

Places

\$6.00

A Quarterly Journal
of Environmental Design

Published by The MIT Press
for the College of
Environmental Design,
University of California,
Berkeley
and the
School of Architecture
and Planning,
Massachusetts Institute
of Technology

Tony Garnier
Lawrence B. Anderson

**Debate on the State of Illinois Center
with contributions by**

Helmut Jahn
Allan Jacobs
Michael J. Bednar
Donlyn Lyndon
Stanley Tigerman
William J. Mitchell

A Rutabaga
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Swiss Collage Cities
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Peterborough, New Hampshire
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**In the Shadow of a Craftsman
Bungalow: Erasure, Overlay, and
Addition**
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**Duck Out of Water: A Late Proposal
for the Navy Memorial**
Drexel Turner

ISSN 0731-0455

Volume 3, Number 4

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Tony Garnier 3

Lawrence B. Anderson

Debate on the State of Illinois
Center 14

State of Illinois Center 16
Helmut Jahn

The Last Roundup 20
William J. Mitchell

Illinois State Office Building 24
Allan Jacobs

The Government Building
Redefined 26

Michael J. Bednar

State Office Building 30
Donlyn Lyndon

A Critique of the Language Employed
in the Design of the State of Illinois
Office Building 34

Stanley Tigerman

A Rutabaga 36
Robert Bly

Laroche-Clermault 37
Lucien Kroll

Swiss Collage Cities 46
Maynard Lyndon

Peterborough, New Hampshire 50
William Morgan

In the Shadow of a Craftsman
Bungalow: Erasure, Overlay, and
Addition 55

Lars Lerup

Duck Out of Water: A Late Proposal
for the Navy Memorial 62

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Caring About Places: Pride

One of the most critical questions for a profession, indeed for a culture, is how to allocate its self-esteem. In what should we take pride? In what ways should we do more than is required of us by others?

People do not invest care in a place on demand. Care, and its reflection in pride of craftsmanship, comes about through deep-seated commitment, through a necessity of the spirit. But we should pay attention to how that spirit develops. Are the things we're learning to care about genuinely important, or will they obscure reality in a glitter of false pride?

The contributors to this issue of *Places* care differently. They all take pride in attending closely to the things that make up our world. They differ in their commitments. The imagination we see reflected in these articles reaches into the fabric of society as well as into the realm of forms through which the makers of buildings solicit our concern.

How should we care? With bravado, with modesty? Through demonstrations of ingenuity, through fostering nearly imperceptible adjustments? By telling a story, by imagining a society? How should we not care?

We should not care by suppressing concern for the disenfranchised, by settling for ways of making places that simply display and do not enable.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Donlyn Lyndon'. The signature is fluid and stylized, with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

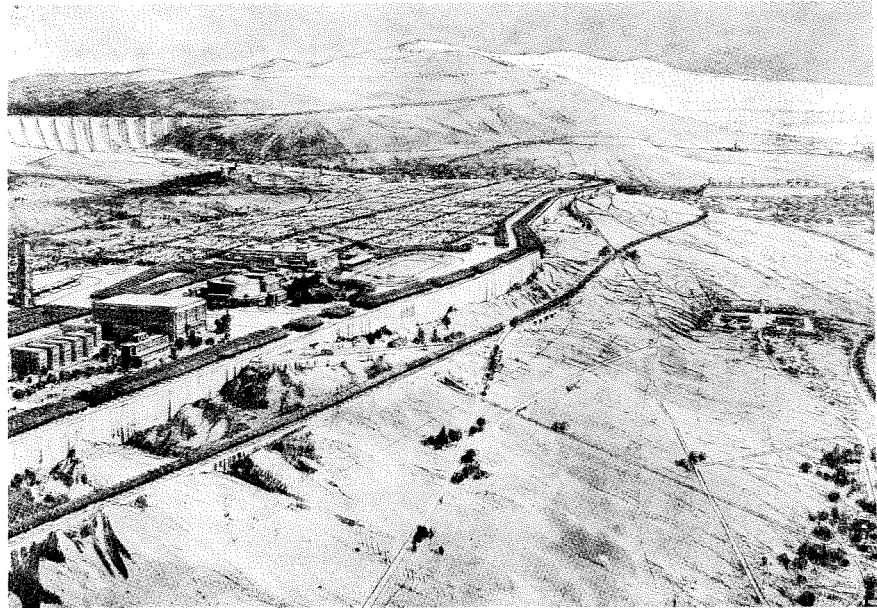
Donlyn Lyndon

Tony Garnier

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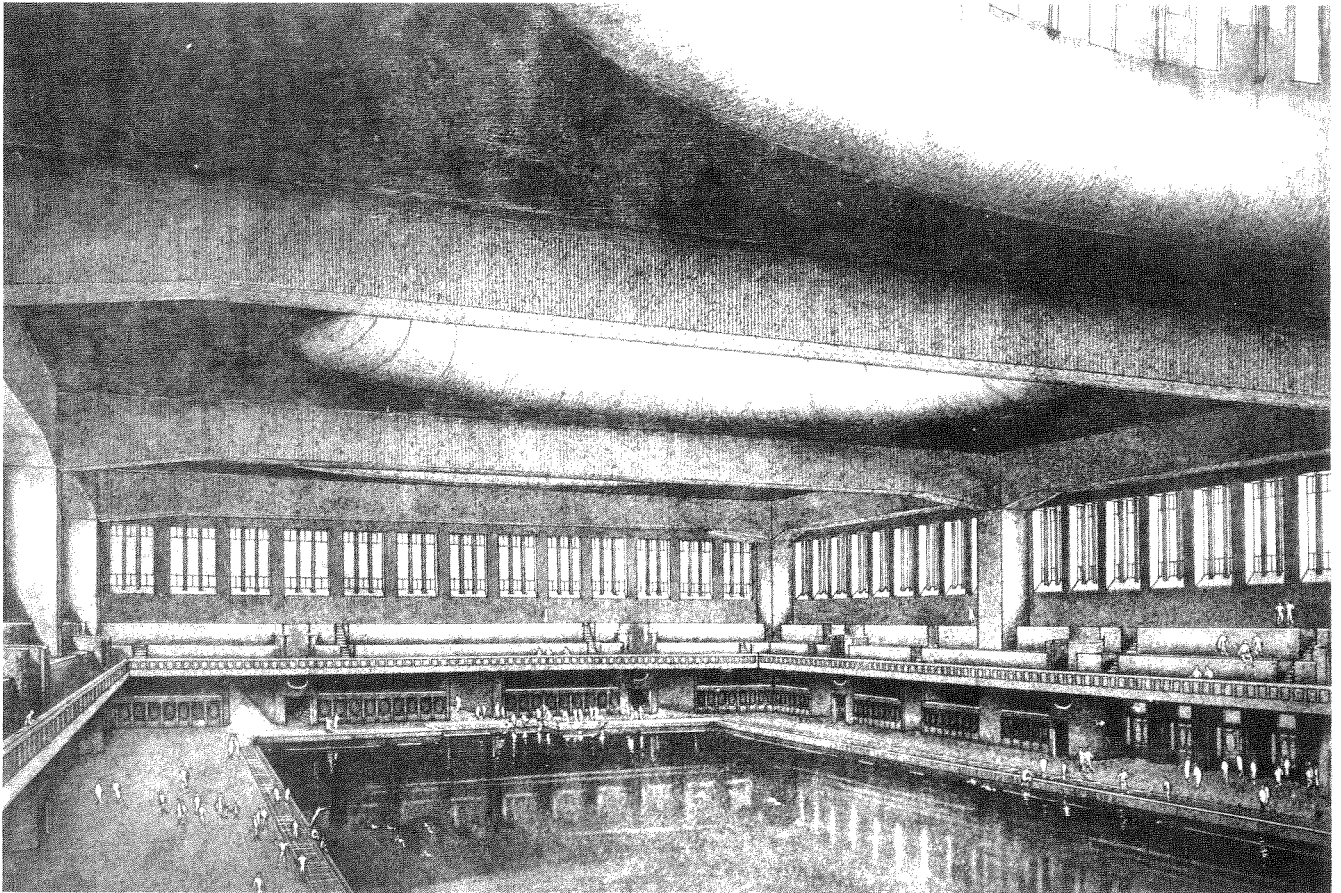
Tony Garnier was a man born too soon, obliged to adapt to an environment uncongenial to him. He was a product of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts against which he rebelled. That slowly stiffening institution was losing its ability to respond to new ways of thinking, yet it still retained the authority to suppress Garnier and his ideas. In shyness and hurt, he withdrew to his native province, where he pursued his independent career while, through his students and over a long period, he avenged that rebuff by his genius as a teacher. He did not have the possibility to operate in any other pedagogical setting or to invent his own, as did Gropius, who was only fourteen years younger. In a sense, Garnier's Lyon atelier was indeed his own creation, but in France all higher education was so highly centralized that the Paris Ecole with its prestigious history offered the only framework for even provincial teachers. There is also no evidence that Garnier tried to change the Ecole's mode of operation: its massive anonymous juries, its centralized programs, its system of prizes, and its unflagging reliance on the spirit of competition. It was only its cultural attitudes and its lack of social vision to which he objected.

Garnier and Gropius resembled each other in several ways: their rationalism, their visions of the oncoming industrialized society, and their conviction that architecture had to be purged and given a fresh start. Differences are also apparent. Gropius belonged to



Photographs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 are from Tony Garnier, *Une Cité Industrielle, Etude pour la Construction des Villes*, 1st ed. Paris: A. Vincent, 1918.

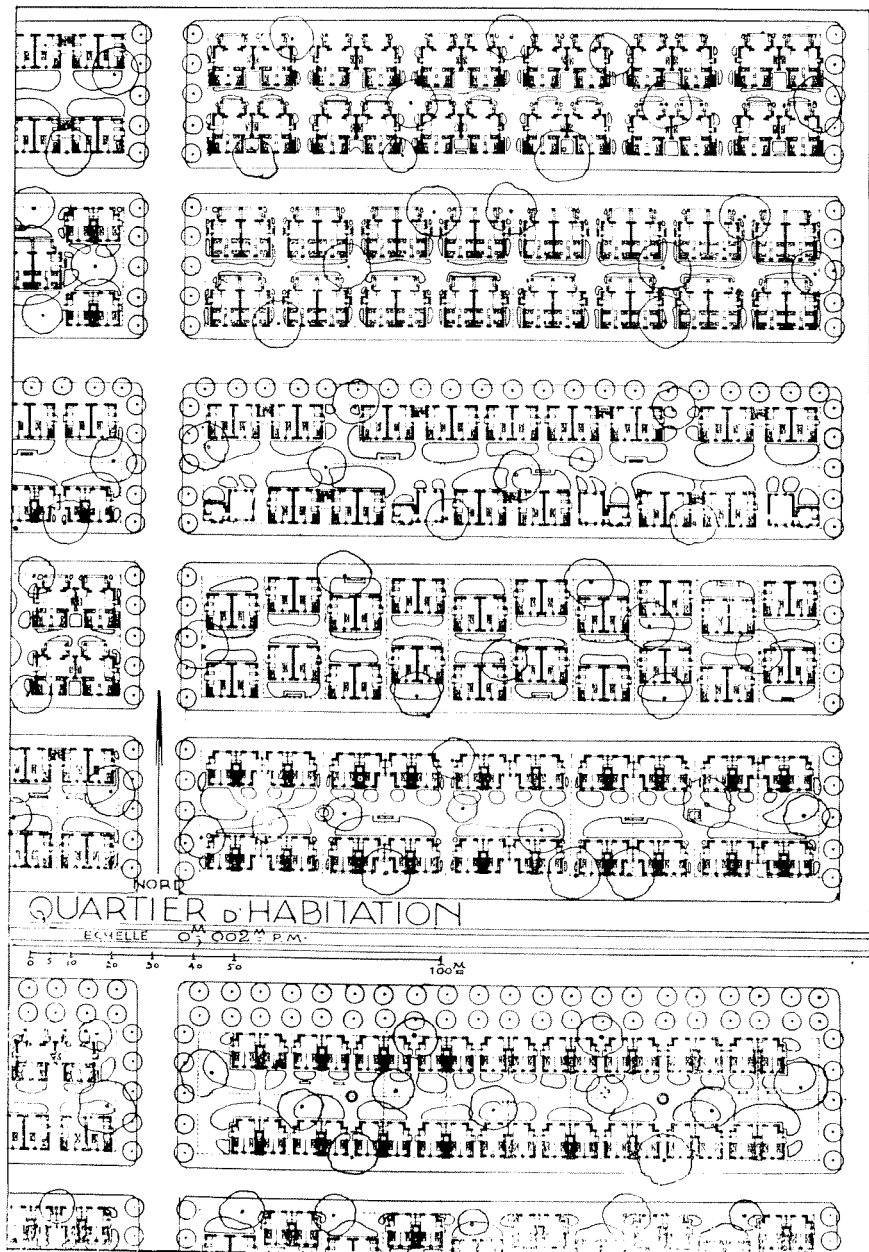
I View of Upper City. At left rear, the hydroelectric dam; in valley at right, the industrial sector



2

a body of like-thinking men who kept in touch with each other, and he believed that design should be a team activity. Having constructed a set of principles, he was eloquent and persuasive in explaining them to the world. Garnier was all alone; he did not trade ideas with others, and he was not eloquent in speech or writing. His message can be found only in drawings and executed work. He and his contemporary Auguste Perret knew and admired each other, but they did not interact, and there is nothing to show that Garnier kept in close touch with the brilliant and successful men who had been his colleagues at the Ecole and the Villa Medici. Le Corbusier visited Garnier and had respect for his contribution. Indeed it is very possible to think that the ways of conceptualizing the physical organization of cities shown by CIAM in its early meetings owes something to Garnier and the *Cité Industrielle*, despite the lack of any other connection than the publication of the *Cité* in 1917.

The biographer encounters great difficulty in dealing with Tony Garnier. It is very hard to be precise about the influences that shaped him and equally hard to assess his influence on the development of the phenomenon called modernism. One is obliged to characterize him as a quintessentially isolated figure who nevertheless brought into sharp focus the yearnings of a new industrial society for better ways to cope with new conditions of urban living and new technologies. He came from a blue-collar background



3

3 Plan detail of residential district

and his early education was vocationally oriented. Lyon had already become the center of the French silk industry and was therefore subject to the growing pains of booming textile technology with accompanying social dislocations and crowding of poorly paid workers in urban slums of an unprecedented kind. These facts are of capital significance in the shaping of Garnier's social perspective.

Yet, the temptation to exaggerate these influences must be resisted. It is true that Lyon was also a major center for the development of socialism as a political movement and that one of socialism's most prominent leaders—Edouard Herriot—was for many years that city's mayor and in effect Garnier's principal client in the important commissions Garnier eventually executed on behalf of the city. Yet there is no record of any political activity or even adherence to a party by Garnier, no hint of any intellectual or ideological exchange with Herriot, and no evidence that their relationship had any dimension other than what was necessary for the projects.

Coming from this background of hard work and poverty, Garnier demonstrated technical skill and artistic gifts that won him scholarship support and at age twenty brought him to Paris and changed the course of his life as he completed his professional education in the environment of the Ecole. His upward mobility into the rather elitist profession of architecture was perhaps unusual

but certainly not impossible in late nineteenth-century French society. Garnier spent ten years—1889–1899—as a student in Paris. That is a long time for professional formation, and we must add the previous three years in the Lyon Ecole and the four subsequent ones at the Academy in Rome before he set up his own office in Lyon at age thirty-five.

It must not be thought that spending a decade in a Paris atelier was unheard of. Students progressed toward the diploma not by time spent but by values accumulated through getting passing grades or higher in project judgments. At a minimum (in 1930), one had also to make a satisfactory “construction project,” a kind of imitation working drawing. Finally, the student became *diplômable*, could submit an adequate independent thesis, and become a qualified professional. But the best designers often remained in the school beyond that point in order to participate sporadically in the various prize competitions. Of these, the most prestigious was, of course, the *Prix de Rome*.

Despite the existence of the regional schools, the real action was in Paris. Competition was intense, and the student who could win a number of top awards achieved national recognition because the winning designs were published. This recognition laid the groundwork for a successful career in practice. It was comparable to football in the United States, where the Heisman Trophy winner is sure

to have attractive offers from the professional teams. The Rome Prize winner could normally count on important commissions being directed his way. (This did not happen in Garnier's case, for reasons that are developed by Louis Piessat in his unpublished biography of Garnier.) Such a situation was not the case in American architectural education, despite the efforts of the Beaux-Arts Institute of Design (BAID) in New York to bring it about. As more and more schools were established in universities, our educational system became highly dispersed, and the practice of centralized judgments withered by 1940. No correlation could ever be observed between success in BAID juries and later prominence in practice. For very many years the Paris Ecole could count on a measure of consensus about what constitutes excellence in architectural design, and it was possible to measure projects for that quality. The success of Bauhaus ideas broke any American consensus, but the Ecole was chauvinistically unable to accept the Bauhaus, and it was not until the 1960s that their centralized jury system came apart under circumstances described in Piessat's memoir.

Tuition fees at the Ecole were very low, and under these conditions it was meaningless to distinguish between full-time and part-time students. Garnier was almost thirty, the age limit for eligibility, when, in his fourth experience of being a *logiste* (finalist), he won the coveted prize.

Unfortunately, there is absolutely no record of how Garnier spent those ten years in Paris other than a few watercolors and the design projects that were successful enough to be officially published. He had come to Paris on prize money, but he must have worked as a draftsman/designer in architecture offices, as did almost all the advanced students. It was surely through office work that he learned how to cope with the practical problems of the profession, so that when he returned to Lyon in 1904 he was ready to open an office in his own name.

Most of his time during the four years of his residency at the French Academy in Rome (Villa Medici) had been devoted to the design of an imaginary city of 35,000 inhabitants instead of to the archaeological reconstitution of some ancient site as required by the authorities who administered the prizes. The exhibition of this design in Paris was received with coolness by official commentators and aroused no enthusiasm elsewhere.

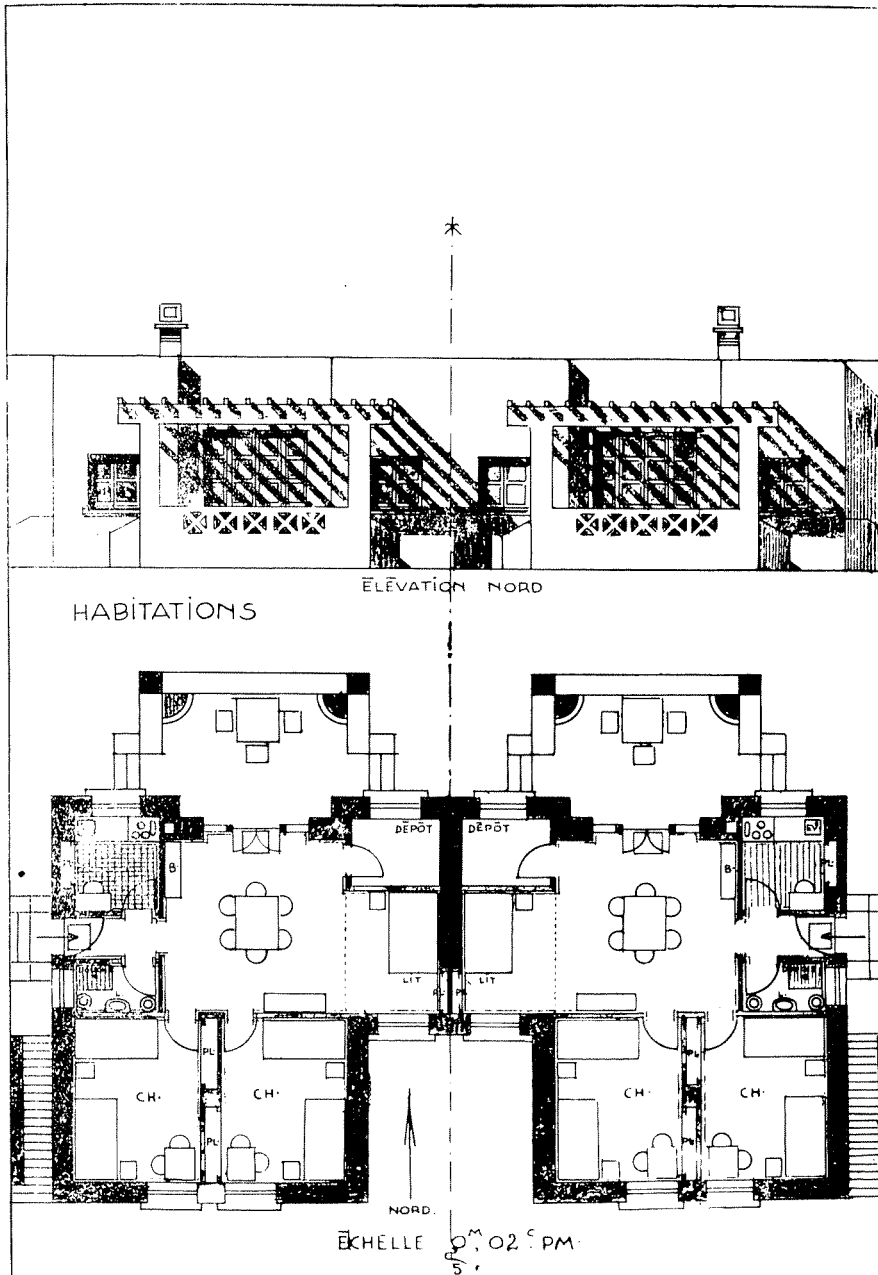
Garnier stuck to his guns and in 1917, having established himself in practice and as a professor, he published the work entitled *Cité Industrielle*, loose-leaf, with very little text and many illustrations. Another edition was published in 1933. It is of course now out of print but may be discovered in the recesses of the older architectural school libraries.

Many other people had by 1900 been searching to create models for



4

4 Typical houses



5

cities, which in the industrial age were growing into unheard-of and sometimes monstrous forms. Garnier, being a trained and gifted designer as well as utopian dreamer, was the first to depict an ideal modern city by working out all the details. He designed an ideal terrain as well, a hilly area on terraces overlooking an important river, with a convenient tributary to be dammed upstream for all needed power and with downstream and downwind flats near the confluence for a transportation nexus and industrial park. On a sunny plateau, serenely above these activities, was spread the low-density residential city and its governmental-cultural-recreational center. Elementary schools were distributed to facilitate pedestrian access, and the health facilities were on still higher terrain overlooking the city. Any activity that could be noisy or pollution-generating was placed in isolation on the riverbank.

Garnier has been praised by many observers for his extraordinary achievement in controlling the organization of this vast self-imposed program. The Cité projects a powerful image of hygienic, egalitarian, and yet sophisticated urban life. Many of its features remain worth striving for, but it is also interesting to note its shortcomings as a predictor of possibilities. Our century has diverged irreversibly from the ideals embodied in Garnier's plan. For example, he firmly downplayed any office facilities other than those accessory to government or industry, and one has to look hard

to find anything resembling a shopping center. Clearly, his citizens were not into service industries, and they were not addicted to consumerism.

In his radical separation of residential areas from places of employment, Garnier introduced the need for mass transportation; the distances were too great for daily walking. Since the city was to be abundantly supplied with hydroelectric power, Garnier chose to meet all transportation needs with electric trains and streetcars. At the turn of the century, the prevailing urban transport, both public and private, was surely horsedrawn vehicles. Garnier must have been totally confident of the obsolescence of that mode: no stable, public or private, can be found. Although Panhard's internal combustion-driven automobile had already made its appearance, Garnier gave no sign that automobiles would be anything but experimental. By 1917, Model T Fords were tumbling out of Detroit, and by 1933 the internal combustion engine had already revolutionized transportation, yet Garnier chose not to make any serious changes in the Cité as he prepared it for publication in those years.

By far the largest zone depicted in the Cité is that devoted to one- and two-family houses spread out in long narrow blocks running east-west. Some higher density housing is also included, mostly for unmarried persons, but it is clear that Garnier's preferred unit is the small, free-standing dwelling. There is no recognition that professional,

government, and management personnel, with above-average incomes, would be allowed any enclave of their own.

Garnier's residential district is therefore strongly homogeneous, articulated only by the carefully distributed local schools. The houses face sunshine and view and are assured of adequate ventilation. Curiously, however, they have no outdoor privacy. They stand in a parklike space crisscrossed by north-south and diagonal paths that enable pedestrians to move everywhere freely, in a system quite independent of vehicular streets. There are no boundaries to discourage voyeurs or that might suggest the right of a family to grow its own carrots. Trees, shrubs, and flowers, together with outdoor sculpture, are everywhere and are apparently to be serviced and maintained at public expense. The way of life implied by these arrangements would be hard for the French to accept; like most Europeans, they have always wanted their property to be fenced or even walled in.

Another urban design feature of the Cité is the avoidance of the *rue-corridor*, the time-honored practice of giving definition to streets by positioning buildings continuously along their flanks. Garnier's objection to this was probably based on hygienic principles that turned into aesthetic preferences. He was not the only person of his time to make a connection between narrow streets and bad public health. An accompanying phobia was that associated with enclosed

courts. Such courts in a city can provide protection from climate and can also become quiet communal spaces, buffers between the family and the city at-large. To Garnier they were simply insalubrious and to be eradicated. His avoidance flew in the face of Ecole tradition as well, since the Beaux-Arts predilection for strong circulation grids led inescapably to the formation of interior courts. See, for example, the 1917 plans for MIT by Welles Bosworth, an American architect who lived in Paris and designed in the best Beaux-Arts manner.

