

The

History

of

Postmodern

Architecture

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\The

History

translated by Radka Donnell

of

HEINRICH KLOTZ

Postmodern

Architecture //

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## Preface

Although I have attempted to present a survey of the manifold movements and trends of present-day architecture, do not claim that this is a standard reference work, to be used as an encyclopedic inventory of contemporary building. My purpose is to illustrate the thesis that postmodern architecture needs to be seen as a revision of modernism. My primary concern is to fully render the radical change that is tersely formulated in the precept "Not only function but cction as well!"

The paramount criterion for postmodern architecture is no nger functional aptness alone. Equally important is the rich scope of meaning and the fictional content of the message om which the form of a building derives its directive.

To help grasp visually this radical change in the course of chitecture, I undertook a comprehensive survey that would clude all the tendencies evident in contemporary Western

building practice, which in spite of their great differences meet at a common goal: to again conceive architecture as a form that conveys meaning and to view it as a species of art.

From the start, I left the new developments in technology and construction out of consideration. The history of building construction needs to be presented separately, even though it is directly connected with all that is articulated herein. R. Buckminster Fuller, Konrad Wachsmann, and Frei Otto play lesser roles, although they must be recognized as notable innovators and as creators of a new concept of architecture.

In the end, I chose not to include the new ecological building, although it may well lead to the development of entirely new building types that will question all that architecture has been. Thomas Herzog's solar-heated houses<sup>1</sup> give us a good notion of what is to come.

A particularly earnest and admirable challenge to present-day architecture is posed by the alternative building of Walter Segal. Segal is not looking first and foremost for aesthetic or design qualities; what is important to him is that a low-income family be able to build its own home.

The greatest hazard for architecture today is that posed by the bureaucracy. The fact that building has become an enormous administrative undertaking threatens to destroy all spontaneity that might imbue an individual design in the very process of its realization. Often the struggles forced on an architect before he starts to get his building erected snuff out any artistic inspiration. One of these days, the building regulations will be more important than the building. Rather than dwell on this incapacitating burden, I shall proceed as if architecture were free of it.

I should like to express my thanks to Peter Neitzke, of

Friedr. Vieweg & Sohn, and to Andrea Gleinger-Neumann, who read the first version of the text and made many helpful suggestions. I am also indebted to the Bildarchiv Foto Marburg for providing illustrations. Above all, my thanks are due to nearly all the architects mentioned, for patiently answering my questions.

This English edition was made possible by Roger Conover of The MIT Press, who kept his confidence in the book through the years that passed since its appearance in German.

I am especially indebted to Radka Donnell and Paul Bethge, who translated and edited the text.

*Editor's note:* Two important terms used in the German edition do not have direct analogues in English. The reader should note that in the present edition alienation represents *Verfremdung* and contextual architecture represents *anpassendes Bauen*.

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## **Introduction**

### **Architecture as a Vehicle of Meaning**

Even though the conflict continues and the defenders of modern and postmodern architecture still confront each other as if the final decision is yet to come, history has already decided. A new kind of architecture prevails today, one that differs fundamentally from Das Neue Bauen of the 1920s. Almost every new architectural idea and every creative architectural form developed since the mid 1970s has stood in opposition to the established authority of the Modern Movement.

Nevertheless, as we begin to be surrounded by architecture that seeks validation by modeling itself on the past and revives forms we had disposed of long ago, we ask ourselves what the states of consciousness might be on which such reactions are founded. Postmodernism then appears to us to be a "premodernism," a return to a state antecedent to the Enlightenment. Hence we find ourselves asking whether we have exchanged progress for regression.

It seems that society, caught as it is in ecological crises, withdraws its trust in progress by drawing back in discouragement from the threshold of the new, seeking instead to recapture the old and to derive security from the past. Doubting the validity of progress seems to correspond to a cultural reversion to historically dated content. Does the assertion of the impossibility of an avant-garde not run parallel to the renunciation of the utopian potential of design? By returning to axial symmetry, are we not seeking an order that ultimately delivers not security but new control and oppression? By endorsing an intimidating neo-monumentalism, do we not surrender the humanness of an environment shaped for ease and transparency; do we not relinquish democratic architecture's openness to experience in favor of new, muscular, boastful posturings of power?

The experiences of the past that are manifest in certain architectural forms are evidently to be permitted to reclaim validity and to distract us from the "project of modernism,"<sup>12</sup> which has held progress to be one of its essential preconditions.

Ever since the concept of postmodernism began to spread, recent historical experience seems to have been divided into a modernism just recently passed and a postmodernism immediately following it — into a progressive past and a reactionary present. The moment when trees are planted in rows like marching soldiers and columns fall in step to make up colonnades, when houses are built embodying hierarchy and symmetrically repeating all their features as if in self-defense, when capitals, cornices, and ornaments extend decoratively over the surfaces and a *horror vacui* seems to break out where sobriety and economy had reigned — then the great backward fall into the historical furnishings and nostalgic moods of an existence among stage props is complete. Along with the

advent of postmodernism comes the demise of truth. All at once everything seems lost — modern architecture, humanity, democracy, and morals. For what is disclosed to us in the projects of today's architecture but the precarious state of a society one ought to fear, because it fears the future? Hence it is fully understandable why the latest developments in architecture are so hotly debated: It is crucial to unmask the defeatists and the reactionaries, because the issue at stake is the defense of progress implied by progressive building technology and modern construction methods and implying the ideologies vested in architecture. The defense of progress in architecture is, by the same token, the defense of the development of society. The existence of building as a vehicle of liberal values is in jeopardy! Isn't it?

At this point, doubts arise in regard to the calamitous conditions of architecture as described above. Could all that have sprung up not in a rebound from the project of modern architecture but as its visionary corrective? Hasn't the time come for drastic measures to halt modern architecture's lapse into rampant functionalism and urban erosion, and to summon back its slipping sense of the responsibility of architecture to its proper niveau? In line with Jürgen Habermas's injunction to "imperturbably restate and critically continue the tradition of modernism instead of joining the dominant movements of today in their escape from it,"<sup>13</sup> one asks whether the critique of modernism has not been accomplished. Isn't postmodernism the critique of modernism; isn't it a continuation of modernism by new but not entirely different means?

The main question implicit in this view is whether in postmodernism the positive qualities of modernism continue to be active (and, conversely, whether postmodern qualities can be judged progressive). One of the possible answers is based on the evaluation of form. Accordingly, we have to inquire whether the essence of modernism and the characteristics of the so-called escape movements have been correctly described in terms of the forms involved. To be precise, we have to discover if the meanings we customarily ascribe to these forms are inexorably fixed to a definite expressive content and to a definite value. Is axiality always an architectural means of coercion by the dictates of power? Is symmetry always a means of order in the service of hierarchy? Does the use of columns always stand for an escape into nostalgia? Do craftsmanship and conventional materials always imply a throwback, in contrast with the progressive stance of the building industry? And, viewed in the opposite way, is the open ground plan always democratic? Are all building procedures that utilize modern materials (such as glass and steel) modern? Do forms have fixed symbolic contents, to be associated with them for all time to come?

Clearly, the argument is focused not on the individual

forms but on their meaning. In the controversy between modernism and postmodernism, the assumption that a particular form stands for a specific content — that it indicates something beyond its own factual existence — is held to be self-evident.

The very fact that we speak again of the meanings of architecture is the most decisive change in the architectural debate since 1945. For many decades we were indifferent to the meanings of architectural forms, either because we were totally opposed to them or because we could afford to ignore them. The structural aspects of a building and the functional values in terms of cost economization and optimization of use were the main objects of interest. The fact that a form could mean one thing or another was not a topic for official discussions, and it remained outside the range of debatable questions for architectural theory. To consciously consider the form of architecture a vehicle of meaning was an exceptional thing to do.<sup>4</sup> In view of the new interest in form, the history of contemporary architecture can be regarded as a history of its decisions in respect to form and its latent or open meanings and its unintended or intended contents and symbolizations.

Whether architects like it or not, a building acts as a vehicle of meaning even if it is supposed to be meaningless. One way or another, it presents a visual aspect. Even the vulgar post-war functionalism that cut the characteristic features of a building to a minimum produced buildings that, as they entered one's visual field, acquired a meaning: an apparently neutral and monotonous uniformity.

In contrast to the kind of architecture that consciously renounced any symbolic effect since by its own definition in terms of functional efficiency any consideration of meaning was too much, the new trends in architecture are predominantly marked by attempts to draw attention to other contents besides the functional qualities of a building — to contents referring to nonarchitectural as well as architectural contexts.

Taking into account the conscious inclusion of new contents into architecture today, one might wish that the criticism directed against so-called postmodernism were to be applied to modernism. If done, this would reveal that the buildings built in observance of orthodox modernism — even those being built today in a kind of brave adherence to enlightenment and progressiveness — suddenly seem empty when they are measured against the new possibilities of architectural symbolization. Have the formal qualities associated with the International Style — the white walls, the elegant framework of steel and glass, the loosely arranged open ground plan, the transparency of the structure — not become hopelessly exhausted and vapid?

Yet attempts were made to counteract the lingering after-effects of the reductive geometry of classical modernism by

enriching it. The low version of functionalism was stretched by high formal ambitions. This led first to giant posturings of pure geometry, and then to the solemnization of buildings as baroque sculptures. These attempts were grounded in the fundamental tenets of modernism, and for this reason interest had to be attracted by other means. The result was interesting forms devoid of meaning, such as Paul Rudolph's mountains of concrete, the restless circular composition of the UN Center in Vienna, and the Landtag building in Düsseldorf.

Assuming that there exist subliminal connections between the separate arts, we can say that many of today's "modern" buildings produce a familiar effect equivalent to that of the "abstract" paintings and sculptures of the late 1950s.

Around 1960 there occurred analogous changes in painting and architecture. In painting, after "Great Abstraction," after Abstract Expressionism, Tachism, and Informel, an abrupt shift was brought about by Pop Art. Everyday life, consumerism, and so-called subcultures were included among the acceptable contents of art, and it was again legitimate to take into account the reality of the external world. Some architects turned away from geometry as a "Great Abstraction" and devoted their attention to other contents.

Pop Art, by halting the expansion of abstraction, created a way out of the "nonobjective" mode and made the appreciation of pure form seem an antiquated cult of aestheticism. All of a sudden the level of art appreciation changed. Gone were the "disinterested contemplative enjoyment" and the self-sufficient universe of color as the prevalent concerns of painting; a giant confrontation with the hitherto repressed concreteness of the everyday world took their place. Since then, with the arrival of photographic realism, the recognition of realistic trends in painting, and the New Expressionism of the "New Wild Painters" and the "arte cifra," the foreground of the art scene has been occupied by "representational" trends.

However, buildings are still built on the pretense that the aesthetic of pure form continues to deserve credibility. The nonobjective, pure composition of volumes in the old conservative "modernism" relies even now on an appreciation in the spirit of and in the terms of abstraction. Yet what we actually see is the "purely interesting." The product of the aesthetic of "purity," of free composition and of the calculations of geometry is: free gesture, empty gesturing!

Thus, the last efforts in architecture to save modernism on the basis of abstraction have failed.

### The Concept of Postmodernism (I)

Long before Charles Jencks named the new tendencies in architecture, a fundamental change had become apparent. The signals came not only from buildings but also from treatises in which architects declared their defection from the

dogmas of modernism. Robert Venturi's *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* — written in 1962, published by the Museum of Modern Art in 1966, and still making its effects felt today — was the first of these treatises. In the preface, Vincent Scully spoke of something new, something "hard to see," something "hard to write about," something "graceless and inarticulate as only the new can be," and proclaimed *Complexity and Contradiction* "the most important writing in the making of architecture since Le Corbusier's *Vers une architecture*."<sup>4</sup>

Even before the publication of Venturi's book, Christian Norberg-Schulz had tried to establish a broad overview of a new concept of architecture in his *Intentions in Architecture* (Oslo, 1963). "Only through cultural symbolism," he wrote, "can architecture show that the everyday has a meaning beyond the immediate situation and a share in the cultural and historical continuum."

In 1966 — the year in which *Complexity and Contradiction* appeared — Aldo Rossi published his book *L'Architettura della Città*, in which he talked of "the city as a work of art," introduced his concept of typology, and strove to restore the definitive role of the monumental building.

The year 1968 brought Venturi's "A Bill Ding" and "Board Involving Movies, Relics, and Space" (*Architectural Forum*, April, pp. 74–76), in which he spoke of his own design for the Football Hall of Fame as "a shed with ornament on it."

*Meaning in Architecture*, edited by Jencks and George Baird and published in London in 1969, was another important contribution to the international architectural discussion. It renewed the discussion of semiology in architecture, and it recalled that as early as 1959 Gillo Dorfles had proposed that architecture be understood as a "sign system."

During the first half of the 1970s, the architecture symposia of the International Design Center in Berlin (organized by the present author) were important events on the European scene. It was at one of these meetings, in 1974, that Venturi, Denise Scott Brown, and Aldo Rossi presented their seminal treatises — "Functionalism: Yes, but . . ." (Venturi and Scott Brown) and "Hypotheses of My Work" (Rossi). It was in the course of these symposia that I first attempted to distinguish "classical modernism" from latter-day "economic functionalism," and in connection with this I spoke of a "turn," of the "sketch of a new environment that would be determined not by an architecture of mere utility but rather by an architecture of metaphor, covering content with fantasy" (*Werk-Archithese* 64, March 1977, p. 3). In the article just cited — published in the same year as Jencks's book — I also remarked that the 1974 symposium might well have been titled "Architecture Before and After Functionalism"; today, I believe that the elucidation of the concept of postmodernism would not have been so chaotic and difficult had it been

discussed in more restrained terms.

Jencks had the audacity to articulate the criticism at the level of fundamental principles, and thus to set in question the self-understanding of an entire epoch. Nonetheless, he coaxed the philosophers out of their reticence with respect to architecture, and particularly with respect to what Habermas called the "project of modernism."

As misleading as the concept of postmodernism may be, at the present we do not have a better one to put in its place. Jencks's idea<sup>5</sup> of borrowing this concept from literary criticism (where it had acquired a negative connotation) and converting it to a positive use in architectural theory was a daring enterprise. In his 1970 treatise on postmodernism, Jost Hermand unmasked all conceivable varieties of modern consumer culture as forces of a reactionary anti-modern (for Hermand, a "postmodern"<sup>6</sup>) conformism. In accordance with this pejorative tradition, the concept has to be associated in architectural theory with notions of a comfortable escapism to the scene of popular distractions, where the garish colors of lollipop culture are joined to the fake patina of the nostalgia products of historicism.

As hopeless as it might seem to give the term postmodernism something like pristine innocence and to try to read into it nothing more than the designation of a historical phase as a temporal sequel of modern architecture, there is an argument for keeping the term in use: It has become internationally accepted. In architectural criticism, postmodern is used mainly to refer to historicist architecture that does not go beyond a nostalgic replication of the past. The polemical use of the term to censure all kinds of historicist architecture deserves disapproval, for even the most vehement opponent of postmodernism ought to be aware that there are ways of relating to the history of architecture that are more than a nostalgic reprise of the past. The critique of postmodernism becomes more pointed but also more simplistic when turned into a critique of nostalgia. Used polemically, the concept is at its narrowest.

I would like to widen postmodernism's range of meaning in the sense indicated earlier on, and to regard as postmodern buildings that do not slavishly follow the early versions of modernism. Whenever present-day architecture observes other laws in addition to functional aptness and maximum simplicity of basic forms, whenever it moves away from abstraction and tends toward representational objectivization, I call it postmodern. By this I mean that in such a case architecture does not seek its final end in itself, in pure three-dimensional realization of volumetric problems, but that it can become a means for the visual realization of contents of a different, of a manifold nature. Then, architecture becomes a work of the visible emergence of beauty and does not remain merely a means subservient to practical ends.

Hence, I propose to use the word postmodernism in its literal sense: as primarily a designation of a break of continuity, pinpointing the fact that the tradition of the Modern Movement in architecture has ceased to be a continuum. On the other hand, I insist that with the advent of postmodernism architecture was not simply severed from modernism. Charles Jencks has arrived at a similar view, even though he has not realized that with the slogan calling for a sequel to modernism the end of modernism was proclaimed.

Yet under the present circumstances, and at this stage in the development of architectural theory, one ought to be allowed to stress to a lesser degree the characteristic features of historical continuity and to elaborate all the more the extent of the historical changes taking place. It is important not to succumb any longer to the illusion of still being able to draw from modernism as from a recent and inexhaustible source. Modern architecture has grown old.

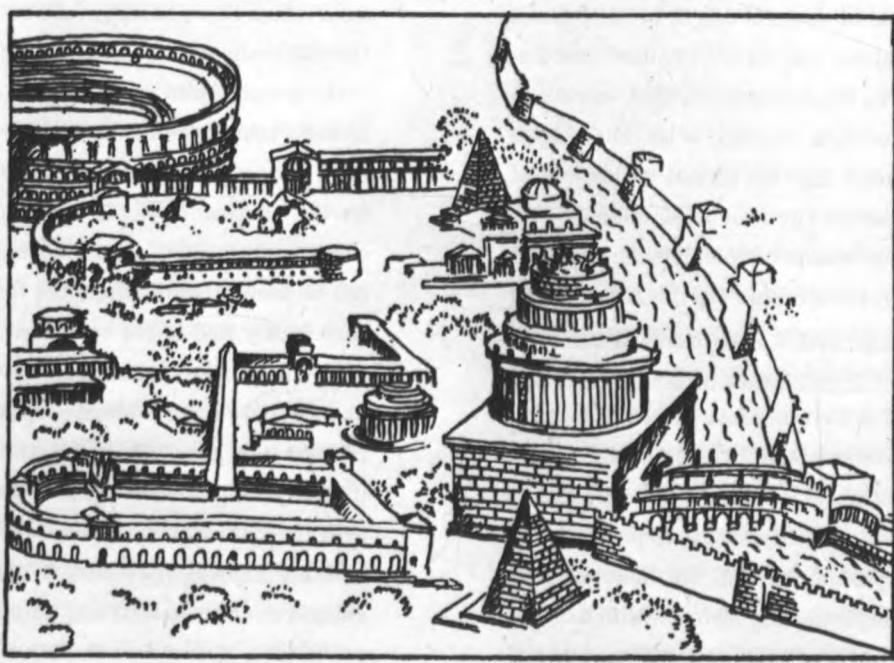
Nonetheless, one would be overreacting if, in the wake of the excesses of functionalism, one were to dismiss modernism altogether. Some of its fundamental insights, as well as some of its methods of building, continue to be valid. Above all, one must keep in mind that the formal vocabulary of modernism can, under certain circumstances, undergo a rejuvenation and be used as unconventionally as the stylistic features made available by historicism.<sup>7</sup> For this reason, I find it an ill-advised move on the part of Jencks, after introducing the problematic concept of postmodernism, to add to it that of "late modernism,"<sup>8</sup> as if it were necessary to subdivide architecture into a postmodernism that has a future and a "late modernism" that is presumably close to its demise. Doubtless there exist in this analysis mutually exclusive positions between modernism and postmodernism. But there are also correspondences and complementary features, which do not permit us to go on using "post" and "late" as parameters delimiting closed worlds that offer us only a choice of different sets of examples. Lately the formal vocabularies are getting detached from their ideological referents and are beginning to be used side by side or to be mixed. For example, James Stirling saturated the historicized building structure of the Stuttgart Staatsgalerie to such a degree with "high-tech" elements that the total effect of a neoclassical architectural whole does not even have a chance of asserting itself. Then there is Adolfo Natalini, who in his recent office and factory buildings has used the steel framework as a paradigmatic modern building core along with a historicized outer mantle of bricks.<sup>9</sup> As an alternative to high-rise buildings done entirely in the "high-tech" vocabulary, Helmut Jahn proposes a historicized version of this building type.

Thus, the possibility of viewing different approaches to contemporary architecture as mutually exclusive "stylistic attitudes" is decreasing markedly, while "modern" architec-

ture is seen as equivalent to technically constructivist forms and postmodern architecture as equivalent to historicizing forms. In the end, what is decisive is the intentions and the successes of the different vocabularies. Historicizing forms can be applied superficially and decoratively (that is, in a nostalgic manner), just as they can be revitalized through a spirited new reinterpretation. The fact that a bad eclectic uses historical material does not suffice to make him a notable architect of postmodernism. On the other hand, if a "modernist" is capable of employing modern architecture's repertory of forms in a new and significant way and thereby revitalizing it — as is Ludwig Leo, for one — then it is nonsensical to ignore him in the name of a merely historicized postmodernism. All that deserves our interest is the high quality of the individual building, which is predicated on the architect's ability to breathe new life into the vocabularies he encounters, be they modernist or historicized. I call the method from which this vitalization process draws its potential force the fictionalization of architecture.

My primary aim has not been to compile the different stylistic trends present in today's architecture and to give them more or less promising names, but to provide evidence for the dominant principle determining contemporary architecture's positive achievements. This guiding principle can be seen at work where the final shape of a building is consciously tied to the recapturing of content that can become the "narrative substance" of a building's total form and its subsidiary forms. This does not mean that architecture has to serve the purposes of illustration. The final goal is to liberate architecture from the muteness of "pure forms" and from the clamor of ostentatious constructions in order that a building might again become an occasion for a creative effort, attuned not only to facts and utilization programs but also to poetic ideas and to the handling of subject matter on an epic scale. Then the results will no longer be repositories of function and miracles of construction, but renderings of symbolic contents and pictorial themes — aesthetic fictions which do not remain abstract "pure forms" but which emerge into view as concrete objectivizations to be multisensorially apperceived.<sup>10</sup>

These reflections on the concept of postmodernism necessarily lead to an equally rigorous examination of the concept of modernism. To see more precisely what contrasts and differences separate modernism and postmodernism, I shall first attempt a brief survey of the history of modern architecture in its several stages. This will also reveal how manifold and how partly contradictory is the historical complex labeled "modern architecture."



1

Le Corbusier  
Drawing from  
*Vers une architecture* (1923)

## **Modernism**

The obtrusive, meaningless uniformity that marks the functionalist boxes and crates defacing mile upon mile of our environment had an almost dramatic significance at its inception, in the early days of *Das Neue Bauen*. The functionalist architecture of the present has as its historical background the avant-garde's bid for recognition, beginning around 1920. The architectural program of the avant-garde was defined by the moral tenor of the aesthetic demand for a return to simplicity, and by the social critique that was implicit in the attack on tyranny in the forms of architecture. The white cubes of the Villa Savoye and the flawless wings of the Bauhaus building at Dessau presaged a whole new world to be pitched against the showy representations of wealth and power that had had a stranglehold on the nineteenth-century city. The realization of an aesthetic based on primary stereometric figures was conceived as an emancipatory move. The reduction of architecture to its basic stereometric forms and the renunciation of all embellishment and ornament were prompted less by a submission to economic utility than by a rejection of the tradition of creating a fine show on false pretenses. To this rejection was connected a simultaneous attempt to propagate new values.

The mere act of purification from all formal excesses was the strongest iconological content of the new program. The quality of purification became the new "pictorial character" and had a pervasive symbolic effect. All other ramifications stemmed from this "first deed," and all the other symbolic analogies were preceded by this call back to the beginnings, back to the simplest unconditional forms of geometry.<sup>11</sup>

*Vers une architecture* (1922) — the first of Le Corbusier's treatises to become famous — contained a drawing (reproduced here as figure 1) in which a pastiche of Roman buildings is framed by the basic figures of geometry so as to demonstrate that the various individual buildings have their origins in the elementary geometric figures. "Architecture," Le Corbusier wrote, "is the masterly, correct and magnificent play of masses brought together in light. Our eyes are made to see forms in light; light and shade reveal these forms; cubes, cones, spheres, cylinders or pyramids are the great primary forms which light reveals to advantage; the image of these is distinct and tangible within us and without ambiguity. It is for that reason that these are beautiful forms, the most beautiful forms."<sup>12</sup> Le Corbusier intended this statement as a complete antithesis to the architecture of his time, which was dominated by style: "Architects today no longer admire these simple forms."<sup>13</sup> "Architects today are afraid of the geometrical constituents of surfaces."<sup>14</sup> "If the essentials of architecture lie in spheres, cones and cylinders, the generating and [defining] lines of these forms are on a basis of pure geometry.

But this geometry terrifies the architects of today."<sup>15</sup> Like all revolutionaries, Le Corbusier called for a redirection back to beginnings and primal concerns. "It is that architecture, which is a matter of plastic emotion, should in its own domain BEGIN AT THE BEGINNING. . . . Architecture today is no longer conscious of its own beginnings."<sup>16</sup> He demanded "the use of elementary stereometric forms" not in order to bring a new aesthetic to power but in order to clarify moral qualities: "Absence of verbosity, good arrangement, a single idea, daring and unity in construction, the use of elementary shapes. A sane morality." He used Roman architecture as a classic example in order to attack the "verbosity" and the lack of order in traditional architecture.<sup>17</sup>

Walter Gropius summed up his own insights into these matters in *Die neue Architektur und das Bauhaus* (1935): "We have had enough of the arbitrary imitation of historic styles. In a continuous development away from architectural caprices and whimsy and toward the dictates of a constructive logic, we have learned to express the life of our epoch in pure, simplified forms."<sup>18</sup> Gropius tried to show what this meant in his first public building after the First World War. Today almost completely unknown, the *Stadttheater* [municipal theater] in Jena — completed in 1922, later destroyed, and now documented only in photographs — was the first presentation of the formal language of the avant-garde in a municipal cultural monument. The politically liberal community of Jena allowed Gropius to dispense with the usual ornate representational mantle and to leave the white cubes of the theater completely bare. There was no sign anywhere of the heaviness and of the ponderous airs of monumental architecture. Neither the bottom-heavy pedestal that gave a classical building its elevation nor the protruding cornice used to highlight the significance of the whole was in evidence. The empty white wall was richer in content than the cascades of ornament of yore. Most important, there were no pilasters, colonnades, architraves, or tympana. The classical norms that hitherto had persisted as a system of reference had been dropped. Not the slightest art-nouveau curlicue that might evoke the memory of this classical referential system was used, lest it indicate the rank of the building in hierarchical terms.

The strongest form of protest against the past was the complete abstention from the use of figurative ornament. The white elementary forms of modern architecture rose in the urban landscape as a blazing signal against the rigidity of conservatism. The *Stadttheater* was the New placed as a perfectly foreign body within the old traditional city. Once the decision was taken to invalidate for the first time in many centuries the proven but depleted referential recourse to antiquity, what language was available other than the mute radiating power of the primary figures to impress the new



2

Walter Gropius  
Stadttheater, Jena  
1922

articles of faith on a society no longer willing to have its basic assumptions represented by columns and architraves? Where could be found a new set of explanatory references that could take the place of the worn-out stylistic references? The answer was: in the machine.

The nineteenth century had witnessed the coming of iron structures — bridges, covered markets, and towers. Now the formal qualities of machines were transferred to stone constructions, in order to go beyond the reductive character of the primary forms and to gain a semantic content through which the goals of society could be expressed in a visible shape. The image of a gigantic white transatlantic liner cutting across the ocean — a complete city in miniature, apparently carrying humanity into the future as to a promised land — easily suggested itself as an appropriate guiding notion.<sup>19</sup> In fact, the ocean liner was a “machine” already translated into architectural terms, and its striking new shapes and its gleaming white exterior could readily be identified with the new architecture.<sup>20</sup> Its railings, portholes, courses of windows, and upper decks provided the modern architecture of the 1920s with suggestive leitmotifs.

The fact that the forms of an ocean liner were related to the liner’s swift cutting through the waves contributed to the idea of “streamlining,” an invention of this epoch. The popular imagination was also excited by the automobile. Le Corbusier’s *Vers une architecture* contained illustrations of the most famous ocean liners of the time and the most beautiful streamlined automobiles. Erich Mendelsohn expressly referred to the motion of city traffic, to the stream of moving cars, when explaining the sweeping lines of his buildings. The extensive horizontals curving around the corner of Mendelsohn’s housing block on Lehniner Platz (figure 3) were said to incorporate the continuous motion of the passing cars into the facade and thus to establish a correspondence between happenings in the space of the city and the shape of the building. The building’s expression was to be the expression of motion! Mendelsohn kept the expressive contents of his symbolic references relatively abstract, avoiding a too-literal use of object forms derived from the world of machines.

How precisely the general public understood the aforementioned references to ships is evidenced by the fact that the building shown in figure 4 was promptly nicknamed “the Armed Cruiser Potemkin.” The steamship symbolism had a rather humorous effect, which stood in the way of its becoming an adequate expression of the goals of modern society. However, when it was used less literally and became a part of a general idiom of modernity, it did in fact help to endow the avant-garde buildings with the flair of progressiveness and optimism.

How difficult it nevertheless was to secure a generally comprehensible horizon of meaning for the purified elemen-

Erich Mendelsohn  
Housing block  
Lehniner Platz, Berlin  
1926–1928



Hans Scharoun  
Housing Development  
Siemensstadt, Berlin  
1929–1931



tary forms after the renunciation of the classical orders and stylistic ornament was shown by the public reaction to the Weissenhof Siedlung, built in 1927 in Stuttgart. A well-known Nazi caricature which gives the white cubes and squares of this garden city an Eastern appearance by adding groups of circulating Berbers and camels perhaps also demonstrates the problem of providing primary forms with generally plausible content. The new language, supposed to communicate a purification from the ballast of the past and the new promise of progress as symbolized through the machine aesthetic, seemed arbitrary and grotesque in its vocabulary. How was a house ever to become a machine? What did a steamship have to do with a dwelling? And yet Le Corbusier had declared: "A house will no longer be this solidly built thing which sets out to defy time and decay, and which is an expensive luxury by which wealth can be shown; it will be a tool as the motor-car is becoming a tool."<sup>21</sup>

The extent to which the machine as the motor of new life could be used to justify the contents of modern architecture is shown by Le Corbusier's comparison of the Parthenon to a machine: "All this plastic [mechanics] is realized in marble with the rigor that we have learned to apply in the machine. The impression is of naked polished steel."<sup>22</sup> Here, indeed, antiquity and modernism were made equivalent! It is not surprising, then, that antiquity — though its aftereffects were bitterly opposed — was used to validate the aesthetic qualities of the machine, the new model to be followed. Thus, at the end of an architectural theory that had been tied to the Vitruvian canon of orders for many centuries, the building that had served as a basic model of neoclassicism as well could be appreciated in terms of the qualities of a machine, whereas the "classical rigor" of the buildings of antiquity was far from determining the goals or standards of contemporary architecture, and even farther from determining those of machine design.

With Le Corbusier's reference to the Parthenon, the "end of antiquity" in architecture was, for the time being, sealed. Yet what generally tended to be stressed were the contradictions between antiquity and modernism. As early as 1909, Emilio Filippo Tommaso Marinetti had written: "A roaring car, sounding like gunfire as it drives along, is more beautiful than the Nike of Samothrace."<sup>23</sup> Modernism opposed tradition; it stood against the culture based on classical antiquity. Marinetti wanted to "liberate" Italy from "the cancerous herds of professors, archaeologists, cicerones, and antique dealers." Italy, wrote Marinetti, "has been a flea market too long. We want to free it from the countless museums covering and encrusting it like countless cemeteries. . . . Grab your hoes, axes and hammers . . . and tear down pitilessly those venerable cities!"<sup>24</sup>

The utilitarian orientation of modernism in the later years

of this century is a far cry from the fervor of the early modernists, for whom the support of the New was necessarily combined with aggressive subversion. For example, the words of Antonio Sant'Elia, whose drawings endorsed and dignified the machine, vibrated with protest against historical styles: "The new building materials and our scientific concepts cannot be brought into agreement with the rules of historical styles. . . . the futurist house must be like a huge machine."<sup>25</sup> Sant'Elia's argument is in line with but even more intense than Marinetti's view of the automobile and the Nike as opposing sides of a conflict. None of the buildings in his famous drawings can be correctly understood if one ignores that intensity or disregards his polemic stance against the past; their contents are based on that conflict.

Behind the propagation of a machine aesthetic and the attack on the architecture of the past lay a distinct social critique. The vehemence of the attack was directed against those architects who still adhered to the conventions of period architecture. In Bruno Taut's 1920 manifesto *Nieder der Seriosismus!* [Down with Seriousism!] one hears echoes of Marinetti's futurist passion: ". . . the professional wigs must fall. . . . Death to everything stale! Death to all that is cloaked in titles, status, authority! Down with everything serious!" But Taut is not satisfied with a general criticism of culture, which had sufficed for Marinetti. He directs his sharpest barbs against the "worshippers of Mammon and Moloch," the "worshippers of violence," who are the protectors of respectability, of "facades fit for gravestones and cemeteries but serving as fronts to secondhand shops and horse trading." Taut's attack on period architecture is founded in social criticism and is addressed against the representatives of power, the defenders of the established conventions: "Smash the limestone columns in the Doric, Ionic, and Corinthian styles, break to smithereens that puppet show! Down with the 'nobility' of limestone slabs and mirrors! Dash to pieces the marble and rare wood stuff and nonsense. Dump the whole lot out with the trash!" Here the language of the classical orders is viewed as equivalent to the language of power. The new language, the language of nonviolence, is modern architecture: "In the distance rises our dawn. Long live our realm of nonviolence! Long live the transparent and the clear! Long live purity! Long live the crystal! and long live a flowing, graceful, faceted, gleaming, sparkling, flashing light — long live eternal architecture."<sup>26</sup> Sant'Elia, too, had emphasized the formal qualities of modern architecture and spoken of "the light and the practical," of "the transitory and the quick," as its characteristics.<sup>27</sup>

What was left, in the end, of the symbolic forms that had been brought into opposition were the general architectonic qualities supposed to define the general formal character of modern architecture. Both the illustrative literal forms or

superstructures derived from the iconology of the steamship and machine symbolism (such as that of scaffolding for the Constructivists) were admissible as means for the intensification of architectural form that was attempted. The essential basis of the new contents was constituted by the formal qualities of transparency and lightness, which provided the basic expressive terms for modernism. It is especially significant that Taut mentions these qualities of the new architecture in the same breath as "the realm of nonviolence," for at that point his utopian manifesto against the past becomes the first testimonial for a modernism defined by social and ethical qualities.

#### ADVANCE NOTICE: "THE BARE NECESSITIES"

After arriving in Manchester in 1826, Karl Friedrich Schinkel added to a sketch entered in his diary (figure 5) a note that one might take as a comment on the functionalistic excesses of modern architecture in the twentieth century: "The huge masses of the buildings executed merely by a master workman in red brick only, without any architecture, and providing only the barest necessities, create an uncanny impression."<sup>28</sup> These shapeless blocks of the factory buildings, completely devoid of decoration and apparently looking to Schinkel like foreign bodies outside of culture, were already "functionalist" in the true sense of the word; however, utility alone was not sufficient as an impulse for a new aesthetic.<sup>29</sup>

Ten years later, in 1836, in his "Säkularbilder," Karl Gutzkow propounded "a mere cube" and "plain, unadorned . . . houses," as opposed to period style architecture, as fitting forms for modern architecture. In contrast to Schinkel, Gutzkow recognized in bare forms "that which we really are capable of achieving." For him, the vision of architecture cleansed of all ornament does not create the disquieting impression of being something uncanny because it lacks the imprint of culture; he finds it enlightening because he perceives in it an undistorted reality:

*Desperate to invent a modern style of architecture, we have turned in our newer epoch back to antiquity and the Middle Ages, and thereby admit either our extraordinary lack of spirit and imagination or the sobering facts and utility factors behind some buildings being made preferably modern, such as granaries, housing for invalids, and the like. The design of the British Parliament is too much of an echo of the Middle Ages to allow us to claim that England is far ahead of the Continent, which in Germany, for instance, has surrendered to the dilettantism of imitation as practiced by Klenze and the mixture of all tastes as practiced by Schinkel. To build a parliament building in the bright, clear, modern sense of the*

*Reform Bill was a task which, in my opinion, was not solved by the design approved by the Parliament. The modern approach has up to now proved its worth only as applied to bridges, canals, railways, and tunnels; modern Christianity does not exist, other than as a plain cube with bourgeois fenestration, a heatable building in the shape of a gambling house that might be allowed to declare itself a church of Christ. . . . the only folly one can reproach us for is that we seek to cover our nakedness and that we trouble ourselves with plagiarisms.<sup>30</sup>*

Gutzkow was well aware of the strong contradiction between the return to antiquity and the Middle Ages and "the sobering facts and utility factors behind some buildings being preferably made modern, such as granaries, housing for invalids, and the like." His reservations sound as if they had been formulated today, for he connected to the idea of a parliament building certain formal expectations according to which the political gains made under "the bright, clear, modern sense of the Reform Bill" were supposed to find visible expression in the building's shape. For him, the neo-Gothic look of the London Parliament did not correspond to this modern sense. If it had been left to him, that building could have been "a plain cube with bourgeois fenestration." As early as 1836 Gutzkow was concerned about the truth of architecture; about the unmasking of false fronts; about the congruence to be established between emancipation and progress, on the one hand, and purified architectural form on the other. This is the same moral concern that provided the moral justification for *Das Neue Bauen* almost a century later. From Gutzkow's point of view, one can also see quite clearly that the revolution of *Das Neue Bauen* in the 1920s redeemed in aesthetic terms the promises which the revolutionaries of the first half of the nineteenth century had sought to realize in political terms. For Gutzkow, the formal qualities of the Modern Movement were already visualizable in 1836. He formulated their architectural shape in the most general way, following the spirit of the new facts that were shaping daily life around him. The slogan was "to develop the character of modern life from the new facts, and not to apply the standards of the past as a moral judgment of the new."

Hardly had this insight been taken up when a different one was introduced on a much less generous level: the observance of the economic utility factor, which had a sobering effect, excluding any other considerations. *Ornament and Crime* by Adolf Loos, published in 1908, clearly determined the sense in which the content of modernity was to be understood. Loos was clever enough not to demand the renunciation of ornament in the name of culturally refined taste, but rather to propose it in the name of cost reduction: "Ornamented plates are expensive plates, while porcelain, which makes food taste better to modern people, is inexpensive. . . .

the houses would pull you in with fingers and thumbs  
the children all the time - the windows were dirty :  
July 20 1826 at the纺纱厂 (textile mill) -



drawn by Schinkel

1826

at Manchester

Sketch of textile mills

Karl Friedrich Schinkel

The worker ornamenting porcelain has to work 20 hours to earn the same as the modern worker working for 8 hours. . . . Ornament is wasted labor and therefore also a wasted health. It was always like this. However, today this also means wasted materials, and both wastes mean wasted capital.”<sup>31</sup> Here, at the beginning of the criticism of nineteenth-century architecture, appears the argument in favor of the minimal expenditures producing the highest profit — that is, the rationalization of means to reach a given end.<sup>32</sup> And even the white stereometry of Loos’s buildings appears to be connected to this calculation made by him in his manifesto. A great many texts are tied to this argument.<sup>33</sup>

Loos’s *Ornament and Crime* makes the following question unavoidable: Which level of concern essentially determined the “project of modernism”? Was it the “bright, clear, modern sense” of Gutzkow, or the cost savings promised by Loos? Or perhaps the hopeful circumstance which according to Habermas facilitated the “project of modernism” actually took place: “In modern architecture at a fortunate moment, the oppositional aesthetics of constructivism and the utilitarian bias of rigorous functionalism met and merged freely together.”<sup>34</sup>

It seems, rather, that the economic utility calculations of functionalism were turned against the aesthetic aspect of modern constructivism, and that, in the course of time, making a principle out of the cheapest solution undermined the promise of the machine metaphor and rendered it more and more meaningless. Faith in utility was in conflict with the desire to give eloquent shape to modern life. In the history of modern architecture this conflict was most sharply revealed as a socio-political contradiction. The rationalization of the utility factor and its tendency to claim absolute priority proved irreconcilable with artistic intention; this rift erupted at the end of the first phase of Das Neue Bauen, around 1930.

A historical analysis bent on closer differentiation makes it evident that there have been persistent leitmotifs and principles of modernism, but that modern architecture in the sense of the rationalism of Mies and Le Corbusier was never accepted without contest. Many different related and opposed trends have challenged the Modern Movement from its beginning. Even in its developmental phases, modern architecture underwent a definition departing from its initial intentions, sometimes almost to the point of self-destruction, and this makes it difficult to refer to a clear-cut canon of modernism. The functionalism that developed after the Second World War in response to the rebuilding of the economy and the demands of the building trade has, in the name of modernism, led architecture far from the modernism of Das Neue Bauen. The history of the past few decades is the story of the spread, the transformation, and the falsification of modernism.

The “project of modernism” has already been explicated through history. Its theoretical conception through an avant-garde is not the only relevant factor to be considered; beyond that, the increasing awareness of the historical phases of modernism provides information about the degree to which it has already been realized or gone astray, and thereby informs us also about its future potential. Modernism’s contours are still recognizable, though history has swept across them. At the same time, the history of modernism is faced with questions about the features of that corrective-to-be through which the “project of modernism” can be liberated from its dogmatic fixation.

## THE INTERNATIONAL STYLE

Das Neue Bauen had been able to claim recognition in architecture for one decade (1920–1930), and already the counterforces began to assert themselves. During the totalitarian epoch between 1930 and 1945, the machine aesthetic was held in low esteem. Instead, first in the Soviet Union and in Germany and later also in Italy, there prevailed a negative view of modernism, in keeping with the petit-bourgeois alarm at the general escalation of innovation. Lenin had voiced objections against avant-garde art in the revolutionary years; he had appealed to the necessity of making art comprehensible for the masses. For Stalin, the problem became even graver; he was concerned with legitimizing his despotism by means of the traditional terms of architecture. Columns and pilasters were a greater reinforcement of the claim to power than the white facades of the Modern Movement. In addition to Stalin, Hitler, Franco, and (later) Mussolini made use of neoclassicism. Yet their opponents, the democracies led by Roosevelt and Churchill, also fortified themselves with monumentality in the shape of the Pentagon and the Ministry of Defense.

The architects of Das Neue Bauen went underground or maintained a marginal existence through private commissions. In France, Le Corbusier had no chance of realizing the few commissions offered during the war. He withdrew and worked on his theories, mainly on the “Modulor.” England remained reserved toward the Modern Movement. Gropius influenced Maxwell Fry temporarily before leaving for the United States. Alvar Aalto’s work, too, is divided into a prewar and a postwar phase. The development of architecture came almost to a standstill, even in the neutral countries. In Sweden, two housing projects in the vicinity of Stockholm (one of them by Gropius’s former collaborator Fred Forbat) are about the only buildings of the war years that correspond to our notions of Neues Bauen. Holland, which next to Germany had played the most important role in the development

of the Modern Movement, was completely silenced during the Nazi occupation. In Switzerland a number of significant large buildings (such as the Bürgerspital in Basel and the Bleicherhof office building in Zurich) were erected, but just as in Germany a petit-bourgeois style was spreading.

It was in Brazil, a country far removed from the events of the war, that the first modern skyscraper slab, the Ministry of Health and Education in Rio de Janeiro, was realized. This Le Corbusier-inspired skyscraper, built in the years 1937–1943 by Lucio Costa and Oscar Niemeyer, exerted worldwide influence as a gigantic representational state building defined completely according to the standards of modernism.<sup>35</sup> At that time, it remained an isolated counterexample to the neoclassical, representation government buildings of Europe and the United States.

The important foundations for the spread of modern architecture were laid during the war, primarily in the United States. The German emigrants Walter Gropius and Ludwig Mies van der Rohe gave this undertaking much of its impetus. Gropius had become Dean of Architecture at Harvard University before the war. His one-family houses (built in collaboration with Marcel Breuer) and his Graduate Center at Harvard served as paradigms for what was to follow, and a great number of American architects who gained fame later on were trained at Harvard under him and his former Bauhaus colleagues. Mies's buildings at the Illinois Institute of Technology, especially those from the years 1944 and 1945, are — together with the California villas of the Viennese architects Richard Neutra and Rudolf Schindler — considered the most important buildings of the modern movement built in the United States during the late 1930s and the war years. In New York, several International Style houses built in the 1930s helped to prepare for the change of style after the war.

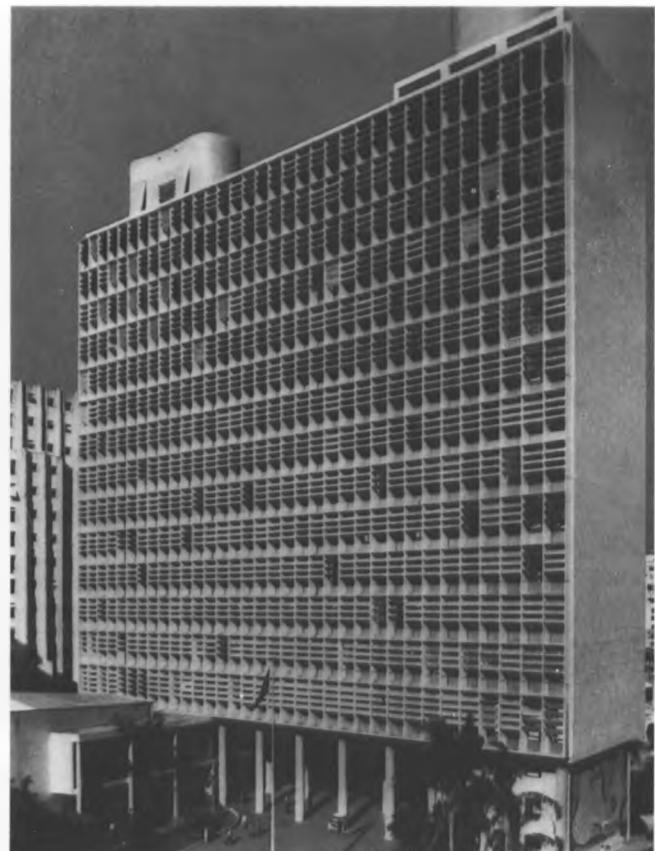
The 1932 exhibit on the International Style at the Museum of Modern Art in New York (or, to be more precise, the book by Henry-Russel Hitchcock and Philip Johnson published in connection with this exhibit) had a notably broad effect. The new European architectural endeavors were presented in a concentrated form, an already thoroughly established International Style of architecture was propagated by the force of concrete examples implementing formal criteria, and contents of meaning were mentioned as little as social facts. The Director of the Museum of Modern Art, Alfred H. Barr, Jr., wrote: "This book represents . . . conclusions [that] seem to me of extraordinary, perhaps of epoch-making importance. For [it has been proved] beyond any reasonable doubt, I believe, that there exists today a modern style as original, as consistent, as logical and as widely distributed as any in the past."<sup>36</sup> With these announcements the general scene seemed sufficiently prepared for the Modern Movement to expand beyond all national boundaries. And the end of the war was

**Lucio Costa, Oscar Niemeyer, et al.**

**Department of Health and Education**

**Rio de Janeiro**

**1937–1943**



an occasion for rebuilding and for a general upswing everywhere. The expansion did indeed take place, but in a surprising fashion that ran counter to the original program.

#### AFTER THE WAR:

#### KIDNEY-SHAPED TABLES AND CANDY COLORS<sup>37</sup>

Modern architecture shed its experimental exaggeration and its avant-garde madness by becoming average, by adjusting to the customary world of forms and by intermixing with them. The Modern Movement became a generally accepted style not through the buildings of the great masters Gropius, Mies, and Le Corbusier but through certain fashionable forms and petit-bourgeois derivatives. A pseudo-modern, trivial form of architecture supplied the rhetoric of the 1950s. Evidently, no one was satisfied by the mere purification of primary forms. In the face of the need for a modernity marked by a certain dynamism, these appeared too quiet and static.

The Stazione Termini [railway terminal] in Rome, shown in figure 7, offers a high-quality example of precisely those features that characterize the architecture and design of the early 1950s. Its seemingly endless facade, whose horizontal extension is emphasized by horizontal marble stripes, is connected to an entrance hall of glass with a roof shaped in a breathtaking curve, swinging out toward the piazza as if the arriving passengers need to be swept with one single motion into the city. Here modern architecture achieves a heightened dynamism; it gains in confidence and sweep; it suggests that relief and ease are possible, that the oppressive neoclassical angularity of the war years can be surmounted, and that the gloom of that period can be overcome. A new eloquence had become necessary. In the process of the international acceptance of the Modern Movement, the contents of its meaning had been changed and the moral injunction "Back to the simple forms!" had been transformed into ingratiating gestures of friendliness.

It may well be that a single modernist form — the kidney-shaped table (figure 8) — contributed more to the victory of "modern" architecture than all that Mies, Gropius, and Le Corbusier ever did. We cannot possibly recapture the impact of the simple fact that after about 1950, in every hotel lobby, the dignified oak table was replaced by a piece of furniture lacking any corners, and that this piece also made its way into private living quarters, changing the domestic atmosphere by the pure presence of its smooth sinuous forms. The decisive effect was not that of the streamline as such, which played a very important role in the 1920s and the 1930s by taking away the impression of weight associated with the forms in everyday use; now these forms were endowed with a sense of existential ease, with curves and an élan supposed to propel

people into a cheerful and smooth rhythm of living. In such forms the shape itself is elevated into a symbolic figure to which associations and emotions attach themselves.

Streamlining imparted to objects such as automobiles and ocean liners a projectile elegance; now humanity was to be lent wings. Streamlining a car had a functional value, and there was a symbolic significance to incorporating the motion of the passing cars into the streamlined sweep of a house facade, as Mendelsohn intended. The kidney-shaped table, too, was initially prompted by functional considerations: how to make a table wrap around both sides of a seated person. Early precursors of the kidney-shaped table, such as the one designed by Frederick Kiesler in 1938 (figure 9), clearly show the functional starting point of the design. Nevertheless, it turned into a free form, a pure figure capable of reversing and curving in a motion comparable to an amoeba's fluid locomotion in all directions. This furniture form was not an outgrowth of the experience of sitting; it was the result of a rhetorical demonstration and of fashionable intentions.

The form of the kidney-shaped table recurred in the patterns of curtains and wallpaper and in all sorts of decorative items. The pinnacle of the new elegance was a kidney-shaped swimming pool. Alvar Aalto had designed such a pool for the Villa Mairea as early as 1938–39, but what really gave the kidney shape its aura of sophistication was the hotel culture of Miami Beach. Morris Lapidus's Hotel Fontainebleau (1952) appeared in a number of Hollywood films,<sup>38</sup> and soon flung-out curvilinear facades, flamboyantly curved marquees, and sweeping staircases were the quintessence of what was meant by "modern" all over the world.

The design fashion of the 1950s looked for its models in the works of Aalto and Niemeyer. Aalto (whose name means "wave") had introduced the unorthodox anti-stereometric wave shapes in his early work. The reception booth in the lobby of his Sanatorium in Paimio (figure 13), his wave-shaped acoustic ceiling for the library in Viipuri, the curvilinear wooden elements of his furniture, and the undulating contours of his famous glass vase (figure 14) and his Baker House at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology prefigured the postwar ideal of the "curvilinear style," although none of the architects who looked for their bearings in Aalto's work ever achieved the pregnancy of his conception of form. What had been one element among many in Aalto's architecture was overelaborated to the point of tedium. Even Oscar Niemeyer, who (essentially under Aalto's influence) tried to create vigorous forms marked by the joy of living, produced an effect of superficiality in buildings such as his Kasino Pampulha in Brazil.

The breeziness of curved forms was not the only remedy by which the Western world sought to dispel the gloom of the

Leo Calini et al.  
Stazione Termini, Rome  
1950



F. Glass  
House in San Antonio, Texas  
ca. 1952



9

**Frederick Kiesler**  
**Combination table, 1938**



10

**Alvar Aalto**  
**Swimming pool, Villa Mairea**  
**1938–39**



11

**Morris Lapidus**  
**Hotel Fontainebleau**  
**Miami Beach**  
**1952**



12

**Marquee of a**  
**West German public building**  
**of the 1950s**

19



13

**Alvar Aalto**  
Reception room of sanatorium  
Paimio, Finland  
1929–1933



14

**Alvar Aalto**  
Glass vases for Savoy Restaurant  
1937

war. There was also a return of color to the public domain. The colors that first became dominant were not the resonant primary colors introduced by Mondrian, which have reappeared since the end of the 1950s in advertising posters, but the more reserved pastel colors — the “candy colors” of postwar modernism. They came to prevalence not only in wallpaper and curtains but also in the mosaic-covered interiors and entrance columns of department stores and office buildings.

The sweet candy tints managed to bridge the gap between the obtrusiveness of full tones and the neutrality of soft gradations. The average citizen, comfortable with the usual range of gray, beige, brown, and olive, managed to accept the new low-intensity colors, which behaved more or less like beige. These pale hues, suitably keyed to the ideal of unobtrusiveness, were the colors of the first modern popular culture; they supplanted the gray-green-beige triad and the stuffy wine red left behind by the *fin de siècle*.

Thus, modernism became the idiom of the public not by following the examples of its great masters but through the mediation of a lower order. The kidney-shaped table and the candy colors were the leitmotifs of the first postwar years. Although they have not been accredited by the history of architectural styles, they remain notable indications of a process significant in its own right: the popularization of a kind of architecture which, though at first resisted politically and ignored by traditional culture, was finally officially propagated.

#### THE LABORATORY STYLE

The “modernism for the nouveau riche” of the 1950s, which derived its leitmotifs from the marginal areas of classical modernism, lasted until the beginning of the 1960s, when there was a turn toward drawing ideas from the core of the modern movement. Tastes, fashion, and the whole design culture changed. Suddenly, as if gripped by a deep remorse, or realizing for the first time what was happening, architects began to look for ways to leave the dubious path of fashion and turned to the heroes of modernism for orientation. (However, even this attempt at an orientation was converted into a fashionable move.) Now the candy-colored cheerfulness gave way to the primary colors of Mondrian — black, white, red, and blue — and the preference for the curvilinear yielded to the squared-ruled precision of Mies. The wooden kidney-shaped table turned into a rectangular frame of steel tubing topped with polished glass. The curved auto bodies with bubble-shaped fenders turned into sharply defined boxes — a consciously intended contradiction of the fluidity of streamlining.

Through its descendant, the Ulmer Hochschule für Gestaltung [Ulm Academy of Design], the Bauhaus again gained worldwide influence. The design firm Braun set down the standards for the form of ordinary appliances all over the world with its “laboratory style,” which manifested a new objectivity through precise contours, sharp edges, and the use of black, white, and gray. The black matte steel tubing introduced by Mies became the distinguishing mark of a modernism consciously founded in geometry. A sober frame of mind, fixed on hygiene for its appearance and up to date on contemporary technology in all its details, made the fluidity, flamboyance, and glamour of the popularized “modernity” of the 1950s suddenly appear outmoded. This break was precipitously and graphically revealed in the lettering types used in advertising and publishing, as fluid cursory script of the sort shown in figure 15 was dropped in favor of “Bauhaus lettering” (figure 16).

But did the strict adherence to function which the theoreticians of architecture were so fond of proposing now make its appearance at last, or was the new kind of beauty only the result of the calculations of maximum functionality? Experience shows that theoretical maxims, even when buttressed by moral arguments, cannot stem the inherent striving of form to achieve complete autonomy. In the previous phase, the addiction to curvilinear form had led to the grinding down of the most resistant of edges; now even those forms that ought to be amenable to easy handling were furnished with edges. The casing of an electric razor, which ought to fit comfortably inside a hand, now had to become rectangular. An easy chair (figure 18) now presented hard edges and angles, which were more attuned to fashion’s appeal to the eye than to the functional necessities of comfortable seating. The same “functionalism” that had come to use right angles on the grounds of their matter-of-fact relevance and their functional aptness now, in no time, emancipated itself from function on aesthetic grounds and turned into a strictly formal principle — into a “style.”

Like the “postwar modernism” of the kidney-shaped table and the candy colors, the laboratory style was a product of the industrialized popularization of the possibilities of modern architecture and design, which had been formulated a good while earlier. What was happening now on the level of consumer culture was an almost autonomous unfolding of events from the history of modernism. Although the possibility of the creation of modern forms appeared on the horizon all at once, that possibility was tapped by the popularizers at various times over the course of the following years in a series of moves and reactions.

The laboratory style, and the veneration of Mies that was connected with it, elevated “dignified” objectivity as a new standard of modernism. The elegantly austere preference for

Hans Bernhard Reichow  
*Organische Baukunst* (1949)



Hans Maria Wingler  
*Das Bauhaus* (1962)

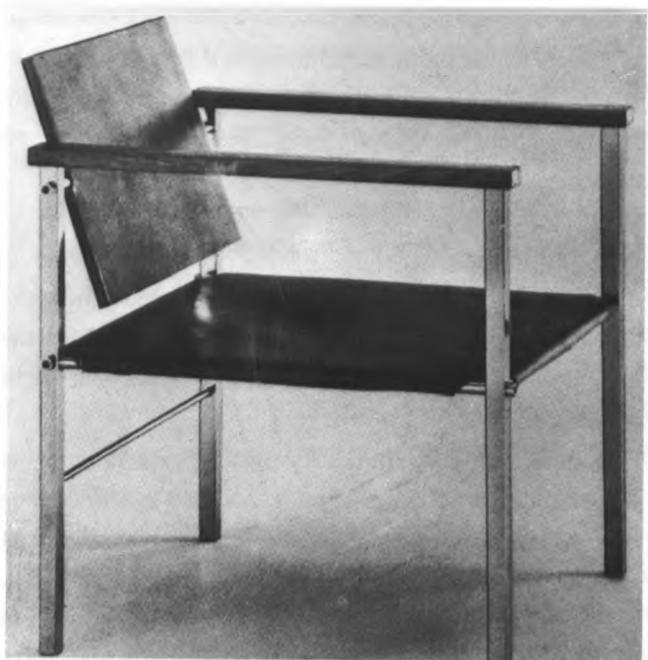
Das Bauhaus

Weimar Dessau Berlin

Verlag Gebr. Rasch & Co. und M. DuMont Schauberg

An armchair of the 1950s  
(design: Alvar Aalto)

An armchair of the 1960s



rectangularity that led to the use of a black-and-white grid even for curtain fabric was extended to chairs, tables, couches — the entire realm of interior design. A conception of modernity fed by the metaphor of restraint as suitable to objectivity permeated every object. The more this new style insisted on objectivity, the less it obeyed the program of functional utility.

The right angles, used as a basic form to implement and express this objectivity, was not always functionally apt where the organic forms of the human body determined the relation between form and function (that is, in the design of objects for everyday use); however, it became the determining leitmotif for functional form in architecture, where it always had facilitated the processes of design and construction.

#### ORGANIC FUNCTIONALISM

The functionalism of the 1960s was based on the right angle. But was it not possible to make functional considerations the basis of a more complex configuration of space that might even be more “human”?

Hugo Häring (whose Gut Gurkau, near Lübeck, is one of the most important buildings of the 1920s) had interpreted the concept of functionalist architecture in a different sense than most of his contemporaries. With his subtler conception, relating function and form to the full variety of the “processes of living,” Häring arrived at complex ground plans and irregular building shapes that were strongly divergent from the simple designs of Mies and Gropius. “The task before us,” he wrote in 1927, “is clear: the important thing is to envision a house by starting from the inside, from the actual processes of living, and to proceed according to this principle also in the layout. The outside is not given from the start, it comes about as a result, like the outside of every organic structure. . . . One has to run the wall around the furniture, instead of fitting the furniture inside rectangles. In that case, the walls would hardly get to form rectangles, and a rectangular building structure is not likely to be the final result. The walls would not absolutely have to be straight either. A natural order will come about. . . . The spaces will be attuned to their purpose. They will receive their shape from the persons living in them and from their life; they themselves are part of life and have to partake of it.”<sup>39</sup> “Many people still cannot conceive of developing a house as an organic whole, of letting it grow out of a ‘form fulfilling a function,’ or of viewing a house as the skin of human beings and as a human organ.”<sup>40</sup>

Häring opposed the aesthetic of primary forms prodded by Le Corbusier, and he unmasked its geometry as a compulsion. However, with his ideal of individually determined forms fulfilling specific functions was connected the risk of losing the spatial flexibility that was needed in a

society with constantly changing tasks and demands. The reason that instead of Häring’s functionalism of organic architecture a functionalism of cost-effectiveness came to prevail is evident in Mies’s personal reply to Häring: “You keep torturing yourself to find out exactly what people want. Just build a large enough shed, and let them do inside what they want to!”<sup>41</sup> With this, the controversy between these two architects, who occasionally worked in the same studio and who were friends, came to a conclusion.

Häring treated a building as if it were a task of object design, and a house as an ergonomic appliance. In his view, a house ought to be adjusted to human movements as an easy chair adjusts to the human body. This “organic” functionalism was much too expensive when compared with the functionalism dictated by the economics of construction and utility. The victory of the square in architecture was extended into other areas of design, and it displaced the concern for the form and the movements of the human body in favor of a preference for hard edges, right angles, and objectivity.

Häring is an isolated case in the history of modernism. His buildings are much more than pieces of object design, yet Häring illustrates the failure of functionalism conceived along “all too human” lines. Victory belonged to the square, the crate, the box — the multipurpose case as universal packaging. This decision, already made in the 1920s, was conclusively reconfirmed in the 1960s. The last argument in architecture that was left after all rhetorics and all representations of contents had been dropped was the appeal to reason as a functionalist rationale — an aesthetic whose stylistic criteria, determined by this kind of rationality, led to forms as simple, cool, and clear as the “rational” calculus of utility itself. What had happened to the functionalism that had opposed “seriousism” by demanding a return to the simplest forms? Where was the aesthetic that had drawn its radiant optimism from the expressive force of an ocean liner?

What actually occurred during the postwar years in the greater part of architecture was the low-grade, constant, unconscious repetition of the decision made by Mies in the 1920s in reaction to Häring. All complex questions were abandoned in favor of the greatest possible simplification and generalization. Moreover, nearly all contents were removed from architecture, except those which Mies had formulated in 1922, in his manifesto in the magazine *G*, as the articles of faith of pure functionalist architecture. But what was pure functionalist architecture supposed to look like, when Mies himself proved intent on claiming for it as a finishing touch the most precious materials (as in the Seagram Building, with its steel framework finished in bronze)? Where is it to be found, this pure functionalist architecture that according to Theodor Adorno can never exist in a “chemically pure” state?<sup>42</sup>

No other creation of Das Neue Bauen has so definitively shaped the idea of the direct fulfillment of function as Mies's 1923 chalk drawing of an office building (figure 19). More than thirty years were to pass before the potential of this design was realized; however, during the 1950s it became the prototype for a vast number of office buildings and factories all over the world.

Here the qualities of the new steel-and-concrete construction were utilized in the most circumspect and economical way, with rows of girder supports topped by coverplates, story upon story, and with the bracket arms of the outer supports holding up the free-hanging space envelope made up of the window hinges and parapets. Here was to be seen, as a complete entity, the simplest and (in regard to its construction costs) most economical large-scale framework of a modern service building. It was the most consistent reductionist form of a building in concrete.

Mies published this drawing in the first issue of the Berlin magazine G together with his "Arbeitsthesen" [work theses], which embody as concisely as his drawing the program of functionalist architecture: "We reject any aesthetic speculation, any doctrine and any formalism . . . our work is: the office building. An office building is a house of work, of organization, of clarity, of economy. Well-lit, large work spaces, easy to survey, not divided but only articulated like the organism of the enterprise at hand. The maximum effect with the minimum expenditure of means. The materials are concrete, iron, glass. Buildings in reinforced concrete are essentially skeletal constructions. No mounds of pasta, no tank turrets. As the girder construction acts as a support, the curtain walls don't. The result is a building with a skeleton and a skin."<sup>43</sup>

Mies's drawing proposed the simplest imaginable architectural covering of the simplest conceivable space. It was a generally valid construction fulfilling the most general needs. Yet the most insistent of these needs — the demand for "the maximum effect with the minimum expenditure of means" — pushed all the other needs aside. It seemed as if the chaotic world, offering something for everyone with its hundred different types of buildings, was reduced to one binding norm.

#### DOCTRINAIRE FUNCTIONALISM

As convincing and aesthetically impressive as Mies's drawing may have been, its impact was nothing short of a disaster. By now it has been generally realized that the idea on which Mies's design is based becomes obstructive and inimical to

life as soon as it is made into an absolute. Building complexes shaped by this kind of absolutist rationality, such as the new universities of Bochum (figure 20) and Göttingen (figure 21), have all semblances of life choked out of them. Mies's "less is more," though a source of inspiration for him, is unmasked here as a threateningly one-sided principle. That such architecture is not particularly conducive to the creative mental activity for which a university is intended hardly needs to be stressed.

The validation of Mies's design as an architectural prototype coincided with the general advance in the functionalism of building and contracting in the late 1950s and the 1960s. The concepts of "impoverished function" (Alfred Lorenzer) and "vulgar functionalism" (Adolf Max Vogt) refer to the successes of this kind of architecture.

In the postwar period, individual forms and motifs of classic modernism became rigid to the point of becoming doctrinaire. A selection took place, determined by the calculus of expediency, that dismissed most of the solutions proposed by classical modernism, leaving only a limited stock of more cost-efficient solutions to choose from. To this limited stock belonged the type of office building suggested by Mies.

The building types and motifs of doctrinaire functionalism, in addition to Mies's high-rise skeleton construction in glass, included Gropius's Bauhaus-derived free ground plan and modular housing as it was defined around 1920. By far the greatest part of the building production of the postwar period was tied to these fixed typological preferences. Doctrinaire functionalism left intact as little of the diversity of modernism as of the intensity of meanings connected to the building forms. The argumentative appeal to utility effaced everything else that was of possible significance.

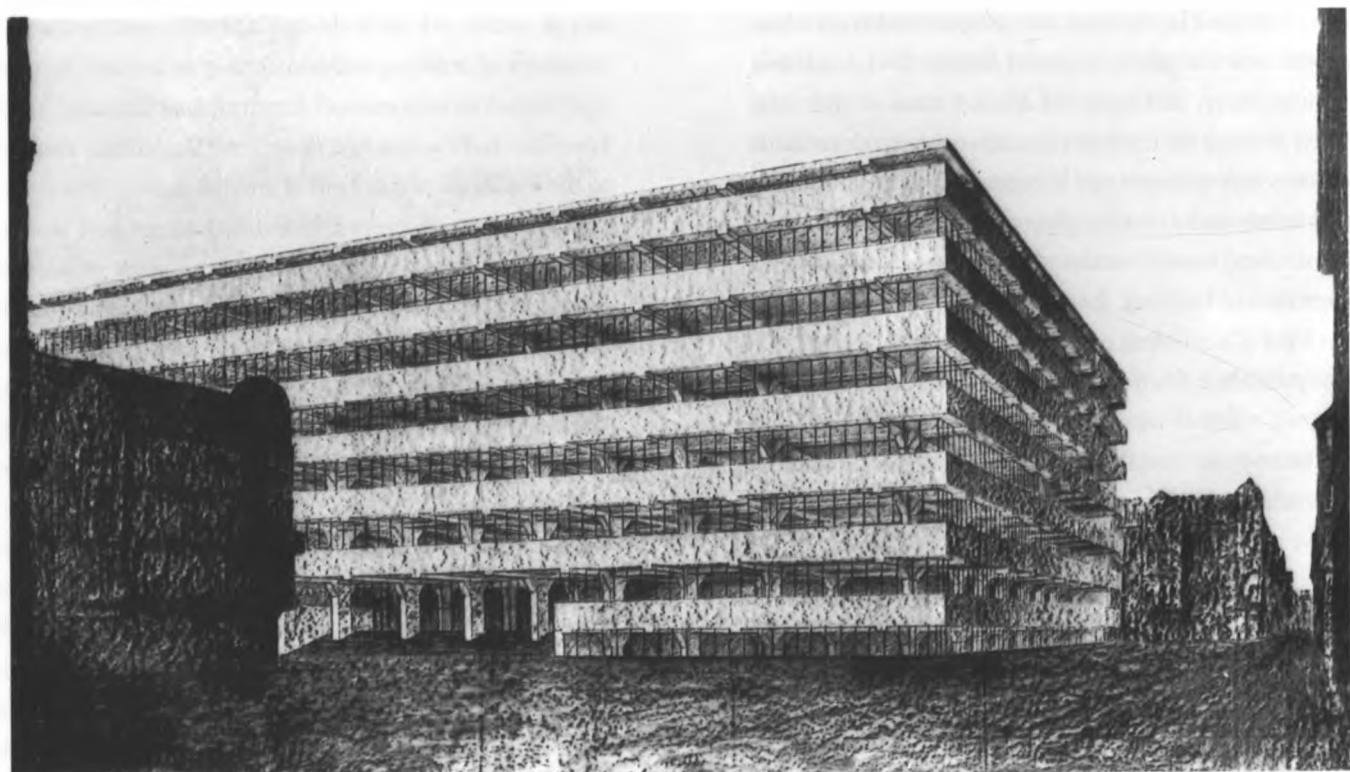
#### THE OPEN GROUND PLAN

Frank Lloyd Wright anticipated Gropius with the irregular ground plans of his country houses, inasmuch as he dissolved the symmetrical order of the conventional layout. Gropius's Bauhaus in Dessau (figures 22, 23) extends in four different directions, thus preventing the formation of a single mandatory facade. To be sure, the divided building complex is oriented in respect to the building line of the streets. But, as Giedion wrote, "the eye cannot sum up this complex at one view; it is necessary to go around it on all sides. . . . The ground plan lacks all tendency to contract inward upon itself; it expands, on the contrary, and reaches out over the ground. In outline it resembles one of those fireworks called 'pinwheels,' with three hooked arms extending from a center."<sup>44</sup>

Ludwig Mies van der Rohe

Design for an office building

1923

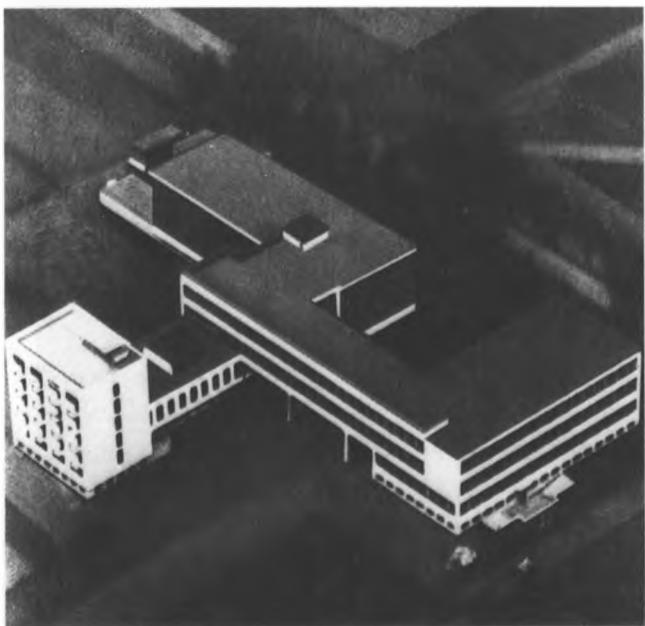


Hentrich, Petschnigg, and partners  
University of Bochum  
1970



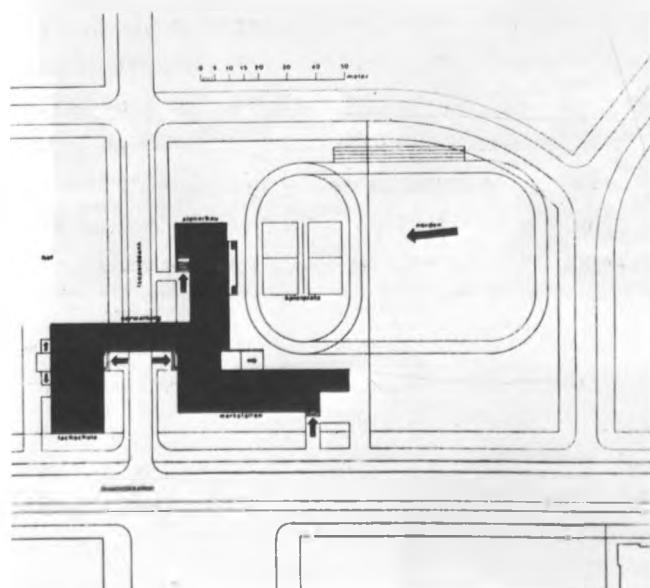
Science buildings  
of Göttingen University  
1972

**Walter Gropius**  
Bauhaus, Dessau  
1927



23

**Walter Gropius**  
Ground plan of Bauhaus  
1927



Soon enough, and especially after the Second World War, the open ground plan of the Bauhaus developed an unforeseeably large following. It came to be expected that a public building would be situated upon a green expanse and would extend in all directions, spreading its wings freely on all sides. The relation to the building line was always secondary, and often the usual building line along a roadside was broken down in order to provide space for one of these Bauhaus replicas. The main objective was to demonstrate the greatest possible independence of the wings. The more these grand and unrestrained structures spread out inside the city, the clearer it became that the density of the city was being dissolved and the coherence of the city's structure was being lost. While each one of these buildings was given its freedom, the city as a whole was disrupted by the unrestricted development of the building unit and became increasingly chaotic. The free ground plan — the building on a green expanse exposed to circulation on all its sides — was hostile to the city. Postmodernism opposed the consequences of this ideal of planning.

#### ROW HOUSES

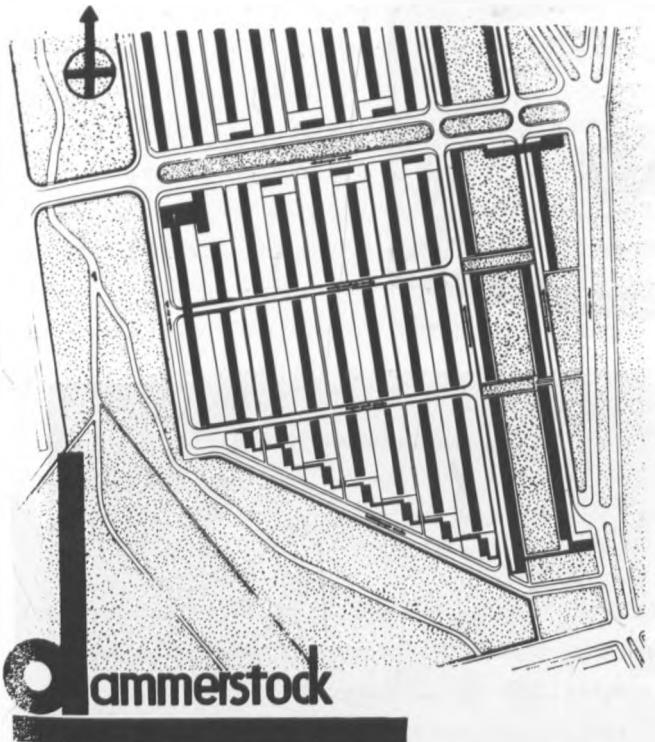
As disruptive as the free ground plan was the row apartment housing that began to dominate the residential sections of the suburbs and (less frequently) the inner city in the early 1950s. Around 1960 it seemed that the only imaginable kind of building for rental apartments was the one shaped by the rationalization programs of the 1930s (see, e.g., figure 24).

At the end of the 1920s it became compellingly evident that, of all experimentally planned placements of apartment blocks, arrangement in rows was the most efficient (see figure 25). Each with its narrow gable front against the street and set at a proper interval to the next unit, row upon row of multi-story apartment houses were built, with the intervening spaces covered with lawns, bushes, and paths. This is a familiar picture all over the world. The endless addition of identical units — one of the possibilities of the architecture of housing in the 1920s — had its greatest success after the Second World War.

Yet the housing projects of the 1920s that achieved fame — those that we consider significant and that still play a role in our search for an environment we can identify with — have hardly anything in common with inanely simple row housing.

Bruno Taut's Britz project (figure 26) derives its impressiveness from the variety in the placement of the rows. The special character of this housing development is due to a very pronounced basic shape — that of a horseshoe, which gives it the outline of a centered structure. Next to it, opening into a

**Walter Gropius**  
**Ground plan of**  
**housing development**  
**Karlsruhe Dammerstock**  
**1929–1931**



**Ferdinand Kramer**  
**Westhausen housing development**  
**Frankfurt am Main**  
**1929**

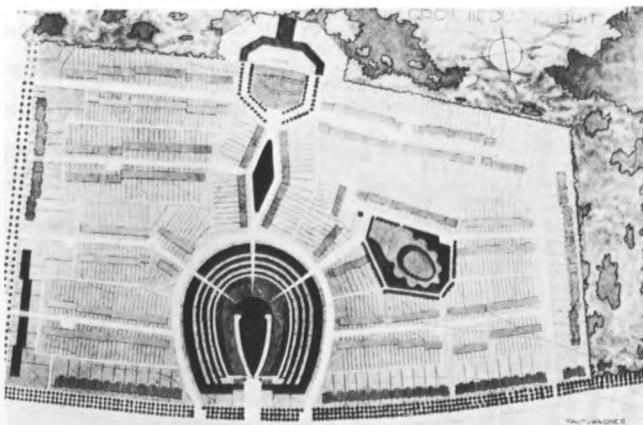


long-pointed diamond shape, follows the "Hüsung" tract. Clear geometric shapes define the inner spaces, whose rigorous symmetry ties in the rather loosely laid out radial streets on both sides.

The housing project Weisse Stadt [White City] follows the course of an avenue of trees from the nineteenth century right into the white modernist world, leading the eye to the arcaded house set across the visual field as the center of its recessional depth. The apartment tracts stretch out in rows on both sides of the avenue of trees. The essence of this housing development thus does not lie in an isolated calculation solved in an abstract mathematical context; on the contrary, the architects (Wilhelm Bühning, O. R. Salvisberg, and Bruno Ahrends) were greatly concerned to articulate the difference and variety of the individual elements within a manifold whole. They did not try to make a point of multiplying one unit to form an unbroken building continuum; rather, they wanted to create culmination points of specific spatial features.

Like the housing developments of Bruno Taut and other Berlin architects, the housing developments of Ernst May in Frankfurt am Main are marked by a layout that was more than a simple misuse of a given site as an area to be filled by the mere addition of identical building units. It is highly significant that those housing developments of the 1920s that became especially famous were conspicuous by the variety of their spatial handling, by their insistence on a compositional relationship between the rows of the houses and the intervals between them. Viewing Ernst May's 1928 Bruchfeldstrasse project in Frankfurt (figure 30), one is struck by the numerous different accentuations of the buildings as well as by the formal variations in the intervening spaces and street areas. One row of buildings following the street line leads directly into open areas, and from these one is led into yards which develop out of the blocks along the street. One of these yards has a strictly symmetrical layout, which strings out impressive building chains emphatically in one direction toward the center (marked by a building taller than the rest) and then pulls them back to point toward an entrance wing. Aside from the original oblique staggering of the housing rows that constitute the yard's sides, all the motifs of this configuration are indebted to Baroque and nineteenth-century planning. They are combined with new motifs, such as irregular and "broken" blocks, into individual rows that do not cohere as a hard quadrature but hang loosely together as configurations combined by chance. Here traditional and innovative elements are interspersed. Like Bruno Taut, May did not shy away from including severe, formally pronounced, and even axially symmetrical elements into his housing developments. The aim of all of this was to set in contrast or to alternate differently defined subsections. Taut used the concept of

Bruno Taut  
Ground plan of  
Britz housing project  
1925–1931



Bruno Taut  
Britz housing project  
Hufeisen, Berlin  
1925–1931

Bruno Ahrends, Otto Salvisberg, et al.

Weisse Stadt, Berlin

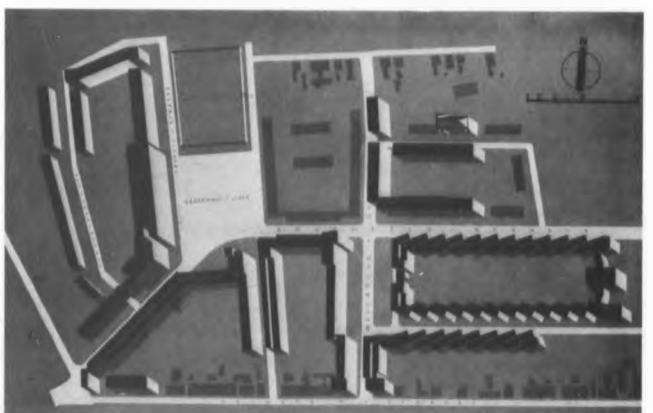
1929–30



28

**Bruno Taut**  
**Britz housing project**

Hüsun, Berlin  
1925–1931



30

**Ernst May**  
**Bruchfeldstrasse housing development**  
**Frankfurt am Main**

31

1928

**Otto Bartning and Hugo Häring**  
**Siemensstadt housing development**  
**Berlin**  
**1929–1931**



31

**Detail of**  
**Siemensstadt development**



32

“exterior living spaces” to explain that the space outside a housing unit has to be planned as carefully as the whole apartment complex. This meaningful interrelation of a dwelling unit and an eventful and strongly defined exterior space, realized by the great architects of the 1920s, was almost entirely lost during the subsequent period.

Even the Siemensstadt housing development in Berlin, which consists predominantly of rows of buildings, shows an abundance of different perspectives and a great spatial variety. For instance, the housing rows on one side of a street are arranged perpendicular to the street whereas on the other side a long continuous block extends along the curve of the street. (Thus the traffic noise can be dissipated between the individual rows on the one side while the continuous block on the other side distinctly stabilizes the street space in a dramatic juxtaposition of solids and voids.) Other housing blocks at Siemensstadt (such as the one shown in figure 32) have balconies that bulge out of the facade.

Bruno Taut designed some window partitions for his housing developments that are strongly akin to Piet Mondrian's paintings (figure 33).

Thus, using the scantiest of means and the wealth of their imaginations, the master architects of the 1920s succeeded in profoundly refashioning all forms, from the “compositional” form of the layout down to the shape of the smallest architectural details.

Analyzing the International Style, Johnson, Hitchcock, and Giedion hardly perceived this great variety, and took as little notice of the color variegation of Taut's buildings as of the intensifying effects of the spatial sequences in the exterior spaces. There remained only the radiant white row as Gropius used it last in the Dammerstock project in Karlsruhe. (This principle of complete limitation to the repetition of one standard unit is embodied even more rigorously in the Haselhorst project in Berlin.) A survey of the important housing developments of the 1920s, starting with Martin Wagner's Lindenhof in Berlin and including the Pessac project of Le Corbusier and the late housing developments of Bruno Taut, leaves the impression of a great wealth of planning creativity, in contrast to the poverty it turned into later. The functionalists of the postwar period who claimed to derive their works from the models of the 1920s obviously remained blind to anything that did not conform to the ideals of purification propounded in that period.

At the end of the fruitful era of the Weimar Republic, at the beginning of the 1930s, Hitchcock and Johnson formulated with the concept of the International Style a simplistic verdict that corresponded, by dint of its simplicity, to the simplistic results of the planning of acres of housing rows (as at Haselhorst). These results of the prewar period became the models for the 1950s and the 1960s.

Bruno Taut  
Windows of  
Britz housing development  
1926



34

Le Corbusier  
Villa Savoye  
Poissy (near Paris)  
1929

Even today, the critical judgment of architecture is bound by this dictatorial limitation, which robbed modernism of the exuberance and the ebullient multiplicity of the 1920s. Too often the defenders of modernism are defending a truncated version. The postwar functionalists were fixed on cost rationalization as their only model. And even today, we believe that we can appeal to that kind of modernism, shorn of all historically given elements of planning, that Ernst May and Bruno Taut observed. The horseshoe of Britz and the Bruchfeldstrasse in Frankfurt are highly complex combinations of loosely grouped rows in open formations, on the one hand, and elements strictly arranged in "baroque" symmetry, on the other hand. Today's modernists have repressed the fact that the innovators of yesterday had a much more open conception of urban planning, which took into consideration existing traditions; they use as their guide a limited version of modernism bound by a doctrinaire adherence to a few motifs and models. This is all the more astonishing in view of the fact that the inherent dilemma was realized early on by Adolf Behne, the most clear-sighted contemporary of Taut and May: "The method of Dammerstock is a didactic method, a method allowing only an "either-or". . . . By narrowing down living to the routines of inhabiting, this kind of housing fails altogether to facilitate living. . . . This is not a togetherness but a drawing apart. A housing project without any integration is not as it should be. If the area happens to be large enough, the housing rows might be drawn out and run for miles and miles to the North and South. This is packaging people on a production line, it is not urban architecture. The starting points of row housing are excellent, and the whole thing should be developed for further use. However, it can become urban architecture only if it is used as a means for this goal and is not turned into a substitute for it."<sup>45</sup>

The preference for modern architecture is entrenched in a small number of rigid ideas. Mies's office building, the open ground plan of the Bauhaus at Dessau, and the row housing of the early 1930s are the prototypes on which it is fixed. Added to these are the formal characteristics to which the remaining contents of modernism are attached. Lightness of construction is combined with technical progress; the bareness of the facade with rationalization and enlightenment; the multiplication of standardized elements with logical consequence. All these formal qualities are far removed from history and tradition. To realize the degree of innovation achieved through them one need only look at the floating white rectangular Villa Savoye, or at the light skeletal frames of Mies's high-rise buildings, or at the row housing interspersed with strips of green. These are the forms of a modernism made into an absolute, removed from any ties to the existing cities or to history, leading everywhere to a complete break with estab-

lished traditions and threatening to exchange the old environment for a totally new one. The contents upheld by the avant-garde as part of modernism evaporated with the popularization and multiplication of its doctrine.

35

Jean Renaudie

Jeanne Hachette Center

Ivry, France

1969–1972

#### THE INTERESTING

The insistence on a language of modern architecture that would still depend on abstract geometry for its expressive force led to an exaggeration of the formal principles of modernism that has, since the mid 1960s, become familiar throughout the Western world. The next-best reaction to the monotony of functionalism consisted in an overblown effort to pep up its formal potential. To get attention, one creates an interesting new look. The eye is offered a melodramatic spectacle that is supposed to fascinate by the use of daring formal combinations. Being interesting amounts to being striking. The longer the earliest version of modernism is rigidly defended, the more meaningless or the more conspicuous the buildings that claim such morally pure lineage become. Our world is brimming over with the products of the muteness and control of modern objectivity, on the one hand, and the results of the reactive gesticulations of the Interesting, on the other. Since meaningful contents are missing, mere form is called upon to produce miracles.

The absurd lengths to which these efforts can go in the attempt to preserve the appearance of modernity are particularly evident in Jean Renaudie's buildings. The antidote to monotony is chaos — this is what one is inclined to believe as one looks down from one of the high-rise residential buildings of Renaudie's Jeanne Hachette Center in Ivry upon the penthouse terraces of the buildings below, where a riot of prickly triangles and spiky trapezoids is unleashed for the mere purpose of dramatizing the sensationalist claims of originality (figure 35). This kind of irrationality is at a loss before the task of creating meaningful expression on purely geometric terms. It can be understood only as an extreme reaction prompted by the desire to turn the use of meaningless abstract forms into something important and pregnant with meaning. Yet, nothing happens!

Along the arterial roads of Paris one comes across formidable "modern" buildings, such as those shown in figure 36, that look like settings for James Bond movies. Steel framework runs up against radiant white plaster, panoramic windows alternate with rows of bull's-eye openings; chunks of stories jut out dramatically over the street and draw back as dramatically; towers rise in bundles against masses of blocks. Modernity turns elegant, the buildings become interesting. Just looking at a staircase tower with oblique lighting fills one with the greatest expectations. But, nothing happens!





36

**Martin S. van Treeck**

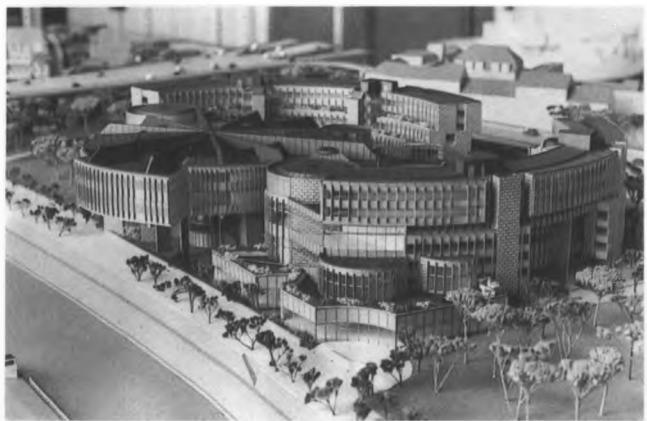
**Hotel Riquet**

**Paris**

**1972–1977**

35

**Eller, Moser, and Walter**  
**Landtag building**  
**Düsseldorf**  
**1981ff.**



**Hotel under construction**  
**in La Grand Motte**  
**1974**

Like the terraced roofs of Ivry, the curved elements of the new Landtag building in Düsseldorf (figure 37) are meaningless ornamentation. These singular parts, arranged in circles, are rounded off to a breathtakingly interesting "composition," yet the conventionally modern grid of the facades remains mute. While austere reserve and noble simplicity are predominant in the elevation, the individual blocks are invested with a decorative sweep. One is led to expect great things to happen, but these great expectations dwindle to nothing. Equally superficial are the new UN Center in Vienna and the fortresslike European Parliament in Strasbourg. These buildings house important political institutions, which call for appropriate architectural characterization; however, what their architects drew from the abstract geometric vocabulary produced an appearance of significance unconnected to a meaningful message, bound up with the formally interesting, and ending up in geometrical ostentation.

Because modern architecture — highly mindful of its progressiveness — abstains from metaphorical language, from symbols and ornament, because it tolerates externally added contents as, at best, advertising signs, because it deems itself independent of all traditions and all historical conditions, because it wishes to be absolutely "free," it becomes a victim of exhibitionist posturing in geometric terms. (See, e.g., figure 38.)

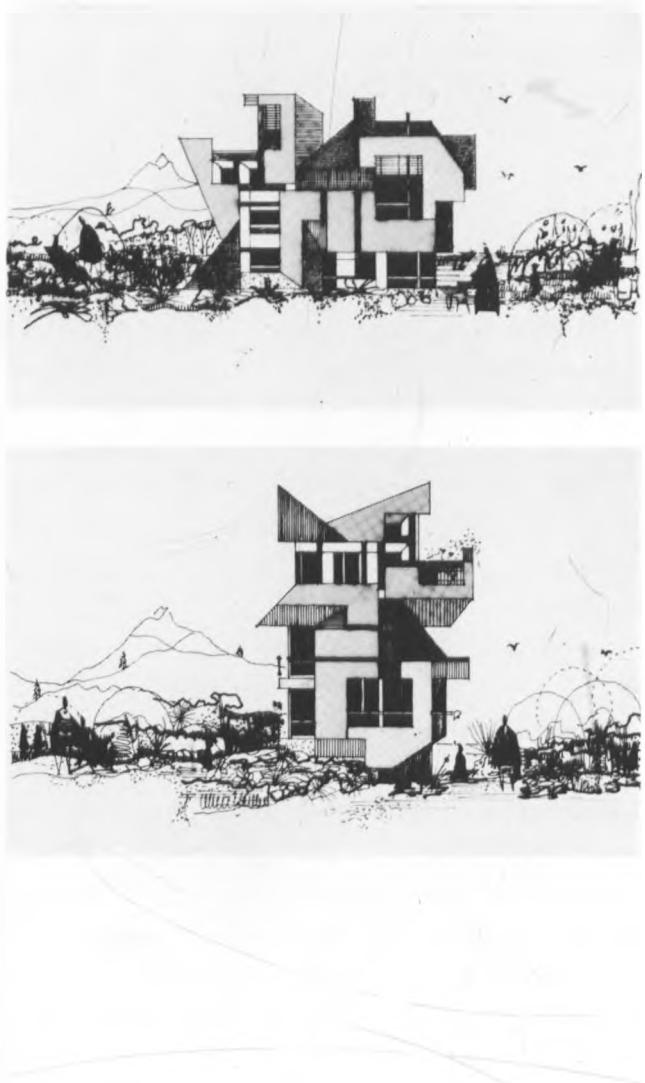
Though at first modernism staked everything on purified primary forms, it ended up in abstract compositions serving the total disintegration of meaning.

Any connection to an architectural theory concerned with aptness was given up. The appropriate forms with which Schinkel, Soane, and even Bruno Taut aimed at a certain metaphoric characterization gave way to free forms, products of pure imagination and total arbitrariness. However, this haphazard characterization, this play of associations, often leads to suggestive innuendos, or to unintentionally comic or dramatic effects (as in the case of the European Parliament).

Even private housing is showing the marks of the striving for the merely formally interesting solution. It is teeming with riotous original ideas, all in the service of culling from abstraction the last possible spectacular effects. (See, e.g., figure 39.) Since the use of abstract formal inventions has reached the greatest heights of frenzy in the sphere of public buildings, the recent daredeviltry of the Swiss cottage builders seems amiable.

The end of modernism came about through the noncommittalism of overinflated stereometry. Its original contents — the machine aesthetic and the belief in a moral-aesthetic enlightenment — are no longer visible. At the end of this development, the architects who no longer use modernist formalism for the commercialization of architecture into an

**Hans Banz**  
**Design for a house**  
**1973**



aesthetic commodity are faced with the question whether they should not look for the answers and for a way out in those realms of architecture in which the great taboos remained in force. Aren't the very prohibitions to which modernism subjected itself responsible for the exhaustion of modernism? Didn't the prescription of great simplicity necessarily produce as a reaction a complexity greater than ever before? Didn't the modern iconoclasm and destruction of ornament provoke as a necessary consequence the desire for a new symbolic language? Didn't the striving for perfection give the signal to look for the opposition — for improvisation?

Shouldn't we look for drastic means capable of breaking nearly all taboos in order to correct the cost-efficiency bias of functionalism and the formalist emptiness of modernism?

#### THE REVISION OF MODERNISM

Through the inclusion of hitherto excluded elements, a new concept of modernism is being formulated. The total break with history is retracted, along with the all-too-rigorous innovation of the surviving traditions. This reorientation introduces breaches in architectural practice and architectural theory that no longer allow us to speak of a continuous development of modernism. The "unfinished modern" (Habermas) can be brought to completion only when it takes into consideration some values that run counter to its original definition — values that at the time of that definition were considered inimical to modernism.

The revision of modernism is the precondition for its future validity. Where just yesterday irreconcilable, mutually exclusive claims existed, now many a synthesis will have to be achieved. These corrections can take place only if we follow the lead of history; they cannot be self-programmed. Some of the advances of history have to be responded to exactly at the points where modernism had thrown out the baby with the bathwater — where its pursuit of innovation had turned into an addiction to the New and where it had unhesitatingly torn the thread of continuity.

Seen against the heroics of the 1920s, postmodernism appears to be an epoch of interrelation and mediation. In contrast to the opposites that claimed exclusive validity in that earlier period, it attempts a synthesis — a fact that, to some, makes it appear to be only a bad compromise and a maneuver of escape from the clear, pure, consistent demands of classical modernism. The offer of mediation seems to be a weakness when contrasted with the forcefulness of the revolutionary avant-garde. Yet the combining of apparent opposites, the equalization, the relativization of absolutes in the realm of ideas and programs, are preconditions for not becoming life-denying, as modernism has become.

**Subterfuges**

**and**

**Reorientations**

Suburban house near St. Louis

ca. 1974

**An Alternative to Functionalism?**

No other trend has called modernism into question more strongly than the historicizing eclecticism that has spread all over the world. Inclining to sentiment and obsessed with the glamour of representation, the architecture of the private suburban house developed its own standards. But corporate headquarters, insurance companies, and banks, which had shown a preference for the grid structure of Mies, also never failed to keep in mind the representational potential of historical styles. That persistent undercurrent, which constantly eroded the ideality of purified modernism and confronted the innovators' reformatory intentions with a brazen and obstinately upheld propensity for trimmings, gained recognition in public architecture again and again. The stagnant shallows of eclecticism have steadily spread.

Eclecticism was an all-too-humanly conceived counter to modernism. Certain value preferences easily rendered within the range of the rhetorical means of figurative representation — the craving for recognition of the nouveau riche, the need for cozy comforts of the petit bourgeois, the complacent constancy of the conservatives — could not be expressed in the language of modern architecture for the very reason that this language wanted to be modern and enlightened. While it was available as a purified idiom of a purified architecture, it did not lend itself to rendering the representational needs of the "unenlightened" public. In the modernist conception, those needs called for reactionary figurative contents, assigned to the past by the avant-garde (which had, nevertheless, not succeeded in achieving a general recognition of the progressiveness of the machine aesthetic as a universally valid source of content). Now, as ever, there are people who want as little to be "modern" as to recognize the purifying aesthetic of Das Neue Bauen. Low overhanging roofs remain a popular feature as long as they evoke coziness, security, and pride in status, and as long as no substitutes are offered.

Why should a client be permitted to express interest in correct construction but prohibited from showing interest in symbolic representation? (I once met a physician who told me that his house was a total failure because it had been built with the utmost consistency. For him this was not a positive thing; it did not express his identity or enhance his image. He accepted the functionalist argument only to calm his deep dissatisfaction with the ugliness of his house.)

The most controversial eclecticist of the present, the American Philip Johnson, was the first to formulate a critique of functionalism. In 1955, Johnson published in the annual of the Yale University Department of Architecture some principles (which he had formulated in 1954 at Harvard) that sound heretical to some people even today.<sup>46</sup> Functionalism was

called to judgment and accused of being a "crutch of architecture":

Merely that a building works is not sufficient. You expect that it works. You expect a kitchen hot-water faucet to run hot water these days. You expect any architect, a graduate of Harvard or not, to be able to put the kitchen in the right place. But when it's used as a crutch, it impedes. . . . If the business of getting the house to run well takes precedence over your artistic invention the result won't be architecture at all; merely an assemblage of useful parts. . . . Perhaps the most trouble of all is the Crutch of Structure. . . . Structure is a very dangerous thing to cling to. You can be led to believe that clear structure clearly expressed will end up being architecture by itself. You say I don't have to design anymore. All I have to do is make a clean structural order. I have believed this off and on myself. It's a very nice crutch, you see, because, after all, you can't mess up a building too badly if the bays are all equal and all the windows the same size.<sup>47</sup>

#### Philip Johnson

Eclecticism as a way out of the compulsions of functionalism has been practiced with the greatest virtuosity by Philip Johnson, whose development illustrates the course of the reversion to the retrospective orientation especially well.

Johnson's career began with the building of his own weekend house (figure 41), which showed him to be a student of Mies but which made it clear that he intended to surpass his admired teacher. Omitting the veranda roof that related the glass box of Mies's Farnsworth house (figure 42) to the outside space, Johnson placed a perfect glass block framed with black steel bars on a low brick base, turning the surrounding meadow into a rug. For contrast, he set a round brick cylinder, containing the toilet, the bath, and the chimney, inside the glass cube. The utility value of the house was almost totally disregarded. It was the pure embodiment of an aesthetic. In place of interior walls, furniture was used to partition off the rooms and suggest the division of the various areas: the rug on the floor designates the living room; the bed (behind a closet door) the bedroom; the stovetop the kitchen. The form of the box overshadowed all its other aspects. Here was the concept of modernism, in the sense of Mies, realized with utmost consistency. Here the inherent potential of glass architecture was fulfilled completely. Thus, it is not surprising that only a few years later Johnson was looking for new models.

The turning point came in 1959, with the commission for the guest house of the Rockefeller family in New York. As figure 43 shows, Johnson's original elevation plan called for a facade composed of a grid of small-partitioned windows with a series of segmental arches superimposed over its full height. Here Johnson began the search for new forms by delving into

41

R

Philip Johnson  
House of the architect  
New Canaan, Connecticut

1949



42

Ludwig Mies van der Rohe  
Farnsworth house  
Plano, Illinois  
1945–1950

Philip Johnson

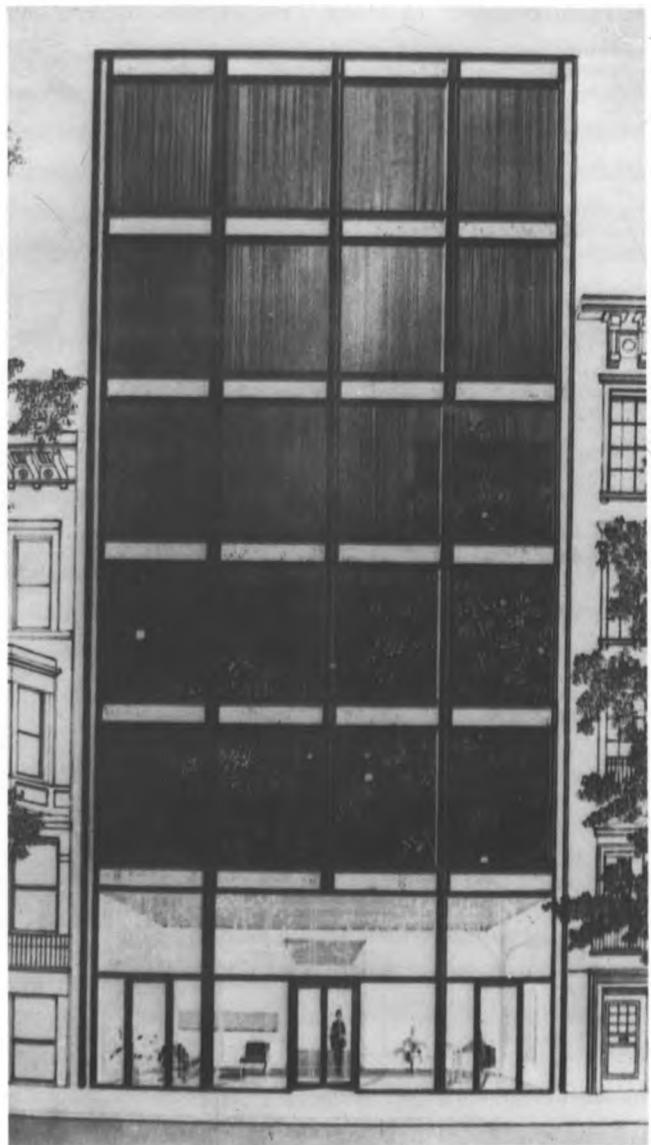
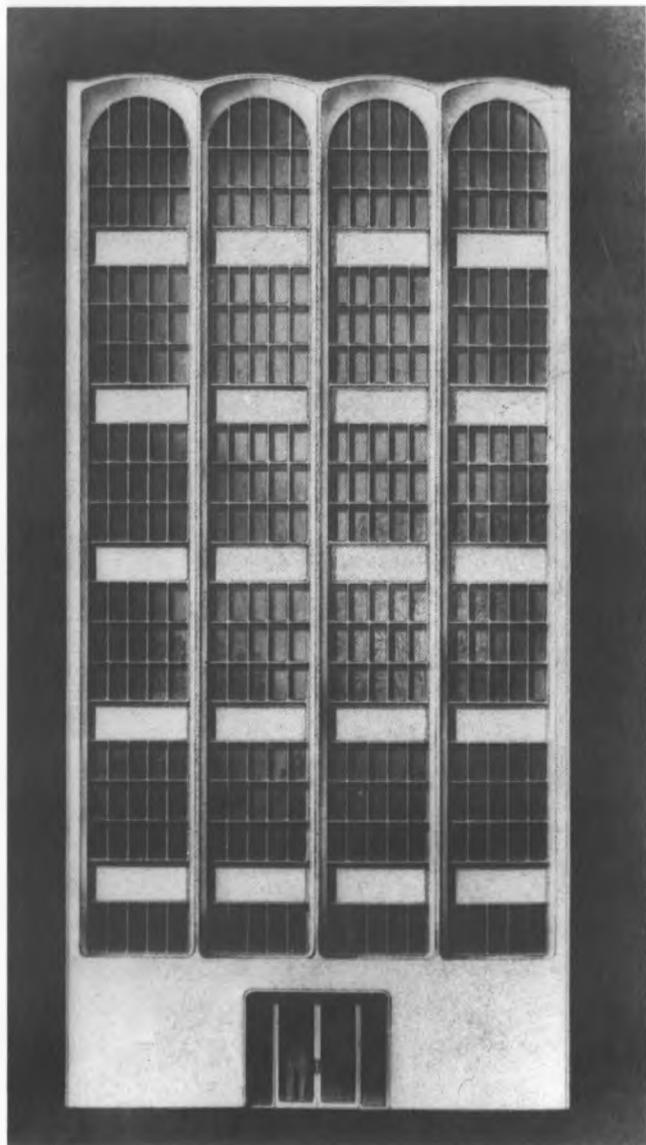
Guest house of

Rockefeller family

New York

1980

(left) first design; (right) executed design



the history of architecture. The model for the proposed facade was Louis Sullivan's Prudential Building in Buffalo.<sup>48</sup> Thus, Sullivan — the preferred good reference of modern functionalism — lent Johnson an aspect of his work that the advocates of functionalism preferred not to mention. Now Johnson actually became what he basically was: an architectural historian who built. Here was the architect who had just created the most modern building of all, the glass house at New Canaan, proposing an old-fashioned facade with the features of an architecture from which the client wished to distance himself at any price but to which Johnson, surfeited by the modern, had returned: "Question to Johnson: 'Do you remember in which way [Rockefeller] objected to your first proposal?' Answer: 'It really wasn't modern. He wanted more glass. He just has an impression. It looked nineteenth century.' "<sup>49</sup> Johnson's refocusing on the past as a qualified historian to whom the world of old still has a great deal to tell and who suddenly finds the laconic temper of modernism lacking in inspiration makes him a typical contemporary figure. He did not start as an eclecticist; however, once he had deliberately left modernism behind, he had no eye for his patron's concept of modernity. The melodrama played out between Rockefeller and Johnson is underscored by the old theme of the misunderstood genius who is far ahead of his time, but Johnson had dropped back behind his time. "In what style should we build?" — the classical question of eclecticists, first asked by the Count von Hübsch at the beginning of the nineteenth century — is decided in each case by the patron. To each according to his tastes! What prevailed in this case was Rockefeller's ideal of modernity, not Johnson's historical reference.

In the preface to the book *The International Style* (which Johnson had written in 1932 with H. R. Hitchcock), Alfred H. Barr, Jr., had written: "American skyscraper architects with cynical good humor have been willing to label their capricious facade ornament 'functional' — 'one function of the building is to please the client.' We are asked to take seriously the architectural taste of real estate speculators, renting agents and mortgage brokers!"<sup>50</sup> Barr had censured the mentality that had promised "To each his own brand of functionalism!" As a counterexample he had pointed to the International Style of European architecture, a unified style not subject to the taste of the respective patron but aimed at realizing a modern ideal of architecture. Meanwhile, Johnson had fallen behind the progressive stance of the very exhibition that he himself had organized. Or had he once again leapt ahead of his time? In the meantime, Charles Jencks has gotten around to recommending a "radical eclecticism": "Why, if one can afford to live in different ages and cultures, restrict oneself to the present, to locale? Eclecticism is the natural evolution of a culture with choice."<sup>51</sup> "The designer should

logically start with an investigation of the semiotic group and always keep in his mind the varying views of the good life as seen by the people involved since architecture ultimately signifies a way of life — something not entirely understood by the Modern Movement."<sup>52</sup>

Thus, we have arrived at a point at which we can react critically and lament the relapse into pre-1932 value preferences. The trend attacked by Alfred Barr has now become an official doctrine. But haven't we, by subscribing to the radical eclecticism demanded by Jencks, returned to a kind of opportunism that turns the architect into a mere subordinate of his patrons and a promoter of their "variously coded" tastes? Isn't it a fact that such a demand comes back into favor as soon as the convincing force of a style or a program such as *Das Neue Bauen* declines and the perplexity of the architects leads them to look for the answers in the decisions of their patrons?<sup>53</sup>

The classical site for present-day eclecticism is the group of buildings added by Johnson around the glass house in New Canaan over the course of several years. One of these added buildings, the residence proper, offers a sharp contrast to the consistently modernist glass house in the use of mediating features conciliatory to the past. Entering the precisely cut block of the sleeping quarters, one is thrust directly into a bedroom with a ceiling vaulted by flattened domes (figure 44) — an interior that makes one instantly forget the presence of purist modernity on the outside. The tiny pavilion, which is situated on a pond below the glass house, has a series of segmental arches that turn it into a piece of "anti-modern modern" architecture. What makes this architecture tolerable is its lack of seriousness. Since all the historic allusions are intended to be contrasted with the dominant didactic mood of the glass house, they come to light as additional stylistic gambits. Thus the glass house, in which the potential of skeletal frame construction is pushed to the limit, loses its dogmatic character; though still untouchable in its radiance, transparency, and dignity, it now becomes bearable because its stringency is relativized by the "nonmodern" features of the other buildings. Eclecticism includes modernism, since modernism is the most prominent among all possible styles. Here Johnson manifested, early on, a radical eclecticism that plays with styles — even with the sacrosanct modern — and that makes every possibility contingent upon another one from which it differs. Absolute loyalty to a single style was abandoned. To the present day the firm of Johnson and Burgee builds now in one manner, then in another. Nothing is more threatening to an article of faith than the inclusion of its substance in the play between different possibilities. The lack of seriousness underlying this switching back and forth has blunted the incisiveness of modernism.

Johnson is a charming cynic who does deliberately and

Philip Johnson  
Sleeping quarters  
New Canaan  
1953



cleverly what only children do in innocence. To talk of "progress" here is out of the question; the only relevant thing here is the appeal of the aesthetic game, a highly conservative play constantly fed by the calculation of the effect. As long as there was a leading style such as functionalism, it was acceptable to be informed, with the help of a wide eclectic choice, about the needs which the dominant architectural trend was not able to fill. Functionalism could as little represent the dreams and demands for self-realization of the occupants of single-family houses as the desire of society for modes of representation. It lacked the means to give signals, for they can be given only with the help of history's reservoir of forms. As eclecticism gains in recognition, the deficiency symptoms of functionalism emerge embodied within it. Being a surrogate, it stands for what is missing. Being a problematic counterplay, it casts its shadow upon the leading notion of an epoch. Johnson, the most ambiguous eclectic of the century, has endeavored for this reason "to shock intentionally the modern, established objective architecture."<sup>54</sup> This is why we dwell with interest on his architecture, on his attempt to run the risk of suggesting an alternative to modernism.

Eclecticism typically undertakes to immerse itself earnestly in the history of architectural forms without really accepting them, as historicism did, but also without imbuing them with witty detachment, with flashes of irony and aloofness. Furthermore, Johnson has always proclaimed absolute freedom of choice and has never thought it necessary to explain why he focused on some historical forms instead of others. No explanatory visual references are given; only the intuitive discretionary power of genius rules here. Hence, Johnson's eclectic arched facades are intent only on a "modernization" of the formal historical equipment. The only thing they make truly plausible is that they have been brought back to life, that they are contemporary. In his conservatism, Johnson is not capable of relativizing historical forms. Even when modernized, his historical reminiscences remain serious in their contents; they remain "monumental." What on earth does it signify that the top of the Kline Biology Tower at Yale University (figure 46) is furnished with a brick armor plating that apparently amplifies the skeletal steel frame into a monumental colonnade? Here the old commonplaces of institutional self-representation have taken possession of skeletal high-rise construction; insistently, they glorify some unknown power. This tower is as eclectic as the Pentagon or the neoclassicism of the 1920s and the 1930s. The drums of the columns, set on plinths cut out clearly and precisely from standstone slabs, stand there, grave and monumental. Even though in the rendering of the details a higher degree of abstraction has been reached than that attempted by the neoclassicism of the 1920s and the 1930s, this architecture still persists in the same retrograde orientation as the eclecti-

cism of former times. Johnson's latest adaptations of styles (e.g., the AT&T building), though touched by the spirit of Moore and Venturi, also promise the effect of grave monumental structures among the skyscrapers of Manhattan. The forms are serious, and the contents are serious as well. And yet, Johnson was once again the first to realize an important impulse: to give back to the high-rise building a specific image, that is, to change the box shape identical at the top and the bottom, as specified by Mies, into a form with feet, a body, and a head, like the New York skyscrapers of the 1920s.

Not only Johnson's eclecticism but eclecticism in general is "in good taste." Good taste is part and parcel of seriousness and monumentality, as are tastefully chosen materials and the careful, tasteful detailing. Even the Chippendale headpiece of the AT&T building is in good taste, as are the fastidious lines of that building's facade and the finesse of its window spacing (which at once takes away the boldness of the excessively large entrance and of the burst-open, pedimented roof). The eclectic's taste is always cautious.

Hence, when seen as an attempt at combining a diluted history of architecture with modernism and thus devising the means for a contrast against both functionalism and the International Style, eclecticism can be judged from two viewpoints:

As an antidote against the absolute claims of the official doctrines of the Modern Movement, it points to the deficiencies of the latter. It supplies the characteristics lacking in modern architecture — the repressed emotional values as well as the lost symbols.

As a representative form, it stands for solemnity, seriousness, monumentality, for the freedom of choice, and for "good taste."

Seen against the liberality of postmodernism, against the distancing effect of its wittiness and its capacity for reinterpretation, eclecticism appears directly affirmative of history and direct in its own use of history's resources, which it adapts for modern use without any contradiction. It appropriates history by smoothing its edges, yet it takes over the signs that characterize the historical as a reminiscence and a ruin of past life.

All critics of the above-mentioned buildings should acknowledge Johnson's continuing intellectual stimulation of the American and the international architectural scene. Indeed, Johnson's glass house — his very first significant building — is, in certain respects, a fulfillment of Mies's architectural credo; and, after all, Johnson had an important role in the realization of the Seagram Building. But Johnson's most recent buildings—especially the AT&T building in New York—announce a withdrawal from a modern typology and a break with the propagation of glass boxes. Johnson dared to recall the Chrysler Building and the Empire State



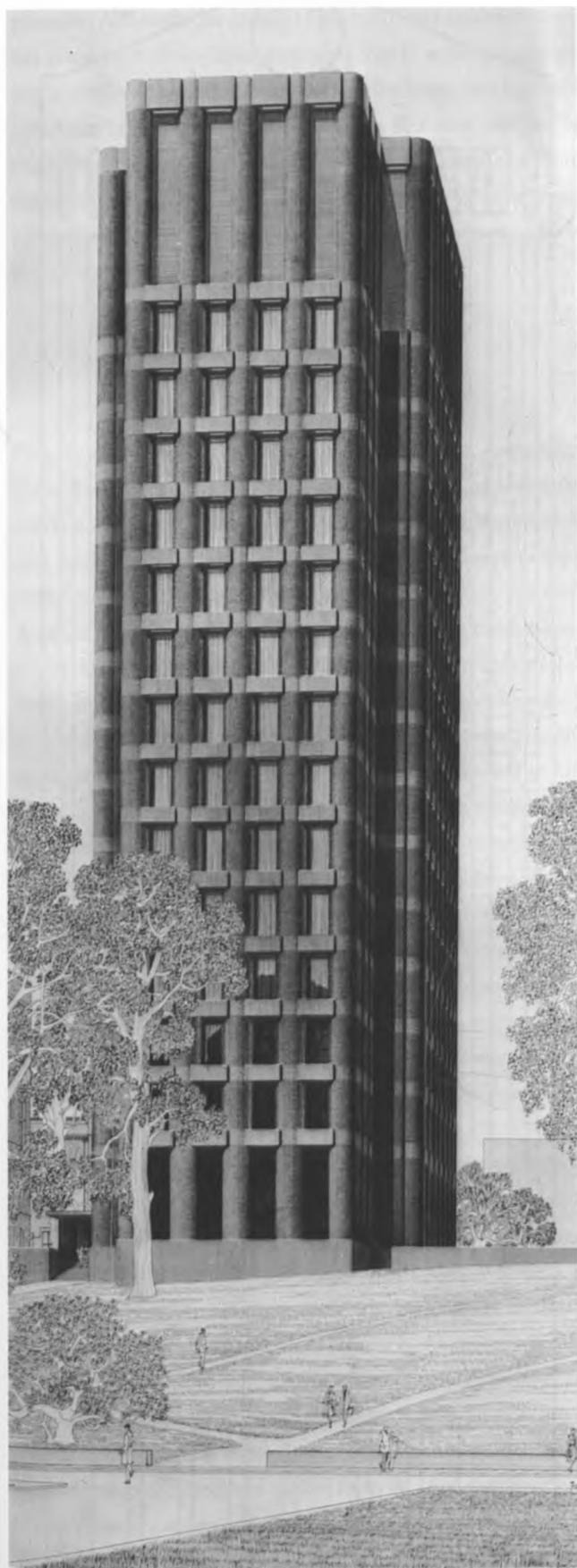
45

**Philip Johnson  
Sheldon Museum  
Lincoln, Nebraska**

1962

46

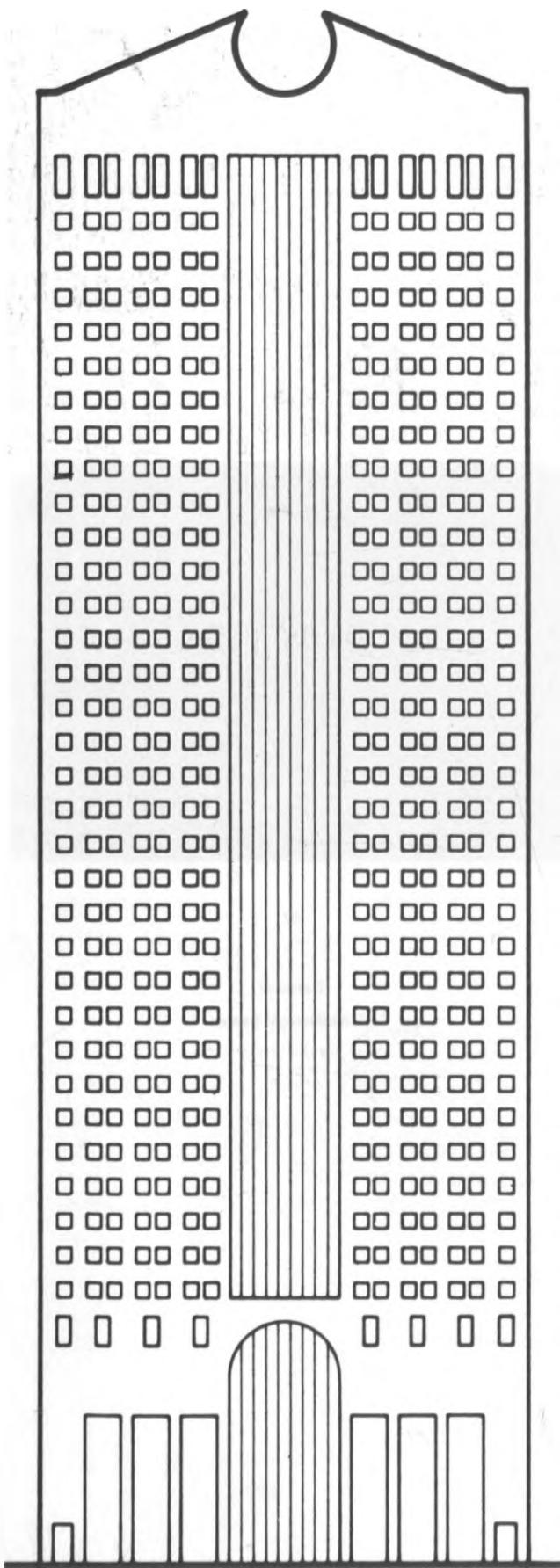
Philip Johnson  
Kline Biology Tower  
Yale University  
New Haven  
1966



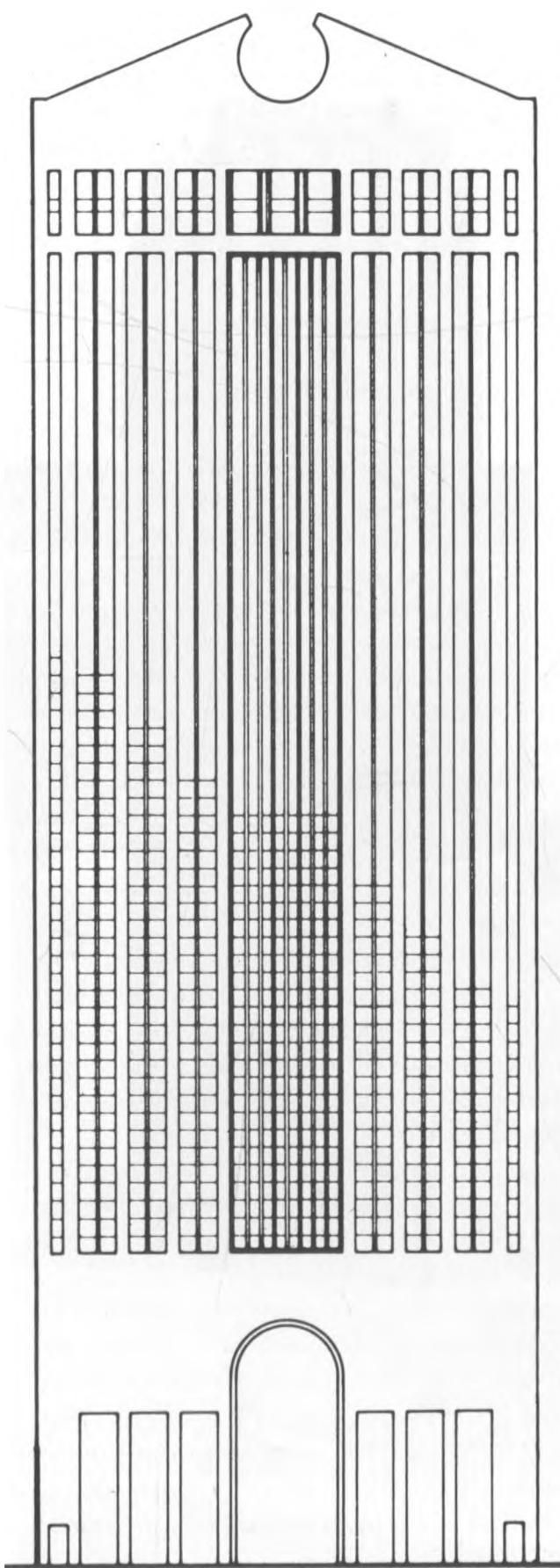
47

Detail of  
Kline Biology Tower

**Philip Johnson**  
**Corporate headquarters**  
**American Telephone and Telegraph, New York**  
**1980–1983**



**Philip Johnson**  
**Alternative design for**  
**AT&T headquarters**



Building, to remember that skyscrapers called for individuality. The return to anthropomorphic shapes (foot, body, and head) was a step in a new direction. This was the point at which representational impulses entered into the building of skyscrapers and at which the glass box lost its currency. Johnson was (though the completed AT&T building left something to be desired) once again ahead of his contemporaries. Although the details of his buildings can be faulted, his ideas have often been inventive. Again and again, Johnson's intellect has led him to break boundaries and has kept him from taking paradigms as dogmas. His own part in the realization of the Seagram Building did not keep him from contradicting that building. Johnson constantly relativizes himself, and thus — even in this pluralistic century — he is the eclecticist par excellence.

50

**Allen Greenberg**

**Design for Best supermarket**

1979



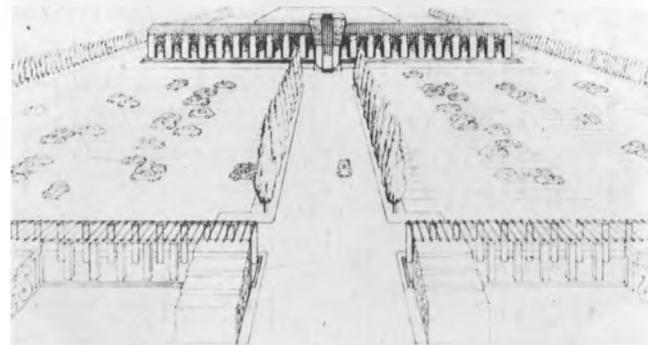
#### HISTORICISM AND NOSTALGIA

Closely connected to eclecticism is historicism. Generally, these two approaches — both of which look to historical models — are not thought of as fundamentally different from one another. However, in order to achieve more precise definitions for the sake of the present discussion, it seems more cogent to use the term historicism only in cases where the historical model has been acknowledged and accepted as valid. In contrast, the eclectic, though he chooses a historical model as his point of departure, tries to pay tribute to the modern and so ends up bowing in both directions. The historicist is more radical; if possible, he honors only the historical. The Englishman Quinlan Terry, the American Allan Greenberg, and the German Heinz Bienefeld are three historicists worth mentioning.

In the United States, there has always been a tradition of copying historical models; wooden houses have been built in the style of eighteenth-century New England, and schools and fire stations in the garb of Independence Hall, for many decades. Greenberg's proposals for more Independence Halls are not especially novel.

The attempts to produce historical monuments while solving architectural problems rooted in the present are original and striking. Greenberg's design for a Best supermarket (figure 50) is as surprising, because of its temple facade, as that of Michael Graves (figure 51), which offers an approach to the supermarket as if it were a palace. A similar effect of surprise is produced by Quinlan Terry's ventilation shaft for the London subway (figure 52). The contradictory nature of the decision to stick an obviously modern functional procedure into an architectural casing from an almost extinct past gives rise to a tension that can be called historicizing alienation.

49

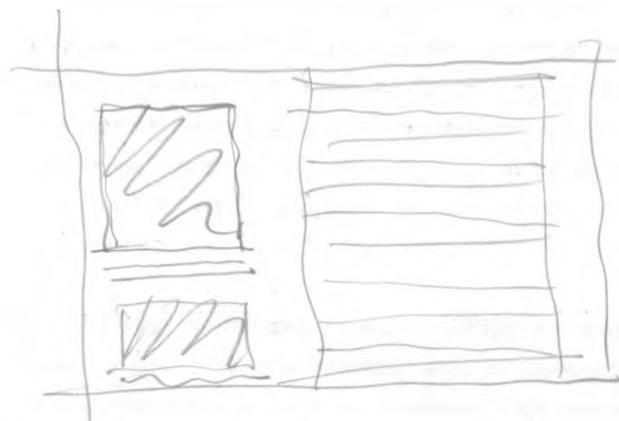


51

**Michael Graves**

**Design for Best supermarket**

1979



**Quinlan Terry**  
**Tower of the Winds**  
 (ventilation shaft)  
 1976



**E. Alban**  
**Steam engine**  
 1840



It must have been equally astonishing in the nineteenth century to see steam engines encased in the garb of Doric temples (figure 53) and railroad stations styled into impressive “historical” architecture, but in the nineteenth century it was still possible to realize the intention of incorporating all that was built into the decorum of a world tamed and ennobled by high culture. Today, a supermarket with a historic facade stands out as an exception against the modern architecture purified of all decorum, and as an exotic aberration against the unadorned, functionalist container structures that fill much of the environment. Cultural integration can no longer be accomplished through period-style architecture.

In his supermarket design, Greenberg consciously exploits the contradiction between a large container structure and a Doric portico, not to achieve an agreeable consonance but to produce a sharp contrast. In the context of such marked oppositions, the literal takeover of period-style architecture today has a much more provocative effect than an eclecticism that conciliates and mediates in all directions. A Doric colonnade built today as an entrance to a supermarket can be understood only in terms of the dialectical nature of its effect. Consequently, it is wrong to think that every historicizing mode of contemporary architecture is ruled by the same principles as the historicism of the nineteenth century. Contemporary historicism draws its argumentative force from contradiction, whereas nineteenth-century historicism sought its validity in the confirmation of the established conventions. A steam engine furnished with Doric columns was integrated into traditional culture as its strange new material aspects were brought into line with the classic columnar orders, but Greenberg’s Doric supermarket is intended as an affront against the aggressive world of vulgar functionalism, as an effort at achieving a distancing from the established culture by recalling from history a totally different culture.

A confrontation is truly achieved only when the historical building forms included are not weakened in their oppositional stance by an eclectic effort to appropriate them. First of all, in contrast to eclecticism, the historicist retrieval of history has a purifying effect, since through its increasingly authentic reproduction history is reclaimed from its eclectic trivialization. After being declared obsolete, history now stands eloquently and directly in opposition to the muteness of the ravaged environment.

Historicizing alienation is credible only when it engenders a contradiction. The contrast between the newness of a building type such as the supermarket and the openly anachronistic use of historical garb fulfills this requirement. The alienating effect is heightened by the “risky” combination of the banal (e.g., the ordinary container structure of a shopping mall) with the high rhetoric of a hypostyle hall. The incon-

gruity becomes obvious. Modern architecture must constantly be seen and kept in mind as a contrasting modality so that the historical can be kept in a perspective that relativizes both in a mutual contingency. Only through this relativization can historicism become a legitimate language of contemporary architecture.

However, when the historical element is used naively and unambiguously, in pure imitation rather than as a counterpoise to modern architecture, its value as a new insight is lost and all that remains is nostalgia. A nostalgic relation to history lacks any distance from it. In nostalgic architecture, the historical garb appears in its “original” meaning; the classical orders make again a serious impression (more precise, they are meant to be serious). What is sought is not juxtaposition to history but identity with it, even at the price of adding an artificial patina. Whereas historicizing alienation imbeds the difference from the original in the building, the nostalgic imitation of past styles wants to ignore its own relation to present reality as much as possible; thus, it provokes the immediate revenge of this reality, which then reveals the stylistic feature as counterfeit. This leads to a constant comparison between a “hard” modern reality and an unconnected absoluteness of the past. The object of nostalgic pleasure is marked above all by irreality, as is all kitsch.

The nostalgic historicism found in the residential suburbs of the Western countries uses the imitation of styles as its sole means of argumentation. The absence of any tension between a building type and the anachronistic use of a style simplifies historicism by making it the means of naive acknowledgment and self-representation. When the imitation of style is added, the effect of irreality is compounded by totally historicized pretensions and longings.

The myriad of Palladian villas, New England cottages, Spanish country houses, and Swiss chalets would not merit a single word were it not for their significance as manifestations of the desire to use one’s house as a means of self-definition and communication. In this light, Terry’s English country houses (figure 54) and Bienefeld’s Palladian residences (figure 55) have their value in the context of the contemporary architectural debate. Unlike extravagant parvenu houses that are so familiar, they state their renunciation of modernism through a demonstratively meticulous imitation of styles. They want to offer a historical counterargument to a historical modernity, and for this reason they come close to nostalgia.

Distinguishing the different intentions behind historical references is one of the most important steps in the assessment of contemporary architecture. However, if the use of historical forms yields nothing better than the destruction of good taste, no fine differentiation will do us any good. In that

**Quinlan Terry**  
**English country houses**  
**1967–1980**



**Heinz Bienefeld**  
**Nagel house**  
**Cologne-Wesseling**  
**1968**

case, all argumentation will bring in the verdict that historical reference per se destroys credibility.

56

## BRUTALISM

### Paul Rudolph

For a while, it seemed that modern architecture's lack of expressiveness could be overcome by formal stylistic means.

Is it surprising that the next idea to suggest itself was to break up, articulate, and diversify the closed box of the outer building shell? This was first attempted by the American architect Paul Rudolph, who with his building for the Yale University Department of Art and Architecture (figure 56) introduced a model collection of all possible approaches contradicting the conventional modern dogma's insistence on closed, light, floating structures. Indeed, contradiction became counterattack. Where simplicity of the total form had reigned, there now appeared a variety of structures composed into a whole. Individual shafts and projecting glass cubes were combined here in a manner suggesting sculpture more than architecture. In place of smooth white walls was a treated surface of concrete whose coarse texture served as an infraction against the Bauhaus program. The solidity and heaviness of the material was made palpable. What was desired was not lightness but emphatic presence of substance. No longer did the calm of the floating primary figure prevail; instead, the thrusting of the individual shafts was played against the separate spatial elements inserted between them in a visually dramatic balancing act of colliding forces. All the rules that had been upheld as articles of faith were refuted by the pitching of one kind of form against another. The differentiation of the structure was accompanied by the strong impression of the building's load. The appearance of a densely compacted space held compressed by clamps and hinges was a totally new effect.

The directional push-and-pull defining the Yale Art and Architecture Building is justified by the building's location at an important intersection and its status as the highest building on its street. Bounded by two Louis Kahn museum buildings, it presents an impressive sight. The highest shaft soars like a gigantic stele at the street corner, forming the focal point from all directions. On the building's narrower side, the shafts are staggered like stage scenery unfolding into a highly eventful, deeply indented flank along the main axis, which keeps pace with the street space and directs the viewer's glance from one element to the next and from one spatial slice to the next. The building's interaction with its spatial surroundings represents the full realization of the technical means available to modern architecture.

Modernism had entered a "baroque" phase. Still adhering

Paul Rudolph

Art and Architecture Building

Yale University

New Haven

1962-63



57

State Street, New Haven

(Yale Art and Architecture Building

in background)

**Paul Rudolph**  
**Endo Laboratories**  
**Garden City, New York**  
**1962–1964**



**Paul Rudolph**  
**Parking garage**  
**New Haven**  
**1962**

to pure stereometry as a basic proposition, Rudolph took the next step toward its aesthetic enrichment. The sustained directional force of the shafts, the fracturing of the total form, and the massiveness of the building add up to a baroque complication and an attack on *Das Neue Bauen*.

Rudolph's building was scarcely completed when it drew a systematic critique from the architect and critic Robert Venturi, who saw it as the paradigm of architecture turned into the art of geometric thaumaturgy. Venturi now recognized in the renunciation of symbols and ornament the tendency to turning a whole building into a single "ornament," a decorative appurtenance to sculpture. Venturi rebuked modernist architecture for turning buildings into hyper-gesticulating visual commodities offering the qualities of the art of architecture "explicitly" for external consumption — the work of architecture turned into a sculpture, into an abstract constructivist structure with its contents limited to the interesting conjunction of building frames and glass cages. Modernism had reached its second phase of stereometric abstraction: the phase of bravura, balancing acts, and heroics. A clamorous, conspicuously "interesting" and "exciting" architecture in concrete spread internationally and became the rival to the mute "container modern."

Venturi made the Yale Art and Architecture Building the object of his criticism because of its prominence on the campus, because it had attracted much public attention, and because Rudolph was the dean of Yale's school of architecture — one of the most important architectural schools in the United States. But other buildings by Rudolph, built with the greatest disregard for their surroundings, are even more critique-provoking. For example, the insistent, swelling, fortress-like concrete masses of Rudolph's Endo Laboratories building (figure 58) lead one to ask whether architecture has not regressed to the point of being ruled not by the rational module but by the ancient molded shapes of the Stone Age. Rudolph's huge parking garage in New Haven (figure 59) is another famous example of how concrete can be employed in the sculpturally molded structures of a kind of new archaism. In the absence of edges, the observer's glance slides every which way over concave balustrades and scooped-out vaults. There are suggestions of expressionism or of "organic" architecture. However, here Rudolph exceeded in scale any previous model, and the excessive quantity affected the quality. The overextended gesture into gigantism negates the identity of everything around it as it lines the whole street with multistory rows of concrete caves.

The Brutalist archaization of architecture has its origins in Le Corbusier's late works, such as the residential high-rise in Marseille and the pilgrimage chapel of Notre Dame du Haut at Ronchamp (figure 60). In a strong contrast with Mies's skeletal-frame buildings, and in a sharp break with his own early

works, Le Corbusier turned away from rational, transparent, modular ground plans and created completely idiosyncratic individual structures. The chapel at Ronchamp has the character of a large sculpture. Its ground plan recalls the Stone Age temples on the island of Malta rather than any modern large-scale building of the twentieth century. A primitive quality is suggested by the heavy walls, which admit daylight only through tiny slits and deeply recessed bunker openings, and by the fact that the towers are denied a helm roof and are instead crowned by rounded shells almost the size of caves. The archaism and the sculptural feel of the forms extend even to the shape of the gargoyles. In this building, as in his Parliament buildings at Chandigarh, India, Le Corbusier attempted to modulate a metaphysical modality instead of adhering to the calculable skeletal framework. This was an architecture conceived in opposition to the "esprit nouveau" which Le Corbusier had endorsed in his youth. Wasn't he already suggesting a critique of modernism by turning against an architecture based entirely on rational calculation, on a mode of production determined by technology and normative standards? Here the irrational element reasserts itself, and the architect's standards approximate those of the sculptor.

It looks as if, with one titanic gesture, Le Corbusier wanted to become Michelangelo—a last genius of the European tradition. Perhaps Paul Rudolph only wanted to be Le Corbusier. Rudolph isolated from the master's work certain formal qualities, which as a gifted student he was able to put into practice. He smoothed his coarse concrete surfaces into a facile perfection, whereas Le Corbusier had accepted and later even come to favor the sort of imperfection he had had to contend with during the postwar period of shortages and poor materials. Le Corbusier had wanted to stem the danger of architecture's being made lifeless through excessive perfection; the handicraft tradition of Mediterranean vernacular architecture must have seemed a possible refuge from absolute rationalism. But in Rudolph's parking garage even the traces of the wooden forms into which the concrete was poured assume a tidy air, and the finely combed surfaces of the Art and Architecture building are like a domestication of Le Corbusier's "béton brut." Perfection is the goal here, not the "honesty" of the brutalism Le Corbusier took up in order to make frank use of the materials and the qualities of the production process. With Rudolph's buildings, all that was left of the "new brutalism" (a term formulated by Alison and Peter Smithson and conveyed by Reyner Banham<sup>55</sup>) was the "brutalism" of huge masses of concrete. A moral stance had been turned into a formalism.

Yet one has to give credit to Rudolph for undertaking to develop a personal vocabulary out of the aesthetic of Le Corbusier's late work, and for pursuing that course farther

60

Le Corbusier  
Pilgrimage chapel Notre Dame du Haut  
Ronchamp, France  
1950





61

**Paul Rudolph**  
**Art and Architecture Building**  
**Yale University**  
**1962-63**

than anyone else. Rudolph earned his own imitators — among them Hans Christian Müller and Georg Heinrichs, whose Leitz factory in Stuttgart (figure 62) is an innocuous version of the Yale Art and Architecture Building that takes up the combination of concrete vertical shafts and horizontal glass tracts but divides these elements too patly and literally into the categorical duality of load and support. Here there is not the slightest hint of the controlled turbulence set off in the Rudolph's building at Yale, not a trace of Le Corbusier's turn to archaism as he recoiled from perfection and hyper-rationalism.

Today, citadels in concrete and sculptural pieces of architecture bearing Rudolph's stamp stand around in our cities like monumental domestic bric-a-brac. The original content has vanished; the effect has become all the more strained and the posturing more hollow. As more such buildings spring up, their surroundings are increasingly disregarded. The depletion of modernism has progressed from an appropriation of the formal features of Le Corbusier's late work to the meaningless use of interesting forms that has become the main characteristic of conventional modernity.

#### Le Corbusier and His Imitators

Many other architects besides Paul Rudolph were involved in rendering Le Corbusier's architectural qualities innocuous. What becomes clear above all is the difficulty of preserving the elementary rebellious force of Le Corbusier's late works from the co-optive effect of the rationalized production processes of contemporary architecture. After observing the archaic vigor of Le Corbusier's Jaoul Houses (figure 63), with their coarse brick masonry and their overpronounced concrete slabs, one cannot help but view the houses by James Stirling and James Gowan in Ham Common (figure 64) as the work of well-behaved pupils. Rudolph's student housing in New Haven (figure 65), which also takes Le Corbusier as its model, manifests only the utmost propriety (though its layout is masterful). Finally, complete sterility was attained with Sir Basil Spence's residential complex at the University of Sussex (figure 66). The arcaded course of concrete slabs marked with carefully calculated traces of casting achieves the smoothness of plastic, while the brick walls produce the effect of foil segments pasted on the surface. Here mass production has again come into full sway, with its norms and its clear-cut rules of precision. The power of surface imperfections to bear tactile witness to individual human presence has been extinguished; the high gloss of mechanical tooling seals everything. Even the bricks appear artificial. An inconceivable perfection falls like frost over every detail.

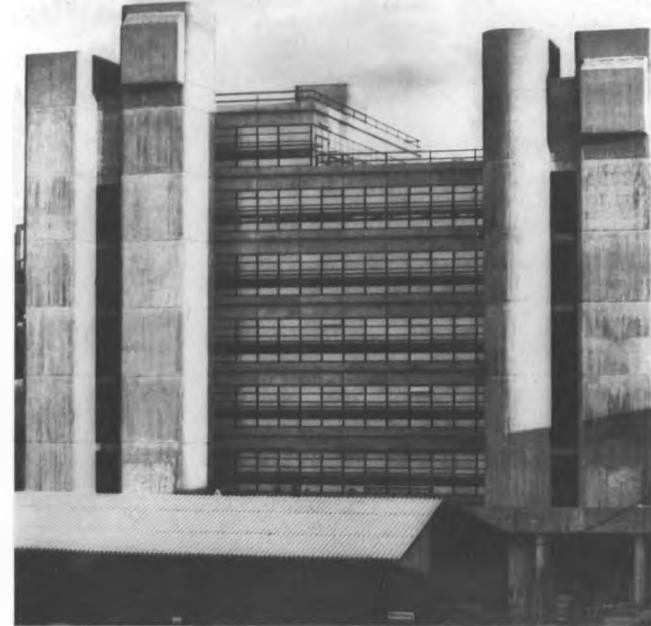
Was it ultimately a relapse into romanticism when, in his late work, Le Corbusier invoked the individualizing effect of handicrafts? Wasn't that an outmoded expressive means, ill

Hans Christian Müller and Georg Heinrichs

Leitz factory

Stuttgart

1966–67

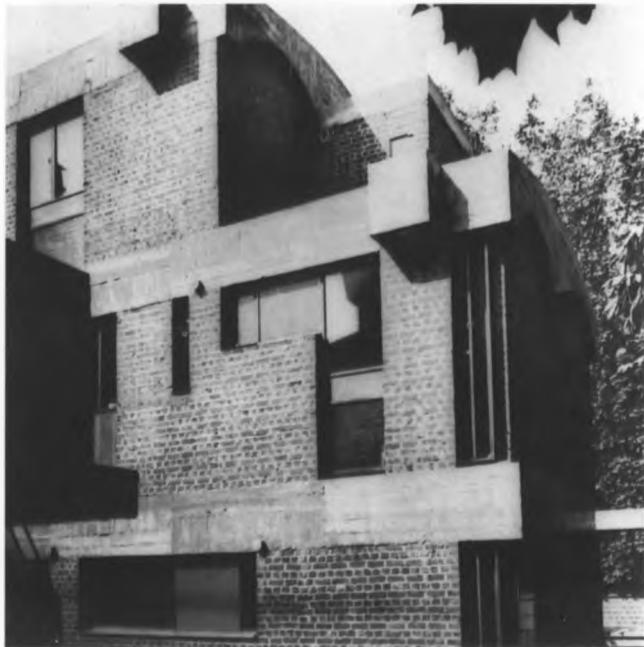


**Le Corbusier**

**Jaoul Houses**

**Neuilly, Paris**

**1956**



**James Stirling and James Gowan**

**Ham Common, London**

**1958**

**Paul Rudolph**  
**Student housing**  
**New Haven**  
**1960–1962**



**Basil Spence**  
**Residence complex**  
**University of Sussex, Brighton**  
**1962–63**

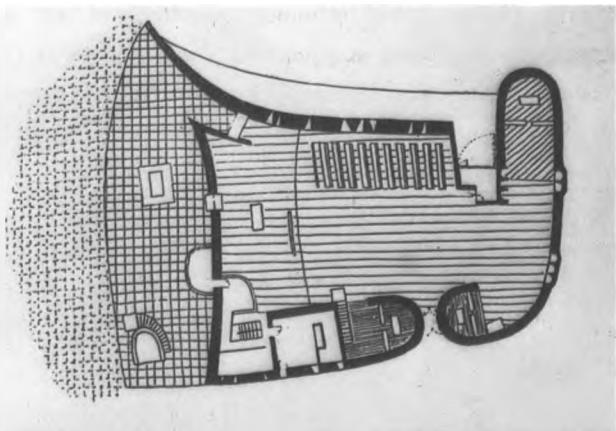
suited to a building trade run on entirely different methods of production? Hadn't mechanization rendered anonymous even the traces of manual execution? Wasn't Le Corbusier's conjuring back the "traces in the stone," a relic of the same romanticism that called for a total transformation of architecture into art, as did the reemergence of the archaic ground plan?

It is undeniable that in his late work Le Corbusier reawakened longings that could be realized only with great difficulty at that point. Since architecture was now conceived of primarily in terms of technology, any traces of "art" in it were bound to appear anachronistic. Nevertheless, Le Corbusier's insistence on claiming for architecture the status of an art — meaning an occasion providing scope for the inventive power of genius — remained a temptation.

