The Harvard Architecture Review

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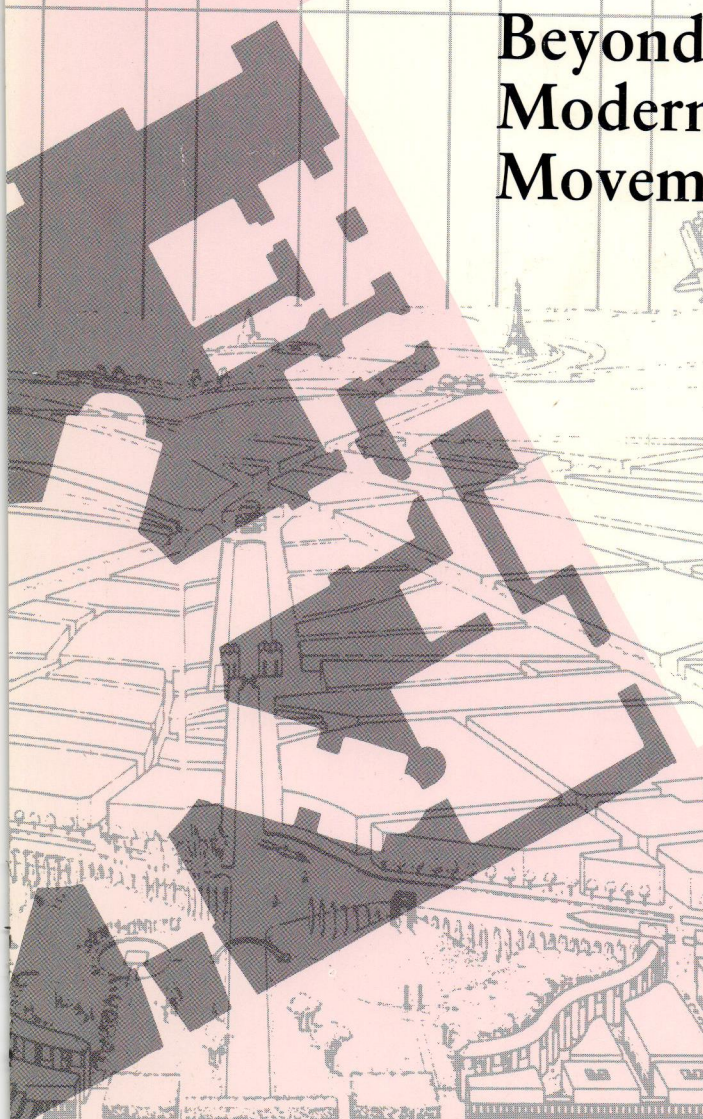
Beyond the Modern Movement



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Jorge Silvetti

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Eduard Sekler

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Beyond the Modern Movement

Editorial

New journals of architecture are most often launched amid a barrage of brave new words as to the high purposes and fine ideals behind their creation. Let us say only this: we are concerned with the role of ideas in architecture, and with their relationship to the art of building. We are moved by the conviction, perhaps naive, that the creation of significant architecture depends on the formation, beforehand, of a set of ideas about architecture—that is, that in each program does not inherently reside the sources for its own *architectural* solution.

This journal, then, is about ideas in architecture and the related arts. It will be comprised of essays by contemporary architects, critics, historians, and students, documentation of built and projected works, exhibition and book reviews, and any additional features which present diverse viewpoints on issues of interest to the architectural community. The *Review* is a student-initiated and student-run endeavor, and as such will reflect the interests and inputs of its (changing) student editorial staff. The expected audience, however, is much wider. We hope to appeal to a broad spectrum of those concerned with architecture and the urban environment, who seek some middle ground between the picture-book approach of some periodicals and the verbal enigmas of others. Finally, the *Review* is a topical publication, organized to provide a variety of opinion and insight into a single issue, theme, or critical proposition.

Along with high-minded words and intentions at their inception, new publications are also marked by an urgent sense of purpose, a perception of important new problems and possibilities, or a mission of improvement through necessary and rapid change. While architects of every age like to claim responsibility for significant advances in architectural theory and practice, we believe that today we *are* witnessing such significant change; and the appearance of new ideas seems to represent more than the vagaries of style and fashion. It is the intention of the *Review* to focus on these changes in architectural sensibility, and of the first issue to explore their most visible embodiment—that work which is moved by a critical attitude toward Modern Movement Architecture.

To this end we have assembled a number of essays and articles which may be included under this general organizational rubric, as well as some dissenting voices as to the meaning or desirability of an architecture 'Beyond the Modern Movement.' The material that follows is accordingly diverse and disjointed, yet may ultimately reveal commonalities not apparent at first glance.

We have not let these responses stand alone, however. In our own process of research, compilation, and review, we have sought to isolate the salient characteristics of this overall phenomenon, and have evolved our own sense of order and significance. These views are provided in the following editorial essay and in brief editorial introductions to each feature, which relate certain ideas found there to our overall editorial position. Our intention, though, is neither simple advocacy nor general opprobrium, but the free exchange and discussion of ideas which may form the basis of a significant approach to architecture today.

If architectural history may be understood, in broad terms, as a dialectical process, then we may place much recent work in architecture in familiar dress: as the logical hypotheses to the Modern Movement's radical and dramatic thesis about a new way of making architecture. What has been variously called, 'Post-Modernism,' 'Super-mannerism,' or, as in our case, architecture 'Beyond the Modern Movement,' can thus be understood as a reactionary phenomenon opposed to a commonly perceived antagonist, with its roots in a long line of criticism of Modern Movement Architecture. But if such a formulation is used to explain and justify the genesis of a large body of architectural work, an obligation arises to address several important questions, some of which have already been raised elsewhere. First, if one must isolate an antagonist, it must have a recognizable and consistent identity. One of the common misconceptions about Post-Modernism[1] is its supposed opposition to *all* of Modern Architecture. Obviously this is far too broad a target, and meaningless as a foil for critical discussion. Thus, Post-Modernism limits its discussion to the architecture of the *Modern Movement*, which is a better defined and more limited entity, with both stylistic and ideological attributes—a cohesive set of formal, social, and technical principles which can be isolated among a wider body of contemporary work. We are speaking here of the architecture of Gropius, Le Corbusier, and Mies, of JJP Oud, Ludwig Hilbersheimer, and Hannes Meyer; of a design method informed by the principles of functionalism,

1 This term we use with great reluctance. It is doubly misleading, as will be explained below, and it has been much-abused and misunderstood in the press. Yet is is more convenient than our own bulky 'Beyond the Modern Movement,' and it is useful to have a single term to represent a diverse body of thought with very little in common save its shared critical referent. The use of this term should not be taken to suggest association with or endorsement of previous definitions or usages, and we will provide our own definition to avoid any misconception in this regard.

programmatic determinism, and structural and technical expressionism; of a conviction in the potential of technology and industrialization; of an aesthetic preference for abstract forms suggestive of industrial process, stripped of ornamentation or historical reference; of a positivist, Utopian belief in universal solutions to problems of shelter and urban living; of a political preference for the collective solution, for the establishment of comparable living and working conditions for all segments of the population. Obviously, the list could go on, but its essence should be clear: a radical new formulation for shaping the human environment, divorced from traditional methods, enamored of innovation and inspired by the potential of a powerful new technology.

Obviously, such a general description should not be taken as a comprehensive presentation of Modern Architecture; rather, it is meant to suggest only a sense of how it is perceived by its critics. For regardless of its actual historical veracity, such a formulation has been the basis of criticism and further work for many so-called 'Post-Modernists:'

In their attempt to break with tradition and start all over again, they [*Modern Architects*] *idealized the primitive and the elementary at the expense of the diverse and the sophisticated. As participants of a revolutionary movement they acclaimed the newness of modern functions, ignoring their implications. In their role as reformers, they puritanically advocated the separation and exclusion of elements, rather than the inclusion of various requirements and their juxtapositions.* (*Robert Venturi*, Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture, *1967, p 16*)

Gone are the days of urban models and with them also has gone the age of urban techniques, self-description, and functions passed off as solutions. The city must be dealt with each time, by gathering and developing its contradictions, day by day, directly. (*Aldo Rossi, from* Lotus 13, *p 7*)

It seems to me that one of the things most violently wrong with architecture in the twentieth century is that the number of things that buildings have been allowed to say has shrunk so greatly that they've simply stopped being interesting to most people. . . . the recent past, the last 50 or 60 years . . . featured an attempt to clean things up, to disconnect a lot of recollections, memories that in the mind of Le Corbusier and the others of the twenties had grown stale and unhelpful. (*Charles W Moore, from* L'Architectur D'Aujour d'hui, *Number 184* (*March 1976*), *p xlv*

Next we should review the *nature* of this Post-Modernist criticism. Despite the high-pitched tone of some of its arguments, it is essentially an evolutionary rather than revolutionary phenomenon. It does not postulate radical new ways of seeing or novel design methodologies; on the contrary, it frequently looks backward, to the forms and processes of the past for general recommendations for the future.

This kind of reactionary attitude is evident in other art forms as well, where similar Modernist tendencies toward abstraction, minimalism, and a-historicism have generated, by opposition, an interest in re-integrating more traditional ways of creating form and establishing meaning. The radical re-appraisal of all forms of artistic endeavor which occurred in the first part of this century may be seen in the paintings of Mondrian, the novels of Gide, the music of Schönberg, and the theatre of Beckett. Their main concern was with stripping away the encumbrances of tradition, with laying bare the essences of its media, to permit explorations into new ways of seeing and confronting reality. The Modern Movement is the architectural counterpart of this outlook, and the reaction to it reflects a broad cultural trend toward a less antagonistic view of history and a less revolutionary view of 'progress.'

Finally, this criticism of the Modern Movement should not be viewed as a movement in itself, but as a loose agglomeration of discrete critical thrusts aimed at a commonly perceived antagonist. And while certain similarities have emerged among some of these varied critical directions, we can as yet perceive no evidence of a comprehensive 'Post-Modern' theory of architecture. The notion of a Post-Modern Movement, with its own discrete boundaries and consistent body of thought, seems to exist only in the eyes of its more active promoters.

We find Post-Modernism useful only as a convenient term of general meaning whose more interesting aspects lie in comparisons among its various components rather than in its primary critical orientation. When we describe buildings or individuals as 'Post-Modern,' we indicate, then, that they embody one or more Post-Modern ideas; but it is untenable to argue that the mere accumulation of these disparate ideas constitutes a comprehensive body of architectural thought in its own right.

With this basic formulation in mind, we can proceed to a more specific discussion of relevant ideas and works. For the purposes of presentation, we will outline five broad areas of concern, each framed in contradistinction to some significant Modern Movement construct.

History

While the Modern Movement attempted to sever its ties with its immediate and distant forbears, recent trends have emphasized the continued relevance of history. Dissatisfied with an ascetic visual language

and restrictive design methodology, architects are looking to the past once again for figurative and organizational resources. On the one hand, a search for a more communicative architectural language has provoked an interest in forms which make direct reference to previous architectural modes; on the other hand, a concern for a more intellectually disciplined approach has promoted the study of principles of architectural organization, means of planimetric and spatial ordering which although transformed by present circumstance maintain their organizational integrity and relationship to their original source.

Both concerns embody a particularly Post-Modern dilemma: if the radical break with the past posited by the Moderns is no longer acceptable, how is one to incorporate history once again as a legitimate source of inspiration? The trends mentioned here are but two answers to this question, one perhaps more literal, the other more abstract, both seeking a practicable *modus operandi*; but emulating, copying, or learning from history has always been a difficult business and it is likely to remain so despite its new-found popularity.

Cultural Allusionism

Akin to the renewed interest in architectural history is the fascination with cultural phenomena outside the realm of architecture proper. The motivation behind both is similar: to expand the figurative and organizational palette of the architect, and to develop a visual language which might communicate more directly to a public confused and alienated by current architectural practice. Modern Movement architects, too, looked beyond their accepted contemporary architectural language for inspiration; indeed they had to, for a new architectural vocabulary was not to be found in the prevalent affections for Beaux Arts Classicism and the other revival styles. Yet the models *they* chose—mills, factories, ships and automobiles—were designed to shock their audiences into a recognition of a new beginning. The alienation which resulted was perhaps inevitable, given the crusader-like zeal of the Modern Movement avant garde, seeking as it was to establish a radical new language of architecture.

Post-Modern cultural allusionism, by contrast, is more accommodating than alienating in intention. It attempts to bring existing symbols and expressive forms, understood and accepted by broad segments of the population, into the realm of architecture.[2] Post-Modernism recognizes that the abstract play of masses in light may not be enough to retain the involvement of the observer, that private dialogues directed at a professional audience may not alone satisfy the requirements of a civic art. Reference to widespread cultural phenomena is seen as one means of creating a more meaningful architectural expression. Like historical allusion, this approach does present problems of translation and application, yet the distance travelled from the point of reference to final use is not so great, as it involves boundaries of taste, not time.

Anti-Utopianism

Modernist theory was Utopian and positivist in orientation: it pledged a better world environmentally and socially, through rational thinking and the new-found tools of its technologically advanced age. This attitude filtered down into virtually every aspect of Modernist practice: the perfect chair could be designed, the correct planning relationships established, the ideal city laid out. Man was conceived of as an abstract, universalized entity, for whom a universal pan-cultural language of forms could be developed. The particular, the eccentric, the unique was to be excluded from architectural expression in pursuit of more urgent needs and goals.

The last few decades have seen a gradual erosion of such Utopian and positivist convictions. The design of housing, for instance, has become less generalized and more attuned to the problems of specific locations and particular users. The social, economic, and physical (i.e. building) conventions of the local population may now form an integral part of the design and programming process, producing more idiosyncratic and contextually responsive solutions. Underlying this approach is the conviction that architecture can profit more by working with what 'is' rather than what 'should be,' on dealing with the messiness and imperfectability of the present rather than the clarity and order of an ideal world. It reflects a growing awareness of the limited impact architecture may have on the tastes and preferences of its users, and that to make a more meaningful environment may not suggest that it be more revolutionary, but more a product of shared sensibilities.

2 It is interesting to note the refusal of the architectural establishment, both then and now, to accept such ventures into areas outside of the accepted realms of architectural inquiry, viewing them as a degradation of the fine art of architecture into mere 'construction' and 'builder's vocabulary.'

Urban Design and Contextualism

Much Post-Modernist criticism in the area of urban design is a recapitulation, on a larger scale, of the anti-Utopian outlook described above. Yet the image of the new city was so important to the ideology of the Modern Movement, and its application often so devastating that it has provoked a reaction strong and extensive enough to warrant a particular focus here. From a policy-making point of view, this reaction has promoted more limited planning horizons, localized community participation, and small-scale decision making—accepting what is found, socially, economically, and physically, rather than calling for extensive revisions of existing patterns. The meteoric rise in architectural preservation and restoration may be attributed, at least in part, to this more accommodating urban outlook.

On a formal level, the Modernist penchant for the city in the park—the object-building surrounded by open green space—has provoked a new interest in traditional urban space, scale, and organization. The conceptualization of the city as 'fabric,' with dense areas of building (the '*poché*') interrupted by carefully designed and defined public spaces, has again come to the fore, with the requisite respect for existing structures, street frontages, views, axes, and patterns of movement. Indeed, the traditional city has become the starting point for entire theories of architecture, which, by identifying the nature of historic urban forms—their inherent order and flexibility—may then posit similar approaches for architecture at a more general level. Here the notion of the architectural *type* has been most persuasive, where the principle of order, or spatial organization, or construction, is rooted in precedent, yet may be re-applied, in principle, to present circumstance. Thus, the traditional city may become not only the source of *ideas*, but also the source of a *method*—of reference, accommodation, and change, stabilized by the order of continuing urban morphologies.

Formal Concerns

If traditional languages of form were rejected by the Modern Movement in its quest for a new architecture, then similarly rejected were traditional notions of organization, composition, and design process. Yet the methods and aesthetic guidelines which were developed to replace them are now being questioned and re-considered. The idea of program, for instance, once the basis of architectural organization and expression, is losing that pre-eminence to a conception of design which values means of organization more general than those provoked by the specifics of each project. Asymmetrical composition, once considered the hallmark of 'contemporary' design, is slowly giving way to a preference for, or at least a tolerance of, symmetry and balance, in both plan and elevation. Free-flowing, universal, open-ended space, once the accepted convention of three-dimensional composition, is being challenged by a conception of space as a closed, static, and well-defined entity. Ornament, once considered 'criminal' in the standard Modern Movement dogma, is gradually re-appearing in diverse architectural projects. The landscape, once merely the 'ground' for the pristine architectural object may now be wedded to the architectural product, not in the literal sense of interior-exterior spatial flow, but in the more profound sense of creating outside rooms and sequences of spaces which integrate the formal arrangement of the interior into a larger environmental design. And architectural drawing, once tied to the fine-line and color-coded conventions of CIAM, is now being explored for all its inherent creative potential, and as a beautiful product in itself.

All these facets reinforce the architect's traditional role as the willful creator of form, in direct contrast to the notion of the architect as the mere translator of economic, social, and technical forces into an appropriate architectural expression. Consequently, the subjectivity and idiosyncracy which the Modernists hoped to exclude from the process are now returning, as the formal restrictions of the Modern Movement are being recognized and rejected.

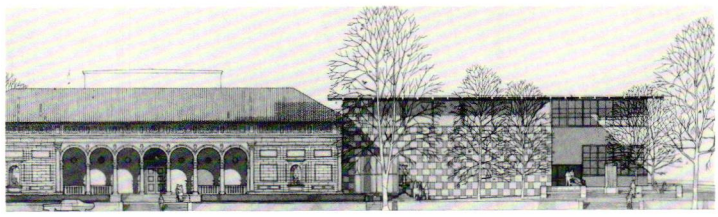
In reviewing these various characteristics, it is obvious that many concerns which have been labelled 'Post-Modern' are not the bold departures of an avant garde, but rather represent convictions held by many architects for some time. The concerns for urban contextualism, user influence in design, historic preservation, and historical allusion, for instance, have been pursued quietly by designers and theorists for years, without any thought of vanguarding a 'Post-Modern Movement.' Thus, recent pronouncements of a new Post-Modern Architecture have no real claim to originality, yet by the same token they should not be dismissed as mere faddishness, or as the invention of a few publicity-hungry architects and writers.

It should also be clear that these concerns have not evolved solely because of aesthetic and philosophical disagreements. Many new design attitudes have been spawned as much by economic and practical necessity as by architects' private aesthetic judgements. For instance, the broad social upheavals of the 1960s were an important incentive to the rejection of alienating high-rise housing; the increasing cost of new construction has made inner city preservation and restoration feasible and advantageous; the growing political activity of urban neighborhood groups has forced officials to adopt incremental planning as a more realistic and practicable approach to long-term goals; and an adoption of vernacular and localized building technology has been encouraged as much by the ultimate inefficiency of mass-production technology for housing as by a changing sensibility

Front Elevation, Allen Memorial Art Museum Addition, Oberlin College, Oberlin, Ohio, Venturi and Rauch, Architects

Axonemetric, Crooks House, Fort Wayne, Indiana, Michael Graves, Architect

Front Elevation (study), Residential Unit in the Gallaretese Quarter, Milan, Aldo Rossi, Architect



toward industrialized products. Still, these tangible forces have found a natural affinity with changing aesthetic and philosophical convictions, mutually reinforcing each other's goals.

Finally, we might state that in our view, the Modern Movement is *not* dead, as some writers have proclaimed. It has not been replaced by any comprehensive body of thought, and it still forms the basis of architectural production for the great majority of architects. Post-Modernism, being a fragmented phenomenon, will promote change only incrementally, and only in particular areas of concern. Thus, we will see in the future not the death of Modernism, but its gradual commingling with its critical offspring, producing hybrid upon hybrid not given to strict categorization and classification. Such times may be harrowing for the historian charged with sorting out all this diverse activity, yet are liberating for the architect anxious to explore new or long-disused avenues of architectural endeavor.

Referential Form

The above analysis portrays Post-Modernism as diverse, disjointed, and lacking in an overall ideology. While this is accurate in terms of its origins and development, one can still find throughout many of its separate constituents a common thread of insight, a similar sense of how to proceed, as well as a caution of what to avoid.

As a widespread cultural phenomenon, Modernism proposed a radical re-examination of the methods and assumptions of artistic endeavor, in whatever medium, as an *a priori* condition for new work. The intention was to liberate all the arts for new explorations into the nature of reality, yet the work which resulted was frequently as much *about* that process of liberation—of laying bare the essences of the art form at hand—as it was about any dramatic exploratory endeavor. Thus, a painting by Kasimir Malevich—his famous *Suprematist Composition: White on White,* for instance— is about, primarily, this act of stripping away, of removing the conventional encumbrances of painting to reveal its true and ultimate essence—in this case, a painting consisting of nothing more than a white field with a white square overlayed at a slight angle. This is not to deny the personal and art historical significance of these works, yet as living, enduring art, they seem to be more directed at the conventions of art itself, rather than about issues concerning society at large, and aimed, essentially, at a private and knowing audience.

In architecture, a similar conceptual revolution occurred. Architecture was no longer to be conceived of in terms of the application of historical styles, but in the concise exposition of its constituent elements: program ('utility'), structure and construction ('firmness'), and 'the abstract play of masses in light' ('delight'). The more an architectural product could explicate these separate essences, the more successful would it be judged.

Obviously, this is a drastic oversimplification of the aims of Modern Movement Architecture. Yet over time, as its social purpose waned, as its technological aspirations proved unrealizable, and as its urban fantasies simply failed, Modernist architecture was again left with its bare constituent parts—architecture was to be, essentially, *about itself*, about its construction, or structure, or materials, or organization, or disposition of mechanical services. This has been the overriding architectural program of the past 50 years, and it is still very much with us.

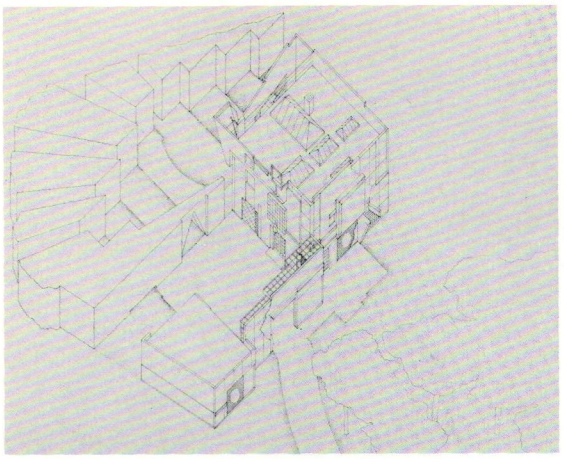
But if this conception of architecture is to be rejected, what is to supplant it—what, then, is architecture *to be about*? What is architecture to signify beyond its own self-explication?

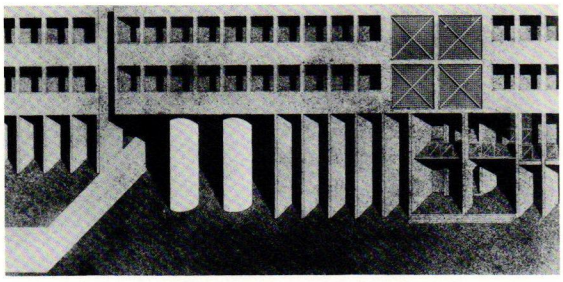
The most compelling work being done today may be understood as a response to this question. And the overriding similarity among this work, which seems to unite it in common purpose, is the notion of *referential form*—that is, the search for meaning outside the strict functional and programmatic requirements of the project, to ideas and forms which, once overlayed, may expand the architectural message to embrace wider cultural concerns.

This effort may be seen in a variety of realms, from the domestic to the urban, the conceptual to the literal. It may be seen in the appropriation of historic images and forms, to jog the memory and the intellect into making associations and connections between known and novel systems of signification. It may be seen in the incorporation of traditional scalar and constructional elements—the window, the door, the stoop, the window seat—to build an architecture from recognized and understood parts. It may be seen in the interest in urban morphologies and types, where the repetition of basic urban patterns may establish the continuity and contextualism necessary for good urban building. It may be seen in the emulation of traditional building organizations and spaces, where the primary notions of spatial sequence and hierarchy provide a sense of order comprehensible, and familiar, even in unfamiliar dress.

These efforts, though diverse, though on apparently different poles of the ideological spectrum, are similar in orientation, as embodied by the notion of referential form. That which is referred to may vary considerably, but it is always something outside of the architectural program proper, it is always something which potentially enriches the final message and impact, and it is always framed as a response to the question posed above—where may we now turn for significance in architecture?

We may find such endeavor in the work of architects





as diverse as these: Robert Venturi, Michael Graves, and Aldo Rossi. Venturi, in his addition to the Oberlin College Art Museum, has made reference to several images outside of the program at hand. In his own words:

> *In the end we extended our villa as a Quattrocento architect might have added to a real villa, two generations after it was built. . . . Our squarish gallery with its strip windows and big overhang recalls on the outside a high school gym of the 40s. . . . From the front, therefore, our complex is meant to be a succession of forms and symbols, juxtaposed and receding, a Quattrocentro monument, a decorated shed, and an enhanced loft.* (*Robert Venturi*, Allen Memorial Art Museum Bulletin, *volume xxxiv, number 2, 1976-77, pp 83-104*)

Or Michael Graves, on his house project for Mr. and Mrs. Dennis Crooks:

> *The surfaces necessary to establish those enclosures in the landscape were remembered from the hedge walls of 17th and 18th century Italian and French Garden Design.*
>
> *A number of drawings had been made to study those elements of architecture that the classical world regarded as given, but that the modern architect has generally forgotten. The classical tripartite division of vertical surfaces, symbolizing foot, body, and head, was thought to engender a more direct relationship between man and his constructed landscape.* (*Michael Graves*, Architectural Design, *June 1977, pp 390, 391*)

Or Aldo Rossi, on his housing unit outside of Milan:

> *In my design for the residential block in the Gallaratese district of Milan, there is an analogical relationship with certain engineering works that mix freely with both the corridor typology and a related feeling I have always experienced in the architecture of the traditional Milanese tenements, where the corridor signifies a lifestyle bathed in everyday occurrences, domestic intimacies, and varied personal relationships.* (*Aldo Rossi*, A + U (*Architecture and Urbanism*), *March 1976, p. 74*)

We do not wish to hold up these examples as the paragons of referential form; they are used here primarily because of the variety they represent.[3] Yet in each one we may note the appropriation of external systems of organization and symbolism, both as ordering elements and as bearers of meaning and significance. Obviously the approaches differ beyond this point, varying from Venturi's ironic vernacular imagery, Graves' layered historical forms, and Rossi's highly abstract translations of urban and domestic morphologies. But these differences are instructive in identifying the limitations of referential form, revealing as they do inherent difficulties and dangers. For instance, while one may applaud the comprehensibility of Venturi's formal references, one may question their appropriateness for the program at hand: should a college museum really suggest a high school gym of the 1940s? Conversely, while one may find sympathy with the choice of symbolic and typological vocabulary in Rossi's work, the legibility of that vocabulary is compromised by its austere representation. And Graves seems to occupy a middle ground, poetically transforming historical elements into a suggestive but enigmatic house-collage.

The important points of consideration, then, are these: the appropriateness of the referential form used, and the appropriate transformation of that form. About the former there will probably be little agreement; about the latter, however, we can at least identify some common ground—that in using external references some sort of manipulation is necessary to legitimize the process of appropriation. For Venturi it is an ironic distortion and overlaying of recognizable image-languages; for Graves it is a fragmentation and collage of known, sometimes classical, elements; for Rossi it is an abstraction of systems of residential and urban organization. But whatever one may deem appropriate, such manipulation, at whatever scale, both documents the operation and comments on its present use. Thus, the final project becomes a union of a triadic nature: of the appropriated form, of the transformation of that form in its present application, and the project itself, overlayed with the above.

Similar to our characterization of Post-Modernism, this notion of referential form may be too general a formulation for any but the most initial stages in a design process, a statement of basic intention which requires further refinement upon actual implementation. However, it is an attempt, and an important one, to respond to the problem of meaning which was posed but never resolved in the development of the Modern Movement. And while its present practitioners may not have evolved a completely satisfactory theoretical or formal language, their efforts are suggestive and challenging. They point to the evolution of an architecture which may establish a more open dialogue with its social and cultural context, expand its communicative potential, and respond more fully to the myriad obligations of a civic art. If this is to be the legacy of such 'Post-Modern' criticism, then it is worthy of our attention and understanding.

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3 These three works, along with several others, were featured in a conference, 'Beyond the Modern Movement,' sponsored by the *Review* in November, 1977. Excerpts and documentation of the conference are included later in this issue.



On Realism in Architecture

Jorge Silvetti

March 1978

Jorge Silvetti's article deals with perhaps the most radical aspect of Modern Movement Architecture – its attempt to break with the past as a figurative and philosophical reference. In this view, recent strains of 'Post-Modernism' are attempts to bridge the gap with the past, or at least to re-supply what was missing when history was removed as a source of architectural language and content: architectural history was not only the source of a language of forms and images to be adopted and manipulated, but also a well-spring of societal significance, since the choice and exposition of these forms carried a widely-understood message for society at large.

Silvetti isolates two sets of theorists, at apparently opposite ends of the ideological spectrum, who seek, in his view, to fill this void of form and content: one, the populists, *embrace the expedient, the narrative, and the* images *of the past for sources of meaning and visual inspiration; the other, the* neo-rationalists, *look to architectural history not as a repository of images and forms, but as a catalogue of the* elements *of design, notions of order and organization which have a significance at a more generalized, abstract, and poetic level. Of special interest here is not what separates these convictions, but what binds them: their mutual search for a more telling and value-laden architectural language.*

While the article gives little credence to the notion of a 'Post-Modern' Architecture as such, we believe it does reinforce the idea of an architecture formed in contradistinction to the principal tenets of Modern Movement architecture, with some specific critical thrust acting as the prime opposition and motivation. But whatever the congruence here to a proposed theory of Post-Modernism, the ultimate aim of the analysis is one of mutual interest: 'to focus accurately the inquiry into the language of architecture, in order to produce a collective discourse capable of addressing society at large.'

The aim of this paper is to contribute to current discussions concerning the characterization of the present state of architecture. It also attempts to dispel some misconceptions about a term which has pervaded current literature: *Post-Modernism*. Post-Modernism announces itself as a beginning, a recuperation, or an end, depending on the emphasis or the persuasion of the critic, and establishes itself always as an antithesis or an opposite to Modern Architecture. It also assumes that it characterizes the present moment, and that as an historical event, it has no precedent. Antithetical positions such as those of Robert Venturi and Aldo Rossi are used as examples of Post-Modernism.[1] If it is true that the present is rich in positions, that there are proposals that displace or remove many of the notions and concepts that had been firmly installed by Modern Architecture, it is also possible to see the present moment as the logical result of tendencies and lines of thought that possess a long, rich, and suggestive pedigree.

What will be suggested here through a specific analysis is a general theoretical proposition which contends that the elements that comprise a historical period (its ideology, its theories, its icons, its forms and images) do not move, change or evolve with the same velocity – that while images might persist, the ideas which originally supported those images might have been replaced; or, more importantly for our case, that figurative and formal changes do not correspond directly to ideological development. This proposition, which should be taken as a speculative hypothesis, can help us to criticize and refocus the all too easy, empiricist and immediate conclusion that sees in current tendencies a definite break from the immediate past. While indeed architecture may portray a new outward appearance, it might be more important to notice that its preoccupation with specific ideological effects is not new.

Criticism seems to deal with two necessary scales: the small and immediate, concerned with facts that are 'new' and which are invariably presented as such, and the large, which allows one to see how, in the end, history is 'short' and made up of a few ideas and principles which transform and recombine themselves in its course. It is important, I believe, to take this latter perspective and scale now, in an attempt to understand more lucidly where we are, from where we come,

* I would like to thank Jeffrey Katz, a student of the Harvard Graduate School of Design second professional degree masters program, for his assistance in preparing some bibliographical notes and illustrations for this article, but most importantly for being a most supportive reader and commentator of the different versions of this article.

Less precise but more substantial acknowledgement should be made to Professors Alan Colquhoun and Colin Rowe. It would be impossible to pinpoint with the exactitude of a quotation their contribution to this article, but it is to their profound efforts to restore the area of the iconography of architecture as a serious theoretical issue that the inspiration of this article is greatly indebted.

[1] In this article I will focus specifically on the productions of these two architects. Besides being, undoubtedly, two of the most prominent figures in architecture today, insofar as they generate the most heated and passionate polemics, both represent



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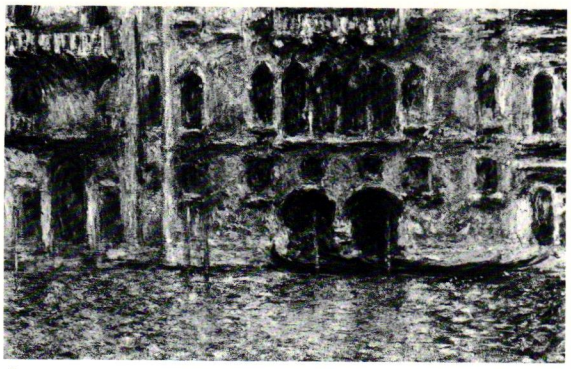

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and where we might possibly move.

Such a task can be modelled or attacked from a variety of perspectives, each of which, as a result of the limitations of criticism, will always be partial. Here, no claim is made to the contrary. I propose to focus on the figurative characteristics of architecture as depicted by both Modern Architecture and contemporary movements, and in dealing with the latter, I will restrict myself to what appears to me to be two paradigmatic cases in the development of contemporary ideas, those of Venturi and Rossi. The choice of the figurative level of architecture is not casual. It is through architectural facts as visual entities and the way in which they present themselves to our senses and minds, that I believe we enact one of the most important entries into the world of ideas and thought that lie hidden in them. When words fade away, when the *zeigeist* disappears, there is always the ineffable fact of architecture that is reiterated as a visual, permanent reality and which is 'read' by us.

Within this perspective I will restrict myself to a most salient fact of contemporary tendencies which in my view makes the figurative aspect of architecture an unavoidable issue for criticism today: the reappearance of the notions of *architectural type* and *architectural typology*. The recovery and use of such notions may be seen and evaluated with respect to such contemporary concepts in art criticism as *realism* and *verisimilitude*, and together I hope they will begin to clarify and differentiate the diverse manners in which typology is presented, the diversity of figurative devices employed, and finally the disparate theories that have resulted from typology. This will also serve to establish with some certainty what is new and what is not, and by so doing will assert the richness of Modern architectural thought, which still defies the many death sentences to which it has been condemned.

PHAEDRUS: *On that point, Socrates, I have heard one who is to be an orator does not need to know what is really just, but what would seem just to the multitude who are to pass judgement, and not what is really good or noble, but what will seem to be so: for they say persuasion comes from what seems to be true, not from the truth.*

passage from Plato's *Phaedrus*

To begin with, we might note that in the course of architectural history, it is possible and necessary to insist that very few moments can be identified as moments of 'pure invention,' in which it is possible to point to a real 'rupture' where ideological mutations have produced a genuine figurative revolution. Within the scope of this article it is necessary to insist that Modern Architecture produced such a thing. This fact, that for the present detractors of Modern Architecture constitutes its sin and for its advocates its most rich and fruitful quality, will not be evaluated here for its virtues or its villany. We shall note it here as a fact of history, incontrovertible, and as such, extraordinary. In spite of 'Post-Modernism,' the emergence of Modern Architecture is an inescapable reference point; after it, architecture is not, and cannot be, thought of in the same way as before its appearance. From this viewpoint, and corroborating what Modern architects and their buildings said, it is necessary to state once again the fact that one of the most striking characteristics of Modern Architecture is its refusal to deal with the past as a figurative resource. We need to say little about this refusal since it is Modern Architecture's most commonly agreed-upon attribute, and both theoreticians and propagators of Modern Architecture have insisted upon such a figurative rupture.[2] What has not been discussed enough, however, is how it is possible to define conceptually such a rupture; that is, within a general history, how it is possible to describe and classify a figurative change of such importance, how to relate it with more general and perdurable ideas in the history of art, what relationships such change establishes with other conceptualizations, and what operations of meaning are involved.

To do this, we need to digress for a moment and to examine some fundamental problems that exist between art and knowledge, and reality and its representation. If art in general is a form of knowledge, then architecture does not escape a similar formulation. Art critics, anthropologists, and philosophers have discussed and elaborated profusely in this respect, and it is not my intention to review their assertions and dissentions. Rather, I would like to emphasize that such knowledge is different from scientific knowledge, and that as with any type of knowledge, its problem lies in its relations to 'reality:' how it interprets reality and explains it, and how it reflects reality in its work (we might say, more accurately, 'represents' it in its work). Each building, each drawing, each writing carries a vision of reality; this ideological condition makes it a testimony to an interpretation of reality. The problem of reality and of the 'real,' this involvement with a 'reality' that is unavoidable in art, has been and is one of the most crucial issues in all figurative art, and at the same time it is one of the most arduous problems to disentagle in art history, theory and criticism. For a layman attempting to discover what 'realism' in art is, the task is difficult, painful, and at times confusing. Because even if at the beginning one finds a direct reference to an artistic movement specifically related to the literature and painting of mid-nineteenth century one soon becomes aware that the more notions of realism and representation are investigated, the more critics and historians find them elusive; and thus, depending on the critic's lenses, not only is 'impressionism' realist (it attempts to represent reality the way our senses perceive it), 'abstract expressionism' realist (it attempts to investigate and represent the reality of painting itself), but also realist is the Renaissance (is not the attempt to represent reality scientifically through the mathematical laws of perspective a realist enterprise?), and certainly, surrealism, pop-art and contemporary super-realism can qualify (Figures 1-5).



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1 Raphael, *The Marriage of the Virgin*, 1504, Pinacoteca di Brera, Milan

2 Claude Monet, *Palazzo da Mula, Venice*, 1846, National Gallery of Art, Washington D C, Chester Dale Collection

3 Jackson Pollock, *Echo*, 1951, Collection of the Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY
Acquired through the Lillie P Bliss Bequest and the Mr and Mrs David Rockefeller Fund

4 Rene Magritte, *La Reproduction Interdite*, (Not to be Reproduced) 1937, Worthing Art Gallery, E F W James Collection

5 John Salt, *Blue Interior*, 1970, O K Harris Gallery, New York, NY



5

As early as 1921, Roman Jakobson had already warned us about the difficulties and multiple meanings that the notion of 'realism' in art had, and the fatal consequences its misuse had for art criticism:

> *Classicists, sentimentalists, the romanticists to a certain extent, even 'realists' of the nineteenth century, the modernists to a large degree, and finally the futurists, expressionists, and their like have more than once steadfastly proclaimed faithfulness to reality, maximum versimilitude – in other words, realism, as the guiding motto of their artistic program.*[3]

Probably 'realism' is one of those terms we should not try to define. It might be enough to notice that such controversy and ambiguity express clearly art's continuous struggle with reality and that this struggle acquires many forms and interpretations. But I believe that by speculating about this problem and posing similar questions to architecture, we could contribute to a clarification of the nature of both the modern figurative rupture and of 'return to history.'

What, then is the 'real' with which architecture establishes its relationships? It is possible to search for it in architectural theories and writings, which naturally contain in an immediate way possible representations of this reality. But this task we leave outside the scope of this paper. What we want to tackle seems more arduous, since we are asking a more specific question: with what 'real' does architecture establish figurative relations? The difficulty is obvious; the usage of words such as 'realism,' 'figuration' and 'representation' immediately produces a certain discomfort in critics, many of whom still believe that architecture (together with music) is one of those arts in which representation does not take place. This is an old problem, but one which is easy to address. And leaving aside the problem of drawings (which present a much more complicated structure, since in our view they are representations of a representation), we would like to concentrate on the other product of architecture, its buildings. As with all material on the other products of culture, buildings cannot escape their signifying nature. Today we know that neither a word nor a functional object, nor an image, not even the minimum gesture, can be considered 'neutral,' or lacking intention or meaning. The problem of 'form' always implies a relation to a referent (which might or might not exist in empirical reality) which is 'represented.' The difficulty in considering architecture as 'representing' something arises from a too-restricted conception of representation and figuration in which only the so-called 'visual arts' (painting, sculpture, cinema, etc.) are included simply because their thematic relation with the visual reality of life is direct. In the case of architecture (and in music also), the problem becomes more complicated because the process of representation historically can be seen (at the figurative level) as a kind of

within the theorectical context of this article two truly extreme positions of what I believe is the field of possibilities of a certain idea of architecture.

[2] I certainly agree with contemporary criticism, chiefly Charles Jencks', in that the idea of 'Modern Architecture' is a deceiving one, as it is made up of a conglomerate of ideas, conceptions and forms, most of the time contradictory among themselves, that resist (in a strict historical sense), such a generalized label. Yet, it seems to me that for the scope and focus of this article, we can still refer to some absolutely basic, elemental, fundamental notions that characterize that peculiar moment in the history of architecture, and which will always make us recognize, in their rich variety, its products as essentially 'modern.'

[3] Roman Jakobson, 'On Realism in Art,' in Ladislav Matejka and Krystyna Pomorska *Readings in Russian Poetics: Formalist and Structuralist Views*, (The MIT Press, 1971), p 39

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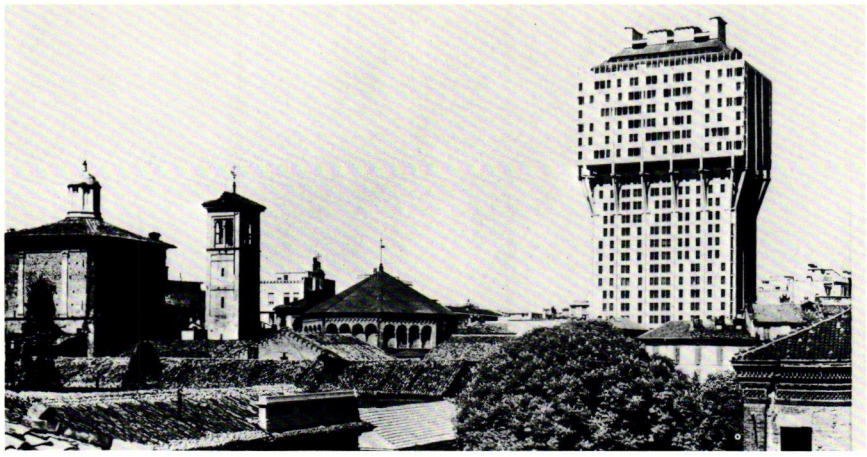


'tautology' in which what is represented and the ensuing knowledge initially *is architecture itself*. Until Modern Architecture (and since the Renaissance at least), the 'real of architecture' was found always in its own history, which in turn provided a sufficient proof of truth. To be sure, that 'real' is always selective and ideologically tinted; as in the case of the Renaissance, which 'invented' a new architecture by selecting as its 'reality' what it believed to be the architecture of Rome, yet having the programmatic aim only of producing and restoring its grandeur.

Thus, architecture has posed itself, as a figurative enterprise, *a 'real' of architectural substance* (or at least of 'building' substance) which necessarily refers to its own history; and it is due to this particular persistence of history as a figurative repository that the appearance of Modern Architecture, in its most radical expressions, about Modern Architecture is the *change in the 'real' with which it operates*. Reality, as the object of representation is depicted by the use of elements *found outside architecture*—in technology, in aircraft and ocean liners, in the vocabulary of the new art—and as such it is incorporated as the new referent.

The problem could be left here, perfunctorily stated. We could say that the present moment is but a quick return to the past as the object of representation. But we would not have said much. The problem still remains—how to characterize the present diverse manifestations of history as the new 'real' and in turn, how to clarify the concept of 'realism' as a critical category. It seems pertinent, then, to discuss and clarify the effect of those different appropriations of the 'real,' what are the ideological strategies that support these appropriations, and finally what these contemporary 'returns' might mean in their differences from the pre-Modern uses of history.

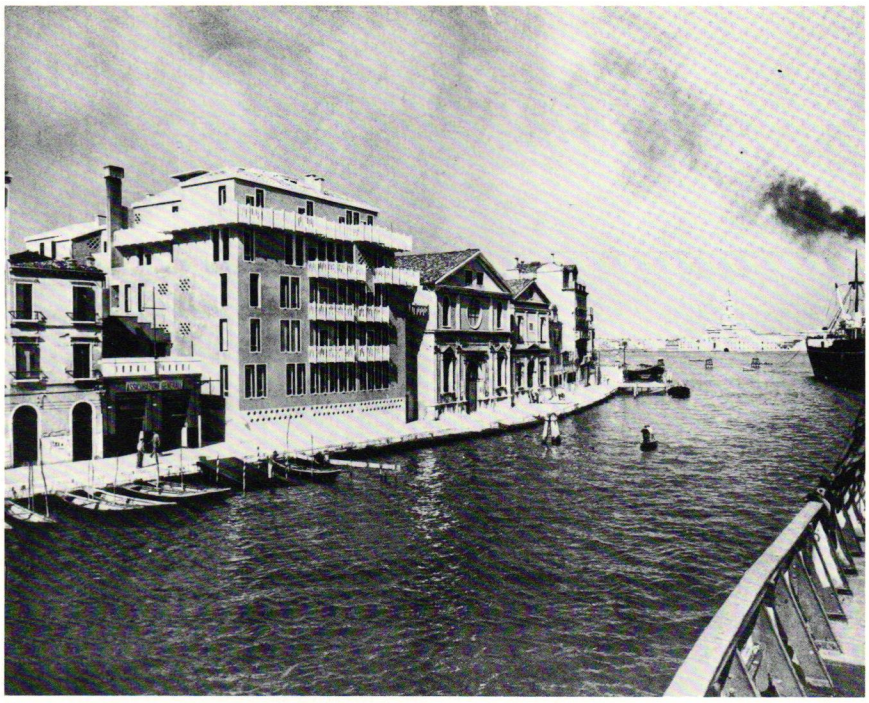
We are confronted with a problem as old as Western thought, for we are questioning among other things the relationships and nature of a type of knowledge to reality, its mode of exposition, its effects and its proof of 'truth.' It does not seem inappropriate to recall Plato and Aristotle, who in their *Gorgias* and *Phaedrus,* and *Rhetorics* and *Poetics* respectively, established the basis for consequent Western thought about the problem of the nature of representation. In the writings of both we find a concept that has served philosophical discourses, as well as epistemology and art criticism, up to the present day: that of *verisimilitude*, which reverberates still in the thought of such contemporaries as Karl Popper, Ernst Gombrich and Roland Barthes.[4]

Verisimilitude for Plato and Aristotle and for subsequent rhetoricians, is a concept which dismisses definitely what was thought to be the constitutive property of language and words: the direct reference to the real. Verisimilitude is the property of the text to produce an effect of reality, a reality which might or might not be historically or scientifically possible: it is the capacity a text has to 'make believe' that that which is said is directly related to a real fact. To do so, it employs rhetorical mechanisms sufficiently strong and elaborate so as to produce such an effect. Plato sadly says, 'In the courts, in fact, people do not bother to say the truth, but to persuade, and persuasion depends on versimilitude.' Wittier, Aristotle comments, 'An impossible verisimilitude is preferable to a possible unverisimilitude.[5] Modern philosophy and criticism have elaborated the concept beyond that of forensic discourses (which was the primary subject of rhetorics in antiquity) to epistemological discussion on the nature of scientific knowledge, to literary criticism and all types of narratives (i.e., cinema) as well as to the visual arts. This concept is a critical instrument with which it is possible to discuss the nature of some logical propositions, to define precisely the concept of mathematical probability (as in Popper's discussion), and to analyze also the nature of 'realism' in the arts, with the accompanying notions of fiction, illusion, artifice, mimesis, and their attempts to create the 'effect of reality.'[6]

With the help of this concept of verisimilitude, we know that signs are not servants of the referent, but of their own internal laws; as a consequence, representation depends not on the 'truth' (truth is not an artistic problem) but rather on that which is represented, on the efficiency with which such representation makes its appearance as a plausible real, and on the mechanisms used to make such effects possible.

I propose that with this concept we could begin to sort out and classify some of the different modes of producing architecture in this century, in so far as how they operate in relation to their object of representation: that is, how the 'real' has been codified and presented, and correspondingly, what has been the performance and destiny of these modes of production with respect to their convincing and persuasive qualities. Modern Architecture of the heroic period was one of those rare cases of invention of a new verisimilitude; it replaced another architecture whose foundations of truth and credibility lay in history. As if the possibilities of such 'realism' had been exhausted by the preceding paroxysm of eclecticism, revivalisms, etc., architecture joined ranks with the generalized figurative rupture that occurred in all the arts, from literature, painting, to music (where even that seemingly eternal 'truth,' the 'natural' scale, lost its authority).

It was a true reversal, since the idea of verisimilitude in the arts had been, up to that moment, one of truthful, 'truthlike' representation of the existent, and in that extraordinary time of the first decades of this century, the represented in architecture indeed was not there, but rather, in a new and final aim: a new society, a new man, a new physical reality. As does any utopian attempt, architecture represents fragments of a future reality, but unlike past architectural utopias, we are now confronted with fragments which are not the products of a recombination of hitherto known architectural elements. The verisimilitude of previous utopias had operated with the expected, still the solid and sure foundation of a verisimilitude. The startling novelty is that Modern Architecture, realistic in the sense that it uses as figurative source for representation something existent (but non-architectural), disregards what



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6 Torre Velasca, Milan, L B Belgiojoso, E. Peressuti, and E N Rogers, 1957
7 House in Zattere, Venice, Ignazio Gardella, 1958
8 Alton West 9, Rochampton Estate, London County Council, 1958



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[4] For a discussion on the history of the term *verisimilitude* and the confusion arising from its sometimes ambiguous usage in classical philosophy (particularly in relation to the term probability) see Karl Popper *Conjectures and Refutations*, (Harper Torchbooks, 1968), Chapter X; 'Truth, rationality and the growth of knowledge,' especially section three; 'Truth and content: verisimilitude versus probability,' and in the same book, 'Addenda; some technical notes.' It seems that the usage of the term in English translatons of classical philosophy is erratic. We are taking Popper's differentiation to correct some widely used translations of Plato and Aristotle in the light of the more consistent usage in Latin (*verisimilis*), French (*vraisemblance*), Spanish (*verosimilitud*), Italian (*verisimilitude*) and German (*wahrscheinlich*) translations, when it unmistakably means 'similar to the truth,' (Greek *eoikota tois etumoisi*).

[5] Both quotes from 'Le Vraisembleable,' *Communications* Number 11, (Editions du Seuil, Paris, 1968)

[6] Karl Popper, *op cit*, Roman Jakobson, *op cit*. See also 'Le Vraisembleable' in *Communications 11, (Editions du Seuil 1968), and Roland Barthes, 'L'Anciene rhetorique,' Communications* 16, (Editions du Seuil, 1970).

[7] Nicolaus Pevsner: 'Roehampton: LCC Housing and the Pictureque Tradition,' *Architectural Review*, (July 1959), p 35

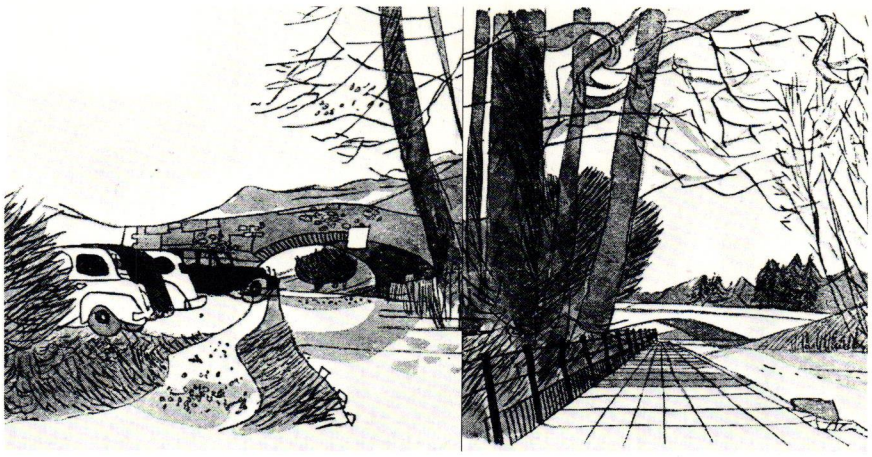
might be socially and collectively believable and plausible as its rhetorical basis of persuasion. Thus the terms of the verisimilitude operation are inverted, inasmuch as the representation of 'reality' and its effects is not based on an *a priori* knowledge of what, as architecture, is socially believable or not, but rather on the 'truth' in which the artist believes, since it will become the focus that will make that reality evident when Man is, by the sole potent presence of architecture, transformed.

It is a complex and contradictory verisimilitude, for if, on the one hand, as a truly *avant-garde* movement, it does not accept society's expectation as the source of its persuasion, on the other it believes that forms themselves will transform those expectations, and that persuasion will result.

In architecture, the reversal takes the form of a double–literal *and* metaphorical–loss of the center: the former expressed by the demotion of symmetry, (the most evident victim of the new figurative strategy), and the latter by the displacement of figurative elements from their hitherto undisputed core where architectural substance reigned, to the periphery where nonarchitectural elements abound. Besides the incorporation of foreign icons as figurative devices (technology, vernacular languages, etc.), another primal element of abstract character comes to replace the authority of history in its role of persuading the generating element of design, aided by an all too rational procedure, function will logically produce buildings so self-evident that their truth will be incontestable.

A possible explanation from the point of view of verisimilitude as to why Modern Architecture began to be attacked in the postwar period and when the first deviations appeared will be discussed later. What we need to note here is that in the decade of the fifties, in Europe as well as in America, we witnessed the reappearance of the traditional idea of verisimilitude, a return to the logic of persuasion based on an elaboration of what is commonly 'believable.' The two most clear, substantial, solid and influential figurative changes occurred in Italy and England during this decade. In the former, corresponding to the aesthetic movement in literature and movies of 'neo-realism,' the problem of historical continuity is posed, the incorporation of contextual mimesis and popular motives is effected, and the turning to 'common knowledge' as a resource for architectural persuasion becomes active. Architecture does not become 'more' involved with representation, since it always is, but the 'real' represented and the versimilitude sought after are easier and more concrete. The 'reality' predicated by Rogers' *Torre Velasca* and by Gardella's house in the Zattere (Figures 6,7), although derived from very different lines of thought, are conscious efforts to install architecture with a figurative program that is more 'realist' and more intelligible as a collective discourse.

In England, a similar concern with a more 'believable' architecture took place, and by this we imply more specifically the search for believability and a figurative rhetoric where the image represented is more clearly understood. When praising Roehampton (Figure 8), Pevsner talks about 'roofs of gentle pitch, . . . winding streets, architecture at ease' and then chastises Leslie Martin, responsible for the last part of the project, because in his design 'there is less variety in the architecture and more *unitè* as it were, and this instinctive refusal to compromise with sentimentality has created a conflict . . .'[7] In its concern for effectiveness a



technique is invented, spelled out and prescribed through the pages of the *Architectural Review*: Townscape, which makes even more explicit the mechanisms of verisimilitude (Figure 9).

In this technique of 'do' and 'don't' we are confronted with an almost paradigmatic prescription whose immediate aim is a verisimilitude based on common knowledge and which resolves itself exclusively at the most pure level of architectural representation: drawing (Figures 10, 11). Presented by De Wolfe in a memorable piece in 1949, Townscape is the alternative to the French tradition of thinking (Le Corbusier) and to orthodox Romanticism (Frank Lloyd Wright); its main ingredient is character ('significant differentiation'), its main political aim a 'democracy of things,' its sensibility an 'understanding of differences,' and its artistic label 'superrealism.' And as if preannouncing the 'do what you feel' techniques of the 60s in this country, De Wolfe outlines the main characteristics of that visual philosophy[8] as

> *. . . a dislike which amounts to an inability to see wholes or principles and an incapacity for handling theory; but on the other hand a passionate preoccupation with independent details, parts, or persons, an urge to help them fulfill themselves, achieve their own freedom; and thus, by mutual differentiation, achieve a higher organization.*[9]

He then goes on to propose 'precedent' as the sole base for civic design, and to use as a model to be followed the 'greatest contribution (of England) to civil organization: the common law.'[10]

In this period we witness, in both cases, a complete change in the sources of the real of architecture, history, and 'city as is,' and the reappearance of a verisimilitude based on a direct appeal to common knowledge and a rejection of a programmatic, promising but yet non-existent real.

I would like to suggest that if the term 'Post-Modernism' has any value (and I am not sure that it has), its little history would begin with that decade of profound changes in architecture which can be detected through these figurative shifts. At the same time, we should note that the intentions and manifest theories of all this architecture continued to establish their ties with Modern Architecture, and that that variety of polemics depended on *zeitgeist* arguments to justify those changes. The fact remains incontestable that a break of important consequences occurred at the figurative level, and understanding this break is essential in assessing the present moment.

Besides the reintroduction of history and the picturesque as figurative devices, which could only have been momentary, a more substantial alteration in architectural thought had occurred. And if the figurative moves were all too clear and noticeable for critics and designers to generate an unusual and animated debate at the time, the most profound ideological shifts that took place seem to have passed unnoticed. Neither Banham nor Rogers (the two most conspicuous and interesting critics who engaged in a heated polemic about 'neo-liberty' through the pages of *Architectural Review* and *Casabella*) seemed to be able to avoid the trap of the *zeitgeist* argument. In attacking the *torinese* and *milanese* architecture of the fifties, Banham used the argument that

> *. . . the only conceivable justification for reviving anything in the arts is that the reviver finds himself culturally in a position analogous to that of the time he seeks to revive.*[11]



10, 11
'Don't' and 'do' sketches for the rehabilitation of the English Canals, Gordon Cullen, 1949

This argument allowed him to discard neo-liberty for not being in accordance with

> *. . . the domestic revolution that began with electric cookers, vacuum cleaners, the telephone, the gramophone and all those other mechanized aides to gracious living that are still invading the home, and have permanently altered the nature of domestic life and the meaning of domestic architecture.*[12]

In responding to the 'caretaker of frigidaires,' Rogers attempted a defense of Banham's victims, and he saw in the new figurative attempts of the Italian scene of the day, the true interpretation of Modern Architecture ideals, as a

> *. . . continuous revolution, that is to say, as the continuous development of the principles of adhering to the changing content of life.*[13]

But the 'changing content of life' is almost a truism (and indeed this argument could also, and paradoxically, very well be the one to substantiate the 'accordance with, the electric cookers, etc.' and which the 'caretaker of frigidaires' needs), and it offers help neither in seeing the beginning of a shift concerning the kind of reality that architecture will engage in nor in detecting the profound change in our state of mind that such a shift will produce, a state of mind which will flourish unchecked into our present time: the persistent, relentless and sometimes paralyzing 'self-consciousness' to which architecture has turned. It is our perspective of twenty years that allows us to see the vicious circle in which such polemics engage, still too rooted in that all-pervasive, undefinable and always attractive idea of the 'spirit of the age.'

A simple look at what happened with the English 'townscape' and with the Italian 'neo-liberty' in the fifties reveals to us the sources of this departure from Modern Architecture: there was a problem between the figurative program and the social aims of Modern Architecture, a problem that in the history of art, politics, and in general, of all ideological practices, invariably produces a transformation of the language in question (be it words, paintings or buildings). We are beginning to see that such changes inevitably resort to specific rhetorical devices in their search for correction and persuasion. I propose that we understand such rhetorical changes as a search for a new strategy of verisimilitude, which in this particular case implied that in order to make architecture believable, the 'effect of reality' had to be based on the known. This choice seems quite simple today: if the abstract, hermetic, figurative propositions of Modern Architecture fail to move and transform man, or, more prosaically, just do not seem to engage the beholder in its arcane discourse, and if those propostions rely heavily on the introduction into architectural language of elements foreign to it, the only apparent possibility is to close that door, after which one is left inside with the only

[8] T de Wolfe is a pseudonym of a well known architectural critic of the times.

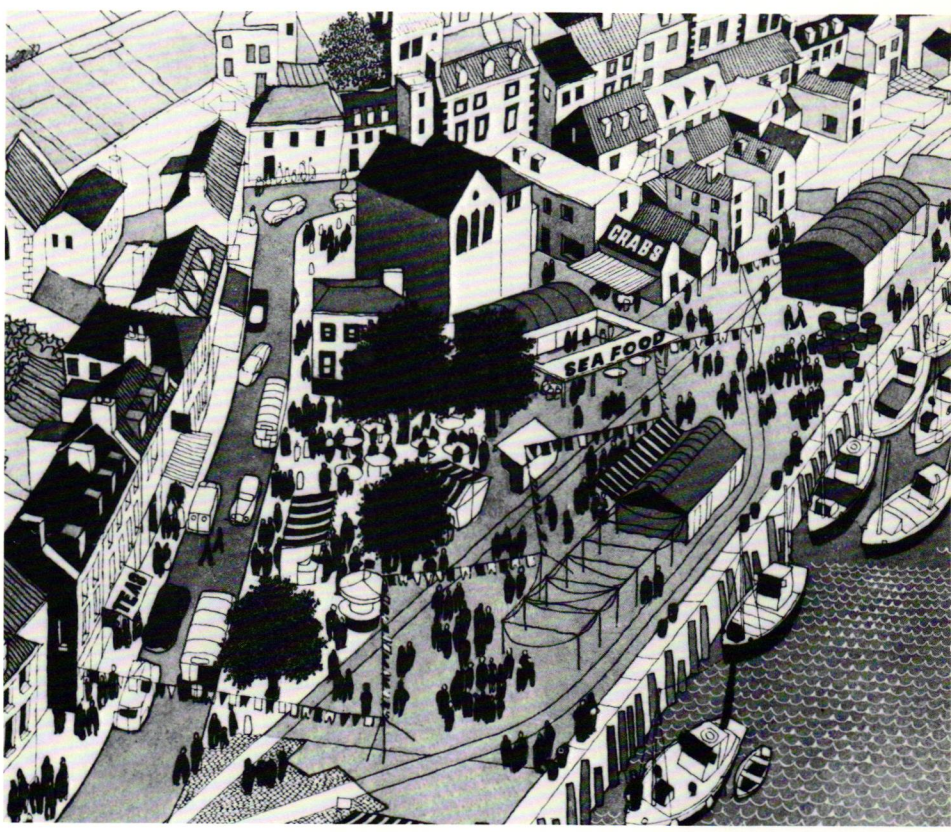
[9] T de Wolfe, 'Townscape: Plea for an English Architecture founded on the true rock of Sir Uvedale Price,' *Architectural Review*, (December 1949), p 362

[10] T de Wolfe: *op cit*, p 362

[11] Reyner Banham, 'Neoliberty; the Italian retreat from Modern Architecture', *Architectural Review*, (April 1959), p 235

[12] Reyner Banham, *op cit*, p 235

[13] Ernesto Rogers, 'The evolution of Architecture. An Answer to the caretaker of frigidaires,' *Casabella*, (June 1959)



9 Illustration from *Townscape*, Gordon Cullen, 1961



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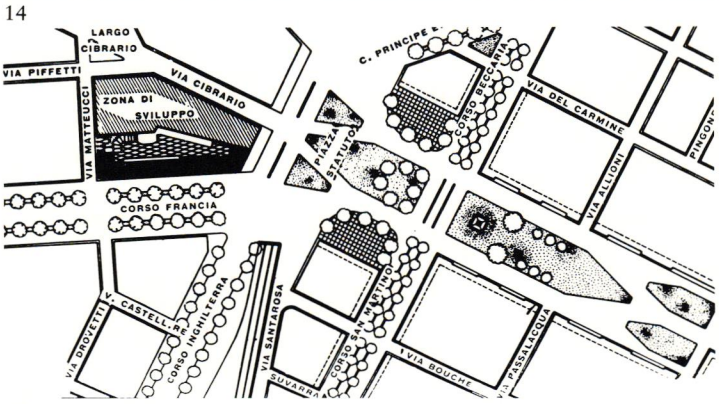

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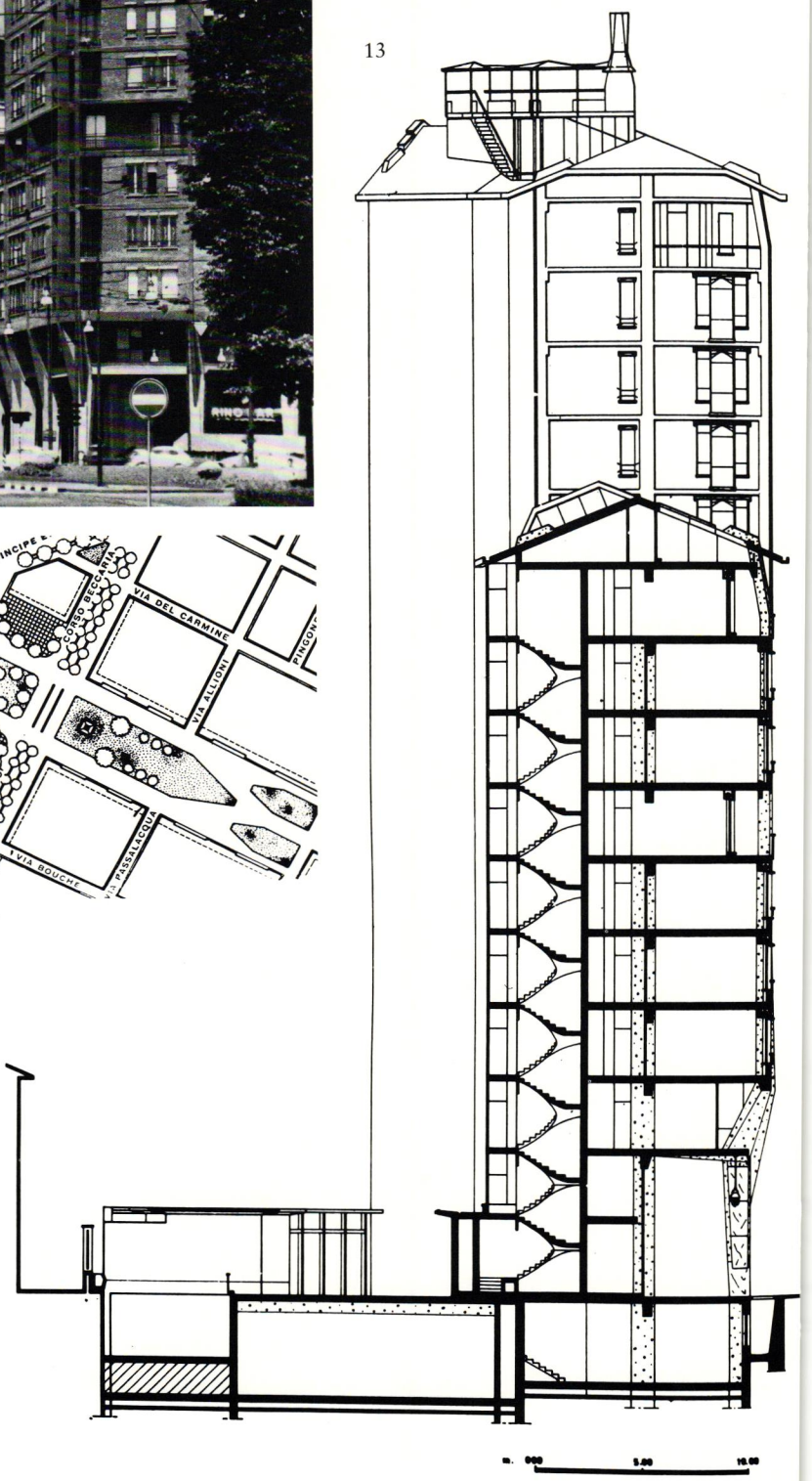


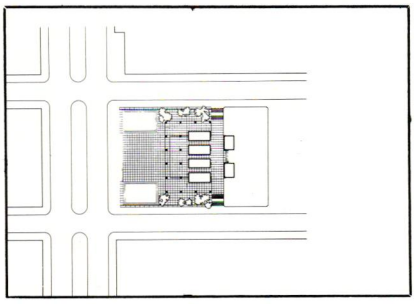
12, 13, 14
Office and Apartment Building, Turin, L B Belgiojoso, E Peresutti, and E N Rogers, 1959

15 Seagram Building, New York City, Mies van der Rohe and Philip Johnson, 1954-58

16 University of Baghdad, The Architects Collaborative, Inc, 1959

17 Administrative Building, Moscow, M Posokhin, 1949-50

15





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17

[14]Colin Rowe, 'Neo-Classicism and Modern Architecture', in *The Mathematics of the Ideal Villa and other essays*, (The MIT Press, 1976), p 131

[15]The precision, boundaries and general appropriateness of labels such as 'populism' and 'neo-rationalism' can indeed be argued. Yet, they seem to have been too widely accepted and established by the press and readers for us to attempt such a discussion, and, within the scope of the paper, they serve clearly to identify two important tendencies in the contemporary architectural scene. As we will see later, they also serve comfortably as labels for the political and social 'realities' that those tendencies attempt to represent through architecture.

[16]*Tendenza*: Italian, literally 'trend' (not in the pejorative sense). A term accepted and much preferred by most of the protagonists of the also called 'neo-rationalism' in Italy. See Massimo Scolari 'Avan-guardia e Nuova Architetture' in *Architettura razionale*, XV Triennale di Milano. Sezione Internazzionale di Architettura, Franco Angeli, Editor, (Milano, 1973)

pertinent elements: namely architectural elements whose proof and verification in practice can only be derived from history. But once this is said, the choices are still not self-evident. That it seems obviously logical and consistent that England resorted to the Picturesque and Italy to a more intellectual and abstract interpretation of its urban traditions can partially explain these choices (Figures 12-14). But the phenomena is quite generalized and pervasive; besides our two beleaguered examples, in America, Mies turned to symmetry (Figure 15), Gropius to 'localisms' of dubious taste (Figure 16), the Soviet Union (after successfully crushing the *avant-garde* of the twenties) turned unashamedly to classicism (Figure 17), and in most places where Modern Architecture had established a foothold, incipient 'vernacular' movements appeared.

Are we then to interpret the Modern Movement as a parenthesis in the history of architecture, as many present critics argue, with the aspiration of seeing a continuity with the various traditions, be they classic, local, vernacular, etc? I simply believe we cannot. The figurative shift, the rhetorical operations involved, the 'new' reality represented, and the attempt to reinstate an orthodox verisimilitude are not the innocent result of a restored 'continuity.' Indeed, they are the result, as Colin Rowe says, of 'the lapse into consciousness' and 'the end of innocence.'[14] In my view, this indicates a profound ideological mutation that is indeed new in the history of architecture. For the first time the architect chooses *'history' as a whole*, as an alternative. History, as the repository of forms has been separated from the continuum of time by that rebel, the Modern Movement, and as such it affords the designer a distance that never before existed. Before Modern Architecture, the use of history was not a problem to be discussed, it was the way architecture operated, and the only possible quarrels might have been about 'what history' to choose; but its authority was not discussed. History had never been consciously 'used,' but naturally 'assumed.' That detachment has been produced by Modern Architecture, and things will never be the same. Before it, rhetorical operations were performed on the classical language of architecture, which was based on precedent, and on the classical or historical codes. After it, *'history' becomes a rhetorical operation per se*. All of this has given architecture a consciousness of itself and of its cultural origins that did not exist before. And if such consciousness has the positive effect of producing a criticism that results in the clear identification of architecture as a social discourse and of the mechanisms of communication and meaning that architecture must know in order to engage in such dialogue, it might also serve to divest architecture of any ideal when that consciousness and detachment (and the knowledge they produce) result in cynical manipulation to assure consumption of architectural signs.

And it is among these auguries and perils that this new verisimilitude of 'history' begins its course of many strategies and effects, of which the most conspicuous tendencies of today are its inheritors.

It would be too adventurous to attempt an exhaustive classification of these tendencies, but within the limits of our subject it is acceptable to address our problem to two lines of thought and production: on the one hand, at architecture which corresponds loosely to the label of 'populist,' and on the other, the more European-based, so-called 'neo-rationalists.'[15] The choice is not innocent. Both serve the argument because, paradoxically as it might seem, both share some positive attitudes and features with respect to 'representation;' both can be characterized by the use of 'history;' both are 'realist' in the sense of attempting to 'represent' consciously such history with figurative devices; and for both the problem of the verisimilitude of architecture is almost obsessive. But this is where the similarities end.

For the neo-rationalist, represented by the Italian *tendenza*[16] and by Aldo Rossi as their foremost exponent, the

[17]Massimo Scolari, *op cit*, p 185

[18]Massimo Scolari, *op cit*, p 158-159

[19]Massimo Scolari, *op cit*, p 170

[20]Venturi, Scott Brown, Izenour, *Learning from Las Vegas*, (The MIT Press, 1970), p 81

recovery of history is essential. But it is viewed not as a repository of styles or as a possibility of order and intelligibility. Architecture is thus understood as discipline, in the quasi-academic sense of the word. (And indeed the *tendenza's* program includes the production of a treatise of architectural composition[17].) As Scolari points out, a distinctive feature of the *tendenza* is that by acting as a critique of the regressive utopias of the immediate past (Archigram, Superstudio, Archizoom, etc.), this architecture is tautological in the sense that it closes in upon itself and declares its autonomy.[18] It does not deny the knowledge of politics and economics that it sees as necessary to an understanding of the place of architecture and its determinants, but it denies the possibilities of translating this information into architectural form. For these reasons architectural autonomy should be understood as a disciplinary autonomy, that is to say, as a specific and independent body of knowledge, theories, and techniques, and not as an 'independent' social practice detached from and unrelated to all other elements that comprise the socio-political reality at a given moment, as many critics have misinterpreted this term to imply.

This particular relation to history and to the idea of discipline allows the *tendenza* to conceive of the idea of 'progress' as 'clarification of the discipline' instead of seeing it as 'change.'[19] Thus, logically, an architecture so established and defined implies the production of knowledge about itself. And if the rapidity with which an architectural proposition spreads is a measure of its clarity, one should conclude that the precision of Rossi's forms and the clarity of his principles are successful. But it might also be that his precision and clarity can be easily and quickly reduced to formulas and stencils, which seems also to be the case.

A different case of success seems to characterize the figurative attempt of the other line, the 'populist,' which resorts to a type of 'realism' in which the idea and use of 'history' acquire a unique dimension. History here is understood in its widest sense, certainly not as the 'history' of a discipline, but as the sum total of culture's products, a view allowing for a permissiveness in which any idea of discipline disappears under the exuberant stimuli that the environment as a whole provides. The fatality of the 'world as is,' as a fact, is turned into its virtue, in the indisputable and inevitable empirical evidence to be followed rather than to be corrected. Its proof is not the history of architecture, but the 'history' of life and things: hence, there could not be anything more alien to this thought than the notion of a disciplinary autonomy. Its *modus operandi* does not arise from the internal consistency of an architectural language and its possible operations, but from the dynamics of the consumption of symbols. To leave no doubts, Venturi asserts this fact by using as an example one of the most perishable products of our culture, one which also becomes a source of inspiration for him: '. . . The tempo of our economy encourages that changeable and disposable environmental decoration known as advertising art.'[20] Its success finally seems to be guaranteed by the extreme facility with which the combination of both an unlimited resource of symbols and the disregard for a precise discipline for their incorporation into buildings can be adopted.

It appears, then, that we are indeed confronted with two types of 'realism.' The verisimilitude of the first attempt is to be derived logically and 'naturally' from the internal consistency of architecture as 'construction' (in Rossi's usage of the word), and based on a required, specific and limited knowledge on one hand, and on founding its 'truth' and 'reality' on the experience of the city by the beholder on the other. The verisimilitude of the second type is to be derived from the already 'proven' and 'believable' nature that the objects of consumption have in the market. And as a consequence, the neo-rationalists aim at a verisimilitude based not on the contingencies of history but on society's memory of it, in the perdurable—an 'atemporal' history as it were, where architectural facts acquire their value as a contribution to

[21]Venturi, Scott Brown, Izenour, *op cit*, p 85

[22]In this sense (and paradoxically), the work of Venturi, Moore and their followers seems to be more in the line of Modern Architecture, by repeating the Corbusian operation of opening architectural language to external codes, although we must grant that all this new openness is done with a certain degree of perversity or irony that is not found in Modern Architecture.

[23]Tzvetan Todorov, Introduction to 'LeVraisembleable', in *Communications* 11, (Editions du Seuil, 1968)

[24]It is not casual that a rhetoric of 'common knowledge' as a serious technique of structuring discourse has been recovered first in our era by the art of advertisement. It is not coincidence that designers such as Venturi, Scott Brown, Moore, etc, are so fond of advertisement and city signs. It is important to remark however, that architecture, (and particularly the work of all the protagonists of these tendencies), bring a complex practice in which building, icons and writings are involved, the written speculations that accompany the figurative proposals belong to Todorov's most elaborate case, (see note 23), in which the product belongs to a given category of verisimilitude but explantions of it attempt to present it as a truthful representation of reality.

[25]For a discussion of the term and a systematic classification, see: Oswald Ducrot and Tzvetan Todorov *Dictionaire Encyclopedique des sciences du Langage* (Editions du Seuil, Paris, 1972), Entry 'Genres Litteraires'.

the 'construction' of the city and culture: the Gothic cathedral, the Renaissance palazzo, the Neo-Classic library or prison, and the Modern *seidlungen*, from this perspective, have not 'time' but 'presence' and are valid only for their consistency with both their articulation with the urban scene they produce, transform, and make intelligible, and with their own internal logic. On the contrary, the populists' verisimilitude is born out of the value of contingency: 'this, here and now' appears to be its driving force, and Venturi is explicit about it:

> *The short run is what our clients have largely retained us architects for. Architectural theories of the short-run tend toward the idealization and generalization of expendiency.*[21]

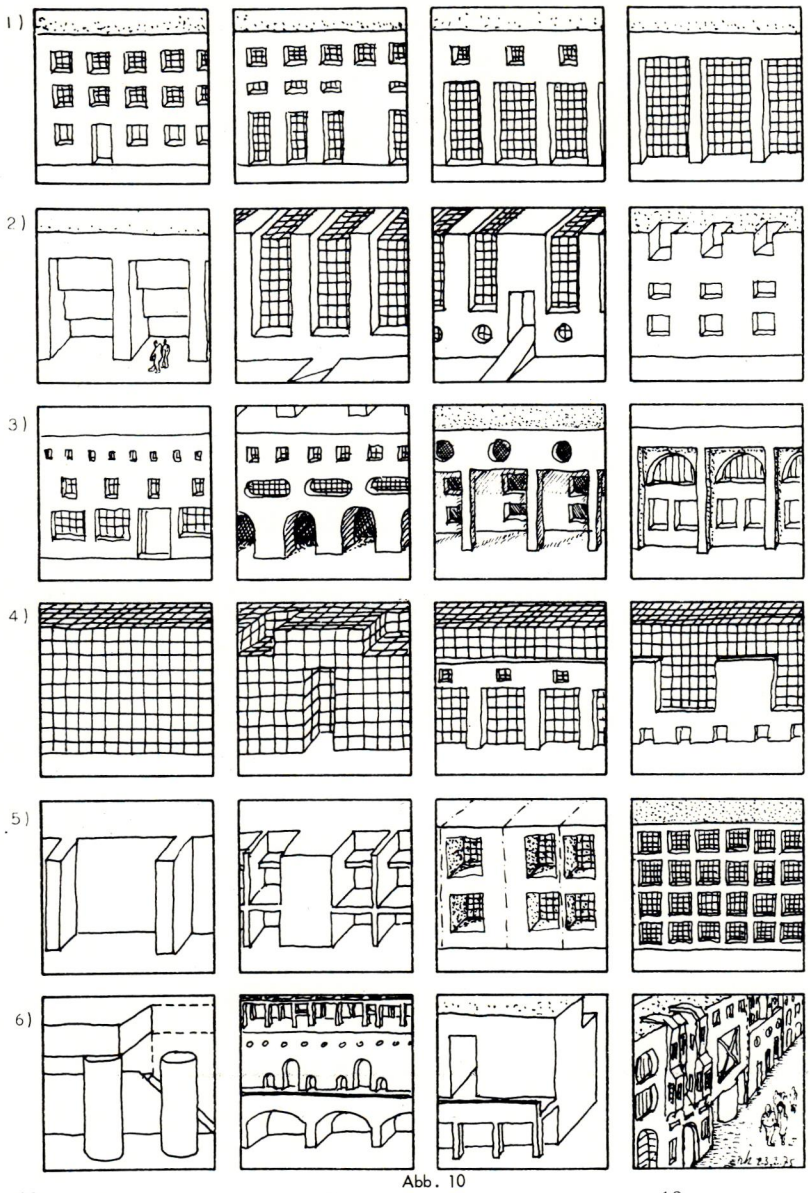
This idea of a 'short run' architecture, the 'tempo' of the American environment, the 'architecture of expediency,' reveals a very specific and original perception of the city, and a completely different focus for the sources of representation, realism and verisimilitude.[22]

It may appear at first sight that the sources of these diverse kinds of verisimilitude are in fact quite similar, since both are based in some way on what the city provides, and their differences might be attributable to the unavoidable differences between European and American cities. But the differences go beyond the readily available sources of precedents into more substantive matters, and reveal two strongly different ideological and cultural aspirations. In our case, they clearly correspond to some specific categories of verisimilitude that have been established in art and literary criticism.[23] On the one hand, there is the idea of verisimilitudes as it still comes from Plato and Aristotle: the relations between the text or the figurative work with other, more diffuse and general 'text,' which is called 'public opinion' and 'common sense' (*doxa*). Here the verisimilitude, the effect of reality, is not based on truth or fact but rather on what the public believes to be 'truth' regardless of its qualifications. It is common sense (*doxa*), common law, common knowledge. As defined by Aristotle, it deals with the techniques, in the forensic discourse, that appeal to the audience in order to convince and which are based on the sentiments, emotions and 'knowledge' of the audidence.[24] On the other hand, there is a level of 'verisimilitude' strategy where the effect of reality is more relative, since within it there is multiplicity of subcases; its multiplicity is the result of a relationship established not with public opinion, but rather with the rules of the 'genre' in question. Thus an epic, a tragedy, a comedy, a 'conversation piece,' 'still life,' etc., conform to their own reality if the rules of the genre are respected. As such this is a much more modern discovery, and its 'effect' is that of engaging an audience or a beholder in the reality of the work, and it requires only—but importantly—that the rules of the genre are shared and that the work be consistent with them in its exposition.[25]

The applicability to our subject seems evident and immediate: in the works of the neo-rationalists we see that their rhetorical efforts are geared toward the establishment of a versimilitude based on the purity and congruence of the 'genre.' This explains the notion of autonomy and the search for the 'discipline,' although the latter is probably reduced to the selection of genre. The populist choice, all too obvious, is linked to the Aristotelian notion of 'common knowledge,' 'public opinion,' etc., that what 'people' think is true.

In short, I believe that it is possible to establish from a critical, theoretical point of view a fundamental difference in relation to the types of architecture produced today: on the one hand, there are architectures that concern themselves exclusively with the problem of the authenticity and logic of the 'genre,' and on the other, architectures that concern themselves with the problem of 'public opinion.' Both will necessarily produce divergent discourses because their 'reals' are diverse. But, both are consciously engaged with one or another idea of verisimilitude.

18-20
Typological and Morphological classifications, Robert Krier, 1975



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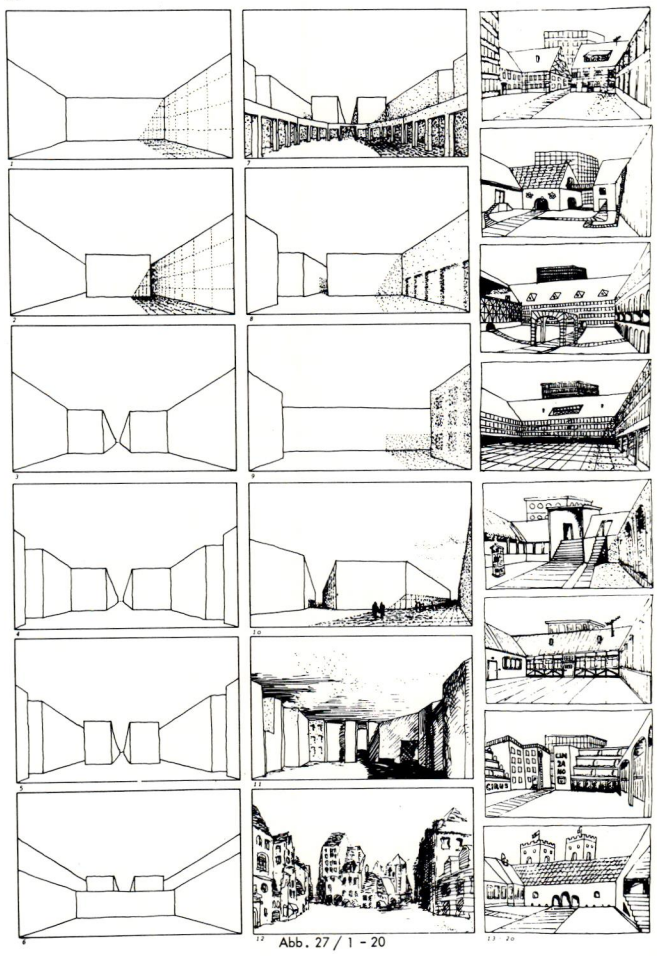

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And it is in relation to these two possible approaches to the problem of representation and verisimilitude (namely the 'genre' and 'common knowledge') in architecture that it is possible to clarify the two different uses that these approaches make of a concept of long and complex tradition in the history of architecture: both tendencies reflect in their thinking and sources a concern for the *concept of type* and that of *architectural typology*. It is not an over-generalization to say today the theoretical concept of typology pervades, consciously or unconsciously, almost all architectural thought, and that the variety of interpretations and uses make it necessary to establish clearly these differences and nuances.

The type relates to verisimilitude because the idea of 'type' implies, first of all, a minimum level of intelligibility for forms based on the architect's and beholders' experience, which in turn will make architecture 'believable.' Almost all current tendencies base their critique of Modern Architecture on some sort of typological consciousness, which implies a definition of the real in some sort of typological manner. For the Italian *tendenza* it implies the reintroduction of history and an important acknowledgement that in design it is not possible to begin from zero since that would imply an 'isolation from reality.'[26] The idea of type also serves to reintroduce critically the idea of 'monument' from the perspective of 'realism.' Scolari says:

> *the image of the monument is, perhaps, what everybody can grasp more easily, and it is because of this that we will use its realism as an indication of simplicity.*[27]

For them the 'monumentalist' choice implies a search for the perfection of the type which is explicitly equated with 'classicism.'[28] The notion of type (together with its companion, urban morphology) is used as a source of realism by the Krier brothers, who more explicitly attack the figurative program of Modern Architecture as abstract and unintelligible and as the cause of the destruction of urban centers (Figures 18-20). The base for 'verisimilitude' is even more clearly stated in Ungers' 'typological' method, which is not so much a search of architectural 'mimesis' with past architectures or contexts but rather a search to 'represent' metaphorically the *process* by which the city is built. Once the types are established (a catalogue of suitable types for the conditions), a simple combination, which indeed could be random, assures the 'production of the city' with a resulting image that reproduces the construction of the city itself (Figures 21,22). In all cases, verisimilitude is understood as discipline and in accordance with the laws of the 'genre,' be it the city, a context, etc. In all these cases the idea of type is recognized as the 'foundation of architecture.' When talking about the *tendenza* Scolari defines a typological method not as a historic method of observation, classification, and comparison, but rather as the very possibility of operation.[29] For them, both concepts of type and typology have their roots in the Englightenment, and the constant references to Quatremere de Quincy and to the work of G C Argan (as the one who retrieved it in the fifties) establish the theoretical parameters of its definition and understanding.[30] As is already well known, Quatremere de Quincy's argument is based on the differences between model and type.[31] Type becomes an abstraction, a principle that begins as a starting point. This then explains the possibility of transformation and change, and the structural interpretation of type as 'genre'.

In the theoretical and methodological discourse of the populists, the concept of type is apparently not so explicitly used, but most of their preferred terminology can easily be read in terms of the traditional discussion of type and model, type and character, and type and symbol, as will be shown later. Venturi's assertion that

> *basic to the argument for the decorated shed is the assumption that symbolism is essential in architecture and that the model from a previous time or from the existing city is part*

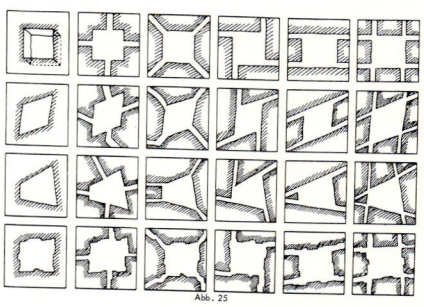
[26]Massimo Scolari, *op cit*, p 155

[27]Massimo Scolari, *op cit*, p 185. *'L'imagine del monumento forse quella che tutti piu facilmente rienscono a cogliere, e proprio per questo suo realismo lo useremo qui como indicazione di semplicita'* (translated by the author in the text).

[28]Massimo Scolari, *op cit*, p 185

[29]Massimo Scolari, *op cit*, p 182

[30]Quatremere de Quincy defines 'type' in his contributions to the *Encyclopedie Methodique, Architecture*, volume 3, part II, (Paris, 1825), Giulio Carlo Argan *Progetto e Destino*, 'Sull Concetto de Tipologia Architettonica,' Il Saggiatore de Alberto Mondadore Editore, (Milano, 1965). See also Giulio Carlo Argan 'On the typology of architecture,' *Architectural Design*, (December 1963).



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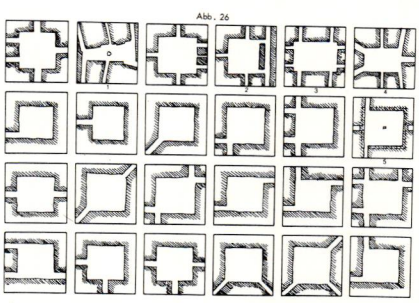

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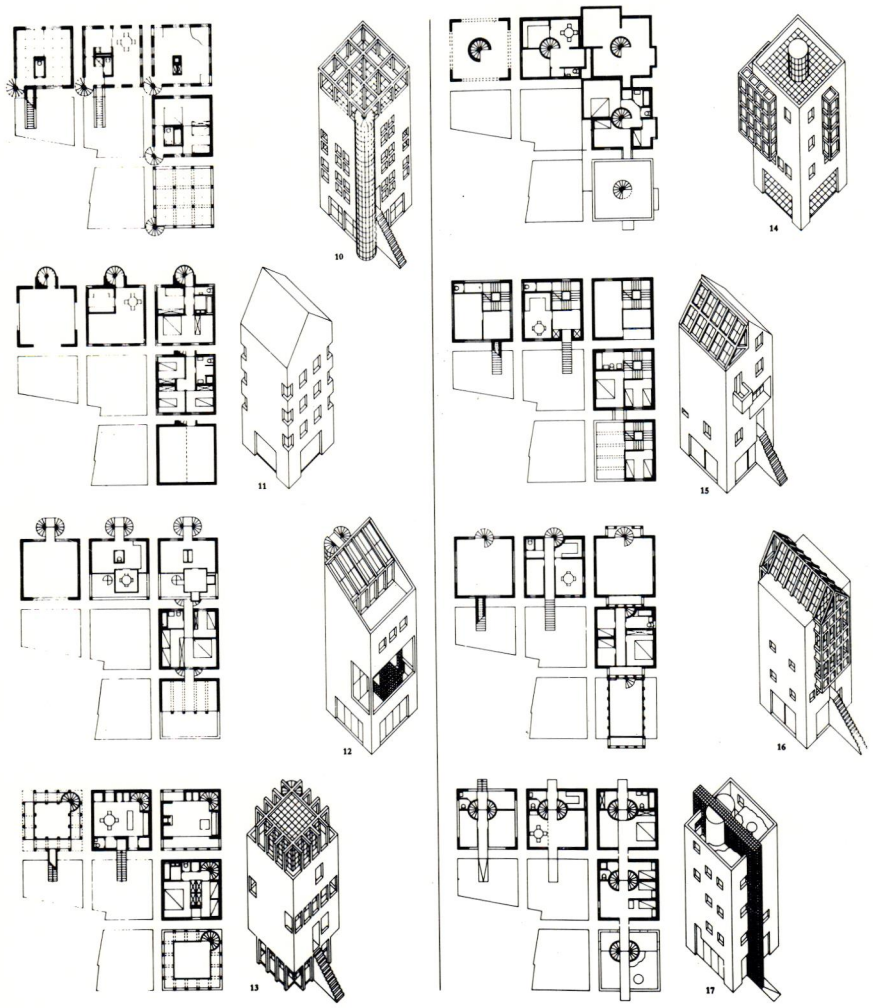


21, 22
A vocabulary: Thirteen alternatives for the three-storey single block with constant base, Oswald Mathais Ungers, Hans Killhof and Thomas Will, 1977

23 Fountain for the Piazza d'Italia New Orleans, Charles Moore, 1975

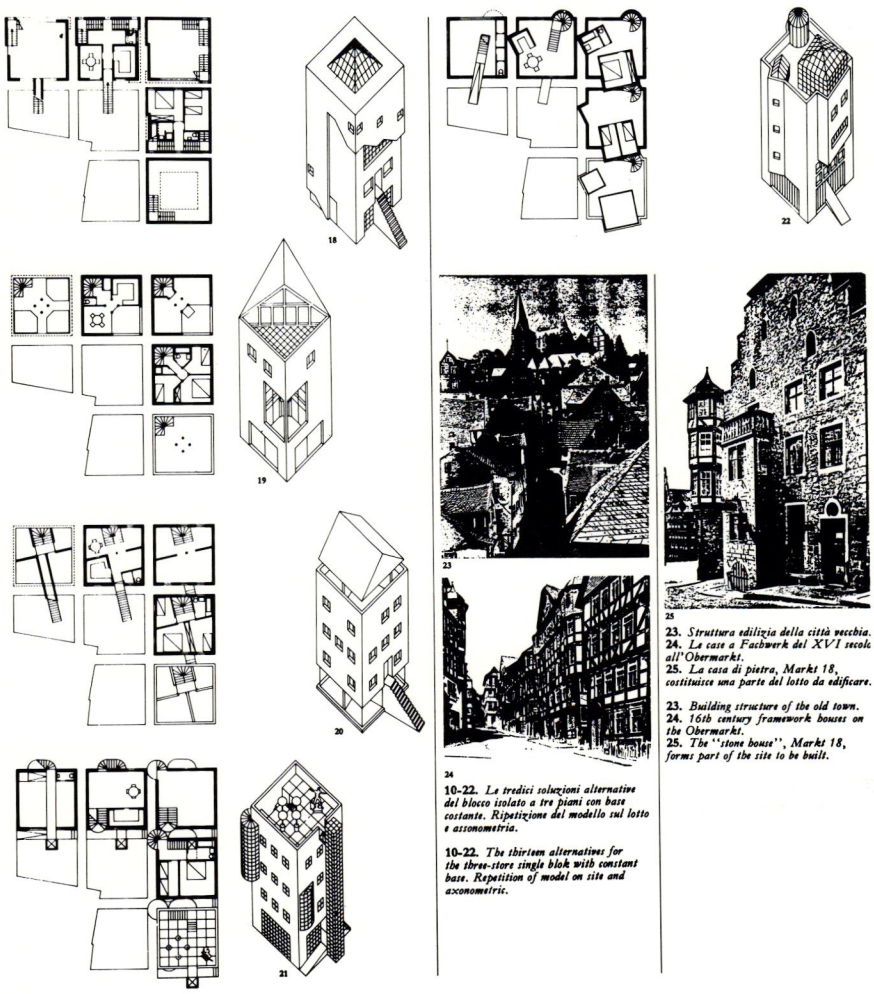
24 Brandt-Johnson House, Vail, Colorado, Venturi and Rauch, 1977

25 Giorgio de Chirico, *The Soothsayer's Recompense*, 1913, Philadelphia Museum of Art, The Louise and Walter Arensberg Collection

22



26 Andy Warhol, *Four Campbell Soup Cans*, 1962, Mr and Mrs Leo Castelli Collection

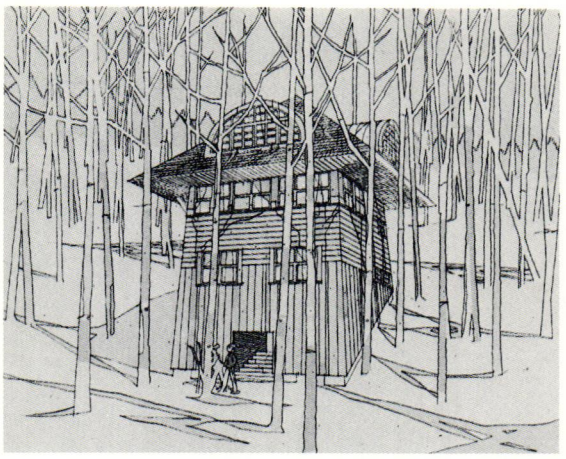


10-22. *Le tredici soluzioni alternative del blocco isolato a tre piani con base costante. Ripetizione del modello sul lotto e assonometria.*

10-22. *The thirteen alternatives for the three-store single blok with constant base. Repetition of model on site and axonometric.*

23. *Struttura edilizia della città vecchia.*
24. *La case a Fachwerk del XVI secolo all'Obermarkt.*
25. *La casa di pietra, Markt 18, costituisce una parte del lotto da edificare.*

23. *Building structure of the old town.*
24. *16th century framework houses on the Obermarkt.*
25. *The "stone house", Markt 18, forms part of the site to be built.*



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of the source material, and the replication of elements is part of the design method of this architecture; that is, architecture that depends on association in the perception of it depends on association in the creation of it[32]

is quintessentially typological, and in the same text, it is suggestive that Venturi makes extensive use of Colquhoun's 'Typology and Design Method' in his discussion of association and symbolism in architecture.[33] It is suggestive because the idea of type in this Anglo-Saxon interpretation does not correspond with that of the tradition of Enlightenment. Both Colquhoun's article and the use that Venturi makes of it point out clearly the other distinct direction or focus the issue of typology has received and which directly reflects a concern also with the problem of realism and verisimilitude. Here we have a purely iconographic interpretation and use of the idea of type. From this perspective, type is far from being an abstraction or a rational principle. Rather, it is the cultural icon that appears and circulates in society that is made identifiable, and becomes, in turn, the 'represented symbol' (Figures 23,24).

The argument on behalf of this notion of type could be structurally similar to that of the neo-rationalist, since both base an assurance of future success on the past success of the type, but their foci are diametrically opposite. For the former it is a principle; for the latter, an icon. And their differences could well be illustrated by the two types of aesthetic 'realism' that illustrate their discussion. For Rossi and the *tendenza* the most evocative images are those of De Chirico's metaphysical realities, and for Venturi it is Andy Warhol's pop-art realism (Figures 25,26).

For the first, the type represents the rational, 'universal,' non-individual, classical form, and for the other the concrete, idiosyncratic and temporal icon. For the *tendenza* the type is the instrument to decodify, distill or abstract a principle that then becomes the foundation of a realism. The effect of its verisimilitude is rooted in the collective memory that the principle

[31]Quatremere de Quincy, *op cit*. See English translation in 'Type', *Oppositions* 8, Spring 1977.

[32]Venturi, Scott Brown, Izenour, *op cit*, p 88

[33]Alan Colquhoun, 'Typology and Design Method', published first in *Arena*, June 1967, and then in *Perspecta* 12, 1969, and in George Baird and Charles Jencks, editors *Meaning in Architecture*, George Braziller, (New York, 1970).

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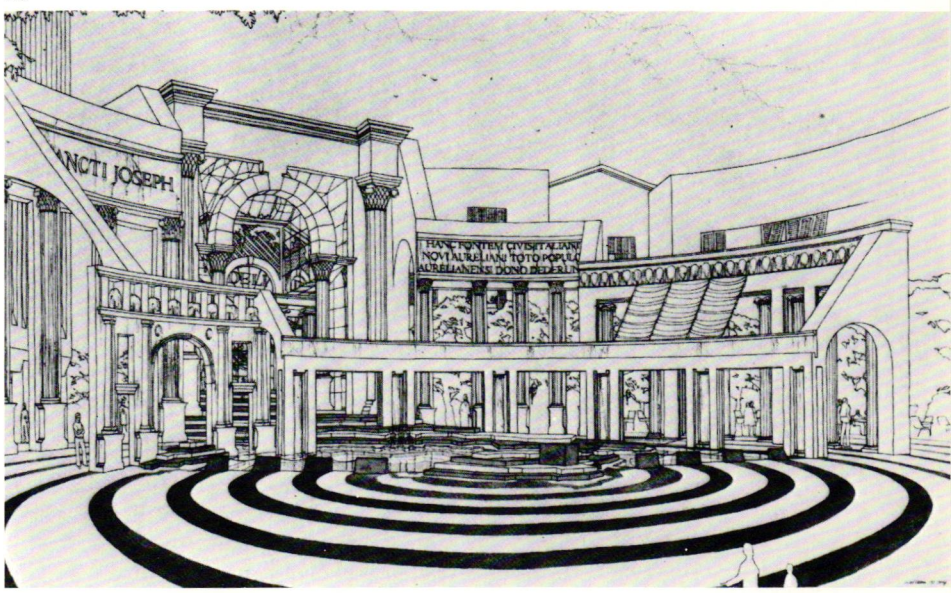

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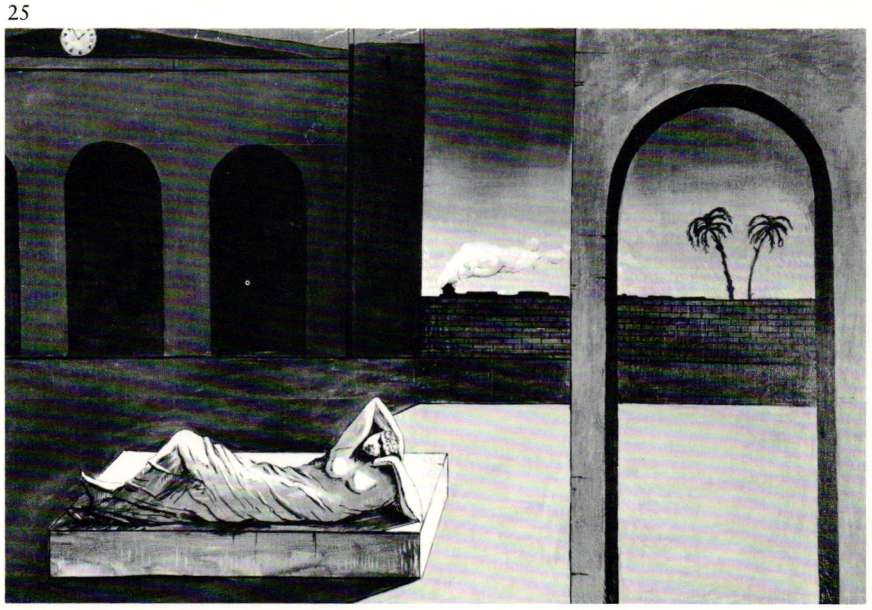
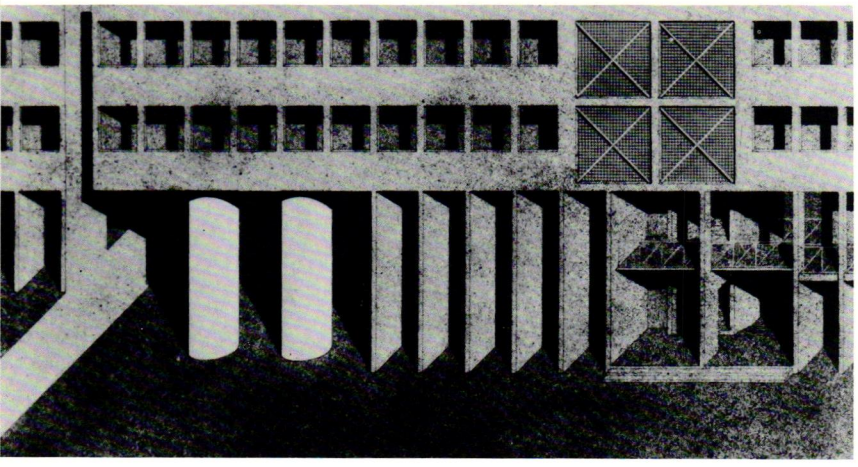




27, 28
Housing Unit at Gallaratese, Milan, Aldo Rossi, 1970
27 Façade

represented would evoke. For the populist the realism of its products is achieved by an almost literal and mimetic representation of a form, the product of the contingencies of a particular environmental condition, and the effect of its verisimilitude is an almost automatic consequence. As with most cases in the history of architecture in which one can synthesize the work of an architect by looking closely at the handling of a single element, we might attempt a summation of what has been said so far by comparing the figurative strategies that some of the foremost exponents of these tendencies follow in the design of that perennial condenser of architectural thought and theory: the column. In Rossi's case, the four round columns of the Gallaratese (Figures 27,28) make explicit the process of abstraction of a typical element and its further monumentalization. Its attributes are here represented as an almost platonic 'idea' of a column, which includes both its intrinsic essences and its role in the construction of the architecture. The appearance of the four columns in the continuum of the sidewalk arcades and their particular configuration and placement in the building didactically explain the richness and complexity of the notion of type in this tradition. On one level these columns are exposed as architectural elements in themselves; further, they are subordinated to an architectural type of a larger order (*aedicula*), which is itself presented in its pure state; finally, the columns acquire another layer of significance as they become the 'event,' or focus of an even larger type, the arcaded block. The verisimilitude of all this systematic and 'disciplined' layering of types comes purely from their autonomous tautological assertion (a column, is a column, is a column . . .) and from the impeccable manner in which the rules of a particular urban 'genre' are effected.

The column in Venturi's addition to the Oberlin College Art Museum (Figure 29) depicts paradigmatically the other view. A sense of urgency and immediacy pervades the object in a disconcerting manner, as if it wishes not to transcend its ephemeral quality. A column, in this case, is an Ionic column, with all the implications that such a 'statement' has in a 'post-modern' era. Here the architect's endeavor is not engaged in the exposition of a logical operation or of a principle; rather, the operation of iconic replica dissipates any possibility of typological abstraction, bringing the object closer to the idea of model. Whereas the Gallaratese's columns are a necessity, once the rules of the genre are accepted, the wooden ionic column of Oberlin is purely contingent and whimisical. But what further differentiates their respective uses of a similar element is the specific manner in which both architects enact through rhetorical operations the effect of 'estrangement.' In both cases the real has been distorted, and distance exists between it and the objects of representation, for neither Venturi's nor Rossi's columns are, in the end, typical. The choice of material, the column's specific location in the building, its framing, and its distortion of proportions bring Venturi close to the artistic operations of pop-art, specifically the art of Oldenburg and Warhol (and probably precariously far from architecture and into the realm of a parody of the discipline), with the collateral effects of irony and joke. Rossi, by divesting the columns of any possible immediate connotation, and by operating a change in proportions, leans more towards the type of estrangement from the real produced by surrealist operations and metaphysical art, with their oneiric effects of remoteness and bewilderment. By effecting such estrangement, both operate within the common traits of contemporary and modern sensibility: self-consciousness, heresy, and paradox.

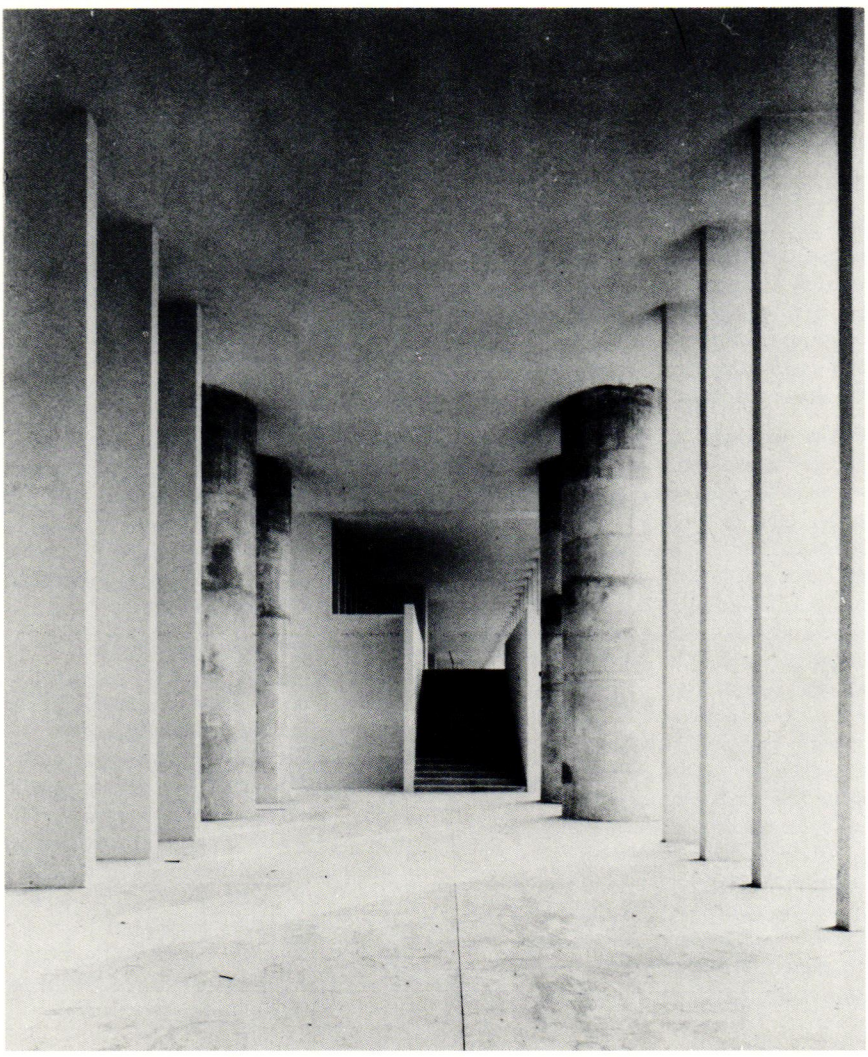
If these characteristic examples of current work in architecture can be labeled realistic because of the conscious concern with representation of a reality, and if they also reintroduce rhetorical strategies (such as versimilitude in their different possibilities) of long standing in the history of art, can we conclude that the new element that differentiates them from the past is their manifest or latent

[34]Anthony Vidler, 'The idea of Type', *Oppositions* 8, (New York, Spring 1977)

29 Column, Oberlin College Museum of Art Addition, Venturi and Rauch, 1976



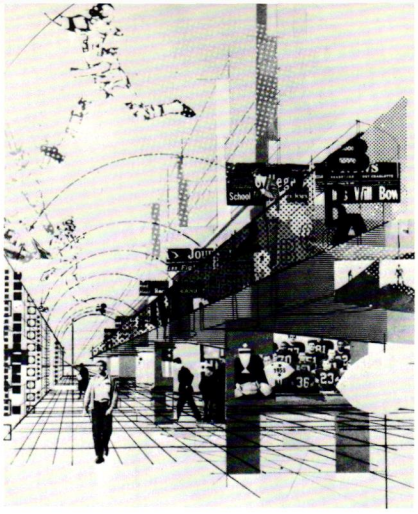
28 View of the Portico



use of the notion of type? Certainly it could be argued successfully that such a notion establishes a definitive distance from the methodological aims of Modern Architecture, but as intimated earlier, this notion itself has a long and animated history that needs to be recalled and matched against these tendencies in order to establish their status today.

The pedigree of the idea of type in the history of architecture has recently been exposed by Anthony Vidler, and when taking the necessary perspective that includes both pedigree as well as contemporary interpretations it is possible to see that we can describe the present predicaments as almost logical consequences of the history of that idea.[34] For there has always been a struggle in the history of architecture between the seemingly contradictory elements that have been associated with the concepts of type, specifically between the implications of type as 'rational type' and type as 'character,' which directly or indirectly contributed to the vicissitudes of architectural theory for a century and a half and which in turn help to explain the vicissitudes of Modern Architecture. Because, from the point of view of typology, functionalism is the logical consequence of Durand's construct and of operations that destroy the notion of character, with all its implication of allegory, individuality, idiosyncrasy, and finally with its most perdurable result: the picturesque.

It is also possible to see Modern Architecture as the resolution of Durand's conflicts. Because Modern Architecture (and we think of Le Corbusier specifically) had the power reserved only for those unique artistic moves which allowed the inherent contradictions of a basic idea to coexist creatively even if founded on fragile premises: by not resorting to history, the contradiction between character and rationality is left aside, and re-elaborated in a new language. Le Corbusier synthesized both by something which may be called 'rational character' as a result of the preeminence of function: this gives the 'reason' *and* the form; it is logical,



30 A Bill-Ding-Board for the National Football Hall of Fame Competition Venturi and Rauch, with the assistance of Gerod Clark, 1967

disciplined *and* expressive of the particularity of each contingency (the program). That the bind was tenuous, we know well, but its inventiveness, promise, and power as a generative idea have hardly been surpassed. The history of what happened after the heroic period of Modern Architecture, as Gandelsonas has outlined well (although from a different perspective),[35] is a renewed split between those contradictions. Thus, the critique of Modern Architecture that appeared in the fifties can be explained as the re-emergence of the idea of character in its picturesque format in England, and its symbolic and allegorical versions in Italy.

The criticism that the reintroduction of the notion of type has effected on Modern Architecture is probably the most valuable since the postwar era because it does not resort to peripheral explanations of its problems, (such as sociology, behaviorism, economics or systems theory), but rather goes to the heart of the matter by immersing itself in 'architectural substance.' Argan, Colquhoun, Rossi and others all discuss the shortcomings of a vision that negates history in all its possible versions: it is not possible to start from zero, it is not possible to establish communication if some sort of collective memory is not invoked through architecture.

But in the reintroduction of type into architecture, an old and too familiar rift seems to have surfaced again, this time with seemingly intense virulence. It is historically naive, however, to expect a return to a polemic that seems to have stopped before Modern Architecture appeared. It has been intimated earlier in this paper that the existence of Modern Architecture cannot be wished away, that the present moment is its product as much as that of the conscious renewal of older ideas. It should be expected that such an equation would yield such complexity and some novelty. And in regard to the incorporation of history, the search for verisimilitude, and the reintroduction of the notion of typology, the changes can tentatively be outlined. Thus, the transposition of some European 'realist strategies' of the fifties to the American scene of the seventies can be seen in the work of Venturi and Moore (two of the most influential personages of that tendency who profess a particular devotion to Italy, where they spent enough of their maturing years at the time when those propositions were advanced and could not have passed unnoticed). Hejduk's remark, that Venturi comes from Gardella, is a poignant and incisive synthesis of such kinship.[36] However, their pedigree is also a product of the parallel English townscape movement, which paradoxically appears in America as an affirmation of the sin that triggered Gordon Cullen's attack: the street signs and their malefic impact in the environment. The populists borrow from Cullen's technique that rendition of a reality of happiness and casualness, in which architecture somehow disappears, and the people, street furniture, color and all symbols of 'joy' provide a persuasive account of an all too untroubled life, here improved and up-dated with pop-art collage (Figure 30). But this marraige of two opposite approaches to realism is also the source of its strength. Whereas Gardella's mimesis was too tinted with academic connotations and intellectual interpretations, and Cullen's images too devoid of any architectural commitment, Venturi's and Moore's propositions depict both an idea of 'building' of empirical immediacy, of quasi-literal historical attachment (as if the urgent task in America was to build a history), and the very representation of the life that it will produce. *As* verisimilitude of common knowledge it synthesizes the best of both.

The Italian *tendenza* (and in the neo-rationalists in general) a similar transformation is apparent in some of the ideas on which their architecture is based. The notion of architectural typology is enriched on two fronts: on the one hand it cannot be separated from its dialectical counterpart of urban morphology (as expounded by Rossi's *L'architettura della citta*)[37] and on the other it extends the concept of architectural type beyond the limits of the academic view of the Enlightenment to include all building types that

[35]Mario Gandelsonas, 'Neo-Functionalism', *Oppositions 5*, (New York, Summer 1976)

[36]Remarks by John Hejduk during the *Harvard Architectural Review* Forum at Sanders Theatre, Harvard University, October 1977.

[37]Aldo Rossi, *L'Architettura della citta*, Marsilio, editor, s.p.a., (Padova, 1966).

[38]See the work of the Istituto de Storia Dell'Architettura dell Istituto Universitario di Architettura di Venezia, especially Aymonino and others; *La Citta di Padova*, Officina Edizione, (Rome, 1970); *Le Citta Capitali del XIX Secolo Parigi e Vienna*, by Aymonino, Fabbri, Villa Officina Edizione, (Rome, 1975); and Aymonino's *Lo Studio dei Fenomeni Urbani*, Officina Edizione, (Rome, 1977).

'construct' the city (as expounded through research work[38]). This proposition allows the neo-rationalists to consider as subjects of architecture both the exceptional (the monument) and the plain (the fabric), enlarging architectural concerns in a comprehensive theory. Thus, in both cases, these realist attempts could be considered 'inclusive' (a term usually associated with populists' tendencies in America alone) although in quite different manners, differentiated by the ways in which they propose, interpret, and deal with the idea of type.

We can now leave our analysis; it has provided us with some elements that allow us to assess the historical status of these current tendencies and to reaffirm some theoretical points. Throughout, our intention has been to focus on the figurative aspects of architecture, and inevitably we have had to consider the thought, ideas or ideological constructs that sustained them. Thus, when looking at current tendencies through these two exemplary cases, we are clearly presented with a seemingly contradictory set of ideas and architectures. Because, if on the one hand the reintroduction of history as a figurative device appears as a return to the pre-modern era (i.e. the quotations of Venturi or Moore, the Krier brothers' revival of Sitte's strategies, Rossi's insistence on typological methods, etc.) and as the inevitable outcome of a prolonged and at times belligerent critique of Modern Architecture, on the other hand, it is precisely in these two disparate attempts at inclusiveness that the legacy of Modern Architecture makes these tendencies unmistakably 'modern'—they can only be explained as the product of a persistent conviction that the hitherto unfulfilled promise of justice, freedom, and democracy that Modern Architecture was to deliver to society must still be maintained and attempted.

This contradiction results from the fact that the figurative rupture with Modern Architecture effected during the fifties (and which culminates today as proposed in this text) was dependent on one of its most important programmatic tenets. In itself this only helps to reinforce the notion that the relations between thought, ideology, and form are not simple or direct. But more importantly, it helps us to see that we are, at best, in a mixed period which cannot be treated either as a 'beginning' or as an 'end' of an era, but rather as a culmination of a process that has unmistakably characterized the discipline since the appearance of Modern Architecture. Since Modern Architecture's historical inception, the task of architecture appears to have been marked continuously by the necessity of refining, adjusting and reproposing the apparently inexhaustable resource of ideas that Modern Architecture presented. As with any new, truly revolutionary rupture, Modern Architecture condensed a wealth of new, disparate, sometimes contradictory ideas that took over the world in a resounding avalanche of formal and ideological possibilities. The loosening up of the figurative boundaries allowed and promoted the stampede of attempts that followed. For is it not possible, by taking those tenets one at a time, to order and classify almost all of the ensuing trends, tendencies, polemics and positions?[39] As if there were no more minds, nor cultural contexts invested with that heroic power that prevailed in the early decades that would allow for the same impetus, the whole period from the post-war up to the present seemed to have attempted to develop *in extenso* some of those original tenets, one by one, (and most of the time, quite ironically), as a reaction to Modern Architecture. And as most of these attempts seem to have discarded themselves, either by exhausting the original ideas, or by ending up in tragic ridicule, or by establishing themselves as endeavors independent from architecture, it is possible to see in the present tendencies (as they belong to that whole atmosphere that Tafuri calls 'a return to language') that we have been left with some bare bones of what might very well constitute the real architectural 'stuff' of Modern Architecture's problem: how to focus accurately the inquiry into the language of architecture in order to produce a collective discourse capable of

[39]For instance during the fifties, while effecting a departure, designers were still trying to perfect Modern Architecture, this time its whole ideology of rationalism and *zeitgeist* reduced to the area of construction, the new materials and their expression (indeed this is the common denominator of all architectural discourses of that time, be it neo-liberty, Brasilia, Mies, etc.). Later, the appearance of the idea of 'research' in architecture was the ultimate stage of the notion of rationality and scientization, already contained in some of the manifestos of the twenties, which ends somewhat in the scientifically naive dreams of people like Christopher Alexander, tinted then with a hyperfunctionalist ideology. The same pedigree could be established even more directly with the updated version of the technological utopias and the strategy of *tabula rasa* in another extreme dead end, best exemplified by the 'cities' of Archigram. In the same track, other endeavors seem to have had better luck establishing themselves independently from architecture after being for a while the direct offsprings of Modern Architecture, chiefly city planning.

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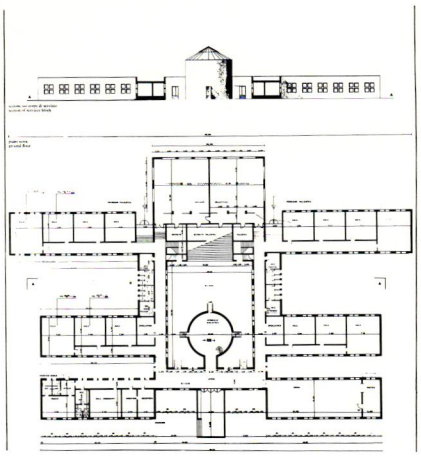

[40]Rafael Moneo, 'Aldo Rossi: The idea of Architecture and the Modena Cemetery,' *Oppositions* 5, (New York, Summer, 1976). The complete quote, which is also to the point, reads: 'We are now in an area in which every side thinks they are defending the same positions. The anti-autonomists vindicate the vicarious role of architecture in the consolidation of the environment and refer control to the exercise of ideological power: architecture is a simple 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.'

[41]Aldo Rossi, Lecture on his own work given on April 13, 1978, at the Graduate School of Design, Harvard University

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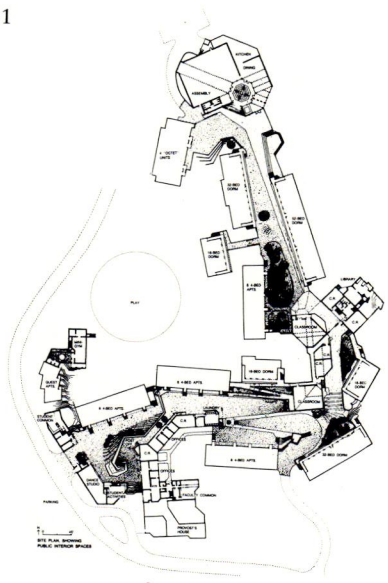

addressing society at large, and producing, representing, and generating the physical manifestation of the resolution to the dilemma of modern society: namely, the contradiction between the law and individual freedom.

That the ideological premises and ideals of these two contemporary tendencies seem to have settled figuratively on the two extremes that Modern Architecture promised to conciliate, the populists' 'representing' individual freedom and the neo-traditionalist displaying the preeminence of the law (Figures 31,32) is only a measure of the importance and of the complexity of the problem that Modern Architecture posed for itself and which continues to be central and unresolved in any contemporary proposition. As Rafael Moneo says '. . . [this is] an era in which every side thinks they are defending the same positions.'[40] Indeed, Rossi recently expressed to an American audience that the aim of his projects is to produce 'total freedom'[41] by which he implies that only by making architecture independent and autonomous, concerned only with its own internal substance and laws, can the ideal of freedom be returned clearly and unmistakably to its own domain, supposedly that of political action and civic exercise. For the populists instead, the idea of freedom must be metaphorically represented in iconographic terms, thus investing the building with the mythical power of inducing such freedom by its contiguity with everyday life.

Thus it seems to me that the products of these two current tendencies must be taken for what they are: at present the two most poignant and distinct artistic representations in architecture of a certain reality that insists on an old, perhaps worn-out, yet still unfulfilled aspiration of modern society. No more, but no less. And in reinterpreting an old dream they display, in a paradigmatic, exemplary way the possibilities at either end of the figurative spectrum that Modern Architecture involuntarily generated. Are they not the possibilities resulting from keeping the figurative repertoire open (that possibility that we still owe to Le Corbusier, the Constructivists, the Futurists) that allows in turn both the indiscriminate use of consumption symbols and the reintroduction of history (this time as just another possibility) as an alternative, in the name of architecture?

We might reassert more convincingly, as a by-product of our specific analysis, that an iconographic critique of architecture still holds one of the most important keys to the interpretation of architectural thought today. If the most profound philosophical and political aspirations articulated by Modern Architecture still haunt current tendencies, if they are interpreted, criticized and reproposed in disparate figurative propositions, this only reinforces the particular role that architecture plays with the ideological practices of society, in particular in the realm of art. By labeling them 'realists,' we are trying to stress the inescapable bond between an ideological knowledge of reality and its representation through diverse figurative mechanisms. If an orthodox verisimilitude in its various manners becomes once again the rhetorical tool of persuasion, it only alludes more convincingly to the validity of the argument that the primary task of architecture today seems to be that of elaborating an effective, plausible collective discourse, a task inherited directly from Modern Architecture. That the two extremes in this spectrum seem to indicate two modes of structuring architectural discourse in terms of cultural strategies (one an architecture of 'genre' the other an architecture of 'common knowledge'), makes explicit both the range of possibilities of verisimilitude in architecture and the still unresolved status in which architectural language finds itself today.

We are, then, operating with some fundamental fragments of ideologies, some modern and some not, which appear somehow independent from one another in the course of history, which evolve and displace themselves through time at different speeds, and which produce, at different moments of contact, diverse manifestations of architecture:

1 a socio-cultural aspiration that remains, in spite of its historical and political adjustments, a driving force since modern times;
2 a figurative operation produced by Modern Architecture that allowed for the loosening and opening up of the boundaries and substance of architectural representation, permitting in turn the seemingly endless trials of how to depict figuratively that socio-cultural aim;
3 the re-introduction, manifest or latent, of an enriched and invigorated architectural notion, *type* (and its consequent method), that is truly, at a theoretical and operational level, the most important element in this contemporary picture, and which by itself might be the most important 'counter-idea' to some of Modern Architecture's fundamental tenets that seem by now to have been definitively dismissed.

The present moment seems to accommodate these premises. And it is possible that the results are the product of an adjustment of the old socio-cultural ideals and utopias to the sometimes discouraging realizations of the actual conditions of contemporary society we have come to accept with some disillusion. Thus, the old egalitarian 'reality' that Modern Architecture represented in its grand schemes has been transformed by the new understanding of democracy: either the realities of the market of this society which stubbornly did not wither away and which are idealized through architecture, or the renewed, hopeful, yet always tragic representation of exemplary civic life in its passage from ideal principles to the empirical reality. (Figures 33,34).



33



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31 Kresge College, University of California at Santa Cruz, Charles Moore, 1974
32 Elementary School at Fagnano Olona, Aldo Rossi, 1977
33 Frontispiece of *Learning from Las Vegas*, Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown, and Stephen Izenour, 1972
34 Drawing for the Competition of the new Central Business District, Florence, drawing by Aldo Rossi



Formalism and the Polemical Use of History:

Thoughts on the Recent Rediscovery of Revolutionary Classicism

Eduard F Sekler

It seems evident that in today's theoretical marketplace, the use of history as a formalistic reference is gaining credibility. While certain periods seem more fashionable than others, the fact remains that formally motivated architects are scouring libraries for inspired monographs of past masters, to be used as visual guides for developing design concepts.

While this method of incorporating historic forms seems acceptable in theory, in practice we are left with few discernable rules for an appropriate method of integration. Many questions come to mind: Is it legitimate to use history as anything more than inspiration on the most conceptual level? Can we translate meaning, or are we simply resurrecting images? Do we regard historically-derived typologies as universal elements, regardless of regional association? How do we choose a specific period? How do we choose a specific form?

Furthermore, it is becoming apparent that within the new wave of architects who do employ historical references, there are differing camps concerning methods of approach. To some, history is viewed in terms of elements which are discovered and then abstracted, while to others historical integration is more directly accomplished by literal (figurative) association. In either case problems arise when guidelines are not imposed, tainting the entire process as an excercise in superficiality.

In the following essay by Professor Eduard Sekler, it becomes apparent that from an architectural historian's perspective, there are dangers to the polemical use of history. While discussing recent architectural trends, Sekler becomes critical of theoretical practitioners who manipulate images but disregard their original significance. To those who seek beauty while missing the richness that comes from a true understanding of meaning Sekler cautions 'effects are on the surface but form comes from depth.'

I am happy to acknowledge a number of very helpful critical comments and suggestions from my colleagues at Harvard University. All translations are by the author.

Was Louis Kahn a formalist? Aldo Rossi thinks so and explains that '. . . architects like Breuer and Louis Kahn belong to the circle of formalists; these architects know well the value of forms and above all of effects.'[1] Such a classification of Louis Kahn should invite challenge if not refutation, or at least a serious discussion about the use of the term formalism in architectural debate, even if, following Rossi, formalism is to be understood 'in an elevated sense.'

Effects are on the surface but form comes from depth. All architects in their work as artists strive for effects and are concerned with the way in which forms affect those who experience them. Formalism, then, must be a matter of degree, having something to do with the amount and kind of attention paid to form versus other aspects of design; and, one must ask, at what point does a legitimate concern with architectural form become formalism? Answers to this question usually will involve such considerations as the process or underlying structure from which a form resulted, the meaning a form carries or the context of conditions and antecedents into which a form belongs. Is it formalism when architectural form becomes something to be treated solely as an autonomous phenomenon regardless of significance and purpose? Or is it when a form resembles too closely something created under different conditions, for a different purpose, for another time and place? Does a lack of consistency in the process of arriving at a form lead to formalistic results?[2]

There are no simple replies to these questions, yet they cannot be begged, and proper answers may be obtained for individual cases by careful scrutiny and interpretation. In doing so it will be found that the rightness of a decision in a system of forms can be checked against previous decisions and their results in the same system. The decision, however, cannot be validated by references within this system only; for validation one will have to turn to a system of a different order, for example, to that of meaning or expression. It is impossible to decide if something is formalistic when only criteria from the realm of form are used.

But whatever criteria one applies to Kahn's architecture, the outcome, in my opinion, will not stamp him as a formalist—at least not in the commonly accepted sense of the term, even if in his late work the insistent use of circular

[1] Aldo Rossi, 'Introduzione a Boullée' in E L Boullée, *Architettura Saggio sull'arte,* translator A Rossi, (Padova, 1967), p 10

[2] By consistency I mean an adherence to a certain possibly self-imposed framework of formal devices and to a course of, within limits, methodical elaboration on certain formal premises—as can be found in the work of such great architects as Wright and Le Corbusier.



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openings may be open to serious questioning. A similar test with regard to the work of Aldo Rossi will be much less conclusive. Is it not formalistic to use the same form, a truncated cone, for a collective burial place and a city council chamber, as he did in his project for the cemetery at Modena (1971) and the municipal building at Muggia (1972) (Figures 1,2)?[3] To understand better what Rossi has in mind when he speaks of formalism, one has to turn to his description of formalist architects as those who 'do not construct a system but refer to a series of architectural facts that constitute formal pretexts for their design.'

Rossi elucidates this system by referring to Louis Etienne Boullée, whose essay on the art of architecture he published in Italian in 1967, together with a lengthy introduction of his own from which the above and following quotations are taken. Boullée, for Rossi, 'is a rationalist architect in the sense that, having constructed a logical system of architecture, he proposes to himself to verify continuously with the various projects the principles he assumed and the rationality of the project consists in the adhering to this system.' Boullée's treatise 'presents a particular interest for those who today are convinced of the necessity of a reading of architecture based on logical principles, and who uphold that the making of architectural projects can be based for a great part on the development of a series of propositions.'[4] Rossi turned to Boullée not because he wished to study and understand on its own terms a particular episode in architectural history, but because he felt the projects and writings of this 18th Century architect were of topical significance. He explains that he is not interested in 'recalling a chapter in the history of architecture' but wishes to 'propose a more general system.' 'Readings of this kind,' he continues, 'represent also a choice; and I maintain that everyone must select for himself and construct for himself a field of testimony . . .'[5]

Put in another way: Rossi is intent not on a renewed critical study of a certain historical phenomenon but on the use of the phenomenon as a 'field of testimony' to prove a point about a system of architectural composition—his own—'as far as possible, outside Boullée's architectural works themselves,' i.e., in a non-historical context valid for today. But this approach denies to Boullée's architecture and theory the reality of a historical fact to be described, interpreted, and evaluated in its own proper context. It demonstrates that to use history as a 'field of testimony' simply means to prefer polemical to pragmatic historiography.[6] But the polemical use of history has its pitfalls, and books have been written to demonstrate this. Geoffrey Scott's *The Arcrchitecture of Humanism*, with its exposure of certain 'fallacies,' belongs in this category as does, more recently, David Watkin's *Morality and Architecture.*[7]

While it is comparatively easy to point to the flaws in such examples as Viollet le Duc's brilliant but partly erroneous rationalistic interpretation of medieval architecture, or in Sigfried Giedion's equally brilliant but one-sided account of the history of Modern Architecture (because, in these cases, the argument remains in the area of professional architectural history), matters become more complex and difficult when questions of political ideology become involved. *Architecture as Ideology* (*Architektur als Ideologie*), a book by H Berndt, A Lorenzer, and K Horn, published in Frankfort / Main in 1968, is a case in point. Hans Schmidt, in a careful review in *Werk* (November 1970, 756), was able to show how the authors misinterpreted historic facts because of a biased approach, just as some twenty years earlier Helena Syrkus, in her defense of social realism in the arts, was led by her initial assertion that 'real artistic revolutions have always been swept forward by social revolutions' to the untenable interpretation of Picasso's paintings as 'a method of showing the rottenness of capitalist society.'[8] Similarly Hannes Meyer in 1942 maintained that Ledoux, in one of his designs (Figure 3), 'deliberately handed over the pyramid to the new dominant class and placed it at the service of the liberated and revolutionary bourgeoisie . . .'[9] Because

[3] *Aldo Rossi, Bauten, Projekte* (Zurich: Department of Architecture, Eidgenoessische Technische Hochschule, 1973), pp 16, 28. The more elongated truncated cone shapes of free standing tall chimneys might also be mentioned here; Rossi placed them in prominent positions in the school at Fagnano Olona and in the project for a hostel at Chieti (*Lotus* XV).

[4] A Rossi, 'Introduzione a Boullée,' p 7

[5] The Italian term is '*campo di testimonianza*' and apparently is meant to indicate something like a body of supporting evidence.

[6] The polemical approach considers history chiefly as a source of material for topical argument, while the pragmatic approach searches for understanding by dealing 'with events so as to show their interconnection.' As far as Boullée is concerned, the pragmatic approach is well represented by the writings of Jean-Marie Pérouse de Montclos and of Adolf Max Vogt. Vogt in his *Boullées Newton Denkmal etc. (Basel, 1969)*, succeeds in reconstructing conditions and convictions that shaped Boullée's work; of special interest is his discussion about the meaning of the pure sphere as opposed to the spheroid flattened by rotation (*op cit, 313*).

[7] It is interesting to note that both authors, due to their polemical stance, occasionally commit the very errors in historical interpretation they so strongly attack in others. Cf the debate in *Architectural Review* 972 (February, 1978), p 64.

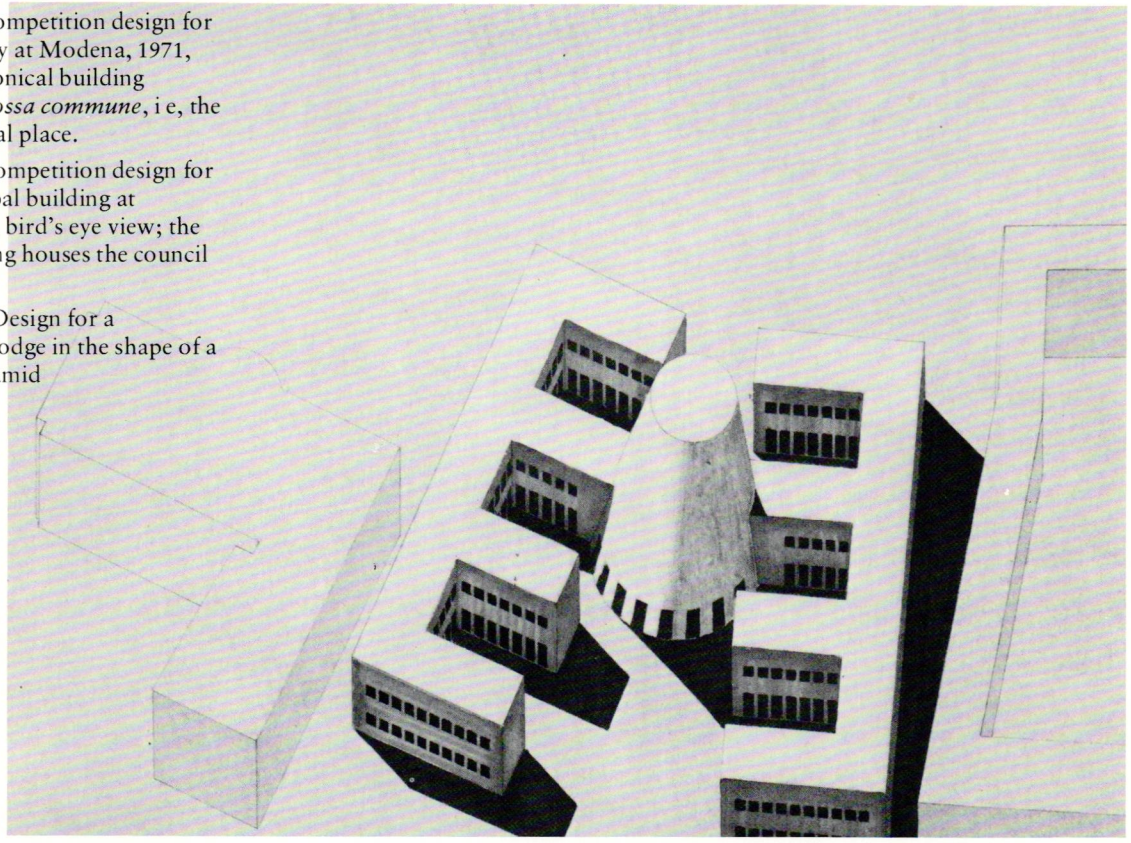
[8] S Giedion, *Architecture, You and Me* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1958), p 86

[9] H Meyer, 'The Soviet Architect' *Task* 3 (1942), p 32. According to Meyer, Ledoux 'decided to throw away all his aristocratic notions and to take an active part in the bourgeois revolutionary movement . . . Among his plans for

1 Aldo Rossi, Competition design for a new cemetery at Modena, 1971, section. The conical building indicates the *fossa commune*, i e, the collective burial place.

2 Aldo Rossi, Competition design for a new municipal building at Muggio, 1972, bird's eye view; the conical building houses the council chamber.

3 C N Ledoux, Design for a woodcutter's lodge in the shape of a truncated pyramid



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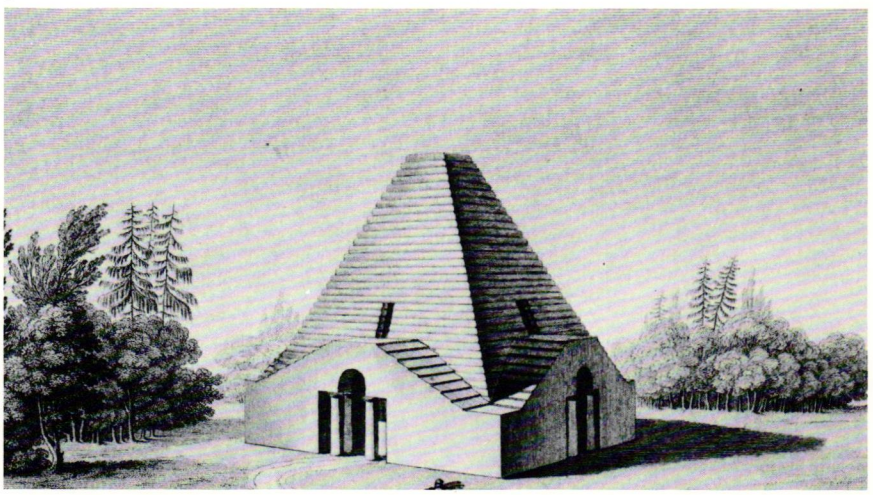
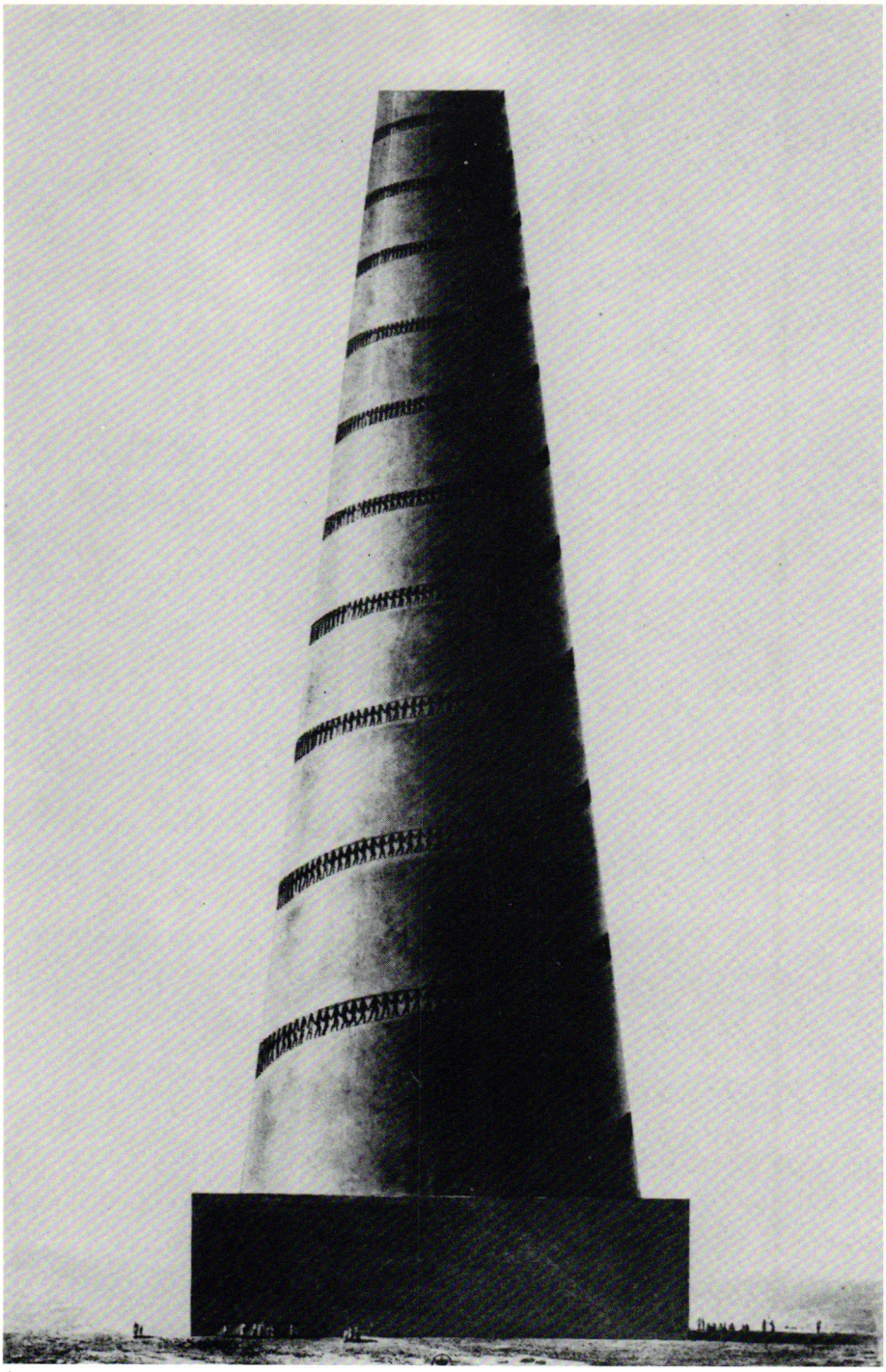


private houses some are remarkable for their pyramidal form . . . On the square base of these modest houses he placed a pyramidal stone roof. In all architectural periods the pyramid had symbolized the dominant power of king or priest . . .'