When Garnier worked at high-density solutions, as in the competition for downtown renewal in Marseille, he did resort to *rue-corridors* and interior courts. However, in his designs for the 1905 Rothschild Foundation competition, aimed at setting standards for rather high-density worker housing in Paris, he arranged the apartments for passive solar exposure, and the dwellings look out on sunny landscaped areas rather than on surrounding streets. Garnier's innovation, which was in sharp contrast to the other competition entries, was a first clear statement of parallel strip housing without resort to enclosed courtyards and avoiding direct street exposure. These principles for group housing were to reach full application in German *siedlungen* in the late 1920s and early 1930s.

Louis Piessat, who has been a student and employee of Garnier, and who, with Pierre Bourdeix, presided over Garnier's teaching

studio in Lyon during the years following Garnier's retirement, rightly calls attention to Garnier's remarkable range of scale, his ability to give clear organization to vast complexes while treating many intimate details with understanding and love. But he is obliged to quote Michel Roux-Spitz, himself a Garnier allumnus and prominent architect, who said among other things, "il n'aimait pas le métier," "he did not like the craft." Garnier was an exponent of the new material—reinforced concrete, in the use of which the Lyon building industry made great progress during his lifetime. When one looks today at the façade of the Ecole de Tissage (weaving), now almost sixty years old, with its faceted pseudopilasters, the quality of workmanship is astonishing; no marks of successive pourings can be seen, and every arris is pristine. Yet, when Garnier specifies that, for buildings in the Cité, all interior intersections of planes are to be rounded, it is the hygienist speaking, not the designer concerned with the technology of concrete placement. Garnier conceived of concrete as a universal material, to be seen inside and out. This led him to make all roofs flat. In the smaller buildings, no serious structural problems presented themselves, but Garnier did not think, as did Le Corbusier, in terms of separating supporting structure from enclosure, so as to gain more freedom in space-making. The fact that Garnier was not, in his heart of hearts, a "constructor", resulted in him being outdistanced by two of his contemporaries in the search

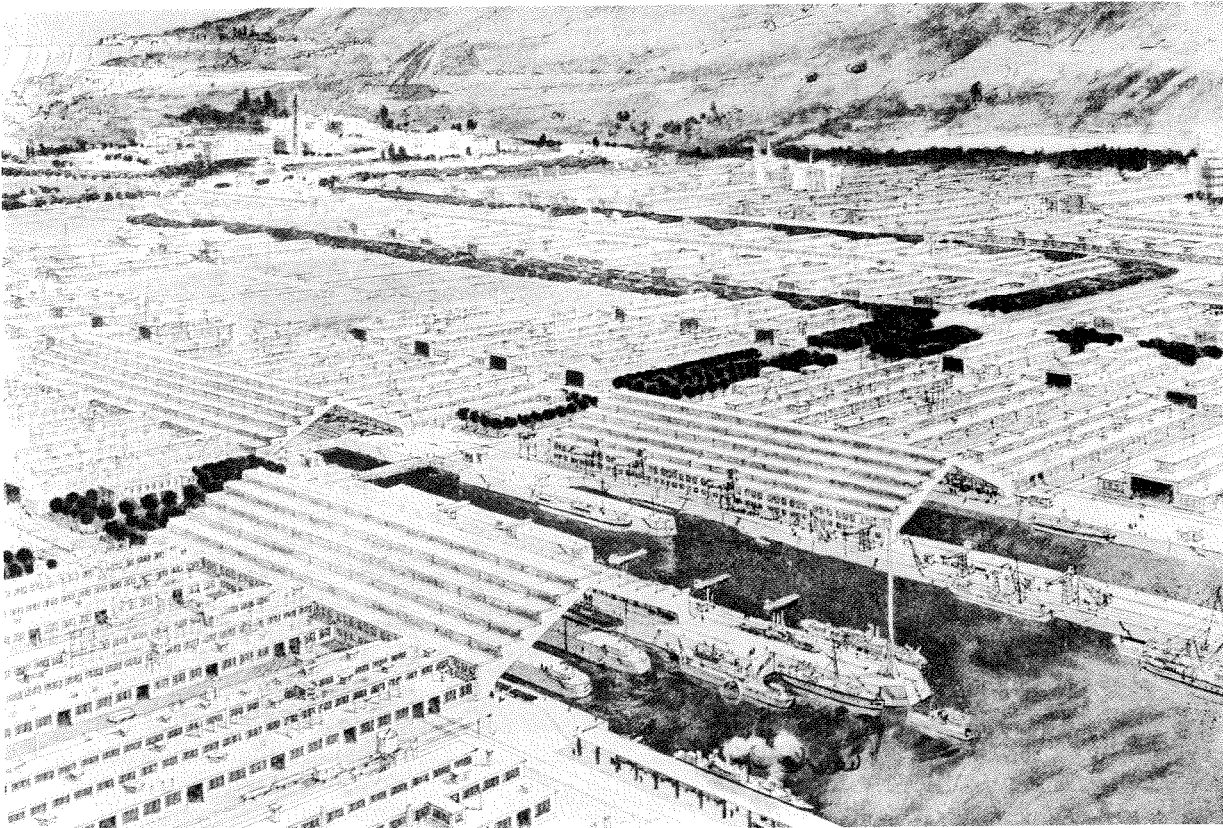
for real elegance in the use of reinforced concrete. Early in Garnier's career, Auguste Perret began his persistent search for a legitimate classic analogue in concrete, and in 1916 Eugène Freyssinet astonished the world with his hangar at Orly.

In the area of long-span structures, Garnier introduced two solutions that became part of his signature as architect. The great Cattle Market is his finest architectural achievement still surviving without change. Its prototype is to be seen in the boat-building shed in the industrial part of the Cité. The original intention was to realize this form in concrete; when this proved impractical, the frame was built in steel with concrete decks. These three-hinged arches are low in the haunch, the building seems to be all roof, the multiple flat planes articulate continuous clerestory windows that bathe the interior in diffused light. The latticed pattern of the arches has a gossamer quality that would not be attainable in concrete until the days of Nervi. Garnier's other characteristic spanning device, never built but drawn repeatedly on projects by him and his disciples, is an alternate to the dome. The high-rising renaissance dome had had enormous impact in France (Invalides, Val de Grâce, Panthéon) and it became the everpresent centerpiece in typical *grand plans* drawn at the Ecole. Programs invariably called for some big assembly hall or other feature occupying a hierarchical position in the plan and whose dome would rise to dominate the ensemble.

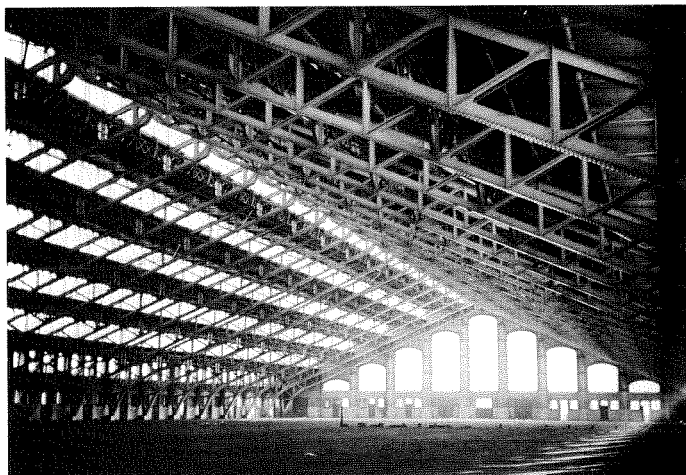
Such a *cliché* Garnier could not accept; his solution for covering such a space was to build pairs of parallel concrete girders, tiered on top of each other with diminishing magnitude, the upper tiers becoming octagonal with clerestory windows or a crowning lantern. In his formidable 1919 project for a Labor Exchange in Lyon, he proposed to span in this fashion the great congress hall seating 4,000 persons.

Both these solutions enabled the architect to obtain natural top lighting, while avoiding any sloping or curved surfaces. However, in his Cité project for an immense public bath, Garnier proposed great horizontal girders between which the roof slabs, horizontal atop the girders, warped upward to meet oval skylights, prefiguring an improbable membrane structure. This could have been the beginning of a structural breakthrough had means been available at that time to analyze such a form. Unfortunately, Garnier never had a brilliant engineering collaborator who could have done for him what Komendant did for Kahn and Arup for Utzon.

In the design of the medical center now known as the Hôpital Edouard Herriot, Garnier was able to bring to fruition a project that embodies a pervasive trait in his character: compassion toward helpless people. It consumed much of his time during the period 1909–1927 and resulted in an institution that continues in high gear today. Medical practice of that time was almost totally without the tools



6



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6 View of industrial sector, with boat-building facilities in foreground
7 Interior of Cattle Market in Abattoir of Lyon. Photograph by Lawrence Anderson.



8

and treatments now in common use, but it had become apparent that sunshine and pure air were helpful in overcoming many diseases. There was a great movement toward breaking down big hospitals into units called pavilions, thus giving patients close relationship to these amenities and making them feel more relaxed than if they were in a huge crowded environment. Garnier's hospital is the example *par excellence* of the psychological and therapeutic merits of the pavilion concept, later abandoned by health planners because of its inefficiency. I recently visited Grange-Blanche (its original name) and was impressed at the bustle of outdoor circulation between the many two- and three-story buildings and deeply moved to see that the windows of a sunroom had bracketed above them trellises on which wistaria bloomed. This Garnier touch not even a hospital administrator could suppress in six decades.

The closest Garnier came to using the architectural language of Perret was in the City Hall of Boulogne-Billancourt (a Parisian suburb); it is the only major work Garnier executed outside greater Lyon. The work exhibits superior probity and dignity without any immodest gesture. It was under construction in 1931–1934, overlapping my own study period in Paris, but I was unaware of it then and still have never seen it.

Although I never had the good fortune to meet Tony Garnier, I benefited indirectly from his

8 Pavilion in the Hôpital Edouard Herriot. Photograph by Lawrence Anderson.

professorship through close association with his students. Arriving in Paris in the autumn of 1930, I joined the Atelier Defrasse-Madeline-Aublet, a studio external to the Beaux-Arts, located in the rue Visconti. Also inducted there during that period were several students from the Garnier atelier who had come to Paris for their advanced studies. Among them were Pierre Bourdeix and Louis Piessat, author of Garnier's biography. Georges Dengler, also a Garnier *protégé*, had already spent a glorious year in Defrasse-Madeline-Aublet and was in the Rome competition. Although new to the atelier and thus lacking other friendships, these students and myself were doing work in *première classe*; we naturally socialized together in the café and restaurant life that gave relief not only from the atelier but from our sleazy hotels that were no more than rooming houses.

It came to pass that in the 1930 Rome competition Piessat had "negrified" for Bourdeix (still in Lyon) while I did the same for Dengler in Paris; that is to say we elaborated on parts of the designs by means of sketches, which, if approved, could be incorporated in the final drawings. Dengler also sought criticism from Garnier by sending studies by mail; one of these was returned with a marginal critique in the form of a sonnet. The general tenor of Garnier's advice to Dengler was to keep his design airy, light, and clean, avoiding all nonessential enrichment. The jury awarded the

first prize to Dengler, who, after a suitable period of celebration and commemoration by his supporters, was sent off to Rome by train from the Gare de Lyon.

Those were heady days, among the most joyously rewarding that the Ecole could still furnish to its adherents. They uplifted me; not only did I bask in the glow of victory as a close friend of the winner and the general exhilaration the event provided for atelier morale, I distinctly felt being rubbed off on me large segments of the attractive philosophy of the great man that Garnier was. I relished his teaching vicariously and came to admire him for the positions he took and the creative work he produced.

His eminence remains solitary; a heroism part of, but also very peripheral to, the Ecole, an achievement foreshadowing, but not exactly merging with, the idealistic first phases of modernism.

Does the Vision Stick?

Donlyn Lyndon

The State of Illinois Center in Chicago offers an extraordinary example of the public realm as conceived in the 1980s. It is a building that belongs to the public, to the people of the State of Illinois, but it does not house the representative public spaces of government. It is not a place for convening. The legislature does not meet here; it is not the place of public debate. It is rather a place of businesslike transactions, a place for bureaucratic operations and for the legislators and the governor to meet with their staffs and constituents. It is where bills are paid, legislation is drafted, and deals are made, not the stuff with which to represent the public. It is a workaday place that houses activities scarcely distinguishable from the activities that shaped the boxy skyline of Chicago even though their consequences may profoundly affect the citizens of the state.

To an eye trained in urban civilities, the exterior of the building is an affront. On two sides, it is covered with a pastiche of cheap-looking, scaleless curtain wall panels that call to mind a diverse array of offensive buildings from the 1950s (chiefly the Jack Tar Hotel in San Francisco and the Prudential Tower in Boston). This effect is neither diminished nor made more interesting by being carried around the other sides as fragments of a false front scattered across the edge of the plaza space. These fragments of wall, trivial as they are, bear some analysis. What role do they play in creating a public

realm? I think none. They are not shaped to accommodate anyone. They are too thin and harsh to lean against or sit within. The materials and colors belong more to the world of buses and cars than to the world of touch. And the fragments of wall they purport to represent do not enfront the street or make any other notable urban gesture because they are not large enough to define the edge of the space or to enclose the plaza within. They are, from the discernable evidence in the place itself, simply a gimmick, the trace of a design move not made, an announcement (hardly necessary one would suppose) that the building does not fill out the block. They make the citizen aware, perhaps, that this is an unprecedented building, a curiosity, perhaps even a joke. One can't help but suppose that their more explicit purpose was to demonstrate the architect's awareness of what passes (or once passed, since it's now several years later) for architectural knowledge in the early 1980s, namely, that an "urban building" fills the block; that fragments of a well-known form may be suggestive of the whole; that curtain wall panels are simply the skin of a building; and (most vociferously) that the interdictions of Mies van der Rohe no longer hold sway in Chicago. These are useful insights for architects perhaps but not precisely the stuff of which great public visions are made. In any case, the execution of these fragments is too thin to bear further exploration, too obvious to sustain inquiry. The gesture that was fragmented was neither strong enough nor relevant enough to bear

dissolution. In short, the fragments are a throwaway line in the midst of a big show.

The big show, of course, is inside, and it is indeed quite a show. The sun shines into an astonishingly large rotunda-atrium that is roofed and walled on two sides with glass—a winter garden like none you've ever seen or, more closely still, a launching platform awaiting its missile. All of it is provisional, with no effort at explanation. The walls of the drum are a miasma of open-railed passages and walls dissolved in mirrored colors. Great openwork stairs similar to the fire escapes that once threaded across the back alley silhouettes of Chicago lead the eye up toward the roof from which they hang. Only in the roof trusses is there comprehensible pattern: a network of trusses with no discernible means of support. This is an environment, not a structure, a fantastic act of will that is to be taken at face value, dressed in a stagey coverall of technical ingenuity. It yields neither to empathy nor to inquisition. It is simply a phenomenon, a show you won't forget.

The bottom several floors are filled with shops and restaurants, a multilevel space of the sort that is familiar now from shopping centers, but it is nonetheless engaging as a peopled scene, with movements in all directions on several levels, flowing escalators, exposed elevators, tables and chairs galore, and plenty of railings to lean out over and survey the passing scene. Not surprisingly, on a

Saturday morning the main floor was filled with extras being filmed walking briskly through, sauntering provocatively along the balcony rail, stopping in the midst of paths to exchange a last few words. It was as though they were filming a William H. Whyte extravaganza, with costuming that was suitably diverse (though perhaps just a bit too natty) and with a racial mix that was commendably balanced. It was altogether believable, not stranger, really, than any other of the fictions of urbane city life that have been constructed in Chicago's Loop and the various central business districts of America.

These fictions follow three general modes: Captains of Industry, Patrons of Rationality, and Art and Entrepreneurs of Environment. There are buildings of the early part of the century that construct a world of tight streets, classically derived orders, and stone. They project a world of Captains of Industry carrying civilization and technology forward with the help of a dutiful crew. The matrons of the crew are provided great places to shop in. The seriousness of the enterprise was manifested in permanent materials, stone (or terra cotta meant to look like stone), and carefully contrived details executed with a craftsman's skill (or manufactured to seem so—skill once or twice removed, but a craft mastered one way or another).

This vision of urbanity was gradually cheapened until it lost authority and was swept away by the Patrons of Rationality and Art,



6

6 Entry colonnade.

Photograph by James R. Steinkamp.

who conceived the city (with a lot of encouragement from architects) as a plane upon which to dispose idealized objects, unblemished by any evidence of the tawdry world of daily provisions. This can be seen most clearly in the federal office building, next door to the new state office building. It is on a flat paved plaza with a flat paved glass lobby and a giant work of Picasso standing forth alone in the wind. This building is serious, still, clearly, carefully, almost painfully studied. Its architects were intent on doing it just right, on being approved for the care with which each act of building was considered.

Now we have the era of consumers having fun. Urban life here and elsewhere has been conceived by the Entrepreneurs of Environment as an extended lunch hour, a pageant of casual encounters and festive shopping, with evocative environments cast around in evident unseriousness.

The respective urban scenes, the public realms that are thus constructed, vary in their import, in the visions of collective life they call forward. What difference do they make? Are we moved by their respective messages? Does the vision stick? Are there standards to apply? What might we expect from a suitable public realm? The answers all depend on the power and purpose of myth and whether myths can be constructed or, of necessity, must grow out of the rampant energies of society as they intersect with the permanent conditions of being.

In a conventional public building, the symbolism is all established and directed; the building forms are representative, and its inhabitants are assigned appropriate roles. The mode is one made familiar in government buildings throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In the Chicago state office building, everything is a part of the spectacle, but your use of it is undirected. The spectacle is a casually related event that hovers over a set of transactions and activities that are formed freely within it. It is a monument simply to the act of being there. It has no designated meanings; it is instead a memorable form to which people will attach their own associations, a framework that they are free to fill out with the stuff of their own daily lives. Yet on this scale, and with the weight of significance the state building necessarily bears, this seems not enough. It should refer beyond itself if to nurture a common bond for its citizens is a part of its intent.

Ten years ago or so I argued, in an article titled "Five Ways to People Places," that architecture should turn our attention to people, should remind us, in so far as it can, that we live among others and that each is a center of initiative and imagination. Our culture needs, I contend, to care more about its participants and less about technology and power and abstraction.

It seemed then that the new breed of shopping environment that was developing was exciting and

hopeful, that we could discover that it was really in the pleasures of human exchange that our public realm would find meaning and purpose. It seems less so now. Showing people to each other has merits but not enough. The scene is amusing but not gratifying. Being in the throng may bring a rush of either terror or recognition, but it does not sustain attention. Watching people mill past objects they might buy, commit themselves to environments and foods of diverse origins, stand in line at the banking machine, or stare blankly at other people is not a way of learning much, especially if what we see mirrors ourselves. What we wish to know and learn, what we wish to encounter, are qualities of mind and sympathy, to observe how others deal with each other, to learn of their works, to recognize lineage and invention, to be made aware of qualities that we might emulate or recommend unto our children. We wish, in fact, to find through our encounters with the public some forms of ethical thought.

This would lead us, I presume to seek a public realm that would encourage investigation, that would let us see people through the medium of their works, to judge actions in relation to context. We would seek a public realm of true encounters, where it is possible to make judgments regarding the appropriateness of observed responses, to perceive the mind and sensibility at work. Following this line of thought will lead us to the importance of formalization—setting things into a frame of

reference that distances perceptions and sets a context for examination. Returning to the State of Illinois Center, it would appear that its proposition that state bureaucratic work is like any other but affiliated with a more wonderous scene may be seen on the one hand as a useful deflation of pomp. On the other hand, it can be seen as inherently corrupting, with government understood to be just another form of business—in this case housed in a building that is callous in its disregard for convention and bent on a form of display that creates spectacle in and for itself without mediating intentions.

The one obvious effort to make a symbolic tie to civic tradition is the placement in its recessed center of a paving pattern directly related to that of the Campidoglio on the Capitoline Hill in Rome. Whether wholly or only half-intended to make the connection with Rome, the gesture is hollow. The paving of the Campidoglio is on a convex form, recalling the hill on which it sits, and is occupied in its center by a statue of Marcus Aurelius, a revered tie with the earlier Rome. The Chicago paving is flat and empty. Chicago is flat, too, but one could hardly suppose that underneath that floor there is earth. Indeed earth is hard to imagine here at all. We stand not between earth and sky, as Christian Norberg-Schulz would have it, but enmeshed in webs of steel, glass, and hype.

Perhaps you will say, “What’s wrong with creating a great people place with all the means available to you?

Chicago can always use another tourist attraction. What could be better than to create a memorable spectacle that can be identified with the life of the state.”

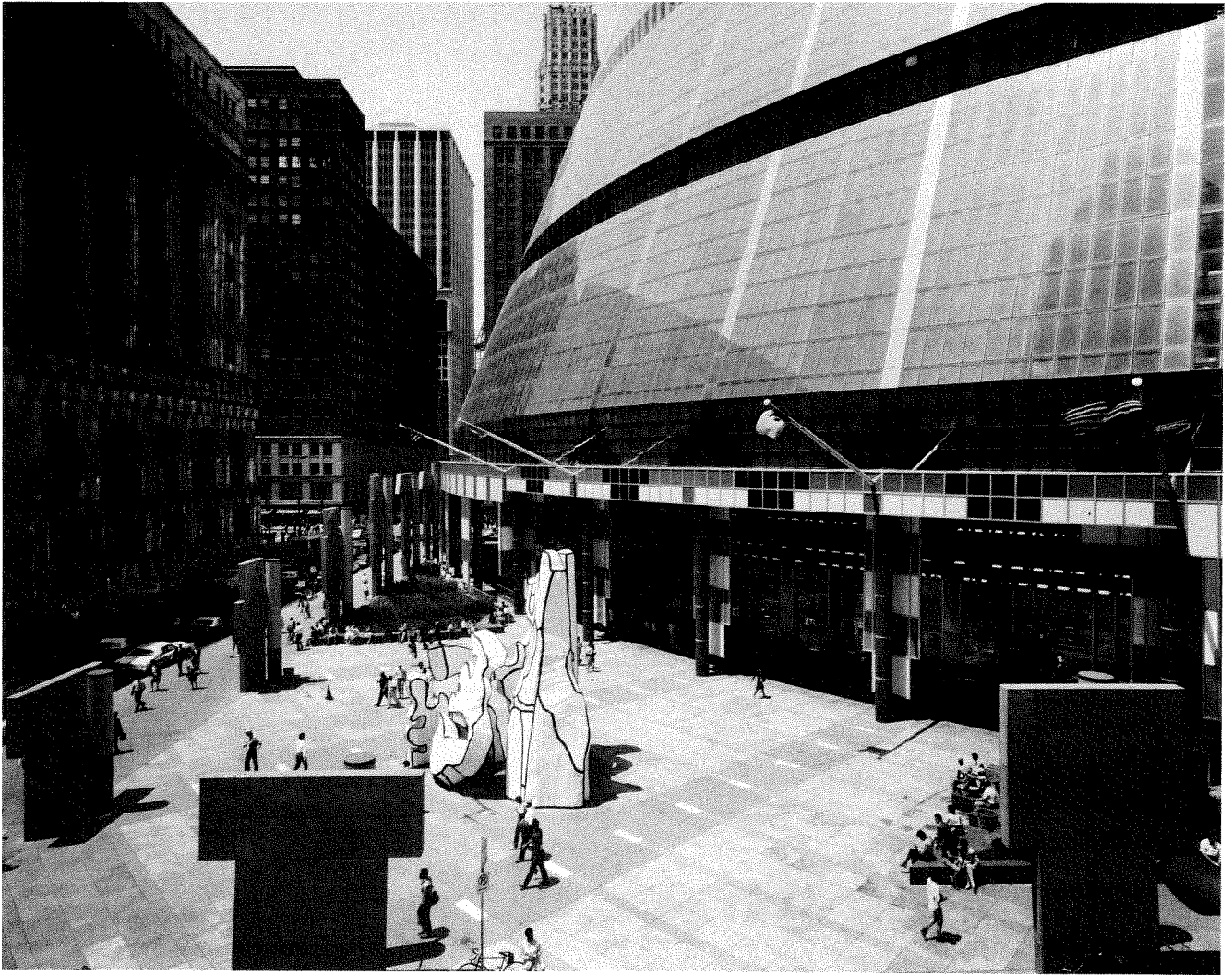
It would be better to make the public realm in ways that sustain investigation, that accommodate many imaginings; to make settings in which one can attend to the transactions of people on issues that matter. It would be better to give a structure for experiencing individuals in the public realm, for being able to know and understand the works of men and women from dimensions of time that exceed the present. Solidity in time is not easily achieved, and in this building it is hard enough to grasp and difficult to imagine keeping a storehouse of civic memories.

To grasp and keep (to use Christian Norberg-Schulz’s terms) has an unfortunately acquisitive tone, because it is so easily associated with things rather than with concepts. Yet our personalities are made up of those memories and response patterns that we keep. And our collective life, the public of which we can become a part, is that set of ideas and experiences that we hold in common with others. The way in which these are represented and made concrete in the spaces that we share is a major qualifier of how we consider each other. It is a matter for contention, then, whether our buildings and public places would have us believe that individuals are important; whether they would remind us of the thoughts and considerations our

predecessors have given to similar circumstances; whether they embellish our perceptions of place and serve as discernable landmarks in the construction of our public persona, whether they intimate that there is importance in times that will follow.