The chapel at Ronchamp claimed unconditional validity for autonomous inspiration as the source of architectural ideas — inspiration without typological or historical antecedents and not contingent on anything. Indeed, it is this absolutist stance as a unique work of art that constitutes the retrograde, aestheticist character of that celebrated building. The demonstration of purity of form and of the artistic value and the sculptural quality of the original inspiration are given such scope that, to us today, the arbitrariness involved is also clearly visible. The vigor of the unconditional and the absolute is exhibited here to the utmost, confronting the opposite extreme of mechanization and of routinized building practices governed entirely by economic contingencies. The chapel at Ronchamp is not only unique and highly original but also melodramatic and monomaniac. (Bazon Brock may well be right in surmising that Le Corbusier developed the ground plan out of his own initials, and that by inverting the letter C he transmogrified his monogram into a cryptogram.) Some of Le Corbusier's late works, such as the Carpenter Visual Arts Center at Harvard (figure 68), the Cultural Center at Firling, and the Philips Pavilion at the Brussels World's Fair, come dangerously close to being merely showy. Rich in interesting effects, they are self-conscious and they verge on overdramatization. Yet in comparison with the formalist monuments produced by his imitators, even these buildings seem restrained and masterful. What visibly predominates is the intention to purify modern architecture of meaning and content; what finally prevails is abstraction and pure form. Because the thematic contents remain in the background and inform the forms as intrinsic stylistic qualities without effecting any symbolizations or employing any unequivocal language of signs, the merely associative contents are lost in the propagation of forms. In the end, pure form serves any kind of aestheticizing intention.

67

**Le Corbusier**  
**Notre Dame du Haut, Ronchamp**  
**1950**



68

**Le Corbusier**  
**Carpenter Visual Arts Center**  
**Harvard University**  
**Cambridge, Massachusetts**  
**1961**



### Scale

One of the most important realms of meaning in architecture is that of scale and the forms of its instrumentation. While typological features define a building in respect to its purpose, its scale is defined by its dimensional qualities — its proportions as articulated and read in relation to the proportions of the human body. The size of a door or a window seen in its relation to a building's total facade reveals the proportions inflecting the building's relation to its environment and to human beings.

As huge as a gas tank might look in the center of a city, no one would call its cylindrical structure monumental. We call monumental, in the sense of "larger than life," buildings whose proportions are measurable in relation to the human body. For instance, the entrance of the Petit Palais (figure 69) is monumental because of its oversize portal (which, like many other buildings of the Napoleonic era, is so inflated in size that its monumentality becomes dubious and its effect hollow). In general, such judgments are possible because comparisons can be made. But a gas tank is hardly measurable in relation to the human body. Being visually incomensurable, it remains incomprehensibly large. Not even placing a human figure next to it would render its proportions intelligible. The Vertical Assembly Building and Launch Control Center at the Kennedy Space Center (figure 70), with its 560-foot-high door, is a good example of a structure whose size is almost beyond human comprehension.

The built environment has been shaped in observance of human proportions since the Renaissance. Human proportions, either life-size or monumentally enlarged, have recurred in all building. Consequently, humans have been able to measure themselves against a building and to experience it as equal to them or surpassing them. However, the last few decades have witnessed the erection of many buildings that cannot be compared with the size of the human body. Uniform and gigantic, they stand conspicuously in the urban landscape yet defy being measured in proportion to anything. This sort of thing had not happened since the Egyptian pyramids.

The Equitable Building in St. Louis (figures 71, 72) is a glass high-rise in the tradition of the rectangular grid structures of Mies. The new feature it introduced was the smooth, mirror-like facade. The steel girders were fitted flush with the glass, unlike those on the facade of Mies's Seagram Building (figure 73), and there were no horizontal panels of the sort that Mies had recessed behind the beams between floors. The structure became a huge unit; before the eye could perceive any detail, it perceived the total form as a foil-wrapped package. This enormous container seems to obtrude into the city-

69

Petit Palais, Paris



70

Vertical Assembly Building

and Launch Control Center

Kennedy Space Center

Cape Canaveral

1962-1965



61

**Hellmuth, Obata, and Kassabaum**  
**Equitable Building**  
**St. Louis**  
**1969–1971**



✓

**Hellmuth, Obata, and Kassabaum**  
**Equitable Building**  
**St. Louis**  
**1969–1971**



✓

**Ludwig Mies van der Rohe**  
**Seagram Building**  
**New York**  
**1954–1958**



scape yet, at the same time, to dissolve into the atmosphere, into the air and the clouds, into the light and its reflections. Mies took into account the fact that a glass building suffers a loss of substance and visual stability because of reflection; nevertheless, he proportioned his stories and his grid subdivisions in such a way that they could be read in reference to the human body. He also insisted on preserving the substance and the weight of the facade, and avoided reducing its relief to the plane of the glass. The Equitable Building, however, seems to be a glass block whose only perceivable features are its surfaces and its sharp edges. The grid of supports is registered visually as a modular drawing extending over the entire structure, and the vertical superimposition of the floors is obscured.

With the Equitable Building, modern architecture was reconfirmed in a striking new way: The vision of the elementary, forceful effect of the primary figures of geometry was embodied in a large-scale structure dominating the skyline of the city of St. Louis. Next to it, in historical contrast, stood the domed, classically ordered Lincoln Memorial Center, whose reflection in the silvery surface of its neighbor created an effect the likes of which had not been seen in Europe.

By now, large buildings in reflective glass have become a familiar sight.<sup>56</sup> Yet unproportioned container buildings acquire a strange air of unreality when they are wrapped in such glass. Not only do they seem to dematerialize; they are, as it were, transported into some other realm by the impossibility of reading their size in human terms. They appear to herald something entirely new, something cosmic.

The Bonaventura Hotel in Los Angeles (figure 75), with its five cylinders of reflective glass, appears to be more a space-travel terminal than an ordinary hotel — it is a kind of futurist anti-building whose splendor exceeds normal human sensibilities. The gridwork that indicates the stories produces nothing more than a checked surface of empty mirrors; a reminiscence of bygone concerns, it only emphasizes the building's superhuman scale. Like the glass block of the Equitable Building, the cylinders of the Bonaventure Hotel are reductionist shapes, primary stereometric figures. Here the aesthetic of elementary forms, which began with Gropius, reached new heights that made Gropius's first buildings seem childishly naive.

The use of new materials and unexpected maximizations of dimensions as signals and advertisements of progress continues to increase. However, since primary geometric figures are intrinsically defined, size-indifferent abstractions, it is hard to use them as the shapes of whole buildings without making those buildings stand out as self-contained and unrelated to human proportions. Now, a deliberate abandonment of human proportions has been added to this intrinsic difficulty. We are beginning to live in two worlds: one which

74

**Equitable Building and  
Lincoln Memorial Center  
St. Louis**



75



**John Portman and Associates**

**Bonaventura Hotel**

**Los Angeles**

**1970–1976**

refers to us and is ours, and another one which is directed toward something else, something immeasurable and incomprehensible.

76

**Kevin Roche and John Dinkeloo**

**Ford Foundation building**

**New York**

**1967**

**Kevin Roche**

The aesthetic of large forms received its greatest impetus from Kevin Roche, an Irish-born architect who had studied with Mies and Saarinen. One of Roche's first works, the Ford Foundation building in New York (figure 76), was a new departure in several respects. Corten steel was used here for the first time in the facade of an urban building. The roofed piazza (figure 77), in itself an exemplary formulation, was outlined and made comprehensible in new terms by the overall form of the building. The wall surfaces faced with red granite give the whole the appearance of a super-large standardized container. The glass planes, marked with the floor divisions from the protruding upper stories on down, are deeply set back; looked at obliquely from the dominant side perspective, they pull back even farther so that the blank walls, unbroken and sharply outlined, occupy the field of vision. Next to this forceful form, the adjacent office buildings seem paltry. The granite renders the overall form — pushed though it is beyond a visually intelligible relation between its scale and the human context — "monumental" through its seeming indestructability. Like the pyramids, the Ford Foundation building soars beyond the reach of human scale and transcends earthly dimensions. In its unimposing surroundings, it appears huge even though it is only twelve stories tall — the height of the lower portions of some adjacent buildings.

The Aetna Life Insurance complex in Hartford, started in 1966, suggests archaic monumental architecture by the symmetrical arrangement of its sandstone buildings. Were it not for their glass surfaces, the total effect would be that of a prehistoric altar for ritual sacrifice, or a sepulchre. Even more ineluctably than the Ford Foundation building, this complex gives an impression of unapproachable, alien grandeur. Modern architecture seems to have gone too far with its presumptions and gotten lost on the heights of "seriousism." Has modern architecture now, by pushing its norms to the limit, taken the renunciation of ornament and the stringency of the aesthetic of primary forms to the point of no return and arrived back at the very condition from which it had fought to liberate itself at its own beginnings — namely, monumental architecture as a form of intimidation? Seen in a different light, the Aetna buildings offer a new meaningful content not directly inherent in their super-scale forms and their symmetrical layout. The enormous hardness of this solid group of buildings is a declaration that architecture must be assertive if it is to survive in the chaos of suburbs and superhighways. Though the problem against which Roche's buildings insist



77

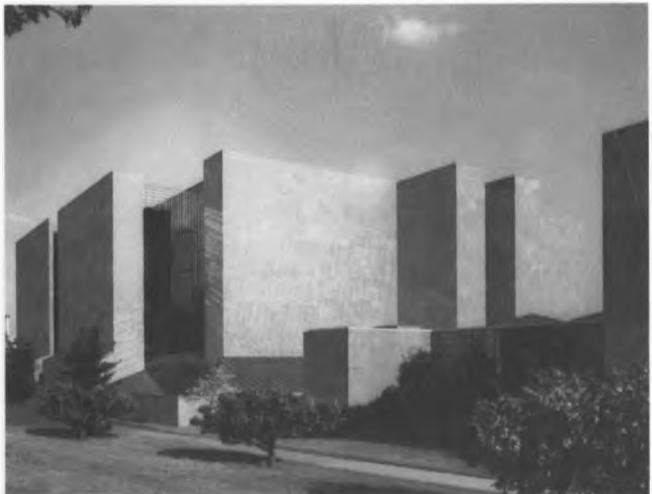
**Piazza of  
Ford Foundation building**

on being seen as a reaction is clearly determined by the vastness of America, such buildings are likely to become relevant in Europe if the destruction of the cities continues there at the present pace. Hence, these buildings should not be given an iconographical reading based solely on the historicist aspect of their form. Along with this one must also consider their strong reactive aspect, for the directly given content of the historicizing forms is profoundly altered in its meaning by being tied to the environmental context.

How wrong it would be to ascribe to Roche an attitude fixed exclusively on monumental architecture in the service of representation is proved by the buildings of the UN Plaza Hotel in New York (figures 79, 80), planned in 1969 and finished at the end of the 1970s. Amid the closely massed skyscrapers opposite UN headquarters, the first of these glass high-rise towers presents a self-attenuating outline that follows the building line on its north corner but slants back on its opposite side, becoming narrower and narrower at irregular intervals and coalescing in an unorthodox manner with the added tower. With this building shape the autonomy of the primary building form is lost. What remains is a "solitaire," unable to unfold in accordance to its own intrinsic laws but ending up as a reactive phenomenon relativized by its environment. The total form reminds one of the aesthetic constructs of hard-edge sculpture and minimalist art. This impression is heightened by the right-angle grid that overlays the buildings. Since the closely spaced horizontals no longer correspond to the stories, the scale is unintelligible. The linear pattern assumes the quality of a line drawing on glass. The smoothly stretched surface overrides the total form by becoming itself the true connective of the two buildings. The irregular profile of the whole no longer permits it to be called a container. Instead, the total impression is one of a shimmering combination of huge prisms, rising in a manner alien to architecture from the midst of the conventional blocks of buildings around them. All concepts of architecture seem to have been lost; the surroundings provide the only suggestion of the scale and the typology of the new buildings.

The rhetoric of the UN Plaza buildings is aimed neither at monumentality nor at the signaling of power. The fact that Roche's original intention of using alternating blue and red glass stripes across the facade was rejected by his patron (the United Nations Organization) in favor of the green glass uniformly used in New York is, indeed, evidence of conformism on the UN's part.

The concept of super-scale form is illustrated most clearly by Roche's 1970 proposal for the County National Bank in Worcester, Massachusetts (figure 81). That building was supposed to act as a raised index finger and put Worcester — cut, torn, and double-tied by highways — back on the map by making it visible again.<sup>57</sup> All differentiating features have



78

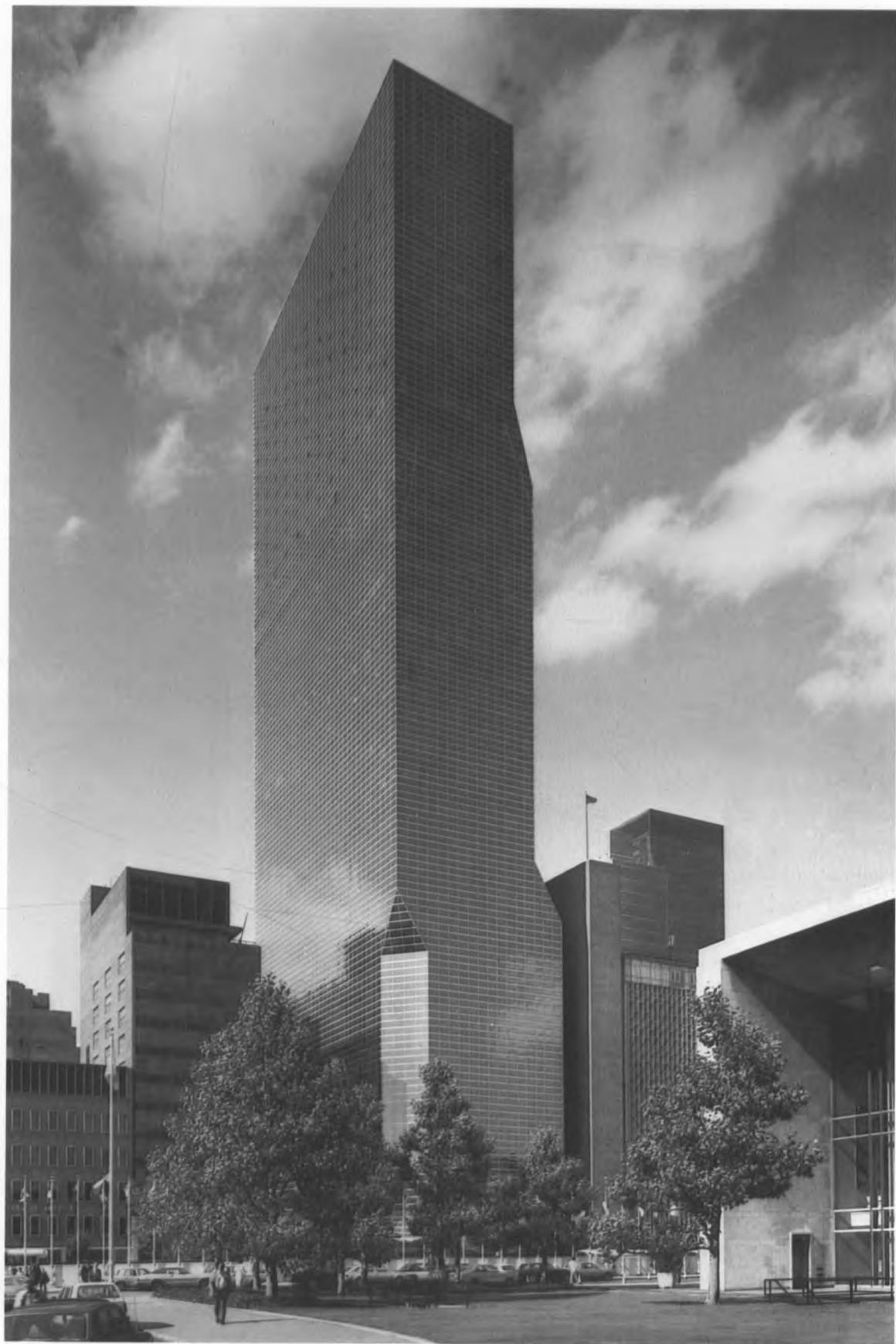
**Kevin Roche and John Dinkeloo**  
**Aetna Insurance complex**  
**Hartford**  
**1968–1973**

**Kevin Roche and John Dinkeloo**

**UN Plaza Hotel**

**New York**

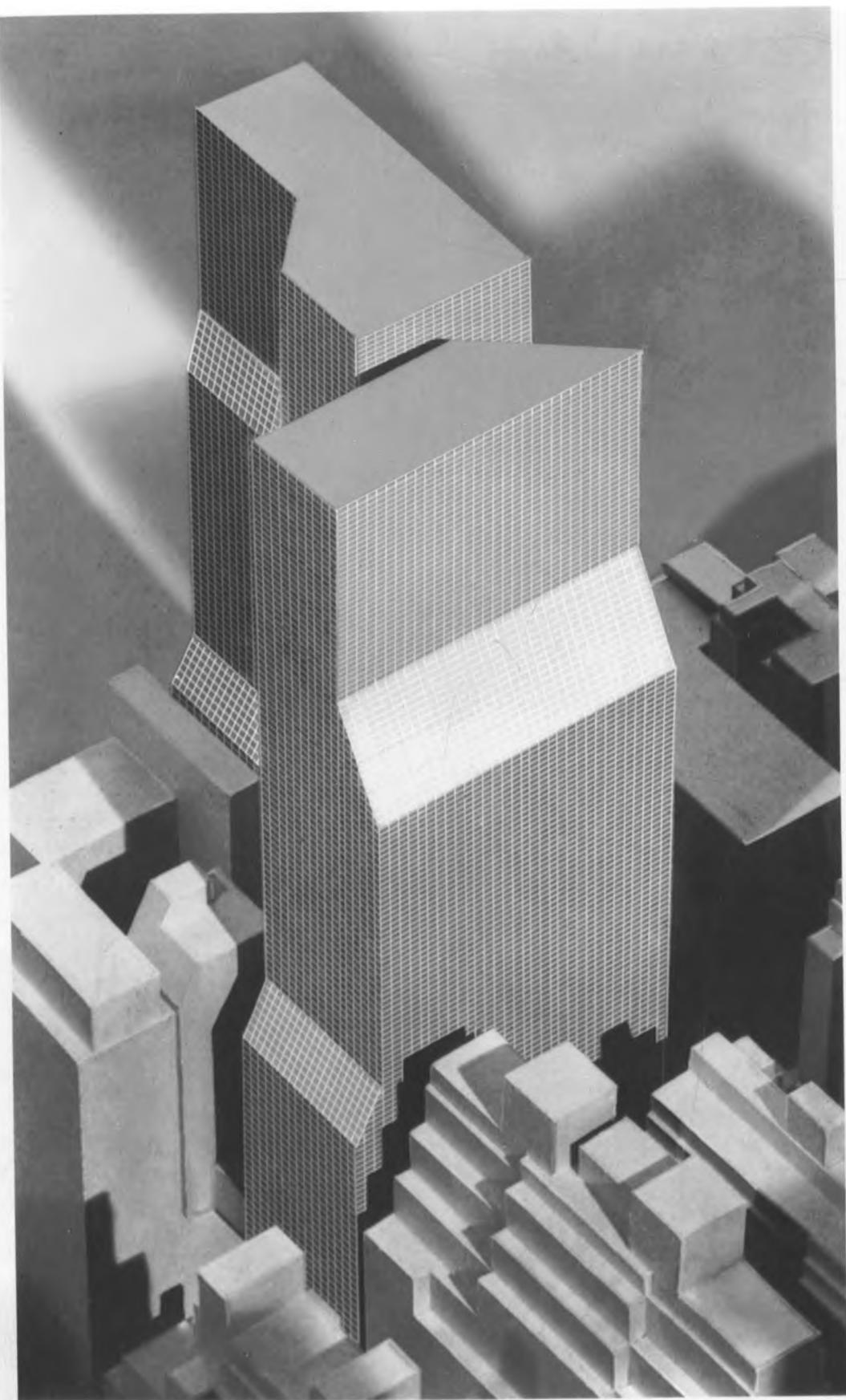
**1979**



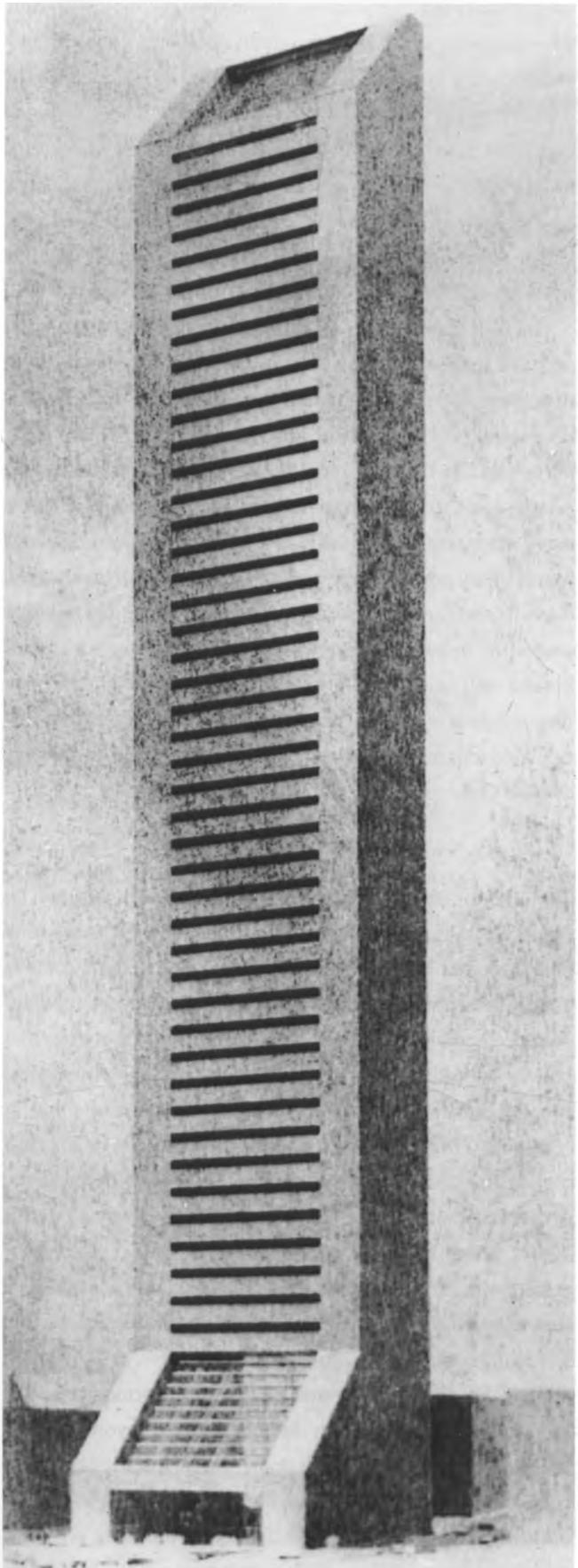
**Kevin Roche and John Dinkeloo**

**UN Plaza Hotel, phase II**

**1979**



**Kevin Roche and John Dinkeloo**  
**Design for County National Bank**  
**Worcester, Massachusetts**  
**1969**



been absorbed into the building's total form: the swung-out lobby at the base, the slanted roof, and, above all, the slit-like windows cut into the front wall. The windowless sides emphasize the unity of the whole by remaining unarticulated. To announce the city's presence from afar is the primary content of this monolithic super-scale form. The building's intention accounts directly for its shape, which is comparable to that of a menhir or an obelisk. An ancient form was now to be combined with new contents to counter the destruction of the environment.

Probably Roche's best-known building other than the one for the Ford Foundation is the Knights of Columbus Tower in New Haven (figure 82). Whereas the obelisk of Worcester was not executed in the impressive form shown in the proposal but was transformed into a conventional glass block, the Knights of Columbus Tower, which stands as a giant landmark right by a highway ramp, was executed in a demonstrative super-scale form running totally counter to the articulation and fine detailing of the old New England city of New Haven. The gigantic tubes of reinforced concrete at the four corners (which contain the fire escapes and the rest rooms) stand like gigantic columns at the city's entrance. The floor supports run right into the towers without being set off by connecting hinges or frame elements, which would have disrupted the unity of the whole.

Roche was one of the first architects to consciously confront the new scale of the American megalopolis, and he has stressed the conflict between small buildings conforming to a human scale and megastructures, such as highway ramps and bridges, that correspond more to the grand scale of nature. "When I go to San Francisco," he has said, "I like to go and stand under the Golden Gate Bridge. It's a very exciting experience! And in a way one isn't dwarfed at all. It has the same quality that you find in nature."<sup>58</sup> Roche emphasizes his intention to bring architecture into congruence with the magnitude of nature's large structures and to find new elements large enough to correspond to them. "The question of scale in the city of the future — as we get into larger and larger structures — will have to answer the problem of getting from the human scale to the megastructure. You just can't take the human scale or module and multiply it indefinitely; it becomes incomprehensible."<sup>59</sup>

The Knights of Columbus Tower in New Haven does not relate to the needs of the pedestrians or to the small, historically given scale of the inner city; it refers instead to the expressway and to the adjacent Coliseum (figure 83), which is topped with a four-level parking garage. "Modes of transportation," Roche says, "have produced structures of enormous scale. The whole highway system is just really gigantic-scale stuff. We are building on the edge of a highway, a movement that is coming from fifty miles away. The ribbon ends or will

**Kevin Roche and John Dinkeloo**  
**Knights of Columbus Tower**  
**New Haven**  
**1967–1972**



pass through the city. We are building right on the edge of it, and it has a presence which we cannot ignore; we have to have some relationship to that scale, I believe, because it is, in essence, the scale of tomorrow.”<sup>60</sup>

With increasing clarity, there emerges a new experience that does not dispose of the relevance of human proportions but certainly limits it markedly. The new scale derives from the sensations of driving an automobile at high speed and experiencing the environment as something gliding quickly by — of being hurled toward and swept past one's surroundings. The visual experience of rapid locomotion and of structures that approximate the vast dimensions of nature results in a “second scale” beyond that of the pedestrian in the city, and it is to that second scale that the superlarge container building is keyed.

The task that emerges from this realization is that the two separate scales must somehow be mediated. In the case of the Ford Foundation building, the outer structure is on the second scale; however, in the courtyard (figure 77) there is an abrupt shift to the traditional human proportions. Assigning a large-scale format to the outer shape of a building and a small-scale one to the inside is a particularly plausible and increasingly popular method of mediation. Ralph Erskine has done this in the almost exemplary fashion with his housing project at Byker (figures 488–490), which presents an unbroken wall as an overblown large-scale response to the busy thoroughfare while the whole other side of its facade is articulated and made accessible and friendly by the addition of smaller features and balconies.

#### **Superstudio**

The Florentine architectural firm Superstudio, headed by Adolfo Natalini, has taken up an aspect of the “new scale” and extended it into a utopian concept of design. Around 1970, when Kevin Roche’s first buildings were being completed, Superstudio created some collages and drawings that convey better than any built architecture the distressing impression created by the new dimensional excesses.

Superstudio’s depiction of Manhattan in the grip of a concrete grid extending to the horizon (figure 84) portrays the endless container building in a terrifying way. To this “monumento continuo” (intended as a “model of total architectural urbanization”) Superstudio added a manifesto that named as reference points the Ka’ba at Mecca and the Vertical Assembly Building at Cape Canaveral — a grand archaic form of blank stone and a gigantic monument of modern technology whose reference extends beyond Earth to the universe. In the depictions, Superstudio unleashed cosmic proportions on historically given cities. The “endless building” extends over English workers’ housing and over the skyscrapers of New York a structure whose grid refers



83

**Kevin Roche and John Dinkeloo**

**Coliseum**

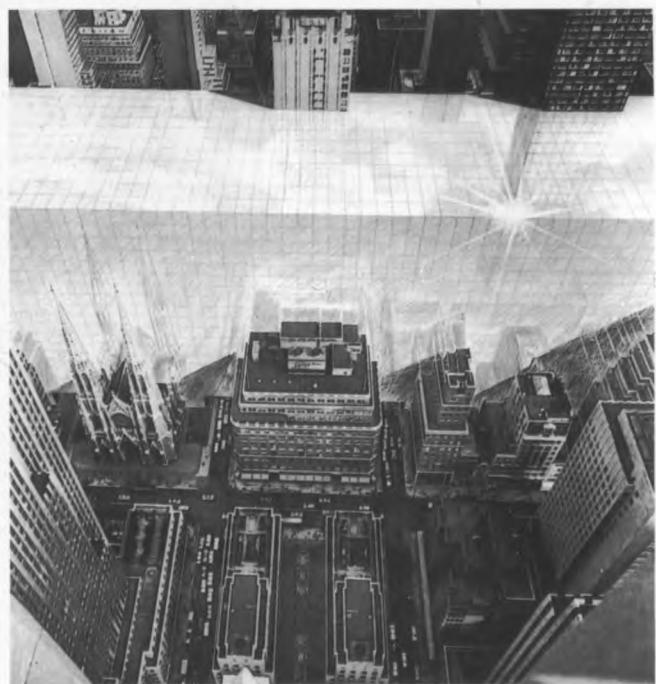
**New Haven**

**1967–1972**

71

UNIVERSITY OF NEW HAMPSHIRE  
ADD LIBRARY

Adolfo Natalini  
*Il monumento continuo*  
1969



Adolfo Natalini  
*Il monumento continuo*  
1969



**Cesar Pelli**  
**Pacific Design Center**  
**Los Angeles**  
**1971–1976**



**Schüler and Schüler-Witte**  
**Internationales Congress Zentrum**  
**Berlin**  
**1967–1979**

neither to individual stories nor to the size of individual building stones.

Superstudio's surrealism-tinged pictures represent the European reaction to the experience of mammoth dimensions: a utopian design that transforms the consequences of modern architecture — primary forms blown up to a mammoth scale — into a narrative tale of visionary fiction.

#### Cesar Pelli

With his Pacific Design Center (figure 87), Cesar Pelli created the paradigm of a container building that stands completely outside the urban referential context and sets its own standards of scale in the middle of a disintegrated city. As devoid of proportion as its enormous parking lot, it lies in the landscape like an oversize piece of architectural moulding. Its whole inner structure is enveloped in shimmering bluish glass. The narrowed sides give the appearance of immense cross sections through the total structure. The semicircular gallery on top of the roof is pulled integrally into the total outline; together with the obliquely sectioned-off stories that protrude along the sides, it renders the overall form completely irregular, taking away from the container the usual characteristic aspect of a primary complete form and leaving a fractured structure. This gigantic fragment stands in the middle of the suburban chaos as an anti-monument. The locals call it "the blue whale." The iridescent glass surfaces, gleaming in the sunlight in all the shades of blue, cling like a wet skin to this giant that seemingly surrenders its consistency. The total shape keeps any comparison between human scale and the building form from even suggesting itself, while the blue glass skin gives the impression of a stranded sea monster that does not even want to be compared with the human sphere. The combined effect of all this is a strange, strongly defined building pitched against a characterless environment. One is gripped by its magnitude without having to confront it.

It is rewarding to compare the Pacific Design Center with the International Congress Center in Berlin (figure 88), which makes every effort to convey the technology and the gigantism of its construction. In contrast with the aesthetic sublimation of the "blue whale," its conspicuous adherence to the view of the house as a machine, to the apotheosis of technology, appears almost old-fashioned. Pelli's blue glass building seems to be floating and weightless, as if shimmering in a different element. Comparing it with the International Congress Center, one becomes astonishedly aware that, though unproportioned, Pelli's superlarge building form proves much more considerate of human sensibility. The colossal congress hall presents its highly elaborated constructional details on an exaggerated scale calculated to dwarf the observer. Pelli's building is far removed from monumentality.

However, it also leaves Das Neue Bauen's aesthetic of primary figures far behind. This architecture no longer has the ambition of enlightenment; on the contrary, it has gone through the play of Pop Art irony, through the mundaneness of the consumer world.

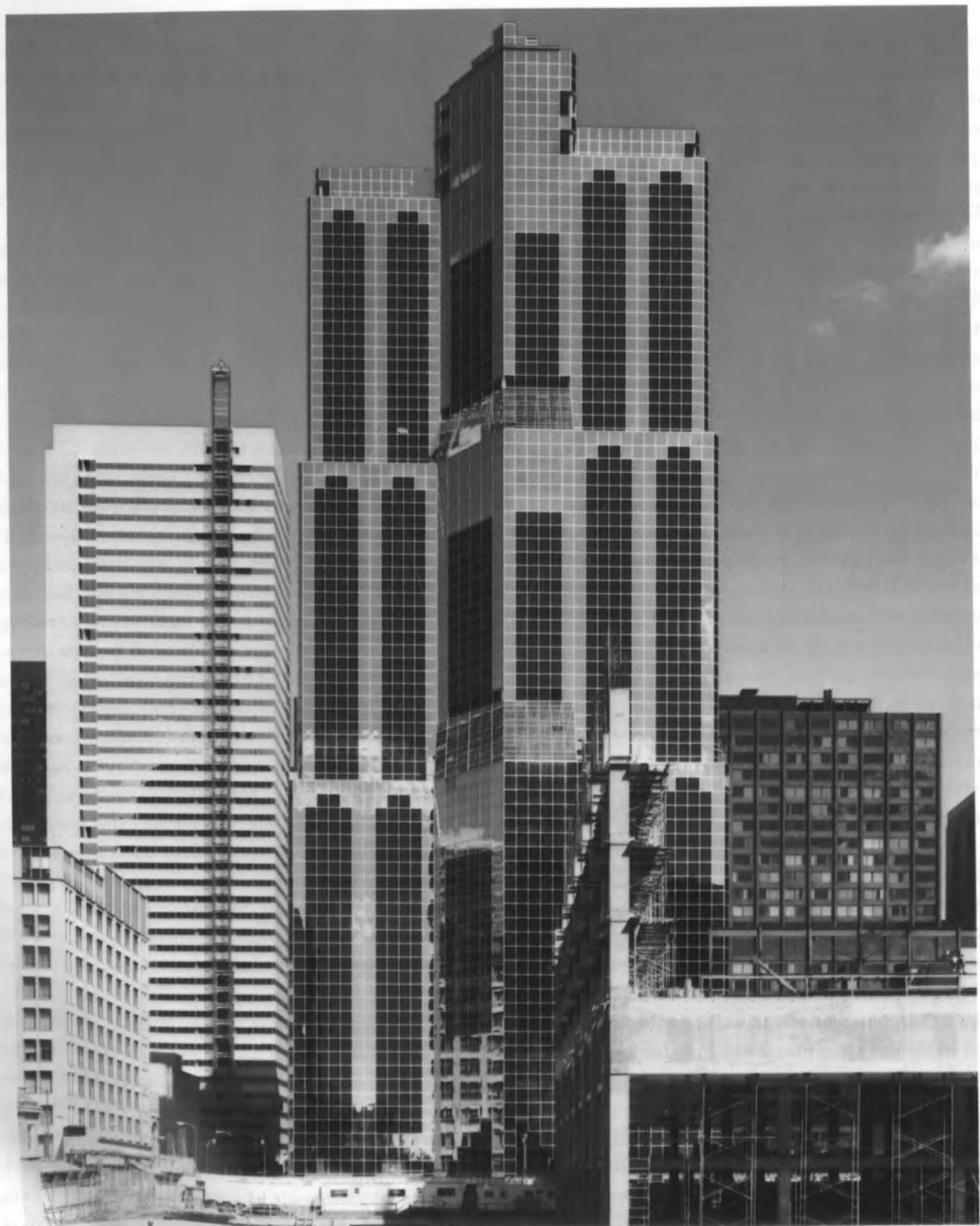
#### Helmut Jahn

What Kevin Roche originally proposed for the UN Plaza Hotel — articulating the glass skin of a container building as an independent decorative surface with a pattern of colors — was brought closer to a realization by Helmut Jahn in his Chicago buildings. In this undertaking Jahn referred to Cesar Pelli's intense efforts to achieve a differentiated treatment of the glass curtain wall.<sup>61</sup> Indeed, it was an obvious enough step to see in the glass facade's almost complete lack of relief a possibility for decorative variegation.

The flanks of Jahn's One South Wacker office building (figure 89) are articulated in a surprising way. The surface of dark glass subdivided into huge elongated fields outlined in lighter glass gives the appearance of a series of blind arcades with indented "arches." The whole unfolds not as a piece of high relief but within the facade's thin, tautly stretched foil. The historical ornamental feature of the indented blind arcade is given a new aspect of being blown up to an enormous size. The motif undergoes further alienation by being transposed onto dark tinted glass. While the historical allusions connect the building to the given historical context of Chicago, the alienating changes in both dimensions and materials produce an inescapable distancing from that context. In the end, the underlying tension between the recalling of the old and the startling emergence of the new leaves no doubt that the present is rebounding from the past. This kind of tense interrelation, combining a conscious reference to the historically existing city with the consciously manifested difference between history and the present, is a new quality and a characteristic of postmodern architecture. The witty elaboration and reinterpretation of the forms taken up from the historical urban context endows the One South Wacker building with an eloquence that was consistently denied to the International Style. In comparison with this eloquence, every functionalist "modern" building appears mute. This building issues a clear challenge and makes a first attempt at achieving a new decorum.

Especially interesting, though at times decidedly grotesque, is Jahn's use of the forms of small decorative objects in container architecture. His first design for the extension of the Board of Trade Building in Chicago (figure 90) is based on a console found in the lobby of the old trade building. In this design a large architectural form and a small detail become interchangeable as formal units. And the container becomes the one motif that can take complete possession of a

**Murphy and Jahn**  
**One South Wacker**  
**office building**  
**Chicago**  
**1979–1982**



building in its totality. This line of interpretation makes explicit the new concept of the large-scale building as an over-enlarged standard unit. The building, by being transformed into the shape of a historical detail, is subjected to alienation just as the historical detail is by being transformed into a building. True enough, this alienation serves as a historical reference to the Art Deco architecture of Chicago. Yet this historical reference does not use the force of the present and its specific possibilities to relegate the past to its place; it borrows something from the past and interprets the present in terms of it. The clients, unable to warm up to Jahn's first design, asked instead for conventional motifs of architectural articulation. The second design, though more familiar in structure, has an elevation made up entirely, even in its pillars and its indented window framework, of blue glass — enough of an alienation, as it is.

Cesar Pelli said of his own works that they were formulated in the spirit of the present. He did not think much of arches, cornerstones, and columns, because the primary meaning of these elements and their original coherence has been lost and only the secondary meaning is left, which represents this originally constructive coherence only by reproducing its appearance.<sup>62</sup> Many of Jahn's projects can be said to acquire their meaning beyond the secondary level of interpretation (on which the historical formal apparatus is understood as an oversized enlarged detail), on a tertiary level where total alienation becomes the fundamental content of the historical quotations. The unfettered detail is no longer part of a whole but itself becomes the whole. One finds oneself transported into a world where the signals of the past, activated from afar, gain impact and spread (via the highly refined constructs of the highest technical perfection) a veil of memories of the past. Such are the makings of fiction for an architecture that, in the wake of the functionalist deletion of meaning, aspires to new meaning and contents. Only by these means does the art of architecture regain the quality that connects it to all the other arts: the ability to relate life to fiction and reality to the realm of the imagination, where the liberation from mere facts can be "played" out.

In Jahn's design of a second building for the Chicago Tribune (prepared for a fanciful competition<sup>63</sup>), a container structure faced in colored glass, with a stepped Gothic gable front, is raised on long stilts above the existing building (figure 92).

Even more fantastic — because it is real — is a strange container that Jahn placed right in the midst of the city of Chicago. This geometrically cut chunk of a building, looking like a giant fragment of a larger whole, is the State of Illinois Center (figures 93, 94). Here Jahn was faced with the choice of either once again raising the usual tall office building on the narrow lot or coming up with something new that would not

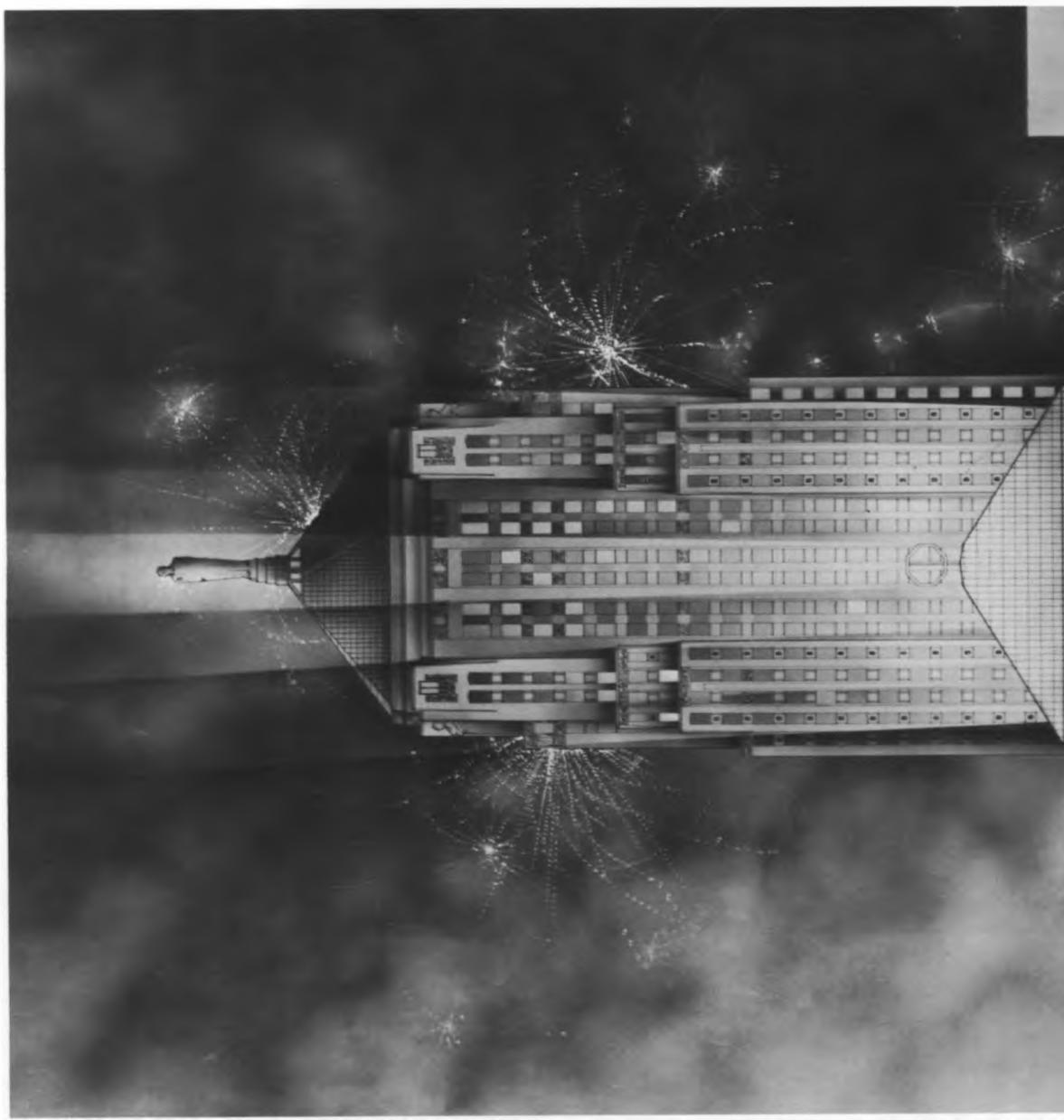


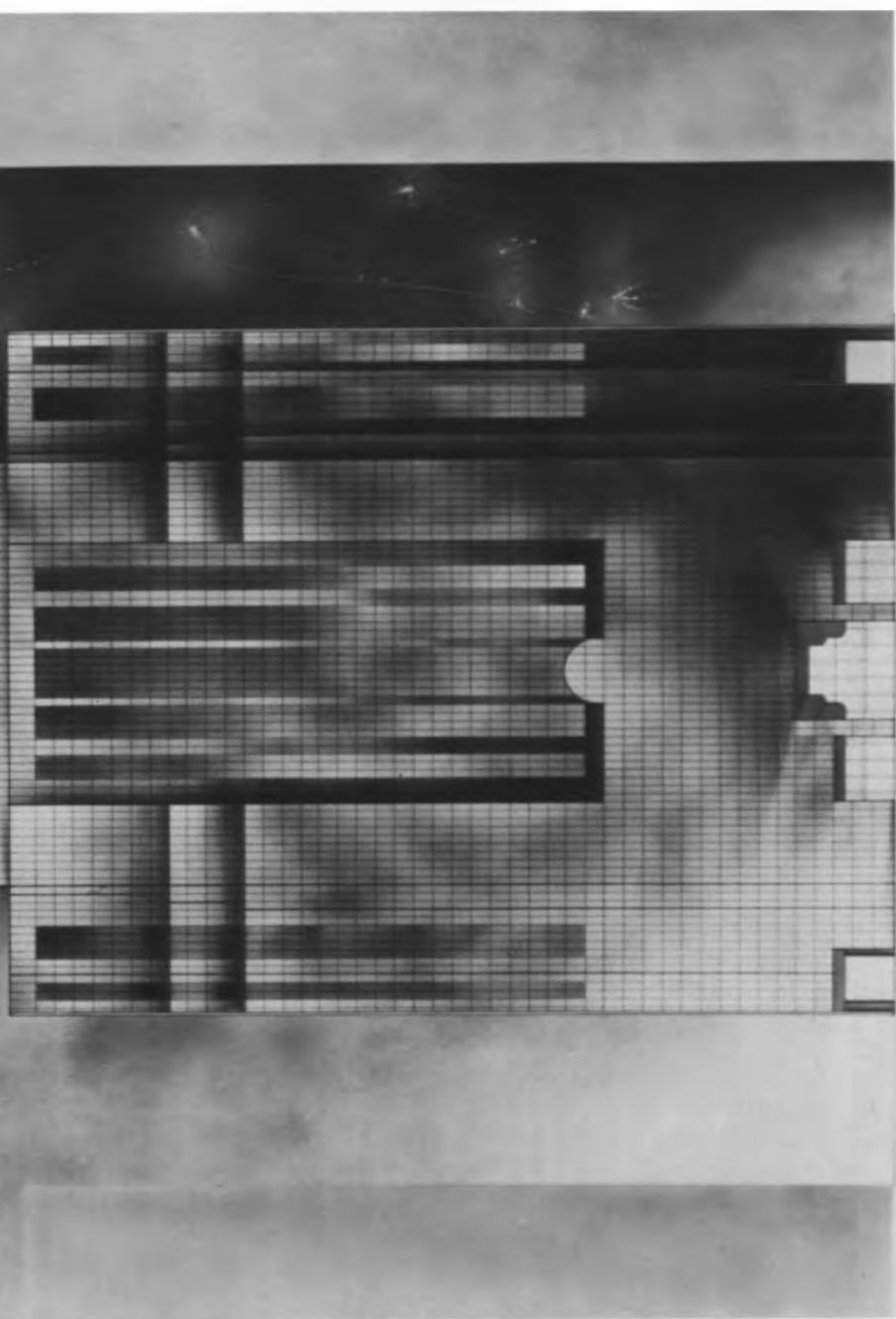
90

Murphy and Jahn  
addition to Board of Trade Building  
Chicago  
(first design)

91

Helmut Jahn  
Addition to  
Board of Trade Building ►  
Chicago  
(second design)



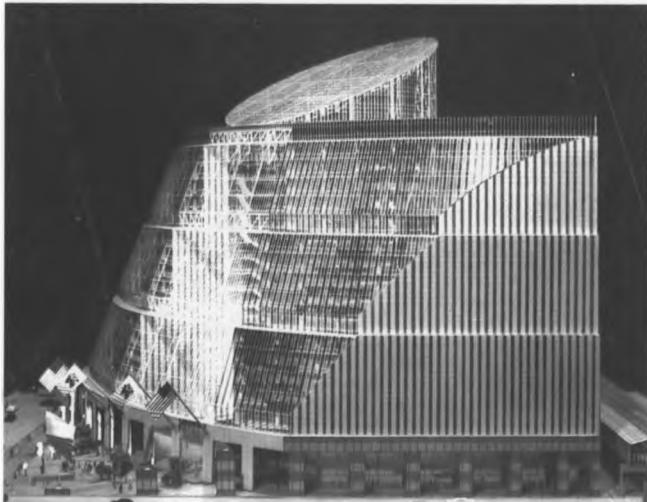




**Helmut Jahn**  
**Design for extension**  
**◀ of *Chicago Tribune* building**  
**1980**

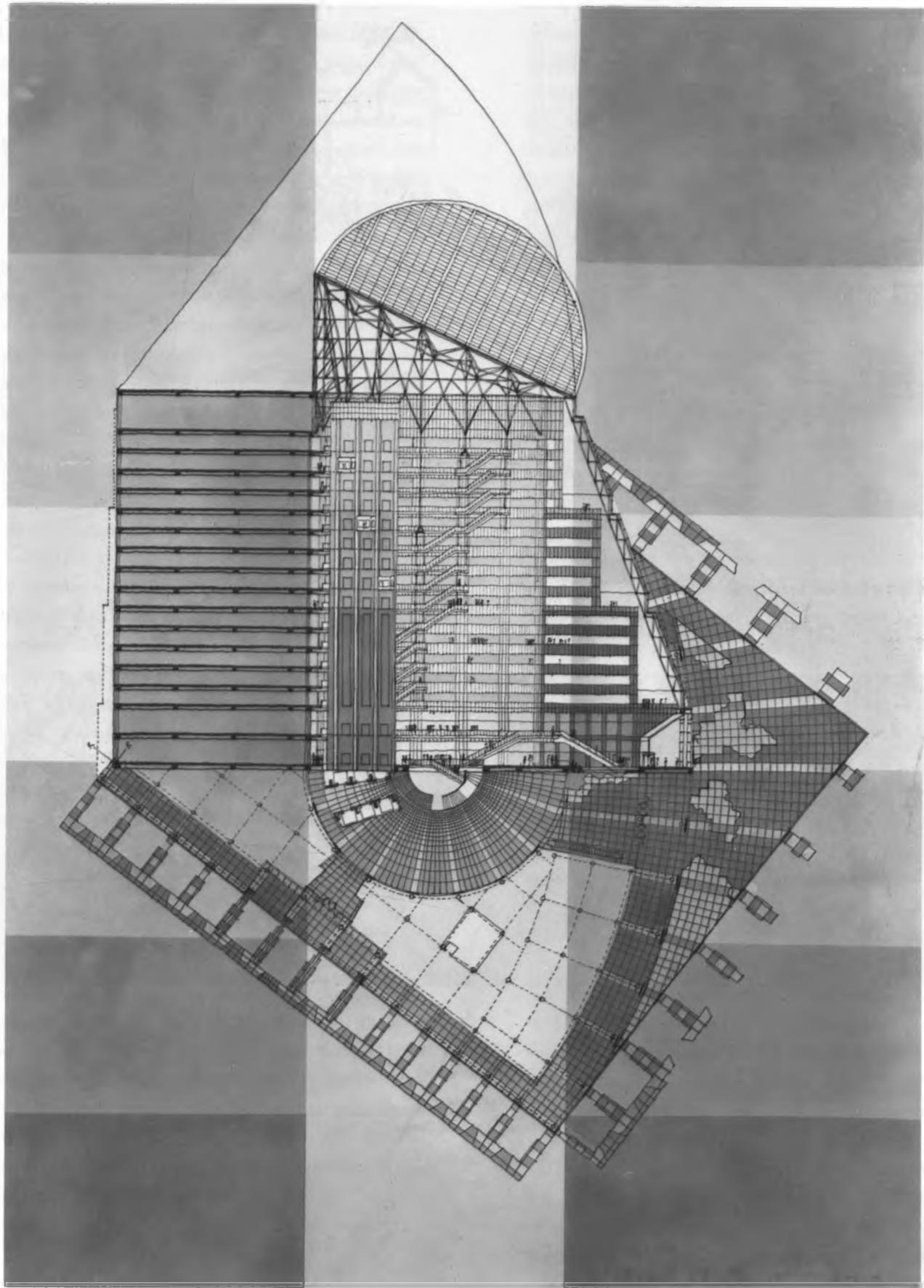
93, 94

**Murphy and Jahn**  
**State of Illinois Center**  
**Chicago**  
**1980–1983**



## Ground plan and cross section

State of Illinois Center

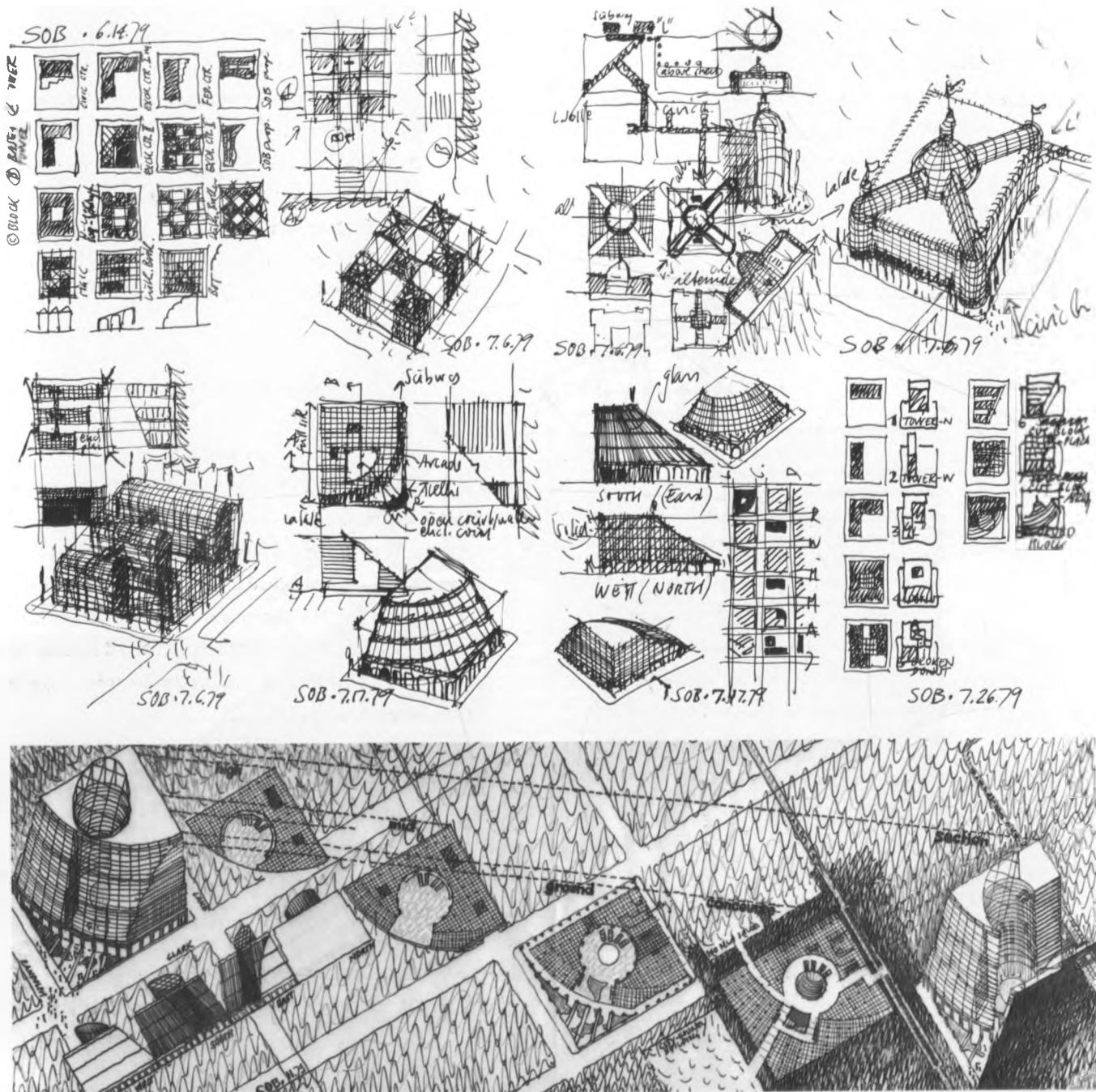


Helmut Jahn

## Design sketches

and layout indications

State of Illinois Center



Helmut Jahn

## Sketches for

State of Illinois Center

only meet the needs of his client but would also genuinely benefit the public at large. Following the example of Kevin Roche's Ford Foundation building and other similar new buildings, Jahn proposed a building with a large cylindrical hall that, after rising through all the floors and through the roof, is truncated obliquely and covered with glass. Jahn's initial design, a conventional domed structure (figure 96, top), developed into something entirely new and no longer explainable in terms of the traditional typology of the domed building. The glass container, stepped back four times, appears like a conic segment cut at its sides by the street lines and uncut only where it faces the plaza at the corner of Clark and Randolph (figure 97). The self-definition of this glass solitaire is impaired by the sharp cuts into its flanks to the point that it appears to be a whittled-down leftover from a previous environment. Only when a building has achieved a large-scale integral total form that is nonreferential even in its lack of proportions can it be cut into at any possible place. This building is not a complete form, defined by its own intrinsic principle; its shape is the outcome of an intersection between the geometry of a building and the geometry of an environment.

The relativization of a building by its environment is an essential issue of postmodernism. The nonreferential lack of proportion in container architecture — that is, the abandoning of human proportions — allows the achievement of a new relation between a building and the surrounding space.

Jahn's fragmentation and transformation of the typology of the monumental deprive the State of Illinois Center of its representative character. A building that defines itself only through its reference to its environment forfeits monumentality not only by abandoning proportion but also by abandoning the conventional typology of the "finished" building. The obliquely applied top in which the Center terminates is something of an anti-dome; the monumental content of a conventional dome yields to the profane understatement of this flat top, which hardly suggests any demonstrative gesture or powerful attribute of the state. With this innovative form, Jahn was obviously mocking representation. Initially, such derisive forms are generally subversive. Here — after Bruno Taut's appeal for light and graceful architecture rather than "seriousism," and after Das Neau Bauen did away with forms (such as heavy plinths and heavy roof beams) that had been associated with ponderous profundity — was a new round of deflation. Now even the program of reducing all architecture to primary stereometric figures was abandoned, as the relativization of the building form led architecture out of the tradition of classic modernism.

## Conclusion

The term container architecture describes the first typical cluster of themes with which contemporary architecture moved beyond ideas such as those of Roche and in the direction of a postmodern architecture as characterized by the works of Jahn, such as One South Wacker and the high-rise in Houston.<sup>64</sup>

The history of container architecture started with an unparalleled validation of the standardized large-scale building form in the sense of classical modern architecture, and ended with its relativization when the integral building was cut into on all sides and the integrity of the primary stereometric figures was lost. Finally, the large-scale building was drawn into the historical structure of the city and became a vehicle of its further articulation in historicizing terms. With this, the turn to postmodernism has already been made.

## CONTEXTUAL ARCHITECTURE<sup>65</sup>

### Contrasts

At the 1959 Congrès International d'Architecture Moderne, in Otterlo, Giancarlo de Carlo voiced a demand for the development of "pliant and adjustable plans" based on "detailed knowledge of the historical data."<sup>66</sup> Without a doubt, it was this demand for the acceptance of the existing historical environment as a determining factor that led architecture out of classical modernism and out of the complex dogmas produced by postwar functionalism.

It soon became unavoidably clear that in the cities no two buildings were compatible. Each new building tended to stick out as a one-of-a-kind creation; each stood as if accidentally placed in a patchwork, and each became all the more a composite itself the more it aspired to be a perfectly unified individual whole. From the very beginning, the aesthetic and the social ethic of Das Neue Bauen had opposed the chaos of the large modern city and in the process had also destroyed the city's historic substance. Le Corbusier's Ville Radieuse is a prime example of architecture fighting against history and for a radiant future.

While extensive redevelopment projects replaced elements of the old cities with (so to speak) tremendously enlarged versions of portions of the Ville Radieuse,<sup>67</sup> the construction of individual buildings had an even more pervasive effect. Step by step, with one new box followed by another, the urban picture changed.

The design principles used to set the individual new buildings off from older structures were intended to make the neighboring buildings look outdated. The rivalry between the old and the new was intensified to the point of intolerable formal contradiction under the impetus of the doctrines of

Le Corbusier  
Unité d'habitation  
Marseilles  
1946



*Das Neue Bauen.* As a matter of fact, all the models of modern architecture that achieved the status of types were initially developed as individual isolated monuments manifesting a relationship of demonstrative negation against the previously built environment.

Le Corbusier's Villa Savoye (figure 34): a cube floating on piles in a park, a paradigm of pure geometry, a hymn to the beauty of self-sufficient basic form, a work of art celebrating the individualist aura.

Le Corbusier's Unite d'habitation (figure 98): a miniature city, at least according to its claims — a block out on the green, independent of Marseilles, in dialog only with the surrounding hills, a concrete sculpture out in nature.

Gropius's Bauhaus in Dessau (figure 22): a building that lost its connection to its site the moment its ground plan was made famous as an abstraction. By spreading its wings in all directions, this building creates space for itself all around; any alignment with a street line is thus declared impossible. It turns its lawn into a rug, and it dissolves the city and its rigid coordinates — another monument, again apparently ruled by the proposition of having to push away all its neighbors.

And finally, Mies's high-rise crystals (e.g. figure 99), which elevated isolation to a fundamental principle. Permeated by light and transparent to the observer on all sides, these polished rectilinear solitaires in steel and glass want above all to be seen. How could such a building give rise to a structural flexibility that might refer to its neighbor in spite of its own stereometrically defined limits? Next to such a geometry, the existing environment was reduced to a contrast, to an antagonist, to mere surroundings that might at best be reflected in the new building's glass surface. Such a building argued only in favor of another equally independent isolated glass monument, and another, and another.

#### An Answer to Mies: BBPR

One example of how “contextual architecture” can provide a valid architectural alternative as well as a possible “modern” solution is offered by BBPR's<sup>68</sup> office building for the Chase Manhattan Bank in Milan (figure 101), which is directly comparable to Mies's work in terms of both technology and materials. The glass facade, with its grid of beams, and the first story, with its steel supports, clearly go back to Mies's canon. Yet, in spite of the acceptance of this vocabulary, the building is by no means isolated; on the contrary, its dominant feature is its relatedness to its historic urban context, from which it draws the impulses for its own special form and quality.

The curve of the facade, related to the angle at which the Via Hoepli and the Via Catena meet in the Piazza Meda (figure 102), avoids the appearance of a rigid block. The placement of the vertical beams suggests that the facade is

99

Ludwig Mies van der Rohe  
Federal Center  
Chicago  
1959–1964

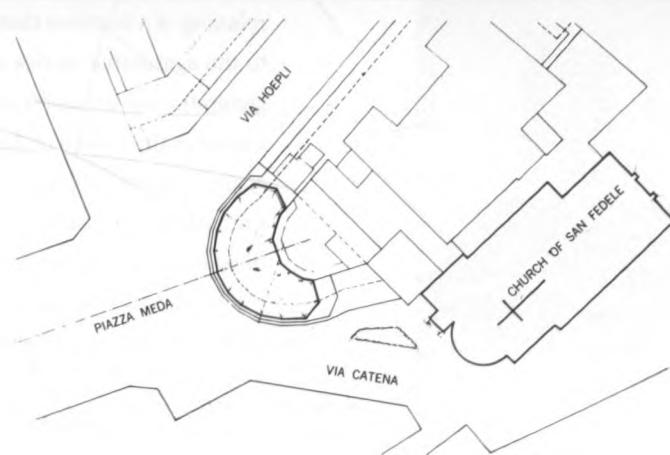


New York  
View of Park Avenue.

100



**BBPR**  
**Office building for**  
**Chase Manhattan Bank**  
**Milan**  
**1969**



**Ground plan of**  
**Chase Manhattan building**

**Arcades of  
Chase Manhattan building  
and neighboring building**



pleated. The slightly bowed windows mirror the immediate environment with a ripple effect. At the same time, the facade echoes the curves of the apse and dome of the nearby church of San Fedele; this relation is emphasized by the stepping back of the top story, which parallels the effect of the tambour's entablature around the cupola of the church, and by the fact that the roof of the office building and the roof of the dome have the same flat slope.

However, the response to the existing historic context is not limited to references to the nearby church. The Piazza Meda is ringed by buildings with open arcades, and the Chase Manhattan building also takes up this motif, as figure 103 shows. The double pillars of the adjacent building recur in the new building's double support beams, and the openings in the spandrels of the older building find their pendants in the bracket interstices of the new building. Configurations of form are transposed and clarified, yet without the ornamental garb of the past.

In terms of its functional value, the Chase Manhattan building would not be worthy of mention if it did not visually articulate by means of its form its own place in the total urban context by actually relating to it, by expressly reacting to existing elements and thus surrendering the egocentric posturing of a monument. All this is achieved not by repeating historical decorative formulas but by acknowledging them in a contemporary form. This building is significant because, while it insists on being "uncompromisingly modern" in the choice of its formal means, it is intent on being a part of a preexisting environment nonetheless. Here, for the first time, modern architecture acquired a flexibility it had lacked while it persisted in its doctrinaire antagonism against the historical city.

What we see here is not a new style but the first signs of the relaxing of a doctrine that initially won its ground by sticking to the aggressive tactics of revolutionary innovation. A new generation of architects not concerned exclusively with innovation as the source of their reputation has made it legitimate again to show tolerance toward one's neighbors. They have unmasked the purely monumental stance as increasingly dangerous for the commonweal, and have opposed the purely demonstrative gambits of architecture as destructive of the human environment.

#### **Historical Architecture as Relic**

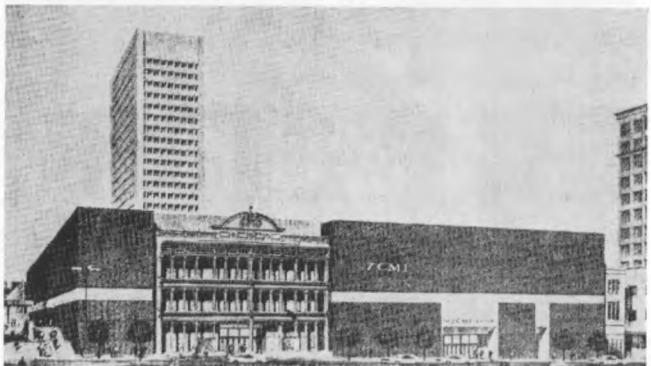
The simplest way to relate new and old architecture is to incorporate an old building, or a part of it, in a new one. The ruin of the old theater of Münster left within the new building and the inclusion of the entrance of the Berlin Palace in the building of the East German Staatsrat (State Assembly) are well-known examples. The reasons for such preservation are various; specific ideological arguments often play a large role.

**Charles Moore**  
**Citizens' Federal Savings**  
**and Loan Association**  
**San Francisco**  
**1962**



105

**Entrance resseault**  
**of former Berlin Palace**  
**incorporated in**  
**Staatsrat building**  
**East Berlin**



106

**Zion's Cooperative Mercantile Institution**  
**shopping mall**  
**Salt Lake City**  
**1969**

The Berlin Palace, built as a monument to Prussian absolutism, was destroyed, while that part of the palace that was (so to speak) appropriated for communism by Karl Liebknecht was preserved. This kind of procedure is based on a misunderstanding. Here a building of the highest rank was invested with ideological content without any regard for other connotations — its role in the development of the urban profile of Berlin, for example. This was a typical postwar argument of a regime that persisted in being defensive against even a past form of political domination.

More customary, and increasingly fashionable, is the use of a facade relic as a historical ornament, as in the case of the shopping mall shown in figure 106. Here the front of an older building was turned into a piece of ornament adding refinement and a patina of history to any otherwise unarticulated and plain container building. Its contrast to the highly detailed old building seems to provide the new building with an alibi for its lack of articulation. This token use of history even claims credit for the fact that the old buildings on the block were not all destroyed. Thus, it demands our gratitude: things could have been worse! However, there is small comfort in imagining what this mall would have looked like without its facade relic.

#### **Integration of Old and New Buildings**

It is a difficult task for the architect to go beyond the mere preservation of a facade relic in the attempt to conjoin an old and a new building in such a way as to produce a convincing new entity. This is evidenced by the fact that, in spite of the widespread destruction in Europe during the war, there are few examples of the successful integration of ruins into new buildings there. One of the best is the Historisches Museum in Hannover (figure 108). The external walls of an arsenal and a medieval tower were the remains of a block bounded by irregular medieval streets (figure 109). The acceptance of the old boundaries of the block and their direct inclusion into the museum's ground plan were extremely unusual. The usual solution would have been to turn the lot into a lawn and to place a multi-wing building on it. But instead, the architect (Dieter Oesterlen) preserved the given street alignments. The new building reflects the street lines in its total shape, accomplishing thereby an adjustment to the historically "grown" urban substance — a definite breach of the doctrines that limit modern architecture to stereometric self-absorption. Oesterlen emphasized the adaptive relationship to the neighborhood still further by stepping back one side of the block so as to echo the half-timbered buildings opposite. The masonry of the external wall summons up, in material and treatment, the rubble masonry of the old arsenal which forms the continuation of the new building's facade. Yet the two discrete elements do not collide head-on; the glass wall of a staircase

shaft provides a boundary between the old and the new, and the light-colored roof edge drawn over the whole structure unites the two parts.

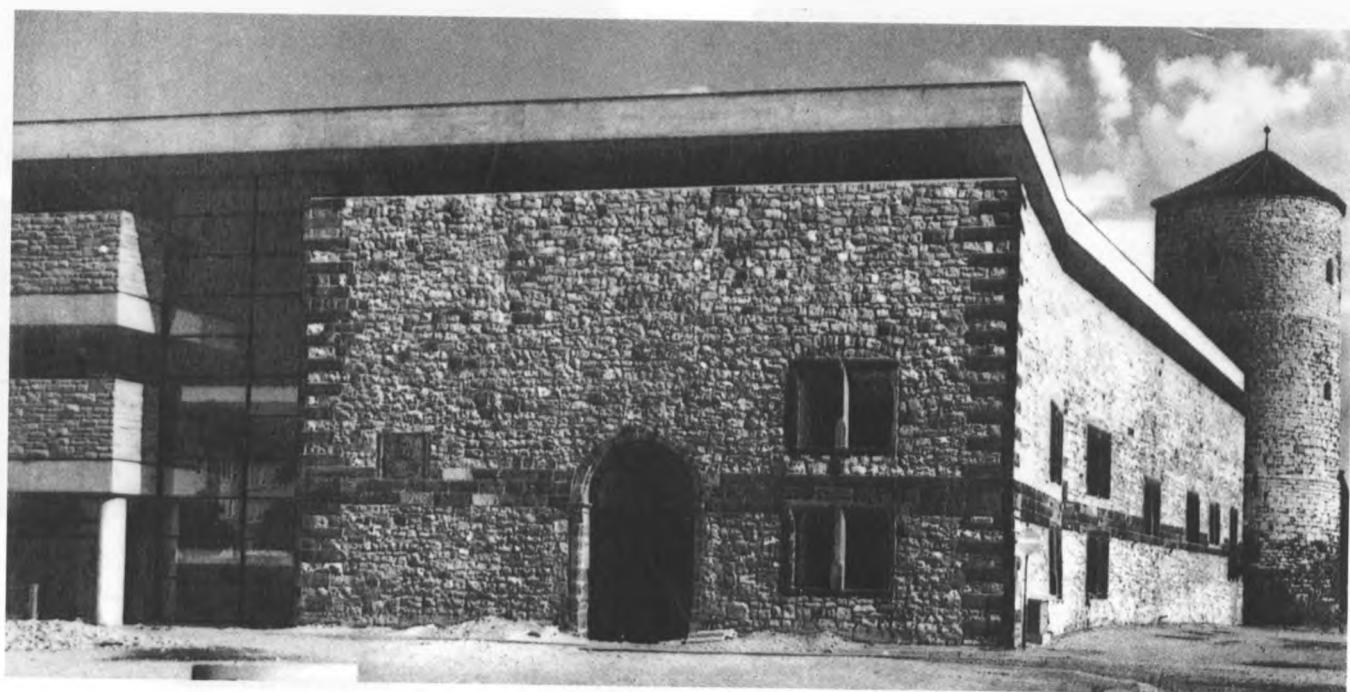
Another successful conjoining of the old and the new is the Bensberg City Hall (figures 111–113). At first glance it seems as if the decisive factor here was anything but a consideration for the old buildings. And yet this building, though by no means "accommodating" in its material and its monumental concept, does not amount to a hostile, self-aggrandizing monument. On the contrary, it shows how far an architect can go in demonstrating his commitment to his own times without having to ignore or completely destroy the existing city and the given topography. This imposing building recognizes many found conditions — seemingly hostile to the realization of an idealized geometric form — as legitimate rival motifs equally worthy of architectural expression. Thus, the ground plan bends to include in its irregularity the circumference of an old citadel, and the Assembly Hall bends to the shape of the old palace. The topography of the site is brought into play and allowed to dominate in the sloping of the courtyard and in the downhill staggering of the new building, which in turn seems to pick up the gradient's descent from the building blocks of the adjacent baroque palace. The faceted top of the tower is the new building's reply to the old slate-roofed spire of the neighboring keep. Town and country combine here in preventing an autonomously conceived artistic form. Even as a means of dialog with a set environment, the architectural articulation retains its validity as an aesthetically forceful form. One might object to such an emphasis on visual relationships as neglectful of the user's comfort. Yet, as it happens, the staggered forms produce a sense of comfort by excluding from the user's experience the discomforting visual sensation of being sucked into the distance by the perspective lines of long straight corridors. The richness of the visual effects is only one facet of a master plan that also reveals itself in the variety of the spatial forms, in the free transition between them, and in the relation of inside and outside.

#### **The Vanishing Building**

A paradoxical consequence of the consistent observance of context is the "disappearance" of a new building. This was ironically pointed out by Charles Moore when he was asked how he would compete against a Brutalist monument such as Paul Rudolph's Yale Art and Architecture Building: "I would simply withdraw from the competition, plant a few trees and build the building underground. Impact by contrast."<sup>69</sup>

Irony need not have the last word when the problem at hand is how to fit a building that has to meet new needs (for instance, the need for parking space) into a historically significant ensemble. That is a question of appropriateness. Is

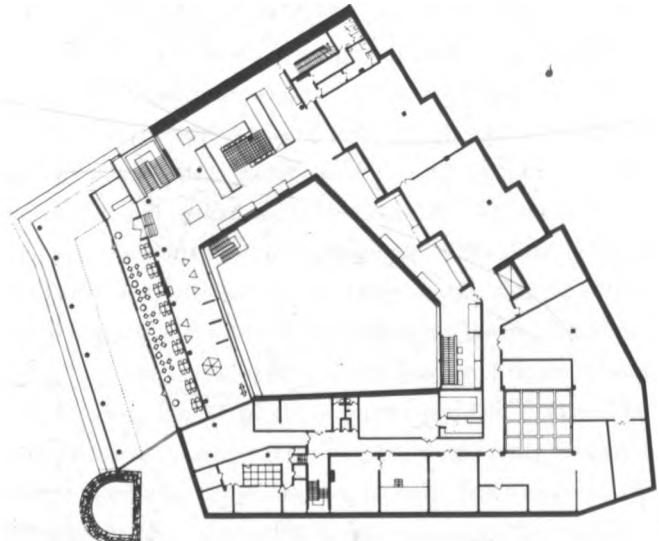
Dieter Oesterlen  
Historisches Museum  
Hannover  
1960–1966





108

Aerial photograph of  
**Historisches Museum**  
and surroundings



109

Ground plan of first story  
of **Historisches Museum**



110

Burgstrasse facade  
of **Historisches Museum**



111

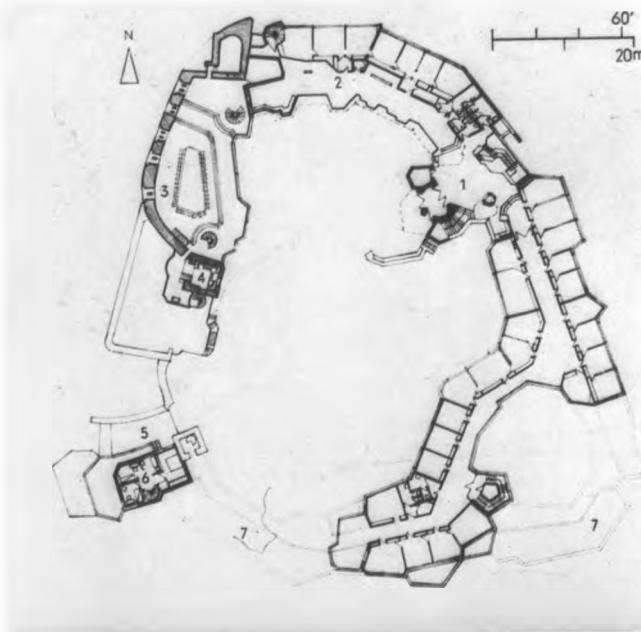
**Gottfried Böhm**  
**City Hall, Bensberg**  
**1963–1969**  
**(view into courtyard)**



112

**New and old towers**  
**of Bensberg City Hall**

**Ground plan of  
Bensberg City Hall**



it appropriate to design a parking garage in such a way that it inevitably competes against older structures, either by its bareness or by its overemphatically sculptural definition (as in the case of Rudolph's parking garage in New Haven)? The architects who had to add a parking garage to the Tennessee capitol in Nashville (figures 114, 115) decided against these two alternatives and found a third one. To mar the dignified surroundings of the capitol building — an imposing, monumental domed structure on a green hill full of trees — with the appearance of a garage was clearly blasphemous, and the cars were better kept out of sight. Thus, the garage structure was turned into a curved wall along the foot of the hill. The roof of the structure, which is not a building in the proper sense, was turned into a small park with trees, paths, and bushes. The garage is no longer recognizable; it has been transformed into something else and has become an element of the urban landscape. One could call this procedure the ultimate conclusion of "contextual architecture" — in the end, even the traditional category of "the building" is abandoned in favor of the existing environment. For the architect as well as for the client, this step means that self-representation and self-monumentalization are fundamentally put in question by architecture, and that every representational building that ignores such alternatives deserves to be doubly criticized.

#### Conclusion

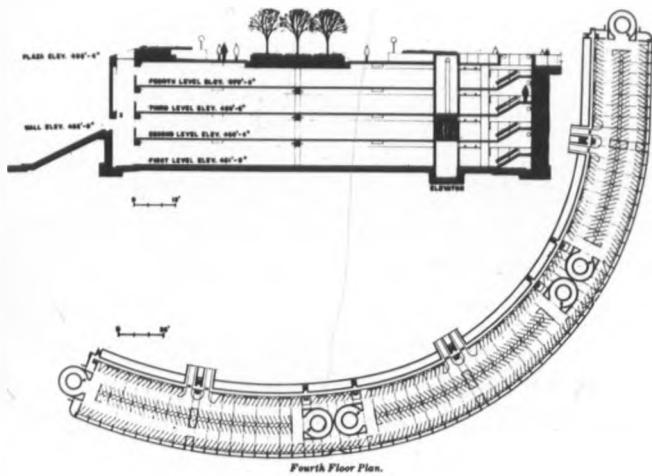
Moore's Citizens' Federal Savings & Loan Association, Oesterlen's Hanover Historical Museum, and Böhm's Bensberg City Hall were the first signs of a tendency toward "contextual architecture," and they were undertaken at a time when very few architects were willing to run the risk of using "knittings and fittings" (as the English put it) and of acquiring a reactionary reputation. Today these buildings are hardly exceptional. Contact with historical form has become accepted, and today architects take up the historical vocabulary much more readily and directly as a point of departure.

**W. Glenn Bullock and Robert B. Church III**

**Parking garage of capitol building**

**Nashville**

**1970**



**Bullock and Church**

**Parking garage of capitol building**

**Nashville**

**1970**



**Preconditions**

**for**

**Postmodern**

**Architecture**

**Belgiojoso, Peressutti, and Rogers**

**Torre Velasca**

**Milan**

**1957-1960**



### The Torre Velasca

At the 1959 CIAM, just as a group eagerly insisting on a renewal of modern architecture was about to enjoy consensus after the break with the great masters of classical modernism, two Italian architects entered by the back door and forced the discussion of a topic hardly ever accorded the slightest mention since the first CIAM: new architecture in context of the historical city. These two architects, Giancarlo de Carlo and Ernesto Rogers, made heretical pronouncements and caused great consternation among the architects who had just manifested their readiness to oppose the dogmas of functionalism by endorsing an architecture aimed at more humane concerns. Suddenly, modernity itself seemed fundamentally called into question. The Englishman Peter Smithson and the Dutchman Aldo van Eyck appeared as the tribunal of orthodoxy.

The controversy that broke out at this congress has proved exemplary, and it has been continued in similar terms. It is the old quarrel between the defenders of history and the adherents of modernity, which has its forerunners in the "Querelles" of the French Academy in the seventeenth century.

Along with several other events that occurred around 1960, the CIAM in Otterlo was a turning point in the history of modern architecture. The blow dealt by Rogers in the name of his firm (Belgioioso, Peressutti, and Rogers) came in the monstrous shape of the first high-rise building in Milan: the Torre Velasca, which violated the modest European standards of permissible building size and at the same time seemed to deride the skyscraper as the ideal prototype of modern architecture. This absurdity stands like a medieval defensive tower made hospitable by copious fenestration and blown up to a giant size in the midst of the old city of Milan. Nothing was left of the elegance with which Mies had endowed skeletal frame construction, even though that method had been employed. As if to mock this elegance, the upper residential part hangs like a paunch over the lower stories, protruding so far that the main supports of the facade jut out like the steep brackets of a medieval fortification, or like those of the Palazzo Vecchio in Florence. A hipped roof with chimney-like additions sits atop the tower like a Victorian nightcap.

Rogers, anticipating attacks, declared: "When I speak about the past and tradition, and when I speak about the building's life being connected with the past, it is not intended that this be an imitation of the forms of the past."<sup>70</sup> In the course of the discussion, Rogers became evasive in order to avoid being charged with eclecticism. But van Eyck had already delivered an axiomatic verdict: "The time has come to avoid the pitfalls of eclecticism, regionalism, and modernism, for these are

utterly false alternatives — three kinds of shortsightedness that continually alternate. Thus, overdoing Palazzo Vecchio's tower . . . , with the aid of inverted flying buttresses and syncopated windows, strikes me as an exercise hardly worth taking."<sup>71</sup> Rogers did not allow himself to be pinned down as an eclecticist: "There were people who criticized this building, saying that it was an imitation of the towers of the Middle Ages. I don't mind if it is, but I must say, it is only a casual coincidence resulting from needs which are, for different reasons, similar to those of the Middle Ages."<sup>72</sup> Smithson, not satisfied with this evasive explanation, proceeded to a frontal attack: "Your building is significant in three ways. Firstly, its outline, particularly in silhouette, has strong connections with the medieval fortress architecture of Northern Italy, connections which are so explicit that they cannot be fortuitous. . . . The general and highly consistent system of profiling and faceting the structure and wall surfaces does no more than contribute to the visual effect of the building. . . . The building has no implications beyond itself, if as an ultimate statement, a solution offered in a closed aesthetic."<sup>73</sup> Just as the old masters had insisted on making the typical and potentially universal forms their prime concerns, Smithson objected to the idiosyncratic limitation of this particular case and demanded a generally valid model: "For me there is a certain element of irresponsibility in this building. . . . With all this intellectual capacity you have to take up your own position, you have to be absolutely responsible because you must think fully of the nature of history, of the nature of society as it is today. I think that this is a bad model to give because there are things that can be so easily distorted and become not only ethically wrong but also aesthetically wrong."<sup>74</sup> Smithson was looking for qualities that could be extrapolated as exemplary and reusable, and did not want to understand that the significance of this building lay in its attempt to respond to the specific and singular characteristics of the old city of Milan — an attempt whose results were inevitably idiosyncratic and not universally valid.

Thus the conflict between modern architecture and architecture that accepted its relativization by the environment was programmed for the following decades: methodological generalization versus the individual case, and the particular solution versus didactic rules.

Yet, what made Rogers's particular solution unacceptable to the defenders of modernity was its semantic content. Here again we run into astonishing, extremely advanced insights that are at the core of the present lines of argumentation: "In discussing Rogers's work we agreed that any form — and not only the form, but the whole vocabulary of that form — carries with it its social content. There is in the work of Rogers and de Carlo an implication of a reimposition of past social contents. The forms they have chosen represent to me a

social period which is long since past. And which one is particularly moved against. It so happens that these forms have just lately had their reappearance in, of all places, the communist world. That may be why we react so strongly, when we see their appearance here and hear them supported by an almost parallel argument.<sup>75</sup> Smithson insisted that he had discovered in the Milan tower the contents by which today the admissible is separated from the inadmissible: freedom and democracy pitched against the reactionary resurgence of medieval architectural vocabulary! Finally, Smithson's argument became pointed in the extreme: "I understand that for you these forms carry little message, but for us these forms carry a load on their backs which is sometimes liberating and sometimes restricting."<sup>76</sup> De Carlo, on the other hand, had already voiced a demand, on the general plane, for that which Rogers had attempted to develop in the particular case of the Milan tower: ". . . in the present situation, the problem is one of formulating pliant and adjustable plans which must proceed, not from abstract ideological rules, but from a detailed knowledge of historic realities which vary from country to country. The problem is one of leading modern architecture towards new 'national tracks' which will enable it to become part of the living texture of the societies for which it is at work. In this way it can carry out the same progressive action which the internationalism of the twenties was, for quite different reasons, pursuing."<sup>77</sup> Obviously, de Carlo's concept of progress was totally opposed to that of Smithson and van Eyck. How could a progressive feature be derived from limiting architecture to historically given factors, which are different in different countries? Didn't this proposition presuppose that taking history into account was not simply tantamount to a relapse into historicism and an apotheosis of past semantic contents of form? De Carlo was able to make the necessary distinctions from the start: "The revivalist tendency does not arise — as is generally believed — from too great an affection for history, but rather from a misuse of history it transfers artistic expressions with the aim of proposing their underlying contents anew, thus disregarding the dialectic relationship existing between the facts and their expression."<sup>78</sup> This plea to question the all-too-rigidly presupposed unity of form and content is still valid today. A historical form can confirm or deny its content, just as a revival of that form does not have to be accompanied by a revalidation of its content.

In his statement, Rogers made the following points: The Torre Velasca, in advancing a strikingly novel version of the modern skyscraper, takes into account the historical environment in which it is placed but does not declare its allegiance to the historical agents of power represented by a fortified tower. The present form contradicts the attribution of this content. The Torre Velasca undertakes to reinforce the iden-

tity of its surroundings, so as not to set in question by a self-isolating modernist stance the value of the entire environment and so as not to appeal demonstratively by its mere presence for the exchange of all that is old for that which is new. The strengthening of continuity does not necessarily mean a backslide into the past; it is supposed to make us aware of the time span required in creating the identity of the human life-sphere. In Ernesto Rogers's words: "This building is a skyscraper in the very center of Milan, 500 meters from the cathedral. It is at Milan's very historical center, and we found it necessary that our building breathe the atmosphere of the place and even intensify it."<sup>79</sup> Rogers concluded with a summary statement of his objective: "[The] attitude of the fathers of modern architecture was anti-historical. But this was an attitude which was born of great revolution, and it was necessary that the first premise of our culture be a new attitude to history. But this is no longer necessary."<sup>80</sup>

### Regionalism

The CIAM at Aix-en-Provence in 1954 had witnessed the first sharp protests against the Great Masters of modern architecture — especially Gropius. Le Corbusier had been present and had applauded the new innovators. Speaking for the renegades at Aix had been Peter and Alison Smithson and Jacob Bakema. By the time of the Dubrovnik congress, in 1956, the Smithsons, Bakema, and Aldo van Eyck had banded together in a secession known as Team X.

At Otterlo in 1959, neither Gropius nor Le Corbusier was present. Louis Kahn made his first CIAM appearance at Otterlo, presenting his Richards Laboratories building. Ralph Erskine came from Sweden, and Kenzo Tange from Japan.

For Erskine, regionalism was important for climatic as well as cultural reasons. His work, he said, was "not intended to be only a theoretical solution to a distant part of the world"; rather, "certain thought processes that [had] come from [the] situation in Sweden [might] have an application to a much wider zone." The climate of Sweden, he said, "made the schematic solution of what was then the acceptable ubiquity of modern architecture impossible."<sup>81</sup> From these remarks could be gathered the first program for a regionalism no longer determined by a retrograde nationalist orientation but, on the contrary, receiving its definition from the perspective of the Modern Movement. Erskine insisted that, with the increasing differentiation of civilization, not only "what is the same for everyone, what everyone wants" was important; rather, one had to apply a new method — a method that would look for "the differences between the Johnsons, the Svensons, the Gustafs; between the Italians, the French, the English, and Dutch." "These differences," he continued, "are real differences and not just superficial differences. We are getting to rather dangerous ground dialectically, because I

suppose one has got to find a sort of law for that as well and that is going to be rather difficult. . . . It seems to me that the only way to go about it is to try to establish a feeling of neighborliness, a feeling that one is established in one's own geographical position."<sup>82</sup>

Geographic conditions had never been disregarded entirely by the architects of the International Style; in fact, no matter how much anyone attempted to become independent from all given conditions, climatic peculiarities were inevitably taken into account. It must be stressed here that Erskine was not calling for a regionalism influenced by the historic culture of a given location, as the Italians already had. Nevertheless, one must note his commendation of the kind of architecture that promotes a "feeling of neighborliness" and a "feeling that one is established in one's own geographical position."<sup>83</sup>

By "neighborliness" Erskine did not mean a friendly approach to one's neighbors as an antidote against social anonymity and loneliness. On the contrary, he meant local conditions and qualities in an embracing sense — that is, all the things that define what we started again to unabashedly call "home," a "geographic position" including everything that constitutes neighborliness in social terms as well as a local identity.

Thus began the gradual emergence of a new conception of architecture that, in contrast to the general rules ensuring the production of the same everywhere and the presence of the universally valid, was supposed to include that which was determined singularly by local characteristics. At Otterlo, in his speech on "The Situation of Modern Architecture," de Carlo noted that among the supporters of the International Style "rule was raised from an instrument of method to the level of a principle. The natural development of this inconsistency was bound to lead to the supremacy of technique and to its becoming a fetish."<sup>84</sup> Architecture was already beginning to show signs of the rift between the observance of local factors and "high tech."

After all we have experienced since, it is not surprising that the spokesmen of Team X, Peter Smithson, Aldo van Eyck, and Jacob Bakema, greeted Erskine with verdicts almost as sharp as those they had meted out earlier to Ernesto Rogers. To be sure, Rogers's turning to history's primordial generative powers was a much greater sin than Erskine's acknowledgment of conditions arising from geographical and ethnic differences.

When Kenzo Tange presented his newest building, the Prefectural Office of Kagawa, it became clear to everyone that he too had utilized regionalist, nationalistic formal elements to elaborate modernist concerns. The strung-out courses of lightweight balustrades, seemingly supported by projecting beams, gave the building a character strongly reminiscent of



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Kenzo Tange  
Prefectural Office  
Kagawa, Japan

1958

Japanese wood architecture, and the sequence of beam-heads catching the light at regular intervals and in double formation over the main supports was a Japanese architectural feature. Rogers addressed Tange directly in the ensuing discussion: "I would like to ask you if my interpretation of your Prefectural Office, which I admire very much, corresponds to your interpretation of it. To me, what you did corresponds profoundly in shape, form, and style to the democratic concept you like to give to your buildings, and the correspondence is visible to me in the sense that your language is very up-to-date and modern language, applied, if I may say so, translated into the Japanese language. Therefore, the democratic relationship is really an intimate relationship you give to your building, to the race — to the whole truth of your civilization — without denying modernity, rather emphasizing modernity and given roots to it. I think that your proceedings are really a very good example of what we have to do at the . . . CIAM. The . . . CIAM gives roots to a general statement which was international, a bit anonymous, and becoming more and more technical for each of us from every country, whereas your statement, I think, is a step forward."<sup>85</sup> But Tange remained unmoved and gave his support to Smithson and van Eyck: "I cannot accept the concept of total regionalism. So-called regionalism is always nothing more than the decorative news of traditional elements. This kind of regionalism is always looking backwards. The popular tendency of using regional characteristics for decorating the facades of buildings must be rejected."<sup>86</sup> Smithson immediately joined this blocking of the emerging regionalism and drew from it a final damning verdict: ". . . I am always a bit wary of what Rogers says. There is inside his statement a plea for the reevaluation of one's own history as *an a priori*. I think this is not only completely wrong, but dangerous."<sup>87</sup> Thus, for the time being, the protests against the conventions of modernism were sidetracked.

#### Architectural Anthropology

At the 1959 CIAM in Otterlo, the Dutch anthropologist Herman Haan gave a report on an African village. His main interest lay in pointing out, in Aldo van Eyck's sense, the primary facts of life. (What van Eyck himself accentuated later, in the introduction to his work on the African tribe of the Dogon, was that "it cannot have been so very different in [the Mesopotamian city] Ur five thousand years ago: The same laboriously fashioned bricks of sandy mud, then as now, . . . the same spaces around a courtyard; the same enclosure. . . .")<sup>88</sup>

At Otterlo, Haan speculated that "we might better come to understand through the study of a primitive culture what in our civilization has remained fundamentally the same."<sup>89</sup> Van Eyck emphasized in his lecture at the congress the "basic values in architecture," the discovery of anthropological con-

stants. What, he asked, is the fundamental basis of our life that runs through all specialization? In our "mechanized existence," with its advanced technical building processes, we have introduced new elements that have dimmed our capacity for perceiving what is fundamental for our lives. Our comprehension of the perceivable needs that must be satisfied by our habitat has been dulled.<sup>90</sup> Haan spoke of life and architecture in African tribal settlements not to invite a return to the singular conditions peculiar to those local cultures, but to reorient his colleagues' attention to the "eternally human" phenomena.

Van Eyck and Haan were not interested in the regional peculiarities brought into relief by Rogers and Erskine, but in the anthropological constants behind the peculiarities of African clay architecture. For van Eyck there was also a need to strip away the affluence of technological civilization and to penetrate to a perception of what is essential. A reformative intent was inherent in this approach,<sup>91</sup> most reform being concerned with a return to essentials and origins.

The anthropological approach came to be seen as a counterposition to regionalism. Peter Smithson had reproached Ralph Erskine for "Mickey Mouse stylization." Just as Walt Disney had given Snow White huge blue eyes and had "blown them up into a symbol," Erskine had "deliberately exaggerated certain features in order to more clearly communicate the intention of the functions."<sup>91</sup>

Finally, Bakema recommended "looking for a possibility of how I could act if I took an element contrasting with the landscape"<sup>92</sup> in order not to be ensnared by the special features of a landscape or a culture.

Those who lost the dispute at Otterlo — Rogers and Erskine — were hardly better architects than van Eyck and Smithson. However, their arguments were the ones that came to the fore and determined the concerns of architectural theory.

With his housing development in Zwolle,<sup>93</sup> van Eyck finally decided in favor of regionalism, which he had opposed so vehemently at Otterlo. Only the Smithsons remained true to their English Puritan restraint. But their calm buildings have, nevertheless, a touch of Snow White's blue eyes. Looked at closely, some of their best works turn out to be influenced by their environment and their specific locations, without the Smithsons' having used the traditional architectural vocabulary of London to fit the buildings into their context.

#### New Brutalism

In the early 1950s, Peter and Alison Smithson consciously and deliberately propounded the relinquishing of the canon of the "white modern" (their own term). With a "new brutalism" they wanted to defeat the English postwar trend of vernacular native architecture (already concerned with the

"genius loci") and to counterpose a new, limited viewpoint against the functionalist fixation on the generalization of universally valid norms. The Smithsons were already pressing in a direction away from the global ambitions of modern architecture and toward a focusing on that which suitably suggested itself as a possible building "for a specific place in the present time."<sup>94</sup> That is, they too were pleading for a qualification of the functionalist norms of modernity. They were still loyal to functionalism, but not to a "mechanistic functionalism." To them, functionalism meant "accepting the realities of the situation, with all their contradictions and confusions, and trying to do something with them."<sup>95</sup> What they meant was that what they called "old modern architecture"<sup>96</sup> was no longer to be valid. Thus a first distinction was drawn and a first attempt made to set what we have come to call the "classical modern" apart from the "new modern" architecture. The Smithsons' criticism, which in the end was among the causes of the discontinuation of the CIAMs, was not derived from a peripheral or sectarian position; it came from the mainstream of architectural development.

It was clearly apparent from Peter Smithson's reaction to Rogers's Torre Velasca that the Smithsons did not want to permit, under any circumstances, a transfer of the characteristics of historical architecture to modern architecture under the guise of historical context. In regard to incorporating new buildings into an existing urban culture, they were primarily concerned with giving emphasis to the universally valid signs of the modern historical development: "The modern architect is interested in the implications of his building in the community and in the culture as a whole. His first concern is with the general problem, from which the specific solution in the particular situation is evolved."<sup>97</sup> "There must be inherent in the organization of every building the renewal of the whole community structure. Take, for example, the problem of rebuilding three houses in an existing street; the houses on each side of the street form, with the street itself, a distinct urban idea; the three new houses should not just live off this idea, but should give an indication, a sign, a new sort of community structure. But this cannot be done unless the architect has a more or less completely conceived general idea or ideal towards which all his work is aimed."<sup>98</sup>

To be sure, the Smithsons' noteworthy article in the November 1957 *Architectural Review* recognized the existing city as a corrective for new architecture. Nevertheless, the main statements of that article reveal a much stronger commitment to the "general idea" of modernism than to the recognition of the "urban concept" that can be realized in the relationship between new buildings and the existing street. New buildings should — and this is stated very cautiously and by no means in the sense of "building in context" — admittedly take the existing setting into consideration, but

above all they should be signs of a new kind of a social structure. This is the paramount concern: to preserve the idea of modern architecture; however, not to let it survive as an abstract "Cartesian aesthetic" but to let it prove itself under the contingencies of the actual case. This line of argumentation, which starts from a general concept of contemporary society and wants to implant its "idea" into architecture, has persisted and continues to be used against architectural "postmodernism." Nowadays it is used too often as a reproach against any historical formal reference. In their buildings, the Smithsons have tried to hold a middle course between the recognition of the existing particular situation and the demand for signs of idealized progress.

### The *Economist* Complex

For the Smithsons, the problem of building in an existing street was one of "finding a way (whilst still responding to the street idea) to chop through the old building face and build up a complex in depth, of providing a suggestion, a sign, of the new community structure."<sup>99</sup> Their buildings for the magazine *The Economist* indeed accomplish this; "a sign of the new social structure," they leave no doubt as to their full acceptance of the modern skeletal structure as a sign of the present.

In 1960 — one year after the CIAM at Otterlo — Alison and Peter Smithson started planning these London buildings, with which they accomplished the coup of turning a commission for one high-rise building into one for three. One building retains the format of the adjacent older buildings. Another — a true high-rise, set farther back — rises unhesitatingly to a height of seventeen stories. A third unit, with eight stories, adjoins it on its far side and picks up the scale of the buildings next to it. Thus, the single high-rise that was supposed to stand on the L-shaped lot was broken up into three parts. The space between them spills over staircases and passages into the adjoining streets. The front building was cut on its back corner at an angle against the inner plaza, creating a protective wall that sets the scale and provides the backdrop for the intimacy of the open space. The subtly articulated environment thus brought about, which is defined by the character of the main building, also derives its communal character from the reactive capacity of the two smaller buildings. At last one becomes aware that the adjacent old building, joined to one of the smaller buildings by a fire wall along its front, is a fourth member of the complex; a bay added in the middle of its extended flank was brought into direct relation with the new buildings by the ground plan. The added structure is marked by the same truncated corners as the other buildings, and the same rough stone facings applied along the verticals of the facade's profile give a touch of Brutalist substantiality to the whole building group. While an

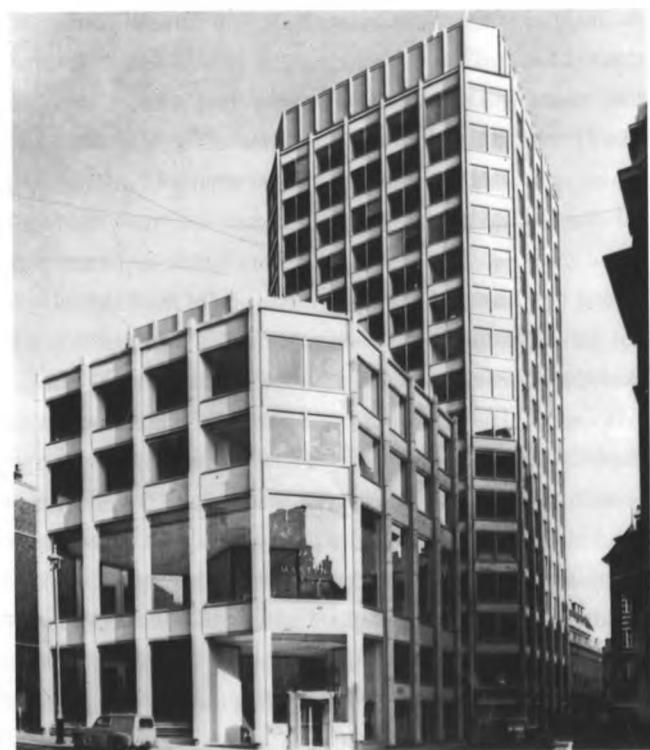
120

Alison and Peter Smithson

*Economist* complex

London

1961–1964

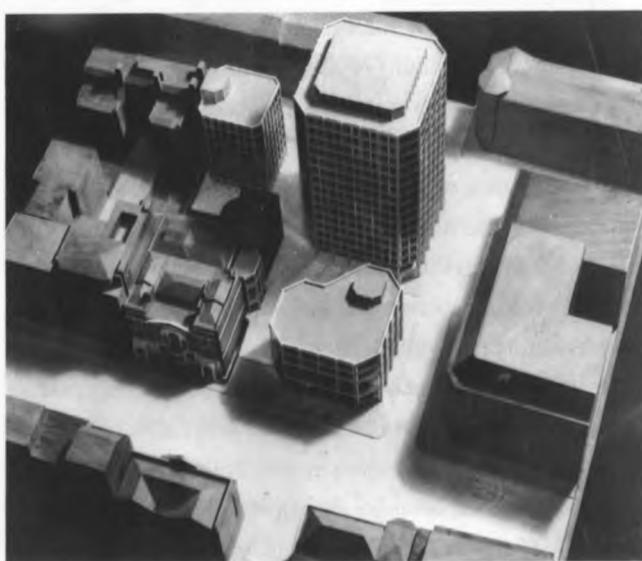
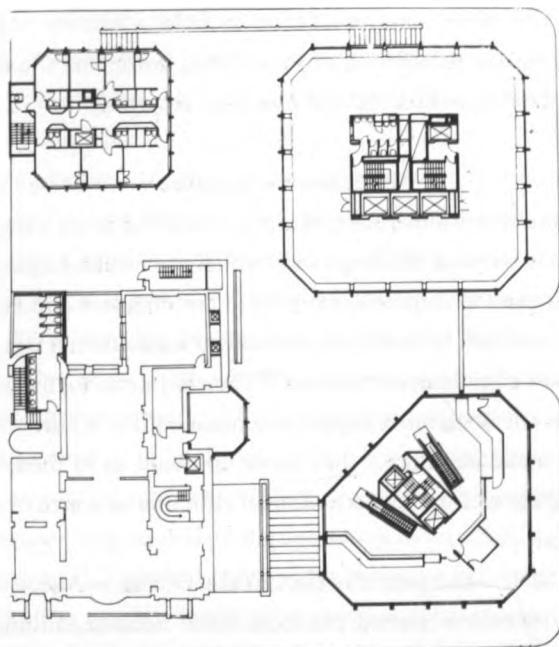


118

Alison and Peter Smithson

Ground plan of

*Economist* complex



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Model of *Economist* complex

almost identical "modern" definition of the facades unifies all four buildings, the individual buildings differ in height and width, in their total outlines, and in their interrelations. The loose spacing of the units and the gentle currents of the open exterior spaces create an impression of serenity without losing the connections and the relationship.

With this complex the Smithsons broke down the dominance and egocentricity of the high-rise monolith, creating out of the quantities of space automatically accorded to a big building an interplay of spatial qualities conducive to an urban environment that would respect its preexistent elements.

With the completion of the Economist buildings, in 1964, the formal language of modern skeletal construction had not been abandoned, but the spatial utilization and the layout of high-rise complexes were put in question. The rectangular block of Mies's Seagram Building, with its own plaza facing Park Avenue, would certainly have fitted here too. Nevertheless, the self-assurance of this kind of modern architecture was sacrificed in a compromise in favor of an interrelation with the given urban structures and their individual features. For instance, the truncated corner of the older building determines the handling of the corners of all the new building by softening them down to polygonal structures, and remains the dominant leitmotif of the entire complex.

The interrelating — the "fitting and knitting" — of old and new was approached here in a way that was quite novel for the early 1960s. The high quality of this group of buildings is the result of an accomplished balancing act that involved the necessity of making a concession to the environment and the possibility of turning the given conditions into the elements of an experientially cohesive whole that would validate the individual buildings as well as the total layout without the Smithsons' having to give up in the least their conception of the proper "sign of the new kind of a social structure." Nevertheless, Reyner Banham, to whom we are indebted for an elaborate study of "New Brutalism," has expressed his disappointment over the Economist buildings. As a historian sympathetic toward technological architecture, Banham happened to recognize in this grouping a fundamental feature that placed it again in the classic tradition: "It may offer a vision of a new community structure, but it does so upon the basis of an ancient Greek acropolis plan, and in maintaining the scale and governing lines of tradition-bound St. James' Street, on which it stands, it handles the 'street idea' very tenderly indeed. Far from being an example of an 'other' architecture, this is a craftsmanly exercise within the great tradition."<sup>100</sup>

The very qualities that aroused Banham's skepticism make these buildings exemplary, even for the architecture of the present, and "contemporary," as precursors of today's postmodernism.

## Zwolle

In view of Aldo van Eyck's damning pronouncements against the Torre Velasca, it is astonishing to see the housing development at Zwolle, The Netherlands, which he designed with Theo Bosch twenty years later. This late confirmation of van Eyck's approach shows almost no trace of van Eyck's former puritanical rejection of all historical examples or of his insistence on developing a "contemporary" architecture "respectful of the present." It was one of the first extensive housing projects in Europe to accept and develop the details of its context.

Following the winding streets and adhering to the historically given layout of the old town, one small house is joined to the next, one gable to the next, to form a continuous row. While on the side facing the street the impression of medieval urban density remains unchanged, inside the block are large courtyards with individual gardens and winding paths. Astonishing too is the great variety in the definition of spaces hidden behind the narrow facades. Alcoves and terraces extend the available ground area, and loggias and small vestibules provide for intriguing combinations of interior and exterior space. One has the impression of an unorthodox, free handling of space made possible by a pitching of the open ground plan developed by modern architecture against the challenge of the small-scale format of the elevation demanded by the historicizing stance. But even the definition of the facade evidences the same counterpoise between the historicizing forms and their modern permutations. Truncated gables had been used in the seventeenth century and even earlier (figure 124). The seemingly random arrangement of the window apertures is also derived from the old facades, whose window openings and hatches, added over the course of centuries, show unintended compositional schemes. Of course, the modern methods of construction make it possible to push the openings alarmingly close together, and to place the deep arch of a loggia right on top of a window lintel, precariously close to the arch diagonally below it. The historical precedent has lost its self-evidentness in its reconstructions and reinterpretations and has been severed from its historical point of origin in the past. These buildings escape eclecticism because of the addition to the historical shape of their gables of unequivocally modern motifs: oversize Roman arches with modern bar screens, deep incisions in the tautly stretched brick surfaces, and projecting bays with glass roofs on the ground floor.

The Zwolle housing project is an outstanding example of how modern architecture can change in response to the need to connect the new and the old. Paying regard to the historical need not automatically lead to historicism, and combining it with the modern does not necessarily result in eclecticism. The modernity of this architecture lies not in innovation at any price, but in the observance of continuity as a requisite

**Aldo van Eyck and Theo Bosch**

**Row apartment project**

**Zwolle, Netherlands**

**1977**



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**Detail of Zwolle project**

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**Detail of Zwolle project**



124

**Seventeenth-century gables**

**in Zwolle**

for the urban environment. If city dwellers are to identify with their surroundings, they must be provided with elements of permanence and of the perpetuity of the historical continuum. When architecture insists dogmatically and ruthlessly on being novel and extinguishes all reminders of history, it reduces the human environment to a detached present. This row housing is saved from the one-dimensionality of the detemporalized present, and it establishes a bridge to the historically contiguous. Is that all it takes to make architecture a thing of yesteryear? Does architecture continue to adhere to a past if it no longer belongs to the present although it still persists down to the present in the historical form of a house and a city? Historical architecture has this double aspect, of originating in the past and of nevertheless being directly present. One doesn't have to know its original meaning; its symbolic contents may be as forgotten as the powers and dominions it served to represent. Historical buildings may be empty vessels in respect to their past contents; they nonetheless provide us with the experience of permanence, and with the sense of a heritage that does not ideologically ensure our present existence but safeguards it emotionally. In this double sense we can define our appreciation of the Zwolle housing project. The permanent recurrence of a certain standard — of a single house form, or even its standardized details — guarantees that buildings will give signs of the contemporary ways of production and deprives them of the romanticism of the picturesque. The acceptance and assimilation of historical forms, on the other hand, produces what might be termed the psychological validation of our environment, which is aimed at the preservation of proven emotional sustenance and not at the "affirmation of the entrenched." A stance that is partial to instant change and that tends to see in this architecture only the incriminating symptoms of reactionary conservation overlooks the fact that, even though we necessarily appropriate our environment through the temporal historical process, we need not inadvertently put ourselves at the mercy of history in respect to the contents of its concerns as well.

I present these observations in order to relate the transformation effected by Aldo van Eyck years later to the discussions that took place at the 1959 CIAM. In what follows I shall return to the times around 1960, when the changes started to emerge with increasing clarity.

### Structuralism

At the 1959 CIAM, Aldo van Eyck introduced a project that has little in common with the historicism of Zwolle: his municipal orphanage at Amsterdam, which does not show the slightest postmodern penchant for architectural narrative. To be sure, van Eyck called the horizontal beams over the supports "architraves,"<sup>101</sup> and in truth these concrete lintels, furnished with long slits to admit the light, appear as heavy

loads superimposed on the supporting "columns." Yet this is a reading primarily of associations that continues the memory of the classical apparatus of forms, just as Mies's Nationalgalerie in Berlin may recall a temple, even though neither of these buildings can be subsumed under eclectic, historizing, or postmodern tendencies as such. Their reference to history remains too general for that. And yet, with the help of such associations the elevation system of the Amsterdam Orphanage gains in liveliness.

However, in his first major work van Eyck brought to the fore architectural concerns too far removed from the intention of recalling features of the classical past to be credited for it. The decisive repercussions of this complex for the development of modernity in architecture came from its novel layout (figure 125). Here a whole was built additively out of a great number of identical elements. A prefabricated domed square was used as the fundamental unit. The system was broken only by larger domed units, cast on the site, which served as living quarters for the children. One could speak here of a "space cluster" in which elements coalesced as cells do to form a larger organism. (A few years earlier, with his bathhouse for the Jewish Community Center in Trenton, Louis Kahn had made the decisive move from devising large spatial wholes to assembling spatial units into overall systems that dealt with unity and variety on a different new basis and produced new interrelations between them.)

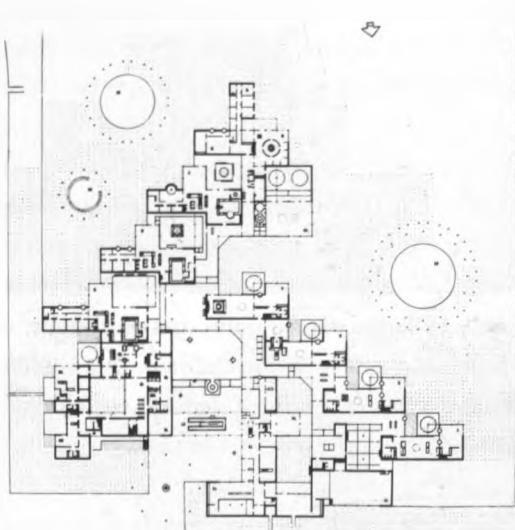
Van Eyck described the orphanage in detail, emphasizing "mutual interrelation" and the "double phenomenon": "The plan attempts to combine the advantages of a centralized layout with those of a decentralized one, avoiding the obvious pitfalls of both. This has, of course, a lot to do with my desire to provide a place for the dual phenomenon of the individual and the collective without warping the meaning of either. For this reason an attempt was made to reconcile unity and diversity architecturally. To state the idea very simply: I regard it as a principal basis to both architecture and urbanism in general that you can best provide for a basic reality by providing for the twin reality from which it was arbitrarily split."<sup>102</sup>

The Amsterdam orphanage marks the onset of Dutch structuralism, the main programmatic goal of which was the greatest possible dissolution of the undifferentiated total form — meaning that the smaller forms were not to be derived by the subsequent subdivision of the large whole, but that they should be assumed from the start as individual constitutive elements and be allowed to be perceptible as such in the finished whole.

The ground plan of the office building of the Centraal Beheer at Apeldoorn, by Herman Hertzberger, is a cluster of spatial elements that reveals the process of assembly as the main characteristic of the building (figures 128, 129). Here a great variety of individual cubical units are joined by connec-

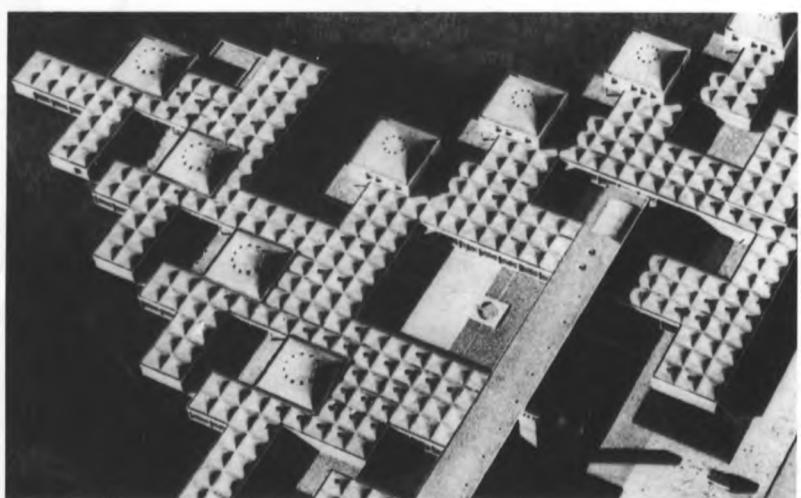
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Aldo van Eyck  
Ground plan of  
Amsterdam orphanage



126

Aldo van Eyck  
Orphanage  
Amsterdam  
1957–1960



127

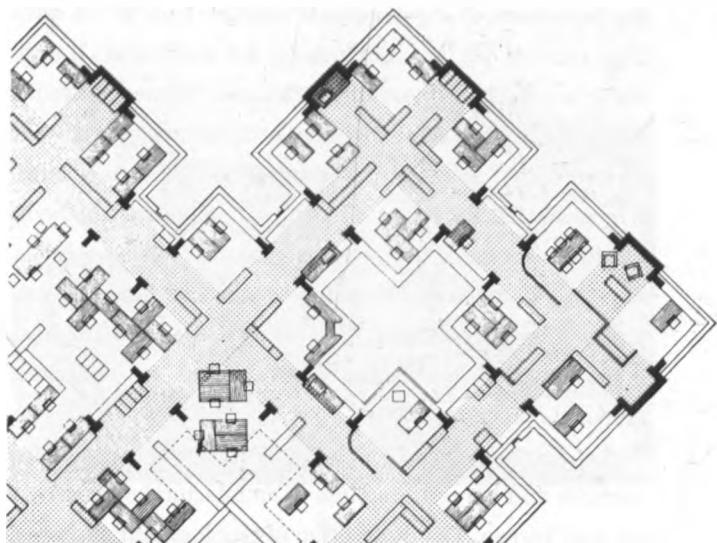
Aldo van Eyck  
Orphanage  
Amsterdam  
1957–1960



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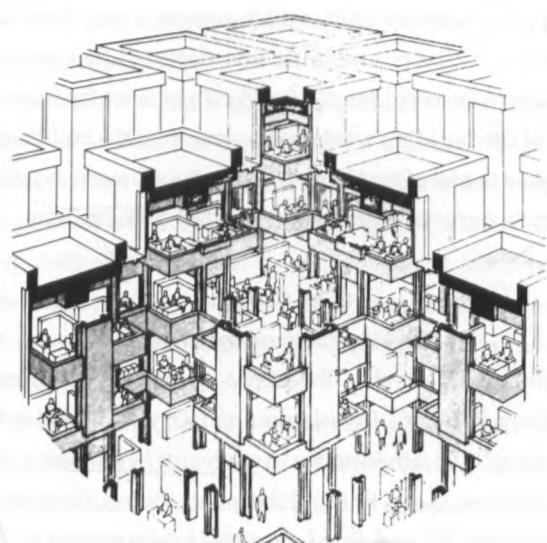
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Herman Hertzberger  
Centraal Beheer office building  
Partial ground plan



129

Modular system of  
Centraal Beheer office building



130



Herman Hertzberger  
Centraal Beheer office building  
Apeldoorn, Netherlands  
1968–1972

109

tive decks. The cross-shaped residual spaces that run through several stories have the effect of high halls into which the rooms' corners jut like balconies. Each employee has the opportunity to think of his cubicle as his own space, and the institutional whole made up of individuals can be experienced not only in architectural terms but also in terms of the social interactions it provides for. This building clearly stands in opposition to modern architecture's preference for multipurpose space.

The exterior of the Centraal Beheer building is characterized by its staggered units, which present a very loose total outline — a cluster unfolding into depth — that seems to poke fun at the very idea of a facade. To look for the front and sides of this building would be an absurdity; the building is a complete denial of tradition. It does not follow any typology, either; its purpose cannot be recognized from its form.

#### O. M. Ungers:

##### **The Architect's House as a Manifesto**

In 1960, one year after the CIAM at Otterlo, the German architects Reinhard Gieselmann and Oswald Mathias Uengers wrote "Zu einer neuen Architektur" [Toward a New Architecture]. Like Philip Johnson's "Seven Crutches of Architecture"<sup>103</sup> and Friedensreich Hundertwasser's "Verschimmelungs-Manifest"<sup>104</sup> [Manifesto of Moldiness], this article took a stand against the narrow-mindedness of functionalist building and brought into the debate a series of far-reaching new arguments.

At Otterlo, Giancarlo de Carlo had demanded "a new concept of architecture" and had expressed the apprehension that architecture might "be diverted to planes foreign to the artistic" — that it might "lose its character as art."<sup>105</sup> De Carlo saw the crisis as connected to an "overestimation of technology," to "the deceptive belief that, through technique, it was possible to reach a superhistoric and international dimension."<sup>106</sup>

Gieselmann and Ungers argued similarly: "Architecture is partially a creation. And, every creative process is art. It deserves the highest spiritual rank. Technique is the application of knowledge and experience. Technique and construction are resources of realization. Technique is not art."<sup>107</sup>

These statements recall Hannes Meier, who in 1923, in his capacity as director of the Bauhaus, dashed off the following sentences: "all these things are . . . no works of art[.] all art is composition and consequently opposed to function. all life is function and therefore unartistic. . . . building is a biological process, building is not an aesthetic process. . . . architecture as 'emotional achievement of the artist' has no existential justification. architecture as a 'continuance of the building tradition' means plying the history of building as a trade. . . . The architect . . . was an artist and now becomes an organization specialist!"<sup>108</sup>

Though no one has formulated the primacy of the technical in architecture as resolutely and brilliantly as Hannes Meier, the view that everything artistic in architecture is a superfluous luxury — a mere "antic," as the functionalists were wont to call it — had become a commonplace, if not in the 1920s certainly by the postwar years. In such a situation, it was more than risky to reclaim for architecture the status of art and to apostrophize "construction" as a mere "means of realization."

Gieselmann and Ungers listed the reasons for holding building techniques in a subordinate position and, at the same time, pointed out the consequences for architecture if technique was to be the overriding principle: "If one follows the methods of technical functionalist 'architecture,' what results is uniformity, monotony. Architecture loses its expressiveness by the utilization of technical functionalist methods. The final outcome is that residential blocks look like schools, schools like office buildings, and office buildings like factories. What is erected first is an empty frame. Form becomes interchangeable with mathematical (that is, unartistic) schematic procedure."<sup>109</sup>

The leveling tendency of the technical-functionalist methods and the resulting loss of architectural expressivity are well known. The destruction of typology and of characterization are the familiar results of exclusive adherence to the technical credo. The manifesto of Gieselmann and Ungers would not warrant mention here did it not contain some sentences that summarize especially cogently the demands to be filled by an architecture of the future: "Architecture is a live intrusion into a complex, mysterious environment that has grown and been molded prior to our times. Its creative mission is to make the task it undertakes visually comprehensible, to adjust it to the preexisting elements, to accentuate and glorify the site. It is a continuous discovery of the genius loci from which it draws its impulses."<sup>110</sup> The notions of environment, adjustment to the preexisting elements, glorification of the site, and discovery of the genius loci occur here, in the greatest possible proximity, in an argument that can be fully appreciated only in our day. Here was stated in the most direct way the injunction to see architecture within the context of a given environment that has "grown" and "been molded," and to glorify the site in conformance to the characteristic "genius loci." These are formulations which today's regionalists believe they have just invented.

Ungers's own house in Cologne-Müngersdorf, completed in 1959, contradicted every conception of an architecture limited to the requirements of construction and reduced to the primary stereometric forms. Hardly any of its features conformed to the generally used formulas of modernity. With this craggy agglomeration and dissection of solids and voids, splintered, checkered, and staggered to visibly contradict all accepted notions of architecture, Ungers created a multiva-



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Oswald Mathias Ungers  
House of the architect  
Cologne-Müngersdorf  
1957–1959

lent, complex structure that certainly showed the tendency of giving priority to stereometric forms but that at the same time was inflected by the presence of a great variety of contingent factors and even was set in question and relativized by their concrete features. The connection to the existing conditions is most clearly seen in the reference to the saddle roof of the neighboring house. Ungers used that roof as a given point of departure, but he turned the pointed gable over the projecting hip roof into a flat roof, and he made the transformation process appear as a physical movement starting from a strict adherence and dependency and aiming for the autonomy of the rectangular block.

The attributive details of Ungers's house, such as the curve of the wall at the street corner and the curves of the interior staircases, were also derived from the existing environment; Müngersdorf is full of curved walls. The whole is not exhaustively defined by reaction to the preexisting environment; stereometry reasserts itself. However, there is no clear demarcation between the reaction to the given and the independence of the cubist composition.

The historical value of Ungers's house lies in its having demonstrated a highly dramatic contraposto of relationships and dependencies, of relativization and complementation, in distinct visible terms and with an expressive intensity unknown at the time. The form of the house was extended beyond its functional and constructive conditions to admit the element of narrative presentation — the conscious articulation of a theme. The clash between geometric figures and the given environmental factors was made visible and resolved. By the establishing of particular formal relationships and the localizing of form in a meaningful context, naked purposefulness was qualified by the ingenious presentation of the behavior of a new element toward an old element, of a supervenient one toward an established one, of a contingent one toward an autonomous one, and vice versa. The untouchable perfect whole seemed to have been made accessible and human by this interrelation. The geometric abstractness of functionalism was dissipated.

#### LOUIS I. KAHN

Louis I. Kahn was the leading figure of the generation that succeeded the masters of modern architecture, and his work was pivotal in the transition from modernism to postmodernism. Kahn's intermediary position, so rich in the impulses it yielded, becomes immediately apparent when one observes how much he emphasized the primary geometric figures and how much he preserved the modern emphasis on the easy handling of material load. Even Kahn's impressively substantial government buildings in Dacca (1962–1974) rise, without any base course, directly from the ground, and finish in a

sharp edge at the top, free of heavy cornices which would illustrate the phenomenon of load and support. (Kahn's Tribune Review Building in Greenburg, Pennsylvania, is an exception; it shows Kahn's Beaux-Arts background in its strongly developed roof cornice and its rigidly symmetrical ground plan.) One characteristic feature of modern architecture is its emphasis on the wall as a surface and, insofar as the wall openings are left free of mouldings, as a tautly stretched membrane outlining the building's body. This concept changed only after the Second World War, with Le Corbusier's late work and with Concrete Brutalism. Kahn certainly emphasized the massivity of the building structure, yet he viewed the wall structure always as a physical boundary and not as a malleable mass.

On the other hand, Kahn broke the taboos of modernism more than any other architect of the 1950s or the 1960s. Manfredo Tafuri called Kahn "the architect of the great occasions, of institutions, churches, synagogues, museums, universities, and capital cities."<sup>111</sup> In keeping with this conspicuous concentration on institutional buildings, Kahn used motifs of planning and of expression that were indebted to the representational architecture of the nineteenth century, to the Beaux-Arts movement, but mainly to Roman classicism. After one has seen his government buildings at Dacca or his Student Center in Ahmedabad, the remaining memory is that of a highly dramatic attempt to achieve a synthesis of modern architecture and 2,000 years of history. Walls that rise almost weightlessly from the ground as pure surfaces become monuments made to last, as it were, into eternity; they bear an extremely compressed symbolic content within, and they push the representative large-scale building form to a superhuman dimension.

Kahn's architecture reveals his special sense for the archaic, mythical magnitude of larger-than-life buildings. Even though his spatial units that surpass all previously used dimensions (e.g., the ventilation shafts of his Richards Laboratories of Pennsylvania University) have some link to superscale container architecture, they are usually juxtaposed with a traditionally proportioned building body, so that a sharp contrast is created. The roof supports of the Parliament Building at Dacca (figures 134, 135), each perforated by a single giant circle, are brought into direct juxtaposition with the rows of representatives' seats below. Contrasts of this sort are paralleled, if at all, only in Le Corbusier's late work. However, in his designs for Chandigarh, Le Corbusier had attempted to introduce totally new monumental forms. Kahn's brick vaults, courses of segmental arches, and stage-like buildings look like a direct continuation of Roman architecture. His complex, irregular ground plans, with their axial breaks occurring as if by chance and with their order alternating between symmetry and chance grouping, recall the Villa Hadriana.

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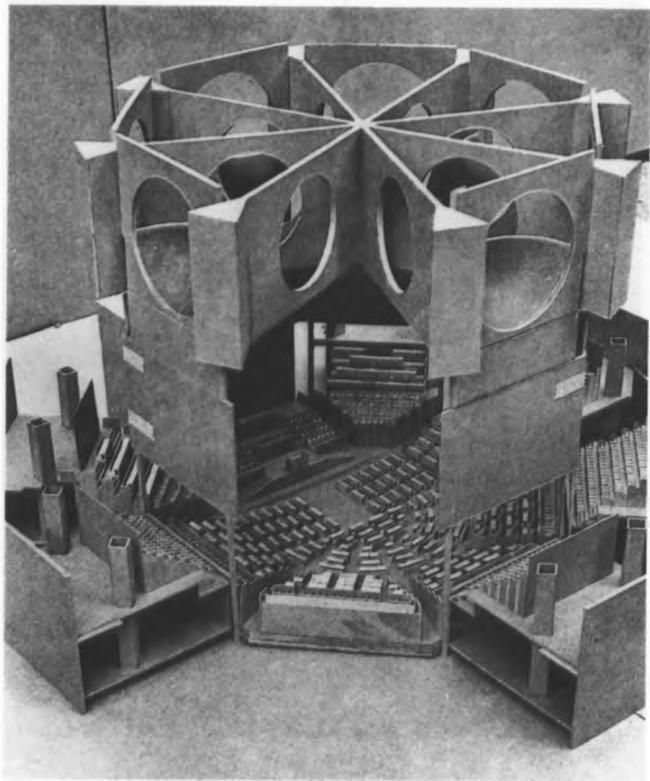
Louis I. Kahn  
Ministerial residence  
Dacca, Bangladesh  
1962–1974



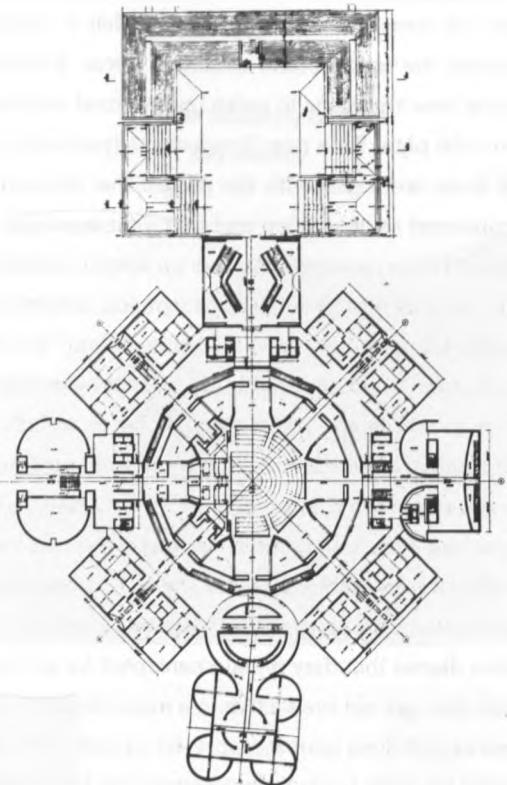
133

Louis I. Kahn  
Richards Laboratories  
University of Pennsylvania  
Philadelphia  
1957–1961

**Louis I. Kahn**  
**Bangladesh Parliament Building**  
 (model)



**Ground plan of**  
**Bangladesh Parliament Building**



Kahn's buildings are strong signs of affirmation and assurance. In these times, in which institutions seem to seek anonymity and to hide behind uniform high-rise facades, Kahn upholds the aspiration to give institutions an eminence above the plane of ordinary life by treating the buildings that house them on a par with ziggurats, pyramids, and cathedrals.

However, the typology of the monumental was not only given up by the functionalist rationalization of means and ends as "expedient"; it was also undermined by the evolving concern for democracy, on the ground that it supplied to institutions the architectural means of terror. Furthermore, television now threatens to make institutional buildings obsolete — the plans for a new Bundeshaus (parliament building) in Bonn were met with the protest that the parliament now convened on television and that a monumental framework for its self-representation was no longer needed. In the face of such developments, the suspicion arises only too easily that Louis Kahn's "neo-monumentalism" is a restorative undertaking, lacking credibility from the start. Following this line of argument, Tafuri went so far as to call Kahn's architecture an export item which now could be of use only in the countries of the Third World.<sup>112</sup>

In the end, we must indeed ask whether monumental forms have not been abused by the power of feudalism and by the imperialist intentions of the twentieth-century dictators to such a degree that they remain corrupted for all time, and whether they are not ineffective in a mass-media society. To test these suspicions against reality, let us look at two American buildings from Louis Kahn's oeuvre: the Jonas Salk Institute and the Eleanor Donnelly Erdman Dormitory.

#### The Jonas Salk Institute

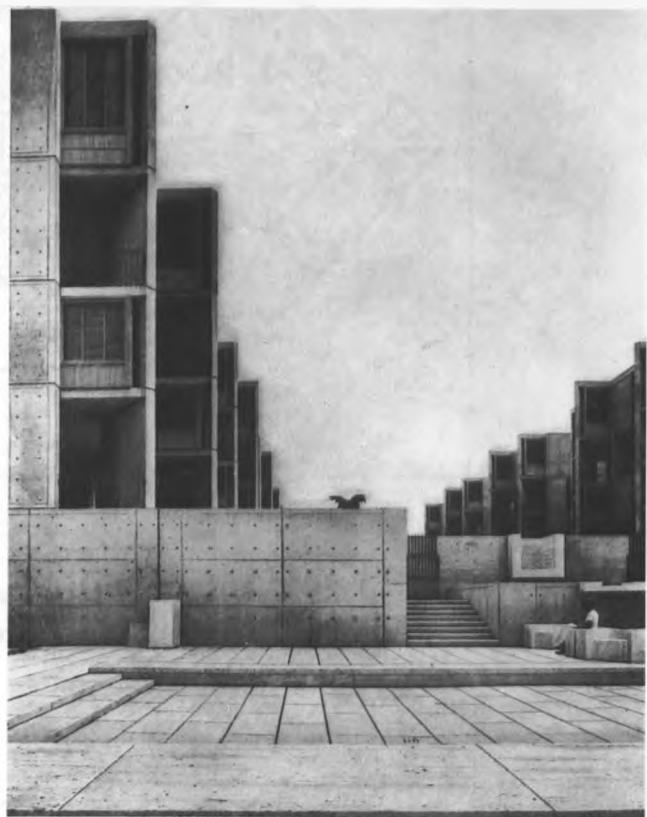
Built between 1959 and 1965, during the decisive years of the change in contemporary architecture, the Jonas Salk Institute for Biological Research in La Jolla, California, suggests a palace complex whose main building has been removed. The approach to the complex (figure 136) leads over a staircase and through a high iron-barred gate to a central plaza that is strongly evocative of a Cour d'honneur. The starkness of the parallel course of the laboratory wings is considerably ameliorated by the housing units attached to them. At the focal point in the distance, where traditionally one would expect to see the Corps de Logis of the palace, is a view of the ocean. The light travertine of the buildings and the plaza contrasts strikingly with the blue of the water. At the axis of the complex stands a small fountain. From its basin, a channel cuts across the travertine pavement of the plaza all the way to the sea. The sparkling water endows the complex with a sublime touch of playfulness in the midst of its axial severity. Above all, the sharp contrast between the ceremonial staging of the approach and the expanse of the ocean at the far



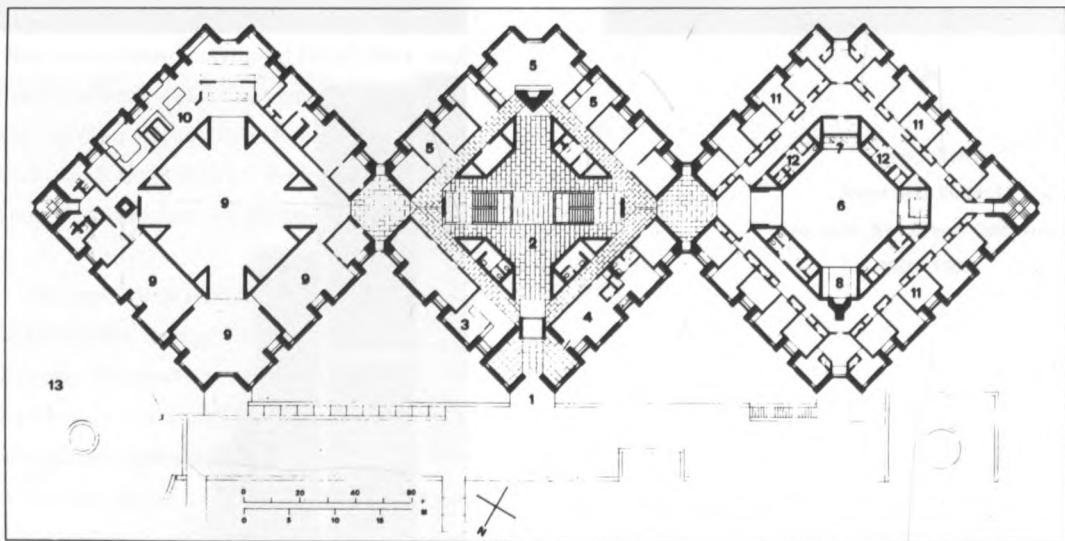
136

Louis I. Kahn  
Jonas Salk Institute  
La Jolla, San Diego, California

1959–1965

**Student and faculty housing****Salk Institute****Facade of laboratory building****Salk Institute****Court of Salk Institute****(viewed from ocean side)**

**Louis I. Kahn**  
**Eleanor Donnelly Erdman Dormitory**  
**Bryn Mawr College**  
**Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania**  
**1960–1965**



**Ground-floor plan  
of Erdman dormitory**

end of the plaza lifts the hierarchical apex out of the total entity, thereby making the alleviation of the hierarchical aspiration directly apprehensible: instead of a hierarchical pinnacle, one sees the liberating vista into nature! With this kind of interpretation of symmetry and axiality Kahn prepared the way for the revaluation that was to find its continuation in the historicizing tendencies of postmodern architecture.

Much more austere than the view discussed above is the exterior facade of the laboratory building (figure 138). The staircase shafts are set in a row, suggesting the fortification towers of a castle, but this impression is immediately dissipated by the continuous windows of the laboratories.

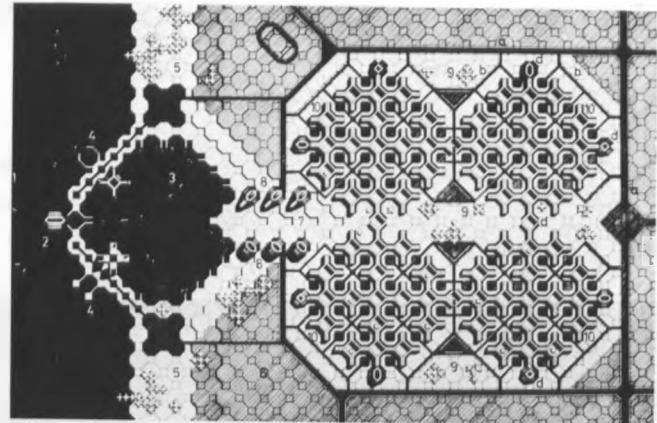
Impressions such as these suggest that, while Kahn certainly made use of monumental forms in order to conventionally indicate the validity of public institutions, he took pains not to use them to strengthen the old conventions. Another example is the axial break in the above-mentioned parliament building at Dacca, for which Kahn adduced several functional grounds but which is primarily a break with the rigidity of axially organized ground plans.

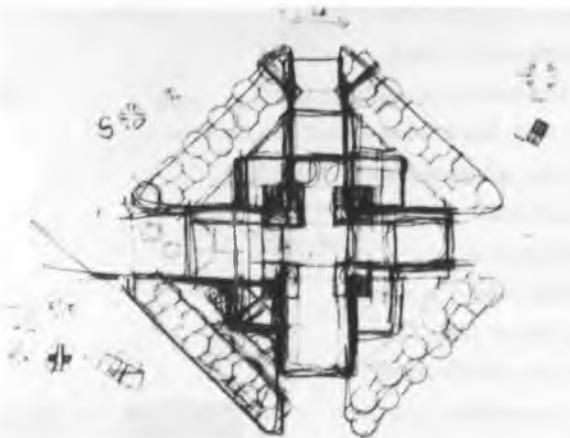
#### The Erdman Dormitory

With his Eleanor Donnelly Erdman Student Dormitory at Bryn Mawr College (figure 140), Kahn used a threefold symmetrical ground plan and facades of black slate to realize an intensely monumental urge far exceeding the concern for functional aptness — perhaps to satisfy the donor's wish for a lasting monument. The three square units, joined together at corners, unfold impressively on a large piece of property on a wooded hill.

In contrast with continental Europe, the Anglo-Saxon countries have a fully developed tradition of college architecture. An American college is not a habitat geared to minimal standards of living; it is intended as a setting for the fulfillment of a wide range of cultural expectations, including that of social ceremony, in a suitably elevated framework. Kahn certainly incorporated the social aspects of the great American universities in the representational stance of the Erdman dormitory. However, he did not employ the traditional typology of college architecture.

The ground plan of this dormitory — which lies, in fact, outside of any typology — is the result of the experiment with structures that seemed to have been formed by cellular division — an obsession of the 1960s (see, e.g., figure 142). R. Buckminster Fuller had provided the stimulus for this experiment, and Moshe Safdie as well as Neumann and Hecker had taken up the impulse. Kahn's 1957 design of a tetrahedral high-rise (figure 149) shows that he was somewhat susceptible to Fuller's ideas; however, they showed up most prominently in the work of Anne C. Tyng, who was affiliated with Kahn during the development of the Erdman dormitory. This was the time of Op Art and of the sweeping success of Victor





143

Early design sketch for  
Erdman dormitory



144

Student lounge of  
Erdman dormitory

Vasarely, and some of the geometric experiments in architecture were indeed outgrowths of Op.<sup>113</sup> Kahn's early designs for the dormitory (e.g., figure 143) clearly point to their origin in the geometry of cellular structures as advocated by Tyng and as later rudimentarily realized by Walter Netsch with the Circle Campus in Chicago.<sup>114</sup> Kahn processed these impulses and embraced them as his own. The basic pattern of the interlinked squares, and especially the series of interlocking living rooms along the squares' sides, are perfect reminders of the experimental geometry of the 1960s.

Such independent experiments with ground plans developed entirely from geometry, which were implicitly encouraged from the very beginning of modernism in architecture, not only led away from the tradition of building typology but also kept the regular symmetrical building form from getting rigidly set in a monumental category. Consequently, it can be said that the symmetry of the Erdman dormitory is not bound to a typology as its source. And here we also see something that can be observed elsewhere in Kahn's work: Although the large and the small forms used in the spirit of the Beaux-Arts and of Roman antiquity show conventions of monumental building complexes organized along axial-symmetric lines, those conventions are subjected to reinterpretation and alienation. Much as the "Cour d'honneur" at La Jolla is missing its central building, the symmetry of the Erdman dormitory loses its monumental amplitude by being absorbed into a serial geometric progression. This also explains why, even though it relies greatly on historical architecture, Kahn's work stops short of seeming historicizing or eclecticist.<sup>115</sup>

Each of the three squares of the Erdman dormitory is devoted to a different category of needs. While the upper stories of each quadrangle are given over to students' rooms (strung out to form a shell-like layer at the perimeter), the center of each quadrangle is devoted to common use. In the middle one is the main lobby with the stairwell and the reception and visitors' areas. The center of the quadrangle on the right in the ground plan is occupied by a student lounge two stories high, which is lit by soft light filtering down obliquely from elevated skylights (figure 144). A large fireplace adds to the atmosphere of ease and comfort. The ground floor of the left quadrangle contains a kitchen and a dining hall. The spaces at the intersections of the squares make the changeover from one realm to the next a consciously registered experience. The reception, lounge, and dining areas, as well as the links between them, are distinctly defined and amplified in their specific meanings by the differentiated handling of the spaces.<sup>116</sup>

#### Differentiation of Spaces

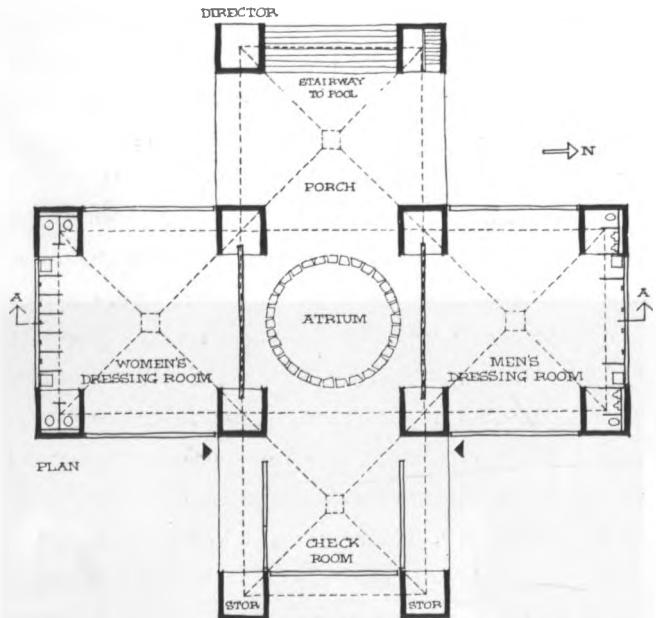
Like Aldo van Eyck, and perhaps even more intensely, Louis Kahn insisted that each of his buildings be made up of self-



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Louis I. Kahn  
Yale University Art Gallery  
New Haven  
1952

**Louis I. Kahn**  
**Bathhouse**  
**Trenton, New Jersey**  
 (ground plan)  
 1955–56



constituted elements, bodies, and spaces: "the individual space as a basic element of architecture — the ground plan as a community of spaces."<sup>117</sup> At every opportunity, Kahn rendered individual rooms clearly distinguishable, not only in respect to function but also in regard to spatial characteristics, lighting, and details of construction. His distinction between "serving" and "served" spaces has come to be widely used. Three examples of "serving space" are the large ventilation shafts of the Richards Laboratories (which prefigured the container architecture of Kevin Roche), the concrete latticework ceiling of the Yale University Art Gallery (figure 145), and the space devoted to plumbing and heating systems at the Salk Institute. The great variety of interpretations Kahn derived from the concept of serving and served spaces is shown by his bathhouse in Trenton, New Jersey, in which the supports of the ceilings of the individual spatial units (figure 146) function as storage spaces and lockers.