[10]CN Ledoux, *L'architecture considérée sous le rapport de l'art, des moeurs et de la legislation* (Paris, 1804), pl 102. The following is an extract from the architect's explanation given with this plate: '. . . a workshop of woodcutters takes one back to first ideas. One lets the oaks of the forest descend; one presses them one against the other, one attaches them on connecting timbers . . . It is not the first time that architecture has been shaped with logs . . . The artist can not always offer those gigantic proportions to the eyes which impress it; but if he is truly an architect he will not cease to be so when he constructs the house of a woodcutter; . . .' (*. . . un atelier de bucherons ramène aux idées premières. On fait descendre les chênes de la fôret; on les serre les uns contre les autres, on les attache sur des bois jointifs . . . Ce n'est pas la premiere fois que l'Architecture a figuré avec des bûches . . . L'artiste ne peut pas toujours offrir aux yeux ces proportions gigantesques qui en imposent; mais s'il est véritablement Architecte, il ne cessera pas de l'être, en construisant la maison du bucheron . . .*)

Meyer wanted to depict Ledoux as a political revolutionary, he failed to mention that the architect signed this particular design as '*Architecte du Roi*' and explained the truncated pyramidal roof of the '*atelier des bucherons gardes de la forêt*' as a construction in wood meant to demonstrate how an artist of imagination can make something very impressive of even a small woodcutter's lodge.[10] Meyer also neglected to mention that Ledoux, like his contemporary Boullée, had worked out the bases of his artistically revolutionary architecture years before the actual political revolution occurred. Naturally he was not uninfluenced by the great currents of thought, the climate of opinion and the political ferment of late 18th Century Paris, and he appears profoundly committed to architecture as a tool of social betterment, but there is no evidence that he considered the pyramid atop his woodcutter's hut as a symbol of royal power and that he wanted to subvert it as such, as suggested by Meyer. It is even possible that for him, a very specific kind of masonic symbolism was attached to a pyramidal lodge built of logs.[11]

While nobody can deny that architecture is, in Meyer's words, 'the product of a specific age, of a definite period,' it certainly *is* an autonomous fact in many respects, if one takes the word autonomous in its proper sense as indicating something which has its own laws. Otherwise, it would be inexplicable why pluralistic varieties of architectural forms can originate even under political regimes that tightly control most aspects of life. An architect, as 'the product of a specific age,' is equally, if not more importantly, the product of the specific cultural milieu of his professional education and practice, with its own traditions. As far



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as he is creatively engaged in the invention and manipulation of forms and spaces, his activity to a large degree is autonomous and its results are unpredictable.

Meyer, because of his polemical attitude, understandable as it was in 1942, was unable to see this; consequently, his interpretation of Ledoux's architecture tends to be just as misleading as Rossi's interpretation of the works of Louis Kahn as formalistic when he compares them to those of his 'artist hero' Boullée. Were it not for a predetermined polemical stance, how can one account for Rossi's reading of Kahn's architectural results as something that 'certainly does not offer itself as meditation on the persistent forms in architecture' and something that does not 'propose itself in any systematic manner?'[12] While agreeing with Rossi that 'there is no art which is not autobiography' and 'it is this kind of connection that distinguishes the world of the artist from the academician and from the formalist who does not add any experience of his own,'[13] I find it impossible to accept that Louis Kahn belongs among those who did not add any experience of their own, and I believe that in his *oeuvre* one can find some of the most profound 'meditations on the persistent forms in architecture' that have been undertaken in the second half of the 20th Century. It has been pointed out[14] that Kahn considered 'Form as a search for truth' and in the light of this statement it becomes understandable why he took so long over his later projects; he meditated not only on forms in architecture but on their deeper personal and universal meaning, convinced that 'a great building . . . must begin in the unmeasurable, must go through measurable means . . . and in the end must be immeasurable.'

[11]A Vidler, 'The Architecture of Lodges etc . . .' *Oppositions* 5 (1976), p 90

[12]A Rossi, *op cit, p 10*

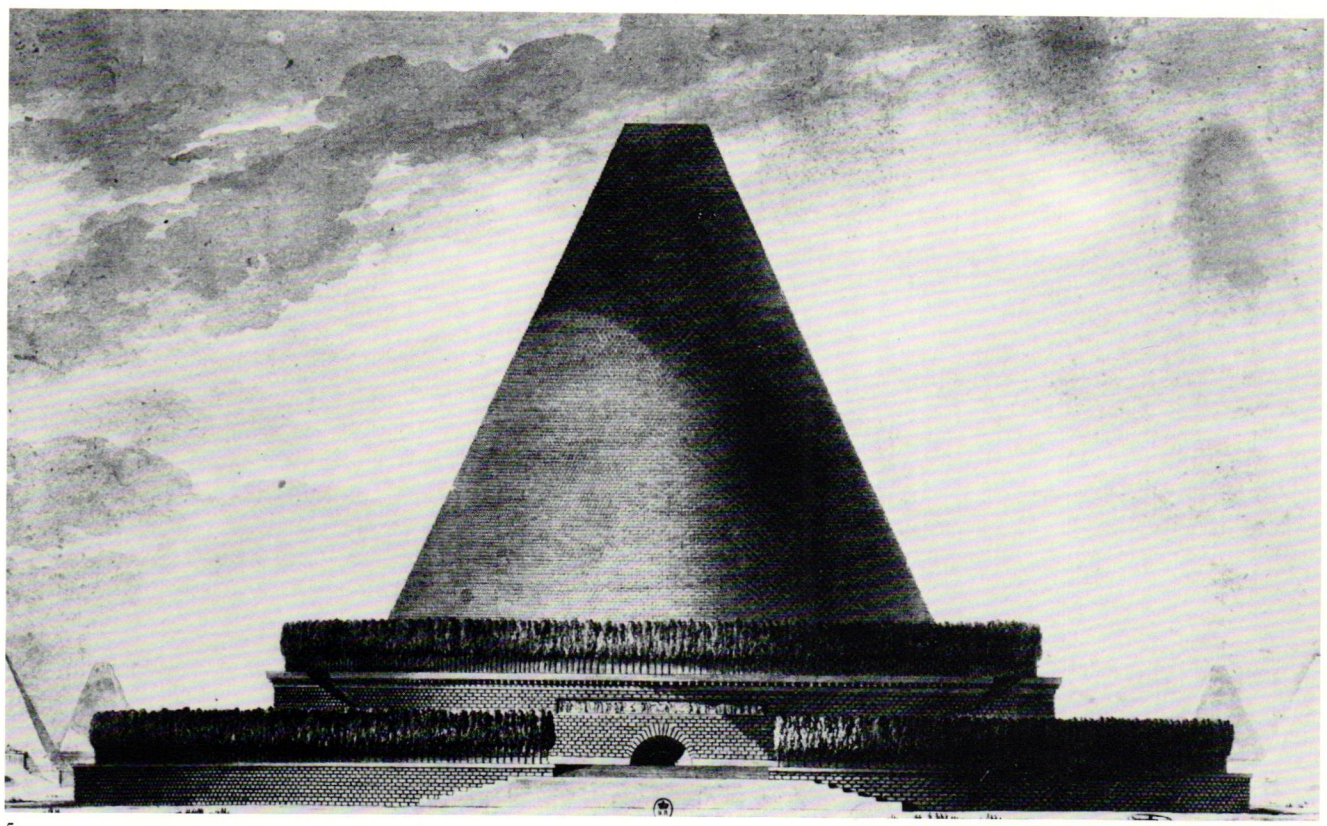
[13]*Ibid, pp 18, 19*

[14]JC Rowan, 'Wanting to Be,' *Progressive Architecture, (April, 1961), p 130 ff*

[15]According to the personal recollection of Wilhelm von Moltke.

4 E L Boullée, Design for a monument in the shape of a truncated cone

5 E L Boullée, design for a cenotaph in the shape of a truncated cone



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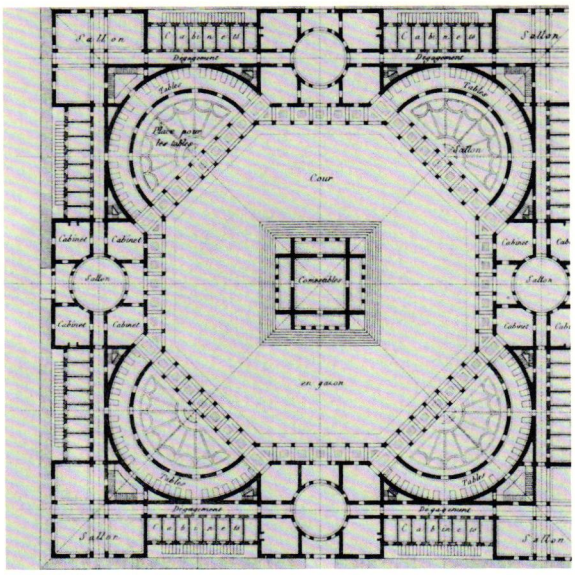
Rossi himself, as his numerous beautiful and provocative drawings and paintings show, does not cease to meditate on 'persistent forms in architecture,' but at the same time he seems to derive a number of them from a close study of the revolutionary classicists, especially Boullée. That Rossi was deeply impressed by the work and doctrines of this architect would be obvious even if he did not explicitly state it. Like Boullée he strives toward a very close relationship between painting and architecture, with projects presented in the guise of paintings, and like Boullée he seems to enjoy it when, as a consequence, an eerie sense of unreality suffuses his creations. At times he even embodies very direct visual references to the revolutionary classicist in his own work, as when he shares the otherwise rarely found shape of a steep truncated cone with Boullée's monuments and cenotaphs (Figures 4,5).

Rossi's familiarity with the revolutionary classicism of Boullée and Ledoux is largely due to the man who introduced the pre-World War II generation of architects like Meyer and Le Corbusier to this period of architectural history: Emil Kaufmann. Kaufmann's *Von Ledoux bis Le Corbusier* (Vienna, 1933), was the first book to imply the possible relevance of revolutionary classicism for the 20th Century. When, after the Second World War, he summed up his life's work in a comprehensive publication, *Architecture in the Age of Reason* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1955), it was Aldo Rossi who gave this book a long and thoughtful, richly illustrated review in *Casabella Continuità* (222, 1958). Whether Kaufmann also had something to do with Kahn's awareness of the world of revolutionary classicism, could be established by ascertaining whether Kahn knew Kaufmann's *Three Revolutionary Architects*. This long essay was published in 1952, in Philadelphia where Kahn was then working, and it did not fail to attract interest among architects in that city.[15] However, Kahn might well have known about Boullée and Ledoux at an earlier date, since his teacher, Paul Cret, had been trained at the École des Beaux Arts at Paris and can hardly have ignored these great precursors. In Kahn's work, direct visual references to forms from revolutionary classicism are not as easily found as in Rossi's, but there are parallelisms when it comes to the system of formal organization.[16] Kahn and the revolutionary classicists share a predilection for plans organized on a geometrical network of such regular figures as the circle, square, octagon, and equilateral triangle. It is revealing in this context to compare Ledoux's permutations of regular geometric



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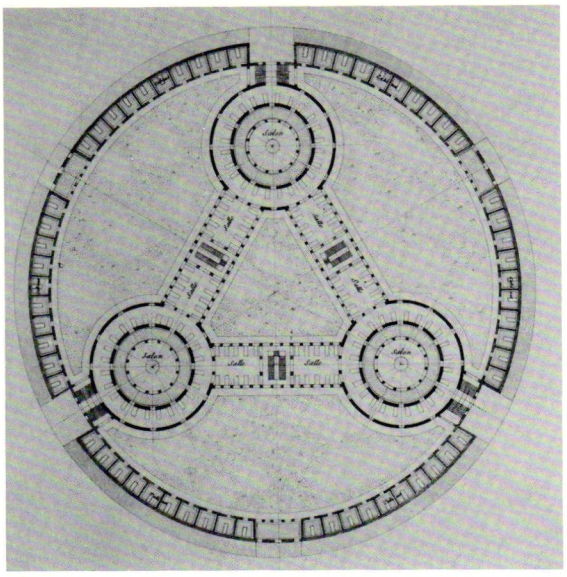

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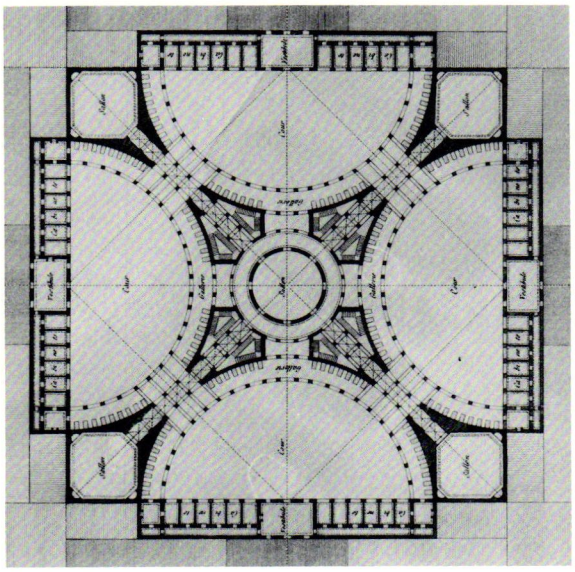

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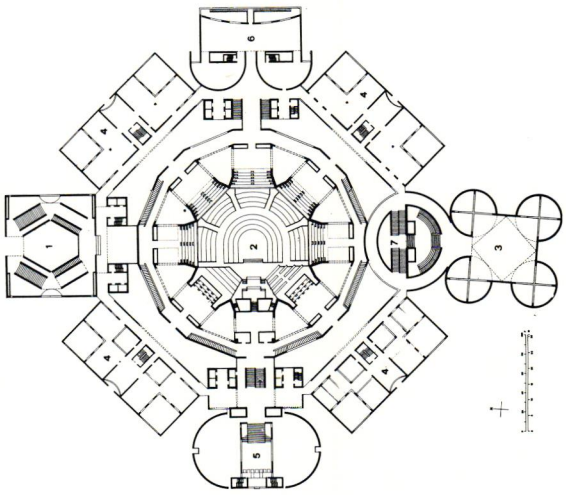

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figures in his plans for *guinguettes* (country inns) (Figure 6) outside Paris with such plans by Kahn as those of the Mikvah Israel Synagogue in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, the Fine Arts Center, Fort Wayne, Indiana, and of the projects for Islamabad and Dacca (Figure 7).[17] Kahn also wrote about Boullée and Ledoux, but unlike Rossi, he approaches them not historically and polemically but poetically; his brief but powerful introduction to a 1968 exhibition catalogue about *Visionary Architects* was in the form of a poem that ends with the words: 'Did we need Boullée, did we need Ledoux? Boullée is, Ledoux is, so Architecture is.'[18]

Kahn's use of explicitly geometric frameworks for architectural composition came as a kind of revelation to those generations of young architects who knew only the design method of the Modern Movement, which, though admitting proportional guiding lines, on the whole repudiated the formalities of geometrically composed plans.

Which brings us to the question: Why, at a given moment in the recent past, was there such a dramatic growth of interest in the work of the revolutionary classicists among one group of contemporary architects; why do the Krier brothers delight in referring to Ledoux;[19] why does Michael Graves publish sketches that show the Barrière de la Villette[20]—quite apart from the special case of Aldo Rossi discussed earlier in this essay? Any answer will be necessarily incomplete and partly hypothetical because the events in question are still very close and neither completely recorded nor sufficiently elucidated. But a few facts emerge clearly enough.

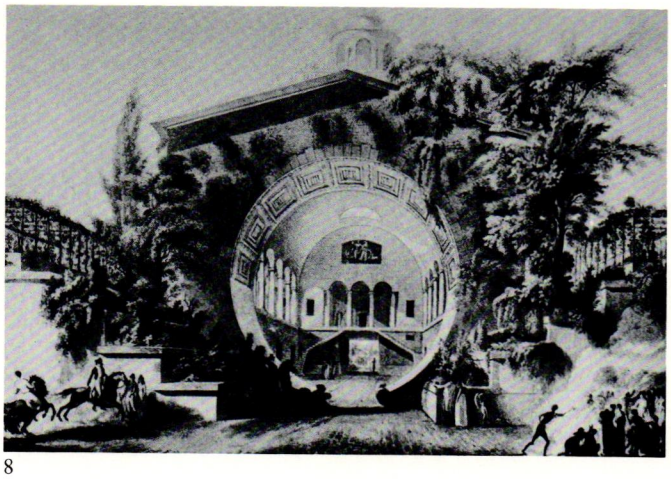
The impact of revolutionary unrest in the Sixties led to, among other things, a wave of enthusiasm for 'anti-architecture' in many parts of the western world. The so-called 'elitism' of architects as willful 'form-givers' was decried, and the social function of the architect as servant of the community was stressed. Citizen participation, advocacy architecture, open-ended, formally neutral systems to be filled with life and form by the users were among the ideals propounded. These new tenets amounted to a self-effacement or abandonment of architecture as form-giving in the traditional sense of the word: technology and sociology would take its place. So it seemed for awhile.

It was almost to be expected that in the case of a strong change in the social and cultural atmosphere, as actually set in after 1970, the reaction to these 'anti-architectural' tendencies would be in the direction of an extreme stress on purely architectural concerns—in the direction of the kind of autonomous forms the 'Visionary Architecture' had displayed. In 1975, Manfredo Tafuri

6 C N Ledoux, Three plans for *ginguettes* (country inns) outside Paris

7 Louis Kahn, National Assembly Building, Dacca, Bangladesh, floor plan, 1965

8 Design for a house on the Champs Elysées, 1802, attributed to Ledoux, perspective view.



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could characterize the situation as a return 'to *pure architecture,* to form without utopia, in the best cases, to sublime uselessness.' He may well have had Aldo Rossi in mind when he continued, 'To the deceptive attempts to give architecture an ideological dress, I shall always prefer the sincerity of those who have the courage to speak of that silent and outdated *purity.*'[21]

On the other hand, it had also become apparent during the Sixties that the principles of the Modern Movement, though correct as far as they went, were not sufficient to guarantee the widespread production of formally good architecture. The world of forms of the Modern Movement, it turned out, could not be derived from these principles alone but was recognized as the result of formal invention on the part of such artists as Frank Lloyd Wright, Le Corbusier, and members of the Dutch De Stijl Group. As soon as the connection between principles and formal vocabulary, up to then tacitly assumed as natural and inseparable, was disclosed as artificial and relative, the door was wide open for new attempts in the search for forms in architecture.

Many avenues of formal investigation that just recently had been most widely exploited (technology, the 'functional tradition,' the 'vernacular,' art nouveau, etc.), were excluded from the search; after all, it had become axiomatic in the arts that each generation has to overcome those that fathered it. At the same time, the art historians' never-ending quest for new topics led them further and further back in the 19th Century toward Neoclassicism, or forward from their latest discovery, Art-Deco, toward the revived Neoclassicism of the Thirties. Thus the time was ripe for one citadel of the avant-garde, the Museum of Modern Art in New York, to put on a large, impressive exhibition of designs from the defunct Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris. It was a calculated demonstration in two directions: the opening up of hitherto neglected terrain in art history, comparable to the research projects in 19th Century art of the German Thyssen Foundation, and the negation of Modern Movement ideology; to be modern now meant to take a new look at history.

Two ways in which this can be done are illustrated by Louis Kahn and Aldo Rossi, in their confrontation with Boullée and Ledoux, as they extract poetry and principles of organization from the past—or polemics and characteristic forms. It is fascinating to speculate why each reacted the way he did, impelled to express something that could be expressed only in forms and not in words, at least not in ordinary discourse. There is a private language of Louis Kahn in which the strictly linear structure of reasoned argument is replaced by a free flow of more subtle and indirect linkages among associations and evocations; there is also a private language of Aldo Rossi in which accepted meanings become inverted and the use of such terms as 'logical principle,' 'rationalism,' 'formalist' clearly is informed by his conviction 'we do not believe that explanations exist.'[22]

Yet on one occasion, in a statement that I find moving in its sincerity, he gives an explanation for all 'that has not been clarified' in his writings; he quotes from Walter Benjamin: 'but I am deformed by the connections with all that surrounds me.'[23] All that surrounds us is, of course, history: the deposit life itself has left behind. It does not matter in the last resort where models are derived from nor what they are, so long as they become sources of authentic inspiration, catalysts for something genuine. The past as a source for the future need not be feared unless the relation to history is disturbed and unhealthy; if we demean it to become nothing but a source of polemics, irony or regret, we demean life, our own existence.

[16]Though one might point to the cylinders and truncated pyramid in his sketch for the center of Philadelphia (1957) or to the large circular openings in walls, (Dacca hostels, Exeter Library) that recall the facade of a house in the Champs Élysées attributed to Ledoux (Figure 8).

[17]H Ronner *et al, Louis I Kahn, Complete Works* (Boulder, Colorado, 1977), p 241

[18]*Visionary Architects, Exhibition Catalogue, Houston, Texas (University of St Thomas, 1968), p 9*

[19]L Krier, 'La Villette,' *Architectural Design* (March, 1977), p 207, writes about the *Mairie* in his project: 'This building is a reflection in plan of a rural building designed by Le Doux . . .'

[20]M Graves, 'The Necessity for Drawing,' *Architectural Design* (June, 1977), p 385

[21]M Tafuri, *Architecture and Utopia* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1976), p ix

[22]*Lotus* 13 (1976), p 6

[23]Aldo Rossi, *Scritti Scelti etc.*, a cura die Rosaldo Conicalzi, (Milan, clup, 1975), p ix


CAPE COD SHINGLES
MEDITER-RANEAN GRILLE
MOUNT VERNON PIERS
COLONIAL SIDELIGHTS
CURRIER & IVES
VERSAILLES

Architectural Taste in a Pluralistic Society

Denise Scott Brown©

For Charles Seeger
1886-1979

Much criticism of Modern Movement architecture has focused on its alienating visual character and its consequent inability to communicate to and be understood by wide portions of society. Such criticism has provoked efforts to create a richer, more varied, perhaps more popularly-based visual language. These attempts are not new, however, and can be traced, ultimately, to the early days of the Modern Movement itself. In her article, Denise Scott Brown focuses on one important chapter in this history, finding in the social upheavals of the 1960s significant pressures on architects to create a more habitable, or, in the jargon of the times, a more 'relevant' architecture.

The social concerns of that era did find their way into the practice of architecture, and did cause change and re-alignment in architectural sensibility. Two of the more visible developments come to mind: the attempt to instill a scientific methodology into architecture, to write the ultimate program for all the myriad problems architecture was to address; and the introduction of the social sciences into architecture, to secure a more direct reading of the needs and wants of the actual users of a given project. While generally useful to architectural endeavor, in their extreme form these tendencies tried to make architecture something it would not or could not become: in the first case, a computer printout, in the seond, a sociology rap session.

A third approach has been developed, and it directly engages the original issue of alienation: that is, the search for a language of expression which is responsive to social concerns and cognizant of the various audiences architecture must address, yet keeps within architecture its primary form-making function.

In her article, Denise Scott Brown focuses on this last option, and using taxonomies from the work of Herbert Gans, tries to isolate and characterize the various architectural audiences—'taste cultures' as he calls them—encountered in design practice, to promote an architecture of greater social awareness through a more sophisticated understanding of form and meaning.

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Denise Scott Brown

[1] MJ Guinsburg, 'Contemporary Architecture in Russia.' *Die Baugilde* (Berlin, October 1928) This piece appears in translation in the appendix of *Russia: An Architecture for World Revolution*, El Lissitzky. Eric Dluhosch translator and editor (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1970). I am grateful to Mr Robin Middleton for bringing this quotation to my attention.

[2] *Ibid*

One special circumstance that will be particularly significant in furthering the work of modern architects in Russia is the emergence of a new group of clients: the working masses, free of prejudices as far as taste is concerned, and not bound by tradition—factors that have in the past exerted a decisive, dominant influence on the thinking of the petty bourgeoisie. Because of bare economic necessity the millions of workers have no love for the ornamental junk, the holy pictures, and all the thousands of useless articles that usually clutter up middle-class homes. These millions of workers must unquestionably be considered supporters of modern architecture.—M J Guinsburg,[1] Berlin 1928

Modern Architecture and Popular Taste

For some architects and urbanists, the idea that the environment in a pluralistic society can and should accomodate different values and tastes, particularly aesthetic ones, is strange and threatening, for Modern architecture, born in revolution, teaches that there is one true Architecture, the architect is its promulgator, and 'the people' will share the revolutionary vision of the architect if they can only be helped to understand it. When they do, to quote Guinsburg again:

> *Their willingness to relinquish certain private desires—which make coherent planning so difficult—should make the transition to constructive building easier and should help to facilitate the industrialization of the building process by means of serial mass production, similar to the process of high quality mass production in the consumer industries.*[2]

Early Modern Architecture, Revolution, and 'The People'

In the Soviet Union, the revolution added poignance and power to such beliefs. Indeed, there was a time when the young Moderns in Russia—the Constructivists—were in control to a far greater extent than were their colleagues in the rest of Europe and were able to complete projects that in other countries remained on the drawing board. However, this does not appear, in retrospect, to have been the result of a 'new group of clients' seeing things the way the architects did, nor of a new confluence of the aesthetic tastes of the masses and the intelligentsia.

Rather, the achievements of the Constructivists resulted from the general disorganization of the early post-revolutionary years, when there was in effect no client, and architects became their own clients. In the 1920s, the institutional clients, the bureaucracies whose task it was to determine the needs of the 'working classes,' had not yet organized themselves. When they did organize in the early thirties, the young Moderns no longer had their way. Far from choosing the reductionism of Modern Architecture, Russian officials favored palaces for the people similar to the palaces of the former ruling classes. Russian officialdom believed that 'the proletariat also has a right to columns.'[3]

In other parts of Europe, young architects had less freedom than they did in Russia, and the reaction afterward was less strong. In Germany, Bauhaus architects and designers aimed to influence the taste of the whole nation and control the entire physical environment through 'total design.' Instead, Bauhaus Modern architecture and industrial design became the recognized style of the political Left, and the flat roof became its chief architectural symbol. When the Nazis came to power, they added a pitched roof to the Bauhaus building. Third Reich architecture favored historicism and, for public buildings, a mixture of cut-down classical architecture and Modern cubism that came to be called Fascist architecture. For housing, a cozy, rustic, pitch-roofed, brick-and-tile style was preferred.

During the rebuilding of European cities after World War II, Modern architecture predominated except in some historic enclaves. This was probably less the result of 'bare economic necessity' than of the fact that young Modern architects moved into the government bureaucracies in charge of housing and renewal, as there was scarcely any private building in Western Europe immediately after the war. Traditional architectural values began to re-establish themselves as the private sector returned and as public agencies confronted user reactions to their projects. Modern architecture was then 'humanized' through the substitution of traditional materials such as brick for concrete and pitched roofs for flat. The term 'Modern architecture' now covered more than just the International Style; in England particularly, International Style came to symbolize a wartime austerity of which the nation was heartily tired. By the 1950s, Modern architecture was the recognized style for most buildings with the exception of some single-family houses, but Modern architecture no longer meant the International Style.

When European Modern architecture crossed the Atlantic, the conditions it met in the United States differed widely from those that had generated the International Style in Europe. In a vast land of different regions and diverse cultures, the myth of the melting pot notwithstanding, universal acceptance of one type of architecture, no matter how well-intentioned, was unlikely. Public bureaucracies were less involved than were their European counterparts in the actual building of projects and more concerned with creating financial mechanisms to support private developers and builders. The vast American home-building industry, developed in part with government financial help, was highly decentralized and fragmented and operated largely without the help of architects. Americans, possessing perhaps more industrial technology and technical knowhow than the Europeans, tended to be more skeptical and less rhetorical about adapting home-building techniques to industrial processes and more pragmatic in doing so when the need arose. As technology was a reality, it did not need to be a symbol.

Furthermore, another Modern style was already in existence here. This style, partly indigenous in origin and identified mainly with Frank Lloyd Wright, both evolved from and was imposed upon the architecture of the Great Plains. Early Modern American architecture was known to European architects in the 1900s and 1910s. It had attracted some early Moderns to the United States, and it influenced the nascent Modern Movement in Europe. Perhaps its greatest influence, however, was upon the merchant builders, whose suburban rancher versions of Wright's Prairie houses swept the United States after World War II.

The International Style, by contrast, landed with greatest impact in the heart of Boston-Brahmin America when its practitioners, fleeing Nazi Germany, were welcomed at Harvard. From Harvard, their influence spread to all corners of the American architectural world and thence to the business world. Bauhaus architecture, the symbol of European left-wing progressives, was picked up in America by the Eastern business establishment, and ousting the Art Deco style, became the architectural choice of corporate America, where 'total design' extends from the Ford Foundation building to the Mobil gasoline pump.

As it tangled with the establishment, International Style architecture in America changed and was humanized just as it had been in Russia and Europe. The third-generation Modern architecture of today's large commercial, civic, and educational institutions is a much more ornate and baroque style than its severe ancestors. In fact, there has already been an International Style revival. Today, approximations of Le Corbusier's white cubes and cylinders accomodate and represent the jet-set life styles of the rich, young, *avant-garde* New Yorkers who summer in East Hampton.

Architectural 'Elitists' and the Social Movements of the 1960s

In the 1950s, third-generation Modern architecture found a market in public housing and federally sponsored urban renewal. Like the European bureaucracies, American public agencies responsible for housing the poor and renewing the city were committed to Modern architecture. Although institutional arrangements for housing and renewal were different from those in Europe, and although the occupants of the American projects were different too, American urban housing and renewal projects looked much like their European models, the lean, light-seeking towers set in parks of green that derived from Le Corbusier's Ville Radieuse.

[3] This view of Russian architecture derives in large part from Paul Willen's lecture, 'An Authoritarian Model: Suprematism-Constructivism in the USSR, late 1920s' delivered at the Symposium on the Politicizing of the Arts in the Western World, Leverton Lecture Series, Fairleigh Dickinson University, 1974.

[4] Herbert J Gans, *The Urban Villagers: Group and Class in the Life of Italian-Americans* (New York: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1962)

[5] Herbert J Gans, *The Levittowners: Ways of Life and Politics in a New Suburban Community* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1967)

[6] New York: Basic Books, 1974

During the late 1950s and the 1960s, American social critics blamed architects and physical planners for designing unsuitable public housing and socially coercive urban renewal projects and ridiculed the architects' belief that everyone should like what they, the architects, like. Architects were described as elitists, do-gooders, and egocentrics who felt that everyone shared or should share their upper-middle-class value systems and aesthetic preferences. Social planners claimed that those for whom communities were planned should participate in the process of planning and urged that new attempts be made to discover the needs of the users—particularly low income users—of housing and the renewed city. Studies such as those by Herbert Gans of Boston's West End[4] and of Levittown,[5] portrayed communities as relatively happy in their environments, although those environments coincided hardly at all with what planners and architects felt was suitable.

Aesthetic Pluralism and the Architect

The social planners' criticism profoundly changed the planning profession and jolted the architects, sending some into a more careful analysis of the needs of their client groups, others into community and advocacy architecture and social planning, and a few into an analysis of the physical forms and symbolic meanings of the disdained popular environment.

This third task is perhaps furthest from the architect's usual practice. Architects are willing to be inspired by the 'industrial vernacular' forms of grain silos and the superstructures of ocean liners, or by the architecture-without-architects of the Dogon or the Greek islands, but they still react strongly against the notion that more mundane local examples, such as Levittown, may have something to teach them. Social scientists have been unable to analyze the physical and aesthetic dimensions of the popular environment partly because they lack architectural training and partly because they have tended to equate all aesthetic preferences with elitism, surely a mental confusion and a *non sequitur*. Hence, we have been slow in obtaining physical parallels to the sociological studies of Gans and in ascertaining what people's physical environments really mean to them. We are even further from achieving a broad understanding of American architectural tastes and defining the role of the architect in relation to them.

American Taste Cultures and Taste Publics

Help in the task of classifying and defining architectural tastes may be obtained from Gans' *Popular Culture and High Culture: An Analysis and Evaluation of Taste*.[6] This is *inter alia* a defense of popular culture against its high culture critics. Although he scarcely touches on architecture and the environment, Gans outlines a taxonomy for the analysis of tastes that allows us to fill in architectural equivalents. He describes five different American 'taste cultures' and the taste publics they serve, ranging from high culture to quasifolk low culture, with a side trip through youth, black, and ethnic cultures. He compares high and popular cultures and recommends democratic standards for evaluating different taste cultures and accomodating their publics.

The cries of outrage that this work has wrung from high culture are no less anguished for being predictable. Actually, to use Gans' terminology correctly, the cries came not from high but from upper-middle taste culture, that is, from those well-educated people who know what is 'good' but who are not themselves deeply involved in the arts as creators: he calls them 'educated lay people.' For example, Barbara Rose, an art critic for *New York* magazine, took Gans, the Whitney Museum, and others to task for 'the encouragement of diversionary rabble-rousing populism in the sphere of culture' and for the presumption that 'there was nothing more to outstanding architecture, art, and design than social status.' Far from art's being related to taste cultures and subcultures, great art, Rose maintains, resides only in New York and 'the

reason many artists are not shown in New York is that their work doesn't meet the acid test of quality and sustained excellence New York imposes.' She fears that if such failures in judgment in the name of democracy continue, 'American art could easily lapse back into the regionalism and provincialism from which it was redeemed by the New York school.'[7]

High culture, embattled at its left flank by popular culture's defenders, has found its right under fire by Tom Wolfe. In *The Painted Word*,[8] he analyzes and ridicules not only the theory and content of Abstract Expressionist high culture art but also the social mores of its supporters. Gans sees high culture's hegemony as a failure of democracy; Wolfe denounces the high culture art world as a group of intellectual phoneys who are more concerned with social status than with art. Gans feels that the public is excluded from high culture because social inequities deny it the income and education needed to appreciate high culture. Wolfe believes the public is merely not invited. Gans, not too hopefully, offers remedies based on breaking the system down into smaller, value-confluent subcultures; Wolfe, less optimistically, appears merely to laugh at the continuing human comedy.

Taste Publics Served by Architects

Where does this leave the architect and urban designer as opposed to the social critic or urban philosopher? Architects have tended in a general way to share the value systems of their clients, if by clients we mean the individuals and groups who fund and implement architectural projects and not necessarily the actual users of these projects. In pre-industrial Europe, the clients were the king, the military, and the church, a narrow spectrum that composed the high culture market of the time. Successful architects today find their clients chiefly in Gans' upper-middle and lower-middle taste cultures.[9] Gans describes upper-middle culture as:

> *the taste culture of the vast majority of America's upper-middle class, the professionals, executives and managers and their wives who have attended the 'better' colleges and universities. Although well-educated, they are not trained as creators or critics, and do not find high culture satisfying. They prefer a culture that is substantive, unconcerned with innovation in form, and uninterested in making issues of method and form a part of culture.*[9]

These are the clients the architect meets on the building committees of large corporations and Ivy League schools, on the technical staffs of 'go-ahead' public agencies such as New York's Urban Development Corporation and the Philadelphia City Planning Commission, and on the architectural selection committees of small-town cultural institutions. They are the lay members of fine arts commissions, design review boards, and selection panels for architectural competitions and awards. Gans suggests that this taste public chooses its art from what has become most popular with high culture and that it may co-opt some high culture creators, for example, Ingmar Bergman, Arthur Miller, and Norman Mailer. This public, Gans goes on to say,

> *pays considerable attention to creators as 'stars,' and it relies extensively on critics and reviewers, who help it to differentiate between high and upper-middle culture content by disapproving of content which they perceive as too experimental or too philosophical on the one hand, or too clichéd and 'vulgar' on the other hand.*

Upper-middle culture values 'artistry' but not 'controversy.' Hence, although it recognizes architecture's innovators as stars, it tends to bypass these innovators and choose their followers for building projects, for example, architects of the Philadelphia School rather than their leader Louis I Kahn, Gordon Bunshaft rather than Mies van der Rohe, and J L Sert rather than Le Corbusier. Partly through this public's support, these follower architects achieve brand-name status.

Architects meet the lower-middle culture public on the boards of state universities and country colleges, as

[7] Barbara Rose, 'In Cold Duck,' *New York* 8, (March 17, 1975), p 72

[8] New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1975 Also see *Harpers*, 250 (April, 1975)

[9] Gans takes pains to define his terms (*Popular Culture and High Culture*, 'Some Definitions', pp 9-15). He adds the caveat that his five taste cultures are 'analytic aggregates which are constructed by the social researcher,' not organized groups or people who perceive themselves as part of a group (p 70). It is unfortunate that the words 'high,' 'middle,' and 'low' imply the very hierarchic and stratified view of aesthetics that we as architects and urban designers should aim to discard in favor of a view of the different cultures as parallel and related. This terminology, inherited from the class system and taken up by the sociologists of social stratification, seems itself to have a status significance: it distinguishes the sociologist from the historian, the Litt D, and the middle classes. The sociologist is prepared to mention, *scientifically* of course, the word 'class;' although these terms are probably distasteful to many architects, their use is, I believe, justified in that it focuses attention on important inequities in American society. In any event the field has moved too far for us to drop them. We are stuck with them.

[10] Dwight MacDonald's for upper-middle culture. According to Gans, this culture is the focus of special hostility from high culture critics of mass culture, because it borrows from but refuses to join high culture.

[11] Wolfe defines Boho as 'twentieth-century American slang for *bohemian*; obverse of *hobo*.' His thesis is that artists who cultivate a radical and bohemian image, a Boho Dance, to attract attention must later cultivate another style when and if their work is accepted and they achieve Consummation.

well as in most agencies where governmental and municipal work is allocated through political patronage. According to Gans, this public is more open than it used to be to 'culture,' that is, to high and upper-middle culture, and is experimenting with adaptations of upper-middle culture:

> *Lower middle art continues to be mainly romantic and representational, shunning harsh naturalism as well as abstraction. Still, judging by the many stores offering quickly painted and inexpensive originals . . . lower-middle publics are . . . ready to accept . . . imitations of cubists like Feininger in which the cubist method is altered in a more representational direction, and op art which is softened and romanticized by the use of pastel colors.*

Members of the lower-middle taste public are the main occupants of merchant builder housing in the low-to-middle price range, that is, of the typical Levittown house.

In the past, architects were rarely employed by merchant builders or their customers, but in the early 1970s, economic recession put the single-family detached house beyond the means of the lower-middle taste public. At the same time, the ecology movement, originally the preserve of high-culture youth, transformed itself into a widely-felt nostalgia for something closer to the 'natural environment' than Levittown represents. Perspicacious developers translated these parallel urges into 'planned communities.' 'Planning' here signifies protection of the natural (and probably social) environment and therefore permits the building in suburbia of urban-density row housing, upped in status now to 'town housing.' Town house developments tend to be highly styled, as if to create a stage set for a newly defined way of life. Styling may be 'traditional,' for example, French Provincial, Colonial, or Spanish Colonial or 'Modern.' In either case, it probably requires the use of an architect and, if the styling is Modern, an architect borrowed from upper-middle culture. In both cases, the model house will probably have the Feininger adaptation Gans describes on the wall of its living room.

An architectural firm that grows and prospers usually finds its market in upper-middle or lower-middle culture. Rarely will one firm straddle both. The upper-middle culture architect is probably a name architect who holds or held a faculty position in an architecture school and has agency and political connections at the federal level. He or she is a cosmopolitan and leads a peripatetic existence, traveling between geographically widespread projects. The lower-middle culture architect has a local base of operations radiating from the state capitol. This architect's political identification and contributions provide the moral force behind state agencies' aim to keep state work for state architects.

The high culture architect lives meagerly off a national and international market spread very thin. Although in demand by the 'better' schools of architecture as a lecturer, this architect will probably not be hired by an Ivy League college to design a building. However, a small school, with a strong art or art history department that influences building decisions, may employ the high culture architect. Other sources of high culture commissions may be a city or federal agency, where a young, recently graduated technical staff has the ear of the selection committee; *avant-garde* art patrons building second homes; and loving relatives. This market is too fine a pinpoint to remain upon for long, and the high culture architect must devoutly hope to be co-opted by Midcult[10] to survive. In Tom Wolfe's terms, the architect must hope to move speedily from Boho Dance to Consummation.[11] Whether this consummation is on the architect's terms or on the culture's depends on the abilities of the individual architect. Many architects are adept at persuading their clients to 'grow,' or 'aspire,' that is, to move up to high culture values, and something in the motivation of upper-middle culture clients seems to lend support to this pressure from their architect; the client stretches both purse and aesthetic.

The other cultures in Gans' taxonomy fall, for most architects, into Wolfe's category of the public that is 'not invited.' In low culture, according to Gans, the aesthetics of the home represent female preferences, as the lower-middle and blue-collar classes who are the main public for low taste culture, tend to segregate sexually for social life. The men choose pinup art at work, and the women

> *like religious art and secular representational pictures with vivid colors. Home furnishings reflect the same aesthetic: they must be solid looking and 'colorful.' . . . Low-culture publics prefer ornateness—either in traditional, almost rococo, forms, or in the lavish contemporary style once described as 'Hollywood modern.'*

On television, low culture is represented architecturally by the Bunker residence. An overall view of that house in its neighborhood introduces *All in the Family*; the symbols of the house locate the Bunkers socially.

Architects, of course, build for members of the uninvited cultures, especially in the public sector, in urban renewal, public housing, schools, colleges, and civic buildings. However, the bureaucractic client usually stands between the architect and the user. The social uprisings of the 1960s and the social planners' criticisms of urban renewal caused architects to seek and consult the real users of their projects. Federal renewal agencies altered their programs to empower local residents to form planning committees funded by HUD and to hire professional staffs to undertake community-sponsored urban renewal. Unfortunately, cuts in federal funding have hamstrung these committees.

Confronting Aesthetic Pluralism

A class-based analysis of the taste cultures of architects and their publics does violence to some Modern architectural pieties. Architects and urban designers, particularly the idealistic ones, like to believe that they are servants of 'the people.' As members of the middle class, they share that class's discomfort with the whole idea

of social stratification and tend to deny the existence of class, or at least to exclude it from polite conversation. Confronted with the existence of class-based tastes, many architects would echo Eugene Debs' idealistic proclamation, 'While there is a lower class I am in it,' or Bauhaus warrior Arthur Korn's rallying cry, 'We are all workers.'

Most architects, it appears, still believe with M J Guinsburg, that the new revolutionaries will make common cause with them, notwithstanding sixty years of evidence to the contrary. If the people still like Levittown, architects argue, it is because they have been brainwashed by the capitalist consumer society and also because they have not seen the alternative. Architects thereby deny the existence of diversified pluralistic aesthetics, just as they deny that they themselves are pushed not only by the dictates of hard functional choices but also by their own aesthetic preferences and symbolic associations.

Many architects continue to hunt for societal salvation through the technology of industrialized mass production; and architectural authoritarianism, the tendency of architects to ram their taste preferences down the throats of others, has reachieved respectability since the late 1960s through a misuse of the language of the ecological movement: now we may call Levittown 'visual pollution.'

Subcultural Programming and the Elitist Box

Gans, to judge from his general prescriptions for satisfying the demands of cultural pluralism, would probably suggest to architects that they describe and analyze the architectural tastes of the smallest subcultures they can distinguish. He would recommend that members of these subcultures choose architects from their own ranks who share their aesthetic preferences.

This 'subcultural programming,' as Gans calls it, sounds simple but is not. The social forces that have propelled architects willy-nilly (and granted sometimes more willy than nilly) into an elitist role will tend to maintain them there. Barring great change within the society, the financing and implementation of architectural projects in the public and private sector will continue to be presided over by middle-class entrepreneurial and managerial executives. Educating these educated lay people to the need for community input and user evaluation studies appears to be the only way open to making architectural projects suit the people who use them.

Today, a family that chooses lower-middle or low taste culture does not feel the need of an architect, an 'effete Eastern snob.' If such a family or community or their developer should hire an architect, this would probably be because they want to *change* their taste culture and need help from the architect to do so. Imagine a client, living in what he or she has come to regard as a ticky-tacky box, who goes to an architect for a new house. If the architect replies, 'Gee, what you have is pretty nice; I like it myself. I would give you something very similar, maybe a little bigger,' the client is likely to suspect an elaborate joke. Knowing that upper-middle culture says suburban sprawl is bad, the client asks, 'Are you putting me on?'

When high culture borrows from low culture, recent converts to upper-middle culture are outraged. One suburban sprawl community interviewed two planning firms. The high-culture firm said, 'We would try to enhance the very special character, the *genius loci*, of your city.' The upper-middle culture planner stood in the middle of the community and said, 'Everything I see around me is crap.' The community chose him. Philadelphia, casting around for suitable local symbols for its Bicentennial celebration, was eager to employ such landmarks as the Liberty Bell and Independence Hall but would not entertain the use of its equally characteristic and perhaps more friendly symbols, the hoagie and the pretzel.

These negative reactions from citizens and their politicians to local popular symbols (in Philadelphia's case to the symbols identified with the politicians'

[12] Herbert J Gans, 'Preserving Everyone's Noo Yawk,' *The New York Times*, January 28, 1975

[13] Ada Louise Huxtable 'Cooper Union Projects Vary Architecture Show,' *The New York Times*, November 13, 1971

[14] *Ibid*

own constituents) bring into question Gans' recommendation that New York preserve not only the historical architecture of the rich but also the city's popular historical architecture, for example, small row houses, nineteenth-century tenements, office buildings, and factories. 'If the Metropolitan Museum can erect an Egyptian temple on its grounds,' he asks, 'should it not also put up a Lower East Side synagogue and an old New York church?'[12]

These are worthy sentiments, and the examples he cites should be preserved, but I predict that, while the mansions of the rich and the Egyptian temple will draw the crowds of people, only high culture artists and scholars will visit the tenements, row houses, and synagogues. I think that Americans, like Russians, feel that they, the people, have a right to columns.

By the same argument, we should expect that the last architects willing to build according to the tastes of the lower taste cultures would be architects who have themselves emerged from these cultures. For example, in the early 1970s, students of architecture at Yale University undertook research into suburban sprawl housing and its symbolism. At about the same time, students at Cooper Union produced an exhibit entitled 'Education of an Architect—A Point of View.' Ada Louise Huxtable of the *New York Times* wrote of the Cooper Union students' exhibit:

> *This spectacularly beautiful work, elegant, formal and totally detached from the world around it, represents a kind of counter-revolution in today's educational thought and practice. . . . With schools beginning to turn toward today's world and the pop environment of the 1970s for lessons, at Cooper Union they have gone back to fundamental, abstract problems of form and space and the masters of the modern movement. Here are Le Corbusier dissected, Rietveld resurrected, De Stijl exploded, Cubism and Constructivism redefined. . . . Most revolutionary of all is the style of this work, or what looks, superficially, like its total irrelevance.*[13]

Of the Cooper Union students she said:

> *When students at other schools set up ghetto workshops, at Cooper Union they learn how to put buildings together. They believe in the well-made joining as well as in the dignity of man. These are city students, many from less than affluent homes in deteriorating neighborhoods, and they know a lot about the dignity of man. No one has to teach them urban problems.*[14]

It seems an inevitable reversal that Yale students should study lower-middle culture while Cooper Union students study the architecture of the old elite. The strains of upward mobility being what they are, we should expect architects of lower-middle and lower class origin to buy more completely than would their upper-middle class colleagues the whole freight of upper-middle culture values, including architectural values. As recent converts, they will see their role as converting the heathen, proselytizing them to aspire. Ivy U can afford to learn from Levittown; City U probably cannot.

Any architect who steps out of the elitist box today courts trouble from design review boards and architectural critics. The best example of this is the architect Morris Lapidus whose career has been, until recently, almost totally identified with one taste culture. The architectural press ignored or pilloried him; his colleagues wondered why he, as a 'good architect,' should stoop to design New York store interiors and Miami Beach hotels of such 'vulgarity.' He himself claimed that what he did was 'not architecture.' It is significant and poignant that new architectural theories and a revival of interest in Art Deco have brought Lapidus to the fore as an architect of interest to the high culture, and that forty years after he designed them, Morris Lapidus' projects have become the subject of research and analysis by his son and others—research that falls well within the bounds of accepted architectural high culture.

Satisfying Pluralistic Taste Cultures: The Something-for-Everyone, Subcultural-Programming, and Value-Added Approaches

The mass media attempt to satisfy pluralistic taste cultures by including something for everyone. *All in the Family* fields two generations of protagonists, several ethnic groups, and at least two shades of political opinion. Gans suggests that a more suitable strategy would be to program directly to smaller taste publics and to abandon the leavening process that is required for a broad-scale appeal. The sharper profiling of taste publics that subcultural programming allows would leave more people better satisfied.

In architecture and physical planning, both models—something-for-everyone and subcultural programming—apply, but the latter has limited use owing to the relative permanence and size of buildings and the physical city. Because buildings and cities are big, they inevitably serve wide taste publics; because they last a long while, over the length of their lives they serve many different people. Subcultural programming certainly has its place in architecture and urbanism. This is in essence what happens between the architect and the private client particularly in home design, where subtle I-thou relations are at the base of the design process. This method can be stretched to cover small communities, for example civic associations and neighborhood groups, and a skillful merchant builder can simulate subcultural programming by profiling the market carefully.

However, such a developer may take another tack and produce a sturdy but noncommittal house, perhaps vaguely Colonial as at Levittown, that lends itslf to do-it-yourself additions by householders in the direction of their own taste preferences. The householder literally adds on the values, usually by applying symbolic and ornamental decoration. The value-added method is preferred too by most architects, who at least pay lip service to the notion of designing 'anonymous' housing that people can 'make their own.'

This still leaves begging the question of the large civic building or the city-wide facility or system. For whom shall they be programmed? In such projects, people must add their own symbolic meanings mentally rather than physically, and the architecture should be evocative rather than anonymous in order to enable them to do so. Here the something-for-everyone approach to values seems to be most suitable, although one balks at the task of defining the architectural equivalents of Archie, Edith, the Jeffersons, Gloria, and Mike, in, say, the design of a city hall. However, I suspect that cultural pluralism may be less of a problem in urban design than the social critics lead us to believe, and that further investigation into subcultural urban values in design will demonstrate that there are enough shared values to allow architects to find something for almost everyone in civic building and urban design.

Shared Values

For example, the planner who works for an urban community made up of several subcommunities, some black and some blue-collar ethnic, may discover broad areas of shared values regarding the environment. All groups may agree upon the desirability of stopping a proposed expressway and rehabilitating run-down houses, upon the need for more open space, the value of gardening, the sanctity of the individual's home, the scourge of public housing (I have yet to find any group, no matter how poor, that wants public housing in its area), and upon the advisability of keeping the high school out of the neighborhood and the rich from moving in. The main difference in values between the two groups may be that the white group does not want the black group living nearby.

In Philadelphia, a value confluence between upper-class exurban women and members of the city's Negro matriarchy resulted in the Neighborhood Garden Association. Here black and white women of about the same age but remarkably different economic status were able to induce considerable physical and social renewal in some Philadelphia slum areas because they agreed that flowers in window boxes are beautiful, that beauty is important in the lives of people and can help keep children from crime, that people should see things grow, that vacant lots should be cleared and planted with rose trellises, and that these gardens are good places to read Bible stories to children. This set of WASP cultural values shared by old Philadelphians and recent southern migrants was hardly shared by the upper-middle culture professionals in the city agencies, who clucked in puzzlement at the lady garden clubbers' successes.

Our studies of people's attitudes toward housing[15] suggest that there is a set of values that can in general be termed middle class and that are shared by almost (note *almost*) all taste cultures in the United States. Some shared values:

– 'home' may mean a rural area or small town but not the city. 'Home' is probably short for 'down home,' as in the Winston ad's 'Down home taste.' Levittown is a suitable approximation of 'down home' because it has winding streets, plenty of open space, informal landscaping, and greenery everywhere.

– home, particularly the single-family detached home, is the family castle. It is the most important locus for demonstrating pride of ownership and social status.

– history and patriotism are good and provide symbol systems that can demonstrate a family's sentiments about home: hence, the coach lanterns, colonial shutters, wagon wheels, picket fences, and Williamsburg colors of much of suburbia. Perhaps the most ubiquitous symbol in American housing is the eagle, followed by the American flag. Rural recall runs through these symbols and is picked up too in the Kentucky-style, barred, painted fencing that competes for popularity with the Colonial picket fence. Other widely used symbols are the classical portico (southern plantation), the flamingo (luxurious hedonism, Florida), and foundation planting (estate topiary).

– the immediate neighborhood is as important as the home in expressing status. Front yards should be manicured to the street line and 'big-city' paved sidewalks avoided; fencing, except for a few token feet of Colonial fencing, is unfriendly and not neighborly. The street is the showcase of the houses that abut it, and failure to maintain the street side of one's house is an unneighborly act.

These values seem to hold from back alleys in city slums to sumptuous retreats in exurbia.

Variations and Deviations

There is a wide range of possible expressions of these values. Variations may occur along several different scales. Variations along a traditionalist-establishment-*avant-garde* spectrum may be observed in one taste culture: high culture traditionalists may live in carefully restored, genuine colonial cottages, furnished with antiques of the period; establishment members of high culture may choose a white, cubist, neo-Corbusian style of the early 1970s; while the *avant-garde* end of the spectrum lives in a loft with Art Deco furnishings gleaned from thrift shops ten years ago.

This spectrum relates to the age spectrum; as the young tend to favor the avant garde and the old the traditional. The varied subsets of youth culture are highly visible but evanescent, because young people usually join other taste groups when they grow older. A New Jersey teenage dancer employed in a New York night spot told Tom Wolfe: 'I don't want to live in New York. I want some place more like where we used to live in New Jersey. I don't like living here. There aren't any trees.' Her sentiments, Wolfe says, 'should reassure a whole generation of Jersey mothers about where the Jersey Teenage rebellion is heading.'[16]

Change in age and position in the life cycle may alter people's architectural and environmental preferences. Urban high living in pad or apartment seems to be a stage in the youth of many taste publics, but marriage and the first or second child bring a desire for a life that is 'rural' (actually suburban).

The elderly are particularly restricted in their ability to exercise their taste preferences; they form a large

[15] D Scott Brown, R Venturi, P Schmitt, and Yale School of Architecture students, a research project 'Remedial Housing for Architects, or Learning from Levittown' (Yale University, 1970, unpublished). Portions of this study were exhibited in 'Signs of Life: Symbols in the American City,' a Bicentennial exhibition of the National Collection of Fine Arts, Smithsonian Institution, Renwick Gallery, Washington, DC, February-October 1976.

[16] Tom Wolfe, 'The Peppermint Lounge Revisited,' *The Kandy-Kolored Tangerine-Flake Streamline Baby* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1965)

component of the remaining American urban population, both rich and poor. The success of planned retirement communities in suburban and exurban areas, however, seems to suggest that, for many elderly, the preferences asserted at the time of family formation continue for the rest of their lives.

Ethnic preferences and variety are downgraded by Gans, who feels that barring a few rituals and the panethnic foods available to everyone in the supermarket, most ethnic differentiation has disappeared by the third or fourth generation. In housing, however, there are observable differences, especially in the appliqué of decorative symbols that different groups choose for their homes. For example, Italian South Philadelphia is richer in ornamental iron work than are nearby neighborhoods and stands out for its high level of maintenance. In Italian-American city and suburban houses, religious imagery and objects and European decorative motifs may join the eagles and American flags of the dominant culture, and plaster Madonnas may replace the ornamental garden jockeys.

Black tastes in housing largely parallel those of the dominant culture, with the exception that black professionals and students involved in community renewal may search for an expression of their African ancestry in housing forms. Middle class black households may, I suspect, choose Afro motifs for some interior decoration—for example, for a son's bedroom—and the Sears Roebuck catalogue stocks African theme fabrics and bed linens suitable for this purpose.

Ethnic taste publics in general seem to combine what they like of their ethnic culture with what they prefer of American culture, as Philadelphia's Mayor Rizzo demonstrated when he declared that his new house would combine the best of the American Colonial and the Italian Renaissance traditions.

Nouveau riche environments are created by upwardly mobile families who obtain more money and larger houses than their peers but not the tastes in art and architecture that go with high incomes. Such environments are disdained as crude and vulgar by high and upper-middle culture. Yet it is to these areas, to Hollywood a generation ago and now to the homes of film stars, rock artists, and sports heroes wherever they are, that architects and urbanists should turn for hints on the tastes of publics who do not have the income to compete in the marketplace in the ordinary run of events but who are affected by decisions that architects and planners make on housing, urban renewal, and zoning.

Architects too are a deviant taste public. They form subsets within high and upper-middle culture. Although a small group, they are powerful and indirectly set the guidelines for architectural tastes and preferences of other groups. Most architectural ideas seem to originate within a small, international clique of high-culture architects, who may themselves have found the ideas outside high culture, for example in industrial architecture. These ideas are then picked up and popularized by upper-middle taste culture architects, and they become, as Modern architecture is now, accepted as a style of the establishment. The process of altering Modern architecture to make it acceptable to upper-middle and lower-middle taste publics is viewed by the architectural *avant-garde* as prettifying and selling out, a pyrrhic victory for Modern architecture.

Avant-garde architects who watch the popularizers profit from their work are apt to react irritably to being dubbed elitist. Against the notion that all taste cultures should be equally valuable in a democracy, the *avant-garde* architect poses the assertion that time usually validates *avant-garde* high culture; that today's outrageous innovation becomes tomorrow's popular choice. Van Gogh, who died without selling a painting, now draws the crowds to the art museum. The question the architectural innovator asks is: In a democracy, what aesthetic rights and choices should the present generation cede to future generations that over the years will outnumber today's majority?

Straddling, Value Hierarchies, and Value Aggregation

Gans uses the term 'straddling' to describe an individual's participation in two or more taste cultures—the professor who reads detective stories. A broader formulation would suggest that people's tastes are hierarchic, that one individual may have different taste preferences for a city-wide project than for his or her own home. When Boston City Hall was built, it was an upper-middle taste culture architectural icon derived from a high culture source, LeCorbusier's La Tourette Monastery. Perhaps by now many, or even most Bostonians, bar a few high culture architects, some social planners, and some civil rights activists, feel that the city hall is 'very suitable' (that is, if they think about it at all), and this includes occupants of suburban ranchers and Cape Cod cottages who would find it highly unsuitable if it were located near their homes.

Despite the existence of pluralistic taste cultures and publics in American society, there are, I believe, areas of shared values broad enough to enable architects and urbanists to aggregate taste publics to the size needed to mandate building and planning projects. Establishment Modern architecture may be quite acceptable in public buildings, even though people avoid it in their homes; by the same token, the vulgar commercial strip that engages upper-middle culture wrath may engender no more than faint complaint from most other taste cultures, so long as the neon keeps out of their residential streets.

Parallel Cultures and Taste Flows Between Them

The parallel and noncompeting taste cultures of today's mass societies had their counterparts in the 'great' and 'little' cultural traditions of pre-industrial Europe. The great tradition, the courtly high culture, like today's high and upper-middle cultures, was cosmopolitan and international in focus. It stressed the achievements of the individual, for example the *roi soleil*, and was subject to frequent swings in fashion. The little tradition, the folk culture, like the decoration on a Levittown house, stressed historical antecedents, patriotism, and neighborliness and revealed the individual as part of the community. It changed only slowly.

There were numerous taste flows between the two traditions, for example, in the rocaille-derived curves of eighteenth-century peasant furniture or the folk tunes that startled the first audiences of Beethoven's symphonies. Today the mass media have accelerated the flows and muddied the distinctions between cultures, but outrage still results if intercultural movements go in the wrong direction, if high culture turns toward low. Upper-middle culture saves its strongest salvos for those who debase its taste canons and retains its choicest epithets for those in high culture who go 'slumming' in lower-middle culture: they are called supine, arrogant, and patronizing; they 'sold out,' 'betrayed their responsibilities as architects;' and they 'wouldn't live there themselves.' Upper-middle critics take Gans to task for spelling culture without a capital C, and us to task for learning from Las Vegas. The outraged tone of their reviews and letters to the editor sounds startingly similar to the tone lower-middle culture uses when it encounters pornography. In matters of aesthetics, it is easy to *épater* the *bourgeoisie*.

Yet analysis of the popular cultural and physical environment need not be supine, arrogant, or patronizing. And if one recommends nonjudgmentalism as a heuristic method for architecture, it does not follow that one must therefore be nonjudgmental about social or economic conditions as well. It is a poor reflection on the intellectual level of architectural critical thought in America that we find it necessary to point out that one can learn from suburbia and yet be in favor of social justice and civil liberties.

Taste Cultures and the Architect: A Prescription

How should the existence of pluralistic cultures affect the practice of architecture in America? I have suggested here that although architects have managed to achieve acceptance of their viewpoint and preferences from the upper-middle taste culture—the population segment most responsible for building—nevertheless it is not wholly within the power of architects to change the situation and design for other taste cultures. Upper-middle culture architecture is what most clients come to architects for.

The extent of the damage done by the expectations of these clients and by the conditioned preferences of architects depends on the particular architect's position and role in the decision-making and city-building structure. When an architect builds for a single client or a small group who will also be the users of the building, architect and client probably share aesthetic tastes; after all the client chose the architect. If they do not, there seems to be little wrong in the architect's trying to persuade the client to aspire to the architect's own taste preferences: the client either has this aspiration in mind or at least partly wants it. The architect who works for a merchant builder or community developer was also probably chosen because the client likes the architect's work and has decided that future buyers will like it too. The presence of an economic or market analyst on the development team may add an extra complication; this consultant's reference to 'market segments' and 'the house product' may sound too commercial (that is, too lower class) for the architect. Nevertheless, in the end, the same value position holds: the developer has concluded that the market is ready for upper-middle culture.

The architect's lack of understanding or sympathy for some taste cultures can become pernicious when there is a separation between the client with whom the architect works and the subsequent user. This is often the case in physical planning and urban design, but

it applies as well to public housing and large institutional buildings such as hospitals and universities. Architects and urban designers who do this work most need knowledge of taste cultures; but for all architects a broadening of the terms of reference to include more than their own personal tastes can be a means of sharpening and refining their aesthetic sensibilities. Ranging beyond the confines of one's own taste culture and conditioning provides an aesthetic jolt. It opens the eye to new possibilities of beauty and revives the creative energies. At least, it can help architects to understand the context in which they build.

Architects must put aside their disdain for sociology and their squeamishness over the facts of social stratification and try hard to understand the class groupings, taste cultures, and life styles of the people for whom they build. They should try to acquire a developer's understanding of markets, particularly housing markets, and a politician's understanding of constituencies and the calculus of benefits and losses among them. This is not because the market or the political arena are places of perfect justice but because they are important influences on the built environment; they provide information on users' needs and preferences, and they present the architect with models of decision-making other than the 'I expert, you listen,' model of the professionals. Future users of buildings should be part of the constituency too, and the architect should raise with the client the question of discounting present needs and values for the sake of future users.

Architects should become aware of the symbolic content of architecture, particularly of popular architecture. They should view the symbolic decorations that people add to their houses as valuable indices to group tastes and life styles. Architects should recognize as well the symbolic content of their own work and understand its role in expressing their personal value systems.

Architects who aim to satisfy the tastes of people different from themselves need not be value free; indeed they cannot be. Even Gans admits that 'creators,' in this case architects, should feel that their contribution meets their own creative needs; but architects should be aware of their own values and should not confuse facts with values. As I have said, the ecology movement delivered timely, factual warnings on the development of the physical environment, but it also encouraged architects to misrepresent aesthetic architectural values as ecological facts. Air and water pollution can be physically measured. 'Visual pollution' is largely a question of taste, and the term is often used pejoratively in reference to some other group's taste culture.

Architects and planners who design or regulate large-scale development should see the urban environment as a complex and difficult whole, to be understood and strategically managed rather than imposed upon; not as a chaos requiring evermore control and regimentation. The architectural autocracy of total design applied to all objects from ashtrays to company headquarters may suit the need for prestige of a giant corporation, but for large-scale architecture and urban design, it is often unjust, usually unbeautiful (to pundits *and* people), and an inadequate expression of our society and time.

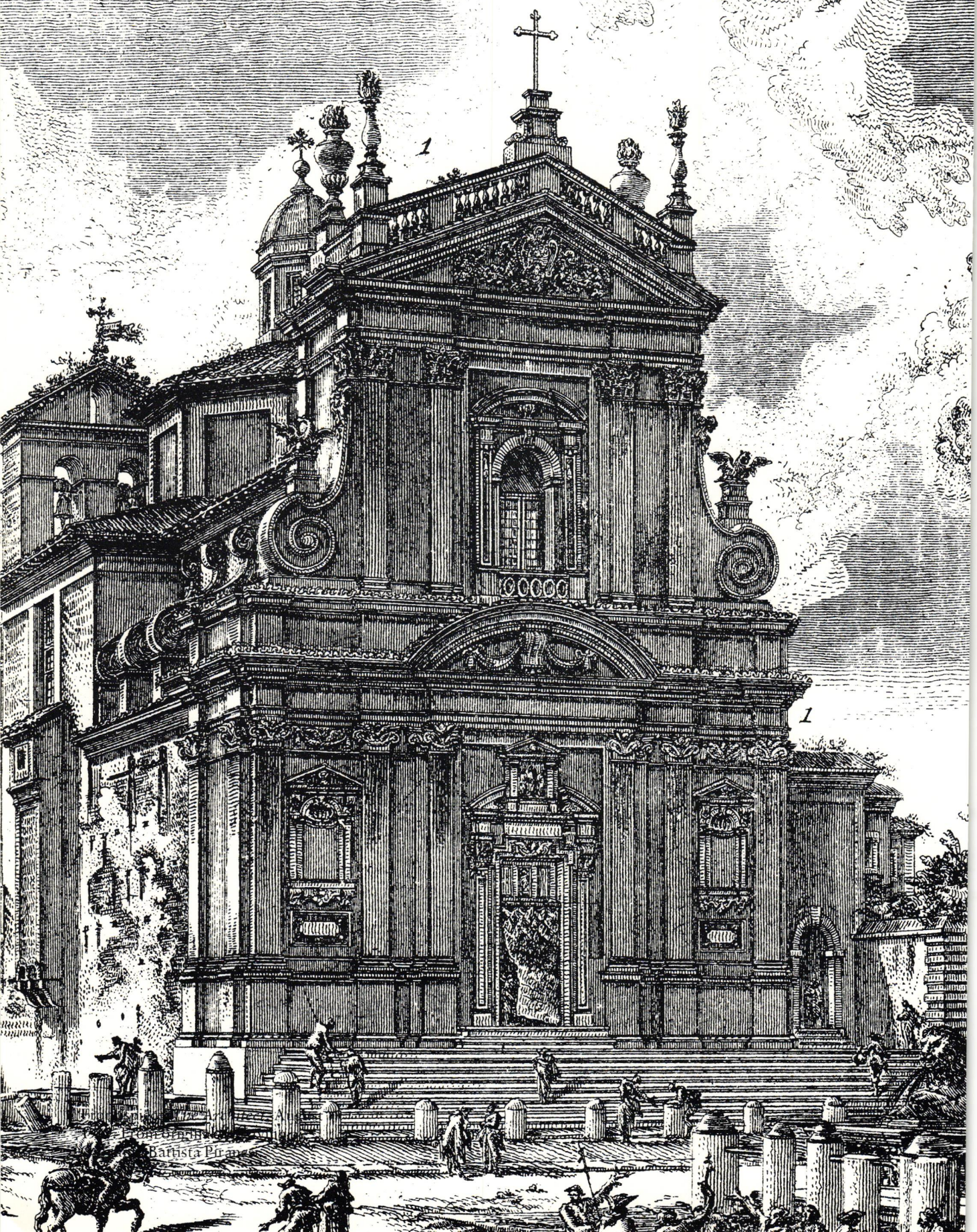
Conclusion

Because architects disdain the vulgarity of the everyday landscape, we lack knowledge of the structure of American architectural tastes today. There has been almost no documentation of architectural taste cultures and subcultures or of flows between them. There is no understanding of the ways in which individual tastes are aggregated to form community, civic, or national tastes. Nor is there discussion of shared tastes or of the possibility of mediation and negotiation on aesthetics between multivalent aesthetic cultures. Lacking this knowledge, government solves the problem of the aggregation and mediation of tastes through the use of fine arts commissions and design review boards. The elderly midcult architects and lay people who occupy these boards, even the honest ones who are not primarily involved in keeping their competitors out of town, tend to approve of upper-middle architecture only. 'The architects know what we want,' says one art commission member, 'There is a straight line of good taste running through history and those who have it know what it is.'[17]

Although most architects are destined to remain the creatures of a limited number of taste cultures, they should take the wider view, if only to make themselves and the influential taste publics they serve more sympathetic to the needs of others. Designers who hope to plan with and for the American city need to take a wide-eyed, nonjudgmental look at it first. This open-minded examination will increase their understanding and will probably make them more creative artists as well.

[17] Meyer Potamkin, Philadelphia Art Commission, quoted by Thomas Hine in 'Design Review—Who Needs It?' *Philadelphia Inquirer*, March 2, 1975

THE ARCHITECT



The Narcissist Phase in Architecture

Alex Tzonis and Liane Lefaivre

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The following article argues that Post-Modernism is little more than self-conscious posturing based on the economic necessity of architects to validate themselves, professionally and intellectually, to society at large. It presents a suspicion, widespread among many practicing architects today, toward the somewhat impractical positions taken by contemporary 'avant-garde' theoretists.

This article holds a unique place within our discussion, as both the only economically-based analysis and the only strong criticism of Post-Modernism. Yet no matter how valid the claims made here, that flashy new movements result primarily in financial gain and publicity for their promoters, we may still question whether the existence of economic imperatives behind some of these actions can be used to generate a blanket criticism of all the products of these activities over time. The relationship of deeper cultural forces to publicized trends is left aside, and thus the critical issue of Modern Architecture's legacy, and public rejection of it, is unresolved. It may be that the 'fads' depicted here have their roots in profound social and cultural needs, no matter how and by whom they were first realized.

Any sudden change in widely-accepted architectural standards is likely to produce both avid proponents and detractors of the new formula. When the new language uses terms such as 'decoration,' 'historic allusionism,' and 'poché' *it is particularly likely, and perhaps rightly so, that it be accused of leaving critical, moral, and practical issues aside. It is necessary in these cases to differentiate between substantive and merely stylistic changes, and to reiterate, as Professor Tzonis does here, the precious territory gained in previous years.*

This paper deals with the curiously incongruous mood that has settled in architecture schools, magazines, and to a certain extent offices and professional organizations—a mood which can be characterized as cheerful pessimism.

To fully grasp this development in Modern Architecture, the authors believe it is necessary to place it in the socio-economic framework of the past few years. The history of movements—especially *avant-garde* movements—like the history of battles and heroic acts, has been absorbing and easy to grasp, but this has been gained by assigning to conceptual and institutional developments a life and sometimes a will of their own. But beliefs, enthusiasms and ideas do not emerge, develop, and deteriorate on their own. They evolve within the psychological idiosyncracies of persons driven by personal interests and engaged with others in conflicts and cooperation, through reciprocities, dependencies, obligations, and dominations—what Norbert Elias calls 'human figurations.'

The case of Modern Architecture is no exception. It is not completely capable of reproducing its own conditions of existence—it is autonomous only up to a point—and cannot be wholly detached, as it tends to be in many works of architectural history and criticism, from certain events: the period of accellerated economic growth and expansion of the late fifties and early sixties, the attempts of the mid-sixties to promote technological innovation and diversified consumption followed by a world wide recession, an economic and energy crisis, crisis of the state of legitimation and fiscal solvency, the present lack of apparent economic and political direction (at even the highest levels of decision making), and the laxness of most of the social and political agents of change. These are characteristics of what is commonly referred to as late or advanced capitalism and have played an important role in the current surge of 'new professionalism;' an attempt to bolster the damaged status of the architectural profession, at the expense of broader considerations linked to the technological, economic, psychological, cultural and economic aspects of the man-made environment.

This mood, which can be seen from inside the profession as arising from a *narcissistic* retreat to a make-believe world where the architect still reigns supreme and as a denial of the present

difficulties in the market, appeared almost simultaneously in Milan, Barcelona, New York. A multi-national economy and an international system of architectural education and press make it possible for so-called advanced thinking to crop up in any part of the world which, regardless of local differences in tone and emphasis, and in spite of unequal national economic development, makes up an international dialogue. A word of warning should be inserted here against vulgar economic determinism. A student of the development of architectural movements might find that the reverse is also true. Places which appear to be closer to the core of late capitalism may display a less advanced discussion. This is partly because they lack the necessary conceptual and institutional vehicles (as in the case of Germany where they were severely shaken during the 1930s and some parts of the United States where they simply never existed). Such cases present paradoxical instances of retardation in specialized debates.

The authors are critical of this recent phase of architecture, finding in it, not the salvation it claims to be, but a deepening of the crisis in the architectural profession, a destruction of basic know-how and design techniques, and a foreshortening of the creative capabilities and social accountability that have been formed throughout the history of the modern profession, not least those which came to light in the scientist and populist movements of the 1960s. To cheerful pessimism, the authors prefer a more sober optimism, and propose in this spirit the conservation of technical skills, serious and deep research, an accelerated development of architectural knowledge, especially in the field of the social history of architecture. Such knowledge will permit the architect to criticize and plan, to press for social change, to look more realistically into the limitations and the potentials of the present socio-economic organization, rather than giving way to resignation through stagnant individual quietism.

As we approach the end of the 1970s, architecture has entered a phase which has baffled many onlookers, giving rise to a good deal of perplexing conjecture in reviews and magazines and to which confusion of course the present article might only add.[1] Indeed, the recent developments have been interpreted variously as the heritage of Palladianism, as a set of exercises in Chomskyan linguistics, as a Marxist redefinition of architecture, and perhaps most unexpectedly of all, as the stuff of which 'apories' are made.[2] The situation in architecture has been described in turn as realistic,[3] dead,[4] and optimistic.[5] The problematic inconsistencies of these trends echo not only in a variety among enthusiasts and critics but also the stylistic eclecticism of the architects concerned. Some of their projects are manneristic versions of Le Corbusier and Terragni, some borrow from the surreal architectural settings of de Chirico and the only accidentally similar official architecture of Fascist Italy, while others recall the 'American Streamline' style of the 1930s. Add to this diversity German expressionism and the French Beaux-Arts tradition, which have also left their mark on many of the new designs, and the result is admittedly confusing.

Yet for all the divergences, these designers do share some strikingly uniform features. These common attributes are found neither in the stylistic aspect of buildings nor in the explicit rationalisations presented in their commentaries but in the conceptual presuppositions behind each individual effort. Succinctly put, these attributes are: 1) *formalism,* a marked preoccupation with the purely visual features of architectural designs, 2) *graphism*, a fascination with the evocative power of drawings and models, 3) *hedonism*, a tendency to view design only as a source of gratification, 4) *elitism*, the conviction that the architect is the supreme judge of the quality of the built environment, 5) *avant-gardism*, a strong belief in the uniqueness and originality of their own ideas, and 6) *anti-functionalism*, the rejection not only of the functionalist aesthetic, but the very idea of function itself. To see the recent phase of architecture through these common

[1] The literature is growing around this topic. A large number of architectural journals are preoccupied with this issue, especially *l'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, *Architectural Design*, *Lotus* and *Oppositions*. Some of the first articles to present this point of view were:

Eisenman, P, 'Notes on Conceptual Architecture: Towards a definition,' *Casabella* Volume 35, number 359-360 (December 1971), pp 48-58

Rowe, C, 'Piecemeal Social Engineering,' *Architectural Review* (August 1974) pp 6-61

Stern, R, 'Stomping at the Savoye,' Five on Five, *Architectural Forum*, Volume 138, number 4 (May 1973) pp 46-48

Robertson, J, 'Machines in the Garden,' Five on Five, *Architectural Forum*, Volume 138, number 4 (May 1973) pp 49-53

Tafuri, M, 'European Graffiti, five × five = twenty-five,' *Oppositions* Volume 5, pp 36-74

Frampton, K, 'Frontality vs. Rotation,' *Five Architects* (New York: Wittenborn, 1972) pp 9-13

Frampton, K, 'Two or Three Things I Know About Them: A Note on Mannerism,' *Architectural Design,* Volume 47, number 5, 1977, pp 315-318

Giurgola, R, 'The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie,' Five on Five, *Architectural Forum*, Volume 138, number 4, (May 1973) pp 46-57

[2] M Scolari, 'Les Apories de l'Architecture,' *l'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* number 190, April 1977

[3] B Huet, 'Formalisme, Realisme,' *l'Architure d'Aujourd'hui*, number 190, April 1977.

[4] Quoted in A Rossi, 'Une Education realiste,' *l'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* number 190, April 1977

[5] Carlo Aymonino, 'Une Architecture de l'Optimisme,' *l'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, number 190, April 1977

[6] A Tzonis, L Lefaivre, 'In de Naam van het Volk' (The Populist Movement in Architecture) in (Dutch) *Forum*, number 3, 1976; (German) *Bauwelt* 10 January 1975

[7] A Tzonis, L Lefaivre, 'History of Architecture as Social Science,' Proceedings from conference of the same title held at the Kunst Historisch Institutut der Rijksuniversiteit, Utrect, held 16-19 May 1977 (Utrecht, June 1978)

characteristics will permit us to identify the unity behind the partial attempts, to explain its path and criticise its direction.

To many, these trends,—with the exception of anti-functionalism in one form or another—represent an unexpected turn of events. The 1960s seemed to point in another direction: neglect for outward appearance and for aesthetic considerations, contempt for architectural drawings and mistrust of their capacity to inform about the end product, an ascetic emphasis on the simple, the ordinary and the commodious, and a general wariness of esoteric discussions. These, combined with an enthusiastic espousal of user participation and of the consultation of experts, were expected to be the legacies with which the 1970s would have to contend.

The authors of the present article have, on previous occasions, used the terms populism[6] and scientism[7] to describe the two most representative movements of the 1960s. Populists in architecture believed that the functionalist norms of design, which stipulated the desirability of a universally applicable order, had to be abolished in favor of a new pluralistic set of norms determined 'by the people.' User needs would replace the stylistic visual ideals advanced by professional architects as the sole criteria of good design. What populists advocated was not only the destruction of traditional architectural norms but even the complete dissolution of the architectural profession. The term scientism, on the other hand, referred to an opposite reaction in the profession, which saw the fault of functionalism not in the ideal of a universal architectural order, but in the sense of rationality in the definition of its norms. Some architects therefore set themselves the task of applying the scientific method to overcome this problem. They tried to reform architecture, to fit it into the mold of an applied science and transform it into a kind of 'soft engineering'.

Populism and scientism barely outlived the 1960s. The end came swiftly and suddenly. By the early years of the following decade their attacks had subsided and, with the exception of a few free shooters firing in the dark, it looked as though the armies of an era which had been hailed as 'post-architectural' had vanished into thin air.

The paraphernalia of the polemics were swept away to the sides of the architectural scene, and a short period of indecisive silence followed. It was one of those dramatic voids that makes an audience at a play feel as though years have passed on stage. This silence, and the mysterious disappearance of the protagonists of the previous action, may account for the fact that when it was declared that architectural thinking had been non-existent during the sixties, no protest was raised.

Why did an approach so diametrically opposed to that of the predecessors surface at that moment? How was it that in-depth discussions in hushed tones about the pleasure of form were able to drown out the clamor of open debates and messianic speeches? What brought about the downfall of populism and scientism? From where has this approach to architecture come? Is it the offspring of a spontaneous conception with nothing to link it to the past? How far will it go in ideas and in practice?

Populism and scientism were removed without any theory, method, or ideology to replace them. Their end came as a result of the economic and energy crises which dried up the resources of the protagonists and rolled back the advanced economic and social conditions, to which populism and scientism had been a response, to a more primitive state. The skillful measures of austere administrators also played a role in this change, as did the soon-apparent unreality of the populist and scientist program itself, whose cooling-off effect on the wild excitations about technological and social breakthroughs of the 1960s cannot be underestimated.

The position of the new phase of architecture in relation to these previous movements ranges from ignorance to hostility. It characterizes scientific concepts and social concerns as completely alien to the real nature of architecture. At first glance, therefore, the new phase seems opposed to the

2 Section, Art and Architecture Building, Yale University, New Haven Connecticut, Paul Rudolph, architect, 1962-63

sensational technocratic and social campaigns of the 1960s, a negative reaction against a failing technology perceived as generating problems rather than solving them, and against the administrative, sterile violence of a spreading Bonapartist state. But in order to verify this first impression, it is necessary to go back in time.

Formalism, graphism, hedonism and elitism have dominated architectural thinking many times in history. They relate to a long tradition, and they are not characteristics of an *avant garde*, if *avant garde* means structures anticipating a new world. In the recent past, the most representative case of this type of thinking is the Procrustes Club[8], a group of American architects whose aim was to promote the pursuit of architectural ideals through the opportunities offered by clients. Prosaic matters such as utility, comfort, economy, and welfare were considered annoying hindrances. The resources for a project were thought best employed when they served the creativity of the designer, who was encouraged to trim and stretch wherever necessary the specifications of the client or user as though the program lay on a procrustean bed.

The Procrustes Club was devoted to the pleasure of form, whether built, glued, or drawn. Openly elitist and outspokenly anti-functionalist, it was something of an exaggerated, but by no means unique, architectural manifestation of the culture of the 1950s. The architecture department at Yale University,[9] to which most of the members were affiliated, followed the same approach although in a milder form. Paul Rudolf was the central figure, the organiser, the pedagogue, the example. Architectural drawings and cardboard models became important because they turned the project into a purely visual object. Ah, those elaborate shadowed perspective sections, those immense stripe-veiled drawings, those white impeccable models roughly chopped in the early hours of the day. They sent electric sparks down the spine of many a young visitor to Rudolf's studio. But the role of Philip Johnson too was primordial. Through frequent visits he monitored, encouraged and supported. If he was the undeniable *eminence grise* of the department, Vincent Scully was its prime mentor. Through his highly charged and massively attended history lectures, he expanded the influence of the approach to future architects and, perhaps more importantly, to future clients. In this same capacity, the role of Carol Meeks, another important architectural historian at Yale, was also notable.

The department viewed history courses as essential to the understanding of studio work. Through their filter Le Corbusier was screened and purified. What remained—his formalist, anti-technological, anti-comfort, anti-social dimension—was arranged side by side with assorted reproductions of Piranesi engravings, Greek temples, Tiffany lamps. In another strain of anti-functionalist formalism, Beaux-Arts schemes from the American Vitruvius and plans of the Chicago Exhibition were included. This extraordinary collage created a closed and self-reinforcing idealized world.

The trend which was probably the most obvious in the Procrustes Club—functionalism-bashing—can be traced to some extent to the writings of Reyner Banham.[10] But Banham's historical investigations were combined with a wayward passion for technology and popular imagery. And so it is in the Giedion of the late writings[11] that we find the real grandfather of the Procrusteans and a great-grandfather of the most recent phase of architecture. Giedion's opening of the way for formalism, graphism, hedonism, and elitism was a betrayal of functionalism (since he made a career of being its extreme propagandist). Henry-Russell Hitchcock was also among the early subverters of functionalism. With the publication of *The International Style* (1932), Hitchcock and Johnson reduced it (a much broader movement by far) to a style and thereby demolished functionalism without even the hint of an attack. (This was possible not only because of their masterly capabilities as strategists but also because of the internal weaknesses, confusion and even dishonesty of functionalist thinking.)

[8] Personal communication with John Johansen

[9] The history of the Yale School of Architecture, though fascinating, has not yet been compiled; the only informative piece for the moment is: R Stern, 'Yale 1950-1965,' *Oppositions*, Volume 4, (October 1974) pp 35-62

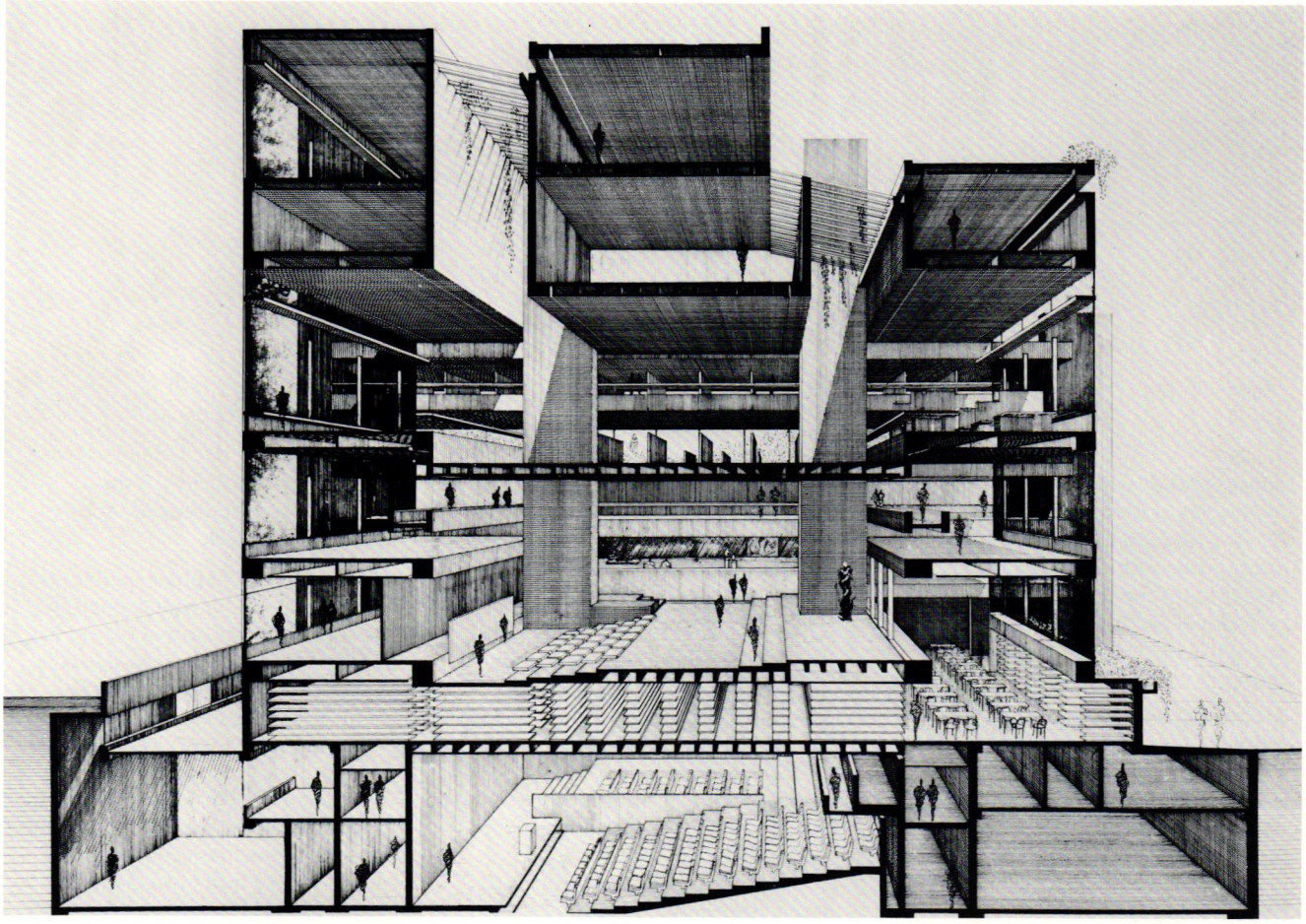
Two excellent articles on the formation of the 1950s in architecture are: P Collins, 'Historicism,' *Architectural Review*, 762 (August 1960), and U H Jordy, 'The Formal Image USA,' *Architectural Review*, (March 1960) pp 157-165

[10] Banham has referred recently to 'Pevsner-bashing' in *Times Literary Supplement*, February 17, 1978, p 191

[11] This can be found especially in the introduction for the thirteenth printing of *Space, Time and Architecture*, (Harvard University Press) entitled 'Architecture of the 1960s: Hopes and Fears' and also in a chapter added, with the title: 'Jorn Utzon and the third generation.'

See also condensation of introduction 'Sigfried Giedion on Playboy Architecture' in *Architectural Forum*, Volume 117, (July 1962) p 116

[12] R and M Wittkower, *Born Under Saturn—The Character and Conduct of Artists*, (WW Norton & Co, New York: 1963)



We could continue down the ladder of ancestry past the 1950s to the Aesthetic Movement of the late nineteenth century, all the way to Alberti's passion for well-proportioned bodies, and even to Abbot Suger's fascination with the altar of Saint-Denis. This journey might help us to set the record straight about the genealogical tree of the characteristics which keep recurring in architecture. But more important than chasing after the forerunners of an idea is explaining its recurring patterns.

Formalism, graphism, hedonism and elitism have returned to dominate architectural thinking whenever the institution of the market has been weakened. Their function has been to give value to the architectural object. In other words, to present the object as precious, alluring, desirable, and to awaken in the spectator the need for possession and thus for transaction. This approach to the design object highlights its visual properties, directing attention to line, surface, and form, thereby confirming the preciousness of the object as well as that of the rules which made it valuable.

These characteristics are especially effective legitimizers of the market because they provide a common frame of reference for the designer, the speculator and the consumer with which they can validate, accept, or discard judgments and statements. This framework shapes the perception of the object, gradually fitting it into a world of fantasy and desire.

In the 1960s the course of the market was obstructed by a conflict among three of its key supports: the iron discipline needed in the modern factory or office, the imagination necessary for making highly technological innovations, and the fantasy required in the design of products for consumption. This situation prompted bold experiments in a frantic search for new ways of working, thinking, and buying.

Populism and scientism were to some degree the outcome in architecture of this general conflict. While scientism aimed at technological breakthroughs in the field, populism ultimately contributed to the increase in consumption by trying to shape architectural products that were responsive to the needs of a wider public.

As with most of the reactions of the 1960s, populism and scientism were impatient extreme enterprises that disrupted conceptual and institutional structures. In the end, the anarchic participation of user groups and the over-analysis of the decision-making process in design hardly made buildings more desirable or their production more efficient. On the contrary, a spirit of constant criticism and questioning impeded the execution of many projects, slowed down architectural production, and in some cases, brought it to a complete halt. In a situation of rising costs of construction, the outcome was close to catastrophic.

Schools hardly fared better. Skills quickly disappeared from the curriculum never to be replaced, or worse yet, to be replaced by completely inoperative new techniques. At least one generation of students graduated without basic skills in drawing, drafting, or conceiving the schematic physical plan of a building.

The recent return to formalism, graphism, hedonism and elitism can be seen as part of an effort to bring architecture back to its traditional ways which, although not the best, now seem to offer at least a more satisfactory alternative: the simple world of universal values of design, the subjective pleasure of built forms, and the private need for design products. Of course, the new phase excludes user participation and empirical methods. It even dispenses with the need for rational, explicit justification processes for the acts of the designer. Gone is the pain and confusion of the pluralist debates, the relativity of results and the other troubles which populism and scientism had brought in their wake.

Thus the new phase of architecture, although very rarely confronting populism and scientism, has helped to erase the memory of a period of instability and has begun to restore a shaken confidence in architecture, and ultimately the market.

Apart from playing a stabilizing role for the architectural practice and for the market, the types of discussions which have emerged from the new phase of architecture have helped the profession to enhance its image. They have done so in two ways: first, by separating out architecture from the professional groups who threatened to impinge on the profession in the 1960s—such as those in the social sciences and

advanced technology—and second, by identifying architecture with fields bearing the aura of achievement—*avant-garde* architecture of the 1920s and 1930s, some *avant-garde* conceptual art trends of the 1960s, and structural linguistics being among the more obvious examples.

Architects have assumed an *as-if* attitude, borrowing from other disciplines or other social or professional groups in order to appear worthy of the prestige these other groups enjoy. For example, we can trace the introduction of the concerns for formalism, graphism, elitism and hedonism to the Renaissance discussion of allegory, proportion, geometric configuration and perspective. These notions helped architects to develop tools of thinking and a professional idiom which emulated those of the humanists,[12] the most influential thinkers in society of the period. The architects profited by this association by using it as a means of rising above the status of worker and supervisor of workers on the building site, thereby preparing the way for the modern architectural profession.

The reasons for this type of *as-if* behavior are complex. Practical people, architects are likely to neglect other fields of inquiry under normal circumstances. Thus, when practice slackens and fails to provide the profession with adequate prestige or power, they look with envy as well as with a practical eye to groups who have attained an enviable stage of intellectual and theoretical development and the status that goes with it.

Measures to salvage architecture were of course much needed. Its image reached a low point after the risky and fruitless adventures of the 1960s. Thus the architect as an *avant-garde* figure was one of the most attractive and convenient images the profession could hope to promote as an antidote; it was different from the populist and scientist images and it was ready-made.

The image of the architect had to be enhanced as much for the self-esteem of the profession as for credibility in the eyes of the public and clients at large. The latest phase of architecture responds not only to the need to restore prestige to the profession and legitimacy to the market, but also to the wish to recreate the sense of contentment within the architectural profession.

The most recent phase of architecture, like populism and scientism, is a spontaneous reaction to the troubling state of affairs in the profession. While the earlier movements concentrated on method and process, this later trend focuses only on the end product. Yet despite its concern with the end product, it denies the importance of getting projects built. Although this tends to make their designs visionary, these projects can hardly be viewed as expressions of a utopian dream. Rather, they are attempts to overcome, psychologically, the recent frustrations of the profession.

We shall call this aspect of the recent phase of architecture *narcissism*, employing the term in its psychoanalytic sense.[13] We shall rely on the analogy between the psychological state of an individual and of a group in the hope of clarifying the recent ambiguous expressions of architecture. Narcissism is characterized by the confusion between the feeling of self-control and of control over the outside world. This is the stage in the development of a child when the self is not yet detached from the things of the external world, when the 'omnipotence of thoughts' dictates a great deal of his acts.

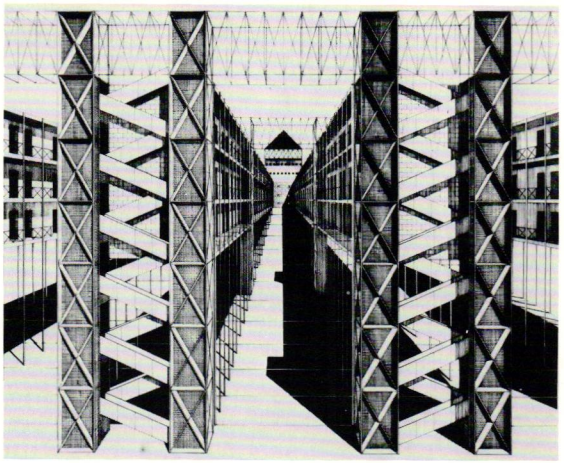
A person may regress to this state after facing an acute disaster such as the death of a loved one, when it is obvious from the outset that no measures can redeem the catastrophe. This regression takes the form of a denial of the painful incident and can occur even under minor stresses and frustrations—before an examination, for instance. The extent of the regression and of the belief in the 'omnipotence of thought' varies with the intensity of the frustration and achieves different degrees of effectiveness.

In social groups—a professional group for instance—a grave loss or a major frustration can provoke similar symptoms of regression: denial of reality and a take-over of the 'omnipotence of thoughts' in its collective thinking.

In the most recent phase of architecture, the preoccupation with formalism, hedonism, graphism and elitism has, to a certain extent, helped to shield a number of practitioners from an unpleasant situation, and has allowed them to shift with an easy conscience from practical measures to a realm of mental constructs. This is an attempt to overcome recent frustrations, to deny the separation between reality and desire, and to turn inward for approval to the closed world of peers or of the office drawing board, where everything becomes possible. This collective narcissism has helped to blur the distinction between wielding professional tools and effectively acting upon the man-made environment. It has helped to bolster a feeling of contentment and ward off a sense of wretchedness before the architectural profession's steadily shrinking sphere of activities.

Populism of course had been naive in believing that architecture suffered mainly from excessive professionalism and that the antidote was the elimination of all professionals. Scientism in turn had cultivated the illusion that the simple naming of architectural phenomena with terms borrowed from fields outside of architecture would automatically lead to good design. Populism saw the troubles of architecture arising from the relation between designer and user, while scientism blamed them on poor thinking, bad techniques and faulty logic. Both tried, therefore, to enlarge the scope of architecture and reform its failing practice by introducing new techniques and methods. If the two movements remained unoperationally utopian, it is partly because they underestimated the professional difficulties involved in such activities as the collection of opinions and the processing of data.

But more constraining than the operational difficulties were the crude models of the role of architecture in society from which populism and scientism departed. Indeed populism and scientism were limited from the



3 Perspective, Competition for the Student's Residence in Trieste, Italy, Aldo Rossi, architect, 1974

start by the absence of a theoretical recognition of architecture's historical, social and cultural setting.

The new phase, on the other hand, suffers not only from disregard for this framework but also from its denial. This position is usually explicitly stated in the writings of its designers or critics; at times, however, it is necessary to dig beneath the semiological and marxist phraseology of the *avant gardist* manifestos to unearth the presuppositions and implications of these unstated architectural values.[14]

The same negation of social or scientific outlooks in design results in the capital importance assigned to the drawing and to the model, elevating them from a means to an end in the design process. A project, however simple it may be to implement, involves some technical thinking and collective involvement, and its maintenance and use brings it into contact with scientific or social constraints. A drawing implies the possibility of form existing independent of technical and social limitations.

In the elitism of the modern phase of architecture, anti-social and unscientific attitudes are explicitly presented as merits. Hedonism also makes a building appear as an end in itself, an object of pleasure to satisfy the desire of a sole individual. Hedonism liberates design from the obligations of scientific rigor and social accountability.

In this new phase, there is an absence of human concern, an inability to acknowledge facts incompatible with evidence; issues of form are handled with the greatest naiveté and arbitrariness. If anything was achieved by the human and social sciences during the last hundred years it was the demonstration that the desires of individuals are not expressions of a private internal self but of self-expressing internalized social forces, or a self in constant interaction with a collective environment. Thus the pleasure of hedonism in architecture is only the result of an illusion which scientific thinking can overcome, if only gradually.

The perception of beauty in particular design forms, as with any other cultural product, is linked to their own constitution as well as to their social context. Arguments which speak to one of those factors exclusively simply reduce, impoverish, and mutilate the real nature of architecture; the meaning of design form is not solely intrinsic. A form which arouses satisfaction is like a message whose significance has been understood and appreciated, interpreted and re-evaluated in the mind like a code, a code collectively produced and socially legitimized.

The narcissistic trend has had an undeniable impact on the world of architects. But its place in history promises to be a minor one. It is a development concerned with the marginal aspects of architecture, contrary to scientism and populism which aimed at the heart of the profession. While populism and scientism were clumsy *avant-gardes* which hinted at future directions for architecture, narcissism is a minor conceptual and institutional reaction. It recalls another group which disgusted with the materialism, opportunism, and cunningness exhibited in the conflicts and alliances of seventeenth century absolutist France, chose a different path. These were the *précieux*.[15] They indulged in the creation of a private language for discussing only matters of pleasure. They chose names from classical mythology for one another and even put to paper their fantasies about their encounters in an ideal mythological world. Whatever this strange game of allegory owed to prior archaic ritualistic traditions which had been highly integrated in society, by the seventeenth century it amounted only to a kind of anachorisis – in other words a retreat from social life, combined with a narcissistic turn inward to an unreal world. Because of the *précieux*' refusal to come to terms with the real world and their subsequent inability to develop tools for dealing with it, the impact of this group on both their contemporaries and on future generations was very small indeed.

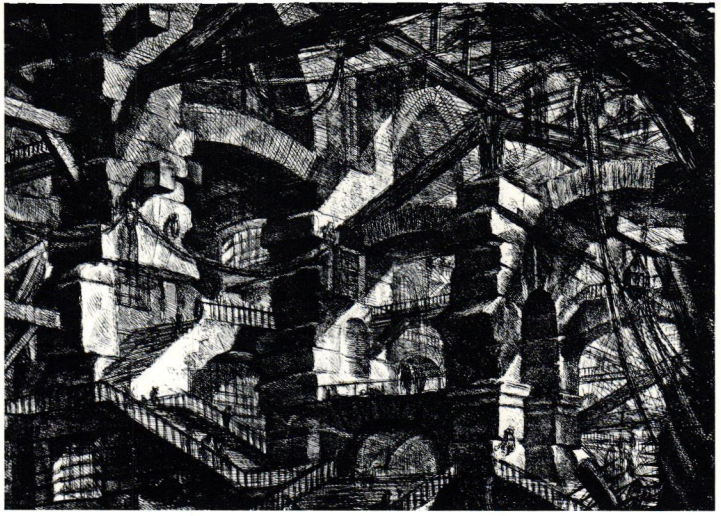
In order for the design profession to be able to proceed as a humanistic endeavor, advancing social development and improving the human condition, it may have to identify its place as an institution within such

[13] S Freud, *Totem and Taboo* (1913) p 84, 'Notes on a Case of Obsessional Neurosis,' *Collected Papers*, III, p 293

For another interesting discussion of narcissism in children see Piaget, J, *The Child's Conception of the World* (London: Rutledge and Keganhole, 1929)

[14] An interesting debate on the *avant-garde* question in relation to the recent phase of architecture occurred at the International Conference held in December 1977, at the University of Technology, Eindhoven, entitled 'Avant-Garde.'

[15] For the literary work of the *précieux*, see Niderst, A, *Madeleine de Scudery, Paul Pellison et leur Monde* (Paris, 1976). Unfortunately, no complete socio-political study of the *précieux* has been published so far.



ambiguous dynamic situations which permit it to exist in the present as well as to prepare for the future.

The moments that have occurred recently in architecture are hardly the easiest or brightest in its history. Innovative thinking is late in coming and basic skills are swiftly being lost. The schematic thinking of functionalism has been rejected, and it is difficult for its deceiving arguments to be brought back to justify inoperable solutions. Neither is there any chance that the simple-minded proposals of populism and scientism will fill us again with false optimism and lead us to unworkable solutions. But sadly, the rejection of these alternatives has not brought us a coherent mass of experience, a body of knowledge gradually and systematically accumulated, from which architecture will be able to draw constructive advice for future action. It has led only to denial and sterile polemics, a characteristic or architecture since the mid-nineteenth century, poisoning the relation of architect to user and client, and that of educator to student.

The ills of the architectural profession and education cannot be blamed entirely on shrinking budgets for buildings. They are also due to the self-indulgence of its preoccupation with private dialogues carried out in spatial and graphic puzzles—the natural outcome of its peculiar brand of cheerful pessimism—and above all to its spirit of narrowness,[16] obstinacy and arrogance, which is ineffectual in improving the architectural condition from any point of view.

Despite its shortcomings, the narcissist phase contains important material for study. Taken as a critique, implicit behind the rhetoric, drawings, and tortured buildings, it has contested the incompleteness of the architectural approaches of populism and scientism, that disregarded the importance of the visual organization of the environment. It has also revealed the rich potential contained in the unique tools of architecture, such as graphic figuration, which are mostly untouched and even unrecognised by other fields in science and engineering. Narcissism has also pointed the finger at the pitifully slow decay that a once most promising institution of modern times is undergoing today; its projects try to detach themselves from reality but only make the marginalization of the architect and of architecture more obvious. This loss is seen inwardly, as it affects the profession, with a sentimental, inflexible attachment to its traditional weaknesses, instead of from the vantage point of the overall cultural and social development which is constantly renewing conceptual and institutional structures.

It is not so much the decay of institutions or ways of thinking which ought to worry us. What is more serious is another problem, deeper and more general: the crisis related to the failure of present mechanisms—architecture being one of them—that reproduce the social code of environmental organization which weaves the deeper ties of human community: what Durkheim would have called *representations collectives*.[17]

Narcissism, like populism and scientism, is unable to arrest the loosening of this social fabric. None of the attempts since the 1960s to renew architecture have investigated the interaction between design and human relations. Thus, despite their various points of contention, all these trends—populism, scientism and narcissism—remain critiques.

Today, in its haphazard evolution, narcissism is causing architects to lose basic skills related to fundamental human needs. It is also making architecture lose touch with the phenomena of cultural and social change because a deeply rooted conservatism exists behind the irrationality and closed nature of its thinking. It is a poor criticism that condemns without explanation. It makes a profession vulnerable to whims, pressures, and interests, unable to develop a body of stable and defensible norms. If architecture is to outgrow these problems, it must stop validating its projects with ideas gathered elsewhere, haphazardly and eclectically. It must become a discipline which carries on, in addition to design, its own research studies. It must generate new knowledge for guiding its

[16]The most perceptive critique so far on the recent phase of architecture is R Pommer, 'The New Architectural Suprematists,' *Art Forum*, October 1976, pp 38-43

[17]E Durkheim, and M Mauss, 'De Quelques Formes de Classification. . . .' *Annee Sociologique*, Volume VI (Paris, 1901-02) pp 1-72

4 Engraving from the *Carceri D'Invenzione* by Giovanni Battista Piranesi, c 1740

new products, focusing on their impact, both mechanical or symbolic, upon social organizations and human relations. Any project, whether a container of operations, a complex of signs, or an allegorical construct, acts upon human ties. It controls them in the cybernetic sense through physical and conceptual means, and in the political sense by channeling the flow of human power, reinforcing or weakening dependencies, domination, and reciprocity.

Such investigations go beyond the simple and semi-automatic science of extrapolating from ethology and questionnaire data to design, and beyond the transposition of engineering formulas to environmental problems. These investigations will have to combine the empirical scientific study of the present with the scientific study of the past.

This urge for a return to history in the study of architecture, should not be confused with the return to history as propagated by narcissism. The latter has attacked functionalism, populism and scientism for trying to make a new architecture without reference to the past—in fact for ignoring the very context within which architectural objects are read and understood. But it has only, in turn, used history as a refuge, a hermitage, a treasure island of architectural forms accumulated through time. The historicism of the narcissist phase, departing from an important observation and criticism, has reverted swiftly to a promotion of formalism. This is far from the view of history as a tool for studying the present and preparing for the future, as a means for identifying the interaction between architecture and human relations, a necessity for designers evolving a better sense of appropriateness in the practice of architecture.

The recent phase of architecture has also presented history as a means of purification, of stripping architecture of its 'fake glamour' and of its 'seductive influence' and of removing its 'ideological mask.' It is seen as part of a larger program of gradual, complete destruction of culture, as the product of a 'ruling arbitrary power.' This use of history, as a tool in a campaign of destruction and salvation dialectics with its undertones of cultural terrorism, is in complete opposition to what the present article proposes. The claim that this stripping process could turn back the cultural evolutionary clock and return architecture to its origins, to a promised land of primitive purity and freedom, is a curious one, to say the least. The real primitive, archaic societies are very different indeed from this mythological image of them. One would have great difficulties in finding in them a trace of the kind of 'purity' and 'freedom' to which some critics of the recent phase of architecture seem to be attached. Such a misguided 'purification' process would only leave architects, and the society at large, worse off than they are today, bearing the curse of the fragmented self, without enjoying any of the achievements of contemporary culture and technology.

For the moment this brand of socio-therapeutic use of history, fortunately, remains rather ineffectual. It serves only as a passport to formalistic escapades for those to whom too much architectural purism would have given a guilty social conscience. Moreover, one can hardly ask the average designer to negate ideology and to reach deep, and with the aid of history, find the naked 'structure' of architecture (likened to a Chomskyan 'syntactic structure'), a pre-ideological, invariant essence of man. This analogy is certainly founded on speculative thinking. It is not at all clear, from the scientific point of view, how, when, and in what form this architectural 'structure' will be found and what guarantees the validity of the results of this search.

In the end, ironically, this para-scientific thinking, for all its anti-functionalism, resembles that of the functionalists. In the past, functionalist designs were validated with free reference to engineering; now some designers search for justification in linguistics. It must be added that functionalist projects—Utzon's design for the Sydney Opera House is an eloquent witness—embraced engineering to the same extent that architecture today embraces linguistics. That is, not very much at all.

Architecture must develop another method for validating its designs besides the use of charisma and persuasion. Experience shows that the simplistic belief in spontaneous participation and the arbitrary invocation of technological performance are not the answer. Architecture must produce a humanistic methodology which is capable of studying architecture's interaction with human relations to meet social objectives while coping with the production of physical objects, of controlled environments, of arrangements of symbols, of an artificial world.

Like populism and scientism, the most recent phase of architecture, which we have called narcissist, has many shortcomings. The present article has focused chiefly on these aspects. But like its immediate predecessors, this phase also has positive sides. Its drive to demonstrate the importance of the visual aspect of the environment, the value of the tools of abstraction which architecture has developed throughout its history, and the necessity of keeping our architectural heritage alive is as significant for the future of architecture as populism's campaign for a democratization of practice and scientism's search for rationalization of design.

The present paper does not offer any concrete proposal for the future. Departing from a critique of the recent phase, it has tried to underline the need for a new direction in the field. Beyond the new ways of thinking, linked to social and historical studies, architecture desperately needs a new humanistic involvement and an explicit rational discourse; and, above all, it needs a constructive attitude and an open dialogue.



Notes on the In-Between

Fred Koetter

If the declarations of the Modern Movement were typified by a search for clarity and directness in the language of architecture, the following article is indicative of a decisive change in contemporary theory leading to meaning available through multiplicity and depth. Professor Koetter seeks here to understand the operation of diverse symbolic and formal contrasts. Although he does not criticize specific trends such as historicism, contextualism or the use of ornament, he frames his argument around them by using the purported polarities of various theoretical camps to develop his own proposals for a more multidimensional architecture.

When changes occur in widely-accepted aesthetic principles concerning the structure and product of design, three general responses on the part of the architect are possible: first, a rush to investigate the new forms; second, a deep reluctance to leave behind familiar and understood methods or attitudes; or last, a dizzying relishment of the process of change, a meshing of images, forms and principles that seems to reach beyond the argument at hand to encompass all of the visual imagination. The article which follows is both about the 'in between' and an example of this third response. In general, an attitude toward ways in which architecture may be formed is presented, rather than a precise program of problems to be addressed or motifs to be chosen. If a stance is taken, it is that of exemplifing the reawakening of architecture's capacity for profusion, variety and surprise.

The well advertized opposition of current architectural practices to the assumed message of old-time 'Modern Architecture' may be far less real than the words of the promoters and distractors would indicate. While appearances often yield genuine contrasts—a building by Robert Stern does not look like a building by Hannes Meyer—there may be more unfortunate similarities of underlying attitude involved in such a comparison than are initially apparent.

For the body of recent theoretical pronouncements, like the great polemical gestures of the Modern Movement itself, reveals a mind set, assembled during the Enlightenment and put into full working order during the 19th century, which tends to see the world of ideas as a theatre of opposing forces which demands action and resolution by way of either the envelopment or the destruction of the opposing point of view. In other words, contrasts or differences are, according to this state of mind, elevated to the equivalent of battlefield provocations. Thus, Modern Architecture could construct an enemy whose artistic legions included the academy and the eclectic tradition. And, as a moral and political venture, the new architecture could also make use of available theory in that area and propose the emergence of a new society . . . just, social, and well-managed . . . which must stamp out the vested interests of willful capitalism, private property, bourgeois sensibility and all the well-known rest. The *we / they* (good-we / bad-they) bulwark of the 19th century theory was thus catapulted, in the area of architecture at least, into the 20th as much more than an ideological construct which had, even by that time, worn conspicuously thin.

The present architectural counterparts of this attitude hardly require extended display. Consider the staging of:[1]

The White / The Gray
Either / Or / Both / And
Exclusivism / Inclusivism
'Modern' / 'Post Modern'

Subjected to casual misinterpretation or taken as something less than imperatives, there is little doubt that distinctions such as these might well promote a form of enlightened inquiry. Interesting or amusing miscegenation could emerge (Inclusive Exclusivism—a version of Romantic Classicism?). Or a less than ironical reversal of intention might be imagined (the notion of Both / And, and its inherent catholicity,

[1] For the reader whose memory is selective or whose tolerance is mercifully limited:

The White / The Gray: A distinction originally (c 1970) framed by Peter Eisenman of the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies and later used to draw lines of contrast between the so-called 'New York Five' and a group of architects whose work might generally be associated with that of Robert Venuti.

Either-Or / Both-And: A distinction offered by Robert Venturi in *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* (1966) to explain a primary quality of an architecture of 'complexity and contradiction' (both / and) as opposed to apparently more restrictive modes of expression (either / or).

Exclusive / Inclusive: A line of contrast originally drawn by Charles Moore upon considering the supposedly 'exclusivist' characteristics of a work of Mies van der Rohe. Later enjoying widespread usage, 'exclusivism / inclusivism' has come to be identified

1,2 Michelangelo, Rondinini Pieta



with the writings and supposedly 'inclusivist' works of Robert Stern and Robert Venturi among others.

Modern / Post Modern: Currently a popular distinction, the Modern / Post Modern duality emerged almost simultaneously on both sides of the Atlantic through the words and writings of Robert Stern and Charles Jencks. If it is indeed more than a journalistic convenience, Post Modernism would seem to be a reaction to the ideologically grounded restrictiveness of Modern Architecture involving the endorsement of an architecture of 'permissiveness' which, perhaps contrary to intentions, also reveals an interesting form of functional determinism i e, the use of a particular motif or 'style' might be determined by its 'appropriateness' to a particular physical or social situation.

[2] The extreme relativism implied by an architecture of 'both / and' tends to promote a breakdown of the possibilities of critical judgment and ideal reference. Following these implications, anything here would ultimately be permissible, leading to a condition which, in simple terms, might be identified as the 'how I learned to like everything' syndrome.

[3] Jose Ortega y Gasset, *The Modern Theme*, CW Daniels Company (London, 1931), Chapter 6

must certainly have a home for more than a few Either / Ors).[2] As stimulants to activity, the inflammatory implications of such equations are without doubt effective (a rush to the gentle barricades of 'post-modernism?'). As journalistic maneuvers, they might, in these days of media overload, provide the necessary aura of X-rated allure. But, as an assumed baseline of serious architectural theory (or non-theory), the presence of this rather debilitating obsession with concocted differences has become tediously overextended.

One suspects in these enterprises the unfortunate subversion of a longstanding and highly useful mode of thought. For the general equation of critical dualities to reality is a proposition which has been around, in one form or another, for quite some time. Perhaps in a burst of innocence and enthusiasm, perhaps as a reaction to the confusion of daily life . . .

> '. . . *one day in the market place of Athens, Socrates discovered reason.*'[3]

According to Ortega Y Gasset, the author of the above statement, the intellectual currents of Western History at large may be read as a chronicle of relationships initially provoked by the Socratic distinction between reason and circumstance. And the list of dualities thus revealed is a long one . . . seemingly endless:

reason - circumstance
(relativity, spontaneity)
truth - life
methodology - the 'impromptu' (ad hoc)
form - content
frame - picture
ground - figure
classicism - romanticism

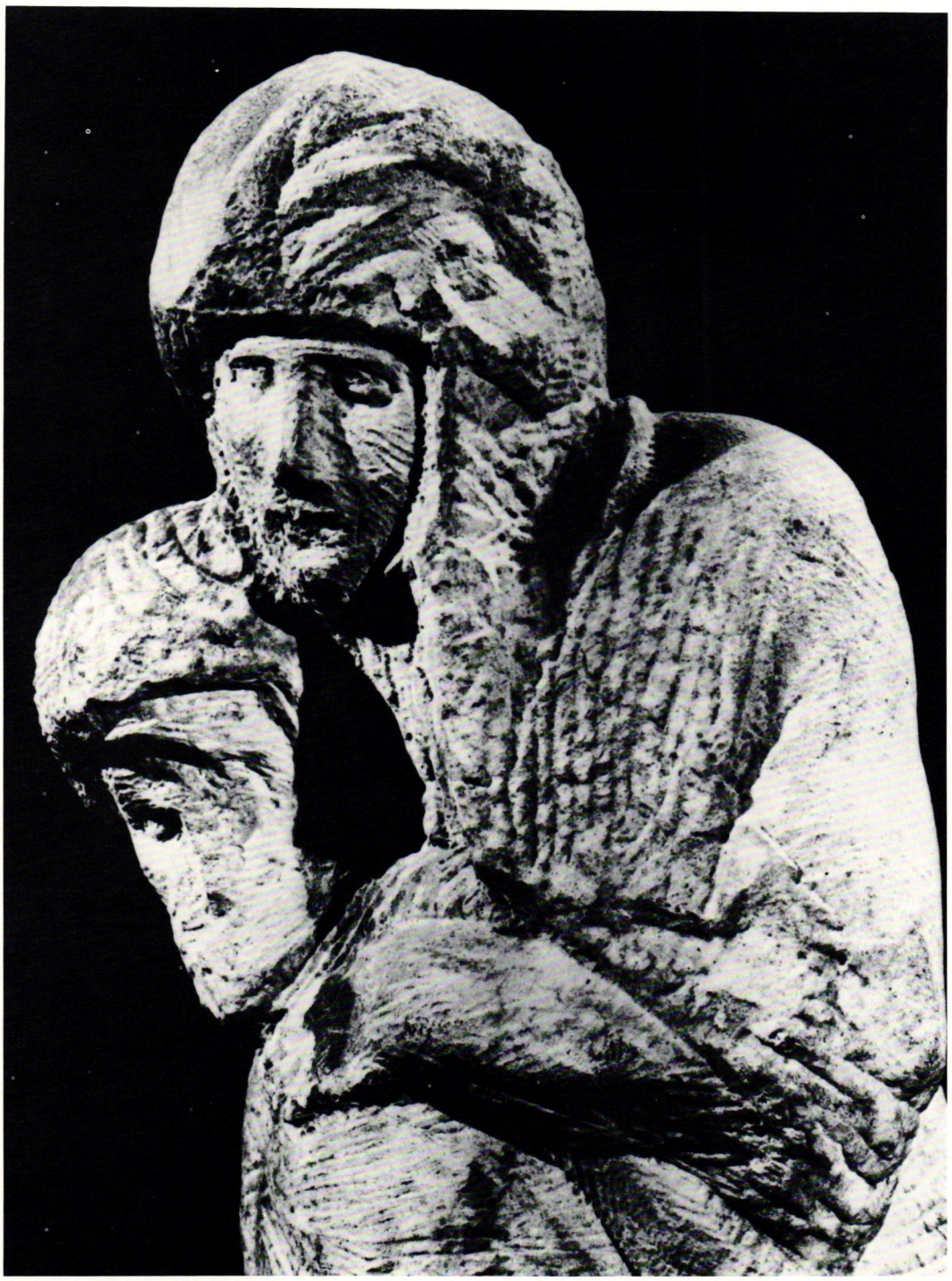
Whatever the historical course of this two-part enterprise, it seems clear that by the late 18th century the constructed duality was no longer put forth (as it long had been) as a stimulant of debate and reflection or as a metaphorical device, but as a literal vehicle for the production of a monolithic and prescriptive world view. The famed Hegelian dialectic or the necessary oppositions and struggles of Marxist theory may, in this way, be seen as the rather sullen ancestors of something like the Modern Architecture / Academy confrontation and its present day corollaries—as reference points identifying a tendency towards literal singlemindedness and a highly categorized view of reality. And central to the mentality of this tendency is the necessity of certainty—of the correctness of a particular point of view (reason as a religion), the attendant quest for positive definition, and, needless to say, the wholesale elimination of speculative doubt.

While architecture, following the distant lead of philosophy and ideology, may thus paint itself into a somewhat unmanageable corner, it may be possible to suggest that the rationalist and historicist fantasy which all of this continues to support is not and has not traditionally been the only available alternative—that the insistence upon literalized dualities requiring overt choice and obsessions with certainty and definition together constitute a mind set which is the reverse of useful to the architect.

It may further be suggested that the theoretical poles represented by the two sides of a forced duality (white / gray or whatever) are likely to be critical fictions whose usefulness may lie not so much in the terms themselves but in an appreciation of the field they describe—the 'zone' of potential communication which such terms tend to define or bracket. This in-between condition, difficult though it may be to describe, could, in its aloofness, have a closer relationship to an 'actual' condition of reality—compounded, multifarious, slippery, uncertain, hard to define in both theory and practice—than any fixed point of interest could allow.

The suspicion and the celebration of such a version of reality (in the arts at least) represent a kind of on-going 'ghost' tradition in its own right—lying beneath the surface at times, forcing itself into the picture at others—but, it would seem, always present in the cracks and crevices of the more visible traditions and 'periods' which it accompanies.

And, if one assumes an attitude along these lines and goes looking for



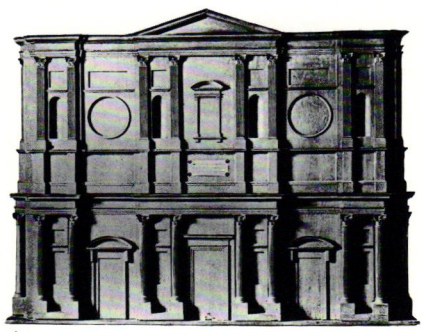
3 Detail, Rondinini Pieta

evidence of this tradition, whether in remote or in well known places, it is really not very hard to find.

Michelangelo's Rondinini Pieta, his last large three-dimensional work, 'unfinished' and long obscure, could serve to illustrate the difficulties and opportunities of an in-between reality. When viewed frontally, the piece would appear to reveal a conventional interpretation of a well known event – the Mother Mary supporting the lifeless figure of a recently crucified Christ (Figure 1). But, as the observer moves around the sculpture, a quite different story is presented. From a three-quarter rear view, reality and traditional image are reversed (Figure 2). The Christ now appears to be carrying a highly fatigued Mary on his back – her power has been completely dissipated; his has been mysteriously restored. Moreover, a return to a consideration of overall effects reveals that both of them seem to be hovering between life and death (Figure 3).

Such seemingly contradictory readings are, of course, there for anyone who wishes to see them, and they in no way demand a preference for one interpretation over another. Rather, they tend, in combination, to induce a highly difficult and provocative form of speculation. They demand, simply, participation on the part of the observer in the consideration of a supremely spiritual question – a question which admits to no binding response.

4 Michelangelo, proposed façade for San Lorenzo, model of final design
5 Michelangelo, vestibule of the Laurentian Library, Florence
6 Detail, vestibule of the Laurentian Library
7 Michelangelo, St Peter's, view from the Vatican Gardens
8 Leonardo da Vinci, Ideal Church Studies



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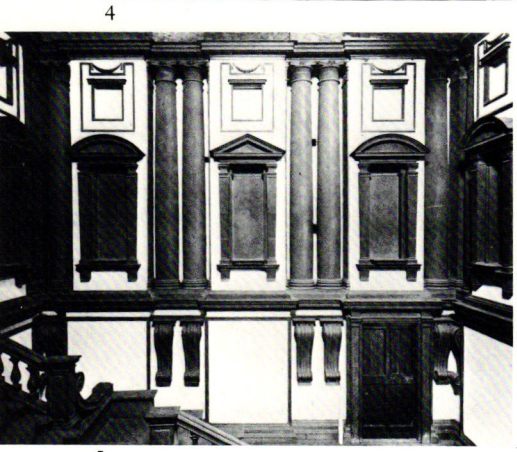

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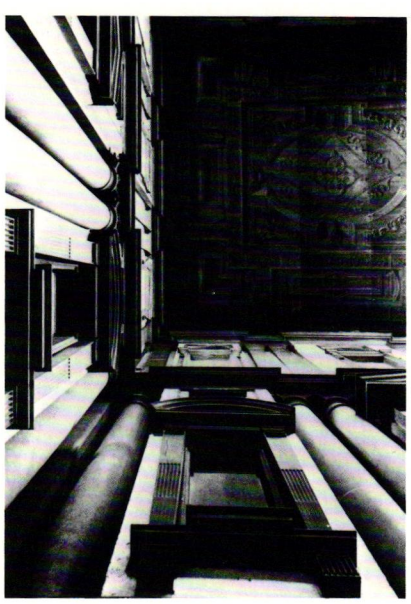

Michelangelo's architectural works also seem to operate in this area of difficult assessment and composite conclusions. His proposed façade for San Lorenzo in Florence displays a lattice of superimposed horizontal and vertical membering of such power and 'factualness' that these elements imply a literal structural role which they in fact do not possess (Figure 4). This same façade, as a taut, flat, precisely detailed surface, begins also to suggest the possibility of an interior elevation which has been thrust into a dominant exterior position. Provocative and highly self-conscious misassignments such as these occur in quite a different way, perhaps the reverse way, in the nearby vestibule of the Laurentian Library (Figure 5). Here, genuine structural columns, set in niches and supporting a broken entablature, are made to appear eminently non-structural—as almost free-standing pieces of detachable sculpture (Figure 6). By way of this oft-noted contrivance, Michelangelo was perhaps saying something about the nature of assumed absolutes . . . that gravity itself is not beyond speculative interpretation. Likewise, the overall effect of the vestibule wall is one of serious disjunction—of a colossally scaled public wall deployed to define a physically small, intimate interior space. The effect is not only overwhelming, but fundamentally inexplicable.[4]

The nature of assumed absolutes . . . the role of 'convention' . . . the nurture of paradox . . . the provocation of uncertainty and the impossibility of clear resolution. . . .

Consider in this context the preoccupation of Italian Humanism with the relationship of man to the cosmos—with the simultaneous demands presented at the time by the rise of individualism and the necessary maintenance of religious dogma. The antagonistic forces brought forth by this relationship could be expressed in terms of yet another seemingly irresolvable confrontation—in this case a confrontation between the interests of *the Sacred and the Profane*—the uneasy coexistence of deep-seated spiritual ideals and the secularizing effects of

[4] Why would Michelangelo do these things? The question is, of course, an open one. Perhaps the defined 'normality' of Renaissance procedures as presented by Brunelleschi at San Lorenzo provides an important reference in the consideration of such a question. The orthodoxy, for instance, of Brunelleschi's Old Sacristy was simultaneously maintained and subverted by Michelangelo in its mate, the Medici Chapel. The extravagant variation was directly dependent upon the stability and lucidity of the model. In a similar way it may be possible to sense thematic references for Michelangelo's amazing reversals of convention (the interior / exterior wall, etc) at San Lorenzo in the Florentine works of Brunelleschi. Perhaps Michelangelo noticed the interesting similarity of Brunelleschi's interior nave walls at San Lorenzo and his exterior loggia to the Ospidale degli Innocenti. Not known for 'unstable' effects, Brunelleschi's work might nonetheless allow for such speculation. That is to say, the near duplication of motif and scale in both these arcaded surfaces provokes a question as to whether the interior nave of San Lorenzo is, in effect, a form of exterior space and, counter to this, whether the Piazza SS. Annunziata fronting the Ospidale is, among other things, a type of interior room. Piazza as 'room' is, of course, a well known equation. Likewise, honorific interior space has been known (via Nolli's plans of Rome at least) to be thought of and represented as a version of exterior space. What is of interest here is simply the possibility, by way of such speculation, of identifying an attitude which might consciously blur known distinctions and at the same time promote the sensation, on the part of the observer, of simultaneously occupying two distinctly different realms—in this case, the realms of interior and exterior space.



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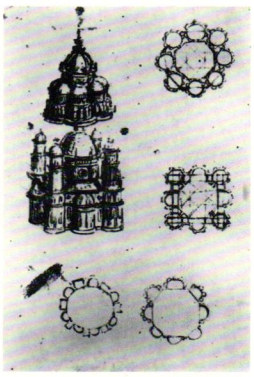

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humanism. Architecturally, the Renaissance interest in the centralized church form could be cited as a litmus test of this dilemma. For within this projected building type, sacred though it may have been in its affiliations, man was to occupy, symbolically and literally, the center, the geometrical and cosmic point of convergence. If this elevated position of man, supplanting the traditional position of the holy altar, was problematic in terms of a ritualistically workable church, this is but a footnote to a larger spiritual and iconographic question: Was the body of the church a thing delivered from above, inspired by divine revelation and set as a beacon in a less than divine world, or was it a gesture of man to the gods, a mundane gesture underwriting this newly elevated and increasingly confident position of man? Regardless of who actually built the church, was it fundamentally sacred or profane, divinely informed or mundanely contrived in its origins?

Michelangelo, it would seem, was not unaware of this dilemma in his final designs for St. Peter's. The conception of his church may be reduced to two major components—a manipulated boxlike base and, contained within the box, a cylindrical center capped by a great dome (Figure 7). If one imagines the domed space as representative of sacred presence and the peripheral base as an indication of earthly enterprise, then the antagonistic forces at work are given physical form.

The idea of the domed space metaphorically delivered from above suggests a kind of 'custard' or soft ice cream theory of Renaissance sacred space, at least with regard to the configuration of its defining material. That is, the essential symbolic movement is from the top down—from heaven to earth—along the line of a presumed *axis munde*. The material of the church is thus deposited around this center so as to produce a descending profile or silhouette in which the peripheral half-domes or chapels are directly generated by the central figure and so on. Leonardo da Vinci's studies of ideal churches or the built church of Santa Maria in Consolazione in Todi might best illustrate the dynamic of this 'custard' or delivered from above theory of sacred space (Figure 8).

While Michelangelo necessarily acknowledged and made manifest this theme at St. Peter's, he was also, at the same time, able to acknowledge and give form to its profane counterpart, for it is possible to imagine the primary material of the dome of St. Peter's, prior to manipulation, as a horizontal earthbound wafer—not unlike a gigantic slab of uncooked pizza dough. Imagine then an interlocking template made up of the building's base and a hypothetical belt or girdle (finally represented by the colossal entablature at the building's perimeter) tightening around and compressing this mass so as to induce, at the point of ultimate pressure, a violent eruption, hurling up, from earth towards the heavens—from man towards the gods—the immense domed chamber at the building's center.

Whatever may be the descriptive mode here employed—precise and analytical, mechanical, merely poetic, or by chance food-like—any verbal explanation of the forces embodied in St. Peter's fades quickly in the presence of the phenomenon itself. The sustained tensions, the torment (in soft terms, the ambiguity) of this unsettled alliance—this magnificent force couple—defies any possibility of simple certainties and thrusts one, rather, towards the precarious realm of the sublime.



9 Michelangelo, The Pieta, St Peter's
10 Annibale Lippi, The Villa Medici, Rome, Front Facade
11 Villa Medici, Garden façade
12 Villa Medici, Section

While there is no intention here to imply an Italian, or a Renaissance, or a Michelangelesque monopoly on an 'in-between' or composite view of reality (which at the time often performed in quite another way), it could be that the transitional period from an established Renaissance to an established Baroque in Italy was, in fact, one of those epochs, perhaps not unlike our own, which has a special significance in this respect.

In his preface to *Rome of the Renaissance*, Paolo Portoghesi defines the period covered by his book (1503-1564) and illustrates 'the profound change which had taken place in the human condition' during this interval through the use of two Michelangelo images—the famous Pieta in St. Peter's and the previously cited Rondinini Pieta (Figures 1, 9):

> *In Michelangelo's early work, 'sculpture' and 'form' were synonymous; he used 'form' to dominate the material and make it coincide with an image that was communicable because it was* absolutely clear *and well defined. By the time he had come to the Rondinini Pieta, sculpture signified a process of thought, a dialogue between the artist and the stone, and free from the presence of witnesses or patrons; here the stone was scrutinized and made to yield all its latent possibilities in order to express the conception of the artist rather than the world of actual experience. In both cases the validity of the equation:* To make = To know *which was the starting point of humanist culture, remained unchanged; but by the latter date it was no longer possible to speak of* 'knowing with certainty' *since the norm had now become to* 'know with doubt' *and this led to a search which* admitted to no conclusion [author's emphasis].[5]

Vincent Mulcahy captures this sense in his commentary on the Villa Medici of Annibale Lippi (Figures 10-12):

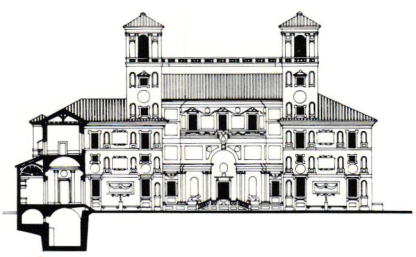
> *Villa Medici is sandwiched between an everyday world and an idealized world represented by its back garden. The front façade is common, planar and contemporary; the back façade is highly articulated with antique paraphernalia. Each face belongs to the world it confronts and at once to the building between. Villa Medici heightens the experience of and extends the 'special situation' of wavering between two worlds. Within its two primary faces external structural assertions are not binding; its interstitial space exists as a* realm of pure possibility [author's emphasis].[6]

The realm of pure possibility. . .

But to leave the 16th century, to retreat briefly from the world of artifacts and to place the notion of a fundamentally uncertain reality in a more general societal context, anthropologist Victor Turner significantly expands an understanding of this reality in his *Forest of Symbols*. Here Turner deals with *liminal* or in-between conditions as they relate to societal ritual—to recurrent ritualized themes which transcend particular groups or cultures. Turner defines liminality as a 'period of margin' and an ambiguous 'interstructural situation' related to such themes as rites of passage or 'transitions between states.' The dictionary defines liminality as a function of a limen or threshold. More specifically, liminality may here be interpreted as a condition of sustained (perhaps perpetual) transition, a 'threshold' situation which is caught between, and in defiance of, direct definition by way of customary categories. Turner's observations present extremely useful analogous material when considering the nature and meaning of art and architecture. Excerpts from his text will thus be used in an effort to provide a broader substratum to the present argument and supplement the consideration of additional visual works.

> *I want to now draw attention to certain positive aspects of liminality . . . Undoing, dissolution, decomposition are accompanied by processes of growth, transformation and* a reformation of old elements in new patterns. *It is interesting to note how, by the principle of economy (or parsimony) of symbolic reference, logically antithetical processes of death and growth may be represented by the same tokens . . . This coincidence of opposite processes and notions in a single representation characterizes the particular unity of the liminal:* that which is neither this nor that, and yet both [author's emphasis].[7]

The 'in-between' is also then the realm of conscious and unconscious



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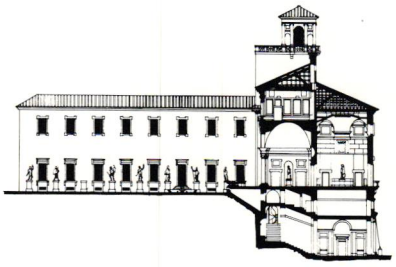

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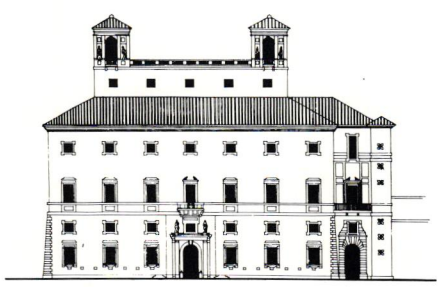

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13 Blenheim, Garden Sculpture of Consuelo Vanderbilt, Duchess of Marlborough
14 John Singer Sargent, *Portrait of the Marlboro Family*, Blenheim Palace Collection
15 Sargent, *Portrait of the Marlborough Family*, detail of Consuelo Vanderbilt, Duchess of Marlborough
16 Griffin
17 J J Grandville: At the assembly the chameleon assures the animals that he agrees with each of them
18 J J Grandville, Comparative Studies

speculation and questioning—the 'zone' where things concrete and ideas are intermingled, taken apart and reassembled—where memory, values and intentions collide. And the pedagogical implications, for instance, of this transaction would seem obvious:

> *The communication of* sacra *and other forms of esoteric instruction really involves three processes, though these should not be regarded as in series but as in parallel. The first is the reduction of culture into recognized components or factors; the second is their recombination in fantastic or monstrous patterns and shapes; and the third is their recombination in ways that make sense with regard to the new state and statis that the neophytes will enter. The second process, monster or fantasymaking, focuses attention on the components . . . on the masks or effigies, which are so radically ill-assorted that they stand out and* can be thought about [author's emphasis].[8]

On the grounds at Blenhiem there is a statue of Consuelo Vanderbilt, (7th or 8th) Duchess of Marlborough (Figure 13). Though her facial features are somewhat elongated, her identity is certain (Figures 14, 15). One might easily, in passing, disregard this piece but for the realization that Consuelo's gentle head, so well known from Boldini and Sargent, rises serenely from the body of a griffin (Figures 16-18).

> *There could be less encouragement to reflect on heads and headship if that head were firmly ensconsed on its familiar, its all too familiar body . . . more important . . . the relations between man and lion* [Consuelo and the griffin], *empirical and metaphorical, may be speculated upon, and new ideas developed on this topic. Liminality here breaks, as it were, the cake of custom and enfranchizes speculation . . .* liminality is the realm of primitive hypothesis *where there is a certain freedom to juggle with the factors of existence. As in the works of Rabelais, there is a promiscuous intermingling and juxtaposing of the categories of* event, experience, and knowledge [author's emphasis].[10]

Many of Grandville's drawings illustrate the enormous possibilities of provocative characterization afforded by a blurring of distinctions between the human and animal worlds. 'More important . . . the relationship . . . empirical and metaphorical, may be speculated upon, and new ideas developed on this topic.'[9]



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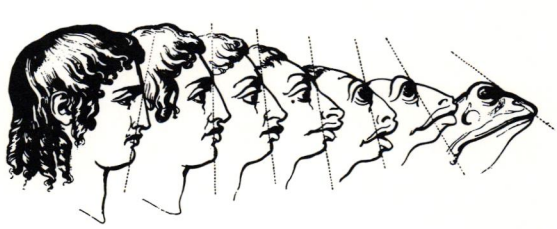

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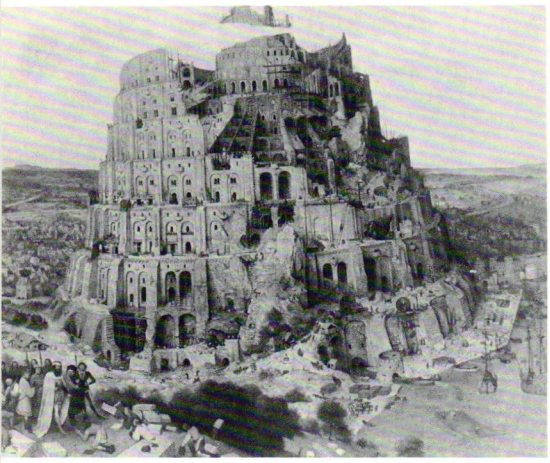
5 Paolo Portoghesi, *Rome of the Renaissance*, Phaidon Incorporated (New York, 1972), p 7
6 Vincent Mulchay, an unpublished essay submitted as part of a successful proposal to The American Academy in Rome, 1976
7 Victor Turner, *The Forest of Symbols*, Cornell University Press (Ithaca, N Y, 1967), p 99
8 *Ibid*, p 106
9 *Ibid*, p 106
10 *Ibid*, p 106



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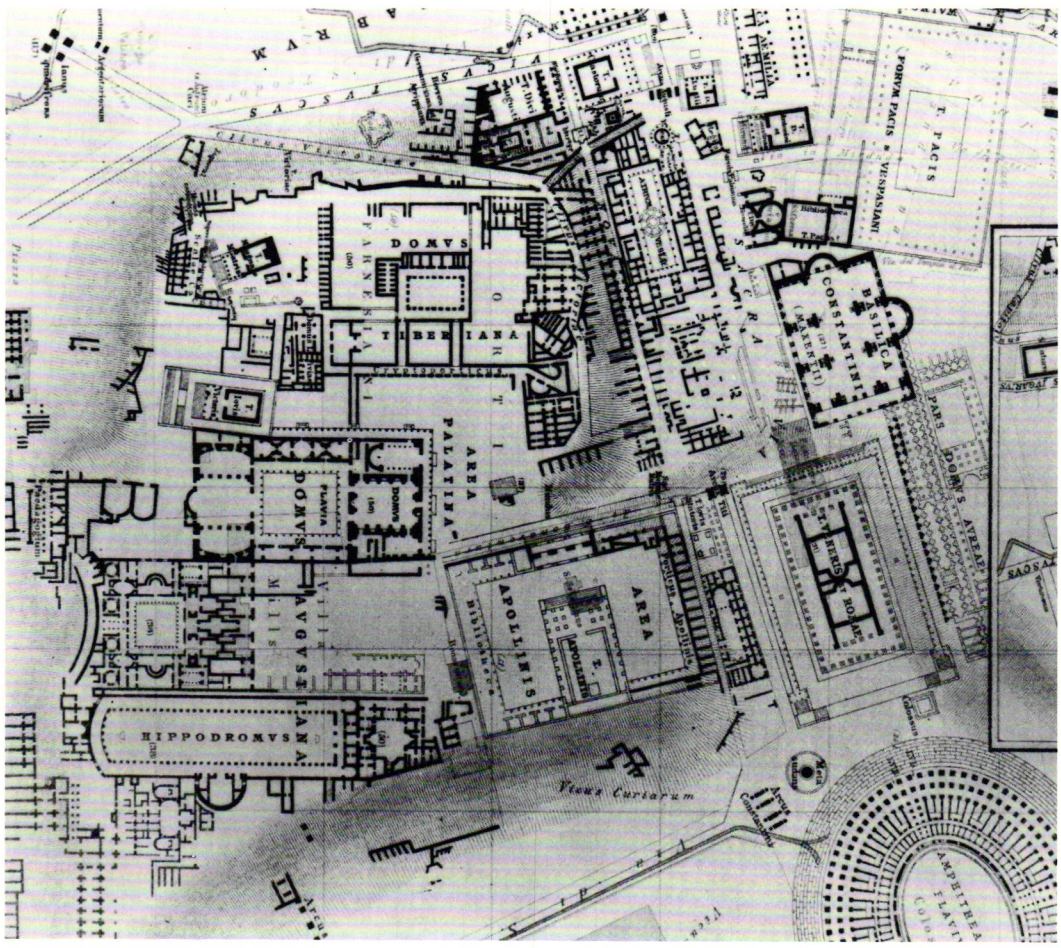

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Certainly with such blurring of categories and confounding of distinctions, the in-between or liminal condition occurs in many ways and on many levels. The several studies and finished works of Pieter Breugel related to the Tower of Babel, for instance, deliver such a troublesome double directive (Figure 19). One senses in these works an illustration of the simultaneous folly and necessity of ideal projection – the impossible gesture of a composite comic / tragic world which demands from humanity the registration of *both* doom and hope.