Juke Box Serenade

Allan Jacobs



4

4 Entry Plaza.
Photograph by James R. Steinkamp.

I came upon the new State of Illinois Center in Chicago while taking a walk during a break in a conference. Actually, I had seen it from a distance a few hours earlier in a taxi and wondered what it was, perhaps some new athletic facility or performance hall of one sort or another mixed with an office development. The round shape and sloping walls may have generated that response.

Now, however, I was experiencing the State Street Mall, or whatever it's called, I was disappointed: just some trees on one side, then some trees on the other; no strong use of landscape; a little bit of this and that. I might have expected such a design in a small city (but then Iowa City has done its own central streets so very well), not in Chicago, a big, tough, wonderful city, or on "State Street, that great street. . . ."

Walking on, or just off of, State Street I saw, again, what I was to learn was the State of Illinois and thought I should find out just what it was, expecting to see, somehow, a marquee and ticket booths and posters announcing coming events. I couldn't see what was inside, so I walked in. It's not an athletic facility, but maybe it is a performance hall.

I thought then, and think now, that it is a strange building. At first I was confused. Where do you walk to get to where you might want to go? How would you get around on the different floors if you worked there? Despite the apparent

obvious flow, there seemed to be confusion. Perhaps it was just my vantage point, or maybe it was all the lights and uneven reflections. Does the circulation work? There seemed so many ins and outs and separate pieces. The confusion was not just one of orientation; it was sensuous as well, so much shine and glitter and glitz, so stylish, so of-the-moment. But then, most of the clothes I buy aren't stylish. Most of them I can wear for a few years; not all, but most. Won't a space and materials and detailing like this be out of fashion soon? Maybe not, but maybe.

Along with the glitter there is a sense of thinness and fragility. Over time, who will maintain and wash all the windows that surround the lobby (and more) and polish all the shiny surfaces. Those surfaces have to be shiny, always. It's like a black Alfa Romeo Spider Veloce. Dust is its greatest enemy. How vulnerable, I wonder, is this state office building?

Overall, being in that lobby made me think of being inside of a transparent 1950s jukebox.

Outside, the paper-thin impressions continue. Why the thin false walls in front of the circular columns, as if to separate the facade from the structure and show that how it's done is a great virtue. But, more important, why this building shape? How does it relate to the grid of streets? What does it gain from or give to, its surroundings? Why all the activity, the restaurants, the shops, on the inside? What is

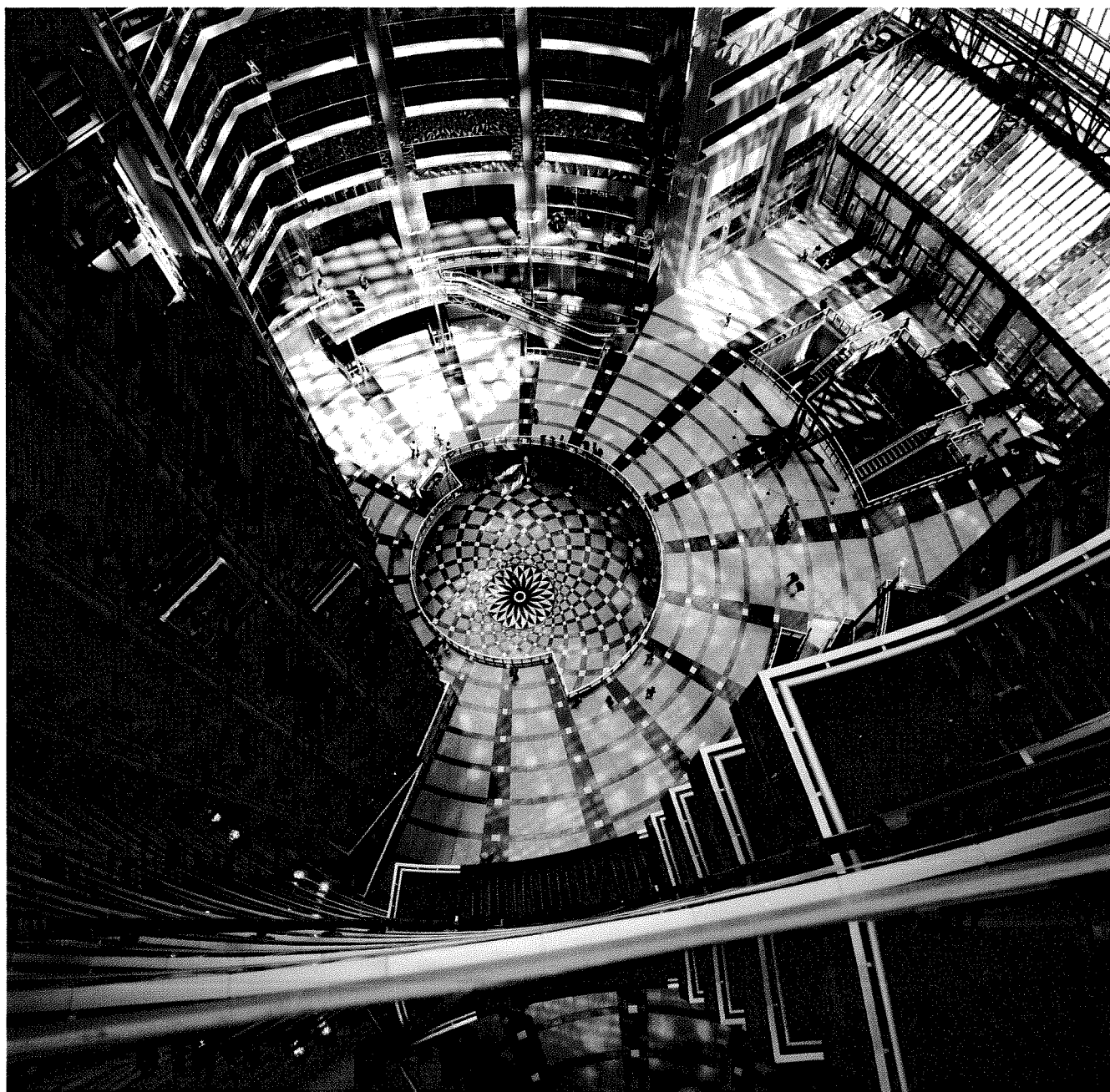
there for the street or the space? Maybe the site is too big, or maybe the building could have been lower (God forbid!) and used more of the site. What spaces are created outside? None of the answers, in positive terms, were, or are, apparent to me.

It is a big building. It does gain attention.

I walked across to Murphy's civic center building, the one with the Picasso sculpture and the large plaza in front. Rain started, then stopped. It was getting on to late afternoon of an early spring day. That building and that space and the building across from it seemed so solid and strong and right. That's a bit of a surprise. I would have thought I would want more activity and animation.

State of Illinois Center

Helmut Jahn

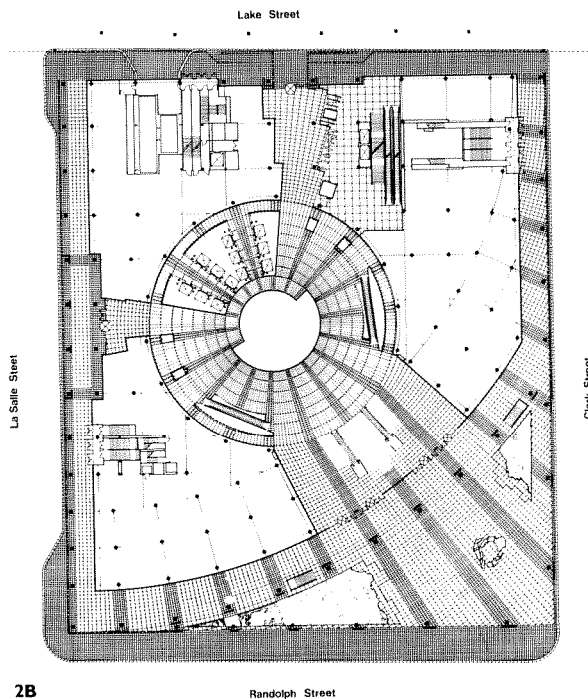
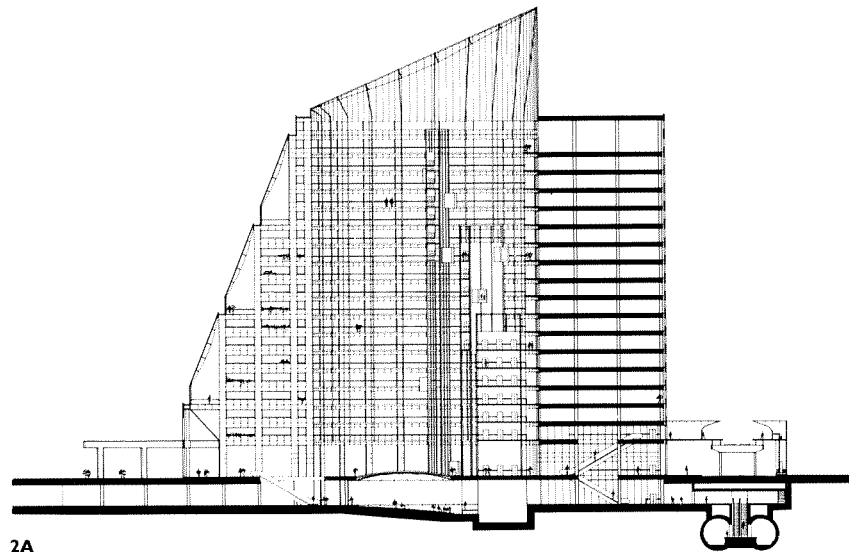


2 Atrium.
Photograph by James R. Steinkamp.

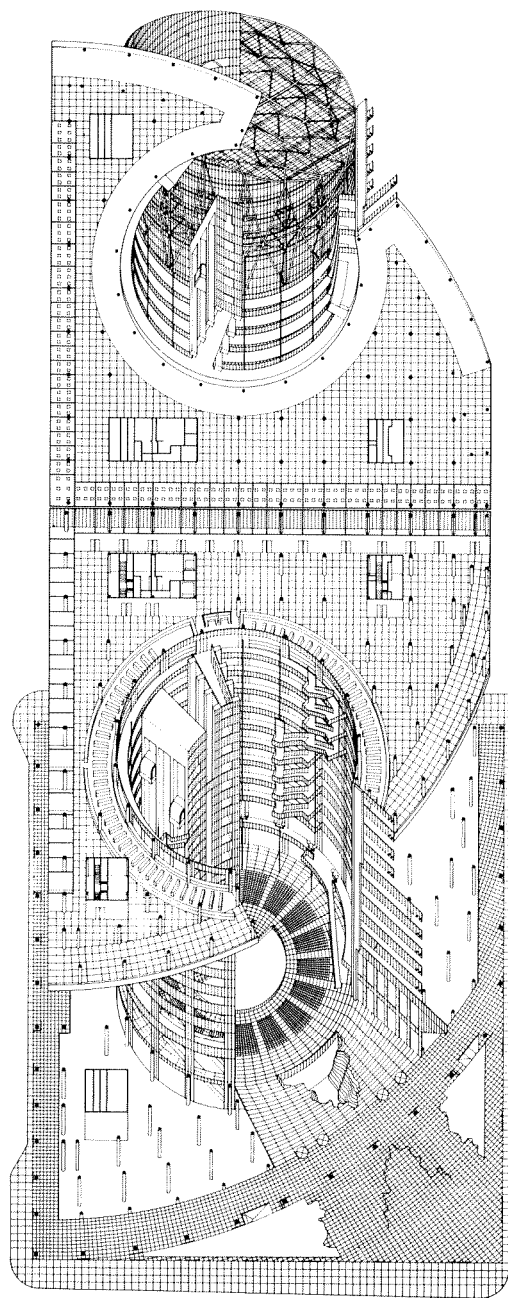
The State of Illinois Center, as a major government building, required a new ideological base. It is a complex amalgam of historical precedent, technology, and urban design. Through a process of fragmentation, it transforms the representative model (Henry Ives Cobb's now demolished federal building in the Loop) into an open, democratic building, meaningful in its urban context and purpose.

The regularity of the square building lot is at once accepted and denied. The triangular plan has two sides aligned to the square site, but the third is rounded to form a giant crescent background to a pedestrian plaza. The arcade surrounding the building breaks down into individual pilasters, which diminish toward the entry at the corner. These structures mentally reestablish the traditional "squaring" of the block, which is contradicted by the built volume above, using a multitude of transparent, reflective, and colored glass to decorate and reinforce the office container. At the ground floor, consideration has been given to continuity with the surroundings, and this is contrasted by the treatment of the upper part.

The spatial sequence of forecourt, arcade, and rotunda establishes the "interphase" between inside and outside and, above all, creates public space as a gift to the city. The duality of the language on the outside is continued here through the Campidoglio-like treatment of the plaza combined with the structural and futuristic



2A Building section
2B Ground floor plan



2C

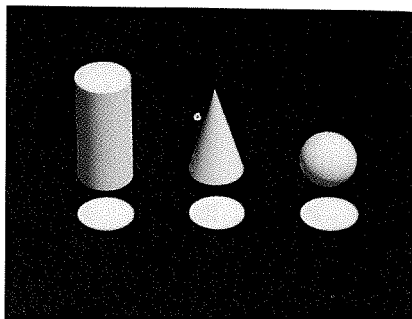
treatment of the vertical surfaces and the top, the mechanistic animation of the elevators and the dynamic movement of the escalators and stairs.

This duality between historic reference and technological imagery is a bold, optimistic statement in a world today so preoccupied with conservatism and historicism. There is still promise of harboring the benefits of technology for life and society.

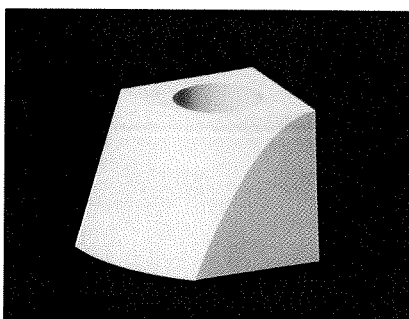
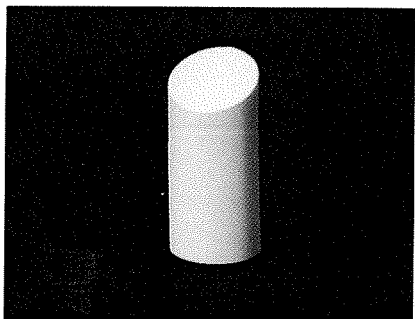
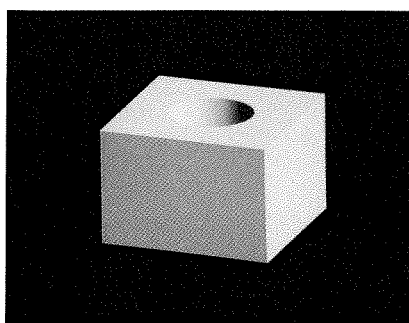
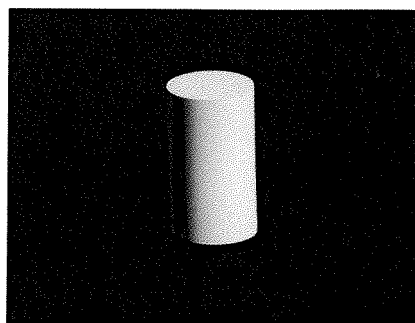
2C Up and down axonometric views
2D Conceptual sketches

The Last Roundup

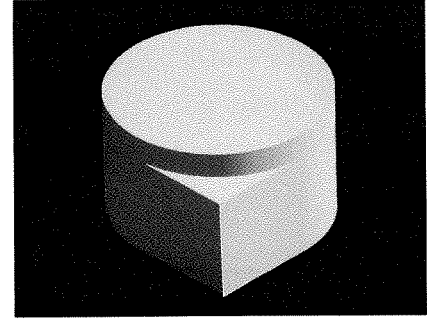
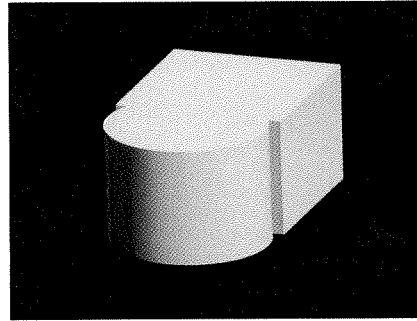
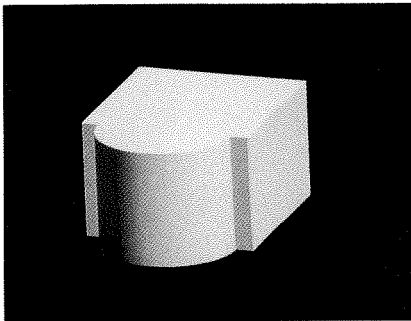
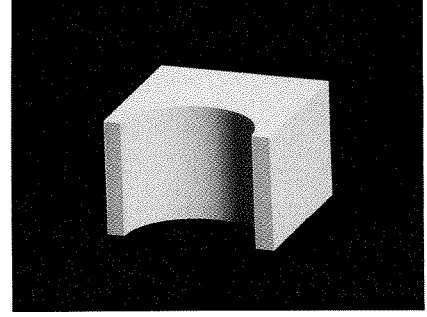
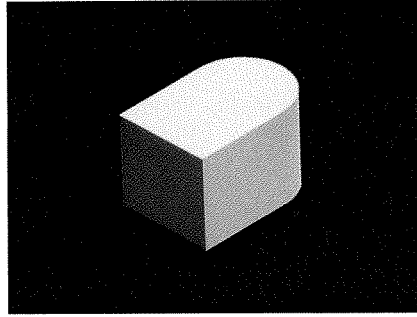
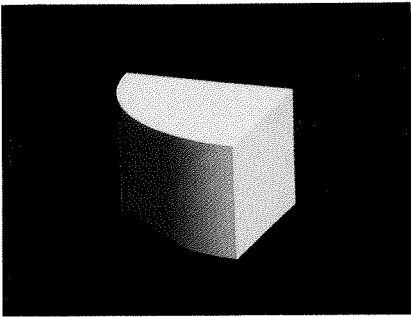
William J. Mitchell



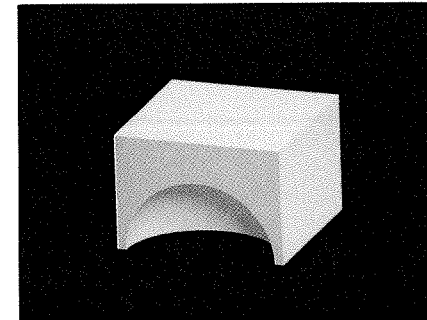
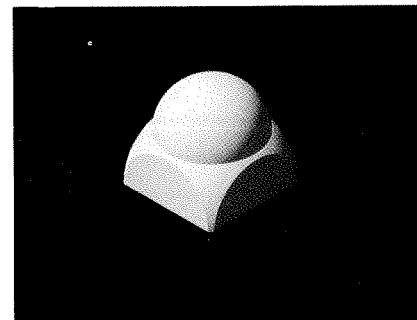
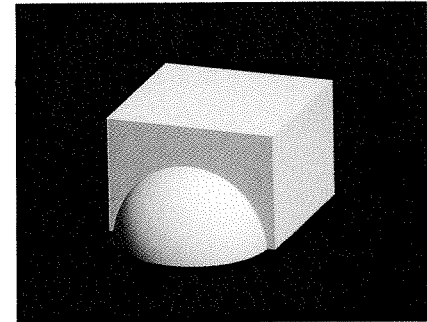
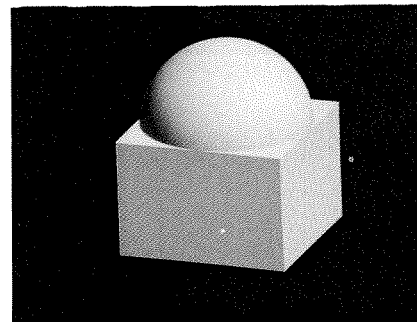
Lay a circle down among the rectangles of the Chicago grid; you can form chords, diameters, and tangents. Now let the circle become a volume; it might be a cylinder, a sphere, or a cone. Finally, imagine acts of union, intersection, and complementation between circular and rectangular masses. Herewith, the **Kama Sutra** of the circle and the grid: a catalogue of positions and pleasures.

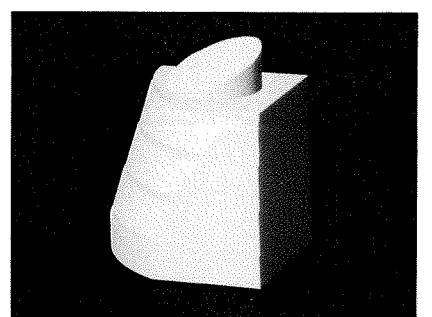
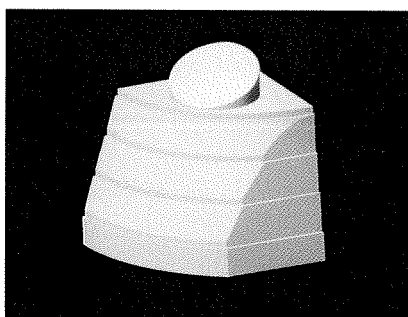
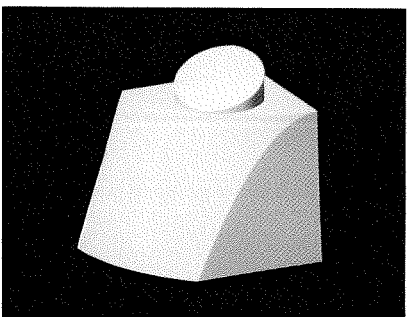
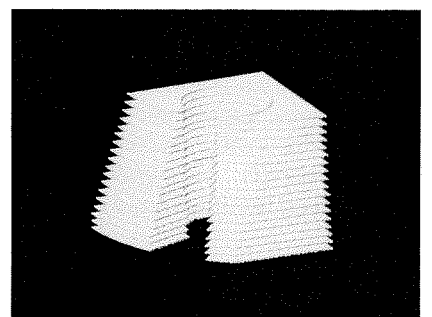
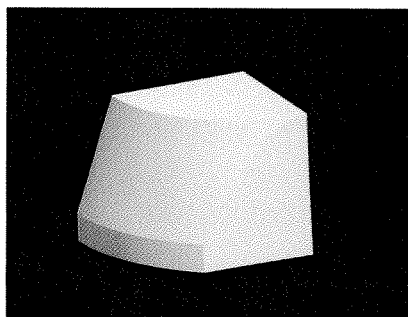
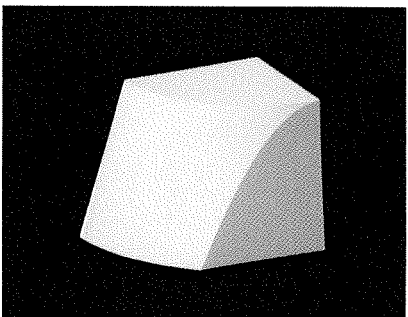
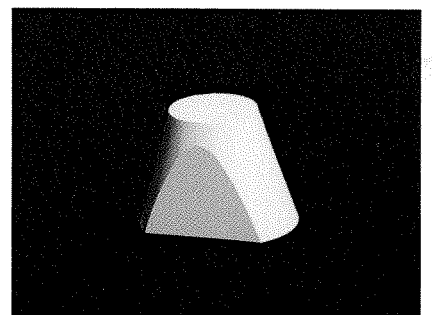
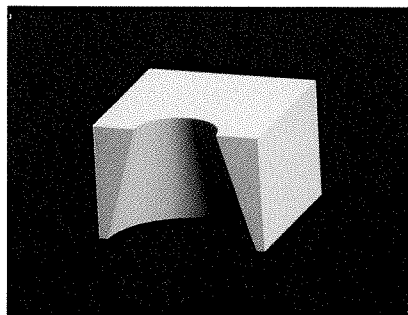
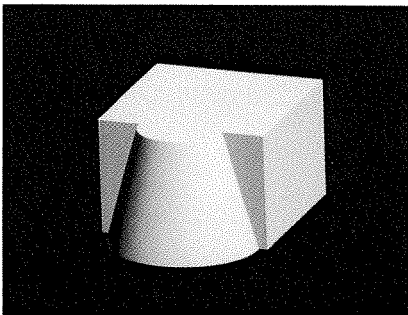
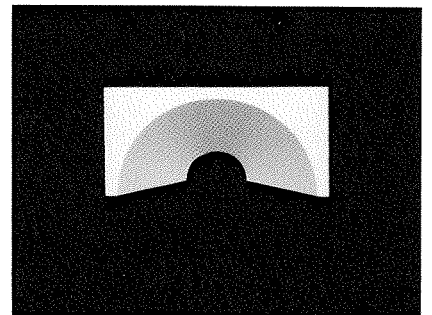
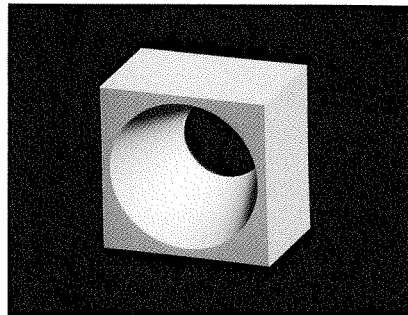
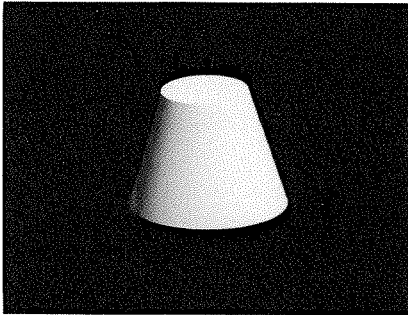


There are the straightforward satisfactions of the cylindrical tower (Marina City) and its complementary atrium. The tangential position and intersection, for more jaded sophisticates, yield the quarter-round corner (Xerox Building). Union configures a convex end (333 Wacker Drive), and the complementation of a cylinder overlapping at a chord leaves a concave emptiness (O'Hare Hilton).



