



The Corporate Villa



**Design
Quarterly
135**

Editor's Notes

Suburbia, a complex topic of perpetual significance amid the changing patterns of American life, has been examined in several recent issues of *Design Quarterly*. Approached from diverse points of view, an expansive, kaleidoscopic subject emerges.

John Chase, in *DQ 131*, *Unvernacular Vernacular*, looks at contemporary American consumerist architecture, a phenomenon which is, for the most part, a non-urban one. The buildings he chooses to discuss are of no known architectural style, yet in their proliferation they constitute a kind of "people's" style that is quasi-historicist yet essentially unrelated to the accepted evolution of architectural form.

Another look at non-urban America is Lois Craig's *Suburbs*, *DQ 132*, in which she takes a backward glance at the domestic side of suburbia. In this essay she discusses a cross section of residential suburban developments. Everything from the architectural heights of California's Case Study houses to an architecturally impoverished Levittown are reassessed from a fresh perspective.

Another aspect of suburbia, an essentially post-World War II development, is the suburban office building that may stand alone in a semi-rural setting, may be a part of an industrial or office park complex, or may border one of the countless roadside strips that surround our major cities.

Fred Koetter, who practices architecture in Boston and teaches at the Harvard Graduate School of Design, has recently completed a major office complex outside of Boston, the Codex World Headquarters Building. In its salubrious non-urban setting, this project for a facility with over one thousand employees, provided Koetter, Kim & Associates the opportunity (as the winners of a national competition) to create a superior suburban building type, a truly appropriate working environment: a corporate villa.

In this issue of *DQ*, Koetter discusses the history of the suburban office building and then analyzes it in terms of its potential relationship to the classical Roman or Palladian villa. He proposes a new kind of villa cum office that he believes will bring urbanity to the suburbs in a new context.

But can the arcadian dream be realized in America's suburbs? Do our working and domestic goals fit comfortably into such a visionary environment? A small group of idealists persists in the search for suburban prototypes that will provide affirmative answers to these questions.

MSF

(front cover, inset)
Andrea Palladio
Villa Almerico Capra
(La Rotonda)
Vicenza, Italy
© Philip Trager 1986

(front and back cover)
Koetter, Kim & Associates
Codex World
Headquarters Building
aerial view, 1986

H O V S T O N
6 J U N ' 8 7

The Corporate Villa

Fred Koetter

**Design
Quarterly
135**



The Corporate Villa

As our ever expanding suburbs come to replace the city center as America's primary workplace, the suburban office building has emerged as a conspicuous element in the contemporary landscape. Yet the typical suburban office building, often isolated or collected in sterile "office parks," offers no coherent substitute for the services, amenities, diversions and public life provided by the city.

It may be said that these buildings are direct reflections of the society they serve. The mass suburbanization process has, in effect, created an atomized society—scattered and uprooted—whose citizens, collectively nourished by electronic communication, are socially and culturally starved because of their physical isolation from one another. Today's suburban society, quite simply, is a society with no identifiable public presence and no tangible public realm in the traditional sense. The typical suburban office building stands as a mute monument to this situation.

At the same time, one recognizes these buildings (along with other public arenas such as shopping centers) as natural meeting places—as places where the citizens of suburbia actually "get together" on a regular basis. Therefore, might not these buildings and their associated activities become catalysts in the formation of a new kind of public realm drawn from the suburban experience? They could perhaps constitute an alternative to the city, reflecting not only the aspirations of suburban life but also the necessities of genuine community expression. With such thoughts in mind, how might this potential public realm be given physical form? In considering the possible architecture of such places, one hopes to identify a building form that, while removed from the city, maintains a level of civility and public presence normally associated with urban architecture. Such an inquiry might also recognize that suburbia may be seen as part of a larger "non-urban" or "other than urban" tradition and that its various public or common-use installations, particularly the suburban office building, might be gainfully informed by the architecture and building types of this tradition.

More specifically, I would propose that the villa, the large country house of classical origin—a conspicuous element of that non-urban tradition—is directly relevant to this inquiry, and that a useful and positive association between the villa and the suburban office building is possible.



In the years since World War II, the suburbanization of America has become so extensive and so all pervasive that today suburbia is no longer simply a place, but a national state of mind that controls and conditions virtually every aspect of American daily life. While contemplating the novelty of this situation, one must also recognize that today's suburban America is not a wholly aberrant or mysterious presence. It is the result of a long, if not inevitable, process, a chain of events that is part of ongoing American folklore: the discovery and settlement of a "new" continent, the enlightenment myth of a "natural" and wholesome order, the Jeffersonian vision of an informed agrarian society, New England transcendentalism, Walden Pond, social utopianism, the frontier, Walt Whitman, the Broadacre Usonianism of Frank Lloyd Wright, the Model T Ford, and more recently—the National Highway Act of 1952, urban renewal, FHA home mortgages, the shopping mall, the strip. These are among the patches of a crazy historical quilt that records the making of suburban America.

In simple terms, today's suburbia is the manifestation of a sustained fantasy having to do with the possibility of a society that might exist and thrive outside the constraints and supposed corruptions of the city. And it must, of course, be recognized that suburbia—or a latent suburbia—has been a reality of American life from the very beginning. With the exception of the most populous eastern seaboard cities, the American city has developed with a rather clear distinction between a non-residential center city (a place of business, commerce, government and culture) and its surrounding residential quarters. In small-town America, this two-part differentiation of the community took the form of a distinction between the town center "Main Street" and the residential "Elm Street." In larger cities this basic separation was maintained with an expanded Main Street becoming "downtown" and Elm Street multiplied as required.

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, this pattern remained extremely effective. Main Street was an often dazzling display of community expression and commercial aspiration. The town hall, the opera house, the bank, the retail emporium, the "grand" hotel all contrived to produce the sensation and often the reality of an elaborate public realm.

Prototypical "Main" and "Elm" streets as they were in small-town America before the post-World War II suburban explosion.

Elm Street, by contrast, provided a kind of arcadian relief from the hustle and bustle of Main Street. Part fantasy, perhaps part wishful thinking, but also palpably real, the Main Street/Elm Street community allowed for the effective coexistence of two fundamental desires: the desire for a public, quasi-urban form of community life and the desire for a calm, somewhat pastoral form of private life. The success of this transaction depended upon a balanced maintenance of both conditions.

It can be shown that the advancement of contemporary suburbia has, in effect, destroyed this delicate balance. While mass suburbanization drains the city of resources and substance, shattering the coherence of Main Street, it replaces Elm Street with countless miles of pseudo-rural housing tracts that mutilate and destroy the very countryside they have sought to embrace. Neither urban nor genuinely rural, suburbia seems to have relinquished the positive attributes of both domains. Today's suburban dweller enjoys neither a sense of community associated with traditional urban life nor the soothing isolation of pastoral existence.

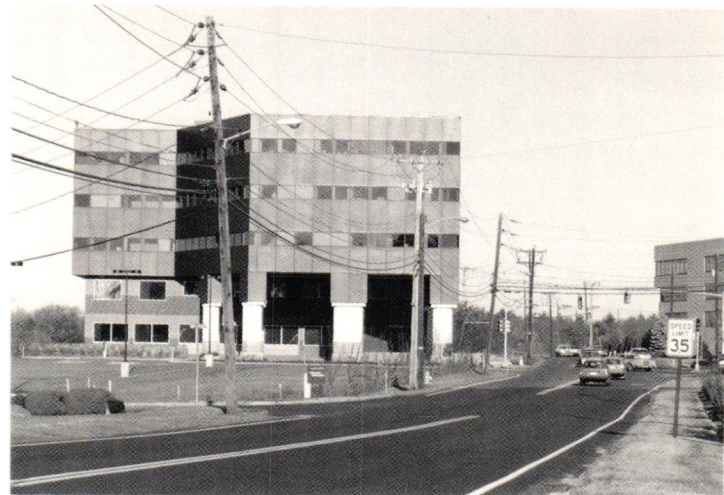
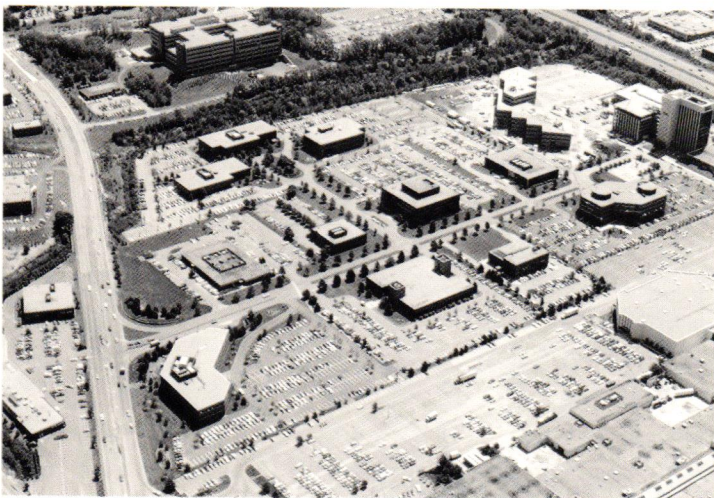
The curiosities of contemporary suburban architecture may be seen as an effort to help fill this void. The typical shopping center, with its make-believe Main Street or its fake "village square," provides a commercially lubricated simulation of community expression while the average tract development markets a variety of "ranches," homesteads and would-be colonial farmhouses to help maintain some sense of frontier fortitude or simple country life. While suburbia lives and shops in this ersatz world of stimulating effects, its typical workplace has likewise been removed from the unpredictable realities of the city and has found a new exurb or suburban home.

This emergent phenomenon of the non-urban workplace may be the most important and the most troublesome aspect of the suburbanization process. If the advent of the shopping center has deprived Main Street of its retail base and its traditional commercial allure, the general removal of the workplace from the city essentially severs whatever remaining day to day ties suburbia has with the city. Increasing numbers of people spend their working days, their entire working lives, outside the city center, removed not only from the business of the city, but the cultural and social presence of the city—the public life of the city—as well. This process of privatization, as it were, effects virtually every aspect of suburban existence, giving it a remoteness and a casualness that is often almost vegetative in its lack of intensity. At the same time there has developed, in the shadows of suburban life, a profound loneliness, a separation, that becomes increasingly apparent.