However, Kahn carried the differentiation of spaces far beyond the elaboration of their varying functions. The surprise over the multiplicity of spaces one encounters upon entering the Erdman dormitory is greater than one would imagine. Aside from the different shapes of the spaces and the variety of the materials used in the walls, floors, and ceilings, the many different ways in which light is caught and distributed in the individual rooms lends variety to their spatial definition and character. But the construction elements, too, play a role in the individual definition of each space. Kahn's strong views on this matter have a decidedly programmatic ring, as is evident from the following conversation with John Cook and the present author:

**LK:** . . . Space is not a space unless you can see the evidence of how it was made. Then I like to call that a room. What I would call an area, Mies would call a space because he thought nothing of dividing a space. That's where I say no. Let me draw a diagram. Here is a large area:



You can divide it into four parts:



No matter how many partitions are in it, Mies would always call the whole area a space. I would call any one of the four divisions a space, but, after you divide it, the whole thing is not a space anymore. I would call this a space, provided it is never divided. What you see in the third diagram are four spaces. I consider these four rooms. Mies would consider this a space within which divisions could be made. In the Miesian

spaces he allows division, but for me there's no entity, when it is divided.

**HK:** Why do you insist so much on showing the supports in your rooms?

**LK:** Because I think that the room likes it. That's why. The room feels its entity, its completeness, it has a right to have a name. It can be called the "east room," for instance.

**JC:** But in the Miesian plan there can be no "east room."

**LK:** It cannot be given a name.

**HK:** Can't it be given a name without showing the supports?

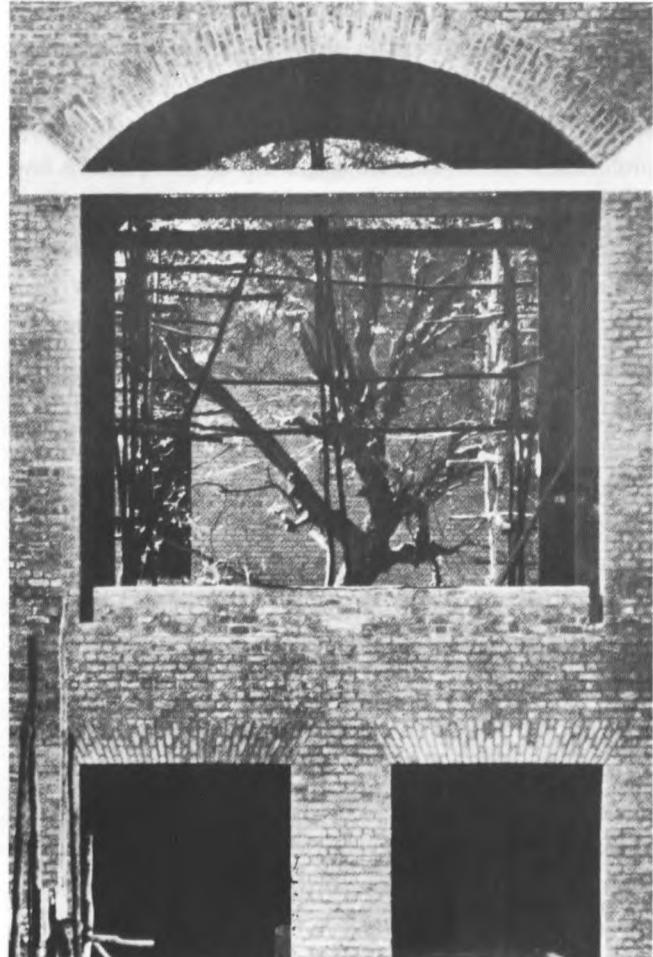
**LK:** No, because it's not yet worthy of its name. Ask that kind of room how it is made, and it will have to say, "If you go next door, you can see the columns of me in that room," and this is what stops me from naming it. But going back to the third diagram, each of these four rooms has its own character because of the light. One has north and west light, one has south and east light, and so on. Each room has its own character. And, if I were being delicate about this, the window of one would not be designed the same as the window of another. Now, each room has its own light, and if I go to the east room at a certain time of day, my memory tells me to expect something there. The structure is the marker of the light. The structure can make an opening, just as a column and a beam can. This is an opportunity for light. And that means if I hide the structure I've lost the opportunity. I go through an immense amount of trouble. If I didn't assume that I needed to do this, my plans would be vastly different. I regard natural light as that which makes a room have its nature, its characteristic, its mood.<sup>118</sup>

Kahn criticized Mies again and again, though he admired him greatly, because he saw in Mies the great simplifier who had reduced architecture to basic elements and the most common spatial forms in keeping with his motto "Less is more." Kahn's concept of space stands in sharpest contrast to the "modern" concepts of space, which are connected with the multipurpose room. The multipurpose room presupposes a quantity of space that can be subdivided at will, and this is why the functionally defined space no longer has any inkling of its "essence," of its "genesis." The need for distinction (in the sense of characterization) is left up in the air. The mood of a space can only be set like a neutral temperature. The seemingly ancient "wishes" of humanity had, in any case, received short shrift from the rationalists, who were overconcerned with fulfilling human needs along optimal functional lines. Weren't light, mood, and character obsolete vestiges? Or had the building been so simplified in its form that the utility of a room had come to coincide with its "atmosphere"? Hadn't the maxim of optimal fulfillment of function neutralized space for modern architecture and made it a nonentity, a matter of indifference outside of its utility?

Kahn's demand for spatial differentiation advanced the critique of functionalism. The Erdman dormitory is the direct opposite of any kind of "modern" neutralization of space. Already in the 1920s, Gropius had begun to show a progressive reluctance to recognize the characterization of individual rooms as a creative goal. With the multipurpose room and the "flowing space," Mies found the epoch-making solutions that determine modern architecture down to the present. With the multipurpose room all space differentiations became space quantifications. There are large and small spaces, and public spaces are somewhat larger than private ones. Consequently, it is no surprise that Le Corbusier, who showed a propensity for individualization of spaces in his early work, reacted after the war even more strongly on this problematic issue. Aalto too struck out on new paths. A few American architects of the late 1950s responded similarly to this shortcoming of modern architecture and made spatial differentiation again a central goal. The shortcoming is demonstrated more clearly by Paul Rudolph's overreaction to it. Rudolph continued to pay tribute to the Miesian idea of flowing space, but he wanted to open the rigid demarcation of separate floors and to invent truly baroque twists of space. Yet all this still had the concept of flowing space as its presupposition. All the same, Kahn was not interested in such a dramatization of rising and flowing space. What was important to him was to permit the connection of spaces only on the condition that each of the spatial elements in question was strictly defined. The geometry of Kahn's ground plans, which he preferred to develop out of circles and squares and then extend to form more complex structures, points back past the Modern Movement. It shows the marks left by his studies of Roman antiquity, and it recalls above all the magnificent Beaux-Arts exercises in geometry that he practiced under the guidance of his teacher Paul P. Cret. (A series of drawings preserved from Kahn's student days points directly to this connection.<sup>119</sup>) For Kahn, this was not a recourse to history; it was a phase in his own life. In an apparently natural way, he combined his experience of tradition with the modernism that had just made its way over from Europe, without radically changing in the process and without forgetting what he had learned from the Beaux-Arts movement.

The special things about Kahn's development are his constancy and his striving for a synthesis. For him modernity did not present an aggressive fundamental character that necessarily commanded one to abandon everything historical without any hesitation. Kahn accomplished what no other twentieth-century architect succeeded in achieving as convincingly: the union of the classical tradition of architecture with modernism. With this union modernism acquired an undreamed-of abundance of feasible new forms, without the need to look to eclecticism or historicism. Neither did Kahn put his faith in the omnipotence of building technology. His

**Louis I. Kahn**  
**Institute of Public Administration**  
**Ahmedabad, India**  
**1963**



conception of architecture as the art of building made his work the most decisive counterproposition against functionalism in the 1950s and the 1960s. Thus, it is no surprise that Kahn's work became a point of departure for the next generation of innovators (including Robert Venturi and Charles Moore), who left functionalism behind.

#### **Construction and Articulation:**

##### **Statics as Representational Content**

More than any other architect of our times, Kahn strove to abolish the muteness of modern architecture and no longer to rely on the primary figures of geometry but rather to represent the constitutive process and the structures of the individual spaces and of the whole building by making the conjoining of the separate elements visually apprehensible. Through this qualitative differentiation historical forms could also be reinterpreted anew, since any whole receives a new meaning by the definition of its individual parts. It is therefore especially significant that, by means of new materials and new construction methods, Kahn changed the traditional connotations of brick buildings and created an impression of lightness and "modernity" where heaviness and material solidity had come to be considered unavoidable.

The thin-walled loggias of the Institute of Public Administration in Ahmedabad (figure 147) are a good example of this transformation. According to Kahn, the segmental arches of the individual loggias normally would have required thicker walls to support the side thrust of the arches.<sup>120</sup> Instead of reinforcing the wall, Kahn introduced concrete elements as tension anchors. In this way a wall differentiation was achieved that made the division of the various tasks within the static system visually comprehensible. Kahn's talent for differentiation is directly demonstrated in the articulation of this elevation. Here an ancient method of building walls with segmental arches and radially set "Roman" voussoirs has been remarkably modernized. The building material, concrete, makes it possible at the same time to reduce the massivity of the wall construction and to create new constellations of forms. Kahn took up an ancient construction element (figure 148) and gave it a new efficiency through the proven strength of concrete. Because he concerned himself intensely with enunciating in clear terms both the individual elements and the constitutive process of a construction, he insisted on building walls articulated in a great variety of ways.

Thus, Kahn's programmatic dictum that a building has to show how it has come about and what it wants to be can be reinterpreted as meaning that a building must visually demonstrate the functioning of its static construction. What was new in this precept? Hadn't the same requirement been set before by the functionalists? Wasn't the "demonstration of construction" a maxim of Das Neue Bauen?

**Entrance of warehouse  
in Ostia Antica, Italy**



for not being consistent enough in the fulfillment of their set goals and for constantly letting themselves be carried away to sacrifice articulation in favor of other priorities. Kahn's dispute with Mies shows this clearly. As has already been discussed, for Kahn every spatial unit had an individual character that needed its own four supports for the visual manifestation of its own specific essence and character. While for Mies the structure as such represented a value and the transparency of the construction by itself was a sufficient ground for satisfaction, Kahn approached a building "phenomenologically"—he viewed it as "the manifestation of an essence," which presupposed the differentiation of construction and material as essential requirements for the characterization of space.

To make this characterization of individual spaces and structures possible, Kahn studied the most modern and the most conventional construction methods down to the last detail. One moment he used ancient Roman brick structures; the next moment he used the newest discoveries of Fuller, whose tetrahedral chain construction he developed into a framework for a projected high-rise building (figure 149). That in this case too he arrived at totally unusual forms was again the outcome of his passionate striving to make the functional interplay of forces and static elements visually comprehensible. The frame of this high-rise was intended to withstand high winds without requiring a concrete core.<sup>121</sup> Kahn poked fun at Mies's Seagram Building ("a slim lady in a steel corset"), and presented this lively and articulate construction as its opposite. Kahn's strong penchant for articulation is particularly well illustrated here by his additional demarcation of the intersection points of the frame's beams in order to emphasize the significant "event" of their cutting across and colliding against one another. Kahn claimed that these demarcation points in the tetrahedral system were supposed to correspond to the points where, in an older system of supports, one would look for capitals.<sup>122</sup>

With this interpretation of a modern skeletal frame seemingly tied by its complexity to the mystique of modern technology, Kahn revealed the actual standard by which he measured everything: that of classical architecture.

Kahn welcomed the chance to use the simplest, most conventional construction methods for buildings in Third World countries. For him, it was not Fuller but the thousand-year-old tradition of brick building that supplied the new building technology. The crucial criterion for him was whether a space successfully demonstrated the process of its construction and its special characteristics. The artistic aesthetic principle of differentiation and articulation cannot be deduced from the progressiveness of a construction system. This explains why Kahn devised a wide range of constructive and formal solutions to realize his main intention: the characterization and the eloquence of the individual elements of a building. The

**Louis I. Kahn**  
**Design project for**  
**Universal Atlas Cement Company**  
**1957**



classical forms of construction — brick, lintel, Roman arch, segmental arch, and tension rod — suited him perfectly as means of communication.

Standing at a turning point of modernism, Kahn once again emphasized the interest in legitimizing form, in grounding form in its relevance to construction, and he surpassed all previous heights of constructivist expressivity and formal variety of articulation achieved in modern architecture. In Kahn's work, the emergent constructive procedures became means of the explicit presentation of architecture through his endeavor to heighten their enunciative power and to add a greater depth to their meaning by contemplative probing into their essence. He helped to bring architecture back to the plane of eloquence and to imbue it with a perceptible degree of discursive intensity. Though he moved more intensively in this direction than any of his precursors, Kahn nevertheless remained within a "narrative" realm in which a building spoke predominantly of its structure and how it was built.

Later, when Charles Moore formulated his memorable demand that buildings be "descriptive," he referred to Kahn as his teacher. Though he surmised that Kahn would certainly have criticized all the descriptive contents he talked about as trivia, Moore appealed to Kahn as his authority by asserting that Kahn had already cited descriptiveness as one of architecture's basic requisites: "But it certainly stems from his having the building be what it wants to be."<sup>123</sup> What Kahn meant by the will of a building was, above all, the self-constitutive sweep of its construction.

Moore and Robert Venturi no longer observed the tenets of modernism that had had an obligatory force for Kahn. But even Kahn had deviated from them; in his endeavor to strengthen the illustration of the constructive elements at work, he had gone looking for suitable evidence in the realms of historical architecture. Kahn himself had trouble admitting that his brick buildings bore marks of Roman antiquity, which he admired so much. But with these buildings Kahn also missed falling victim to the temptation of creating trendy modernist architecture, as did Oscar Niemeyer for instance. Niemeyer could not stop frenetically paying homage to catchy constructive procedures with the help of the latest techniques, as his daring feat placing a tall building on V-shaped supports (figure 150) illustrates. The "narrative" approach sought after modernist sensations as long as the semantic contents of architecture were limited to the raising of tall, upright buildings. With his tetrahedral high-rise Kahn got quite close to Niemeyer, although he was constantly mindful of achieving in his buildings the expression of the essential and of avoiding sensationalism. Extravagant dramatization of construction gimmicks — as in the work of Niemeyer — is the result of the modern prohibition of speech in architecture. Kahn knew how to avoid that pitfall.

150

Oscar Niemeyer  
Apartment building  
Hansaviertel, Berlin  
1957





A black and white photograph of a building facade. The facade features a grid of numerous small, square windows arranged in a pattern. Above the windows, there is a decorative cornice or ledge. The building appears to be made of light-colored stone or concrete. The sky above the building is clear and blue.

**Postmodern  
Architecture**

**The Concept of Postmodernism (II)**

I soon made the mistake of a pure radical abstraction when I developed the conception of a certain work of architecture out of its next trivial purpose alone and out of the construction. What resulted in this case was something dry and rigid that lacked freedom and excluded entirely two essential elements, the historical and the poetical.

Karl Friedrich Schinkel

There are upheavals in history that take place behind the scenes. It often requires the judgment of the historian to mark the threshold of an epoch—the point at which one thing emerged from another. Only after the event do we become conscious that something has changed, and that there are good reasons for recognizing the upheaval as a historical turning point.

The transition from modernism to postmodernism was an almost smooth one, like the transition between the early and the high Renaissance; by no means did all the standards or the priorities change. The protest against modernism is not a determinate and rigid "No"; rather, it is a "Yes, but."<sup>124</sup> This does not diminish the fact that some hard truths were advanced against the guiding notions and the established tradition of modern architecture. Some of the articles of faith of Das Neue Bauen were actually turned upside down. However, Mies and Le Corbusier have not been simply eliminated, even if some "radical eclectics" take the liberty of labeling modernism an unfortunate incident of history.

On the other hand, we cannot shut our eyes and, together with the defenders of modernism, take up a sort of radical evocation of modernity. Effective remedies have indeed been advanced against the one-sided dogmatism of modernism, and these remedies serve as substantial historical evidence of an epochal change. The radical change occurred around 1960. Around 1980, the new reality of postmodern architecture became common knowledge. Here we are faced, as a matter of general principle, with the question whether it is still permissible to extend a concept that covers everything over a historical process whose most characteristic trait is that it is spread out in many directions and is determined by the most divergent tendencies.

At first glance we note two main movements, which have taken on seemingly irreconcilable positions in their programmatic struggle: "high tech" architecture (which is based predominantly on the expressive qualities of technological procedures and construction, and which offers the Olympic Stadium in Munich, the Expo Pavilion in Osaka, and the Pompidou Center in Paris as its best-known examples) and postmodern architecture (which takes into account the his-

tory of architecture and refers to the given factors of the whole cultural setting). The latter wants again to be an art, and its most telling renditions are Robert Venturi's "My Mother's House" and Guild House, Charles Moore's Kresge College and Piazza d'Italia, James Stirling's Staatsgalerie in Stuttgart, Aldo Rossi's cemetery in Modena, and O. M. Ungers's designs for Enschede and for the Berlin museums.

However, when we look at the different trends of contemporary architecture in terms of the theory of architecture, it becomes obvious that the lines of demarcation run differently than the superficial distinctions in terms of style would have us believe.

Even with a kind of building that forgoes the use of historicizing forms, the characteristic objective of postmodernism — to create an architecture of "narrative contents"<sup>125</sup> — can be achieved. To the bare realization of the demands of utility are added "border-violating" contents, which lift architecture out of its primary subservience to function and which use it as a medium extending beyond functionality and serving to represent an "imaginary world" — that is, as a means of fiction. The contents of postmodernism can refer to a great variety of things. They can indeed create "a beautiful world of appearances" that distracts one from the bare factuality of architecture as a protective cover and that deflects one's attention to the completely different realms of environment as a narrative representation.

Fiction is not achieved by merely combining successfully some geometric forms. Only after a building is no longer bound up solely with itself, only when the stereometric autonomy of perfect volumetric wholes is destroyed and allusions and associations are permitted that go beyond the building itself, is there a possibility for creating an architectural fiction. A Palladian villa is a nearly perfect architectural fiction not only because it has perfect dimensions and proportions, but also because it contains an abundance of witty allusions to antiquity that bespeak the sophisticated needs of its users; not only because it does not strive to be only functionally adequate for the routines of daily life, but also because it elevates life to the plane of fiction and provides a background for staging it to the fullest.

Geometry per se is, at best, "interesting." Only the contents connected to geometry make the fictional a possibility. Bruno Taut's interpretation of Das Neue Bauen as a world of lightness and transparency pitched against the ponderousness of "seriousism" was such a fiction, containing not only a good dose of social critique but also an equal dose of poetry. As soon as the geometry of modern architecture was deprived of any fictional aspect and only the pure objectivity of functionalism was left, the "white bodies under the light" revealed the meaninglessness of bare facts. The underlying notion of a modernity connected with simple primary forms

withered away with each white block and each rectangular glass building that was added to the city.

To the question why he wanted to "get away from the slickness of the International Style," Charles Moore replied that this style was not "a very useful, interesting, meaningful, worthwhile description of what's going on."<sup>126</sup> He continued: "A building itself has the power, by having been built right or wrong or mute or noisy, to be what it wants to be, to say what it wants to say, which starts us looking at buildings for what they're saying rather than just accepting their pure existence in the Corbusian manner. This narrative function that we have been talking about is all of these things together, the building being as descriptive as it can, about what is interesting about it — either the way it's built or the way people use it; the message is either shouting, or being quiet, or hiding, . . . but letting you know what is going on."<sup>127</sup>

In the realm of architecture, the fictional is always only one aspect of the total whole. A building is not purely a work of art, and it can never come out as independently as a novel or a painting. Architecture is directly connected to the everyday procedures of human life, and it is more subject to the utility and profit considerations of economics than any other art. But under the dominance of functionalism the fictional element was banished from architecture, and the only thing left was the technique of building. A Gothic cathedral, which according to Abbot Suger was an earthly likeness of the City of Heaven and the reflection of God's light on human reality, would never have been built under the conditions of functionalism, which declared the imitative and representational character of architecture — the building as an invented place, an artistic fiction — a fairy tale for children that could not claim any validity among sober adults.

Today we are in the process of liberating architecture from the abstraction of pure utility and restoring to it the potential of making invented places possible again.

Karl Friedrich Schinkel addressed the conflict that still plagues us at the beginning of the nineteenth century. He spoke of "radical abstraction," which today we recognize as the functionalist formula by which a building is developed "out of its next trivial purpose along and out of the construction." In his view, the result of this abstraction was "something dry, rigid, and lacking freedom." Today we realize that the architecture of functionalism, which was made from the same recipe, is for the most part equally dry, rigid, and unfree.

The two elements in which Schinkel sought liberation are the answers to "radical abstraction" in our times: the historical and the poetical. The historical enriches the spectrum of possible references and the wealth of historicizing stylistic means, in order that the poetical may emerge. The poetical is the power of the imagination to picture desirable places; it is the generative power of fiction going beyond mere purpose.

Fiction limits abstraction because it confronts the nonobjective directive of mere utility with the contents of the imagination. Schinkel's statement reduces the maxims of a modern architecture limited to functionalism and the injunctions of postmodern architecture to a common denominator. He realized that an architecture that draws its explicit visual character only from trivial purpose and from construction does not attain a satisfactory result. His statement contains a definition of architecture that is also the definition of postmodern architecture.

This leads us to the question of how various people have defined postmodernism.

Charles Jencks has emphasized stylistic pluralism as the essential feature of postmodern architecture. From this insight he draws the conclusion that the individual architect must embrace a "radical eclecticism"<sup>128</sup> — must submit to any change of style that the client desires. What may be valid as a description of a total scene does not have to be an imperative for the individual artist. A certain commitment to one's own idiom should continue to be possible. Nevertheless, it is a fact that no stylistic dogmas are in force any longer. The simultaneous presence of one style next to another, with all their glaring differences, is almost the necessary credential of a highly advanced architectural culture, especially in the United States.

Correspondingly, Achille Bonito Oliva cited the change of style as the most decisive feature of the "trans-avant-garde": "The cultural epoch in which the younger generation is living is that of the trans-avant-garde, which views language as a tool of change, as a path of moving from one work to the next, from one style to the next. The avant-garde, in all its variations since the Second World War, developed in the sense of a linguistic Darwinism rooted in the great movements of the early twentieth century. The trans-avant-garde, however, operates outside these limits; it follows a nomadic basic inclination that advocates the interchangeability of all languages of the past. . . . The trans-avant-garde overcomes the idea of progress in art, which was aimed entirely at conceptual abstraction. It brings into consideration that the linear development of earlier art can be viewed as one of many different possibilities, and it directs its attention even to languages that had been rejected earlier."<sup>129</sup>

Oliva too speaks of abstraction as the main trend of modernism in the arts. The "non-objective" in painting has its parallel in the abstraction of the primary forms in architecture, which were supposed to represent nothing but themselves. References to contents other than the stereometry of basic forms, signaled by symbolism or ornamentation, were viewed as blemishes, as antiquated tarnishings of the purity of architectural form.

In contrast, postmodern architecture is characterized by

the fact that the previously revoked stylistic means regain their validity, but that these stylistic vocabularies are employed to achieve as a particular goal an architecture which is no longer abstract but which puts its arguments across in a representational manner. The pluralism of styles is not in itself an explanation, but it provides the precondition for the development of architecture's capacity to speak in order to make aesthetic fiction possible. The "styles" provide the vocabulary needed to substantiate an architectural narrative. They are the repository of forms, the potential raw material of architectonic representation. This is why the pluralism of styles is not the most appropriate formulation of postmodernism. What does adequately define postmodernism is, rather, the insistence of the fictional character of architecture — which is diametrically opposed to the abstractness of modern architecture. Because this key notion exists, and because the fictional concretization of architecture provides the actual impetus of postmodern building, the variety of the available styles is not at the core of the decisions to be made. Vocabularies can change, and they can adequately serve widely divergent forms of representation and a wide variety of contents, as long as they are used as fictional narrative terms and thus are contributing significance and meanings. I am by no means rehashing here the question asked by Baron Hübsch at the beginning of the nineteenth century: "In what style should we build?" What is at question is: Which stylistic means are adequate for the visual articulation of a given content? What is at stake is not the choice of what stylistic dogma to restore (say, Gothic or Renaissance) but the decision whether architecture is to remain abstract or whether epic devices will again be recognized as legitimate ingredients of an architectural statement. If the latter alternative should become a reality, then the wide range of stylistic means forming the material of fiction automatically suggests itself. Again, one is not saying much when one says that stylistic pluralism is the characteristic feature of postmodernism. We need, rather, to see it as a consequence of the new impetus aimed toward representation and directly opposed to abstraction.

#### Examples: Moore, Hollein, Peichl

The most telling example of postmodern architecture is Charles Moore's Piazza d'Italia in New Orleans — not because the historical forms of the classic orders were used in an almost excessive profusion, but because a fiction was created in a direct way.

The Piazza d'Italia was intended to become the center of a predominantly Italian section of New Orleans where the Italo-American Institute is located. The immediate area — in fact, the entire part of the city — was in need of renovation and was dominated by large modern edifices. There was

nothing alluring or inviting about the area and little to make one linger.

Moore created a totally new site by cutting into the space intended for a projected building (never executed).<sup>130</sup> The site is circular. Groups of columns provide a backdrop for a topographic map of Italy, which juts out from the middle of a large arcade and reaches right into the center of the concentric circles of the piazza, with a fountain as the Mediterranean. (Sicily has the central position, because most of the residents of the neighborhood are Sicilian.) The piazza wall was supposed to be the purely decorative part of the projected building, against whose modern forms, smooth white facade, and simple square window openings its breathtakingly classical decorum was to contrast sharply.

All the classical orders are present: Doric, Tuscan, Ionic, Corinthian, and Composite. Together they provide the "boot" of Italy with a complete cultural background and a reminiscence of the heroic columnar orders of Italian architectural facades. However, classical greatness is evoked here with touches of humor and commented on with irony. There are collars of neon-light tubing under the capitals of the central arcade. Other "columns" are actually curved sheets of steel, with rivulets of water creating the effect of fluting (figure 153). The Tuscan columns next to these "Doric columns" are made of stainless steel and are "cut open" to reveal marble (figure 154). Their metopes are "wetopes," with tiny fountains.

On this "narrative" plane, the classical columnar orders are reinterpreted through the playful divestment of their monumental dignity. Yet, at the same time, the architraves are inscribed with words of dedication and with the title *Fons Sancti Josephi* [Fountain of Saint Joseph], and the architect's face is immortalized in a water-spouting mask in the spandrel (figure 155).

The Piazza d'Italia was created solely for the purpose of fiction. The collage fragments of this stage of memory do not want to be serious, perfect architecture. Rather, they want to be the vocabulary of a narrative: architecture between the Old World and the New, between wit and seriousness, between perfection and fragmentation, between historical exactness and humorous alienation. The Piazza risks making the poetical statement "Here is Italy!" only to add immediately, with a sad smile, "Italy is not here."

Hans Hollein's Österreichisches Verkehrsbüro [Austrian Travel Bureau] was built at about the same time as the Piazza d'Italia. Behind the nondescript front of an older building, under a glass roof, Hollein composed an environment that recounts tales of travels in many different ways and even prepares people for travel just as a stage prepares one for a play or an opera. Immediately after entering the travel bureau, one finds oneself before the brass stems of metal palm



Charles Moore

Piazza d'Italia

New Orleans

1976–1979

3



Charles Moore

Ground plan of

Piazza d'Italia

Charles Moore

Piazza d'Italia

New Orleans

1976–1979



"Doric" water column

Piazza d'Italia



Socles of Tuscan columns

Piazza d'Italia

View of Piazza d'Italia  
showing portrait of Charles Moore



Hans Hollein  
Austrian Travel Bureau  
Opernringhof, Vienna  
1976–1978







Pavillon in  
Austrian Travel Bureau



Ceiling of pavilion in  
Austrian Travel Bureau



Department of overseas travel

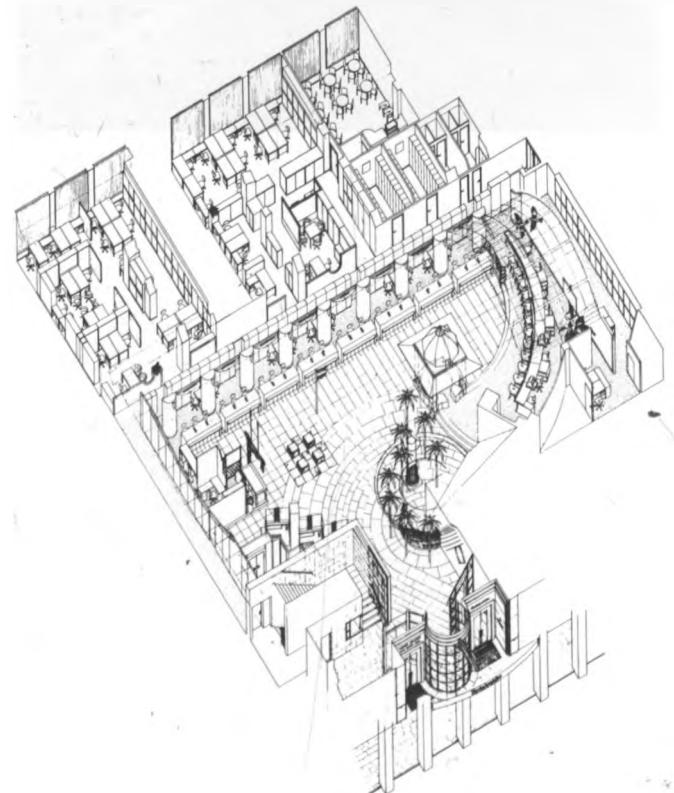
Austrian Travel Bureau



trees. Against the wall, marble building stones rise in a pyramidal shape that extends beyond the room into infinity. Amid the palms stands the stump of a classical column, in which a shaft of stainless steel is imbedded. This sets one's perceptions oscillating between the longing for classical antiquity and the contemporary myth of technology. Similarly, the white neon tubes on the ceiling above the palms and the column counter the nostalgia for faraway times with the cool objectivity of the present. A plastic Austrian flag appears to be ruffled by a stiff breeze. There is an actual proscenium, with a Serlio stage set — here one buys theatre and opera tickets. On the opposite side, on the same axis, is a pavilion with a golden baldachin roof used in *The Abduction from the Seraglio*. At the far end of the hall, the plot of distant travel thickens. Two eagles soar against a pastel blue sky delicately veiled by wispy clouds: Air travel! In front of the painted sky and behind the counter stands an easel with a piece of canvas representing the same pastel blue sky — a picture within a picture that ironically points out the limits of the larger fiction at work here: the fiction of a narrative environment. The space is the space of the theatre stage, and a visitor moves in it as if playing a part in a play, as if participating in a wider fiction. Architecture blends with images, travel metaphors, and symbols of the theatre. The space is only a frame; it is a plain hall in which a fictional world has been brought into existence that creates an almost irresistible tension between the materialization and the shattering of an illusion, and that makes architecture the setting of experience. Here the question arises: What would a travel agency built in the manner of the "Modern Movement," or of functionalism, be like? Surely, it would be like the agencies one sees all over the world: just four walls plastered with travel posters. The difference is what separates postmodern from modern architecture.

Fiction is also at work in Gustav Peichl's water-purification plant at Berlin-Tegel (figure 165), which brings to life the steamship metaphor — the old favorite of modern architecture. This "steamship on land" derives from the technomechanical forms of the purification plant the impulse for a highly suggestive symbolism of a steamship taking off into the future. But this fiction, having been developed to the full in the 1920s and having once made a legitimate architectural content out of overconfident promises about the future, no longer has much of an effect. Today the trust in the symbolism of technical forms is well-nigh exhausted. It seems as if the modern continues to seek self-validation in its former success as "machine-modernism." But mere repetition is not a sufficient means for the regeneration of an overstrained metaphor. This decay of symbolism<sup>131</sup> is rife in the area of overoptimistic faith in the future, where the fictions were based on an overinflated regard for technology and have

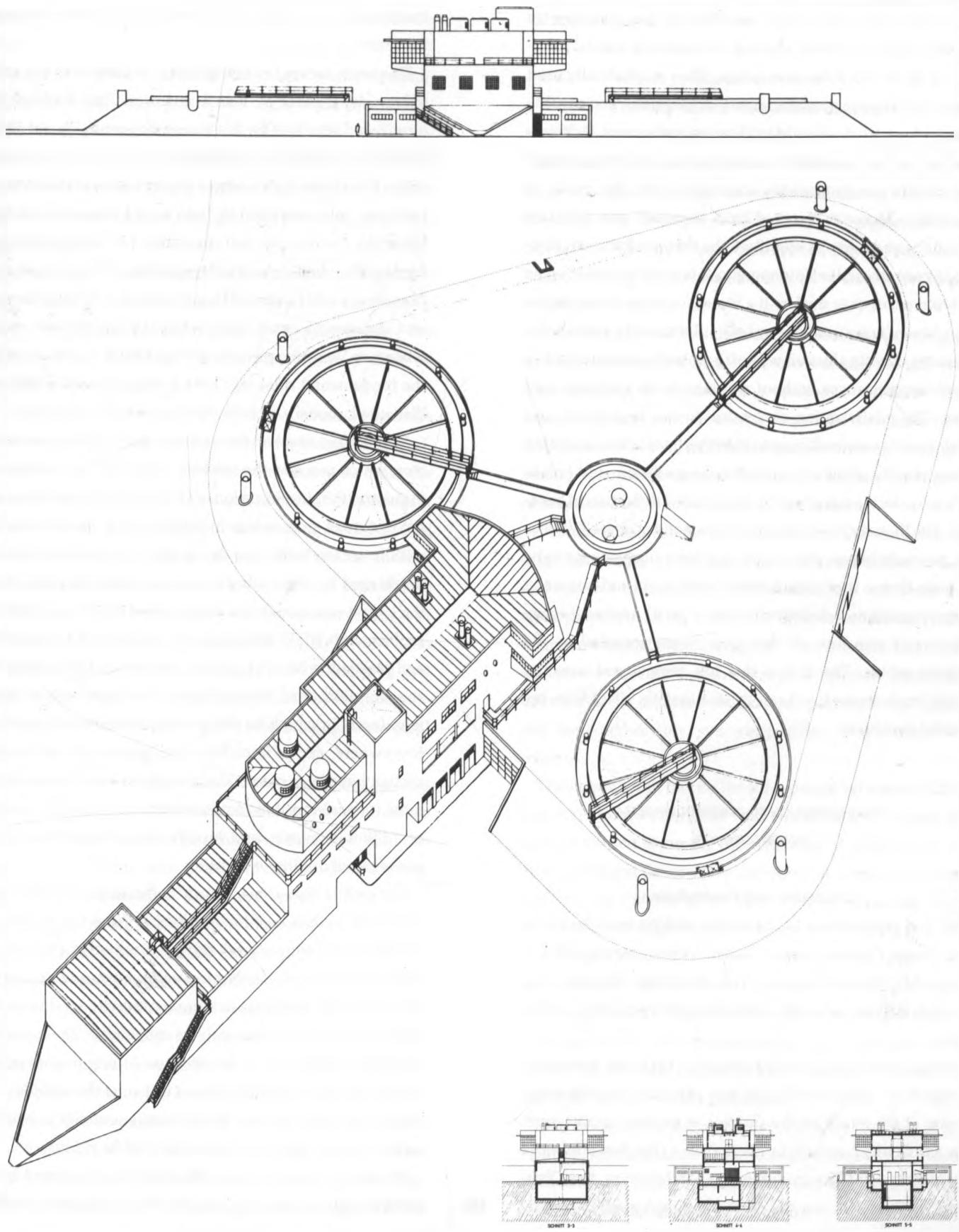
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Hans Hollein  
Austrian Travel Bureau

Gustav Peichl  
Walter-purification plant  
Berlin-Tegel  
1981



become increasingly threadbare. A new symbolic language is emerging which, as the foregoing examples show, refers to the full scope of life and does not limit itself to a faith in progress clad in machine metaphors.

The use of symbolic reference, and especially the recourse to historical material, have shocked some people and have elicited much resistance. But Moore and Hollein made it perfectly clear that their choices of historical forms were not arbitrary, and that the architectural fictions they created were not the product of sheer whimsy, by including special information in the buildings in question. They emphatically used signs calculated to produce certain atmospheres and capable of inducing participatory identification in the users. Hollein's travel bureau attunes the customer to his upcoming travels and creates an atmosphere consonant with the mood of departure. Moore's Piazza d'Italia awakens and localizes memories and permits identity to be reformed without forcing anyone to ascribe autonomy to this architecture of signs and references or to declare it a literal surrogate for an Italian city. Moore's system of symbols intentionally retains the character of witty allusion while it points illusionistically to a set of circumstances without claiming to be identical with them. The relativization of classical forms, neon lights, and steel capitals creates distance, reduces the relationship to the factual reality of Italy to one of mere quotation, and breaks with a modernism marked by a one-sided definition of progress. The Piazza allows one to smile at it and at oneself; it does not seriously tempt one to look in it for a surrogate for Italy. Its main theme is nostalgia, veiled with irony and humor. A pervasive wittiness destroys the bogus "as if" quality of eclecticism and prevents all this from being accepted as the genuine article. The fiction that has been staged here has qualifying features that keep its illusionistic effect from becoming too strong.

#### BREAKTHROUGH TO POSTMODERNISM:

ROBERT VENTURI

#### Complexity and Contradiction

Mies had compressed his reductive architectural theory to one phrase: "Less is more." Robert Venturi responded sarcastically: "Less is a bore." This exchange presents, in a concentrated paradigmatic form, the turn away from modernism.

When Venturi attacked the precept of the Great Simplifier, he was fully conscious that he was plunging into the mainstream of the attack on the dogmas of modern architecture. Vincent Scully's remark in his preface to the first edition of *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* that Venturi's 1966 treatise was the most significant piece of writing

on architecture since Le Corbusier's *Vers une architecture* (1923) has been proved correct by the subsequent developments. Venturi went to the heart of the matter, responding to the vestiges of an architectural theory with a theory of his own — and, indeed, a programmatic one. This was a complete breach of custom; who dared to write anything theoretical on architecture any more! People were offended; they aggressively displayed their hurts and spread their venomous reactions for years afterward. Young Venturi had overstepped the limits of decorum.

The main forum for the ensuing disputes was the architecture department at Yale University. Paul Rudolph felt humiliated and hurt by his young colleague,<sup>132</sup> and Philip Johnson was aghast that someone else had been allowed to be witty. Even Louis Kahn, whose student and assistant Venturi had been, felt compelled in 1969 to call Venturi's buildings bloodless abstractions that illustrated his theories but were inadequate when viewed independently.<sup>133</sup> The reactions to *Complexity and Contradiction* at Yale were to recur for years and decades to come, everywhere in the Western world, whenever Venturi's theories and buildings were to come up: the fundamental rules had been broken; decorum had been disdained; modern architecture appeared in jeopardy.

Venturi had attacked the strongest side of modern architecture, which was also the weakest. Certainly, the reduction of forms and the simplification of functions had been the essential feature of architecture in Mies's epoch. Venturi attacked with irony the belief that the quality of a building could be heightened by attenuating its form and that the reduction to the lowest common denominator could be the solution of all problems. He spoke out against the omission of contradiction and pleaded in favor of greater complexity. Complexity versus simplification! Venturi began his book with a "gentle manifesto" in which he declared his fundamental tenets: Everywhere, except in architecture, complexity and contradiction have been acknowledged, from Gödel's proof of ultimate inconsistency in mathematics to T. S. Eliot's analysis of "difficult" poetry and Joseph Albers's definition of the paradoxical quality of painting.

But architecture is necessarily complex and contradictory in its very inclusion of the traditional Vitruvian elements of commodity, firmness, and delight. And today the wants of program, structure, mechanical equipment, and expression, even in single buildings in simple contexts, are diverse and conflicting in ways previously unimaginable. The increasing dimension and scale of architecture in urban and regional planning add to the difficulties. I welcome the problems and exploit the uncertainties. By embracing contradiction as well as complexity, I aim for vitality as well as validity.

Architects can no longer afford to be intimidated by the puritanically moral language of orthodox Modern architec-

ture. I like elements which are hybrid rather than "pure," compromising rather than "clean," distorted rather than "straightforward," ambiguous rather than "articulated," perverse as well as "impersonal," boring as well as "interesting," conventional rather than "designed," accommodating rather than excluding, redundant rather than simple, vestigial as well as innovating, inconsistent and equivocal rather than direct and clear. I am for messy vitality over obvious unity. I include the non sequitur and proclaim the duality.

I am for richness of meaning rather than clarity of meaning; for the implicit function as well as the explicit function. I prefer "both-and" to "either-or," black and white, and sometimes gray, to black or white. A valid architecture evokes many levels of meaning and combinations of focus: its space and its elements become readable and workable in several ways at once.

But an architecture of complexity and contradiction has a special obligation toward the whole: its truth must be in its totality or its implications of totality. It must embody the difficult unity of inclusion rather than the easy unity of exclusion. More is not less.<sup>134</sup>

Venturi's statements caused additional irritation because he buttressed his arguments not only with examples of modern architecture but also with European examples from the Romanesque period up to the nineteenth century. Should it be possible again to claim legitimization of present building practice by referring to historical examples? Venturi showed the Romanesque facade of the Dome of Cremona right next to Le Corbusier's Villa Stein, and the Renaissance palace of Francois I in Chambord right alongside the Smithsons' plan for Berlin. Thus, it is not surprising that in Venturi's first buildings, in addition to the general principles of "complexity," historical detail began to play a role (although a marginal one, for the time being).

In his early works Venturi concentrated on finding a formal counter to modern architecture's ideal of simplicity. Here we can hardly speak of symbolization or of the iconic contents of representational facades. Venturi's critique of modernism was initially formulated as a counterproposal to Mies and to his great simplification; historical context did not yet play an important role. Whereas at the Otterlo CIAM the tendency had been to question the main beliefs of modernism by referring to regional influences, Venturi took as his point of departure an explicitly formulated theoretical position, which he set up as a new order of architectural priorities in radical opposition to the established norms of modern architecture. Even though Venturi's first buildings show signs of the first application of the criteria that define postmodern architecture along with the recourse to historical forms, Venturi's argumentation focused not on the consideration of the

historical environment but, first and foremost, on the renewal of the principle of manifoldness. For Venturi, complexity means manifold influencing factors being put in action in the form of architecture without the suppression or the smoothing away of contrary or mutually exclusive demands. The driving force of the new architectural aesthetic was not practical response to a given situation but conscious and theoretically formulated reaction against the established norms of architecture.

### The North Penn

#### Visiting Nurses' Association Building

Even before Venturi formulated his convictions on architectural theory in Complexity and Contradiction and in his many subsequent articles, he was demonstrating them in his buildings. His first work to be built, the headquarters of the North Penn Visiting Nurses' Association (figure 166), clearly has complexity and contradiction as its theme and its source of fictional content.

This building has the character of a demonstration piece meant to illustrate an idea, a narrative theme. Fraught with contradictions, it amounts to a deliberate anti-Mies statement. In spite of its somewhat too extrinsic design qualities, it has come to be seen as a trail-blazing event in the history of contemporary architecture. The specific features leading out of functionalism can be traced to this building.

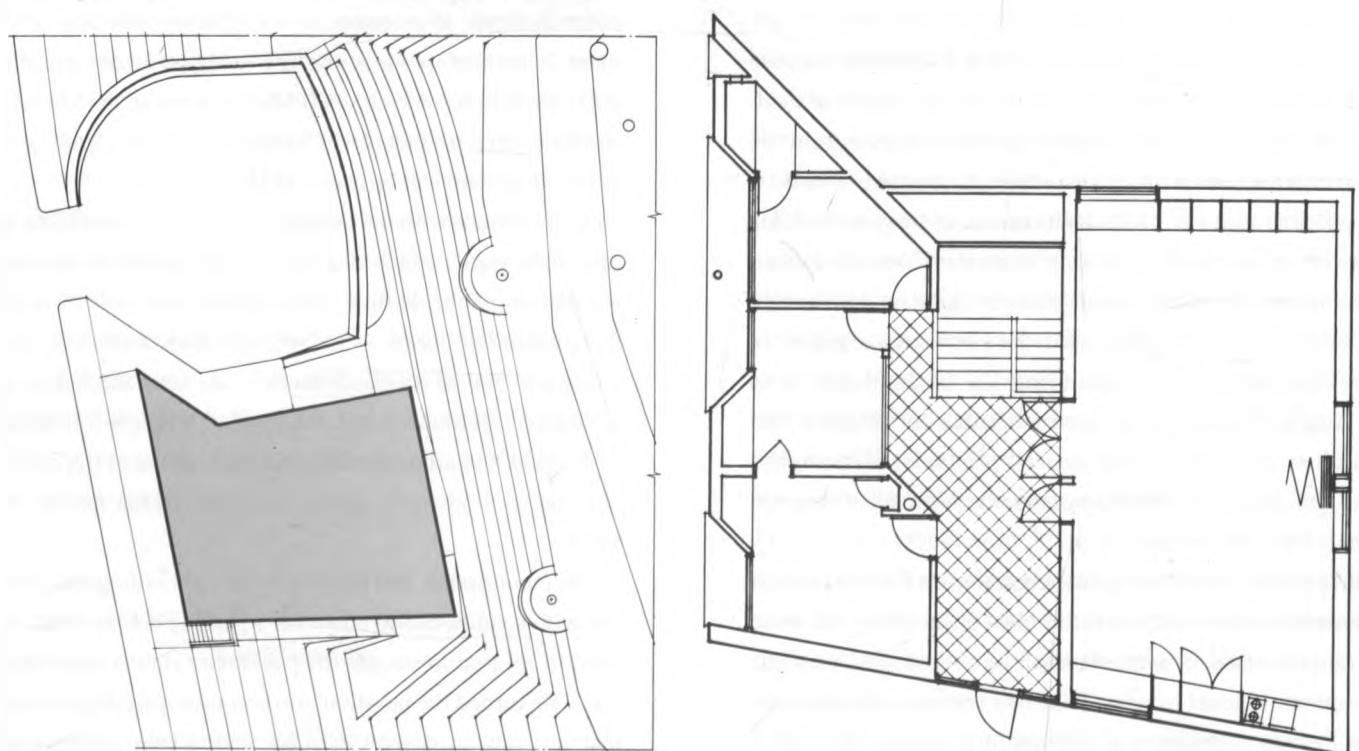
In accordance with the International Style, the building has thin, light walls, which rise from the ground without a base and end in a thin roofline. Nevertheless, the validity of primary geometric forms — indeed, all ideas of modern rationality and logical conclusiveness — are contradicted by the ambiguous entrance portal, the applied window frames and their relief, the arbitrary oblique indentations of the niches, and the contradictory, precarious order of the facade as a whole.

The commission had called for a simple orthogonal pavilion with a substructure and with a parking area in front, but Venturi refused to supply the customary right-angled structures. He turned the pavilion into a strange irregular structure that juts out on one of its sides with an unusually sharp corner while its opposite corner opens to the outside, forming a wide angle, without any immediately apparent "reason" for this distortion. At first glance this seems to be a caricature of the conventional orthogonal plan; however, after a while it becomes evident that the projecting sharp corner serves to protect the entrance and, at the same time, turns toward the large walled niche of the parking lot.

The monumental entrance overshadows the rest of the building, which is rather unassuming, but the simple wooden coulisse (now painted blue) relativizes the impression of grandeur, and the oblique white beams — suggesting a spire

Venturi and Short  
 Headquarters of  
**North Penn Visiting Nurses' Association**  
**Ambler, Pennsylvania**

1960



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Layout and ground plan  
 of upper story  
**Visiting Nurses' Association building**

— contradict the circular sweep of the arch and yet combine with it in a fanfare of complexity. Just as complex and contradictory is the treatment of the deeply recessed upper windows; the large niche has a post in the middle, and the wall in back, in keeping with the interior spatial organization, is pushed off center from the indicated shared axis. The ground-floor windows (figure 168) are set in the outer wall surface in blue mouldings resembling large picture frames; they present an entirely different form from that characterizing the large windows, and they introduce to the facade a historicizing individual detail — the carefully defined profile of the frame, with its double outline — in a most surprising manner. The windows nearest to the protruding corner are pushed dangerously close to the extreme edge of the facade. Even though on the whole a correspondence in the placement of upper and lower windows is preserved, they are so differently accented that the differences between them seem prominent enough to suggest that, although the will to harmony was present, the individual elements refused to come to a consonance.

By the time this building was finished, Venturi had become persona non grata among most of his fellow architects in Philadelphia. However, the very adjectives that were hurled in criticism against this building — “ugly” and “ordinary” — later sparked the discovery of Venturi by the public. Venturi himself registered the condemnation, turned it into a positive category, and henceforth saw to it that his buildings would be “ugly and ordinary” in contrast to the radiant perfection of the International Style and to the heroism of the new concrete monuments. Venturi understood “ordinary” in the sense of “everyday reality,” in which he intended his buildings to be imbedded without rising conspicuously as monuments and claiming an autonomous realm of effects.

#### **“My Mother’s House”**

With the house for his mother, built between 1960 and 1962, during his new theoretical reappraisal of architecture, Venturi created the building that realizes and demonstrates most effectively the postulate of complexity and contradiction. At the same time, historical references were shown to be acceptable. Modern architects had not seen any value in building houses with saddle roofs and painted gables, nor had they approved of placing arched portals (or even slight insinuations thereof) over entrances. And it was inconceivable to paint a house green. Venturi’s violations of these formal conventions were in themselves provocations against the very idea of modernity, but in addition there were apparent incongruities that “disfigured” the whole structure in the name of complexity. The most conspicuous feature of the house, the gable, is split by a deep cleavage. At the same time, a skylight straddles the saddle roof’s ridge to form a penthouse whose front wall coalesces with the chimney. At the



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Robert Venturi and John Rauch  
House for Vanna Venturi  
("My Mother's House")  
Philadelphia  
1960–1962



145

Rear view  
of "My Mother's House"



171

**Alison and Peter Smithson**

**One-family house**

**Sugden, Sussex**

**1956**

back (figure 170), the penthouse roof turns into a hip roof, under whose gable a Palladian transom window is flattened. Finally, the whole facade is completely disrupted and turned into the balustrade of a projecting balcony. Mutations and conflations wherever one turns one's eyes!

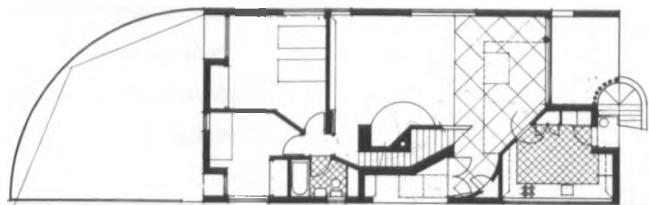
The tension between the large and the small window in the main facade adds to the conflict created by the split arch over the rectangular entrance, which reaches perilously close to the small window in defiance of the customary spacing. (Venturi may have been acquainted with the Smithsons' small brick house in Sugden, Sussex, whose oversize cross-barred window dominates the articulation of the entire facade.) The provocative effect of the individual forms and of their conflicting relations is heightened by the fact that Venturi's house does not claim to be eclectic but rather retains the taut and light surfaces of modern architecture.

The gable surfaces of the house rise from the roof like facades set aslant, and seem to start off on a separate existence of their own. This is due to the combination of classical modernism's emphasis on flatness and the American tradition of false-front architecture.

This was the only one of Venturi's early designs for one-family houses to be built, yet in it Venturi's concept of a complex and contradictory organization of interior space found a telling realization. That the unambiguousness of modern architecture's spatial definition was abandoned is evident from a single detail: the obstruction of the staircase by the chimney of the living-room fireplace. But even the elevation visibly demonstrates the contradictions that arise from the collision of the different forms. On one side of the living room a barrel-vault segment coincides with the upper curve of the transom window on the back facade. The flat ceiling reaches toward and against the vault with a lintel that seems to be supported by a single thin round pillar (figure 174) — except that the vault segment cuts directly across the spot where the pillar ought to be offering its support, thus creating a collision of the forms (by accident or in response to a hidden irrational prompting). At this point, as everywhere else in the house, the difficulty of combining the individual elements and joining the various forms becomes apparent. Nothing is self-evident; nowhere is there a problem-free "composition of form." The conflicts persist, and the contradictions are consciously emphasized, revealing complexity as the underlying theme to be elaborated. The vapidity of modernism's functional organization of space, which lacks any tension, is overcome by a dramatic integration of solid structures and spatial units in apparently permanent confrontation.

#### Guild House

In 1960 — the same year in which the nurses' headquarters were completed and "My Mother's House" was started —



172

Ground-floor plan  
of "My Mother's House"



173



174

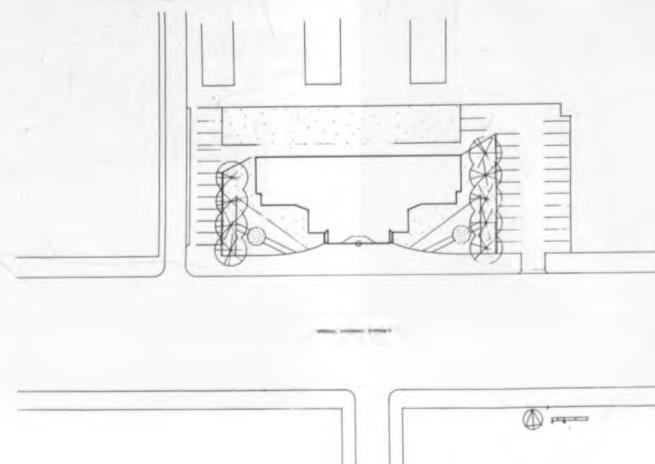
147

**Robert Venturi and John Rauch**

**Guild House**

**Philadelphia**

**1960–1963**



**Ground plan of**

**Guild House**

Venturi received the commission for a Quaker home for the aged to be built in Philadelphia. His Guild House (figure 175) is an inconspicuous, ordinary brick structure with cheap aluminum window frames, simple loggias of raw concrete, and a commonplace ground plan. As with many other buildings in the neighborhood, the facade stands out from the main part of the structure. Guild House is so unassuming that it might be overlooked in its context if its ordinariness had not been distinctively accentuated and if the building had not been ornamented.

The back of the building (figure 177) is a plain brick wall with an almost hackneyed arrangement of window openings; however, a subtle rhythm counteracts the initial impression of monotony. In the end, the building is not what one was led to believe at first glance. The simple stripe of white bricks that sets off the top story of the main part of the building is counterposed with the white brick ground-floor facade, which is read as a socle. The resulting impression is that of a colossal order, starting with a massive granite column and ending with the window at the top of the facade (which is reminiscent of a Palladian transom window); however, the individual forms counter this impression and bring the building back to mundane reality.

The building's signs and symbols — the commercial-looking sign over the entrance, the simple balcony railings of perforated sheet metal,<sup>135</sup> and the magnificently banal television antenna (originally gold-plated) — also help to bring the building's looks down to the plane of the ordinary. The simple cross-barred windows of the wings help to convey the modesty of the accommodations; however, by markedly enlarging the adjoining windows so as to produce a pretentiously inflated version of the cross-barred windows, Venturi introduced tensions and surprises that led out of triviality and asserted through a dialectical reversal the value of the particular in the general context of the ordinary. Venturi is a contemporary of the Pop artists, who discovered everyday reality, and his emphatic use of large cross-barred windows here seems to have been motivated by the Pop aesthetic. The large sign, too, is Pop-inspired. The ponderous granite column at the entrance is contrasted by the banal grid it supports, and the central support of the window's arch ends (as it were) at the tip of the original TV antenna (see figure 185), which occupied the place traditionally given to a statue of the Virgin Mary in some similar institutions.

The beautiful, simple rooms are not strung out in endless rows along long corridors but are arranged in a complex manner around the bends of zigzagging hallways, which informally suggest a friendly homelike interior, as if belonging themselves to the adjoining living quarters (figures 179, 180). However, as in the nurses' headquarters, Venturi's expressive intention is concentrated in the exterior, in the

177



178

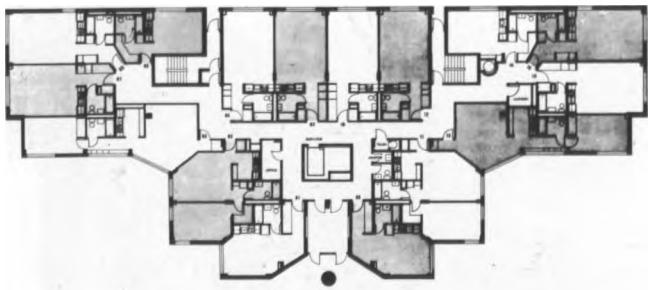
facade. None of the forms here are arbitrary. Even the granite column at the entrance fulfills a function: to shield the lobby from the full glare of the incoming light. The wide angle of the door casing's aperture provides ample room around the column on either side. The building radiates a high degree of integrity in the midst of its decaying suburban surroundings. Everything about it is solid, every detail correct.

Although even the ground plan shows a relatively high degree of complexity, the theme of this building is not exclusively complexity and contradiction. Further concerns are the acceptance of a historical building type, of a central avant-corps, and the ever-increasing interest in the symbolic aspects of the facade's shape. The front of Guild House stands out as an independent surface, a "billboard." This two-dimensional quality is amplified by the two slits cut into the facade from above near its two corners, and by the segmental arched window, which reaches up to the facade's edge and thereby makes it seem weightless. Guild House announced an important tenet which Robert Venturi and his wife, Denise Scott Brown, formulated theoretically a few years later: "A house is a decorated shed!" The facade of Guild House seems to be applied from the outside. It is not the result of the spatial definition of the interior; it is a vehicle for signs, and it attains its import by virtue of this capacity. With his assertions that "the exterior is not the interior" and "the interior is not the exterior," Venturi once again transgressed against a normative prescription of modern architecture: that the organization of a building's interior should be observable in its exterior.

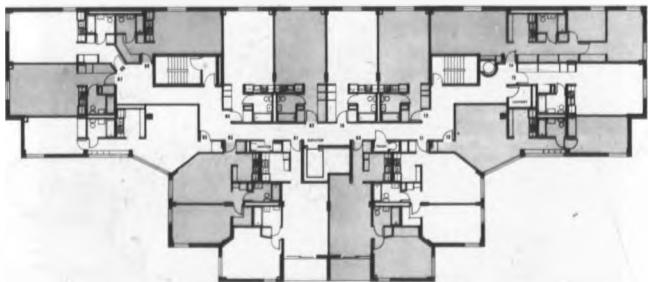
For all this, do we have sufficient grounds for declaring Guild House an anti-modern building? Despite the formal historical metaphors (base course, attic, avant-corps), the building is light and unencumbered; its walls rise directly from the ground and end without any load at the top. Venturi never joined in the Brutalist monumentalization of concrete in the 1960s; he insisted on saving materials and limiting costs, as did Gropius. In fact, he retained the wall structure as defined by the Modern Movement and the International Style.

Signs of the transformation along the path from modern to postmodern architecture are evident in the changes made in Venturi's three alternative drawings of the facade of Guild House (figure 185). To be sure, from the very beginning the building was conceived as a symmetrical complex with a central avant-corps, but the flanks and the fronts of the sides were originally to have large horizontal or vertical window courses. The white line of bricks was also not included originally.

The modern outlook does not permit the interpretation of buildings primarily in terms of classical palace facades; however, changes in a few individual details can indeed evince fictional contents. Guild House is the first large building of postmodern architecture.



Plan of ground floor



Plan of  
fourth and fifth floors



181



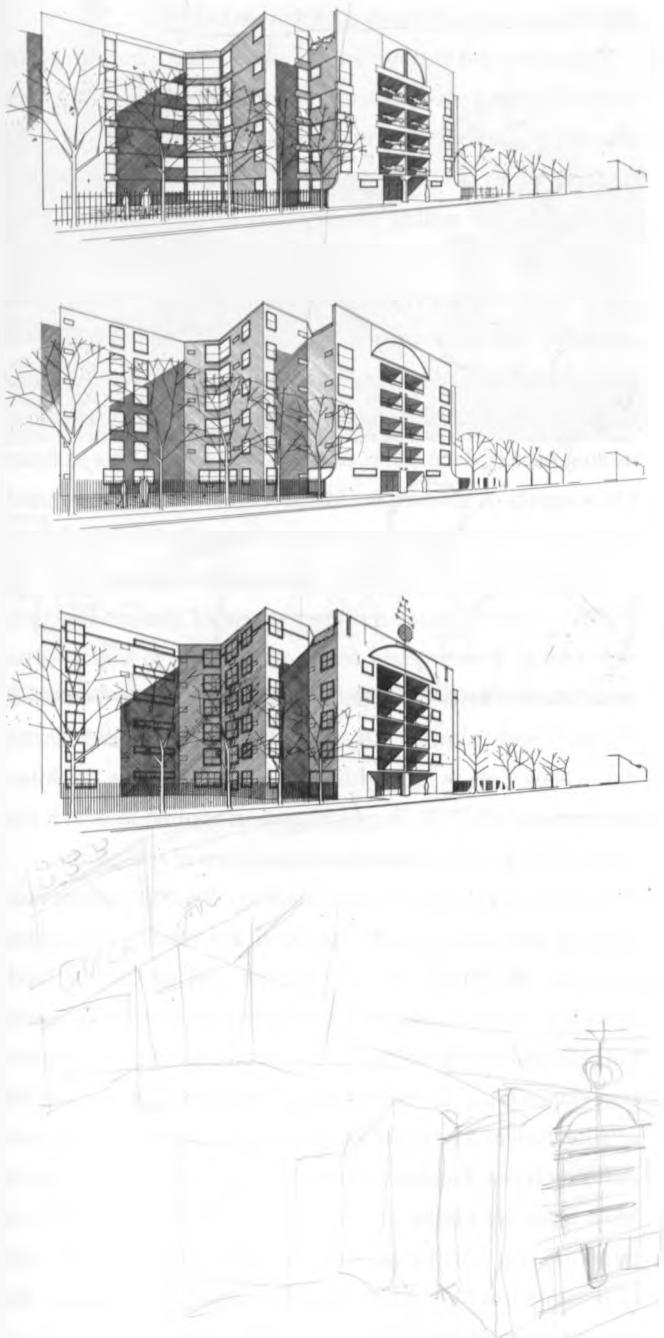
182

184



183

First, second, and executed designs  
for Guild House



For the firm of Venturi, Rauch, and Scott Brown, one particular aspect — heretofore perceptible in the background but overshadowed by the primary objective of an architecture aspiring to complexity — gradually emerged with increasing clarity in the 1960s: the realization of architecture as a "vehicle of signs."

In 1963, nobody else would have had the slightest notion of spelling out the name of a home for the aged in huge letters the size of a commercial advertisement on the facade. By doing just that, Venturi was reacting to the strange tendency of that period to allow new extremes in the chaos of advertising signs while in all other spheres of life anonymization was advancing. Why shouldn't the need for information evident in the proliferation of billboards also be present in the civic realm? Weren't public buildings too often wrapped in silence? Venturi thus turned to a possibility which the Pop Art aesthetic had also drawn upon: the recognition of the trivial and the everyday as a basis of formal development.

Venturi was also the first to employ signs on the less directly informational plane of associations and allusion. The controversial TV antenna set up as a gold-plated piece of sculpture on the roof above Guild House's facade was supposed to allude to the fact that retired people spend a great deal of time watching television. That may indeed be a fact, but was this kind of message worthy of symbolization? Didn't the emphasis attached to this sign, though conceived in a spirit of friendliness slightly tinged with irony, affect the old people as a mockery? Venturi and Scott Brown apparently had not taken into consideration that the emphatic use of signs in the public domain mostly symbolizes idealized needs, whereas fixing people's attention on unadmitted weaknesses or all-too-commonplace facts is viewed as a provocation. The Quakers were quick to remove the golden antenna from the roof of Guild House, and thereby the question was raised: What contents could be articulated in symbolic terms when the problem at hand was to make a building's facade a vehicle of signs? Was there enough of anything to be communicated at all, and was there anything appropriate to be communicated to the public at large? What, if anything, was publicly appropriate? The architectural handling of symbols was a new realm of experience, one with which twentieth-century architects were scarcely familiar.

The language of architectural forms employed in Guild House as an architectural system of order also clearly called for criticism. A central avant-corps with an applied facade that started with a base in white brick and ended with a segmental window symbolizing the lounge behind it was a highly unusual departure around 1960. The semicircular segmental window was not an accepted unequivocal symbolic

form standing for community, but it accommodated the self-image and the representational needs of the inhabitants. To avoid a too-pat reassurance of this always extant and ever resurgent representational need, Venturi slimmed down the facade and relativized it to a freely applied showpiece and a frontispiece.

In the case of Guild House, primary indices (the name) and secondary signs (the antenna) united with the expressive content of architecture to produce a manifold communicative spectrum. By connecting these three planes of information, Venturi created a point of departure for a richly developed theory of architectonic symbolization.

As soon became evident from Venturi's practice and theory, his intention of bringing architecture back into the context of representation and information, as manifested for the first time in Guild House, constituted a much sharper attack against the established norms of modern architecture than his plea for "complexity and contradiction." The reintroduction of the facade as a vehicle of signs also meant the readmission of ornament and the sullying of the barely won purity of architecture with facade embellishments and applied decoration. The functionalists had rigorously upheld the injunction to keep the interior and the exterior of a building in an inextricable mutual connection, so that the facade would be shaped by the division of interior space. In contrast, Venturi maintained that the facade had to be informed by its own particular functions and could not be limited to merely informing the viewer of the meaningless correspondence between the interior and the exterior.<sup>136</sup> Could an architect caught in modernist Puritanism continue to believe that honest construction expressing itself in the congruity between inside and outside interested anyone other than the architect? On the contrary, wasn't it the purpose of a building's exterior to inform the public of many other things, such as the building's meaning and purpose, and not only of its construction or its stereometric purity?

According to Venturi, the anonymization of architecture and its mute aggressiveness — consequences of the faith in the grandeur of pure boxes and crates — lead inevitably to the dehumanization of building, and the self-centeredness of architecture is responsible for this to a large extent. Venturi's argument that architecture must refer to something beyond itself and represent contents other than those of architectonics was the first serious challenge to modern architecture. It was a challenge to modernism's first rule, on which the development of the Modern Movement was based, and to Adolf Loos's declaration that ornament is a crime. Guild House made symbolic architectural detail and the false front permissible again.

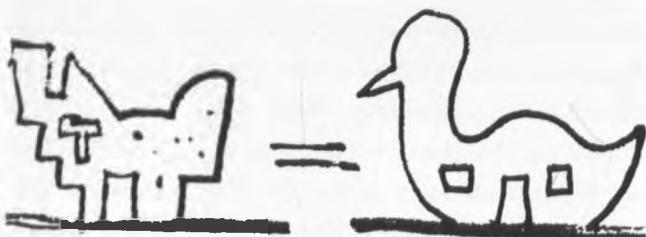
#### The "Decorated Shed"

Following consistently the path started with Guild House, Venturi was bound to achieve a methodic stringency that admitted a formulation as a program. Venturi insisted on making a fundamental distinction between a building's structural whole and its facade, and the facade's design was at least as important for him as the whole of the building. The building could be a simple hall — basically a box (a shed as defined by Mies) — while the facade became an ornamented wall connected to the shed. This is what suggested Venturi's definition of a building as a "decorated shed."

There was still another way of conceiving a building: The whole building could become an ornament. What had been externally applied information could be turned into the building's form, as in the case of "The Big Duck" (figure 186), a roadside store selling poultry near Riverhead, New York. For Venturi, only two principle categories of building concepts were left: the "decorated shed" and the "duck." (Admittedly, the two principles could be mixed.) Venturi declared himself in favor of the shed and in opposition to the duck. The duck, he felt, was the most inconsistent and embarrassing form of decoration, as the sketch shown here as figure 187 suggests. A modern building, with all ornament banned, became itself an ornament in its entirety, like Paul Rudolph's Crawford Manor (figure 188), whose shafts and balconies are dramatic architectural representations of pseudo-functional forms. Stereometric forms overblown to yield "ornament" as an "interesting" effect were rejected by Venturi as "heroic" and "explicit." Even Eero Saarinen's TWA Terminal in New York (a bird with extended wings) was "architecture as ornament"; in its rejection of an applied facade, it had inflated itself into a giant figurative piece of sculpture.

In the background of these ideas lay Venturi's never consciously articulated skepticism about the validity of building typology. His attack was directed not only against the modernism of "heroic" massifs based solely on abstract geometry but also against the notion of conveying meaningful information via the typology of buildings. The all-inclusive container architecture had formally swallowed up a variety of different building types. Fundamentally, Venturi had moved closer to Mies again by taking up Mies's concept of a neutral basic structure; yet now he covered that structure with signs and ornamentation in order to cancel its neutrality. Venturi did not characterize the different architectural tasks by means of different building types; rather, they were subsumed under the category of the shed and were individualized by differing applicative features. For Venturi, this question never took the explicit form: Was there any building typology left in the realm of public building, or had the large all-purpose building totally superseded it? Venturi answered this question by supplanting typological characterization with the use of signs

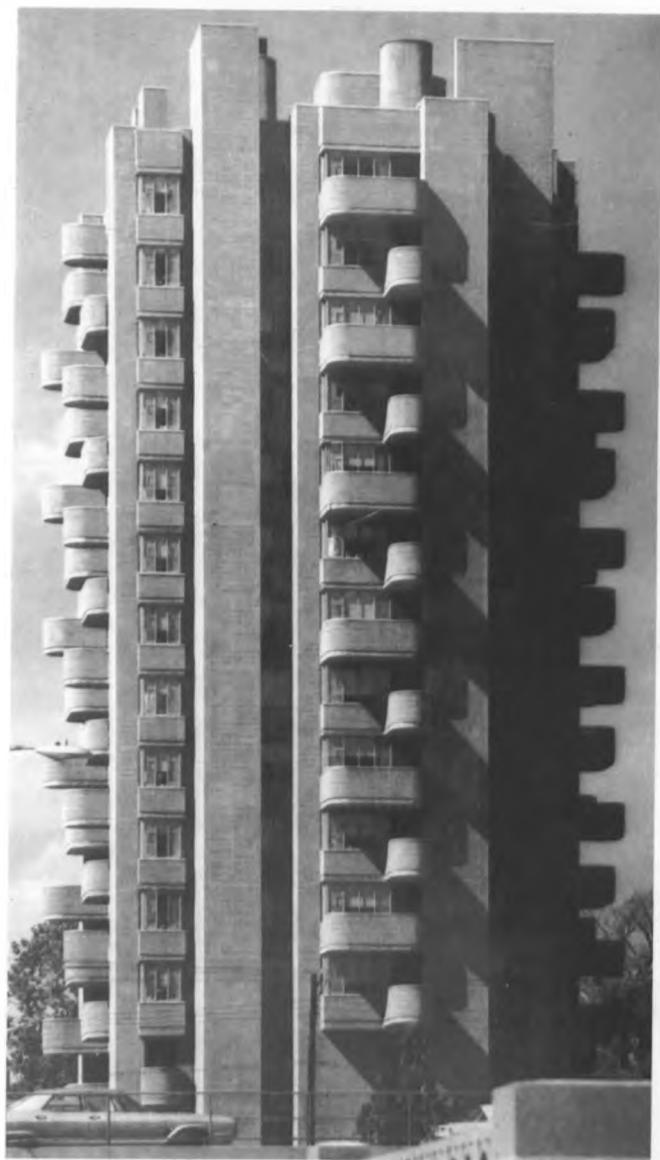
"The Big Duck"  
near Riverhead, New York



187

Robert Venturi  
*A House as a Duck*

Paul Rudolph  
Crawford Manor  
New Haven  
1962–1966





189

Eero Saarinen

TWA terminal

John F. Kennedy International Airport

New York

1956–1962

and symbols. He fixed those insights in his theory, and in *Learning from Las Vegas* (with Denise Scott Brown and Steven Izenour; MIT Press, 1972) he presented a vision of a world in which huge billboards are the most important architecture and buildings modestly recede into the background. Couldn't Las Vegas be the inspirational site for today's architect, just as ancient Rome had once served as a fount of inspiration? Conversely, Venturi also knew how to use historical examples to legitimize his own intentions. Wasn't the facade of a Gothic cathedral one single giant advertisement billboard; wasn't the nave a decorated shed? At least, this comparison impresses upon us the necessity of signs and of additional pictorial information going beyond pure architecture.

In 1967 Venturi produced a design (never realized) for a Football Hall of Fame — a design that demonstrates particularly well his idea of combining a shed and a facade. This building's facade, facing the parking lot, was to be a huge electrified signboard, supported by giant pillars reaching inside the building and subdividing the interior space and displaying great football events via 200,000 electronically programmed lights. With this project Venturi emphasized paradigmatically the duality of building and sign, and even didactically pointed out the novelty of using electronic image transmission in place of ornamentation.

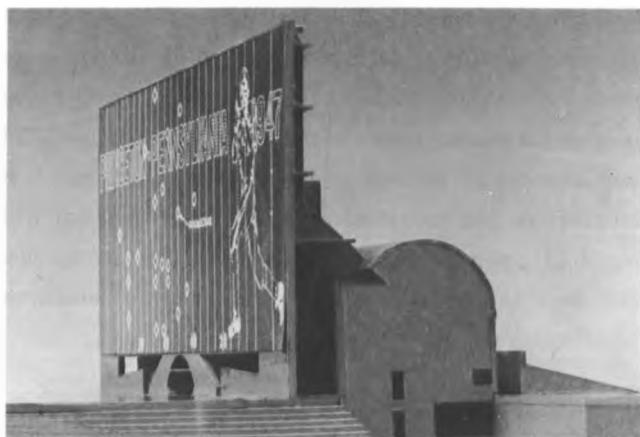
Later on, the firm of Venturi, Rauch, and Scott Brown proceeded much more conventionally. For instance, they painted a Best supermarket all over with giant Pop flowers, and they embellished another store — a shed of the simplest sort — with the name of the enterprise spelled out in huge, widely spaced letters that could be read as the store's name from a passing car. In the case of the Basco store (figure 192), only the way in which the letters were placed as independent pieces of sculpture against the wall was novel, not the formal principle that determined their shape.

The ISI building in Philadelphia (figures 193, 194) is also an ornamented shed. As in many other cases, cost considerations militated against architectural complexity. But the facade's ornamental design, developed from a computer pattern and executed in colored tiles, endows the building with an individual character. The oblique wall next to the entrance, which carries the name of the institute as an advertising sign, surprises the visitor with a friendly approach and a spirit of welcome where customarily one finds the hermetic exclusiveness of science.

Venturi's most successful "shed" is the Dixwell Fire Station in New Haven (figure 195). The one-story garage is connected with the two-story firemen's quarters by the brick facade, which carries huge letters. Directly above the obliquely placed entrance, the facade is peeled away in a manner that draws attention to its independence. This build-

**Robert Venturi and John Rauch****Football Hall of Fame (model)**

1966-67



191

**Venturi, Rauch, and Scott Brown****Best supermarket****Oxford Valley, Pennsylvania**

1977



157



192

**Venturi, Rauch, and Scott Brown****Basco supermarket****Philadelphia**

1978

**Venturi, Rauch, and Scott Brown**  
**Institute for Scientific Information**  
**Philadelphia**  
**1978**



194

**Institute for Scientific Information**



195

**Robert Venturi and John Rauch**  
**Dixwell Fire Station**  
**New Haven**  
**1970–1973**

ing became the model for the “de-architecturization” that later became the point of departure for the SITE group. Venturi’s unrealized project for a Natural History Museum in Charlotte (figure 196) is also closely related to the projects of the SITE group. A simple shed with modern window courses and smooth facades was to be turned on one side into a large support surface for panels depicting the natural landscape of Charlotte. At the same time, the building as a whole was to serve as a pedestal for a dinosaur figure. The side facing toward the adjacent church was to be a graded, landscaped slope, cut to reveal its geological strata. An oversize column at the entrance (figure 197) was to provide architectonic support for the nature imitation of the slope while articulating by contrast the primacy of architecture. This design suggests that buildings can go through all sorts of metamorphoses, that architecture can be transformed into metaphors that will avoid all typologies and will leave room only for specific individual information against the background of a uniform basic building unit.

#### **Signs and Symbols**

Through his buildings and through his theory, Venturi clearly showed that the demands addressed to the architect go far beyond the assumptions on which the conventions of Modernism were based. If one takes Venturi’s injunctions seriously, then the architect’s crossing over into painting and into advertising graphics is a basic precondition of architecture. In Venturi’s view, the decoration of the shed is at the least as important as the shed itself. In addition to the considerations about what architecture as traditionally conceived had to look like, the equally challenging question of the facade’s design came to the foreground. The architect could as little remain a “pure” architect as architecture could remain “pure” architecture. This insight aroused sharp opposition not only because it went beyond the traditional concept of architecture but also because it required a skill that architects had gotten along very well without: to be able to speak in metaphors as well as in abstract geometry.

In one of his first commissioned works, Venturi immediately demonstrated his special interest in the graphic design of the facade. This was his renovation of Grand’s Restaurant in Philadelphia, which acquired its particular character through the use of oversize stencil lettering (which had already been used in Pop painting by Robert Indiana). On the facade the lettering was combined with a sign representing a coffee cup (figure 198); on the inside it ran along the walls, taking up almost all the space above the booths (figure 199). Only in the America of the Pop Art period could this strikingly direct approach have become imaginable. Shortly afterward, Charles Moore used super-large typography as a decorative element in the changing rooms for the pool and

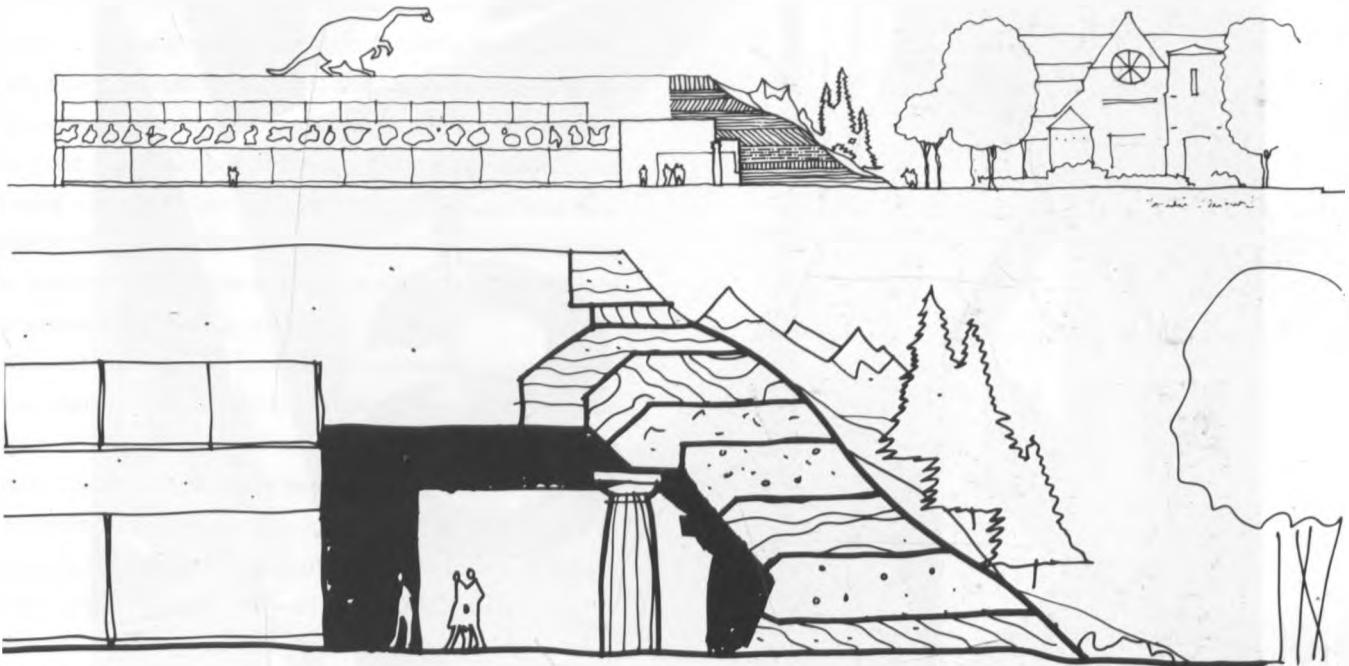
Venturi, Rauch, and Scott Brown

Natural History Museum

Charlotte, North Carolina

(project)

1978



197

Entrance to  
projected Natural History Museum,  
Charlotte



198

Venturi and Short  
Grand's Restaurant (renovation)

1962



199

Interior of  
Grand's Restaurant

Charles Moore  
Changing rooms  
for swimming pool and sauna  
Sea Ranch, California  
1967



sauna of the Sea Ranch condominiums (figure 200). The application of vividly colored letters and numerals, which Venturi and Moore were well on their way to developing into a new ornamental system, soon became widely popular in the United States.

In the course of time, Venturi, Rauch, and Scott Brown received a long series of commissions for the redevelopment of urban slums. These projects are marked by a conspicuous consideration for the existing urban substance. The firm's attention was primarily focused on the little things that remain directly within the optical and tactile grasp of people: curbstones, lanterns, benches, bus stops, telephone booths, and so on. The addition of symbols, signs, and even pictorial facades was supposed to improve the visual field and heighten the quality of life. Banners were to be hung across the streets, not to advertise events or products but to indicate the names of neighborhoods.

Venturi, Rauch, and Scott Brown proposed setting up a series of giant billboards on the main access road between the airport and the city of Philadelphia to call attention to the famous local features and to the city's history. In the jumble of the existing signs advertising commercial products, there was to be a sign depicting Philadelphia's skyline and bearing the slogan "Philadelphia — the Nation's Birthplace." Farther down the road, a giant silhouette of William Penn would extend a welcome — with a historicizing undertone of irony — to "Penn's Greene Country Town." Next, one would encounter a pretzel as tall as a house and a colossal hoagie sandwich (representing the local delicacies) and a huge reproduction of a painting from the Philadelphia Art Museum. The aesthetic effect of these signs derives partly from the accomplished graphic design, but mainly from the inversion of expectations: these billboards promote the public interest rather than private enterprises. The huge hoagie becomes as "beautiful" as a free poetic form.

The Venturi firm's Franklin Court, erected for the occasion of the U.S. bicentennial, differs greatly from the aforementioned signs. The building structure itself serves as a single symbol, and the entire site of the Franklin Museum has become a fictional environment adding to the facts of reality the poetry of the imagination. Above the excavated site of Benjamin Franklin's house rises a steel framework that delineates against the sky the outlines of the old house, with its gable roof and its three chimneys. Looking down into the excavated site upon the old hearth, one can read on the tiles on which one stands quotations from Franklin's diary, engraved in metal for eternity. The tension between the reality below and the fictional signs above creates a stimulating and poetic atmosphere.

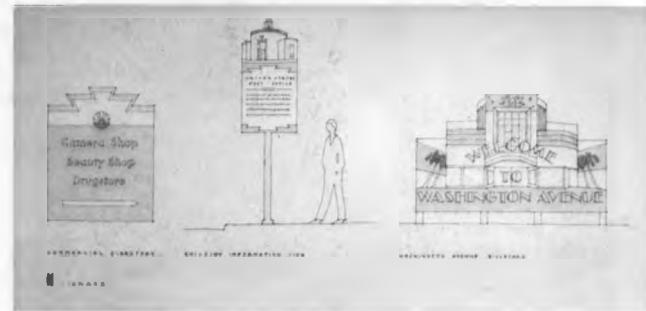
All these possibilities for the architectonic use of signs and symbols should not deflect our attention from the fact that

201

**Venturi, Rauch, and Scott Brown**

**Signs**

**Miami Beach**





202

Venturi, Rauch, and Scott Brown  
Murals for  
downtown Scranton, Pennsylvania  
1976



203-205

Venturi, Rauch, and Scott Brown  
Proposed billboards for  
Philadelphia  
1973



**Venturi, Rauch, and Scott Brown**  
**Franklin Court**  
**Philadelphia**  
**1972**



architecture's classical system of decorations — the language of facades derived from load and support: column, architrave, arch, and lintel — still presents a rhetorical substance that awaits interpretation.

Nearly all of the houses Venturi has designed since "My Mother's House" have been, basically, "decorated sheds." His two vacation houses on Nantucket (figures 207, 208) are, typologically, simple cabins with gabled roofs; they take on a special regional character by dint of their clapboard exteriors. Their manifold window treatments recall turn-of-the-century American country houses; however, the odd placement and jointure of window openings — now pushed up against the facade's edge, now spaced with one corner irritatingly close to the roof line — are postmodern mannerisms that make it clear that these houses originated in recent times. These were the first buildings in which Venturi employed the historical vocabulary almost literally. That the end effect is not eclecticism lies in the fragile surface quality of the flat facades as well as in the unorthodox position and assortment of the windows. However, all in all, both houses give the impression of friendly Cape Cod cabins wrapped in clapboard and standing there for a whole century, comfortable, simple, and full of character. Similar qualities make the Tucker house in Katonah, New York — though it is rooted in everyday reality by its clapboard facades, its compact ground plan, and its gabled roof hood — stand out from the everyday through a pointed interpretation of the individual elements. The large hood of the roof seems made only for the purpose of enclosing an oversized bull's-eye window crowning, as a superfeature, the facade's elevation, which begins at the entrance level with a series of normal-size windows, then goes on to include a pair of oversize windows, and ends (at the height of the crowns of the surrounding trees) with a bloated round window. The tension between normal and oversize dimensions — between an ordinary house and an extravagant window arrangement — creates a significant, individual building out of a typologically simple prototype.

The year 1977 marks Venturi's first programmatic use of forms derived from historical styles, his initial demonstration of their facade symbolism (figure 211). He developed a basic prototype of a cottage with a saddleback roof and a Doric portico (figure 212). In this design, the temple front stands as a totally distinct feature against the body of the house. Set in contrast with the rest of the building, the main facade gains independence by achieving the value of a sign. The columns are read sometimes as a group of three heavy, bulbous weights, and sometimes as losing their volumetric aspect and becoming merely a coulisse punched out of a flat surface, as in the loggia of the later Flint House (figure 213). The classical forms are simplified into signs and modified to formulas, which have an alienating effect. In the drawing reproduced



207

**Robert Venturi and John Rauch**

**Trubek house**

**Nantucket**

**1970**



208

**Robert Venturi and John Rauch**

**Wislocki house**

**Nantucket**

**1970**

Venturi, Rauch, and Scott Brown

Tucker house

Katonah, New York

1974-75



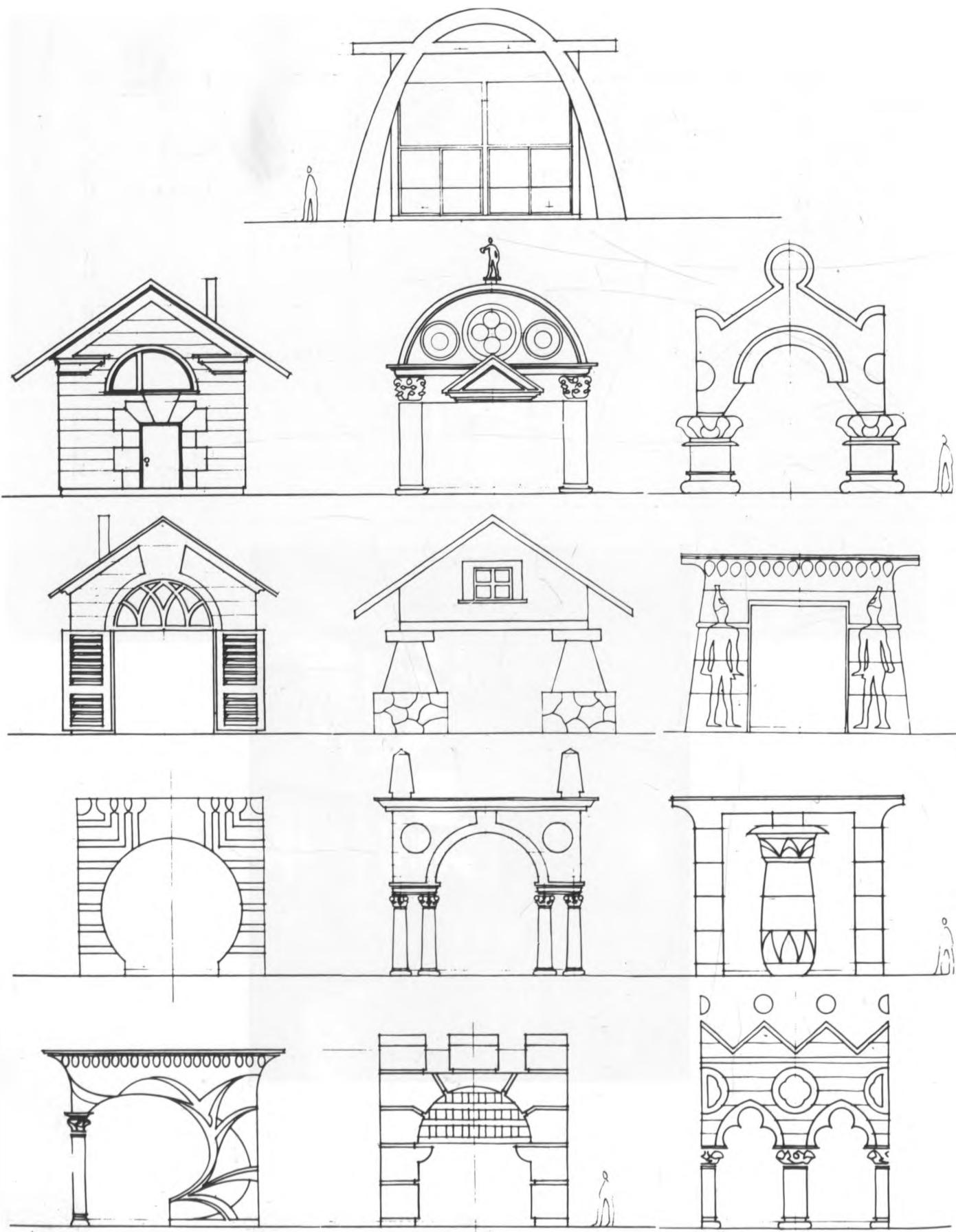
Interior of upper story  
of Tucker house



Robert Venturi

Entrances

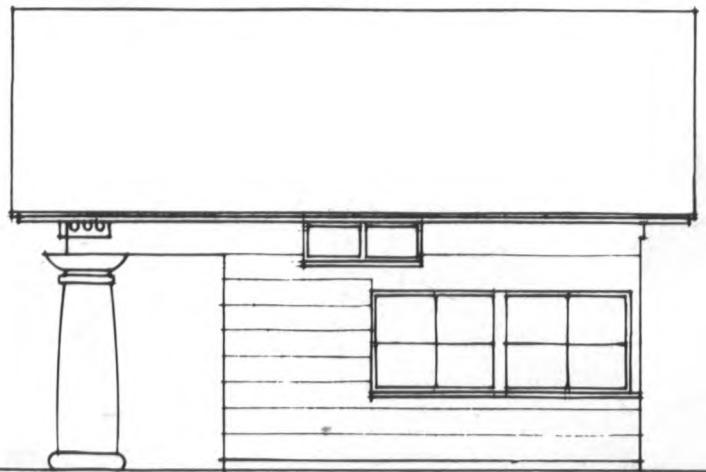
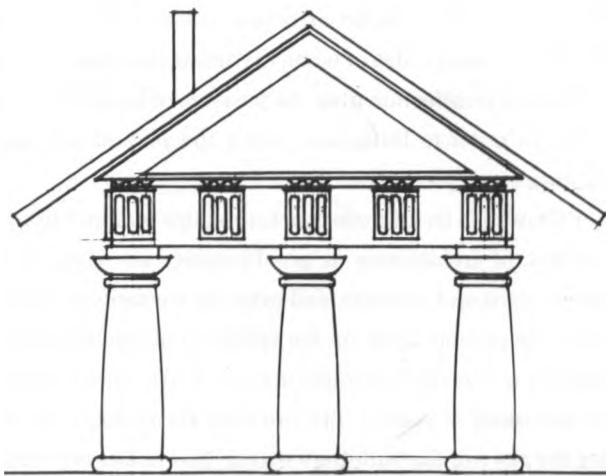
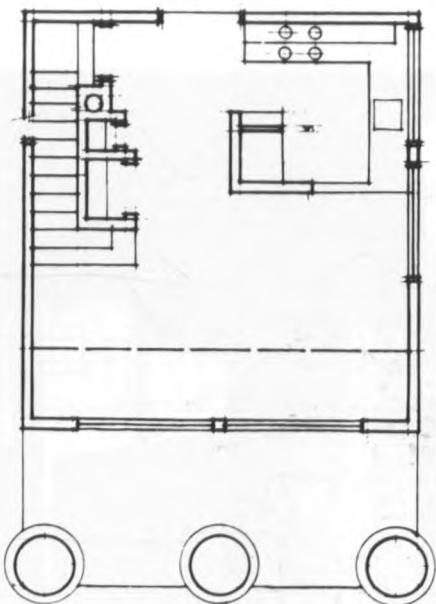
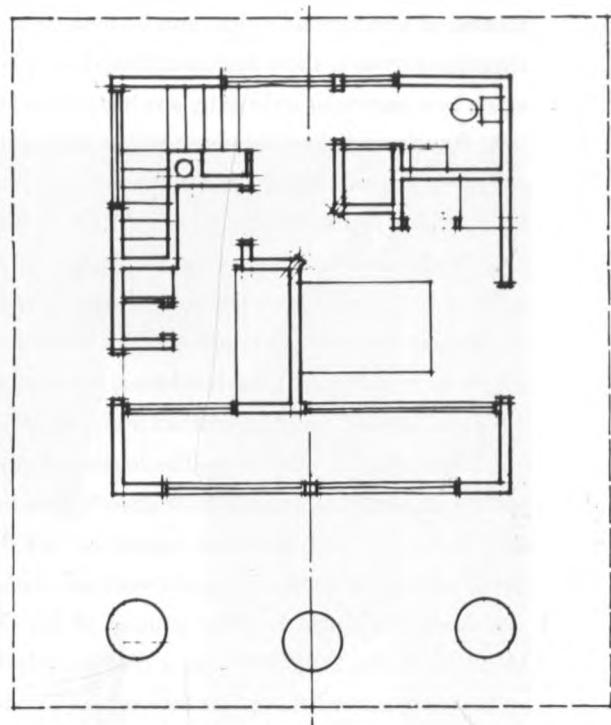
1977



Robert Venturi

Weekend house

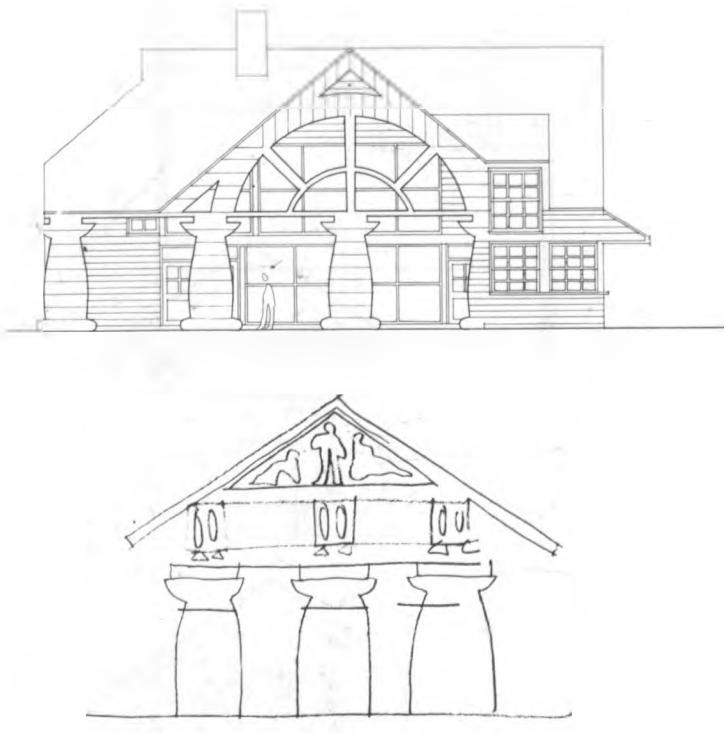
1977



**Venturi, Rauch, and Scott Brown**

**Design for Flint house**

**1981–82**



214

**Robert Venturi**  
**Design for stand**  
**at Venice Biennale**

**1978**

here as figure 214, the figures of the tympanon assume the fluent consistency of amoebas in motion. The Palladian wooden cottage becomes an ancient cipher combined with the ordinariness of a rustic house.

Venturi played through a whole series of other possible stylistic variations on the design sheet reproduced here as figure 211. He starts with a modernist arched facade in the manner of a McDonald's sign, and he then drew facades in alternative styles to show that the modern facade is marked as much by a particular style as by any historicized style.

As diverse as all these facades might be, they all conform to one particular mode. They are playful set pieces, well suited for a vacation house but unsuitable for monumental architecture. Their illusionistic trappings are marked by a wittiness peculiar to the exuberant mode of vacation architecture. In his designs for the Flint house and the Brant house (figure 215) Venturi also used historical forms; however, he applied them less literally, with a less direct irony, achieving thereby a stronger effect of alienation. The loggia columns of these houses are stage coulisses, almost ghostly structures which refer as signs to the typology of loggias but lack the conventional substantial weight of representational elements.

In Venturi's single wooden column at the Oberlin Art Museum (figure 216), although a considerable substantial solidity is preserved, the spaces between the wooden strips of the shaft revoke the suggestion of weight. And even though the capital is quite large, the volutes' overweight bulge lends the whole structure a grotesque air. In the end, the prevailing effect is that of a symbolic sign: the column is asking to be read as a symbol of decoration that has submitted to the mutations imposed by the contemporary period and has lost all knowledge of the monumentality of old. Venturi stated expressly that stylistic forms are now to be used only in this witty, tongue-in-cheek manner, so as "not to be lugubrious"<sup>137</sup>; although he named Edwin Lutyens as his witness to the contrary, nevertheless in Venturi's own work something new happens in the history of architecture: Forms culled from historical styles are used for the purpose of a relief from all historical claims to grandeur implanted into these forms down to our time. The fiction of bogus colonnades consists in the emancipatory idea of using the ornamental garb of power to liberate architecture from the pressure of hierarchical concerns in order to bring into action the play of wit and to rupture set expectations.<sup>138</sup>

Followed to its ultimate conclusion, this idea questions the validity of architecture as an affirmative art. Used in this sense, signs and symbols, and even the elements of architectural decoration, open up the spectrum of signification and lead away from the old implication — tied to the architecture of thousands of years — that building always has to be done for the glory of the building's owner, that in fact nothing can

**Venturi, Rauch, and Scott Brown**

**Brant house**

**Bermuda**

**1978–79**



**Venturi, Rauch, and Scott Brown**

**Wooden column**

**Museum of Art**

**Oberlin, Ohio**

**(1973–1976)**



be built any other way.

Admittedly, architecture cannot achieve the same penetrating impact as the most critical of the arts — caricature. Depending entirely on commissions for its development into an art, architecture is perforce very good at affirmation and glorification. Robert Venturi and Charles Moore were the first architects who consciously made it their methodic concern to revoke architecture's compulsively affirmative role. The first impulse in this direction came from Pop Art, which incited Venturi to recognize "ordinary" and "ugly" everyday reality as meaningful and "beautiful." This immediately posed the question whether any social sphere could be excepted from the aesthetic of the everyday and instead legitimately claim an "elevated" language as its own prerogative. Charles Moore has pointed out this conflict:

We have invented a magnificent neon sign for a little bank in Westport. . . . It is called "County Federal Savings," and we invented a sign that says "County Federal Savings" in elegant letters, with a star inside the "o" of County. "County" is blue, and the star is red, a sort of Texaco sign. The "o" is neon.

Question: And this is the sacrosanct place where people bring their dollars? Don't you need some big, impressive, heavy columns and walls?

Moore: Davis Brody<sup>139</sup> gave us all the heavy walls we need. We were going to have an enormous blown-up five-dollar bill over one of those heavy walls. But the bank president doesn't want it. In fact, he doesn't want anything we've suggested so far.

Question: In the International Style, a church could look like a factory — like Oud's church at Rotterdam. The meaning was no longer important, because functionalist purity was all-important. When a Beaux Arts architect wanted to build a bank, he just took a marble colonnade with a pediment, and it was a temple, the "Bank." When you built a bank, it has a neon sign on it. A bank may not need to narrate security and stability any longer, the building doesn't need to look safe, but the alarm system has to function. Nowadays, a bank could even look like a gambling house.

Moore: Yes, it depends on the value system of the society. Our bank looked, to some of the directors, perfect and wonderful, and they were very excited. To some of the others, it looked like a Texaco Station, so they killed it."<sup>140</sup>

It is obvious that to renounce "seriousism" is even more difficult in the realm of concrete signs and symbols than in the realm of abstract stereometric forms. Yet there are isolated instances of successful breakthroughs. Venturi's ISI building, with its unusual stance of renouncing representation, is one such instance. Only if one knows the building's ambitious aim and the preference of the sciences for seriousness and dignified, cool reserve can one appreciate the liberation im-

plemented by the colorful design of the facade and the openly inviting entrance.<sup>141</sup> Seen in comparison with this building, Kahn's Salk Institute has the look of a monument built for eternity. These two buildings are worlds apart. Most of the buildings erected for public institutions nowadays are still far from the progress achieved in Kahn's renunciation of hierarchy. Still less has the renunciation of the representative forms of hermetic distancing penetrated into the public consciousness. The break with the forms of orthodox self-representation, in the sense of the demonstrative display of the instruments of power and of the posturing of status, is already an essential feature of classic modernism. This leveling intention achieved a compelling visual realization by being transposed to the fictional and symbolic sphere of architecture through the endeavors of Venturi and Moore.

### Realism

Venturi's first theoretical writing contains a sentence that triggered a persistent and heated controversy in American architectural circles: "Main Street is almost all right." That is to say, the arterial roads, with all their roadside businesses — gas stations, hotels, repair shops, fast-food stands, and so on — are almost in order. With this controversial statement, Venturi wanted to say that it is senseless to continue to adhere to the utopian expectations that a city can be completely cleaned up and rebuilt.

Venturi viewed the photographs in Peter Blake's book *God's Own Junkyard* in a much more positive light than Blake intended. In the raw jumble of structures and objects, in the existing collision of disparate elements, Venturi finds the reality of contemporary life. Accordingly, for him it would suffice to discern the vaguely indicated connections hidden close to the surface of things to be able to discover binding elements in the chaos of urban decay and to become able to use what is already available, not to create a future city out of it but to produce improvements in what exists. In the words of Denise Scott Brown, "We are taking a very broadly based thing, which is the popular culture — and I wouldn't exactly call it a subculture, because it is so broad — and we're trying to make it acceptable to an elitist subculture, namely the architects and the corporate and governmental decision makers who hire architects."<sup>142</sup> Isn't it an illusion that one can start over from scratch and impose the idea of a "beautiful city" on people patronizingly, from above? Doesn't the existing, painfully ugly city contain an element of truth? And do not the ways and means necessary to change the city for the better lie within the city?

Does this attitude amount to resignation? Does taking full cognizance of reality inadvertently mean recognizing everything that exists? Or, on the contrary, isn't limiting one's scope of influence the necessary precondition for having any

influence at all? Venturi also urged architects to remember their own potentialities if they did not want to lose all possibility of influence. This also sounds like resignation in the face of a too-difficult task, and in the late 1960s it seemed that Venturi's position was about to be overrun by the younger generation's impulse to overthrow the entire social order. Yet in the meantime Venturi seems to have been proved right. At the moment of disappointment, wasn't Venturi's qualification of the possibilities much more subversive than the hope for a revolution?

Venturi's concept of a realistic approach to the urban environment is illustrated by his little-known and little-appreciated 1968 project for an office building on Transportation Square in Washington, D.C. (figure 217). The projecting lower part of the building takes its shape from its symmetrically stepped-back plaza, but the design then flouts symmetry by allowing the obliquely running Maryland Avenue to "cut off a piece" of the projecting building in a manner that forcibly emphasizes the building's adjustment to the site. The building becomes part of the predefined urban structure; it submits to being fragmented by preexisting elements; it adjusts to the "unbearable" given reality. Like the other modern buildings in the area, which is near the Capitol Building, this design has a circumspect, inconspicuous facade; like Venturi's design for the Yale Institute of Mathematics, this is "a working building, enhancing rather than upstaging the buildings around it."<sup>143</sup> The jury of the competition awarded first prize to this design, but a specially convened committee (which included Gordon Bunshaft, a strict adherent to the International Style) rejected it as "ordinary and ugly."<sup>144</sup> The words "ordinary and ugly" came from Bunshaft, and from that moment on these words were used by Venturi's firm as terms of self-appraisal.

In 1968, the contextually adapted ground plan of Venturi's project was a novelty. Venturi himself had admittedly already overstepped all the bounds of good taste with his 1965 renovation project for the City Center of North Canton, Ohio (figure 218), which called for the main building to be truncated on one side at an awkward angle out of respect for a row of trees, cut in half in the middle, and hollowed out to form a circular plaza in such a way that "useless" points and corners were left over, which reduced the concept of a building as an integral whole almost to the point of absurdity.

Out of his radical demonstrations of how buildings could be made to conform to intractable reality, Venturi developed an aesthetic that involved not only drawing attention to problems caused by existing circumstances, but also surmounting the constraints by making them part of a play of sectioning and abridgement. He turned the ordinary and the ugly into means of style:

We say our buildings are ordinary — other people say they

are ugly and ordinary. But, of course, our buildings in another sense are extraordinary, extra-ordinary. Although they look ordinary, they are not ordinary at all, but are, we hope, very sophisticated architecture designed very carefully, from each square inch to the total proportions of the building. Literary critics have known about this all along, that is, about the news of clichés, the news of common, everyday language which makes the literature of Eliot and Joyce, for instance, extra-ordinary.<sup>145</sup>

Venturi's most successful project, in the sense of recognizing the contingencies of urban reality, is his design for the renovation of Copley Square in Boston (figure 219). Venturi's proposal (which did not win the design competition) contradicted all current concepts of "painterly" and "human" public squares. His alignment of trees in a grid seemed to be more related to ideas from the nineteenth century. The use of lawn sections and steps was extremely unusual, as were the paths cutting across the square and separating the green strips into a great variety of lawn fragments. What Venturi had done was transpose the pattern of the nearby streets onto the plaza. Quite incidentally, this provided diagonal paths; Venturi incorporated the tendency of pedestrians to seek shortcuts into his plan. The breakup of the right-angled grid is the formal principle of the entire layout. That such a fragmentation does not end up in chaos but rather yields signs of freedom is the result of Venturi's controlling chance by conscious intention and of his making this intention appear to be part of chance.

#### CHARLES MOORE: "PLACES"

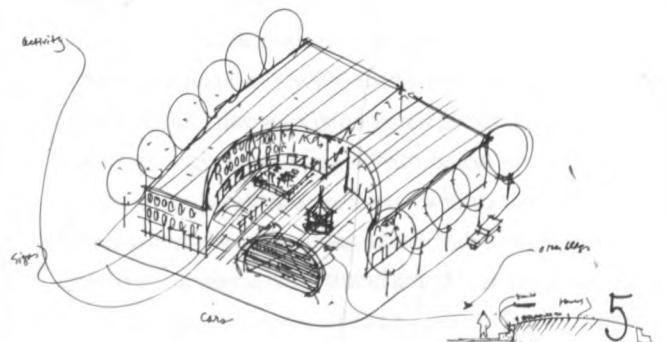
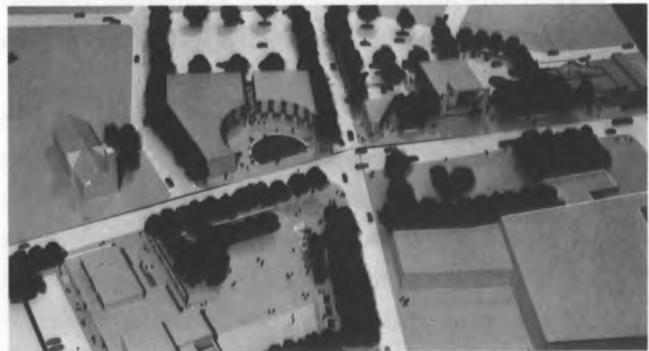
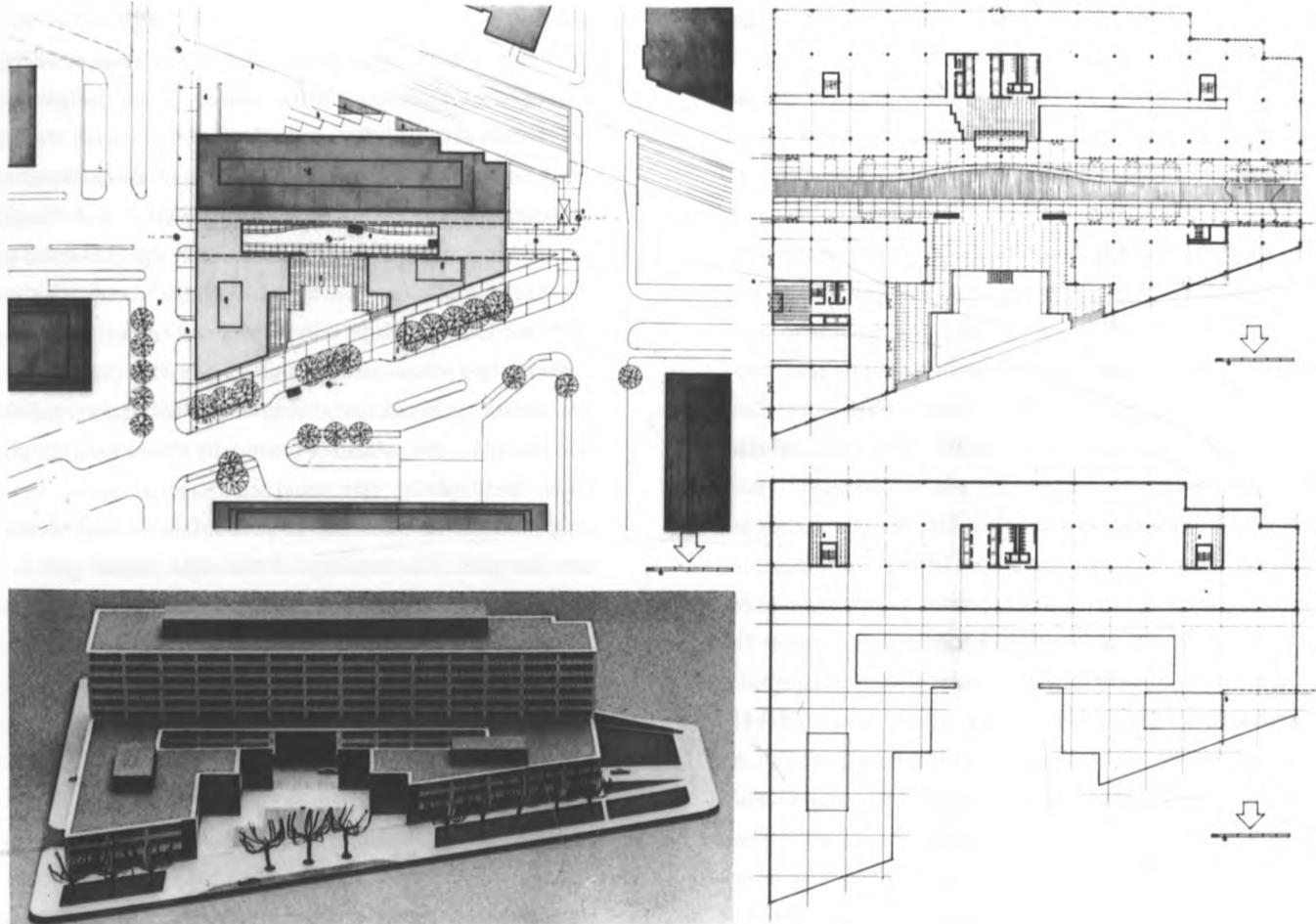
Charles Moore (who, although he came from the Midwest and studied at Princeton and Yale, must be considered the head of the Californian school) is an architect who knows how to use modest means to create complex, exciting spaces that combine surprise with familiarity.

Moore has developed the interview with a client into an art. While carrying on an intense dialogue, he makes little hieroglyphic sketches that capture all the client's wishes — the obscure as well as the obvious ones. The summoning up and examining of conscious and unconscious wishes connected to housing and to being sheltered is the starting point for Moore's architectural endeavors and for his architectural theory, both of which are focused on "making places."

Moore has searched as no other contemporary architect has to find architectural means of meeting the most marginal human needs as well as the anthropologically constant ones, and to respond with innovative as well as with archetypal motifs to promptings which our orientation toward securing our existence predominantly in terms of the means-to-an-end rationality hardly ever allows for. To make a house a place of

**Robert Venturi and John Rauch**  
**Office building**  
**Transportation Square**  
**Washington, D.C.**

1968



218

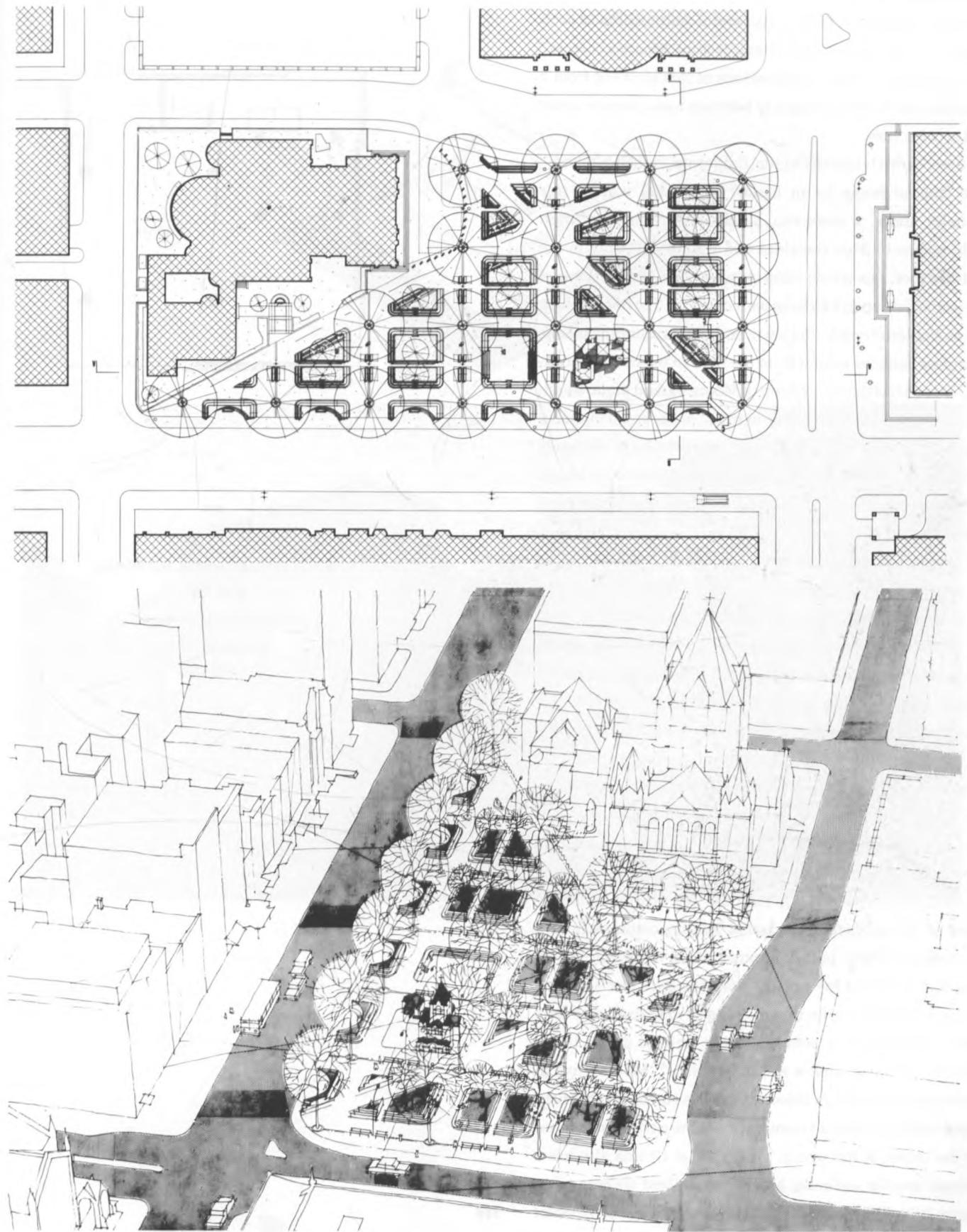
**Robert Venturi and John Rauch**  
**Renovation project**  
**for North Canton, Ohio**  
**(model and explanatory sketch)**

1985

Robert Venturi and John Rauch

Proposal for Copley Square, Boston

1966



shelter and personal identity is an avowed aim of all architects. However, the need for adequate human shelter can hardly be met with an architectural language that is attuned more to the dictates of geometrically perfect configurations than to the wishes of the inhabitants. What is more important to Moore and his partners is "making places rather than manipulating formal configurations,"<sup>146</sup> and this statement rejects a modernism that places its faith in the effectiveness of pure geometric forms and holds a successful composition of such forms to be the highest goal of architecture. Moore's "places" result not from formal compositions of this kind but from a sensitive search for a congruity between basic human needs and architecture.

Moore's own house in Orinda, California, is such a "place." One feels at home in an almost primordial way in this bachelor house, a one-room, single-level rectangular unit. Light comes in from the sides and from an opening in the tent-like roof. The whole thing is grasped at a glance. Some of the walls slide open like large barn doors, so that one can look out on the countryside, the lawn, and the surrounding plants. The glass surfaces extend from the floor to the ceiling. Looking out, one has the impression of Moore's grand piano standing as an amusing alien object in midst of the green outdoors (figure 221). The co-presence and intertwining of disparate elements is used as much as a narrative means by Moore as the exploration of essential relationships and basic interconnections.

The four columns in the center of the house (figure 222) set off the living and dining area as a place within a place, with its own roof and its own skylight. Moore picked up the idea for this from John Summerson's book *Heavenly Mansions*. Since ancient times the space marked off by four columns in a square formation has had a profound significance; it has stood for the center of the universe. For a person sitting inside an aedicula, secure under the protection of a ciborium, the world is concentrated in that space; if another person enters the space, their joint presence acquires the aspect of a ceremony. Architecture as the framework of ceremony is Moore's intended goal; function is a side issue. The space seems to be an ideal prototype of space. And the fact that the four supports of the baldachin are actual Tuscan columns from a nineteenth-century building introduces a temporal dimension that connects the present with the past. For Moore, a house must always refer to something beyond itself, and only when dreams have a chance of being realized does a house become a place of shelter and of identity.<sup>147</sup> Moore's living-room aedicula is not an object for use or a suitable implement of practical goals but an element of fiction, a poetic metaphor for the center of the world. The house at Orinda also has a second, smaller aedicula: a monumentalized shower cabin (figure 223). For Moore the morning shower is a ceremonial



220

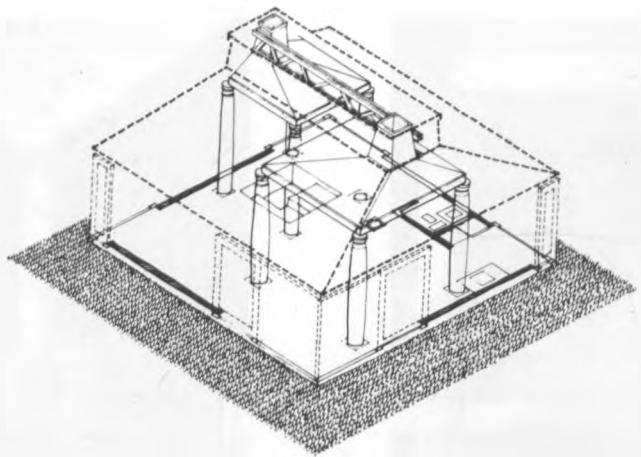
Moore, Lyndon, Turnbull, and Whitaker

(MLTW)

House of Charles Moore

Orinda, California

1960–1962



223



178



222



221



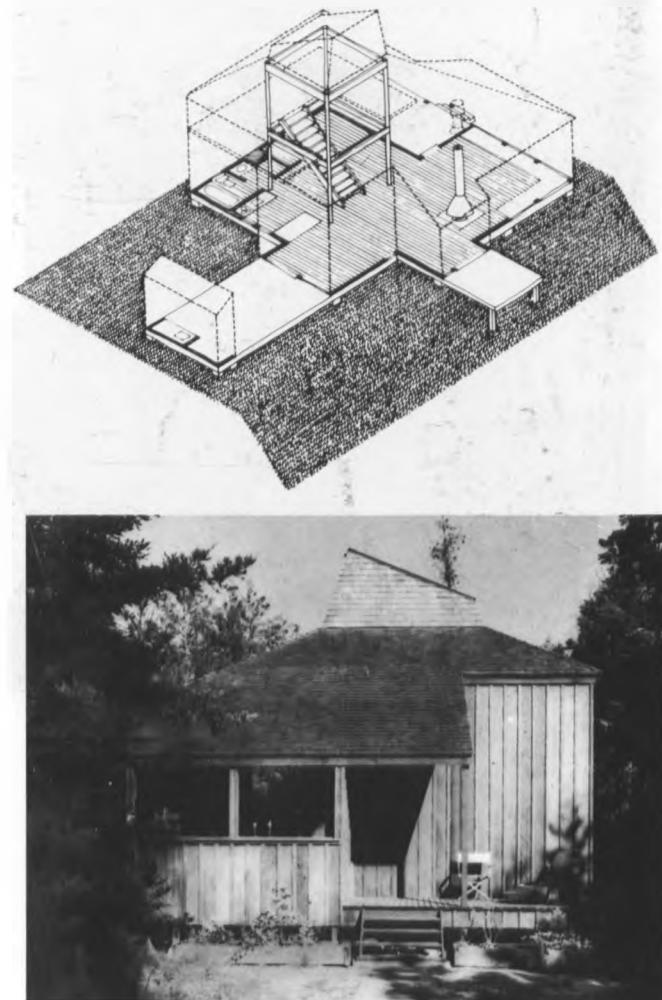
pleasure, and his shower cabin certainly reflects this; however, the real "purpose" of the smaller aedicula is to relativize the larger one and to humanize it with a gentle touch of irony. The skylights in the ceilings of the two aediculas (placed off center, perhaps so as not to appear too nearly perfect) also serve to minimize the representative aspect of the form.

Moore's little house at Orinda is permeated by a hard-to-define sense of comfort and by a "power of place" that connects ceremony and humor. It is a place of fiction, whose illusionistic power is much more potent than the most compelling objective elements. Along with Robert Venturi's "My Mother's House" (also completed in 1962), it represents a turning away from the ruling notions of the International Style. The combination of historical columns, a saddle roof, barn doors, and floor-to-ceiling glass walls was a fundamentally new thing and a questioning of the progressive stance of modernism. To every architect thinking in terms of modernist notions, what Moore termed the "creation of a place" was bound to seem a mystification of architectonic space and a lapse from the spirit of rationalism. The aesthetic of stereometry would have called for a simple shell as the enclosure of an unbroken spatial unit, as in Philip Johnson's glass house. But Moore did not want any abstract rationalist simplification; he was striving to present a fiction based not on the composition of solid forms but on the idea of home and of security. Thus, human emotions and the human need for protection became fundamental motivational factors in the design process. The aediculas were typological answers to archetypal wishes. A functional analysis, such as the calculation of the most efficient use of kitchen space, was not capable of fulfilling such wishes. The range of the expectations extending to architecture was widened when psychological needs that had been neglected as functionally irrelevant began to be treated as necessary conditions requiring formal definition.

#### **Design Motifs: Aediculas, Bay Windows, and "Saddlebags"**

Moore has often used the aedicula as a metaphor for the center of the universe. The Jobson house (figure 224) — built before Moore's house at Orinda — has as its core an aedicula more than two stories high and ending in a skylight. Later, Moore made an octagonal yellow baldachin the center of his Johnson house at Sea Ranch (figure 225).

In the main, Moore's individual houses at Sea Ranch are reminiscences of his use of aediculas in the early 1960s. However, other motifs are also important here, including the jagged roof profiles and the use of bay windows as a determining element of the elevation system and a leitmotif of the spatial composition. Bay windows going around corners on the ground floor, and upper bay windows with shed roofs, became prominent motifs in the buildings of Moore, Lyndon,



224

**Charles Moore (MLTW)**

**Jobson house**

**Palo Colorado Canyon, California**

**1960**

**Charles Moore (MLTW)**  
**Johnson house**  
**Sea Ranch, California**  
**1965–1971**



*Colmn*

Turnbull, and Whitaker (figure 226). Rather than a mere painterly loosening up of the buildings' outlines, Moore intended a definite formal departure from the International Style: the destruction of the box.

Like Moore's aedicula motif, his motif of added-on spaces — the "saddlebag motif" — was formulated with his earliest buildings. The Bonham house (figure 227), built at the same time as the house at Orinda, is a one-room vacation cabin with a lean-to extension at either end, one serving as a bedroom and the other as an entrance hall. Moore realized the saddlebag principle much more forcefully in the Talbert house (figure 228). Situated on a gradient of 60 degrees, the house had to be built as a tower, with additional spaces to be attached on the outside. Indeed, the projecting bay structures and balconies, the awkward cantilever girders, the graduated shed roofs, the narrow windows, and the boarded-up facades were a mockery of the modern one-family house as it was usually conceived in the early 1960s. Elements of banal structures were mixed with fragments of historical reminiscences and combined into a pastiche that was thoroughly unorthodox at the time. One could no longer speak of clear and rational forms; the destruction of the box was complete.

Because of a very low budget, Moore used prefabricated industrial products in the Bonham house. The chimney is of zinc-plated pipe, and the huge ceiling window of the central space is a standard item. The Talbert house marks the first appearance of external metal chimney pipes, which were later to become widely fashionable.

The walls of the Bonham house are of inexpensive plywood, faced on the outside with boards painted gray-green. Inside, however, the whole range of colors is unrolled. The orange of the entrance hall and the chimney wall contrasts sharply with the white of the main room, the railings are blue, and the staircase is dark purple. Moore's juxtaposition of intense colors with white in this remote cabin was later to achieve great popularity throughout the Western world.

#### Paths

The Talbert house displays the beginnings of yet another of Moore's essential themes: the house as a path. Moore refused to be satisfied with setting passageways and staircases apart as isolated spaces of transit, as is normally done; instead, he made movement an aspect of the living areas. One enters the Talbert house from the hill, on the top floor. A staircase leads from the separate entrance hall into the large central room, from which another staircase descends to a platform. From here, broad steps lead to the lowest level. The central room receives its light from the projecting "saddlebags," and the resulting spatial continuity, amplified by the impression of movement sustained by the stairs and the platforms, is interwoven with the play of the light. Actually, the living spaces

Charles Moore (MLTW)

Sea Ranch, California

1963-64

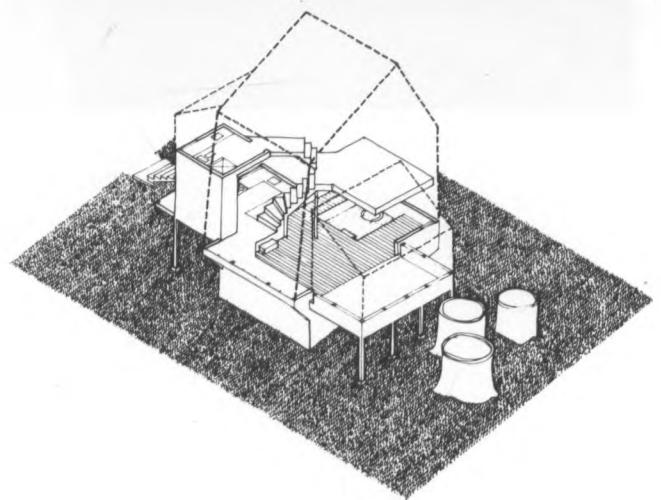


Charles Moore (MLTW)

Bonham house

Boulder Creek, California

1961

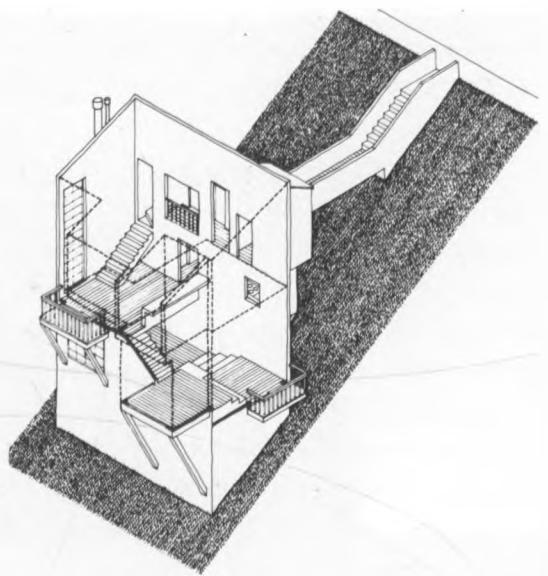


Charles Moore (MLTW)

Talbert house

Oakland, California

1963



With the apartment he built for himself in Los Angeles in 1979, Moore intensified his use of the principle of path spaces. His entire apartment within this multiple dwelling (figure 229) is a staircase. It begins at the entrance on the ground floor, branches off into a guest room, then rises past the kitchen, spreading out to form a platform that affords enough space for a group of easy chairs; then it narrows again, and finally it leads up to a Victorian archway, which serves simultaneously as the center of a library and as the point de vue of the complex of stairway spaces (figure 230). The window groups are also staggered, ascending in a row as an accompaniment to the upward movement and leading to skylights. The central spatial motif is the staircase, which forms the axis of the apartment and which allows the adjoining spaces to branch off to its sides or to be hidden beneath it. The surprise arises from the decision — so typical of Moore — to let many things happen under one roof. This complexity of spatial chasms, this interpenetration of different spaces, and this interweaving of levels, platforms, and flights of stairs have not been equaled in the twentieth century; they conjure up the Baroque with their richly varied spatial composition and their handling of light. But Moore did not use a strict order of axiality and symmetry; instead he worked with a free ground plan. Thus, all at once he tied himself to the tradition of modernism and renounced all that had been realized by the International Style. Spatial movement and spatial chasms of this kind, the change between open penetration and definite closure combined with an almost baroque variety of light effects, lead into new realms that leave modernism behind; they are part of an architecture that becomes a festival setting in which the inhabitant moves as if he is the focus of a stage production of life itself in color and light.

Charles Moore (MLTW)

House of the architect

Los Angeles

1979



### Kresge College

Working with William Turnbull, Moore applied the concept of an ambulatory architecture to the layout of Kresge College, a residential college on the Santa Cruz campus of the University of California. Like Moore's one-family houses, this place proclaims its identity through motifs associated with security. In this case, the motifs are the village, the square, and the winding path — motifs with which people associate the idea of a social group small enough to be comprehensible.

Kresge College consists of student residences, faculty apartments, classrooms, a small library, a dining hall, a dance studio, kitchens, an administration building, and so on. One enters the "village" at the site's lowest point, and suddenly one finds oneself in a white core, like that of a coconut. The unassuming brown and yellow-ochre facades of the exterior blend with the colors of the ground and the trunks of the tall redwoods; their raw, unfinished surfaces seem to have been

Interior view of  
Moore's house in Los Angeles



abandoned to the forces of nature. But the moment one steps through the main portal, which looks like a big barn door, one encounters a radiant world of white facades accented with red and blue. The inside of the portal, which on the outside is unassuming and weatherbeaten, is decorated with a vigorous checked pattern of red, white, and blue. The sensation of being in a village square invites one to cast off the outside world. Indeed, this fantastic landscape exhibits quite explicitly the characteristics of a temporary stage set. It wants not to be serious, wants not to demonstrate noble honesty of construction or "clean" handling of materials; what it wants is to provide the stage and the coulisses for the sensuous enjoyment of a few semesters of student life.

The main street of the "village" is lined with dormitories. The impression of movement and of a continuous pace is intensified by the irrational pattern of the gallery supports — a, b, a, c, b, d, a, c, c, b, a, b, a — which is emphasized by the brightly colored walls of the galleries. Walking along past the white facades and the dark green fir trees, one sees the galleries turn from red to orange and finally to yellow.

The dorms are occasionally interrupted by "monuments of utility," which set strong accents and stress the stage character of the student village. The entrance to the laundry room has been turned into an impressive speaker's rostrum, the garbage shed is connected to a kiosk for notices and announcements, and the telephone booth is turned into a monstrous baldachin with giant ears. This contradicts the general concept of monumentality; the monument is robbed of its seriousness, and what is left is a humorous theatrical designation of the place. But some other utilitarian elements are given aesthetic and metaphorical content; for instance, the gutters of the "village square" shown in figure 231 are turned into the tributaries of a fountain.

**Kresge College** is the preeminent example of Moore's endeavors to rid architecture of the representational signs of grandeur and to deny the pretensions of monumentality. Like Robert Venturi, Moore is committed to liberating architecture from the symbolization of power and to creating distinctive forms not through representation but through the use of irony to deflate grandiosity. The result is something like a monumentality of the trivial, in tune with the atmosphere of Californian life — a cheerful, sun-drenched stage set of "dis-empowered" architecture that asserts no hierarchical claims and does not strive to transpose respect and eternity into stone. To many Europeans and to many Americans on the East Coast, it seems too unserious, too lightweight.

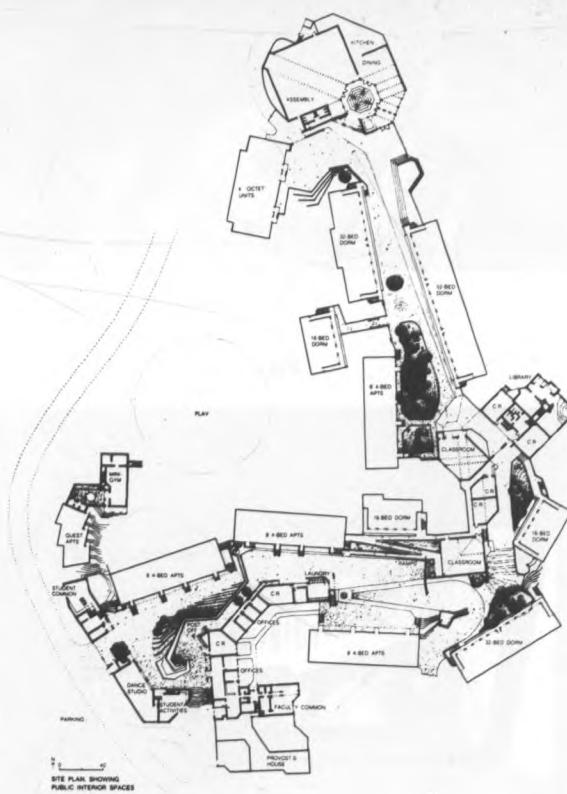
Moore has captured in a brief description the intention he associates with the expressive content of Kresge College: "This looks like a village, but it isn't really — there's no hierarchy of people, there's no mayor, there's nobody more important than anybody else. All the inhabitants are stu-

**Charles Moore (MLTW)**  
**Kresge College**  
**University of California, Santa Cruz**  
**1973**



232

## Ground plan of Kresge College





234



233



235

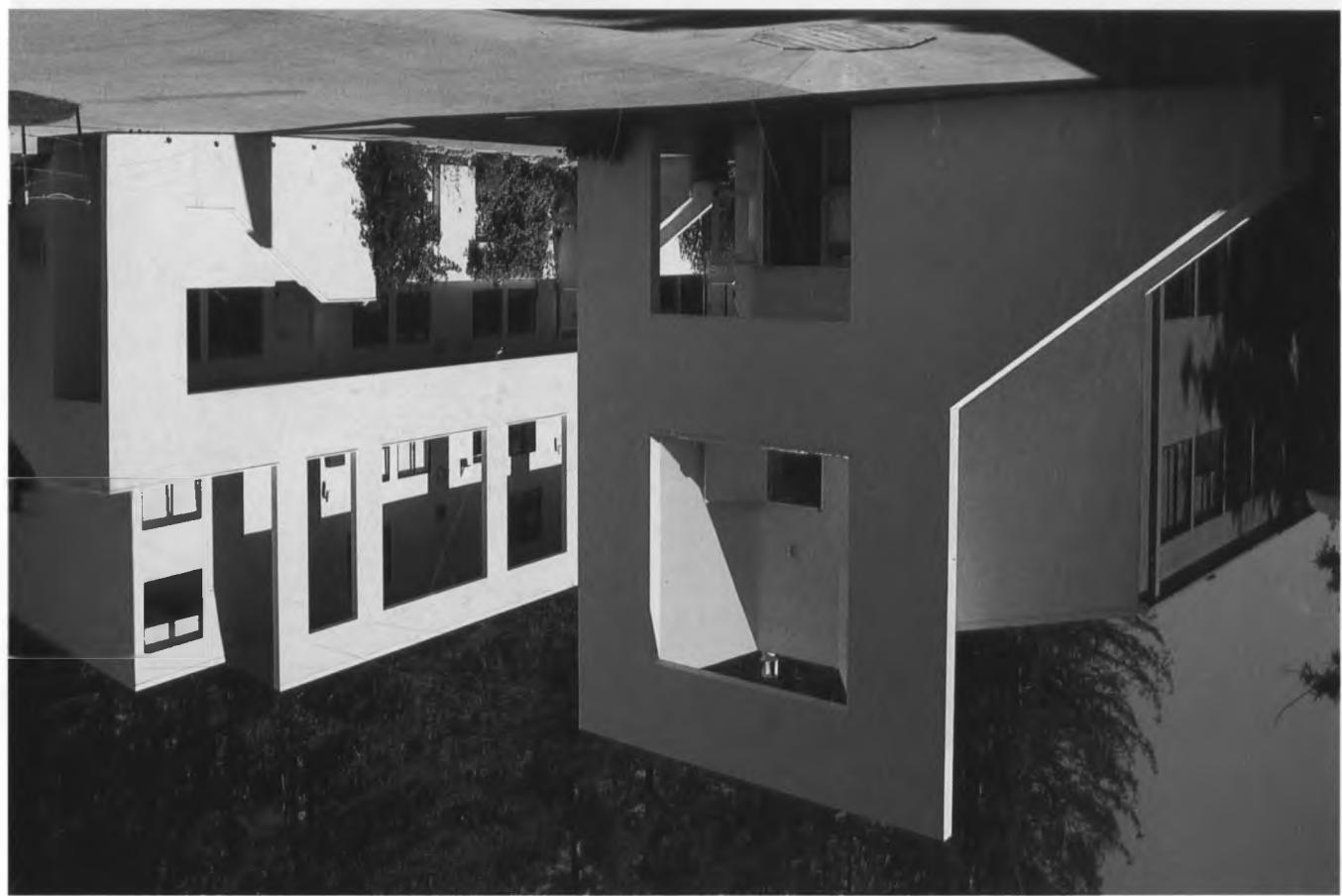


236

187

188

238



237

239



240

*locale  
• society  
• architect*

dents, here for four years together. Therefore it did not seem important to us to erect a row of institutional monuments; rather than that, we wanted to set up a row of trivial monuments in order to let a sense of the particular place arise, and also to give aid to orienting oneself along the street. . . ." <sup>148</sup> Nonetheless, at least one sign of hierarchy can be seen: the oversize window that sticks out from the provost's house, facing the outside of the complex (figure 239). Though this window seems to indicate that the house is a place of significance, it cannot be taken seriously as an element of hierarchy.

The uphill path through the complex culminates before the Student Union building (figure 240) in an octagonal courtyard with a fountain at its center.<sup>149</sup> The walls that enclose this courtyard (visible in figure 236) have huge square cutouts that frame views of the tall spruces and the sky beyond. Clearly this is the high point of the "village," the climax of the visual experience, the "center of the world." Yet even this "monument" is not a sacred precinct; it is only a thin stage set with no purpose other than to please the eye.

Kresge College shatters the doctrines of a moralizing architectural theory and proclaims clearly that the architect's work, "the making of places," should have as an essential goal the building of coulisses and facades, the erecting of symbols and signs. With a very small financial outlay, Moore produced an environment for student life rather than the customary display of stability, solidity, and purity.

Time and again, Moore was asked to create an environment that would heighten the quality of life without spending much. With "superficialities," the "magic of the stage," playfully daring "flights of the imagination," and improvisation, he brought excitement even to potentially desolate housing projects (figure 241). In short, Moore always chose to create illusionistic fictions whose contents were the ironization of the solemn and the solemnization of the trivial. This revaluation was accompanied by the rediscovery of primal typological forms and the use of such forms to impart to the individual a sense of identity and protection. The narrative range of Kresge College extends from the trivial monumentality of the telephone booth with giant ears all the way to the octagonal courtyard's sense of permanence and embrace.

With Kresge College, Moore managed to create an entire complex — and one with considerable narrative force — without using a single historical form, thus demonstrating that the fictional is not dependent on the mediating potential of historical forms. Kresge College is the very paradigm of white modernism and of a lightness nearly approaching the loss of substance; its white walls, without socles and without cornices, have the immateriality of floating surfaces. In this respect it is not very different from Gropius's Harvard Graduate Center; however, that building (figure 242) lacks any

**Charles Moore (MLTW)**

**Whitman Village**

**Huntington, New York**

**1974**



**Walter Gropius and TAC**

**Graduate Center**

**Harvard University**

**Cambridge, Massachusetts**

**1949**

narrative quality. Gropius's buildings are radiantly white, light to the point of floating, and mute. Moore's are radiantly white, floating, light — and eloquent. One can see in Moore's work an attempt to carry on modernism but to give modern architecture a more comprehensive language — to humanize it through the use of fiction — rather than to go on observing the dictates of modernist abstraction and of the reduction of content to geometry.

Moore's later recourse to historicizing elements, like Venturi's, meant an enrichment of architecture's language and its spectrum of communication, not a fundamental reorientation in the sense of a renewed awareness of style. The fountain of Moore's Piazza d'Italia in New Orleans derives its narrative substance predominantly from historical allusions, but also from the topographical reference to Italy and the cultural reference to the significance of water. The use of historicizing forms has not led Moore away from his basic striving to create places and to present them as fictive human environments; Kresge College and the Piazza d'Italia contain as much fictional material as Moore's house at Orinda or Venturi's house for his mother.

#### AMERICAN POSTMODERNISM

Many architects took up Venturi's and Moore's new approaches to form and content. Some of these followers are beginning to water down the original impulses through excessive imitation; others are developing them further.

##### Robert Stern

Venturi's most faithful disciple is the New York architect Robert Stern, who was largely responsible for the rapid dissemination and the intense discussion of Venturi's ideas. Stern took part, with Charles Jencks, in the propagation of the concept of Postmodernism, and his opposition to the New York Modernists was highly articulate.

During the 1960s and the 1970s, the New York scene was dominated by a group of architects who took the early moderns (especially the young Le Corbusier) as their models and Colin Rowe as their mentor — the New York Five — and by two critics who were part of their larger circle, Kenneth Frampton and Ada Louise Huxtable. To these people, it seemed audacious indeed when Stern left Yale to set up in New York, the city of the steel-and-glass skyscraper, an office dedicated to the proposition that architecture could drink from other wells than the International Style.

There was little for Stern to do but concentrate on designing country houses and the occasional interior for a home or an exhibition space. (An exception to this was a small New York townhouse, built in 1974–75 and reminiscent in its

details of its 1930s counterparts.) Stern took advantage of this period of house commissions to begin to distance himself from Venturi. He was even influenced by the New York Five's use of "Le Corbusier white," and he began to mix modernistic and Art Deco elements. Stern was enough of a pluralist that he did not hesitate to borrow ideas from his opponents.

Stern was also becoming more and more involved in the renovation and expansion of large nineteenth-century villas, and in conjunction with these commissions it was natural for him to make use of the existing historical vocabulary. In some of these renovations, he began to avoid emphasizing the difference between the old and the new portion.

Stern's earlier body of work is the prime example of a kind of architecture that, almost in the sense intended by Venturi, assimilated historicizing elements to the present, ultimately taking history in a literal way and becoming almost identical with it. Stern, like Allan Greenberg, became a historicist — something that Venturi and Moore largely avoided. Whereas Venturi and Moore remained in the gravitational field of historical architecture, using alienation and ironic tension to differentiate their works from the historical models, Stern renounced this kind of distancing. His later one-family houses tended toward a highly cultivated, stylized architecture that, as it identified itself more and more with its historical prototypes, tended to lose its fictional character.