The offspring from the union of the sphere and rectangular volume, domes and apses, populate the history books. Complementation generates the corresponding concave interiors, and pendentives are produced by intersection.







3

A cone cut by two parallel sides of a rectangular box and intersected becomes a frustrum, another thoroughly respectable part of the architectural tradition. The complement, inverted, turns into an amphitheater (like the one by Walter Netsch at Chicago Circle), or sideways and divided, Louis Sullivan's splendid entrance to the Transportation Building at the Columbian Exposition. Union along a diameter produces a conical apse and a triangle; if the diameter

becomes a chord, the triangle becomes a hyperbola—a little too racy for some. Intersect and you get the exotic thrill of a conical pendentive with hyperbolic arches. There is still more adventurous variation: the cone offsets its axis, intersects again, and the circle and the grid achieve a State of Illinois Center.

It was always there, waiting to be tried, a last possibility still lurking, unmaterialized, in Plato's heaven.

3 State Office Building in urban context.
Photograph by James R. Steinkamp.

The Government Building Redefined

Michael J. Bednar



5

In the nineteenth century, a government building was thought to be monumental, formal, and neoclassical. Its plan was highly symmetrical, with a grand ceremonial space in the center (often a domed rotunda) flanked by multistoried office wings. The rotunda was reached by a grand exterior stair leading to a portico and interior antechambers. It was devoid of activity except on ceremonial occasions and/or when people passed through.

In the twentieth century, a government building often has been considered as a statement of bureaucratic efficiency. In order to save tax dollars, the grand ceremonial space was replaced by a lobby, and the exterior was made to look like any other office building. Gone is the sense of public or civic significance.

In the State of Illinois Center, the concept of a government office building has been redefined. The program has been enlarged to include public activities in the form of shops, restaurants, an auditorium, and a gallery. The rotunda has returned and been expanded to grandiose proportions such that it spatially dominates the building and interrelates all activities. A sense of openness, availability, and accessibility permeates this building from the street level entrance to the open plan offices that directly face the rotunda-atrium across surrounding galleries.

In recent decades, several government buildings have

incorporated an atrium. The Boston City Hall (1969) has a kind of atrium with a complex section, whereas the Dallas City Hall (1978) has a 223 foot long, six-story atrium with a stepped section. At the Hart Senate Office Building in Washington, D.C., the atrium is eight stories high and T-shaped in plan. In Minneapolis, the sixty-foot wide, twenty-four story atrium at the Hennepin County Government Center (1974) unites two towers. In each of these cases, the design intentions for the atrium are similar: to provide a significant public space while fostering a sense of spacial community among the staff. In each case, the latter intention is achieved with greater success than the former; the public spaces suffer from a lack of true public purpose and its design realization.

In the State of Illinois Center, this dual intention is admirably achieved. The public space is truly public, in large part because there is a public program. This building incorporates 82,000 net square feet of commercial space on the bottom three levels along with several public-access state functions. The public has abundant reason to be there, to eat, drink, shop, or obtain services. The rotunda-atrium spatially and visually unites the government employees on the floors above with this public activity and vice versa. Bureaucratic divisions are spatially eased by the open relationship of offices to galleries and the interfloor stairs suspended in the atrium. All floors are physically united by the prominently placed glass-enclosed



5A



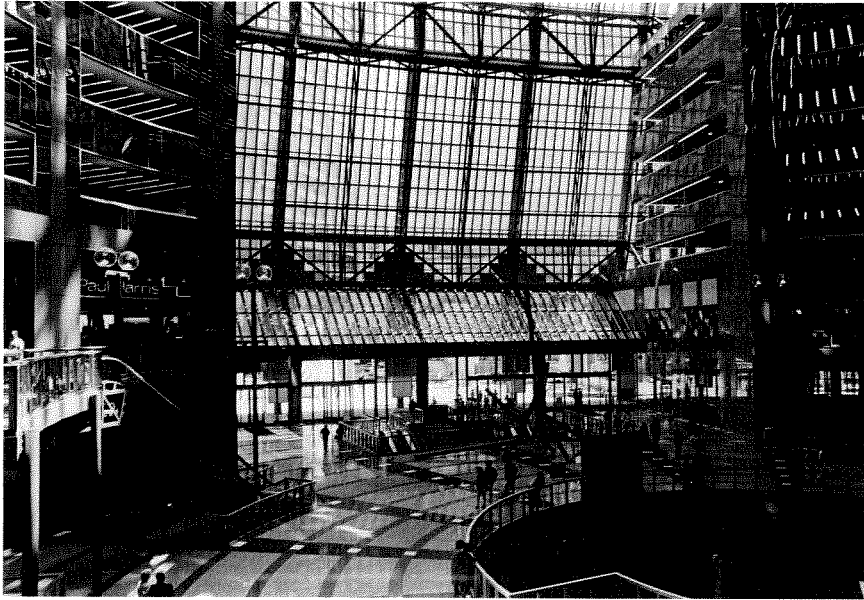
5B

5 Atrium, different levels.

All photographs by Michael J. Bednar.

5A Corridors open to atrium

5B Entry plaza

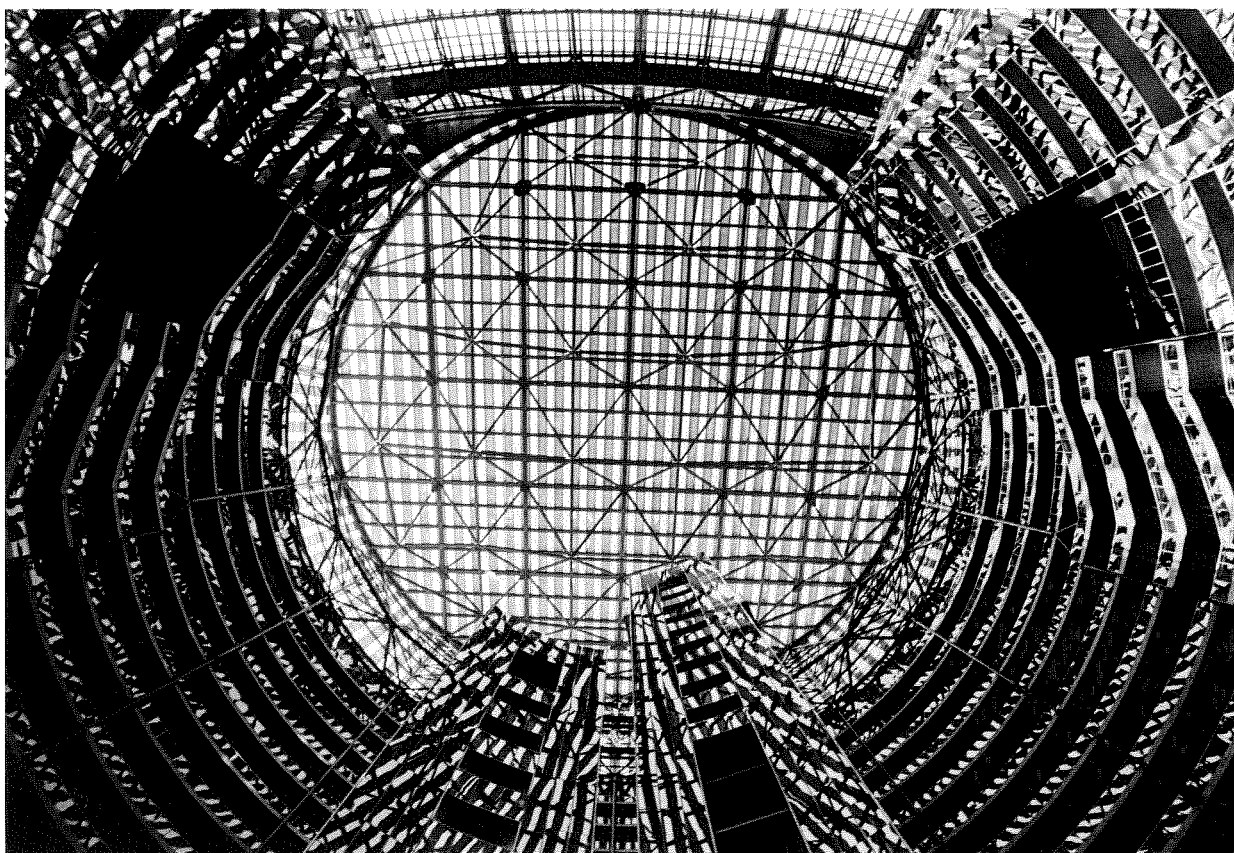


5C

elevators. The concourse level, however, is dissociated from the main space despite the circular well at the center and the escalator well at the entry.

The processional sequence in this building is very literally manifested in the spatial form. Even from the exterior plaza at the corner of the site, a pedestrian can already see his/her destination in the building and the means to get there. The sequence begins at the plaza and passes through a layer of arcaded space that serves as the entryway to the triple-tiered ante-atrium and the rotunda-atrium itself. The elevator lobbies lead to the office galleries and their interfloor stairs, all suspended within the rotunda-atrium. Because of its sloped top and the strong diagonal/radial movement that leads to its free standing elevator cores, this magnificent space has a more dynamic quality than most rotundas. In fact, the whole place is alive with movement, which can be viewed from every vantage point within. This constant stream of pedestrian movement, its reflections in the numerous clear and reflected glass surfaces, and the changing patterns of daylight provide a visual interplay that holds the observer spellbound.

The visual interplay, however, does not end with the excitement of movement and daylight. The architectural expression of the rotunda-atrium is uniquely that of Helmut Jahn, a kind of high-tech, constructivist postmodernism. The blue and rose color scheme is visually overpowering when carried



5D

out on so vast a scale. This composition of brightly colored linear elements and transparent surfaces yields an aura of tension and freneticism. The earth-toned, radially patterned granite floor is in stark contrast to all other aspects of the space since it is a richly patterned surface. The combination of daylight, movement, and unrestrained expression results in a place that exists at the point of self-destruction with only the power of the great circular form to hold it together. In a way, the architectural expression challenges the power of the space and the rich and varied activity within. It is not a place of

repose, as are other rotundas, yet it is a place of compelling attraction.

The historical significance of this building is not primarily in its unique exterior form or its audacious architectural expression. It is the power of the rotunda-atrium that makes this building significant, because it spatially and programatically unites the public servant and the general public. By establishing a public space of grandeur and excitement in both scale and form, the nature of the government office building has been redefined and a strong precedent has been established for the future.

5D View into atrium

State Office Building,
Chicago



I **Atrium.**

Photograph by James R. Steinkamp.

It's big, it's singular, it's bold, even brazen; it occupies a particular space in the grid of Chicago, challenges the limits of that geometry and taps onto the every-

day mercantile life that weaves through city streets. It may be seen as the apotheosis of the shopping mall, as a proud humbling of the bureaucracy, as a sensational(ist)



IA

landmark in the city. And, it was built for State Government. Whether the *Illinois State Office Building* is a place, of the place, or out of place is a matter of some debate. We have

asked the architect and five others (all teachers of architects and planners who teach, it turns out) to comment.

IA State Office Building, Chicago.
 Photograph by James R. Steinkamp.

A Critique of the Language Employed in the Design of the State of Illinois Office Building

Stanley Tigerman



7

A distinct odor of controversy has wafted about Helmut Jahn's Chicago office building for the State of Illinois since its inception. Political issues, construction cost overruns, arguments about contextualism, and appropriateness have been among the criteria by which this stigmatic presence continues to be measured. Even the building's high school "pom-pom" cheerleader color scheme has raised hackles on Chicago's self-anointed taste gurus. However, it is in the area of language that critics have been strangely silent—the language of architecture, if you will—and it is considerations in this area, I believe, that are crucial to understanding this apparently alien object since it landed here from an architectural planet different from the one to which we are more normally accustomed.

There are two different paradigms that can be employed to help one comprehend the State of Illinois Center: the first one is that traditional model of state capitols throughout the United States, and the second is the conventional mixed-use office building. It is reasonable to submit that Jahn's project is a hybridization, since the building has the functions and symbols of both paradigms.

In comparing the Illinois building with other, similar edifices, clearly the grand, central space establishing the locus of state capitols authored early in this century by American architects trained at the Ecole des Beaux Arts was influential on Jahn's understanding of the ennobling

7 Glass skin at atrium entry.
Photograph by James R. Steinkamp.

possibilities intrinsic to such spaces. By conceiving a great central court, or atrium, bounded by state functions, Jahn suggests the kind of heroic feeling apparent in all such buildings, from Hadrian's Pantheon in first-century Rome to Kahn's late twentieth-century Bangladesh Parliament building in Dacca. Conventionally conceived in that sense, Jahn's space enjoys so many precedents of this type to make one wonder if there is not something other than the building's spatiality that annoys so many people.

Perhaps what galls most people is the mixed-use concept for a public building in which civic functions are blended with a Western-style capitalistic retail presence. Certainly, the glitzy way in which retail shops are presented suggests so much importance to commodities as to infer a suppression of the very presence of the state itself. After all, the Ford Foundation's quiet dignity is reinforced by the way in which offices flank that particular atrium (of course, there is no sign of intrusive retail shops to take one's mind away from the stately presence of an eleemosynary operation). Just as the Chicago park district's loathing of any sign of commerciality in the green swath bordering our inland sea precludes the presence of retail activity on its arcadian edge, perhaps we have been trained to be revulsed by the sign of potential profit making connected with any of our preconceptions about noble gatherings, be they in the park or attached to the state.

It may be that the unconventional way in which the building is massed—and detailed (perhaps Jahn will discover that it is not a good idea to bring cheap materials to earth so that they can be kicked and dented as if one were in an architectural used car lot)—disrupts our sensibilities so much as to create a common angst about this building. After all, we have such an overwhelming gridiron tradition in Chicago (both on our land and imprinted on the facade of our buildings [the skeleton frame of both Chicago schools, that is]) that the presence of an object so blatantly disrupting both the frame is very likely to evoke feelings of loathing toward the author of such an intrusive presence.

The fact is that the State of Illinois building is actually quite conventional insofar as it is so solidly embedded in both ancient and recent traditions. It is also optimistic in that it is not so steeped in tradition as to suggest any sense of a loss of innocence in its presence. It may be *declass *, but who would suggest that either the City of Chicago or the State of Illinois politics is anything to the contrary? It may be glitzy (certainly its color is not to my particular taste), but think about the terminally boring, dirt-gray albeit tasteful alternatives conventionally employed in any other metropolitan building in recent Chicago tradition.

It is amazing that the Illinois body politic commissioned and then approved this strange lump of a

building, and to its credit, the resulting structure suggests that indeed there is hope for some kind of a future after all. The building's obviously contrived form is, after all, essentially "American" insofar as hybridization is a peculiarly American design methodology; it just goes a bit farther than contemporary taste can quickly adjust to, thus, the state of anxiety connected with the object in question. But, with that anxiety is also a state of joy attached to a future that portends hope as opposed to the better-known government pragmatism. That whim and wit can find their way into an agenda connected with public building suggests that an Orwellian option is not yet upon us. Given Chicago's gritty way of aging our most colorful buildings, even the pom-pom palette will no doubt turn dull in time. Too bad, in a way.

A Rutabaga

Robert Bly

The rutabaga is such a squat, fearsome thing, a sort of German observation balloon that observes below the ground. It notices the worms pass on their thundery errands and during the night watches weird beetles passing outside the cottage.

It is about the size of the testicle of a two-thousand-pound bull. The lower half (in its double color, it resembles a bobber) is pale cream, a gorgeous deep cream, the undoubtful high forehead of a man of inherited wealth. And the upper half is wine-red, something urgent, a reckless furtiveness that calls attention to itself, the burglar that wears red clothes, or a hermit sitting high on a pile of rutabagas. The burgundy color is altered here and there by whitish streaks.

In the hand, it rocks in its own cool ocean world. The hand feels complimented by it, as if it had been given a gift: the solid drift of snow that keeps the henhouse warm or the waves the storm throws against the cliff.

A knife has cut off both taproot and foliage. The cut at the bottom shows the raw flesh, as a severed head shows the neck. Faint rutabaga rings reverberate up into the skull.

When we bite into it, we taste an embittered story out of the Depression that ends with the whole family scattered, the furniture dispersed, the old pump no longer working, sour old men camped in the living room, and crusted cans of Carnation condensed milk everywhere.

Last night I dreamed that Christmas was coming, and you were in the house practicing music upstairs with a young, dark-haired man, a drummer. Each time you hit the sheet music with your wooden stick end, notes came out. The tune was "When the Saints Go Marching In."

Lucien Kroll

The construction of twenty-four “HLM”¹ dwellings was decided upon for Laroche-Clermault, a village in the Indre-et-Loire. The site was reserved, and all that needed to be done was to hire the usual architect and ask him to draw the houses according to the usual constraints and then to build the usual French mediocrity, a faithful image of the regulations and their guardians.

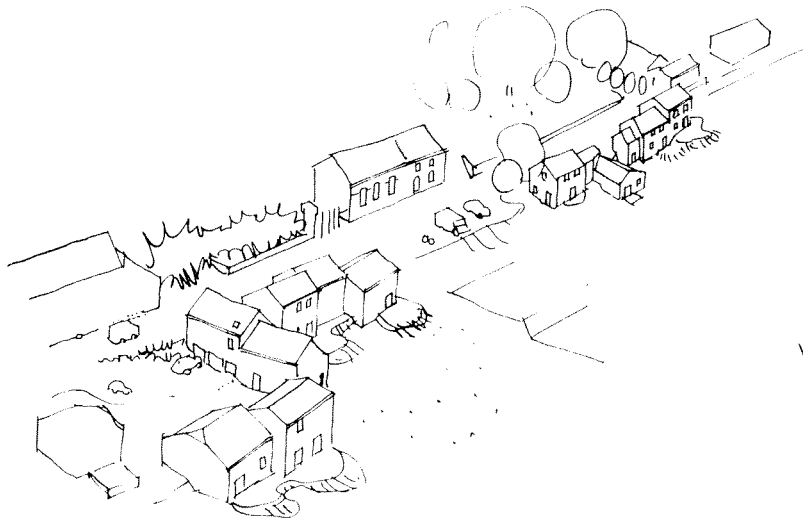
But the mayor of Laroche, whom I had met through a friend, asked me to help him do something more, in association with a very competent local architect. “Yes, but I am not from here,” I said. But he persisted: “How can we bridge the gap?” “We can ask the local inhabitants; there I can help you.”

The village has nearly four hundred residents—farmers, workers, bourgeois. There are hamlets, the remains of a castle, some isolated farms, a major goat farm, the gigantic silos of the agricultural cooperative near the train station, the vineyards within the territory of the *appellation contrôlée* Saumur-Champigny, and notably the caves, natural grottoes of limestone enlarged over the generations, which were inhabited not so long ago.

The village is a street, running halfway up a hill, toward caves bored into the hill. It has no precise center; the church is isolated off at a



I Laroche-Clermault.
Photograph by Lucien Kroll.



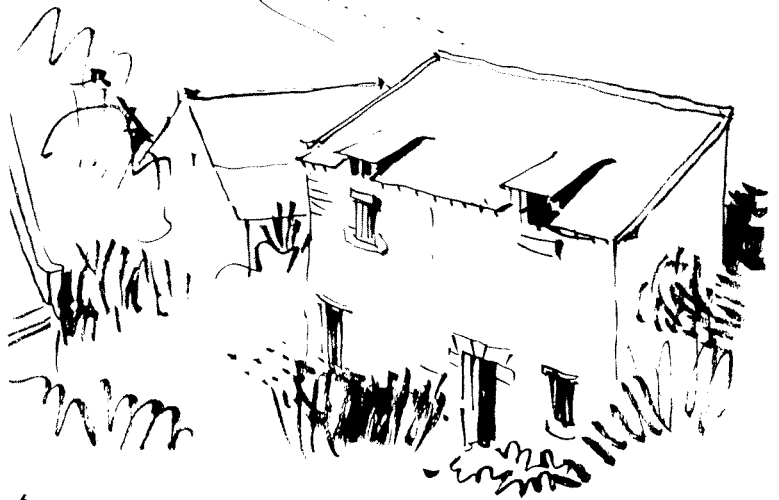
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distance. The HLM units were to occupy the hill just below the village, due south, below the City Hall, in inescapable full view, the precise image of the institutions and their charitable power.²

I explained, "This is very dangerous. When we ask the inhabitants about housing, they will answer about everything else. So we should plan to have three public meetings, fifteen days apart, and one evaluation meeting between us. No more than that. After that, we will study, draw, and keep the inhabitants informed. We must be very clear on the number of decisions that can be made. For example, what happens if they decide to reject the site?" The mayor answered hesitantly, "No, everyone knows the site was bought for this project, and that cannot be renegotiated. But frankly, if they reject it firmly, we will have to investigate other possibilities. But you'll see, they will not even mention it."

During the first meeting, discussion about the siting below the village lasted ten minutes: "Don't you know that is the last place one should build?" said the inhabitants. The mayor held on for two meetings and then was forced to resign due to an unrelated complaint lodged against him by the community to the prefect.

How could we modify the normal procedures? Maybe

we could avoid the fatal artifice of the initiator, the *Maître de l'Ouvrage et d'Oeuvre*, who would force the project to obey cultural forces that are alien to the place and that sometimes respond to time lapses in the future and the past. The implicit model of contemporary architects is often that which originated in 1935 Germany and in the "Taylorist" school. Is this really preferable to the bad taste of the inhabitants?

We knew well that a question posed in these terms could not result in a geometry that was authoritarian and repetitive: opinions would be diverse and so would be the architecture and its implementation. And without our having to insist, the *Maître de l'Ouvrage* would see the complexities and give up his annoying directives.

How tempting it is for authorities to be authorities. After our second participatory meeting, the municipal council held a special meeting to adopt a text that was very close to the residents' desires but premature in its timing. This text was immediately challenged by the residents. Was the council so afraid of losing a small part of its power? Of course it had a right to decide everything, but only after the third meeting and only by justifying very clearly its differences with the people's opinions. The locals felt trapped and

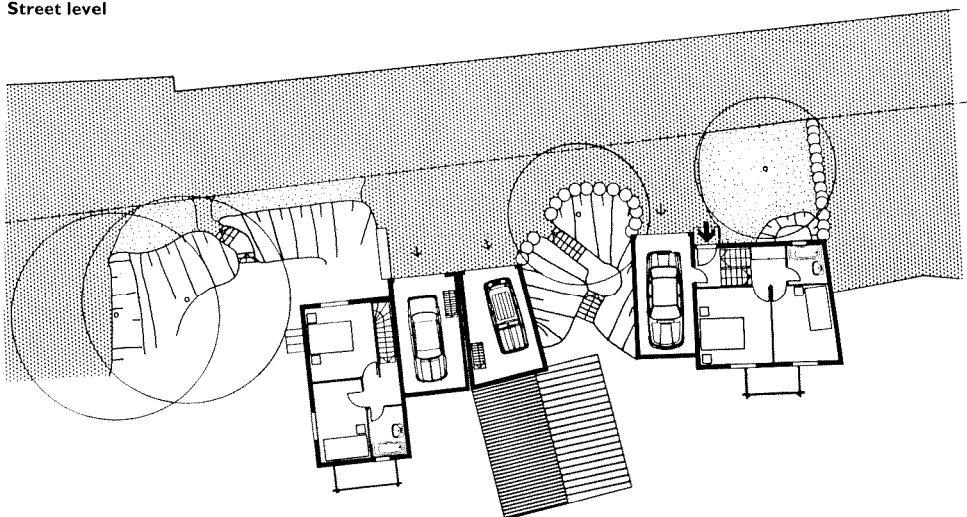


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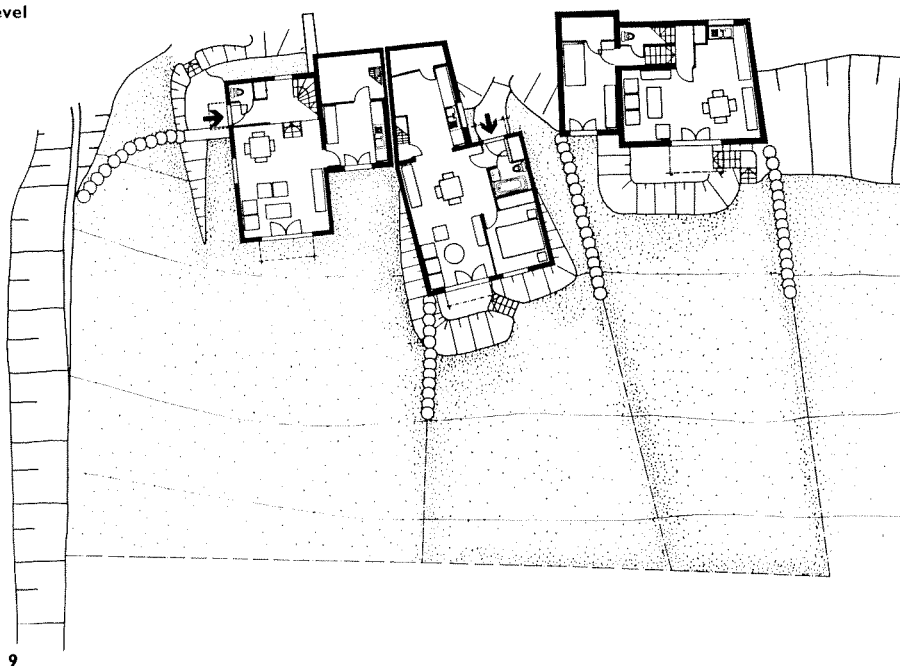
- 2 Project for ten houses along the main street
- 3 The neighbors
- 4 In the area
- 5 Spontaneous architecture
- 6 Continuity of landscape
- 7 Building sites proposed by inhabitants during the participatory meetings.
- 8 A nearby farm

Drawings 2–10 by Lucien Kroll.