Another of Bruegel's paintings, *The Battle Between Carnival and Lent*, inscribes, at center canvas, a kind of rift or vacant zone defined by and at the same time supporting the scene of frivolity and sobriety to either side (Figure 20). What ultimately occupies the eye and mind is neither Carnival nor Lent but the expansive power of the central void pattern – a contested zone which delivers the highly charged sensation of a perpetual interstitial reality.

And a slightly forced urbanistic interpretation of this interstitial phenomenon could perhaps be provided by a consideration of the pattern of Imperial Rome, where great structured layouts – baths, forum pieces, etc., 'rational' and highly stable – are surrounded by and thrown into combination with an idiosyncratic and relatively malleable web of 'in-between' zones (Figure 21). Here is the implication of the city as physical caricature, drawn large, of the perhaps never ending *limbus* of human affairs . . . public decorum (the stable nature of the 'set piece') and private opportunity (the *ad hoc* quality of the in-between 'debris'), tragic finality (the 'plan') and comic relief (the 'action'), definition and confusion, etc.

The city as human artifact and public / private theatre, as a collision or order and opportunity . . . artifact as a registration of human limitations and aspirations . . .

Even someone as seemingly well-balanced as Hannah Arendt was profoundly aware of the precariousness of this situation in *The Human Condition*:

> *The term 'public' signifies the world itself, in so far as it is common to all of us and distinguished from our privately owned place in it. This world, however, is not identical with the earth or with nature, as the limited space for the movement of men and the general condition of organic life. It is related, rather, to the human artifact, the fabrication of human hands, as well as to the affairs which go on among those who inhabit the man-made world together. To live together in the*



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19 Pieter Breughel the Elder, *The Tower of Babel*, 1563, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna
20 Pieter Breughel the Elder, *The Battle Between Carnival and Lent*, 1559, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna
21 Plan, Imperial Rome (Kiepert and Hulsen)
22 Pablo Picasso, *Death's Head*
23 Pablo Picasso, *Baboon with Child*

> *world means essentially that the world of things is between those who have it in common, as a table is located between those who sit around it; the world, like every in-between, relates and separates man at the same time.*[11]

The artifact–city, building, painting, whatever–has then, in the best sense, its own double obligation. It may act as a positive instrument for the qualification of human association (artifact as in-between 'table') and at the same time it may in itself present an encapsulation of the same uncertain drama of reality which it helps to qualify and stimulate. The artifact, in other words, may operate as both active agent and as a means of record-keeping, occupying a realm which is both 'immediate' and potentially timeless.

Picasso's *Death's Head* of 1944 acts to probe the mortal and temporal frontiers of just such a domain (Figure 22). It is the 'instant antique' which forces a shuffling and reshuffling of time. Likewise, it promotes a question as to the nature of authenticity–what is false and what is true? . . . what is 'genuinely' antique and what is 'of today?'

Similarly his *Baboon with Child* of 1951 tends to provoke a confusion of known or customary references (Figure 23). A toy car is displayed 'raw' and convincingly as the facial structure of a baboon. A basketball, 'cooked' by way of its clay covering, is assigned the role of middle body. The multiple readings of these elements flip back and forth in the mind–toy car, baboon's face, mechanized icon, the animism of inanimate objects . . . basketball, torso, the platonic sphere, the interior void of the body; the entire production is caught and maintained in a transitional state.

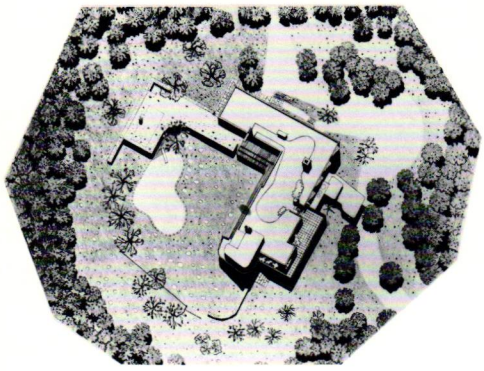
> *. . . liminality here breaks, as it were, the cake of custom and enfranchizes speculation . . . the realm of primitive hypothesis where there is a certain freedom to juggle with the factors of existence.*[12]

But the illumination of this existential juggling act and the powers of speculative freedom, so central to the present argument, also attract massive qualifications. That is, while the 'arational,' atemporal, the indefinable and transitional are certainly meaningful recurrent themes, even imperatives in most societies, such ambiguities are also not without their own difficulties:

> *Dr. Mary Douglas, of University College, London, has recently advanced (in a magnificent book* Purity and Danger (1966)*) the very interesting and illuminating view that the concept of* pollution *'is a reaction to protect cherished principles and categories from contradiction.' She holds that, in effect, what is unclear and contradictory (from the perspective of social definition) tends to be regarded as (ritually) unclean. The unclear is the unclean: e.g., she examines the prohibitions on eating certain animals and crustaceans in Leviticus in the light of this hypothesis (these being creatures that cannot be unambiguously classified in terms of traditional criteria). From this standpoint, one would expect to find that* transitional beings *are particularly polluting, since they are neither one thing nor another; or may be both; or neither here nor there; or may even be nowhere (in terms of any recognized cultural topography), and are at the very least 'betwixt and between' all the recognized fixed points in space-time of structural classification. In fact, in confirmation of Dr. Douglas' hypothesis, liminal* personae *nearly always and everywhere are regarded as polluting to those who have never been, so to speak, 'inoculated' against them through having been themselves initiated into the same state* [author's emphasis].[13]

In advancing the interests of the indefinable and the confused, one should not forget parallel obligations to the interests of the clearly defined. With the previously noted pattern of Imperial Rome acting as a physical analogue to a psychological necessity, society would seem to demand a format, a 'structure' of sorts (and an architecture?) which simultaneously exhibits clarity and confusion, both definition and a 'pollution' of definition.

[11]Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, University of Chicago Press (Chicago, 1958), p 52
[12]Turner, *op cit*, p 106
[13]Turner, *op cit*, pp 97-98



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With this tantalizing difficulty in mind, we may perhaps speculate upon the relative 'pollution' of our friends and enemies. Certainly Modern Architecture, at least in what might be called its 'mainstream,' seemed bent upon the elimination of such pollutants. Very little funny business or 'profound disassociation' were (perhaps in the name of 'Total Design') tolerated. And the choices presently available appear, for the most part, to be equally limited, segregated and disinfected—the elevation of methodology and management to a rather bizarre and embarrassing icon, the impromptu and the *ad hoc* (Total Design in disguise?), surface eclecticism (overt 'charm?'), the strident singlemindedness of a dying *avant gardismo*.

Such 'transitional beings' as existed within the temporal confines of the Modern Movement either remained rather obscure, as, for instance, Luigi Moretti or Berthold Lubetkin, or, as in the cases of dominant figures such as Alvar Aalto or Le Corbusier, were either provided with or provided themselves with a frontispiece of explanation and orthodoxy.

Aalto, himself prone to minimal commentary on his own work, was without doubt a supreme juggler of conventions and images. His Villa Mairea of 1938 (Figures 24,25), perhaps an index of his entire oeuvre, stands as a prime commentary upon the combined forces of the natural and the man-made, the 'indigenous' and the normative, the rationalized type and the idiosyncratic distortion of type. This building, like the majority of Aalto's works, escapes, at a certain point, any full-blown analytical treatment, any attempt of 'unambigous classification in terms of traditional criteria.'

Le Corbusier, despite his public proclamations of rational precision and Cartesian clarity, was in practice likely to confuse the very categories which, as a polemicist, he had gone to such pains to establish. While his urbanistic proposals remained somehow immune to confusion and 'pollution,' the bulk of his specific building ventures would seem to move inextricably towards that zone 'which is neither this nor that, and yet both.'

If, for instance, he vigorously attempted to establish the celebrated Domino frame (Figure 26) as the new way of building (point structure, free plan and façade, recaptured terrain via roof garden and all the rest) then his simultaneous interest in the antique parallel bearing wall format of the Citrohan model (Figure 27) would seem by way of direct opposition to cancel out the definitive advantages of the Domino type. While such massive logical disjunctions would be thoroughly unacceptable to the strict rationalist, this odd confrontation did not seem to bother Le Corbusier in the least. Indeed, some of his most provocative works would appear to exploit the very uncertainty of this self-constructed dilemma. Consider the villa at Garches (Figure 28) in the context of this Domino / Citrohan debate—as phenomenal cross-breeding of the two models. Or, in quite a different way, the convent of La Tourette (Figure 29) may be seen as a wily but direct put-together of these two themes.

Likewise, on a more detailed or directly pictorial level, Le Corbusier could not disguise his delight in the promotion of confused categories. The roofscapes of Poissy or Marseille (foreground / background convergence) (Figures 30,31), the living room at the Villa d'Avray (mirror as window, window as picture) (Figure 32), and particularly, one curious view of walls, windows, mirrors and light source at Porte Molitor (Figure 33) reveal that enigmatic mind in full bloom.

The assumption of definition and specification is in these cases used not as a path towards certainty—towards a world where things are, more and more, what they appear to be—but as a constructed vehicle, as a pretense to definition, which may then be exploited to produce an even more elaborate pretense, a kind of maintained debate of antagonistic forces—a debate which involves neither winners nor losers.

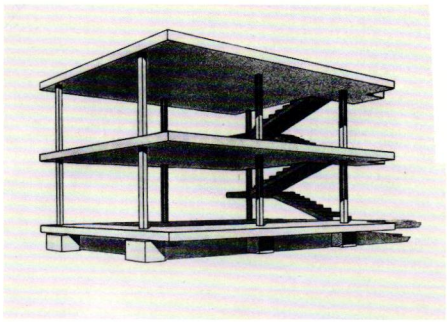
Alongside its official façade then, Modern Architecture has also presented a surprisingly complex profile. Perhaps it would be beneficial at this time to dispense with tedious attacks upon the obvious faults of a largely stillborn Modern Architecture—an edited architecture of polemics brought to us via historical reductivism—and search, rather, for the threads of this architecture's profound uncertainties, its place within the continuum of 'the indefinable.' It has been suggested here that something like the reverse of this procedure is presently being carried forward and that what has in effect been maintained with respect to Modern Architecture are some of its more dubious psycho / philosophical biases. And in this area of forced polarities, the quest for literal definition and the drive towards classification will perhaps be with us for a long time to come. One must, it would seem, 'protect cherished principles and categories from contradiction.'[14] The usefulness of these impulses may be conceded; their advancement as a comprehensive representation of reality, architectural or otherwise, cannot.

Surely, the present day is not without its share of 'transitional beings.' While the current production of highly partitioned architectural categories . . . neo-rationalism, contextualism, populism, bodyism, neo-functionalism, neo-neo-classicism, etc., etc . . . is probably approaching an unprecedented level, these very distinctions, together with the amazing volume of theoretical disclosure which supports their presence, may still inspire sufficient disbelief to tempt and activate the unsettled mind.

> *The test of a first-rate intelligence is the ability to hold two opposed ideas in the mind at the same time and still retain the ability to function. One should, for example, be able to see that things are hopeless and yet be determined to make them otherwise.*
> —F Scott Fitzgerald, *The Crack-up*, 1936

[14]Turner, *op cit*, p 98

24 Alvar Aalto, Villa Mairea, Site Plan
25 Villa Mairea
26 Le Corbusier, The Domino Frame
27 Le Corbusier, The Citrohan House
28 Le Corbusier, The Villa at Garches
29 Le Corbusier, The Convent of La Tourette
30 Le Corbusier, Villa Savoye, Poissy, Roofscape
31 Le Corbusier, Unité d'Habitation, Marseilles, Roofscape
32 Le Corbusier, Ville d'Avray, Living room
33 Le Corbusier, Apartment at Porte Molitor, View of bathroom



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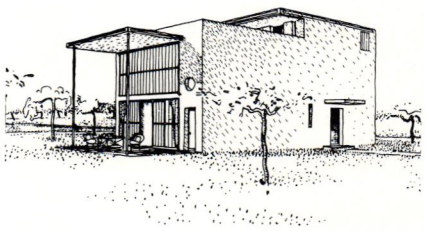

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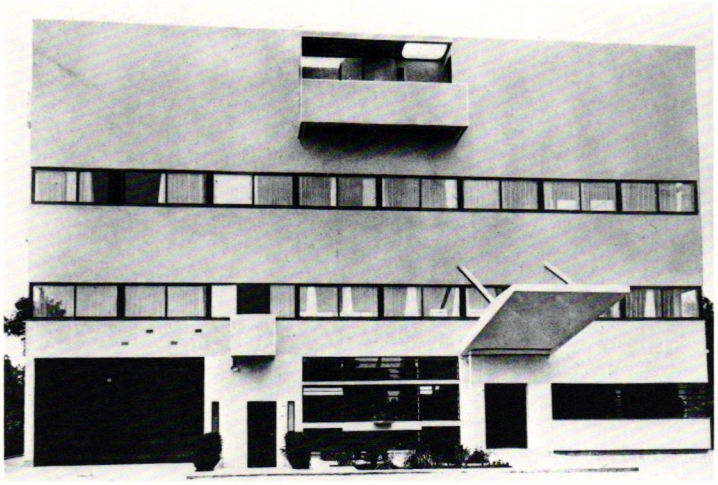

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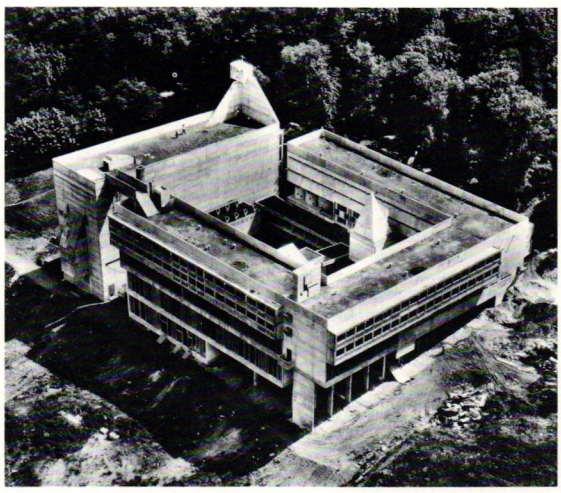

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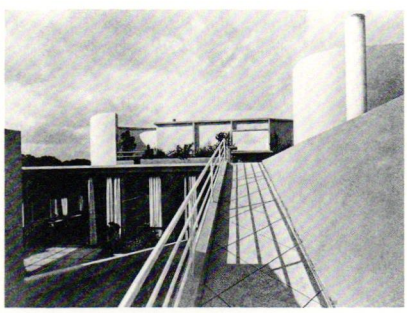

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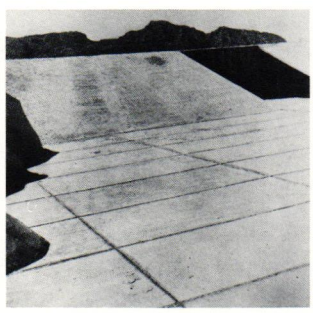

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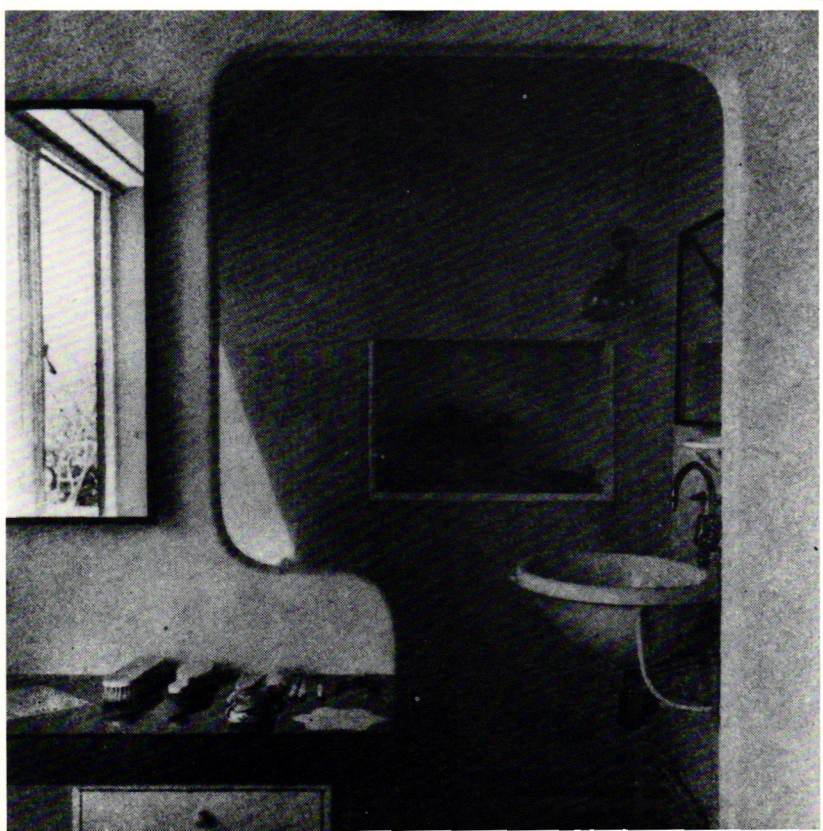

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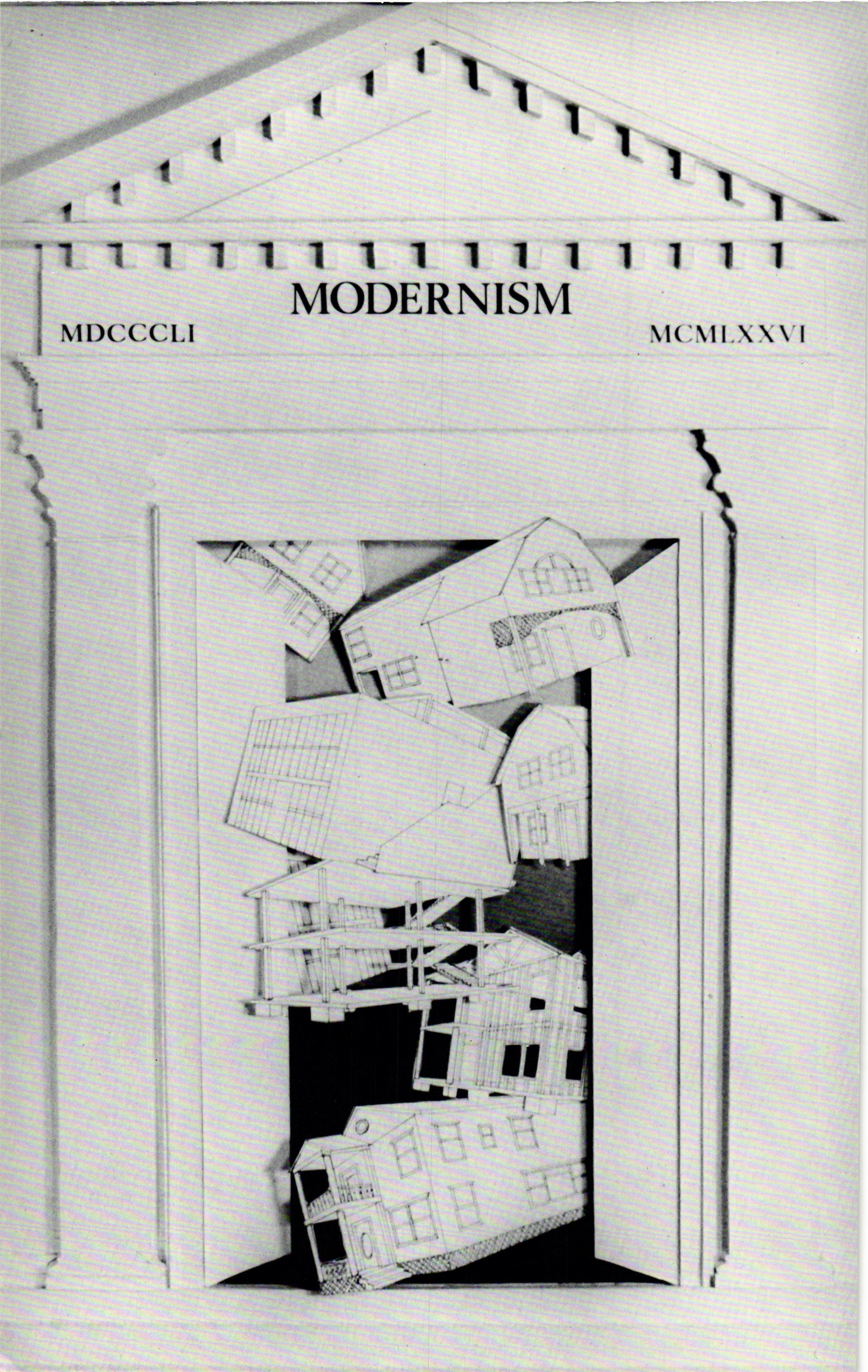


The Doubles of Post-Modern

Robert A M Stern

In this article, Robert Stern answers current criticism that Post-Modern Architecture is both faddish and culturally superficial by drawing parallels between it and recent devlopments in the other arts, and proposing a genealogy for Post-Modernism which encompasses the 500-year old tradition of Western Humanism.

A framework is established by which Post-Modernism can be viewed as a broad-based cultural reaction, occurring on a variety of levels in the arts and art criticism, to the abstraction and resultant alienation produced in modern culture. The intellectual 'pedigree' of Post-Modernism as a term is thus achieved through two arguments, one based on its place within an historic continuum, and one relying on the diversity of fields in which it is currently operating.

In this respect, the agenda of the following article is nonargumentative, leading to an interpretation *of the historical and cultural place of Post Modernism rather than polemics for it. The assumptions underlying the argument are: that its occurance is a notable event in contemporary architectural and cultural history, that its roots are cohesive and profound, and that it is as worthy of intellectual evaluation as the Modern Movement itself. In other words, an understanding of the lineage of Post Modernism is crucial because it will, in itself, spawn substantial changes in future architectural thought.*

. . . *cubism and superrealism* [*surrealism*], *far from being the dawn of a style, are the end of a period of self-consciousness, inbreeding and exhaustion. One thing seems clear to me: that no new style will grow out of a preoccupation with art for its own sake. It can only arise from a new interest in subject matter. We need a new myth in which the symbols are inherently pictorial.*[1]

What has been called Modern architecture for the past 50 years is in disarray: though such leading architects as Paul Rudolph, I M Pei, and Kevin Roche continue to produce major new work, the forms as well as the theories on which that work is based are systematically being questioned by a growing number of younger architects who perceive the waning of modernism and who are questioning the prevailing philosophic basis for architecture and its form language. This questioning sensibility has come to be described, alternately and rather imprecisely, as 'Post-Modern' or 'Post-Modernist.'[2]

Charles Jencks' book, *The Language of Post-Modern Architecture*, is the first to explore the new mood and to begin to erect a scaffolding of theory for post-modernism.[3] Jencks suggests that the term 'Post-Modern' is at best 'negative and evasive.' Nonetheless it does enjoy some precedent in architecture.[4]

The terms 'modernism' and 'post-modernism' have been used in other disciplines besides architecture, including political history and literary and art criticism. In each of these disciplines, they suggest two different conditions resulting in related sets of what I would describe as 'doubles'—the doubles of modernism and of post-modernism. Both grow out of the same two distinct but interrelated sensibilities or conditions, and both fall within the Modern—that is Western Humanist / Post-Renaissance—period.

These conditions affect both modernism and post-modernism. Borrowing the term from Frank Kermode, I would label the first of these conditions 'schismatic.' The schismatic condition argues for a clean break with Western Humanism. I would label the second condition 'traditional,' borrowing the term from Stephen Spender. It argues for a recognition of the continuity of the Western Humanist tradition. Traditional modernism can be 'conceived of as a return, at once

[1] Kenneth Clark, 'Boredom Blamed,' *Art Digest*, Vol X (November 15, 1943) 3. I am indebted to Peter Eisenman, Kenneth Frampton and Vincent Scully for reading and commenting on portions of this manuscript in a much earlier stage of its development; Suzanne Stephens has read it more recently. What is written here is much the better for their advice. Nonetheless, I am sure they will be relieved to learn, I take full responsibility for the final product.

[2] Portions of this text are based on material introduced by me on previous occasions: See 'Postscript at the Edge of Modernism,' in my *New Directions in American Architecture*, 2nd edition, revised (New York: Braziller, 1977) 117-136; 'Five Houses,' G A *Houses*, 1(1976) 36-41; *Architectural Design*, 47, #4 (May 1977); 'Something Borrowed, Something New,' *Horizon*, 20, #4 (December 1977) 50-57.

[3] Charles Jencks, *The Language of Post-Modern Architecture* (London: Academy Editions, 1977); see also, Jencks, 'Post-Modern History,' *Architectural Design*, 48, #1 (January 1978) 11-62.

[4] The term seems to have been initiated by Joseph Hudnut in his essay 'The post-modern house,' *Architectural Record*, 97 (May 1945) 70-75, which was reprinted as Chapter 9 in Hudnut's *Architecture and the Spirit of Man*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard, 1949) 109-119.

Its earliest influential use was in Arnold J Toynbee's, *A Study in History*, 8 (New York: Oxford, 1954-59) 338.

Peter Eisenman and I discussed the term and its probable definitions at considerable length in the summer of 1975. I first 'went public' with a definition for the term in relationship to architecture in 1976, using it to characterize a shift in mood represented by an event—the Beaux-Arts exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art—and a shifting of alliances among the architects who constituted the 'White' and 'Gray' groups of the mid-1970s. See my 'Possibly, the Beaux-Arts Exhibit means something after all (with apology to Clement Greenberg, Rosalind Kraus and the month of October),' a paper delivered at the 'Oppositions Forum,' Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies, 22 January 1976, and published in William Ellis, editor, 'Forum of the Beaux-Arts Exhibition,' *Oppositions* 8 (Spring 1977) 169-171; see also my 'Gray Architecture as Post-Modernism or Up and Down from Orthodoxy' (Gray Architecture: *Quelques Variations Post-Modernistes autour de L'Orthodoxie*), *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui, 186*, *(Aout/Septembre 1976) 83.*

spontaneous, willed to eternal values long forgotten or buried but which a reborn or renewed historical memory makes once again present;' schismatic modernism can be seen as a sensibility in which 'the new and the modern [are] seen in terms of a birth rather than a rebirth, not a restoration but . . . a construction of the present and future not on the foundations of the past but on the ruins of time.'[5]

The two modernisms can be distinguished by their attitudes toward the past: 'traditional' modernism, typified by the writings of Proust or Eliot or the paintings of Picasso, views the past as a source of order; 'schismatic' modernism, typified by the work of Duchamp or Mondrian, views the past as a burden. Although the two kinds of modernism are distinct, they are linked by an apocalyptic view of the future and by a recognition of Western Humanism as an on-going condition.

It is important to reiterate that the Modern period as a whole encompasses a continuing tradition of humanistic thought and action though some of its stylistic movements—for example Dada and Surrealism—regard humanism as a yoke.

Like the two modernisms, the two post-modernisms can be distinguished by their attitudes toward the past. While the schismatic Post-Modern condition posits a break with both modernism and the Modern period itself, the traditional Post-Modern condition proposes to free new production from the rigid constraints of modernism, especially from its most radical and nihilistic aspects (as exemplified by Dada and Surrealism) while simultaneously reintegrating itself with other strains of Western Humanism, especially those which characterize its last pre-modernist phase, that of the Romanticism which flourished between 1750 and 1850.[6] Thus, schismatic post-modernism is a sensibility that considers itself not only beyond modernism but also outside the Modern period, one which seeks to establish the mode of thought and artistic production that is as free from the 500-year tradition of Western Humanism as that mode was, in its turn, free from the previous Gothic era of religious scholasticism. Traditional post-modernism, on the other hand, is one that seeks to reintegrate or subsume modernism within the broad category of the Modern period as a whole.

In post-modernism, the distinctions between traditional and schismatic conditions are useful in illuminating the distinctions between the work of John Gardner and William Gass in literature or of Peter Eisenman and Michael Graves in architecture. Though the term 'Post-Modern' appears to be used to describe sensibilities and theories that share as common ground a reaction to the modernism which has dominated much of the cultural activity of the past 125 years, the traditional and schismatic conditions serve to distinguish between distinct sensibilities within the Post-Modern devolution; these distinctions have at their core the question of the relationship between new work and the tradition of humanism which characterized the Modern period itself.

Thus the doubles of the Post-Modern: two distinct but interrelated Post-Modern sensibilities: a schismatic condition that argues for a *clean break* with the 400 year old tradition of Western Humanism and a 'traditional' condition that argues for a return to, or a recognition of, the *continuity* of the cultural tradition of Western Humanism of which it holds modernism to be a part.

Somebody should write the history of the word 'modern.' The OED isn't very helpful, though most of the senses the word now has have been in the air since the 16th century, and are actually older than Shakespeare's way of using it to mean 'commonplace' . . . The New is to be judged by the criterion of novelty, the Modern implies or at any rate permits a serious relationship with the past, a relationship that requires criticism and indeed radical reimagining.[7]

In order to clarify what is meant by the term 'Modern' in the phrase 'Post-Modern,' it is necessary to establish clear definitions for the related terms 'Modern' and 'modernism.' Such

[5] Renato Poggioli, *The Theory of the Avant Garde (Cambridge, MA: Harvard,* 1968) translated by Gerald Fitzgerald, 217; see also, Daniel Bell, *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism* (New York: Basic Books, 1976) 34; Frank Kermode, *Continuities*, (London: Routledge and Egon, Paul, 1968) 8.

[6] See Stephen Spender, *The Struggle of the Modern* (Berkeley: University of California, 1963) passim

[7] Kermode, *op cit*, 27-28

[8] See Kermode, *op cit*, 8, 13; Kermode observes that 'the fact that defining the modern is a task that now imposes itself on many distinguished scholars may be a sign that the modern period is over,' p 28. See also, Bell, *op cit*, 40-52.

[9] See Clement Greenberg, 'Modernist Painting' in Gregory Battcock, editor, *The New Art* (New York: Dutton, 1973, revised edition) 100-110.

William Jordy, 'The Symbolic Essence of Modern European Architecture of the Twenties and its Continuing Influence,' *JSAH*, XXII, #3 (October 1973) 117

[10] David Watkin writes that 'an art historical belief in the all dominating *Zeitgeist*, combined with a historicist emphasis on progress and the necessary superiority of novelty, has come dangerously close to undermining, on the one hand, our appreciation of the genius of the individual and, on the other, the importance of artistic tradition,' *Morality and Architecture* (London: Oxford, 1977) 115. See also, John Alford, 'Modern Architecture and the Symbolism of the Creative Process,' *College Art Journal*, XIV, #2 (1955) 102-33; see also, Bell, *op cit*, 13, 20, 46-52.

a seemingly pedantic exercise is necessary because the distinctions between the older terms have become blurred by daily use, and they have become ineffective for discourse.

What can be called the 'Modern period' begins in the 15th century with the birth of Humanism. The renaissance of classicism in architecture is the first of the Modern stylistic phases: the Baroque and the Roccoco are subsequent Modern styles. The International Style of ca. 1920-60 is also a Modern style, often thought to be *the* Modern Style in which the meaning of the word 'Modern' is transformed and limited so as to represent only those values more properly described as 'modernist,' a term which describes the urge to produce new artistic work that eschews all known form-language and, ideally, all grammar, in favor of a new self-referential (i.e., in architecture, functionally and technologically determined) language of form whose principal cultural responsibility is toward its moment in time. Modernism sees art as a manifestation of the *zeitgeist*; it strives to reflect the moment of its conception. Modernism, in the most oversimplified terms, represents a moralistic application of a superior value to that which is not only new but also independent of all previous production.

Modernism views the present as a state of continuing crisis; it sees history only as a record of experiences, a body of myth, but not as objective truth, and it is apocalyptic in its relationship to the future. A person who believes in the sensibility of 'modernism' is a 'modernist' as well as a 'Modern,' the latter term being the more general one and simply referring to someone who has lived in the 'Modern' period and has contended with or at least recognized the issue of 'modernity' but who has not necessarily adopted a modernist stance.[8]

Modernism is not a style in and of itself in the sense that the Renaissance and Baroque were styles with unifying principles. It can be regarded as a succession of attempts to redefine the syntax and the grammar of artistic composition (the poems of Mallarmé, the stream of consciousness of Joyce and Woolf; the buildings of Mies van der Rohe and Le Corbusier). As a result, and rather perversely, to the extent that it has deliberately been made difficult and inaccessible, artistic production has also shown itself to be modernist. In some cases, there has been an effort to go beyond issues of syntax and grammar and to seek to establish new form languages which, because they are not culturally based (that is, familiar), are by necessity personal or self-referential.[9]

Modernism does not accept the appearance of things as they are in nature and in the man-made world; it seeks always to take them apart in order to discover their hidden and presumably essential character. Modernism seeks to close and ultimately to eliminate the distance between the object perceived and the person perceiving the object. It seeks to do this in two ways: by insisting that all experience and thereby all art exists in the present—Giedion's phrase was the 'eternal present'—and by insisting that each work of art and each act of artistic production is a personal act.[10] This presentism and the self-referential aspect of artistic production are fundamental to any examination of the nature of modernism in relationship to the issue of an on-going culture which we call the Western Humanist tradition.

It has been argued that modernism can never be part of any tradition, that it is a thing apart, a parallel tradition to Western Humanism. This issue of modernism as a sensibility apart from the Modern has resulted in that plethora of modernist styles or isms which has made the history of the literature and art of the last 125 years seem so confusing and troubled.

While the term 'Modern' as in the phrase 'the Modern period,' is a term of historical description (like 'the Middle Ages'), it is also a term of sensibility and style. It can be used as the term Baroque is used—with and without a capital 'B.' One can exhibit a baroque or a modern turn of mind while acting outside the Baroque or Modern period.

As a term describing a style, the use of the word 'modern' opens up a veritable Pandora's box of confusion: for

example, 'L'Art Nouveau,' for a while known as 'Le Style Moderne,' is a style in the Modern period and, more specifically, it was a 'modernist' style in that it sought to stand free of the *historical continuum*. At the same time, insofar as it is the 'fine art' manifestation of the bohemianism of the *fin de siecle* it also represents a sensibility.

Another meaning for 'modern' is up-to-date or 'contemporary.' The term contemporary cannot be used to describe a stylistic sensibility because it signifies merely the absence of any strongly defined period features. Thus, actually all current production is modern: in fact, 'the great claim of modernism was that it at last was free of style—finally and forever open to direct experience'[11] is rendered preposterous by the history of the Modern Movement.

As Susan Sontag has observed, this 'notion of a style-less transparent art is one of the most tenacious fantasies of modern culture. Artists and critics pretend to believe that it is no more possible to get the artifice out of art than it is for a person to lose his personality. Yet the aspiration lingers—a permanent dissent from Modern art with its dizzying velocity of style *changes*.'[12] Harry Levin articulates what I believe to be a fundamental characteristic of the modernist era: 'Now we are all contemporaries; about that we have no option, so long as we stay alive. But we may choose whether or not we wish to be modern'[13] (by which I think Levin means modernist).

Thus, one must be wary of the use of the term 'modern' in architecture, as in most of the arts and in literature. It is not really a description of a style but, as Irving Howe has observed, a term of critical placement and judgement.[14]

Contemporary historians and critics of Modern architecture, perhaps even more than their counterparts in literature and the fine arts, seem to confuse the broad historical definition of the Modern period with related but distinct ideas pertaining to modernism and to use the terms interchangably. While this issue of historiography critically affects the seeming confusion of the current situation, it is too long and too complex to be dealt with effectively in this essay. Suffice it so say that until the impact of Hegelian and Marxist thought came to dominate the developing discipline of art and architectural history in Germany in the second half of the nineteenth century, historians undertook to define modern architectural history in broad terms and to regard the Renaissance as the first of a sequence of Modern styles. Even as late as 1929, Henry-Russell Hitchcock in his *Modern Architecture: Romanticism and Reintegration*, embraced a chronologically broad and relatively inclusive definition of Modern architecture. Nonetheless, perhaps under the impact of his subsequent collaboration with the more polemical Philip Johnson on the book *The International Style*, and perhaps as a result of his subsequent contact with European modernist historians such as Giedion and Pevsner, Hitchcock has since drawn back from his earlier and more inclusive position.

In *Modern Architecture*, Hitchcock traces the origins of the Modern period to the breakup of the Gothic style, regarding each phase since that time not as an 'independent style' like the Greek or the Egyptian, but rather as a subsidiary manner of one Modern style. Yet, even in *Modern Architecture*, Hitchcock was already under the sway not only of the emerging polemic of the International Style but also of the historical determinism which pervades so much German art historical writing of the period. In *Modern Architecture* Hitchcock claimed that a fundamental characteristic of the Modern style is a 'preference for formal experimentation,' as if Egyptian and Greek architects in Antiquity were never interested in trying anything new.[15] In his later books, by inference, and explicitly in an essay 'Modern Architecture—A Memoir,' Hitchcock has altered his original position, claiming that had he followed his initial plan to cover

> *. . . the whole range of time from the Late Gothic to the present it would have been more or less analogous to the books of the nineteenth century architectural historians such as James*

[11] David Antin, 'Modernism and Post-Modernism: Approaching the Present in American Poetry,' *Boundary 2*

[12] Susan Sontag, *Against Interpretation* (New York: Delta, 1966) 17

[13] Harry Levin, 'What Was Modernism,' in Levin, *Refractions: Essays in Comparative Literature* (New York: Oxford, 1966) 271-295; see also, Robert Martin Adams, 'What Was Modernism?' *Hudson Review* XXXI, #1 (Spring 1978) 19-13. Adams' title and themes are deliberately based on those raised by Harry Levin in his earlier essay of the same title; see also, Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane, *Modernism 1880-1930* (Hammondsworth: Penguin, 1976).

[14] Irving Howe, *Decline of the New* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1970) 3

[15] Henry-Russell Hitchcock, *Modern Architecture: Romanticism and Reintegration* (New York: Payson and Clarke, 1929) xvi

Ferguson (who) . . . dealing with the 'modern styles' . . . interpreted 'modern' in the old sense as the third portion of the relevant past: 'Modern times,' that is, the period from the Renaissance onward, in distinction to 'antiquity' and the 'Middle Ages.'

Hitchcock goes on to observe that

. . . what is, at any given point, accepted more broadly as 'modern architecture' can have no fixed beginning—various historians and critics have set its start all the way from the early fifteenth century to the early twentieth. Nor, even more obviously, can it have a fixed ending. What is still properly considered modern architecture began, according to my present view, in the 1880s, not way back in 1750, nor yet in 1900 or in 1920; it will be over when we or the next generation have another name for it.'[16]

Thus Hitchcock brings us to a fundamental issue of the moment: although at first glance it seems difficult to sustain as the broadest definition of Modern architecture all the production of the Post-Medieval period, upon further reflection such a definition seems more workable than those later attempts to link the historical definition of the Modern period in architecture too closely with specific economic, political, or cultural events that have occurred since the middle of the 18th century—that is, with the Industrial Revolution, and the political revolutions in the United States and France—or with prior positions taken on behalf of any particular manifestation of current or contemporary production that might seem more 'advanced,' 'innovative' or 'progressive.' Such a broad view opens up the definition of Modern architecture, enabling it to be understood not as a unified style but rather as a humanistic pursuit involving a continuous interweaving of diverse and often contradictory formal tendencies assembled, discovered, sometimes even invented through various processes including eclecticism, modernism, and technological as well as functional determinism. Such a view would hold out 1750 as an important marker in time, as it would also note the decisive shifts that took place in the period 1870-1890 (emergence of a dominant modernism) and again around 1960-70 (emergence of a dominant post-modernism). But this view, as I hope to demonstrate later, would not see decisive reasons why any of these phases should mark the conclusion of the Modern period's larger themes, or their replacement by themes not already present in the formative stages of the Modern period.

It is not Hitchcock, but Giedion, Pevsner and J M Richards who have exerted the greatest influence on the profession's and the public's view of what Modern Architecture was and should have been during the past 40 years: much of the confusion about the character and chronology of the Modern period in architecture can be attributed to their tendency to present the history of the architecture of the past 200 years as a series of morality tales involving heroic struggles between pragmatic materialism and high ideals, 'good guys' and 'bad guys,' 'progressives' and 'reactionaries,' 'constituent' and 'transitory' facts. Whole careers and aesthetic movements have been cut off from the so-called 'main stream' of historical flow: Giedion's *Space, Time and Architecture* and Pevsner's *Pioneers of the Modern Movement* have been the most influential in the architectural profession and therefore the most troublesome. In these works, as Hitchcock has observed, much of the architecture of the nineteenth century has been treated "as constituent premonitions of [the] 'modern architecture' " of the 1920s and 30s and not as legitimate artistic production in its own right.[17]

Outside the architectural profession, most educated people now in their 40s and 50s were exposed to this point of view in introductory courses in college, sometimes in the original text of Giedion and Pevsner, but more often in such popularizing work as Richard's *Introduction to Modern Architecture* in which

the words 'Modern Architecture' are used here to mean something more particular than contemporary architecture. They are used to mean

[16] Henry-Russell Hitchcock, 'Modern Architecture—A Memoir,' *JSAH*, 27, #4 (December 1968) 227-33; the broad view was taken by Montgomery Schuyler, for example, who stated that 'modern architecture, like modern literature, had its origin in the revival of learning. The Italian Renaissance in architecture was inextricably connected with the awakening of the human spirit which was the beginning of modern civilization.' 'Modern Architecture,' *Architectural Record* IV (July-September 1894).

[17] Hitchcock, 'Modern Architecture—A Memoir,' passim; Robert Venturi and Denise Scott-Brown first used the good-guy, bad-guy analogy in their 'Learning from Lutyens or the Case of the Shifting Zeitgeist,' *RIBA Journal*, 76 (August 1969) 353-54

the new kind of architecture that is growing up with this century as this century's own contribution to the art of architecture; the work of those people, whose number is happily increasing, who understand that architecture is a social art related to the life of the people it serves, not an academic exercise in applied ornament. The question that immediately arises, whether there is in fact enough difference between people's lives as they are lived in previous centuries to justify a truly 'modern' architecture being very different from that of the past – and indeed whether 'modern' architecture is quite as revolutionary as it is supposed to be.

For whatever reason, modern architecture has been passing through a sort of 'puritan' phase, in which the negative virtues of simplicity and efficiency have been allowed to dominate, and since 1939 a concentration on the essentials has also been necessitated in most countries by the overriding need to build cheaply.[18]

The revisionist architectural history of the 1950s and 60s, which owes a considerable debt to the example of Hitchcock's comprehensive *Architecture: Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, sought to develop a broader characterization of the Modern period which would include the stylistic revivalism of the late 18th and 19th centuries as well as the self-referential modernism of the 20th. But despite Hitchcock's influence, the determinist view of history typified by Giedion's *Space, Time and Architecture* seems to have prevented the revisionists, in their search for a broader view, from considering events earlier than the mid-eighteenth century. Thus, even the very important re-definition of Modern architecture which Scully offered in 1954 and refined in 1961, though the first to free the stylistic analysis of architectural production from the futurist polemic of the Modernist Movement of the 1920s, is not free from political determinism and is not, in the final analysis, sufficiently broad in its historical scope. Acknowledging a debt to Frank Lloyd Wright, Scully offered a definition of Modern architecture as the 'architecture of democracy,' an 'image of ourselves' emerging 'precisely at the beginning of industrialism and mass democracy [where] we find it, in terms of fragmentation, mass scale, and new, unfocused continuity.'[19] In this sense Scully, seeking to reconcile the views of such early twentieth century historians as Fiske Kimball with those of Giedion and Pevsner, brings us to the threshold of our current perception of the distinctions between the Modern tradition and modernism.[20] As a result it is now possible to see the Modern Movement as an episode in the broad history of Modern architecture itself.

Similarly, one can see modernism not as a style but as a strategy, one of a number of *isms* which have emerged in the Modern era to help the artist express his attitudes toward the present in relation to his sense of the past and/or the future: in architecture 'eclecticism,' 'associationalism,' and 'technological determinism' are other attitudes which interact with modernism to help organize a theory upon which to base work. Thus, though modernism has had its period of hegemony, resulting in a univalent style whose abstraction rendered it difficult and uncommunicative from the first, it should not be seen as a style in and of itself. The International Style was the great modernist style, and modernism itself remains a Modern sensibility. Yet there are those who would argue that it is a sensibility parallel to Western humanism and thereby outside it, that is not at all part of the tradition that began with the Renaissance, and it is this issue which constitutes the crux of the current debate.

The idea of a Post-Modern age was introduced by Arnold Toynbee in his *A Study of History*,[21] and has been developed by a number of historians, most notably Geoffrey Barraclough.[22] The post-Modern Age as discussed by Toynbee and Barraclough is one in which there is increasing recognition that co-existence is the *modus vivendi* of the pluralist condition of our time. This pluralism in turn forces a close examination of the validity of the proposition that the distinction between

18 J M Richards, *Introduction to Modern Architecture* (Hammondsworth: Penguin, 1960) 9, 13; see Watkin, *op cit*, passim; also Peter Collins, *Changing Ideals in Modern Architecture* (London: Faber and Faber, 1965) passim.

19 Vincent J. Scully, 'Modern Architecture: Toward a Redefinition of Style,' *College Art Journal* VII, #2 (Winter, 1958) 140-59; see also Scully's *Modern Architecture* (New York: Braziller) passim.

20 Fiske Kimball and George H Edgell, *A History of Architecture* (New York: Harper, 1918); Chapter XII, 'Modern Architecture,' was written by Kimball; see also, James D. Kornwolf, M H *Baillie Scott and the Arts and Crafts Tradition* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1972) XXLV.

21 Toynbee, *op cit*; see also, Toynbee, *The Present Day Experiment in Western Civilization* (London: Oxford, 1962) 26-37.

22 Geoffrey Barraclough, *An Introduction to Contemporary History* (New York: Basic Books, 1965)

23 Gerald Graff, 'The Myth of the Postmodernist Breakthrough,' *Tri Quarterly* #26 (Winter, 1973) 383-417; see also, Bell, *op cit*.

a single standard and competing standards sets the contemporary of the Post-Modern period apart from the Modern period as a whole. If, as Toynbee and Barraclough argue, the Modern period began at the end of the 15th century, when Western European culture began to exert its hegemony over vast land areas and cultures not its own (and Western European man found himself having to deal not only with the pluralist politics of European nationalism in its formative stages but also with the pluralism brought about by encounters with the 'native' populations of the 'New World'), then it perhaps can be argued that the Post-Modern or contemporary phase they describe is really just another stage in Modern history, a 'global' or 'Post-Industrial' Age following a 'National' or 'Industrial' Age, an era of 'relativism' that at once accepts the inherent diversity of the present while seeking order and meaning through a connection with the past, especially with the Romantic era.

Post-modernism should not be seen as a reaction against modernism; it seeks to develop modernism's themes by attempting to examine them in relationship to the wider framework of the Modern period as a whole.

The divided nature of modernism complicates our understanding of the Post-Modern devolution. At the beginning of this essay, I defined two kinds of Post-Modern sensibilities which can now be seen as related to modernism: a traditional one and a schismatic one. But the complex nature of modernism itself, with its two distinct conditions or types united by an apocalyptic view of history—not to mention the claims that are sometimes made for modernism as a sensibility completely independent of Western Humanism—complicate the situation with regard to post-modernism. As a result, it can be argued that there are not one but two sets of Post-Modern doubles: that there are *two types of traditional post-modernism* and *two types of schismatic post-modernism*.

The first type of traditional post-modernism—and the one which I would argue is the more viable of the two—argues for a break with modernism (where modernism is itself seen as a *break with* Western Humanism) and a reintegration with a view of Western Humanism which includes modernism among its many and sometimes conflicting conditions. The second type sees itself as a continuation of modernism (in which modernism is itself seen as a successor *sensibility* and *style* to the Baroque and Roccoco, a sensibility and style that is contradictorily and inexplicably, in its present-ism, a contradiction of the very notion of style.

This second type of traditional post-modernism is somewhat dubious: at the very least it fails to account for the stylistic complexity of the Romantic era, and it leads us to a question of whether such a post-modernism is really different from modernism itself. For if traditional modernism is a condition in which all art is seen as being in the present, though not breaking with the values and symbols of Western Humanism, then where can this second type of post-modernism stand in time? Is there a place beyond the present?

The first type of schismatic post-modernism—and the one which I would argue is the more viable of the two—is the one which argues for a *continuity with* modernism (in which modernism is itself seen as a *break with* Western Humanism). This kind of schismatic post-modernism, like the second type of traditional post-modernism, is a continuing modernism, but the use of the prefix 'post' has meaning because it permits the designation of a condition which is distinct from modernism because it breaks with the Western Humanist tradition. Schismatic post-modernism of this type marks the full flowering of a sensibility which has its origins in modernism's aspiration toward a clean break with the Western Humanist tradition.

The second type of schismatic post-modernism is itself seen as a *continuing* tradition. This is the so-called 'post-modern breakthrough to post-modernity,'[23] in which a totally new state of consciousness is achieved that insists on the obsolescence of modernism as well as the entire Western Humanist tradition. Attractive though such an image seems to those who view the current situation as unnecessarily confusing, it is difficult to make clear just exactly how this new condition will emerge. As Richard E Palmer has written:

> *Post-modernity raises the question of a transition and transformation so radical as to change the fundamental view of language, history, truth, time and matter—so radical that 'understanding' becomes a quite different process. It raises the possibility, in other words, of a 'new hermenuetics.'*
>
> *The hermeneutical problem of bridging the gap between modern and post-modern sets-of-mind goes in both directions: the problem of understanding a post-modern way of thinking when the assumptions and furniture of our thinking are themselves given by modernity, and the problem of a person who, having achieved a post-modern, post-spatialized, post-perspectual, or holistic framework, must then communicate it to someone who has not reached it.*[24]

[24] Richard E Palmer, 'Postmodernity and Hermeneutics,' *Boundary 2* 2, (Winter 1977) 363-393. This is the strain of post-modernity that Daniel Bell disapprovingly characterizes as "the psychological spearhead for an onslaught on the values and not rational patterns of 'ordinary' behavior, in the name of liberation, eroticism, freedom of impulse and the good life . . . it means that a crisis of middle class values is at hand." *Op cit*, 52; see also, p 79. On p 104 Bell writes that in the 1960s a 'powerful current of post-modern developed which carried the logic of modernism to its furthest reaches. In the theoretical writings of Norman O Brown and Michel ▶

Thus, though there are four conditions of post-modernism, it would seem that in the case of two, questions of considerable complexity remain unanswered at the present moment, thereby limiting the effectiveness of these conditions for artistic production if not for discourse. The difficulties raised by the second type of traditional post-modernism—that is, the notion of a continuing modernism—simultaneously claiming a position within Humanism and apart from history, seems hopelessly contradictory. It seems to be a condition which, despite the Post-Modern label that might be applied to it, is no more or no less than that of the traditional modernism of Marcel Proust, of the James Joyce of *Ulysses,* of Picasso, and of Le Corbusier.

The difficulties of the second type of schismatic post-modernism—the post-modernist breakthrough—have already been discussed. It takes as its point of departure the work of such writers as James Joyce but, as yet, it has not found a truly convincing voice. Such critics as William Spanos and Ihab Hassan are attempting to articulate the nature of the post-modernist breakthrough.[25] Because this type of schismatic post-modernism is only schismatic, it doubles back on itself and reaches a dead end.

Thus it becomes clear that the second type of schismatic post-modernism is not just a shift of emphasis within modernism; its relationship to modernism is not comparable to that which post-impressionism had to impressionism; schismatic post-modernism is radical in the extreme. In an essay on 'Joyce, Beckett and the Post-modern Imagination,' Ihab Hassan observes that though 'one might be inclined to conclude that modernism is simply the earlier movement . . . and that post-modernism is the later movement, which began to dominate Western literature after World War II,' one must finally see that 'however jagged or ironic modernism allowed itself to be it retained its faith in art, in the imaginative act, even at the end of cultural dissolution . . . Post-modernism on the other hand, is essentially *subversive* in form and *anarchic* in its cultural spirit. It dramatizes its lack of faith in art even as it produces new works of art intended to hasten *both* cultural and artistic dissolution.'[26]

The two conditions of the Post-Modern that are at this moment important, and the ones I should like to consider in some detail in the remaining pages of this essay, are: 1) the schismatic post-modernism that argues for a clean break with Western Humanism and a continuity with modernism and 2) the traditional post-modernism that argues for a break with modernism and a reintegration with the broader condition of Western Humanism, especially with the Romantic tradition. These seem the only possible categories because they are the only ones that contain in them the 'double' sensibilities of continuity and change which are necessary to sustain generative cycles of creation.

The emergence of the Post-Modern sensibility can be seen as a logical result of the opposition between the Romantic and Modernist sensibilities, the former reveling in diversity, the latter struggling to find a universal cultural voice. Post-modernism is not revolutionary in either the political or artistic sense; in fact, it reinforces the effect of the technocratic and bureaucratic society in which we live—traditional post-modernism by accepting conditions and trying to modify them, schismatic post-modernism by proposing a

[25] William Spanos, 'The Detective and the Boundary: Some Notes on the Post-Modern Literary Imagination,' *Boundary* 2, 1 (Fall 1972) 147-68

[26] Ihab Hassan, 'Joyce, Beckett, and the postmodern imagination,' *Tri Quarterly*, XXXIV (Fall 1975) 179-200; see also, Hassan, *Paracriticisms, Seven Speculations of the Times* (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois, 1975) 55-56.

[27] William Gass, 'House VI,' *Progressive Architecture*, 58, #6 (June 1977) 57-67

[28] Siegfried Giedion, *Space, Time and Architecture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard, 1941) passim

[29] Mario Gandelsonas, 'On Reading Architecture,' *Progressive Architecture*, 53, #3 (March 1972) 68-88

[30] John Gardner, *On Moral Fiction* (New York: Basic Books, 1978-9

▶ Foucault, in the novels of William Burroughs, Jean Genet and, up to a point, Norman Mailer, and in the porno-pop culture that is now all about us, one sees a logical culmination of modernist intentions. They are, as Diana Trilling put it, 'the adventures beyond consciousness.' "

"Traditional modernism, no matter how daring, played out its impulses in the imagination, within the constraints of art . . . Post-modernism,' Bell continues on page 52, describing that of the breakthrough variety, 'overflows the vessels of art. It tears down boundaries and insists that *acting out* rather than making distinctions, is the way to gain knowledge.'

condition *outside* Western Humanism, thereby permitting Western Humanist culture to proceed uninterrupted though not necessarily unaffected.

Post-modernism, though a reaction to modernism, is not a revolutionary movement seeking to overthrow modernism. Modernism cannot be ignored. We cannot pretend that it never existed and that we can return to a pre-modernist condition (such is the folly of such neo-traditionalist architects as John Barrington Bayley or the theorist Conrad Jameson). Post-modernism is especially affected by that aspect of modernism which derived from romanticism itself, particularly the romantic belief in the religious aspect of art. Most importantly, the Post-Modern condition arises out of the need to account for, and to continue to function under, the drastically altered circumstances which emerged from the political and cultural events of the 1920s and 1940s and which continue to condition action in this last third of our century. Thus it must be seen that post-modernism is a Modern sensibility that includes modernism by virtue of its reaction to it; it is the manifestation of what Irving Howe describes as 'the radical breakdown of the modernist impulse,' which came as a result of the experience of the Holocaust, of World War II, of the use of the atomic bomb. At its root lies existentialism, an attitude toward history and the idea of time which has extended beyond our thought processes to the very mode of our consciousness.

Schismatic post-modernism can be seen as an outgrowth of the anti-intellectualism of the modernism of the 1920s and 30s. In philosophy and literature it is represented by such writers as Norman Brown, Herbert Marcuse, Marshall McLuhan, Donald Barthelme, Samuel Beckett, and William S Burroughs. In architecture, Peter Eisenman is its leading advocate. It rejects the Western Humanist tradition and, in the realm of aesthetics, it rejects Aristotelian composition. Though very much related to modernism, schismatic post-modernism is nonetheless a distinct sensibility. And it adopts the post-modernist label to differentiate itself from the modernist tradition.

Schismatic post-modernism separates itself from traditionalist post-modernism by suggesting that it is not simply the crises of mid-century life that have irreparably changed the relationship of men to each other and to their ideas, but that these events have rendered untenable that relationship between men, objects, nature, and the sense of the ideal (the deity) which has been accepted since the Renaissance. Schismatic post-modernism sees the relationship between men and objects as a competitive one, and God as dead or, at least, removed from the fray.

It is in this context that Eisenman's position can best be understood. His proposal to make architecture autonomous is anti-historical and anti-symbolic; his endeavors to produce an architecture that is autonomous and self-referential—that is hermetically sealed from all concerns except the process of its own fabrication and fabulation—make his works virtually impenetrable. Eisenman's houses become symbolic of their own process of conception, but that process is so cut off from contemporary culture, history, and pragmatism that in the end, the effectiveness of the symbolic gesture ceases to be symbolic of anything outside itself; the building runs the danger of becoming merely an object which can, at best, make its appeal on a sensuous and hedonistic level. Although it struggles to free itself from all cultural references, by its very physicality it cannot but remind the viewer of some object previously seen or experienced.

Despite his belief in an autonomous architecture, Eisenman's ideology is culturally based. It draws extensively from the linguistic theories of Noam Chomsky and from the work of such literary critics as Roland Barthes and William Gass, who has himself written about one of Eisenman's buildings, House VI.[27] In basing his argument for an autonomous architecture on theories developed in relation to others in parallel but not necessarily related artistic disciplines—and in making comparisons with discoveries in the sciences, especially mathematics and physics, Eisenman seems caught up in a contradiction not unlike the one which characterized the justifications devised for modernist architecture by historians and polemicists such as Giedion, who sought to justify architectural modernism by connecting it with Einsteinian physics.[28] Schismatic post-modernist architecture, as represented by Eisenman (and I can think of no other architect who might be included with him in this category) buoys itself up with analogies to literary and linguistic theory.[29] But where modernism's connection to physics was *ex post facto,* schismatic post-modernism's connections have been established the other way around. As a result there seems to be in Eisenman's work what John Gardner has observed in the work of such schismatic post-modernists as John Cage and William Gass: a sense of 'art which is all thought . . . art too obviously constructed to fit a theory.'[30]

To sum up: Eisenman's work, in its dazzling extremism, brings into focus the fundamental dilemma of schismatic post-modernism which, to paraphrase Kermode, is based on an inherent contradiction that can be seen in modernism itself: can one reconcile a cult of self-referential form-making with a denial of the existence of form itself? Schismatic post-modernism leaves us little choice: with all of previous culture removed in theory, at least, we are left with an aesthetic of unparalleled abstraction and hermeticism and without, as yet, even a hope for the emergence of an atavistic mythology to help crack the code. Eisenman leaves us terribly alone, naked.

John Gardner has written that the problem with the idea of art as pure language—which it seems to me is the basic concept of Eisenman's position as it is basic to Cage's and Gass'—is 'that it shows . . . a lack of concern' on the artist's part for 'people who care about events and ideas and thus, necessarily, about the clear and efficient statements of both.' 'Linguistic opacity,' a phrase of Gardner's, suggests that the need to communicate is not a primary function of art. One might ask what can this seeming 'search for opacity' do for us? What are we to make of these

'linguistic sculptures' which at best make, as Gardner writes, 'only the affirmation sandcastles make, that it is pleasant to make things or look at things made, better to be alive than dead'?[31]

It may well be that the extreme position which Eisenman represents in architecture, Cage in music, and Gass in literature, marks an end part in a cycle, and that a viable post-modernism must be one that opens up possibilities for new production rather than describes a situation that can be seen as ultimately futile and nihilistic.

Irving Howe has argued that although there is in modernist literature a 'major impulse' to express 'a choking nausea before the idea of culture . . .' there is also 'another in which the writer takes upon himself the enormous ambition not to reinvent the terms of reality.'[32] It is this 'realistic,' 'accepting' aspect of modernism that is carried over in the second, traditional or 'inclusive' post-modernist reactions.

Howe regards Saul Bellow, William Styron, and Bernard Malamud as 'traditional' Post-Modern writers, in the sense that in their books, the action of individuals takes place in relationship to specific cultural conditions. Robert Gillespie, writing about the younger American novelists of the 1960s, states that the work of a considerable group, among them Wendell Berry, Scott Momaday, Larry McMurtry, Wright Morris and the Ken Keysey of *Sometimes a Great Notion* share a traditional post-modernist point of view. These writers accept

> *responsibility for the world's conditions, and therefore of authority in managing it. Consciousness for them is less a curse than it is an act of conscience. They are eager to locate themselves in 'a place on earth' (the title of one of Berry's novels) and to merge their lives with that place. From such felt relation comes sustenance . . . so a region has its own mythology which may offer the only sustaining relation between the past and the future.*[33]

Traditional post-modernism is simultaneously inside contemporary society and critically detached from it; it uses art to comment on everyday life; it is at once 'satiric' and accepting in its view of culture; in this sense it seeks to make telling interpretations of everyday life. Such a post-modernism begins to 'restore that state of balance between unchecked fabulation and objective social realism' necessary to prevent artistic production from degenerating into trivial self-indulgence.[34]

In painting and in architecture, traditional post-modernism relies increasingly on representational as opposed to abstract or conceptual modes. Rackstraw Downes equates traditional post-modernism with a revived realism in painting. Critical of what he describes as modernism's 'pictorial narcissism – it became a painting capable only of admiring its own nature,' Downes' argument against modernist abstraction and in favor of pre-modernist representation hinges on his criticism of modernism's exclusivist principle of selectivity:

> *While Old Master painting had allowed emphasis of the different aspects of form, its nature was holistic and embracing, whereas Modernist styles were partial. As were their means, so was their grasp on reality. Expressionism, Dada and Surrealism were associational styles which dealt respectively with emotions, ideas and fantasies. Hedonistic Impressionism, Cubism – a still life style – and Purism which dealt in Utopian absolutes, concentrated on particular properties of form. Modernism, then, constituted a rapid succession of specialized styles, each one supplying some deficiency of the rest, what they gained in intensity and concentration they lost in comprehensiveness and range.*
> *Modernism was . . . to excel in uncompromisingly personal triumphs and, likewise, fail to produce a syntax sufficiently limber and resourceful to be widely shared and passed along. In fact, that was one of its rules, that no manner should develop into an available language; because if it did so it would*

[31] *Ibid*, 69, 71

[32] Howe, *op cit*, 5

[33] Robert Gillespie, 'Beyond the Wasteland: The American Novel in the Nineteen Sixties,' *Boundary* 2, III, #2 (Windsor, 1975) 473-81

[34] Gerald Graff, 'Babbitt at the Abyss: The Social Context of Postmodern American Fiction,' *Tri Quarterly* #33 (Spring 1976) 307-337

[35] Rackstraw Downes, 'Post-Modernist Painting,' *Tracks* (Fall 1976) 70-73; see also, Hilton Kramer, 'The Return of Realism,' *New York Times*, 12 (March 1978), Section 2, 1, 25; see also, Robert Berlind, 'Artist's Choice: Figurative Art,' *Arts* LI, #7 (March 1977) 23; see also, Bell, *op cit*, 104; Peter Collins argues that the idea of 'precedent' offers a way beyond the blockage of the art historical concept of 'style;' see *Architectural Judgement* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University, 1971) 28-32.

[36] Traditional post-modernism should not be confused with the neo-traditionalism of Henry Hope Reed, John Barrington Bayley, Conrad Jameson. For Bayley and Reed, see Henry Hope Reed, *The Garden City* (New York: Doubleday, 1959) passim.

become transparent and the Modernist purpose would be lost.[35]

Downes notes that while the modernist looks to the examples of the past in a search 'for lessons which it would not have known it could reach,' the post-modernist looks back on history 'in a spirit of empathy for its ostensible purposes.' Nonetheless, traditional post-modernism does not advocate stylistic revival, though it does support the concept of emulation. Traditional post-modernism looks back to history to see how things were done and to remind itself that many good ways of doing things which were cast aside for ideological reasons can be usefully rediscovered. Thus, for example, inclusive post-modernism can employ recognizable imagery in an abstract way—it can be at once pre-modernist and modernist.[36]

Traditional post-modernism opens up artistic production to a public role which modernism, by virtue of its self-referential formal strategies, had denied itself. In painting, as William Rubin has observed, 'one characteristic of the modern period *seems* to be ending. That is the tradition of the private picture—private in its character and subject matter as well as in its destination—that is, for the small circle of collectors and friends of artists, who sympathize with vanguard art.'[37] In this sense, the current interest in photography should be seen as a last-gasp modernist stance.

Architecture, of course, is by definition a public art. Yet in its modernist phase, it often spoke the private language of painting—one need only recall the arguments advanced in Henry-Russell Hitchcock's book *Painting Toward Architecture*.[38] More importantly, as Suzannah Lessard points out:

between the abstract beauty of technological principles and the underpinning of intricate solutions to innumerable minute problems, there is a kind of middle ground which was overlooked in the exuberant rush to modernity. Between man's desire to expand his ego and the needs of man as ant—I can think of no better way to express the dual preoccupation of the age of technology—the question of what human life would be in the new world floated unasked, unnoticed.[39]

It is this aspect of social and cultural responsibility—not in the narrowly simplistic sense of architectural do-goodism but in a broader and more profound sense of a genuine and unsentimental humanism—that characterized traditional post-modernism's distinction from the abstract, self-referential schismatic post-modernism which we have already discussed.

Traditional post-modernism rejects the anti-historical biases of modernism; influences from history are no longer seen as constraints on either personal growth or artistic excellence. History, no longer viewed as the dead hand of the past, now seems at the very least a standard of excellence in a continuing struggle to deal effectively with the present. Modernism looked toward the future as an escape from the past; traditional post-modernism struggles with the legacy of that attitude, a world filled with objects whose principal artistic impetus often came from a belief that in order to be 'Modern' they must look and function as little as possible like anything that had been seen in the world before. The traditional post-modernist struggle then, is not to free itself from the past, but to relax what has been characterized as 'the stubborn grip of the values created by the rebellion against the past.'[40]

Traditional post-modernism rejects what Charles Moore has described as the 'obsessive normalization of the recent past, where we have drawn our expressive elegance out of poverty . . . (and) our process out of crisis.'[41] It argues that it is proper and sufficient to struggle with the problems of the present viewed in relation to the values continuing from the past while leaving the future to those who will inherit it.

Traditional post-modernism recognizes that the public has lost confidence in architects (though it still believes in the symbolic power of architecture). Modernist architecture offered very little in the way of joy or visual pleasure, its conceptual basis was limited and disconcertingly

37 Rubin is quoted by Douglas Davis' 'Post-Modern for Stories Real and Imagined/ Toward a Theory,' in his *Art Culture—Essays on the Postmodern* (New York: Harper & Row, 1977). See also the 'Post-Modernist Dilemma,' a dialogue between Davis and Suzi Gablik, *Village Voice*, March 24, April 3 and April 10, 1978.

38 Henry-Russell Hitchcock, *Painting Toward Architecture* (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1948) passim

39 Suzannah Lessard, 'The Towers of Light,' *The New Yorker*, 54 (July 10, 1978) 32-36, 41-44, 49, 52, 58

40 Lessard, *op cit*; James D. Kornwolf makes the interesting observation that 'Le Corbusier's generation was misguided not to recognize that the nineteenth century's struggle with the past was also its struggle, and that a new understanding of the past, not a denial of it, was what was needed.' *op cit*, 513.

Peter Collins observes that "the idea of an 'International Style' was a product of the Renaissance. In fact, the so-called 'battle of the styles' might be more reasonably and meaningfully interpreted as an attempt to refute the concept of an 'International Style,' rather than as a conflict between 'Gothicists' and 'Classicists.' This was certainly the essence of the position taken by Viollet-le-Duc and Ferguson." *op cit*, 171-72

41 Charles Moore, 'Foreward,' in Sam Davis, editor, *The Form of Housing* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1977) 6

materialistic. By once again recognizing the common assumptions a culture inherits from its past, traditional post-modernism is not only an announcement that Modern architecture has emerged from its puritan revolution, its catharsis at last behind it, but it is also an avowal of self-confidence in contemporary architecture's ability and willingness to re-establish itself on a basis which cannot only deal with the past but also match it, value for value, building for building.

Traditional post-modernism seeks to look backward in order to go forward. It should not be regarded as a jettisoning of Modern architecture itself, but as an attempt to pick up the threads of theory and style which were cut by the pioneers of the Modern Movement, especially the concerns for architectural history and for visually comprehensible relationships between old and new buildings. In its inclusiveness, traditional post-modernism does not propose an independent style; it is a sensibility dependent on forms and strategies drawn from the modernist and the pre-modernist work that preceded it, though it declares the obsolescence of both. It is *a* Modern style but not *the* Modern style. In its recognition of the transience and multiplicity of styles within the historical epoch we call Modern, it rejects the emphasis on unity of expression that was so central to modernism itself. Traditional post-modernism recognizes both the discursive and expressive meaning of formal language. It recognizes the language of form as communicating sign as well as infra-referential symbol: that is to say, it deals with both physical and associational experience, with the work of art as an act of 'presentation' and 'representation.' It rejects the idea of a single style in favor of a view that acknowledges the existence of many styles (and the likely emergence of even more) each with its own meanings, sometimes permanently established, but more often shifting in relation to other events in the culture.

In architecture, Robert Venturi and Charles Moore can be seen as the leading advocates among an older generation of traditional post-modernists; Michael Graves and myself, among others, from the point of view of age, though not from one of ideology, occupy a middle ground (that is we are young enough to have been students of Venturi and Moore), and an even younger generation, including Stuart Cohen, Thomas Gordon Smith and the Arquitectonica group, is beginning to make its positions felt as well.

Venturi and Moore are in many ways transitional figures: their theoretical positions are more 'advanced' in the movement toward a position which includes modernist and pre-modernist values than is their built work, which as often as not tends to be abstract and non-representational (Venturi's Oberlin Museum and his Hartford Stage; Moore's own house in Los Angeles) as it is representative of ideas that are contextually based (Venturi's three Brant houses, and his Benjamin Franklin house 'restoration'; Moore's Burns House and his Piazza d'Italia). This is not surprising since their education was modernist, and until recently theirs has been a virtually solitary struggle to integrate its ideals with the wider body of architectural culture.

The work of the other traditional post-modernists who have been cited can be characterized by a struggle to use traditional languages without falling into the presumed trap of revivalism. The heritage of modernism remains a problem for all: its impulse to 'make it new,' as Ezra Pound put it 70 years ago, conflicts with the sensibility to make it legible and make it appropriate; the preoccupation with traditional languages is often at the expense of the languages of modernism, which, no matter how abstract, have come to mean certain things in the culture at large and the recognition of stylistic diversity can be viewed as *laissez faire* permissiveness. Thus, in some traditional post-modernist work the grammar of architectural composition has not been explored with the same care as have the individual elements or the overall meanings; in other words some traditional post-modernist work has become 'picturesque.'

[42] Gardner, *op cit*

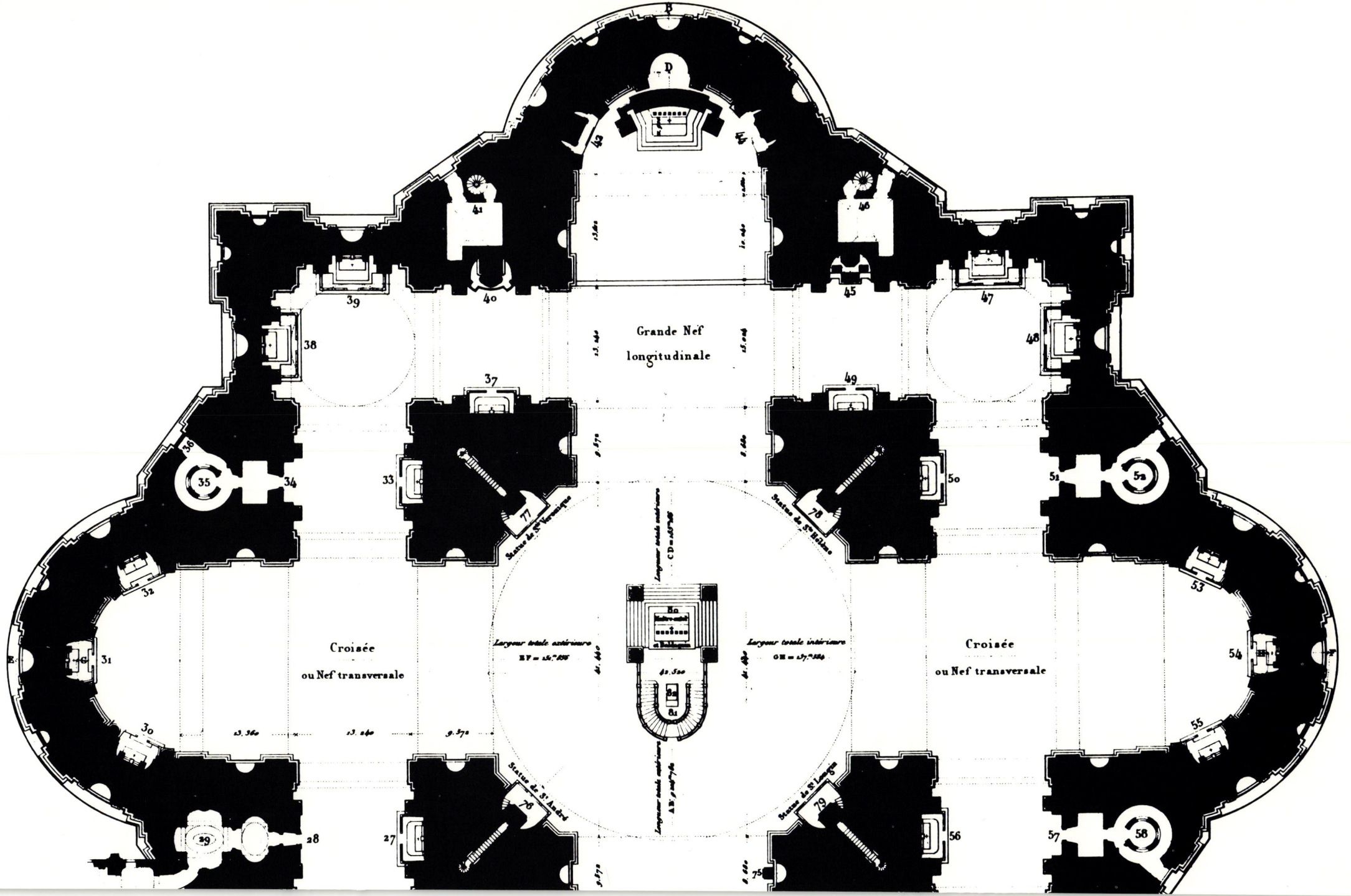
Everywhere there are signs of an emerging cultural resynthesis: Richard Gilam sees a 'new naturalism' in the drama; John Gardner pleads for a 'moral fiction' based on a belief in an art dedicated to the 'preservation of the word of gods and men;' Daniel Bell states that the 'problem then is whether culture can regain coherence, a coherence of substance and experience not only of form.' Signs of the shift in sensibility in art and architecture abound. All this seems clear enough, and I hope that what I have written has shed some light on the nature of these shifts. If what I have written has any value, it is as a reminder that all which glitters in a new or different way is not necessarily golden, that the ranks of the avant garde may not any longer be the exclusive defenders of the holy grail of insight: that a shift in sensibility need have very little if anything to do with progress. The fact of the matter is that the reaction to modernism is not only a vote of 'no confidence' in its ideology but also a recognition that its forms are exhausted. As Gardner observes:

> *When modes of art change, the change need not imply philosophical progress; it usually means only that the hunter has exhausted one part of the woods and has moved to a new part, or to a part exhausted earlier, to which the prey have doubled back*
>
> *Aesthetic styles—patterns for communicating feeling and thought—become dull with use, like carving knives, and since dullness is the chief enemy of art, each generation must find new ways of slicing the fat off reality.*[42]

The fundamental nature of this shift to post-modernism has to do with the reawakening of artists in every field to the public responsibilities of art. Once again art is being regarded as an act of communication as opposed to one of production or revelation (of the artist's ego and/or of his intentions for the building or his process of design). Though art is based on personal invention it requires public acceptance to achieve real value—to communicate meaning. An artist may choose to speak a private language, but a viewer must be willing and able to 'read' the work, whether it be a book, a painting, or a building, for the work to have any kind of public life at all. To the extent that contemporary artists care about the public life of art, they are post-modernists (modernist artists make things for only themselves and/or for the gods); to the extent that an artist believes in the communicative role of form but is not willing to accept that such a role necessarily carries with it cultural meanings, that are not inherent to the form, his is a schismatic post-modernism.

Modernism in architecture was premised on a dialectic between things as they are and things as they ought to be; post-modernism seeks a resolution between—or at least a recognition of—things as they were and as they are. Modernism imagined architecture to be the product of purely rational and scientific process; post-modernism sees it as a resolution of social and technological processes with cultural concerns.

Post-modernism seeks to regain the public role that modernism denied architecture. The Post-Modern struggle is the struggle for cultural coherence, a coherence that is not falsely monolithic, as was attempted in the International Style in architecture or National Socialism in the politics of the 1920s and 30s, but one whose coherence is based on the heterogeneous substance and nature of modern society: post-modernism takes as its basis things as they are, *and* things as they were. Architecture is no longer an image of the world as architects wish it to be or as it will be, but as it is.



Grande Nef
longitudinale
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Croisée
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Statue de Ste Veronique
Statue de Ste Hélène
Statue de St André
Statue de St Longin
Largeur totale extérieure
Largeur totale intérieure

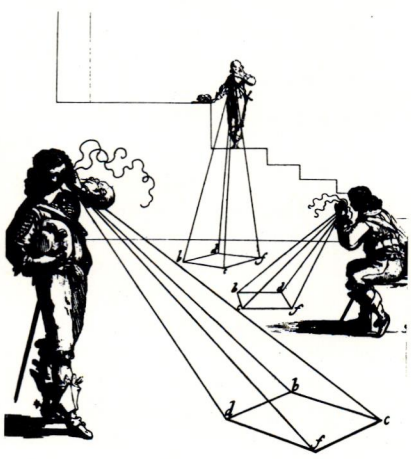
Space and Anti-Space

Steven Kent Peterson

As architects have become increasingly concerned with the emotional and cultural effects of their designs, they have rejected the ambiguous, abstract spatial configurations of Modern Movement architecture in favor of the making of 'places' which are enclosed and well-defined. The typical Miesian house consisted of an organization that was highly regarded because it held true to a simple diagram; space was left free and unencumbered whenever possible. By contrast, contemporary designers are rediscovering the value of enclosure and definition of architectural space, of making space readable through the use of formal circulation and sequential, articulated rooms.

In poetic language, Steven Peterson contrasts modern and traditional space through the effects of enclosure, opening, and partition. Implicit in this argument is a re-affirmation of pre-modern ideas, and a re-integration of the architectural tools of ornament, symmetry and poché. *The author speaks in the language of the designer, presenting the* means *for forming enclosure and containing spaces in specific, architectonic terms. The message is presented so strongly that it begins to be reminiscent of the oversimplifications inherited from the Modern Movement itself. One might question, in fact, whether a new role for design is being suggested, or just proof that the architect's palette should be broadened and revitalized through recovery of long disused techniques.*

In any case, the striving expressed here for greater involvement in molding architecture and architectural space, through methods previously considered regressive by Modern Movement designers, exemplifies the investigations which a generation of architects are occupied with today. They are searching for ways to make architecture mean more than shelter through investigating its forms: the thickness of a wall, the shape of a space, the nature of enclosure.



1 Perspective: the perception of space as volume, integral with geometry and form

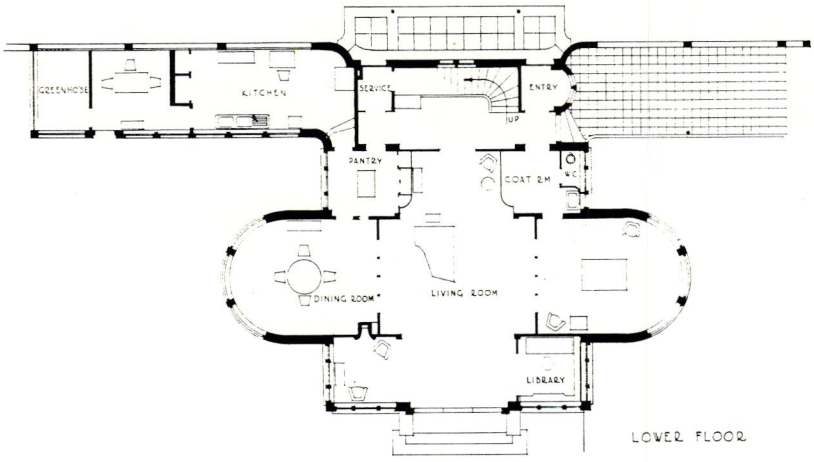
The form in which space is presumed to exist is the framework of our perception of the world. Space, as idea, is the intangible qualifier of our vision of form, of location and dimension, establishing the relative measure among physical things (Figure 1). Yet recent criticism and current architectural polemics overlook or take for granted the exact nature of the definition of space and seem oblivious to the consequences.

To achieve any significant development and growth in architecture, it is essential to clarify the restrictions imposed by modern space. Both Modern Architecture and contemporary society in general have accepted the destruction of volumetric space in order to achieve other things, and this fact conditions all our current conceptions of meaning and form.

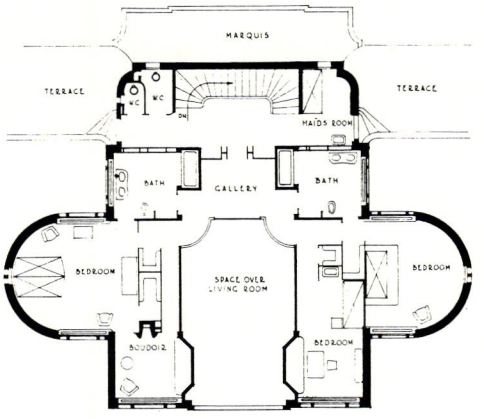
Because of this, no criticism of Modern Architecture can be complete and no *post mortem* version of it can be successful without a more exact understanding of what is meant by Modern space. Its unique effects are all-pervasive and can only be overcome by re-evaluating our basic conceptions and transforming our actual sensibility to space itself. Built-in biases must be reversed so the fact can be established that space is by definition neither 'ineffable' nor 'abstract'. It is an entity which has form and identity. It can be subject to analysis and criticism.

This critique of space which is so necessary for architecture has not occurred and remains problematic largely because there is no longer a valid, constructive approach to solutions at a time of crisis. The confusion derives from a fundamental attitude toward change which has become inverted: it is now no longer based on anticipation but on retrospection; it is no longer an *avant garde* revolution but has become instead a conservative reaction. Still, through uncritical habit the approach to problems is couched in the familiar spirit of progressivism; revolutionary actions continue but without an adequate process or program to focus conviction.

While we can now recognize and agree on the limitations of the Modern style, justifiably discrediting some of its results, we must also accept the loss of the *avant garde* itself and identify the disjunction between this as a cultural process and new, potentially contradictory intentions. The uncritical



LOWER FLOOR



UPPER FLOOR

[1] Philip C Johnson, *Mies van der Rohe* (New York, 1947) p 181

[2] Charles Moore, Gerald Allen, *Dimensions–Space, Shape, and Scale* (New York, 1976) p 7

[3] Rudolf Arnheim, *The Dynamics of Architectural Form* (London, 1977) p 9

[4] Arnheim, p 9

[5] Moore, *et al*, p 7

continuation of the *avant garde* attitude of crises leads only to its unconscious transformation into a posture of dandyism. Just as the 18th century dandy attempted to fulfill the social role of the lost aristocracy by substituting an extravagant posture for a legitimate old position, the current posturing of the *avant garde* role is a false re-enactment.

There is now a prevailing sense of nostalgia for the position provided by the lost *avant garde*. The past is approached as a substitute for missing convictions about the future (Figure 2). New beliefs are postured with extravagant taste and changing rhetoric. There is hope that this will still provide legitimate new answers, but it is a struggle within an old procedure which is maintained to keep up with the imagined need for new movements.

The danger in this nostalgic emulation of the *avant garde* is the risk of being dazzled only by performance itself, or blinded by the simplistic identity and popular success of extreme positions. In the rush for notoriety, useful information and ideas may be passed over; the value of intelligent criticism may be obscured.

We are now at a starting point similar to the beginning of the Modern Movement when there was complete frustration with the limitations of a prevailing style. Despite new enthusiasm and fresh stirrings of expectation, no clear and satisfactory direction for a new architecture has yet emerged. The situation is remarkably similar to Mies' description of the mood in 1910: 'We find ourselves in painful inner discord. Our enthusiastic hearts demand the unqualified and we are ready to pledge ourselves to an idea, but the potential vitality of the period has by this time been lost.'[1]

The mood today is the same but the conditions are different. The idea and theory of the *avant garde* provided a solution to the dilemma for architects in 1910. The revolt against prevailing forms was in itself a source for the energy of invention. There were no regrets, no hesitations. Now, we no longer can be shocked by the proposal of new styles because our vulnerability has been hardened through repetition. Our faith in both the modern utopia and its methods has been exhausted.

The Loss of Space

What is Modern space? The evidence for a confused and incomplete criticism of space is found throughout the entire spectrum of contemporary writings on architecture (see Box 1) although a specific definition of Modern space consistently emerges. In a typical example, architectural space is described by Charles Moore and Gerald Allen as

> *a special category of free space, phenomenally created by the architect when he gives a part of free space shape and scale . . . we cut off a piece of space from the continuum of all space, . . . to make it recognizable as domain. . . .*[2]

In this notion of space, as a slice of the continuum, is the underlying assumption of Modern Architecture. Space is conceived to be a free element in nature, a found resource. It is thought to be transcendental, abstract, continuous, vast, and with no form. This is a repetition of the Platonic ideal concept of space as

> *the mother and receptacle of all created and visible and in any way sensible things . . . the universal nature which receives all bodies . . . for while receiving all things she never departs at all from her own nature and never in any way or at any time assumes a form like that of any of the things which enter into her.*[3]

This concept of formless universal space is also hypothesized by psychologists as a basic condition of perception: Rudolph Arnheim suggests that Modern 'space is experienced as the given which precedes the objects in it. In the absence of such objects, (it is assumed) space would still exist, as an empty boundless container.'[4] In other words, modern space is exclusively perceived as the background for the figure of form, as an *a priori* natural condition.

This concept of 'natural' space even becomes romanticized and imbued with a kind of implicit animism.

2 Villa Schwob, La Chaux-de-Fonds, Switzerland, Le Corbusier, 1916

You can capture space and let it go, 'define' it or 'explode' it. Space is surely one of the things you have more of after you have 'exploded' it, but it seems to thrive in captivity too.[5]

There is a sense that space prefers a free habitat and that making space is like capturing and domesticating a wild beast.

One can imagine a typical modern interior in these terms, as an attempt to make one's particular piece of wild natural space feel at home. The informal arrangement of walls and the lifting of all the furniture off the floor, allows the free and 'natural' movement of ones own house space. Like a domestic pet it is allowed to roam freely throughout the interior. The white walls, the elimination of clutter, the purity of design are placations to the pure habitat of this captured creature. Even the inevitable modern house plants casually but strategically placed can be seen as a supplication to this special pet space cut off from its true source of nourishment in the natural continuum.

There is an aspect of respect and deference inherent in this idea. Like the notion of ecology, neither space nor nature should be overly affected by man's presence. Nature and its coincident image of space are to be left in balance so that Modern space is conceived to be untouchable and must be unaffected by willful human intervention.

A definition of Modern space emerges almost by consensus from these observations. It is a definition which one suspects is shared unconsciously to some degree by everyone. That is: modern space is a natural phenomena, a found condition; it is imagined as an *a priori* continuum; it has a scientific connotation, and similar to the field theories of light and energy, it is ever present, untouchable, and abstract.

Being indefinite, it cannot carry meaning and must remain the background condition for form. It can no longer be imagined as a medium of design. This is the most limiting assumption, the conclusion that it is wrong or presumptuous to try and make space—it can not be subject to man's intervention nor to the manipulation of his imagination. Modern space cannot be conceived as form.

The powerful influence of Modern space and its sustaining presence derive from its singular image as an embodiment of nature. This has become a conditioned response which pervades our entire culture, from the popular / ordinary to the exclusively architectural. Modern space is interpreted in this way throughout and this attitude has not been subject to criticism: in fact, the space of Las Vegas remains the same as the space of the Ville Radieuse (see Box 2).

The restrictions of this spatial framework make it necessary to revise the situation in a fundamental way and to re-establish volumetric space as a medium of architectural design. An alternative hypothesis for a definition of space which goes beyond this modern idea is certainly possible: space can be man-made, not found; it can be willfully created; it can be made to have form; it can be figure as well as ground: space is not a natural phenomenon.

Space and Anti-Space

There are two principal conceptions of space which can be compared to the theory in modern physics of matter and anti-matter. This theory postulates the existence of two opposite universes, each totally antithetical to the other. Any coincident meeting of the two worlds will cause their mutual obliteration.

According to this analogy Modern space is, in effect, *anti-space*. Defined by its properties as an undifferentiated and formless continuum, it must destroy its opposite, *space*, which is conceived of as a formed and shaped figure. The traditional architecture of streets, squares and rooms created by differentiated figures of volumetric voids is by definition obliterated by the presence of *anti-space*.

Complete, uncritical subscription to the limited sensibility of Modern space, or *anti-space*, leads to the erosion and eventual loss of *space*, and the results of this can be seen all around us. It is no longer possible to make a stable public space, to design a street or square, or simply form a good room. The sensibility as well as the skill to accomplish this have been lost. While we are aware of both types of space, there is a predisposition to use only one; modern life is conceived only in terms of *anti-space*.

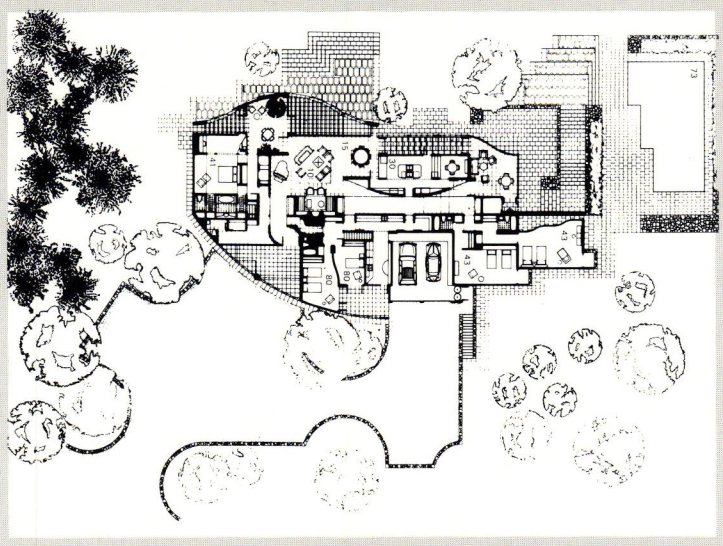
Each of these two space types is defined more precisely through a description of both the conceptual form ascribed to them, and their assumed properties (see Box 3). *Space* is conceived as differentiated volume, identifiable in its configuration as form, discontinuous in principle, closed and static. It is serial in composition. *Anti-space* is the opposite. It is undifferentiated and ideally formless, continuous in principle, open and flowing. It is controlled, directed, or temporarily captured, but never composed.

While, perceptually, the actual visual occurrence of either *space* or *anti-space* is realized only in the presence of physical things, the illusion of what is seen between these things is in each case different. *Anti-space* appears indefinite; it is perceived as the tension and direction in between things. *Space* is specific; it is perceived as the *form* of the *'in-between'* itself. This condition is unique to *space* and is the essence of its definition. The successful appearance of this illusion of form 'in-between' is almost tangible: something is there. *Space* does not appear empty; *anti-space* does, despite its animation. *Space* as opposed to *anti-space* has value—it is charged with a presence. It seems to exist and have properties which are tangible: scale, proportion, and size. Its shape can be measured and its limits defined. The perception of *anti-space* is always less explicit.

Historically, the two types of space derive from different world views (see Box 4). When *space* was the dominant concept, its underlying assumptions were a finite universe of Cartesian geometric order, a harmony of simple mathematical ratios interpretable through geometry. The universe of *space* was imagined as an assembly of pure and crystalline forms whose structure, although hidden from ordinary appearances, was the

Box 1

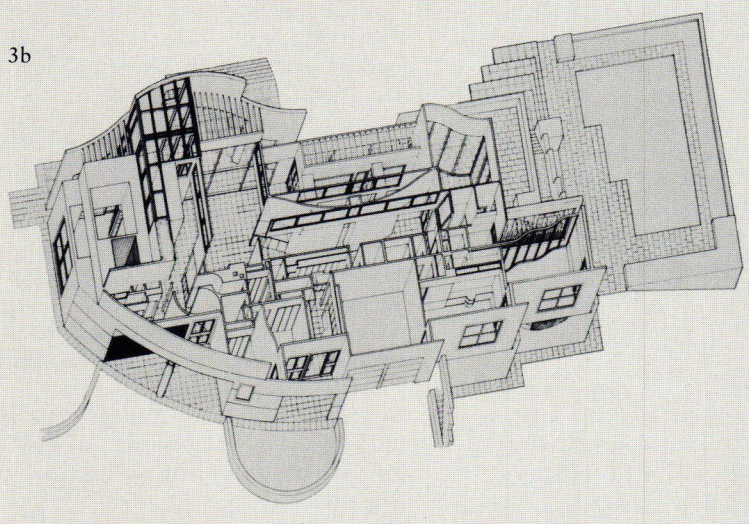
Post-Modernism and the Neo-Rationalists



3a

3a,b
Westchester Residence, Armonk, N Y,
Robert Stern and John Hagmann,
1974-6

3b



Post-Modernism is chiefly concerned with the meaning and style of buildings in reference to the individual and the problem of popular expression (Figures 3 a,b):

- It assumes that Modern Architecture is worn out and proposes to substitute new styles of historic *allusions* for the limited message and inadequate communicative devices of Modern Architecture.
- It is nostalgic for architectural *ornament*, espousing a return to exterior decoration.
- It advocates *contextualism*, but one of associated forms and details which contains no notion of an aggregate contextual space. It does not speculate about the content or the form of a new context.
- It makes no proposals for the external space of the city, nor does it offer a new kind of space for the interior.

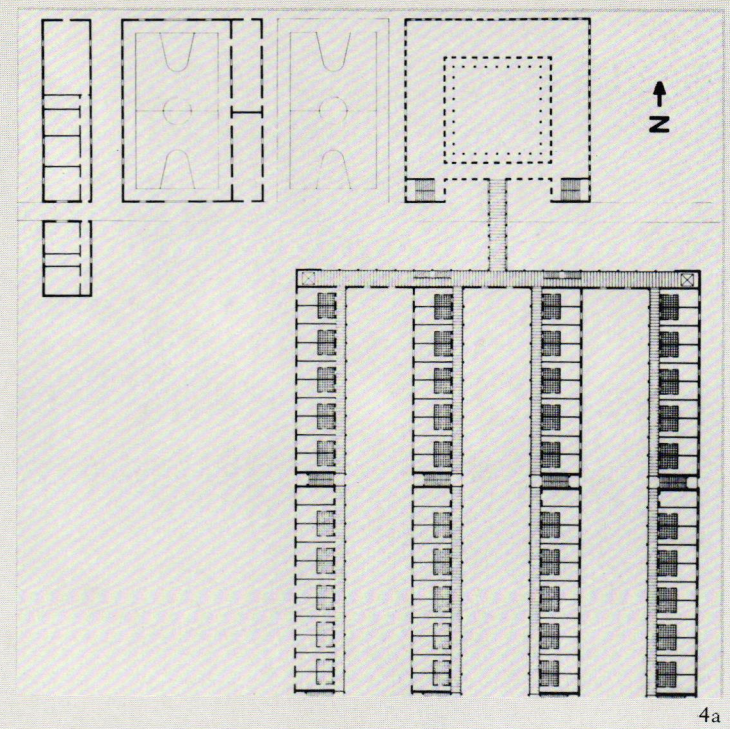
The Italian Neo-Rationalists are apparently concerned with the opposite, focusing on the ideology, structure and meaning of the whole city as a collective form (Figures 4 a,b):

- It is a critique of Modern Architecture's destruction of the city, proposing the re-establishment of a rational physical fabric integral with a new society.
- Its projects emphasize external forms in order to refocus society collectively and give it group meaning and identity. So far it is an architecture without interior space.
- It represents a nostalgia for the clear categorization and order of *typological form* present in the Enlightenment.
- Its solutions are based on the idea of recovering the *monument* and recollecting group meaning.

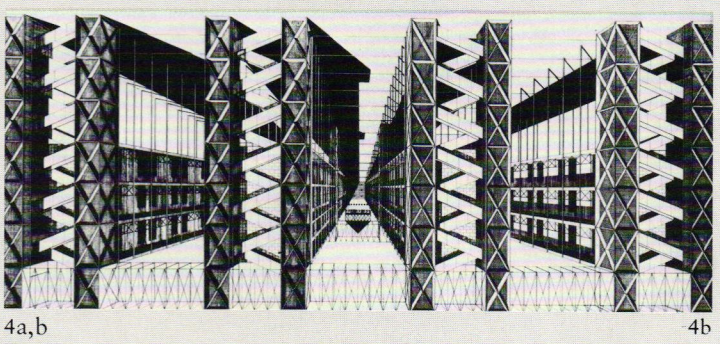
Despite their general criticism of Modern Architecture, neither the Italian Neo-Rationalists nor the American Post-Modernists provide a clear critique or an explicit alternative to the dilemma of Modern space. Like Modern Architecture itself, both groups remain object-fixated in their attempts to establish clear architectural symbols and icons. They tend to maintain the assumptions of Modern space while rejecting Modern Architecture's more explicit and obvious limitations on meaning.

Neither makes plans with a complex spatial focus (as opposed to a complex formal one) but concentrate instead on external appearance and literal symbol. The elevation, the bird's eye perspective, have become the generators as both movements indulge in a kind of historical mythology, returning to pre-Modern architectural conditions and attitudes. It is as though each imagines that history can be rewritten to suit its own purposes. One starts with Ledoux and ends with an architecture for the *worker*, while the other begins with Lutyens and ends with an architecture for the *consumer*. They represent opposite poles of a similar investigation aimed at revitalizing the meaning and symbolism of form, one slanted toward the collective memories within a communist order, the other toward the individual in a capitalist society.

Although both espouse urbanism, one advocating the city and the other contextualism, neither position provides a solution for the complex spatial range which must exist between public requirements on the one hand and private needs on the other. No urban image emerges comparable to the sequence of movement in a traditional city from the public *piazza*, along the *avenue*, down the *street*, into the semi-public *courtyard*, through the communal *foyer*, up the *stairs* and into



4a



4a,b 4b

Student Housing in Trieste, Competition, Aldo Rossi, 1974

a private *room*. This is an elaborate sequence of passage through a rich typology of spaces for which there is a vocabulary of discrete terms. The complex linking of these provides an accommodation of the conflicting public and private domains, offering a place for the unpredictable and a location for intermediate transitions.

The potential richness of these in-between transition spaces is not yet present in the work of these two groups, although it would seem to be the natural outcome of an architecture advocating the city or contextualism. It remains to be seen whether Post-Modernism and the Neo-Rationalists can establish a comprehensive attitude toward space which goes beyond the extreme limits of their current investigations. For now their definition and criticism of space remain elusive.

Box 2

Modern Architecture and Las Vegas: The Space is the Same

In *Learning From Las Vegas* there seems to be a contradictory attitude toward space. On the one hand, the principle criticism of Modern Architecture focuses on its rejection of symbolism for an exclusive concentration on space as an abstraction. 'In the architecture of abstract expressionism, space is what displaced symbolism.'[6] This, as an affirmation of the unique expressionless qualities of Modern space, is quite clear. On the other hand, because Modern space is not specifically identified, it is also possible to interpret the statement as a rejection of all types of space. 'Perhaps the most tyrannical element in architecture now is space. Space has been contrived by architects and deified by critics, filling the vacuum created by fugitive symbolism.'[7] This implies an inherent opposition: architecture is a question of signs versus space.

Further, although the intentional use of Modern space is criticized, when this same type of space is discovered as a found object in the context of Las Vegas it is embraced as an acceptable phenomenon with a legitimate historical pedigree.

> *The A&P parking lot is a current phase in the evolution of vast space since Versailles. The space that divides high-speed highways and low, sparse buildings produces no enclosure and little direction. To move through this landscape is to move over vast expansive texture.*[8]

This 'vast' space is the same Modern space which was criticized above. Was not the Ville Radieuse also 'a current phase in the evolution of vast space since Versailles?' (Figures 5-7).

[6] Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown, Steven Izenhour, *Learning from Las Vegas*, p 148

[7] Venturi, *et al*, p 148

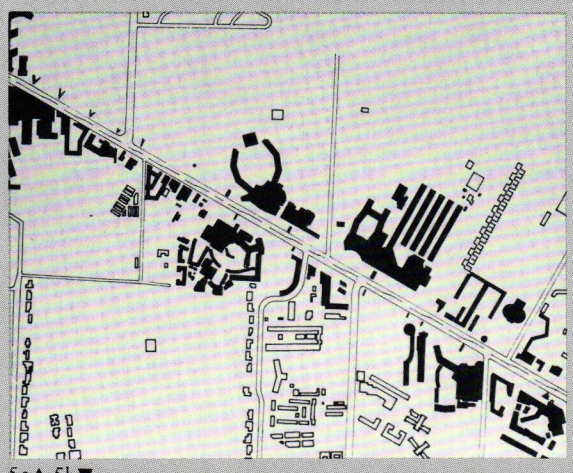
[8] Venturi, *et al*, p 13

5a
Figure-ground Plan of Las Vegas, Nevada, from *Learning from Las Vegas* by Venturi, Scott Brown and Izenour, 1977

5b
View of Las Vegas, Nevada from *Learning From Las Vegas*, by Venturi, Scott Brown, and Izenour, 1977

6 Figure-ground plan of Strasbourg Competition, Le Corbusier, 1951

7 View of Ville Radieuse, Le Corbusier, 1930



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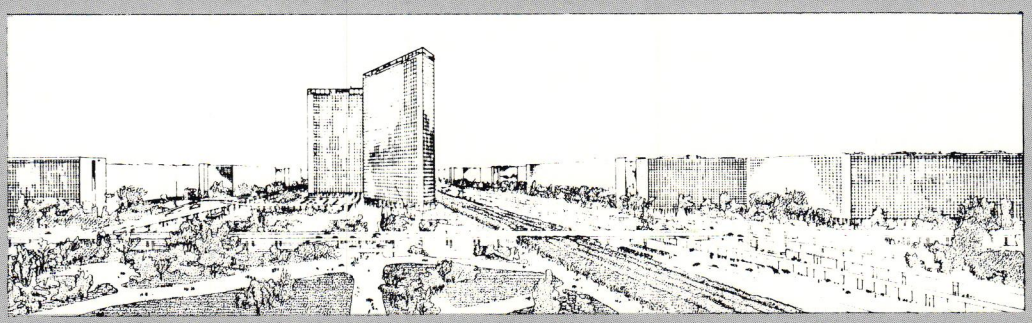

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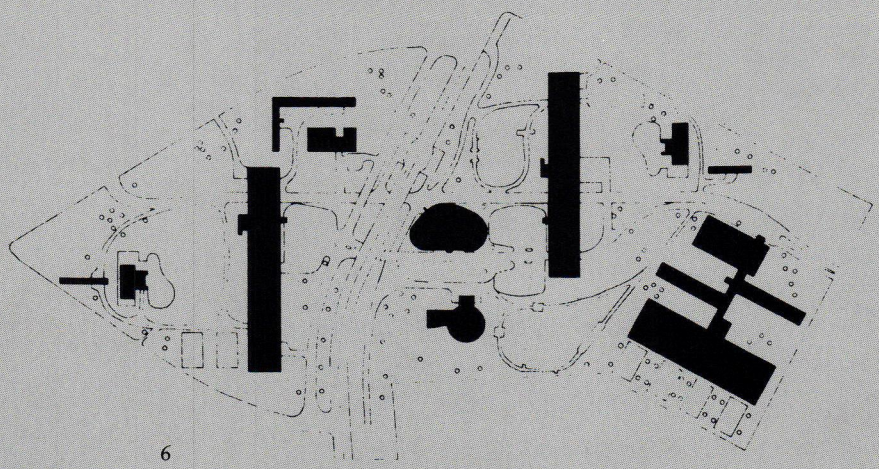
Certainly to move through it would have been 'to move over vast expansive texture.' In both environments concentration remains on the object. The only difference between Las Vegas and the Ville Radieuse is that 'because the spatial relationships [in Las Vegas] are made by symbols more than by forms, architecture in this landscape becomes symbol in space rather than form in space,'[9] But the concept of space in both is the same. The space of Las Vegas is the same as the space of the Ville Radieuse, and this is an unchallenged assumption which passes without criticism. The highway strip, suburban sprawl, A&P parking lots, and the destruction of the city are also direct consequences of the 'tyrannical element' which is Modern space.

[9] Venturi, *et al*, p 13



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Box 3

Space and Anti-Space

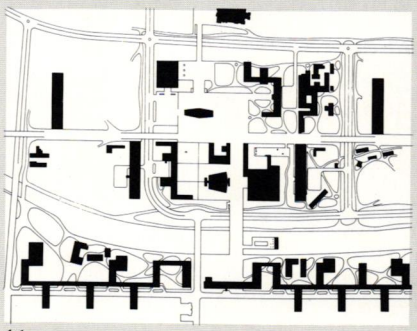
Space–Anti-Space

Perceived–Conceived
(almost visible) (invisible)
Ordered–Random
Formed–Unformed
Discontinuous–Continuous
Static to flexing–Flowing in motion
Specific–General
Man Made–Natural
Particular–Universal
Variable–Uniform
Multiple–Singular

The interior of Palladio's Villa Rotunda is made of *space*. The interior of Mies van der Rohe's Farnsworth house is made of *anti-space* (Figures 8,9). The public piazza in Sienna is an urban realization of the image of *space* (Figure 10). The public town center of St. Die is an urban realization of *anti-space* (Figure 11). The Villa Lante is a garden conceived of as *space* (Figure 12). Jackson Park and Central Park are landscapes conceived as *anti-space* (Figure 13).



10



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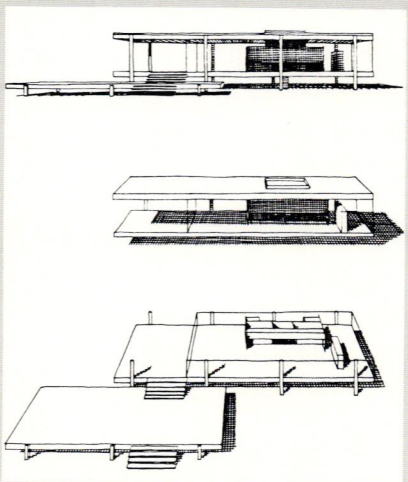
8 Villa Capra (Rotunda), Vicenza, Italy, Andrea Palladio, c 1554
9 Farnsworth House, Plano, Illinois, Mies van der Rohe, 1950
10 Figure-ground plan of Sienna town center, Sienna, Italy
11 Figure-ground plan of St Dié Center, St Dié, France, Le Corbusier, 1945
12 Villa Lante, Bagnaia, Italy, Vignola, 1564
13 Jackson Park, Chicago, Illinois, Frederick Law Olmstead, 1895



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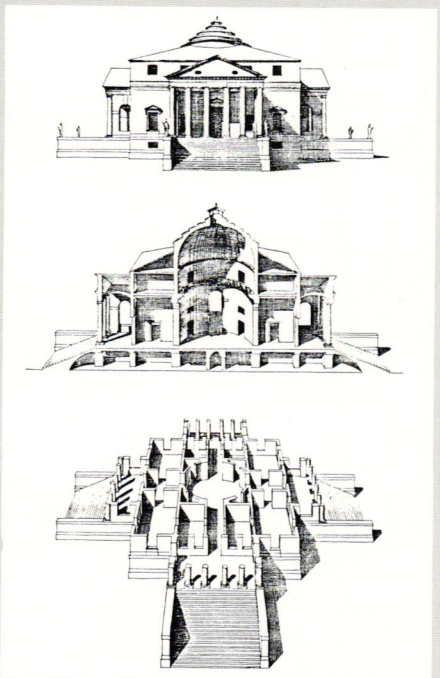

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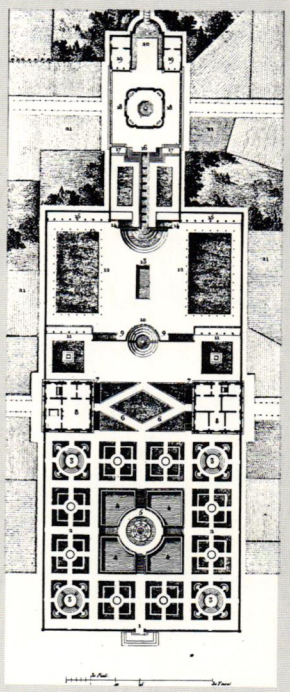

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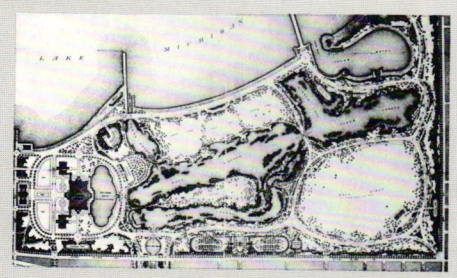


Box 4

The History of Anti-Space

[10]*The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford, 1973)

[11]Yi-Fu Tuan, *Topophilia*; this interpretation is suggested by the analysis on pages 104 and 105.



14a
One-point perspective: man's preferred position at the center of space

Space, as a discrete categorical term, did not always exist as an explicit subject of architectural theory. In the Renaissance, there was no analytical separation of the elements of space and form. The concept of perspective was the closest equivalent to a definition of space in that it provided location, direction, and a complete referential framework for composition. The emphasis of one-point perspective is necessarily on the in-between volumetric dimensions, the shape of the space along with its defining surfaces.

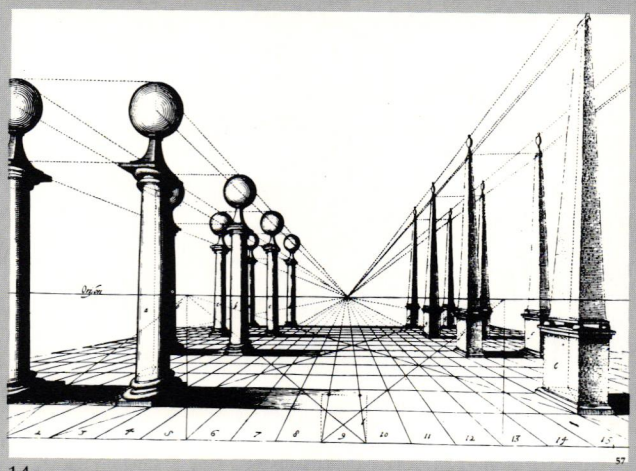
However, perspective was more than a representational device or the method of craft—it incorporated a unified concept of design, integrating painting, architecture, and the structure of society, to embrace the complete image of Renaissance man (Figure 14 a-c). The station point, symbolizing individual virtuosity, locates an ideal preferred view, while the vanishing point, symbolizing the centrality of man in general, focuses on the unified origins of form. Perspective thus combined in its concept of space both the principles of an underlying geometric order and the framework of its appearance to the individual.

The identification of space as an element separate from form occurs later and appears coincidentally with the first notions of the idea of *anti-space*, whose origins are connected directly with the Copernican revolution. After Copernicus the universe could no longer be conceived of as a contained space, enclosed in an ideal static form by the sphere of the sky. Space becomes, instead, independent and relative to the moving objects in a solar system which is open and infinite.

Prior to Copernicus, space was defined as 'the dimensional extent lying within certain limits or occupied by a body,'[10] an image of space which is enclosed and applies to either a piazza, an ideal town, or the imagined containing surfaces of the heavenly 'spheres' (Figures 15,16). However, following Copernicus there is a radically new definition. Space is now thought to be 'continuous, unbounded or unlimited extension in every direction'; it is regarded as 'void of matter,' and 'frequently coupled with time.'[11] There is a shift in awareness from finite to infinite, from static center to moving periphery, from wholeness of myth to the differentiation of description.

Subsequently, *anti-space* developed historically as it was progressively identified with nature and science, resulting in a reversal of the values of city and nature. Initially the city was regarded as sacred, a manifestation of the abstraction of ideal form, incorporating true nature as a concept of pure geometry and space. The surrounding presence of actual nature, however, was interpreted as profane, corrupt, and dangerous, in other words, wilderness.

Now, within the contemporary framework of *anti-space*, the wilderness has disappeared, and nature is described in a new, more gentle way as 'landscape.' Nature has become the sacred realm, with its found organic relationships providing the source of scientific truth. The city is now interpreted as profane, dangerous, and corrupt, and in effect the new wilderness; it is, as a realization of the artifice of abstraction, no longer valued. Its image has been changed through time from a city of perspective space, to a garden, and finally to a park inhabited by towers. Today, every place has become 'landscape' with *anti-space* as the metaphor for nature.



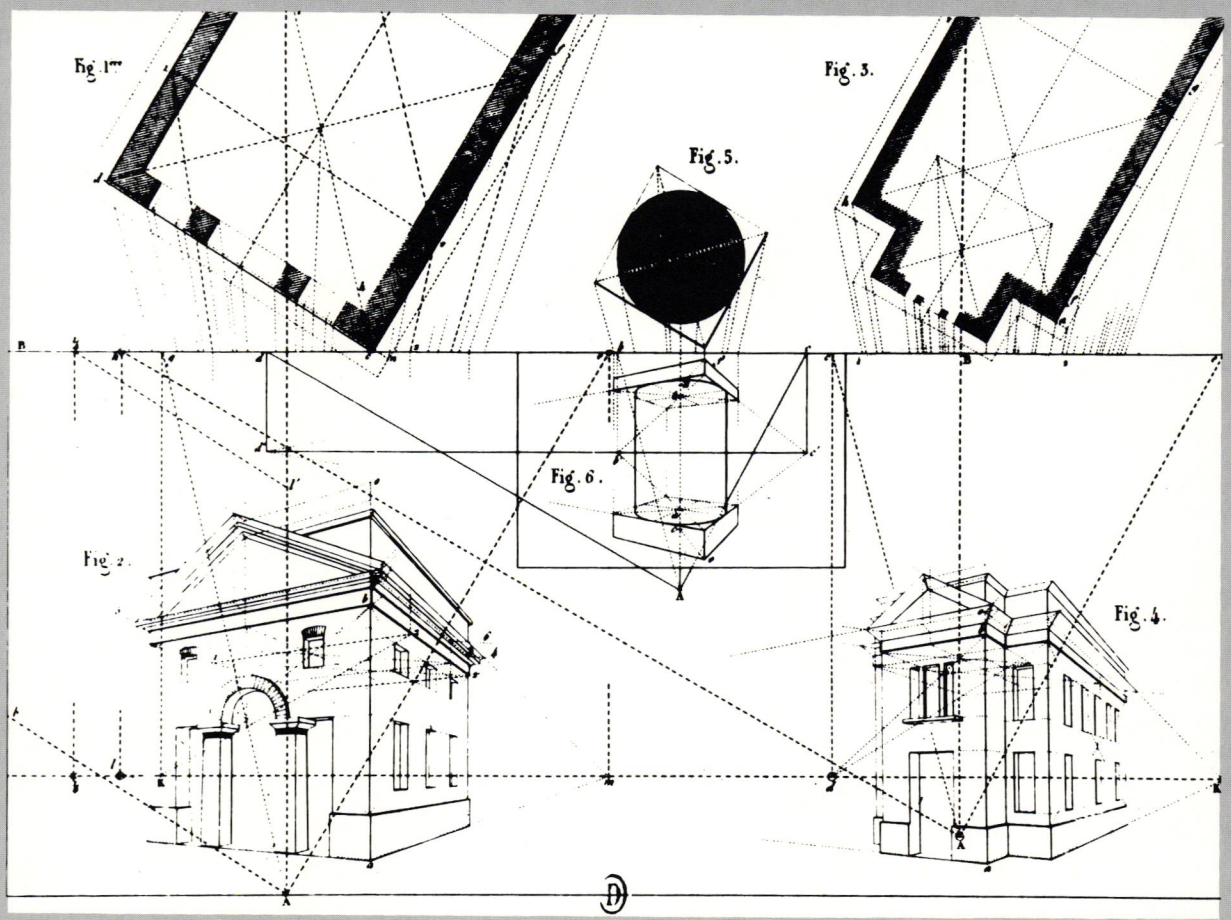
14c

14b
Two-point perspective: emphasizing the object in an unenclosed space

14c
One-point perspective: emphasizing enclosed space 'in between'

15 Pre-Copernican view of space: illustration of relationship between the five Platonic bodies and the planets. From *Mysterium Cosmographicum*, Kepler, 1596

16 Pre-Copernican view of space: Plan for an ideal city, from 'Delle fortificatione libri cinque,' Buonaiuto Lorini, 1592



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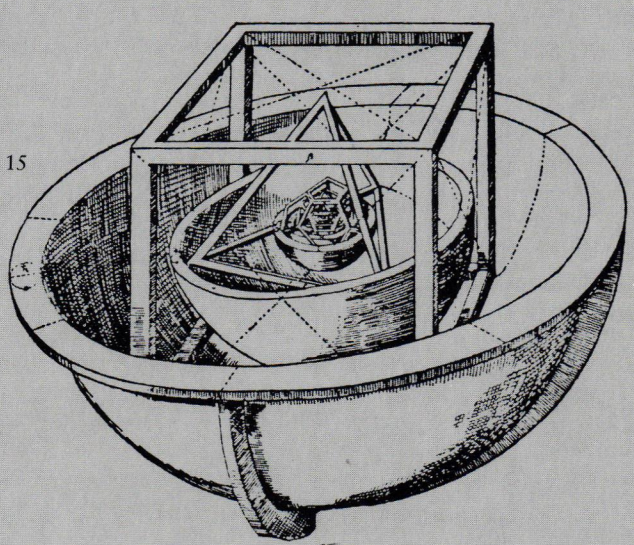

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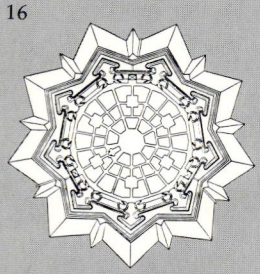

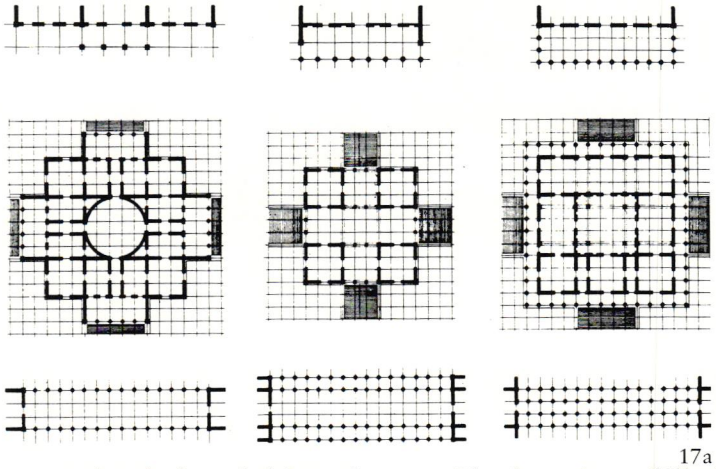

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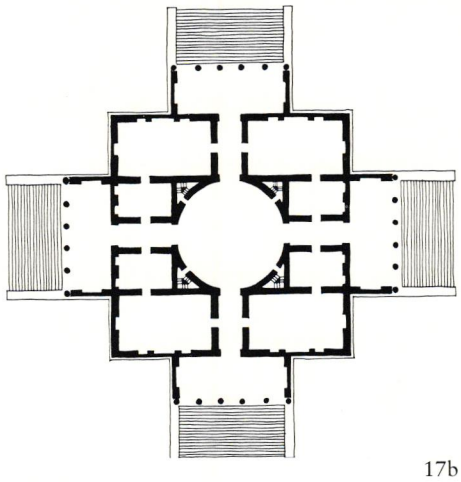


17b

presumed truth, the underlying order. Random nature was accepted in this scheme as a profane, unconverted realm, hiding the true order. The ideal city was the sacred realization of *space*.

As the universal validity of Euclidean geometry and Newtonian physics were disproved, *anti-space* emerged as dominant. When 'truth' became less certain, the underlying assumptions relating to *anti-space* became an infinite universe, a continuum approaching entropy, a condition of pure probabilities and random events decipherable only through statistics. Free random nature came to symbolize the truth of reality in its unadulterated state. As such, it came to be the proper source of knowledge and the subject of science. Within the tenets of *anti-space*, the precision of the city as a reference to pure form and contrived figures of design was now interpreted as an esoteric invention without validity.

The dominance of *anti-space* as the prevailing spatial sensibility was reinforced by the concepts of romanticism. When the individual vision replaces man's general vision as the framework for interpretation, each person establishes his own relationship to nature as the primal source. After this occurs, there can no longer be a convention of universal perception. Space itself loses value since the correctness of composition is determined by the picture it makes for each individual (the picturesque). Geometry as a generalization of form becomes separate from space and is used only as a neutral, referential grid, becoming the necessary overlay of scientific description onto this romantic natural milieu.

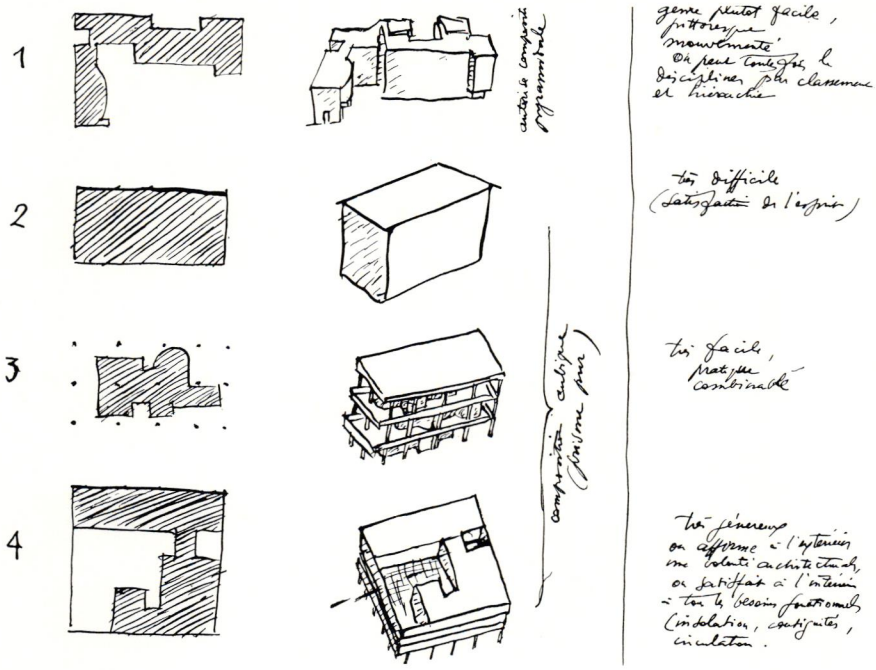
This change from the idea of *space* to *anti-space* and the consequent deterioration of the sensibility to figural space can be seen quite clearly in the image and drawing of architectural plans. When Durand draws a Palladian villa, *space* is somehow missing. Although the type remains, it has been neutralized and converted into a mere geometric pattern separated from the space (Figures 17 a,b).

The change in sensibility from *space* to *anti-space* is also observable in the altered configuration of both the garden and the city. When the Bois de Boulogne was converted to an English park landscape, it supplanted a forest of geometric *space*. A wandering circulatory system replaced the taut linear *allèes* which form the spatial relationships between the edges. Nature is re-established as sacred, tamed by its association with *anti-space*.

Even the dramatic urbanism of Haussman refers to nature via the precedent of the garden. The new boulevards are really the avenues of a hunting forest cut through the wilderness of the city. The resulting vast streets lined with trees begin to obscure the walls of the city, undermining the tension required for the presence of *space*.

It is apparent that the foundation of Modern Architecture rests on this idea of a fluid, natural space. It is also evident that Modern Architecture did not invent *anti-space* but transposed it without further articulation or analysis. All the attributes of *anti-space* are present: a 'free,' 'open' plan, the literal interpretation of indoors as outdoors, buildings seen as finite objects demonstrating the infinity of space around them, raised off the ground to encourage its uninterrupted and continuous flow. Nature is encouraged everywhere, and all formal garden *space* is excluded in deference to 'natural' landscape; *space* cannot be made inside or out. Modern space as a fluid, moving ubiquitous continuum is *anti-space*.

Looking back at Le Corbusier's diagram of the five points (Figure 18), a sixth point can now be imagined as the unspoken principle informing the other five. The sixth point is free space, or *anti-space*! In fact, the room plan diagrams which show natural light are almost themselves illustrations of *space* on the right and *anti-space* on the left. In Le Corbusier's other diagram of the four compositional types (Figure 19) there is also the implicit presence of an exterior space which remains untouchable and continuous, with each building free-standing and without context.



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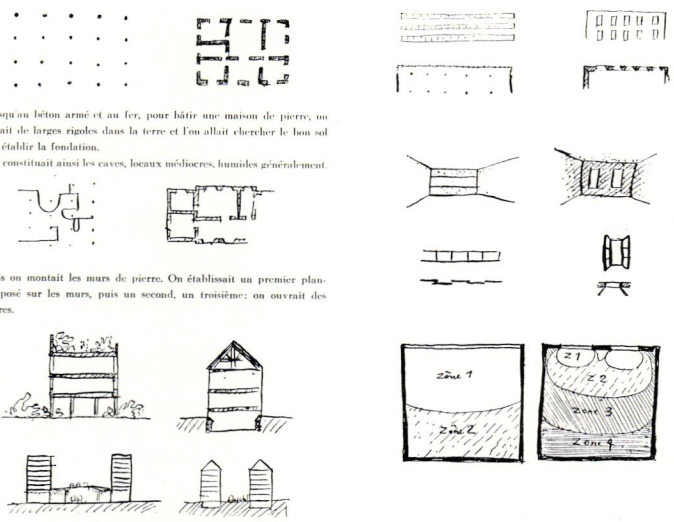

18

17a
Plan Drawings, J N L Durand

17b
Villa Capra (Rotunda) Vicenza, Italy, Andrea Palladio, c 1554

18 'Five Points' from *Oeuvre Complète*, Le Corbusier, 1910-29

19 Four Diagrams of House Types, from *Oeuvre Complète,* Le Corbusier, 1910-29

It seems clear that no transformation of architecture can take place without first recognizing the power of this sixth point and its influence as an unconscious spatial bias. *Anti-space* is deeply imbedded in the whole framework of contemporary society. It is further reinforced by the prevalent political concept of collectivism in all its contemporary forms. The undifferentiated, uniformly equal value of *anti-space* serves as the perfect equivalent of an undifferentiated society of equals. Its abstraction is embraced as a metaphor for freedom and equality, while its implicit openness continues to symbolize the general scientific image of free nature.

Despite the apparent cultural integration of this spatial concept its effects are disastrous. The free, flowing aspect of *anti-space* obliterates the important distinctions necessary for the definition of place, which requires specificity and uniqueness. By making everywhere the same, *anti-space* destroys honorific distinctions between public and private realms, breaking down the barriers and layers required for transitional passage.

However, perhaps the greatest disadvantage of this particular spatial attitude derives from its obliteration of *space* itself. *Anti-space*, because it is by definition formless, can carry no specific meaning beyond its transcendental aspirations. If there can be no form without meaning, there can be no meaning without a form, and an expressive vacuum is the inevitable consequence of the elimination of figural formed *space* as a medium of architectural manipulation.

Surely this contributes in a significant way to the current crisis of meaning in architecture. The vacuity of the concept of *anti-space*, resulting in the loss of figural *space*, induces a loss of formal capacity and a reduction in communicative content. *Space* must be re-incorporated into architecture.

Characteristics of Anti-Space

The loss of figural *space* as an intermediary structure between form and the observer has also left a vacuum in the process of seeing and interpreting our relationship to form. In *anti-space* there is a reduction in the equation of perception from three factors to two, whereas in the presence of volumetric *space* the identity of the space itself acts as a separate third term between a form and the observer, with each relating to it. The observer moves through *space* which the form itself creates. Form and space together act as a constellation, legible and integrated in a mutual relationship against which motion and navigation are measured in a fixed unchanging figure.

The destruction of *space* and its disassociation from form removes the

Box 5

constant third term in this perceptual relationship. When *anti-space*, as a freely moving continuous ground, becomes independent of form it loses its value as a mutual reference. In a sense the location of *space* is reversed. *Anti-space* becomes associated primarily with the observer rather than with the forms which create it, so that architecture receives its vitality not from an integrated figure but from a personal space which is mobile and individualized.

Relationships are perceived within *anti-space* as if it were a force field activated by the presence of isolated things: each object, in a sense, radiates its own influence animating the space so that mutual relationships are revealed primarily through the motion of the observer. We no longer move through a fixed space but along with a moving, fluid one.

It has been the primary formal concern of Modern art and architecture to analyze this mode of perception and explore the appearance of form through movement and time. This analysis is exemplified by cubism, where the transformations of shape and space derive from the movement of the viewer in the fluid, non-sequential medium of anti-space (see Box 5).

From cubism it is readily apparent that the following three *anti-space* characteristics have become provocative determinants of our perception of form in architecture: first, the interpretation of form as a relative state; its basic characteristics and appearances can be transformed by the events of moving and observing over time; second, the interpretation of solid mass as if it were both present and conceptually dematerialized by the permeation of space, or in a sense transparent; and third, the acceptance of the incompleteness of collage, the juxtaposition of fragmented figures as a satisfactory method of finished composition.

It is particularly the collage aspect of *anti-space* which is pertinent because it is more than a characteristic compositional device: it also represents the process of modern perception. The experience and meaning of formal relationships are known to the individual through non-sequential appearance, fragments of thought and assembled memories. This process of individual thought is itself the paradigm for collage.

In addition, collage, as a general attitude, promotes a critical and speculative relationship between the ideal and the real. As in a collage 'painting,' the application of a real fragment onto the canvas challenges the painted image. It establishes a dialogue between fact and illusion, between real and ideal. With collage, useful attributes and partial references deriving from an ideal or utopian framework can be appropriated and used without accepting the whole premise of this position.

This attitude provides the means to incorporate multiple spatial typologies into architecture. It eliminates the necessity to accept the premise of a world of *anti-space* in order to use the valuable devices and perceptions which have emerged from it. It is not necessary to believe in a vast infinite flux as the only representation of the reality of space. There are two scales to our perception and knowledge—the vague reality of the expansive concepts of cosmological space and the specific reality of finite place and time. The collage process should be as applicable to the *form* of *space* as it is to the *forms* in *anti-space*.

The perceptual characteristics of *anti-space* allow us to understand that form can be perceived relative to its appearance through motion and time; that mass can be conceived as transparent, permeated with *space*; that relationships can be established through fragments and the incompleteness of memory. These are conditions requiring further exploration. They are the lessons of *anti-space* we do not wish to unlearn, because once the image of form and the process of perception have been transformed by *anti-space*, a new conjunction of *space* and *anti-space* in architecture is possible.

21



22



20 Analytical Drawing of a Cezanne painting, Erle Loran, 1943
21 Cubist Painting: *Pitcher and Violin*, Georges Braque, 1909
22 Cubist Painting: *Collage*, Juan Gris, 1914

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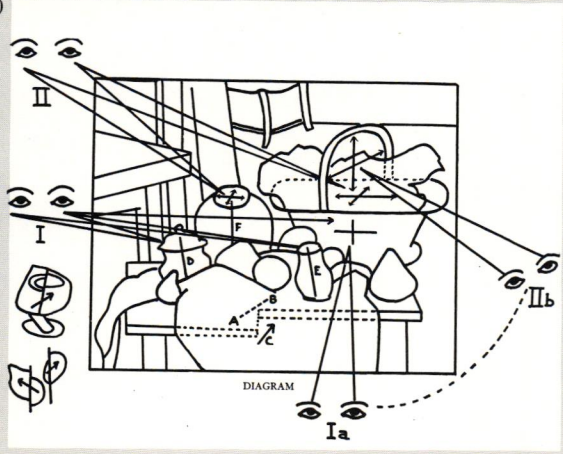


A cubist painting can be seen as formal dissection of *anti-space* in which its constituent properties are isolated for examination:

- *Anti-space* moves. The transformation of the objects illustrated is a result of a moving observer in a dynamic space.
- *Anti-space* is a force, or at least the conveyor of forces, which emanates from objects. Anti-space distorts or transforms form; it is the medium of exchange for the energy of objects.
- *Anti-space* is independent of geometry, and geometry is itself an independent structure, a grid appearing in both solids and voids.
- *Anti-space* exists within physical mass. Everything has an aspect of transparency. Nothing is totally solid. All objects have the potential of perceptual penetration.
- *Anti-space* is ever-present. There is no preferential place for anything and space is uniformly ambiguous.
- *Anti-space* is uniform and infinite. It obliterates distinctions between figure and ground; there is neither a background nor a limit to the space.
- *Anti-space* is equated with time. An unknown and indefinite duration is assumed for the observation of a cubist image. Time is combined with space to have equal value and extent.
- *Anti-space* promotes collage. Composition is achieved through the juxtaposition of fragments and the acceptance of incompleteness.

The complex intricacy of a cubist composition is still emotionally moving because it has the magical capacity to dematerialize mass, to transform objects through time and movement, and to reverse the appearance and location of figure and ground. These ambiguities and contradictions result from the conditions of *anti-space* which are accepted as the basic context of cubism. Its obliteration of pictorial space confirms the presence of this new spatial framework. The painting thus provides an analysis of the mode of perception which transforms the appearance of things, demonstrating that within *anti-space*, the experience of form is interpreted as a derivation of personal memory through time and motion.

Formally, this is accomplished through a juxtaposition of fragments and the acceptance of incompleteness. Cubism rejects any single interpretation of reality in terms of position or time and challenges the simple comprehension which might be elicited by a finite, stable space. In this way it evokes the process of individual memory. It is representative of the way in which we see but not of what we see. It is a caricature of experience and perception, interpreted as a multiple exposure of impression (Figures 20-22). The lesson of cubism is not in its depiction of reality as fact but rather in its demonstration of the process of comprehension within the perceptual framework of *anti-space*.

Negative Space and Positive Space

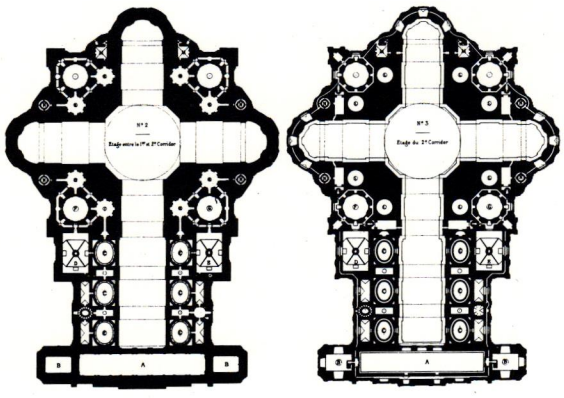
A new architecture of volumetric space, qualified and transposed into the context of modern perception, can be made, but first the transformation of our sensibility to space is required. This will involve two new terms which define specifically the *conditions* of space's relationship to form. These are *positive space* and *negative space*.

If *positive space* is any perceived created space, *negative space* is essentially the opposite: a solid, but a solid in a particular condition of configuration which is qualified in two ways. First, it must be shaped to define and form *space* externally and cannot appear as a detached object. Second, it must be empty, thereby containing *space* internally. In other words, if *positive space* is the void which is 'in-between' form, its opposite, *negative space*, is the void which is 'in-between' space. *Negative space* is the specific design of a physical solid to solely serve the formation of space, both inside and outside itself. It is a condition of multiple appearances, looking solid and being empty.

To illustrate this let us imagine a transformation of a solid mass into *negative space*. The wall and piers of St. Peters are simply solids defining space and are not in a condition of *negative space* (Figure 23).

However, if they could be rebuilt in their exact present shape out of steel and light cladding so that empty space was also provided within the dimensions of their present thickness, then, while the outward appearance would be the same, still serving to shape the architectural spaces, the wall itself would be in a condition of *negative space*. Small portions of the ground plan and the upper levels can already be interpreted in this way (Figure 24).

Negative space then is a condition of appearance. The condition of an apparent solid is maintained, defining volumetric spaces with its outside surface, but its interior is carved out. Essentially, it is the *poché* of the plan, but the *poché* revealed as empty. Making *negative space* thus involves an awareness of both the space within a



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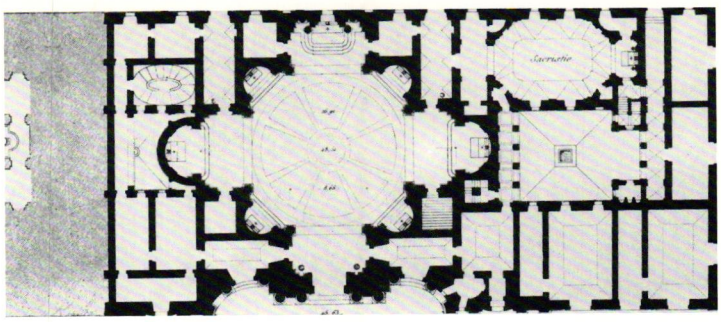

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thick wall and the space formed by a thick wall. It is a designed interpretation, a condition, consciously established, of something being space-forming from one view while containing space from another. The empty exterior corner pier of Bramante's plan of St. Peters illustrates this further (Figure 25). The pier is established as a condition of *negative space* from within the building through its role in the formation of shaped space and thereby obscures the identity of its own configuration as object. However, the pier is not in a condition of *negative space* from the outside of the building where it appears as a conventional solid object.

If Bramante's corner were inserted into Michelangelo's plan as a substitute for the crossing pier, it would be in a state of *negative space* from all positions. In the same way, the thick, hollow 'skin' of Lutyen's elephant is not *negative space* but appears as hollow mass or volume from the outside because it does not shape a space externally (Figure 26). However, from the inside, where it forms space, the 'skin' appears in a condition of *negative space*.

This condition of *negative space* is not limited to the interior. It can exist on the outside of buildings as well, if the walls are shaped to form external urban spaces. The front wall of St. Agnese on the Piazza Navonna (Figures 27,28) is shaped to define space both outside and inside; if all its solid piers were occupied with space as the north pier is, then the entire mass would be conditioned as *negative space*.