Stern found himself again and again in the difficult role of belonging to a second generation, longing for identity with Venturi's work while striving to distance himself from it.

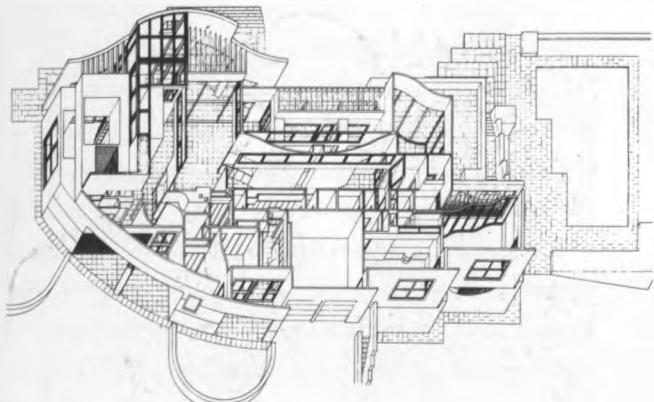
Soon after Venturi's Brant house was built, Stern began to fashion a similar but more ambitious design (figure 243). What Venturi had accomplished with the utmost economy became baroque and gesticulating in Stern's hands. Along with the Venturian qualities of complexity and contradiction, Stern's house took on aspects of "explicit," "heroic," over-demonstrative, ostentatious architecture — which Venturi had wanted to avoid at all costs. An architecture meant to counter the merely "interesting" was in danger of becoming itself "interesting" in the extreme. On the other hand, Stern proved that Venturi's accomplishments were transferable, and his attempt to carry Venturi's design one step further confirmed the strength of the original.

Despite his fanfare about seeking an identity of his own, it was mainly left to him to overcome the ongoing confrontation and to make the New York scene more pluralistic. His position might have been more precarious had it not been for the success of a certain string of buildings — including the Lang house, in Washington, Connecticut — that won him a secure place in the history of postmodern architecture.

In its ground plan, the Lang house (figure 244) shows a dialectic between the tautly stretched front facade and the complex movement of the rearward spaces. The simple white

**243**

**Robert Stern**  
**House in Westchester County, New York**  
**1974–1976**



**244**

**Robert Stern**  
**Lang House**  
**Washington, Connecticut**  
**1973–74**



**245**

**Robert Stern**  
**Point West Place office building**  
**Framingham, Massachusetts**  
**1983–84**



moulding on the yellow plane of the facade (derived from Venturi's North Penn Visiting Nurses' Association building) advanced a new importance for historical motifs. This enlivening detail has since been copied in many different interpretations.

The commission for Point West Place (figure 245) — Stern's first for a large building — raised the question: To what extent would Stern comport himself as a historicist when designing a building to which the typology of the American country house was not applicable? What Stern did was to set up a large, smooth block with "modern" bands of windows and then throw into it a granite brooch quoted from Ledoux. Though the brooch is far too modest, Stern was clearly trying to show that, without great expense, a container-style building could be given a face.

#### SITE

##### (“Sculpture in the Environment”)

Much more independent than Robert Stern's works, the works of the New York group SITE are guided by Venturi's concept of a building as a shed with a sign-bearing facade.

SITE was fortunate in receiving at once several commissions from the Best supermarket chain and in being allowed to apply a great variety of facades to the huge, box-like sheds of Best's stores. The first (by James Wines, the head of the group) was a rather innocuous brick facade that seemed to peel away like paper from the wall underneath (figure 246) in a manner reminiscent of Venturi's Dixwell Fire Station (figure 195).

SITE became famous through its next two projects, Best supermarkets in Houston and Sacramento. The Houston facade (figure 247) appears to be crumbling into a ruin. The fiction of decay is played off against the perfectly intact Best sign in a humorous counterattack against the neutral, meaningless, complacent suburban environment. The Sacramento store (figures 248–250) has an irregular wedge missing from one corner, as if the masonry had crumbled away.

At first, the theme of SITE's "de-architecturization" was architecture itself. Earlier on, the group had developed some proposals in which surprising reinterpretations of the architectonic "substance" were attempted. In one of these, a brick building started to change at its socle into a different state of aggregation — it seemed to melt away into large bubbles and ripples. In another (figure 251), the wall of an elevator shaft seemed to dissolve and slide down, pushing large boulders into a courtyard. What was asserted here was the exact opposite of the customary ideas of architectural statics: Nothing is solid; nothing is secure; nothing is unchanging. The contents of these architectural fictions and of the Best facades were directed against the general expectation of being able to use perfection as a promotional image. SITE's

246

#### SITE

*Peeling Project*

Best supermarket

Richmond, Virginia

1972



247

#### SITE

*Indeterminate Facade Showroom*

Best supermarket

Houston

1974

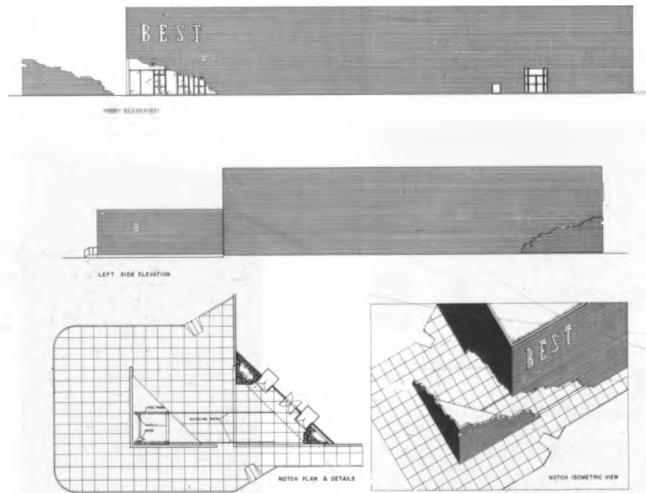
## SITE

*Notch Showroom*

Best supermarket

Sacramento

1977



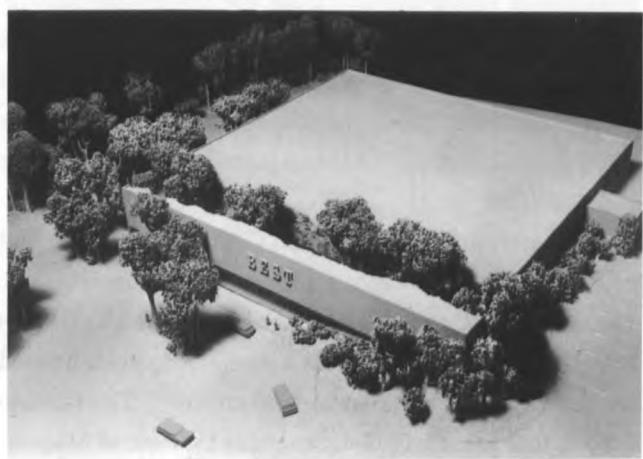
**SITE**  
*Schoolyard (project)*  
 1973



**SITE**  
*Parking Lot Showroom (project)*  
 1976



**SITE**  
*Forest Building (project)*  
 1980



Kanya  
 Kenzo  
 Walker

designs contradicted the established faith in perfection and drew their effect from the opposite: architectonic disaster. Later SITE projects extended the themes of deterioration and disaster from the building to the environment. "Parking Lot Showroom" (figure 252) proposed that a supermarket be covered in rippling waves of asphalt rising from its parking lot, and "Forest Building" (figure 253) had trees breaking up the box of another supermarket.

SITE's disaster architecture met the public's need for relief from the monotony and the air of total harmlessness of the modern supermarket. Thus, it can be said to have contained an element of criticism against the bogus perfection of perfect smoothness.

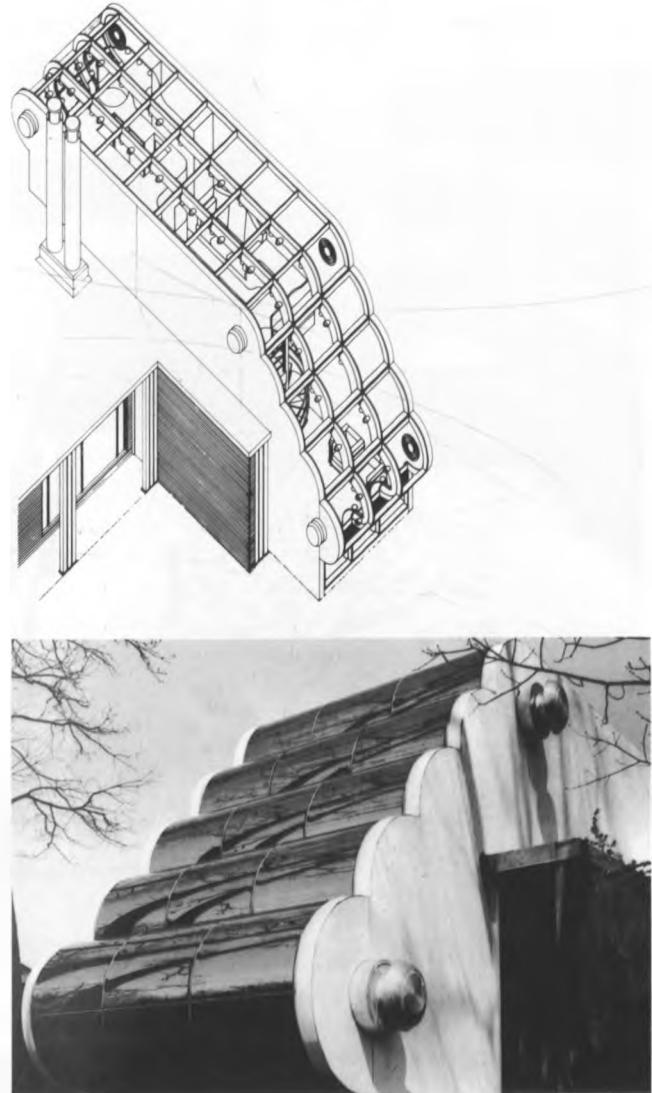
#### Stanley Tigerman and the Chicago School

SITE has proved that a building can become a medium of illusionistic representation. However, it remains controversial what kind of content shall be represented. Stanley Tigerman went in a different direction than SITE when, during the 1970s, he started playing with inflated Pop forms derived from the shapes of consumer goods. Tigerman's addition to the house of the architect George Fred Keck — an oversize Pop object that appears to have swallowed up the house — recalls Venturi's use of the term *duck*. The glass roof of Tigerman's addition (figure 254) looks like a series of rollers that can be turned by using the ventilators on the sides as knobs. Tigerman's earlier "Hot Dog House" (figure 255) was fictional only in its sausage-shaped floor plan.

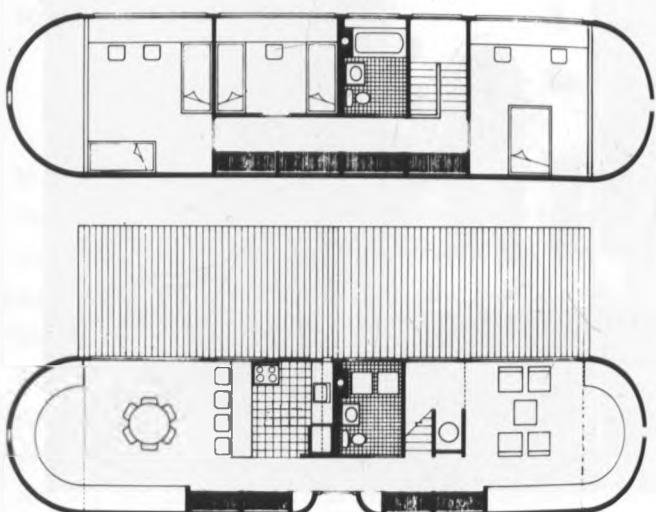
However, in 1979 Tigerman abruptly changed his frame of reference. With the Villa Proeh (figure 256) he became one of the first postmodernists to make literal references to historical architecture. He expressly cited the circular courtyard and colonnade of Raphael's Villa Madama, and he also used Renaissance gables and windows. But the ground plan resembles that of the "Hot Dog House," and the facades have the streamlined form of Neo-Modernism (which had itself become historical). Thus, the Classicism of the Renaissance and the streamlining of Modernism, were tacitly joined in a peaceable liaison.

In the early spring of 1978, the Graham Foundation had held a competition in Chicago for the design of town houses. The majority of the nineteen entries (of which Thomas Beeby's, shown in figure 257, is a good example) abandoned the great Chicago tradition of Modernism.<sup>150</sup> The Chicago School, that seemingly unconquerable bulwark of Modernism, had begun to undergo a conversion; Tigerman later depicted the decline of Mies's authority in a collage titled "The Sinking of the Titanic," which showed one of the Master's IIT buildings sinking in strangely calm and smooth seas, with summer clouds overhead.<sup>151</sup>

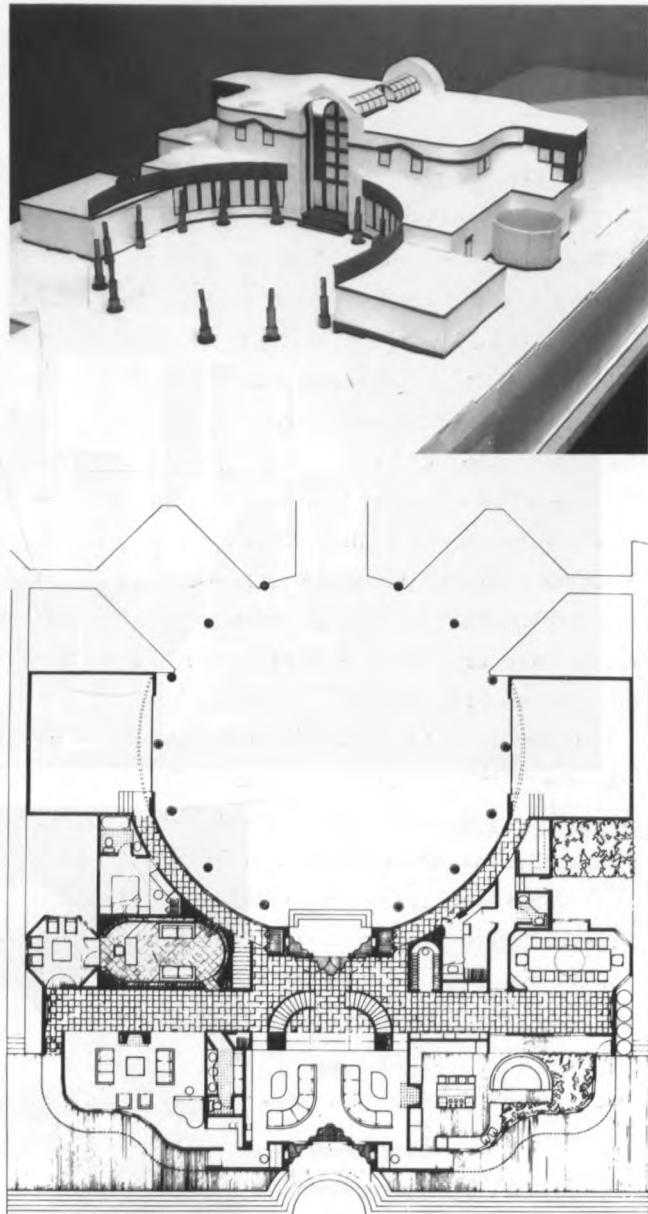
Stanley Tigerman  
*Tigerman Takes a Bite Out of Keck*  
(addition to Keck house)  
Highland Park, Illinois  
1977–1979



**Stanley Tigerman**  
**Floor plans for**  
**Hot Dog House**  
(1972–1974)



**Stanley Tigerman**  
**Villa Proeh**  
**Highland Park, Illinois**  
1979–1981  
(model and ground plan)



Thomas Beeby  
Project for "Townhouses" competition  
of Graham Foundation  
(Chicago, 1978)



Stanley Tigerman  
*The Sinking of the Titanic*  
(collage)  
1981

It is significant that those architects whose essential concern above and beyond the functionality of architecture is to communicate narrative contents use other media for that purpose. Tigerman, for one, has produced highly original caricatures and drawings, in addition to his collages. It is part of the essence of that kind of architecture, and not a casual by-product or an aesthetic extravagance, that Thomas Beeby uses architectural drawings to picture contents that go beyond the boundaries of architectural representation. Robert Venturi's plea for a multimedia architecture remains highly pertinent as long as architecture has not been led out of the ghetto of geometric abstractness and has not realized its communicative capacity to a higher degree. The architectural drawing, the collage, and the architectural model are additional genres which the architects of postmodernism use to try out forms and to give shape to the fictive contents of architecture in ways that go beyond the amplitude of building.

**Thomas Gordon Smith and  
Historical Architecture**

In 1980, the then little-known California architect Thomas Gordon Smith exhibited at the Venice Biennale a model of an oratory apparently derived from the baroque, and large aquarelles of a baroque church interior that seemed to belong to seventeenth-century Rome (figure 259). Despite its baroque elements, Smith's strange, asymmetrical church presupposed the insights of modern design. The Californian, impressed by the baroque architecture of Rome, had made the startling decision to adopt it as the point of reference for his own constructions.

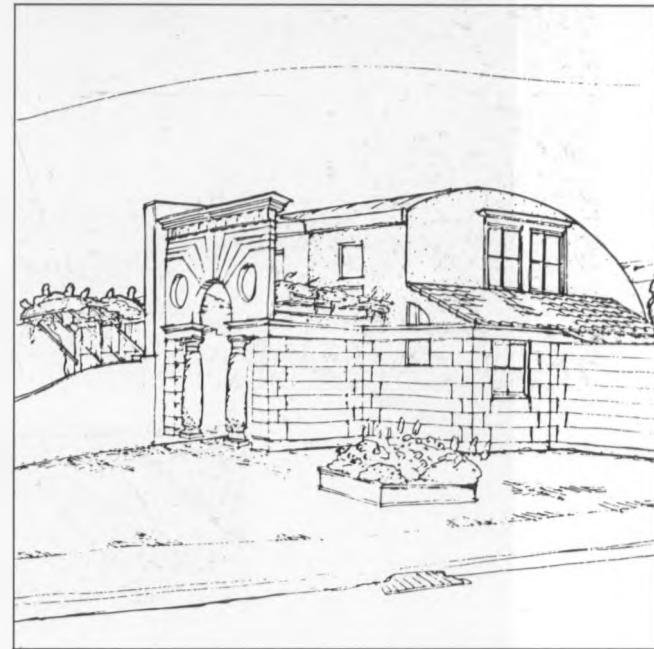
Earlier than Tigerman and Beeby, Smith had taken over the classical form vocabulary with surprising literalness and brought it into new, unusual contexts. Smith's originality in transmuting his Italian studies was already apparent in sketches he made in 1977. In that year (about a year after Moore's proposal for the Piazza d'Italia in New Orleans, which had not yet been publicized) Smith proposed a house in which rusticated walls and a columned entrance borrowed from the stock of Renaissance models were to be combined with a prefabricated Quonset-type sheet-metal shed (figure 260). Since then, Smith has come up with many such jarring combinations of exactly copied classical details and forms belonging to the present — figure 261 is an incisive example. The surprising effect arises from the contrast between classical and modern forms and from the irreverence of the combination. This was how the historical first became contemporary once again.

Smith's first two executed buildings were one-family houses built next to each other in Livermore, California (figures 262, 263). The garages combine sheet-metal doors

**Thomas Gordon Smith**

**Project for oratorium**

**1978**



**260**

**Thomas Gordon Smith**

**Paulownia house**

**(proposal)**

**1977**



**262**

**Thomas Gordon Smith**

**Tuscan House**

**Livermore, California**

**1979**



**263**

**Thomas Gordon Smith**

**Laurentian House**

**Livermore, California**

**1979**

**201**

Courtyard of  
Tuscan House



with columns — one Tuscan, one a raw tree trunk. The houses themselves are amply provided with columns; the Tuscan House has bundles of green columns, and the Laurentian House has a triple colonnade whose cornice might have been taken from a Roman arch of triumph. The facades are of prosaic plaster, and the windows are inexpensive mass-produced ones; however, the yellow garage gable works as a tympanum and the courtyard as a stage to lend the whole a higher sense and to transform it into an ironic fiction of the union of classic forms and modern functional limitations.

The Tuscan House's courtyard, with its cutouts, recalls Charles Moore's "stage sets." Louis Kahn originated the idea when he placed free-standing walls with round openings in front of the facades of the parliament building in Dacca. (Kahn's walls served the additional function of limiting the amount of light falling on the buildings.) Moore developed the thought further, making free-standing coulisses out of ocular walls which were still bound to the construction. As with the Student Union of Kresge College, the cutouts in the courtyard of the Tuscan House work like frames for the landscape. "Stage walls" have become a characteristic of California architecture. Ultimately, the wall of columns in Moore's Piazza d'Italia is a free-standing dummy wall as well. These pure facades — provocative and useless — exist solely for the sake of form and statement. The concentration of columns in the "stage" area of Smith's Tuscan House is not arbitrary; here the wall carries a minimal burden, which hardly admits the impression of standing and supporting, while the forms have been turned into a weightless lattice of columns and frames. Form is everything, function nothing.

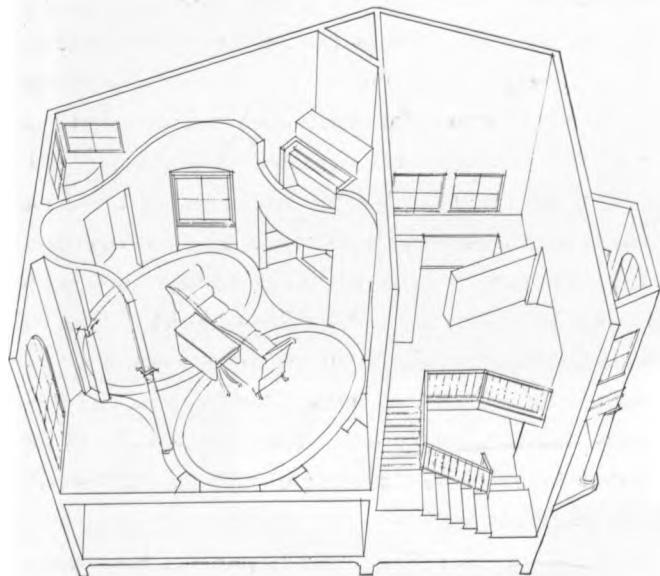
In the design of the Richmond Hill House, which he built for himself, Smith again took up the baroque model. The very simple rectangular structure contains a complex spatial system (figure 266) that, although in some ways reminiscent of Robert Venturi's floor plans, suggests baroque room forms more than anything else. A sofa stands in the middle of the space like a memorial, tying the two parts of the room together. Smith furnished this baroque room with pseudo-Pompeian wall paintings (figure 267). Some Europeans are quick to condemn the mixing of these elements with standard aluminum windows; however, this contradiction belongs to the basic cultural stock of American architecture. That which Europeans are all too quick to condemn as the parvenu behavior of people who are insecure in their tastes becomes here (as, incidentally, it already had in the work of Bernhard Maybeck, one of the most significant of American architects ca. 1900) a consciously applied, innovative method through which surprisingly fresh and imaginative interiors are created.

The tendency to free architecture from its modernistic purity and unite it once again with the richness of pictures can be

Colonnade of  
Laurentian House



**Thomas Gordon Smith**  
**Floor plan (in perspective)**  
**Richmond Hill House**  
**Richmond, California**  
**1981–82**



**Thomas Gordon Smith**  
**Living-room frescos**  
**Richmond Hill House**



observed in all of Smith's work. Similar tendencies can be observed in the reintroduction of sculpture in the exterior facades of Michael Graves's Public Service Building in Portland, Oregon, and in Rob Krier's building on the Rittenstrasse in Berlin.

When Smith presented Roman-Pompeian styles of architectural decoration in his house, and when he used the historical forms to depict the history of petroleum (the house stands right across from a huge oil tank), he took a significant step in the direction of a semantic rendering of architecture. American architects take stylistic and narrative liberties of this sort much more freely than Europeans, and this accounts in part for the astounding richness of contemporary American architecture. The introduction of a baroque spatial arrangement into the strict rectangular floor plan of the Richmond Hill House is another risky experiment. Even in his first projects — for example, the Ionic House (figure 268) — Smith had experimented with the possibilities of a baroque floor plan. The facade of the Richmond Hill House (figure 269) also appropriates baroque motifs. The combination of small and large proportions and the introduction of a superior element (the large Roman arch window in the center) have parallels in Francesco Borromini's buildings, but profane functional details from the present (the banal cross-hatch windows on the oblique sides of the balcony) immediately relativize the historical reference.

On close inspection it turns out that Smith's buildings, so strongly marked by baroque historicism, possess many characteristics that have been mediated through the modern. The extremely complex floor plan of the Long house (figure 270), despite its isolated baroque quotations, is a freely arranged spatial system. Its irregularities contradict the baroque idea of symmetry; it is imaginable only after the floor-plan innovations of the early modern period. Even if it is not a conscious reference to the floor plan by Hugo Häring shown in figure 271, the comparison demonstrates how strongly it is influenced by the achievements of the early modernists.

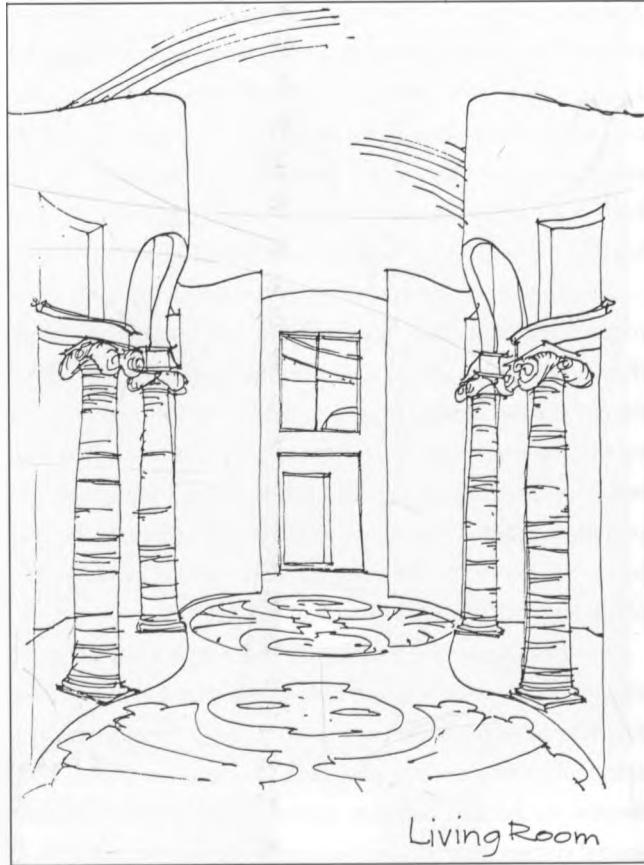
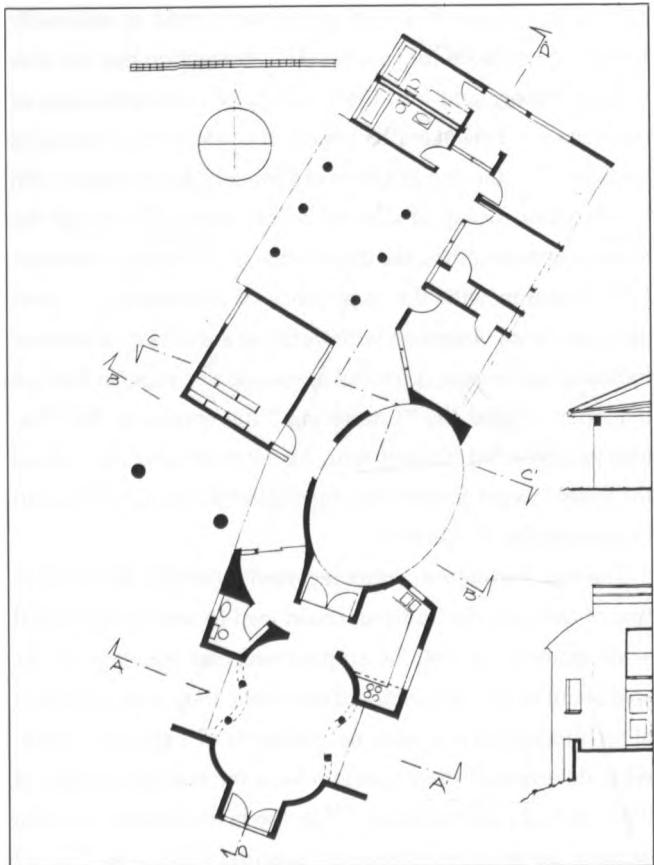
Smith has pointed to Paolo Portoghesi as his teacher. Portoghesi's first buildings, and above all his Casa Baldi (figure 272), explored anew the potential of the baroque and borrowed the concave and convex curves of Borromini's walls.<sup>152</sup> It was certainly an unusual undertaking on Portoghesi's part to develop a building based on a free modern ground plan (figure 273) along baroque lines and to set all the walls in undulating motion. However, the brick vaulting in several of the rooms — which goes back to regional building techniques — turns the whole interior into a gently flowing sequence of spaces that demonstrates the reestablishment of a tradition. At first glance this ground plan seems to show signs of the *stil novo* (the Italian style of the kidney-shaped-table era), but in fact it is a blending of the style of the first postwar

decade and the baroque tradition of Rome. Portoghesi is to be credited with a valid attempt to place what had been a merely playful modernist manipulation of sweeping linear curves in a cultural context, and to provide the abstract forms with a historical and hence meaningful referential background. However, he ran into criticism when he tried in subsequent designs (such as that shown in figure 274) to mold the formal idiom derived from the baroque into a geometric doctrine that was supposed to furnish his strange buildings — designed with a veritable mania for segmental arches — with a rationalist explanation. Portoghesi had turned an originally historical reference into a geometric abstraction that led him outside history and into the triviality of contentless formal experiments. However, the largely allusional fictive factor of Casa Baldi — the combination of a modern ground plan with the dynamic sweep of a baroque wall organization and the attempt at reconciling the experience of the Roman architectural tradition with the experience of modernism — soon gave way to an obsession with building a whole by a series of formal progressions. A fruitful approach was superseded by a tendency toward the “interesting,” the eccentric. But Portoghesi corrected himself with his later designs and joined the trend toward historicism; his project for the Citta Vallo di Diano testifies to this fact.

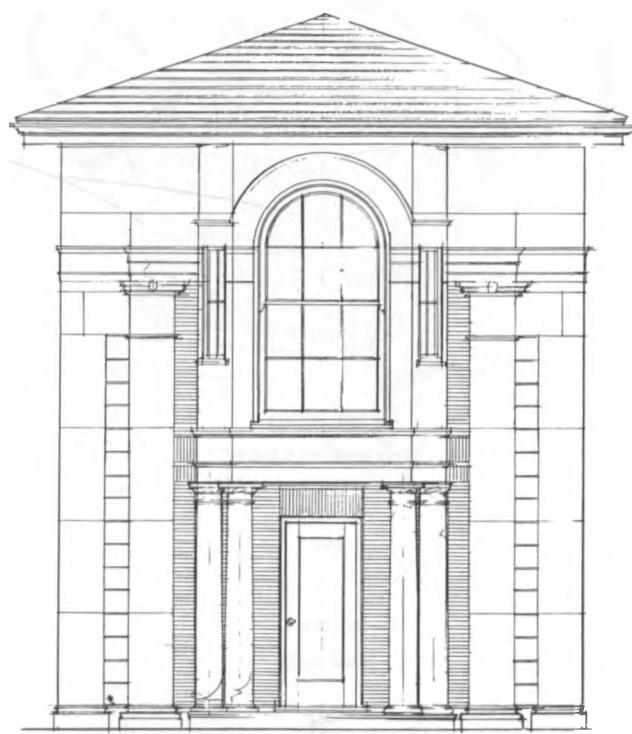
Through Portoghesi, Smith received proof that the resumption of the baroque tradition could lead to new architectural achievements. In 1983 he emphasized that the elements he was using were “no historical elements; they were elements of architecture. They were not elements of a specific epoch; what determined their special character was the system of their mutual interrelations.”<sup>153</sup> In the historical forms of the baroque lay an inherent general meaning which was distinct from its historical tinge. In contrast with modernism, which was far more amenable to mere serial arrangements and the mere addition of forms, what was decisive for the baroque was a tension-filled relationship (between, for example, two windows on the opposite ends of a facade), with the intermediate forms bypassed.

Smith began to use the baroque compositional manner without letting himself be limited by its historical aspects as a style. At the same time, on the level of decoration he continued to apply the historical forms of classicism, and pitted them against utilitarian contemporary forms. Smith expressed the wish that Portoghesi had not “abstracted” his baroque models so much.<sup>154</sup> In fact, since Casa Baldi, Portoghesi had also been using abstract individual forms more and more. He believed that in this way he would succeed in modernizing themes derived from history: the more abstract, the more modern! Casa Baldi's reminiscences of classical cornices, profiles, and corbels were abstracted so much that they forfeited their designatory power; they could neither

Thomas Gordon Smith  
Ground plan and living room of  
Ionic House (project)  
1976



**Thomas Gordon Smith  
Facade of  
Richmond Hill House**

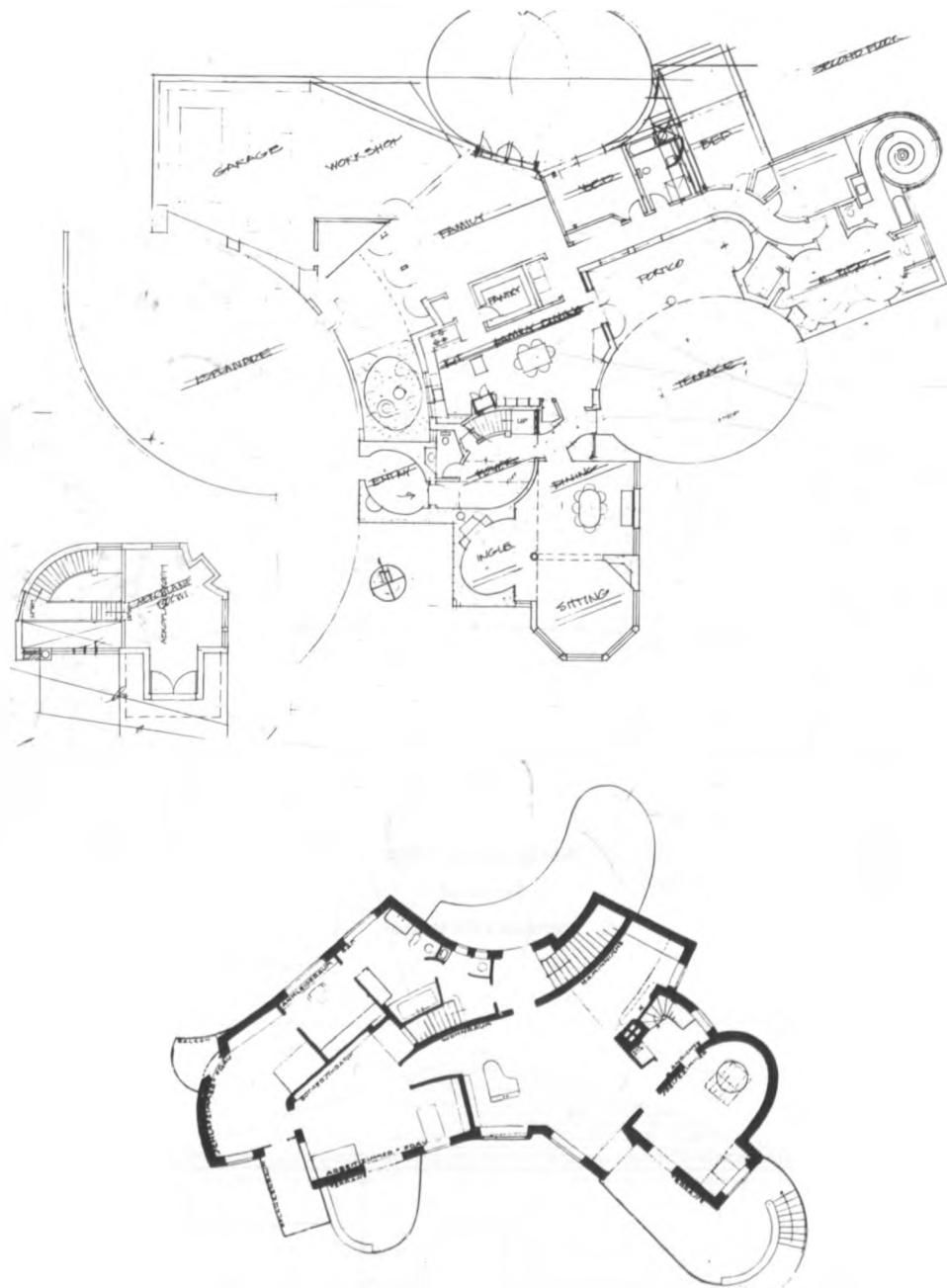


Thomas Gordon Smith

Long House

Carson City, Nevada

1980



Hugo Häring

Floor plan for a house

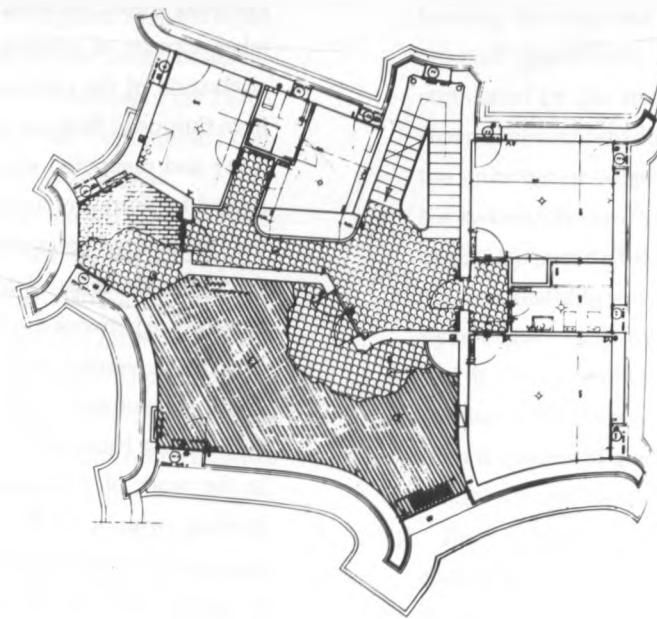
1922–23

**Paolo Portoghesi**

**Casa Baldi**

**Rome**

**1959–1962**



**Ground plan of**

**Casa Baldi**

**Paolo Portoghesi**  
**Model of**  
**Chiesa della Sacra Famiglia**  
**(1960–1973)**



provide a sharp contrast against modernism nor claim modernity for themselves. When postwar architectural eclecticism failed to deliver on its promise that a middle course between historical authenticity and modern abstraction would bring simultaneous appreciation of both history and modernism, the postmodern architects began to look for more uncompromising ways to contrast the reclaimed authenticity of history with modernism. They intended, by advertising the break between these two phenomena, to establish a relationship between them — to connect the signifying vocabulary of historical architecture with the functionalized forms of contemporary architecture. Smith's juxtaposition of palmettes and drainpipes in the Tuscan House (figure 261) is a striking example.

#### RATIONALISM

Rationalism — the contemporary architectural trend initiated by Aldo Rossi and Oswald Mathias Ungers — has proved to be the most successful response to functionalism in Europe, where the escape from modernist dogma has taken a different course than in the United States. Although Europeans and Americans have adopted each other's strategies, and although American architecture has many imitators in Europe and European Rationalism is responded to in the United States, the two camps' points of departure are fundamentally different.

The main features that have recently been seen in American architecture — the formal and thematic references to the everyday world, the absorption of Pop Art, the realism which takes account of existing elements, and the increasing relativization of the representational forms — are all missing from European Rationalism. Even though alienation through irony and mannerist extremes are among the methods employed by European architects, they show little of the wit or the lighthearted polyvalence with which Americans endow the given elements of historical architecture. The mutual antagonism between the Europeans Rossi and Ungers and the Americans Venturi and Moore has been overemphasized. There are elements in the work of individual European architects (e.g. Hans Hollein) that can be compared to elements in the work of Americans, and the recent work of James Sterling (who, anyhow, occupies the special position of a mediator between the Americans and the Europeans) exhibits similar uses of the historical vocabulary. Yet, the architects of European Rationalism have not developed a sensibility receptive to all the fictional material that found its way into architecture as a result of Pop culture. On the contrary, through a sharp counterattack on the functionalistic banalization of structure and the aesthetic valorization of everyday experience, they made an attempt to renew the

significance of historical typology (an attempt that many critics erroneously perceived as necessarily connected with the totalitarian neoclassicism favored by the dictators of the past).

In a counterattack on means-ends rationalism, Ungers insisted on “the right of architecture to an autonomous language of its own”<sup>155</sup> — an insistence that also served to stress that architecture’s aesthetic autonomy had to be brought to bear again on the outcome of design, and consciously. Rossi sought the fictional contents of architecture in the recovery of the archetypal in building forms. He defined the forms of his buildings by turning back to the primordial ideas of what a house can be. The associations Rossi arrived at led to “primary structures” that — much like Ungers’s buildings — gave the impression of an almost metaphysical profundity; viewed superficially they could easily be mistaken as equivalent to classical representational architecture, as coinciding with its colonnades, its symmetries, and its axiality.

But what does Rossi’s concept of Rationalism mean?

The Fifteenth Milan Triennale, in 1973, included an architecture section set up by Rossi and called “Architettura Razionale.” The exhibition catalog contained an introduction by Rossi and a series of texts selected to support Rossi’s proposition: a rather long 1958 essay by his teacher Ernesto Nathan Rogers (whose Torre Velasca had ceased to be controversial), a text by the Swiss architect Hans Schmidt (undated), and writings by Moisei Ginzburg (1926), Adolf Loos (1910 and 1912), and Jacobus Johannes Peter Oud (1927). But Rossi accorded first place to an excerpt from Adolf Behne’s book *Der moderne Zweckbau* [The Functional Modern Building]. This incunabulum of the architectural theory of modernism, one of the most lucid theoretical treatises of the 1920s, contains the following anticipation of the contemporary controversy between functionalism and Rationalism:

The rationalist is not more indifferent toward the purpose of a building than is the functionalist; he does not take the side of the baroque genius contemptuously disregarding that purpose, but seeks to escape the tyranny of a purpose that has become preponderant. While the functionalist attempts the greatest possible adaptation to a highly specific purpose, the rationalist produces the best possible solution applicable to a great number of cases. Whereas the first seeks the solution best fitted to a particular case — something unique — the latter seeks the solution most appropriate for general use — a norm. The former is selflessly concerned with adaptation, relation, a minimum of form, and an approximation, while the latter heeds also the promptings of self-will, self-awareness, play, form.<sup>156</sup>

In these distinctions one recognizes Aldo Rossi’s own intentions. Reaching back to the beginnings of modernism, he admits the basic validity of the architecture of the Modern

Movement; but as a Rationalist he demands that the one-sidedness of functionalism be transcended.

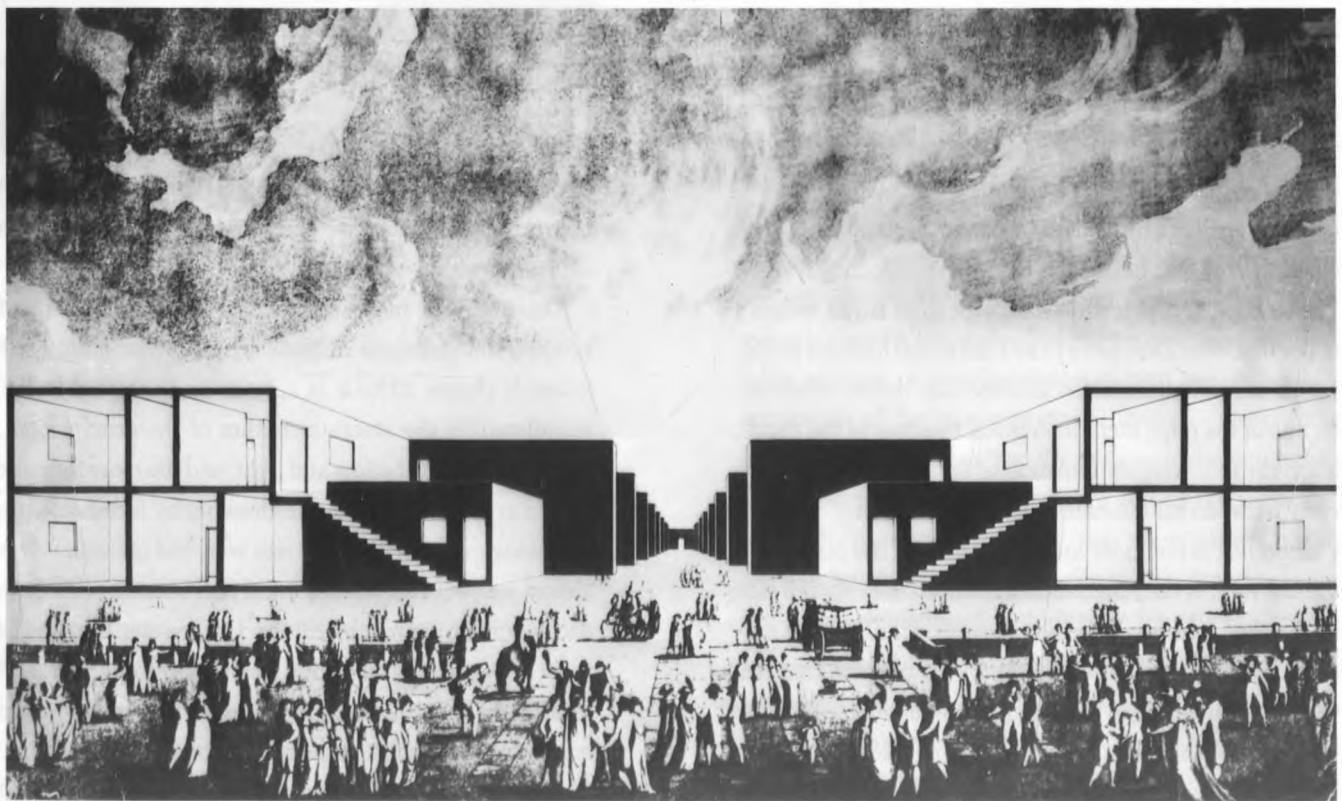
Rossi did not wish to renounce the classical modernism of the 1920s or to imply that the revival of historical forms would create a theatrical realm for human activity; rather, he wanted to bring about a loosening of the strictures imposed by functionalism by encouraging a reexamination of the original intentions of classical modernism. The programmatic definition of Rationalism seemed to guarantee this for him. In a way, Rossi wanted to get back to modernism — all the way back to its origins. Yet his own development took him farther and farther away from the modernist tradition and into a new territory unknown to modernism.

In the second section of his Triennale treatise, “Rationalism and the New Architecture,” Rossi proposed some examples for an architecture of rationalism. It is not surprising that individual projects of the New York Five were included<sup>157</sup>; they too had turned back to classical modernism (on the recommendation of Colin Rowe), and they had found inspiration in Le Corbusier’s work. Something of a historicism of modernism was emerging; however, as long as modernism was thought of as an unbroken continuum, it was hardly permissible to talk of a “neo-modernism.” It seemed that with only a bit of correction the unfinished and tarnished but still valid “Project of Modernism” could be resumed; that the standards that had determined its original priorities and formal principles could be used to set it back on its proper course.

Also included in Rossi’s treatise was a 1927 design for a housing development in Basel by the Swiss architect Hans Schmidt (figure 275). It is easy to imagine that Rossi was stimulated by the staccato rhythm of the arrangement, the sharp contrast of shadow and light, and the close formation of the units (emphasized in the drawing by foreshortening). If the awkwardly drawn little trees were not present, one might almost suspect that Rossi’s hand had been at work here. To derive something worthwhile and impressive from the banality of boxes — this was what Rossi was searching for. As he saw it, the correction of modernism was anchored in the admission that functionalism was not the last word but that from it a metaphysical drama could be made to spring. Simplicity was not devoid of expression!

Responding to an assignment at the Milan School of Architecture, Rossi’s students Rosaldo Bonicalzi and Gianni Braghieri submitted a design, supervised by Giorgio Grassi, that took its inspiration from Hans Schmidt and transformed Schmidt’s impulses into a “pittura metafisica” (figure 276). Here, in contrast with Schmidt’s drawing, the fronts are white and the sides are black. The foreshortening has been increased, and thus the whole rendering is more dramatic. In a departure from Schmidt in the direction of Rationalism, sym-

**Hans Schmidt**  
**Housing project**  
**Basel**  
**1927**



**Gianni Braghieri and Rosaldo Bonicalzi**  
**Housing development**  
**Pavia (project)**  
**1970**

metry is introduced to the complex's layout by the two grand staircases in the foreground, which seem to be intended for solemn processions. The presentation provides a historical retinue from a sketchbook of Sandro Botticelli and historicizes the whole of perspective construction between the poles of the Renaissance and De Chirico. A decidedly fictional intention was at work here. The suggestion was that looking back to the fathers of classical modernism was actually a way of looking into the future. Aldo Rossi had been anticipating this in his work since about 1965. The "return to the fathers" and the turn away from the functionalist banality of the present turned more and more into an exodus from the conventions of classical modernism as well. What Rossi had sought under the concept of Rationalism and found in Behne's work was a purified functionalism that became, increasingly, an independent new style.

#### OSWALD MATHIAS UNGERS

##### Morphology and Manifoldness

Arata Isozaki, an interested but aloof observer, characterized the roles of Oswald Mathias Ungers and Aldo Rossi in the emergence of Rationalism as follows:

O. M. Uengers was the first to deliberately propound the way of "rationalism." What had been consistently maintained in his plans since the middle of the 1960s was to set up all the architectural structures on an urban scale as complexes of a fundamental architectural style. Because of the lucidity of this approach, he attracted and influenced a great many followers, but by the 70s he was unable to execute any more of his work.

Because of their metaphysical expression, the works of Aldo Rossi were even more poetic, but they may also be categorized in "rationalism" . . . through these works Rossi was successful in creating a condition of which only silence could speak, by restricting the architectural expression to the extreme.<sup>158</sup>

Between 1970 and 1980, Rationalism continued to gain acceptance in spite of the great resistance it encountered. Having gained a surprising number of followers in the United States, it became a new "International Style." This is as much a reflection of its success as a sign of the incipient danger of its becoming insipid. On the Continent — especially in Italy and in the German Federal Republic, but also in France — it became a universally valid representational mode of architecture; however, its programmatical intentions and its design concepts have not been reflected upon, even approximatively. Rationalism threatens to be debased to a mere design fashion.

It is going to be all the more important in the future to try to

trace the origins and the history of the rise of Rationalism, and its theoretical aspirations and practical realizations, before its particular goals are obscured by a general leveling and an almost entirely unconscious acceptance. For instance, hardly anyone remembers the important role of Oswald Mathias Ungers in the rise of Rationalism. Ungers's style, which he developed while teaching activity at the Technical University in Berlin between 1963 and 1969, has become common property. The idiosyncrasies of his representation of form and the theoretical development of his approach have hardly been celebrated as individual achievements.

At first, Uengers was closely allied with "New Brutalism" and with "Team X." His buildings of the early 1960s (mostly public housing) have become well known. But between 1963 and 1965, with little preparation, Uengers accomplished a trend reversal that led out New Brutalism. His projects from that period included a plan for a student residence in Enschede (figures 277, 278) and competition entries for the German embassy to the Vatican (figure 279), for the museums of the Prussian Cultural Estate in Berlin-Tiergarten (figures 280, 281), and for a school in Mayen. Later, Uengers began to direct his work toward the formulation of an architectural theory rooted in the architectural theory of the Renaissance, predominantly determined by aesthetic terms, and countering modernism's tendencies toward standardization.

Uengers expressed his point of view in his designs; at first, his only written opinions were marginal comments, theoretical rejoinders which did not lead to a fully defined programmatic declaration of principles such as Venturi's and Rossi's. Many of Uengers's designs and drawings are marked by a crystalline transparency, and their argumentative force conveys the gist of the main theses of his program. While Robert Venturi opposed the modernist tendencies toward simplification by demanding "complexity and contradiction," Uengers opposed the modernist tendency toward a total leveling of form in a similar vein but with different results.

For the functionalists, what determined the look of a form was the purpose for which it was most generally used; for instance, a door remained a door as long as one did not expect anything other than a passage through a wall. But Uengers demanded with his first Rationalist designs that additional, more refined definitions should be possible — that a door should be able to assume the special character of a portal or a gate — and that architects should strive to express these differences. While Venturi turned against the anonymous, uniform, multi-purpose space in which the complexity of a program dissolved without any contradiction, Uengers rebelled against the functionalist leveling of the process of design, which had only the most general answer ready for any function and which assimilated the differentiation of the individual case into the universal validity of general use. The

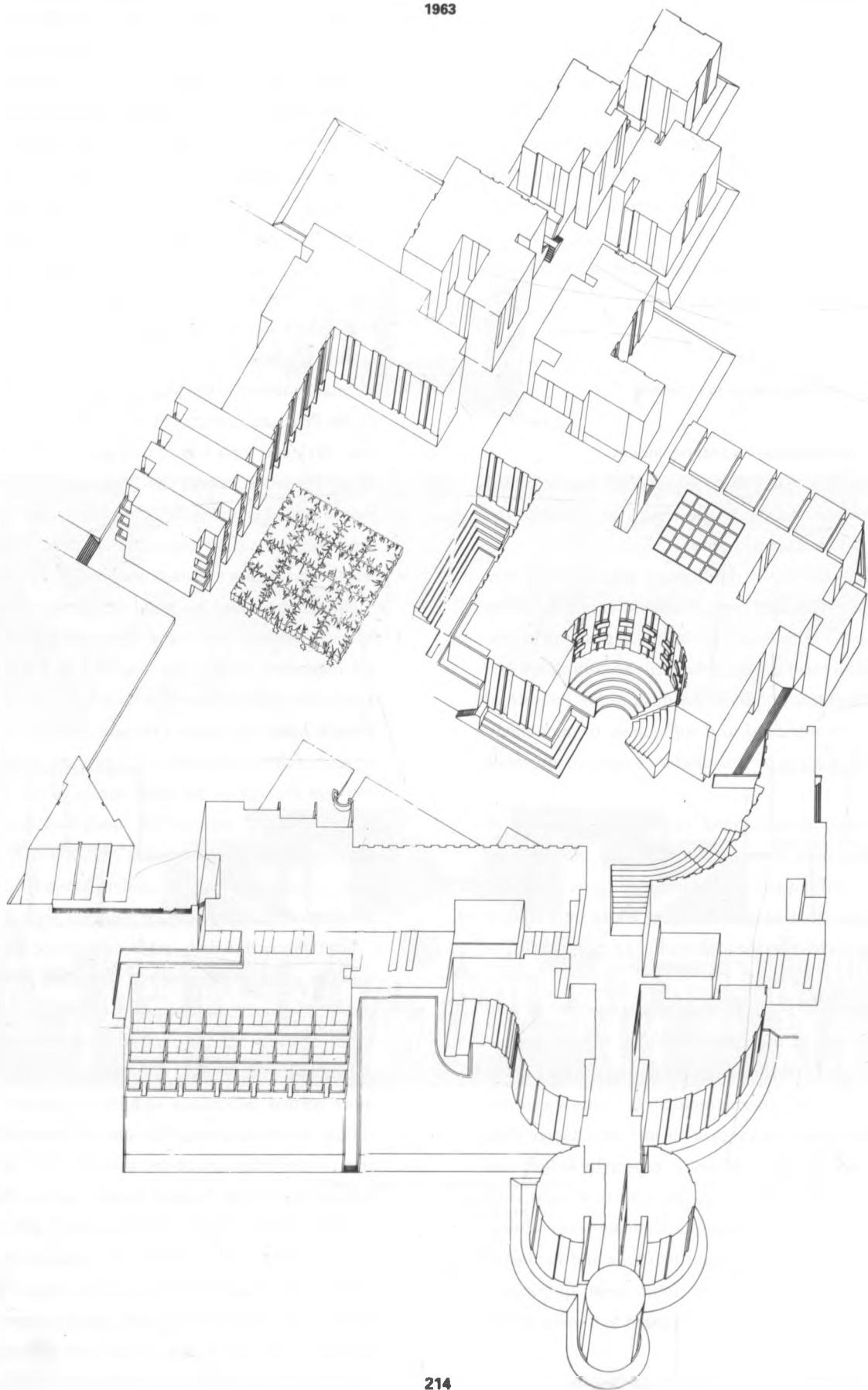
Oswald Mathias Ungers

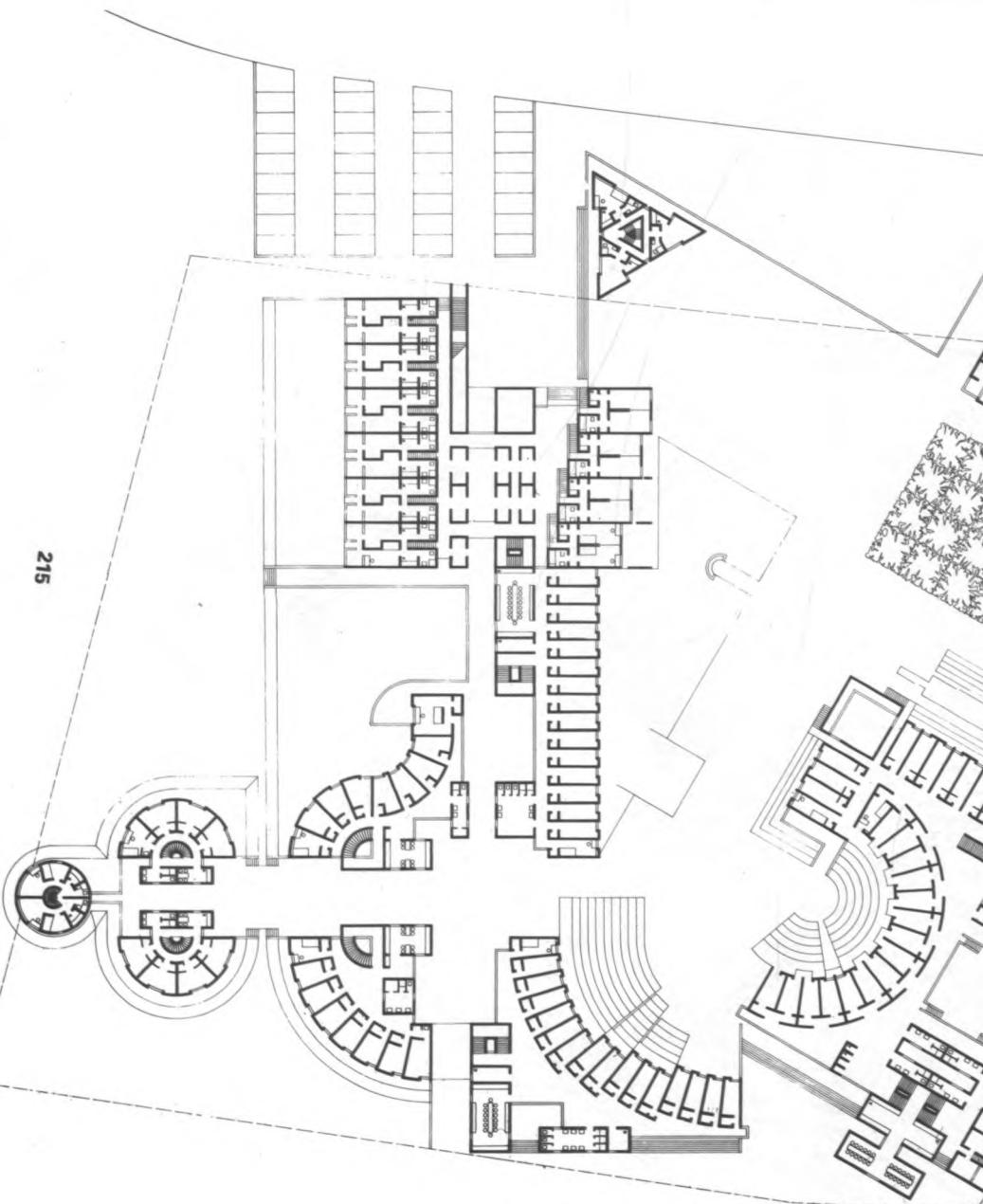
Student residences

Enschede, Netherlands

(project)

1963





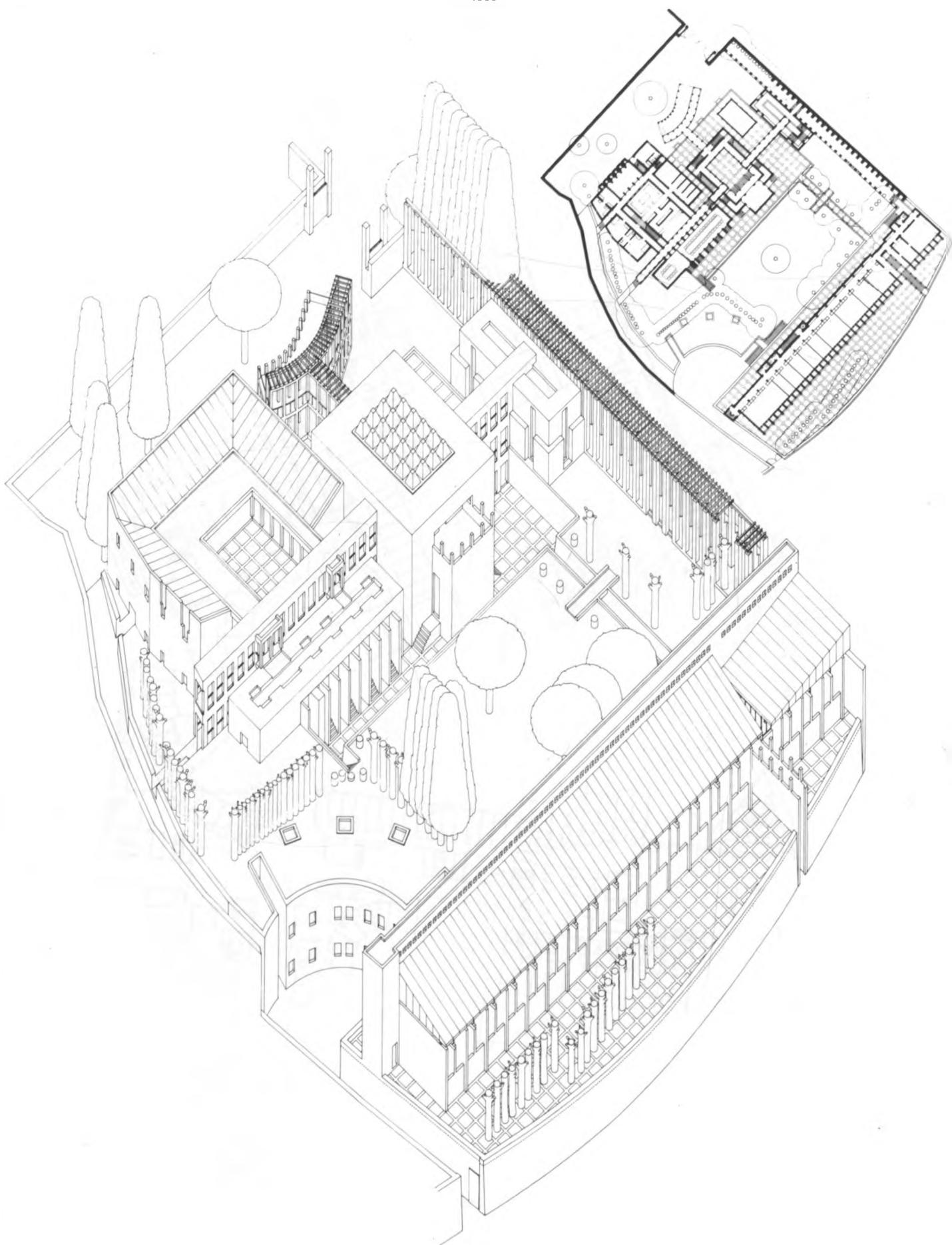
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278

Oswald Mathias Ungers  
Student residences  
Enschede, Netherlands  
(project)  
1963



Oswald Mathias Ungers  
German embassy to the Vatican  
(project)  
1965

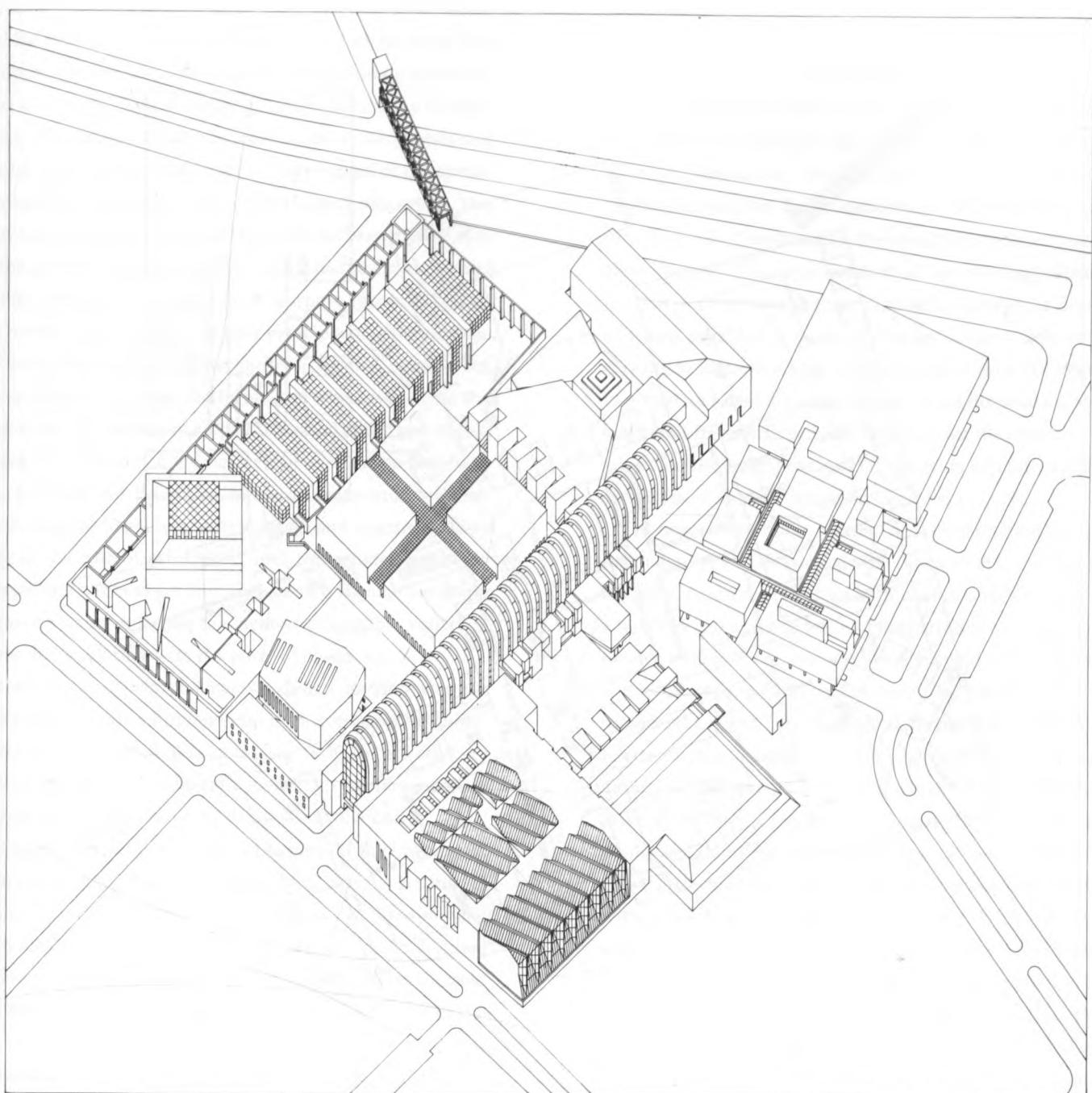


Oswald Mathias Ungers

Museum for Berlin

(project)

1965

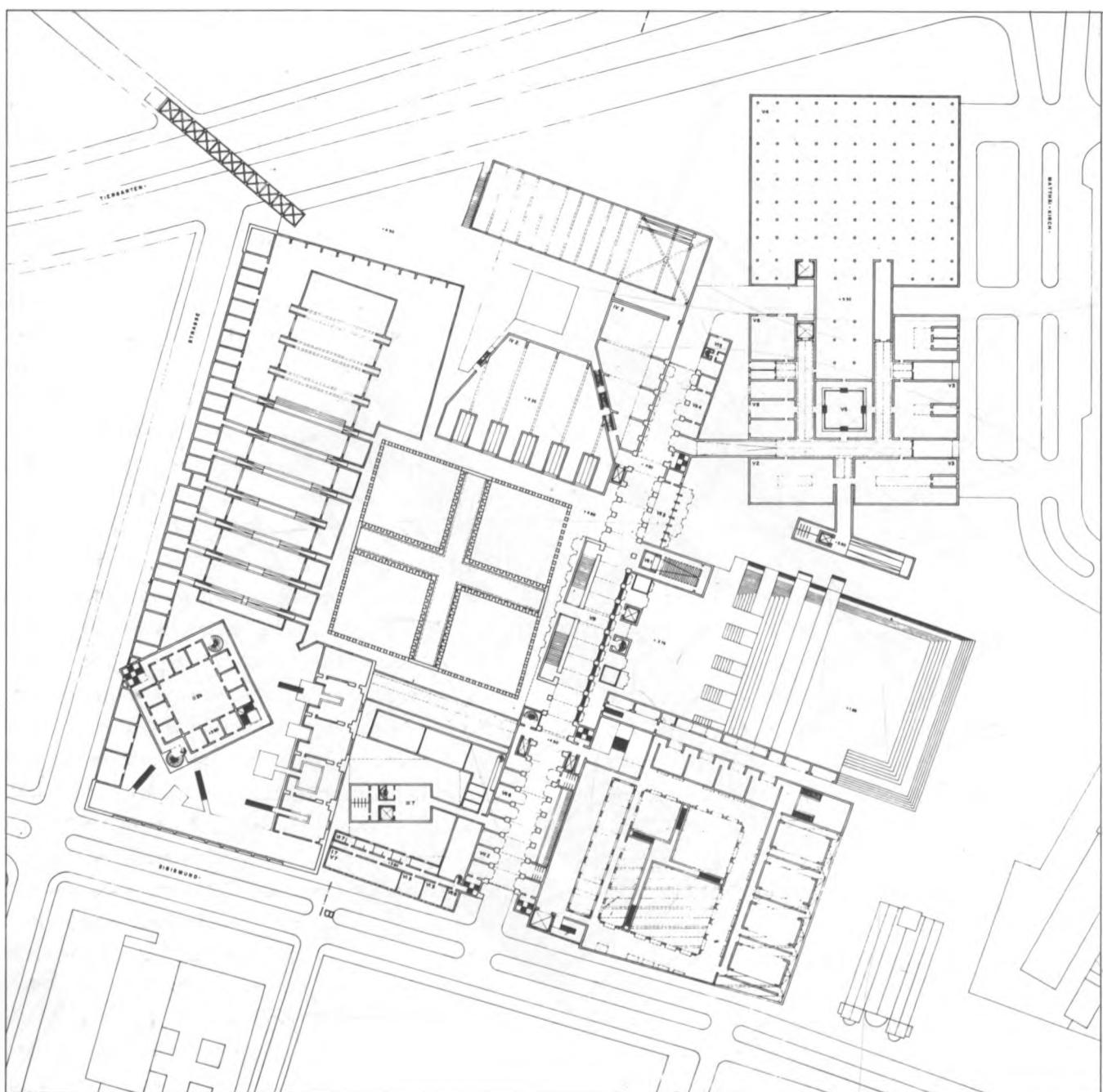


Oswald Mathias Unger

Museum for Berlin

(project)

1965



different forms and types of a door, a portal, and a gate were reduced to “a passage,” and the differentiating features were lost. In contrast, Ungers wanted to bring to light the manifold possible morphological transformations of an idea, of a primal form, of a basic concept — to thwart sameness and to articulate diversity.

Pascal had emphasized the interdependence of the whole and the individual: “Manifoldness which does not issue into unity is negation. Unity which does not depend on manifoldness is tyranny.” Ungers suffered under the tyranny of unity as it had expressed itself in functionalism. What Venturi had castigated in his early writings — the triumph of the lowest common denominator — also stirred Ungers into action. The disintegration of architectural typology had been the first step in the process of generalization, which had reached its most logical conclusion in Mies’s multi-purpose spaces. Calculating reason had overruled nature’s principle of manifoldness. In nature there existed not just one tree, one bird, one fish, but many different species. Goethe had not searched only for the *Urpflanze*, the essence of all plants; he had embarked on that search full of marvel at the variety that could be derived from one fundamental principle. Modern means-ends rationalism was about to abolish individuation and to grant validity only to the rule of principles, until the general monotony everywhere began to get depressing and it became necessary to invent, as an antidote, the greatest imaginable variety of forms and subforms — to the point of chaos.

The crucial aspect of Ungers’s design method was the attempt to provide a fundamental justification for the differentiation of forms. It was necessary to avoid an arbitrary concoction of fanciful ideas and instead to counter monotony by coherently explaining the deciphering of a unity.

Ungers replaced the concept of variety (of the Interesting) with a concept of manifoldness as justified on the grounds of architectural theory (in Ungers’s terms, the “morphology of an idea”). That is, a theme was needed to which individual phenomena could be related so that the use of ideas dictated by license or chance could be hindered. But what is a building as a whole if it is not identical with the generalizing simplifications of the most common determinants of function? In the search for an answer to this question, Ungers chose to proceed empirically by practically reenacting the initial deliberations over what a house can be. An inventory of basic forms (a building wall, a courtyard, a block, a house within a house, and so on) leads to “wholes.” Each basic form can supply the principle in accordance with which an individual structure is formed, or else the different types can be set side by side to emerge from or contrast against one another. Rossi emphasized the search for archetypal form, for the “idea,” but Ungers maintained his focus on the deciphering of a concept and held the transformation of one form into

the next to be essential. Whereas Rossi’s buildings and projects tend to express calm, Ungers’s early Rationalist projects have the ongoing motion of a theme in the process of explicating itself. For Ungers, the establishing of the finally discovered architectural archetypes was not as important as the manifoldness of different possibilities (insofar as they were justifiable).

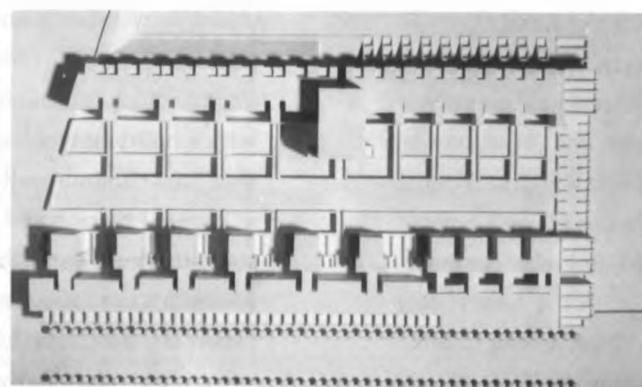
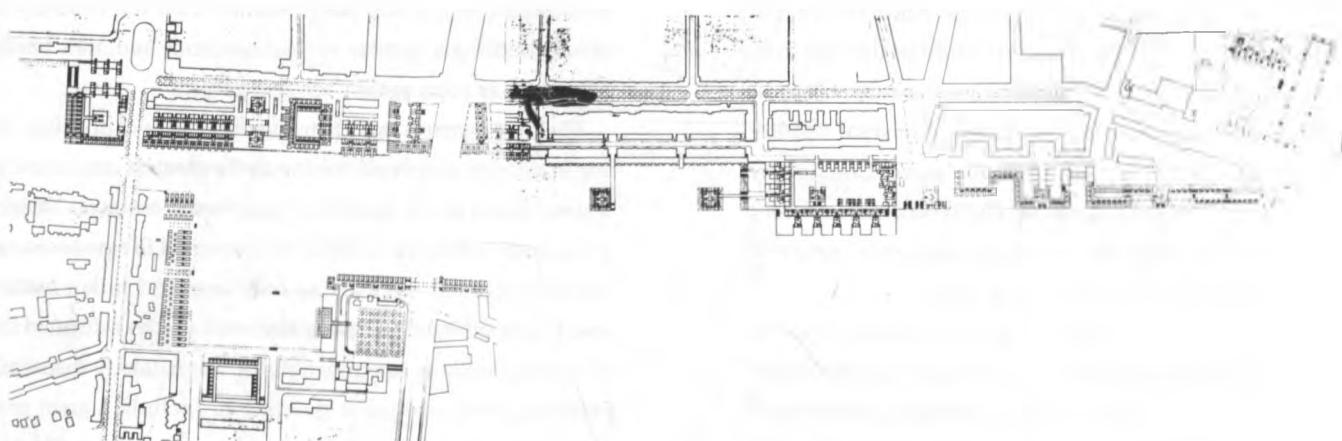
### Grünzug-Süd

Ungers’s unrealized redevelopment project for the Grünzug-Süd section of Cologne (figure 282) marks the first consciously theoretical working-out of his principle of transformation and theme elaboration. Ungers’s main concern here was “determining the design by interpreting the given factors.” The consideration of the existing helped to prevent the discovery of form from being dictated by caprice and also provided a range of themes. Ungers insisted on sticking to his conviction that the architect does not operate in a void and does not always have at his disposal an ideal, constraint-free starting point, and that, on the contrary, the given conditions impose special demands and offer binding directives as soon as they are recognized.

The new construction, a strung-out course of housing varying in density and developed with the greatest consistency as a street space in the direction from west to east, was based on a typology unknown in 1963, in the period of row housing. It readily included the existing buildings and urban features, and it strengthened the given elements and transformed their accidental aspects into meaningful, thematically discernible relations, thus making it possible to include a great many motifs. In this schema — the first use of transformation as a principle of urban planning — Ungers presented the morphology of building blocks, urban spaces, and facade walls. The transformational chain of the themes starts in the west with a building typology of “individual units in front of a wall” and continues with an “open block,” a “closed block,” a “serrated block,” and finally an “incomplete block.” The street that runs through the midst of the housing development starts as a “street inside the buildings,” then turns into a “street separate from the buildings,” then into an “extended street area,” and finally into a “place with inserted buildings.” The buildings, seen from the south, start as a “closed wall,” continue as a “double wall” (with “individual units between walls”), and end in a “folded wall” and an “interrupted wall.” In all these transformational sections, the existing buildings gave the cues for the changing motifs in the transformation. The given elements also determined the character of the local surroundings, and here and there the new structures formed a resonant framework for the existing ones. Although some of the given structures dissolved almost completely into the new ones, their vestiges were among the

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Oswald Mathias Ungers  
Redevelopment plan for  
Grünzug-Süd section of Cologne  
1963



283

Oswald Mathias Ungers  
Zitadelle, Grünzug-Süd (project)  
1963

220

factors that determined the forms of the new buildings.

In 1966 the Deutsche Bauzeitung published a most unorthodox treatment of Grünzug-Süd (figure 284).<sup>159</sup> In the midst of six columns of photographs of old buildings there appeared a row of drawings illustrating Unger's plans for the corresponding areas. Unger gave this article the title "Bauformen, Gebäudeordnungen und Themen der Umgebung" [Building Forms, Organization of Buildings, and Themes of the Surroundings], and in the accompanying text Jürgen Pahl offered the following apt comments:

... it is certainly a unique event, and it may at first alienate some readers, that here appear predominantly pictures that show anything else except buildings, designs, or projects of the architect discussed here: pictures that seemingly cannot have anything to do with this architect's work — whose subject matter, superficially regarded, may appear in part banal or even lowbrow; nevertheless, this presentation characterizes in a special way the thinking and building of the architect Oswald Mathias Unger, and leads those who are willing to make some effort to read them correctly to the core of this thinking and building. The source from which Unger derives his basic ideas and form is neither an extravagant nor a constructive realm, neither an absolutist nor a functionalist rationale. His constantly recurring theme is the spatial organization derived from the genius loci, from the creative resources of the given site, and from the sculptural, metamorphic rules that have been objectified over the course of history.<sup>160</sup>

With this series of pictures, the extent to which Unger drew upon empiric analysis of the environment for the derivation of his morphological themes, and the extent to which he allowed his concept of architecture to be determined by the given conditions, by the historical material, became clear for the first time. Unger had entered into an interaction with history — not just in the insignificant sense of building in a way that could be said to "take into account the old city," but in the sense of drawing upon history for formative principles that could be transferred to the present. He did not limit these considerations to urban planning and to large-scale projects; he considered smaller details, as is shown by the inclusion in the above-mentioned article of pictures of the rounded brick wall enclosing his own house. (These pictures, shown here as figure 285, were placed under the heading "determination of design through application of local scale and building forms.")

Never before in European modernism had the autonomy of architecture been set in question in such terms; never had modern architecture been made to depend on the existing environment. Unger's consideration of the given architectural substance was not only a restriction on an otherwise unregimented design; it can be said that the "deter-

mination of the design through interpretation of given factors" was the design principle.

Yet it would be wrong to see this procedure as a kind of recipe that Unger used dogmatically on every possible occasion. Rather, it indicates the great breadth of his field of reference. In his 1983 book *Die Thematisierung der Architektur*<sup>161</sup> Unger follows the first-mentioned theme, "transformation or morphology of form," with treatments of other major themes, including "assemblage, or, the coincidence of opposites," "incorporation, or, the doll inside the doll," "assimilation, or, the adaptation of the *genius loci*," and "imagination, or, the 'world as idea'." Furthermore, his thematic spheres occasionally overlap.

At the beginnings of his theoretic disquisitions, Unger always refers to Schinkel's Schloss Glienicker [Glienicker Palace] in Potsdam, in which he finds his most important example of morphological transformation: the column as a basic theme with many individual recapitulations.<sup>162</sup> His point is that the playing through of the possible variations of a basic form and the formal unfolding of a theme in many different directions creates differentiation among similar things — manifoldness.

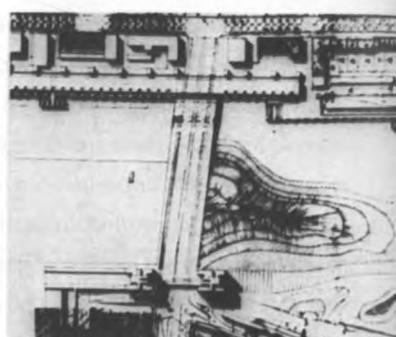
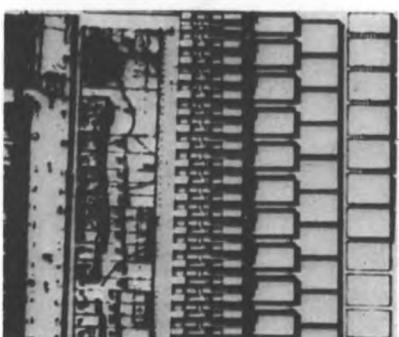
#### The Museums in Berlin-Tiergarten

Like some of the projects mentioned above, Unger's 1965 competition entry for the rebuilding of the museums in Berlin-Tiergarten (figures 280, 281) is marked by a novel manner of graphic representation and by a new definition of building typology that leads away from the conventions of modernism.

The Grünzug-Süd project was novel in layout, but the individual forms continued to be inflected by the idea of "modern" architecture. For example, the architecture of the "Zitadelle" (figure 285), a composition of recurring structures down to the details of the horizontal windows and the balconies, was clearly modern. However, the motif variations of the layout contradicted all accepted views of modern urban planning — not only because the existing structures were included and because the buildings were strung along the roadside, but also because the total complex was used for the presentation of themes (the theme of a street's relation to a building, the theme of a block, the theme of a building's structure), which took on a fictional, narrative character in the course of their explication.

But two years later, with his design for the Berlin museums, Unger took a different approach. Now the individual forms became manifold as well. The thematic changes affected not only the layout, but also the characterization of each individual building. As a result, the morphological neutrality that limited modernism to geometrization was abolished. The individual buildings stood out as separate and

Oswald Mathias Ungers  
Building forms  
1966 (see note 159 for source)

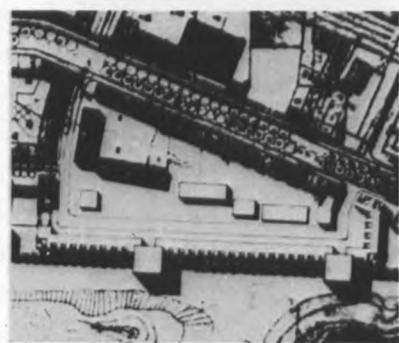
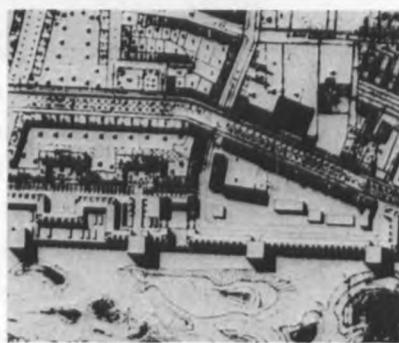
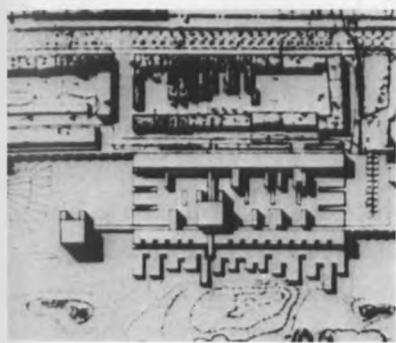
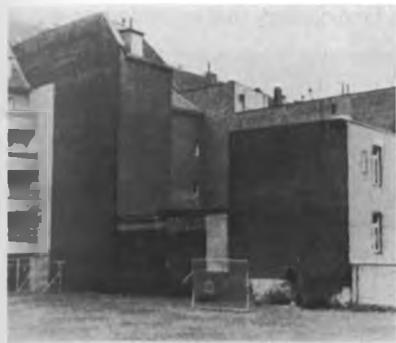


**Row 1.** One-family houses in a row: addition of equal elements. Alternation between closed, formulated and open, unformulated area.



**Row 2.** Articulated, different single buildings in front of continuous wall.

**Row 3.** Gate and bridge.



Row 4. Stratified buildings between walls.



Row 6. Plaza with inserted objects.



Row 5. a) Street area, b) horizontal buildings with vertical penetration.



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different, as if the main concern here was to formulate a new type for every building's purpose. The sculpture hall, furnished with a traveling crane for the handling of heavy sculptural objects, was structured like a factory, with square glass panes between overlapping girders. The building intended for small pieces was shaped like a jewel box. The administration building, adjoining the street and set at an angle to the rest of the complex, was almost neoclassicist in its austere symmetry and its emphasis on a central courtyard. Most important, however, was the large gallery that extended on a slightly oblique axis through the whole complex; the revival of such a function had to be paralleled by the revival of a historical type. The attempt at differentiation virtually required Ungers to use historical motifs in order to avoid amorphousness and ambiguity.

The axiality of the central exhibition space, with its cruciform skylight, awakened in some people objectionable associations of the totalitarian architecture of the recent past. However, this impression can arise only if one fixes one's attention rigidly on an individual point and refuses to perceive the abundance of manifold motifs as a morphological unfolding of the basic theme of "museum." The use of axiality and symmetry here does not keep the whole complex in line by force, but it provides a strong enough cohesion to this group of richly articulated and differentiated components.

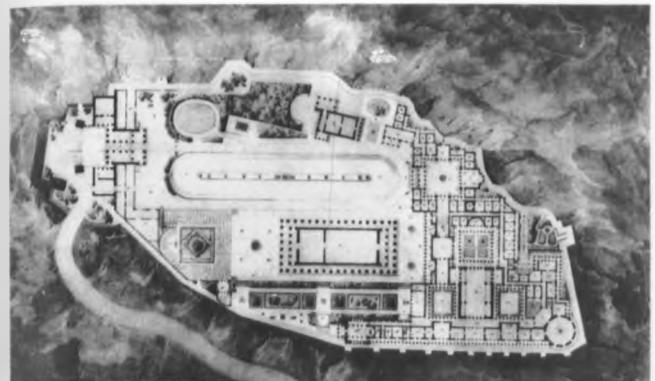
In his quest for an all-embracing means of binding together the individual buildings of the museum complex, Unger drew upon Schinkel's design for the Acropolis (figure 286)—and hence on Leon Battista Alberti's concept of *Varieta*, of the diversity in unity and of unity in diversity, according to which the individual buildings and the whole ought to claim equal validity.

#### Alvar Aalto and Variability

More than any other architect of the first modernist generation, the Finn Alvar Aalto changed European modernism and questioned its tendency to rigorism without giving up its tradition. Aalto's work shows a pronounced sense of the development of a great variety of motifs and a first attempt in the direction of morphological transformations. If Aalto's buildings escape the rigid geometrization of functionalism, this is to be credited to his ability to resist getting tied down to standardized and malleable forms and to seek instead several different interpretations of a task and to apply them side by side. In contrast with the tendency to give validity to only one optimized form and to use it serially, Aalto strove for distinctions that did not result from a painterly predilection for multiplying idiosyncrasies but whose substance lay in the interpretative process. His works — especially those of the 1950s — are based on the individuating effect of the principle of variety.

*Sketch X*

Karl Friedrich Schinkel  
Design for palace on  
Acropolis, Athens  
1834



Standing in front of Aalto's faculty dining hall at the University of Iyväskylä (figure 287), one marvels first at its austere, elevated, temple-like form. The building, with a row of pillars under an architrave-like roof, is faced in light-gray granite slabs, so that it stands out from the neighboring brick buildings. It immediately strikes one as austere and representational. Only after one realizes that this is the dining hall of the faculty, and that the adjacent students' dining hall is a much more modest building faced in brick, do its formal qualities begin to appear more plausible. The differentiation between the two buildings acquires almost the weight of a typological definition, and it is convincing in visual terms.

It seems that this keen sense for distinctions is responsible for the unique subtlety of Aalto's buildings. In most cases, however, the most that is achieved is the development of two distinct characters. Such a distinction entails the risk of creating a hierarchy. In architecture a large percentage of formal differentiations are due to class distinctions. The question remains whether or not the differences of form that supposedly parallel the different ways of life in question really only testify to a social contrast or conflict. If that is all they do, the formal variants are only the reflexes of social differences. In that case, Aalto's brick and granite surfaces are not complements but adversaries. However, Aalto was not interested in architectonically abetting or immortalizing social distinctions. The general principle of variations on a theme was his central concern; this is clear from the alternation of wooden and granite benches in the outdoor theatre of the University of Iyväskylä (figure 289).

The Villa Mairea, one of Aalto's most beautiful buildings, has a courtyard terrace that is supported by round pillars, a rectangular pillar, and columns made up of four round wooden poles bundled together on a stone base. The meaning of this becomes evident as soon as one realizes that the bundled support belongs to the adjacent woodshed, whereas the round one belongs to the elegant main house. The handling of the supports illustrates the transition from the domestic realm to the rustic. Furthermore, a wall of large fieldstones runs from the woodshed to a gate (figure 291), which opens onto a meadow. Opposite the wall is an earthwork, and there is a simple board fence between the gate and the earthwork. Here again, two variants of a theme — the theme of enclosure — are set off against one another. The differentiated form of the gate is associated with the stone wall, the board fence with the earthwork. The contrast between the stone wall and the earthwork and that between the gate and the fence evoke a feeling of the free play of different possibilities and thus of spontaneity — all the more because the earthwork, which can easily be stepped over, presents a barrier only in optical terms. Things take on meanings because of these contrasts and these different characterizations;

Alvar Aalto  
Faculty dining hall  
University of Jyväskylä, Finland  
1952–1957



Alvar Aalto  
Student dining hall  
University of Jyväskylä, Finland  
1952–1957



Alvar Aalto  
Open-air theater  
University of Jyväskylä, Finland  
1952–1957



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Alvar Aalto  
Courtyard of Villa Mairea  
near Noormarkku, Finland  
1938-39



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this is not so much an attempt to create fact as an invitation to recapture a world created by artistic invention.

Aalto's published writings do not seem to contain any direct theoretical statements relating to his method of creating diversity. However, in a 1935 lecture entitled "Man and Rationalism" we find this:

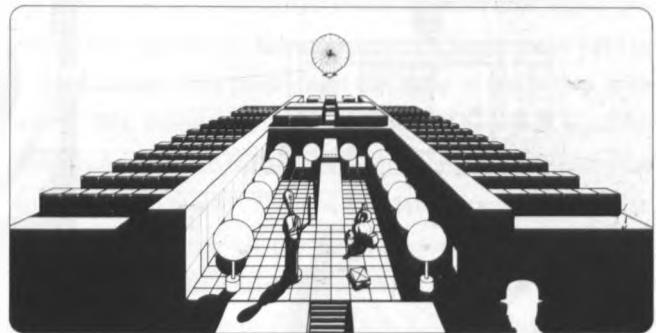
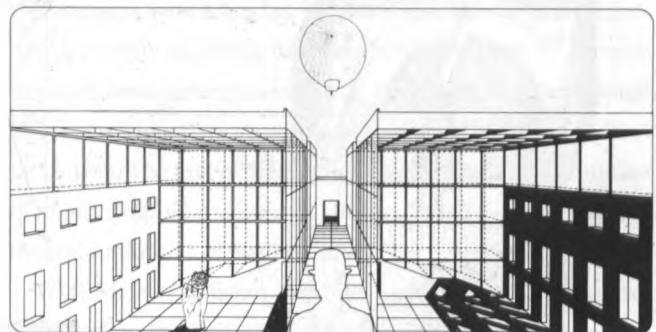
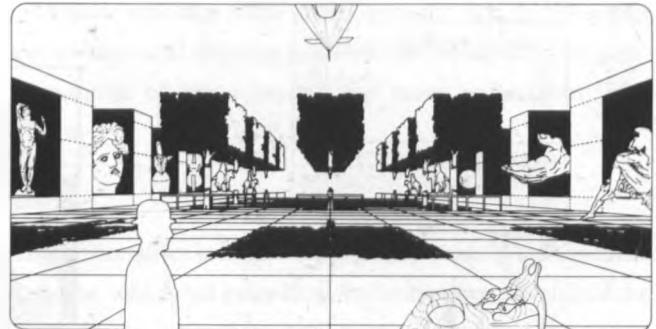
We have already touched on the importance of variability. Nature, biology, offers profuse and luxuriant forms; with the same constructions, the same tissues, and the same cellular structures it can produce millions and millions of combinations, each of which is an example of a high level of form. Human life comes from the same roots. The objects that surround man are hardly mere fetishes and allegories with some mystical eternal value. They are more likely to be cells and tissues, a life just as cells and tissues are, the building components of which human life is composed. They cannot be dealt with in a different way from biology's other units; otherwise they would be in danger of becoming unsuited to the system, of becoming inhuman.<sup>163</sup>

Ungers did not know these sentences, and his theory is far from being grounded in Aalto's method, yet his work elucidates the relevance of a method that counters the optimization of functionalism with meaningful architectural characterization.

#### The Architectural Drawing

Ungers's designs for the dormitories in Enschede, the German Embassy to the Vatican, and the museums in Berlin mark the first appearance of the drawing style limited to thin outlines, which has since become the most accepted style of architectural rendering; there is only the white of the paper and the black of the evenly drawn outlines. Not only did this method of aesthetic stylization depart from the method of postwar functionalist architecture; it also suddenly superseded the tonally amplified and illusionistically embellished style of the 1950s and the 1960s. Here, instead, was pure architecture, without pedestrians, baby carriages, and dogs. The extreme graphic stylization recalled Schinkel's engravings, although even Schinkel had included human figures (as, for example, in the well-known drawing in which a father is showing the entrance hall of a Berlin museum to his son).

At first Ungers purified his drawings completely, creating a bell-jar atmosphere of pure outline. When human figures reappeared, it was with an ironic emphasis on the unreality of drawn existence. Magritte's "Man with a Bowler Hat" showed up in a few drawings, as a surrealistic touch, but in general Ungers preferred to stick to a representational objectivity limited to pure outline. These drawings were not at all lifeless; in fact they were livelier than most drawings that strove to impress the viewer with semblances of life.

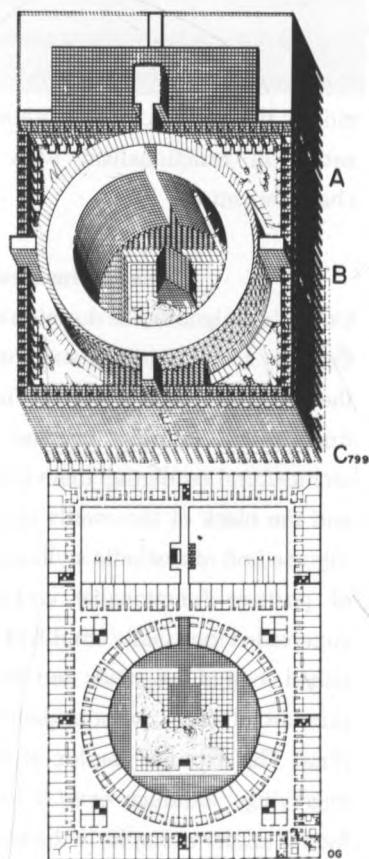
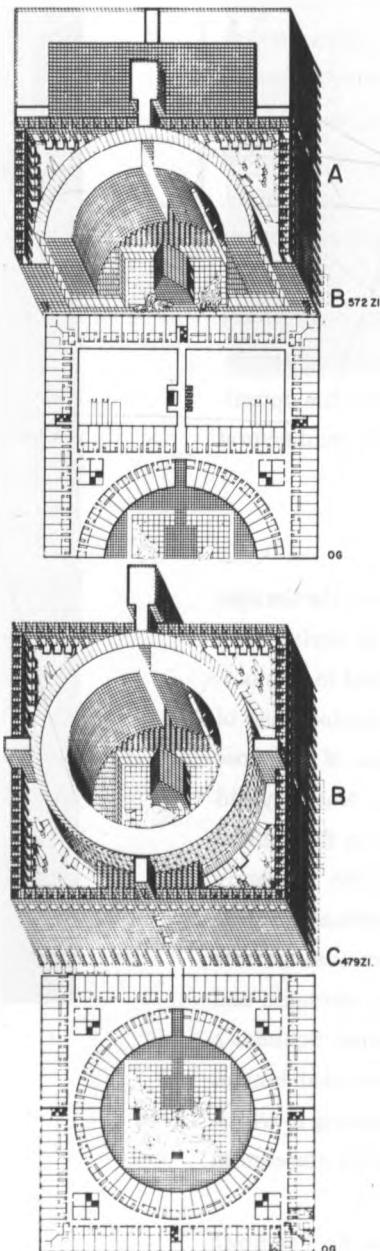
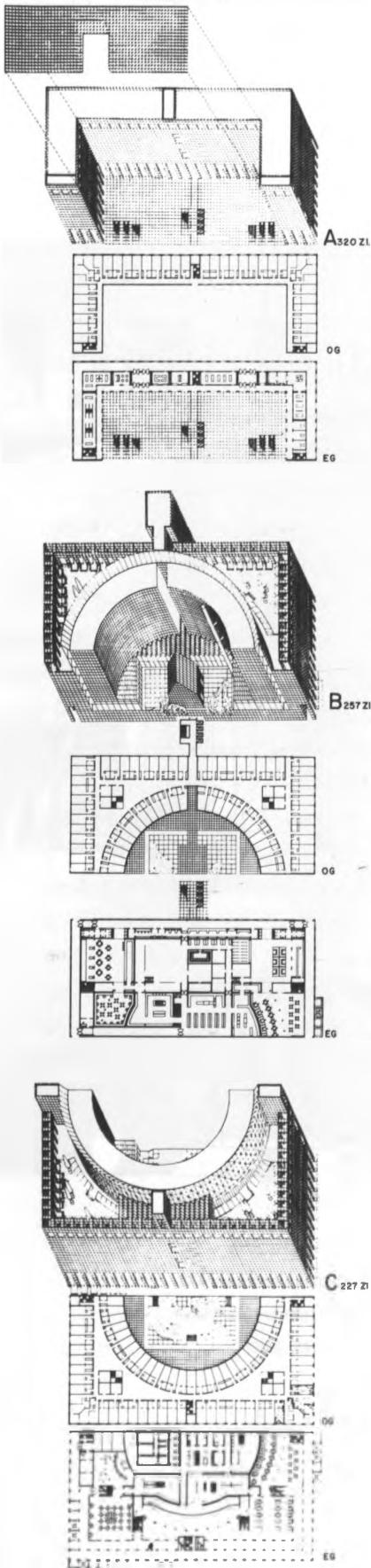


20,

## Oswald Mathias Ungers

Hotel Berlin

1980



Ungers introduced movement by means of axial displacement, or by placing a form in a manner that violated the rules of harmony. (Recall the subtly displaced gallery in his design for the Berlin museums.) This tactic required extremely careful drafting technique. The differentiations that it produced mocked the rationality of the uniformly applied modular grid. As in the work of Louis Kahn or Alvar Aalto,<sup>164</sup> the fine nuances of Ungers's distinctions seem to animate the transparently clear lines of some of his designs with a delicate breath of life. In other cases, his drawings are so refined that they suggest natural microstructures, such as snow crystals or diatoms (a good example is figure 293, which is totally devoid of suggestions of movement). Ungers's students and imitators were rarely able to make the subtle animating motion or the extremely refined line structures come off.

Ungers's favorite presentational form is the isometric projection, which makes a building and all its rich differentiation comprehensible in just one glance. It is clear that he considers the visual grasp of the whole — that is, the aesthetic experience — to be as important as ground plans, elevations, and cross sections. Although a building looks different in an isometric view than to a passerby, an isometric drawing can convincingly anticipate the combined effect of a building's volumes and its spaces. To render the palpable experience of a building as an illusion while removing all atmospheric elements through the sole use of line, to abstract illusionistic three-dimensionality by graphic stylization — these are the means Ungers employed to lift his drawings above the realm of banal illusionistic effects. Yet the imaginary (or, to use Ungers's term, the "idea") has its place in these transformations. Thus, Ungers's drawings are not only preliminaries or aids to construction; they have an autonomous quality, as do his buildings. They do not assert their autonomy unconditionally; rather, they make visible how the aesthetical strives to free itself on the basis of a given condition. Indeed, mediating the tensions between freedom and obligation can be said to be Ungers's design method.

Since the beginning of the nineteenth century, architects have placed an increasing value on the cultivating of drawing as a possible mode of communicating ideas, and have not limited themselves to sketches and working plans. Schinkel reached for his brushes and palette when he wanted to depict his utopian conceptions as all the more "real." Le Corbusier also comes to mind. The most important works of Ledoux, Boulée, and Durand were not buildings but series of engravings. Mies's most important designs of the period around 1920 — the office building for the magazine *G*, the glass skyscrapers for the Friedrichstrasse, and the brick and the concrete villa — were "realized" only as drawings. An architectural drawing can attain a very high degree of reality, even though it is an illusionist depiction.

The great danger of the architectural drawing lies in the fact that it aestheticizes the building as a mere art object and thereby sets its functional efficacy in question. For this reason, Ungers has never attempted to anticipate through a drawing the effect produced by a real building; on the contrary, he has stressed the artificial character of drawings. All too frequently, naive observers have failed to understand the dialectical meaning of this decision and have mistakenly read the artistic distance of a drawing as a diminution of its potential for realization.

Ungers, and later Aldo Rossi, were the first to rediscover the architectural drawing as an artistic medium for the communication of ideas beyond the mere presentation of a design.

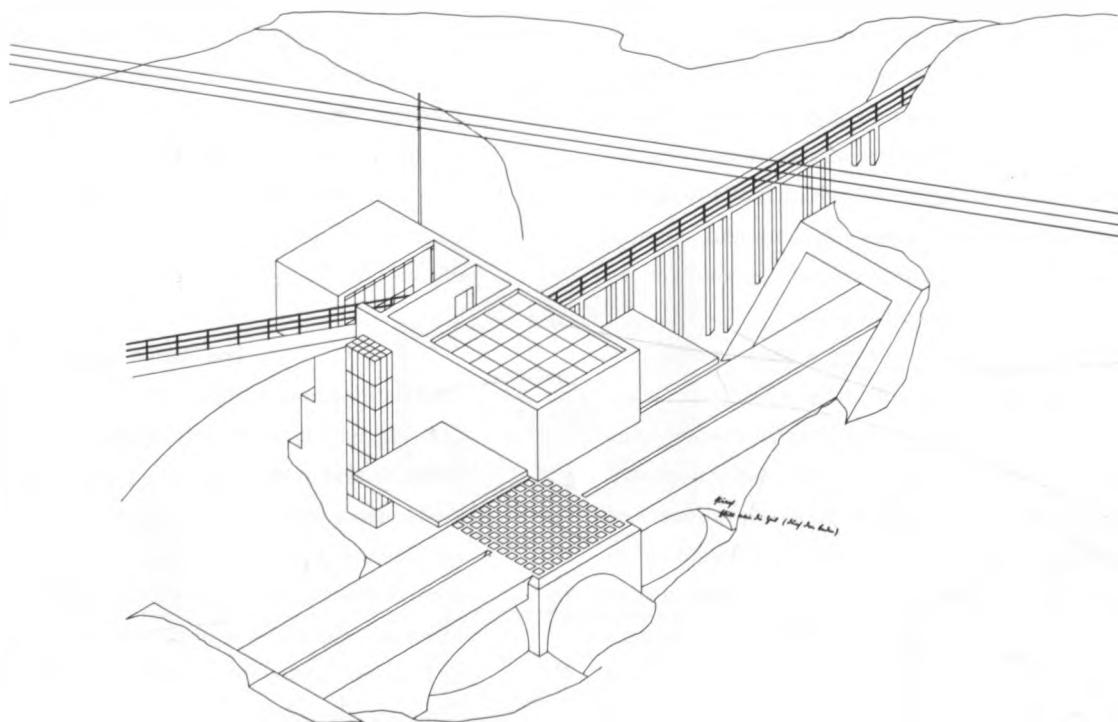
#### The "Berlin School"

That Rationalism brought with it a new mode of architectural drawing, which led away from the technology worship of the 1960s, is also evident from the projects produced by some of the students who attended Ungers's seminars at the Technical University in Berlin between 1963 and 1968.<sup>165</sup> Though none of these projects were built, they exerted international influence when they appeared in a series of brochures edited by Ungers. The first of these brochures<sup>166</sup> contained a number of highly original works from 1964 and 1965 — works that are central to the rise of Rationalism.

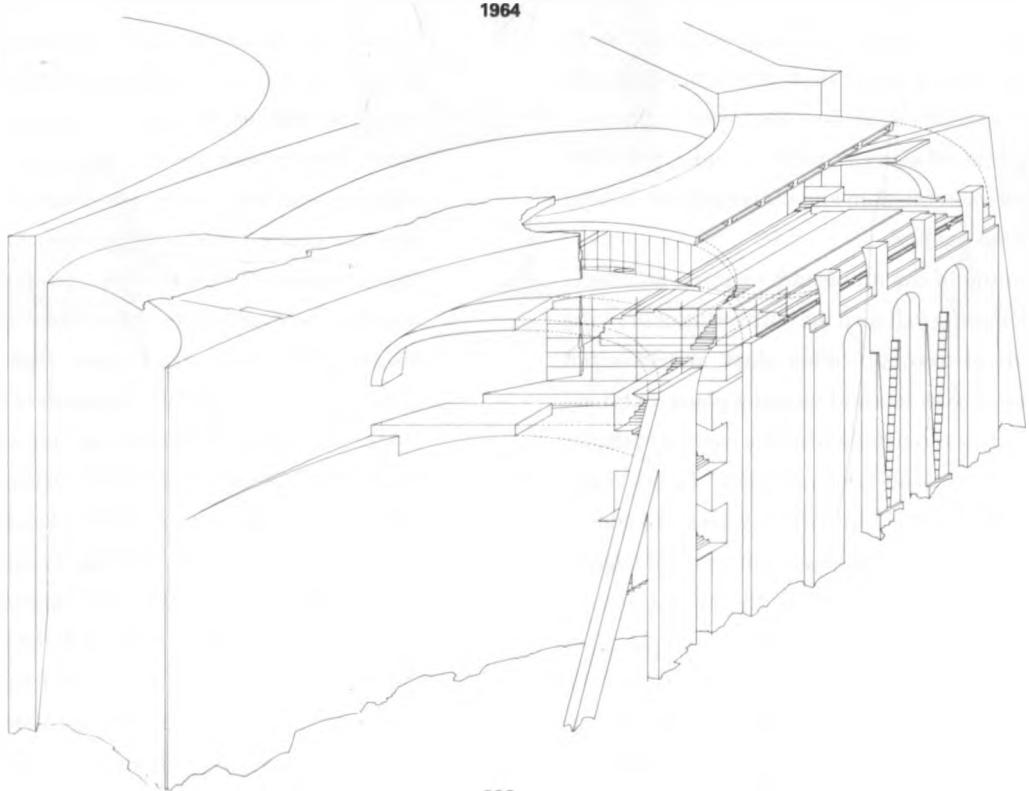
Wolf Meyer-Christian combined utilization schemes that bordered on the fantastic with very direct presentation, and his long, delicate pen strokes made his drawings highly poetic. Figure 294 shows one such project: a house embedded in a rocky chasm. The poetry and the force of the fiction with which this monument of a one-family house is simultaneously evoked and carried ad absurdum reach as far into the unreal as into reality. Meyer-Christian's drawings (see also figure 295) capture all the essentials with an exceptional elegance and with a crisp linear objectivity. In a short commentary after a visit to Berlin Leon Krier made the following statement: "From the devastated architecture scene in postwar Germany three exceptions stand out. The great project-work of O. M. Ungers, three drawings of Wolf Meyer-Christian, and the boathouse of Ludwig Leo. . . ."<sup>167</sup>

Meyer-Christian's 1964 project for a museum of architecture (figure 296) was supposed to incorporate the neoclassical Villa Calandrelli on the Landwehrkanal in Berlin. This project (drawn up for one of Ungers's seminars) is especially noteworthy because of the conscious use of historical motifs: the old villa, the Ionic column in the courtyard of the main building, and — above all — a remnant of the demolished Berliner Stadtschloss [Berlin City Castle], which was to be laid flat in the depressed courtyard of the Villa Calandrelli as a memorial to the old Berlin. Meyer-Christian's historical

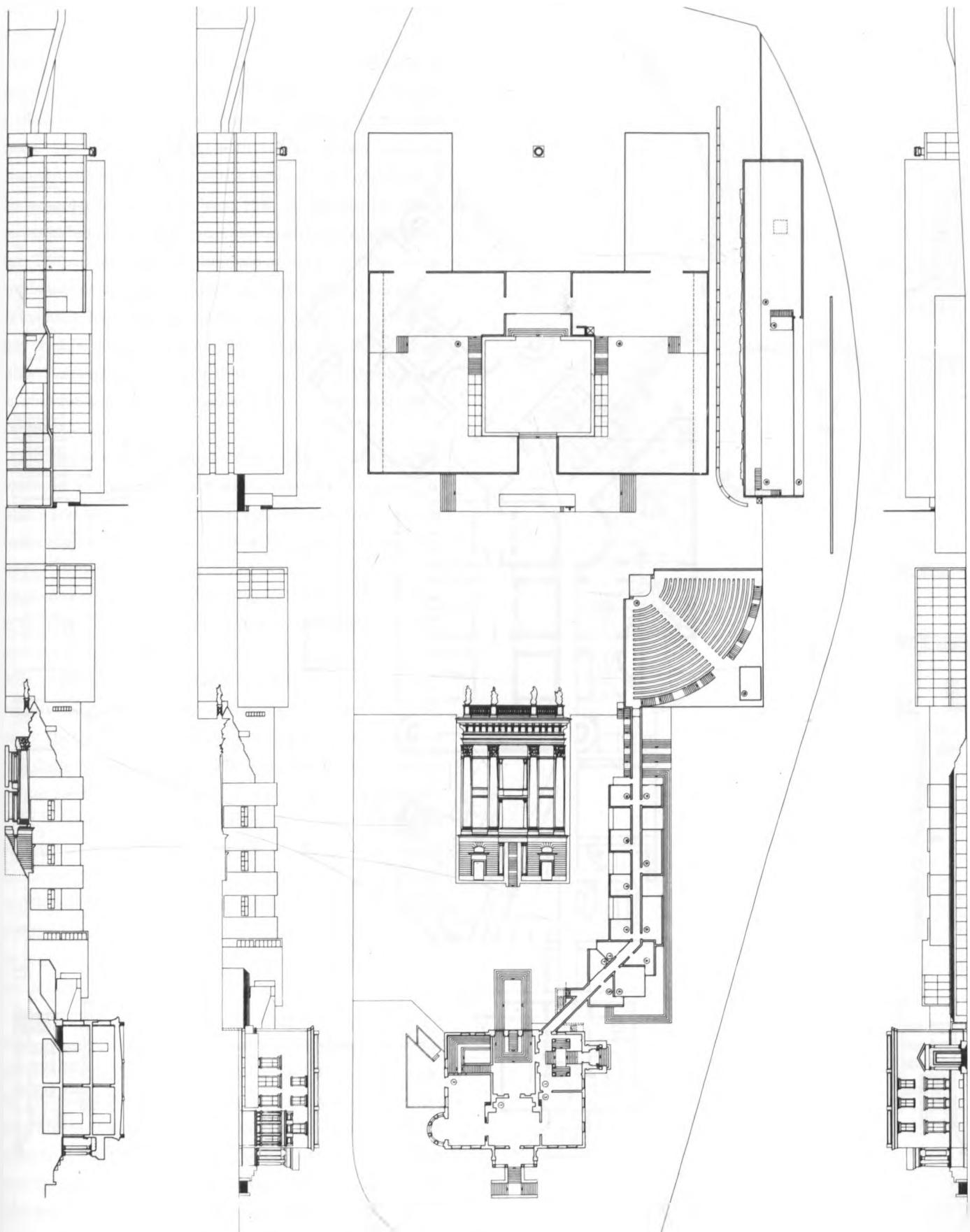
Wolf Meyer-Christian  
One-family house (project)  
1964



Wolf Meyer-Christian  
House of thin bricks (project)  
1964



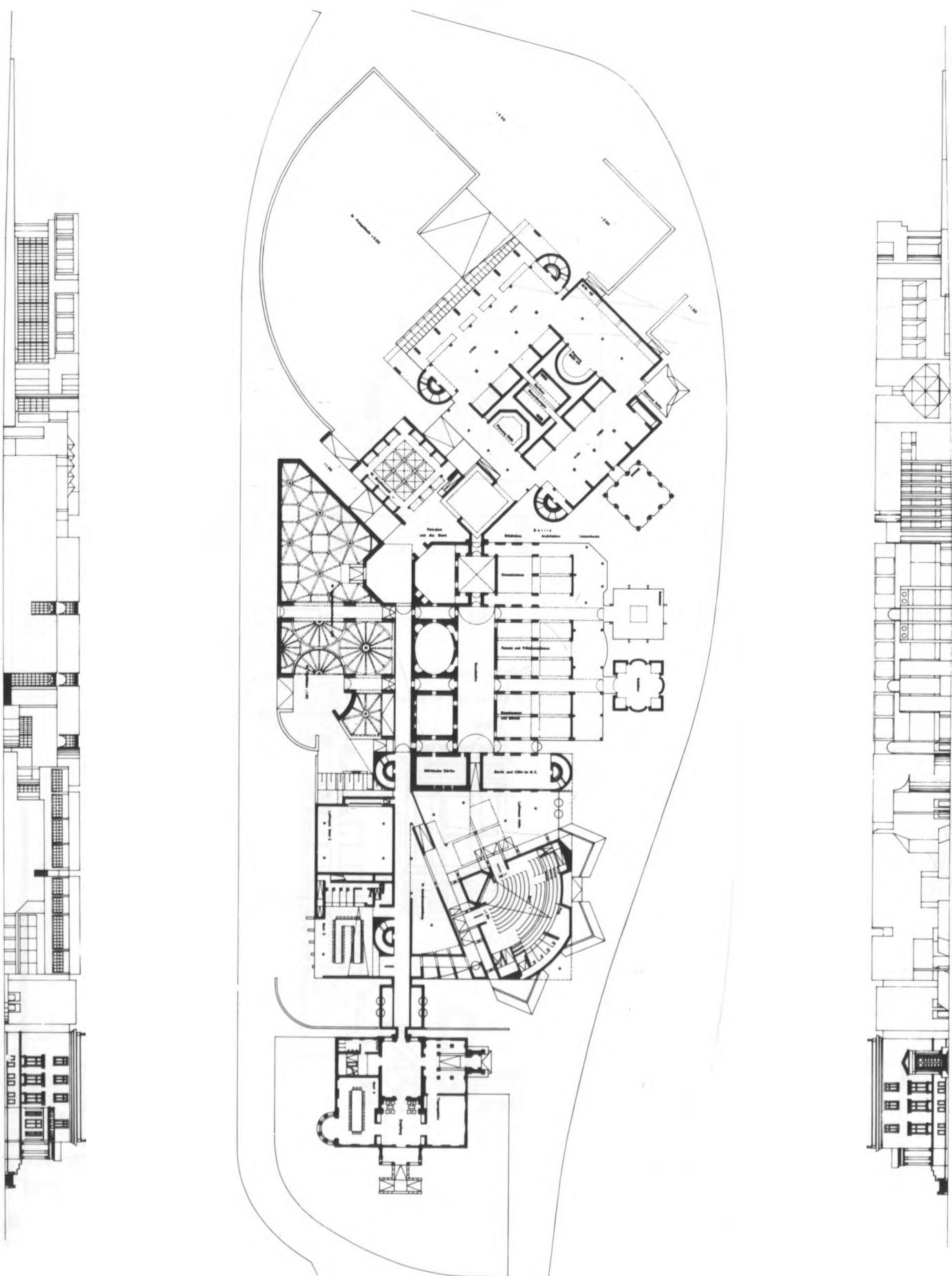
Wolf Meyer-Christian  
Design for architectural museum in Berlin  
(incorporating Villa Calandrelli)  
1964



Michael Wegener

Design for architectural museum in Berlin

1964



citations and his use of the only recently frowned-upon axial symmetry were masterful.

298

Another notable product of Ungers's assignment to design a museum of architecture is Michael Wegener's project (figure 297). Determined entirely by historical motifs, it looks like an assemblage of closely connected structures. The sequence of different vaults and spaces suggests an explication of the history of architectural styles.

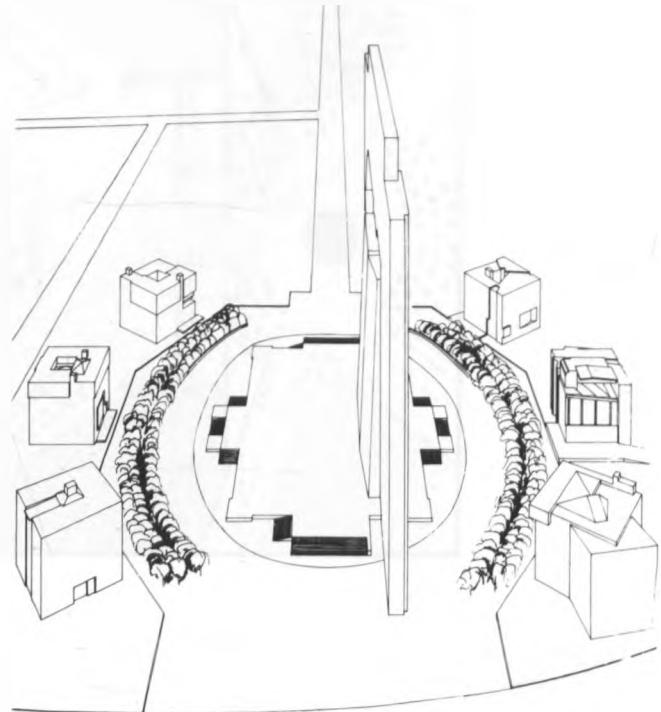
Eckhart Reissinger's 1966 design<sup>168</sup> for the development of the Leipziger Platz (a plaza in Berlin) attests to the profusion of ideas and approaches in Ungers's seminars of the mid 1960s. The site was fraught with history; it had been the intended site of Friedrich Gilly's famous 1797 design for a monument to Frederick II (figure 299). Reissinger let Gilly's design influence the base of his asymmetrically placed high-rise. The six buildings he arranged around the plaza show motifs that closely approximate the Rationality of Ungers — for instance, the dense series of square windows in the under-shot square building (figure 300). With remarkable originality, Reissinger represented the morphological unfolding of the structures as a transformational process in an exemplary manner.

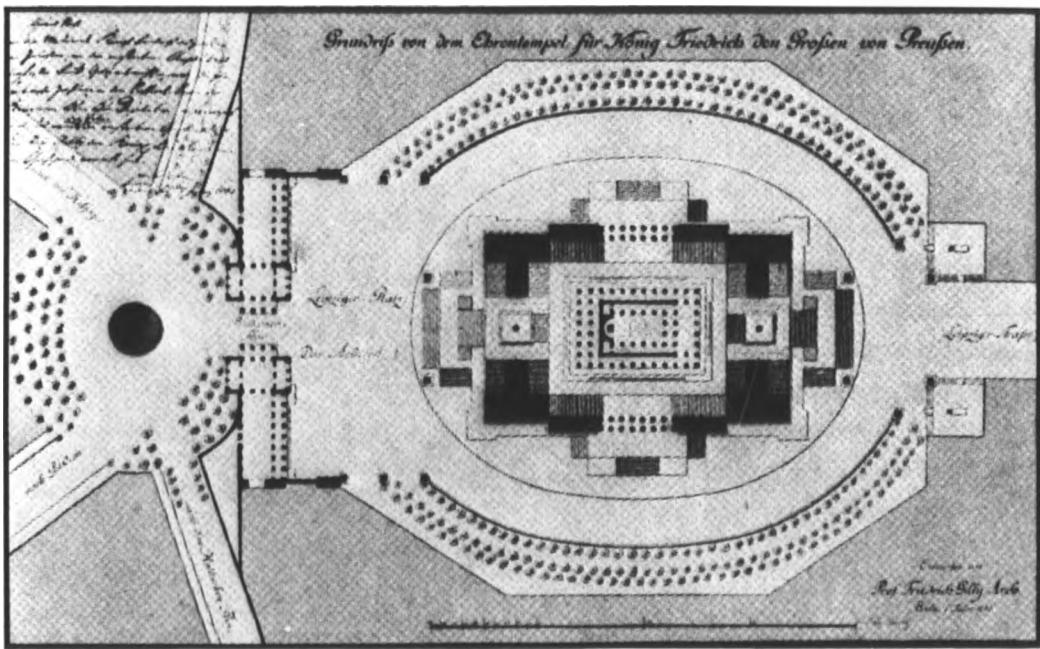
One sees from these examples that a special sense for given structures and for the historical material was important to Ungers and his students. Ungers refrained from the posing of abstract tasks that was customary in the 1960s; he refused to choose themes without temporal or local ties. The projects he assigned were, according to Jörg Pampe, "always tied to Berlin in terms of their site and purpose."<sup>169</sup> Pampe goes on to say:

Thus, it was possible for the students to grasp the tasks in logical, historical, and sensual terms, and for Berlin this meant that solutions were being developed which, starting from the given situation, could be related to its unmistakably unique local aspects. While the Berlin Senate tore down Berlin's historical traces and removed them, in Unger's seminar were created projects for residences in housing blocks, on parks, on the water; for the renovation of traffic rotaries and traffic intersections; for building in a historical situation. Only today are projects and solutions taken up by the city and by individual architects, but in cleaned-up urban deserts.

All the projects mentioned here were developed between 1964 and 1966 — that is, at the same time when Aldo Rossi was conceiving the first Rationalist project (the alterations to the Theatre of Parma), the design for the monument at Segrate, and the San Rocco project. Neither the early Rationalist projects of Ungers himself nor the projects of his students have the magico-metaphysically adumbrated greatness or the light-drenched corporeality of Rossi's visions. Instead they penetrate, with an analytical elegance pared down to the

Eckart Reissinger  
Leipziger Platz, Berlin  
1966





299

Friedrich Gilly  
Ground plan of monument to  
Frederick II of Prussia  
Leipziger Platz, Berlin  
1797

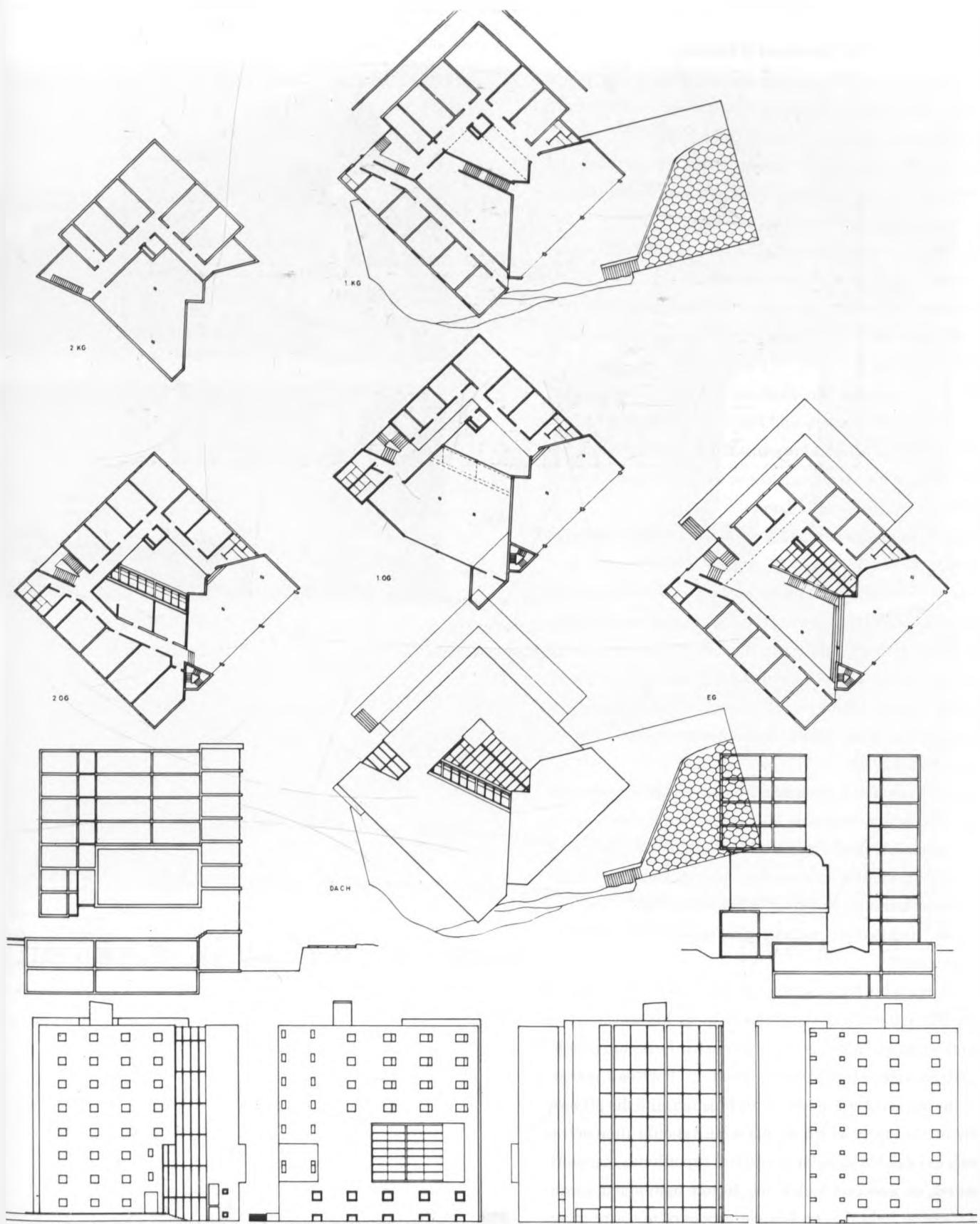
Eckart Reissinger

Block 6

Leipziger Platz, Berlin

(project)

1966



delicacy of a line, into a realm rich in emerging themes, which are studied methodically in all possible directions and concentrated into poetical images. The narrative contents of these themes are generally developed to a much greater multiplicity than in Rossi's works.

301, 302

**ALDO ROSSI**

**The Monument in Segrate**

One of the few realized projects of Aldo Rossi is the monument to the Resistance in Segrate (a small town in the vicinity of Milan). Rossi explained this work succinctly:

*The design closes off the square against the landscape by means of a wall: the wall emphasizes the fact that the square is a construction, that it is architecture.*

*The square's boundaries are also indicated by cylindrical elements, fragments of other architectures.*

*The most important element is the monument honoring the partisans; this is put together out of various architectonic elements and pieces.*

*On Italy's squares the shadows belong to architecture: They indicate the seasons and the hours of the day.*

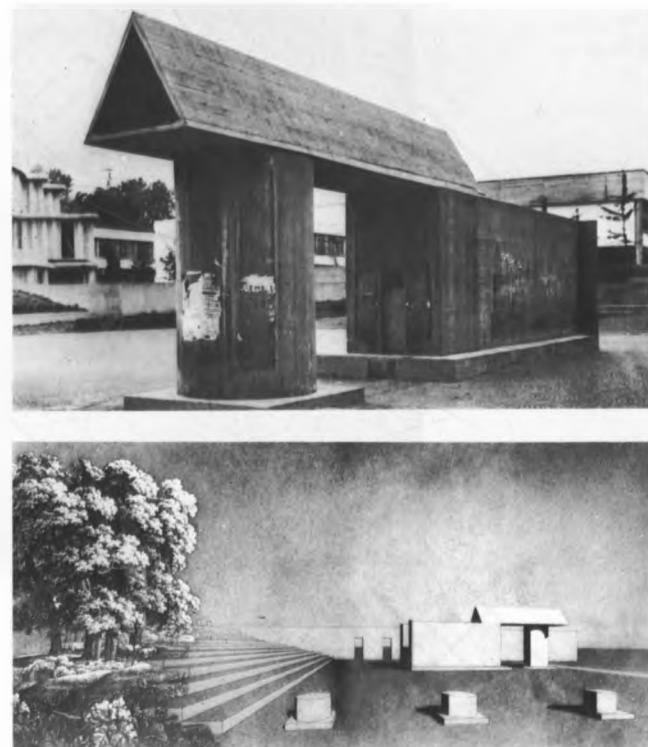
*Frequently the squares are constituted by a single individual building, which is enough to give them their specific local identity, as in Arezzo or in Loreto.<sup>170</sup>*

Like all the other advocates of a Rationalist concept of architecture, Rossi refused to employ nature merely as a means of "loosening up" or "animating" a scene. The trees depicted in one of the views of the Segrate monument (figure 302) stand in sharp contrast to the architecture, and themselves assume an almost monumental character. This classical group of trees, which recurs in many of Rossi's designs, is a historical quotation derived from an engraving by a student of Josef Anton Koch.

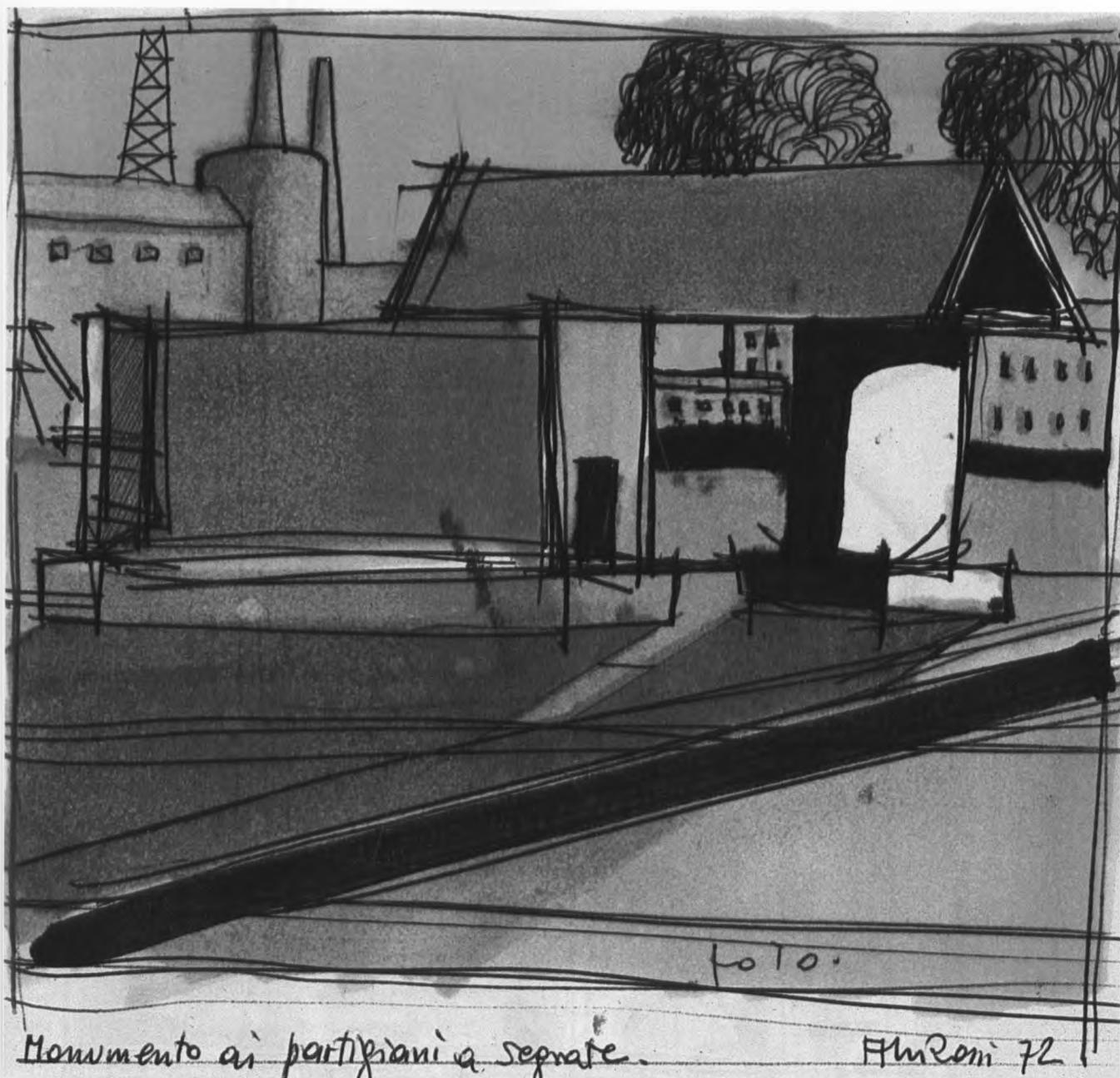
The monument is put together from several basic geometric forms. The whole ensemble is pure geometry: a rectangular block, a cylinder, and a prism. Does it not fit Le Corbusier's definition of architecture as the "correct and magnificent interplay of forms played upon by the rays of light"? Isn't this "modern" architecture in the original sense, as conceived by Le Corbusier?

Interpreting his housing block at Gallaratese, Rossi made a seemingly self-evident statement that, in his usage, has a special meaning: "Meditation on geometric forms has characterized the architecture of every period."<sup>171</sup> For Rossi, geometry is the means of architectural purification, and the primary forms are the ideals which all that is built should approach as closely as possible in order to shed all superfluous elements. However, on a second look at the Segrate monument, meanings come to light that go beyond geometry to evoke mem-

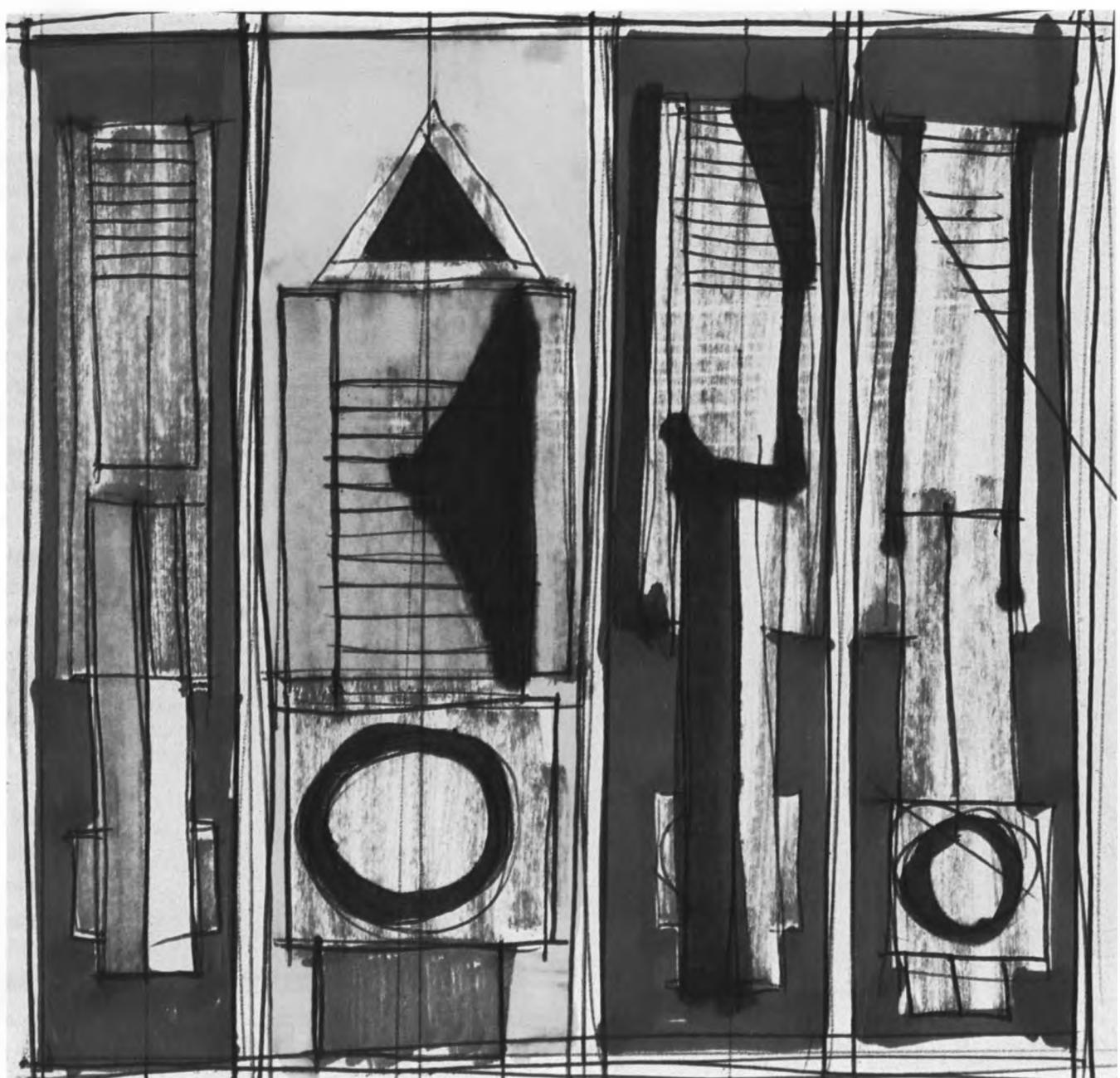
**Aldo Rossi**  
**Monument to the Resistance**  
**Segrate, Italy**  
**1965**



Aldo Rossi  
Monument to the Resistance  
Segrate



Aldo Rossi  
Monument to the Resistance  
Segrate



ories through associations. The prismatic structure is now seen as a shed roof, the rectangular block as a house, and the cylinder as a metaphor for all load-bearing supports. The shapes of the "elements" and "pieces" now become intelligible. They have not been piled together in a "free composition" for an interesting effect; rather, they have been organized to form an image that evokes load and support, a house and a roof. This gives rise to the impression of a simple shelter — an archetypal form. (A different impression would be created if water were to pour from the end of the prism into the elongated box; the monument would then be seen as a fountain.)

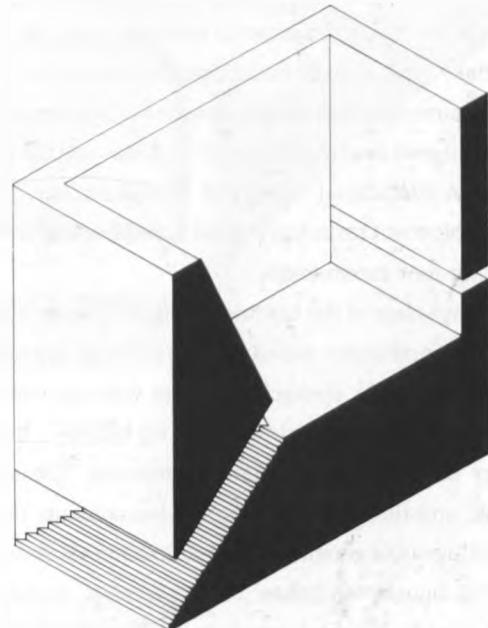
The realization that the cylinder is standing on a plinth awakens memories of historical architecture. Indeed, an early plan for the monument called for several more cylinders, standing in row like stumps of columns. The version shown in figure 302 is enveloped in a historical ambiance. The group of trees and the row of column stumps are, in Rossi's terminology, "fragments of other architectures." The modernity of geometry and the ideality of abstraction are united with a vast background of typological and historical meanings. One can see why Rossi added the following to the above-quoted sentence on the meaning of geometry: "The relationship between geometry and history, that is, the historical application of geometric forms, constitutes a constant characteristic of architecture."<sup>172</sup> As the deepening of the significance of geometric forms has led architecture out of pure abstraction, Rossi's work leads it out of modernism.<sup>173</sup>

#### **The Monument for Cuneo**

Rossi's published oeuvre (from which he omitted a number of early works not marked by the stylistic features of Rationalism) begins with a 1962 design for a monument to the Resistance, which was to be erected in Cuneo. Although it is an almost totally pure statement of the aesthetic of primary geometric forms, this design does not depend entirely on those forms for its effect; it is also fraught with meaningful contents.

A staircase leads up to a platform. The staircase narrows as it rises, and the slanted ceiling that hangs over it makes it seem like a mineshaft or a ramp into the funerary chamber of a pyramid. With each step the oppressive closeness increases. But at the top, one finds oneself in a vacuum-like space. The walls are blank, and there is only a slit of a window. The intended architectural experience is one of ascension and of the contrast between the increasing constriction and the shimmer of hope suggested by the light coming in the window.

This design is one of a series of important but unexecuted projects of the 1960s. These unprecedented deviations from the accepted norms of modernism were not understood by



305

**Aldo Rossi**  
**Monument to the Resistance**  
**Cuneo, Italy (project)**  
**1962**

the architectural clients or by the general public, even though they seemed "modern" in their bareness and their lack of historical allusions. The question that immediately suggested itself was this: Did these attempts to charge geometry with allusive characterization ignore a (perhaps unconscious) basic disposition of European society in the second half of this century to recognize only the factual?

In Europe, the dubious uses to which symbols had been put by Hitler and Stalin had caused a reaction against the representation of "higher sentiments" in public buildings. (The American avant-garde was hardly aware of this problem, because it had begun to draw its contents from the realm of the trivial.) With Rossi's buildings and projects — particularly his monuments to the Resistance — "serious contents" (i.e., public grief over the crimes of the Nazis and the Fascists) were again considered worthy of representation. Thus the dark side of recent history provided a credible and acceptable content for new monuments.

Rossi kept clear of the historical pathos of monumentality. The Cuneo monument stated its case through the restrained means of geometric abstraction. There were no wreaths, no emblems, no monumental pedestal, no tablet — the whole typology of public memorials was missing. The staircase, the shaft, and the window slit provided contents that lifted the building out of geometric abstraction and yet avoided embarrassing figurative clichés. Rossi's general, perhaps even ancient motifs touched upon metaphysical phenomena, creating an almost archetypal quality of the sacred and the ceremonial.

#### The Cemetery in Modena

Rossi made even greater use of geometry's rich potential of symbolic connotations in his project for a cemetery in Modena — his most famous design next to the Gallaratese housing block. Here the character of a monument has been extended to the entire cemetery. All the features of its layout — the strict axial symmetry, the meaningful prominence of several centrally placed buildings, the wall — seem at first glance to belong to the debris of a forbidden historical vocabulary.

