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..CONTENTS.

CARING ABOUT PLACES

**2 Giving Purpose
to Change**

Donlyn Lyndon

SPEAKING OF PLACES

**4 Where Gaia and
Ouranos Make Love**

Bruno Queysanne

**7 Britain's Phone
Kiosks**

Howard Mansfield

10 The Waste of Place

Kevin Lynch

PORTFOLIO

24 Carrara Quarry

Joel Leivick

**32 The International
City Design
Competition**

Jeffrey E. Ollswang

Allan B. Jacobs

Carlos Tejeda

Cynthia Weese

Amos Rapoport

William Turnbull, Jr.

48 Boston Visions

Antonio DiMambro

56 Surrealist Paris

Alexander C. Irwin

**68 Social Concern
and Architectural
Discourse**

James Ackerman

**72 Broadway and
Columbus**

Larrisa Bilaniuk

Mallory Cusenbury

Christopher MacDonald

Kevin Powell

Ted Pratt

**80 Streets as
Landmarks**

Giancarlo De Carlo

STANDARDS

**84 In Defense
of Street Trees**

Allan B. Jacobs

DISPATCHES

**88 Tilted Arc: Setback
for Public Art?**

**88 Papago Freeway's
Silver Lining**

**90 Parkway, Beach
and Promenade:
Robert Moses'
Regional Vision**

92 Contributors

97 Sponsors

In Defense of Street Trees

Allan B. Jacobs

“Standards” will be a regular feature of Places. It will report on how methods and practices of design and building (particularly those that have evolved into regulations or standards) influence the character of places—consciously or unconsciously, inadvertently or for purpose, for good or for bad. It will also be concerned with the origins of and rationales for standards, and with finding ways of developing and expressing standards that allow individual places to flourish. We invite readers to submit ideas and materials that would be of interest for future “Standards” columns.

In too many American cities today, it would be close to impossible to design a really good street and have the design implemented. The design would run afoul of the city’s own standards and practices: impossibly wide lane widths, continuous turning lanes at intersections, required ill-designed light standards and fixture types, sign regulations, building set-back lines, tree planting standards and a lot more.

Take just one example, street trees, a favorite subject of mine these days. If, in an American city, you wanted to make a major positive impact on an existing street and had a limited budget, you might well recommend planting trees as the way to get the most impact for your money.

When you begin deciding where to put trees along a street, there are a lot of dimensions and planting characteristics you would want to know. For example, I have found, after measuring the distance between trees on innumerable streets, that they have the most positive impact where they are spaced from 15 feet to 25 feet apart. To be sure, there are some fine streets on which the trees are farther apart (but seldom more than 35 feet) and some where they are closer (sometimes as little as 10 feet).

Observations of streets have turned up other rules of thumb. On the best streets, trees come right up to the corners. The lines of trees are usually continuous; they do not stop because of building entrances, curb cuts, or bus

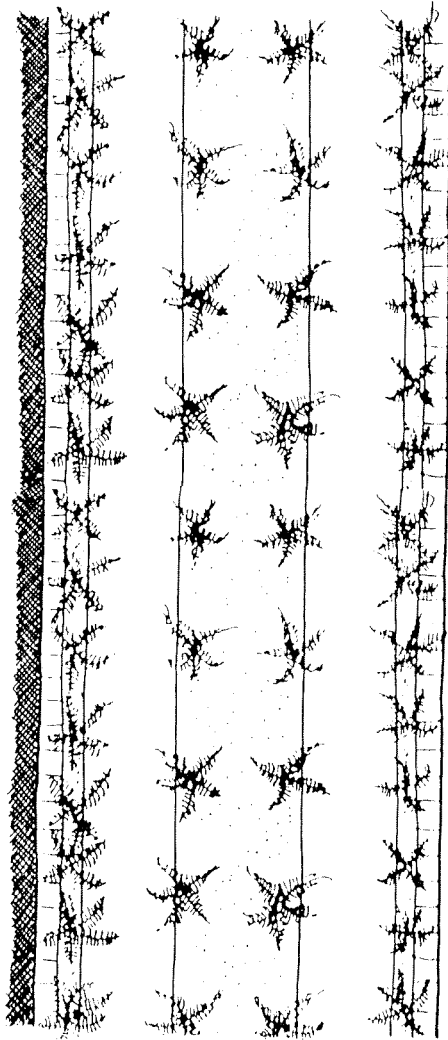
stops, or because someone thinks they have a special building that should stand out. The species are not random, determined by each property owner. More often than not the trees are close to a curb so that trunks become a line of columns between the cars and the walkway, creating a pedestrian precinct. Size is important; lollipops do not make good street trees.

Having come to these conclusions, or ones similar to them, just try to design them into a street.

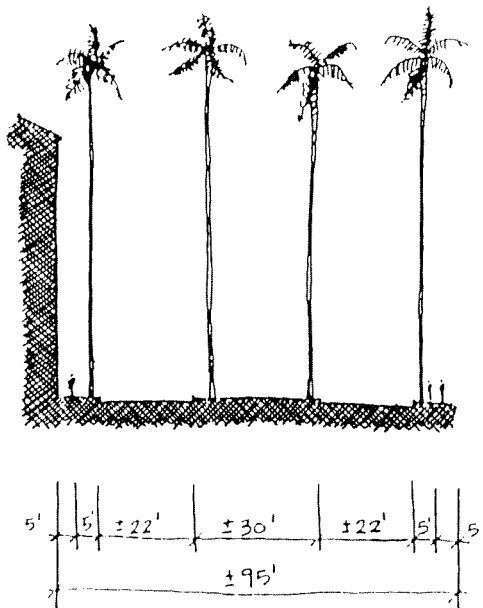
Consider the “distance from the corner” standard. Simply, trees will not be permitted within 40 or 50 feet of an intersection, presumably because of safety concerns having to do with sight distances for drivers. On a 300- or 400- foot block, that 100-foot prohibition (50 feet on each end) is a lot.

But how much sense does that standard make? Are trees near corners really dangerous and, if so, how dangerous? How come there are so many examples of street trees (planted before this standard came along) that come right up to the corner, without anyone tearing them out? Or, if trees are dangerous, then why is a light pole or traffic signal pole with a diameter larger than a redwood and with a large electronic box attached to it permitted at the corner? Or what, God forbid, if people stand at the corner?

Turn to spacing. For impact, street trees should be close together. There are exceptions, of course, but generally speaking, I will stick to my 15-foot to 25-foot spacing. Yet someone, usually an engineer in a public works department, but often an urban forester or a landscape architect, will say trees should be 40 to 60 feet apart. There are strange reasons, one being health, the health of trees that is. If I give examples of streets where trees are closer together, such as Viale Manilo Gelsomini in Rome where the London

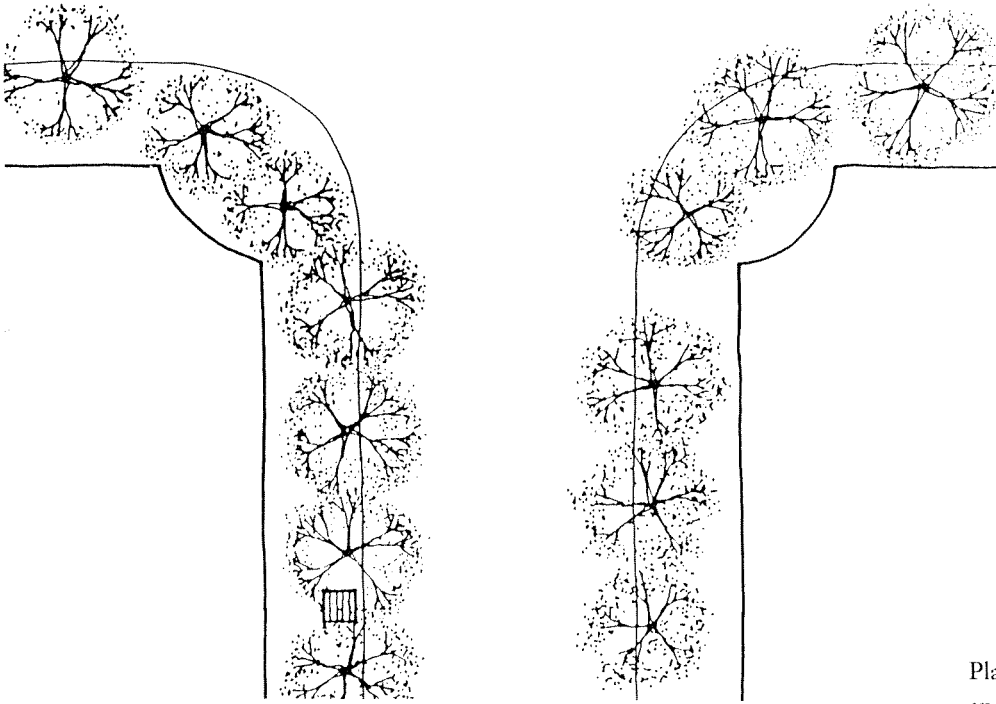


Royal Palm Way, West Palm
Beach, Florida.

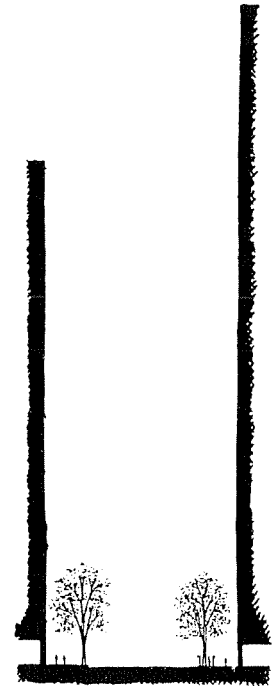


Photos by Allan B. Jacobs.

Graphics by Rick Williams, from
field notes by Allan B. Jacobs.



Avenue Rio Branco,
Rio de Janeiro.

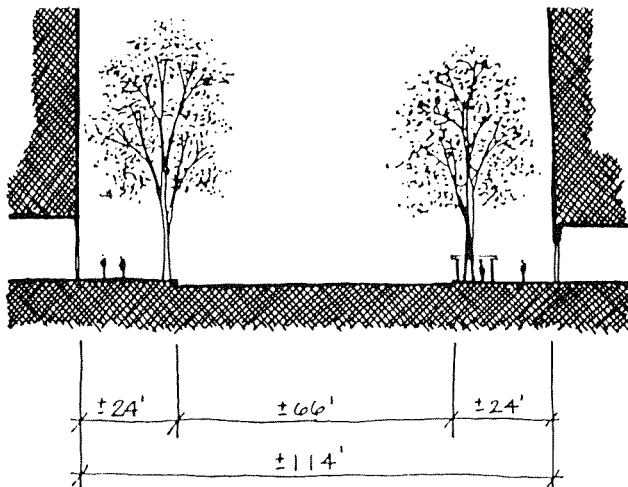


Planes can have three-foot diameters and are on 18-foot centers; or Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington, D.C., where trees are 15 to 18 feet apart; or on any number of streets in San Diego, where the palms are 10 feet apart; I am likely to be told those are unhealthy trees. Someone should tell the trees.

The most puzzling rationale for distance has to do with parking. Take Oakland, California, but only as an example. Oakland is not so much different from other cities. Consider one of the rationales for spacing trees found in *Greenstreets*, a report written for the city in 1981 by the Urban Design Trees Group:

Trees should be located in sidewalks at the painted space marks on the street. This will prevent car doors from hitting trees and will usually be three feet away from parking meters. Since parking spaces are 22 feet long, the resulting tree spacing will either be 44 feet (every two parking spaces) or 66 feet (every three spaces).¹

My God! Why should parking spaces have anything to do with it? Why is it important for the tree to





Two views of Via Terme di Caracalla, Rome.

avoid the car door? Why not the other way around? What lasts longer and is more meaningful to the design of the street, parking meters, parking spaces, or trees? Why 44 feet or 66 feet instead of 22 feet? What tail is wagging what dog? What dog is letting its tail be wagged? It is the closeness of many trees in a line that makes the impact, that gives the cover, the provides the movement to engage the eyes, that creates a pedestrian precinct.

If we want to design good streets (and remember that streets account for from one-fourth to one-third of all urban land) then we might do well to focus on the streets themselves, not so much the buildings on them, and not traffic and parking concerns. Trees are only one element of street design but they can be terribly important, and they last a lot longer than cars, curb cuts and, these days, many buildings. On many streets their positive impact could be stronger, but not if good proposals are watered down to meet imagined imperatives of traffic engineers.

And, finally, it is worth remembering that people and activities can and do adapt. It is not very hard to adapt to the existence of a well chosen and placed tree, but difficult to adapt the tree to serve changing phenomena like curb cuts, building entrances, or parking meters.

At this moment, street trees and how to locate them are a favorite concern of mine in the design of streets and cities. There are a host of other concerns that one cannot help but get involved in: building lines, street enclosure, transparency at ground level, entrances, the sizes of buildings, turning lanes, lane widths, open space standards, side yard and lot coverage standards, to name a few.

My fear is that most of the city standards and current practices actually run counter to notions of "urban" design (as opposed to suburban or non-urban) and that the major reason is the publicly required bigness of most things, making them larger than they need be with the impact of distancing and spreading rather than joining people in communities. It is in that larger context that street tree standards are most important.

Note

1. Urban Trees Design Group, *Greenstreets: The Street Tree Plan for Oakland* (Oakland, CA: City of Oakland, 1981).

Where Gaia and Ouranos Make Love

Bruno Queysanne

This story begins in Pienza, a little town in the south of Tuscany, where a humanist Pope, Pius II, wanted to set up a kind of laboratory for Renaissance culture, of which he was one of the most passionate promoters.

Pienza is situated on the extreme edge of a plateau, overlooking the wide and deep Val d'Orcia and facing the Monte Amiata. In laying out the new town, its architect, Bernardo Rossellino, retained the roughly orthogonal grid plan of the old village Corsignano, on whose site it was built. Pienza is shaped like an elongated rectangle, oriented east-west along a central Corso, itself parallel to the sides of the plateau but winding slightly in its middle. The secondary streets that cross the Corso run roughly north-south, emerging at the edge of the town above the Val d'Orcia.

Fortifications act like buttresses to the plateau; they hardly rise above ground level, only to the top of a parapet which borders the path running around the town. They do not interrupt the view beyond to the south; the land outside Pienza is invisible from within the town, since it lies way below the town. From these narrow streets, squeezed in between house fronts, the sky alone is visible. But the sky is seen in a horizontal format, rather than a vertical one, through the "crack" left between overhanging roofs. In Pienza the sky is not only above our heads but in front of us and, even, most astonishingly, beneath us. For anyone inside the town the sky fills the Val d'Orcia, whose floor remains out of sight.

It was there that I witnessed the meeting of Earth and Sky for the first time, Sky apparently sharing with Earth a dwelling in lower regions, which are usually reserved for the latter by itself.

This experience in Pienza was the moment at which I understood what spatial design means, at an architectural scale as much as at an urban or landscape scale. It is to offer Earth-Gaia and Sky-Ouranos a place where they celebrate anew their fruitful love. According to Greek mythology, the result of that love is the universe itself with its gods, men and landscapes:

First of all, there was Void; then came Earth, with her generous flanks, forever providing the living with a stable domain, and Eros, the most beautiful among Immortals....Void gave birth to Erebe and dark Night. In her turn, Night gave birth to Ether and daylight. Earth first gave birth to a being equal to her [and] able to cover her entirely, starlit Sky, who forever provided the blessed Gods with a stable domain. She gave birth also to the high Mountains.

Then, from her embrace with Sky, Ocean came into life, with his deep whirlpools....Then came Chronos, the god with double-dealing thoughts, the most redoubtable of her children; and Chronos began to hate his flourishing father. She gave birth also to the violent-hearted Cyclops, with their brutal souls, similar to the Gods apart from their single eyebrow. Then came the hundred-armed Giants and other terrifying beings, thanks to their power and skill. For they were terrible sons, those born from the embrace of Earth and Sky.¹

To us it seems quite normal that Earth and Sky, who were permanently in love with each other while still being mother and son, could only give birth to monstrous creatures—the Cyclops. And let us not forget that these Cyclops were the first builders, as though the art of building is the outcome of a union between those elements that should not be united,

Sky and Earth. Thus, building cannot be anything other than a violent act, a matter of breaking the established order of classification and of risking to bring together that which was in the first place separated.

This was exactly the tale that I recognized in Pienza, albeit retold in a gentle way, as if to reassure our human weaknesses.

But Pienza is a small town, an exceptional experiment carried out in the Early Renaissance by a generous Pope together with an excellent architect. It is thus a fragile testimony, constrained by our limited ability to build within earshot of the gods.

Hence my surprise, and delight, in rediscovering the same spatial effects in San Francisco—this time not at the scale of a small town, miraculously spared from the voracious ebb and flow of human history, but at the scale of a city, and in the capital of one of the fastest changing regions in the world. The same effect I had found tacitly in Pienza's calm, I rediscovered *alla grande* in the much more intense ambience of a great American city.

Everyone knows the streets of American towns are laid out on an orthogonal grid. Everyone knows San Francisco is built on hills. Everyone has seen—in detective films at the cinema or on television—cars chasing each other up and down the city's steep streets. But not everyone has seriously considered the spatial consequences of applying, absolutely rigorously, a strict grid to a hilly site, one where the gradients are sometimes extremely severe.

Usually towns laid out like checkerboards are to be found on flat land, where an orthogonal grid can develop unhindered. When a town is to be built on a sloping area, the usual layout is in a spiral form, in order to let the streets unroll—in volutes—around the slopes; thus, these slopes neither deny



A view down a street in Pienza into the sky beyond.

their intrinsic physical structure nor impede man from moving around them easily. Anyone who has been in a hill town like Siena knows how to weigh the longer distance of a route that offers easier walking against the shorter but more tiring route along streets that follow the line of the steepest gradients.

San Francisco began with the imposition of a relentless grid on the hills. Then, little by little, this checkerboard spread over the many hills and equally over flat areas along the peninsula between the Pacific Ocean and the inland bay. Only within the last two decades have some parts of the town been built up following the natural contours. Nevertheless, this refusal to confront the slope is most exceptional and seems unacceptable to the *genius loci*.² It thus cannot dilute the genuine character of San Francisco.

What interests me is the richness of the spatiality made possible by stubbornly applying a grid to a terrain whose very nature contradicts it. It is precisely in this conflict between urban planning patterns and the hilly charac-

Photos courtesy Bruno Queysanne.

San Francisco's grid is warped by the city's hills, yet the point at which a street meets the summit and touches the sky is a place of exhilaration.



ter of this landscape that places are created where Gaia and Ouranos meet each other again and again. The violence of their divine coupling echoes the town's spatial construction. That Earth and Sky "embrace" is about as "natural" as this conjunction of grid and hills.

The wonder of San Francisco derives precisely from this artifice, this "dis-natural" device, which violates the inherently hilly nature of the place in which it takes place. The same effect that occurred at a small scale in Pienza, as if in a laboratory, happens here a thousand times over, in an obsessive way. Thanks to the alignment of the steep slopes, each street offers a glimpse and holds out a promise of this cosmic embrace at its summit. The sky is not only above the earth but also beneath it, behind the hill. It billows up from below, rather than descending to it.

To be sure, not all the hills have the same character. Some are hard and some are soft. Some are covered with little wooden houses, and others with concrete blocks of flats. So the aper-

tures that streets open up, towards their hilltops, present a wide variety of frames. But the sky always lies behind, forming the backdrop yet never offering the same setting.

In order to witness this divine coupling one has to pay a certain price, to suffer through the very human act of walking, but one's entire being is exhilarated. It is almost disappointing when people give up laying out the city, taking an easier mean than the steepest slope—when the straight street has been replaced with steps, or with hair-pin bends as in Lombard Street. For then they have given up the effort required for enjoying the company of the gods in exchange for picturesque pleasure.

I exaggerate, for a number of these stairways, which enable the conquest of hilltops that are really *too* steep, are charming places. But they are only human places; Gaia and Ouranos, at our coast certainly, prefer to meet each other at the top of straight, continuous streets that obey the implacable grid.

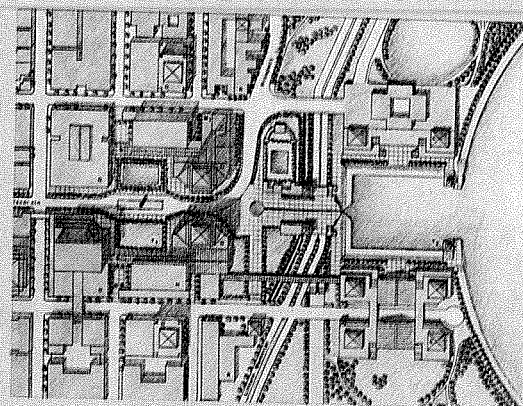
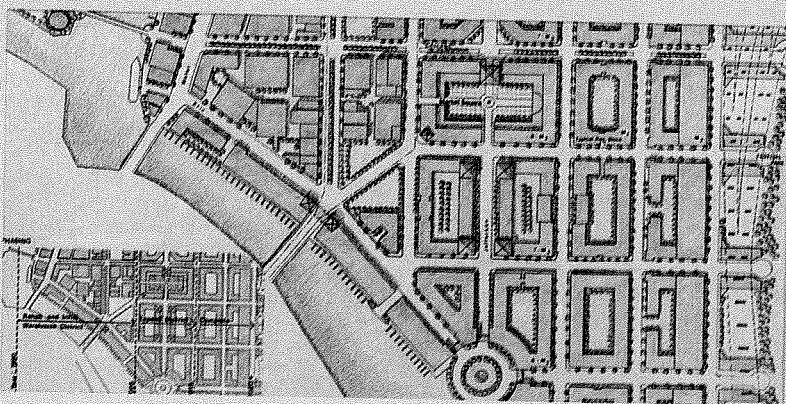
Notes

1. Hesiod, *Theogony* (116-155).

2. Let's remember that Arne Novak, in his wonderful *Prague Baroque* (1938) was the first to re-enliven the notion of "*genius loci*."

The urban character of the city center would be extended to the south:

- The underlying grid would be continued.
- Housing would be street-oriented, with minimal setbacks.
- Interior courts would be enclosed within a block, creating space for semi-private gardens, play areas and parking.
- Buildings at corners would vary in form to accommodate shops.



The meeting of Wisconsin Avenue and the lake is a symbolic focal point. Because pomp and ceremony are essential to urban life, formal areas are as important as informal ones. A sequence of squares and plazas, a reshaping of the waterfront, and public and private buildings would combine to demonstrate the drama and power created when a city's built form is united with its most important natural asset.

Places Are Not Impositions

William Turnbull, Jr.

Reviewing the entries for the International City Design Competition in Milwaukee, I was struck by the similarity of the attitudes expressed to those of previous generations who had addressed this problem, whether in literary form, as in George Orwell's *1984*, or in architectural drawings, as in Tony Garnier's ideal city of 1917.

Frustration with the failure of the design community to meet reasonable environmental expectations has led the explorers of the future to make bold strokes of prognosis. Just as Big Brother is the literary outgrowth of big bureaucracy, megastructures are the descendants of the linear city and Corbusean ideals.

What seems to be missing in the competition essays into futurism is an awareness that we have already looked at the future and found it to be us.

"Us" is not metaphorical. "Us" is the multiplication of the species. More and more humans inhabit a limited planet that is stressed by our atmospheric pollution and ozone depletion.

For an increased population to coexist in harmony, not chaos, requires rules of deportment, rules that are stratified and organized into regulatory laws and municipal codes. The

ones that concern the city of the future are municipal zoning and planning ordinances and building codes dealing with public health, safety and welfare. These are our constraints, the invisible boundaries that normally encompass us and wall in the enthusiasm, idealism and energy that can be expressed in design competitions.

Once, not so long ago, these walls were broken down in the United States by the Federal Government under the programs of urban renewal. Wholesale house cleaning was the model of the day in the 1950s and early 1960s. Whole blocks and older neighborhoods were leveled in cities across the country; in some the Corbusean ideal of city living was attempted, others became pastures of urban weeds.

For the most part our fellow citizens, the clients and inhabitants of our efforts as designers, did not rejoice in these utopian visions of the future. The comfortable and known, albeit tired and dirty, had given way to the unfamiliar, unremarkable and all too often socially disastrous places of inhabitation. The visionaries' dreams of the future disintegrated with the dynamited remains of the Pruitt-Igoe housing project in St. Louis.

People responded in the voting booth by electing officials whose priorities lay elsewhere; they cut off funds to existing urban renewal programs and evolved new ones with tax incentives to rehabilitate existing structures.

People were saying, in effect, the world around us gives us security, emotionally as well as physically. The professionals can play their games of one-upmanship with the latest fashions if the corporate and private patrons will support such childlike activities. But we the public do not wish these games played on our turf, in our neighborhoods.

And the people drew this old armor of laws and codes and zoning around them and settled down more aware than ever of the physical and social-political values of Little Italy, Chinatown, Over-the-Rhine, or whatever their ethnic neighborhoods were called.

But the problems of life still exist. Indeed, they are exacerbated by the continuing increase in the number of people—affordable housing, decent education, jobs proximate to where we live, parks, recreation opportunities and safe streets.

It seems to me, looking over the visionary energy invested in this competition, that the grass is not always greener on the other side of the street; the bold stroke cuts the Gordian Knot but kills the fabric of the community.

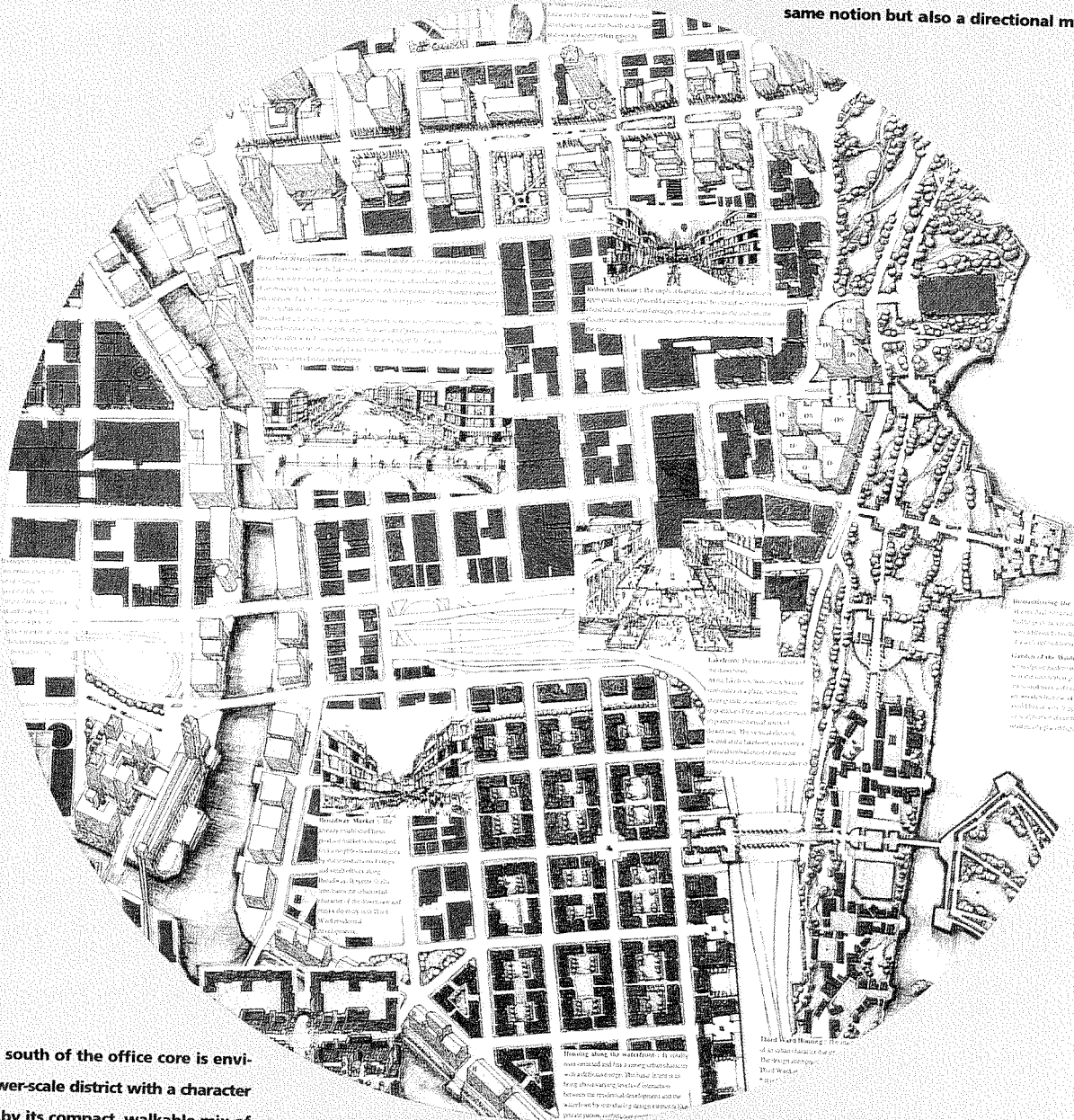
A better design attitude might be to take a myriad of little steps based on an understanding of how people inhabit space, both their own and that of the common realm. Add to it gently, repair it when it is broken and reinforce its qualities in the consciousness of inhabitants. The tyrannies of Haussman made Paris a great whole, but little people, wrestling with pragmatic daily problems of keeping afloat, created the wonders of Venice.