In general, the design of volumetric space inherently depends on the use of thick walls so that the shape of one space can be formed independent of the next, as in the Palazzo Barberini, where the oval space of the foyer is completely independent of the flat exterior surface of the façade. The capacity of the wall to be formed differently on each side is the direct product of its thickness. Its inside and outside faces, being dimensionally separate, can act independently. Furthermore the Palazzo Barberini intentionally uses the hollow of the thick wall to produce two conditions of *negative space*, in the servant stairs and passages as well as in the rear public stair (see Box 6).

Today we can no longer afford thick massive walls. However, the new capacity to build and define *space* with thin materials allows us to make *negative space* according to the formal properties of the thick wall. Thinness can be used to produce the illusion of thickness through the exploitation of precedents found in the architecture of volumetric space. We can have it both ways, solids and voids as places of occupation, *space* and *anti-space* separated by an empty, conceptually transparent mass.

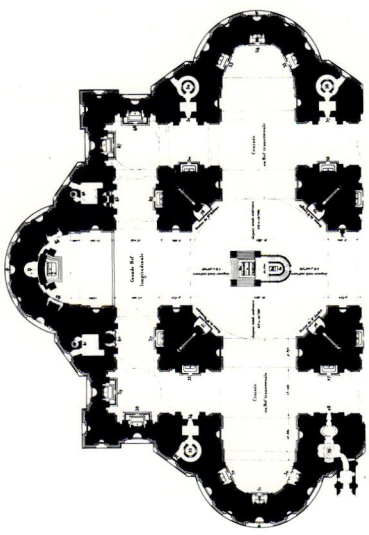
The work of John Soane is filled with intuitions of *negative space*. The ceilings of the Bank of England and the thick wall / façade of his own house suggest the possibilities of an architecture conceived in the formal principles of volumetric space and mass, but opened up by the actual thinness of its construction (see Box 7).

The potential of this idea seems far-reaching. Volumetric *space* can exist next to *anti-space*, separated by the thickness and independent surfaces of *negative space*. Free plans using volumetric space can be composed by maintaining the separation of the specific shapes across a certain dimension and thickness. *Negative space* is, in a sense, another kind of 'in-between' which separates and joins space over distance. It is the opposite, or the negative of the general definition of space—*the form of the void in-between*.

With *negative space* in mind, it is possible to look back at the history of architecture and see new things. The eyes of our imagination can walk through walls. We can enter into the space of solids. We can relearn the lessons of space, mass, and volume, appropriating old plans through this new interpretation, revealing space that was never intended to be seen. We can imagine the *poché* and the secondary spaces being perceived as *negative space* and move through the building, with the perception of *anti-space* in a wandering, exploratory promenade—finding new figures and unexpected possibilities.

23 Partial Plan, St Peter's, Rome, Michelangelo, 1546
24 Upper Level Plans, St Peter's, Rome, Michelangelo, 1546
25 Early Plan for St Peter's, Rome, Bramante, c 1506
26 'Building,' Sir Edwin Lutyens, 1882
27 St. Agnese, Piazza Navonna, Rome, begun by Rainaldi, 1652. The thick walls as 'negative space' resolve each part of the plan into discrete volumes of space. A similar and equally complex configuration at Hadrian's Villa, however, maintains an open and continuous pattern because of a different sensibility to space and its relationship to the wall.
28 Piazza d'Oro, Hadrian's Villa, Tivoli, 120-140. The Piazza d'Oro does not develop negative space. Despite it's complex interaction, space remains open.

23



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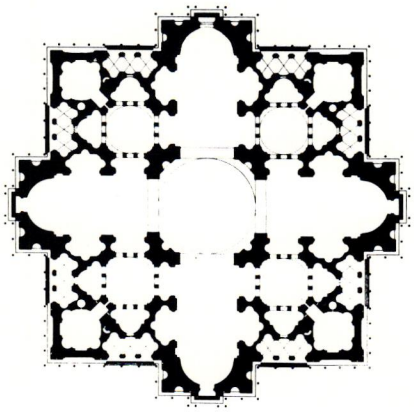
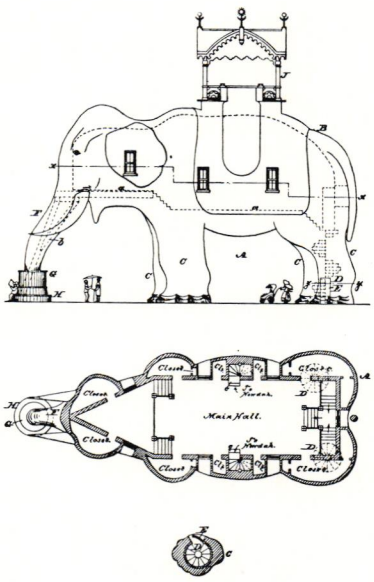


Box 6

Negative Space in the Palazzo Barberini



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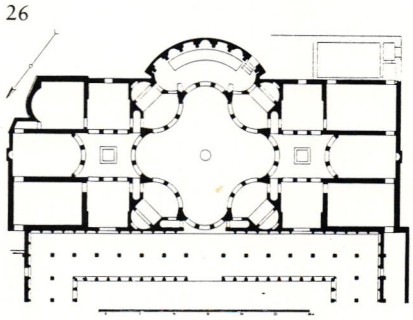

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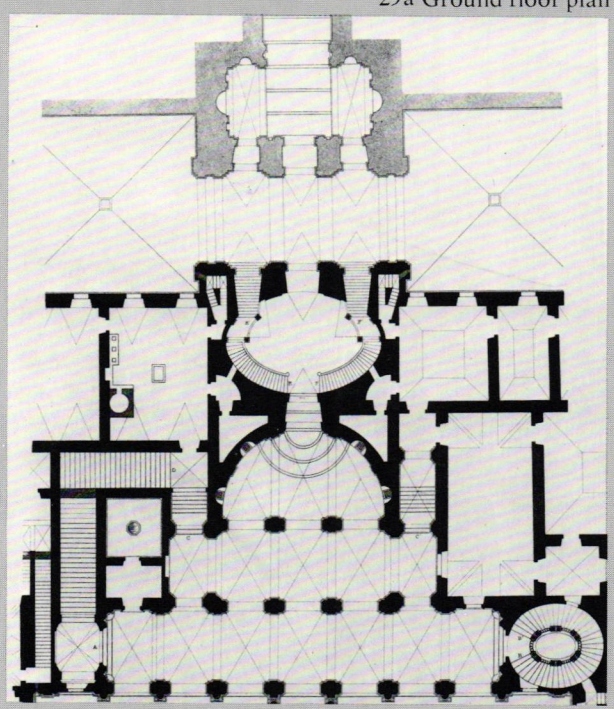
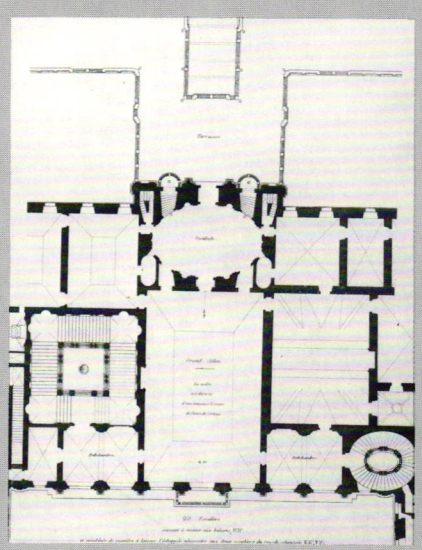
29a Ground floor plan

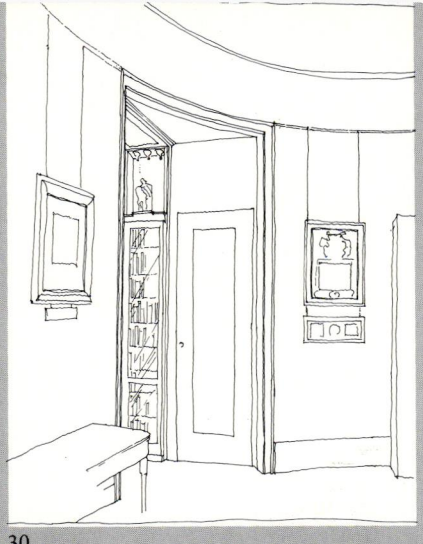


The thick walls of the Palazzo Barberini provide an actual situation in which the condition of *negative space* can be experienced. The service stairs, minor passages, and hidden chambers within the rear walls on both floors operate as a second world of activity independent of the main sequences (Figures 24 a,b). These internal wall spaces can be perceived today as a parallel and related architectural experience to the main spatial volumes. Although originally a spontaneous movement between these two worlds was not intended, the present possibility of experiencing both internal and external wall spaces as equal terms alters the sense of the walls' solidity, allowing them to be perceived in a condition of negative space.



29b First floor plan

29a,b
Palazzo Barberini, Rome, begun by Moderna, 1628, completed by Bernini and Borromini.



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This is particularly apparent in the rear stair which connects ground floor to *piano nobile*. This sequence is filled with contradictory perceptions. First, the stair space at the ground floor seems to be a conventional hall leading up to another room within the building, but it terminates surprisingly onto an exterior rear terrace, penetrating the thick façade wall through an opening which is both door and window (Figure 30). Then, directly above the stair, within the oval vestibule itself, there is no evidence of the necessary sectional space required for the stair's headroom. It has apparently disappeared. Two spaces, the stair and the vestibule, are somehow impossibly made to co-exist at the same point in plan.

In fact, a condition of negative space has been produced which disguises the location of the stair space, absorbing it into the raised sill and recess of the monumental window (Figure 31). This illusion of solid and the dimension of thickness is a condition of negative space which provides a simple resolution to a difficult circumstance of function and location. This is achieved through the thickness of walls and by a reversal of the understanding of solid and void along the sequence of movement.

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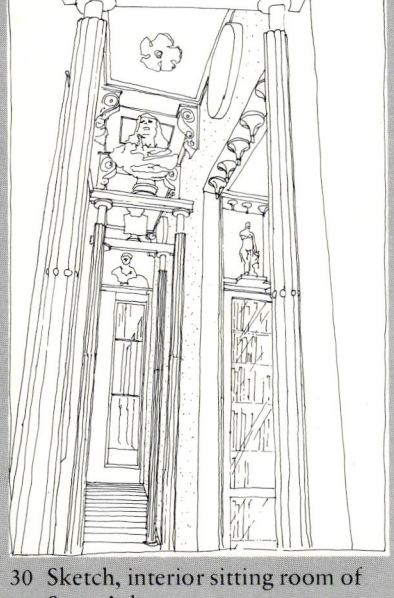


30 Sketch, interior sitting room of Soane's house

31 Sketch, the 'thick façade adjacent to sitting room, Soane's house

Box 7

The Negative Space of John Soane

The work of John Soane represents, perhaps, the first realizations of *negative space*—it is the starting point toward an architecture which occupies the space of the wall. This is nowhere more apparent than in the façade of his own house which was added on in front of the existing building as a thick double wall. The façade is a contrived thickness, conceived as a solid but completely occupied by a void.

The consequences of this are clearly revealed in the upstairs sitting room where the room in plan is shaped independently from the surface of the façade and related only through a thick wall of windows (Figures 32 a,b). This is a plan condition similar to the vestibule and façade wall of the Palazzo Barberini in which a curved room is juxtaposed against a flat exterior (Figures 29 a,b), but at Soane's house the thickness and solidity of the in-between wall is not literal but a more illusory and incomplete conception. The mass of the wall has been opened up (Figure 33).

From the sitting room as one steps into one of the window niches, a whole different world appears. Between the surface of the room and the surface of the façade there is the surprising discovery that the thick wall contains a transverse space which is continuous between the outer and inner surfaces (Figure 34).

This space, however, is not empty but is articulated to reflect and describe the spatial connection between the window on the façade and the openings in the room. These demarcations form a tiny series of spaces which are parallel in sequence to the sitting room. These spaces have a miniature architecture all their own, with columns, niches, vaults, and statues, designed so that the details inscribe the space with geometry and scale, asserting a density and sense of enclosure to each part which completely contrasts with the sparseness of the main room. Because of this, the space of the wall is identified—it exists. One feels within a thick form rather than simply in between two separate walls or planes.

Although Soane's negative space is tentatively formed, it is a subtle phenomenon rather than a literal disguise of mass, as in the Palazzo Barberini. Here, it promotes a multiplicity of interrelated but separately defined spaces, yet also explores the technological capacity to make things thin. Old perceptions and a new type of construction appear together as Soane exploits both thinness and thickness at the same time. The compositional precedents of volumetric space are incorporated into a new situation which does not use massive walls. The illusion of the wall remains but it is hollowed out and its presence is re-established by the specificity of its own interior space. Nothing is lost and a great deal is gained.

John Soane explored negative space in other ways, particularly in unique modulations of the section, where he invented a form of ceiling using false domes and vaults to create the same kind of thick double layered space overhead as in plan. This vertical formation of *space* is one of the most difficult things to accomplish today because of prejudice for the honest treatment of structure. Yet even at that time, Soane's vaults were an ambiguous special vision which contradicted the real construction. It was, in effect, the invention of a 'free section': spatial volumes formed independently of structural elements. These interior vaults and domes were not the actual structure any more than they had been, for example, in a Palladian interior, but Soane exposes this condition and consciously incorporates the space of the attic into the room. The many variations of negative space as free section are clearly demonstrated in the vaulted rooms of the Bank of England, in his own dining room, at the gate house of Chelsea Hospital, and at the Dulwich Gallery.

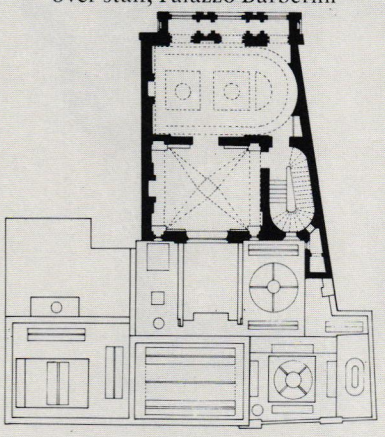
Soane's negative space is particularly evocative because its transparent multiple readings, alluding to mass with thin materials of construction, demonstrate the feasibility of combining volumetric space with modern technology (Figures 35 a,b). It is also an attitude which accommodates a contrasting range of scales, between large, open, simple volumes, and small, closed, intricate spaces.

32a
Plan of Upstairs Sitting Room, Soane Museum, Lincoln's Inn Fields, Sir John Soane, 1812-13
A similar, but disguised thickness occurs at the windows in the rear of Chiswick House.

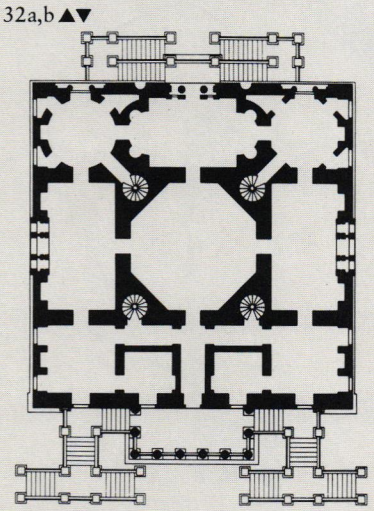
32b
Chiswick House, Chiswick, England, Lord Burlington, 1729
Lord Burlington's Palladian Plan also contains a thickness in the window 'wall.'

33 Sketch, exterior view of door / window, Palazzo Barberini

34 Sketch, interior view of window over stair, Palazzo Barberini



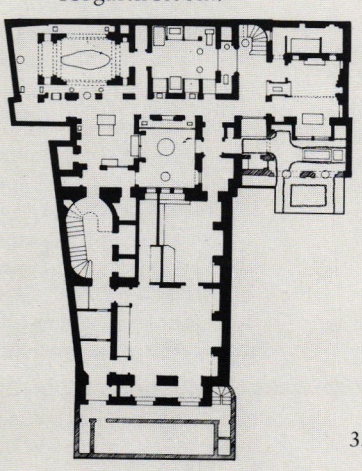
32a,b ▲▼



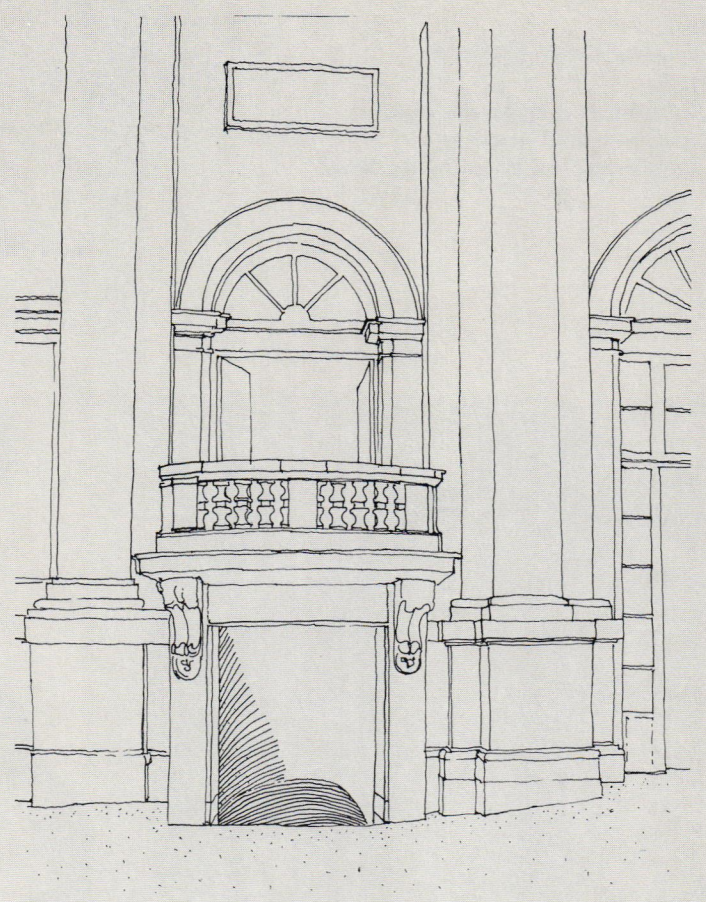
35a,b
Soane Museum, Lincoln's Inn Fields, Sir John Soane 1812-13

35a
Hogarth Room is square room at upper right.

35b
Basement Plan; Monks cell is in upper right, one floor below Hogarth Room.



35b



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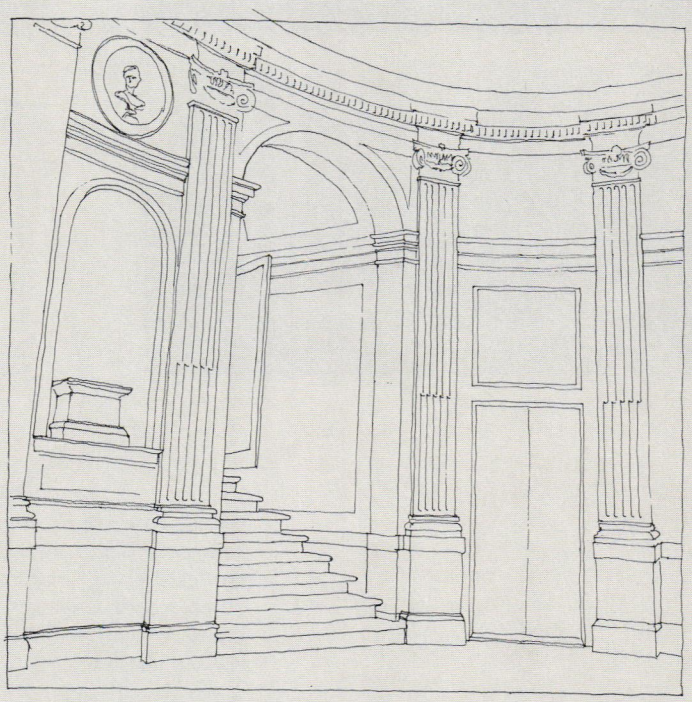

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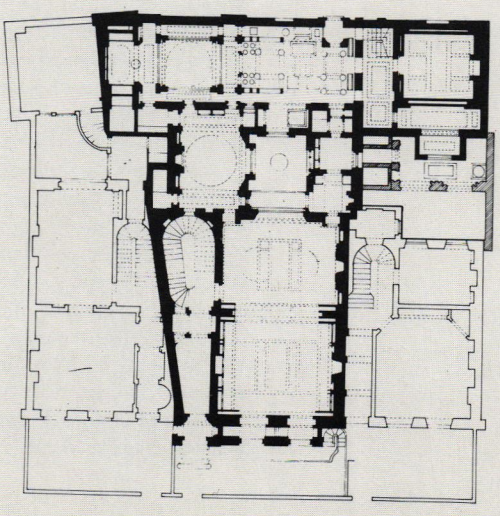
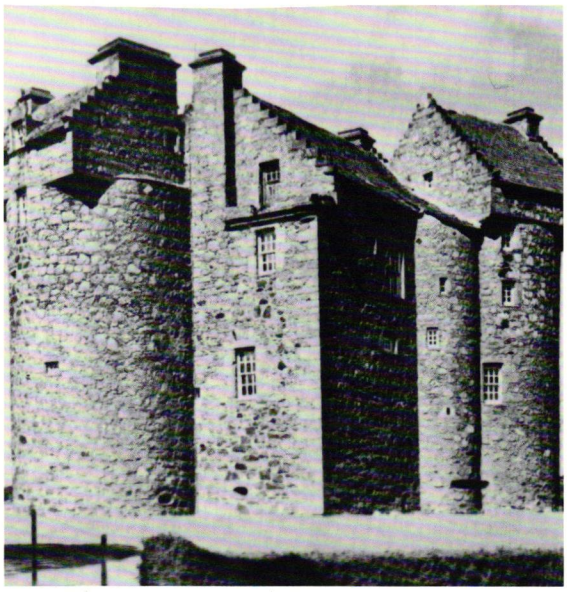


35a

36a,b
Claypots Castle, Scotland
37a,b
Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts, Harvard University, Cambridge, Ma, Le Corbusier, 1964



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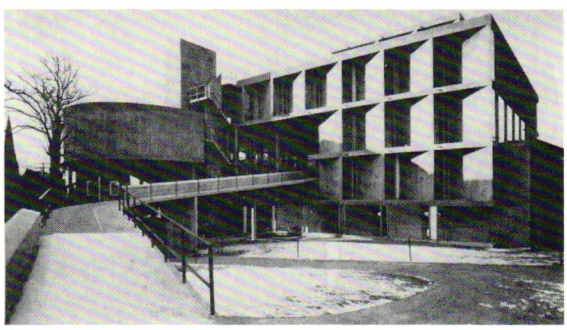

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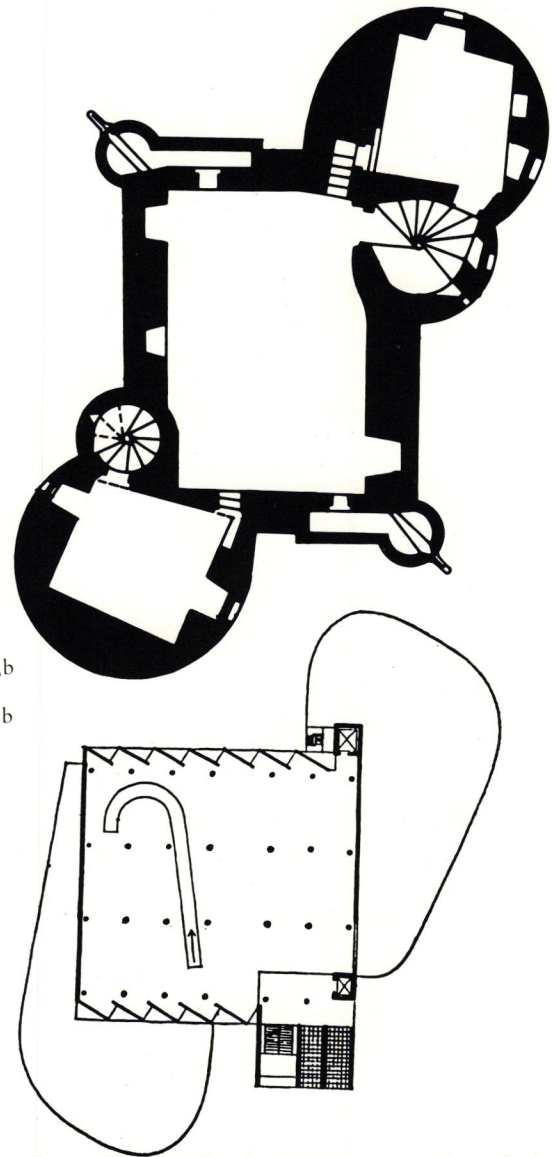


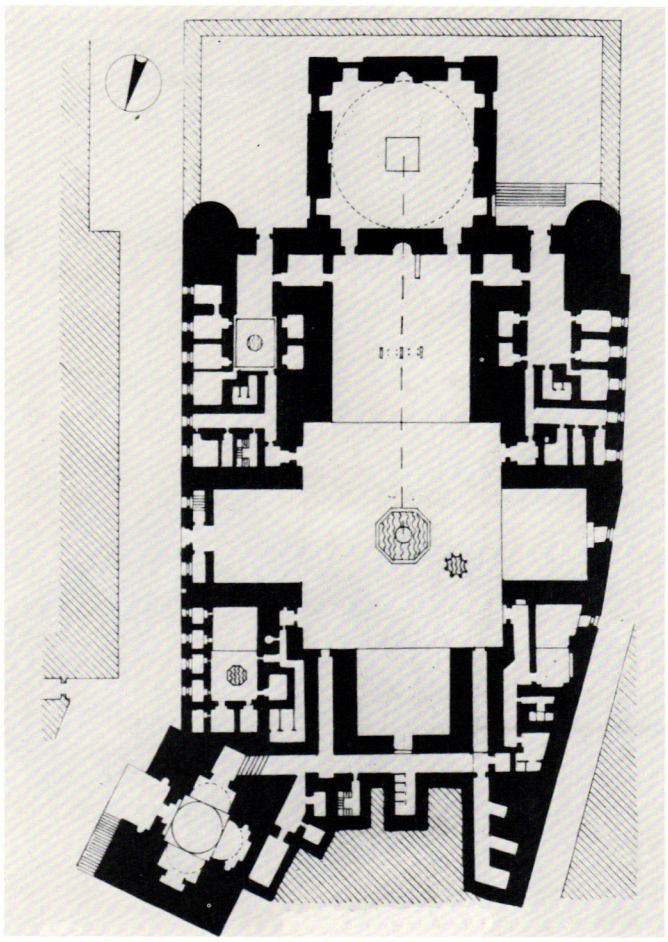
We can compare the medieval castle of 'Claypots' (Figures 36 a,b) to Carpenter Center (Figures 37 a,b) and observe different spatial images of the same figure. We can re-inhabit the 'Sultan Hassan Mosque' (Figure 38) in Cairo or 'Castel Coch' (Figure 39) by repossessing rooms within the walls. We can reinterpret the plans to have hollow walls, perceiving the back rooms as *negative space*. Compare a Spanish Baroque church (Figures 40,41) with the Millowner's building plan (Figure 42). A question is raised—the spatial thesis and anti-thesis suggest a dialogue of possibilities in-between. Confrontations of alternative space types can be imagined in other plans: figural and non-figural space is combined circumstantially in the perimeter of Mansart's Church of the Visitation in Paris (Figure 43) and behind the vestibule in San Michele's centralized chapel (Figure 44). The walls of every castle and fortification suggest a version of a free plan with space (Figures 45-48).

To develop the potential of *negative space*, it is necessary to transform our way of seeing and making plans, to work with different objectives and judge with new values. 'Wasted space' must be made intentionally to produce the left-over dimensions separating spaces. With special attention, this dimension can be made into *negative space,* to be exploited as the raw material for the formation of *space*.

Once present, this thickness can be usefully reoccupied. Closets, cabinets, shelves, even whole rooms such as toilets and vestibules can become a dense continuous medium of surface and *negative spaces*. They need no longer be seen as the still-life objects required to animate a modern interior.

The re-submersion of subsidiary elements into the thickness of the wall provides the necessary dimension for

38 Sultan Hassan Mosque, Cairo
39 Castel Coch, England
40 Church in Salzburg, Fisher Von Erlack
41 Spanish Baroque Church, Ponce de Urbana, Valencia, Diego Martinez
42 Millowners' Association Building, Ahmedabad, India, Le Corbusier, 1956



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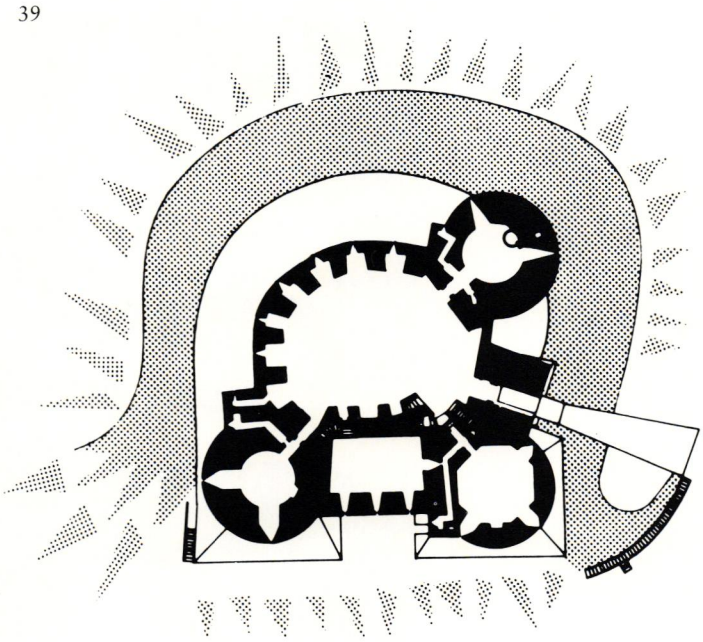

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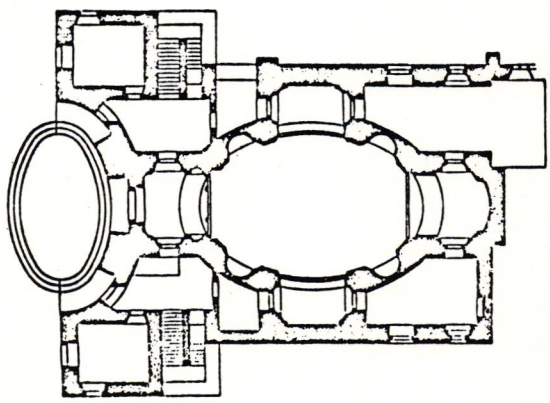

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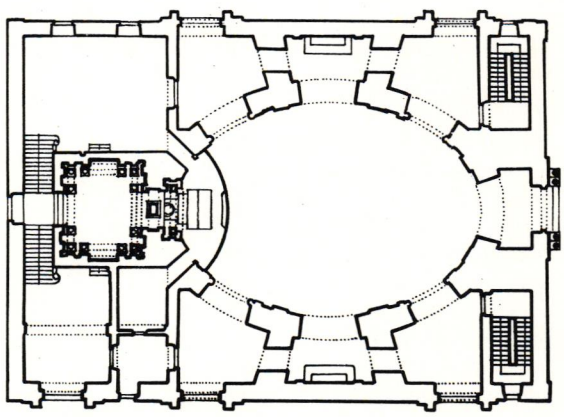

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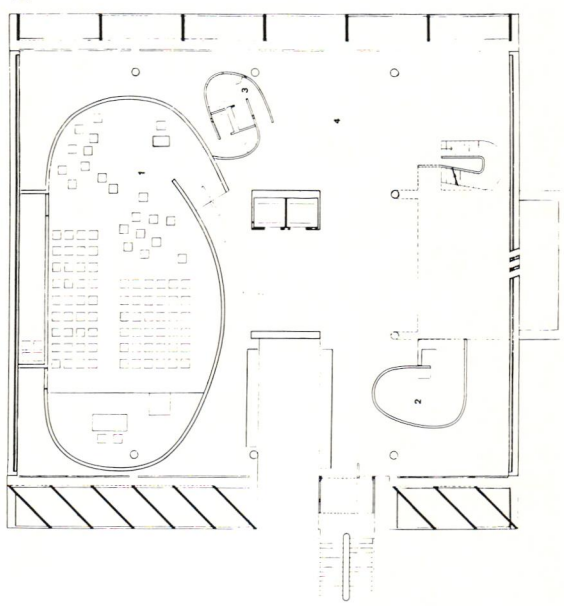

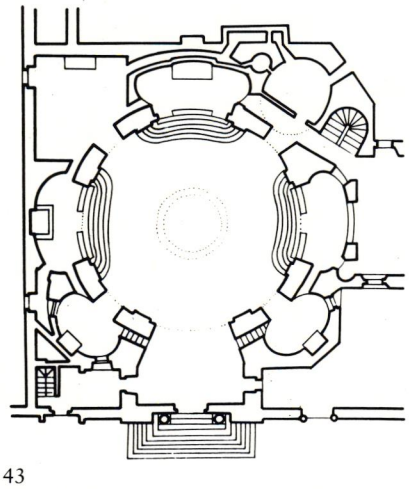

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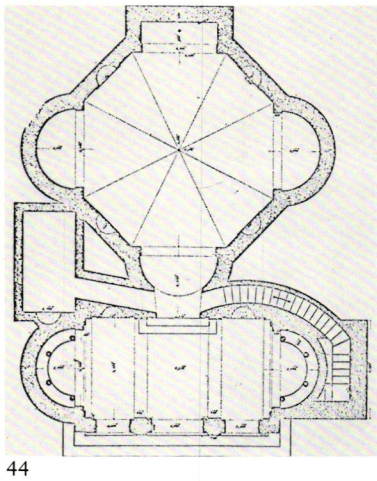


44

43 Ste Marie de la Visitation, Paris, France, François Mansart, 1632-34

44 Chapel, Villa Della Torre at Fumane, San Michele

the plastic manipulation of *space*. What remains is the question of refinement and the precise focus of these spatial configurations. We will have to relearn the definition of continuous surface and re-acquire the skills to make good profiles and taut silhouettes, as the characteristics which join the wall to space. If the wall is to make space, it must manifest a dense architecture all its own (Figure 49).

The architecture of the wall, of *negative space*, can incorporate another world of intimacy, emotion, and memory. It can contain places which are the equivalent of attics and basements. Alcoves, window seats, inglenooks, hidden panels, and secret passages, can be carved from the 'solid'. The space of the walls can provide new mystery, illusion and surprise.

With the enriched variety of spatial separation, a new functional adaptability is also possible for both architecture and the city, based on a classification of space rather than a separation of uses through zoning. The conventional relationships of plan and program can be rethought. 'Incompatible' functions can be adjacent to one another but separate and unconnected. Spatial uses can be mixed in unconventional but non-conflicting ways as circumstance requires.

The notion of 'servant' spaces for mechanical equipment or subsidiary functions can be contained within the *negative space* of the walls forming the preferred positive spatial sequences. Essential but secondary spaces no longer need be embarrassing appendices to a configuration or justified through a conscious expression. 'Servant' space becomes, instead, part of the supporting ground for the design of *space*.

The architecture of *positive space*, supported by the illusion of *negative space* and thick walls, can only occur *with the transformation of our sensibility to space* itself. We must focus on the tautness of shapes and the specific definitions of *space* for its own sake. Once *positive space* has again become a medium of architecture, its capacity for meaning will unfold.

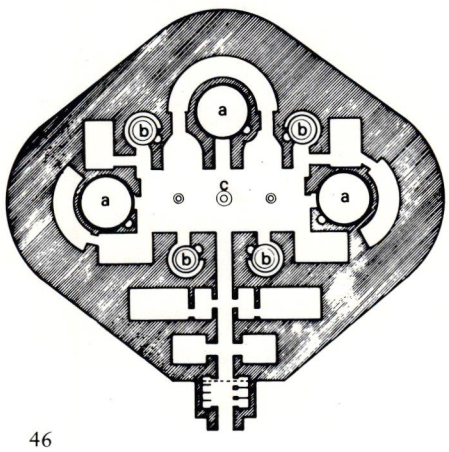
The use of *negative space*, however, is not simply a fashion. It is not a justification for collecting architectural antiques or the making of a super-graphic mannerism. The dignity and repose of precise, clear spatial figures should generate both elevation and plan. *Space* should become explicit, form less autonomous. The particularity of walls should be consistent with the spaces they enclose. The reuse of *space* does not imply a new version of total design nor a temporary posture of historicism. It is an association of the oldest principles of architecture with contemporary technology and perception.

The rediscovery of the thick wall and the value of *negative space* result from the need to break through the limitations of *anti-space*. Their significance has emerged slowly through drawing and design, and grown without conscious articulation in the struggle to make space (see Box 8). However, the testing has just begun. Architecture will talk back, in an interaction of design and critical conviction, establishing and confirming the condensation of these ideas.

The City of Space

We have at our disposal the knowledge to develop a new strategy for architecture which can, through its formation of exterior space, affect the configuration of the city. It is possible to produce a new city of *space* by extending the definition of *negative space* to the larger scale of the urban block. The result will be a new interpretation of streets, squares, and public places.

To achieve the city of *space* a specific program of goals must be established for the process of work, which reconsiders the relationship of space to the plan and the wall. A new agenda is required for architecture (see Box 9). The purpose of this agenda is not to create a new style or justify a more elaborate expressive architecture, but to provide a simple and clear way of accommodating the complexity of actual conditions with rich spatial configurations. This implies the existence of more elaborate



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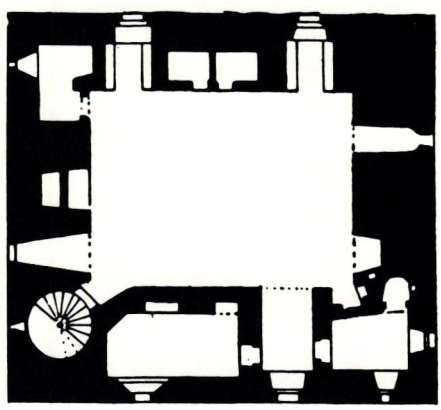
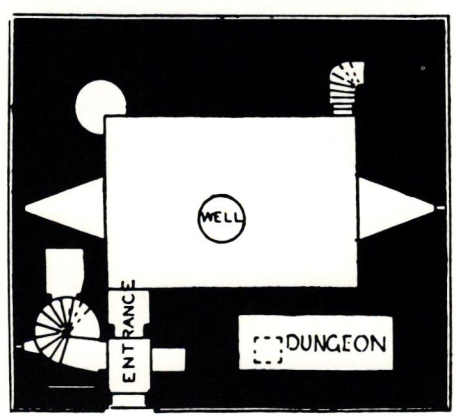
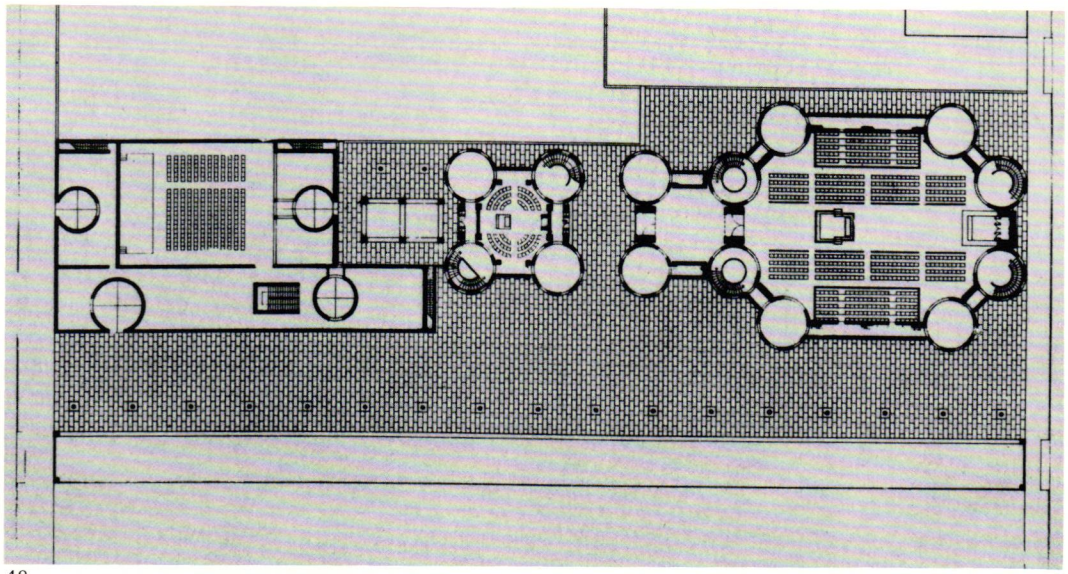






48

intermediate categories—in effect, a complete typology of space. This typology should not simply become a method of order generating repetition and redundancy nor a justification for a new monumentality, but instead, a reference point for transformation and interpretation.

It is now clear that to make a complex city and a complex architecture with *anti-space* alone is impossible. The simultaneous presence of a free plan inside and a free plan outside will obliterate all distinctions, destroy all *space*, and lead to a chaotic uniformity. The free plan is unsuitable to the city. Without the nuance and variations produced with differentiated *space*, the choice of ordering devices is limited and impersonal. In a city of *anti-space*, no controlling order is possible except an abstracted matrix of points and lines, a neutral, repetitive grid existing for reference but carrying minimal information.

The environmental premises of the city of *space* and the city of *anti-space* are implicitly different because the type and quality of their urban textures are a consequence of opposite compositional mechanisms. The premise of the city of *anti-space* is uniformity. It results from a composition of free objects ordered through repetition which stand relative to an undifferentiated natural background. The premise of the city of *space*, however, is variety. It results from the composition of formed voids in complex serial orders which are the consequence of a background assumed to be a dense, highly differentiated network.

The new urban texture for the city will be solved by accepting space as the generator of the matrix of complete networks, defining the size, scale, grain, direction or disposition of whole quarters, precincts and neighborhoods. This network of solid and void can

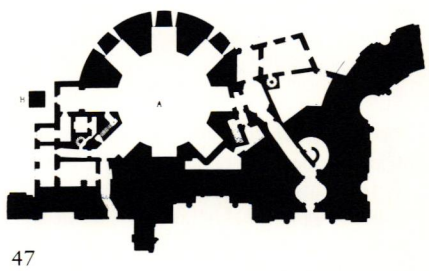
45 Perhaps Louis Kahn had a similar idea about the 'negative space' in a thick wall when he wrote:
The stark architectural directness of the castle and the musically rhythmic image of the Greek temple combines in my mind a thought about Le Corbusier. I believe Le Corbusier, even in the light of his marvelous revelations in architecture, is just beginning to create his greatest work. I dare to think of a building that he might make, a great block of building, which is cut into from top to bottom in varied places of varied shapes neither forgetting the castle, nor the order of temple, giving light to spaces and passages on the immediate interior and leading to a glorious central and single space, the walls and their light left in faceted planes, the shapes of the record of their making, intermingled with the serenity of light from above.
Castel Plan

46 World War I Fortress

47 Old Sacistry, St. Peter's, Rome

48 Synagogue, Mikveh Israel, Philadelphia, PA (project), Louis Kahn, 1961-1970

49 Lord Derby's House, London, England, Robert Adam, 1777
The profile and poché makes an architecture of the walls.



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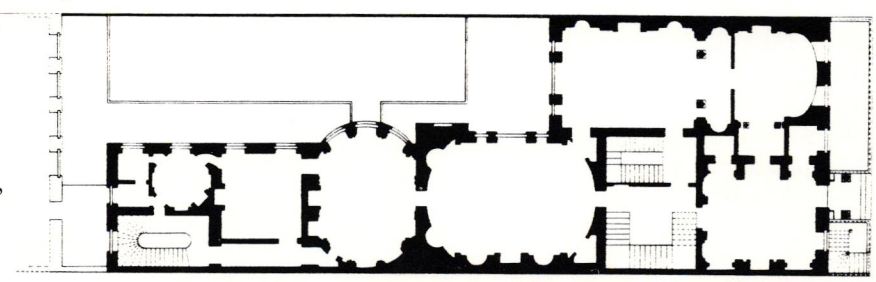


become a grid, not of lines, but of *space* integral with geometry and form, a complete 'field,' with solid and void in balance, *positive* and *negative space* in an integrated matrix. This is a situation impossible to achieve with *anti-space* as the exclusive conceptual framework. In this urban 'field', the shaped space of the streets form the blocks, not the reverse. The blocks themselves disappear behind the walls of public space.

The complete conception and practice of urban design begins by inventing textures and patterns, by establishing a context of space. Urbanism is achieved by designing space first, the monument and the dwelling unit last. The context of the city must be actively designed, not passively responded to as circumstance. Architecture must assert its responsibility to form aggregate urban space.

However, the new image of the city of *space* must remain elusive. It must be conceived as a plasma of circumstance and intentions resolved into *space*. In order to provide options, accommodate contradictions, and promote speculation, *space* must be the medium of interaction between the contradictory layers of place which emanate from private need and public requirement.

The city is not determined by selecting models to correspond with a single ideology; it begins by evaluating the inadequacy of available means to meet obvious necessities. The reiteration of ideological and political debates continues because the medium of *anti-space* itself contains an inherently proscriptive message. Its formlessness prohibits any complex urban configurations which support integration, transition or dialogue. *Anti-space* promotes utopianism because it rejects the language of its antithesis. The loss of *space* as an architectural medium is, in effect, the loss of meaning.

The city should not be discarded simply because it is seen as a wilderness of *anti-space*. The city of *space* is the potential solution, but the city of *space* can have no overall image which in itself is the answer: it cannot be utopian as a form, nor can it be 'natural' and completely spontaneous. Our objective is an elaborate condition of spaces, a collision of inventions; not a neutral ground of *anti-space* but a plasma of spatial fields promoting multiple interactions, choices and opportunities.

Through concentrated attention, the sensibility to *space* can be re-integrated into architecture, producing a rich, complex, and varied urbanism. This is our motivation.

We must make *space* the generator, not the plan, and certainly not the façade:

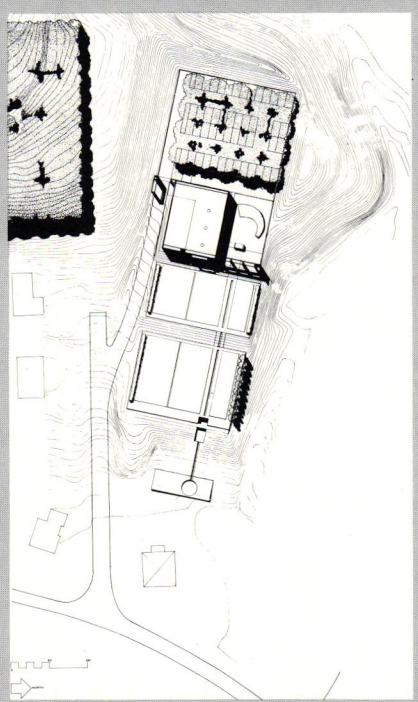
The plan is the generator of order.

The façade is the generator of signs.

Space is the qualifier of both, the generator of complete meaning and comprehension.

Box 8

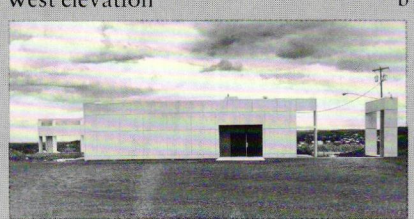
Space: The Process of Work



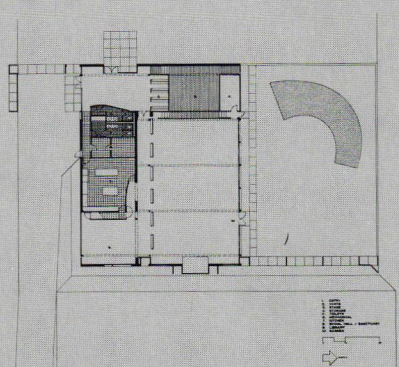
50a



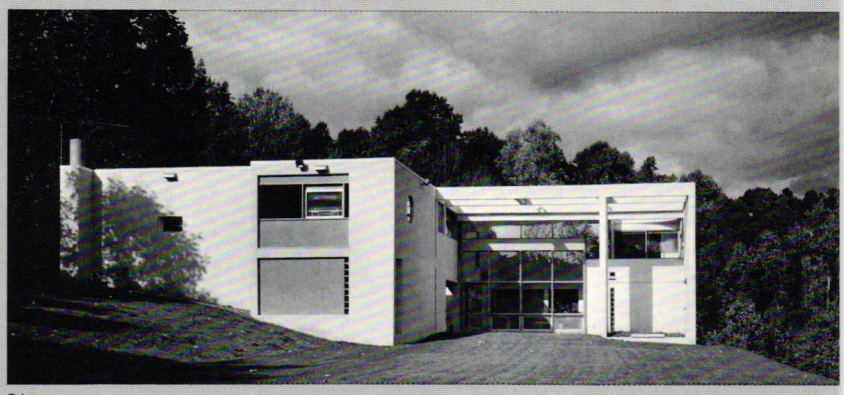
West elevation b



East (Entry) elevation



50a-d
'CBS' Synagogue, Syracuse, New York, Chimacoff / Peterson



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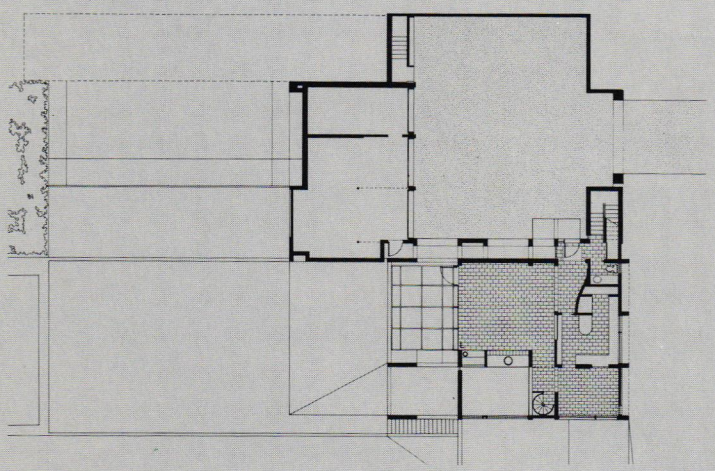
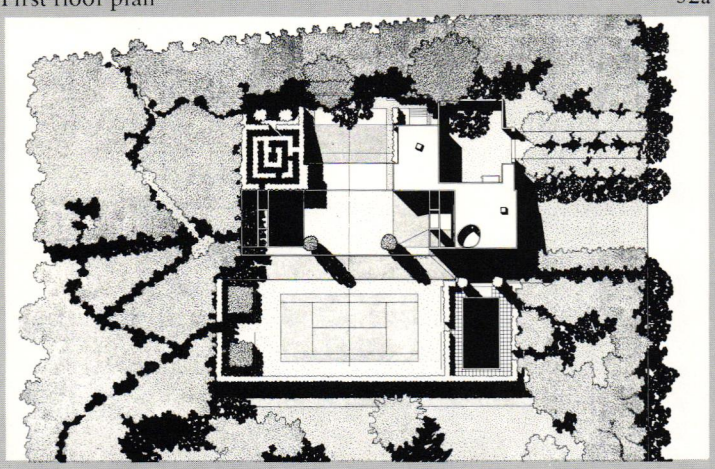


First floor plan 52a



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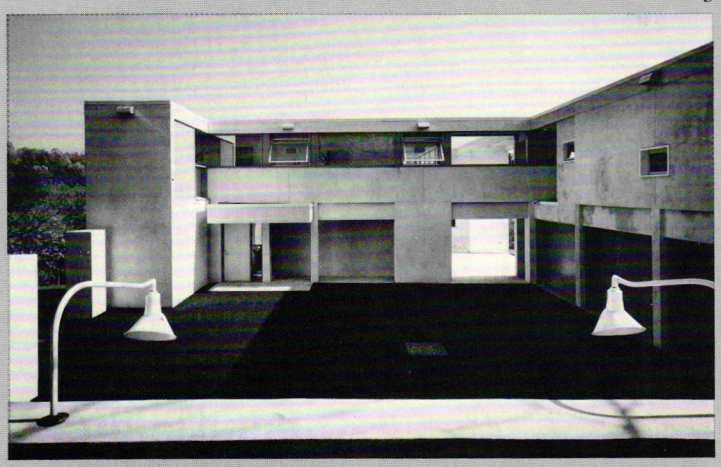


Court and 'thick' entrance wall c

The architecture of Chimacoff / Peterson evolved through the intuitive struggle with the thick wall and volumetric space. Beginning with the synagogue (Figures 50 a-d), the thick wall was a principal theme both inside and out, as it established the volumetric exterior spaces of the garden while forming a dimension for transition of entry and ceremony. The two front walls are thick and dense but also hollow; their stretched disposition generates from the geometric exterior space. In both Lowenstein houses, exterior volumetric space is interlocked with enclosure, binding it to the wall. The space is conceived of as static although still transparent and overlapping, but in LoHo II, the general configuration of the building is distorted to wrap around formed external geometric spaces (Figure 51). The house itself is conceived of as background walls to a garden of volumetric space (Figures 52 a-c). It is an attempt to transpose the object into the ground, to make the building, like the trees and hedges, into the negative space of the garden.

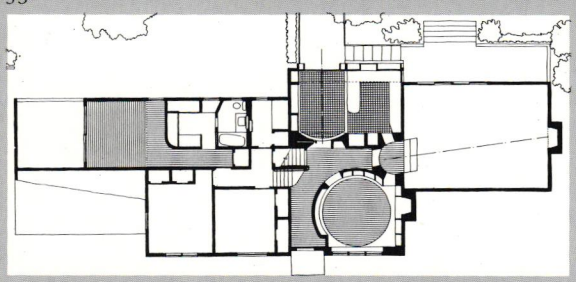
51 LoHo II, Morristown, New Jersey, Chimacoff / Peterson, 1974, view

52a-c
Lo Ho II, Morristown, New Jersey
Chimacoff/Peterson, 1974

56a



53



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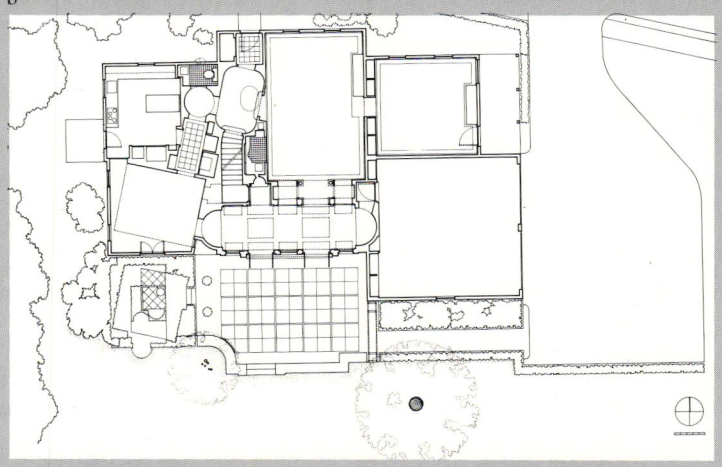

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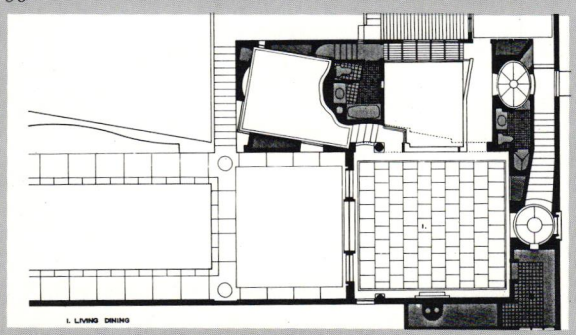

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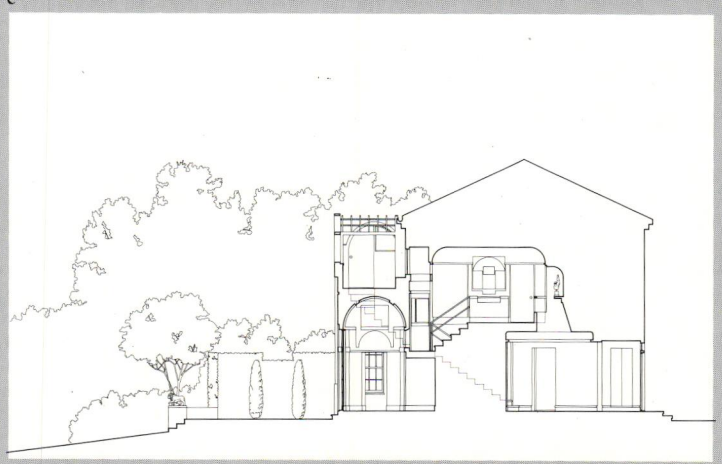

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Box 9

A Revised Agenda

Our first notion of negative space in the interior developed in the Postel renovation (Figure 53), where the center of a builder's house was made 'solid' by the introduction of stable volumetric rooms whose defining walls were no longer partitions but were thickened into negative space incorporating storage and shelving. Then, with the Guilden house (Figures 54 a,b), the entire ground floor is established as figural space carved out of solid walls and earth. The garage, kitchen, and pool spaces are contained within the walls of the living room and loggia. Here the thickness of the wall is exploited and occupied by entire rooms for sauna, changing, bathroom, and storage. In the Kornaza house (Figure 55) negative space is interposed into the midst of the plan, allowing both fluid space and separate volumetric spaces to exist independently. Perhaps the evolution of our consciousness of volumetric space in plan has proceeded more rapidly than its crystallization as a complete framework, but the direction is clear (Figures 56 a-c).

The agenda for an architecture constituting a new city of space must start with the wall. The wall promotes the architecture of *space* by joining with it in mutual configuration. To accomplish this requires new priorities—it will be necessary to:

Make walls primarily to shape *space*—the wall is not a neutral partition which simply divides *anti-space*; it has configuration.

Make walls with density and texture—the wall is not a neutral partition which simply divides *anti-space*; it can become the ground itself.

Make walls which are thick and contain *space*—the thick wall is the medium of *negative space*; its dimension is a primary condition of volumetric *space*.

Make walls which are 'useless,' only for the sake of space; walls are not just the perimeter edges of programmed functions; they are the location of transitions and are places in themselves.

Make walls which define exterior space first—façades are not just the skin of a box or the surface for signs; they are the boundary walls of urban rooms, the street and the square.

Next, the plan must be re-established. It must become again the mechanism for invention and of space: In order to compose a plan of space, it is necessary to:

Make plans which integrate geometry with the composition of *space*—geometry is not just a modular system within free space, nor is the plan limited to abstracted coordinates for locating forms.

Make plans with more than one spatial order—the plan is not simply a clear arrangement of areas; it must also provide for the multiple interpretation of events and experience through *space*.

Make plans where circulation is integral with the sequential forms of *space*—circulation is not a separate element of architecture, nor is a plan generated simply by the path of a promenade.

Make free plans composed of *space* rather than of objects—the use of volumetric space does not require rigid, inflexible plans nor is a free plan the exclusive province of *anti-space*.

Make plans with *negative space*—the 'wasted' space of apparent mass and thickness are preconditions for the presence of *space*.

Through this agenda, *space* can be re-incorporated into architecture with the necessary form and dimension to become the figure of its composition, revitalizing the range of meaning.

53 Postel House Remodeling, Princeton, New Jersey, Chimacoff / Peterson, 1976

54 Round Weekend House (Guilden House), Long Island, New York, Chimacoff / Peterson, 1974

55 Kornaza House, Long Island, New York, Chimacoff / Peterson; Alan Chimacoff, Partner-in-charge, 1977

56a-c Worthing House Project, Princeton, N J, 1978

Only Connect: Recognitions of Old and New

Jaquelin Robertson

In no other realm of architectural endeavor has the Modern Movement had as cataclysmic effect as in the great urban renewal projects of the 1950s and 60s, which developed as much out of utopian Modern Movement premises as specific economic and political constructs. Thus, the Modern Movement has been criticized most profoundly for the aftereffects it produced in cities, and any discussion of changes in contemporary architectural attitudes must include concerns particular to urban *architecture, whether involving large-scale urban designs or individual projects set within an urban context. In order to function at the level of urban design, to develop city-wide systems which can accommodate architectural programs at various scales, the urban architect should be capable of understanding and responding to concerns outside the traditional realm of 'design' as it has been promoted over the last 50 years. The following essay is by one such designer who has operated, at various times, in the capacity of an urban designer, a policy-maker, and an architect in the field of urban development. It is divided into three parts: the author first delivers a personal description of the need for and demands of urban design, then answers questions by the editors of the* Review, *and finally presents directives for producing a more compassionate, practical and connective architecture.*

Extreme movements cause extreme reactions, and the bravado of the Modern Movement's agenda for creating new cities is countered today by attitudes toward urban design that are often equally extreme. Jaquelin Robertson here admonishes the advocates of both, exhorting his audience to leave polemics aside and consider the real *responsibilities of an urban architect.*

Now that the war is over, everyone'll stop fighting? I wouldn't bet on it; men always fight and war is never over. Good thing too. The world is a very unreliable place. Yes, but I think the aggressive thing will be kept in check now, don't you?
After so much destruction?
Destruction? The world was corrupt; and, after all, our cause was just; the old order had to go.
But what good did it do us?
It carried us forward, my friend. Progress; that's the way it is.
Oh well . . . yes. To some extent you are right, I expect . . . but it all seems so costly; so disjointed and pointless . . .[1]

In June of last year I was approached by the editors to write something for the first issue of this magazine. I had been away from the United States for over two years and felt the need to touch base again with the more popular trends in American architectural circles. (The architectural glossies, through which one mistakenly but persistently tries to keep 'in touch,' affect me much in the same way as, I imagine, *Vogue* does the average housewife's husband: who the hell would wear that! And you're reassured only by the notion that she can't afford it and the fad will pass quickly. In short, one looks in frustration at the things because they're there, searching, I suspect, for provocative lingerie or bathing suits, and knowing full well there'll be little in the way of architecture or, for that matter, style.[2])

I liked the idea of a Harvard Architecture Review, particularly the 'Notes' sent to me by its editors—probably because they reinforced a general line of thinking I myself have been pursuing for some years. More to the point, I was flattered and felt I might try again to put down what I felt was important—in the broadest sense—about architecture. That is, what, other than my own private design concerns and preferences, could be of interest to others. I might add that I have never thought of my beliefs as being 'before' or 'after' anything, but as having grown quite naturally from my own background and experience and from what I learned to admire in our own and other cultures.

I was, however, mindful that on an

[1] Imaginary conversation by the author.

[2] Of course there have been notable exceptions to this: *Architectural Review* in the late fifties; *Architectural Design* before *Archigram;* Bill Marlin's year at *Forum*; One always hopes that Barnett / Goldberger / Huxtable / Marlin / Stern Eisenman would collaborate on an annual number. Just one.

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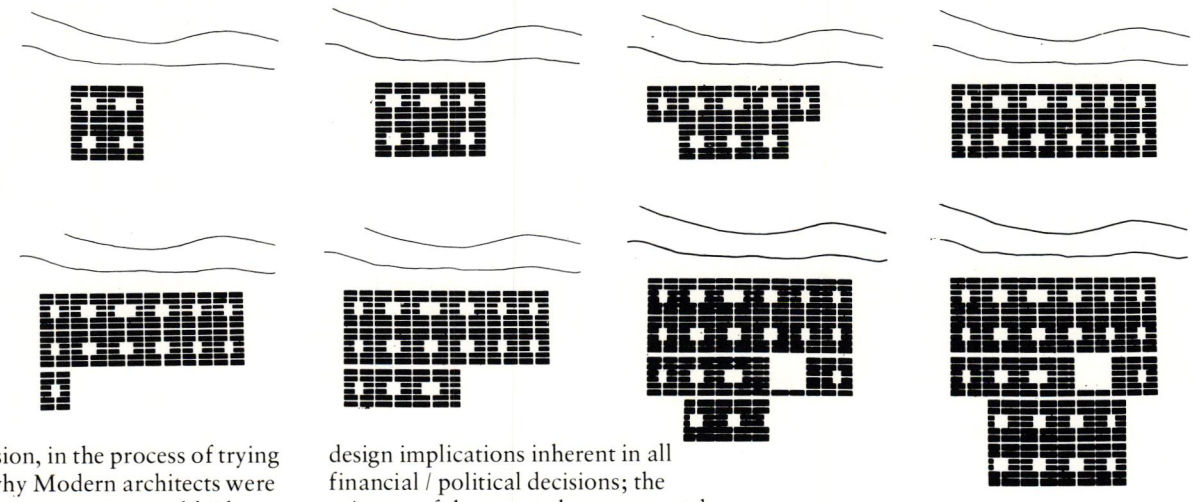


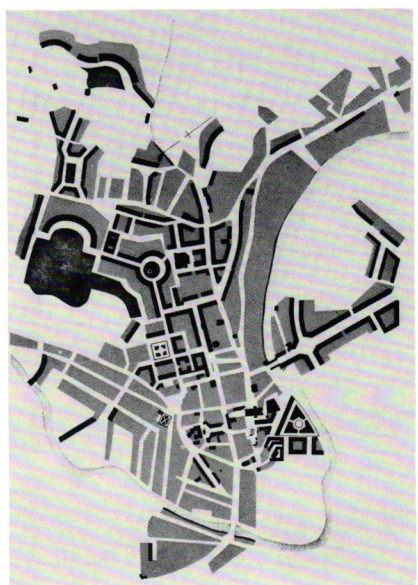
earlier occasion, in the process of trying to explain why Modern architects were not producing a very nice world, I have given vent to unnecessarily sharp criticism of some of my most talented peers ('Five on Five: The Machine in the Garden'[3]) in a way that I later regretted. I also guessed that at least some of my previous critique was not so much a diatribe against others as it was an attempt to make my own course seem more understandable to them. . .and to myself. All but my closest colleagues seemed consistently to misinterpret what I believed I was up to; they saw me as having abandoned 'design,' and this made me a bit uneasy. I know my professional course was slightly out of step, and although this was by decision, as a designer one really hates to be taken for something else—be it planner, bureaucrat, or developer. I had, therefore, responded by establishing an overly aggressive rationale for my veering career and interests and overly intolerant view of those who did not see the world as I did. Not having a larger audience for my own concerns, I was, in a sense, attacking them out of frustration. Not a very balanced response, I admit, but perhaps I had become too involved in politics and in 'the battle for the city.' And damn it! At that point, the architecture of the city seemed much more important to me than did individual buildings—either as ends in themselves or as paradigms of the city as a whole: Savannah and Bath more important architecturally than Falling Water or the Villa Stein (Figures 1 a,b).

The themes that had always been at the root of my sensibility and that had begun to dominate my architectural thinking at that time were: the importance of context and setting to the design of individual buildings; the necessary continuity between past and present; the importance of traditions and how they and one's own artistic ambitions can only be *gradually*, not radically, transformed; a deep distrust of utopias and of too formal and inflexible polemics; the inseparability of architecture, planning, and development; the real and potentially constructive influence, indeed the centrality, of money and political power in the design process; conversely, the design implications inherent in all financial / political decisions; the primacy of the street, the square, and the park in city design, and the design importance of the whole—the city—over that of its constituent parts.

I felt with real dismay that far too few of my peers agreed with these views or were even seriously concerned with them. Although these attitudes have changed to a great extent today, I find unhealthy the persistent faith in the resolving power of the single building as well as the very real suspicion among too many good designers that those who design something other than single buildings are not properly architects.

My architectural persuasions evolved in a traditional colonial setting, Virginia, and an exotic, foreign, and imperial one, Peking, and they centered around the rather simple notion that individual buildings were and should be shaped by their surroundings as much as by their 'programs' (i.e., internal functional requirements) and that these were always as much socio / cultural—aspiration and convention honed by economics—as personal or purely formal. The 'program of tradition' was unselfconscious but fundamental; the idea of an architecture disembodied from this 'gene bank' of place and time had always seemed inconceivable to me. Stratford, Monticello, and Charlottesville (as well as the Temple of Heaven) are all part of a very real tradition of living and thinking. They are not recently unearthed *foreign* artifacts to be exploited unknowingly and commercially by everyone who wants to get in one the 'historical act' (Figure 2). Formal exercises in the language and logic of architecture (e.g., Eisenman), very necessary as calisthenics, supported rather than replaced these 'higher' requirements. They gave you a way of expressing or reflecting the contemporary scene—as well as providing an intellectual skeleton and language—but were never an end in themselves. I must confess that as a traditionalist, I found both the syntactical jargon and too much of the so-called 'post-modern' talk gawkily stilted, almost atavistic, like the barbarians in Rome. It is a kind of

[3] Jaquelin Robertson, *et al*, 'Five on Five,' *Architectural Forum*, volume 138, number 4 (May, 1973)



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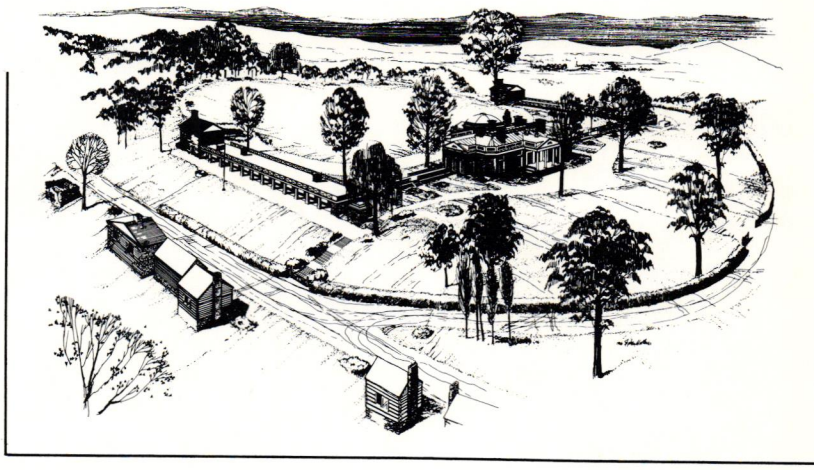
1a The growth of Savannah from 1733 to 1856

1b Plan of Bath, c 1810

2 Monticello, Thomas Jefferson, architect



pushy *nouveau-riche* discovery of the past in which most of the self-conscious posturing and 'referencing' only further reveals a recent and basic provincialism. For crying out loud! One cannot acquire 'history' and 'tradition' in the way one acquires a new accent or a stylish trinket any more than one can practice environmental conservation by keeping tropical fish or become a statesman by going to conferences. (And giving it the old, heavy academic dressing only makes things worse: 'multivalent paradigm' sounds like public relations jargon from the Pentagon. Paul Goldberger gets this accurately: 'Eclecticism tends to be uncomfortable in intellectual garb.') In terms of architecture, this recent stampede to grab indiscriminantly from the cake-cart of the past has resulted in some truly funny and preposterously inappropriate metaphors. There is as yet little sign of graceful language. No—this was *not* what I meant about the 'program of tradition and place.' For 'tradition' (heavy word!) just can't be picked up.[4]

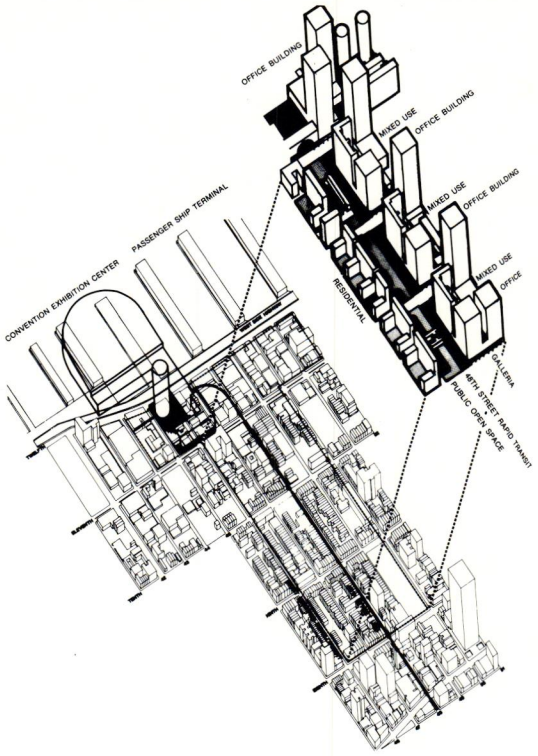
Until I went to architecture school, I had never really tried to distinguish between traditional and 'modern' architecture other than to recognize flat roofs and glass blocks as another 'style' which, with few exceptions (Wright in Oak Park, the Asplund Crematoriums, all of Aalto), seemed out of place in most of the places where one saw it. Upon entering practice, I was at a loss to answer the inevitable cocktail question: 'Are you a *Modern* architect?' 'Well . . . yes and no.' In retrospect, my confusion is now at least appreciated. I suspect that the term 'post-modern' is little more than the historian's dressed-up and belated recognition that Modern architecture *was* a rather violent interruption and that now 'the war is over.' The complex variety of life, of continuity and ever-changing prospect that was suspended during the abortive hostilities re-emerged almost like a new vision of Paradise (some renderings of which will assuredly have to be phantasmagorical). There will be much excited chatter by those who have been recently demobilized and who are not standing on the edge of the forest, overawed by the 'vision' on the plains of the prewar themes. And, quite naturally, a minor background chorus of 'Re-enlistment Blues' will be sung by those who are beginning already to miss the martial life.

But what had this 'war' really accomplished? Yes, you guessed it: the destruction of civilized places, our cities. The First War of Modern Architecture (into whose post-period we have thankfully arrived) quite simply destroyed a great deal of the best parts of many of the places in which we live. We are just now beginning to understand this, to assess the damage and to think about how to start rebuilding. Fortunately, we have 'lost with these losses' a good bit of our hate, our messianic belief in polemics and in the 'future-by-design' and have become quieter, more limited, and better 'connected' to one another. We are also, as in most postwar periods, more predisposed to learn about the future, in part at least, 'from the lessons of the past.' This attitude is healthy and can carry us forward for some real period of time, provided we do not become too cute or too intolerant or too polemical again. It can also produce some less radical, less destructive, less childish and less inflexible architecture as long as we are humanistically selective and move cautiously, and provided that we understand that the role of buildings to the city is one of the parts to the whole. It is this larger *plural environment* that gives grace and meaning to our collective lives.

But I do believe that professional attitudes *have* changed rather abruptly in the past few years; there *is* a growing and perceptive audience concerned with the architecture of cities; with old and new. This concern can be seen in the questions submitted to me by the editors:

Q: *Is urban design becoming (partly as a result of your efforts) a profession that is separate from architecture, and are we headed for a time when the 'architect' designs only the buildings, while* another *professional—perhaps calling himself an 'urban designer'—develops the larger physical framework into which the building is to be placed?*

[4] From the beginning Philip Johnson has had it both ways, primarily because he has an enormously cultivated European / American sensibility. His Glass House was the first 'modern' building that I feel at home with; a family relative of Stratford, I told him once that it was the only *traditional modern* estate. He was like the Virginians of the 18th Century Enlightenment who were children of Europe creating a new / old culture in a New World: liberal, republican, aristocratic, inquisitive, learned, arrogant, deeply sensitive.



3 Proposal for 48th Street Corridor, Office of Midtown Planning and Development, New York City

A: Yes and no. There will, I suspect, be professionals trained as designers who don't even design buildings beyond the purely schematic stage and who are almost solely preoccupied with establishing the rules and the precedents for the larger setting and with getting things built (Figure 3). (This will be particularly true of 'urban designers' working within government.) On the other hand, most architects act (or should act) as urban designers from the very beginning of their projects. The design requirements of an area are essential preliminary data, as inextricably connected to the task at hand as are planning statistics, the budget, or the program, and this has *always* been true. I personally don't believe that an urban designer does anything that could or should not be done by the architect. Quite simply, *urban design is architecture*—at its proper and most telling scale. I can't believe that one can be a really good urban designer without being a good architect, although the converse is unfortunately not true often enough (certainly Safdie's recent work in Jerusalem, a quantum step 'beyond Habitat,' shows what a first-class talent can do given a serious problem in an urban setting to which he is deeply committed and in which he is culturally 'pickled.' At least he is working on the right canvas—the real example of 'tradition.' The same is true, to a lesser extent, of Stirling's recent work in Germany).

Q: *You have defined urban design as the coming together of business, government, development, planning and design. Given the individualism with which architects have traditionally tended to approach their craft, to what extent must this be replaced by some communal or corporate spirit in order to be part of a successful urban design process?*

A: The individualism can, and indeed must, be replaced by a more communal spirit. More pointedly it must be accompanied by a better understanding of the world around one—an essential notion of the Enlightenment. The civilized man participates in *all* these worlds to some extent; because he is an architect does not relieve him of that republican responsibility. (You'll note when I talk about city design I always use the plural, not royal, 'we.' This is not undue modesty, only the recognition that no one person gets it done at this scale.)

Q: *You have been termed a 'gamesman' in a recent article. Will the 'post-modern' architect have to become more of a 'team player,' more of a 'facilitator,' more of a 'compromiser?'*

A: Probably. The percentage of architects who assume or seek these kinds of roles should be greater than it has been in the recent past, but out of necessity, however, as much as out of choice (i.e., that's where the work may be). Historically, there have been Nashes (facilitators), and Soanes (individualists). Soane was unquestionably the finer architect, but Nash was of much greater significance to a much larger public. His canvas was greater and thus his beneficial influence affected a greater number of people. In the end he teaches us 'more about more.' More architects, I believe, will find professional satisfaction in trying to effect change at some larger scale. I do not mean that thinking about and making buildings like Swiss watches won't be important—just not *the* only important thing intellectually. (Social priorities do change after all, as do 'architectural heroes.' Some of mine have been architects, others not: Nash, the Woods, Sixtus, Shah Abbas, Jefferson, Haussman, Robert Moses, Dick Lee, Ed Logue, Ed Bacon, Kahn—all men who either got things done in a big way and didn't fret

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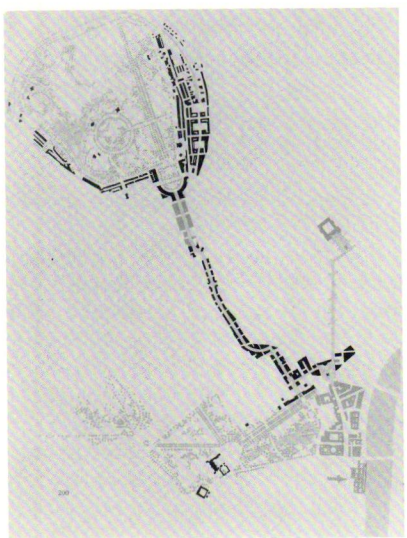
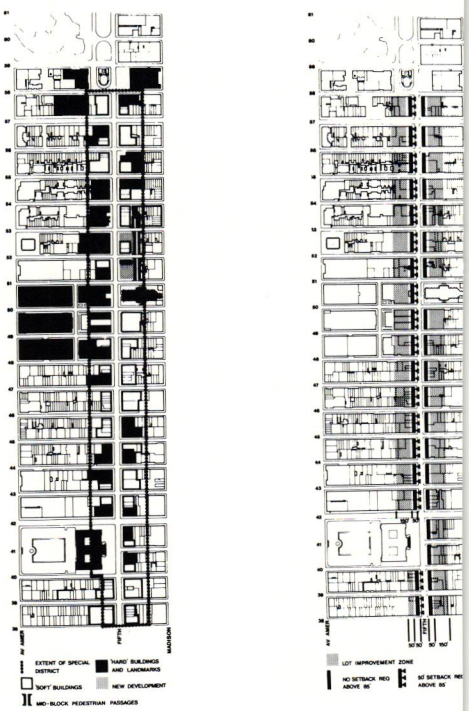
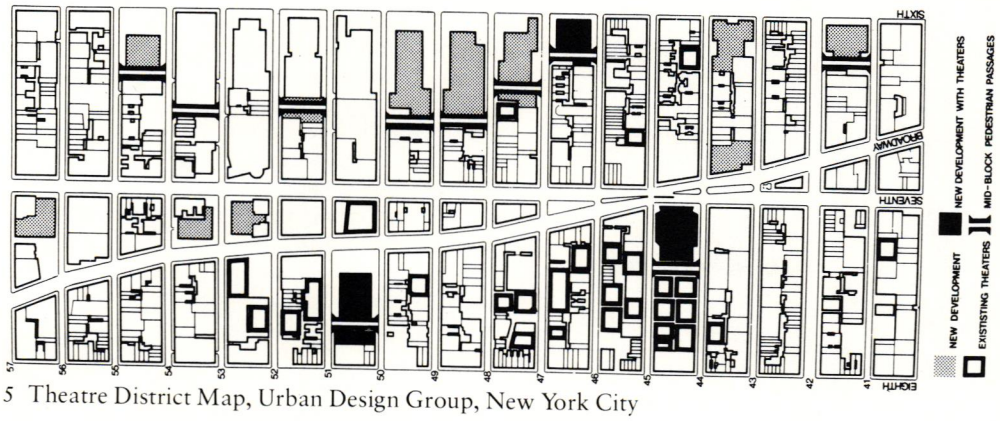
Regent's Park and Regent Street Corridor



4b
Fifth Avenue Special District Map, Urban Design Group, New York City





5 Theatre District Map, Urban Design Group, New York City

because all the details weren't quite right, or who, in getting the details right didn't confuse this with the larger issues—the city (Figures 4a,b). They changed their cities for the better.) Our work in the city was always a 'team effort.'

Q: *Where will the impetus for urban design occur—out of the public sector (as seemed to be the case in the late sixties) or more out of the private sector, through greater cooperation and joint venture between architects and developers?*

A: I suspect in both areas though I doubt, Portman to the contrary (he is both an exception and exceptional), that there will be many successful architect / developers. Public sector activity depends very much on whether we believe that a better physical environment can be successfully analyzed and publically directed from above. (And there are, given the example of the United Kingdom, still some real and valid doubts here. How much direction works? And what kind of people healthily become 'directors?') In our society a major area of choice still lies with corporate America and with its lending institutions. If these sectors can be shown (or better still can be induced to *learn on their own by doing*) that there are serious and potentially beneficial (or dangerous) implications for all as a result of *their* decisions, then these decisions *may* be weighed more carefully. The government's job is to point up and sharpen the issues and to make the 'better' decisions easier and more attractive.

Q: *To what extent were the ideas that emerged out of the urban design offices in New York City a product of a unique local political climate coupled with a healthy national economy? To what extent can these ideas be adapted to, or serve as models for dealing with other cities under differing social, political and economic climates?*

A: Some of our specific proposals (e.g., the Theater District, Fifth Avenue) (Figure 5) did grow out of a unique situation and a (reasonably) healthy economy. The general notions, however, of a) *providing incentives for people to do positive things* rather than *restricting* them from doing negative ones, and b) trying to *identify strengths* within a given system or situation, and then using the government's powers as *leverage to extract public benefit* out of the private development process have broad applicability elsewhere. Identifying strengths and trying to get people to do 'good' things as well as conceiving of political power as a lever / partner (*vs.* resorting only to constraint and / or massive subsidy) is completely consistent with both the methods, means, and goals of our very peculiar and 'hot house' free-enterprise (but controlled) economy. I am more tentative, however, about the applicability of these methods to other cultures.

Other aspects of our work (e.g., Movement in Midtown) were more traditionally plannerly, except that again the emphasis was on encouraging what was 'nice' and practical (trees and walking) and on the 'natural' sorting out of less attractive congestion (reducing road space at the core and increasing it on the periphery). They were also based on the ecologically sound notion of building in a 'budget of flexibility,' a *variety of options*, rather than opting for a single-purpose solution (be that mass transit, foot, taxi, car, bus, what have you). Instead of indulging in policies based on polemics—mass transit in this case—we were attempting to find self-rationing devices and to provide for more modes rather than fewer.

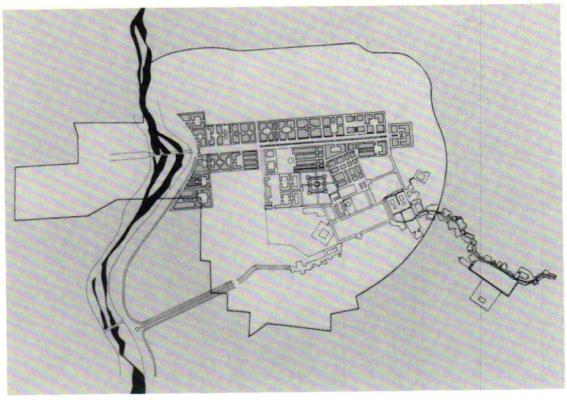
Our efforts to create a small-scale pedestrian network—vest pocket and thru-block parks (Figure 6), galleries and sunken subway plazas—out of the ongoing development process was, I believe, a realistic, incremental approach to Manhattan's need for more open space which realistically couldn't be accomplished by buying up a lot of real estate and creating big parks. I would recommend this kind of strategy to others. It is direct and not costly, an instance in which knowing what you want and negotiating for it at the right time pays off. The developer may fret, but generally he as well as we benefit over the long run.

Q: *It is said that a new pragmatism has enveloped the planning and design professions. Incrementalism, the idea of gradual, controlled change emerging out of concern for cultural continuity and the existing social order, might be interpreted as one sign of such a pragmatism. Does incrementalism allow for the 'dreamers,' the idealists, with whom architects as a group have tended to identify themselves? Is a new age of pragmatism, in part as a reaction to the often misplaced 'utopianism' of the Modern Movement, upon us?*

A. The best architects are, to some extent, dreamers and idealists. This has always been true. They will also always posit utopias, symbolic futures, albeit more distant and unattainable, in some periods than in others. For the present, I believe we have come back from a kind of Children's Crusade and are again trying to address the pressing issues in a more mature, tolerant, and less ambitious way. (We will also probably discover, as is the case after all 'wars,' that really positive things came out of the holocaust of the Modern Movement, that obviously some great strides *were* made. War *always* has positive fall-out, but it takes time to readapt the ideas and techniques of 'war' to the requirements of 'peace.' We are now faced with that task.)

6 Paley Park, New York City





7a
Isfahan: Sha Abbas Plan—A new national center for 16th century Persia conceived on a grand scale and planned so as to connect to the existing town at its most crucial point, the entrace to the Bazaar. The great gardened boulevard, the Maiden-I-Shah, and the King's Mosque brought together government, commerce, and religion and imposed a new scale and order which both changed and reinforced the old city.

It is reassuring to me that interest in *Archigram* and the like has all but subsided. These were indeed exciting 'comic strips'—entertaining and often educational; they were at the same time quite wasting on a whole generation, and they didn't take us anywhere. (In this sense, I believe Beaubourg as an isolated, designed 'thing' represents the end of a line of thinking, not a new beginning. It is quite literally a kind of charming dinosaur which will be loved as a public jungle-gym, much like the Eiffel Tower, a great monument to both the *Salles des Machines* and *Flash Gordon*. And in this sense it is 'good' urban design. My fear, however, is that it is all the exposed oil refinery stuff which will stay in the architect's mind. That is, the best points may be missed by those who will replicate it, and the surface sex exploited.)

I believe that a building almost always has meaning only as part either of some larger community of buildings or of some predominant natural setting, and almost never as an isolated art object—no matter how handsome. For architecture is as much a communal and pragmatic act as it is an individual and aesthetic one; it must answer to the constraints of use and literal references and is therefore always active within some broader socio / cultural context. For this reason I feel it must be freed from being seen or evaluated only as an isolated aesthetic work by what I would call 'gallery standards' (i.e., essentially as a piece of disembodied and unused sculpture).

This is not to say that architects can, or will, or indeed ever did abandon architectural design as a passionate art or that architectural constructs do not have a necessary, formal life of their own. Unlike music, painting, and sculpture, architecture acts on and is acted upon by other requirements which are as crucial to its evaluation as to its conception. People *use* not just admire buildings, and therefore buildings are committed in a very fundamental way beyond their own inner order to their surroundings. Charles Moore refers perceptively to architecture as 'the order that we feel in our bodies.' I would add to this that it is an order of our bodies and our heads together. There is no Cartesian split. Collectively, buildings are 'social' objects committed to and dependent on one another. The history of architecture is, or should be, the history of buildings in these larger collective and natural contexts and of our perception of them as such. These settings give 'the meaning.' To paraphrase Foster, architecture must 'only connect' (Figures 7 a,b). (Kahn understood this best at the end when he *made a street* with two buildings [Salk Institute for Biological Studies, La Jolla, California-Editor]. Almost everything worthwhile about the city old and new is caught in and behind and *between* those two simple parallel buildings—the single most devastating response to Le Corbusier's vision 'from the terrace' into the vast unpeopled spaces of the *Plan Voisin*.)

For this reason, *I believe that city building and building within cities is the most crucial architectural act. Always a semi-public activity, the ultimate social art.* (And, contrary to Van Eyck, designing a city is *not* like designing a chair!) In light of these rather 'heavy' sentiments, I have evolved a few basic tenets about practising the art / discipline of architecture—many of which I might add, run counter to a good deal of recent doctrine. They are in the form of directions to myself. . . .

Build within not against the existing cultural and natural context unless there is a profoundly perceived reason for violating that setting. This means reinforcing the 'found orders' and systems more often than not, and observing the "social contract" that exists between most buildings in any architecturally satisfying community.

Articulate and enhance social ceremony and local tradition; abide by the manners of the place and the time.

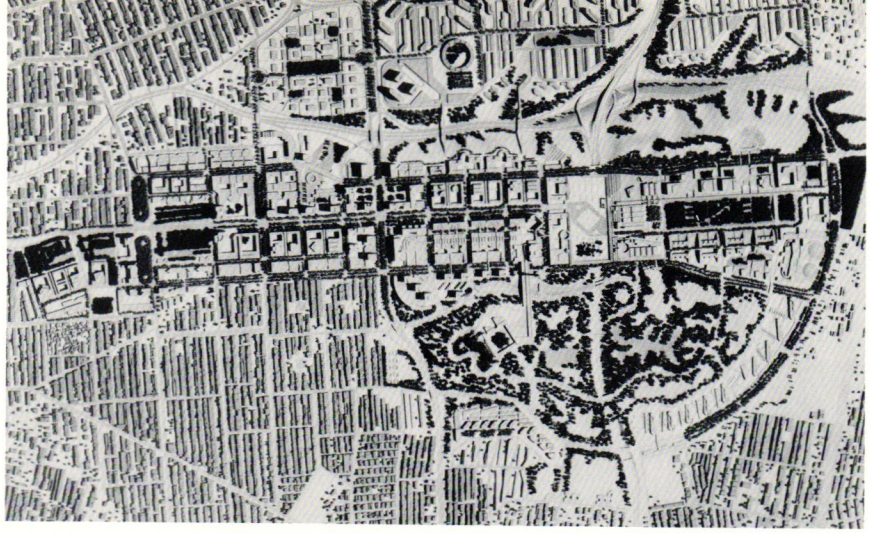
Use the implied architectural conventions; do not attempt to invent new vocabularies for their own sake. Languages take a long time to develop: you throw them away at great risk.

Suspect variety for its own sake and value constancy and modified repetition. (Mies was often right—awful pun—being good is much more important than being original. Stop trying to shock; restrain the compulsion always to 'do it differently.')

Don't think that your primary concern is always to 'reform' your client in some fundamental way or necessarily to extend his frame of reference, or to show him a 'new world.' Quite often he really doesn't need any of this, and the attempt to evangelize is only narrow self-gratification—excess baggage to the flight at hand. (All efforts in life are not healthily informed by the same sense of urgency and private passion. Indeed, the ability to 'overload' relatively modest programs is all too prevalent. There is much to be said for the unselfconscious, natural, and repetitious response rather than the frazzled original idiosyncratic one. It is neither possible nor desirable to have to 'think things through' each time. No one has the time. Thinking, following Whitehead, is not unlike a cavalry charge in war: it requires fresh troops, great courage and strength; it must come at precisely the right moment and it is always undertaken at great risk and cost. By analogy, high civilizations are precisely those which maximize the number of tasks performed by rote, High Design being no exception. Good architecture is generally that in which the fewest number of variables or elements have 'originality' or newness. That is, it is the proper balancing, sorting and reusing of known elements and techniques which must often produce buildings of merit and long life.)

Mediate between appropriate monumentality and necessary human scale without taking polemical sides. Both are necessary. Study history: love it *critically* and appreciate its contextual implications. But try to understand what you're copying not just what it looks like. You can't escape the past and its traditions and its dynamics any more than you can escape tomorrow. (And in this sense cribbing from history is like stealing from yourself. It can't hurt you!)

Use historical models as building blocks. You are part of a continuum, and your major tasks as a thinker-doer are to sort information about it (i.e., *past tracking*), to distinguish patterns, and to unscramble those new orders



7b
Tehran: Shahestan Pahlavi—At a comparable scale, Iran's new national center, to be built in the middle of a city of 5 million, will similarly mix institutional, governmental, commercial, residential and recreational functions around a great linear garden system, creating a new order which 'connects' at its edges to the surrounding city system. It also reinforces the great north/south axis which runs from the desert to the mountains. A national Main Street.

which better describe the surrounding reality (using Bateson's analogy, you must distinguish 'what information has to go onto what map').

Recognize, understand, respect and *use* the real constraints of money, time, local building and development practices, and prevailing habit. These are all *positive* values and should be recognized as such.

Try to wrest from the possible and the limited some extra concessions of grace rather than to win a sweeping victory; extract from the relentless pressure of diminishing resources and waning manners some limited enhancement. This is basically what the artist / architect is hired to do—not to transform society. (Transcending the realities of the constraints must always be considered *a bonus*. You don't get it every time around—but only as a reward for special efforts, and as a dispensation 'from the Gods.')

Understand that most good architecture is achieved through compromise and mediation, almost never through the exercise of artistic license. Architecture is made of incremental steps—very rarely, or healthily, of great leaps forward.

Try to get over the idea that architects are 'special' people who can afford to operate outside of a given and accepted way of doing things. Appreciate that all of us are laymen before the world. Architects, when confronted with the complexity of the world, are not *always* better designers than some laymen who have design ideas. (Quite often architects confuse technical familiarity and habit with design proficiency when comparing their ideas to those of laymen: one has to suspect the image of the architect / hero *a la* Richard Strauss as an individual set against the outside world—lonely, embattled, austere. This is not only misleading as a model, but alas, ludicrous.)

Eschew utopias or idealized futures; espouse and value confronting the present.

Recognize that almost every decision has some design implication and thus to influence those decisions one must try to understand *other than the designer's world*.

Don't be ashamed of wanting to make money or to receive honour, or be disappointed that design won't 'save the world.' It won't.

Don't be made nervous by or become over-reactive to fashion. It's merely normal 'surface change.' And don't confuse fashion with much slower incremental change. (Continual over-response to surface stimuli is not necessary or healthy—and can produce trauma. Witness most contemporary architecture.)

On the other hand, accept 'style' and 'fashion' and 'taste' as a means of giving architectural ideas a kind of recognizable, contemporary reality, so long as that style or fashion or taste is appropriate to the project at hand. In this sense don't be offended by being seen as a 'tastemaker.' There is nothing pejorative in the word.

Understand that there is a great (and sobering) gulf between the two-dimensional and analytic world of representation and statistics and the three-dimensional one of use-and-perception over time. Coloured land-use maps, population projections, as well as elegant axonometric drawings are mistakenly, and all too easily, substituted in the architect's mind for the experiences and recognitions of working, playing, walking, eating, or merely watching within the built and finite world. The strengthening and extending of perception within the real, not the representational, world is the point of the thing.

In the same vein, remember that although the architectural and planning practices may well be processes which in themselves often undermine and always alter their final product, they can never be a surrogate for that product as some would wish. The 'process' is *not* the product, and the ultimate client is, in time, indeed quite ignorant of the designer's process or intentions. The intended public lives with the results—a physical world in which it has neither a legitimate need nor interest in authorship, only a hope of appreciation in use, and that exhilaration of perception, sometimes called 'joy.' Your client is not yourself.

Build your understanding of architecture from buildings to cities and back again. Once experienced, this perception will change what and how you design and think.

Don't be confused or misled by architectural awards. Buildings should not, indeed cannot, be evaluated (or given prizes) for five or ten years. *The opening is only a promise*. Nothing more. Try to learn from what you do and how it is *used* and *valued*, not by whether it provides immediate fuel for your ego. At the same time have confidence and believe in what you do—even if it is not headline stuff. Anything that you really understand and do well can be put to positive use, but knowing what to throw away (Hemingway's 'shit-detector') is the toughest discipline.

Finally, try to acquire grace, a knowledge of the world, and a sense of intellectual balance and human perspective as a person who just happens to practice architecture. What you *are* as a person can be important to what you *do* as an architect, even though in strict analytic terms, you can't 'prove' this nor can it make you a 'good designer.' This basic premise, about grace and knowledge in men, lays behind the humanist ideal and is, I suspect, still fundamental to a healthy architecture today.

Don't be impatient. Architecture comes slowly.

1 The Southwest Freeway, Houston: juxtapositions of relative land use contrast high-intensity development (right) with portable buildings (left)



Aspects of a New Urban Vernacular

Peter C Papademetriou

Peter Papademitriou's article is an investigation of appropriate imagery and strategy for urban design. As an alternative to the popular images of European town centers, Papademitriou focuses on the typical, or perhaps the ultimate, American city—Houston, Texas. Papademitriou's approach reflects a wider concern with recognizing the lessons and beauty to be found in vulgar and vernacular sources. There is here a fascination with traditions which are typically deemed outside the realm of architecture proper, a kind of joy and righteousness in proclaiming the value in these once (and to many, still) degraded traditions in the American scene.

But beyond the playful and striking imagery is a more profound, anti-Utopian proposition for architecture: that one should start with, or adhere to, that which 'is' rather than that which 'should be'—that one can more assuredly guarantee success or quality by observing and learning from building design which has already *met with popular approval—as testified by its cheer ubiquity and longevity.*

While one may applaud the proposed expansion of the architect's visual resources to virtually all of his culture's products, this additional visual stimuli seems to require some set of standards or critical framework with which to judge it. Is the goal of architecture merely to emulate the lowest common denominator of popular taste? Are the actual environmental results of such emulation really tolerable as a basic design consequence? And is the acceptance and transplantation of the imagery and symbolism found there a proper architectural response to other, contextually unrelated projects?

* This article is the result of research undertaken with the support of a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency in Washington, D.C.

The idea of the city as a traditional urban form, as a solid fabric which could be understood in images such as those of Nolli's Eighteenth Century map of Rome, has come into question in the American Experience.[1] It was in America that the street and eventually its system of extension, the grid, became the generator for urban form. In the decades since the advent of the automobile, the spatial character of the American city has been transformed through the virtual dissolution of the solid city, most particularly in the new, evolving cities of the American Southwest which have developed since the Second World War.

In his book *Design of Cities*, architect and planner Edmund N Bacon states, 'Architecture is the articulation of space so as to produce in the participator a definite space experience in relation to previous and anticipated space experiences.'[2] From this definition, Bacon develops an attitude towards urban design based on observations of traditional cities with solid fabric. These urban design concepts are useless in describing the spatial form of the new cities of the Southwest. Here the spaces have generally developed in relation to vehicular movement and are scaled not to pedestrian but to freeway speeds; buildings no longer *make* urban space, but are reduced to objects *in* urban space. This physical manifestation results in a complex relationship between object and context which has developed outside of the culture and assumptions of 'Modern Architecture' itself. Frequently, the relationship between such factors as, for example, relative land value (and consequent land uses) and accessibility cause juxtapositions with completely unanticipated jumps in scale (Figure 1).

This sort of environmental complexity does not lend itself to the easy imagery which characterized the polemics of the Modern Movement. Urban theories which philosophically would seem to be exclusive to one another often present features which are merely complementary. Rather than proposing dialectical alternatives, the images of *both* the Ville Radieuse *and* Broadacre City become two virtual aspects of the same manifestation, mutually reinforcing rather than mutually excluding each other (Figures 2-5). This indicates that a fairly complex urban form has developed, one which does not readily lend itself to simple explanation or representation. With such juxtaposition or contradiction between philosophies more often the case than

[1] Nolli's map has been reproduced in part in Robert Venturi, Denise Scott-Brown and Stephen Izenour's *Learning From Las Vegas* (MIT Press, 1970, p 15). More recent fascinations with the solid city may best be seen in Robert Krier's *Stadtraum* (Stuttgart, 1975), and philosophical criticism of the American scene has emanated from these younger European sources.

[2] Edmund N Bacon, *Design of Cities* (Penguin, 1976)



2-3
Le Corbusier's Ville Radieuse (Buenos Aires) and Houston's Medical Center
4-5
Wright's Broadacre City and a view from Houston's Westheimer Road

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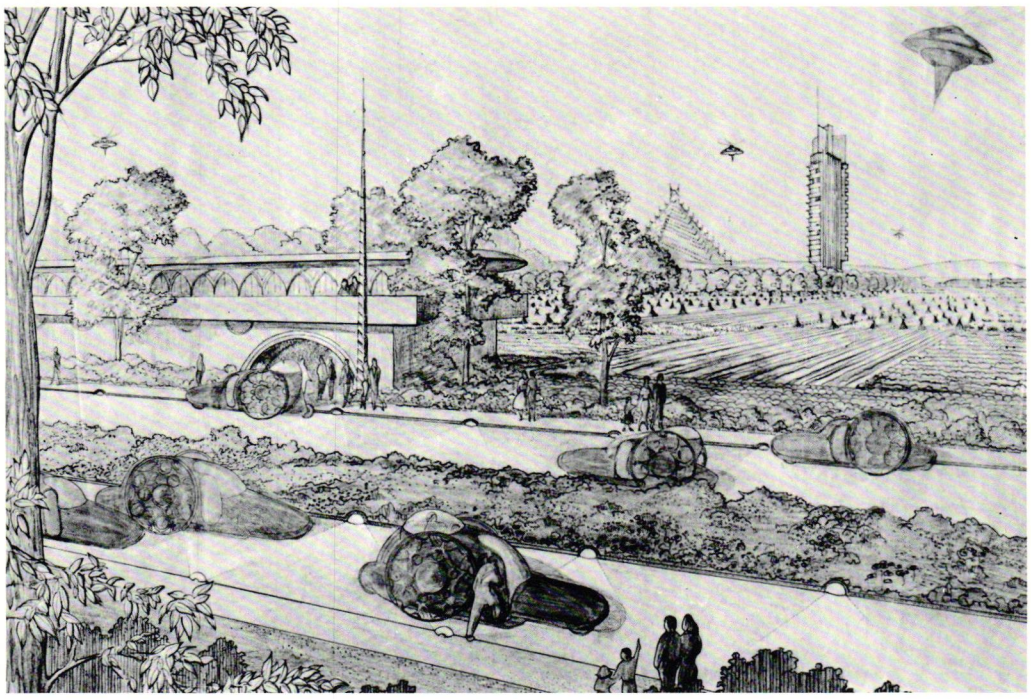



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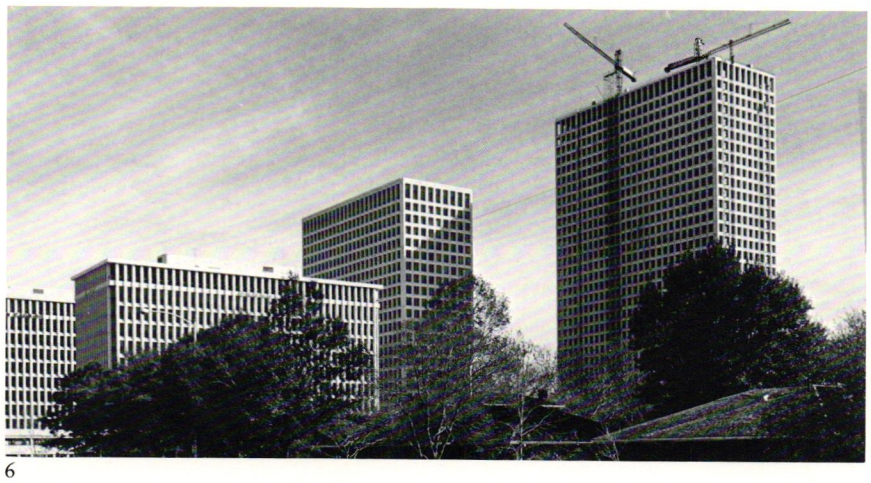
not, the need exists for a fresh view of urbanization that recognizes both the potential independent and interdependent functioning of environmental activity, an order operating beyond the level of mere surface appearances (Figure 6).

In the American Southwest, the new cities have grown at unprecedented rates, often doubling in population every ten years. Moreover, there has been little existing context to serve as precedent for new building, and generally few constraints on physical form. These cities have therefore evolved as fairly pure manifestations of contemporary forces at work in urban growth and change. A primary example among them is Houston, the fifth largest city in the United States and the only metropolitan area *without* land-use zoning. Houston thus presents an essential case study; constraints on its patterns are few, and the relationships between forces are often direct.

In its present state of development, the transportation and distribution network of Houston presents an almost perfect diagram of a dispersed city (Figure 7). With few geographic constraints, little pre-existing fabric, and the absence of zoning, each increment of its concentric growth has served to reinforce an emerging symmetrical pattern, one which at first glance seems to suggest a kind of uniform 'grayness' or lack of differentiation, with potentially equal distribution within the service network (Figure 8).

Hierarchy and differentiation do exist in this new city, however, although recognition of the diversity is perhaps inhibited because of those fewer points of physical intervention than in traditional, dense urban form. When the diagram is overlaid with demographic and sociological abstractions of other urban characteristics, a paradox develops between the notion of a form for uniform distribution and the actually differentiated socio-cultural urban milieu it supports (Figures 9,10). There are, as it were, desirable and undesirable precincts as there would be in traditional urban landscapes; the city is still good for some, not so good for others (Figures 11,12).

It is, therefore, often difficult to say what a building type is, in terms of the normal functional level of contrast found in denser traditional



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6 Images of Broadacre City and the Ville Radieuse exist simultaneously near Houston's Greenway Plaza

7-12

Houston's Northeast Side contains some of the city's most depressed neighborhoods

7 Freeways and arterials define Houston's general form

8 Density

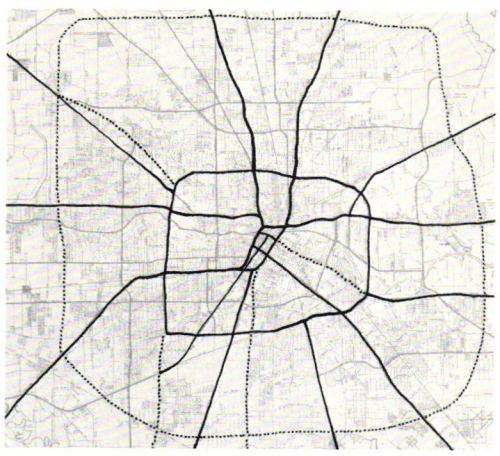
9 Median Value Owner Occupied Housing

10 Median School Years

11 Median Family Income

12 Air Pollution

7



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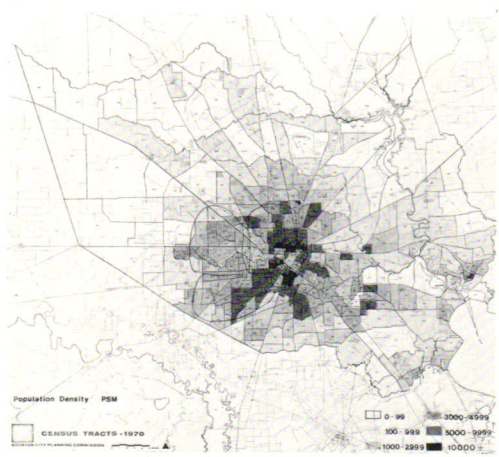

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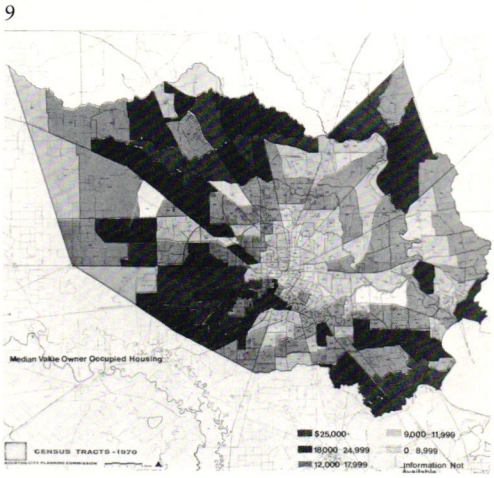

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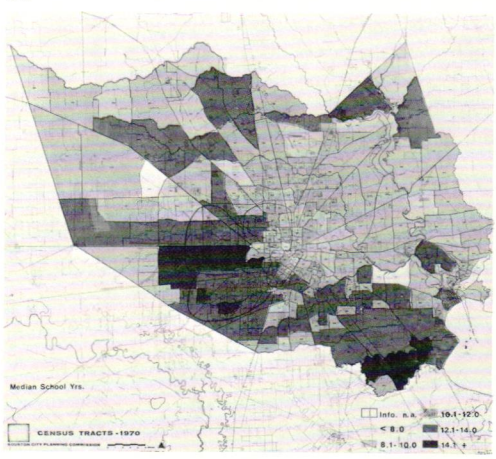

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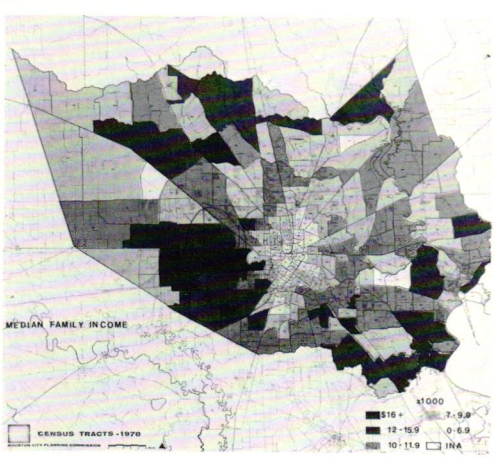

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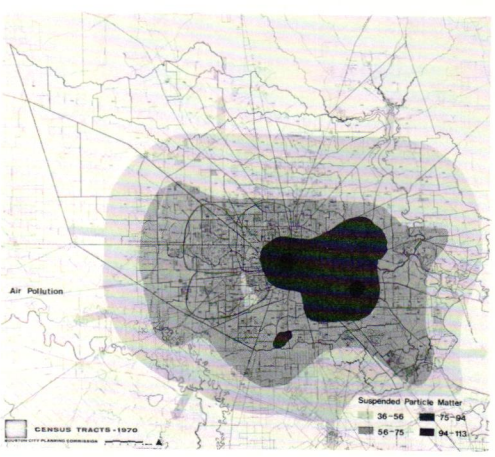


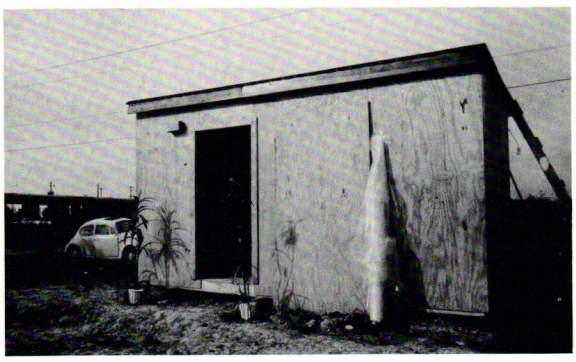
13-25
Examples illustrating the transformation of building typology under the classification 'office building'

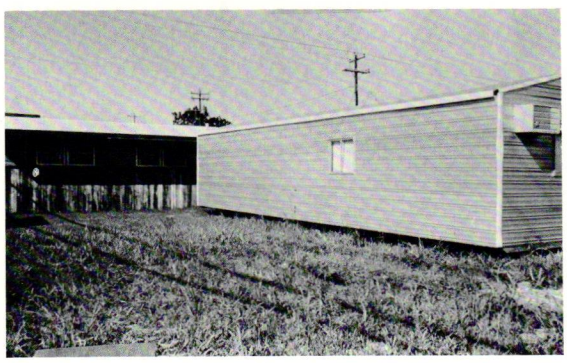
environments. Any attempt to classify a building-type on a purely functional basis is complicated by the *extreme range* of physical contexts in which the building-type may operate.

An examination of the building-type 'office building' serves as a case in point: it can produce no ready image since the type is no longer inherently related to particular aspects of urban form; a broad diversity is possible, fitting particular situations from the 'rustic hut' of Laugier (complete with entrance landscaping) to variations on the traditional central-business-district-high-rise-tower (Figures 13-25). This new American urban context appears to have an even finer grain of differentiation than the traditional city. On one hand 'grayness' is a result of a predictable uniform distribution across a simple progressive scale of densities. On the other hand, architectural form exhibits a broader range of formal variation due to a freer response to context. This is a finer degree of differentiation, true across a range of building types which causes elementary building classifications such as 'office building' to become diverse formal types.

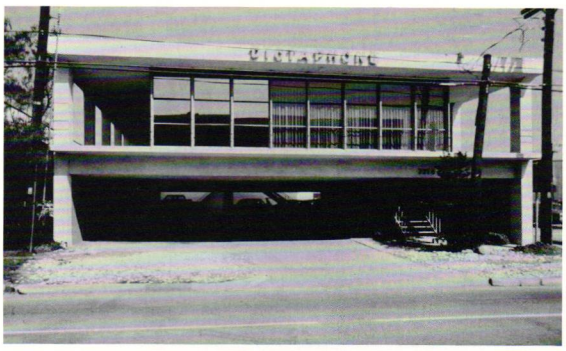
The eventual perception of this new context arises from the recognition that events which characterize the evolving urban scene operate at the level of small-scale cause and effect relationships. At times these causes and effects appear to be totally unrelated, and are part of a process resulting in a complex and dynamic visual context which conventional tools of planning or urban design cannot articulate and whose media are inadequate, if not inappropriate, to document.

Moreover, on the level of built form, rather than in terms of socio-cultural or market abstractions, the dispersal of buildings themselves serves to complicate further the clarity of this urban structure, since the new system allows for diverse transformations of architectural form and multiplies any development of a typological taxonomy. In traditional urban form, building types themselves tend to reinforce the context (particular building types in particular densities, articulated by land-use zoning), yet the

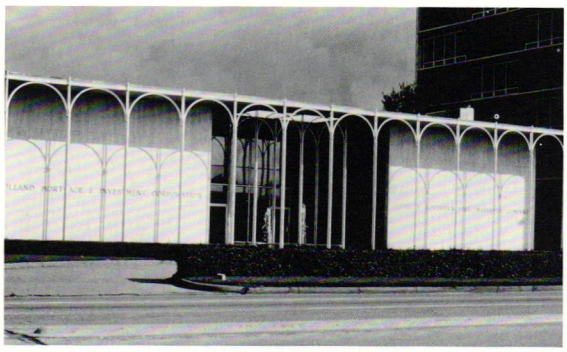


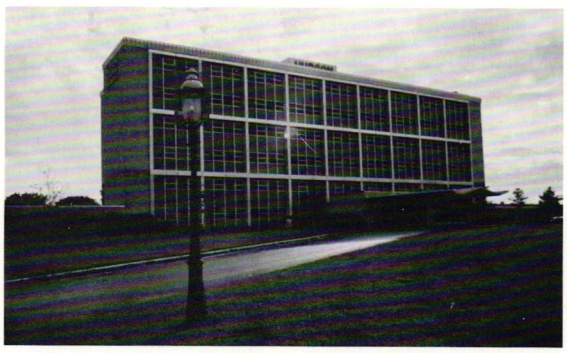


























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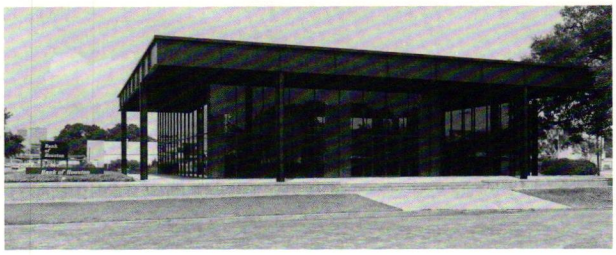

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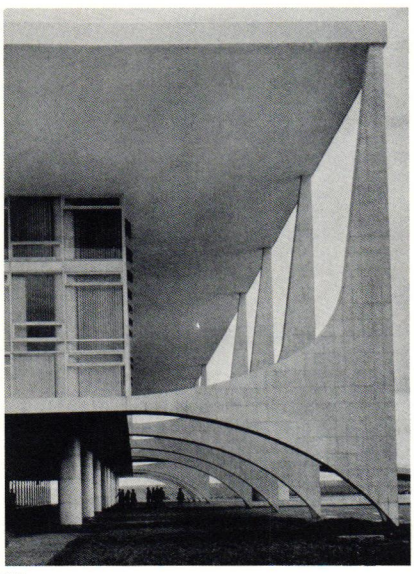

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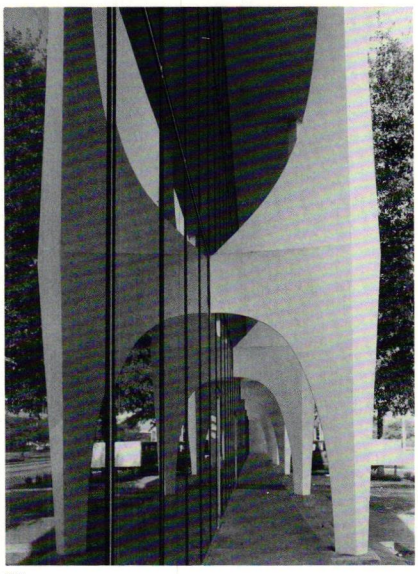

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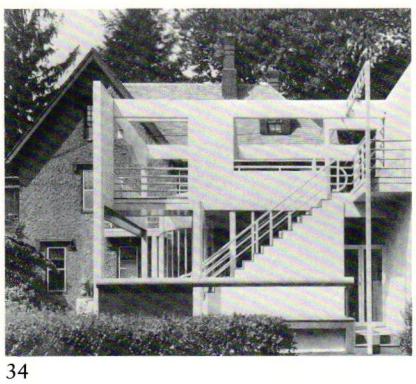

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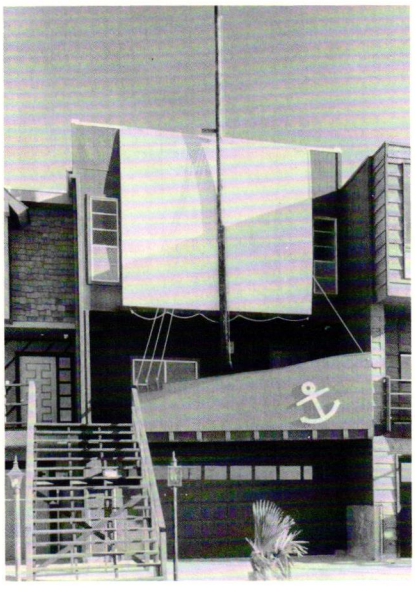
context of the new city promotes a diffusion of relationships between specific types and physical characteristics of the urban form itself.

In contrast to this process of transformation, some commentary should be directed to the general failure of the Modern Movement to develop a corresponding architectural / urban vocabulary. A comparison between some of the more noteworthy architectural landmarks of the last two decades and certain occasionally unrelated knock-offs in Houston may help us understand the dilemma (Figures 26-37). Because of their individuality, the 'originals' may be rather easily identified; this very individuality prevents their synthesis into more general categories of form. In fact, the *particular* original becomes the model, somewhat caricatured by reappearing either at a different scale, or in an inappropriately different use, such as an art museum becoming a drive-in bank (without even intending ironic commentary on 'treasures'). Given the apparent irrelevancy of such styling to inform a larger comprehension of building typology, this creates a conflict between 'expression' and a more general vernacular of form. It should not be especially shocking, therefore, to encounter variations and extremes of formal reference which clearly border on the bizarre (Figures 38,39).

In the absence of a truly comprehensive contemporary formal vocabulary, a fairly low-level adaptation of 'traditional' styling appears to have emerged. Further, when urban space is rarely defined by building form, it is difficult to create a 'sense of place' through the spatial relationships between buildings. Without land-use zoning or other tools of planning which extend down to the level of individual buildings, independent locational criteria frequently make a prediction of what will be where, to say nothing of what things may occur together, virtually impossible. Consequently, this banal use of style, where simple associations cross between differing buildings, fortuitously begins to bring an order from chaos, to re-establish architecture beyond the single building (Figures 40,41).

26 National Gallery, Berlin (Mies van der Rohe)
27 Bank of Houston (Wilson, Morris, Crane and Anderson)
28 Boston City Hall (Kallman & McKinnell)
29 Houston Independent School District (Neuhaus & Taylor)
30 Northwestern Insurance Co (Minoru Yamasaki)
31 Jefferson Chemical Co (Neuhaus & Taylor)



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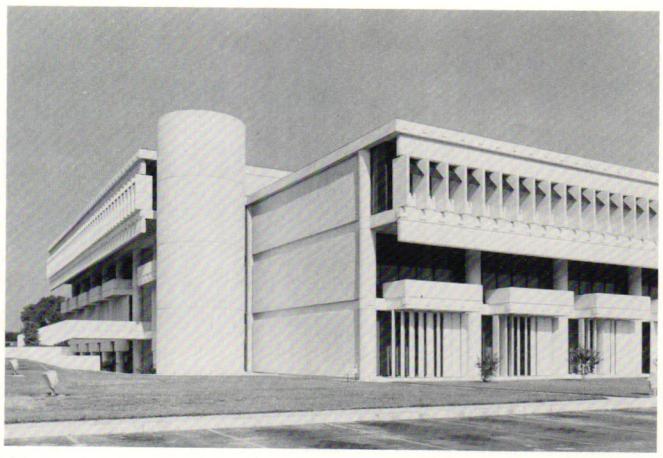

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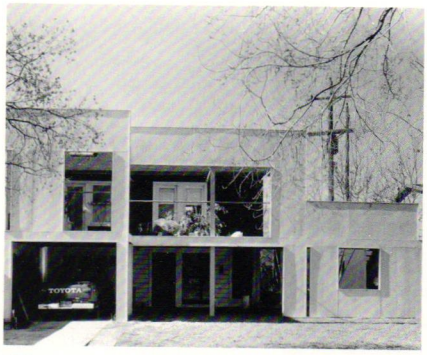
32 Presidential Palace, Brazilia
(Oscar Niemeyer)
33 3311 Richmond Ave, Houston
34 Benacerraf Addition
(Michael Graves)
35 Garage renovation, Houston
(George Englert)



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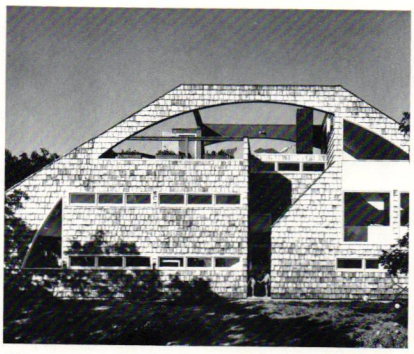

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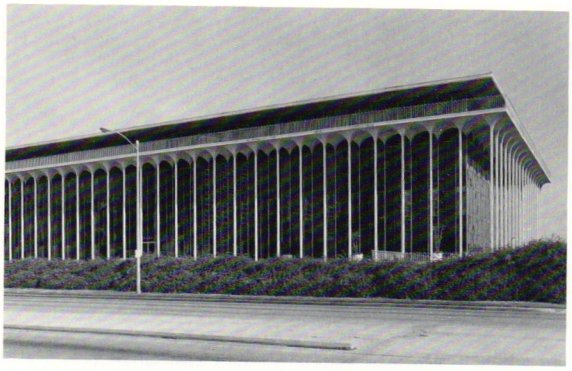

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36 Wiseman House
(Stern & Hagmann)
37 Block House
(Charles Tapley Associates)
38 Beachfront Townhouses, Galveston
39 Detail of townhouse in 'ship style'
40 Gas station and strip shopping rendered in recent Early American.
41 Chemical Bank and its small drive-in facility separated by streets but related by styling.



40 ▼ 41 ▲



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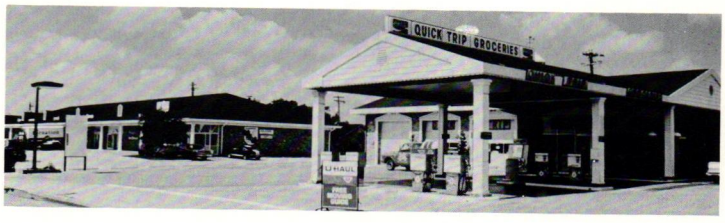



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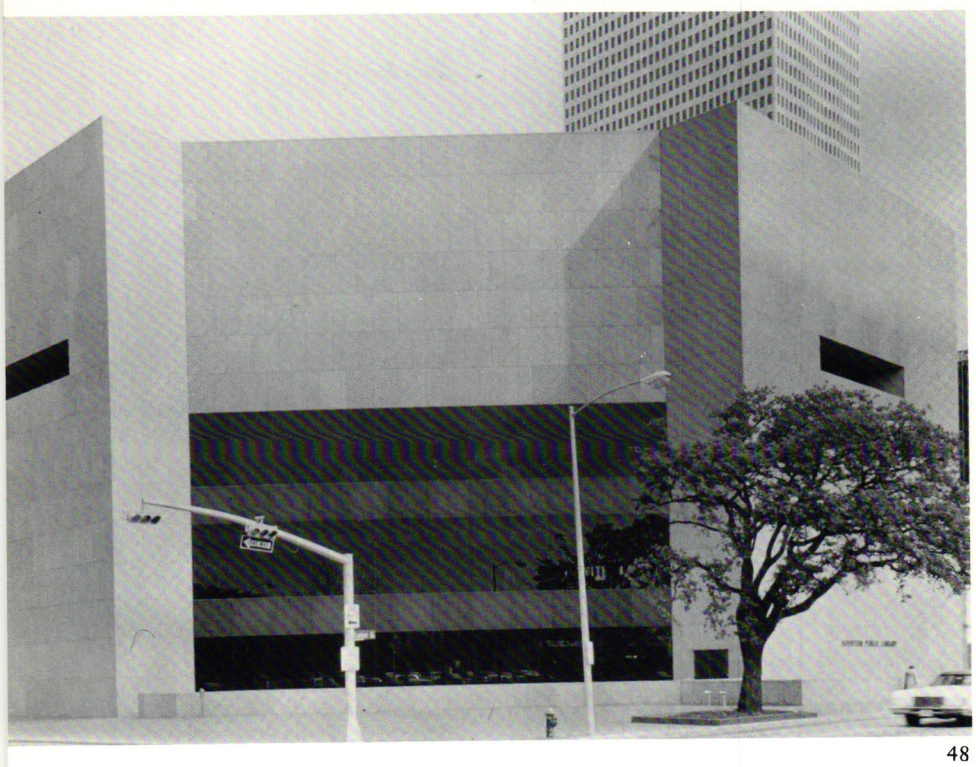

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What the new city provides, in a sense, is a building taxonomy based not only on function (access, density, land value, market, etc.) but also on 'styling.' The differentiation which occurs within a given building type represents an extended range true of all building types, such that it becomes possible for a given type to cross over, visually, into another type. For example, the classification 'office building' also contains a hybrid collection associated with images of *housing*. That is, one type may begin to 'look like' another type, such that 'office building' begins to look like 'motel,' 'row houses,' 'garden apartment,' 'town houses' and so forth (Figures 42-46).

When visual elements which generally 'belong' to one type of building are used rather cavalierly in another, this further confuses (or perhaps we might say potentially enriches), the function of architectural criticism. In particular, the explanatory role of architectural criticism has often centered around a clear definition of form generally embodied in a comparatively small selection of formal expressions, the so-called 'key monuments' used in art history. Clearly, aspects of a new urban vernacular include emerging types and combinations of types not part of this processs.

An essential failure of Modern Architecture has been its *abstraction*. While the basis of contemporary architectural form has generally been seen as the *program*—that characteristic which ostensibly separates it from architecture of previous eras—coupled with this is the adage that the external form should reflect the internal arrangement. Yet, often the forms recognizable as 'modern' are generally so abstract that they can be enlarged or reduced to any size, to operate at a variety of scales and contain diverse functions (Figures 47,48).

This abstraction has led, rather perversely, to a kind of universal archetype, the 'What Is It?' building (Figure 49). Although carefully composed and articulated, the building reveals its function by the discreetly placed, highly-reduced-in-scale symbol of a traditional barber pole. Where the

44



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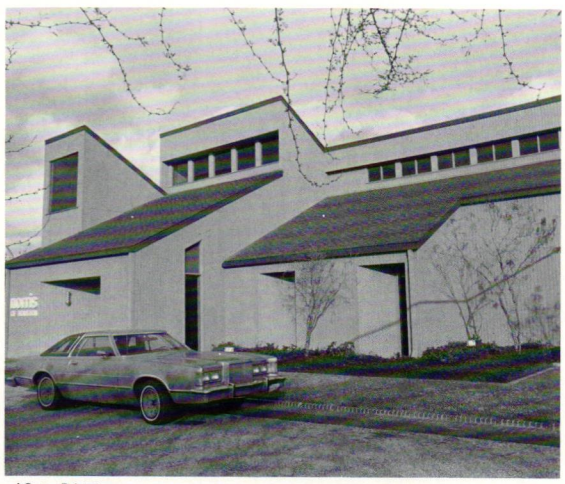
46



virtually identical building form was produced for another use, a heavy incrustation of symbols was laid on to render its meaning more clearly (Figures 50,51).

42-46
Further transformation of typology: 'office building' rendered along images of housing.
47 Rothko Chapel, Houston (Barnstone & Aubrey)
48 Houston Public Library, Main Branch (S I Morris Associates)

49-51
'What Is It?': the 1960's Shed Roof Architect-Designed Multi-Purpose Building, actually a barber shop and a Greek restaurant. The latter's form is obscured/elaborated by the layering-on of symbols.



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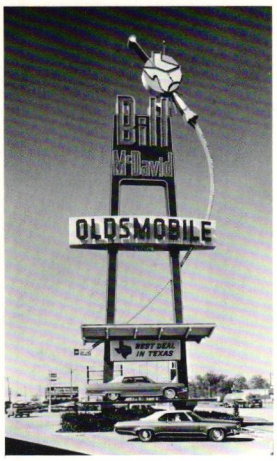


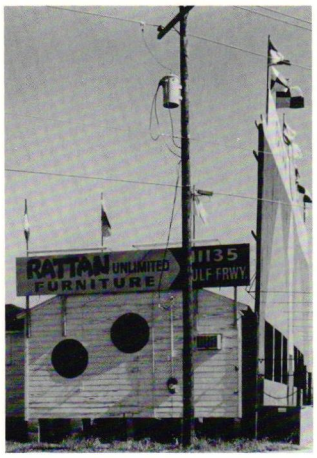
52▲ 58▼ 53▲ 59▼

A final series of buildings from Houston will illustrate the evolution of architectural form through the complex interweaving of elements which may prove to be more viable sources at an urban scale. This tendency for typology to cross over, and for symbolic elements to be used freely, may be seen in a further transformation related to contexts where communication is an essential element of expression.

Signage has reached new stages of elaborate development in cities organized for a consumer society. New technologies have made available The Sign, larger and more intense than its neighbors and continuouously programmed for ever-changing displays (Figure 52). More traditional, highly sculptured signs operate at a scale so huge as to be truly monumental (Figure 53).

Common variations on the pure sign are the building-as-sign, in which the major formal elements are actually closer to signage than to building techniques. These can be fairly elaborate 'fronts' made of quasi-architectural elements (Figures 54,55), tacked onto a simple shed, or they may be examples of Robert Venturi and Denise Scott-Brown's 'billding-board' technique, ranging from the fairly direct (Figures 56,57), to *trompe l'oeil* (Figures 58,59) to outrageous ironic / erotic (Figures 60,61).





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52 'The Sign,' Westheimer Road: with no message programmed, it replicates a moving stream of cars.

53 A monumental-sculpture sign, where real automobiles are mere decorative details in the overall composition.

54-61 'Building-as-sign' developing various degrees of false-fronts.

54▲ 55▲ 57 56







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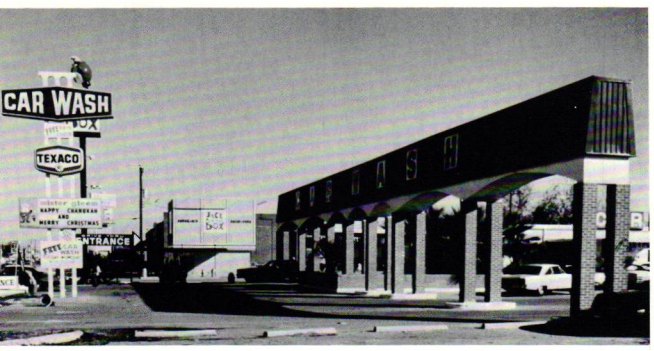

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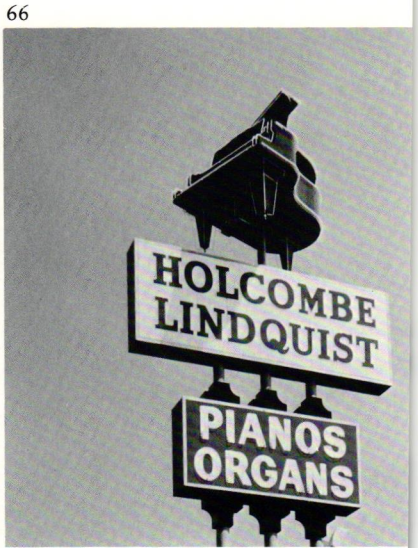

62,63
Sign-as-building' where the actual building is visually recessive and the sign is composed of architectural elements.

64,65
Half-sign/Half-building: an extended inflection directs the form to the adjacent freeway.

66
Signs are often more visually interesting than the buildings they support.

An inversion of these is the sign-as-building (Figures 62,63), in which the sign itself is actually made of architectonic motifs (piers, vaults, roof), while the real building being serviced is both expressively and literally incidental.

Another variation is the hybrid half-building / half-sign, in which architectural elements, while used as above, are extended as though a part of the building to provide more 'frontage' to be read from an adjacent freeway (Figures 64,65). Finally, it is often interesting to observe that the designs of signs themselves are frequently more visually interesting than the actual building they support (Figures 66).

These propositions deliberately end on a vulgar note, and hope to suggest through an examination of this complex process of transformation that a limited, exclusive and discriminatory viewpoint will further alienate architectural form from meaning in a general cultural sense.

Perhaps the evolution of a new urban vernacular, where collective issues of form narrow the gap between *Collage City* and *Learning from Las Vegas*, will also suggest a reintegration, through architecture, of our perception of the physical environment. In this way, we may fruitfully return to the very root of 'vulgar' itself: 'of or pertaining to the common people or general public . . . vernacular, also, written in or translated into the vernacular.'[3]

[3] *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary* (G&C Merriam Company, 1959)



64


Mission
Inn

Architectural Imagery, the Mission and California

David Gebhard

In his essay David Gebhard discusses the origins and development of the Mission Style as a source of popular imagery in California architecture. This attention to vernacular building traditions reflects a widespread interest in local and regional architecture, an interest implicitly opposed to the notion of an International Style, or a universal language of architecture. Further, it bespeaks a concern for architectural traditions which have not been acknowledged in the propagandistic histories of Modern Architecture—traditions which may have developed independently of mainstream Modernism, but represent in their own right vital architectural ideas and concerns.

Beyond its regional focus, David Gebhard's article represents a quiet polemic for the role of image in architecture. Imagery, understood to be that formal *component capable of evoking direct associations from the observer, is seen to be an integral part of architectural expression. This emphasis underscores a concern for a more communicative and symbol-laden architecture, designed in cognizance of the need for and the power of architecture to speak to its various audiences. Once accepted as a motivating force for design, however, one might question the relative position of this issue in a more general approach to architectural production, since its over-emphasis does present inherent problems of superficiality and foppishness. It is, in any case, a source of continued debate in the evolution of a Post-Modern architecture.*

California, and especially Southern California, has always occupied a peculiar niche within American architecture. Over the years a variety of suggestions have been made to account for these peculiarities—the state's remote geographic distance from the hub of American culture, the Northeast; its remarkable environment, which, with its year-round warm climate and lack of rain, makes it so radically different from the East and Midwest; the fact that it is to a large degree a man-transformed environment; and finally, its Mediterranean, as opposed to Northern European, historical background. To one degree or another each of these factors, and the interchanges between them, has contributed to the distinct qualities found within California's architecture.

Among California's many ironies is that although it often seems to convey a sense of non-history, it has, when it comes to its own past, been one of the most self-conscious regions of the country. One of the most delightful and flamboyant examples of this self-consciousness occurred at the turn of the century, when almost the whole of California became entranced with the image of the Mission. California's Mission Revival (c 1890-1915) was one of the state's first great exports to the rest of the country—followed closely by the bungalow, the Spanish Colonial Revival (Mediterranean) of the twenties, the Bay Area woodsey house of the thirties and forties, the popular California Ranch house of the fifties, the auto-oriented commercial strip, and the drive-in shopping center.

In each of these episodes certain dominant exchanges have taken place, the most significant of which have been: the intense play between the everyday builder's vernacular and the more pretentious world of professional ('serious') architecture; the continual give and take between verbal and visual images; and finally, the interplay between that which is highly rational (i.e. utilitarian) and that which is symbolic.

California's Mission Revival provides a beautiful case of how complex these interchanges could be. At its inception, this revival of imagery was literary, and only later was it expressed in visual forms.[1] The first non-Hispanic response to the Missions occurred in the 1870s. The interest in them was as romantic and exotic ruins of a culture whose roots, in part, lay outside of the

1 San Carlos Mission, Henry Sandham, 1882-83, from Helen Hunt Jackson's *Glimpses of California and the Mission*, 1907



1

Northern European experience. The stone or adobe church complexes were picturesque objects to be contemplated not as actual objects, but through the written word, a pictorial depiction on canvas, through the medium of wood or steel engraving, or through a photograph. Helen Hunt Jackson accompanied her splendid descriptive Victorian prose (in *Glimpses of California and the Missions*, 1883 and later) with equally romantic engravings by the artist Henry Sandham (Figure 1). Her writings, especially her highly popular *Ramona* (1884), more than any other single phenomenon turned California's attention to the Missions and Hispanic secular adobe architecture.[2]

She was followed by two exuberant and passionate converts to the myth and fact of Hispanic California—Charles Lummis and George Wharton James.[3] Both of these literary figures saw the Missions in a far different light than did Helen Hunt Jackson. For them, a ruin, no matter how romantic it might be, was an object addressed to a small and far too limited audience. If California was to honor its past, and in the process be distinct from the rest of the United States, the pre-Anglo Hispanic must emerge as a popular image. And while the written word was important to convey this image, the ideal of a distinct and different Hispanic California could come about only through visual images which would, on a day to day basis, continually remind the inhabitants of that tradition. Two approaches could make this possible: first, the Mission buildings themselves needed to be restored so that they could be read more easily by a popular audience; second, the Mission image should be developed to form the basis of a distinct, regional style.

The question of breadth of audience was of major concern to Lummis and James. If California was to seize upon the image of the Mission, the new buildings must not only be romantic and regional, but they must also be something which was practical, and they should function as a commodity which would openly 'sell' California to tourists and potential immigrants. It was therefore quite natural that the

2 Santa Fe Railroad Station, San Juan Capistrano, B F Levet, 1894.
3 Santa Fe Railroad Station, San Bernadino Architectural Bureau of the Santa Fe Railroad, 1918
4 Santa Fe Railroad Station, Berkeley, circa 1912
4 California Building, World Columbian Exposition, Chicago, A Page Brown, 1892-93
6 Recreation Shelter, Loring Park, Minneapolis, 1906

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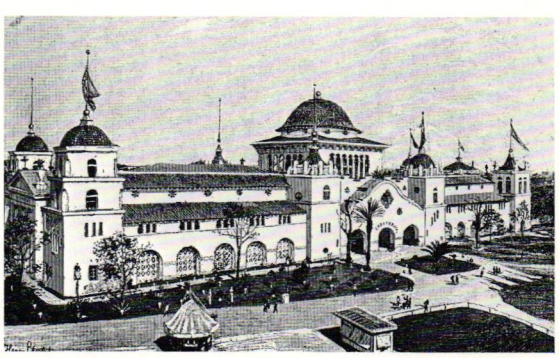

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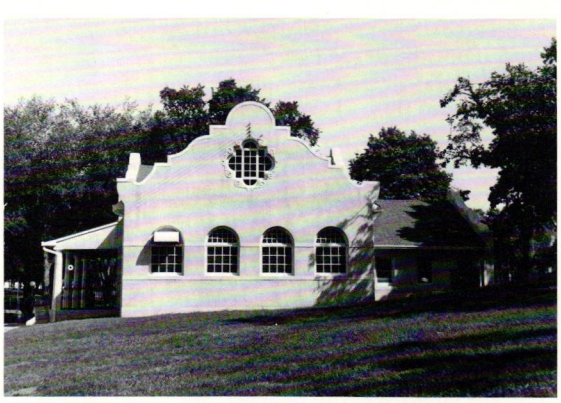


most impressive of the early Mission Style buildings were railroad passenger stations and exposition buildings.[4] The stations represent the first major architectural artifact which greeted the visitor when he came to California, while the exposition building symbolically sought to impress upon visitors the unique personality of California. The early Mission Revival stations at San Juan Capistrano (B F Levet, 1894) (Figure 2), and at Burlingame (George H Howard and J B Mathiesen, 1894) to the north, were rapidly followed by a succession of stations built by the Santa Fe, the Southern Pacific, and the Union Pacific Railroad (Figures 3, 4).[5] By 1915 the Mission Style was the most frequently encountered image for railroad stations throughout California.