The simplest justification of the form of the enlarged cemetery lies in the fact that the adjacent neoclassical cemetery is a walled-in precinct in the shape of a rectangle. Next to it, separated by an administration building, Rossi places a second rectangle. "I thought," he writes, "of fashioning the cemetery on a Rationalist concept of death, as a disruption of life. I tried therefore to represent it as a deserted house with empty windows [figure 307] and as a factory with a smokestack where the work has been disrupted [figure 308]. At the same time I viewed the cemetery as part of the city. For this reason I gave a special importance to the buildings for collective

use. The cemetery is located in the immediate surroundings of the city, in a park area which, however, has been considerably built up already. The cemetery's typological form is characterized by straight passages with porticos along which the graves are arranged. The elements forming the cemetery can be described as follows:

- along the perimeter and under the ground there are two stories of columbaria
- in the center stand the burial vaults
- in the green area are the graves
- the chapel
- the cone represents the [collective sepulchre].<sup>174</sup>

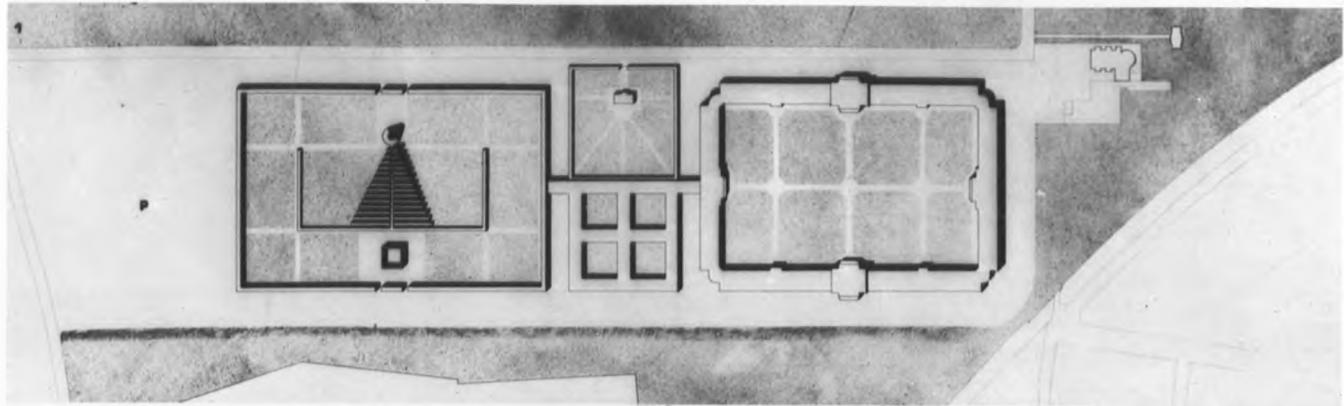
Many of Rossi's drawings for this project recall his monument for Cuneo.

The red brick building just inside the entrance is empty and roofless. Vacant window openings perforate the building and its shadow (figure 309). Here, again, Rossi chose to turn a primary figure — a cube — into a profound symbol. Directly opposite it, along the same axis, a plain, bare cone rises behind the densely packed rows of burial vaults. As is clear from the above quotation, Rossi wanted it to be seen as the smokeless chimney of a factory whose work had been disrupted; however, this cone is also meaningful in geometric terms: It provides a contrasting form against the cube. The interior of the cone is organized as an assembly room, with concentric circles of stepped seats filling the floor. The complex attains an austere grandeur through the simple lining up of the columbaria along the four sides of the rectangle. Simple porticos with an almost endless row of supports frame the complex. The individual columbaria can be experienced only as elements of a series, as if to reinforce the thought that in death all human beings are equal.

This project also has subliminal contents that go beyond geometry for their meaning. For example, in one of the early drawings (figure 311) a fish skeleton — possibly an emblem of death, possibly a Christian symbol of eternal life — appears just below the somewhat skeleton-like plan of the burial vaults.

This fully formulated project, which belongs among the paradigmatic designs of Rationalist architecture, contains all the levels of meaning that Rossi used in his work. The effect of geometric figures determines the expression of the whole complex. Care is taken not to impair the effect of the ideal forms, not to amalgamate them through ornament or intermediary forms. Architecture gains a high degree of autonomy. But at the same time, Rossi respects what he calls the "context" (in this case, the existing cemetery). As Rossi puts it, to "immerse a building into its context" means to give a

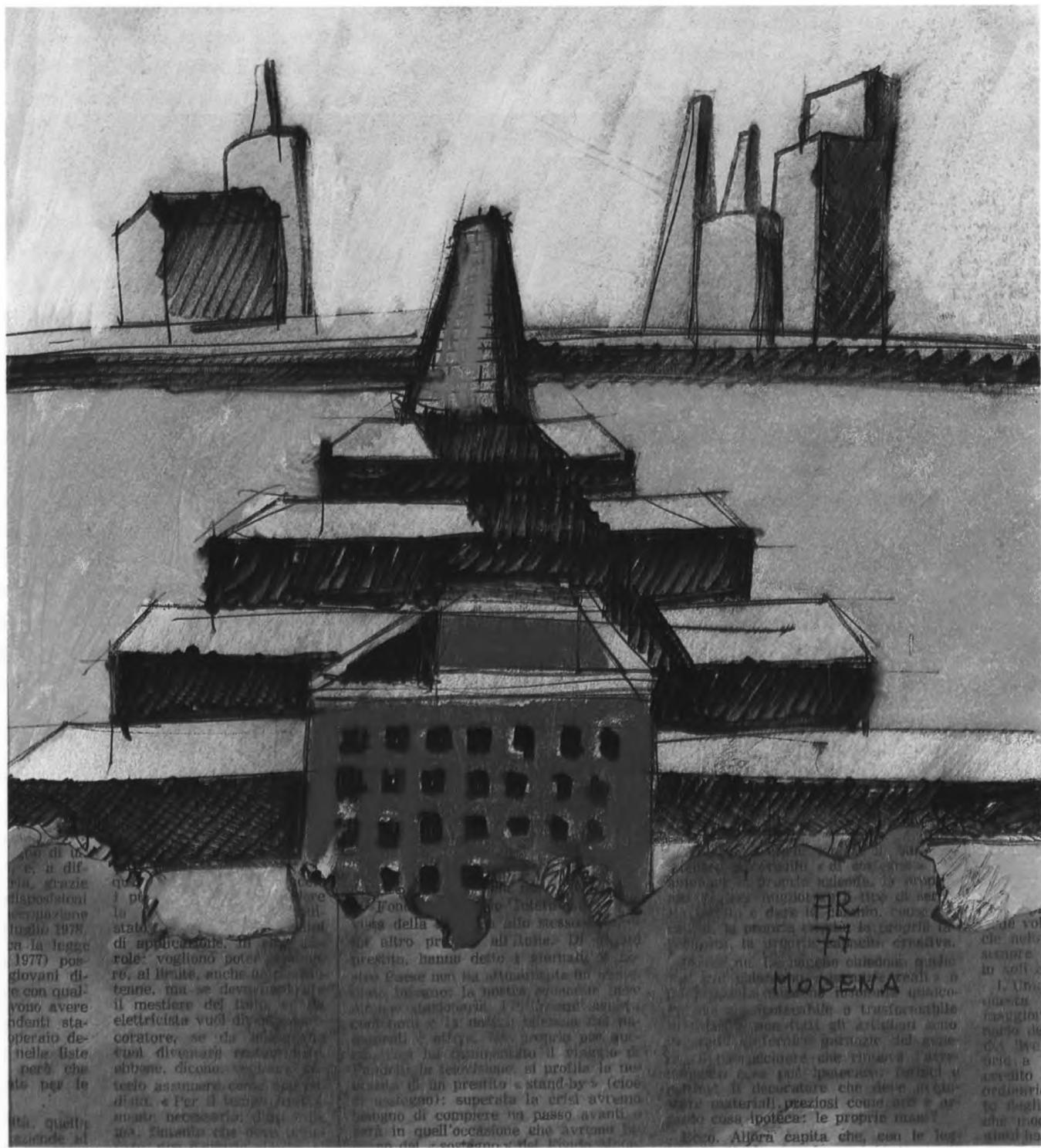
**Aldo Rossi**  
**Ground plan for**  
**Modena cemetery**  
**(Including old cemetery)**  
**1971–1985**

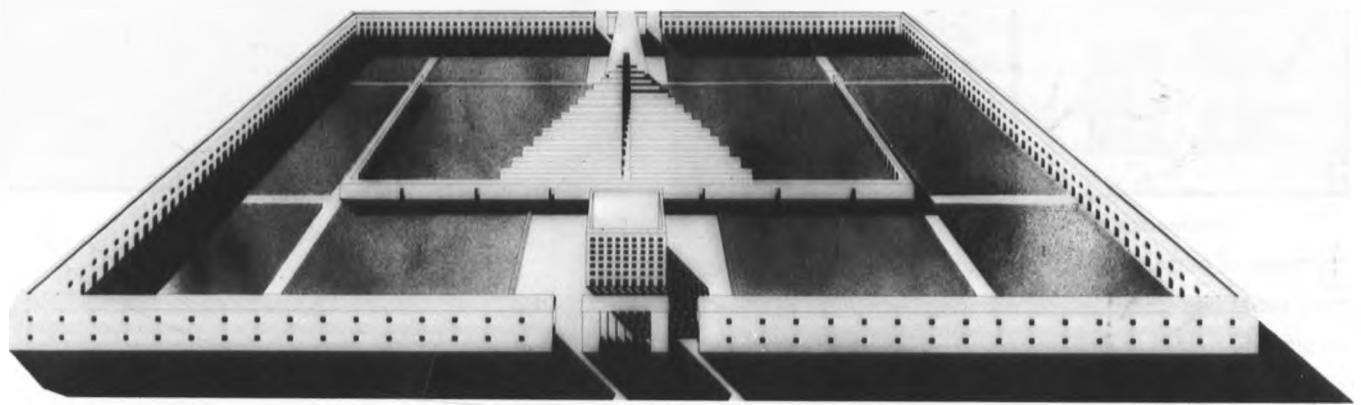


307

**Aldo Rossi**  
**House with empty windows**  
**Modena**  
**(project)**

Aldo Rossi  
 Cemetery as  
 "shut-down factory"

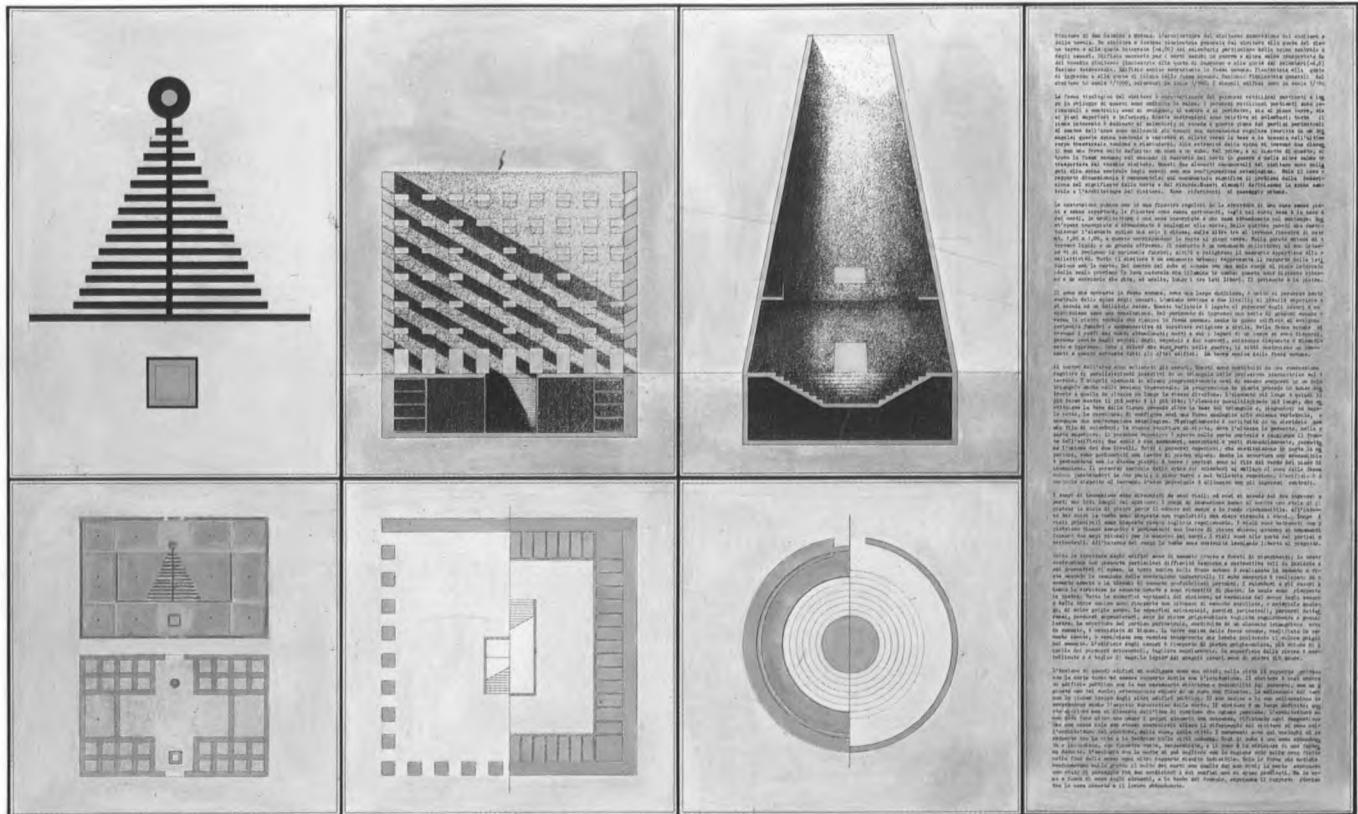




309

245

**Aldo Rossi  
Individual elements of  
Modena Cemetery**



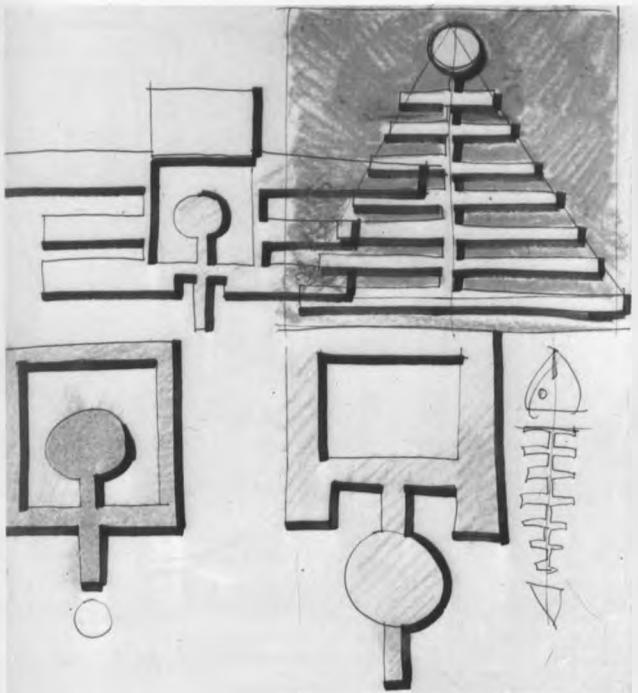
place a deeper permanence. This is also achieved through the recognition of a distinct typology. The overall form of the cemetery complex, with its extended porticos of columbaria, dispels any questions about its place and purpose. This is an Italian cemetery. One can even tell that it is set in Lombardy and not in Naples.

In this project the ideality of geometry and the expressive power of typology are combined with what might be called the symbolic language of monumentality. For example, the door-like columbaria, each with a window opening above it, suggest the upright human figure. The cubical building, with its many windows, recalls a housing block and thus becomes a metaphor for human society. The empty, floorless interior makes this building a pure sign, recalling Ungers's statement of the "right of architecture to have an autonomous language."<sup>175</sup>

Rossi noted that "in the squares of Italy the shadows are part of architecture, they indicate the seasons and the hours of the day."<sup>176</sup> And indeed he made dramatic use of sunshine and shadow in many of his drawings for the Modena cemetery, often to throw the corporeality of form into relief. In some of Rossi's drawings of the cubical building, rays of sunlight fall at an angle in a way that emphasizes the structure's emptiness. Rossi's elevation plans are always given depth of shadows, and the individual building structures emerge from them as isolated objects on an empty surface. (One is reminded of Giorgio de Chirico's *pittura metafisica*.) The availability of plenty of sunlight allows the use of a larger format and permits a greater repetition of individual features before architecture threatens to become monotonous.

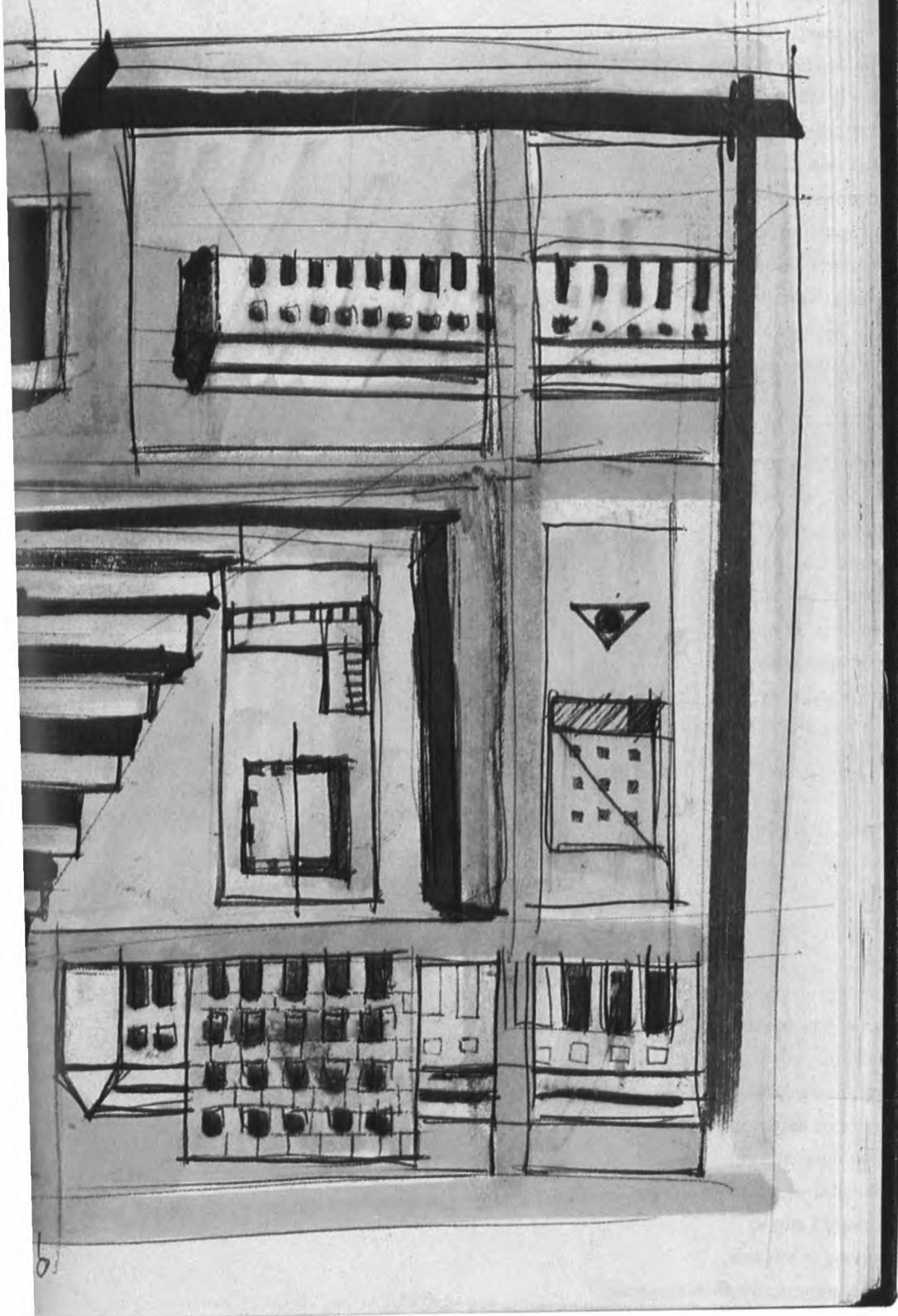
#### Typology and Monumentality

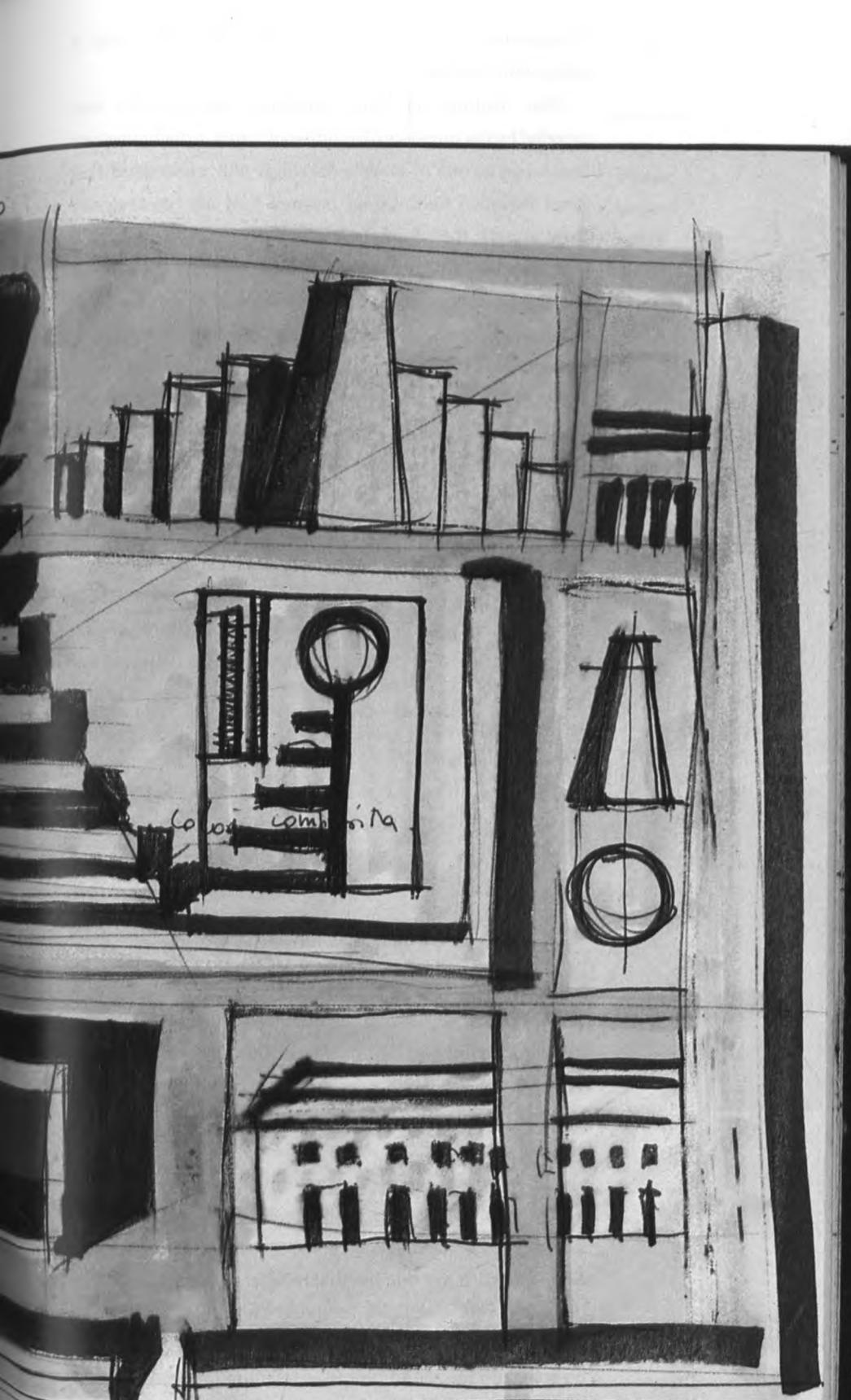
Rossi's answer to functionalism consisted in restoring what the exclusive concentration on utility had taken away: the possibility of viewing a building as a form obeying its own autonomous architectonic laws. Attempts to free architecture from the bonds of utility often end in whimsicality, in subjective expressionism, in toying with "free geometry." But Rossi imposed new constraints, under which architecture is possible only when it can relate to historically given elements or to a typology. When Rossi was asked what he meant by typology, he answered: "Not Durand and his collection of building types. I mean life. Typology is life." He then referred to Adolf Loos, whose writings he knows as thoroughly as Hölderlin's poetry and Walter Benjamin's prose: "One cannot change the position of a sleeping dog before the stove. Someone may drop by and say that it would be better to stand before the stove or to stretch out completely. Nevertheless, the dog won't change his position. This is typology. People come by and talk of the Democrazia Cristiana, of communism and socialism — this is all very well, but what interests me is man.



311

Il giroc della mure





312

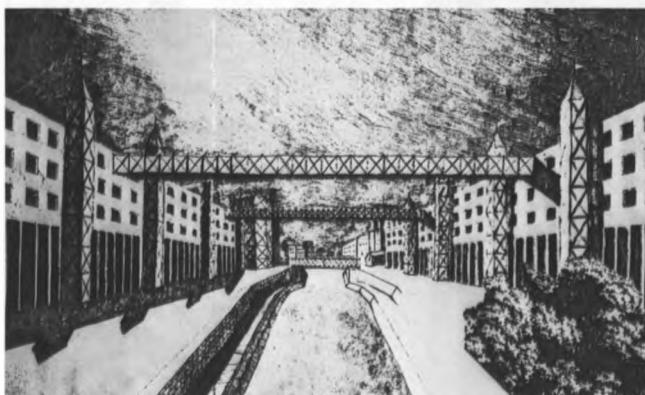
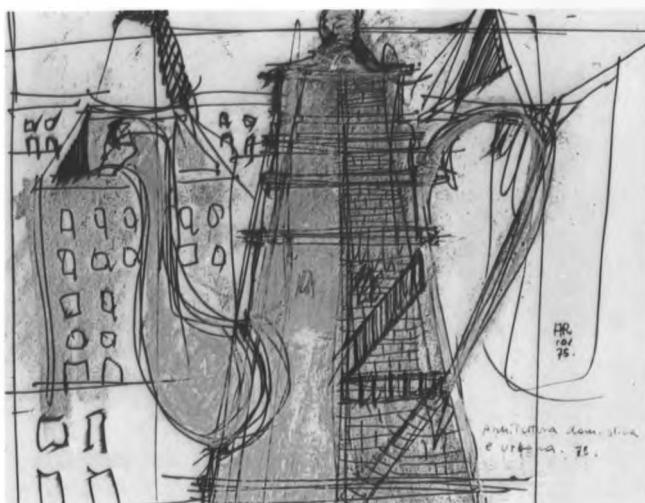
Aldo Rossi

*The Game of Death*  
(cemetery, Modena)

1972

Il cimitero di Modena - Aldo Rossi 1972

**Aldo Rossi**  
*Architettura domestica e urbana*  
 1975



**Aldo Rossi**  
*Housing project on  
 Verbindungskanal  
 Berlin*  
 1976

I think about that which seems self-evident. Why soup is eaten with a spoon.”<sup>177</sup>

After reading the above quotation, anyone who was puzzled by the presence of a coffeepot, a fork, a doghouse, or a beach bag in one of Rossi's drawings will understand that Rossi included these things because they are typologically fixed objects; their forms are so self-evidently “archetypal” that they cannot be changed in principle, in spite of all stylistic intentions and innovative talents. There is a large drawing by Rossi in which a blue coffeepot occupies the whole field of vision (figure 313). In the pot's body is a conical architectonic structure, which turns out to be one of Rossi's stocky “smokestacks,” with a flight of stairs inside. The coffeepot, which becomes architecture, is an architectural type in itself. It is a norm in the sense that its functioning no longer presents any problem. Its functions have long ago become part and parcel of what is viewed as its self-evident form. Rossi gave this drawing, which shows in the background a building reminiscent of the brick cube of the Modena project, the title *Architettura domestica e urbana*. The coffeepot becomes a “monument,” and indeed its archetypal shape and its ideal form might be called monumental.

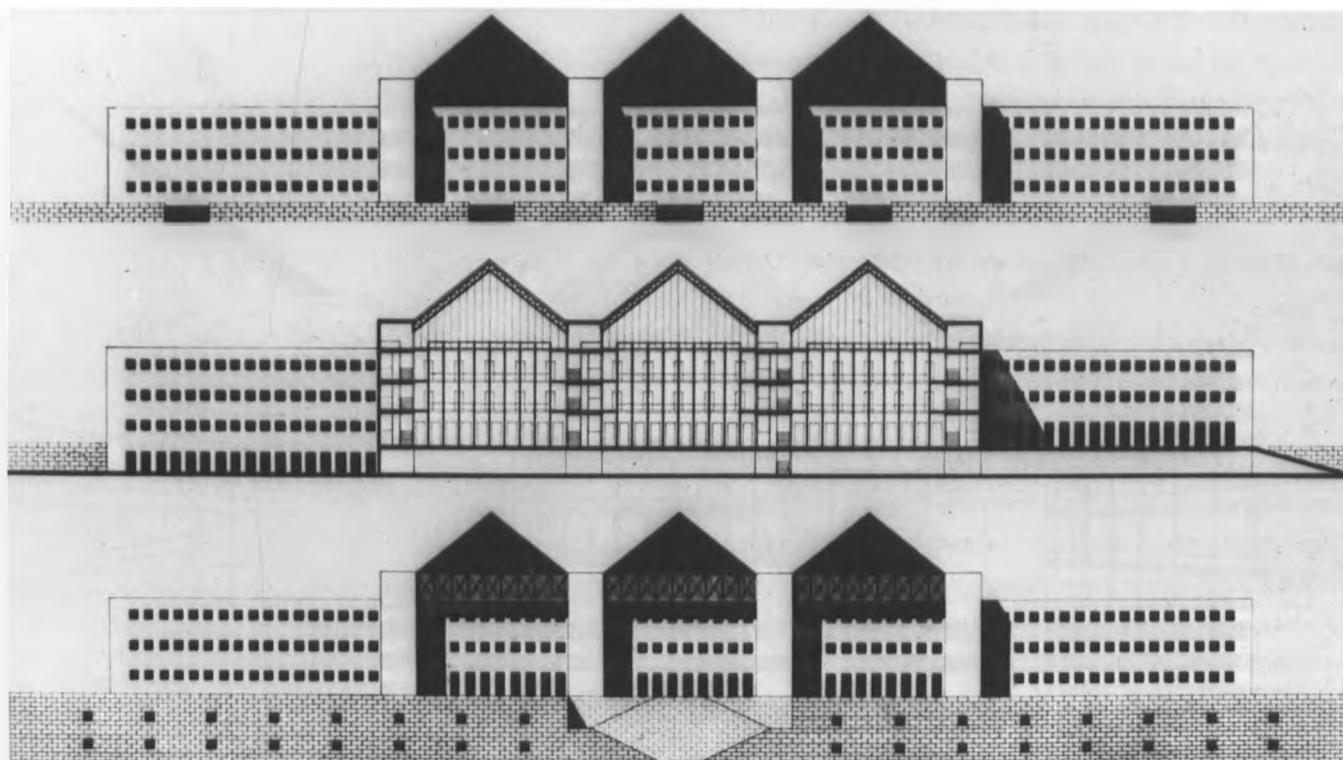
Rossi developed a special concept of the monumental while working on a design for a housing project on the Verbindungskanal in Berlin (figure 314): “Especially in Berlin I got the impression that today the historical center is something more comprehensive than a mere stylistic concept tied to the monuments and buildings of the past. For us today industrial plants, gasometers, storage plants, canals, and railroads are also monuments, which alternate with residential areas.”<sup>178</sup> And he justified his design for this canal with the following argument: “In this design I have in view a linear typology, the formation of a large front, running parallel to the canal, for which, like cathedrals, gas works provide the background. . . .”<sup>179</sup>

In Rossi's drawings, the background often serves as a point of departure. For instance, in figure 308 (above) the Modena cemetery is depicted against a background of actual smokestacks and silos in a manner that reinforces the symbolism of disrupted work that Rossi intended his conical building to convey, and the contrast between the gray background and the colorful foreground produces a fiction that goes beyond the effect of abstract geometry.

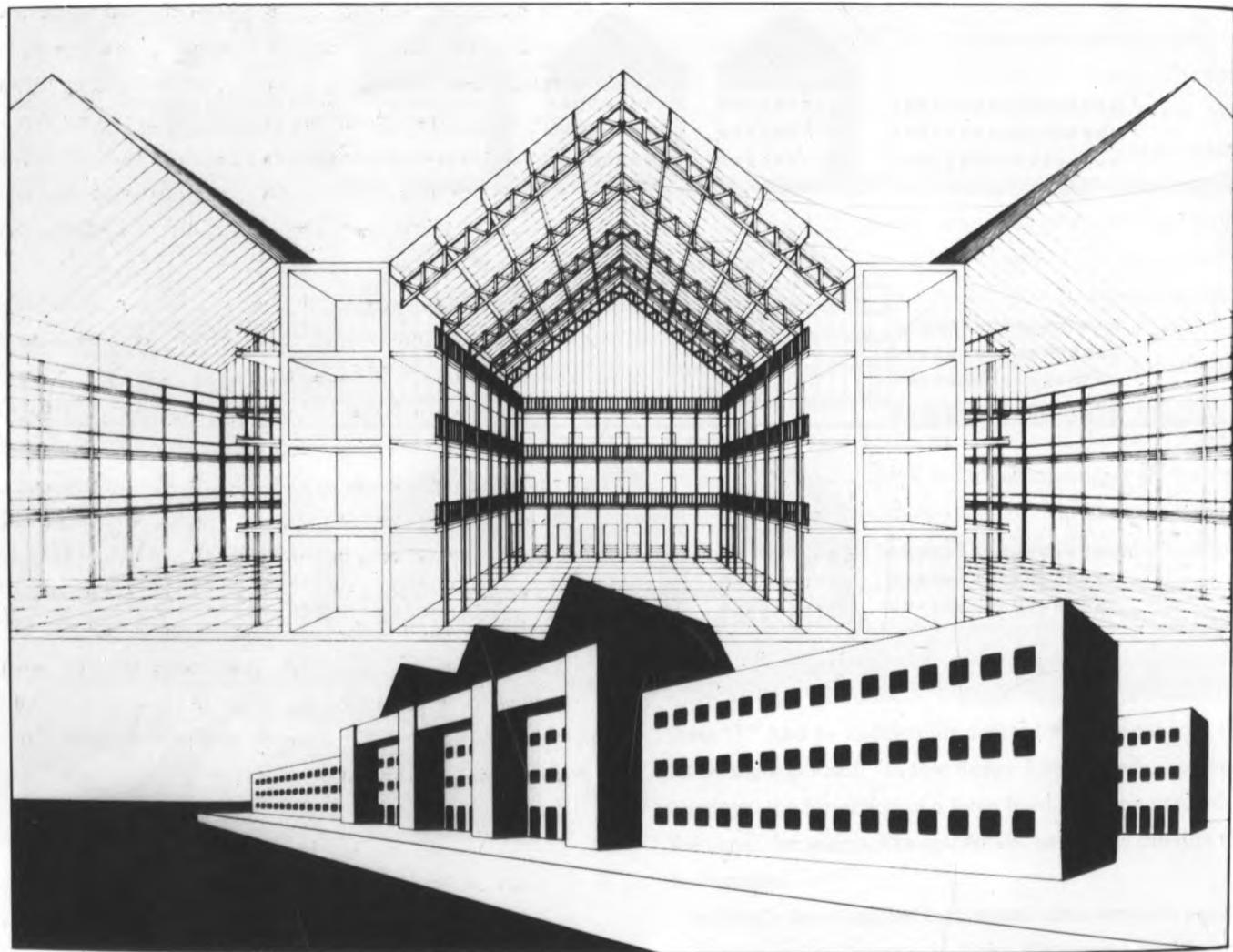
#### The Regional Administration Building in Trieste

Rossi's fundamental achievement has been his return to typologically fixed forms of architecture. Standing in opposition to the reduction of form to primary figures, Rossi has attempted to reduce the multiplicity of forms to a few forms marked by typical characteristics. This approach runs the risk of burdening the typologically fixed forms with problematic

Aldo Rossi  
Regional Administration Building  
Trieste  
(project)  
1974



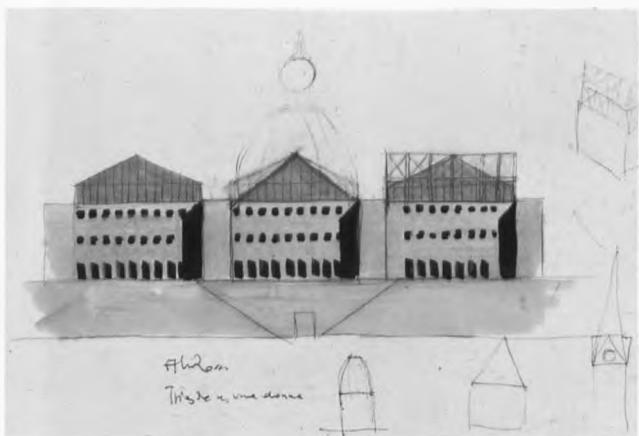
Aldo Rossi  
Regional Administration Building  
Trieste  
(project)  
1974



connotations, and of inviting the misunderstanding of those who are not willing to recognize the novelty and the innovative power of Rossi's work.

The attempt to recapture a certain idea of public architecture with a social impact is aptly illustrated by Rossi's design for a Regional Administration Building in Trieste (figure 315). But for the four huge posts, the one-story-high architraves, and the three voluminous saddle roofs, this could be a typical linear building of the Modern Movement, much like Otto Salvisberg's "White City" or the designs of Ludwig Hilberseimer. However, these supermotifs claim public significance for the building. In this design the typology of modern row housing is combined with the typology of classical architecture. Rossi has seen to it that the emblematic features signaling monumentality do not stick out as a historicizing formal apparatus. The towering posts are not colossal pilasters, and the architrave actually supports the upper gallery story.

The strangest aspect of this design is the use of saddle roofs to cover the three halls. No such roofs occur in historical monumental architecture. In a design sketch in which Rossi was trying out various roof forms (figure 317), a bulbous Venetian dome is penciled in. The size of the three saddle roofs also suggests a dome. However, modern equivalent had to be found for that historical monumental form. Rossi chose saddle roofs not only because they are less expensive than a dome but also because they fit the preference of our times for simplicity. Nevertheless, the roofs achieve a strong symbolic effect through their allusion to a house. Here we see the quintessence of Rossi's approach: the use of archetypally house-like primary forms rather than complex form clusters and modernist slickness.



317

Aldo Rossi  
Sketch for  
Regional Administration Building  
1974

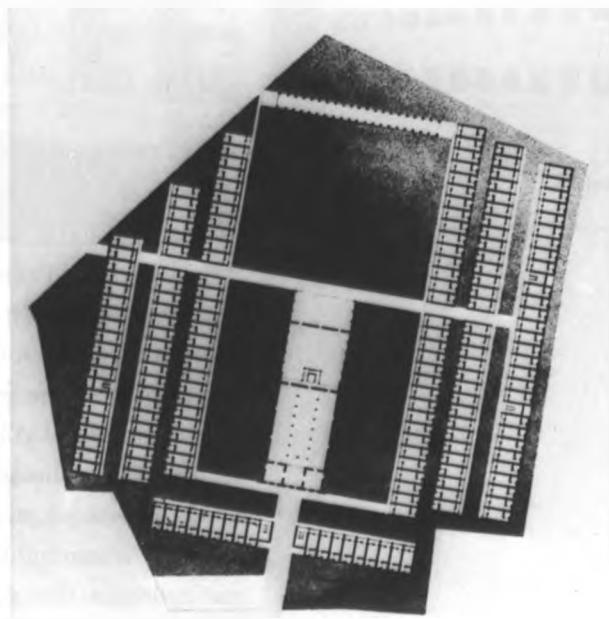
#### The Student Village

Rossi's 1976 project for a "student village" (figures 318, 319) is an especially good example of his reduction of architecture to archetypal forms. Here each individual student gets a unit resembling a child's drawing of a house, with a peaked roof, a door, and a window. It is as if the object here was to develop a collective whole out of the simplest imaginable elements. The many units are grouped around the common building much as in an old village the houses are grouped around a church. The oculus in the gable — one of Rossi's favorite motifs — was adopted from the designs of Heinrich Tessenow,<sup>180</sup> whose buildings and writings Rossi and his Milanese colleague Giorgio Grassi had studied diligently. A monument resembling a chimney (or an obelisk, or a totem pole) was to stand in the middle of the square behind the common building.

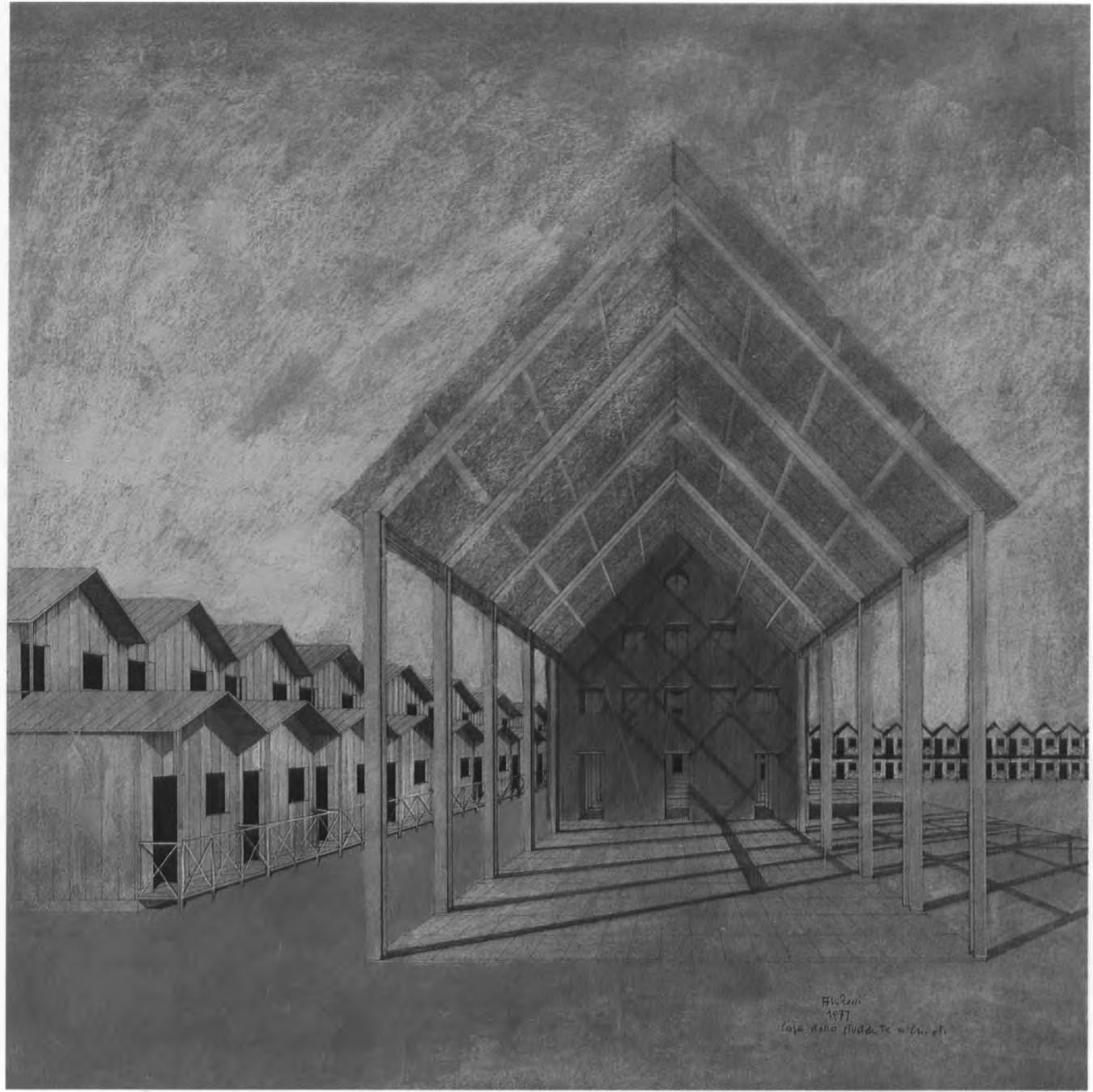
The student village was Rossi's prototype of a village free of complication, cultural debris, and obsessive detail and

318

Aldo Rossi  
Student Village  
Chieti, Italy  
(project)  
1976



254



319

Aldo Rossi  
Student Village  
Chieti, Italy  
(project)  
1976

stripped down to the essential.<sup>181</sup> Rossi's daring consists in his intention of sweeping away the complexities of an over-inflated civilization.

#### The Housing Block in Gallaratese

Rossi's first large project to be realized was a 600-foot-long housing block in Gallaratese, near Milan.<sup>182</sup> This building clearly had its origin in Das Neue Bauen's storehouse of "Pathosforms." It was part of Rossi's program to take up the beginnings of Modernism again in order to overcome the functionalism of the International Style. As was discussed above, Das Neue Bauen contained planning motifs that—in contrast with Functionalism—carried within them strongly expressive contents.

Figure 322 shows that Rossi originally planned a building that would not have differed markedly from the usual housing projects of the 1960s. The unusual things about this design were the extreme length of the building and the thin, closely spaced supports holding up the building and subdividing it like bulkhead partitions. The smooth facade, without any relief and without any sign that might represent the action of load and support, was to be articulated only by long courses of horizontal windows. This would have suited the requirements of Das Neue Bauen and of postwar functionalism. The building might perhaps have deserved notice for the consistency of its ground plan, but otherwise it would have been only a better-than-average example of European modernism. No one would have wasted any words on it. The typology of a modern housing block would have been realized down to the last detail of its elevation system.

But Rossi did not want to recognize the established typology any longer. Furthermore, a 600-foot block of poured reinforced concrete required a number of expansion joints. Rossi took advantage of that necessity to cut the structure in two (figure 323), and to dramatize the cut by varying the ground level from one side to the other, with steps at the break. Most important, he added four hefty round pillars, which break the rhythm of the flat supports and bring solemnity to the otherwise dryly calculated order. Since Le Corbusier's early buildings, round supports had been a routine feature of modernism. However, here they were turned into giant, primal pillars that gave the previously insipid building a monumental dimension and made it a public provocation against modernism. In addition, the horizontal<sup>183</sup> windows were turned into closely spaced square openings that followed the galleries and provided the exact spacing and articulation for the window and loggia openings on the opposite side. One can only marvel at how little it took to turn a "modern" housing block into a "rationalist" one. Only the Saint Andrew's crosses over the stairwell grids are derived from the standard motifs of neoclassicism.

In the Triennale catalogue of 1973, with which "Rationalism" was founded, Rossi included only a section from the Gallaratese building—the break and the "elephant's feet." This motif appears once more in the drawing that concludes the first chapter of the catalog—a poetically fictive drawing in which the split building emerges, elevated on its round pillars, from a cityscape. (See figure 325.)

Rossi has used the motif of a long, narrow building on thin slabs and heavy round supports over and over again, varying and reapplied it as if he expects a type to emerge from this innovation.

#### *L'architettura della città*

Rossi's most important piece of writing on architecture is his theoretical treatise *L'architettura della città* [The Architecture of the City], published in 1966.<sup>184</sup> This book had less of an impact than Robert Venturi's *Complexity and Contradiction* (which came out in the same year)—perhaps because Rossi imbedded his new theses in a comprehensive exegesis, whereas Venturi took direct sensory experience as his starting point. Yet Venturi and Rossi had the same intention: to combat functionalism by referring to historical examples. Venturi opposed the extreme simplification advocated by modernism and was particularly provoked by standardized forms such as used by Mies, Rossi was set against the belief that one can produce important architecture on the basis of the mere definition of function.

According to Rossi, history has proved that function has had to adjust itself to form in the course of time. As examples Rossi mentions the amphitheater of Arles, which was turned into a residential complex, and the Roman Coliseum, which by order of Sixtus was supposed to house the workshops of shoemakers. In his "Comment on the German Edition" Rossi writes: "The city of Split [Yugoslavia], which grew up within the walls of Diocletian's Palace and gave new uses and new meanings to unchangeable forms, is emblematic of the meaning of architecture and of the relationship between architecture and the city, where the broadest adaptability to a multiplicity of functions corresponds to an extreme precision of form."<sup>185</sup> This statement is the opposite of the functionalist credo. At the peak of the functionalist boom Rossi dared to come out with the heretical view that the definition of function is actually of secondary importance, for function adapts to the given form if the form is significant enough. This helps to elucidate why in his Triennale catalog Rossi had cited a particular passage from Behne's *Zweckbau*: "While the functionalist seeks the greatest possible adaptation to a highly specific purpose, the rationalist seeks the best possible solution applicable to a great number of cases." Rossi may well have been thinking of Hugo Häring's struggle for the most exact correspondence to function, yet what he had in mind as

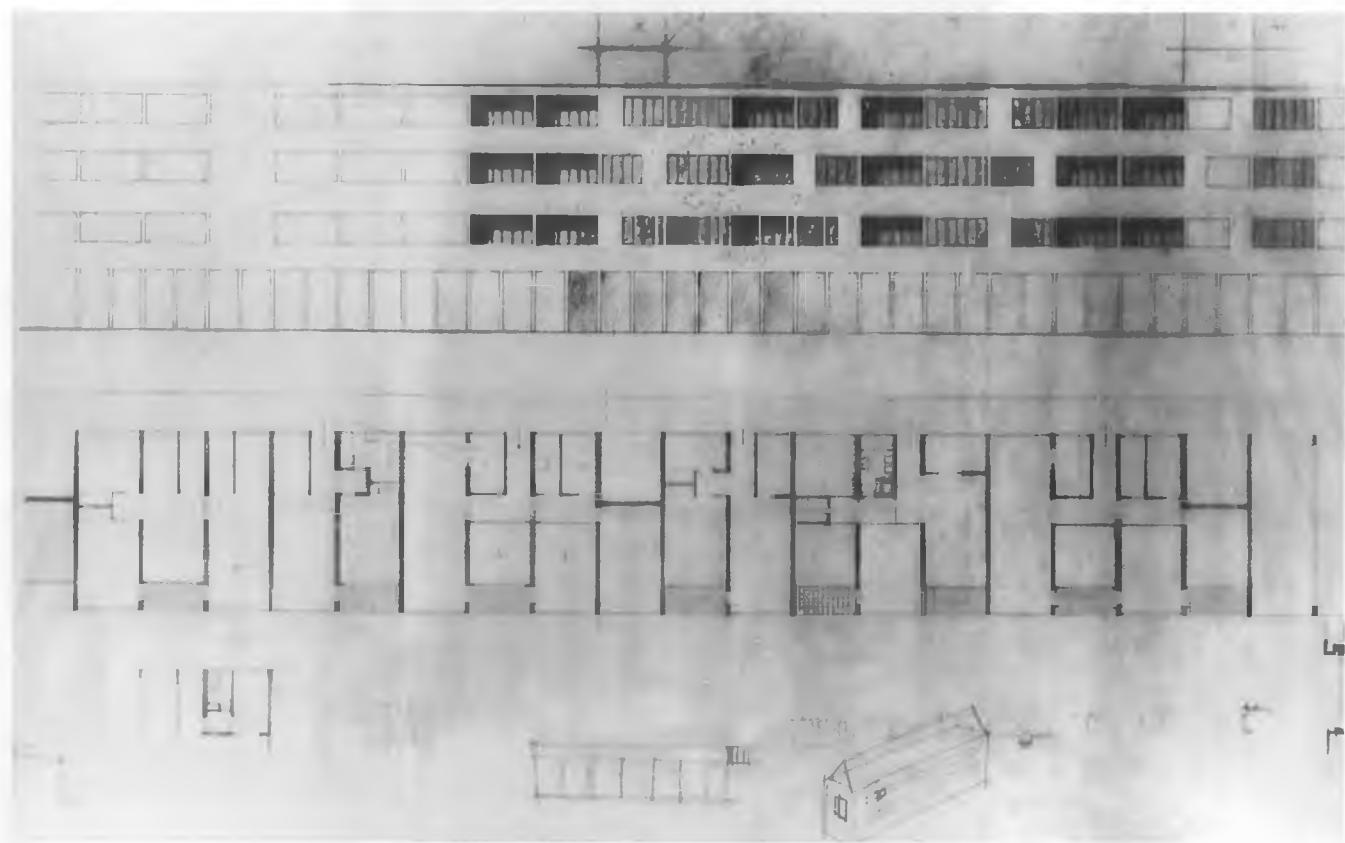
Aldo Rossi  
Housing block  
Gallaratese, Italy  
1969–1973



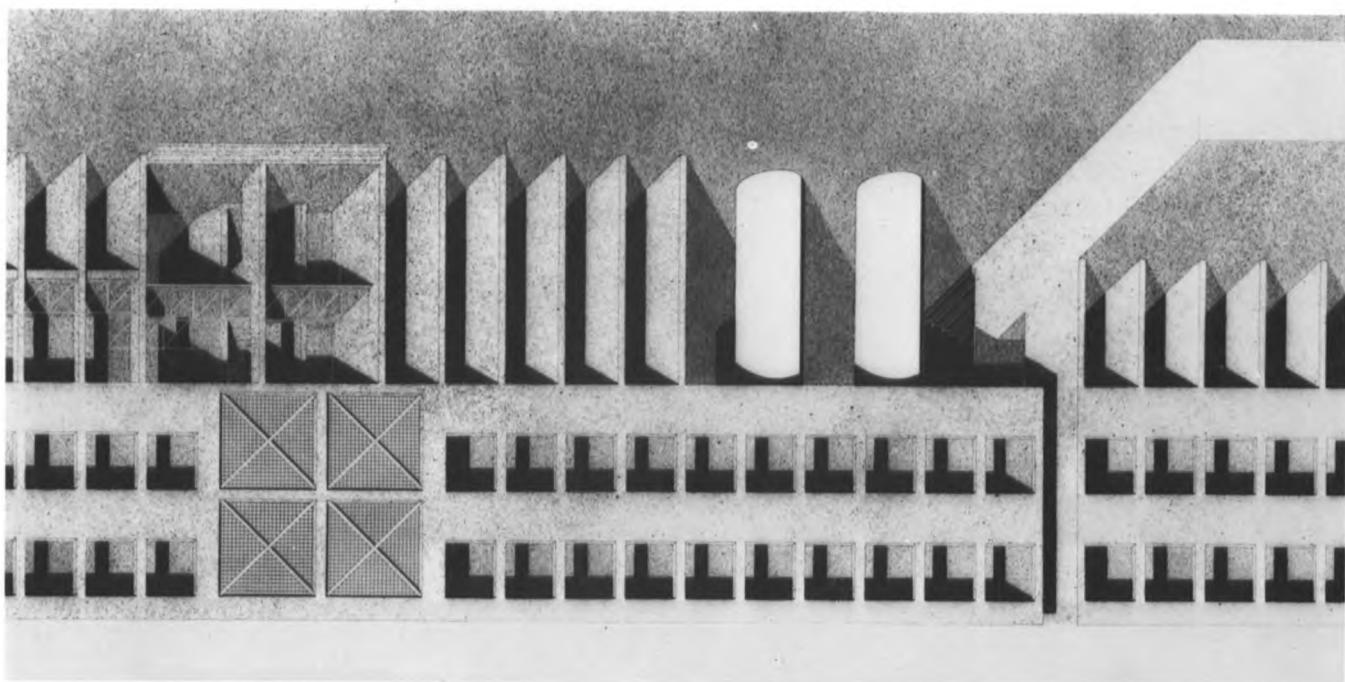
Aldo Rossi  
Open block with arcade  
Gallaratese



Aldo Rossi  
Preliminary design for  
Gallaratese



260



324



323



325

Aldo Rossi  
Preliminary sketch for  
engraving in Triennale catalog  
1973

a possible alternative was not Mies's multipurpose building but a building defined on different principles: "The building had to be 'pregnant' only in its form and meaning, its function did not have to be immediately readable."

Rossi argues that functional and organic architecture, the two main streams of *Das Neue Bauen*, go back to a common origin, which accounts for their weakness and their fundamental error: robbing form of its complex motivation. On the one hand, a type is reduced to a mere schema for the arrangement of individual elements, a diagram of traffic patterns. On the other hand, architecture is no longer accorded any autonomous quality. Consequently, according to the theory of *Das Neue Bauen*, the aesthetic intentions and needs that precede the building of a city and constitute its complex relationships cannot be analyzed any further.

Rossi's comment that the "complex motivation" of architectural form had lost its complexity through its subservience to function could well have come from the pen of Venturi, and the analysis of the city undertaken by Rossi might have been demanded by Venturi. However, Rossi's argument takes a European turn:

*This theory, which results from the analysis of urban reality, contradicts the popular thesis that just with the planning of functions alone a certain shape can automatically be created. In reality it is the forms (and certainly not only in so far as they fulfill a function) that bring a city into existence. In this sense, the individual building is an essential component of the urban reality. Thereby it receives a meaning which does not result from its conception as an abstract container of a number of changing functions. I know very well that this alternative to the functional concept of city planning popular today is hard to define and that it runs up against difficulties of many kinds in its realization. Nevertheless, I am firmly convinced that we will not overcome the damaging consequences of functionalism as long as we do not see clearly the importance of the form and the logical processes of architecture.*<sup>186</sup>

From these observations Rossi draws an initially surprising conclusion—a conclusion that leads far afield from Venturi's plea for an unassuming architecture that fits in with everyday reality, that reveals its subtlety only at second glance though at first it seems to conform to its "ugly and ordinary" surroundings. Rossi demands the very opposite: monuments. His analysis of the historically grown city culminates in the conclusion that its architectural monuments, its "primary artifacts," are the repository of the collective memory of society and the culmination of urban development: "In . . . Athens, those elements which we have called primary urban artifacts . . . are effectively defined as the generating elements of the city. . . ."<sup>187</sup> "Precisely because the city is preeminently a collective fact it is defined by and exists in those works that

are of an essentially collective nature. Although such works arise as a means of constituting the city, they soon become an end, and this is their being and their beauty. The beauty resides both in the laws of architecture which they embody and in the collective's reasons for desiring them."<sup>188</sup>

Rossi arrives at the view that "the term context"<sup>189</sup> . . . is mostly an impediment to research. To context is opposed the idea of the monument. Beyond its historically determined existence, the monument has a reality that can be subjected to analysis. . . .<sup>190</sup> One of the subheads in Rossi's third chapter — "I monumenti. Critica al concetto di ambiente" ["Monuments: Critique of the concept of context"] — captures his intentions even more precisely. In order to emphasize the role of monuments, Rossi recalls an image: "I remember in the postwar years the sight of Cologne Cathedral in that destroyed city; nothing can conjure up the power that this work, standing intact among the ruins, had on the imagination. . . . The analogy of the value of monuments in destroyed cities serves mainly to clarify two points: first, that it is not the context or some illusionistic quality that enables us to understand a monument; and second, that only by comprehending the monument as a singular urban artifact, or by contrasting it with other urban artifacts, can we attain a sense of the architecture of the city."<sup>191</sup>

Indeed, Rossi wants to speak of architecture only when it is seen as "the architecture of the city" — that is, in its comprehensive natural, historical, and political setting. Assessing what is valuable about architecture, he avoids details (organizational schemes, the functional justifications of the highway network, zoning, and development plans) and dwells instead on the "soul of the city" and its not always rationally explicable effect on the people. References that might appear to be relics of Romanticism acquire objective meaning in Rossi's analysis. The architectural monument is valued as the repository of a collective consciousness, and its significance as primary element in the creation of a city is emphasized in a way that sharply contradicts the numerous contextual theories that, in their overconcern with the total fabric of the city and the ambience of the small structures, had forgotten the communicative value of the individual monument.

It would be wrong to suggest that Rossi has no sense of the manifold interconnections that make up a city. He does speak of "the recognition of the city as a complex structure in which parts can be found that function as works of art,"<sup>192</sup> and he quotes Francesco Milizia's statement that "even without extravagant buildings, cities can appear beautiful and breathe desire"; yet he follows the latter quotation with Milizia's next sentence: "But to speak of a beautiful city is also to speak of good architecture."<sup>193</sup>

Rossi's book does not expressly point to conclusions vis-à-

vis present-day architecture; there are only implicit pointers and historical examples. Just when the reader has become accustomed to discussions of historical phenomena, Rossi gives a clear indication that he assumes that the erection of monumenti is a perfectly natural task for the architect of today: "... we can design a 'monument.' ... to do so requires an architecture; that is to say, a style."<sup>194</sup> This is what antagonized the modernists so. Rossi defended himself against their sharp attacks with a counterargument: "There must always be something to which architecture is referring, but present-day architects tended to forget this fundamental precondition." He quoted a passage from one of Adolf Loos's responses to his critics: "If we find a mound six feet long and three feet wide in the forest, formed into a pyramid, shaped by a shovel, we become serious and something in us says, 'someone lies buried here.' That is architecture."<sup>195</sup>

Although Rossi and Venturi agree that the decisive fault of functionalism lies in its opposition to communication, and although both men plead for the fictive character of architecture, their ways of approaching representational contents draw them far apart. Rossi (like Ungers) has in mind the seriousness of the monumental, while Venturi (like Moore) is thinking of the symbolization of the everyday, of the break with representational forms. Concerned as they are with establishing communicativeness in the medium of architecture, all these architects think in terms of the historical level of reference — the level at which Loos's mound is pure architecture because its meaning can be read from its shape. "This," Rossi writes, "is possible only through the historicity of architecture, for whose forms antiquity even today seems to have found valid solutions. This is why the great architects of all times have seriously endeavored to comprehend the architecture of antiquity, as if there are unchanging relations between forms and their meanings, although in reality this relation finds in each case an individual solution."<sup>196</sup> For Rossi, to make meaning visible means to recognize at the same time the historicity of architecture. Applied on his own building, this means that "the relation between geometry and history, that is, the historical use of geometric forms, constitutes a continuous particular quality of architecture."<sup>197</sup>

#### ITALIAN RATIONALISM

Italy proved to be fertile ground for the ideas of Rossi and his collaborators. However, without Rossi's prominence, his students (e.g. Gianni Braghieri), his more distant adherents (e.g. Franco Purini and Francesco Venezia), and his comrades in and around Milan (e.g. Pierluigi Nocolin) would have remained largely unknown. Of Rossi's many students and followers I will discuss only a few who developed Rossi's

concept further or who (like Giorgio Grassi) participated directly in the development of Rationalism.

#### Giorgio Grassi:

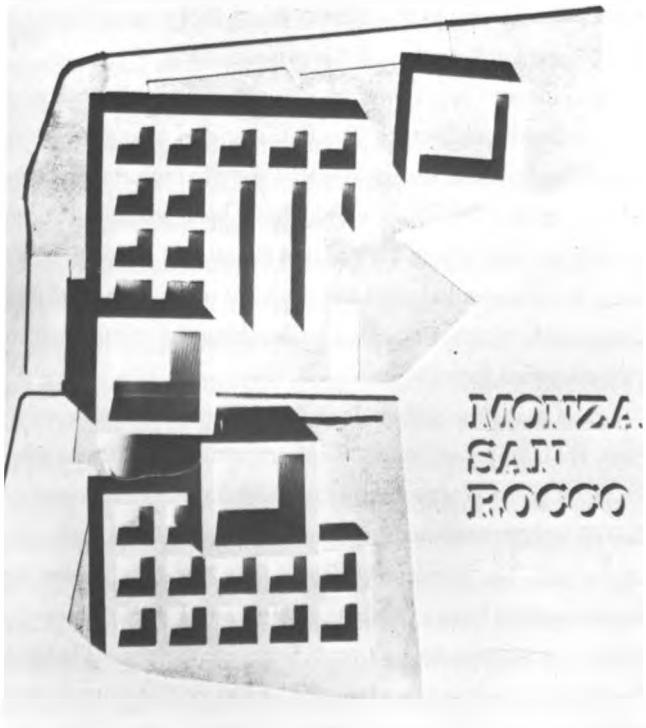
##### Opposition to "Experimentalism"

Next to Rossi, the Milanese architect Giorgio Grassi is the most important proponent of Italian Rationalism. Most of his early works, such as the 1966 design for a housing project on the outskirts of Monza (figure 326), were collaborations with Rossi. The history of this design might throw some light on the different approaches of the two architects.

The characterless suburban site called for a distinct and well-defined architecture. The dense grid of courtyard units intermixed with larger squares that were to include the communal service buildings would have been extended more evenly over the whole surface had Grassi had his way; however, Rossi prevailed with his proposal of a slight axial displacement, which amounted to breaking the complex into two staggered formations.

Grassi seeks the self-evident, inconspicuous, simple solution. He is opposed to the "experimentalism" of those who constantly strive after innovation and forget the fundamentals of architecture, its tradition. Like Rossi, Grassi seeks the archetypal. Much more rigorously than Rossi, he strives for structures that have a compelling force and a collective credibility. He is out to find a simple language that leaves behind individualist whimsy and showmanship, on the grounds that the more intensely experimentalism strives after effects, the clearer it becomes that there is hardly anything left to express that can claim general validity. Grassi's pessimistic insights ("The illusion of modernism was to believe that through a new form it could give new contents to architecture"<sup>198</sup>; "It is enough to recall the fact that on the one hand there is architecture's specific quality of being a collective creation par excellence and that on the other hand the modern capitalist city entirely lacks collective contents"<sup>199</sup>) have led him to an architecture that almost drowns in silence — "Its formal content appears so clearly that its internal message runs the risk of getting lost."<sup>200</sup> In the universally valid traditional archetypal forms, Grassi seeks the binding force of the last remnants of a collective vision. V. M. Lampugnani has called Grassi's drawings "stops along the road to the only reduction that is capable of bringing about a collective and objective language in a pluralist society." Lampugnani continues: "The elementary crystalline quality of his precise and fine strokes, of his ascetically presented forms and their delicate colors, mirrors exactly the qualities of the imagined architecture: its contours, its volumes, its spaces, its emotive force. Consequently, this graphic and conceptional rigorism . . . is the product of an intense intellectual and artistic process that seeks to fulfill Lukács's demand for aesthetic realism through

**Giorgio Grassi with Aldo Rossi**  
**San Rocco housing project (design)**  
**1966**



conscious self-limitation. The result is a subtle neutral abstraction that precludes superficial enjoyment."<sup>201</sup>

Grassi's 1969 design for a laboratory in Paullo (figure 327) is reminiscent of Rossi's use of an enclosing wall in his design for the Modena cemetery. The empty courtyard is framed by a row of piers, with rectangular openings between them and with squat windows above the rectangles. A few steps articulate the floor surface. The white facade, with its regular sequence of wall openings, dominates the hushed scene. If it were not for the light and the shadows, this would be a scene of eternal cosmic lifelessness; however, the glimpse of the sun's course hints at transience with a barely noticeable suggestion of events and changes. The motif of an opening between two piers with a stumpy window opening above it — derived from the classical architecture of Rome — played a conspicuous role in the arcade architecture of the Renaissance and in neoclassicism. Its continuous use in European architecture endows this motif with the quality of permanence and validity and turns it into a compelling "archetypal" form. In going back to this archetypal motif, Grassi saturates the white wall of modernism with the presence of history. At the same time, the motif of an extremely reduced form bordering on nothingness provides a meaningful expression, as if Grassi wanted to say that where nothing else is left there is still architecture nonetheless. But architecture had hardly ever taken on a more objective character, purified of all individualist traces, and it had hardly ever been as far removed from innovative experimentalism. In his 1967 book Grassi quotes Tessenow, who along with Hilberseimer serves as his main authority: ". . . if we want to create something healthy and genuine in our design work, then we have to be primarily afraid of the individual and not of the general and of repetition, since these always carry their own explanation with them."<sup>202</sup>

Grassi reached the extreme opposite pole to modernist eccentricity by restricting himself to the use of architectural motifs marked by tradition and promising universal validity. However, this reduction was not bought at the price of all distinctive character, as was the reduction that resulted in the functionalist container. Grassi appealed to the authority of history in order to gain from it a still-valid collectively relevant expressiveness: "Here the world of possible forms — the field of design — shows through the images developed in the passage of time its own countless connections with the past. [The world of forms] reveals itself only against the background of the past, and it becomes a reality only on the condition of a concrete positive imitation. This is to be understood not as a nostalgic act of conjuring but as an appropriation and an overcoming; as continuity and unity of the most universal goals. . ."<sup>203</sup>

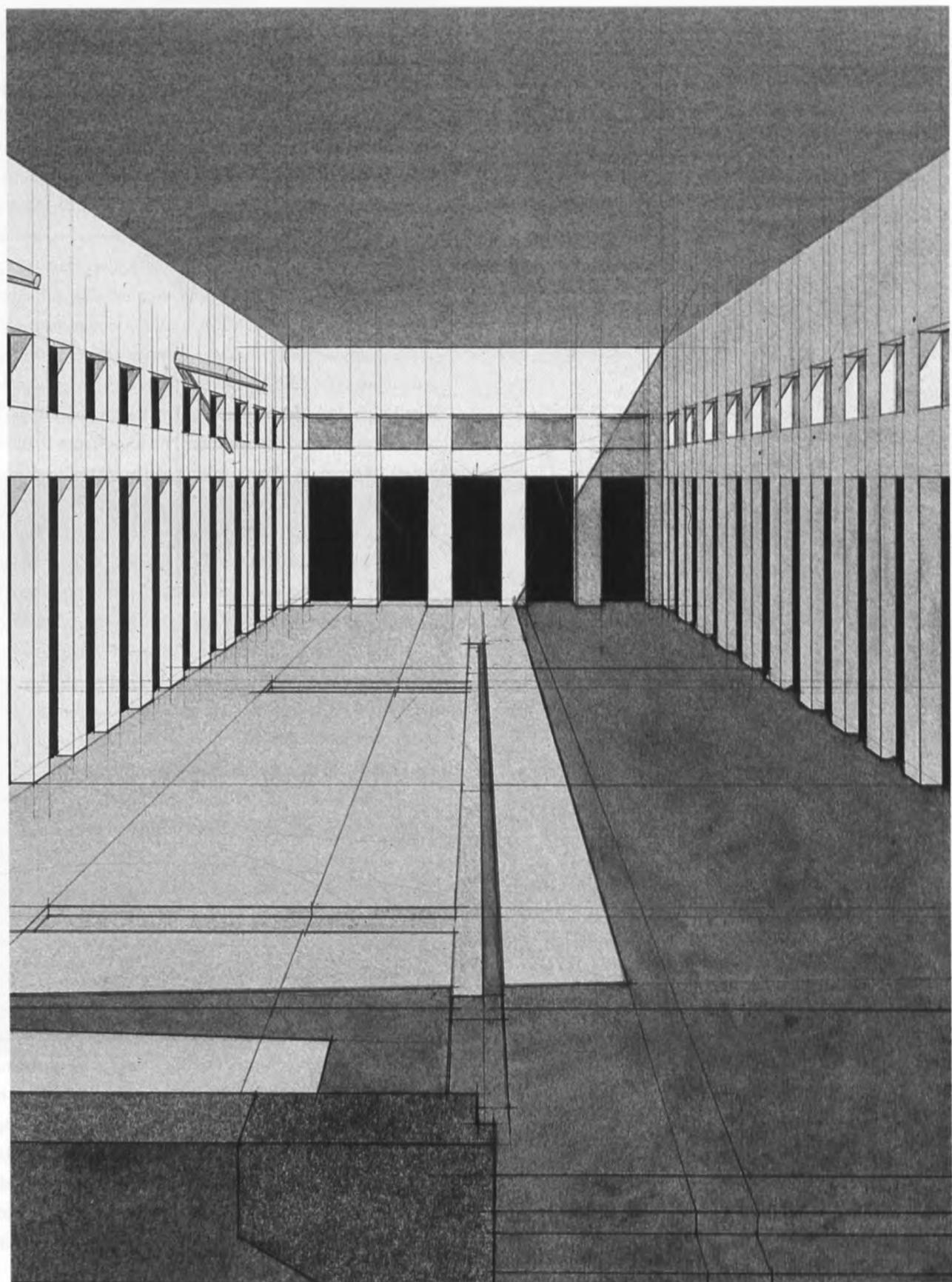
**Giorgio Grassi**

**Laboratory**

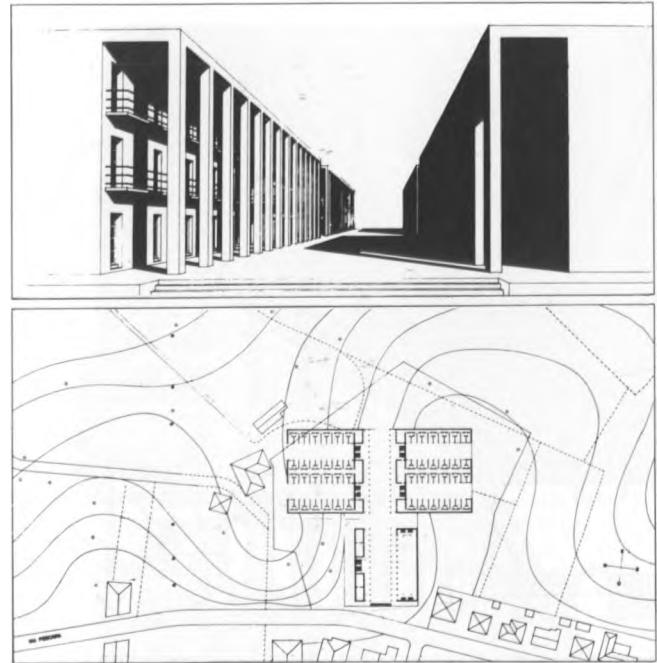
**Paullo, Italy**

**(project)**

**1969**



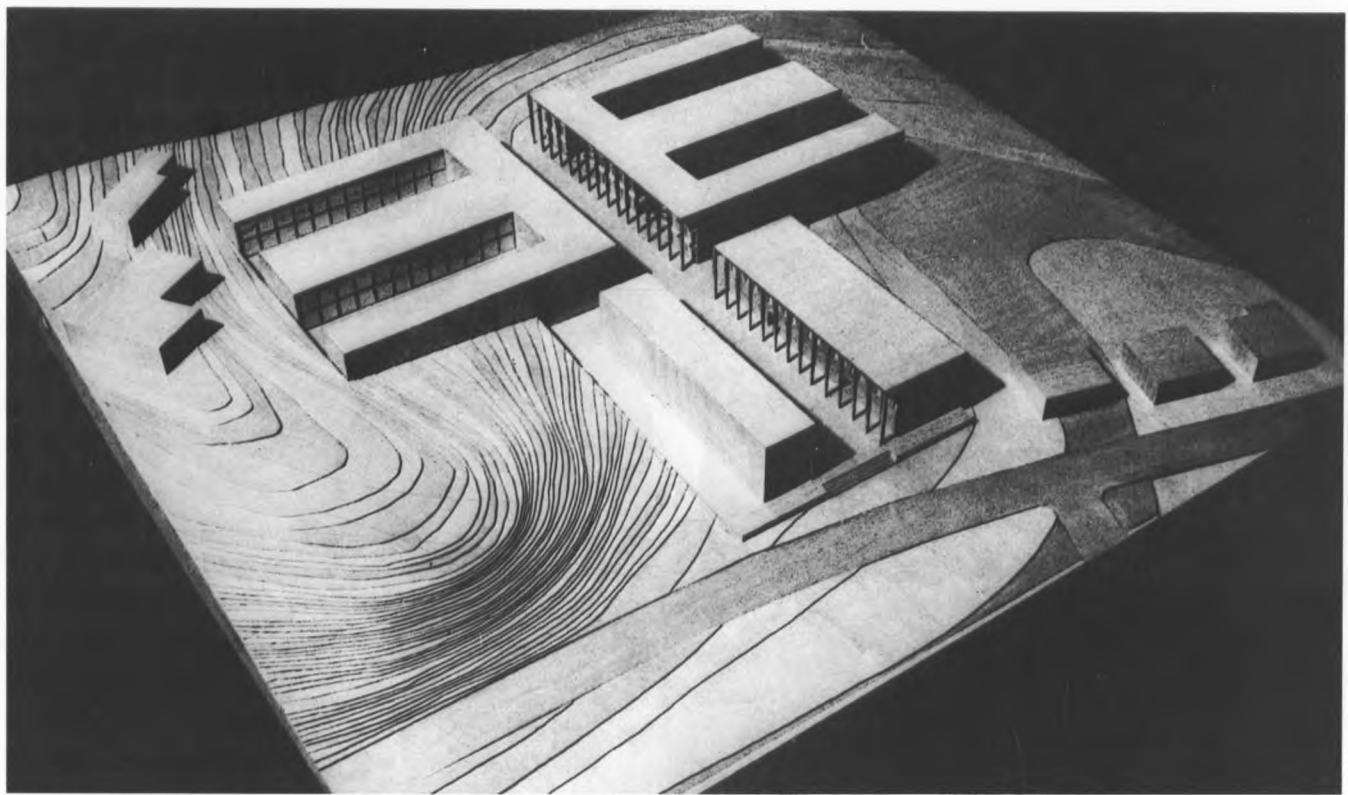
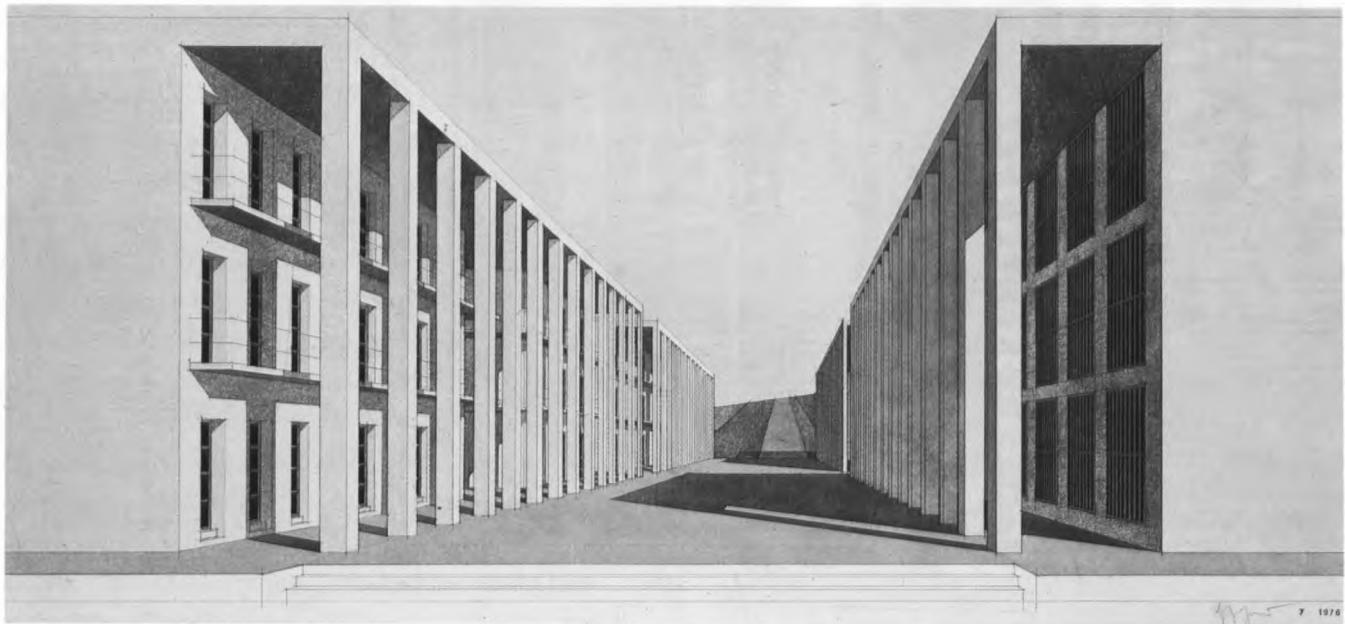
in his most important executed project: a student residence in Chieti. Rossi's "student village," discussed above, was designed for the same competition, but whereas Rossi opted for a square with individual gabled houses and set a common building in the middle of the square, Grassi decided to arrange two simple rows and two comb-like blocks symmetrically, creating a street defined on both sides by tall galleries serving as facades. In comparison with Rossi's proposal, this arrangement was strikingly simple and lapidary. Rossi's project has greater narrative qualities; the individual houses grouped together around the square present the architectonic image of a village. But there is not the slightest reason to think of a village in Grassi's interpretation of the same commission. The galleries along the street awaken an impression of big-city life and of monumentality. The slender, three-story-high piers unify the buildings and give them the impressive air of serving a public purpose. Where Rossi gives visible expression to the collective aspect by emphasizing the contrast between the individual units and the common building, Grassi relies on the form of the running gallery, with its tall individual piers, for the same purpose. He incorporates every function, individual or communal, in the four buildings. That two of them extend rearward is of no importance to the total visual impression. A maximum of simplicity and a maximum of reduction is the design principle. However, the calm regularity of the galleries is enlivened by the articulation of the smaller forms, as figure 331 shows. The regular placement of doors and passages, the dense staccato rhythm of the railings, and (above all) the airy expansiveness of the exterior staircases undercut the regularity of the piers and ameliorate the rigidity of the whole. In figure 331, sunlight falling on the piers and appearing to be bent off course enlivens the whole scene. Sunlight is an essential ingredient in Grassi's designs, as in Rossi's. In the case of Grassi's dormitories at Chieti, light and shadow — extra-architectural factors — disturb the rigidly symmetrical order of the architecture. None of this is new or interesting. The interest these buildings awaken is not the effect of the startling perception of highly inventive structures; it is born out of the recognition of familiar architectonic phenomena and clearly assessable typological motifs. However, the great elegance of these succinct forms — the delicate matchstick quality of the piers and the smooth linearity of the roof — elevates this architecture above the banality of everyday concerns. Yet its typology originates in the mundane rural buildings of northern Italy, many of which have galleries, piers, and covered loggias. (See, for example, figure 332.) The Chieti buildings also refer to Friedrich Weinbrenner's Kaiserstrasse in Karlsruhe (figure 333). Grassi based the drawing shown here as figure 331 on Schinkel's famous engraving of the interior of the Neues Museum (figure 334);



328

**Giorgio Grassi**  
Student residences  
Chieti  
1976

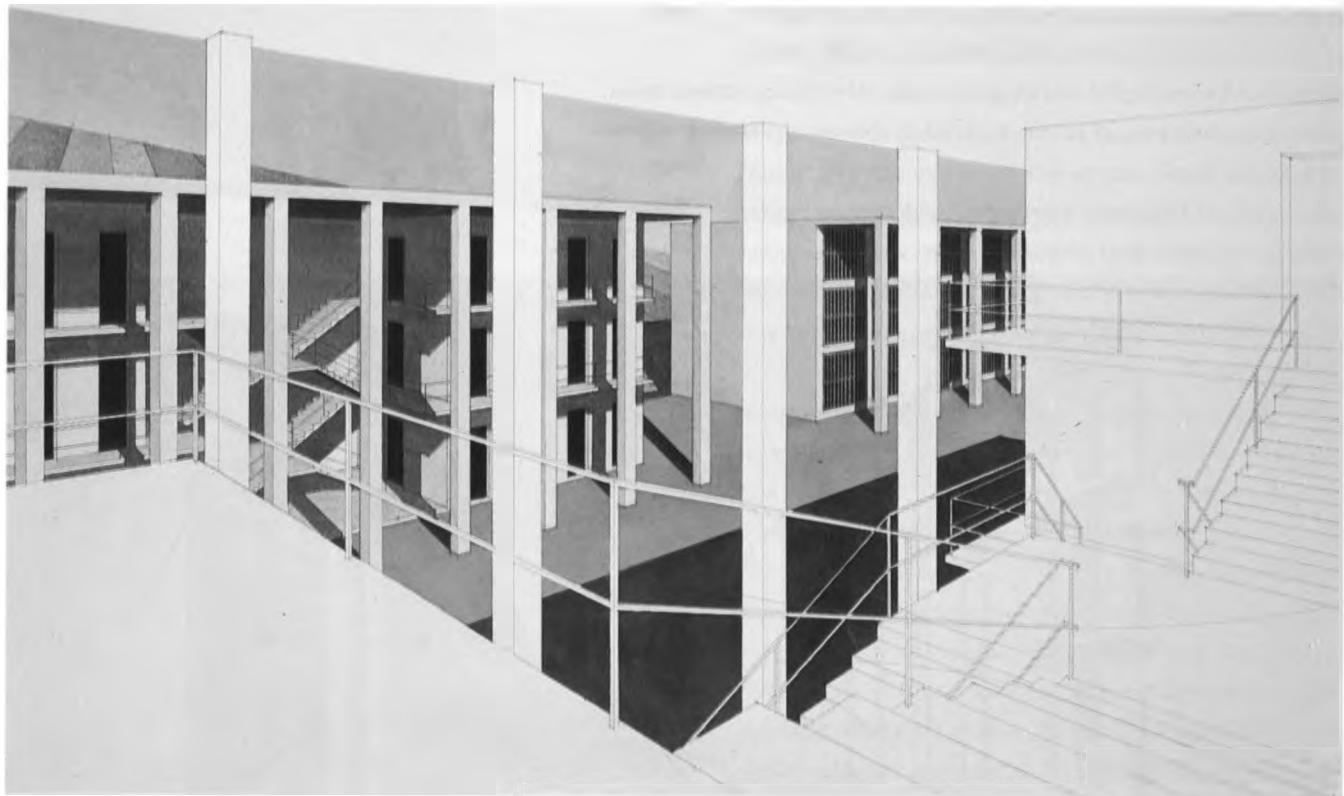
**Giorgio Grassi**  
**Student residences**  
**Chieti**  
**1976**



330

**Giorgio Grassi**  
**Student residences**  
**Chieti**  
**1976**

267



331

**Giorgio Grassi**

**Student residences**

**Chieti**

**1976**



332

**Arcaded houses in**

**Northern Italy**



333

**Friedrich Weinbrenner**

**Kaiserstrasse**

**Karlsruhe, Germany**

**ca. 1820**

both depictions illustrate how perspective complicates spatial and structural arrangements. Thus, Weinbrenner, Schinkel, and Lombardian vernacular architecture provide the background for a reductive yet profound building.

#### Pictorial Representation and Fiction

Rossi's theory amounts to a counterattack against an architecture that claims to be able to create fictions. Grassi decries the use of representational means that belong to painting and sculpture. He pleads for an architecture that keeps to itself,<sup>204</sup> that "examines its own fundamental principles, its tradition," because architecture differs fundamentally from all other arts in that "the representation and the represented object coincide."<sup>205</sup> Grassi emphasizes that in the past it had been customary to "do violence to architectonic creation by displacing it to the level of pictorial representation."<sup>206</sup> As examples of this he cites even such important works as the cathedral of Laon and Borromini's S. Andrea al Quirinale in Rome, whose individuality is due to "artful devices of a painterly nature." What estranges these buildings from architecture, according to Grassi, are the characteristic features of painting. "In fact," he writes, "architecture cannot be a fiction except at a very high price."<sup>207</sup>

One has to agree with Grassi insofar as the concept of fiction remains bound up with the concept of imitation, of mimesis. Yet even painting has freed itself from a concept of the fictive tied to the presumption that it creates realms of appearance, isolated spheres of illusion. Now a picture can be exclusively itself; it does not have to refer symbolically to anything else. A painting by Frank Stella is an aesthetic object without mimetic representational references. Here too "the representation and the represented object" coincide. Grassi, however, was less concerned with obeying a modern aesthetic than with pointing out the autonomy of architectonic motifs. The galleried halls of Chieti are nothing but themselves. They are a genuine architectonic motif that does not reproduce anything else.

The restraint that Grassi demands precludes the use of pictorial illustrations such as those used in Hollein's Austrian Travel Bureau. The mixing of genres, in the sense of the "total work of art," is not Grassi's thing. But isn't a column with a Corinthian capital a "painterly" motif too? And aren't Hollein's palm trees architectonic motifs which — as in the kitchen of the Royal Pavilion of Brighton — take on the architectonic role of columns? In the end it is a question of deciding where the line between figurative illusionistic representation and architectonic abstractness should be drawn. Grassi has pushed the boundary extremely close to abstraction, yet nevertheless he has continued to refer to historical motifs of architecture. Grassi's reductions lead to an objectivity of "representation" that replaces ingenious peculiarities



334

Karl Friedrich Schinkel  
Entrance lobby  
Neues Museum  
Berlin  
1823–1830

with self-evident manifestations of collective memories. The courtyard and the pier are representational forms too. They are materials of a fictional creation in that their use leads far afield from a neutralizing geometry. Further, it is claimed that they resolve the contradiction between architecture's collective task and the capitalist city's lack of collective contents by asserting an archetypal, universally binding validity, and that in the end they suggest collective contents even though they do not communicate these contents directly.

Even if all these theoretical tenets should remain questionable, in the end the impact of Grassi's architecture should demonstrate what he means. The fiction of the courtyard of the Paullo laboratory is one of stillness, of the resistance to ostentation, and of the seemingly incidental play of light on symmetrical, regular structures. The fictive element in Grassi's architecture lies in the aesthetical result of having fashioned an expression of an objective and eternal phenomenon, of having reduced the myriad possibilities of form to a timeless architecture of compelling collective relevance. On closer scrutiny, this state of clarity and harmony, of simplicity and self-evident truth, is seen to be the result of a balancing act—a state of calm and equilibrium achieved by a highly ascetic restraint that nevertheless does not forfeit the presence of life. As figure 329 shows, a green slope provides an element of uncontrollable reality and fills the background between the galleries. In addition, the focal axis of the observer is thrust slightly to one side of the street axis in a way that makes the sunny side appear more expansive than the shady side. The light and the landscape appear unpredictable, yet Grassi's use of them to represent extra-architectural forces is highly calculated.

#### Mario Botta:

#### The "School of the Ticino"

Whenever the "School of the Ticino" is discussed, Mario Botta's buildings are the center of attention. Since about 1970, there has developed in the Swiss borderland between the Italian- and German-speaking cultures an astonishingly rich architecture — something of an experiment in postmodernism. The old schemata of functionalism have been questioned not only on paper but also in real practice. Since Aldo Rossi's stay in Zurich (1972–1974) this tendency has become even stronger.

Mario Botta, however, has generally followed a path of his own, independent of Rossi. His main teachers were Le Corbusier and Louis Kahn, and with their sponsorship Botta developed an unbroken faith in architecture. All his buildings have a high degree of self-assurance, as if architecture had never suffered or perpetrated any damage. For example, the villa at Cadenazzo (figure 335) gives an impression of total independence, as if no other buildings existed around it;

indeed, some had trouble recognizing it as a house. It makes no concessions to the local typology or to its topographic situation. What Botta did here was transfer some forms Kahn had reserved for public buildings (e.g., large oculi<sup>208</sup>) to a private house.

Botta's work may prove that even in the present an architecture can retain its credibility although it accepts hardly any conditional factors — although it does not define itself in typological, regional, topographic, or historical terms.

Buildings such as the villa in Cadenazzo and the tower house in Riva San Vitale (figures 335, 336) presuppose an undiminished confidence in the autonomy of architecture and in the power of invention. That in the Ticino there are to be found tower houses<sup>209</sup> does not explain anything about Botta's. He stands at the extreme opposite pole to Giorgio Grassi, who must suspect him of being dangerously close to the experimentalist mania he deplores. The house in Cadenazzo refers only to the work of Louis Kahn. Just as it has been said that sometimes only art is capable of commenting on art, it can be said that with Botta's first buildings architecture is commenting on architecture. But this does not suffice to generate a fictive character. Therefore, Botta comes close only to the merely fascinating, to formalist excrescence. That is the greatest danger, since formal extravagance goes hand in hand with superficiality. A shape becomes stale when it lacks content. More recently, Botta has desisted from such abstractions.

Looking at the "Casa Rotonda" in the midst of its suburban surroundings (figure 337), one notices at once what Botta was confronting. Rather than take the path of compliance, this house negates everything around it. The possibility of the inhabitants' accepting the attitude implicit in the architecture may be part of the potency of the house's narrative motif, which is the contrast between fortification and openness. While fortification is emphasized by various details (the cornice, the window notches, the stairwell column and its enormous capital), the superimposed triangular skylight and its extension downward to rupture the barrel on one side work to open the house to the outside world. This fiction is far removed from the contents favored by Das Neue Bauen — i.e., confident celebration of technology, of the machine, the automobile, and the steamship.

Does the "Casa Rotonda" prove that — as the critics of postmodernism suggest — the Middle Ages have broken out again? On the other hand, hasn't Botta unmasked the bourgeois ideology of neighborliness? Isn't his actual and symbolic formulation of security in an aggressive world a step toward reality?

With the "Casa Rotonda" Botta broke from the conventions of modernism as well as from the tradition of typology. This house is without any previous example. Even with his earlier

Mario Botta

Villa at Cadenazzo, Ticino

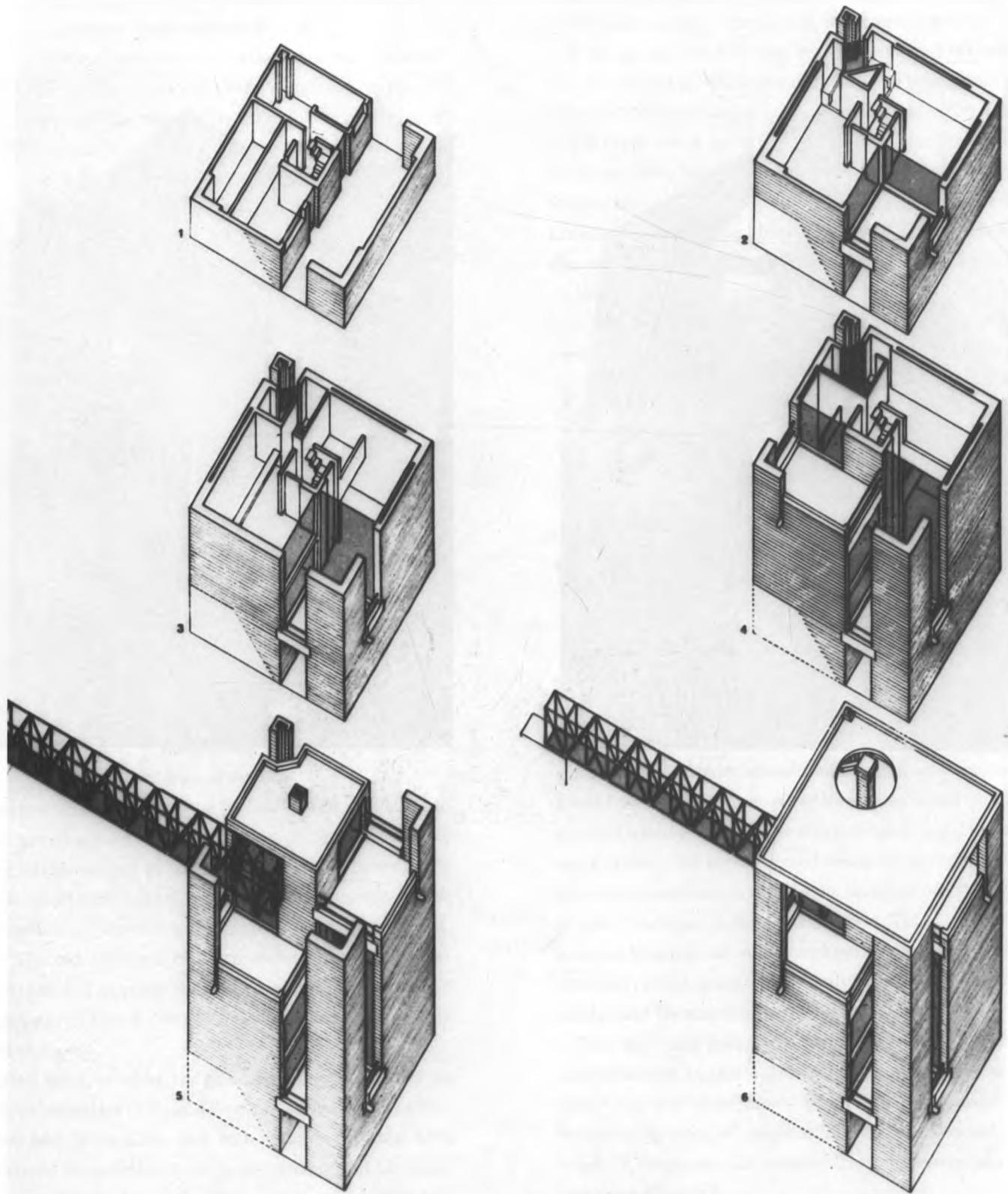
1970–71 (left)

House at Riva San Vitale, Ticino

1972–73 (right)



Mario Botta  
Design drawing for  
Riva San Vitale house





337

Mario Botta  
"Casa Rotonda"  
Stabio

1981

Mario Botta

"Casa Rotonda"

Stabio

1981





339

Details of  
"Casa Rotonda"

340

**Mario Botta**  
**Rectory at Genestrino,**  
**1961–1963**  
**(church in background)**



341

**Mario Botta**  
**One-family house**  
**Stabio**  
**1965–66**



342

**Mario Botta**  
**One-family house**  
**Ligornetto**  
**1975–76**



343

**Mario Botta**  
**One-family house**  
**Ligornetto**  
**1975–76**



houses, Botta had ignored Giorgio Grassi's vehement argument against subjective experimentation and in favor of concreteness, traditional architectural motifs, and objectivity. Whereas for Grassi a conflict between a house and its environment in a particular case cannot become a collective content, Botta uses this particular situation to formulate a message that goes to the extremes of unconventionality and possibly into "incongruity," ending up in the realm of sensationalism and individualist innovation. On the other hand, such advances offer points of departure and occasions for new typologies and new traditions.

Botta's first building (figure 340) reflects the orientation of his teacher Carloni and is strongly attuned to its surroundings. A rectory, it is closely related to the adjacent church building; it is built of the same square-hewn stones, and it echoes the angle of the church roof. But after working in Le Corbusier's firm on the planning of the famous Venice hospital project, Botta turned away from the standards advocated by the Carloni school. His next building, a reinforced-concrete house in Stabio (figure 341), is a work of art isolated in the landscape, projecting out at the top and including a monumental chimney and a sculptural exterior staircase in the manner of Le Corbusier. With this house Botta was pursuing the ideal of the "unique"; a few years later Venturi proclaimed that such "explicit" and "heroic" uses of abstract sculptural forms would have to be left behind. Botta's next building, the house in Cadenazzo discussed above, shows the influence of his next teacher, Louis Kahn.

Through these changes in his orientation, Botta continued to use rectangular ground plans. In the house in Ligornetto (figures 342, 343), he cut the rectangle through the middle and bridged the two parts only at the top. The Ligornetto house shows Botta's first use of regional traditions in its striped facade; brown-and-white striped facades are a characteristic feature of Ticinese architecture, as figure 344 exemplifies.

Eventually, Botta distanced himself from regional peculiarities. His later houses display a principal Palladian feature; they are strictly symmetrical structures which instead of a central gable have deep verandas that can be closed off with glass doors. The glass barrel vault of Botta's house in Viganello (figures 345, 346) is reminiscent of a Palladian thermal window.

Le Corbusier's remove from history and Kahn's abstract circles no longer remain Botta's articles of faith. His subjective power of invention led him to experiment with historical forms — and it was then that his talent for handling contents and narrative material emerged. His use of abstract formal combinations, which harked back to Louis Kahn without incorporating Kahn's approach to representational material, gave way to an interest in pictorial dramatization.

344

Country house  
Ticino



**Mario Botta**  
**One-family house**  
**Viganello**  
**1980**



346

**Vault of house in Viganello**

Botta elevated the conflict between introversion and extroversion to a theme. That theme refers to universal problems, such as environmental destruction, but is not enlarged to a symbolic content of general social nature so as to represent a collectively binding principle. More and more, the "decay" of generally valid symbols<sup>210</sup> is combined with an expansion of the application of special and individual signs, which are as much in conflict as in harmony with the representational needs of society. Thus, Botta stands in direct opposition to Grassi's claim that form must be reduced drastically in the name of collective content because the validity of collectiveness has been reduced drastically. Botta takes the individual and the particular seriously enough to give them validity by experimenting with a multiplicity of forms.

#### **Bruno Reichlin and Fabio Reinhart:**

#### **Neo-Palladianism**

The Casa Tonini (figures 347, 348) ushered in an epoch of Neo-Palladianism — a thing that hardly anyone would have thought possible. (Palladio's influence was nearly unbroken from his death at the end of the sixteenth century up to the beginning of the twentieth century, but since the ascendancy of Das Neue Bauen it had seemed dead; imitation of his buildings had been condemned as eclecticism.) What could have prompted the recall of Palladianism? The client's exaggerated demand for representational effects? By no means; Mr. Tonini is a mathematics teacher with a modest income. Unfathomable backwardness on the part of the architect? Equally unlikely; as assistants at the ETH in Zurich they were made familiar with all the trends of modern architecture.

The central portion of the Casa Tonini reveals its special historical origin without the addition of any formal detail. With one exception, the architects dispensed with historical detailing on the inside as well and gave complete priority to the typologically fixed total form. The slender skeleton of reinforced concrete, the plaster surfaces of the bay walls, the gutter used as a cornice, the metal frames of the doors and the windows, and above all the concentration of windows at the corners endow the house with a contemporary simplicity and with what might — but for the Palladianism — be called a modest modernity. The break with modernism here is a typological break, not a break with modern materials and detailing.

The huge arch visible in figure 348 almost achieves the significance of a monument; however, as soon as one notices the sheet-metal flues and realizes that one of the pillars is used as a chimney for the fireplace and the other one as the chimney for the furnace, its beautiful irony is out in the open: this near-monument makes a virtue out of the fact that it frees the house proper from having chimneys. Indeed, practicality lurks behind all of this house's individual forms, keeping

Bruno Reichlin and Fabio Reinhart

Casa Tonini

1972–1974

Bruno Reichlin and Fabio Reinhart

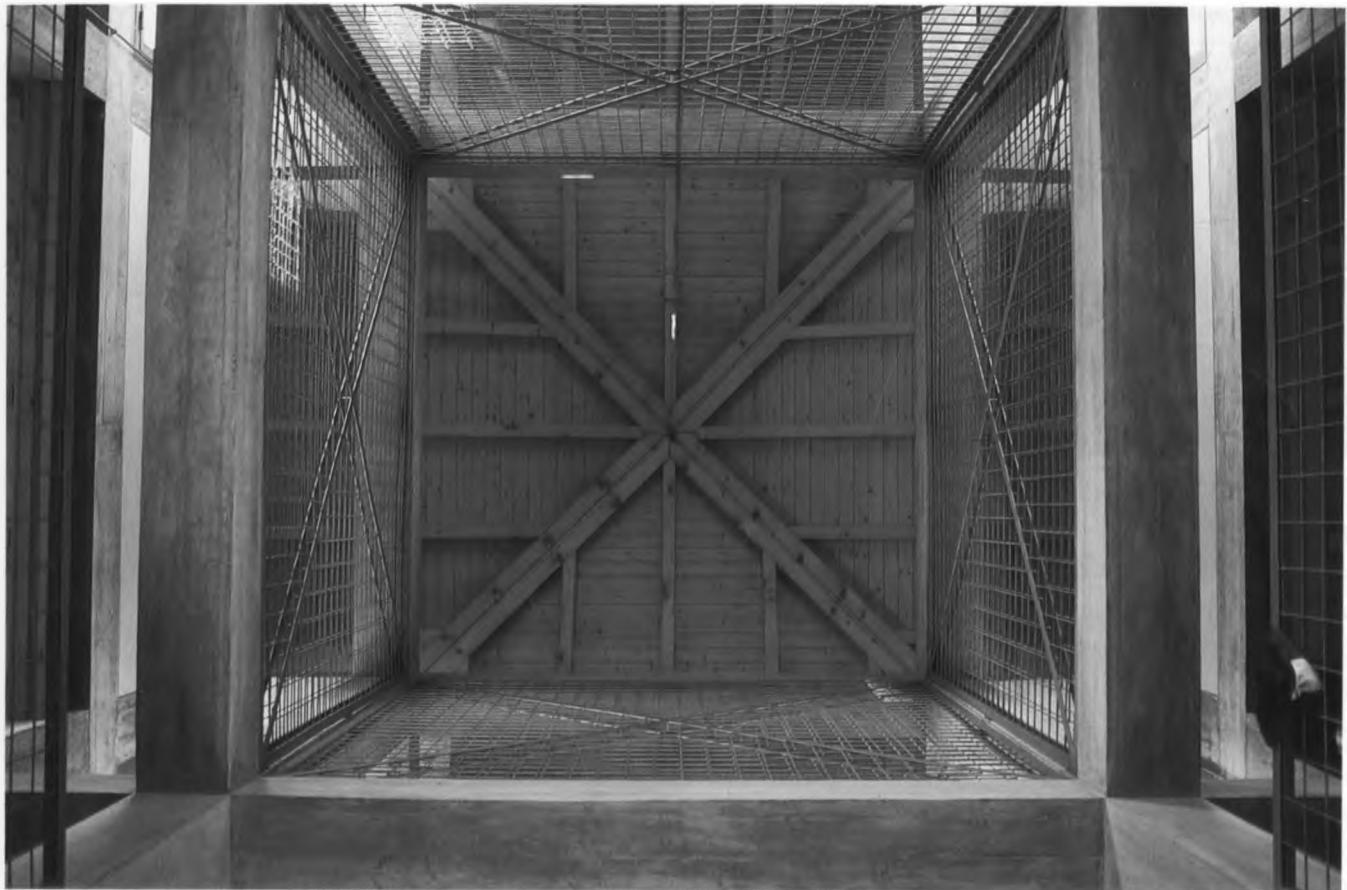
Casa Tonini

1972–1974



**Interior view of Casa Tonini**

(looking up)



them from lapsing into grandeur. This is a simple house in every sense of the word, yet thanks to Palladio one does not take its professed modesty for real.

The interior of Casa Tonini is surprisingly “modern.” The concrete skeleton is exposed, and so are the boards of the roof (figure 349). The wire screen that separates the upper galleries from the central shaft has a functional, industrial look. The central floor is a checkerboard of large white and brown tiles, and the fluted tympanum front of the fireplace niche (figure 350) makes one think of Joseph Hoffman and the Wiener Werkstätten. Refinement contrasts with artless directness, triviality with monumentality, and industrial culture with fin-de-siècle taste as the contradiction between modernity and historicity is played out with great intensity.

What is most surprising is that this unique, witty little Palladian villa can be accepted with the greatest ease, and that it is not a pretentious conversation piece. This is due to intelligent use of the historical building type. The inner space framed by the four supports is led up to the skylight so that a vertical axis of space and light is brought into play, around which the galleries and the other spaces are arranged. This transparent spatial arrangement, which allows one to grasp the whole house from its center, turns the reference to Palladio into a counterattack on the open ground plan. Surprise and puzzling spatial effects are salient features of the open ground plan; connections do not have to be immediately plausible. Unregimented, flowing spaces are identifying marks of modernism; symmetry and Palladian centeredness were long associated with coercive order and with Victorian representational rigidity. But today, in the wake of the fanatic pursuit of efficiency, a new sense of festiveness and distinctness has emerged.

With Casa Tonini, Reichlin and Reinhart showed how a typology traditionally associated with power could be brought into a context divested of power. They achieved this change of meaning through the aesthetic of contrasts and by consciously playing off mutually relativizing opposites. Their approach calls to mind Venturi’s and Moore’s “democratization” of the traditional representational rhetorics. A temple is desecrated — and thereby brought back to life.

With the Villa Sartori (figure 353) Reichlin and Reinhart reclaimed a second well-known Palladian motif: the wide tympanon facade with a thermal window (though here the temple facade does not rise above the structure but melts into the wall in a “modern” fashion). As is rarely the case with such adaptations, this is accomplished with so much boldness and ingenuity that it does not lapse into petty historicizing. Just note, for instance, how the two Ticinese architects distill Palladio’s typology of prominent central axes and accompanying side elements down to a row of windows, displace two windows to the sides, and stretch one of the central

Interior view of Casa Tonini

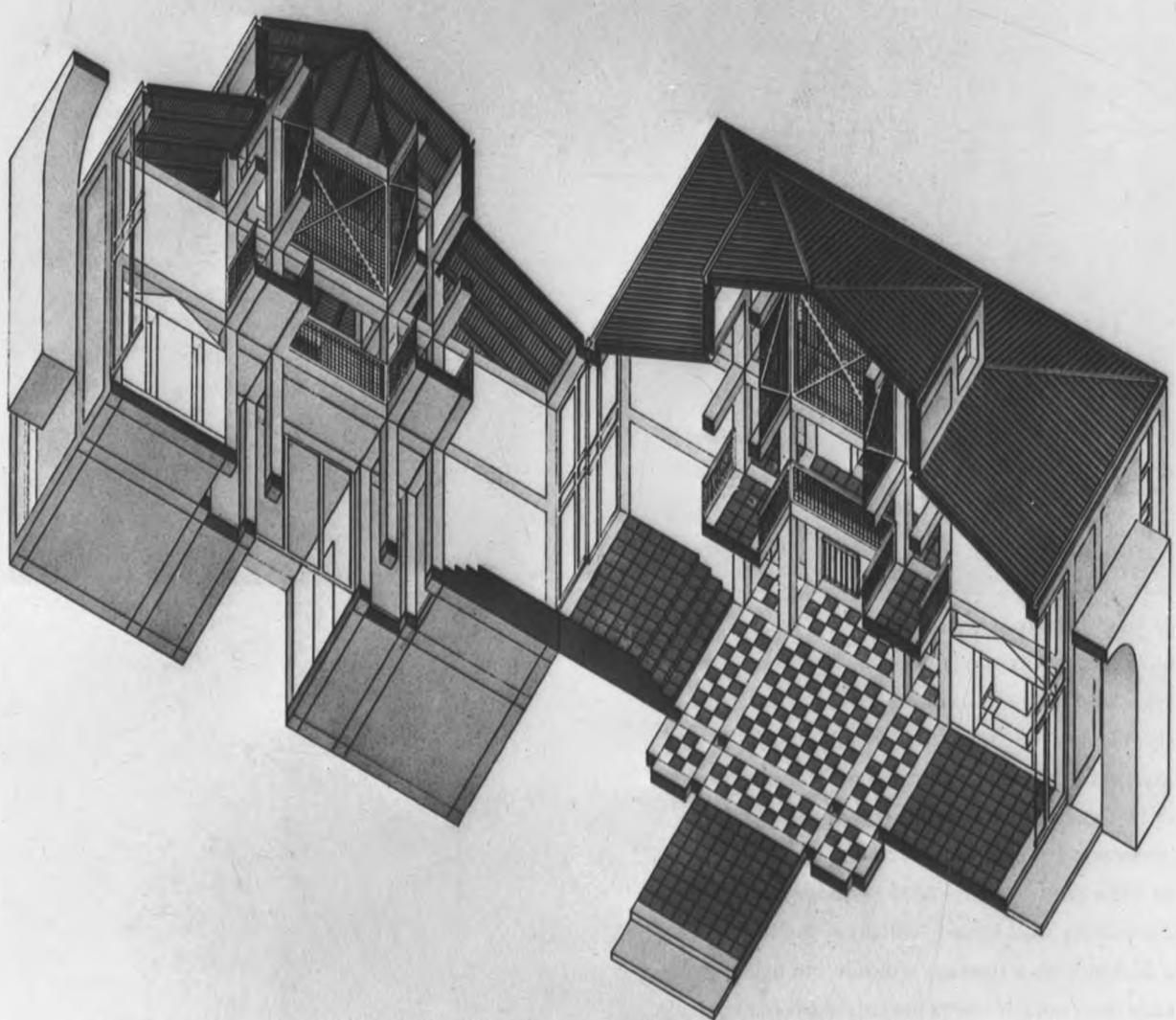
(showing fireplace niche)



Bruno Reichlin and Fabio Reinhart

Casa Tonini

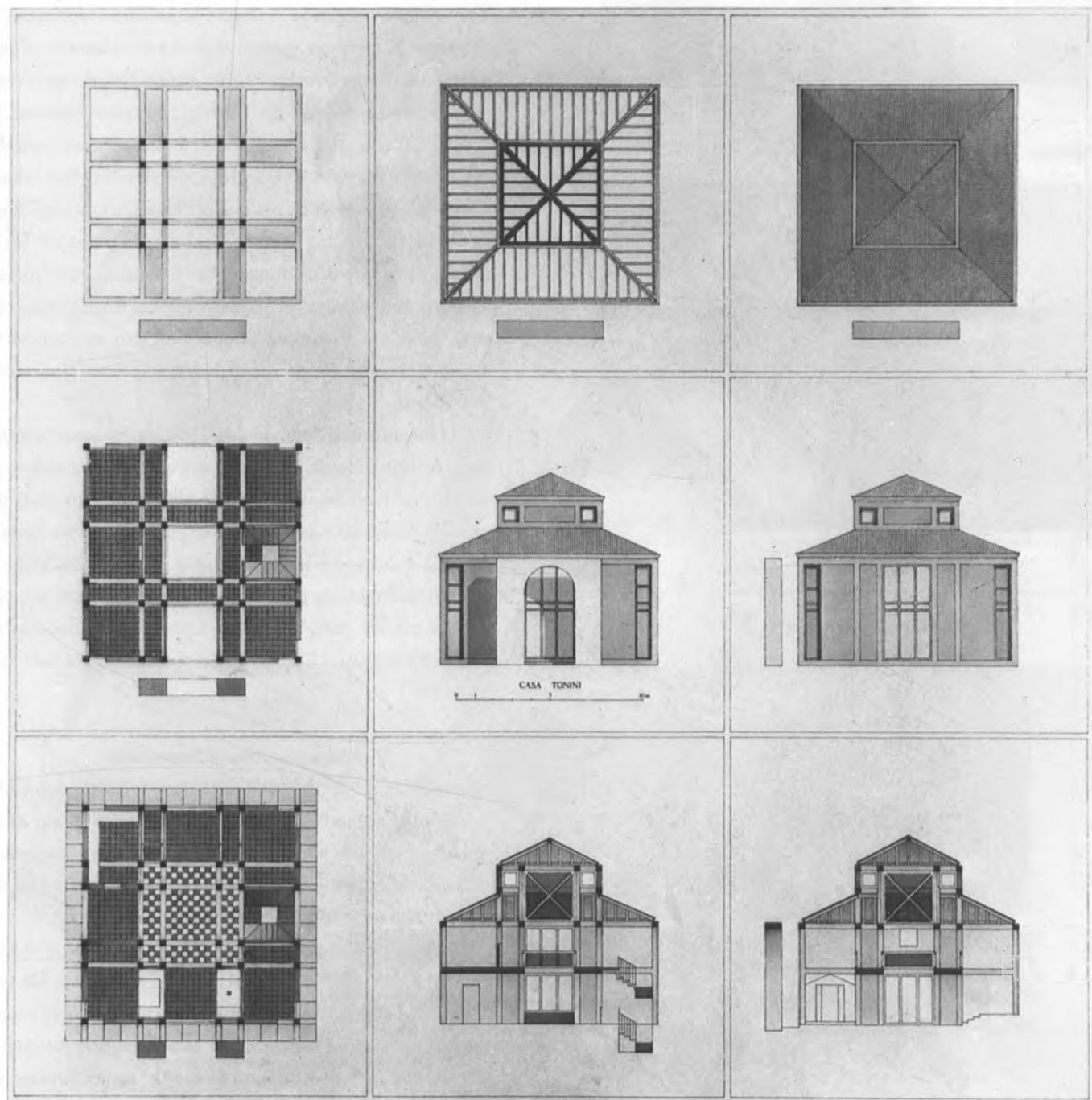
1972–1974



Bruno Reichlin and Fabio Reinhart

Casa Tonini

1972–1974



**Bruno Reichlin and Fabio Reinhart**  
**Villa Sartori**  
**Riveo**  
**1975–1977**



354

**Entrance platform of**  
**Casa Tonini**

windows down to form a door. The facade's strict axial symmetry is dissolved, and it is almost amusing to recall the huge temple portals that sit in the middle of, and provide the grand motif of, every Palladian facade. The excessive size of a Palladian portal is indirectly retained in the extended height of the door of the Villa Sartori; however, the door is pushed to the side as a disclaimer (almost a persiflage) of the systematic arrangement. The wittiness of this modern commentary on and reclaiming of the Palladian facade is the enlivening element of this building, which to anyone acquainted with Palladian architecture is highly narrative.

During the years 1972–1974 Reichlin and Reinhart were Aldo Rossi's assistants at the ETH in Zurich; however, they did not fully subscribe to Rossi's ideas about typologies. As they saw it, typology merged with the peculiarities of individual architects. Over the course of centuries, daring innovations became universally acknowledged types; however, the individual characteristics peculiar to the architect remained inherent in the type. This is the understanding that informs Reichlin and Reinhart's reading of Palladian typology. Rossi, however, was going beyond architectural history in his search for a few basic forms. For this reason, the villas of Reichlin and Reinhart are "more historical" than Rossi's projects. They are also more intellectual; they are full of wit because, through the conflict between opposites, they escape eclecticism.

Yet Reichlin and Reinhart avoid preciousness and mannerism. A little-noticed detail of the Tonini house shows the subtlety of their work: the small platform (figure 354) that serves to keep out rainwater and to make one aware that one is approaching the entrance. Inside the simple frame of poured concrete, the platform is paved with stones in a concentric pattern that, through simple means, prepares the visitor for the centralization that is the leitmotif of the whole building.

#### **Adolfo Natalini and Superstudio**

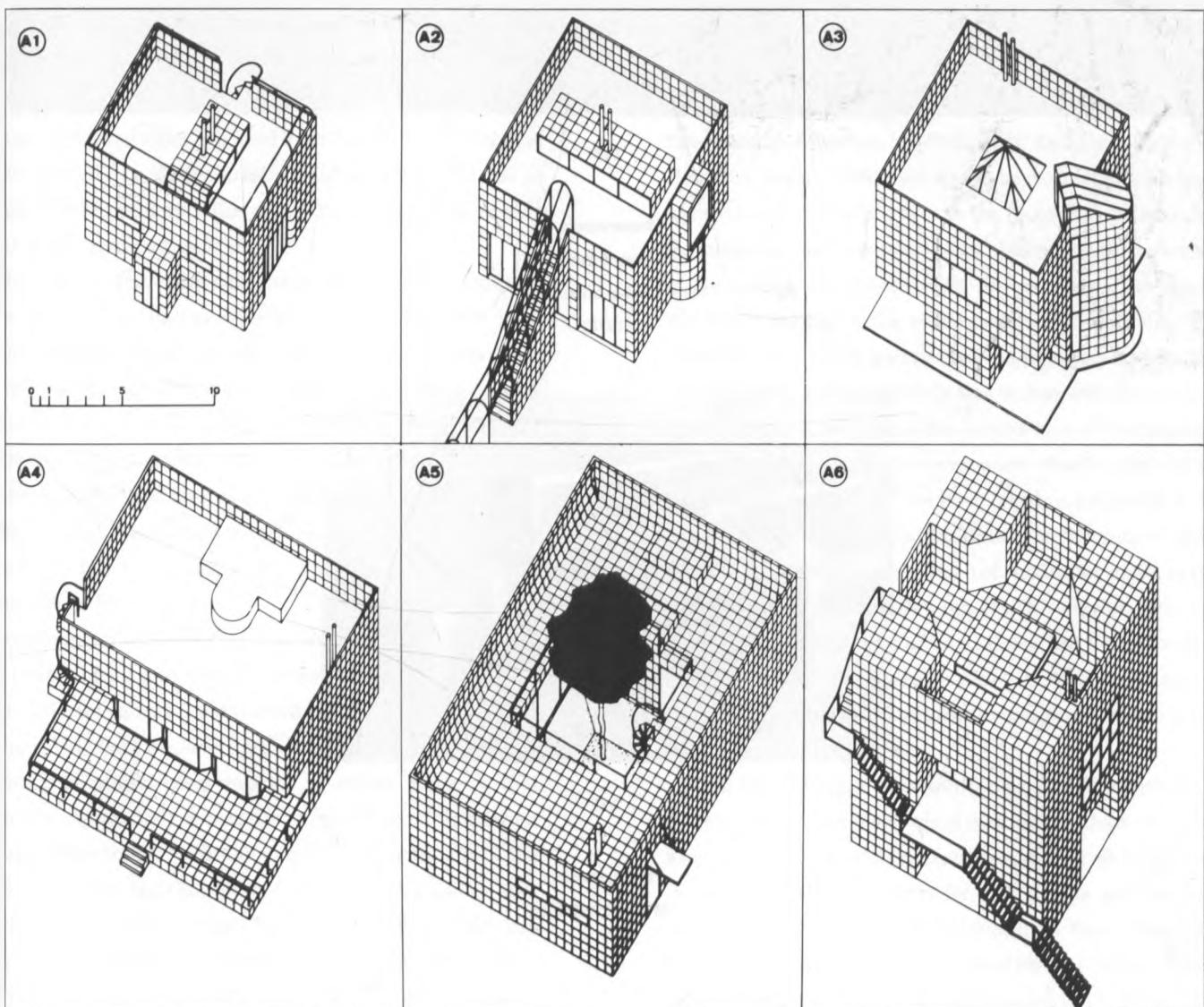
Superstudio of Florence does not belong to the school of Aldo Rossi, and neither does it belong directly to Milanese Rationalism. In the late 1960s, Superstudio — quite independent of the developments in upper Italy — showed impulses that were comparable to those of Rossi and Grassi.

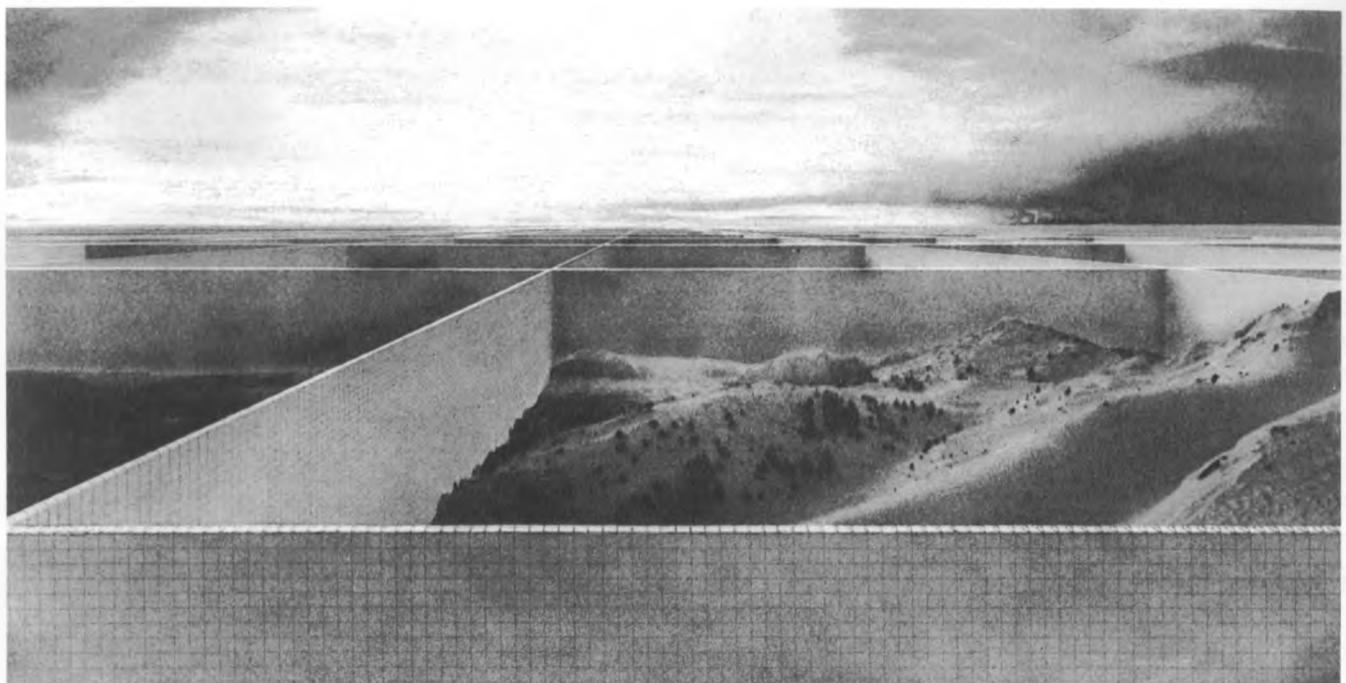
Rossi had good reasons for including works of Adolfo Natalini as well as those of Reichlin and Reinhart in his 1973 Triennale catalog,<sup>211</sup> yet it would be an inadmissible simplification to consider Natalini only as a Florentine Rationalist. The versatility of this architect and artist, and of Superstudio as a whole, can scarcely be equaled. Natalini's furniture designs and store interiors, his artistic projects, and the utopian films he conceived as a member of Superstudio cover a very wide range of creative design — a range rivaled, perhaps,

## Superstudio (Adolfo Natalini)

## Catalog of country houses

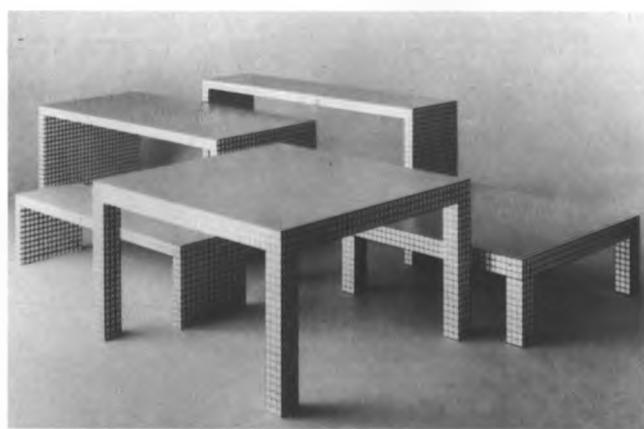
1968–1970





356

Superstudio  
Excerpt from  
"The Twelve Ideal Cities"  
(1972)



357

Superstudio  
"Misura" furniture

286

only by that of Haus-Rucker-Co of Düsseldorf.

Natalini's attitude and his work show the effects of a fundamental conflict of our time, a conflict that was a special concern of the generation of architects born between 1935 and 1945: the conflict between the desire to create aesthetically pleasing buildings and the distrust of a capitalist society that co-opts aesthetic form for purposes of self-legitimation. Natalini spoke for many of his generation when he said "Our present architecture is only the search for a new state of affairs in which, ultimately, architecture will no longer be needed,"<sup>212</sup> yet he presented a host of very personal and pregnant formal suggestions that took their cue from the opposite intention. This dilemma, which in Natalini's case led to productive activity and not (as for many architects of the 1968 generation) to a dead stop, was expressed in Natalini's first important project: Superstudio's Catalog of Villas, dated 1968–1970. In the description of this project Natalini wrote that "to design a villa is a nonexistent problem: modern architecture has already solved all problems related to this theme, and beyond that it has revealed the economic, social, and functional absurdity [of building villas]"; however, anyone who thinks that Natalini proceeded to give up designing villas is bound to be disappointed. Natalini saved himself by a simple pragmatic observation: "Be that as it may, the building of villas offers the rare occasion of still making any architecture at all."<sup>213</sup>

The catalog included suburban, seaside, and mountain villas and "great Italian country houses." The first page (figure 355 here) shows six suburban houses for various sizes, all in steeply angled bird's-eye views. The surface of each house is enveloped by a grid, representing the extreme of rationality: exact measurability. Natalini thought of these square as white tiles. If any form whatsoever could be "rationalized" from the outside by means of a tile grid, then any proportion had to be conceivable in terms of the unit measurement set by the grid.

Natalini went on to create visions in which the entire world was covered by a grid with a checkered surface. In some of these visions (such as *Il monumento continuo*, shown above as figure 86) the checkered grid could take on a purifying meaning of omnipresent reason; in others (such as that shown in figure 356) it became a sign of an authoritarian technocratic utopia.<sup>214</sup> Unlike many of the architects of the 1968 generation, Natalini did not repress the realization that power played a part in many formal decisions. On the contrary, he articulated — in theoretical and in aesthetic terms — the dialectic of power and the ambiguity of the grid. Indeed, both a critique against an environment obliterated by total rigidity and a positive view of the aesthetic of universal rationality are evident in Natalini's first utopia, *Il monumento continuo* — though it must be said that in the begin-

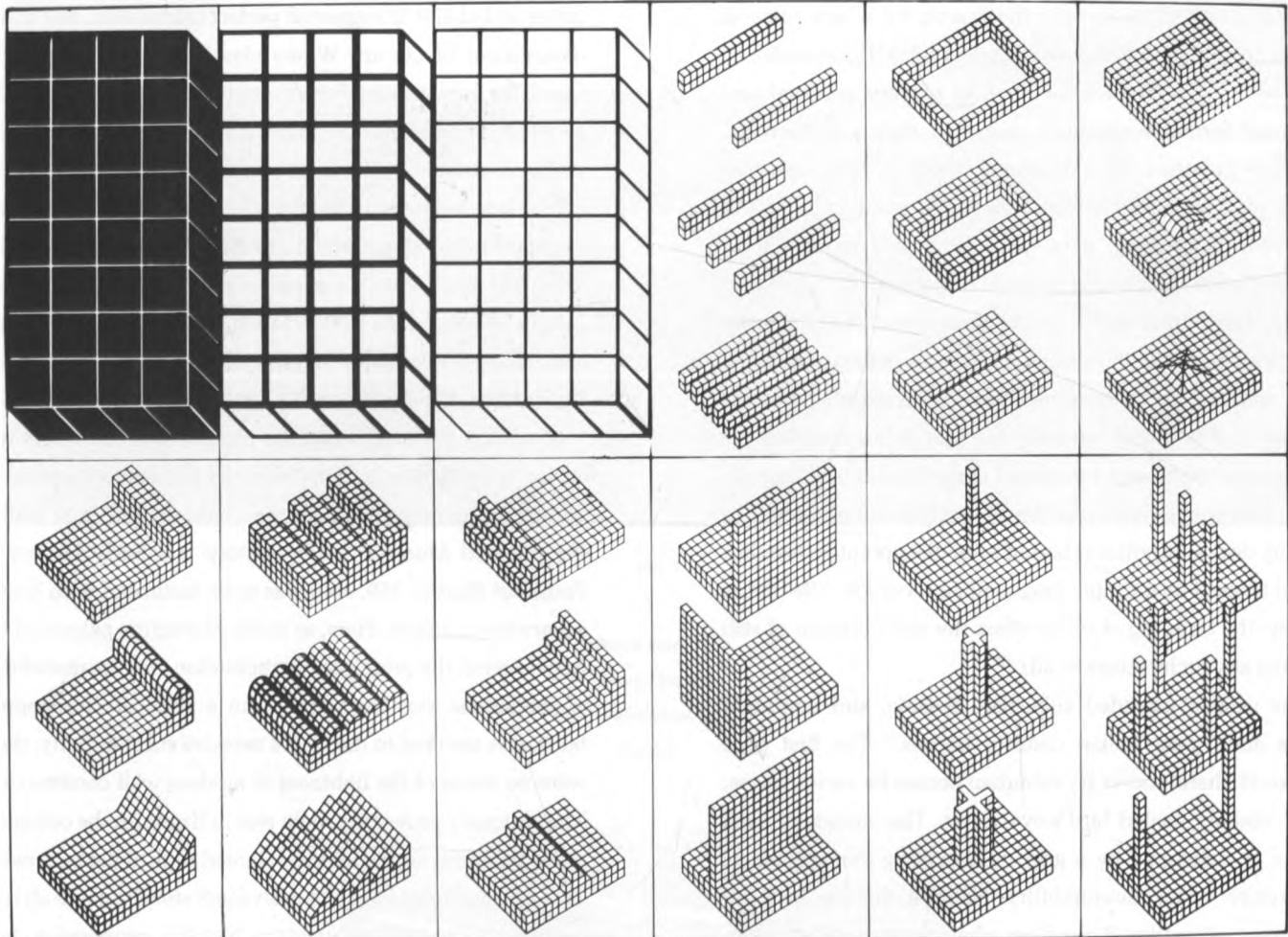
ning his faith in the positive effects of the grid carried the greater weight.

Superstudio also applied grids to furniture, achieving greater success in that realm. The series "Misura" ("Measurements"), produced between 1969 and 1971 by the firm Zanotta, became an international hit by virtue of its rectangular modernity. The grid, strangely enough, took on an ornamental character when applied to the surfaces of tables and chairs. It suggested perfect calculation, and it was reminiscent of Op art. Where classical modernism, in its search for pure primary forms, would have left such furniture all white, Superstudio calculated how many units of measure a form contained and celebrated the fact that the quadrature coincided exactly with the corners and edges of the furniture. Superstudio's "Istogrammi d'architettura" were supposed to show that quadrature is a generative principle from which all imaginable forms can be developed. To ironize and relativize such rigor of principle, Natalini called the page of illustrations shown here as figure 358 "the tombs of architecture."

Several years later, when the use of historical forms was easier to legitimate, Natalini allowed his abstract geometric grids to be imbued with narrative contents. The front wall of the planned Museum for Prehistory and Early History in Frankfurt (figures 359, 360) was to be rusticated with heavy, square-hewn stones. Here, as in the Florentine palaces of the Renaissance, the principle of articulation was the materiality of the stones, not lines drawn on a surface. The stepped buttresses testified to the wall's massive substantiality; there were no traces of the lightness of modern wall construction. The obliquely projecting socle was in line with the obliquely receding mural crown and the slanted tops of the buttresses. This unusual rendering of massiveness stood outside all conceptions of modern architecture. Natalini proposed to take the tracery window from the facade of the ruined Gothic church and to hang it, in a frame of rusticated stone, in front of a huge new window through which steelwork was to be openly visible; this playful handling of the relic robbed the rusticated wall of its apparent claim to historical authenticity, relativized its historical character, and made it into a postmodern hybrid structure.

With the Frankfurt museum project Natalini gave up his grids in favor of the materials of historical architecture. However, the Japanese architect Arata Isozaki visited Superstudio in 1971,<sup>215</sup> and a year later he took up the grid aesthetic. Isozaki's design for the Fukuoka Mutual Bank (figure 361) shows the development of a building from a checkered block; the grid determines every detail, from the ground plan to the articulation of the facade, with the sort of consistency Superstudio had aimed for with its Istogrammi. This design principle helped Isozaki to break away from the Brutalist tradition of Kenzo Tange and to advance into postmodernism.

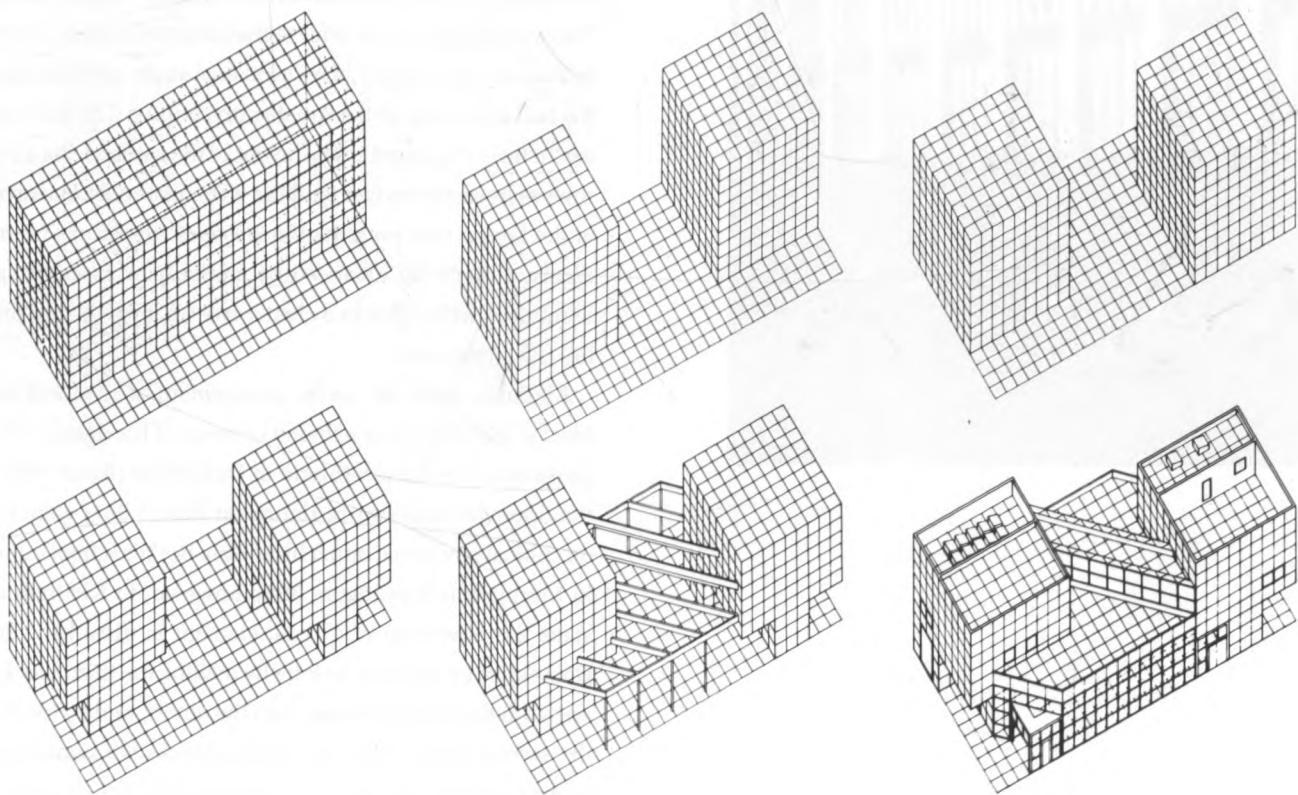
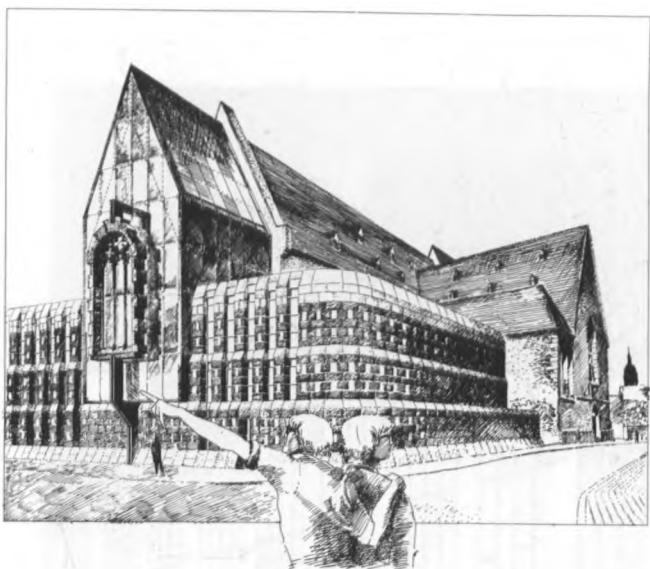
Superstudio  
"Istogrammi d'architettura"  
1969



**Adolfo Natalini**  
**Museum for Prehistory**  
**and Early History**  
**Frankfurt am Main**  
**(project)**  
**1980**



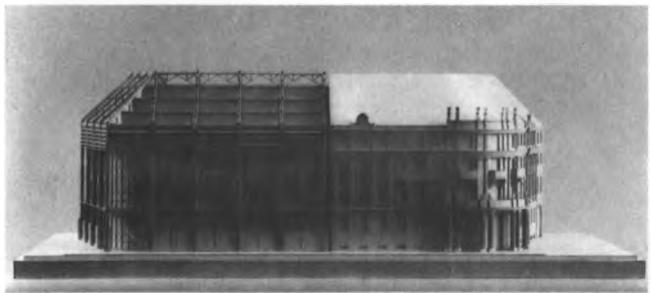
**Adolfo Natalini**  
**Museum for Prehistory**  
**and Early History**  
**Frankfurt am Main**  
**(project)**  
**1980**



**Arata Isozaki**  
**Design drawings for**  
**Fukuoka Mutual Bank**  
**1972–73**

**Josef Paul Kleihues**

**Extension and reconstruction of  
Ephraim Palace  
Berlin  
1979**



**Josef Paul Kleihues**

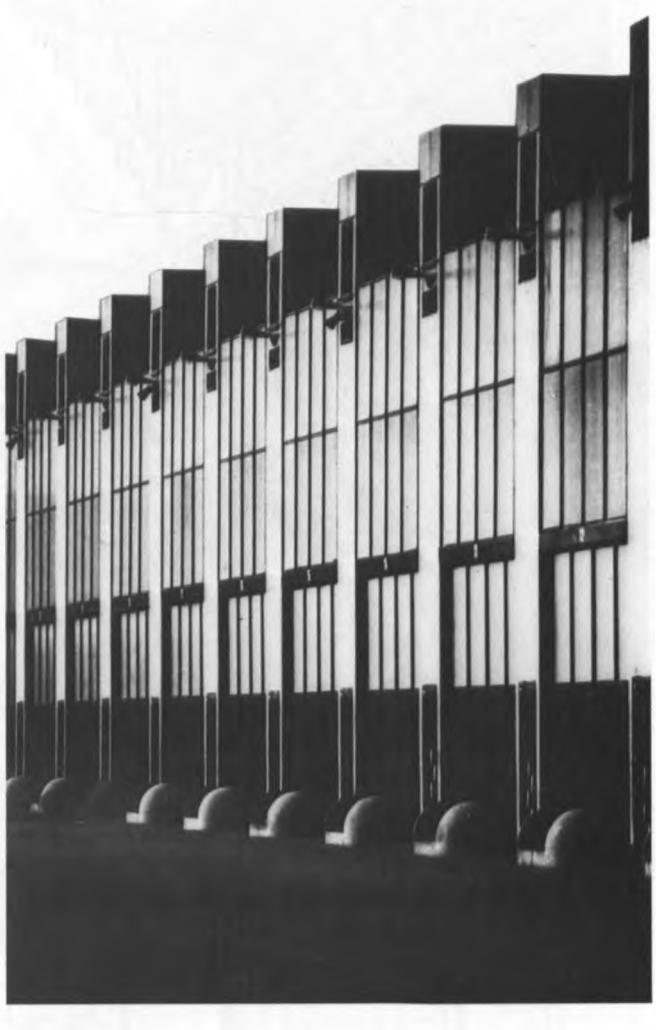
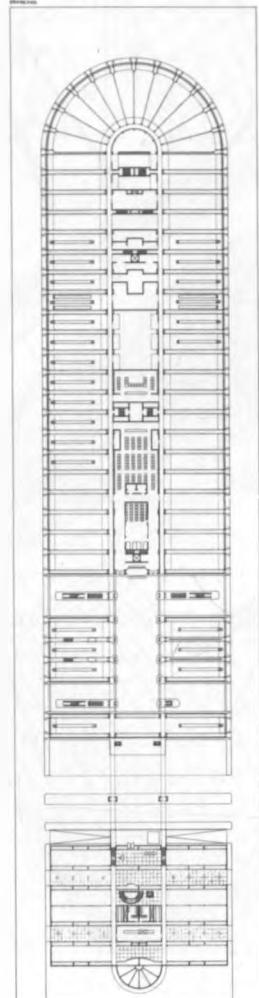
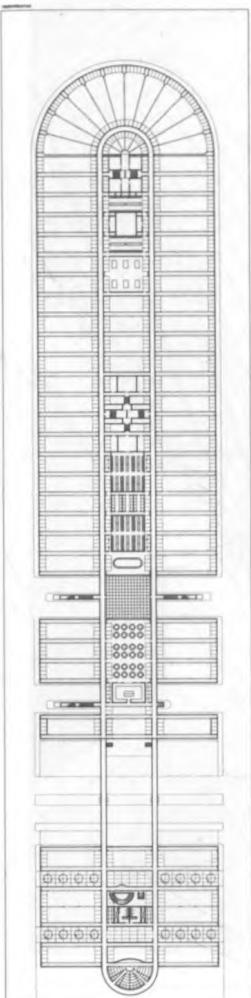
Josef Paul Kleihues is out of the mainstream of Rationalism in that his designs do not ignore technological forms but instead incorporate them. His striving to unite conflicting positions is well illustrated by his extension of the Ephraim Palace (figure 362), which has the look of a rebuilding of the old palace in a high-tech version reminiscent of the great halls Peter Behrens built in Berlin for the electrical firm AEG.