To make a “place” need not be an act of imposition; that is a violence all too easy to acquire. To work with the opportunities inherent in people, place and circumstance takes longer and is harder for a young designer, but in the end produces the physical settings our society chooses to protect and conserve. From Beacon Hill to Telegraph Hill, places are for, by and of the people. To make them you must understand the inhabitants and their feelings and needs. Only then is our future believable.

Journey home, my friend, know the flowers in your own garden before trying to pick the stars from the sky.

The river is perceived as the commercial and residential spine of downtown. The additions and alterations to the river would implicitly conform to the existing urban character and create a sense of cohesiveness. A continuous street would be maintained along the river edge in order to prevent privatization of a public amenity. Office and retail activities would capitalize on the river, maximizing their frontage by opening shops and outdoor cafes along the edge. This would enliven the riverfront during and especially after work hours. River taxi stops would be located to facilitate travel along the river and to initiate retail development.

The lake front is the recreational area of downtown. There, Wisconsin Avenue terminates at a plaza, which by its sheer grandeur acknowledges the importance of the avenue as the most significant commercial artery of downtown. The vertical element located at the lake front is not only a physical embodiment of the same notion but also a directional marker.



The peninsula south of the office core is envisioned as a lower-scale district with a character made distinct by its compact, walkable mix of uses in new and old buildings; it forms a bustling urban waterfront. The development of the district would follow the grid system, but pedestrian use of streets and sidewalks would take precedence over automobile use of those spaces. The narrow street and alley, the arcade and through-block gallery, and the court and atrium are all time-honored urban design devices used in the district to thread together and reinforce the pedestrian circulation system.

Project team:
 Simon Atkinson, Meera
 Sanghavi, Naila Shamsi,
 Sunalini Hegde, Sandhya
 Savant, Shoba Sivakolundu
 (Gold Medalist)

Solutions in Search of a Problem

Amos Rapoport

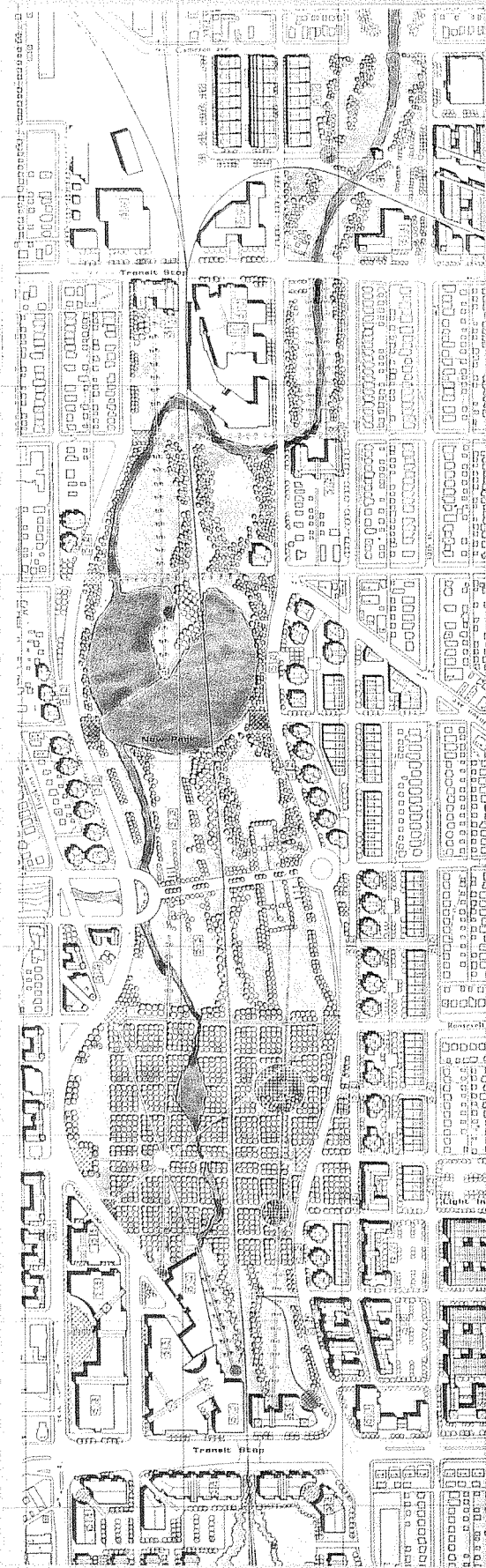
Two things influence the comments that follow. First, I was a member of the committee that developed the program as well as a member of the jury. Second, on both I represented a different view of design, predicated on research-based knowledge derived from environment-behavior studies (EBS) and a variety of related disciplines. These comments, therefore, address some general and very important issues that I raised during the program committee meetings but could not address during the jury process. In fact, they are based on notes I made while on the jury knowing that I would not be able to use them there and then.

The program asked competitors to select a future involving assumptions about a variety of economic, occupational, educational, demographic and similar variables. Proposals were to be derived from these assumptions. To me that meant an acknowledgement that design, particularly of cities, cannot be arbitrary and subjective, but is a serious problem-solving activity. I therefore, expected an explicit chain of reasoning and inferences leading from the setting of explicit objectives based on the assumptions, and the use of research-based knowledge, to proposals satisfying these objectives. After all, one can hardly judge whether a thing is done well unless one knows what it is supposed to do—and why.

From that perspective the entries were generally disappointing. Lacking were clear objectives—notions of what things should be like and why—and any link between assumptions and proposals.

Competitors checked the assumptions but seemingly ignored them, proceeding in the usual non-explicit, arbitrary way to manipulate shapes and spaces, buildings and vegetation. The few who did engage in serious analysis also ignored the assumptions and either neglected proposals or made proposals that neither derived from nor emerged from the analysis. As a result there was no clear rationale for decisions, no clear or explicit goals, nor any possibility of justification of any goals—even if one could infer them. The lack of chains of reasoning, of explicit linkages among assumptions, data, relevant research and proposals made it difficult, if not impossible, to analyze, discuss and, hence, evaluate the proposals rationally.

Even the problems were never identified—and unknown problems cannot be solved. Yet problems could be derived from the assumptions. For example, the assumptions selected by each competition team would lead to a certain distribution of population groups. These population groups could be expected to have certain lifestyles leading to the need for cer-



Project team:

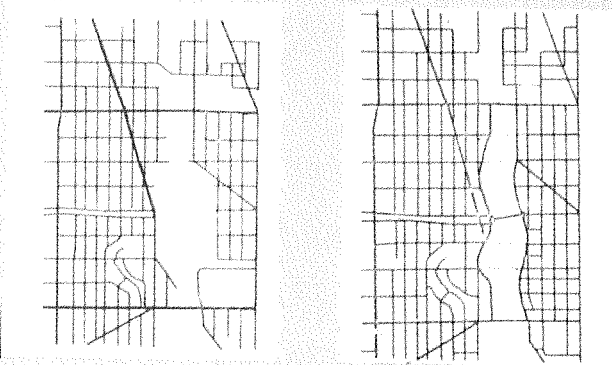
Santiago Abasolo, Simon Atkinson, Wayne Attoe, Robert Mugerauer (Gold Medalist).

Facing page:

Two distinct areas are proposed for the park:

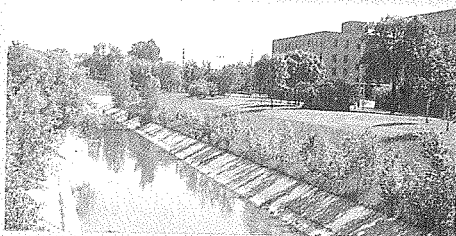
- The "lake," a very open area with long vistas and a bridge for the railroad.
- The "forest," a heavily wooded area with more intimate spaces and a network of paths that link different areas of use.

Informal or more picturesque open spaces would be defined by tree masses that link these two areas and specific sites for sports fields. The edge of the park would be defined by some of the existing residential areas as well as by new housing units, which are defined as "urban villas" and provide a visible edge to the park while preserving a "permeable" quality for the residential area.



An integral component of planning for the Older Neighborhood District is re-evaluating the street system:

- The existing street grid would be extended to the edge of the new park.
- New residential blocks would be half the size of existing blocks to allow better public access to the park from the residential areas.
- Two curvilinear streets would mark the edge of the park.
- An existing street would be continued through the park and under the railroad.
- A network of pedestrian paths would be provided in order to link the lake area with places for sports activities, small squares at the end of streets and the proposed transit station.



Lincoln Creek passing through the Older Neighborhood District competition site.

tain facilities for instrumental supportiveness and certain meanings, imagery, etc., for supportiveness of latent functions. The degree of variability of environments follows from the projected diversity of such groups, their sub-cultures and resulting lifestyles. From this, desirable environmental quality profiles can be inferred with certain attributes expressible through a set of facilities, forms, shapes, spaces, colors, vegetation, linkages and so on.

One way in which this can be done is through scenarios. These enable thinking in scenes and hence settings which can be illustrated in three dimensions. This was why the program asked for such illustrations. Scenarios enable social, demographic and cultural assumptions to be related to proposals, avoiding the problem of "planners' people."¹ Not doing so leads to abstract and vacuous proposals because competitors do not consider the likely inhabitants, visitors and users of settings. It follows, as is so often the case, that such illustrations were used mainly as decoration or window-dressing—like the assumptions made.

As I have long argued, competitors seemed to launch immediately into manipulating shapes and spaces, buildings and vegetation; they seemed to be concerned with how to do things, neglecting the far more important questions: what are the problems and hence what should be done and why? Although the program tried very hard to make them address these questions it did not succeed.

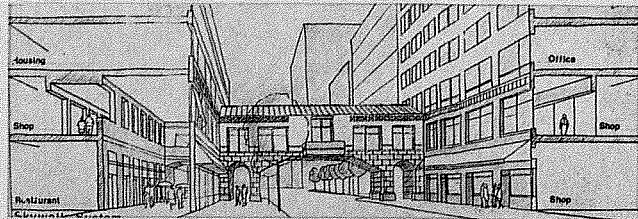
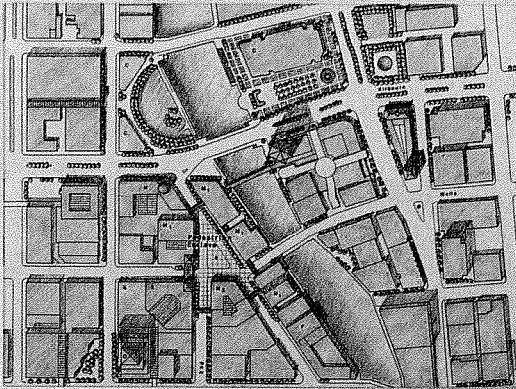
It was also clear from the program, as it should be generally, that adequate design, especially of cities, cannot be done by designers alone, even those with some knowledge of EBS. Hence, entrants were encouraged to form interdisciplinary teams involving planners, social scientists and EBS specialists as well as designers. While I still have no data, I doubt that such teams were in fact formed. If they were, the approaches and knowledge of other disciplines did not visibly (and certainly not explicitly) influence the proposals. That seems to support my position that mainstream designers are unwilling and probably unable to use knowledge and others' expertise. In fact, it has been shown that even when research is done by designers themselves it is not used in design.²

All these shortcomings not only weakened the proposals for Milwaukee but made transferability much less likely—or even impossible. I doubt that it was even considered. Certain local, specific and idiosyncratic features dominated (while others, such as climate, were generally ignored) but no apparent consideration was given to Milwaukee as an exemplar of a class of declining, nineteenth-century industrial cities—as had been intended. Needed were generic approaches (and even proposals) modified by local specifics. To give just one example, the emphasis on the lake front and the river should have

Project team:

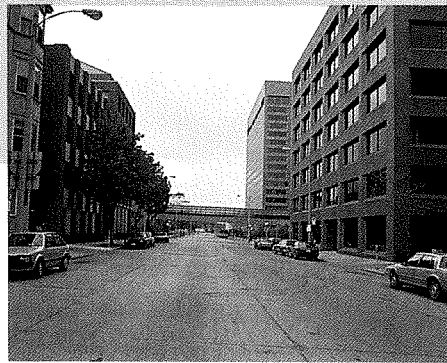
Timothy A. Gawronski (Silver Medalist).

Along the central riverfront, the intersection of Wells Street, 2nd Street and Plankinton Avenue (where they form "Plankinton Square," the pedestrian precinct) demonstrate how the automobile can be integrated into the urban landscape without destroying the quality of outdoor spaces for the pedestrian.



Skywalk systems can be used to help define outdoor spaces...

...rather than destroy urban space and pattern.



been generalized to water edges; their treatment and linkages derived from assumptions and related to the lifestyles of the likely users in the downtown, older neighborhood and growing edge contexts. Only in that way could proposals influence policy relevant to this particular class of cities.

Finally, in these very brief comments, I find it significant that there was general agreement that the proposals for the growing edge were the weakest; in my view these were followed by the older neighborhood with the downtown proposals being the strongest. I think this is because the latter is most constrained by local and specific conditions, whereas the first is the least constrained and hence the most generic. Yet constraints are essential—the essence of design is a *choice among alternatives* using research-based criteria gradually to reduce the decision-space. The results show the inadequacy of arbitrary, subjective, idiosyncratic criteria mainstream designers typically used to make decisions. It also bears on the unwillingness (or possibly the inability) of designers to derive constraints from the program, from the research literature and from the knowledge of other disciplines.

I thus conclude where I began. The competition revealed the typical and traditional weaknesses and problems of designers and the design professions. It confirmed my position that fundamental changes are essential; the state of the art in city design (as of design in general) is pretty woeful.

Notes

1. E. W. Wood, Jr., S. N. Brower and M. W. Latimer, "Planners' People," *AIP Journal*, 32:4 (228-234) (Chicago: American Planning Association, 1966).
2. S. M. Low, *Professional Culture: The Boundary between Theory and Practice in Design* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, NIE, Education Resource Information Center, No. ED 2129290, 1982).

Cities of Culture, Cities of Places

Carlos Tejeda

The problem that inspired the competition—the lack of dialogue about the city of the future—seems as evident in the case of Milwaukee as it is in the case of a metropolis many times more problematic, like Mexico City. The complexity and fragmentation of urban government precludes the possibility of sustaining a continued dialogue capable of producing general and plausible concepts for the not-so-distant future.

The ICDC has been a unique and very valuable endeavor, supported in good measure by the excellent program prepared by the organizers. It has been a success in terms of response to the competition because there were around 240 entries from a wide variety of countries. But concerning the nature and quality of the projects, the results are not easy to assess.

In spite of the program's emphasis on the idea of credible visions and the practical nature of time frames of 20 to 30 years into the future, many entries, perhaps more than half, were complete flights of fancy, often belonging in the realm of "eco-fantasy." Some of these were undoubtedly interesting scenarios of far distant futures, or just strong images of the unreal contrived to expand the limits of the imaginable. But too many were only shallow abstractions of the nature of the city and life in general, where a vague notion of ecology seemed to matter much more than urban structure and design.

This is very meaningful because it indicates a rejection, or ignorance, of the idea of the city as a fundamentally cultural entity, as human and material concentration in contrast with nature. It means also that many competitors evaded the question of dealing with the city's specific problems in design terms. Maybe part of this vacuum was indirectly caused by one of the few questionable assumptions of the program, that the proposals for Milwaukee could be applicable to other similar cities. As it turned out, the best projects made very particular proposals for specific sites in Milwaukee. Their applicability to sites other cities is valid only at the level of general principles and concepts.

Suburban sprawl was a basic concern that was countered with the need for effective containment; therefore, the process of urbanization of the urban edge was transformed in proposals for new types of suburban housing integrated with new industry and agriculture and by the use of the fringe for parks, recreation and environmental management.

The problem of regenerating old neighborhoods produced many interesting ideas and was the theme most successfully

developed by the majority. Most competitors seized the opportunity to reuse Lincoln Creek, the railway lines and the old industrial land. The proposals included the creation of a large park, the use of the river to create a lake and ponds and the treatment of the waterfront as a very valuable element in itself. The social and economic fabric of the neighborhood was strengthened by the creation of new industrial uses and jobs in vacant industrial sites; the introduction of local shops, market and schools; and generally, the creation of new neighborhood places.

The revitalization of the city center was dealt with rather loosely. The stronger ideas were for the use and design of the river front, the rediscovery of downtown housing and the need to strengthen the axis along Wisconsin Avenue between the river and the lake. But there were only two or three projects that understood clearly the need to link the heart of downtown with the edge of the lake.

In general, there seems to be a lack of understanding for the need for civic or ceremonial spaces, for monuments, for well-defined places. Maybe it's not in the culture anymore.

It is difficult to judge if interdisciplinary approaches contribute to the substance of submissions, since the identity of the competitors remained unknown to the jurors. But in the end substance is a product of strong minds, interdisciplinary or not.

The insights that arise through design, particularly through competitions such as this, must enter public discussion and policy. To do this we need to make these issues part of public education; we must invite and commit the politicians and officials (they were absent from this competition); and we must convince them and the community to get some of these proposals actually built, as examples.

If we judge the state of the art in city design based on this competition, it is fair to say that the state is delicate. There is a lot of fanciful escape from the problem. On the other hand, the works of quality are not opening new frontiers into the next century. They are returning to classic principles of design, to the basic forms of urban life that seem to work well time after time.

L A K E M I C H I G A N



Incremental Utopias

Allan B. Jacobs

The ICDC was a difficult and complex competition. It did not encourage or seem to ask for clear, imageable physical designs. Its substance was real, messy, complex urban areas and those who wrote the program were looking for complex solutions.

Competitors were required to focus on not one but three areas, each different from the other, each with its own very separate problems and challenges, each distant enough from the others that their physical, social inter-relatedness was not always clear. Only one area, at the urban fringe, offered a reasonably clean slate for designers to really exercise their hands and for that one it was not at all clear that any development and therefore any design was appropriate.

Entrants, to a point, were asked to choose their own programs (albeit from a pre-prepared palette). The organizers invested considerable effort in presenting presumably rational program options for competitors to consider: slow growth versus fast growth, more or less money available, greater or lesser public investment, and so forth.

Yet, the connection between choice and physical consequence was not always clear. This requirement might well have proven frustrating. Diagrams might have provided a solution, the kind of verbal pictorial cartoon that makes clear intended relationships between the city, region and socio-economic conditions, the kind of clear diagram that Ebenezer Howard used to present his garden city ideas.

Entrants also were asked to form interdisciplinary teams. Bringing together an interdisciplinary team might not be so easy, except at a physical place where diverse disciplines exist at one location. Think about how designers actually prepare competition entries—in one central office or place with drafting boards and the tools of the designer, often after regular working hours and with a team of people who are known to each other and can and do come together regularly (perhaps one senior designer and a group of juniors).

Remember also that the products, on three boards, were to be physical, imageable drawings, something to attract the eye and then, via those physical images, to make mental connections to socio-economic ways of living, both past and present. With that kind of product, the person who holds the drawing pencil is king. Even if an interdisciplinary team is put together, the leadership is likely to be with the designer.

One might have expected the competition would be inviting to groups from universities, particularly of students working with one or two professors. The competition seemed made for an interdisciplinary design study done as a semester's

work in a required course. My bet is that's who entered in large numbers. If that's right, it would explain the large number of naive and unsophisticated entries.

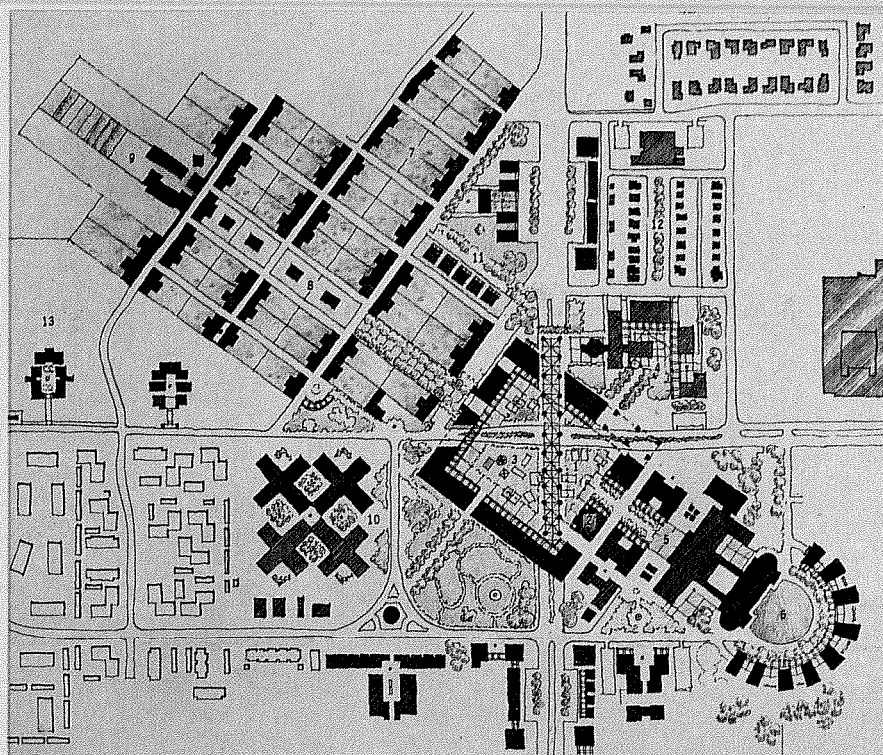
There wasn't any problem coming up with three winners, but the fact that we couldn't really fill the slots allotted for medalists is instructive: few outstanding ideas at even one of the scales, and fewer still that were able to integrate a vision and some kind of coherent point of view or philosophy with actual designs, at all three scales.

It would do us well to reread something like Kevin Lynch's "place utopia" in his book *Good City Form* and then say "What would such changes mean in terms of initial changes to the urban physical environment?" I recall only one entry that really did that. It embraced an urban vision that looked to ecological and environmental responsibility, logically proposing truck gardens (maybe even small farms) in or adjacent to the most central location and looking at alternative energy sources, in this case, wind. It used the windmills as the visual focal point entering the center: better, I think, than the seemingly inevitable high rises.

Perhaps competitors understand that the enthrallment with large projects, ones that are sponsored by big government or big business and result in large land holdings controlled centrally by few very wealthy people, has been misplaced, is simply not appropriate and rarely results in good urban design. But, incrementalism and modesty of scale rarely make for eye-catching graphics. Competitors had difficulty communicating ideas that were not physically large, even though they might foretell a more appropriate urban lifestyle and image.

One might have expected a lot more focus on streets: alternative designs, rearrangements, landscape solutions, transitions between buildings and public ways. Streets still take up from 25 percent to 35 percent of all developed land. But transportation technocrats continue to engineer fewer and larger streets and block with even fewer intersections.

What was positive about the designs at the urban edge was that we didn't see the bevy of high-rise point towers or long, long slabs that so characterize the outskirts of many European cities. Thanks for that. At same time, competitors had the most difficulty at this scale and location. Maybe that means designers have given up any real hope of designing real places at the urban fringe, places instead of sprawl. If that's so, then it is a terrible commentary on the ineffectiveness of urban planning and of our political will. Out of just such a malaise might come some renewed dedication to the notions of urban limits and to dealing with the edge and the interrelationships between urban and non-urban life. If the competition could serve that end, and that's a lot to ask, it will have served a useful purpose.



The Growing Suburban Edge should be developed to introduce the idea of the contemporary "trading post." A hard enclosure at the crossing of two roads would create a market place and meeting place.

Surrounding areas would provide necessary ingredients for a healthy rural economy. Encourage office headquarters and light manufacturing to locate in this area. Limit growth and define development boundaries. Preserve land for agriculture and large-scale urban recycling enterprises. Promote well-measured variety of building types; including:

- Farmettes, ten acres of land owned and worked by five to ten families living in a compound located on the land.
- Orchard housing, an alternative or addition to ill-defined suburban space patterns and monotonous housing types.

—Cekic, Cormier, DeGrazia, Hubbel, Letunic, Mann

Let Milwaukee Be Milwaukee

Cynthia Weese

The competition recognized that there are definite characteristics uniting certain urban areas. The exploration in this case was of the problems and possibilities inherent in late nineteenth-century, mid-sized industrial cities such as Milwaukee, Cleveland, Rochester, St. Louis and Minneapolis.

These cities do not have the lively urban qualities of New York, Chicago, or San Francisco, nor are they as amorphous and spread out as southern and western metropolitan areas; they have a certain rather pleasant density, particularly in their older residential areas. They exist because of a natural feature, generally water, which made their industrial growth possible, and a human-made feature, railroads, which carried their products to markets. The strong work ethic of the immigrant populations still exists and is celebrated. In the past 30 years the industrial base has diminished and in some cases has been replaced with a service and information economy.

The most creative thoughts came in proposals for the older residential area, a district where the single family house on the 50-foot lot prevails and there are few apartment buildings or town houses. The competitors looked at the problems with fresh eyes, possibly because the elements of the existing neigh-

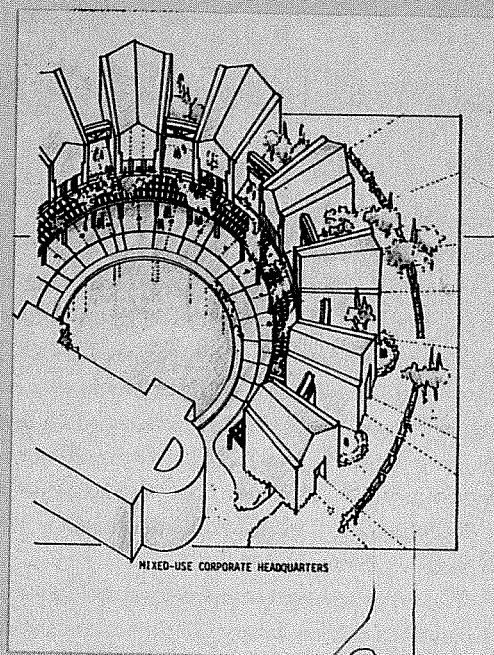
borhood—housing, commercial, industrial and a park with a stream—were an interesting and unusual mix, and possibly because these issues have seldom been worked with on an area-wide basis.

The solutions were successful in two ways. First, competitors understood and respected the scale of the neighborhood. They added shopping areas and cultural centers that had an appropriate scale and texture. Second, they worked with the existing natural features—the park and the stream—to make them integral to their solutions. Sometimes the park became larger, sometimes smaller, but the successful schemes always used it positively.

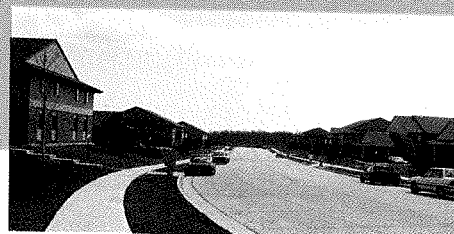
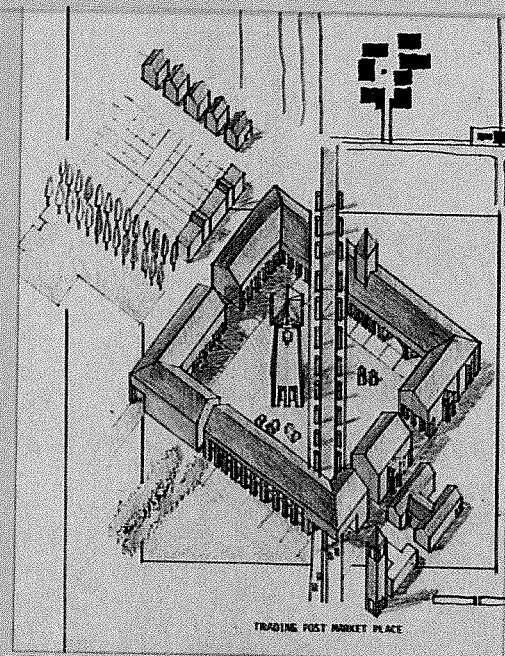
Solutions put forth for the downtown area, while strong in many cases, were less fresh than those in the older residential area. The existing visual tension between older low buildings lining the street and the new high-rise structures standing apart is difficult to deal with, and relatively few solutions addressed it.

Some of the downtown solutions were simply too grand. They provided public spaces far beyond what is realistic for a city of this density. There was an underlying assumption in many solutions that all downtown areas must throb with life as New York or Paris—virtually impossible here since no one lives downtown and very few people live within walking distance. Perhaps more importantly, few people want to live

Detail of mixed-use corporate headquarters.



Detail of trading post market place.



A street in Oak Creek, the Growing Suburban Edge competition site.

downtown. In cities like Milwaukee, those people who “pioneer” move to the older residential areas, which have great character and are very pleasant. Somehow we must recognize the fact that these downtown areas are quiet after 5 p.m. and that this is not necessarily a problem. For urban dwellers, quiet has become synonymous with danger; this is not always the case.

An opportunity overlooked in many downtown schemes was the city’s most dominant physical feature—Lake Michigan. One of the urban strengths of Milwaukee’s neighbor, Chicago, is that the lake front has a strong public presence. It is unbuilt on for most of the city’s 65 miles of shore line and is entirely in the public domain. This is not the case in Milwaukee. The enormous potential of the lake was recognized and celebrated in the best schemes, but it was ignored in many others.

Jurors generally agreed that the area with which entrants dealt least successfully (many abominably) was the outlying suburban/farm section. Schemes varied tremendously—from no-growth proposals (perhaps to the jury’s eyes the best) to wildly futuristic chaos. A medieval village caught our eye almost in relief. It occurs to me that the addition to the teams of a visionary landscape architect would have been a tremendous help here. The existing, gently rolling farmland with woods, an existing road grid, and some random develop-

ment—these could have been best joined with new development within a strong conceptual landscape framework.