Street level



Lower level



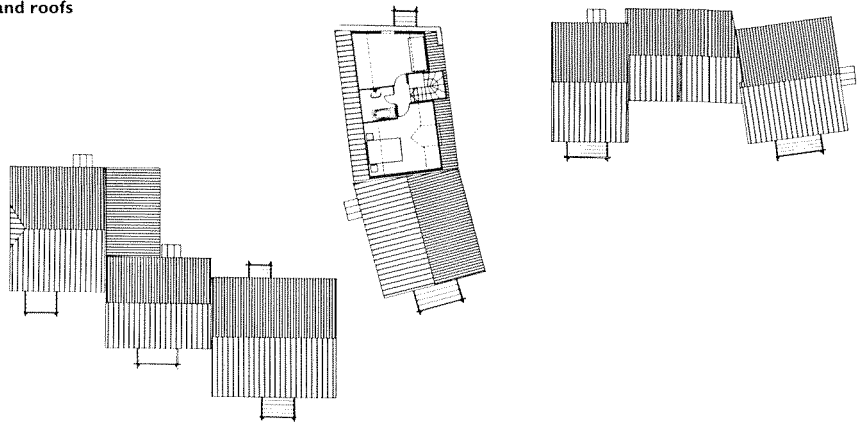
- 9 House grouping to the east
10 House grouping to the west

frozen by the council's untimely and clumsy text, even though it was almost right. This would all be fixed later on.

The wishes of the inhabitants were rarely novel, but as always they were expressed with an authenticity and directness that we could not argue. "In any case," they said, "we do not want a colony like at Cinais, a nearby village, where a group of twenty-four HLMs is oriented inward, apart from the rest of the village and where the children of the HLM fight at school with the children from the village." It is like South African apartheid.

"We do not want new inhabitants that we will not get to know, people whom we would only see as they drive by quickly in the morning and evening after doing their shopping in town. The pavilions should not be recognizable from afar as a group apart from the village. They have to be dispersed. There are ruins which we do not like; rebuild those. There are empty houses; buy them. There are empty sites; build your HLM units there. And if after that there are not enough units, some houses could be built above the chosen site at street level and others below the village, under the little road on the ridge. There is just enough room and they would blend in with the rest."

Upper level and roofs

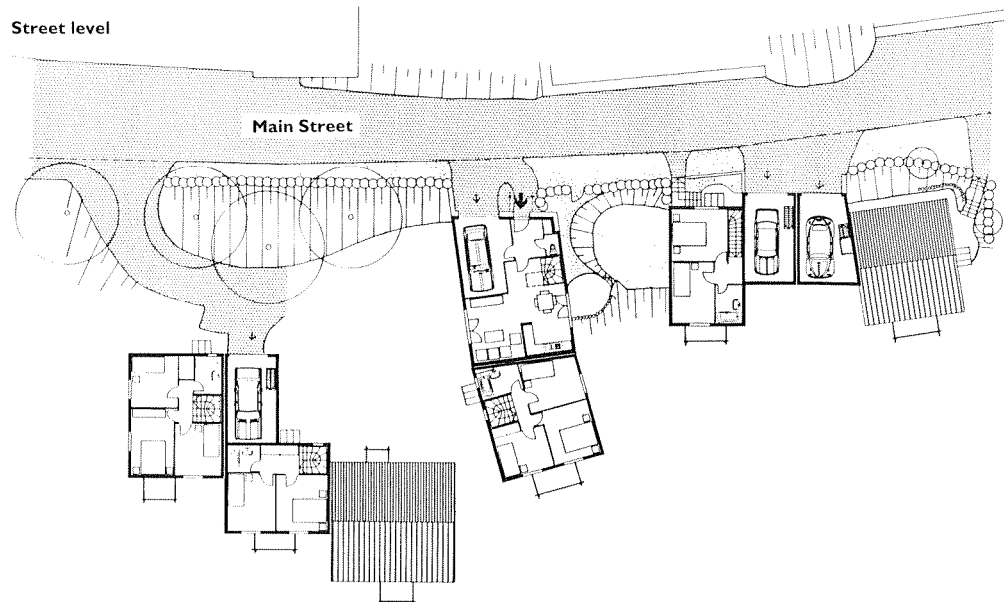


Some of them added with emotion, "It is not that we do not like strangers; quite the contrary, we need them. This village is getting old. There are not many children, the grocery store is gone, the school may close down. We are bored. We want to have a party to welcome the newcomers and get to know them."

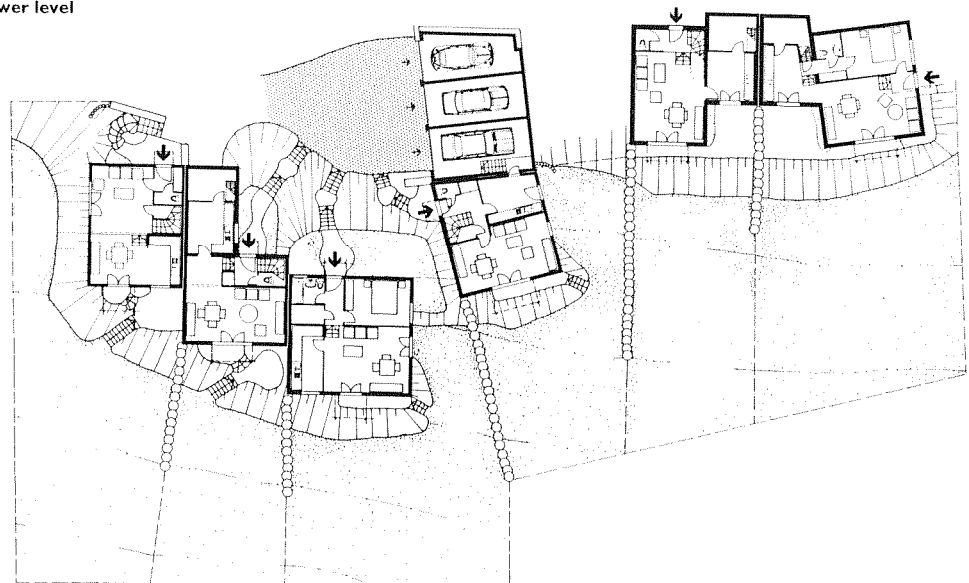
We had shown them three basic organizing principles: a circular arrangement, a grid, a realigned street imitating the existing pattern of crossroads. Yet none of these models was acceptable on its own. For the other meetings, we had maps of the site and views from afar to show the volume of the new houses above and below the village. The locals themselves went across the hill to judge the impact. They knew the parcels of land, the views, their proximity. It is easy to reach an understanding with people who are motivated to understand.

In our role as unfamiliar foreign architects, we were at the same time fragile and invulnerable: fragile, since we had little local clout, we were suspected of stealing work from local architects, and we could be disposed of easily; invulnerable, since we were not dependent on the *Maître de l'Ouvrage* and the local authorities, so we could side with the inhabitants and imagine and impose solutions that local architects could not suggest without committing

Street level



Lower level



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professional suicide. Of course, this can work only once.

We were able to measure the risks in this course of action during our tough negotiations with the designated *Maître de l'Ouvrage*. Used to doling out orders, the OPAC³ was stunned by our responses, disgruntled at having to follow the advice of the peasants, and we, being slightly off balance, thought ourselves to be more backed up than we actually were. Very naively we thought the *Maître de l'Ouvrage* and the local architect would show up at all the meetings enthusiastically to see how the locals lived with the products of their own devising. But they were not very interested. They only came later when everything had been said.

The *Maître de l'Ouvrage*, powerful and generous, came to visit and walk the chosen site on top of the village. Visibly, the discreet siting of the units seemed to him a preposterous idea; one should be able to see the HLMs. He pretended that there were caves in the subsoil—even though there were none—refused to drill borings, and finally declared, “It is too complicated; I don’t want to build here. We choose a site; if the locals only want to build on the top of the village, they can only have ten units.” That was nevertheless a much better solution.



15

11, 12, 13, 14, 15 HLM project
at Laroche-Clermault.
Photographs by Lucien Kroll.



16

16 HLM project at Laroche-Clermault. Photograph courtesy of *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*.

After that, everything happened in a more conventional fashion, since we were unable to obtain the list of the future dwellers to discuss with them the details of the job. Drawings as well as models were presented at the City Hall. The building permit process went smoothly. Finally, a difficult open bid period ensued, for the houses, though simple, were each different, hugging the steep slope of the site on different levels.

We certainly missed important events, consciously or not. It is hard to present the three somewhat jarring meetings, the blunderings, and the ultimate architectural product as a project that was completely produced by the village. The result was only a common denominator, an interpretation of what we heard, and it was greatly damaged by the local authorities. Unfortunately, the houses were not dispersed among the village, there were none on top of the hill, and most seriously we were not able to solicit the participation of the future dwellers. Furthermore, the discussion was limited to the construction of the project according to HLM regulations. We were never able to discuss the creation of a more liberal and participatory apportionment of the land or to find ways to connect this project with community development and make the two interact. For example, the contractor could have been required to

hire young unemployed locals to work as apprentices on the construction site or to hold discussions with the future occupants of the artisans' zone, which was planned for a nearby site.

In any case, we were able to avoid an official project, and were able to model the project to the landscape and to the way the locals live. It is no longer a project estranged from the village, and consequently the new dwellers might be more quickly welcome. I took a nonmyopic student a kilometer away from the houses, and facing the new construction I asked him to count the units. He could not even find them.

Obviously, when one talks to different people, one creates architecture of the same family but different and nonrepetitive. The studies for these architectures are more trying, yet the computer program we wrote helped us to draw them. Unlike what most people would think, these tools can help in the participation process. Except for arm wrestling with the *Maître de l'Ouvrage*, this kind of job can be easy and enjoyable. It doesn't cost much to pass a few evenings in a beautiful landscape with exceptionally hospitable people. But for this first time, one should have serious sociologists. Why is this never done?

The answer is political. What counts is either one's image

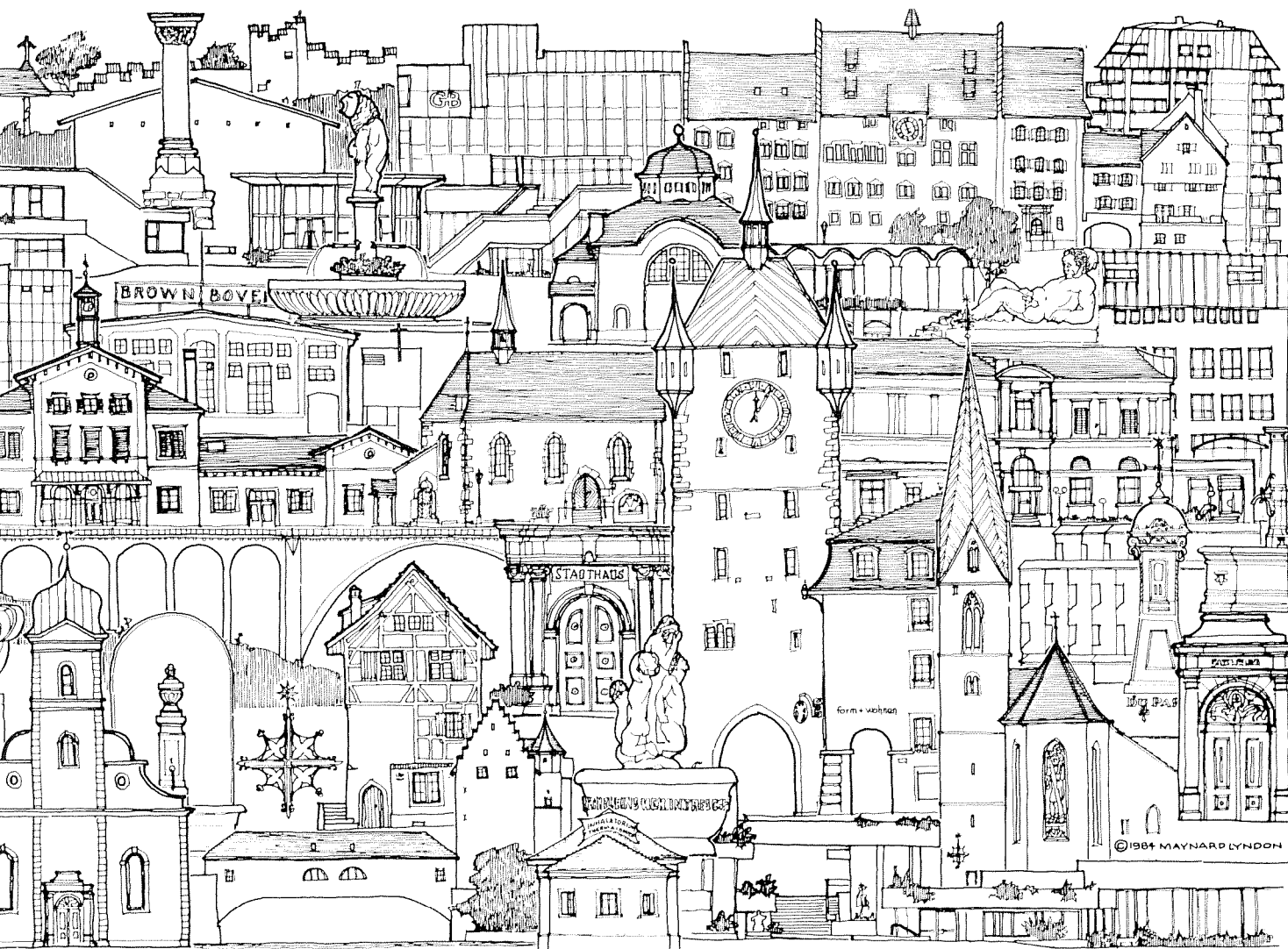
of society or what is dictated by the object. For a half-century, architects have been trying to "Taylorize" the object (and nowadays, to dress it in "post-Modern" style). When ethnology is paramount, it is crucial to live inside the social network and to build emphatically an architecture that, rather than inhibiting social practices old and new, becomes the means for their realization. That is the eternally tough choice between the aesthetic and the ethnological.

**Translated by
Anne Fougeron**

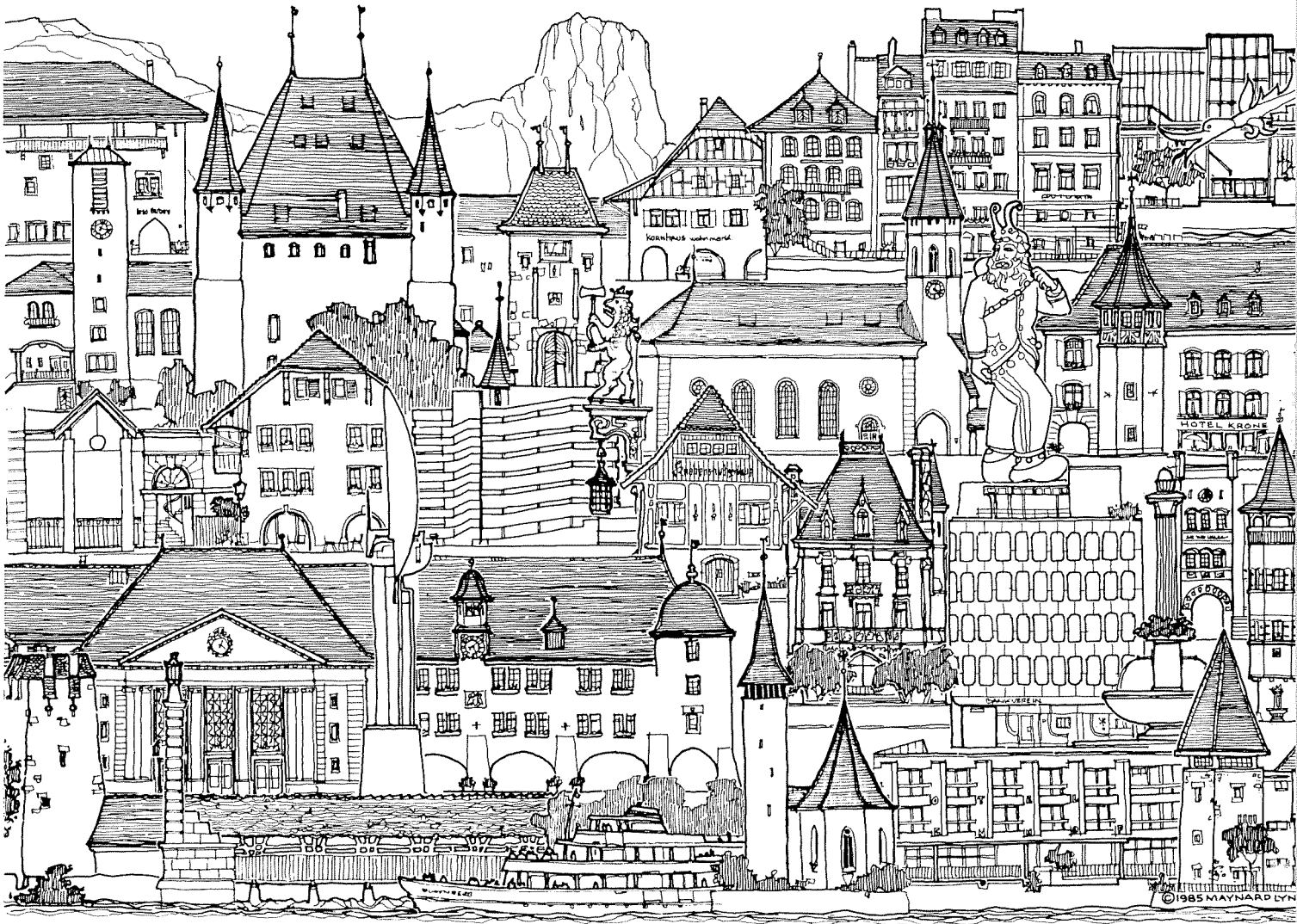
NOTES

- 1 *Habitations à Loyers Modérés*, subsidized moderate income housing.
- 2 The French organizational system requires that authorities or institutions appeal to the state organs that are charged with managing their operations. These organs, sometimes huge and always authoritarian, have built hundreds of thousands of low-income housing units throughout the French countryside. Only rarely are they concerned with, or even informed about, architecture.
- 3 *Office Public d'Aménagement et de Construction*, Public Office for Planning and Construction, which is the *Maître de l'Ouvrage* (supervising agency) for this project. The OPAC is a powerful and irritating agency responsible for a large number of HLMs.

Maynard Lyndon



Swiss cities, having escaped war damage in this century, are rich collections of buildings and public spaces from many periods, in each of which designers were committed to the principles and vocabulary of their time.

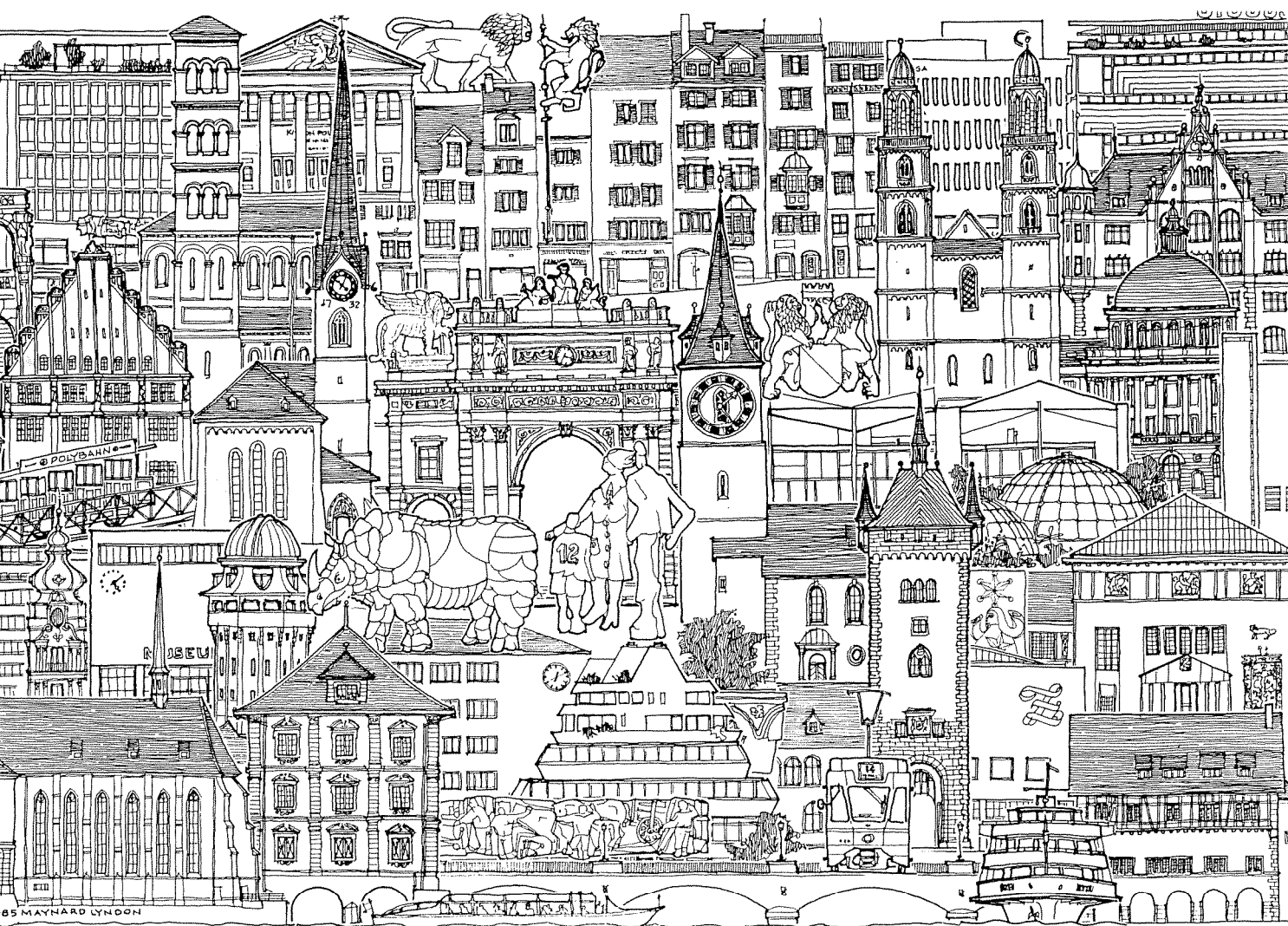


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The progression of modes is visible and we are reminded that each was transitory. Every period is always overtaken, for better or worse, by a later one in which the prevailing group is confident it has an enlightened understanding.