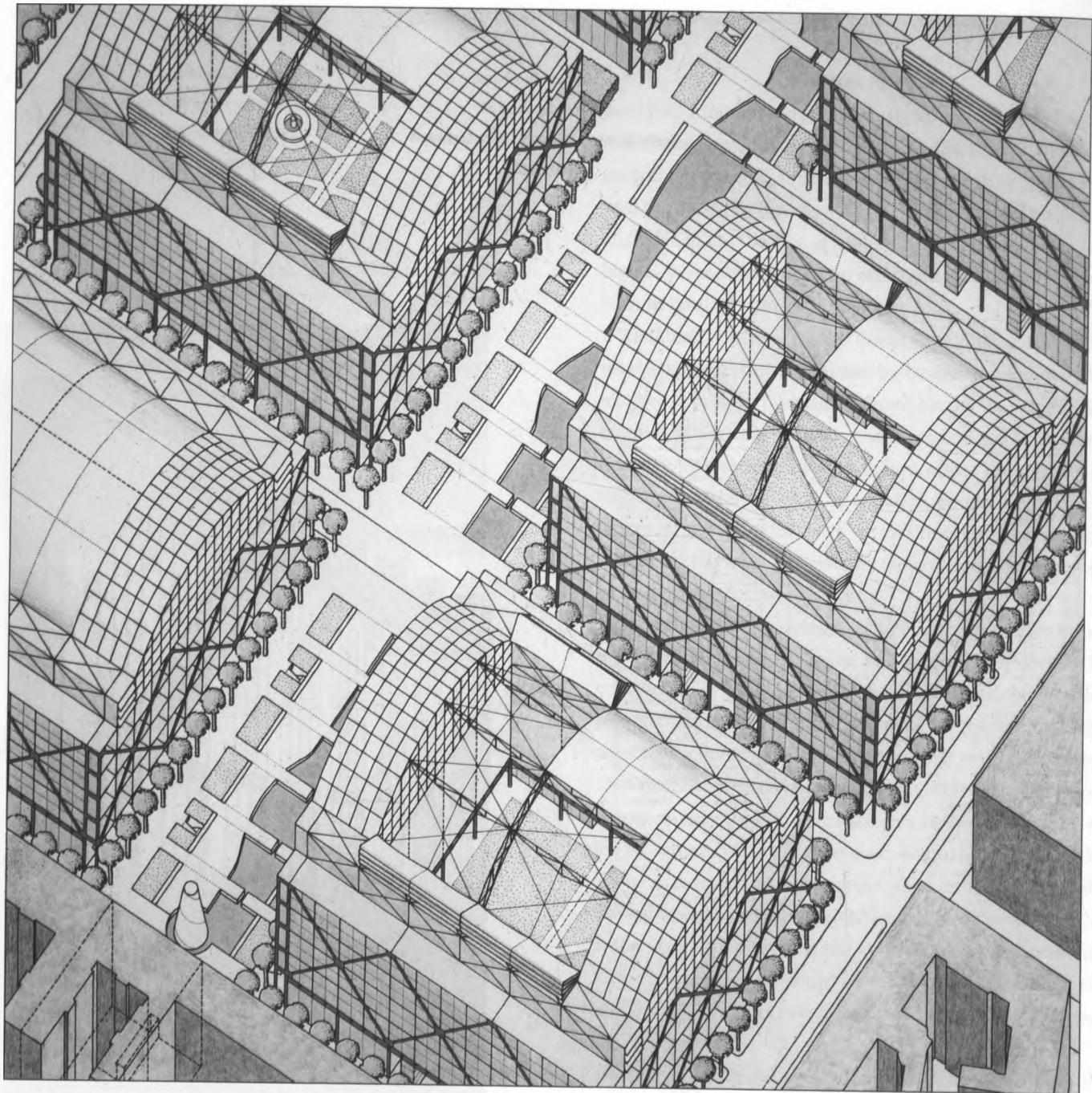
Kleihues's building for the Berlin municipal cleaning department (figures 363, 364) can be counted among the first realized works of German Rationalism. In its details, this building gives little indication of an opposition to modernism. It is an almost abstract structure whose individual elements offer hardly any information about its contents; however, the rounded bays at one end and the staccato rhythm of the glass panels and the concrete pier supports suggest a large factory.

Kleinhues's "Park Lenné," a project for six huge housing blocks in the center of Berlin, is likewise "technical." The conspicuously articulated skeletal frameworks of the buildings are emphasized by the use of glass surfaces, and the retractable curved roofs make the buildings look like hangars. These buildings do not refer to the historical urban culture of Berlin; on the contrary, they awaken a slight reminiscence of the hall structures of the nineteenth century. The Rationalist aesthetic is expressed in the layout of the gardens, the straight rows of trees, the hedges, and the water channels. However, it is the layout that presents the strongest departure from the ideals of planning advanced by modernism; assembling six identical quadrangles in a cluster was an unusual and probably risky proposal.

Kleihues made the serial arrangement of identical units, blocks, and structures a theme in many of his designs.<sup>216</sup> His projects for the Landesgalerie in Düsseldorf (figure 366) and the Sprengel Museum in Hannover (figure 367) were based on cubical pavilions, much like Mario Botta's school building in Morbio Inferiore (figure 368); however, in Kleihues's designs the repetition of a basic element is disturbed. In the Düsseldorf project this is done by making the third block (the one with the grid) narrower than the others, and by fracturing the second block. The two deviant blocks are signs of functional relationships that interrupt the sequence of exhibition rooms; the fractured block is also a symbol of fragmented order. The disruption enlivens the complex and brings in representational material that is content-related. Further subjective references provide background information that enlarges on the main theme. With the increase in information, the narrative structure is condensed: "The exhibition frames are large concrete blocks. . . . They are to be read as a poetic

**Josef Paul Kuehne**  
Main workshop of  
**Berlin Municipal Cleaning Department**  
**1969–1972**



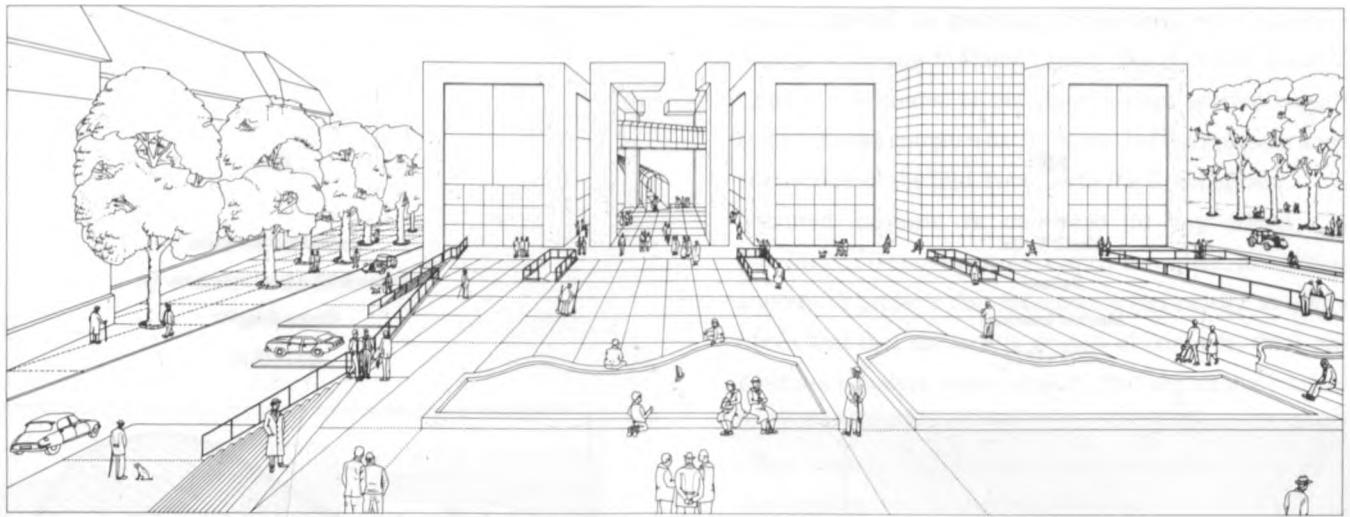


365

**Josef Paul Kleihues**

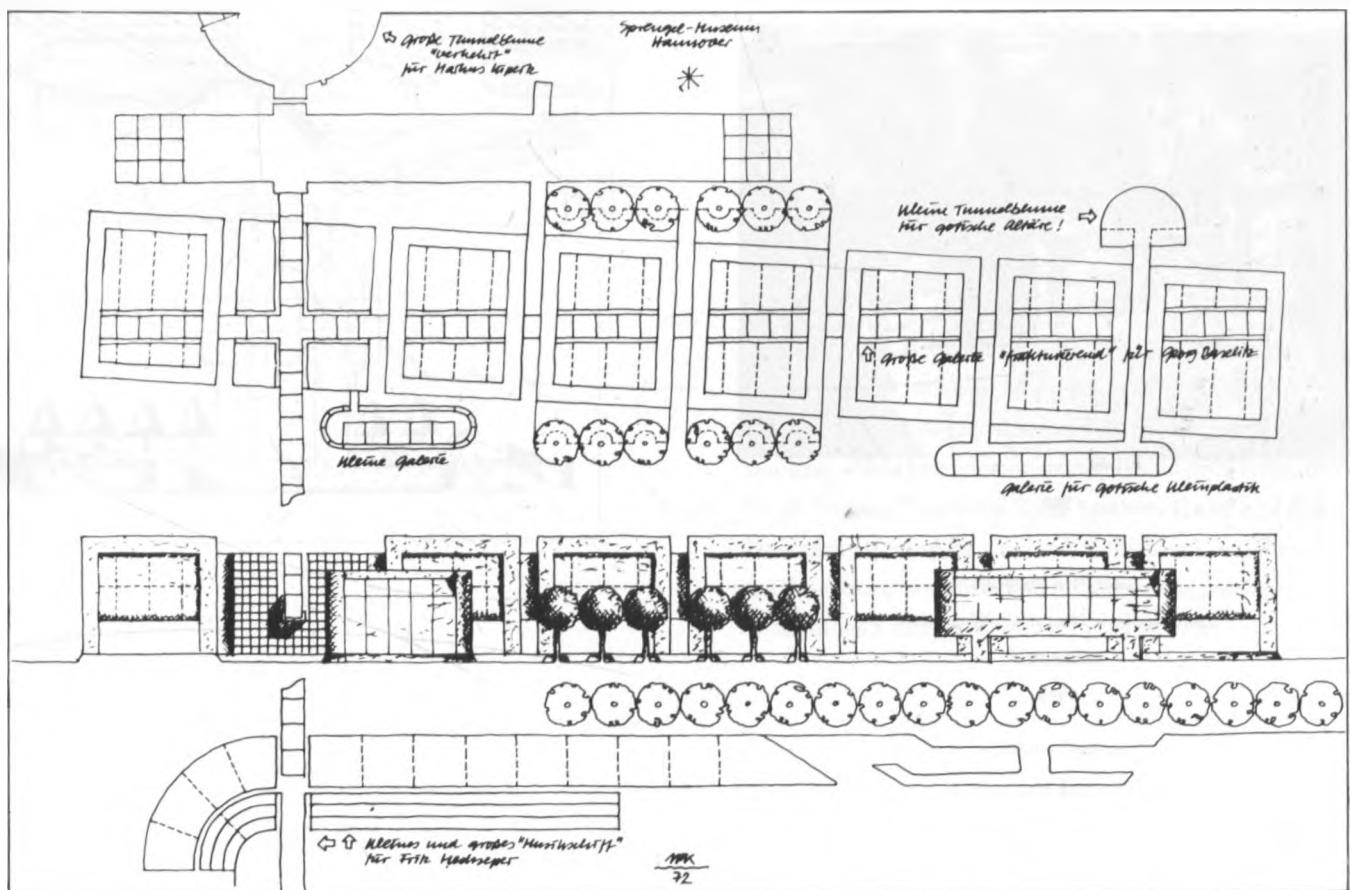
**Park Lenné (project)**

**1979**



366

**Josef Paul Kleihues**  
Landesgalerie Nordrhein-Westfalen  
Düsseldorf  
1975

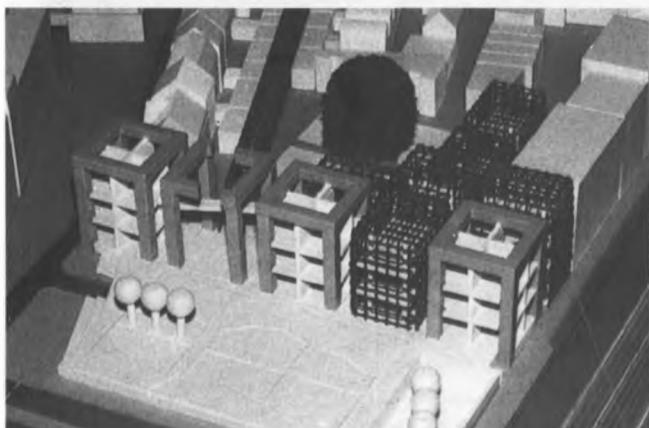


367

**Josef Paul Kleihues**  
Museum Sprengel  
Hannover  
1972

368

Mario Botta  
School  
Morbio Inferiore  
1972–1977

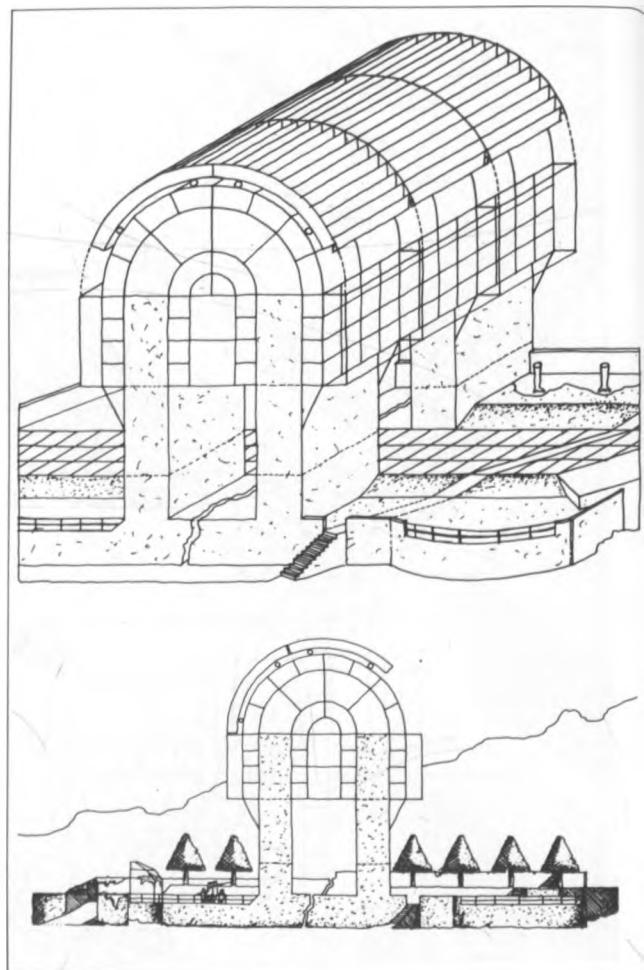


369

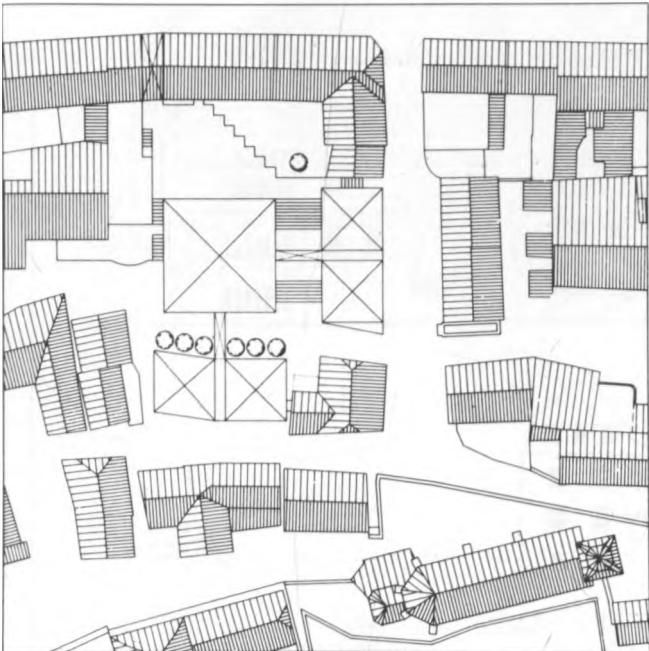
Josef Paul Kleihues  
Landesgalerie Nordrhein-Westfalen  
Düsseldorf  
1975

370

Josef Paul Kleihues  
House with a fractured base for  
Georg Baselitz  
1972



**Josef Paul Kleihues**  
**Museum, Blankenheim**  
 (project)  
 1976–1982



gesture against the tradition of neoclassical architecture as well as a homage to Donald Judd. The concrete frame fractured in the course of the glass passage symbolizes at the same time the entrance hall (pronaos) of the museum and the connection of the Old Town with the Grabbeplatz. . . . This fractured pronaos is dedicated to my friend Georg Baselitz.”<sup>217</sup> These examples clearly show that, in addition to a group of projects that incorporate technology as a formal idiom and that are mostly devoid of contents, there are in Kleihues’s oeuvre other projects that are strongly oriented toward a narrative communication of information, that develop down to their details a comprehensive fictionality, and that venture into the subjective realm.

One of Kleihues’s most beautiful and conceptually convincing projects is his museum for Blankenheim, a small town in the Eifel region. Because the town would hardly have tolerated a large modern building, Kleihues opted for five exhibition halls, adjusted in size and proportions to the neighboring old buildings. Like the old buildings, the projected buildings were to have facades in a “half-timber” style; however, now the “timbers” were to be of steel. This translation of the historical latticework into a modern one is one of the themes of the project. Kleihues’s handling of the masses of the projected buildings was intended to preserve the small scale of the town. Unfortunately, narrowminded pleas for something more “modern” prevented this project’s realization.

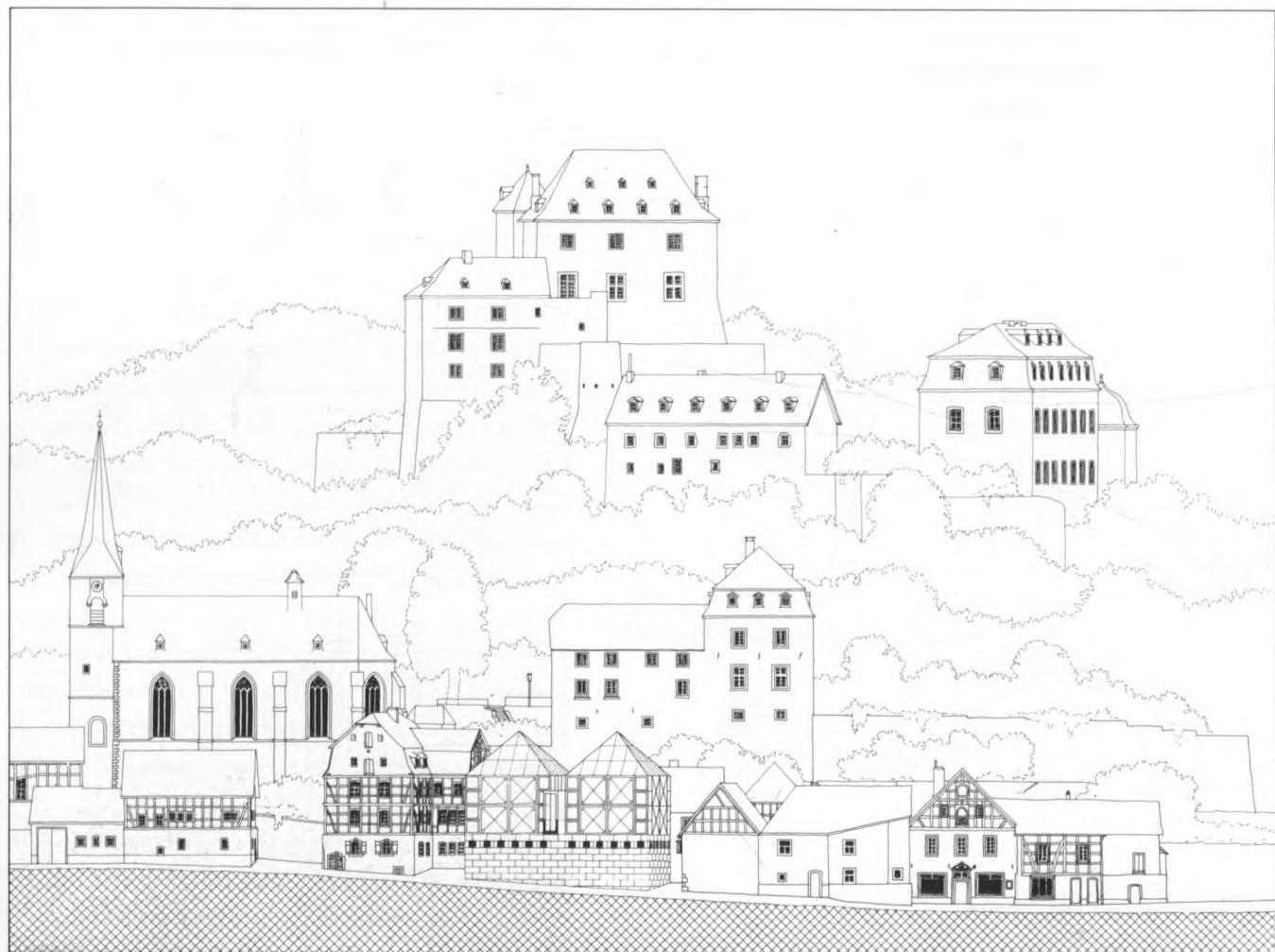
Figures 373 and 374 show a quadrangle that Kleihues began planning in 1971. The renovation of nineteenth-century block structures in the Kreuzberg section of Berlin had brought a renewed recognition of their validity,<sup>218</sup> and the planning model most favored by modernism — open row housing — had been demonstratively and decisively rejected. O. M. Ungers<sup>219</sup> and the Krier brothers (Leon and Rob) had been campaigning for a revival of the block, but they did not get the chance to realize their projects. (The partial realization of Kleihues’s design is shown in figure 375.)

#### Urban Spaces:

##### Rob and Leon Krier

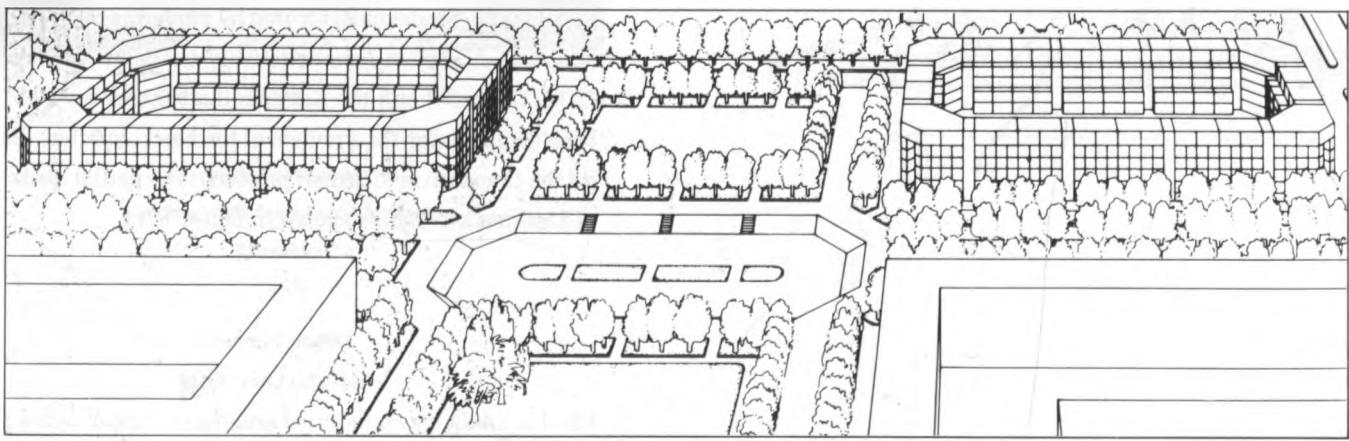
For the younger generation of architects, “urban-space planning” became a paramount issue as various manifestations — exemplified in the works of the Krier brothers, Leon and Rob — hinted at a turn away from “city planning.” The technocratic planning procedure that (as Lucien Kroll put it) amounted to setting rows of houses along the rows of utility poles was being challenged for the first time since the 1920s, and the utopias of city planning — invented worlds based on the wonders of technology — were under attack. The dividing line between modernism and postmodernism was clearer

**Josef Paul Kleihues**  
**Museum, Blankenheim (project)**  
**1976–1982**

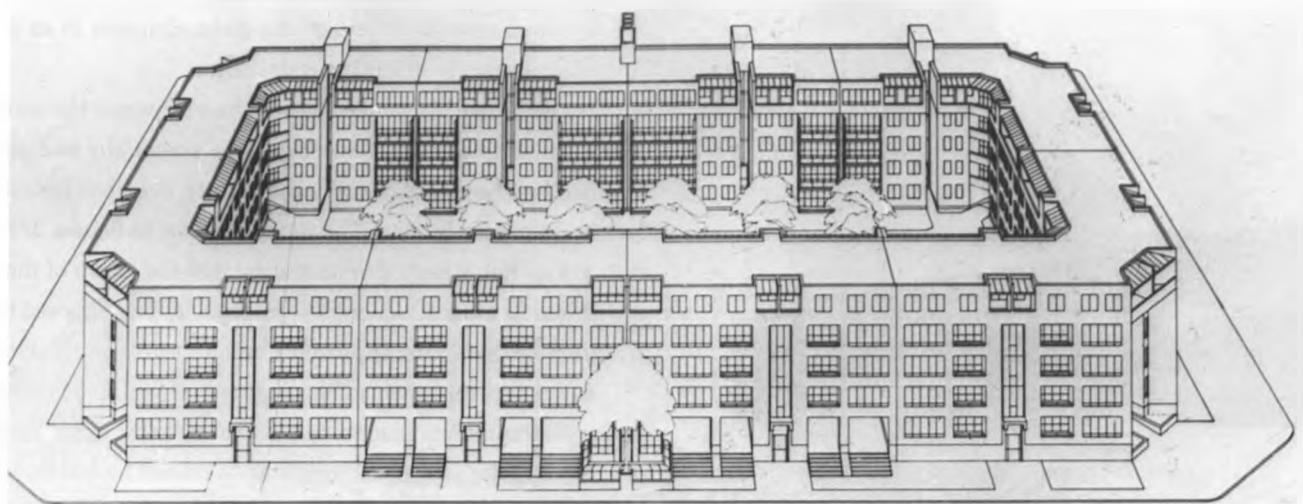


373

**Josef Paul Kleihues**  
**Housing block**  
**Vinetaplatz, Berlin-Wedding**  
**1971–1977**



296



374

**Josef Paul Kleihues**  
**Housing block**  
**Vinetaplatz, Berlin-Wedding**  
**1971–1977**



375

**Josef Paul Kleihues**  
**Housing block**  
**Vinetaplatz, Berlin-Wedding**  
**1977**

in the field of city planning than in other areas of architecture. On the one side were the glamorous urban utopias of modernism, which seemed to be on another planet. On the other side were the designs that took their bearings from the cities of the nineteenth century. The architects who favored the latter had passed through the technological frenzy and were now trying to supplement and "repair" the given elements in an urban environment that was being destroyed.

Figure 376 illustrates the relation between the modern urban utopia and the existing city; a potentially endless lattice structure extends above the old city, detached from it and declaring it obsolete. The project shown in figures 377 and 378 — Rob Krier's demonstration that the future of the city lies in its reconstruction<sup>220</sup> — is diametrically opposed to the utopian-modernist approach. On the basis of painstaking research into the urban archaeology of Stuttgart, Krier recreated with scrupulous exactitude the structure of the city. According to Krier's proposal, this city — ruined by bombs in the Second World War and by rebuilding in the postwar period — was to be given again the coherent shape that it had attained, through urban planning, since the seventeenth century (and, definitively, in the nineteenth). Expressway ramps were to be built over or eliminated, and the modern buildings that had been stuck piecemeal into the city were to be altered to suit their context. Krier even made the blocks and the squares that were to be added to the city analogous to their nineteenth-century forerunners, in order to head off future high-tech utopian schemes and to encourage a methodical approach of supplementation and recovery.

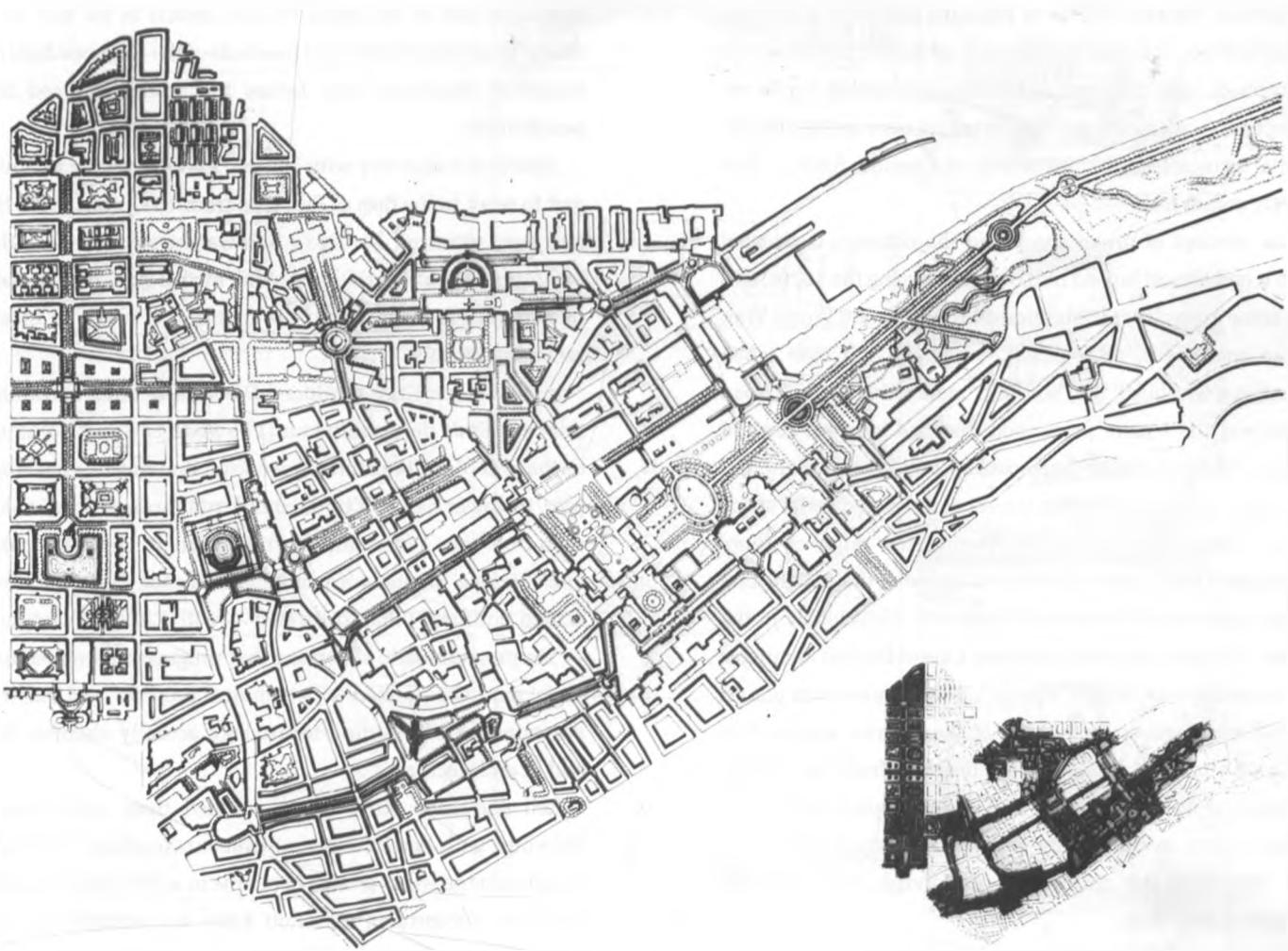
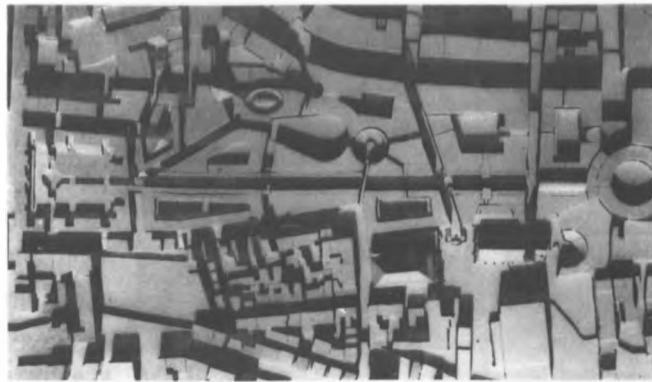
The archaeologically informed rehabilitation of urban "wastelands" — city spaces laid waste by functionalist architecture — is postmodernism's utopia. The daring invention of new worlds, customary since Le Corbusier's "Radiant City," cannot be the architectural utopia of the present; the new insights into the past and into the endangered state of the "architope" call for imagination and vision of a different kind. Those who still feel compelled to see modernity and progress embodied in a high-tech utopia advanced under the guise of progress, and to view the search for an orientation in historical sources as a nostalgic aberration, are forgetting that the historical city is also a present one, that it exists as an environment (though a disrupted and damaged one), and that its realized spatial features prove valuable every day. A row of trees along a street of apartment blocks that ends in a plaza with more trees is still a typological motif of urban space that, in its combination of nature and architecture, preserves an urban environmental value that is hardly to be surpassed.

In place of the accepted concept of city planning Rob Krier offers *Stadtraumgestaltung* [urban-space design]. In his book *Stadtraum in Theorie und Praxis* Krier states that the Charta of Athens did not define the concept of urban space.<sup>221</sup> He

376

**Yona Friedman**  
**Latticework Superstructure**  
**(New City over the Old City)**  
1963





377, 378

**Rob Krier**  
**Project for**  
**reconstruction of Stuttgart**

1975

(Shaded areas in small map indicate  
newly planned portions of city.)

provides a morphology of spaces, public places, streets, and facades. Here the city is seen as an experiential space, not as a cluster of various functions. The sensual perception of the city is given a higher value than the abstract categories of planning according to which the Charta of Athens had defined the modern city. For Rob and also for Leon Krier, this contrast raises the danger that the city will be seen only as a “city image” and that urban design will consequently exhaust itself in the production of a perfect and undisturbed city image.<sup>222</sup> However, one needs to see the demonstrative character of these reconstructions of urban spaces, and to keep in mind that they are directed against the notion that all imaginable abstract criteria of planning had been taken into consideration, that the bureaucracy of urban planning had triumphed, and that real, sensually perceptible urban architecture — architecture “following its own artistic fundamental principles,” in the words of Camillo Sitte — had quietly gotten lost.

The concept of urban space and the contents connected with it had almost lapsed into oblivion during the 1920s, and had come even closer to oblivion after the Second World War. Urban space was, so to speak, what was left over when something was built: the “unbuilt,” a negative entity. Urban space was the legally prescribed distance between rows of houses, which ensured the necessary incidence of light. Urban space was the grid of the streets or the zoned aerial space of the large American cities. During the reign of functionalism it took a special effort to arrive at the insight that urban space must be seen and dealt with consciously in the design of streets and public squares. One of the first architects to realize this was Ungers, who in his housing projects placed special emphasis on the design of the exterior spaces. The first step consisted in freeing the building from the strange compulsion to keep interior and exterior space strictly interdependent, in conformity with the Modern doctrine. Ungers describes the process of dissolving this dogmatic obligation as follows:

At that time I talked a lot about the so-called Janus-head of architecture, the double face of architecture, which acts in two directions, on the inside and outward. I turned against the doctrine that dictates that the facade must be the result of the definition of the interior. The exterior space acquires its shape at the same time as the building, and for this reason the exterior space has to become equally an element of the design. And in all the building structures I designed at that time I worked with a strong clustering of the exterior form.<sup>223</sup> Thus, Ungers anticipated the themes that have become rampant since about 1975 under the heading of “adjusted” and “contextual” architecture. The design of urban space in the sense of a rehabilitation of the historical urban layout of Berlin-Wedding was the theme of a seminar he conducted at

the Berlin Technical University in 1967–68, and in this seminar Ungers’s students Gorch Dennert and Torsten Mahlke proposed a supplemental block construction (figure 380) similar to those realized by Krier and Kleihues.<sup>224</sup>

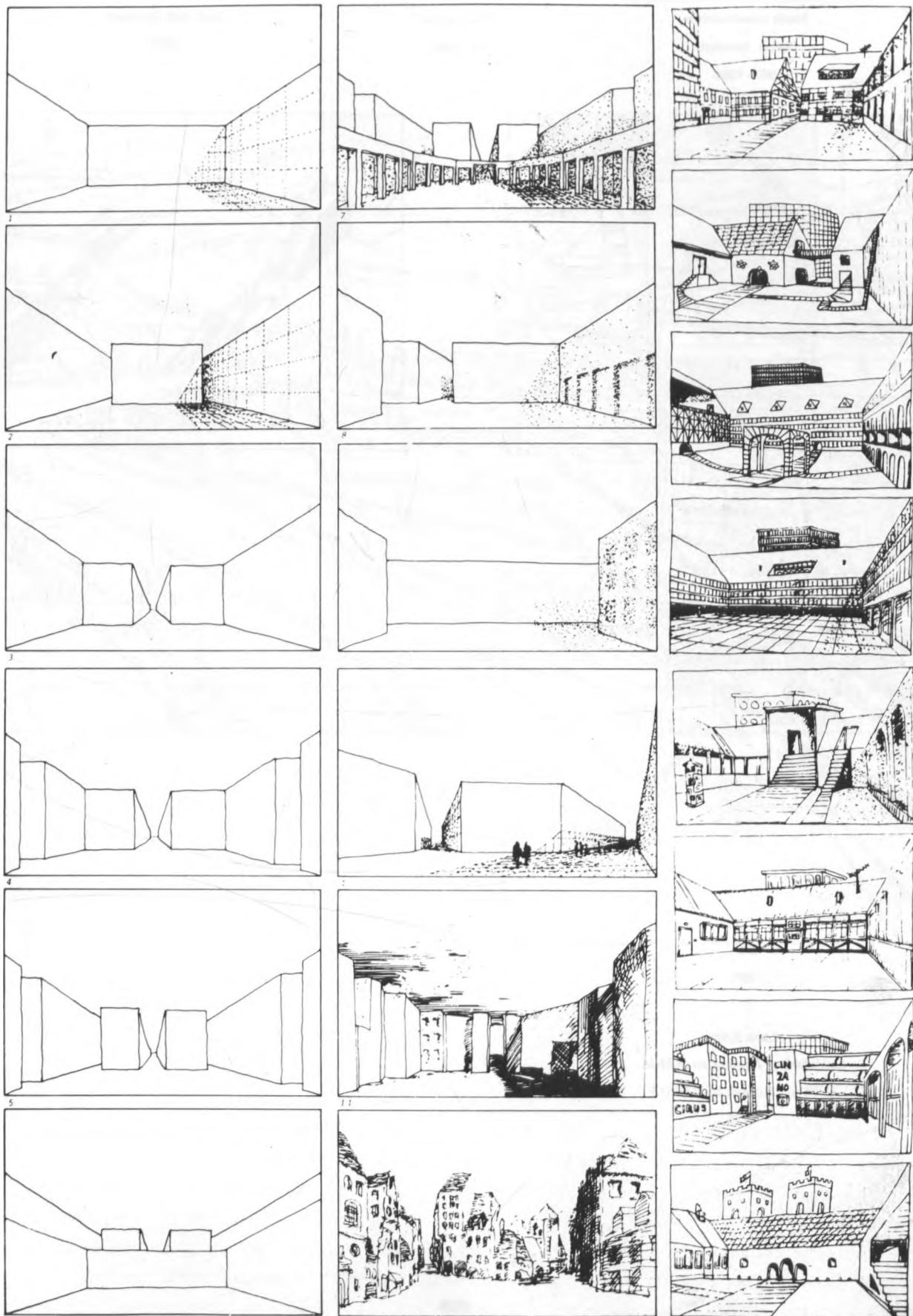
In 1965–66 Rob Krier was working for Ungers’s firm in Cologne, and Leon Krier was working in close collaboration with his brother and learning the fundamentals of architecture from him. This period left its marks not only on their drawing technique but also on some of their formulations (e.g., Rob’s *Stadtraumgestaltung*).<sup>225</sup> Figure 382, one of Leon’s first drawings of 1967, shows a direct kinship with Wolf Meyer-Christian’s works of 1964–1966 in the drawing technique and in the forms of such details as the bay windows. Thus, Leon Krier used products of the Ungers school as points of departure even before his brother noticed the possibilities.

After a one-year stay with Ungers, Rob Krier went to Stuttgart to work in the firm of Frei Otto from 1967 until 1970. He had been attracted by Otto’s lightweight structures. In the meantime, Leon Krier was drawing his baroque-tinged view of Echternach (figure 383), the first of his series of urban reconstructions.

In 1977 Leon Krier produced *Die sechste Säulenordnung oder das Ende der Architektur* [The Sixth Order of Columns or the End of Architecture], a sarcastic drawing of a concrete pier, its lower half still in the mold, run through on all sides with iron bars. With similar satirical intent, he built for the 1980 Venice Biennale a handcrafted facade (“My only executed building”) that illustrated — with Luddite overtones — his programmatic statement that progress in architecture ought not to be equated with technical progress, and that the preeminence of building technology actually signifies the end of architecture.

Rob and Leon Krier often enriched their architectural drawings with narrative embellishments (curtains and flags flapping in the wind, groups of people in action, balloons and airplanes, footprints), and Rob Krier has occasionally attempted to reintroduce sculpture as a means of fictionally intensifying architecture. The sculpture applied by Rob Krier on the courtyard side of his housing block on the Ritterstrasse in Berlin, a highly abstract figure that seems to be taking off in flight, represents a strong effort to reverse the separation of the arts ushered in by early modernism and to revive the possibility of the enrichment of architecture through artistic fictions.<sup>226</sup> However, the disillusionment that found its way into architecture along with constructivism and functionalism presented an obstacle to this effort. Rob Krier’s housing block on the Ritterstrasse (figures 388, 389) is the first of a series of reconstructions in Berlin-Kreuzberg in which a number of architects worked together to renovate war-damaged nineteenth-century buildings, and to link them to

**Rob Krier**  
**Typology of plazas**  
**1975**



380

Gorch Dennert and Torsten Mahike

Block construction

Berlin (project)

1967–1968

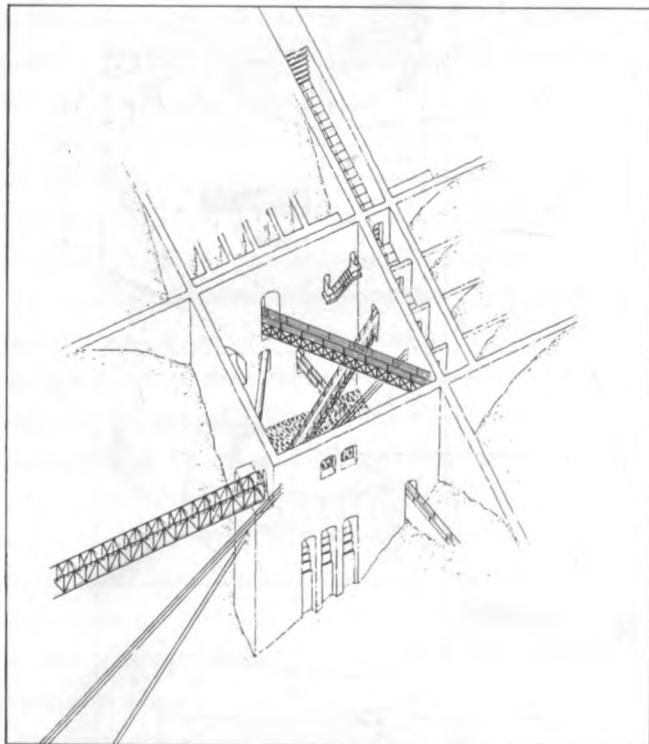
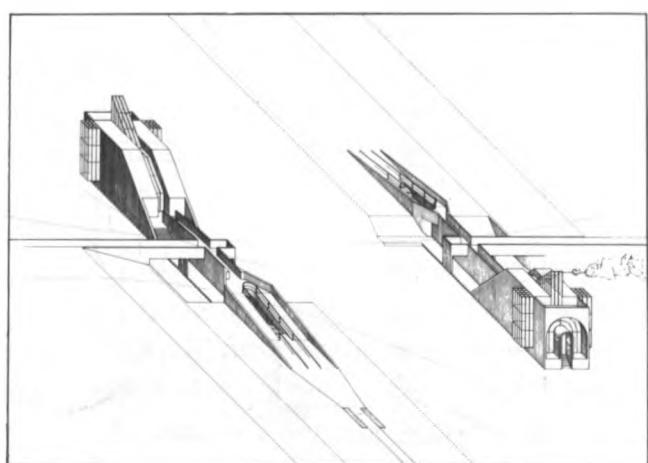


382

Leon Krier

Boat club (project)

1967



381

Leon Krier

*Schwieriger Zugang zu O.M.U.*

[Difficult Access to O.M.U.]

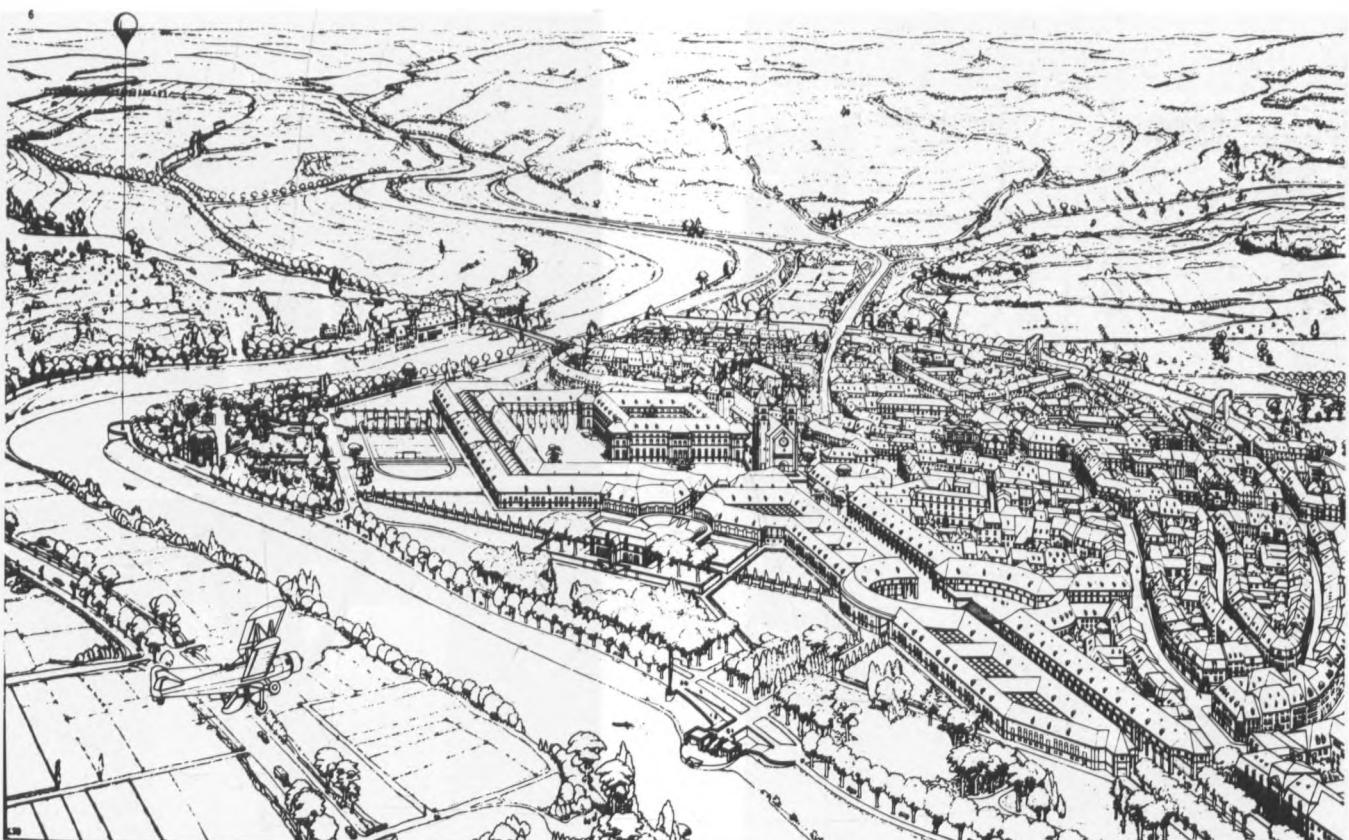
1975

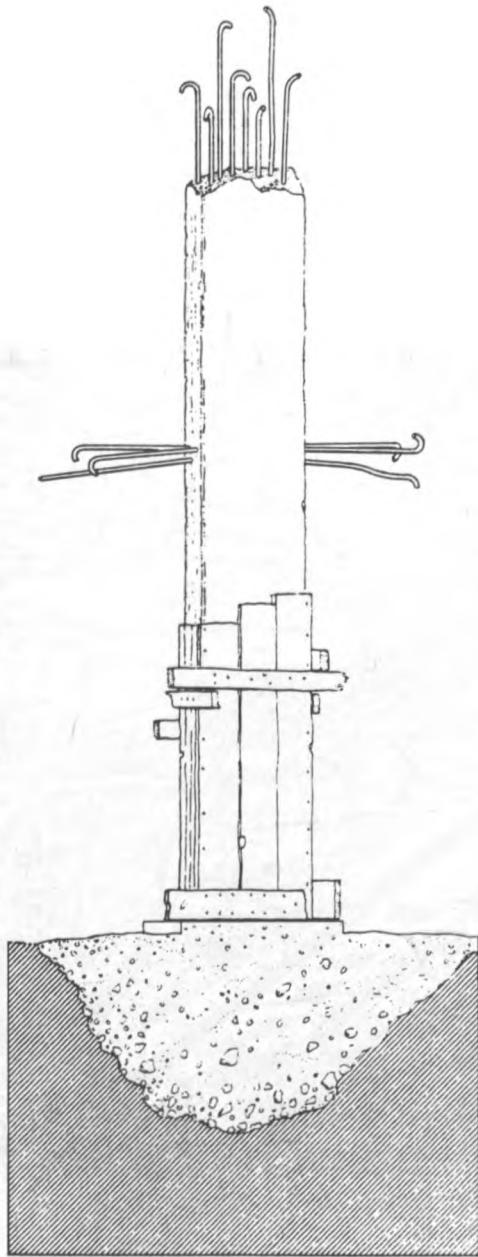
302

Leon Krier

Echternach

1969–70





384



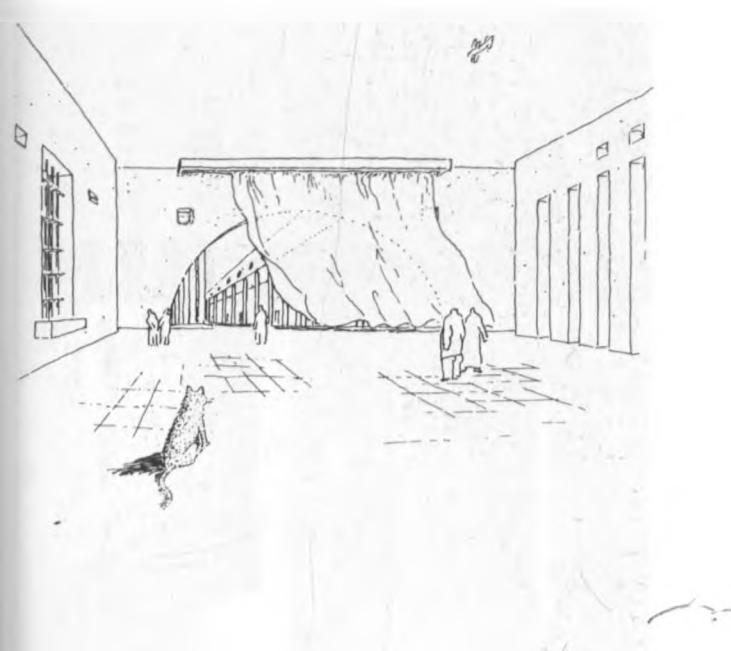
385

**Leon Krier**  
**Die sechste Säulenordnung oder**  
**das Ende der Architektur**  
*[The Sixth Order of Columns, or*  
*The End of Architecture]*

1977

**Leon Krier**  
**Portico for**  
**1980 Venice Biennale**

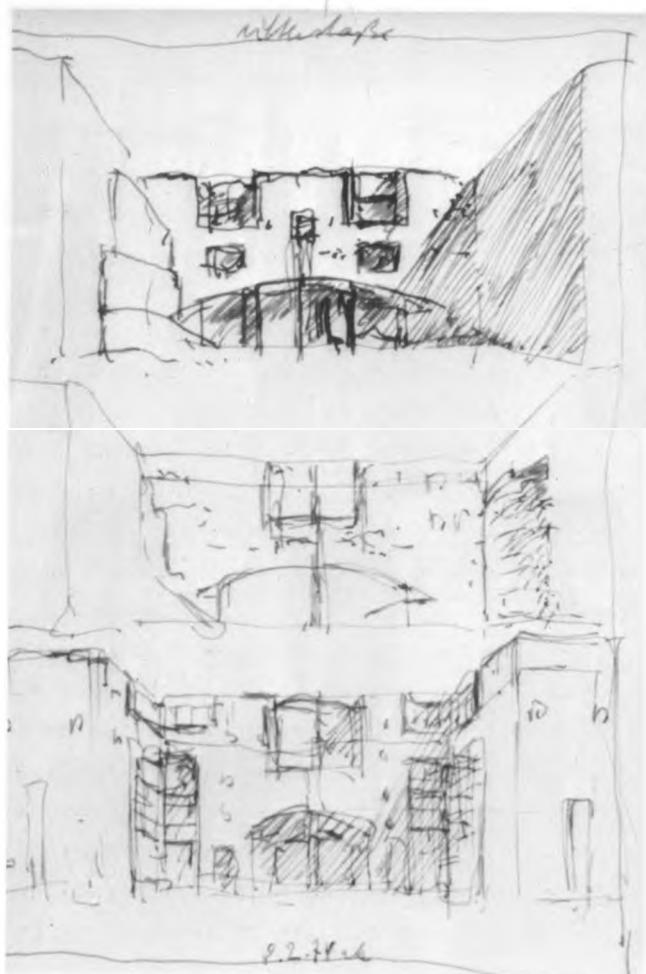
**Leon Krier**  
**Royal Mint Square Housing II**  
**1974**



**Rob Krier**  
**Sculpture above archway**  
**Berlin**  
**1979–1981**



**Rob Krier**  
**Sketches of housing block on**  
**Ritterstrasse, Berlin**



**Rob Krier**  
**Housing block**  
**Ritterstrasse**  
**Berlin**  
**1978–1981**



**Detail of  
Ritterstrasse housing block**



one another with new structures that would complement the old ones.

The main historic inspirations for the Krier brothers' opposition to modern technology and to functionalist urban architecture were the city planning of the nineteenth century, the drawing technique of Schinkel's Acropolis plan, and the visionary magnificence of Otto Wagner's city perspectives.

#### **"The Battle for the City":**

#### **Maurice Culot and the ARAU**

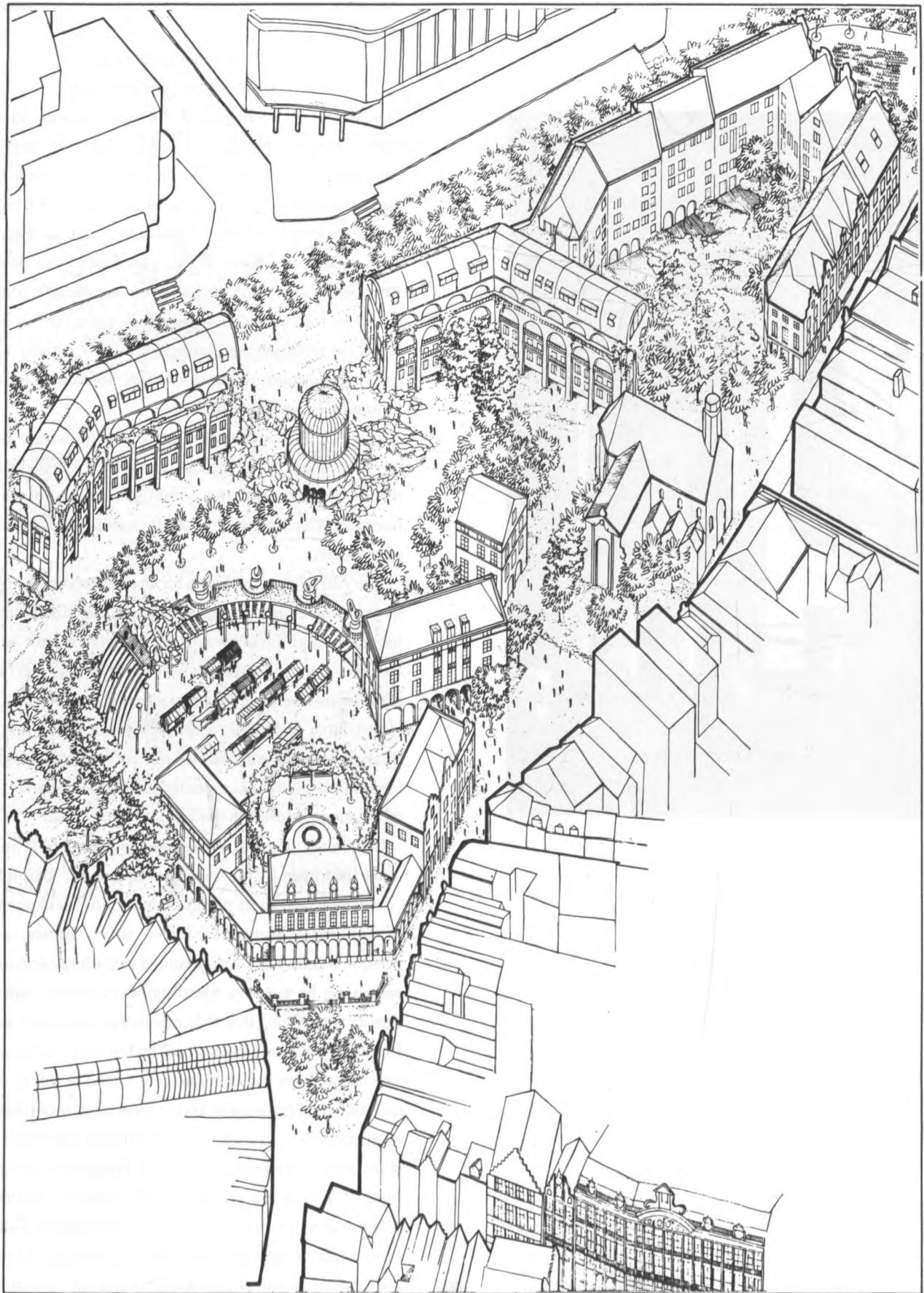
The Atelier de Recherche et d'Action Urbaine, founded in 1968 in Brussels by Maurice Culot, fought the "battle for the city" not only in theory but from one actual case to the next, using concrete and convincing plans to plead for renovation and reconstruction rather than destruction of the architectural substance. It was Francis Strauven who particularly stressed the idea that talk was of no use without counterproposals — that attractively packaged plans for big buildings could be rebuffed more effectively with equally attractive drawings supporting the theoretical arguments for an environmentally equitable solution.

The ARAU concentrated on Brussels, where the inner city was about to be almost completely plowed under for the sake of constructing administration buildings for the European Community and office buildings for international corporations.

The ARAU saw the battle for the conservation of Brussels in terms of a class struggle between the inhabitants of the inner city and the corporations and government bureaucracies. The drawing shown here as figure 391, which presents a small-scale residential section as an alternative to some projected large buildings, exemplifies the group's approach. Such drawings were intended not only as protests against the ideas of the municipal agencies and decision-makers but also as means of informing the local citizenry.

Ultimately, the ARAU called for "the rebuilding of the cities destroyed by the 'modern' urbanism." This rebuilding "[had] to accept as its points of departure the elements of the pre-industrial European city — street, square, neighborhood."<sup>227</sup> Leon Krier was involved in the formulation of these sentences; he too was pleading for reconstruction, and he agreed with Culot that this reconstruction could not be effected by modern architectural technology. As Culot stated, "social progress was conclusively forced to fall in line with technological progress in favor of the most profitable models of North American society."<sup>228</sup> The French architect Bernard Huet argued (referring to Walter Benjamin) along similar lines: "There is no progress in architecture, neither in the functional and constructive nor in the aesthetic sphere, and for the following reason: because architectonic has to correspond to an architectonic tendency, which in turn has to be

Maurice Culot (ARAU)  
Reconstruction proposal for  
Ste. Gudule section of Brussels  
1976



part of a truly political tendency.”<sup>229</sup> With this assumption, Maurice Culot’s argument against modern architectural technology’s faith in progress (“... it means that one has to clearly declare oneself ready to attack again all traditional models of architecture and urban construction. In this case it is of little importance whether the models have been invented by the bourgeoisie or not. . . . the degree of the falsification of these models is of no further interest to us; the pleasure in the disputes about the ‘truth’ in architecture we leave to the archaeologists and the hypocrites”<sup>230</sup>) is easier to understand. It does not take long to identify who the hypocrites are; they are theoreticians from the “extreme left,” as ARAU categorizes several of its opponents — those who mistake the ideology of the previous patrons for the actual “contents” of some buildings.

Those who call for the reconstruction of the city are out to recover the experience of the quality of life that is evident in the neighborhoods of the nineteenth century. The strongest argument against “modern” urbanism is the higher quality of life and housing in the bourgeois neighborhoods of the nineteenth century. This being the case, the next question poses itself automatically: How is it possible that twentieth-century architecture has abandoned this already achieved high level; is this progress at all? Modernism has subverted its own qualities.

#### **Rem Koolhaas**

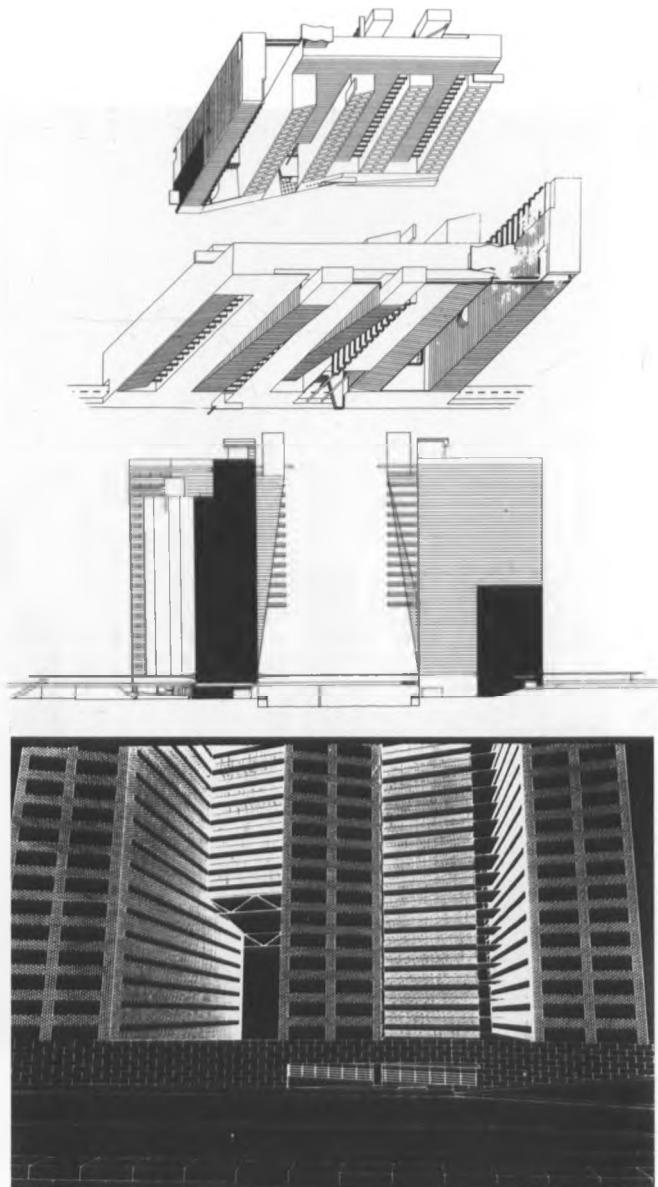
The Dutch architect Rem Koolhaas, who studied with Ungers at Cornell and can be counted as one of the Rationalists, stands in sharp contrast to Culot and Krier. Koolhaas did not turn completely away from the maxims of modernism. His unexecuted project for a housing block on the Maas River in Rotterdam (figures 392–394) suggests that the big single housing block, lately declared obsolete, could still be legitimate.

In conscious opposition to the trend of “low rise, high density,” Koolhaas posed the question of how, in a period of rapidly declining availability of real estate in the inner city, living in the city might still be a possibility. In a project for a piece of real estate next to the stock exchange in Amsterdam, he arrived at the conclusion that, in view of all the special regulations regarding the spacing and the format of the construction, a high-rise slab offered the greatest possible utility.

Koolhaas also suggested loosely spaced high-rise slabs for the rebuilding of urban areas partly destroyed in the war, as in the case of the design shown here in figure 395. This design surprised the jury of the International Architectural Exhibition in Berlin, though the use of red, blue, yellow, black, and gray had precedents in the work of Mondrian and the other De Stijl artists. Was Koolhaas recalling classical modernism?

Looked at more closely, the Friedrichstrasse-Kochstrasse pro-

**Rem Koolhaas**  
**Housing block**  
**Rotterdam**  
**(project)**  
**1980**



**Rem Koolhaas**  
**Housing block**  
**Rotterdam**  
**(project)**  
**1980**

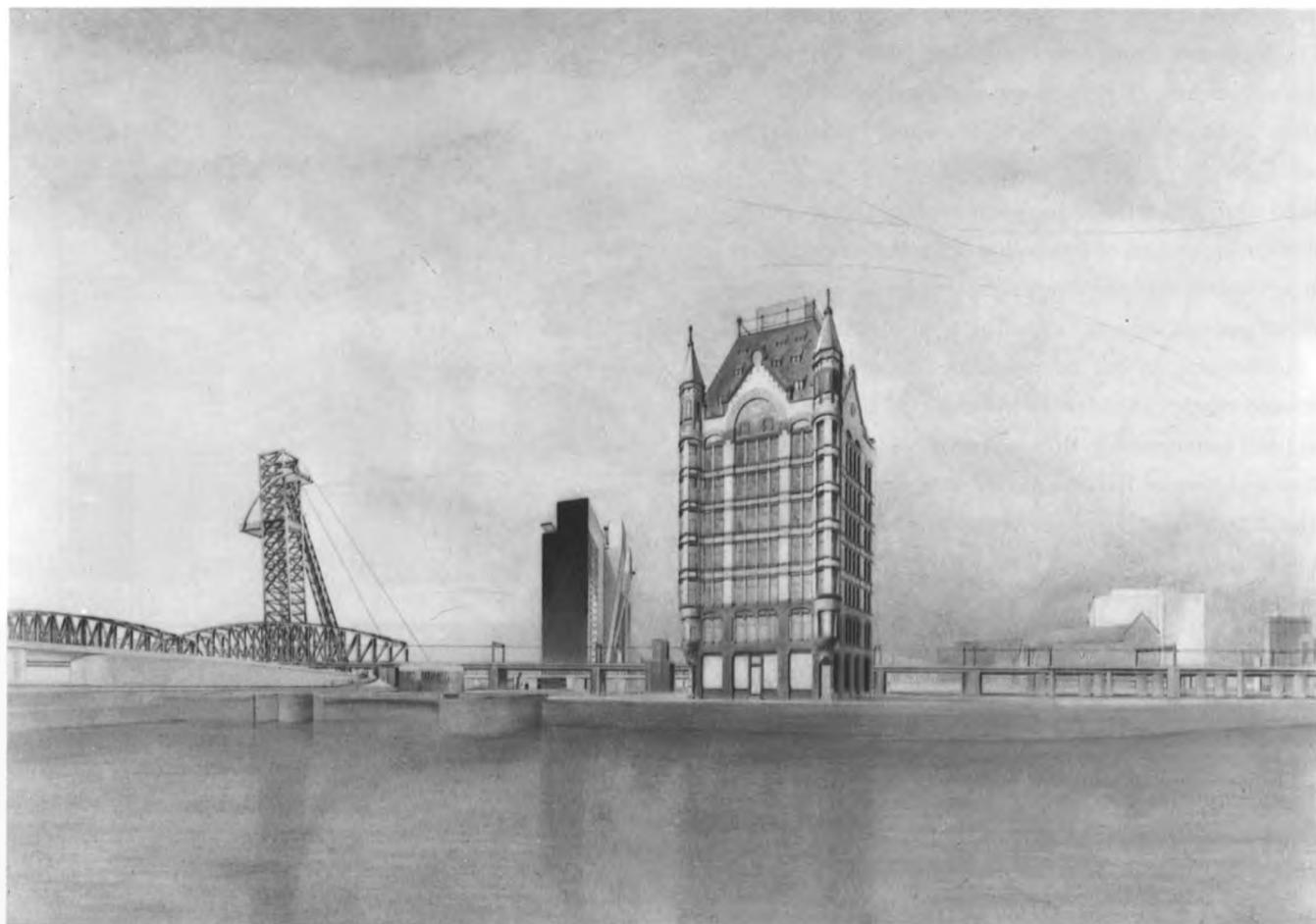
**Rem Koolhaas**

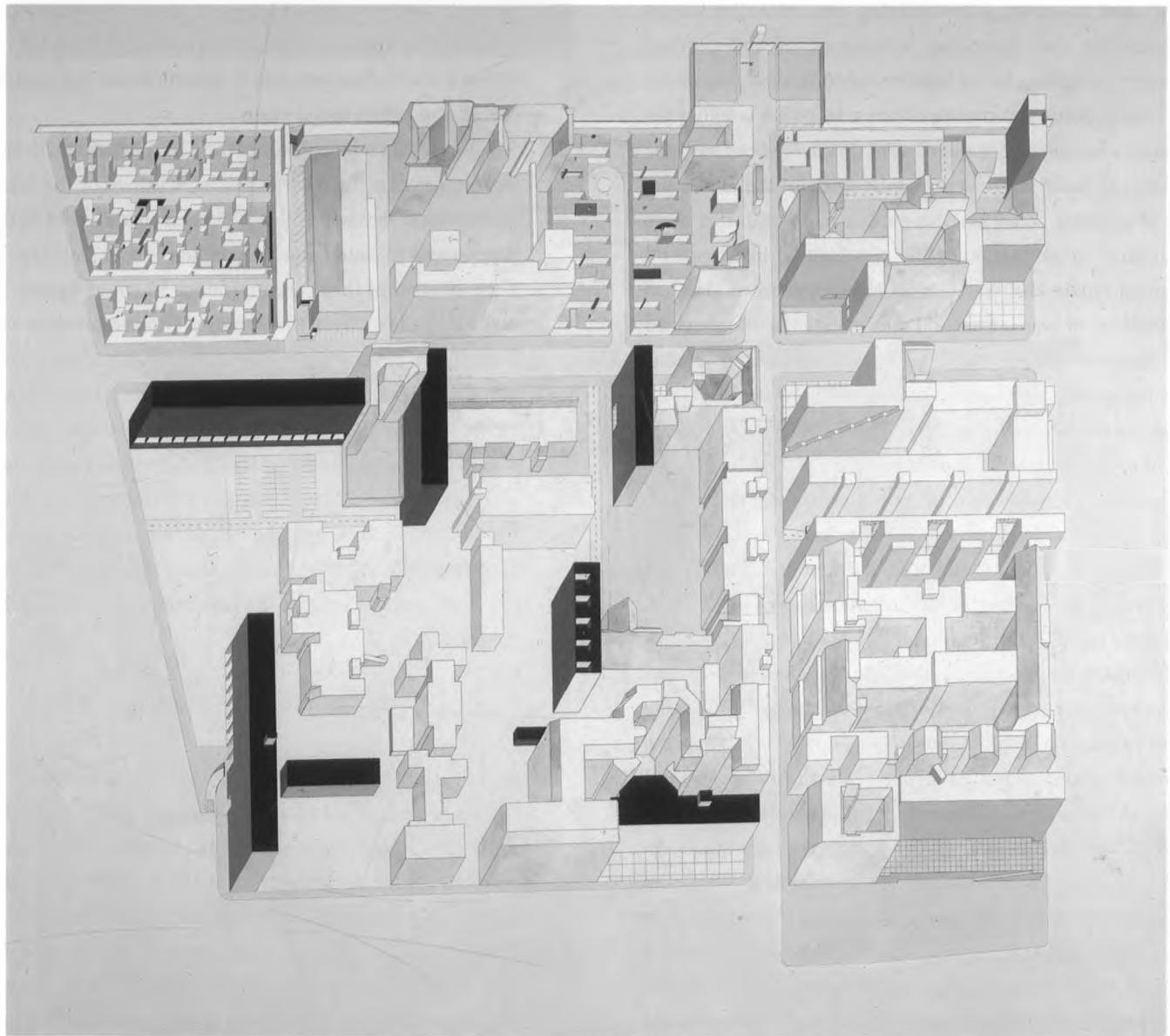
**Housing block**

**Rotterdam**

**(project)**

**1980**





395

**Rem Koolhaas**  
**Competition entry**  
**Berlin International Architectural Exhibition**  
**1980**

posal discloses that the slab blocks were fitted with utmost sensitivity among the existing buildings. Koolhaas refrained from reconstruction in the sense of a corrective, complementary addition to the city of the nineteenth century; however, in contrast with radical modernism, he did not search for an ideal area, cleared by demolition, on which to set blocks in a free "composition" or in rigidly aligned rows. The novelty of his proposal consisted in the classical modernism of the buildings and in the adjustment of their placement to the fragments of old structures. For Koolhaas "urban redevelopment" did not mean a historicizing reconstruction but an accentuating and balancing adjustment of independent geometric buildings in the fragmented contextual continuity of a largely destroyed city. Koolhaas was asking whether the difference between past and current styles, together with the decision to build in close proximity without the modernist fear of contact, could not produce a more real and more "beautiful" rehabilitation of the city than an insistence on seamless repair. But was this an abandonment of classical modernism, or was it a second modernism that emphasized its difference from the existing environment and at the same time recognized the particular value of the existing environment—a modernism of equal inclusion instead of a modernism of exclusiveness?

The design for the high-rise in Rotterdam is also far from being simply a demonstration of modernist recalcitrance. Several shafts of the building lean at different angles, so that the Maas River will be reflected in some of their glass surfaces while the sky will be mirrored in other shafts; the changing reflections in these surfaces dominate one's first impressions of the building as one approaches it on the bridge. On the street side facing the city (figure 393), Koolhaas violates the rationality and austerity of the grid by placing the facades and the shafts at oblique angles, thus setting the huge slab in motion. This design escapes the customary vapidly of abstract, contentless stereometric structures and turns the building into a narrative representation of the relationship between itself and the approaching observer—an experience of constantly changing images and standpoints between stability and lability. How strongly these fictional elements determine the total picture of the whole would become clear if the project were to be realized. But one says already that the language of modernism is still tolerable only after it is expanded and enlivened by narrative interpretation of the forms.

Koolhaas's proposal for extending one of the piers of the old bridge into an observation platform with a bar and a restaurant (figure 394) turns the area of his Rotterdam project into a rich neo-modernist scene, with the combination of the latticework, the yoke, and the tension cables of the tower and the oblique shafts of the building creating the impression of

constructivism in the sense of Leonidov and Tatlin. Retrospectively directed toward its beginnings and manneristically alienated, modernism thus regains a vigor it had forfeited in the course of postwar functionalism.

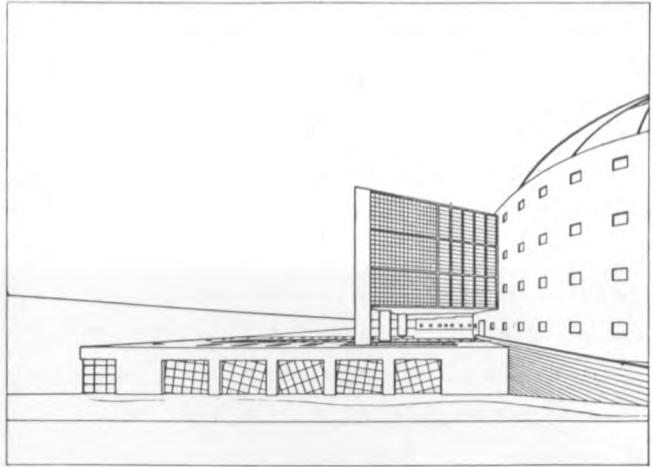
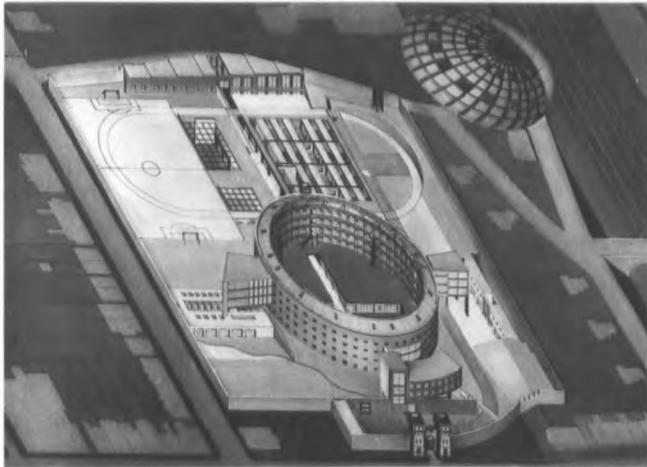
Koolhaas demonstrated his awareness of the narrative force of manneristic reinterpretation—another means of escaping the dogmas of modernism—with his design for the renovation of a prison in Arnhem (figures 396, 397). He must have been aware that he was venturing close to impudence (in respect to the prisoners and to the authorities) when he tilted the bars on some of the windows, thus suggesting a possibility of liberation. Nonetheless, these experiments constitute a methodical attempt to gain fictional material from acts of opposition to the norm.

The extent to which Koolhaas and his partners made narrative architecture their starting point is shown by the detailed architectural fictions (indeed, fictions made up of fictions) they created in watercolor for Koolhaas's book *Delirious New York*. Several of these are reproduced here as figures 398–400. Koolhaas's *City of the Captured Globe* represents a New York made up of granite blocks upon which are placed a number of notable monuments, including Le Corbusier's "Villa Radieuse," Poelzig's expressionist village, Natalini's world of checked grids, and Dali's surrealistic rendering of a struggle. Zoe and Elia Zenghelis's contribution depicts a "hotel-city" in the shape of a sphinx, whose head contains a planetarium dome. These stories about stories remind us that Koolhaas began his career as a filmmaker and a screenwriter.

## THE NEW YORK FIVE

Peter Eisenman, Michael Graves, Richard Gwathmey, John Hejduk, and Richard Meier are often associated with European Rationalism. For a good while, these New Yorkers (and the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies, connected to them through Eisenman) have insisted on counting Aldo Rossi and O. M. Ungers among their closest sympathizers. The Austrian architect Raimund Abraham, who teaches at the Cooper Union together with Hejduk, can also be counted as an early supporter of European Rationalism in the United States. Rossi's inclusion of works by the New York Five in his exposition at the fifteenth Milan Triennale, in 1973, attested to the connection between European Rationalism and the "Whites" (as the New Yorkers are also called), yet the New York Five arrived at the beginnings of their style by an entirely different route.

Whereas Rossi was strongly influenced by his teacher Ernesto Rogers and by the Swiss and German avant-garde, and Ungers came from the tradition of Team X and had gathered further impulses from Alvar Aalto, the New York Five had,



396, 397

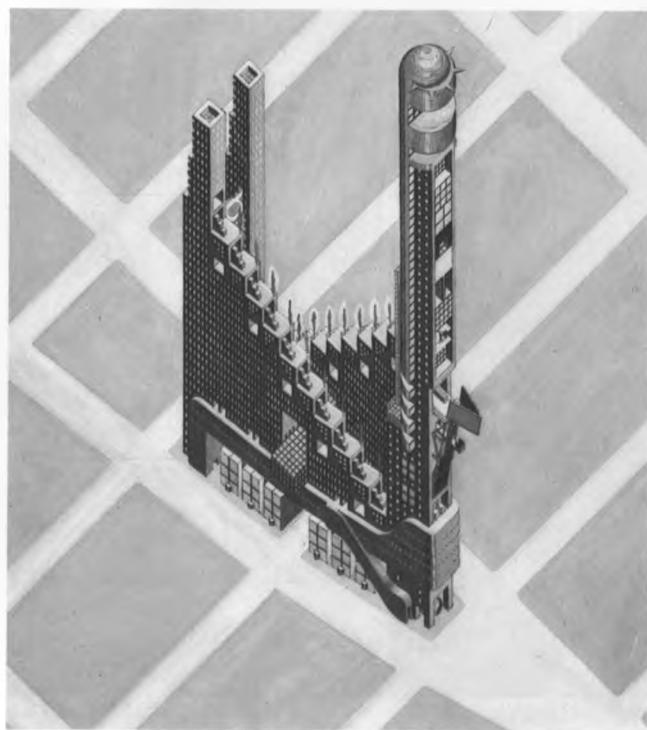
Rem Koolhaas  
Project for  
renovation of prison  
Arnhem  
1980



398

Rem Koolhaas  
*The City of the Captured Globe*  
ca. 1972  
[from R. Koolhaas,  
*Delirious New York*  
(Oxford University Press, 1978)]

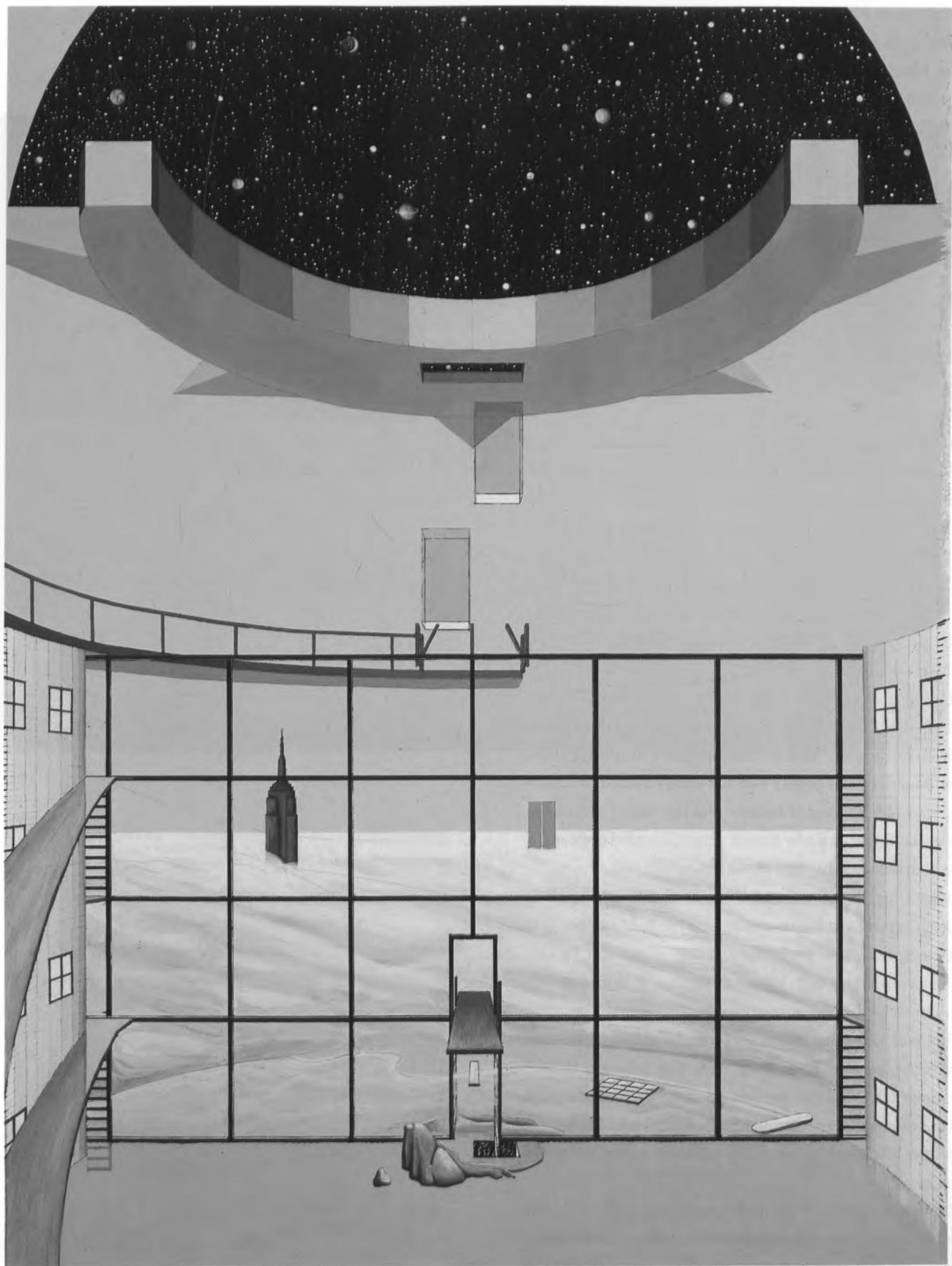
**Zoe and Elia Zengelis**  
**Hotel Sphinx**  
**1975–76**



Rem Koolhaas, Zoe Zengelis, and Elia Zengelis

Planetarium with swimming pool,

Hotel Sphinx



under the influence of their teacher Colin Rowe, come to be inspired by the early works of Le Corbusier. Eisenman had also been inspired by the Italian architect Giuseppe Terragni.

401

#### Richard Meier and Neo-Modernism

More than any of his colleagues (even Richard Gwathmey), Richard Meier has adhered to the original intentions of the Whites. It is his works that most deserve the appellation White. Meier's white buildings—especially his houses of the 1960s and the early 1970s and his public buildings, such as the Atheneum in New Harmony, Indiana—recall the dreams of the young Le Corbusier (who had to be satisfied with more modest realizations).

Meier does not like to see his works traced back to Le Corbusier any longer; he believes that he has taken new paths and gone far beyond Le Corbusier. This is correct inasmuch as Meier has achieved a new enrichment of spatial situations. Yet now, as before, it is unmistakable that Le Corbusier is the godfather of nearly all Meier's buildings. It can even be maintained that Meier has been drawing new things from the canon of the young Le Corbusier.

In particular, Meier's great house in Old Westbury, New York, gives the impression of a continuation of Le Corbusier's ideas. It seems to combine the best features of the Villa Stein and the Villa Savoye. The thin, tautly stretched white walls, the floating structures interacting so to form large compositions, the grouping of thin round supports, the long extending ramps, the dark loggias penetrating deep into the building, the bright surfaces of the drawn-out window courses, and the white railings—all these motifs were formulated by Le Corbusier. Meier did not make a point of denying this; on the contrary, he insisted that the tradition of Das Neue Bauen had not been exhausted: "I am still fascinated by the poetry of Das Neue Bauen, by the beauty and the utility value of technology. . . . I simply cannot believe that the highly promising, rich possibilities of a few formal principles are supposed to be exhausted already."<sup>231</sup>

Meier's first independent houses—the Smith house in Darien, Connecticut (1965–1967), and the Salzman house in East Hampton, New York (1967–1969)—present Le Corbusier's vocabulary with a great virtuosity.<sup>232</sup> With the Salzman house he arrived at the combination of main building, bridge, and side wing that achieved substantive meaning in later projects of the New York Five. The Salzman house's extremely tall windows are foreign to Le Corbusier's work, and the rooms that rise through several stories and enter into manifold relationships with the adjacent rooms are something new.

The grand rooms of the Salzman house, with their tall, slender round supports, appear as the unsurpassed ideal of modernism. It is as if modernism reached its climax with this

Richard Meier

Atheneum

New Harmony, Indiana

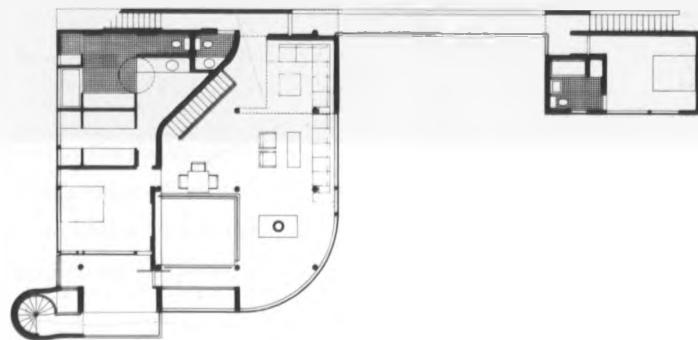
1975–1980



Richard Meier  
One-family house  
Old Westbury, New York  
1969-1971



**Richard Meier**  
**Saltzman house**  
**East Hampton, New York**  
**1987–1969**



**Plan of**  
**Saltzman house**

**Interior of  
Saltzman house**



development of space and this white building. Indeed, it can even be said that Meier's complex interconnections of spaces, which can hardly be grasped from a single level, are symptomatic of a last phase of modernism. And the fact that these spaces receive their light through many kinds of openings lead to the inescapable conclusion that, in spite of all the coolness of white modernism, we are seeing a virtuosity in the handling of light that is about to exhaust its last possibilities. This assumption is confirmed by the Atheneum at New Harmony, whose profile is even more richly diversified than the young Le Corbusier would have dared to make it. The symbolic allusion to ocean liners is expressed even more strongly here than in the well-known examples from the 1920s. However, the contents of Meier's buildings do not go beyond this symbolic reference, which is one of the commonplaces of classical modernism. The language of the forms remains as abstract as that of Le Corbusier.

Though he has claimed to "reject the objective and advocate the abstract,"<sup>233</sup> Meier has sought a "historical" level of reference to which contemporary architecture can relate — namely, the work of the young Le Corbusier. Nevertheless, one can hardly maintain that Meier's architecture stands in an unbroken tradition of modernism. Le Corbusier himself chose different paths with his late works, which led to Brutalism. Meier and the New York Five consciously passed over this last stage of the history of modernism while reaching back to its beginnings, and they brought back to life a "maniera" that, in Le Corbusier's work and in the general development of architecture, had been left behind as a historical achievement.

Recently, there have been more and more indications that architects are beginning to recapitulate single phases of modernism and to reinterpret forms derived from different stylistic contexts. The groups Alchimia and Memphis are reviving the design and architecture of the 1950s, and the New York Five the architecture of Le Corbusier. Perhaps, therefore, it is more appropriate to speak here of an early neomodern than of a "late modern"<sup>234</sup> architecture.

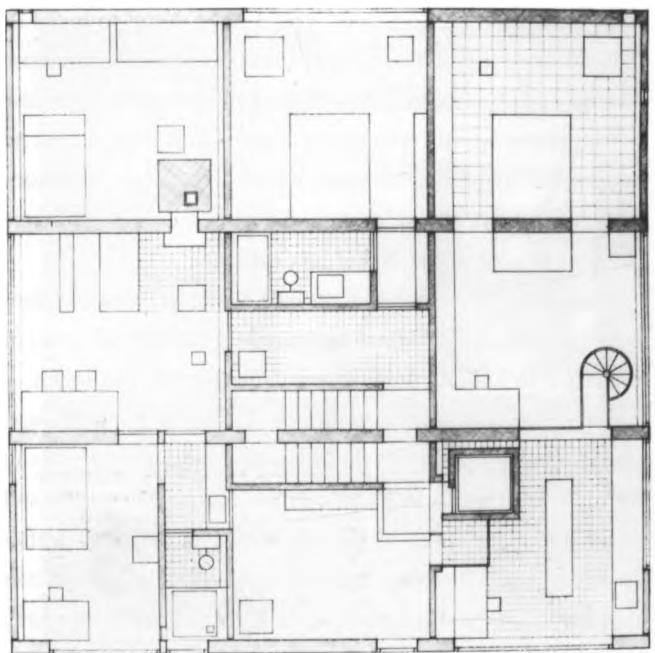
Though Meier and the New Yorkers invoked a true adherence to modernism, their works are marked by an invigorating distance from the original modernism. Yet this distance lacks spontaneity. There is in it more reflection than further development. The impressive radiance of their buildings, designed with an undiminished faith in modernism, is nevertheless only a reflection of something from the past. These buildings bear the marks of artificiality and of conscious reexamination.

**Abstraction and Fiction:**

**John Hejduk and Peter Eisenman**

In contrast to Meier and Gwathmey, the other architects of the New York Five — Peter Eisenman, Michael Graves, and John

John Hejduk  
House 7  
from "Seven Houses"  
1963



Hejduk — did not adhere to the initial prescription of a further development of Le Corbusier's architecture and of the Modern Movement. Instead they accomplished a transformation that has become paradigmatic for the genesis of contemporary architecture — a transformation that leads from abstraction to narrative fiction.

John Hejduk's "Seven Houses" (1954–1963) are subtle refinements of themes from Mies in which Hejduk varies, in minute detail, the theme of the residential pavilion with a three-by-three grid. These designs must be recognized as high points of the modernist achievement in the geometric approach to architecture. With the next series, the "Diamond Houses," Hejduk continued the idea of a design series developed from stereometric spatial experience on the basis of new data. Whereas the "Seven Houses" were rigid and static, the "Diamond Houses" were dynamic spatial structures, conceived in terms of supports and walls set in centrifugal motion; they were serial products of compositional ideas from serial geometry.

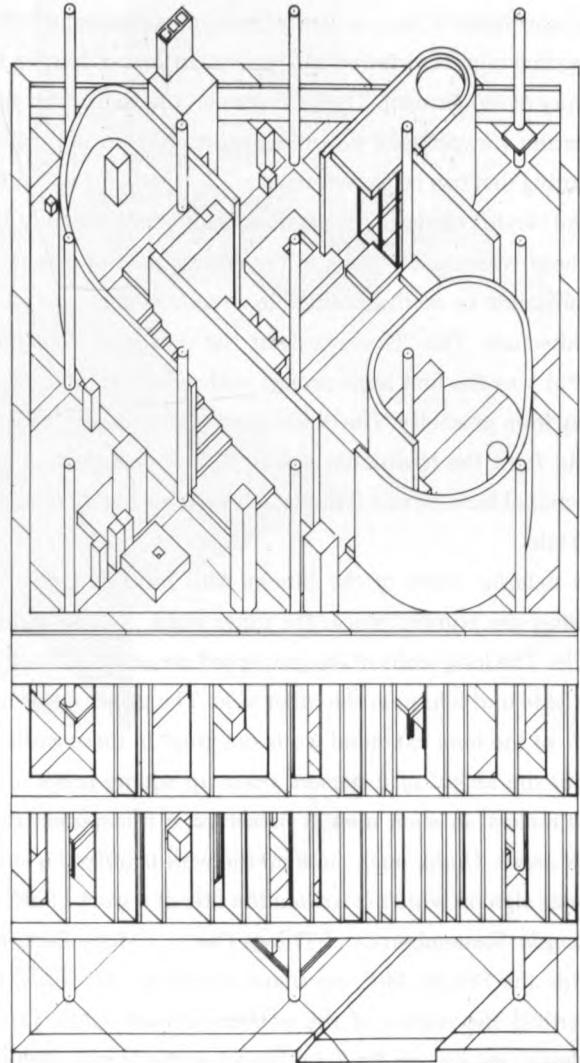
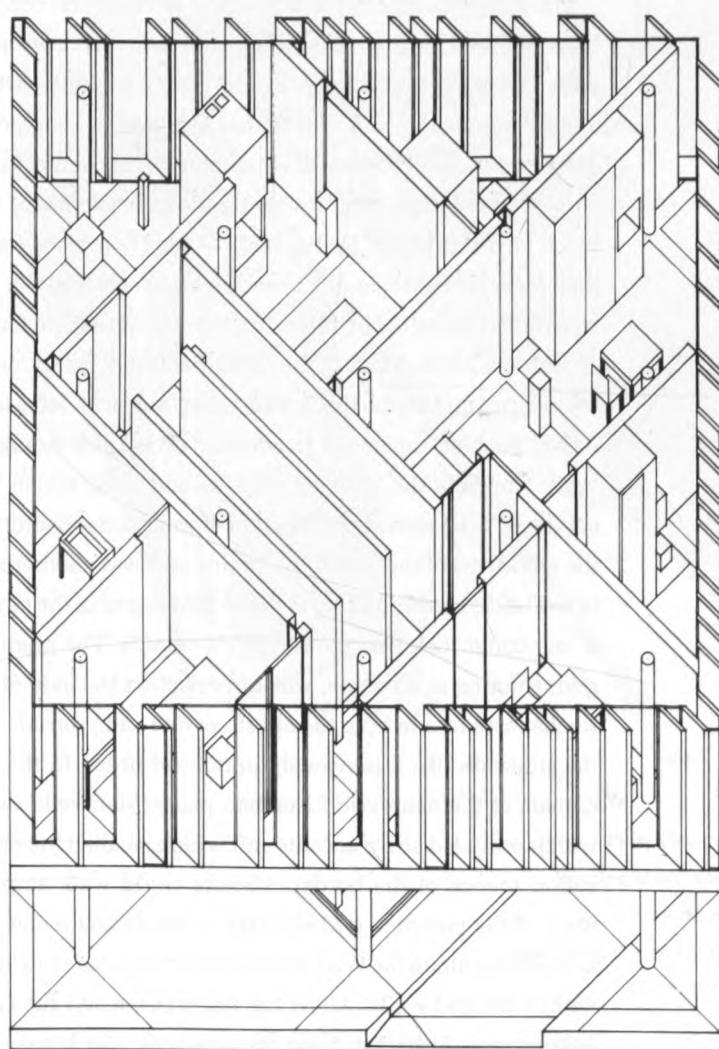
In spite of their differences, the two phases of Hejduk's work share the fundamental assumption of an architecture developed from the possibilities of pure geometry. The specific historical importance of these works lies in their complex and diversified spatial structure, which acquires a significance extending beyond functional considerations. Here, as in the case of Eisenman, we can speak of a late phase of modernism, because here the last possible conclusions are drawn from the modernist concept. From this integral self-contained foundation Hejduk draws the consequences of an immanent development of a "modern architectural geometry." With the immanence of these logical steps in the direction of an increasing refinement and enrichment of a fundamental idea is also connected an increasing hermetic tendency, which sometimes (especially in the case of Eisenman) seems to lead to a total lack of explanation. The rationality and transparency of geometry turns into the irrationality and opacity of highly complicated structures.

Even Hejduk's comments on his geometric exercises are abstract:

*The realization that the hand and mind are one, working on first principles, and filling these principles with meaning through a juxtaposition of basic relationships such as point, line, plane, and volume, opened up the possibility of argumentation. The first groupings were arbitrary; but once the arbitrary beginning was committed, the organism necessarily went through its normal evolution — and whether the evolution of form continued or stopped depended on the use of the intellect not as an academic tool, but as a passionate living element. The problems of point-line-plane-volume; the facts of square-circle-triangle; the mysteries of central-peripheral-frontal-oblique-concave-convex; of right angle*

407

John Hejduk  
"Diamond House"  
1967



and perpendicular; of perspective; the comprehension of sphere–cylinder–pyramid; the questions of structure–construction–organization, of scale and position; the interest in post–lintel, wall–slab, vertical–horizontal; the arguments of two-dimensional and three-dimensional space; the extent of a limited field, of an unlimited field; the meaning of implied extension; the meaning of plan, of section, of spatial expansion–spatial contraction–spatial compression–spatial tension; the direction of regulating lines, of grids; the relationships of figure to ground, of number to proportion, of measurement to scale, of symmetry to asymmetry, of diamond to diagonal; the hidden forces; the ideas of configuration; the static, the dynamic: all these begin to take on the form of a vocabulary.<sup>235</sup>

These geometric and geometry-related qualities are for Hejduk the “contents” of the basic principles; a vocabulary, he claims, can be constituted of “meanings” such as points, lines, surfaces, and bodies. This rhetorical outburst sounds like the last great summation of all conceivable possibilities of an abstract geometric conception of architecture — a virtual catechism of the modernist faith, encompassing everything that might be viewed as a generative force of form in the history of modernism. These “contents” are so abstract that, from the viewpoint of postmodernism, they do not yield a meaning that can be experienced.

But Hejduk changed his position completely, abruptly and without warning. In place of the abstractness of geometric serialization he set the intelligible visualization of a narrative architecture. The “Graveyard for the Ashes of Thoughts” (1975) was the first large project with which Hejduk broke away from geometry. The description of this project leads far afield from the traditional description of constructive and functional facts, so much so that it becomes a highly imaginative tale:

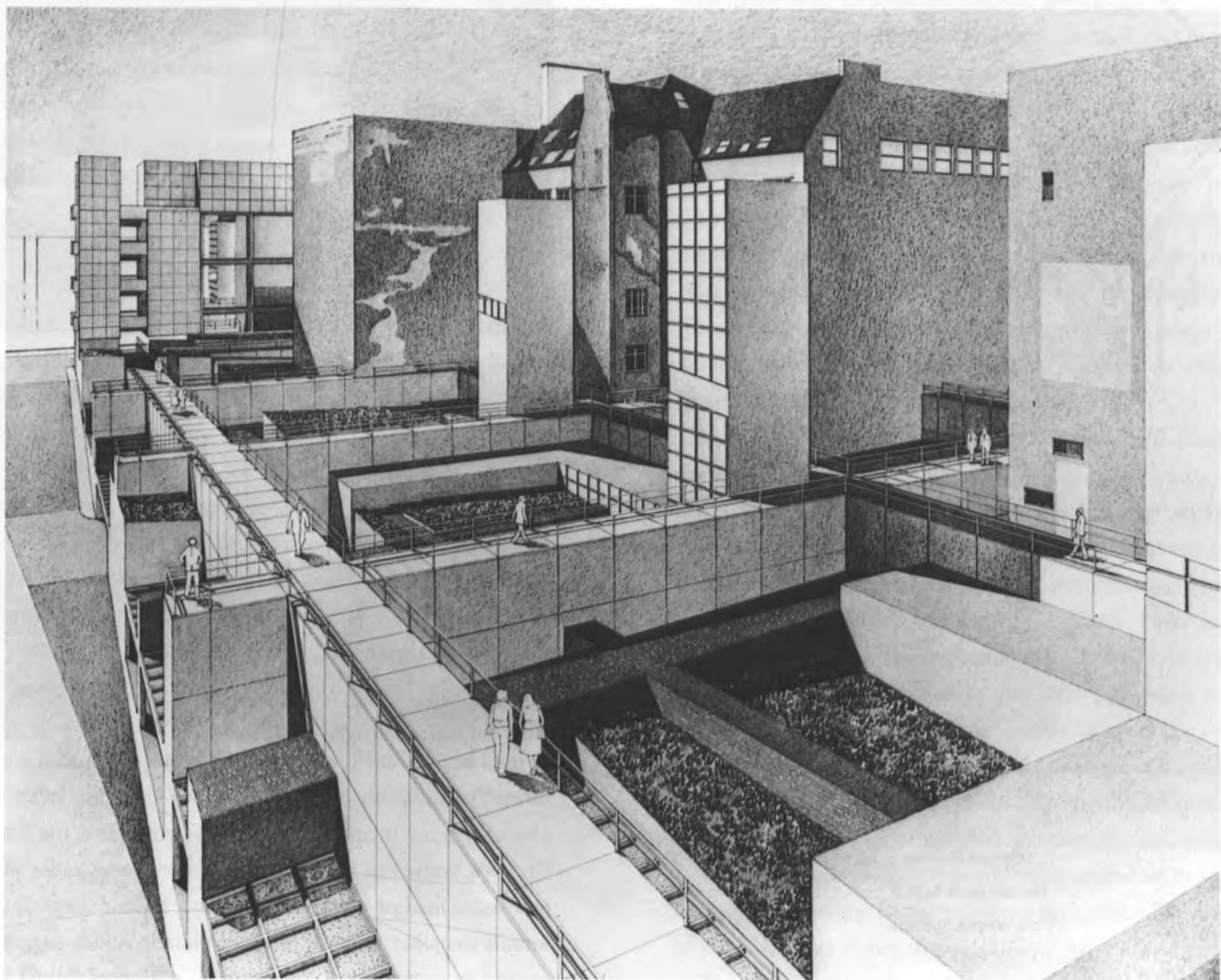
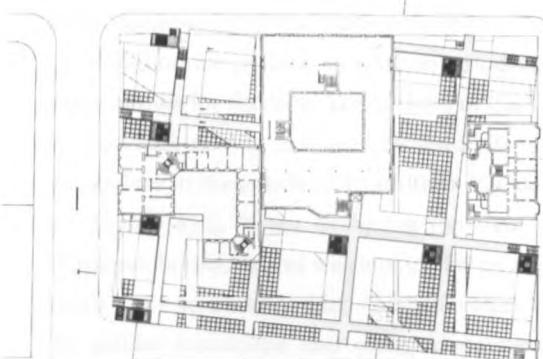
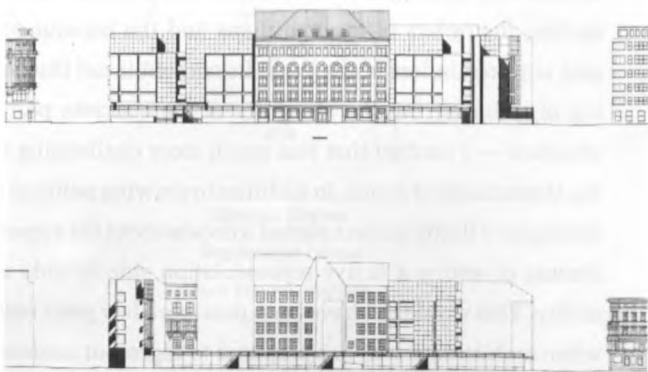
The exterior walls of the Stucky Mill [an old factory in Venice] are painted black; the inner walls . . . are painted white. The long walls of the graveyard are painted black on one side and white on the other side. The upper edges and ends of the long extended walls are gray. In these walls, at about the height of a person, open up square areas of 93 centimeters. In each area is preserved a transparent cube with ashes. Under each cube on the wall is affixed a small bronze sign on which is written the title of a work of art, for example: Remembrance of Things Past . . . Moby Dick, etc. Inside the Stucky Mill, on small tablets on the walls, are inscribed the names of the authors: Proust, Gide, Dante, Melville, etc. On an artificial island in the lagoon stands a little house which for a fixed time serves as a shelter for one single person. Only one person is supposed to dwell in this house for the period agreed upon, and no one is allowed to visit the island while that person lives there. This individual

has to observe the “Graveyard for the Ashes of Thoughts” across the lagoon.<sup>236</sup>

Fictive representation takes on a legendary tone here, as in the projects of Rem Koolhaas (e.g. *The City of the Captured Globe*), which were produced at about the same time. One is reminded of the utopias described by conceptual artists; however, these often sound less like utopias than like fantastic nightmares — which is the danger of such fictions. Hejduk too tends to invent cryptic, poetic imaginary worlds. These “projects,” which seem to be fantasies with no connection to practice, are signs of the drastic change of position undertaken by Hejduk and by many other architects during the 1970s.

Hejduk’s attempt to avoid any references to historical formal parallels does not automatically remove his works from postmodernism. The rebound from modernism is not necessarily assessed primarily in terms of the degree of potential assimilation of historicizing detail; the decisive standard is the capacity for a narrative representation that lies beyond stylistic imitation.

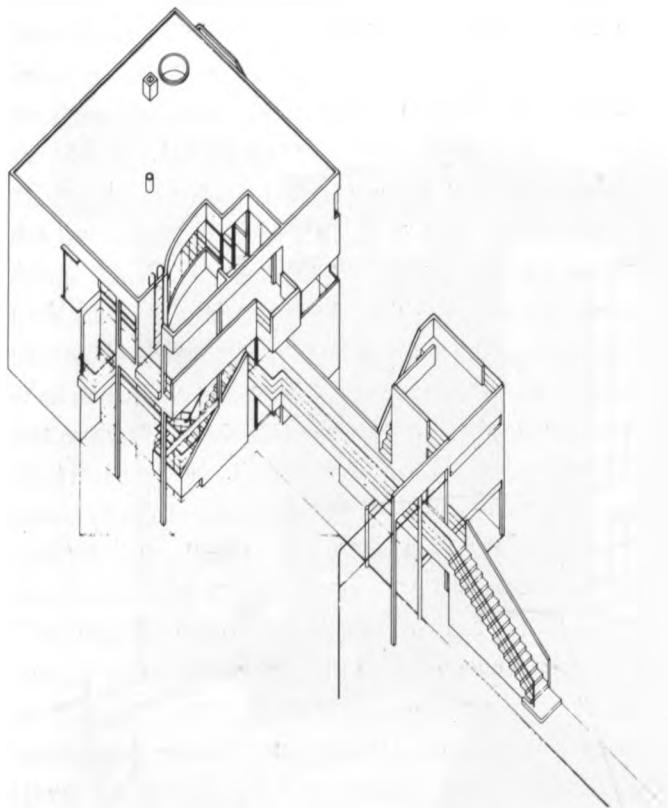
The danger connected with the new architectural conceptions becomes clear when architectural fiction is confronted with reality: The utilitarian use of reality excludes fiction almost completely, and thus fiction is bound to be opposed and derided. Peter Eisenman experienced this conflict in the context of a competition involving the redevelopment of a block adjacent to the Berlin Wall — hardly a place for illusionism. Three separate houses that had survived the war were to be connected by filler structures so as to again form a continuous block. Many of the participants did, in fact, unobtrusively complete the block. Eisenman, however, left a large part of the block open and fragmented on the side facing the Wall. Opposite the Wall he set a second wall, which was supposed to be seen as part of a grid of walls corresponding to the meridians of the globe. Under this grid was another grid, in red brick, corresponding to the old street grid of the city, as if one could look into the old city’s entrails. The meridian grid, running at an angle, was to project on the side of the Kochstrasse facade from the old street line and protrude into the sidewalk like a previously unnoticed order. In the free corners of the main grid Eisenman placed stairwell towers, which provided sharp accents and which recalled the observation towers of the border. Visitors could walk atop the walls of the meridian grid and take in the dismal scene, and happenings along the Wall would be documented in exhibits within the grid walls. Along the Kochstrasse and the Charlottenstrasse, Eisenman filled the gaps with new houses that appeared to be truncated or cut in half. Eisenman made a point of not restoring this place to perfection; he refused to undo the grim threat of the Wall with amiable gestures. On the contrary, he used architecture to articulate the awful



408

Peter Eisenman  
Housing block, Kochstrasse  
Project for  
International Architectural Exhibition,  
Berlin, 1980

situation by making this street block into a monument connecting the orders of the meridians and the baroque street grid with reminders of the Wall. Its content is not the meaning of geometry but the absurdity of the concrete political situation — a content that was much more challenging than the abstractness of forms. In addition to drawing political fire, Eisenman's Berlin project started a debate about the appropriateness of setting a fictive representation side by side with reality. This would not have been possible a few years earlier, when architecture was not prepared to represent content.



409

**Michael Graves**  
**Hanselmann house**  
**Fort Wayne, Indiana**

1987

#### **Michael Graves:**

#### **From Le Corbusier to Postmodernism**

Michael Graves returned to the beginnings of modernism — to Le Corbusier's early works — in his search for orientation points for his first buildings. Yet from the beginning he pushed the reinterpretation of these impulses much farther than Meier or Gwathmey. The smooth-surfaced white cube of Graves's Hanselmann house, penetrated from the outside, could easily have been an idea of Le Corbusier, and like his predecessor Graves left the upper edge of the wall over the opening of the loggia standing free in space like a stage coulisse. Le Corbusier's projecting white walls and sweeping surfaces were the raw materials of a design method that Graves and Eisenman developed to the limits of art for art's sake. Graves's Snyderman house is the climax of the transformation of one-family houses into airy compositions of free-standing walls, undulating structures, and fragile frames reaching out through space.

Eventually the aestheticism of pure composition led Graves away from the influence of Le Corbusier and transformed his architecture into one of complex spatial sculptures. The unfolding of space into ever-changing levels and planes was the theme of the Hanselmann house, the first of Graves's houses to be realized. Furthermore, Graves made increasing use of colored walls, and he had large Cubist murals installed. Indeed, the Hanselmann house suggests a perfect environment of the 1920s — a kind of Cubist total work of art realized after its time. An entirely aesthetic arrangement, not to be judged in terms of purpose and utility, it was a status symbol for its patrons, who must have thought they had attained the pinnacle of modernism. At last modernism had become an aesthetic event, far removed from functionalism. Here was modern architecture as sublime taste, as a beautiful composition of the integrated arts — the finale of modernism!

Much as when Aldo Rossi put neoclassical Saint Andrew crosses over the balustrades of his housing block in Gallarate, Graves used details to announce his turn from modernism. In 1974 — the same year in which the journal

**Michael Graves**  
**Snyderman house**  
**Fort Wayne, Indiana**  
**1972**



**Living room of**  
**Hanselmann house**

Oppositions reprinted Luigi Moretti's 1951 article "Valori della Modanatura" ["The Values of Profiles"] — Graves used classical cornice profiles and frame mouldings as motifs in some murals for the New York offices of the Transammonia Corporation. Also in that year, he used bits of the historical vocabulary in the facade of an addition to a house in Princeton (figure 412). When designing the new facade for the Wageman house, Graves was looking for an alternative to the sharp steps and edges of his Cubist facades. He found it in the milder transitions and softer modeling of the classic profiles. A complicated interlace of coulisses and bogus features gave way to a calmer facade, developed out of the surface, in which the profiles and cornices took over the role of three-dimensional modeling. Starting with one individual problem, the relief articulation of the wall, Graves slowly found his way to a new concept of form. This new concept was fully developed and applied three years later when Graves remodeled an old warehouse for use as his own house (figure 413). Here, using plinths, columns, tympana, fluted pilasters, pendant keystones, herms, and rusticated walls reclaimed from the history of architecture, Graves broke with the formal canon of the New York Five<sup>237</sup> as well as with the exhausted *maniera corbusiana*.

In his warehouse-cum-residence, Graves used pilasters that were tessellated with round blue tiles to produce the effect of fluting. In place of a capital, a keystone obtruded over the pilaster. Other elements of classical decorum were combined in similar mannerist fashion, or were thoroughly reinterpreted in opposition to the original canon. There is, for example, a keystone arrangement that on one side (in an arrangement not uncommon in the High Renaissance; see Raffael's Palazzo Caffarelli) ends in wide layers of rusticated stone while on the other side an arch is sharply indicated by an unorthodox inflection (figure 414). Then there is a rusticated surface, unproportioned at first, that changes abruptly from huge square-hewn stones to smaller square-hewn stones and, as a total entity, is set in contrast against another surface of glass building stones (figure 415).

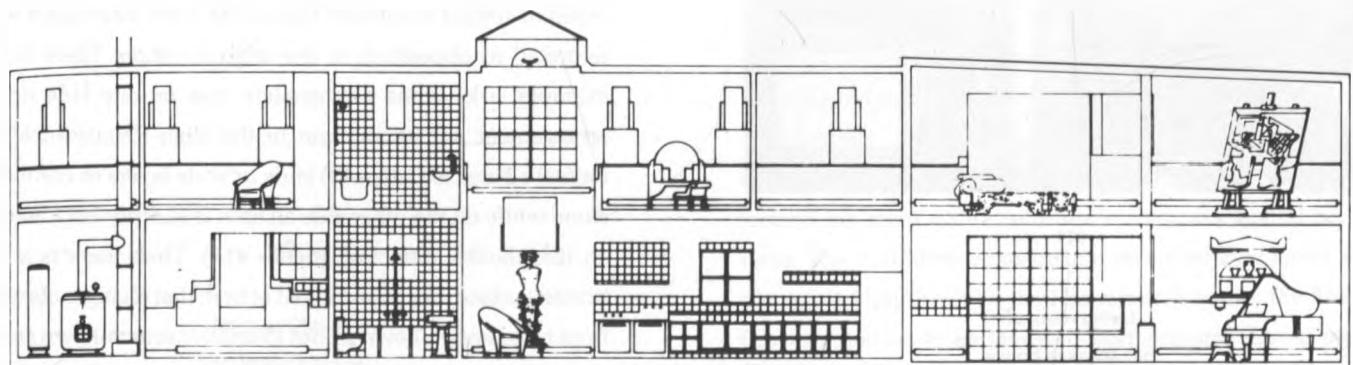
The alienation produced by the unusual dimensions and the unusual uses of materials took Graves's house beyond any mannerist *capricci* of the late Renaissance. Graves's new comparative vocabulary combined historical motifs with the language of modernism. A rusticated wall with its surface cut into squares, combined with a moulding profile in steel, became a piece of modern design, while the modern moulding profile in steel took on historical connotations and acquired a "deeper" meaning.

At this point Graves's elevations and wall surfaces still recalled Cubism; they were hardly narrative. The historical motifs were, in their new flat context, all but abstract. But that changed with his subsequent works, such as the Kalko house



412

**Michael Graves**  
Design for facade detailing of  
Wageman house  
Princeton, New Jersey



413

**Michael Graves**  
House of the architect  
(remodeled warehouse)  
Princeton, New Jersey

1977

(figure 416). The entrance of the Kalko house dramatically evokes a number of associations: the rustication suggests defensiveness, the espaliers welcome, the oculi suspiciousness, the roof pergolas serenity. Instead of being subordinated to an abstract arrangement of planes, these formal details are concentrated so as to be more recognizable and more definite in their meanings.

With his first realized public building, the Public Service Building in Portland, Oregon, Graves carried on the exploration of Art Deco that he had begun with the houses discussed above. Indeed, the Public Service Building's whole typology — a black granite substructure with a light-colored block superimposed on it — stems from the Art Deco of the 1930s; only the detailing of the facade departs from that tradition. The seven-story-high cross-barred window is a supermotif that penetrates the facade and opens up the center of the block. The two stocky pilasters and the giant keystone are alienated quotations from the vocabulary of New York's Art Deco skyscrapers. As Charles Jencks noted,<sup>238</sup> this was certainly one of the first postmodern public buildings.

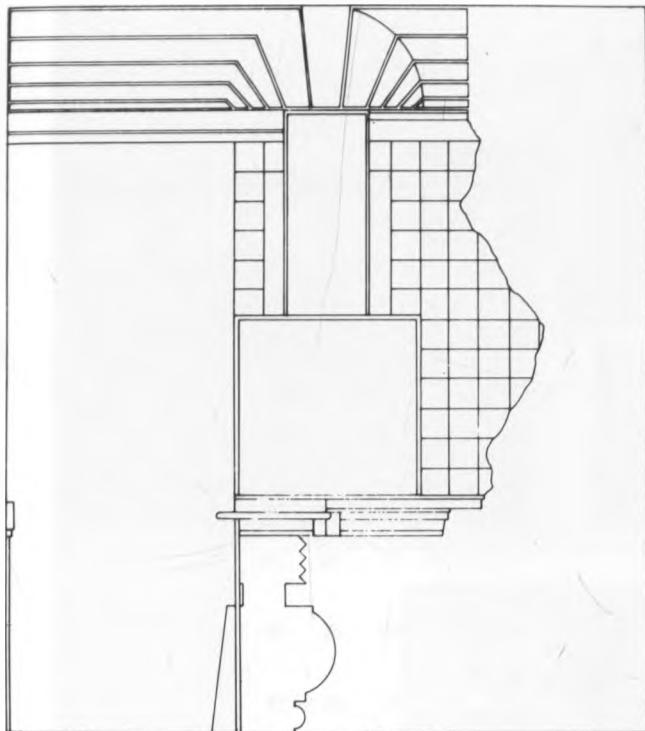
The huge sculpture that Graves intended to place in front of the facade (figure 418) recalls Rob Krier's housing block on the Ritterstrasse. Like Krier's sculpture, this was an attempt to restore the possibility of significant figurative ornamentation, which had been lost in the 1920s. Another unrealized aspect of the design — the addition of small, house-like superstructures to the roof — was quashed by the patrons' insistence on utter sobriety. In a way this was fortunate (these structures might have softened the building's fortress-like character and interfered with its reminiscence of the typology of the 1930s); however, it also raised the question whether the new, history-minded architecture was going to be forced to become monumental but joyless, as architecture had historically been,

In conclusion, it should be said that the rapprochement between Graves (one of the New York "Whites") and Robert Stern (a "Gray," that is, an adherent of Venturi) seems to have exemplary and indeed unavoidable implications for most of their American colleagues.

#### JAMES STIRLING

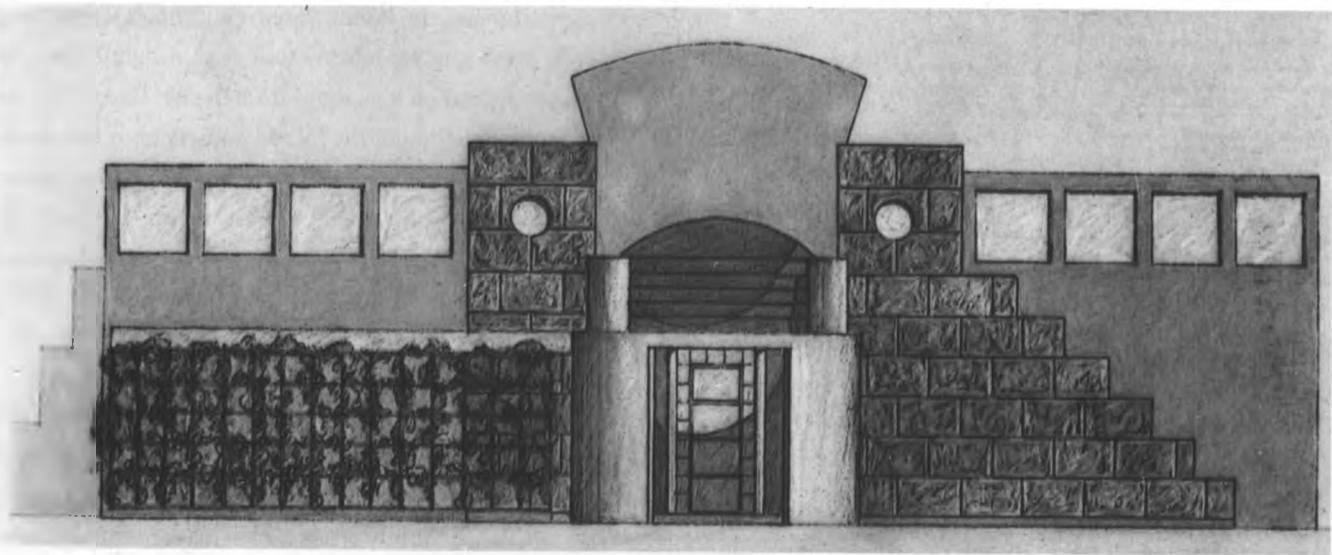
The British architect James Stirling, who has experienced or influenced the most important transformations of postwar architecture, arrived at a postmodernism determined by historicizing tendencies after leaving the orbit of New Brutalism and Team X. Among those who influenced him were Hans Hollein (with whom Stirling taught architecture at the Düsseldorf Academy of Art for many years) and Leon Krier. Today Stirling has to be seen as one of the most successful architects of the postmodern avant-garde by virtue of a series

414



415

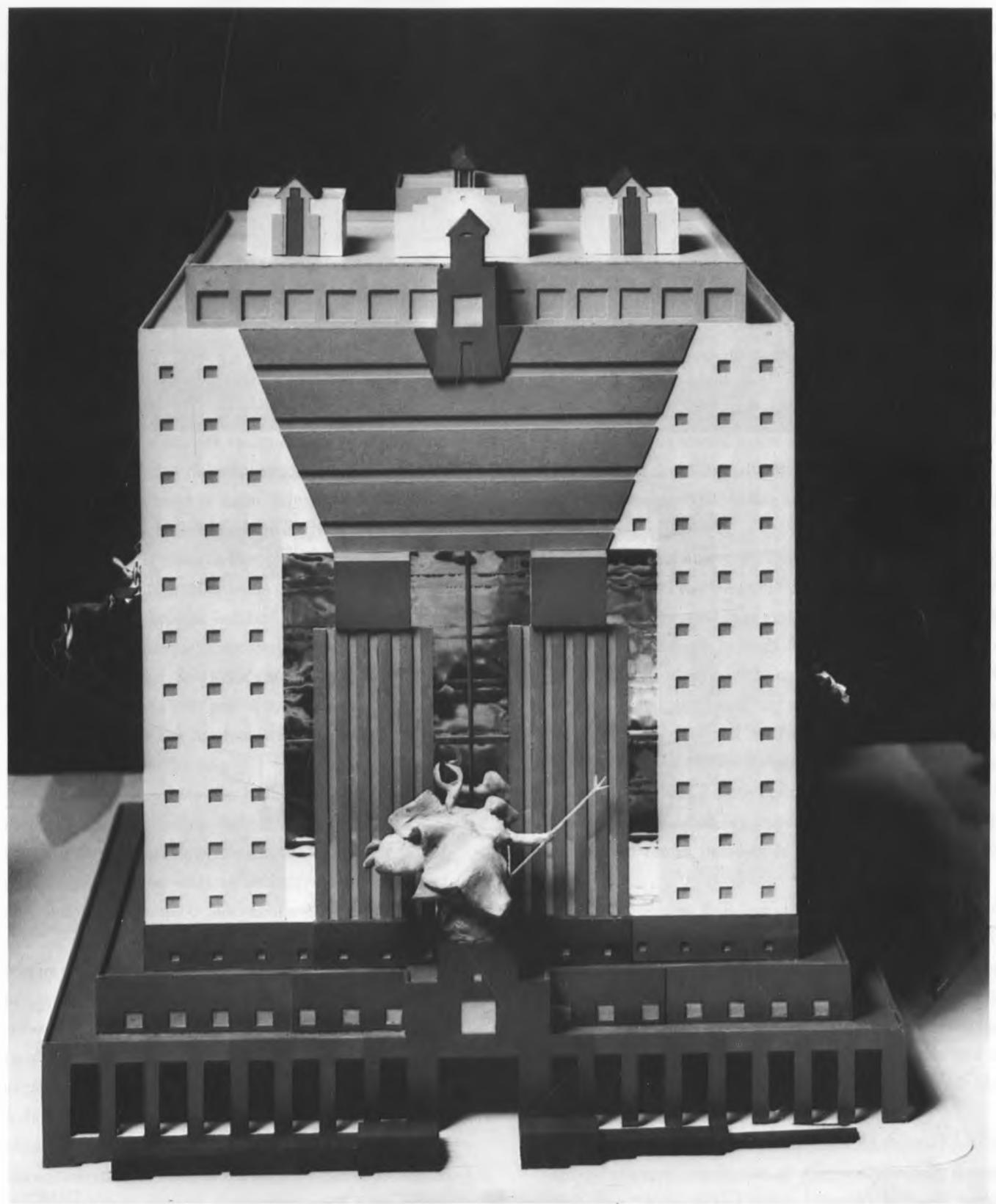
**Michael Graves**  
**Kalko house**  
**Green Brook, New Jersey**  
**1978**



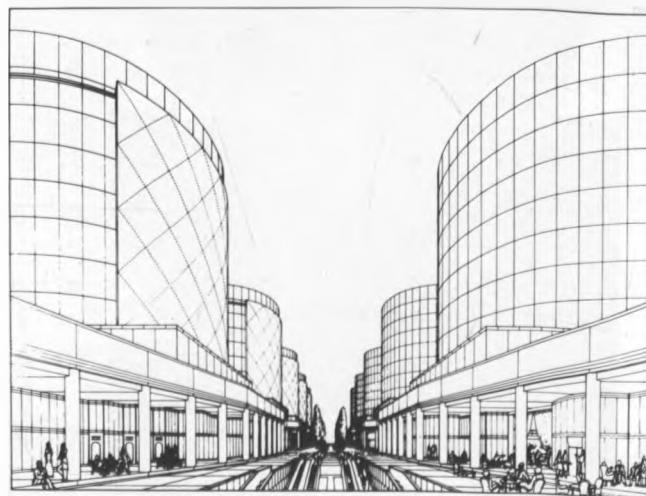
417

**Michael Graves**  
**Public Service Building**  
**Portland, Oregon**  
**1980–1983**

Michael Graves  
Model of  
Public Service Building



**James Stirling**  
**Olivetti Training School**  
**Haslemere, England**  
**1969**



**James Stirling**  
**Siemens AG**  
**Munich (project)**  
**1969**

of important commissions, primarily in the United States and in Germany.

For a while Stirling belonged to the small number of innovators of modern architecture, as the Leicester University Engineering Building (1959–1963, with James Gowan) proves. But he was also quick to appreciate the promising approaches of other architects and to appropriate them, as made clear from those of his buildings that were marked by a great enthusiasm for technology prior to the onset of post-modernism, such as the Runcorn New Town (1967–1972) and, above all, the Olivetti Training School in Haslemere (figure 419). The latter, which stretched out in the countryside like a streamlined train, was a masterpiece of “High Tech.” John Jacobus wrote of it that “the prefabricated components of polyester reinforced with glass of the facades and the roof were assembled like products of industrial design, for example, like Olivetti machines.”<sup>239</sup> Similar buildings were appearing elsewhere at the same time, so it cannot be said that Stirling was being especially inventive at this point.

Stirling’s project for the Siemens firm (figure 420) was another effort in the High Tech manner — a series of tank-like white cylinders with automatic sliding sun blinds. However, the neo-classicist ambiance of the arched arcades, the axial alignment of the row of poplars, the symmetrical order of the whole complex, and the delicate handling of line in the drawings suggest the hand of Leon Krier, who had joined Stirling’s firm in 1968. Krier brought to England the developments that were taking place in Europe, which he had come to discover through his acquaintance with the firm of O. M. Uengers (in which his brother Rob had worked from 1965 to 1966) and through his acquaintance with the works of Meyer-Christian and Reissinger. Rob Krier’s book *Stadtraum [Urban Space]*, written between 1967 and 1970, stimulated his younger brother, and the Krier brothers’ version of Rationalism made an impression on Stirling.

Stirling’s divergence from the High Tech aesthetic illustrates the change of direction that took place between 1970 and 1975 in the avant-garde of Europe, the United States, and Japan, inasmuch as the work of an individual architect of Stirling’s rank mirrors the upheaval of a particular era. The design that immediately follows the Siemens project — the project for the city center of Derby, with which Leon Krier’s collaboration came to an end — shows the new direction even more clearly than the Siemens project. The connection of the old City Hall buildings with a glass arcade indicates the characteristic readiness to reconcile the new architecture with the old, to reduce the contradiction between the present and the past of a city — something Stirling had already given some consideration in some of his earlier projects. However, the framework that came to dominate the old marketplace

was derived from the glass architecture of the English tradition and from Stirling’s own earlier work. It became also the framework of the facade of the old Assembly Hall, which was to be rebuilt as a coulisse structure placed at an oblique angle and which was intended to sustain the memory of the past in a witty and ironic manner. Meyer-Christian, in his 1966 design for a Museum of Architecture in Berlin, had tilted the facade of the Berlin City Palace into a monument. With the appearance of mementos of this sort, the High Tech approach changed fundamentally. The gleaming functionalist world of steel and aluminum that had striven to legitimize itself through constant reiteration of the machine metaphor gave way to a scenic architecture that referred to realms of meaning beyond the latest accomplishments of human inventiveness. In a way, the Derby project was an intimation of Charles Moore’s Piazza d’Italia in New Orleans, a herald of the “narrative environments” and the fictive urban scenes that lay ahead.

#### Functions as Articulation

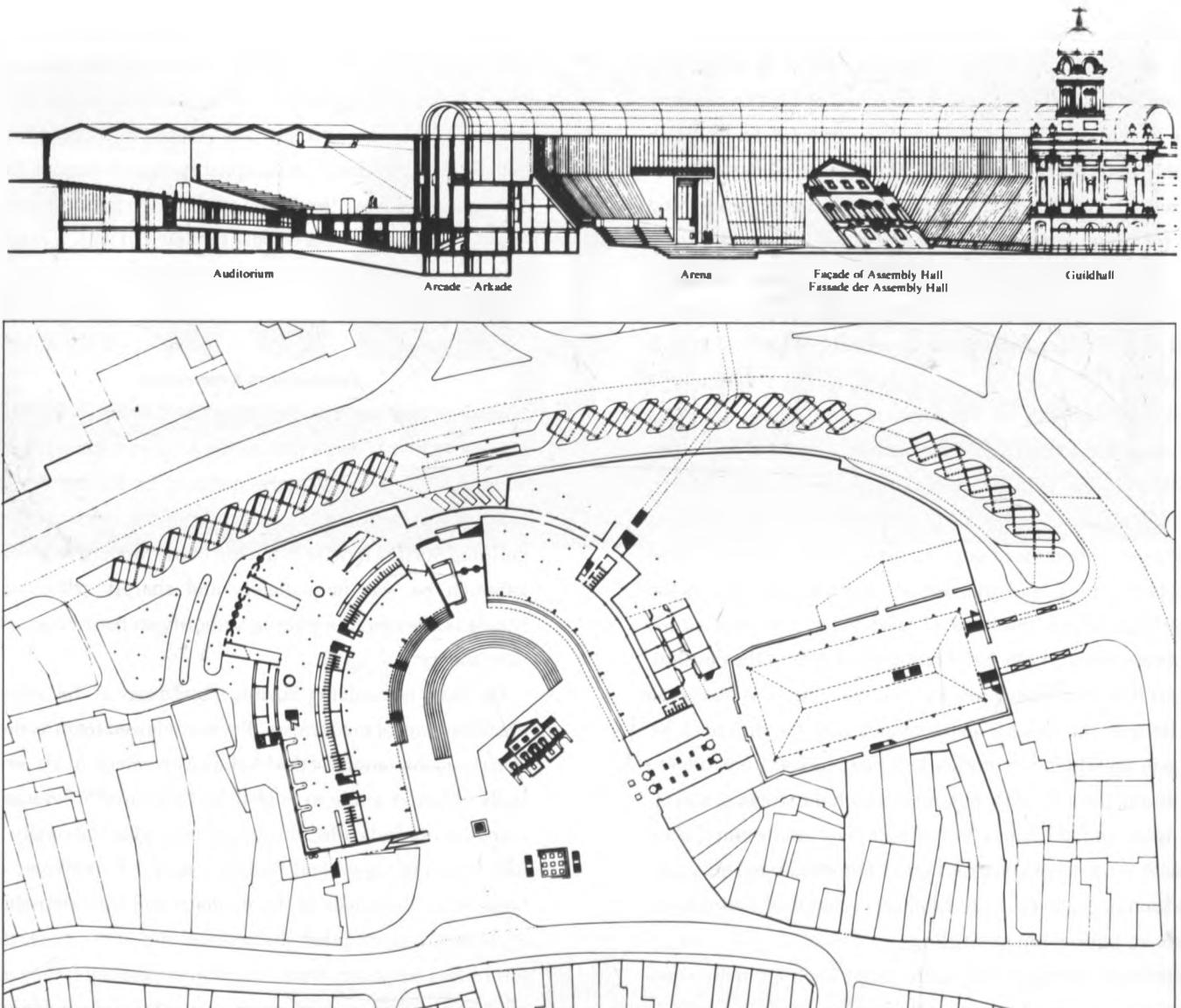
Stirling’s Engineering Building at Leicester University (figures 423, 424) was a pioneering achievement of the highest rank. It is matched only, perhaps, by Kahn’s Richards Laboratories or by Aalto’s buildings of the 1950s. With this building Stirling moved to the top of the Modern Movement, although he was immediately and sharply criticized by Nikolaus Pevsner, the leading authority on modern architectural theory.

Far from recognizing Stirling’s buildings of the 1960s as confirmations of modernism, Pevsner viewed them as deviations from the canons of the Modern Movement. In his professedly objective guide to English architecture,<sup>240</sup> Pevsner got carried away and called Stirling’s Cambridge University History Building “raw” and “actively ugly.” To Pevsner, who believed in the ideals of the Bauhaus and the International Style in a way no other theoretician did at the time, these forbidding buildings were bound to appear ugly; they actually contradicted in many respects the views of a modernism which had found its ideal in the simplest, most concise forms.

The Engineering Building was divided into a shed-roofed hall and two towers, and each tower was subdivided into a projecting lower part (containing lecture halls) and an upper part (offices and workrooms). In this Pevsner saw a new expressionism that brought an unexpected restlessness into the serene scene of the International Style. Uengers had also been censured by Pevsner as a neo-expressionist for his house in Cologne, built in 1956–1960.

It was true enough that Stirling (and Uengers, and Kahn) had arrived at a new conception of what was generally termed a “function.” Kahn talked of the difference between “serving

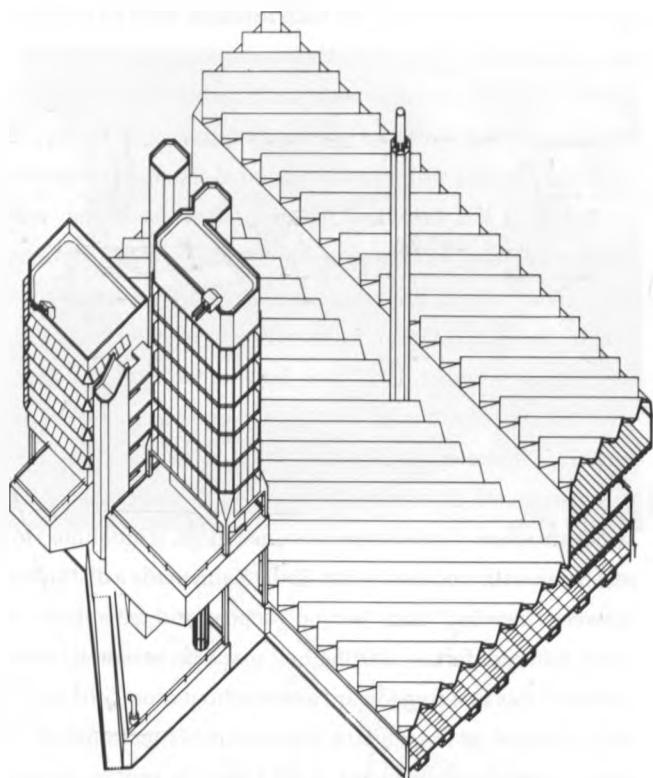
James Stirling  
Design for city center  
Derby, England  
1970



**James Stirling**  
**Engineering Building**  
**Leicester University**  
**1959–1963**



**James Stirling**  
**Design drawing for**  
**Leicester University Engineering Building**



and served spaces," by which he meant both a general difference in the functions of different types of space and a difference in formal characterization. Much as the smooth, compact shafts for plumbing and wiring in Kahn's Richards Laboratories differed from the transparent structures housing the actual labs, in Stirling's buildings the differing specific functions led to different kinds of expressive forms, which in the case of the Engineering Building resulted in an ensemble of different structures. Jacobus wrote: "As a result of the principal concern to provide each function with an architectural expression of its own, the tower complex combines a variety of different volumetric units, while the monofunctional horizontal structure presents a calmer total shape."<sup>241</sup>

Hadn't Stirling fulfilled the principal tenet of modernism — that form has to follow function? If he had, then what might have been the reason for Pevsner's sharp critique? What remained decisive was whether an architect was ready to actually grant different forms to the different functions of a building or whether, like Mies, he was inclined to house a great number of different functions in one big uniform structure. The tendency of the late 1950s and the 1960s had been to subsume all differences in function in a superlarge container structure. Under these circumstances, it amounted to a real break with tradition when Louis Kahn made a distinction between "serving" and "served" spaces and gave them entirely different forms. Stirling had made an essential contribution to this first step toward a new articulation. Stirling had also infringed on the reigning conception of functionalism (as it was generally understood in the 1960s) in another respect: He had refused to identify the expression of a function with the visible manifestation of a construction. In 1966, when he was invited to give a lecture in Bologna at the celebration of Giovanni Michelucci's retirement to the rank of an emeritus professor, it was generally expected that he would also express his commitment to the principal tenet of modernism. What he actually said was: "I understand the subject for discussion at this symposium is the relevance of structure in architecture. This is not a very appropriate subject for me as I have a rather ad hoc and expedient attitude to structure particularly as a design element and I usually manage to prevent it from intruding in the architectural solution. I'm more concerned with sociological, environmental, and organizational problems, which I regard as being more important in the evolution of a design."<sup>242</sup>

Stirling did not comply with the strange (though economically welcome) general agreement to collect all functions under the roof of a supercontainer and then to call this container, including the specific features of its construction, "functional." Didn't this kind of functionalism consist in the successful compromise of combining the love for primary forms with the truth of transparent construction? Wasn't this



425

Konstantin Mjelnikov  
Transit Workers' Clubhouse  
Moscow  
1927–1929

a "functionalism of the building industry," though so many architects had defended it as a matter of life and death? After Stirling's statement in Bologna (if not before) it was clear that in the 1960s Stirling had not been a functionalist in the accepted sense of the term; rather, he sorted out the different realms of function in the commissioned tasks and gave them differently articulated forms.

The importance Stirling attached to the creation of impressive forms is shown by the shed roof of the Engineering Building, in which prisms of polished glass are placed obliquely in such a way that the individual glass volumes are emphasized. Just as expressive are the lecture halls that jut out of the towers; here Stirling was borrowing from Konstantin Mjelnikov's Transit Workers' Clubhouse in Moscow (figure 425).

Stirling's 1981 project for a Berlin Science Center (figures 426–428), though completely different in design from his Engineering Building, also acquires its essential quality from the attempt to articulate different functional realms, to emphasize them as individual structures, and to unite them to form a whole. An old building is allowed to stand as a separate element in the complex. In the space between the old building and the new elongated structure, Stirling inserts a building with a ground plan resembling that of a cruciform church, another building with a semicircular plan, and a hexagonal tower. The fifth element of the complex is a square building with four turrets. This is a city within a city, an agglomeration of buildings that seem to have been assembled by chance and that nevertheless form an ensemble. Subdivision has hardly ever been advanced as far. This design is a result of the knowledge that the large buildings of the present day are experienced as destructive of the environment and thus as hostile to human life. This diverse environment, composed of a multiplicity of monumental components, replaces monolithic information with pluralistic communication.