One of the goals of the competition was to encourage realistic urban planning that could be implemented. With the exception of some of the suburban schemes, most of the competitors worked toward that end. The winning schemes intrigued the jury for many reasons—one being their in-depth, micro-analysis of urban situations. These analyses dealt realistically and contextually with Milwaukee, and they provided solutions that could be adapted easily by planners.

This is the first in a series of competitions, each with a different city “type” as its focus. It is important that these competitions continue.

PARKWAY, BEACH AND PROMENADE: ROBERT MOSES' REGIONAL VISION



Traffic on the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway ducks onto two decks cantilevered from a cliff and covered by the Brooklyn Heights Promenade. When engineers proposed the freeway structure, Moses added the promenade.

Photo by Todd W. Bressi.

New York—This year marks the hundredth anniversary of the birth of Robert Moses, one of the most prolific builders of public works the region, or the country, has seen.

Moses' parks, parkways, bridges and urban renewal projects made him many enemies—Robert Caro's voluminous yet popular (and Pulitzer-Prize winning) vilification of Moses, *The Power Broker*, is still the departure point for debates about Moses' accomplishments—still, he has legions of admirers. Many are frustrated planners and builders who adulate Moses because he got things done. But others realize that Moses articulated a rare vision—one that not only took in the open space, housing and transportation needs of the region but also lavished upon even the smallest projects an attention for detail that invested them with great significance.

A good way to understand the scope of Moses' work is to travel the network of highways he built throughout the region. Although they are now popular commuter routes, they were built to connect New York City and its northern suburbs with the parks he scattered liberally throughout Long Island. Moses wanted Long Island's open spaces to be a recreational escape valve for the crowded city, and he knew it was crucial to act before inevitable suburban development occurred.

The highways were more than connections; they were parks themselves, setting a standard for a new genre of road: the parkway. They were built for

fast-moving traffic, but their gentle curves and carefully maintained landscaping to this day evoke the mood of recreational motoring they were intended to promote. Moses was adamant that every detail reflect his romantic visions of motoring and of the natural landscape. Bridges were faced with locally hewn rock, not left as unconsidered, utilitarian concrete and steel post-and-beam viaducts. Gas stations and a state police barracks were carefully designed, albeit in a Cape Cod style. A unique icon identifies each parkway, not the standard interstate shield.

The task of the Meadowbrook Parkway is to carry traffic to Jones Beach State Park; for that reason alone it would be a route of special anticipation and excitement. Moses wanted his parkway design to heighten that.

Wheeling off the Southern State you notice the lighting standards change from typical metal poles to wooden posts with decorative carvings at the top, a signal that nature is to be encountered here, even if only in the most carefully controlled way. Several miles before you arrive at Jones Beach, you see the obelisk that serves as the focal landmark for the park wavering through the haze on the horizon, cleverly proportioned so it always seems far away, beckoning one onward. To reach the barrier island on which the beach is located, one must cross a bridge whose silhouette mimics the lines of a ship.

At Jones Beach, in a meeting room on the upper floor of the West Bathhouse, is another testament to the breadth of Moses' vision. Covering most of one wall, reaching almost from floor to ceiling, is a photograph depicting an aerial view of the park shortly after it was finished. The mural shows the painstaking formality of the landscape: boardwalk, parking fields,

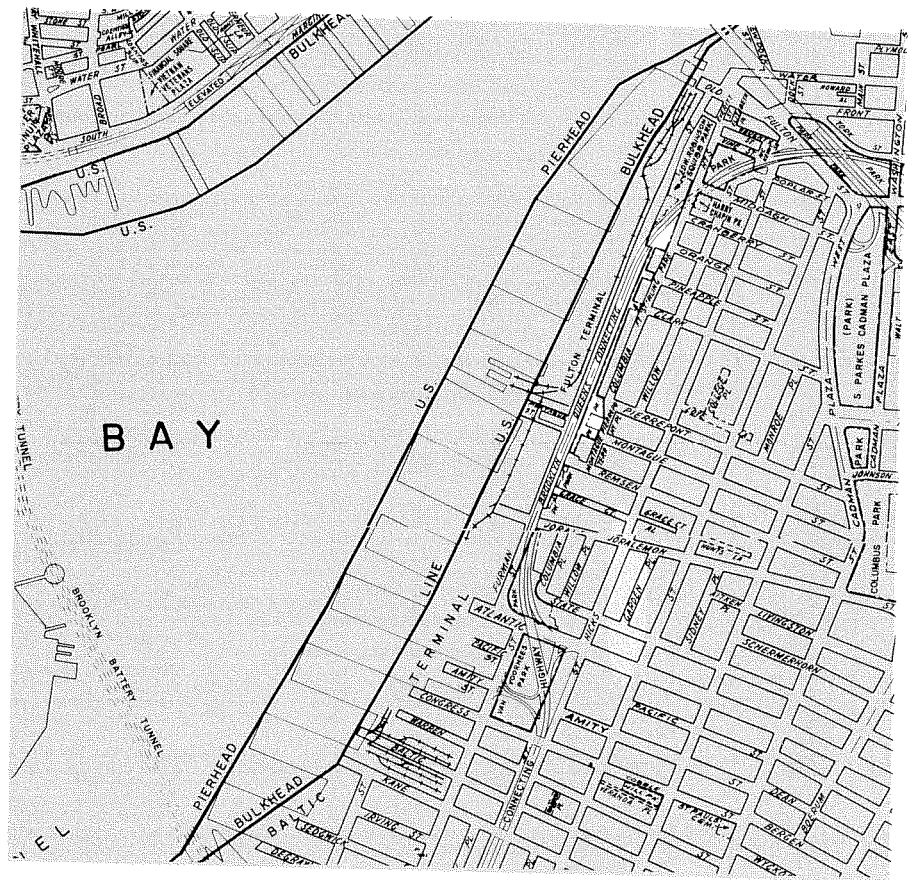
The expressway jogs to the waterfront to avoid the historic Brooklyn Heights neighborhood. Several streets are continued through their right-of-way and provide access to the promenade.

gardens and bath houses laid out with a geometric precision; yet at a scale so large that the effect of that order on the pedestrian is subliminal. What one remembers are the gently swooping walkways and boardwalks, and the untended, shifting fringe of the beach as it succumbs to the ocean's waves.

Meanwhile, all of this is clearly part of a grander scheme. From the obelisk run three divided highways: Ocean Parkway leads east to Robert Moses State Park and the further reaches of Fire Island. Wantagh Parkway leads north to suburban communities. The Meadowbrook leads back west, the most direct route to New York City, via connections with other Moses parkways and expressways. From this photograph, it seems all roads lead to Jones Beach, and there they all meet, peacefully, gracefully after a harrowing voyage, at the grand obelisk.

Moses also left his mark by way of smaller, localized gestures that turned difficult conditions into elegant design solutions. One of them is the Brooklyn Heights Promenade, which sits atop a cliff that rises 40 feet above the East River and affords one of the most spectacular views of Lower Manhattan anywhere.

The problem was fitting the six-lane Brooklyn-Queens Expressway (a major east-west arterial) and a four-lane street in the narrow right-of-way while protecting the brownstone apartments atop the cliff from noise and air pollution. The engineers' solution was to cantilever a double-deck



expressway from the cliff and put the street below that. Moses, reviewing the proposal at a public meeting, off-handedly suggested covering it with a public walk that ran behind the apartments' backyard gardens; the Brooklyn Heights Promenade was born.

The Promenade offers connections to the city that one can experience in very few other places. Imagine wandering through blocks of brownstones, rowhouses and Victorian apartment buildings and seizing upon a shaft of daylight and a fleeting glimpse of water at the end of a street. Intrigued, you follow them past churches, rowhouses and playgrounds and finally burst upon the promenade, where you confront the Manhattan skyline, eerily silent yet almost at hand.

Caro's biography details Moses' accumulation and exercise of power, which enabled him to impose his

vision on the region. It is the debate between Moses' ruthlessness and success at shaping the landscape versus the seeming inability of the public sector to effect large projects today that pre-occupies New Yorkers.

Projects such as these suggest another lesson to be considered—Moses' vision itself. We may contest the details with which Moses articulated his vision. (Would mass transit have been a wiser investment than highways? Do we need Cape Cod gas stations?) But by paying attention to both the details of his projects and their connections to the larger world, Moses showed we can create places that are memorable and inspire much needed respect for and confidence in the common public ground.

—Todd W. Bressi

TILTED ARC: SETBACK FOR PUBLIC ART?

New York—Finally, *Tilted Arc* was taken down. The country's most notorious piece of public art was carted off in the dead of night on the Ides of March.

Richard Serra's sculpture, a 120-foot-long, 12-foot-high, curved piece of rusting steel that sliced across a plaza outside the Jacob Javits Federal Building, had been controversial ever since it was installed in 1981 as part of the federal government's Art-in-Architecture program.

By challenging the landscape of the plaza and the architecture of the buildings around it, *Tilted Arc* attempted to bully people into an awareness of their built environment. But the sculpture eventually took on a more profound meaning: it became a lightning rod for the debate about the role of art in the public realm. (Unlike the recent debate over the Robert Mapplethorpe photography exhibit, the debate focused not on the question of public funding for art, but on the implications of putting art in a public place.)

For years arguments resonated in public hearings, court briefs, op-ed articles and impromptu discussions at the sculpture itself: How to strike a balance between moral imperative of the artist to exercise his or her creativity and the wishes of the public? Just who is the "public"—the people whose daily environment is transformed by the art work; the amorphous community at large, who might experience the art work once or twice; or art experts? The questions tran-

scended the environmental issues Serra raised about the Javits building plaza, yet the sculpture always stood as a reference point.

Those who use the plaza say *Tilted Arc*'s point had been made and it was time for the sculpture to come down. Others note *Tilted Arc*'s impact will be long lasting: public agencies are now more likely to involve the communities they serve in selecting artists and reviewing the designs of public art.

Nevertheless, the removal seems a loss. Fundamental questions about the nature and responsibility of public art were sidestepped, not resolved. Without Serra's aggressive work to prod us, these questions will be much less vivid and we will be less inclined to confront them.

PAPAGO FREEWAY'S SILVER LINING

Phoenix—Papago Freeway met bitter opposition when proposed here in the 1960s, as did countless other freeways across the country. The elevated highway would have blocked views of the Phoenix Mountains in the northeast section of the city, and the cars coursing along it would have been an ever-present, all-too-visible reminder of the noise and air pollution that were raining on the city. Phoenicians feared their city's image as a healthy place with wide open vistas was in jeopardy.

But this freeway revolt ended differently from most others. Despite opposition, Papago Freeway is under construction. On top of it, covering a half-mile stretch that passes through a historic district and under the city's main commercial and ceremonial street, the city is building a park.

Parks over freeways are not so unusual anymore; more than a dozen have been built or are planned in this country. What is most noteworthy about Deck Park (which was designed by Howard Needles Tammen & Bergendoff) is its attempt to achieve a synthesis with the surrounding city, a task it accomplishes by serving as three parks in one.

One end of Deck Park will be a broad, landscaped space with a pond, Japanese garden and groves of trees that will serve as a quiet green for the four historic neighborhoods that abut the freeway. This part of the park will also will reach into an adjacent neighborhood so a nearby school will be connected to the open space.

Giving Purpose to Change

Places change. How they change depends a lot on us. What we think can be done in a place or with a place determines our response to it. The cumulative effects of a community's expectations, expressed in legislation or in the market, sets the destiny of most places. Whether preserved, wasted, quarried, or transfigured, places are products of our imagination and enterprise coupled with the physical conditions of a site.

What value should we give to what's already there—to the earth, vegetation, the heritage of things previously built? What should we care about the processes these all embody and the acts of nurture and attention they require? These are questions involving ethics and identity.

How should we judge what places might be? What do we (or our descendants) forego when we are complacent? How might the city that now is be transformed with purpose into a city that might be? These questions also involve ethics and identity.

Complacency is not nurture. We must recognize that places are always in evolution, discern the energies at hand and give them our best—bit by bit, sometimes by fashioning a door handle or saving a tree, sometimes by shedding the limits of conventional thought and facing fresh possibilities.

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To give purpose to change it is necessary to quarry the imagination and to leverage chunks of possibility out of the layers of inchoate thought that course through society. To do this often shatters the common ground of our assumptions. But shock waves do not make places, they only create conditions for change. Places that are rewarding emerge slowly, through the persistent sculpting of possibility, attending to the grain of the surroundings, listening to the pulse of aspiration and deftly, patiently adding to the common understanding of what a place can become and what it can mean in our lives.

In this issue we encounter unsettling images of waste, confusion and transformation: the accompaniments of change. We also explore two recent competi-

tions that engaged professionals in imagining what their cities might become, illustrating prospects for change. Our authors query the directions that professional thought generally has taken and offer suggestions for refocusing our efforts.

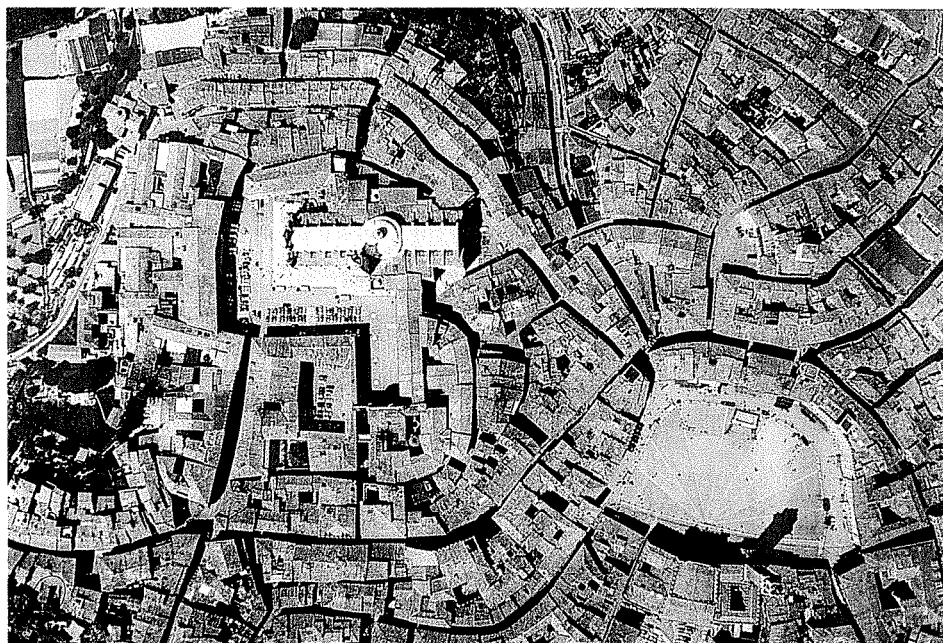
We initiate with this issue three features that will appear regularly in our pages: "Speaking of Places," short essays that give a personal reading of specific places and their character; "Dispatches," brief accounts that highlight current issues in place-making, and "Standards," a critical review of prevailing standards and assumptions that regulate common elements of our cities. Together they will provide a continuing commentary on the ways in which thought comes alive in particular places.

Paul Lyman



Cover: The Gioia quarry.
Photo by Joel Leivick.

STREETS AS LANDMARKS



Aerial view of Siena
and the Piazza del Campo.
Photos courtesy
Giancarlo De Carlo.

We complain that the streets of urban peripheries are boring, that they do not offer the same opportunities for encounter, exchange, curiosity and attention that are offered by the streets of the historic centers. It is not surprising, as the streets of the historic centers were made for the motion of human beings whereas the streets of the periphery have been made for the motion of automobiles.

The difference between these two kinds of motion is immeasurable. Human beings' motion is slow, inordinate, erratic: it tends to follow winding trajectories (if it is not forced to go straight on by other more aggressive motions such as car traffic), it seeks encounters that once found can make it change route and even go back, and it tires not so much in proportion to the distance traveled as in inverse relation to the quantity of stimuli it meets.

Car motion is fast, peremptory, determined: it generally moves in a straight line and, when it changes direction, it takes narrow curves that lead it in another rectilinear trajectory; it avoids encounter with other cars (because that would mean a collision) and never goes back unless it has reached the pre-established destination; it does not tire or stop, unless it experiences mechanical failures or obstacles barring its way; it is totally indifferent to the environment it crosses since its only relationship is with the strip along which it runs, that is, with the surface of the road.

The major difference between human motion and car motion is that the first is of man or woman, therefore "organic," whereas the second is of machine and therefore "inorganic." One could observe that cars are driven by human beings and are "instruments" governed by organic will. But this does not change a thing.

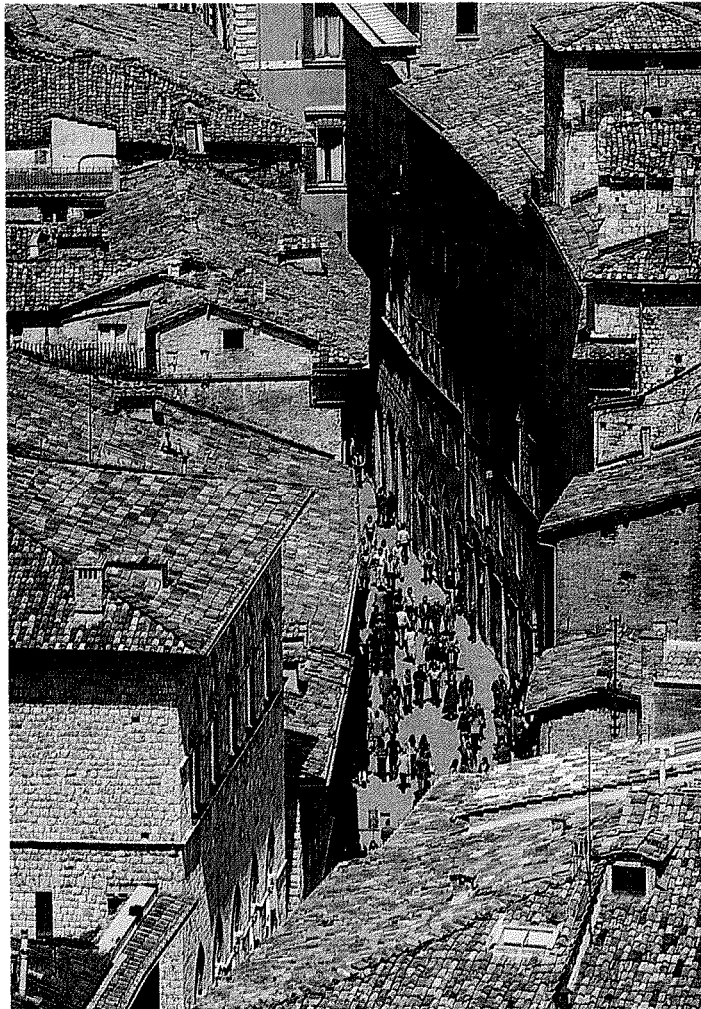
Plan of Siena and its region.
Courtesy Giancarlo De Carlo.



First, the instruments invented by humans always modify both their behavior and their way of thinking. Then, in this particular case, the instrument has a volume about sixty times bigger than that of its operator, whom it also contains. Lastly, the fact of being contained, disjointed and somehow imprisoned leads drivers to a state of estrangement that blunts their capacity of criticism and pushes them to elementary and stereotyped reactions.

Nevertheless, one cannot imagine that it is enough to prevent cars from running along roads to make these roads interesting. It doesn't seem possible, because cars have an irresistible attraction and it is therefore unthinkable that they can be done away with, and because roads in the periphery, having been designed for car needs, can change only if they are redesigned in order to correspond to a set of more complex needs, to the combination of car and human needs.

A street winding through Siena.



About the irresistibility of cars: everybody speaks against them, but hardly anybody would do without them. Together with great disadvantages, cars offer some highly appreciated advantages: door-to-door service, the possibility of reaching far places that cannot be reached by other means, time saving compared to public transport and the privilege of hiding in a cockpit where one can feel "unique," free from any rule of civic behavior, protected from social control, powerful, safe and often compensated for the desolation of one's living place and the dreariness of one's working place.

It seems difficult to get rid of cars until other means are found that offer even more advantages with fewer acute disadvantages. Therefore, peripheral roads will continue to be traversed by cars and the only thing one can do is redesign them so that they can correspond also to human needs.

But, then, how to redesign the roads of the periphery?

To approach the problem one should probably start by distinguishing between internal roads that serve buildings door-to-door and external roads that serve the whole district and connect it with the city center, the other districts of the periphery and the net of regional roads.

On internal roads traffic is slower than on external ones, and cars could be regulated so that they never overcome the threshold beyond which, be they still or in motion, they start to oppress human motion. It is not difficult to reach this goal, as we now can rely on effective instruments of revelation, monitoring and information that allow us to foresee traffic, avert it, divert it and absorb it on alternative routes.

The most decisive interventions are those that affect the design of the road itself, which can be remodeled in such a way that pedestrian paths and car lanes coexist in a joint configuration. The task of pedestrian paths is to allow people to start living on the street again.

To attain this goal, the transformation of roads should focus on a series of converging scopes and make use of many different instruments. One should aim at changing the geometry of internal roads, making it more complex; bringing human motion closer to the foot of the buildings to make the routes more interesting and the activities more accessible, both longitudinally and transversely, with connections that can be perpendicular to the edges, or oblique, elevated, ascending, descending, or level, depending upon the destinations to be reached and the character of the places that are crossed; and enriching the meaning of the road spaces through the insertion of significant elements, such as pavings, signals, street furniture, manufacts and artifacts, colorings, and clusters or lines of trees.

These interjections, like the net of pedestrian paths, should no longer be imprisoned in the implacable linear geometry

that at present regulates roads. On the contrary, they should break that geometry down, generating sequences of complex spaces and chains of pleasant places where human motion can freely express its tendency to seek and experience what is most congenial to it.

As for the external roads, one can say that they display the same problems internal roads do and can be redesigned with analogous criteria at some points or along some stretches (especially where human presence is denser). But they display other problems as they directly confront nature and, even though the people who designed them rarely thought about it, they are (and always have been) fundamental components of the landscape.

One should first ask oneself what could be their role in the landscape to which they belong. This role could be defining a border between two territories differently inhabited or cultivated; or establishing connections among sequences of inhabited nuclei or fields or water beds; or setting the matrix for a system of fencing, rows of trees, ditches, banks, that structure the agricultural areas; or cutting a horizon between land and land or between land and sky, to announce not only an end but also the presence of something beyond what is visible.

One should take these roles into account when designing the external roads. The crux of the problem is to free them from the unification imposed upon them when they were considered only as lanes to be measured in terms of traffic intensity rather than as significant parts of the landscape, always different from one another.

The aim of their redesign is therefore to characterize them differently. The method is to extract the characteristics (geographical, geological, topographical, topological, aesthetic) of the places they cross and transfuse those attributes into the design. The tools are common techniques and materials, used in a way that they end up by being consistent with the other components of the landscape, modeled, that is, upon the multiple order of nature.

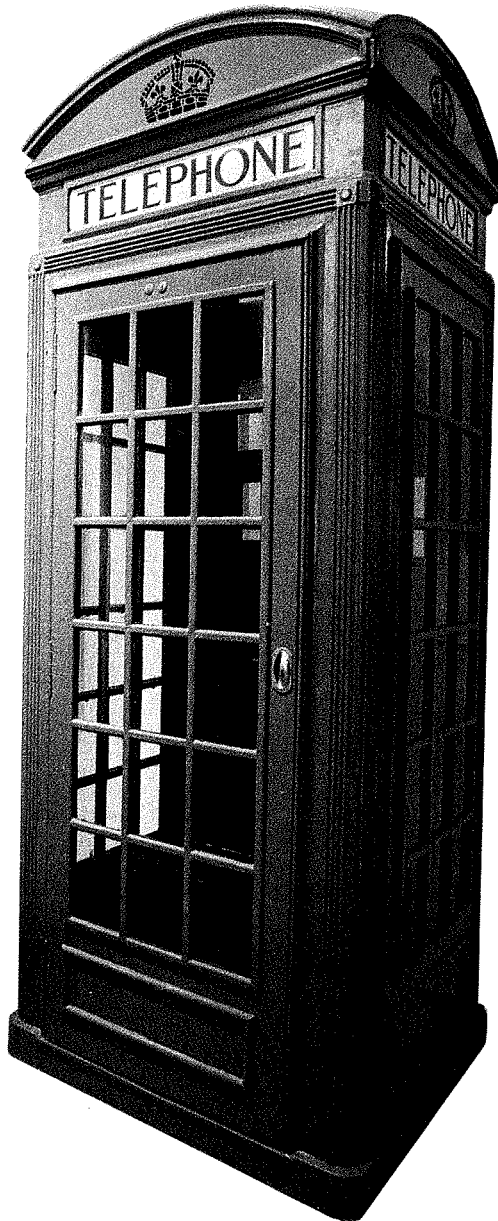
Every element contributing to the formation of roads should be re-examined critically in order to be redesigned, in itself and in conjunction with the other elements, giving birth to new configurations ruled by much more complex geometries than the linear ones that are, always and everywhere, re-proposed. Roadways, platforms, retaining walls, connections, crossings, viaducts, parking areas, green systems, artificial lighting, furniture, signals, etc.: each part should be redesigned in order to compose roads that are consistent with the areas they cross, and therefore, in most of their aspects, unique—like places.

Britain's Phone Kiosks

Howard Mansfield

London is coming undone. Not in big ways, not with blockbusting towers in the Manhattan manner, but in small ways, down on the street, in the details that knit the city together. London is coming undone detail by detail.

London is a city unified by small highlights of color: the bright red phone booths, mailboxes and double decker buses; the black taxis; and black and white street signs. It is a gray city dressed smartly in red and black.



On each street corner, in the dozens of things one encounters daily, numerous objects say London. When we talk about one place becoming like another, it's these details whose absence we mourn, often without knowing it. When New York City lost its Bishop's Crook street lights and the little figure of Mercury atop the traffic lights on Fifth Avenue, it lost, on each street, hundreds of voices saying "New York." The same loss is now occurring in London.

"Red phone boxes have become one of the symbols of Britain, along with policemen in helmets, scarlet buses and guardsmen in fur hats," wrote Libby Purves in *Highlife*, an English magazine. "After a long time abroad, the sight of a cheerful red box on the corner of a gray London street or a village green building brings tears to an Englishman's eyes; he knows that he is really home. The sight conjures up a powerful national magic, and since the image and magic of Britain are eminently exportable, so, now, are our telephone boxes."

Three years ago British Telecom astonished many when it announced that it wanted to replace the 76,500 classic red boxes in the United Kingdom, many of which have seen between 50 and 75 years of service. Under Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, the phone service had been taken away from the post office in 1984 and given to a new private company, British Telecom. The company was about to invest millions in the long neglected system, and quite naturally, it wanted a new image. Royal red is the

A stately London phone box stands in all its splendor. Its home is not a London street, but a London museum.



Three regal red phone boxes stand at attention under the awning of the Telephone Bar and Grill. The taxi and the pay telephone inside betray the phone boxes' true location: New York City.

color of public utilities in Britain (hence the red buses and mailboxes). British Telecom wanted to be done with that: yellow and blue are its corporate colors (although it still uses the red phone box as its logo).

At first the company tried painting the red phone boxes a school-bus yellow. To the public this looked about as right as if the Queen's horseguard were to troop the colors wearing baseball caps, instead of fur hats. They protested and Telecom relented. But Telecom hit on a plan it liked even better: remove the phone boxes and replace them with an American Plexiglass model. It's hard to notice what's not there, and sure enough people seemed to pay the new phone booths little mind.

The Thirties Society, a preservation group, was the first to notice, and for three years it has fought a kind of guerilla preservation war phone box by phone box all over the country. British Telecom refuses to meet with the group and leaves the decision to save any phone boxes up to its regional pay phone managers, who at best are uncooperative and in some districts are antagonistic.

The Thirties Society sent out 450 letters to the government district councils and eventually won a two-week stay of execution: if a box were to be removed the local government council would have two weeks in which to act. For a box to be saved, it was up to British Telecom to inform the council. Thus the phone company was cast both in the role of protector and destroyer. In the first 18 months, the Thirties Society managed to save only eight boxes; meanwhile hundreds were destroyed a week.

British Telecom says the boxes are a maintenance nightmare: they offer a vandal a choice of 72 different windows to smash, they provide too much

cover for a thief rifling the coin box, and they are, to certain royal subjects, just the ideal urinal. The company has circulated a video promoting the new phone booths: the poor patron in the video struggles to open the door on an old booth only to find a vandalized phone in a foul smelling space. The video also highlights Telecom's ultimate argument: the elderly find the boxes hard to use, and a small step-up bars access to the handicapped.

The Thirties Society says the problems are with the phones not the boxes: Just replace the phones, and the money saved would be better spent on maintenance. Adjustments can be made for the handicapped, they say (cordless phone technology, new additional booths of another style). And they point out the new boxes are hardly vandal proof: many have been attacked just a day after an installation by vandals who seem to be sizing up their new opponent. The new boxes have a projected life of just 15 years; the old boxes have already served for half a century or more.