2 Thun

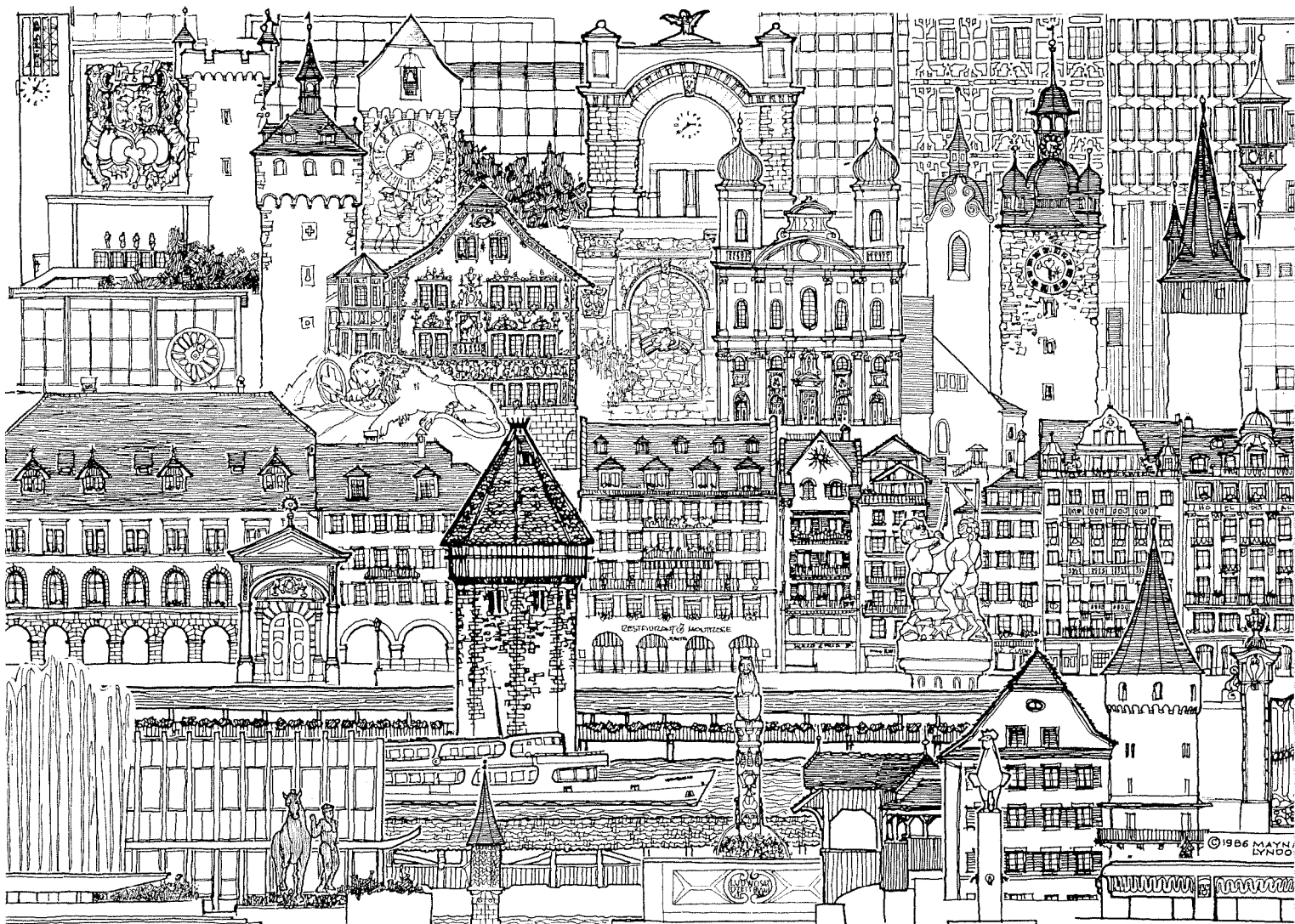
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3 Zürich

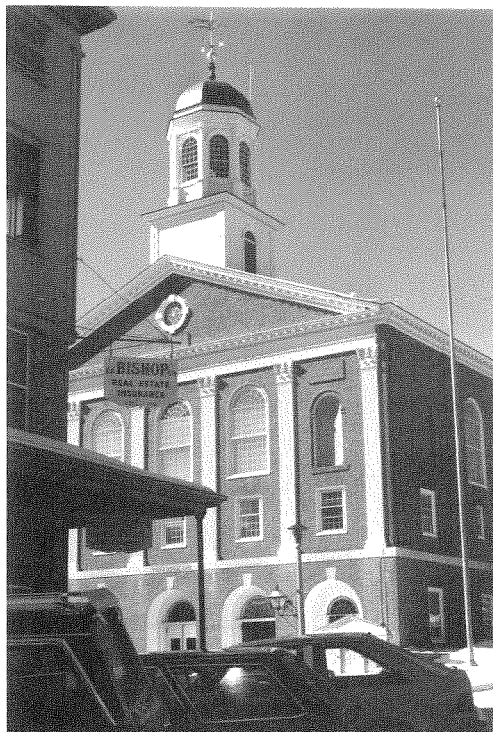
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What the drawings do not reveal adequately is the great progress that has been made in planning, and in the development of construction techniques.

Peterborough, New Hampshire: *Our Town* Revisited

William Morgan



1



2

1 **Town House**, corner of Grove and Main streets, Little & Russell, architects, 1918

2 **Grove Street**

Photographs by Lilla Bingham

When one crosses the line into Peterborough—coming down Temple Mountain, out of the shadow of Mount Monadnock, or along the Contoocook River valley—a sign proclaims this New Hampshire town of 5,000 people to be “A Good Town to Live In.” Even the first-time visitor senses a feeling of homecoming, a familiarity that comes from knowing that Peterborough was the model for Grovers Corners in Thornton Wilder’s classic drama about small-town American life, *Our Town*.

Peterborough is more than merely another attractive town in the rugged terrain of the Monadnock region, just on the outer fringe of Megalopolis. Although it has contributed little to the population explosion that has made New Hampshire the fastest growing state in the Northeast, Peterborough has become something of a mecca for newcomers from more cosmopolitan places. The attraction is more than scenic landscape, bracing climate, or the absence of state income or sales taxes. Unlike many other isolated northern New England towns, Peterborough can point to an influx of young people and virtually no unemployment. Its robust economic health is based on phenomenal growth in the “soft” industries of publishing and mail-order businesses as well as a reputation as a flourishing center for the arts.

Peterborough has changed, however, since Thornton Wilder depicted it a half-century ago. There is no longer a corner drugstore in the center of town where one can catch up on local gossip over a cup of coffee. Dutch elm disease has removed the town’s leafy canopy, while much of Peterborough’s commercial activity has moved to shopping centers and “industrial parks” on the outskirts of town. Many young professionals who work for the McGraw-Hill-owned *Byte* magazine, patronize the Toadstool Bookstore, or purchase Perrier and brie in the health food emporia are not natives, but immigrants seeking the good life. Yet the perception of Peterborough as the quintessential, unspoiled small town persists.

What accounts for Peterborough’s favored image? It doesn’t have a state college like the regional center of Keene; it doesn’t have interstate highway access to Boston and Route 128 like Concord, the capital; neighboring Hancock is generally acknowledged to be the most beautiful village in New Hampshire. In large part, the answer lies in the fact that cultural reputation does translate into commercial prosperity. This is reinforced by the subtler but more tangible factor of Peterborough’s architectural ambience.

The totem of the arts in Peterborough is the Mac-

Dowell Colony, a cluster of studios in the woods above the town, which since its endowment by the widow of composer Edward MacDowell in 1907, has provided a monastic but congenial haven for poets and painters such as Edwin Arlington Robinson and Milton Avery, composers Aaron Copland (“Appalachian Spring” was written here), Virgil Thompson, and George Gershwin, and writers such as James Baldwin, Willa Cather, and John Updike. While the colony’s impact is more national than local, the anticipation of seeing Alec Waugh or Leonard Bernstein taking a coffee break made Mike Goldman’s Village Drugstore something of a place of pilgrimage for culture mavens.

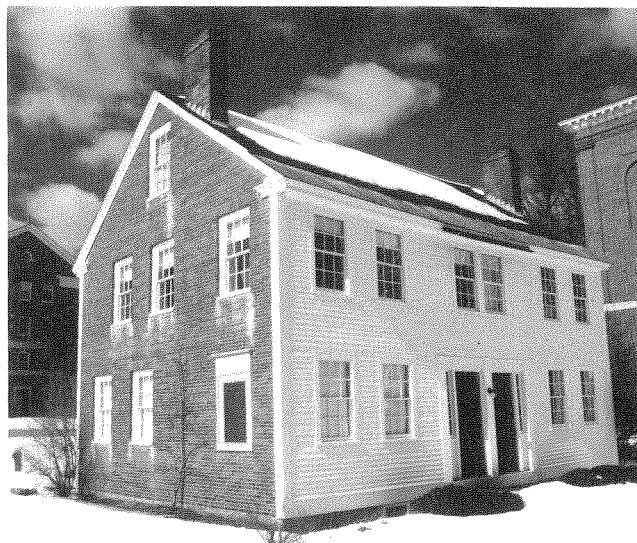
Even if the MacDowell colonists remain sequestered in their rustic cabins, the buildings clustered around the falls of the Contoocook and Nubanusit rivers contribute to the impression that Peterborough is a magical place, where one can partake of the rural life without having to forgo the aesthetic pleasures of New York or Boston.

Although not as rich historically as, say, the colonial capital of Portsmouth, as wealthy and trendy as Hanover, or as picturesque as many nearby villages, Peterborough has an attractive and representative

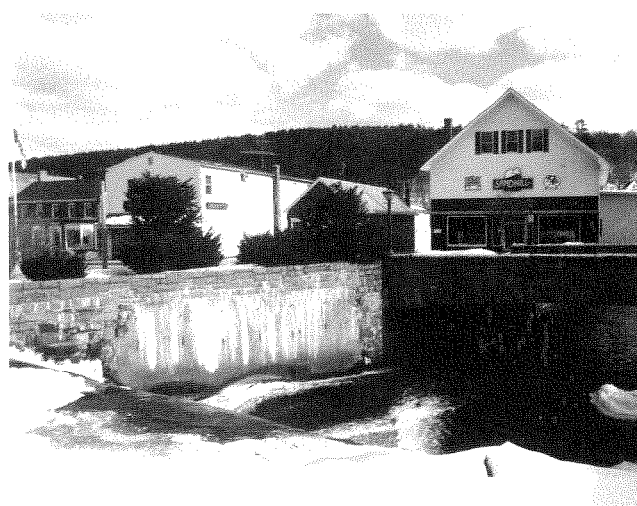
collection of American architecture. The spire of the so-called Bulfinch church is the focal point of a downtown that features commercial blocks in a variety of nineteenth-century styles surrounded by residential streets lined with houses dating back to the Revolutionary period. A few grand cottages in the hills attest to the town’s modest popularity as a turn-of-the-century vacation spot for Proper Bostonians and well-to-do New Yorkers. (Their church, All Saints Episcopal, is a delightful re-creation of a Norman chapel outside of Oxford.)

The remarkable aspect of the majority of these buildings is their total ensemble as townscape rather than their intrinsic design qualities. Like many an appealing English market town, Peterborough is a first-rate collection of second-rate architecture, blessed by a constricted valley site framed by dramatic hills. Its plan is not a boring grid pattern (nor is there the ubiquitous New England common or green) but a haphazard nexus of winding streets whose very wiggleness creates a cohesion and tension that emphasizes its human scale and visual interest.

Ironically, as Peterborough has become an “in” town, much of that delicately balanced fabric has come under assault. The 1833 Peterborough Tavern, a

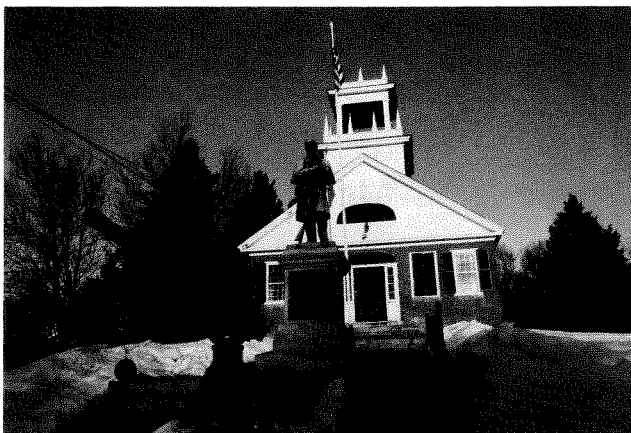


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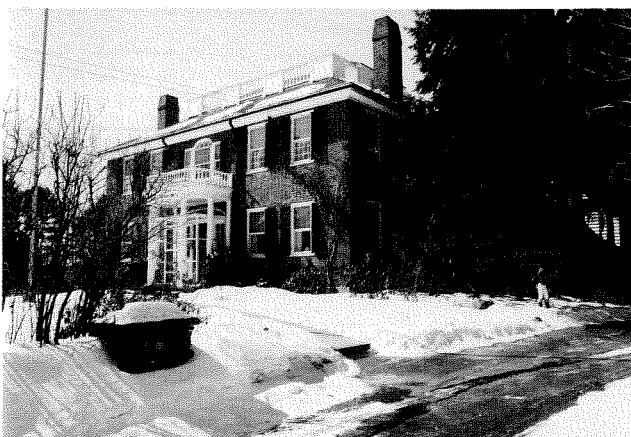


4

- 3 Phoenix Mill House,**
Grove Street, c 1858
This was a two-family mill worker's house.
- 4 Grove Street**
Shops as seen from across the Nubanusit River



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6

5 Peterborough Academy, Grove Street, 1837
Deeded to the town of Peterborough as the Grand Army of the Republic Veterans Hall in 1899

6 Classic example of New England Federal style, c 1820

four-story hostelry that anchored the junction of the town's two main streets, was demolished in 1965 and replaced by a single-story bank of the blandest sort of "suburban colonial" design. Another significant keystone in the townscape was the Gatto House, a marvelous Victorian manse that stood at the eastern terminus of Main Street. This was razed in 1971 by a local developer who used the site for a singularly uninspiring apartment complex. (In a bit of unwelcome publicity, a photograph of a bulldozer slamming into the house graced the cover of a Boston Society of Architects' publication entitled *Our Vanishing Heritage*.) Two years ago, the mansard-roofed building that housed Mike Goldman's drugstore—the last of a group of Second Empire-style structures that defined the north side of Main Street—was torn down for a parking lot.

Following the destruction of the Gatto House, the Peterborough Historical Society hired an architectural historian from Princeton University to survey the town's man-made resources, but little was done with the material he gathered. Incredibly for such a culturally minded community, only a handful of nonthreatened buildings (including the MacDowell Colony, the Unitarian Church, and All Saints) are

listed on the National Register of Historic Places—a paltry performance compared to neighboring Dublin, a town only a quarter the size of Peterborough but with almost 150 structures on the register.

The construction of a shopping center on the edge of town in 1973 proved to be the most destructive to Peterborough's image. Actually, this symbol of "progress" is Peterborough's second such venture, the first being a grim planning disaster that even a Los Angelino would be ashamed to claim. The sad thing is, that with some imaginative solutions (such as reusing existing buildings in the town center and judiciously inserting a parking garage behind them), Peterborough could have revitalized its downtown and avoided the commercial hemorrhage caused by the relocation of many of its businesses.

The Peterborough Shopping Plaza does have a shingle-covered piazza, and its facade is varied by several changes in direction, which break up its mass and slightly relieve its inherent boredom. But, all in all, it hardly constitutes the sort of amenity a town would tout on a picture postcard. Worst of all, it has siphoned off the very street life that makes a downtown successful. True, the post office, the banks, and the municipal offices

are still in the center of town, along with the health food stores, a diner, and the gentrified shops, but how long will it be before Peterborough gets a McDonald's, a Burger King, and the kind of development that has made the edges of nearby Keene and Milford as awful and depressing as Everywhere, U.S.A.?

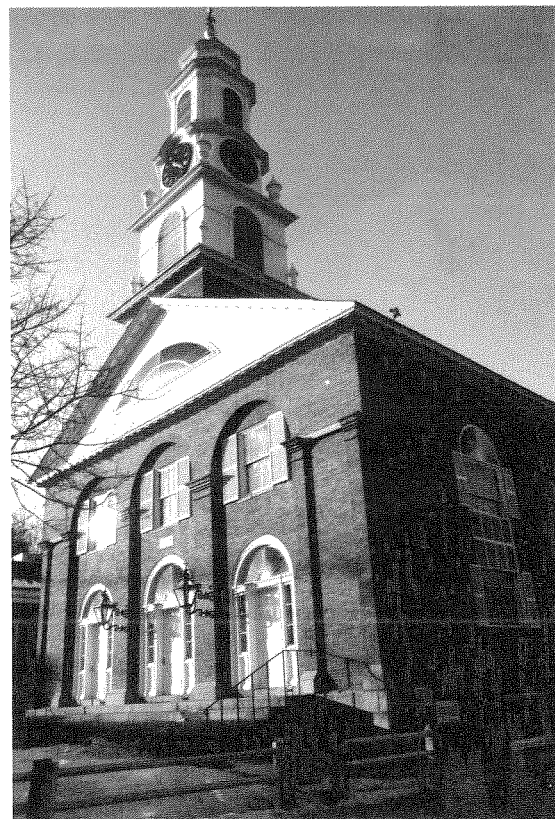
Aside from the MacDowell Colony and the country's first publicly-supported library, Peterborough's claim to fame is publishing (*Byte*, *Microcomputing*, *Robotics Age*, and *Cobblestone*—a history magazine for children—have joined *Yankee* and the Guernsey Cattle Club's journal) and its mail-order businesses, notably Brookstone and Eastern Mountain Sports.

The outfitter of tents, backpacks, and pitons is owned by Warner Communications, while Quaker Oats' Brookstone (500 employees and \$30 million in annual sales) now peddles French mustard, English cosmetics, and Danish telephones along with the hard-to-find tools that comprised its original *raison d'être*. Peterborough's largest employer, New Hampshire Ball Bearings, has just been acquired by the Japanese conglomerate, Mineba, Ltd., of Tokyo.

Unquestionably, the efforts to entice "clean" industry has reaped benefits, but



7



8

7 Carpenter's Gothic, 1849

Straight from the pages of Andrew Jackson Downing's popular pattern books

8 Unitarian Church, corner of Main

Street and Summer Street, 1825
The so-called Bulfinch Church



9



10

9 Peterborough Town Library,

1893

Site of the first free library in
the United States supported by
taxation

10 South Main Street

primarily in economic terms. Nevertheless, Peterborough is still a nice town in which to live. The MacDowell Colony thrives, along with a vital summer theatre, and the town is fortunate in being the headquarters of Monadnock Music, a regional symphony that offers first-rate classical music.

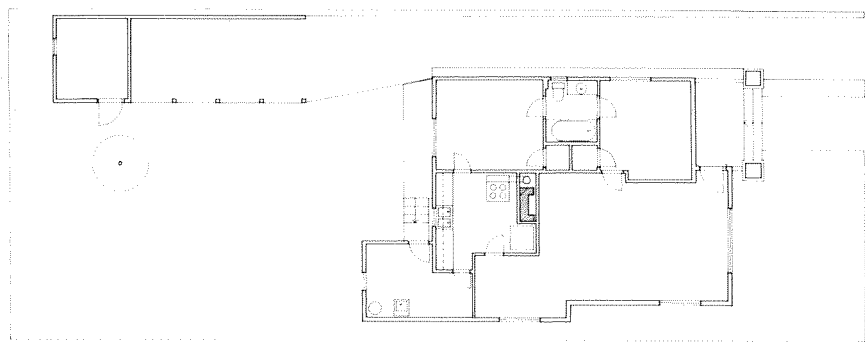
Despite the "Our Town" mystique, Peterborough is a town in search of an identity for the years to come. The yuppies that move here are an enriching factor, yet their continuing immigration imperils the small-town flavor that brings them here in the first place. Without adequate planning (the importance of its patrimony demands imaginative zoning controls and an architectural review board) as well as constant public discussion of what the town wishes to be, Peterborough may become more like a preppy Connecticut suburb and lose its somewhat frumpy New Hampshire character. Change in itself can be healthy, but Peterborough is a town that needs to assess its special resources and take steps to assure their preservation.

In The Shadow of a Craftsman Bungalow: Erasure, Overlay, and Addition

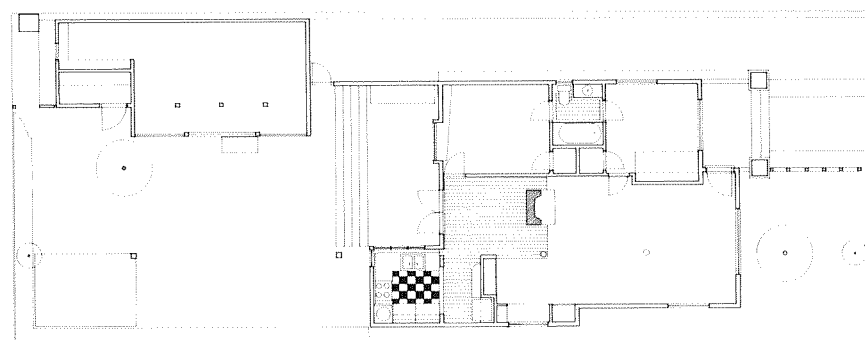
Lars Lerup

The Craftsman Bungalow was inspired primarily by the Greene brothers, who practiced together in Pasadena from 1893 to 1914, although the house form may have come originally from the Anglo-Indian “bungalow.” It became popular about 1910 and was constructed for only a comparatively short time; few were built after 1930. Yet in those few short years millions appeared, and the Craftsman Bungalow became an integral part of the lore of the American suburb.

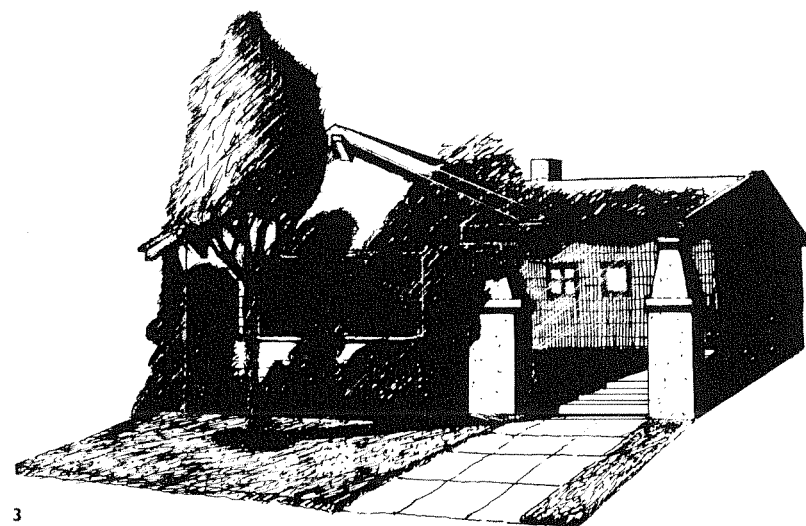
With its open, wide overhangs, front porch, and squat gabled roof, the bungalow was associated with country life. Its interior was comfortable, informal, and rustic. In the flood of pattern books and popular house magazines that appeared during the early part of the century, the bungalow’s interiors were illustrated with pictures of a man comfortably reclining near the inglenook smoking his pipe, his wife affectionately smiling from a doorway that probably led to the kitchen. In the elementary version, the plan reflected the stereotypical family, with two bedrooms, a small bath, kitchen, dining nook, and living room. The relationship to the back yard was circuitous, through an added laundry room. Over the decades many elementary bungalows went through a series of modernizations, including, if it happened after 1950, replacing or overlaying gypsum board on the original board and batten walls, improving kitchen equipment, and even replacing the wooden windows with aluminum sashes.



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1 The old bungalow
2 The new bungalow

3 The old facade with new windows and greenery

Figures 1–3 by Lars Lerup.

As the illustrations show, the bungalow I bought in the early 1980s possessed the characteristics and the rehabilitation pattern of the type's elementary version. This particular bungalow's appeal was limited to its exterior; the interior had lost all its mythical charm to modernization and low-maintenance home improvement. I decided to divert the further destruction of the bungalow myth by a series of interventions that were not intended to restore the stylistic qualities that had been removed from the bungalow but to retrieve an aspect of the myth that may lie manifested in a certain architectonic specificity that mass production had covered up.

Erasure

With a minimal budget, tools, and the help of a student who was also a skilled builder, I began to dissect the house like an exploratory surgeon. Behind a layer of gypsum board and another of board and batten, was a burned-out chimney in a thickened wall between the living room and the kitchen. Removing the wall stripped the chimney bare and drove the first wedge between the stereotypical plan and the "new" bungalow.

Erasing this wall led to investigating the entire kitchen, first opening the opposite wall between the kitchen and the garden, previously penetrated only by a small ventilation window. In order to open a gate to the wonders of the California garden, the kitchen counter had to go, then the kitchen. The void that was left was almost

square in plan and provided a new focus to the house, with the living room on one side and the garden on the other. Then an avenue of "open" space was created, beginning with the front yard, to be followed in file by the living room, the new void, a new deck, and the garden. The original, typical plan was "lobotomized" by the avenue of unspecified use that disrupted the typical narrative implied by the living-dining-kitchen sequence.

Erasing the kitchen included also removing the gypsum board on the walls and the linoleum flooring to expose the underfloor that had not been walked on since its construction in 1923. Sanding and varnishing the underfloor was a symbolic gesture, celebrating the discovery of the "underground" of the bungalow myth.

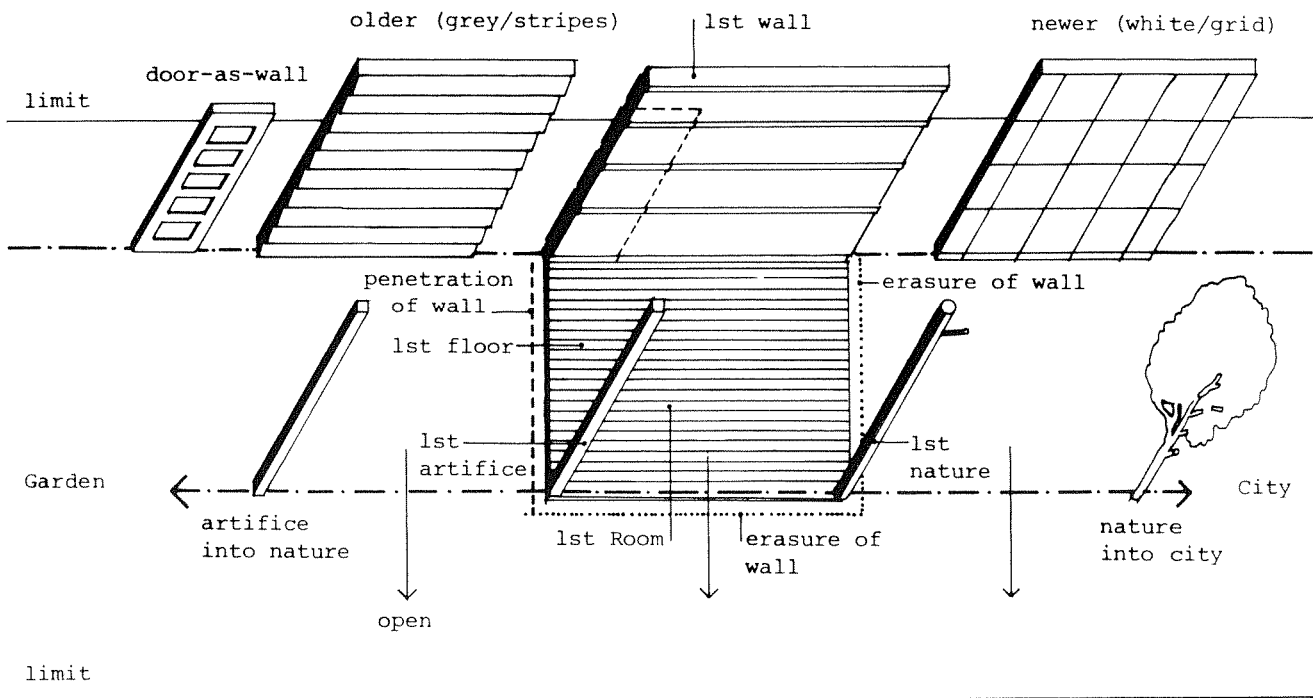
The "freeway" opened up the plan and suggested two bordering zones of more specific use. The left zone, facing the garden, suggested a series of cul-de-sacs: sitting areas, an inglenook, a service nook, and a new kitchen, compact and efficient, inserted in the old laundry room. The right zone remained intact with its file of rooms, but it suggested rehabilitating the carport into a new studio. The result is a tripartite plan, which zones use in a far freer manner than the former one had done.