Beginning with the 1893 World Columbian Exposition in Chicago, the state of California represented itself exclusively via the Mission image (Figure 5). In the following year, 1894, California held her first exhibition, the Mid-Winter Fair in Golden Gate Park, San Francisco. The dominant architectural image employed in this exhibition was Mission. The same image was employed to represent California officially at the major post-1900 exhibitions at Buffalo (1901), St Louis (1904), and Seattle (1909). By the mid-1900s the Mission Style had darted off in directions which certainly the early proponents never had envisioned. As a style it came to be associated, and particularly in non-California minds, with places of pleasure. Mission Style amusement parks, and recreation buildings began to be built all over the U S (Figure 6).

What part did California's major high art architects play in the introduction of the Mission image? Was theirs an important role, or were they bystanders to a popular phenomenon from which most of them wished to remain aloof? In 1887 and 1888, while practicing in Los Angeles, the British born and educated architect, Ernest Coxhead, accompanied by several younger designers, including John Galen Howard and Willis Polk, made a number of trips to sketch the Missions and adobe buildings. While Coxhead

[1] Francis J Weber, *A Selected Bibliography: The California Missions, 1765-1972*. Los Angeles: (*Dawson's Book Shop*, 1972); also, Karen Jeanine Weitze, *Origin and Early Development of the Mission Revival in California* (Ph D dissertation Stanford University, 1977)

[2] Much of the material brought together in the volume, *Glimpses of California and the Missions*, appeared as articles in *The Century* magazine in 1883, and later in 1886 in a volume entitled *Glimpses of Three Coasts*.

[3] Charles Fletcher Lummis' first major article relating to the missions was 'The Old Missions,' *Drake's Magazine* 7 (March, 1889). Lummis' major influence came about in his editorship of *The Land of Sunshine*, and his active participation in the preservation of the missions, with the founding in Los Angeles in 1894 of the Landmark Club. See his article, 'The Lesson of Adobe,' *Land of Sunshine* 2 (March, 1895), pp 65-67. George Wharton James produced innumerable travel books on California. His most significant work relating to the missions was *In and Out of the Missions*, first published in 1905. See his 'The Mission Style in Modern Architecture,' *Indoors and Out* 4 (May, 1907), pp 51-59; also see June, pp 119-124; July, pp 186-193; August, pp 232-238; September, pp 271-275.

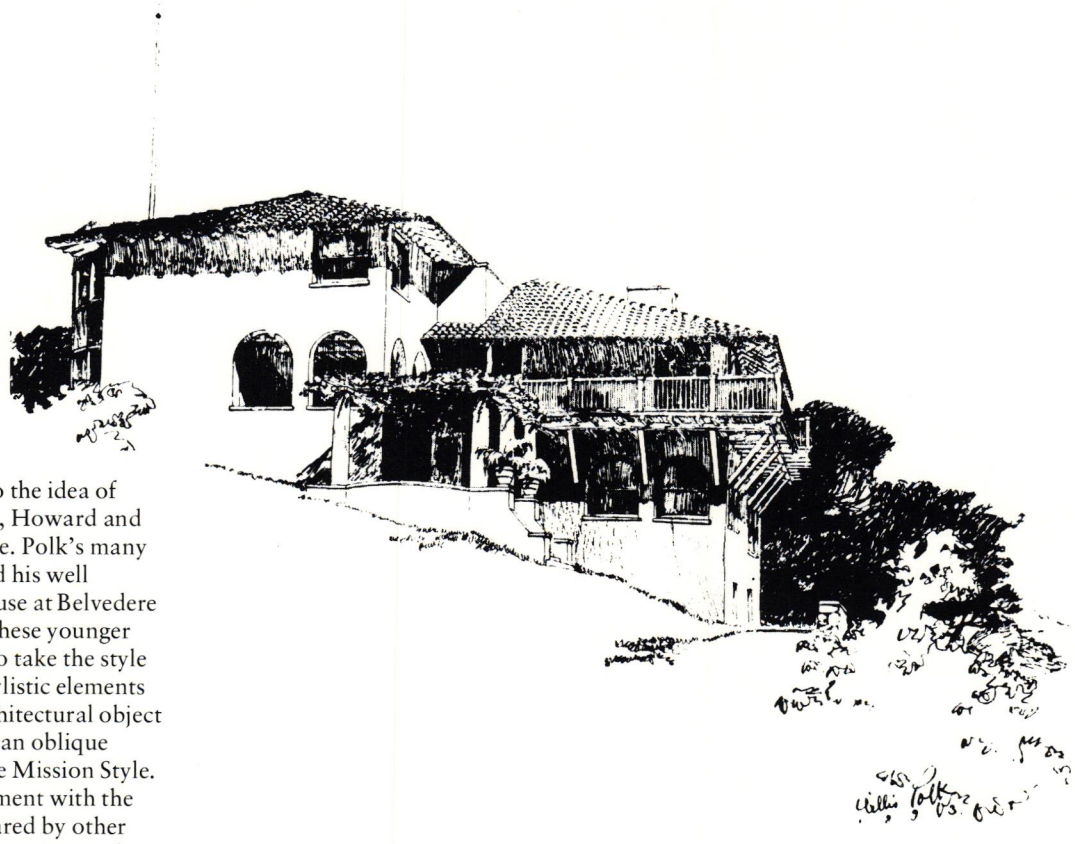
[4] Norman M Stineman, 'Spanish Mission Architecture in Railroad Stations,' *Architect and Engineer* 62 (September, 1920), pp 75-79

[5] John Beach, 'The Bay Tradition, 1890-1918,' in *Bay Area Houses*, Sally Woodbridge, editor (New York: Oxford University Press 1976), pp 23-98

himself remained cool to the idea of using the Mission image, Howard and Polk were more receptive. Polk's many sketches of the 1890s and his well publicized 1893 Rey House at Belvedere (Figure 7) indicate that these younger architects were willing to take the style and mix it with other stylistic elements to produce a serious architectural object which would, at least in an oblique manner, comment on the Mission Style. Polk's marginal involvement with the Mission Revival was shared by other major California architects. Bernard Maybeck's Faculty Club, at the University of California at Berkeley (1902), is often cited as an example of the Mission Style.[6] But if one tore off the few arches on the building and substituted shingles for the exterior stucco surfaces, the building would never be thought of as Mission. In the south, such major figures as the Beaux Arts-inclined Myron Hunt had little to do with the Mission image, and while Elmer Grey, and Charles and Henry Greene occasionally dabbled in the style, they could hardly be labelled as proponents.[7]

As far as the work of professional architects is concerned, the prominent structures which employed the Mission image in Southern, as well as Northern California were designed by locally important but nationally little-known architects and architectural firms. The Mission Inn in Riverside (1902) (Figure 8), and the second Arlington Hotel in Santa Barbara (1911), were designed by Arthur B Benton; the Los Angeles firm of John C Austin designed the Potter Hotel (1901) in Santa Barbara and St Mary's Academy in Los Angeles (1911) (Figure 9). In Pasadena, and in and around Los Angeles, Lester S Moore and F L Roehrig produced some of the earliest houses (in the 1890s) in the style. Two of the most formidable exponents of things Hispanic via the Mission Style were the brothers Samuel and Joseph Cather Newsom – the architects *par excellence* of the Eastlake / Queen Anne Style of the 1880s. Samuel Newsom himself was one of the first architects to be involved in the actual restoration of a mission, in his case, the Santa Barbara Mission in 1891.

The line which separates the Mission



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7 Rey House, Belvedere, Willis Polk, 1913
8 The Mission Inn, Riverside, Arthur B Benton, 1902
9 St. Mary's Academy, Los Angeles, John C Austin, 1910
10 Burrage House, Redlands, Charles Charles Bingham, 1899-1901



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[6] Kenneth H Cardwell, Bernard Maybeck, *Artisan, Architect, Artist* (Salt Lake City: Peregrine Smith, 1977), pp 78-81

[7] Randell L Makinson, Greene and Greene, *Architecture as a Fine Art* (Salt Lake City: Peregrine Smith, 1977), pp 44-45, 203-205; Robert C McLean, 'Some Late Work of Myron Hunt,' *Western Architect* 27 (June, 1918), pp 49-52; Elmer Grey, 'Architecture in California,' *Architectural Record* 17 (January, 1905), pp 1-17

Revival imagery employed by these and many other professional architects from the run-of-the-mill builder's product of these years is often non-existent. They all tended to utilize a limited series of elements which would evoke the theme of the Hispanic Mission in the popular mind. The vocabulary consisted of extensive stucco surfaces, tile roofs, arched openings, arched loggias, projecting parapeted gables, often with curved scalloped edges, and round or quatrefoil windows. For larger structures, an entire Mission façade might be produced with a pair of low-tiered bell towers pressing in on a scalloped, central gable with an arched loggia below. These agreed-upon symbols of the Mission were employed by California, as well as non-California, architects regardless of where these buildings were built. For example, when the conservative Boston architect, Charles Bingham, designed the extensive Burrage dwelling (1899-1901) in Redlands, he utilized the full vocabulary of an idealized Mission church (Figure 10).

Architects also pursued another course similar to that found in builders' versions of the Mission Revival. They often sought to enrich the 'primitive' Mission image by the addition of a contrasting richness of ornament and details, especially that which was referred to as 'Moorish.' The introduction of such ornament into the Mission Style made it possible to bring about other suggestive images—the exoticism of North Africa and Moorish Spain, as well as the exuberance of the earlier Queen Anne. Some California designers, like the Los Angeles architect Louis Bourgeois, not only combined the Mission and Islamic, but also applied variations of terra cotta ornament derived from the contemporary ornaments associated with the work of Louis H Sullivan.

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By 1915 builders and architects had come close to realizing Charles Lummis' and George Wharton James' vision of how the new California would be a connection of the old. The Mission railroad stations and hotels were joined by Mission schoolhouses, bandstands, commercial blocks, warehouses, service stations, and public buildings, ranging from jails and firehouses to city halls and public libraries (Figures 11-17). The Mission image was implanted firmly in residential architecture, encompassing the full range from upper middle-class single-family housing to spec bungalows, bungalow courts and large and small buildings (Figures 18-23). One of the great assets of the Mission image was that it referred exclusively to a building as an object in the landscape. In the popular mind, and with the architects as well, it did not concern itself with an interior Mission landscape, nor did it openly comment on structure. When Rexford Newcomb made the first systematic study of Mission architecture he indicated one feature which he felt to be essential, which had anything to do with enclosure of space—the patio.[8] All of the remaining features were external.

This emphasis on the external allowed the Mission Revival building to do what it wished with internal space, and even to some degree with semi-enclosed spaces such as porches, pergolas and terraces. Therefore, the plan of a Mission Revival architect or builder's house could, with ease, reflect both the stylistic fashion of the moment and whatever utilitarian considerations were felt to be essential. In domestic architecture this meant that the first of the builder's or architect's Mission Style designs were Queen Anne in plan; later their plans and details became Craftsman and in some instances, even lightly Beaux Arts in their balanced compositions organized around major and minor axes.

[8] Rexford Newcomb, 'The Architecture of The Spanish Renaissance in California: Part II—Construction,' *Western Architect* 28 (September, 1919), p 80

[9] A striking example of the factual and symbolic mixture of the Richardsonian Romanesque is that of the campus of Stanford University, designed between 1887 and 1891 by the Boston firm of Shepley, Rutan and Coolidge. See Paul V Turner, *The Founders and The Architect, the Design of Stanford University* (Stanford, 1976); also Karen Jeanine Weitze, 'Origin and Early Development of the Mission Revival in California,' (Ph D dissertation, Stanford University, 1977), pp 75-83

11 High School, Compton, circa 1912
12 Park Pavilion, Oxnard, circa 1905
13 Ventura Gasoline Service Station, Los Angeles, circa 1919
14 Riverside County Jail, Riverside, circa 1906
15 V F W Building, Pomona, circa 1910
16 Public Library, Santa Ana, 1903
17 Public Library, Riverside, Burnham and Bliesner, 1903
18 House, Los Angeles, circa 1905
19 Holt House, Redlands, F T Harris, 1903
20 House, Hollywood, circa 1905
21 Bungalow, Altadena, circa 1908
22 Project for Four Duplexes, Los Angeles, A L Haley, circa 1905
23 Project for an Apartment House, San Diego, A L Haley, circa 1905
24 Five Spec Houses ('Cottages'), Santa Barbara, A Page Brown, circa 1893



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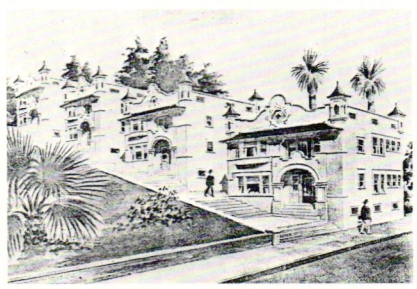

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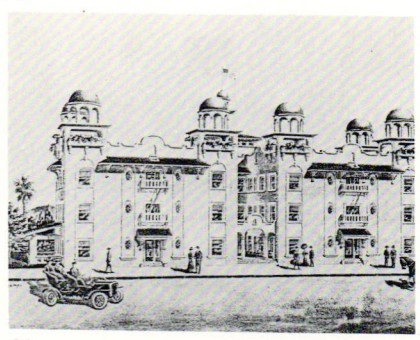

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As long as the key symbols of the image were present, the non-Mission elements could be as numerous as desired. A classic case in point was the single square tower, generally topped by a low-pitched, hipped roof, which became a hallmark of so many Mission Revival buildings. These towers, of course, have nothing to do with the original Mission buildings; rather, they refer back to the Italian Villa style which was so popular in California in the post-Civil War years. And so too, the basic massing and picturesque roof forms of the smaller Mission Style buildings have far more to do with the Queen Anne and Colonial Revival of the 1890s than with the original Mission or early nineteenth century adobe buildings. In many of the larger essays in the style there was an open overlay of Mission features on a design which was basically Richardsonian Romanesque.[9] These strong, connective links with the immediate past meant that the Mission image would be able to appeal to a larger audience than if it had been more archaeologically correct.

Another great advantage of the Mission image was that it could be easily (and cheaply) realized by any one of the current techniques of construction. The smaller buildings could be built of wood studs, wire mesh and stucco. Larger buildings (or more expensive ones) might use the latest technology—hollow tile covered with stucco, or reinforced concrete. The roofs could even be flat, visually hidden by raised parapets, and roof tile could just as well be cast or pressed metal as ceramic. The general faith in the modern age and its technology was not seen as being in any way in conflict with the historic images of the Mission. The image was to hint at that which was remote and romantic, but factually the building was to be of its age.

Though the public, the builder, and the plan book designer were all reasonably loose in suggesting the image of the Mission, still as we have already noted, certain ingredients were considered essential. Those features employed to convey the image were taken over in full by the professional architect. There might well be appreciable differences between the carefully studied and realized architect's product and that of the builder, but while particular elements of plan, structure, detail, and proportions might be readily perceptible to members of the architectural profession, they were not always apparent to the middle class audience. An example of this would be the row of five spec houses in Santa Barbara produced by the San Francisco firm of A Page Brown (c 1893?) (Figure 24). These have all of the thin, cardboard qualities characteristic of the builder's version of the style, yet in their planning, proportions and care with details, they reveal the hand of a high art architect. The same holds true for such large scale Mission monuments as Elmer Gray's 1910 Beverly Hills Hotel, A C Schweinfurth's extensive Hacienda del Pozo de Verona at Pleasanton (c 1895) for Phoebe Apperson Hearst, and the more modest Los Angeles residence of General Harrison Gray Otis, the

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conservative publisher of the *Los Angeles Times*, which was designed by John P Kremple in 1898 (Figure 25).

On the whole, the typical builder's spec houses miniaturized the major Mission elements which came to characterize the larger, more pretentious composition. (Figure 26) They could be as simple, visually direct, and puritanical as any exponent of the Craftsman tradition could ask. The features which conveyed the needed historical illusionism could be sparse, such as in 'Design #21' published in Pierpont and Walter S Davis' 1915 pattern book *Ideal Homes in Garden Communities*[10] (Figure 27). This house, which is essentially a stucco box, becomes readibly Mission by two tiled chimney tops, tiled shed roof over the entrance, a single segmented arched opening at the side of the porch, and the projecting *canales* (projecting roof drain). As in the larger scaled examples, functional considerations of interior space—the need for larger window openings—have not been compromised a bit. Sometimes, even in a small stucco bungalow, richness of detailing and ornament could be inexpensively introduced, as Pierpont and Walter S Davis did in their 'Design #16' (Figure 28). Here, the entrance becomes an overscaled formal composition, its rich ornament hinting at the Churrigueresque, realized by the simple means of wood, wire and plaster, and inexpensive precast ornament. The tile eyebrow on the wall parapet and the tiled chimney top add the final note which stamps the stucco box as Mission.

26a



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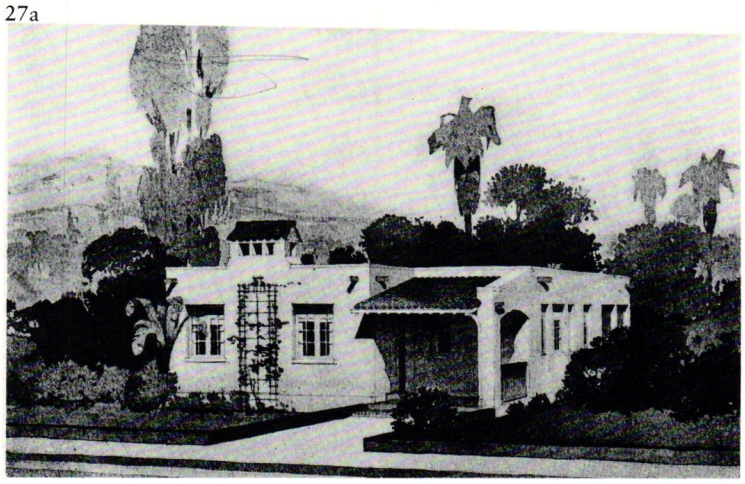

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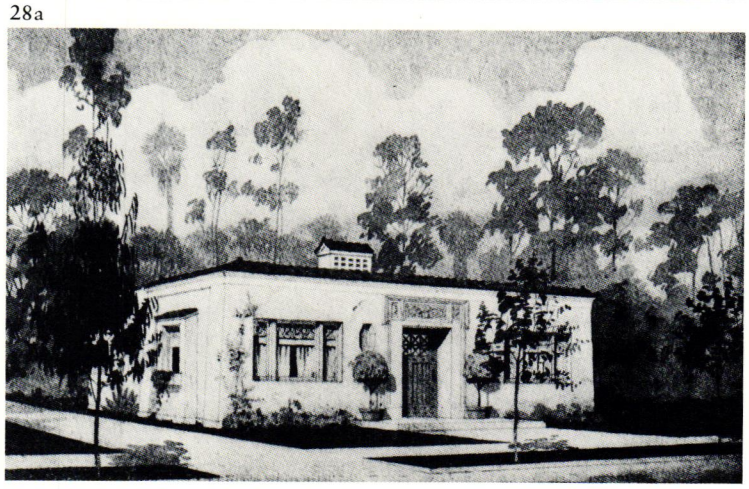


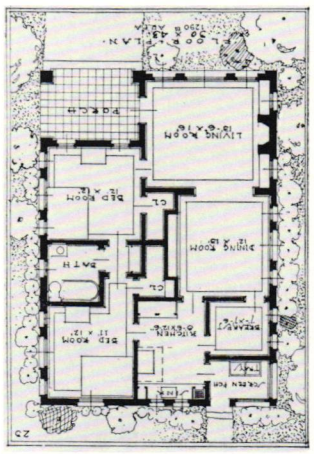
Shortly after 1910, the widespread acceptance and enthusiasm for the Mission image broadened to include the whole of the Mediterranean tradition, plus such side relishes as the Pueblo architecture of the Rio Grande Valley and the pre-Columbian architecture of Mexico and Central America. While this expansion of imagery added a degree of authority and learnedness, it did not, at first, mark a strong break with the early involvement with the Mission as *the* symbol of California's unique past. As with the earlier Mission Revival, the new episodes of what eventually became the Spanish

25 Otis House, Los Angeles, John P John P Kremple, 1897
26 Design #23, Walter and Pierpoint S Davis, 1915
27 Design #21, Walter and Pierpoint S Davis, 1915
28 Design #28, Walter and Pierpoint S Davis, 1915

[10]Pierpont and Walter S Davis, *Ideal Homes in Garden Communities* (Los Angeles, 1915)

[11]*Landscape* was published and edited in Santa Fe, New Mexico, by J B Jackson between 1952 and 1968

26b



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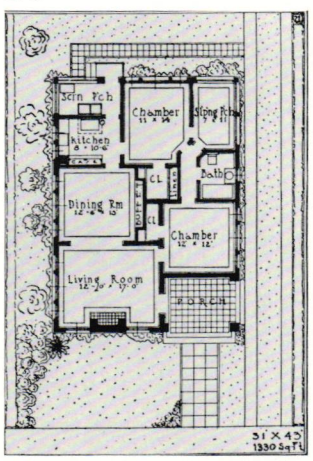

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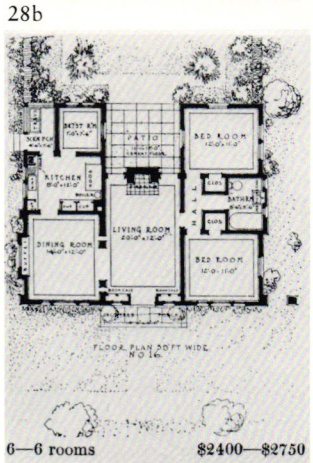

Colonial Revival (or as it was often characterized, the Mediterranean) had the same ability to provide a popularly readible series of images which could entail both the elements of low and high art architecture. It could reflect the ability of visual abstraction of George Washington Smith and Lutah Maria Riggs, the formalism of Bertram B Goodhue, the 'correct' Mediterranean Beaux Artism of Myron Hunt, or the Churrigueresque lushness encountered in the commercial buildings of the Los Angeles firm of Morgan, Walls, and Clements. The building of these and other California architects had a wide appeal, ranging from the middle class 'man in the street,' to professional architects and critics who wrote for the regional and national scene. An Andalusian country house by George Washington Smith appealed to those trained in architecture because of the rigorous purity of its composition; while to the middle class citizen of the twenties, such houses evoked a romantic picturesqueness associated with childhood and the far away. Only minor changes had to be made to magically transform the stucco Mission Style box to something whose image was Mexican, Spanish, Italian or Moorish. As with the Mission Style, the Spanish Colonial Revival addressed itself primarily to the question of imagery, but in context, its concern for imagery was expressed internally as well as externally. The strongly utilitarian aspects of these Spanish Colonial Revival buildings were slowly modified during the 1920s and early 1930s, with tighter organization of interior spaces and communications, and above all, the planning of the building to respond to the use of the private automobile.

It was in the 1950s that J B Jackson, through his remarkable magazine *Landscape*,[11] sought to make intellectuals / architects aware of the important vitality of California's vernacular tradition and the impact that tradition has had on high art architecture. The middle-class American public, and particularly the California middle class, of course, needed no such reminding—they knew it. The post-World War II California Ranch house of Cliff May, exposed by *Sunset* magazine, was a sought-after ideal which pervaded the whole of the country. In each of these California episodes, the key element was always that of historic imagery—the suggestion of place established and maintained by allusion to the past. The California experience not only comments pointedly on the need to employ historical imagery which is addressed to a wide audience, but it also illustrates how significant the vernacular has been in our century for the high art practitioner. In California, all of the major brand-name designers, ranging from Irving Gill to George Washington Smith and Charles W Moore, have drawn heavily upon the popular vernacular. Always their most successful work has occurred when they have referred to the past and when they have addressed a widely divergent audience.



Modernist Housing and Its Critics: The Dutch Contributions

Donald I Grinberg

Perhaps in no realm has the rejection of Modern Movement dogma been more acrimonious and strident than this: housing. It was in this realm that the earliest organized critics of Modernism – Dutch Forum and Team 10 – focused their energies, and it is here that the criticism of social critics has persisted to their day. This rejection seems particularly significant, since housing was in many ways the cornerstone of Modernist technical, social, and aesthetic theory. Its two guarantors of quality – mass production and industrialized technology on the one hand, and the vision of the city in the park on the other, have been largely discredited, and with them some of the basic assumptions of how to provide shelter for people in large numbers.

The focus here is Holland, a kind of hothouse environment for Modernist housing theory, where the dogma took hold early and produced results quickly, with its environmental ramifications clearly visible at an early date. Criticism sprouted almost immediately, with Bakema, van Eyck, Dutch Forum, et. al., *and has continued unabated to the present. Naturally, the early criticisms did not constitute a complete and radical break, and the architecture of Team 10, for instance, while formed in opposition to Modernist principles, seems to repeat some of the same errors, in built form, as their opponents. Other responses to the 'alienating qualities of large scale housing' in Holland have been more fruitful and are significant in their parallels to similar efforts elsewhere. Some of these ideas, such as user participation in design and a visual language informed by popular imagery, are gaining widespread acceptance, and while they may not appear revolutionary or surprising, seem to be real advances in the art of housing design.*



1 Indigenous housing in the Province of North Holland

Seldom were the possibilities so much, seldom has the profession failed to such a degree. – Aldo van Eyck, 1959

Aldo van Eyck's sweeping indictment of architecture refers to the *Nieuwe Zakelijkheid*[1] – the new objectivity – otherwise misleadingly known as functionalism. Very much in the tradition of strongly polemical Dutch architectural thought, van Eyck's criticism began in the war years of the 1940s, yet his was neither the first expression of disillusionment with Modernist housing nor the last. What then are the sources and manifestations of the Dutch reaction to the Modern Movement – that body of theory and design which was nurtured, especially in Holland, during the first decades of this century and which grew to be regarded as the norm by 1950? This essay explores how the Dutch have come to regard the Modern Movement, and how this perspective appears to be shaping current approaches to housing.

The development of twentieth-century Dutch architecture is marked, more than in almost any other country, by a dialectic of ideas – all within the context of a relatively small and homogeneous culture. The formation of one approach to architecture seems to have given birth almost immediately to an opposing set of views, and the willingness to debate and disagree has created an intellectual tradition favorable to ideologies. However, despite the apparent contrasts among the buildings and polemics of Berlage, the Amsterdam School, *De Stijl*, *Nieuwe Zakelijkheid*, Group 32, Delftse School, Team 10, Structuralists, etc., there is evidence that none has been as independent as might first appear. The flow of ideas is complex enough that it comes as no surprise that the current re-assessment of Dutch housing constantly raises both the specter and the glory of the past.

The terms of the present-day critique of Dutch housing derive from the birth-pangs of the Modern Movement in Holland ca. 1917. Furthermore, it is not entirely coincidental that where some of the earliest triumphs of Modern housing were achieved, one could find not only some of the most literal realizations of Modernist principles on a vast scale – as happened in Holland following World War II – but also some of the most vociferous opposition. Here the anti-Modernist critique arose early, and has grown especially strong in a country where every design professional is inevitably

[1] The term *Nieuwe Zakelijkheid* is the Dutch translation of the German *Neue Sachlichkeit*, which was first used by the director of the Mannheim Art Gallery in 1923 as the title of an exhibition of post-expressionistic paintings and graphics. The 'New Objectivity' very quickly came to signify the rejection of subjective emotions. See Fritz Schmalenbach, 'The Term *Neue Sachlichkeit*,' *Art Bulletin* 22 No 3 (1940), pp 161-165.



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2 Agneta Park, Delft, 1885
3 Garden Village Vreewijk, Rotterdam, 1916-1919
4 'Eigen Haard' housing in the Spaarndammerbuurt, Amsterdam, Michel de Klerk, 1917-1920

[2] JH van den Broek and JB Bakema, 'Project for Kennemerland,' *Forum* 15, No 1 (1960), p 38

[3] For a discussion of dwelling conditions before 1900 and a more thorough analysis of Dutch housing up to World War II see Donald I Grinberg, *Housing in The Netherlands 1900-1940* (Delft, 1977).

[4] JWG Floor, *Beschouwingen over de bevordering van de volkshuisvesting* (Leyden, 1971), p 4

acquainted with the soul of the *Nieuwe Zakelijkheid*.

Housing reform was of central importance to the germination of ideas about architecture in the 'teens and twenties, and J P Berlage's dictum that housing is 'the most important building type' continues to underly the Dutch architect's conception of his role. J B Bakema and many of his contemporaries believe that 'the character of our towns will, to a large extent, be determined by houses meant for the lowest income group,'[2] which signifies that anti-Modernist strains in Dutch housing will inexorably be linked to government policy, the marketplace, and to the particular view the Dutch have of themselves as a social-democratic society. Holland is very densely settled—402 inhabitants per square kilometer—and although a prosperous society, its architecture does not take many cues from expensive single-family homes or an esoteric body of aesthetic theory. The most valuable perspective on the Modern Movement, consequently, is from the point of view of Dutch contributions to and reactions against Modernist prototypes for social housing.

Beginnings

One of the first breakthroughs in the late nineteenth-century Dutch housing crisis[3] ironically established what were to become key themes of the current anti-Modern critique. The workers' community, Agneta Park, in Delft (Figure 2) was built in 1885 as a model industrial settlement. While altruism, paternalism and the profit motive were undoubtedly present, Agneta Park demonstrated that reasonably high-quality housing could be built when the process was removed from the forces of speculation. These workers' dwellings—for almost the first time in Holland designed by an architect—made a conscious attempt to communicate meaning, and attempted a deliberate symbolic expression of the well-to-do way of life. Surrounding the villa of the industrialist patron van Marken, the dwellings were joined together in groups of four and detailed so as to deny that these were workers' dwellings. Rather, the illusion was created that Agneta Park was a group of villas in an idyllic pastoral setting. This model housing initiated two important themes: that industrialization need not be openly celebrated to produce good housing, and that housing, like other types of architecture, could be subject to the architect's concern for representing or alluding to cultural and social ideals. In contrast to Agneta Park, the Modernist housing of thirty years later would seek to equate formal qualities with democratic socialism and industrialization.

Agneta Park, along with the unsuccessful efforts of the early housing cooperatives, was built in the climate of reform which culminated in the very progressive *Woningwet* (Housing Act) of 1902. This legislation addressed the severe housing shortage by creating a mechanism of capital loans to municipalities and housing associations. The Act required municipalities to prepare building regulations and expansion plans, which led Berlage and his followers to view housing as the basic substance of the city fabric. The *Woningwet* forced the conceptualization of housing on a larger scale—i.e. mass housing, many dwelling units built at one time from one design. Although the Housing Act should be regarded as the 'product of socially concerned political liberalism,'[4] not of workers' agitation, there was a commitment to a strong socialist philosophy among those most directly involved: the municipalities (especially Amsterdam), the cooperatives and the architects. In the milieu of liberalism and socialism, the expectations embodied in the *Woningwet* stimulated the Dutch idealist tradition, which would continually re-assert itself in each subsequent direction of housing theory and practice.

Two of Holland's key early twentieth-century architects, Berlage and Granpré Molière, collaborated on a housing project in Rotterdam which, like Agneta Park, both influenced the development of Modernist housing in Holland and eventually suggested grounds for its rejection. The garden village Vreewijk (Figure 3), planned initially by Berlage in 1913, has proven to be among the most successful



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syntheses of the Housing Act, the Dutch garden city movement, and architectural design sensitivity. Granpré Molière's housing, brick and cottage-like with sloped roofs, mimicked the traditions of the Dutch vernacular. Vreewijk was highly regarded by *Nieuwe Zakelijkheid* architects such as J Duiker, who especially appreciated its spacious dwellings, landscaping and open site planning.[5] However, Vreewijk was not above suspicion among some of the more radical architects like J B van Loghem, who pejoratively labeled it *boerenwoning architecture* – peasant architecture. Another key *avant-garde* architect, Mart Stam, indicated his distaste for Vreewijk's nostalgia and romanticism in his advocacy of flat roofs: 'if the minimal dwelling has no attic . . . so much the better. The people will not cling to everything: neither Grandmama's furniture nor memories of their youth.'[6] These architects found Vreewijk romantic, bourgeois and too individualistic – judgments which became simplistically applied to Granpré Molière himself. As he became the advocate of the most conservative values in Dutch architecture, especially following his conversion to Catholicism in 1927, it was increasingly difficult for Vreewijk to be appreciated or its significance fully understood by *Nieuwe Zakelijkheid* architects. However, the fragmentation of polemics in the post-war period has allowed Vreewijk to be re-considered, and the increasing respect accorded it is one measure of the current interest in the architecture of association, the vernacular, and the articulation of individual dwelling units.

The highly individualistic housing façades (Figure 4) designed by Michel de Klerk in Amsterdam from 1915 to 1923 proved to be more provocative than Vreewijk and less indebted to the rational qualities of vernacular housing (Figure 1). De Klerk was striving to invent a visual language appropriate to workers' housing – an objective which Modernism and its critics have also taken very seriously. For the first time in Holland, De Klerk showed the degree to which housing could be regarded as an aesthetic problem. This evocative, romantic, and often strange architecture represented the expressionist extreme in the 'teens and twenties in Holland. But despite the antagonism which arose in the functionalist camp, De Klerk and other Amsterdam School architects firmly established that housing could be subject to aesthetic choice. Perhaps a forerunner of what Charles Jencks has termed 'radical eclecticism,'[7] the Amsterdam School housing not only provoked the Modernist polemic, but also stimulated the current re-evaluation of Modernist housing.

The Nieuwe Zakelijkheid

As formalist 'façade architecture,' the Amsterdam School housing served as a foil for other architects, especially J J P Oud. Beginning in 1917, Oud was associated with *De Stijl*, the group of artists and architects loosely organized by Theo van Doesburg, who edited the periodical of the same name. While it is not necessary here to go into the nature of the polarity between *De Stijl* and the Amsterdam School,[8] it should be mentioned that although *De Stijl* thinking was an important formal underpinning of the *Nieuwe Zakelijkheid*, not all of its principles

[5] De 8 en Opbouw, '*De Organische Woonwijk in Open Bebouwing*' (Amsterdam, 1932), p 11. Through Vreewijk can be traced the direct influence of the garden city movement on the CIAM manifestoes of 1928 and 1933.

[6] Mart Stam, 'Away with Furniture Artists,' in Werner Gr:aff, *Innenraume* (Stuttgart, 1928), pp 128-130; translation from Benton and Sharp, editors, *Architecture and Design 1890-1939* (New York, 1975), p 228

[7] A close study of Jencks' books *Modern Movements in Architecture* (New York, 1973) and *The Language of Post-Modern Architecture* (New York, 1977) reveals how some of his ideas appear to derive from the Dutch experience.

[8] The distinctions between *De Stijl* and the Amsterdam School have been well-evaluated in Reyner Banham, *Theory and Design in the First Machine Age* (London, 1960). For a specific analysis of the conflict between Oud and De Klerk, see Suzanne Frank, 'Michel de Klerk 1884-1923: An Architect of the Amsterdam School,' (Ph. D. Diss., Columbia University, 1969), pp 247-257

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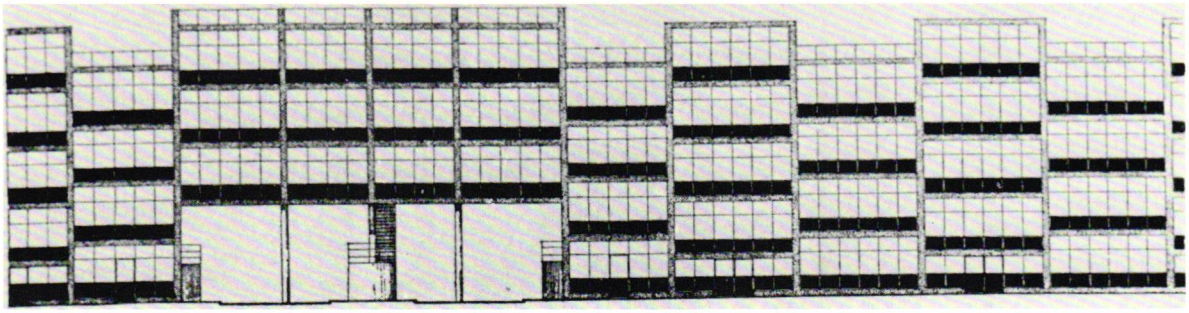


[9] HP Berlage, *Normalisatie in Woningbouw* (Rotterdam, 1918), p 31. This is a very important text which has remained much too obscure.

[10] Mart Stam, 'The Stam Houses,' *Die Form*, 2 (Berlin, 1927), p 292; translation from Benton and Sharp, p 196.

[11] Mart Stam, 'Collective Design,' *ABC*, No 1 (1925), p 1

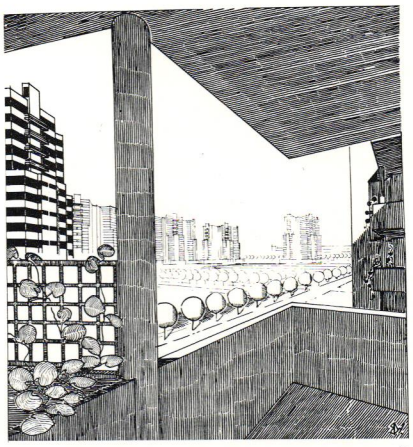
were or could be embraced by the Modern Movement. Oud left the *De Stijl* group in 1921, motivated in part by his conviction that neo-plasticism and housing were incompatible. Ultimately, Oud's seminal 1924 Hoek van Holland dwellings and 1925-29 Kiefhoek stood closer to the *Nieuwe Zakelijkheid* than to *De Stijl*. Rietveld too was unable to realize any synthesis, as is evident in his entry for the Inexpensive Workers' Dwellings competition of 1934 – a submission which the jury dismissed as 'factory housing' (Figure 5).

One of the obvious targets of the post-World War II critique is the standardization of dwelling types, an idea which had quickly matured during the acute housing shortage of the First World War. As neutrals, the Dutch were inclined to develop a less cynical, more idealistic attitude about the possibility of techinical solutions to social and economic problems. Furthermore, socialist architects like Berlage helped to justify the standardization of dwelling types by pointing out the positive qualities of repetition not only as an economic necessity, but also as a primary aesthetic quality. More significantly, Berlage believed that repetition of the same dwelling type created the means by which the social-democratic values of the working class could be symbolized, for 'naturally the same dwelling presupposes a complete social equality of the inhabitants.'[9]

Oud was indebted to this notion, although he argued for the use of mass-production more forcefully than did Berlage. The need to remedy the severe housing shortage, coupled with the desire to create an aesthetic representative of the age, paralleled the infatuation with housing designed to suggest mass-produced housing, even if it was not. By 1927, Mart Stam epitomized the essentially Modernist view that the minimum dwelling was an 'inevitable necessity.' Stam believed that the solution to the housing shortage was 'to establish a standard type of dwelling. The individual attached house will have to be dispensed with; in its place a type of dwelling will have to be created which, although taking less account of individual preferences, will still express the generality of human needs, the requirements of every housewife and every family.'[10] Although a critic of *De Stijl* and its formalist implications, Stam clearly shared Berlage's and *De Stijl's* philosophic preference for the universal over the individual and the belief that the subjective must be avoided. 'The individual's isolation has led him to be dominated by his emotions,' he wrote in 1925, 'What is special or individual must not yield to what is common to all.'[11] For Stam and others this premise led to the visual suppression and functional over-simplification of the individual dwelling unit.

In addition to standardization, open site planning – the free-standing block – was an essential feature of *Nieuwe Zakelijkheid* housing. J Duiker's writings and projects emanated from his belief that the enclosed housing block was a cause of disease, and his architecture was a purposeful striving towards the realization and representation of the hygenic dwelling. Duiker, Stam, Merkelbach and others were dogmatic advocates of spatial openness, in the form of Dutch versions of Le Corbusier's Ville Radieuse, such as Duiker's Hoogbouw of 1930 (Figure 6), or in the four-story, north-south oriented *strokenbouw*, such as Stam's Hellerhof (built in Frankfurt in 1928). These two pre-World War II prototypes of functionalist housing were and must still be regarded as significant advances, despite their now apparent failures.

The highrise block with gallery access was first realized in Rotterdam in the Bergpolder flats of 1934 by J Brinkman, L C van der Vlugt and W van Tijen (Figure 7). As the first highrise housing for workers, this steel-frame building became the paradigm of industrialization, the repeated 'minimum' dwelling, and the free-standing dwelling block. According to van Tijen, the Bergpolder housing was the result of a collaboration in which the personalities of the individual architects were seen as subservient to the program and the building itself. An element of a larger planning conception, the Bergpolder type was intended to be used repetitively in order to realize city-wide advantages, and



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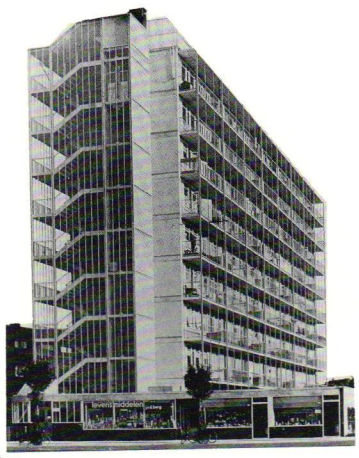

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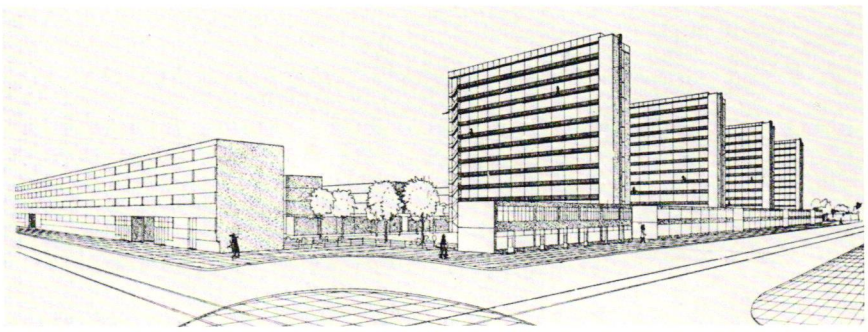
5 Competition for Inexpensive Workers' Dwellings, G Th Rietveld, 1934
6 J Duiker, *Hoogbouw*, 1930
7 Bergpolder Flats, Rotterdam, W van Tijen, J A Brinkman and L C van der Vlugt, 1934
8 Competition for Inexpensive Workers' Dwellings, J H van den Broek, 1934

9 Landlust, Amsterdam, B Merkelbach, C J F Karsten, P Vorkink and G Versteeg, 1937
10 Landlust, Amsterdam, original proposal for expansion and alternative proposed by B Merkelbach and C J F Karsten, 1933
11 Weissenhof Siedlung, Stuttgart, Mart Stam, 1927



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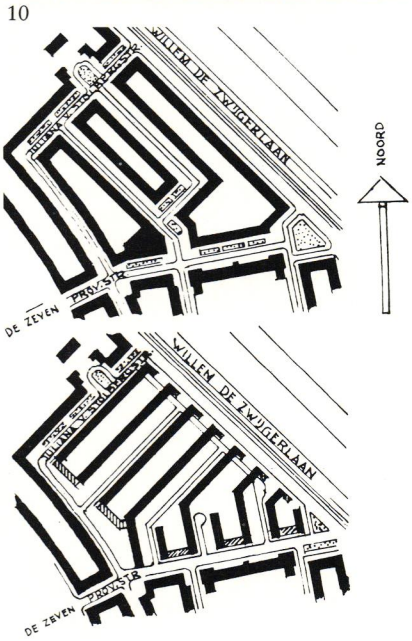
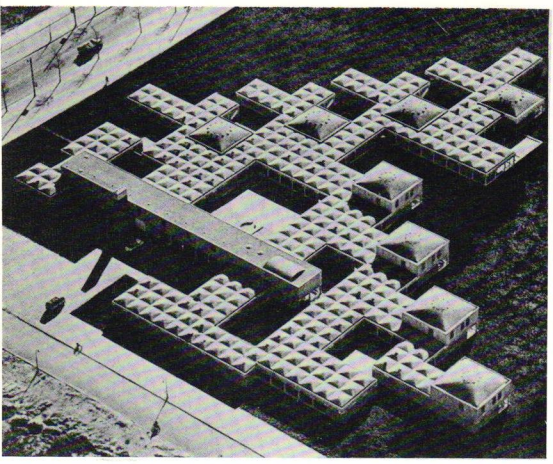


some entries submitted to the 1934 Competition for Inexpensive Workers Dwellings illustrated this approach (Figure 8). The other most significant prototype was the *strokenbouw*, long, parallel, low-rise blocks. This type of housing also reflects the triumph of key Modern ideals: proper orientation to the sun for all inhabitants, through-the-dwelling ventilation, and the *kijk tuin* (literally, 'garden to be looked at')—the sanitized green space between dwelling blocks. The best-known pre-war Dutch example of this type was Merkelbach and Karsten's Landlust of 1937 (Figure 9), which was a specific counter-proposal to a plan to build traditional enclosed housing blocks in expanding western Amsterdam (Figure 10).

First Challenges

The critique of *Nieuwe Zakelijkheid* developed almost simultaneously with its advocacy throughout the 1930s, largely through the influence of Granpré Molière, who had a strong distaste for the use of the new technology in building and was suspicious of an aesthetic which denied the spirit of Dutch individualism. Finding the functionalists too materialistic, Granpré Molière and his followers (the Delftse School) were romantic conservatives who respected traditionalism, localism and handicrafts. Other traditionalists, known as the 1932 Group, had initially been associated with *De 8 en Opbouw*, the Dutch arm of CIAM. By 1938, however, they came to believe that the *Nieuwe Zakelijkheid* unnecessarily denied the artistic, form-giving process in architecture. The functionalists also had to contend with those architects who tried to continue the Amsterdam School after De Klerk's early death in 1923. But the most serious threat seemed to arise from the deteriorating political situation in Germany, where Modern housing (Figure 11), like that built for the 1927 Weissenhof exhibit, was labeled 'bolshevik' by the National Socialists. Fear of developments in Germany and a suspicion towards romantic conservatism in Holland contributed to the overstating of some basically sound ideas, which hence became too simplified and formula-like. Because each polemic was accompanied by its own moral philosophy, potential syntheses could only become increasingly problematic.

The building pause which began during the Occupation in 1940 provided a chance to reflect upon the achievements and failures since the First World War. Compared to other progressive housing programs in Europe, the Dutch program had accomplished the most to alleviate the housing crisis. But during the Occupation some architects were bold enough to suggest that some qualitative failures had occurred. The architects of the new generation were not initially more cynical than their elders, but they believed that most post-World War I mass housing was blatantly naive. Facing another formidable housing shortage and the need for extensive reconstruction, some Dutch architects were naturally prone to challenge even the most basic tenets of Modernist housing, including the Charte d'Athenes of 1933. Ultimately, the housing of the 1950s confirmed not only the degree to which Modernist housing goals had triumphed in Holland, but also the narrowness of their scope.



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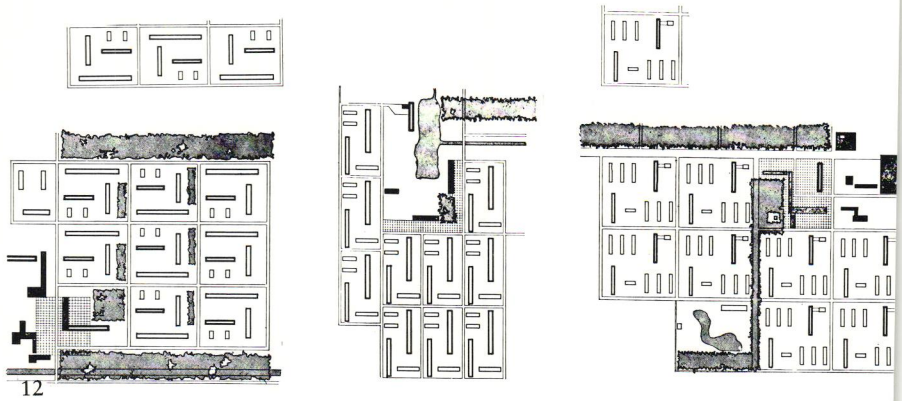

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Internal dissatisfaction with CIAM led to the formation of Team 10, a group of architects charged at the 1953 Congress at Aix-en-Provence with organizing a subsequent meeting at Dubrovnik.[12] Two Dutch architects, Aldo van Eyck and J B Bakema, were among Team 10 members the most fully-exposed to the origins, rationales and manifestations of the Modern Movement. A student of Stam in the early 1940s, Bakema had been trained in the doctrines of *Nieuwe Zakelijkheid*, and his association with J H van den Broek made him heir to the legacy of M Brinkman, J A Brinkman and L C van der Vlugt.[13] Not surprisingly, his early criticism of the Modern Movement anticipated that it could live up to its promises. Nevertheless, Bakema observed in 1957 that 'in many Dutch towns a post-war building process is surrounding pre-war town centres with repetitive blocks of walk-up flats (creating an atmosphere of monotony)' with the result that, 'many are protesting this loss of variety.'[14] Concerned with the notion of transitional elements since 1950, Bakema, like van Eyck, was dissatisfied with the categorization of work, home and recreation as separate entities linked by traffic—one of CIAM's hallowed principles. 'The relationship between all these is more than traffic,' he wrote, and for Bakema the challenge was to move from the 'analysis of functions towards the expression of the relationship between these functions.'[15] 'Relationship' to Team 10 was, however, more than a visual concept; from sociology and psychology it derived the notions of hierarchy, association, cluster and identity. Ironically, these notions imply an approach to housing which had been tentatively suggested in earlier Amsterdam School and garden-village housing. Bakema's preliminary studies of the 1950s for Pendrecht and the Alexanderpolder (Figure 12) illustrate the evolutionary movement away from the dogmatic site planning of the *Nieuwe Zakelijkheid*. But subsequent developments have made it increasingly apparent that these schemes—as is true with most of Bakema's housing—were well within the rationalist traditions of Modernism as embodied by CIAM and the work of Le Corbusier. Van Tijen, observing that Bakema's architecture aimed at the integration of *De Stijl* and the *Nieuwe Zakelijkheid* was correct in suggesting Bakema was a transitional figure.[16]

The developing criticism of CIAM reached an important culmination within Holland in 1959 (the year of the Otterlo meeting) when Bakema, Aldo van Eyck, Herman Hertzberger, J Hardy, G Boon and D C Apon formed the new editorial board of *Forum*. Their first issue was a bold departure from prior editions of the magazine, which had published an unending succession of Dutch post-war functionalist buildings. The understated title, 'The Story of Another Idea' could not disguise a flagrantly anti-Modernist polemic, which at the same time respected the utopian possibilities which lay within the Modern Movement. 'Seldom were the possibilities so much, seldom has the profession failed to such a degree,'[17] wrote the periodical's chief polemicist, Aldo van Eyck.

Their program, if it could be so called, revolved around two central concepts, 'threshold' and 'Kasbah'. The former, perhaps influenced by van Eyck's experience with the design of small-scale playgrounds, was specifically architectural, and meant to suggest the creation of a non-alienating environment using the physical embodiments of transition and relationship: doorstep, street, window and balcony. In their capacity to evoke a user's interpretation and behavior, forms were regarded as functional—a notion less presumptuous than but certainly indebted to the *Nieuwe Zakelijkheid's* view that modern housing would reform society. These architects felt obliged to overcome the *Nieuwe Zakelijkheid's* tendency to regard form as insignificant. The Kasbah idea, also indebted to van Eyck's interest in anthropology, alluded to the architecture of the African Dogon and American Pueblos, and represented a belief in an organic, wholistic integration of a society's values with its housing forms. Through 'Kasbah' and 'threshold' the Forum movement assumed, in a manner typical of Berlagian ethics, a stance based in part

[12]For an overview of Team 10, see the articles by Brian Taylor and Kenneth Frampton in 'Team 10 + 20,' *Architecture d'Aujourdhui* 177 (January-February, 1975), and Alison Smithson, editor, *Team 10 Primer* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1968).

[13]In successive partnerships these architects designed key projects such as the Spangen gallery housing of 1919, the Van Nelle factory of 1928 and the Bergpolder flats of 1934.

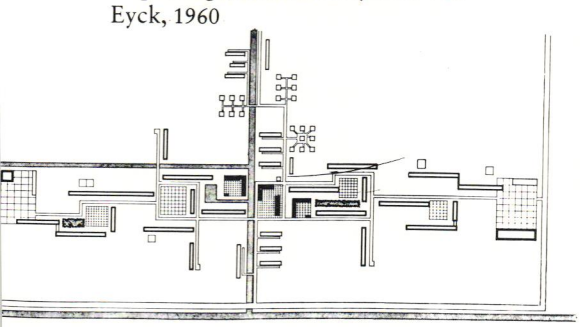
[14]JB Bakema, 'Architecture by Planning, Planning by Architecture,' *Architects' Year Book* 8 (New York, 1957), p 23

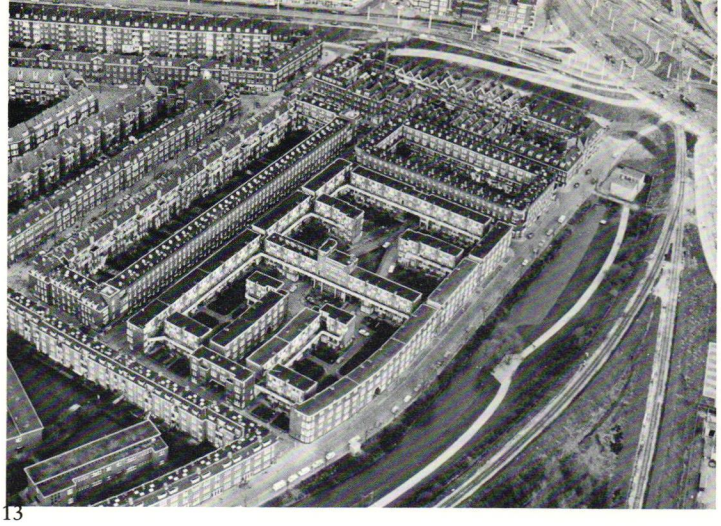
[15]This was an approach which had been suggested by van Doesburg in his 1924 claim that 'the new architecture has demonstrated that everything stems from relationship.' See Theo van Doesburg, '*Tot een beeldende architectuur*,' (Towards a Plastic Architecture), *De Stijl* VI, No 6/7 (1924), p 79

[16] W van Tijen, 'The present Situation of Architecture,' *Forum* 15, No 9 (1960-61), p 326

[17]Aldo van Eyck, 'The Story of Another Idea,' *Forum* 14, No 7 (1959), p 199

12 Studies for Pendrecht and Alexanderpolder, J B Bakema, 1949-1956
13 Spangen, Rotterdam, M Brinkman, 1919-1921
14 Orphanage, Amsterdam, Aldo van Eyck, 1960





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on the 'moral function of architectural expression.'[18]

The conviction that modern man was alienated from his existence was the common thread which unified this Dutch critique of Modern architecture. Even one of the movement's own heroes was not immune: 'In architecture this perfection of an icy-cold, inhuman but perfect beauty is brilliantly represented by Mies van der Rohe. This is architecture fit for gods and priests, dictatorship of Non-entity – its only opponent being Le Corbusier.'[19] The *Forum* group also believed that alienation was partially caused by *Nieuwe Zakelijkheid's* overstatement of the case of collectivization ('no longer little garden plots but one common green space'). The proposed remedy suggests the common basis underlying the subsequent work of both Hertzberger and Habraken: 'The first thing that the idea of community needs is the creation of a place where people are able to live their own lives.'[20] The focus on housing, however, was not yet much more than a reiteration of the rallying cries of 1901 and 1918: 'It is at any rate clear that architects are unable to produce housing in the necessary quantity that is both relevant to people and reasonably cheap.'[21]

The Sociology of the Street

The *Forum* editors went beyond the suggestive non-western imagery of the Dogon settlements by elevating a housing project within Holland itself to the status of paradigm. The gallery access housing (Figure 13) in the Spangen district of Rotterdam, designed by Michael Brinkman in 1919, was regarded by Bakema in 1960 as a rediscovered treasure, superior in many ways to most post-World War II housing. Seeing in Spangen 'architectonic town planning and forms giving clues for human behavior,'[22] the *Forum* architects / editors considered this housing complex an example of the principles of threshold, connection, 'house as city' (van Eyck) and 'Architecturbanism' (Bakema). The subsequent admiration of Spangen since 1960 has epitomized some of the dissatisfaction with Modernist housing, for the project itself obviously contradicted what were to become inviolate Modernist precepts: its organization is based on the closed, street-defined block; not all units have an equal or necessarily desirable orientation to the sun; and the central court was not entirely communal space but largely allocated to private gardens belonging to ground floor occupants. Aesthetically, with the exception of the almost constructivist gallery, Spangen is severely heavy in its use of the vernacular brick. It seeks to accentuate, not equalize, the distinct qualities of front and back, and is suggestively expressionistic as a social statement.

To some extent the Dutch have seen in Spangen what they wanted to see, but some valid interpolations of its features have been made.[23] For instance, the dwelling street, as 'inbetween place' is a key element in van Eyck's critically important orphanage, built in Amsterdam in 1960 (Figure 14). In many ways the orphanage is the archetype for many of the anti-Modernist modes in Dutch housing, and its influence on the subsequent work of Hertzberger and others has been enormous. Yet for those who worked in the constrained economic context of the 1920s and 30s, the broken-down scale of this building would appear to flout the key *Nieuwe Zakelijkheid* principle that for economic reasons housing should be configured as a 'large closed mass.'[24] With its ideological basis in psychology and behaviorism rather than in politics, and economics, the orphanage is almost the deliberate antithesis of Modernist architecture. The building belies its institutional role, in part because it appears to be an assembly of small modules, as if an indigenous additive process created the building over time. Echoing the morphology of the Dogon housing, the orphanage for van Eyck was also a realization of the Berlagian principle so dear to Dutch architects – unity in diversity. In this building van Eyck attempted 'place-making' in contrast to the 'organized Nowhere' of Modern housing: the orphanage does not sit isolated in space but encloses and creates its own.

[18]JB Bakema, letter, *Forum* 15, No 5 (1960-61), p 189

[19]Editors, 'The Threshold – Land of In-Between,' *Forum* 14, No 8 (1959), English Summary

[20]*Ibid*, p 271

[21]Herman Hertzberger, 'Homework for more hospitable form,' *Forum* 24, No 3, (1973), p 2

[22]See Herman Hertzberger, 'Three Better Possibilities,' and JB Bakema, 'A House for 270 Families in Spangen' in *Forum* 15, No 5 (1960-61), pp 193-195.

[23]However, for forty years Spangen's gallery idea was mis-applied in such projects as the 1934 high-rise, gallery-accessed Bergpolder flats – a model of much post-World War II housing.

[24]Mart Stam, '*Drie woningen op de tentoonstelling te Stuttgart*', ('Three Houses at the Stuttgart Exhibition'), *i 10* (1927), p 342. Stam wrote further in explaining his Weissenhof Siedlung housing, 'If the building is broken up into several smaller masses, it will require a much larger area of exterior wall, and certainly be much more expensive.'

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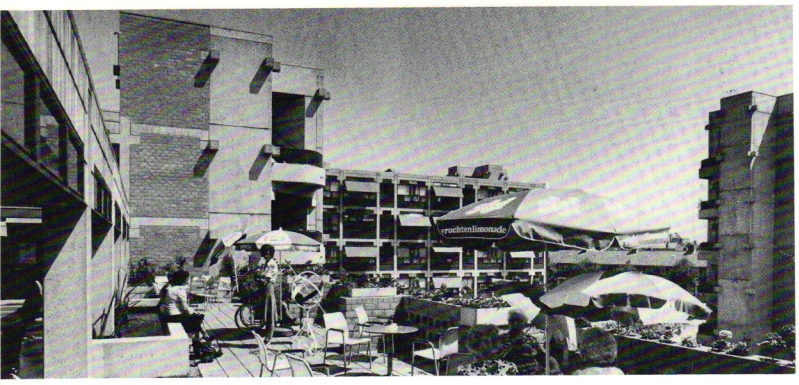

15 Driehoven, Amsterdam, Herman Hertzberger, 1972-74
16 Kasbah, Hengelo, P Blom, 1972-73
17 'Diagoon' Experimental Housing, Delft, Herman Hertzberger, 1971
18 *Pijlwoningen*, Helmond, P Blom, 1974
19 *Pijlwoningen* and community center P Blom, 1974

Because of its meandering plan ('labyrinthian clarity') the orphanage also takes an anti-bureaucratic (but not anarchistic) stance.[25] The internal logic and contrast of opposites which are ambivalent, not polar, reflect both functional and symbolic goals. With connection and relationship treated as carefully as the individual spaces, the orphanage (a 'city-like house') is a formal statement to the effect that the remedy to alienation lies in the proper balancing and integration of the individual and the collective. However, the orphanage can be criticized in the terms identified by the *Nieuwe Zakelijkheid* architect van Tijen. He observed just after the orphanage was completed that 'this building proves that it is impossible to pre-arrange spontaneity.'[26] This opinion correctly recognizes the formalist, almost intellectual tendency of van Eyck's work.

The notion of housing complexes comprised of small spatial modules partially derives from the long-standing use of repetition and geometry as structuring devices in Dutch design. Influenced by the work of J H de Groot on proportion, Berlage employed a modular geometry in his Beurs and later buildings. Likewise, some of Berlage's contemporaries (de Bazel, Lauweriks) used proportioning systems, planning grids and modules. This approach continues to characterize the Dutch fascination with ordered geometry—whether the imposing sense of geometric control in Blom's and Hertzberger's buildings or the tartan grid applied by SAR (The Habraken-inspired Foundation for Architectural Research). The use of regular geometries in the twenties and thirties was as much an extension of Berlagian rationalism as it was part of an attempt to develop an image appropriate to industrialization in an era of eclectic taste. However, modularization of the building fabric—in a spatial, not a building-component sense—should also be regarded as the consequence of Berlage's belief that the spirit of the working class could be represented architecturally by the repetitive treatment of housing plan and façade.

It is in this sense of the representational potential in architectural expression that some anti-Modernist housing shares a key assumption of the 1920s and 30s. Oud, Stam, Duiker, van Tijen and others sought in their architecture to 'reflect a culture' and represent what for them were almost ethical standards: equality, hygiene, low cost and the suppression of any hint at individuality. Van Eyck, similarly assuming the need for a correspondence between housing aesthetics and Dutch society, searches for what he has termed the 'unknown configurative discipline'—'the aesthetics of number.' This is the delicate balance between the individual and the collective, and parallels the typical tension in Dutch society between centuries-old capitalist freedoms and the post-war social-democratic welfare state.

Hertzberger, like van Eyck and Habraken, has been especially motivated by antagonism towards the alienating qualities of large-scale housing. 'Wherever the architect effectively determines the environment of people on a large scale, and gives it form in word and deed, he in fact contributes—as is continually being demonstrated—to the perpetuation and extension of a world where everything is too cold, and too large: a grim underworld of gravestone skyscrapers, passages, lifts, tunnels, and pipes through which people circulate and are transported and manipulated . . .'[27] In the context of Team 10 traditions, and of his respect for Le Corbusier and Louis Kahn, this attitude poses certain dilemmas, which are still unresolved in his large buildings in Apeldoorn and Amsterdam. The Driehoven old persons' home (Figure 15) is, like van Eyck's orphanage, housing of a specialized type, yet in this enormous complex Hertzberger has developed qualities diametrically opposed to Modernist housing. In contrast to its almost threatening exterior, the interior of Driehoven is an optimistic assertion of the individual's ability to make his mark on space. Taking the concept of the city-like house and the interior street even further than van Eyck, Hertzbeger has created in Driehoven a well-balanced blend of private,

[25]See Aldo van Eyck, 'The Medicine of Reciprocity Tentatively Illustrated,' *Forum* 15, No 6 / 7 (1960-61), pp 237-238 and 'Labyrinthian Clarity' in John Donat, editor, *World Architecture* 3, (New York and London, 1966), pp 121-129

[26]W van Tijen, 'The Present Situation of Architecture,' *Forum* 15, No 9 (1960-61), p 327

[27]Herman Hertzberger, 'Homework for more hospital form', *Forum* 24, No 3 (1973), p 2

[28]Dutch housing projects, expressionist or otherwise, have traditionally had metaphorical or allegorical names.



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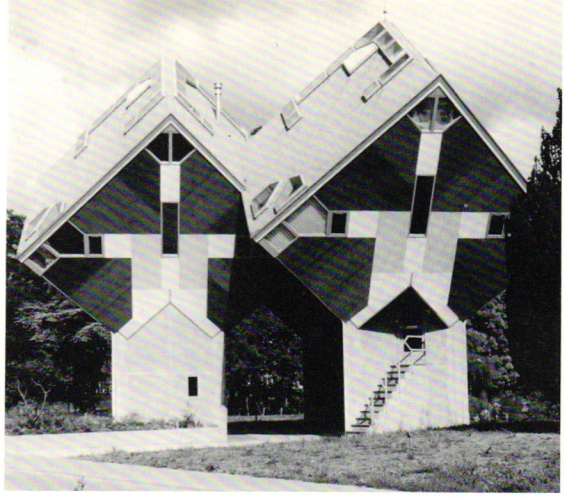

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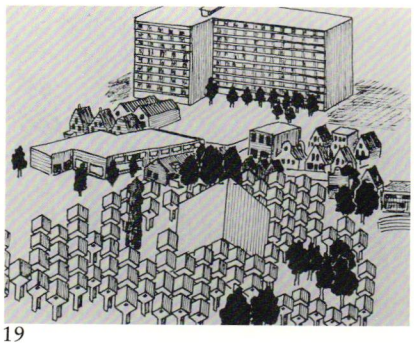

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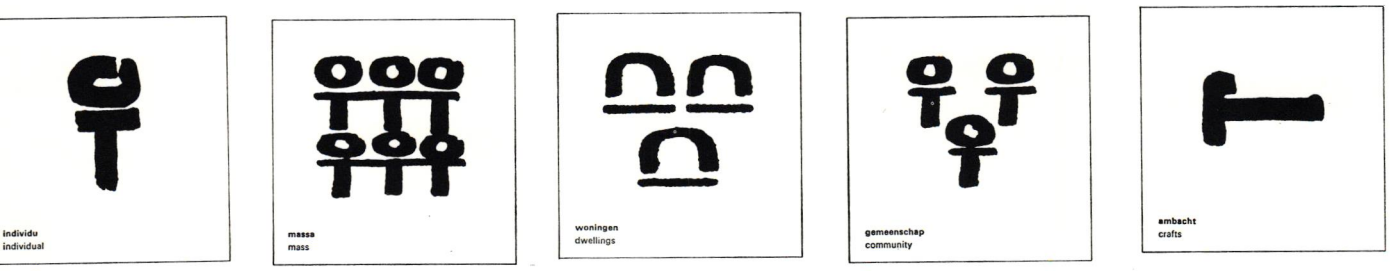
semi-private and public spaces. At each scale, rather than totally predetermining the design, numerous opportunities have been left for the occupants to complete and personalize the spaces. The project's success also arises from its intense, somewhat unconventional juxtaposition of the dwelling unit with city-like spaces—cafe, restaurant, billiard hall, laundry, hairdresser, sun terraces, greenhouses, an indoor village green and 'streets.'

To be anti-Modernist in Holland has not been sufficient guarantee that practicable housing will result, and despite the relative unity among the current Dutch *avant-garde*, realizations of theory have often been tentative and at times unsuccessful. Piet Blom, less polemical than Hertzberger or van Eyck, believes that 'a city should be inhabited as a village'—an idea which has informed his early student work, published in *Forum* in 1959, and more recent projects. Blom's first major housing complex, the Kasbah, (Figure 16) (so named[28] in deliberate reference to the initial *Forum* propaganda) was built in Hengelo in1973. This is obviously anti-Modernist housing, yet its achievements are only tentative at best. With all the housing raised in the air, not in the manner of *pilotis* but as housing along a lake might be built against the possibility of flooding, the Kasbah denies contact with the ground in contrast to a basic Dutch housing value. This approach arose not from any commitment to the abstract dwelling-in-the-sky-overlooking-the-landscape attitudes of the Dutch highrise schemes of the 1930s, but rather because the project was originally conceived to provide opportunities for user-created infill in a tight urban context, such as Amsterdam. The housing forms an infrastructure which is incomplete, and, in a manner similar to Hertzberger's Carcass housing in Delft (Figure 17), the residents are expected to infill the ground floor zone according to their own desires. For various reasons this has happened only incidentally.

The Kasbah is constructed primarily from brick, the traditional Dutch building material, and with its sloped tile roofs makes deliberate visual reference to the traditional Dutch home. On the other hand, Modernist notions such as exposed concrete frames and roof gardens are also employed. The project attempts to prove the viability of high-density, low rise housing—an approach which a minority of sociologists had advocated in the early post-war years as desirable and possible. Blom's site planning makes deliberate use of controlled, contained exterior space. Each dwelling unit is placed in a direct relationship with other portions of the project, not left part of a free-standing whole within the landscape. The Kasbah has a greater variety of dwelling types than usually is found in contemporary housing complexes, although perhaps through Habraken's influence it has been increasingly typical in Holland to offer a variety of dwelling layouts corresponding to particular types of inhabitants. As one of several experimental projects which have received a subsidy from the national government,[29] the Kasbah illustrates the extent to which official sanctioning of new approaches has been helpful in making the anti-Modernist critique more than simply theoretical.

While Blom raised questions with his Kasbah, and even suggested some valuable directions for exploration, he has digressed somewhat with the *Pijlwoningen*, or 'dwelling trees' of Helmond (Figures 18,19). Here, as in some of Hertzberger's architecture, repetitive geometry dominates the plan. Abutting cubes, diagonally balanced with one corner of each placed on a concrete stem, create an internal environment more reminiscent of the forward part of a wooden sailing ship, or a space vehicle, than of housing. As a deliberate attempt to be anti-Modernist through the articulation of each dwelling, the overt decoration of the façades, and the rejection of the orthagonal, the Helmond project succeeds in avoiding any allusion either to Modernist or traditionalist prototypes. Unfortunately, these qualities have been achieved at great cost to the functions normally associated with housing. In the final project, which will be integrated with a community center, one senses that the sponsors are more concerned about municipal notoriety than the quality and marketability of their housing. As arbitrary as they are fanciful, the *Pijlwoningen* are spiritually closer to the Amsterdam architecture of the 1920s than to the more relevant themes of the critique of Modernism.

[29]The current policy of the Ministry of Housing and Physical Planning experimental housing program is focused on: urbanization (versus suburbanization) through the development of sufficiently attractive urban residential environments; infill housing to preserve building intensity, small scale and multi-purpose character, housing for persons with special needs; and housing offering occupants greater control over character and layout.



20 from 'Three R's for housing' N J Habraken, 1966

The articulated, formal configurations of the architecture of Hertzberger, van Eyck, Blom and others (Verhoeven, van Stigt and van Klingeren)[30] also raise the issue of flexibility. Rietveld's Schroeder house of 1924 had experimented with movable partitions on the second floor. Within ten years, this feature was beginning to appear in most of the progressive schemes for workers' housing. This application allowed the inhabitant to efficiently accommodate a large family within a small space, but did not allow the user to radically manipulate it in his own image. This and other variants of flexibility are not held in high esteem by architects such as Hertzberger, who finds what he calls 'freedom noise' in the formlessness of totally neutral architecture. Although for Hertzberger a specific form is necessary to provoke user response, he still willingly employs the flexibility inherent in repetitive spatial / functional 'cells' to generate a large building fabric. Most recently, Dutch architects have begun to conceptualize flexibility in terms of user freedom—a sociological approach which supersedes movable partitions or lowest-common-denominator housing solutions.

Participatory Design

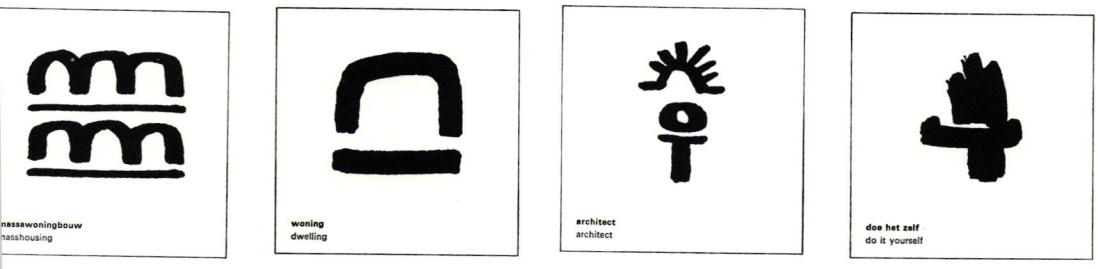
For the Dutch, involvement of the user in architecture has been based upon two distinctly different concepts. On the one hand, van Eyck and Hertzberger have advocated an approach based upon the interaction between architectural form and users. Hertzberger has often spoken of 'form being interpretable—in the sense that it must be conditioned to play a changing role,' and van Eyck has also sought to explain his projects on the basis of a diversity of interpretation. Attention to small-scale architectural features has characterized this approach—hence the design care in a doorstep, a flowerbox, a seat or sandbox. This precious attitude is typically Dutch in its fascination with small things. But such concern for the microenvironment does not constitute a sufficiently complete program for housing design.

A second approach to user involvement has more significant implications.

Participatory design (as distinct from response to architect-created form) is rooted in the very beginnings of the Modern Movement, when workmens' cooperatives were, for a brief period, the most important producers and consumers of housing. As early as 1918 Berlage had advocated the participation of workers in the establishment of dwelling types. The Team 10 line of questioning, again fueled by the sense of alienation, was reflected in Bakema's recognition of the importance of identity: 'If we plan schemes for towns with high blocks, in such a way that functional problems of traffic, sun, open space, etc., are recognized, we have solved many questions but forgotten one problem which is nowadays the principal one. *Which is that people like to belong to something.*'[31] Bakema, in 1957 still very much an advocate of the functionalist tradition, restated this position a few years later in a way which was even more critical of Modernism and certainly lacking its *hubris*:

> *Matters that were self-evident before 1940 are no longer clear to us: e.g., how to formulate the building program of working class dwellings. The people who are to inhabit them still do not do so. The many committees have not yet succeeded in establishing a real contact with the future occupants. The committee of the housing society at least used to have some contact, but as a matter of fact the post-war technical-financial-administrative circumstances cause all these committees to accept the same kind of building, barring small variations, that is to say, the type that suits a rational-administrative-technical production machinery best.*[32]

However, at this point, just before the publication of Habraken's *Supports*, Bakema's commitment to participation was oriented more to the possibilities of visually expressive residential environments than to a total reconceptualization of the housing process. Bakema believed that bureaucracy interfered too much with the individual and allowed 'too little scope for the stylization of differences and diversities of human behavior,' but his various housing projects have



[30]See Arnulf Luchinger, 'Strukturalismus–eine neue Strömung in der Architektur,' *Bauen + Wohnen* 1 (1976).

[31]JB Bakema, 'Architecture by Planning, Planning by Architecture,' *Architects' Yearbook* 8 (New York, 1957), p 24

[32]JB Bakema 'Architecture is the three dimensional expression of human behaviour,' *Forum* 15, No 3 (1960), p 119

[33]See *Architectural Design* XLV (November, 1975) for an edited version of the Royaumont proceedings.

[34]NJ Habraken, 'Three R's for Housing,' *Forum* 20, No 1 (1966)

shown only tentative progress in achieving the desired diversity.

In 1961, transcending the Team 10 critique and reacting to the failures of the post-war housing boom, N J Habraken's profound book *De Dragers en de Mensen* (*The Supports and the People*) was published. Habraken's key point was that 'the return of consultation and involvement on the part of the users must be accepted.' Arguing that housing uniformity–'perfected barracks'–is caused by the elimination of the individual from the housing process, Habraken argued that the problem was not technical but organizational (Figure 20). The plea that architects could not and should not design housing was addressed to a wider audience and went well beyond the call for psychological participation, which continually surfaced in Team 10 polemics. Although Habraken was indebted to the impetus for reform behind the formation of Team 10, he has regarded the housing built by Team 10 members as continuing the traditions of CIAM. His ideas were far too visionary to be easily accepted by the housing establishment, but Team 10 was readily willing to carry Habraken's message, as van Eyck did at Royaumont in 1962: 'To be able to express yourselves in that place where you are living, to alter it according to your own fashion, to do it in your own personal way; these things are freedom of choice.'[33] A number of progressive Dutch architectural firms were instrumental in seeking the means to implement this way of thinking, principally through the establishment of SAR (*Stichting Architekten Research* or Foundation for Architectural Research) in Eindhoven in 1964. SAR's chief purpose has been to develop concrete design recommendations, according to which the goals of individual participation in housing can be achieved.

The theory of 'supports' and 'detachable units' distinguishes that portion of housing, about which there is group consensus, from the modifiable, individually controlled portion. This approach signifies the inversion of some of the principles of housing dearest not only to the *Nieuwe Zakelijkheid* but also to most post-war architects. Habraken believes that 'you cannot make a home for someone else . . . you cannot make dwellings for unknown people.'[34] This would have been simply an untenable and unheard-of position for Oud, Stam, Duiker, van Tijen or Merkelbach. While the *Nieuwe Zakelijkheid* advocated the development and use of universal housing prototypes, supports theory requires a solution sensitive to each situation. Because a 'support' is not an industrialized building frame but that portion of housing for which local communal decision-making is necessary, there can be no one 'support' prototype. With full involvement of the user, who has control over the 'detachable units,' standardized plans cannot offer viable housing. The work of SAR on modular coordination focuses on the need to facilitate the interconnection between supports and detachable units; industrial production must be coupled with action taken by an individual. This is not, as sometimes thought, just another technical approach to reducing housing costs.

Habraken was reacting most directly to te Dutch housing of the 1950s and 1960s–'those miserable objects which we now design and produce and which no longer make possible the act of real housing.' Yet supports theory cannot be characterized as just another overstated position in the seemingly unending dialectic of Dutch architectural polemics. Rather, it is an approach to participatory design which is broadly conceived, and Habraken happily acknowledges the influence of such divergent architects as Granpré Molière and van Tijen. On the one hand, participation in the housing process allows for the maximization of individual choice, while on the other Habraken is heir to the *Nieuwe Zakelijkheid* belief that proper employment of industrialization can serve the creation of livable and affordable dwelling environments.

It must also be stressed that, like most developments in Dutch architecture, SAR ideas correlate with broadly-based political and cultural phenomena. Although Habraken's *Supports* anticipated the radicalism of the late

21 Demonstration against the Amsterdam Metro, 1975
22 Bijlmermeer, Amsterdam, 1969-72
23 'Kasko' housing, Delft, S Haaksma, 1973
24 Papendrecht, Frans van der Werf, 1975
25 Zwolle, Aldo van Eyck, 1975



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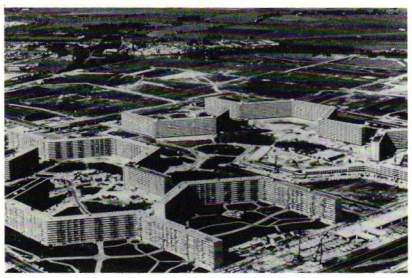
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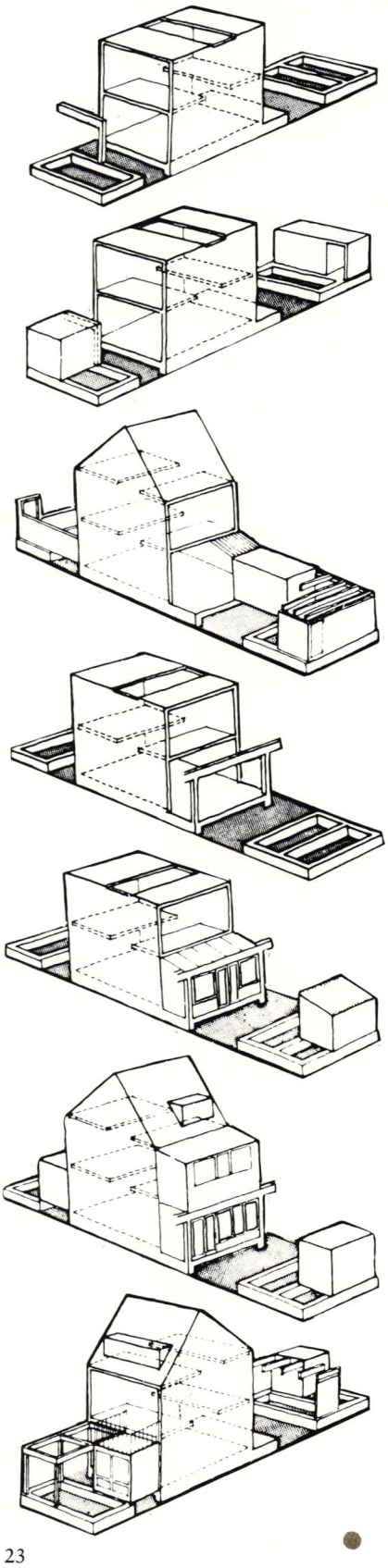
1960s, it was conceived in the same climate which nurtured the political and social upheaval of those years. Habraken's ideas have been paralleled by the increasing politicization of environmental concerns, most acutely manifest in the anarchistic Provos movement. Involvement and activism have continued almost unabated in Holland—whether attempting to stop the construction of the Amsterdam Metro, provoking a municipality into a better land-use policy, or demanding more individual control of housing (Figure 21). But with the continuation of such housing fiascoes as the over-scaled Bijlmermeer project in Amsterdam (Figure 22) and with 56% of the Dutch population living in rented dwellings, the supports approach seems to be a particularly appropriate response to the insatiable market for the one-family house.

While a number of housing projects by S Haaksma (Figure 23) and others suggest ways of implementing supports theory, a significant realization of some of the SAR principles has just been built at Papendrecht [See accompanying documentation-Editor]. Designed by Frans van der Werf for a competition held in the early 1970s, the winning scheme was at first similar to Bakema's housing schemes typical at that time. However, through van der Werf's association with SAR, and aided by a government grant for experimental housing, the project has evolved as a key step forward in the realization of occupant participation in housing design (Figure 24). In more than 100 dwelling units of this rental housing, the future occupants were given the opportunity to determine floor plans in consultation with the architect. The significant 'support agreement' involved fixed plumbing locations, and the resulting plans were far more varied than could have been designed without user participation. On the exterior skin the occupants determined, within guidelines set by van der Werf, the amount and placement of windows, fixed glass, and solid infill, and from a lively pallete chose the color of the trim.

Aesthetically much more restrained than Lucien Kroll's University of Louvain in Belgium, and less presumptuous than Blom's Kasbah, Papendrecht, rather than reflecting *a priori* organizational or aesthetic theories, conveys meaning according to the desires of its inhabitants. In making allusions through its roof configurations to the traditional Dutch townscape it is appropriately ordinary. Whatever the ideology behind the project it has not become boringly obvious or absurdly obscure. But the subversive qualities of this housing are perhaps more profound than would at first appear. On the most basic level, the project dismisses the mentality of the *schoonheidscommissies*, the 'beauty' commissions which in some locales have exercised strong control over aesthetics, including the requirement for uniform trim, either white or brown. In the future, SAR's principles will foster the development of diverse aesthetic features through the implementation of housing built in the image of its inhabitants.

Beyond Modernist Housing

It would be incorrect to conclude that all Dutch housing proceeds simply on the belief that user participation is sufficient to insure good design. The implementation of SAR methodologies has been difficult and slow, and more conservative principles still hold sway in most Dutch housing practice. The pre-war prototypes are still being built, and the market for one-family houses is too often being satisfied with block after monotonous block of garden-city inspired row houses. Whether an expanded version of the pitched-roof cottage or deliberately box-like 'Modern,' this housing apparently satisfies much of the Dutch populace. Yet it continues to be abhorred by most progressive Dutch architects. Many attempt to create alternatives to the rote, uniform planning of the double-loaded street, but too often this is 'camouflaging monotony by variety of design'[35] rather than a radical altering of the architect's role. For other architects, principles of neo-plasticism hold renewed appeal, and the attempt to incorporate *De Stijl's* formal attributes in housing goes far beyond the intentions, if not the abilities, of Oud and Rietveld.



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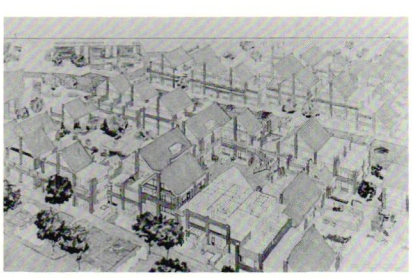

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Despite the inertia of the various producers, institutions and agencies concerned with Dutch housing, dwellings organized and formed according to the hygiene ethic of Duiker are no longer the *sine qua non*. Demand for housing in the Jordaan and Dapperbuurt districts of Amsterdam has blossomed in recent years, reflecting a renewed regard for sense of place and connection to a continuously evolving urban fabric. For similar reasons, Amsterdam School housing has recently been accorded renewed interest by historians, the Dutch populace and government. Infill housing, such as van Eyck's Jordaan and Zwolle (Figure 25) projects, respond to the specificity of the context rather than exclusively to a set of universal principles. Allusions to the forms and materials of the Dutch vernacular are used deliberately to evoke the inviting and more subtle qualities of home in order to avoid threatening alienation through the deliberate representation, if not actual use, of mass production. Stam once wrote that 'the dwelling has become for us more than shelter, but it should remain predominantly that,' but today the most innovative of Dutch housing is continually seeking to reach what Bakema in 1942 had anticipated as the 'things which cannot be touched by words, analyses and reports.'

Unlike the architecture of the United States, Japan and elsewhere, recently labeled 'post-modern' by various critics, the radical directions of Dutch housing today transcend contradiction, semanticism, and the neo-vernacular, although all of these may be present in varying degrees. In the densely settled Netherlands, housing is undergoing a more authentic and existential struggle with the deep implications of Modernism. The concern for better housing—ultimately, for how people are to live—is set in the broader terms of how an individual can participate in the collective political process and marketplace and simultaneously nurture his individual freedom. Yet the close connection between architecture and society, which historically has stimulated Dutch housing innovations, provides a basis for optimism, since modern values—beyond architecture—are the subjects of reform. If Modernist housing was thought to stimulate moral improvement, the current Dutch idealists hope more modestly and certainly less paternalistically that their approach can help to overcome modern alienation. What remains to be seen is the degree to which the participation of users in the housing process liberates architects less aggressive or iconoclastic than van Eyck, Hertzberger, or van der Werf from the effective stranglehold of rote Modernist housing solutions.

[35]See John Carp, 'The History of a Development and the Future,' *SAR Openhouse* No 4, (1976), pp 19-28.

Molenvliet-Wilgendonk:

Experimental Housing Project, Papendrecht, The Netherlands

Frans van der Werf, Architect
with Hubert-Paul Froyen

As a result of the critical housing shortages of the late nineteenth century, Modern Movement designers attempted to develop schemes for mass housing which have left a bitter legacy in the many public housing projects which blight our cities today. Although we may criticize the results of Modern Movement housing types, the needs from which they arose remain. The following project is an attempt to develop a mechanism for mass housing which avoids the alienating qualities inherent in Modern Movement housing of the past.

Taken at face value, this project supports the inherent reasonableness of the Modern Movement's systematic approach to public housing. At the same time it suggests that the Modern Movement simply stopped short of accommodating the particular needs of specific users and specific sites, because it did not actively solicit input from those sources, or allow local building traditions to modify its forms. The assumption is that an architectural system *can still work – but its purpose must be to allow for variation and sensitivity to users' needs at various scales.*

This inevitably leaves many of the questions raised elsewhere in this publication unresolved: for example, whether pattern languages, Modern or Post-Modern, can be manipulated from unit to unit to satisfy age-old needs once answered through the synthetic reintegration of symbolism, decoration and historic reference. And further, whether large subsidized housing complexes can ever provide acceptable living environments – or just be modified without truly redressing past failures. Although it straddles both 'Modern' and 'Post-Modern' approaches to design, the message of Papendrecht is clear: that architects should not work in total isolation from the geographical and cultural context of their projects, and that housing *in particular must first serve the psychological and physical needs of its inhabitants before satisfying the polemical urges of its designners.*

Introduction

The Competition

In 1969 the City of Papendrecht, population 25,000, invited designs for the construction of a housing scheme of 2,400 dwellings. We began to develop our scheme for this competition on the basis of two ideas, each resolving a complex set of relationships into a simple plan diagram. The neighborhood would have a linear layout. A central street would provide for pedestrian and cyclist circulation and give continuity to the neighborhood by forming a backbone for all services, schools, and shops. Clusters of dwellings and green spaces would alternate along this street in such a way that each opening on one side of the street would face dwellings on the side opposite.

The second idea established a system of public and private areas for the proposed community so that the needs of both areas might be accommodated: reflection and contemplation as well as interaction and communication.

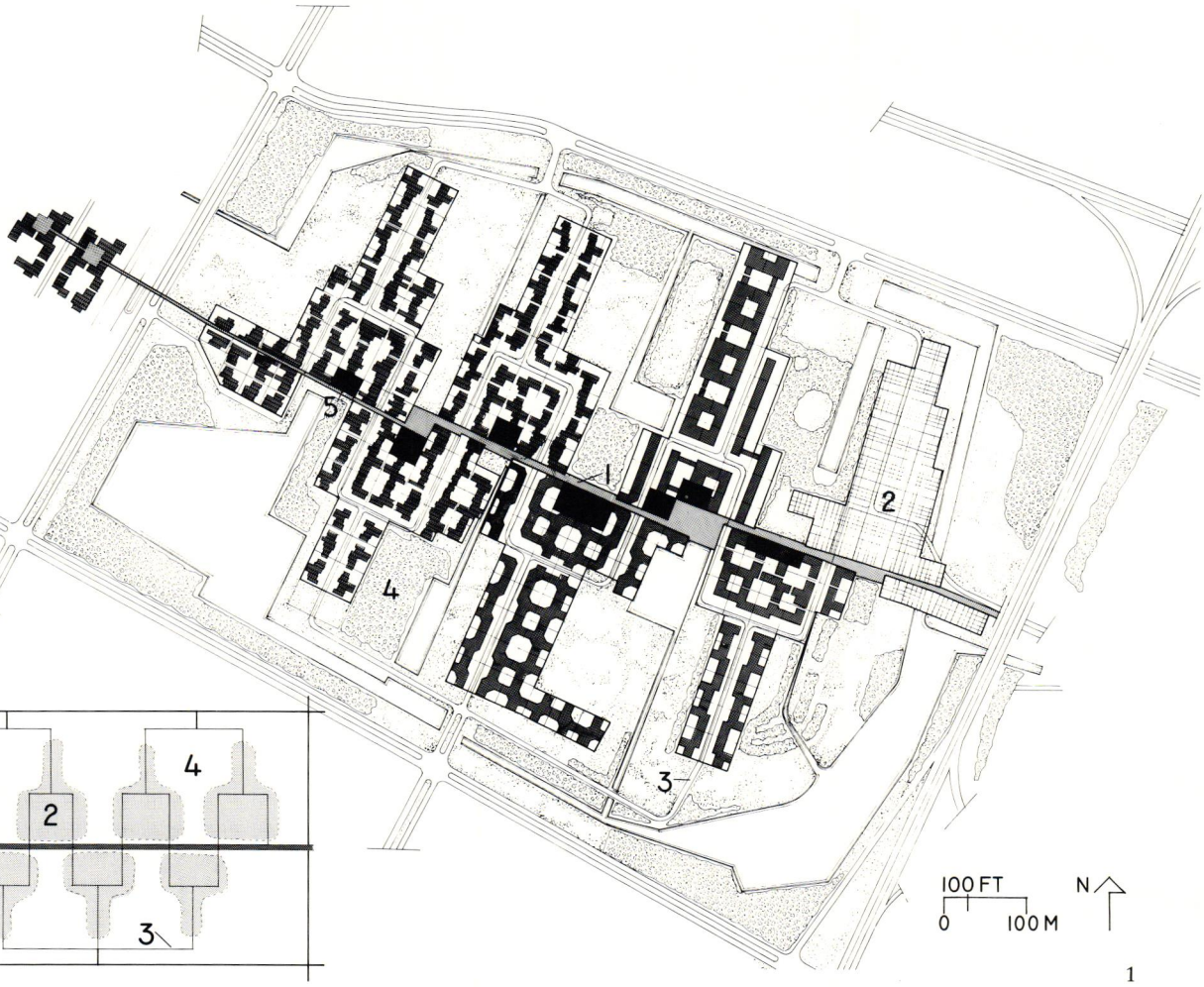
The city found our approach interesting, awarded first prize to our scheme (Figure 1), and eventually supported the complete design and construction of a portion of this scheme. Below are listed the primary elements of the competition plan. For each of these four plan elements and their relationships (Figure 2), a pattern was developed. These patterns, inspired by Christopher Alexander, represent not only the formulation of the problem but also the solution in terms of morphology and location.[1]

The Four Plan Elements

1 The central street: a linear space for pedestrians and cyclists oriented longitudinally in the middle of the site. This central artery is similar to the kind of main street which is found in a typical rural village, and all the necessary service facilities are located along its length. This organization makes apparent many of the unifying elements of the scheme. The scheme also addresses the smaller scale of the housing clusters by associating each cluster with an important service area – a school or shop, for example.

2 The building zones: spaces allocated for construction, primarily for housing of a certain density (here approximately 80 dwellings per hectare or 32.4 per acre), but also for service facilities. One of the necessary services is placed in

[1] For a full discussion of the use of patterns in the design process see Christopher Alexander, *A Pattern Language: Towns, Buildings, Construction,* by Christopher Alexander, Sara Ishikawa and Murray Silverstein, with others, Oxford University Press, (New York, 1977).



each building zone, and by living near one of these facilities one can more easily identify with the immediate housing cluster and, at a larger scale, with the neighborhood as a whole.

3 The roads: circulation elements for cars outside the building zone. The roads, together with the streets within the building zones, form a hierarchical circulation network. A ring road provides convenient access to the separate building zones, while the smallest arteries serve the central area where pedestrian activity is most intensive.

4 The green areas: small open spaces of 5 to 10 acres. Too often the growth of our cities includes the allocation of existing open space in small parcels to individual dwellings. But green areas should have comfortable dimensions and variety of character. After all, green space is cheap to lay out and maintain and is healthful for people of all ages. Through high density development we have found it possible to provide a large amount of green space, a scarce resource in the Netherlands: here Nature exists near housing and enables 'respiration.'

The Decision-Making Process

The decision-making process for neighborhood design and construction (Figure 3) is complex and wide-ranging. It is an iterative process and one that encourages variation within it. As our diagram illustrates, the strategy determined in one area forms part of the framework for discussion and

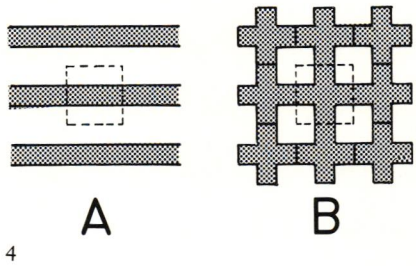
1 Stichting Architekten Research, Foundation for Architectural Research, The Netherlands (formed in 1964)

3

The Decision-Making Process

Level 1	**City Plan**	
	Area: Wilgendonk	central street
	Relationships • Elements	built area roads
	Patterns	green area and water
	Model of overall plan	
Level 2	**Overall plan**	working out of roads, green and water
	Area: Building zone	
	Relationships • Elements	streets and alleys courtyards
	Patterns	buildings
	Tissue Model	
Level 3	**Tissue Plan**	working out of streets, courtyards, sewerage and pipes
	Area: Buildings	
	Relationships • Elements	floors roofs
	Patterns	piers
	Support Principle	
Level 4	**Support Plan**	working out of foundations, constructions and pipes
	Area: Dwelling, shop, etc.	
	Relationship • Elements	partitions plumbing fixtures kitchen units
	Consultation with tenant	wiring heating facade elements
	Dwelling plan	working out of facade elements, partitions, etc.

1 Site plan showing central street (1). building zones (2), roads (3) and green areas (4)
2 Site plan elements: Central street (1), building zones (2), roads (3) and green areas (4)
3 Scheme of the decision-making process
4 Comparison of linear (A) and two-directional (B) building patterns
5 Open-space diagram showing pattern of entry courts (A) and garden courts (B)
6 Building section diagram showing pattern of two-story dwelling units
7 Building section diagram showing pattern of building zones (A), margins for future construction (B) and open areas (C)
8 The building section allows sunlight access to the garden courts



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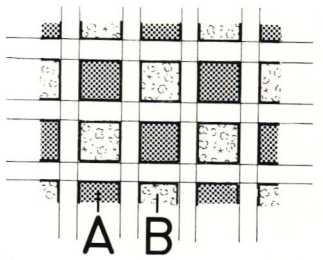

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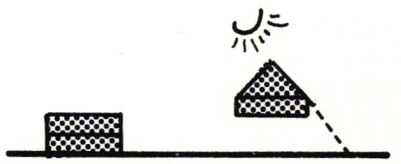
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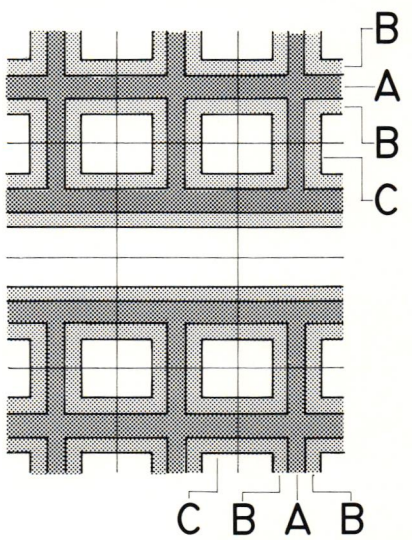

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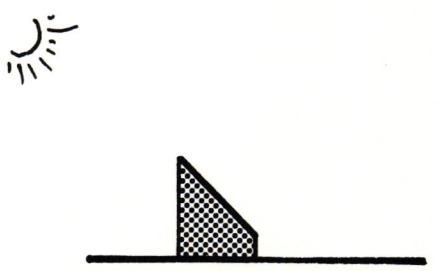
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resolution in the next. For simplicity this process may be seen as having distinct levels, according to the scale of the design elements concerned. Each level involves not only the desires of associated people (including future occupants) and agencies, but also the process of accommodating those desires, from patterns which interpret them to ideas, schemes and agreements that progressively satisfy them and result in a specific design strategy.

Level 1: Overall plan of the neighborhood, with the four main elements mentioned earlier.

Level 2: Plans of the built areas in the form of open spaces and building zones: the tissue plan.

Level 3: Plans of the building zones: floors, walls, etc.: the *support plans*.

Level 4: The *infill plans* of the dwellings, offices, shops, etc., represented in floor plans, facade layouts, etc.

The New Urban Tissue

Level 2 of Decision-Making Process

By 'urban tissue' we mean the structure of the housing environment in which a characteristic relationship is established between built and open areas but which accomodates special elements within it.

The new tissue for Papendrecht evolved according to SAR 73[2] methodology with C Alexander's pattern, 'buildings surround open spaces' as a primary three-dimensional strategy. We also developed three secondary principles: land-use economy by building in two directions (Figure 4), a distinction in the building zone between front and back (by use of entrance and garden courts) (Figure 5), and a height limit determined by stacking two dwellings to provide three levels and a habitable attic (Figure 6). The methodology suggested other specific patterns and variations for elements of the tissue plan: 'housing around courtyards,' 'animated alleys,' 'cars in the street,' and 'supports as built space,' the basic concept for design on Level 3.

The Tissue Model

The ideas about the different site plan elements and their mutual relationships are established in a tissue model, a schematic representation of building zones, open areas and margins for future construction between them (Figure 7). To this zoning system we added a system of rules which regulates the building section and which stipulates such things as the location of pedestrian crossings and the provision for lower buildings on the south side of the garden courts for sunlight access (Figure 8). The tissue model facilitates the location of special areas and buildings as might be necessary, e.g. schools, shops, a church. In addition, representatives of the various services, administrations and institutes involved with the project, use the model's information as the basis for discussion, design and calculations of density, land-use, etc.

It is our strongest belief that these rules for the organization of the site plan

elements are the most essential criteria for the design of the housing environment; however, since World War II little attention has been directed toward the development of a design approach based on these criteria. People design without a sufficiently comprehensive vision of urban space. With the aid of the tissue model we finally made a first layout for the competition site. We made a tissue zoning system within which different architects could work (Figure 1). The tissue plan was completed after this zoning was established for the whole site.

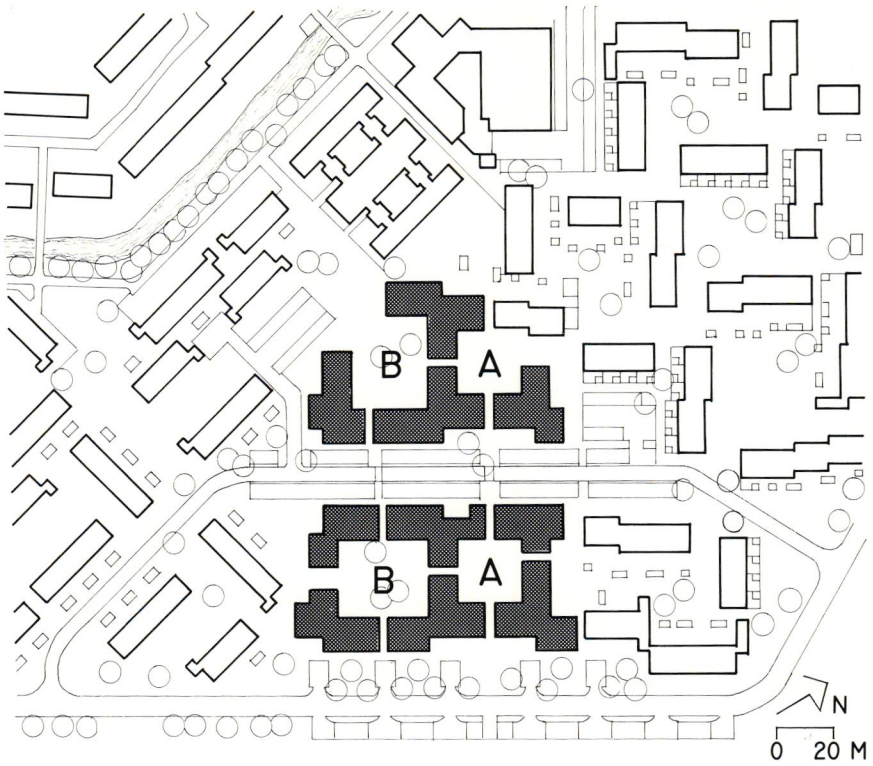
On the Molenvliet site (to the left in Figure 1) we see a test phase of the Wilgendonk competition project, consisting of a tissue fragment: one street and four courtyards. The site plan of this experimental project (Figure 9) had to accommodate two adjacent housing schemes. Here three different and very small-scale tissue models exist in obvious disharmony rather than in mutual support. The awkward edge condition shows how important it is for architects to work on the basis of one common tissue plan. Although the three architects and the urban designers coordinated their work, there was no common language. The tissue model could have provided this language.

The Support Structure

Level 3 of the Decision-Making Process

The test phase of the competition project is now realized, an experimental project which incorporates not only three kinds of spaces (street, inner court and alley), but also the concept of a support structure to be filled in. Together with the concept of the tissue model, it became necessary to elaborate upon the concept of the support structure, improving our preparatory study of 1973. The concept demanded an unusual design approach, one in which the architect does not design houses, but only an architectural structure to be filled in according to smaller scale requirements.

[3] '*Vide*' is a French term for floor openings that enable visual and auditory contact between vertically adjacent rooms.



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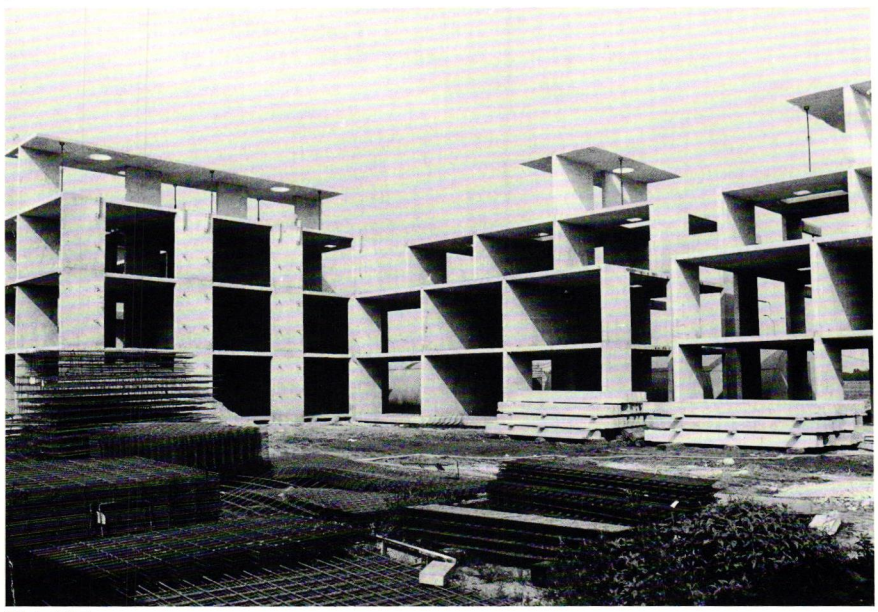

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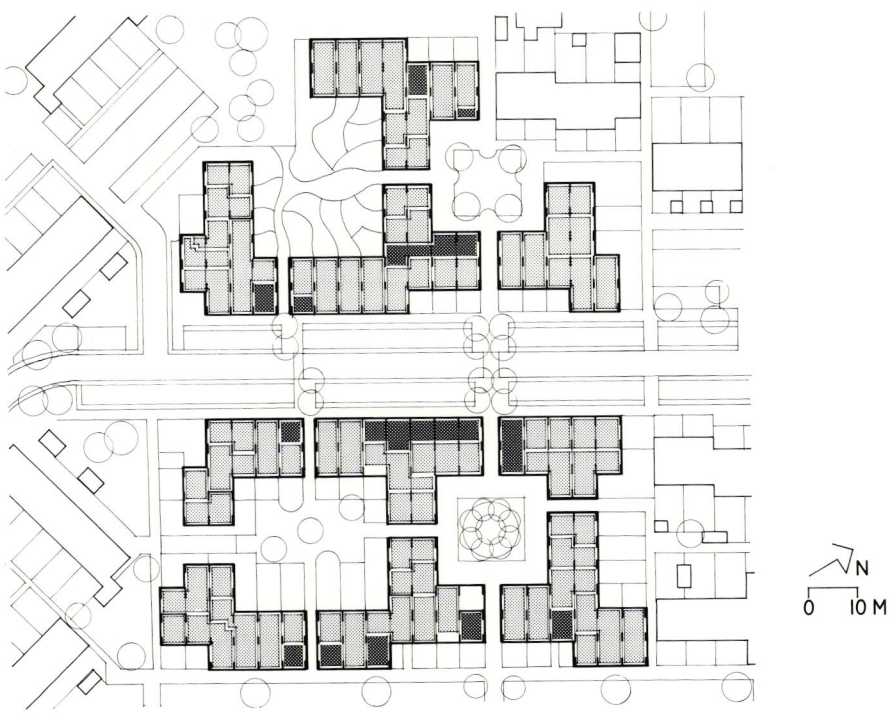


9 Site plan of the Molenvliet project showing entry courts (A) and garden courts (B)
10 The support structure
11 Subdivision of the support structure into dwelling units according to design 'pattern', summarized below. (Dark areas in plan indicate storage and circulation).

Pattern: 'Differentiation in Dwelling Size'

Human interaction in a neighborhood of adults and children occurs mainly among persons who share a specific urban space. This contact is far more interesting if it takes place among people of different age groups, different social status and different stages in family life.

Therefore, dwellings of a specific urban area should be as diverse as possible in size: from studio apartments to apartments with four bedrooms or more.
For the same reason such dwellings should also have as much diversity as possible in tenant groupings: families, couples and single people.

In Papendrecht the concept of the support comprises the following:

– two-level dwellings, stacked according to height limits.

– small private gardens for ground floor dwellings, large terraces for upper level units.

– simple, continuous building forms on the ground level; frequent interruptions for terraces on the upper levels.

– staircases to the open, third floor galleries. The open galleries around the entrance courtyards can be reached through both outdoor and indoor staircases (by law in the Netherlands). The open galleries along the street can be reached through the alleys.

– 3-meter low eaves on the south side of the courtyards.

The support structure itself (Figure 10) is a combination of seven components:

– floor decks, with openings for staircases and *vides*.[3]

– *in situ* concrete piers, 20 cm × 140 cm (8″ × 4′7″) placed parallel to each other on a 480 cm (15′9″) square grid.

– pitched roofs, two bays wide, parallel with the piers, sloped at 45° to provide a habitable attic with a loft under the ridge as an extra space for the use of the upper level dwellings.

– wooden frames which act as armatures for specific façade elements in the longitudinal façades, and prefabricated concrete parapets and wooden frames in some of the transverse façades.

– roof terraces located on the flat roof space of the ground floor dwellings as outdoor extensions of the upper level dwellings.

– open galleries for upper level access.

– vertical service shafts 60 cm (2′0″) square containing all wiring and piping for gas, water, electricity, television, telephone, chimney, ventilation and sewerage.

After our presentation of this support concept, the local Housing Association ordered plans for approximately eighty two-room apartments on the Molenvliet site. By means of the pattern 'differentiation in dwelling size' we proposed that the authority not build in this fashion but rather that it build a complex of dwellings, ranging in size from one to six rooms, for a variety of people whose differences and diversity would enrich the life of the neighborhood. This pattern did much to open the minds of the design participants on all levels and raised the dwelling count to one hundred twenty-two.

Our next step was to make a choice of specific site plan elements according to our zoning system, applicable to the 3.3 acre site and to the tissue model. We chose one street, two entrace courtyards, and two garden courtyards. The urban tissue concept allowed for an easy transition to the surrounding tissue patterns by using these elements. One garden courtyard opens onto the playground of an adjacent school, and one entrance courtyard links the project to existing single family houses to the northwest (Figure 9).

Once all components are determined, the support provides an infinite variety of possibilities. One can easily adapt it to specific situations either in an open, rural context or in a highly urbanized one, where a rather rigid structure of spaces is already present. And a support concept can be elaborated upon separately from a tissue concept. The support is an approach to the tissue in the same way that a tissue is an approach to an entire neighborhood.

A support is flexible and three-dimensional; it is a process of growth in space. The support is not a fabric of ordinary row-houses. The dwellings develop and evolve and are shaped in the process of in-filling, beginning with the subdivision of the support structure, followed accordingly by the laying-out of each specific dwelling. I believe this is the only way to make housing an 'act' – the development of the dwelling as an event in time, time being in a sense the fourth dimension of the support.

Subdivision of the Support Structure

During the process of shaping the support structure for this project, we developed various subdivision strategies for the location of dwelling units. The subdivision of the total support structure into dwellings was a function of the average dwelling size, the integration of small workshops, the location of communal storage space, and the use of roof terraces, loggias and private gardens (Figure 11).

In developing these subdivision strategies the three-dimensional freedom of the support structure was particularly useful. A willful mixing of small, middle-size, and large dwellings on all levels, with numerous decisions being left to chance, results in somewhat chaotic and irregular variations within the framework of the support structure. Variations in orientation, private outdoor spaces, staircases, special corner solutions, the addition of volumes, and the attics provide interest and surprise in the house forms.

The support structure is thus a built collection of various unit configurations. Such spontaneous creation in the design process within a rather rigid structural grid amazed us. The uniformity of mass housing was broken.

Reallocation and Renovation

The same support structure can be subdivided in many different ways. In Papendrecht the design program was changed while the support structure was under construction; there was a specific demand for one small and three larger dwellings on the ground floor for the handicapped, and twelve dwellings for elderly people. The positive characteristics of the support made it possible during the construction process for us to divide each of several large dwellings into two small ones. Since then, by request, fourteen large units have been split. Most of these new upper level dwellings have their own ground floor entrance. The dividing walls between adjacent units, made of bricks, gypsum board and acoustic material, allow us to redesignate areas of the support structure at any time a tenant wishes or when housing requirements are changed. This means that the program can be rewritten and the infill renewed without interfering with either the support structure or the tissue plan. Thus the possibility of



12 Tenant-architect design consultation.

renovation is an inherent quality of the support.

Tenant Participation

Level 4 of the Decision-Making Process

The essential part of the support-infill concept, the occupants' design or at least control of the design of their own dwelling was realized in the infill level of the decision-making process. After a general information meeting about the concept of the experimental project and its management aspects, each tenant in the 'Molenvliet-Wilgendonk' public housing scheme met twice with the architect and a representative of the Housing Association, and sometimes with a sociologist who acted only as an observer (Figure 12). Each tenant, each individual or family representative, talked candidly in two hour-long sessions about their own private lifestyle, their habits and ways of thinking, their customs of eating, sleeping, relaxing, bringing-up children, their being alone.[4]

All future occupants were presented with an empty support plan. We started together, defining the front side, the location of the opening for the staircase, of the private garden or terrace and of the vertical conduct shaft. Sitting around a table we started talking:

> *Where do you want to live, ground floor or upper level? Should spaces be open or rather closed off; what do the children want? Where would you like to sit most, front or back side, large window or not? What kind of activities do you have with your family; do you have hobbies? How important is an entrance room for you? Where do you want to locate the WC, a shower, washing and drying? Do your children sleep in one room; where do they play and work? What happens when grandmother comes for a couple of days?*

In most cases people immediately gave a clear answer. Ideas were generated: no bedrooms, an alcove, a bathroom next to the entrance room, a storage space in the living room or a special very small room 200 cm (6′7″) square or living in the attic, or a children's playroom in the very small loft right under the ridge, or a big aquarium as focal point of the house.

Everybody had his own story, his own individuality. Occasionally a person hesitated and gave no answer, waited for me to speak as a specialist. In such cases I insisted on the fact that we were talking about their life and their house, not mine. Sitting around the same table we gradually elaborated the floor-plan. We puzzled over it, and using every inch of space came to a solution together.

The future occupant went home with a sketched floor-plan after this first meeting. After him a new client came in with an empty support plan, a new face, a specific life and a specific story.

One week later we met the same tenants again; they had reflected upon their floor-plan and wishes, and they had talked to their children, relatives, neighbors and friends. Together we decided where to put the furniture, how much light was necessary, and many other details. Lastly they made a choice from a range of eight colors for the outside painting of windows, doors, window frames and panels. And again people knew mostly what they wanted.

The application of a SAR rule about components, *viz* partitions, to be placed on a 30 cm (12″) grid, helped a lot during these meetings. Of the one hundred twenty-two dwellings no two are similar, either inside or out. Not only was each potential dwelling space already different from adjacent ones at the support stage, different in shape and situation, but also each dwelling layout was a direct result of the specific wishes of the tenant.

After six months of regular consulting hours on two afternoons a week I have only one conclusion: people all live different lives and need different living conditions in their housing situations. Architects should stop designing houses in the traditional way: seated at their drawing boards. Only then can uniformity in mass housing be broken.

There need not be a contradiction between freedom and a given framework with associated agreements in a support; when elements are standardized, variety occurs. The social group decides on the support; the individual fills it and changes the infill during the course of time. While the support structure is complete, the dwelling itself evolves in an open-ended process.

Problems and Possibilities

It should be clear to the general reader and doubtless also to the specialist that the concept and the realization of an urban tissue, a support and detachable units is not as simple as expressed above. Certain problems warrant comment:

1 Code requirements and building standards; review of plans by the governmental authority.

In general the building authority requires submission of fully detailed plans, viewing the two parts, support and detachable units, as one housing scheme. In our case this requirement necessitated the design of a hypothetical and provisional floor-plan for each unit in the subdivided support structure. The authority also accorded our project the official title, 'Experimental Housing Project,' which resulted in some design freedom. Once this official procedure was complete we were free to design new floor-plans with each future occupant. These final plans were sent for approval to the Housing Association, the local authority in Papendrecht, mainly for review of safety aspects. Following approval the definite plans were sent to the future occupants, general contractor, electrician and contractor for central heating, producer of the partition walls and other sub-contractors, so that for each dwelling the infill components could be fabricated immediately.

2 What happens when a new tenant comes in?

As a result of the participation process each dwelling is different. Some interiors are so specific and personal that there is a chance that a new tenant will refuse it. The system of construction, however, makes it possible to change the floor-plan by changing the position of the movable partitions. One section of the electrical circuit is part of the support, set in the poured concrete floor and the loadbearing wall elements. Additional

wiring is part of the infill set in the skirting near the floor or in a second skirting near the ceiling. Connections for lighting, sockets and pull-switches are available throughout. The pipes for central heating by individual boilers, for gas and water supply run from a central vertical shaft to the concrete walls and are fixed there or against the movable partitions. The most difficult and most expensive items to change are the traditional tiles in bathrooms and WC's.

3 Central heating system, meters for gas, water, electricity and plumbing.

The traditional installation of the central heating system in this experimental support-infill project sometimes caused problems. Most pipes were visible and fixed near the joint between the wall and the ceiling. For a later project we developed a better, separated system, one part belonging to the support, placed in the poured concrete floor and run from the central shaft to the bearing walls, the other part flexible and belonging to the detachable unit, enabling radiators to be placed where needed.

Similarly, the location of the meters for services was difficult and restricted the number of plan variations. Meter location and plumbing should be a subject for specific research.

4 Façade frames.

A technical problem resulted from the freedom of choice associated with the composition of the façade frames, since economical fabrication required that all vertical and horizontal components of doorposts and window frames be glued in advance. A flexible system was developed in which a kind of 'support' façade frame was installed first. This frame then held the different 'infill' components: standardized windows, doors, glass and panels with thermal insulation. The design of this frame allowed for movable partitions to be connected at any vertical jamb or panel.

5 Complexity and construction.

The complicated character of the building groups caused construction problems. Different kinds of interior angles, joints in terraces and loggias, junction details between attics, between attics and flat roofs and façades caused many difficult problems. The creativity and experience of the building contractor were very helpful in the design and construction process.

Summary

The four-level scheme of decision making allows for participation in the design process by city, neighborhood and tenant interests. Many alternative support plans can be worked out for the same tissue model, all respecting the given rules. On the support level many alternative floor-plans for infill—many plan variants—can be worked out, all respecting the given rules.

In utilizing the support structure the modular coordination rules allow for the dimensioning and positioning of the building components and make realization possible both economically and technically. SAR rules also deal with the *evaluation* of a support, based on potential for variations, during the design process. The production of building components in a system of open industrialization based on these modular coordination standards will facilitate the construction of both supports and detachable units.

In the Papendrecht project there was a direct relationship between architect and future occupants of the housing scheme subsidized by local authority. Consequently, each tenant has a unique relation to his dwelling and in a broader sense to his neighbors. Such private relations enhance community participation.

The design of the support structure is much more fascinating than the design of ordinary row houses; the design process is much more surprising and inspiring and deals in a more fundamental way with the 'act of housing.' Maximum flexibility is not the most important aspect; power of control in the decision-making process is much more important for the occupant. The support structure contains many 'hooks to hang something on,' so many starting points for occupants to create in many different ways, using light and darkness, different shapes, various transitions between inside and outside, passages, views, concentration of light. The support is no neutral skeleton.

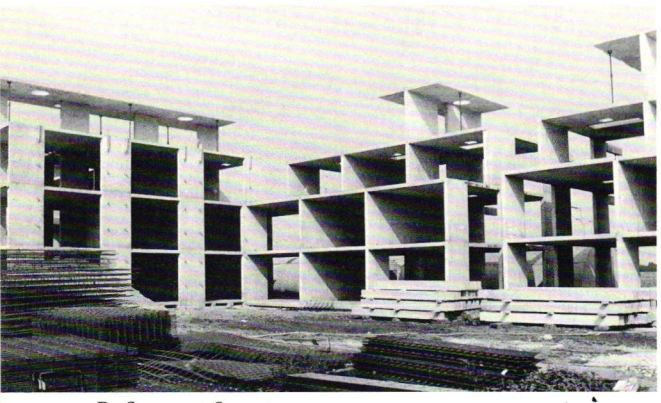
Epilogue

Alive and Beautiful!

We talk about SAR ideas, about supports and tissues. But there are many people who worry about aesthetics. I wonder, is it so important? Aren't these questions of aesthetics problems only for an elite group, insignificant when urgent needs require attention?

The problem we tried to solve at Papendrecht was not that of the luxury house in the country, with high aesthetic qualities inside and out. Rather we had an image in mind, the image of ordinary villages with people living together and constantly maintaining their houses and surroundings, adapting and remodelling them with all kinds of materials in various colors. The experience of shaping and building one's own environment is so very essential in our society now! For the same reasons the concept of support and infill is vital in cases of collective financing and building in an urban environment, as opposed to Papendrecht's rather rural nature. The support incorporates a collective beauty, the infill an individual beauty. Balanced, the support-infill relation reflects the beauty in the occupants' hearts.

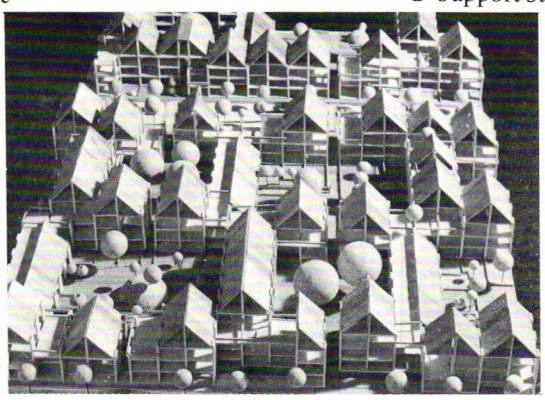
[4] This situation made clear the strength and importance of Professor N John Habraken's ideas, published in *Supports: An Alternative to Mass Housing*, Architectural Press (London, 1972), and elaborated under his direction in SAR.



B Support Structure



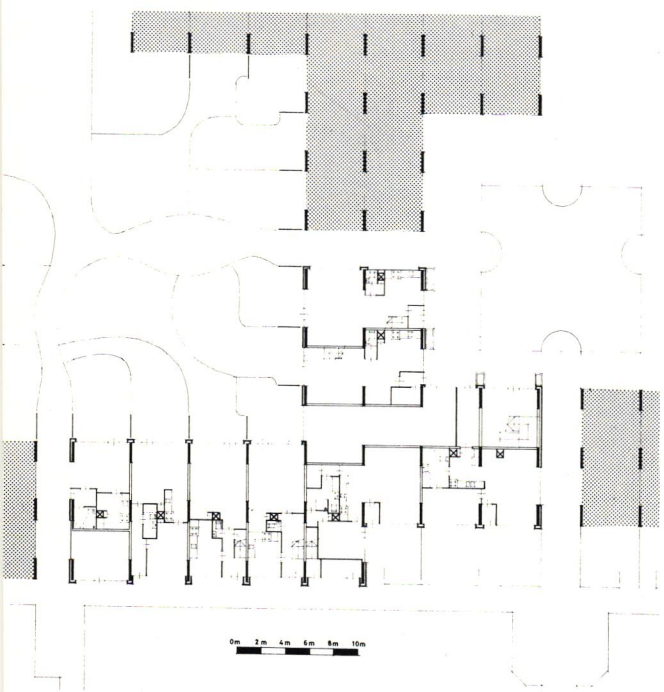
C Support Structure, as built



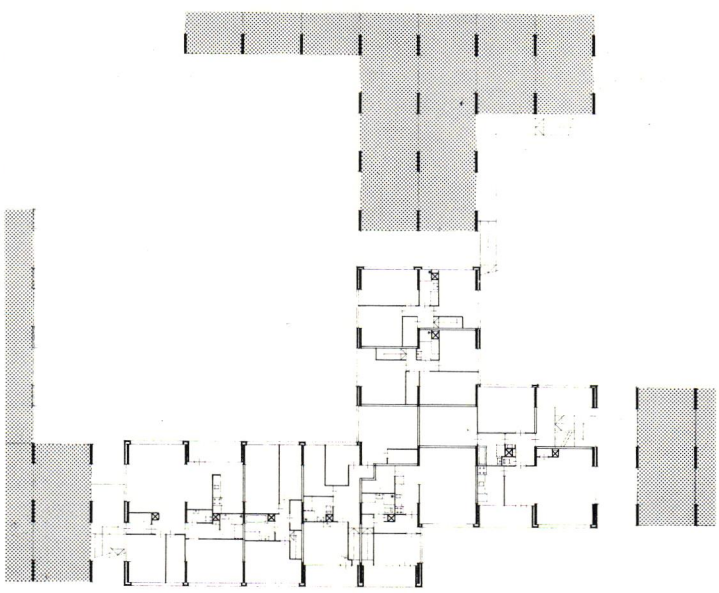
A Model, Support Structure



E Garden Court

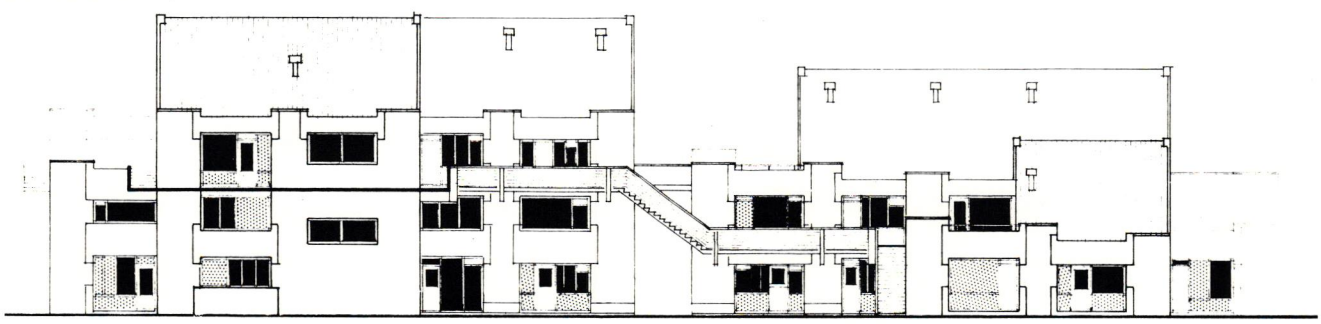


Ground Floor Plan, Block C



First Floor Plan, Block C

North Elevation, Block C

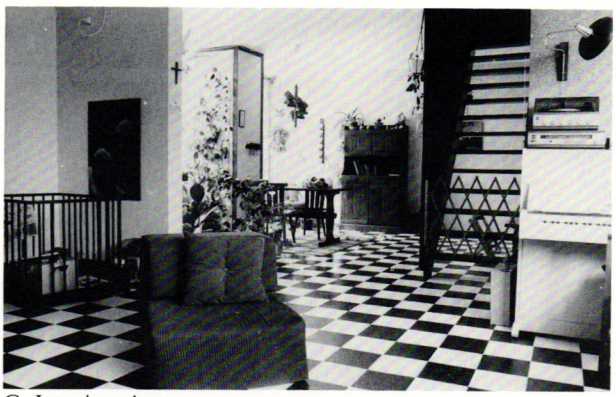




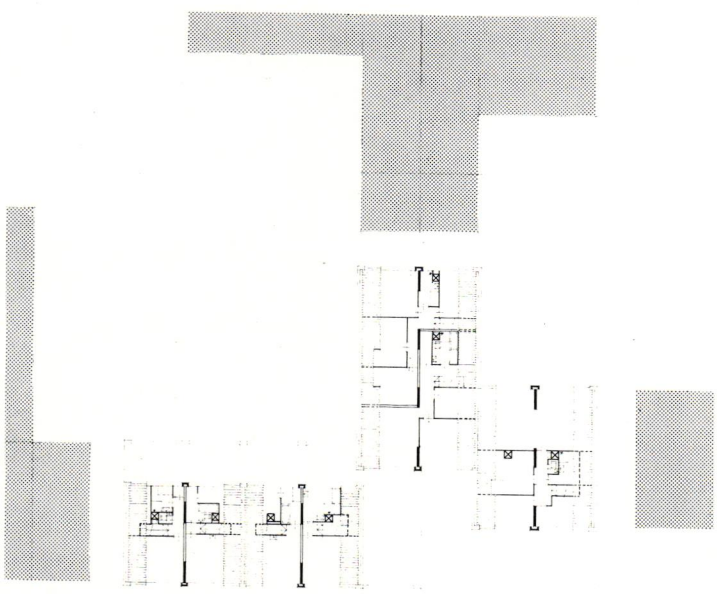
F Street elevation



D Central Street



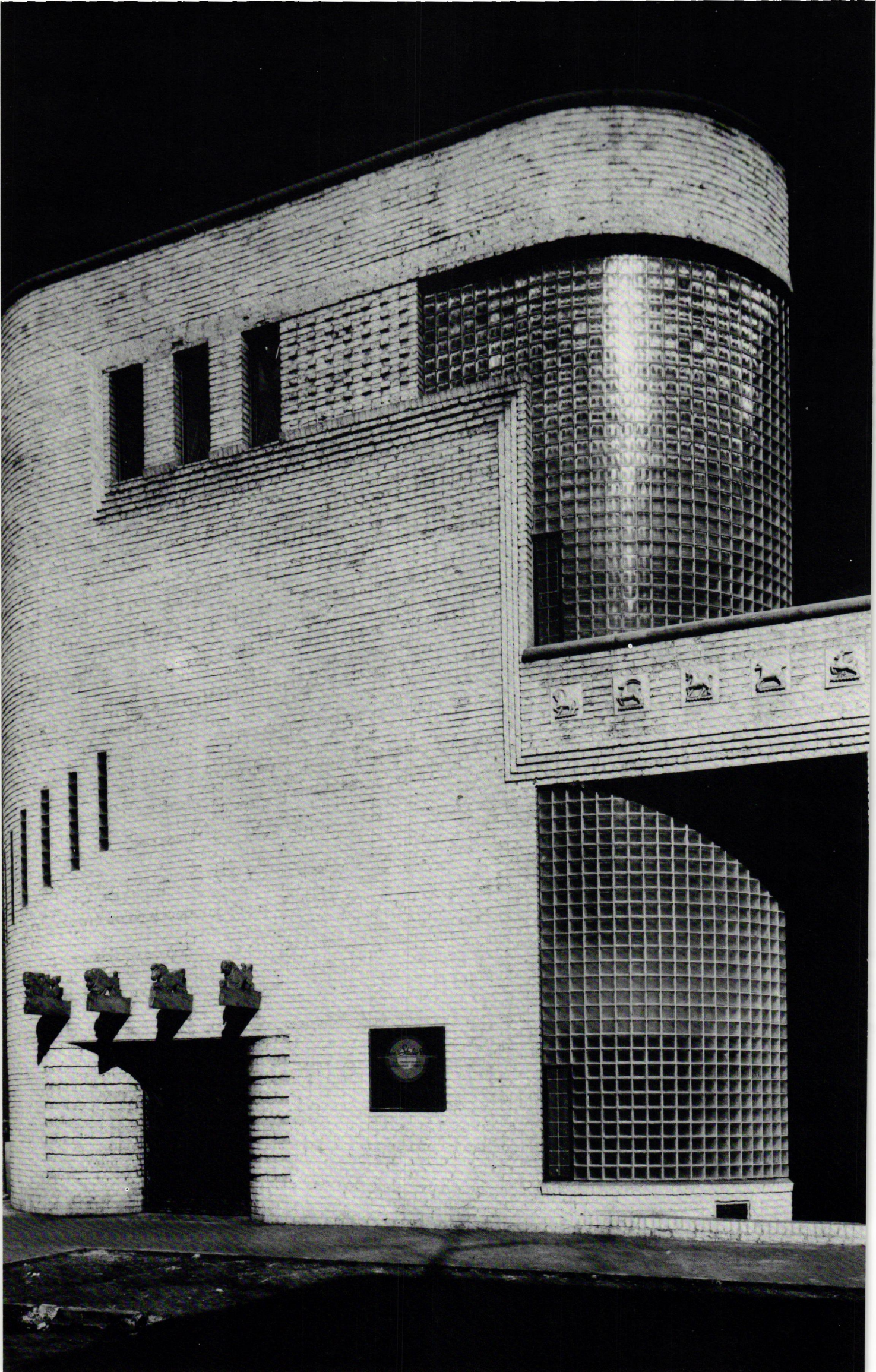
G Interior view



Third Floor Plan, Block C

West Elevation with infill, Block C





Modernism and the Canonical Chicago Architectural Condition

Stanley Tigerman

Stanley Tigerman contributes here to a widespread effort to write revisionist histories of Modern Architecture. The intention is to strike out against the errors of Modernist propaganda, to focus on the careers of those lesser lights whose work was unknown, ignored, or actively subverted by Modernist historians. In this case the focus is on Chicago, a prime example since, with the advent of Miesian dogma at IIT in the 30s, it became, apparently, one of the most hermetic and rigid architectural communities in the United States.

This affinity to revisionist history-writing is only to be expected, occurring as it does at almost any moment when the established canons of taste and style are being seriously questioned, and new references are found to promote a changed sensibility. Thus, it has two purposes: one, perhaps altruistic, is to 'set the record straight,' to give these slighted figures their due when the 'definitive' history of the era is finally written; the second, more self-serving, is to provide a foundation or a lineage for one's own works, to establish a precedent which extends the pedigree of one's own efforts.

Thus, Tigerman returns to the forgotten traditions of Chicago architecture, to refurbish the reputations of the more undogmatic and idiosyncratic practicioners whose work did not quite fit into the great Sullivan-to-Mies 'axis' proclaimed to be the essence of that city's architecture. And if this axis is a common foil for the contemporary architects here discussed, their responses seem to show all the idiosyncracy now permited by a wider and less restrictive outlook.



1 Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago, Illinois, Graham Burnham & Company, Architects, 1911-19

Until very recently[1], Chicago's place in architectural history had been codified by historians, critics, and architectural taste-makers in general. As a result, Chicago's place in the Modern Movement in architecture has long been established. Nonetheless, just below the surface of those very familiar strains of classicism and romanticism, stemming from Jenney and Root through Mies van der Rohe on the one hand, and from Richardson through Sullivan and Wright on the other, lay a rich, albeit unmined lode of formal, idiosyncratic, and strangely symbolic architecture—as a third force. If there is a regional force that has influenced Chicago's architects who have come of age into the area of interests beyond the Modern Movement, it is this largely unknown line of work which exists outside the mainstream of canonical architectural thought. This body of work not only has survived the suppression of architectural historians determined to develop the case of Modernism, but it also has influenced a new generation of architects concerned with the possibilities of Post-Modernism, borrowing from the American vernacular as well as the International Style.

Louis Sullivan is famous for his pronouncement that 'the damage wrought to this country by the Chicago World's Fair (1893) will last half a century.'[2] It is little remembered, however, that he made this remark fully thirty-one years later in 1928! But the damage was done, though it must be remembered that by 1928 Chicago had been throttled by so-called Eastern eclecticism, and was being clad in the most remarkable ways. While the Modern Movement in architecture was gaining momentum in Europe, America, and in particular in its centroid, Chicago, this same city, so responsible for progressive architectural thinking through both the First Chicago School of Architecture and the energies of Frank Lloyd Wright, was still caught up in the last gasps of the academicism of the Ecole des Beaux Arts, which, from its origins at the now-famous 1893 Fair, had taken over Chicago with many examples of classical architecture (Figure 1). But Chicago was eager, willing, and ready for a change.

Mies van der Rohe's arrival in Chicago in 1938 fell between the publication of Nicholas Pevsner's classic *Pioneers of Modern Design* (1936) and Sigfried Giedion's *Space, Time and Architecture*

[1] See Stuart Cohen's *Chicago Architects* (Swallow Press, 1976) for an updated anti-canonical vision of Chicago architecture.

[2] Sigfried Giedion, *Space, Time and Architecture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1959) p 391



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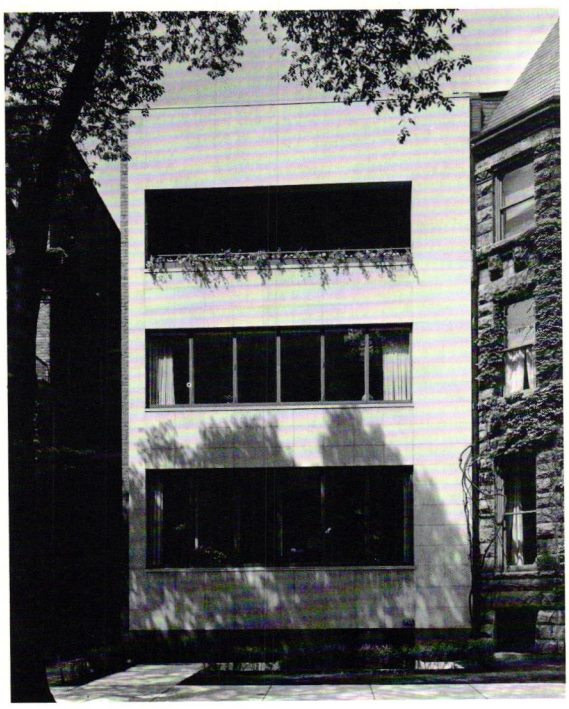


2 Crane House, Ipswich, Massachusetts, David Adler, Architect, 1927

3 Market Square, Lake Forest, Illinois, Howard van Doren Shaw, Architect, 1916-17

4 Row House Renovation, Chicago, Illinois, James F Eppenstein, Architect

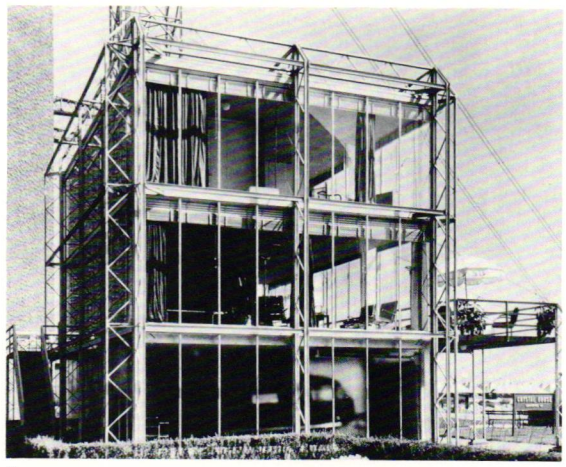
5a,b Frank Fisher Apartments, Chicago, Illinois, Andrew Rebori, Architect, 1939

6 Crystal House: 'A Century of Progress,' Chicago, Illinois, George Fred Keck, Architect, 1934

(1940), and occurred within a few years of the precise half-century that Louis Sullivan had predicted. It seemed almost too good to be true. A direct liason between Mies van der Rohe and Sullivan could produce a history-making link so powerful as to preclude other directions at work in the Chicago of the thirties and forties. Surprising? Not really. Architectural history has long since been identified as more polemics than scholarship.

Thus, all of the timid, tentative, early steps taken by other Chicago architects attempting to use resources other than those allowed by dogma were successfully stifled for a generation and more. Men such as Howard van Doren Shaw and his premiere apprentice, David Adler (Figure 2), who in the 1920s evoked a Lutyens-like eclecticism (Figure 3), were avoided for twenty years, only to be rediscovered a full half century after the fact. Though Shaw was posthumously awarded the AIA's gold medal in 1927, projects such as his Lake Forest Market Square were simply too far removed from the emerging machine ethic to receive any permanent critical acclaim by historians concerned with the emerging polemics of Modernism. Others such as Andrew Rebori and James Eppenstein (Figure 4), who employed a soft-corner, depression-modern style as successfully as did Edward Durrell Stone in the thirties, were quickly forgotten. Rebori's Frank Fisher Apartments of 1936 (Figures 5 a,b) is just one example of a style of the time that did not survive the manifesto-like architectural theories being propounded.

Perhaps the most unfortunate casualty of the times, however, was George Fred Keck. Although he was a close friend of Sigfried Giedion (when I apprenticed to Keck in 1948-49, I observed that whenever Giedion was in Chicago, he always paid a visit to the Keck office), he was completely passed over as *Space, Time and Architecture* was written and as the polemics which developed about the work of Mies van der Rohe and, by then, the Second Chicago School of Architecture (SOM, C F Murphy, Holabird and Root, etc.) really took hold. Architectural history-as-polemic reached a very low moment indeed



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when Keck's Crystal House of 1934 (Figure 6) was excluded from the manifestoes of the times. It always struck me that if the Crystal House had been developed in Germany *before* 1938 (the critical date when Mies came both to Chicago and IIT), it might have been acceptable in the evolving chronology of architectural theory-as-date-making. Equally acceptable is the theory that the Crystal House might have evolved in Chicago *after* 1938. Since, however, it was designed in Chicago *before* 1938 there was no way that Giedion could have acknowledged it as well as simultaneously supported his powerful theory about Mies van der Rohe and the development of a Second Chicago School of Architecture.

All of this is history of another kind now, but in the 1930s it tended to celebrate one point of view so much more strongly than any other that it killed off experiments in form, not so much in the mainstream of what was rapidly becoming the central point of view about a Chicago architecture, but frankly, in the one right legitimate way to make buildings. Soon enough, Mies van der Rohe's work and teaching became the only acceptable point of view in Chicago.