The old phone boxes are more properly thought of as little buildings: "stately, temple-like and thoroughly architectural, with almost square window panes, fluted corners and domed roof," as the Thirties Society described them in a report: "They have a solidity lacking in today's throw-away society. Their regal livery and the crowns they bear add dignity to the concept of a public utility." "Solidity" is the word. Each phone kiosk is made of one ton of cast iron. The boxes harken to a well-ordered Edwardian society; each was designed with an umbrella hook, a place for parcels and a small writing table. In fact, they give more substantial appearance than many modern office buildings.

The boxes were designed by Sir Giles Gilbert Scott (1882-1960), archi-

tect of Liverpool Cathedral and the Battersea Power Station, whose work is now in vogue. His first design, the K2, as it is known, dates from a 1924 competition. In the Royal Jubilee year of 1936, Scott reworked his design, streamlining the windows and making the phone box smaller.

The Thirties Society wants the phone boxes listed as historic sites just as buildings are. There is a precedent in London's protected cabman's booths. The society is careful to say that it does not want all phone boxes listed. As a last ditch effort, they have raised the possibility of having private organizations adopt a phone box, taking on the upkeep of a few as a garden club project.

In a backhand tribute to Scott's designs, the decommissioned phone boxes are eagerly sought. British Telecom has been auctioning them off to companies that strip off 25 years of paint, refinish them and sell them off. Demand is great: in London alone, there is a two-year waiting list and the *Economist* estimated that 30,000 phone boxes could be sold in the United States, where the price is \$3,750 a kiosk (including the steel import tax). The Thirties Society laments this as "asset stripping" or, as it says, "flogging our heritage for a giggle."

Altogether, the Thirties Society has saved perhaps 500 phone boxes. Most have been saved by the Westminster City Council, which covers much of the London seen by tourists. And there, oddly, the reason frequently given is that the red phone boxes should be saved because tourists expect to see them: another British anachronism, along with guns, fewer cops and the pomp of monarchy. It's a kind of Third World reaction to tourism: many native crafts in Third World nations now survive, stripped of function as trinkets of local color.

Inevitably, there is now a company making full-size plastic reproductions, not only of phone boxes but of mail boxes as well. Its advertising has captured the elegiac feeling, claiming that the imitations "echo the elegance and quality of times gone by."

London, you see, *is* coming undone.



Refurbished phone boxes are being spirited to the United States. In San Francisco a phone box (repainted turquoise) sits outside the California Cafe.

THE WASTE OF PLACE

Decline, decay and wasting are a necessary part of life and growth; we must learn to value them and to do them well. This is one of the messages of Kevin Lynch's last book, Wasting Away, which he was working on at the time of his sudden death in 1984. The unfinished manuscript has now been edited and will be published by Sierra Club Books in 1990.

It may surprise those familiar with Lynch's previous works that this book is on the subject of waste, since he spent most of his career writing about the planning and design of cities and regions, with special emphasis on their sensuous form. Although his early work was usually pragmatic, positive and directed toward the environmental design professions, his later efforts became increasingly philosophical. This book represents a natural progression in his consideration of all aspects of urban life. He saw that we are headed in a self-destructive direction that has implications for virtually every profession, including environmental design and planning. The book is not a warning, but a plea that we should acknowledge most waste and the processes of wasting as valuable and necessary in the life of people, things and places

Sewage, smog, garbage, scrap, litter and trash make up the daily waste flow of the city. There are more protracted wastings in nature. Supernovas explode, and the shell of debris racing out into space sweeps up the dust and gas from which new stars condense, to re-ignite the atomic furnaces. The sun wastes its substance, and the mountains wear away. They are thrown up with a vomiting of magma, gas and ashes, which destroy living communities and then convert to the fertile volcanic soil that supports new life. Carbon is extracted from the air by plants and is locked by their death in beds of coal, or pools of oil. The calcium in the shells of sea creatures drifts to the depths, there to be sealed off in deep limestone layers. The smooth circling of the ecological system is only an aspect of more pervasive change—more protracted, more violent, more wasteful of matter and energy, more an irretrievable flight than a placid turning....

Man is now a significant agent in the transfer of material in this dynamic system, and may soon be the dominant one. If the rate of garbage production in North America were to be achieved throughout the world, then that mass transfer would somewhat exceed the rate of volcanic upwelling that has built the mountains of the Pacific rim. If the per capita rate of the use of new minerals that characterizes the modern industrial world should be adopted by even 15 percent of the world's population by the year 2000, then it will amount to 20 billion tons per year, which is a mass comparable to such global processes as mountain-building, erosion, ocean crust formation (estimated at 30 billion tons per year), or the recycling of all earth's biomass (estimated at 60 billion tons per year). Combustion adds 50 billion tons of carbon to the atmosphere each year, which is one percent of the total already present. We now discharge such metals as iron, copper, zinc and lead into the oceans at rates that exceed natural processes by an order of magnitude.

© 1990 David, Laura, Peter and Catherine Lynch.

Photo research and captions by Michael Southworth.



Niagara Falls represents an awesome and continuous waste of water as well as rock. Attempts to stop the erosion are futile, so why not dramatize the wasting?
Photo courtesy New York Power Authority/Niagara Falls Chamber of Commerce.



Wastes have been dumped in oceans, rivers and lakes for generations in attempts to put them out of sight. But the medical wastes, including needles, vials of blood and even body parts, that have washed up from the sea onto beaches demonstrate the futility of trying to hide our wastes.
Photo by Kirk Gendryes.

Lynch's conception of waste was broad, including phenomena as diverse as everyday waste and unwanted objects, land that must be reclaimed and acts of destruction by humans or nature; he noted that "there are hardly more than a hundred words in the language that have as many dictionary definitions."

Characteristically, he tried to expand readers' thinking by reducing the notion to its most fundamental meaning and then exploring its many implications:

"Waste," he wrote, "is what is worthless or unused for human purpose. It is a lessening of something without useful result; it is loss and abandonment, decline, separation and death. It is the spent and valueless material left after some act of production or consumption, but can also refer to any used thing: garbage, trash, litter, junk, impurity and dirt. There are waste things, waste lands, waste time and wasted lives."

In the book Lynch examines waste from many perspectives. Why are we so uncomfortable with waste and wasting? Is wasting ever

valued and celebrated?

Looking at waste in many cultures, he talks about class and waste, eating, cleaning, and death, among other subjects. Two chapters deal with "The Waste of Things" and "The Waste of Place."

"Looking at Waste" is a photographic essay on what waste processes—good and bad—look like in the environment. Another chapter attempts to define what we mean by waste. The final chapter, "Wasting Well," presents and illustrates his philosophy of positive wasting. The excerpts that follow are taken from Chapter Three, "The Waste of Place."

—Michael Southworth



Trash may provide occasions for social interchange and recreation. Town dumps often serve as social centers as well as places to find recycled things. Garage sales and flea markets are a weekend hobby for many people.

Photo by Kimberly Moses.



THE BONE-GRUBBER.

The bone-grubber is a trade of the past in post-industrial economies.

From Henry Mayhew, *London Labour and London Poor*.

Demolition is a highly specialized and dangerous activity requiring special techniques and equipment.

Human Waste of Place

These great wastings are echoed in the human settlement. Buildings are abandoned, moved, or demolished; whole areas are cleared and rebuilt. Materials weather and age, are broken up and reused. Vandalism and arson render sound structures useless. Inner city regions may be deserted—at first slowly, then with increasing speed. Lands fall vacant or derelict. Abhorred, unwanted uses are shunted out to marginal areas. Entire cities may decline or gradually be abandoned.

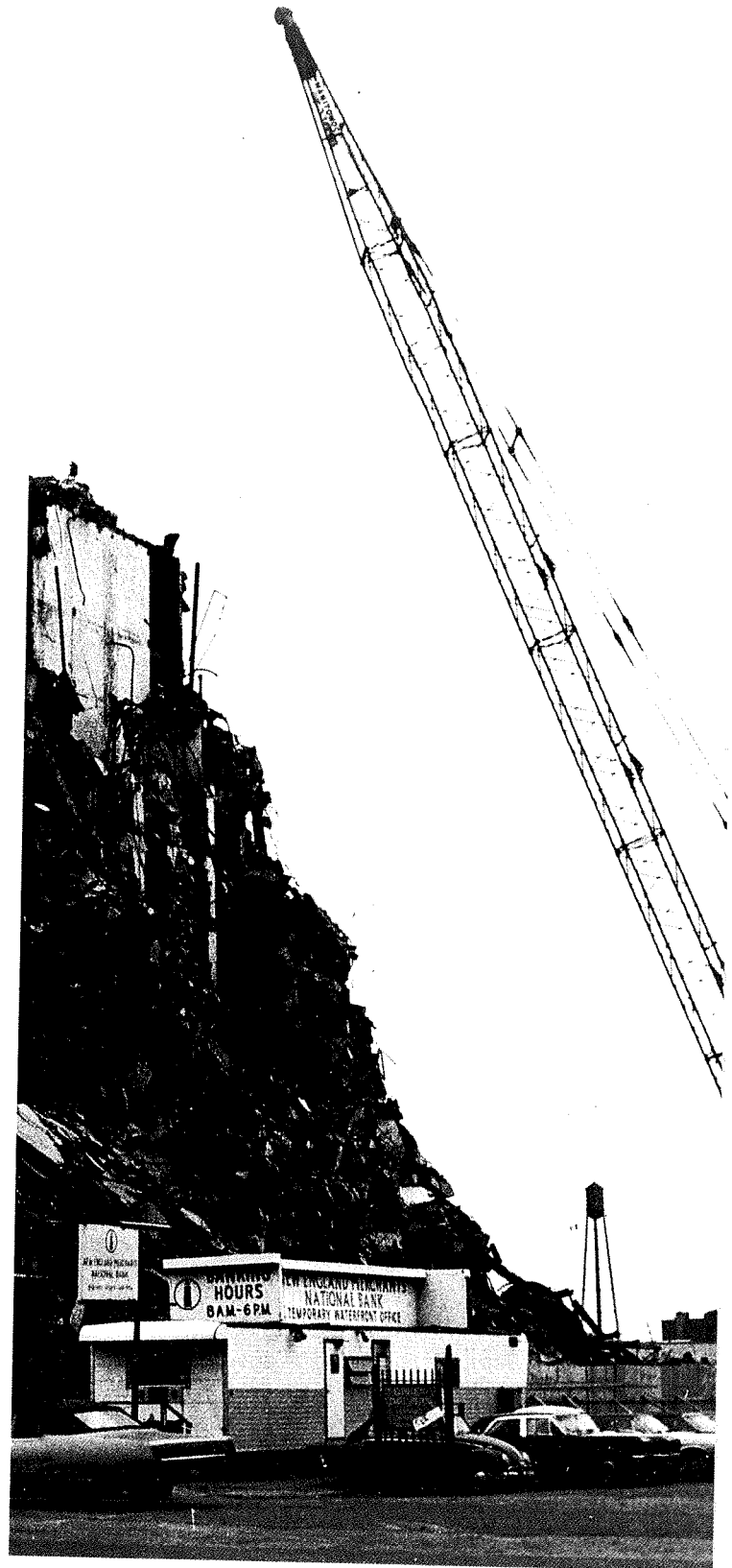
Kyoto was once a capital of 400,000 people, and it contains 700,000 today. Yet it shrank to a village in between. A wooden city, it went through repeated fires and savage civil wars. Buildings were thrown up by forced labor, abandoned, ruined, burnt, moved, or given away in pieces. Palaces were occupied for only a few years, or even for a few days in the year. Emperors and nobility moved about between houses and temples, as their palaces were destroyed. The waste of habitat was on a grand scale. Here, as in many other ancient societies, buildings and even settlements were wasted deliberately, as a symbol of royal prestige and purity, just as emperors were served more than they could eat and possessed more clothes than they could ever wear. New cities and palaces were at one time built at every accession and abandoned at each royal death.

Wreckers and Scavengers

Superficially, the building wrecker is like the saprophyte of the natural system, which reduces dead organisms to their simpler elements to speed the recycling of matter. But the likeness is only superficial. The saprophytes break an organization down into its simpler compounds, in order to make use of the material and the energy released.

Wreckers also break up old patterns, but they make little use of the energy so released. The salvaged material is only incidental to their work, and much of it is more intimately mixed when they are done. They are recyclers only secondarily, and certainly they are not remanufacturers. They are paid to clear a space, and not to prey on the dead.

It is the vandal stripper who more closely resembles the natural saprophyte. In ancient cities, old monuments and buildings were routinely mined for their stones, beams, or roofing material. An imperial rescript to the Count of the East, in A.D. 397, instructs him to use the material from demolished pagan temples to maintain the public bridges, highways, aqueducts and wells. The ruined aqueducts of Rome were closed in to make squatters' dwellings. A heap of old rubbish from the Great Fire, which encumbered eight and a half acres of central London for half a century, was shipped

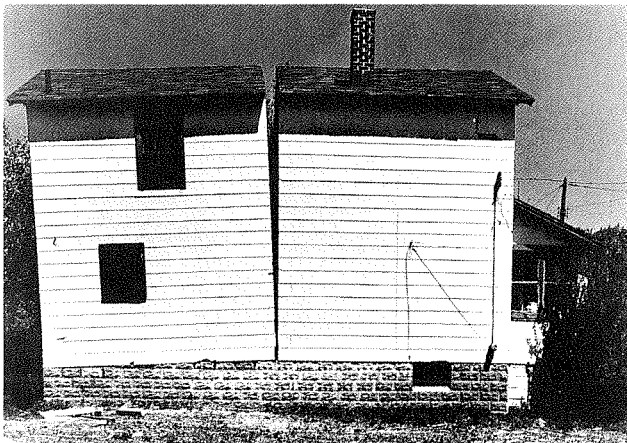


House moving, once a common activity, is reappearing in some cities to provide affordable inner city housing.

Photo by Rajeev Bhatia.



Splitting, 1984, by Gordon Matta Clark. Abandoned houses inspired Clark to deconstruct them, to cut huge holes in walls, floors, or roof. This house was cut completely in half.



Courtesy University Art Museum, University of California, Berkeley.

as fill to create the new Russian city of St. Petersburg. One advantage of living in any ruined city is its concentrated wealth of material, as well as the half-built spaces it affords....

Vandalism

Vandalism is more powerful than weathering. Like demolition, it creates waste deliberately. Vandalism first meant the willful and ignorant destruction of beautiful or venerable things by invading barbarians. Now it means the willful destruction of any property. It is widespread, but not meaningless, and it may arise in varied circumstances.

At times, vandalism is the by-product of an illegal livelihood gained by stripping and resale of valuable parts. Occasionally, it may be the unintended by-product of mere play, of exuberant action. More often, it is deliberate destruction, aimed at a person or institution that has injured the vandal. Or it is part of some large struggle, and so it is “sabotage.” Most often—and this is the motive that both fascinates and frustrates the non-vandal—it is an intentional act not directed toward any definite end: the expression of a generalized hostility, or of a sheer pleasure in destruction. Therefore, it is called “mindless.” But it is not mindless. It is quite mindful, and because of that, quite difficult to prevent.

Especially for those young males whose future is restricted and meaningless—but also for other similarly placed groups in society—vandalism is just the ticket, the ideal form of rule breaking. In a world that seems indifferent to their existence, vandalism is expressive of their feelings, and also instrumental, since by its means the world is forced to respond to them. There are risks, which add a spice of danger, but the risks are not great. The familiar and alien environment is restructured and played with according to the vandal’s own rules. Mostly absent in traditional, controlled societies, or in those that are in hopeful transition, vandalism is present throughout the relatively affluent world, both capitalist and socialist. Some vandalism is condoned (“students will have their fling”), or it is hidden within institutions, where it is expected and provided for. Elsewhere it is a common scandal....

Urban Decline

In recent times in the United States, there has been a marked decline in certain entire urban areas, a process backed by our high mobility of capital and young labor, and our historic custom of moving on. Europe on the other hand, has shown a less marked decline of its old cities, due to repeated public interventions and to the national barriers against free population movement.¹ Mobility means freedom, and efficiency in

the use of resources—at least in the short term. The 1980 President's Commission for a National Agenda proposed that national policy should encourage this mobility, rather than seek to check it.² The poor should be given incentives to move to where the jobs are, to go from Rustbelt to Sunbelt. Older cities should be allowed to shrink. Present subsidies to declining places, in their opinion, only trap the poor, since they tempt them to stay and survive, when they might move and prosper. Moving on and abandoning things is the American Way, the expression of our free spirit.

In 1975, Edgar Rust studied the declining metropolitan areas of the United States.³ He found an increase in metropolitan areas with less than one percent population growth in a decade: from five in the 1940s, to 10 in the 1950s, and to 26 in the 1960s. Between 1970 and 1972, 27 actually declined, and the trend has since become more marked. The shift from the north to the southwest is common talk, but in fact these losing areas can be found in any section of the nation.

Typically, a city in decline is one that boomed in the past, dominated by a single economic activity in which it specialized. When that activity faded, or found a more advantageous locale, the city failed to shift to new enterprise. At times, decline was reinforced by some major disaster—fire, flood, or earthquake; or by the loss of some transport connection—canal, port, or railway. The original boom may have been founded on commerce, on servicing westward settlement, on

resource extraction, heavy industry, military procurement, consumer products and services, or even, as at present, on the attraction of some preferred climate or landscape.

The larger administrative centers, with their multiple economic bases and concentrations of headquarters offices, remain stable in this flux. Headquarter locations monopolize capital and skill, and can afford to hold on to them in hard times, or to take the gamble of a shift to some new activity. They sit at the major nodes of transportation systems, so that they are not easily isolated. Administrative functions tend to persist. Moreover, a tradition of civic pride may have encouraged businesses to invest in the public environment in flush times, leaving a heritage of amenity that continues to hold their skilled people in times of adversity...

Declining areas have their own values: low housing costs, less crowding and a relatively placid, stress-free world. Church, family and ethnic ties are strong, even if the mature children are gone. But the environment is likely to be of low quality (with a few splendid survivals), and expectations and self-esteem are depressed.

Public policies that treat of decline as a local disease, or come too late, or encourage growth in other places can be ineffective or damaging. Typically, significant efforts are rarely made to address decline at its roots: to create flexibility and diversity at an early stage; to invest in the public amenity that will stabilize a place; to compensate for the social costs of



Cities are filled with waste spaces that appear useless. Often they do have uses, albeit marginal ones—storage, dumping, or even shelter. Photo by Rajeev Bhatia.

**Railways are often favored
areas for play and exploration
by children and teenagers.**

Photo by Kevin Lynch.



mobility; to put the control of enterprise in local hands; to capitalize on the hidden benefits of stability, stagnation and decline.

If the government is serious about responding to the mismatch of people and capital, then it must propose far more radical actions: the transshipment of entire communities, and not just the mobile young; the invention of transferable infrastructure and institutions; and a humane closing down of abandoned settlements. Such a policy could be an interesting speculation. It might even be rational, if expensive and politically distasteful. At least, it would make evident the hidden costs of uneven growth.

Dereliction

Derelict land is even more extensive than derelict building. Derelict land is often defined as land so damaged by development that it is incapable of beneficial use without further treatment. Note that this definition excludes land abandoned because of changes in the market, like an empty mill yard; land that is simply unpleasant or dangerous; and land naturally unusable or made so by natural cause. If it pays, it isn't derelict. If it doesn't pay, due to some human devilment, and once did pay, then it is derelict.

Surface and subsurface mining creates much land of this kind. It may destroy topsoil and vegetation, leave pits and holes, cause subsidence and flooding, and pollute the ground

**What can we do with automobiles once they are no longer
useful as vehicles?**

Photo by Michael Southworth.



Junk is fascinating. Found objects can make the best toys, offering endless opportunities for imaginative play.

Photo by Robin Moore.



with brines, spoil heaps, acid wastes and slimes. Modern mechanical mining may accelerate this dereliction—causing deeper subsidence, or more extensive gashing—since it works to greater depths at greater speeds, and it discards larger percentages of waste piling in taller, looser heaps. Some manufacturing processes, such as steel works, smelters, power plants, gas works, or industrial chemicals, also pollute the land with their deposits of ashes, slags, metals, chemical wastes, radioactive material and other toxic substances, as well as by their massive foundations and utilities. At the same time, there have been technical advances in land reclamation, using heavy earth-moving machinery to reshape the waste heaps or recover the strip mines, and new methods for reestablishing vegetation by drainage, rebuilding the soil, and progressive planting of selected species. Reclaimed sites need 20 years to mature to a stable state. Meanwhile, they still appear derelict, and so may continue to attract illegal dumping, and the destruction of their cover....

Abandoned Transport

Abandoned transport also results in derelict lands, but these will more easily find new uses. Railroad closures have left substantial mileages of unused lines which turn out to be useful secondary recreational routes. The old city terminals and yards, being extensive and close in, are valuable for urban development. The old canals, especially in Great Britain, have proved ideal for pleasure boating.⁴ Some remove bulk seaports are truly derelict, but the old urban waterfronts from which modern container shipping has largely receded are now prime development sites. The wartime airfields of Great Britain, predicted to become permanent scars, are now largely returned to other uses. Runways are mined for aggregate, broken up, and returned to fields, or used as farm roads and hardstands. Roads themselves rarely become derelict. They continue to be used for access, although some of their structures, such as our recent elevated highways, may in good time have to be torn down. Any connected spatial network, once acquired, continues to be useful for many modes of flow: trains, pipes, cars, cycles, horses, wires, walkers, canals, whatever. When Los Angeles abandoned its extensive street railway system, it also dismembered the rights-of-way. The city has had ample occasion to regret the miscalculation....

Wastes of Successive Occupations

Landscapes shift from one function to another, are abandoned and reoccupied, take on new forms, revert and occasionally are changed irretrievably. The wastes of successive occupations accumulate and become part of the nature of the land. The European occupation of New England is a capsule example. From subsistence farms on newly cleared forest land, farmers turned to cash crops of wheat. In 1824 the wheat weevil arrived, and in 1825 the Erie Canal brought Midwestern grain to the cities. A population exodus began, and the wheat fields were converted to sheep pasture. Removal of the wool tariff in 1840 caused a shift from sheep to dairy cattle, and emigration was hastened by the loss of men in the Civil War. People moved down from the upland farms and towns to the water power, the railroad lines and the meadows of the river flats. Later, the cows no longer grazed for themselves, but were fed in the barnyard, and so the upland pastures grew back to cherry, maple, blackberry and alder: "puickerbush" in the local tongue.⁵

The farmers thought it was sinful to let those fields revert to the original forest, and yet the process continues, leaving stone fences and cellar holes in the woods, and a skeleton of narrow forest roads. "I sold the cows when the barn floor collapsed, loaned out one horse when its mate died, sold the sheep when the fences got too weak, and now I rent the tillage land and have a town job," recounted one Vermont farmer. "Somewhere in every New England mind there is an abandoned farm," wrote David McCord.

Today, the landscape is being reconverted to recreation. The houses are going uphill and out of town again. The roads are reused, and the stone fences emerge once more. Land is cleared to gain a view instead of to raise a crop. Ski runs are cut down the steep slopes, and new commercial activities appear along the river-bottom highways. In time, future successions will again remake these highways, these new second homes, these narrow ribbons of rye grass cascading down the slopes. The landscape changes, accumulating historic waste....

The Persistence of Cities

Abandoned cities—as distinct from derelict lands and ghost villages or small towns—are not as numerous as one might think, despite the vivid role their awesome ruins play in our imagination. Babylon, Nineveh, Chan Chan, Troy: the names of lost cities are magical and nostalgic. But if we analyze the listings by Chandler and Fox of those ancient cities founded between 1360 B.C. and A.D. 620, we find that out of a total of 69, 31 survive today.⁶ A 45-percent survival rate, across a time span that now averages over 2,500 years, is hardly a sign of evanescence. (If their listing is incomplete, the actual sur-

vival rate may be somewhat lower.) If we look at their more complete listing of cities built in the last 1,000 years, and count only the mature, major settlements—that is, all those that reached a size of at least 40,000 before 1900, or, in continents other than Asia (where larger cities appeared earlier), of at least 20,000 before 1600—we have a list of some 905 places. Of these, only 30 do not exist today, and 21 of the 30 were in Africa and the Americas, where the failure rate was near 10 percent. Moreover, only 20 of the remaining 875 survivors have dwindled to populations below 5,000. Urban settlements seem to have sticking power, despite (could it be because of?) the concentrated wastes they generate.

Isolated disasters have not often caused a permanent abandonment, unless they were natural shifts that destroyed the economic base (such as extensive soil erosion, siltation, or change in sea level, which destroy a harbor, or long-continued drought), or unless they were purposeful devastations, executed with malice and power. Above all else, settlements need to provide safe transport, and security from human predators. The principal killers have been war, disorder and the shift of trade. Final abandonment comes only after a long series of disasters that exhaust the will and capital of the survivors....

Antioch, in Syria, founded in 307 B.C., was one of the great cities of the Hellenistic and Roman empires. Its collapse into a small provincial town came only after a 100-year period that included: a great fire in A.D. 525, followed by recurrent outbreaks for six months; the earthquake of 526, in which 250,000 persons died, almost all the buildings fell down, ruins and corpses were ransacked by thieves, trade ceased, and citizens emigrated; aftershocks, and another major quake in 528, in which all surviving buildings and walls fell and 5,000 were killed; capture and sack by the Persians in 540, after severe street fighting, burning of the city and suburbs, and deportation of the inhabitants to Persia; bubonic plague in 542, and recurring outbreaks thereafter; earthquakes in 551 and 557, when the walls came down again; cattle plague in 557; bubonic plague again in 560 and 561; earthquakes in 557 and 588, with 60,000 killed in the latter; loss of all the olive trees, a vital permanent crop, in the drought of 599; devastation of the crops by weevils in 600; capture again by the Persians in 611, and evacuation by them in 628; capture by the Arabs in 638, after the collapse of Roman power in Syria. At that point, Antioch was at last reduced to a minor settlement....

Systematic destruction of a city in war has perhaps been a more common cause of final abandonment than natural disaster. Even then, a city is hard to kill, in part because of its strategic geographic location, its concentrated, persisting stock of physical capital and even more because of the memories, motives and skills of inhabitants. The destruction of Carthage

was an unusual success (although the site is now recommended for a new town), but the attempt to obliterate Poland's capital after the Warsaw Uprising was an instructive failure. The German army was ordered to destroy the city forever; no usable fragment of the city capital was to remain. First, those who had survived the Nazi atrocities were evacuated. Section by section, the city was fired, to reduce its mass, and then blown up by demolition teams. A large, sophisticated military force exerted a tremendous organized effort, over a period of several weeks. All the buildings fell, but a surprising amount of structure survived, both underground and at ground level. The very rubble of the explosions protected the remains and blocked the movement of the fire and demolition teams. Even more intractable was the consuming desire of the Polish people to restore their remembered city. So Warsaw reappeared.⁷....

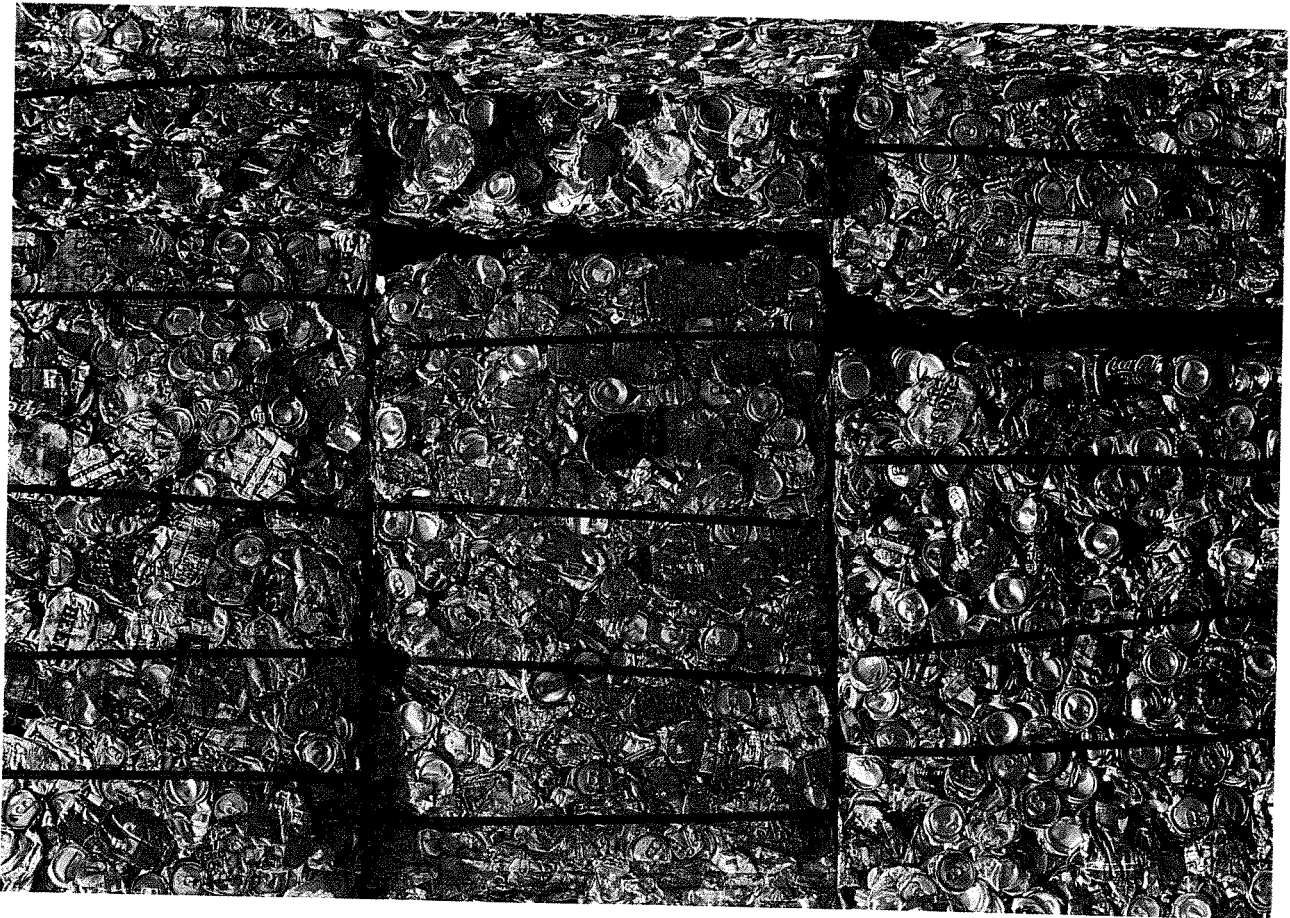
Other Places of Waste

Abandonment, dereliction and destruction are not the only breeders of waste ground. There are uses not welcome in any settled community, but essential to the larger region. These include accommodation for people on the fringe of society in one way or another: halfway houses, mental hospitals, or low-income housing projects. There are also facilities that have some direct nuisance effect: highways, airports, truck and bus terminals, distribution centers, quarries, power plants and heavy industry. There are some that need cheap quarters, or cannot or will not pay for public services: marginal industries, squatter housing, storage yards and tax-exempt institutions. And there are the abhorred wasting facilities themselves: dumps, incinerators, sewage plants and outfalls. Communities always applaud their location somewhere else in the region. We avoid them and yet depend on them.