On closer examination, it seems that Stirling overcame the ties to functionalism with this design. To be sure, the different buildings house the different institutes of the Science Center; yet the simple rows of offices do not differ from one building to the next. Furthermore, the institutes are not delimited by the boundaries of the individual buildings but extend from one building to the next. In keeping with the functional definition of the task, Stirling could have built one big structure and united the different institutes under one roof while responding to their different space requirements. "It is," he noted, "a special task to develop an architectonically and environmentally outstanding solution from a program that consists mainly in the repetition of the same office units. A rational solution for office buildings normally produced banal 'box-like' buildings; much of what is wrong in the

426

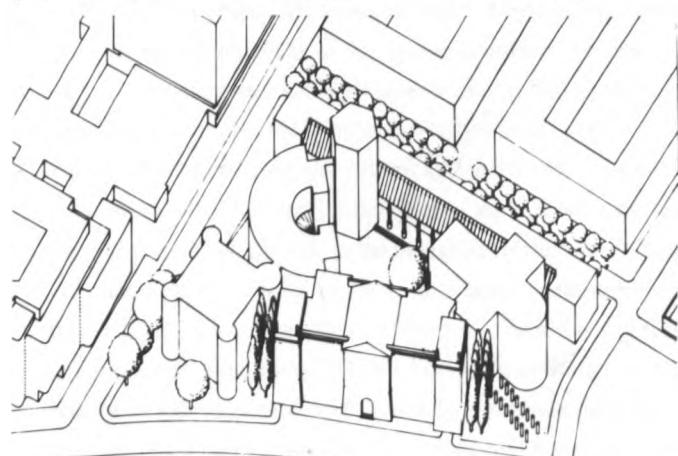
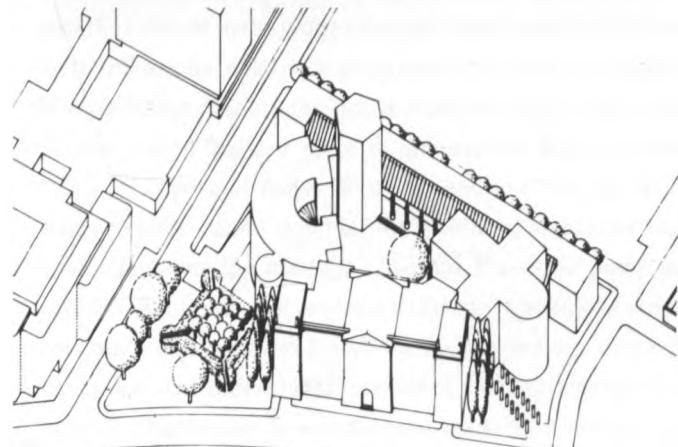
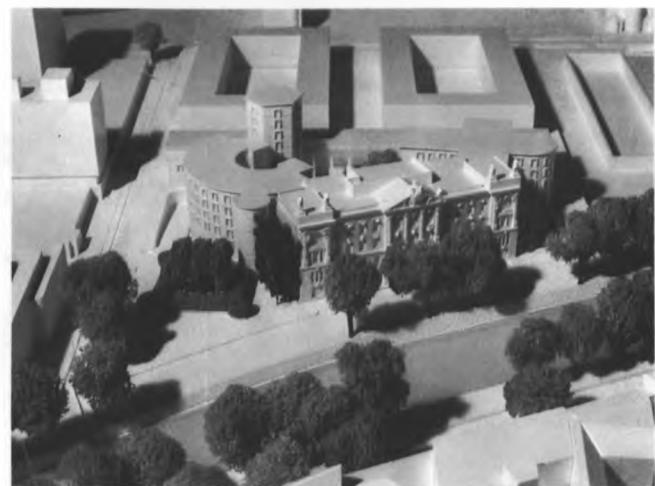
James Stirling

Entry in design competition for

Berlin Science Center

International Architecture Exhibition,

Berlin, 1981

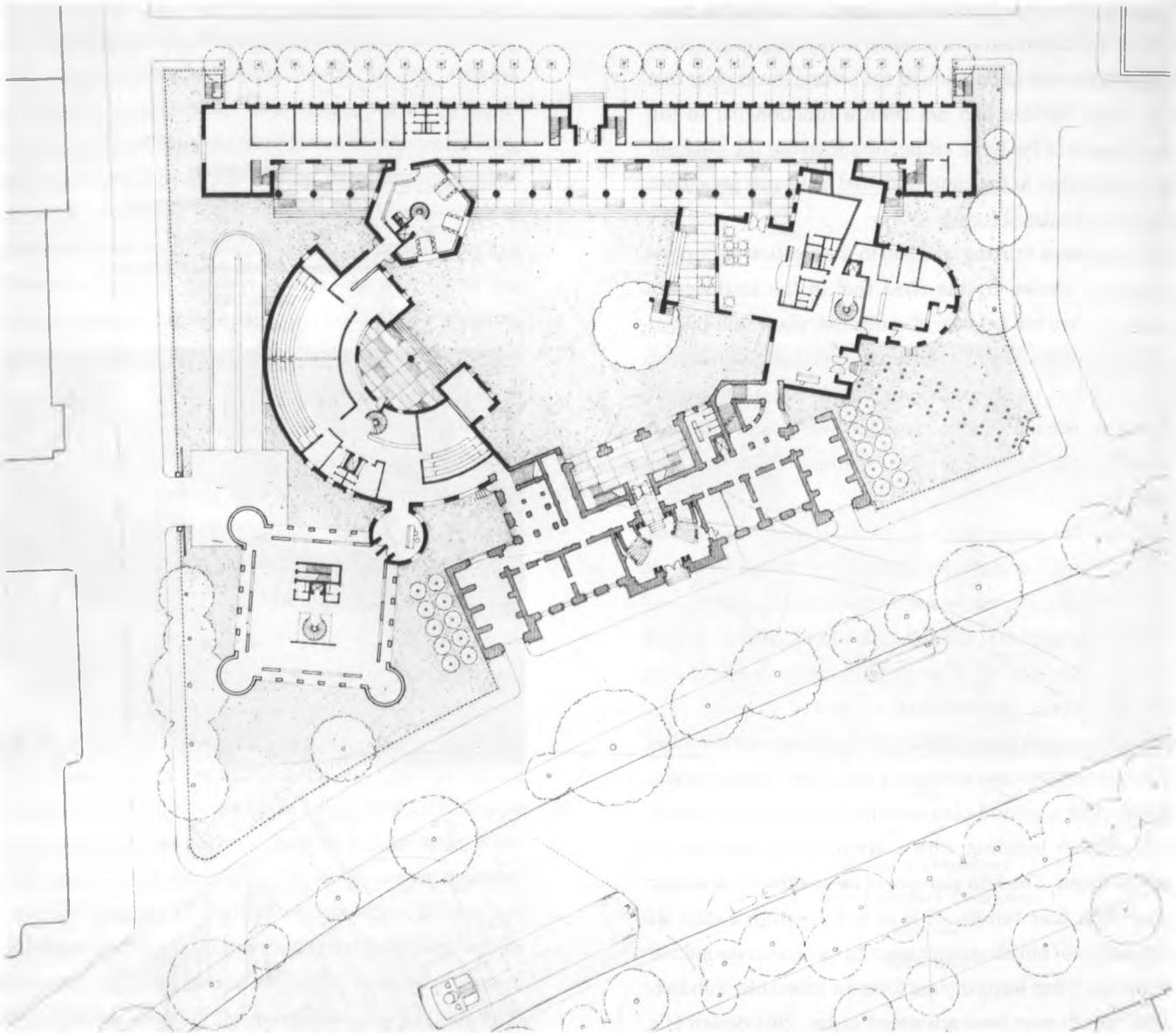


427

James Stirling

Drawings for

Berlin Science Center



428

**James Stirling**  
**Ground-floor plan for**  
**Berlin Science Center**

postwar reconstruction of the cities lies in the monotony of these ‘rationally’ produced office buildings, and presumably they are the largest single factor that has contributed to the visual destruction in the period of postwar reconstruction.”<sup>243</sup> What this project amounts to is a city within a city — an agglomeration of several buildings that seem to have been assembled by chance yet form an ensemble. The subdivision of a building has hardly ever been advanced so far. This shows an awareness that the large buildings of the present are experienced as destructive of the environment and as hostile to human life. Out of the multiplicity of monumental components in Stirling’s design there emerges an environment that is marked by diversity and that replaces monolithic information with a richer pluralistic communication.

#### **Urban Landscape:**

#### **Stirling and Hollein**

Two of Stirling’s designs of 1975 — one for a museum in Düsseldorf and one for a museum in Cologne — were also for complexes of buildings; however, in these designs the predominant impression is one of almost natural growth, as if the complex had grown together with the existing urban structure.

In the Düsseldorf project (figure 429), Stirling left a piece of an old building and pushed a new structure into its walls. The museum’s entrance pavilion (also a bus stop) is placed at an angle. From here one passes via a winding corridor through the main building and then into the round garden, which provides the connection to the pedestrian walk at the rear. A prescribed program is subdivided and fragmented, and coalescence with the existing environment is given a decisive role. The unity that can be present even when a building is articulated into wings and arms has been sacrificed in favor of the existing substance of the old building and the whole environmental situation. One might be inclined to see in this procedure something like a collage method, an artful overlapping of fragments<sup>244</sup>; however, here the individual elements have greater independence than in a collage, and the result is a varied whole assembled from diverse parts. The variety is not chaotic; rather, it preserves the coherence of meaningfully interrelated elements within a landscape — an architectural landscape. Building typology, in its conventional meaning or in the sense of Rossi and Grassi, has no validity if one is willing to understand the particularization of an architectural program in the scenic terms of a landscape as a new typology in itself.

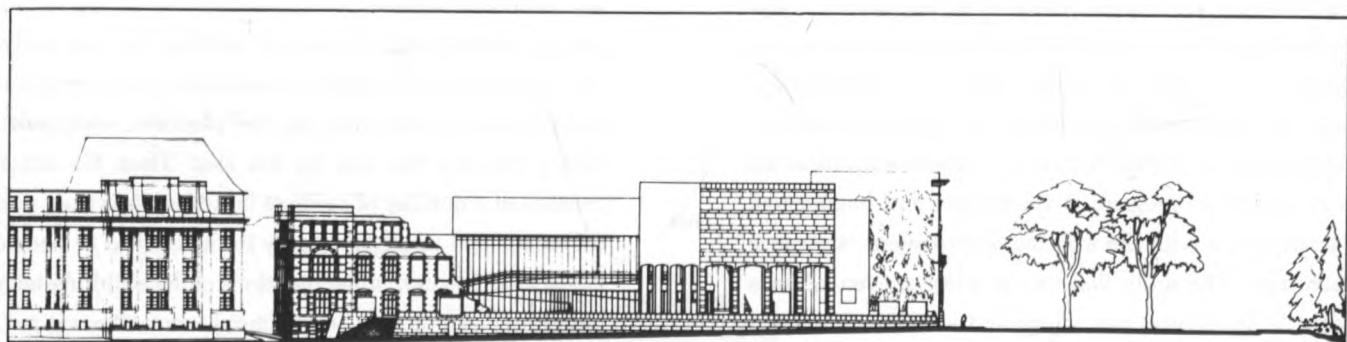
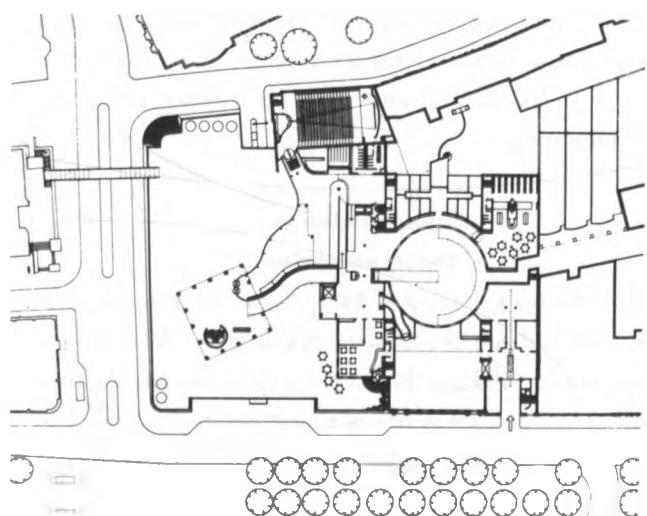
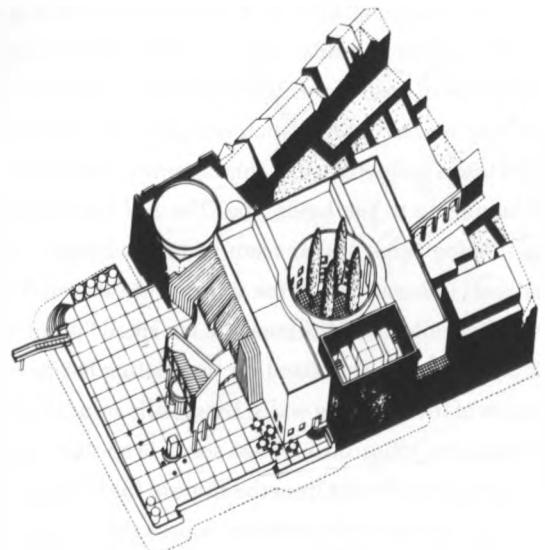
The landscape character is expressed even more strongly in Stirling’s design for the Wallraf-Richartz Museum (figure 430), which calls for a rich configuration of buildings, squares, passageways, and spaces on both sides of a railroad

line near the cathedral in Cologne. (Neither Stirling’s design nor one by O. M. Ungers won the nod of the conservative jury, even though the patrons — the Ludwigs, whose collection the museum houses — are among the foremost collectors of contemporary art.)

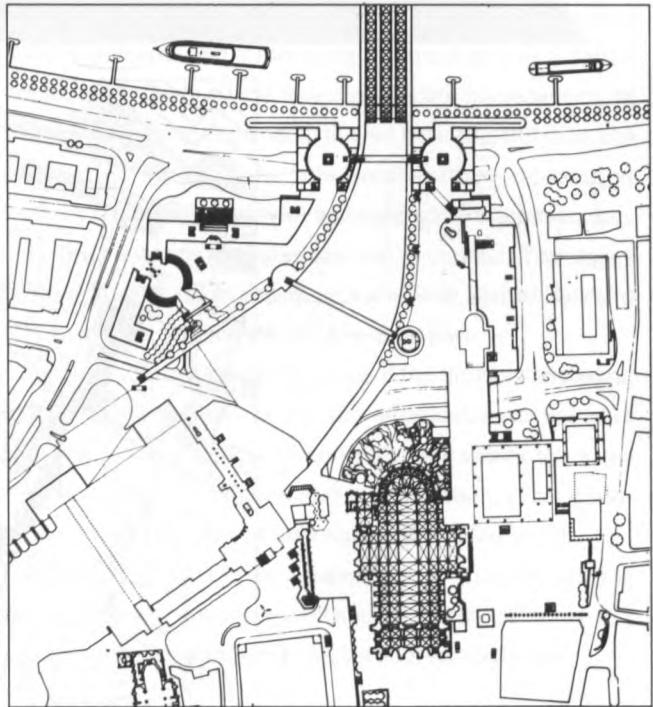
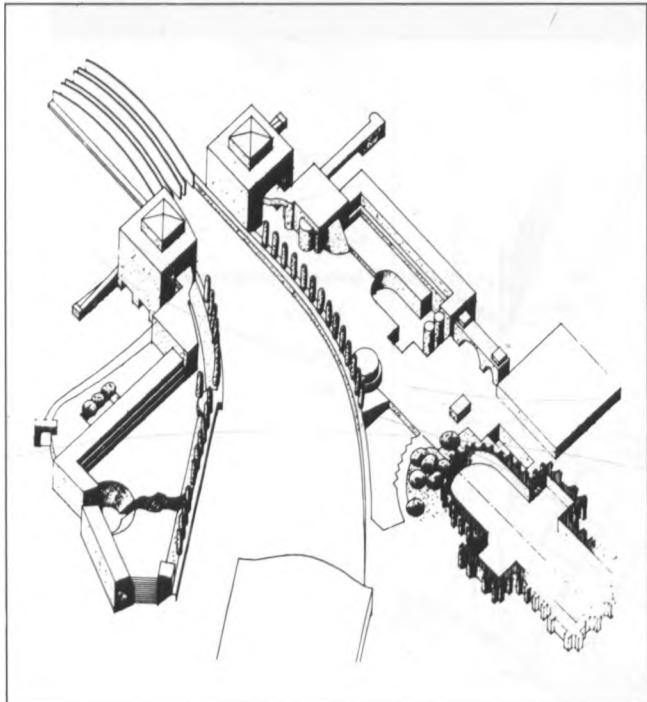
It seems as if there are two art museums that will emerge from the German museum boom of the 1970s and the 1980s as architectonic masterpieces: Stirling’s third German museum project, the *Staatliche Kunstsammlungen* [State Art Collections] in Stuttgart, and Hans Hollein’s museum complex in Mönchengladbach. Hollein’s museum is mentioned in this context not only because it was the first architectural landscape of postmodernism to be conceived as such but also because it was the first such design to be realized. Molded right into a hollow of a hill, this complex gives the impression of belonging to the landscape. The hill terraces, with their undulating brick walls, seem to be an integral part of the natural landscape and of the architecture as well. The administration building of the museum is a small “point high-rise”; its isolation is emphasized. Its undulating facade echoes the curves of the retaining walls. Diagonally opposite the administration building, on a graded socle, is another independent building; it sticks out from the slope of the hill and provides a striking contrast to the group of square shed-roofed buildings on the other side of the pedestrian platform. The little temple-like shell that adjoins the upper staircase of the terrace is another individualized piece of architecture that enlivens this landscape and makes it significant, and the entrance lobby, which stands right on the platform, welcomes the visitor and sets the tone for his visit. Thus, the museum consists of a number of separate buildings, free from a strict coherence and arranged loosely in the context of a molded landscape. The individual functions of the buildings take on individual meanings in architectural terms; they are not derivatives of a big form. This was an early contradiction of the generally dominant idea of the supercontainer. But here it was not really a matter of breaking up a large building. Rather, Hollein chose an unusual yet historically proven path — one that had also been chosen by Alberti and by Palladio: the path of “a house as a city” (by which Alberti and Palladio meant that the greater whole was to be mirrored in the individual, and that a house ought to be a far-reaching autonomous universe just as a city is). The architectonic fulfilment of this demand could not be a monolithic big building; it had to be a richly articulated complex of variously combined buildings, corresponding to the ideal villas in Palladio’s “Four Books on Architecture.”

Hollein’s architectural landscape in Mönchengladbach was, even before this was noticed everywhere, both a rejection of the functionalist typology of the individual building and a new demand for the articulation of large building

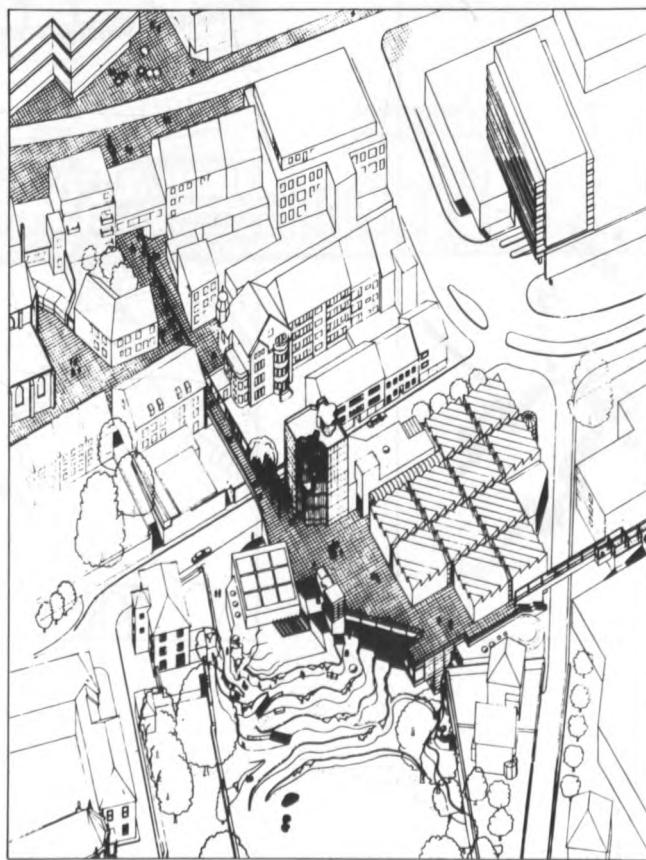
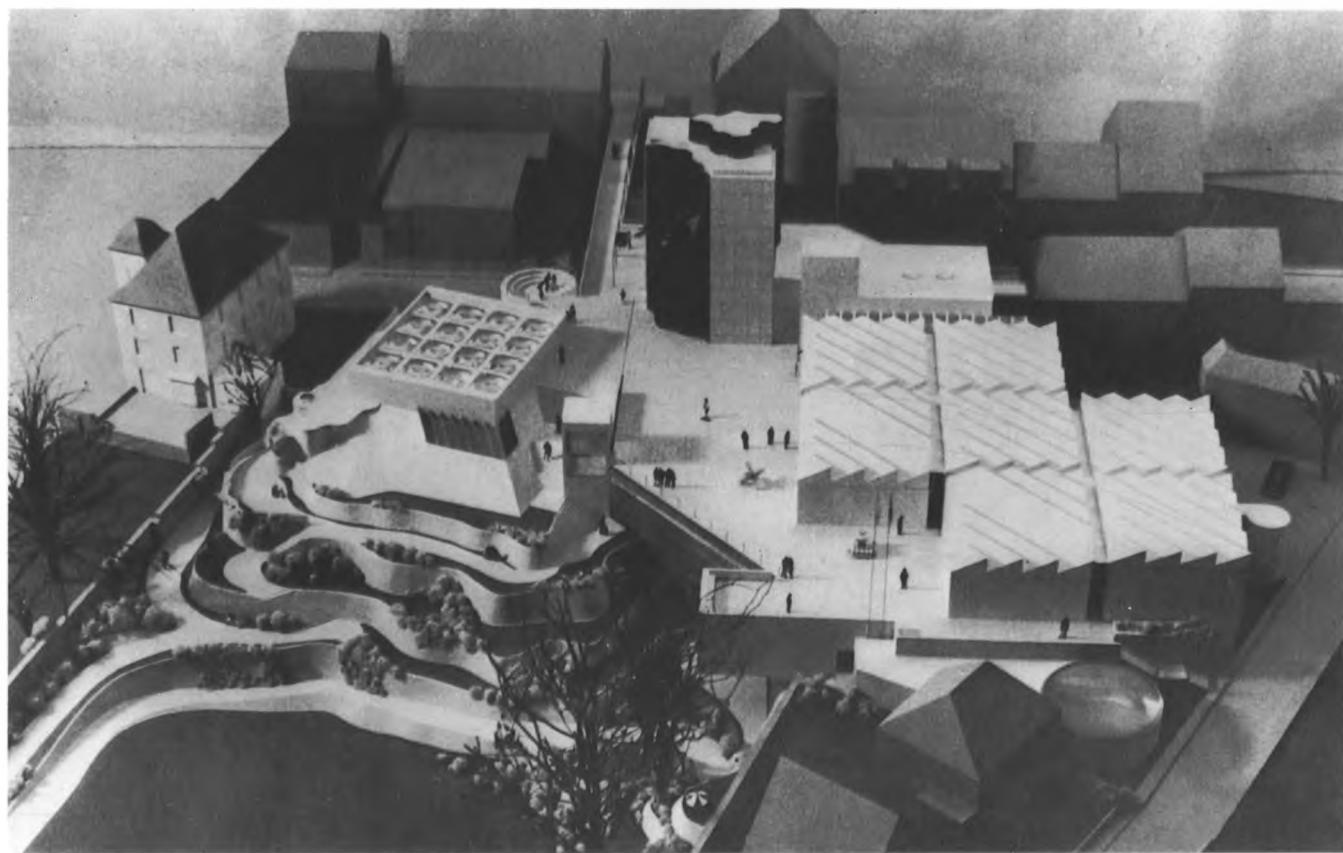
James Stirling  
North Rhine-Westphalia Art Collection  
Düsseldorf  
(project)  
1975



**James Stirling  
Wallraf-Richartz-Museum  
(Museum Ludwig)  
Cologne  
(project)  
1975**



Hans Hollein  
Museum Mönchengladbach  
1972–1982



programs in terms of urban architecture. (As early as 1966, Hollein had developed a proposal for a “building to stroll in” [figure 433] — a building that lacked conventional outlines and was articulated by stairways and terraces.)

#### The Staatsgalerie in Stuttgart

After the extension of the Rice University Museum (1982), the additions to the Württembergische Staatsgalerie constituted the second large project of Stirling’s postmodern phase to be realized. This was the third in a series of museum designs that carried the idea of an architectural landscape to perfection.

In contrast with Stirling’s Cologne and Düsseldorf projects, here the overall form of the complex was determined by the U shape of the existing building. This ruled out a freely arranged architectural landscape. What Stirling did was to set a circular courtyard (which he had already used in the Düsseldorf project) into the middle of the court. As in the Düsseldorf project, he ran an open passageway via an entrance ramp through the inner cylinder. On the other hand, he introduced a number of elements that disturbed the original configuration. On the outer side of the laterally added wing on the right, at the entrance to the theater, a colorful steel construction almost brutally disrupts the neat pattern of the stone facing, and shatters the historicizing effect of the facade wall by its “modernity.” Just as obtrusive is the undulating glass wall of the entrance hall. This combination of disturbing modern elements and a historicizing structure was a departure from Stirling’s efforts to accommodate his extension of the Rice University Museum to the old building. But then, the historicizing forms of the nineteenth-century museum at Stuttgart are not applied with archaeological exactness; they strike the viewer as alienated and out of context. The craggy Egyptian cornices turn almost provocatively against the carefully rusticated wall of which they are a part.

The new administration building of the Stuttgart museum, with its curvy facade, recalls the administration tower of Hollein’s Mönchengladbach complex and shows the same tendency toward separation and individuation. (This building is added at the rear of the original U-shaped building.)

With his additions to the Staatsgalerie at Stuttgart, Stirling indeed achieved a synthesis of a great variety of forms and gestures and of contradictory styles and vocabularies.

#### HANS HOLLEIN AND THE VIENNESE ARCHITECTURE OF THE PRESENT

After the war, Vienna was reduced to a sort of cultural way station between the East and the West. Nevertheless, it was in Vienna (and in Berlin, where Scharoun and Ungers taught in the 1960s) that the architectural potential of the German-

433

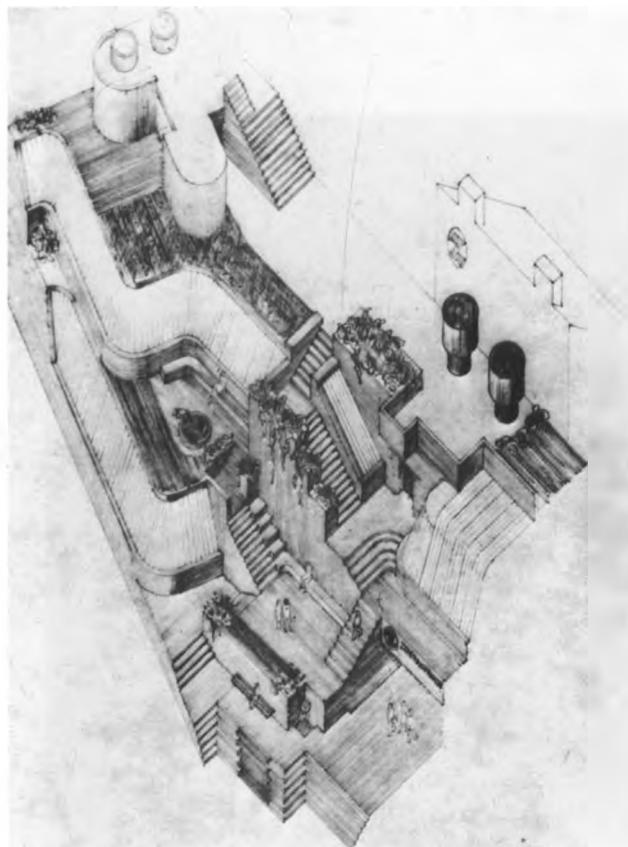
Hans Hollein

Zentralsparkasse [Central Savings Bank]

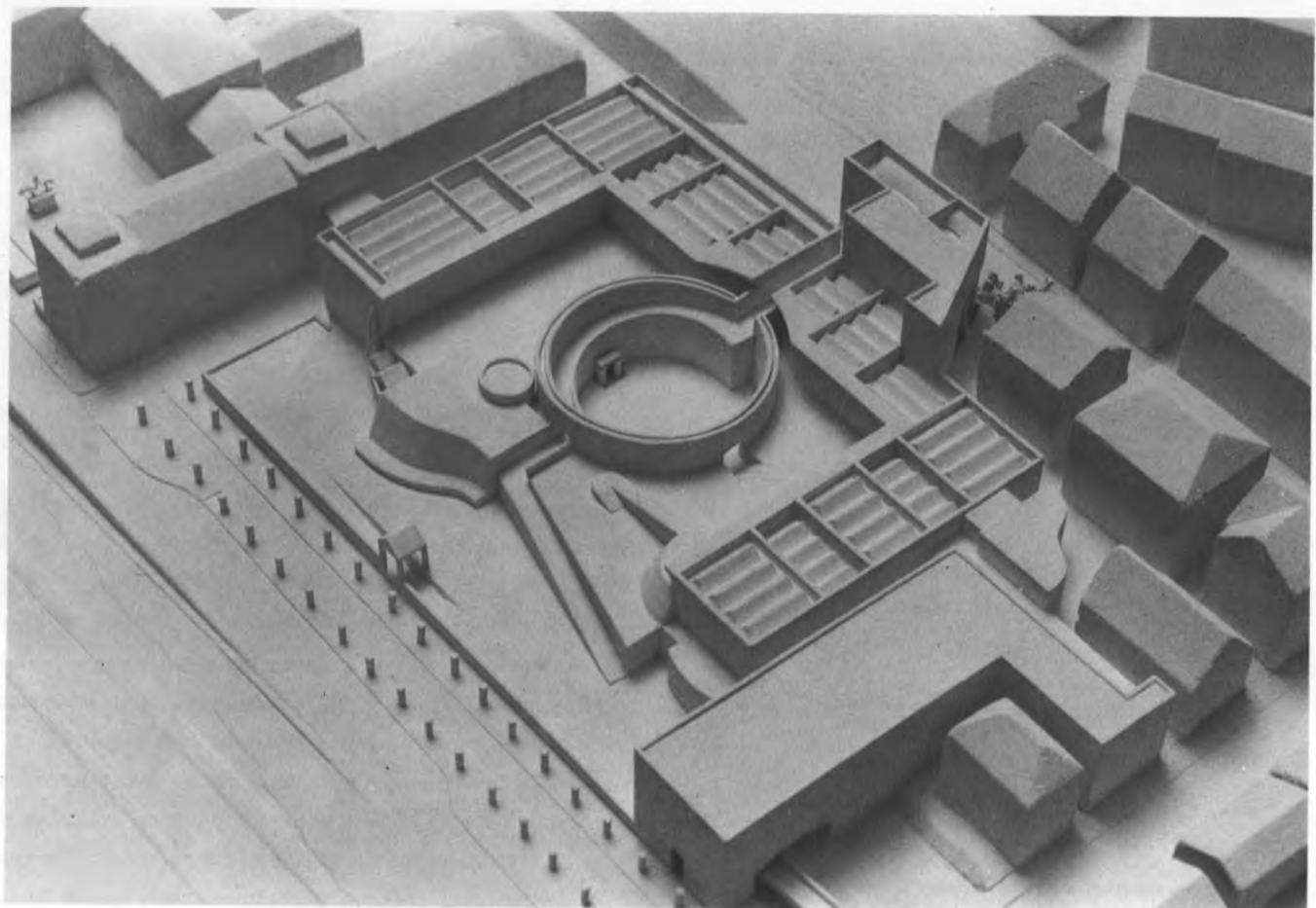
Vienna

(project)

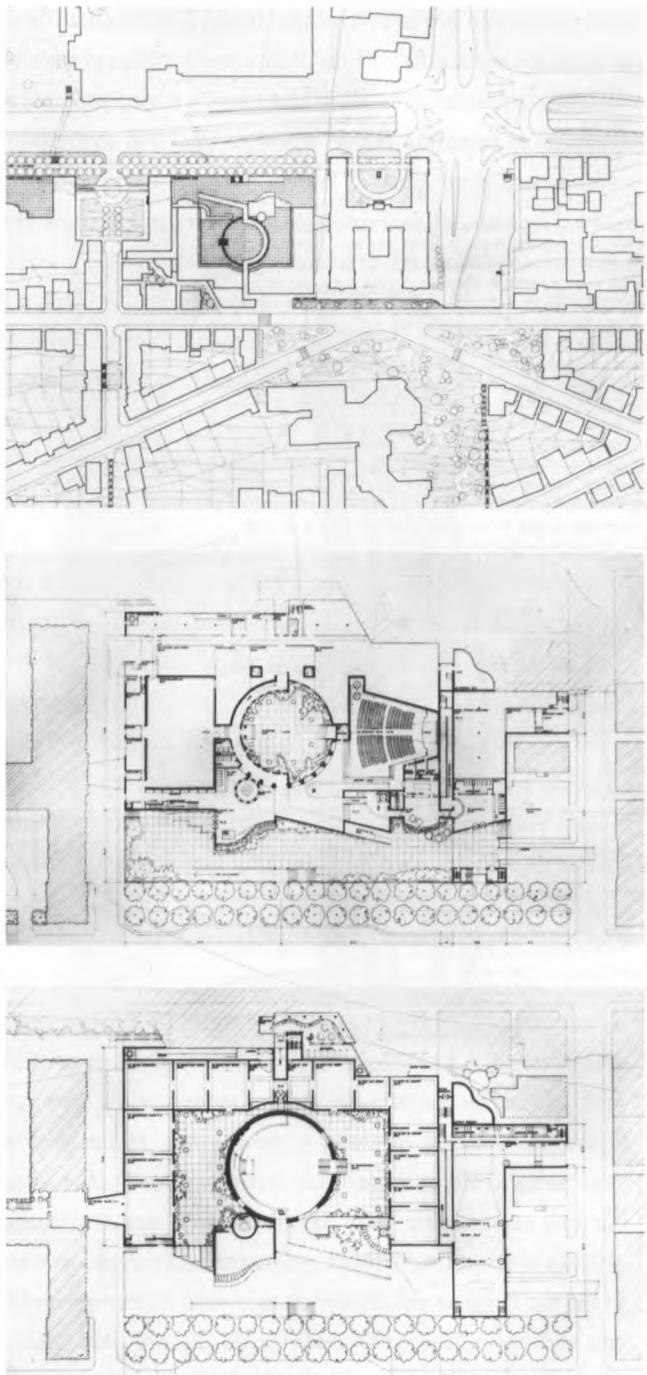
1968



James Stirling  
Württembergische Staatgalerie  
Stuttgart  
1977–1984



**James Stirling**  
**Württembergische Staatsgalerie**  
**Stuttgart**  
**1977–1984**



speaking countries was concentrated. Indeed, in 1970 Peter Cook went so far as to say that since 1960 there had “probably been more interesting young architects coming out of Austria than out of any other country.”<sup>245</sup>

Names such as Abraham, St. Florian, Haus-Rucker-Co, Coop-Himmelblau, Huth, Domenig, Peichl, Rainer, Tesar, Czech, and Holzbauer are all connected with the Viennese architectural scene, which produces the more ideas the less there is to be built. (Hans Hollein has not received a public commission in Vienna for several decades.) But quite apart from the situation of the Austrian building industry, Austrian architecture had from the first a peculiar experimental bent—a tendency toward utopian and poetical notions that refused to be constrained by economic realities.

“Architecture has no purpose. Speaking in terms of a pre-calculated material utilization, it is purposeless,”<sup>246</sup> Hollein exclaimed in a lecture after returning to Vienna in 1962 after several years in the United States. What was one supposed to do, with that kind of attitude, in a society that understood architecture only as an undertaking governed by expediency? Hollein, however, had in mind something that archaeologists and antiquarians liked to talk about but which architects had not mentioned for a long time: “The origin of architecture is sacred. The human need to build manifested itself at first in the erection of structures with a sacred purpose, with a magical significance, of a sacred sexual nature. The first pollings, piles of stones, sacrificial blocks cut out of a rock, are the first artifacts, are man-made constructs with a spiritual aim, are architecture. Their function is a purely spiritual, magical one. They have no material functions. They are pure architecture, purposeless.”<sup>247</sup> As references to phenomena of the past, these sentences sounded very poetical. But Hollein went on to apply them to the present and to draw from them a critical potential. The lecture, he said, was going to be concerned not with practical questions but with an interpretation of the meaning of architecture. A meaning that, in my opinion, is about to be forgotten by many architects. An aim that threatens to get lost under the invasion by a philosophy that views architecture as the clothing of a material function in a form rather than as the transformation of an idea through building. Architecture has to turn against that philosophy, which for decades has continued on its triumphant course through the world because it has helped to provide the mediocre minds with a recipe and a justification for the mediocrity of their works, because for the conformists it was a welcome means for the legitimization of their activities. Because it permits rationally justifiable decisions and it submits willingly to an analysis. Because it has exiled the uncomfortable world of the irrational from architecture and has made ideas superfluous. Because out of an act of creation, with all its responsibilities and lonely



## 1. WE PRACTICE BABY-CHARMING

**HANS HOLLIEIN** Charming babies is a difficult art. The children who visit my studio are no exception. They can be just as difficult as ye baby, or that baby-in-law child of your sister-in-law's!

I point this out to those people who say to me, "Oh, well, y photograph most of course, you can get unusual poses." The is no such thing as a tried-and-true among babies. I have had learn something about babies, what they can do and can't do various ages, how to dress and undress them, how to amuse the and catch their attention.

These developmental stages will be just as useful to you who photographing babies as adults, with simple lights, as they are to me in my practice of taking photographs of babies for advertisers.

Therefore, let's consider the very important matter of lighting, letting you consider the nature of our young prima donnas. We shall now discuss the babies by age groups, and find some tips for each:

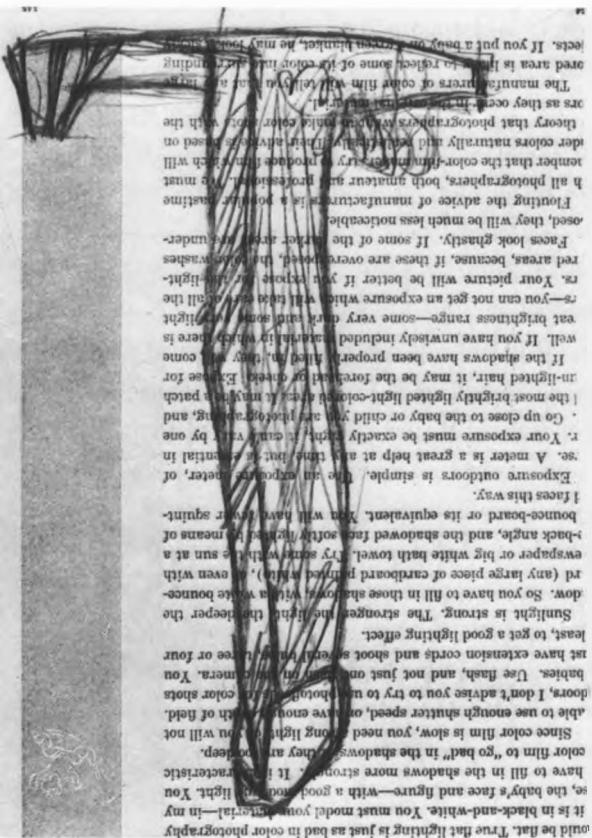
- 1—From birth to one month.
- 2—From one to four months.
- 3—From four to eight months.
- 4—From eight months to two years.
- 5—From two years to three years.

When they are two, you probably call them babies any more.

At 5 or 6 months the baby will hold up that wobbly head, he stops that blank stare, looks around the world with interest, those fists have uncannily stopped being clenches, clutches. He can lift himself up on his own two hands, although not for long. He likes to be held or primped and a soft, jumpling sitting position. He enjoys songs, music, stories, and your foolish conversation if it is quiet. Hardly a time to settle him. And how he does approve of a bouncy chair!

The business of the baby's hair, feet, mouth, eyes, ears, is quite a study when you are getting used to a new body only 6 months old. Swinging the bouncy is fine pastime, but that photographer is always trying to seduce you out of it, for some reason.

Of course you get your lamps set up, your camera focuses on a pillow placed on the table where you expect to pose the baby and of course you wait until the baby has had his nap, has been fed and properly "burped" and has been rendered any other necessary



**HANS HOLLIEIN**



decisions, it has made a process called: problem formulation, problem analysis, problem solution. Because it makes it possible to sacrifice the potential of the individual and to take the easy way of security which a team and a majority decision provides. It is the philosophy that today dominates the international so-called "modern" architecture, the international city construction. . . .

Architecture, a building is supposed to express a construction? Let's look again at nature, let's look at human beings. Hardly any untrained person is capable of distinguishing at once a male from a female skeleton. For our discussion here we may consider them equal, and on this same skeleton is built in one case a woman and in another case a man. In their appearance two very different beings, different in function, form, and goals but each perfect in itself, magnificent, however sharing the same construction. . . .

The shape does not develop out of the material conditions of a purpose, but from the essence of the purpose itself, from its spiritual meaning, from the meaning of physical reality. Spiritualization of the material leads to a materialization of the spiritual.

There is therefore no functional or functionalistic architecture. There is therefore no constructive, structural architecture. A building is not supposed to express the way it is used, it is not supposed to be an expression of its structure, construction, is not supposed to be a cover or a subterfuge. . . .

A building has to be itself. A building wants to be a building. A building ought to show what it means.<sup>248</sup>

At this point Hollein had not built anything. One year later, in 1963, he displayed — in a five-day exhibition in the same gallery where he had delivered the above-mentioned lecture — sketches, drawings, and models that clearly demonstrated how far he had deviated from marketable architecture.<sup>249</sup> There was an "urban renovation project for Vienna" in which giant rock steles covered the city. There was also on view a "freely developable and alterable city," with "utilization possibilities to be selected by the inhabitants." There was a depiction of amorphous rock structures, resembling top-heavy menhirs, rising from a peaceful summer landscape (figure 436). The primordial, the "return to the origins," was the main theme. This sculptural rock architecture was the direct opposite of functionalist modernism. Hollein also exhibited two 1958 drawings in which the seminal notion of modern building, the skyscraper, was transformed into elemental symbols: a phallus and a forearm with a clenched fist (figure 437). These drawings, done at the Illinois Institute of Technology, may have been reactions to the pure doctrines of Mies. They came across as ironic commentaries on the skyscrapers of Chicago, and they brought to light the secret notions that are present in utilitarian architecture in spite of all its sobriety.

Hollein's drawings and collages have much in common with the works of Claes Oldenburg. Again and again Hollein conjured up a huge object resembling and symbolizing a building. The object in figure 438 appears to be an aircraft carrier, and that in figure 439 resembles a railroad freight car. Oldenburg's Pop monuments — his screw in Stockholm, his electrical plug in St. Louis, his clothespin in Philadelphia — all have directly readable meanings. However, the object in one of Hollein's representations becomes something else; it acquires an unexpected, strange, yet appropriate meaning. Hollein does not lapse into the method of the Surrealists, who play with the meaningless and the absurd. His reinterpretations are immediately plausible, because subliminal qualities and secondary meanings are elevated into a primary meaning. For example, the grille of his "Rolls Royce radiator skyscraper" resembles the vertical window courses of some actual skyscrapers, and the shell with its statue recalls some actual buildings erected in Manhattan around the turn of the century. In the case of the "aircraft carrier," the undulating landscape is transformed into an ocean, and the "carrier" itself, with its great variety of installations and equipment, represents an autonomous city. The "freight car's" grimly superhuman quality — already present in its utilitarian look — becomes, with the monumental alienation of the object, its main characteristic, so that the trivial purpose of such a car is expanded into the dimension of spiritual distance.

We are talking here of architecture, and not of sculpture, photography, or any other genre of art. The transformation of an aircraft carrier into a city indicates the breadth of the range of meaning between the primary meaning and the poetical transfigurative interpretation which for Hollein is the basic precondition of architecture. What Hollein means, in effect, is that architecture is fulfilled and can become a cultural object only after its functional directness has been transformed onto a symbolic plane; then, a built structure loses its mere matter-of-factness and is seen to be symbolic and open to personal perception and experience. The freight car, the radiator grille, and the aircraft carrier become architectonic fictions. In a certain way, Hollein's collages are also instructive: they metaphorically represent a theoretical content, and they are supposed to demonstrate architecture's freedom from purpose. That the effect of architecture lies not in an addiction to purpose but in the power of the fictional appeal to jokes, satire, irony, and deeper meanings — this and nothing else is the meaning of Hollein's laconic exclamation that "architecture is without purpose." In 1979 Hollein made his programmatic demand more realistic: "Architecture is cultic, ritualistic, a communication medium. Architecture is a means of preserving body warmth. These are the certainly strongly simplified and compressed polarities between



438

Hans Hollein  
*Aircraft Carrier in the Landscape*  
1964

which a concept of architecture — my concept of architecture — has to be situated.”<sup>250</sup>

Like Philip Johnson in “The Seven Crutches of Architecture,” Hollein has always tacitly taken it for granted that a building functions. What is worthwhile to think and talk about is not purpose and utility but what follows after — that which makes architecture a fiction of fundamental contents of meaning. “An architecture that is to be conceived as a communication medium, as a sign, as a means — a ritual and semiotic architecture — relies on, among other things, atavistic basic attitudes of humanity, conventions memory, and experience. Communication and reception happen through direct experience as well as through associative transformation.”<sup>251</sup>

Hollein’s architecture is an architecture of associative thought. The images allude to something else than what is directly represented. Allusion and association are possible only on the assumption of something already known and experienced. The comparison entailed by metaphors presupposes conventions, presupposes the possibility of recognition. The familiar can reach back to the almost-lost primordial depths of atavistic experience, where the unconscious and the subconscious begin. These are the realms of associative thought, which creates the poetic simile, and the symbol, which creates fiction.

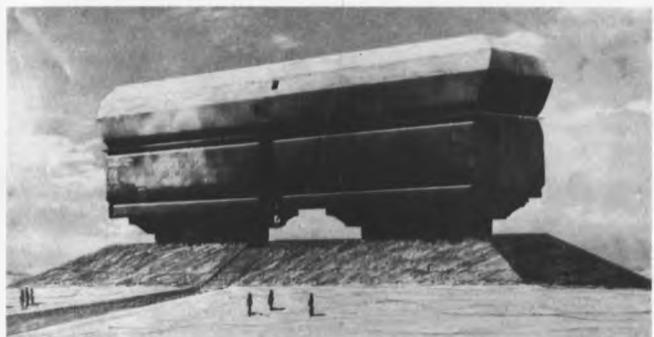
Naming of the preconditions of associative thought that make architecture a possible medium of communication necessarily leads to history. Each use of historicizing terms in response to fashion and fads betrays itself by its superficiality. But when Hollein speaks of memories and experiences, of the familiar as a precondition of alienation, of the tension between the unknown and the still-known, he is talking about something quite different. This kind of historicity is not the nostalgic collecting of forms; it is metaphorical reference to the stored experience of humanity.

The metal palms in three of Hollein’s travel bureaus in Vienna allude, in a historicizing manner, to the palm-shaped columns of the nineteenth century. On the intellectual plane, they are supposed to enrich the allusional contents of the interiors in which they appear; however, they can also be experienced directly as signs of exotic destinations and as promises of things to come. In the Opernringhof office (figure 441), the metal palms and the part-classical, part-stainless-steel column constitute a fictive landscape that combines the present with history, the new with the known, and the familiar with the strange to create an emotional tension that metaphorically prepares the traveler for his coming journey. The large, relatively neutral hall in which this grouping stands (figure 155) provides a backdrop of reality.

In his “scenario” for the travel bureaus, Hollein describes the furnishings as devices intended to “communicate mean-

439

Hans Hollein  
*Transformation*  
1963



440

Claes Oldenburg  
*Electric Plug*



Hans Hollein  
Austrian Travel Bureau  
Opernringhof, Vienna  
1976–1978





442

Hans Hollein  
Austrian Travel Bureau  
Am Ringturm, Vienna  
1980

349

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO LIBRARIES  
400

Hans Hollein  
Israel Tourist Information  
Vienna  
1980



ings and set off associations.” He also states that the relatedness of the three offices “does not depend on the fixed use of certain identical forms, colors, furnishings, lettering types, etc., but on the basic types and leitmotifs (such as pavilion, paravent, palm), intensity of atmosphere, design elements (such as curves and grids). . . .”<sup>252</sup> The variations that can be seen in figures 441–443 demonstrate what he meant by this.

### Stores

In 1965 Hollein became known to a wider public with his Retti candle shop, which was followed by the CM Boutique (1966–67); an extension of the Feigen art gallery in New York (1967–1969); the Section N, an extension of a Viennese house of the seventeenth century (1971); and the Schullin jewelry shop in Vienna (1972–1974). All of these are small buildings in narrow available spaces. Though exquisitely furnished, they were not overly expensive to execute. They all evince highly cultured taste, yet they are widely divergent in formal character. The significance of these works lies in the fact that here, for the first time since the 1930s, the store was recognized as a relevant architectural task.

These shops — especially the three in Vienna — show an extraordinary amount of formal innovation. It is difficult to agree with Charles Jencks, who saw in them nothing but a sensualist feast for the eyes and who lumped them together with the works of the Florentine architectural firm Archizoom as examples of a trendy design fashion that had succumbed to the splendor of shiny surfaces and luxurious materials.<sup>253</sup> Jencks’s observation is correct insofar as it registers the fact that in the midst of functionalism the legitimacy of sensual qualities was being recognized once again and formal innovation and aesthetic nuance were gaining ground; however, what is most important is that Hollein approached each of these commissions as a fundamentally new task of characterization.

The Retti store (figure 444) makes its impression with a glittering aluminum facade,<sup>254</sup> with furnishings that capture and amplify the play of light, and with multiple mirror reflections, which elevate light into a theme with manifold variations. Almost every individual form serves this consistent thematization.

Though the facade of the CM Boutique (figure 445) differed markedly from that of the Retti store, the approach was similar: the door was combined with a vent in a geometric figure. The logo that appeared on this facade (figure 446) inspired many similar attempts to overcome Bauhaus typography and to achieve individual characterization in lettering. The interior was paneled in matte-finish plastic, which soon became fashionable everywhere.



444

Hans Hollein  
Retti candle shop  
Vienna  
1964-65

Hans Hollein  
CM Boutique  
Vienna  
1966–67



Logo of CM Boutique



Hans Hollein  
Schullin jewelry store  
Vienna  
1972–1974



ernist notions, a variety of forms — irregular, disruptive ones as well as precise ones — occur in the facade of the Schullin jewelry store (figure 447). The fiction here is that a bunch of metal tubes is bursting through the smooth stone surface and tearing it open. The fissure runs through the whole facade, making it seem about to break apart. But the silvery scar grows together and festers on the surface of the stainless-steel door, even distorting its edges. Here, again, Hollein has reinterpreted and transformed the functional elements of a facade: the tubes are air-conditioning vents.

Hollein described the Schullin facade as follows: "An example of a communicative store front. An architecture that is semiotic, associative, ambivalent. No anecdotal message about purpose and contents (of the store). The communicative means not externally applied but integral part of the architecture developed from the functionally necessary elements."<sup>255</sup>

Hollein's approach to the design of the Retti store and CM Boutique was still based on geometry and abstraction, although there are signs of a transition to symbolization and fictional interpretation. The illusionistic expansion of the narrow Retti store through the skillful use of mirrors is characteristic of the fictional mode of representation in postmodernism, and the peculiar openings remove this store's facade from the abstractness of elementary geometric figures and make it a semiotically effective image even though its contents cannot be pinned down. In addition, the contrast between the gleaming metal of the new facade and the Neo-Renaissance decoration of the old facade has a deliberate narrative quality. In 1966 it was an especially meaningful message that a tense, contradictory relationship between old and new elements of different styles could be understood as a cooperative interaction.<sup>256</sup>

The Retti store leaves some room for doubt, but the Schullin store is surely a postmodern work. The geometrization of form-composition has given way to the use of figures dictated by contents, such as the fissure in the facade. This is an architectural fiction that, like a subtly wrought poem, has been characterized in a set mode.

#### **Walter Pichler: A Utopia of Monuments**

Hollein's sensualist store facades and his exotic travel-bureau interiors have little or nothing in common with the monumental, absolute designs that were on view at his first exhibition of 1963. In 1962–63, between the lecture and the exhibition discussed above, Hollein made some drawings and models in which he used striking conjunctions of modern forms rather than the archaizing rock-like forms of his earlier city projects (e.g. figure 436). Here, for the first time, we encounter Hollein's compact structures of yokes, disks,

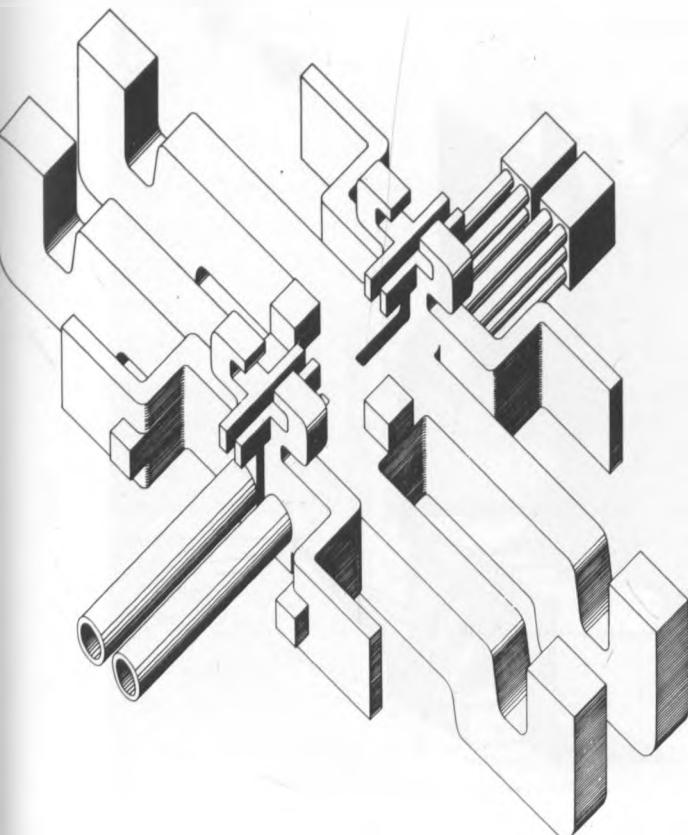
fillets, and tubes. Here architecture took on the shape of a technical instrument, as if it were made of punched metal parts, screwed together and interconnected by tubes. These fragmentary, intersecting technological forms were symbolic, just as ocean liners, automobiles, factory scaffolding, and machine frames had once been symbolized architecturally.

Hollein's fillets and tubes were monuments in the sense he and Walter Pichler demanded: buildings as sacred structures, as spiritual signs without purpose. Pichler had contrived some very similar architectural monuments, which amounted to something like a collection of basic motifs for the coming Viennese Utopia and, beyond that, for future architectural fantasies. Yet Hollein and Pichler never arrived at a pure and consistently optimistic technological utopia.

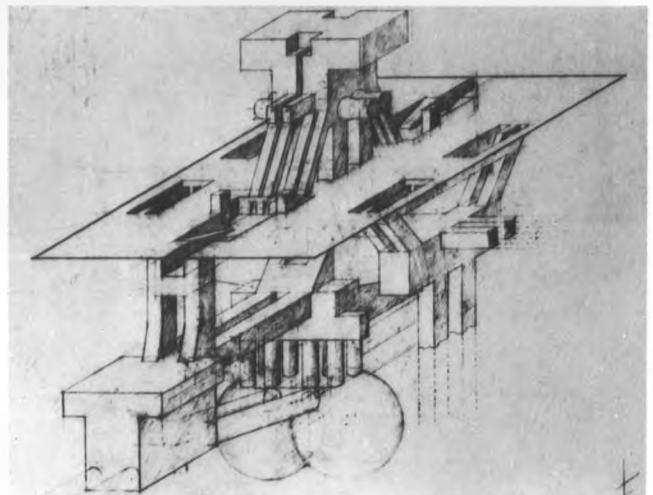
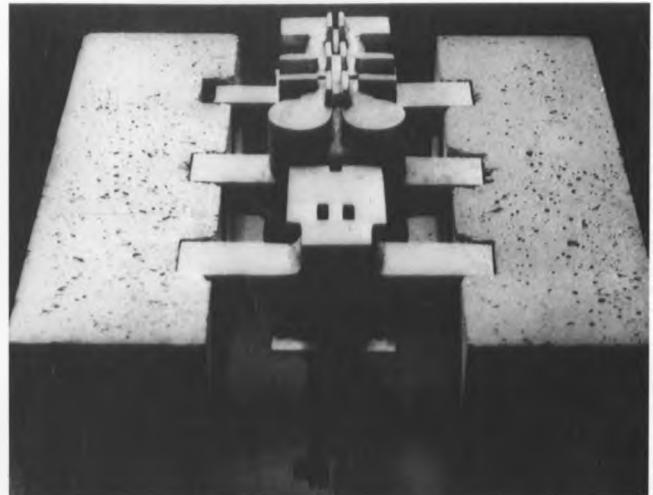
Pichler's earlier technological utopias (e.g. figure 449) were already marked by a strange, archaic monumentality; after he and Hollein had met, their works became even more similar (compare figure 450 and figure 448). There followed a great number of gloomy, monumental utopian designs, which pointed as much toward the past as toward the future but which nevertheless constituted a new fantastic typology, from which Raimund Abraham and Friedrich St. Florian were to profit later on. Pichler's 1963 drawings *Underground Building with Extendable Core* (figure 452), *Core of an Underground City*, and *Schema of a Growing City* were archetypal formulations that combined rational forms and precise construction with the emotionality of the ritualistic and the sacred, as if ancient Egypt or Sumer had been transposed to the present. Another example of this archetypal tendency is Pichler's *House on a Rock* (figure 453), with its breast-like spheres protruding from a rock. This drawing had as a forerunner Hollein's *Spherical House* (figure 454). Raimund Abraham worked with Pichler on similar ideas as early as 1963, and developed these impulses further in his later work.

Pichler's extremely imaginative architectural fictions, which look archaic and technological in equal measure, have roots in the European tradition of monumentalism. In comparison with the Pop Art influences that were becoming more and more apparent in the American architecture of the period, they seemed primeval or perhaps otherworldly; however, these very poetical images were combined with a conservative conception of architecture as an elitist concern: buildings as instruments of power! "Architecture is not the cover for the primitive instincts of the masses. Architecture is the incarnation of the power and longings of a few people. . . . It never serves. It crushes those who cannot bear it."<sup>257</sup> Here the protest against functionalism took a turn toward the heroic. How close the young Pichler was getting to the ideological idolization of an elite and of the superman needs no further comment. It was not the first time that the protest against the alleged utilitarian purpose of architecture had

Hans Hollein  
*Knotenpunkte einer Stadt*  
 [Nodal Points of a City]  
 1962–63



Walter Pichler  
*Kompakte Stadt*  
 [Compact City]  
 1961–1963



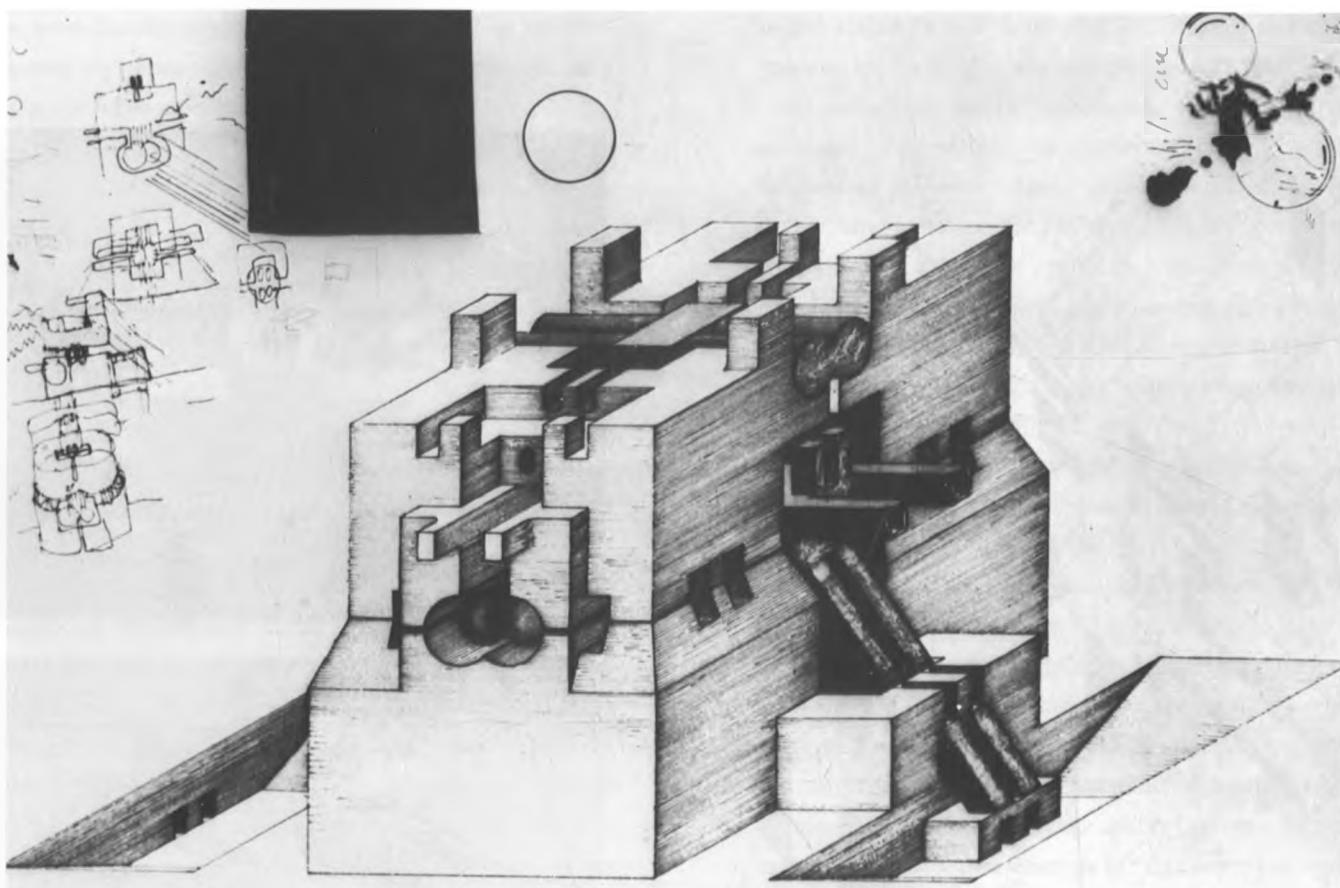
Walter Pichler  
*Mündung einer unterirdischen Stadt*  
 [Mouth of an Underground City]  
 1963

Walter Pichler

*Mündung einer unterirdischen Stadt*

[Mouth of an Underground City]

1963

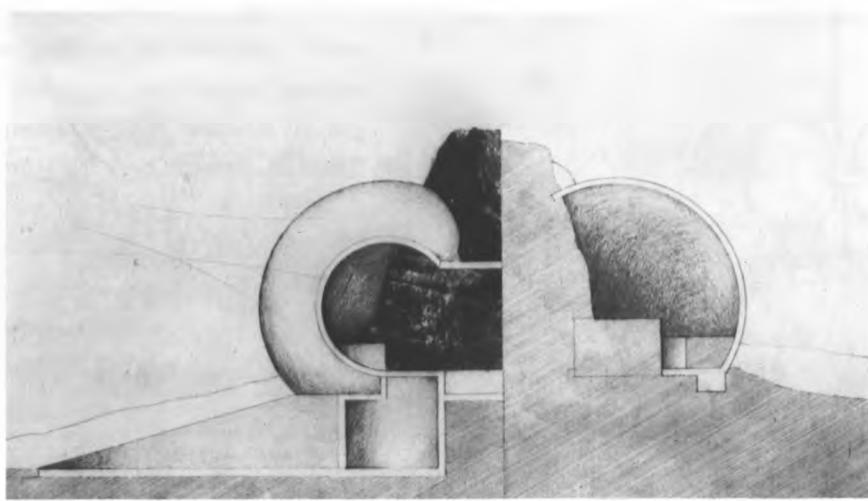
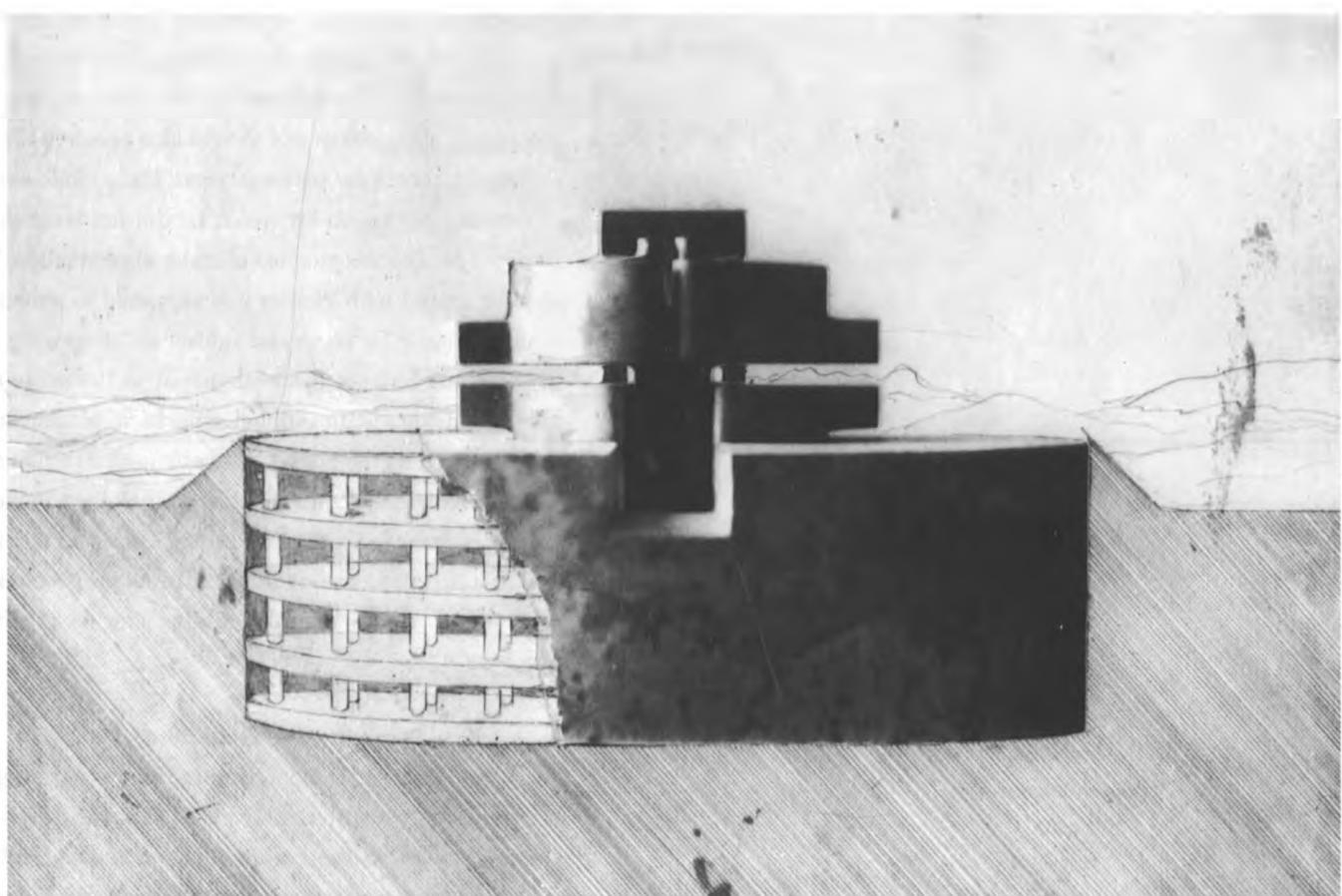


Walter Pichler

*Unterirdisches Gebäude mit ausfahrbarem Kern*

[Underground Building with Extendable Core]

1963



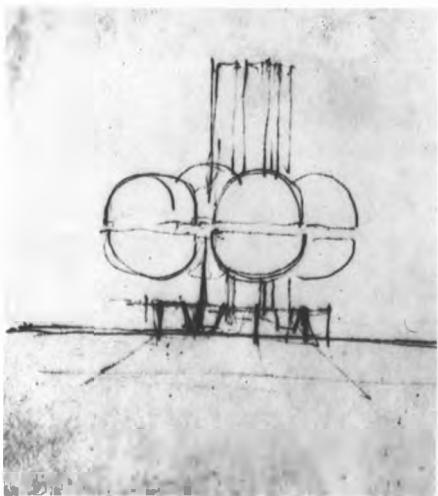
Walter Pichler

*Haus an einem Felsen*

[House on a Rock]

1964

Hans Hollein  
**Kugelhaus**  
*[House of Spheres]*  
 1962



turned into an overreaction. Should we see in Pichler's drawings a monumental elitism, or were these the dregs of an archaically garbed enthusiasm for technology that recognized utopia only in the form of monumentalized zones of loneliness?

If nothing else, the works of Pichler and Hollein during the early 1960s reveal the difficulty of affirming the eternally human without falling into convention. It was indeed their declared aim to emphasize, by referring to its sacred and mythical origins, that architecture should not only react to contemporary phenomena but should also preserve the anthropological constants. In these years Hans Hollein conceived architecture as an art which he did not want to see made dependent on the progress of material production. The attitude he shared with Pichler was supposed to remain "a statement in itself," a statement subject to "deepening and transformation" but not to development in the sense of a continuous advance of the rationalist positions of instrumental reason regarding the possibilities of knowledge. Thus, in their drawings of these years Pichler and Hollein made an attempt to look for the basic facts of life beyond an architecture serving as expedient aid to any and every purpose, and to put in place of the useful building the symbolizing monument.

#### "Everything is Architecture"

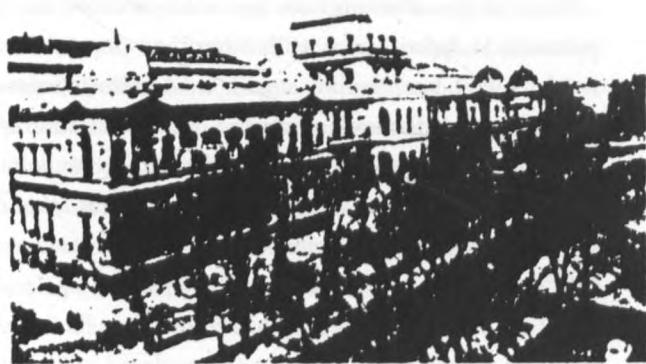
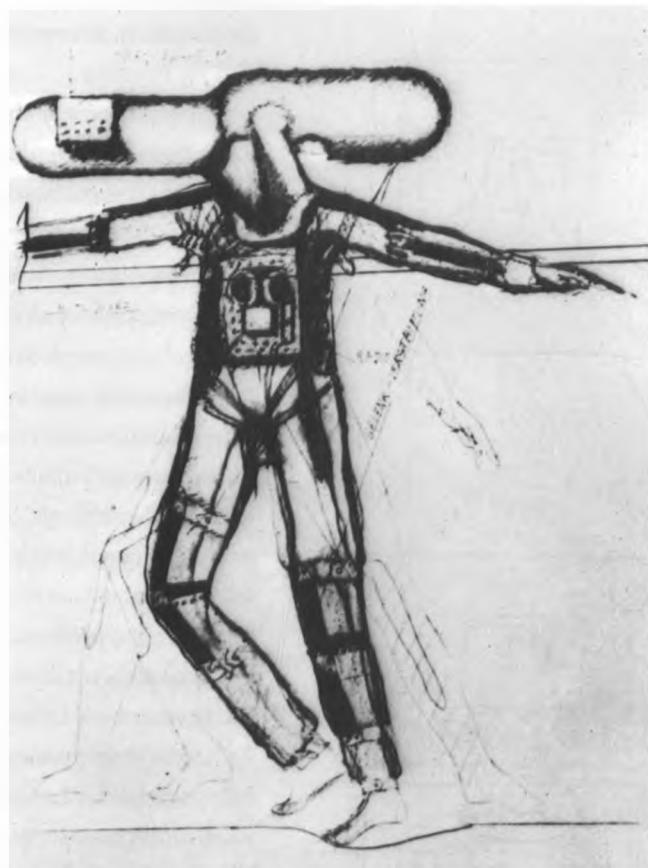
In the mid 1960s, the referential plane of ideas went through a fundamental change with the advances in space travel and the new attention to the communication media. Hollein wrote: "A telephone booth represents a prototype of a new architecture enormously expanded by the communication media. Although the 'building' as such is reduced to the minimal dimensions in respect to the human body, it is globally extended by the medium of telecommunication, and its sphere extends over the whole world."<sup>258</sup> Pichler produced a drawing of a suit equipped with all sorts of technical appurtenances, suggesting that space travel would create new standards for life on earth. The attention of Hollein and Pichler shifted from the creation of gloomy, eternal architectural monuments from scaffolding, tubes, and machine parts to the possibility of letting buildings dissolve. Hollein went so far as to envision a university of buildings being superseded by a tele-university, and the enlarged electrical cord of his drawing (figure 456) was a telling pun on the "extension" of the university. Hollein asserted the superfluity of buildings in other ways as well — in 1966 he spoke of a "spray for environmental change," and in 1968 he mentioned an "architectural pill from the 'Nonphysical Environmental Control Kit,' a box of instant supplies for the production of desired environmental situations."<sup>259</sup> Everything fixed and durable was being questioned; even Hollein's 1965 drawing

Walter Pichler

*Standardenzug*

[*Standard Suit*]

1967

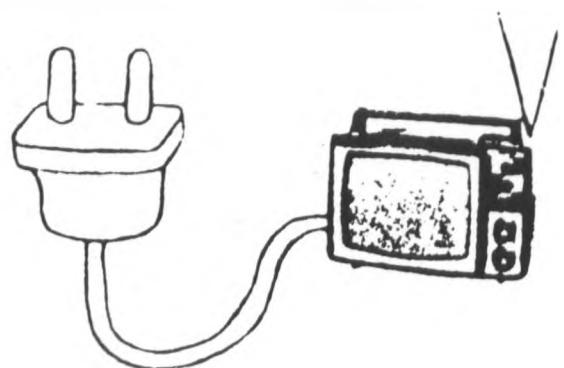


Hans Hollein

Project for

extension of University of Vienna

1966

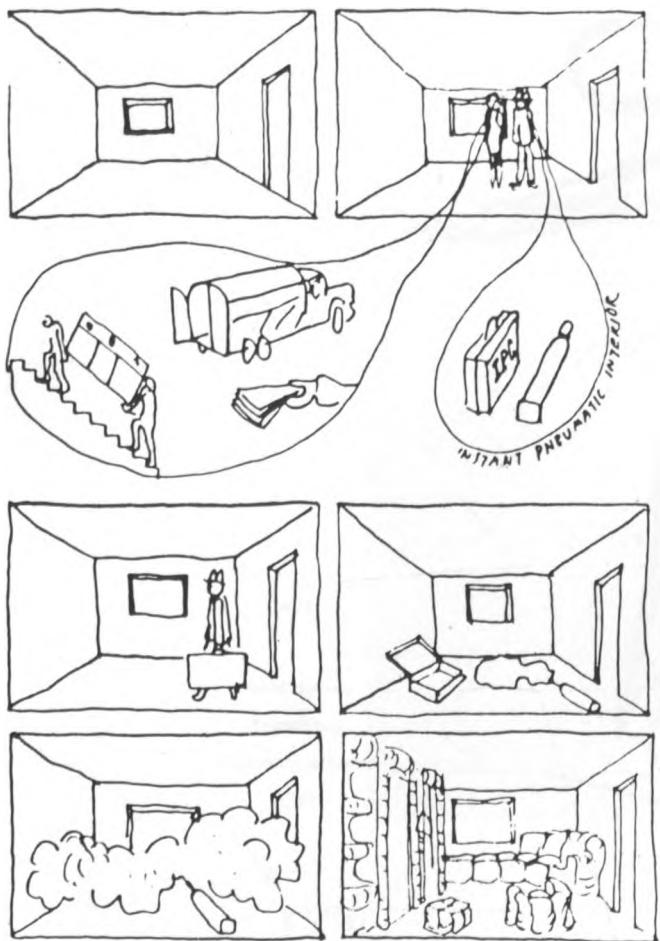


Hans Hollein

*Aufblasbare Wohnungseinrichtung*

[Inflatable Furniture]

1965



illustrating the advantages of inflatable furniture (figure 457) can be seen as a manifestation of this thinking.

In 1968, Hollein wrote:

Limited concepts and the traditional definition of architecture and its means have lost much of their validity. The environment as a whole is the object of our concern and all media which it controls. We care for television and for air conditioning, transportation and clothing, for the telephone and for housing.

The expansion of the human domain and the means of determining environment goes far beyond the statement of a building. Today, in a manner of speaking, everything becomes architecture. "Architecture" is one of these media. . . .

Man creates artificial states. This is architecture. Physically and psychically he repeats, transforms, extends his physical and psychic realm, and determines "environment" in the broadest sense.

In accordance with his needs and his desires he employs means to satisfy these needs and to fulfil these wishes and desires. He expands himself and his body. He communicates. Architecture is a medium of communication. . . . Early examples of the extensions of architecture through the communication media are telephone booths — a building of minimal size, yet directly comprising a global environment. Environments of this kind in an even closer relation to the body and in a more compact form are, for instance, the helmets of jet pilots, which extend through their telecommunication connections the senses and sensory organs. . . . The development of space capsules and space suits leads toward a synthesis and to extreme formulations of the place of a contemporary "architecture." Here a "shelter" far more perfect than any "building" is created. . . .

However, few attempts have been made to define our environment, to define space, with other than physical means (such as light, temperature, smell). . . . Architects must stop thinking only in terms of materials. . . . An architecture of our time is therefore about to define itself anew as a medium and to expand the range of its means. Many spheres other than that of building go into architecture, [and] architecture and the "architects" comprehend wide spheres.

All are architects. Everything is architecture.<sup>260</sup>

In 1964 Hollein had become acquainted with Archigram,<sup>261</sup> and this publication (put out by a group of British architects) certainly influenced his move away from monumentalism with its viewpoint that architecture was no longer limited to buildings and with its boundless optimism about technology and the media.

By 1968, when the remarkable "Everything Is Architecture" issue of Bau — for which Hollein had served as editor — came out, the constricting boundaries seemed abolished; the conservatism of a building practice based on a limited

concept of architecture had supposedly been overcome. Didactic demonstrations were to take the place of monuments and illusionistic aesthetic devices. The possibilities offered by technology were to be explored. The group Haus-Rucker-Co, founded in 1967, started to conceive and "build" environmental-conditioning devices such as the "Mind-Expander" and the "Balloon for Two." The boundaries between architecture and life were to be abolished, along with those between art and life.

Since 1960 architects had been on their way to developing a realm of meaningful metaphors and narrative representations as a way of overcoming mere subservience to utilitarian purpose, but with Hollein's expansion of the concept of architecture it seemed that the opposite of an architecture founded on fictional and aesthetic design would appear. This was not the announcement of a new, rigorous attachment to purpose, but the annulment of a separation between purposive ends and art. "Everything is architecture" also meant that nothing had to be "art" any more. But this was not the first time that it became clear that the largest and most comprehensive fiction is the belief that one can get along without any fictions — the identification of life with art and vice versa. In the meantime, those of Hollein's drawings that totally affirm this identity — confident didactic wishes — have come to look like works of art, just as the devices of Haus-Rucker-Co have not remained consciousness-raisers but have turned into fictional works of art that proclaim a message but are not themselves the fulfillment of that message.

The path from the conservative archaism of Hollein's and Pichler's archaic monuments leads in the direction of an "architecture" that ought to have as its most extreme goal the liberation of architecture, and that should take advantage of the most modern technological means to free building from the use of stone — to make building not a material process but a psychological conditioning.

Postmodernism also entails an inquiry into the "art" of building. It is a reaction to the pretension that life has absorbed art. It is as much a reaction to a utopianism that wants to see freedom as already realized as a corrective of the technological designs of the future. Insofar as it prescribes new fictions, postmodernism is dis-illusion. Isn't the shimmering abstract aluminum facade of the Retti store much more hopeful than the fictive fractured stone wall of the Schullin store, whose pictorial concreteness refers to the illusionism of old?

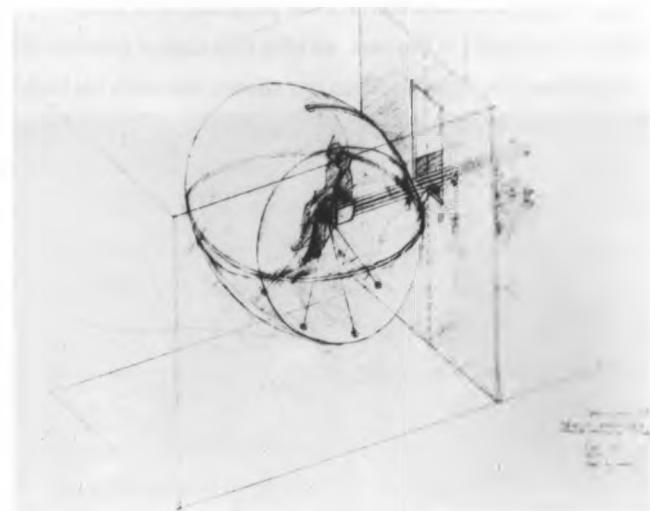
The architecture of the present shares with art in general the fate of having to take back the abolition of all limits and having to unmask the claim of abolishing all limits as an ideology. But, as if we have had a taste of the realization of that utopia, we distrust the new aesthetic. The apparent sobriety of its ends, the revealing neutrality of utilitarian calcu-

Haus-Rucker-Co

*Ballon für Zwei*

[*Balloon for Two*]

1969



lation, and the first taste of a life that allegedly does not need art any more are the real enemies of a new “art of building.” The polemic attack comes from the conservative side of means-end rationality, as well as from the partisans of freedom who still believe (through wishful thinking) in the reality of an art that has become part of life and hence superfluous. The high-flown notion that “everything is architecture” once seemed the most progressive of ideas — yet today it is a thing of the past, an idea that cannot provide any progressive impulses. Hollein has shown this with his buildings, while on the other hand he has been one of the first to outline in comprehensible terms the abolition of the limits of architecture. Perhaps it is especially significant that this discussion took place outside or on the fringes of built architecture, that hardly any of it materialized visibly or left a lasting trace. The abolition of fiction remained a fiction.

As a response, there has arisen an architecture of a “renewed fictitiousness,” of metaphorically and symbolically enriched descriptions and representations of imaginary worlds. That it does not uphold this illusionism with the straightforwardness of historical architecture, but casts doubts upon it at the very moment of its creation, is shown by the fact that the illusion breaks through the irony and the commentary. What is new about the new fictionality of architecture is the attitude that architecture need no longer be viewed as an affirmative art.

Architecture is the last of the arts to acquire a means of expression that, all through history, had not been its own: the mocking of illusion to preserve illusion, as in the architecture of Venturi, Moore, and Hollein. The maintenance of fiction at any price, even to the point of unconditional deception, is not a mark of postmodernism. The postmodern aesthetic is based entirely on producing illusion, but with tongue in cheek. (This has long been the technique and the strategy of novelists.) Architecture’s ties to the client denied it the chance to relativize the seriousness of a statement; however, this becomes possible when the traditional historical idioms of architecture cease to be accepted as the vehicle of such seriousness. Brought into new contexts, they permit themselves to be used in an almost fresh way. The historical form finds a new recognition not because it allows a past meaning to be nostalgically recovered, but because only through it can the break with the seriousness of meaning become a new meaning. Thus, architecture has won a fictional terrain that was not accessible to it before.

#### Critical and Ephemeral Architecture:

##### Haus-Rucker-Co

What Hollein put in words as “everything is art,” and what he and Pichler tried to represent as “space-conditioning” architecture in some compelling drawings and in some dilet-

tantish realizations, the group known as Haus-Rucker-Co took up as a stimulus for the “construction” of “machines” that would create new experiences of the environment. For example, the *Yellow Heart* (figure 459), which was expanded and contracted by air pressure, produced a vivid impression of being inside a beating heart chamber. Since the transparent outer enclosure and the transparent inside partition were marked with dotted grids, “the inner and outer dotted grids are constantly displaced and the change of their relative position intensifies the impression of flowing space.”<sup>262</sup> “The *Yellow Heart*,” it was said, “gives us the possibility of leaving the real environment for certain periods of time, to enter a space that presents a strong contrast to the natural environment. The time spent inside the *Yellow Heart* has a rhythm of its own, to which one has to adjust oneself. The optical and acoustical impressions help the users to experience a new kind of relaxation.”<sup>263</sup>

The first large project of Haus-Rucker-Co was the above-mentioned *Balloon for Two* (figure 458), which was meant to float above a city. A later project was *Green Lungs* (figure 460), in which two lung-like structures “breathed” oxygen that seemed to come from a few green plants growing between them. The visitor ascended a staircase and got a breath of air that had been treated with artificial “natural” scents. Many of the other works of Haus-Rucker-Co were also aimed at environmentalist consciousness-raising. For example, the idea behind *Air Fountain* (figure 461) was that New York City might be equipped with suspended glass helmets that would supply clean air at the touch of a button.

Thus, for Haus-Rucker-Co, in the aftermath of the 1960s, “environmental conditioning” meant the use of art and architecture to criticize the state of the environment. (See also figure 462.) In keeping with other trends of the time, the public was pulled out of the role of observing illusionistic concoctions and given a participatory part. When Haus-Rucker-Co’s giant air pillow (figures 463, 464) was set up on Fifty-Third Street in New York, people romped and tussled on its soft surface. Had critical participation given way to hedonism? Not quite; when a similar pillow was put in a Vienna museum, its clear purpose was to question the detached behavior of museum-goers and to desecrate the museum.

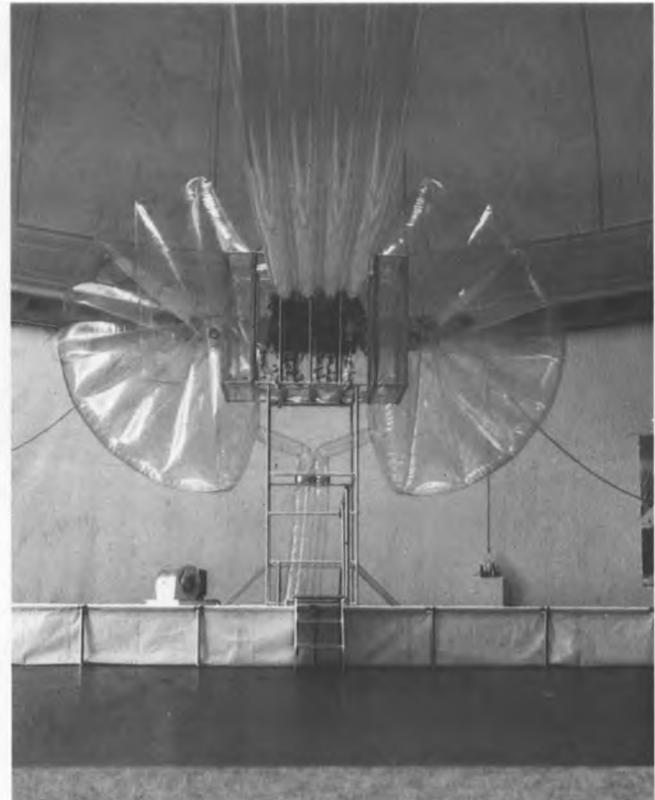
With each project, it became clearer that the actual theme of Haus-Rucker-Co’s endeavors was life in the city. It was written in the introduction to the catalog of one of their exhibitions that “one ought to make oneself comfortable in [the city],”<sup>264</sup> yet they were striving to demonstrate what was lacking in the city. A few of their projects were addressed to government and politics (such as the proposal to make Vienna’s City Hall more accessible to the citizenry by erecting festive tenting over ramps leading up to the entrance); how-

**Haus-Rucker-Co***Gelbes Herz*[*Yellow Heart*]

1968

**Haus-Rucker-Co***Grüne Lunge*[*Green Lungs*]

1973



**Haus-Rucker-Co**

*Air Fountain*

1971



**Haus-Rucker-Co**

*A Piece of Nature,*

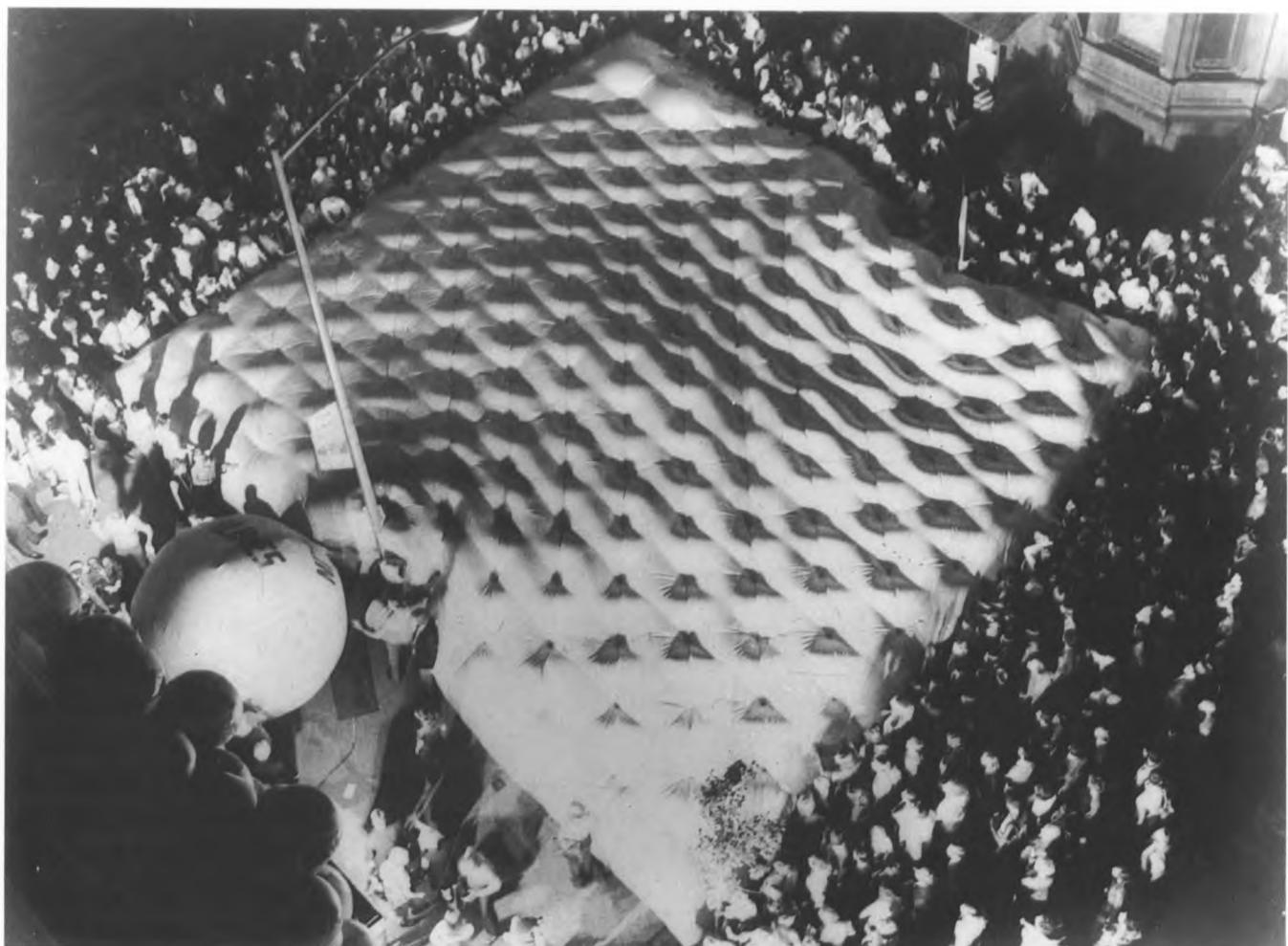
*Canned in 1973*



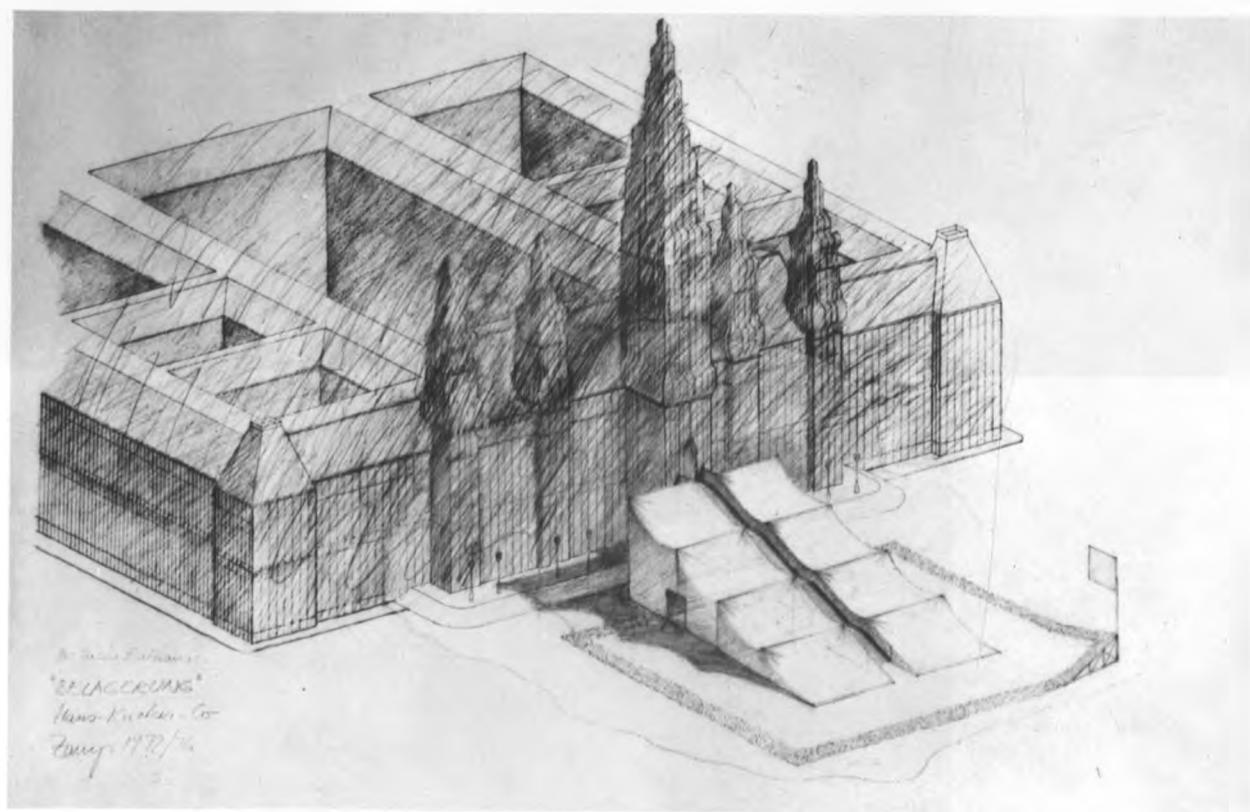
Giant Billiards

New York

1970



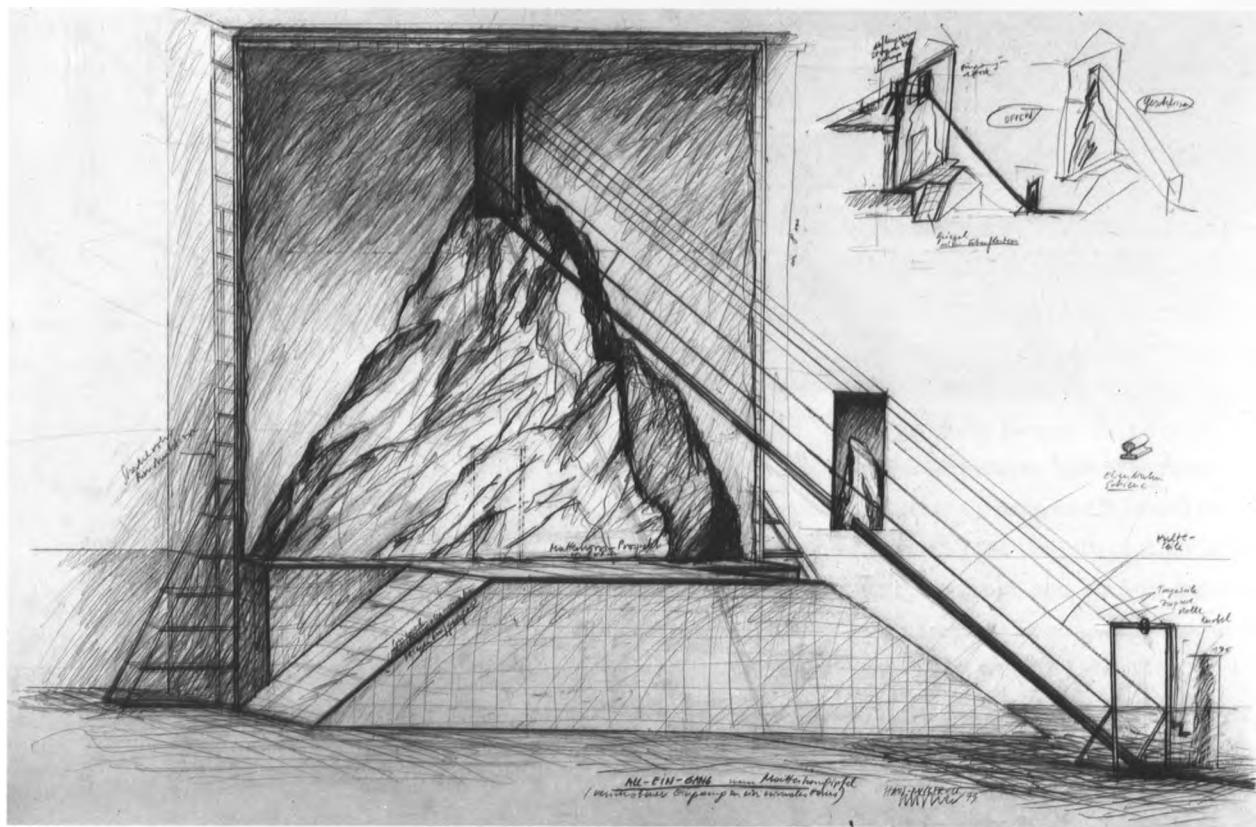
Haus-Rucker-Co  
*Belagerung [Encampment]*  
City Hall, Vienna  
1972–1978



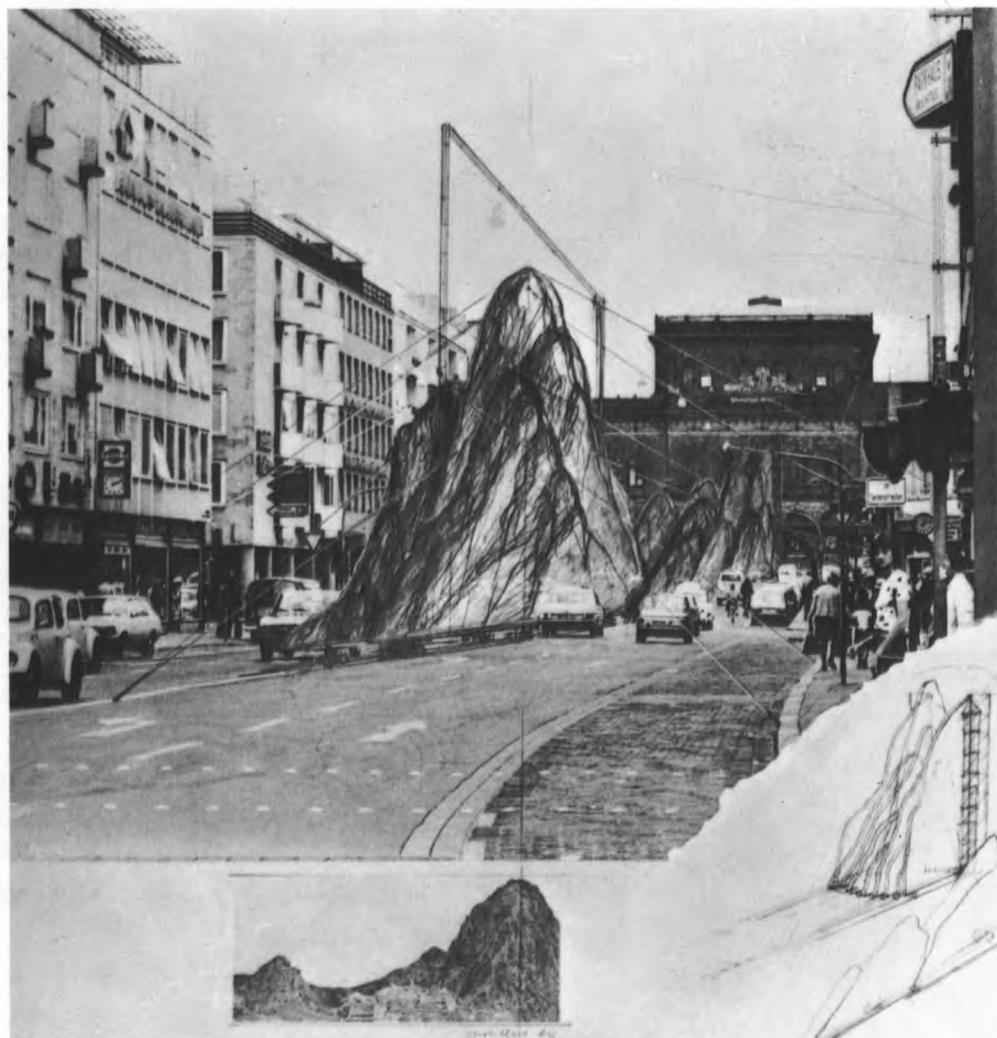
Haus-Rucker-Co

Matterhorn project

1974



Haus-Rucker-Co  
Artificial landscape  
Braunschweig  
1974



GRASSEN NASE  
Wiederholung der großen Nase  
FEST-KUNST am  
HÖCHSTEN PUNKT

**Haus-Rucker-Co**  
**Artificial landscape**  
**Braunschweig**  
**1974**



ever, the usual center of attention was the experience of the urban environment — as in the case of the project for the attachment of a large rendering of the Matterhorn to the facade of the Kunstverein in Braunschweig, about which Heinz Holtmann wrote:

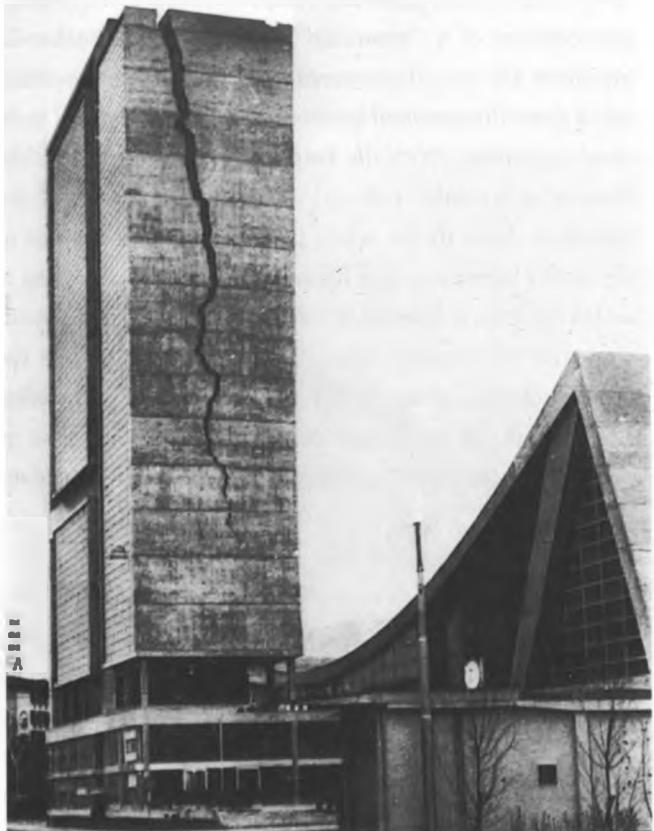
... The over-10-meters-high picture of the Matterhorn was set up as a significant, generally comprehensible symbol of the phenomenon of a "mountain". . . . The Haus-Rucker-Co transform the two-dimensional depiction of the mountain into a three-dimensional environment with the help of technical equipment. With the help of cables and pulleys like those of a funicular railway, one can pull the top of the mountain down to the urban pavement below. In place of physically strenuous and dangerous mountain climbing is set, in an absurd reversal of this undertaking, the technical maneuver of cranking down the mountain top. Here the Haus-Rucker-Co group makes skillful use of an alienating effect which, by its exaggeration, is supposed to make us conscious of the problem of questioning our customary ideas about nature.<sup>265</sup>

Haus-Rucker-Co describe their intention as follows:

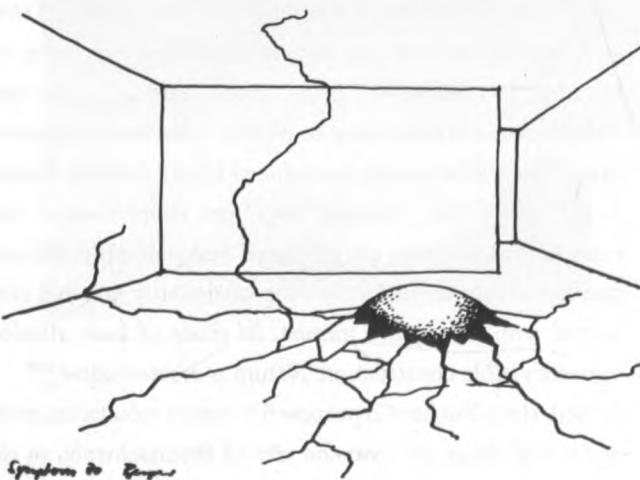
Nature has become artificial. For over 50 years we have had time to become conscious of this process, to admit our responsibility for this self-caused artificiality. But the fact is: Nature must be natural. And with a self-pitying glance into the past, nature is treated in the smallest places as if it had always been there, as a limitation disturbing everything else around it. Sentimental illusion becomes the last vanishing point before earthiness is finally shaken off; burdened with guilt feelings as if not only the umbilical cord was being cut but also the mother was being struck dead. . . . The Matterhorn does not stand only in Wallis; it can be transplanted to any place whatsoever, reproduced in any number. Nature is put into swing, "natural laws" are supplemented and expanded. Anomalies are produced systematically, the normal made into an attraction, the organically growing connected with the rigidly formed. In place of hazy illusion appears visible construction: Nature is created anew.<sup>266</sup>

Indeed, Haus-Rucker-Co proposed to install mountains, rock-work, and ridges all over the city of Braunschweig, in the form of painted mockups and scenery held up by wires (figures 467, 468). One is reminded of similar projects and ideas that sprang up around 1970, such as Ueli Berger's *Tear*<sup>267</sup> and *Symptom* (figures 469, 470). In *Symptom*, Berger depicted a dark sphere pushing up through the floor of an empty room and cracking the walls and the ceiling. What was depicted here, as in *Tear*, was rigid geometry being "animated" by being subjected to a process of destruction. The subject of these new fictions was the destruction of modernism. These fissures were like outbreaks of human feeling, and the destruction felt like a sigh of relief, like the

Ueli Berger  
*Riss [Tear]*  
 (collage)  
 1970



469



470

Ueli Berger  
*Symptom*  
 1970

realization that one is not completely dead. Wasn't the destruction of modernism the first and seminal fiction of postmodernism?

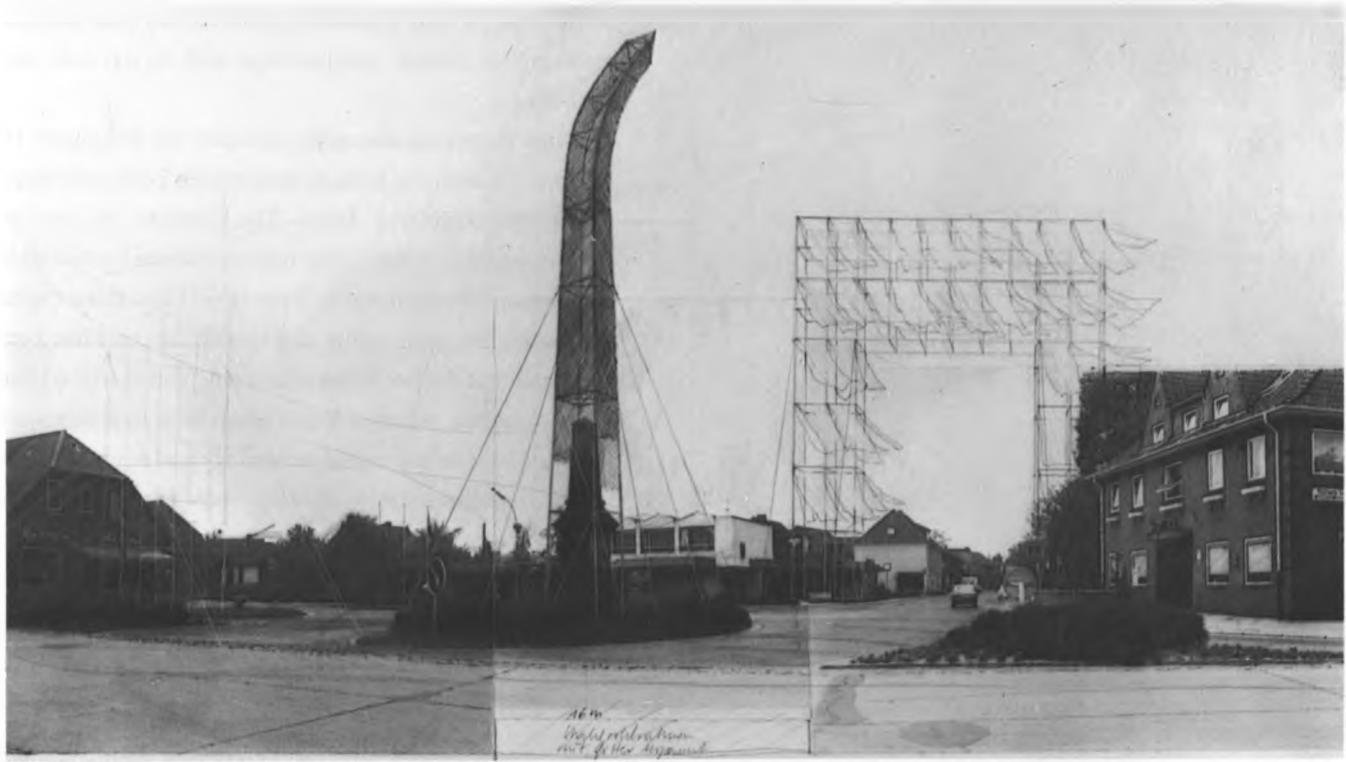
In 1969–70, several years before Haus-Rucker-Co envisioned Braunschweig filled with rocks and crags, Engelbert Kremser had depicted a Berlin filled with what he called "earth architecture." He chose several impressive buildings to be turned into amorphous, proliferating sculptures that challenged the predominance of right angles and rational construction — archaic-looking urban mountains that seemed to be works of nature and not products of planning and reason. However, Kremser's visions were naive and one-dimensional, because of their apparent reality, their claim to be actual buildings. Haus-Rucker-Co only proposed to change the urban environment temporarily; they knew that no one would actually be willing to bring rocks and mountains into the city. Haus-Rucker-Co's ephemeral structures, destined to be undone, had the didactic, artistic aim of influencing consciousness rather than reality. Seen against Kremser's neo-expressionist visions, this restraint gives them a greater reality, endows them with an intellectual distance which includes the indirectness of irony: there's no one who wants to turn the world inside out. The restraint of the provisional turns into an ironic reserve — a stance of postmodernism — whereas Kremser's projects are characterized by a pushy insistence on reality. Kremser's visions are no more "modern" than those that appeared in the magazine *Fröhlicht* around 1920.

Both Kremser and Haus-Rucker-Co were responding to an environment that had lost its naturalness and to the desire for the return of irrational spaces (even rocks and caves). However, it seemed that their environmental criticism could not be turned into architecture. Their projects could only be drawn temporarily, like stage settings, across the human field of vision. Perhaps criticism can be accomplished only through the transitory and the illusionary. In this context it is worthwhile to consider Haus-Rucker-Co's project *Provisional Structure of Power* (figure 472), with its "Arc de Triomphe" of steel tubing faced with cloth panels and its bent obelisk of steel wire mesh. This project evokes old symbols of power in order to deride them. The ephemeral character of the architecture and the fragility of the structures are themselves elements of this critique of the symbols of power. The historical forms are allowed to exist solely as transmogrifications, and only for the purpose of annihilating their capacity to express power. (Moore and Venturi approached the same problems in a very different way: by giving the representative forms a playful turn. For them, as for Americans generally, historical forms were not so burdened with associations of power as they were for Europeans. For them, a white marble dome ringed with columns, as in the Capitol Building

**Engelbert Kremser**

**Cafe Kranzler**

**1969–70**



**Haus-Rucker-Co**

***Provisorium der Macht***

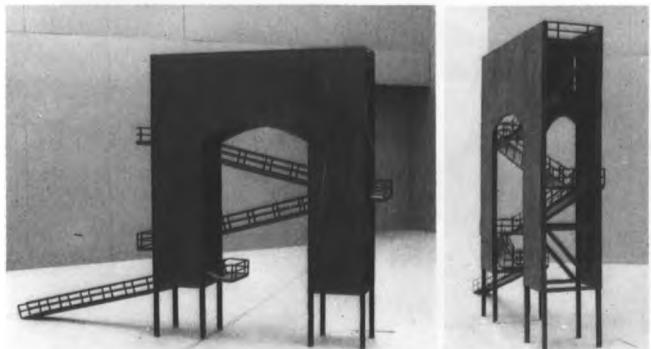
**[Provisional Structure of Power]**

**1976**

Haus-Rucker-Co

*Tor für die Düsseldorfer Innenstadt*  
[Gate for the Inner City of Düsseldorf]

1977



in Washington, could be a valid symbol of democracy.)

Haus-Rucker-Co used the triumphal arch in a more conciliatory sense in the project shown in figure 473, in which the staircase running through the structure of the arch symbolizes the contrast between the past and the present. The contrast between the two elements can be experienced not in a hostile and mutually excluding sense but as a complementary relationship providing an opportunity for mutual commentary.

Interaction and reconciliation between the present and the past are even clearer in the case of Haus-Rucker-Co's Nike of Linz, which rose from the roof of the Kunstakademie as a symbol of aesthetic traditions. The *Jahrbuch für Architektur* noted: "The Nike of Linz consists of two elements: Element 1: the photographic image of the Nike of Samothrace, carried by two aluminum surfaces tipped toward each other and cut along the silhouette of the sculpture. Element 2: the extendable arm of a crane, raised at an angle, on which these two surfaces are mounted. Traditional aesthetic values, represented by the Nike, are coupled with the basic notions of the constructivist revolutionary architecture: humanistic tradition overlaps industrial technology."<sup>268</sup> This work recalls Marinetti's statement, in his futuristic manifesto of 1908, that "a roaring car, sounding like gunfire as it drives along, is more beautiful than the Nike of Samothrace." What just a short while earlier had appeared contradictory had become an instance of mutual interpretation and, in the end, mutual validation.

Thus, historical elements provided the fictions of Haus-Rucker-Co with the tension from which postmodernism derives its expressive force. The projects of this group demonstrate how the fictive representational potential leads to postmodernism even if there is no Corinthian capital to signal it. The overcoming of a modernism that had become meaningless did not begin with a celebration of the triumph of historicism; rather, it began when form took on meanings that led beyond the cult of technology and made possible the narrative representation of many ways of relating to the different realms of life.

#### ARCHITECTURE AND TECHNOLOGY

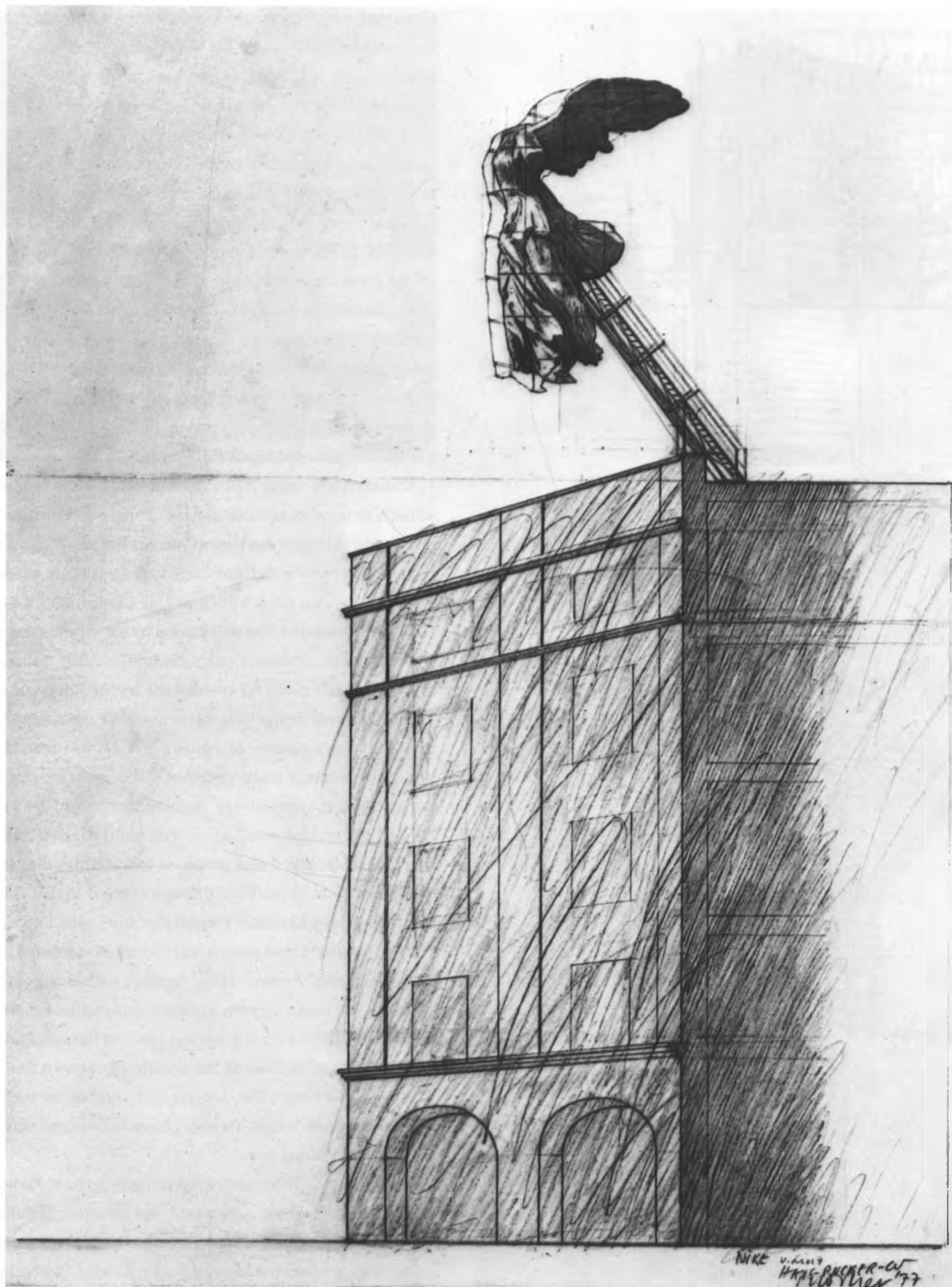
##### Archigram

The London architectural team known as Archigram, which comprised Peter Cook, Warren Chalk, Dennis Crompton, David Greene, Ron Herron, and Mike Webb, held a theoretical position close to that of Haus-Rucker-Co. Archigram produced beautiful plans, and models, but none of its projects came even close to realization. From a seemingly inexhaustible wealth of imaginative ideas, Archigram created rapturous utopian visions of a world of lattice frames, tubes,

Haus-Rucker-Co

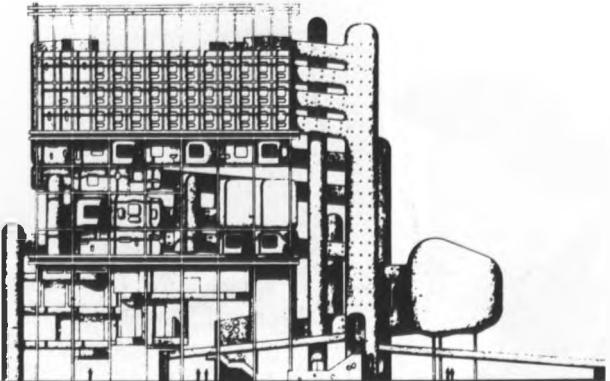
*Nike of Linz*

1977



**Mike Webb**

**Furniture Manufacturers' Association Building  
for High Wycombe  
(project)  
1957**



capsules, cells, spheres, balloons, robots, space suits, submarines, plastic, and Coca-Cola bottles — of a society oriented toward high-technology recreation and leisure.

The foundation for the work of Archigram was Mike Webb's Sin Centre Entertainment Palace for Leicester Square (1959–1962). Before that, Webb had conceived the Furniture Manufacturers' Association Building for High Wycombe (figure 475), a futurist design that was reminiscent of an automobile engine. Here, for the first time, a building had become a machine — in appearance, at least. Le Corbusier had said "A house is a machine for living," but his buildings were abstract and geometric; the comparison to a machine applied only in a metaphoric sense, not in terms of form. R. Buckminster Fuller had taken the talk about a house as a machine more literally with his Dymaxion House (figure 476), yet in spite of its machine-like construction no one would have thought of calling the Dymaxion House a machine. But with the High Wycombe product, Webb had made out of a building (which was not actually a machine) the first construction that really resembled the most popular idea of a machine: the motor of an automobile. Webb had gotten the claim and the final image to match, though neither the claim nor the image suited the building's function.

Around 1960 some Austrian architects were producing projects as utopian as those of Archigram — among them the unorthodox skyscrapers shown here as figures 477 and 478. But a comparison with Peter Cook's Montreal Tower (figures 479, 480) or with Cook's *Plug-in City* (figures 483, 484) reveals that Holzbauer was still guided by a traditional concept of architecture, whereas Cook's design (certainly influenced by Webb's early projects) avoided the traditional typology.

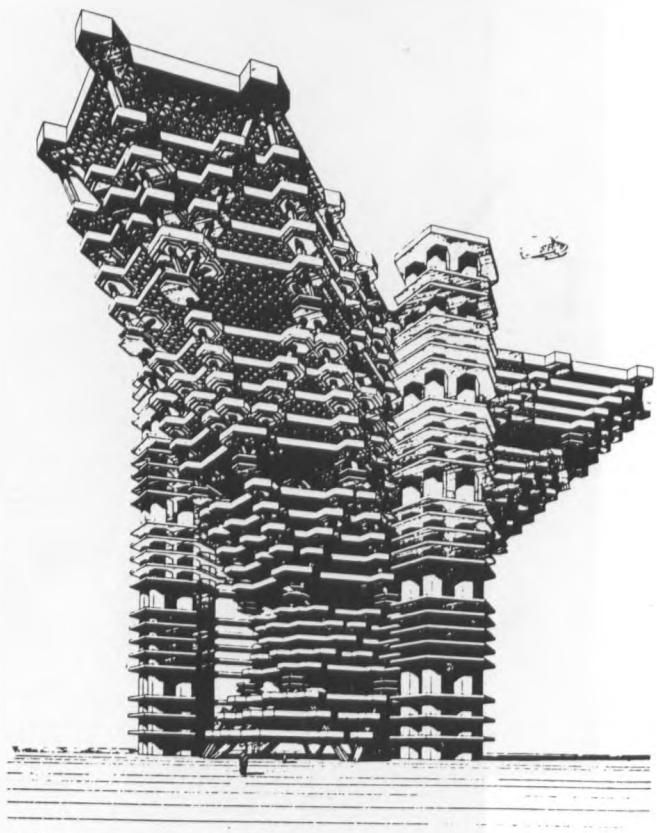
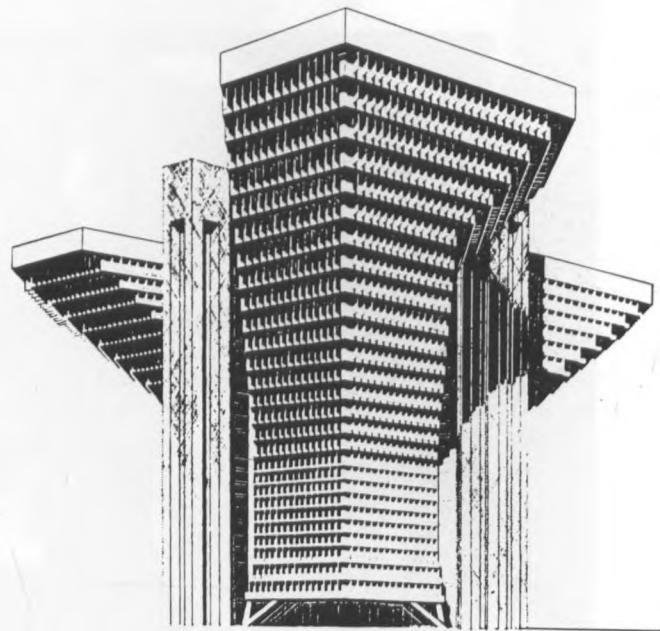
The Montreal Tower was not a machine metaphor, but a machine in the manner of Fuller's Dymaxion House; however, it was much more complex. This was the very first design that, in present-day terminology, could be called "High Tech architecture." Cook took pains to make this design realizable, and it was proposed to the authorities as the English entry in Expo '67. Although rejected at that time, it was realized (by Kiyonori Kikutake) at the Osaka Exposition in 1970, by which time people had become accustomed to the High Tech look. Around 1960, together with Arata Isozaki, Kikutake had come up with some designs that had shown as much originality as Archigram's projects of the same period. The best-known of these is the aquatic city shown in figure 481. Yet these Metabolist designs, still bearing the traces of the 1950s, were not High Tech machines in the same way that Archigram's visions were.

Herron and Chalk's Interchange project (figure 482) evoked a convincingly realistic new world, and its repercussions are evident in the Centre Pompidou and in the Berlin Kongresshalle. Making use of the ideas of Fuller, Konrad Wachsmann, and Frei Otto, Archigram had invented a technological style

R. Buckminster Fuller  
Dymaxion House (model)  
1927

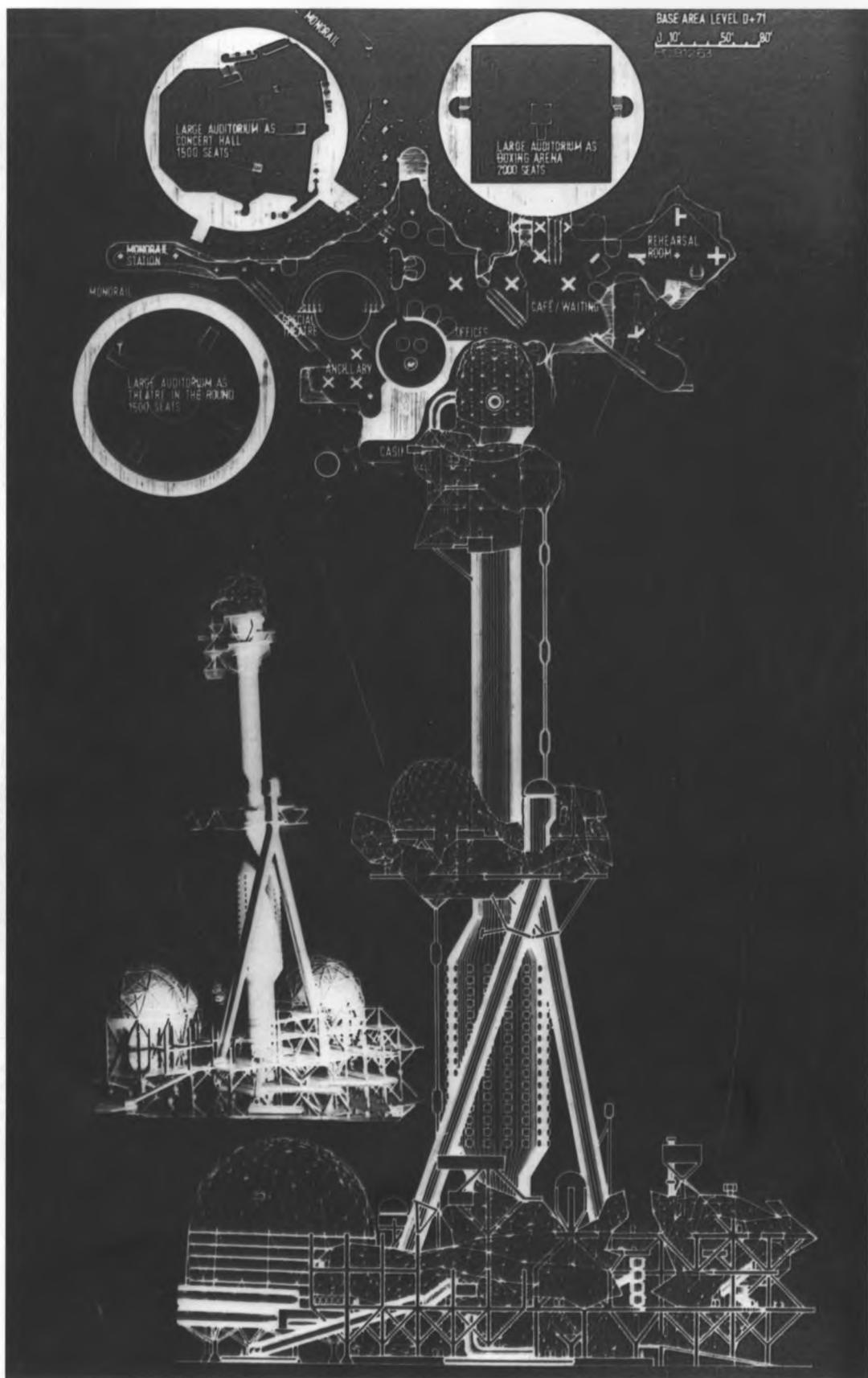


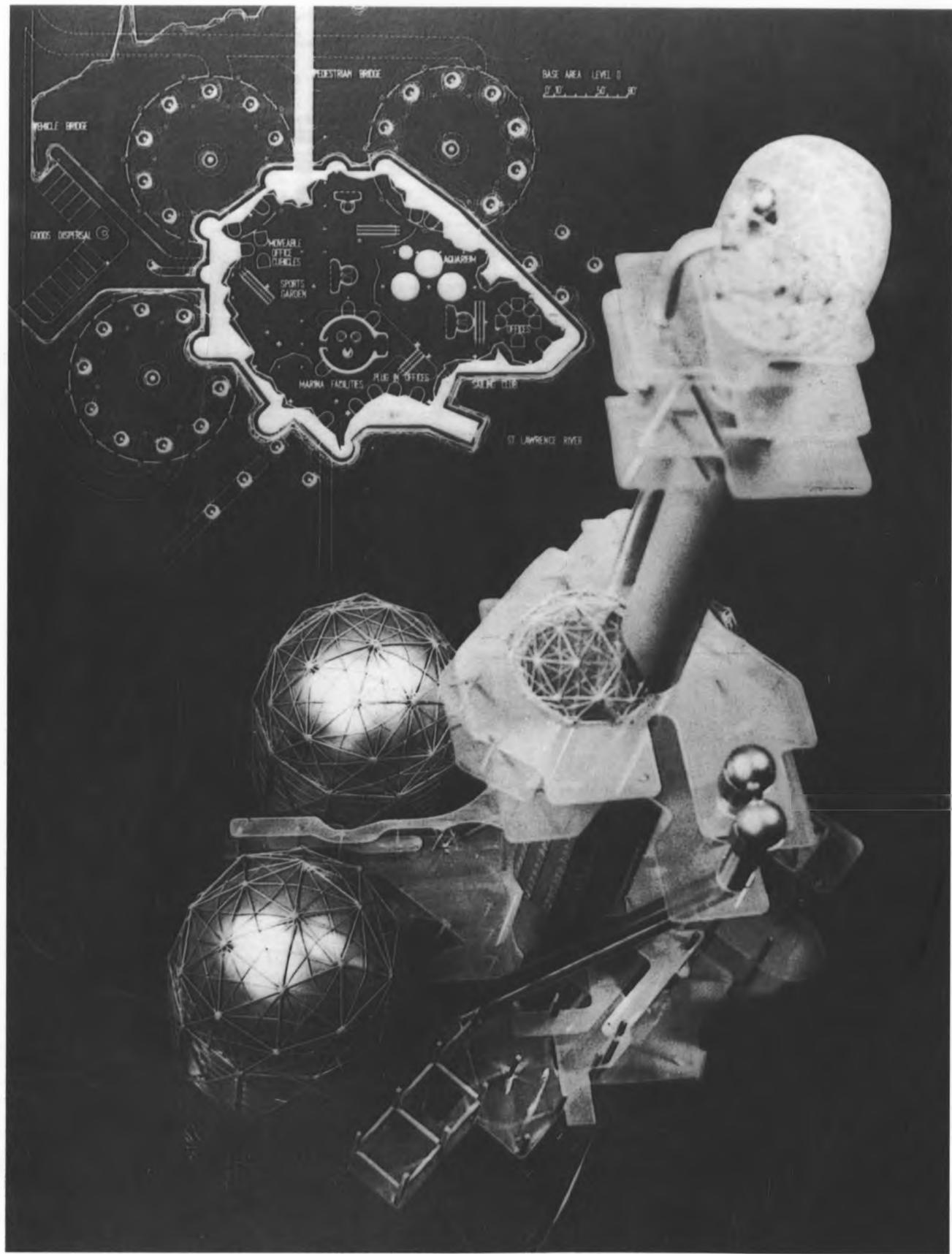
Wilhelm Holzbauer  
*Helicopter Office Building*  
1961



Wilhelm Holzbauer  
*Helicopter Office Building*  
1961

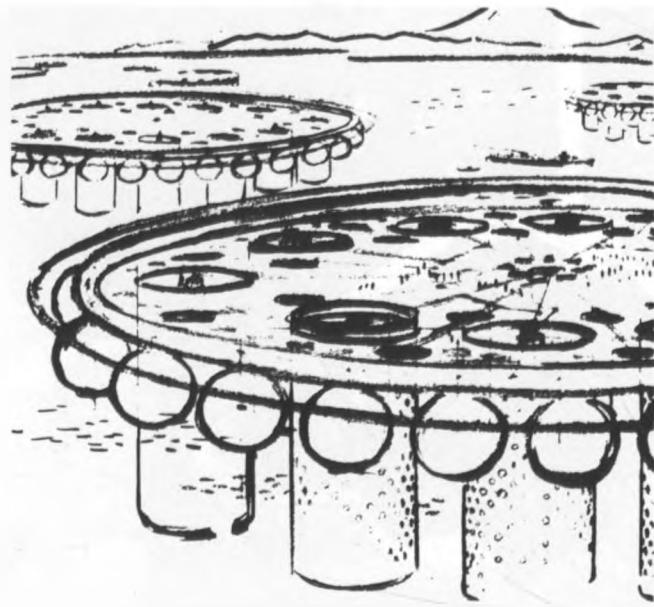
Peter Cook  
Montreal Tower (project)  
1963





480

Peter Cook  
Montreal Tower (project)  
1963



481

Kiyonori Kikutake and Arata Isozaki

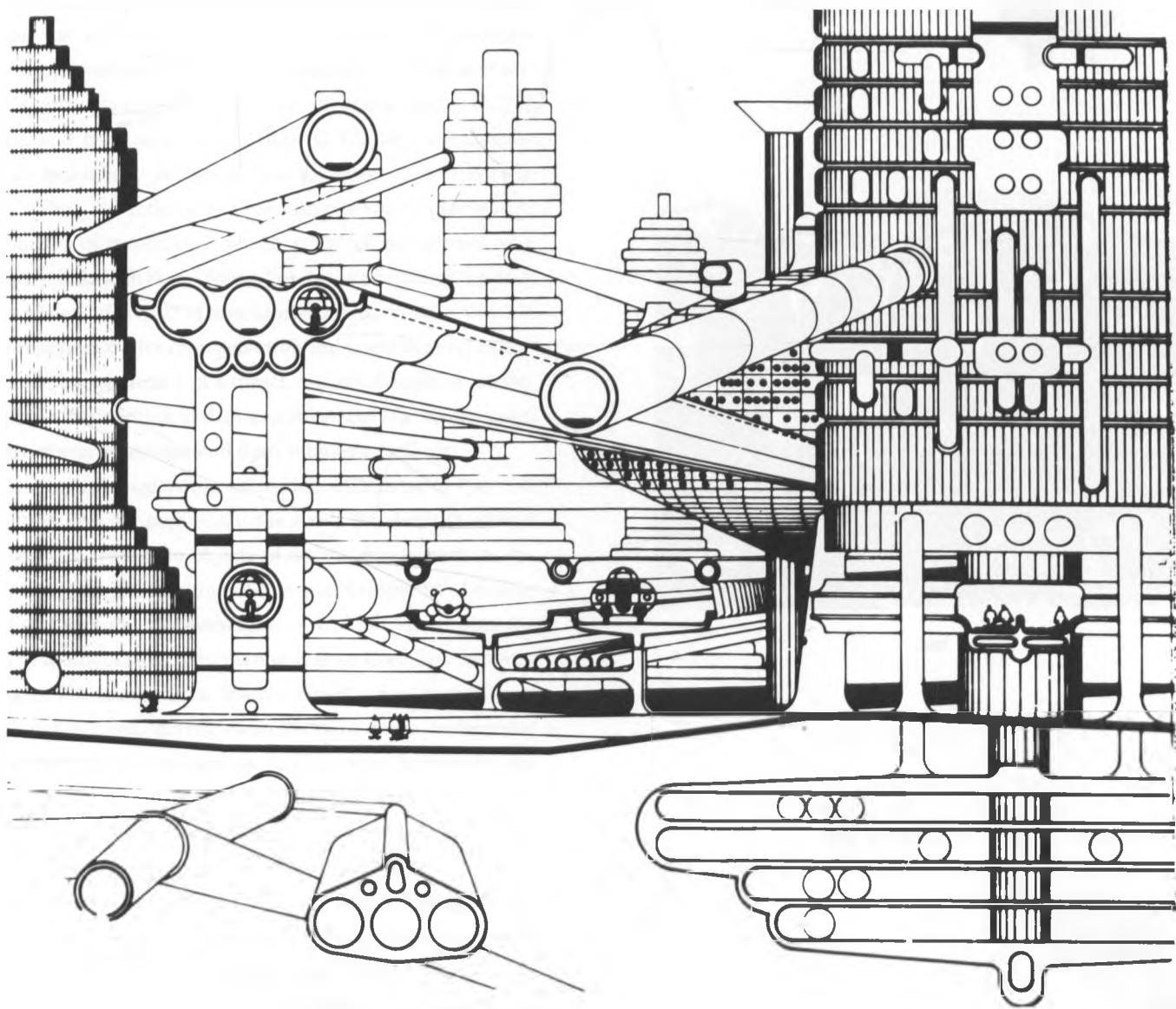
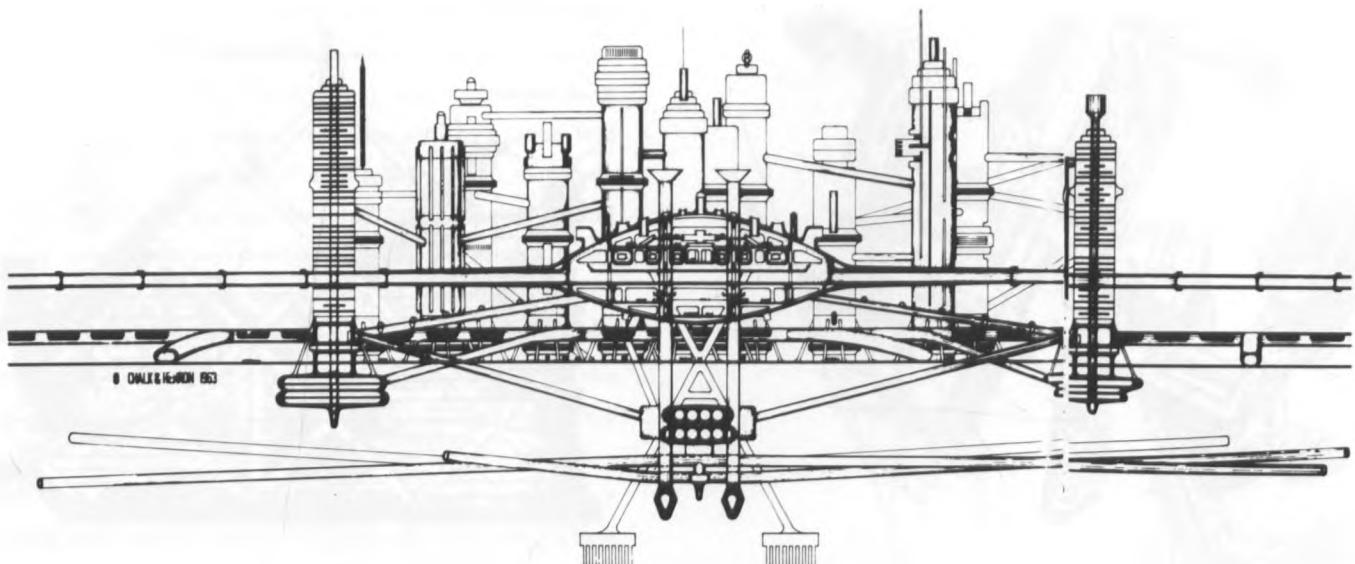
*Floating City*

1959

Ron Herron and Warren Chalk

*Interchange*

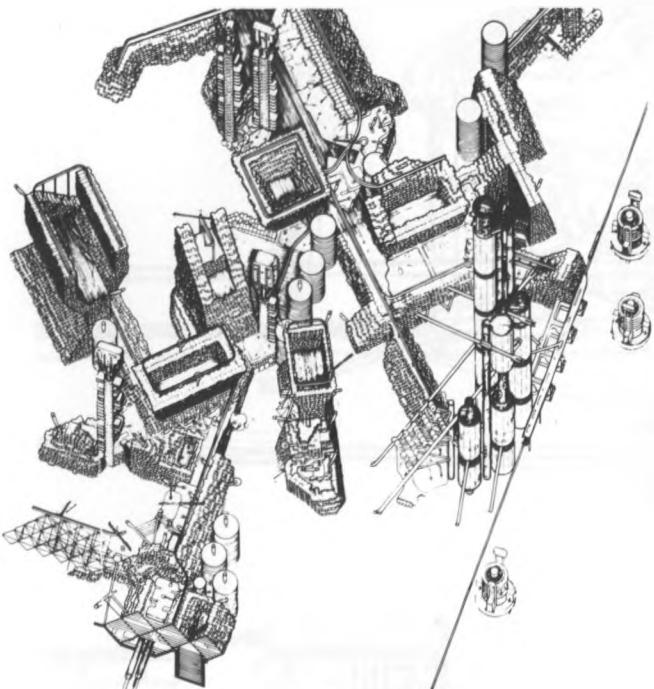
1963



Peter Cook

*Plug-in City*

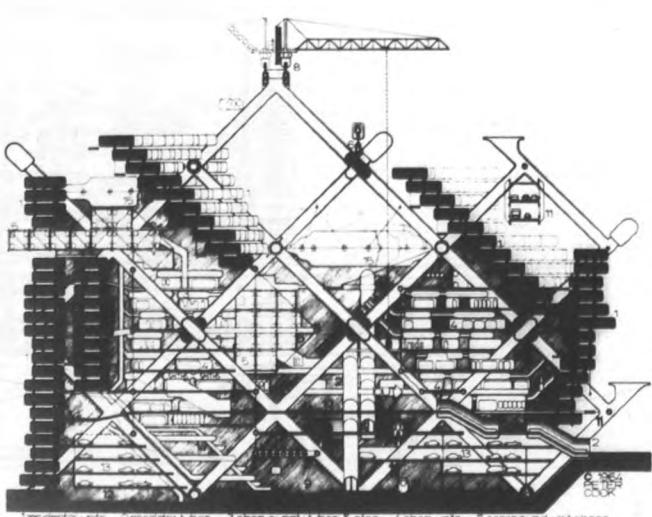
1964



Peter Cook

*Plug-in City*

1964



that embodied the optimism of Pop and of space travel and through which, from that moment on, all thought about the expression of technology in architecture had to pass.

The fact that many of Archigram's proposals were not realizable was not decisive in the reception of its enormously varied formal prepositions. But how thoughtless Archigram's acceptance of the throwaway consumer culture seemed! Cook's Plug-in City (figures 483, 484), with its thousands of disposable capsules installed in a framework by a crane, was almost a travesty of "flexible" architecture. Soon, however, everyone was ready to forget the contents of such designs and to look only at the round-edged and tubular forms, which were now seen as signs of the end of stone architecture. Though nonsensical in terms of function, these designs were compelling in terms of form. In them was distilled all the technological optimism of the early 1960s — note the happy denizens of Herron's Instant City (figure 485).

Perhaps the most poetic (and ludicrous) of Archigram's projects was the one shown in figure 486, with which Ron Herron proposed insect-like legged buildings that would be able to crawl across the landscape. Here was a technological utopia that no longer had anything in common with technology's sober rationalism. Herron combined modern and atavistic concepts to produce a vision of strange and primitive force, and he quoted from Arthur C. Clarke's novel 2001: "High technology is high technology only when it is magical." Thus, the rationality of technology was to give way to the magic of technology, which could be manifested only through artistic fiction. Webb's "motor as a building" had led to a vision of a city of machine-animals. Wasn't this the ultimate in narrative representation and poetic fiction? Didn't it show the legitimacy of a direct, realistic figurative rendering of contents which had long ago overcome the abstractness of geometric structures and their interesting effects?

Archigram's beginnings coincided with those of Pop Art. Much as Pop Art gave consumer goods the status of art and made them legitimate objects of artistic representation, Archigram made the machine and its qualities worthy of artistic and architectural representation — without interposing the sort of aestheticizing sublimation that Le Corbusier had employed. For example, in Warren Chalk's Aquaman (figure 487) submarines, diving capsules, and other underwater equipment were depicted as if they were household appliances in a sort of advertisement. Words such as Glamour and Coca-Cola and robots are some other leitmotifs that Archigram members used in their Pop-ish collages.

