

A Journal for Ideas and
Criticism in Architecture

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Summer 1976

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Editorial

“Neo-rationalism” and “neo-realism”: these two terms describe more or less exactly the two antagonistic ideologies that share the present architectural scene. Neo-rationalism generally encompasses approaches developed in the late 1960s and in the 1970s; approaches that are opposed to those of the neo-realists. Where the former is represented by Aldo Rossi in Europe, Peter Eisenman and John Hejduk in the U.S.A., the latter denotes the major currents of thought prevalent in the 1960s and epitomized by the position of Robert Venturi.

Neo-rationalism depends on the idea of an architecture that is “autonomous,” that is, on an architecture which, in the eyes of the most radical architects within this tendency, transcends history and culture; an architecture which is a force in itself, a language that speaks about itself and which does not communicate ideas other than its own.

Neo-realism, in contrast, is historical and cultural, it cares for the present, for the other aspects and practices of culture, such as pop art, advertising, cinema and industrial design to which it exposes architecture. While, with respect to issues of culture, history and “language” (the vocabulary and the syntax of architecture), these two positions are clearly distinguished, paradoxically they share a common ground — both have been developed in opposition to a third and once dominant ideology. Both neo-rationalism and neo-realism are

Neo-Functionalism

essentially anti-functional. Venturi, Rossi, Eisenman, and Hejduk all share this attitude, and have contributed at least to a more general and now widely shared Manichean view of functionalism as a negative and regressive ideology.

In its time, functionalism was a progressive ideology — perhaps one of the most progressive to have developed in the history of architecture — providing for both the definitive demise of classical architecture and the creation of a new architectural language. Functionalism, created in the particular historical conjunction of the inter-war period, seemed to be the most efficient means of creating a language of architecture. Asserting that function and technology constituted the basis for the generation of form in architecture, it thereby eliminated contemporary academic conceptions of meaning and symbolism.

But a radical ideology that grows out of a particular historical conjunction might well become “regressive,” when applied twenty or thirty years later in a different context; and functionalism, when re-emphasized after World War II in the service of massive urban reconstruction, was no exception. The anti-functional position of neo-realism which continued to persist in neo-rationalist ideology was, in this context, justifiable and, in itself, progressive. Attacking the functionalist position in order to change certain aspects of the

original doctrine, neo-realism and now neo-rationalism succeed in adjusting to a new reality, and to a more complex rationality.

There is, however, a second paradox underlying the ideological position of both neo-realism and neo-rationalism: on the one hand, they share a similar position *against* functionalism; but on the other hand, they are themselves developing fragments of this doctrine. In this sense, the prefix “neo-,” suggesting a movement coming from the past, is appropriate to characterize the revival of an ideology that originated a long time ago and which is still being developed. The early ideology of functionalism embodied both notions of *realism* and *rationalism*: the former can be seen in Le Corbusier’s use of the “object-type,” — the airplane, the ocean liner and the car; at the same time, these images also embodied the latter in a consistent logic for the generation of forms in architecture, a logic that was implied by such ideas as “the plan is a generator,” or “regulating lines.”

But in functionalism there is also something which relates to a different problem, to the problem of meaning, of the symbolic dimension of architecture. The fundamental doctrine of functionalism was synthesized in the dictum “form follows function.” Since function is itself one of the meanings that could be articulated by form, we see, in fact, that functionalism was essentially based on a simple and embryonic *idea*

of meaning. Functionalists in general (and Le Corbusier in particular) did not use or develop in depth this dimension of architecture; firstly, because their work was an attack on the symbolic architecture of the Academy and secondly, because there existed no rigorous theoretical context that would allow such a development.

Now, however, the dimension of meaning, present but underdeveloped in the first phase of functionalism, can be confronted. The polemical conditions facing architecture in the beginning of this century no longer exist, while the historical perspective and theoretical means to conceptualize the role of meaning in architecture, have been created. That is, it is now possible to reintegrate the tendencies of the 1960s and early 1920s into a more comprehensive ideology which fundamentally emphasizes the development of the symbolic dimension — the introduction of the problem of meaning within the process of design in a systematic and conscious way. Such an approach might be seen as a “neo-functionalism.”

The idea of such a neo-functionalism is opposed to the respective neo-rationalist and neo-realist positions in the sense that they have developed isolated fragments of the original doctrine and, in this way, have eliminated the complex contradictions inherent in functionalism. A neo-functional position would neither eliminate nor

solve these dialectical contradictions but rather would assume them as one of the main forces which keep alive the development of ideas in architecture. Thus the concept of neo-functionalism would exclude neither the neo-realist nor the neo-rationalist notions, but rather add and develop the fundamental dimension of *meaning*, thereby reconstituting all dimensions of the original doctrine.

This should not be seen, however, as a mere revival or development of functionalism as originally conceived, nor as a reconsideration of functionalism in order to realize its dated and, for us, timid propositions and basically reformist aims.

A neo-functional position abandons the pendular movement (which is not real change) that has characterized the passage from one ideology to the next, now represented by functionalism, now by neo-rationalism and neo-realism. Such an association tends, through the underlying idealism inherent not only in functionalism but in most architectural ideologies, to eliminate or neutralize contradiction. Rather, such a position proposes the development of the progressive aspects of functionalism, an action which implies the effective transformation of its idealistic nature, building a dialectical basis for architecture.

Mario Gandelsonas

Rafael Moneo

Translated by Angela Giral

There is no question for the editors of *Oppositions* but that the face of architecture of 1975 is radically altered from that of 1965. Equally, there can be little argument that a significant contribution to that difference is the concept of autonomous architecture. It can be seen now to be one of the few ideas capable of articulation internationally which has reached this country since World War II, and perhaps it will be of as much consequence as the functionalist doctrines of the early Modern Movement. Its potential to be of some relevance here is perhaps aided by the fact that there is little one could call direction in either the schools, or in our present program of building.

With this set of articles, *Oppositions* brings to its English-speaking readers, for the first time, the work of Aldo Rossi. The article by Rafael Moneo was written in 1973 before the Triennale of September 1973, and thus before the exhibition mounted by Rossi and his followers which codified the notion of autonomous architecture in the form of the neo-rationalist *Tendenza*. The article presents two of the themes central to Rossi's work. First, there is the concept of the relationship of architecture to the city and second, the concept of an autonomous architecture expressed in the development of a typology of relationships between architecture and the city. Neither one of these themes is new; both having a long history in European architecture. What seems of relevance in these

ideas is the particular juxtaposition of an autonomy which is developed from an analysis of the structure of the city. That is, one understands what architecture is from an analysis of those things in the urban fabric which architecture is not.

Moneo makes the connection between the two aspects inherent in Rossi's work by breaking the article into two dialectic halves; each with its own theme and its own rhythm and cadence. The first part, which dissects Rossi's thinking in his book *L'Architettura e La Città*, is intense; the second part, which examines Rossi's project for the Modena cemetery, is lyrical. For me, this is architectural writing at its best — dense and informative, analytic and questioning. There is no question but that Rossi's metaphysics demand this kind of dissection.

Equally important for the European context is the fact that such an article by Moneo, who is one of the Barcelona group of the magazine *Arquitecturas Bis*, signals a possible change in the Milan/Barcelona axis: from the influence in the early sixties of Vittorio Gregotti and post-war functionalism to the new ideology present in Rossi's work.

What remains in question, ten years after Rossi's book, is whether 'architettura autonomia' is merely another architect's smokescreen, as Functionalism was, for 'aesthetic free-play'. This question persists because the forms of this 'autonomous

architecture', as Rossi and others of the so-called *Tendenza* exhibit, have such a marked preference for a neoclassical style.

And now this autonomous architecture has acquired the moral benefaction accruing to the label of 'rationalism' and, with the broom of the *Tendenza*, has swept up the metaphysical Scolari, the romantic Krier brothers, the delirious Koolhaas, etc.

And who will dare cry in the face of all of this — Formalism!
PDE

Rafael Moneo was born in Tudela, Spain, in 1937. He graduated in architecture in 1961. Between 1958-1961 he worked in the office of Saenz Oiza and from 1961 to 1962 in the office of Jorn Utzon. After living in Rome as a Fellow of the Spanish Academy he returned to Spain in 1965 to start his own professional practice and to teach at the School of Madrid. In 1971 he obtained a Professorship at the School of Architecture in Barcelona where he is presently teaching while maintaining his private practice in Madrid.

This essay, published here for the first time in English, was originally published in Spanish (José Rafael Moneo Valles, La Idea de Arquitectura en Rossi y el Cementerio de Modena [Barcelona: Ediciones de la ETSAB]).

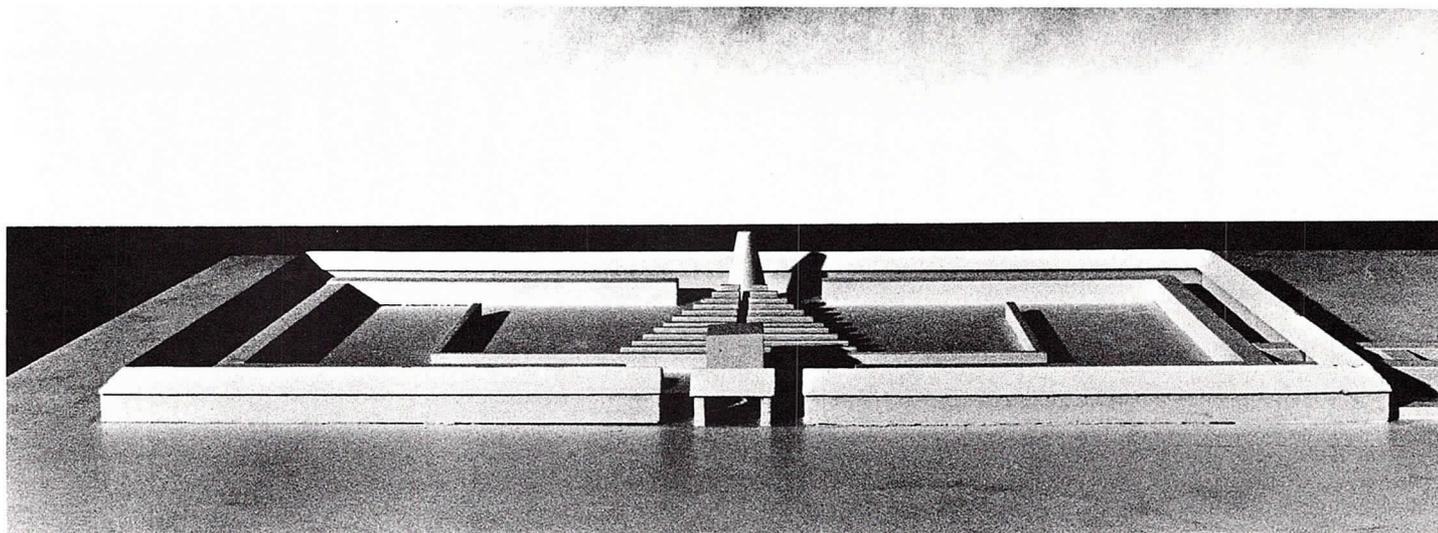
1. *Modena Cemetery, Modena, Italy.*
Aldo Rossi, architect, 1971. Model.

2. *Cover of Casabella-Continuità,*
1953-1954.

3. *Aldo Rossi.*

4. *Cover of Aldo Rossi's book,*
L'Architettura della Città, 1966.

2



1.



3.



2.



4.

The recent competition for the Modena Cemetery (fig. 1), published in 1972 in *Casabella* (no. 372) and *Controspazio* (no. 10), consolidated and reinforced the movement known as "La Tendenza" (literally in English the "tendency") initiated some years ago by a group of Italian architects headed by Aldo Rossi. Because the Tendenza has ceased to be an isolated proposition and has become an architectural ideal shared and assimilated by a great number of professionals, we are forced to consider and examine the Modena project in depth, and to question its meaning in the context of not only the Tendenza but also other current architectural ideologies. This is not merely because of the intrinsic value of Rossi's winning design, but also because of its concern for how a system of thought can confront the problem of design and its realization in built form.¹

It has been a long time since the appearance of a common position with both a coherent and continuous view of architecture. Such a position can be seen both in the projects for the Modena competition and in the work of students in the Italian architectural schools, published in *Controspazio* and *Casabella*. Perhaps not since the early sixties, when neo-liberty seemed to be of major interest in Italy, has there been a situation similar to this one.

The first thing which must be acknowledged is that the Tendenza is supported by a common ideology, by the same theoretical basis, rather than by mere personal affinities. Insofar as these theoretical propositions are intelligible and are clearly formulated, they have a certain value in that they can generate both a homogeneous architecture and one which can be differentiated from all others. This is obvious in the publications already mentioned. Outside of what is to be expected from a personal affinity, a common position is evident in the works of Rossi, Grassi, Aymonino, Dardi, Bonicalzi and Pracchi, Marzoli and Vizzi, etc. One could even expand the list by including all those spattered by the label "Tendenza." But there is no doubt about Aldo Rossi's fundamental role in the development of this ideology. Let us then use Rossi and his writings to characterize the Tendenza and to show the continuity between his theory and practice, as it is manifest specifically in the design for the cemetery.

Rossi (fig. 3), who has taught in Zurich and in Venice, worked with Ernesto Rogers, Vittorio Gregotti, Mario Zanuso, Tentori, etc., on *Casabella* (fig. 2) in the early fifties and sixties. It is interesting today to reread the pages of *Casabella* to understand the value of these people who detected so many future problems. In many masterful issues, the work of minor architects was examined and themes were presented that had been previously undervalued and completely left out of traditional history. Already, at that time, it was a magazine which was an anathema for Reyner Banham's defense of neo-liberty; a position which, in those days, was a break with the accepted indiscriminating orthodoxy of the Modern Movement. Within the framework of an Italy of the fifties and the sixties the attitude of the then young editors of *Casabella* surrounding Rogers, led to a less elementary architecture than before; one which could allow for the complexity of reality. The editors had become conscious that a moralistic posture which would allow an understanding of the evolution of architecture through Manichaean glasses was not possible. This attitude ultimately led to a confrontation with those who understood the Modern Movement from an exclusively plastic point of view. From this a fundamental principle developed slowly in the work of Rossi and in the entire group: the idea that there was a specificity or a particular aspect of architecture which could allow it to be considered as an autonomous discipline. It was Rossi's idea that through a study of the city, seen as the finest and most complete expression of architecture, a knowledge of these principles could be found. This autonomy of architecture and the special quality of its principles becomes clear upon an explanation of the form of the city. The idea is that the problems which arise on trying to understand the form of the city have not been resolved, neither by the highly abused organic metaphors, nor by the most current model theory. However, for Rossi, the study of the city and its formal problems should be approached from the perspective of a discipline which is best equipped to grasp their meaning; and that discipline is architecture. It is from the unusual and unique principles of architecture that the form of the city can be explained; understanding the city and its morphology (which is the same as saying its birth or its evolution), requires a knowledge of the principles of

4 architecture which govern the form of the city.

The most outstanding feature of the *Tendenza* can be clarified in the following manner. The Modern Movement, and in particular the historiography of the Modern Movement, can be seen as insisting on the figurative aspects of architecture, in an attempt to establish a continuity between architecture and the other fine arts, thus reducing the specific value of architecture itself. On the other hand, Rossi can be seen to defend the legitimacy and independence of the principles which govern the practice of architecture itself. To discover these principles, and to determine how they are incorporated into the process of the production of architecture, and the creation of the city, he says, should be the task of any theoretical discussion of architecture. Research in architecture thus leads to the study of the specific aspects of architecture which allow it to be understood as an autonomous discipline, not assimilated within sculpture or painting; a discipline that cannot be understood exclusively through external parameters but which can be established through appropriate formal rules. Through the idea of autonomy, necessary to the understanding of the form of the city, architecture becomes a category of reality. Rossi, like Alberti, Scamozzi, and the architects of the Enlightenment, defends architecture as an expression of thought. The task of architecture, then, would be the explanation and conversion of this thought into reality. But is it possible to think of architecture as an autonomous discipline? Isn't this perhaps a mere fantasy? Let us see how Rossi himself explains this autonomy and where his theoretical propositions lead within the idea of the city as architecture.

The Architecture of the City

Rossi's ideas are systematically exhibited in his book, *The Architecture of the City* (fig. 4). Some of his concepts have been elaborated with greater depth in other writings — the CLUVA notebooks,² the studies on the city of Padova,³ a preface to the works of Boullée,⁴ etc. But one can say that his architectonic thought has been more systematically developed in this book in spite of its being a somewhat dated text.

Since the purpose of this article is the understanding of the connection between Rossi's thought and his work, or alternatively to see how the thought is converted into work, we can use *The Architecture of the City* as a first analog or a model for this thought. Rossi begins his book with the following: "The city, which is the object of this book, is understood within it as architecture. When I speak of architecture I don't mean exclusively the visible image of the city and the whole of its architecture, but rather architecture as construction. I refer to the construction of the city in time."⁵

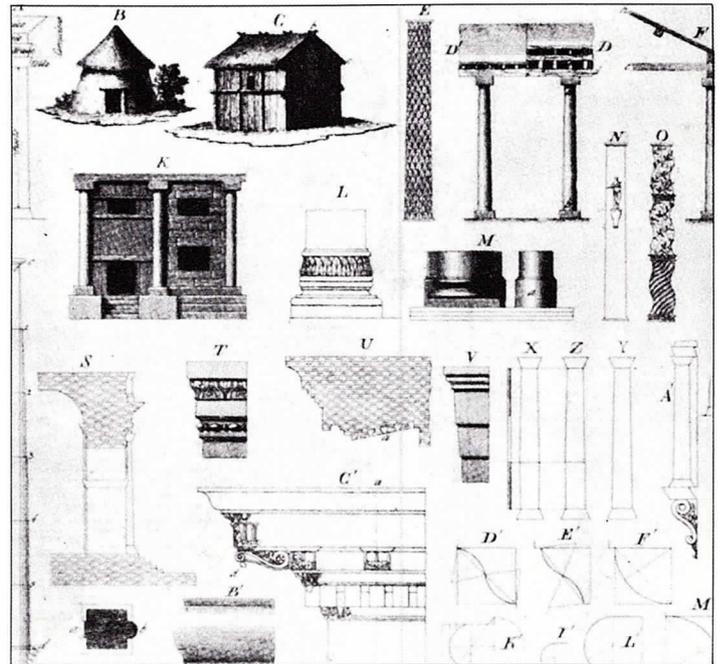
The development and growth of the city is subject to certain rules and forms which allow for its "construction," which is its architecture. This idea of architecture as construction makes us understand architecture as that discipline or that field of knowledge within the real, which gives a realization to the city. Naturally, from the very beginning, one must avoid the temptation to understand construction in terms of structure and of building: for Rossi, to construct is simply to act on the basis of reason, not, as one might think, to materialize thought.

Thus, from the beginning of the book, Rossi has announced the aspects of the specificity of the discipline of architecture; that is, to understand how the city is constructed, how it is produced from architecture, and how it forces the establishment of an autonomous discipline that will be aided by "the analysis of political, social and economic systems,"⁶ but at the same time cannot rely solely on them.

First, Rossi begins a description of the elements from which the city is constructed. Once the elements have been established it is possible to grasp the laws by which they are composed and through which they create a more complex reality — the city. For Rossi, the experience of the city is what permits the discovery of these elements, and identification of them as urban facts, as a "unicum," having value in the whole as well as individually as form, in a particular place. These elements are intelligible through memory, not through remembering. This kind of extreme analytic suspension gives us a fleeting glimpse of the *raison d'être* of the city. On the basis of these elements, we must

“understand the city as a great representation of the human condition.”⁷ We will attempt to read, “representation through its fixed and profound scenery, architecture.”⁸ But the wish to clarify, to order the elements with which the city is constructed, leads Rossi to present “the fundamental hypothesis of the book . . . the study of a typology of buildings in relation to the city.”⁹

It is not necessary to underline the importance that the concept of typology has had in Italian theoretical studies of architecture. But we should make clear the discovery of the validity of this concept, whether it be for the analysis of the city or as point of departure for certain approaches to design, such as in that of Rossi, Aymonino, Grassi or Scolari. In fact, what we have is merely the reincorporation of a concept that had been forgotten by a previous generation of critics who were more attentive to purely visual principles such as *Gestalt* and cultural considerations. These critics considered that the eclectic treatises had used typology improperly: typology was, for most modern critics, an old-fashioned concept. But it was more than a rescue operation that was performed by Rossi. Rather it was the affirmation of a new idea of architecture that attributed a greater value to its capacity as an autonomous discipline with internal norms, than to the personalist dictatorship that had been the end result of much that went by the name of Modern Architecture. It was, if we may be allowed such an oversimplification, a matter of attributing greater value to architecture than to architects.



5.

Rossi picks up, as does Argan (fig. 5), the definition of type, so often quoted, from Quatremère de Quincy, “the word type does not represent so much the image of something that must be copied or imitated perfectly, as the idea of an element that must itself serve as a rule for the model. . . . The model, understood from the point of view of the practical execution of art, is an object that must be repeated such as it is; the type, on the contrary, is an object on the basis of which everyone can conceive of works that may not resemble each other at all.”¹⁰

Type is something constant, it is what remains beyond the particular and the concrete, something that appears during

6 the examination of architectural facts and gives them support: "a structure that is revealed and made knowledgeable through the fact itself. . . ." Rossi condenses this idea when he says: "no type can be identified with a particular form, but all architectural forms can be referred to types."¹¹

One can examine the entire history of architecture from the concept of typology, from the temple to the suburban house: through type we can explain the formation of the city. "We can say that type is the idea itself of architecture, that which is closest to its essence and therefore what, in spite of change, has always imposed itself 'over feeling and reason' as the principle of architecture and the city."¹²

The introduction of the concept of type will allow Rossi to make a new kind of classification which will become a necessary tool for the interpretation, through fragmentation, of the city. This type of classification comes close to the one employed by a botanist in his examination of plant life.

However, before proceeding, it is necessary to recall the architectonic category of permanence which Rossi associates with memory. There are, in the city, urban facts which are permanent, that withstand the passage of time; these urban facts are the monuments that, in one way or another, constitute or make up and configure the city. The monument therefore has more than an intelligible and atmospheric value, it is not only architecture as anecdote, as the picturesque, but it gives meaning to the life of the city which, through these monuments, both remembers the past and uses 'its memory.'

The monument, which again has been underestimated by the preceding generation of critics because of its singularity and its rhetoric, is restored by Rossi who understands the role the monument has played in giving structure to the city. Faced with such a conservative view of the past, Rossi achieves a vindication of the presence of monuments insofar as they also embody the current moment — the city's present.

The recovery of monuments then is far from a merely archaeological devotion to the past. Monuments from the

perspective proposed by Rossi acquire a real dimension and an immediacy that disturbs any conservative vision of the city described in terms of immobility and inalterability.

Thus, we could say that the concept of typology allows Rossi to establish a continuity between type and form, so that one is able to understand the formation of the city in terms of what he calls "areas" or "sectors" through such a concept of type (fig. 6). These sectors are seen as pieces not defined by their sociological identity but by a formal condition which responds to morphologically similar sectors. The city is thus understood as a homogeneous continuum in which diversity is not accidental but, on the contrary, something appropriate to its roots; and history, the city's memory, takes care of the given sense to that diversity.

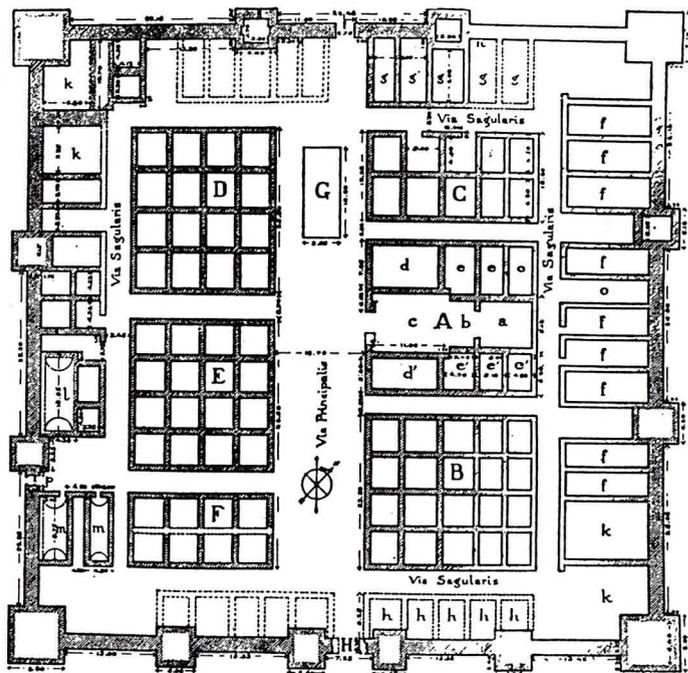
Thus it happens that "the monument is something permanent because it is already in a dialectic position within urban development, permitting an understanding of the city as something that is created through points (primary elements) and areas (neighborhoods); and while it acquires value as such through the form, it disappears in the latter from which the value of use comes forth."¹³

Furthermore, Rossi considers "the plan as a primary element, just as a temple or a fortress";¹⁴ it is the way one thinks of a city, the way it is first recorded in our mind and from this imposes an architectonic reflection.

At the same time, urban facts express their content, their life, their destiny: "Visit an asylum: pain there is something concrete. It is to be found in the courtyards, in the walls, in the rooms."¹⁵ Rossi quotes Levi-Strauss and says that "space possesses its own value; just as sound and perfume have color and feeling."¹⁶

And thus appears place; individualized, concrete space. The site, which Rossi has called "the concrete sign of space."¹⁷ Rossi says, referring to urban facts: "sometimes I have asked myself, as I again do here, where the individuality of an urban fact begins, whether it is in form, in function, in memory or in something else. We might then say it is in the event itself and in the sign that fixed the event."¹⁸ It is

6. Roman fortifications, *Dagantya*,
Jordan. These elements constitute a
type of urban form.



6.

7
 therefore understood that each situation, each event whose recollection is retained in memory, has a corresponding architectonic answer; a sign which fixes it whether it be from the public domain or from a concrete, individual, private domain. Place allows every architecture to acquire its condition of being, allows it to achieve the dimension of the individual, which as we have seen is necessary for the identification of an urban fact. But place alludes also to a collective support; place means, or can be understood through, the collective.

The principles of architecture will become concrete in a place, in a certain time, whether in the city, or in the landscape. Architecture cannot be made ignoring these realities which give it a sense of place and of history.

The idea of place encompasses something deeper, more rooted in geography itself, in the physical reality that underlies history; place, from which urban facts acquire meaning, is something more than the environment.

One should remember, however, an exception: it is sometimes the role of symbols to condense in architecture the world of desire, "architecture and its principles are summarized in symbol; and on the other hand there is the condition for building — motivation."¹⁹

It is the difference between architecture and urban fact, between principles and concrete construction, which allows us to make a value judgment about architecture. Rossi says, "precisely what composition and style want to say about architecture, is that architecture becomes a determining factor in the constitution of urban facts when it is able to assume the entire civil and political dimension of an era; when it is highly rational, comprehensible and transmissible. In other words, when it can be judged as style."²⁰

Therefore, when a style is achieved, architecture is embodied in an urban fact: "the identification of some urban facts and of the city itself with style in architecture is so immediate that it can be found in a certain environment of space/time with discreet precision in the Gothic city, in the Baroque city, in the Neo-Classic city."²¹

8 The failure of most current urban designs is because of a conception of the city in terms of architectural design, which does not consider the notion of an architecture of the city. It is necessary to rethink building from the form of the city or, better yet, from how it forms the city. To a certain extent, building makes one consider all the prior morphological problems that demand both a knowledge of place and a certain interpretation of history before it can aspire to be an urban fact, and thus become a city. This way of understanding things “contradicts the belief held by many that pre-ordered functions can give the necessary direction to facts and that the problem consists in giving form to certain functions: in reality the forms themselves, in their materialization, separate the function; they are stated as the city itself.”²² Building must become an urban fact. This particular way of understanding urban fact as form is therefore the area in which the architect works, thus the architect’s effort is directed to realize “the importance of the form and of the logical processes of architecture while seeing in the form itself the capacity for assuming value, meaning, and the most diverse uses.”²³ The problem of architecture, and of understanding the city in its fullest dimension, can only be solved when the logic of its form is understood. Use or function can only be solved through the logic of form itself.

The objection that this line of thought can only be applied to old cities can be dismantled if one considers that the proposed hypotheses do not distinguish between old and new cities; on the other hand, the city is always making references to the past insofar as “one of the characteristics of the city is its permanence in time.”²⁴ On the contrary one must insist on the observation of the public and collective nature of the city, “such a beauty rests both in the laws of architecture and in the choice in value that the collective wishes to give for these works.”²⁵ This collective nature explains the value of history: “the city is a repository of history.”²⁶ As a result of this primal encounter with man, the city even today, bears traces of the conversion of this physical environment into place.

The city is faithful to its own “memory,” a term that Maurice Halbwachs already applied to the city. “The city is

the *locus* of collective memory. Memory thus becomes . . . the conducting thread of the entire complex structure . . . the collective nature and the individuality of urban facts arrange themselves into the same urban structure. Within this structure memory becomes the conscience of the city.”²⁷

Evolution of Urban Facts

To understand how urban facts are produced in time, and to understand their evolution, we must add a new and fundamental dimension that will help us grasp the dynamics of the city; we mean by this, the economic component. Urban facts are produced under the pressure of economic phenomena and in some way become their reflection. The work of Halbwachs, according to Rossi, is enormously clarifying in this respect.²⁸ The history of the city is full of episodes in which economic circumstances, such as the unwanted liberation of the land, force and push the evolution of the city. From this perspective, as can be expected given Rossi’s political position, he can be seen to link up with a materialistic and dialectic vision of history.

This is why plans either conform or do not conform to reality depending on the circumstance. For example, Haussmann’s plan offered an interpretation of the structure of Paris from a very concrete point of view. However, Paris conformed to Haussmann’s plan from other perspectives without considering Haussmann’s intentions.

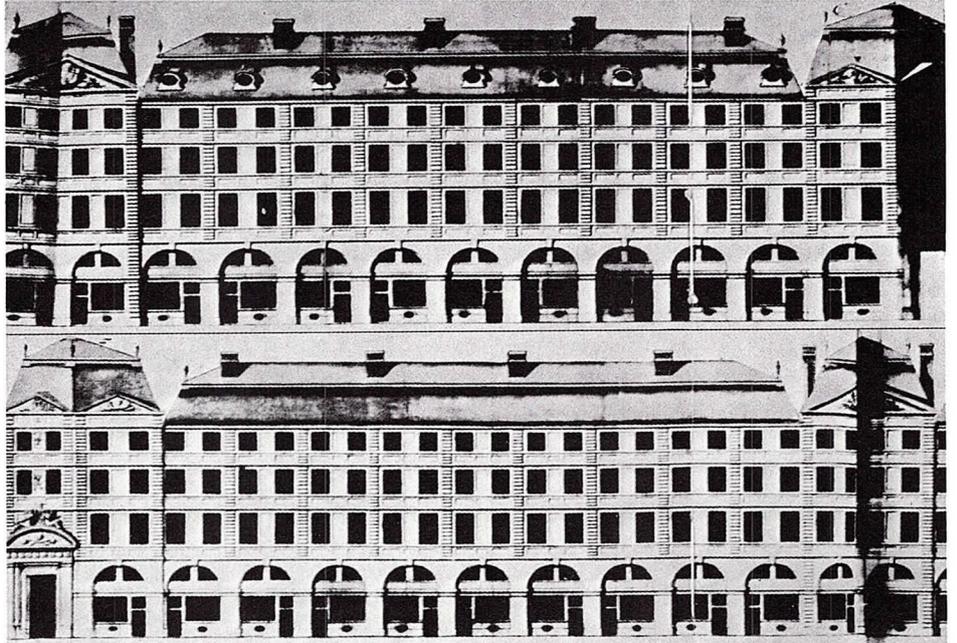
One can say that in some way all European cities, throughout the nineteenth century, were conscious when making such decisive interventions in their infra-structure, of a latent new city form brought about by industry (fig. 7).

The problem of the city, Rossi says, grows out of “the end to political and physical homogeneity which followed the coming of industry . . . a first stage can be discerned in the destruction of the fundamental structure of the medieval city based in absolute identity between dwelling and workplace within the same building.”²⁹ The breakdown of the duality, dwelling/work, whose continuity was taken for

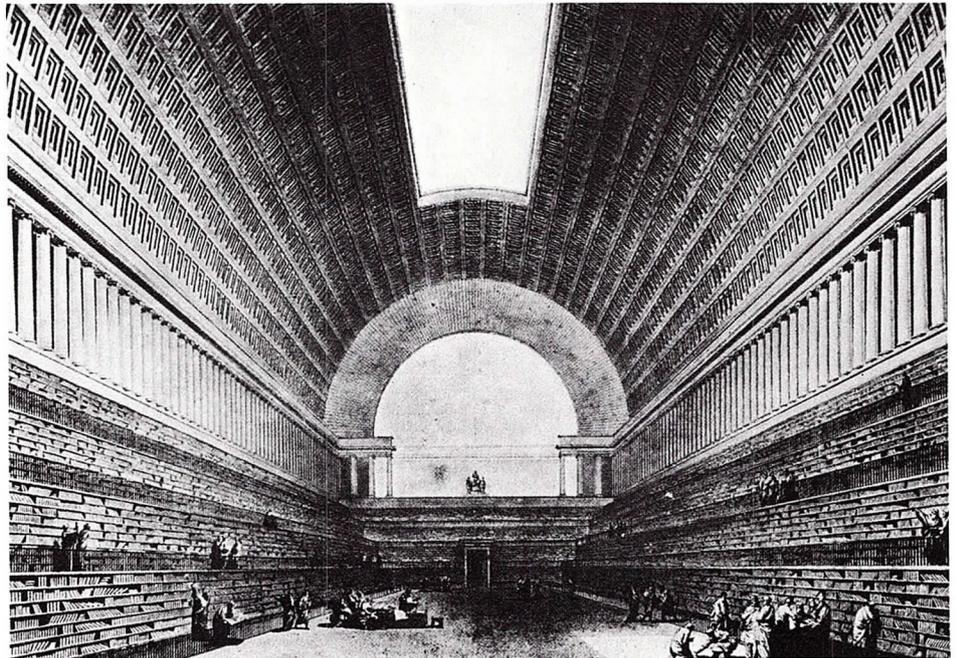
8. *Rue de la Ferronnerie, Paris, 1669.*

9. *Proposed new hall for the expansion of the National Library, Paris. Etienne Louis Boullée, architect, c. 1780.*

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Rossi's text, with this assertion of independent formal laws for the architecture of the city; while, from others points of view, if there is precisely something that architecture and city cannot boast about, it is autonomy. It is not only passionate, but also instructive, to underline the importance of formal relationships in architecture. To insist on the value of form in architecture, is a desirable antidote today when considering urban facts. A better understanding of Rossi's position, in relation to the crisis of orthodox urban studies, justifies any interest in these new propositions.

Architecture as Logical Construction: Reason in Architecture.

Once he has exposed the connection between architecture and city, Rossi then proposes some principles of architecture. Architecture for Rossi is fundamentally "construction." The function of any theory of architecture is to examine the laws which allow "construction." These laws merely confirm that autonomy of architecture which comes out of its specific reality. For Rossi, then, the elaboration of these laws based on lived experience are the objective of every theory. As Rossi says, "in the true classicism of Alberti, norms are always modelled after life rather than on an *a priori* position."³⁵ When one studies the generation of these norms one realizes that, in theory, an architectonic order can be produced independently of a sequence of time.

The first principle of all architecture for Rossi would be the possibility of achieving a form from a set of elements; the relationship between the elements and the whole in which they are developed is the context of the architect's work.

Rossi explains how Boullée elaborated his project for a library (fig. 9): "at the beginning he sees the library as the physical site for the spiritual heritage of great men, of the culture of the past; it is they and their works that constitute the library. We must notice that these works, the books, remain throughout the development of the project as primary data, organized material for the project, the same as in the case of the national palace, the material of architec-

ture will be constituted by constitutional laws."³⁶

This emotional, definitive point of departure is not associated with a particular form of architecture; it is not used as a possible development of architecture. Assuming this premise and these components of reality (centralized light, accessibility, intelligibility, etc.) which justify such a typological adherence, architecture is constructed and becomes form, leaving for later development an examination of the technical and constructive problems deriving from the chosen type. And finally there is the obligation of making the work real and true.

Neo-classical architecture states for the first time the problem of content in architecture. In this context, architecture must derive reason for this meaning from its own field, from its own logic, from its autonomous position (fig. 8). It is not surprising then to find the classical orders, that are so close to a primary constructed reality, completely upset when forced into a new architecture in which the dimension, scale, and the traditional formal relationships, etc., have been forgotten. However, this content is always sustained by a logical development of architectural form, by a will to rational expression which is perhaps the most pronounced characteristic, a differentiated feature, of style. Furthermore, the will to reason is at times converted so that it becomes the exclusive content of neo-classic architecture. The interest of Rossi in neo-classicism is thus to be expected. This period witnessed the birth of a whole series of new building types in the service of a civil vision of history. Architecture experienced with neo-classicism, the architecture of the Enlightenment, the adventure of a new formal world. In this context, building assumes a character, "that is, the nature of the subject, its evocative power."³⁷ History, the collective memory of a certain past, is poured into the architectural object in order to make it intelligible, thus recovering its nature.

The fact that men demand from architecture this kind of satisfaction justifies an extremely rational attitude. In this way one does not oversimplify in the manner of that other type of rationalism which, as Rossi says, from a presumed scientific reason, is forgetting architecture's obligation to

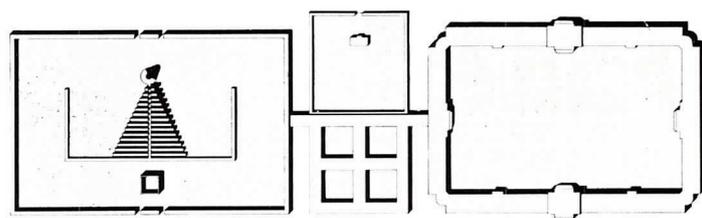
12 assume itself as the construction of a world of ideas.

The Enlightenment marks the first time in which architecture as an autonomous discipline was able to uncover principles which would allow itself to be seen as “construction.” Thus Canaletto, Rossi says, can mount a collage with Palladio’s architecture in Venice, Canaletto is telling us how the city can be thought of as a logical operation. This “objectification” of elements in building and of buildings in the city is characteristic of this period. It contains an objectification that allows for construction and for creation of an architecture using the same kind of mechanisms like such painters as Francesco de Giorgio Martini and Giorgio de Chirico. This is a way of forming, or constructing which, spread throughout the Veneto, and even today, gives the Veneto that strange feeling of urbanity that is doubtlessly one of its greatest charms.

This thinking about architecture abstracted from time, that occasionally gives Rossi’s drawings the quality of a de Chirico (fig. 12), allows them to attain a reality, to become material, and to be built. The drawing of architecture, such as in Canaletto’s paintings, already suggests construction: it is already architecture. This is the sense of Rossi’s collages. Doric columns with concrete framework are architecture: they presuppose a relationship, a way of building from memory, with objects and with architectonic matter, without any mediation imposed by use.

A quick examination of one of Rossi’s projects (fig. 13) would be enough to prove to what extent the statements of the Enlightenment and the principles of rational architecture, have been recovered.

The building is presented as a promenade, an axis around which are gathered different typological schemes. This axis will facilitate construction, the relationship between elements — the enclosed square, the tower on columns, the technological balustrade, the dome. Construction, in this case, is the possibility of manipulating these elements, of binding them, relating them, even admitting the formal diversity underlined by the use of materials — the columns in white steel, the facings in dark stone. Construction, the



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operation of architecture, charges disparate elements that cohabit in an unsuspected image with content, almost surrealistic in the midst of a park that, according to Rossi, allows “a building public *par excellence* not to lose contact with outside spaces, with the world to which it belongs.”³⁸

The Project for the Modena Cemetery

Our intention here is not to examine the entire *oeuvre* of Rossi but to focus on the Modena cemetery (fig. 11). Having made an initial interpretation of his theoretical position, we can now attempt a reading of the cemetery so as to see how these principles are present in the work.

The Modena competition called for an extension of the existing traditional cemetery (fig. 10). It is necessary to point out the effort that Rossi makes in his accompanying text to describe the project in strictly architectural terms. For Rossi, describing architecture in some way guarantees its understanding: he has always insisted on a description of the city and of architecture.

The first concept introduced in his text for the competition is that of typology.³⁹ The cemetery is understood as a house; as the house of the dead. The first typological allusion points out that, in the earliest cultures, house and grave were the same thing, “death signalled a passing stage between two conditions with no well-defined limits . . . the cemetery as building shall be the house of the dead . . . today the identification of house with grave has only remained, as a distinctive feature, in the architectonic structure of the cemetery. The house of the dead, the grave, the cemetery is a deserted, abandoned house . . .” (fig. 15).⁴⁰

This idea of abandoned house, of spoil, is present throughout the entire work and deprives it of the condition of a house for the living, having lost those attributes without having itself become a ruin. Rossi sets himself throughout the project, the program of the desolate house.

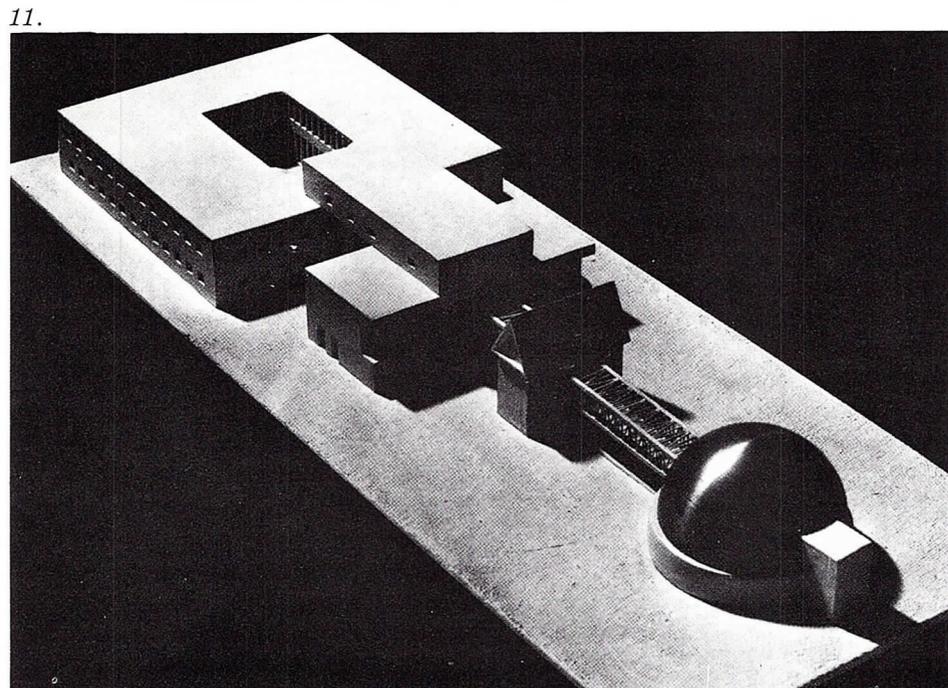
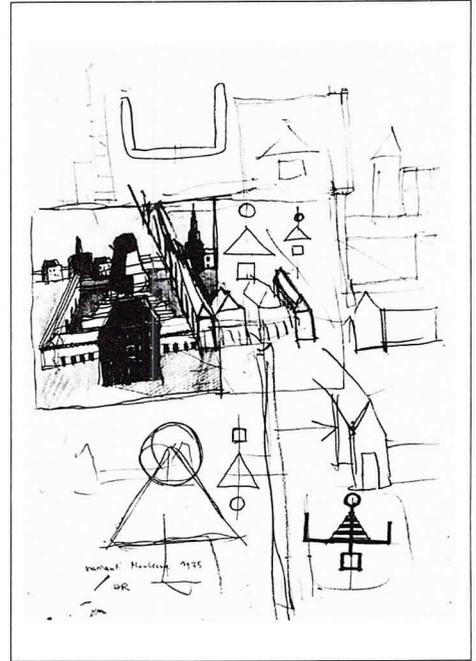
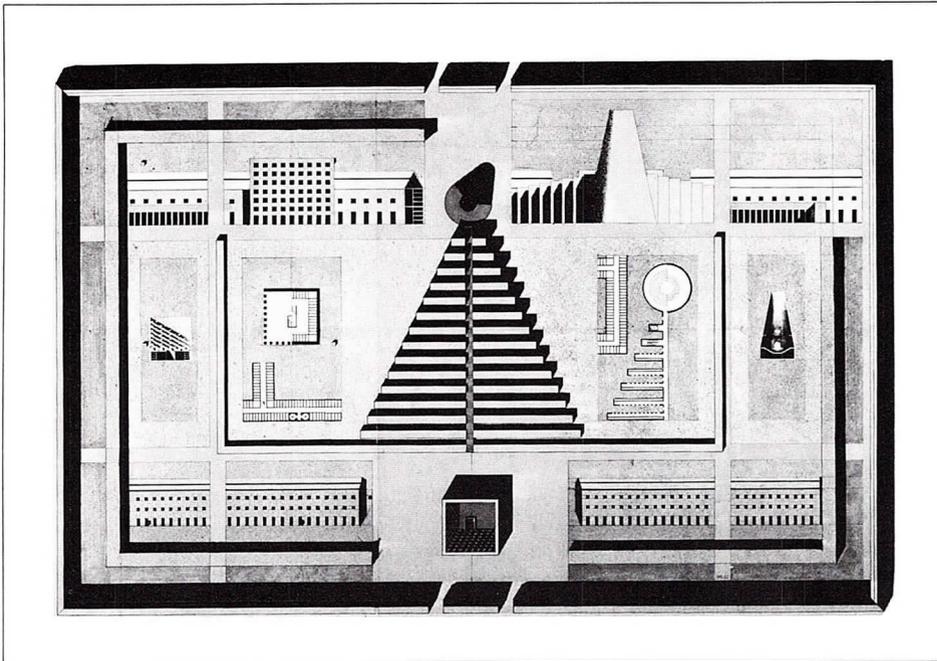
But to this idea of despoiled and abandoned house, is added another and different typological dimension: that which

10. *Modena Cemetery, Modena, Italy. Aldo Rossi, architect, 1971. Site plan showing the new cemetery, the existing Costa cemetery, the Jewish cemetery and the services area.*

11. *Projection drawing.*

12. *Sketch.*

13. *Scandicci City Hall, Italy. Aldo Rossi, architect, 1968. Model.*



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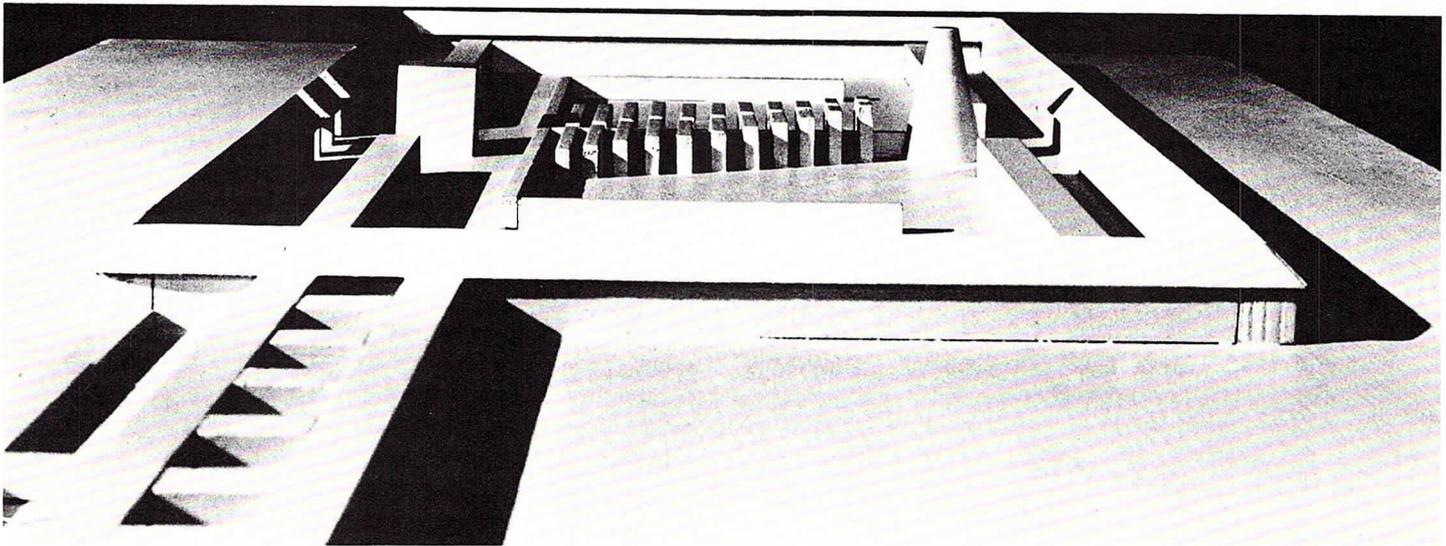
14. *Modena Cemetery, Modena, Italy. Aldo Rossi, architect, 1971. Model.*

17. *The eighteenth-century Costa cemetery.*

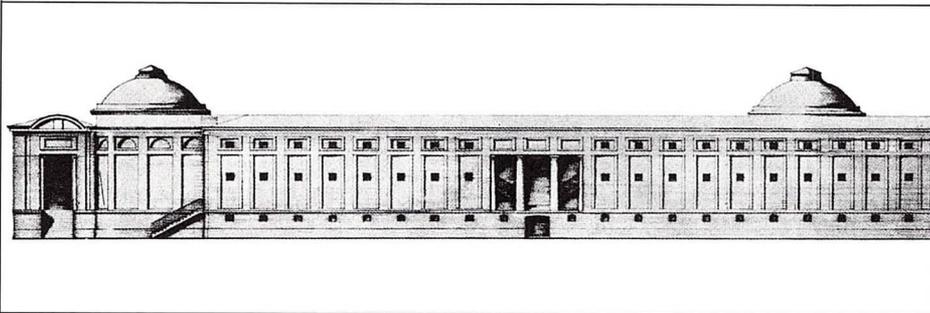
15. *Aerial perspective.*

16. *Path of tombs, after Piranesi, c.1720.*

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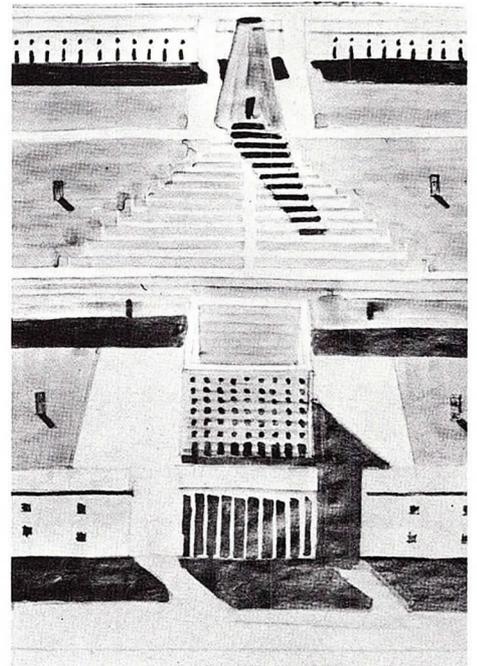
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understands the cemetery “as a typological form of rec-tilinear arcaded walk.”⁴¹ Rossi uses a reference for the project the building type of the classical cemetery.

It would be difficult to find another theme better suited to Rossi’s preoccupations. The cemetery as an architectural type is consolidated during the beginning of the nineteenth century after the politicians took over the concerns of physical health and hygiene. The cemetery, the city of the dead, with walls that define it as a reliquary, with monumental doors full of archaeological resonance, with measurable order, with strict functional services that suggests the newly discovered hygiene, is a building type that was introduced in the late Enlightenment (fig. 16). The Costa cemetery (fig. 17) and the Modena cemetery are no exceptions. These well-known typological dimensions are accepted by Rossi here more radically than in any other of his projects.

We will not enter into the discussion suggested by the acceptance of the type as a given obligation of the project. In such a case, the acceptance of the type compromises the architect’s choice in its deepest sense. To accept the traditional idea of the cemetery supposes accepting the gravity of the place and of the situation; supposes accepting the memory — forgetting those options that might understand the area as a park or a garden — as a pantheistic recovery made by nature with the interment of human spoil. This is in opposition to a Nordic or Scandinavian idea of the cemetery, which would solve the problem from a basis of a natural acceptance of death. Rossi underlines the social meaning of death — that history is made by our lives. Death is in this way incorporated in the graveyard; to an artificial social milieu whose meaning is found in ritual. Architecture helps man to live, to formulate those artificial situations, within which custom and usage, the past and memory, make sense. The recovery of a certain typology is thus intimately linked to the idea of memory, since it is from this role of the cemetery in society that one may understand that, “the architectural definition” constitutes “an architectural place where the form and rationality of buildings as interpreters of the city and, in this case, the meaning of the cemetery, may be an alternative to the senseless and disorganized growth of the modern city.”⁴² Architectural form

must support such meaning: that is, its meaning in the collective memory through which one may then understand work, assimilate it and situate it in the world of known objects; this support establishes a relationship with the deep and so often forgotten world of our experience.

The cemetery, insofar as size, spaces, and the designation of those spaces, accepts the model of the nearby Costa Cemetery. There is, however, something quite different: the space is not covered by graves, instead these are situated catacomb-like, opposing each other: here the space is one with the monument, with the idea of grave; one standing for all, underlining the value of the empty, bare, despoiled enclosure (fig. 14). “The configuration of the cemetery as empty house is the space in the memory of the living.”⁴³

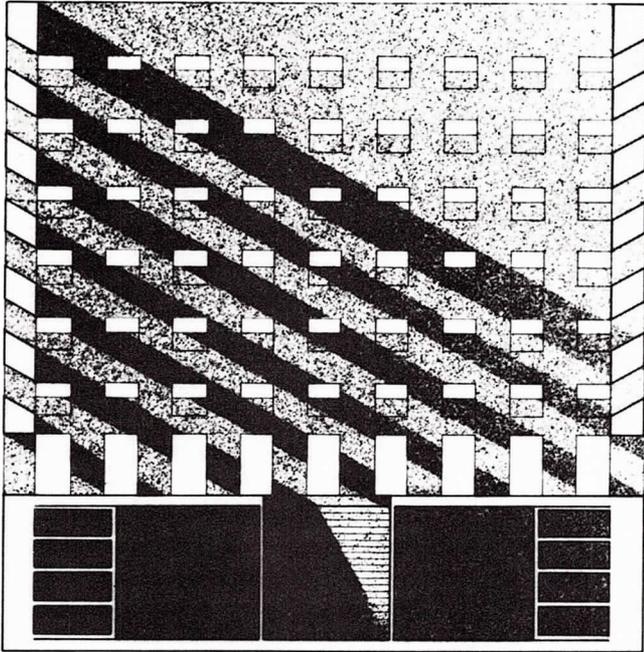
The cemetery today is the place that positions the feelings of the living towards death, but this expression of the feeling of the living towards death is only achieved in this case through architecture, through the specific mode of knowledge that architecture has as an autonomous discipline. In general, our admiration for the great neo-classic cemeteries comes precisely from the fact that they can be seen as “the expression of a civic architecture.”⁴⁴ The cemetery can continue to be understood as a known form near, immediate: it does not deny the character of building, but on the contrary, it is this character itself which is the departure for its architecture. We can accept that the cemetery responds, as an idea, to the feeling of abandonment of a house no longer useful, of emptiness in the most vulgar sense of the word, of a denial of what was once full and alive. How can the elements of architecture be used to achieve such an expressive level? “The cubic construction with regular windows has the structure of a house without floors and without roofs; the windows have no mullions, it is merely the house of the dead, it is an incomplete house, therefore, abandoned” (fig. 19).

The expressive value is given to the unfinished, to the lacking, to the missing. The house is inhabited by people that no longer need protection from the cold; it is occupied by the living as they remember the dead. The architectural

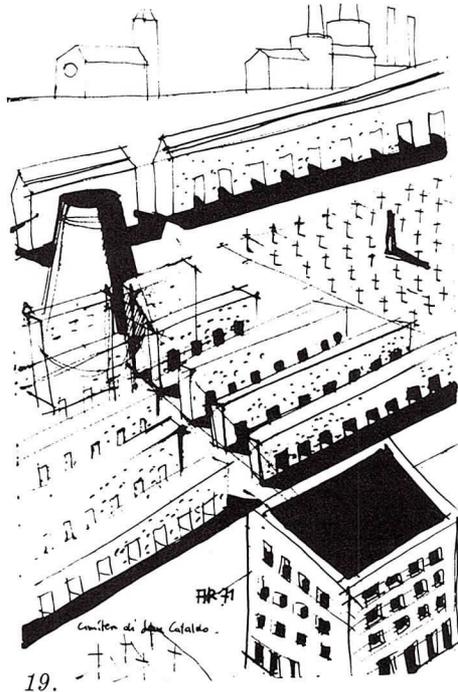
18. *Modena Cemetery, Modena, Italy. Aldo Rossi, architect, 1971. The house of the dead.*

19. *Sketch.*

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elements — the windows for instance — are the same as in the houses for the living; they maintain their formal condition on the wall, but without those pieces and parts which would allow them to be useful and practical.

The entire project reinforces this idea of emptiness, beginning with the arcades. As we saw in the Scandicci City Hall, an axis is established which permits the location of elements of components for the elaboration of the architecture of the cemetery. But it is the emptiness, the arrival to nothing, that gives meaning to the approach, it is the goal of the journey. The sanctuary, a cubic form, allows one to be continually with “the blue of the sky” by way of the chamfered windows cut out of the wall. Empty house no longer in need of floors or roofs; but not a ruin. An eternally new house for the dead (fig. 18).