WW II, SOM, the Miesian dogma, and the Second Chicago School of Architecture codified the entire condition from a revolution to an academy that became the American equivalent of the Ecole des Beaux Arts. The utopian dream that Modern Architecture held forth was, in Chicago, to become a nightmare of silence; for it was, after all, in Chicago that the revolution of Modern Architecture was won. It was Chicago that could boast over forty-five buildings by Mies van der Rohe. It was Chicago that already had over fifty buildings by Frank Lloyd Wright, Purcall, Elmslie, and other Prairie School figures. It was still Chicago that had an equivalent number of structures left over from the First Chicago School of Architecture. And finally, it was Chicago that was to build more than one hundred framed structures of the Second Chicago School of Architecture. Meanwhile, at IIT, an entire generation was to pass before a graduate of a school other than IIT would teach there! And a generation was to pass as well before a lecture series of architects of persuasions other than Miesian ones would occur. The school, in the hands of disciples and sycophants, was to become similar to a Catholic seminary, filled with seminarians sworn to an anti-intellectual vow of silence by Mies van der Rohe who once said 'Build, don't talk.'

Nonetheless, certain figures began to appear on the architectural scene who were not entirely convinced by the canons of Modernism as revealed by Miesian dogma. Such men as Paul Schweiker and Harry Weese (the latter trained at Cranbrook and influenced by both Saarinens) were willing and eager to introduce Scandinavian masonry

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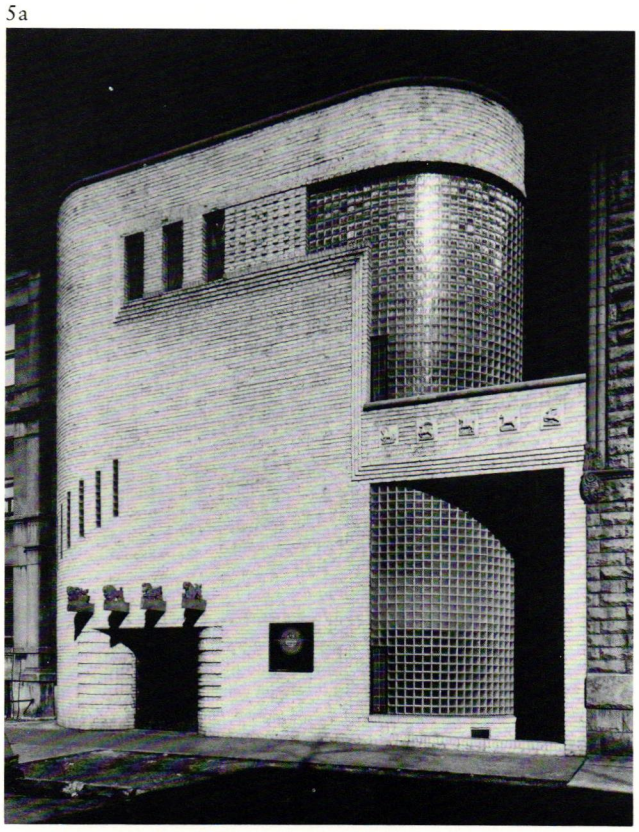

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[3] Thomas Hall Beeby 'Vitruvius Americanus: Mies' Ornament,' *Inland Architect*, (May 1977) pp 12-15

[4] Thomas Hall Beeby 'The Grammar of Ornament, the Ornament of Grammar,' *Via* III, (University of Pennsylvania, 1977)

methods as design generators (Figure 7). From the Bauhaus and Miesian training came Bertrand Goldberg, and from MIT came Walter Netsch into a Skidmore, Owings and Merrill which was not quite codified into the Mies *métier* at the end of WW II. It is fascinating to observe that the earlier idiosyncratic practitioners of the 1920s and the 1930s were to be found in the persona of the work of transitional figures Schweiker, Weese, Goldberg and Netsch. Thus Rebori, Keck, and others such as Howard Fisher (Figure 8) and the Bowman brothers (Figure 9) were to find roots in the eccentric work of those transitory figures. Only the cause of outright eclecticism was not to be served. The work of Shaw and Adler and, for that matter, Philip Maher (Figure 10) was apparently so repugnant to the mainstream of Modernism that fully another fifty years were to pass before it would become even mildly fashionable to discuss sources other than pragmatic ones in the presence of Miesian dogma.

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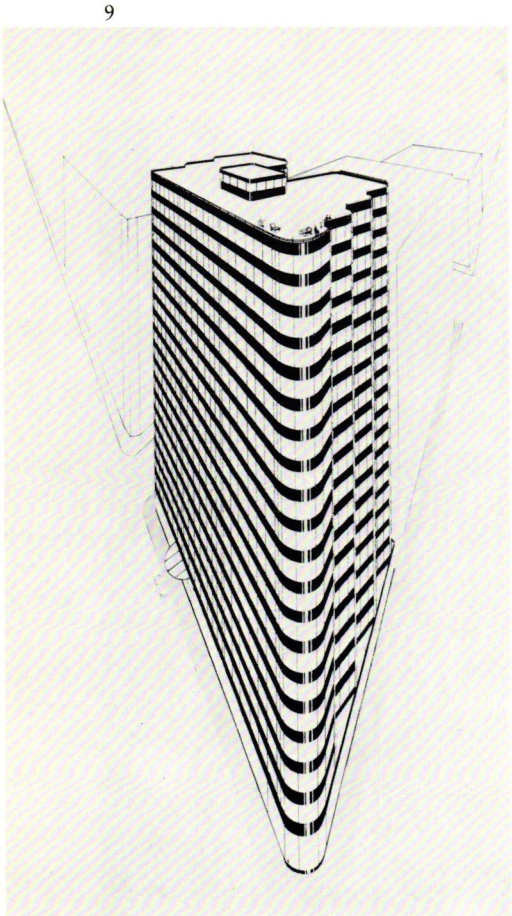

But even as the idiosyncratic work of the successor eccentric cadre began to appear, it was essentially stifled in the face of the overwhelming acceptance of the Mies van der Rohe frame. The possibilities of a new pluralism, through the work of the transitional figures, were eroded out of existence early on by the solidarity of the new academy before they could coalesce into a meaningful opposition. Fully three decades would pass before the new architectural establishment could be confronted.

In 1976, as part of the American bicentennial celebration, the Chicago architectural establishment planned to sponsor an architectural exhibition at the Museum of Contemporary Art that had actually been seen three years earlier in Munich. Much of Chicago architectural history was to be avoided as the mainstream of structural architectural philosophy was celebrated once more. This time, however, an anti-canonical show and book were assembled by four Chicago architects attempting to broaden the base of Chicago architecture by establishing, once and for all, the pluralistic origins of an architectural past that was vastly more open and broad-based than Miesian dogma would allow. The four architects were determined to confront a value system that suggested one legitimate, right way to make architecture. Laurence Booth, Stuart Cohen, Benjamin Weese and I opened that show as evidence of connective tissue between a suppressed past and an avoided present.

As a result of the show and book, *Chicago Architects*, and as an expansionist inclusivist maneuver, the four expanded to seven with the addition of Thomas Hall Beeby, James Ingo Freed, and James Nagle, and, conducting themselves as 'the Chicago Seven,' held an art show of architectural drawings of seven free-standing, detached single family residential accomodations-as-idea at the Richard Gray Gallery in December of 1976. By 1977 the Chicago Seven had expanded to eight with the addition of Helmut Jahn, and they had their next show at the Walter Kelly Gallery in December, 1977.

Another public event of 1977 helped to confront the closed environment that the new academy presented. A major conference was structured at Chicago's Graham Foundation on the state of the art of architecture in 1977. Included were Chicago architects together with ten architects from other parts of the country representing the Whites, the Grays, and the Silvers . . . eighteen in all. Present also were one hundred-thirty professionals concerned with the theory of design. The conference attempted to confront, and in some cases polarize, the peculiar Chicago condition that for so long has been couched in non-speak pragmatism.



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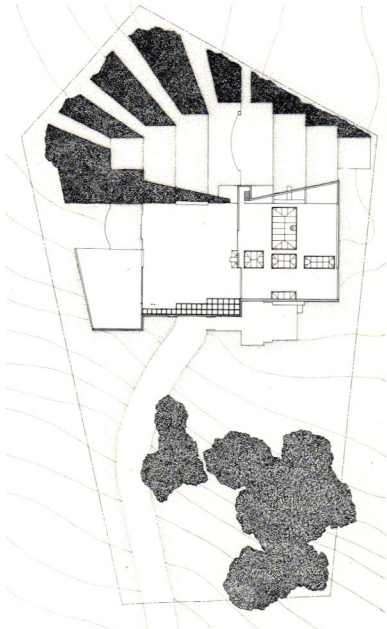
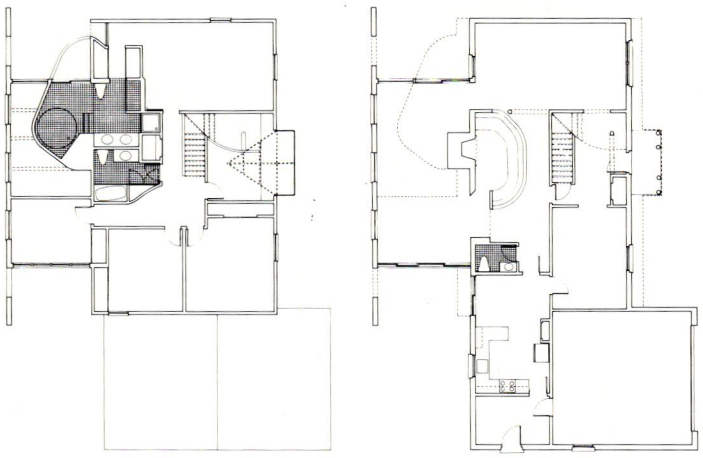


7 Emerson Settlement House, Chicago, Illinois, Paul Schweiker, Schweiker and Lamb, Architects, 1938
8 Walter T Fisher House, Winnetka, Illinois, Howard T Fisher, Architect
9 Apartment Project, Rush and Delaware Streets, Chicago, Illinois, The Bowman Brothers, Architects, 1930
10 Bath House, Lake Forest, Illinois, Philip D Maher, Architect, 1930
11 'The House of Virgil' project, Chicago, Illinois, Thomas Hall Beeby, Architect 1976
12 Crooks House, Fort Wayne, Indiana, Michael Graves, Architect 1975

As part of this recent history it is useful to look at the work of certain of the younger Chicago architects who attempt to operate in pluralistic ways—Post-Modernist ways, if you will—as a demonstration of an architectural condition that is opening up certain avenues. Their work tends to employ broad resources that identify certain tendencies rather than personalities. It all begins to make apparent a trend toward a multi-faceted Chicago architecture that, while not entirely rooted in the recent past, is certainly not devoid of that past.

Thomas Hall Beeby is a Chicago architect educated at Cornell and Yale and trained by Miesian Gene Sommers at C F Murphy. Now a partner in the firm of Hammond, Beeby and Babka, his work in some ways tends to be an obvious synthesis of Corbusian / Miesian principles. And yet, in his 'house of Virgil built in anticipation of the return of the Golden Age' (Figure 11), one finds an evocation of nostalgic, pre-industrial agrarian values, not only as an escape from the machine ethic and things Modern (found in his built work), but central to recent surrealist architectural theory. Equally important in the Beeby project is a concern for ornamentation (a Modern Movement reject) shown also in his recent papers on the subject in both *Inland Architect*[3] and *Via*.[4] The House of Virgil project is actually evolving on property in Door County, Wisconsin.

Classical modes employed to evoke a reinterpretation of the normal Romanticist position have always played a large part in an architecture intended to be seen in contradistinction to academic classicism. The House of Virgil (first shown in 1976 at the Richard Gray Gallery in Chicago as part of the first Chicago Seven exhibition) is fascinating in somewhat the same way as Michael Graves' Crooks House is (Figure 12), insofar as both tend to evoke pre-Modernist allusions as generators (e.g., *trompe l'oeil*, topiary, and the introduction of figural modes into architectural form), though both architects were educated in Modernist methods and each of their *oeuvres* has, until now, tended to represent that training.



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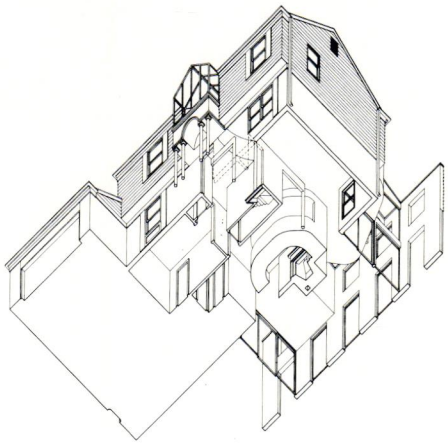

13b

[5] *Oppositions* 2, (Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies, January 1974), pp 2-39 (see footnote 9, p 38)

[6] As of January 1978 James Ingo Freed is no longer Dean of Architecture, Planning and Design at IIT, and has returned to New York City.

Reinterpreting the Romanticist position, Stuart Cohen, another native Chicagoan also trained at Cornell, currently represents the more modish thinking of the recent Venturi-like American genre (Figures 13 a,b). His Grais House remodelling and addition allude to eclectic qualities that are somewhat more recognizable than Beeby's mythological historicism. Palladian entrance replacement, a Hejduk-like wall, removed and detached, all drawn in the manner of Choisy and Stirling, evoke strong contrasts to the standard American suburban house. There is also a contextural aspect (his catch-phrase) to the project, found in much of Cohen's thinking and projects, that also separates it from Beeby's dream-like affair, which deals with yet another dream (albeit a peculiarly American nightmare), the suburbs. His distended wall and the modernist Gris-like plan addition only reinforce the original repetitive form as a part of the American suburban pattern. Cohen's interest in contextualism is well known,[5] but with the Grais House a new dimension of that concern is demonstrated (a sardonic one, to be sure), one that corresponds to his continuing fascination with the work in the past decade of Robert Venturi, Charles Moore, and Robert Stern. This tends to classify Cohen as a part of a particularly popular Post-Modernist camp, one that unfortunately is in danger of obtaining the same establishment image as that of the cubist-constructivist activists to which it stands in opposition. Nonetheless, Cohen is sufficiently intellectually questioning to be able to weather the continuing storms surrounding this cadre of Post-Modernists.

Post-Modernism, as any inclusivist organizing structure should, embraces many aspects of the design condition. In the orthodoxy of Miesian Chicago, it even can be seen to embrace extensions of the International Style. Certainly one of the more orthodox Modernists in Chicago has been James Ingo Freed, who grew up in Chicago, matriculated at IIT under Mies van der Rohe and returned to his Alma Mater as her Dean of Architecture, Planning, and Design in 1975, after a twenty-year apprenticeship with I M Pei, New York high-life, and East Coast civilization in general, thereby surprising the Miesian faculty who expected one of their own kind as Dean.[6] His recent conceptual work is of particular interest here, beginning with his classically mythological entry (Figure 14) to last year's Chicago Seven show, and more recently his project for a house in East Hampton, Long Island (Figures 15 a,b). Both concepts display some of the same concerns from the same Modernist origins that New York architects such as Richard Meier, John Hejduk, and Peter Eisenman have had. Freed's work is particularly noteworthy when it is seen in the light of his role as spiritual leader at IIT. However generalized the apparent origins of his conceptualizations, certain surrealist tendencies are also present, which, when observed in the context of IIT, are remarkable.

13 a,b
The Grais House Addition, Chicago Suburbs, Stuart Cohen, Architect 1976

14 'House in Landscape,' project, Chicago, Illinois, James I Freed, Architect

15 a,b
'House in East Hampton,' L I, N Y, James I Freed, Architect, 1976

16 a,b
Monroe Center, Chicago, Illinois, C F Murphy, Architects, Helmut Jahn, Partner in charge of design, 1977-78

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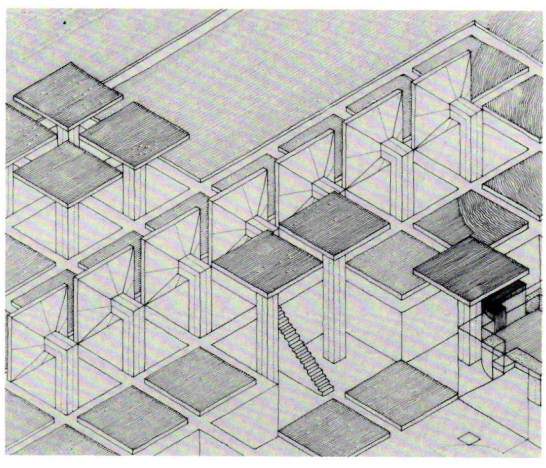

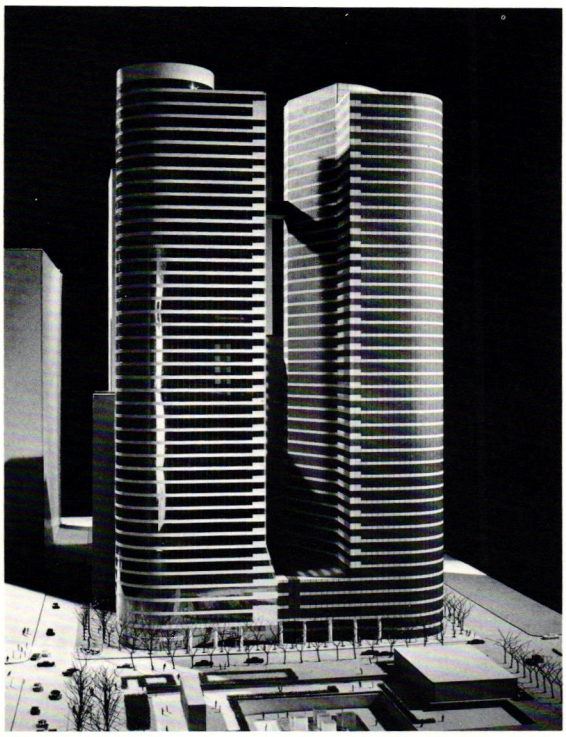

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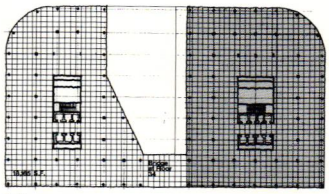
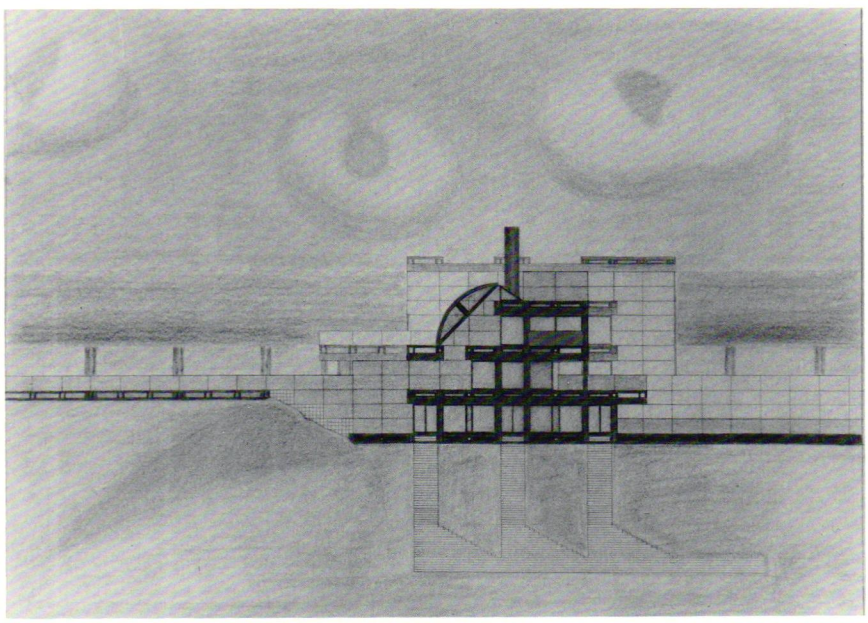


16a

Equally interesting from an orthodox Miesian Modernist point of view is the recent work of Helmut Jahn, partner-in-charge of design at C F Murphy. Jahn's background shares with Freed German birth and with Beeby a Sommers apprenticeship. Jahn's recent Monroe Centre office towers (Figures 16 a,b), more than any other post-Miesian framed structure in recent Chicago history, introduces formal concerns rather than slavishly continuing the rectangular grid of the Chicago Plan tilted up into space. Monroe Centre extends the Meisian notion of structure and skins in ways reflective of concerns beyond the Meisian ethic. The structure, core, gridding, and plan modulation of the building are, in Miesian contextural terms, a 20'0" × 20'0" bay. But where Mies chose to express the slenderness of steel through the window-washing, wind-resisting, shadow-collecting device of the H-section mullion, Jahn opts for an energy-responding, corner-turning, columnar-suppressing kind of soft-corner architecture in some ways more reminiscent of the thirties pre-Miesian, almost Mendelsohn-like work than of the canon law of Mies' Chicago. His method of drawing, with axonometrics, reinforces post-constructivist concerns of bringing everything to the picture plane rather than the planar interests of the rather more run-of-the-mill Mies architect who is still concerned with edges and planes. The building is slick (as are all of Jahn's recent efforts), elegant, distilled, even detached: a kind of Meier-like architecture that is anything but visceral.



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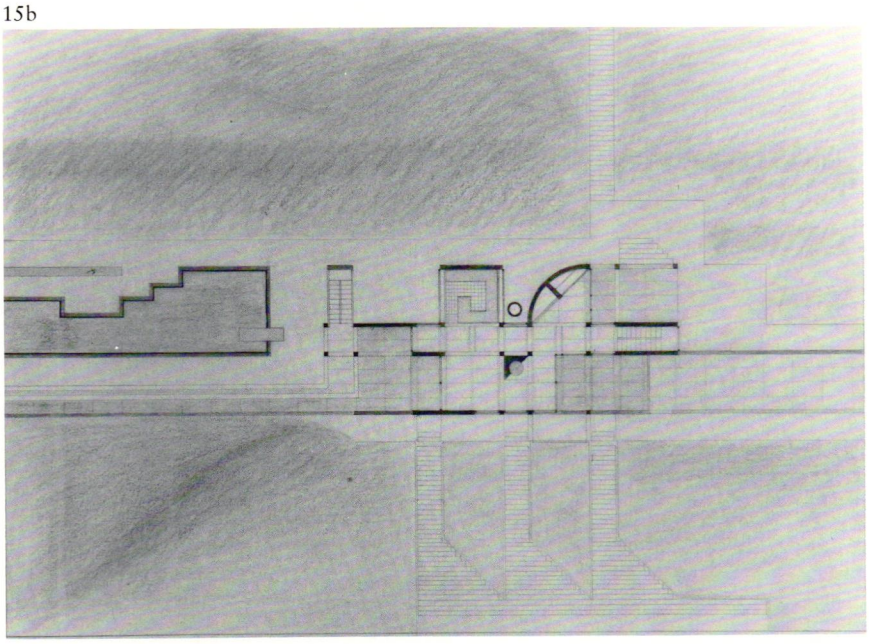
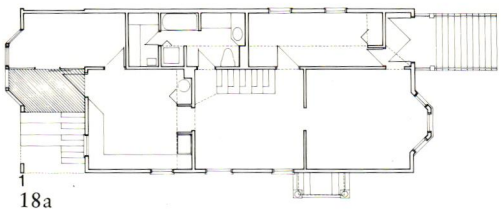


Recent projects by two of the younger architects in Chicago are of particular interest, especially when they are seen in relation to each other. Ken Schiano, a product of John Hejduk's academy in New York, is now on the architecture faculty at IIT. He came to Chicago from the University of Kentucky, a well known Cooper Union outpost. Ken Schroeder teaches architecture at the University of Illinois at Chicago Circle, having graduated from that institution, and combines academic obligations with an interesting, if modest, architectural practice. He is a partner of



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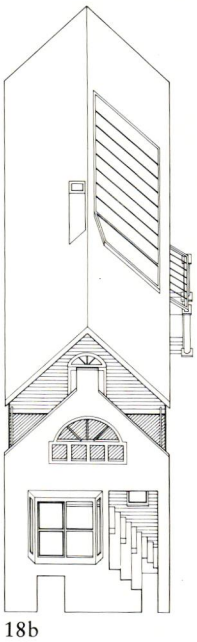
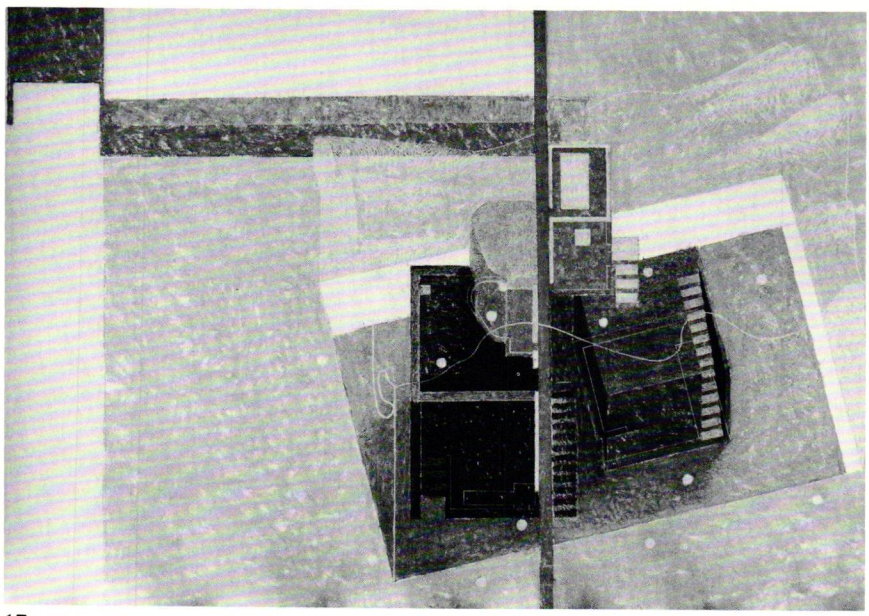

18b

Hinds, Schroeder, Whitaker. Schiano and Schroeder are both young, bright, pedagogically persuasive architects with concerns so widely divergent that only the convenient umbrella of Post-Modernism could even begin to contain their efforts. Schiano has for some time been fascinated by the schizophrenia of architectural programs interpreted in post-constructivist, painterly ways (Figures 17 a,b). His Desert House project of 1977 programatically truncates itself only to be reorganized in formally and spatially askew ways. Presented in rendered form (the implication clearly is three-dimensional modelling) the project shows continuing concern with the superimposition of the plastic arts on architecture, a concern shown equally precisely and beautifully in Schiano's collages. Schroeder's concerns are somewhat different, partially, one must assume, by dint of his partnership with Richard Whitaker (formerly of Moore, Lyndon, Turnbull, Whitaker). These concerns then (Figures 18 a,b), are naturally contextual, wry and witty, and in the case of the small urban house shown here, certainly not unlike his fellow faculty member Stuart Cohen's Craig House shown earlier: he makes a commentary about urban, repetitive street façades by residually implying a bay window façade, and recalls other devices such as contrasting scales, cut-outs, layering of walls, and Palladian windows.

Both Schiano and Schroeder are fascinating, not only because of their divergent points of view about architecture as idea-content, but also because of their positions in the two colleges of architecture in Chicago. Schiano's teaching at IIT clearly embraces the kinds of work referred to here, and as such, is one of the healthiest, most open signs of progress at that school in almost forty years. In Schroeder's work at Circle Campus, and much in the same way as Stuart Cohen, the simple introduction of idea-content into a tenure-laden, idea-less school of architecture can only be applauded.

17 a,b
'House in the Desert,' Ken Schiano, Architect, 1977
18 a,b
Residential remodeling, Chicago, Illinois, Ken Schroeder, Architect, 1977
19 a,b
The Anti-Cruelty Society, Chicago, Illinois, Stanley Tigerman, Architect, 1977-78
20 a,b
Illinois Corn Crib, Chicago, Illinois, Cynthia Weese, Architect, 1976-77
21 The 'Titanic' going down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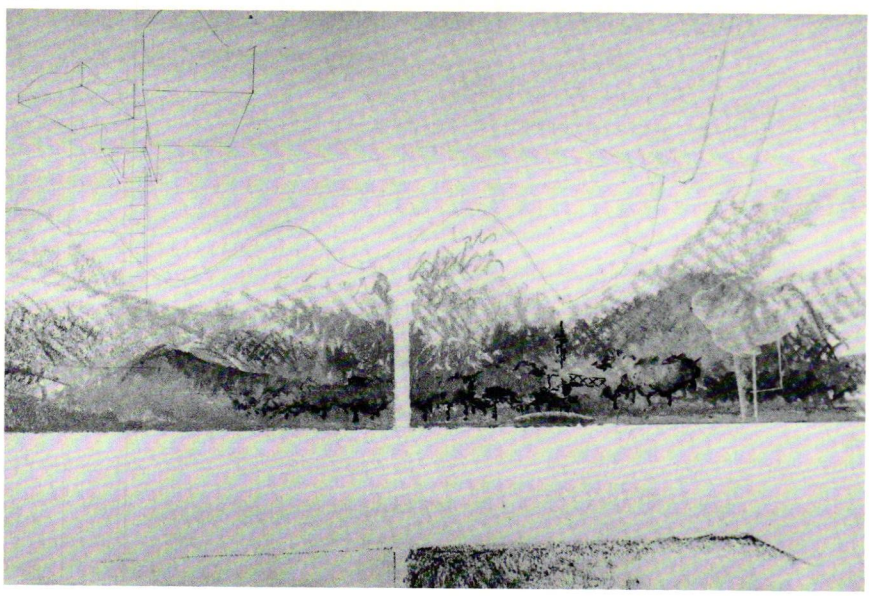
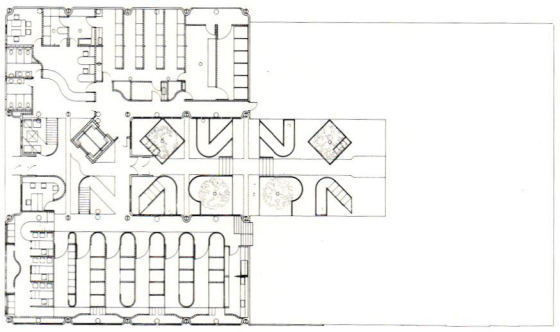
17b





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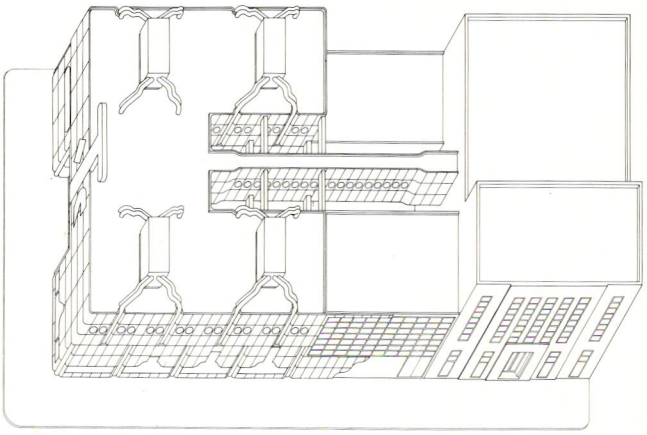
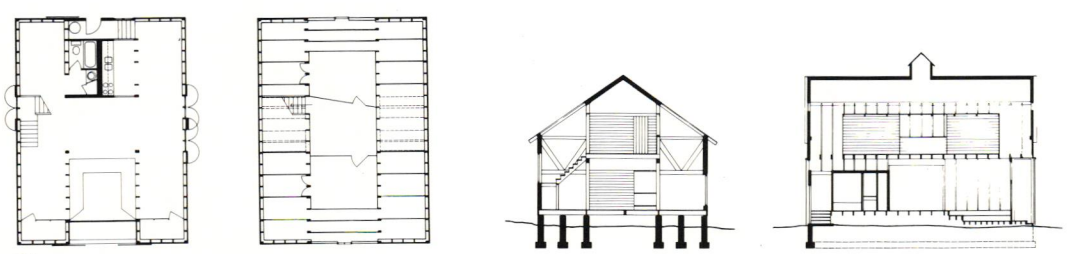


19b

The Anti-Cruelty Society (Figures 19 a,b) remodelling and addition project relates to concerns about anthropomorphic readings of buildings by the lay public, and as such, originates in the earlier Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, now nearing completion. Both projects are couched in the language of the machine ethic as one of two current Post-Modernist concerns about how buildings are read, the other being the concern for metaphorical content in buildings. Both issues inevitably become linked together in all of the author's recent work. One project is more elitist, traditional and closed, while the other is more populist, contemporary and open: both perhaps representing much of the current schizophrenia at work in the context of many Post-Modernist efforts today.

It is interesting to observe one last project by Cynthia Weese, a young Chicago architect in practice with her husband. She is a product of Washington University and has been practicing in Chicago for seven years. Her Illinois Corn Crib project of 1976 (Figures 20 a,b) relates to indigenous rural values first most clearly demonstrated by Frank Lloyd Wright in particular, and the whole notion of the Prairie School in general. These quiet, middle-western values have been among her concerns for some time now, but never were more clearly and poignantly shown than in her Illinois Corn Crib project. The clarity of this irreducible, almost minimal construction reinforces those who might see a vernacular architecture in support of Post-Modernist pursuits.

There are, of course, other younger Chicago Architects beginning to expand on a vocabulary that speaks to the inclusivist possibilities in a pluralist society. Some of the work of Laurence Booth and James Nagle, as well as Benjamin Weese's early beginnings of independent practice, start to suggest a rather fresh, new view of Chicago that is surprising in quite an up-beat way. In a city whose architects have danced an architectural two-step long after the music stopped, the classical vision that IIT has represented as a kind of American Ecole des Beaux Arts no longer represents the single theologically inspirational source that for so long dominated a 'Chicago School of Architecture' (Figure 21).



20a

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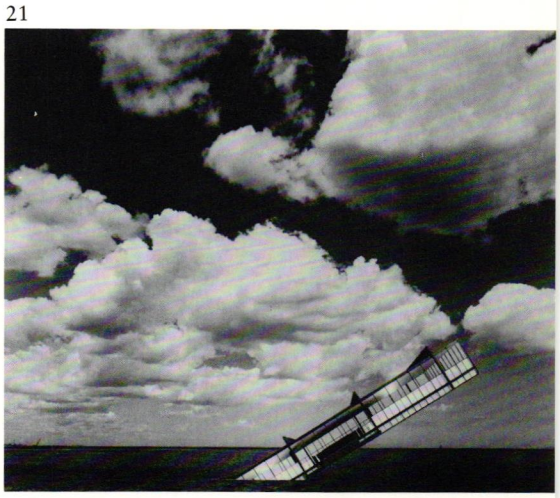
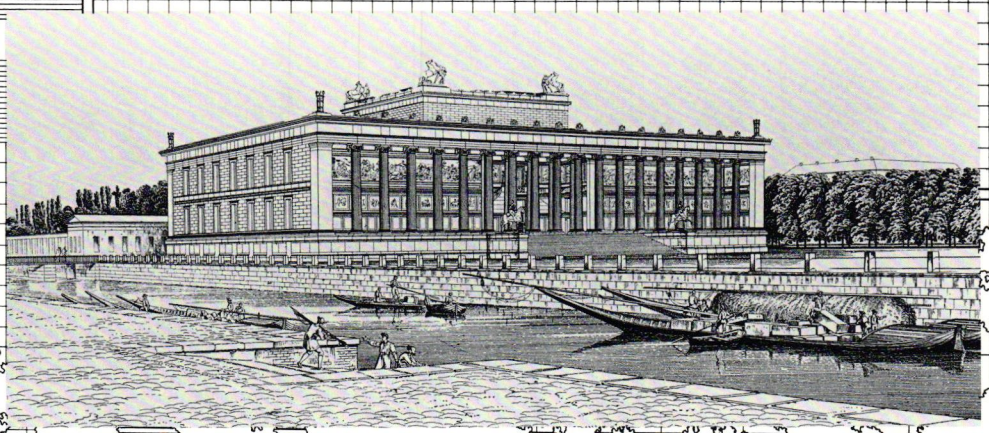




Mies' New National Gallery: An Essay on Architectural Content

Peter Serenyi

Peter Serenyi here takes a position antithetical to the thrust of much of this issue. His article is an explicit rebuttal of much of the anti-Modern criticism that has recently come to the fore, specifically that the Modern Movement was too narrowly functional, devoid of content, and anti-historical. And he uses as his medium the high priest of Modern Reductivism – Mies van der Rohe.

While one might take issue with the specifics of the argument, it does raise an important concern: 'Let us not,' in Serenyi's words, 'let the Modern Movement become Post-Modernism's Ecole des Beaux Arts.' In the rush to criticize the much-noted inadequacies of the Modern Movement, it is all too easy to commit two serious errors of oversight: first, that all of Modern Architecture is represented by what has come to be known as the Modern Movement or the International Style; and second, that even in this narrow selection of work is there a uniformly unacceptable formulation of architectural principles and practices.

Unlike the Modern Movement, which did posit a radical break with its immediate and distant past, Post-Modernism does not reject totally what it criticizes. It calls for a less dogmatic exploration of its forebears, with eye and mind open, first of all, to the heterogeneity of 20th century architecture, and secondly, to the important lessons to be found in even its most dogmatic practicioners.

In his "Introduction to an 'Iconography of Medieval Architecture,' " published in 1942, Richard Krautheimer argued that "the 'content' of architecture seems to have been among the more important problems of medieval architectural theory; perhaps indeed it was its most important problem." He added that 'It is during the last fifty years only that this has apparently been superseded by a purely formalistic approach.'[1]

Krautheimer's concept of the nature of Modern architecture reflects an attitude that was widely held among historians and critics until quite recently. The formal and technical innovations of the architects of the Modern Movement were so novel and even baffling that elucidating those innovations seemed a challenging enough task in itself, quite apart from the interpretation of architectural content. Moreover, the belief that the architects of the Modern Movement addressed themselves to purely formal and technical questions was greatly encouraged by those very architects whose extensive writings generally confused, rather than clarified, the meaning of their work.

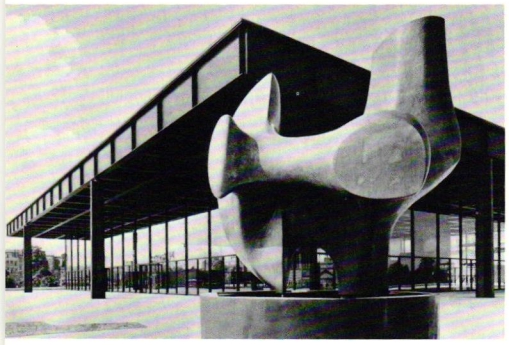
The early interpreters of modern painting also followed a largely formal approach, best exemplified by the writings of Alfred Barr. In 1937, a major rebuttal to this formal approach was launched by Meyer Schapiro who, taking as his target Barr's *Cubism and Abstract Art*, published a year earlier, argued that Barr often 'speaks of this art as independent of historical conditions, as realizing the underlying order of nature and as an art of pure form without content.'[2] To counter this view, Schapiro offered his famous dictum: 'there is no *pure art*, unconditioned by experience; all fantasy and formal construction, even the random scribbling of the hand, are shaped by experience and by nonesthetic concerns.'[3]

Although Schapiro made no reference to architecture in his famous essay, at the same time a small number of historians, particularly from Germany and Austria, addressed themselves to the problem of architectural content in similar terms. Rudolf Wittkower and Otto von Simson were two who, unlike Krautheimer, had a direct effect on the historiography of Modern architecture. In 1949 Rudolf Wittkower published his seminal work, *Architectural Principles in the Age of Humanism*, which became one of the most widely read books in schools of architecture in England and

1 Richard Krautheimer, "Introduction to an 'Iconography of Mediaeval Architecture,' " *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 5 (1942), pp 1-2

2 Meyer Schapiro, 'Nature of Abstract Art,' *Marxist Quarterly* 1 (1937), p 79

3 *Ibid*, p 86



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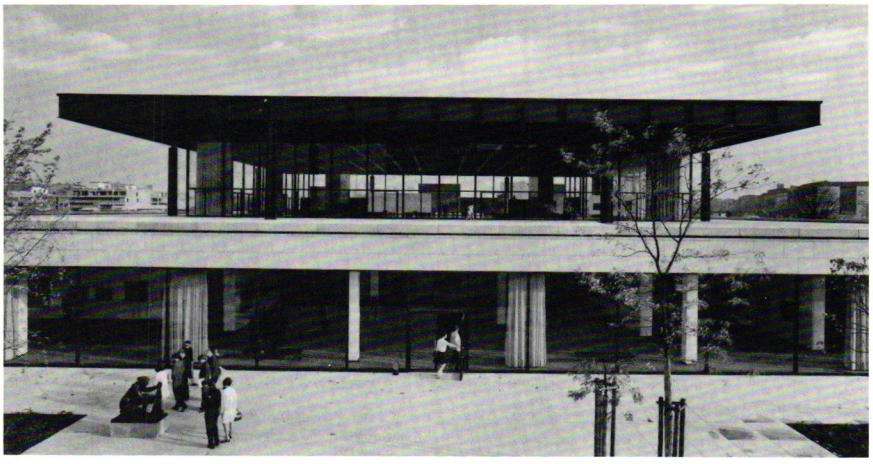

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this country during the 1950s. As Henry A Millon has pointed out, Wittkower's book exerted an important influence on three areas of architecture and architectural history: modular construction, proportion and composition, and the reassessment of the aims and achievements of the 1920s and '30s.[4] In *Architectural Principles* Wittkower addressed not only the formal but also the contextual issues embodied in architecture, focusing primarily on its philosophical, religious and cultural implications. Wittkower's work deeply influenced Colin Rowe and Reyner Banham, who initiated an approach that gradually superseded the formalist attitudes of Sigfried Giedion, Nikolaus Pevsner and Henry-Russell Hitchcock.

Less known, but equally important from the point of view of method, is Otto von Simson's *Sacred Fortress: Byzantine Art and Statecraft in Ravenna*, published in 1948. As the subtitle indicates, von Simson's argument concentrated on the connection between artistic and architectural form and institutional forces; art and architecture were seen as expressions of social and political ideology. Eight years later, von Simson published his well-known *The Gothic Cathedral*, which, from the standpoint of methodology, represented a continuation of his previous work.

Otto von Simson's influence on the historiography of Modern architecture is best exemplified by Norris K Smith's *Frank Lloyd Wright: A Study in Architectural Content*, published in the same year (1966) as Robert Venturi's well-known *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*. Smith's central argument is that architecture is an art of human institutions. He quotes Wright to the effect that 'all form is a matter of structure, it is a matter of government as well as a matter of architecture; a matter of the framework of a society.'[5] The requirement that it express societal forces, however, was not the only demand Wright made on architecture. As Smith pointed out, Wright also expected of an architect 'a system of philosophy and ethics.'[6] The dual task Smith had undertaken in his book was first to outline the philosophical tradition to which Wright belonged and then to explain the connection between some of his key buildings and the societal forces which shaped them. He argues that Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Emerson, Thoreau and Whitman, are Wright's most important intellectual ancestors, while the institutions of the family and business are in his view those to which the architect gave his most eloquent visual interpretations.

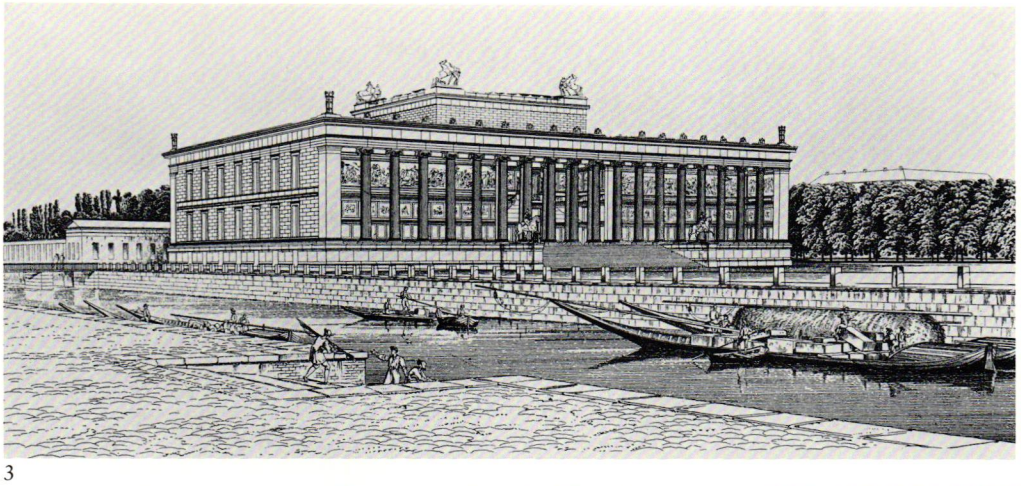
However significant Smith's interpretation of Wright's work may be, the chief contribution of his book lies in the recognition that Modern architecture is as laden with institutional and cultural significance as the architecture of the past. Moreover, Smith's book helped set the stage for a critical reassessment of the premises and presuppositions of the Modern Movement.

Although the year 1966 signaled the beginning of a more systematic questioning of the achievement of the Modern Movement, most of the current literature seems surprisingly uninformed about the meaning of that achievement. The criticism most often raised was that the Modern Movement was too narrowly functional, that it was anti-historical and that it created architectural forms devoid of content.[7] While such criticism is justified with regard to the work of some exponents of the Movement, it is less so with regard to others. In the hope that a closer examination of a building designed by one of the founders of the Modern Movement can dispel these misconceptions, I wish to discuss the meaning of Ludwig Mies van der Rohe's New National Gallery in Berlin, created between 1962 and 1968 (Figure 1).[8]

When Berlin was partitioned in 1945, the city's great cultural and civic center, the Lustgarten, dominated by Schinkel's Old Museum of 1822-30, became part of the Eastern Sector, leaving West Berlin with nothing comparable. During the rebuilding of West Berlin, plans were made to provide the city with a new cultural center at Kemperplatz, south of the Tiergarten. One of the few older landmarks remaining in this area had been the Italian Romanesque Matthiaskirche of 1845, which became the focal point of the new plan. The two most important buildings flanking the church were to be Hans Scharoun's Philharmonic Hall to the north (1963), and Mies' New National Gallery, to the south.

The sloping site assigned to Mies' museum offered intriguing opportunities to the architect, and he took full advantage of them. The main body, intended for the permanent collection and storage areas, he treated as an extension of the slope, and placed a large glass-enclosed pavilion for temporary exhibitions on top (Figure 2). The sculpture court, surrounded on three sides by high granite walls, was treated as a continuation of the lower level. Although the largest part of the New National Gallery is devoted to the permanent collection (paintings, prints and sculpture of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries), the most significant part of the museum is the great glass-enclosed hall. This space, measuring one hundred sixty-six feet square, is covered by a two hundred and fourteen foot square roof, the enormous weight of which is supported by two cruciform steel columns on each side. The only part of the museum visible from a distance is this vast *vitrine*, which affects as well as absorbs the outside environment.

The architectural sources of the New National Gallery are numerous and varied, but the single most important influence on Mies' design was Karl Friedrich Schinkel (1781-1841), the well-known Neo-Classical architect. Philip Johnson first drew attention to the profound connection that exists between these two architects.[9] Although neither was a native of Berlin, both began their careers in that city. The Berlin of both Schinkel and Mies had recently been the victim of disastrous wars: in 1806 it was Napoleon and in 1918 the Allies who defeated Germany. No wonder, therefore, that both architects created a considerable amount of paper architecture before the economy of their respective times permitted them to build. After the battle of Waterloo



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(1815) conditions improved rapidly in Prussia, finally enabling Schinkel to realize his ideas. Within six years he designed his three masterpieces: the Royal Guard House of 1816-18, the Theatre of 1818-21, and the Museum of 1822. Only the latter (Figure 3), erected between 1823 and 1830, will concern us here, due to its direct influence on Mies' museum (Figure 2). Referring to his New National Gallery, Mies stated that he was determined 'to use the slope in the terrain, placing the museum on a terrace open to a garden to the west. This permitted [the] design of a clear and strong building in the tradition of Schinkel's Berlin.'[10] The three concepts that stand out in this statement are siting, clarity and strength, all of which played a vital role in the designs of Schinkel and Mies.

Notwithstanding its abstract shape and unaccented façade, Schinkel gave his building a marked sense of orientation by focusing it on the open space of the Lustgarten, which resulted in a lively visual dialogue between building and site. This dialogue was greatly enhanced by allowing the exterior space to enter the interior through the giant recessed portico and the semi-enclosed vestibule beyond (Figure 4).

Schinkel achieved clarity of design by articulating the functional and symbolic roles of each level, and in his impeccable handling of detail. The main body of the building rests on a hollow podium containing spaces for storage and heating equipment. Yet the function of the podium goes beyond mere utility. Visually, it raises the building so as to give it added significance in the company of its distinguished neighbors, the Cathedral and the Royal Palace. Symbolically, it links it with the tradition of the Roman temple, Alberti's churches or Palladio's villas, infusing it with a quasi-sacred quality. Here the temple of worship, or the temple of the family, becomes the temple of culture.

The main body of the building, consisting of two floors, contains exhibition spaces for paintings, prints and sculpture. To provide adequate lighting without glare, most of the rooms were equipped with screens set at right angles to the windows,

[4] Henry A Millon, 'Rudolf Wittkower, *Architectural Principles in the Age of Humanism*: Its Influence on the Development and Interpretation of Modern Architecture,' *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 31 (1972), p 83

[5] Norris K Smith, *Frank Lloyd Wright, A Study in Architectural Content* (Englewood Cliffs, N J 1966), p 10

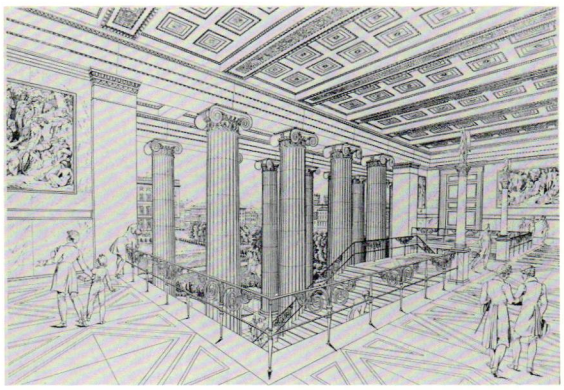
[6] *Ibid*, p 4

[7] For the best recent collection of these views, see Robert A M Stern, "Some Notes on the New '40 under 40,' " *Architecture and Urbanism* Number 73 (1977), pp 51-70.

[8] Descriptions and illustrations of the New National Gallery can be found in A James Speyer, *Mies van der Rohe* (Chicago, 1968), pp 84-87, and Peter Carter, *Mies van der Rohe at Work* (New York, 1972), pp 94-99.

[9] Philip Johnson, *Mies van der Rohe* (New York, 1947) and 'Schinkel and Mies,' *Program* (Journal of the School of Architecture of Columbia University), (Spring 1962), pp 14-34. The best studies on Schinkel in English are: Nikolaus Pevsner, 'Schinkel,' *Journal of the Royal Institute of British Architects* 59 (Jan 1952), pp 89-95; Henry-Russell Hitchcock, *Architecture: Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Baltimore, 1958), pp 28-36; Hermann G Pundt, 'K F Schinkel's Environmental Planning of Central Berlin,' *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 26 (May, 1967), pp 114-130, and Hermann G Pundt, *Schinkel's Berlin, A Study in Environmental Planning* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1972).

[10] Mies,' *Architectural Forum*, 119, (Sept 1963), p 87



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1 Mies, New National Gallery, Berlin, 1962-68
2 Mies van der Rohe, New National Gallery, Berlin, 1967-68
3 Karl Friedrich Schinkel, Old Museum, Berlin, 1822-30
4 Karl Friedrich Schinkel, Old Museum, Berlin 1822-30

foreshadowing Mies' movable screens. This, with other innovations, made Schinkel's building the most functional museum of its time. Yet functional considerations were not permitted to overshadow the symbolic significance of this part of the building. The colossal Ionic columns, for example, fulfill several purposes, one of which is to counteract the sacred connotation of the podium. As a temple of culture rather than of God, it refers to the secular stoa of classical Greece. Its civic character thus enhanced, Schinkel could proclaim more forcefully that his building was meant for a new kind of institution: the public museum.

With its dramatic siting, clear architectural expression and strong intellectual content, the Old Museum left a permanent impression on Mies. It should seem natural, therefore, that when he was asked to design a new museum for Berlin, he would turn to Schinkel for inspiration. From a distance two parts of Schinkel's museum stand out most conspicuously: the podium and the main body, and the attic level.[11] Mies focused on these two units and translated them into his own double-storied structure. The function fulfilled by the podium and the main body of Schinkel's museum was compressed by Mies into one hollow columnar podium, open in one direction. And the attic of Schinkel's building was transformed into the great hall for traveling exhibitions. What was merely the crowning feature of the older building became the most essential part of the new.

The visual dialogue established between the Old Museum and the open space of the Lustgarten was reinterpreted by Mies on the west side of the New National Gallery. His sculpture court must be seen, in fact, as a miniature version of the Lustgarten, offering a spatial counterpoint to the Gallery's interior. Hence, the dramatic interaction between outside and inside was achieved not only by the glazing but also by the compositional relationship between the two.

The two buildings are also connected by their conceptions of form and space. Both are unaccented, symmetrical, columnar structures, with a clear and simple monumental form defined by sharp edges: both are, in short, classical. Space, on the other hand, is romantic in each building, in its vital interpenetration, fluidity and drama; hence, both buildings can be considered examples of Romantic-Classicism.

To understand the content of Mies' New National Gallery more fully, one must examine not only its architectural but also its intellectual sources. Mies paid frequent tribute to St. Augustine and Thomas Aquinas;[12] and he made one published reference to Spinoza. There are remarkable parallels between the thinking of Mies and that of the noted rationalist philosopher of the seventeenth century.

In April 1960, Mies on receiving the Gold Medal of the American Institute of Architects, concluded with the words of Spinoza: 'Great things are never easy. They are as difficult as they are rare.'[13] It is with these words that the great philosopher concluded *The Ethics*, his most significant contribution to the world of ideas.[14] In it Spinoza gave new definitions for God, man and the universe. Let me briefly examine these definitions insofar as they are related to Mies.

According to Spinoza, God and the universe or God and nature are of the same substance. Harry Wolfson, Spinoza's most profound modern interpreter has pointed out that the substance of God for Spinoza is 'nothing but a logical shell holding the particular things of the universe together.'[15] To put it in a historical context, Spinoza replaced the personal God of the Judeo-Christian tradition with a structuralist God of his own construction. Hence for Spinoza a mechanical rather than a personal God is the innermost essence of all existence. And the chief attributes of his God are thought and extension, the latter being Spinoza's concept of matter.

Mies' New National Gallery is not only a logical shell containing the compelling universal space created by the architect, but also 'an expression of the innermost structure of its time.'[16] This for Mies meant two things: material structure as well as the intellectual or spiritual climate of an epoch.[17] This echoes the

[11]The primary function of the attic level is to conceal the dome of the sculpture hall.

[12]See especially, Philip Johnson, *Mies van der Rohe*, p 195 and Peter Carter, *Mies van der Rohe at Work*, pp 10, 171-172.

[13]Mies van der Rohe, 'Presentation of the Gold Medal of Honor,' *Journal of the American Institute of Architects* 33 (1960), 91

[14]Benedict de Spinoza, *The Ethics* translator R H M Elwes (New York, 1951), p 271

[15]Harry Austryn Wolfson, *The Philosophy of Spinoza* 2 volumes. (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1948), 2: 346

[16]Mies van der Rohe, 'Presentation of the Gold Medal of Honor,' p 91

[17]*Ibid*, p 91

[18]Spinoza, *The Ethics* p 129

[19]Philip Johnson, *Mies van der Rohe*, p 186

[20]Wolfson, *Spinoza*, I:246

[21]*Ibid*, p 245

[22]Johnson, *Mies van der Rohe*, p 190

[23]Paul Heyer, *Architects on Architecture* (New York, 1966), p 36

[24]Mies van der Rohe, 'Presentation of the Gold Medal of Honor,' p 91

[25]Philip Johnson, *Mies van der Rohe*, p 184

[26]H G Hubbeling, *Spinoza's Methodology* (Assen, 1967), p 83

[27]Spinoza, *The Ethics*, p 119

[28]Philip Johnson, *Mies van der Rohe*, p 186

[29]*Ibid*, p 192

[30]Philip Johnson, 'A Personal Treatment,' *Four Great Makers of Modern Architecture* (New York, 1963), p 111

[31]Mies van der Rohe, 'Presentation of the Gold Medal of Honor,' p 91

[32]Peter Carter, *Mies van der Rohe at Work*, p 172

chief attributes of Spinoza's God, thought and extension. Hence Mies' oft-quoted motto that 'God is in the details' (e.g. matter) may have deeper philosophical implications.

According to Spinoza, extension, or matter, is indivisible. Similarly, Mies' aim in his later works was to create not only the much discussed universal space but also an indivisible space—a space as free of obstruction as possible, an indivisible whole. Mies' glass enclosed spaces are also limitless, having neither beginning nor end. The same is true of Spinoza's God and universe.

Man for Spinoza is an integral part of this divine shell of thought and extension, and his actions and desires are measurable. 'I shall,' he wrote, 'consider human actions and desires in exactly the same manner as though I were concerned with lines, planes and solids.'[18] From the twenty-four by twenty-four foot grid of the IIT campus to the one hundred and sixty-six foot square of the New National Gallery's main exhibition hall, Mies measures and defines human actions with the geometrical exactitude found in *The Ethics*. Spinoza's great philosophical edifice was constructed with the help of Euclidean geometry, incorporating all its rigid definitions, axioms and propositions. Everything follows clearly and logically from what appears to Spinoza as self-evident truths. This can also be said of Mies. His late work is a clear and logical outgrowth of certain definitions, axioms and propositions made from the 1920s onward and clothed in a geometrical framework. For example, his well-known statement made in 1924 that 'the individual is losing significance; his destiny is no longer what interests us'[19] is given a renewed interpretation in the New National Gallery. Here, as in his other later buildings, references to individuality and uniqueness of expression are eliminated so as to focus on more universal architectural elements.

Spinoza's descriptions of nature and the universe grew out of his understanding of God and man. He proclaimed that 'we may easily conceive the whole of nature to be one individual, whose parts, that is to say, all bodies, differ in infinite ways without any change of the whole individual.'[20] And of the universe he said that 'although it varies in infinite ways, yet it remains always the same.'[21] Both Spinoza and Mies were primarily concerned with the whole rather than the part, the universal rather than the particular, with timelessness rather than with change.

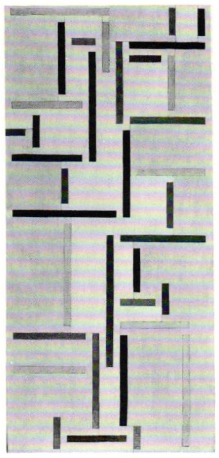
From a methodological point of view, Spinoza and Mies also have much in common, for they both relied primarily on the deductive rather than the inductive method. Real knowledge for Spinoza and Mies could only be acquired by reason and intuitive science, not by experience, which was in their view merely the first step in any kind of intellectual inquiry. Mies once said that 'we must set up new values, fix our ultimate goals so that we may establish standards.'[22] His later buildings are in fact attempts to fix standards, rather than an individual response to the particular needs and experiences of his age.

Reason, however, was not merely a tool to gain real knowledge of the world but also a means to reshape it. According to Mies, it was with the guidance of reason that architecture should lay the foundation for a new world. Quoting Thomas Aquinas—whose writings greatly influenced Spinoza—Mies said that 'reason is the first principle of all human work.'[23] He believed that with the help of reason a realistic assessment of the facts of our time could be achieved, which he viewed as one of his chief tasks. 'Truth is the significance of facts,' as he put it.[24] For Mies the paramount 'fact' of our time was industrialization and technology. In 1924 he proclaimed that if building methods, and by implication the rest of society, could be industrialized, 'our social, economic, technical and even artistic problems will be easy to solve.'[25] Guided by reason and utilizing technology, the architect would then become a social engineer for the benefit of mankind.

In this rational world freedom of action and imagination would have had little place. H G Hubbeling has noted that for Spinoza thinking was not creative, because he saw it only as a part of a 'mathematical, necessary process.'[26] Imagination might have resulted in freedom of action, which he could only reject; he said quite explicitly that 'in the mind there is no absolute or free will.'[27] And from the 1920s, Mies expressed a corresponding apprehension about the power of the imagination. In 1924 he wrote, 'we do not respect flights of the spirit as much as we value reason and realism.'[28] Fourteen years later he proclaimed that education 'must lead us from chance and arbitrariness to rational clarity and intellectual order.'[29] These thoughts are best exemplified in his much-quoted motto: 'I don't want to be interesting, I want to be good.'[30]

For Mies, to be good in architecture meant to capture the essence of the times in built form. In 1960 he said that 'architecture should be related only to the most significant forces in the civilization. Only a relationship which touches the essence of the time can be real.'[31] Although in his published writings Mies never explained what he considered the essence of our time to be, there are suggestive enough hints. After condemning individualism in architecture, he once added that 'I would look for more profound principles. Since I know that we are under the influence of science and technology, I would ask myself what result comes from this fact—*can we change it or can we not change it*? And the answer to this question gave me the direction which I followed. I have tried to make an architecture for a technological society.'[32] For Mies, technology is clearly the essence of our time.

Spinoza's ultimate aim, on the other hand, was to redefine the form and substance of God, whom he viewed in mechanical rather than in personal terms, but whom he still considered the essence of all existence. In the last analysis, the most meaningful link that exists between these two thinkers is that they both tried to give form and substance to what in their view represented the innermost essence of their own time: an impersonal God for Spinoza, an impersonal technology for Mies. In this light, Mies' famous dictum 'less is more,' as well as the New National Gallery become more clearly understandable.



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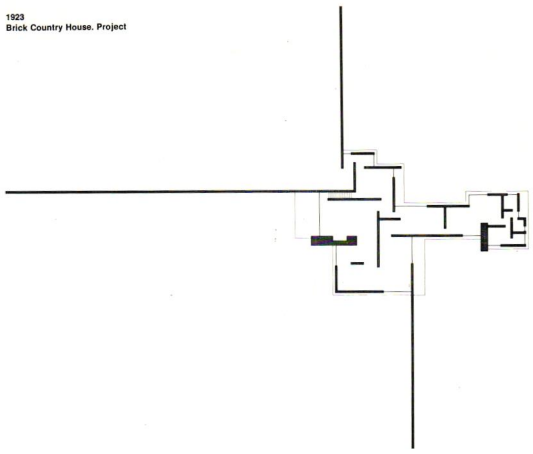

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[33]Jack Kaminsky, *Hegel on Art* (New York, 1962), pp 55-61

[34]Nikolaus Pevsner, 'Schinkel,' *Journal of the Royal Institute of British Architects* 59 (Jan 1952), p 91

[35]GWF Hegel, *Philosophy of Fine Art*, 4 vols., translator F P B Camaston (London, 1920), 3: *passim*

[36]Philip Johnson, *Mies van der Rohe*, p 191

[37]*Ibid*, p 192. In the context of current criticism of the Modern Movement, it is useful to remember that the foregoing statement was part of the inaugural address Mies gave as director of architecture at the Armour Institute of Technology (the predecessor of ITT) in 1938. Although addressing a group of students in a technical institute, Mies spoke of architecture (not excluding that of his day) as having spiritual and not merely functional qualities, and as possessing the capacity to become pure art. It is regrettable that such a significant statement made by one of the chief founders of the Modern Movement is largely forgotten today.

[38]It was J J Winckelmann who made this view initially widespread during the eighteenth century, and Hegel owes him a great deal.

[39]Jack Kaminsky, *Hegel on Art*, p 75

[40]Philip Johnson, *Mies van der Rohe,* p 186

[41]HLC Jaffé, *de Stijl / 1917-1931* (Amsterdam, 1956), p 56

[42]*Ibid*, p 54

[43]HLC Jaffé, *De Stijl* (London, 1970), p 65

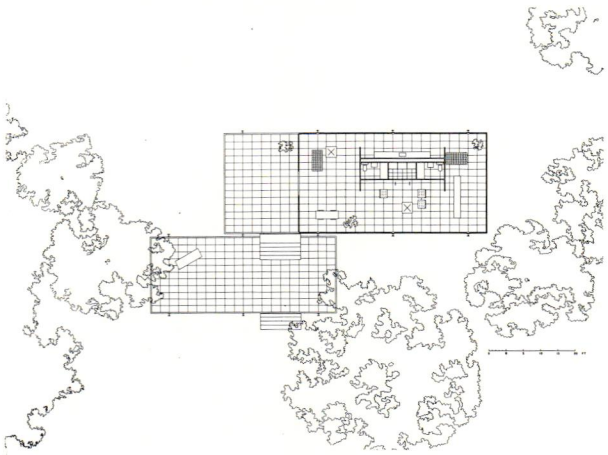
[44]Donnelley Erdman, *The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston* (Houston, 1973), p 20

Any outline of Mies' intellectual roots must also emphasize Hegel. In 1818, the same year in which Schinkel undertook his Theatre, Hegel was appointed professor of philosophy and aesthetics at the University of Berlin. I can scarcely touch on the deep connection that exists between Hegel and the chief architect of Frederick William III of Prussia. Suffice it to say that, as key exponents of German Romantic-Classicism, they both admired Greek architecture for its form and Gothic architecture for its space. In Hegel's view Greek architecture represented the perfect fusion between the science of mathematics and the art of aesthetics. On the other hand, Gothic architecture succeeded for him in attaining the most perfect fusion of form with spiritual content.[33] Schinkel echoed this view when he said that only with the Gothic style is 'the spirit wholly in conquest of mass and matter.'[34] In the main, Hegel judged works of art on the basis of the ethical and philosophical ideas they expressed.[35] This is also true of Mies. Not only did Mies share Hegel's, or for that matter Schinkel's view of Greek and Gothic architecture, but he also adhered to the former's belief that beauty depends on significance. He once advised a critic that a work of art must be tested 'from the point of view of significance and value.'[36] Mies believed as did Hegel, that architecture of lasting value must express intellectual and spiritual qualities of the highest order. The architect echoed the philosopher when he said that 'in its simplest form architecture is rooted in entirely functional considerations, but it can reach up through all degrees of value to the highest sphere of spiritual existence, into the realm of pure art.'[37]

The Miesian notion that works of art are the expressions of an epoch rather than of specific individuals also owes a great deal to Hegel.[38] According to the philosopher, the artist interprets his time through 'working in a purely mechanical and abstract way according to rules ready at hand, rather than with the vision of his own . . . unique creation.'[39] Referring to some of the great monuments of the past, Mies asks: 'of what significance are the fortuitous personalities of their creators? Such buildings are impersonal by their very nature.' To which he added his oft-quoted maxim: 'Architecture is the will of an epoch translated into space.'[40] It is clear that both Hegel and Mies viewed the artist merely as an instrument of a larger will, whose force guides his hand and mind.

The Hegelian dialectic (thesis, antithesis, synthesis) was absorbed by two movements which had a profound effect on Mies' architecture of the 1920s: Marxism and de Stijl. As Hans Jaffé has pointed out, the founders of de Stijl were greatly influenced by Schoenmakers, the Neo-Hegelian mystic, whose first significant books, *The New Image of the World* and *Principles of Plastic Mathematics*, were published in 1915 and 1916 respectively.[41] Jaffé also points out that Theo van Doesburg described neo-plasticism 'as the plastic manifestation of the laws elaborated by Hegel.'[42] He declared in 1918, in a truly Hegelian fashion, that art 'has always expressed the truth of oppositions; but only today has art realized *this truth in its creation*.'[43] To put it differently, art, in van Doesburg's view, has always expressed a dialectical process, but only recently—ostensibly through de Stijl—has art realized this principle. It is important to note that in van Doesburg's view Modern art realized the truth of oppositions, whereas previous art merely expressed it. The distinction is significant, for it reveals that van Doesburg differentiated between the conscious act of realization and the often unconscious act of expression. The conclusion that emerges from this distinction is that for van Doesburg it was only Modern art—especially his own—that realized the Hegelian notion of oppositions on a conscious level. His 1918 painting, *Rhythm of a Russian Dance*, is merely a short step from Mies' seminal project for a Brick Country House, for in both works form and space are set against each other as theme and counter theme, yet always resolved in a synthesis (Figures 5,6).

The only purely Hegelian structure realized by Mies was built in 1926 for, appropriately, two Marxist revolutionaries, Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxenburg (Figure 7). These founders of the German Communist



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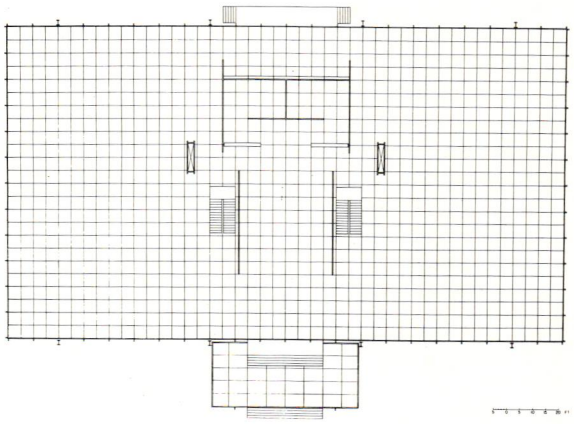

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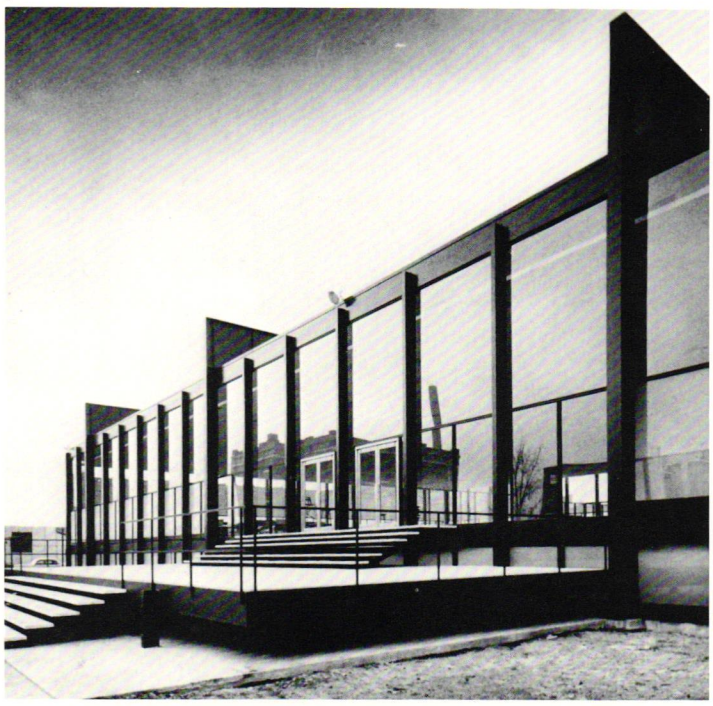

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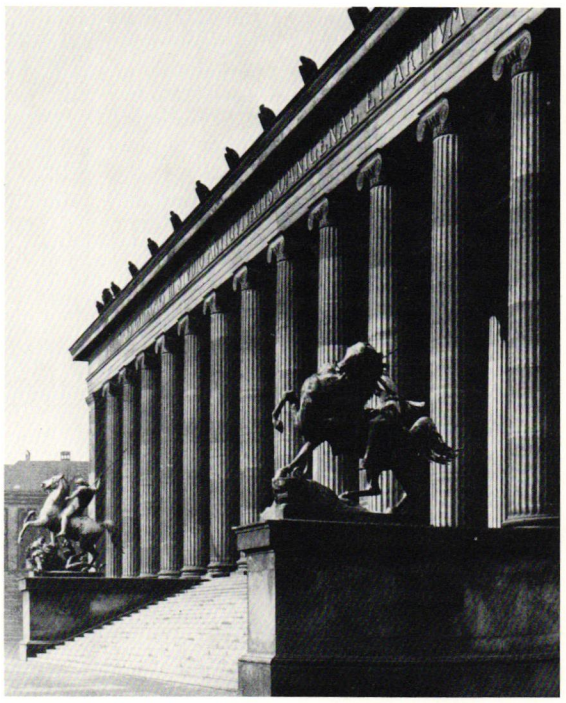

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5 Theo van Doesburg, *Rhythm of a Russian Dance*, 1918. Oil on canvas, 53½ x 24¼, Collection, The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Acquired through the Lillie P Bliss Bequest

6 Mies, Project for a Brick Country House, 1923

7 Mies, Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxenburg Monument, Berlin, 1926, demolished

8 Mies, Farnsworth House, Plano, Illinois, 1945-50

9 Mies, Crown Hall, I I T, Chicago, 1950-56

10 Mies, Crown Hall, I I T, Chicago, 1950-56

11 Karl Friedrich Schinkel, Old Museum, Berlin, 1822-30

12 Mies, Cullinan Hall, Houston, Texas, 1956-58

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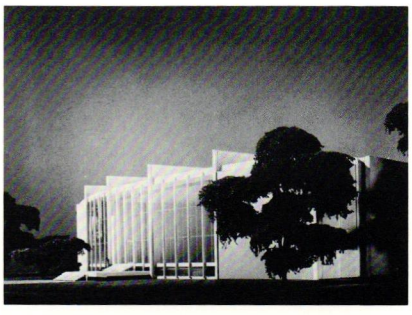
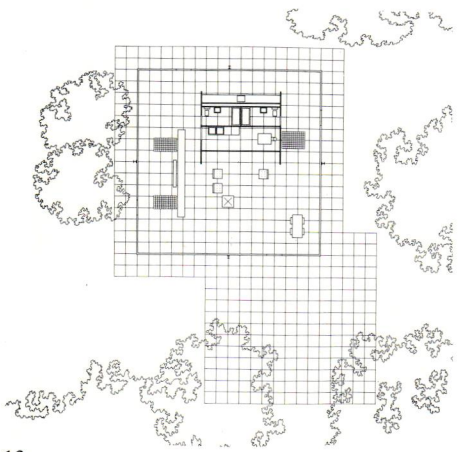


Party were killed in Berlin during a street demonstration in 1919. The monument, built of Dutch brick, is composed of large advancing and receding rectangular masses, which either interlock or slide into one another, creating a dramatic assymetrical pattern. The continuously shifting sets of formal and spatial relationships provide constant interaction between theme and counter-theme. The resolution between thesis and antithesis in Mies' monument lies outside its own boundaries—in the mind of the observer.

The Barcelona Pavilion is the great turning point in Mies' architectural development. Here the classic and the romantic, the state of being and the state of becoming, are perfectly fused. The building is public in scope, yet private in scale; hence individuality and collectivity are brought into total unison. After the creation of this landmark, classicism gained the upper hand in Mies' art, and the Farnsworth house of 1945-50 was the logical outgrowth of slow and painstaking maturation. In Crown Hall, the Architecture Building for IIT (1950-56), Mies transformed the universal yet inflexible space of the Farnsworth house into a public building (Figures 8,9). Schinkel's Old Museum offered a direct source of inspiration for the façade of Mies' newer building (Figures 10,11); a fact significant not only in terms of form but also in terms of content. If properly understood, Crown Hall can be seen as a museum, with an exhibition hall on the upper level and spaces for the preservation of the Miesian system of thought on the lower level. It is not surprising, therefore, that this building served as a prototype for Cullinan Hall, Mies' 1956 addition to Houston's Museum of Fine Arts (Figure 12).[44]

The New National Gallery also represents a continuation of the ideas first developed in Crown Hall. The space for traveling exhibitions and the galleries for the permanent collection underneath are reinterpretations of the Architecture Building's exhibition hall and design rooms respectively. And, as indicated earlier, the roots of both buildings go back to Schinkel's Old Museum.



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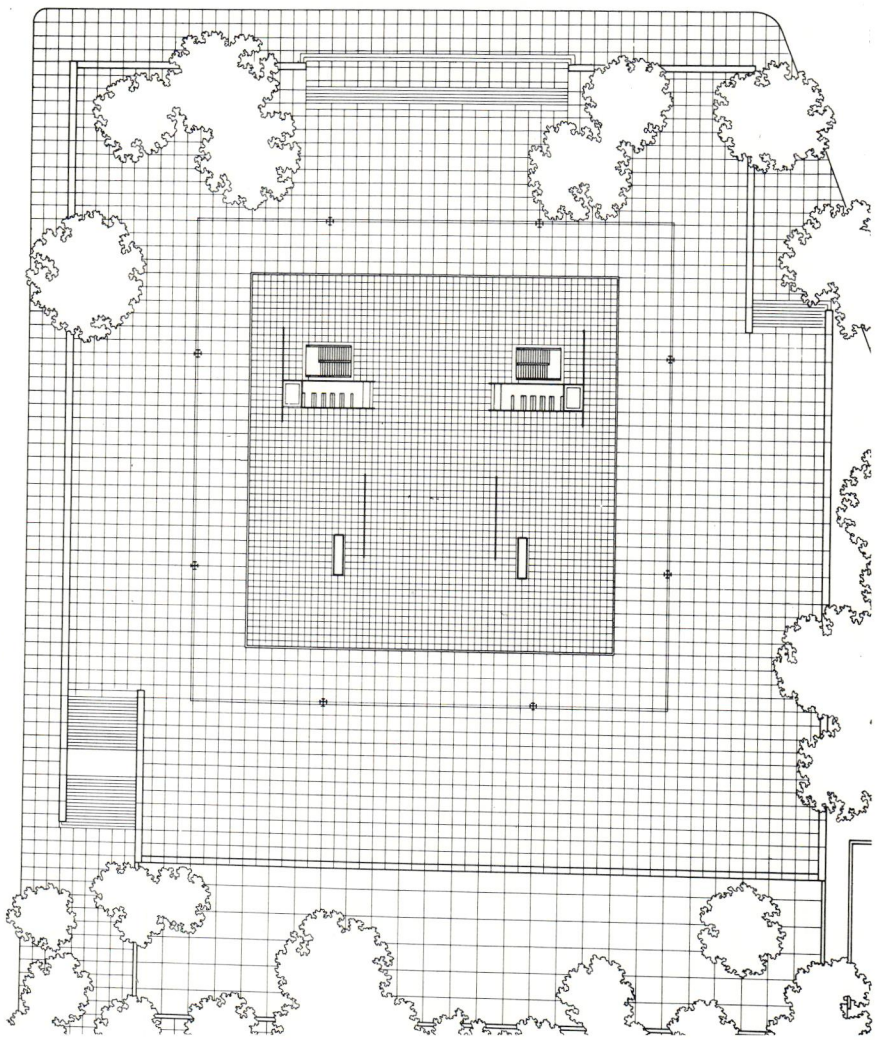

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13 Mies, Project for Square House, 1950-51
14 Mies, New National Gallery, Berlin, 1962-68
15 Mies, New National Gallery, Berlin, 1962-68

While the organization of the interior functions of the New National Gallery represents a reworking of the solutions realized first in Crown and later in Cullinan Hall, the plan of the Gallery derives from the Square House project of 1950-51 (Figures 13,14). Until the early 1950s Mies expressed his ideas primarily in rectangles, but from this project forward the square became more and more central to his thought, as many of his subsequent designs indicate.[45] For Mies the square symbolized a purer form, hence one with a greater universality. In the light of this development, Spinoza's influence acquires added significance.

From a conceptual point of view, the New National Gallery represents the culmination of a lifetime dedicated to the clarification and purification of form and space, a process which was greatly aided by the philosophies of Hegel and Spinoza on the one hand and the architecture of Schinkel on the other. Moreover, this building also exemplifies Mies' painstaking search for the perfect art museum, which could, in his view, respond to the needs of his time.

It must be remembered that the public museum is a relatively recent

[45]Among the most important of these are: Project for a Convention Hall, 1953-54; Post Office Building of the Chicago Federal Center, 1959-73; project for the Bacardi Office Building, 1957; Home Federal Savings and Loan Association of Des Moines, Iowa, 1960-63; Banking Hall of the Toronto-Dominion Centre, 1963-69.

[46]Peter Carter, *Mies van der Rohe at Work*, p 184. See also Mies' project for a Museum for a Small City of 1942 for an earlier expression of these ideas.

[47]For a recent discussion of the two polar tendencies in Post-Modernism (reductive rationalist and inclusive historicist), see David Dunster, 'A comeback for architectural theory,' and 'Elusive outcome' by numerous authors, especially Michael Graves, *Progressive Architecture* 58 (May, 1977) pp 80-96.

[48]'Mies,' *Architectural Forum* 119, (Sept. 1963), p 81

[49]Werner Blaser, *Mies van der Rohe, The Art of Structure* (New York, 1965), p 6



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institution, and Schinkel's Old Museum was in fact the first built solely for this purpose. But since that time the public art museum has acquired an institutional significance best compared to that of the Church in previous centuries. In the pluralistic societies of the West, the public art museum has become perhaps the only institution which can technically claim universal membership. With its broad range of educational services, from the popular to the esoteric, the museum has gone far beyond being merely a repository for man's artistic achievements; it has in fact become an all-embracing cultural symbol.

Mies, of course, recognized the complex role an art museum has to fulfill today, and offered a solution in Berlin which he hoped would function as a new prototype. To serve the multiple needs of the New National Gallery in a relatively small building, the architect created three functional zones: a courtyard for sculpture, a lower level for the permanent collection and storage, and a great open hall over it for temporary exhibitions. This glass-enclosed exhibition hall is perhaps the most versatile space Mies ever created; it can also be used for lectures, concerts, and a number of other activities (Figure 15). Yet it is in its primary function that this exhibition hall excels. As Mies' friend, James Johnson Sweeney, put it:

> *where the presentation of works of art was concerned he felt that they should have complete priority. Architectural details, fantasies in installation or lighting that might even slightly distract the observer's attention from the works of art were inadmissible. The only features he permitted were open space and a sensibility in its division. The relative 'absence of architecture,' as he put it, intensifies the individuality of each work of art and at the same time incorporates it into the entire design.*[46]

How different this is from Wright's approach in the Guggenheim Museum.

The organization of the spaces ot the New National Gallery reveals the significance Mies attached to the functions contained therein. The permanent collection is the foundation, the root, as it were, of whatever temporary exhibition is situated above it. Yet the temporary exhibition represents the true center, the *raison d'être*, of the museum, giving such an exhibition an unprecedented significance. Here the most recent and timely manifestations of human culture can be viewed in a universal and timeless setting. No other architect, in fact, has focused so sharply on the significance of the traveling exhibition as a unique cultural manifestation of our time, and given it such an eloquent formal and spatial interpretation.

In the context of recent criticism of the Modern Movement, Mies' New National Gallery demonstrates that in architecture the symbolic and mythic representations of a culture need not be expressed in a literal or direct way, but may be communicated through a more abstract language.[47] Notwithstanding his reductive rationalist approach, Mies imbued the New National Gallery, like most of his other buildings, with architectural content. His responsiveness to the philosophies of Spinoza and Hegel, to the architectural tradition of Schinkel's Berlin, and to the unique nature of a modern museum all attest to this. Spinoza's statement, 'I shall consider human actions and desires in exactly the same manner as though I were concerned with lines, planes and solids,' is given a remarkably authentic reinterpretation in Mies' later buildings. In their overriding concern for harmony and order, Spinoza and Mies were equally ready to equate human actions with geometry. Mies once described the goal he set for himself as 'the creation of order out of the desperate confusion of our time.'[48] An obsession with harmony and order encouraged these two thinkers to focus on the general rather than on the particular, on timelessness rather than on change. The aim of both was to give form and substance to the essence of their time: an impersonal God for Spinoza and an impersonal technology for Mies.

Mies' notion that architecture can reach the highest sphere of spiritual existence, the realm of pure art, and that works of art are expressions of an epoch rather than of specific individuals represents an important aspect of the German idealist tradition going back to Hegel and Winckelmann. Schinkel was also part of this tradition, and his Old Museum is one of the foremost examples of German idealism in architectural form of the last century. In it, Schinkel fused history with modernity, the spiritual / intellectual with the functional, the built form with the larger environment.

In the New National Gallery Mies created a rational order based on geometry and mathematics which parallels that of Spinoza's *Ethics*. By imbuing his museum with an exquisite sense of form and space, Mies also lived up to Hegel's expectation that architecture at its best can become an example of pure art. Moreover, Hegel's notion that a whole epoch rather than merely an individual finds expression in a work of art is emphasized by the impersonal and anonymous qualities of this building. In addition, Schinkel's ability to fuse the architecture of the past with the needs of the present is realized afresh in the New National Gallery. Here Mies transformed the Old Museum into a modern architectural statement, where the traveling exhibition as a cultural manifestation peculiar to our age is treated as a central theme. He once said that 'I felt it must be possible to harmonize the old and the new in our civilization'[49] In the New National Gallery Mies accomplished his aim flawlessly. The criticism that the Modern Movement was too narrowly functional, that it was anti-historical and that it created architectural forms without content can certainly not be applied to Mies' New National Gallery, nor can they be applied to many of the Movement's other major examples. Unless we examine the achievements of the Modern Movement more carefully, we will repeat one of its chief errors: to condemn the immediate past without properly understanding it. The Modern Movement need not become the Post Modern Movement's Ecole des Beaux-Arts.

Forum Discussion

'Beyond the Modern Movement' A conference held at Harvard University, November 5, 1977

Date:
November 5, 1977

Sponsor:
The Harvard Architecture Review

Introductory Remarks:
Jerzy Soltan

Panel Members:
Stanford Anderson
Peter Eisenman
John Hejduk
Leon Krier
Donlyn Lyndon
Cesar Pelli
Robert Stern
Stanley Tigerman

Buildings Presented:
Kitakyushu Prefectorial Central Library; Japan, 1975
Arata Isozaki

Addition to Allen Memorial Art Museum at Oberlin College, 1976
Venturi and Rausch

Crooks House
Fort Wayne, Indiana, 1977
Michael Graves

Residential Unit in the Gallaretese
Milan, Italy, 1970
Aldo Rossi

Whitman Village
Huntington, New York, 1974
Moore, Grover, Harper

Centraal Beheer Office Building;
Apeldoorn, Holland, 1973
Herman Hertzberger

The Modern Movement can be defined variously as a moral code, a set of methods for designing, an expression of twentieth century cultural, political, and industrial phenomena, or as a style. Many of those who are currently rejecting either its premises or its products mistakenly claim a common antagonist for their work. Thus the analysis of architectural endeavor today is complex for two reasons: first, because of the diversity of post- or pre- or non-Modern architecture, and second, because of deep, but often unarticulated differences of attitude over which aspects of Modernism to redress.

On November 5, 1977, the editors of the Harvard Architecture Review sponsored a conference to help define the character of this criticism of Modern Movement Architecture, or as we framed it, architecture 'Beyond the Modern Movement.' Invited guests included self-proclaimed advocates of the 'movement,' as well as critics representing opposing views. Several buildings which embody clearly defined architectural ideas were presented as a foil for critical discussion. While these buildings as a group did not rigidly conform to the basic precepts of a Post-Modern Architecture, they did suggest a variety of reactions to, or developments of Modern Movement Architecture. Our hope was to clarify these various directions, and to see whether patterns of development or critical posture could be drawn.

The following article contains edited transcripts of that discussion. While the conference did not succeed in identifying a structure or an explicit agenda for 'Post-Modernism, it did underscore the problematic nature of the Modern/Post-Modern debate. Without clarifying the assumptions underlying a critical discussion as diverse as architecture, cohesive arguments and counter-arguments cannot be achieved. For example, Robert Stern's evaluation of architecture on the basis of its capacity to convey symbolic meaning, and Leon Krier's responsiveness to its impact as part of a political process, reveal widely differing attitudes concerning the sphere in which the profession operates. Thus, the speakers disagreed not only over an evaluation of the buildings presented, but over what the very nature of the discussion should be. As a result, organic formulations of what architecture should be proved hard to come by. Among the projects presented appeared few common threads of expressed goals for architecture. This diverse activity leaves unresolved the primary issues around which Post-Modernism has gathered its forces: whether architecture should be handed to the people or held outside the popular grasp, inspired by historic precedents or by the materials and technologies of its own time, incorporate known systems of signification or be left unencumbered by external cultural references. And furthermore, it denies a prognosis for the Modern Movement itself, whether it is dead or born again, or ever lived a unitary life at all.

Soltan: The organizers of this meeting and myself felt that some sort of voice from the grave—a voice from behind the gate—might be proper and of some interest to those gathered here. So, I'll try to encapsulate the character of some of the discussions in which I participated during the '30s.

How shall I encapsulate them? Well, they were clear, orderly, and coherent. Everybody was aware of the concern with social, economic and even political issues. Everybody was concerned with technological issues, with sound new building technologies to build the *maison machine à habite* with. CIAM [*Congres International d'Architecture Moderne*] was keenly aware of the world-wide hunger for food and shelter, was aware of the thousands if not millions of deaths that were occurring daily because of this hunger. These architects felt the burden of responsibility on their shoulders.

In the area of form, not much was said. There was a tacit agreement not to touch this delicate point. It was almost a taboo. Also, among us, few as far as these CIAM members were concerned (we called them CIAMese brothers) were really gifted visually. These good, well-meaning Germans, Swiss, Czechs, Hungarians and Poles were kept busy enough dealing with basic matters.

Aesthetically, the Zeitgeist and the principle that 'form follows function' was unfortunately sufficient for them. The proverb, 'Think not about roses when forests are burning,' was very much in their minds. Architecture is a litmus test, a blood test of general social, economic, political, and indeed, general order. This order was very much present in the minds of all participants—a mildly Marxist, social, and socialistic utopia.

. . . any architectural content, whatever one could understand, of it, was also, in a way, in opposition to the CIAM, an antithesis. Why? The social human was here just as out-of-place as the visual was in the CIAM. Here everything was supposed to be dear to form, but visual magnificence is a delicate subject matter. It is a delicate flower and put in an insensitive lingo it tends to wither. . . .

As we said a moment ago, 'Think not about roses when forests are burning.' Shouldn't one correct this proverb and say, 'Think not only about roses when forests are burning.' These forests are still burning, aren't they?



Robert Stern, Stanley Tigerman, Donlyn Lyndon, Cesar Pelli, Peter Eisenman, Stanford Anderson, Leon Krier, John Hejduk

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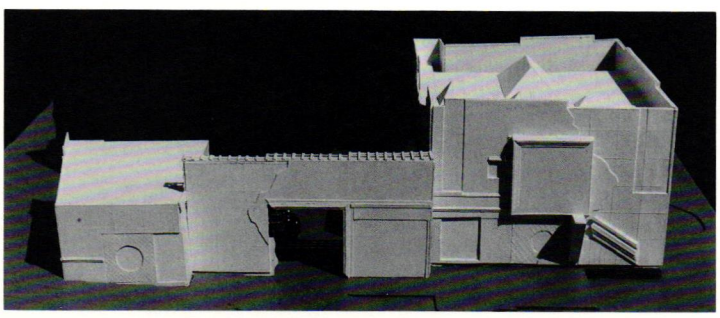

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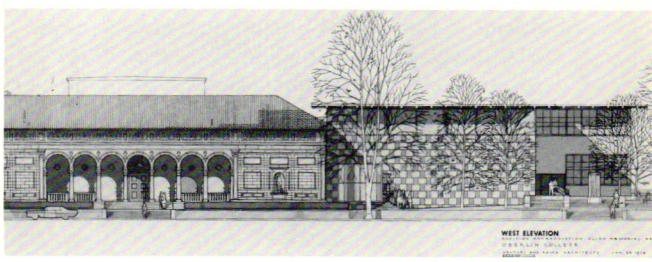

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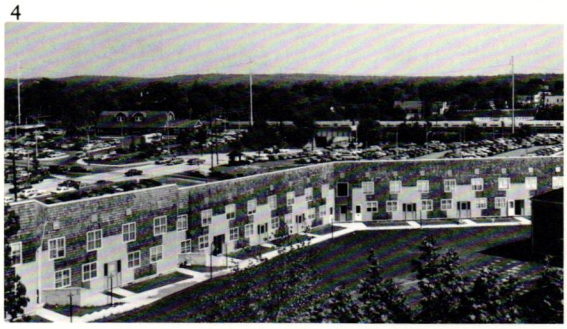

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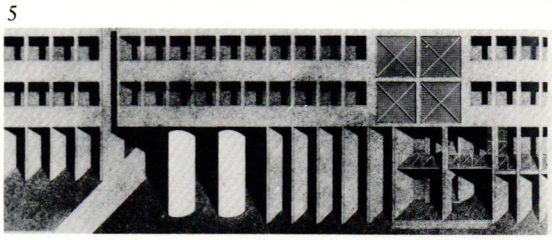


1 Kitakyushu Prefectorial Central Library

2 Crooks House

3 Addition to Allen Memorial Art Museum

4 Whitman Village

5 Residential Unit Gallaretese

6 Centraal Beheer Office Building

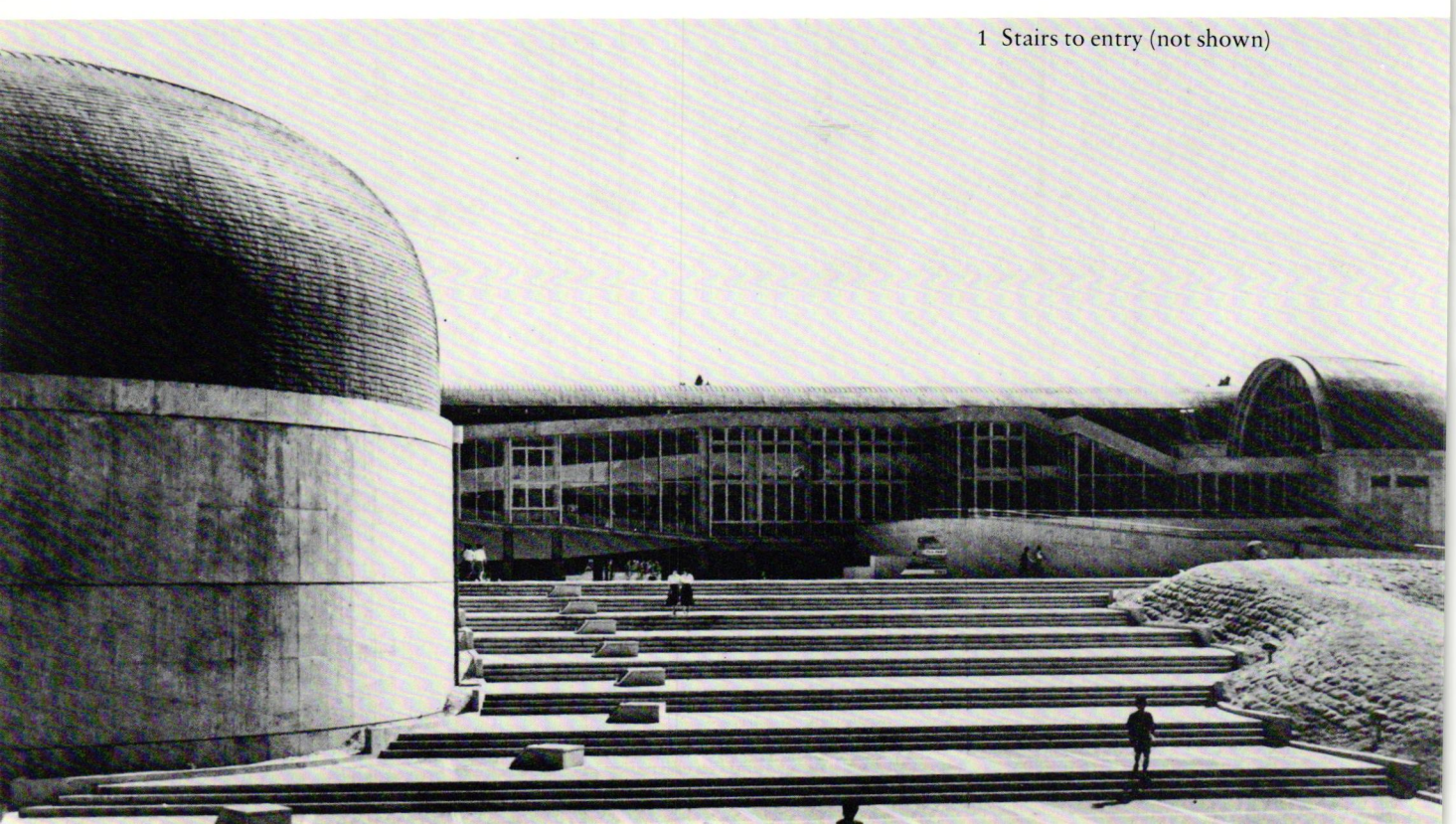
Kitakyushu Central Library
Kitakyushu, Fukuoka Prefecture, Japan 1973-75
Arata Isozaki

The Kitakyushu Central Library is a complex consisting of an historical museum, an audio-visual center, and a municipal library. More specifically, its program includes exhibition rooms, library stacks and reading rooms, studio space, lecture rooms and a restaurant, as well as a number of smaller office and service spaces. The building is located on the gentle slope of a park in the center of the city.

The Kitakyushu Library's functions are organized into two semi-cylindrical 'tubes,' roughly three stones high, which run parallel to each other, then bend away in a curving fashion to form an open space for stairs from street level leading to the main entry. However, this morphological separation (into two tubes) does not correspond to a programmatic one, as the library functions, for instance, overflow from one semi-cylinder to the other, without apparent impact on the exterior.

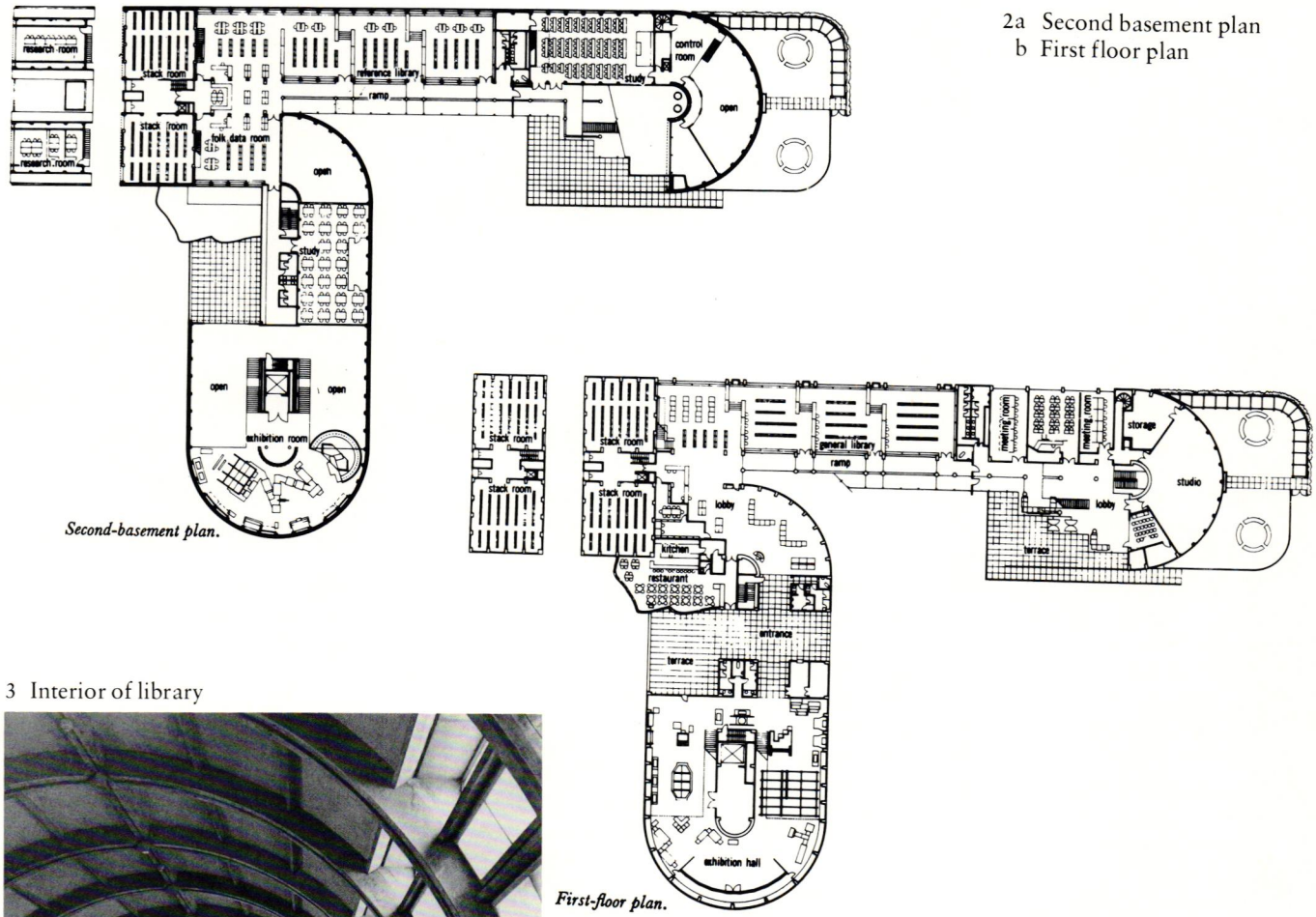
These tubes house 3-4 floors of program space, although the main functions are generally located on the top two floors, where, with frequent double-height spaces, the continuous vaulted ceiling establishes the basic spatial type for the complex. Generally, the program space is located in the full depth of the tube, with circulation and service functions running as a thin band alongside or between the semi-cylinders.

Construction is of unfinished reinforced concrete at the base, three-hinged pre-cast concrete ribs for the vault structure, and pre-cast concrete plates covered with copper shingles for the vaults proper.

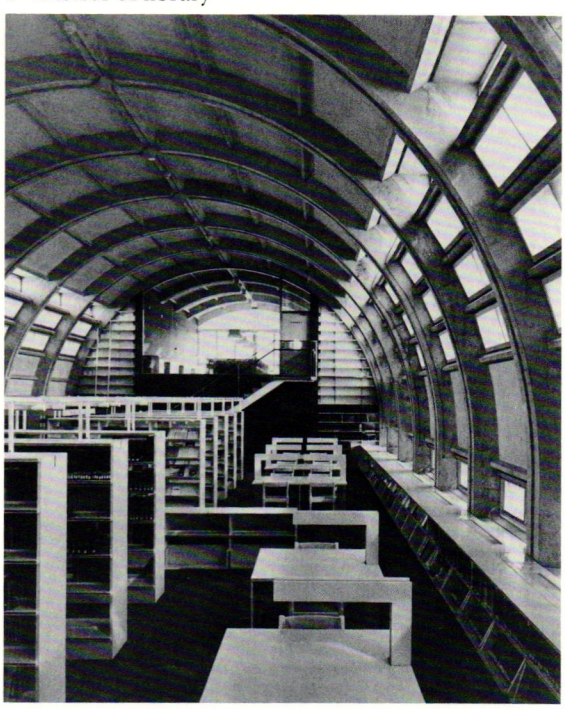


1 Stairs to entry (not shown)

2a Second basement plan
b First floor plan



3 Interior of library



Arata Isozaki

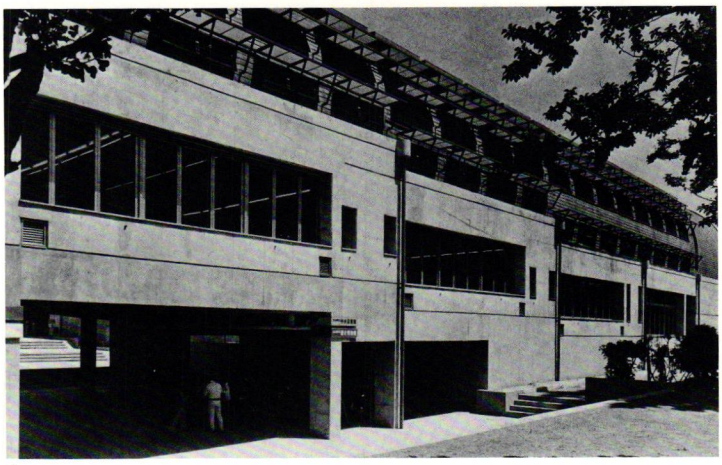
Seen from the outside, no one part of the complex can be distinguished from the others. Instead, the library has been designed so that the formal structure underlying the various design constraints, that is the library's morphology, emerges.

The vaults, which are the p primary expression of the library's morphology are subject to the following rhetorical devices. First is bending–producing compressed rings of revolving space. The next is juxtaposition. The vaults are juxtaposed, thus creating a space between them, clarifying formal relationships between the building parts. The third is incision. The arch is cut off abruptly at the ends, suggesting the continuity of the vault form and the space it embraces. The result is that meaning begins to emerge and we can consider these acts of bending, juxtaposition and incision as semantic operations.

Arata Isozaki, from *Architectural Design*, January 1977, p 41.

Formalism interprets architecture as form and makes form independent. It adopts the position that it is possible to develop new meanings by means of the management of forms. Form gives birth to meaning. This system of formalism inverts the method whereby technology, function, social demands and other themes imposed on architecture from the outside become the decisive facts in architectural expression.

Arata Isozaki, translation of '*Kenchiku No Kaitai*' ('Dismantling of Architecture'), *Japan Architect*, April 1976, p 67.



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Pelli: Let me try to start. . . . I see several things which do not quite correspond to the words of Isozaki or the moderator's description of the building.

First, I have no doubts in my mind that that is a Modern building. Anyone looking at that building (at the realities and putting the words aside) would clearly see it as a Modern building. Second, dealing with semantics, I have a hard time reading 'library' in that building (which it should be telling me first and foremost). . . .

When we talk about Beyond the Modern Movement, I have a hard time trying to think what the Modern Movement is or was. Now, when the Modern Movement is maybe 90 years or at least 70 years old, we do not need to go back to the definitions of the Modern Movement, but we can look at it and observe it and we see that very important members of the Modern Movement were people like Frank Lloyd Wright or Mendelsohn or van Doesburg who were not necessarily part of CIAM. . . .

Anderson: My thoughts were pretty much along the same lines as what Cesar has pronounced. If this notion of a Post-Modern Architecture makes any sense, it is a term that can only be understood in relationship to what we mean by Modern. It is not a term that claims any other information for itself. Obviously the great difficulty is that whether we take the polemics of the 1920s and '30s or whether we take the anti-polemics of the 1960s and '70s, there have been very inadequate definitions of what Modern means. As Cesar has said, the architecture itself was always much more rich, much more filled with alternatives, much more exploratory of a wide range of problems than that which comes out of any of the definitions that we have (from the historians and architects themselves) of the 1920s and 1930s or again if we take the contrary arguments of recent times. For example, take what you have quoted of Isozaki, saying that what he wants to do is to make form independent and that this inverts the method of Modern Architecture . . . well, his definition of Modern Architecture basically assumed that it was a functionalist enterprise, and that if you define it as such then you can readily make a complete inversion of it and claim to have something that is Post-Modern, anti-Modern, that overcomes it in some way.

In any reasonable reading, even of the 'functionalist' buildings of the 1920s and '30s, we don't have functionalism. Of course, we also have many buildings that never presumed or sought to be any such thing. It seems to me, then, that in a great many of the works of recent years that have given rise to the kind of debate in which we are now participating, there has been this intentional simplification of the Modern Movement and then the attempt to invert it. To the extent that this is what has happened, it tends to make a very weak argument for contemporary work that inevitably suffers the same difficulties and the same limitations as the over-simplified definition of the Modernism to which it counterposes itself.

Just to make this last point more concrete, I think the issues as to whether architecture is an autonomous discipline, whether form within architecture can have a certain autonomy or independence as Isozaki used the word, is an important question. But, it sets out only one pole of the debate about what form can be and how form operates. For me, at least, it clearly never operates totally autonomously, just as it never operates totally functionally, and what we have is a spectrum that has to be analyzed for the attitudes of the architects, for the response that we expect relative to a particular kind of problem that the building is addressing. . . .

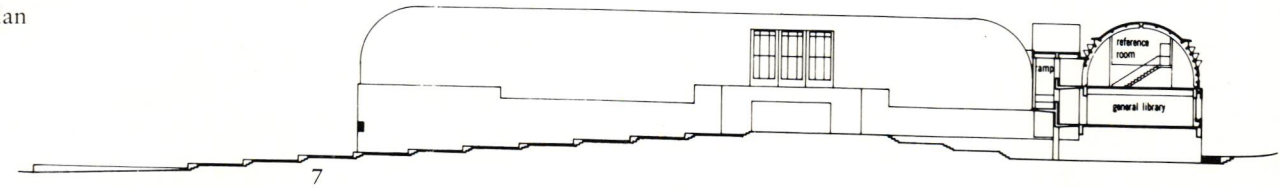
Let us turn to something more specific about this building. I don't presume to do justice to the whole building but just to draw out two details that are nevertheless very obvious and major. One is the use of circular plan forms—segments of circles—that you find in several places in the building, or the vaulting that runs through the entire building. In both of these cases you have rather specific forms. Segmental plan forms are bound to have a focus; in this case they are even given much the same dimension throughout. . . . the range of different uses, which goes all the way from studios to exhibition spaces to library spaces to electric control rooms . . . are put under the same form. It seems to me to be a rather primitive exploration of an important issue: what is the proper relationship between formal autonomy and actual function? . . .

Stern: Frankly, I find this building, as an object, not substantially different from the kind of building that Skidmore, Owings and Merrill was doing in the sixties—and if that is what autonomous architecture means, I can't differentiate between the Bienecke Library and this one. Neither of them says very much of interest about readers and books or about institutions. When the library outgrows this building, perhaps they will have to replace it with something else, leaving this building behind with the possibility that anything could go into it just as appropriately. Maybe ultimately it will be more appropriately coded—perhaps as a hot dog factory or a tootsie roll factory.

Lyndon: What I read from it, in its similarity to the Bienecke Library and a thousand other things—a thousand other things I'd like to disassociate myself from—is an interest in the building not as a building form but as some kind of diagrammatic form, on which the transpositions which are mentioned—bending, juxtaposition, incision—are taken. . . .

The roots of the formal invention that does take place in this building are in its conception as an object and not in any sense in the kinds of things people do in it, the kinds of experiences they have going through it.

4 View of rear of library wing
5 Axonometric
6 Site plan



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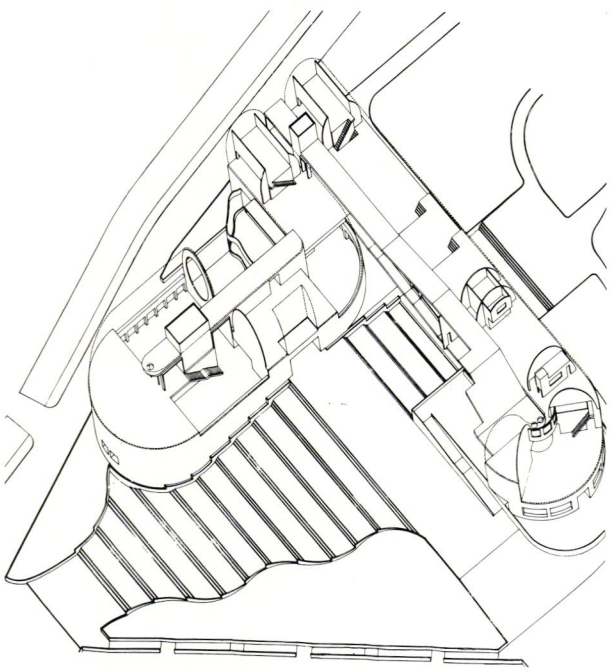

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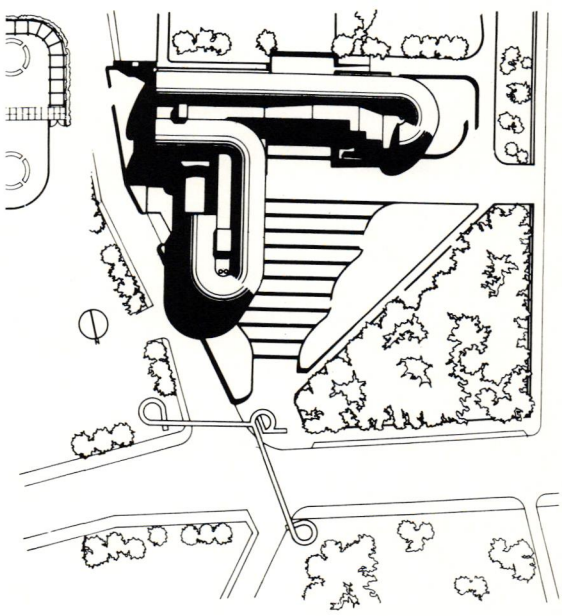

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The student who introduced the building didn't use the phrase 'the uses are stuffed into it,' but something slightly more gentle than that. It seems to me that its overriding characteristic is that any action or experience one might have in that place would be subservient, finally, to that mammoth extrusion which operates over and above anything else that happens. . . .

Lauber: . . . I agree with Professor Anderson that Modern Architecture was quite a diverse body of ideas and works, but historians and apologists for Modernism have portrayed it in a more or less monolithic way . . . and further, I think that people are reacting to it as if it *were* a monolithic body of workshops . . .

[This building] takes a form that, despite practical concerns, is one that Isozaki uses again and again. It seems that there is a concern with form here that was absent in the Modern Movement—an overriding concern with form which tries to ignore the function of the building, to be as consistent and obvious as possible. I think that this is the 'rose' that Professor Soltan was talking about and it seems that it is here with a vengeance. This is the aspect of the building that we consider significant, problematic also, but significant if it can be seen to be opposed to some of the general ideas about Modern Architecture.

Stern: The definition of the Modern Movement is usually somewhat different from the definition of Modern Architecture. . . . The Modern Movement was rather monolithic as it was conceived of, particularly in this country, in large part because Hitchcock and Johnson's book was so clear and so prescriptive.

This building . . . is an inheritor of the tradition of making a building about its own construction—it is, in that sense autonomous architecture—and not about telling us what is happening in the building or making a comment on the building in its physical context, or even, in my opinion, making a building in the context of a still rather interesting and refined culture. . . .

Tigerman: . . . Bob said something about the codification of the Modern Movement, when it happened. This brings up how we are going to look at this and other buildings today and how we look at buildings in general. You really have to think first about what architectural history is (which as far as I'm concerned tends to be slightly different from other history) . . . it tends to cleanse, push aside, to focus and make points.

. . . We can be cute and talk about extrusions and so forth and try and relate that to certain earlier codifying principles, but the building demands, in some ways, more than certain of the other buildings that we will be analyzing. We can use language that reflects back to certain precepts of the Modern Movement, but they really, to me, fall a little short in describing, justifying, rationalizing this kind of building.

Krier: Perhaps I could say something on it. I find it rather difficult to get into this discussion because obviously the issues are very complicated and the buildings are too. I would like therefore to try to reduce the discussion to some points which I feel would be helpful. One could talk about Modern or

Post-Modern for another week and we still would not know what was going on. Everything that is being built today is modern and anything which was built yesterday is old. (There are books of Paris of the 1850s which are called *Paris Moderne*.) Not to confuse this issue, we are trying to criticize, what might be called the Modern Movement, or which might be identified today as CIAM. . . .

This was a group of people who tried to state theoretically something which had happened over 120 or 150 years ago in the European city. This was really the impact of industrialization on the city, which was promoted by CIAM through a kind of ritualization of zoning. But, this kind of zoning was actually the result of the economic dynamic in capitalism and industrial production.

Zoning brought with it an exhaustion of architecture. This is an entirely new topic of discussion. . . . There was an historical break which was sanctified in the design of buildings in relation to the city. In pre-industrialized society (I can talk only about the European city, but I think that is really the issue) there was a very strong relationship of the building to the public realm. The building was both the result of the public realm and had an effect on the public realm by identifying it. With the spread of the cities, caused by zoning and the economic dynamic or later by cultural proposals (as with CIAM), virtually every building in the city is viewed as an isolated object. In a funny way, this concentration on the object seems to fall together with the collapse of a typological culture. You can make a history of architectural types, and it would stop around 1800, because we see that there is an immediate relationship between program and building type. As building programs become very complicated you tend to lose building types to the formation of building organizations which become difficult to identify as building types.

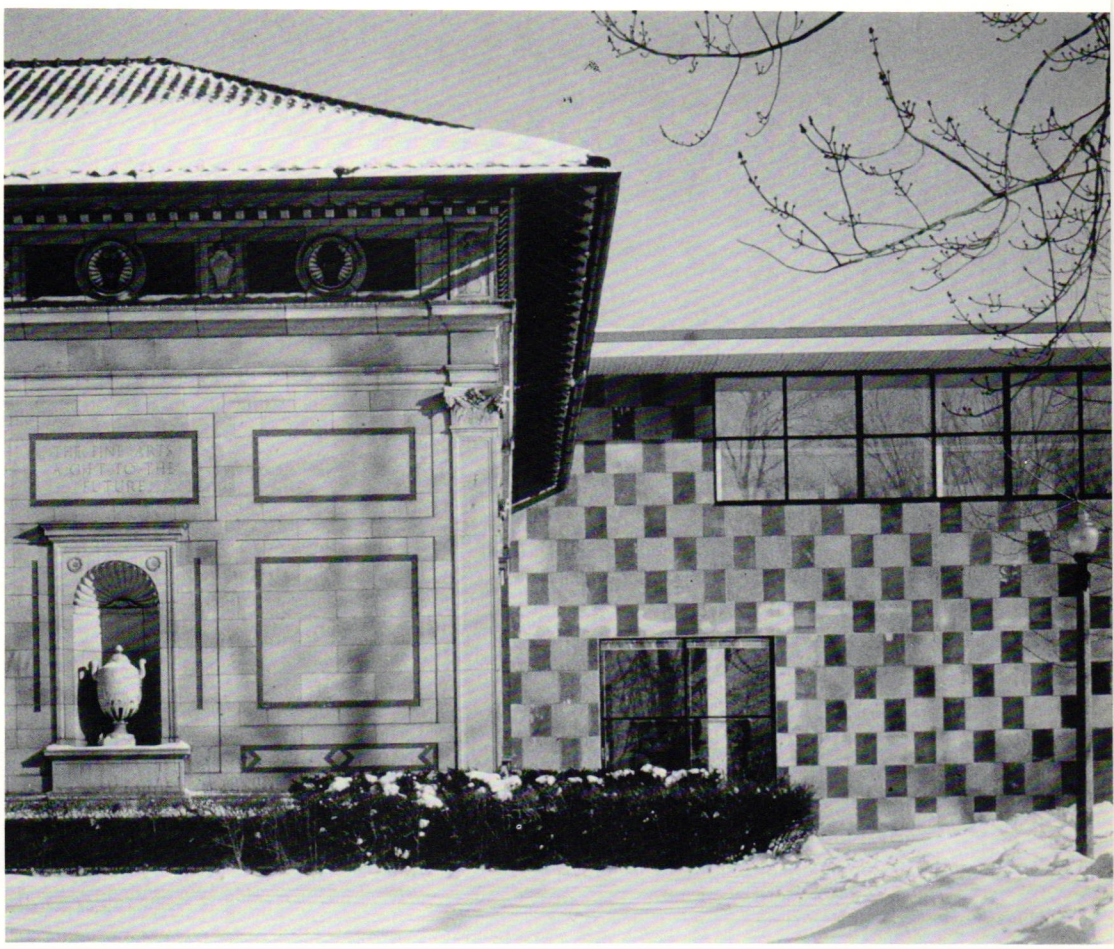
I brought a passage from a text of Quatremere de Quincy to illustrate this point:

> *The word 'type' does not so much represent the image of something to be copied or perfectly imitated but rather the idea of an element which itself serves as a rule to the model. . . .*
>
> *To everything an antecedent is needed. Not one thing of any kind comes from nothing. . . .*
>
> *We speak of a nucleus around which have agglomerated the developments and variations of form which the object itself has provoked. Thus, thousands of things of any kind have come to us through history and one of the main occupations of the sciences and philosophy is to catch the reasons, to find the origins and the primitive causes. This is what we have to call type in architecture as in any other branch of human invention and institution.*

One can refer to buildings as types of buildings, types of spaces, types of construction, types of decorations—the types of artistic conceptions of the world. All these buildings today can be criticized in relation to one of these disciplines and I would like to say that Isozaki's building refers to a type of construction. It has not reached the point of being a type of building, because it is endless and has no beginning or end.

Addition to the Allen Memorial Art Museum
Oberlin College, Oberlin, Ohio 1976
Venturi and Rauch, Architects

1 Detail view of west elevation



This project is an addition to an art museum designed by Cass Gilbert in 1917 in an early Renaissance style. An addition to that building, housing classrooms and studios, was constructed in 1937.

The firm of Venturi and Rauch was asked to add a large gallery space, re-house the existing library, and expand the facilities of the art department.

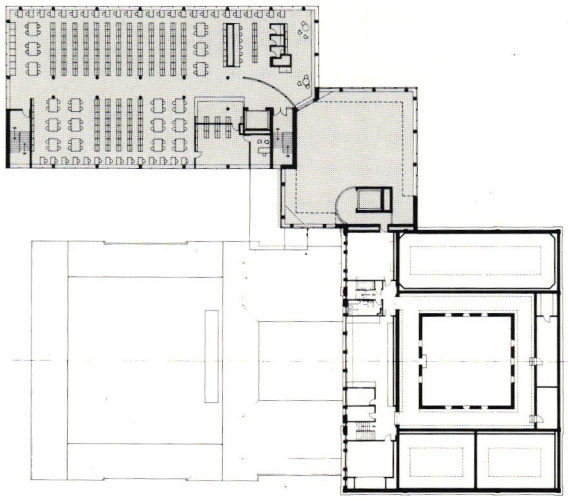
From the major street side of the site, the new addition recedes from the original building façade via set-backs in plan. The first bay houses the new gallery, which is almost square in plan. The large, generalized interior shape of the new gallery is interrupted by an angled corner window which exposes a decorative (and structual) Ionic column. The next bay contains loft spaces for classrooms and offices and houses the major exterior entrance to the addition.

The addition is faced with panels of pink granite and rose sandstone, matching the coloration of the original Gilbert façade. The loft spaces behind are faced in simple buff brick. Continuous metal sash windows are the other dominant element on the exterior, along with a deep roof overhang.

The design of the new gallery derives in part from conflicting needs for abundant but controlled natural lighting. Strip windows located high in the gallery walls utilize three light-controlling mechanisms: a large roof overhang, the depth of the roof framing and curtains of overlapping translucent plexiglas panels.

Both the construction and plan of the classroom wing are straightforward, forming simple, flexible working spaces.

2 East Elevation
3 Interior view of new gallery
4 West Elevation showing original museum and new addition
5 Second floor plan
6 Site plan – first floor plan
7 View of column outside northeast corner of gallery



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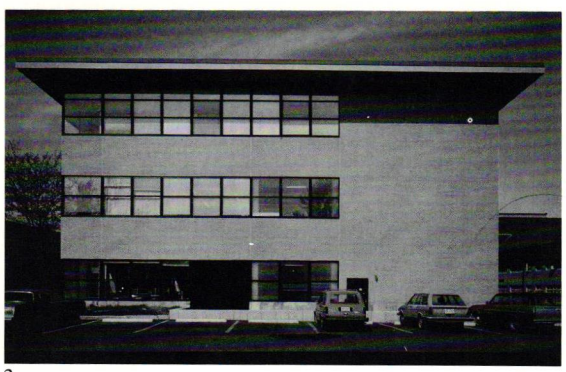

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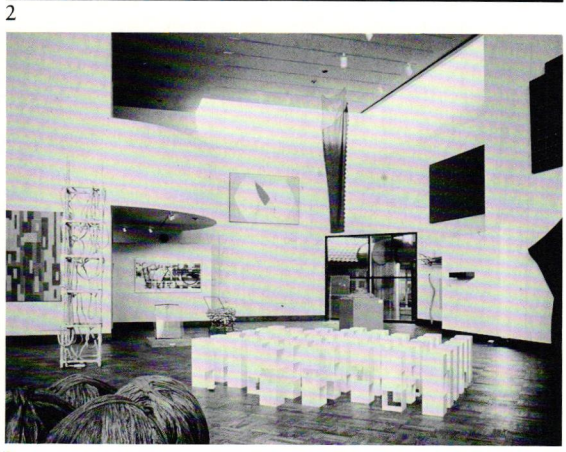

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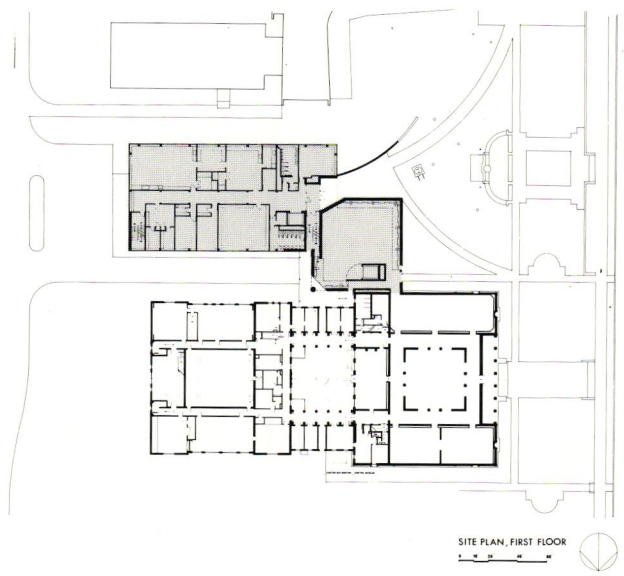

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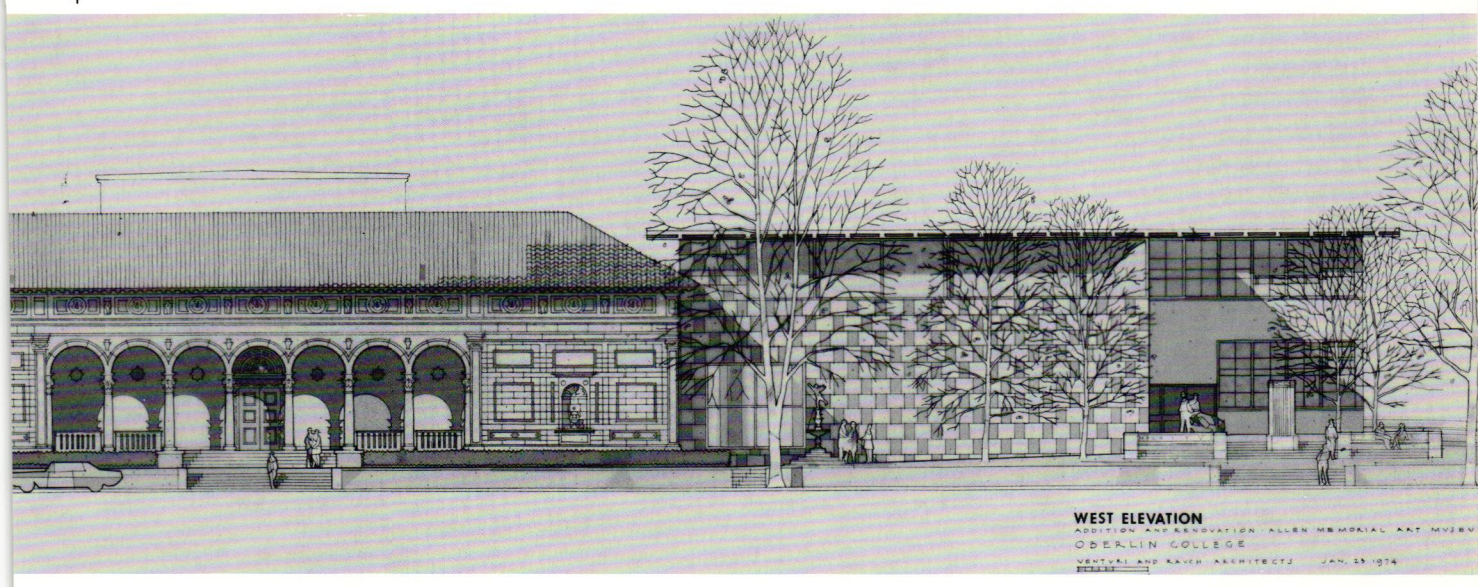


Venturi and Rauch

. . . the Art Museum [Cass Gilbert's original Museum] is not high art with a vengeance. If it is a symbol of high art midst mid-America, it forms a poignant rather than a condescending image, not a separation between great art and everyday life, but a contrast. As an architectural gem in an ordinary setting, it makes its own harmony . . . a Quattrocento villa symbolizing the greatest decades of Western art—in a grid-iron plan off a village green and among a Congregational church, a Citgo Service Station, and those somewhat threadbare bungalows, nondescript but universal in the American town.

. . . In the end we extended our villa as a Quattrocento Architect might have added to a real villa . . . two generations after it was built; we juxtaposed a workable new block in an architectural style current today.

. . . In the end we like jamming an independent new pavilion onto the old pavilion without a transition—or rather, with a transition at the scale of detail—through placing a flush, 10 inch, vertical strip of grey granite on the new wall at the joint meeting the contrasting patterns of each pavillion and receiving the classical mouldings of the old one; and with careful adjustment of the height of the new wing and its roof overhang to the roof of the old.

The design of the addition as a whole fits our predilection for the 'decorated shed'—that is, plain architecture with a fancy appliqué. The play between contrasting and analogous harmonies and between plain and fancy elements in the forms of this complex is echoed by a similar play in its symbolism. Our squarish gallery with strip windows and big overhang recalls on the outside a high school gym of the 1940s. But the decorative pattern on it evokes other associations, fancy rather than plain. And the loft with its big proportions and flush windows is a fancy representation of a plain style. From the front, therefore, our complex is meant to be a succession of forms and symbols, juxtaposed and receding: a Quattrocento monument, a decorated shed, and then an enhanced loft.

Robert Venturi, 'Plain and Fancy Architecture by Cass Gilbert at Oberlin and the Addition to the Museum by Venturi and Rauch,' *Bulletin,* Allen Memorial Art Museum, volume 34, number 2, 1976-77.

Krier: I didn't really want to say anything about this building but I find it honestly ridiculous, in bad taste and bad architecture. I would just ask if this building were published in a magazine and the architect were called Albert Schmidt or Peter Muller, you would just not talk about it. But because of the architect, it is being considered—whether it is good or bad. I think that it is just uninteresting.

Hejduk: I rather liked it. I liked it for many reasons, but the prime one was that it brought back one's past. . . . The past it brought back for me was William Wurster in the late '30s or '50s whom I always admired as an architect. . . . I think [the building] would not be passed over so lightly by those who are cognizant of an architectural history in America.

Stern: . . . I find myself on both sides of the fence that has been raised by the last two speakers. . . . I don't believe that much that Robert Venturi has said about this building is really what the building is about finally. I don't think, for example, that Cass Gilbert's building is a little, ordinary thing that invites entrance. It is a very beautiful building, delicate and grand. I believe that the way Venturi and Rauch's addition juxtaposes itself to the old building, though it may be filled with good intentions, is unresolved in its actual form.

I do share with John Hejduk the feelings that it does remind one of American things. It reminds me of those American buildings of Mies that I like best, the earliest buildings of IIT where Mies used very ordinary stock parts very eloquently, which I believe this building also does.

I can say with some certainty that the interiors, which aren't very well illustrated by the slides we see here, are very successful; they reflect a genuinely humane attitude to functional accomodation. It is very un-polemical inside; ideas of dumbness and ordinariness are nicely counter-balanced by good solid planning decisions. The library is extremely library-like with a very nice relationship to natural light, comfortable seating for both serious research and casual browsing. I find the Ionic column a wonderful, witty joke, but after my first laugh, I wondered why it was there, and I wonder whether it is more than a private joke in a private language. . . .

I don't think that either Leon Krier or the typical student or resident of Oberlin, Ohio ought to have a course in the history of American architecture to appreciate the building. This obscurantism defended by a presumably populist ideology is finally at the heart of the matter: its sets up the most profound and provoking reactions; it is what makes the building so controversial.

But why, I wonder, does an addition to an art museum have to take as its reference system a high school gymnasium? Why can't the new building look like the building it's added onto? At the very least, why can't it look like some other museum one has seen or could find in a book somewhere and not a gymnasium? That is a fundamental question, and if we do believe in this discussion of Modernism and Post-Modernism, semanticism and 'asemanticism,' it is something we should think about. Why on earth doesn't it have a pitched roof?

Hejduk: I would have thought that the reference would have been made that the old building is a very Italianate building and the new building is a very Italianate building. We both know that Kahn and Venturi, in the early 1950s, were roaming around Italy, and not only did they look at the old but they also looked at the new.

It appears that there is some kind of strange secret being kept among architects in America of where Venturi comes from. We all know that Venturi comes from Ignazio Gardella, Gardella's early work in Italy in the early 1950s. Consequently, I find this an extremely Italianate building.

Stern: The secret is perpetuated by the architect, of course, who will give every source but the real source. . . . Since most of us agree that architecture doesn't come from whole cloth but is always made up of other things, why doesn't Venturi say that? Why the smoke screen of non- or pseudo-references in the name of reference? . . .

. . . I find that if buildings are to be made more accessible in the popular sense, which I have no trouble with as an ideal, this building isn't accessible. . . . What we're asked to believe about this building and what we are having terrible trouble believing is that these references are accessible.

Lyndon: Bob, just to pick up on your question, we had fun identifying the obscure references in this building and I think that they are all there. Those of us who grew up in the Midwest know that you don't need to go to Chicago's early Mies to find this reference. The set of things that are in the building are more accessible than those we are describing.

Stern: But are they more appropriate? That is the question.

Lyndon: What I find difficult to deal with is the self-conscious 'dumbness.' Now, Kahn liked to say that what he was doing was dumb, and Wurster also liked to say that what he was doing was dumb. In Bill Wurster's case, he was deliberately trying to do things very simply. In Kahn's case, he was trying to do things very archaically and in a very sophisticat manner. In this case, though, there is never quite the willingness to do it 'dumb.' This is what is so fascinating about it. The entrance, for instance, where the checkerboard pattern and the brick come together, is an extremely complicated bit of self-referencing, of putting things together in an impossible way and then laughing about

the fact that they have been put together in that impossible way. And, for me, it just doesn't come off. It doesn't manage to be appropriate, because it is too busy being self-conscious. . . .

Stern: . . . Not too long ago—before the Modernist revolution—if you were the architect asked to do the commission, you would have said to yourself, 'What would Cass Gilbert have done?' And, the dumb and natural thing would have been to try to do it as much like that as possible. . . . You'll notice that at the back of Gilbert's building there is an early addition designed to resemble the front part of the building, and if you were to go there and see this back building, I think you'd agree, it is not as good as Cass Gilbert's. Cass Gilbert's remains the jewel in the crown, but [the old addition] is a *baguette*. It is a reinforcement of the front. Venturi and Rauch's building sits nervously in relation to the main composition. It's definitely not a *baguette*, and as an 'important' jewel it diminishes the impact of Gilbert's earlier work. It certainly is not in the same language as the main composition and it is not saying the same things, nor is it trying to.

Audience Comment: I find that the panel is dealing with this building rather smugly. . . . I like this building very much and I will clarify my reasons. . . . It is a very intellectually derived building with an ordinary outcome, which is an unusual thing to do since we always try as architects to build something that stands out and is going to be seen by our peers. It effectively embraces the heritage of the place itself and makes a commentary on it, employing certain types that are understandable, not just to those who study architecture but also to the people who have to live there. . . . The building is smashed into an Italianate building of another age; we have to understand that there is a conflict in time. It is a new building added to an old one, and perhaps there is nothing wrong with expressing that conflict. . . .

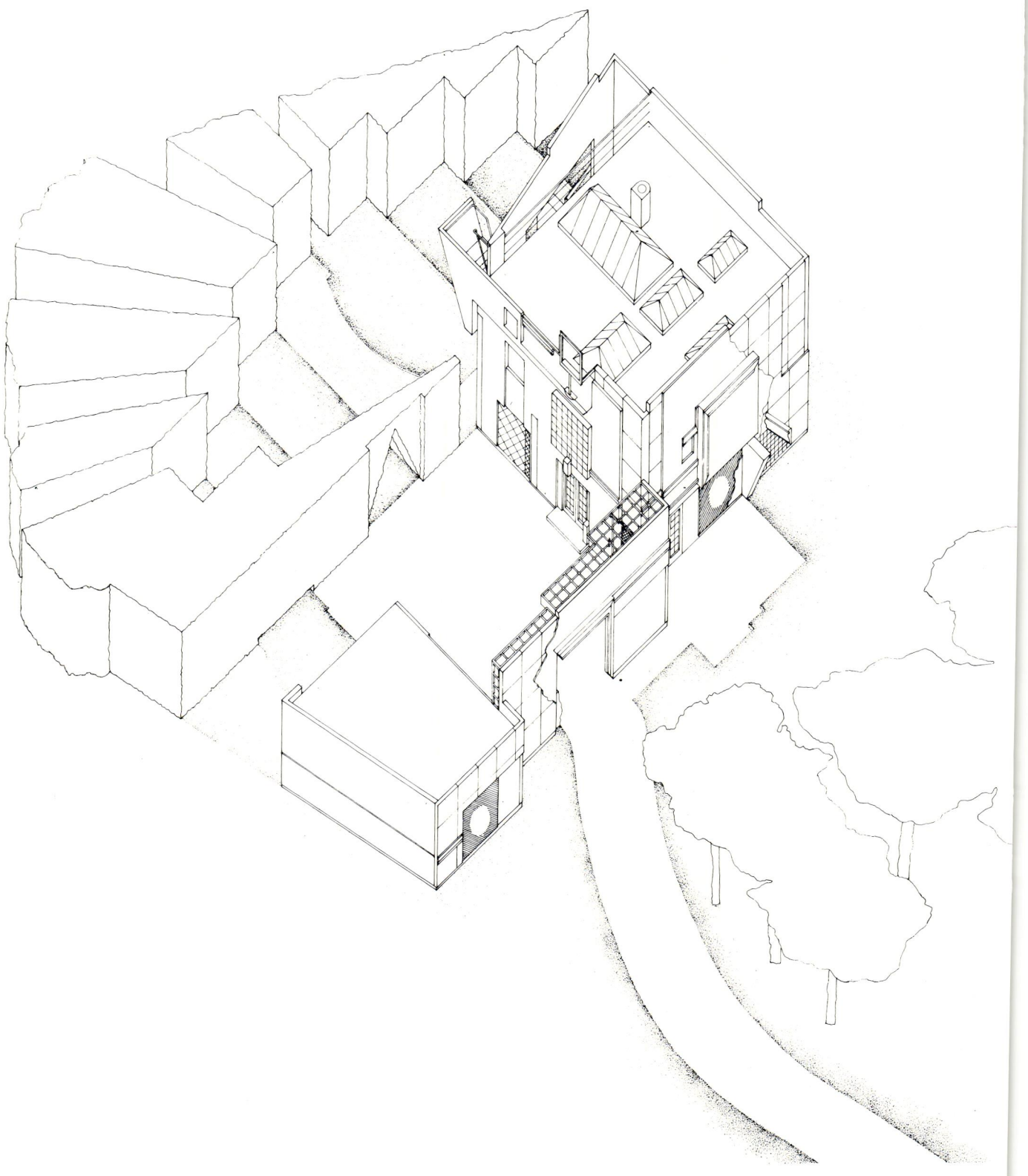
Stern: I find it rather laudable that the building tries to make an institution accessible by using certain familiar forms, like an Ionic column. Whether you can laugh at it for only thirty seconds is not important. I think its important that it is very understandable, and can be viewed as a non-esoteric form—though I wonder. . . .

However, the real issue of the building, which I don't think anyone from the floor has quite addressed, is that if this building is to presage a newer, more semantically-loaded architecture, shouldn't its messages be less private? We are a bunch of architects talking to other architects in this room and can refer to Mies' Metallurgy building or the Crow Island School and understand each other. But, when you stand on the green in Oberlin and you look around, where there are other buildings by Cass Gilbert in a similar Italian Renaissance vocabulary and it is very hard to think of the south side of Chicago or Winnetka at that moment. It is much easier to think of Cass Gilbert and Florence—Italian architecture that most everyone brought up in the western tradition knows; it's a common reference. Therefore, one has to ask, given the Las Vegas book and its plea for a populist, responsive architecture, does this building do what the book seemed to suggest it ought to do? I find it does not.

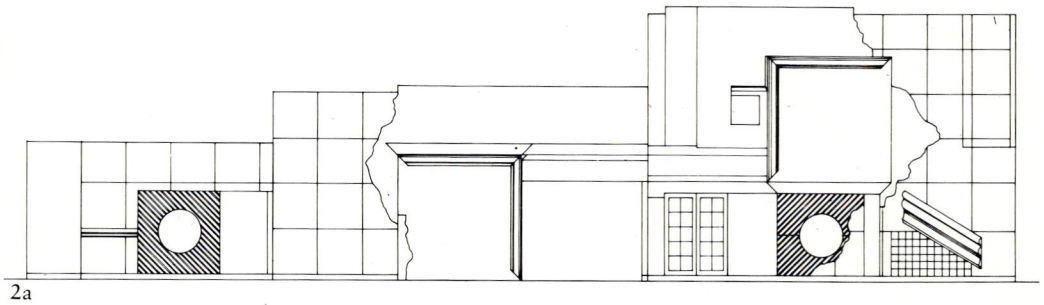
Krier: The issue which is being discussed is, in fact, very serious and one can address it even if the subject is Venturi. The idea of type which I was suggesting before is important here. There have already been additions to the building before Venturi and, although modest, they had begun to transform the initial type which was Florentine or whatever. The additions at the back tried to continue the court scheme rather modestly as you can see from the street. What Venturi has done is to make a provocative new addition—and he has made the octopus grow in an unacceptable fashion. The initial type is so strong that you either enhance it or you destroy it. The important issue of the Modern Movement is that as the programs get bigger, the buildings are enlarged by the architects. I find this very critical, because you end up with a huge building which is a mile long and for which there is no beginning or end. How big should the building be allowed to grow. . . . Why did he not just put another building next to it which would stand on its own? . . .