One might observe the pathetic indications of this condition in, for instance, the "mall-walker" phenomenon. The elderly throwaways of suburbia stride, in great numbers, through the Muzak-saturated passages of suburban malls—a kind of atavistic reconstitution of a public activity where no real public realm exists. But, as adaptive organisms, in a Darwinian sense, the mall walkers are able to relate to circumstance and give to the shopping mall a public dignity it has no right to possess. In other words, where no public realm exists, a public realm, at least of the mind, will be made. This phenomenon indicates that suburban society is striving, unconsciously at times, to find some authentic form of public expression.

But back to the workplace itself. As this process of suburban fragmentation and privatization becomes increasingly intense, the workplace becomes a kind of substitute or defacto public location, one of the only places where appreciable numbers of people actually come face to face on a regular basis, where the better part of their waking hours is spent in close proximity one to another.

However, this public and communal role of the suburban workplace remains, for the most part, unacknowledged. The typical suburban office building is a routine agglomeration of minimum space planning procedures and superficial styling effects. Removed from the amenities and diversions of the city, the suburban worker's on-site social life revolves around watercooler and cafeteria, with the addition, at times, of peripheral attractions such as health clubs, libraries, and the like. Though often set in remarkable, still rural landscape, typical site planning strategies insure the isolation of the building from any contact with this setting by insulating it in a ring of parking lots and meaningless landscape gestures. Some recent efforts to upgrade such deadening environments have usually resulted in takeoffs from "state of the art" shopping centers—mini-malls, Muzak, ferns, the kind of hollow charm that characterizes such places.



The buildings themselves, as pieces of construction or as architectural entities, defy classification. If it is possible to associate architecture with some theory of pedigree or lineage, the bulk of these buildings are not simply orphans or mutations, but are often frightening piles of undifferentiated material made on the cheap and highlighted by a bizarre collection of stylized quotations drawn from the latest trade journals. Now, as with the shopping center, it is possible to detect a thin silver lining around this particular cloud. The best cosmetics and gyrations of the typical "high profile" suburban office building can probably be recognized as a legitimate form of folk art; the vitality and crudeness of the commercial strip are often found in its visual effects. But as one enjoys the pleasures of these effects, one remains terrified by the incredible undirectedness, in both sociological and environmental terms, of such operations.

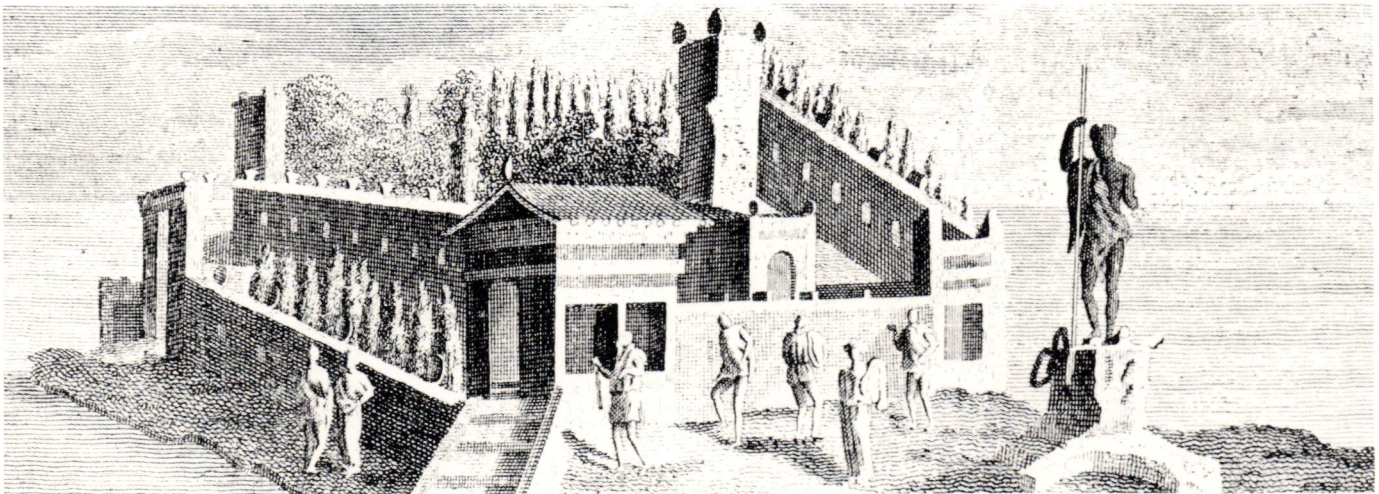
Can these buildings be conceived of in another way? In their design and layout, is it possible not only to recognize, but to aggrandize their potential social and communal significance? And, in keeping with the suburban ideal, can these buildings establish a more meaningful, positive relationship with their natural

Anonymous suburban office buildings proliferate on the strips bordering our freeway networks.

surroundings? And in architectural terms, might the suburban office building have, in fact, a pedigree of sorts? Might it somehow relate to known building types—and situation types—that are able to inform its development, its identity and its usefulness to society? Might there be a form of architecture, or a tradition of architecture, which, while not literally of the city, is able to establish and maintain a level of public presence normally associated with urban architecture? Might not this same architecture, at the same time, recognize and exploit the advantages of a rural or non-urban location?

In order even marginally to address these questions, one must return to a more general consideration of non-urban (or other than urban) development, its history and its artifacts. And here, at least tentatively, the villa might be introduced as a point of reference and inquiry.

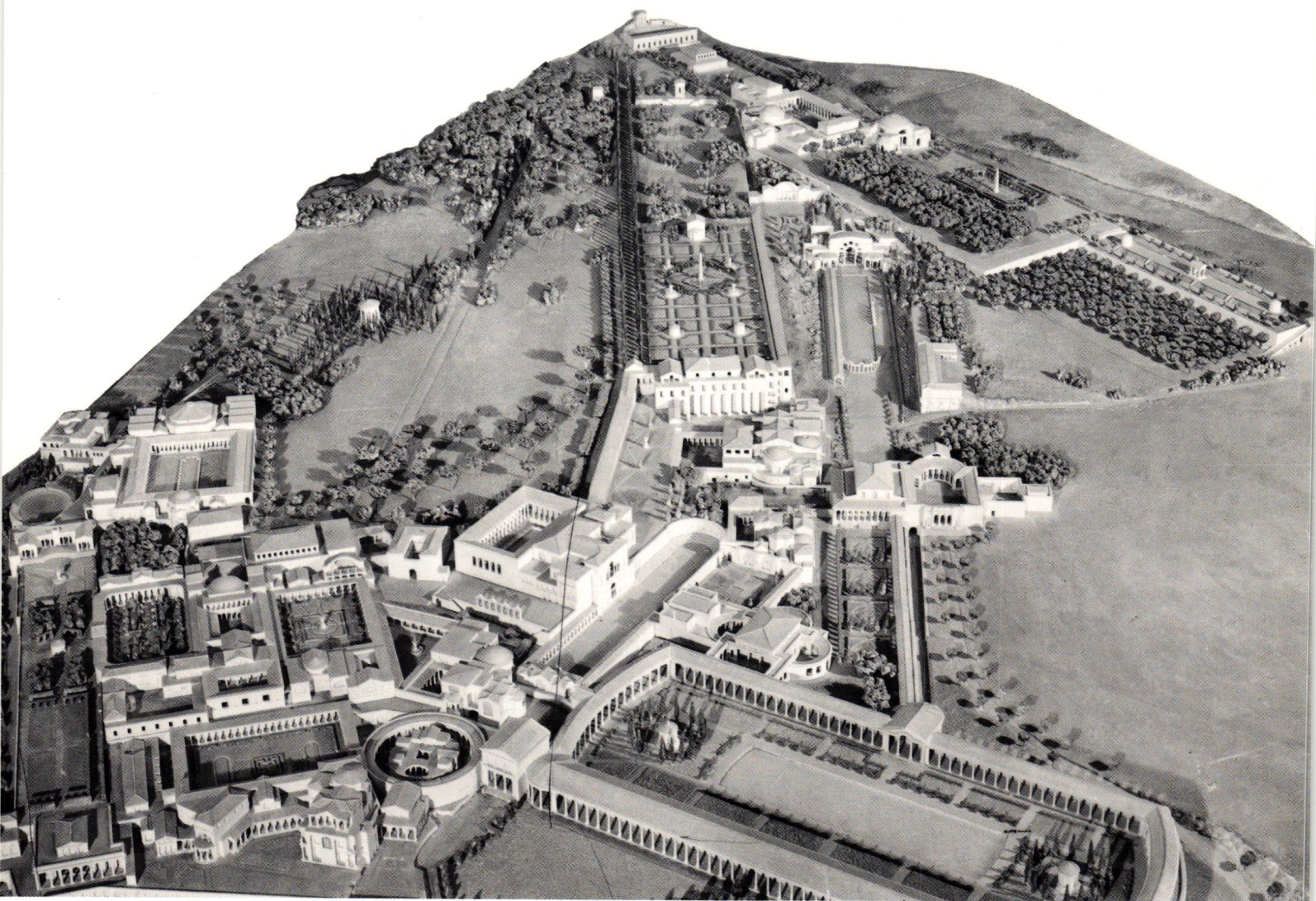
The villa may be identified simply as a rural residence or country house of classical origin. In its earliest Imperial Roman manifestations the villa was a combination of building and landscape devised as a retreat from the city, as a place of pleasure, recreation, rejuvenation and communication with nature. But, removed as it was—physically and psychically—from the city, the Roman villa



was not removed from classical procedures with respect to its architecture. It was neither an orphan nor an unrecognizable mutation, but a healthy child or cousin of Roman urban architecture and Greco-Roman traditions. Hadrian's villa, near Tivoli, presents an extravagant example of the type. A vast assemblage of building elements and gardens, although literally removed from the city, it was, in its deposition and complexity, an idealized, miniature version of Rome itself. Hadrian's elaborate retreat from Rome could thus maintain, at a refreshing distance, the sophistications of urban life and could act, in its own way, as an endorsement of the city.