But after crossing the ossuary, the charnel house, we again meet the endless path, the path that will take us to the fundamental form, the key of the project, the common grave. The path is given meaning and underlined by the graves where the composition relates a greater length to a lesser height on a triangular floorplan, and produces, in the strange perspective feeling, an understood and assimilated labyrinth in which the creation of architectonic form is presented as a problem of distance and proportion. This is done in close proximity to the idea of storage, thus cruelly exposing such proximity if one thinks of the meaning of this storage.

The natural perspective is falsified as the height of the ossuary increases in depth, the corridor becomes an image *contra natura*; equivocal and atemporal. Someone walking without a notion of time, without perspective, reaches the gravepit, the terminus at the end of the path; the metaphor is obvious and effective.

Architecture is not presented as a volume, as a plastic body to which a certain use is ascribed. Rather the architecture is constructed with known primary and intelligible elements and, in this way, they give birth to the individualized, concrete architectural fact that is presented. The fact of building, as manifested in these elements, becomes a differ-

ent reality whose sense and meaning are accessible and understandable.

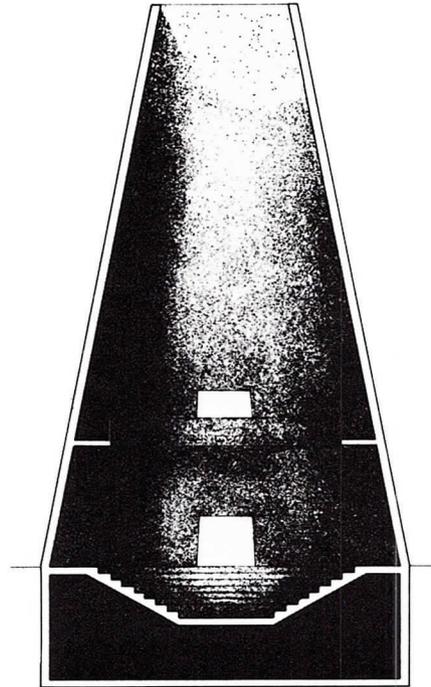
The journey that ends in the common grave, as we said before, is the agent of construction through which architecture is built; where architecture finds its meaning. The path takes us to the end, “the abandonment of the abandoned,” says Rossi. “In the common grave are the remains of the abandoned dead . . . often people from the asylum, the hospital, the jail, from a desperate or forgotten existence. The city builds its most important monument for the oppressed.”⁴⁵

However, we must make a more careful analysis of these elements. The memory of Mycenaean tombs, of the Pantheon itself, of industrial ovens, etc., is obvious enough in the Rossi quotations. The truncated form allows us once more to remain alone with the “blue of the sky.” The gravity of the space is accomplished through the primary experience of it.

Once more it is proportion, the relationship of measures, that supports the expressive value. The form, a truncated cone, overthrows the possible dome-like experience and becomes a less known, more abstract, yet understandable space (fig. 20). Everything is understood as forms that, through their excessiveness which individualizes them, become architecture, qualifying a place and creating a space in which “funeral and commemorative ceremonies of religious and civil character” can be performed.

The ordinary graves, which are under the ground, are divided into fields marked by numbered stones or *stelae* which are identified by an orthogonal network of paths crossing the rectangular area of the enclosure. Thus a well-known distributive mechanism, the orthogonal grid, is used to suggest the function of the space. This system of regulating lines divides the vast space defined by the enclosure; imposing a structure of form on meaning and use.

Thus “the aggregate of buildings is configurated like a city . . . the cemetery becomes a public building with the necessary clarity and rationality of the pathways, with a suitable



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18 use of land . . . the reference to the cemetery is established in the architecture of the cemetery, of the house, of the city. . . .”⁴⁶

This same clarity is demanded of the construction itself in its strictest sense. The construction is extremely simple, using only concrete blocks which facilitate the clear, unambiguous understanding of the constructive content of the project, without possible misinterpretation; the work and the explicitly written statements having an identical purpose.

Only the common grave, which is more complex in its construction, is thought of in reinforced concrete. This extremely subtle figure in reinforced concrete imposes the intellectualized character of the proposal as does a cover on a book — it is the ideogram of a cover. The clear paradigmatic image of cover crowns the cemetery walls.

Large stones would be used for paving the pathways; detail is abandoned for the sake of a greater clarity of the construction: the mental operation must be obvious, providing for a possible articulation that would give the architectural form a tactile quality necessary for its decorative enrichment.

The cemetery is thus close to the principles of a neo-classical architecture to which it conforms. The result is elementary, known, cruelly and painfully ingenuous, and it can be understood in this condition as a manifestation of first principles. Materials are elaborated within this criterion; they appear in their original state, without the hues and shades that would allow for the virtuosity of design. They are natural materials, neither valued more than another, since what matters is not so much the material but how it is employed: “the new materials are not the most modern ones but those which acquire their meaning from the way in which they are understood, that is to say, their modernity is not due to their novelty but to their *raison-d’être*.”⁴⁷

In reality we find ourselves confronted with an example of “how to build,” that Rossi had already made explicit in

other projects, but in this case is presented with greater crudity, in each and every level in which the architect works in defining form.

Technique does not count, the essence of architecture is not found in technical matters. What is asserted is construction, the building activity, the specific business of the architect. It is the *work* which Rossi underlines and values. Rationality, in itself, is what matters, independent of any circumstance.

The result is an almost surrealistic image, phantasmagoric, “de Chirichian.” Rational construction paradoxically gives place to a little-known image. It is as if the encounter between reality and rational order would establish a distance which would give to Rossi’s work a surreal halo; in spite of Rossi telling us that “this project for a cemetery complies with the image of cemetery that each one of us has.”⁴⁸

For what is certain is that the image Rossi gives us today of a cemetery, although inspired by well-known typologies, is produced as a mental image and only from this viewpoint can it have a sense otherwise lost in the retina hardened by the commonplace of everyday experience.

But it is also necessary to indicate some objections, not so much with the theory but rather with the results of Rossi’s projects and proposals. The reference to surrealism, to certain Renaissance and metaphysical perspectives, puts us on the track of one of Rossi’s characteristics that is both greatly disputed and consciously proposed: this is his estrangement from the real, understood as the everyday occurrence. Certainly one could speak of the recovery of an authentic dimension of reality as happened in the architecture of the Enlightenment. But Rossi’s imposition of a deliberate distance between the image of reality, trivialized and banalized through use, and the perspective that proposes what an architecture of the city might be, also points out a certain attitude which says something about the possible future of the architecture in our present society. One more step and we find ourselves faced with that extreme critical position of Manfredo Tafuri, which interprets the

autonomy which Rossi claims for architecture as merely allowing the architect to carry out his work through inoperative parameters, as a pure game. Paradoxically, this game, according to Tafuri, only has meaning in this society, which in so many ways is unalterable. This architecture may be seen as capable of assuming its architectural condition, its specific reality, because it is only interested in the problems that concern it, without necessarily reaching a level of objectivity, however desirable, because in so doing it would intrude into other aspects of social life. From the architect's personal or individual condition this autonomous position would have value since it does not trust the social transcendence of its work.

Therefore, Rossi's architecture could be understood as an evasive one, deliberately forgetting the framework of the real even at levels as evident and compromised as the technological one, which, as is well-known, constitutes for some the ultimate *raison-d'être* of architecture. It is thus possible to interpret his elemental construction, his aggressive and polemical design which underlines the formal aspects of the primary spaces as something which borders on the expressive, ingenuous and evident world of children.

Furthermore it is easy to understand how its monumentalism has been misinterpreted by critics who adhere to the orthodoxy of the Modern Movement, as an incomprehensible involution, as one more episode of waste which, in this particular case, is seen as too sophisticated.

Such a vision of Rossi's work would contradict his argument which pretends to incorporate a dimension of the collective, and the weight of social order, as a precondition and obliged reference to the process of individualization which is part of the production of an urban fact. It should be the obligation of this architecture of the city to be a meeting point of the individual and collective interests which could guarantee its social relevance.

Rossi clamors for an architecture with a precisely engaged civic value of architecture and affirms it as the only way to achieve the collective. Nothing is further from Rossi, then, than architecture as escape, as nostalgic sentiment.

We are now in an area in which every side thinks they are defending the same positions. The anti-autonomists vindicate the vicarious role of architecture in the consolidation of the environment and refer control to the exercise of ideological power: architecture is simply a game and as such to understand it as an autonomous, closed discipline, can be on occasion better, insofar as it is less equivocal.

On the other hand, for the autonomists, it is precisely through architecture that society can express its civic and public manifestation. The genuine value of the autonomy of architecture is that it allows for an expression of society in which architecture is an indispensable instrument for the production of the framework necessary to civil life.

On what does one base a value judgment when speaking of architecture? Rossi's is to underline and make visible the value of architecture itself at a time in which it is fashionable to speak of the extinction or death of architecture. This position makes clear that one of the most important tasks of man on earth is the creation of the city.

In this light, Rossi is as much anti-Archigram as he is anti-Venturi. Archigram presupposes an attempt at solving the problems of architecture through technology in such a way so as to produce an architecture almost automatically, incorporating both formally and visually every technological innovation. Architecture as "discipline," as a way of thinking, as spatial order, disappears. The answer to functional needs, which are thought to be the only ones that interest mankind, will come from technology and not from architecture. Here we are in the antipodes of Rossi's thought. Here man exercises control over space through architecture and thereby the problems of the world we live in.

We can see the criticism in Venturi's understanding of architectural reality. Here reality is capable of including everything, assuming everything, admitting that communication in the physical world is based more in the support of non-architectural mechanisms than in those that see architecture as a discipline through which the physical world is both transcended and intruded upon. Architecture must

20 be integrated into this process of communication forgetting its specific condition, its own norms; what is interesting is the control of communication, not the intrinsic study of the architectural world, from its internal coherence, the logic of its production; to recover, in a word, the sense that, in today's society, have the forms that specialists look upon as banal. These proposals of Venturi's are radically opposed to those of Rossi's, as we have seen throughout these notes.

Where then is Rossi's charm, his ability to convene, as demonstrated by the enthusiasm that surrounds him? In our view it is the emphasis on the explanation of architecture through the city, a concept that includes its opposite. This is equivalent to saying that architecture cannot be proposed as an individual task which in a competitive society systematically stimulates novelty; in fact, in Rossi's work, there is a deliberate relinquishing of novelty, and a desire not to demand an excessive effort from memory in leaning on a formal repertory whose interpretation is clear and unique. The insistence on permanence, on the capacity memory has for recognizing the past, for living history, presupposes a determined rejection of architecture as a purely personal task. However, from this approach to the city it would make sense to speak of the individual task of the architect, insofar as in this dimension one could work at the level of the concrete, of personal intervention. For the architect does not act in a vacuum in radical solitude, but, on the contrary, knowing what is collective in the city he, as an individual, could penetrate the ground where architecture belongs, and make architecture.

This is Rossi's proposal, one that has been developed throughout all his projects, from the Segrate fountain to Gallarate and San Rocco. It can be pointed out that one can find in these projects the same attitude as in the Modena cemetery. This anticipates the objection that comes from thinking that a theme such as this — the cemetery — presents the best opportunity for the development of a methodology, of a proposal such as we have described. It would be difficult to find a work of architecture in which the continuity form-content needs greater expressive demand; one need only read Rossi's statement to find out to what extent architecture is asked to express feelings.

But then what are the linguistic means utilized? Only those Rossi judges to be supportive of architecture; they are therefore alien to the formal fractures imposed by vanguard movements. Rossi's architecture is based on what he understands as basic principles — relationships, order, measurements, the mirror of the constructive, formal remains still identifiable, utilization of perspective as symbolic form, such as Panofsky explains it — rather than as description of space, etc.

The figurative supports of Rossi betray a certain elementarism: architecture as contained form seeks support in primary, elemental situations. Taste, or better yet the need the architects of the Enlightenment felt for expressing themselves through elementary forms, reappears as an invariable in Rossi's projects. There is something that might bind him to the Corbusian definition of architecture: short light sketches the reality of the object. The use Rossi makes of thrown light in his drawings is not a simple problem of representation.

The reaffirmation of reality, through these elementary contrasts that define both the presence and the encounter of architectural objects, appears in every one of his projects: the value of a slope, of a corridor behind the stairs, of a cylinder and a prism which had been assigned functions alien to their form, etc., are all episodes that are telling us what Rossi thinks is construction. It is always a question of architecture that results from a certain mental operation from construction therefore or, better yet, from a reconstruction of sensations that as such is a mental act, reconstruction which, on the other hand, takes place from a conscious manipulation of the elements of architecture.

There is a certain Heideggerian vision that interprets construction as the occupation of the land, though I do not believe Rossi ever mentions Heidegger. This is what gives Rossi's architecture that ontological and metaphysical condition within which building, achieving architecture, presupposes a reflection alien to any possible spontaneity.

The entire formal world of Rossi and what it means can be understood as an attempt at survival through evasion; in

other words, that at a time when architecture as a discipline is about to disappear, in which its death has been decreed so often, the tragic defense Rossi makes could seem a desperate attempt at nostalgic evasion. In fact, one could ask many questions after examining Rossi's works: can a defense, such as he has attempted, be accomplished outside technology (Archigram) or alien to the satisfaction that is demanded by the eye of the most vulgar of mortals (Venturi)? Is not Rossi's archaism witness to the oblivion, in the most vulgar sense of that word, of the real? Monumentality, in Rossian terms, is indeed useful for the understanding of the old city, but can the modern city be adjusted to the same models?

The answer to all these questions, which we have formulated several times throughout these notes, forces us to accept not only the autonomy of architecture but also to consider an atemporality, which would lead us to admit that the old city and the new are, at least in their principles, the same thing. And if that is the case then, the attitude of man towards urban facts and to architecture would also be the same. We would find ourselves in a fully platonic vision of events or perhaps, put in more current terms, it would be a structuralist view capable of clarifying the city, and therefore its architecture, through the concepts of typology and morphology. And this brings us to consider the double role played by Rossi as both creator and a critic.

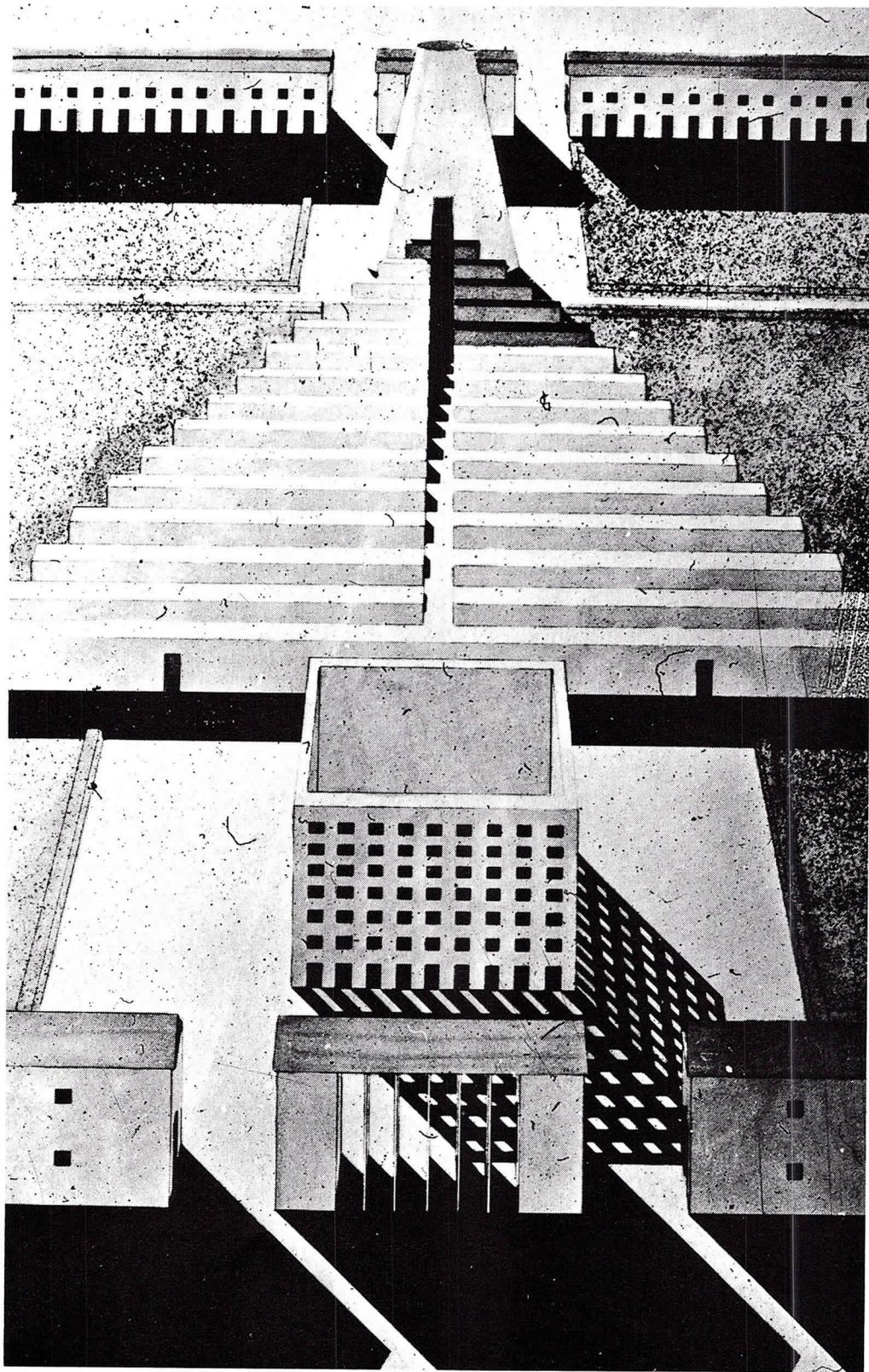
As the critic, one cannot doubt the clarifying value of Rossi's work. A critique of modern urbanism has been made possible through the knowledge of the old city. This has shown the terrible voids in modern urban theory and therefore the role the old city plays as an antidote. This is his most important contribution to the development of current urban thought.

But is there a one to one correspondence between the projects and this theory of an architecture of the city? That is to say, does a Rossian view demand a figurative world as exemplified in an extreme sense in the Modena cemetery? In my understanding it does not. Although I have tried to explain how his theory was realized in a concrete project, I believe that following Rossi's enunciated principles in no

way compels the formal choices he has made.⁴⁹

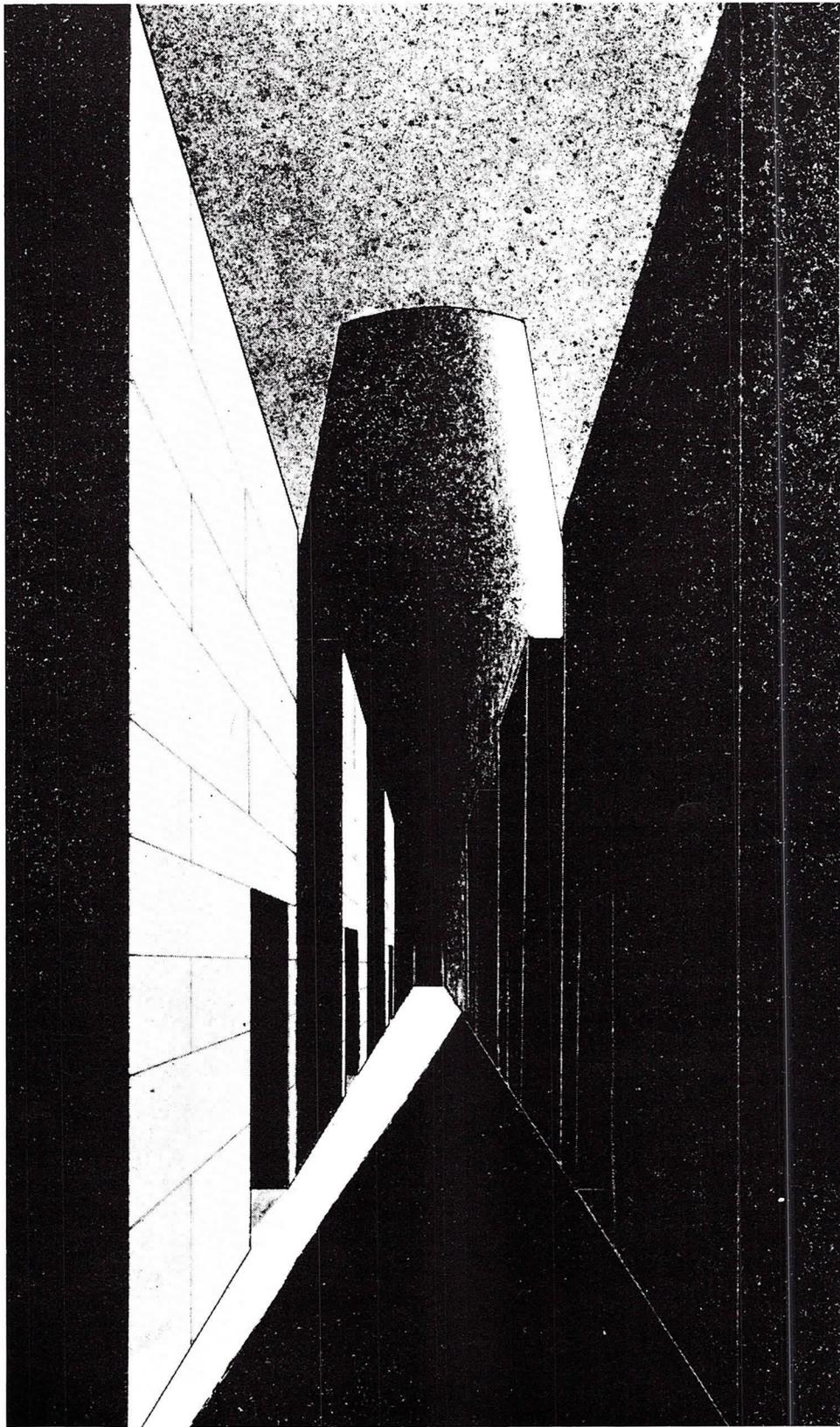
This could be an extremely dangerous statement because it could be misunderstood as the possible rejection of Rossi's doctrine, as the erroneous interpretation of his architecture, as such it would be totally unjustified.

21. *The representation of the cemetery insists on its meaning from the city, since it is the city, so distant in many ways, that supports it. The cemetery is thus: "the architectural place where the form and the rationality of built forms, interpreters of the city and of the meaning of the cemetery, are an alternative to the foolish and disorganized growth of the modern city." The weight of the grave, of the cubic die of the sanctuary, are felt in the drawing, at the same time that the elementary geometry of the courtyards is underlined by walls and entrances; their elemental nature is given more strength by their monumental value.*

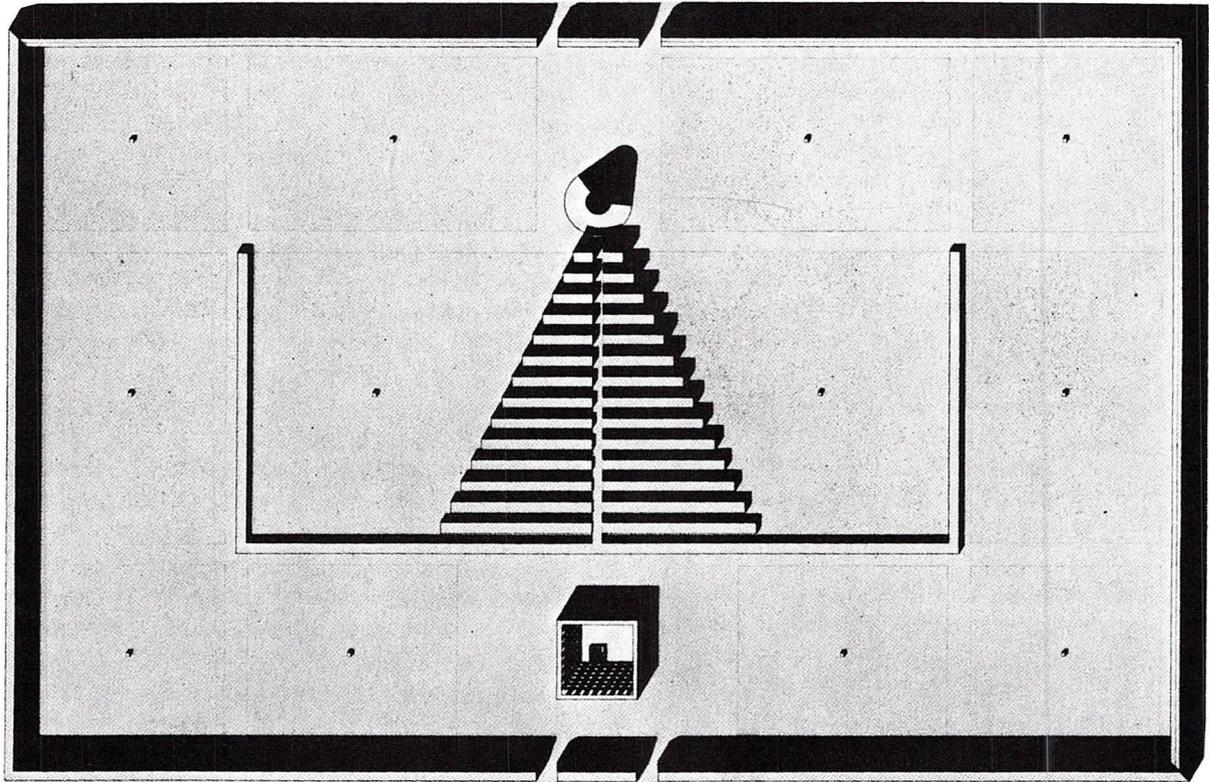


22. *The volume of the common grave imposes itself as an unappealable verdict: "lives are like rivers that end at the sea, which is death." The solitude of the street, with its allusion to the city of the living, is made more obvious by the presence of the common grave; the remembered city, through a use of its morphology, loses its real condition and scale to turn into the city of the dead. Thus, through the monument of the common grave that "to these oppressed, the city builds its highest monument," there is a stage set with the perspective of civic criterion as backdrop to the solitary, though full of memory of the street.*

But this perspective will no longer respond to the laws of geometry that allowed its construction, its drawing; on the contrary, the changes in height of the common grave, taking place as one progresses towards the gravepit, destroy the expected perspective vision, from the moment in which an optical game, so architectural, makes one lose the notion of measured space, of controlled, deep space. The image constructed and thought out through a well-known idea of space is a different one and, when the perspective is upset, is converted into a vision of the timeless city.



23. Rossi's was, among all projects, the one that most respected the traditional type and idea we all have of a cemetery. This can be seen in the floor plan of the first presentation board: the same idea of enclosure, the same size areas, the identical pathways, access roads, etc. But, as this floor plan shows, there is a certain use of the individual elements, whose public meaning has already been explained, which endows that space with a new meaning. Thus, Rossi's proposal renounces the dual axis of the Costa Cemetery and manifests an interest in a continuous reading of the elements through the value acquired by the axis. From the filter of the entrances in which the scale of the new construction is transformed, one reaches, on axis, the monumental sanctuary, with a blind wall perpendicular to the axis. After paying homage to the sanctuary of Cerberus, we anxiously recover the axis that leads the way to the common grave. The expression, the capacity for evocation and recollection has been totally entrusted to architecture. For it is through architecture and strict mechanisms of its discipline that the elements lose their abstract condition and become reality, acting upon us.



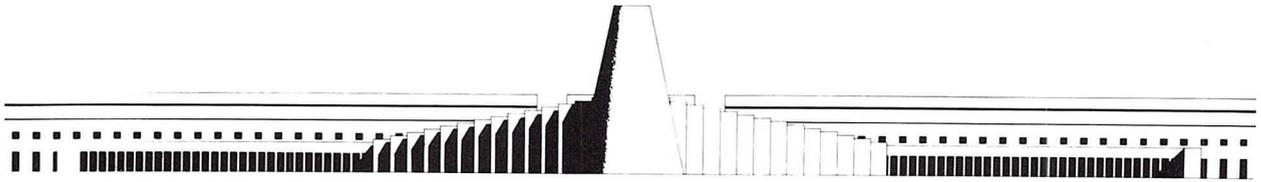
24. *The value of the floor plan as generator of space that Rossi mentions when dealing with the greater of spaces, the city, is clear in these drawings.*

A certain idea of element, whether it is a matter of defining areas or of constructing significant pieces, enables Rossi to establish a subtle relationship between the ground level and the underground level, between the plane of the living and the plane of the dead; thus silence, the emptiness left in the world of the living, an emptiness that covers the space presenting us with elementary monumental pieces, makes tragic contact with the gravity of interment, with the weight of a custom. But while the living need the presence of the monument as a bound point of references that enables them to understand the space, the city of the dead can do without it, trusting only a new type of element – the value of plane as such.

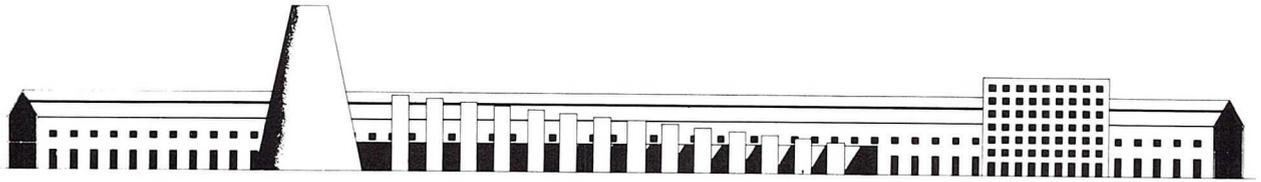
In any case, it is interesting to underline the level of expression reached through architecture,

through the strict exercise of a discipline, since these are exclusively architectural elements (order, geometry, scale, etc.), which enable the creation of a sensible space, even if it is something as serious as establishing the meaning of death and the dead for the living.

25. *The elementary character of architecture that Rossi speaks of is manifest in these elevations, as elementarist definition of architectural form (this could lead us even to link Rossi's work to the projects of Le Corbusier of Towards a New Architecture), and as use of the series of elements as material for the project. Mechanisms that justify the permanence of the discipline, to put it in Rossian terms, are again openly utilized: order through measure; value of size and proportion; equivocal scales; the weight of the axis on the definition of form; the consideration of superficial values through a system of voids and hollows; the presence of the singular; the generation of space through the movement it demands, etc.*

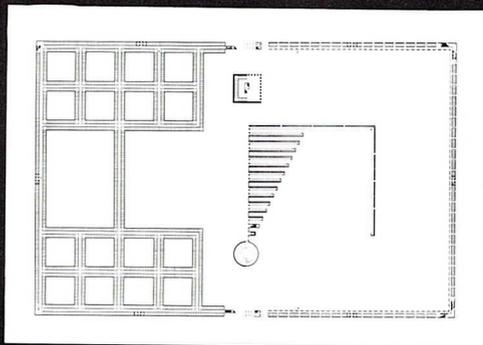


PROSPETTO NORD



PROSPETTO OVEST

24.



25.

- 30 1. These notes, written in 1973 before the Triennale of 1974, do not deal with the complex notions which provoked that exhibition; with the grouping under the banner of the "Tendenza" — a heterogeneous, yet consciously selected, group of architects from different countries. Thus these notes are limited to a discussion of Rossi's principles made explicit in his book *L'Architettura della Città*, and in this light, to see how Rossi designed the Modena Cemetery without considering the propositions inherent in the Triennale even though Rossi was undoubtedly the inspiration for these ideas.
2. Aldo Rossi, "Rapporti tra la morfologia urbana e la tipologia edilizia," *CLUVA* (Venice: Editrice CLUVA, 1966).
3. See Aldo Rossi's article in *La Città di Padova* (Rome: Officina, 1970).
4. Introduction by Aldo Rossi to Etienne Louis Boullée, *Architettura: Saggio sull'arte* (Padua: Marsilio Editori, 1967).
5. Aldo Rossi, *L'Architettura della Città* (Padua: Marsilio Editori, 1966), p. 11.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 16.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 28.
8. *Ibid.*
9. *Ibid.*, p. 30.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 31. Quotation from Quatremère de Quincy, *Dictionnaire Historique de L'Architecture* (Paris, 1932).
11. Rossi, *L'Architettura della Città*, p. 32.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 33.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 97.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 107.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 112.
16. *Ibid.* Quotation from C. Lévi-Strauss, *Tristes Tropiques* (Paris, 1955), p. 121.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 118.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 120.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 130.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 132.
21. *Ibid.*
22. *Ibid.*, p. 134.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 135.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 143.
25. *Ibid.*
26. *Ibid.*, p. 146.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 151.
28. Maurice Halbwachs, *La population et les tracés de voies à Paris depuis un siècle* (Paris, 1928).
29. Rossi, *L'Architettura della Città*, p. 183.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 184.
31. *Ibid.*
32. *Ibid.*, p. 188
33. *Ibid.*
34. *Ibid.*, p. 189.
35. Aldo Rossi, review of François Cali, *L'Ordre Grec* (Paris, 1958), in *Casabella-Continuità*, no. 228, 1959.
36. Introduction by Aldo Rossi to Boullée, *Architettura*.
37. *Ibid.*
38. "Architettura di Aldo Rossi 1967-1970," *Controspazio*, 10, October 1970. pp. 29-42.
39. Aldo Rossi, "L'azzurro del cielo," *Controspazio*, 10, October 1972, pp. 4-9.
40. *Ibid.*, p. 4.
41. *Ibid.*
42. *Ibid.*, p. 8.
43. *Ibid.*, p. 5.
44. *Ibid.*
45. *Ibid.*, p. 4.
46. *Ibid.*, p. 9.
47. *Ibid.*, p. 5.
48. *Ibid.*, p. 9.
49. Nonetheless, those who have followed his principles seem to have been led inevitably towards an architecture in which no other formal elements fit except for those proposed by Rossi. Thus the strict Rossians echo the formal parameters of the master to such an extent that his principles, so inaccessible and so abstract, seem to have been paradoxically and contradictorily converted into a mannered style. To maintain that the city is built from architecture and its principles is not to bring about one type of city made of fixed and identical elements: in other words, an understanding of Rossi's proposals does not automatically imply the reproduction of Rossi's architecture.

Figure Credits

- 1, 14. Photographs by Sergio Fornasetti. Courtesy Aldo Rossi.
2. Reprinted from *Casabella-Continuità*, no. 199, December 1953-January 1954.
- 3, 5-8. Reprinted from Aldo Rossi, *L'Architettura della Città* (Padua: Marsilio Editori, 1966).
4. Photograph by IDZ Berlin/Christian Ahlers.
9. Reprinted from Jean-Marie Perouse de Montclos, *Etienne Louis Boullée* (Paris: Arts et Métiers Graphiques, 1967).
- 10-12, 15, 18-25. Courtesy Aldo Rossi.
13. Reprinted from *Controspazio*, 10, October 1970.
16. Reprinted from Adolf Hueppi, *Kunst an Kult der Gral Statten* (Switzerland: Walter-Verlag Ag Olten, 1968).
17. Reprinted from *Controspazio*, 10, October 1972.

The Blue of the Sky

Aldo Rossi

Translation by Marlène Barsoum and Liviu Dimitriu

This essay was part of the winning submission by Aldo Rossi (Gianni Braghieri, collaborator) for the Modena Cemetery Competition in 1971. It was first printed in Italian, "L'azzurro del cielo" in Controspazio, 10, October 1972 and is here translated into English for the first time.

The Architecture of the Cemetery

The cemetery, when considered in terms of a building, is the house of the dead. Initially, no distinction was made between the typology of the house and that of the tomb. The typology of the tomb and of the sepulchral structures overlaps the typology of the house; rectilinear corridors, a central space, earth and stone materials. Only the oldest forms were able to fuse the cult of the dead with the cult of the lifeless in the depth of the grottos. Death expressed a state of transition between two conditions, the borders of which were not clearly defined. The urns, shaped like Etruscan houses, and the Roman Baker's tomb express the everlasting relationship between the deserted house and the abandoned work. Consequently, references to the cemetery are applicable to the cemetery itself as well as to the house and to the city. This project for a cemetery complies with the image of a cemetery that everyone has.

The Description of the Project

The typological form of the cemetery is characterized by rectilinear paths punctuated by porticos; the funerary niches are ordered along both sides as the walks unfold. The paths with their arched porticos occur on the perimeter and centrally. Their development describes three levels: the ground floor, the upper and the lower ones. These structures primarily house repositories for dead bodies. The access to the underground level is made through the perimeter porticos. At the sunken level, the layout of the repositories follows a reticulated pattern which results in a series of large courtyards, which are also burial grounds further reticulated by the pattern of the individual parcels. The funerary niches flank the courtyards. With respect to the typology of house to court, the relationship is inverted. At the center of the area are located the regularly patterned ossuaries which are inscribed in a triangle. Its central spine, or vertebra, increases towards the bottom and the extension of the last transverse member appears to be closing in the central space in a large embrace. At the extremities of this central spine there are two elements of a very definite shape — a cube and a cone. In the cone, and

under it, is located the communal grave. The remains of those who fell in the war, as well as those remains brought over from the old cemetery, are placed in the cube or sanctuary. These two monumental elements are connected to the central spine of the ossuaries (or burial vaults) by means of an osteological configuration. Their only relationship is of scale and monumentality; here monumentality signifies the problem of describing the meaning of death and memory. These elements define the central spine. 31

The Sanctuary

The cubic volume with its regular windows has the appearance of a house with no floors and no roof. The windows, which cut directly into the wall, have no frames or panes: this is the house of the dead and, in terms of architecture, it is unfinished and abandoned and therefore analogous to death. Only one out of the four walls, which constitute the element of the cube, is solid. On the other three are windows of one-meter-by-one-meter which are aligned with the gates at the ground level. Epitaphs are embedded in the solid wall; otherwise, only a large fresco is found on this wall. The sanctuary is a collective monument where funeral, civil, or religious ceremonies take place. Just like the cemetery, the sanctuary belongs to the whole community. It is an urban monument which represents the relationship between the institution of the city and death. The access from the center of the cube to the underground level is made possible by means of a single ramp. The natural light which illuminates the repositories of the dead emanates from the staircase. These repositories cover the four walls around a circular corridor.

The Communal Grave

The cone which covers the communal grave like a smokestack is connected to the central path running down the spine of the ossuary. The junction occurs at two levels; at the upper level, access is possible by means of an interior balcony cantilevered around the central space. This balcony is connected to the path of the ossuaries and forms an ending.

32 From the pavement of the entry, a series of steps descend toward the funerary stone which covers the communal grave. In this building, funerary and commemorative ceremonies of both a religious and civil nature take place. In the communal grave, the remains of the abandoned dead are found; dead whose links with the temporal world have dissipated, generally persons coming out of madhouses, hospitals and jails — desperate or forgotten lives. To these oppressed ones, the city builds a monument higher than any other.

The Ossuaries

The ossuaries (the building containing the burial vaults) are situated at the center of the area; they are comprised of a regular succession of four-sided elements inscribed on the ground in a triangular plan. The individual elements are raised progressively in such a way as to be also contained in a triangle in a transverse section. The progression in width in the plan proceeds along the same axis but in an opposite direction to the growth in height. The longest element is therefore the lowest while the shortest element is the tallest; the longest four-sided element, which constitutes the base of the figure, continues beyond the base of the triangle and folds at right angles on itself. Thus a shape analogous to the vertebra of some osteological formation results. Typologically, the building is made up of a series of corridors which connect the individual burial vaults. When the section allows, the same structure is repeated in the upper part of the building. The path at the upper level is open in the central part and reaches the front of the building; two paired stairs and elevators, placed symmetrically, connect the two levels. All the upper levels, which partially constitute the roof, are paved with slabs of white stone. Even the inaccessible roof is covered with the same material. At the ground level, the porticos are at the same precise level as that of the burial grounds. The central path of the spine of the funerary niches is connected with the cone of the communal grave, penetrating it at the ground level and at the balcony level.

The Meaning of the Architecture

The configuration of the cemetery as an empty house is the space of living peoples' memories. Certainly, the great architecture of the past perceived, in the cemetery and in the tomb, the exaltation of history where one disappeared within the framework of a civil and public death. The Pantheon is a tomb. In the modern world, the relationship has become increasingly private; the cult of the dead consists above all in keeping alive all the remorse. Closed to remorse, death becomes a sentiment which has no history. Only the civil aspects of this sentiment can be expressed in architecture. This is where the meaning is acquired by single monuments like the Etruscan tombs or the Roman Baker's tomb. Besides this ineffable relationship, architecture must impose itself with coherence as a rigorous technical fact and use proper elements; in this sense, the great neoclassical cemeteries (Modena, Brescia, Musocco, Genova, etc.), as an expression of a civil architecture, still have value for us. These references, in their totality, are the meaning of the architecture of the cemetery.

The Burial Grounds

Wide paths surround the perimeter of the burial grounds; two pairs of entrances situated on the principal sides of the cemetery give access to them. Each burial ground, marked by the crossing of the paths, has in the center a stone stella, like a menhir, which bears the number of the particular area, thus giving it an identity. In the interior of the field, the tombs are regularly disposed. The paths are covered with white gravel carefully levelled, or paved with white stone. Around the monuments, the paths, which are at the same level as the perimeter of the porticos, form two spacious squares allowing for the maneuvering of the hearses.

The Characteristics of the Technology

All of the structure is in reinforced concrete with filled borings; the construction does not present any special technical or constructional difficulties which could not be fore-

seen with accurate calculations. The conic tower of the communal grave has a cement finish, utilizing the technique of building towers for the industrial plants. The cubic sanctuary is built in reinforced concrete or in load bearing prefabricated concrete blocks. The repositories for the dead and all the vertical surfaces of the cemetery, with the exception of the ossuaries and the conic tower, are covered with plaster of roughly-finished cement or with dark grey plastic materials. The ossuaries have a structure of reinforced concrete with a light grey stone finish. The horizontal surfaces, perimeter porticos, underground passages and elevated walks, are all in grey stone cut in regular large slabs. The roofing of the perimeter porticos, which also have vaults for the dead, are made of a cement-based hollow triangular element with a white finish. The conical tower of the communal grave is made out of reinforced concrete, and finished with a transparent substance which leaves unaltered the grey color of the cement. The stone surfaces are always hammered or hatched.

The Connection with the Old Cemetery: Services

The new cemetery is connected to the existing Costa Cemetery by means of the cemetery service building located at the rear of the Jewish cemetery. Such an area, which is symmetrical with respect to the old construction and is presently an open lot, imposes the systematization of the general services. The newly created form, as it clearly results from the plan, is a large, regular rectangle characterized by the typology of the service building in the center. The sides and the perimeter form a perspective view of a single entity in which the volumes of the entries have a dominant character.

The graves, previously located in the central parcels of the old cemetery, will find a resting place in the new cemetery (graves of the fallen in the war of 1915-1918 and related official tombs of the 1920s and 1930s and of Protestants and the unfortunate). The sanctuary of the partisans and of the fallen of the 1940-1943 war is demolished and the remains are transferred to the new sanctuary. The remains, which are presently in the communal grave, are transferred to the

conic tower of the new cemetery. The Jewish Cemetery is systematized by the regularization of its perimeter with a newly erected surrounding wall aligned with the perimeter wall of the other buildings.

Relationship with the Pre-Existing Surroundings

As far as relating the cemetery to the pre-existing surroundings, it is difficult to find references other than those of the already mentioned Costa Cemetery and the Jewish Cemetery. Located in the middle of outskirts characterized by run-down tenements, the cemeteries are to be isolated from vegetation, large paved areas, and a tree-lined street. The addition in the large pre-existing cemetery will occur through the enlarging of the perimeter enclosure without cutting the wall, but through the continuity of the existing wall. The Costa wall, regulated according to the original design, will continue in the new building. The general view will present dimensions which the new large complex will offer in its totality.

Urban Additions

As for the urbanistic connection with the city, particularly in its viable aspects, the valid guidelines offered by the General Master Plan for the City of Modena are retained. In so doing, it is shown that such a problem, so directly connected to the question of private property and to complex urban choices, cannot be solved by an external formal solution, but should rather result from a careful consideration of technical proposals, political and administrative choices, and a specific knowledge of the situation. The project demands quite a deep green area in front of the monumental entry to the cemetery. This green area should be constituted of a plane of high grass, thus producing a compact garden, to be bordered by a row of cypress trees; the layout of which follows a line parallel to the enclosing wall of the cemetery grounds. A large parking lot is located on the left side of the cemetery, tangentially to the main road coming from Modena. In this area, one can find other various small commercial services.

34 Relationships with the City

The principal interrelationships with the city, as far as this project is concerned, consists mainly in its precise architectural definition so as to constitute “an architectural place” where the form and rationality of the construction — interpreters of the piety and meaning of the cemetery — are an alternative to the brutal and disordered growth of the modern city. The cemetery, as an architectural place, just like other public places, is capable of creating the collective memory and will of the city. Thus, the cemetery, articulated around the central burial grounds and around the building containing the ossuaries and the perimeter repositories for the bodies of the dead, offers its dominant elements under the hypostases of the cubic sanctuary and conic tower of the communal grave. These elements, towering over the confining wall, are references to the exterior surrounding cityscape and signal the cemetery.

Realization through Successive Stages of Development

The rational and rigorous implementation of the entire cemetery scheme allows for construction over a certain period of time following alternative and equally valid propositions. This fact is primarily due to concepts of symmetry and order, to the design of an ordered plan resulting from an additive system; these plans permit the growth in time by the addition of various elements. From a functional and aesthetic point of view, it is possible to build in a first phase the perimeter building of the repository for dead bodies, then the central section. It is equally possible to execute the internal part and the central structure of the ossuaries and then the perimeter buildings.

The Cemetery as a Public Building: Its Significance

Together, all of the buildings read as a city in which the private relationship with death happens to be the civil relationship with the institution. Thus the cemetery is also a public building with an inherent clarity in its circulation and its land use. Externally, it is closed by a fenestrated wall.

The elegiac theme does not separate it much from other public buildings. Its order and its location also contain the bureaucratic aspect of death. The project attempts to solve the most important technical issues in the same manner as they are solved when designing a house, a school or a hotel. As opposed to a house, a school or a hotel, where life itself modifies the work and its growth in time, the cemetery foresees all modifications; in the cemetery, time possesses a different dimension. Faced with this relationship, architecture can only use its own given elements, refusing any suggestion not born out of its own making; therefore, the references to the cemetery are also found in the architecture of the cemetery, the house, and the city. Here, the monument is analogous to the relationship between life and buildings in the modern city. The cube is an abandoned or unfinished house; the cone is the chimney of a deserted factory. The analogy with death is possible only when dealing with the finished object, with the end of all things: any relationship, other than that of the deserted house and the abandoned work, is consequently untransmittable. Beside the municipal exigencies, bureaucratic practices, the face of the orphan, the remorse of the private relationship, tenderness and indifference, this project for a cemetery complies with the image of cemetery that each one of us possesses

“European Graffiti.” Five x Five = Twenty-five

Manfredo Tafuri

Translation by Victor Caliandro

With this piece Manfredo Tafuri turns the critical method of his essay “L’Architecture dans le Boudoir” (*Oppositions* 3), to an appraisal of the New York Five.” In regarding modern avant-gardism as being in essence schizophrenic, as being split between a nostalgia for *Kultur* and an anti-historical determination to artistically destroy its very substance, Tafuri maintains that, notwithstanding the hermetic polemics of “Grey” versus “White,” to speak of architecture today is to speak of events which are at best a testimony to the restless dreams which upset the drowsiness of the intellectual conscience.” He goes on to argue that both the Venturis and the Five are equally “voyeuristic”; the one indulging in “a sly schizophrenic game with the masks of reality”; the other “standing masochistically transfixed before their own reactions.” Tafuri’s argument is an attempt to analyze their architecture not as a product of a group but rather as the work of five individual architects, as the result of both the context established by American culture and the present situation in the world of architectural ideas.

The Five, Tafuri maintains, are to be distinguished by their formalist commitment to the *hortus conclusus* of language; that is, by their exclusive concern for a self-referential architecture and by their specific adoption of the arbitrary, yet historically referential, signs, which they syntactically manipulate as ends in themselves. As Tafuri puts it,

Eisenman, Graves, and Hejduk manipulate linguistic material in such a way as to betray that state of affairs where the “war” of the Enlightenment is over and nothing is left save the inescapable ambiguity of intellectual pleasure.

This emphasis on the differences rather than the similarities of their works allows him to disassemble some of the schematic labels used to characterize their work as a revival of the Modern Movement, as “White” formalistic architecture confined to the design of private houses. He describes their operation as more subtle than a simple formal revival of the early twentieth-century avant-gardes. He sees their work as an attempt to explore problems which are antithetically opposed to American pragmatism.

For all that the logic of this linguistic purity is compromised by a recourse to the principles of a realistic architecture, in the practices of Gwathmey/Siegel, and Richard Meier, much of their work still remains contained within the bounds of their concern for form. Thus even Meier, in his public work, still renounces that utopian gesture of charging “built forms with impossible myths.” That such a renunciation is the inescapable fate of architecture in the last phases of capitalism glimmers through as the latent argument of Tafuri’s text.

KF

Manfredo Tafuri was born in Rome in 1935. He graduated in architecture in 1960, and has taught the history of architecture at the Universities of Rome, Milan and Palermo. Since 1968 he has been Chairman of the Faculty of the History of Architecture and the Director of the Institute of History at the Architecture Institute in Venice. He is a member of the Scientific Council at the International Center of Studies of Architecture “Andrea Palladio” of Vicenza and on the committee of editors of the magazine *Archithese*. His published works include: *Teorie e Storia dell’Architettura*, Bari 1968; *L’Architettura dell’Umanesimo*, Bari 1969; *Progetto e Utopia*, Bari 1973; *La Città Americana dalla Guerra Civile al New Deal* (in collaboration), Bari 1973. He is presently working on a book on the study of the relationship between the avant-garde and contemporary architecture.

Moscow, September 1921.
Aleksander Vesnin, Ljubov Popova, Aleksandra Exter. Aleksander Rodchenko, and Varvara Stepanova organize an exhibition entitled “5 × 5 = 25.” Here the themes of a constructivist poetic are defined in terms of the “engineered aesthetics of form.”

New York, 1969. *Meeting of the CASE group held at The Museum of Modern Art and the consecration of the “Five Architects” group.*

1. The "Five" architects. Left to right:
top, John Hejduk, Richard Meier,
Michael Graves; bottom, Peter
Eisenman, Robert Siegel and Charles
Gwathmey.



There is nothing new to the fact that American culture is possessed of a deep sense of nostalgia for that which it has never had. It is not surprising that our attempt to define the “never had” does not produce an object, but a pair of opposites; opposites, moreover, that are dialectically related. On the one hand, there is *Kultur*, what Goethe meant by the “spirit of Weimar”; and on the other hand, there is an antihistoricist ideology which sadistically fractures that very *Kultur* — a painful self-reflection of intellectuals exiled from the world who, beginning with Nietzsche, continue to chant the *canto del si e del cosi sia* (“song of what is and of what might be”). From Benjamin Latrobe, to the City Beautiful Movement, to Louis Kahn (and his followers), there exists a tie which unifies these different experiences into a “principle of value,” that is, entwines them into the Lukacsian myth of “totality.” Yet from John Cage, to Robert Ranschenberg, and Robert Venturi, there is an insistent search to recapture the European myth of the dialectic; through the inherently irrational, through kitsch, through the happenstance and the informal.

It matters little that the experiences which preceded Dada were in fact born in America. What matters is that in the U.S. those experiences, just as those which are apparently the antithesis of the *neue Sachlichkeit*, have not become institutionalized in their own time.

Nostalgia thus envelops both historicism and antihistoricism. Indeed, without that tormented sense of deprivation which lies at the origin of nostalgia, many American intellectuals would lack an instrumentality: this is also true in relation to recent American history, as the films of Peter Bogdanovich and Sidney Pollack testify.¹

In approaching the architectural work of the so-called Five Architects, we shall lay aside those questions which have preoccupied many Americans. We are not interested in ascertaining whether they do in fact constitute a “New York School,” or whether they are a self-proclaimed group deliberately created to drive a wedge into the American architectural marketplace.² We will assume instead that the Five are bound to each other by more or less strong ties and that they have reached, by means of even disparate paths, a

common “poetics of nostalgia” that is interesting in itself, only because it is a manifestation of upper-class behavior. Let us remove all possible misunderstandings. It is not the intention of this essay to espouse the ideas of the Five nor to declare them an anathema. These are not the tasks of criticism which must give historical perspective to its object and cast light upon its less evident aspects; all the while remaining as detached as possible. We will also not waste any time explaining that the architecture of the Five is hermetic, sophisticated, suitable only to the initiated, removed from the social context, theoretical, manneristic, etc. *It is all of these things:* but not less so than the works of Kahn, Venturi, Giurgola, Moore, Stirling, *et al.* So much by way of stating that to speak of *architecture* today is to speak of events which, at best, are expected to be a testimony to the restless dreams which disturb the half-awakened intellectual conscience.

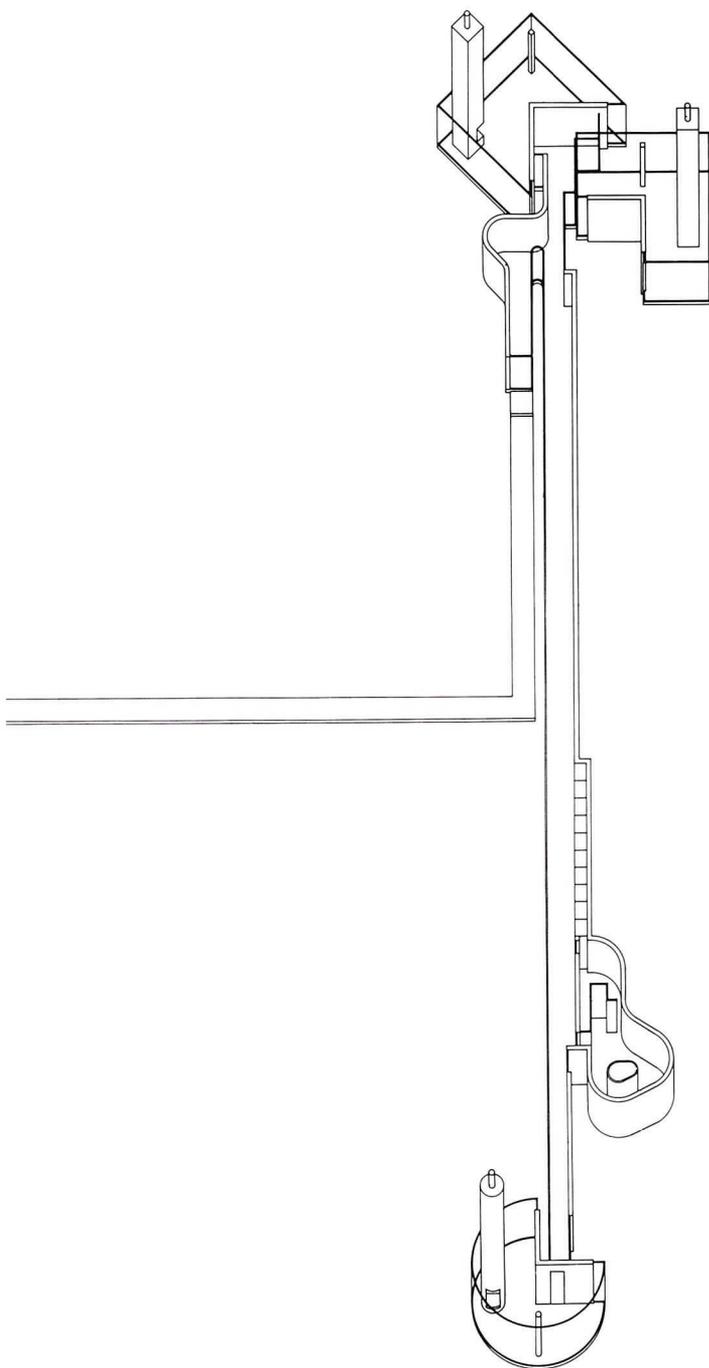
It is nevertheless certain that the attitude of the Five includes nostalgia as an instrumentality; be it a desperate attempt to recapture those avant-gardes which America experienced only in its superficial aspects, or be it an exploration of those methods which are the antithesis of the American pragmatic tradition. In a certain way, the Five express a sense of revolt. To have closed themselves into the *hortus conclusus* of language is a polemic act — not only with respect to those efforts which are aimed at reinstating a sense of meaning into a world which has erased the problems of artistic communication, but also with respect to those institutional realities which control the formation of American cities. “*L’homme revolté*” is not a revolutionary man. In fact, the Five oscillate between nostalgia and detachment. An astonished reflection of language upon itself is in fact the opposite, but also the equivalent of, the indiscriminate collection of messages generated by Venturi’s flirt with the mass media: on the one hand, we have the rigorous selection and clarification of one’s personal limitations; on the other hand, we have redundancy elevated into a system. Each of these attitudes take on the stance of the *voyeur*: the first, because it masochistically stares at its own image as it is multiplied and distorted through mirrors; the second, because it plays a sly schizophrenic game with the masks of reality.