Overlay

The void that was created by the erasure of the wall became the key to developing a set of "Principles for making (instant) history." Taking the clue from the horizontal

siding on the exterior, a "first" wall was defined, consisting principally of a set of ledger lines across a vertical surface. The void, the "first" room, with its "first" floor, began its spatial definition with a cover of varnished plywood, subdivided by horizontal strips of redwood that formed the principal wall of this poor man's parlor. A freshly cut trunk of red madrone replaced the demolished wall, and the chimney was refurbished by a Count Rumford-inspired fireplace, only twelve inches deep, that works miraculously. A carefully planed redwood pilaster, part of a "gate" to the new kitchen, defined the remaining corner of the first room. A rustic parlor wall, a hearth, a tree trunk, a column—a first artifice—and a rustic floor thus established the motor of the new house.

Suggested by the madrone and the redwood pilaster, an array of "columns" was established, beginning with a red plum tree in the front yard and ending with a set of real columns in the back yard. These uprights also mark the relative openness of the bordering zone. Opposite the columns stands their abstract counterpart, the wall, establishing another array that ranges from the modern abstract gridded surface to the deeply layered siding through a series of surface markings using various materials. Now it protects the more private right-hand zone. Because of these simple overlays, the bungalow had become a kind of Sweets Catalog of architectural elements—an architectonic promenade—suggesting a new architectural



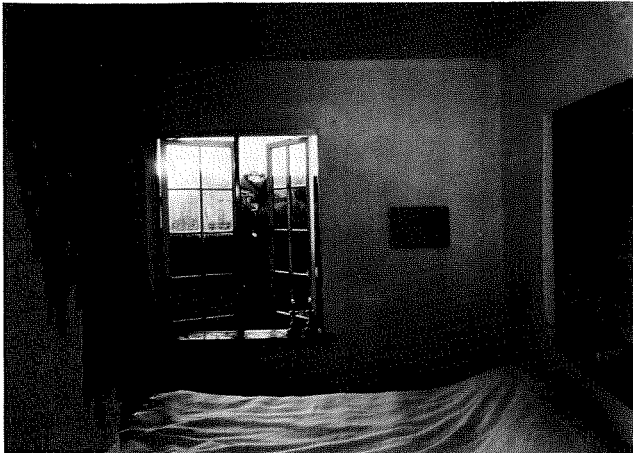
Array of Columns: rose, white column, three white columns, black column, redwood pilaster, madrone column, column footprint, red plum tree, rose.

Array of Walls/Doors: grey door-as-wall, grey siding with gridded door, wide white grid, grey grid, varnished plywood with redwood stripes, white grid, white built grid.

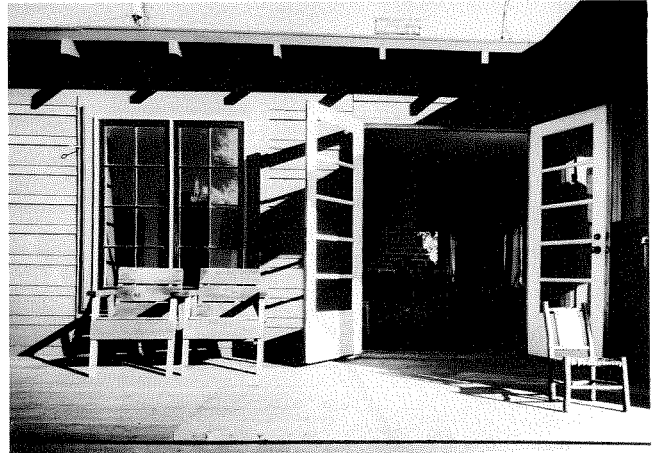
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4 "Principles for making (instant) history"

Figure 4 by Lars Lerup.



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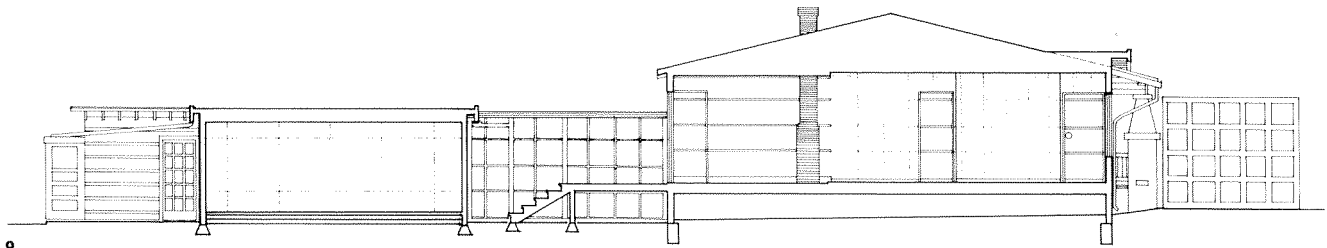
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**5, 6 A room behind the wall and the
"first" room**

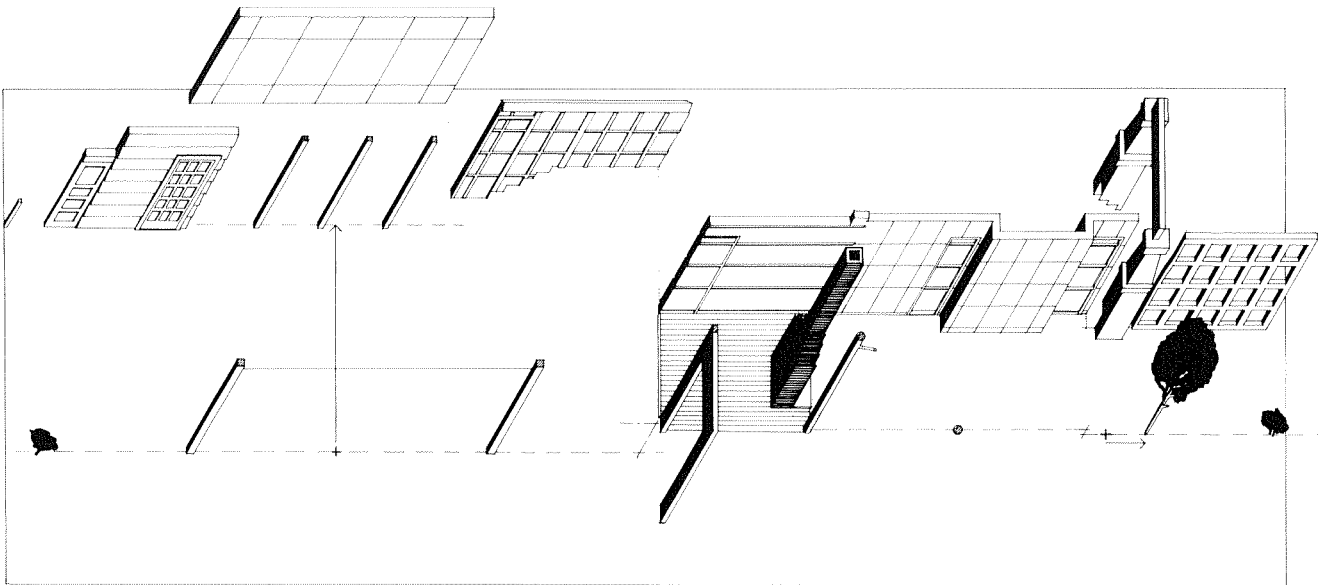
Photographs by F. Namdar

7, 8 The back and the front

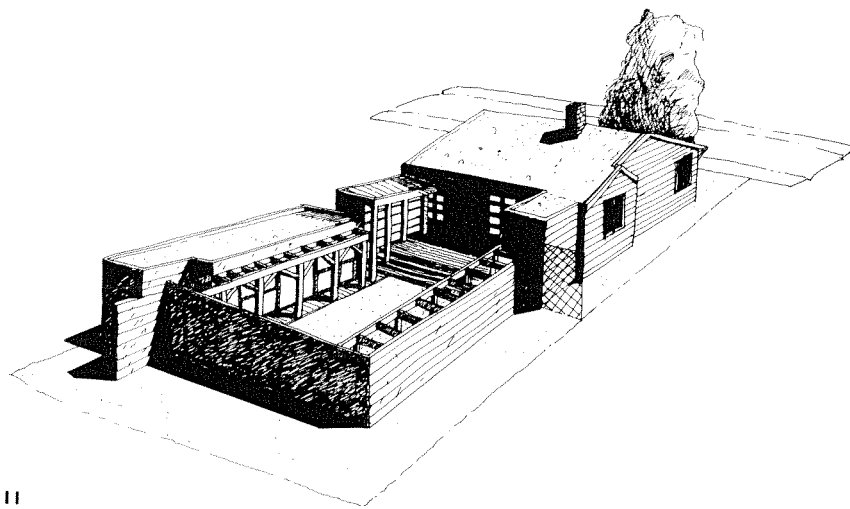
Photographs by F. Namdar



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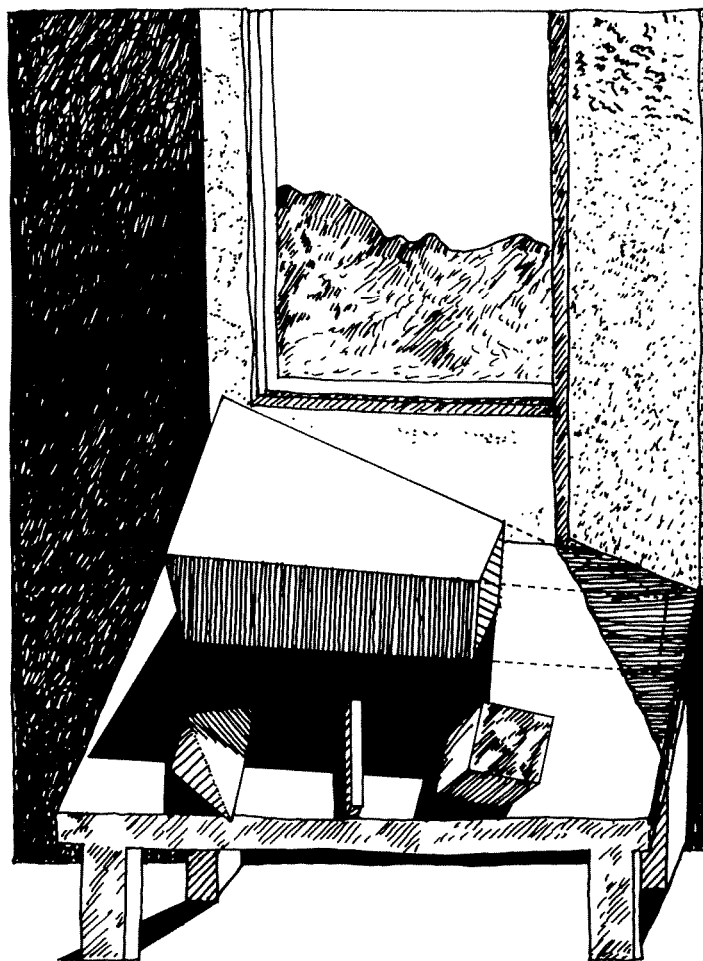


11

9 Section of the new bungalow
10 Columns and walls of the new bungalow

11 "If I had the money"

Figures 9–11 by Lars Lerup.



12

narrative in which the history of materials from timber to finely manufactured glass was prominently overlayed on the “shattered” family narrative of the typical plan: form across function.

The “principles for making history” suggested further development of the tripartite zone that would be built “If I had the money”: arcades, a link with the studio, an inner courtyard.

Addition

The new house seems to have recovered some of the ambience of the bungalow myth in its fundamental materiality, which had been hidden behind the skip-troweled gypsum board and the linoleum floors. The house had been brought back in history.

The next challenge was to add a new dimension to the house that would bring it into the here and now, a modern coda that has its roots more or less obscurely in the house but suggests its own specificity and presence.

In previous work I had dealt extensively with the notion of shadow constructions, inspired by the thick and mysterious shadows cast by the buildings in De Chirico’s paintings from the early 1900s. The result was a highly complex “addition” to a house in Paris, referred to as the Love/House. It was the result of highly technical transformations derived from an existing house. The additions to my bungalow were intended to follow similar principles but in a far less structured manner.

In the back yard the mythical “shadow” cast by the bungalow led me down a semirational path in which three elements from the “first” room in the house were displaced and put through a kind of platonic transformation, much the way shadows are transformations of their parent bodies: the madrone trunk became a red column, the fireplace became an inverted yellow pyramid, and the room became a

12 Addition

13, 14, 15 Views of the addition

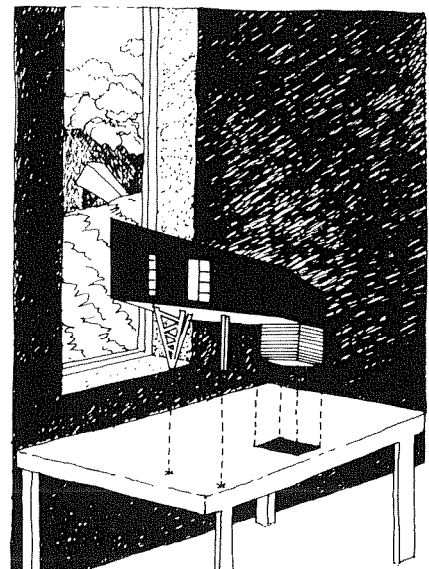
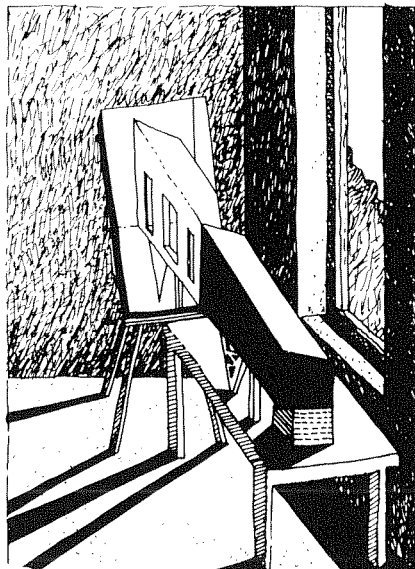
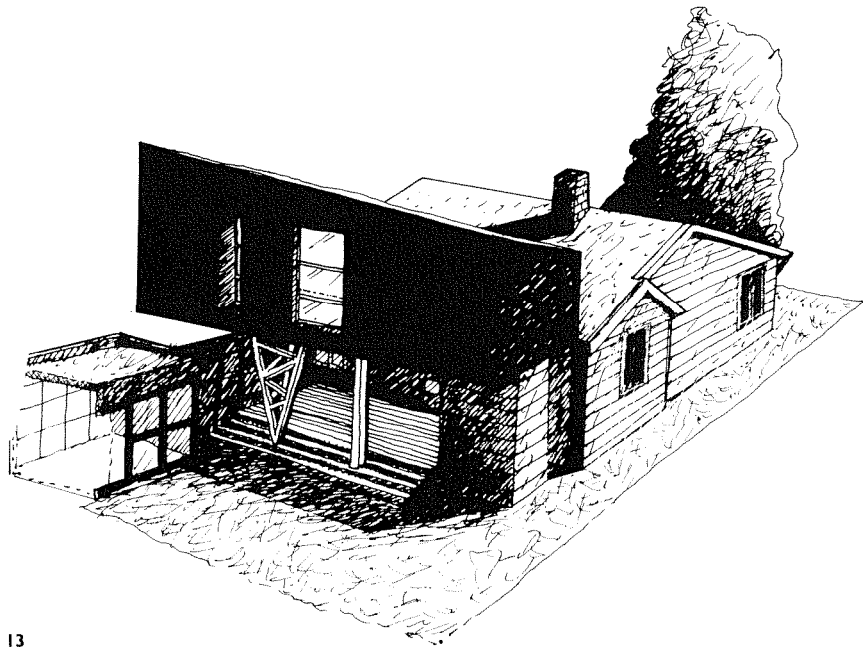
Figures 12–15 by Lars Lerup.

cube that coincides with the new kitchen. These were the bearings or stakes in the past. On these was perched a black, racked box simulating a fleshy shadow. The battered sides were derived from the existing slope of the predominately side-gabled roof. The color *derived* not only from shadows but also from the gray with which the entire exterior of the bungalow had been painted.

Since the addition is a dream-house in a double sense—it is both a place to sleep and it is not yet built—the interior has remained underdeveloped.

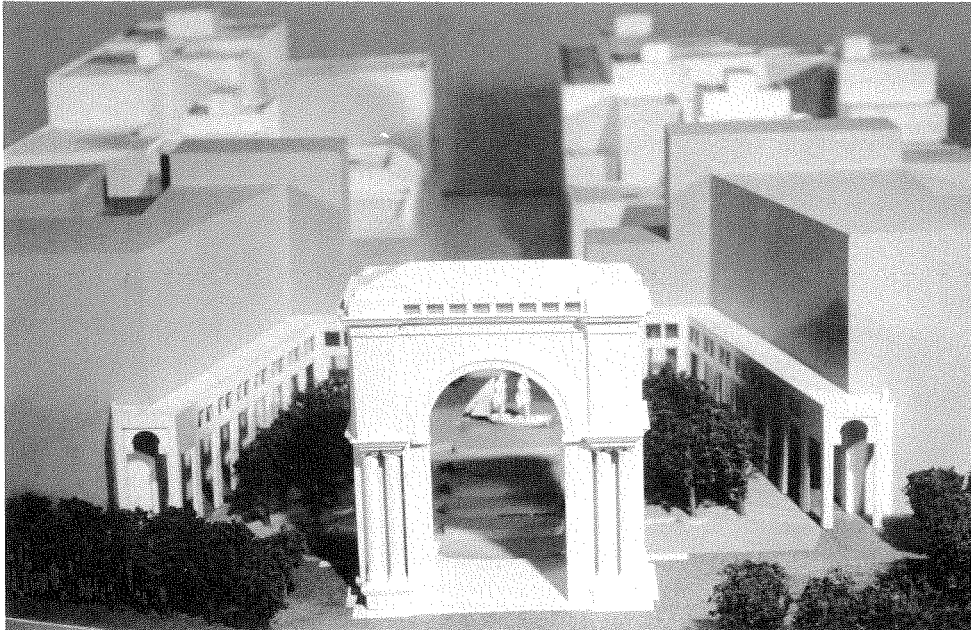
Finally

This exercise in recent construction and planning for the future is part of a larger project that I have called “planned assaults on the single family house,” which has resulted in a series of tripartite plans and houses challenging stereotypical conceptions of the house. The example of the bungalow suggests a double action back into the past and forward toward the future. By erasing and overlaying certain architectonic concerns in the elementary craftsman bungalow a new fundament of architectonic materialism may be achieved, and by adding to the house, just at the border, outside the orthodoxy of the type, a certain freedom of expression may be achieved simultaneously. This, I suggest, is a way to reclaim the past without losing the future.



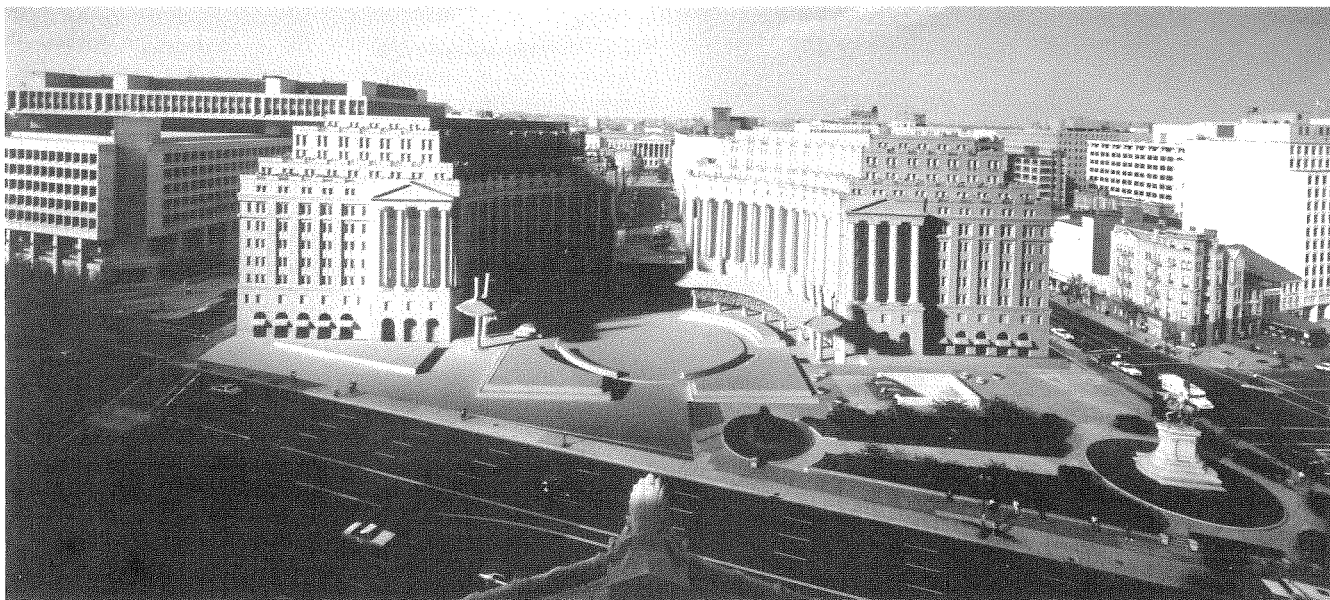
Duck Out of Water: A Late Proposal for the Navy Memorial

Drexel Turner



Pennsylvania Avenue, the nominal Main Street of America, or at least its quadrennially televised approximation, will soon acquire a Navy Memorial as part of an exedra-shaped plaza being built in Market Square Park at Eighth Street across from the National Archives. Despite the best intentions and several extensive revisions to the design, the result is neither particularly monumental nor nautical. It lacks a sufficiently succinct and engaging prospect to make clear its purpose as civic art but appears, instead, diffuse and thematically fragmented. In sensibility, it more nearly resembles the entrance to a Rouse-formula festival market than a monument to a nation's naval heritage, accruing to a street of collective memory. For the aggregate, it offers no convincing gesture to mediate the immense passageway between the Capitol and the White House or to relieve the elliptical quality of monumental Washington, which persists much as Henry James found it nearly a century ago: "vague, empty, sketchy . . . however expectant, however spacious, overweighted by a single Dome and overaccented by a single Shaft . . . never emerging from its flatness, after the fashion of other capitals, into the truly, the variously, modelled and rounded state," a deficiency compounded in James's

I Navy Memorial, first scheme. Conklin Rossant, Architects, 1981–1982. View of model looking north from Pennsylvania Avenue. Photograph courtesy of Conklin Rossant.



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estimation by the city's "absence of salient social landmarks and constituted features."¹

In its present form, the Navy Memorial seems the product of diminished expectations, a sign of the times already implanted several blocks farther up Pennsylvania Avenue between Fourteenth and Fifteenth streets in the diminutive, enfolded maze of the Pershing Memorial and Park (M. Paul Friedberg and Jerome Lindsey, landscape architects; Robert White, sculptor, 1979). It comprises a plaza partitioned within the compass of a much larger square inherited, if imperfectly, from L'Enfant's plan of Washington. In this setting the memorial appears

peripheral and redundant, a double negative constituted as an appendage of the two speculative buildings it prefaces. Its self-effacement may well reflect the initial, implicitly ancillary, conception of the project as a modest band shell and fountain to be built by the Pennsylvania Avenue Development Corporation with funds raised privately by the U.S. Navy Memorial Foundation—the kind of substantially utilitarian, voluntary monument that is by now an inseparable part of the American landscape.

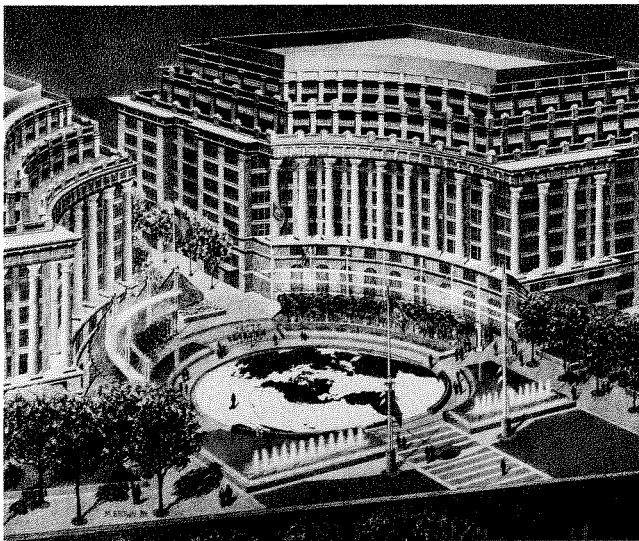
Nevertheless, the first design proposal for the memorial, prepared by architects William J. Conklin and James S. Rossant and submitted to the Commis-

sion of Fine Arts for review in February 1982, attempted to elicit a more monumental effect than the program or its station alone implied by transforming the band shell into a ten-story triumphal arch with a naval museum in its upper two levels.² The arch was placed parallel to the National Archives, spanning Eighth Street at an oblique angle to Pennsylvania Avenue and framing abbreviated vistas of the old Patent Office three blocks to the north and the portico of the National Archives directly across the avenue to the south. Acoustical panels, lowered from the underside of the arch, were to form a partial band shell when needed. A colossal arcade, affixed to a pair of boxy, mid-rise

2 Navy Memorial, second scheme, final version.

Conklin Rossant, Architects, 1984.