Two points are worth noting here within the present discussion. First, the ancient villa's relationship to the city was quite clear and, seemingly, quite positive. It was evidently not intended either to replace the city or destroy it. In passing, it is interesting to consider this condition with respect to the relationship between the contemporary American city and its suburban dependencies. For it is fair to say that the expanding suburbia of today assumes an overtly divisive relationship to the city rather than a complementary or passive one. Second, no matter how

A villa by the sea, drawn after a wall painting at Pompeii.



Hadrian's villa, as this model demonstrates, was a miniaturized Rome in the countryside.

direct and how positive the villa's traditional associations with the city have been, these associations might, at the same time, easily be imagined away. It is perhaps by way of such convenient editing that Thomas Jefferson was able to imagine the villa—or an extended landscape of villas—as the setting for an ideal non-urban society that could develop and flourish on its own, completely removed from what he construed to be the debilitating presence of the city.

But if Jefferson perhaps purposefully dispensed with the villa's urban affiliations, he also seems to have recognized the villa as more than simply an elaborate country house. The villas of his new society, one may assume, were to be productive as well as recreational entities. This assumption relates to another important aspect of the villa tradition. During the course of its history, the villa has often altered or supplemented its basic pleasure oriented program and has sustained various forms of association with a related type, the working farm estate. This association, involving industry as well as recreation, has not always led to a simple and direct intermingling of these two preoccupations. The villa-farm as represented by, for instance, the typical Palladian model, was

often something more than a straightforward agricultural enterprise. The villa's proprietor, the "gentleman farmer," could imagine himself as the purified kinsman of his less opulent but more literally industrious farmer cousin. The effects of this fantasized association must have been indeed soothing and inspiring, requiring an exercise of the imagination but not of the back. But the farm-villa association also assumes, from circumstance or necessity, more literal forms of collaboration, and it is the model of the true working farm-villa that captures the interest of this discussion.

More often than not, in post-medieval times, the actual work force of the farm-villa was not in residence at the villa itself but was assembled on a day labor basis from the nearby countryside. A villa of substance could, in fact, cause the formation of an adjacent small town or "village." The villa, nonetheless, possessed within its precinct most of the industrial paraphernalia, resources and daily life amenities to sustain not only the pleasures of the proprietor, but the needs and diversions of its attendant work force.

The farm-villa was thus, in effect, a kind of "home away from home" for the day worker, a miniature (or make-believe) town in its own right. This aspect of the villa—its role as "second home" for a "commuting" day labor force—presents an interesting parallel to the situation of today's suburbanized worker.

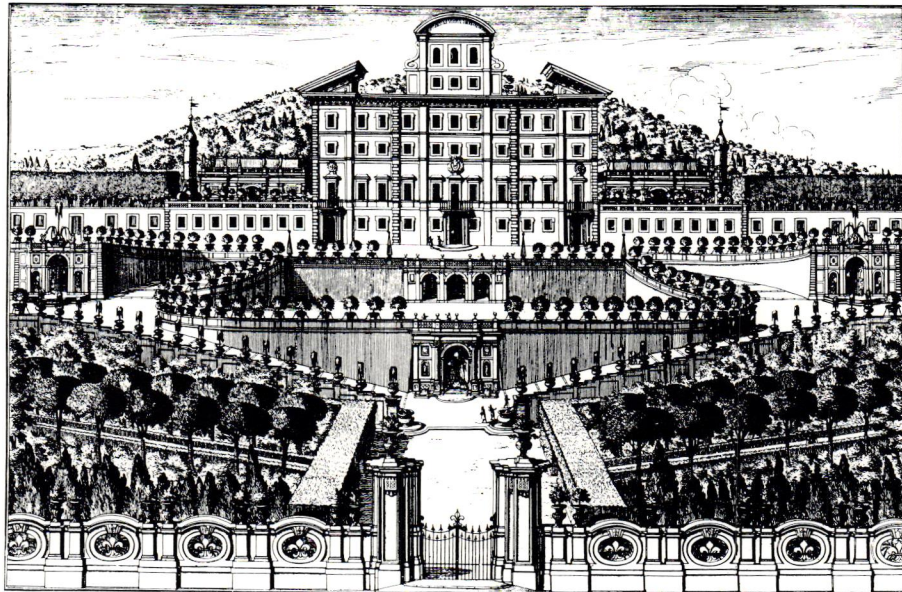
Now it is surely possible to construct a more detailed, comprehensive history of the villa in order to further inform the present discussion. While this may ultimately be of value it may also cloud rather than illuminate the essence of this inquiry. For one might assume that the villa, as an organizational construct and as a recognizable non-urban type, presents a valuable model for use in the consideration of contemporary suburban development. But ultimately, the allure of the villa lies elsewhere. For regardless of the villa's usefulness as a model, regardless of its chronological history or the details of its particular manifestations, the villa is, above all, the physical embodiment of a fundamental human desire—a seemingly impossible desire for the simultaneous and salubrious existence of both artifice and innocence.

In its idealized orchestration of building and landscape, of self-conscious man-made artifact and natural circumstance, embracing both and yet denying neither, the villa consolidates this desire into a realm that is supremely enticing, magical and universal in its attraction. It is in this way that the villa has historically lent itself to an almost inexhaustible array of cultural, social, philosophical, political and ideological persuasions: the fantastic imperial ensemble of Hadrian, the rejuvenating escape of Pliny, the proto-bourgeois and proto-capitalist installations of the Palladian Veneto, and the lucid richness of Frascati's magnificent suburbia. And, we can expand the definition of villa to include its offspring: the chateau, the Cartesian power of Versailles and, on this continent, Thomas Jefferson's Romanized farm at Monticello and Frank Lloyd Wright's summer and winter Taliesens (villas of sorts).

This list of examples is not intended to confuse or irritate the reader, but is simply an effort to underwrite a basic premise that the villa, as an idea, as a tradition and ultimately as a form, has the ability to transcend its particular circumstance, location, time of origin and basic program. And here, one is inspired to imagine a further continuation of this tradition, to imagine a villa of sorts installed in the environs of contemporary American suburbia. This imagined villa

is equipped with the basic elements of the type: a big house, gardens, outbuildings; a properly rustic, but at the same time sophisticated presence, some intermingling of natural (or would-be natural) and overtly man-made landscape; an elaboration of both building and landscape that might sustain the interest and the spirit of its inhabitants. The imagined villa itself is arranged to accommodate various administrative and clerical functions. Great rooms, courtyards, gardens and outbuildings provide the settings for community and public life.

This hypothetical villa cum office building strives, in short, to establish an identity and meaning commensurate with the actual requirements of daily life. Whether this installation might be (or become) a legitimate socio-cultural entity—a true institution of suburbia—or remain a stillborn ornament of suburban excess, is an open question. Its possibilities, nonetheless, deserve further comment.



We grapple with the meaning of suburbia and we contemplate its future. We are bombarded daily with testimony as to the foolishness of suburbia—its wanton obliteration of the landscape, its parasitic drainage of the city, its cultural emptiness, its narcissistic self-interests, its consumptive capacities—and yet, one is moved by its stubborn persistence. Written into suburbia's allure, there must be something more than frontier fantasies, simulated self-reliance, cheap mortgages, “safe” schools, backyard barbecues and assorted sociological studies on the subject. Suburbia, it would seem, represents a dream. While we are aware of this dream's historical underpinnings—a glorification of nature, a disdain of the city, and so forth—it carries with it more elaborate fantasies. And at this point, previous comments concerning Thomas Jefferson and the villa may be allowed to reenter the discussion. Jefferson's supposed interpretation of the villa and its usefulness to society must, of course, be largely taken as points of conjecture. We rely more upon the implied story told by his building, Monticello, than upon the words of Jefferson himself.

The Villa Aldobrandini in Frascati, Italy, is an extraordinary example of the Baroque country retreat.



Jefferson's house was the built indication of a new society in the making. His farm-villa, constructed in the wilderness, was both an endorsement of a simple, honest agrarian life and the maintenance of a received body of tradition, culture and technique. This incredible combination of interests, overwhelmed by the sublime grandeur of an untouched continent and yet throttled by the presence of sustained cultural directives, converged in a vision that, recognized or not, lies at the foundation of the American dream. Jefferson's vision, recorded and still advertised by Monticello, specified a society that could be simultaneously informed and innocent, aristocratic and peasantlike—a society that would reject the city and yet maintain those positive qualities traditionally associated with the city, a society that could, in short, maintain *urbanity without urbanism*.

Suburbia exists as the persistent but weak reminder of this dream. It is, nonetheless, a vision of extravagant grandeur, a vision whose inherent nobility is undiminished by the dubieties of its current manifestations. The villa has (once again) been suggested here as a means of articulating and giving physical presence to the potential of that vision.

Frank Lloyd Wright's
Taliesin West, Scottsdale,
Arizona (1938), and
Monticello, Thomas
Jefferson's farm-villa near
Charlottesville, Virginia
(1768-1782).

The Codex World Headquarters Building Canton, Massachusetts (1983-1986)

In outlining some important aspects of contemporary American suburbia, I have indicated that the suburban office building plays a large and increasingly relevant role in American life, and I have speculated that the villa might serve as a meaningful model for the further development and understanding of this particular building type. For the villa—or an abstracted form of the villa—gives an indication of how building and landscape might be arranged to provide a felicitous working environment, a plausible sense of community, and, at the same time, a positive and even poetic relationship between a building and its natural surroundings. It may be further suggested that the villalike combination of urbanized effects (the little city outside the city) and maintained communication with nature is related to the promise, if not the current condition, of American suburban society.