2. *House 10, project. John Hejduk, architect, 1966. Projection.*

3. *Diamond Project B, House. John Hejduk, architect, 1967. Projection.*

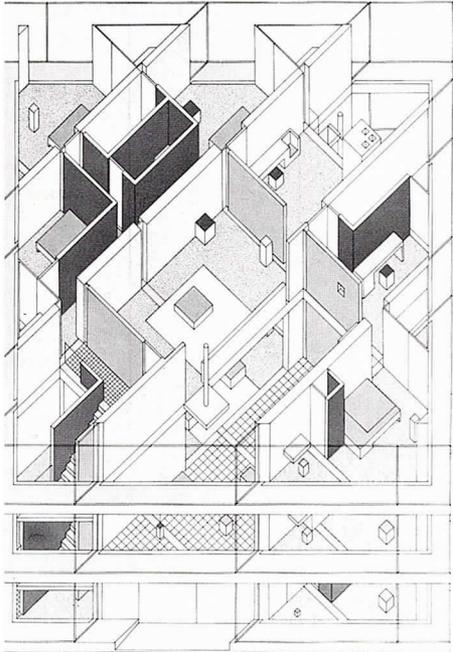
4. *Diamond Project A, House. Projection.*

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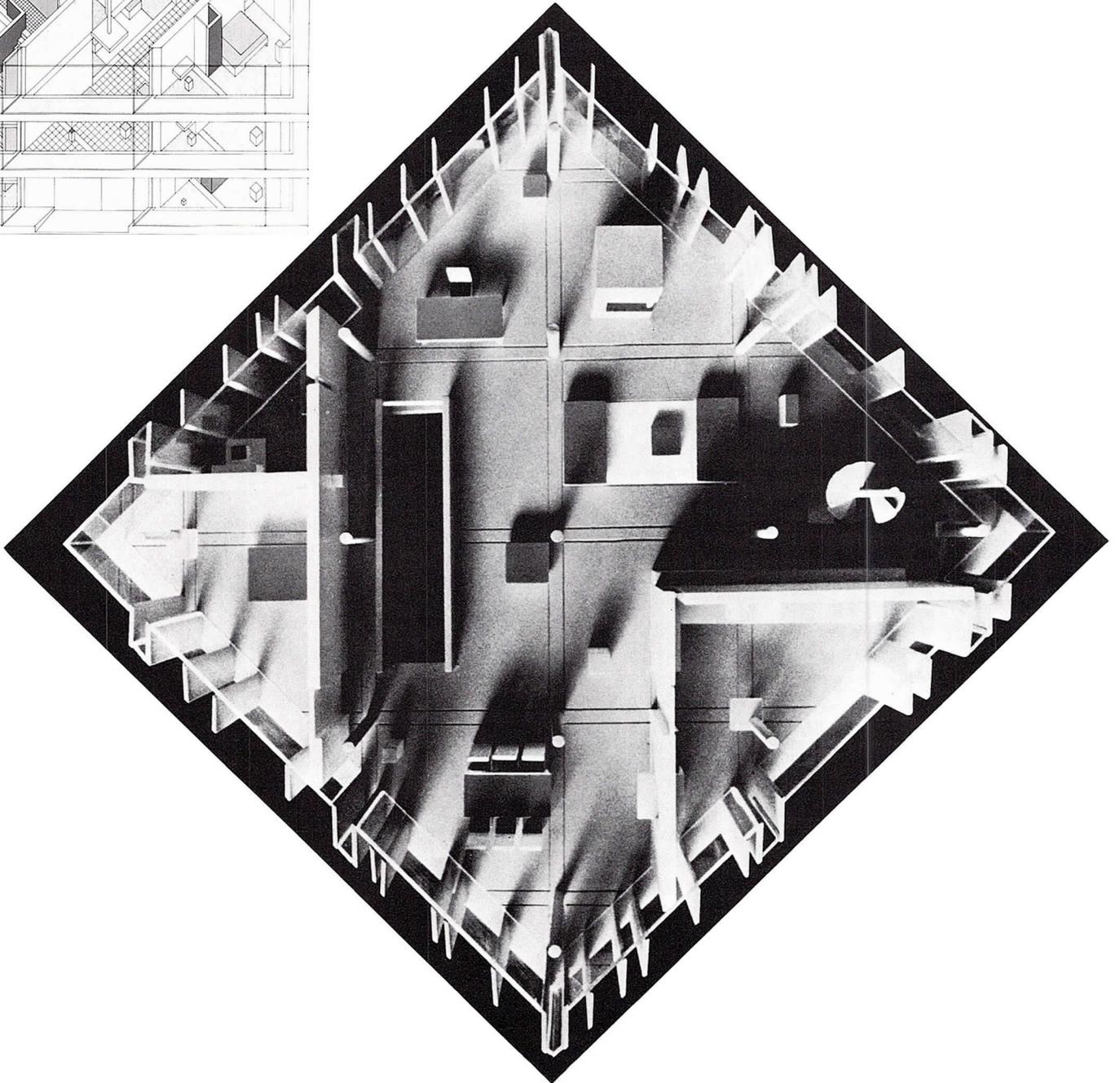


But it is mistaken to prejudge an architecture which presents itself so proudly in its own separateness and asks to be recognized as such. Let us therefore attempt to approach the architectural works of the Five on their own grounds.

John Hejduk: House 10, 1966 (fig. 2). Without doubt this is the most programmatic of Hejduk's works, much more so than the Diamond Projects of 1967 (figs. 3, 4). Yet whosoever wishes to read into House 10 certain themes common to those of Graves' "magical sequences" or of the structural sequences of Meier would be mistaken. Nor is Kenneth Frampton convincing in his association of the qualities of horizontal dislocation with Frank Lloyd Wright's object-forms.³ The real meaning of this hermetic diagram can only be grasped by comparing it to the One-Half House designed in the same year. In fact, both designs are based on geometric forms which have been cut according to elementary rules: in the One-Half House (fig. 5), circle, square and diamond — simple planimetric units grouped in close proximity — are cut in half; in House 10 (fig. 6), the same elements are cut into quarters and, more importantly, are separated and grouped at the ends of a long, paradoxical path. Two organically-shaped spaces are placed along this path as if they were growths inserted to confirm the laws of the axis. In other words, Hejduk performs two complementary tasks: he chooses absolutely trivial forms, and then deforms them according to arbitrary, but nevertheless elementary, rules. The arbitrary quality of these signs — as in the entire Cubist tradition — is the basis of any act of deformation; but the deformation is contained in order to confirm the nature of the original geometry. Such a method would seem to be most basic to the technique of montage; but Hejduk pushes his polemic even further. For him space is a neutral field: the relationships between objects, which are still mute in spite of their manipulations, obey the indeterminacy of the laws of topology. The path connecting the two extremes of House 10 could be stretched out to infinity: it is not the chief element in the composition. The path, however — not unlike that platform which in the One-Half House is defined by the wall and by the long rear-side rectangle which encloses the central assembly — has the same value which the screen has in the cinema: it is



3.



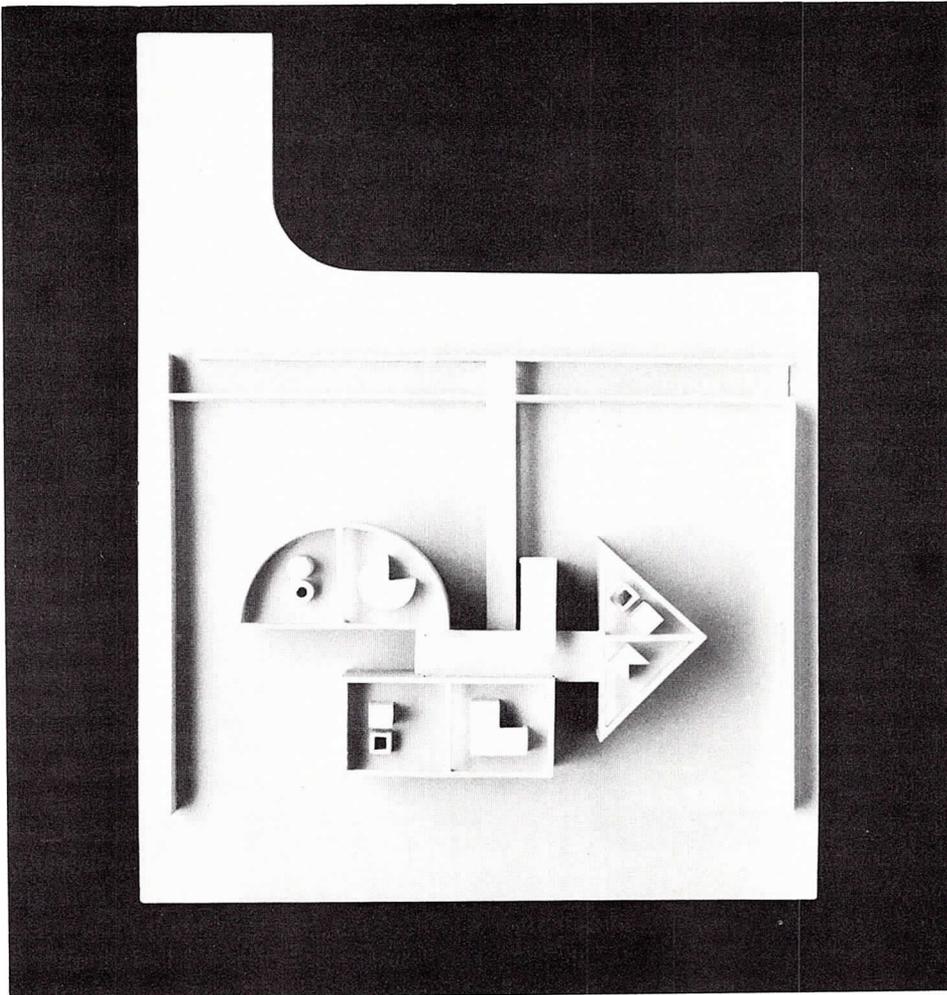
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5. *One-Half House*, project. John Hejduk, architect, 1966. Model.

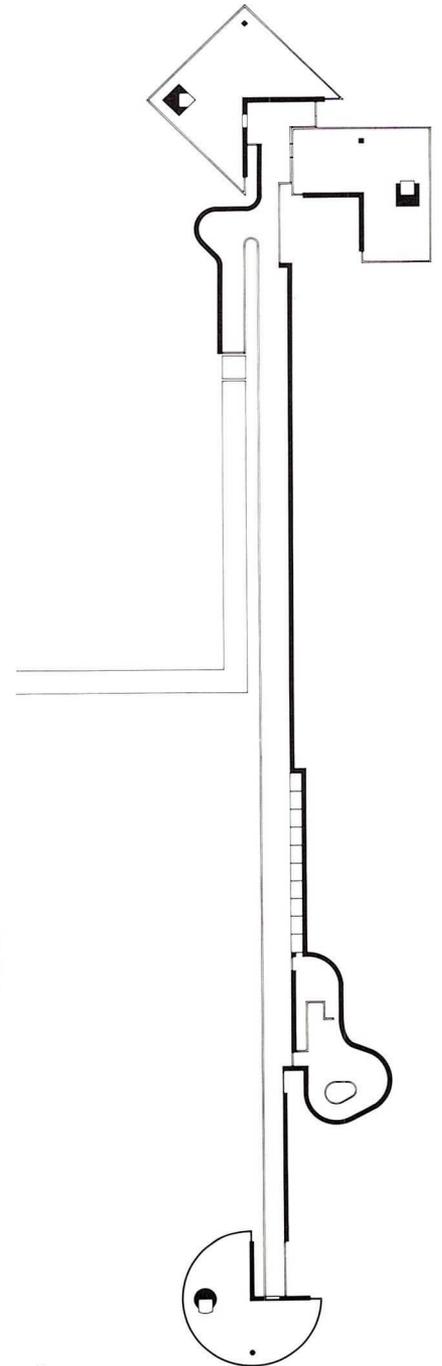
6. *House 10*, project. John Hejduk, architect, 1966. Plan.

7. *Bernstein House*, project. John Hejduk, architect, 1968. Projection.

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5.



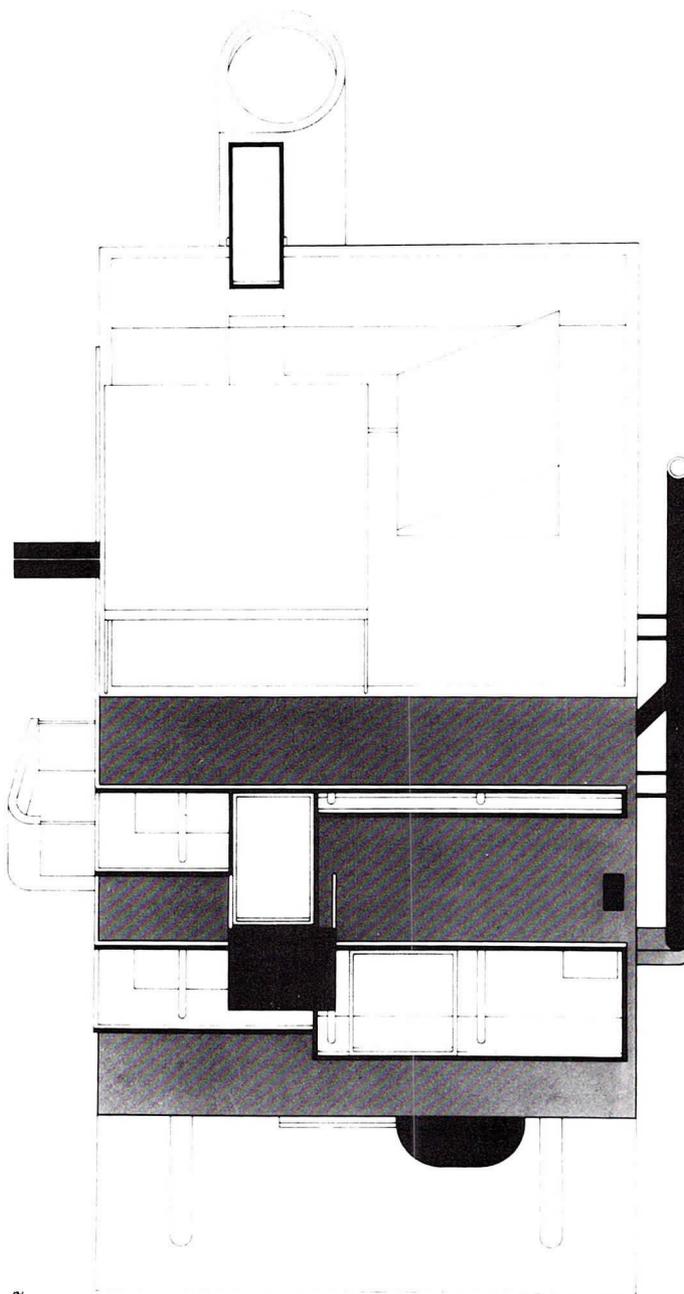
6.

only the support onto which a cruel sequence of fragmented happenings are projected.

The “poetics of the object” are thereby simultaneously recalled and instantly destroyed. What matters in this game is the perverse and lucid exposition of its own futility. In this case, the references to Purism are misleading: in spite of the “quotations” embedded in the Bernstein House of 1968 (fig. 7), Hejduk appears to follow different objectives. Even in the works of Picasso and Braque of the early 1910s, the triviality of the common objects which surface or the fragments of real object applied to the collage serve to declare that the true protagonist of the composition is the artificial quality of the manipulation; and Ozenfant does nothing more than reduce that manipulation to its bare essentials. Hejduk, however, nails the object to its own triviality. The process of deformation is instantly clear: the geometric solids, cut and empty, lie stunned in the conceptual jail into which the architect has slyly locked them, while feigning to set them free.

Despite its appearances, Hejduk’s formal method is purely tautological. The sign is only itself: elaborated or distorted to no avail; its finality is that of its meaning lost forever. In 1967 Hejduk and Robert Slutzky explicitly stated their sources in the exhibition “Diamond and Square,” held at the Architectural League. Let us accept that Mondrian’s *Broadway Boogie Woogie* (fig. 11) is at the source of these projects. It is certain, however, that the three designs developed at the Cooper Union only confirm his prior experiences. Research into the basic disposition of an elementary form rotated on forty-five degrees may also be justified by Hejduk as a *repêchage* into a theorem of Mondrian’s — a theorem not yet appropriated by architectural culture.⁴ Yet the fact is that the three diamond projects of 1967 (figs. 8-10) cling to what remains unchanged after the intersections and manipulations brought about by elementary but arbitrary laws of geometry.

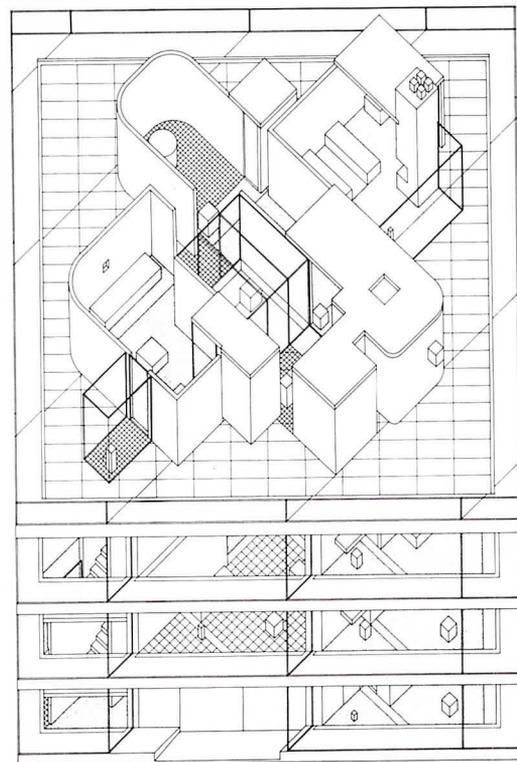
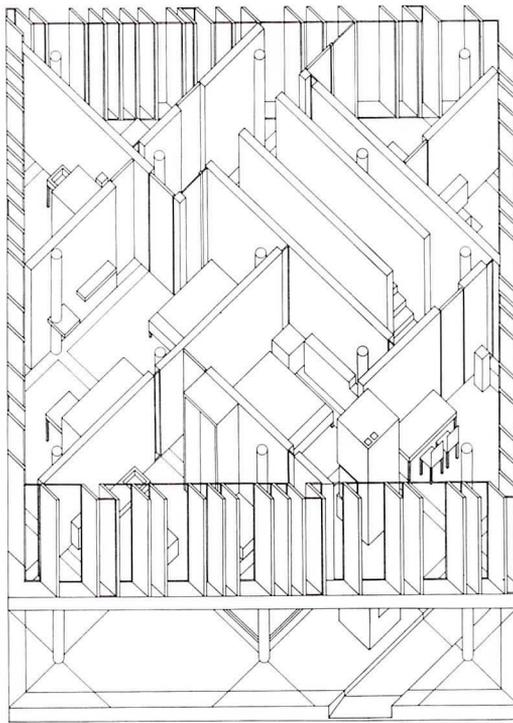
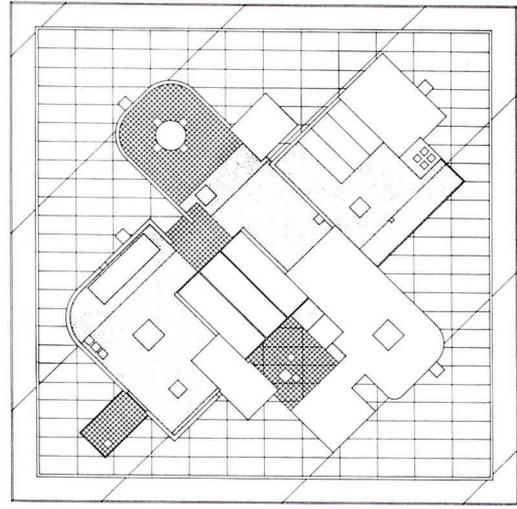
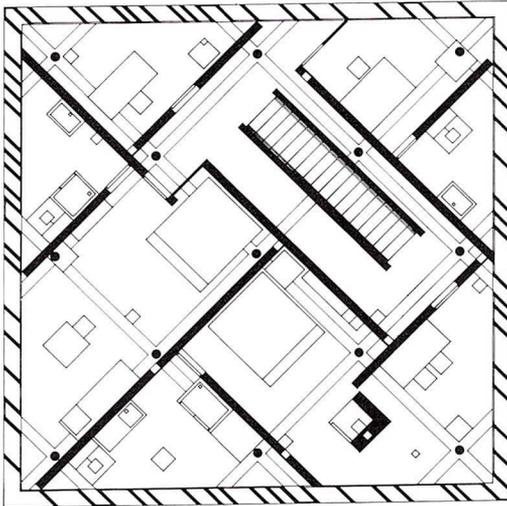
“The mysteries of central-peripheral-frontal-oblique-concavity-convexity,” writes Hejduk, “of the right angle of perpendicular, of perspective, the comprehension of sphere-cylinder-pyramid, the questions of structure-

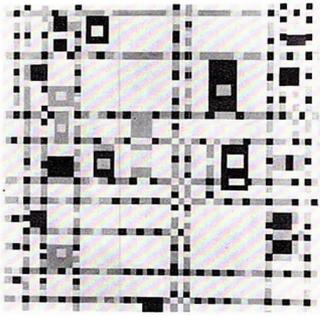


7.

8. *Diamond Project A, House. John Hejduk, architect, 1967. Second level plan and projection.*

9. *Diamond Project B, House. Roof level plan and projection.*





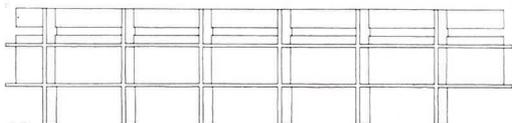
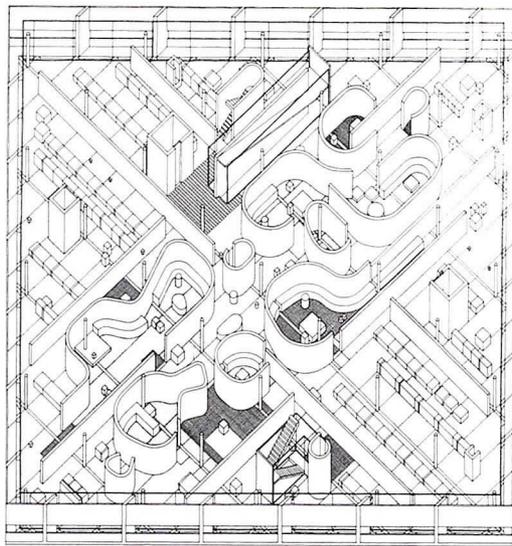
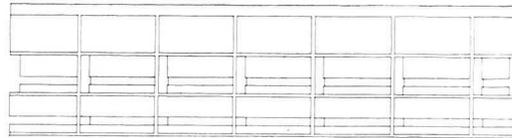
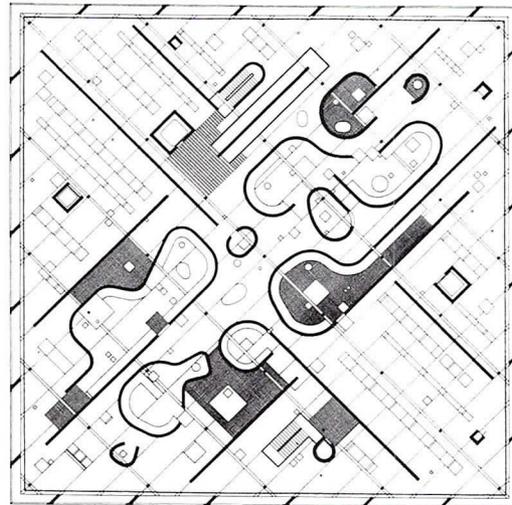
11. construction-organization, the question of scale, of position, the interest in post-lintel, wall-slab, the extent of a limited field, of an unlimited field, the meaning of plan, of section, the meaning of spatial expansion-spatial contraction-spatial compression-spatial tension, the direction of regulating lines, of grids, the forces of implied extension, the relationships of figure to ground, of number to proportion, of measurement to scale, of symmetry to asymmetry, of diamond to diagonal . . . all begin to take on the form of a vocabulary.”⁵ We are therefore confronted by the reconstitution of a fully-fledged syntactic code wherein the reference to De Stijl has meaning only if we consider that, in all of the intellectual baggage of the elementarist avant-garde, Hejduk is only interested in the final nihilism — an attitude towards the poetics of mere signs. Because of this, among the Five, Hejduk is closest to Eisenman. If this is the base, what is his intention in blocking the articulation of the sign itself in a deliberate imprisonment, in denouncing its very “poverty”? From Project A to Project C, the diamond field is employed to explore the effects of subdivision or compression of space: once again the base form is like a movie screen. But what takes place on the screen does not explode into the imaginary. It rather confirms — despite Hejduk’s sophisticated rendering — the “nothingness” of the empty screen. Since we have referred to the cinemas and to the neoplastic movement, we may hazard an historical analogy. Project A is to the experimental film *Rhythms 21* of Hans Richter, as Project C is to the *Dyagonale Symphonie* of Viking Eggeling (fig. 12):⁶ planar structures and curvilinear ones in a diagonal field are complementary — a fact which demonstrates the limits of manipulating an elementary sign.

To verify how such an elementarist logic may emerge from the limbo of theory and enter the real world, it is not nearly as useful to examine Hejduk’s ably done restoration of the nineteenth-century Cooper Union⁷ as it is to examine his Wall Houses: and specifically the studies and designs for the Bye House.

“To fabricate a house is to make an illusion,” writes Hejduk in the margins of one of his 1973 studies for the Bye House. And, by way of explaining his Wall Houses, he states: “The

10. *Diamond Project C, Museum.*
Floor plan and projection.

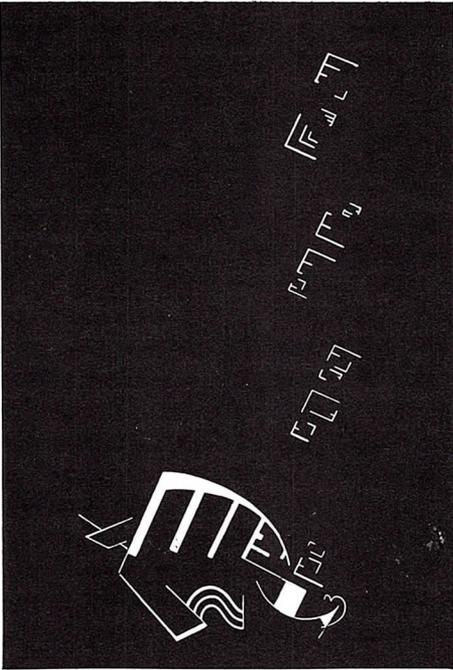
11. *Piet Mondrian, Broadway Boogie Woogie, 1942-43.* Oil, 50" × 50".



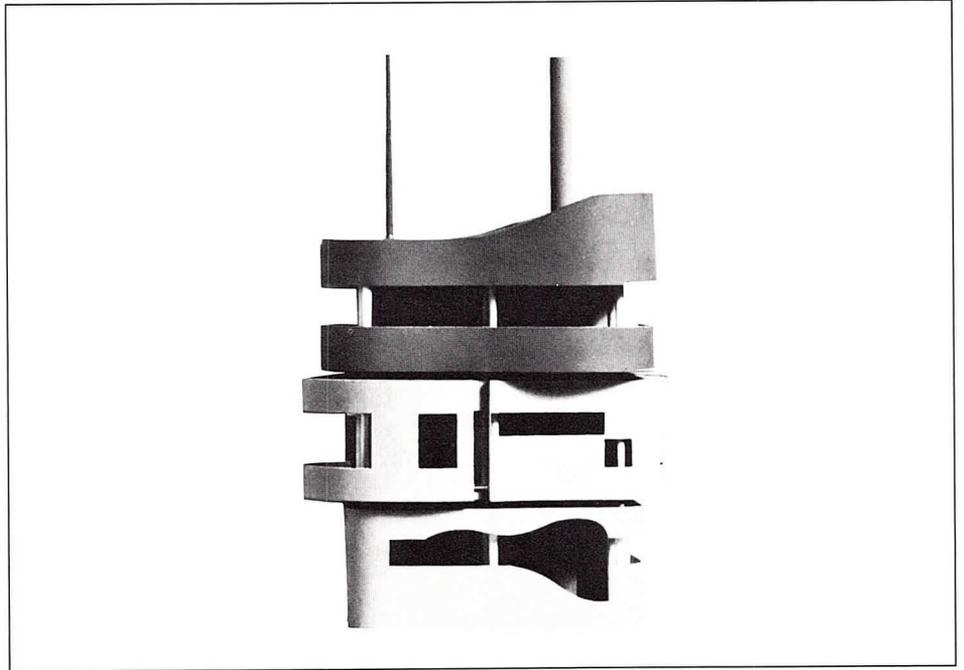
12. *Viking Eggeling, Dyagonale Symphonie, 1921.*

13, 14. *Bye House, project. John Hejduk, architect, 1973.*

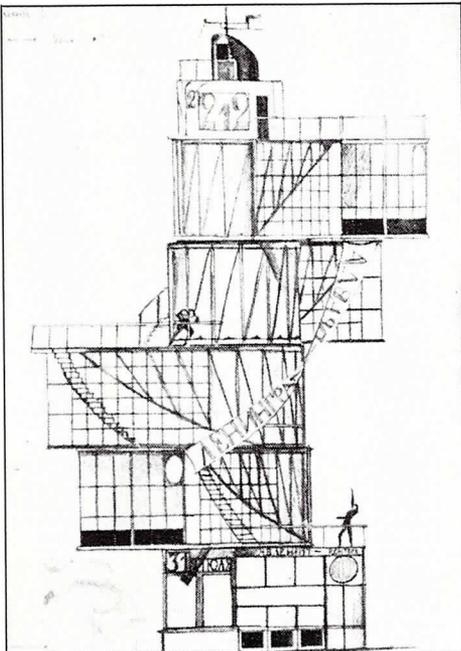
15. *Leningradskaiia Pravda, competition. Konstantin Melnikov, architect, 1923.*



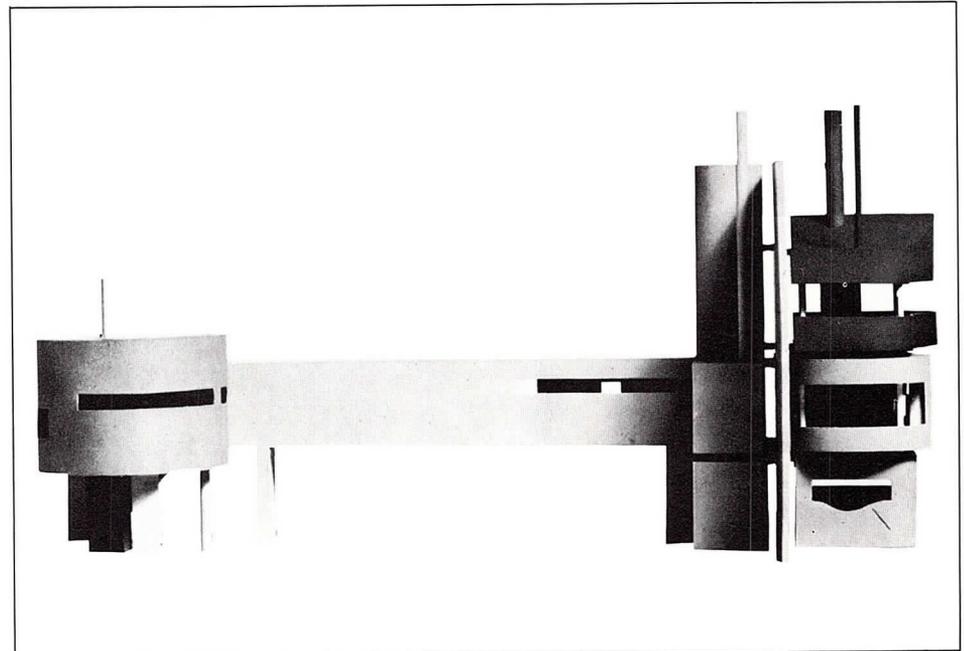
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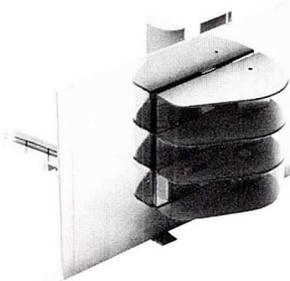


15.



14.

16. *Wall House I*, project. John Hejduk, architect, 1968. Model.



16.

wall is the most present condition possible. Life has to do with walls; we are continuously going in and out, back and forth and through them; a wall is the 'quickest,' the 'thinnest,' *the thing we are always transgressing*, and that is why I see it as the present, the most surface, condition."⁸

In fact, the protagonist of the Bye House (fig. 13, 14) is the wall which separates the residential block from the elongated storage area and curvilinear studio: it is one of the themes of House 10 rooted in turn in the hypothesis set forth with the First Wall House (fig. 16). Yet a word of caution: that wall — the most unreal part of the composition, the most dreamlike if only because it is free from any function — is the opposite of what it had been in the Renaissance — the perspective plane. Once again, and this time explicitly, Hejduk relies on the movie screen, which also serves as a painter's canvas for a spatial "counter-relief." Starting with the wall, from its very "unreality," everything is now possible: forms are set free from it but cannot help but be projected back onto it. No longer elementary geometries, but complex ones; yet, the articulation of the objects seems constrained, tied into the "empty field" of a bare and disquieting rectangle. The wall is the protagonist in as much as it is the element to be violated. Everything is forced back onto it, be it the thrust of the parallelepiped which is surrealistically suspended above ground, or be it the three superimposed residential blocks connected directly to that merciless wall. Three blocks, with three curved edges, clearly of Purist inspiration, and each one of different shape have holes cut into them that are more complex the simpler the volumes: in the rectangle, with rounded corners in the first-floor bedroom, the windows follow an organic contour; in the amoeba-like block of the dining room on the second floor, the rectangular windows are cut in a random fashion; in the upper living room block, a single long window sharply divides the volume. The independence of the forms may recall some of the Constructivists' work, such as the 1923 competition for the Leningradskaia Pravda building by Melnikov (fig. 15).⁹ But Hejduk's work does not tend toward the same kinetic exaggeration as does that of Melnikov. The forms which detach themselves from the wall challenge the obsessive presence of the wall itself. The Bye House heightens the

sadist theorems of previous designs: the "transgression," 45 which ought to liberate the forms, has as its only function the chaining of these forms to the same hallucinating sign which generates them.

These observations on Hejduk bring us directly to an examination of Peter Eisenman's work. With Eisenman, the cruel interplay of impoverished formal materials assumes a theoretical consistency. Beginning with certain insights from Eisenman's own vast writings, Mario Gandelsonas has accurately state: "In the case of Peter Eisenman's work, the traditional play of modifications within a semantic dimension has been abandoned. . . . One of the most interesting and original aspects in the work of Eisenman is the discovery of the possibility of modifications within architecture which are the result of a shift in the dominant characteristic of architecture from the semantic to the syntactic. By 'paralyzing' the semantic dimensions, the syntactic dimension is seen in a new light. In this way both the syntactic and the semantic dimension of architecture stand uncovered, thus permitting not only new access to their make-up, but also a potential point of departure for the development of a non-ideological theory."¹⁰ Moreover, Gandelsonas links this approach to the consumption of supertechnological utopias — which are tied to the recovery of an "*autre*" semantic — spanning Archigram, the populist intellectualism of Robert Venturi, and the technocratic regressions in the architecture of the sixties.

Eisenman himself links the exaltation of logic in the processes of form development to a criticism of the historical avant-garde ideology. He has written that, "the Modern Movement has tended to identify itself with change and ideas of change, because it too has thought itself to be a 'permanent revolution' and consequently its particular mode of speculation has been historical rather than logical. There is an inherent danger in this absence of logical thought."¹¹ Here the avant-garde persists as an ideology of innovation. We are certainly in full agreement with this.¹² But for Eisenman to be free of ideology has a precise meaning. That which he has called "conceptual architecture" is supposed to give prime importance to the relationship be-

17. *House I, Princeton, N.J. Peter Eisenman, architect, 1967. Axonometric.*

18. *House II, Hardwick, Vermont. Peter Eisenman, architect, 1969. Axonometric.*

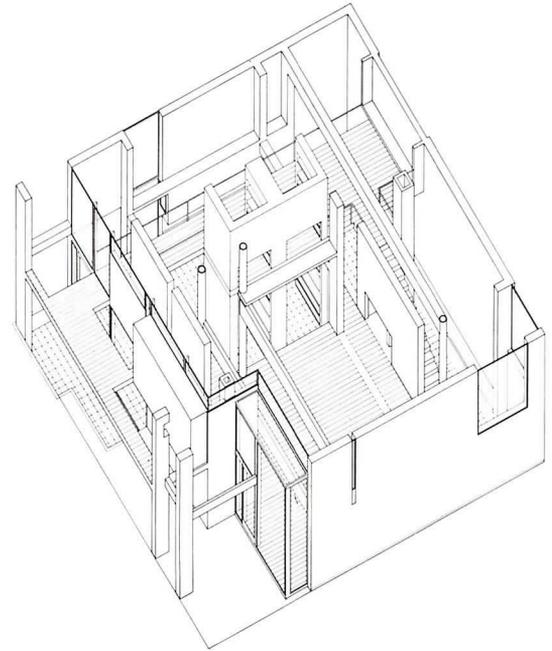
46 tween objects rather than to the objects themselves (but are we not returning to a principal theory of the historical avant-garde?). Thus the emphasis on syntactic structure, as a rule of formation and transformation of form, puts the iconographic aspects into parenthesis — as a sort of Husserlian *epoché*. Not without reason then does Eisenman preempt his most rabid critics by defining his own architecture as “Cardboard Architecture.” Eisenman states that, “‘Cardboard Architecture’ is a term which questions the nature of reality of the physical environment; ‘Cardboard’ is a term which attempts to shift the focus from the existing conceptions of form to a consideration of form as a signal or a notation which can provide a range of formal information; ‘Cardboard’ is a means for an exploration into the nature of architectural form itself, in both its actual and conceptual states.”¹³

Thus Cardboard Architecture is an expression of *its own self*. We are once again immersed into the formative stage of the avant-garde. It is not possible then to recall the 1913 manifesto of Kručěnyckh, “The word as such,” which establishes the theoretical base of Russian Futurism?

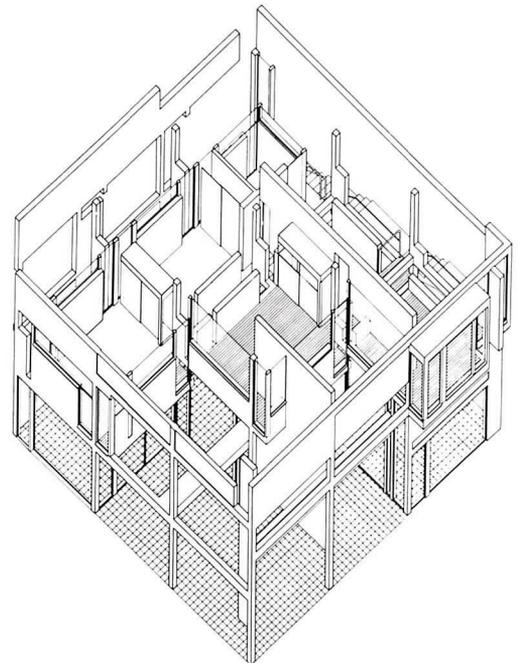
Let us attempt to review some of the fundamental passages of this manifesto, within which were synthesized many of the discussions and currents which gave rise to the most “scientific” movements of the European avant-gardes at the beginning of the century.

“Words die,” writes Kručěnyckh, “the world stays young forever. An artist has seen the world in a new way, and, like Adam, he gives his own names to everything. A lily is beautiful, but the word ‘lily’ is soiled with fingers and raped. For this reason I call a lily ‘euy’ and the original purity is reestablished. . . . A verse presents, unconsciously, a number of series of vowels and consonants. These series are untouchable. It is better to substitute for a word one similar in sound, rather than one similar in idea. New verbal form creates a new context, and not vice versa. Introducing new words, I bring new content, where everything begins to slide.”¹⁴

There exists, therefore, for Kručěnyckh as well as for



17.



18.

Khlebnikov, an archetypal meaning which must be rescued through a “word revolution.” Both of these men, as well as the later linguists of the Russian formalist school, the Opojaz group, consider themselves simply “workers of the word”; in fact, it is the formalists who will remove any and all ideological aura from such “work.” Also, in the case of “transmental poetry,” as well as for the semantic shifts theorized by Victor Sklovskij, language does not create new realities so much as it rediscovers a lost relationship between sign and meaning. And is not Eisenman the one to explain that his “conceptual architecture” attempts to bring to light “a set of archetypal relationships which affect our most basic sensibilities about our environment”?¹⁵

The semantic dimension, excluded in his theory, now reappears with force. The significance present in all forms leads Eisenman to the study of Chomsky’s transformational linguistics and to the relationship between systems of signs and deep structures — a concern similar to that of the chief exponents of Minimal Art and Primary Structures.

This means that not only must the semantic aspects be put aside, but so must the pragmatic ones. What is left is only “virtual space”: as with Hejduk’s, Eisenman’s architecture has been violently attacked as anti-architectonic abstraction.

But let us try to understand the work before passing judgment. House I (the Barenholtz Pavilion in Princeton), 1967 (fig. 17), and House II, 1969 (fig. 18), are one single search directed towards neutralizing every “realistic” perception of the building. The pure prism comes into conflict with the intersection of the floors and with the point-configuration of the columns. These three elements are made to interact with each other, as in a chemical reaction wherein the analyst remains distant and detached from the experiment. In this manner — inside as well as outside — the floor, the columns, the enclosing surfaces begin a counterpoint of multiple intersections. The effects of transparency of emptied spaces — in particular the three levels which articulate the second floor of House II, to which the articulations of the roof correspond — make these two buildings into perfectly autonomous objects, locked into an explora-

tion of the possibilities of transformation of elementary geometric figures.

It is here possible to repeat what we have said about Hejduk, but more emphatically because Eisenman fetters the forms after having “freed them as such.” Yet there is something else in this, if only because of the obstinacy with which Eisenman insists upon integrating his projects with theoretical explanations. It is not just a simple need to theorize, nor can the theoretical aspects of this and similar works be dismissed as an aspect of neo-stylism or of “lifeless architecture.”¹⁶ What is certain, however, is that Eisenman reaches in House II, and later in House IV, a perfect “virtuality” of the object itself. *That is to say, he positions the observer in a state of perfect alienation from the real, an alienation which corresponds to the absolute divorce of the forms from themselves.*

Kenneth Frampton is certainly correct in observing how, in House I, the omission of one column from the otherwise uniform grid creates a certain magical effect: even if it is exaggerated to speak, as he does, of a “strategy of the building as ruin.”¹⁷ Frampton’s insight is useful, however, to highlight the fact that the absolute rarefaction of the linguistic elements chosen by Eisenman must come to terms with the first law of any aesthetic communication — the inflation of the chosen code.

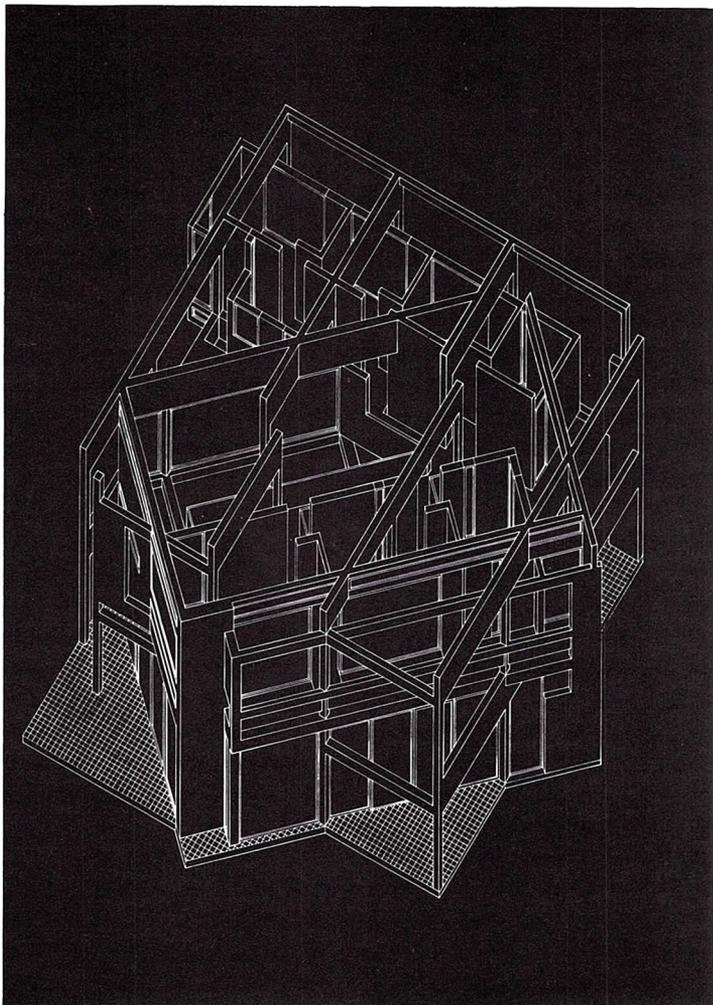
It is significant that in House I, such transgression should coincide with an “absence.” Even House II, in its totality, evokes an absence. The interpenetrating or sheared planes allude to the loss which occurs in any significance when it has been emptied of its semantic value. The “deep structure,” sought by Eisenman, appears as an hallucinating contemplation of the sign itself. That which makes the object “object” also condemns it to an absolute solitude.

The photographs of House II, which capture it in its most dislocated state — in the midst of an expanse of snow — are a faithful representation of the architect’s intentions (fig. 20). He displays an acute sense of self-awareness through his revealing presentation which precedes the publication of House III (fig. 19). The grid which defines the basic prism is

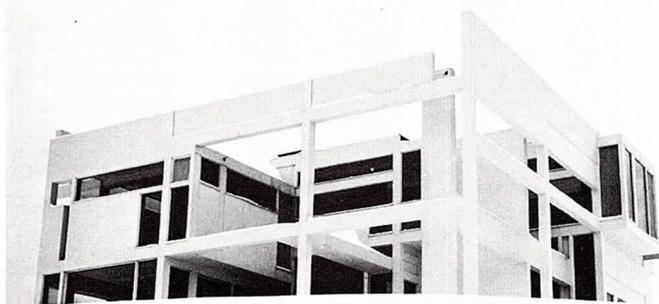
19. House III, Lakeville, Conn.
Peter Eisenman, architect, 1971.
Axonometric.

20. House II, Hardwick, Vermont.
Peter Eisenman, architect, 1969.

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19.

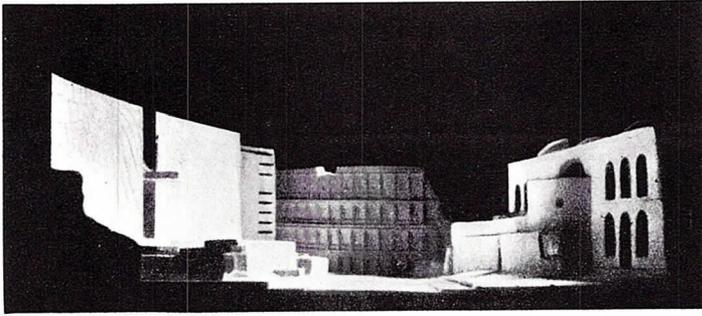


20.

the same as that employed in the two previous works. But this time, another reagent is introduced to the chemical process of catalyzing the form: the forty-five degree rotation of the geometric solid relative to the cage which, through this rotation, is emptied. This theme bears only a superficial resemblance to Hejduk's Diamond House or to some of the work of Graves. To Eisenman, rotation serves only to question the very concept of "composition." There can be no synthesis after this transgression — as there is for Graves — nor any self-satisfaction in the work — as there is for Hejduk in Projects A, B, and C.

In House III, Eisenman carries his method through to the end. It is necessary for him to *demonstrate the very process of alienation of form, not only with respect to reality but also in terms of itself.*

In other words, the microcosm of signs arrayed so as to discourse only with themselves — which in previous works appear as a synthesis and reflect a level of linguistic accomplishments — is now broken and compromised through the simple, though arbitrary, act of decomposition and the subsequent intersection of two virtual solids. The principle which links Eisenman to the work of the first Russian Constructivists, beyond merely stylistic affinities, is to "work on form" as a means of "highlighting the linguistic procedures." Eisenman therefore follows the "school of formal method," as set out in the experiments on the effects of alienation of forms by Tatlin and Puni and theorized by Sklovskij and Tynjanov. (Perhaps one of the meanings of the title to this article begins to be clear). But, unlike the *priëm ostranenje* of the Russian avant-garde, Eisenman turns the linguistic search upon itself. Not without reason Eisenman compares the paradoxical work of House III to the film, *A Letter to Jane*, by Jean Luc Godard and Jean Gorin:¹⁸ in both cases the very emphasis placed upon the montage of the sign compromises an identification of its meanings. Eisenman titles his article on House III "To Adolf Loos & Bertold Brecht," thereby clarifying the nature of the procedure underlying his entire research. "While the architectural system," writes Eisenman, "may be complete, the environment 'house' is almost a void. And quite unintentionally — like the audience of the film — the



21. *Palazzo del Littorio, Rome.*
Carminati, Lingeri, Salvia,
Terragni, Vietti, architects, 1934.

21. owner has been alienated from his environment. In this sense, when the owner first enters 'his house' he is an intruder; he must begin to regain possession — to occupy a foreign container. In the process of taking possession the owner begins to destroy, albeit in a positive sense, the initial unity and completeness of the architectural structure. . . . By acting in response to a given structure, the owner is now almost working against this pattern. By working to come to terms with this structure, design is not decoration but rather becomes a process of inquiry into one's own latent capacity to understand any man-made space."¹⁹

We are therefore confronted with a reduction of the architecture to its underlying structure, as the means towards alienation. And the allusion to Brecht is legitimate only if it refers to a technique of dislocating the spectator from his habitual codes. Then, to inhabit, in this particular conception, does not mean what it says. Instead, to inhabit means to challenge the limits which the language imposes upon itself and upon existence. Form, then, is a challenge and an obstacle which must be overcome. The man who claims to *live form* is condemned to a double alienation, from which it is possible to escape only by aggressing that form, taking on its challenge. The language, in House III and even more so in Eisenman's subsequent houses, codifies its own limitations: by excluding a relation with the public through communication or "invitations to action," it postulates a behavior which sets it apart from the "*autre*" dimension which it creates. There is in all this no identification between form and life. Eisenman's merciless manipulations recognize that an architectonic language cannot be set forth if it is not outside conventional practice. Furthermore the syntactic laboratory, as it is invoked through objects which are perfectly locked into a mutual dialogue of signs, accepts no intruders. Man's presence there is scandalous: once into Eisenman's laboratory, he cannot avoid destroying its suspended tonality and in so doing giving substance to the intangible.

As can be seen, in analyzing the work of Eisenman and Hejduk we have avoided any precise linguistic reference. Their nostalgic interpretation of the heroic years of the

avant-garde is in fact much more subtle and perverse than a simple revival. Colin Rowe, in his introduction to the *Five Architects*, has recalled the hopes and frustrations of the ideology of the Modern Movement.²⁰ But in their work, Eisenman and Hejduk do not attempt to recapture that ideology. Instead they mercilessly dissect it. Any evocation of the processes typical to the avant-garde is blocked at the very points where the avant-garde proposed itself as a "political" instrument. The disenchantment with pure syntax corresponds to that "grand illusion," refusing to go back over the road of frustration. It is true that Eisenman has proposed urban renewal projects and worked on mass housing. It is enough to recall his participation with groups which have proposed a restructuring of mid-Manhattan and housing types for the New York State Urban Development Corporation.²¹ But the thrust of his work is not at all related to the utopia of Le Corbusier. He engages Purism, as does Graves, in the most abstract of its forms, apart from the very meanings which it has had. Not to be overlooked is the fact that Eisenman is an avid collector of magazines and documents of the avant-garde.²² The spirit of the collector is not that of the *bricoleur*, but presupposes a process of selection. Certainly, through his concern for Italian "rationalism" of the twenties and thirties, Eisenman is well aware that he is confronting the most abstract and "metaphysical" current of the Modern Movement. One wonders in fact if Carlo Belli's 1935 statements, in *Kn*, are not underlying his interests in this period: "An exhibit of works which bear no title, without an author's signature, without date and without any human reference, distinguished one from the other by simple algebraic notations $K, K_1, K_2 \dots K_n \dots$. The creator — musician, painter — ought to guard against entering into his own work: the highest ambition of the artist must be that his work is possessed of an independent life, be it of itself, as an expandable and absolute world. But the absolute is relative only to itself, that is, it is not relative. And if the work is absolute it must possess its own existence and not that of man or nature."²³ Undoubtedly neither Hejduk nor Eisenman adhere to the spiritualistic and metaphysical overtones of Belli's *Kn*. Eisenman's analyses of Terragni's works are directed towards the syntax, not towards the lingering idealism of the "Milione" group or towards the Como school

50 of painters close to Lingeri and Terragni.²⁴

Yet points of departure do not always coincide with points of arrival. Belli wrote, “Art is the liberation of the *eternally human*,” thereby interpreting the linguistic absolutism of the “Milione” rationalists: it is an interpretation which is closer to the central themes of Malevich, Ivan Puni or Schwitters than it is to those of Kandinsky. The syntactic emphasis of Hejduk and Eisenman is within the “suspended tonality,” replete with the magical and modern evocations of the Como groups, or of certain works by Adalberto Libera. (A suspended tonality that movie directors, such as Godard or Bertolucci, have captured far better than many critics — just think of the use made of Malaparte’s house at Capri which the former employed in *Mepris* or by the latter’s use of the terrace at the Palazzo dei Congressi at EUR in *The Conformist*.)

In other words, a reduction to pure syntax embraces an “involuntary semantic.” This “interrupted signification” also reintroduces a sense of ambiguity to the emptied sign, and permits another semantic dimension to enter into the fabric of rigorous conceptual penetrations. It is a dimension which is antithetical to the original theoretical assumptions: it is “magical.” Now, and only now, is it possible to speculate about what is perhaps an unconscious source of Hejduk’s Wall Houses: Project A, presented by Carminati, Lingeri, Salvia, Terragni, and Vietti in 1934, in the competition for the Palazzo del Littorio on the Via dell’Impero in Rome (fig. 21).

The above leads us directly to the work of Michael Graves. It is often seen as a sort of pendant to Eisenman’s syntactic elaborations: it is not by chance that we find Graves and Eisenman associated in an urban design proposal for the Upper West Side, Manhattan, in the “New City” exhibit of 1967.

In 1967 Graves designed the Hanselmann House (fig. 23): a pure prism violated by a set of accidental cuts. It is an attempt to precisely define its relationship to its surroundings. This is accomplished through a series of formal de-

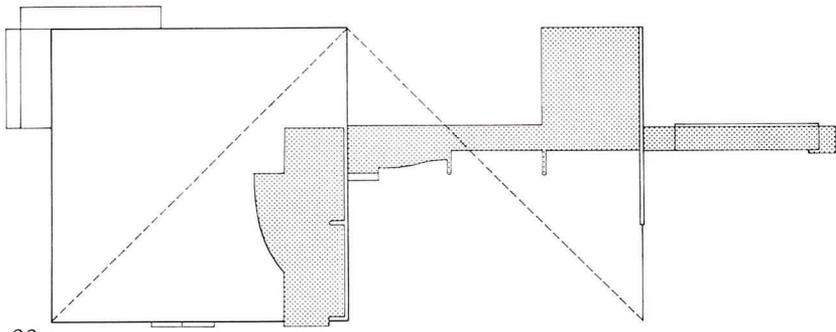
22. *Hanselmann House, Fort Wayne, Indiana. Michael Graves, architect, 1967.*

23. *Entry facade.*

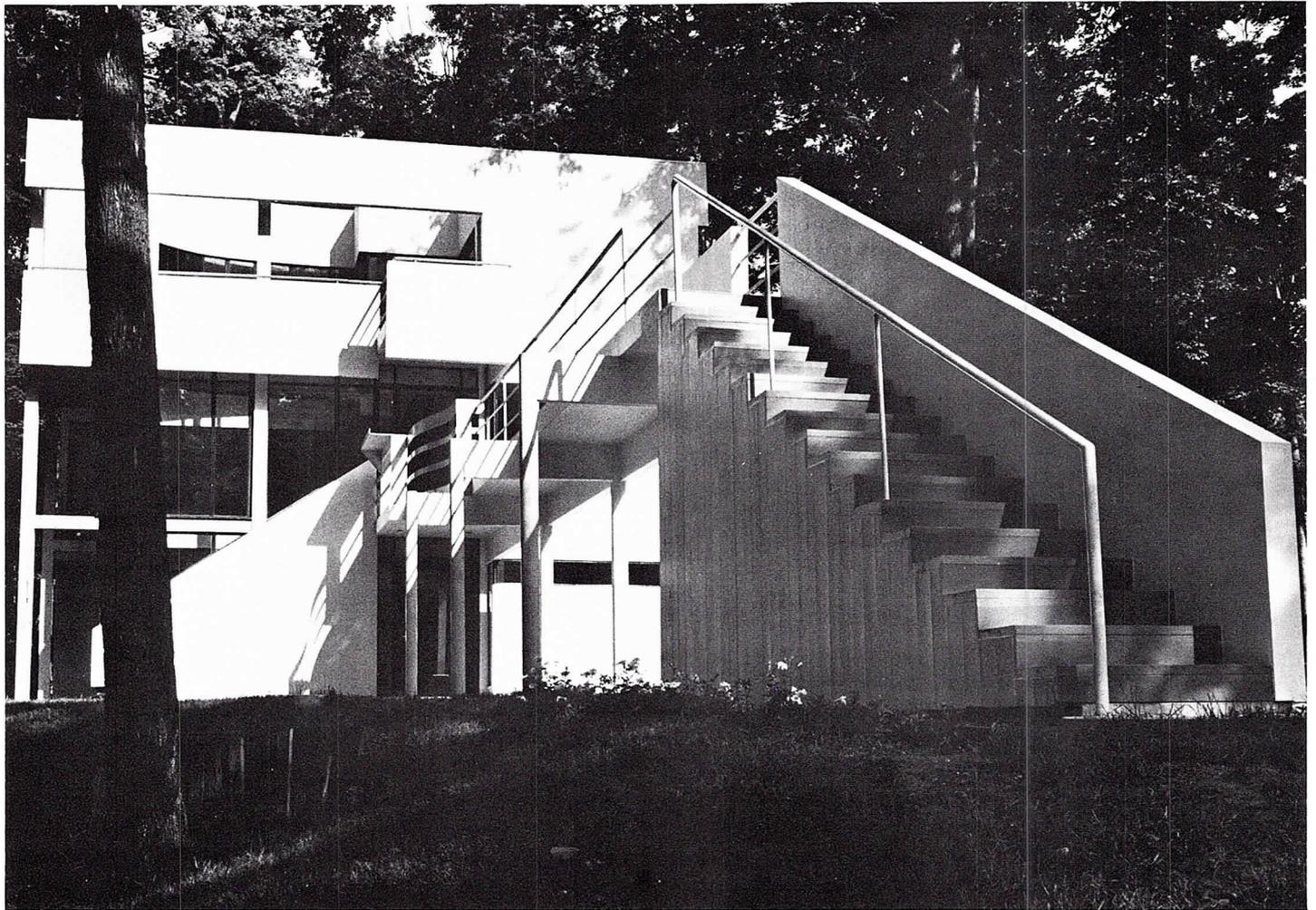
24. *Third level plan showing grid rotation.*

vices: through access to the second level by an external stair connected to an elevated walkway; through a transparent screen which is placed between the stair and the walkway; and finally by expressing the relationship between built and open areas, based on a double square, and articulated in plan by a ninety degree rotation of the exterior paved area (figs. 22, 24).