Hejduk: But I thought that was the brilliant aspect of this building actually. Basically, he is making, I suspect, a comment about the city . . . that is, how a city is made. It is popular even in Europe these days to keep adding little pieces here and there. That is an aspect of the building that hit me when I saw it. It is not an isolated building out in the middle of a field but is a city addition and also a cultural one.

House for Mr. and Mrs. Dennis Crooks
Fort Wayne, Indiana 1976 (unbuilt)
Michael Graves, Architect



1 Axonometric
2a Street elevation (N E)
b Garden elevation (S W)



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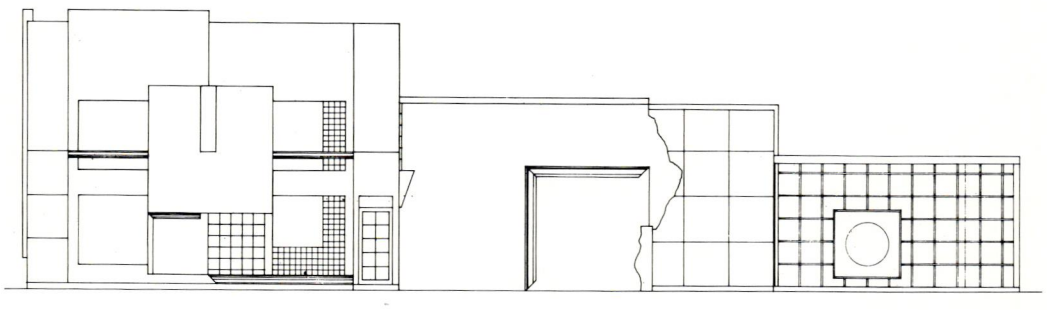


2b

This is a small residential project for a family of three. The site is a three-quarter acre lot in a typical suburban subdivision. The project is organized around two major outdoor spaces, an entrance court and a garden, defined by house, garage, hedges, and a screen wall. One enters the complex via a drive which penetrates the screen wall, leading into the entry court.

The various elements in the design display a certain amount of interdependence, particularly between built and unbuilt spaces, as for instances, one wall of the house proper is deformed to complete the design of the garden space. Each element then appears incomplete in itself and it is only in the totality of the whole that the design is unified.

The house itself is organized rather simply into living and sleeping levels, and its major features seem to be designed at least partially in deference to the exterior spaces on two sides.

Michael Graves

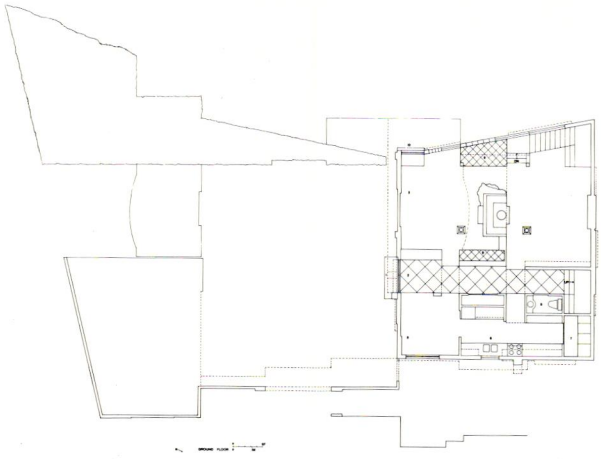
The typical suburban solution to the problem of privacy is to locate the building as an isolated object in the approximate center of the site, thereby leaving the landscape as residue. The Crooks House attempts to resolve the conflict between privacy and isolation by treating the major formal gestures as incomplete fragments of a larger organization, thereby setting up a dependence between object and landscape. Rather than a single center, a succession of centers is produced both in the building and in the landscape. These centers are linked by their mutual adjustments which allow them to be understood as a continuum.

While the Crooks House is very small, it extends its sphere of influence by the fragmentation of both building and landscape. In this way one attempts to obviate the original character of the adjoining site and at the same time produce a spatial continuum which provides for necessary levels of public and private domain.

The surfaces necessary to establish those enclosures in the landscape are derived from the hedge walls of 17th and 18th century Italian and French garden design. The idea of land-building dependency, both in plan and surface, becomes ever so much more germane when applied to an open landscape with little spatial definition of its own.

Michael Graves, from *Architectural Design,* June 1977.

3 Ground floor plan
4 Second floor plan



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Eisenman: . . . We are in the presence of a phenomenon here that is at least attempting to talk about ideas, be they Post-Modern or Modern. I am reminded of Charles Jencks' seven points of Post-Modernism—which uses Modern Architecture as the Modernists, in turn, used the Beaux Arts in their rhetoric—that is, to further their own personal desires.

I'd like to remind Charles Jencks that the notion of a façade physiognomy is a pre-Modern idea and we perhaps should call it that. The notion of eclecticism first began, I believe, with Schinkel; we could interpret his eclecticism as a kind of Modernism, countering the idea of the evolution of history as periods of proscribed and united styles. To now see eclecticism as something Post-Modern makes one question the value of using that term at all.

This brings me to the question that I have for Michael [Graves], and since he is here I hope he will answer it. I take very seriously the [statement] that Michael is looking for reversals between the house and the court. I ask myself, why? Then I try and give some possible answers. One, that the house is being seen as a garden. Two, that the outside is to be seen as the inside. Three, that there is a concern for the destruction of the sacred notion of 'houseness' as articulated by Bachelard. Four, that the house is no longer an object but is really a painting of an object, and thus the true dematerialization of the object. (I think in that case it would correspond to a truly Modernist notion.) Five, the potential reduction of anthropocentricity with the reduction of the sacred notion of 'houseness' to a more nature-centered concept of the universe, which would be truly counter to a continuing notion of history as perceived in classical culture, but then also a truly Modernist notion. Six, as a ruin of humanism, again counter to the notion of a continuing humanism and perhaps a truly Modernist building.

But then I come to the contradiction that is present in Michael's own words: 'The classical tripartite division of vertical surfaces symbolizing foot, body and head was thought to engender a more direct relationship between man and his constructed landscape.' It seems to me that this is a return to classical anthropocentrism, perhaps to something other than Modernism, and it seems to me therein lies the value of the ideas, because we are truly in the presence of a contradiction. Perhaps it is in that contradiction that a concern for what might be called Post-Modernism arises. I wonder if Michael chooses to comment?

Graves: What is the contradiction?

Eisenman: The contradiction is that in the six earlier points there seems to be an attempt to strive for a true Modernism that is outside of the classical Western conception of house, to try to turn the house into a court, or into a garden, or turn the outside to the inside—or the destruction of the sacred notion of houseness, or the negation of the house as an object, or the house as the ruin of humanism—all these seem to be all against the classical continuum of architecture. And then you say in fact what the house is really about is bringing the symbolization of the tripartite man (foot, body, and head) to produce a more direct relationship between this object which is now representative of man and the constructed landscape.

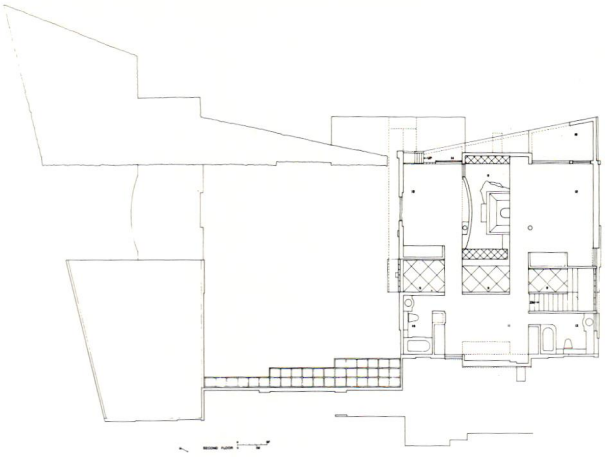
Graves: [Mr. Graves' response was not recorded due to a technical difficulty]

Krier: . . . [I'd like] to talk about what Peter said in the beginning. Carlo Aymonino is the Chairman of the Venice School of Architecture. We visited the Place de Beaubourg in Paris. He said that obviously the old formula would apply 'To make the easy difficult by the useless.' '*Grand va le facile difficle par l'inutile*.' I think this was an issue which the Venturis are deeply involved with although I think of Michael's work as being something much more serious. This building is so complex, and there are so many things that I don't understand about it, that it addresses a very special audience.

On the other hand, the preceding discourse on the suburb is a critique of the suburban house. I think this might be a good example of it. There is really a tendency not only to make a building but to relate it to the landscape. The relationship of building to landscape in this house is really very similar to the casual relationship of urban fabric which has been changed over time, to urban space. This rather casual way of relating to urban space is different from the historical pattern of suburban buildings. They actually wanted to be monuments or to stand as objects in the landscape. On the other hand, to note the relationship of monuments in the French tradition of garden-making, the building is always a monument, an isolated object which is used as a sign in a system of urban spaces which might consist simply of trees. It is not just by accident that, according to Laugier, the most important 18th century theorist, the garden (either French or Italian) was really an experimental medium for what would go on four hundred years later in cities—for instance, that one cut avenues or piazzas into the city fabric as one did two hundred years earlier into the fabric of the forest.

Eisenman: . . . Just because something is easy and simple, it may be saying something complex or it may be saying nothing. Just because something is complex, it also may be saying nothing, but it also may be expressing an idea which can only be expressed in complex terms. We have to be more generous and acknowledge that some ideas are complex and reducing them to simplicity reduces them altogether. . . .

If we have poles represented here [Michael Graves' and the Venturis' positions], each is dealing with very complex ideas. Bob's rhetoric sounds very simple;



4

Michael's rhetoric is very complex. It may be that Michael has a very difficult time expressing his ideas and Bob a very easy one. This does not take away from the potential for a true and perhaps necessary complexity and the need to see things not so easily and hierarchically but in a more relativistic way.

Anderson: . . . Could I come back to Peter's first point which was directed to Michael's work? Namely, the question of whether Michael, in his work, could in some way be simultaneously Modern and Post-Modern, and claim that humanist context which he is quoted as having and which is clear in his work? I wanted to bring back a reference along these lines which shows that Peter's query is part of a very entrenched position and one that I think ought to be challenged. What I respect in Michael's work is that he does challenge it.

I was rereading the book, *Modern Architecture* by Henry Russell Hitchcock from 1929, which is a history of architecture in the last couple of centuries written in such a way as to take a polemical position advocating the Modernist Architecture of the 1920s. When, towards the end of the book, he comes to the work of the 1920s he is talking about the future of architecture, addressing the American audience saying that it ought to embrace Modern Architecture, that architects ought to accept it and clients ought to patronize it. He says:

> *This is an architecture which can serve capitalism, or fascism, or sovietism; neo-Thomism, or liberal protestantism.*

First, it is curious that it can serve all those things. But, what is the most curious is that:

> *The one thing it cannot serve is humanism and the worse for it (for humanism, that is).*

Why was he so concerned about humanism? Why did he put that aside as something that couldn't be served when he thought it could serve almost everything else? He doesn't explain, but I think the answer is that Hitchcock accedes to the belief that we march along toward an historical destiny. What it means to be a Modern architect is to be caught for better or worse in the terrible situation of life in modernized, industrialized society with mass civilization. This will have to result in work that has nothing of a humane quality, nothing of the reference to the individual as a thinking and feeling being with certain dimensions and proportions. We have had to put aside all kinds of metaphors in architecture that relate to us as individuals.

Peter's challenge is once again, to re-embrace the particular view that 'modern' means impersonal, mechanical, and controlled, in the way that Pevsner has also defined Modern Architecture. What I respect so much in Michael's work is that he steps outside that kind of historical determinism, recognizes that we are still individuals, still addressing the environment immediately as well as in other ways, and that we should have the opportunity to feel these kinds of responses between ourselves and our environment.

That is all in support of Michael and contrary to the way in which Peter even posed the question. But just to pose one question that I have about Michael's work: direct evidence of this project as well as Michael's words address these issues of how we, as individuals, encounter the environment, learn from it and establish mutual resonance; but I wonder why so much of this, in Michael's work, is accomplished in graphic or representational form . . . For me, all building automatically incorporates so many complex levels that the efficacy of such a very thick layering of representational effects on top of literal architecture eludes me—as does the reason why one must go to such a level of complexity. But more importantly, I put this question in the context of an enterprise that I do very much respect.

Audience Comment: . . . As Professor Krier said, this conference presents a critique of the suburban context. In the previous projects this context was passed over. There, context was part of the presentation. In this case the context—suburbia—has not been shown. There is no site plan. There is no indication of what is around it—just this beautiful, decorated object in itself. Unless we can see what to relate it to we can't really treat it any differently from something urban, for example.

Krier: . . . Michael's work seems to be a commentary about the suburban situation. In a suburb there is no context. There are trees and buildings.

Tigerman: I don't believe that is true. I do think that there is a suburban context.

Krier: I mean that what Michael addresses is an urban context. There is a difference.

Tigerman: . . . I think what is interesting here, which is not at all contextual, is that Michael in these various notations very clearly talks about the morphology of the city, the ruin, history. These are clearly city ideas, planning ideas in terms of elongated growth that are implicit in the house. It is not contextual with respect to the suburbs, which nonetheless do have a context.

Stern: I agree. I think that this is a very important criticism of the building—that it operates under false pretenses. It is only about the suburb in the sense that it is about how to deny the suburb, however desirable that denial might or might not be. . . .

Eisenman: [Directed at Stern] . . . Earlier I listed six points (which you disliked so much) about what I thought made this a Modernist building. Could you be as brief and articulate as to what six points might

make this a Post-Modernist building which would then put it in the context of the discussion at hand.

Stern: I couldn't really give you six points that would make it a Post-Modernist building. I would say that the representational elements of the design are certainly contrary to what I understand by your use of Modernism. I think it sits on the fence between Modernism and Post-Modernism, and by virtue of its ambiguity in this regard it is Post-Modern. But as I observe Graves' work, I think that it represents direction that is moving toward Post-Modernism.

I think the fundamental problem Graves set for himself in this building—the attempt to make a cube-like volume in a representational way and the attempt to modify it—represents Michael's unwillingness to deal with the content of the suburban house on its own terms (as a free standing object in a continuous green landscape. He is trying to use a cube in a classicist, not a cubist, way; and this does not represent a rejection of the suburb, because if he takes the wall away from the garden, he ends up with a cube and that represents a kind of architecture which so many people are against. It doesn't seem to me that the cube *per se* is wrong (it is a suburban type), but that the cube in cubist architecture was kept pure and never adjusted to the demands of the landscape. If you took the courtyard and site development away and just worked with the cube you could use representational notations on the façade to make connections to suburban landscape that would be absolutely understandable and appropriate. You don't have to give up the cube; nor do you need to have a pitched roof on the building. . . .

Eisenman: My thought, Robert, is that while I have suggested that Post-Modernism is a red herring, I think that if we were to take a poll of all six buildings at the end none of us would be able to locate them in something called 'Post-Modernism.' I would like to suggest that perhaps the reason for this is that we haven't yet reached a 'Modernism' in architecture. I support Michael's work because it is approaching a Modernism in architecture, in contrast to which many other buildings may still be pre-Modern. Peter Smithson said some time ago in New York that if we were to compare certain artifacts of Modern Architecture to the Renaissance, he felt we would not have reached Bramante yet. What we are really dealing with is not the continuation of the mechanistic interpretation of Modern Architecture, but rather Modernism as a critique for historical determinism. . . . I think that Michael's building stands as a critique of historical determinism, as I think Modernism does. The continuing notion of humanism, functionalism, mechanistic, or anthropomorphic determinism merely continues the flow of classical Western ideology as a necessary fact. I think of Modernism (in its broadest philosophical context) as a parallel sensibility—as a consciousness which exists side by side in a relativisitic, non-hierarchical way with Western humanism and stands, therefore, dialectically and in a critical context to a continuing historical determinism.

Stern: I think that parallelism is absolutely fundamental to understanding the Modern period. Hitchcock, in his most lucid and illuminating book, *Modern Architecture* of 1929, talks about that and he starts the Modern period at the break with the Gothic. . . . Everyone who uses 'Modern' in this conference and in general in architecture uses it differently.

When I say 'Post-Modern,' and I use the term only when I am forced to, I mean 'Post-Modern Movement.' I do believe that the term 'Modern Movement' describes a body of ideas and works which do not recognize this parallelism in Modern Architecture. If this conference is about the Post-Modern Movement, then Michael Graves and Robert Venturi and Charles Moore are certainly Post-Modern architects in that sense. If you are saying that this is a Post-Modern period, in the sense that the Western humanist tradition is over, I think your claim then is ridiculous. We are all in the Modern period and it is going to be here for quite a while. . . .

Hejduk: . . . I must say that this late work of Michael's disturbs me greatly, not only for the reasons that Bob Stern indicated about where it is going, but because I think that it is obvious where it is going, which makes Bob very happy. The Venturi building previously discussed is comparatively mild, modest, and conservative.

What disturbs me the most about Michael's building is that it provokes an image and a vision. (Some of you, my friends, have heard this before.) When I first went to Italy—Genoa—they had a heavy flood. We went out to visit the cemetery. On the hill, all the bodies, the coffins, the marble tombs were all mingled together and floating down that hill. I must say that this is the impression that I get from this particular building. . . .

The other disturbing factor is that, simply, the house does not have anything to do with cubism. To suggest, Robert, that it might have something to do with cubism, I think is a heresy. In fact, I go back and wonder about what are authentic cubist roots. There's a place in Rumania or Yugoslavia, I think, or Hungary where there are buildings, and they begin to cut into these buildings and reveal other buildings of another time. This image is very interesting because apparently they are able to go through three or four layers on a façade. They strip the first layer and it is revealing of time in the past. What I suspect is occurring here is an accordion-like condition and there is a revealing of a past with no time.

Lyndon: I think this last comment is really rather suggestive. What is to me so intriguing about this project is that it has gone away from a set of

Whitman Village Housing
Huntington, Long Island 1968
Moore, Grover, Harper, Architects

reductionist notions and it has gone, as Stan has pointed out, beyond being confined within a given category of type or a given category of movement and is trying to add into itself time, or the representation of a whole range of different kinds of meanings. . . .

But to go back to John's point, what is interesting is that the additive quality of this project suggests the possibility of time accumulating in the future. It does not just reveal the evidence of time now.

Hejduk: I still see history in the linear sense as that condition of building upon something spatially. I would say that this is macabre to say the least. Now that Michael has shown the compression of time, he presents all the past simultaneously. He consequently will then imagine the future simultaneously upon the façade (which by the way intrigued me to no end if it didn't have an erosive smell of the graveyard).

Krier: . . . John talks about time without a past; I think that that is really the endeavor of architecture since the Renaissance. It's the idea of humanist architecture—a collage of time, the construction of time in the present—with the difference that architecture from the Renaissance to the Modern Movement was very optimistic. It was trying to construct an entire world, whereas Michael's late work represents the anxiety which this culture unavoidably experiences. It is really a critique of the suburban way of living. I can see it only that way—as the anxiety of the suburban isolation of people. In that sense I find it polemically very interesting. But also very pessimistic.

Audience Comment: I feel that a lot of these buildings are really being mis-characterized or ignored. . . . Most of us here are students who have much to learn and want to delve into the realm of ideas that Mr Eisenman was talking about. But if we can raise the name of Corbusier again, the one thing which struck me about his buildings were his ideas about the modulor—that human beings are what architecture is all about. I think that has been completely ignored by the panel up to this time. . . . I'd like to know if the panel thinks that architecture is supposed to relate to human beings or to consist simply of ideas and games?

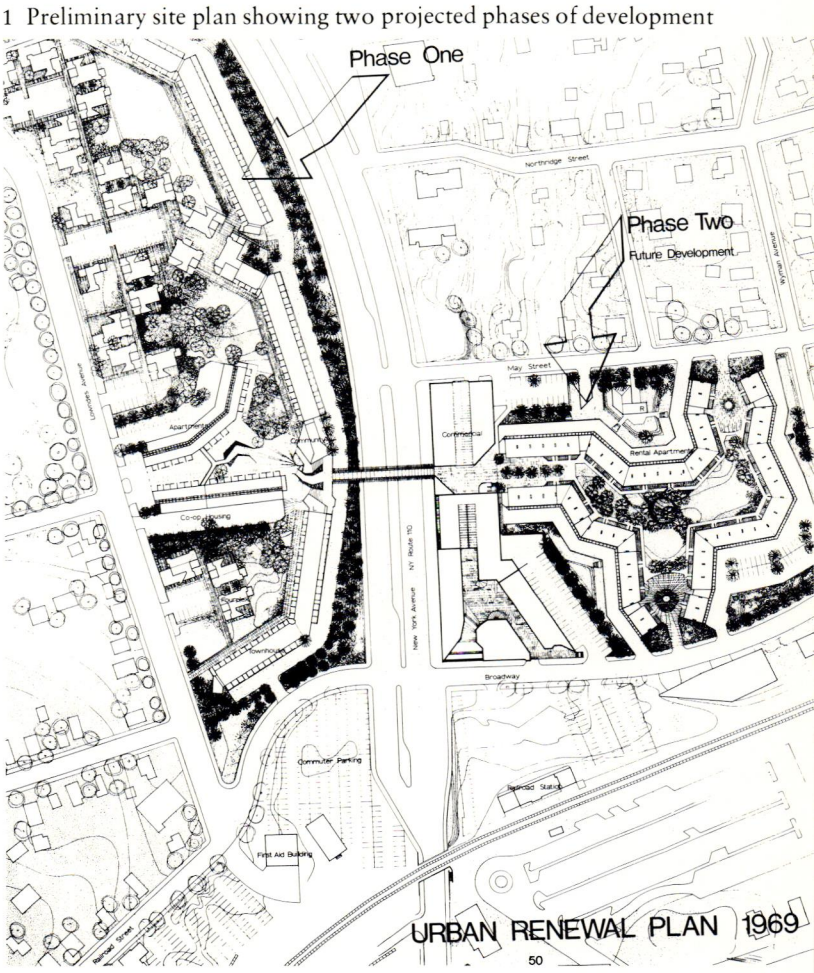
The firm of Moore, Grover, Harper was commissioned to design an urban renewal plan for public housing on twenty-five acres of cleared, hilly land located next to a commuter railroad station and a major suburban highway.

The first of two phases have been completed. This phase contains three major building types placed strategically on the site:

- a continuous wall of row houses with paired entrance-ways protect inner, semi-public spaces from the bustle and noise of the adjoining highway;
- fourplexes consisting of three duplexes and one single-story apartment placed next to an existing suburban neighborhood of single-family dwellings;
- a four-story apartment building, with many elderly tenants, is located near the center of the site, separated from the other units by open space and trees.

Also, a small community center stands across from the apartment building providing a focal point at the major entrance to the complex.

1 Preliminary site plan showing two projected phases of development





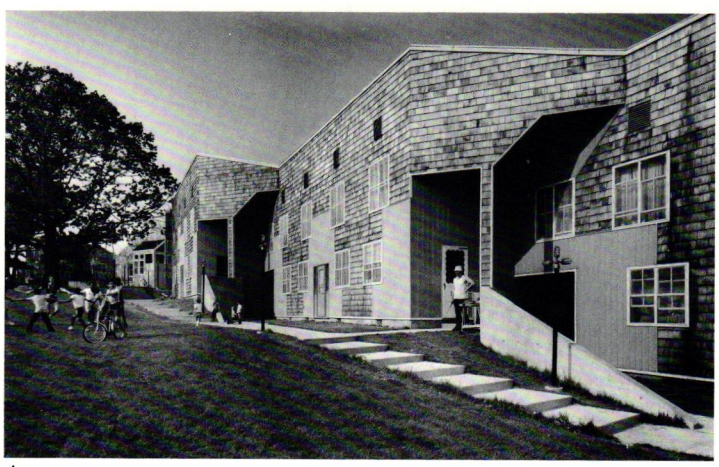
2

2 View of elderly apartment building
3 View of fourplex units
4 View of townhouse units from interior green space
5 Street entrance to townhouse units
6a-c
Section and plans of townhouse units
7a,b
Plans of fourplex units

Operating on an extremely limited budget, the architects chose traditional wood construction for the town houses and fourplexes. The apartment building is constructed of steel frame with exterior block walls.



3



4

Charles Moore

. . . . buildings can and should speak . . . buildings can talk and give messages to us.

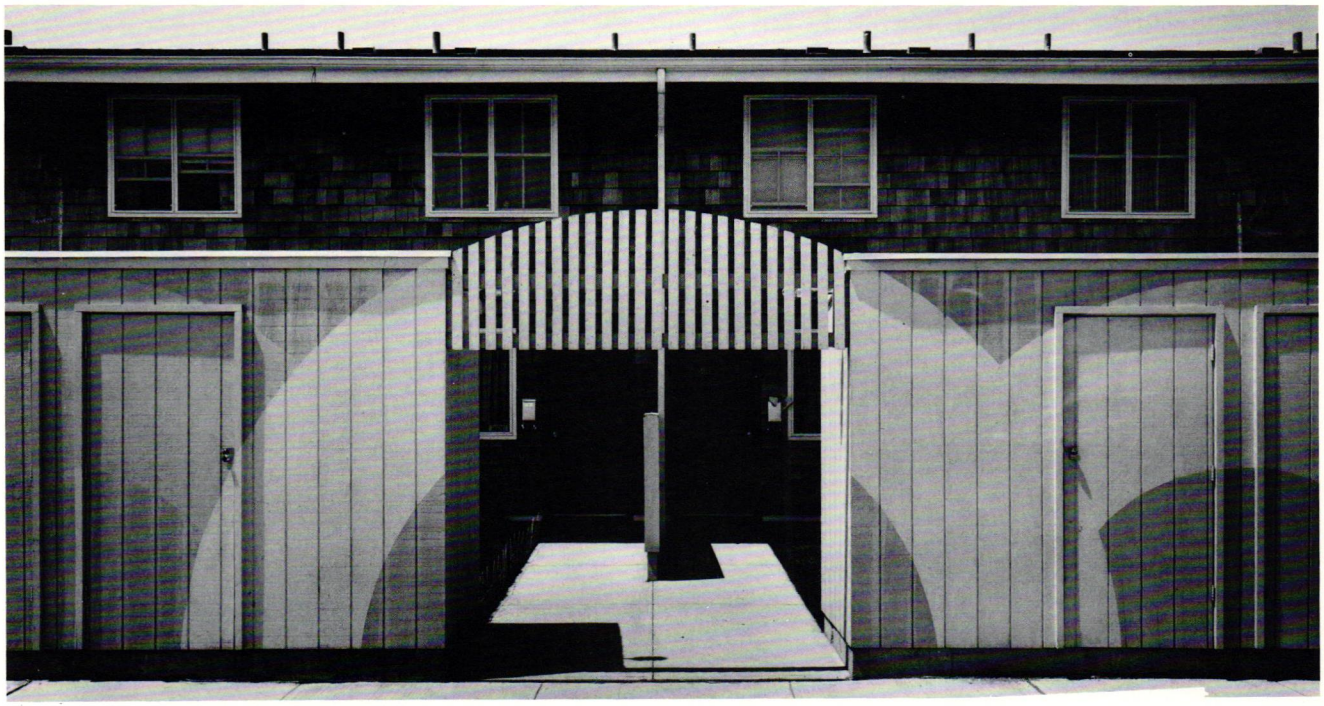
. . . They must therefore have freedom of speech. It seems to me that one of the things most violently wrong with architecture in the twentieth century is that the number of things that buildings have been allowed to say has shrunk so greatly that they've simply stopped being interesting to most people. . . . if architecture is to survive as something that humankind cares about . . . the things that buildings can say, be they wistful or wise or powerful or gentle or even silly, and the freedom to speak in those manners, has to be maintained.

. . . Buildings must be inhabited by the minds and bodies of human beings . . . the architecture of the past seems . . . to demonstrate much more powerfully than most twentieth century architecture the possibility of inhabitation, either by human beings or by their surrogates, . . . plants and statues and even light playing through spaces and over surfaces.

. . . the physical spaces which lie in and around buildings should be based not on a set of abstractions like Cartesian coordinates, but on the human body, on our own sense. . . . something we all know in our bodies but are not shown in any formalist diagram.

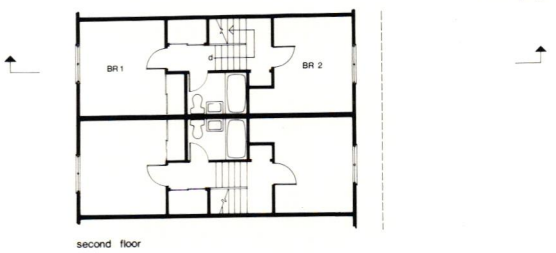
. . . the psychic spaces and the shape of buildings should assist the human memory in restructuring connections through space and time. . . . the recent past, the last 50 or 60 years, perhaps quite properly, featured an attempt to clean things up, to disconnect a lot of recollections, memories that in the mind of Le Corbusier and the others of the twenties had grown stale and unhelpful . . . the half century ahead calls for just the opposite action, . . . so that those of us who lead lives complicatedly divorced from a single place in which we can find roots, can have, through the channels of our minds and our memories, through the agency of building something like those roots re-established.

Charles Moore, from *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, number 184 (March 1976) p xlv.

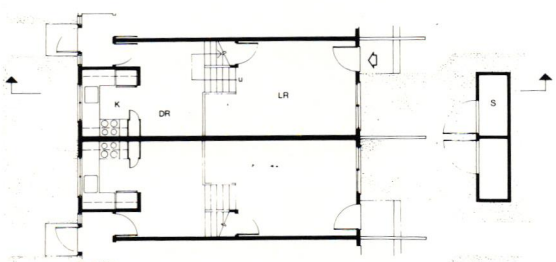


5

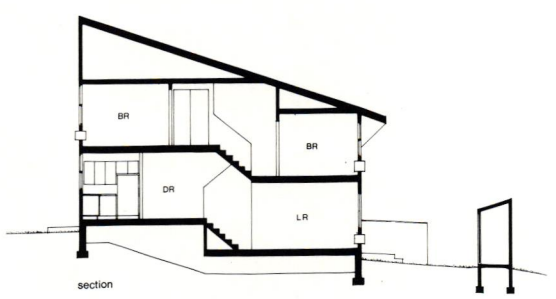
▼6a,b,c



second floor



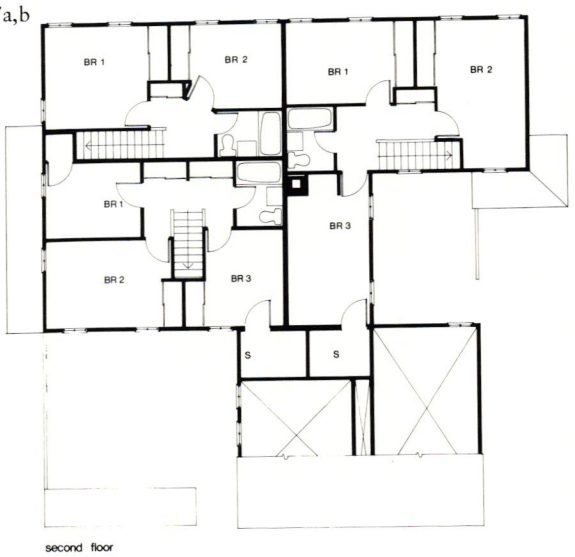
first floor



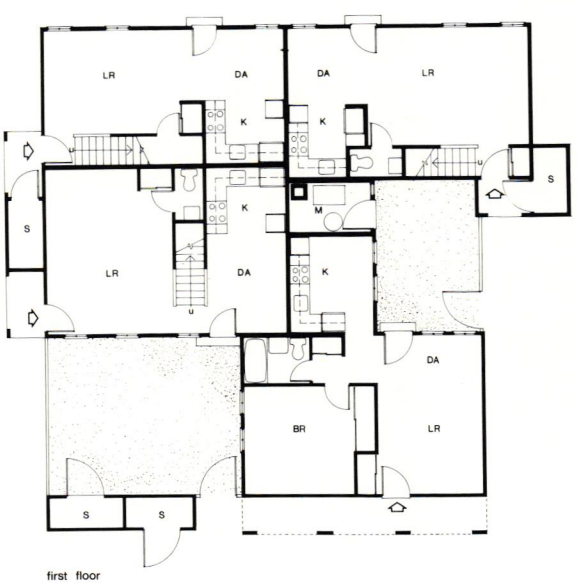
section

2BR Townhouse

7a,b



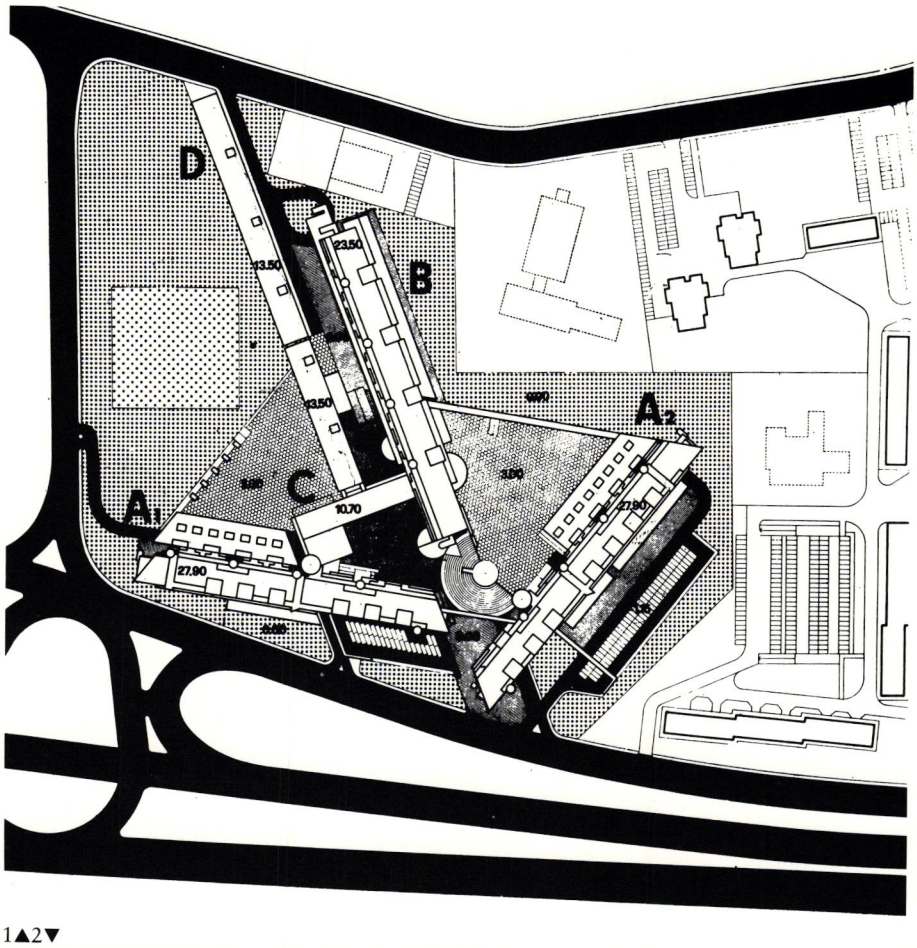
second floor



first floor

Fourplex

Residential Unit in the Gallaratese Quarter
Milan, Italy 1969-70
Aldo Rossi, Architect



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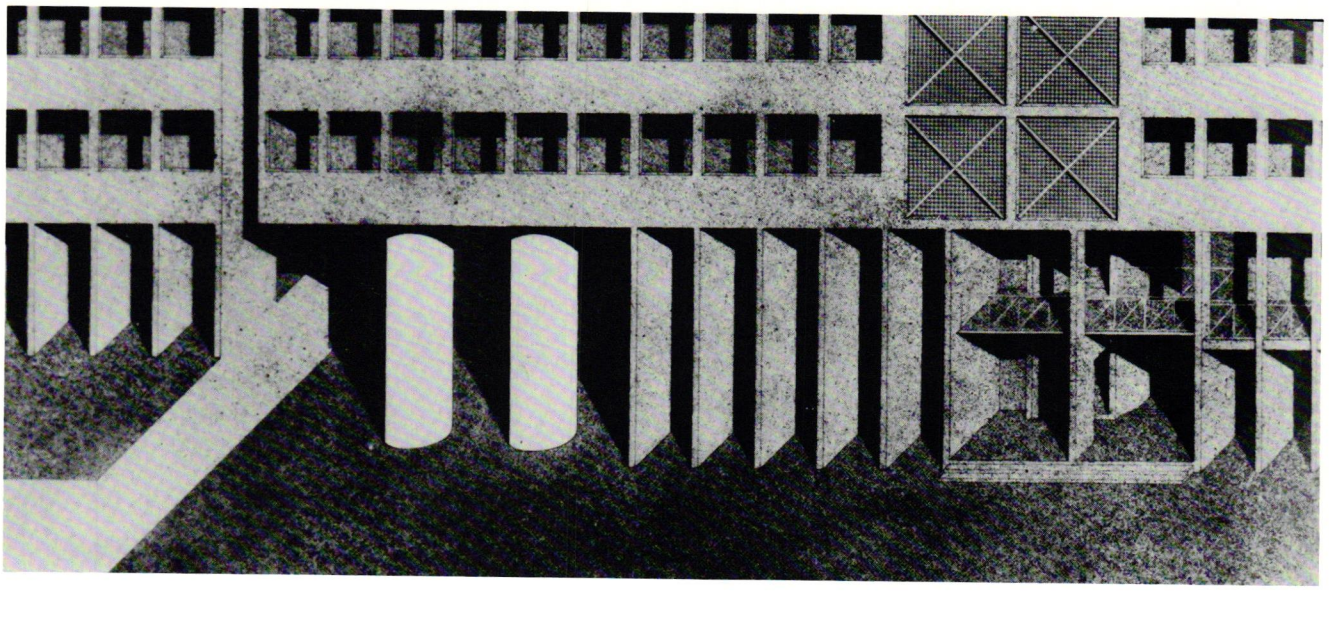
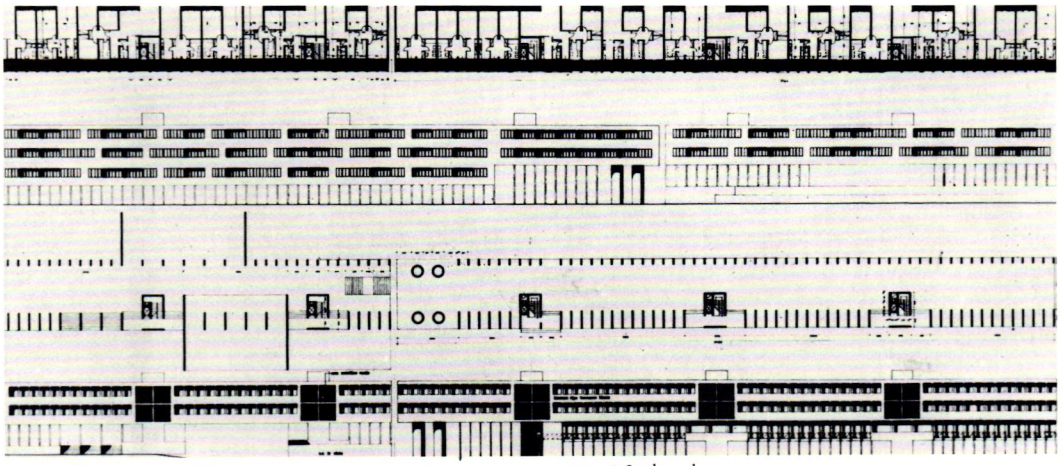




▲3a,b,c,d

1 Site plan (Rossi unit extends from 'D' to 'C')
2 Elevation study
3a
Typical apartment floor plan
b Rear elevation
c Ground level (portico) plan
d Front elevation
4 Rear elevation, with building by Aymonino in background
5 View down length of portico
6 Entry drive; Rossi unit on the right
Venturi and Rauch—Addition to the Oberlin College Art Museum



4



5



6

This building is one of several new apartment houses in the Gallaratese Quarter, a relatively new residential district outside of Milan. The other buildings in the most recent phase of construction were designed by the Italian architect Carlo Aymonino, and his brightly colored, highly-articulated structures form a dramatic contrast to the austere forms of the Rossi project.

The residential unit by Rossi consists basically of a large portico at ground level, and apartments opening onto a single-loaded exterior corridor at the upper levels. Exterior stairways are interspersed along the length of the portico to provide access to their corridor.

The ground-level portico runs the entire depth as well as length of the building, open through to the street on one side and the green space on the other. Near one end of the building the portico floor changes levels, and at this point the building is split along an expansion joint and the structure is altered from flat piers to four round columns.

The apartments are typically two-room units running the full depth of the building with a small porch towards the garden side, and are entered from the open gallery on the street side.

Aldo Rossi

. . . Only very recently, walking in front of it [the Gallaratese Block], I saw the first open windows, some laundry hung out over the balustrades to dry . . . (sic) those first shy hints of the life it will take on when fully inhabited. I am convinced that the spaces intended for daily use—the front portico, the open corridors meant to function as streets, the porches—will cast into relief, as it were, the dense flow of everyday life, emphasizing the deep popular roots of this kind of residential architecture . . .

. . . I consider that the assumptions contained in a building—technological, architectural, and typological—can offer a solution capable of generalization. In comparison, the repetition of characteristic personal architectural features has no special validity and correspondingly little interest. Such values are mainly of concern to the historian. Nevertheless, it is difficult for the architect to determine a priori *whether any given formal relationship offers a chance for further creative development or whether a repeated feature may acquire unforseen significance.*

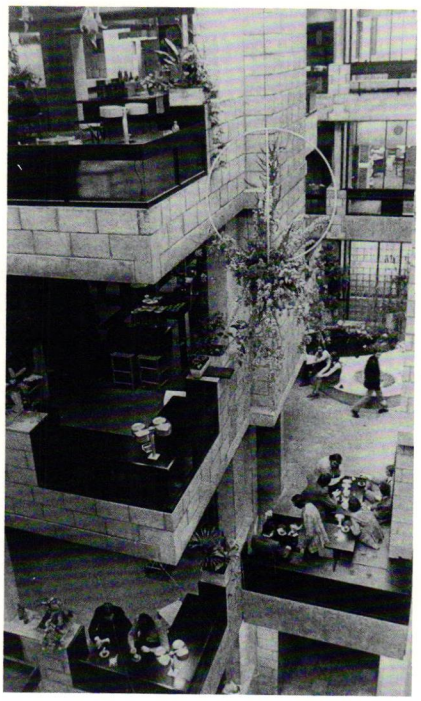
Aldo Rossi, 'Thoughts About My Recent Work' *A + U Architecture and Urbanism*, number 65 (May 1976) 83.

Centraal Beheer Office Complex
Apeldoorn, Holland 1968-72
Herman Hertzberger, Architect

1



2



1 Aerial view
2 Interior view

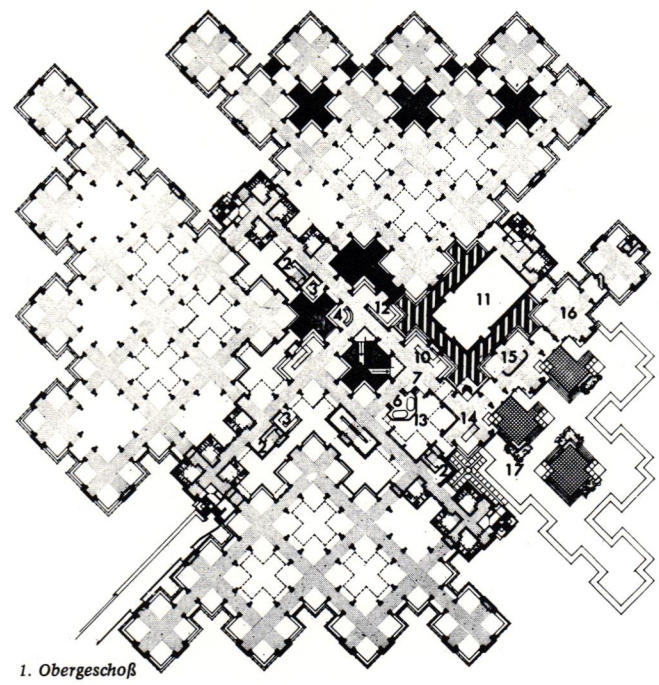
Designed for a Dutch insurance company, this complex is basically an office building housing 1,000 people in a suburban setting. Its program also includes a restaurant, day care center, classrooms, coffee bars, and roof terraces, and its ground floor is designed to work as a public street with many entrances connecting various parts of the neighborhood. Parking is located at the lower levels.

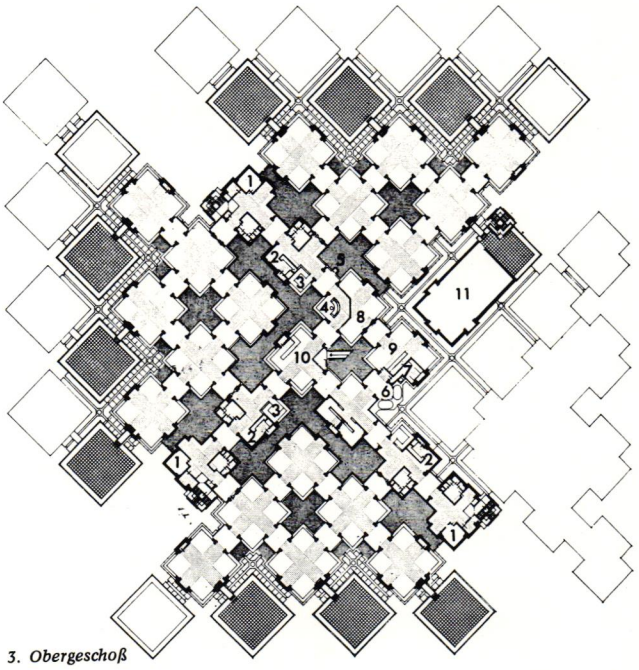
In designing the building, Hertzberger, through research and interviews with employees, evolved a basic work station (about nine feet square) which could accommodate a variety of office functions. Combined in sets of four (organized around a cruciform circulation path) these work stations form the basic planning and construction module of the entire project. The structure for the module is located in pairs at the center of each side, and connection to other modules is via bridges linking their circulation.

These building units are organized into four quadrants in a pinwheel or swastika pattern, with a large open space and vertical circulation at the center. Because the work-modules are aggregated almost as free-standing islands connected by bridges, there is no continuous floor plane as in conventional office construction. Thus, the identity of each work station is emphasized, and the openness of the entire building reinforced. The frequent vertical penetrations and abundance of balconies, columns and light sources establish a lively, if somewhat disorienting, overall character.

The basic building module is constructed of reinforced concrete and concrete block balcony walls, with occasional glass block partitions. These unadorned materials provide the finish both inside and out.

The exterior of the building accurately reflects its interior arrangement and its modular design and construction.





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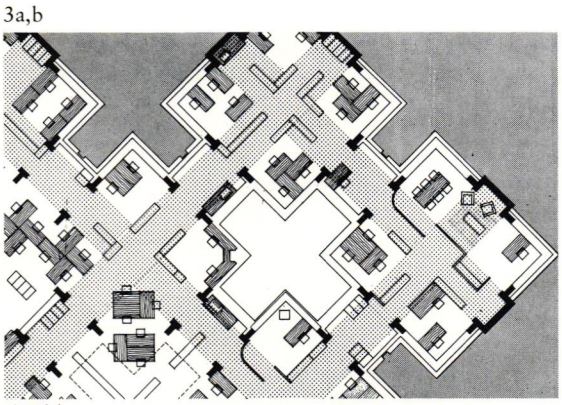

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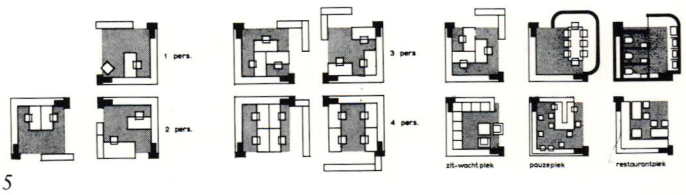

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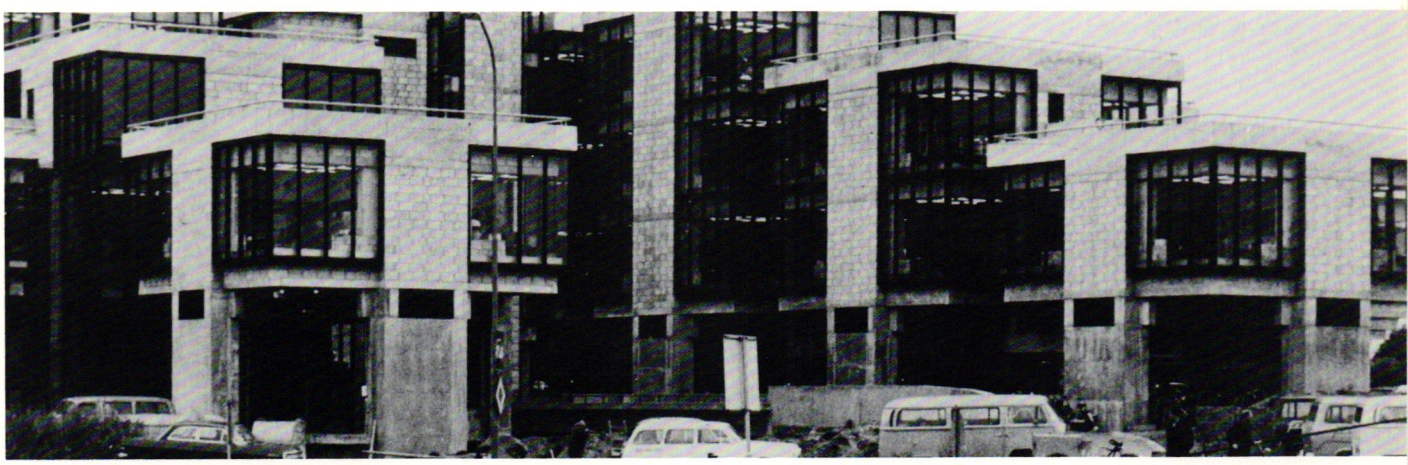
3a,b
Floor plans
4 Exterior view
5 Diagrams showing possible work-station arrangements
6 Detail of typical floor plan



Herman Hertzberger

. . . Architecture has never taken people very much into consideration. Pyramids, temples, cathedrals and palaces were implements for making an impression on them rather than offering them freedom. The work of the architects has historically been directed more towards the glory and celebration of the established order of things, to the benefit of a minority, than towards improved circumstances for all.

To be more responsive to people, a building has to be a reflection of their needs; it should offer everyone the space to do what he has most at heart, and to do this in the way he wants to.

To this purpose, a building must accommodate both individual and communal activities, purposes and associations, and have the capacity over and above this to suggest these uses in different ways to each individual. . . .

. . . It is the fundamental unfinishedness of the building, the greyness, the naked concrete, and the many other imposed, (but also the concealed) free-choice possibilities, that are meant to stimulate the occupants to add their own color, so that everyone's choice, and thereby this standpoint, is brought to the surface.

Herman Hertzberger, 'The Building As Instrument For Its Occupants,' 1973.

Creating this possibility [accessibility to the public] is a logical extension of the building's openness, intended to reduce the gap between working and living, between things public and private, and between building and street, so as to put together again much that became disintegrated in our society.

Herman Hertzberger, 'Centraal Beheer, Apeldoorn.' (Unpublished essay).

Charles Moore:
Housing in Huntington, Long Island

Aldo Rossi:
Gallaratese Residential Block

Herman Hertzberger:
Centraal Beheer Offices

Eisenman: . . . One of the problems in evaluating these projects is the rhetoric in relationship to the reality. The thing that disturbs me most about Hertzberger's building is its extreme geometric determinism. The building consists of little boxes piled on boxes. If that's antimonumental, then the work has no meaning. I suppose I could take Hertzberger's words and apply them to Michael Graves' building and find them more compatible. . . . I guess the problem is that all of us look at images and read into them what we want to read. We have preferences; we say, yes, Hertzberger's building is very much more about people than the Michael Graves building; or the Rossi building is not about people (because Rossi does not take pictures of the buildings with people) and since Charles Moore has happy people in front of the buildings, his buildings are about people and Rossi's are not.

I think that these are projections of individual preferences. We want to believe what we want to believe, irrespective of what the facts of the case may be. And we have very little way of judging what those facts are. For example, if you take the Rossi and Aymonino complex, Lina Wertmueller used it in a film to symbolize high living and upper middle-class consciousness in Milan and not the workers' housing that in fact it is. Either she is wrong or she is projecting her fantasies onto the building.

When we talk about signification (mentioned earlier), what is it that signifies 'library' or 'interesting place to be?' What is it that signifies 'happiness' and 'humanity?' Is it merely an arbitrary projection of words and ideas onto forms? At least in a written sign system, when I spell 'happiness' there is a correlation with an idea. We don't have that kind of symbol system in architecture. There is no way of making a correlation between a building and 'humanity' or 'inhumanity.'

I think the Rossi building is as much about humanity and the human condition as is the Charles Moore building or the Hertzberger building. I maintain that a critique of humanity—say the idea of pessimism, as opposed to optimism—may be as healthy a condition of humanity as any other. I further submit that it is possible to see Rossi's building as, ultimately, the most humane and the most moral gesture that might be made, given the status of contemporary Italy.

In conclusion, it's too easy to say, yes, Charles Moore is about people and no, Aldo Rossi is not; yes, Hertzberger is about people, and Michael Graves is not. I think the philosophical and cultural condition of man today is such a complex issue that simply photographing buildings with or without people begs the question.

Pelli: Really, to me, 'humanistic' means anything that the human spirit wishes to be interested in, not just the sun on our bodies and how we run over lawns with bare feet.

Stern: Peter, I think what you have said is interesting, and I agree with it in large measures because the quotes had me really thrown off base. Charles Moore's quote didn't talk about people but about ideas. And Rossi's quote which told us about the laundry hanging there was unbelievable.

But the issue is one of signification in another sense: the literal signs on the building. Hertzberger's building is not merely a piece of geometry, as you characterize it; he also says that because it is a rather bleak piece of geometry: you have to bring in your plants from home. The architect has given up on doing anything to the environment beyond providing a place which the user has to brighten up. You'd have to spend all day just watering the plants within that building.

At least Rossi's building does not escape some kind of signification, no matter how he may try. Rossi may deny the building's connections with Italian architectural culture, although I don't think he does. It's perfectly clear that it reminds one of other buildings. Even the most impoverished European still has a sense of his own traditional culture, and knows how to use Rossi's building when he is there. In America, it seems to me, architects always have to design so that new buildings scream at people and give them many cues about how to use them, because we have such a mobile, disoriented, disjunctive culture. I think that in the juxtaposition of Rossi's and Moore's, we are offered two sides of a similar coin—and not really a confrontation between meaning and anti-meaning of humanism and anti-humanism.

Anderson: Both of the last speakers have been unhappy with the rhetoric that architects or their apologists place in juxtaposition to their buildings, but I would submit that they have gone right on to do the same thing, imposing their rhetoric upon these buildings. For example, in relation to the Hertzberger building, 'it piles up a repetitive geometry of repetitive structural units.' Yes, it does; but that is offered without argument, as an indication that Hertzberger doesn't have the concerns for people that he claims for himself. I don't think that just because you use repetitive units, you either will or will not have a humane architecture.

Which units are made repetitive and how are they repeated against one another and to what extent? What happens in this process of repetition? What is at least made challenging about the Hertzberger building is that it is a repetitive construction, and therefore able to be realized within some kind of budget, similarly to other office buildings which use repetitive units. But Hertzberger's design creates a very different kind of spatial condition, a very different opportunity for the organization of office work than that of the typical office building. Without prejudging this building on the basis of the photographs (which always seem

rather compelling to me, but I don't trust them either), how do we begin to know something about the quality of life for a large work force in that building. The repetitiveness of construction in itself is not at all the issue.

Stern: But because the building has not been transformed by a process of signification, or some other process, it is *just* (and I think this is the point) a pile of repetitive geometry. I mean, the next steps seem to be very much missing and it is a real give-away (for me) when Hertzberger says that you must bring in your entire world of signification, of decoration, of inhabitation, into your office. The architecture gives you nothing; *just* a place, in that sense.

Anderson: It is not that I wouldn't welcome some further exploration at other levels by the architect—one ought not to thrust everything onto the users. But, my claim is that it won't do at all just to point out the repetitive units, for we have them in many buildings which result in radically different kinds of spatial and movement configurations. The one thing we can be sure of from the plans and from the images is that this building does have a quite different spatial and movement organization from other office buildings; therefore, repetitive units have been used to accomplish something new. Now we need to know what it has indeed accomplished in a deeper way than what the photographs can convey to us.

Lyndon: The Hertzberger building starts with a cellular notion of a place which is small enough for a reasonable number of people to work in together. I think that the notion of a building as made up of centers of people who can do things together is a terribly important one, but I would also agree that to stop there is not sufficient.

Pelli: Yes, but I think we need to identify something which is affecting all of our perceptions and this is: how good is the architecture, regardless of how good it is for people, regardless of how good it is in terms of signification.

Unquestionably the Rossi building is the most successful here—in purely architectural terms. Actually, Charles Moore, in purely architectural terms, has done much better things than this project. The Hertzberger building is rather unsuccessful, architecturally. And, basically, we are all reacting in this manner. At least within the perspective of our culture in America, we all know that you can live an infinitely more decent life in a suburban house than in Aldo Rossi's building. Leon Krier talked about alienation in a suburban house. The truth is that we are all experienced in living in suburban houses, and they are much less alienating than any collective dwelling.

Krier: I think really the problem of these three projects is that they are all in some way monstrosities. All three are expressions of what I was talking about before—of zoning. The one pretends to be a suburban kind of housing; Rossi's pretends to be more urban housing, and, Hertzberger's pretends to be a little city just for offices. But, it is always a very big complex for just one function.

We should compare the buildings to the sources of their imagery. Hertzberger wants to make not one building but a whole city, with streets and squares and commerce. But in fact, while it pretends to be a city, the organization of the spaces are completely unhierarchical. There are streets, but they are all the same, and if you are in one, you don't know where you are; whereas, it was the basic quality of traditional streets to have a strong character related to their morphological quality, both in extension and in section.

Charles Moore's project is a kind of nostalgic suburban collage, and I don't see any reason why buildings should be spread on such a big surface when they can be gathered on a third of that area. It's very Modern in that sense, for what else is it than buildings in the park—it was the ideal of the CIAM to build buildings in the park. The program is so limiting and it is that which makes this architecture terribly poor. Just these three kinds of units have to be expressed, whereas if you want to make an urban composition which has some complexity, you need a more varied program. You need, first of all, the relationship between public and private, you need big, collective buildings in relation to private buildings, and so on. As such, I think the Gallaratese was an incredibly important project in Italy. It began to use again elements other than housing units, by including colonnades and porticos, which were a kind of luxury in the late 60s. On the other hand, it also contains the contradictions of an architecture with an extremely simplified program trying to be urban. In the end it is just literature.

With whatever talents or will with which you want to do something for human beings, I think political factors enter into the picture—who decides where the housing will be and how the city will be organized? I don't think one can reconstruct architecture with zoning. I think any reconstruction of architecture will have to deal with the complete politicial reorganization of the city and with the complete complexity of life.

Stern: As you talk, I search my mind for the place where the kind of city you speak for exists, and it exists only in a handful of spots in a handful of European cities. I think you express an orthodoxy about the city, independent of the political question (which I can never quite follow). Just on the matter of morphology or typology of cities, you deny not only the American suburb, but also all those parts of cities you admire that don't conform to your view. (I can understand that on the grounds of cultural unfamiliarity you don't understand the American suburb; perhaps I don't

understand the European city either, but I think that I am more sympathetic to it than you are to our unique form). You claim, for example, that you can tell one street from another by morphology and typology—but that's a romanticism that you have about the cities you admire. I've wandered around Georgian London and gotten lost many times; one must learn a city through repeated use. And as for zoning, those streets of Georgian London, or Nash's Crescents, or the Crescents of Bath are all rigidly zoned for one use.

Krier: But that's all where the Modern Movement started isn't it? If you get confused in some London streets, it is because they were the result of very early zoning—they were just housing. They were repetitive units and there was nothing else there besides housing. That's where the problem lies.

Stern: I find your relationship to the American suburb interesting (and I noticed that many people in the audience became quite wide-eyed as you spoke). It seems hard at this moment in time to deny the validity of so many ways of living. To many Americans, the suburb is not alienating. I think for an architect to be so categorical about what is or is not alienating, without thinking about it is unspeakable. I find such orthodoxy very dangerous and reactionary in the sense of bringing us back to times when Le Corbusier's claim that he knew how people ought to live went unchallenged.

It seems to me that Moore's project is very important in terms of the idea that buildings can have semantic importance, that they can address things other than simply how they are put together or what literally happens inside them. Moore's project deals with the 'burning issues,' (as Mr Soltan has brought up) of the day—at least some of them. It deals with them by the acceptance of a wide range of the aspirations of the people who are going to live there. These aspirations don't exactly dovetail with high-style form-making or 'advanced' ideology but they do reflect physical and psychic needs. What I am saying is that this is public housing made to look like rich man's housing; it is not made to look like 'existence minimum,' even though it is. It is a fundamental intention of the architect to group things and make them grander. In doing that, Moore has picked up the thread of making cheap housing in the image of luxury housing—a thread, like so many others, which was thrown out in the revolution of the '20s. You know, if you go to places like Bronxville and Scarsdale in New York, there are relatively modest houses where four or eight families are grouped together and which are skillfully designed to look like a big mansion.

Whitman Village speaks a language that I do think is familiar to most people who have been to American suburbs and have dealt with them. I think that on this level, Moore's attempt at dealing with the suburban house and Michael Graves' are very different. The intentions of both of these architects to speak, to gain our attention, and engage us in the languages that are being spoken are wildly different.

Hejduk: First of all, of all six projects, I find the Rossi the most beautiful. And you might ask me to explain that and I can't explain it. All I can say is that it exudes something inexplicable which none of the other five projects do. There is also a sense of remoteness there. What is especially interesting to me is that all three of the last projects fundamentally deal with isolation and remoteness. What they celebrate, ultimately, is acts of privacy. In other words, that perhaps may be the issue today. What we are seeking or what our life depends upon is not a public condition but one of remoteness, silence, and above all privacy—even in a tight building that might exude a sense of a conglomerate of people. That probably is, in a way, the inexplicable of which I spoke above, the most cherished thing, as far as I am concerned, with all the forces that are upon us today. But you can have your choice as to what kind of privacy you want. And I think that the Rossi building, in a way, might express the most private solution.

Pelli: What is the sense of privacy in Rossi, John? I think it is very beautiful also—extraordinarily beautiful as a form and as an expression of architecture in a detached way. But I cannot sense any privacy there.

Hejduk: The privacy that you brought out in the Hertzberger project, which was interesting, was when you said, 'I don't know how it would be, I might have the most privacy in that condition or vice versa.' I think that we talked about it relative to Michael's project. I just get a sense of time in the Rossi project. The sense of time in comparison to the other two projects is two dimensional and not three dimensional.

Pelli: I agree with your sense of time but how about the privacy.

Hejduk: Are you talking in pragmatic terms?

Pelli: In whatever terms you care to use. I want to understand how you think the Rossi project has privacy because I do not have the same feeling.

Hejduk: Okay, the sense of privacy you can have if you're on a ship with a lot of people and you are in remote waters. I can only give you an image.

Pelli: A ship has a certain luxury or number of relationships in which you find yourself—a privacy protected in a conscious system even if you are among other people. But in that building, I really imagine myself as being exposed. I feel naked in that building.

Krier: If I might say something about privacy. There is the argument that in the state, both the public and the private are dissolved. I think that that is quite obvious. If you analyze the zoning of cities, where you have an incredible explosion of the public realm—where suddenly the space between the buildings becomes

infinitely large, becomes virtually the landscape—in the end there is no relationship between any of the buildings and you need a car to go from one to the other. That becomes very clear.

On the other hand, in gaining this enormous space separating the buildings, their privacy seems to shrink to an infinitesimal quantity of what it was before. If you look at how peasants used to live, even in the most atrocious conditions, and compare it to social housing, you will see that they lived in palaces. They had huge rooms to sleep in and to work in and to live in. So there seems to be not only a destruction of the public but also of the private realm. Furthermore, this private realm seems, after all, not to be that private, if you look at television—if you have 13 channels of television that go on day and night. I think here is something to think about, and of the possibility of architecture at home.

Audience Comment: As architects, I think that it is our natural inclination to be unempathetic to the people that we are designing for, because we sit at our drafting tables all day and because we don't work in insurance agencies, and because none of us has experienced all the different types of housing that are available.

Mr Pelli, you were talking about suburbia as not necessarily alienating. I think as a man you wake up in the morning and leave the suburban atmosphere. You come back at seven o'clock, put on the TV and then you go through this ritual. I am not a woman who lives in suburbia, but in trying to be empathetic with the people I am designing for, I understand that suburbia is very alienating to fifty percent of the people who live in that situation. This is very important to think about.

I also think that you have the same kind of problem when you talk about Hertzberger's building. We do not work in insurance agencies. For the people I know who are part of a corporate entity, working in insurance agencies is usually one of the most alienating experiences, because of the tremendous amount of paper work. You participate in processes in only a very minimal way. What Hertzberger has done in his building, through architecture, using the power of architecture, is unite people in a process in which they don't usually participate. You could say he has a rigid geometry. He's opening that rigid geometry. He's making people overlook one another, experience each other. . . .

Krier: And control each other?

Audience Comment (continued): . . . admitting natural light to all. And, he is making an office environment that is completely radical compared to the way we usually look at office environments—completely different from huge monolithic office complexes, lit by fluorescent lights, where every single office is the same. I don't think he is demanding that we put plants in there, I think he is inspiring us to put plants in there. He is saying, 'I am giving you an impetus for humanity,' and then the individuals working there may bring in their humanity by bringing in their plants. The building would be fine without the plants, but the building inspires one to bring them. I can't dismiss the building in the way that I think you have dismissed it. I think that it is much more radical than anyone has admitted.

Tigerman: What's interesting is that among as disparate a group of people as there are up here, none of them seems to be finding a major redeeming feature in the Hertzberger building, although all of them were looking at the building in very different ways. I find that curious. In many ways the six buildings exhibited here represent very different possibilities in relation to 'Beyond the Modern Movement,' or to the pluralism of our times. Of the six buildings, the five largest projects, which in some ways are additive, have very simple programs. The small project is a single program yet alludes to the most possibilities, in the sense that it addresses abstract ideas that were contained within the original revolution of the teens and the twenties. It raises the possibility of pre-Modern ideas, anthropomorphism (wall house, garden, landscape, notion of the ruin, additive context, morphology of cities) all occuring in a very provocative and yet unbuilt house.

Audience Comment: I think that a lot of architecture today deals with individual languages. Hertzberger, for instance, may not know that he is saying certain things in his buildings—it seems to me that they have a certain paternalistic character, a boxiness that is inherent in Dutch traditions. Thus his buildings say something he was not necessarily intending to say.

It is true that Rossi has used his language in a very beautiful way, maybe the most beautiful of all, but it seems to me that it says something in the end. I think that language today breaks down into two categories: an elite language and a populist language. Mr. Krier's interest in Graves' house versus his abhorence of Venturi's museum is based upon the familiarity he probably has with the European abstract elitist language that Graves speaks, versus the language Venturi speaks with which he is not so familiar.

Stern: Don't you characterize Michael Graves' house incorrectly by saying that it speaks one language? Isn't the point Stanley Tigerman and others have made that it is seeking to speak both these languages? That is why it is such a provocative project.

Lyndon: Also, I think that it is a mistake to talk about the Venturi building as speaking only in a popular language. That kind of distinction just isn't helpful. It seems to me that the architect needs to speak a language which draws on a very wide range of sources, but is personal and more developed than the popular language. You want to have both things going on, not one or the other.

Building Documentation

Hotel Berlin
O M Ungers, Architect

Since World War II, many European cities have experienced an unprecedented degree of urban growth. In addition to other factors, the devastation created by World War II left many areas in need of massive reconstruction. Modern Architecture addressed this problem with its radically new forms and processes, representing breakthroughs in building production technology. Yet while Modern Architecture did provide accommodation on a large scale, it also created an intense conflict with remnants of the existing city. Concern for a contextually responsive architecture was overshadowed by the need to produce buildings in quantity – an architecture of mass production.

In opposition to Modern Architecture's arbitrary imposition of experimental prototypes, we have recently witnessed the emergence of a body of thought concerned with the incorporation of historically-derived building typologies as a method for producing architecture. The existing city becomes an architectural resource with its basic elements, or architectural types, offering urban development guidelines as well as suggestions for formal design motifs.

With this new attitude toward urban design a conscious shift takes place: 'building-as-object' is de-emphasized, while the clearly defined urban space gains prominence. Planimetrically, the Modernist figure-ground relationship between built form and open space becomes reversed as new construction is looked upon as a missing piece of a large puzzle – elements required to complete an already existing urban matrix.

2



In the following hotel project, architect O M Ungers develops this dialectic between building and urban space by closely examining those architectural and urban design features which exist in the city of Berlin. On a large scale planning level, the architect looks to certain dominant city-scale features as urban design guidelines. By consideration of existing axes, block size, building proportion, street edge, and façade rhythms, the hotel project admirably responds to its context. While the actual architecture is still unadorned, Modern if you will, the dialogue between what is old and what is new is quite coherent.

At a more specific level, Ungers continues his examination of the surrounding Berlin context in search of elements which will give rise to inspiration on a formal plane. According to the architect, urban artifacts are selected and transformed by way of abstraction and scalar change, before being incorporated as formal organizational devices. In this manner, an anonymous rondell (fountain) suddenly becomes the generator of the grand circular hotel courtyard. The fact that there is no translation of meaning (from object to space) seems of little consequence. The key operation is the abstraction of found urban artifacts. This process seemingly complements the initial concerns for preserving the integrity of the city structure, yet formally, the imposition of exaggerated geometries generates a sense of internal ambiguity concerning the intentions of the overall design. The building becomes a monument – paradoxically, a modernist object laced with contextual accutrements.

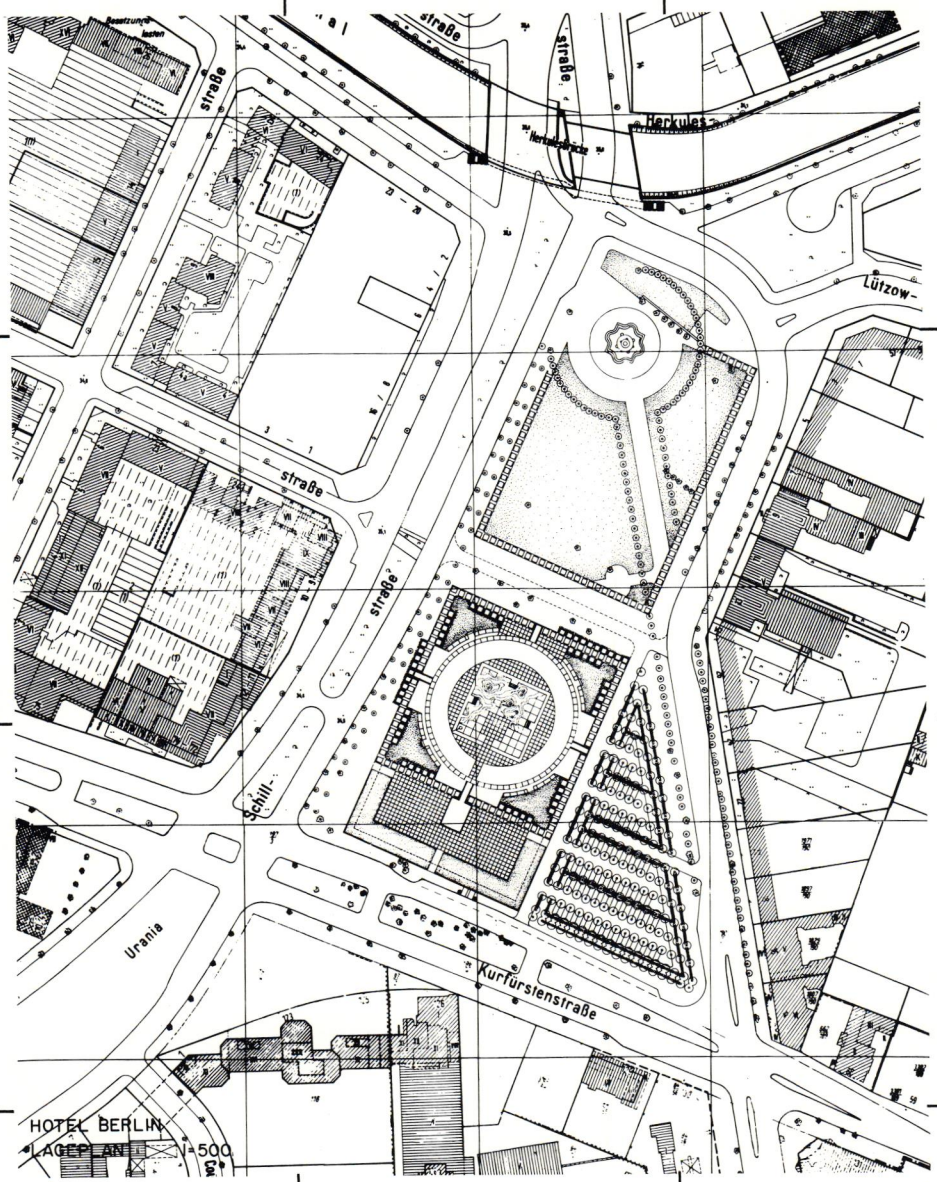
Although we question this process of abstracting city elements beyond reasonable levels of recognition, the fact that monumentality is achieved is not necessarily a flaw in this project. As the chosen solution for one of the largest hotels to be constructed in East Germany, the O M Ungers project may be totally appropriate – a 'Post-Modern' urbanistic response, latent with allusions toward Berlin's historic palaces of grandeur.



1 View of Lützoplatz from the north, prior to World War I. The rondell (see text) is in the center left.
2 Overall site plan of the Grosser Stern–Lützoplatz Axis, with the Tiergarten to the north and downtown Berlin to the south. The hotel site is located in the gridded area to the bottom left.

The architectural concept of the project adopts the historically predetermined format of building in 'blocks.' The block in question forms the southwest wall of Lützowplatz (Lützow Square), which will be restored, as far as is possible, to its original shape. Above all, the historical Rondell (roundel) with its fountain will be reconstructed (even though only in fragmentary form) because of its spatial significance for the Grosser Stern–Lützowplatz axis. The axis will also be accentuated by the reconstruction of the original avenue, where now only remnants of the tree-lines remain. The spatial character of Lützowplatz will be emphasized by a permanent enclosing pergola, which will have the same dimensions as the hotel block itself. The resulting formal motif of a quadrangle with a cut-out circle is also the formal concept of the adjacent hotel block of equal size.

To ensure a better proportional linkage with the environment, the height of the hotel building was kept as low as possible so that the remaining historical structures were not overshadowed. The geometrical, clear, and visually unobtrusive form of the building helps to tone down the visual chaos of the surrounding environment.



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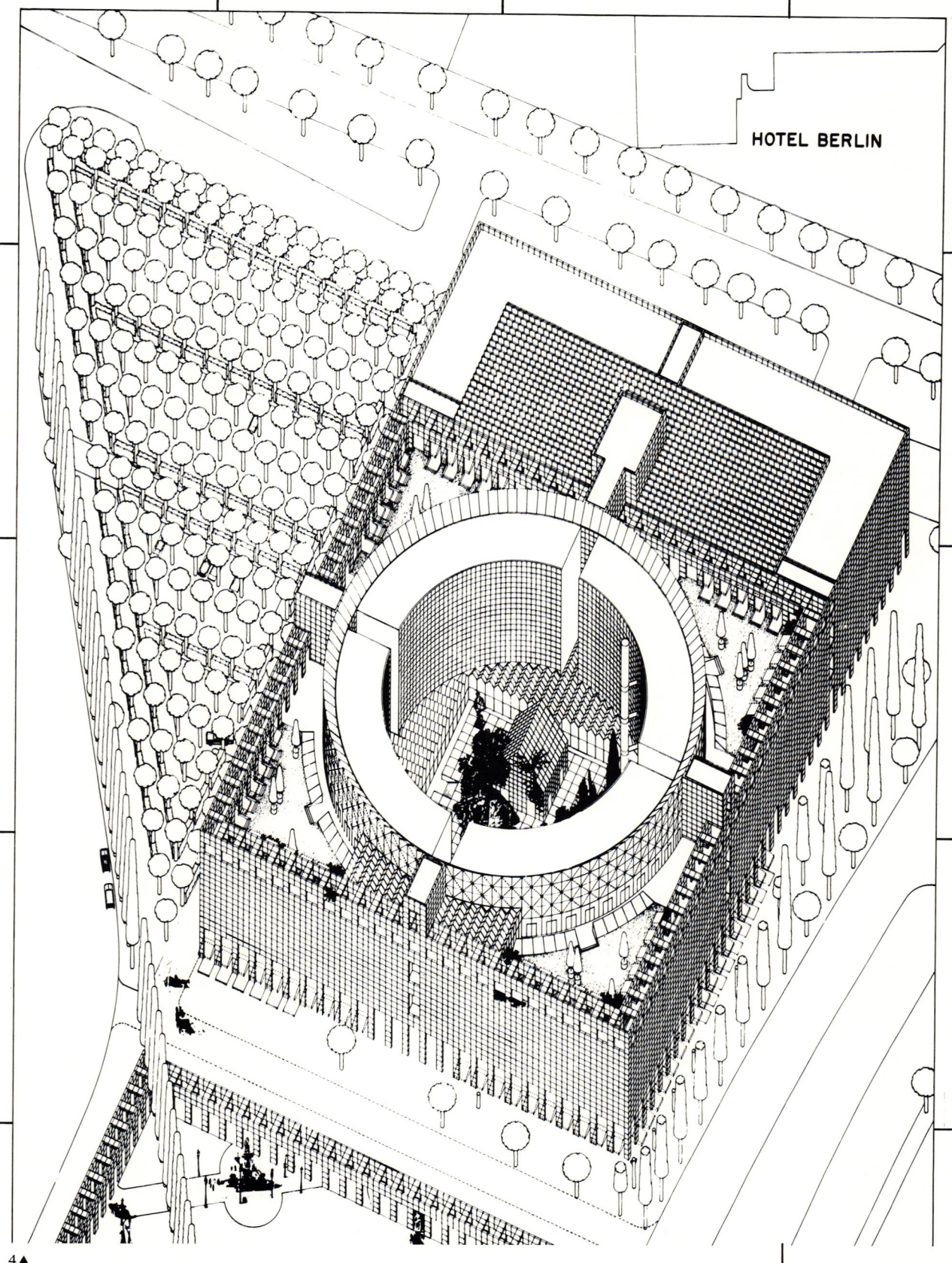
3 Hotel site plan, showing the rondell, the Grosser Stern-Lützoplatz axis, and the hotel itself
4 Axonometric

The hotel building should appear as an urban hotel; hence the enclosed arcades for varied uses—as shopping arcades, reception arcade, arcade café and restaurant, parking arcade and service (shipping) arcade; thus also the grand lobby engaging all levels of the building, intended as an urban space, a meeting-place (especially in rainy weather), and especially as a place of elegance within an otherwise unattractive inner city environment; and hence the strict, formal character of the building, which is oriented towards the representative values of Grand Hotels as traditionally conceived. Toward the outside also, the structure should present itself unmistakably as a hotel and not as an apartment or office building.

The lobby is the true focal point and the central space of the hotel. All sections are related visually and functionally toward this space and are accessible from it. From the outside the lobby is accessible from several sides; within the structure, it forms the point of departure for the internal grid of pathways. The lobby itself, within this grid of 'streets,' assumes the function of a 'square.' The interior façade of the lobby has been designed as an outside (street) façade. In a phased realization of this project, the lobby would come into existence only at the last stage, so that what was up to that point an open space, would be covered by a glass roof.

The structure can be realized in several stages (cf. the 'Matrix Plan'). The separate building sections A, B, and C are complete in themselves and can function by themselves. This also applies to the combinations A + B or B + C. The realization of the project in stages can be seen as a necessary sequence, or as a procedure in which each stage is a unit complete in itself, since even from a formal point of view the parts A, B, and C are spatial forms complete in and of themselves. In the final stage the old hotel could even be retained between the new structures A and C. This immediate juxtaposition of the old and the new actually could give the charm of the fragmentary to such an architectural complex. It is important that, even with a phased realization, the hotel—independent of the phases selected—will at no stage present itself as a temporary solution or an incomplete structure, but will in every phase be a formally and functionally complete architectural complex.



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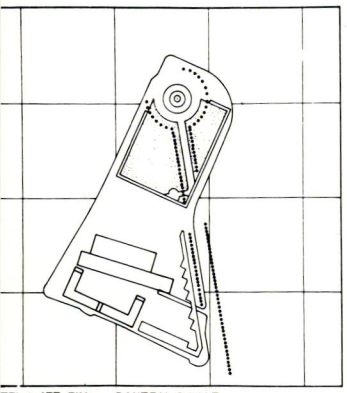

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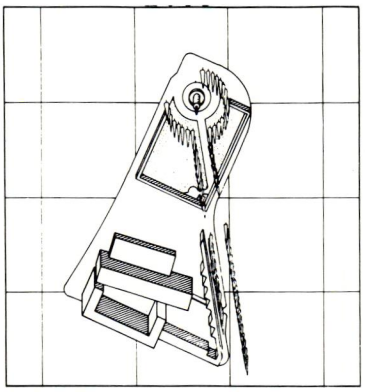

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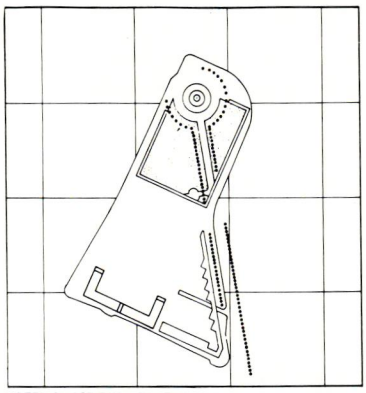

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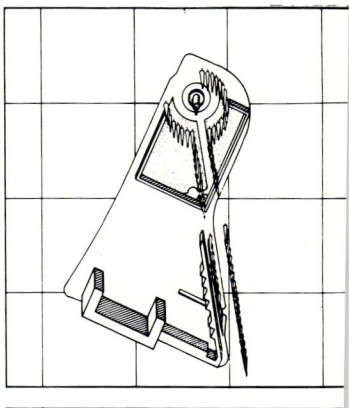

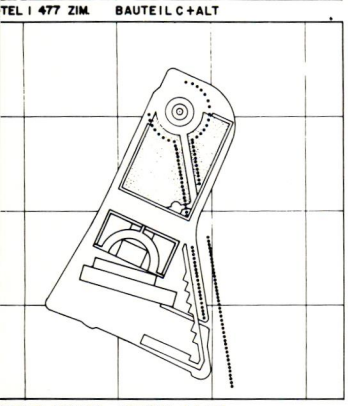

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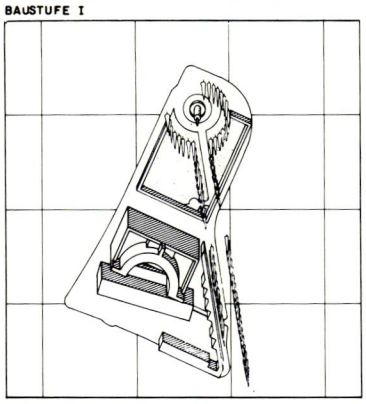

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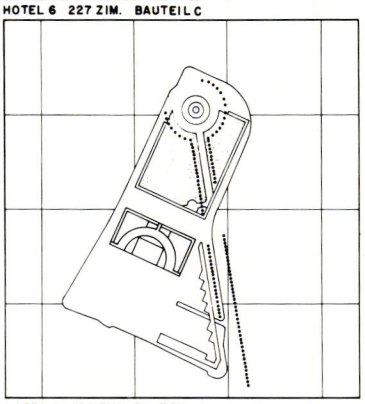

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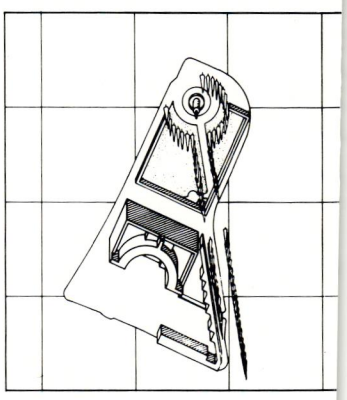

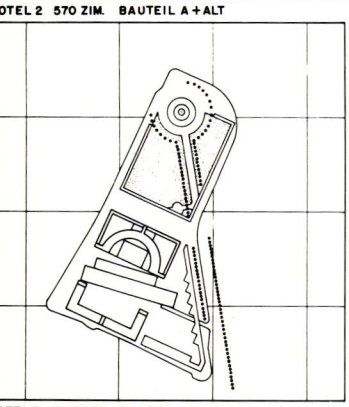

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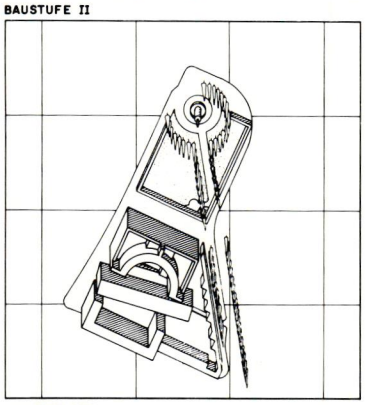

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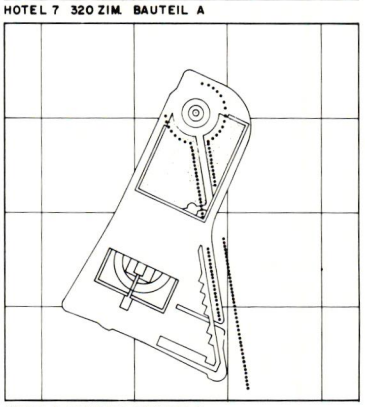

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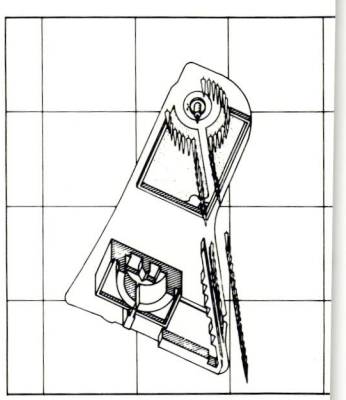

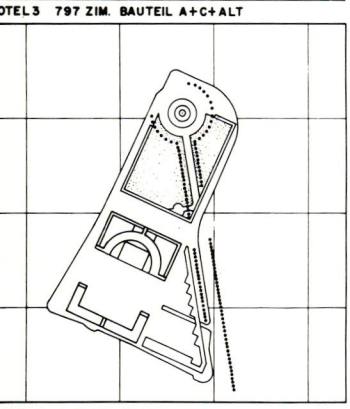

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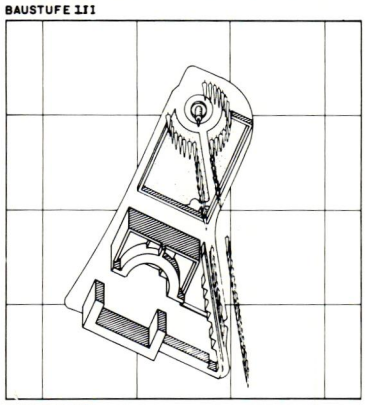

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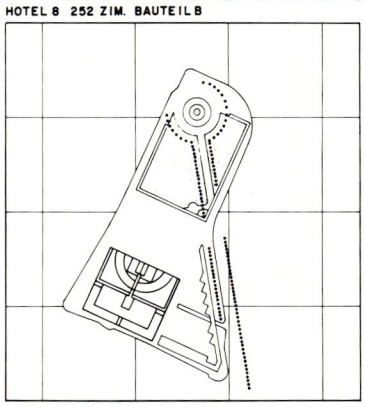

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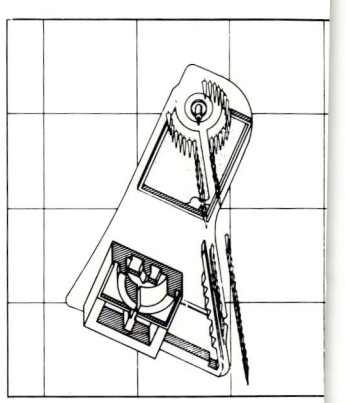

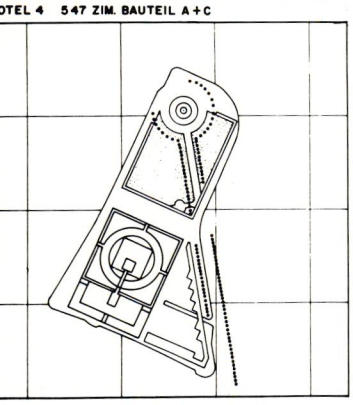

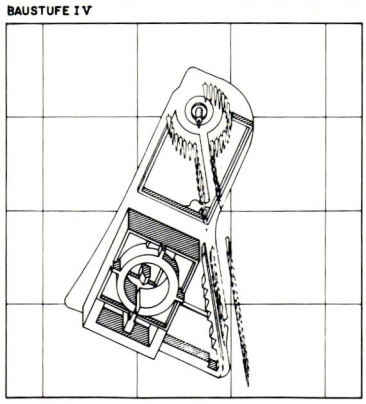

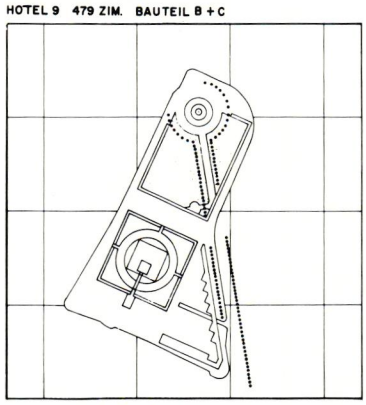

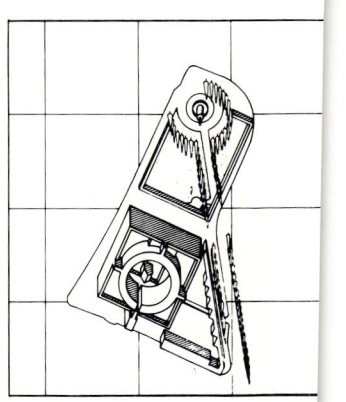

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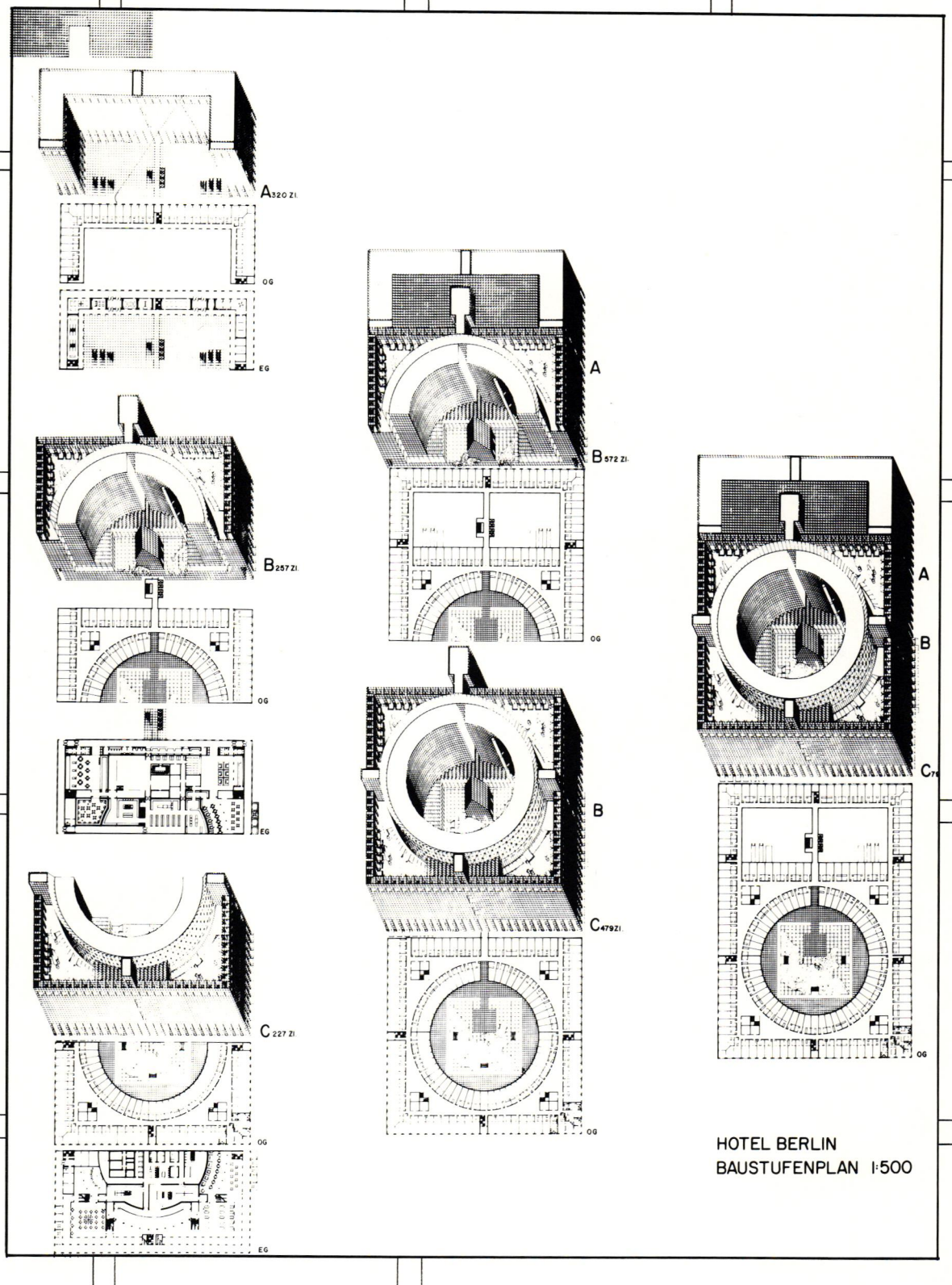
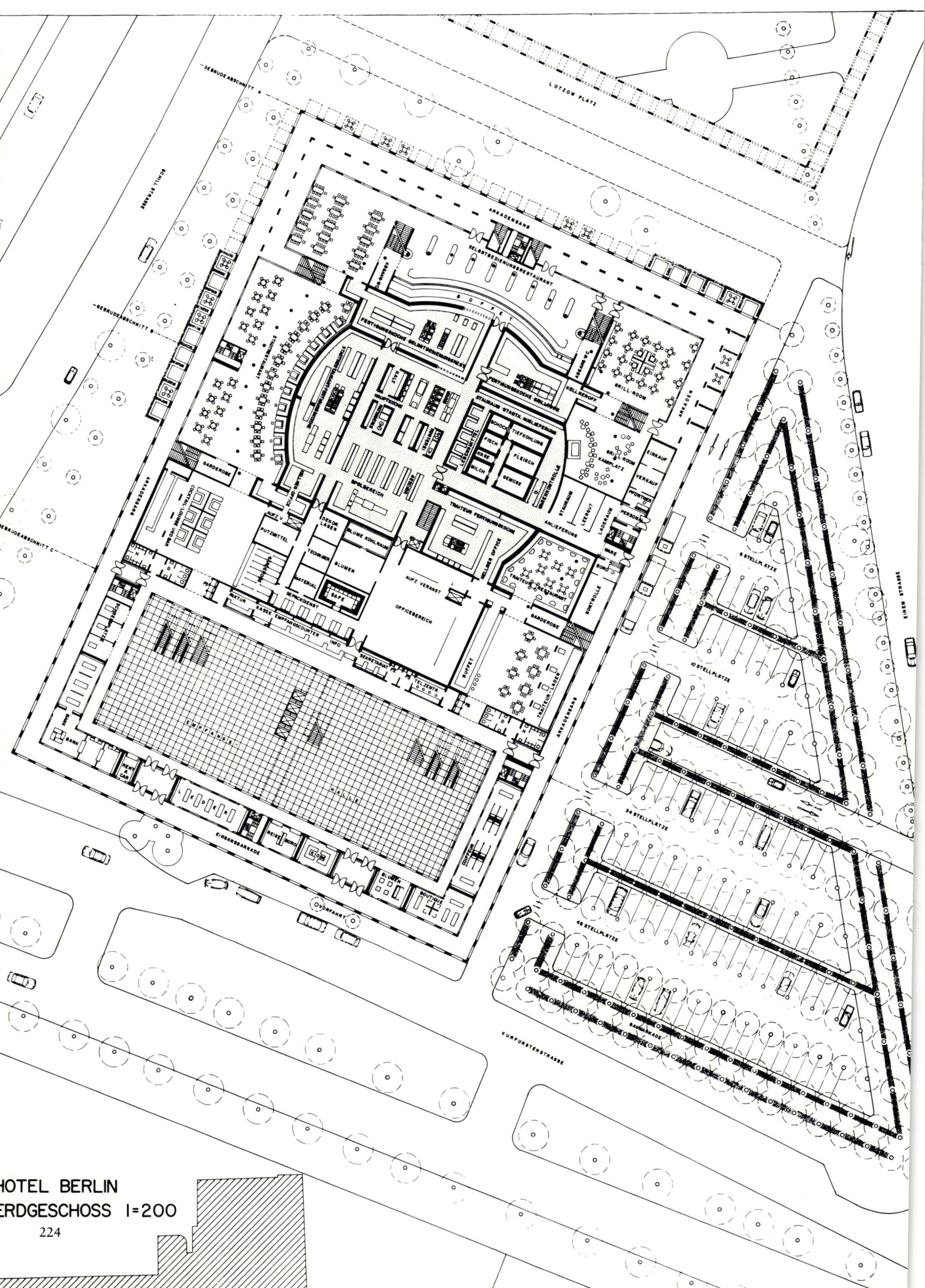


5 Matrix Plan, showing possible combinations and construction phasing of the basic hotel elements, including the provisions for retaining the hotel presently on the site

6 The hotel constituent parts. The plan documented on the following pages is the combination of all the parts, A, B, and C (right).

7 Plan, Lobby level
8 Plan, Mezzanine level
9 Plan, Second through fourth floors
10 Plan, Seventh floor

7



HOTEL BERLIN
ERDGESCHOSS 1=200

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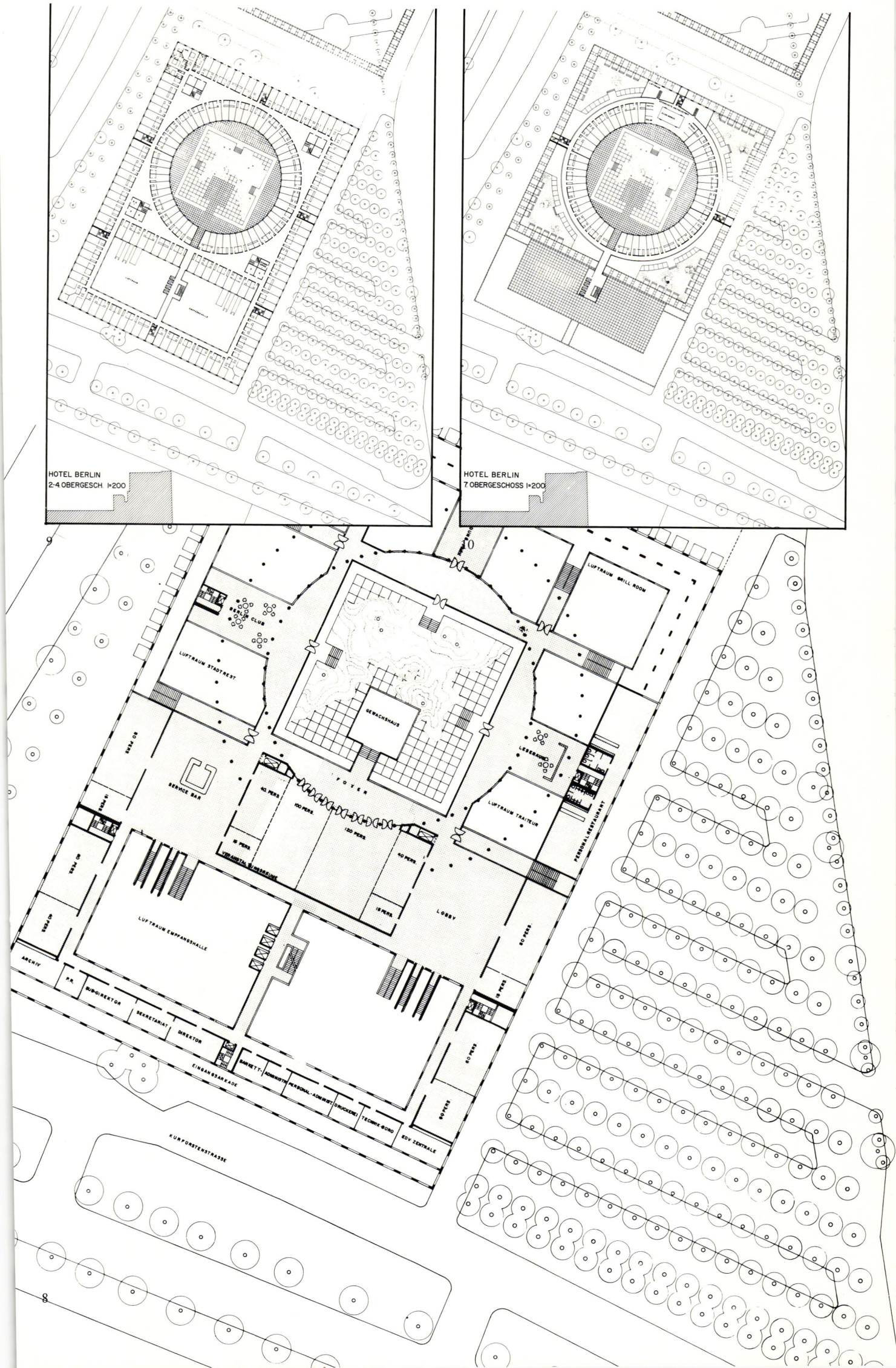
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2-4 OBERGESCH. 1=200
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7 OBERGESCHOSS 1=200
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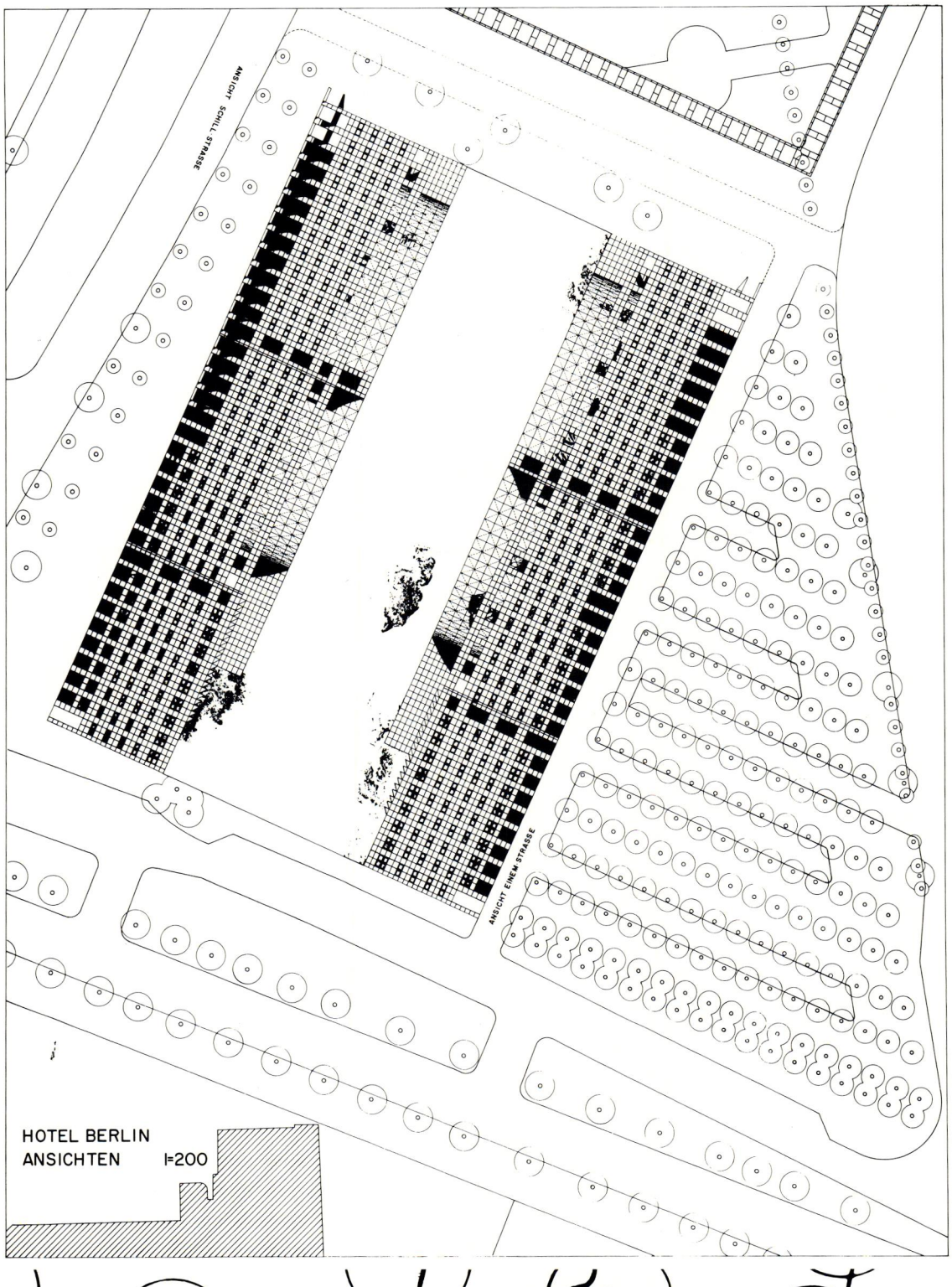
10
LUFTRAUM GRILL ROOM
BERLIN CLUB
LUFTRAUM STADTREST.
GEWACHSHAUS
LESERAUM
LUFTRAUM TRAITEUR
PERSONAL-RESTAURANT
SERVICE BAR
FOYER
40 PERS.
100 PERS.
120 PERS.
15 PERS.
VERANSTALTUNGSRÄUME
LOBBY
LUFTRAUM EMPFANGSHALLE
ARCHIV
P.R.
SUB-DIREKTOR
SEKRETARIAT
DIREKTOR
BANKETT-
ADMINISTR.
PERSONAL-ADMINIST.
DRUCKEREI
TECHNIK-BÜRO
EDV ZENTRALE
EINGANGSARKADE
KURFÜRSTENSTRASSE
8

11 East and West elevations
12 Section through lobby and court
13 Detail of Figure 12

11



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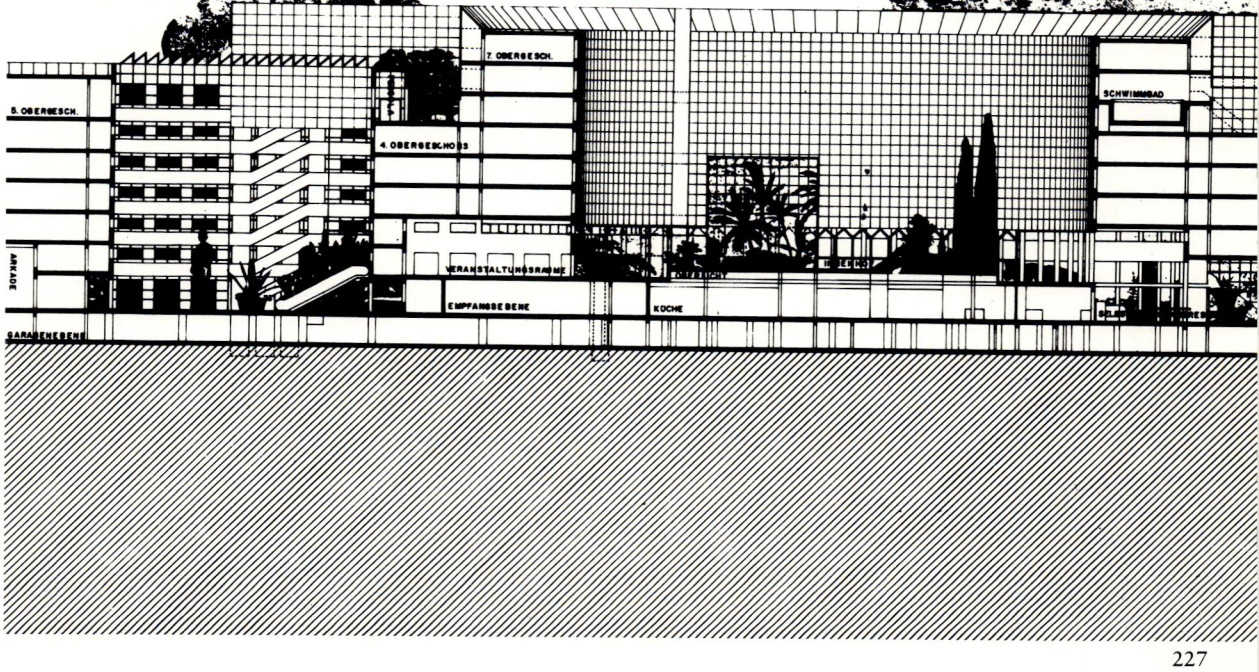


Interview

Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown

The following is a much-edited transcript of an interview held in May, 1978, at the offices of Venturi and Rauch, and at the home of Denise Scott Brown and Robert Venturi. Questions had been provided beforehand, and the final edited transcript was cleared for publication with the interviewees.

ED: Do you stand by the same architectural ideas of ten years ago as espoused in *Complexity and Contradiction* and *Learning From Las Vegas*? Have you had to come to grips with conflicts between stated goals and realizable solutions, ie, were your ideas buildable?

RV: I don't feel any kind of revisionist urge concerning the stands we are taking. *Complexity and Contradiction* dealt with the formal side of architecture. *Learning from Las Vegas* did the same but dealt with the symbolic side as well. Most of the allusions and sources for C&C were historical Western sources, mainly Renaissance, Mannerist, and Baroque architecture, and of course most of the sources for *LLV* were the commercial vernacular of architecture today. What we say in these books, and the sources we refer to, are still relevant and rich sources for me. Anybody has to go to his own set of sources, and I think when you write books like these, you shouldn't be advocating too explicitly what other people should do or what sources they should go to. You are explaining what things turn you on and are helpful to you.

ED: But don't they influence younger architects to look at those same sources?

RV: I think they do, just as the older architects when I was young influenced me. It depends on the person who reads the book.

In *LLV* we're a little more prescriptive. I hope we weren't too prescriptive. But you wouldn't write it if you didn't think it would be helpful to somebody else.

DSB: We were saying that architects can't afford to ignore their environment, or disdain it . . . and ought to understand it as a necessary prelude to doing anything about it. We also said that this is not an inspiration of the moment, particularly if we are involved in urban planning and urban design. Sources of inspiration for artists may move on, but the urbanist is still faced with the city. Using it as a source for inspiration is only part of what we were talking about; facing it and dealing with it is something one's going to have to do all the time that it exists.

RV: I think we might be backing away from being prescriptive at this moment, because we're not too aware of what's happening at this moment. These days we're enjoying concentrating on our own work and not looking at the broad architectural scene. When you're younger, it's important to look at the whole scene. You're trying to find out where you want to be within it or what you want to do outside it. When you're older, if you're a practitioner, which is what we are, you have more opportunity to concentrate on your work, and you don't theorize as much.

What we do see happening, I think, is a growing danger of a return to evangelism in architecture, to a dogmatic prescription about what the right road should be. I think it's dangerous. It parallels the kind of puritanical approach of Modern architecture. In our books we weren't that way. We were more general and more tolerant.

ED: You've said something to the effect that the ideas of *Complexity and Contradiction* were not so useful or quite so buildable as a practical series of ideas but rather something more theoretical.

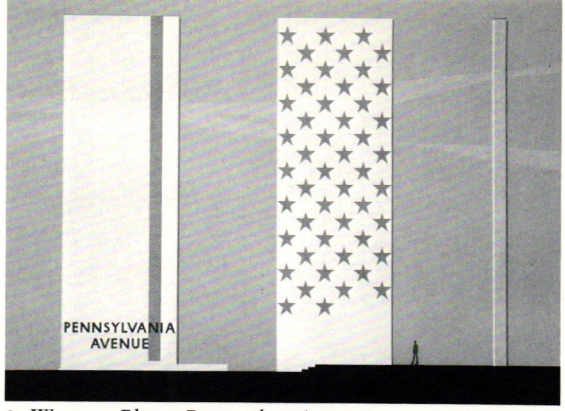
RV: We do not get many big projects that are inherently complex and contradictory. Usually small and simple programs don't allow for complexity and contradiction. As we've said before, there is a danger when artists write and talk, that their work becomes an excuse to prove a point rather than solve the problems at hand. We don't want to prove points. In some ways we've reacted against manifestations of C&C which are too literal or fanatical.

DSB: We say somewhere that an artist shouldn't go all the way with his or her own philosophy. It makes for very dry architecture. There ought to be a subtle difference between what you say and what you do.

RV: I feel strongly about that. I think that when artists work, they should forget their theories—Jean Labatut at Princeton talked about 'creative forgetfulness.' When you work you draw from what you have in you on an unconscious level. There are moments when you say: how does this fit with what I have been saying or thinking? But an artist's work should not follow too closely what he says. You shouldn't take yourself too seriously. An artist, in the end, works on specific problems. He has to be pragmatic. If he isn't, he's not going to be very good, his work isn't going to be very juicy.

ED: Especially an architect. A sculptor can run through the nuances of the same piece about fifty times, but an architect can't.

DSB: We had one idea, or a few ideas, in all the theory that we've evolved. I think a strong person is lucky to have one or two ideas in their life and then build on those. What we will be doing from now on is



2 Western Plaza, Pennsylvania Avenue, Washington, DC, 1978, with George E Patton, Inc

developing the ideas that we've had and taking them further, not renouncing them, not going off in another direction. They've been a very rich source for us. I'm rather pleased that we have had this idea of having one idea and then developing it. From the beginning of *LLV* you'll see that we say that we are Modern architects, and that in spite of our criticism of Modern architecture, we feel that it was the right way to go and that we are still part of that tradition. We don't call ourselves Post-Modernists. We feel that there has been an over-reaction. We don't agree with the people who say, for example, that our addition to Oberlin's Allen Memorial Museum should have been Classical. Maybe we're behind the times in certain respects.

ED: Is it important for architects to look outside their profession for intellectual constructs and methods of operation?

RV: It depends. At certain times in architectural history or an individual architect's life, going outside the field can be stimulating. At other moments it can be absurd. Early Modern architecture went out of the field not in a theoretical sense but in a visual sense when it aped the industrial vernacular to achieve a formal vocabulary. And to Cubism which is even further outside.

When you are working in architecture and planning anything that turns you on, or helps you achieve a synthesis or expands your thoughts, is valid. Any kind of metaphor counts.

DSB: That's the point of inspiration. Then comes evaluation—is my inspiration a good one? Inspiration is whatever turns you on. In evaluation there are things you cannot afford to ignore.

ED: You have often explained the importance of Pop Art in your work; now that Pop Art has declined as a contemporary movement, are you still pursuing lessons of Pop? Are they part of an acquired vocabulary?

DSB: Pop Art is one of the important movements that interests us, only one. But I don't believe that because art has moved away from Pop Art we should necessarily follow; our involvement with the popular environment started before Pop Art and should continue after, because it's what we live in (Figure 1). It's what we as ameliorists—which is what we are as architects and planners—have to work with. What we have to work with was something the Pop Artists caught on to describe. If they pass on, it still exists.

RV: Our work has very seldom been literally Pop. You don't use blinking neon signs on the outside of the Yale Math Building. The lessons we learned were not literal. A sense of appropriateness is important.

DSB: This brings up a deeper issue. Pop culture and Pop Art are not the same thing. We don't use Pop Art and we don't build for Popular culture most of the time. We are rather firmly fixed in an elitist box, as my article says, want to or not. We hope for opportunities to build buildings for other than elitist people, and to satisfy their tastes.

ED: There are directions in art toward Minimal, Conceptual and Blank art that seem to be contrary to the richness and diversity you endorse. Are these, or other contemporary art movements such as Photo-Realism, of interest to you in terms of ideas, or is Pop still the most correct vehicle for expression your architectural values.

RV: Very briefly, I would say these later movements haven't meant much to us. This is part of our orientation as older people who are looking out less, and within more—reaching into ourselves and developing what is there. Minimal Art generally goes against what we are saying, which is to make experience as rich as possible and to accept impure situations.

Our PADC (Pennsylvania Avenue Development Corporation) project in Washington involves sculptural elements that are rather minimal (Figure 2). I don't know whether they are minimalist, but they are purposefully abstract and simple in order to achieve a kind of magical and monumental effect.

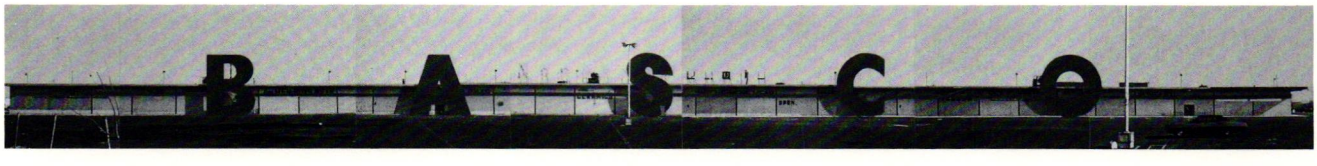
DSB: But when you get up close they are decorated. I don't believe minimalists would do that, but we do because we are urbanists. I think we take a very urban view of minimalist art, in that case.

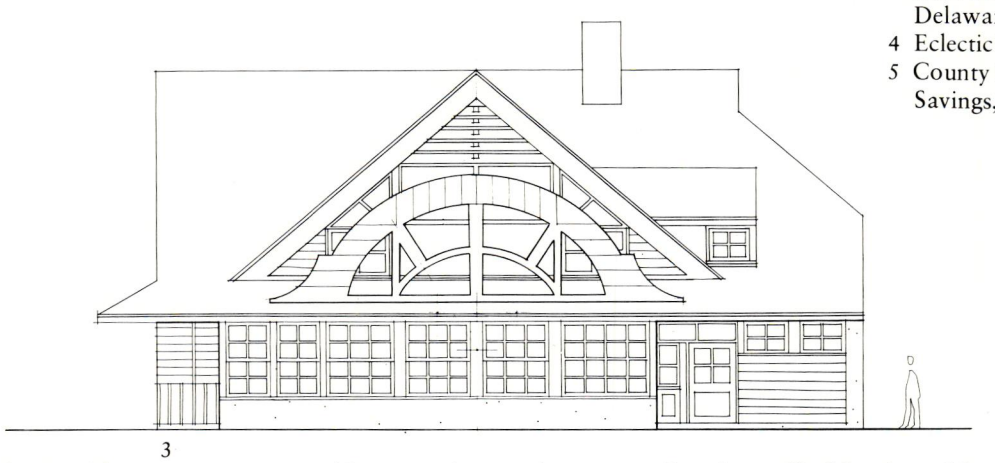
RV: On a certain scale and within a certain distance, our pylons achieve a kind of magical effect. Tours de force can be wonderful, but only if used once in a while. Again, it's a question of appropriateness.

The FDR memorial, which is kind of urban earth sculpture, and the Fairmount Park sculpture are minimal too, but at one level only.

DSB: They're seen as multiple-level experiences. When you are a pedestrian you see the complexity of them. When you are 200 yards away you see the minimal quality of them. That's very much an urbanist's and a historical architect's point of view.

1 Basco, Philadelphia, Pa, 1978





3 Flint House, Delaware, 1978
4 Eclectic Weekend Houses, 1978
5 County Federal Savings, Fairfield, Conn, 1977

3

You could go to Renaissance and Baroque places and see the same thing.

RV: These urban designs have a sense of scale that minimal sculptors don't achieve. The scalelessness here becomes all the more wonderful because you are informed of the real scale or scales when you get up close. The minimal elements are minimal from one standpoint but complex from another. They rely on more than the fabulous initial shock.

ED: Do you look equally at high-brow art and low brow art? Pop Art and the Arts and Crafts movement, although popularly based, are probably understood by only a minority of the population. Do you look at media that reach a broader base of people, such as commercial art, television, or Sears catalogs?

DSB: When we design a building that's going to be used by a lot of people, what we try to do is make sure there is a richness which can vibrate in lots of people in different ways. I think that historic, traditional architecture did this too. Modern architecture had the problem that for a great many people its symbols were not recognizable. It seemed like there were no symbols even to the people who did it themselves. They thought they got away from symbolism. This was just not attractive to the majority of the population. I think what we're saying is that if we can produce an architecture that vibrates on a great many levels, this is ok. And if at the same time we're conducting an arcane conversation with our peer group, that is not necessarily to be criticized.

How you do this is difficult. We think traditional architects managed to do it partly because there were more shared symbol systems. But we know there are shared symbol systems today. I think television has managed to find some of them. It seems to me that some of the big TV shows manage to vibrate for many different people. This is where I diverge from Gans because he felt that you should program to small subgroups on television. Maybe television will be able to do that one day, but I don't think architecture can. So we have to think about how you reach a spectrum of people.

RV: We are constantly looking all around us. We don't only rely on reading or travel. We are constantly using our eyes. I don't think all architects or all artists are this way. When we go to the drugstore in a familiar neighborhood our eyes are constantly moving. Its as if our heads were on swivels. We are always absorbing what's around us; therefore we are seldom bored.

ED: You have expressed interest in furniture and the decorative arts. Does this interest influence your architecture? For example, does your interest in the Arts and Crafts movement and furniture of Gustave Stickley affect the mood and craftsmanship of the interior of the Brant Vail House?

RV: I've always liked furniture. It's one of my idiosyncracies. Furniture is really interesting, it's like sculpture which is always related to the human figure. The chair is always pretty much the same because the human figure is pretty much the same. Yet there can be and are many variations occurring within this constriction.

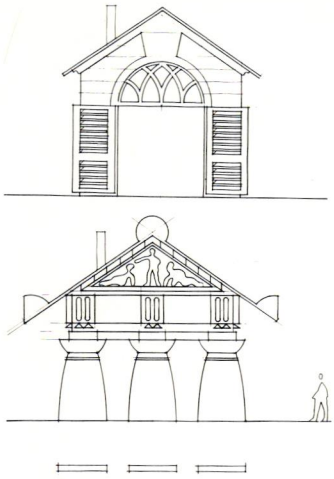
In a chair there's a kind of tension; the suggestion of the human figure that it sets up and the way it's dealt with the problem we find fascinating. Maybe if we didn't have this thing about chairs we would buy sculpture. The chairs are sculpture. I'm a Thoreauvian. I love Henry David Thoreau. He said why would anyone want more than three chairs; one for yourself and two for friends. But we own about 80 chairs.

ED: We are specifically interested in history in relation to the design process. Do you initially approach a design problem with research and analysis of historical precedents from your knowledge of history?

RV: It is always stimulating for me to think of historical precedent when we design (Figure 3). Historical precedent for me is generally limited to Western architecture but to a wide range within that tradition. I generally don't apply historical lessons in any literal way in the sense that the Italian Rationalists and others are doing now. Never doubt that our buildings are modern. We are never historically 'correct.'

I have always relied on precedent, as you can see from *Complexity and Contradiction*. That book was written when very few architects acknowledged history. Precedent is inevitable; you inevitably build on what's gone on before. The more you are conscious of this, the better you will do probably. I think that Modern architecture used precedent and didn't admit it in the same way it used symbolism without admitting it, and is therefore weaker for that. Generally the more conscious you are of what you're doing the better you're doing it. The Modernist would emphasize that using precedent can be a limitation. But, relying on precedent is inevitable, as I have said, and it can be something that can give you, if not more freedom, then a richer scope or palette. It can be either bad or good, it has to be taken in the right dosage. I have a tendency to use it. It is very stimulating to me. I love traveling and looking at historical architecture and I love looking at books of historical architecture.

DSB: I think that he starts off with a series of interests and preoccupations when designing a building. Ideas from earlier projects continue on, which may be useful or may not; sometimes it's a question of dumping all those and facing the problem straight on. So he does that, and sometimes he might have to drop them, but these are flowing around in his mind at the time. Now, he'll reach a point in a design



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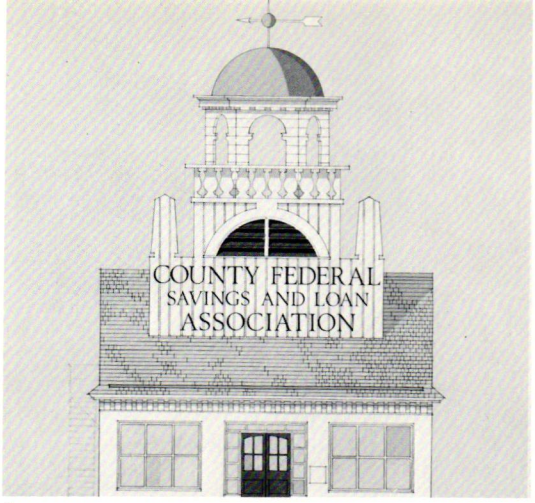

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where he's stuck. He'll come home and lie in bed and look at history books. But he'll also look at Alvar Aalto and Corbu. Now what was that project that so and so did? I want to go back and look at it. It could be Lutyens, it could be Aalto, or maybe a book of English houses. At a specific point he'll turn away from the design and toward these things. Going back to the design, something has happened. Therefore you see how history becomes a book of broad lessons, not merely a source book of decorative appliqué. Take the Yale Math Building for instance; there's a little Gothic reference in there, a quotation. It's wit; it's not to be taken too seriously. It's not the most important part of the building. It's one extra little fillip.

ED: It seems as if you use history in a whole variety of ways. Some for basic organization, some for decorative motifs. If you reach a design problem, would you specifically look at something to see how it's solved and say, Well I'm doing something like that?

RV: I would do a little of that. We don't use history so much for programs as for aesthetic problems—for formal or symbolic problems of design. We like being conventional and being conventional in a sense is relying on precedent. Lately we have designed buildings that are more explicitly historical in terms of symbol or style.

But in general, I tend to disagree with those who are now being Classicists. For one reason, they tend to be too literal. You shouldn't rely on too limited a formula and be fanatical about it (Figure 4). Also, I'm suspicious of artists who invent movements and names for their movements. Perhaps this is not a pragmatic enough approach for me. Latter-day Classicists are being too literal in several senses, perhaps. For instance, they are making 'ducks' rather than 'sheds'—that is, rather than using the classical systems of ornament as appliqué. I think that when you use Classical elements, it should be as more explicit appliqué; that means that you can have a building which is Modern inside and Classical outside. What tends to happen is that literal Classicists limit their use of Classicism to a very small range of building types; cultural centers or opera houses or institutional buildings, because they resist appliqué and want programmatic and formal consistency. They also therefore deal with a limited taste culture. They might learn from Luytens that the best way to use Classical vocabularies today is with wit.

Some of our recent projects use Classical elements. The County Federal Savings Bank was a little building (that's not going to be built) for a New England suburban community (Figure 5). Its the kind of community that likes 'Colonial' architecture, so we enjoyed giving it to them but we made it purposely incorrect. We gave it a bigger scale than a little 18th century building would normally have but appropriate for the needs of a roadside environment.

You could say our architecture has always been essentially Classical in form; we generally start out with a plan, with a distinct order with several cross axes which is initially symmetrical. Then we break the order. We're Classical in that we have a high sense of unity that we then modify to accommodate circumstantial needs of program or site. Perhaps we attempt a Palladian order which gets distorted in an Aaltoesque way. That's why we are in the Mannerist Classicist tradition.

ED: Can architects today legitimately copy motifs of the past? Is it necessary always to alter motifs and forms to demonstrate the contemporaneity of the usage? Is it OK to do a Georgian facade without the kind of distortion which would show it to be obviously not of today?

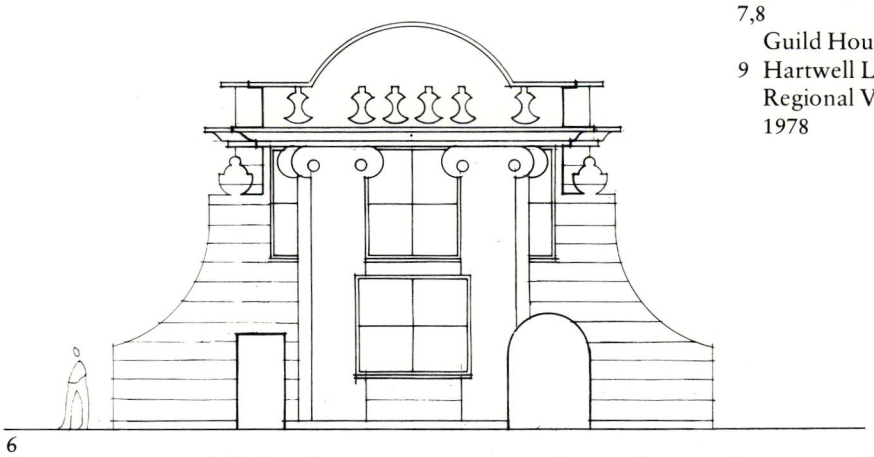
RV: I think there are several ways of doing this. For instance, in our own house we have real old furniture and we have copies. I think it is possible to make of the building a collage, where you might have, if not a real archaeological element applied to the building, then a copy of one. On the other hand, you could have the whole building be an interpretation of an historical form. It's a question again of appropriateness. In general, the appropriate approach is to be explicit—you are using an appliqué, you are using it as a sign, part of a symbol system or appliqué as a specific message—rather than to distort the whole building into a historical thing.

ED: Is it OK in Williamsburg to do real replicas, which people, if they didn't know, couldn't really tell from the originals?

RV: I think it's OK in Williamsburg and in certain other circumstances. I can conceive that almost anything's OK, depending on the context. But in general, this doesn't work in terms of contemporary programs, budgets, and contexts. Generally, the degree of visual and craft refinement is much too strong for our urban contexts and our working methods. It wouldn't be very appropriate to play a Haydn minuet in Times Square. Once in a while things like that work, but generally do not.

ED: You could say in the case of replication, the word 'appropriate' might mean cost. Today you can't afford to spend the money to do a reproduction decorative detail; but Venturi and Rauch might do it by cutting out plywood, even though the cut-out wouldn't have each nuance of classical detail. It would be stylized.

RV: That's true but I don't want to generalize too much. Sometimes some weird opportunities might come up, where literalness is appropriate. You can't be a purist in either direction. This is one thing that makes us different from orthodox Modern architects. We find it hard to say No, never do that. At the same time, we are Modern enough to say, generally it is irrelevant and



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6 Gooding House, Absecon, NJ 1977
7,8 Guild House, Philadelphia, Pa, 1961
9 Hartwell Lake Regional Visitor's Center, Georgia, 1978

inappropriate to be serious and consistent about employing Classical forms.

ED: You've mentioned at times that you use a loving irony as a way of accommodating a great many diverse sources. I think an ironic point of view wouldn't permit a literal copy of a historical form without some kind of distortion, some kind of recognition that it is a reuse of something.

RV: It's interesting to me that some of the so-called Whites are going in this direction. It points out that the Whites are essentially eclectics and have been all along eclectics. They chose a past architectural style, that of the Heroic Moderns of the 1920's, so it's easy to move to another style.

ED: I think this question applies to them. They have a pre-interest, and it seems that no matter what the program, it comes out in a certain style. You're saying that you do what is appropriate for each project. But, if you're interested in the Arts and Crafts before you even get a commission, is that next house you get going to be Arts and Crafts? If you have continuity, then that surely seems to happen.

RV: Naturally, individual architects have predilections of the moment. But we just designed a house in New Jersey (Figure 6), and it's a Petit Trianon in wood with a flat roof. It's not Arts and Crafts at all because that wouldn't correspond to what the client wants. We are truly eclectic in that we accomodate to clients' predilections and taste cultures. Our work is very diverse now for this reason. Within the same building we can be eclectic and combine styles. We might have a building which needs Modern flowing space inside, a Colonial front outside, and as we have said elsewhere, a Serbo-Croatian behind.

ED: But you always have written about it. It seems that you have always felt compelled to write about the projects you have presented for publication.

RV: I have. People say that architecture should speak for itself. Not necessarily. When we do things which aren't well received or understood, we have a desire to explain them.

ED: I think your writing about buildings makes them more accessible. Because you write about them, you can use words like 'ape'; it helps the building to be more understood by say, my mother.

RV: Also, the photo-essay is a very contemporary medium. Particularly when the building doesn't have a physical existence like the Football Hall of Fame. But you must write about it as an architect, as an artist writing an essay—not as a historian making an analysis, because you aren't one.

ED: Would you hope that everyone would read about the buildings instead of just looking at them? When you look at a building, you don't have a sign next to it saying this is what the building's about. You have it when it's published. What happens when someone drives by the Jazz Museum?

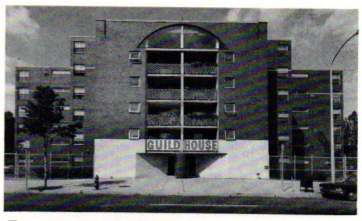
RV: Well, there is a problem here: I don't mean to sound like an elitist, but we're working in an area that few people know much about or care about. The little criticism we have in our field I think is not at a very high level. Educated laymen have little knowledge of architecture; perhaps that's why what we do is often misunderstood (although other architects misunderstand as well). Our emphasis on being ordinary and conventional has been taken literally, for instance. People, when they view architecture, don't have the sensibility that they might have when looking at sculpture or painting. They do not have the sensibility to discern. Maybe that's another reason we have a feeling that we want to explain. Also, we are realizing that architecture as a public art has to appeal to a range of people with a range of taste cultures—to use Herb Gans' term.

DSB: Those explanations are really written for our peers in our field. There will come a time when there's enough shared culture about the architecture that we're doing that we won't have to write as much. Much of our writing on our projects happened because we just didn 't feel there was that shared value system.

ED: It seems to me that people who write about their work are taking a bigger chance than people who don't because they build up an expectation in readers about the building. If there's a discontinuity between what the written statements say and what the building seems to do and accomplish, people say well, you must be crazy because you have great pretensions for your buildings and that doesn't satisfy them. Some people feel that that's true about some of your work. In the Guild House, for instance, some people saw a discontinuity between the stated goals and stated visions of the building and what it actually accomplished. Who was supposed to understand what you were trying to say about the building?

DSB: In that building there are explicit references to architectural history. I don't know if you've seen that photograph of an old lady sitting there in one of the apartments (Figures 7, 8). She's got a big smile on her face, and all around her she's got family photographs. She's not going to look at that line of white brick around the top and say, 'I understand that that refers to an architecture of a certain period;' I don't think that line is going to offend her either. It might offend some architects, but it's not going to offend her. There are many things on the building that she likes very much. We thought her smile showed that. I don't think that it's snobbish to say that the building can communicate on those two levels. If it didn't satisfy her aesthetic needs, I think we would be wrong. There are many buildings that won't satisfy her because there are many architects who would remove her geraniums from the front porch.

ED: There may be some confusion for people who read what you write concerning how much meaning is



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supposed to be conveyed to the everyday user. It seems that at times there is an assumption that laypeople would understand a lot of layers in a building, which, as you're speaking now, is not really the case.

DSB: I don't want to come out as an elitist who says that the prols are not going to understand everything I put into that building. Rather I'm a person whose tastes are situated on a spectrum of tastes. I have certain tastes, other people have other tastes. I share some with everyone. For example, liking green, nature, and open space is a rather generally shared value position in this culture, and I share it. But there are aspects of a building that I respond to and other people don't. This is valid. I, as a creator, have a right to my own appreciation of that building. But I would be wrong to ram that, and only that, down the throat of someone else. There should be room in one building for lots of types of enjoyment.

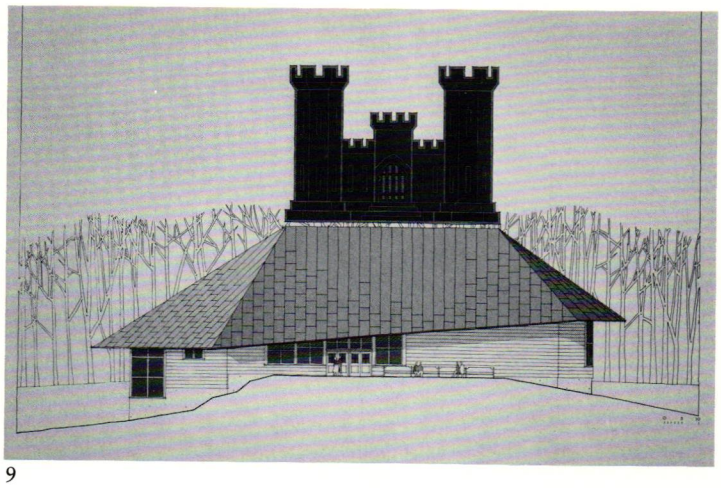
ED: The early Moderns can be criticized for their exclusivity which accompanied their prescriptions for architecture in the spirit of the age. Might your suggestions about roadside commercial architecture be criticized in the same way? Is the spirit of the age, if there is such a thing, represented solely by the architecture of the roadside? Let me read this quote: '. . . this is not the time and ours is not the environment for heroic communication through pure architecture. Each medium has its day, and the rhetorical, environmental statements of our time—civic, commercial, or residential—will come from media more purely symbolic, perhaps less static and more adaptable to the scale of our environment. The iconography and mixed media of roadside commercial architecture will point the way, if we will look.'

DSB: There's nothing there that says that it should be the exclusive source. Nothing at all. Everything that we've said in this interview goes in the other direction.

ED: If you say each medium has its day, it suggests that there would be a media appropriate to some days and not to others.

DSB: I think it's a statement of what exists and not what ought to be. It's not a normative statement. It's a descriptive statement. It says to architects, like it or not, you're not as important to this culture as a space scientist or as a television producer may be. People just don't value your service. Know your place, enjoy it in humility and don't posture.

RV: Beverly Sills, the opera singer, has an infinitely bigger audience than Philip Johnson, and this has not been the great age of opera. It's just a fact that certain media are attuned to the times. This is not a time which will go down in history as a heroic age in architecture. As many have said, the movies are perhaps the media of today.



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ED: Aren't there some media which you would believe would be more important now, and some ways of architecture that are more impotant than others?

DSB: Yes, except that I think that the roadside architecture which we see as a source, but not the only source, may be a more convincing and generally appreciated medium than some other media. This is not really the essence of what we're saying. The essence seems to lie more in being non-exclusive, being inclusive, and being allusive. Learning from the roadside medium is one way of doing that, but looking at history again from a different point of view is as important; and both of those are ways of being inclusive (Figure 9).

The early Modern movement was a great time in architecture. What's happened is that things have changed, and the Moderns haven't. The technology that they admired has changed. We've been burned by their 'brave, new spirit of the times.' We no longer hope it will spread over the face of the earth, because sometimes, when it has, it hasn't done the earth much good.

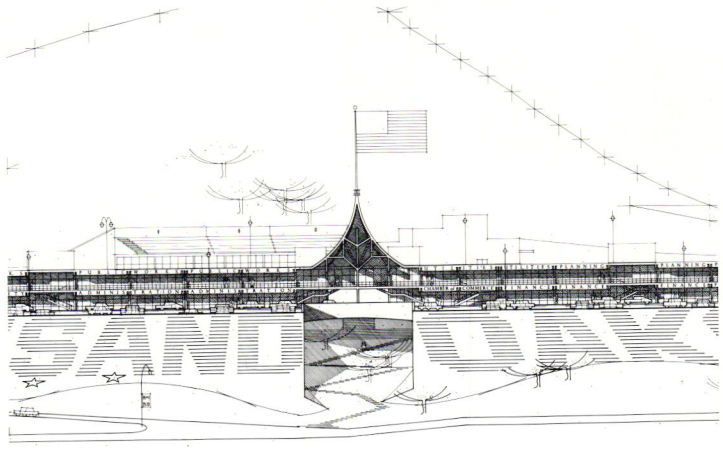
ED: Does the use of irony widen the gap between you and the people for whom your work is intended?

DSB: There is a very specific reference to that in *Learning from Las Vegas*. I don't know where to go further than that. We basically say that in facing Pluralism, or in facing the kind of social situations that, as human beings, we don't agree with, and in facing the necessity to respond to many diverse values—you can face life tragically or you can laugh in order not to cry; irony seems to be the second approach.

The use of irony can probably help a diverse group of people live together, and I see no reason why architects shouldn't express that. Irony is also a middle-age virtue.

ED: If you start with the premise of identifying and accommodating the popular will, do you always end up with a populist, or popular art? By your own admission, you are high-art, mannered architects, but you are also interested in vernacular styles and popular tastes. Do you think there is any contradiction or disingenuousness in using and responding to popular culture on two levels, one for the everyday user and one for the architecturally informed?