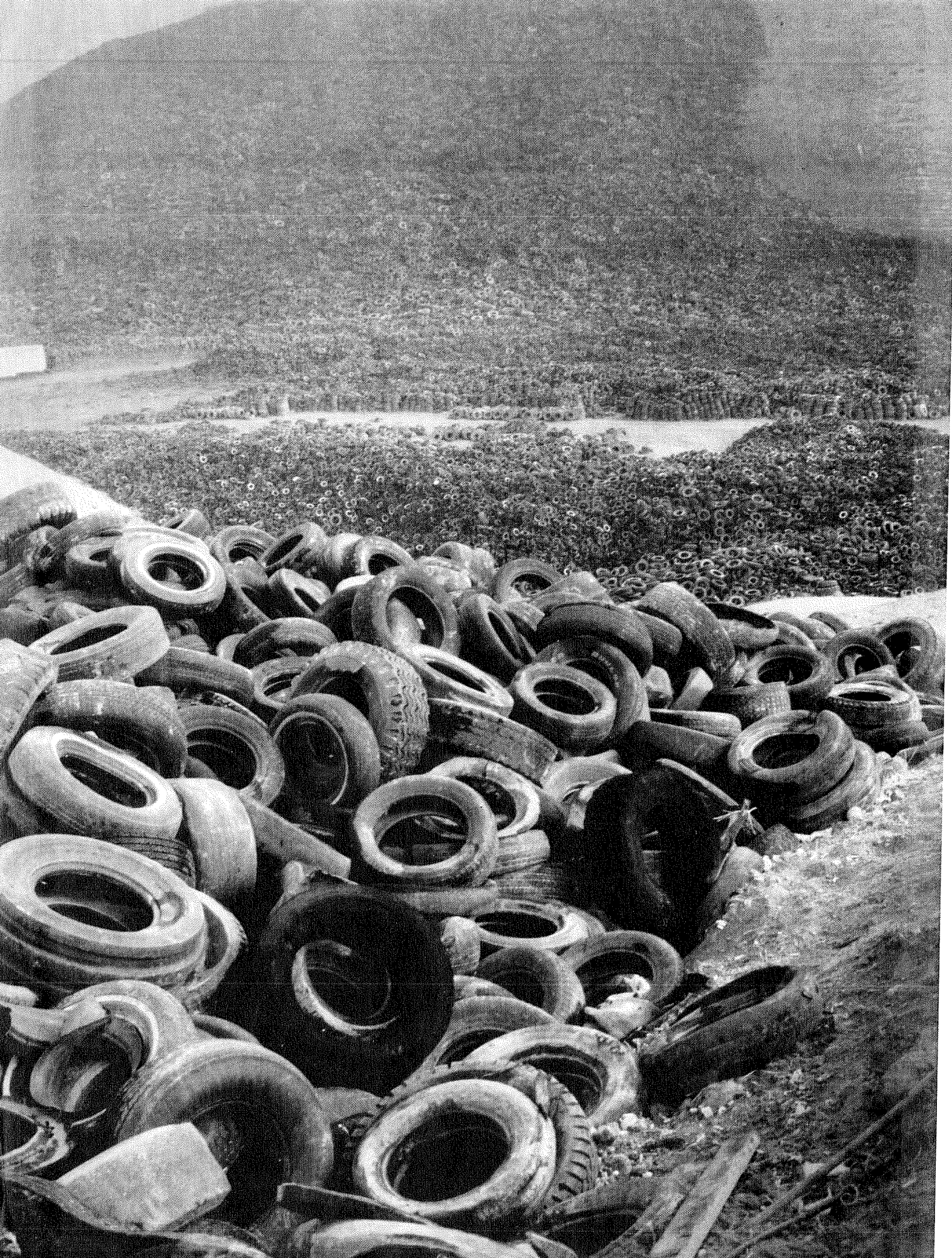
In no contemporary new town in America, where every inch is planned, is there any provision for dump or burial ground. Indeed, there are very few cemeteries in the initial layouts of our nineteenth-century cities, although the churchyard had been a standard component of the colonial town. Now we keep death at a distance, and the thought that cemeteries are part of our disposal system is quite disturbing. We rarely enter them alive, except for the ceremony of interment. The old tradition of visiting the family graves on special days of the year is fading away. Yet graveyards were once the parks of the city, places of quiet escape and social recreation. In a few cases, they remain so today. The vast cemeteries surrounding Cairo were used on holidays by everyone. Now they are squatter settlements. Our own park-building movement began with such landscaped burial grounds as the Mt. Auburn Cemetery in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and the Spring



In Hindu mythology, Kali
is regarded as the goddess of
death and destruction.



Aluminum cans are crushed
and baled before they are recycled.
Photo by Rajeev Bhatia.



Grove Cemetery in Cincinnati. Today, a cemetery is the night-time haunt of adolescents, who are also in many ways at the margin of society. Moreover, these graveyards are a refuge for wild fauna and uncultivated plants....

Urban Wilderness

Urban wilds, cemeteries and city dumps move farther and farther out, as settlement spreads. The quest for disposal room grows more pressing and is more fiercely resisted by the outlying suburban towns. The acceptable location of the margin becomes a regional issue. The swelling inflow of goods and energy into the dense urban area makes it increasingly difficult to return the waste to any productive cycle, or even to put it down where it will not offend. It was this very concentration of resources in cities, of course, that first provoked the great wastings of war. Now, as the region continues to expand, wastelands reappear at the city center, in the form of vacant lots, boarded housing, junked cars and exhausted slums. The rural poverty and rural waste heaps of the past are being encompassed as underused land and marginal groups within the city itself. Remote or central, these wastelands are also the places where discarded ways of life survive and where new things begin.

Within any city littered yards are used for low-cost storage and low-value activity, and fragmented, masterless spaces are used for disposal. Grady Clay has named them "sinks." Linwood Avenue, in inner Somerville, Massachusetts, is typical of such marginal areas. Isolated behind the elevated McGrath highway, it is accessible only by a single indirect entrance. Its low, repatched, concrete block buildings, spotted with signs, are closed in on themselves. These are warehouses, service industries and repair depots. They stand within ragged dirt and asphalt yards, full of discarded objects. The broad streets, surfaced in cracked and oily paving, have no regular edges, but are sporadically lined with broken chain-link fences. Trucks and cars are double- and triple-parked, or nose into the yards. The workers are male, in rough and dirty clothes. An ugly, polluted, yet tolerant place, where the workers seem at ease. A remnant left by a carelessly planned highway, it is a refuge for infant and relict enterprises. However unseemly, these urban remnants are also freer places, where one is momentarily relieved of the pressures of status, power, explicit purpose and strict control. These shabby careless backsides, these rear yards, alleys, outhouses and urban rat holes, have their own delights....

Facing page: Mountains of used tires are now converted to electrical energy near Modesto, CA. Photo courtesy Oxford Energy Company.

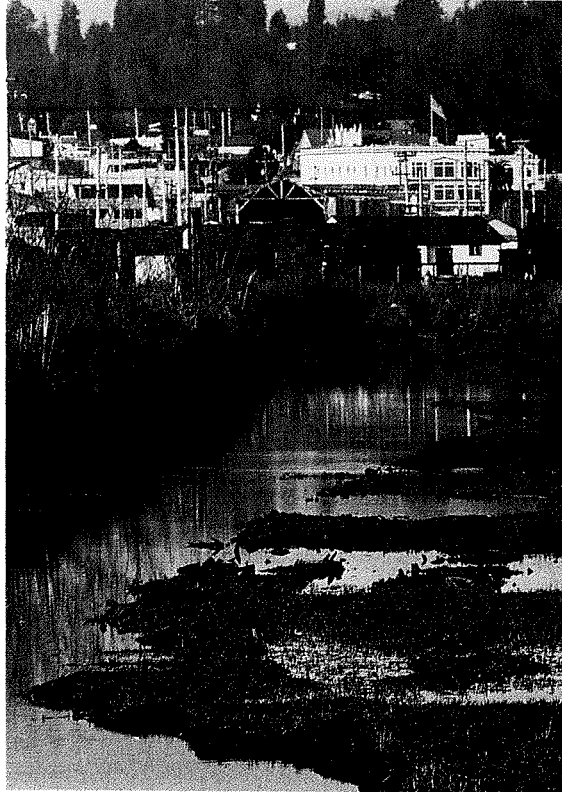


Urban "sinks," however unattractive, have their own values and delights. They are relatively free of social control and provide habitats where outdated things can survive and new ones may gain a foothold.

Photo by Michael Southworth.

A Tangled Mix

Wasting is a pervasive (if valiantly ignored) process in human society, just as it is elsewhere in the living system. It is a feature of the underlying flux that carries us along, the everlasting impermanence of things. There is a short-term wasting of objects, and a long-term wasting of place. Each has its own characteristics. The rate fluctuates, and the flow is cyclical or directed, depending on circumstances. It threatens our health, our comfort and our feelings. It interferes with the efficiency of our enterprises. Still, it has its own values. If we seek to preserve things, it is a ceaseless threat. If we look for continuity and not permanence, on the other hand, then wasting might be turned to account. Rarely has any accumulation of waste caused the abandonment of a settled place, unless it has served to hasten some natural evolution. Only occasionally has the environment been pushed to some truly irreversible dead end. Wasting has not usually caused fundamental social change, but it accelerates changes already under way, and shifts the distribution of burdens. It seems to us a tangled mix of good and evil, and mostly the latter. Hidden behind the polite facade of living, its presence preoccupies us: it is an affair of the mind. Might there be pleasures in it, and practical opportunities? Could we be at ease with it?



Arcata, CA, waste treatment ponds use natural processes to treat waste water. A railroad trestle, dump and lumber mill were converted to marshes that treat waste water while serving as a wildlife sanctuary, salmon ranch and recreation area used by hikers and bird watchers. Photo by Carol Arnold, California Coastal Conservancy.



Disposal of solid wastes is a worldwide problem. Increasingly, municipal incinerators are being shut down since solid wastes, when burned, generate airborne wastes. Photo by Catherine Lynch.

Notes

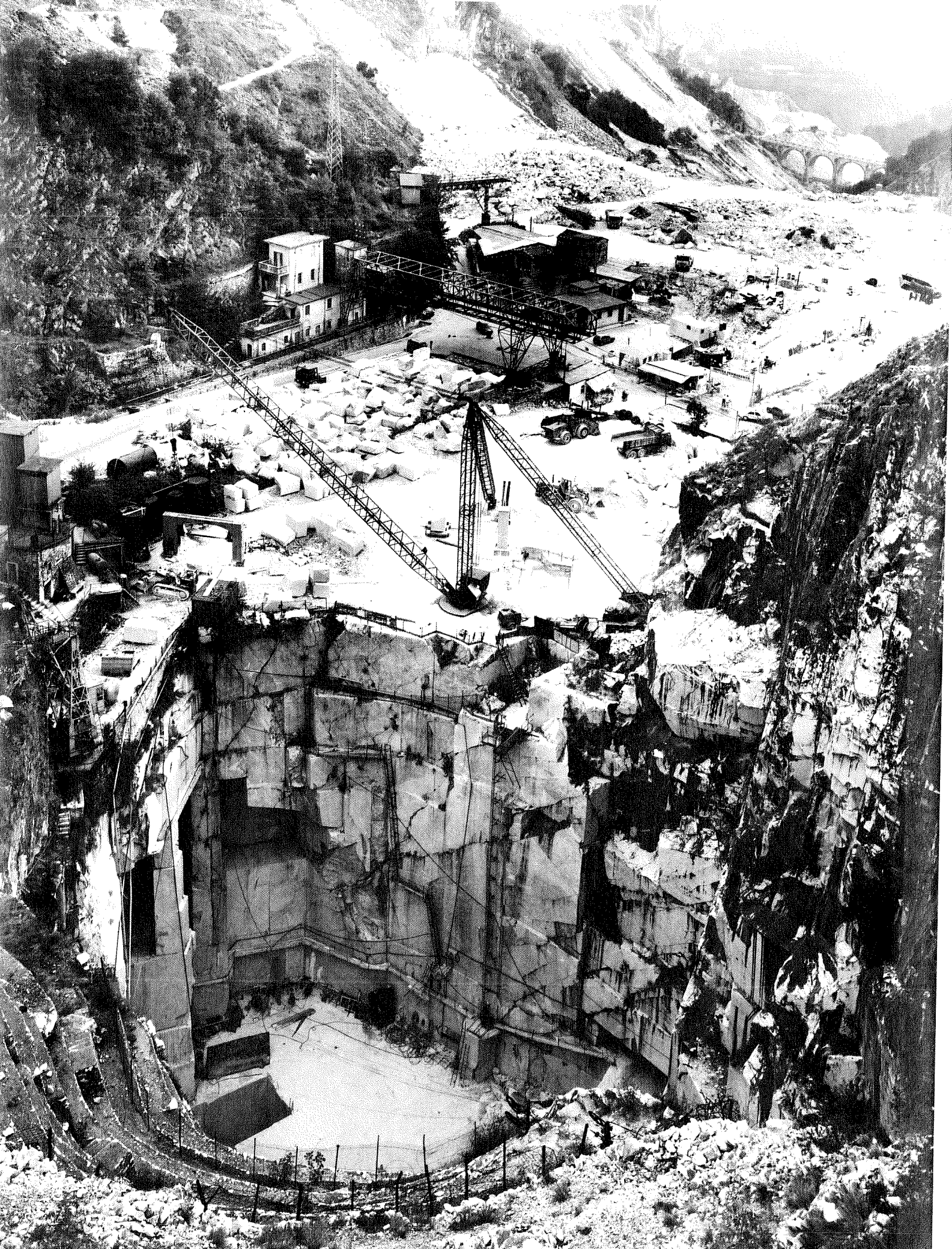
1. It should be noted that decentralization of the American city has been heavily subsidized by the federal government, especially by means of highway construction and backing of home mortgages.
2. *Report of the President's Commission for a National Agenda for the Eighties* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1980).
3. Edgar Rust, "Development without Growth: Lessons Derived from the U.S. Metropolitan Experience" (Conference paper, Alternative Futures for Older Metropolitan Regions Conference, Youngstown, Ohio, May 1977).
4. The old canals of Lowell, Massachusetts, built to power the textile mills, have been recycled along with the mills and machinery to become the framework for an educational and historical park.
5. Sheafe Satterthwaite, "Puckerbrush, Cellar Holes, Rubble: Observations on Abandonment in Vermont," in *A Sense of Place: Images of the Vermont Landscape 1776-1976* (Burlington, VT: Robert Hull Fleming Museum, 1976).
6. Tertius Chandler and Gerald Fox, *3,000 Years of Urban Growth* (New York: Academic Press, 1974).
7. By the end of the World War II, about 90 percent of the historic buildings, three-quarters of all residential buildings and one-third of the streets of Warsaw had been destroyed. Both old and new towns of Warsaw were reconstructed building by building and almost brick by brick. In the old town, the reconstruction program included not only all the churches, but also the burghers' houses, dating from the fifteenth to the seventeenth centuries. The interiors were rebuilt according to the extant architectural plans, and facades were restored on the basis of old photographs and drawings. The maze of old town streets and squares and public foci such as the Fukier wine shop were carefully reconstructed. The Royal Road, lined by historic residences, churches and monuments, representing diverse architectural and sculptural styles from the sixteenth to the twentieth centuries, was rebuilt meticulously, along with the two royal residences, which have a very important place in people's memories. Juliusz W. Gomulicki, *Warsaw* (Warsaw: Arkady, 1967).



The garden of the Bulwinkle house in Oakland is a fantasy of birds, flowers and other things fabricated from scrap iron.
Photo by Kimberly Moses.

Joel Leivick

CARRARA QUARRY



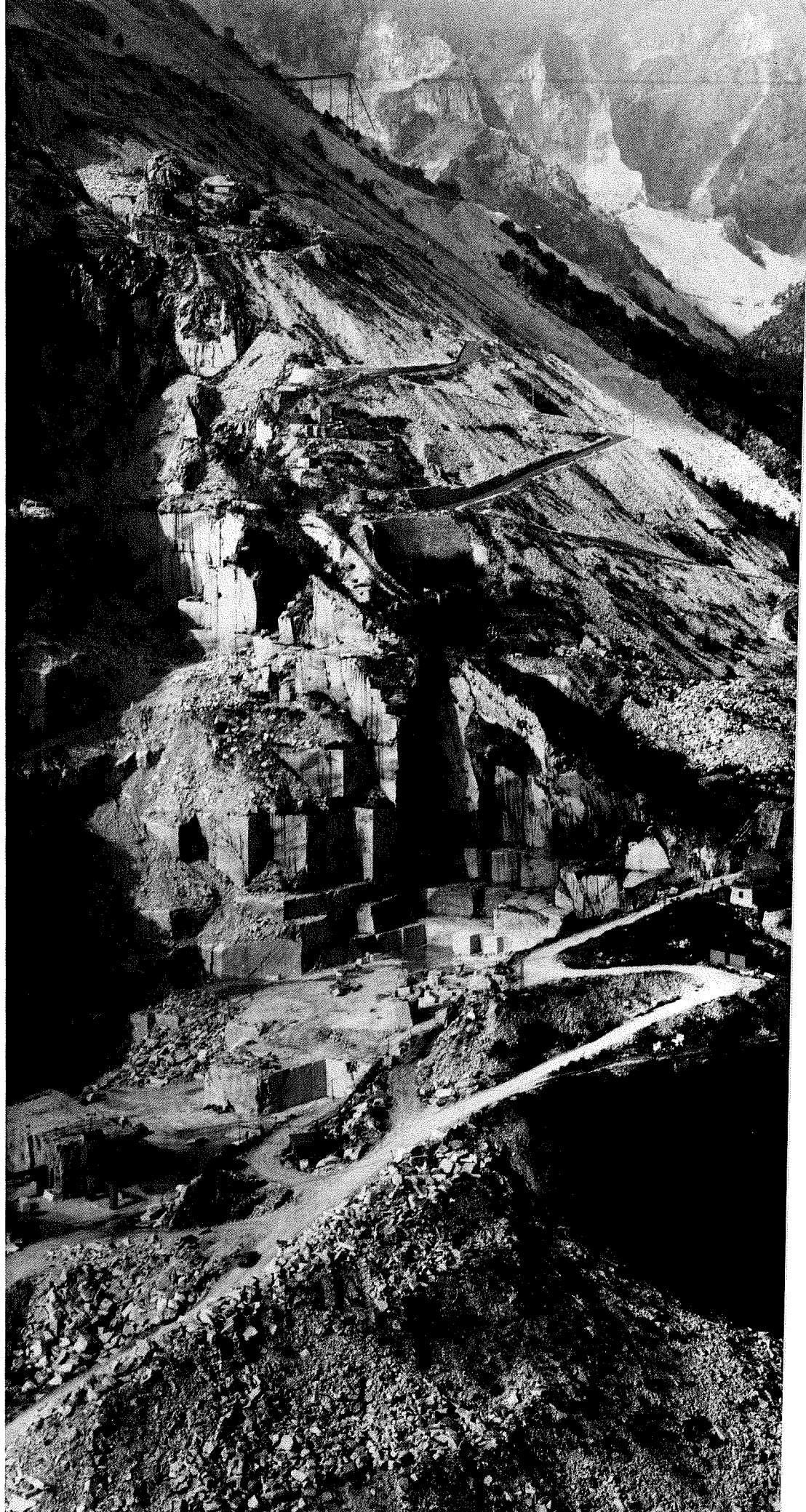
Previous page:

Deep pit quarry at Fantiscritti.

View of Colonnata.

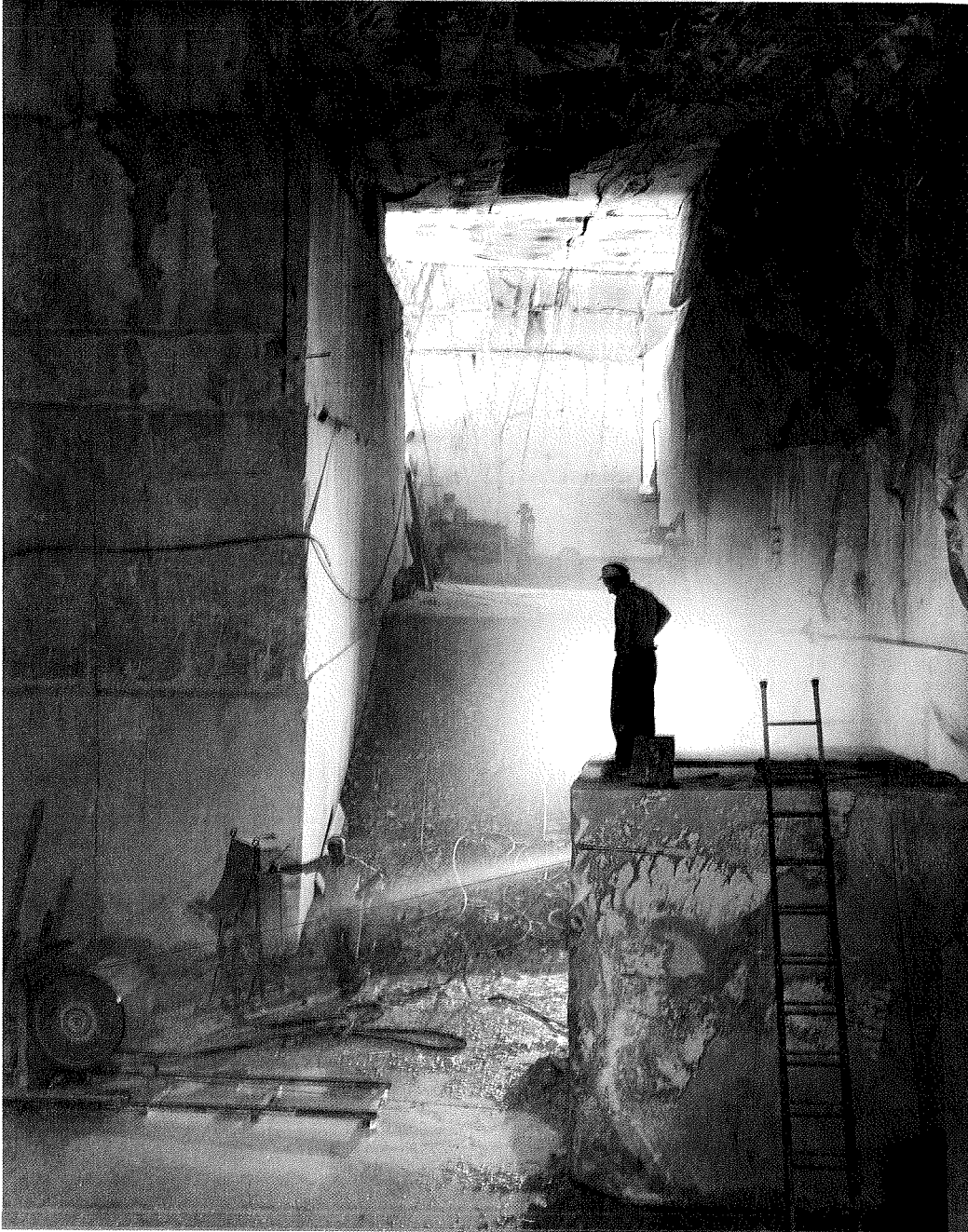
Approached from the sea, the Apuan Alps above Carrara are so like pristine snow-covered peaks that one must remind oneself, more than once, that in the late Tuscan August snow is at most a faint memory. What is really there is a landscape created by 2,000 years of methodical quarrying. These mountains of solid marble have been hewn relentlessly for as long as European history has been recorded. The beauty, the ultimate purity of the scene is surprising. There is whiteness everywhere. Even the river flowing through Carrara, filled with the dust of dozens of small marble sawmills, runs pure white—a river of milk.

I had suspected that Carrara would provide a powerful inspiration for me, but I had no idea of the immensity of proportion that I would encounter. The quarries seem as grand as the Grand Canyon, yet their vastness is the result of steady attrition at the hands of humans. As a landscape photographer, my attention has been focused on the structure of natural things and on the effects of civilization—subtle and salutary or gross and unreasonable—on the natural scheme. Above Carrara the effect of industry is indeed gross, but here civilization also provides a subtle counterpoint





Underground quarry,
Fantiscritti.



Marble blocks ready for squaring, Fantiscritti.



to the authority of nature. A tiny medieval village perfectly sited—its angular forms, its church tower echoed in the excavations nearby—supplies the scene with a profound visual harmony. I found myself stunned by the spectacle.

The methods used by the quarry workers to extract huge blocks of

stone have evolved from the ancient ways of hand-saws, chisels and oxen, to today's methods of electric-powered wire saws, black powder and bulldozers so large they seem imagined. But the place still seems to be operating at some point in the past. There is something resistant to technology in the inertia of a 20-ton block of stone. The quarry foreman relies upon cleverness and experience to devise an elegant and

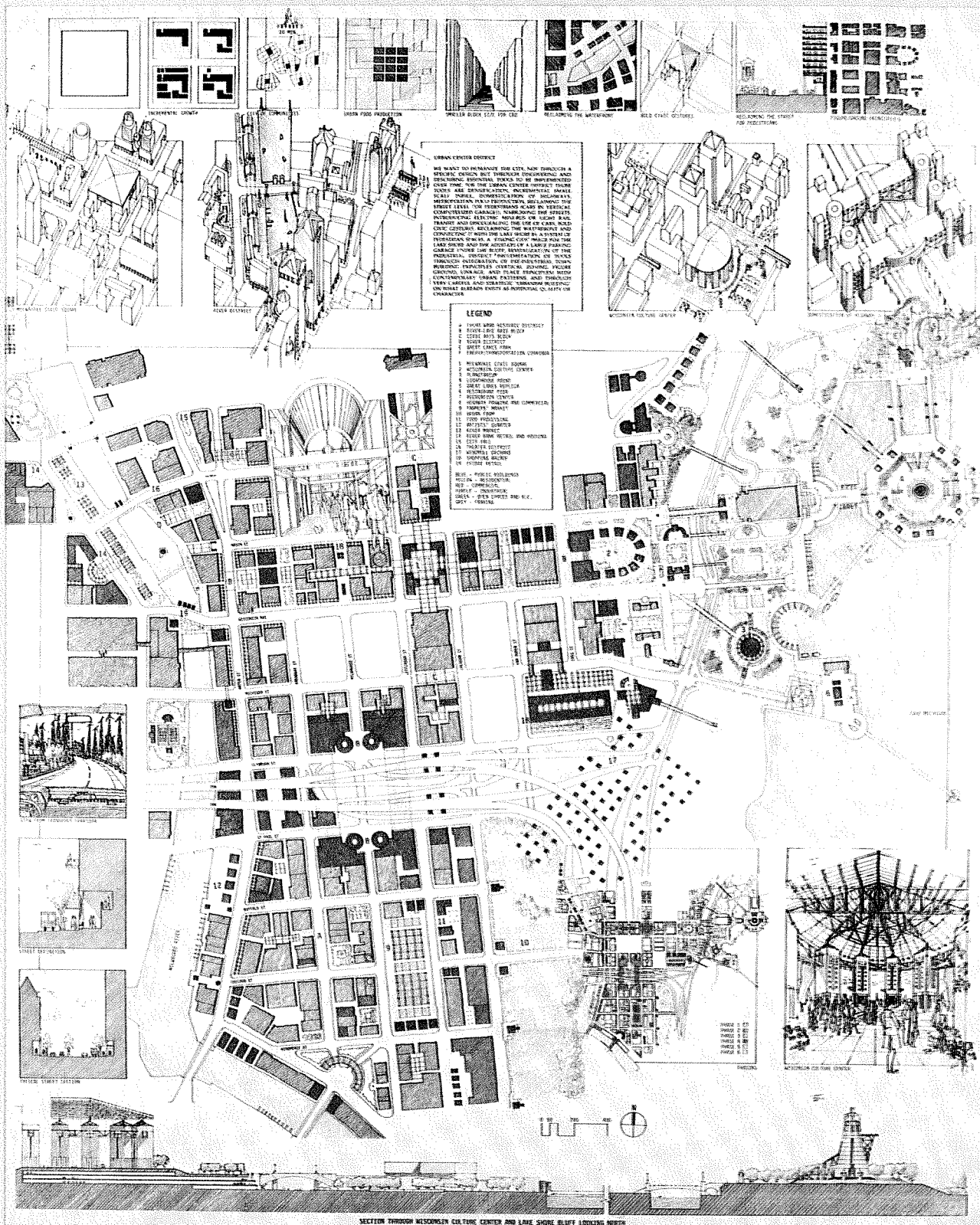
economical plan to shift the position of a rock the size of a small house. Echoing Archimedes, who claimed to need only a place to stand in order to move the world, the quarryman knows that even the heaviest block on the most precipitous slope will succumb to a clever plan.