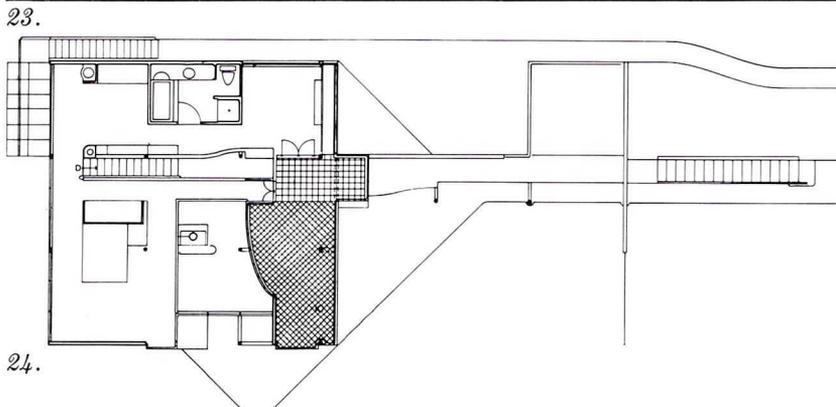
Commenting on the Hanselmann House, William La Riche refers to the transition from profane space to sacred space at the Acropolis.²⁵ The Purist and the Classical are here intertwined. We are confronted with the problem of finite forms in the presence of the infinity of nature. This reference to Greek architecture may overwhelm the object in question, but it is nonetheless effective. The Hanselmann House fully captures the premise of Le Corbusier’s villas of the 1920s and 1930s: they are discrete fragments in a space which is theoretically continuous and homogeneous. For Le Corbusier the homogeneity of space is rich with ideologic content: even in reduced architectonic terms, it is for him an expression of the basic postulate of the Ville Radieuse — that is, of the full social availability of the ground and the surrounding environment. For Graves, however, the availability of the ground is an abstract assumption unquestionable in and of itself. His house “reacts” to potential external forces which impinge upon it, as if assaulted by invisible currents. The two stairways which converge towards the second floor entry are in a certain way the visible manifestation of some of these forces. A transparent diaphragm set across the elevated walkway marks the entry into the realm of total artifice. The cuts into this pure prism, the play of overhangs and the intact transparent surfaces are but the means to make manifest the artifice: and here real space and virtual space mutually exchange their meanings. Therefore ambiguity becomes the principal value of Michael Graves’ architecture. Proceeding on the southern stair of the Hanselmann House, we note that the left side parapet has been omitted, thereby allowing a full view of the interplay of the objects — a view which varies with the observers’ upward movement. The elements which contribute to this dynamic play are the diagonal cut of the second stairway, the dialectic between solid surfaces and the deep spaces as revealed through the glass openings, and the



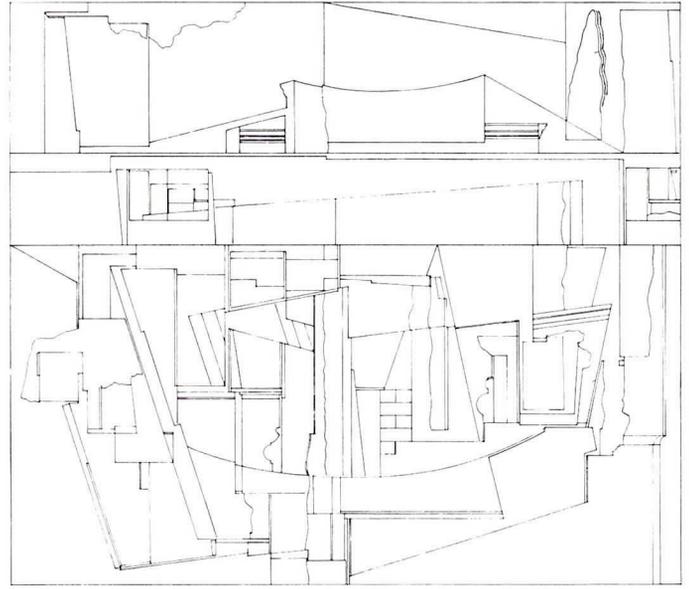
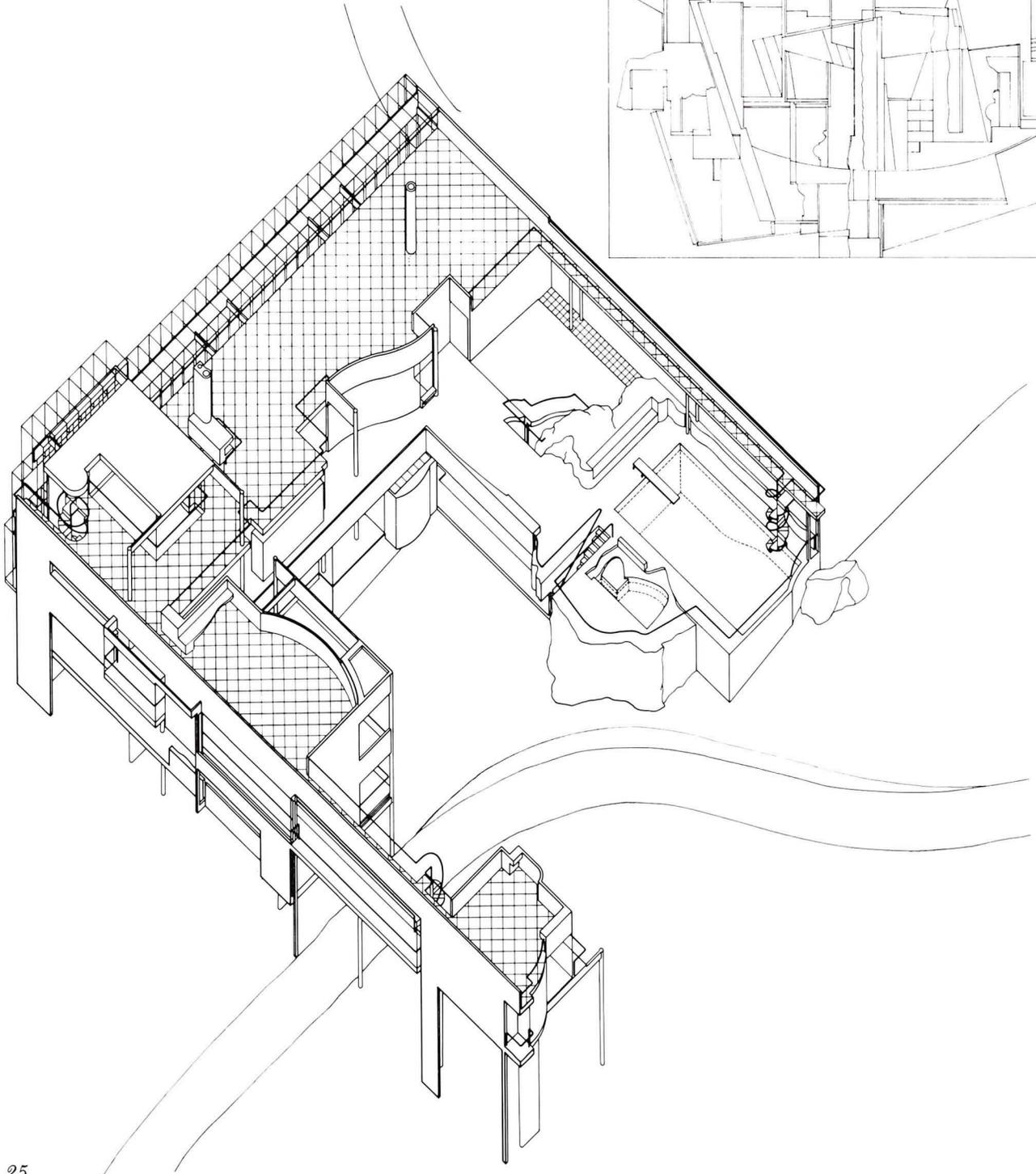
22.



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24.



25. *Rockefeller House, Pocantico Hills, N.Y. Michael Graves, architect, 1969. Axonometric.*

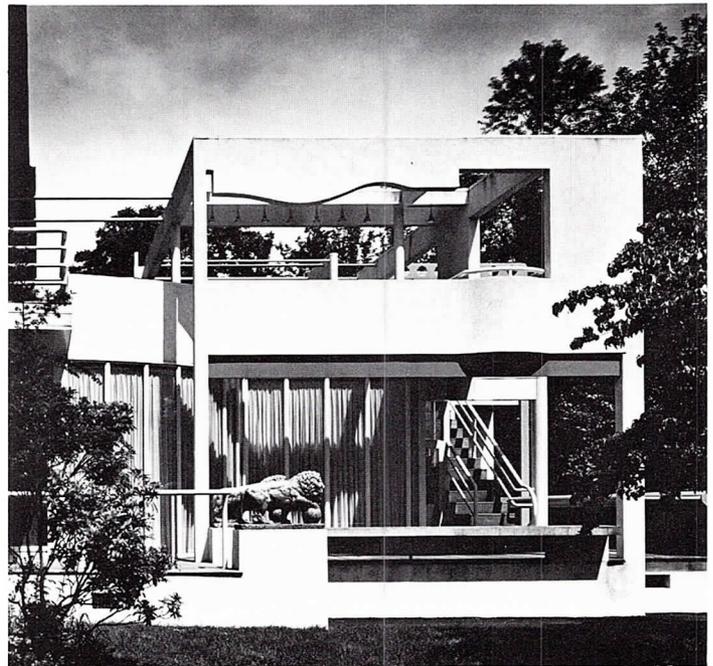
26. *E.N.T. mural cartoon. Michael Graves, 1971.*

27. *Benacerraf House, Princeton, N.J. Michael Graves, architect, 1969.*

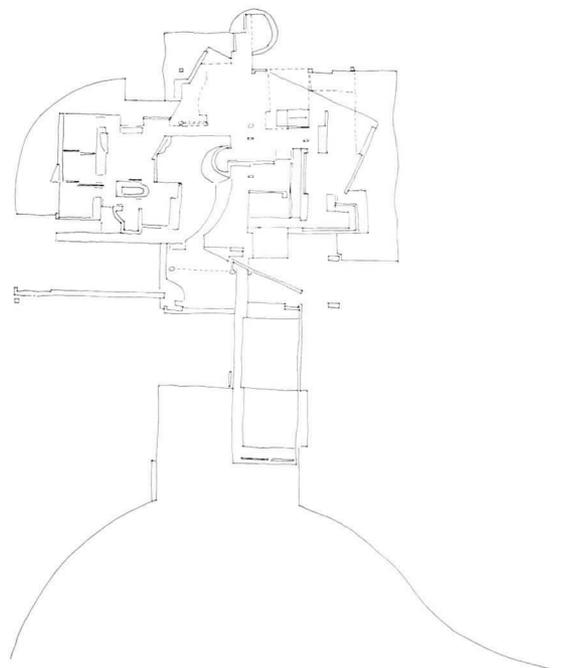
28. *Drezner House, project. Michael Graves, architect, 1970. Plan.*

shear of the curved plane on the upper terrace. The formality of entry also reveals a dynamic interrelation of discrete geometric forms: the axis of approach becomes the visual pivot of Graves' pluralistic formal setting. In this context, the murals which Graves deploys within his buildings are not the vehicles of an anachronistic *Gesamtkunstwerk*, but a means to accentuate the virtual nature of the space. His paintings are certainly rooted in Cubism and Purism, but they are also the result of a sort of idealized conflict between artificial forms and nature. This aspect is very much in evidence at the Rockefeller House of 1969 in Pocantico Hills, New York (fig. 25). Behind the pierced screen, and paradoxically suspended above the uneven terrain, there unfolds a series of passages and open spaces defined by curved surfaces. These are the same surfaces which conjoin in the soft conflicts of Graves' paintings (fig. 26). But, above all, they reappear at the intersection between architecture and nature in the "grotto" of the Rockefeller House.²⁶ The finite qualities of form are thus always in a tenuous balance with nature: the marriage of opposites — nature and artifact — is impossible. Their conflict may be frozen and exhibited in narrative form.

This is precisely what occurs in the irregular spatiality of the Drezner Residence (fig. 28), and in the ironic fragmentation, the flow, and the transparency, of the stacked floors in the Gunwyn Office at Princeton.²⁷ As with the Benacerraf Residence (fig. 27),²⁸ these are true Purist paintings projected into space. The three levels of the Gunwyn Office (1971-1972) (figs. 31, 32) are cut, modelled, and fragmented, to the point of paradox, with the aim of making the entire space fluid and free of fixed reference points — a space in a continuous state of metamorphosis. The muted colors, ranging from white to green, serve to accentuate the instability of the forms. The equivalences between solids and voids, between straight and curved surfaces, between structural and linking elements come together in a refined and exhausting stimulation of our perceptive abilities. The need to work exclusively within an existing "neo-nineteenth-century Flemish" building appears to have heightened Graves' sense of his own poetics. The Benacerraf Residence (1969) also presents an unusual situation: it is but an addition to a pre-existing house (fig. 29). This may in part



27.



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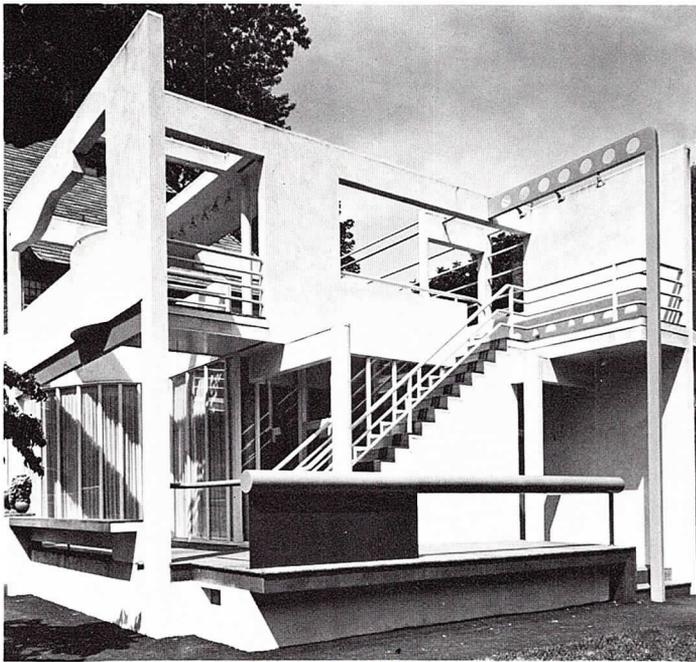
29. *Benacerraf House, Princeton, N.J. Michael Graves, architect, 1969.*

32. *Second level, axonometric.*

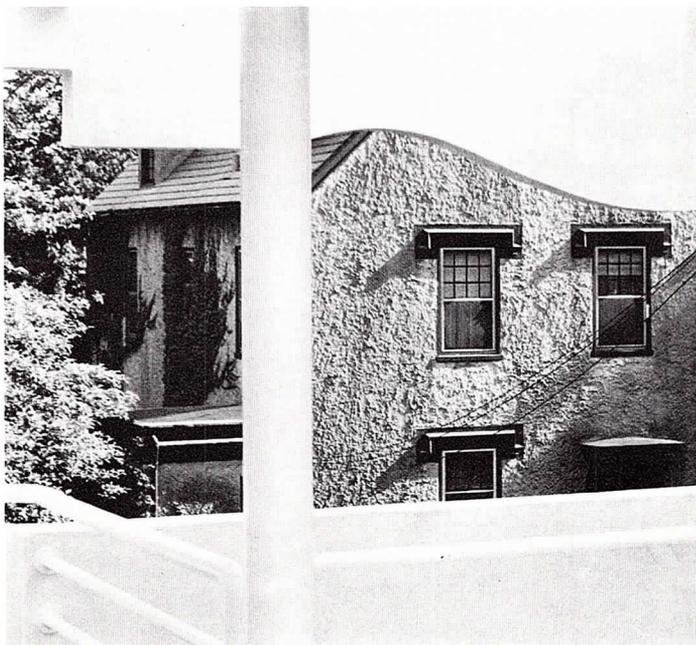
30. *Curvilinear cornice.*

31. *Gunwyn Ventures Investment Office, Princeton, N.J. Michael Graves, architect, 1972. First level, axonometric.*

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29.

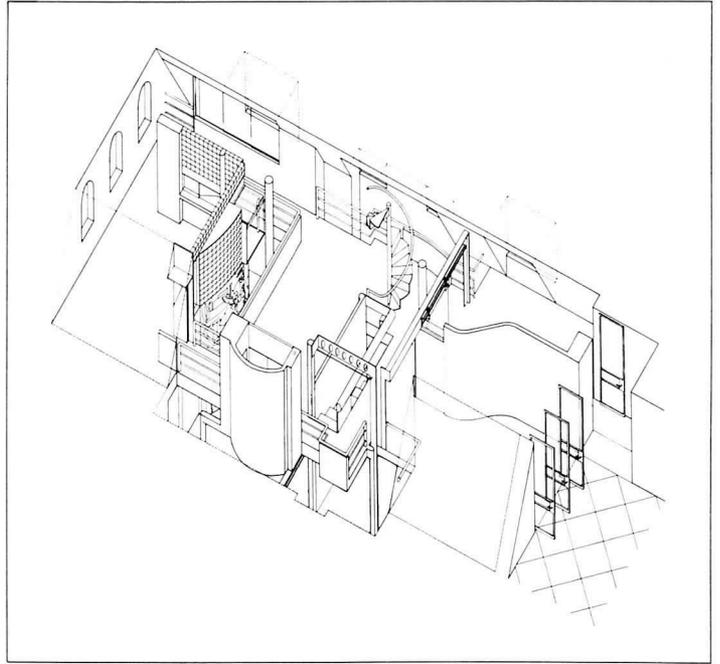


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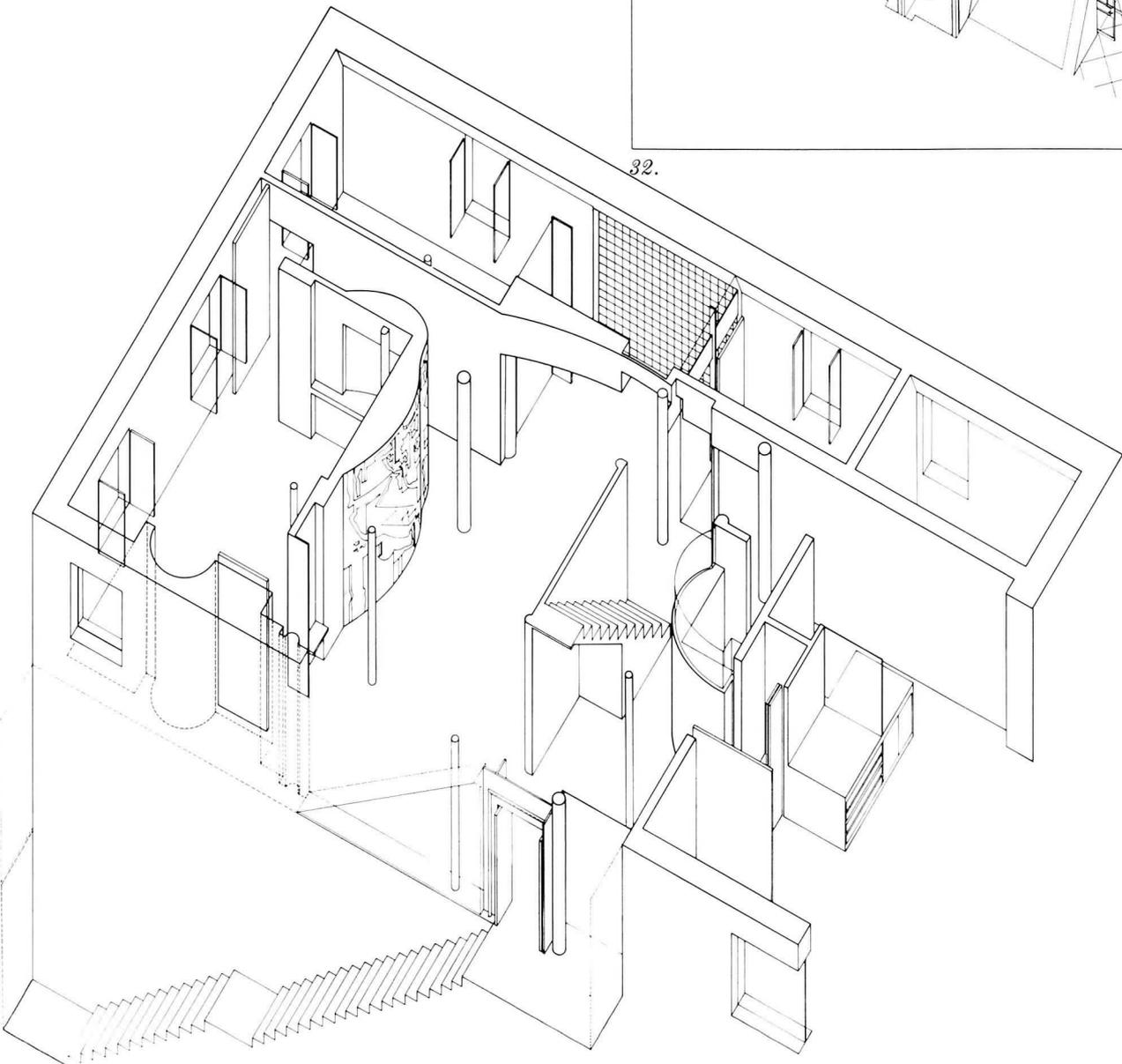
explain a certain magical quality which it acquires through the play of elements related to each other only by means of opposition and contrast. The layering of screens which characterizes this small house creates a sense of unreality charged with allusive irony. For example, the curvilinear profile of the cornice (fig. 30) defining the space of the upper terrace — a traditional element now deformed — establishes a subtle dialectic between the necessary and the arbitrary.

This dialectic is that much more heightened in the Medical Office for Ear, Nose and Throat Associates in Fort Wayne, Indiana, of 1971 (fig. 33). Once again, only an interior architecture, but Graves overcomes this limitation by rotating the geometric structure of the central nucleus of the nurses' station into the diagonal. In other words, he inserts into the given space another closed space, thereby permitting the central block to be read as an independent architecture set into a sequence of tangential paths. These paths then take on the role of virtual external spaces. The technique of rotation, which we have already found in Hejduk's and Eisenman's work, assumes new value here. This is especially true if we consider how Graves makes the examination/treatment rooms into truly illusionary boxes through mural painting (figs. 34, 35). The entwined and diagonally-broken forms of the "murals as extended landscape" are explained by the architect as a means "to help alleviate the trauma of treatment. . . . The diagonal produces a sense of perspective that distances and sets the patient apart from his medical concerns or fears." Yet, as has been rightly observed, "the mural walls — as walls — become stronger and enclosing because they have an object painted on them; yet, alternately, they become less strong as walls since they depict an extension out into the pictorial landscape beyond. . . . The mural becomes illusion or *deep* because of the space in the picture, so you have two worlds to deal with. The idea is that one can become involved in the spatial expansion and still experience the enclosure."²⁹

The diversion of experience into opposing aspects becomes undoubtedly the most important factor. The dominance of linguistic elements leads to the greatest ambiguity in the use of language itself.



32.

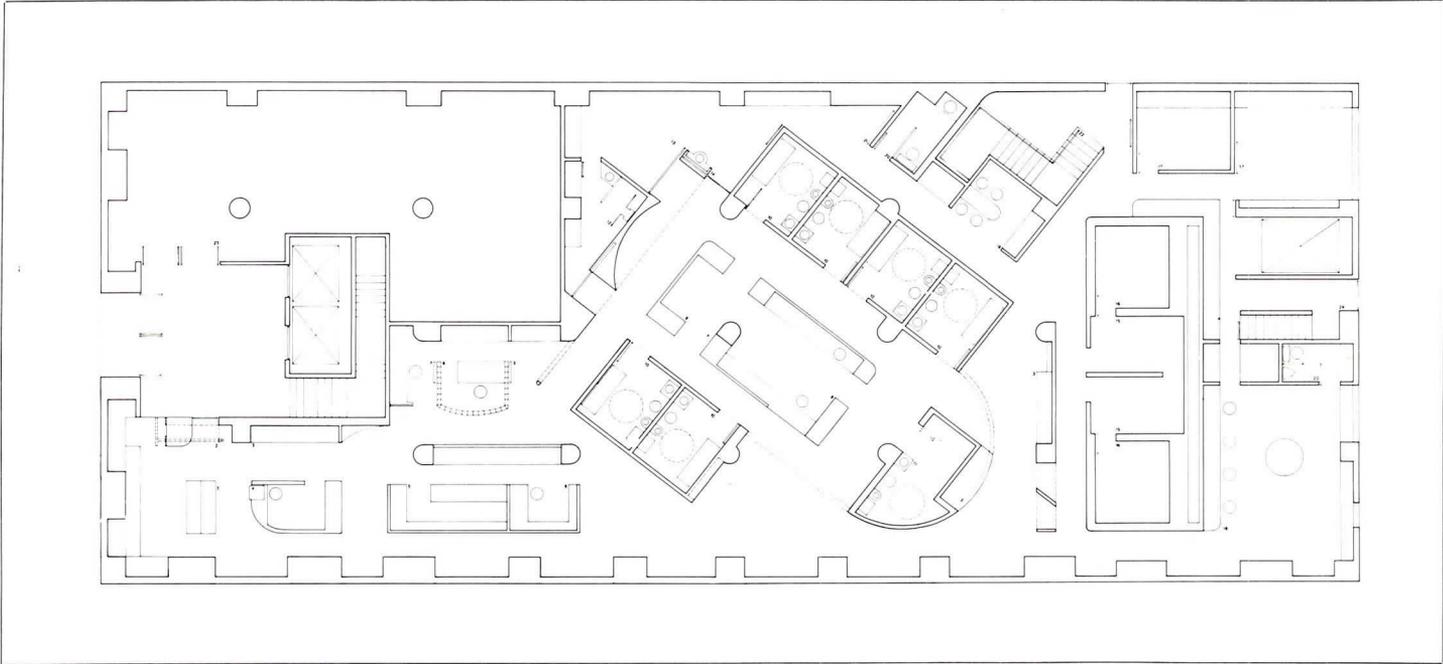


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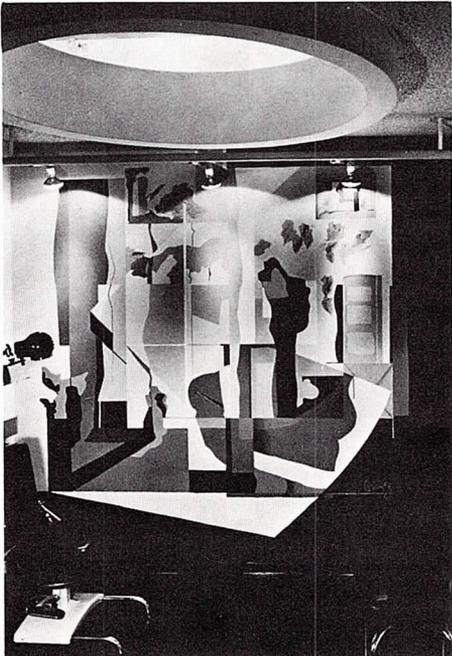
33. *E.N.T. Medical Office, Fort Wayne, Indiana. Michael Graves, architect, 1971. Plan.*

34. *Examination room mural showing diagonal relating to perspective.*

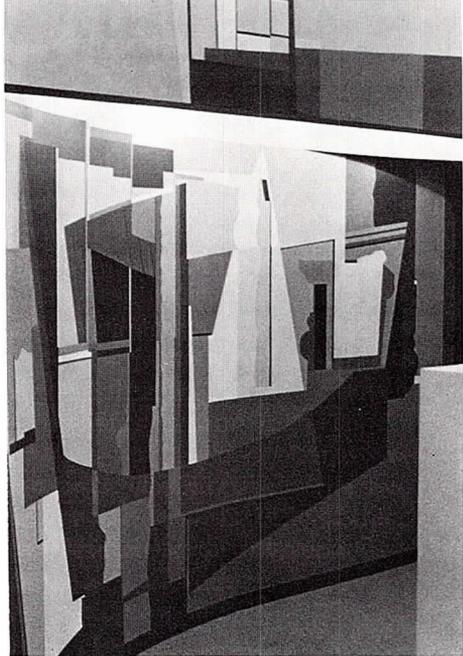
35. *Nurses' station mural.*



33.



34.



35.

Some preliminary conclusions may be drawn now. Hejduk, Eisenman and Graves represent in their work three approaches to linguistic “alienation,” to experimentation with functional languages which have been paradoxically removed from the field of language. But this is not all. Their reference — and only their reference — to the hide-and-seek game with language is also part of the heroic years of the Modern Movement. It has but one result: Hejduk’s, Eisenman’s and Graves’ three ways of manipulating linguistic materials bespeak a very real phenomenon — namely, that “the war is over.”

After all, was it not Barthes who decried polemically and insidiously that, “there can be tranquil moments in the war of languages, and these moments are texts.”³⁰ The languages of the twenties and thirties, to which our architects allude, were, in one way or another, “battle cries.” Now, as always, in the experimental fields of the new avant-gardes, those battle cries are transformed into “languages of pleasure.” The war is over, but with a checkmate by the adversary. All that is left is to declaim with affectionate irony, and with barely concealed nostalgia, the verses of a decomposed and frozen “Marseillaise.” (Is not freezing the surest mode of preservation?)

Barthes writes: “Still far too much heroism in our languages; in the best — I am thinking of Bataille’s — an fetishism of certain expressions and finally a kind of *insidious heroism*. The pleasure of the text (the bliss of the text) is on the contrary like a sudden desquamation of the writer’s hackles, a suspension of the ‘heart’ (of courage).” To insist on the pleasure of a text, is to bring back to reality one of the least remembered of Brecht’s proposals — and in a roundabout way we return to one of Eisenman’s postulates. But Barthes continues: “How can a text, which consists of language, be outside languages? How to *exteriorize* the world’s jargons without taking refuge in an ultimate argument wherein the others would simply be reported, repeated? As soon as I name, I am named: caught in the rivalry of names. How can the text ‘get itself out’ of the war of positions, of sociolects? — by a gradual labor of extenuation. First, the text liquidates all metalanguage, whereby it is left: no voice (Science, Cause, Institution) is *behind* what it

is saying. Next, the text destroys utterly, *to the point of contradiction*, its own discursive category, its sociolinguistic reference (its ‘*genre*’): it is ‘the comical that does not make us laugh,’ the irony which does not subjugate, the jubilation without soul, without mystique (Sarduy), quotation without quotation marks.” Precisely, a Marseillaise without a Bastille to overthrow. Yet it is just this aspect which allows one to “enjoy” Cardboard Architecture insofar as it is a theoretical experimentation. The pleasure which arises from reading the works of Hejduk, Eisenman and Graves is entirely intellectual. I enjoy the subtle mental games which subjugate the absolute nature of the forms (whether they be designed or built, at this point it does not matter). Clearly there is no “social” value in all of this. And, in fact, is pleasure not an entirely private affair? It is all too easy to conclude that this architecture is a “betrayal” of the ethical ideals of the Modern Movement. On the contrary, it records the mood of someone who feels betrayed and reveals fully the condition of those who still wish to make “Architecture.” (If there is a truly arbitrary act, it lies precisely in the choice to make “Architecture.”)

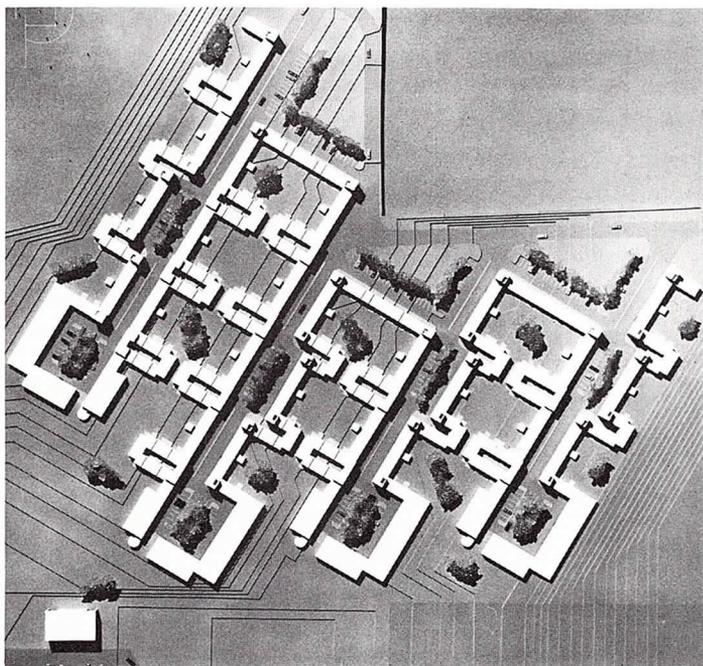
Let us allow Barthes to continue: “The pleasure of the text does not prefer one ideology to another. *However*: this impertinence does not proceed from liberalism but from perversion: the text and its reading are split. What is overcome, split, is the *moral unity* that society demands of every human product. We read a text (of pleasure) the way a fly buzzes around a room: with sudden, deceptively decisive turns, fervent and futile: ideology passes over the text and its reading like the blush over a face . . . in the text of pleasure, the opposing forces are no longer repressed but in a state of becoming: nothing is really antagonistic, everything is plural. I pass lightly through the reactionary darkness.”

Further comment would be superfluous. Only one last note to make: if it is true that pleasure is of an asocial nature, then, having chosen the field of art as an intellectual game, we cannot help but recall Schiller — that is, to recognize that the spirit is never more serious as when it is at play. In any case, take note: we are dealing with the *spirit*, not with social practices.

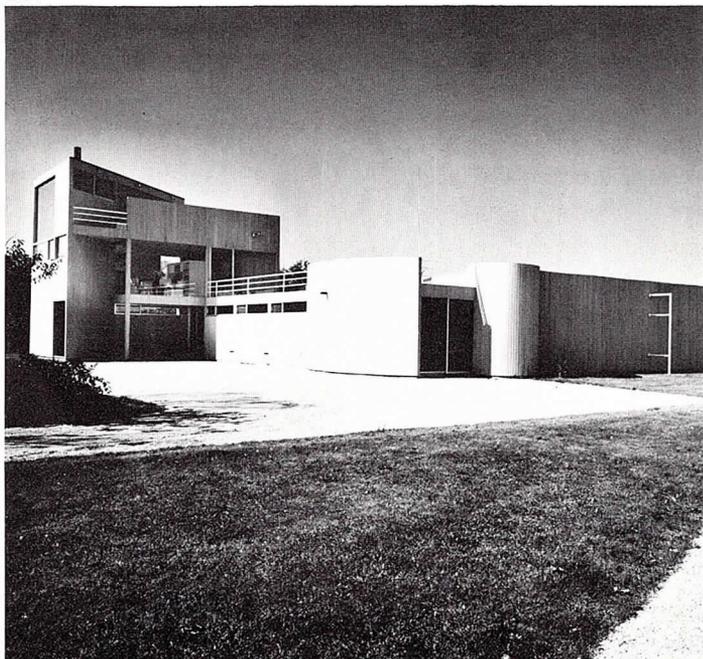
36. *Perinton Housing, Rochester, N.Y. Gwathmey/Siegel, architects, 1972-76. Site plan.*

37. *Tolan Residence, Amagansett, N.Y. Gwathmey/Siegel, architects, 1970-71.*

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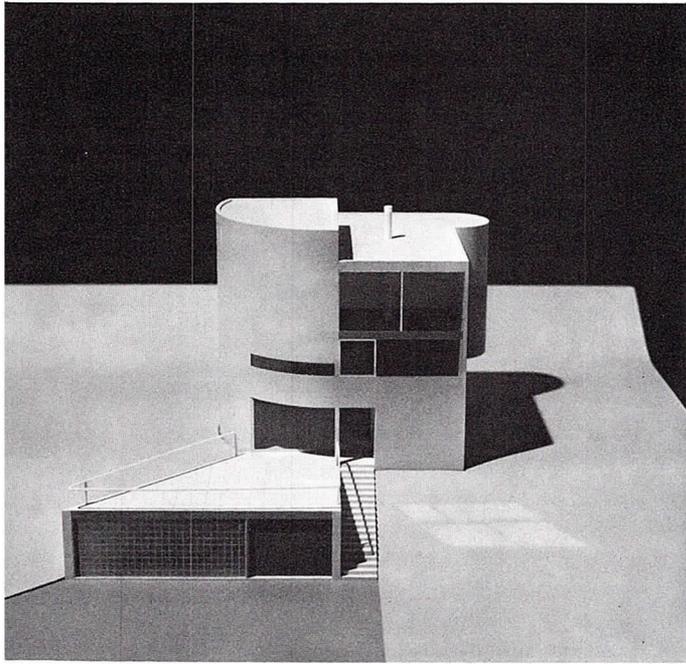
In relation to the three architects we have discussed, the personalities of Charles Gwathmey, Robert Siegel and of Richard Meier appear decidedly out of place, except for certain works. Let us look at the Cogan House, the Cohr Residence, Pearl's Restaurant in New York, or the student residential complex of the State University College at Purchase, New York. In these works, Gwathmey and Siegel distill compositions from the purity of geometric solids, through a dialectic of routes and passages, of transparencies, and of isolated volumes. In these examples, abstractions pervade socially usable spaces. The prohibitions which weigh so heavily on "free" social use in the works of Hejduk and Eisenman are lifted. The Purist rigors dissolve into formal articulations and pleasurable cadences. Hermeticism is not eliminated from these works, but it is made accessible. The play of design is brought back into the realm of safe professional controls. What is lost in linguistic purity has been gained in architectural realism. This is not a value judgment but a statement of fact. Gwathmey and Siegel employ as a current language some of the results of linguistic experimentation to which they only marginally subscribe. This does not take away from the fact that in a large-scale project, such as the Perinton Housing project (five hundred dwelling units commissioned by the U.D.C. Greater Rochester, New York) (fig. 36), the dialogue between the *rédents* blocks, which display a denuded modularity, and the unfolding of open spaces, achieves a timeless quality without losing the desired model-like character.

But, as we have stated, these are works which "use" an experimental method, which test its capacity to compromise itself with the space of life. But this is not the case of the Elia Basch Residence project (fig. 38) or the Sagne Residence project (fig. 39). Here Gwathmey and Siegel employ to maximum advantage the technique of volume deformation, of the interpenetration of forms, of "surprise" — techniques that are also used in as heterogeneous a group of works as the Whig Hall at Princeton University (fig. 40), the Bridgehampton Residences, the Tolan Residence (fig. 37), and the Gwathmey Residence and Studio. Whig Hall might very well be defined as a montage-by-analogy. A. Page Brown's neoclassical temple of 1893

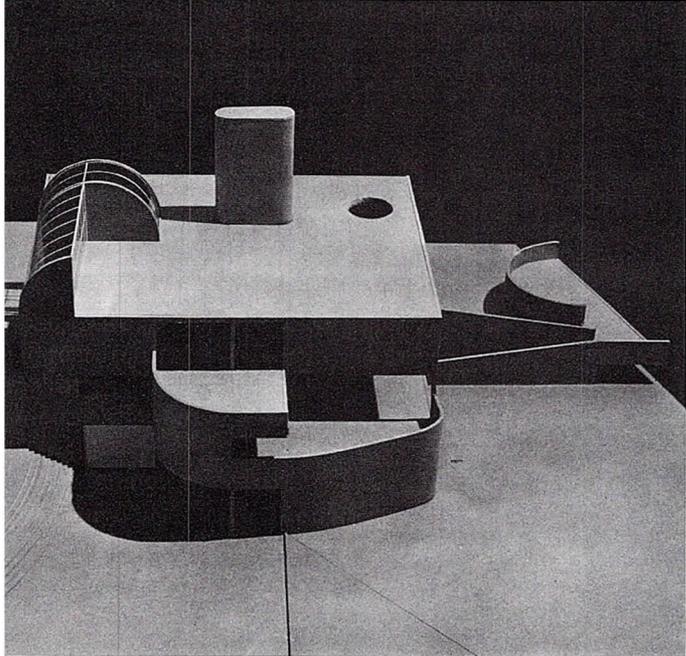
8. *Elia Basch Residence, Newbury, N.J. Gwathmey/Siegel, architects, 1970-71. Model.*

9. *Sagner Residence, project. Gwathmey/Siegel, architects, 1970-71. Model.*

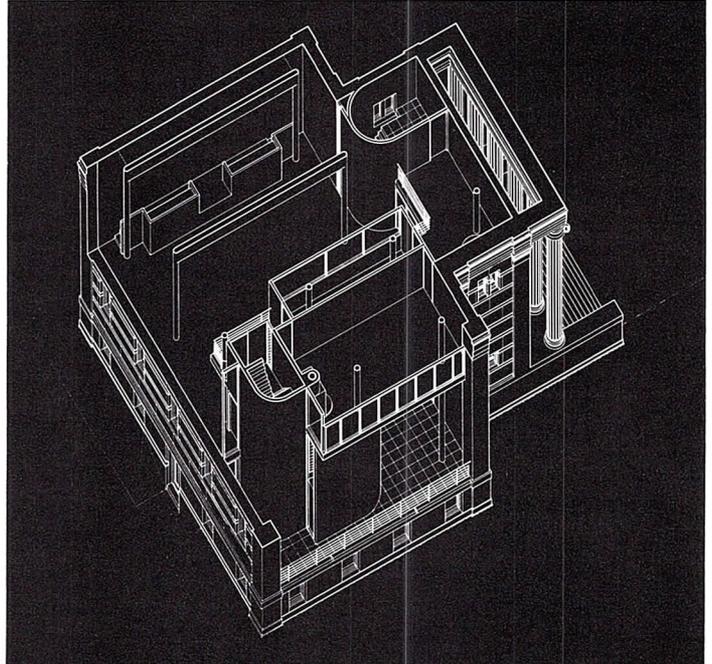
40, 41. *Whig Hall, Princeton, N.J. Gwathmey/Siegel, architects, 1970-72.*



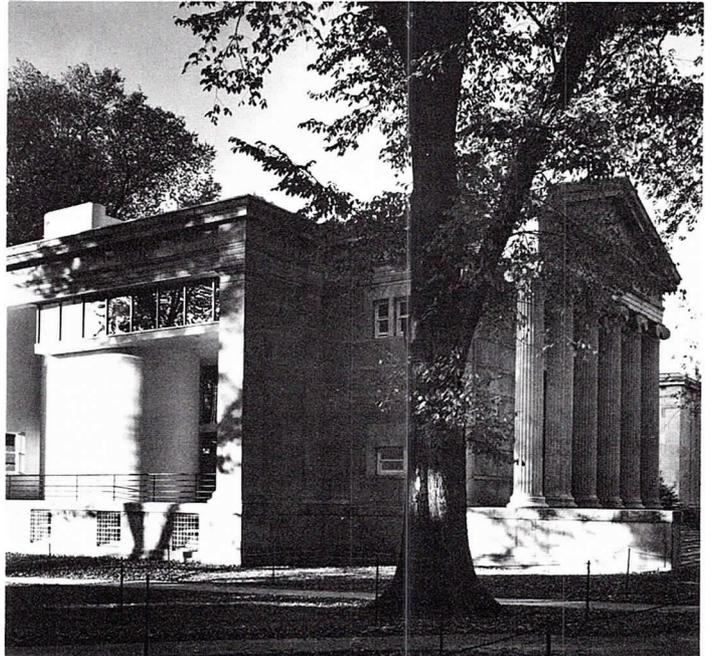
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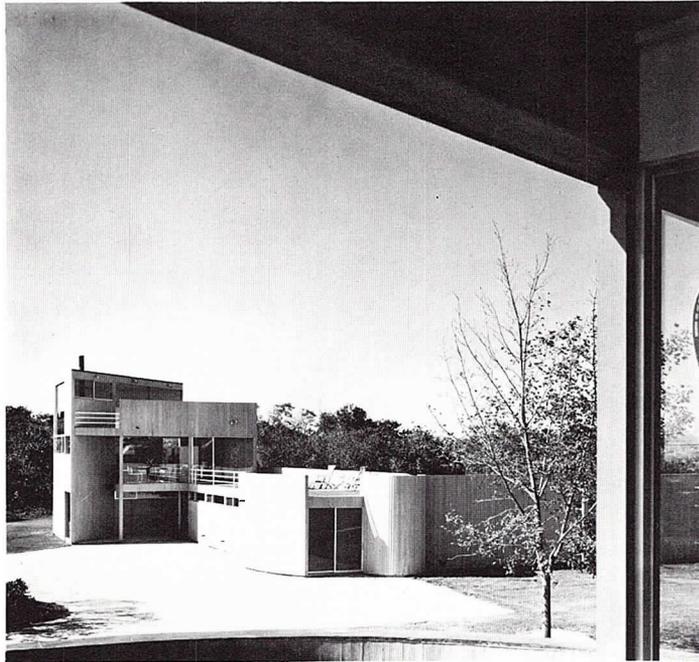
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42. *Tolan Residence, Amagansett, N.Y. Gwathmey/Siegel, architects, 1970-71. View from Gwathmey Residence.*

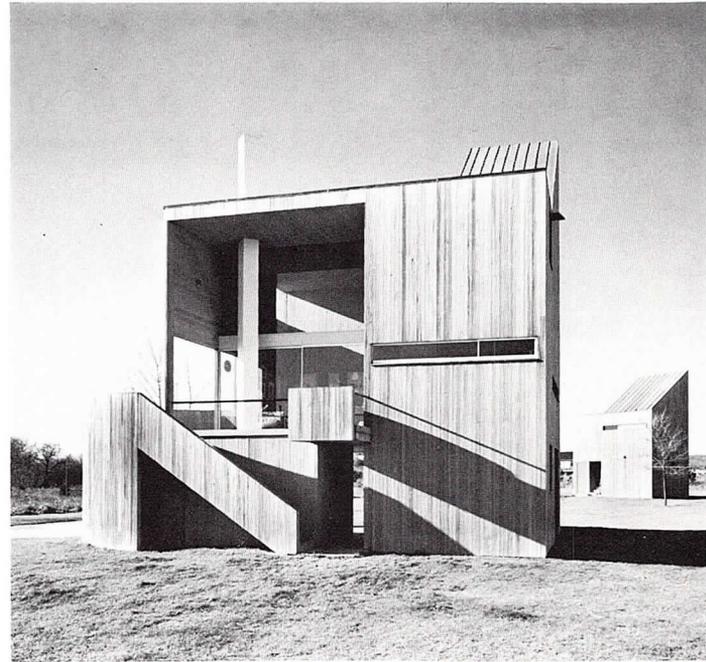
43. *View showing Gwathmey Residence in background.*



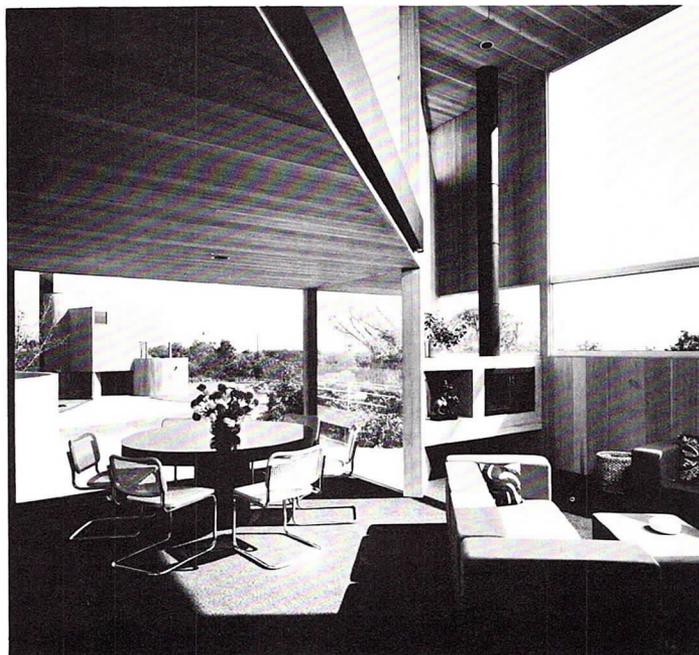
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44. *Gwathmey Residence and Studio, Amagansett, N.Y. Gwathmey/Siegel, architects, 1965-67.*

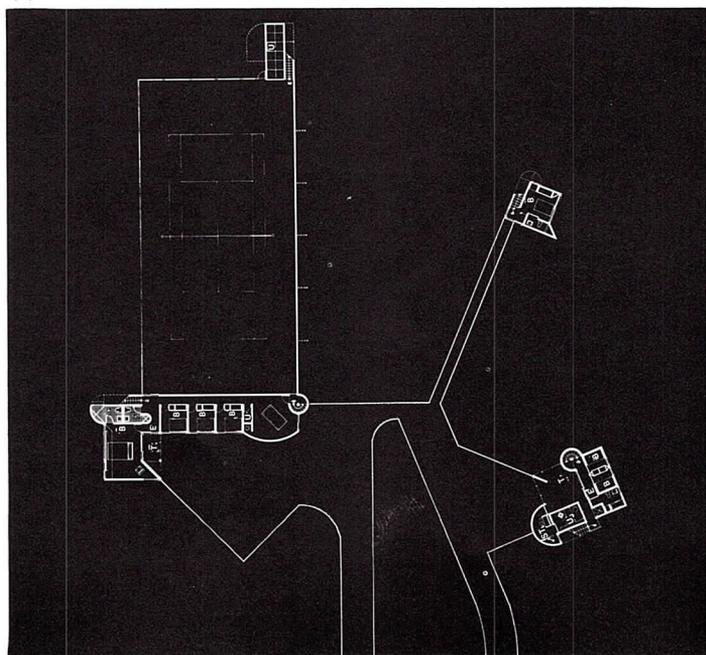
45. *Gwathmey Residence and Studio, Tolan Residence. Ground floor plan.*



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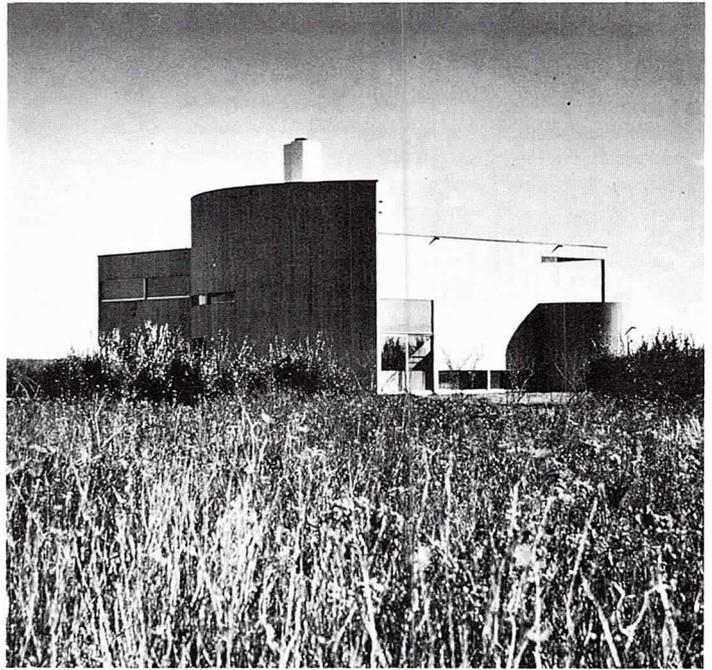


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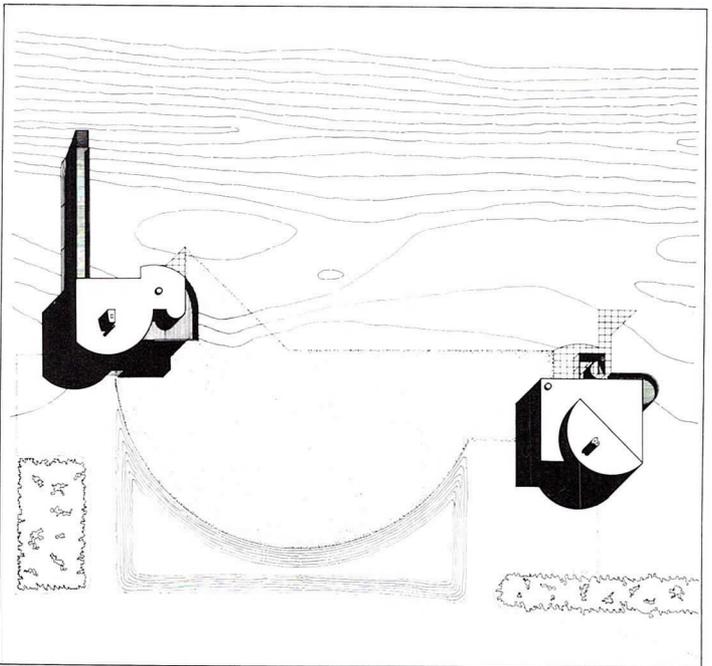
standing isolated on the Princeton University campus, is opened on one side so as to allow a Puristic assemblage of white volumes to emerge (fig. 41). In the belly of academic purity there lives the dawning nucleus of the avant-garde: this is what the surprising assemblage of Whig Hall wishes to express metaphorically. Such a foreshortening of historical perspective is stated without any polemic intention: the Ionic temple and the Purist quotation are complementary to each other and seemingly parallel in time, and — as if time itself were suspended — reduced to an eternal present.

A suspended tonality — once again, but not by chance either — for the magic box of Whig Hall metaphysically evokes a section, an X-ray of the building's own "soul." The dream vision of the nineteenth-century temple, brought to light through the intervention of the architect/psychoanalyst, reveals an unconscious pregnant with the future — were it not that the entire operation is conducted in the past tense.

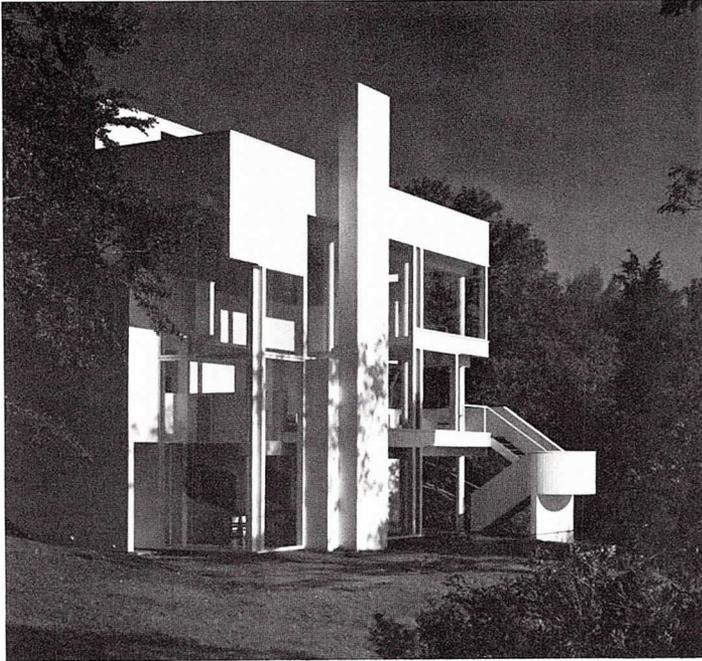
The Gwathmey Residence and Studio of 1965 and the Tolan Residence of 1970 (figs. 42-45) are neither part of the same professional wisdom which informed the Perinton Housing project, nor do they share the surrealistic stupor of Whig Hall. The three blocks, located on the southern shore of Long Island, employ in plan the technique of sectioned geometric solids so dear to Hejduk. The regulating lines which guide the placement of the three volumes are fixed by the irregular contours of the paths and open spaces. There results a sort of imaginary explosion, of which the three buildings on the flat land of Long Island are but residual fragments. And, like fragments, they are irregular and random, while their disposition studiously avoids any conventional relationships among these three splintered bodies. This is no longer a "Cardboard Architecture," but rather a return to the material nature of architecture which led Frampton to speak of a possible inclusion of the Gwathmey House into the American wood-building tradition.³¹ But the same material density, the same taste for the fragment, the very same method of composing through an apparently disconnected geometry — which is nonetheless tied together by complex interrelationships — characterizes the Bridgehampton Residences of 1969 (figs. 46, 47).