This discussion of the suburban office building is not intended to offer prescriptions, but to open the subject to further thought and to stimulate further speculation. It is perhaps through such speculation and continued observation that one is able to develop some sense of reality with respect to the city, suburbia and the suburban workplace.

If the tradition of the villa is useful in this respect, one might also identify a number of contemporary examples of suburban office facilities that likewise offer assistance. The General Motors Technical Center in Warren, Michigan (1948-1956), and the Deere and Company Headquarters, Moline, Illinois (1956-1963), both by Eero Saarinen & Associates, come to mind. In both these cases an attempt was made, within the parameters of late modern architecture, to lend dignity to the suburban workplace while bringing building and landscape into some positive relationship with one another. In both cases, particularly at John Deere, there is the further suggestion that the suburban office building might, indeed, come to achieve an identity of its own.

Eero Saarinen &
Associates
Deere and Company
Headquarters
1956-1963
Moline, Illinois



But perhaps the greatest and most provocative reference in this respect is Frank Lloyd Wright's S.C. Johnson and Son Administration Building, Racine, Wisconsin (1936-1939). With Johnson Wax one is given not just a good office building in the suburbs but an indication of how American society, removed from the city, might elevate the workplace to a form of genuine community expression. Johnson Wax may be seen as a kind of town center in its own right—a fragment of Wright's Broadacre City—intended as a place of confluence and collective identity as well as a celebration of the workplace itself. Johnson Wax is grand, exhilarating and humane. Even the smallest details of this building reveal the sense of Wright's societal vision and the inherent dignity of that vision. While hardly a "villa" in any sense of the term, it nonetheless serves to describe an attitude and an architecture that relate directly to the proposed villa-office building affiliation.

But such examples, even in partial or abbreviated form, are very few indeed. The suburban office building remains, on the whole, an unformed entity, charged

Frank Lloyd Wright
S.C. Johnson and Son
Administration Building
and Research Tower
1936-1939
Racine, Wisconsin

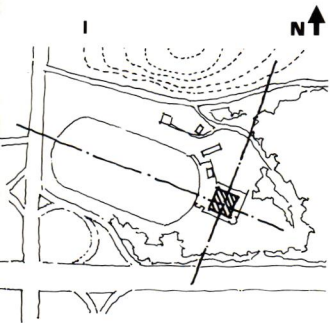
(below)
1939 photograph of the
Great Workroom in the
Johnson Wax Building,
with its original
furnishings in place.

with the implications of its importance to suburban life and yet confused and uninspired in its usual manifestations.

The Codex Headquarters Design Competition of 1983 offered, for many architects, an unusual opportunity to consider both the problems and the potential of the suburban office building under almost ideal conditions. The Codex Corporation, a high technology company in the advanced data communication field, invited some one hundred architects from across the country to submit designs for a headquarters building of 250,000 square feet, to be located on a magnificent rural site south of Boston.

The program of uses included, in addition to office space: laboratories, dining facilities, libraries, exhibition spaces, auditorium and parking, all to be accommodated on an eleven acre portion of Maresfield Farm, a fifty-five acre former horse farm situated in a splendid pastoral setting adjacent to the Great Blue Hill Reservation, a public nature preserve. The remaining forty-four acres of Maresfield Farm land, also owned by Codex, were to be maintained in farm related uses with a number of farm buildings—barns, stables, sheds and the farmhouse itself—to be retained and restored. Within the competition

2

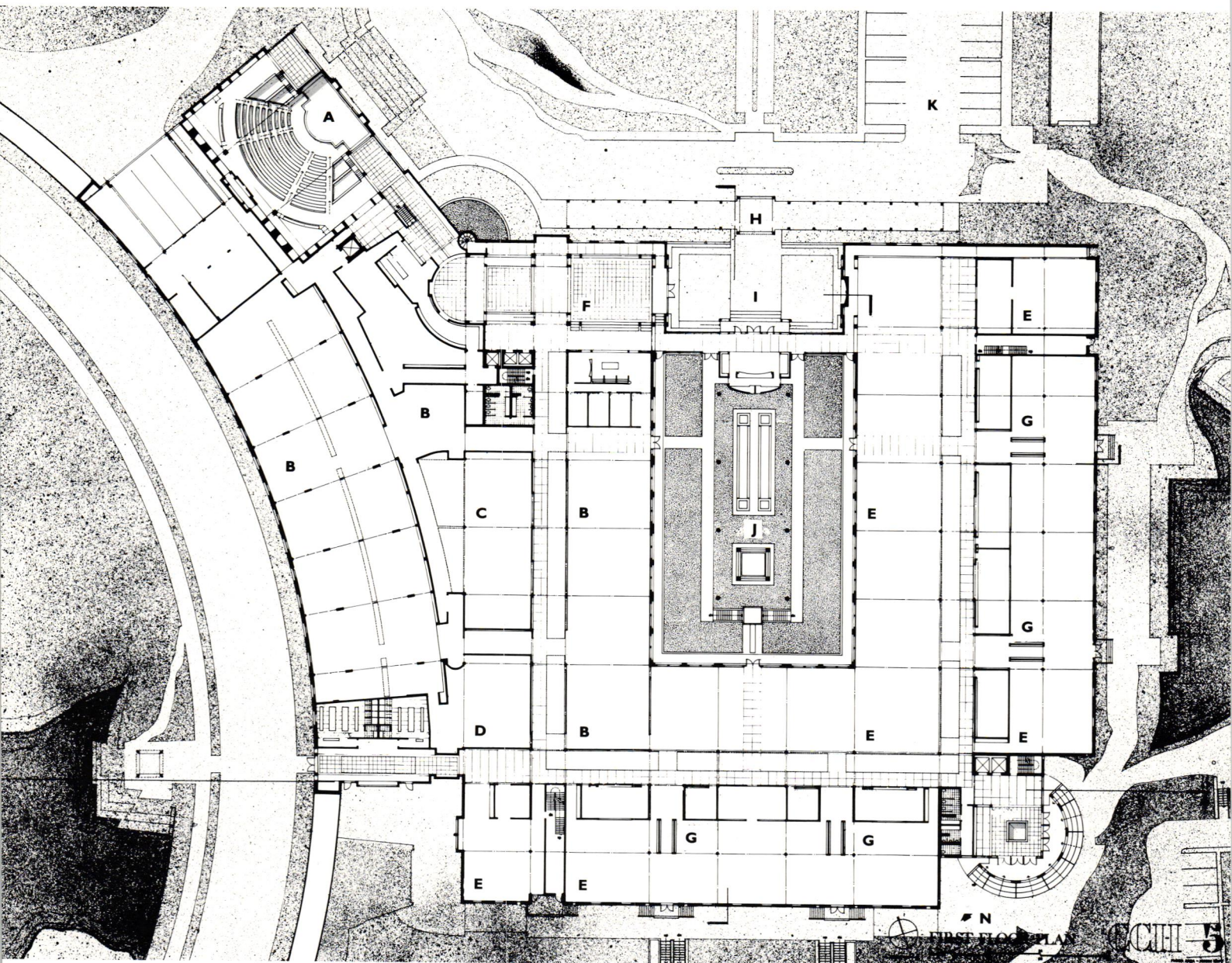


documents, a number of design goals were identified and articulated and emphasis was placed on the development of an environment that would be stimulating to the company's staff, encouraging creativity, health and cultural awareness.

The initial invitation to compete resulted in a first stage submission of forty-eight proposals. Of these, four proposals were retained for a second stage of development with the proposal of Koetter, Kim & Associates selected from these four for complete development and construction. The finished building was occupied during the summer of 1986.

This project provided a conspicuous and unique vehicle for the investigation and illustration of the problem of the suburban workplace. The commitment to excellence of an enlightened corporation, the scope of the program and the beauty of the site all conspired to reinforce the uniqueness and importance of the venture. And with all of this there was, of course, the simple overriding question—what is the suburban workplace to be?

The competition jury was made up of Jaquelin T. Robertson, Dean of the University of Virginia School of Architecture, Michael P. Buckley, President of Halcyon Ltd., Hartford, Connecticut, and James W. Storey, President of Codex Corporation.



**Codex World
Headquarters Building
First Floor Plan**

- A Auditorium
- B Laboratory
- C Science Computer Room
- D Business Computer Room
- E Open Office Area
- F Exhibition
- G Moveable Resource Reference Center
- H Covered Entry Porch
- I Entry Court
- J Garden Atrium
- K Visitors Parking

The size and complexity of the program, the accommodation of up to 1,000 people, the provision of not only workspace but cultural, exhibition, performance and recreation facilities, dramatically supported our conviction that a major suburban office complex is, or ought to be, more than simply a building or collection of buildings. Such a place is, in fact, almost a municipal entity, not really a town perhaps in the literal sense, but something

very much like a town in its complexity and its obligations to the daily life of its inhabitants (3).

The conspicuous beauty of the site with its combination of wooded natural terrain and open farmland punctuated by the remaining buildings of the original farm suggested the possibilities of an extraordinary intermingling of building and various forms of landscape. The richness of this situation was

further elaborated by the adjacent position of the farm's horse track to the west of the building site, the overwhelming presence of the Great Blue Hill to the immediate north, preserved meadows and farmland to the east and, violently interrupting the serenity and magnificence of this setting, the alignment of Boston's heavily trafficked circumferential highway, Route 128, at the site's southern boundary (1,2).





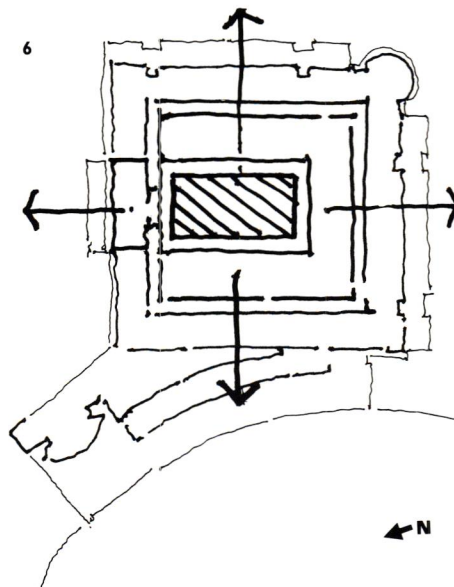


(overleaf)
View of Codex's east facade across one of two geometrized reflecting ponds created at the building's perimeter.