The Gioia quarry.

In my photographs I want everything in its place and all parts of the picture to bear a precise and logical relationship to each other. In the editing of a great film each scene follows its predecessor with the airtight inevitability of a dream. As a result the viewer becomes effortlessly engaged in the story. I want something like that from my pictures. I want each picture to show a world that is believable and real, but seen as a glance into the past; a world seen through a faint patina with the freshness and freedom from association that archaeologists need when trying to fit together the puzzles left by ancient civilizations. Carrara, a monumental collaboration of man and nature, provides potent raw material.



SECTION THROUGH WISCONSIN CULTURE CENTER AND LAKE SHORE BLUFF LOOKING NORTH

We want to humanize the city by discovering and describing essential tools to be implemented over time. For the Urban Center District, those are:

- Densification.
- Incremental small-scale infill.
- Domestication of highways
- Urban food production.

- Reclaiming street level for pedestrians.
- Narrowing the streets.
- Introducing electric mini-bus or light rail.
- Bold civic gestures.
- Reclaiming the waterfront and connecting it with the lake shore.
- Revitalizing the industrial district.

These would be implemented by using pre-industrial town building principles (vertical zoning, figure ground, linkage and place) and strategically building on what already exists as a source of quality of character.

Project team: Milosav Cekic, James L. Cormier, Anthony DeGrazia, Neal Hubbel, Niko Letunic, Roy B. Mann (Gold Medalist).

The International City Design Competition

There are too few forums directed towards generating credible visions—that is almost an oxymoron—for the city of the future, especially those that encourage dialogue among the various groups responsible for planning, designing and building cities.

Politicians and public agency planners spend, with justification, most of their time, energy and money “fire fighting”—their tasks and efforts are defined by political situations, public opinion and economic forces. Rarely do they have the time and opportunity to develop long-term visions, plans and design alternatives based on realistic projections, or the luxury of reflecting on what ought to happen, given the opportunity.

As academics, my colleagues and I often ask ourselves if we do any better. As we teach professional skills, values and practices, are we introducing students to the political and economic realities that establish the constraints of the real world? When we define the planning and design problems for their studio work, are we insuring the projects will promulgate our personal values? That we have no answers to these questions is a source of great dissatisfaction to us.

By staging the International City Design Competition, we hoped to accomplish two things. First, we wanted interdisciplinary teams—including politicians, educators, planners, architects, social scientists and private developers—to address the problems and potentials of cities of the twenty-first century. Second, we wanted to move this discussion from the realm of fantasy and utopias and focus on a real place as it exists today and how it might exist in the next century. We thought Milwaukee, a nineteenth-century industrial city that is experiencing economic and social change, could be a prototype because it is familiar to us and is indicative of many places in the industrialized West. The ideas and concepts developed in the competition would be applicable to cities such as Detroit, Cleveland, Stuttgart and Liverpool.

The International City Design Competition was sponsored by the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, School of Architecture and Urban Planning. It was organized by Carl V. Patten, dean of SARUP, Associate Dean Lawrence P. Witzling and Jeffrey E. Ollswang. Places invited Ollswang and the jurors to comment on the lessons ICDC taught about city design.

All photos and graphics courtesy of ICDC, except Milwaukee map.

Aerial view of Milwaukee looking south from downtown, over a waterfront park and a parking/warehouse district.



People said Milwaukee is a conservative community and we would never be able to raise enough money to stage the competition, but we raised nearly half a million dollars, all from local, county and state sources: utilities, insurance companies, television stations, foundations and the Wisconsin Society of Architects. People who have participated in the building of the city and have a vested interest in it are a lot less cynical about the future, and it is a lot easier to make them think they can have a positive role in what is going to happen. It is not hard to convince people that they should be a part of the process.

How do you define the city of the future? Most people—including architects, planners and urban designers—envision places like those contrived for movies such as *Blade Runner*, places at which they can gawk and say “wow.” It was essential, though, that competitors did not spend their time predicting the future. Their effort was to be directed toward the creation of planning and design concepts based on a prepared set of predictive assumptions that were developed and presented as part of the program.

We approached the problem by thinking of what Milwaukee was like 15 years ago, how it has changed and what is likely to happen in another 15 years. We thought, if one of us were a developer or mayor, what would we like to see happen? What is likely to happen?

We generated various assumptions about economics, demographics, government policies and private investment from which the competitors could choose. We also established constraints. For example, it is unlikely that we could bring a Cyclopean developer into Milwaukee and say, “Here’s an eraser. You can start anew.” We figured enough land could be assembled, potentially, for four or five large projects downtown during the next 30 years. So it would be up to the competitors to determine if those would occur, where they should occur and what they would be.

The toughest thing was establishing the design problems, and I mean that in the broadest context. We know in a city like Milwaukee, if you take a map and put a pin where downtown is, then cut a wedge from that point out, you will include part of downtown, a mature residential neighborhood and the fringe or developing edge. So we decided those were the three prototype areas that should be addressed. The downtown site includes the lake front, harbor, part of the traditional commercial downtown and part of a close-in residential neighborhood. The mature neighborhood site includes parts of three neighborhoods, a railroad/industrial corridor, a creek and a parkway. The suburban edge is in the town of Oak Creek, nine miles south of central Milwaukee, and includes both a town center and undeveloped forest and agricultural land.



The assumptions and constraints made the task incredibly difficult for competitors. Although they predetermined the way in which we hoped competitors would think, they were meant to guide competitors towards a realistic set of criteria, not to constrain designs.

Interestingly, where we set the fewest constraints and guidelines, in the fringe or developing edge, competitors had the most problems. When you have enormous areas of farmland between Chicago and Milwaukee with a major highway and you tell them it is going to develop, many people do not know what to do.

Some of them did have good ideas. They recognized that Chicago and Milwaukee are growing together, so they proposed not a satellite city but a “village cross,” with a High Street, that could be noticed from the highway. Others said this is beautiful, rural land and it should remain undeveloped. It takes a lot of courage to say develop right along the highway and leave the rest for farmers. To be credible you need an economist and someone with the conviction that even though there may no longer be room for a quaint Wisconsin family farm, there is viable farmland left.

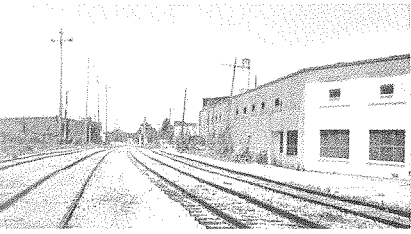
The competitors were best at working with the downtown and mature residential areas, probably because they are used to that. One area had a railroad running through it and a good park system with a little stream. You cannot realistically

remove the railroad. So they thought about how to bridge the right-of-way and make it more attractive, to make the little creek a real amenity and to weave together the railroad, commercial and light industrial uses with the residential. They did that sort of thing quite well.

Sometimes it is said we have no compelling paradigms that tell us how cities should be built. Did this competition turn up some new and astounding fundamental concepts of city design? If we had wanted that, we would have written to Walt Disney, because they are much better at it, or to people who are true visionaries in the best sense, or to a futurist.

Yet this competition reassured me it is possible to think about cities in a visionary way. And I am convinced this is the way to do it. We should have a competition like this every three years and each time pick a different type of city. The next one might be a city out of control, such as Mexico City, Cairo or Djakarta. Or it may be a city that has a thousand-year-old historic district that, because of some developmental pressures, is being destroyed. Not Athens or Rome, but some place like Dubrovnik or York. This can be the start of an ongoing dialogue, and get people talking.

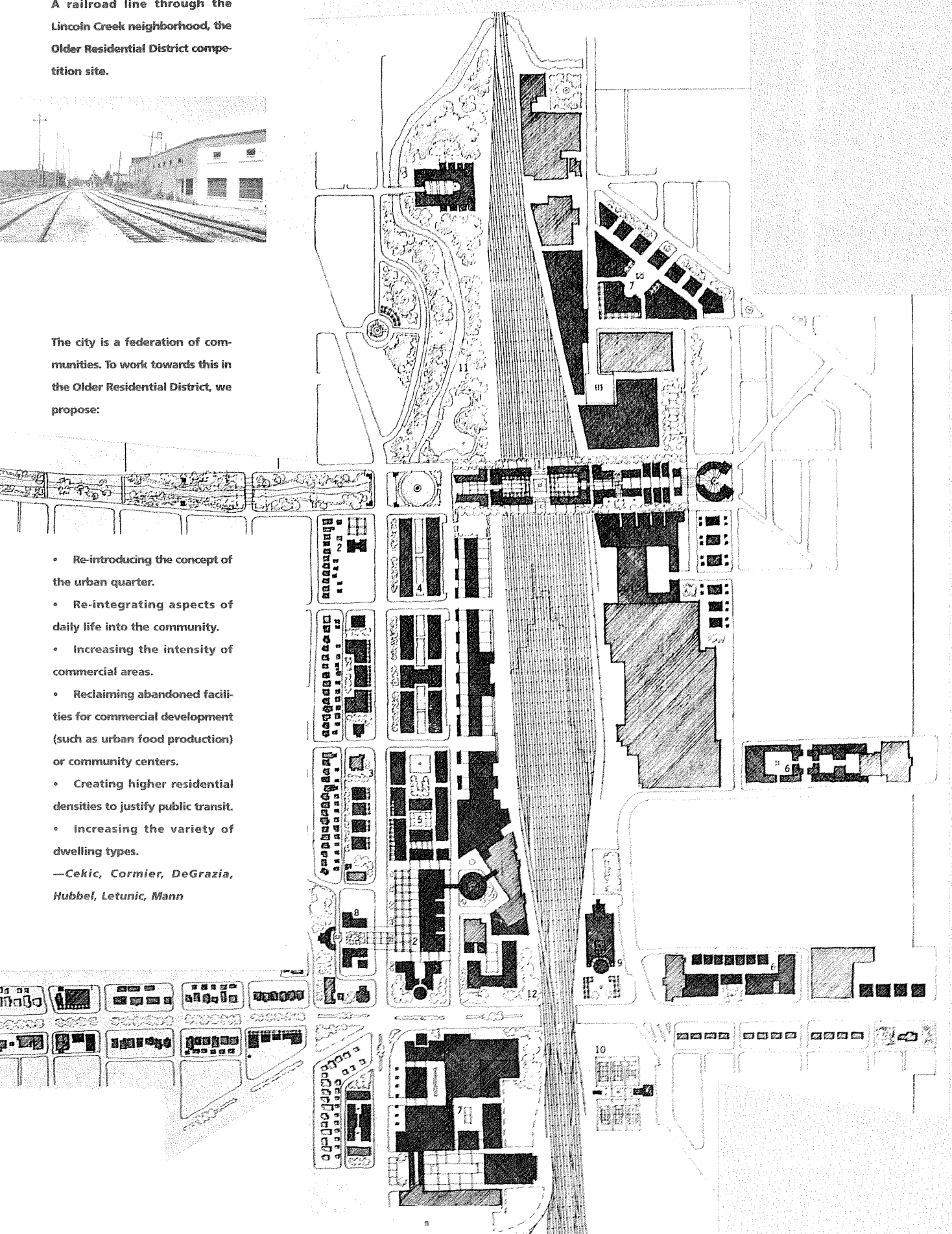
A railroad line through the Lincoln Creek neighborhood, the Older Residential District competition site.



The city is a federation of communities. To work towards this in the Older Residential District, we propose:

- Re-introducing the concept of the urban quarter.
- Re-integrating aspects of daily life into the community.
- Increasing the intensity of commercial areas.
- Reclaiming abandoned facilities for commercial development (such as urban food production) or community centers.
- Creating higher residential densities to justify public transit.
- Increasing the variety of dwelling types.

—Cekic, Cormier, DeGrazia, Hubbel, Letunic, Mann



Design competitions typically ask entrants to respond to a specific program, such as that for a signature building or a symbolic public space. The problem is defined at the outset and is limited in scale; a first award can result in a lucrative commission and in the realization of the designer's ideas.

Occasionally, however, a competition is open-ended, seeking not plans for what will be but ideas for what could be. Such competitions ask for visions, challenging participants to frame problems as well as answers. There is no commission awaiting the winners, nor any commitment that the proposals will be implemented or even accepted.

Two recent competitions (Milwaukee's ICDC and Boston Visions) have posed an even more searching challenge—developing visions for the city of the future. In each, competitors were forced to contemplate multiple, jumbled scales and contexts; to demonstrate a broad understanding of the processes by which urban form evolves; and to wrestle with complex, interlocking problems that transcend physical design and raise issues of social, economic and environmental justice.

Despite the special challenges the Boston and Milwaukee competitions posed and the likelihood that competing would lead neither to commissions nor to direct implementation of ideas that

were presented, both attracted hundreds of competitors who collectively demonstrated a tremendous vigor in their submissions. Places asked Antonio DiMambro, president of the Boston architecture firm Communitas, which won two first awards in Boston Visions, to comment on why a designer would participate in a visionary design competition, how such visions influence city design and how participating in Boston Visions has influenced his own work.

BOSTON VISIONS

**View of downtown
Boston with Logan Airport
in the foreground.**



Visionary design competitions are important cultural events in the life of a city. When properly conceived and programmed, they can elicit an incredible richness of ideas—ideas that are very bold and sometimes shape the form of the environments in which future generations will live, or ideas that are simple, yet, if implemented, immediately would enhance our daily life.

For me, participating in Boston Visions was a unique intellectual challenge, an opportunity to explore ideas outside the constraints of real-life projects. I also believe that as an architect, planner and urban designer, it is my responsibility to participate in the cultural debate about the future of our cities.

City visions can generate fruitful debate on both new development opportunities and current issues and problems. They can capture the imaginations of citizens, inspire them and embody their cultural and economic aspirations. They are ideas that, if realized, are often enriched by the political and economic implementation process.

Many examples of this come to mind. In Italy, Giancarlo De Carlo's plans for the historic center of Urbino and for the expansion of its famous university remain textbook examples of good contemporary city planning and design. In Boston, Frederick Law Olmsted and Charles Eliot's "Emerald Necklace" and Kevin Lynch's "High Spine" visions have shaped the form of the city in undeniable ways. What makes these three visions exceptional and their realization so successful is that De Carlo, Olmsted and Lynch have had an enviable ability to observe and read the environment, to listen to people and to create powerful images that society was ready to accept and implement.

Visionary designs have always influenced Boston's development. They seem to occur in 40- to 50-year cycles or when the city is in a period of crisis or poised for change, and they have helped shape the city's physical design. Four such visionary plans that culminated in additions to the city's fabric are David Sears' development of Boston's Back Bay neighborhood, Olmsted and Eliot's Emerald Necklace and regional park system, Charles Davenport's plan for the definition of the Charles River's Boston edge and the "high-spine" concept connecting Back Bay to the Financial District with high rise development. Some of these designs when presented were considered unrealistic; for example, Lynch's ideas for redeveloping downtown were presented in the 1960s, when the city was experiencing a substantial decline in population and no one believed the city center would continue its historic prominence.

**View of downtown Boston
2088 with a new city of
120,000 residents replacing
the airport in the middle of
the harbor.**

The Boston Visions competition was organized at a critical time in the city's history. In the past decade Boston has enjoyed its most extensive development boom ever, which has dramatically transformed the skyline and rejuvenated the downtown. Boston, traditionally an industrial-maritime city also noted for its strong educational institutions, has emerged as a financial, high-tech and research center. The building boom that transformed downtown Boston has also spread to neighboring suburban areas and to communities along the regions circumferential routes.

Boston's recent development has had undeniably positive impacts on the city as a whole, but has also generated several pressing problems, such as a housing shortage, an overloading of transportation systems and the over-taxing of a decayed and insufficient infrastructure. The economic boom has by-passed inner-city communities, such as Roxbury, Dorchester, Chelsea and East Boston, where many unemployed minority residents live. Some critics have questioned whether continued growth along the pattern of the 1980s would change the city's urban and historic character and lessen the city's livability and quality of life.

The competition was organized to generate new ideas on how to deal with these issues. Participants were encouraged to develop ideas for a new planning framework that would carefully control growth, for a new civic design bill of rights and for a new public mandate to establish an appropriate public transportation framework and reclaim forgotten neighborhoods, create meeting grounds and build a proud new public realm. The intellectual challenge was to generate new ideas and images that would address the issues Boston faces in a comprehensive, bold and thought-provoking way.





BOSTON 2088

My approach to tackling projects has been influenced and strengthened by my firm's intense involvement in Boston Visions. I continue to tackle design problems at the large and small scale. I search for new and effective ways for dealing with and solving planning and design challenges associated with diverse topics such as regional transportation systems or the delivery of affordable housing. I believe these problems are all interrelated and must be dealt with accordingly.

Since the competition, my firm has received two commissions with important visionary aspects. The first, Roxbury Visions, is a study to propose visions and stimulate a community debate about the future of a physically run down, economically depressed but socially rich and diverse Boston neighborhood. The second is a master plan for the redevelopment of Long Island, the largest island in Boston's harbor, to accommodate an array of human and health care services for the city's poor residents as well as recreational facilities for the region. These projects are wonderful opportunities for debate in the public arena.

City visions cannot be exported. Rather, they should be generated from extensive analysis of a place and thoughtful synthesis of the cultural background of its people and institutions. Unfortunately, in the past fifty years, cities have forgotten that their beauty lies also in their aesthetic and morphological diversity. Most large American cities have opted for the "formula projects" often destroying existing valuable environments. Consequently, they have similar Manhattan-like skylines, convention centers, mega-malls, large hotels with multi-level lobbies and sports com-

This vision follows Boston's five-centuries-long tradition of expansion into hinterland and harbor. From the filling of the Mill Pond to the creation of the Back Bay, from the eighteenth-century lowering of Beacon Hill to air rights development over expressways, the forces behind reclamation and rebuilding have varied in technology and scale, not in concept.

Boston's seventeenth-century core city retained a key administrative, economic and symbolic role even as residents moved westward and southward along radial transportation corridors. The present pattern of radial and circumferential routes and new interstitial and sub-center development, together with denser rebuilding in the core and some neighborhoods, can continue for another three or four decades.

After that time, reactive and piecemeal planning and building will no longer suffice. Lands within the Route 128 boundary will be substantially developed, and further western and southern expansion appears increasingly costly in terms of traffic congestion and loss of rural landscapes. The time has come again to look to the sea for Boston's inspiration and regeneration and to redress inequities.

This vision follows Boston's historic models of waterfront development and identifiable neighborhoods to create a complementary New Boston. New Boston is firmly integrated with adjacent, long-overlooked neighborhoods and celebrates Old Boston's maritime legacy and unique setting.

Boston 2088 proposes a broad restructuring and expansion of the metropolitan public transportation system to liberate new planning and living options. The regional planning and public commitments needed to fulfill this vision are relocating air transport facilities, integrating and expanding regional transit and capturing the Harbor's potential.

Diagram of the Inner Harbor Basin, with route of harbor ferry public transit service and areas for mixed use harbor front development.

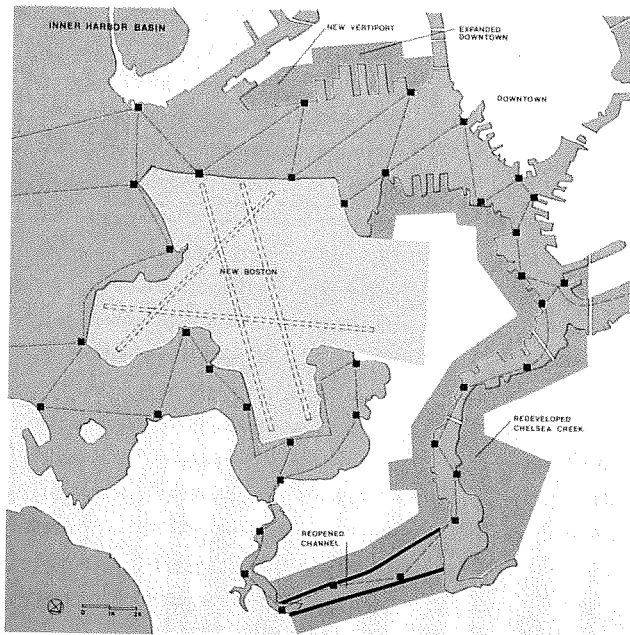


Diagram of the proposed open space system, which links eleven new neighborhoods to the regional system of parks along the water's edge.

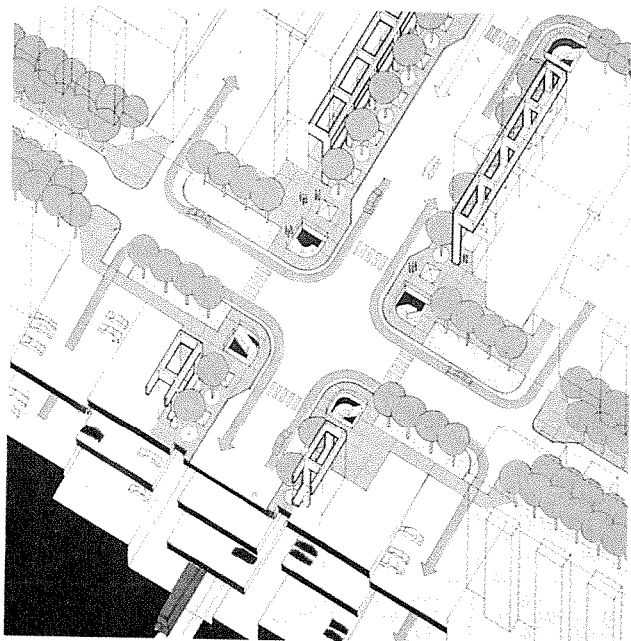
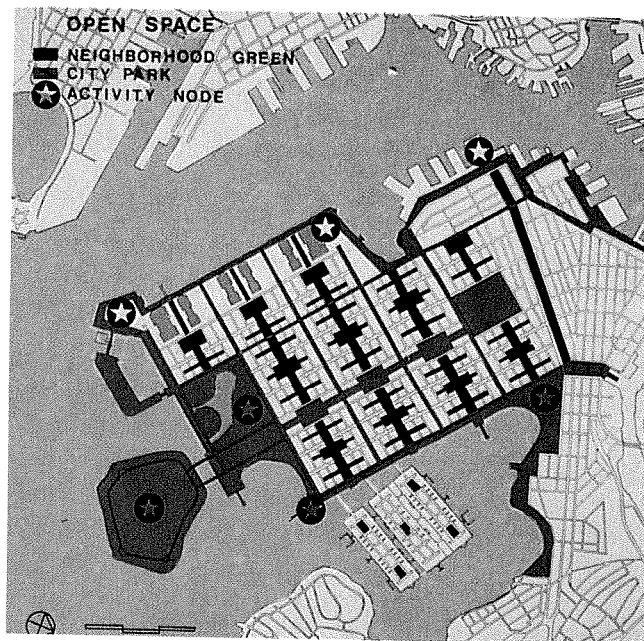
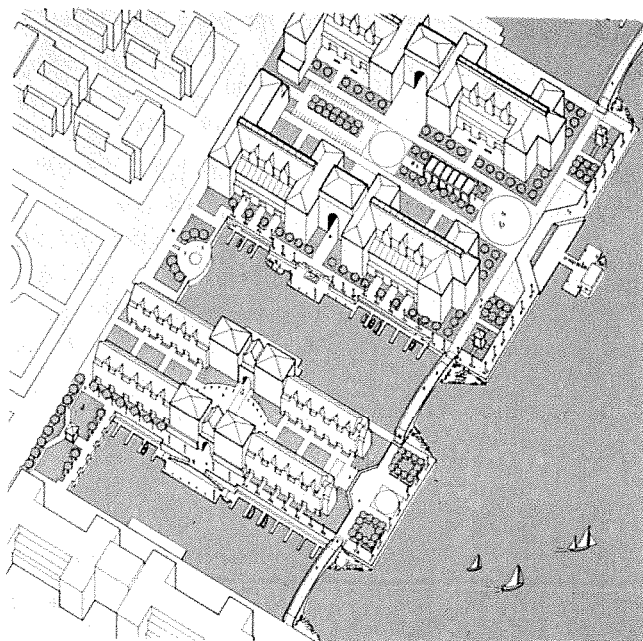


Diagram of proposed organization of parking facilities and subway system along the main boulevard connecting new neighborhoods.



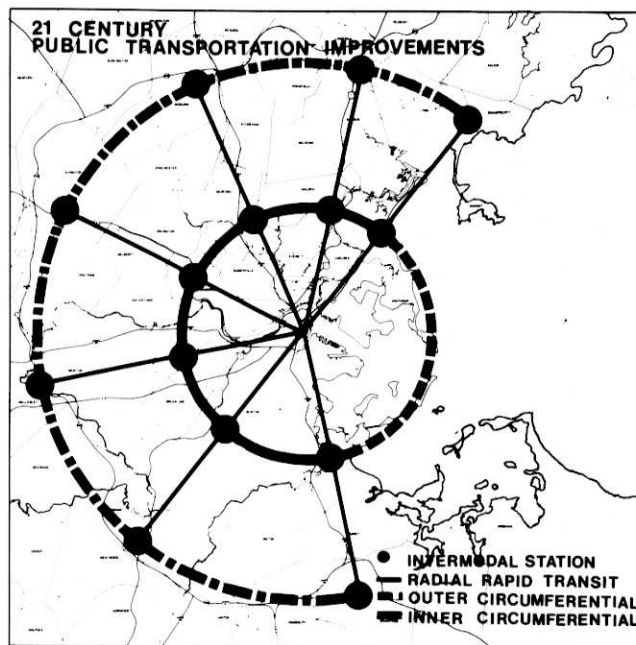
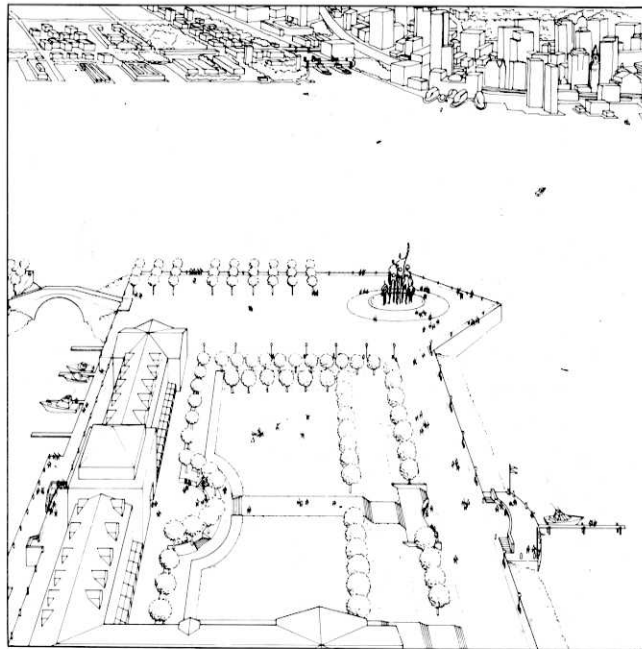
Proposed mixed-use harbor front development. The new image recalls the historic piers of old Boston, while emphasizing pedestrian accessibility to the water.

plexes. I hope that in the next century, American cities will rediscover and cultivate better ways of managing their growth and controlling the transformation of the built environment.

I encourage the new generation of architects and planners to reject passionately the crippling social and professional attitudes of the "age of cynicism." New generations have to face difficult challenges, the most pressing of which is making peace with the environment. I hope future planners will see themselves as something more than problem-solvers, analysts and policy-makers. I hope future architects stop fussing about various "isms," "neo" and "post" labels.

I hope that as planners and architects shape the future of cities, they will abandon the piecemeal, homogenizing and *laissez-faire* approach of past decades and rediscover the comprehensive and purposive art of city design. I hope in the future, architects, planners and urban designers will pay more attention to bridging the disciplines instead of compartmentalizing them. These are essential tasks in the reclamation of a more meaningful and substantial role in the process of building and caring for the environment.

**View of Immigrant's Plaza,
which celebrates Boston's
multi-ethnic heritage.**



**Diagram of high-speed public
transit system, with radial
and circumferential routes
connecting downtown core
with regional subcenters.**

Relocate Air Transport Facilities

Logan Airport, designed for the relatively compact city and hub-centered ground transportation system of the 1940s, is increasingly dysfunctional as the passenger cachement area shifts west and propeller planes have yielded to thundering jets, convoluted flight patterns and congestion.