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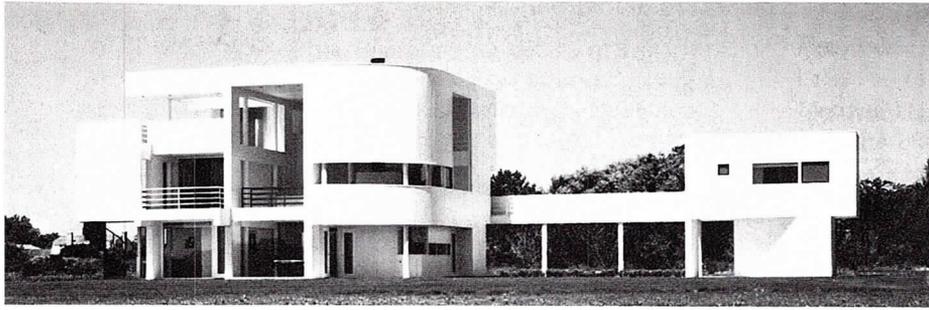
48. *Smith House, Darien, Conn.*
Richard Meier and Associates,
architects, 1965-67.

49. *Saltzman House, East Hampton,*
N.Y. Richard Meier and Associates,
architects, 1967-69.

We are thus at the opposite poles of either Whig Hall or Eisenman's conceptualism. Yet, even these works end up being signs astonished at their own presence in the world. The "commonplace," into which Hejduk locks his geometry, is only apparently "overplace": for, where Hejduk places an addition sign, Gwathmey/Siegel put in a multiplication sign; the results differ only superficially.

The work of Richard Meier departs even further from the linguistic absolutism of Hejduk, Eisenman and Graves than does the work of Gwathmey/Siegel. Should anyone wish to challenge the consistency of the Five, Meier's work would offer the best proof. It is not by chance that, in the 1972 edition of the book on the Five, Meier is represented only by the Smith House of 1965 (fig. 48) and by the Saltzman House of 1967 (fig. 49). These villas have a layered structure, in which the relationship between volumetric order and transparency, and the analysis of possible geometric articulations, suggest certain analogies to the syntactic purity of Eisenman and even to some of the ambiguous metaphors of Michael Graves. Without doubt, the two villas invoke a "charmed and magical" atmosphere in their absolute isolation from their context. This might even make them suspect of historicism. Nor is a sense of irony lacking: for example, in the Smith House, we notice the contrast between the weightlessness of the glass block and the mass of the chimney. There is more: the cut which exposes the internal structure of the Saltzman House, so reminiscent of Loos at the Tzara House, is there as if to challenge the ambiguous geometry of the prism with the great rounded corner built on the diagonal grid.

The Saltzman House is certainly within the realm of that same suspended tonality which we have recognized in Whig Hall and in the Bye House. The Old Westbury House of 1971 (fig. 50) is even more a part of it. The extent of its length permits us to recall the metaphysical distillations of Purism in the work of Figini and Pollini (fig. 52), the works of Dujker or of Howe & Lescaze in the 1930s.³² Yet in the Old Westbury House, the long ramp, which joins the refined residential volumes, is housed in a glazed gallery with a semi-circular roof — an evocation of the Victorian

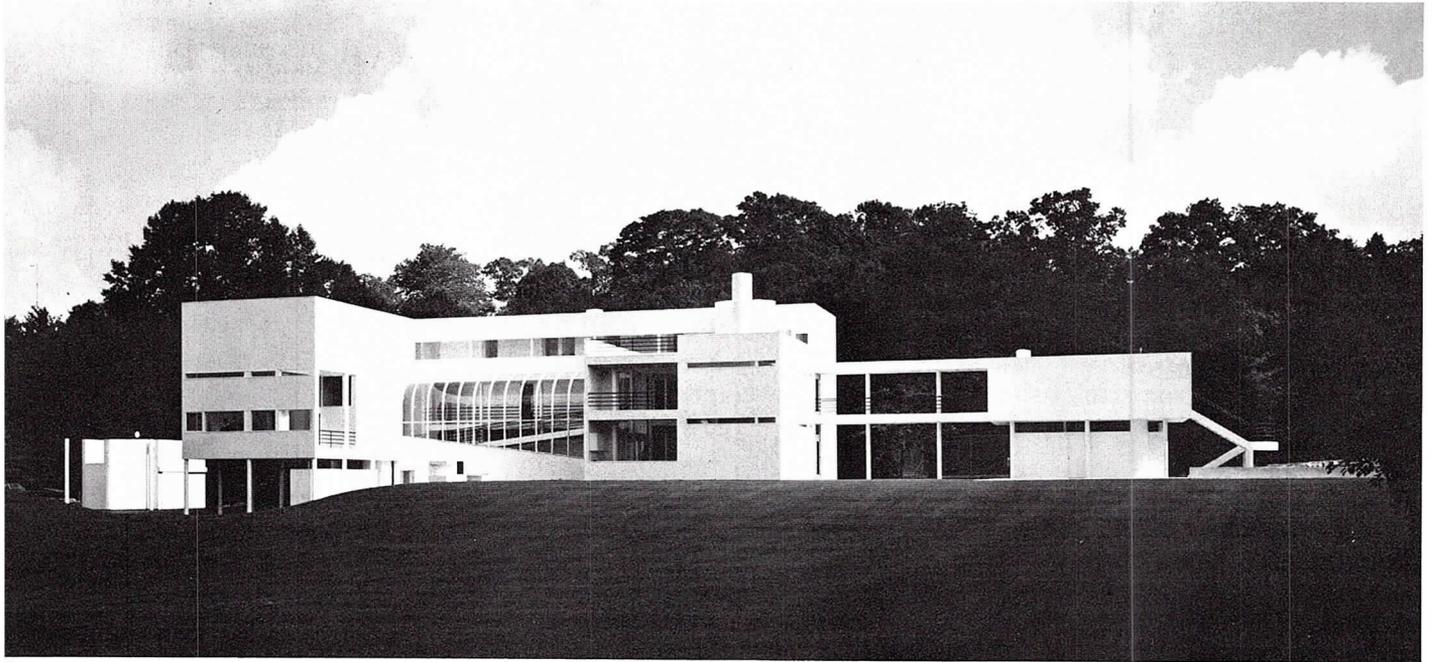


50. *Old Westbury House, N.Y.*
Richard Meier and Associates,
architects, 1969-71.

51. *Entry facade.*

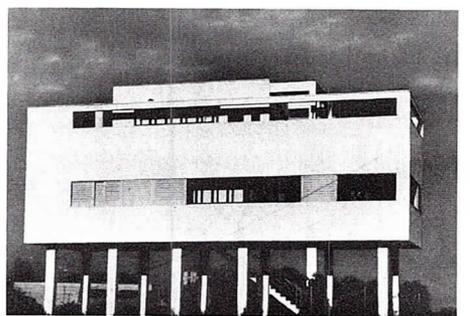
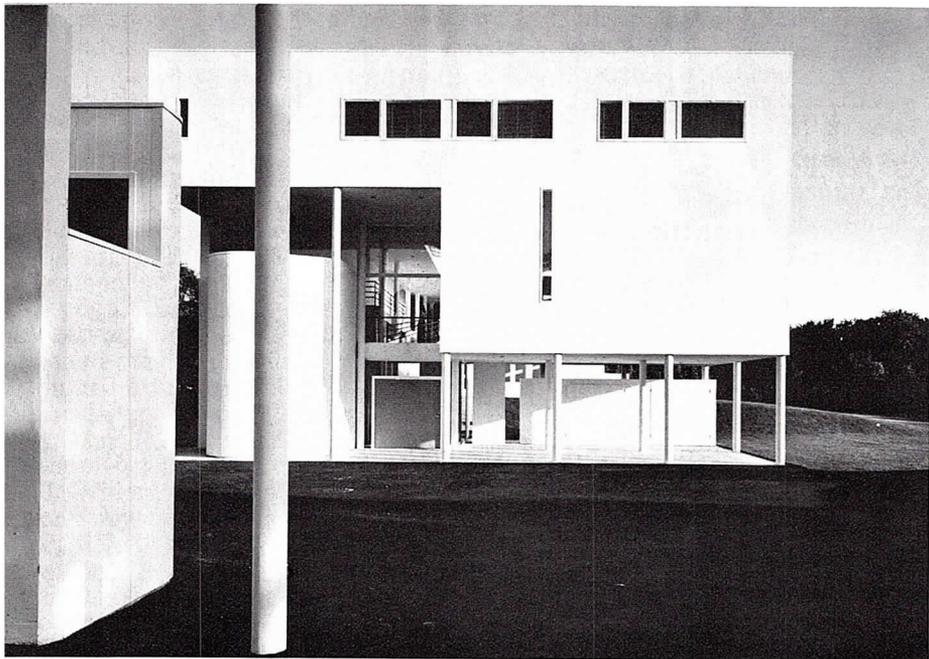
52. *House in Milan, Italy.* Luigi
Figini, architect, 1934-35.

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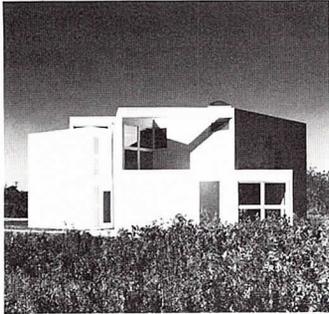
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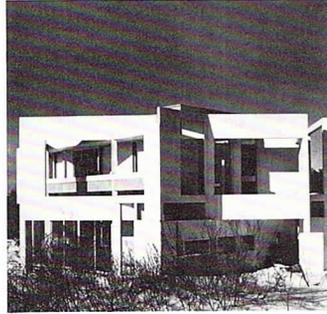


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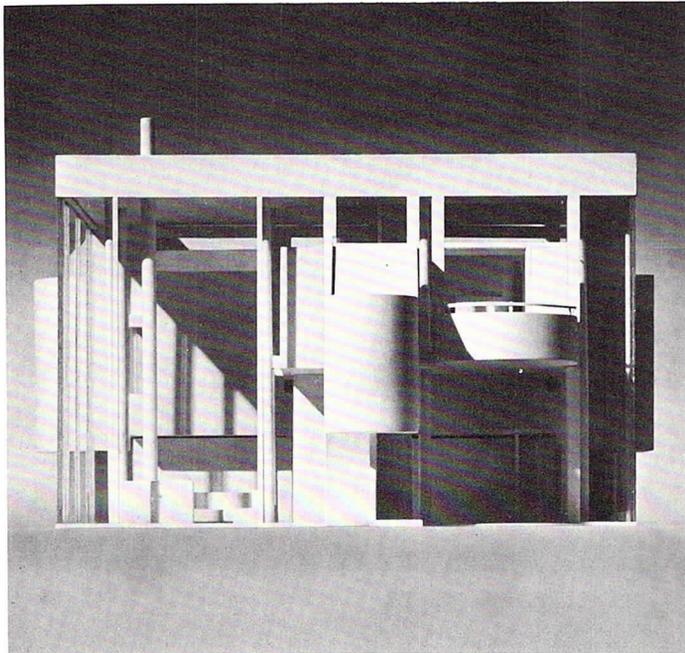
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greenhouses, perhaps mediated by James Stirling's own reinterpretations. Without doubt, such a brutal interruption in the simple concatenation of volumes introduces a further ironic note, similar to the entry face of the house (fig. 51) where the thin steel columns are laid bare to support the "suspended" upper floor and to reveal the curved block set into the lower recess.

The fact that a circulation element is emphasized in the Old Westbury House must give pause for reflection. In a recent presentation of his works, Richard Meier, while discussing design tools, gave principal importance to circulation systems in the interior as well as on the exterior of his buildings.³³ Graves and Hejduk also emphasize the "circulation" component. Vertical or horizontal circulation systems played a precise role in Le Corbusier's small-scale architecture: namely, to reproduce within each single building the type of free relationship between street and buildings which he had postulated for interventions on the urban scale. Meier follows neither the Corbusian symbolism nor Hejduk's abstractions. Circulation systems, as well as the clarity of organization, bearing structures, and access points, are for Meier simply materials of design. They must be correlated in complex ways once their roles have been selectively analyzed. It is the complex web of their relationships which makes the architecture so compelling. In Meier's work, typological invention is the basis for an effort to completely recapture the functional aspects of language.

Were architecture to be a dream of pure structure, Eisenman is the one who, more than any other in America, comes closest to achieving it. If, however, architecture is a "system of systems," if its expressions belong to different but interwoven areas of language, then it is Meier who is able to grasp those relationships. Compare two works apparently based on the same theme: House III by Eisenman (fig. 54) and the Hoffman House of Meier (fig. 53). In the former, as we have seen, the two rotated solids present without commentary the result of the arbitrary act which has placed them thus. In the latter, what matters most is the jointing between forms, their synthesis. Models for this type of approach, however distant, seem to be found in the Kallenbach House of Gropius and Adolf Meyer of 1921 and in

53. *Hoffman House, East Hampton, N.Y. Richard Meier and Associates, architects, 1966-67.*

54. *House III, Lakeville, Conn. Peter Eisenman, architect, 1971.*

55. *Three houses, Colony am Rupenhorn, Berlin. Luckhardt and Anker, architects.*

56. *House in Pound Ridge, Conn. Richard Meier and Associates, architects, 1969.*

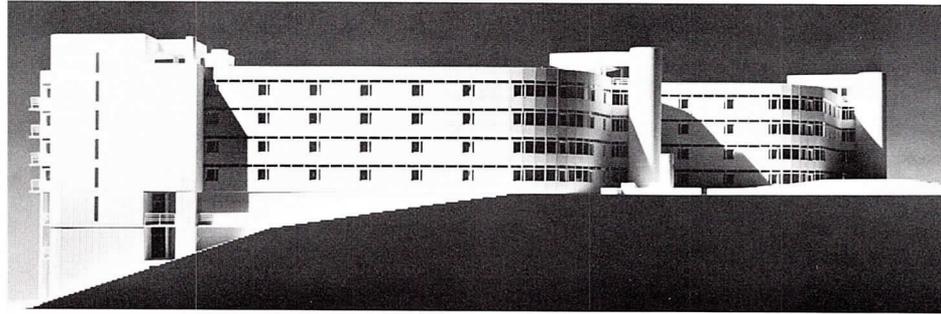
57. *Olivetti Tarrytown residences, project. Richard Meier and Associates, architects, 1971. Model.*

58. *Axonometric.*

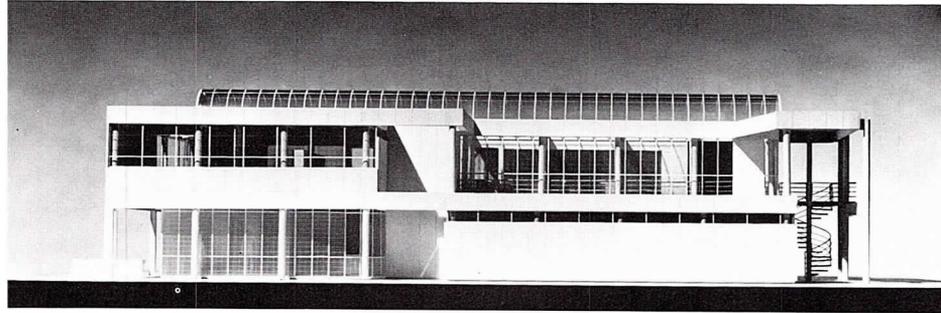
59. *Olivetti branch prototype, project, 1971. Model.*

60. *Olivetti Washington branch, project, 1971. Axonometric.*

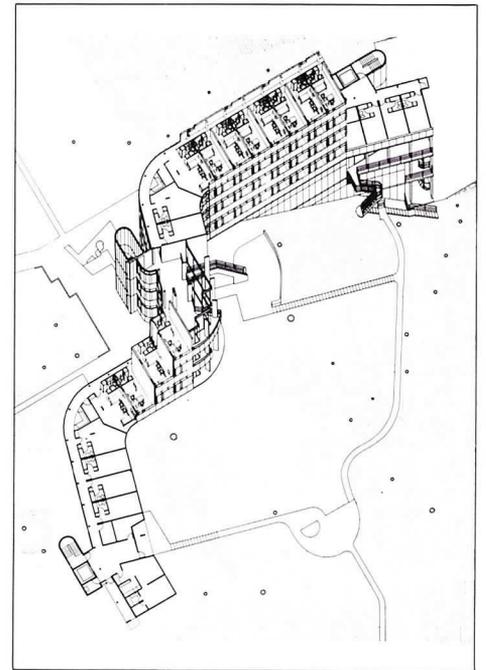
61. *Olivetti branch prototype, project, 1971. Axonometric.*



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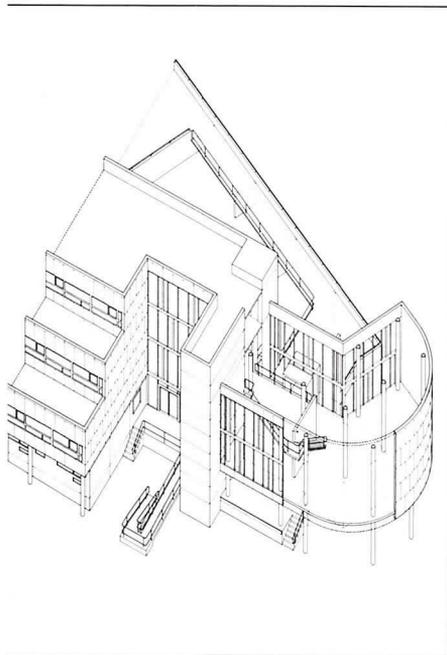


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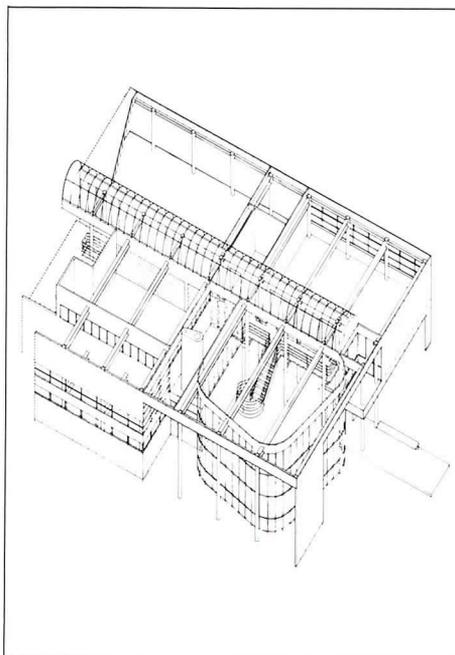


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62. *Health and Physical Education Facility, Fredonia, N.Y. Richard Meier and Associates, architects, 1968. Axonometric.*

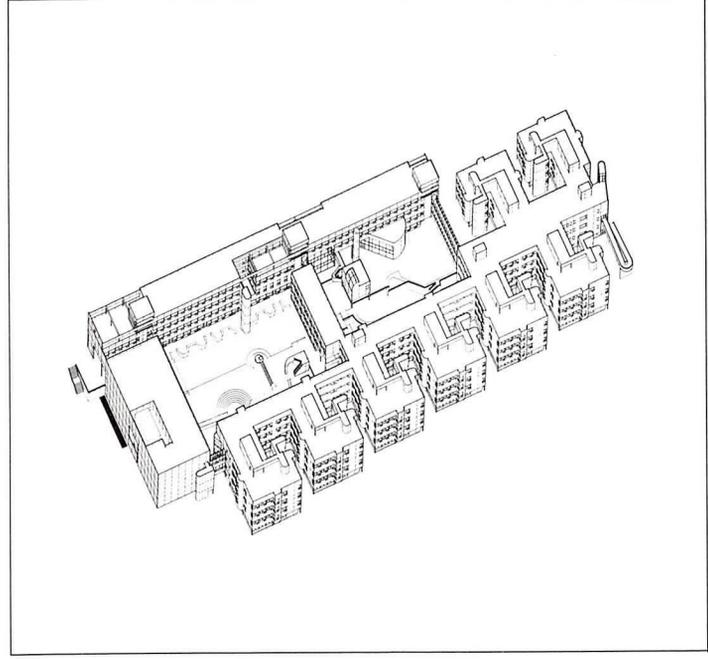
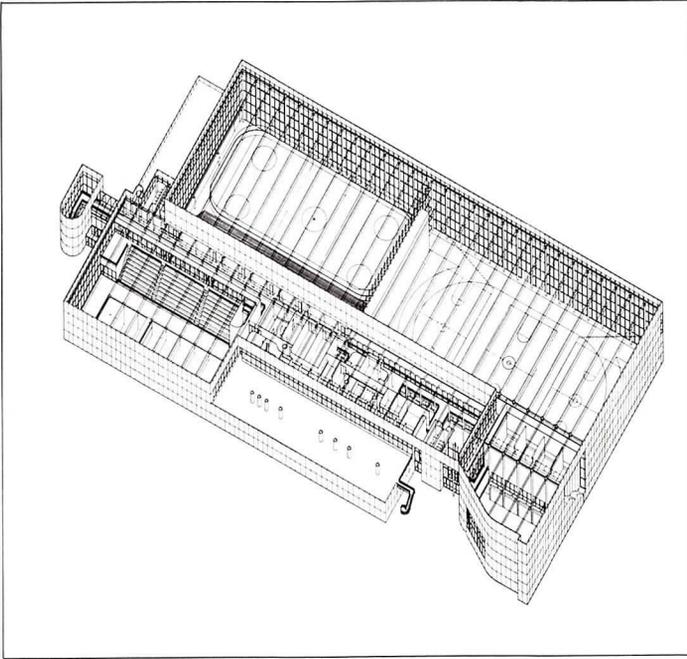
64, 65. *Two of seven housing projects, Manhattan. Richard Meier and Associates, with Emery Roth & Sons, architects, 1972. Axonometrics.*

63. *Bronx Developmental Center, N.Y. Richard Meier and Associates, architects, 1970-76. Axonometric.*

66. *Douglas House, Michigan. Richard Meier and Associates, architects, 1971-73.*

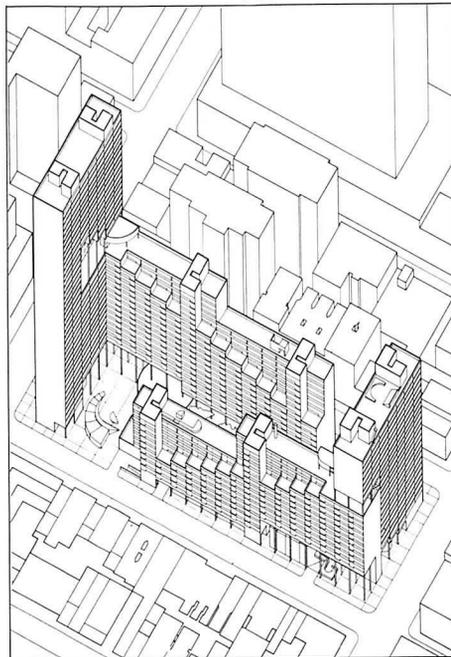
67. *External stairway.*

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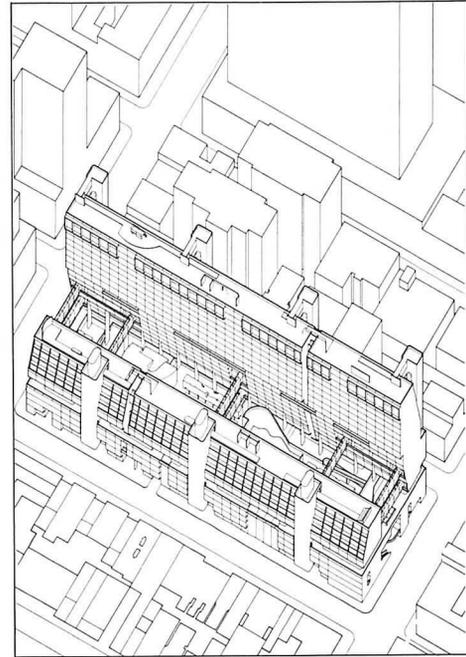


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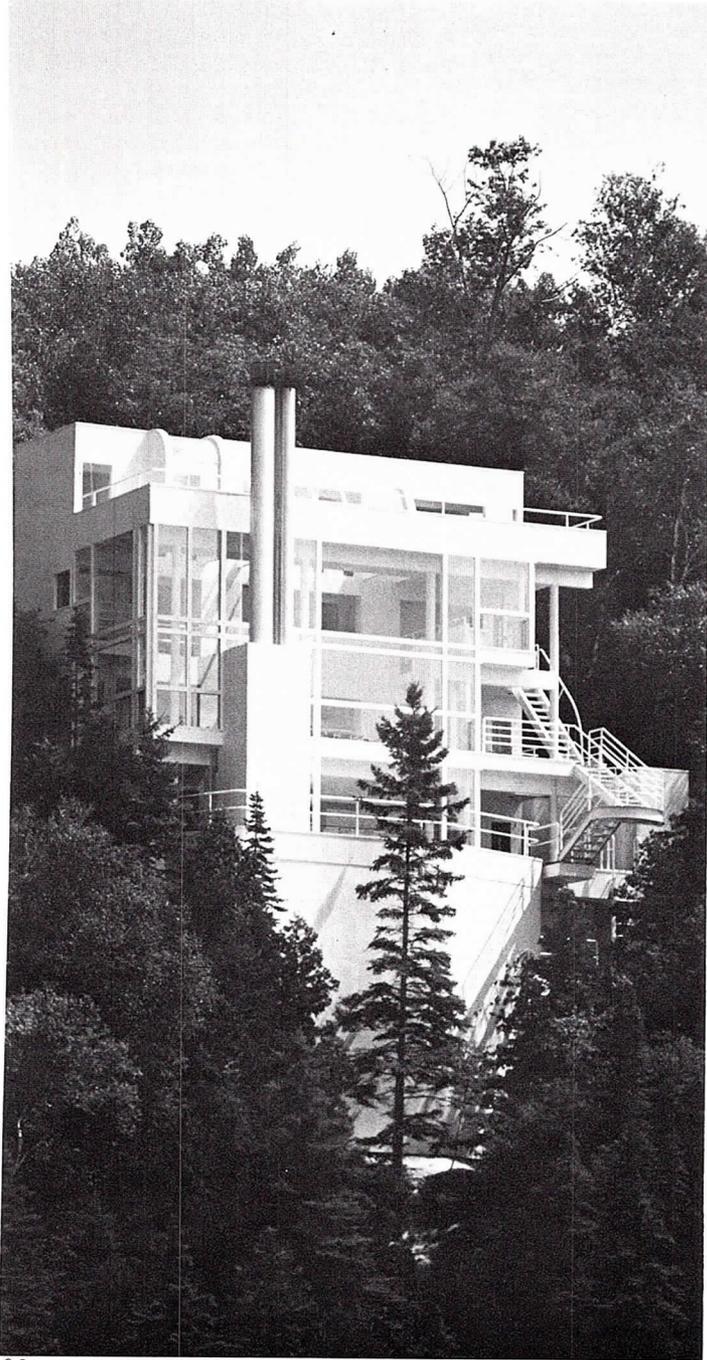
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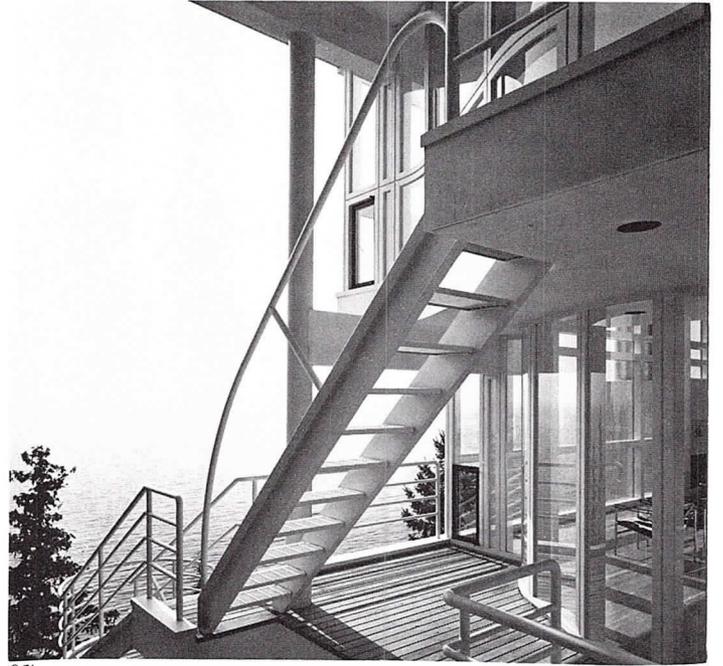
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68. *Twin Parks Northeast, Bronx.*
Richard Meier and Associates,
architects, 1969-73.

71. *Twin Parks Southeast, Bronx.*
Giovanni Pasanella, architect, 1973.

69. *Axometric.*

70. *Westbeth Artists' Housing,*
Manhattan. Richard Meier and
Associates, architects, 1967-70.
Interior courtyard.

68 several designs by Luckhardt and Anker (fig. 55). In other words, Meier is proposing a method wherein the initial separation of components and the testing of a codified typology, by means of free variation, in no way obstruct their eventual synthesis. By means of this recovery of the "function of the sign" — wherein we define "function" in its broadest terms — Meier advances a tacit criticism of Eisenman's conceptualistic reduction of sign and structure. Geometry is no longer cruelly chained to its own harrowing silence, there is no search for "deep structures," or any attempt to extract multiple meanings from the signs, as Graves attempts to do. Meier's use of geometry also excludes any attempt to regain semantic values: the articulation of his signs is but a testimony to the presence of objects which display their function in absolute clarity.

"Meier's architecture," writes Joseph Rykwert, "is always understated, and yet always assertive through its insistently complex geometry, which he somehow always reduces to appearing absolutely inevitable. That is his strength: the assertion of an inevitable order, which exalts the functional patterns of the occupation. Meier is a maker of objects whose power is in the obsessive elegance of their cut, in their cool though exemplary and somehow didactic detachment from their surroundings."³⁴

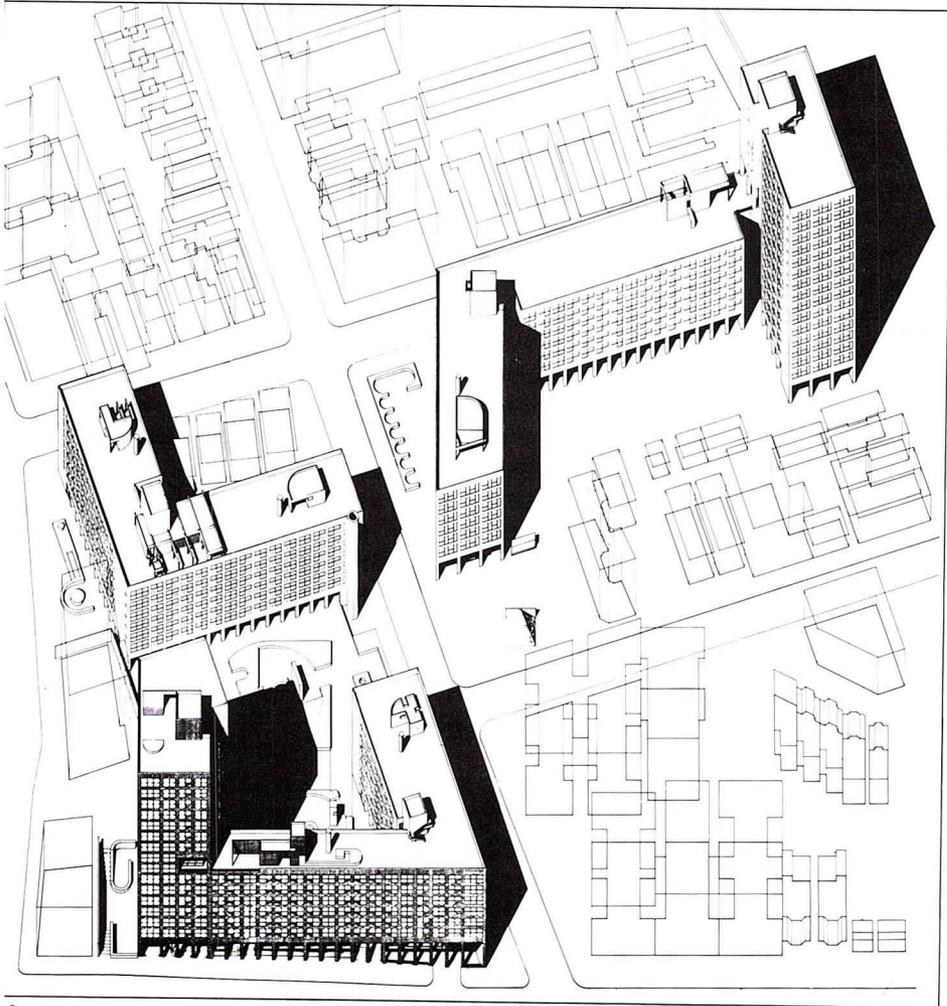
This may be true for works such as the house in Pound Ridge (fig. 56), where the themes of the Smith House and the Saltzman House overlap in the poetics of "dynamic equilibrium," that leave nothing to their historical models. It is no longer proper to speak of "nostalgia" in the presence of a classic example of "survival" rather than "revival." However, Rykwert's judgment may still appear pertinent for the four designs developed by Meier for the American Division of the Olivetti Corporation (figs. 59-61), or for the prototype of flexible industrial buildings alongside a highway.³⁵ These designs display, among other things, Meier's unprejudiced sense of typological experimentation. (For example, the use of a serpentine plan for the Olivetti residences in Tarrytown, 1971 (figs. 57, 58), wherein the winding of the main body and the concentration of service cores and vertical access at nodal points on the curves, spells out criticism of Aalto's Dormitories at M.I.T. in Cambridge.)

But we maintain that the meaning of Richard Meier's work is not fully comprehensible without considering the relationship he has established between his research into forms and his large-scale design. It may be possible to grasp some of this in his Health and Physical Education Facility for the State University College of Fredonia of 1968 (fig. 62) and in his Bronx State School in New York City of 1970-76 (now under construction) (fig. 63). As Meier himself points out, the enlargement of the scale at the Fredonia complex corresponds to the same organizing principles that are found in the Smith House and the Saltzman House. Different nuclei are linked to a spine which in turn gives them life and configuration. One may here criticize the labored composition formed by I. M. Pei's circular campus space and tangential juxtaposition of the building to it. But at the Bronx State School, a residential complex for 750 mentally retarded children, the deployment of units around the central space fully recaptures the typically urban qualities of the relationship between public and private spaces. In other words, Meier seems to go back over, though in a deeply critical manner, some of the stages already travelled by the classical "masters" of the Modern Movement: from the self-sufficiently perfect configuration of objects rich in metaphorical reference, to the institutional values of technology, and finally to their reconfiguration within the urban fabric.

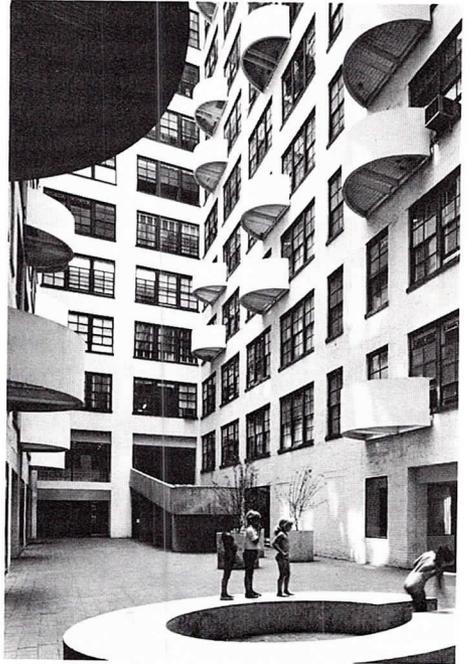
In the Douglas House on Lake Michigan in 1973 (fig. 66), Meier continues an investigation, begun with the Saltzman House and the house at Pound Ridge, of a language of "oppositions," of a denied dialectic between the total transparency of the front and the solid compartmented rear. One must highlight here the compositional "mechanism": in section we find once again a "machine age" modelling vaguely resembling Stirling's. But what matters more is that the building deliberately relates to its environment by means of an emphasis on external stairs (fig. 67). The two stairs and the elevated bridge, which lead directly from the hillside to the topmost terrace, form an independent circulation. The interior corridor and the hallways connect to this system. In this manner, the Douglas House establishes a dialectic between the independence of the object itself and its surrounding space. We believe that we must read this as a



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72. *Afrikanischestrasse housing*,
Berlin. Mies van der Rohe, architect,
1925.



72.

from this conscious attempt to conflate two ultimately antithetical models drawn from nineteenth-century urban theory.”³⁸ The *immeuble à rédents* does after all make an explicit appearance in one of Meier’s preliminary designs for Twin Parks. As built, however, this form is cut apart, deforming itself, following or altering the existing street lines, as the case may be, and coming to a formal conclusion in the tall blocks at both ends. What we have called “realism” in Meier’s work is fulfilled at Twin Parks. The ability of the prototype of Hénard and Le Corbusier to function as the universal remedy of urban ills has been challenged. There is not even a nostalgic longing for that particular prototype. Rather, it is quoted with detachment, it is criticized, and it is immersed into a contradictory reality — the Bronx slums. It is as if one wished to underline the limitations of the intervention, that its importance is as a social service which stands in the face of metropolitan conflicts. (And Twin Parks will heighten these conflicts rather than resolve them.) This explains why Meier chose to forego any linguistic exploration in this design. The concise tautness of the wall surfaces follows from the self-imposed denial of any typological invention: there is no neo-Brutalism here, smug in its materiality, but rather a subtle cadence of rhythmical holes wherein any minimal variation accentuates the compactness of the wall itself, and heightens its despairing unity. The *assonance* of this work with existing buildings has therefore a deep meaning. And even in this work there is no populist approach; the refinement of clean cut edges on the walls and the geometric deformations of the main blocks exclude any and all sentimentalism. This linguistic reduction is based on another model, Mies’s “less is more.” And, to be precise, it is the Mies of the residential units on Berlin’s Afrikanischestrasse (1925) (fig. 72) rather than the Mies of America. We therefore have an architecture which presents itself on two levels: the one, replete with social utility, and the other reserved for those who are able to read the deep meaning in the refusal to charge built forms with impossible myths.

Thus, the analysis of the small scale works of 1965-1970 has as its result one of the best works in the field of contemporary American housing. The experimentation with the possibilities for the independent expressive function of lan-

70 premise of Meier’s urban housing.³⁶

Let us look at the seven designs which Meier and his associates have prepared, together with Emery Roth & Sons, for Madison Associates and Tishman Reality and Construction Corporation (figs. 64, 65). It is a development in mid-Manhattan with six-hundred residential units and 300,000 sq. ft. of office and retail space. From a single and simple rectangular block set into the central green (rich with reference to Le Corbusier), we pass on to a richly varied articulation of masses, and then to a separate tall building connected to a stepped-back volume. This corresponds to a second development, characterized by a stepping outward. It is a difficult exploration, one which cannot be considered as a general model. And like the other, Meier halts his explorations at the edges of a utopia: should the continuity of the circulation system be directly projected on to the urban scale, it would still appear as the “thread of Ariadne,” giving direction to the labyrinth of forms. Yet that “direction” is neither unique nor final: it does not *resolve*, it does not attempt to erase the difficulties or the contrariness of the intervention itself, it does not attempt to create an “oasis of order.” It is possible to speak of a deep “critical realism” in Meier’s large-scale designs. This is well shown in the exceptional renovation of Westbeth (fig. 70) — in the first of New York City’s special zoning districts (FHA sponsored) — and by Twin Parks Northeast, designed for the U.D.C. (figs. 68, 69).³⁷

Kenneth Frampton rightly compares Meier’s solution to that of Giovanni Pasarella for Twin Parks Southwest (fig. 71); the latter is a mannered revival of the *Unité* at Marseilles, where the relationship between public and private space is undefined. The alternative advanced by Meier oscillates between accepting the existing urban grid or deforming it — a deformation which would be created as a function of the precise definition of the social use of spaces. “One may argue,” writes Frampton, “that the overall *parti* of the Meier scheme stems from a curious compound of Le Corbusier (after Hénard), on the one hand, and Sittesque notions of urban space, on the other. The usual formal and social interaction that the Meier scheme invokes, in conjunction with the existing urban context, no doubt derives

guage must (provisionally) conclude with a painful reflection on the limits of language itself and on its capacity for typological invention.

From Hejduk to Meier: the avant-garde, having been revisited, undergoes an autopsy. We have tried to point out in what manner the Five are far from being a homogeneous group. But at the same time, they have helped us trace a section through a particular state of mind, one which twists through present-day architectural culture in America. And we might add that, unlike the mysticism of the Kahn school or the facile ironies of Venturi, what is most characteristic of this state of mind is a sort of backing off from the original traditions of the avant-garde — traditions which must be pieced back together in order to form a continuum.

No one ought to be deceived by the optimistic declarations or by the finality of the positions taken by the Five (or the more theoretical among them). In 1972, Colin Rowe spoke of an “expanse of simulacra,” and more recently others have wanted to see in their work a sort of “repeatable coercion.”³⁹ Their images and their themes tend to confirm only one reality: the strength and cruelty of the golden gable within which this intelligentsia is locked, and the limits of this cell where they are only able to leave *graffiti* on the underside of the walls, bearing, if anything, mute testimony to their laconic presence.

- 72 1. See Bruno Torri, "Film come revival," *Il Revival*, Giulio Carlo Argan, ed. (Milan: Mazzotta, 1974), p. 289.
2. The cultural homogeneity of the Five is repeatedly asserted in Arthur Drexler's preface, *Five Architects* (New York: Wittenborn & Co., 1972: Oxford University Press, 1975); and in Paul Goldberger, "Architecture's 'Big Five' Elevate Form," *The New York Times*, 26 November 1973, pp. 33-4; Bill Marvel, "Architecture as seen by the Eyes of the Whites," *The National Observer*, 22 June 1974, p. 20. But the most violent critics of the Five generally underscore their differences, as is apparent in the polemical articles in *Architectural Forum*, May 1973 (Robert Stern, "Stompin' at the Savoye," pp. 46-8; Charles Moore, "In Similar States of Undress," pp. 53-4; Romaldo Giurgola, "The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie," pp. 56-7). In answer to these criticisms, put forth by the Yale/Penn axis, see Paul Goldberger, "Should anyone care about the 'New York Five'? . . . or about their critics, the 'Five on Five'?" *Architectural Record*, Feb. 1974, pp. 113-6.
3. Kenneth Frampton, "Frontality vs. Rotation," *Five Architects*, p. 9.
4. John Hejduk: "He [Mondrian] continually urged architects to delve into the spatial ideas of his paintings; however, the architects of his time apparently were not interested in adopting the diamond configuration. One of the major architectural arguments of today still concerns the dialectic between the concepts of two-dimensional and three-dimensional space" (*Three Projects*, John Hejduk [New York: The Cooper Union School of Art and Architecture, 1969], p. 3).
5. *Ibid.*, p. 2.
6. In analyzing the experimental films of Richter and Eggeling, note that both Hilberseimer and Van Doesburg speak of the discipline of the elementary as a means to explore a new *Gesamtkunstwerk*. See Theo Van Doesburg, "Abstrakte filmbeelding," *De Stijl*, IV, no. 5, 1921, pp. 71-5; see also Ludwig Hilberseimer, "Bewegungskunst," *Sozialistische Monatshefte*, vol. 27, no. 56, p. 467. Quite naturally, the historical allusion to the "Dyagonale Symphonie" concerns only the technique of assembling curvilinear forms in a diagonal field: in fact, Hejduk would appear foreign to the mystical and spiritualistic atmosphere into which Eggeling is immersed. See Louise O'Konor, *Vikings Eggeling 1880-1925: Artist and Film Maker* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1971).
7. See Roger Yee, "Metamorphosis," *Progressive Architecture*, July 1974, pp. 96-102.
8. As quoted by David Morton, "The Bye House: Second Wall House," *Progressive Architecture*, June 1976, p. 100. The first Wall House has been extensively published in *Projects/John Hejduk, Architect*, introduction by Franz Oswald (catalogue to the exhibition at the Fondation I Corbusier, Paris, October 1972).
9. See S. Frederick Starr, "Konstantin Melnikov," *Architectural Design*, vol. 39, no. 7, 1969, p. 366.
10. Mario Gandelsonas, "Linguistics in Architecture," *Casabella*, no. 374, 1973, p. 22; *idem*, "On reading architecture," *Progressive Architecture*, no. 2, March 1972, pp. 69-76. The discussion on the supremacy of the syntactic dimension on this semantic is clearly presented in the lecture by Peter Eisenman, "Notes on Conceptual Architecture II: Dual Deep Structures." In this, Eisenman challenges the iconological research of the Warburg Institute, of Wittkower and of Colin Rowe, with research on the intrinsic nature of the sign. This work was carried out by Tomás Maldonado, Abraham Moles and Gui Bonsiepe.
11. Peter Eisenman, "Toward a continuing theory of architecture," unpublished.
12. Manfredo Tafuri, *Architecture and Utopia, Design and Capitalistic Development* (Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press, 1975).
13. Peter Eisenman, "Introduction to Cardboard Architecture," *Casabella*, no. 374, 1973, p. 24. See also, *idem*, "Cardboard Architecture: House I," *Five Architects*, pp. 15-17.
14. Aleksej Eliveevic Krucenyckh, *Deklaracija slova kak takovogo* ("Declaration of the word as such") (Petrograd 1913), paras. 5, 3, 1, 6. See also Vladimir Markov, *Russian Futurism: A History* (London: Macgibbon & Kee, Ltd. 1969), p. 130.
15. Peter Eisenman, "Conceptual Architecture. From the perception of form to its hidden meanings," *Contemporanea*, II, 1973-74; *idem*, "Notes on Conceptual Architecture," lecture.
16. See conclusion of Alan Greenberg, "The Lurking American Legacy," *Architectural Forum*, May 1973, pp. 54-56; see also Jaquelin Robertson, "Machines in the Garden," *Architectural Forum*, May 1973, pp. 49-53.
17. Frampton, "Frontality vs. Rotation," *Five Architects* pp. 9-10.
18. Peter Eisenman, "To Adolph Loos & Bertold Brecht," *Progressive Architecture*, no. 5, 1974, p. 92. Compared to the architect's lucid statement, the articles of the critic David Morton ("One man's fit . . .," pp. 92-4) and of the house owner, Robert Miller ("I guess you win, Peter," pp. 94-8) appear superfluous and even counterproductive.
19. *Ibid.*
20. Colin Rowe, "Introduction," *Five Architects*, pp. 3-7.
21. "The New City: Architecture and Urban Renewal, exhibition, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1967. Also, *Another Chance for Housing: Low-Rise Alternatives* catalogue for exhibition of the same name, The Museum of

- Modern Art, New York, 1973, p. 29.
22. See catalogue to "Modern Architecture 1919-1939: Polemics, Books, Periodicals and Ephemera from the collection of Peter D. Eisenman," exhibition at Princeton University Library, New Jersey, February/April 1968; see also, Peter Eisenman "A Comment on the Exhibition," and R. J. Clark, "Library Notes," *Princeton University Library Chronicle*, vol. xxix, no. 3, 1968, pp. 216-8.
23. Carlo Belli, *Kn* (Milan: Il Milione, 1935). Concerning the history of Italian abstractionism between the wars and the architecture of the Como group — including Terragni, Lingeri, Cattaneo, Radice, etc. — see the well-documented work by Paolo Fossati, *L'immagine sospesa. Pittura e scultura astratte in Italia, 1934-1940* (Turin: Einaudi, 1971).
24. See Peter Eisenman, "From Object to Relationship I: Terragni's Casa Del Fascio," *Casabella*, no. 344, 1970; idem, "From Object to Relationship II: Giuseppe Terragni, Casa Giuliani Frigeria," *Perspecta*, 13/14, November 1972. But Eisenman's interpretation of the connections between object and relationship is best captured in an unusual article by him, "Notes on Conceptual Architecture: Towards a Definition," *Casabella*, no. 359/360, 1971. This article consists of four sheets without text, on whose white surfaces the author arrays fifteen numbered points, each of which corresponds to a footnote. The footnotes refer to texts on minimal art, conceptual art, to Chomsky's linguistics, and to the Panofskyan *Idea*.
25. William La Riche, "Architecture as the World Again," *Five Architects*, p. 39.
26. These aspects of the Rockefeller House are ignored in the jury's assignment of a design award in 1970. See *Progressive Architecture*, January 1970, p. 86.
27. See Peter Carl, "Towards a Pluralist Architecture," *Progressive Architecture*, no. 2, 1973, pp. 82-9. Peter Carl insists that spatial ambiguity is for Graves an element of language. In support he cites William Empson, *Seven Types of Ambiguity*, and concludes that: "The pluralist effort to confront imaginative realities in their full complexity, with its use of metaphoric language, its reintroduction of mythic themes, and its attention to psychological nuance, is an attempt to reintroduce the adjectival description crucial to perceptive experience."
28. Gandelsonas, "On reading architecture," *Progressive Architecture*; and La Riche "Architecture as the World Again?" *Five Architects*.
29. C. Ray Smith, "Painterly illusion and architectural reality," *Interiors*, September 1974, p. 185.
30. This and the following quotes are drawn from Roland Barthes, *The Pleasure of the Text* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1975), p. 31.
31. "One cannot but be reminded of those remarkable bath houses designed by Muschenheim and built on Long Island in the late 1930s. Are we in the presence here of a special East Coast subculture compounded of European abstraction and American technique?" (Frampton, "Frontality vs. Rotation," *Five Architects*, p. 12.)
32. Concerning the Smith House and the Old Westbury House, see David Morton, *Richard Meier* (Tokyo: Global Architecture, 1973); "Space that works for a large family," *House and Garden*, March 1972, p. 73; James D. Morgan, "A House that glows with crystalline transparency," *Architectural Record*, April 1972, p. 97. For the Hoffman house, East Hampton, see *Architectural Record Houses of 1969*.
33. Richard Meier, "Design Strategies," *Casabella*, May 1974, p. 17.
34. Joseph Rykwert, "The very personal work of Richard Meier & Associates," *Architectural Forum*, March 1972, p. 36.
35. Ibid.; Gerald Allen, "A traditional Image for Olivetti," *Architectural Record*, February 1974; "Four Projects for Olivetti in U.S.A.," *Domus*, March 1974.
36. Charles Hoyt, "Richard Meier: Public Space and Private Space," *Architectural Record*, July 1973, pp. 89-98.
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The Architecture of the Lodges; Ritual Form and Associational Life in the Late Enlightenment

Anthony Vidler

Since the publication of Emil Kaufmann's *Von Ledoux bis le Corbusier*, in 1933, the Modern Movement has been presented with a tantalizing vision of its own possible origins in eighteenth-century "revolutionary" architecture. Initially basing his analysis on the correspondence of geometric forms — the self-conscious "purism" of the two ages — Kaufmann himself moved closer to an appreciation of the distinct differences between the two architectures, visionary and modern. Nevertheless, students of political revolution have found endless comparisons between the "spheres" of Ledoux and Boullée and those of the Constructivists after 1917; latter-day communitarians have ransacked the "blue-prints" for social happiness produced by Fourier and his school, and the history of modern architecture as it apparently rose from the head of nineteenth-century eclecticism has been rewritten to include the French materialists, the so-called visionary architects Ledoux and Boullée, and of course the utopian socialists.

Rooted thus in eighteenth-century utopianism, the Modern Movement itself has been criticized for its own brand of utopia, characterized as "totalitarian" in implication, sterile in form, and Benthamite in its behaviorism. The facile connections made between the monumental images of Boullée and those of Speer's generation, have seemingly reinforced the argument.

The overt, and even the underlying, resemblances point, of course, not to a superficial revivalism, but to a common structure of social and economic production. It is hardly surprising that images, developed as the primitive idealizations of an emergent capitalism, should reappear or repeat themselves, during successive periods of readjustment to new forms of production, and successive attempts to impose an essentially bourgeois form of order on an increasingly mass social and political reality.

The following article seeks to examine a single instance of the "production of utopia" so to speak, from the emergence of a way of life, to its ideological justification and to its final reification in an ideal form. In trying to understand the *process* by which a social order defines its reality, and projects this reality as an ideal model for the reform of the rest of society, the author is concerned to uncover the specific *interests* that lie behind the construction of utopias in modern capitalism. Anthony Vidler has condensed this article from a chapter of a longer study soon to be published under the title, *Architecture and Reform in the Late Enlightenment*.
MG

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.

76 *If man is shaped by environment, his environment must be made human. If man is social by nature, he will develop his true nature only in society, and the power of his nature must be measured not only by the power of the separate individual but by the power of society. These and similar propositions are to be found almost literally in the French materialists.*

Karl Marx, *The Holy Family*, 1844.

The interdependence between environmental form and social relations has, since the Enlightenment, been a premise of bourgeois reform and social utopianism alike: the idea that man, drawing all knowledge from the world of sensations and experience, could be “perfected” in an environment especially constructed to this end. Posited first by the English materialists of the late seventeenth century, transformed and extended by the French *philosophes* of the mid-eighteenth century, the concept was adopted into architecture as the natural complement of institutional formation and factory organization. In its idealized state the idea permeated the utopistic schemes of the Revolutionary period as the willing and somewhat indiscriminating agent of progress and primitivism, civilized mores and natural anthropology, embellishment and rustication — of all plans, that is, that demanded environmental realization. Carefully describing the proper *milieux* of social happiness, the social philosophers and ideal architects of the late Enlightenment finally rendered utopia *accessible*. Utopia, hitherto a realm absolutely divided from the real world by a rift — an unpassable gulf — in the geography of fiction, was now within reach. No-place, in the critical paradigm of Thomas More, had been a place of no-return — the traveller might never retrace the path of the shipwreck or regain the lost map; now materialism had succeeded in transforming no-place into good-place. The site of utopia was the earth, the instrument of its production a newly constructed environment, and its inhabitants those of the world.

Two interlocking themes first characterized this “materialization” of utopia, so to speak: the first, identified with the doctrine of progress through reform of the *physical* environment, saw the advancement of mankind as an in-

exorable movement toward perfection as the product of civilized technique and industrial manufacture. The second, more concerned with the social relations of a too-rapidly changing condition of existence, believed that only through a correctly formed *social* environment could the natural bonds of human association be reestablished. Both ideals began with a fundamentally agrarian orientation, a rural site; the one out of the economics of the Physiocrats, the other drawn from the country morality of egalitarians like Morelly and Restif de la Bretonne. By the end of the eighteenth century they parted over the question of the machine, and were personified in the positivism of Saint-Simon, apostle of scientific progress, and in the romantic sensualism of Fourier, delineator of the New Amorous World. The history of “social” architecture throughout the nineteenth and well into the twentieth century has stressed the equivocal and often contradictory influence of these two propositions.

Nevertheless, the separate identity of environmental and communitarian ideals was by no means clearly seen in the late eighteenth century; nor was the ultimately reactionary nature of the commune versus the factory apparent in an economy still concerned to reinvigorate agriculture as the essentially productive base of wealth. The determining force of environment, physical or social, was assumed; the problem was to discover and apply the scientific laws of its operation and the *forms* of its realization. The spatial conditions for the production of progress on the one hand and community on the other were, of course, initially clear: Turgot spoke of the *route* toward perfection while Rousseau described the *circle* of brotherhood. Indeed the one was the path to the other. Perhaps the most characteristic formulation of this plan was Rousseau’s *Nouvelle Héloïse* where the hero, Saint Preux, traced an arduous route through the mountains before entering the asylum of friendship, the protected enclosure of his mentor’s domain. The Marquis de Sade described a similar spatial order, but inverted, in the impassable route to the Chateau of Silling and the hermetic center of libertinage it concealed.

These two novels were not utopias however — at least in the eyes of their authors. Indeed, the very word “utopia”

had, by the middle of the century, become suspect to materialist philosophy: Voltaire and Rousseau alike dismissed the notion that they were creating any kind of chimeras. Rather, their method demanded an attention to the observed rules of sensation, behavior in environment and social interaction. The ideal (as opposed to the utopian) community was to be fabricated out of the material of the real. Rousseau even outlined a project for a book that would, by observing human response to surroundings, provide “physical principles” for the science of happiness — “an external regimen which, varied according to circumstances, could hold, or sustain the soul in a state most favorable to virtue.” He entitled it “Sensitive morality, or the materialism of the wise man.” De Sade’s prescriptions were hardly less pragmatic.

The development of these ideas cannot be separated from forms of social relationship and environmental modification in *ancien regime* society itself; if the science of happiness was to be founded on anything it had to rest on careful observation of reality. The verb *utopier* (“to make utopia out of reality”), first appearing in the 1730s, was increasingly appropriated to describe the process of formalizing, of reconstructing the patterns of existence as idealizations, to serve as the promises of an imminent future. The emerging processes and class relationships of capitalistic production called for a covering ideology, a mythic mask, that would facilitate an essentially uneven development, that would smooth out the arrow of progress into an all-embracing formula for human redemption and seemingly equalize the evident disparities in fortune, dignity and well-being of those who were so brutally functionalized as units of labor value. The numerous attempts to find a right form for the factory “community” in England and France during this period, the search for the right physical plan for the institutions of civil and hygienic order, the extension of the architect’s purview to embrace the dwelling of the poor, were all in some measure aspects of this complex operation called *idealization*. The call for an expressive architecture, later termed “*architecture parlante*,” was inextricably linked to this need for stability during change — the classification, ordering and then the communication of social place through architectural form. Thus the charcoal burner was

endowed with his pyramid, the barrel maker with his barrel, the river surveyor with his giant drain, and so on.

The specific nature of the transformations of existence into ideal — from the charcoal burner’s pyre to the pyramidal furnace, the barrel hoop to the hoop-shaped house — has yet to be explored in detail; the concentration of historians on the “history of utopias” or the fantastic nature of “visions” separated from their conditions of production has hitherto obscured their real functionality. It is clear, however, that whether the idealizations refer to a primal past and the restoration of an archaic order, or to a projected future, a promised land that will come with time (and of course hard labor), they stand, at the beginning of our era, as the purveyors of interests inseparable from those of their bourgeois makers. Even as those “Robinsonades,” the primitive models of mid-eighteenth century anthropology, must be seen as the aesthetic guise of the real formation of a “civil society” based on competition and individuality, the “utopian” dreams of the turn of the century reveal themselves as the perfected clothing of essentially bourgeois modes of life: the paternal extension of the forms of satisfaction to the dissatisfied, the removal of contradictions from reality.