Photomontage showing disposition of memorial in Market Square Park looking north from Pennsylvania Avenue. Roof of portico of National Archives appears in foreground; statue of General Winfield Scott Hancock (Henry Jackson Elliott, sculptor; Richard Morris Hunt, architect, 1896) at far right; and Market Square mixed-use development project buildings (Hartman-Cox, Architects, 1984) directly behind memorial. Photograph copyright F. Harlan Hambricht; courtesy of Hartman-Cox.



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3 Navy Memorial, second scheme, final version.

Conklin Rossant, Architects, 1984.

Detail of disc and arcade. Mona Brown, delineator. Photograph courtesy of Conklin Rossant.

buildings planned by the Pennsylvania Avenue Development Corporation, defined three edges of a trapezoidal enclosure. Within this compound, a terraced seating area stepped up toward the north end of the site, terminating in a pool with a sculpture of a small sailing ship. Other sculptures depicting naval history were to adorn the arch. The design was criticized for its scale, siting, resolution of multiple functions, and also its formal character, which, however lacking in refinement, was neither inconsistent with the McMillan Commission's vision of monumental Washington, nor, as Philip Johnson pointed out, with the architecture of surrounding buildings. In the face of sustained opposition, much of it mounted by architects and community organizations, the proposal was rejected by the National Capital Planning Commission in July 1982.

The second scheme for the memorial, also devised by Conklin and Rossant, was far less prepossessing, "more a park and less a memorial," as the *Washington Post* noted.³ It was organized about a low, flat disc, one hundred feet in diameter, placed on axis with Eighth Street and set, at its north end, into a hemicycle formed by a pair of classically detailed, thirteen-story, mixed-use buildings.⁴ Although the general arrangement of the second

scheme was accepted by the Pennsylvania Avenue Development Corporation in March 1983, the proposal was revised several times thereafter before receiving final approval from the Commission of Fine Arts and the National Capital Planning Commission.

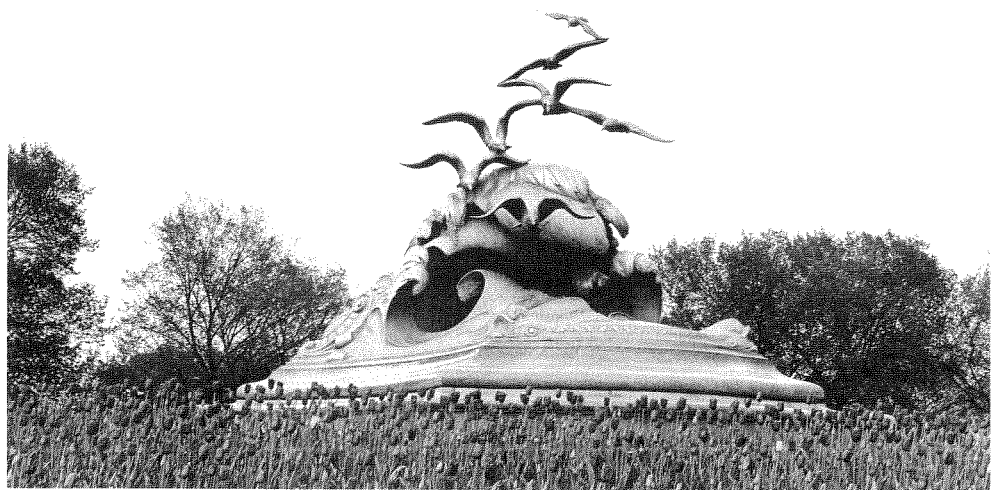
The chief issue affecting acceptance of the second scheme was the treatment of the surface of the disc, which was initially left to Stanley Bleifeld, a Weston, Connecticut, sculptor and medalist, who had also been retained to provide sculpture for the previous scheme.⁵ Bleifeld first proposed to cover the surface of the disc with a field of raised sculptural forms representing waves, an undulating lithic obstacle course that was subsequently replaced by a single, giant cluster of waves. This in turn was rejected in favor of a two-dimensional map of the world paved in stone with Washington at its center—an eccentric projection insinuating, if inadvertently, a sort of global *mare nostrum*.⁶ Occupying this considerable rostrum in the final version was the figure of a "lone sailor" by Bleifeld standing just to the west of the Hawaiian Islands, its stature reduced from the thirty-foot colossus initially proposed to slightly more than life size. Other elements were also reduced or modified at the prompting of the Commission of Fine Arts; a fifteen-foot high group of marines climbing

shroud lines was omitted altogether. Still remaining are groups of statuary representing “peril at sea” and honoring “navies of the world” as well as that of the United States, which will be stationed at fountains facing Pennsylvania Avenue to either side of the disc. Bas reliefs by another artist, John Roach, of Alexandria, Virginia, illustrating historic naval events will extend along several low walls following the curve of the disc. In place of the arcade of the first scheme is to be a semicircular, glass-topped canopy supported by free-standing, mast-like posts interposed between the disc and the curved faces of the buildings forming the hemicycle.



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Despite the ostensible profusion of this assemblage and the referential intention of many of its parts, the result seems unfulfilled and ambiguous as a whole, its centerpiece more closely recalling a compressed version of the Unisphere at the 1964 New York World’s Fair than any naval theme. Washington already enjoys a pair of somewhat equivocal naval monuments, one of which, a stepped podium of allegorical figures meant to commemorate the naval dead of the Civil War (Franklin Simmons, 1877) is situated at the head of Pennsylvania Avenue just below the Capitol. So successfully does it conceal its intention—the only perceptible naval reference is a cherubic



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4 Peace (originally Navy) Monument, Washington, D.C. Franklin Simmons, sculptor, 1877. Photograph by David Blume; courtesy of the Columbia Historical Society.

5 Navy-Marine Memorial, Washington, D.C. Ernesto Begni del Piatta, sculptor, 1922–1934. Photograph by David Blume; courtesy of the Columbia Historical Society.

Neptune resting at the feet of Victory on the second tier—that it has since been renamed the Peace Memorial. The other, sited along the George Washington Parkway, consists of a large wave supporting a flight of seagulls (Ernesto Begni del Piatta, 1922–1934) and is meant to honor the navy and marine dead of the First World War, although it would be no less cogent as a monument to oceanic wildlife.⁷

Naval monuments have traditionally made use of such neutral but manifestly civic forms as arches and columns adorned with waterborne quadrigas, ships' prows, and historical figures to provide a necessary measure of thematic explication. Curiously, Washington has failed to acquire these forms itself, despite the imperial ministrations of Burnham and McKim and the prescription of L'Enfant's manuscript plan of Washington (1791), which called for a naval monument in the form of a column "to celebrate the first rise of a navy, and to stand a ready monument to consecrate its progress and achievements." The column was intended to occupy a ceremonial landing on the Potomac River at the foot of Eighth Street, which, falling midway between the Capitol and the White House, was envisioned as a principal cross axis to the mall. Where Eighth Street crossed Pennsylvania Avenue,

the site presently proposed for the Navy Memorial, L'Enfant's plan indicated a vast square with a grand fountain at its center.⁸ If the transposition of the Navy Memorial up Eighth Street from the water's edge to Pennsylvania Avenue deprives it of an element of thematic congruence, it offers in return what is today a far more conspicuous site and also the opportunity to acknowledge the importance L'Enfant attached to that crossing. But the current proposal, with its virtually two-dimensional profile, does little to occupy or define the considerable space that will lie between the great bulk of the National Archives and the two buildings that will form the hemicycle on the other side of the avenue. Neither does it respond to the diagonal sweep of Pennsylvania Avenue through that space or to the processional nature of the avenue itself.

Nevertheless, the most nettlesome aspect of the present proposal is the lack of any more convincing thematic relation to its role as a naval monument. The outline of an eminently more suitable thematic device can be glimpsed at the margin of Conklin and Rossant's first scheme for the Navy Memorial in the form of the ship that occupies the pool beyond the arch. The forms of ships themselves have long served as icons, an aptitude discernible, even at a small scale, in votive reliefs on

tombs of antiquity; as emblems of mercantile aggrandizement in friezes and shields applied to the Palazzo Rucellai in Florence; or as a cap to a marker recalling the settlement of the New England town of Newbury, Massachusetts, by Puritans in the seventeenth century. Still larger representations of ships, in full form, appear in reconstructed views of the ancient Acropolis as offerings beside the statue of Athena Promachos and in Renaissance and Baroque engravings as conveyances for coronation processions and as waterborne follies in immense garden basins. As metaphors for nation-states, ships have served as centerpieces for republican allegories in Beaux-Arts fountain sculptures at the Paris Exposition in 1889 (Jules Coutan's *France Bearing the Torch of Civilization*) and the world's Columbian Exposition of 1893 in Chicago (Frederick MacMonnies's *The Triumph of Columbia*). The exploits of the *Bon Homme Richard*, vividly recounted in engravings of the time, were among the first evidence of American success in the Revolutionary War and the beginning of the naval tradition now to be commemorated along the landlocked expanse of Pennsylvania Avenue. The popular campaign to preserve a later embodiment of that tradition—the *U.S.S. Constitution*, now a wharfside monument in

6 First Settlers Monument, Newbury, Massachusetts, 1905. Photograph from *The American Monument*, E. Eakins Press Foundation, New York, 1976; courtesy of the photographer.

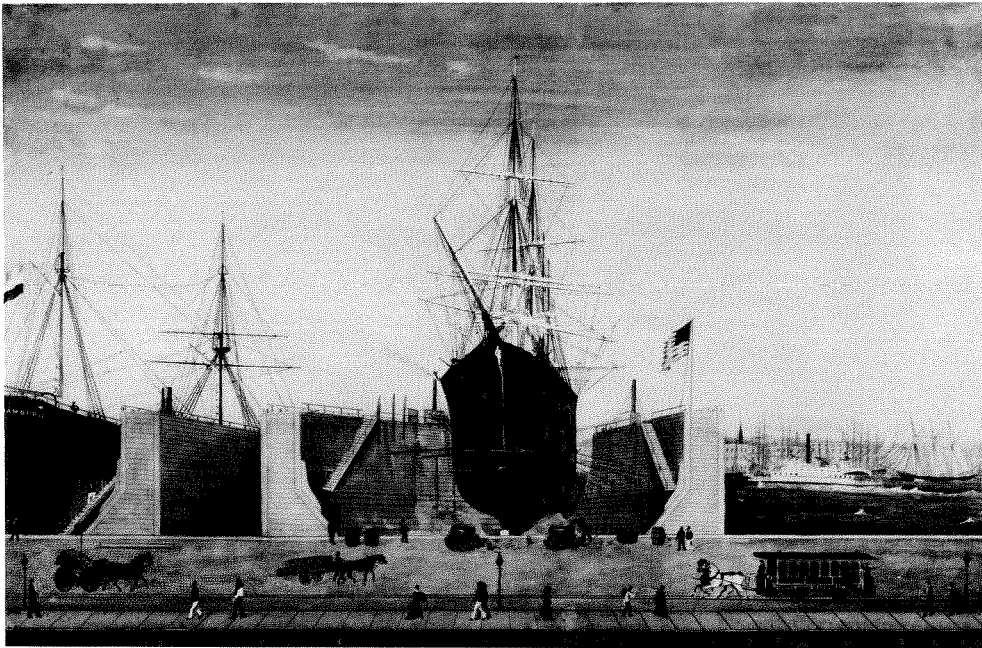
7 The Triumph of Columbia, World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago. Frederick MacMonnies, sculptor, 1893. Photograph by C. D. Arnold; courtesy of the Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library, Columbia University.



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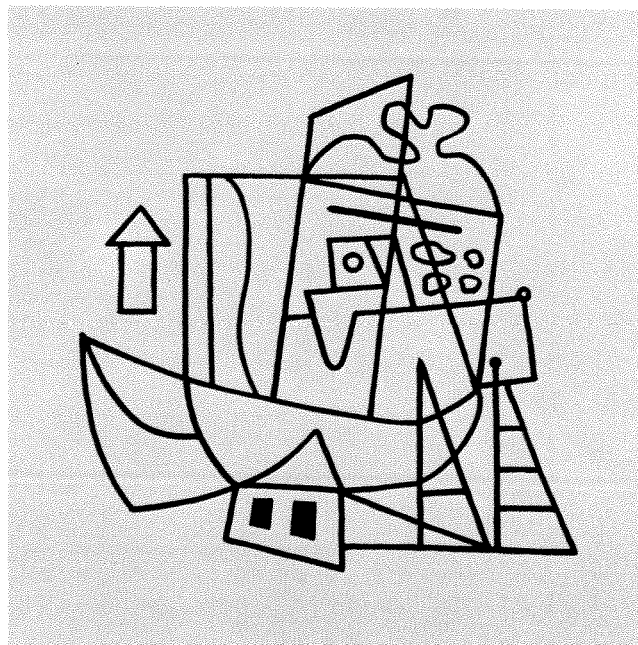
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8 New York Ballance Drydock. Jurgan Frederick Hoge, 1877. Collection of Amy and J. Matthew Davidson. Photograph by Geoffrey Clements; courtesy of the Whitney Museum of American Art.

9 Nautical Shapes. Stuart Davis, c. 1932. Collection of Shirley Polykoff.



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Boston harbor—also demonstrates the claim such figures can lay to public sentiment. Even today the most prominent feature of the official seal of the Navy Department remains a sailing ship.

Apart from a ship's thematic and romantic appeal as a commemorative device, the nature of its setting can also yield mnemonic effect. For a ship seen out of water, as in a drydock, with the full extent and shape of its hull revealed, is somehow more striking than one afloat—a prospect adopted for Stuart Davis's Cubist *esquisse* of signlike planes. Perception is similarly heightened when the object is encountered completely out of context, for instance along Route 1 which runs past a ship-shaped restaurant near Lynnfield, Massachusetts. Less vernacular, trans-Atlantic appreciation of these attributes can be found at the entrance to the Trinity Almshouses, London, a seventeenth-century mews for the widows of seamen, where miniature sailing ships bracket end pavilions, and in the *Oeuvre Complete* of Le Corbusier, where somewhat larger sailing ships are positioned atop roofscapes and sallyports in projects for marine quarters of Algiers (1938) and Paris (1935, 1961). The Venturi, Rauch and Scott Brown unbuilt Nichol's Alley Jazz Club project for Houston (1978), with its rooftop ship fully revealed, noticeably out of

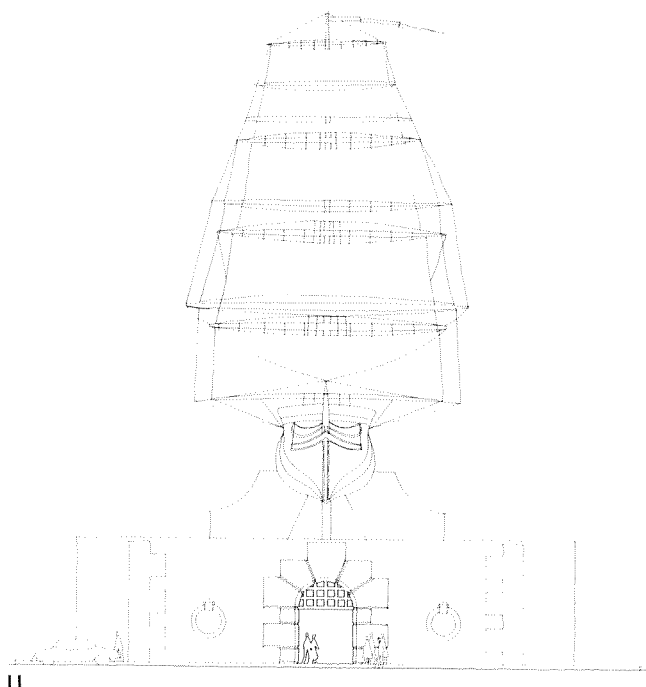
context and much larger than its building “base,” is an almost ready-made naval monument, no less adaptable to the processional needs of Pennsylvania Avenue than those of Houston’s Westheimer strip.

A Navy Memorial using a ship as its principal component would require substantial elaboration in response to program and site. What follows is meant to suggest certain considerations and possibilities, among others, that might inform the development of such a scheme. To begin, it might prove advisable to shift the immediate site of the monument from its presently planned location on axis with Eighth Street to a point several hundred feet southeast, within Market Square Park, at the tip of a triangular promontory that juts out toward the Capitol, reaching Seventh Street. The equestrian statue of General Winfield Scott Hancock (Henry Jackson Elliott, sculptor; Richard Morris Hunt, architect, 1896), which now occupies this sentinel point, would be equally at home astride Eighth Street, guarding the approach to the hemicycle and the Old Patent Office. Such a revision in siting would allow the form of a ship to project more incisively into the space between the hemicycle and the National Archives, where, with profile amply exposed, it would command



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10 Nichol's Alley Jazz Club project, Houston. Venturi, Rauch and Scott Brown, Architects, 1978. Section.



11 **Nichol's Alley Jazz Club project, Houston.** Venturi, Rauch and Scott Brown, Architects, 1978. Elevation.

both slices of L'Enfant's severed square. The monument might then be either inflected to reinforce the gap-ridden north wall of Pennsylvania Avenue or aligned along Seventh Street to provide a third "edge" for (and within) L'Enfant's square.

The ship itself might be a one-half scale representation of the *Bon Homme Richard*, the progenitor of the naval tradition the monument is intended to honor. As a conspicuous example of French solicitude for the revolutionary cause (the *Bon Homme Richard* was a converted Indiaman conveyed to John Paul Jones through the intervention of Louis XVI and renamed by Jones after the French rendition of Franklin's *Poor Richard*), it would also serve to advance the French subtext already suggested along Pennsylvania Avenue by Lafayette Park opposite the White House and by Robert Venturi's *parterred* vignette of L'Enfant's plan, which forms the base of Western Plaza between Thirteenth and Fourteenth streets. A miniature model of the *Bon Homme Richard* is among the holdings of the National Archives across the avenue; the original sank after its engagement with the *Serapis* and lies unrecovered off the coast of England.

The union of the ship and its site might be effected by means of a hinged, two-

armed "drydock" open at one end, an arrangement similar to that shown in the painting of the New York Ballance Drydock. However, the relative size of the drydock compared to the ship should be much smaller, approximating that of ship to "base" in the Nichol's Alley project. The ship might be raised above ground to a height where it would appear to be just barely resting on the base formed by the drydock when viewed from a distance, inducing a palpable suspension of disbelief if not apprehension. The arms of the drydock "base" might be configured as a diminutive revetment to stiffen one or both sides of the promontory and also hollowed out to form a tunnelloke gallery for displays (which might additionally be installed in the void of the ship's hull). The exterior walls of the drydock might receive commemorative legends and friezes and perhaps an illustrated time line of American naval history. Naval figures and artifacts might be ensconced within niches along the walls and possibly arrayed at the crest as acroteria. A platform for bands might be appended to the side of the drydock facing the square while another slightly raised plane might adjoin the leeward side of the base to harbor a Lilliputian flotilla recalling the post-Revolutionary naval past. An intimation of how such an assemblage might appear in context can be

gleaned from a composition by Wassily Kandinsky, with the left-most group standing for the National Archives; the gap, Pennsylvania Avenue; and the two sail forms, a single ship. The pylon to the right might be annexed to the scheme, standing in memory of L'Enfant's column and perhaps offset to provide a terminal feature for Seventh Street.

The particulars of the ensemble and its disposition are, however, secondary to the notion of the ship itself as signal object—an improbably vernacular, peculiarly American addition to a ceremonial precinct. Such a roadside strategem may even conceal a more delicate appreciation of civic possibilities. J. B. Jackson, an observer of the realities of the American landscape, has written that “despite our admiration for the formal square as a feature of the urban scene—there are in fact many signs that the street, or a given fragment of the street, will be the true public space of the future.”⁹ In Washington, this has long been the case, for many of the plazas depicted in L'Enfant's plan were compromised from inception by the overlaying of a Baroque pattern of radial streets on a uniform, classical gridiron, a conceit that tended to erode and distort the edges of prospective squares with an awkward surfeit of

converging arteries. As a consequence, possibilities for civic art are often narrowed to a relatively few opportunities to terminate vistas with imposing objects and to a somewhat more plentiful supply of chances to create processional incidents along the margins of streets. Occasionally the opportunity arises to attempt both at once, as in the case of Western Plaza, where, had they been built, the two pylons proposed as part of the Venturi, Rauch and Scott Brown design would have provided an emphatic frame for the oblique, somewhat recessive prospect of the portico of Robert Mills's Treasury Building while at the same time producing an anchor for the plaza in a processional sense.¹⁰ But as a rule, Washington continues to favor two-dimensional realizations of processional incidents, whether through lack of opportunity or ingenuity.

Today, halfway down the ceremonial reach of Pennsylvania Avenue, there remains the opportunity to create both a better approximation of that rarest of Washington commodities—a square—and a monument that speaks more aptly to memory and to its surroundings than does the present scheme for the Navy Memorial. Such an artifact should represent American culture and patronage at its best, embodying what Elbert Peets

described as “L'Enfant's genius for amalgamating . . . the sacred and the profane”¹¹ as well as those virtues that Henry James sought of monumental Washington: tone, resonance, and beguilement.¹²

NOTES

1 Henry James, *The American Scene* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1907), pp. 339, 352.

2 The progress of the arched first scheme was reported in the *AIA Journal*: “Pennsylvania Avenue: Owings Resigns, Huge Arch Proposed” (March 1982), pp. 21, 25; “Naval Arch Plans Move Ahead; Federal Triangle Scheme Shown” (May 1982), pp. 10, 12; and “Navy Memorial Arch Rejected; Western Plaza Models Revived” (August 1982), pp. 10, 11. An official account of the first scheme and its successor is contained in Sue A. Kohler, *The Commission of Fine Arts: A Brief History, 1910–1976. With Additions, 1977–1984* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1985).

Another account of the Navy Memorial projects appears in Roger Trancik, *Finding Lost Space: Theories of Urban Design* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1986), pp. 167–171. It contains a perspective rendering of the arch, with band shell panels lowered, looking obliquely toward the portico of the National Archives. This view suggests the effect of the arch as a framing device, similar in intent if not result to Ledoux's presentation of the Hôtel de

Thélusson (1778–1783) which is revealed in an engraved perspective through the aperture of an eccentrically proportioned, prefatory arch (Michael Dennis calls it “half buried”) that is placed close to the front of the hotel and is nearly the equivalent of its central register in breadth and height.

- 3 The second scheme and its revisions were described and commented on by Benjamin Forgey in the *Washington Post*: “Revised Navy Memorial Plan: Design Includes Sunken Plaza, Bandstand and Sculpture,” March 17, 1983, Section D, pp. 1, 4; “Revised Navy Memorial Gets Aye Aye and Full Steam Ahead for Restaurant on Mall,” July 13, 1983, Section D, pp. 1, 6; and “Anchoring the Avenue: For the Navy Memorial, A Redesign That Floats,” May 19, 1984, Section C, pp. 1, 5. The cost of the accepted version of the second scheme is reported to be \$8.5 million; completion is planned for 1987.
- 4 The design for this pair of buildings, by Hartman-Cox, Architects, was the result of a three-firm, limited competition conducted by the Pennsylvania Avenue Development Corporation in 1984. All submissions were required to incorporate the second scheme for the Navy Memorial by Conklin and Rossant. See “Mixed-Use Scheme Chosen for Washington’s Market Square,” *Architecture* (December 1984), pp. 13, 14. An earlier design for the same site was prepared by Hugh Jacobsen, architect. See “Five Current Projects from the Office of Hugh Jacobsen,” *Architectural Record* (May 1974), pp. 117–119; and *AIA Journal* (March 1982), p. 21.
- 5 Bleifeld’s previous commissions include reliefs for the Vatican Pavilion at the 1964 World’s Fair and a statue for the Knights of Columbus Father McGivney Memorial in New Haven (1982).
- 6 The idea of a map as a substitute for the several wave motif versions proposed for the disc in the second scheme is credited to J. Carter Brown, Chairman of the Commission of Fine Arts and Director of the National Gallery. See Sue Kohler, *The Commission of Fine Arts: A Brief History*, p. 142.
- 7 James M. Goode, *The Outdoor Sculpture of Washington, D.C.* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1974), pp. 242, 207.
- 8 See Elbert Peets, “On the Mutilations of L’Enfant’s Plan,” in *On the Art of Designing Cities: Selected Essays of Elbert Peets*, Paul D. Spreiregen, ed. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1968), pp. 79–83, 86.
- 9 J. B. Jackson, “The American Public Space,” *The Public Interest* (Winter 1984), p. 64.
- 10 See Suzanne Stephens, “Monumental Main Street: Pennsylvania Avenue, Washington, D.C.,” *Progressive Architecture* (May 1979), pp. 110–113.
- 11 Elbert Peets, “Washington As L’Enfant Intended It,” *On the Art of Designing Cities*, p. 35.
- 12 Henry James, *The American Scene*, pp. 357, 358.