Logan would be replaced by a new airport 35 miles northwest of downtown on the site of an old military air base, Fort Devon. Existing air facilities at smaller cities in the region, such as Providence, Worcester and Nashua, would be upgraded. All would be interconnected by ground transportation. For people traveling between Boston's core and other city centers, a compact Verti-port (Vertical Take-Off and Landing) on the South Boston waterfront would be readily accessible via ground transport and harbor ferries.

Create Neighborhoods, Social Streets and Lively Centers

The relocation of Logan would free 2,400 acres of publicly owned land. Where the airport is now, 11 New Boston neighborhoods would circle a green mall and stretch from East Boston to Apple Island. East Boston's street grid and scale would continue into the new neighborhoods, and the older community would gain space above the harbor tunnels and below-grade access highways. South of these new neighborhoods are public services and spaces that would serve the wider city and region: harbor-front piers and an institutional and commercial center. An isthmus would lead from the eastern tip of New Boston to Apple Island Sanctuary.

Transportation infrastructure is integral to the scale and livability of the new neighborhoods. Each 18-block community would have an individual identity and focuses on a square with a transit station, meeting places and public institutions. This square, in turn, is linked to adjacent neighborhoods by pedestrian boulevards with all residents living within three blocks of this "heart" and transit station.

Neighborhood population (7,000 to 20,000) and buildings (four to ten stories) would be of a comfortable scale, yet dense enough to support the infrastructure costs.

Restructure the Transit Network

Boston's ground transportation system perpetuates inequity and inefficiency. Public transit is limited to radial corridors while private vehicles enjoy access to both radial and circumferential routes. Transit passengers must make time-consuming downtown transfers to accomplish cross-town and inter-urban trips; drivers face delays at harbor tunnels and bridges.

Radial transit lines would extend to Route 128 and connect with circumferential routes. Increased vehicle capacity at the Boston core, via a third harbor tunnel, would be balanced by high-occupancy vehicle lanes on circumferential highways. For inter-regional passengers, a new high-speed rail line would be developed away from the present congested shoreline corridor. Connections between transportation modes and routes would be catalysts for sub-center development.

Celebrate Boston's Inner Harbor as Common Ground

The Inner Harbor is a common ground for all Bostonians, from ferry passengers to strollers to those who admire skyline and water from windows. The airport relocation and transit restructuring would create a new harbor basin, which would be not a barrier but a vital transit facility for local passenger travel, complementing land-based rapid transit.

New Boston's piers would echo traditional waterfront architecture. These parallel pier buildings would frame skyline vistas and terminate New Boston's axial open spaces. On New Boston's southern shore, multiple pedestrian bridges would connect the pier ends in a continuous esplanade where key focal points link past with present and evoke collective memory in everyday life.

—Antonio DiMambro

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"I don't know why, in fact, it is there that my steps take me, there that I almost always arrive when I walk with no destination in mind, nothing decisive, except for the obscure given: that it is there that the event must occur...."¹

André Breton

"Take out my heart, you will find Paris there."²

Louis Aragon

SURREALIST PARIS

From its very inception, the Surrealist movement created by André Breton, Louis Aragon and their colleagues in Paris of the early 1920s was marked by the young poets' passionate devotion to the city in which they lived and wrote. Paris was the "real hero" of many of the Surrealists' most significant works.³ For Breton and Aragon, Paris was muse, spiritual initiator, seductress, confidante. The city was a "capital of desire" whose forms and rhythms, "deciphered like cryptograms," unveiled to the members of the Surrealist circle their own secret needs and unavowed wishes.⁴ Few movements in Western art and literature have been shaped as decisively by their relationship to a specific urban locus as was Surrealism, and no literary movement in recent times has contributed as many fresh insights to the understanding of the complex, multi-layered nature of urban space.



Shop windows, which often display mysteriously disposed objects, offered rich terrain for aesthetic prospecting.

The city that served as a matrix for the literary, artistic, political and psychological experimentation associated with Surrealism is chronologically removed from us by more than half a century. (Breton, the movement's acknowledged leader and spokesperson, published his *Surrealist Manifesto* in 1924; Louis Aragon's *The Peasant of Paris*, a detailed exploration of what its author called the "metaphysics of [Parisian] places," appeared in 1926.) Urbanistically and spiritually, however, the capitol through which the poets wandered is still astonishingly present in the heart of the sprawling metropolis that is the Paris of today.

Certainly, names have been altered and significant changes have occurred in many of the sites discussed in *Nadja*, Breton's 1928 chronicle of love and esoteric mystery, as well as in the places woven into *The Peasant of Paris*' kaleidoscopic mixture of meticulous observation and lively poetic fantasy; these changes had already begun to unfold, as Breton himself pointed out, while the books were still being written. Yet visitors to the Porte Saint-Denis area or the flea market at Saint-Ouen can still sense the magic and ambiguity that fascinated the Surrealist writers and artists who haunted these places.

Three aspects of the Surrealists' approach to the city will occupy our attention here: the continuity between urban space and the space of the poets' dreams and fantasies, that is, the refusal to posit a rupture between the real and the fantastic in the urban realm; the concept of the streetscape as an oracular text to be deciphered; and the notion of the city as the setting of a mystical/erotic quest.

The City of Dreams

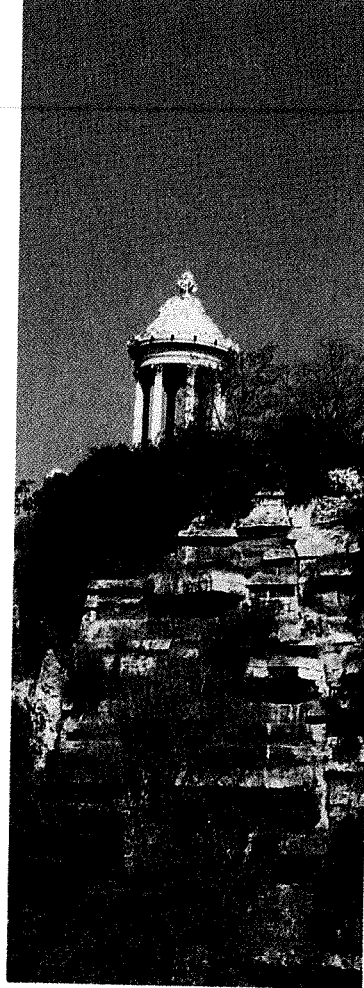
The principal goal of Surrealist activity, according to André Breton, was to find the "supreme point" at which the dream world and the waking realm, poetic imagination and the prose of everyday life would cease to be perceived as antithetical. Paris' urban matrix offered a complex series of spaces and images especially propitious to the abolition of these "false antinomies," to the fusion of fantasy and the real. The streetscape of the capital presented an endless parade of visions—in the form of advertising posters, unexpected juxtapositions of objects, the faces and attitudes of passers-by, surprising architectural details and shop window displays—that opened passages from ordinary reality into the world of the dream.

The oneiric quality that Surrealist poets had admired in the painting of DeChirico revealed itself with equal force in the spaces of the real city in which they lived. Breton and Aragon savored the hallucinatory incongruities of shop displays along less chic segments of the *grands boulevards* (Boulevard Bonne-Nouvelle, Boulevard de Sébastopol and Boulevard Magenta, among others), where glaring signs, exotic and perplexing objects and throngs of people hungry for excitement mingled in an atmosphere of celebration, fermenting desire, or somnambulistic enchantment.

The poets prospected the streets of Paris in search of places where the veil separating ordinary reality from the dream realm had been worn especially thin. Their most electrifying finds rarely coincided with those monuments or parts of the city that would have been considered beautiful by ordinary aesthetic standards.

In fact, the Surrealists showed a marked predilection for extreme forms of kitsch, decaying buildings and quarters neglected by those of sophisticated tastes: the sordid haunts of prostitutes, drug dealers and other outcasts in Montmartre, the dubious commercial area around the Porte Saint-Denis and the Porte Saint-Martin;

The "Temple of Love" in the Parc des Buttes-Chaumont remains one of the principal strategic points of the "capital of desire."



and the rundown working-class and immigrant district of Belleville in the city's northeastern section. Such shadowy and ill-famed places were for the poets the authentic habitat of modern myth and liberation fantasy. "All the fauna of our imaginations and their marine vegetation," wrote Aragon, "lose and perpetuate themselves in the badly lit cones of human activity."⁵

For Aragon, the region of the capital that was most porous to the osmotic filtering of fantastic elements into the real was that of the glass-roofed *passages*, the shopping galleries constructed in the neighborhood of the *grands boulevards* in the nineteenth century. In the ambiguously lit *passages*, Aragon sensed the presence of

"locks badly closed on the infinite. There where the most equivocal activity of the living goes on, the inanimate sometimes gives a reflection of people's most secret motives. Thus, our cities are populated by sphinxes which are seldom recognized."⁶

The window display in a cane shop in the Passage de l'Opéra conjured up for Aragon visions of a sweet-voiced siren from his past, whom he "saw" one evening swimming base-chested in an aquatic medium that had somehow filtered in among the canes, pipes and umbrellas.

The *passages*, those "human aquaria" given over to more or less sordid forms of commerce, offered a high concentration of such sphinx-like visions, which, like images in a dream, provided the onlooker with information about the depths of his own unconscious: "It is his own abysses which, thanks to these faceless monsters, the explorer of the Surrealist city will be able to plumb," Aragon wrote. "The modern light of the unexpected, that is what from now on will hold his attention."⁷

The Surrealists' urban aesthetic was founded on the notion of the *insolite*, the unexpected, the astonishing, the marvelous images and occurrences that surged forth in the teeming, restless matrix of



Ecce homo. A bewildered mannequin contemplates the restless crowds in the Boulevard Rochechouart.

Mechanical voyante near the Place Pigalle: kitsch as a catalyst of mystery.



the city. Just as in painting and poetry, they valued above all else the “spark” produced through the juxtaposition of superficially unrelated objects or images.

Therefore, in the urban landscape, the members of the group searched out spaces and juxtapositions that corresponded to Le Comte de Lautréamont’s aesthetic canon: “As beautiful as the encounter of an umbrella and a sewing machine on an operating table.” Certain areas of the city offered particularly rich terrain for such aesthetic prospecting: the crowded sidewalks of the *grands boulevards* with their flashing electric signs and their endless streams of faces; the *passages*, with their cast of shady characters and the mysteriously disposed objects in their shop windows; the area of the Porte Saint-Denis and the park of the Buttes-Chaumont.

For Breton, one of the most significant points of interpenetration between concrete urban space and the world of dreams and the unconscious was the flea market at Saint-Quen in the capital’s northern suburbs. In *Nadja* and *L’amour fou* (1937), he described at length visits to the flea market and discoveries that he and his Surrealist colleagues made there. In the poet’s words, unwanted or misunder-

stood objects “went to dream” at this gigantic bric-a-brac sale, their “dreaming” could sometimes give—suddenly and with an irresistible authority—tangible form to the unconscious desires of the passer-by.

A mask found at the flea market enabled Alberto Giacometti to complete a sculpture whose final form had been eluding him, and a strangely carved wooden spoon discovered by Breton on the same occasion revealed itself to be the fulfillment of a poetic-erotic fantasy that had been haunting the poet for several months.⁸

Breton felt perfectly justified in analyzing objects discovered at the *marché aux puces* or encounters experienced in the course of a walk through the streets of Paris precisely as if they had been images from a dream, fabricated by his own unconscious. In the Surrealists’ vision of the city, in effect, the barrier between “inner” and “outer,” between objective reality and the subjective play of fantasy and desire, had ceased to function with any sort of rigor: “Paris inscribes in its stones the irrationality of the dream, of which it represents the projection made easy, tangible. So easy, in fact, that one can no longer distinguish



Cane shop, Passage des Panoramas. “The canes swayed softly like seaweed. I had not yet gotten over this enchantment when I noticed that a swimming form was sliding between the different levels of the display.” (Aragon)

The flea market at Saint Ouen.
A mask found at a flea market
enabled sculptor Alberto
Giacometti to complete a pro-
ject whose final form had
been eluding him.



between the dream and the adventure that one has actually lived...Itineraries exist in Paris which trace among and with the objects of daily life (posters, electric signs, decorative elements and construction projects) the paths of the imagination.”⁹

The City as Oracular Text

“Interpreting” objects found at the flea market, chance encounters in the street, or advertising symbols noticed for the first time under peculiar circumstances meant deciphering the sense of these objects, events and images in a specific personal/psychological context. The meanings uncovered would inevitably, the Surrealists believed, emerge as linked to a “difficulty [the viewer/interpreter] is in with himself,”¹⁰ usually relating to love, sexuality, the fate of a relationship. Objects and occurrences encountered “by chance” took on the aspect of personal messages addressed to the viewer by his own unconscious through the medium of the urban landscape.

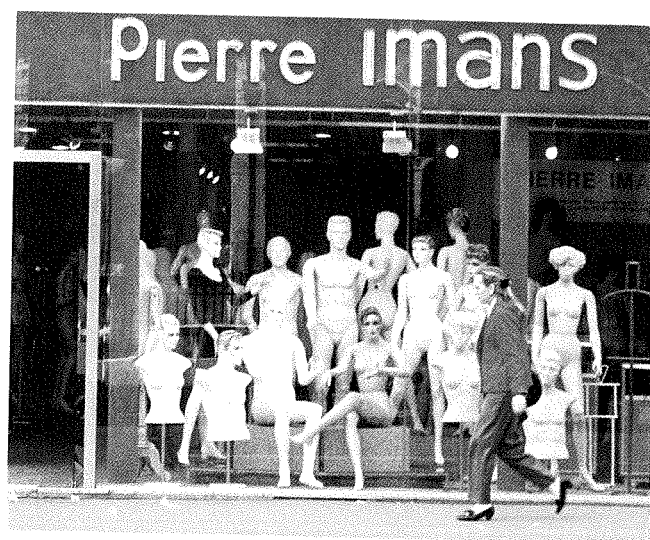
The city became a medium for communicating not only by conventional means, but also in the occult sense. Paris was on oracle, a “voyante” who, through gestures, images, words and seemingly fortuitous encounters, announced to the poets

information concerning their own destinies.

Philippe Soupault, a member of the Surrealist circle who collaborated in Breton’s early experiments in the techniques of automatic writing, explored this occult side of the city in his novel *The Last Nights of Paris* (1928).

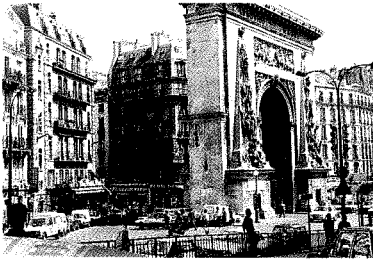
Soupault explained how at crucial moments Paris “called” to him, “demanded his attention.” He described his rapture when he realized that, luring him into one of her hidden corners, the city had decided to “trust him with a new secret.”¹¹ As the title of this book suggests, Soupault’s Paris was a nocturnal entity, coming to life only under cover of darkness. The secret spaces whose perplexing and disconcerting powers awakened him in the darkness included the area of the Champs-Élysées near the Petit Palais, where specialized prostitutes plied their trade, and the *quais* and bridges along the Seine: places of loneliness, passion and furtive movement to which the river communicated something of its own liquid mystery.

Even such an eminently “respectable” and rational space as the courtyard of the Institut de France on the Quai de Conti could become the theater of nocturnal rituals that took on a strongly occult character and in which Paris herself



The “mystery and melancholy” (sometimes ludicrous and sometimes menacing) that haunted the canvases of De Chirico and Max Ernst can still be encountered in the streets of Paris.

The area of the Porte Saint-Denis was Andre Breton's favorite Parisian quarter. He described the gate itself as "very beautiful and very useless."



Passage du Prado. One of Louis Aragon's "human aquaria."



seemed to emerge as playing the principal role: "The Paris that I had thought I knew, but whose sexuality and mystery I had not understood, Paris misunderstood but then found again, Paris with her breath and her gestures, Paris with her supple, silent night."¹²

Breton, who was an adept of the tarot and frequently consulted mediums and *voyantes*, experienced the city itself as a complex network of occult symbols carrying a multiplicity of messages. Human mediums and oracles had their places within a larger oracular text, which was the substance of the city. Thus in *Nadja*, the prison of the Conciergerie inspired Breton's heroine with visions of a previous incarnation, and the poet reported that Nadja regularly consulted certain Parisian statues, such as the bust of Henri Bècque in the Place Villiers, to obtain their opinions on how best to resolve her personal dilemmas.

For Breton and his companions, the proper functioning of the esoteric code was less dependent on the "authenticity" of the places, objects and personages involved than on the psychological "availability" and openness of the person interpreting the signs. According to Surrealist principles, not only were kitsch and incongruity not

barriers to contact with the mysterious dimensions of existence, but by bending the structures of ordinary aesthetic perception, they actually facilitated such magical contacts.

Some of the Parisian places in which the poets experienced most readily the presence of the mystifyingly and enchantingly *other* (for example Aragon's beloved Passage de l'Opera or the Théâtre des Deux Masques, which Breton frequented in Montmartre) have long since become casualties of urban progress. However, a casual stroll up the Boulevard de Clichy from the Place Clichy to Pigalle, or along the Boulevard de Magenta between the Place de la République and the Gare de l'Est, would reveal that Paris retains its ability to deploy kitsch and eclectic oddity as an invitation into the realm of mystery, paradox and wonder.

The Mystical Quest

Disponibilité, total physical, intellectual and emotional receptivity, was the essential characteristic of the Surrealists' approach to the urban environment. The poets opened themselves consciously to all of the city, to its incongruities and contradictions, to its undeniable ugliness as well as to its picturesque and pleasant aspects, asking only that it continue to

astonish them. And in this, Paris never failed.

The Paris of Breton and Aragon was a city that unfolded itself at a walking pace, at the rhythm of the poetic *flâneur* patient enough to search out and savor its intimate details. Every walk along the boulevards or through the winding streets of Montmartre, in the neighborhood around Breton's home in the Rue Fontaine, became a voyage of discovery, an opportunity to gain fresh insights into that "metaphysics of places," which, in Aragon's words, nourished the dreams of children and poets.¹³

Under these conditions, the Surrealists' famous "*promenades*" took on the character of pilgrimages among the unforeseen and ephemeral shrines of the marvelous, of a quest, constantly renewed and different each time, for those objects, persons and places that could catalyze a penetration into the dimension of myth and mystery. But the mystery that was the object of the poets' quest remained anchored in the weave of the tangible urban fabric. "The quest in the setting of city appears clearly religious in character;...[however, in the Surrealists' view] one does not decipher the universe by turning away from appearances, but rather by scrutinizing them intensively. Read right to the end, they



Hanging bridge in the Parc des Buttes-Chaumont, the entirely artificial bucolic enclave created by the Baron Haussmann in northeastern Paris. "The bridge is suspended. Suspended from your lips, Ladies. One cannot be more gallant. One cannot be more gallant than a suspended bridge." (Aragon)

would yield the key to reality.”¹⁴ Aragon insisted: “There is no knowledge except of the particular. There is no poetry except of the concrete.”¹⁵

The poets’ urban mysticism retained a strongly erotic element. It was the search for and the promise of love that, more than any other factor, oriented Breton and Aragon’s wanderings through the streets of Paris. It hardly seems surprising, then, that one of the richest territories for their explorations should have been the Parc des Buttes-Chaumont in the capital’s nineteenth *arrondissement*, crowned with its neo-classical “temple of love,” and, at night, filled to overflowing with couples in various stages of amorous abandon.

“Let us walk through this decor of desires,” Aragon wrote in *The Peasant of Paris*; “In this setting full of criminal thoughts and imaginary spasms. Perhaps by the betrayal of a gesture or a sigh, we will be able to understand what links these sensitive phantoms to the touching life of the trembling bushes, to the blue gravel which crunches beneath our feet.”¹⁶

Erotic energies were, for the poets, tied directly to the tangible phenomena of the urban setting: the shrubs and gravel and eccentric architecture of the Parc des Buttes-

Chaumont, the cafés of Montmartre, the solitary elegance and mystery of the Tour Saint-Jacques, in which André Breton sensed a benevolent guiding presence during a late-night walk with a newfound love.¹⁷ For Surrealists, Paris itself became an erotic object, shot through with currents of desire: “The bizarre, the strange, the divine encounter, hope, mad hope...all these ideas announce that the city is to be explored, caressed, penetrated” like a lover’s body, “and that, like such a body, the city possesses its hollows and its hot points.”¹⁸

Conclusion

The Paris of the Surrealists was a realm in which dream and concrete reality ceased to oppose one another and instead fused into a unity in which the most astonishing visions, events and encounters became not only conceivable, but necessary and inevitable. In oneiric spaces such as the glass-roofed *passages* and the flea market at Saint-Ouen, the city offered signs and messages that the poets believed they could interpret just as they did the dream-symbols of their own unconscious. They looked at the tangible fabric of the urban environment as an oracular text in which occult meanings were to be sought out and deciphered. Ultimately, for Breton and Aragon, Paris was the setting of a mystical quest tirelessly pursued though the streets, squares, *quais*, parks and mysterious trysting-places and guided by an attitude of physical and mental *disponibilité*. Love in its most exalted forms was the ultimate aim of the poets’ quest, and the force of their desire turned the city itself into an object of erotic passion.

The Surrealists were resolutely faithful to the principle of taking a passionate rather than a rational and distanced approach to the urban world. For them, the one thing that the city could never be was an object of disinterested,

clinical examination. Breton, Aragon and Soupault felt themselves to be personally concerned, directly solicited by the events and images which proliferated in the urban landscape around them, even those events and images which to other eyes might have appeared ugly or trivial.

Whatever the ultimate value and sincerity of the Surrealists’ esoteric research, the fact remains that half a century before modern investigations into architectural semiotics, they explicitly approached the urban environment as a tissue of signs to be interpreted on diverse levels: social, political, affective and occult. Perhaps still more important they viewed the city as an organic, living text whose multiple and constantly changing meanings could never be exhausted, reduced to a simple formula, or definitively analyzed and catalogued. The “text” of Surrealist Paris remained open at all moments to fresh and unexpected images, new surges of poetic/esoteric inspiration.

In this sense, far from constituting a set of ideas limited in their applicability to a single historical urban context, the vision of the city developed by the Surrealists in the Paris of the ’20s and ’30s would seem to suggest insights

for an approach to other urban situations, as well.

The poets' attitude towards the city was above all one of careful and respected attention to nuance and detail, especially where such detail became puzzling and enigmatic, seeming to resist tidy classification. Their particular form of attention was at the same time both a joyful participation in the complex and exhilarating life of the city they loved and a delight in, rather than a refusal of, complexity, mystery, paradox and passion as fundamental categories of urban experience.

Notes

1. André Breton, *Nadja* (Paris: Gallimard, 1964), p. 38.
2. Louis Aragon, "Le paysan de Paris chante," in *L'oeuvre poétique, tome X: 1943-1945* (Paris: Livre Club Diderot, 1979), p. 87.
3. Marie-Claire Bancquart, *Paris des surréalistes* (Paris: Seghers, 1973), p. 104.
4. Marie-Claire Bancquart, "Paris, capitale du désir," *Magazine littéraire* no. 254 (1988), p. 38.
5. Louis Aragon, *Le paysan de Paris* (Paris: Gallimard, 1979), p. 20.
6. Aragon, *Le paysan*, p. 20.
7. *Ibid*, p. 20.
8. André Breton, *L'amour fou* (Paris: Gallimard, 1987), pp. 41 ff.
9. Bancquart, *Paris des surréalistes*, p. 72.
10. Breton, *L'amour fou*, p. 16.
11. Philippe Soupault, *Les dernières nuits de Paris* (Paris: J'ai lu, 1982), pp. 44, 38.
12. Soupault, p. 112.
13. Aragon, *Le paysan*, pp. 19-20.
14. Bancquart, *Paris des surréalistes*, p. 74.
15. Aragon, *Le paysan*, p. 245.
16. Aragon, *Le paysan*, p. 178.
17. Breton, *L'amour fou*, p. 50 ff.
18. Pierre Sansot, *Poétique de la ville* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1984), p. 57.

Social Concern and Architectural Discourse

The many failures of social design and the oppressive formalism of some planning in the modernist era are cited as justifications for the abandonment of social concern in architectural discourse. But architecture is inextricably linked to social institutions, and it is unhealthy to ignore the responsibilities of this bond, just as it would be unhealthy to disparage untrammelled flights of imagination and invention.

There was already a social component in the architectural thought of the earliest Renaissance theorists. In discussing the design of cities, Alberti, Francesco di Giorgio, Filarete and Serlio were concerned primarily with the psychological and physical well-being of the privileged classes and to that end advised zoning according to class and trade. On the whole, however, the housing proposed by these theorists represented an improvement over what was being designed for every class.

There were revealing instances of ameliorative government action based on social policy even before the era of theorists. In the fourteenth century the Venetian Senate provided mass housing near the shipyards for retired sailors. That development, called the *Marinezza*, was livable enough to function to the present day. A century later there were similar interventions in Ferrara (where, exceptionally, a new town was constructed following an architect's design), for indigent widows. In Augsburg, a private developer, the Fugger bank, created a lower-income neighborhood.

Similar examples could be cited in the course of the following centuries of government by aristocrats, kings and emperors. The Enlightenment and the beginnings of the Industrial Revolution brought significant change in the social attitude of architectural and urban theorists. The ideal city of Ledoux was influenced by egalitarian political philosophy and placed citizens not by their social rank but by their occupation. A generation later, reacting to the desperate overcrowding and the misery of the poor in the industrial megalopolis, Pugin also proposed a utopian amelioration in terms of building

This paper was originally prepared for a symposium on the occasion of the retirement of Jesse Reichel, a professor at the University of California, Berkeley architecture department.

types, in this case modeled on the forms and institutions of the supposedly idyllic Middle Ages. Fourier evaded the new urban problems by setting up Phalansteries in the country where, presumably, all classes would be treated alike. But the later nineteenth century anticipated the present situation by creating the one-class garden city as well as the aestheticized City Beautiful.

In the premodern period the accommodation of architecture and theory to the institutions and functions of society usually took the form of representation or symbolic communication. A building functioned primarily by advertising the political and economic status and intellectual interests of a client, and to this end, clients were prepared to suffer inconvenience and discomfort. This sort of architecture was still being designed in this country up to World War II.

Early in this century a competing concept of function emerged, stimulated by the growing prestige of technology and machinery. When I was in school we were encouraged to believe that it was strictly behavioral and utilitarian, seeking only efficiency and convenience. We later saw that it was also a bid for a new kind of representation, which should communicate egalitarian ideals and ethical principles of a rather Puritan sort, such as Purity, Honesty and Cleanliness. Much of the confusion that followed in the discussion of the social role of architecture derived from an unwillingness to recognize that the functionalism of utility did not drive out the functionalism of representation.

Our generation first became aware of contemporary architecture at a moment when its social role was a burning issue. It was a few years before World War II—not long after Hitchcock and Johnson, in their book of 1932, introduced Americans to what they called the International Style. That book represented the so-called modern movement not in its social context but in the typical formalist terms of the art criticism of the time. Formalist criticism isolated the work of art from other aspects of life and history and focused on the character and interaction of spaces, planes, rhythms and so forth. The significant context in which any particular work of art was to be understood was exclusively one of other comparable works. The social relevance of all the architecture discussed was acknowledged only in slighting references to some of the workers' housing of the previous decade.

Yet social concern was in the foreground of European discussions of architecture, encouraged by socialist governments which made it possible for architects again to build for the working and lower middle classes as well as for the rich. Even in America, where there has always been reluctance to deal with social and political implications of design, Lewis Mumford was insistently pointing them out in his historical and critical writings. Le Corbusier and other modernist associates formed the *Congrès Internationale de l'Architecture Moderne* (CIAM) in the late 1920s to create an ongoing forum of leading architects concerned with the interaction of architectural and urban design and with mass housing. The social thrust of this aspect of contemporary architecture became more apparent in writings of the 1940s, notably in the Giedion's *Space-Time and Architecture* and Pevsner's *Pioneers of Modern Design*, which were required reading in every architectural school in the country until the early 1960s.

Social awareness manifested itself in two distinct ways. The first, which is usually called "functionalism," was concerned with redesigning traditional building types so that they would conform better with the behavioral patterns of users. Typical examples would be the design of efficient kitchens with easy access to dining areas, Wright's Usonian houses built without basements on flat slabs with radiant heating, or Le Corbusier's high-rise structures opened at ground level by *pilotis*. The second was concerned with the pressing urban problems of the modern super-city: overall urban design in the tradition of the Renaissance makers of ideal cities, solutions for low-cost and low-income housing and transportation. Let's call these two "Liberation" and "Amelioration."

What excited us students was the realization that the struggle of the new architecture for recognition could be associated with efforts to realize a social order of increased equality and freedom. There really was a great gap between the values and manners of the generation of Edwardians and Teddy Roosevelt and those of the postwar period. Modern architecture proposed an environment that gave shape to the desire to escape the era of stuffiness and class segregation. It offered a physical liberation that complemented the psychic liberation of a new generation. In criticisms of modernism today, the fact of liberation is forgotten because it was so successful. Today it seems that people must always have had houses and work

places accommodated to modern life, and we hear only of those aspects of modern design that failed to liberate or created new confinements.

It was not just the early masters who were interested in amelioration. After World War II, a younger group of architects broke away from the CIAM to form Team Ten because they found their elders too utopian and because there were fewer socialist governments to support social programs. They found ways to work with individual industrialists, local communities and even labor unions to realize housing and settlements. And in the 1960s, especially in this country, the anti-establishment spirit spawned advocacy design. In its most extreme form, advocacy extended even to assigning the task of determining not only a project's program but also its architectural design to user-architect teams. That led to some pretty incoherent buildings exhibiting a complexity and contradiction of which Venturi never dreamed.