Conditioning all of these assumptions and factors were a number of basic conceptual questions. How, specifically, might all of this be brought together in some coherent way? By what means is it possible to establish the fundamental identity of this place, to give it some sense of location and community? We initially imagined an almost literal town form, an assembly of individual buildings related in scale and size to the existing farm buildings and arranged to define a large central green

or common. But this notion of fragmented buildings was rapidly discarded with the realization that the demands of the program, the necessary accommodation of a changing and sometimes unpredictable array of programmatic requirements, shifts in personnel arrangements and the like, required office space that was as continuous and as flexible as possible, ideally the space of a large single loft building.

While abandoning that particular building pattern we remained preoccupied with the general concept of a centralizing and unifying space. So, while allowing the specific arrangement of building elements to remain undetermined and vague, we imagined a great space in the landscape, simple in configuration and set in counterpoint to the diversity and complexity of the surrounding terrain: a courtyard or garden, a grand light-filled space of large dimension, perhaps open, perhaps covered;



a space that, in its quality and its potential dignity, could become a genuine center, a magnetic presence, collecting around itself all the various activities of the program and, at the same time, projecting its influence beyond the building into the surrounding landscape. Once the idea of this garden was established and developed as a spatial and qualitative reality, the basic order of both building and site design followed directly. In simple terms, the building pattern is anchored or focused by the

central garden and then moves outward from this space in concentric waves or rings (4,5).

Immediately surrounding the garden, the building's inner rings are made up of completely flexible office space while its outer limits accommodate the more specific and relatively unchanging elements of the program: library, quiet rooms (sub-libraries), dining facilities, auditorium (6). Forming an intermediate ring, bisecting the general office space, is a continuous top-lit gallery space



7

8



running vertically through the entire building section and introducing natural illumination to all internal quarters of the building (7,8). As the building's outer limits are reached, its perimeter is distorted and particularized to reflect externally the internal location of its special use elements. These "little

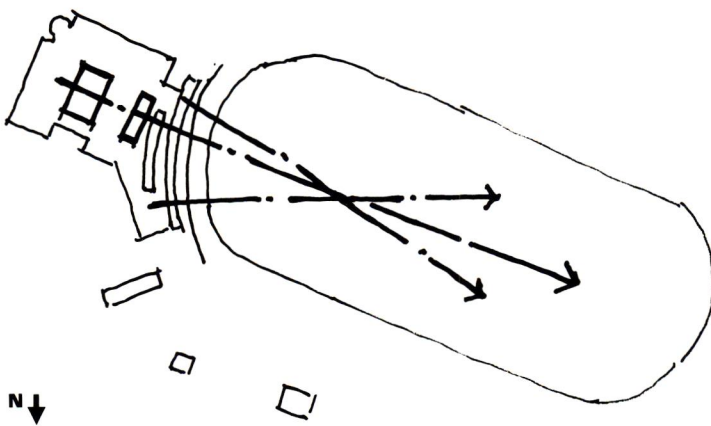
buildings within the building," so to speak, identifying library, auditorium, etc., also establish strong relationships with the particulars and idiosyncracies of the surrounding site condition.

At the building's western extremity, for instance, we allowed its perimeter, accommodating major dining spaces, to dissolve into a series of landscaped terraces molded in their specific configuration by the radial sweep of the farm's adjacent horse track (10). The resultant stepped

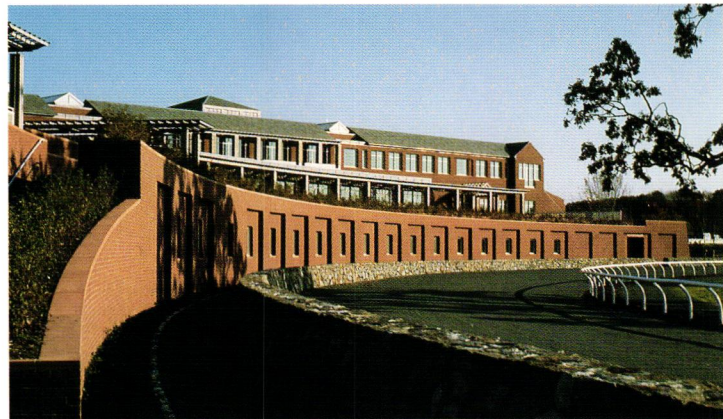
garden blurs distinctions between building and landscape and affords dramatic views of track, farm and surrounding terrain (11). As these terraces sweep northward, toward the existing farm building complex, they are terminated by a small attached building element housing auditorium and special



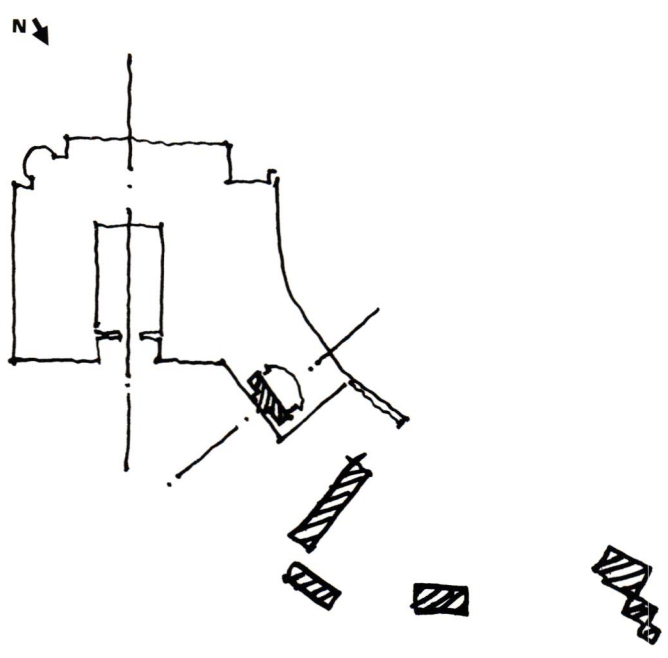
10



11



12

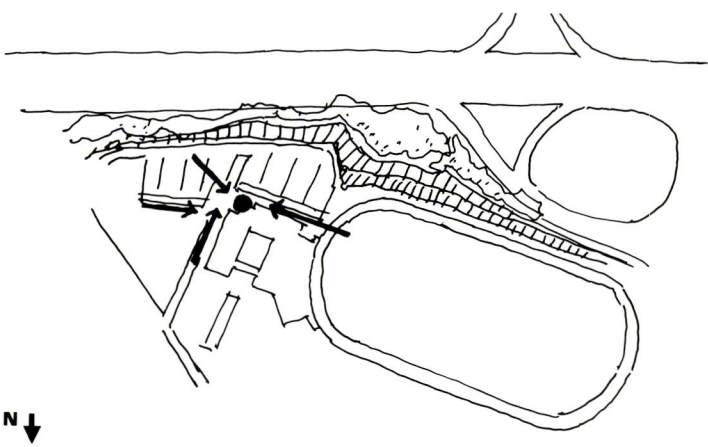


use rooms with related formal gardens. This element, with its highly specific and articulated configuration, serves as a bridge between the headquarters building and the small-scale pattern of existing farm buildings (12). At the building's northern perimeter, a major facade and entry court establish an axial relationship and visual linkage between the building, its central garden and the Great Blue Hill (9). The provision of this Blue Hill vista, like those afforded from the building's western terraces overlooking the farm's horse

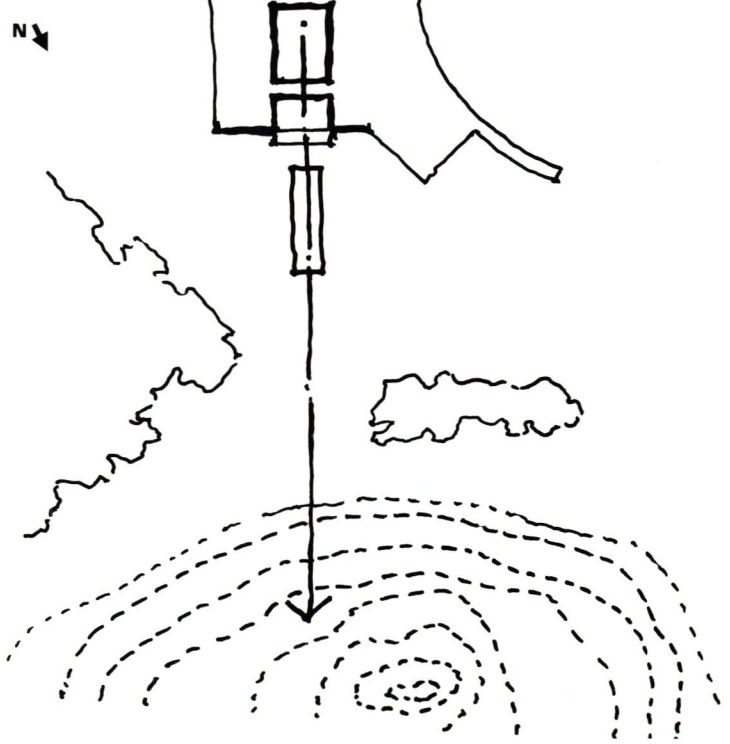
track, expands the building's visual field beyond its immediate site boundaries and further dramatizes the presence of these spectacular features (13).