In this process many ideal schemers found their material in the forms of a very special kind of reality, a type of existence that itself had already taken on the quasi-ideal aspect of “lived utopia”; one that at the same time had, between 1750 and 1789, become one of the founding institutions of bourgeois social power: that is, the masonic societies, clubs and lodges that flourished throughout Europe and took root strongly in France in the thirty years before the Revolution. In the long process that might be called the “making of the middle classes,” the lodges played a deeply formative role in constructing social relations and ideology.

Yet while these societies were among the necessary preconditions of bourgeois sociability before the final overthrow of aristocratic privilege, they were at first fragile, subject to attack from church and state: defensive before hegemonic, the lodges took refuge in asylums of their own building. In an age that trumpeted the beneficent effects of

78 environment on community, the Freemasons designed themselves worlds apart from the world, and confirmed their existence in architectural isolation. The type forms they adopted for their rituals of initiation and their social life were seen as the prototypes for perfectibility. Withdrawing in secrecy from a corrupted civilization, the brothers would be cleansed by rites of passage; living in sociability they would forge their brotherly bonds by means of banquets and festivals that would for an instant lift them into the realm of happiness. The architectural patterns that affirmed these two conditions — the initiatory rite that traversed a *route* and the brotherhood that defined a communal *center* — gradually developed as the paradigmatic spaces of social *bonheur* and finally emerged as the very instruments of utopia itself.

The Formation of the Lodge

The coterie of the Anti-Formalists was made up of twenty persons, absolute enemies of ceremonies and forms. The place where they met was of a peculiar shape. It was almost completely in the form of a ball and, as it did not take up a great deal of space and its foundations were not fixed and firm, it could be transported almost as easily as a tent; also it often changed its position, lending a grand variety and distraction to their meetings.

Laurent Bordelon, *La Coterie des Anti-Façonniers, Paris, 1716.*¹

The flourishing associational life of the clubs, circles and masonic societies of prerevolutionary France was, in a very special way, confirmed by the architecture of its meeting rooms. The apartments, salons and lodges that served as the active centers of bourgeois sociability in the closing years of the *ancien régime* were all planned, or at least decorated, to characterize and ratify the intimate life of the group, to affirm its nature as an institution.² Even as the earlier forms of brotherhood — the professional and trade confraternities — had identified themselves with particular chapels for their worship and meeting, and as the tavern societies and wine circles of the first quarter of the century

had established themselves in cabarets and inns, often renting entire premises, so their lay successors found the need to incorporate themselves, so to speak, by means of their *salles de réunion*.³ Fashionable pleasure societies in the capital, like the quasi-masonic *Fendeurs* (“Hewers”), took over forest estates and fabricated elaborate settings for their bacchic festivities; more serious philosophical and fraternal associations developed precise rules for the layout of their rooms and the decor of their rituals.⁴

The extent to which space was seen as a mode of constitution was marked by the very names the societies adopted; often the group would be called after its place of assembly. Thus the young artisans of Provence, meeting in emulation of bourgeois circles, called themselves *chambers*;⁵ the Freemasons, meeting in lodges, named their assemblies as well as their social organization, *lodge*.⁶ Without such proper homes, a society felt hardly formed. The astronomer-royal, opening the first permanent home of his freemasonic order, the Grand Orient of France, told of their search for “a house which could provide for our needs”: “in effect dispersed until now, and wandering in all directions, we had neither place for our secretariat, store for our archives, nor place for our reunion; without fixed asylum we were forced to carry our workshops to the houses of our brothers. Without Temple we had neither security nor decency.”⁷ In a climate of severe political and religious censorship, where any secret group was read as a potential threat to state order, or a conspiracy against morals and dogma, the word “asylum” was particularly apt.⁸ Even in the 1780s when the masonic order had become generally acceptable to the authorities, the lodges still felt the need for anonymity and privacy: the Lodge of Friendship at Arras was “a house like any other house” on its street, nothing designated its particular character.⁹ Earlier, in the late thirties and forties, when lodges were subject to police action, the need for security, for “an inviolable place of refuge,” was more acute. The isolation provided by a secure home would further strengthen the social and ideological ties of essentially fragile and heterogeneous associations: “the more we are isolated and separated from the great number,” wrote de Lalande, “the more we hold to that which surrounds us.”¹⁰ In this way, the space of brotherhood would at once

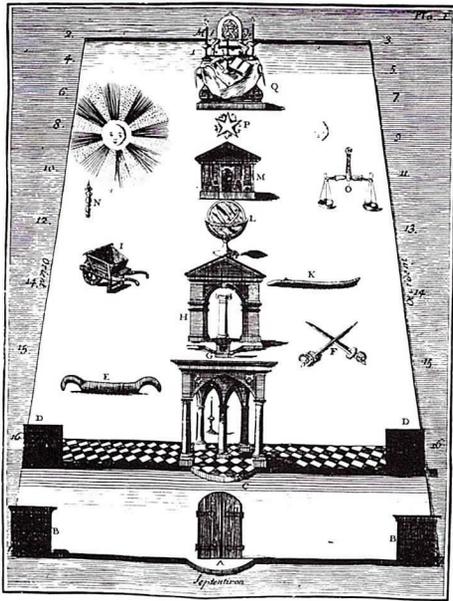
protect and inform; the influence of proper surroundings was no less important for the development of sociability than the carefully constructed organizational codes that they ideally mirrored.

For the Freemasons, the form of their lodge was of particular importance, not only as endowing the new society with institutional concretion, but as the immediate extension of their adopted terms of discourse and the representation of the forms of their ritual. Reviving the terminology of the old “operative” masonic guilds, the aristocratic and middle-class fraternity of the mid-eighteenth century still talked of “building the Temple,” of “constructing the social edifice.” In their workshops (“*ateliers*”) the brothers “worked” with all the tools of masonry — compass, square and plumb line — emblematic of their assumed heritage. Their *Constitutions* traced the history of architecture as taught to Adam and his sons by the Grand Architect of the Universe, and reaching its *apogée* in the revealed forms of Solomon’s Temple.¹¹ It was the task of Freemasonry, of its “apprentices,” “companions” and “masters” to, in the words of Couret de Villeneuve, “reintegrate the mutilated parts of this edifice,” to “reestablish” its original proportions in “their original purity.” “Artisans of our own happiness,” he wrote in 1748, “we work on plans traced by Nature and compassed by Reason to reconstruct a moral edifice, the model of which, executed in the first ages of the world, we have conserved by the universal idea of our order.”¹² Although such phrases were, in the midst of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment, plainly allegorical for the state of society, they achieved immediate relevance when applied to the lodge building itself.

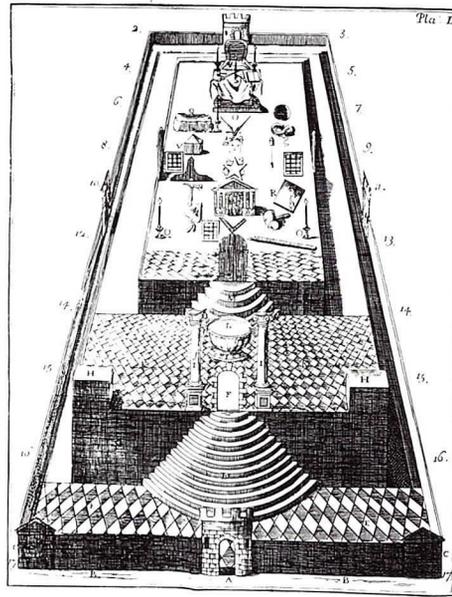
The emergence of a type form for the lodge building was, however, in practice slow. The earliest groups of French masons, suspected and ultimately banned by Rome, continually harassed by the local police, were unable to establish any really permanent home. The first-known regularly constituted lodges — formed of Jacobite *émigrés* and their French aristocratic sympathizers — met in private houses, or in the many eating rooms of the Left Bank quarter of Saint-Germain. Between 1726 and 1735, as the order gradually attracted a more substantial middle-class

patronage, the cabarets and taverns of the rue des Bouche-rons, a noted gaming precinct, and two gambling houses on the right bank (the Hôtel de Soissons, the Hôtel de Gesvres) were known to be the haunts of the *fri-maçons*. Trying to escape the surveillance of the police they repaired to the inns and *guinguettes* of the *banlieu* after midnight. Police reports dating from 1737 mention “five bands, which meet in the cabarets in the different quarters of Paris.” The Hôtel de Chaulmes, the center of the renowned literary circle of the Duc de Chaulmes — “le Parnasse de Chaulmes” — attracted many well-known masons of the Lodge Louis d’Argent to its *soirées*, while the Hôtel d’Aumont, owned by the director of royal entertainments, *les menus plaisirs*, was the scene of many quasi-masonic banquets.¹³

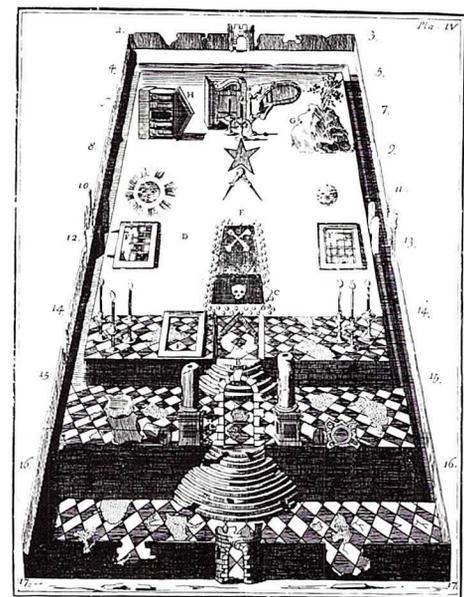
Between 1740 and 1750, police and church spies frequently reported surprising groups of Freemasons assembled for receptions, deliberations and most often, dinners; indeed, writing from Orleans, the royal procurator, Leclerc de Douy, hazarded that the “pleasure of the table makes up the principal object of the association.”¹⁴ These reports provide a detailed picture of the meeting rooms and their ceremonial equipment of the mid-century. In 1744, in the house of one M. Ozouf, for example, thirty men and six women were arrested while “seated at long tables, singing, drinking and eating dessert”: “we observed [wrote the commissioner of the Châtelet district], that the said room which was long and narrow, was hung with tapestry, so that one could only see clearly by lamps, and that the entry to this room was also closed by tapestry. We observed also that the entry to a small garden, whose trellis formed a square, was hung round from the top of the trellis to eye level to prevent anyone seeing what was done in the said square of garden.”¹⁵ A more elaborate “lodge” was raided the next year in the rue des Martyres; on the first floor, beyond a courtyard, the masons were occupied with an initiation ceremony in three consecutive rooms, all with blocked windows. The apartments of the Hôtel de Soissons were lavish in comparison; on the second floor, beyond the grand staircase, the masons had established themselves in six rooms. The police found fifteen or so individuals waiting in the first five apartments, and a further twenty-five in the sixth. These latter were all dressed alike, wearing aprons of white



1. Floor-drawing: the Apprentices' Lodge. Perspective view of the diagram laid out on the floor for the reception of an apprentice. Drawn for the Abbé Larudan in 1747, the elements correspond to other known designs for floor-drawings in the so-called exposures of the 1740s. Sketched in chalk, or embroidered on a floor-cloth, these designs circumscribed the ritual or "sacred" space of the Lodge. They symbolically traced a route from the profane world to the brotherhood; the stages marked between the entrance door (firmly closed in this drawing), to the altar (displaying the tools of masonry) and the Master's chair behind, show stages in the initiation rite.



2. Floor-drawing: the Companions' Lodge. Here Abbé Larudan has provided an elaborate version, showing a more literal depiction of the three dimensional architectural spaces that the flat floor-drawings represented. The stages from the entrance (A) to the altar are marked by passage through three enclosures to an inner sanctuary. A giant flight of steps leads to the preparation room with its giant laver for the ritual washing (L) and the two chambers for isolated reflection (H). The door is guarded by the two columns of Solomon's Temple. From here the aspirant passed into the Lodge proper for the final rite.



3. Floor-drawing: the Masters' Lodge. The specific nature of Larudan's imagery, as he transformed this drawing into a scene of desecration, with the altar overturned, the columns broken, and the pavement torn up, perhaps refers to his own profane desecration of the masonic secrets. Otherwise the floor-drawing follows the general pattern of other Masters' designs, with the steps to be taken by the candidate marked out on the floor, the tomb of "Hiram" the master architect of Solomon surrounded by tears, and the compasses displayed in the Master's position.

leather, and guarded by a brother at the door holding a drawn sabre.

Such a precarious social position did not, save perhaps in the most highly-protected personal lodges — those of Chevalier Beauchaine in La Nouvelle-France or of the Duc de Clermont, for example — lend itself to any permanent architecture. The lodge was composed by its members, its rituals, and above all by its items of ritualistic equipment — its costumes, emblematic tools, and furniture.

The Ritual Route: the Architecture of Floor-drawings

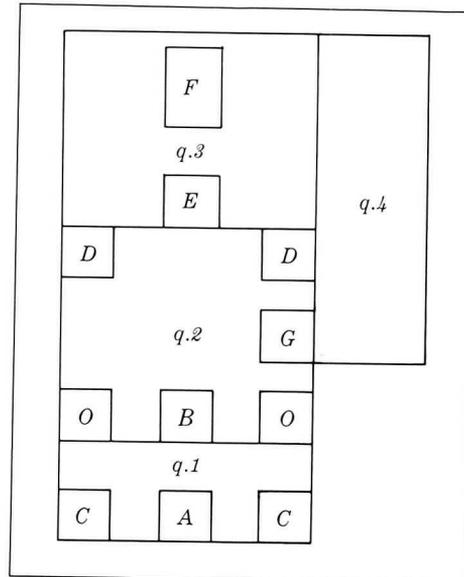
The masons of the rue des Martyrs had been described as ranged in two lines around a “form of carpet marked on the square tiles with white stone.” It represented, among other symbols, the sun, the moon, compasses, squares, level, stars and columns. In the Hôtel de Soissons, the masons were grouped around an actual carpet of linen spread out on the floor: “which cloth represented at the end a portico of two columns with a sun and a crescent above; a star in the middle, two different levels of masonry and others things.”¹⁶ Easily erased after a meeting, or rolled up and carried, these chalk “floor-drawings” and “floor-cloths” were apparently the temporary, but typical form by which the early Freemasons defined the space of their ritual and marked the emblems of their “craft.” The earliest-known representation of these figures is English, from the so-called Carmick Manuscript of 1727, triangular in form with the warden or master seated at the east point, two steps at the west, and the brethren in seats along the sides; it contains the compasses, rule, gavel and trowel, together with two candle-holders found in later renderings. Above the drawing is written “this figure represents the lodge.”¹⁷ “Foot cloths” and “drawing-boards” were mentioned in accounts of the English rituals from 1733,¹⁸ but the first systematic depictions appeared in France in 1744 and 1745, among the group of “exposures” of masonic secrets that were published between 1737 and 1751; they were, according to the journalist Louis Travenol, “properly called the lodge.”¹⁹

Allegorical of the first Temple of Solomon and its attributes, they were evidently laid out to describe a *route* from the point of entry into the lodge to the point of reception — the *route of initiation*. The drawings were differentiated according to the ordered stages of the initiation process, and to the three grades of initiation of Apprentice, Companion, and Master. From contemporary accounts it is clear that these drawings played a very active part in the reception rites. Prepared by a sponsoring brother, the aspirant was stripped to his shirt, his eyes were bandaged, and he was left alone in an antechamber, sometimes called the chamber of reflections, for a long time. He was ritually cleansed, then led to the door of the lodge itself where a mock battle for entry was staged by the sword-bearing brothers; once inside, the “journey” commenced. Still blindfolded he was made to walk three times around the floor drawing, “a kind of representation in crayon of the Temple of Solomon,” the brethren all the time making a great noise, throwing gunpowder on the candles and clashing their swords. Some candidates confessed to fright and exhaustion as they encountered obstacles at each step. “Those who have undergone the ceremony,” confided the Abbé Perau, “declare that there is nothing more tiresome than this blindfold perambulation. One is as much fatigued as after a long journey.” Finally, the blindfold was suddenly removed, the lights turned up and the candidate delivered to questioning by the Master: “the lights, the brilliance of the swords, the singular ornaments that adorned the Grand Officers, the sight of all the brothers in white robes form a spectacle bewildering enough for one who has been deprived of light for some two hours.”²⁰ The candidate, thus thrown into “bewilderment and perplexity,” was ready to receive the knowledge of his attained grade (fig. 4).

In these rituals, which were rapidly elaborated as grade was added to grade, the floor-drawings — the primitive type, as it were, of the lodge — performed all the roles of architecture itself; signifying the stages of entry into the society by the entry into the temple, they were iconic of three dimensional spaces; they were the didactic textbooks of the emblems of the grades; they defined the sacred space of the brotherhood from the profane space of the temporary apartment. The most detailed and probably highly fantastic



4.



5.

4. *The unveiling of the candidate: from Abbé Perau's exposure of 1742. At the point of initiation, the candidate is exposed to the light once again. The lights of the Lodge are turned up, the Brothers flash their swords, and the enactment of "re-birth" or visionary "enlightenment" is complete.*

5. *Plan of the Berlin Lodge. Larudan's explanation is as follows: "1st Door (A) separates the place consecrated to the Profane. It is always closed and guarded with much vigilance by the two serving brothers. (C.C) are two small rooms constructed in the corners of this Quarter. There are called Obscure because they are so in effect when they conduct and leave the aspirant therein. (B), the entry of the second Quarter, 2, has a door without guards. On two sides are the two baths (O.O) and two storerooms (D.D). The third Quarter, 3, is the one they regard as the most sacred, wherein they deliberate and in which are held the initiations and promotions. Its entry (E) is guarded outside by two armed brothers and inside by an apprentice. The room is very spacious. In the middle (F), they draw with crayon the emblems that are found on the plates of this book. These figures are generally enclosed in a rectangle 8 feet long and 4 feet wide. All the members of the Lodge are placed around it. The last Quarter, 4, is that of recreation. They enter through the door (G) into a Room whose size and plan furnishes a thousand amenities."*

representations of the drawings proper for the higher grades, those of the Abbé Larudan, were even drawn as perspective projections of actual architectural spaces (figs. 1-3).²¹

The Space of Brotherhood: the Fraternal Circle

“The ceremony ended, and the explanation given, the Candidate is called Brother, and they seat themselves at Table, where they drink to the health of the new Brother”;²² invariably the ceremonies of initiation — and most of the police reports support this — ended in a banquet, the center of the sociable life of the masons. Very early the order had been seen as a kind of eating society — the author of the tract “The Order of the Freemasons Betrayed,” the Abbé Perau, speaks indeed of the various associations, the *sociétés Bachiques*, of the first years of the century, from which he assumes the Freemasons derived.²³ Rumors of the licentious feasts of this secret society were rife by the mid-century: Couret de Villeneuve defended the celebrations of his brothers admitting that, “we do, it is true, have a taste for fine and delicate voluptuousness, but it is not uniquely sensual; the Table is a pleasure of tolerance — in itself it is no crime.”²⁴ Perau similarly dismissed these slurs on masonic reputation, citing the rule against political or religious discussion in the lodge, as well as the punctillious nature of the toasts and dining ceremonies: “there is no military academy where the drill is performed with greater exactitude, precision, pomp and majesty.”²⁵ The architectural theorist and ex-Jesuit, the Abbé Laugier, was credited with defending the order against the strictures of the Pope: “In sobriety are our banquets prepared; by an intimate union the bonds are drawn closer.”²⁶ This intimate union, forged by initiation and cemented by continual festivity was, for the Freemasons, the paradigmatic aim of their life of sociability. Gathered around the semicircular or horseshoe-shaped table, sharing a common repast, the brothers were able to experience the pleasures of friendship and union.²⁷ “Let us join hands, let us hold close together,” they sang, and with every toast reminded themselves of the bonds which joined them closer than any family.²⁸ In the confines of their small band, they alone had perfected the

true *art of living*: “the law of equality, a soul tender and sociable, sweet mores, the love of the fine arts, the decency and harmony that reigns in our festivals, there is the inextinguishable source of our happiness.”²⁹ In the celebration of the banquet, the masons likewise partook of the general “search for origins,” for the primitive roots of happiness, that was common to many discourses in the mid-century. Rousseau had described the first festivals, where, gathered around a common hearth, the first men felt the first and sweetest sentiments of humanity, singing and dancing.³⁰ an anonymous mason compared his brotherhood “to the first times, when men were always ready to care for their mutual needs.”³¹ Perhaps there was a more than coincidental relation between the civilized primitivism of these Enlightenment masons, their desire to return to the source always couched in the metaphorical language of architecture, and the paradigm of the “primitive hut” erected by one of their brothers, the Abbé Laugier, with such effect in 1753.³²

The Type of the Lodge

If the descriptions of the police raids and the so-called exposures are compared, it is clear that, by the late forties, the plan of the typical lodge was fixed, at least in overall distribution. The Abbé Larudan drew a plan of one he calls the Berlin Lodge; whether or not he ever visited Berlin, the diagram bears a close resemblance to the apartments of the Parisian Freemasons (fig. 5). Downstairs were the rooms used by the serving brothers, the concierge, cook and confectioner; a grand staircase led to the second floor where the apartments of the lodge itself were arranged *en série*. The first room, or “quarter” as he called it, was “the place of darkness,” and showed two small cabinets for the use of the waiting candidates. In the second “quarter” were the purification facilities, bathrooms, and two other small cabinets whose use remained unspecified. In the chamber of initiations itself, the main room of the lodge, the floor-drawings took up a rectangle in the center of the floor some eight feet by four feet. Beyond this hall was a banqueting room, where, “during the ceremonies, the serving brothers are preparing the meal or refreshments to follow, so that when

84 the “Mysteries” are over the Brethren can pass at once to this well appointed room.”³³

This pattern remained general, with certain elaborations according to the cult, for the remainder of the century; the Lodge of Friendship in Arras, for example, inaugurated in 1786 in the presence of the architect Charles de Wailly, possessed, in addition to these four major rooms, chambers for visiting brothers and a large garden opening out from the banqueting hall.³⁴ The only changes called for by the unified “code” of Beyerlé in 1784 were the provision of adequate archival storage, and perhaps three separate lodge rooms for the three grades of initiation.³⁵

The true type of the lodge, after which the reception rooms were generally modeled, and which was represented in the floor-drawings, was, of course, the Temple of Solomon, the architectural reconstruction of which had exercised the ingenuity of antiquarians and hermetic geometers for many centuries. Willermoz, the mystic mason from Lyons, proclaimed that “the Temple of Jerusalem is the universal type of the science of man, substituted on account of its perfection for all the types or symbols which have preceded it.”³⁶ Nevertheless, most lodges, at least until the last quarter of the century, seem to have been content to allow the emblematic type to remain pure within the confines of the floor-drawing, and were not excessively preoccupied with its transference to the detailed architecture of the lodge room. The dimensions all roughly conform, but by no means consistently, to a one-third/two-thirds proportional relation between width and length; the two columns of Jakin and Boaz invariably stand at the entrance surmounted by their globes; and the east, the Orient, is treated as the most sacred space.³⁷ But the majority of Freemasons understood the essentially *allegorical* connection between their architecture and Solomon’s, and were more concerned with the social implications of the metaphor.

The architectural significance of the typical lodge, as it developed around the middle of the century, should then be seen not in terms of its specific aesthetic attributes or iconographical references to Biblical precedent, but rather in its concretion of ritual in space — the implication of the

floor-drawings for the emergence of the architecture of esoteric masonry towards the end of the century, and finally the establishment of a “primitive” type for associational architecture. Such a type, responding to the growing self-consciousness of the bourgeoisie, was hitherto non-existent, in *architecture* at least, and its existence prepared the way for a veritable burgeoning of “utopistic sociability” during the Revolutionary period.

Masonic Stage Craft: the Grand Orient 1773–1788

The foundation of the Grand Orient of France in May, 1773, and the installation of the Duc de Chartres as Grand Master, with the Duc de Montmorency-Luxembourg as his regular substitute, marked a new phase in the institutional development of the order, confirmed by its rising public popularity. The almost public nature of the festivals, the dramatic increase in membership, and the proliferation of lodges throughout the provinces under the regular oversight of the Orient, established as openly as possible what had emerged as a fact over the preceding ten years: the masonic order as the primary form of institutionalized sociability appealing to aristocrats, intellectuals, churchmen, professionals and shop-keepers alike.

The celebration of the new Grand Mastership was the occasion of elaborate pomp and brilliant display; held in the duke’s private quarters on the rue Folie-Titon, in the faubourg Saint-Antoine, the ceremonies were conducted in a vast salon “clothed in mystery.”³⁸ The entire ritual was set amidst scarlet tapestries beneath azure vaults scattered with golden stars; the hall was lit with nearly a hundred and fifty lights, arranged according to mystical number theory.

Even more splendid, and certainly more significant for the Order, was the inauguration of their new quarters in the fall of the next year.³⁹ The architect for the Grand Orient, Pierre Poncet, had converted the building of the old Jesuit Noviciate in the faubourg Saint-Germain. Raised above the level of the street, the lodge rooms were approached by a flight of twenty-four steps and a screen of columns. The three halls of the lodge were placed in sequence; the first

decorated in flowered cloth of different colors, the second in a watered blue and white and furnished with a double row of benches. Both were lit by a large number of lamps suspended from crystal chandeliers. The *salle des travaux* itself was seventy-eight feet long and twenty-one wide and was divided into two parts. The main room was fifty-one feet long and twenty-one feet high, with a blue ceiling, and furnished again with a double row of benches; to the west were the triangular tables of the Surveillants, with the two columns "of the most pure metal, crowned with capitals, which carried a cluster of fifteen stars" standing on either side. The Orient, reached by steps from this hall, was twenty-seven feet long and thirty-five feet high; the three tiered platform mounted to the grand throne, with the officers arranged in a semicircle on the first stage. Beyond this hall was the large banqueting room, again decorated in blue and red, with a blue ceiling, a raised dais for the Grand Master, and almost the same size as the lodge room.⁴⁰ "It is in this place," stated de Lalande, "that we build a temple to the Grand Architect and to virtue, which belongs to all the regular masons of France: it is in this sacred asylum that the Orient will give itself up to its sublime works with the decency and dignity to which it is suited."

Within a very few years of the foundation of the Grand Orient, however, what the historian Pierre Chevallier has called "an irruption of mysticism" disturbed the apparent unity established inside the lodges by the concentration of all masonic operations under a single authority. Individual mystics, *idéologues*, sectarian leaders and charlatans gained followings inside and outside the lodges, elaborating their personal visions of perfect masonry, establishing breakaway sects and quasi-masonic cults. The brotherhood, formerly united by the general idea of fraternal bonds, was disintegrating around individualistic and charismatic leaders; the names that appear in the late seventies are no longer the sober venerables, but the fanatical mystics, ascetics, eclectics, womanizers and quacks of a truly "pre-romantic" era.⁴¹ All the tendencies already embodied in the received doctrines of masonry — alchemical lore, cabbalistic language, hermetic philosophy — were brought to the surface in this "flowering of cultism."

The social bases of this efflorescence were diverse. The early affiliation of the bourgeoisie to the complicated grades of "Scottish masonry" was only the first stage of an increasingly sharp division between the "purism" of the aristocratic administrators of the Grand Orient, and the eclecticism of the schismatic Grand Lodge.⁴² The accomplishment of high and obscure grades seemed to offer a kind of ennoblement to an ever aspiring middle class; further, the real historical explorations of masonic intellectuals such as Court de Gebelin had revealed potentially utilizable knowledge of the rites of past civilizations.⁴³ In purely philosophical circles, and rapidly in the "nature" cults of the leisured classes, the idea of individual self-knowledge and of revelation, gained strong following after the death of Rousseau. Writers and painters took increased pleasure in the delights of the sublime, of contrast, of bizarre effects, of opposition, and experimented with the world of sensation. Popular tastes for chinoiserie, gothicism and eastern mysticism developed side by side with the emerging world of consumption.

In the interior world of masonic architecture these developments were marked by two parallel and mutually supporting themes: the further elaboration of the forms of ritual initiation, and their final confirmation, not in the ephemeral *mise-en-scène* of decorative hangings, but in the spatial sequences of the architecture itself.

The Architecture of Initiation

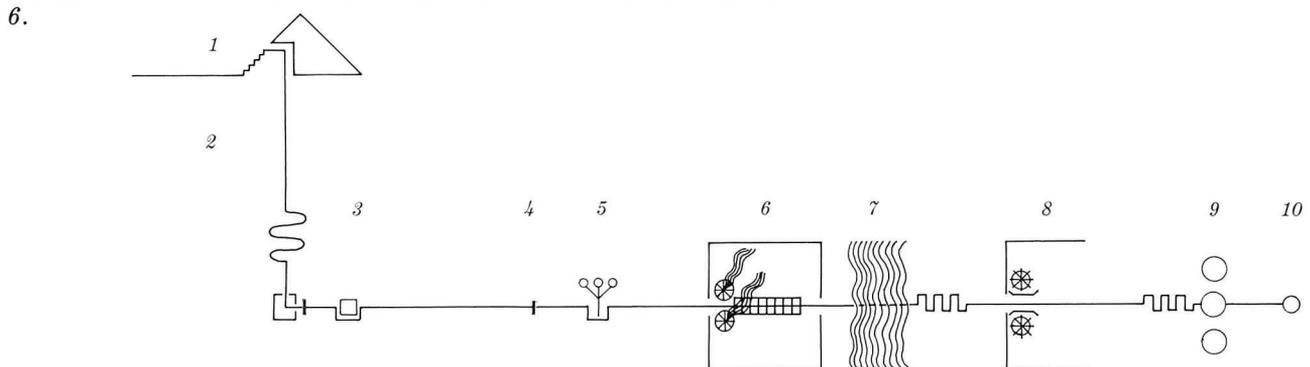
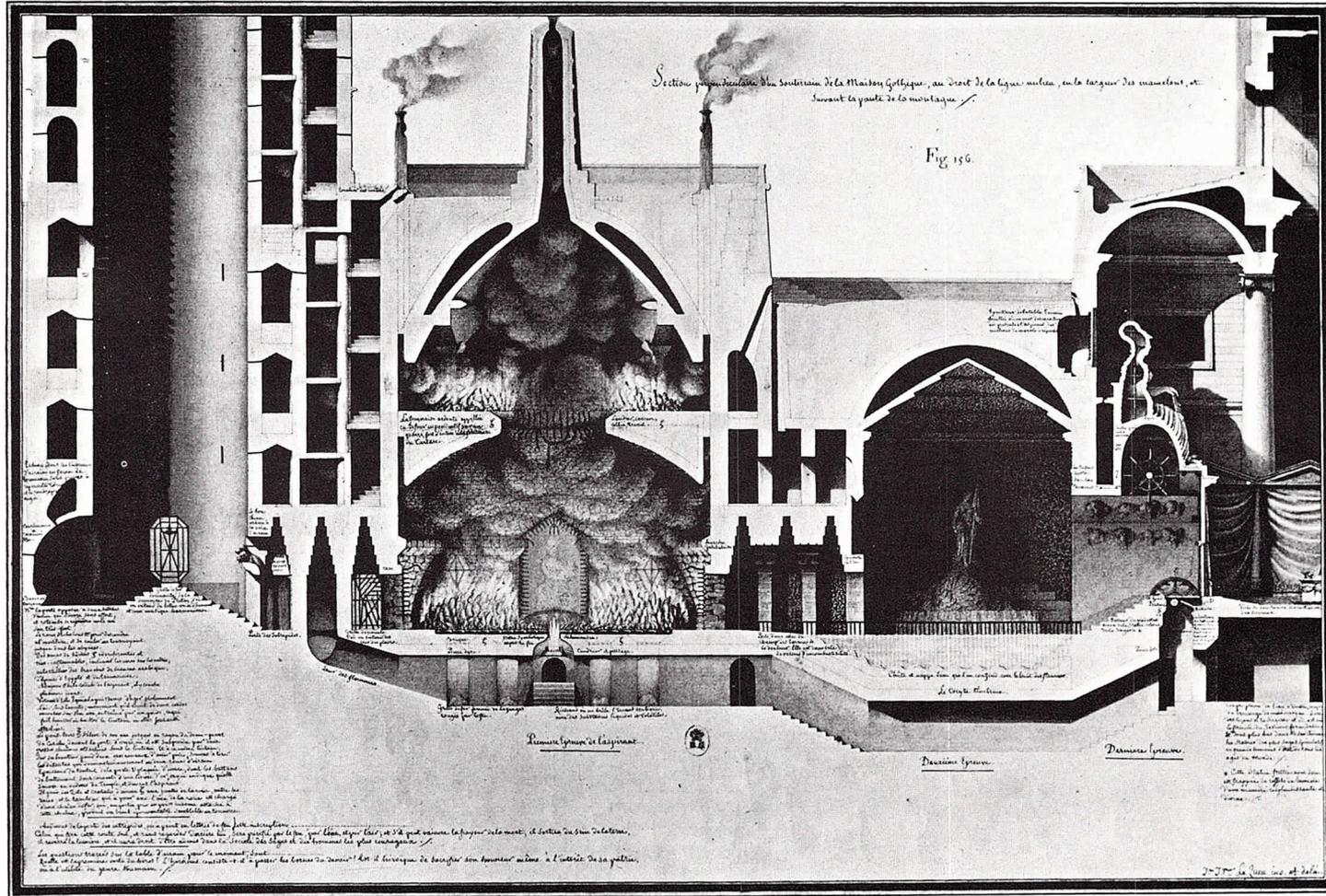
On the occasion of Voltaire's initiation into the Nine Sisters Lodge, in the spring of 1788, the historian Court de Gebelin read a detailed account of the Eleusinian mysteries taken from his great work, *Le Monde Primitif*. A contemporary masonic rite was thus supported by historical precedent — the primitive type of initiatory ritual itself, the rites of Demeter and her daughter Persephone. For de Gebelin, these rituals were, together with those of Orpheus in the Underworld and those described in Virgil's *Aeneid*, typical of the first initiation conducted in Egypt, the home of hermetic magic, for the benefit of Hermes Trismegistus, first Magus, by the Egyptian priests. He quoted from clas-

6. *The Gothic House: Jean-Jacques Lequeu (date unknown). Here, Lequeu's eclectic imagination has designed a "lodge" that architecturally replicates the initiatory route of Séthos. Lequeu provides exact details of each effect — the inflation of the Salamander fire-god, the noise of thunder, the running of the wheels beneath the*

Statue of Isis — and quotes liberally from Terrasson's text. Lequeu's drawing, probably designed after the Revolution, represents the end of a process whereby the "Egyptian Rite" was absorbed into the rituals of Freemasonry at the same time as the stages of initiation were increasingly marked by architectural effects.

7. *Journey of Séthos into the Egyptian Underworld: described by the Abbé Terrasson in Séthos, 1733. This was the route traversed by Hermes Trismegistus and then by Orpheus, and Terrasson used the novel to display his mythological erudition. Séthos is led into the Great Pyramid, down a deep and narrow shaft, through passages defended by*

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7.

Cerberus, the three-headed dog, to the initiations proper — the fire, the waters and the air. Finally he arrives, propelled by gigantic wheels (the rite of aerial passage) beneath the Statue of Isis, where he is presented first with a draught of Lethe (to forget the past), then with a drink of Mnemosyne — to prepare for new knowledge.

1. *The Great Pyramid*
2. *The shaft*
3. *The warning tablet*
4. *The bronze doors*
5. *The three-headed dog*
6. *The initiation by fire*
7. *The initiation by water*
8. *The drawbridge and the wheels*
9. *The Statue of Isis*
10. *The cup of Lethe and Mnemosyne*

sical authors concerning the horror of the mysteries and the enlightenment of the initiate: “The horror of it is augmented by everything terrible that human industry could imagine. The thunder rolls from all sides, thunderbolts fall with a great tumult, the air is full of monstrous figures, the sanctuary trembles, the earth itself bellows. Finally calm succeeds the tempest, the scene is opened, and extends into the far distance; the end of the sanctuary opens and the initiates see a pleasant pasture whence they repair to dance and rejoice.”⁴⁴ In this way the basic structure of initiation, a reenactment of descent into the underworld, and the following trials or proofs of the candidate’s worth, was given historical demonstration and placed in the domain of the theatrical effect.

The literature of Freemasonry had already proposed this essentially artificial quality of initiation, in several quasi-historical novels treating of Egyptian rites and their elaborate settings. That of the Abbé Terrasson, published first in 1733, was perhaps the most celebrated. His novel, *Séthos* described in detail the trials of his hero following the steps of Orpheus (fig. 7).⁴⁵ The ritual was administered by the priests in realms that stretched beneath the Great Pyramid, from the horror-filled caverns of Hades to the brilliant and perfumed Elysian fields. The architectural layout was so graphically precise that a late eclectic like Jean-Jacques Lequeu was able to transform Terrasson’s descriptions into plan and section with accuracy (fig. 6).⁴⁶

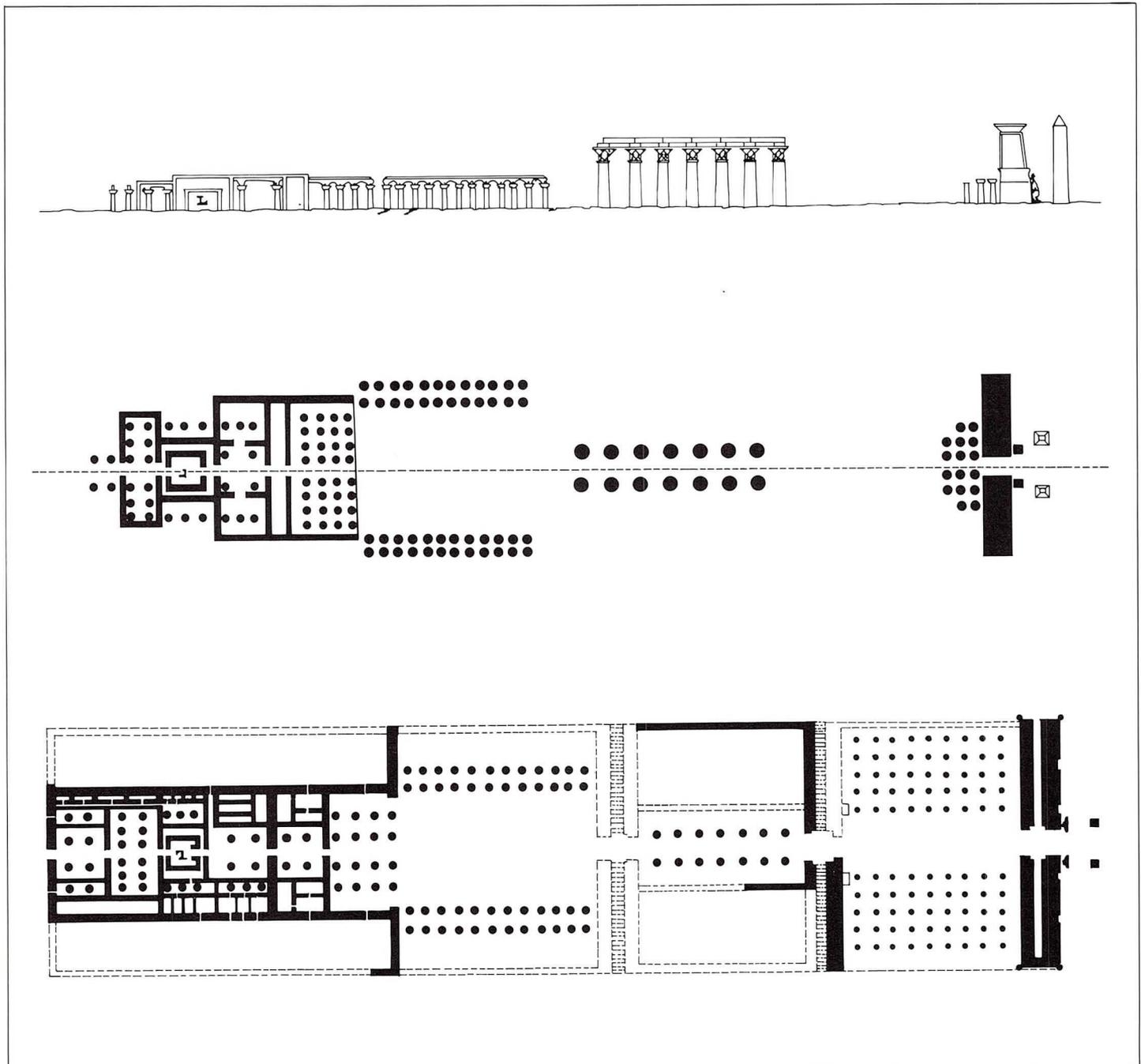
It was generally believed that the prototypes of initiatory architecture were Egyptian and that the ruins discovered by travellers around the pyramids, and of the great temples themselves, were traces of ritual structures. The forms of this architecture were studied by the new masonic iconographer for any signs, patterns and dispositions that might inform the development of ritual procedures and higher masonic grades; in the same way as the architecture of the Egyptian priests had been deliberately constructed to affect the succeeding states of mind of the aspirant by providing, as it were, the stage set for the initiation; so might not the lodges be planned in turn for their restored rites? Willermoz was clear as to the implications to be drawn from Egyptian practice: “they [the Egyptians] employed all their

Emblems and Allegories to exercise the intelligence of the Aspirants, and prepare them for the development of the mysteries which were their object. Thus the Triangular form of the pyramids which in Egypt cover the underground vaults destined for initiations, the form and number of the Routes which lead there, all the ceremonies which were there observed, offered to the aspirant a sense of mystery, relating to the principal object of initiation.”⁴⁷ Architecture was now seen to confirm the states of initiation in a very real way; all the laws of sense, developed by materialists, could now be adduced to support the idea that the spatial organization of the initiatory sequence might be an agent of mental change. Initiation, together with its architecture, was endowed with the power to transform minds, to open access to hidden knowledge, to reveal the ultimate secrets of spirit and soul.

The discovery of Egypt, and specifically the reconstructed plans of the temples, thus lent a particular formal vocabulary, and more importantly, an architectural plan — a spatial model for the representation of this mystical route. The pyramid, as Willermoz and Terrasson noted, was seen as the entry, the point of descent into the underworld so carefully constructed by the priests. Beneath this pyramid were the several routes, punctuated by trials and obstacles, leading to the Temple of Isis; beyond this Temple were the happy realms of Elysium. Each of these environments was pictured in a definite way. The routes to the Temple, as well as the form of the Temple itself, were read out of the rediscovered and partially excavated plans of Thebes and Karnak; Quatremère de Quincy, himself a mason but not of the occultist kind, writing the earliest scholarly dissertation on Egyptian architecture before Napoleon’s expedition stimulated accurate excavation, described the temples according to his understanding of the mysteries they celebrated: “it was in the shadows of these underground vaults that the initiations were born, whose secret was the first law. The secret was deified under the name of Harpocrates. . . . Numerous doors, closed by veils which added to respect, followed one after the other, and led to vestibule after vestibule, which only allowed sight of the true temple or sanctuary from afar.”⁴⁸ Door after door, the succession of vestibules along an extended axis, these were the formal

8. *Egyptian Temples: restored by Pococke and reprinted by Quatremère de Quincy, 1803. These “partial” reconstructions supported the notion of stages of initiation along an axis, to an inner sanctuary hidden from the profane.*

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elements of Pococke's reconstructions; they also emphasized the *route* rather than any one place along it as the primary space of ritual (fig. 8).

The Temple in the Garden

In the various occultist and mystical lodges built in the period of masonic "disintegration" between 1780 and the Revolution, the spatial and social order of the early lodges — with all-embracing qualities such as the floor-drawing which *signified* a route leading to the space of brotherhood, or the banqueting room equipped with the horseshoe-shaped table — was overlaid and transformed by this increasing stress on the initiatory rites and their *real*, physically built, routes. And these routes, even as those traversed by the legendary initiates, were no longer confined to the space of the lodge building itself, but extended out into the landscape. For a second and equally powerful vision of initiatory space had asserted itself in the late seventies as the corollary to the Egyptian temple — that of the *jardin-anglais* — allegorically representing the landscape of the Elysian fields.⁴⁹ Rousseau had proposed the natural landscape as the site of mankind's regeneration; now the increasingly popular forms of the English landscape garden were adopted as the sublime agents of the initiatory state of mind. Supporting this development was, of course, the emergence of the individual patron of the individual mystic; the patron, the resident magician, the secluded estate, all combined to establish the particular forms of the new cultist lodges.⁵⁰ The temple, individual asylum, was built in the garden, retreat of privilege.

The small pavilion built by Cagliostro for his patron, the banker Sarasin, on his estate near Basel in 1781, epitomized this trend.⁵¹ Constructed in the remotest part of the grounds, the two-story lodge was specially conceived as a lodge of "Regeneration" according to the formulae of Cagliostro's so-called Egyptian rites, invented some five years previously. In the lodge an aspirant would be confined for forty days, undergoing trials and performing ceremonies that recalled those of the occultist *élus-coens*.⁵² On the first floor were the main rooms — the entry, the reception room,

and the lodge room — while a spiral stair led to the salon or "billiard room" and two small chambers for the aspirant and his hierophant on the second level.

The lodge was in this way invested with the quality of garden *fabrique*, and as such it readily entered the vocabulary of landscape gardening in general, perhaps in such gardens as the Desert of Retz, or Monceau, but certainly as built for the Comte de Bouville, the wealthy mason who was perhaps the only significant patron of Jean-Jacques Lequeu before the Revolution.⁵³ The "Temple of Silence," built around 1786 on the count's estate near Portenort, was the private lodge *par excellence*. Both private dwelling and quasi-masonic lodge, it demonstrated the extent to which the celebration of masonic rites had been individualized by the Revolution. The iconography was clear: the figure of Harpocrates, the God of Silence, in the pediment; the owl of night over the doorway; the occultist turtles in the metopes. Within this personal Lodge of Silence, a complex sequence of spaces led from the entrance through to the final gallery serviced at points by trapdoors and underground passages.⁵⁴

Similarly, the *fabriques* designed by Ledoux for the gardens of the Marquis de Montesquiou at Mauperthuis may well have described a kind of ritualistic route through the *jardin-anglais*, called by Montesquiou "Elysée." The garden itself was approached through a subterranean grotto beneath a huge stone pyramid, surely a species of descent into the underworld, while in the park were, among other "follies," a rustic temple beside a small spring dedicated to "the Eternal," and a round tower, dedicated to the arts (fig. 9). The quasi-masonic nature of these pavilions may be confirmed by others planned by Ledoux but never executed — notably the spherical house of the Agricultural Guards, and the ideal village with its curious temple in the center.⁵⁵ But whether the attribution is finally masonic or derives from more generalized romanticism matters little: the spatial structures are common and their formal vocabulary derives from the same root.

Such an interpretation is supported by the description of another esoteric lodge of the 1780s elaborated by the En-

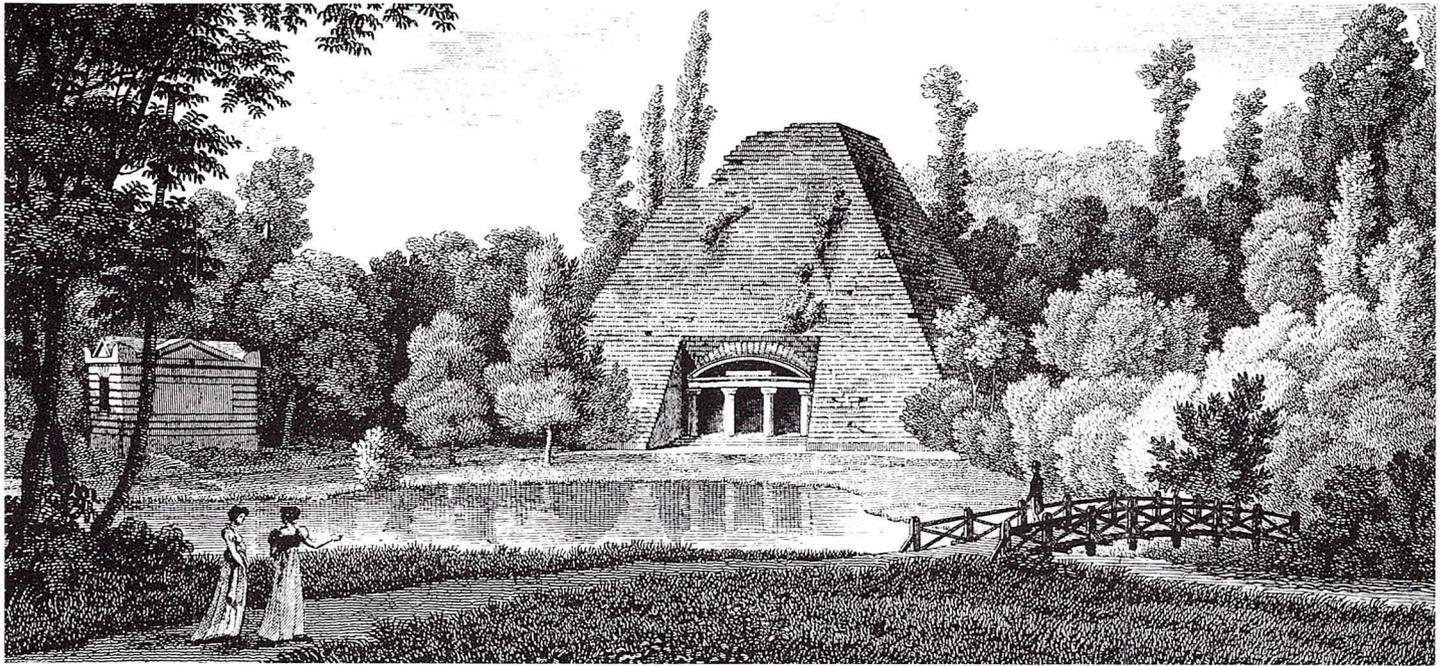
90 glish mystic William Beckford.⁵⁶ This “lodge,” which Beckford claimed to have visited in 1784, resembled contemporary stories of the sect called the Eveillés; it was, according to Beckford, situated some distance from Paris, in the midst of a deserted garden, and surrounded by endless alleyways of woodpiles.⁵⁷ The entrance to the structure was in the largest of these, through a sequence of chambers, each markedly different from the other. They seem to have depicted a kind of “history of civilization” in architecture, from the initial “primitive hut” to a “barnish hall,” medieval and gloomy, then to a small, rustic eighteenth-century cottage overlooking a sun-lit garden, then to a cubical anteroom, and finally to the great salon itself, with a coved ceiling richly painted in mythological subjects. In the center stood a giant laver, filled with liquid; in front of the fireplace sat an ancient and “grim-visaged” man. Beckford was filled with horror at the visions presented to him in the surface of the evidently “mesmeric” fluid, and was even more disturbed by the sight of the final chapel, lit by a single ray of light, in which a clearly unorthodox service was being held (fig. 10).

The route from the “primitive” forms of the charcoal-burners’ piles, to the final chapel of revelation was, in this lodge, the overriding spatial pattern. The celebration of brotherhood had returned to its religious patrimony, readopting the forms of ascetic mysticism. The architect of this lodge, a friend of Beckford’s and described as an adept in the mysteries of the sect, was Ledoux. Beckford visited the building in his company.

With the tale of Beckford we are in the presence of fully developed romanticism; the edges of fantasy and reality are blurred. The spaces of the lodge take on an almost living character as they participate in the state of mind of their neophyte. Without the appearance of Ledoux, and the introduction of specific historical references, the story might form an indistinguishable part of the same author’s *Vathek*, an oriental mystical romance first published in French two years later.⁵⁸ This half-real quality is heightened by the introduction of the names of Ledoux and Lequeu, the “visionary” architects of later historians. Beckford himself was willing to believe that Ledoux in his role as conductor

was indeed a master of some occult magic. And even if the entire tale were fabricated, a product of Beckford’s wayward and fantastic imagination, the discourse that would join the author and the architect, object of his speculation, would finally be identical. For it was in the very nature of the cults themselves to merge the facts of everyday life, with their mystical extensions into feeling and the heights of sensibility. The idea of an aesthetic of sensation was first and foremost tied to the creation of a *trompe l’oeil* for the feelings. Few believed wholeheartedly in the mysteries, yet few were prepared to deny the possibility of witnessing the unseeable; here the boundaries between stage effects and their apparent reality, between the artifice that stimulated and the sense that recognized, were alike unclear.

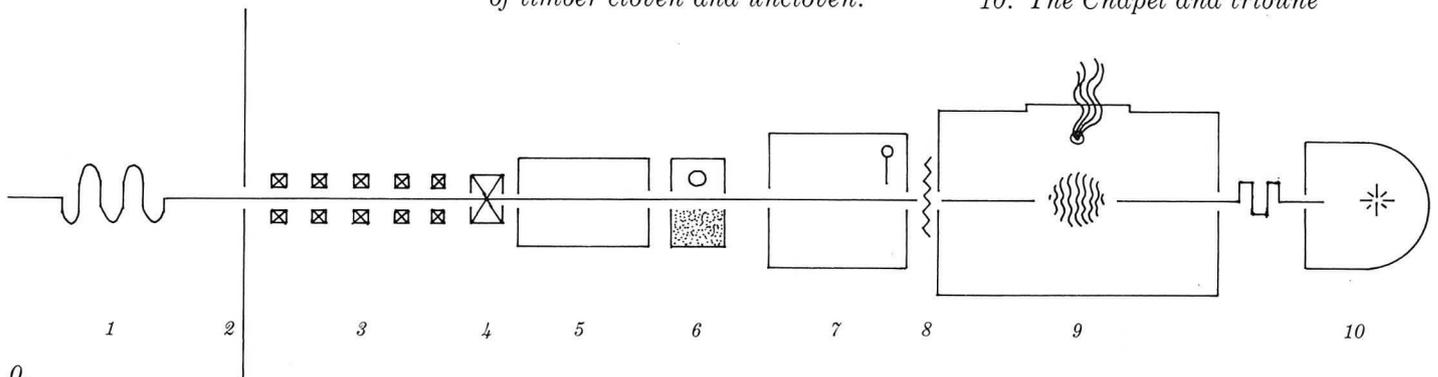
The point where everyday life and a utopian vision of what might be were confused was indeed the very point of the eighteenth-century associational experience. Therein lay the peculiar ability of an apparently materialist century to live, and to project from life the aspirations and ideals of a more perfect social order. It was by no means a coincidence that the notion of the festival and the banquet pervaded both real social existence and utopian romance in the second half of the century. The festival was, after all, that instant of daily life where normal routines, even normal mores, were for a moment suspended.⁵⁹ In the life of the masonic societies, withdrawn from the world, the festive life could be lived to an even greater extreme. In a very real sense, the life of the associations was “lived utopia.” Thus the almost simultaneous translation of the forms of this existence into the domain of literary, and especially of architectural, utopia during the 1780s should be seen as a logical extension of the conditions of sociability.



9. *The Pyramid of Mauperthuis:* Claude Nicolas Ledoux, ca. 1783. The pyramid and the grotto beneath it, served as an entrance to the landscape garden, called *Elysée*, on the estate of the Marquis de Montesquiou. Its reference to the *Séthos* legend is clear.

10. *Ledoux's Lodge:* described by William Beckford, ca. 1784. Beckford depicts this lodge set in "a vast space entirely occupied by wood-piles some of enormous dimensions and very lofty, others with thatched roofs acutely pointed" and reached by "apparently endless avenues formed by these innumerable accumulations of timber cloven and uncloven."

1. The route from Paris
2. The wall of the estate
3. The wood-piles
4. The Pyramidal entrance
5. The "barnish hall"
6. The cottage and garden
7. The antechamber with a cockatoo
8. The curtain
9. The main salon with laver and fire
10. The Chapel and tribune



92 This study of the *spatial* forms of freemasonry and its related cults in the eighteenth century naturally relies on the social and institutional histories of the societies for its understanding of the conditions of their existence. A number of excellent works have recently been published that begin to situate the Freemasons more firmly in the cultural and social development of pre-revolutionary France, supplanting older "conspiracy theories" and mystical "searches for origins." These will be referred to in the notes as appropriate, but as no accurate account yet exists in English, a summary of freemasonic development may be useful.

The stages by which the original masonic craft guilds ("operative" masons) were gradually superseded by the societies of bourgeois and aristocratic association toward the end of the seventeenth century are not entirely clear. It is certain that in the mid-seventeenth century in England operative masons began to receive non-practicing members ("speculative" masons) into their ranks, and that a number of societies, from the London tavern societies to the gentleman's discussion clubs of the provinces, began to constitute themselves as wholly speculative circles. The group of philosophers and scientists involved in the establishment of the Royal Society, including Elias Ashmole and Robert Morey, were among the earliest recorded speculative masons. By the turn of the century, the operative form was more or less extinct, and the Grand Lodge of London was established in 1717 to regulate the constitutions of the various societies already in existence: the book of *Constitutions*, collated by James Anderson, was published in 1723, and marked this stage of unification by bringing together the heterogeneous rules, mythologies and histories of masonry, some dating from the mid-fourteenth century, that had served the different lodges.

Imported into France after 1725 as a wholly fashionable society, freemasonry was connected at its inception in Paris (the first known lodge was of 1726) with a group of aristocratic Jacobite *émigrés*, led by Charles Radclyffe, the future Lord Derwentwater. Rapidly becoming popular (Montesquieu was recorded as having been initiated in London in 1730) with aristocrats, bourgeois and intellectuals, the order attracted the attention of the Paris police from 1737, and the Church of Rome issued its first Bull of condemnation in 1738. The period between 1737 and 1755 was one of considerable growth under the loose regulation of the early Grand Masters, the Duc d'Antin and the Comte de Clermont. Police harassment continued until 1745; the second Papal Bull was issued in 1751. Nevertheless the order flourished, first under the Grand Lodge (from 1743),

then the Grand Orient (from 1773); by 1778 there were at least eighty-two lodges active in Paris. The Grand Orient counted some 8,500 members in the capital between its foundation and the Revolution, and beyond these were the continuing schismatics of the Grand Lodge, the woman's lodges, or lodges of "Adoption," and hundreds of breakaway sects.