The '60s constituted a watershed in the story of social concern in architecture. This country had never given wide support to government enterprise, and many urban renewal schemes failed catastrophically to improve the lives of poor people. Though the fault was primarily in the structure of our society and in inadequate social and political planning, the failure discredited the architectural concepts that had given shape to the projects.

Toward the end of the decade, community institutions, especially universities, gradually withdrew from building programs. Architectural commissions began to come primarily from large corporate clients, developers and an occasional millionaire homebuilder. The art museum was the paradigm of the new age—what star architect can you name who has not designed at least one art museum? Whether they are nominally public or private, American museums are controlled by the same dollar and yen elite as the corporations, an elite that is presently prepared to spend as much on a single work of art as on the museum in which it will be housed. In the absence of the forces that encouraged amelioration in earlier decades, the governments, communities and concerned and wealthy individuals, the concept lost its appeal.

Not only were the social aims of modern architecture subverted at this time: the style itself was kidnapped and neutered by corporate wealth. The bland glass box of innumerable

skyscrapers transformed the innovations of the earlier twentieth century into a fashionable form without meaning. Moreover, the ideals of modernism were blamed for the travesties committed in its name.

Inevitably some kind of post-modernism would emerge to counter this trend. But what kind? There was a choice between seeking to reinvest architecture with a new, independent prospect of its significance in society, and offering to the corporate world a new and less bland image. The latter prevailed. Venturi, who may have intended to choose the higher path in his book *Complexity and Contradiction*, later produced with his partners *Learning from Las Vegas*, a primer for collaborating with and encouraging corporate image makers.

I haven't seen many instances of the first option. One, to stay with the written word, would be Aldo Rossi's *Architecture of the City* and other essays, which accept the improbability of changing the world through architecture and look to evolution rather than revolution.

Rossi suggested that architecture should work out of the underlying forms of the city's past, the types of building and of building groups, to address society through a revivifying of its memories and continuities. This doesn't define any practical design solutions but it does give the designer a responsibility more communal and more exalting than the appeal to individual clients. The problem is that it is applicable mainly to building in European environments with long histories rather than in a young country like ours.

Modernist amelioration was dismissed as the naive or authoritarian effort of architects to take on tasks that either belong to social agencies or are irrelevant. The attack came from two quarters, right and left. The right, identified with writings by Peter Blake, Charles Jencks, Denise Scott Brown and Robert A.M. Stern, proposed that true social responsibility is realized by architecture that conveys humanist values. It is hard to argue with platitudes that are not backed up by any serious articulation of principles. The impression was that an Ionic column, an oculus or a pitched roof—all of which are irrelevant to the experience of the average modern person—is a humanist value regardless of how it is used.

The attack from the left was represented by Manfredo Tafuri's *Architecture and Utopia*, which has been misinterpreted by its miserable English translation. His argument is that in a late

capitalist environment, social amelioration is inherently contradictory because the efforts could be realized only by the powerful forces that cause the oppressive conditions requiring amelioration. Socially oriented architecture is utopian, reinforcing the contradictions of present-day Western society by proposing cosmetic improvements that make it supportable. His answer is essentially to give up the effort so long as we remain in the present political and social condition. We have been offered the choice between fuzzy disregard of the social dimension and paralysis of imagination.

The neglect in current discourse of the social implications of architecture is in sharp contrast to the evolution of architectural history since the modernist period, and this contrast is a sign of disarray in our intellectual life. Architectural history in the course of the 35 years that I have been practicing it has moved steadily toward the interpretation of the architecture of past times in terms of social, political and economic forces. The constructed formalism of Hitchcock and Johnson's 1932 book, which focused on individual and period style evolving in an autonomous architectural culture, was characteristic of both the historical and critical stance of the time.

The current approach to historical interpretation is the outcome of a remarkable flowering of ideas in Europe during the 1960s and 1970s, involving structuralism and its analog, semiology, the *Annales* group of historians in France, and neo-Marxism, notably that of the Frankfurt school.

The thrust of this diverse development was to focus attention on the synchronic study of events or buildings in the light of the complexity of ideas and the social, economic and political conditions of their moments, rather than to see them in diachronic terms, as part of a sequence of like occurrences or buildings. Further, the neo-Marxist achievement was not simply to reveal the significance of the material economic base supporting the superstructure of cultural activity, but to widen the sphere of ideological criticism. Architectural works might be seen in terms of the ways in which they fulfilled not only the stated needs of the client or the program, but also those ideological needs that were subliminal, unconscious and so intimately tied to the needs of the social and class structure that only an outsider, like a historian or anthropologist, could perceive them. This made it possible to subject the program itself, as well as the building design, to criticism.

It seems paradoxical that criticism and the writings of architects have moved away from references to the societal contexts while historians—not to speak of psychiatrists and anthropologists—have been moving toward them. We are all subject to the same intellectual influences and we are all addressing the built environment. The fact that designers, now that they are employing motives from the past, have become much more sympathetic to history than they were at the end of the modernist period ought to make for a community of outlook. But history as it is seen in a postmodern mode is not the same as ours: ours is rather one of free-floating motives unrooted in their culture, while historians have become increasingly interested in roots.

But in one sense the new history is isolated from, and the new architecture is attuned to, a present-day society. In politics there has been a retreat from efforts to define and to deal in modern ways with major social deficiencies, such as housing, health care and racial and sexual inequities. The socialist parties abroad and the left at home are in disarray; all of the major Western governments are now headed by leaders suspicious of social programs and oriented to individual entrepreneurial initiative. The condition is analogous to the abandonment in architecture of societal programming and the return to a focus on the individual client.

We ought, however, to be able to come together in support of an architecture able to transform, as great architecture has done in earlier centuries, those aspects of the architecture of the past that arouse a response and stimulate the imagination today. This means seeking a deeper knowledge of the forces that formed past architecture and a committed search for the forms that embody our communal aspirations today.

Can we expect architects to take on problems that no one is putting before them? Yes. Le Corbusier's Citrohan house or Ville Radieuse and Wright's Usonian house were conceived not on commission but as a way of articulating ideas about the accommodation of modern life. It was an ethical dimension to their careers, an effort to serve not simply the fortuitous client but the whole of humanity, that is less in evidence today.

Architects, as specialists of the manmade physical environment, have the opportunity and responsibility to suggest solutions that under more hospitable political conditions could ultimately stimulate further experiment in an abandoned area.

BROADWAY

AND

COLUMBUS

Columbus Avenue interrupts the orthogonal logic of San Francisco's grid. At Broadway this disruption takes on a unique identity: the jumbled mixing point of districts that are vigorously diverse.

In reading this intersection as a place unto itself, how do we unscramble all the messages coming at us? How do we attend to one conversation when three others are within earshot?

As you exit the peculiar inner-city tunnel on Broadway, driving toward downtown, you see before you, flickering in the exhaust fumes, a dazzling oasis of lights and color. Layers of open shops and restaurants spill their contents out onto the sidewalk. The cityscape is flooded to the knees with waves of cars and people.

Then, you see her—first in line among a row of impressive signs, a long and stringy figure that stretches three stories of a building. She leads you on with her blinking beacons—as you approach she looms before you, a monster with her awkward body and evil expression; she stares you down. In the distance you see the freeway, a bridge arching its spine into the blue hills across the Bay, and, once the light turns green, you make for your getaway.

The intersection of Columbus and Broadway exists as both path and destination. For through-traffic it is the junction of major arteries: another set of stop lights with special potential for delay. The trajectories of these wide streets are resolute. Distances along them are foreshortened by views of the Bay Bridge and of office towers downtown, both beckoning destinations.

To experience this place on foot is quite a different matter. The intersection is less a crossing of paths than it is a bringing together of corners. Because the intersection is hourglass shaped, its narrow waist seems to focus like a lens, drawing together disparate interests and activities on all sides: Chinatown, Italian Quarter, Red Light District and Downtown Fringe. Each character hugs the perimeter of a block, and not one street maintains a consistent identity across the common ground between. The diagonal traverse

Larrisa Bilaniuk

Mallory Cusenbury

Christopher MacDonald

Kevin Powell

Ted Pratt



As you travel along Broadway,
the effigy of Carol Doda stares
you down and leads you on.

Photo by Larrisa Bilaniuk.

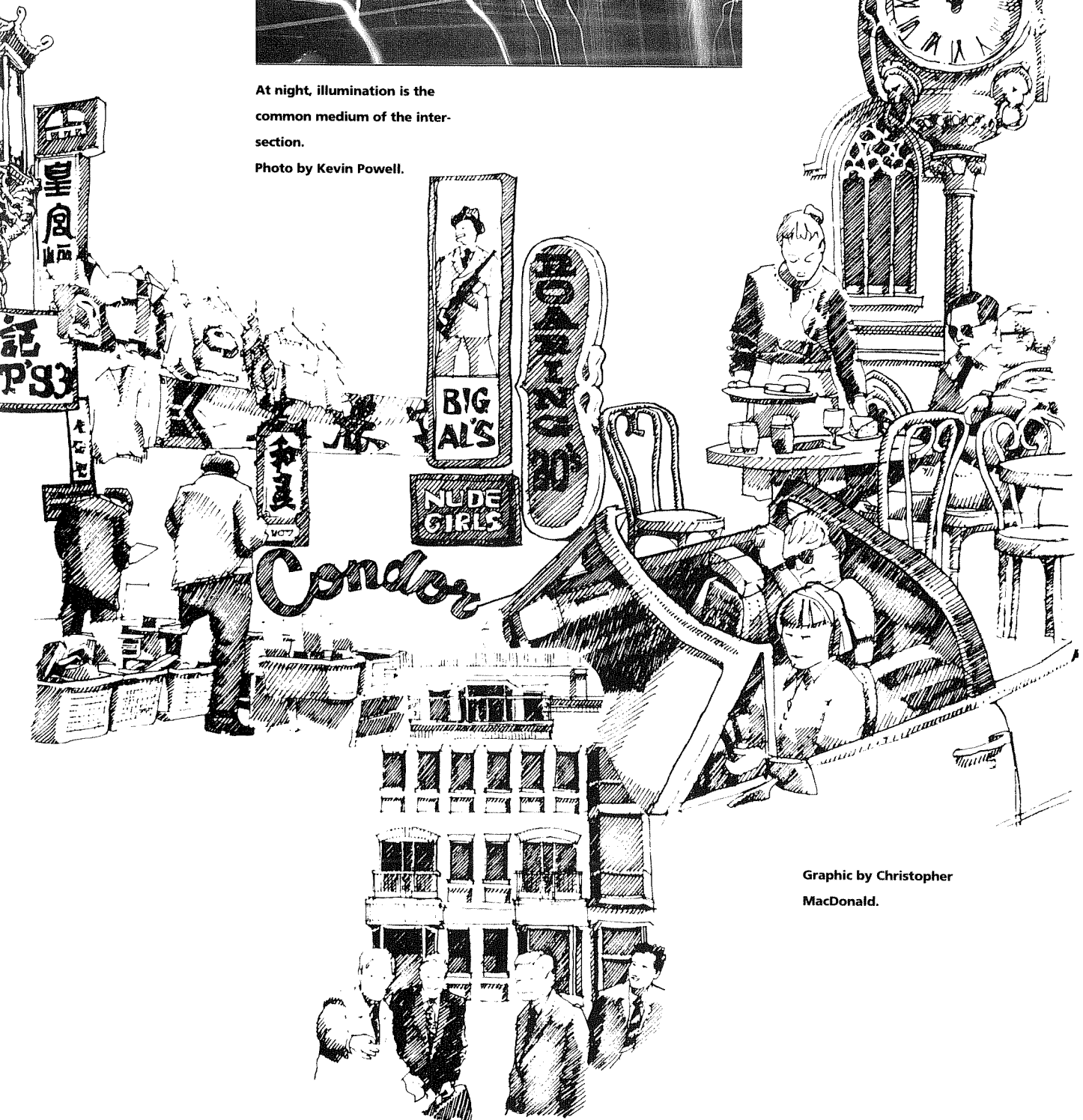
BROADWAY

Graphic by Christopher
MacDonald.



At night, illumination is the common medium of the intersection.

Photo by Kevin Powell.



Graphic by Christopher MacDonald.

of open space and traffic intervenes. It would be simplistic to categorize this place in exclusive terms. Experience refutes the neatly quartered intersection in favor of more complex order.

At night everything shifts. Bright signs and luminous windows ally to form a new emphatic cadence along the street. Illumination becomes the common medium of the intersection, unifying the diverse personalities through a common presentation.

Containment gives way to drama. The lighted windows and signs have an impact that upstages the buildings. Street walls, which delimit the area by day, dissolve. The intensity of lighting calls attention to detailed activities, framing them like a proscenium. The person standing at the automatic teller machine or at the newsstand is standing in a frame of light, and is an integral part of the overall performance. A steady parade of automobile headlights adds to the overall drama, while traffic lights lean out across the oblique angle of Columbus Avenue and seem to be signaling randomly.

Yet, moving between spotlights, you cannot avert your eyes from the darkness. Derelict alleys and abandoned doorways add gravity to the celebration. Variety and its choices take on a darker dimension as the back street is severed from the carnival.

Climbing up out of downtown, heading west on Columbus Avenue, you approach the intersection at the slow pace of late afternoon traffic. It is dusk, and there is activity everywhere. People in cafes reciprocate your scrutiny, chefs prepare food in kitchens exposed to the street, merchants clear their wares from the sidewalk after another day of business. On one corner there is a window display with feminist literature, books on AIDS and socialist politics and small press publications of local authors. Across the street, almost as a

rebuttal, the strip joints hit the street with the pornographic point of view, the barkers striking deals with passers-by.

A giant mural wraps around the apex of Columbus and Broadway. It provides a lexicon for the whole district. Of course it gives the conventional interpretation, somewhat dated now, of Telegraph Hill as an Adriatic fishing village. Taken at face value, the mural's capacity to structure the experience of North Beach seems limited. Its images are unsophisticated and probably biased. Only the most naive tourist would find the message satisfying or genuinely informative.

Yet this tableau speaks powerfully about local order. The structure of Columbus and Broadway is that of a collage. There are no clear boundaries here. Overlayerings and untidy juxtapositions abound. A few local entities prevail as rallying points for scattered allegiances: Molinari's deli represents the remnants of an Italian community, Carol Doda's effigy gathers behind it a scruffy retinue of bars and porn shops, and City Lights bookstore harbors the memory of the Beat Generation. Around all these a casual sifting or sorting of elements occurs, but the parts never quite coalesce.

We can also observe the picture running off the frame in all directions. The single aperture is simply too small to encompass all this. But neither is it fixed. Turning the frame of the intersection this way or that, we are able to bring one set of images into focus and relegate others to the periphery.

One imagines the early days: a traveler arriving at William Squire Clark's Wharf, the "Stone Pier," and walking westward, up the steep hill of Broadway, past boarding houses and saloons, past the Broadway Primary School, past the city's first synagogue, past the Broadway



A mural wraps around the apex of Broadway and Columbus...



...and permits a voyeurism that is reciprocal between street and apartment above.
Photo by Larrisa Bilaniuk.

*German Methodist Episcopal Church, past the Broadway Jail, and, turning right onto Montgomery Avenue (now Columbus Avenue), heading for a plateau with a ragged park, later named Washington Square. Or perhaps the traveler would turn left at Kearny, a block before Montgomery Avenue, and head one block south to the Barbary Coast, that block of Pacific Avenue between Kearny and Grant that provided the liberal entertainment described in Herbert Asbury's *The Barbary Coast* and portrayed in the movie *San Francisco*.*

Wearing blinders of purpose as we move, we catch the cues provided for a swift passage from goal to goal. Our understanding of "place" stops short of

the street-wall at colorful, Plexiglass masks. These signs are fast food for thought. They allow us to negotiate daily life as though in a gaseous chamber of floating meanings—architecture for the few glances we may afford at 30 miles per hour.

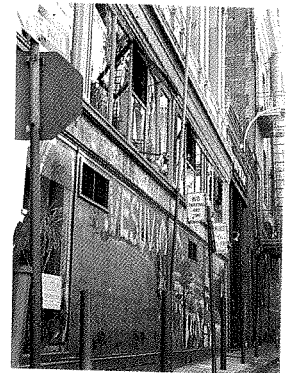
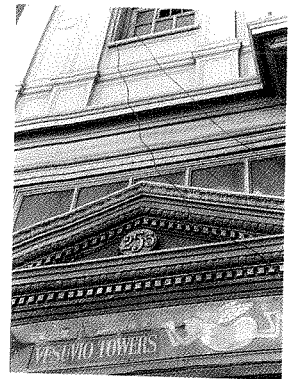
Whole facades are rendered as billboards, cropped, filtered and labeled by our appetite for immediate consumption. Most clearly, the mural at the corner provokes these dual interpretations of surface: masonry hotel and painted image. Both occupy the same skin yet make no accommodations for each other. Windows cut uneasy fragments from the collage: the painting treats built form as a single canvas. Perhaps we see the building better now that it is obscured.

Signs stripped of their meaning become simply architecture. To western eyes, the dense, red, green and yellow calligraphy of Chinatown reveals only a rich embroidery of ornament. Strip joint emblems sized to be seen from afar become hovering canopies for the pedestrian.

Here, penetrating the northeast recesses of the corner, the back room of a bar. A strip parlor acrid with ample disinfectant. A woman bends ninety degrees from the waist and shakes; she is on a carpeted platform surrounded on three sides by damaged tables and mostly empty chairs. She is wearing high beeled shoes, some makeup, and a wig of dyed blond hair. She is naked to the eye, but nude to the imagination. Here, two lonely men in jacket and tie and career-cut hair are red and purple in the shadows. Silent, but one does not have to listen hard to hear their howl. Up the street I have just seen a wizened Chinese man chop foreign roots, exhort shopping women and kick a ragged cat, all this simultaneous.

Voyeurism here is both institutionalized (night clubs and fish bowl cafes) and spontaneous (overheard conversations and upper-story residential windows). It nurtures an exploration of the possibilities of your own life by allowing you to explore those of other people. Because you can visually penetrate the building walls so easily, so frequently, it is easy to imagine their internal workings and to see the accretions of individuated life.

This voyeurism is reciprocal between street and apartment above. The windows of residential hotels become two-way apertures through which domestic life is framed for public scrutiny and street life is staged for the residents. There is little connec-



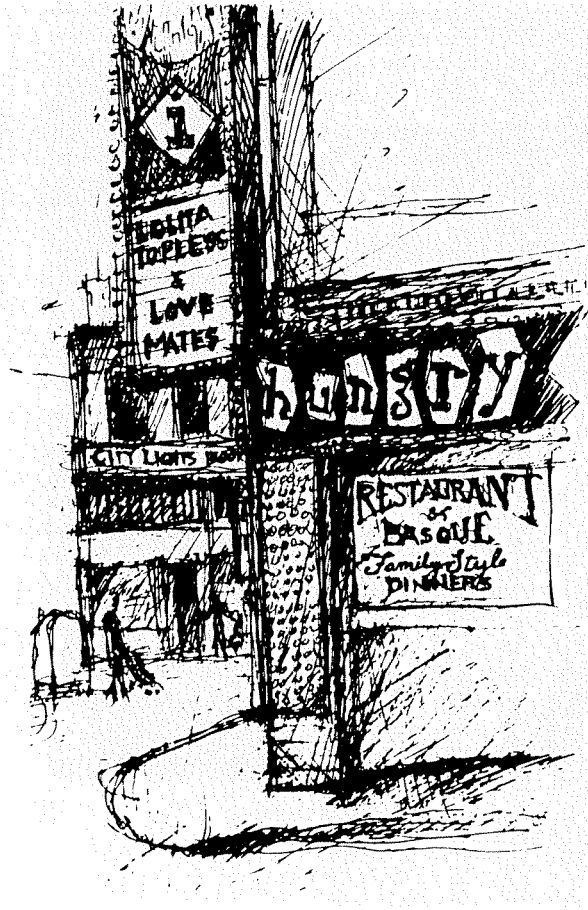
Overlays and untidy juxtapositions abound; the parts never quite seem to coalesce.

Photos by Larrisa Bilaniuk.



The colorful calligraphy of Chinatown provides a rich embroidery.

Photo by Larrisa Bilaniuk.



tion between individuals and address—entrances to the residential hotels are surreptitiously slipped between business fronts, lobbies are hidden from view one story above the street—which provides the anonymity needed to keep the show uninhibited.

On the street, the vigor of commerce brings this exploration into the realm of the physical: the voyeur becomes the participant. The way that businesses present themselves is loud, engaging and exhibitionistic.

*My sympathies are with the cod, floating
fin-to-fin in just enough soupy water.
Standing before the Hong Kong Market,
I can't help smiling at our encounter.
Destined for someone's dinner, no two fish
seem quite the same, while each draws
breath and maybe returns a critical gaze.*

All rituals confer or confirm membership; baptisms especially so. Name-giving separates object from context but can also consign it to a group or class. In this way, to name something expresses and facilitates possession.

When a street name connotes possession, placing the name on a map elevates the connotation to a seemingly incontrovertible fact. Reality is often less conclusive. Jack Kerouac Lane separates Vesuvio's Bar from City Lights but the spectacle of drunken poets is left to the imagination. Instead the Chinese-American museum quietly takes up residence.

Street processions express ritual ownership. The Columbus Day Parade, an Asian funeral cortege, or a rowdy, spontaneous assembly of football fans; all pass this way. Their presence is intense, enhanced by slogans, anthems, uniforms and banners. Yet ritual possession is fleeting. Weekday traffic neither anticipates nor recalls these celebrations.

Place names and street festivals tolerate inclusion. These appropriations are permissive; ownership remains in contention despite an undiluted sense of participation and belonging.

Columbus and Broadway challenges the common perception of America: the intersection is not a melting pot. Instead, it is like a shuffled deck of cards, where each element retains its own identity no matter what lies next to it.

*Seeking to understand Columbus and
Broadway you look for a handle, some-
thing to help you grasp the thing as a
whole, to help you "make sense," to bring
into immediate focus what it is that makes
this corner a place, probably the most
memorable intersection in San Francisco.*



Signs stripped of their meaning
become architecture.
Photo by Larrisa Bilaniuk.



*A metaphor from Faraggi comes to mind.
I say to you, "the corner resembles the
chaos of violent linen." You tilt your head,
squint your eyes. I imagine you under-
stand something of what I mean.*

Graphic by Christopher
MacDonald.

TILTED ARC: SETBACK FOR PUBLIC ART?

New York—Finally, *Tilted Arc* was taken down. The country's most notorious piece of public art was carted off in the dead of night on the Ides of March.

Richard Serra's sculpture, a 120-foot-long, 12-foot-high, curved piece of rusting steel that sliced across a plaza outside the Jacob Javits Federal Building, had been controversial ever since it was installed in 1981 as part of the federal government's Art-in-Architecture program.

By challenging the landscape of the plaza and the architecture of the buildings around it, *Tilted Arc* attempted to bully people into an awareness of their built environment. But the sculpture eventually took on a more profound meaning: it became a lightning rod for the debate about the role of art in the public realm. (Unlike the recent debate over the Robert Mapplethorpe photography exhibit, the debate focused not on the question of public funding for art, but on the implications of putting art in a public place.)

For years arguments resonated in public hearings, court briefs, op-ed articles and impromptu discussions at the sculpture itself: How to strike a balance between moral imperative of the artist to exercise his or her creativity and the wishes of the public? Just who is the "public"—the people whose daily environment is transformed by the art work; the amorphous community at large, who might experience the art work once or twice; or art experts? The questions tran-

scended the environmental issues Serra raised about the Javits building plaza, yet the sculpture always stood as a reference point.

Those who use the plaza say *Tilted Arc*'s point had been made and it was time for the sculpture to come down. Others note *Tilted Arc*'s impact will be long lasting: public agencies are now more likely to involve the communities they serve in selecting artists and reviewing the designs of public art.

Nevertheless, the removal seems a loss. Fundamental questions about the nature and responsibility of public art were sidestepped, not resolved. Without Serra's aggressive work to prod us, these questions will be much less vivid and we will be less inclined to confront them.

PAPAGO FREEWAY'S SILVER LINING

Phoenix—Papago Freeway met bitter opposition when proposed here in the 1960s, as did countless other freeways across the country. The elevated highway would have blocked views of the Phoenix Mountains in the northeast section of the city, and the cars coursing along it would have been an ever-present, all-too-visible reminder of the noise and air pollution that were raining on the city. Phoenicians feared their city's image as a healthy place with wide open vistas was in jeopardy.

But this freeway revolt ended differently from most others. Despite opposition, Papago Freeway is under construction. On top of it, covering a half-mile stretch that passes through a historic district and under the city's main commercial and ceremonial street, the city is building a park.

Parks over freeways are not so unusual anymore; more than a dozen have been built or are planned in this country. What is most noteworthy about Deck Park (which was designed by Howard Needles Tammen & Bergendoff) is its attempt to achieve a synthesis with the surrounding city, a task it accomplishes by serving as three parks in one.

One end of Deck Park will be a broad, landscaped space with a pond, Japanese garden and groves of trees that will serve as a quiet green for the four historic neighborhoods that abut the freeway. This part of the park will also will reach into an adjacent neighborhood so a nearby school will be connected to the open space.

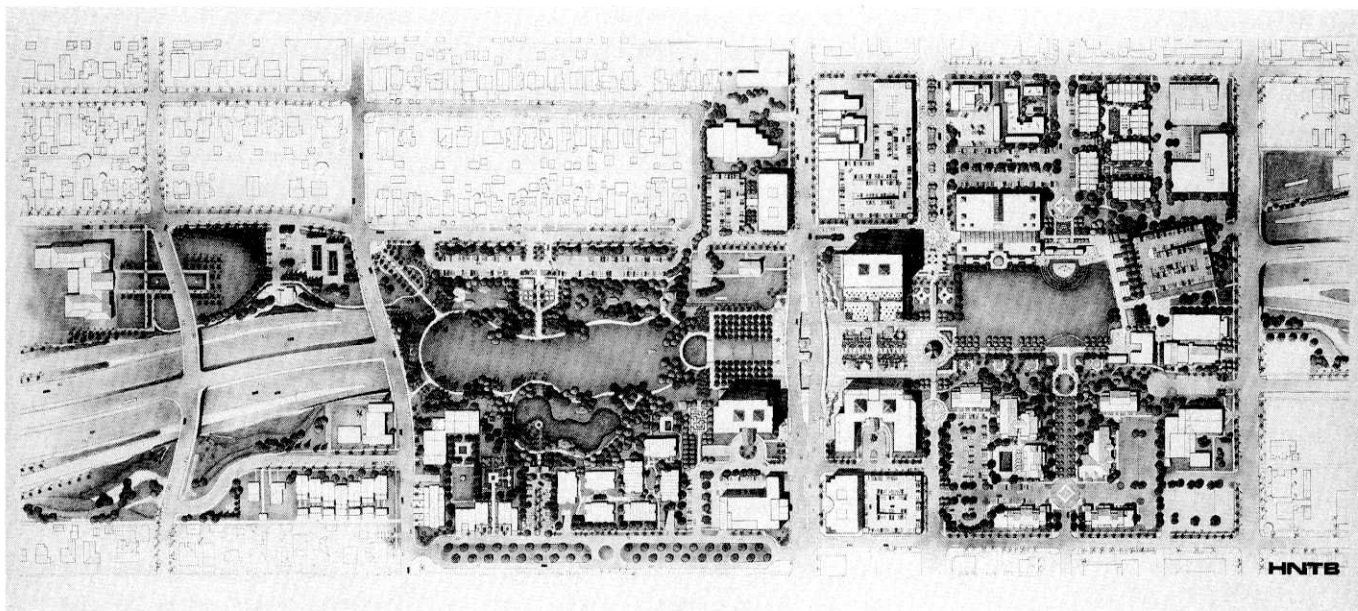
Central Avenue, Phoenix's main street, will arch over the park on a bridge of its own. The crossing, which will bisect the park, will be celebrated with a tightly scaled urban plaza that contains retail shops, amenities such as fountains or a carousel, and access to an express bus stop in the freeway median below the park. The plaza might also serve as a terminal for a historic trolley line.

Finally, an existing cultural building at the other end of the park will be supplemented with a cultural park containing an amphitheater, an open lawn for festivals and, perhaps, a library. Plans also call for an "arts walk" to lead from this section of the park through a nearby artists' housing district to museums and theaters in Phoenix's civic center, a half mile away.

Freeway air rights projects have a mixed track record: at worst, they are beacons, such as Boston's Prudential Center, that serve the automobile traveler, not the urban fabric. At best, they are open spaces, such as Lawrence Halprin's Freeway Park in Seattle, that derive their success by engendering feelings of escape and insulation from the rest of the city.

Phoenix's Deck Park is setting a new standard for air rights developments: it tames the freeway by making it part of the surrounding city.

"Dispatches" will be a regular feature of Places. It will report on timely, noteworthy attempts to make, care for, and understand places. We invite readers to send brief reports or news clips on topics that would be of interest for future "Dispatches."



Aerial view of Papago Deck Park and adjacent development plans.

Courtesy Howard Needles Tammen & Bergendoff.

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adapted their article from a report prepared for From Space to Place, a graduate seminar in the University of California, Berkeley, architecture department.

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