To the south of the building, a combination of terraced parking and bermed landscape is deployed to act as a visual and auditory buffer between the building site and adjacent highway (14). In this area, at the building's southeast corner, another semi-attached "little building"—a cylindrical element accommodating

14



13



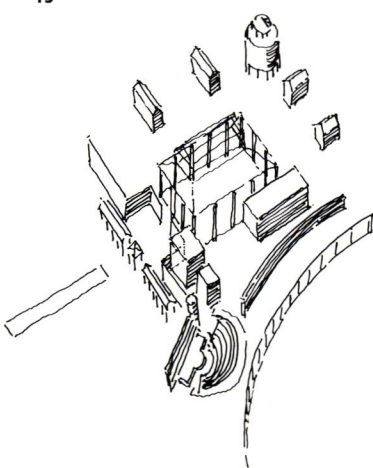
library uses above a major entry location—is positioned to provide a conspicuous point of visual focus and an identifiable entry portal linking parking to building.

While these various manipulations of the building perimeter help to provide a bond between building and site and externally advertise the presence of the building's special use functions, these same uses—auditorium, library, dining rooms, exhibition spaces—form, internal to the building, a confederation

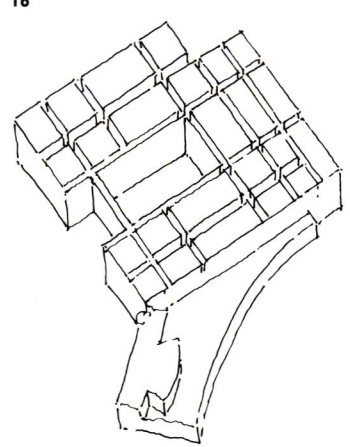
or network of identifiable communal spaces dominated by the central garden (15).

This variegated pattern of common use elements, existing within a continuous gridded field of office space and connected by a great top-lit circulation way, provides a kind of abstracted condensation of traditional town form (16). Main street, town square and conspicuous public buildings all exist within a repetitive gridded pattern of building elements and streets.

15



16

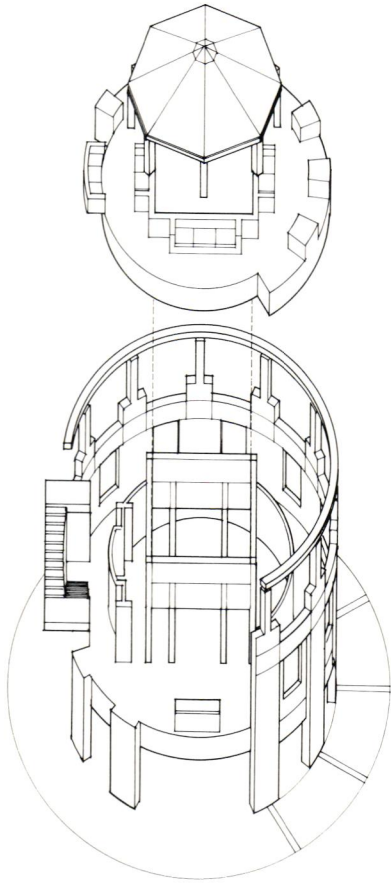


17



18

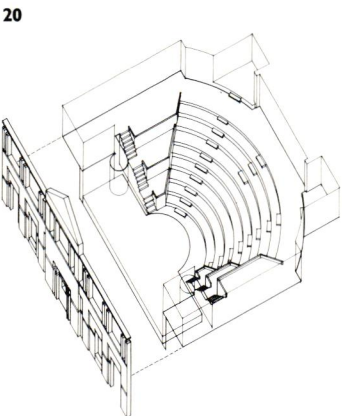




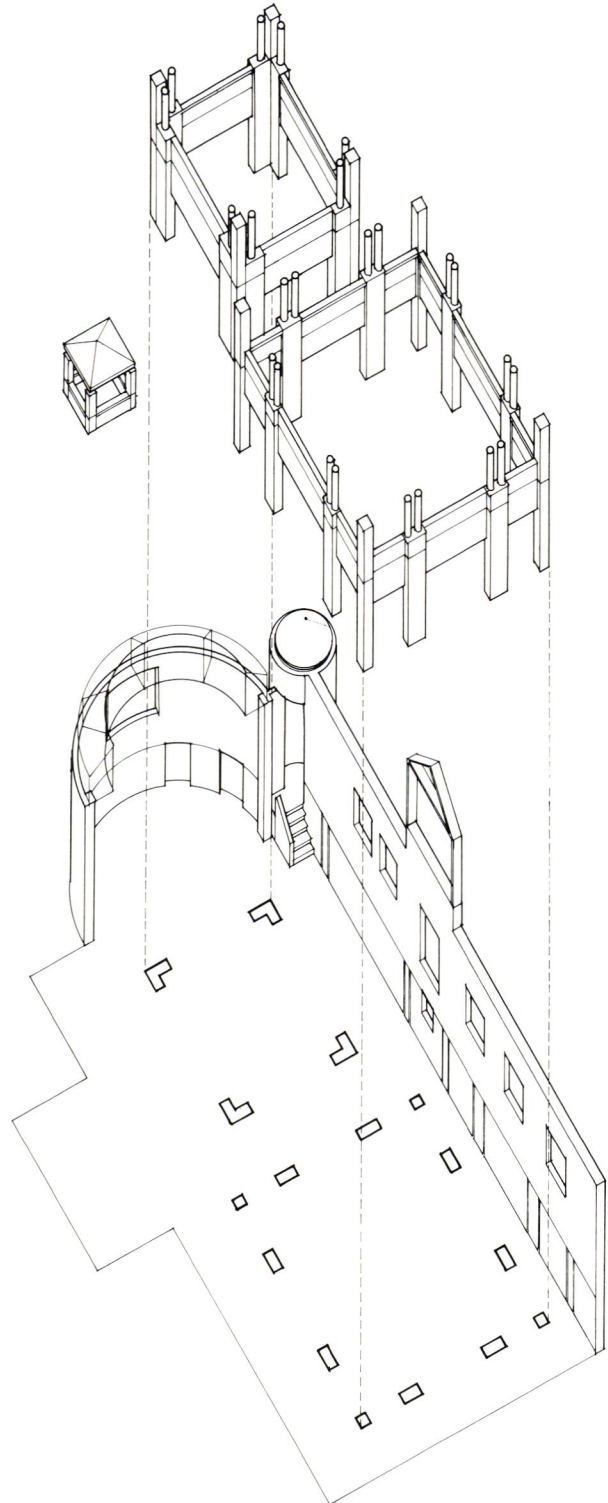
It is no doubt foolish to interpret such analogies between buildings and towns in a literal way. If the history of this supposed equation might fill several volumes (buildings as little cities, cities as big buildings), it must be recognized that buildings and cities are not quite the same thing. We were, nonetheless, stimulated by this

analogy in determining the specific nature and form of the building's common use elements and arriving at some meaningful distinction between the relatively private and relatively public quarters of the building.

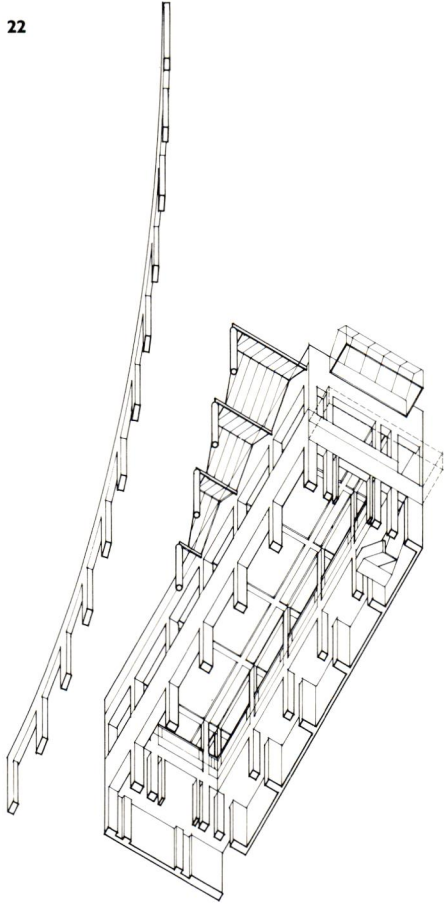
The main garden was thus imagined as an overtly public space, thought of first as a version of village square or town common and finding its final expression as a vast, glazed, all-weather public garden. The library takes its cylindrical configuration from the traditional equation of rotunda and reading room, a form of inherent dignity and an expression not uncommon to the historical development of American library architecture (17,19). The building's auditorium was developed as a version of a classical theater, semi-circular in disposition and intimate in its relationship of audience to stage, perhaps the most identifiable "theaterlike" configuration that such a space can take (18,20).



This desire to give identity and public presence to communal space extended to the building's exhibition spaces and dining halls as well. Exhibition spaces were conceived of as galleries, almost museumlike in character, scale and display potential (21).



22



24

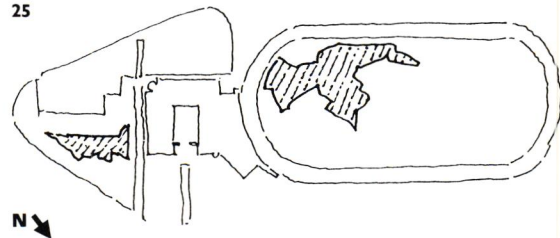


23



The main dining room was developed as a public hall, rising vertically through two floors (worm's-eye view, 22) and adequate in dimension and configuration to accommodate large gatherings as well as day to day requirements of food service (23).