The best general histories of the order are: Pierre Chevalier, *Histoire de la Franc-Maçonnerie française* (Paris, Fayard, 1974), I, 1725-1799; Carlo Francovich, *Storia della Massoneria in Italia* (Florence: La Nuova Italia, 1974), for its clear exposition of the origins of continental masonry in England, and D. Knoop and G. P. Jones, *The Genesis of Freemasonry* (Manchester, 1957). Frances Yates devotes an excellent chapter to early freemasonry in her *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment* (London, 1972). Finally, the list of members of the Parisian lodges under the Grand Orient between 1773 and 1789, compiled by Alain le Bihan in *Francs-Maçons Parisiens du Grand Orient de France* (Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale, 1966) is, of course, invaluable. For a comprehensive review of all historical studies through 1964, D. Ligou's "La Franc-Maçonnerie française au XVIII^e siècle (Position des problèmes et état des questions)," *L'Information Historique* (Paris, 1964), No. 3, May-June, pp. 98-110, is especially useful.

1. Laurent Bordelon, *La Coterie des Anti-Façonniers* (Paris, 1716), quoted in Arthur Dinaux, *Les Sociétés Badines, Bachiques, Littéraires et Chantantes* (Paris, 1867), p. 37. Bordelon's satirical fantasy, of a society of anti-formalists, rolling in their sphere-shaped lodge, indicates the extent to which in 1716, societies were already assuming identities according to specific forms. The comparison with Ledoux's spherical "lodge," for the Agricultural Guards of Maupertuis (1782) is amusing.

2. See Maurice Agulhon, *Pénitents et Francs-Maçons de l'ancienne Provence* (Paris: Fayard, 1968). Although primarily concerned with provincial life during the *ancien régime*, Agulhon characterizes the precise differences between lodges, circles, clubs, and confraternities, as well as the survival or transformation of one form in another: "There existed, thus, diverse societies, where they pursued varied aims, more or less elevated, but where they also found the occasion for that communal pleasure proper to group life; many societies, but the group life," p. 212.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 68. The trade confraternities of the fifteenth through the seventeenth centuries "had a chapel, either isolated or in a parish church, which is both place of worship and place of reunion." The early eighteenth-century eating

societies, loth to imperil their new-found middle estate by utilizing the cabarets of popular recreation, established homes of their own. Dinaux, *Les Sociétés Badines*, II, p. 16, notes that the order of Medusa formed by maritime officers in Marseilles and Toulon around 1684 "assembled to hold their chapters in hospices named *Manses*, established in different parts of the realm, and these chapters were held at table."

4. The *Fendeurs*, probably one of the oldest masonic societies of "Adoption," were apparently formed by the Chevalier Beauchaine, a master of the Grand Lodge, in 1747. For their first meeting he appropriated a vast estate to the north of Paris at la Nouvelle-France. An imitation, with pleasurable divergences, of the ancient orders of *comagnonnage* among the foresters and *charbonniers* of the Jura, the order developed its rituals according to "rustic" forms. See *O. ou Histoire de la Fondation du Grand Orient de France* (Paris, 1812), p. 361.

5. See Agulhon, *Pénitents et Francs-Maçons*, pp. 214, 243, for a description of the Chambrées of Provence, heirs of earlier meetings of scholars.

6. According to *The Constitutions of the Free-Masons* (London, 1723), p. 51, "a LODGE is a Place where *Masons* assemble and work; Hence that Assembly, or duly organiz'd Society of *Masons*, is call'd a LODGE, and every Brother ought to belong to one. . . . It is either *particular* or *general*, and will best be understood by attending it."

7. Jérôme Le Français de Lalande (1732-1807), Member of the Academy of Sciences and the Professor of Astronomy at the Collège de France from 1762, was Orator of the Grand Orient, as well as founder and Venerable of the "philosophic" Lodge of Les Neuf Soeurs from 1776. The opening ceremony of the quarters of the Grand Orient was described in a circular published by the Orient in June 1774, Grand Orient of France, *Miscellaneous documents and papers* (Paris, 1773-1777), piece 5, pp. 1-4.

8. The *Encyclopédie* (Paris, 1751), I, article "Asyle," defined asylum as "a sanctuary or place of refuge sheltering a criminal who retires therein;" not yet tainted with overtones of medical confinement (a connotation that was not fixed until the first years of the nineteenth century) the word was used ubiquitously in literature and philosophy throughout the eighteenth century. Masonic lodges were generally termed "asylums of friendship," or of "virtue": Rousseau called the retreat of Julie and Wolmar, in *La Nouvelle Héloïse* of 1759, "an inviolable asylum of confidence, friendship and liberty" (*Oeuvres Complètes* [Paris: Pléiade, 1961] II, p. 544). The Abbé Delille in his poem *Les Jardins* (1784) used the word indiscriminately for woods, gardens, clearings — any space adopted for refuge.

9. As described in Emile Lesueur, *La Franc-Maçonnerie*

Artésienne au XVIII^e siècle (Paris, 1914), p. 173.

10. De Lalande wrote the article "Francs-Maçons" for the *Encyclopédie, Supplément* (Paris, 1777) which was published in a slightly fuller version by the Grand Orient, in *Etat du G. O. de France* (Paris, 1777) I, part 2, pp. 86. "The Society or Order of Free-Masons," he wrote, "is the reunion of chosen people, who are linked to each other by an obligation of loving each other as brothers, of aiding each other in need, of animating all virtues, above all that of beneficence, and of guarding as an inviolable secret all that characterises their Order. . . . The secret that they observe is a further means of cementing the intimate union of the Free-Masons." This essay has recently been demonstrated by Chevallier to be accurate in its survey of the early growth of the Order in Paris.

11. *Constitutions*, pp. 1-48; this masonic "history of architecture" was in fact a compilation of accounts of the history of the craft from Manuscripts dating from around 1360. These are discussed in D. Knoop, "Pure Ancient Masonry," *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum* (1940), LIII, p. 4, and republished in Knoop, Jones and Hamer, *Early Masonic Catechisms* (1943). The 1723 *Constitutions* was first translated into French in 1736 (Jean Kuenen, The Hague) and again in 1742 (de la Tierce, Frankfurt). The successive transformations in these historical accounts according to the development of architectural theory in general is particularly revealing as a way of understanding the specific relationship of architects to the Order. At times, indeed, the influence may have expanded from freemasonry into architecture; the discourse on the "primitive type" for architecture — the hut or the temple — must have been at least supported by the masonic affiliations of, for example, the Abbé Laugier, or Quatremère de Quincy.

12. Martin Couret de Villeneuve, *L'Ecole des Francs-Maçons* (à "Jerusalem," 1748), p. 13. In the "Discourse on Friendship," the analogy was made clear: "Let us raise Buildings on the model of those of our fathers, but which surpass by their magnificence all the orders of Architecture which shine therein; that is to say, let us shape our hearts for all the virtues; let us place as the foundation intimate union and social love that all should tend toward the solidarity of the Edifice," *ibid.*, p. 32.

13. This account of the formation of the early Parisian lodges is largely drawn from Pierre Chevallier, *Les Ducs sous l'Acacia, ou Les premiers pas de la Franc-Maçonnerie française 1725-1743* (Paris, 1964), chapters 1-3.

14. Quoted in *Essai Historique sur les Francs-Maçons d'Orleans, 1740-1886*, par "U.P." (1887), p. 3. Letter of Leclerc de Douy, procurator royal to chancellor d'Agnesseau, May 2, 1744.

15. Minutes of M. Aubert, Commissioner of the Châtelet,

- 94 Paris, May 24, 1744 in Pierre Chevallier, *La Première Profanation du Temple Maçonique, ou Louis XV et la Fraternité* (Paris, 1968), p. 182. Chevallier publishes these police reports in full, pp. 180-191. The inventories of items seized are an invaluable source for the reconstruction of mid-century rituals.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 183.
17. The "Carmick M.S." is published in facsimile in *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum*, XXII, pp. 95-115.
18. See the survey article by E. H. Bring, "The Evolution and Development of the Tracing or Lodge Board," *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum*, XXIX, pp. 243, 275. In the *Mason's Confession* of about 1727 (*Scots Magazine*, March 1755) there is an interesting reference to the chequered pavement often depicted both in floor-drawings and in depictions of lodges: "What's the square pavement for? For the Master Mason to draw his ground draughts on."
19. Louis Travenol ("Leonard Gabenon," pseudonym), *Catechisme des Francs-Maçons* (à "Jerusalem" and Limoges, 1744) published the designs of the floor-drawings for the Apprentice-Companion's Lodge (a combined drawing for the use of both grades) and of the Master's Lodge. In a second edition of this work, *La Désolation des Entrepreneurs Modernes du Temple de Jerusalem, ou Nouveau Catechisme des Francs-Maçons* (1747), he published revised versions of these two drawings. The most interesting addition was the façade of the Temple, set in true perspective beyond the two columns. The author of the exposure, *L'Ordre des Francs-Maçons Trahi* (Amsterdam, 1745) reprinted Travenol's first versions, labelling them "inexact," and supplemented two new drawings, called the "true plans."
20. Abbé Gabriel Louis Perau, *Le Secret des Francs-Maçons* (1742), included in *L'Ordre des Francs-Maçons Trahi*, p. 50. A carefully annotated collection of the major exposures, translated into English, has been published by the Quatuor Coronati Lodge, *The Early French Exposures*, Harry Carr, ed. (London, 1971).
21. Abbé Larudan, *Les Franc-Maçons Ecrasés* (Amsterdam, 1747). Larudan outdid all previous exposures in the elaborate detail of his floor-drawings. He illustrated five drawings — for the admission of a Serving Brother, an Apprentice, a Companion, a Master, and the higher degree of Architect, or Scottish Mason.
22. *Reception d'un Frey Maçon* (Paris, 1737), in *The Early French Exposures*, p. 8.
23. Perau, *Secret de Francs-Maçons*, pp. 3-4; he mentions the Order of Liberty, the Order of Medusa, of the Grape (Arles), of the Trancardins, the Order of Drinking (in lower Languedoc, ca. 1703), as well as many English *cotteries* and clubs. "There were so many Bacchic Societies, in which they celebrated only the God of Wine: they nevertheless sang a few Hymns in honor of the God of Cytherus; but they were content to sing whilst they offered very ample and very real sacrifices to Bacchus." In some provincial towns, where the masons took over the forms and functions of earlier trade corporations, like the Lodge of Fidelité at Hesdin, or Perfect Union of Montreuil, the feasts were held on the same days as the major religious festivals; the annual banquets of Constance and Amitié in Arras were virtual replicas of the corporative fêtes of St. John. See, Lesueur, *La Franc-Maçonnerie Artésienne*, p. 75.
24. Villeneuve, *L'Ecole des Francs-Maçons*, p. 127.
25. Perau, *Secret de Francs-Maçons*, p. 35; "it seems first of all that the Table must be the fixed point which unites the Freemasons. Among them whoever is invited to an Assembly is also invited to a repast," p. 19.
26. Abbé de Laugier, "prédicateur du Roi," quoted in Abbé Grandidier, *Essais Historiques et Topographiques sur l'Eglise Cathédrale de Strasbourg* (Strasbourg, 1782), ii, p. 417. The masonic poem attributed to Laugier was a response to the Papal Bulls of 1738 and 1751; the first half reads, "Par la sobriété nos banquets préparés, / D'une intime union sont les noeuds resserrés. / Jamais la liberté, hors des bornes poussée, / N'y sçut faire rougir la pudeur offensée: / Le déceit préside à tous nos entretiens: / Dieu, l'honneur, le secret composent nos liens." I am indebted to Professor Joseph Rykwert for drawing my attention to this isolated piece of evidence linking Laugier with freemasonry. The letter (attributed to Grandidier by eighteenth-century masonic historians) within which this poem was quoted, was first published in 1779, in the *Journal de Monsieur* (January, pp. 75-85, and the *Journal de Nancy*, pp. 118-124, 139-148). It was a general argument for the evolution of speculative from operative masonry in the context of the builders of Strasbourg; this has also been studied by contemporary scholars; c.f. P. Frankl and E. Panofsky, "The secret of the medieval masons," *Art Bulletin*, March 1941.
27. Travenol, *La Désolation*, described this horseshoe-shaped table; that of the lodge Amitié at Arras was also of this form, the paradigmatic figure of brotherhood.
28. The drinking songs of the masons are a delight to read and an important source of imagery; this refrain comes from the Apprentices song, in a collection published by the brothers Villeneuve of Orleans, *Recueil de Poésies Maçonnes* (à Jerusalem, 1748).
29. "Lettre et discours d'un maçon libre," quoted in Robert Mauzi, *L'Idée du Bonheur dans la Littérature et la Pensée françaises au XVIII^e siècle* (Paris, 1965), p. 612. Mauzi characterizes masonry as realizing "the alliance between repose, pleasure and virtue. Everything being identified with morality, it constitutes an art of living, equally fit

from asceticism and debauch.”

30. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Essai sur l'Origine des Langues* (Paris, 1970), facsimile edition, p. 523: “they gathered around a common hearth, they made feasts there and danced; the sweet ties of custom imperceptibly drew man to his fellows, and on this rustic hearth burned the sacred fire which carried the first sentiment of humanity to the depth of all hearts.”

31. “Lettre écrite par un maçon à un de ses amis en province” (1764), quoted in Mauzi, *L'Idée du Bonheur*, p. 611.

32. Abbé Laugier, *Essai sur l'Architecture* (Paris, 1753). The primitive hut was of course only a “principle” in Laugier’s terms for the construction of a more civilized architecture. Wolfgang Herrmann (*Laugier and Eighteenth Century Theory* [London, 1962]) has noted the paradigmatic form of the chapel at Versailles as strongly influencing Laugier’s views on church architecture, and in a later article (“Unknown Designs for the ‘Temple of Jerusalem’” by Claude Perrault, *Essays in the History of Architecture presented to Rudolf Wittkower*, ed. Fraser, Hibbard and Lewine, [London, 1967]) he draws a relation between this chapel and the reconstruction of the Temple of Jerusalem along lines suggested by Villalpandus and Perrault. Laugier was then concerned with both the primitive (natural) and the civilized (revealed) paradigms of masonic architectural theory. Although the connections need to be elaborated in more detail, with an accurate “reading” of masonic texts, this confrontation between models, so to speak, is also a characteristic of mid-century freemasonic history. See, for example, Villeneuve, *L'École des Francs-Maçons*, pp. 1-22.

33. Larudan, *Les Francs-Maçons Ecrasés*, p. 127.

34. “Livre d'Architecture de la R..L.. de l'Amitié,” quoted in Lesueur, *La Franc-Maçonnerie Artésienne*, p. 176.

35. Jean-Pierre Louis Beyerlé (1738-7), Counsellor to the Parliament of Nancy, *Essai sur la Franc-Maçonnerie* (à Latomopolis,” 1784), ii, p. 178, “Concerning the locale of the Lodge.” He divides his subject into Distribution and Decoration, and described as a type form, with much elaboration of the organization of the Archives, the plan generally in use from the 1740s.

36. Jean-Baptiste Willermoz, Letter to the Duc de Brunswick (1780), quoted in Gustave Bord, *La Franc-Maçonnerie en France des origines à 1815* (Paris, 1908), I, p. 40. Willermoz (1730-1824) was continuously developing masonic mysticisms throughout his life; his theories, half occultist half alchemical, were linked to the “Templar” movement. See (also for a clear and reasoned account of mystical masonry) Alice Joly, *Un Mystique Lyonnais et les secrets de la Franc-Maçonnerie* (Macon, 1938).

37. Beyerlé, *Essai*, says that a lodge room 28' wide should

be 54' long; that of Amitié in Arras was 21' wide by 33' long; the Grand Orient was divided into two parts, 21' by 51', and 21' by 27'; the Grand Lodge of London (1776) was 43' by 100'.

38. G.:O.: de France, *Planche à tracer générale de l'Installation* (June, 1773); Pierre Chevallier has established the date of installation as 22 October 1773.

39. The administrative procedures and finances are noted in several circulars of the Grand Orient. At the Assembly of January 31, 1774, Pierre Poncet was asked to search for a property; he presented his plan for renovating the old Jesuit Noviciate in the rue Pot-de-fer, Faubourg Saint Germain, on 7 March. On 12 August the Grand Orient was installed. Lalande’s inaugural speech has already been noted. See *Miscellaneous Documents of the Grand Orient*, piece 6, January 1775, which noted that “the Temple is still without decoration, and the few pieces of necessary furniture are rented at high cost,” p. xiv.

40. This detailed description of the fully completed lodge was published in *Etat du G.:O.: de France* (Paris, 1777), I, iv, pp. 7, 35-36. In Vol. I, i, there is a remarkable picture of the lodge festivities at the Orient of Bordeaux on the arrival of the Duc de Chartres, February, 1776. The whole façade of the Lodge, 88' long, “was decorated with a magnificent illumination of gothic architecture. Eight twisted columns carried an entablature of light, allowing the sight of obelisks in the spaces between,” p. 67.

41. See Auguste Viatte, *Les Sources Occultes du Romanisme* (Paris, 1965), I, “Le Preromantisme”: Lavater at the turn of the century distinguished some seven types of “pious assemblies” — magico-religious, mystico-religious, theosophico-religious, visionary, etc. — while at the Congress of the Philalèthes, called by the hermetico-scholarly sect inside the Lodge of *Amis Réunis*, Paris, 1785-1787, an anonymous mason similarly categorized seven types of masonry.

42. See Chevallier, *Histoire de la Franc-Maçonnerie française*, p. 87. “Scottish rites” introduced thirty-three grades into the canon; these were most clearly set out and explained in their symbolism in de l’Aulnaye, *Thuileur des trente-trois degrés de l'Écossisme du rit ancien, dit accepté* (Paris, 1813). The fourteen plates are useful.

43. The magisterial work by René le Forestier, *La Franc-Maçonnerie Templière et occultiste aux XVIII^e et XIX^e siècles* (Paris, 1970) is the best guide through the labyrinths of the “intellectual” and philosophical history of the cults.

44. Antoine Court de Gebelin (1719-1784), *Monde Primitif considérée dans l'Histoire civile, religieuse et allégorique du Calendrier ou Almanach* (Paris, 1774-1776), vol. iv., p. 320. Gebelin paraphrases Themistios’ “On the Soul,”

- 96 from Plutarch. Cf. G. Mylonas, *Eleusis and the Eleusinian Mysteries* (Princeton, 1961) who characterizes this description of initiation as essentially Orphic in origin, and not part of the original mysteries of Eleusis. The spatial hermeneutics of Eleusis are explored by K. Kerényi in *Eleusis. Archetypal Image of Mother and Daughter* (Pantheon Books, 1967). The adoption of the so-called mysteries into the rites of the brotherhoods had a respectable history of its own; on 21 September 1645, the *compagnons du devoir* in Paris were condemned by the Faculty of Theology for having introduced into their initiation ceremonies for Apprenticeship a seeming parody of religious forms, administering baptism with rites "common to the mysteries of Eleusis." See Dinaux, *Les Sociétés Badines*, I, p. 229.
45. Jean Terrasson, *Séthos, ou vie tirée des monuments anecdotes de l'ancienne Egypte* (Paris, 1731). This extraordinarily influential work was translated into English in 1731, into German in 1737, and reprinted in Paris in 1767. Shikaneder used it for the libretto of Mozart's *Magic Flute*, Cagliostro based his "Egyptian Rite" of 1775 on its descriptions of Séthos' initiations, and of course, the fantasies of Jean-Jacques Lequeu were drawn from its pages.
46. See especially the "Vertical section of the cellars of the Gothic House," plate 156 of Jean-Jacques Lequeu, *Architecture Civile* (Paris, 1779), unpublished, in the Bibliothèque Nationale. Plate 158, the "Temple of Divination at the northern end of the Elysian Fields" and Plate 164, "Porch or Vestibule which serves as an entry to the subterranean places, and the dwelling of Pluto," are also connected to Séthos. The problem of Lequeu, inadequately explored by the "rationalist" explanation of Emil Kaufmann, has recently been opened again by the researches of Jacques Guillerme (who discovered the Séthos connection) and of Philippe Duboy in *Periodo Ipotetico* (Venice, December 1974), pp. 122-144.
47. Willermoz (in part), "Instruction secrète des Grands Profes," in Forestier, *La Franc-Maçonnerie Templière*, p. 1026. This document, edited by Antoine Faivre, presents the fully developed theories of Willermoz on the Temple and its emblems.
48. Antoine-Chrysostome Quatremère de Quincy (1755-1849), *De l'Architecture Egyptienne considérée dans son origine; ses principes et son goût* (1785) (Paris, 1803). First published in the *Encyclopédie Méthodique* of 1800 this article was Quatremère's prize essay for the Academy of Inscriptions and Belles Lettres of 1785. It contains an extended discussion of the virtues of Greek architecture over Egyptian, and of course, of the type of the temple, the primitive hut. Quatremère was a member of the Parisian Lodge, Thalie, from 1782-1786 when he departed for Rome.
49. See Abbé Delille's poem "Les Jardins" of 1784, and

- Robert Mauzi's analysis of its spatial and literary antecedents in "Delille, peintre, philosophe et poète dans les Jardins," *Delille est-il mort?* (Clermont-Ferrand, 1967).
50. The paradigmatic estate-owner, landscape garden designer and patron was, of course, the Marquis René de Girardin, last patron of Rousseau, who, according to a chronicler, "raised his children according to *Emile*, designed his gardens at Ermenonville according to *La Nouvelle Héloïse*." His *De la Composition des Paysages* was written in 1775 and published two years later.
51. See Marc Haven, *Le Maître Cagliostro* (Lyon, 1964), Chapter V.
52. For a detailed description of this ritual, see, O.: ou *l'Histoire du Grand Orient de France*, pp. 244; the rite called for four rooms, the first or "parvis," the porch, the temple or tribunal, and the final retreat. The instruments to be used in the ceremony were elaborate — a machine to imitate thunder, three other machines to make lightning flashes, a wide pan with lighted coals, a vase full of water, another with petrified earth, an intricate spiral stair with marked level, a trapdoor on the last step, three sticks, censers, thirty candles, and chalk. The last was to describe a microcosmic figure on the floor of the lodge within which the candidate was ritually transported through the traumas of "birth," "hell, chaos and death," and finally "life."
53. The Desert de Retz was designed by François Barbier for the eccentric and extravagant Freemason and occultist François Racine de Monville, between 1771 and 1782. Carmontelle designed the "landscape of illusions" for the Duc de Chartres at Monceau, 1773-1778. Jubert, Comte de Bouville was a member of the Lodge, La Candeur, from 1777. The drawings of this lodge were published in Jean Charles Krafft and N. Ransonette, *Recueil d'Architecture Civile* (Paris, 1812), plates 37-39. "We are uninformed," wrote the editors, "and we do not see why a house which is essentially a dwelling by its interior distribution, has been given the name, the form and the character of a temple. We are equally uninformed and we understand even less why this pretended temple is dedicated to Silence," p. 10. According to the section, the house was levelled to its foundations by the Revolution.
55. The documentation on the estate of Maupertuis is scanty. A. de Laborde illustrated some of the *fabriques* in his *Description des Nouveaux Jardins de France* (Paris 1808), and C. Rivière published Ledoux' drawing of the Ideal Village in *Un Village de Brie au XVIII^e siècle Mauperthuis* (Paris, 1939). There exists an inventory of the *fabriques* made in 1795 on Montesquiou's emigration that mentions a "round tower, serving as the base of a temple dedicated to the arts," a chinese house built on piles, the Mausoleum of Admiral Coligny and a "subterranean grott

in rusticated stone . . . surmounted with a facade in the form of a pyramid." The construction of this grotto, which still remains, was estimated in 1781, and the park and *fabriques* developed from 1782 to 1787. This *Recueil de documents* and *Inventaire des fabriques* (21 Prairial an III), is now in private hands.

56. This account is quoted in full in J. W. Oliver, *The Life of William Beckford* (London, 1932), pp. 172-181. The letter was purportedly written to Louisa Pitt-Rivers, née Peter Beckford, William's sister-in-law and lifelong passion, in Paris 1784. It was apparently much worked over and elaborated throughout Beckford's life, and often recounted to friends; Oliver is willing to accept its general accuracy, but Guy Chapman, in *Beckford* (London, 1937) thinks it "almost certainly a pure romance." The circumstantial details are all true, however, particularly those relating to Ledoux, and it is difficult to know how Beckford would have known of the architect's work with such intimacy without having met him in the context described. Boyd Alexander, *England's Wealthiest Son* (London, 1962), and André Parreaux, *William Beckford* (Paris, 1960), both attest to Beckford's occultist friends and mesmeristic dabbling. It should be noted that the celebrated scene-painter Jacques Lautherbourg (1740-1812), the scenic director of Drury Lane from 1771, was a reputed adept, and friend of Cagliostro; it was Lautherbourg who provided the sets for Beckford's notorious "Egyptian" party at Fonthill in 1781.

57. The setting described by Beckford, "a vast space entirely occupied by woodpiles, some of enormous dimensions and very lofty, others with thatched roofs acutely pointed . . . apparently endless avenues formed by these innumerable accumulations of timber cloven and uncloven," could as well denote the ritual forest of the Hewers, as that of the Eveillés; this latter sect, a branch of the Illuminés of Bavaria, was noted by the author of *O.: ou Histoire de la fondation du Grand Orient de France*, pp. 225. "The locale ought to be vast," he writes, "containing long corridors, cellars, and garden — a country house in an isolated place, but not far from the city; a garden of many acres, wild and uncultivated for receptions." An article by F. J. W. Crowe, "The Fendeurs or hewers," *AQC*, 22 (1929), outlines the regulations of 1788, *Instruction des Fendeurs*.

58. William Beckford, *Vathek*, ed. with an introduction by Roger Lonsdale (London: O.U.P., 1970); this novel was written in French in 1782, and published first in the same language in 1786-7. The oriental scenes, particularly those of the Hospice, or Caravanserai, seem to have influenced Ledoux. Over the doorway of the hospice, was the inscription "This is the asylum of pilgrims, the refuge of travellers, and the depository of secrets from all parts of the world," p. 54.

59. See the evocative article by B. Baczko, "Lumières et Utopie," *Annales, E.S.C.*, March-April 1971.

60. Claude-Nicolas Ledoux, *L'Architecture considérée sous le rapport de l'art, des mœurs et de la législation* (Paris, 1804). The so-called Ideal City of Chaux was an extension in Ledoux's mind of the new salt-works at Arc-et-Senans, near the forest of Chaux, that he had constructed from 1773-1779. Of the many interpretations and descriptions of this ideal city and its monuments, by far the most serious and useful for the eighteenth-century historian is Mona Ozouf's "L'image de la ville chez Claude-Nicolas Ledoux," *Annales, E.S.C.*, November-December, 1966.

61. Ledoux, *Prospectus to L'Architecture considérée* (Paris, 1802), 20.

62. *Ibid.*, p. 3.

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9. Reprinted from A. de Laborde, *Description des Nouveaux Jardins de France* (Paris, 1808).

**On Architectural Formalism and Social Concern:
A Discourse for Social Planners and Radical Chic Architects**

Denise Scott Brown © 1975

Denise Scott Brown's article is an attempt to describe the gap that separates sociologists and planners on one side, and architects on the other.

In doing so, she suggests certain parallels inherent in both the position of social planners and architects which arise from a certain isolation and misunderstanding of each others role in the building process. In addition to several suggestions for ways to ameliorate this condition, Scott Brown calls for a theory of form and meaning in architecture.

While this prescription puts her argument in the mainstream of architectural debate in both Europe and America in the last ten years, one central aspect of her proposition remains open to question; that is, the non-dialectical nature of her position which is revealed in her argument through many polemical statements.

It would seem that the confusion of polemics and theory, or even the substitution of polemics for theory, was inherent in the rhetoric of the Modern Movement. We hope that the theoretical propositions which will be put forward and clarified in Scott Brown's argument will not suffer from the same problem.

MG

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100 There is long overdue a written history of social concern in Modern architecture. This monograph would document the strong social component in early Modern architectural theory in Europe, and would trace the implementation of architectural social theory in the housing programs of European cities during the 1920s and 1930s and after the second World War. It would survey, in passing, such fascinating sidelines as the left-wing symbolism ascribed in Europe to the International Style and particularly to the flat roof. Crossing the Atlantic, the history would remark on how little of the social rhetoric of the Modern Movement reached the United States, noting that this omission has been attributed to the political and social outlooks of the movement's first American propagandists, Henry-Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson. However, it would question whether, given the vast differences between American and European social and economic institutions, the differing approaches to social housing, and the different arrangements for getting it built, the social dicta of the Modern Movement would have stood much chance of implementation in the United States, even the United States of the depression years and much less so since. One exception would be noted however; that some of the social rhetoric of CIAM urbanism did cross the Atlantic, to be appended triumphantly to the CIAM-type urban renewal projects that were built in America during the 1950s and 1960s to house, not the poor and the working classes as in Europe, but the rich and the very rich, at the expense of the poor whose homes were demolished to provide urban renewal sites and who found themselves living at greater density in existing slums in the path of yet more urban renewal.

The history would further document how, during the quiescent 1950s, socially concerned architects tended to leave architecture and enter the fields of planning or housing where they found a homegrown tradition of social endeavor in the works of Henry Wright, Clarence Stein and Lewis Mumford, the Greenbelt towns and T.V.A., and a set of institutions evolved during the Depression which allowed architectural idealists to align their social beliefs and their work lives; although possibly at the expense of their vocations, as the new jobs usually involved desk work and administration, rather than design and construction.

Architects who remained in architecture and, in the late fifties, formed successful practices in urban renewal, found themselves, with the first swells of the social movements that were to rock the sixties, in confrontation with a new breed of planners whose backgrounds were not in architecture but in the social sciences and who called themselves "social planners." The social planners' critique of architects was in part a form of self-definition and the imperialism of a new regime in planning ousting an old. Social planning had little effect on the body architectural because in the late fifties and early sixties the only architects who read the planning journals were those few in planning schools. But in the mid-sixties, the social planning message reached architects indirectly through the social uprisings. Moved by events around them and by the spread of information on urban problems, young architects and students who had not heard of Paul Davidoff, Herbert Gans or Melvin Webber, began to offer their services to community architectural workshops and to deride the "physical bias" of their profession. In many architectural schools, community involvement was offered for credit. The Davidoffs' recommendation that planners and architects serve as advocates for the poor whose lives are affected by planning decisions, was taken up eagerly in architecture schools and there were probably more advocate architects than advocate planners in the United States in the heyday of the advocacy movement.

Meanwhile, in the late sixties, the social planners' critique began reaching American architects via a traditional channel for the spread of architectural ideas in America, the English architectural press, whose critics having discovered the social planners ten years late themselves, began berating American architects for their lack of social relevance. Unfortunately, this critique returned from Europe with a familiar CIAM accent and a diatribe on the evils of capitalism and the American consumer society. In this form it caused no painful reassessment of American architectural thought, but was merely added to the existing modern architectural social rhetoric, where, together with some misused nostrums from the ecology movement, it provided, not a prescription for change, but further support for traditional architectural authoritarianism, and also a rhetoric

with which to berate some architects who have isolated the variable, architectural form for study and who have done so in such places as Las Vegas.

Social planners don't read the architectural press; if they did, I believe they would label the whole of the social dogma of modern architecture, from the 1920s to the 1970s, as the work of armchair revolutionaries, long on the production of moralistic, irrelevant norms and short on ideas for the messy business of improving the here and now. Tom Wolfe, perhaps cruelly, applied the term "radical chic" to rich left-wingers who gave cocktail parties for Black Panthers. I feel the term can be applied to much of the social rhetoric of modern architecture.

However, *pace* social planners, radical chic architects, and the English, and despite the hostile U.S. institutional environment, there are many ways that architects, as architects, can and do use social insight and show social concern; and, particularly in the late sixties, new forms of architectural-social endeavor were defined. For example, self-supporting architectural offices that specialized in ghetto work; partnerships of architects and sociologists who contract for socio-architectural research and design; research projects on the relation between behavior, environment and design; and publications that publish the results of this research. In the 1970s, Nixonomics, impoundment and the recession, have curbed these activities, but there remains a growing body of professionals concerned with the relation between architecture and social need.

My focus in this article is not on the history of social concern in modern architecture, but on one particular aspect of the relation between social concern and architecture, the one most suspect by the social planner and most bedevilling to the architect; that is, on the realm of form — architectural, physical form and its aesthetic theories — and particularly on those areas in form making that depend upon intuition and are not, or not yet, amenable to quantitative analysis. A basic question is: can architects' concerns with form and its aesthetics be reconciled with their social concern and social idealism? My aim is to show that they can, and that allegations of social irresponsibility, made by social planners

against American architects in general and made by radical chic architects against us, as theorists of form, are, respectively, to some extent and to a large extent, misplaced.

First, an aside on a second unwritten but needed monograph, on architectural formalism. Lacking this work, we have neither definitions nor a taxonomy for the subject. Therefore, I shall suggest adhoc definitions where needed to clarify my argument. By "form" I mean the physical shape, dimensions, location, and appearance of buildings, parts of buildings, building complexes and urban areas, and of spaces within buildings and spaces defined by buildings. The monograph would take this definition further to cover other concepts of form from Plato's to Louis Kahn's. I have tried to keep mine simple and unphilosophical, limiting it to what we see (or think we see) and touch (or think we touch). The characteristics of form that concern me here are not only its perceptual qualities but also its symbolic, associative qualities, its meaning. That is, I am concerned not only with what we see in form, but with what we understand from what we see.

ARCHITECTS' PROBLEMS WITH FORM

Social planners may be surprised to hear that architects too have their problems with form. Modern architectural theory dictates that form should derive from function; that is, that the physical appearance of a building should be derived totally from the program of physical (and maybe psychological) requirements given by the client, and from the imperatives of structure and construction. The architect's or client's previous experience and symbolic associations with form or preferences for certain forms over others should, according to this theory, have nothing to do with the design process, and previous, traditional or culture-based ways of arranging forms — previous "formal languages" — should not be accepted.

In the term "formal language" I include "formal vocabulary," that is, the set of forms that correspond to words, or perhaps morphemes, in a written or spoken language; as

102 well as “grammar” or “syntax,” that is, the set of rules for putting the forms together to make a recognizable language. An example of a formal language in architecture is the “orders,” the Greek and Roman system of columnated and arched supports and spans whose elements and proportions were laboriously learned by generations of architectural neophytes through hours of measuring and drafting. The orders provided the formal language for several hundred years of architectural endeavor, but were banned by Modern architectural theorists as stultifying to architectural creativity and inhibiting to the solving of new problems. Also abolished was the notion of style, as an accepted way of choosing and arranging forms at a time in history. Modern architects saw style as a personal attribute, and a by-product of other concerns. If Modern buildings looked alike, this was because their architects were facing the same problems. Others could label the new look the “International Style,” and set it beside the prevailing Gothic, Greek or Renaissance fashions; its practitioners insisted they had not merely invented a new style, but rather, were answering the new imperatives of an industrial and technological society.

Modern architects, when they cast out the styles and the orders as aesthetic disciplines on form making, came to consider as irresponsible all attention to form that did not start with the functions it was fulfilling. “Flashy,” “stylish,” or “superficial” were the adjectives prefixed to “formalism.” There could apparently be no profound or responsible formalism. Persons concerned with the analysis of form were *ipso facto* irresponsible toward the other aspects of architecture and particularly toward the social duties of architecture. This last was perhaps deduced from the empirical observation that “architects’” and “peoples’” tastes in architectural form frequently differ.

This reasoning is illogical. Its origin in the righteous revolutionary fervor of early Modern architecture is understandable but there is no reason for its continuation today. Some fallacies in the Modern dogma on formalism should be set straight now.

The Social Irresponsibility Fallacy

To assume that formal interests exclude social interests or that the separation of form in architecture for analytic study betokens irresponsibility toward architecture’s social or even moral dictates, is a *non sequitur*. The separation of one variable for individual study, as part of a process of analysis and design, has a long and worthy tradition in the sciences and the humanities and belongs honorably in architecture as well. It is vulnerable, as are all studies of subsystems, to criticism in the interest of the larger system, but this does not invalidate it. The other systems in fact become context for the analysis of form; for example, form may be seen as a result of function or analyzed as a tool of symbolic communication; the affective properties of form and aesthetic formal preferences may be studied in a cultural context; historical and cultural comparisons of formal languages can be made, and they may be evaluated against criteria derived from other variables such as economic feasibility or flexibility for social interaction; and new descriptive techniques can be evolved to suit new forms derived from new social needs.

Allegations of social and architectural irresponsibility can, indeed, be made if the architect does not resynthesize all factors to the greatest extent possible in design. But there is nothing socially irresponsible, *per se*, with the analysis of form. I am reminded of the exasperated observation of a musicologist colleague: “When I discuss function they say I am irresponsible to structure. When I discuss structure they say I am irresponsible to function.”

But something more than a disapproval of formalism is involved in the cries of social irresponsibility that have followed analyses such as ours of the forms of Las Vegas and Levittown. Comparable analyses of the forms of the Dogon or of traditional Japanese architecture do not receive similar criticism. It seems some architectural critics object to analyses of forms built under the capitalist system. Their argument is twofold. The first part goes: “Architects who praise [sic] Las Vegas and Levittown, praise the worst parts of the consumer society. Everybody knows that people don’t really like Las Vegas and Levittown, the commercial strip and suburbia; these are rammed down their

throats by the unscrupulous power structure. Architects who don't have to live on the Las Vegas Strip prescribe it for other people. This is arrogant." Now few people to my knowledge live in commercial strips, many live in suburbia. Many choose Las Vegas as a holiday resort. I have yet to see one of these critics, who is so certain that "everyone" hates suburbia and the strip, attempt a responsible assessment of the extent to which people in public housing and those who use downtown urban renewal areas, are in these architecturally-approved environments against their will. As far as one could see, people appeared to visit Las Vegas of their own volition, and residents were either proud of or indifferent to the Strip, although they did resent the image of their city as solely a gambling spot and were quick to point out the availability of other amenities such as Lake Mead. In Levittown, at the suggestion of Herbert Gans, we paid particular attention to alterations made by people to their houses once they had moved in, as a way of meeting the criticism that many were forced by economic necessity into taking developer housing that they in fact hated. As far as we could see, most do-it-yourself alterations were symbolic, and the chosen symbols tended to intensify the given developer imagery; for example, a Cape Cod house would be made to look more colonial by the addition of shutters, coach lamps and picket fencing. Perhaps these additions were "all that were available at the hardware store," but if people didn't like them, why would they have bought them in the first place? In other words, how far can you take the argument "it was rammed down their throats?" Many architects live in suburbia but, if rich, they can afford a better "class" of suburbia and, if poor, they search for a rich family's coach house or barn. Why should these architects deny the lower middle class its version of the suburban environment? The you-wouldn't-live-there-yourself argument applies both ways: if I, not living in Levittown, may not praise it, why should you, not living there, be allowed to blame it? Especially if it is an approximation for a poorer person of the place where you yourself are living.

The second "anti-capitalist" argument says: "Architects who praise [sic] this capitalist environment must be Nixonites, and were probably in favor of America's intervention in Vietnam. We other architects must fight for what we

believe in and against the social ills of our society. Social progress is often achieved as an imposition, against the popular will." For example, Mr. Koetter suggests in a review of *Learning from Las Vegas (Oppositions 3)*, that compulsory education in England and desegregation in Alabama would both have been defeated by a popular vote. This argument ignores our careful limiting of our non-judgmentalism to the *initial* stages of *architectural* inquiry, and our statement that its aim is to make subsequent judgment more sensitive, as well as our careful definition of this technique as a heuristic for *architecture*, not a prescription for living. It was not even a prescription for other professions. I have in the past recommended that urban economists, political scientists and urban sociologists take a more normative and judgmental professional stance, because unlike architects, members of these professions have, in my opinion, been too quick to accept existing trends. Our prescription was specifically for architects as an aid to form making and was a reaction to the unthinking, authoritarian and socially coercive stance taken by Modern architects in the 1950s and 1960s in urban renewal in America. We recommended learning (note, *learning*, not loving — at most we recommended a hate-love relationship) from Las Vegas and Levittown as a means of producing innovation in architectural theory and form making, for *inter alia* social reasons, to make architects more receptive than they have been to the needs of people different from themselves whose lives they affect. The recommendation had for us personally another benefit in that we found these environments a goad to our own personal creativity.

Our comments on the role of the artist in a society that did not sit well with him or her, and on the use of the material of that society ironically in social comment, cut no ice with our radical chic critics. Nor did our suggestion that architects and urbanists not wait for some perfect, post-revolutionary state, but act in the here and now, starting with what exists and heading pragmatically toward a vision. But even if the architect who works with what "is" as a point of departure for what "ought to be," risks the label, "conservative," there is still ample reason for the idealist in architecture to grapple in professional life with urgent, immediate problems, rather than sit in judgment in academic armchairs, or

104 plan utopias. As Allard Lowenstein said to the students, "What did you do *after* you marched on Washington?"

It is also over-simple to link building types and styles to an economic system. On a recent visit to East Berlin we saw housing on the former Stalin Allee and in the center city that resembled capitalist Miami Beach (which in turn derives at some remove from the socialist Bauhaus). We felt these palaces for the workers, like those at Miami Beach, were an attempt to reach the tastes of the East German equivalent of middle America, and that we could learn from them as we had from Miami Beach. What does this make us? *Apparatchiks*?

But something other than a disapproval of capitalism is still at issue here. Architects have analyzed the forms of coercive societies before, without criticism. For example, no one criticizes an architectural analysis of Chartres Cathedral because of the brutality of medieval Christianity, nor do architects put scholarly discussion of Haussman's Paris beyond the pale because of the economic skullduggery and militarism that accompanied that endeavor of bourgeois capitalism. Who prefaces an analysis of the architecture of fifteenth-century Florence with a diatribe against the Medici? And if you really wanted to take on the consumer society wouldn't it be better represented by the great corporate, Modern architectural edifices of the 1960s and 1970s, than by Las Vegas or Levittown? It seems to me that, behind the moral criticism of studies such as ours of Las Vegas and Levittown, lie sentiments less worthy than concern for the downtrodden; that it's not really the economic system the critics don't like, nor the formalism of such studies, nor even the forms of suburbia themselves, but what these forms represent: that is, the taste of the lower middle class people who live in or use these environments. I think we are up against plain, old-fashioned, class snobbery. To put it plainly, much of the criticism sounds like class prejudice against white, lower middle class Americans, on the part of American architects who wouldn't dream of expressing anti-Black feelings and consider themselves liberals.

In sum, I suggest that the allegations against us of social

irresponsibility lie not in the fact that we have analyzed forms, nor in the fact that the forms we analyzed are in a capitalist society, nor even, for that matter, in the ecological considerations to which these forms are without doubt subject, but in the lower middle class symbolism of the forms of Las Vegas and Levittown that are offensive to the upper middle class tastes of many architects.

All these points were made in our book, and I suppose the critics who did not pick them up there are not likely to be impressed with them here. It is interesting to me that we have not been criticized in this way by the social planners who are arguably more socially involved and committed than the architectural critics. The social scientists and social planners I have worked with regard Las Vegas and Levittown as emanations from important subcultures in the pluralist American culture and, as such, as worthy of examination and not to be scoffed at. Our thinking on the subject (and my personal approach to architecture) owes as much to the social planners as it does to the Pop artists, historical sources and the theorists of the early Modern Movement. It is interesting to note that Gans received few allegations of social irresponsibility for writing *The Levittowners*, but encountered the full force of the "anti-capitalist" argument when he entered the art world with *Popular Culture and High Culture*. (See "Should We Subsidize Popular Art?" by Herbert J. Gans, *New York Times*, Feb. 9, 1975 and responding letters Feb. 23, and March 9, 1975.)

It seems to me that many architectural critics lack knowledge of philosophy, psychology, the social sciences and literary criticism, subjects where the attitudes we have described as "permissive" and "nonjudgmental" are accepted tools for attacking intellectual problems (note, not all problems, nor the only tools). This suggests that there are vast gaps in the liberal arts and cultural preparation of American architects, and it calls into question the efficacy of the system of graduate education whose very aim was the better cultural preparation of architects.

To help fill one gap I suggest a third long overdue monograph: on pluralist architectural aesthetics and the architectural élite. It would not be as damning to architects as it

sounds, for it would enumerate the many forces within the society that keep the architect willy-nilly in the role of standard-bearer to the élite, and it would describe the fate of architects such as Morris Lapidus who step out of the system.

For all that, I question why those critics who assailed our social responsibility and morality in studying Las Vegas did not, in fairness, assess the application of our theory on South Street. This essay in advocacy, although described at length in our book, has been ignored in the reviews. I would have been happy if even one of the critics who quoted our request “Don’t bug us for lack of social concern,” had had the intellectual honesty to complete the statement by adding its other half, “we are trying to train ourselves to offer *socially* relevant skills.” (The italics were in the original.)

The Purity Fallacy

The notion that form should be derived from function and from function only (with a little assist from intuition) has been tackled and demolished by Alan Colquhoun in “Typology and Design Method” (*Arena*, June 1967). He questions whether it is possible or desirable for architects to avoid the formal preconceptions they have gathered from personal experience and a knowledge of history, and recommends, instead, that architects depend on the associations they and their clients have to lend richness to their work. I question whether it is, indeed, possible for the human mind to get from a statement of requirements to their translation into physical form without a set of *a priori* aesthetic rules for the making of form that constitute a formal language, and that may relate well or badly to the other rule systems, structural, financial, social, or whatever, that bear on form. In other words, whatever else determines the making of form, *form* itself, its associations and its languages, is one of the determinants. No one starts with a clean slate.

Formal languages have always been a part of architecture. Historians and critics have demonstrated that even the early Moderns, after they had cast out the styles and the orders and thought they were free and clear, shared a formal vocabulary derived from the industrial architecture that they admired and from the Cubist, De Stijl, and Con-

structivist painters and sculptors who were their friends. The rules were there; they were merely unacknowledged. It was these rules rather than the “technological imperatives of industrialized society,” that made the International Style recognizably a style.

The same holds true today. The denial continues and “styling” is still ascribed derogatorily to automobile design and not to architecture. Yet architects continue to use formal languages, derived still from the same industrial architecture that inspired Le Corbusier in 1910 and from its space age descendants, as well as from the abstract expressionist painters and the works of other architects.

Even in advanced scientific architectural circles, or perhaps particularly in these circles because here the moral fervor against “formalism” is intense, the same unadmitted struggle continues. I have seen serious students of design methodology arrive at the conclusion of their analysis to discover that it has not produced one (or even two) unequivocal directions toward the making of form. They are on their own again in an unknown field. As they endeavor to fill the gap between research and design, unconscious formal preconceptions take over and the physical design acquires a Lou Kahn styling without there having been any rational deliberation on whether this particular master’s vocabulary is the most suitable one to the social, functional, economic, or symbolic problems posed by the building. Similarly in urban design, conscientious young practitioners emerge from the schools well versed in the social ills of the city and in the philosophy of process in city making, but on their drawing boards are the formal hand-me-downs from whichever “master” presided at their previous architecture schools, a different one at every board. Any or all of them may be relevant to the social, economic, political, or technological problems posed in urban development, but as these formal preferences are unadmitted, they are not tested and evaluated, therefore they act as unconscious constraints much stronger than the accepted constraints of the styles and the orders. Yet, formal languages are a necessity in urban design, where there are many variables, and few of them are overriding; more so than in, say, the design of hospitals or bridges, where clearly definable,

In sum, those who refuse to study form and the vocabularies and grammars of formal languages because they believe form should be a mere resultant of other considerations, tend to find themselves the prisoners of irrelevant formal hand-me-downs whose tyranny is the more severe for being unadmitted. This is an unrecognized problem but a severe one personally for architects and particularly for students until they learn to internalize a basic contradiction in the dogma of modern architecture, which states that form derives from function, and leaves unexamined the reality that form also derives from form. Perhaps one reason architects turn more eagerly to the works of architectural father-figures than to documents of primary research (to Le Corbusier rather than to regional science if one is an urban designer, to Aldo van Eyck rather than to education texts if one is designing a school) is that from the ‘master’ they get personal help with a difficult problem that lies at the intangible end of the design process where research rarely reaches.

The Unconscious Fallacy

Alan Colquhoun in the same article points out that some early Moderns, facing the problem that the imperatives of technics and function did not lead straight to form, were prepared to add an extra, undefined component, “intuition,” that in some unspecified way gave an extra assist to the process. And architects today who recognize the existence of formal languages may, nevertheless, feel they should be left in the limbo of the unconscious because out in the open they may outweigh the other determinants of form, and result in architecture that is “mere formalism.” Some architects fear that a grammar of form may inhibit individual genius or creativity.

As with the purity fallacy, the answer to the “outweighing” argument is that formal tyrannies can be greatest when formal concerns are unadmitted. On the “inhibited genius” and in general on the relation between individual creativity and accepted cultural patterns, formal or otherwise, much could be said; here it suffices to note that most architects, including most great architects, have worked *within* the

discipline of accepted formal languages and that their creativity has both found scope within the limits of their chosen language and shifted the scope of that language. This is true of the architecture of both Georgian London and Miami Beach. But even the great formal innovators of the early Modern Movement, bedevilled as they were by the nineteenth-century image of the architect as Howard Roark, used one or several formal languages, as we have seen. They were merely not languages acceptable at the time to the broader culture in which the architects lived.

PROPOSITION ONE

In my opinion there is nothing intrinsically wrong with the use of a language or languages of form in architecture and urban design; indeed we cannot do without them. But when we deny them, they tend to control us unawares and limit our ability to deal with the other problems of architecture straightforwardly.

For example, the Cartesian formal ordering system favored by Mies van der Rohe and his followers sets rectangular blocks (high-rises, town houses, shopping precincts) at right angles to each other on a series of $x y$ co-ordinates within a superblock. Heights and distances are mediated by an hierarchical set of solid-void relations: big building — big space before it; small building — small space before it. Associated with these prescriptions is a vision of glazed towers rising from piazzas or green lawns. Until recently, this has been the formal language for perhaps a majority of U.S. urban renewal projects. Small inconveniences can arise from this abscissa-ordinate formal determinism: residents may be forced to carry heavy grocery packages round two sides of a triangle because the architect was unwilling to provide a diagonal pathway where people most need it across the lawn between the supermarket and the high-rises. And slightly larger inconveniences: because the boundary road is on a diagonal, the architect sets the shopping precinct well back from the road to maintain the project’s rectangular formal organization, with the result that half the shops remain unrented. But these inconveniences are nothing compared with those suffered by relocated

slum-dwellers in order that some tidy, purist architect and some tidy, purist redevelopment agency could start with a simple, rectangular-shaped project area, to bring to the city the “clean, simple lines of modern architecture,” what the design review boards recognize as “design excellence.”

In sum, formal languages must be carefully chosen for relevance to the functional, economic and social components of the program at hand or the architecture that results will be functionally inconvenient, economically unsuccessful and socially harmful.

How do we analyze and evaluate our own formal language preferences and preconceptions? This is a subject for that missing monograph on architectural formalism. But obviously, part of the analysis would be in terms of the other systems, economics, social needs, functional relations. Other analyses would cover the symbolic components of formal languages, their affective properties, cross-cultural and historical comparisons of formal languages, and analyses of techniques for the description and documentation of form.

My investigation of architects’ problems with form was intended to demonstrate the confusion of thought that caused the Moderns to mistake their abandonment of one language of form and selection of another, for the casting out of all *a priori* formal conceptions.

SOCIAL PLANNERS’ PROBLEMS WITH FORM

The planners have added to the confusion. The social theorists of planning, whose writings over the last fifteen years have profoundly changed American planning, have staged a three prong attack on what was, when they started, the bastion of establishment planning, “physical planning.” Distilling the critique of Gans, Dyckman, Weber, Davidoff and their followers as they touch upon architectural formalism, we get:

1. Architects in planning have distorted planning by putting physical problems first and by defining urban problems

in physical rather than in economic, social and political terms. Physical solutions do not touch the worst problems of the urban poor; and, with the automobile and telephone, physical promixity relations are no longer binding either socially or economically on a great many members of society, therefore what the physical planner has to offer is less important now than it was. This is the “physical bias” argument.

2. Architectural and urban design theories and principles of planning, for example, theories of the neighborhood unit, the green belt, or “urbanity,” are important to architects but to no one else. Architectural value systems should not be applied without questioning to the planning of the city. People care less for urban and architectural beauty than architects do. Architects’ aesthetic concerns and preferences are relevant to few people other than themselves. This is the “values” of argument.

3. Architect-planners and urban designers have caused more harm than good in urban renewal. This is the “harmful architect” argument.

These have been the most challenging, threatening and productive accusations of the 1960s and early 1970s to architect-urbanists. To answer them would take me far beyond the limits of this essay which, concerning itself with formal and social concerns, covers only one aspect of architectural-social relations. In any case, I feel that to a large extent the planners are right and their arguments don’t need answering so much as clarification and the removal of internal inconsistencies. But many of the inconsistencies lie in the general area of architectural form making and its social implications. Here the social planners seem to be as subject to fallacious reasoning as the architects. My critique of the planners’ critique is based in part on my experience as an advocate on South Street, Philadelphia, and on our Las Vegas Strip and suburban sprawl research projects.

The Physical Bias Fallacy

The general answer to the “physical bias” argument is to admit that architects have a physical bias and to call for the

108 entry of more social scientists into planning because architect-urbanists should not be expected to *be* social scientists but to work sympathetically with social scientists. Also, granted the greater importance of economic and social programs in urban planning, this does not negate the need for physical planning. The physical city will still be built. But if national urban policy were reoriented to stress economic and social rehabilitation, the physical planning focus would be altered to stress housing and community facilities rather than downtown commercial renewal — to the delight of many architects. In addition, whatever the real priorities should be, problems in the city are often posed in physical terms; for example, whatever else their woes, the South Street residents' immediate problem was that they were threatened with the physical removal of their housing. In many low income communities, political organization can most easily take place around the problem of the physical condition of housing. And here formal and aesthetic questions have a place. On South Street the image quality of the community's counter design assumed a political significance — enough to galvanize the highway forces to produce their own image of an expressway with a lot of small boutiques on top. Finally, when economic or social planning is given greater weight than physical planning or when economic and social conditions decree that least money should be spent on physical programs then, arguably, the best architectural imagination is required.

The argument that economic and social relations today require less physical proximity than before did not hold for the majority of the population nor for all relations even before the energy crisis; but if it were true it would not negate the need for physical planning. In suburbia, relations between physical elements still exist, they are merely more dispersed. We have in part misplanned the automobile city because we have applied to it physical relations and formal languages evolved from other times and places, for example, from the Italian piazza and the medieval town.

To the extent that social and economic interdependencies are now less determined by physical constraints, we can make physical decisions based on amenity and aesthetic preferences instead. This would seem to call for more in-

volvement of architect-planners, not less, and for greater use of imagination in innovating formal languages to make them open to plural aesthetic values.

The Values Fallacy

The general answer to the planners' critique on urban designers' and architects' values starts again with an admission. Yes, architects have been as "value unaware" as other upper middle class professionals. Although I know of few urban designers, except in land development outfits, who are still theorizing on neighborhood units and green belts, with the ecology movement they probably soon will be again, and the critique is true too of some of the newer architectural theories — of megastructure cities or design methodology: they are not socially relevant. The critique misses the strong but misfocused social concern of Modern architectural theory that I have described above, and more important, the planners miss the fact that, whether they are irrelevant or not, the aesthetic concerns of architects develop into formal languages which, I have tried to show, architects use often unconsciously and in spite of themselves, and that these languages *do* have relevance because they may serve or hinder social purposes. Social planners should try to understand formal languages so they can help criticize and evaluate them or at least make formal preferences one of the criteria for the selection of architects. The planner who recommended us for work on South Street said "If you can like the Las Vegas Strip, we trust you not to neaten up South Street at the expense of the people living there."

Do people value beauty less than architects do? Do they care as little about and respond as little to the physical appearance of their surroundings as planners think they do? Our studies of alterations people make to their houses, once they acquire them from the developer and without the help of architects, suggest that many people care enough to invest their house with an appearance that is more in line with their images of themselves than it was when they first moved in, and that these images appear to be class, income and ethnic group related, and are, for most groups, far removed from what is considered good imagery by architects.

We found low income citizens groups place great stress on “beauty,” although they may be resentful of the terms in which urban beauty is usually defined because the definition excludes them. Appearance must have some effect on city users, otherwise why should commercial and entertainment architecture go to such lengths to proclaim its presence in someone’s, not architects’, aesthetic terms? Then there is that great, all-American, beauty-related value, green space — positively acclaimed, surely, by all the population except the social planners.

In fact, social planners seem to have more hang-ups with “beauty” than people do. People uncomplicatedly like it. The planners’ problem is that they have confused “beauty” with “what architects like” and said that because people don’t like the second, they don’t want the first. Whereas, people define beauty for themselves and are prepared to pay to achieve their version of it. How much people will pay for their own aesthetic preference or what trade-offs they will make with other goals such as economic well being or education is difficult to assay, as these goals are not of the same order and are not additive. For example, if education is a higher goal than aesthetics, should architects be ordered to design ugly schools? Perhaps if schools are to be built they may as well be built beautifully, although the beauty may be of that austere order that goes with minimal budgets and the formal language must be derived accordingly.