DSB: With regard to a building like the Guild House, we start out by being receptive to a great many things. We, like all other people, have to judge in order to live. We certainly have to judge to design. Judging involves narrowing. We are elitists, and much of the time we design for an elite market whether we like it or not. These are the people who come to us. We use popular sources as inspiration and we end up with elitist art when we do that. I think that an architect has to be



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10 Civic Center, Thousand Oaks, California, 1969
11 Institute for Scientific Information, Philadelphia, Pa, 1978
12 Entrance, Settlement Music School Addition, Philadelphia, Pa, 1978
13,14 Western Plaza, Pennsylvania Avenue, Washington, DC, 1978, with George E Patton, Inc
15 Brant House, Tuckerstown, Bermuda, 1977

very aware of her role and position in design of any sort, but particularly in urban design. What you would design for a client who sits across the table and talks with you would be very different from what you would design for a speculative builder selling town houses in a New Jersey suburb, or what you would design for low-income, inner city people whom you would meet in a civic group. You'd be lucky even to meet with a civic group; in most such situations the architect's client is not the users. In this case you should look for a symbol system of great generality to be resonant for many different people. And yet, it should be something evocative, not anonymous, or bland; a good strong base that people could add their own associations to. In Levittown, and in some inner-city ethnic environments, a wonderful, idiosyncratic, personal decoration is added to the houses. I felt that we ought to be able to produce an architecture that would be a sturdy base for that kind of personal addition, and where these additions would make the building better. That's a high ideal and very difficult to achieve. Guild House, with its geraniums on the balconies and antimacassars in the parlors, does, I think to some extent, achieve that relationship with its occupants.

ED: I'm referring to projects in which it seems as though you start with ideas derived from the popular culture, and then turn them around in such a way that people for whom the building is intended are offended by your irony. Correct me if I'm wrong, in the Thousand Oaks project people were offended by your use of the big American flag. They thought it might be a little too ironic (Figure 10).

RV: A lot of good artists offended people when their work first came out. Any artist who works on several levels at one time might be ahead of his time in some of them. I guess you can't worry about that too much. You must worry about it as a practitioner trying to meet a payroll, who needs a market, of course, but on the critical level you can't worry about it. Why should we be any more liked than a lot of other artists? Also if you're good you spend a lot of time on things that you don't write about, on plans that work well and proportions that are good.

DSB: People asked about Thousand Oaks, Are they really serious? That was a competition design. It didn't become a building. It's an open question what would have happened to it in the design process. In its present form it's kind of an emblem; an icon itself. As it became a real building, there would have been a lot of back-and-forward between the community and us and maybe aspects of it would have changed.

ED: What is the relationship between writing and the development of your architectural ideas? Generally, which comes first, the verbalizations or the designs?

RV: I think I write when my ideas are ahead of my opportunities. Architects don't have many opportunities to build when they're young unless they're good politicians or whatever it is you have to be to get work. When you can't do your thing, you write about it. So in our case our writing is usually ahead of our work. Then we write again later to explain what we did. There are two kinds of writing, and it's indicated in the way the two books are written. Part one is general ideas and part two is jobs. People say the ideas don't connect with the jobs. Well, I'm delighted that they don't connect too literally for reasons I've gone into earlier. We haven't done much Complex and Contradictory architecture because we don't get the opportunities—writing is essentially our way of dealing with that problem of not having the opportunity.

DSB: I write to clarify my mind, to get down everything I feel about something in one place, and then a system of thought grows out of it. You find out what you think by putting it on paper.

RV: I agree. Writing helps you to know where you stand. Someone said how do I know what I think until I've heard myself speak. Another reason we write is that presumably you won't have to talk if you write, but the trouble is people don't read much.

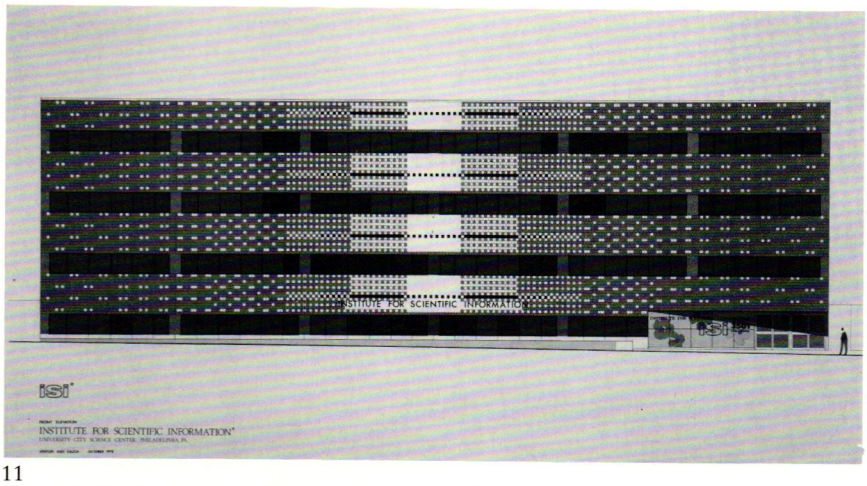
ED: Do you think your ideas concerning the decorated shed and main street are being developed by other architects?

RV: I don't see practically anyone except students doing the decorated shed or understanding it (Figure 11). That certainly doesn't bother me; we really haven't had much chance to do it ourselves.

DSB: I think complexity and contradiction got used in the wrong way. And now the new Radical Eclectics, or whatever they are called, have ideas that are related to ours on symbolism, decoration, and imagery, but don't use them in the same way. I think that we are significantly different from most other architects including the Post-Modernists, and that one important difference lies in the value we place on social analysis and social knowledge, which most architects scorn. Lou Kahn used to say that sociologists deal with 2.5 people and therefore by definition they were beyond the pale. I don't think that most architects differ from him in that. I think that our work diverges from that of most architects, be they our followers or not, because we have this dimension that they don't have. They neither perceive it in our work nor do they understand it, nor do the critics.

ED: Does the scale, context and use of the project dictate the amount of symbolic message?

RV: The project dictates the amount of the message. There are some very beautiful warehouses along the Schuykill River. They have a little bit of symbolism placed appropriately around the doorway. We were thinking of that when we said late Modern



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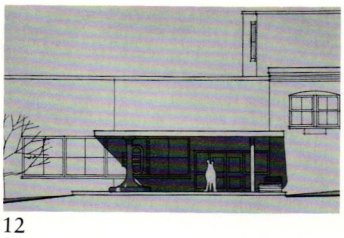

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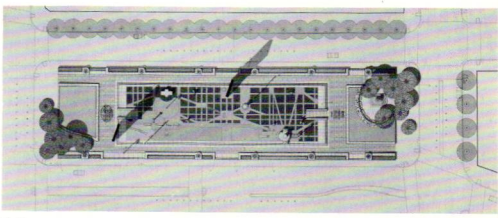

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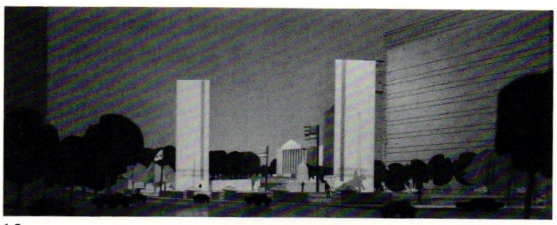

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architecture had too much integrated decoration. Instead of being a so-called functional warehouse-type structure with a little Greek pediment symbol over the main door, the whole building becomes a symbol.

ED: New England Colonial houses also had decoration around the front door.

DSB: Yes, they had a little in the right places, and it's done in a very spontaneous and uninhibited way. That's what I think is appropriate. A little decoration applied at symbolically important spots (Figure 12).

ED: The PADC project, for example, is symbolic on a monumental scale (Figure 13). Because the pylons frame the treasury building, the project may be criticized for being symbolic of money and power, without your really intending it to—or is that what PADC intended?

DSB: It symbolizes this government and this system—the good parts, as well as the bad.

RV: The Treasury building is *there* and it is for us to go from there as architects.

ED: So again, it's the issue of appropriateness.

DSB: But then you could say, Why do you use Classical symbolism? Why don't you use some kind of symbolism to do with public parks and humanism and all that? I think there's another level on which you could answer the criticism: This is Classicism, we're past Classical times, we're modern now—and all the same answers apply that made us rethink Modern architecture in the first place. You could also ask How is this Classical symbolism different from other Classical symbolism of the past?

ED: Is it different?

RV: Again, we are starting with the context; there is a very definite context: the remnants of L'Enfant's plan (Figure 14). If L'Enfant's plan had been completed, we wouldn't be dealing with it. But there is the foundation of L'Enfant's plan, and it seems to us that the best approach is to start with what's there and go along with it. Now, what's different about our Classicism is that the two pylons are askew and only parallel perceptually when you're far away. Their arrangement is certainly Classical from the long view, but it breaks down when you get closer.

ED: But that's more on the level of architecture. I'm not saying that architecture and symbolism are different, but regardless of what the pylons are like, the symbolic thing is that they're framing the Treasury Building.

DSB: They're framing a view, but when you get closer, they're not.

RV: When you get up close, the pylons have a beautiful thinness; they're very, very immaterial, which is again different from the symbolism of Classicism which is often heavy and permanent in its expression.

DSB: Classicism would suggest some roundness, these are flat, and very thin in one dimension.

RV: Let's say there is a kind of plasticity to Classical architecture and I guess symbolically the idea of permanence. The pylons do not have anything like that.

DSB: Also, Classical architecture, oversimplified, tends to be equal on both sides. You made the columns on the Brant Bermuda house flat on one side—that's definitely modern (Figure 15).

RV: That made those columns symbolic, because the real columns are behind them—they're the wood posts. This is an example of symbolism which is explicitly applied decoration. In other words, those columns are not round, real columns.

DSB: They're flat approximations. Modern architecture made things flat, lightweight, narrow and one-dimensional and therefore cheaper.

ED: Does your interest in a particular formal or organization idea continue through several projects? Do you try to elaborate and develop several projects? Does this violate the notion that each design problem should generate its own more or less unique solution? For example, there seems to be a continuation of some ideas in the development of early house projects and more recently in the Tucker house and Brant Vail house. Are the similar designs of these two houses dictated by the similarities of site conditions and / or current interests (Figures 16, 17)?

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16 Tucker House, Katoonah, New York, 1974
17 Brant-Johnson House, Vail, Colorado, 1975
18 Brant House, Greenwich, Conn, 1970
19 Model, Flint House, 1978

RV: Usually, in the beginning there is a predilection; you often apply the forms of your last job to your next job. But when you get into it, you discard things that are irrelevant to the particular problem. On the other hand, with those two houses—they both are in the woods and we like the idea of vertical towers sitting among the vertical trees. But nevertheless, one was a development of the other.

DSB: The interesting thing is that the Brant house is one of three Brant houses. Now it doesn't look like the other two although it's for the same client. It looks like the one that's for a different client in a similar location (Figure 18).

ED: Now even in the Flint house the important space, the main room again is upstairs.

RV: That's true. On the other hand, there are good functional reasons for that very peculiar arrangement: the very big music room contains instruments that are sensitive to temperature or humidity conditions. Our client does not like too much reliance on air-conditioning for the rest of the house (Figure 19). This is a big room that has to be sealed off even in the winter because of its humidity requirements. It has to be sealed off, and to put a sealed off room in the midst of the downstairs would have a deadening effect on the life of the house. Making it remote made sense. Also, it's a room that's going to have an organ in it; and the location under the eaves gives the space height and atmosphere. So there are all those things that make the big room upstairs appropriate.

ED: You don't always follow what you do with a similar solution, although it often works out conveniently. If it works out then its okay, but this doesn't negate having unique ideas.

RV: I think there's a natural tendency to be in a certain groove if you're a good architect. We tend to be steered by our theories, and I think a good tension develops between your predilections and the particular demands of the job at hand.

ED: It seems as if you're the last ones who should be criticized for being overly consistent or overly concerned with one particular formal idea because I think your buildings reflect a real sensitivity to context. I guess if you look at work by any architect you can really see continuities even in the differences.

DSB: That's strength I think. But if one thing comes out of all that, it is that there is, for us, no one source. The sources are myriad; there are more of them than it appears from what we say and write.

ED: How much are the architecturally uneducated users of your project supposed to understand? For instance, what is the minimum message of the Guild House, or the addition to the Oberlin College Art Museum, which should be understood by the users in order that you would consider it a success?

RV: Guild House was designed 14 or 15 years ago. If we were designing that building now, we would be more sensitive to the symbolic needs of the users, and the building would be, let's say, prettier in the sense that developers' houses are prettier. What we were trying to do was give a neutral background for people to put their own things in. I think it worked well. You can see the photographs of the inhabitants with pictures of Kennedy on the wall, and the fake flowers in the window and it hangs together. I think it's neutral enough so that the contrasting juxtaposition looks all right.

DSB: Except for two things: In Guild House, old ladies on welfare retired university professors live in the same building; and it meets both needs. Also it meets a context need, and the context really has to be seen to be understood. It is an industrial and semi-industrial area in which the brick, windows, and shape of Guild House fit very well.

ED: In the Oberlin College Art Museum, how much are the architecturally uneducated users intended to understand; how much of a message, or what kind of message, is intended for them, presuming that these buildings do have a symbolic message?

RV: Well, naturally, in a building like that at Oberlin you do not have the same span of users as in the Guild House, from retired Quaker academics to people on welfare.

In a museum, of course, you're serving a much narrower spectrum of tastes. You do not have the commitment that you would have, for instance, if you were an architect for a developer who has to sell houses to a wide market. Here your commitment is to please your sophisticated client.

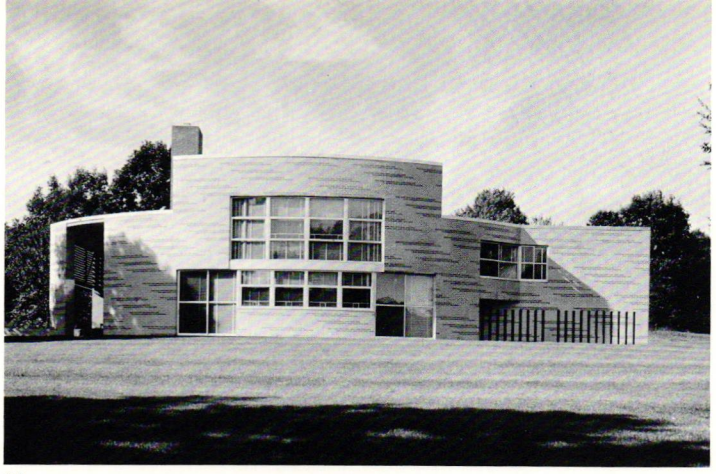
But that doesn't mean that everybody is going to like your building. It never has been that way and it never will be.

DSB: And also people who didn't like it in the design stage now like it as an actuality.

RV: It's a cliché but it's true—you can't please everybody all the time.

DSB: The first time we looked at that Oberlin solution we didn't like it. That building was a very, very difficult problem because they have Cass Gilbert's perfect Renaissance pavilion and you should add to it only at the back, and that was already done; and the only place for a second addition was to one side.

Then there was a program which required you to interrelate the new gallery and the old at two levels, leaving you with no options of polite links. So the functional relations dictated a very difficult solution. Lou Kahn once said, 'Sometimes you find yourself in a position where the solution you evolve you hate. You hate it and you hate it until you love it. You come to



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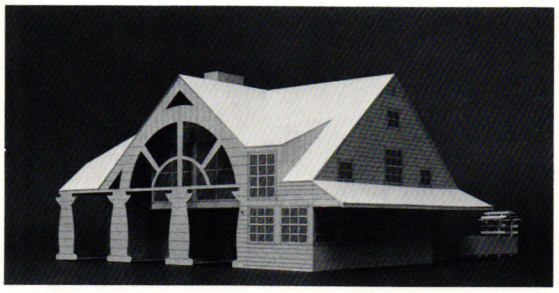

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love it when you realize you really have to do it that way.' And that's kind of what happened around us. We hated that thing and hated it until we finally developed it to where we felt this is it, it's got to be this way. It is, in fact, very strong, although it's not easy to like. But we think there are things people can like about it even if they find it as we did, difficult and indigestible, in the beginning. Inside it's very joyous; there's an almost merry sensation in the new gallery from color, light and proportions. And enjoyment comes too from your understanding of exactly why that gallery is the way it is, when you see how it connects. We hope the students feel that this is architecture that allows people to make it their own, not to feel a guest in the building. It allows people to kick it. It allows people to live with it. In the furnishing, we tried to make it mellow, to soften the hardness of the hard solution, found with difficulty, by loving reuse of old furniture, upholstered with warm tones, so that there's a play between hard and mellow. There's also an intricate concern with the circulation spaces that serve as social spaces, and with facilities that reveal rather than demonstrate their purposes. It's a building that, if you live with it, you get to find ways of using it which are friendly and nice; and therefore it's a courteous building. I think people like that.

ED: In the description of the Museum published in the Oberlin catalog, I think you gave certain references and sources for it, sources of inspiration, one of which was a '40s gym and vernacular commercial architecture. Now how much of those sources do you think people who look at the building should get? Again, I'm speaking of the non-architecturally educated audience.

RV: Again, I would rather not stress sources. While working we used ideas playfully, but such play can be serious; they were analogies that were helpful to me in coming to those forms. Source isn't really the right word. Such images open up my mind—they're an inspiration or metaphor maybe.

ED: I think the question is, how much of that should people know?

RV: They don't need to know any of that.

ED: Is it important that they sense that at all?

RV: No.

ED: Again, I would think that the person or the user is not reading what you're thinking.

RV: On all levels. When the user, or let's say a competent critic, looks at it and says, I'm going to look at this and analyze and see what I think, I don't think he should necessarily know about our metaphors or even have similar ones. When you look at that museum building, you do not have to make my kind of analogy; but when you look at a church, and it has a cross on it, that's a symbol. And the other thing is that the same person using it every day naturally is not expected to think in those terms. That involves another way of looking at it.

ED: People have said Oberlin doesn't look like a museum. Is it important to you that it doesn't look like a museum, and that it looks like a '40s gym so that there's a contrast?

RV: I find that critical critics often use your own criticism. It's an irony that your most severe critics get their ideas from something you said. So I say forget it, it isn't worth talking about. All I know is that there are many levels in there. There's the level of the metaphor and the gym: I would say that a user may not think of a '40 gym, but may still understand that our intention was not to do a building that has a pompous symbolism. I think that's all I would say on that. Of course, the building has lots of contradictory symbolism, a gym would never have had the decoration on it in 1940.

The functional requirements were very important; a museum needs a lot of wall space; they wanted natural light, and we didn't want skylights so that meant we had to put the windows high.

DSB: No skylights for reasons of leaking.

RV: For leaking and cost. So we decided the overhang made sense for keeping the direct rays of the sun out. So a lot of the design comes from functional needs.

ED: You probably did like the notion of the shed.

RV: Yes, we are interested in the shed as the symbol of shelter.

DSB: And for the classroom wing, it was the symbol of the loft.

ED: All those things make it look like it has the qualities of a gym—not that you looked at the gym first.

RV: Yes, exactly. We didn't say we wanted it to look like a gym. We said it's beginning to look like a gym on one level and there's nothing wrong with that. Accept the inevitable. In a way that's what we were doing with the connection problem. There is a gaucheness to that building which is inevitable, and we said all right, let this building be gauche so the new wing contrasts with the Florentine Villa, which is the least gauche of all architecture. Of course, a lot of good Italian town planning is full of gaucheries, so in a way we were somewhat fitting in with the setting that the original building might find itself in.

ED: One intriguing aspect of your work is the apparent confluence of two formerly discrete strains of architertural inquiry, formal analysis and study, and sociological research, referring to your article which

appeared in *Oppositions*, 'On Architectural Formalism and Social Concern.' Generally, how do you see these two strains coming together?

DSB: I would just question your terminology a little bit. Formal analysis and study, that's fine. The case I've made in the past is that this is designers' research. In that article I've tried to relate formal interest and social concern not sociological research. Sociological research might be a subset of social concern. But basically I was dealing with a dialectic, an internal one: with one individual's oscillation between aesthetic and moral values and with the fact that these might be in contradiction. The reason that this is a very important question for me lies in the history of architecture in the '50s and '60s in this country. In planning school, in the late '50s and early '60s, I was told every day, 'you are an architect you are therefore socially irresponsible.' But my feeling was that the mere fact that I had aesthetic interests did not mean that I was socially irresponsible. Nor did the fact that I was an architect mean that I was only intuitive and not analytical. So that's the dichotomy and the oscillation, and I think it's been a very challenging one for me. But my personal dialectic is not the only way of connecting those two fields. It was a way that was very present for me because of my experience in the '60s.

ED: A certain sociologist has suggested that you base your understanding of the behavioral preferences of people on an analysis of their physical environment without actually talking to them, that you ascribe meanings to forms based on observations and intuitions rather than on the reactions of the people for whom the meaning is intended. For instance, in the Renwick show 'Signs of Life,' you have identified the stylistic derivations of both façade and furnishings of the suburban house. Do you think your ascribed meanings and derivations are shared by the residents? Is it important that they are?

DSB: I can't tell. I know that we listened hard to people as they went through the Renwick show, and we asked for visitors' comments on cards, and got a lot. The people who worked there as guards and janitors were amazed and amused at what they saw. I gathered they didn't often see exhibitions that they could relate to. Now I don't think that they felt put down, but what they said was 'That's just like cousin George's house.' People from other cultures also said, 'I had mixed feelings seeing myself so well expressed, and I have no illusions but that that house is me.' So I think a lot of people had that feeling of 'I connect with this thing,' some enthusiastically, some with mixed feelings. We didn't go and ask people; we used our educated eyes, which by 1976 had been educated for ten years on the subject.

Now the question of asking people entails great difficulties. At the beginning of the Levittown study we did a survey of surveys and found basically no information. No one has done, or at least no one has published, this kind of survey. But I'm sure Levitt did the same kind we did. He travelled around and looked at houses. Then he did another kind of research—on the spot research. He tried things, and the things that worked he used more of and the things that didn't work, he dropped.

We didn't only look at houses. Most students did content analysis of mass media; that meant we looked at television primarily; we looked at housing backgrounds of ads, situation comedies, and soap operas. We also examined a broad range of journals, from architectural ones through *Popular Mechanics* with *House and Garden* in between; and we looked at movies. We said, 'This isn't people directly saying what they want, it's some other middle-class marketing group analyzing what people want. It's a different mesh from the ones architects usually use.' These meshes are important in understanding what people want. Now, interviewing people requires a great deal of skill and takes a lot of time. We did interview people and we got those interviews on video tape and showed them, but they didn't get published because they are hard to publish. We also used time-lapse photography to document how people used external space in public housing. So we used a great many research techniques. We didn't only look at housing; but that part was the most reproducible in the long run.

ED: So, to recapitulate, it does seem necessary to get some verbal input. I'm speaking more about projects where there may be a disjuncture between the client and the user. When you're designing the project you try to satisfy what you imagine to be the needs and wants of the people. And again, I'm getting back to the use of popular culture because it seems to be necessary to be successful and effective and represent people's needs to some extent, but then you turn it around on them so it's not really the popular culture that they know but it's an ironic popular culture.

DSB: But we usually do that for elitists. You see, you're mixing up levels. If you're working for the planning commission on aesthetic regulations, you cannot say, 'I'm going to abolish popular culture from South Street.' That's what elitists tend to do. You should say, 'Different people have different aesthetic tastes, different people have different aesthetic needs; I'm going to try to be as unconstricting as I can be in formulating aesthetic regulations.' That's not putting down the users. But if you say 'This population deserves nothing better than Levittown and by golly I'm going to put the symbols of Levittown all over their housing'—that I think would be a put-down, but we haven't done that. We've used some symbols that we've learned from popular housing for elitist groups, where we met and discussed with the people concerned. In actual fact, we have not really used popular symbolism much; we've tried to show that the sources of our symbolism are myriad, not singular. If you think of the houses that we've done, it's hard to see popular symbolism as being predominant.

ED: One thing that comes to mind is the TV antenna on the Guild House. It's a symbol of popular culture which, as I understand it, people resented because it didn't seem to be the right symbol to put on top of that house.

DSB: Well, architects resented it; I didn't hear anything about the people. But it was an implicit statement. We paid for the antenna ourselves, and when it fell to pieces they didn't put it back. But I didn't hear anything from people living in that building about 'Gee, I didn't like that,' I thought it was disrespectful.'

ED: At Harvard, through the legacy of Gropius and Sert, the precepts of the Modern movement developed as a teaching dogma. Now we see these precepts being challenged. Do you see this as a broader phenomenon in education and the profession? Is Modern architecture still a viable body of work and thought to be used as a reference for educational purposes? And if not, what do you see taking its place as a body of thought?

DSB: In both the profession and education—education meaning other schools as well as Harvard—the ideals of the Modern movement, up until the last few years, were still the point of departure for architectural theory and practice. Such ideals may have fallen by the wayside now at Harvard and at

many other schools. In the profession it's hard to say, but in education, now the principles of the Modern movement are in question.

I think that many schools of architecture are like haunted houses today. They don't know where to go. What they teach has been challenged. It was challenged by the social movements, by the social planners and their critique of urban renewal; and by us. This has caused a great deal of confusion at the theoretical level. I think we have found a way out of the confusion for ourselves, and some other practicing architects have found other ways that we don't necessarily agree with. But the schools are very lost, they don't know where to go.

Another movement in the schools is related to the recession and the aftermath of the 1960s. It's a kind of scared return to traditional skills. Now the interesting thing is that in returning to design, structures, drafting expertise, and other saleable skills, the schools haven't returned to Modern architecture. So they're coming back into studio but they don't know what to do when they get there. They know they should be learning basic skills, but what do basic skills constitute if there isn't a Modern Movement? How are you going to go back to basic skills if you haven't got a basic Modern architecture to teach? I don't know many schools that aren't facing this dilemma.

Is Modern architecture still a viable body of work and thought? I think like any other historical period, it has relevance. It is an historical period, the part of it that's most worth having. When we say we're still Modern architects, we're forging a new synthesis of what we mean by Modern architecture. We say we aren't Post-Modernists, because we think many of the ideals of Modern architecture are still pretty good but have to be seen in a new light. So yes it is a viable body of thought, but much else valuable has opened up. History has become available again. Formal vocabularies come into this too, because basically in the end what architects crave is some way of relating forms to need via some set of rules, even if the rules can be broken, extended, and enlarged. The Moderns had Cubism and industrial architecture to give them a formal language. We feel that we have evolved a formal language. I think a lot of people are very stuck because they don't have one. I think those are the boundaries of the haunted house of architectural education.

There are further problems. Because of the way liberal arts education is kept separate from architectural education, architects are not getting the most that they could from the interdisciplinary input of their liberal arts degrees. They don't know how to relate their undergraduate academic training to their architectural degree and therefore they work in a very closed system. Also, the bottom has dropped out of studio. As far as I can see there are very interesting things happening in many schools around course work; this is sometimes the place where the young professors are involved. So that you might find a school that has some interesting research, maybe some interesting course work and only studio remains a haunted house.

ED: Do you see other architects' ideas and work, in addition to your own, beginning to set up a distinct contrast with Modernism and suggesting possible outlines for a 'Post-Modern' movement?

RV: A rather obscure answer is: if you're in the fray you can't be too conscious of what you're doing. You can't stand back and see yourself very exactly. It's not for me to say, too explicitly, what I'm doing while I'm doing it. I think that's a danger with those who are advocating a rather literal Classicism and naming new movements bimonthly. Perhaps they have too much assurance at the wrong level. But I think if you're a pro who is in the fray and if you're not trying to work just by rules but are concentrating on the problem at hand, then you will only know ten years later what you have been doing at a general level. When a style is flourishing I imagine you aren't really aware of it. That probably wasn't true at the beginning of the Renaissance, or at other times of revolution in architecture, but in times of evolution perhaps you shouldn't be too self-conscious and should concentrate on quality rather than polemics.

DSB: I like what Charles Moore said: why do I have to be Post-something? Why can't I be Pre-something? I think that we feel that we've gone back to early Modernism, and then taken a point of departure from that. We were departing from the latter-day Moderns and heading back to the early Moderns, saying that their relevant revolution could be matched by another one, which didn't mean using silos and grain elevators today. But there are other things to inspire us, and having said that, we're therefore continuing a revolution by a new revolution. Do we think of ourselves as avant-garde? If we are avant-garde, Martin Pawley said, the avant-garde is leading from the rear; and the thing is full of paradoxes, because to be in the rear is to be avant-garde today, so he was right in a sense. We also said rears lie in the eye of the beholder.

ED: Well, I can see the avant-garde being to the rear, but do you think there is a place for the avant-garde today in architecture and do you see yourselves as avant-garde?

RV: Well, as Denise just said everything is all mixed up. Who is avant-garde and who isn't? I hear in Washington that our pylons for the Western Plaza of Pennsylvania Avenue are pompous—traditional and Classical; on the other hand, others say they are vulgar—too Pop; they are like billboards. Of course, they can be both at the same time in their imagery and associations. Civic art should be that way, perhaps. Art historians found it convenient to look at the early development of Modern art in terms of polarities: the Impressionists and the Pre-Rephaelites were the avant-garde fighting the terrible academies. The good guys were those who defied conventions. That way of looking at things worked then. I wonder if it does now. Outrageous, shocking artists today tend to do boring or irrelevant work, and are perhaps *our* academicians. That's an oversimplified thesis but not far-fetched. That was a period when progress and technology went together. We're in a period when what's progress is not so obvious. So, I can't speculate on whether we are avant-garde or not. We are what we are. And whether that's avant-garde, I don't know, I don't care particularly, and it's not for me to say. We're responding to situations as artists—as thinking artists. I'm suspicious of those who are naming their own movements today—we are the Whites; we are the Grays; we are the new Traditionalists; we are the Radical Eclectics. Some of these people are the same people several months later. It makes it easier for journalists to write about you.

Exhibition Review

Seven Chicago Architects and Immanent Domains (Boston)

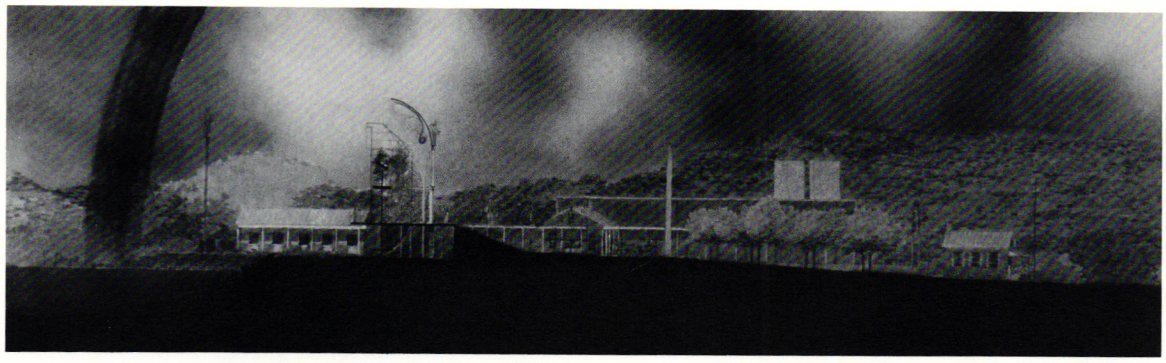
Whenever an accustomed body of thought is thrown into controversy, mechanisms for presenting new thinking occur as quickly as the ideas themselves. The recent flood of architectural exhibits, forums, and media exposure occurring in this country have occurred at a pace with the development of underlying theoretical arguments. Architecture has become imbued with a new vitality in the public's eye, both because the proponents of the various Post-Modernisms produce particularly imageable work, and because they have invested a great deal of energy in orchestrating the display of that work.

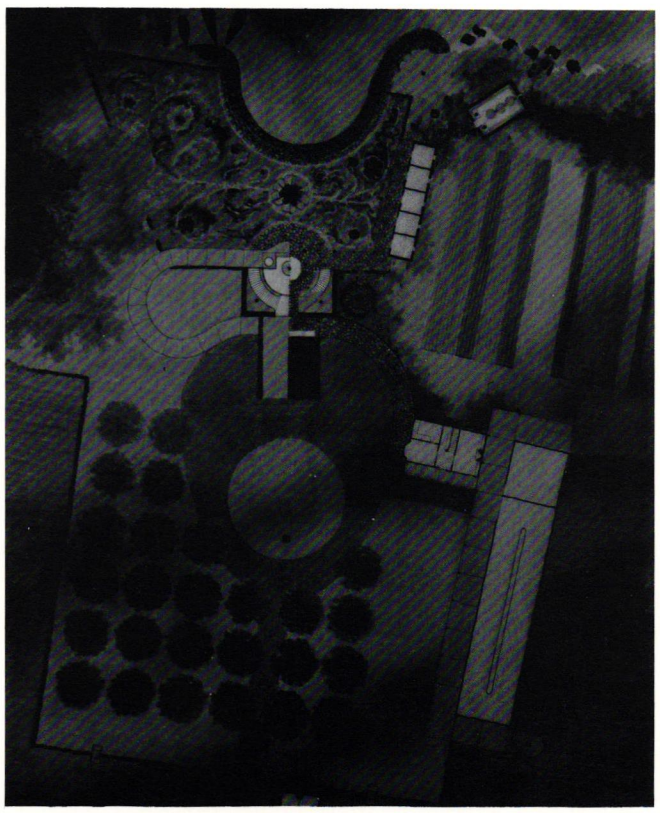
Both of the exhibitions documented here are collections of idealized domiciles, for which programs and specific sites take on limited importance, and emphasis is placed on the revelation of experimentation and finesse in architectural design. The ideal villa theme has been a traditional vehicle, from Boullée to Le Corbusier, for thematic and intellectual explanations of architectural principles. It allows the designer to stretch his or her capacity for innovation and expression without concurrent pragmatic restrictions from client and circumstance.

The two exhibitions which follow have served to publicize and identify various architects who are offering alternatives to mainstream Modern Architecture. The presentation of recent architectural thinking in the format of public exhibitions exposes new trends both within the profession and to the public at large. Group identities, such as the New York Five and the Chicago Seven, have been formed in the public's mind as a result of energetic self-promotion by the architects themselves. As well, the increased concern for projecting an architectural statement (which may or may not occur in the form of a commissioned project) to a wide audience has occurred hand in hand with the growing attention paid to the style and quality of architectural presentations. Drawings and concurrent verbal explanations have become imbued with the same decorative, poetic, or imageable language which characterizes the designs themselves.

It is very difficult to arrive at a simple explanation which describes all of the work that has been shown. In the case of the Chicago show, we might find revealed a common urge to rebel against a Modern, in this case Miesian, dogma that has stood over that city like a sober judge for so long; yet the products of this reaction are widely divergent in final emphasis and form. In the Boston show, variety alone appears as the common description for the designs included; solar heating, user input, and formalism surface in the works presented. Not all of the designs exhibited land squarely within the Modern/Post-Modern debate; neither are all revolutionary or visionary in the message promoted.

Like Post-Modernism itself, the following projects when grouped together reveal the drive behind recent theoretical changes without exposing a parallel unified direction. Yet a dialetic emerges which on the one hand argues for the integration of popular imagery, vernacular, contextual and regional sources—a kind of psychological and material inclusivism—and on the other hand demands a more abstract refinement and intellectual control which will produce a more academically-informed architectural language. The result for both may be a place-making for architectural endeavors, both in the literal sense of the production of designs which are profoundly stable and culturally referential, and in the figurative sense of re-establishing an arena for architectural discussion that is respected by and which attracts society at large.







Thomas Hall Beeby
The House of Virgil
Built in Anticipation of
The Return of the Golden Age

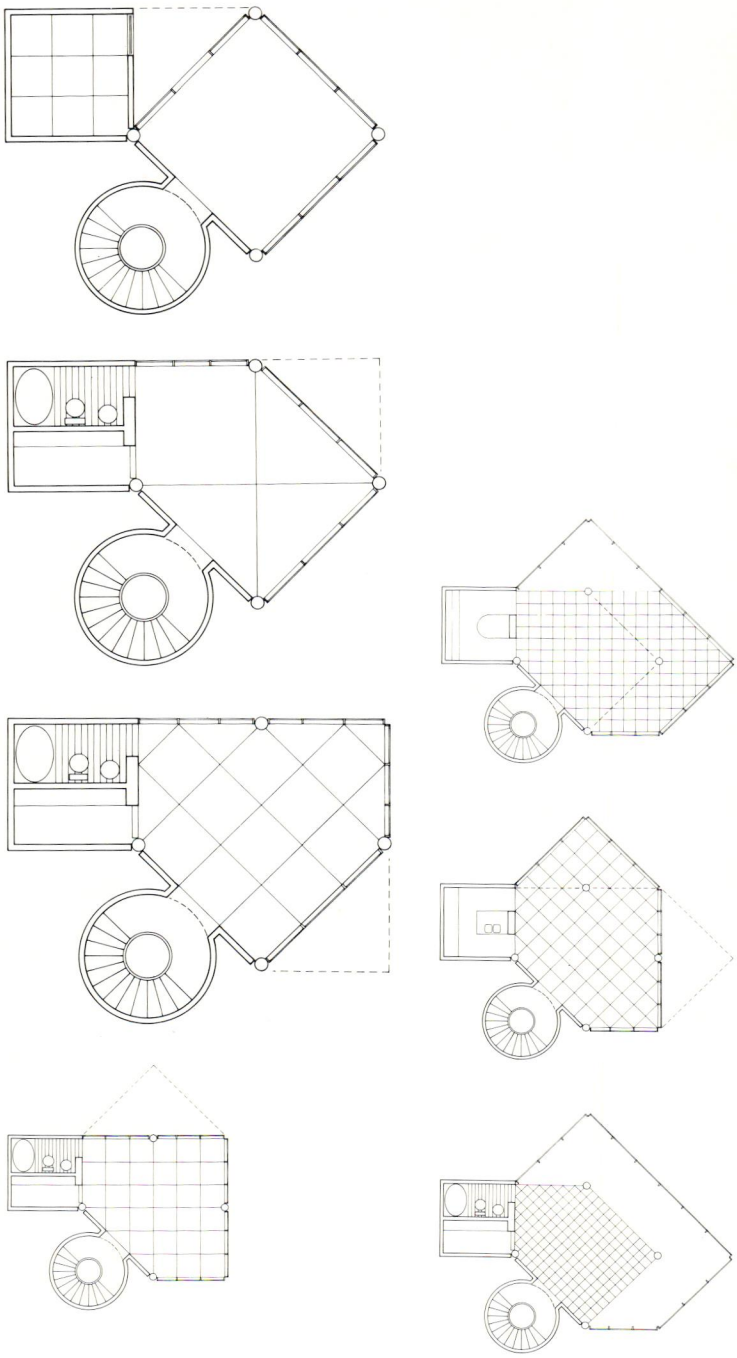
Though the great song return no more
There's keen delight in what we have:
The rattle of pebbles on the shore
Under the receding wave.

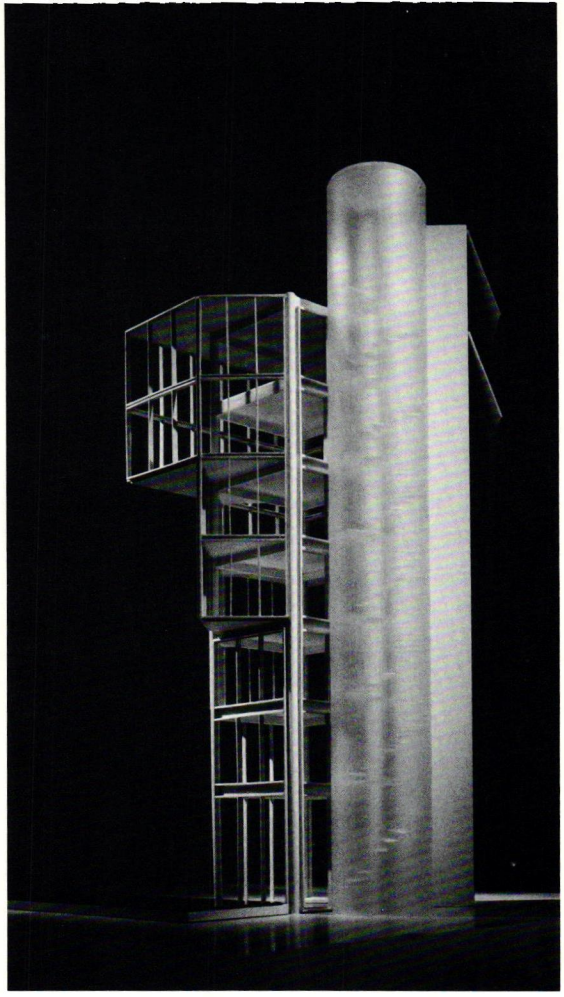
Yeats, *The Nineteenth Century and After*

The house is built within the ruins of an abandoned Midwestern farm. The almost classical parts are reassembled into a sanctuary of civilization employing the imagery of Rome inherited from Palladio, Jefferson and Adler. The forms of this tradition deal with pastoral themes leading to Arcady and beyond, to the gods and goddesses of the earth, water, air and fire. The language of classical architecture offers images pregnant with symbolic meaning. It is a visual and literary touch through the means of abstraction. The central half-domed pavilion rises from the ruins of the barn. It is a terrestrial being, vertical, centralized, compact. A central steel column passes on axis through the house, the half-dome is cut away to allow clear passage from heaven to earth. Steel loggias, ramps, and walkways extend to connect out-buildings. The entrance elevation is closed and formidable with a long ceremonial path past the relocated schoolhouse, through an old cemetery gate, under an orchard and around an obelisk before arriving at the entry ramp. In contrast, the rear elevation is open to the garden, the heart of the house. At night the central light guides visitors up the drive like a guardian eye and bathes the entire house and garden area with soft reflected light. Reception is at the level of the conservatory which is flanked by two finch cages overlooking the garden. A steep serpentine stair winds around the central column from the conservatory up to the platform of daydreams. Generous symmetrical stairs descend to the garden through the darkness of the grotto. Water drops around the dining area from the walls of the conservatory above. The formal garden is defined by the stone walls of the old livestock enclosure. Water is channeled from the grotto throughout the garden, finally spilling over stone steps into the great pond, the mirror of heaven. In the ruin of the silo, is the chamber of fire. The smoke rises through the opening at the top forming the visible breath of the house. Facing the garden in the converted stable, each stall is an austere sleeping cell. The spring house is converted into a glass-roofed bath with three pools offering hot, cold or tempered water. The old farmhouse is the home of the caretaker, and although this is a working farm, it is built for the purposes of enchantment.

Look at the world, rocked by the weight of its overhanging dome; look at the lands, the far-flung seas and the unfathomable sky. See how the whole creation rejoices in the age that is to be!

Virgil, *The Golden Age Returns*





Laurence Booth
The Family Tower

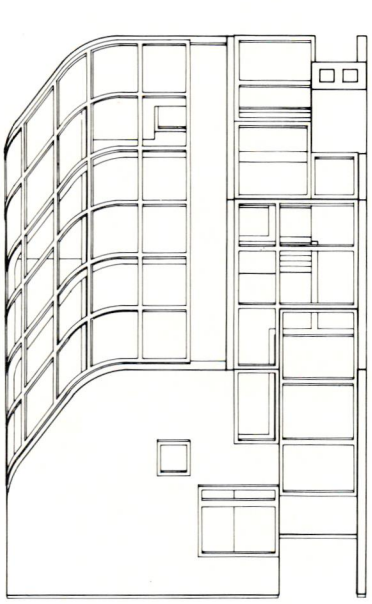
Architecture occurs when rational technology and construction express sentiment.

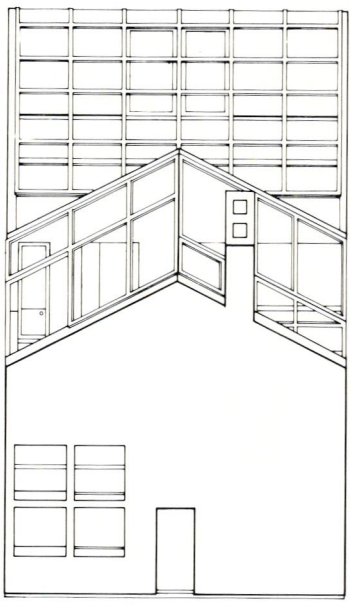
Many buildings are rationally constructed without sentiment. Many buildings express sentiment without rational technology and construction. Architecture of the past, such as Roman and Greek, used technology and construction to express sentiment. We are challenged to renew this delicate balance with architecture that employs our technological capacities expressing a sentiment that illuminates our experience.

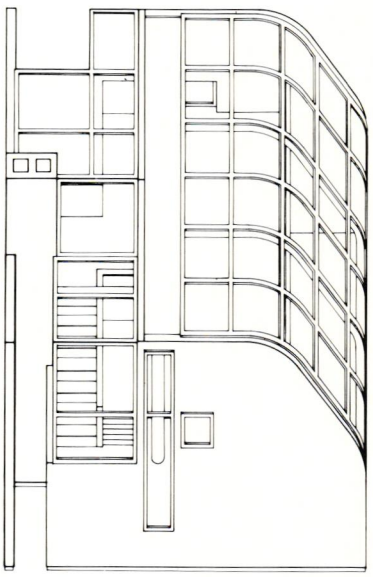
The architecture of the tall building that grew in Chicago from a new technology expresses more than any other form the sentiments of the 20th Century. History will label us the age of 'skyscrapers' as surely as the Egyptians are the pyramid builders. The tall building is the symbol of our optimism, our power, our technical advancements, our greed, our corporate organizations, our speed, our complexity, our commercial endeavor. For good or for else our tall buildings circle the earth having caught the imagination and desires of people regardless of political or social situations. The tall building is what we are and will stand as our 20th Century testament.

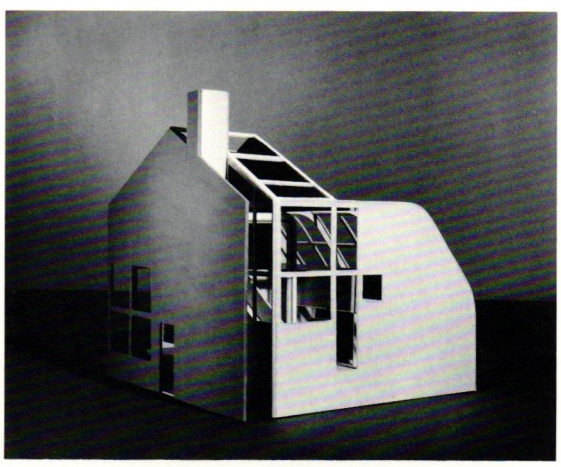
As the 21st Century approaches, our values are beginning to change as we question with wisdom the past with its imperial corporate optimism and energetic brave new technologies. We are beginning to look forward to a time when that symbol of power—the tall building—will stand mute. Before we go forward it is only fitting that the catalog of tall buildings be completed with the family tower. For this tower hopefully belongs to that future when the family will indeed tower as our highest value.

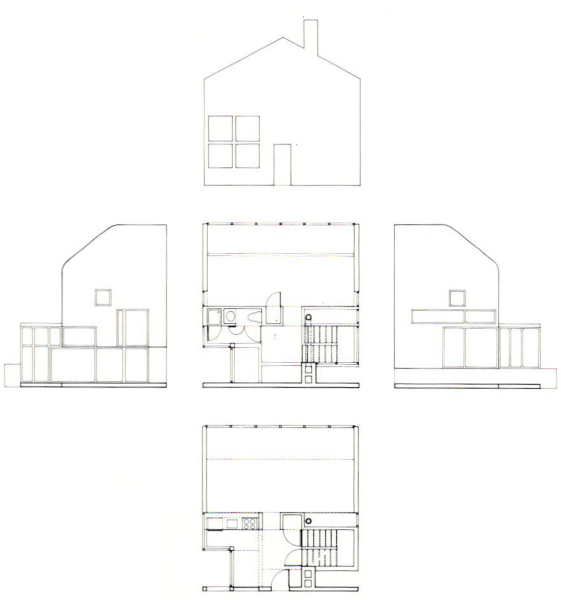
Stuart E Cohen
Kindergarten Chats











Now what is this? What building I mean?

No building, but the design for a house to be called Kindergarten Chats.

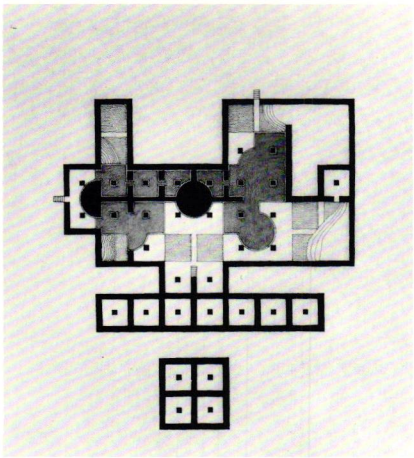
From the front it looks like a child's drawing of a house.

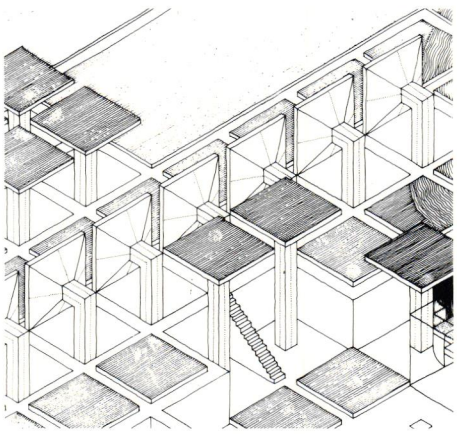
Precisely. You look at it and you know that it's a house.

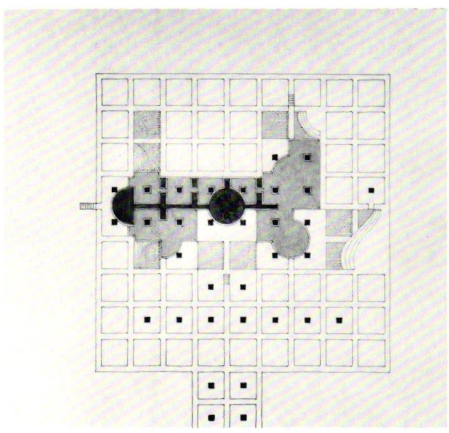
You say that as if you believe that cultural forces rather than the solution of problems determine a building's form.

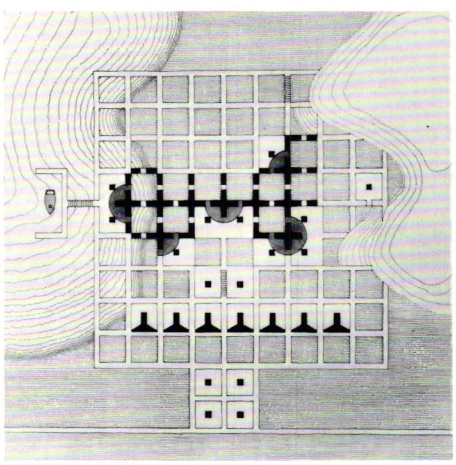
How we understand form in both a physical and a cultural sense determines the shape of what we build. The cultural meaning given to a specific form is a basis for architectural understanding. Walls, the vertical surfaces that we see, not their arrangement in space, are the primary carriers of architectural meaning. The front wall of this house is a transposition – the façade becomes cultural image. The wall is a mask, a face presented to the world, a cartoon intended to communicate house. It satisfies the need to understand what we see as well as the psychological need to see things that we understand. The disjunctive back is one of any number of possible backs. Metaphorically 'open' and accommodating, a private form behind a public façade, it might well satisfy the physical and psychological needs of an endless variety of different people. Here it is meant to be primary and simple. A single glass-roofed space that opens visually to the sky. It is an arbor of metal and glass cut off like a sectioned extrusion by side walls and meant for the ever-diminishing suburban lot. The house is intended as unique, not to be literally repeated again and again as an object but as an idea about making architecture.

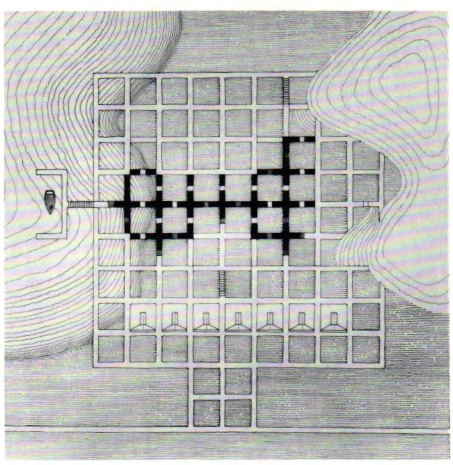
James Ingo Freed
House in Landscape



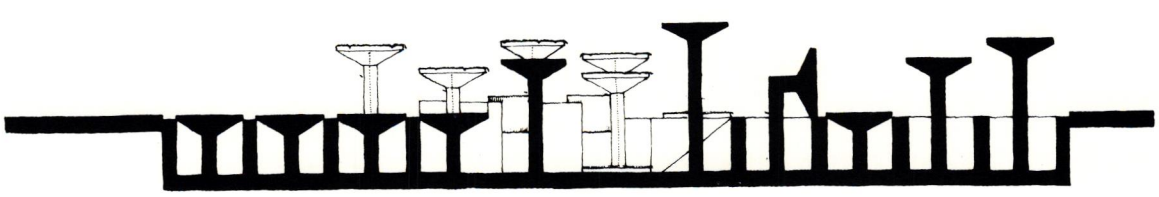




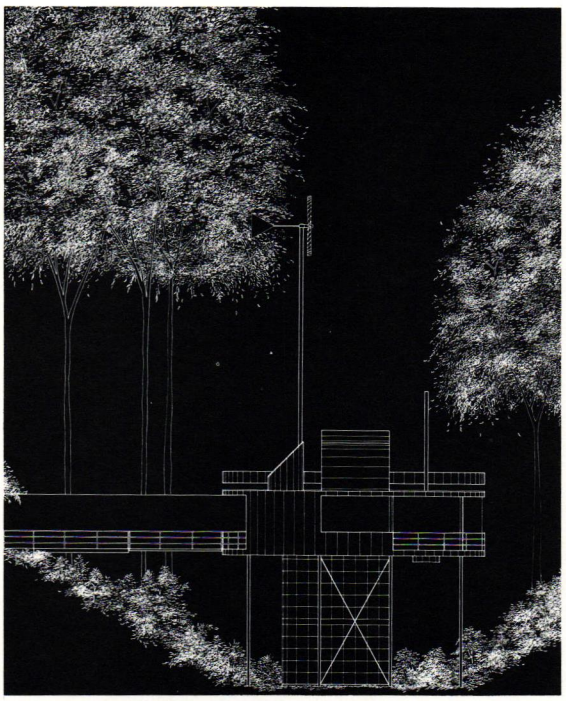


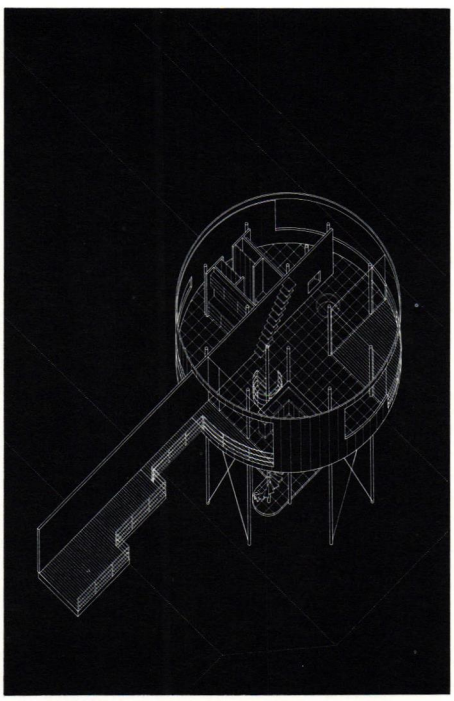


Architecture dominates earth and water by imposing the idea of order. Images of artifacts, the graffiti of idea, reside in memory. Nature is archaic and has become artificial. Building is everywhere – architecture is every thing. The industrial cavity supports impossible arcadia. The sunny dream gridded by reason becomes equally sunny nightmare. In the mind Paestum stands against the sea and the mountains – one column remains in memory. The recollection of axiality and the processional – the hierarchic power of approaching and passing through the Gate to the single Column retains its ability to move. The House of Chronos has been destroyed and the earth living Giants are no more. The landscape column is broken.



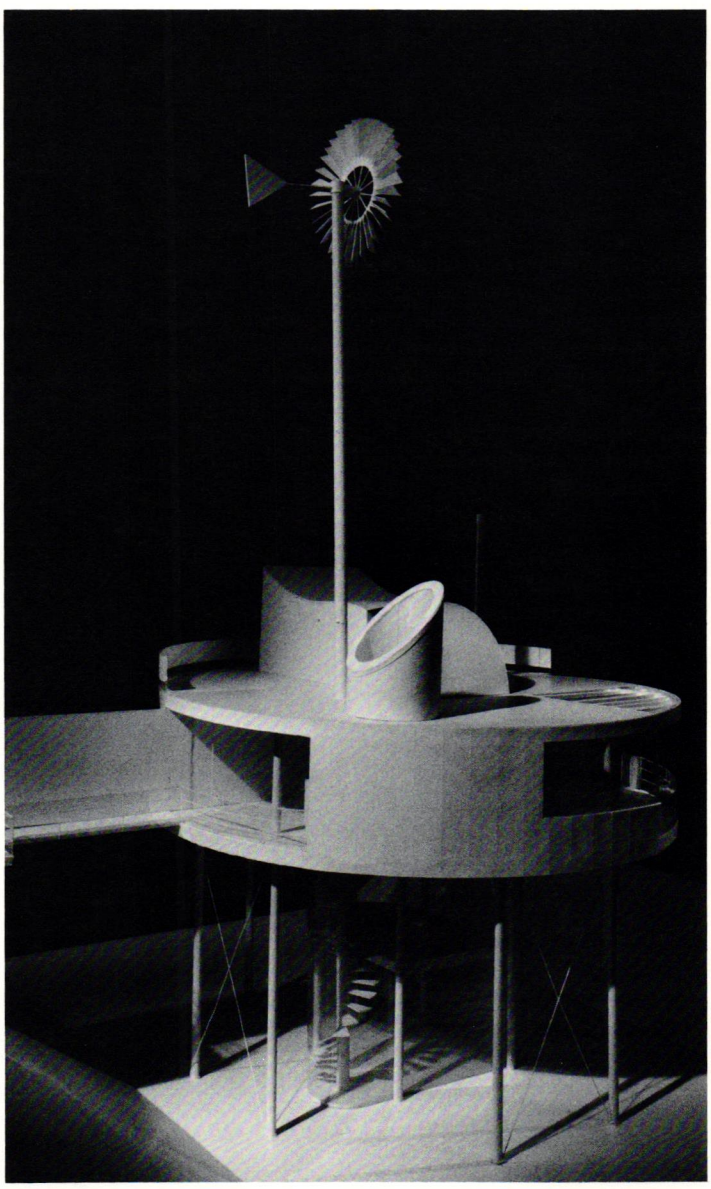
James L Nagle
The Sun Dial House



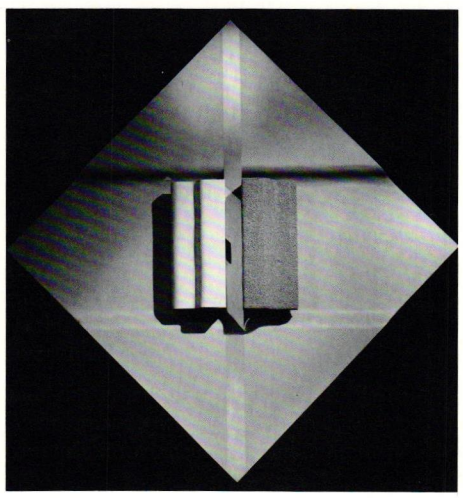


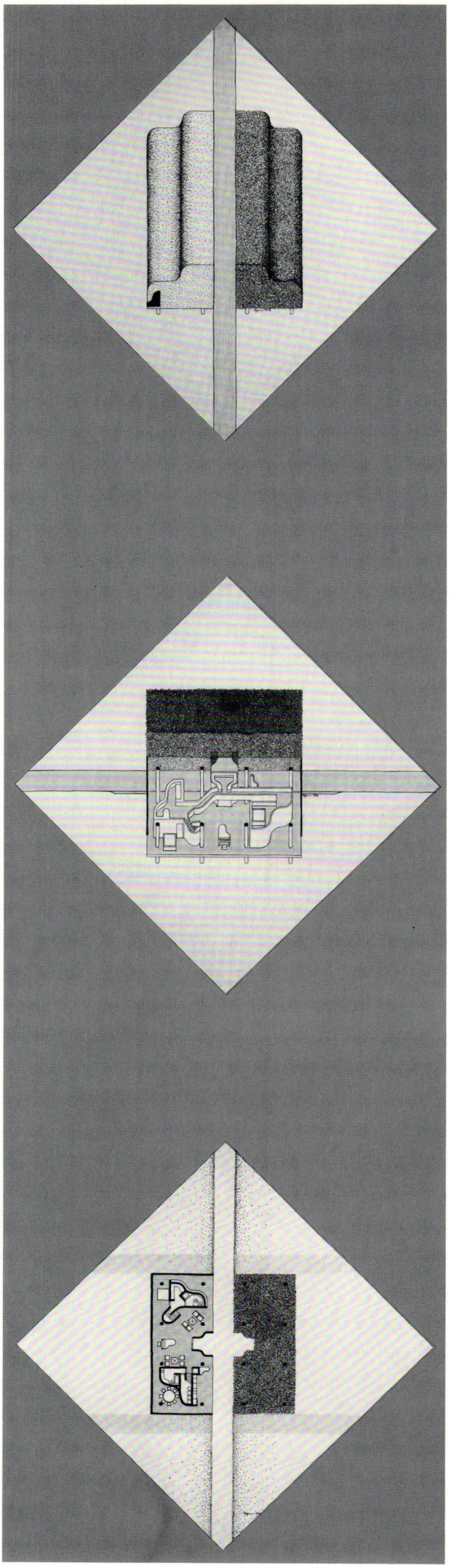
'The subjective is the arbitrary, the unconscious, the relatively indeterminate, which can be sublimated through the conscious mind to relative determinateness. To this end, the subjective must be ordered by the conscious mind so that, in its relative determination, style is achieved.' (J J P Oud 'Art & Machine,' *De Stijl*, Volume I, Number 3/4, 1917).

The neo-plastic artist believed that style would be achieved when the problem of architecture was solved afresh. This is difficult at best. I believe that architecture is developed from the elements of building—function, economy, mass, plane, time, space, light, color, material, structure, etc. I also believe that building must be symbolic and personal. I do not believe that architecture need be formless as did the neo-plastic artists. It is usually built in context. But when it is not, it should create a harmonic whole and it is best when it achieves a maximum plastic expression while solving the practical requirements. I would intend to build the Sun Dial House.



Stanley Tigerman
The Little House in the Clouds





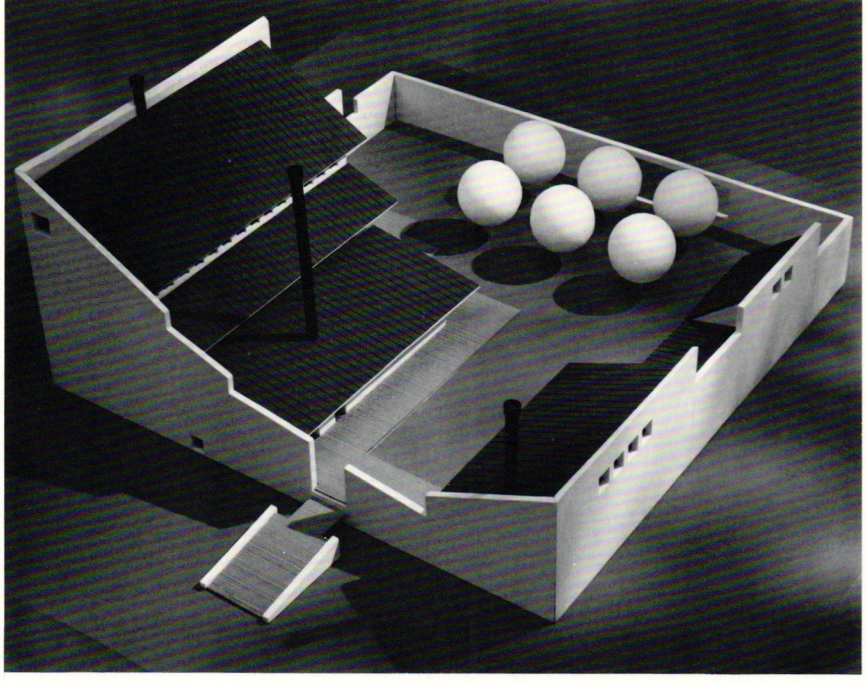
This is the story of the primeval house standing under the stars. The house is ordered by sacred pillars with Corinthian capitals supporting a celestial soffit of clouds suggesting paradise as *trompe-l'oeil*.

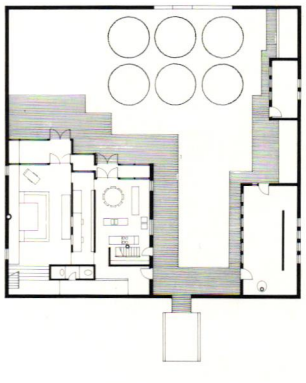
We look back once more to the beginning of man in opposition to nature. Primal man is again viewed in the mirror image of himself as voyeur trapped in history.

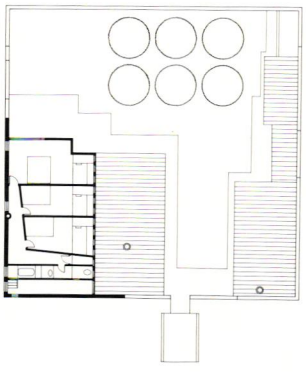
The land inflects as if depressed by the weight of the foreign objects placed upon it. The downward deformation embraces both the house and the trees which are halved with scalpel-like precision. The one-half house returns to nature while its other half becomes man's vestigial home.

Both the house on *pilotis* and its topiary mirror image suggest a ritualistic dance. The earth recedes, removing itself from what might become a struggle or an embrace.

Far into the future as sentinels they stand and they watch and they wait.

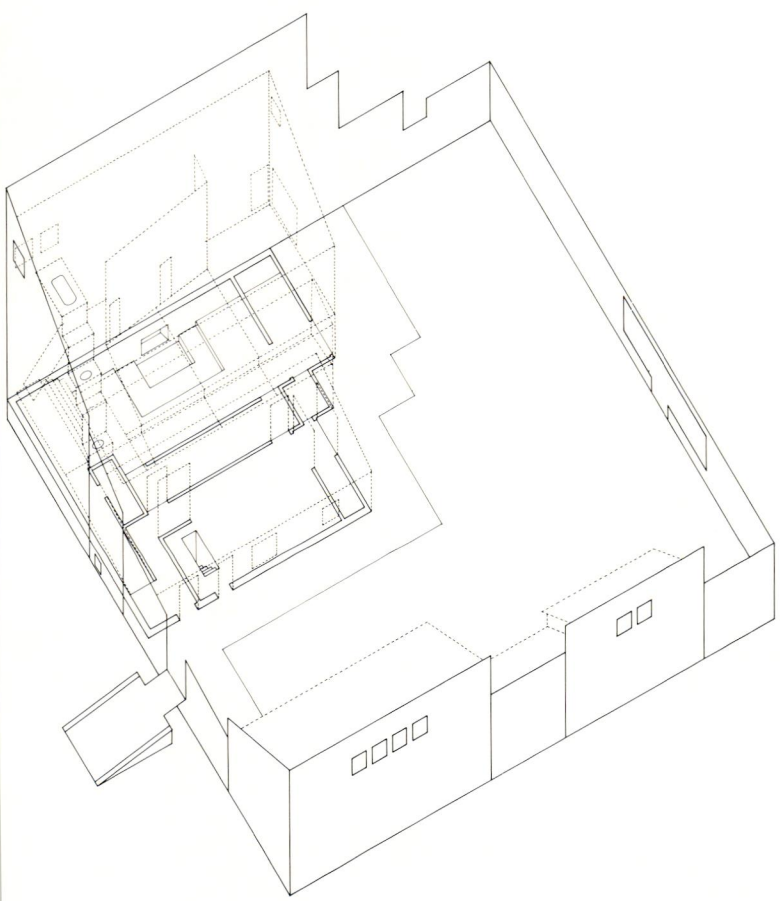




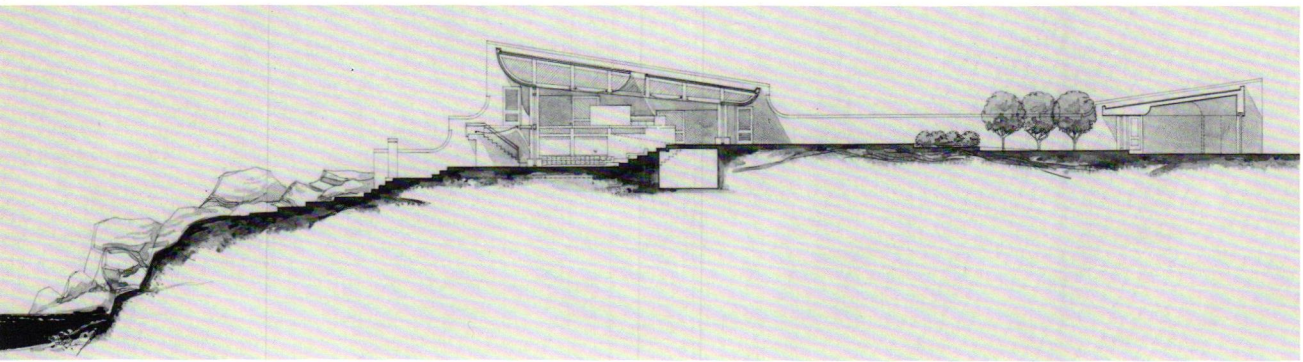


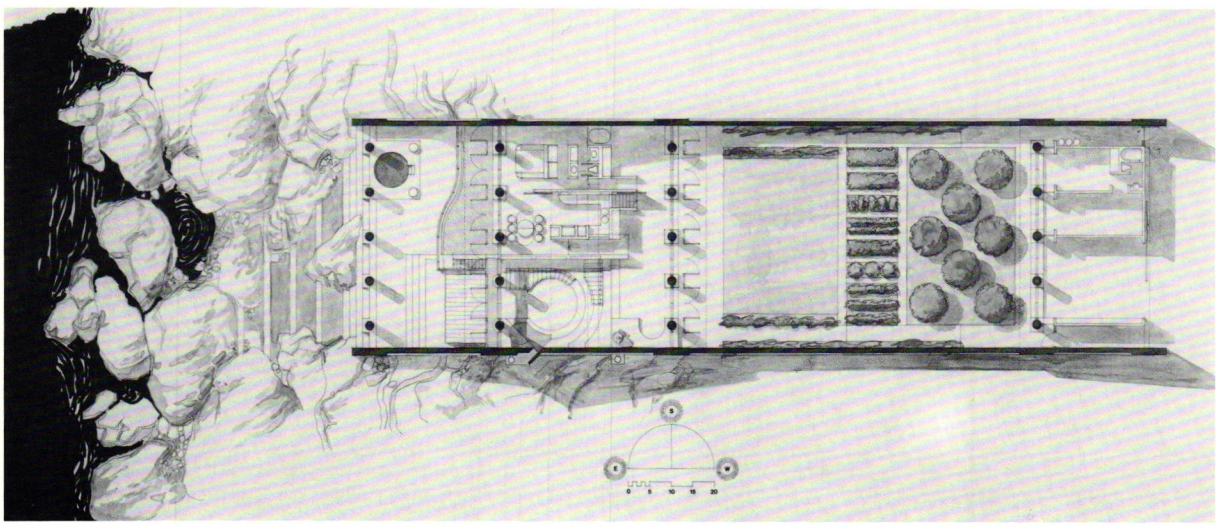
Ben Weese
A House

The house I designed is one I could live in. It represents my attitude toward the world. Its idea springs from the traditional pattern of living, the East European *Hof* or enclosed barnyard. There is a protective wall, the organizer, behind which the family lives. There is cottage industry, animal shelter, and a kitchen garden. It means to be self-contained or self-sufficient. The outside wall might also represent broken, historically earlier architectural fragments, like the Roman wall, behind which the lean-tos of post-Roman settlement found protection. Rural France too has fragmentary structures that represent centuries of additive changes by successive inhabitants. A house as a 'ruin' suggests the cycle of life and death and the human condition. Given the above there is no highly developed formal sense of geometry in the plan but it is put together more by feel. The spaces are comfortable and sheltering. The sun and wind, snow and rain have been considered. The building was supposed to blend or disappear or be contextural. I knew it wouldn't disappear but it should. It should try to find something timeless. It should not pamper the inhabitant with false visions of himself. But if we have fewer churches and public gathering places now it should be the church and a gathering place. Whatever fails or is lacking it should provide. Bodily functions of relieving, ablutions, and bathing are placed on different ascendant ritual levels, something to strive for! Cooking and eating are communal experiences, and the process should show. It could be heated by wood stoves—still the most efficient use of solar energy. Eating, bathing, gathering, gardening, resting should be more of a revelatory thing. But the American home today is a monstrous consumer trap of the moment, a sedative, one gigantic mortgaged appliance; even the radical chic architecture. There are too many things. Let's have less clutter, fewer mechanical hums and buzzes, nothing that shines or glitters, a room with one straight chair in it, and the automobile should never be a part of the house because it has already put meaningless space between people. If this house seems like a romantic notion now, maybe we should wait another ten years. By then it could possibly serve as a commune, a factory or a barn.



Immanent Domains





Thomas Amsler
The Living House

The Site . . . A narrow lot with ocean frontage on a rocky and wind swept rise, amidst an assortment of home owner's dreams, from the late 19th century porched mansions to the split leveled ranch variety and beyond.

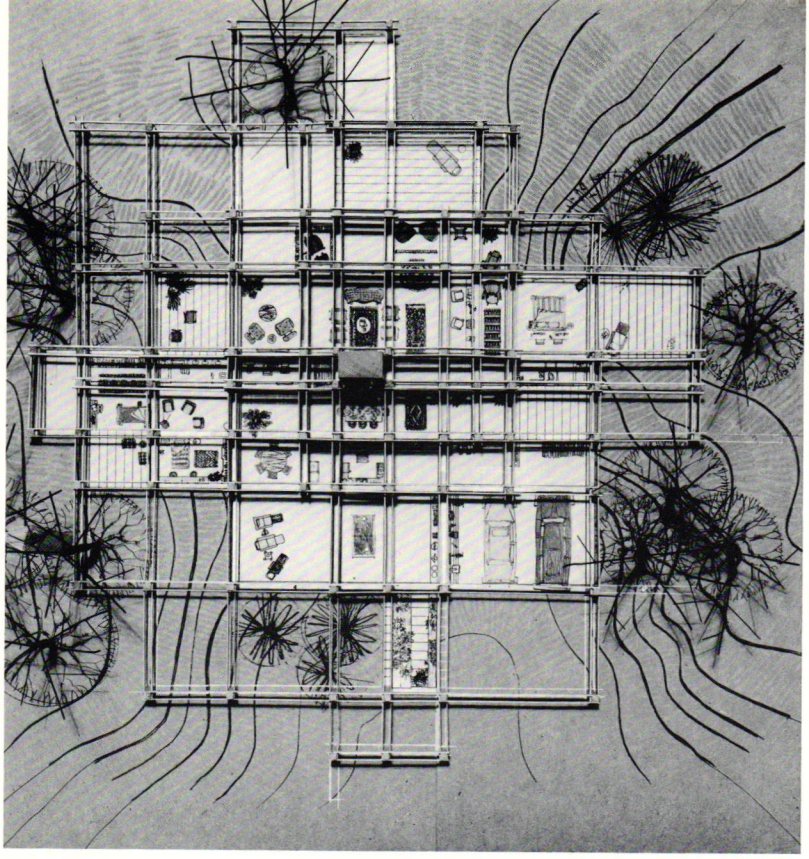
The House . . .

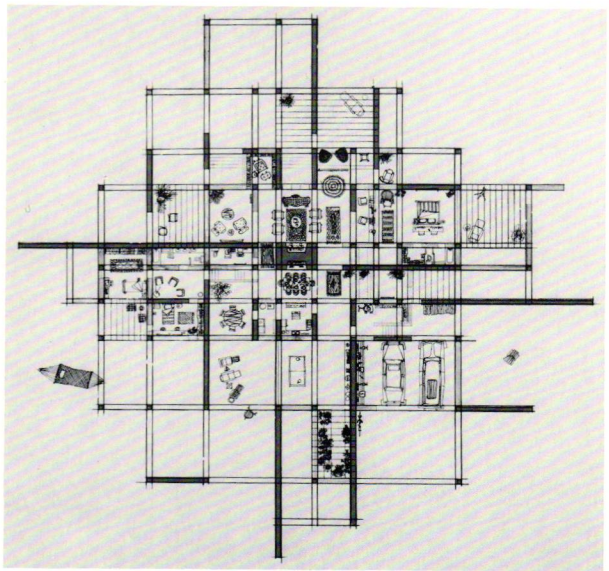
No contribution to architectural theory and history, no technical innovation, but a place for a family's private life.

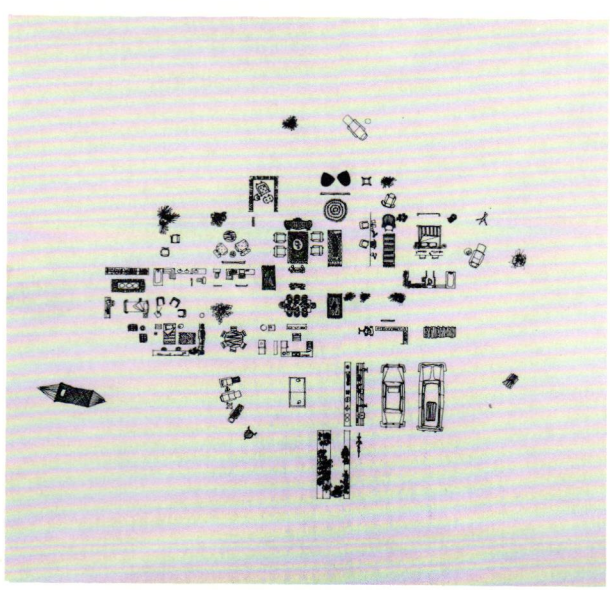
Neighboring houses acknowledged but respectfully neglected. Nature and its forces ever present. A house for a family with children; older persons sharing shelter and experiences with younger persons. Waking up to the rising sun over the ocean, feeling the salty breeze; smelling the flowers; working up a sweat in the garden, playing, plunging into the ice cold water, soaking up the sun, stretched out on the warm ledge, sleeping, making love, eating, watching the sun set beyond the orchard.

House and yards between two walls, stretching from sunrise to sunset, defining the family's place. Built with common materials, timeless, undated shelter, a minimum of furnishings.

Water, wind, sun, earth, plants, animals and the family. Sunrise, sunset . . . order of time, space, life.







Louis Bakanowsky
The House as a Place-Field

Space is the medium through which we experience the physical world.
Space is *Existential–Existence* is *Spatial.*
Places are used *spaces.*
The essence of architecture is *place-making.*

This house is a diagram. It is a network of spaces created within the field of the built-system, designed to accommodate the things accumulated and treasured by people to personalize their environment. Places are created within the relational structure of the ordinary elements with which we build. These elements form patterns of relations, and the collective patterns form an overall environmental field of spaces, providing the physical context for the experience of *place.*

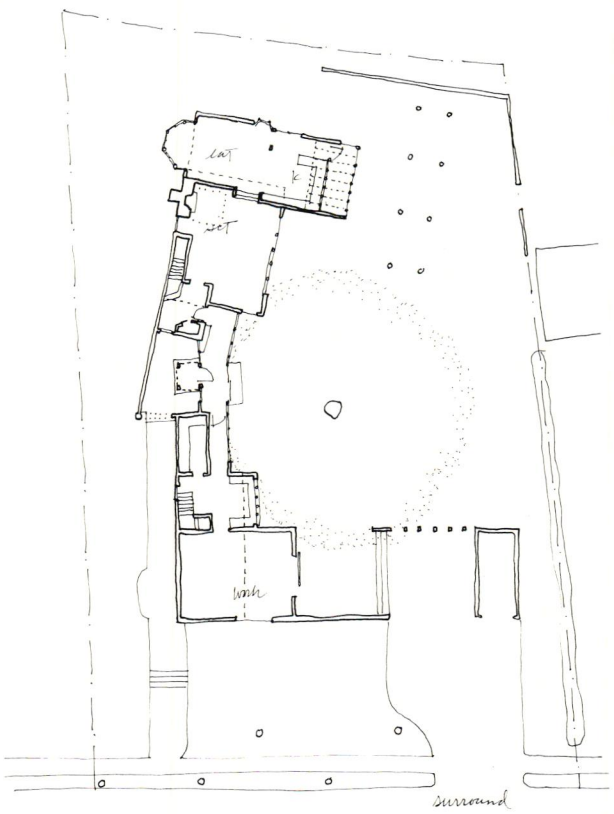
The attention here is shifted from 'object' with the surface and outer configuration to the inner anatomy of the experience 'field,' the inner structure of spaces that yields closed and open places, large and small places, light and dark places, alone and together places. These collectively make up the genuine Place-Field which is the home.

The image is one of complex tapestry of space and light. It is integral with its place on the land and continuous with space–all our space.

A house is a microcosm.
A house is real, tangible, palpable.
A house is unreal, illusive, mystical.
A house lives as we live–we shape each other.
A house is someplace, my place, your place, our place.
A house contains things, my things, your things, our things.
A house mediates between the outer most and our inner-most worlds.
A house is a center.
A house has a center, a hearth, a heart.
A house is a *home.* A home is a *place*–a place where the *spirit dwells.*
A house is a *dwelling place.*


surround


merge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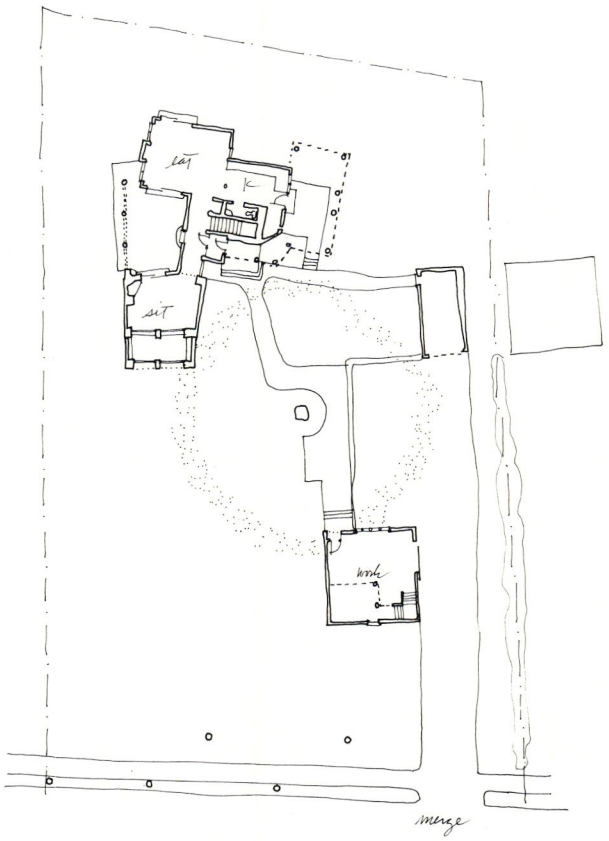
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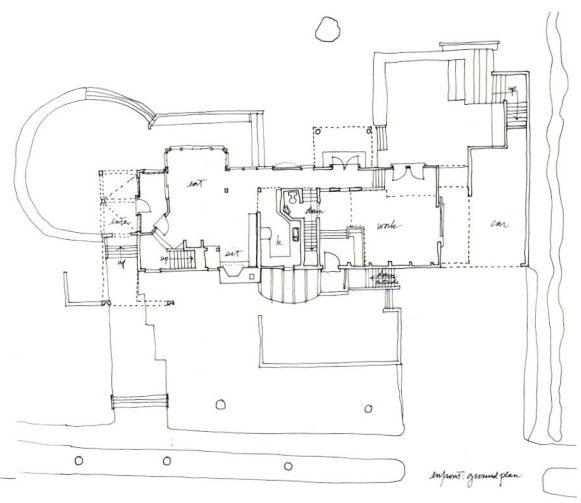
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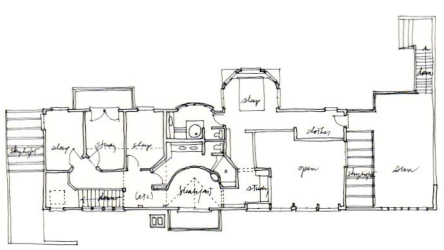
sleep
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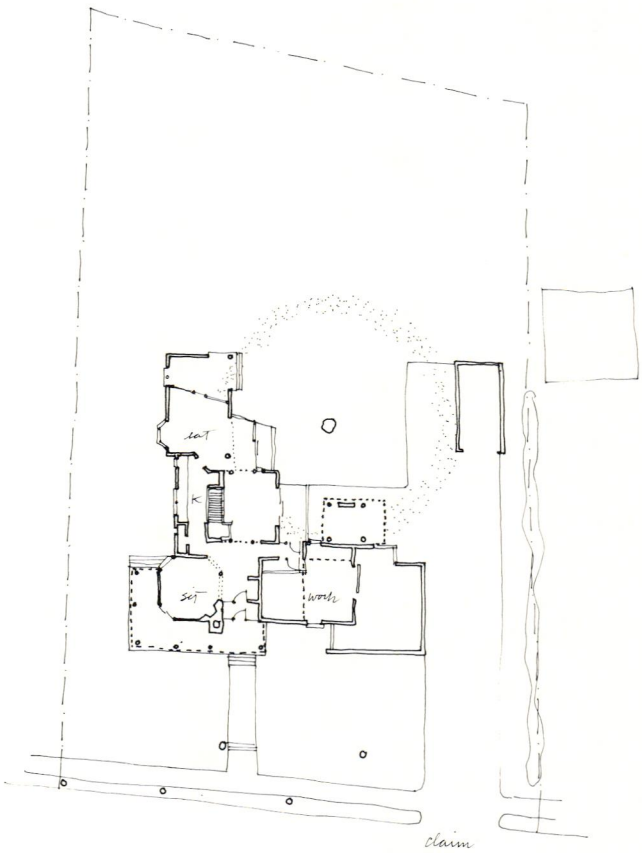
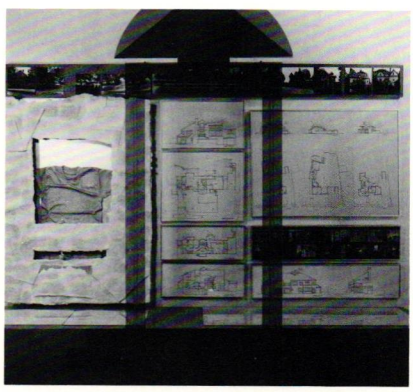
Alice Atkinson Lyndon
Donlyn Lyndon
Placeworks 4







Houses are not boxes, temples or ships. They are places to build our lives in and amongst.

Only when something's wrong do they only house.
Only when something's wrong are they empty of work.
Only when something's wrong do they float free of context.

Boxes, temples and ships make compost for growing houses, but windows are the seeds. Windows are what we see through (design with): windows to sit in, eat by, work under, to look through, to measure by, to open and to close.

Windows bring selected bits of the outside in – and on the building's face they trace the life within. Windows are surrogate actors on a communal stage.

Houses are scenes in an existing place-play. They layer time and memory. Houses set limits on and provide opportunities for our daily acts. They collect the sun, shed the rain, choreograph our movements and shelter the detritus of changing work-lives.

Places to live in are not puzzles that fit only one way.

In *The Place of Houses* there are four ways to fit houses to the land: to *claim* dominion over it, to *surround* a piece of it, to *merge* with it or to *enfront* its public face.

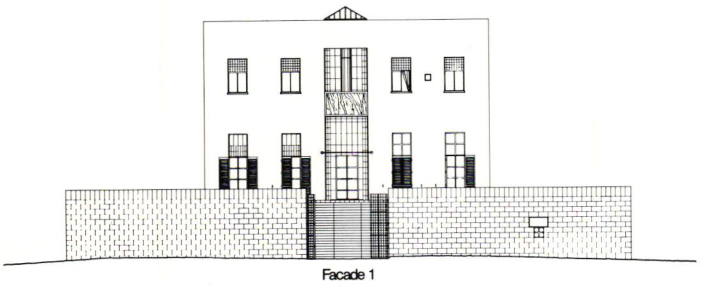
There are also four ways to arrange the major spaces of a house: rooms around a core, rooms linked, rooms bunched or rooms enfronting special features outside.

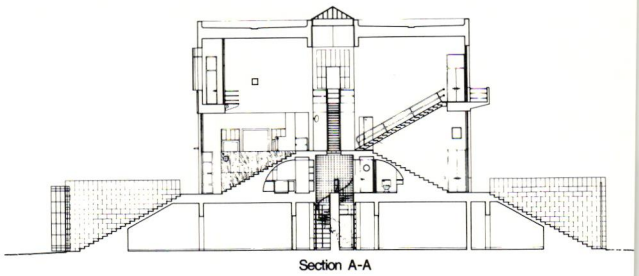
On this real site we have illustrated how we might build our (fictitious) lives in four combinations.

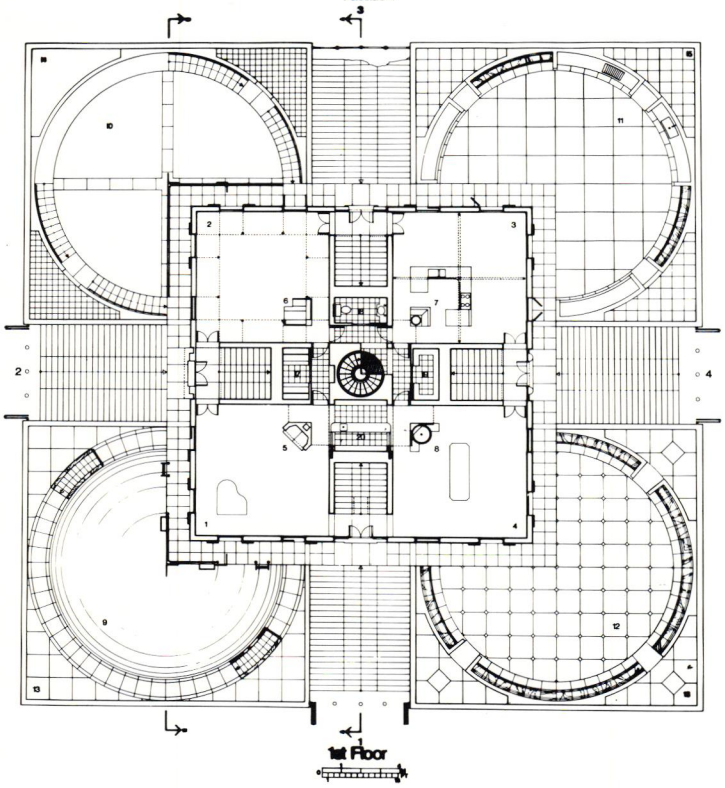
They would each be person-centered, both clear and messy; they would each love the sun, they would each live with the copper beech tree. They would each belong both to us and to Newton.

Houses don't need to be alike.

Country House
Rodolfo Machado







First Floor Plan

Rooms
1 Living Room
2 Library
3 Kitchen
4 Dining Room

Attributes
5 Fireplace
6 Lectern
7 Oven
8 Cooling Fountain
9 Swimming Pool
10 Cloister
11 Patio
12 Terrace
13 Solarium
14 Grotto
15 Herb Garden
16 Pavillion

The Rest
17 Closet
18 Toilette
19 Cellar
20 Bar

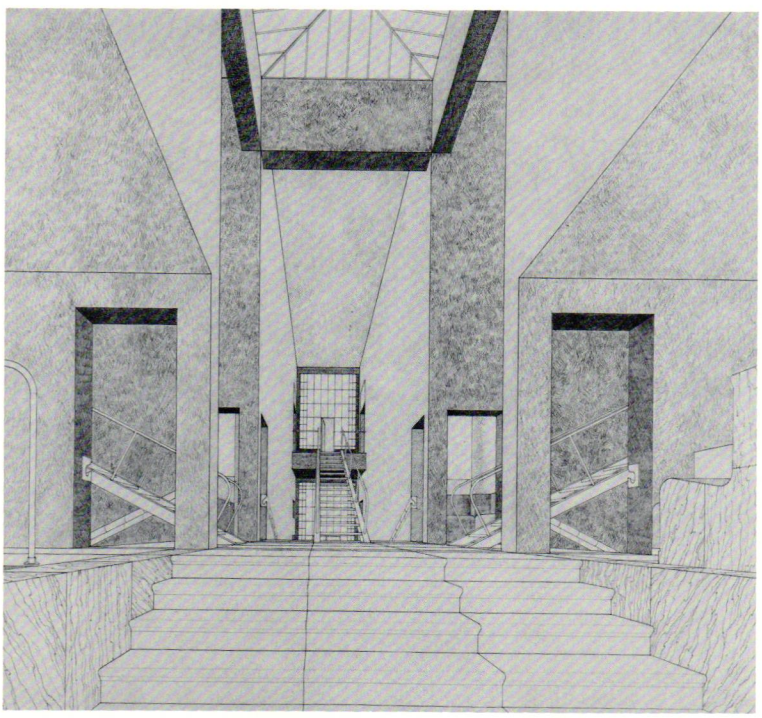
The design of this house is based upon an existing building. The building in question, a manneristic piece of rigorous and self-conscious beauty, posseses all the conditions for becoming an architectural type. It is precisely this latent power, plus the house's impeccable architectonic calligraphy, among others things, which prompted me to select the edifice, to transcribe it and to critically transform it having in mind its insertion in a cultural context – the Piedmont region of Virginia – so different from the one of its birth – northern Italy. In a similar fashion this type of organization could have been clothed with the air, painted with the tones, rendered with or actualized through the technical means of so many other various contexts since it is, as type, strong and potentially prolific.

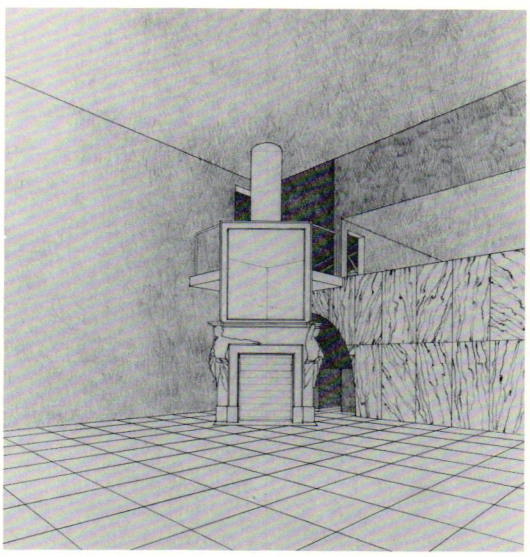
Before and during the design of Country House two themes (or, literally, two pre-texts) have been everpresent in my mind. They could be seen as the latest manifestation of a long preoccupation with the question of meaning in architecture and they have, in turn, significance both personally and in relation to larger issues in architecture.

At a personal level (the importance of whose role in design I would wish to assert, perhaps unnecessarily, since it is today such a well known fact) this work is strongly linked to my history as designer, to a personal episode: in 1963 I extensively studied Villa Emo Capodilista, called Montecchia. Built at Selvazzano, in the proximity of Padova, in 1570 by Dario Varotari, Villa Montecchia constituted a milestone in my apprenticeship in architecture, becoming an obsessive presence, at times forgotten, once dreamed of. This act of design is then a tribute, a loving reenactment, a new *mise en architecture*. It ignores those features of Montecchia that are found bothersome, it exaggerates or repeats those that are found especially pleasurable.

Concerning architecture, the theme the house elaborates upon is a double one; I would like to refer to it as 'Rooms and Attributes;' it relates to my interest in figurative techniques in architecture and derives, besides, from a rather complex functionalist concern.

The notion of room should be understood as opposed to the historically younger, abstract, specialized and preciously elaborated notion of space; in other words, the type of space commonly known as room can be opposed to the space that is said to flow, to the space generated according to mostly pictorial or more precisely cubist techniques, to the one endowed with refined transparencies or produced by layering, to the space qualified as taut or planar or deep, to the so called flexible space, to the space containing representations of space of perspectively distorted or corrected, to the spatial chain with articulations, to the one that, remaining undefined, is labelled 'post-modern,' or to so many other varieties of convoluted spaces, depending on the architectural codes at work in their making. Rooms, in turn, appear as accessible and legible entities even for the un-trained beholder, as well defined, forceful units without spatialisms of any kind; it could be said that the origin of rooms is pre-architectonic, (and as such interwoven with the notion of construction, even though they have been architecture's favorite 'raw material' for





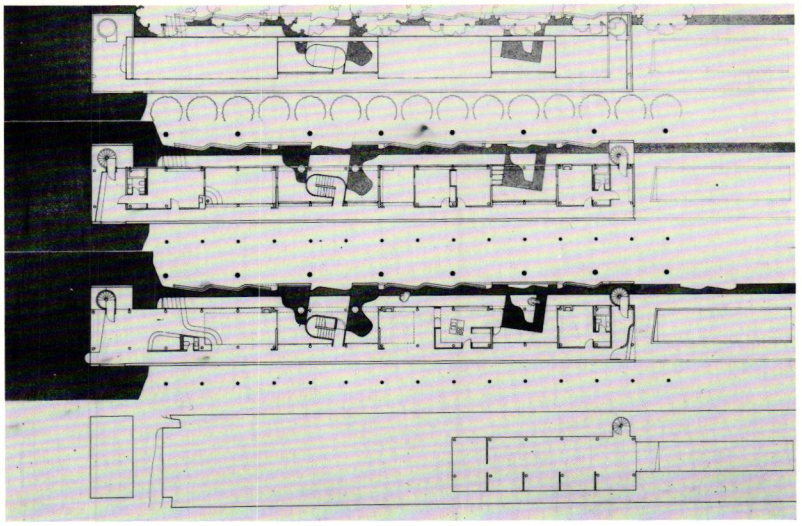
centuries) and that they might transcend, in a few cases, cultural differences. In this case particular rooms are treated as geometrically equal chambers, non-directional and not exactly cubical, grouped in a series without either beginning or end displaying an almost stately 'tempo.' In a certain way this exercise attempts to recover—and to revise, critically—a most useful design technique that has been officially forgotten for too long a time: the composition of rooms, the design of chambers.

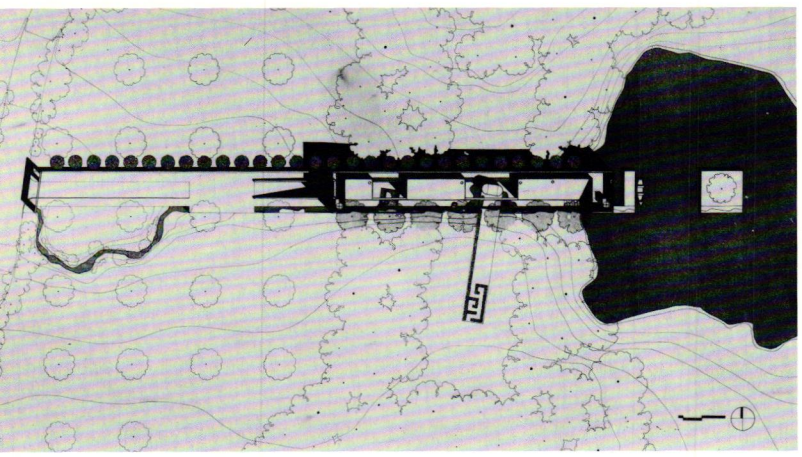
The notion of attribute, historically related to the symbolization of functions and the production of character, is seen in this work to be opposed to abstraction, to indifferentiation, to neutrality, to a signifying void, to the lack of marks, of indications.

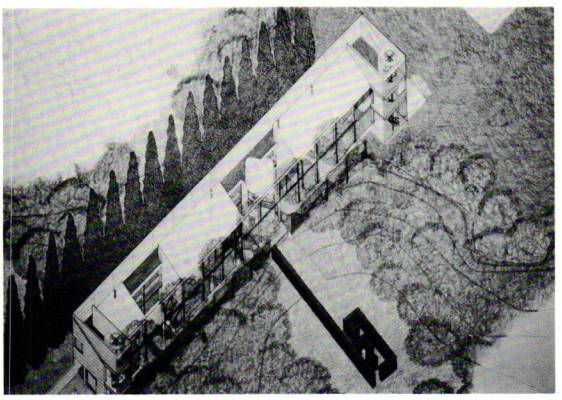
At the first floor level the house consists basically of four rooms and of four exterior 'gardens' (see references) which are functionally determined and / or semantically qualified by the rooms opening onto them; in this way, diagonally organized and mutually conditioning chains of functions take place. Both rooms and gardens contain attributes which behave as supporters of their special significance. Attributes are little buildings, monumentalized objects emphatically placed within the rooms and the gardens and treated as if they were domestic totemic structures, enthroned, deified. The attributes are architectural pieces, they belong to architecture. On the second floor, the four bed rooms display the same idea at work, executed with variations; the choice of furniture reinforces the figurative and architectonic nature of the attributes. Apparently, a design technique seeking the attribution of specific meaning to rooms should exploit to its benefit the question of size and form of rooms; by refusing to do so the signifying power of the attributes can better be tested.

Architecture in the past has used, generally, two modes of attributing meaning to rooms: one, pictorial, consisting of an array of iconographical motifs, mostly allegorical in nature, sometimes completed with mottos, veritable narrative pieces linked to the function of the room; the other mode is decorative, consisting of an extremely detailed and complete repertoire of pieces of furniture and minutely codified objects and art pieces. Specific architectural codes which for that purpose could have, for instance, exploited variables of measure and shape were not really totally developed with enough precision. Within Modern architecture, some marginal attempts to provide that kind of emphatic indication remained just that: incomplete stammers of an architecture that could have been *parlante*. This design attempts a way of attributing meaning through architectural means. At a personal level, to work with rooms gives a momentary feeling of relief . . . at the level of the ongoing architectural discussion this work seeks to contribute a revision of the notions of room, of attribute and of the representation of functions.

Francis McGuire
Run Along House







The House is an exercise in attenuation. It is a journey through landscape.

Beginning at a road, it develops itself through an orchard, incorporating a run, or small stream along the way. It enters the woods, crosses and gestures to a clearing, and deposits its spatial cargo in a pond.

It is an environmental conduit, in which people can live in privacy but with accessibility. One simply walks on down the line. The corridor spine links a series of living spaces on two levels, all interlocked with a linear water garden.

The undulating glass block garden wall provides translucent privacy from the untouched woodland. It reflects in its material and form the acquatic nature of the space it defines. The wiggles also help it stand up.

The house is closed to the north and west, open to the east and south. The north façade is a shield against winter wind and public view, pierced only to allow cross-ventilation in summer and to express the thinness of the house.

The south façade is an evocation of the green, sunlit rippling environment with which it interacts. It is also a display of functional zoning.

The west façade is an index to the architectural vocabulary used. Materials are indicated, structure is revealed, relationships of corridor, rooflines, stairs and stream are catalogued on this datum plane.

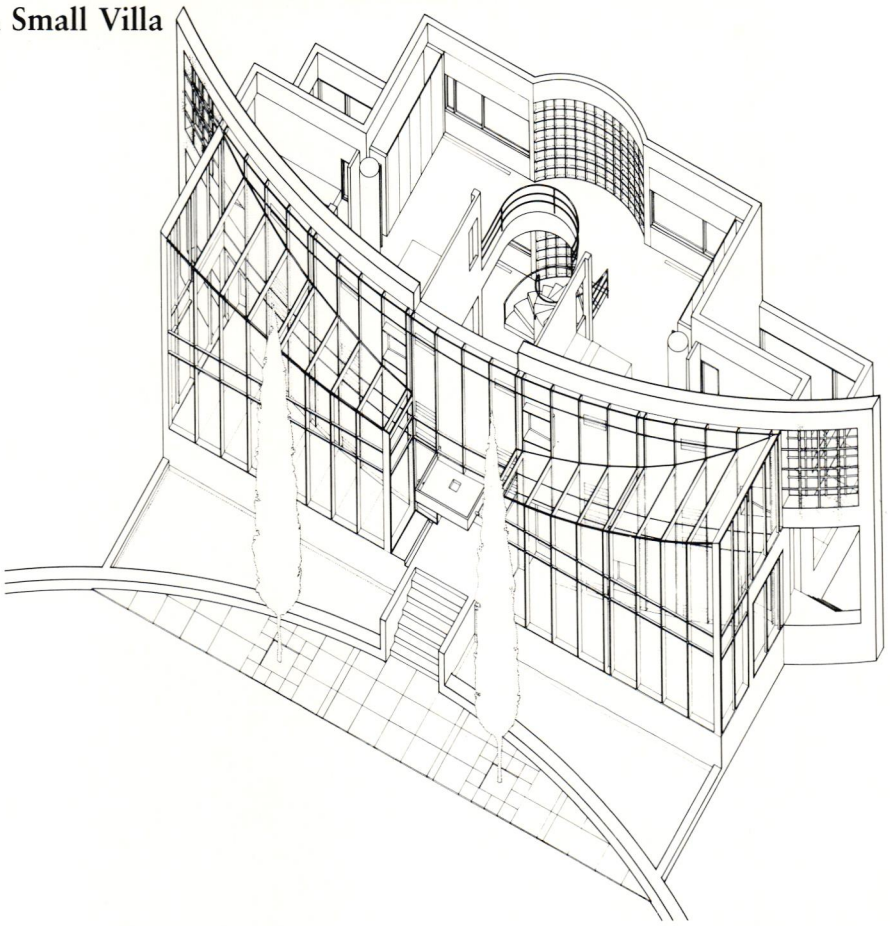
The east façade is a nice place to sit or work, or wake up to morning sun across the pond.

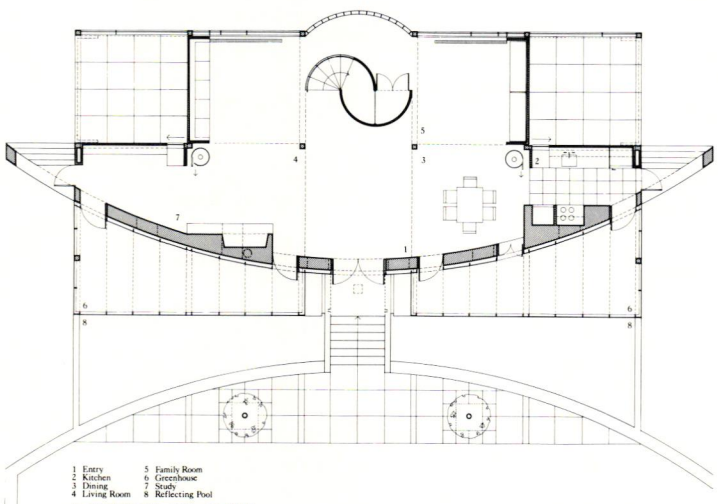
The small *parterre,* with its maze and *alee,* recalls boxwood gardens of a Virginia childhood, and reflects the diagonal of the house, relative to which shifted elements of the plan are positioned.

I am primarily interested in architecture as an organizing device for imagery, a structure which rewards the careful observer with information as to the intentions of its creators.

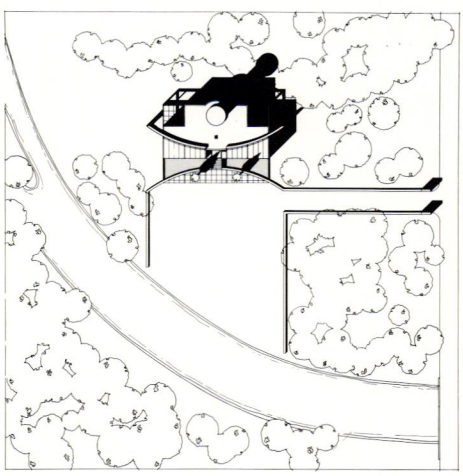
An architect's mind is a jumble of sensory impressions, organized through the elements of discipline and training. To me, good architecture offers the spectacle of a trained mind at work, or at play, in a garden of images. It all comes down to that. Functional architecture in its broadest sense embraces memories, dreams, ideals. This house springs from Tolkien and Le Corbusier, from *Trout Fishing in America,* Jefferson, railroad trains, Villa Lante, Tivoli, Maison de Verre, The Brugh of Angus Og, Japanese Gardens, Russian Constructivists, and from me, because all of those things move me.

Robert Silver and Warren Schwartz
A Small Villa



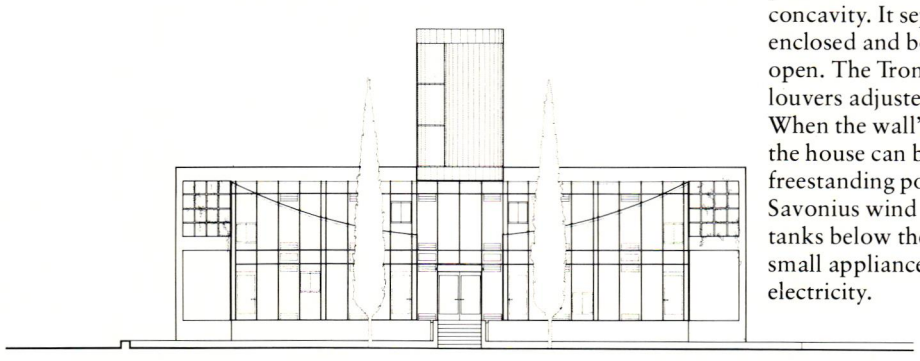


LOWER FLOOR

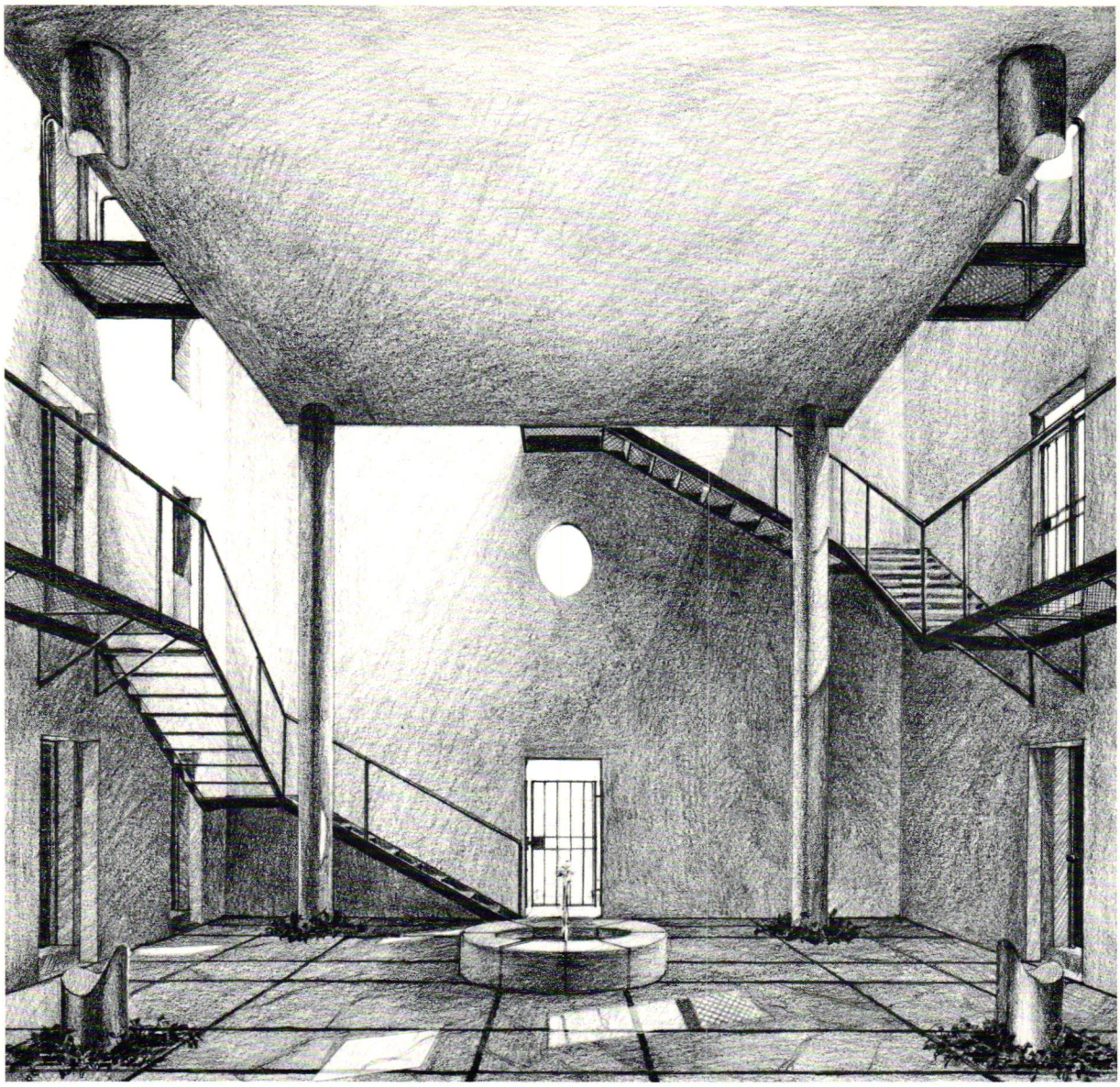


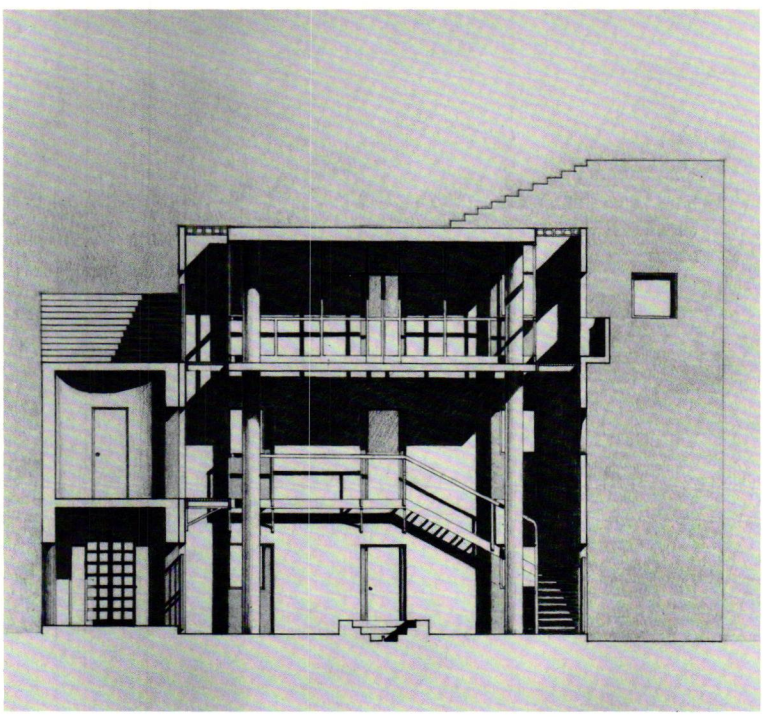
The villa is seen as a vehicle for exploring ideas about architecture; these ideas are both formal and functional / environmental; they evoke the formal heritage of the past and the environmental technology of the future. From the two streams of ideas (formal concepts of symmetry, axiality and scale, combined with functional recognition of environment and requirements of habitation) derives the dialogue of the house.

The south wall of the house is bowed to follow the path of the sun and to shelter the spaces within its concavity. It separates the house into two areas, one enclosed and bounded, the other transparent and open. The Trombe wall heats in winter, and, with louvers adjusted, it creates cooling breezes in summer. When the wall's heat is not needed, the living areas of the house can be opened outward alongside freestanding portions of the north façade. The Savonius wind rotor compresses air for storage in tanks below the main level. The compressed air runs small appliances and provides a reliable source of electricity.

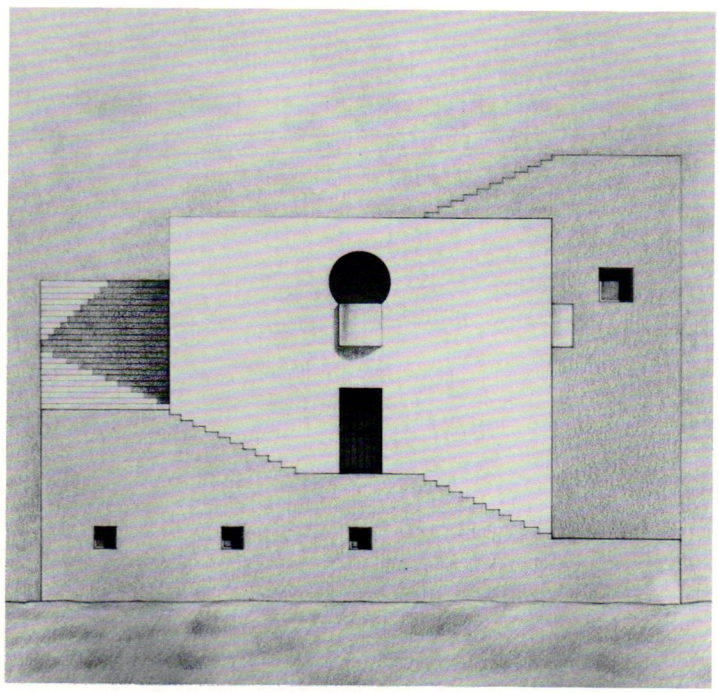


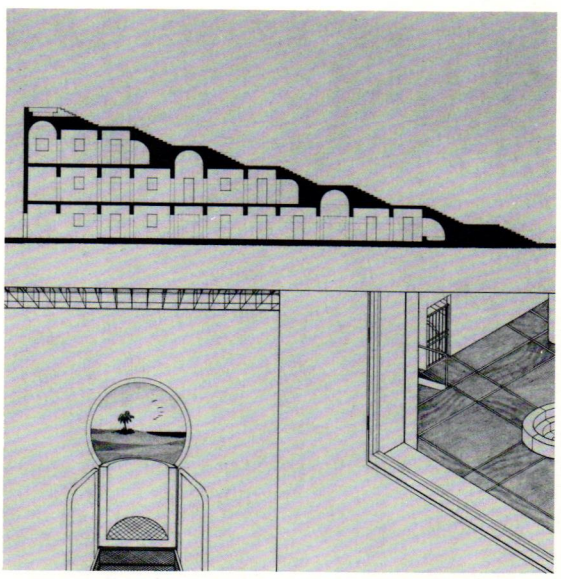
SOUTH ELEVATION

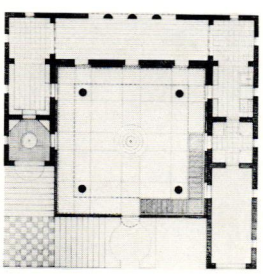


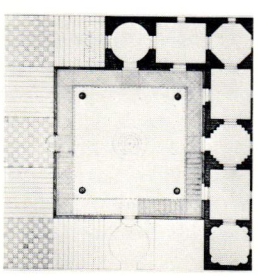


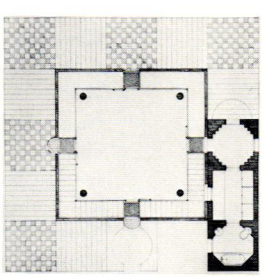
Jorge Silvetti
A House on the Island of Djerba, Tunisia
A Cube and a Stair

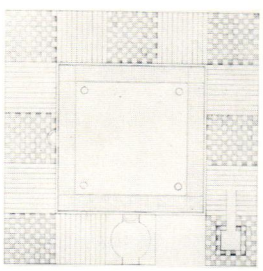












Thoughts after the fact.

The Cube: Architecture, order, culture.

It does not come from function.
It does not suggest function.
Water, sound, air, breeze, shadows, *void*.
A tautology: it contains architecture:
four columns.
Four exterior façades.
Four interior façades.
Nothing between them.

The Stair: Building, function, vernacular.

It wraps around Architecture.
It hides it. It protects it.
It provides points of entry to and of release
from Architecture.
From it Architecture can be observed, touched.
From it Nature can be contemplated.
It mediates between nature and culture.

But

The cube and the stair: a contradictory assemblage.

It is mediated by the laws of Architecture
through the Plan: a unifying architectural system
that emanates from the cube. It takes over the
building. It belies the nature of the stair.

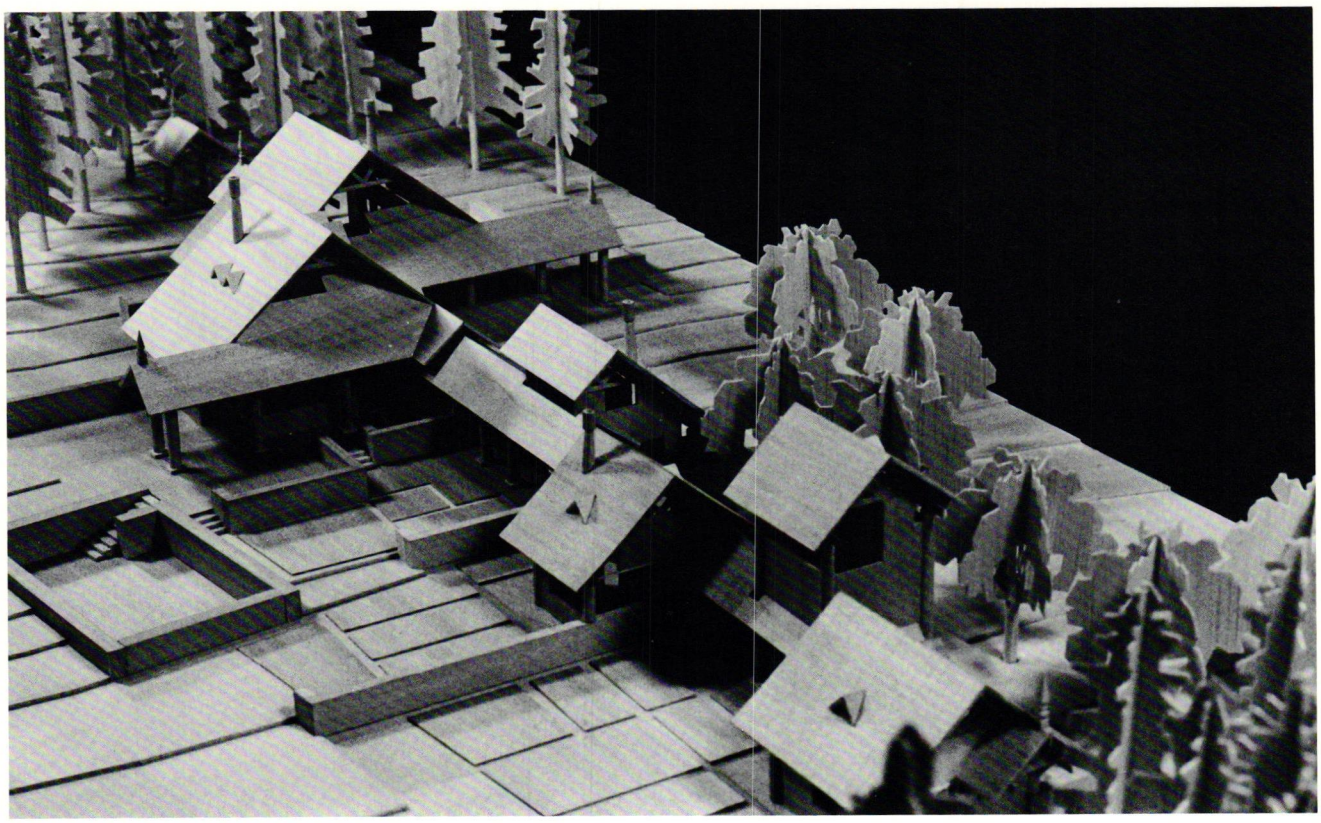
Function finds the plan.
It is mediated by the vocabulary: signs of a
vernacular idiom that redeploy themselves
throughout in an architectural discourse.

Function finds the image.

A monument to the vernacular.

Venice, July 1977

Jan Wampler
A Place for Twenty People



It has to do with
people
porches
paths
trees
sunrises
and rain on the roof

It has to do with all things that surround
a tree
a rock
a wild flower
that are all part of the physical experience no different than that which is built.

It has to do with frameworks that can act as references
for change
and growth
And it has to do with the making of echoes of peoples' ideas, desires, and dreams of what a place
should be
can be
must be
if healthy places are to be made.
The place or house then is an echo of the people who will live there. An echo of their different and changing thoughts.

The house is for a large collective of twenty people representing three generations of several families, some who grew up together knowing each other as children but have since grown in separate ways. The house will be a place for these different people. A place to return to from distant journeys.

It will be on a small island off the coast of Maine that is mostly covered with tall pine trees and buildings closely packed around the dock where the boat comes each day from the mainland. The island is without electricity and with only several trucks. Everyone walks the short distance on narrow paths. The families know the island having lived there for many summers, some having grown up there over the summers. Now, some will come for

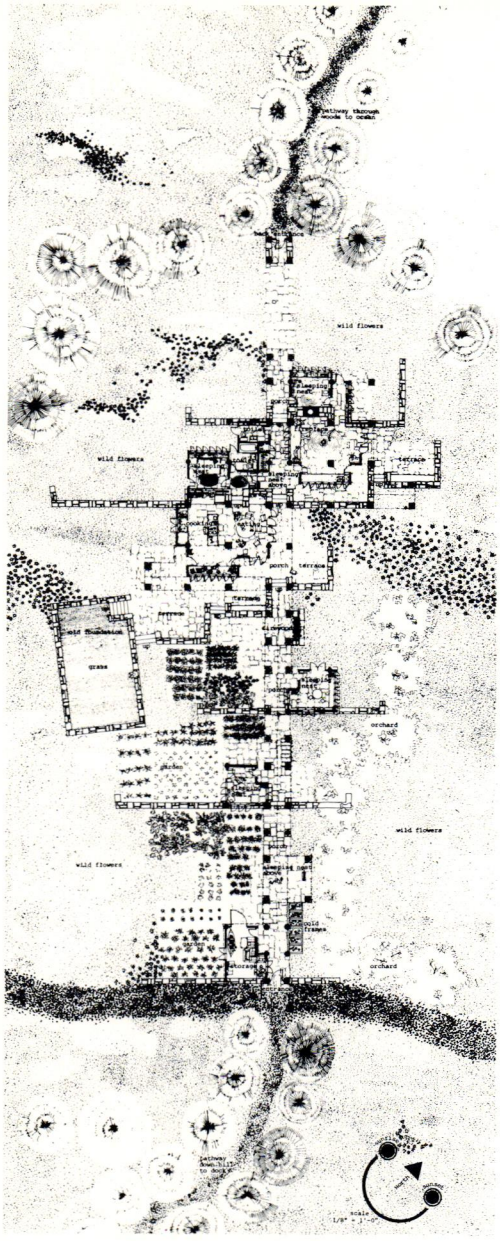
the summer
some may stay the winter
some in the spring
and fall

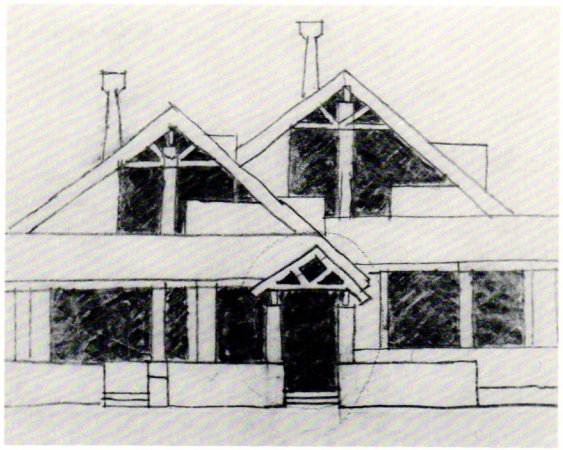
and still others for
special days.
The house will mean many things to many people.

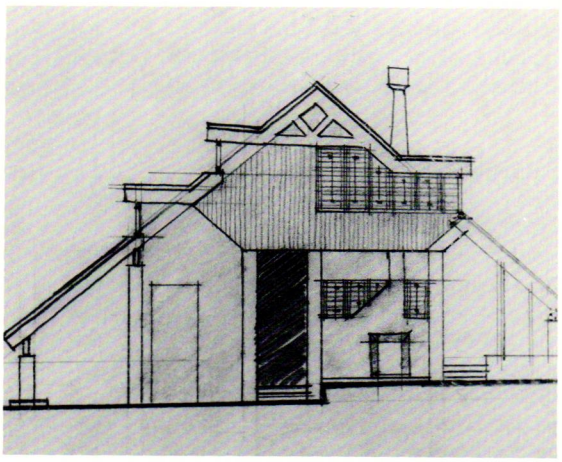
The house is also about reflections of that which is there
the path from the dock
the houses
the porches
the small sheds and out buildings
the tall trees
and even (if possible) the clusters of
wild flowers.

The house attempts to reflect this and give form to the collective directions of the people and provide the stage for individual actions.

The house becomes a framework
of stone walls to hold and embrace the land and give direction to the path of
round columns like trees in the forest







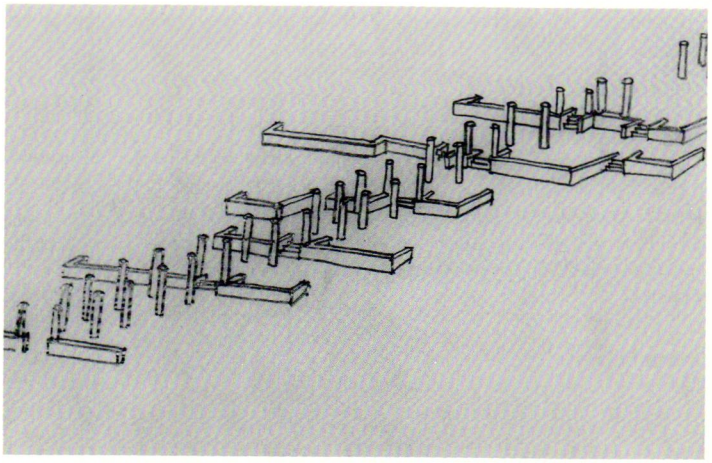
to define spaces of places
of roofs to provide an umbrella from sun, rain and wind, yet to let in with special care, the sun, rain and wind.

A framework of porches along the path. A path porch following the old path up the hill that goes through the woods to the ocean. A path porch that connects the individual places with the collective places. It becomes many things to many people

a place to hang a hammock
a place to sit
a place from the rain
a place for shade

and still more, the house is about these people
building
making
imprinting

and when people build their surroundings, changes occur, ideas develop, growth happens and makes a mockery of predicting the static future of things to come. All things must grow and change. And finally it is about, if nothing more, collecting special rocks from the shore to slowly make the floor of the path porch
all contributing individually
to a collective direction



Notes on Contributors

Denise Scott Brown
Denise Scott Brown received her diploma from the London Architectural Association and her Master of Architecture and Master of City Planning at the University of Pennsylvania. Long involved in research in planning and urban design, Ms Brown has published extensively, including co-authoring *Learning from Las Vegas* (MIT Press, 1971) and *Signs of Life: Symbols in the American City* (Aperture, Inc, 1976) an exhibition catalog with Steven Izenour. She has served as a member of the Visiting Committee of the School of Architecture and Urban Planning at MIT.

David Gebhard
David Gebhard received his MA and PhD from the University of Minnesota. He is the co-author of *Architecture in California, 1868-1968* (1968), *A guide to Architecture in San Francisco and Northern California* (1973), *A Guide to Architecture in Southern California* (1965), and *200 Years of American Drawing* (1977), and has organized several exhibitions on Schindler and California regional architecture. Mr. Gebhard has served as Curator and taught at the University of New Mexico, and is presently Director of Art Galleries and Professor of Art at the University of California at Santa Barbara.

Donald Grinberg
Donald Grinberg was educated at Harvard College (BA), the Harvard Graduate School of Design (M Arch), and the Technishe Hogeschool, Delft (Bouwkundig Ingenieur). He has received a Research Fellowship from the Ministry of Housing, Netherlands (1974-75) and a Sheldon Traveling Fellowship (1973-74). He has written *Housing in the Netherlands 1900-1940* (Delft University Press, 1977) and lectured extensively on Dutch housing. Mr Grinberg is currently an Area Coordinator at the Boston Architectural Center.

Alfred H Koetter
Fred Koetter was educated at the University of Oregon (AB Arch) and Cornell University (M Arch). He has practiced in Washington, New York, and Boston; his professional experience includes a proposal for the Redevelopment of Central Harlem, the American School in Switzerland, Broadway East Housing in Kingston, New York and the Grumman Squash Courts, Cornell University. He has co-authored, with Colin Rowe, *Collage City* (MIT Press, 1978). Mr. Koetter has taught architecture at Cornell, Yale, Ohio University, the University of Kentucky and is presently in the faculty of the Harvard Graduate School of Design.

Liane Lefaivre
Liane Lefaivre studied psychology at McGill University and the University of Strasbourg. She has been engaged in research on the cultural, social and institutional history of architecture. Among her published works are 'La Geometrie du Sentiment,' in *Dix-Huitieme Siecle* No. 9, 1977 and collaboration on '1650-1800 Les Sistems conceptuels de l'architecture,' report, 1975. Liane Lefaivre is currently writing *The Roots of Modern Architecture, a Documentary History.*

Peter Papademetriou
Peter Papademetriou graduated from Princeton University and Yale University, where he was a co-editor of *Perspecta 12*. He has designed and edited many publications, including the series, *Architecture at Rice* and *Houston: An Architectural Guide* (AIA, 1972), and has contributed numerous articles and reviews to the international professional press. Mr. Papademetriou is currently the southwest correspondent for *Progressive Architecture* and an associate Professor at the Rice University School of Architecture, while maintaining a private architectural practice.

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Steven Peterson received both his Bachelor of Architecture and Master of Urban Design at Cornell University, where he was awarded the Eidlitz Traveling Scholarship in 1972. He has practiced in Illinois, England, New Jersey and New York. As a partner in the firm of Chimacoff/Peterson he has designed numerous award-winning projects, including a synagogue and several private residences. Mr. Peterson has taught architecture at the University of London, the London Polytechnic, Princeton University, Harvard University and Columbia University, and has lectured at the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies, New York.

Jaquelin Robertson
Jaquelin Robertson received his BA and M Arch from Yale and his MA from Oxford University, where he was a Rhodes Scholar. He has worked with Sir Leslie Martin, Edward Larrabee Barnes, the Urban Design Group of the New York City Planning Commission, the Office of Midtown Planning of the Mayor of New York, and was Chairman of Llewelyn-Davies Associates in New York City. He has been responsible for urban design projects and planning legislation in New York and Teheran. He has served in the past as Critic and Lecturer at Yale University and Columbia University and has been active in the Transportation and Urban Design Committees of the AIA.

Eduard F Sekler
Eduard Sekler received his diploma from the Technical University, Vienna, and his PhD in Art History from the Warburg Institute at the University of London. He has conducted an independent architectural practice

with a partner in Vienna since 1946, including historic restoration and conservation, housing and urban renewal. He is the co-author of *Le Corbusier at Work, the Genesis of the Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts* (Harvard University Press, 1978) as well as numerous other publications on architectural history and historic preservation. The recipient of many academic and professional honors, Mr Sekler currently holds the position of Professor at the Harvard Graduate School of Design and the Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts.

Peter Serenyi
Peter Serenyi was educated at Dartmouth (BA), Yale (MA History) and Washington University at St. Louis (PhD). He has written widely on Modern Architecture and is the editor of, and a contributor to, *Le Corbusier in Perspective* (1975). Under the auspices of a Graham Foundation Grant, and a Fulbright Senior Research Scholarship, he has organized a major exhibition on contemporary architecture in India. For the past ten years Mr Serenyi has taught at Northeastern University, where he is now a Professor of Architectural History.

Jorge Silvetti
Jorge Silvetti received his diploma from the University of Buenos Aires and his Master of Architecture from the University of California at Berkeley. He has received a *Progressive Architecture* award for his 'Fountain House' (designed with Rodolfo Machado), a second prize in the competition for the renovation of the La Villette sector of Paris (designed with Diana Agrest and Mario Gandelsonas) and participated in the Immanent Domains exhibit held in Boston in 1977. He has conducted extensive research on architectural typologies and urban morphology and been published in numerous periodicals in the United States and abroad. Mr. Silvetti has taught at the University of California at Berkeley, Carnegie Mellon University, and is currently Associate Professor of Architecture at the Harvard Graduate School of Design.

Robert A M Stern
Robert Stern received his Master of Architecture at Yale University. His private practice includes numerous private residences and the Jerome Green Hall at Columbia University. He represented the United States at the Venice Biennale in 1976. His published works include *New Directions in American Architecture* (1977), *George Howe: Toward a Modern Architecture (1975)* and *Another Chance for Cities*, with Peter Wolf, a companion volume to the exhibition at the Whitney Museum of American Art, 1970. Robert Stern is presently an Associate Professor of Architecture at Columbia University.

Stanley Tigerman
Stanley Tigerman received his Bachelor of Architecture and Master of Architecture from Yale University. While maintaining an extensive private practice, Mr. Tigerman has served as Chairman of the AIA Committee on Design and Coordinator of the *Chicago Seven* exhibit and catalogue. He is presently on the Advisory Committee of the School of Architecture at Yale and has been appointed the 1979 Charlotte Shepherd Davenport Professor of Architecture.

Alexander Tzonis
Alexander Tzonis received his diploma from the Technological University of Athens and a Master of Architecture at Yale University. Among his publications are *Towards a Non-Oppressive Environment* (Braziller, 1972) and *The Shape of Community* (Penguin Books, 1970) with Serge Chermayeff. Mr. Tzonis was the General Editor of the multidisciplinary series, *Man Made Environment* (Penguin Books). He has taught at Yale University, the University of Montreal, the Institut d'Architecture et Urbanisme in Strasbourg and is currently an Associate Professor of Architecture at the Harvard Graduate School of Design.

Oswald Mattais Ungers
O M Ungers received his diploma from the Technical University at Karlsruhe. His professional experience includes the design of residential structures, office, school and manufacturing buildings and urban development proposals. He has initiated numerous symposiums on urban architecture and has conducted research on new communities, computer applications to architecture and innovative housing systems. Mr. Ungers has taught at the Technical University, Berlin, the University of California, Los Angeles, Harvard University and at Cornell University, where he was Department Chairman from 1969-75.

Robert Venturi
Robert Venturi received his Bachelor of Arts and his Master of Fine Arts at Princeton University. He is a partner in the firm of Venturi & Rauch whose works range in scale from private residences to urban designs. The recipient of numerous professional and academic awards, his publications include *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* (Museum of Modern Art) and co-authorship of *Learning from Las Vegas*. He has served as a Rome Prize Fellow, and was Charlotte Shepherd Davenport Professor of Architecture at Yale University from 1966-1970.

Frans van der Werf
Frans van der Werf received his degree from Delft University. He has been associated with SAR, a Dutch housing research organization, and is now in private practice as an architect for Kokon Werkgroep Architekten in Rotterdam.

Credits

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Silvetti 1: courtesy of the Pinacoteca di Brera, Milano; 2: courtesy of the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D C; 3: Irving Hershel Sandler *The Triumph of American Painting: A History of Abstract Expressionism* (New York, Praeger Publishers, 1970) p 119; 4: David Sylvester *Magritte* (London: Lund Humphries for Arts Council at Tate Gallery, 1969) p 118; 5: Udo Kulterman *New Realism* (Greenwich, Connecticut: New York Graphic Society, 1972) p 105; 6, 12, 13, 14: Belgiojoso, Peressutti, Rogers 'Tre Problemi di Ambientamento' *Casabella* no 232 (October 1959) pp 4, 19, 18, 19; 7: Giusseppe Samona 'Una Casa Gardella a Venezia' *Casabella* no 220 (July 1958) p 9; 8: Nicolaus Pevsner 'Roehampton' *Architectural Review* CXXVI no 750 (July 1959) p 23; 9: Gordon Cullen *Townscape* (London: Architectural Press Ltd., 1961); 10, 11: Eric De Mare 'Canals for Pleasure' *Architectural Review* CVI (December 1949) pp 61, 62; 15: Carlos Hirsch *Mies Van Der Rohe: El Arte De La Estructura* (Zurich: Artemis Verlag, 1965) p 47; 16: Helmut Jacoby *Architectural Drawings* (New York: Frederick Praeger, 1965) p 43; 17: S. Kolesnikov; The Results of the Competition for the Best Buildings in the RSFSR' *Arkhitectura SSSR* no 1 (1951) p 19; 18, 19, 20: Rob Krier *Stradtraum* (Stuttgart: Karl Kramer Verlag, 1975) pp 17, 11, 16; 21, 22: Oswald Mathias Ungers, Haus Dillhoff and Thomas Will 'A Vocabulary' *Lotus* no 15 (June/July 1972) pp 94, 95; 23: 'Piazza D'Italia' *Architecture D'Aujourd'Hui* no 184 (March/April 1976) p 63; 24: David Morton 'Mission Accomplished' *Progressive Architecture* no 10 (October 1977) p 61; 25: courtesy of the Philadelphia Museum of Art; 26: Lucy Lippard *Pop Art* (New York: Frederick Praeger, 1966) p 93; 27, 28: Vittorio Savi *L'Architettura Di Aldo Rossi* (Milano: Franco Angeli Editore, 1976) pp 72, 93; 29: courtesy of Venturi and Rauch, Architects and Planners, Philadelphia; 30, 33: Robert Venturi, Denise Scott-Brown and Steven Izenour *Learning From Las Vegas* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1972) p 78) pp 119, 1; 31: Sally Woodbridge 'How to Make a Place' *Progressive Architecture* (May 1974) p 78; 32: Aldo Rossi, Gianni Braghiari and Arduino Cantafora 'Elementary School at Fagnano Olona' *Lotus* no 15 (June/July 1977) p 31: 34: courtesy of Aldo Rossi.

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Errata

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