25



26

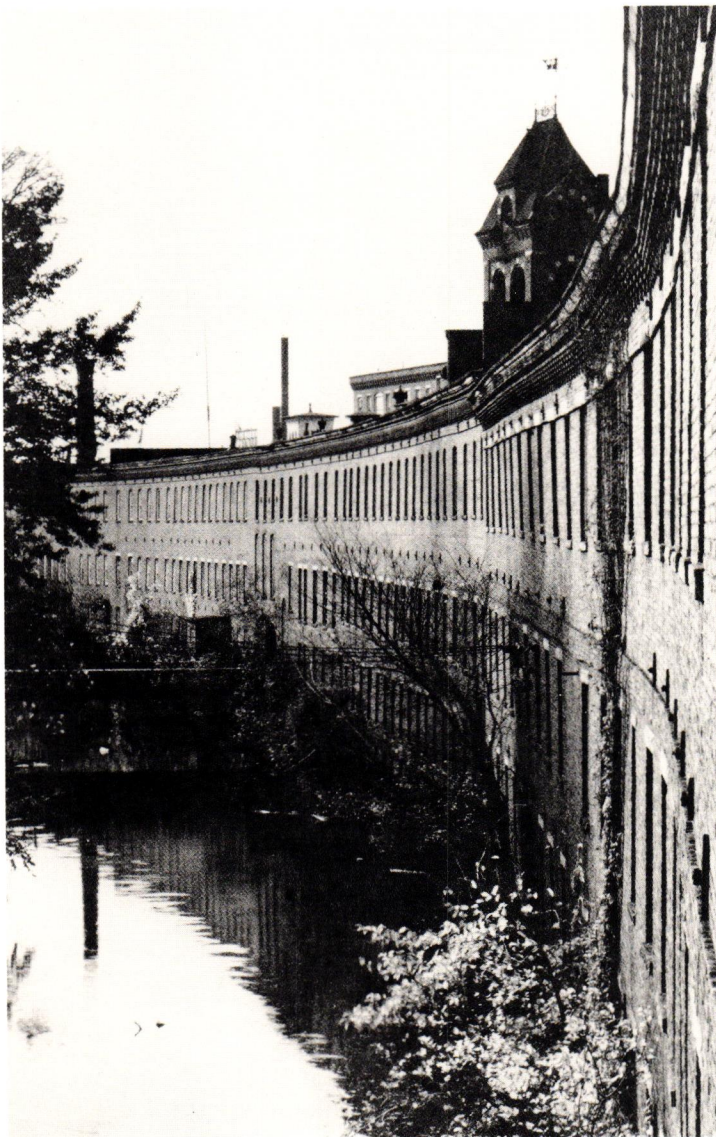


While bringing these interior spaces to final definition, we returned to a more detailed development of the relationship between building and site. From the garden-centered concept of building organization, a general landscape strategy also

emerged. As building and landscape come together at the building's perimeter, the strict geometric order of the central gardens gives way to increasingly naturalized and picturesque arrangements of planting which, in turn, give way to the as-found condition

of natural landscape at the site's perimeter and beyond (24). The intermingling of geometric and more picturesque landscape beyond the building perimeter is reinforced by the introduction of partially geometrized water pieces at both the eastern flank

of the building and at the horse track infield to its west (25). While these ponds help to focus and give continuity to the landscape, they also serve as site amenities for the building's occupants and attractions for passing waterfowl.



As the building and its various elements began to take shape and as the relationship of building and landscape became thematically identified, ideas concerning the appearance of the building were also evolving. The brief history of the suburban office building provided no evidence of any conventions with respect to building type, building appearance or general image. In considering these issues, we turned rather to the various traditions of large-scale buildings in the New England countryside: farm complexes, big barns, mills, factories, and the like (26,27). We thought of other related but often non-local traditions: the villa, the large country house, the gallery, and the conservatory. At the same time, we remained preoccupied with the building's immediate surroundings and the existing buildings of the farm—buildings that, although small in scale and of frame construction, will remain as permanent a part of the site as the headquarters building itself.

Major materials were selected from local and regional building traditions: New England red brick, Vermont slate, Maine granite and lead-coated copper metal work.

Some mention should also be made of the building's

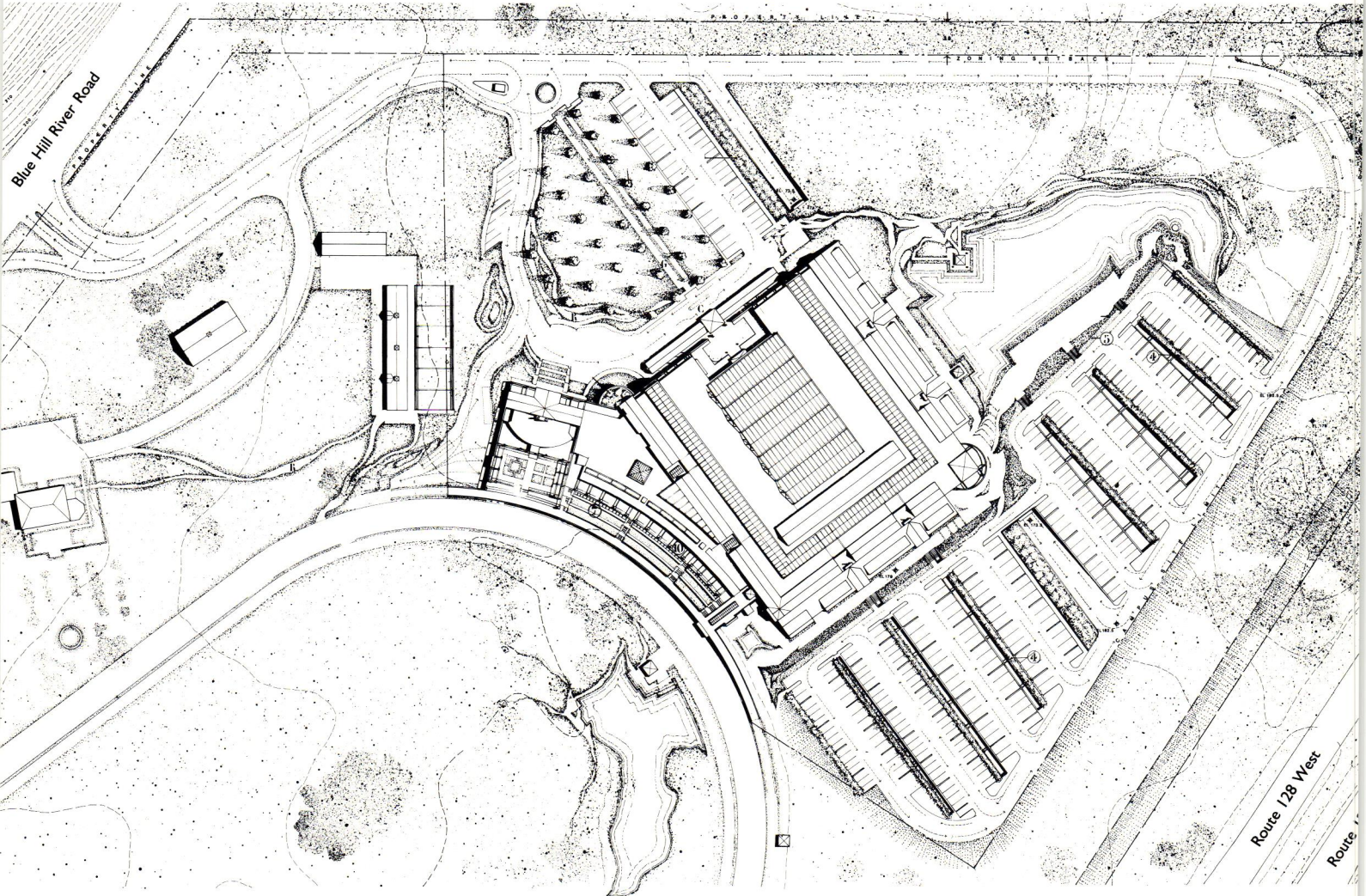
mechanical and environmental systems as many of the building's most conspicuous architectural and landscape features are related directly to these systems. The central garden, for instance, glazed but essentially an exterior space, acts as a passive solar device and as a giant storm window, allowing extensive light-giving window area at its building perimeter without generating appreciable heat loss. While this space is not cooled or heated by the building's primary systems, it is partially heated in winter, enough to maintain plant life, by excess heat from the building's computer rooms.

The central garden, along with the top-lit circulation ways and perimeter window areas, provide a high level of natural illumination to all workspaces, increasing the quality of these spaces and significantly reducing their daytime artificial lighting requirements.

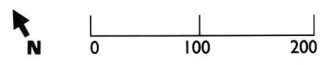
The two site ponds, beyond their role as important landscape elements, also serve as run-off water retention ponds and as irrigation/fire protection water sources. In addition, these ponds function as recharging components of the building's ground water heat-pump system, its sole heating and cooling source.



J. Billaud
Galerie Colbert Arcade
1826
Rue des Petits Champs 6
to Rue Vivienne 4
Paris, France

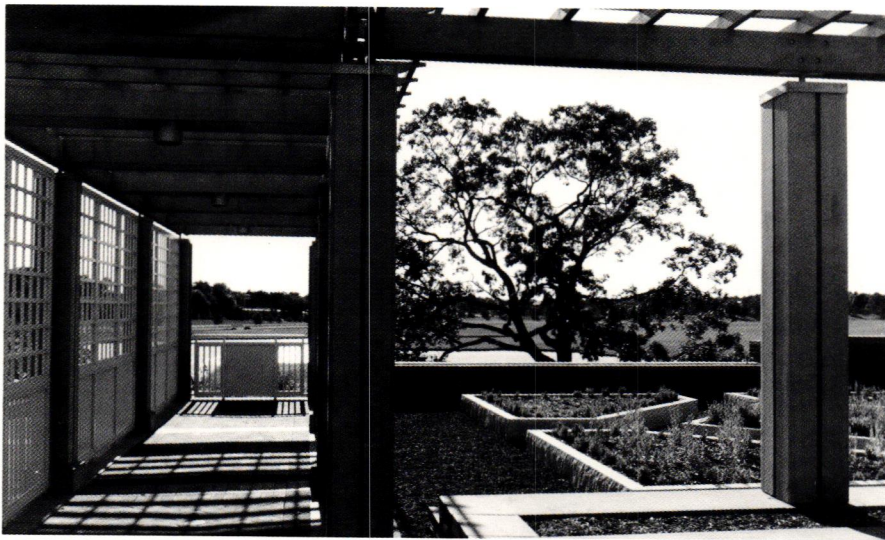


Codex World
Headquarters Building
Site Plan



Whatever may be added to this description with regard to either our design intentions or to the characteristics of the finished building, it must be stated once again that our primary objective at Codex was to provide the best possible working environment for the building's occupants. Beyond this, it is hoped that this building might help advance a general understanding of the suburban workplace, its importance and its potential and that it might come to serve as a useful reference in this respect.