Planners too have their values. I saw a planning students’ study that listed thirteen possible urban goals and asked selected “urban decision makers” to rank them. These notables placed “economic opportunity” and “education” first and second, and “transportation” and “civic beauty” twelfth and thirteenth respectively. (Only one respondent replied, “You have made our problem seem too simple!”) This proved to the students that beauty was, as they had suspected, of no great value. But the fact that transportation was ranked so low had them puzzled. It demonstrated, they suggested, that decision makers don’t understand the technological imperatives of the transportation system. This is the same reasoning social planners criticize architects for using about aesthetics: “people are uneducated,

they don’t see things my way.”

Social planners began to require that the planning profession be “value free” as a result of their critique of the aesthetic and class values of architect-planners. Ironically, the confused thinking behind this requirement was demonstrated during the 1960s in relation to political values. A younger generation of planners, involved in the social turmoil of the times, was determinedly not value free on political questions, and proclaimed that it should not be. The rational position on values, surely, is that planners, architectural and social, should be aware of their own value systems *and* of those of others, and should be moral in any accommodation of values that is not, or not adequately, mediated by the political system, and over which they may preside while planning.

The Harmless Harmful Architect

The third allegation of the social planners, that architects in planning have often done more harm than good, has unfortunately often been true, particularly in urban renewal during the 1950s and 1960s, and partly for formal-aesthetic reasons of which they have been unaware. I hope it is less true today. But the critics can’t have it both ways. If physical planners can be harmful, they are part of the problem and relevant; if physical planning is unimportant, then the architects are harmless and should be allowed to go their own way undisturbed.

PROPOSITION TWO

Social planners should admit that architecture, urban design and physical planning, with their aims cut down to size, are important and are here to stay; that even aesthetic and formal concerns are relevant, and that we all — people, architects and even planners — have them. Architects should recognize that peoples’ tastes differ and that in these differences lie possibilities for urban richness; and architects and planners should accept architects’ formal preferences as part of the planning process, but should watch them to keep them useful.

110 REFORMULATING THE PROBLEM OF FORMAL AND SOCIAL CONCERNS

Even if architects' and social planners' confusions and prejudices are cleared, we still face real problems of relating formal and social concerns.

Relating Physical Form and Social Need

There is no simple, one-to-one relation between physical form and social need. One form can serve different social needs, one need can be met by different physical forms. Sometimes the architect has difficulty getting from the sociologist a statement of need sufficiently specific to evolve a form from it. This may be partly the result of communication difficulties between architects and sociologists owing to the fact that they are untrained in each others' disciplines. Social scientists' blocks against architecture seem more intense than architects' blocks against the social sciences; architects have, at least, had a verbal education, most social scientists have not had a visual one. Therefore, I have in the past recommended that the gap be crossed by the architect's learning the social sciences, not *vice versa*. But recently, some sociologists have made rewarding and open-minded contact with architects on their own accounts. These sociologists have not been social planners and the architects have not been urban designers. Architects who are not physical planners or urban designers tend to be more oriented to the immediate future and more expedient than are their urbanist colleagues who have been rightly criticized by the social planners for focusing their architectural attention on the year 2020 — the "perfect vision" year. Perhaps "ad hoc" architects fit more easily than do urban designers with the younger, activist social scientists, who are concerned more with social issues than with the planning process, more with "plotting" than with "planning." Yet it would be a great pity if entrenched positions in urban planning should prevent the collaboration between urban designers and social planners, as these are the very people who can most benefit from contact with each other.

The Social Critique of Formal Languages

Even when interdisciplinary collaboration is achieved it may be omitted in some important areas because

sociologists stay clear of formal languages. For example, an architect-sociologist professional team designed housing for a Puerto Rican community, following to the last detail the sociologist's prescriptions for the arrangement of community facilities and pedestrian ways based on Puerto Rican informal meeting and assembly patterns. However, the formal language through which the prescriptions were translated was concrete-gangway Modern; the informal meeting places were several levels of concrete access balcony up in the air. Although the facilities were there, they *looked* so foreign that I question whether Puerto Rican residents would want to use them in their traditional way.

Cultural Pluralism and Formal Languages

From radical chic architects to social planners, and including most architects and planners in between, we are all against the melting pot and in favor of cultural pluralism and the richness it affords this nation. But when it comes to the aesthetic and formal implications of cultural pluralism we all of us run scared. Social planners of my acquaintance seem to be scared of art and aesthetics in general, perhaps because they see them as intuitive, spontaneous behavior beyond rational control. In fact, social planners tend to see the totality of urban design and architectural behavior as intuitively based and not subject to rational discourse. And, although aesthetic preference patently affects in some way the urban decision making behavior of a majority of the population, rich and poor, social planners define aesthetic concern as "élitist" which, for them, means it should be disdained and ignored.

Architects are afraid that if they are forced to pay attention to the aesthetic preferences of people and groups different from themselves they will lose aesthetic control. For the architect, the sensation induced by the loss of aesthetic control is one akin to drowning.

Given such, not altogether misplaced, fears on both sides, we have had unsurprisingly little rational discourse on the subject. There has been almost no documentation of group and subgroup architectural tastes and no discussion of whether there exist shared tastes between the larger aggregations of groups for whom planners, urban designers

and civic architects work. Although individual architects and firms may become skilled at the process of aesthetic value mediation between themselves and their clients at an I-thou level, few seem to hold much optimism for the success of a process of mediation and negotiation on aesthetic decisions between groups of people with different tastes — the situation faced by architect-planners and urban designers. Design professionals have given little consideration to what should be the role of the architect and urban designer in a multivalent aesthetic culture, nor to how formal languages might differ to meet the needs of the unknown group client, the client that is known statistically or through social profiles, as opposed to the individual client whose worried eyes may belie the approval of her or his words across a conference table. And government deals with the problem of the aggregation of aesthetic values egregiously through the appointing of design review boards composed of the most insensitive of elderly élites.

Social planners who have been quick to label architects élitists, have been slow to investigate what other, non-élitist opportunities are available to them in a multi-cultural society — few, I suspect. But our main problem in this area is that until we give pluralist aesthetics rational attention, until we codify even the experience we have, we won't know what to think.

Social Scientists' Aesthetic Discernment

Architects in planning fear that social planners will ride rough shod over them because the social planners don't understand architecture and particularly architects' aesthetic concerns and formal preferences. Social planners who omit to exercise as much discernment in their choice of architect collaborators, as they do in their critique of architecture, cause architects to ponder, "with his ideas on urbanism how can he work with architect X?" I suppose all collaboration is prey to this quandary and that the social planner views the architect askance for having selected colleague Y, whose philosophy is so inconsistent with that architect's aims. But social planners in particular seem to have a penchant for thinking all architects are alike.

Funding

Although there is a growing interest among sociologists in architecture, there is very little money in the field and most researchers must go where the money is. Social science foundations that have the money, tend to see studies in the connection between architecture and sociology as "fascinating but not our field." The architectural foundations are meagerly funded and aesthetically and intellectually hide-bound. The researcher into social need and its architectural implications may receive their blessing, and so may the analyst of Japanese or European medieval formal languages, but not the analyst of the aesthetic preferences of middle America. As Mr. Carter Manny of the Graham Foundation wrote us: "I believe I accurately reflect the consensus that while the Foundation is very pleased to have had association with your 'Contradictions and Complexities' which established your unique point of view applied to traditional architecture, there is less enthusiasm for that point of view as applied to the vulgarities of Las Vegas and Levittown."

The Architectural Establishment

Finally, innovation in formal languages as a result of architectural-social collaboration will have the same tough time at the hands of the architectural establishment that any other formal innovation has. Perhaps more so, because threatening aesthetic values from other culture and class groups will be involved. HUD believes it knows what "design excellence" is and gives prizes for it and any city or town worth its salt has its design review board to keep architectural deviants in line; yet socially inspired formal innovations must be accepted by these arbiters of taste if they are to be built.

TOWARD NEW FORMAL LANGUAGES

What are the sources for new, socially relevant, formal languages? In part, the source should be whatever inspires the designer, because the source should not be judged but the results of using it. On the other hand, sources relate to sensibilities and sensibilities relate to prevailing fashions in the arts and sciences. Inspirational sources for a new,

112 socially-based formalism might include the Pop artists and the city around us, particularly sprawl city and the commercial strip. If our problem is the automobile city and the need to produce humane architecture in the mass society, and literally in its parking lots, then I believe we should search for formal languages and nascent problem-solutions within the problem-ridden automobile city itself, and particularly in its newer, more clearly developed versions in the American southwest. This pragmatist's way of going, where possible, with the grain of the problem is preferable to the confrontational techniques of revolutionary Modern architecture, because it is socially more responsible and aesthetically more successful. At the same time, when sensibilities change, history should be reinterpreted and we should turn as well to the historical city, to Rome as well as Las Vegas. Other important sources for new formal languages are those social planners I have criticized and also the urban land economists and regional scientists. There is no reason why the physical schema of these disciplines, rent tents, desire lines or isodapanes, should not serve the urban designer as muse as well as data base.

Designers should be encouraged to maintain their skills in translating physical and social requirements into physical form, but to hone these skills to a new edge of social relevance. The architect who brings a social rhetoric to a citizens' meeting brings coals to Newcastle. Community groups know it all and can do it better. But she or he who brings a usable skill in the relating of need to form, is a valued collaborator. It should be that architects best serve their society through the use of their own architectural skills.

PROPOSITION THREE

Architects and urban designers should be allowed to undertake the analysis of forms, both profane and sublime, without receiving brickbats from their colleagues or from social planners on lack of social concern. We need to know more, not less, about how form is evolved if we are to make it a socially responsive process. Today we lack even the techniques for describing new urban forms because these forms are not defined by walls as in the traditional city and therefore are not susceptible to traditional architectural descriptive techniques; neither can they be defined by land use mapping, and therefore are not illuminated by traditional planning techniques. Their physical properties are largely determined by the need to communicate across vast space with distant people in moving vehicles. How do you show the Stardust sign on a land use map? (And if architects continue to question whether that's a socially useful task, then I tremble for the profession and for its future victims.)

Commentary, Bibliography and Translations
by Kestutis Paul Zygas

The extremely short-lived, trilingual magazine, *Veshch/Gegenstand/Objet*, has to be counted, as Kestutis Paul Zygas indicates, among the great underground myths of the heroic period. Commentators have understandably regarded magazines such as *Veshch/Gegenstand/Objet* and *G* as evidence of that short-lived, but extremely fertile, cultural *détente* that seems to have been a direct reflection of the Treaty of Rapallo.

While few, as Zygas goes on to argue, have ever bothered to examine the contents of *Veshch*, nothing from it could surely be more revealing than the otherwise unpublished text by Le Corbusier which appears here in English for the first time.

This essay, first published in Russian, is remarkable for its date and for revealing even more frankly than the seminal essays in *L'Esprit Nouveau* (i.e. "Vers une Architecture") the full extent of Le Corbusier's cultural consciousness. We are made aware here as nowhere else of the extent to which, like Adolf Loos, he admired the English Arts and Crafts tradition and its implicit way of life. Like Loos, he revered the movement for its civilized sense of comfort and convenience but resisted its style. We see also how perspicaciously he realized the pan-Germanic *Machtstaat* connotations of *Werkbund* form and also how his anti-Beaux Arts polemic was tempered by the realization that, under frontier circumstances, the tradition could still attain a certain

legitimacy as to form, content and context. In short, Grand Central was almost acceptable but the Grand Palais was not.

The accompanying translation of Ulen's (Lissitzky's?) extremely generalized review of Russian avant-garde art serves only to confirm Zygas' contention that, while *Veshch* was intended to serve as a two-way vehicle for East/West exchange, it functioned more effectively as a Western cultural courier to the Soviet Union than vice versa.

KF

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Veshch/Gegenstand/Objet (in Russian "veshch" means "object" or "thing") was edited by El Lissitzky and Ilya Ehrenburg and published by Skythen Verlag in Berlin. Its subtitle is "An International Review of Contemporary Art." *Veshch* was only published twice: the first issue, No. 1-2, is dated March-April 1922, the second issue, No. 3, is dated May 1922.

Commentary

Kestutis Paul Zygas

Veshch enjoys the reputation of a legend, although the reasons for this are not altogether clear. It may be due to the honorable mentions that *Veshch* receives in the memoirs of the artists of the period. Or, it may be due to the references that art historians grant it in their footnotes. More substantial reasons may be its relative scarcity and its Cyrillic script — always good for a touch of mystery. What is quite certain and well-founded, is the fame of *Veshch*'s covers (fig. 1). El Lissitzky designed them, they have been reproduced frequently, and they are memorable images indeed. Perhaps these famous covers supplied a reputation by association to *Veshch* in its entirety. 115

A magazine, however, should not be judged by covers alone. The typography and *mise en page* of the majority of the inside pages are, by contrast, safe and tame (figs. 3, 4). They have none of the adventure of earlier and contemporary Dada publications, for instance. They lack the hard-edged crispness and clarity so characteristic of El Lissitzky's work. For the period, many inside pages are straightforward enough to border on the commonplace. El Lissitzky could not have lavished much attention to any but the inside title pages (fig. 2). In short, the internal layout does not live up to the promise of *Veshch*'s covers.

As for the contents, they are only a partial success. Not because the magazine was short-lived. Not because many articles were borrowed from other periodicals. And certainly not because only some of the articles promised by a list of brilliant contributors did, in fact, materialize. The contents disappoint because they failed to fulfill *Veshch*'s stated aims.

On the inside front covers the twofold intentions were stated explicitly: (1) to inform those creating in Russia about the most recent Western European art, and (2) to inform Western Europe about Russian art and literature. *Veshch* managed creditably with the first intention, inadequately with the second. To be more precise, *Veshch* communicated in Russian to a predominantly Russian audience. A full three-quarters of its contents were written in Russian, of the remaining quarter, two-thirds were in German, the rest in French — meager justification for *Veshch*'s

116 trilingual subtitle. The majority of the readers could only be Soviet and *émigré* Russians. Three outlets handled the magazine in Moscow; the distributors in Germany are not specified even though nearly half a million Russian *émigrés* lived there in 1922-1923.¹ Many of the *émigrés* would have found *Veshch* an anathema, despite its cosmopolitan ambitions.

As most of the contents carried information from the West to the East, *Veshch* cannot be described as a balanced forum. The reader may judge for himself from the bibliography. It will also indicate the extent to which *Veshch* borrowed from other periodicals, notably *L'Esprit Nouveau*.

We have chosen to translate "Sovremenaia arkhitektura" ("Contemporary architecture"), the only Le Corbusier article in *Veshch* not specified as a translated reprint. This unillustrated essay is an early, if not his first, appearance in Russian. Yet another audience now came into contact with this point of view. The essay, dense as it is, is not opaque; outlines of his fundamental concerns and thought patterns are sufficiently apparent: technolatriy, dictates of the *Zeitgeist*, the idea of progress, the necessity for impersonality, and, of course, the underlying substance of all architecture. Beliefs such as these were intelligible and acceptable to the intelligentsia of the administration that six years later was to reward him with the Centrosoyuz Building commission. Beliefs such as these would also find support among the Russian architects associating themselves with OSA (Society of Contemporary Architects). It may just be possible that their periodical *Sovremenaia Arkhitektura* derived its title from this Le Corbusier essay.

Although the majority of *Veshch's* articles carried information eastward, several articles reciprocated with news about the East. N. Punin's two paragraphs on Tatlin's Monument to the Third International, accompanied by a photograph of the model, is a case in point.

But by far the most important report in *Veshch* about contemporary Soviet art is the article in German translated below as "The Exhibitions in Russia"; it is signed Ulen — a

pseudonym. Sophie Lissitzky-Küppers makes no claims for it, but both T. Andersen² and A. Nakov³ attribute the authorship to El Lissitzky. The article surveys art activities, attitudes, and high points for the period 1910-1922, with the emphasis on breakthroughs and innovations. For the amount of text, the information is about as much as one could hope for. It seems to be an important source for recent overviews of the period appearing in exhibition catalogues written by galleries declining to do their own research.

A photograph of utmost consequence to artists of the time and to art historians of today, accompanies "The Exhibitions in Russia" article (fig. 5). It illustrates the 1921 Obmokhu Exhibition in Moscow. As the exhibition seems not to have issued a catalogue, and as the photograph is one of the only two known — its importance may be appreciated; moreover, it documents a crucial moment in the Productivist vs. Laboratory Work vs. Constructivist polemics of the day. Several of the illustrated exhibits have even been reconstructed recently.⁴ An extended analysis of the photographed exhibits would be superfluous since two fresh catalogues — *From Surface to Space*⁵ and *2 Sternberg*²⁶ — grapple with the significance of the Obmokhu exhibition at some length.

For Berlin sculptors of abstract inclination, the *Veshch* illustration was a welcome shock. The Obmokhu exhibition photograph may have been fuzzy, but the exhibit's message was clear: anatomical or figural representation had been eliminated, there was not even a trace of a Cubist hangover; severe geometry ruled the day. Despite the variety, the exhibited spatial constructions displayed certain common characteristics. The pedestal, as such, was eliminated; the construction and its vestigial base were now an inseparable entity. Every construction advertised the radical reduction of sculptural means to an absolute minimum. And, notwithstanding the minimalization, a three-dimensional space had been delineated, clearly defined, and occupied. Yet none of the spatial constructions were static, each one was implicitly dynamic along its own axis within its own visual field. All this had been fashioned by novices — students of their early twenties.

These innovations could not pass unnoticed, especially by artists like L. Moholy-Nagy, working at the time in Berlin along similar directions. The pedagogical implications were evident and could only reinforce the Constructivist faction within the vacillating Bauhaus administration. Furthermore, De Stijl could now anticipate support for an international group of progressive artists.

Aside from such influences, *Veshch* has to be considered in the context of postwar, Russian émigré-saturated Berlin. Valuable as *Veshch*'s articles and illustrations may have been, they were only articles and illustrations. The actual art objects and the artists themselves were, to some extent, available. To name the famous, El Lissitzky, N. Gabo, and A. Pevsner were all in Berlin circa 1922. Obviously, they could relate and explain at length the Soviet art scene to anyone interested. Then there were the exhibitions, for instance, the 1921 show of I. Puni's work, the 1922 exhibition devoted to A. Exter, and of course, the *Erste Russische Kunstausstellung* opening at the Van Diemen Gallery in October 1922.⁷ The latter exhibited the full spectrum of Soviet art, but it was the Obmokhu exhibits, previewed in the *Veshch* illustration discussed above, together with the Suprematist and Constructivist works that made the sensation in the Berlin art world.⁸

Veshch outlined the background and previewed the shape of Soviet abstract art to come. For several months, *Veshch* was an inseparable component of the émigré milieu in Berlin. During that lifetime it was a Russian-speaking messenger with news about contemporary Western art. Unfortunately, it was unable to fulfill its avowed aim of being a cultural courier in French and German as well. Even so, its several messages about recent art developments in Petrograd and Moscow were welcome and enlightening.

1. Robert C. Williams, *Culture in Exile, Russian Emigrés in Germany 1881-1941* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1972), p. 111.
2. Troels Andersen, *Vladimir Tatlin*, exhibition catalogue (Stockholm: Moderna Museet, 1968), p. 59.
3. Andrei B. Nakov, *2 Sternberg 2*, exhibition catalogue (London: Annely Juda Fine Art, 1975), pp. 53,67.
4. John Milner, *Russian Constructivism Revisited*, exhibition catalogue (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Hatton Gallery, 1973); John Bowlt, *From Surface to Space, Russia 1916-1924*, exhibition catalogue (Cologne: Gallery Gmurzynska, 1974); Nakov, *2 Sternberg 2*.
5. Bowlt, *From Surface to Space*.
6. Nakov, *2 Sternberg 2*.
7. For the Russian émigré artists' scene in Berlin during the 1920s see Eberhard Steneberg, *Russische Kunst Berlin 1919-1932* (Berlin: Gebr. Mann Verlag, 1969).
8. Sophie Lissitzky-Küppers, *El Lissitzky, Life-Letters-Texts* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1968), p. 22.

Figure Credits

- 1,2,4. Reprinted from *Veshch/Gegenstand/Objet*, no. 3, May 1922. Photographs by Charles Langer.
 3,5. Reprinted from *Veshch/Gegenstand/Objet*, no. 1-2, March-April 1922. Photographs by Charles Langer.

Bibliography

Kestutis Paul Zygas

- 118 Each *Veshch* issue was subdivided into the following seven sections: Art and Society; Literature; Painting, Sculpture, Architecture; Theatre and Circus; Music; Cinema; Announcements. The bibliography has been arranged accordingly.

Except for the text of the editorial statement, which was printed in German, French, and Russian, all other articles, poems, notices were printed in only one of these three languages. Every item listed below with an English title appeared in *Veshch* in Russian. The German and French titles have been left untranslated.

Veshch/Gegenstand/Objet, no. 1-2, March-April 1922.

Editorial Statement, pp. 1-4. "Die Blockade Russlands geht Ihrem Ende entgegen," "Le blocus de la Russie touche à sa fin," "Blokada rossii konchaetsia." The complete English translation appears as "The Blockade of Russia Moves Towards Its End" in Sophie Lizzitzky-Küppers' *El Lissitzky, Life, Letters, Texts* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1968), pp. 340-341. For another translation refer to *The Tradition of Constructivism*, ed. Stephen Bann (London: Thames and Hudson, 1968), pp. 53-57.

Section 1. Art and Society, p. 5.

Notices about: the March 1922 International Congress of artists in Paris, the Hungarian magazine *Ma*, the "Museum of Artistic Culture" in Moscow, an article about Dada in *Journal du Peuple*, and reproductions of A. Gleizes' and F. Léger's work appearing in the magazine *Clarté*.

Notice about *Udar* ("The Blow"), a new magazine about the arts published by Russian *émigrés* in Paris, editor Sergei Romov.

Shklovsky, Victor. "Pismo k Romanu Jakobsonu" ("letter to Roman Jakobson").

Section 2 Literature, pp. 6-12.

Epstein, Jean. "Jules Romains." A short article from *L'Esprit Nouveau* translated into Russian.

Esenin, Sergei. "Pougatcheff." An excerpt of the Russian poem in a French translation.

Goll, Iwan. "Mittag." An excerpt from the poem titled in German as "Paris brennt."

Hellens, Franz. "Literatura i kinematograf" ("Literature and the Cinema"). An essay.

Kusikov, Aleksandr. "Mapa i pama imazhinizma?" ("Mapa and Pama, Imagism?"). An essay.

Mayakovsky, Vladimir. Untitled Russian poem beginning "Eto vam — upitanie baritoni. . . ."

Pasternak, Boris. Untitled Russian poem beginning "Ne trogat, cvezhe-vykrashen."

Romains, Jules. "Europe." A poem in French.

Salot, Jean. "Russkaia poezia" ("Russian Poetry"). An essay.

Vildrac, Charles. "Le jardin." A poem in French.

List of articles about and translations of recent Russian poetry.

Section 3. Painting, Sculpture, Architecture, pp. 12-23.

Corbusier-Saunier. "Doma seriiami" ("Houses in Series"). An excerpt from a *L'Esprit Nouveau* article.

Corbusier-Saunier. "Sovremenaia arkhitektura" ("Contemporary architecture"). An unillustrated article, pp. 20-21. Refer to the accompanying complete translation.

Doesburg, Theo van. "Monumentalnoe iskusstvo"

("Monumental Art"). An article accompanied by three diagrams illustrating his conception of the underlying bases of painting, sculpture, and architecture.

Punin, N. "Tatlinova bashnia" ("Tatlin's Tower"). The article, illustrated with a photograph of the model, consists of the first two paragraphs lifted from N. Punin's pamphlet *Pamiatnik III Internatsionala*, Petersburg, 1920. For an incomplete English translation of the pamphlet refer to: Fülöp-Miller, René. *The Mind and Face of Bolshevism* (London-New York: Putnam's, 1927), pp. 100-102. For two different translations of the paragraphs in *Veshch* refer to: Andersen, Troels. *Vladimir Tatlin* (Stockholm: Moderna Museet, 1968), p. 57, and Bann, Stephen (ed.), *The Tradition of Constructivism* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1974), pp. 15-17.

Ulen (a pseudonym). "Die Ausstellungen in Russland." The review is accompanied by an illustration of the 1921 Moscow Obmokhu Exhibition, pp. 18-19. Refer to accompanying complete translation.

Questionnaire: *Veshch* requested painters, sculptors and architects of varying outlooks to "evaluate the condition of contemporary art." This issue printed the replies of the following: Doesburg, Theo van. "Sostoiannie sovremenovo iskusstva" ("The State of Contemporary Art"); Gleizes, Albert. "O sovremennom sostoiannii zhivopisi i ee tendentsiakh" ("On the Present Condition of Painting and Its Tendencies"); Léger, Fernand. Untitled reply in Russian; Lipchitz, Jacques. Untitled reply in Russian; Severini, Gino. Untitled reply in Russian.

Announcement that the "Pervaia mezhdunarodnaia khudozhestvennaia vystavka v Diusseldorfe" ("First International Art Exhibition in Düsseldorf") (sic) is scheduled for May-July 1922. The organizers of this congress state their aims and summarize "the unfortunate isolation of creative people must finally come to an end."

Section 4. Theatre and Circus, pp. 23-25.

Arnold, Selin. "Tsirk" ("Circus"). A very short essay.

Duvchar, Fernand. "Novye spektakli v Parizhe" ("New Plays in Paris"). Reviews of J. Cocteau's "Marriage in the Eiffel Tower" and F. Crommelynck's "The Magnanimous Cuckold."

Parnach, Valentin. "Novye tantsty" ("New Dances"), and "Dzhaz-band" ("Jazz-band"). Two brief reports.

Parnach, Valentin. "Pantomima, balet, tsirk v Parizhe" ("Pantomime, Ballet, and the Circus in Paris"). A brief review.

Tairov, A. "Zapiski rezhissera" ("Notes of a Director"). A short essay.

Section 5. Music, pp. 26-27.

Gleboff, Igor. "S. Prokofieff." An essay in German.

Jeanneret, A. "Muzyka i mashina" ("Music and the Machine"). Russian translation of *L'Esprit Nouveau* article.

Section 6. Cinema, p. 28.

Unsigned notes about Charlie Chaplin. Text in Russian.

Unsigned short essay about "Glyphocinema." Russian text.

Section 7. Announcements

Although a separate Section 7 for Announcements was included in the table of contents, the notices and announcements were, in fact, interspersed throughout the issue thus obviating the entire section.

Veshch/Gegenstand/Objet, no. 3, May 1922.

Section 1. Art and Society, pp. 2-3.

Notices about: the procedure for selecting Russian art to be exhibited at the international exhibition in Venice, the

120 invitation to *Veshch* to attend the “Parisian Congress to Unify Supporters of the Contemporary Spirit,” and the “International Congress for Artists of the Left,” scheduled to begin in early June in Düsseldorf.

“Torzhestvuiushchii oboz” (“The Triumphant Train”). An unsigned essay attributed to Ilya Ehrenburg. See Françoise Essellier’s French translation in *VH 101*, no. 7-8, 1972, pp. 168-169.

Section 2. Literature, pp. 3-9.

Aseyev, Nikolai. “Severnoe siianie” (“Northern Lights”). Poem in Russian.

Beauduin, Nic. “O novoi poeticheskoi tekhnike” (“Concerning New Poetical Techniques”). An essay.

Esenin, Sergei. “Volchia gibel” (“A Wolf’s Death”). Poem in Russian.

Fabri, Marcello. “O romane bez personnazhei” (“About a Novel Without Characters”). An essay.

Khlebnikov, V. “O sovremennoi poezii” (“About Contemporary Poetry”). An essay.

Loeb, Harold. “Obmen!” (“Exchange!”). An essay.

Mayakovsky, V. “Ecoutez, cannailles.” A poem.

Neis, Paul. Untitled introductory remarks about A. Salmon’s “Prikaz.”

Salmon, André. “Prikaz.” An excerpt in French from the longer poem.

Brief notices about the latest *belles-lettres* publications in Russian and other languages.

Section 3. Painting, Sculpture, Architecture, pp. 9-15.

El (a pseudonym attributed to El Lissitzky). “Vystavki v

Berline” (“Exhibitions in Berlin”). For the English translation see: Lissitzky-Küppers, Sophie. *El Lissitzky, Life, Letters, Texts* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1968), pp. 341-342.

Hausmann, Raoul. “Optofonetika” (“Optophonetics”). An essay without illustrations.

Ozenfant, A. and Ch. Jeanneret. “Po povodu ‘Purizma’” (“Apropos of ‘Purism’”). Two illustrations of A. Ozenfant’s paintings accompany this essay.

“Sezann i Sezannizm” (“Cézanne and Cézannism”). An unsigned article from *L’Esprit Nouveau*.

Questionnaire is continued from issue no. 1-2: Archipenko, A. Untitled reply in Russian; Gris, Juan. Untitled reply in Russian; P. Picasso’s reply was advertised for *Veshch*, no. 4, but the issue was never published.

Section 4. Theatre and Circus, pp. 15-17.

Duvchar, Fernand. “Teatr vo Frantsii” (“The Theatre in France”). A short report.

Tairov, A. “L’atmosphère scénique.” An essay with a photograph of a V. Meyerhold production in Moscow in 1920.

Notices about theatrical events and publications in Moscow, Petrograd, and Berlin.

Section 5. Cinema, pp. 17-19.

Hilberseimer, Ludwig. “Dinamicheskaiia zhivopis — bespredmetnyi kinematograf” (“Kinetic Painting — Random Cinema”). Illustrations of V. Eggeling’s and H. Richter’s abstract film compositions accompany this essay.

Unsigned essay. “Suzhdeniia Liui Delliuka o fotogenii” (“Louis Delluc’s Comments on Photogenics”).

Contemporary Architecture¹

Corbusier-Saugnier

Translation by Kestutis Paul Zygas

Section 6. Music, p. 20.

P.S. "Sergei Prokofiev." An essay in Russian.

Section 7. Krestiny "Veshchi," p. 21.

For this issue Section 7 was renamed "Krestiny 'Veshchi'" ("Veshch's Baptism"). In addition to a letter to the editors from Aleksandr Shreider, the page bantered about the Birth — Name — Horoscope of *Veshch*. Actually, it was the opportunity for the editors to take swipes at the Russian *émigrés* who were less than happy with *Veshch*.

Architecture does not advance in step with the other manifestations of contemporary reality. It is extremely tardy; since the eighteenth century its condition has remained static. 121

The evolution of economic, industrial, political, social, and aesthetic events was so rapid during the last generation, that it seems revolutionary. No other epoch witnessed such staggering phenomena: things changed appearances, society changed to its core.

One thing remains incomprehensible; the house, though intimately related to all the transformations, itself remained unchanged. It displays its own disgraceful obsolescence.

For architecture, however, every passing day suggests fresh inferences for new principles; on the one hand, derived from increasing rationality, on the other hand, from the boundless acquisition of industry.

This has created a range of new materials, which can be used immediately; the moment for construction has arrived, and all thoughts concentrate, ultimately, on that purpose.

Housing today is inadequate for the requirements of hygiene, minimum comfort, and even minimum utility. Conversation is by telephone, travel is by railroad, work is restricted to an eight-hour day, the cinema expands the outlook of the masses, yet the house remains an antiquated sanctuary of the old order. Old houses become either hovels or objects of conceit.

The houses of the rich are poorly adapted to the requirements of the rich; the houses of the bourgeoisie or of the workers frustrate the essential needs of the bourgeoisie and of the workers. The problem of architecture is so serious in all countries that, if it is not resolved as soon as possible, it will be the cause for revolution.

By saying that, I wished to indicate that the world-wide crisis in architecture nears its end, that a solution is inevit-

122 able. New principles, new motives converge to help resolve the problem of architecture. The evolution of consciousness welcomes conceptions, already in the process of being refined, which correspond with rationality and which inspire contemporaneity.

It is necessary to point out the useful work being done in France, Germany, the United States, and England; meanwhile, other countries merely reflect their contributions. Neither Italy, nor Russia, nor Scandinavia, nor South America, nor Spain participate in the interchange; that is, they do not contribute in that field.

The problem of architecture does not touch "style," its roots lie in the fundamental principles — *construction and plastic sensibility*.

For some time England possessed "Home," i.e. an architecturally organized house, still satisfying the present-day household. England defined the constituent parts clearly, other countries made their conscious contributions only recently. They noticed that such architecture accommodates family life, and that the matter of the house is re-solved with improvements based on the experience of the last generation.

English architecture now enjoys great influence in other countries. It is a pity that the influence is not confined exclusively to the practical sphere, but extends into aesthetics, thereby grafting an English "style."

The English tradition, compounded by the Dutch, continued in the United States. Two aspects characterize life in America: life in the open air — in the country, in large colonies of workers in the suburbs. And on the other hand, extremely intensive life in enormous cities. The intensive life led to an entirely novel architectural conception — the skyscraper. Americans thereby established the basis for the construction of large cities, just as they developed the technical means. Their conception is a valuable demonstration if one keeps in mind, of course, that it is presented in a rudimentary state, and that the architectural possibilities of building cities upward have not yet been exploited. Ameri-

can skyscrapers bring chaos into the city and the large American cities are very chaotic. Architectural inferences from the American experience were first made in 1921 in *L'Esprit Nouveau*, no. 40, where they were applied to the French case.

The United States contributed the *industrialization of building elements* as the fundamental basis of the new architecture. As a result of its bold and enterprising spirit, industrialization in the building sector revealed its possibilities for the first time in that country. It is necessary to stress this major event, which is to play a momentous role in the architecture of the future: *the determinants of the new architecture will be industrialized construction and the serial fabrication of building elements*. When individuals, as residents and as builders of houses, accept the idea of serial production, the new architecture will attain its proper status.

The German architectural contribution startled everyone with its daring conceptions, novel inventions, and masterful quality. This reputation is the result of propaganda, the right hand of pan-Germanism. During the last twenty years Germany displayed unified might in all of its activities, thereby shocking everyone abroad. That vigor is partially checked, but the new house, with which Germany covered its territory, remains, just as the fame of German architecture continues to persist.

From 1870 that country reconstructed its cities. Its doubled population was settled in new houses. It was the only country in Europe that covered itself anew; it housed its families, rich and poor alike, in clean, freshly painted and centrally-heated houses. This exclusively economic and political fact was without aesthetic intent, but it involved an aesthetic aspect which needed verification: splendidly organized magazines propagated to the entire world the results achieved by German architecture. A Germanic spirit manifested itself: in German houses and palaces it was an aesthetic form which left an imprint on contemporary aesthetics. The journalistic propaganda was so effective that the influence of German architecture extended to all countries, especially to Switzerland, Italy, Russia, Poland,

Czechoslovakia, Austria, and Scandinavia. Now it has infiltrated into France and the United States.

In specifying the German contribution to contemporary architecture, it is best to be levelheaded — the contribution is of a superficial order. The house plan originates in the English house plan; the aesthetic endeavors of the grand houses originate in eighteenth-century France. German architecture manifests itself by elaborating superficialities; before 1900 this ornamentation was Gothic; afterwards, offering arty formulas, came that Secessionist misunderstanding. Germany, under pan-Germanic pressures, created architecture of increasing imperiousness, which aspired to impress and to overwhelm. It could not devise anything better than the discovery of Louis XIV. Louis XIV became the mode and remained so up to now, superseding the Gothic mode. Aesthetically arranged apartments relate architecturally to the style of Louis-Philippe; the knick-knacks, the *objets d'art*, the flowery tapestries and wallpapers were the charming tunes, but it was foreign to new contemporary attitudes and aspirations. The exterior of the house was dictated by the district architect. Visitors were delighted to note that the residents bathe in bathrooms. It was a noteworthy achievement affecting the life of the nation, the achievement was genuine, but of an economic order, not an architectural one.

During the war years all these contrivers came into contact with industry; Louis XIV and the Gothic were confronted with the innate beauty of engineers' constructions — iron, concrete, factories and so on. After the war, deep consternation in the minds of Germans asserted itself in *expressionism*, particularly among those who before the war were dedicated to machines and engineers. Inexcusable evolution! It proved that the trend, apparently realistic, actually originated in futurism: futurism is an excellent preparation for expressionism. Expressionism, as futurism, is not architecture! It is an incompatibility, because architecture is based on the laws of physics and statics; it expresses itself as art through higher correlatives, through proportions which are directly related to the physical and constant nature of things.

In France, nothing is as apparent as it ought to be.

Other countries believe that the Ecole des Beaux Arts is the single source of French architectural output. The Ecole des Beaux Arts displays examples of its work in the Grand Palais and in several railroad stations of Paris and the provinces. It has even exported its product to the United States, where it is still used with credit, and to the Mediterranean countries, since the vacillating culture of young nations still finds some satisfaction in it. Foreigners do not notice anything in France, as they do not look close enough. While the Ecole des Beaux Arts continues its insignificant work, France manufactures automobiles, airplanes, steamships. The spirit of that country, where reason controls everything, does not, as a matter of fact, include the pastries of the Ecole des Beaux Arts. As nothing came to fruition, it is necessary to discover the underlying reasons and causes. Nobody notices, but France invented reinforced concrete and worked out the application methods by herself — that alone revolutionizes construction. Nobody notices, but the clearest manifestations of modernism were at the 1889 Exposition in France — the halls with metal skeletons, the Hall of Machines, the Eiffel Tower and so on. The French population decreased. It was not absolutely necessary to build, so it continued living in the old buildings in the capital and the provinces. If the Secession characterized Germany, the 1889 Exposition characterized France: the first — arbitrary aestheticism, the second — the laws of construction. Nothing new was visible either in Paris or in the provinces; however, the *constructive method* was the goal of a whole generation of inventors, and it may be said, perhaps even affirmed, that henceforth the technical strength of France will have substantial impact and weight.

In architecture it is not as apparent as it might be, but with surprising continuity painting and sculpture left an imprint on the landmarks of that country's strong traditions, now associated with Cubism and its consequences. Cubism and its sequel are based on the physics of painting and on the psychology of perception; German expressionism rejects the physical qualities of things and appeals to sentimental and violent feelings, nearly always sickeningly unhappy.

of those petrified Scythians. Even the last stage of Naturalism, a "Clou," was represented, as was an "Object" by Ivan Puni — a plate (genuine), which was attached to a plank (also genuine) with nails (real ones).

Masses of people thronged to the exhibition. Agitated meetings and disputes took place in the reception hall of the Palace, and the new ideas were thrown recklessly into the crowds.

At the same time an exhibition was held in the Academy, it displayed the competition entries for monuments, models, graphics, and portraits of the new leaders intended to fill the frames freed from the portraits of the czars. All of these were to serve as memorials to the Revolution. May all these efforts unburden the earth!

Moscow. Red, seething. Russian art always found its vanguard here. The new artists seized the Narkompros' visual art department (IZO), and formed the central exhibition bureau as one of its sections. It was to organize all the exhibition-related matters throughout the country. It was to direct not the art education, but its propaganda. We do not intend to evaluate these plans here, but intend merely to trace the events. Twenty large exhibitions were organized in Moscow alone, and many more throughout the country. These exhibitions took trouble to display only the productions of the new art. They declined to be retrospective. They marched in the direction of stiff-necked opposition. The first exhibition was dedicated to the work of Olga Rozanova who, having become ill working in the open air for the October anniversary festival, had died in the meantime. Of the many new young Russian artists, she was one of the best. Gifted with a high intelligence and talented with a sharp color sense, she was one of the first to march through Cubism, Futurism, Suprematism, and to stride into the direction of Production Art. She had been entrusted with the reorganization of craft studios on a production basis.

The subsequent exhibitions, each devoted to a particular field, were those of the artists organized in professional associations: painters, sculptors, and craftsmen.

The painters even founded a Federation of Leftist Artists.

The most important exhibition of 1919 was "Non-Objective Creation and Suprematism." Here the conclusion of the development of painting as color expression was declared, and it was here that the last "i" was dotted. Malevich exhibited "White on White," Rodchenko "Black on Black." Udaltsova, Popova, Kliun blazed in full spectrum. Painting as such found its consummation here. A new compositional symmetry was born here as well. In the process of yearning for the concrete, they enveloped themselves in the flames of the most abstract idealism and annihilated everything corporeal in order to be pure for the conception of the new object. Composition was finished; now one could proceed quickly into construction.

The exhibition following the one dedicated to Rozanova was also devoted to the work of one artist — it showed the twenty-year output of K. Malevich. We will say more about this great artist and person, the creator of Suprematism, who as the leader of an entire generation radiated the fresh passion of the Revolution to the very end.²

The 1919 exhibition represented the summit of "Non-Objectivity" and marked the change of direction to the new specificity. It was here that the individualist Rodchenko, thereafter analytically inclined, strove to condense the dispersed colors and resolve into lines the forms that Malevich had converted into planes. Absent-minded Kandinsky, so alien to contemporary Russia, was here. He confronted our times, our times of organization, of clear and precise plans, somewhat in the manner of an antediluvian beast. And on the other hand, the Group for the Synthesis of Painting, Sculpture, Architecture exhibited seven designs for a Building of the Soviets, which had been prepared by a sculptor, two painters, and several architects. Many other designs and sketches were to be found here as well. Aesthetic was still in abundance, but to be sure, craftsmen were there who manipulated the vital material and sought to fashion it into new forms.

One could clearly sense the underlying strength which had been trained on the construction of painting, and which

ready to start on the construction of objects. In this way old easel painting drew in a breath of fresh air and produced concrete *images* of things. The 1922 Sternberg exhibition displayed an entire series of things made with a high visual sense and with an affectionate manipulation of glass, china, wire, and stucco; with exceptional economy of means, exhibits were created which the spectator was invited to handle.

At the same time, as other difficulties appeared and were solved, it became clear to the young groups of artists that the old exhibition format was no longer adequate to their intentions. That which only covered the walls no longer served the spectators' satisfaction. What the artist now painted was no longer the outcome of anyone's conscious deliberations. For example, a charming view of a sunset, which was to affect one's next-door neighbor, also served to divert him from the real sunset. A red circle is definitely not a sun, and therein lay something almost thoroughly incomprehensible. Hence many artists took their places next to their works and attempted to be their own guides for the spectators' benefit (the Russian artists showed much self-sacrifice). Others went out again into the streets. The sculptor Gabo, the painters Pevsner and Klucis displayed their works in the public music pavilion on Tversky Boulevard in Moscow and fastened their "Realistic Manifesto" to the buildings of the city.³ It enlivened the traffic on this Boulevard and in the evenings the authors spoke to the audiences of the impromptu gatherings.

Tatlin had greater success. He managed to bring the five meter high model of his Monument to the Third International for display at the exhibition organized for the eighth All-Russian Soviet Congress. And there, in the center of the State Publisher's Hall, next to the model, stood its creator with his two assistants and explained to the delegates from Siberia, from Turkestan, from Crimea and the Ukraine the meaning and purpose of the tower-like monument.

This trend, seeking new formats for art exhibitions, was further developed by two groups: "Obmokhu" (Society of Young Artists) and "Unovis" (College of the New Art).

"Obmokhu" exhibitions were new in form. There we looked not only at the art works hanging on the walls, but particularly at the ones that filled out the space of the hall. 127

These young artists assimilated the experience of past generations, worked hard, acutely perceived the specific natures of materials and constructed spatial works. They attempted to press forward in between the skill of the engineers and the "aimless purposefulness" tossing art now here, now there.

"Unovis" grasped the essence of the problem. They forged a new method. They saw the problem lying clearly before them — namely, the creation of a new symmetry in the construction of admissible forms, i.e. the basis of a new architecture, in the widest sense of the word. But they knew the boundaries of science and those of art. They knew what one could and must know about art — that one begins on the other side of comprehension, that one strives toward the obligatory goal with the relentless conviction of a sleep-walker.

So "Unovis" set itself the exercise of mounting an exhibition as if it were a technical one: here is the red iron-ore, here the metal is extracted, here it is transformed into steel, here it is rolled into rails, and so on. In this manner "Unovis" approached the achievements of painting up to this very day: Cubism, Futurism, Suprematism. The exhibition demonstrated how the new constructive system manifesting itself within us was to be understood, and how, hand in hand with it, we could proceed afresh through life. In this way the art of painting became like a preparatory exercise in the course of organized participation in life, and for trainees intending to become thorough painters, its study no longer seemed coercive.

Everything achieved here continues in the new Russian advanced art schools. They are the arena of the struggle for the rallying cries: "Art in Life" (not outside of it) and "Art is One with Production." One of the most glorious revolutions has taken place in the former Russian Academy.

- 128 1. Ulen (a pseudonym), "Die Ausstellungen in Russland" ("The Exhibitions in Russia"), *Veshch*, no. 1-2, March-April 1922, pp. 18-19. — Ed.
2. The promised article on Malevich and Suprematism was not printed in the next issue as *Veshch* had ceased publication. — Trans.
3. Although Gustav Klucis exhibited together with Naum Gabo and Antoine Pevsner on Moscow's Tversky Boulevard in August 1920, he was not a signatory of the "Realistic Manifesto." — Trans.

Reviews, Letters and Forum

130 To the Editors:
I am sorry to cop out from writing a piece for *Oppositions* on the U.K. situation, even though my opinions are likely to be regarded, on this side at any rate, as those of an embittered oldy out of touch with the scene who doesn't have enough to do, which is probably entirely true. But more to the point, I feel there is little to write about on the building front, unless it is to do with the return of peoples detailing in nobby land. Still less to write home about in regard to critical writing which, until recently via our architectural press, we could feel somewhat smug about. Our architecture mags now seem entirely occupied with sneering and giggling between bouts of being absurdly patronizing and obsessed with the third world — as if we didn't have our own problems. Similarly, with distractions like *Architectural Heritage*, one is uneasy about the motivation which at Whitehall level may only be a concern with tarding up for the tourists. One can't but feel that serious discussion about architecture has moved on — to Italy and New York and hopefully elsewhere — and so, here's to wherever it's alive and kicking. Love to all,
James Stirling
London, England

To the Editors:
Your publication about my husband, George Wittenborn (Kenneth Frampton, "*George Wittenborn 1905-1974*," *Oppositions* 4), has some discrepancies and errors that should have been caught and I should greatly appreciate it if I may mention those that give wrong impressions or wrong information.

Mr. Frampton has my husband serving his apprenticeship in Altenau, Prussia; I presume Mr. Frampton means the Prussias east of Berlin and beyond Poland's corridor to the Baltic, but both are wrong, for my husband served his apprenticeship just a tram-ride from his

home, in Altona, Hamburg's twin city, rather like Minneapolis and St. Paul! Apparently Mr. Frampton was not aware that George spent the final months of his apprenticeship in Wolf Hermann's Bremen bookshop, still a model of its kind. It was his first flight from the nest, and away from his martinet of a father and browbeaten mother, he found the world could also be a warm and intimate place. From there, as Kenneth Frampton correctly states, George went to Berlin and eventually managed the Kurfürstendamm branch for its owner, Carl Buchholz, who looked after the original bookshop near the Berlin University. Meanwhile George became good friends with Christopher Isherwood (in his *I am a Camera* days) as well as with Stephen Spender, Klaus and Erika Mann and that great actor and *regisseur*, Gustav Gruendgens (also from Hamburg), among many others in the "Berlin Avant-garde of the Arts."

Now we come to the fall of 1932, when George left Berlin and went to Leipzig to take a "quickie course" in typesetting, since supply everywhere never caught up with the demand for printers. With this beneath his belt, so to speak, he hurriedly left Germany with only the clothes on his back, at the suggestion of an old bookseller/friend, Ferdinand Ostertag, who had already reached Paris. There they joined forces, together with a young Swiss banker, Jacques Naville, in opening a bookshop at 17 rue Vignon, behind the Madeleine, which they called *Au Pont de l'Europe* — a name that consciously alluded to the idea of a united Europe. But this was not merely a bookstore, its entrance was also that of the ground floor of Madame Cuttoli's small, but prestigious, art gallery whose main showroom was on the second floor where she proudly showed the *crème de la crème* of the avant-garde, bringing George into contact with the already famous Parisian "Ecole" of Braque, Picasso, Léger, among the many other artists who often passed

through the bookshop on their way to the gallery upstairs.

By the way, it was not until George and I met in 1933 (in the bookstore, of course) that I persuaded him to let me call him George rather than by that idiotic name "Otto," and from then on his friends followed suit — after all, he was born in Taurus, a Georgian month, if ever there was one!

Soon after, however, through his friendship with the art dealer, Curt Valentin, he became reunited with a former customer and friend of his Berlin days, Heinz Schultz, who was delighted to join Wittenborn and Company. So were we to have him with us and we soon opened a small bookshop under that name on the sixth floor of Thirty-eight East Fifty-seventh Street in 1939. It was a year or so later that we dropped George Wittenborn Inc. as the name for our publishing department, substituting for it that of Wittenborn, Schultz Inc., but reverting to George Wittenborn Inc. after Heinz Schultz left us in 1951 and thereby hangs a tale. Mr. Schultz left us because he feared a nervous breakdown, but he died in an air crash in 1952 which might not have taken place had he stayed on with us. What games fate plays!

Just for the record, people came and still come to the bookshop to browse and explore the fantastic selection which my husband had amassed and which I feel sure will continue. The work George single-handedly built up will be carried on, perhaps in a different manner but with just as much love, in the person of Gabriel Austin. And may I add, that Mr. Austin's knowledge of books is perhaps even greater than that of my beloved husband.

How delightful, by the way, to come across an article that subtly leads one on to a last, triumphant Coda!
Joyce Wittenborn
Scarsdale, New York

William Ellis

William Ellis is an Assistant Professor of Architecture at City College of New York, an Assistant Professor (Adjunct) at The Cooper Union, New York, and a Fellow of the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies.

The recent exhibition, "The Architecture of the Ecole des Beaux Arts," at The Museum of Modern Art has created the most energetic architectural argument New York City has witnessed for a very long time. As such, it proved to be a brilliant choice for the subject of *Oppositions'* third forum. The format seemed greatly improved too, managing to provide a framework for precise remarks while allowing a certain limited amount of spontaneous exchange. The panel of ten respondents represented an unusually happy balance between practitioners and academics. Their remarks carried a weight of commitment, and the evening a certain tension, because it was in some respects a face-to-face confrontation between the Museum and its professional public.

It is difficult to imagine a better subject for the kind of event *Oppositions* would like these forums to be. Because the Museum's exhibition was intended, at the very least, as a critical comment on the present architectural scene, it combined currency and local esteem with historical distance. This characteristic proved to generate, or at least be susceptible to, a class of acute commentary the like of which has recently remained unavailable not only to previous *Oppositions'* forums, but to architectural criticism as a whole for some time. At the same time, the show constitutes a series of subjects within subjects: an architecture, an exhibition, the relation between the two and the current architectural scene, and so on. These produced a gratifying little series of "spin-off" topics that avoided seeming gratuitous, and were held in focus by the apparent grip of the show itself on the speakers' reactions. Thus it seemed neither diffuse nor confusing to hear discussion ranging from the exhibition as such, its content as either architecture or drawings, their implications or the lack of them for the current scene, architectural education, the Ecole itself, the age it represents, aestheticism, moralism, urbanism, élitism, modernism, totalitarianism, The Museum of Modern Art, and more, all approached

along various shadings of reaction: sentimental, objective, subjective, contemptuous. Moreover, these particular circumstances allowed points to be inferred about any one of these aspects while speaking about any of the others. This seemed to enlarge in a titillating and useful way the distance between the ostensible subject and the actual objective of the remarks, lending the exchanges a richness they might not otherwise have had.

Finally, the timing of the forum seemed propitious in that critical reaction had had time to simmer, evolving from initially cautious but general admiration to what, in some quarters, had become serious second-thought. Such a thickening of critical broth already could be detected in the architectural press, often in the work of a single critic. The ten respondents delivered their latest second-thoughts, covering a predictable range from "pro" to "con." The slight majority of these sentiments seemed either ambivalent or critical of the exhibition, directly or by implication, but were distinguished for the most part by their unforced, genuine nature, apparently related to sincere positions.

If a number of compelling points were touched upon, sometimes even with clarity and precision, there was still enough unresolved debate, in necessarily too concise and refracted a form, to make us wish for some kind of elaboration. This notion was apparently not lost on the *Oppositions* editors, who plan to include the material, either directly or otherwise, in their forthcoming special Beaux Arts issue. Hopefully, they will allow the respondents to annotate or expand their remarks in light of the various other contributions, and preferably with illustrations, to guard against over-enthusiastic assertions.

Because this forum seems likely to have some concrete result, it is unnecessary to indulge in a blow-by-blow account, which would be too lengthy at any rate. But a crude sampling of some questions is irresis-

1. William Conklin addressing the Forum.

2. Anthony Vidler addressing the Forum.

3. Paul Rudolph addressing the Forum.

4. Laurence Brooks, Peter Eisenman, William Ellis, and George Baird.

5. Peter Eisenman introducing the Forum.

6. Ulrich Franzen, Vincent Scully, Peter Smithson, and Robert Stern.



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7. Robert Golder, Arthur Drexler, and Henry Cobb.

8. Philip Johnson and Peter Eisenman.

9. Massimo Vignelli, Lella Vignelli, and Diana Agrest.

10. Abigail Moseley, Diana Agrest, and Michael Schwarting.

11. Vincent Scully and Julia Bloomfield.

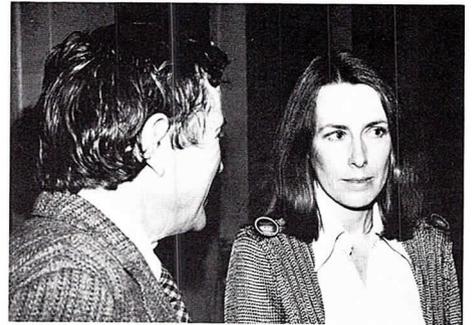
12. Richard Meier, Anthony Vidler, and Robert Golder.

13. Andrew MacNair.

14. Ulrich Franzen, Diana Agrest, and Peter Smithson.



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tible. In George Baird's provocative if balanced opening remarks, he allowed balance to become irresolution on at least one point, necessarily leaving unattended the apparent paradox of a Beaux Arts urbanism characterized both as "object fixated" like the early modernists and, at the same time, as containing by example lessons which might lead us to develop a more "contextual" approach to present cities. Depending on the examples selected, the case might be made either way. But if Beaux Arts urbanism was both, as it surely must have been, and probably still can be made to seem, then it certainly must be elaborated in a future article with illustrations. Paul Rudolph's remarks on the same subject would be unlikely to contain any such complications. For him, Beaux Arts urbanism did not exist, and to suggest that it did would for him be absurd hair-splitting. Vincent Scully's special extemporaneous way of threading together Labrouste with American architecture and the Modern Movement needs to be transcribed even though we might imagine we already perceive sufficient connections.

Peter Smithson raised some analogies that are worth arguing. He suggests that "we modernists] have not yet come to Bramante" in our development. We hope his is true, but it tempts us to consider the possibility, however less hopeful, that we (especially Americans) may be smack in the middle of seventeenth-century France, living with the somewhat dissipated and nationally transmuted energies of essentially foreign events, applied as a style, separated from the notions which initially gave them a meaning. Robert Stern would seem to take some such view, considering the Modern Movement to have passed and a post-modern moment to have arrived. Tony Vidler would agree, but while quoting Le Corbusier on the value ("eminently French") of Beaux Arts planning for modern architecture, would experience some problem with the notion of American architecture tying itself to compelling ideas of any sort, or that it ever has done so.

15. *Tim Prentice, William Ellis, Michael Schwarting, and Elizabeth Eisenman.*

16. *Renato Severino and Vincent Scully.*

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15.



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Scully and Stern at the close of the evening had begun to counter this assertion, and we should like to see that embellished, and done in the particular context of the *Beaux Arts* issue. We should like to be able to peruse at length the various appositions between Labrouste and Charles Garnier and their significance for the real issue in this debate: what is it at present we lack? Is it, on the one hand, visual richness that we require as a revitalizing force in architecture and urbanism, capable even in its most frivolous forms of redressing something modern architecture seems to have got mislaid, but in danger of leading to a vacuous decoration, lacking the moral energy of modernism's early development? Or, on the other hand, do we as children of modernism, grandchildren of both the Enlightenment and the Romantic Movement, need to reinstate an architecture of consciously high seriousness, for which in any case there seems no present social or intellectual stimulus with much real collective cohesion or force? George Baird's remarks indicated in some such terms the present dilemma which the exhibition has indeed brought into focus. He quotes Colin Rowe on the "present divergence between the physique and the morale of architecture," and says of the show that it "does announce a discontinuity in present architectural history, but it does not indicate new direction." He left understandably unanswered the question of where and "how far, creatively speaking, should we expect to be able to go in our new, mature and disillusioned enlightenment?" If too much such blunt self-questioning might prevent the doing of anything at all, these points and others like them which were raised in the forum are reasonable ones to put forward, if merely to get them out of the way, while reminding us at the same time that they always exist.

Needless to say, the effect of the exhibition itself is still unclear. But whether or not it is eventually seen as a significant event in the revision of modern architecture, it is apparent that the climate of at least local argument has been affected in a way that

now makes it difficult to imagine that climate having ever been without it. That the exhibition might have failed to completely restructure at a stroke the immediate future of architecture is neither surprising nor distressing. That the exhibition was hurt by the absence of the book that was to have accompanied it is certainly a justified observation, made several times during the evening; and we look forward to its publication. But the catalogue for the show makes only the most modest claims, and it has been argued that most of the polemics have arisen from reactions to the show. If this is true, then the exhibition is probably as significant as a symptom of our condition as it may have been intended to be as a catalyst for imminent change.

The very least the show has done is to have made a public signal that modern architecture for some time has not occupied a very significant point in its own history; that therefore, it may be ripe for new energies, new development, and that the revision of its early assumptions will inevitably be part of that process of development — perhaps a more significant part than the mere repetition, dilution or expansion of those early assumptions. The very least the forum has done is to show how useful a focus for arguing these abstractions the exhibition has proved to be.

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