But to return briefly to the main theme of this essay, the relationship between the contemporary suburban workplace and the villa tradition, I am not sure that this association took any direct or literal form at the Codex building. One might perhaps detect a hint of classical and Palladian organization in the layout of the building's major block, its north facade and the axial relationship of this facade to the central garden space. With respect to the relationship of building to landscape and the specific development of the landscape itself, one might also find some affiliations with those traditions of classical Italian and French landscape design that would allow the combined presence of regularized landscape fields and the idiosyncratic, often site determined, distortions of that regularity.



Places such as the Villa Collodi near Lucca, the Florentine Villa Pratolino and Chantilly in its later English Garden influenced phases come to mind. But in the end, such direct affiliations are probably of limited value or relevance.

Our interest in the villa is sustained rather by generalizations that go beyond its usefulness as a model for formal interpretation and detail development. For the villa, as a construct of the mind and often as built form, establishes a fundamental relationship between building and landscape, a relationship that ultimately transcends reality and exists as a form of pure communication between self-conscious human endeavor and natural circumstance. Basking in arcadian splendor, the ideal villa is not the product of pastoral innocence but is a willful projection of the city, and the culture of the city, into the countryside. This combination of urban affiliation and pastoral location, of civility and rusticated effect, of decorum and "naturalness," elevates the villa beyond utility—transcending natural setting, even transcending the city—and provides a glimpse of the world not as it is, but as it ought to be.

View looking west
toward Maresfield Farm
horse track.

**The Codex World
Headquarters Building**

**Architects
Koetter, Kim & Associates**

Partners in Charge
Fred Koetter
Susie Kim

Team Leaders
Kent Knight
Mark Chen

Competition Project Team
Neil Denari
Jim Favaro
Deborah Fennick
Sophia Grudzys
Steve Johnson
Steve Moser
Carolyn Rufo
Kelly Wilson

Production Project Team
Ken Bishop
Kathy Busch
Charles Carlin
Greg Conyngham
Linda Hockett
Steve Johnson
Myles Katz
Ioannis Kythreotis
Tom Peterman
Lois Rosenblum
Augie Shaefer
Craig Spangler
Terry Steelman
William Tecu
Wilven Van Campen

Engineers
LeMessurier Associates/SCI
(civil/site/structural)
Flack & Kurtz, Consulting
Engineers (mechanical/electrical)

Landscape Architects
Hanna/Olin, Ltd.

Illustration Credits

From *A History of Garden Art*, by
Marie Luise Gothein: pp 7, 10

Culver Pictures: p 4 (right)

Courtesy The Frank Lloyd Wright
Foundation: p 11 (top)

Courtesy Johann Geist: p 29

Geneva Historical Society: p 4 (left)

Courtesy S.C. Johnson & Son, Inc.:
p 13

Courtesy Koetter, Kim &
Associates: pp 6 (right), 22, 27, 31

Alex S. MacLean, Landslides: cover,
p 6 (left)

Courtesy Smithsonian Institution:
p 28 (bottom)

Steve Rosenthal: pp 16-21, 24, 26

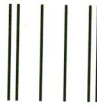
Ezra Stoller, © ESTO: p 12

Shawn Sweeney: p 14

James Tkatch, courtesy The
Thomas Jefferson Memorial
Foundation, Inc.: p 11 (bottom)

Philip Trager: cover inset, p 2,
from *The Villas of Palladio*.

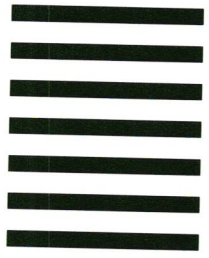
All drawings of the Codex project
are by Koetter, Kim & Associates



No Postage
Necessary
if Mailed in the
United States

Business Reply Mail

First Class Mail Permit No. 309 Boston, MA



Postage will be paid by Addressee

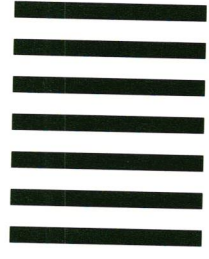
MIT Press Journals
55 Hayward Street
Cambridge, MA 02142



No Postage
Necessary
if Mailed in the
United States

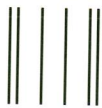
Business Reply Mail

First Class Mail Permit No. 309 Boston, MA



Postage will be paid by Addressee

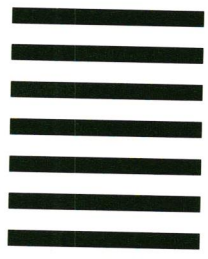
MIT Press Journals
55 Hayward Street
Cambridge, MA 02142



No Postage
Necessary
if Mailed in the
United States

Business Reply Mail

First Class Mail Permit No. 309 Boston, MA



Postage will be paid by Addressee

MIT Press Journals
55 Hayward Street
Cambridge, MA 02142



Design Quarterly

Please **begin** my subscription

Please **renew** my subscription

individual \$20

institution \$40

Prepayment required

payment enclosed

charge to my

Mastercard

Visa

Outside USA and Canada add

surface mail \$7

airmail \$25

Card #

Expiration date

Signature

Name

Address

City

State

Zip Code

BCX1

Design Quarterly

Please **begin** my subscription

Please **renew** my subscription

individual \$20

institution \$40

Prepayment required

payment enclosed

charge to my

Mastercard

Visa

Outside USA and Canada add

surface mail \$7

airmail \$25

Card #

Expiration date

Signature

Name

Address

City

State

Zip Code

BCX1

Design Quarterly

Please **begin** my subscription

Please **renew** my subscription

individual \$20

institution \$40

Prepayment required

payment enclosed

charge to my

Mastercard

Visa

Outside USA and Canada add

surface mail \$7

airmail \$25

Card #

Expiration date

Signature

Name

Address

City

State

Zip Code

BCX1

Editor: Mildred Friedman
Graphic Designer:
Lorraine Ferguson
Editorial Assistant:
Linda Krenzin

Design Quarterly is published Spring, Summer, Fall and Winter by The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England, for the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Business Offices:
Subscriptions, address changes, and mailing list correspondence should be addressed to:
Journals Department
The MIT Press
55 Hayward Street
Cambridge MA 02142

Subscription Rates:
\$20 for individuals and \$40 for institutions. Subscribers outside the United States and Canada add \$7 for surface postage, \$25 for airmail. Single copies of current issues: \$8.00; special issues: \$10.00. To be honored free, claims for missing issues must be made immediately upon receipt of the next published issue.

Postmaster:
Send address changes to
Design Quarterly
55 Hayward Street
Cambridge MA 02142

Design Quarterly is indexed in
ARTbibliographies and *Art Index*.

Copyright Information:
The code below indicates the copyright owners' consent that copies of the issue may be made for personal or internal use, or for personal or specific clients. The consent is given, however, on the condition that the copier pay the stated per-copy fee through the Copyright Clearance Center, Inc., 21 Congress St., Pickering Wharf, Salem MA 01970, for copying beyond that permitted by Sections 107 and 108 of the U.S. Copyright Law. This consent does not extend to other kinds of copying, such as copying for general distribution, for advertising or promotional purposes, for creating new collective works, or for resale.

0011-9415/87/350001-32 \$10.00/0

© 1987 Walker Art Center
and Massachusetts Institute of
Technology

ISSN 0011-9415

This issue of *Design Quarterly* was supported in part by a grant from the Design Arts Program of the National Endowment for the Arts.

Walker Art Center Board of Directors

Officers

Erwin A. Kelen, Chairman
John A. Rollwagen, President
H. Brewster Atwater, Jr.,
Vice President
Martin Friedman, Secretary
David M. Galligan, Treasurer

Gary Capen
Linda S. Coffey
Thomas M. Crosby, Jr.
Mrs. Julius E. Davis
Dennis E. Evans
Clarence G. Frame
Martha Gabbert
E. Peter Gillette, Jr.
Stanley Gregory
Mrs. David H. Griffith
Roger L. Hale
Ann Hatch
Wellington S. Henderson, Jr.
Geri M. Joseph
Kenneth H. Keller
David Kruidenier
Josef Kuhn
Anita Kunin
Sarah M. Lebedoff
John D. Levine
Jeanne Levitt
Reid MacDonald
Colleen Yeates Marsh
Mrs. Malcolm A. McCannel
Franklin Pass
Mrs. Michael Roeder
Harriet S. Spencer
Philip Von Blon
Adrian Walker
Brooks Walker, Jr.
Elaine B. Walker
John C. Walker
Stephen E. Watson
David M. Winton
Alice E. Wittenberg
C. Angus Wurtele

Ex-Officio

Judith Farmer
Hon. Donald M. Fraser
Hon. George Latimer
Commissioner
Samuel S. Sivanich

Design Quarterly Available Back Issues

Single issues \$8.00
Special issues \$10.00
Fourth class postage and handling included in these prices. Prepayment is required on all orders for back issues.

Address orders to:
Journals Department
The MIT Press
55 Hayward Street
Cambridge MA 02142

- | | |
|---------|--|
| 82-83 | Advocacy: A Community Planning Voice |
| 86-87 | Aspen '72: The Invisible City |
| 90-91 | New Learning Spaces & Places |
| 97 | Five and Dime Architects |
| 113-114 | City Segments |
| 118-119 | Meanings of Modernism: Form, Function and Metaphor |
| 120 | Green Architecture |
| 121 | Robots |
| 123 | A Paul Rand Miscellany |
| 125 | Center City Profile |
| 128 | Urban Circumstances |
| 129 | Skyways |
| 130 | Hofmann/Weingart: Basle School of Design |
| 131 | Unvernacular Vernacular |
| 132 | Suburbs |
| 133 | April Greiman
Does it make sense? |
| 134 | Japan from the Inside |