Archigram is as little or as much modern or postmodern as is Pop Art. By its objective realism, Pop Art had broken with the dominant streams of modernism. Through the new directness of its enjoyment of storytelling, it had broken the silence dictated by the Great Abstraction. Through the me-



485

Ron Herron

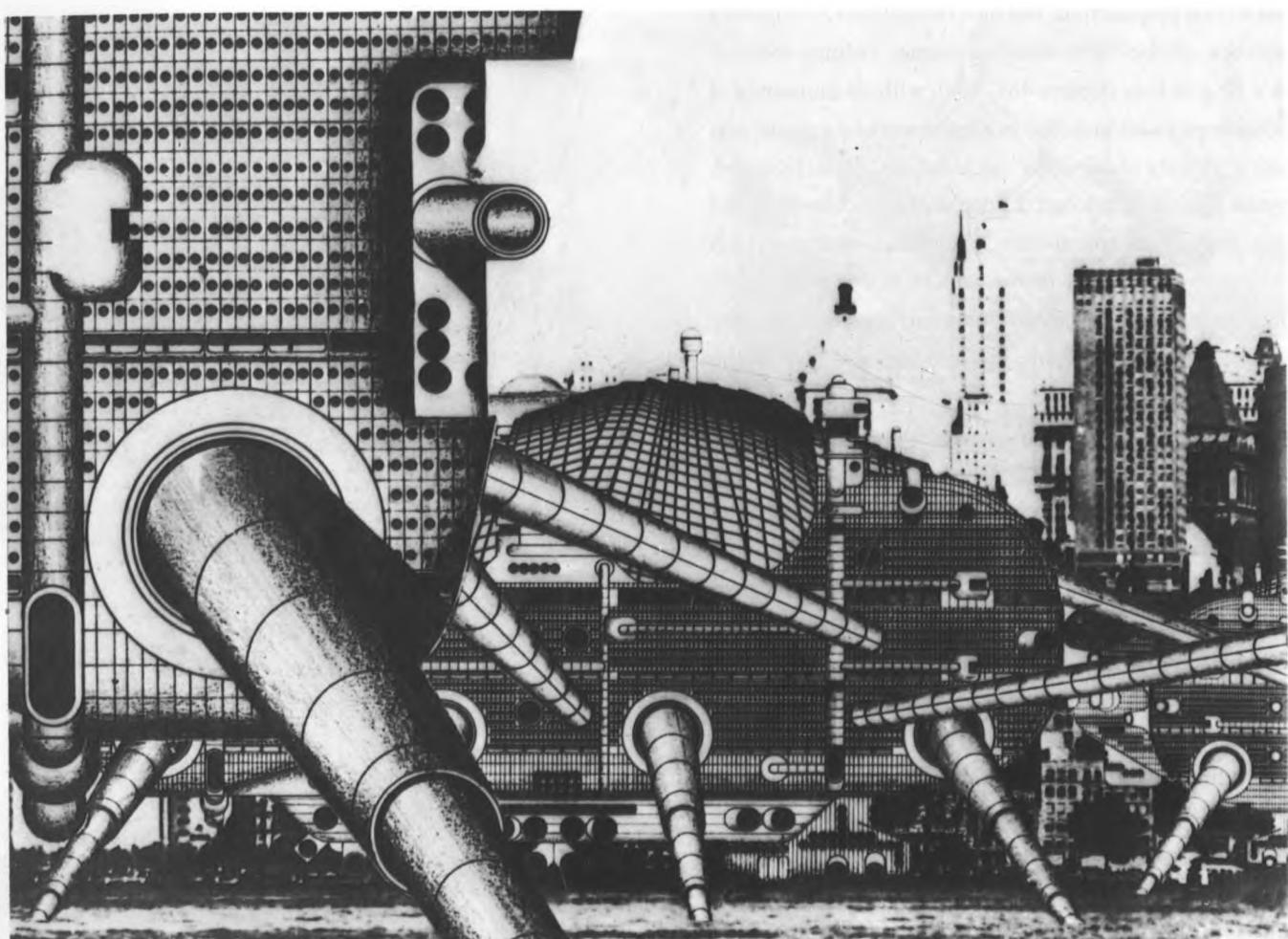
*Instant City*

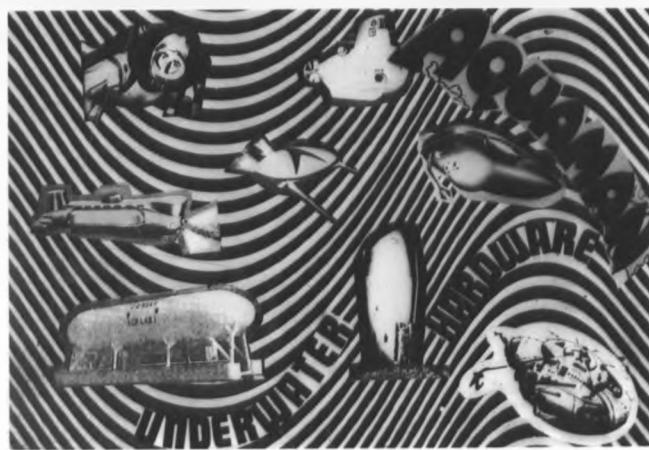
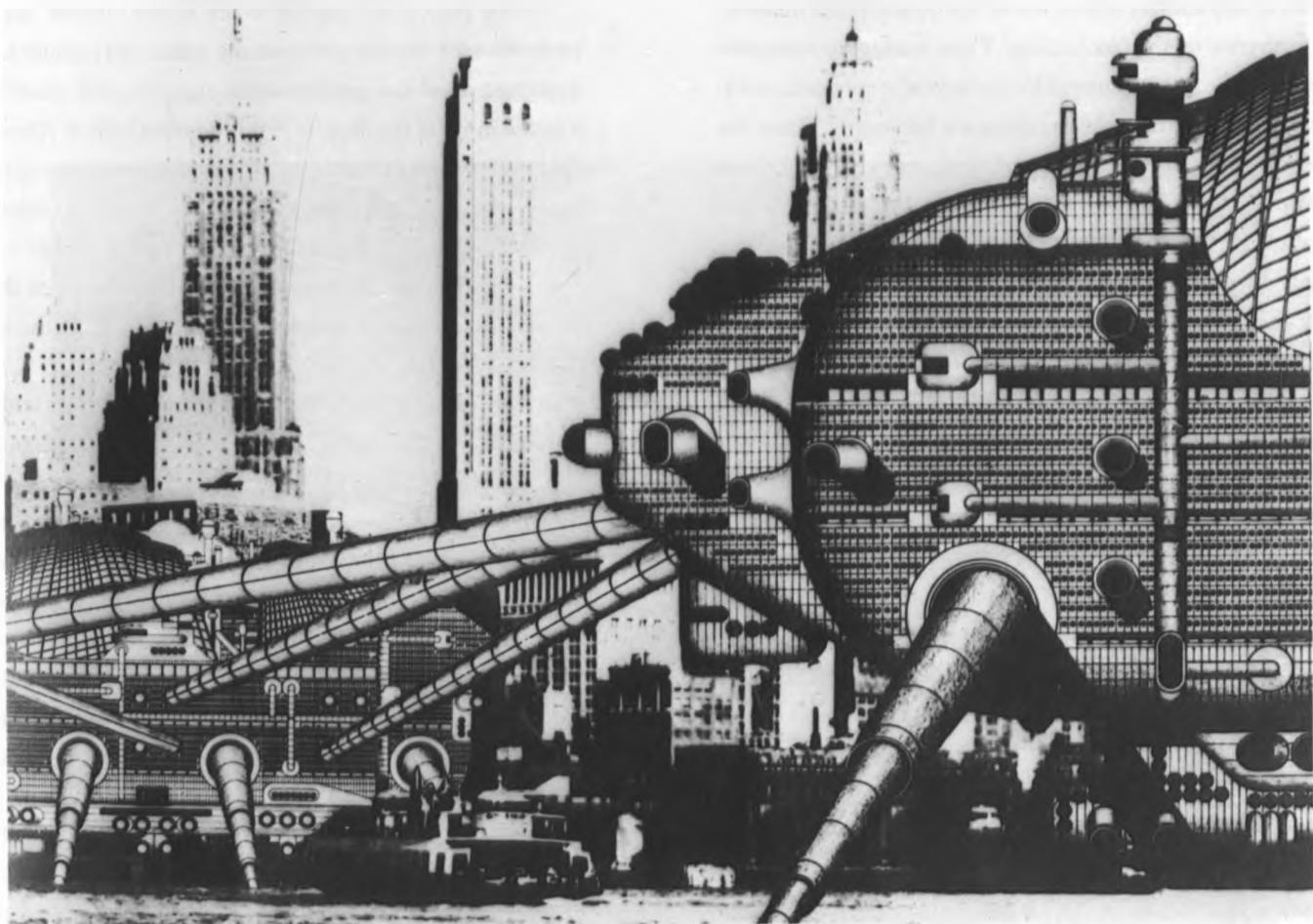
1969

Ron Herron

*Walking City*

1964





487

Warren Chalk

*Aquaman*

1964

383

dium of technology and the machine, Archigram began to tell architectural fables of a kind that had hardly been seen before in the twentieth century. From Webb's *Sin Centre* to Herron's *Instant City*, Archigram produced a series of great urban fictions that left the geometry of modernism and the muteness of functionalism far behind. The decisive thing was what Archigram was talking about: the great myth of modernism, the great myth of technology. Thus, Archigram remained in a one-dimensional zone of technological utopianism, without being able to reestablish coherence between the past, the present, and the future. Although Archigram adopted a few of Pop's stylistic features, its main interest lay in the appropriation and glamorizing of technology. Even though the newly awakened sense of description and fiction cleared the way for the symbolization and storytelling of postmodernism, in regard to content there remained the fixation on technology as the only instrument of salvation. These first High Tech fictions actually validated modernism, even though the naively refined narrative bent of Mike Webb and Ron Herron led away from utilitarian rationalism.

Thus, 1960 again proves to have been the incubation year of the New. That was the year in which, in the Anglo-Saxon countries, Pop Art brought the values of the consumer society into the sheltered sphere of modern aestheticism, and the result was a breakdown of the boundaries between everyday life and art, kitsch and art, consumerism and art. It becomes clearer and clearer that this upheaval has been of fundamental importance to the cultural development of the twentieth century. The year 1960 will turn out to have been as significant for the history of art and architecture of this century as 1905 and 1920. The ideas and intentions that began to come to the fore in 1960 are still clamoring to be realized.

Archigram, with its vision of architecture as a vehicle of meaning and a species of fiction, was a forerunner of the movement from modernism to postmodernism that has been increasingly discernible since about 1970 — even though Archigram's only fiction was the glory of the machine.

#### AGAINST PERFECTION

##### Ralph Erskine: The Byker Wall

After working on the fringe of the international scene for decades, the English-Swedish architect Ralph Erskine won worldwide recognition with a housing project erected between 1970 and 1980 in the Byker section of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, England. The 1960s and the 1970s had seen a great number of failed attempts at large housing developments, especially in France, Germany, and the Netherlands.

To a considerable degree, the success of Erskine's Byker project can be credited to the participation of the prospective residents who found their way into the architect's office in a

former funeral parlor of the old Byker Project, where their questions were answered and their wishes noted. This involvement created a good atmosphere for the work that had to be done, including the demolition of parts of the old project. One of the main concerns was to preserve the existing social infrastructure.

Erskine responded eagerly to the future tenants' general preference for colorful architecture, which ran counter to the expectations of the governmental agencies, but other than that the input of the tenants had little actual effect. Allowing them to "participate" was really a way of conditioning them to their new environment. The tenants were not consulted about the most prominent feature of Erskine's design — the huge "Byker Wall." In fact, many of them dissociate themselves from it by telling outsiders that, in spite of the wall, Byker is beautiful on the inner side.<sup>269</sup>

Otto Bartning had designed large, defensively laid-out rows of housing in the 1920s (e.g. the Siemens-Stadt in Berlin), and in 1978 Erskine also used this sort of plan in a project for a housing development in northern Canada (figure 491). The wall — certainly the dominant element in the planning of the Byker complex — offers protection from the north winds and from the noise of expressway traffic. On the side facing the street, the wall has a closed appearance that departs from the customary welcoming gesture of historical architecture. However, on the inner side it is open, friendly, bright, and cheerful. The "crow's nest" balconies and the wooden arcades contrast with the closed brick surface of the wall to create an air of improvisation and chance arrangement. The blue hoods on the rooftops, the green and pink wooden railings, and the vermilion and blue girders of the arcades animate the muted brick-red of the facade. These colorful elements look like the results of some giant do-it-yourself enterprise, but in fact their formal characteristics were carefully calculated, as were the now free, now more rigid pattern in the bricks of the facade. The closed, uniform street facade provides a continuous foil for the perception of the fragmented and friendly inner wall.

The Byker Wall may seem to show the effects of the tenants' participation; however, the involvement of the user does not, in itself, produce architecture. This attempt at enabling the future inhabitants to take over part of the architect's role actually confirmed the architect's primacy in initiating a design and in making actual decisions. The "participatory" architecture of Byker is a style, a formal language, and not the reflection of true participation. The "hand-made" wooden structures are a fiction created by Erskine.

#### Lucien Kroll

No other architect has explored the participation of the inhabitants in the creation of architecture as exhaustively as the Belgian Lucien Kroll. In his writings,<sup>270</sup> Kroll reports on

Ralph Erskine  
Byker housing project  
Newcastle-upon-Tyne  
1970–1980

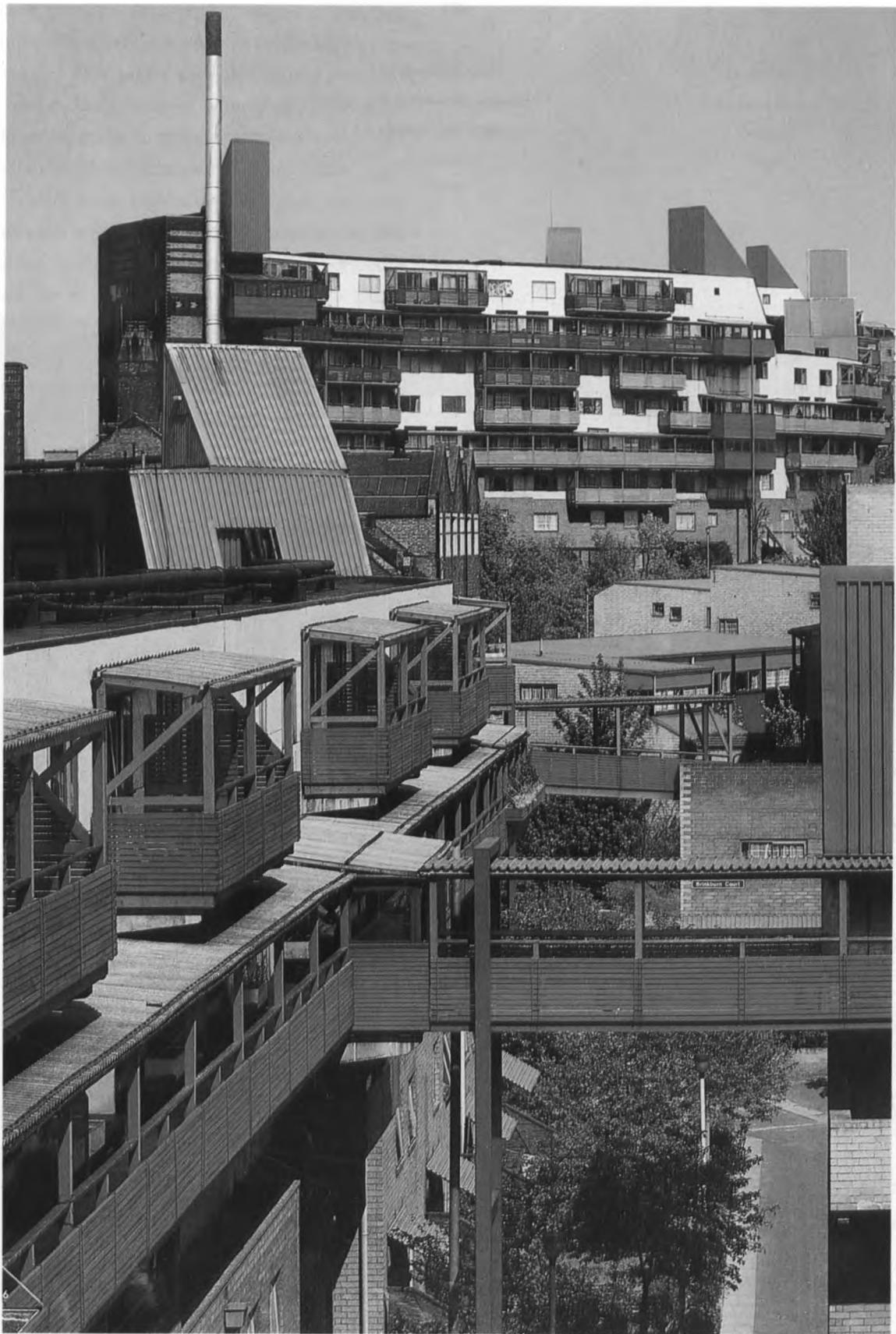


489

**Detail of Byker Wall**



386



490

**View of Byker Wall**

Ralph Erskine  
Housing development  
Resolute Bay, Canada  
(project)  
1978



several projects in which the architect learned a great deal from the future inhabitants. Yet even in Kroll's case it cannot be overlooked how much a specific formal repertoire determines the ultimate look of a building. What Kroll was actually seeking was a mode of expression in which democratization could be articulated in formal terms.

With the Antoine house (figures 492, 493) Kroll was trying to break down the stereotype of the basic form of the one-family dwelling and to establish, through an unorthodox interpretation, an unequivocal individuality. The abrupt changes from red brick to concrete blocks set the unity of the wall, and indeed that of the entire building, in question. On one side, the tiled roof continues down over a truncated corner and onto the facade, where it overlaps one corner of a window. An unexpected freedom of the individual elements seems to threaten the whole with disruption, even chaos. Yet the roof clamps everything together from above. All this is accomplished with simple means.

Kroll operates on the other side of all conventions. Allusions to the historical meanings of forms are completely absent from his works. Instead, he keeps at hand a very simple vocabulary that derives its meanings from differences in materials, from fragmentation, and from the free handling of individual forms. The results are unpretentious, almost banal; they are saved from becoming Philistine by the suggestion of improvisation that results from the use of clashing materials and the fragmentation of details. But something fundamental is at stake here: Kroll is attacking perfection.

With his now-famous residence for medical students at the University of Louvain, Kroll brought the participation of the users to a very high level. Besides wanting to familiarize himself with the specific conditions of the place and with a group of the prospective inhabitants, he wanted to use the students' suggestions as a means of underlying the rigid bureaucracy he knew he would have to deal with. (Kroll once wrote into a contract proposal the requirement that, once a week, a red carpet was to be rolled out between his office and the building site. His intention was to satirize the bureaucrats' power plays and their long lists of requirements and regulations. As expected, the proposal came back signed, without objections. Kroll believes that this humorous approach may unsettle the Building Department more than a whole series of successful legal challenges.<sup>271)</sup>

Kroll also encourages co-determination within his firm. He allows his thirteen colleagues to work in independent groups,<sup>272</sup> where they can be questioned directly by their collaborators. In the case of the Louvain dormitory, the carpenters were allowed to contribute to the ornamentation. Worker-designed elements such as the grotesque statues shown in figure 495 are not only a bow in the direction of handicrafts and improvisation; they are also arguments against technocracy and perfection — against the systemati-

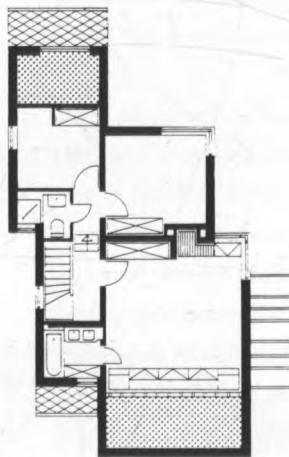
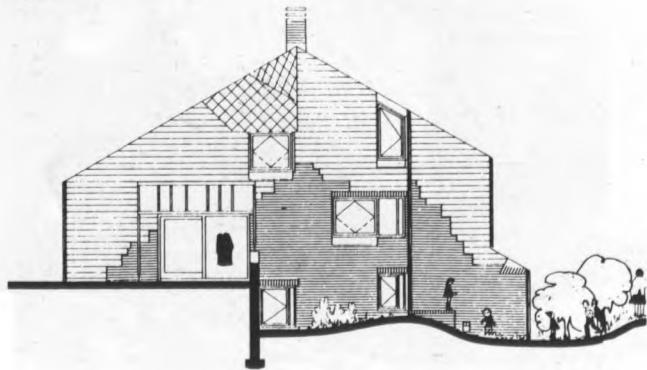
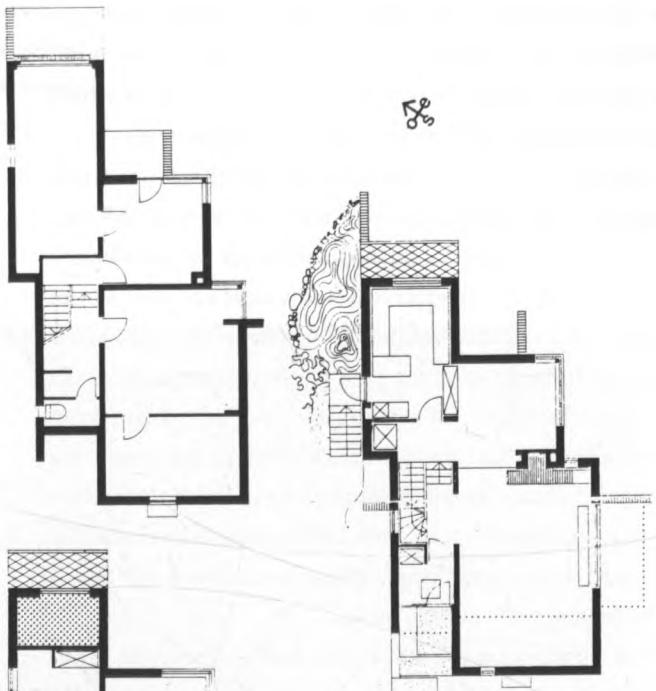
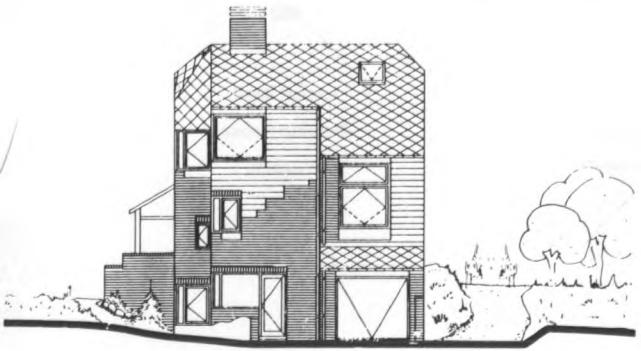
**Lucien Kroll**

**Antoine house**

Brussels

1980

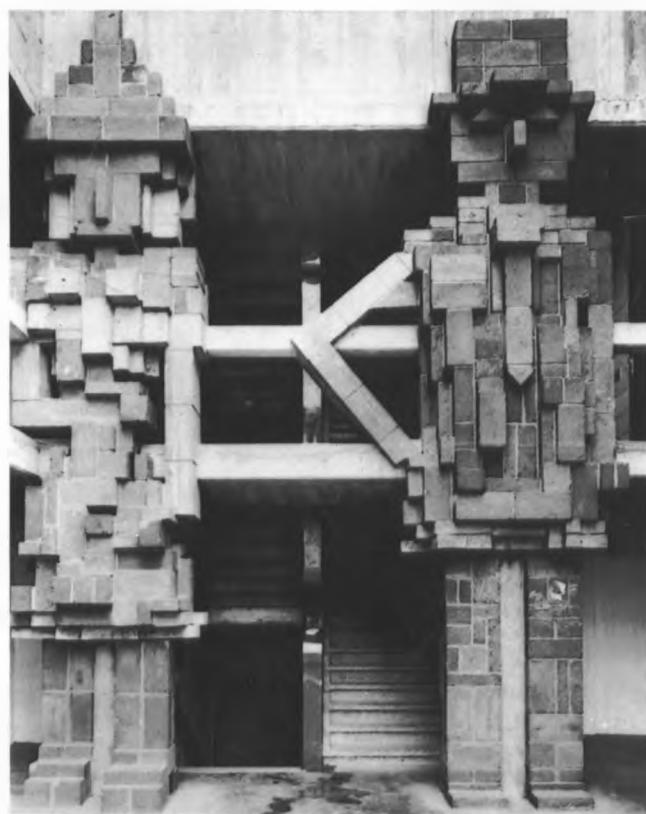




493

Lucien Kroll  
Drawings for Antoine house

Lucien Kroll  
Dormitory for medical students  
University of Louvain  
1974–1976



zation that had been on the march ever since Brunelleschi's orphanage in Florence and that, with the advent of prefabrication, had reached the point where not one irregular joint was considered allowable.

Kroll was striving to find architectural forms that would be consonant with his opposition to bureaucracy, technical perfection, functionalism, and pre-programming. The traditional language of historical architecture did not offer a fitting vocabulary. A capital turned on its head, or any other such mannerist capriccio, was out of the question, since playing with an order is predicated on one's acceptance of it. In spontaneity Kroll sought the elemental and the culturally unfettered, and thus the details of his buildings approach the formal range of expressionism.

The facades of the Louvain dormitory look as if a storm has blown away parts of the siding. Never before had such a large building looked so much like a temporary shack pieced together from salvaged scrap. Windows of many different sizes and styles were combined in a free improvisation with wooden wall elements and with parts and fragments of plastic, concrete, and brick in such a way that only with the greatest difficulty could one see the building as a unified whole. Several of the shingled areas seem to have lost a few shingles, but even this is the architect's doing — he was intent on creating the impression of something incomplete and run-down rather than something smooth, flawless, aseptic, and untouchable. Part of the facade was treated in an "ordinary" manner, as a reminder of the norm, and a number of rooms were strung in a regular, numbered row, as in a hotel. This bit of normality in the midst of upheaval was called "la Fachiste" by the students who were involved in the participatory process — this was where the students who were not interested in participation could live. Yet even the "participating" students did not participate in the actual fashioning of the facade. Therefore, it cannot be called a direct result of co-determination; rather, it should be understood as a symbolization of participation.

Kroll's buildings make visible the ongoing opposition between the logically conclusive and the irrational and uncontrollable. They represent a coup in which the emotional sphere, held in extremely low esteem within a discipline ruled by calculation and reason, achieves a higher importance and asks to be perceived and made comprehensible. The acclaimed virtues, which through their one-sidedness turn into vices, are set in question. Only through monstrosity does the totally Other, the disdained and neglected part of reality, claim recognition. The oppressed and repressed elements must draw notice to themselves by drastic means. The significance of Kroll's buildings goes beyond the realm of architecture — these buildings are warnings about the obsessive pursuit of efficiency.

Kroll's point of departure was the fact that all human beings are different:

Today are built everywhere average apartments for average people. I have figured out that, for instance, in Belgium there are at the most 50 average Belgians, and that is why [at the University of Louvain] we have built each apartment in a different way and finished it differently. Some motivated students have designed their apartments themselves; there was an American student who was very tall. He designed an apartment that deviated from every normal standard — the floor space was very small, 2.4 meters by 2.7 meters, but over 7 meters high and with split levels. We got this crazy apartment built, and wanted to see what happened when the apartment had to be sublet to others. To our surprise, five students eagerly applied for this apartment.<sup>273</sup>

#### Frank Gehry: The Problematic Whole

Frank Gehry's own house, situated on a corner in a middle-class section of Santa Monica, California, is a surprising sight to passersby. From the front, one first notices an enclosure of corrugated iron and chain-link fence, which looks as if it is hiding a house that is still under construction. Inside this enclosure one discovers a small house with pink asbestos siding, a dark green shingled roof, and a red brick chimney. It becomes apparent that the enclosure is actually an extension of the house. The windows in the corrugated iron enclosure, the subtle arrangement of the chain-link fencing, the strange glass corner, and the border of grass around the wall of the front yard are signs that the house is indeed finished and inhabited, and that it is the result of an architectonic design. Yet "accidents" abound. The front steps seem to have been simply tossed where they lie, and the topmost slab has "pushed" the doorway into the wall at an angle. Large glass prisms seem to have been accidentally dropped into the extension. In the rear, a portion of the roof hangs at a slant. The house has been turned into a drama of architectonic instability.

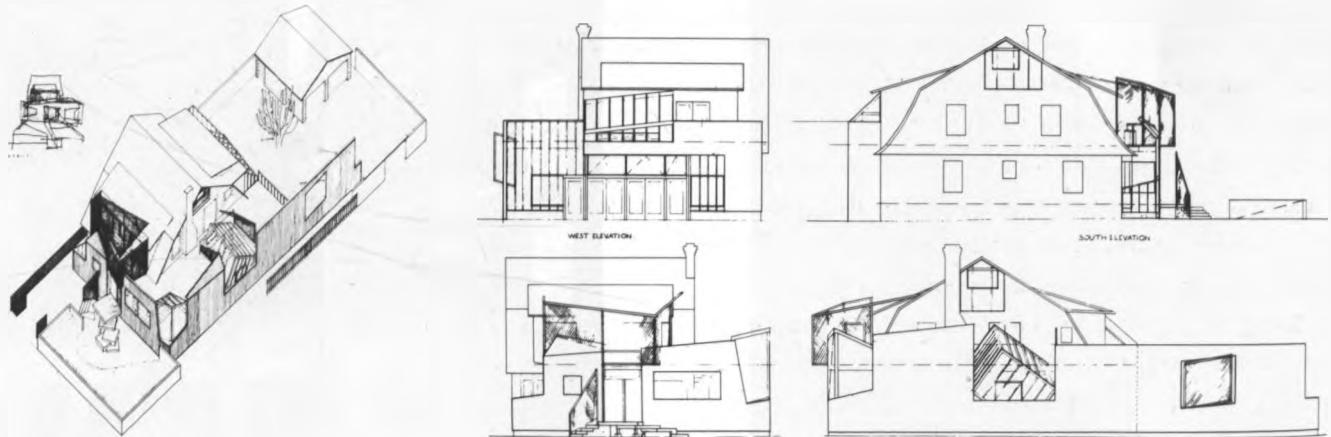
The contrast between the old and the new portion of Gehry's house could not be more pronounced. And yet, the addition emphasizes and even ennobles the modest old cottage. Gehry has said: "I got fascinated with the idea that the old house should appear to remain totally intact from the outside, and that you could look through the new house and see the old house as though it was not packaged in this new skin. The new skin and the windows in the new house would be of a totally different aesthetic than the windows in the old house."<sup>274</sup>

The goal of all the tactics that Gehry used in designing his house was to present the building as unfinished and provisional. The glass cubes, seemingly dropped from above and placed precariously aslant, contradict any notion of architec-



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**Frank Gehry**  
**House of the architect**  
**Santa Monica, California**  
**1978–79**



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tural stability, and the corrugated iron wall appears to have been improvised with no thought of order. In contrast, the old cottage stands secure and intact within the junky new shack. The shack is built of the cheapest materials, and their banality is fully expressed in that they are neither finished nor even treated. "I think," Gehry said, "that of necessity we're probably going to have to build cheaper and cheaper — at least I will with the clients I have. Maybe there's some relevance in terms of the economy now — in terms of understanding that things don't have to be quite so completely finished, and they have a value in terms of livability, in terms of people being able to bang nails in the wall."<sup>275</sup>

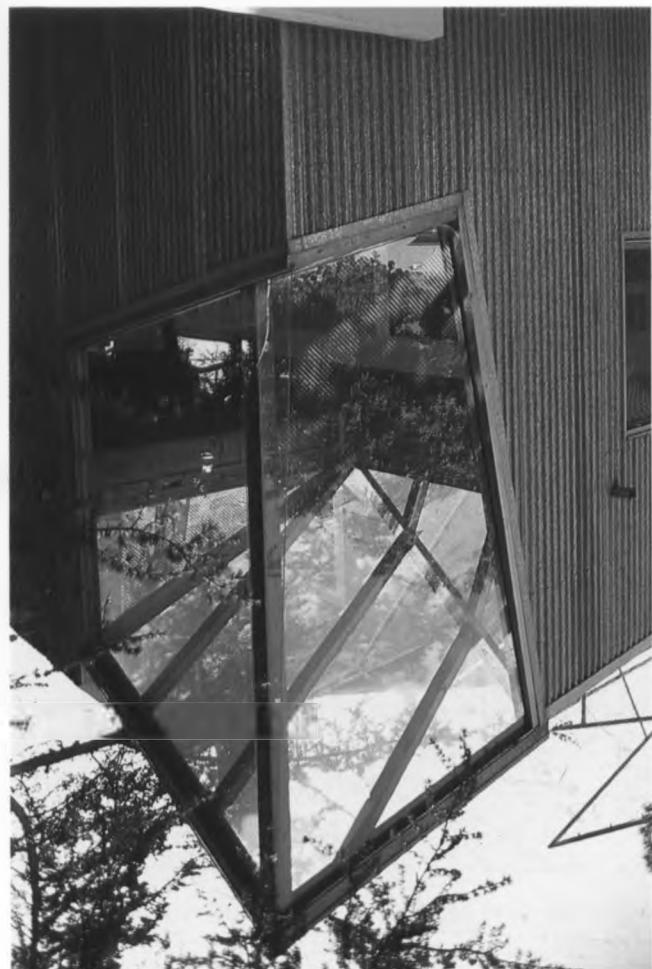
Gehry called for a new attitude on the part of architects, an attitude such that the process of building would no longer be entirely controlled by plans and drawings: "The process of doing architecture is to work through a set of ideas, a set of finished drawings, and give them to the field for construction. Everything's got to be on that drawing, or else you get killed with extras. So process forces a kind of precision. I can see why architecture tends to be so precise and finished, because the idea of building in the unfinished is very much against the system of building, unless you get out there, and work hands-on with the materials. It is something I've been urging students to do, rather than go to work with a big office and become cynical in two years. It would be much better, I think, to go into the field, and build hands-on. It's a more positive and optimistic kind of attitude about work."<sup>276</sup>

Inherent in all of Gehry's buildings is the directness of the handmade. Gehry likes to compare architecture to sculpture, and he often refers to such artists as Judd and Pollock. His aim is to articulate visually — through handwork, in particular — that character of the production process that is lost in technical manufacture. "I guess," he has said, "I was interested in the unfinished — Jackson Pollock, for instance, or de Kooning, or Cezanne, that look like the paint was just applied. The very finished, polished, every-detail-perfect kind of architecture seemed to me not to have that quality. I wanted to try that out in a building. The obvious way to go about it was the wood studs, the unfinished wood studs. We all like buildings in construction better than we do finished — I think most of us agree on that. The structure is always so much more poetic than the finished thing that I started working with the studs exposed, and leaving them that way . . ."<sup>277</sup> Though some may see in this symptoms of a relapse into the atavism of the pre-industrial epoch, what is really at stake is the need not to lose all traces of human spontaneity. Whereas the Op artists wanted to compete with technical perfection, Gehry has begun to formulate an alternative to technical perfection that permits fictions of subjectivity and imperfection in buildings.

Gehry has stated his own position and explained how it differs from that of Venturi: "[Venturi is] into kind of a story,

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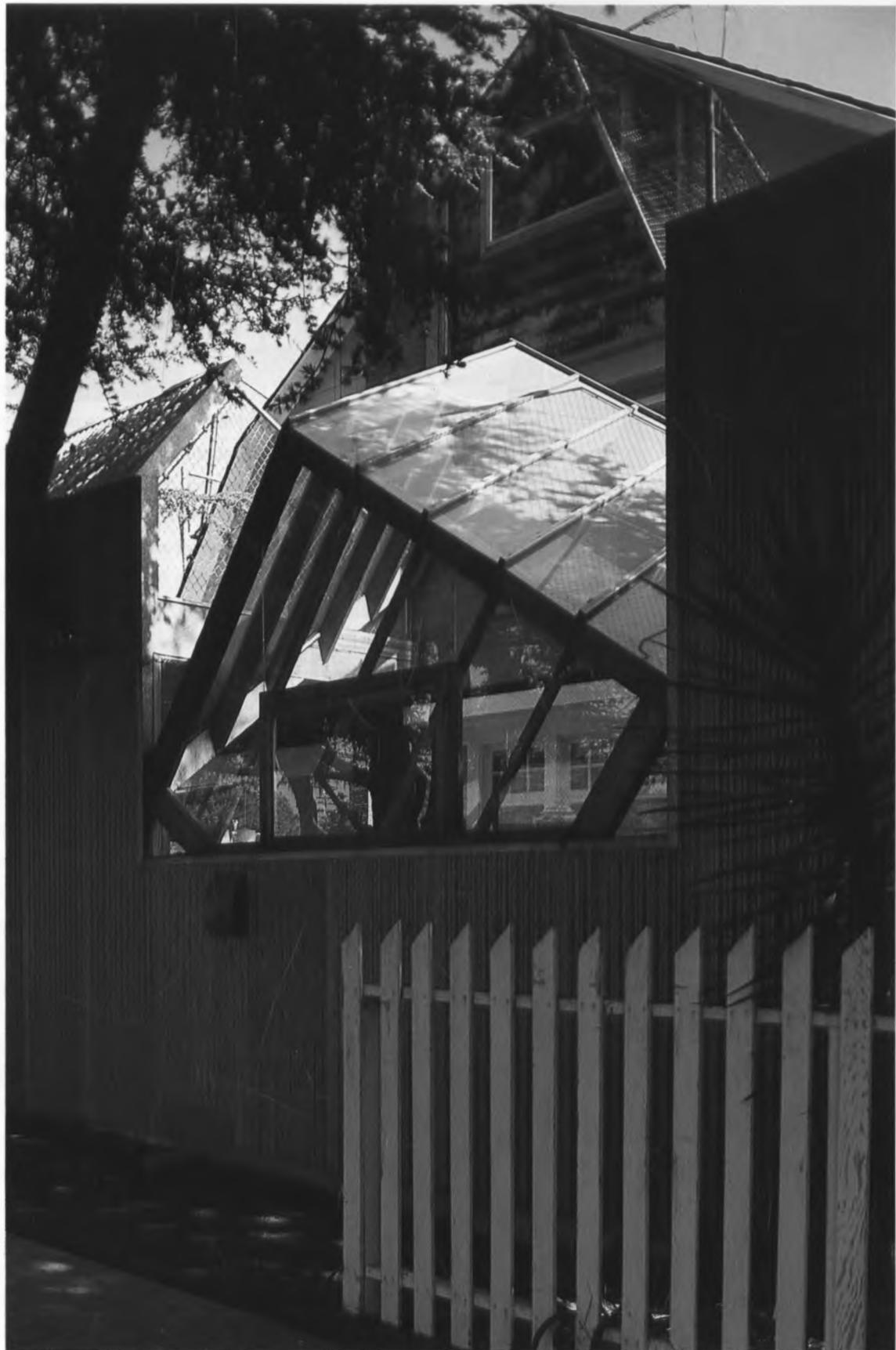




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504



505

a verbal polemic. . . . I'm really interested in this hands-on thing and not in telling stories. . . ."<sup>278</sup> Ultimately, however, Gehry is telling stories — but they are stories of another kind. Gehry does not resort to a historically given vocabulary, and he is not as directly engaged in a controversy with modernism. He succeeds in achieving an expressive rendering of improvisation, and of the temporary, the unfinished, and the jumbled together, through narrative illustration. It seems that Gehry has opened up a wide range of new possibilities.

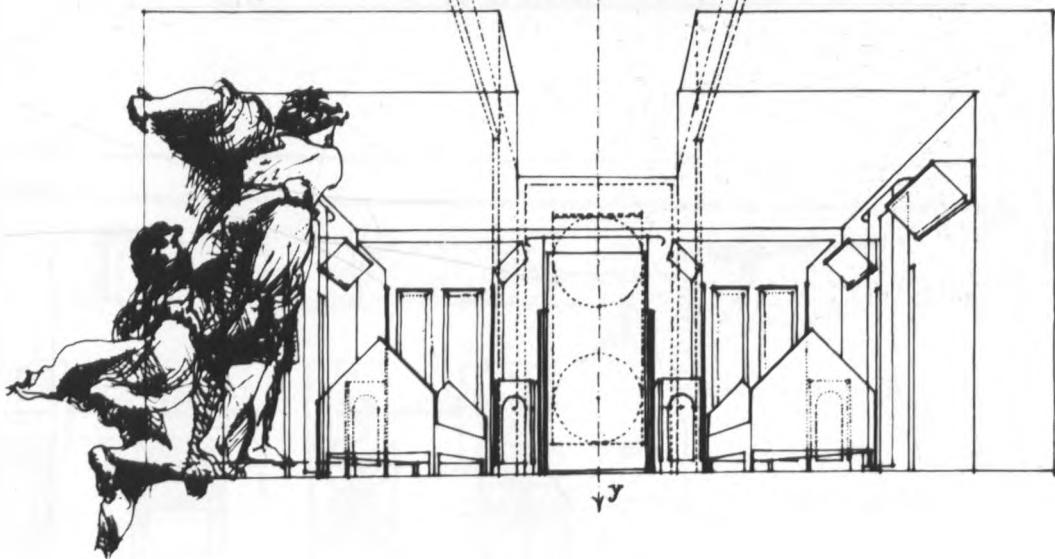
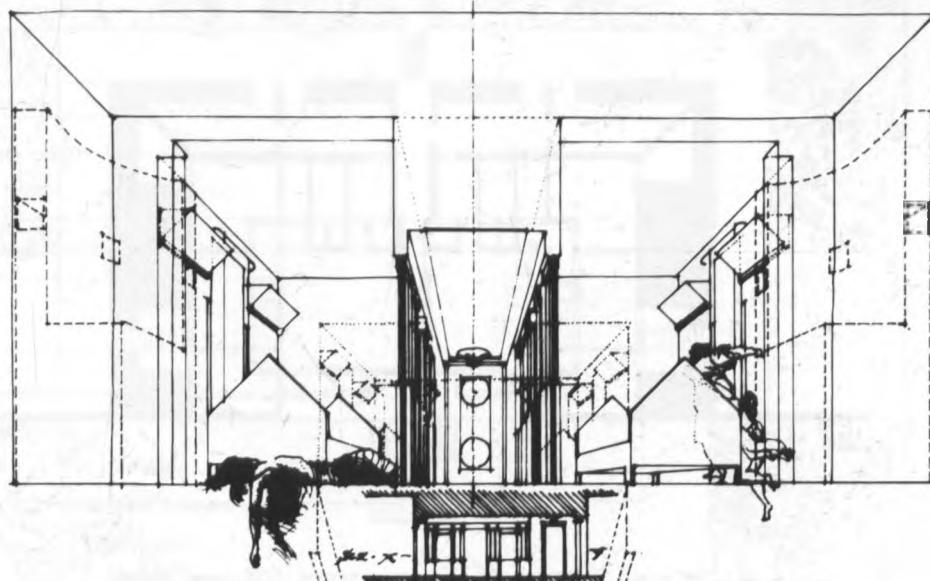
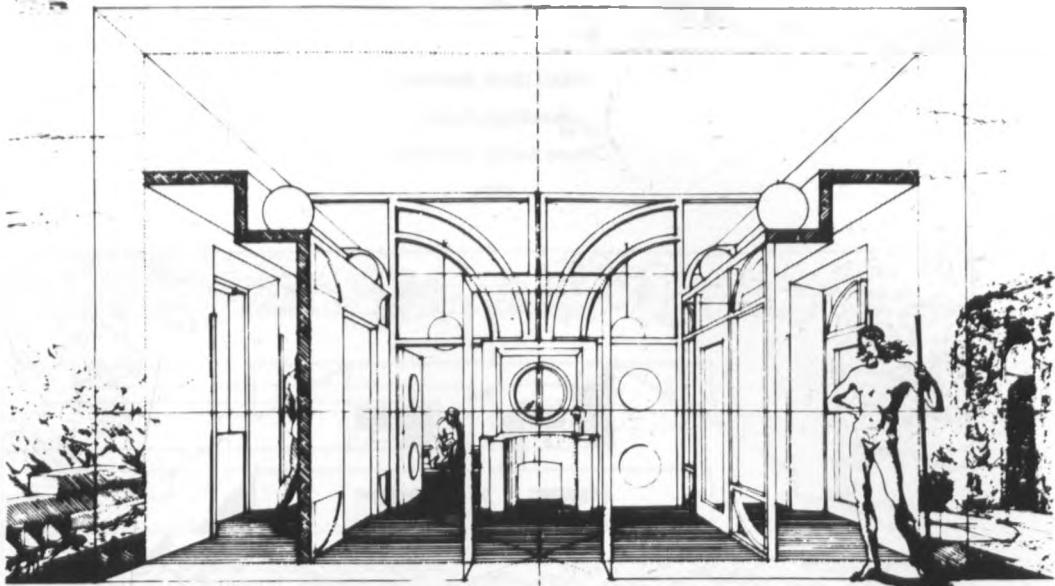
#### ARCHITECTURE ON PAPER

In light of the existence of a new architecture that allows the representation of contents, it is not surprising that many architects began to use drawings as a medium for the development of a representational sphere extending beyond building. Those who derided drawings created in this vein as impractical and unrealizable were missing the point that such drawings were better suited than realizable ones to the expression of far-reaching ideas. With the advent of a new "architecture of drawings," architecture was freed from its restriction to the practically realizable; now it was again an avenue for the manifestation of visions and dreams.

#### GRAU

The enrichment of the architectural drawing with historically identifiable human figures began with GRAU (Gruppo Romano Architetti Urbanisti), who used the classical tradition to draw attention to the history of architecture. In GRAU's 1967 design for the restoration of the villa of Cardinal Chigi (figure 506) there appear a number of human figures derived from Renaissance prototypes. Here is evidence of a new joy in narrative depiction. This was the first appearance in a present-day architectural drawing of people not belonging to the present era, and the first appearance of people with a role other than the merely functional one of "animating figures" (such as a mother with a pram, or a man with a dog).

The architects of GRAU were innovative in many respects, even though their executed buildings are marked by an almost eccentric geometrism. The 1964 drawing reproduced here as figure 507 shows an aesthetization unusual for that time. The combination of a strictly symmetrical ground plan with an equally symmetrical front view, both framed with foliage, was novel and unusual. This form of representation is still in use today. Other GRAU designs that sympathize with historical motifs are reproduced here as figures 508–511. The drawings for the park at Lecce reproduce literally the classical capitals, and the rather classical garden is lined with various symbols, including ground reliefs of Athena. Figure 511 recalls the renderings of French Revolutionary architec-



506

GRAU

Villa of Cardinal Chigi

Ariccia, Rome

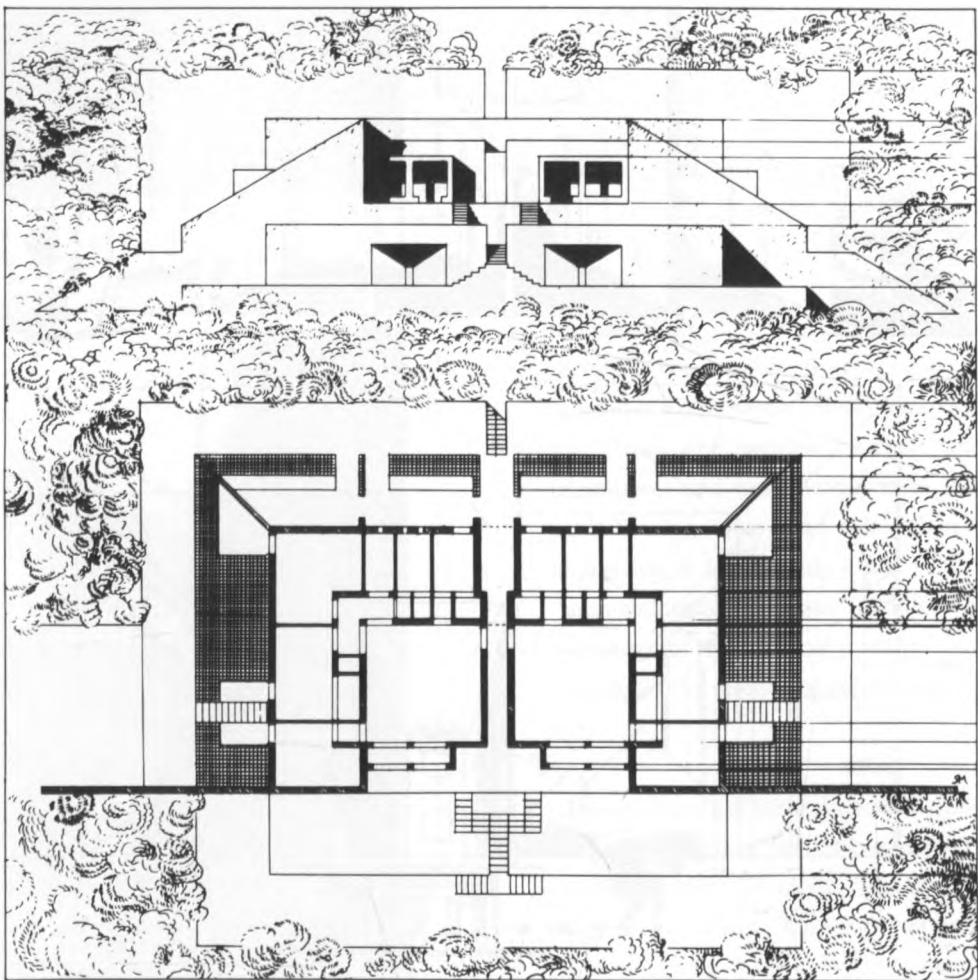
1967

GRAU (Erol, Mariotti)

Lancillotto house

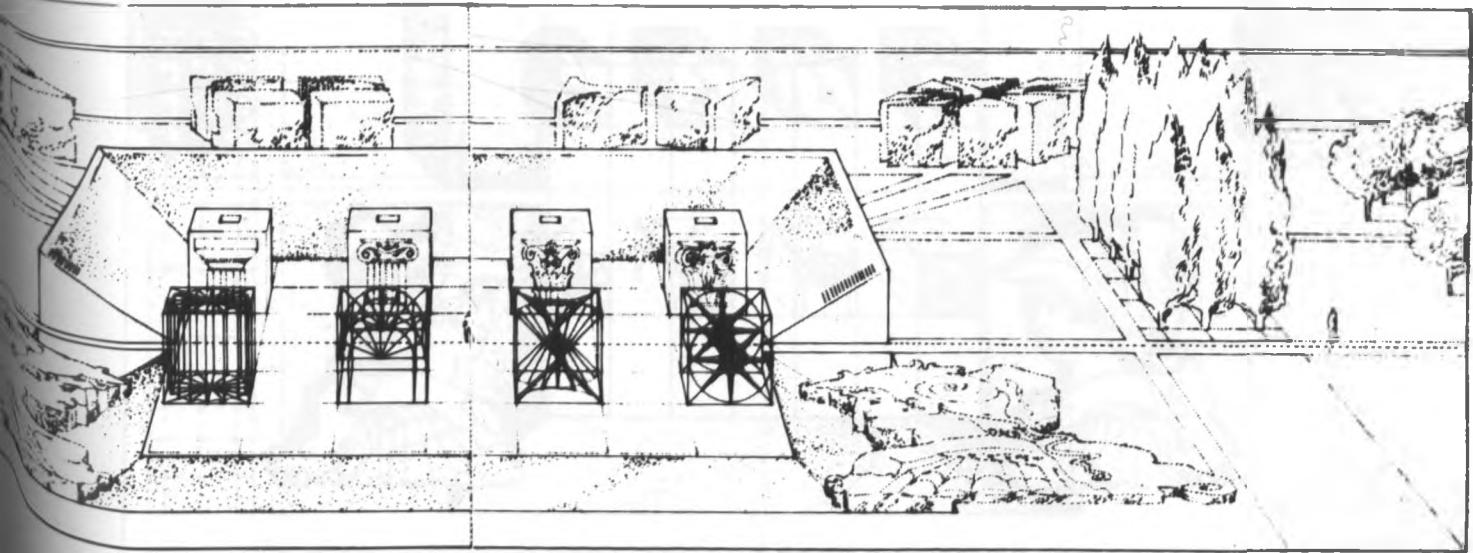
Porto Ercole, Grosseto

1964



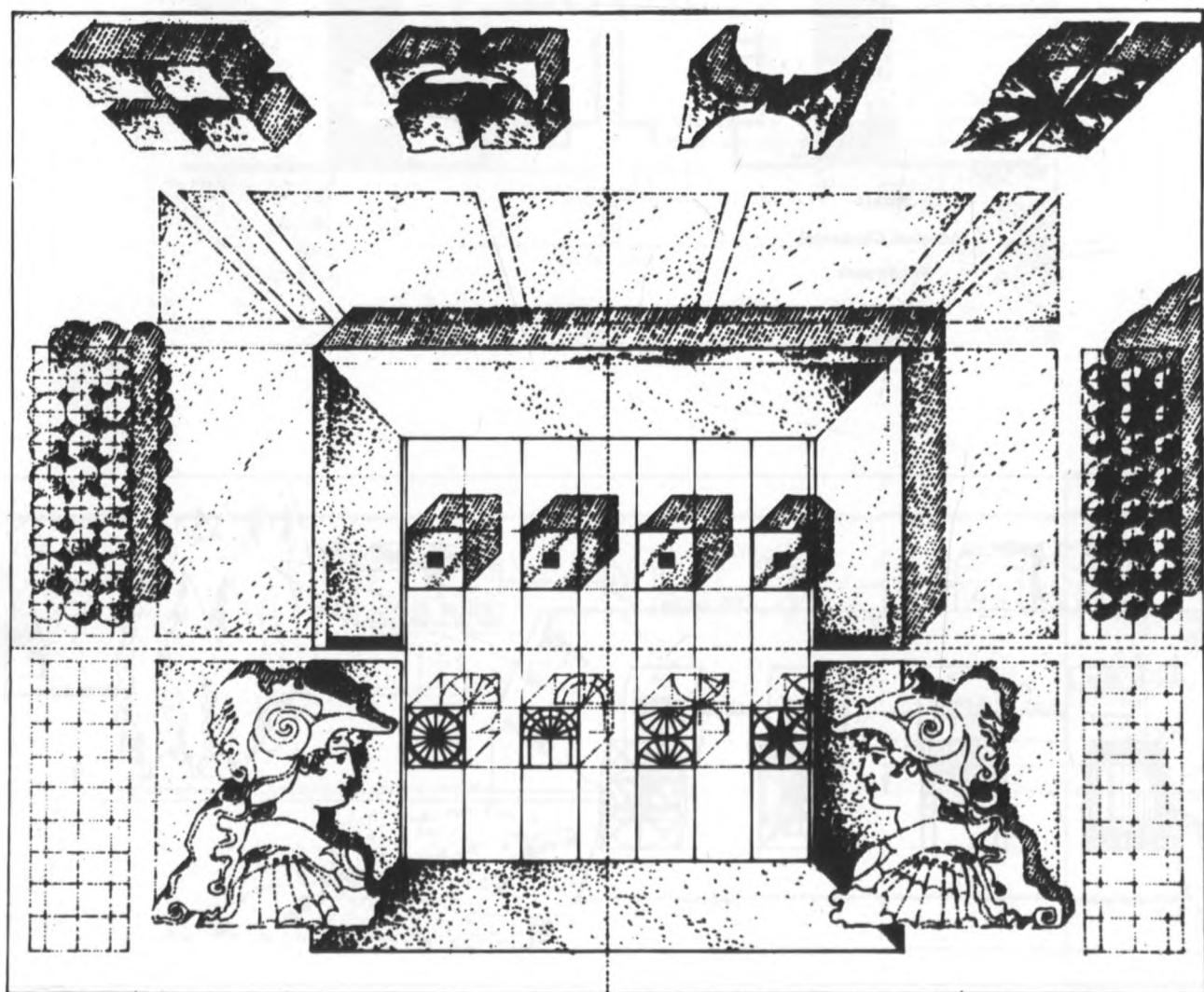
508

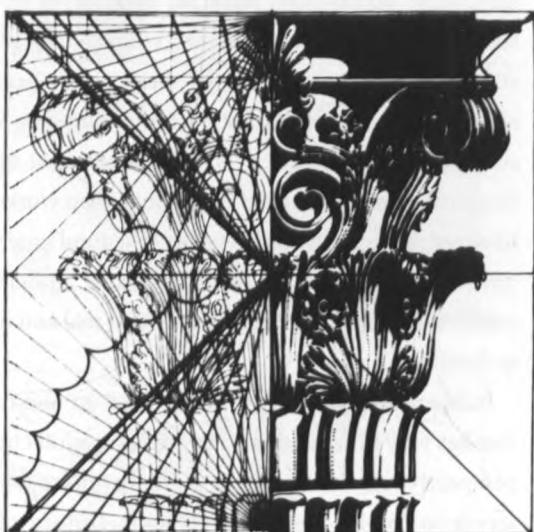
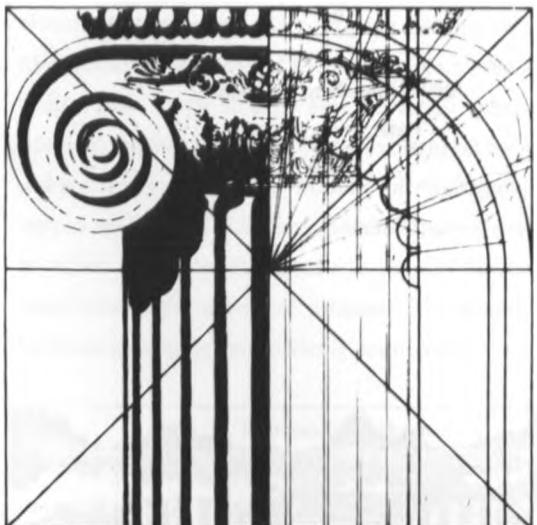
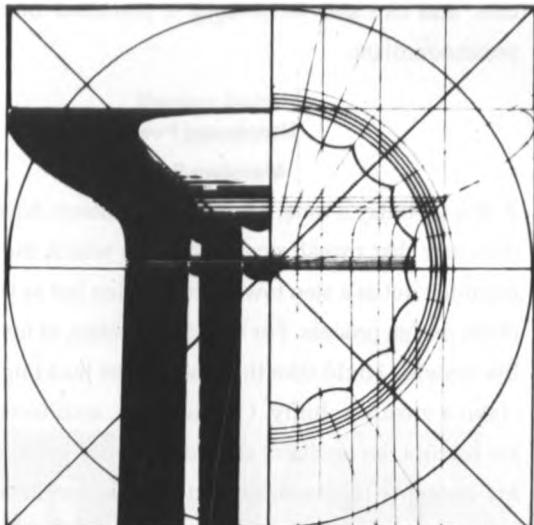
**GRAU**  
**(Anselmi, Chiatante)**  
**Public park**  
**Lecce**  
**1979**



GRAU (Anselmi, Chiatante)

Drawing for park in Lecce





510

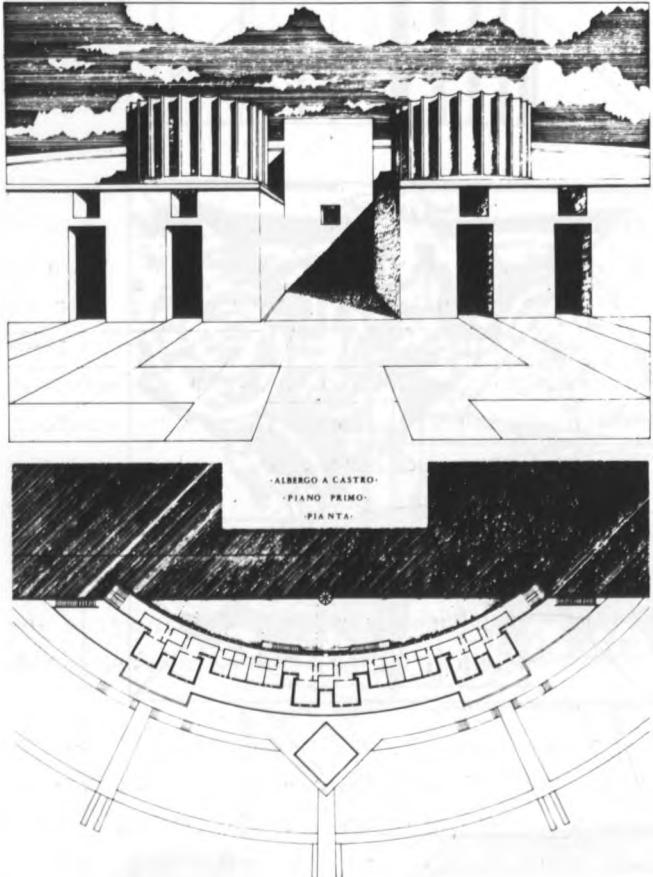
GRAU (Anselmi, Chiattante)

Drawing for park in Lecce

GRAU (Chiattante, Genovese)

Hotel, Lecce (project)

1969



ture, and can also be seen as a precursor of neoclassical postmodernism.

#### Utopia and Poetry:

**Massimo Scolari**

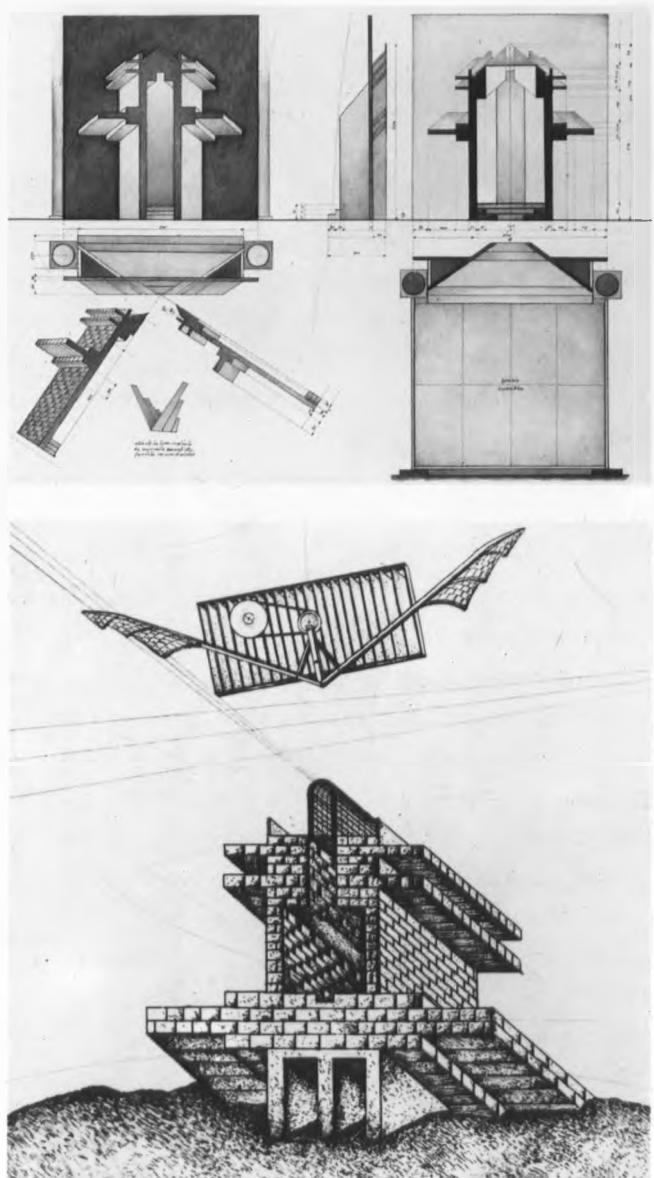
A few of today's most important architects have produced drawings that reveal a conception in which the drawing is intended not as a step toward realization but as the final goal of the design process. For Massimo Scolari, as for Leon Krier, the drawing could take the place of the building, and could claim a greatly validity. On this view, architects who build are corrupt; an architect should not build but should record his concepts in drawings. Building is dominated by local bureaucracies, and corporations lack true interest in architecture. Krier and Scolari have set themselves up against "a society of thieves and murderers, who are the only ones who still have money for building." Krier says: "I can create architecture because I am not building. I am not building because I am an architect."<sup>279</sup> With paradoxical statements of this sort, Krier and Scolari (who have often worked together) have retired from the practical architectural enterprise. They have switched over to the medium of drawing, through which they hope to be able to represent real and uncorrupted architecture.

In his drawings, Scolari has created an alternative world that has very little in common with real architecture. His non-perspective renderings make it nearly impossible for the observer to fix the building's position. Instead of aligning a drawing in relation to a vanishing point and a center of vision, Scolari produces an "isometric reality"; in his pictures, he says, "one can see how the perspective is gradually getting lost." As a result of this approach the objects in Scolari's pictures seem to be in an unreal state of flotation. (See, for example, figure 512.)

In many of Scolari's drawings, architectural pieces turn into airborne objects that resemble primitive flying machines. (See figure 513.) On this subject, Scolari notes: "It is very interesting for me to see that today's technology of space travel produces machines that depart from the machines enclosed in a body, from the encapsulated airplanes where everything remains hidden; meanwhile, from the capsules have been emerging strange bars, wings, and solar panels that remind us of the early airplanes.... On the one hand, flying is the deed of Icarus, who happened to crash but nevertheless stood at the beginning of progress. And on the other hand, flying is a symbol for escaping the force of gravity completely someday. The loss of gravity also means that one has no fixed position anymore, that one also has no perspective any longer."<sup>280</sup>

Scolari's "little poetic worlds" are anti-technological utopias that question the modern faith in architectural and social progress. These are not designs for the future but poetic

**Massimo Scolari**  
**Gate for**  
**Venice Biennale**  
**1980**



513

**Massimo Scolari**  
**Engraving**  
**1969**

alternatives to reality. The utopian dreams of the Japanese Metabolists, and those of the successors to Wachsmann and Fuller, now have strange and powerful competition from poetic conceits. Utopia is being exchanged for poetry, technology for lyricism. The fictions of Archigram have given way to the fictions of Scolari. It seems that for a while we have to enlist poetry in the battle to escape the naive faith in machines as the agents of progress. The grand ideas of the technological utopias suddenly seem stale.

#### Raimund Abraham

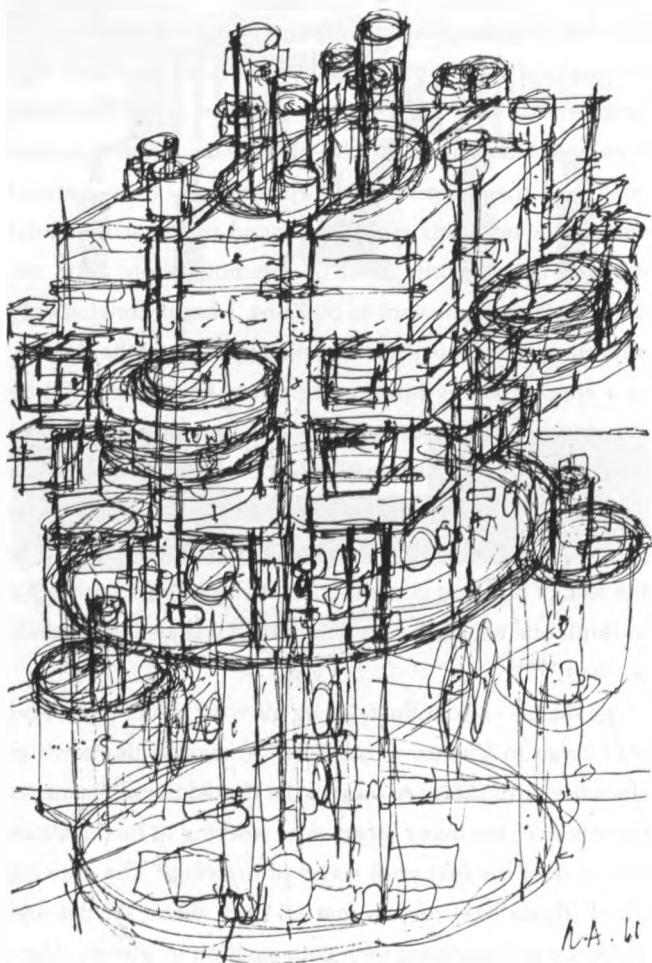
The changing situation is manifested even more drastically in the works of the Austrian architect Raimund Abraham, who now lives in New York. A close adherent of the New York Five and a colleague of John Hejduk on the architecture faculty of the Cooper Union, Abraham is to be counted among the architects who have found in the architectural drawing their favorite form of communication: "For me, drawing is an equivalent to building. I begin drawing only after an architectonic idea is completely ready in the abstract, as a concept in my imagination. Then I begin to build by drawing. . . . And there are many different languages for the realization of an architectural idea. One of the possibilities is the drawing. I am not saying that an architectural drawing is an intermediate product: the result of the frustrations due to the lack of building commissions. It would be a grave error to think one could classify the drawing as an intermediate product."<sup>281</sup>

Abraham — also influenced by his work with Pichler and St. Florian in Vienna — has been producing his drawings since the early 1960s. At least in the United States, he merits priority over the many others now working in this medium by virtue of his first great series of drawings. The drawing Cities (figure 514) reveals that in 1961, when Pichler and Hollein were beginning their collaboration in Vienna, Abraham was already thinking of technological utopias that retained some references to myth rather than being devoted entirely to function or to futurist technology — the cylinders and wheels presented in this drawing as places of human habitation do not point to function as the basis of their form. Unlike the members of Archigram, the Viennese utopians have always acknowledged mystery.

In 1971, Abraham turned completely away from technological utopianism. That was the year he began his Ten Houses series with the House of Curtains (figure 515), a grid-lined cube with its geometric austerity playfully framed by curtains blowing in the wind. Two years later, Abraham gave even stronger expression to the need for poetry in his drawing House with Walls of Flowers, depicting a container with double-glazed walls whose interstices were partially filled with rose petals. In 1976, Abraham incorporated these lyrical images in the triptychon Nine Houses (figures 516–518).

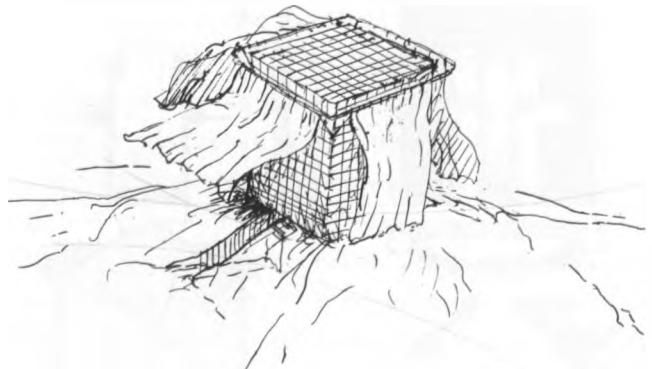
514

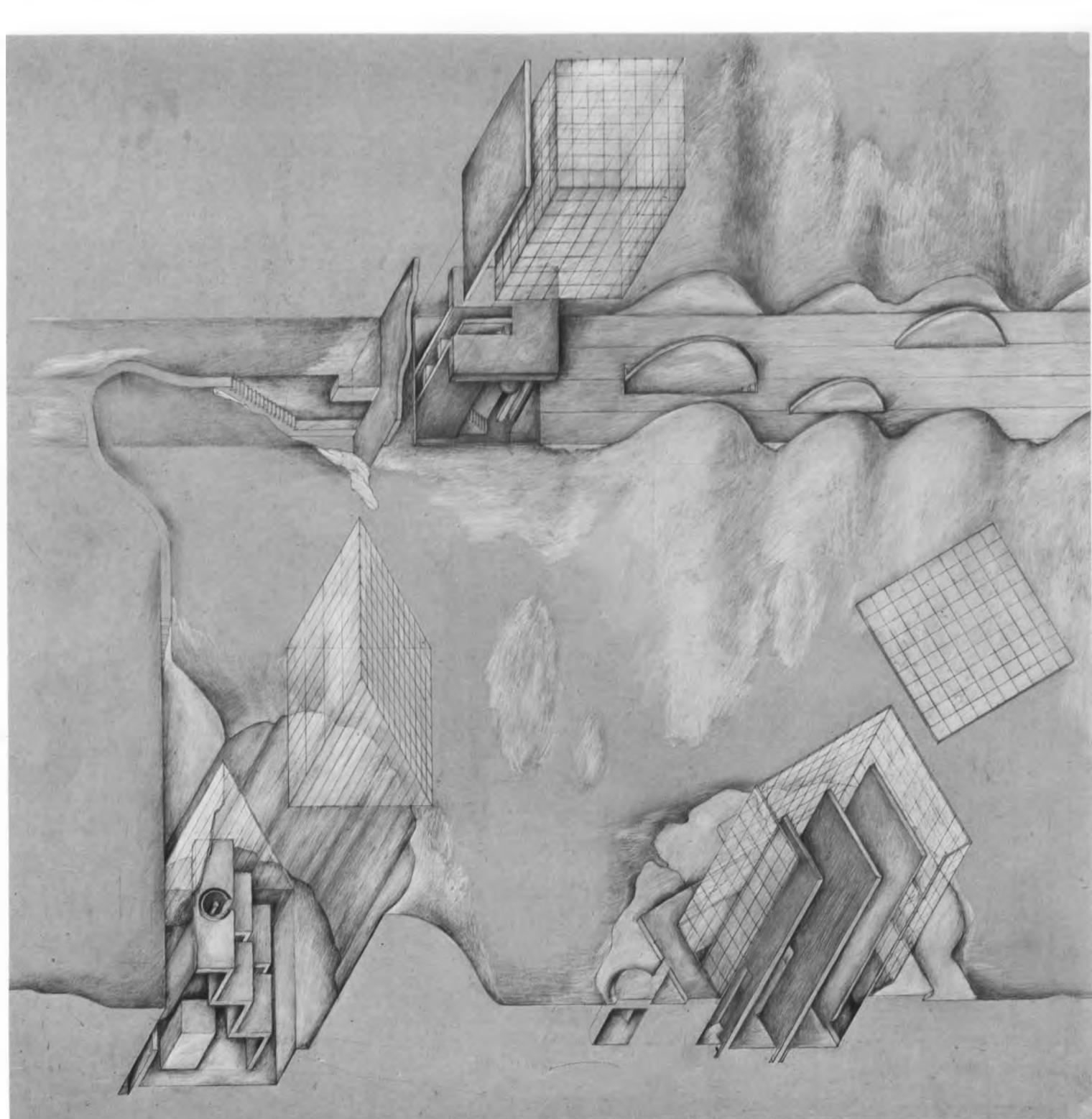
Raimund Abraham  
*Cities*  
1961



515

Raimund Abraham  
*House of Curtains*  
1971





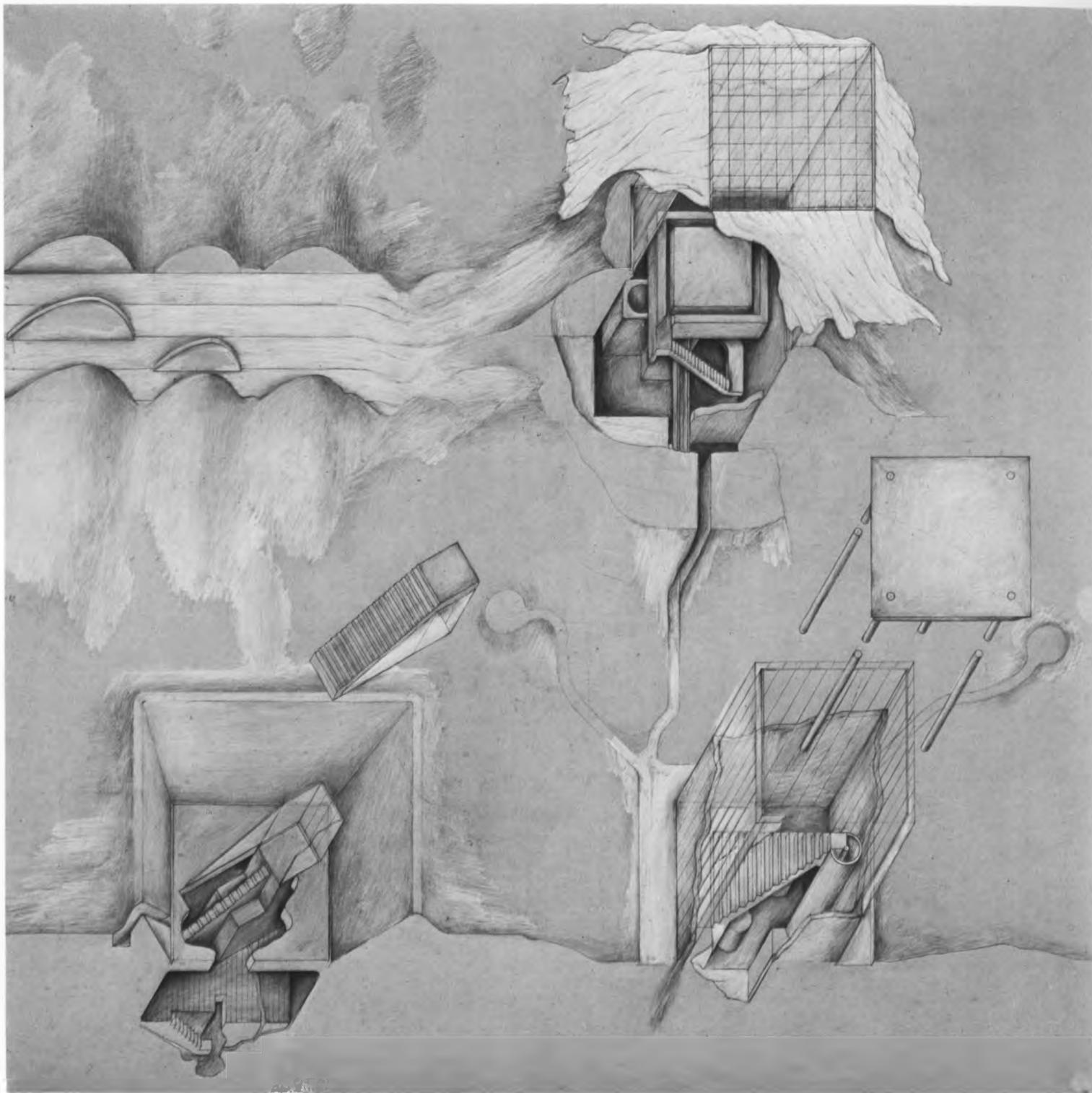
516

Raimund Abraham

*Nine Houses (first panel)*

1976

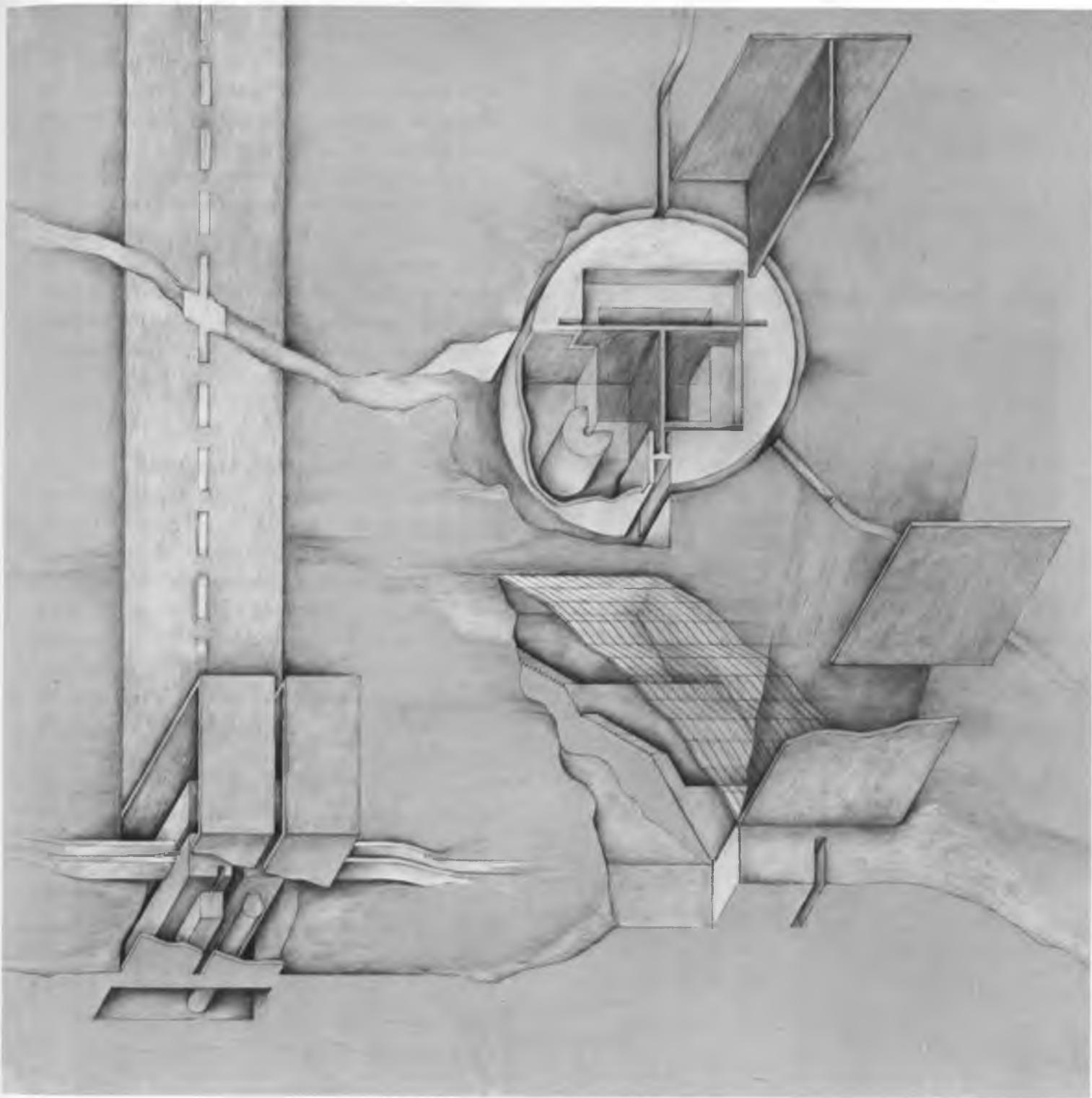
407



517

Raimund Abraham  
*Nine Houses* (second panel)

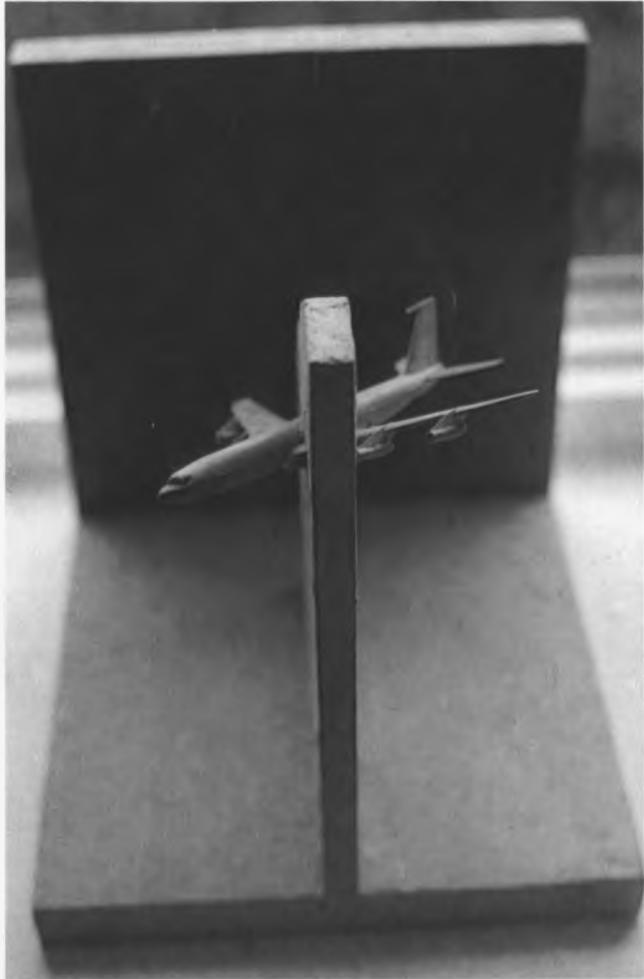
1976



518

Raimund Abraham  
*Nine Houses* (third panel)  
1976

Raimund Abraham  
*Airplane Breaking the Sound Barrier*  
 1982



Abraham's drawings preserve the Viennese tradition of playing off finely graduated hand-drawing against more formal drawing. Like Pichler, Abraham succeeded in maintaining a personal technique of drawing in a period when the mechanical representational methods of Op and Pop had broad influence.

Abraham's sculpture *Airplane Breaking the Sound Barrier* (figure 519) recalls other recent works involving the "freezing" of vehicles, such as Stefan Wewerka's automobile stuck in the Berlin Wall and James Wines's *Ghost Parking Lot* (figure 520). These works are warnings against the fetish of high-speed locomotion; they seem to suggest that machines are good only as symbols of the fact that we are not actually advancing at all.

#### Anti-Utopia:

##### Nils-Ole Lund and Ettore Sottsass

In 1979 the Danish architect Nils-Ole Lund produced a series of sharply critical collages in which buildings such as Stirling's Engineering Building and Kahn's Salk Institute were depicted in decay. Rather than celebrate the architectural monument, with its individual appearance, Lund envisioned it wasted like any other commodity. A short while earlier, the individual architect had seen himself as a demiurge; and with the envisioning of future supercities this role had grown ever more convincing. What Lund did was remind architects that even their most idealistic creations were part of the transience of all things, and of the destruction of the environment as well. Lund's visions suggest that steel frames, concrete cores, mirror surfaces, and plastic facades are not even fit to produce dignified ruins.

Six years earlier, the Italian architect Ettore Sottsass had produced a series of imaginative and humorous lithographs that caricatured utopianism and revealed its penchant for the grotesque. One lithograph (figure 524) showed a number of "bumper cars" driving along, powered through long tentacles by an endless electrified net above the earth's surface. Could this be part of a legitimate dream, part of a healing vision for the world? In another piece (figure 525), Sottsass turned the argument around and set an idyll in contrast with the technological utopia: On a river, against a backdrop of rolling hills, colorful cabins flying flags and bearing the names of the occupants' favorite composers drift along on inflated rubber rafts which have been turned into small green islands. This idyll carries the visionary utopia to the point of absurdity as it also satirizes petit-bourgeois hedonism. In another of the lithographs, a flying saucer is stuck in a gorge (figure 526). But perhaps the most striking of Sottsass's caricatures is the one shown here as figure 527, in which we see the wreckage of Herron's Walking City stuck in mud and about to sink. The primeval forest is already beginning to cover it with growth.

520

SITE (James Wines)

*Ghost Parking Lot*

Hamden Plaza shopping center

Hamden, Connecticut

1978



521

11

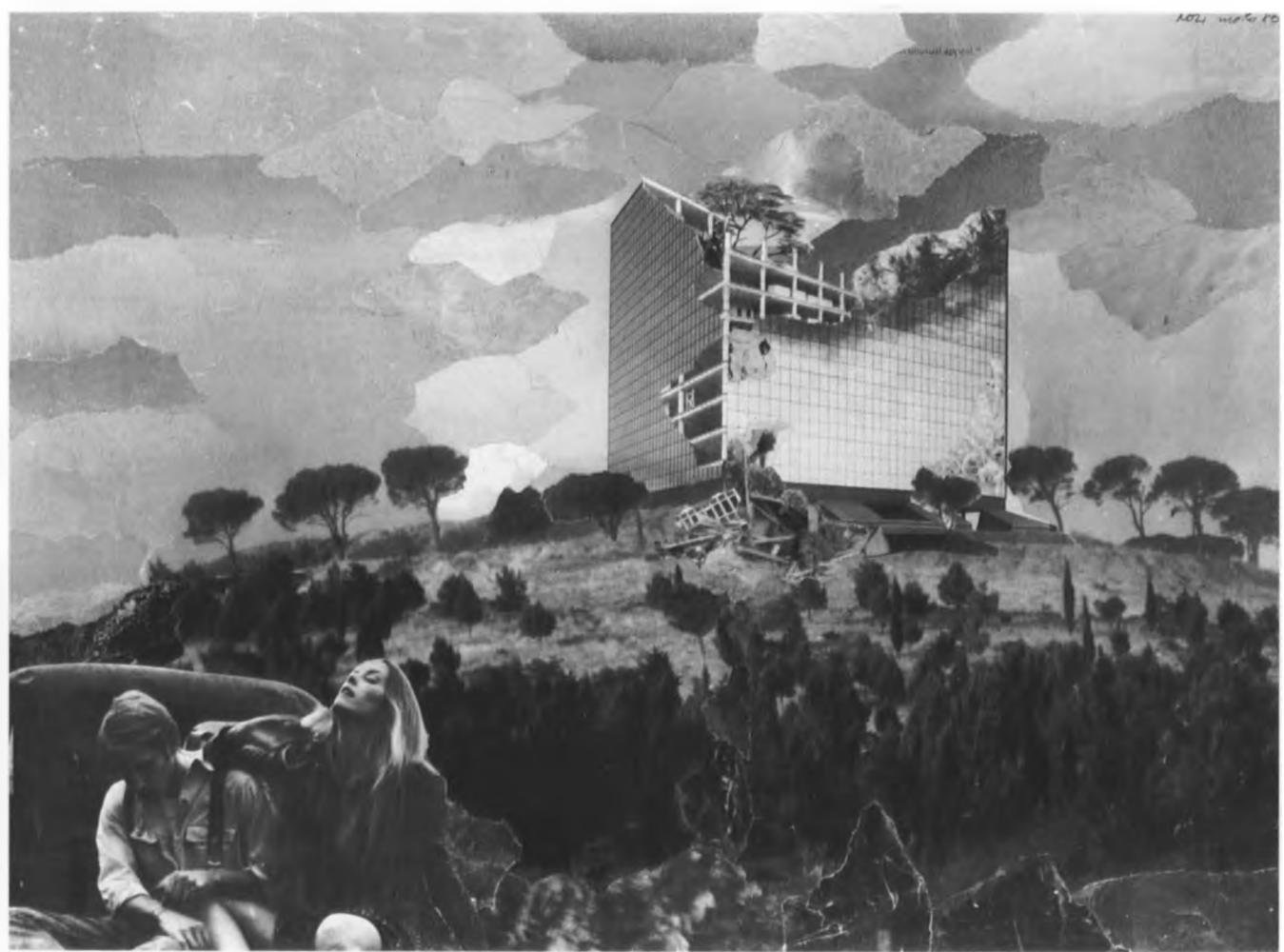
Nils-Ole Lund  
*The Future of Architecture*  
1979

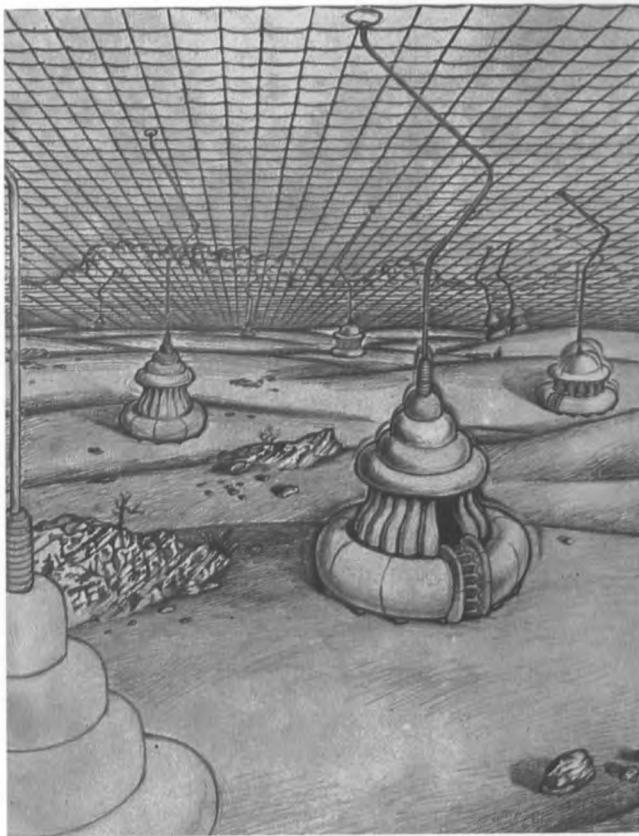


Nils-Ole Lund  
*The Future of Architecture*  
1979



Nils-Ole Lund  
*The Future of Architecture*  
1979



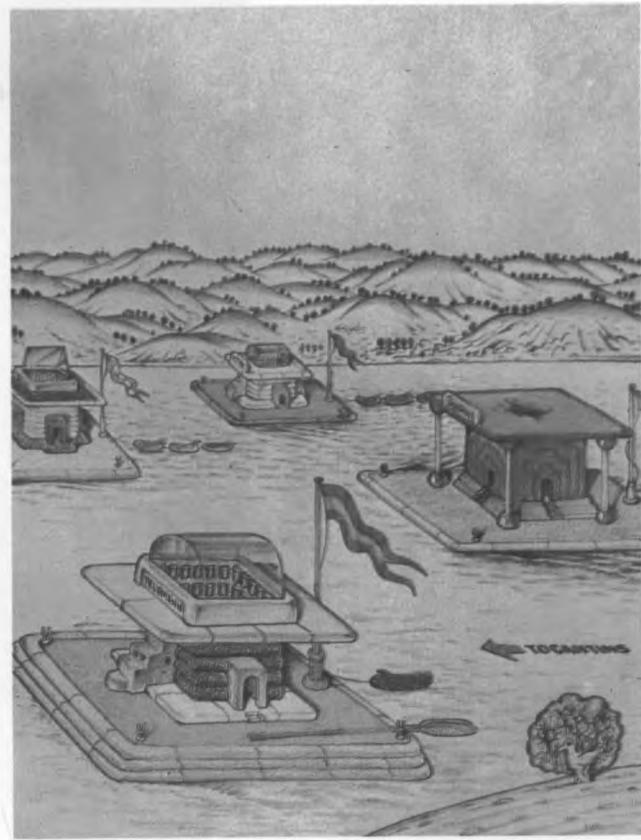


524

Ettore Sottsass

*Another Utopia*

1973

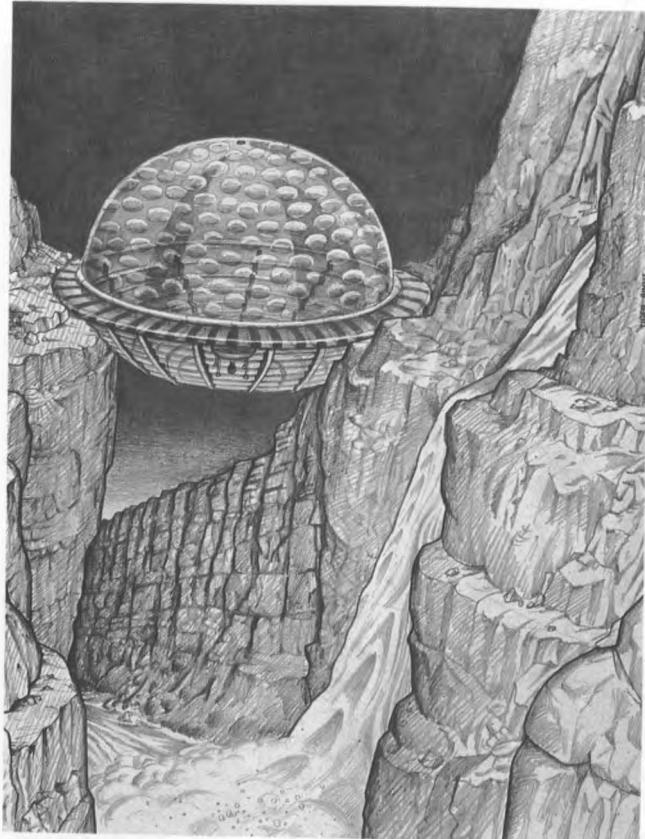


525

Ettore Sottsass

*Another Utopia*

1973



526

Ettore Sottsass

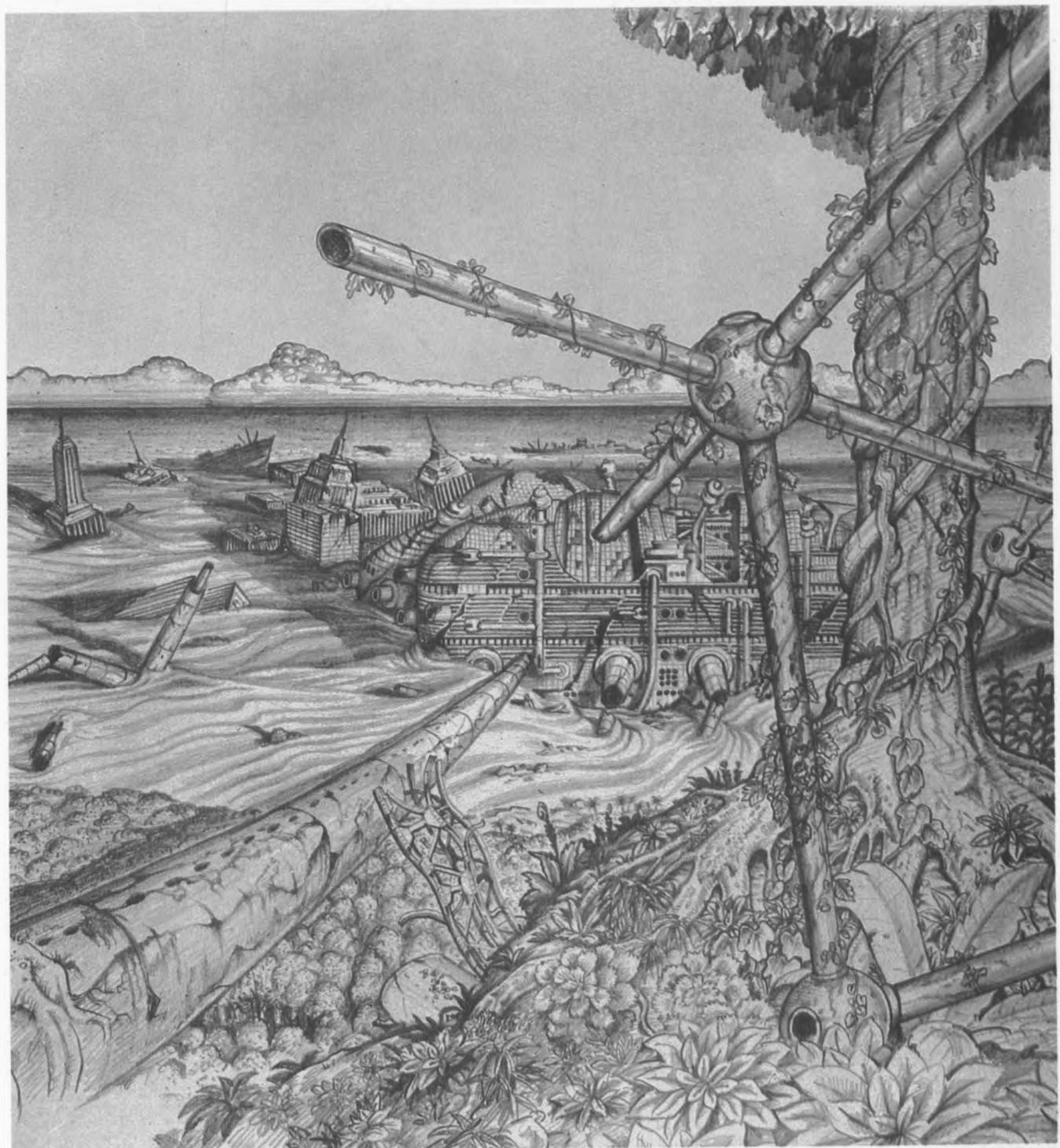
*Another Utopia*

1973

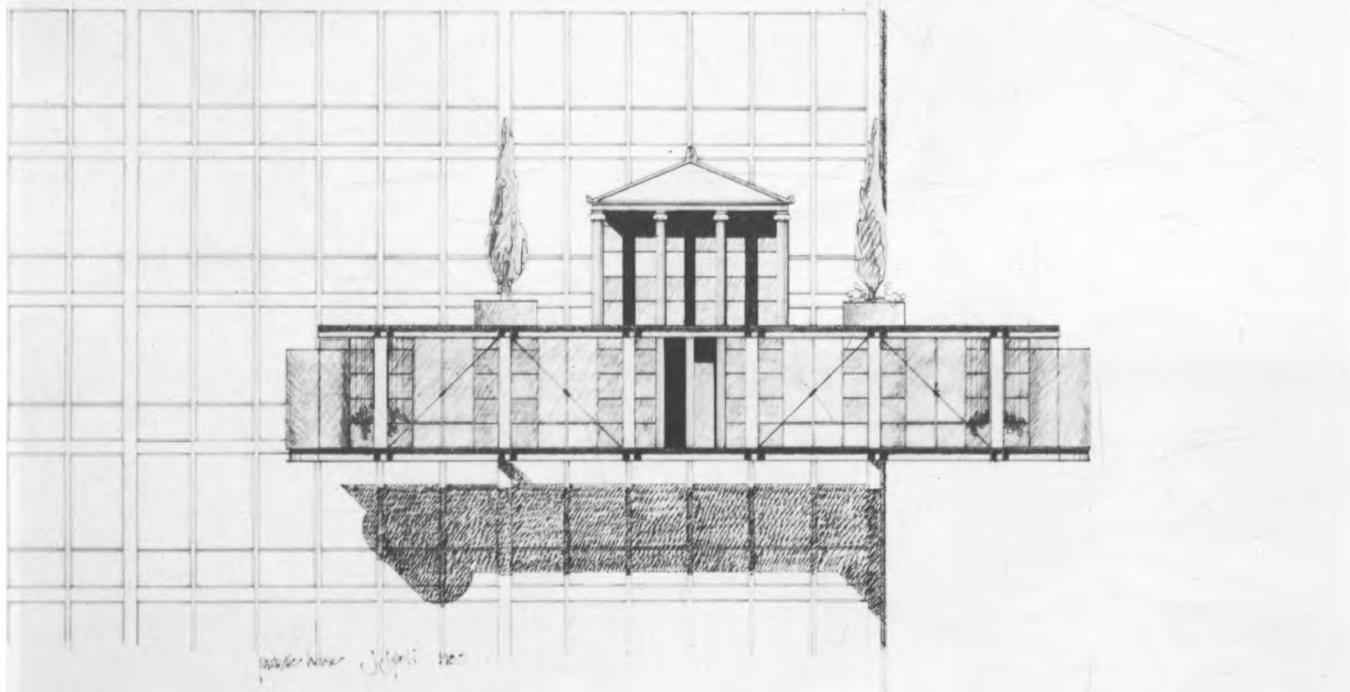
Ettore Sottsass

*Another Utopia*

1973



John J. Poli  
*Parasite House*  
1980



## **Epilogue**

The drawing reproduced here as figure 528 depicts a small columned loggia, with an Ionic temple and two cypresses sitting on top of it, hung before a modern grid facade. The humorous contrast is intended and programmatic; it is the contrast between two epochs which are related only in terms of an antithesis. The muteness of the abstract grid is pitched against the love for narrative evident in the Arcadian scenery, and the disembodied geometry of modernism against an architecture of substance which casts real shadows and which relates to history and language. However, this drawing also illustrates an uncritical (and popular) conception of postmodernism — a misconception by which its foes denounce it as retrograde, as assiduously historicist, and as "nostalgic."

I have tried not to make this great stylistic difference the main element of my account, even though as a stylistic phenomenon historicism is indeed a contributing factor in the definition of postmodernism. The change in the paradigm of contemporary architecture is better understood in light of the fact that in place of modernist abstraction there has emerged a new tendency toward symbolization, and in place of pure geometry and the ideality of primary forms a new representation of contents by means of narrative fiction. The rebirth of the art of building means that, beyond fulfilling the basic practical requirements, it must become a medium of narrative representation again.

I have attached such a great value to the concept of fiction because, ultimately, it far surpasses the concept of architecture as a means of communication. To see architecture only as a communication system means to be satisfied with the reception of signs without being able to adequately perceive and judge the artistic dimension of architecture. Information theory and semantics do not help us to assess the qualitative aspect of a work of art in addition to its significative aspects. Michael Graves has made this point forcefully: "...architecture is surely more than a system of communication. I tend to think that the communicative value of architecture, though necessary, exists primarily on the surface, and that what one is intimately interested in is a level of participation that involves the reciprocal act of ourselves with the figure of the building, which like good literature goes beyond communication and ultimately involves us in the text."<sup>282</sup> In architecture, "getting involved with the text" means going beyond the mere perceptual registering of signs and experiencing the fictive content of a building in a wider context.

Once, modernism placed great value on fictions and poetic conceits. The primary forms were intended to suggest liberation from the burden of the past and from the representation of power. For Bruno Taut, the introduction of modern architecture was connected with the idea of replacing the bourgeois striving for individual distinction with an architecture based on equality. The Russian Constructivists' skeletal

buildings aspired even more than Le Corbusier's ocean-liner metaphors to represent the meaning of social progress. Ludwig Leo, Rem Koolhaas, and Haus-Rucker-Co have transposed the contents of these metaphors to the present era, and Gustav Peichl has recently made use of the allusive potential of the steamship metaphor; however, these fictions have lost their power to convey the universal significance that was originally intended. Social realities no longer support their referential range; metaphoric reference to technology no longer stands unequivocally for progress or symbolizes hope. In the course of the history of modernism, the democratic ideal was completely lost; all that remained was what the primary figures had in fact been reduced to: boxes and crates. Owing largely to economic considerations, the poetic architecture that came into being in the 1920s lost its poetic element, its metaphoric reference to reality. Its original fiction now plays only a secondary role, as one fiction among many.

The representational material of contemporary architecture has been strongly expanded. The narrative contents cannot be read in universally binding terms, in the sense of a dominant system of social values. Seemingly unimportant contents may become relevant to different individuals, just as so many seemingly trivial contents are represented as significant by advertising.

The group SITE has shown how many different kinds of fictions can free themselves from the immediate concerns of advertising. Hans Hollein has shown how a figurative approach can be used not only to represent the various functions of a travel agency but also to create an atmosphere of travel. Peter Eisenman has taken the difficult step of using a real context tied to negative experiences as narrative material. Frank Gehry's work shows how the unfinished and the imperfect can become the narrative contents of architecture. Lucien Kroll helped to show how co-determination by the users can be made a reality and how the refusal to bring everything under the same denominator can provide narrative material. All these fictions respond to special or local occasions and represent particular concerns without achieving universal validity. And unlike the merely symbolic, the fictional — through the narrative — makes contents accessible instead of providing signs with fixed significance.

Use of the historical vocabulary is not the primary criterion of this new architecture, which we call postmodern. Kroll, Gehry, Eisenman, and many others could not be properly assessed if we measured the innovative substance of their architecture by the degree to which it does or does not include historical forms. The program of postmodernism is not fulfilled by a reanimation of history. Even those postmodern architects who quote history literally<sup>283</sup> are interested not in the contents of history but in the interpretable formal material that history puts at their disposal. The historical forms are

husks of meanings that can be filled with new contents — usually in such a way that the new contents are in a tense antithetical relation to the old contents, which are still partially remembered. In a certain realm of fictional design, the final meaning of the whole coincides with this antithetical tension.

All these trends differ from ahistorical modernism in that they are not defined by the spirit of abstraction. The architecture of postmodernism is referential, not "self-referential."

We can assume, however, that the tendency in contemporary architecture toward fictional, narrative design is going to decrease again, for architecture cannot be equated with the pictorial arts. Architecture is, on the basis of its own definition, not only a "vehicle of meaning"; it is also substance and space per se. The problematic relationship between "architectonic abstractness" and "architecture as a vehicle of meaning," which has become so noticeable in recent years, will occupy us for a good while; indeed, it is in these terms that the future of architecture is going to be decided. Modernism has to pass through the process of fictional design, and all those architects who think they will be able to keep the purity of modernist abstraction from being sullied will not be part of the continuing creative development of architecture.

Exactly what, then, are the defining characteristics of postmodernism?

1. Regionalism has replaced internationalism.

2. Fictional representation — tending toward the figurative — has supplanted geometric abstraction.

3. The tendency toward fictional representation has led away from the late-modern tendency to view a building exclusively in terms of function, and toward seeing it as a work of the art of building that belongs in the realm of the illusory.

4. Postmodernism relies not on the symbolic value of the machine and of construction as defining progress in architecture, but on a multiplicity of meanings (including everything from immediate signs to narrative design).

5. Poetry has supplanted technological utopianism. Postmodernism draws from the world of the imagination rather than from the "brave new world" mentality in which velocity is equated with progress.

6. Postmodernism opposes the sterile faith in the continuous improvement of instruments and construction with improvisation and spontaneity. Instead of striving for untouchable perfection, it favors the disturbed and the imperfect, which are now seen as signs of life.

7. Whereas modernism sought to free itself from history and made architecture purely a thing of the present, with post-

modernism we have regained memory. And rather than exploit history for "interesting" effects, we can now entrust ourselves to the spirit of irony.

8. Rather than view a building as an autonomous, universally valid geometric form, we can now allow it to be relativized by its historical, regional, and topological conditions, and can appreciate the palpable individuality of the particular solution. Heroism gives way to compromise, to equitable treatment of old and new, and to respect for the given environment.

9. Instead of a dominant style, with its tendency to become dogma, a broad range of vocabularies and stylistic languages exist alongside one another. Postmodernism denies the self-referential inventiveness of the Modern Movement and pays tribute to the pluralism of referential allusions.

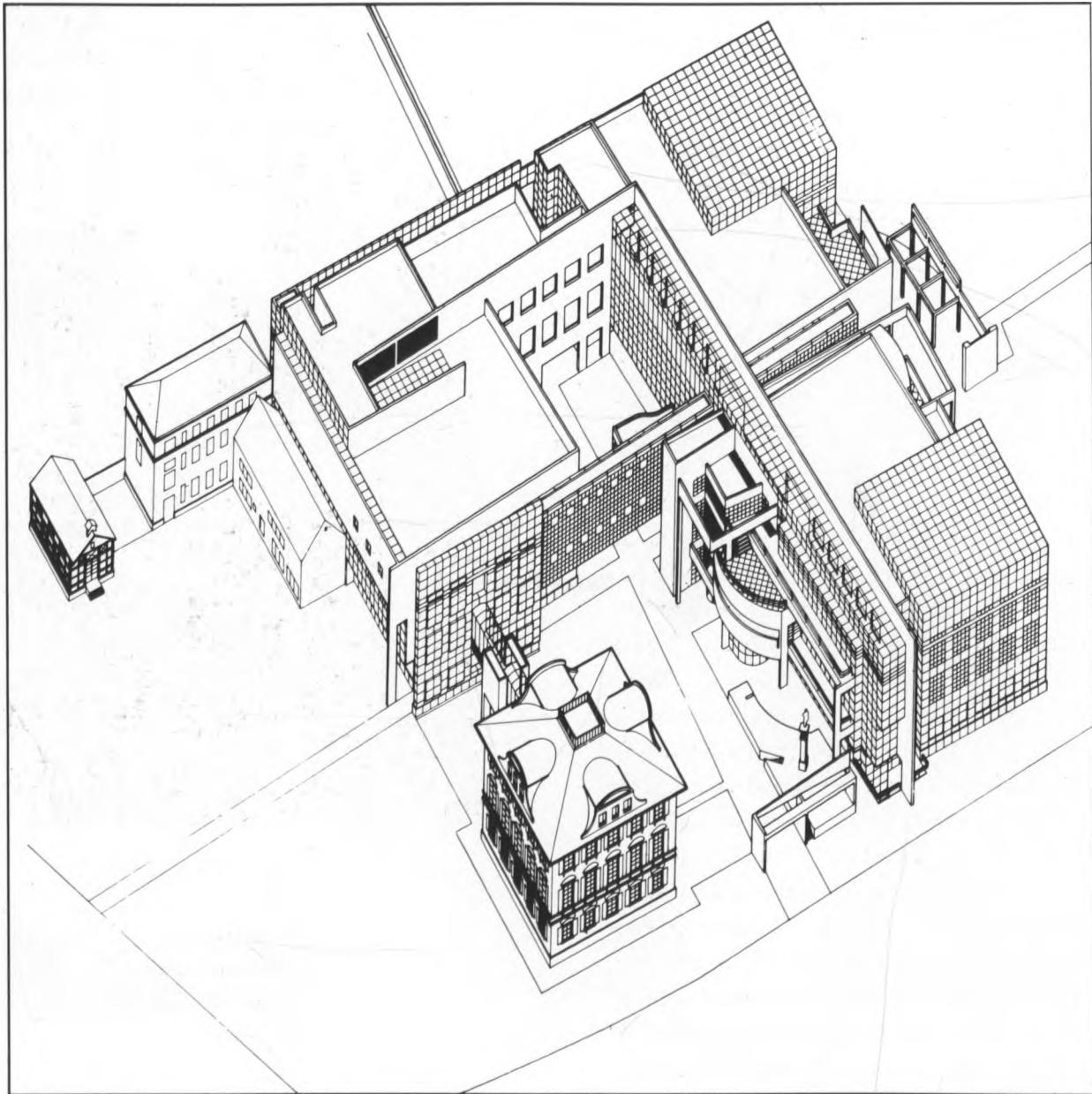
10. Rather than identify architecture with life, postmodernism establishes anew the aesthetic distance from life. Fiction as well as function!

**Postscript:**

**Since 1980\***

\* This was written in 1987 for the American edition.

Richard Meier  
Museum für Kunsthandwerk  
[Museum for Arts and Crafts]  
Frankfurt am Main  
1981–1985



Since 1980, postmodern trends in architecture have gained ground all over the world. There is a certain shallowness connected with this; architects are increasingly accepting the postmodern slogans without qualification. Often, postmodernism is understood as the orchestration of decorative embellishments for the surfaces of containers — in short, as a packaging aesthetic. Postmodernism in this sense of the word is only a reaction to functionalism's unprecedented renunciation of all ornament; where once bare walls and empty surfaces were the hallmarks of a progressive attitude, now the quick addition of a few mouldings or the monumentalization of a portico is automatically accepted as a proof of being up to date.

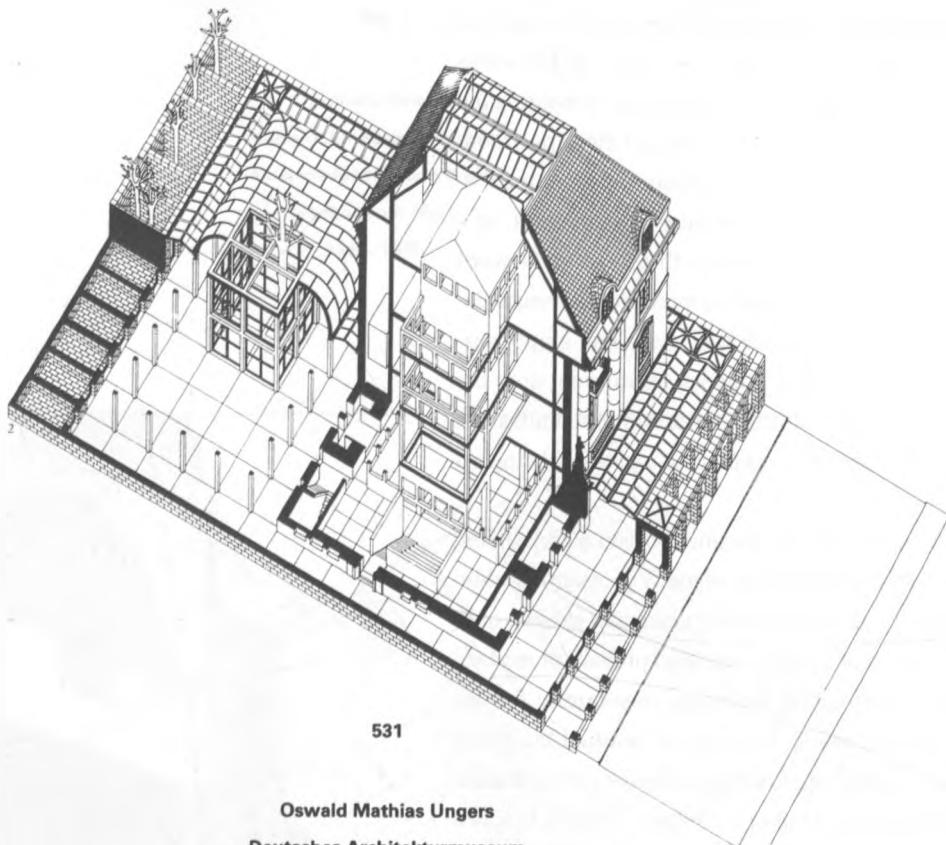
But what has actually made postmodernism a convincing reality is the successful realization of many projects of public architecture of the sort that for many years had existed only on paper. Just as most of the early realized projects of modern architecture were residential buildings (one-family houses and housing developments), most of the seminal buildings of postmodernism were one-family residences or condominiums: Robert Venturi's "Mother's House," Charles Moore's early one-family houses and his Sea Ranch, Aldo Rossi's housing block in Gallaratese, Oswald Mathias Unger's own house in Cologne, and the one-family houses of Richard Meier and Michael Graves. More recently, however, the range of the new trend has been expanded by the realization of large public buildings, office skyscrapers, and museums. Hans Hollein's museum in Mönchengladbach, James Stirling's museum in Stuttgart, Richard Meier's museums in the United States and in Germany, Rafael Moneo's buildings in Spain, Arata Isozaki's Gumma Municipal Museum, and Oswald Mathias Unger's architecture museum and exposition hall in Frankfurt testify to the strength of the foundations of postmodern architecture. Michael Graves's Public Service Building in Portland, Thomas Beeby's library in Chicago, and Gottfried Böhm's public buildings in the Federal Republic of Germany show that the impact of the new ideas has gone beyond the "architecture on paper" phase. New industrial buildings such as the distribution center of the Ernsting chain of "mini shops" (figure 534) provide evidence that postmodernism is not just a whim favoring architectural ornament and that it is not limited to country houses.

Along with Graves's Public Service Building, Stirling's Württembergische Staatsgalerie has dominated architectural discussions in the past few years. Though the proportions of its interior spaces have often been criticized, with this museum in Stuttgart Stirling has proved that postmodernism does not necessarily result in a retrograde recapitulation of period-style architecture but is propelled by an interpretive vigor of its own. Stirling transformed a uniformly conceived building into a manifold architectural landscape, and brought the individual stylistic elements of historicism and



530

Arata Isozaki  
Municipal Museum  
Tsukuba, Japan  
1982–1986



Oswald Mathias Unger  
Deutsches Architekturmuseum  
Frankfurt am Main  
1980–1983



532

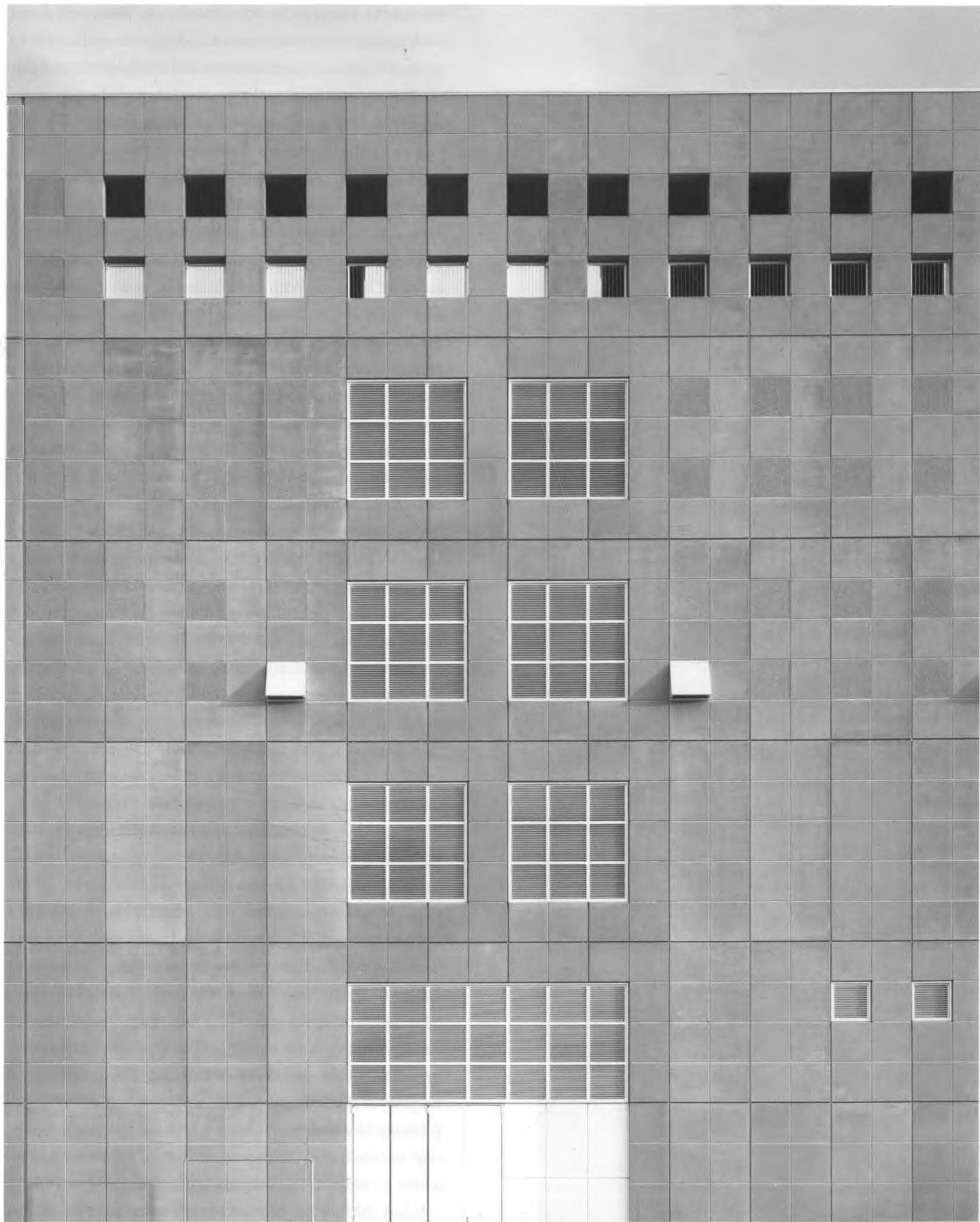
Oswald Mathias Unger  
Deutsches Architekturmuseum  
Frankfurt am Main  
1980–1983

Oswald Mathias Ungers

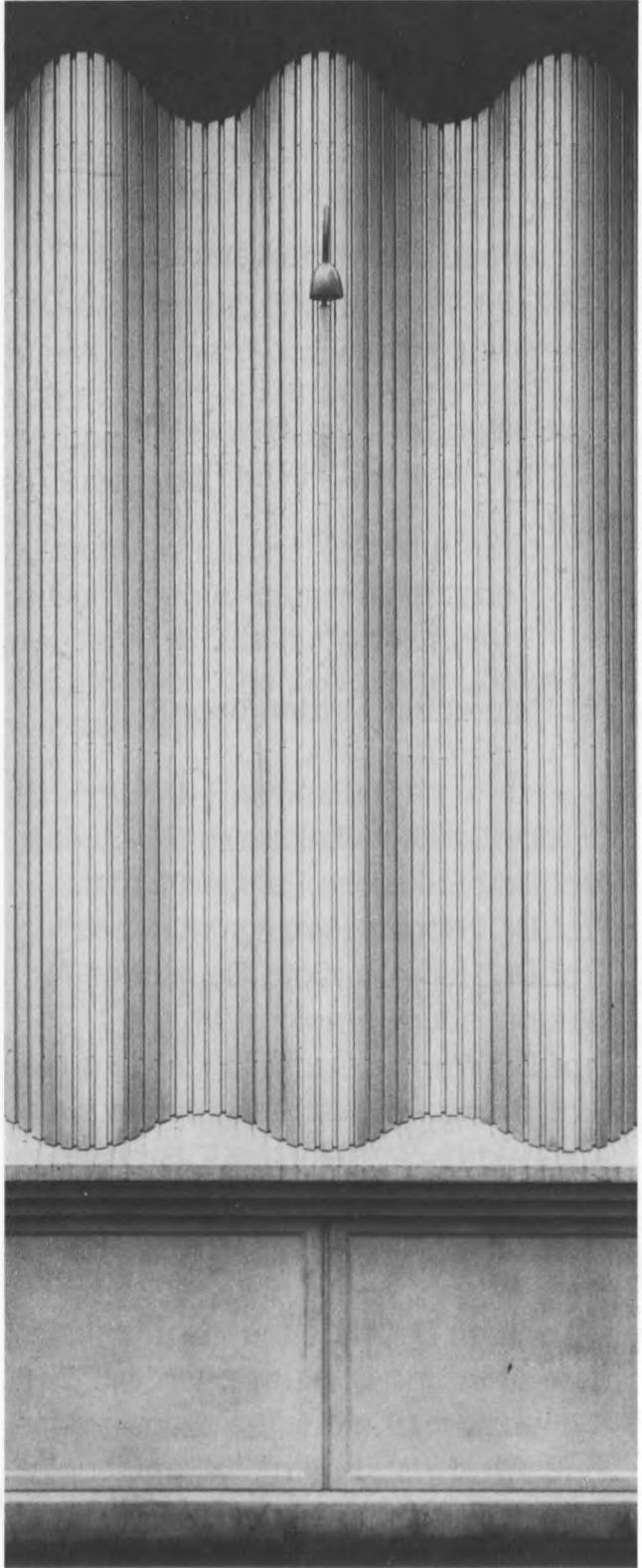
Exposition Hall

Frankfurt am Main

1984–85



**Reichlin, Reinhart, and Calatrava**  
**Distribution center of**  
**Fa. Ernsting's Mini Laden GmbH**  
**Coesfeld-Lette, West Germany**  
**1984–85**  
**(detail)**



High Tech into a collusion from which a new architectural language could be brought forth.

The international architectural discussion has also been influenced by two new museums in Frankfurt am Main: Meier's Museum für Kunsthantwerk [Museum for Arts and Crafts] and Ungers's Deutsche Architekturmuseum. In the case of the Museum für Kunsthantwerk, Meier was faced with having to combine a new building with a villa built in 1816, during the Biedermeier period. He solved this problem skillfully by subdividing the new building into interconnecting pavilions that reproduce the proportions of the old building, which they surround. Thus Meier proved that he did not want to propagate an architecture of autonomous grand structures in the manner of Le Corbusier. He showed here how an extension building can become a complementary structure that respects the existing elements yet demonstrates an originality of its own. With this, Meier moved closer to postmodern tendencies (even though he still insisted on retaining the language of "white modern" architecture), and he also affirmed the pluralism of contemporary architecture.

In no other country except the United States have so many museums been built in the past few years as in the Federal Republic of Germany. With the above-mentioned Deutsches Architekturmuseum, Ungers was able for the first time to realize a project that exemplified his program of a morphological architecture. What Unger did was gut an old villa and insert a new structure in it. Outside he surrounded it with a rusticated wall, which also enclosed the new hall structure in the back of it. Inside, Unger unfolded a "theme," which began with a baldachin on the first floor and which from one floor to the next gradually enclosed the rooms until at the top the core had turned into a "house within a house," standing inside the husk of the old building as a symbol of architecture. Unger gave this building its fictional aspect not through narrative ornamentation but by typologically transforming the whole building into a representation of contents.

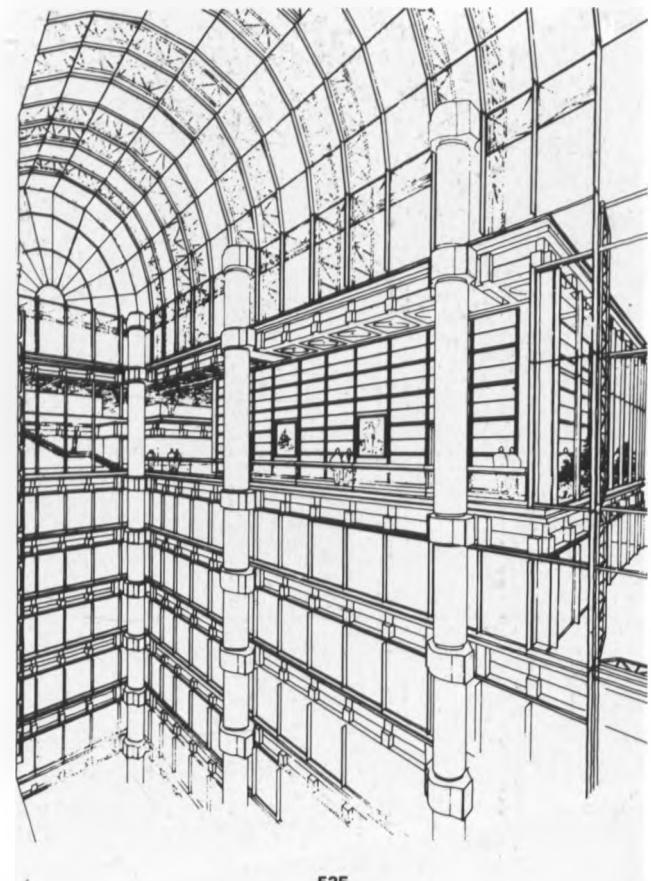
Though many of the new ideas of postmodernism were formulated in Italy, and though Aldo Rossi, Giorgio Grassi, Vittorio Gregotti, Paolo Portoghesi, and the group GRAU acquired considerable followings there, there has been a shortage of realizable commissions in that country. Mario Botta has been intensely active in the Ticino, and has built many one-family houses and a large bank building in Lugano. Also noteworthy are the office and factory buildings of Adolfo Natalini in the vicinity of Bologna. Gregotti was able to realize a new university in Calabria. Yet out of a great number of projects and promising beginnings in Italy, surprisingly few have been realized. Perhaps this is why many well-known Italian architects have turned to interior design, a field in which the Italians are the leaders today.

James Stirling has received only one commission in his own country since he made his change to postmodernism, yet

what stands in the way of postmodernism in Great Britain is not so much a lack of commissions as a continuing faith in the virtue of modernism. The dominant firms are Foster Associates and the firms of Renzo Piano, Ove Arup, and Richard Rogers. Rogers's Lloyds of London building — a celebration of Constructivism — seems to declare England the country of High Tech; yet it is crowned with a radial window that quotes Paxton's Crystal Palace. The steeply rising central hall shows an interesting symbiosis between High Tech and postmodernism. Similar attempts at symbiosis can be observed elsewhere; while in the theoretical debates the two sides face each other in a sharp opposition, there is a tendency to come to terms in the world of practice. The pluralism of viewpoints, which is the main characteristic of the arts in the twentieth century, is marked first of all by a tendency toward synthesis. More and more, the different value systems are relativizing one another.

In France, architecture became strikingly sterile after Le Corbusier's death. In vain, people hoped for new ideas in the 1960s and the 1970s. In 1975, with his public housing in the Rue des Hautes-Formes in Paris, Christian de Porzamparc found a connection to Italian and German Rationalism. Today such younger architects as Antoine Grumbach, Jean Nouvel, and Fernando Montes have changed the French scene fundamentally, yet there is still a preference for huge buildings that recall the megastructures of the 1960s. Ricardo Bofill, a Spanish architect who in the 1960s and the early 1970s enriched the architecture of his own country considerably, turned in France into an architect of superscale, as his apartment complex in Marne la Vallée shows. In Bofill's French work, the tendency toward grandeur that in the case of Piano and Rogers's Pompidou Centre still had the force of conviction, was exaggerated to the point of becoming dubious. In the provinces, new housing projects are being based on intimate country dwellings, and near Lyon experiments with clay buildings (inspired by the Belgian architect Jean Dethier) are being realized; however, in the environs of Paris almost all the new buildings are of superscale proportions. (The fact that Bofill was seduced into building a series of "Versailles for the bourgeoisie" is due in part to the building program of the French government.) Situated as it is among enormous superscale housing projects, Bofill's "Arena" (figures 537, 538) is actually appealing. He has succeeded in producing a sequestered realm that offers a certain refuge from urban chaos. However, the exterior of the complex is fortresslike, deterring, and intimidatingly alien. Here, too, it is evident how insignificant the effects of architectonic detailing become once the form as a whole has got out of proportion. Under such conditions, Bofill's baroque glass colonnades and cornices seem to express despair in the face of the problems of urban planning.

Many high-rise buildings in the United States are afflicted



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**Richard Rogers**  
**Lloyds Insurance building**  
**London**  
**1982–1986**

**Christian de Portzamparc**  
**Public housing**  
**Rue de Hautes-Formes, Paris**  
**1975**



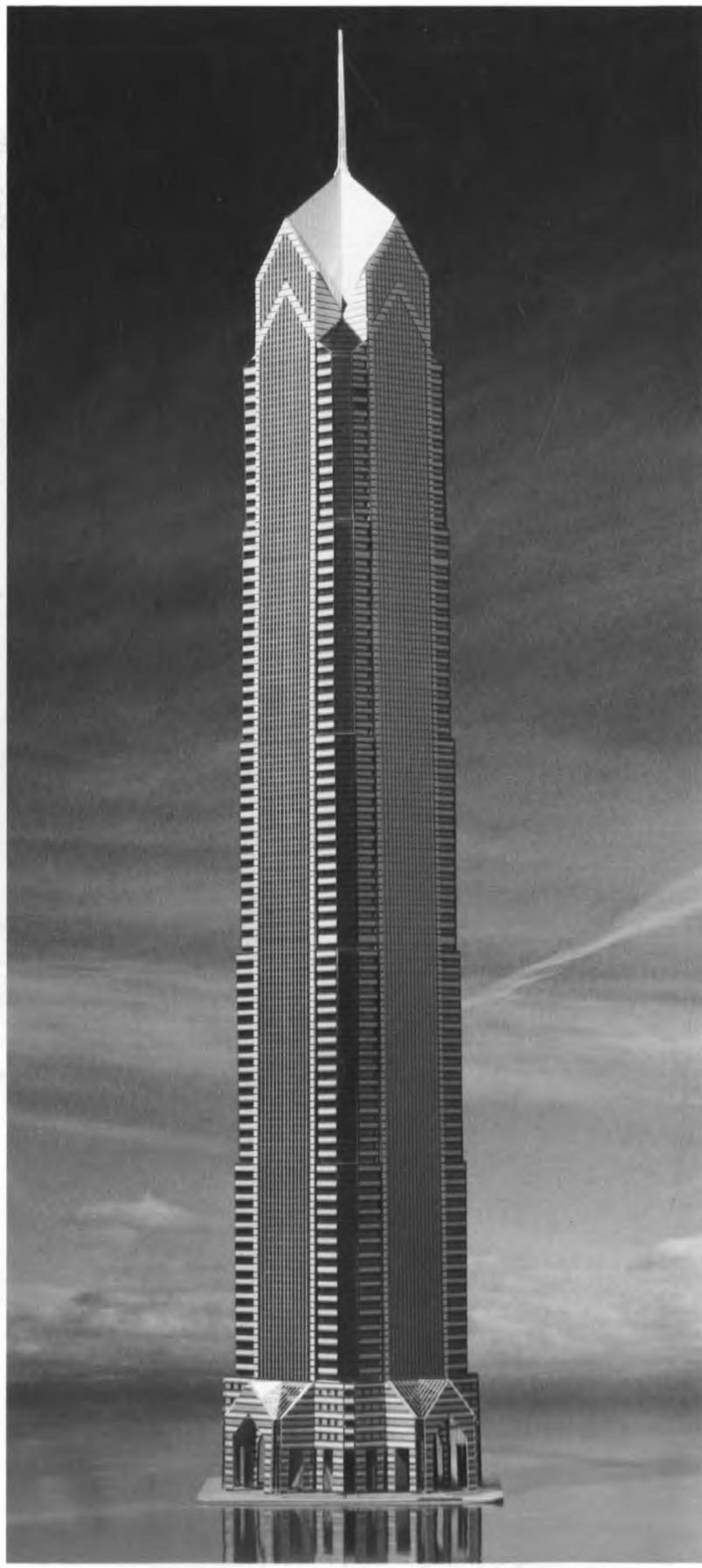
**Ricardo Bofill**  
**Apartment complex**  
**Marne la Vallée, France**  
**1980–1984**



Ricardo Bofill  
"Arena" apartment complex  
Marne la Vallée, France  
1980–1984



Helmut Jahn  
Bank of the Southwest Tower  
Houston  
(project)  
1981



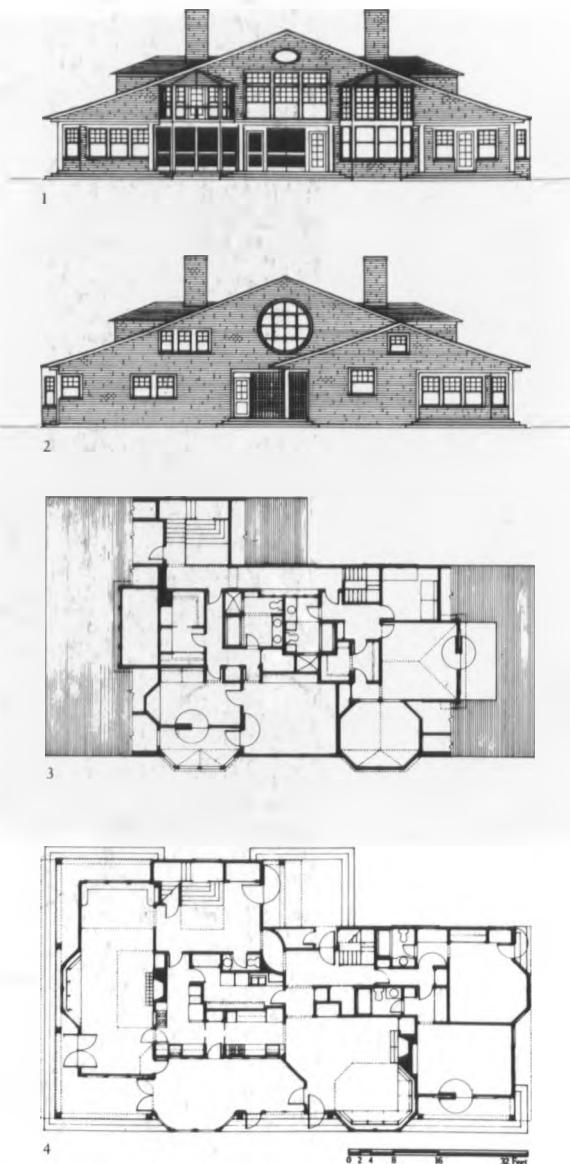
with makeshift devices similar to those used by Bofill, and in most cases the ornamentation seems like ill-fitting clothing thrown over the buildings' masses. However, Philip Johnson recognized the underlying formal problems when designing the AT&T building in New York, and Helmut Jahn took a further step with his skyscraper project for Houston. Both these architects felt the need not to continue in the Miesian tradition of the rectangular block. The reversion in the direction of the high-rise tradition of the 1920s and the 1930s (exemplified by the Chrysler Building in New York) is yet another sign of the break with modernism. The new attempts to replace pure geometry with an anthropomorphic form in which buildings again have heads, bodies, and feet confirm that the skyscraper — still the most important building type invented in the modern epoch — continues to be a prominent task for contemporary architecture.

At present, the American architectural scene is certainly the most interesting in the Western world. With its great variety of schools and trends, there is nothing that it does not include. The attention to Rossi and Ungers has given European Rationalism a foothold in the United States, and the work of Leon Krier has had an impact even on the independent and inventive Michael Graves.

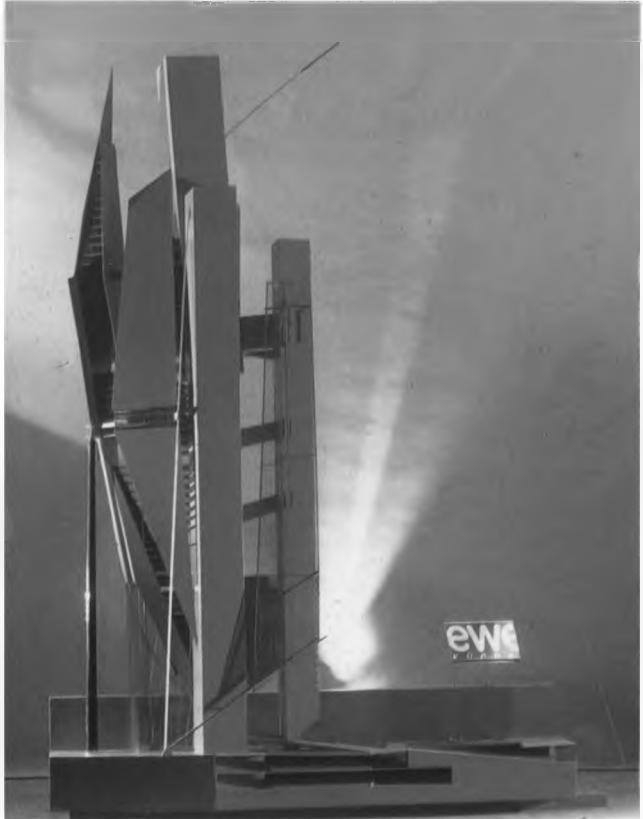
There are two increasingly sharply defined opposing tendencies in the American architectural discussion that, although they do not exactly dominate it, certainly shed light on its practical and theoretical aspects. One of these tendencies is embraced by the historicists Allan Greenberg, Robert Stern, and Thomas Gordon Smith; the other by the Californian Frank Gehry.

The New York historicists have drawn from postmodernism the impetus to revive the historical architecture of their own country. Leaving the British architect Quinlan Terry out of account, only in the United States can we observe that historicist architecture has become the avowed goal of several gifted architects. Greenberg has come the closest to an imitative architecture; his interiors for government buildings in Washington seem to stem from the early nineteenth century; they recall both Robert Adam and William Strickland. Stern, like Greenberg, uses his historicist vocabulary not ironically but literally, as if he actually aims to erect a historical building; however, Stern likes to introduce some ingenious alienating feature into the overall conception of a building as a contrast to the historicizing details. Smith, in a theoretical treatise, has gone so far as to reintroduce the Vitruvian canon of orders and to use the Renaissance concepts of *regula* and *inventione* to determine the degree of deviation from the former rule. His goal is to approximate historical architecture as closely as he can without succumbing to it. In all these attempts it becomes evident that historicism, which at first seemed to be a transitional phase, has turned into a persistent attitude in American architecture. Where once the New York

**Robert Stern**  
Elevations and floor plans  
of private house  
1984



**Coop-Himmelblau**  
**Skyscraper, Hamburg (project)**  
**1986**



historians leaned toward reinterpretation in consciously ambivalent and modern forms, now they identify themselves with the historical models — even, in Greenberg's case, to the point of tasteful imitation. Ironic reinterpretation was their starting point and their alibi. The alibi, they believe, is no longer needed.

The other position is championed in the United States by Frank Gehry, whose works continue to be ruled by the intention to make them vocal and articulate while renouncing all historicizing forms. Remaining within the tradition of modernism, Gehry breaks the muteness to which its aesthetic was reduced and strives for a narrative manner of representation whose theme is the fracturing of the building as a perfect whole. He has been joined in this undertaking by many European architects, among them the members of the Viennese group Coop-Himmelblau and also Zaha Hadid, who has worked in the studio of Rem Koolhaas. Hadid's architectural fantasies — splintered and fissured visions of space — derive their narrative quality of uncertainty from their lack of a unified perspective. These and many other attempts articulate the striving to hold onto the tradition of modernism and to keep alive the modernist insistence on a self-referential justification independent of history. By manifesting this insistence, architectural expression becomes more imaginative. The form becomes articulate of its own accord, even if only to represent the blowing up of the building. The expressionist intensification defends modernism as much as it submits to the new need for representation and the urgency of a narrative fiction.

However, a question arises: How much of an effort does it take to maintain ahistorical modernism? Rem Koolhaas, has concluded that "a building cannot dissolve like Zaha Hadid wants it to but has to remain a built structure."<sup>284</sup>

While Frank Gehry performs poetic balancing acts for the preservation of the building as a whole, Rem Koolhaas has already returned to Mies. But, as Koolhaas says, his Mies is "twisted," and the buildings he has conceived lately are impure and contradictory. What the post-modernists did with the historicizing forms, Koolhaas now does to the modern ones: He ironizes them.

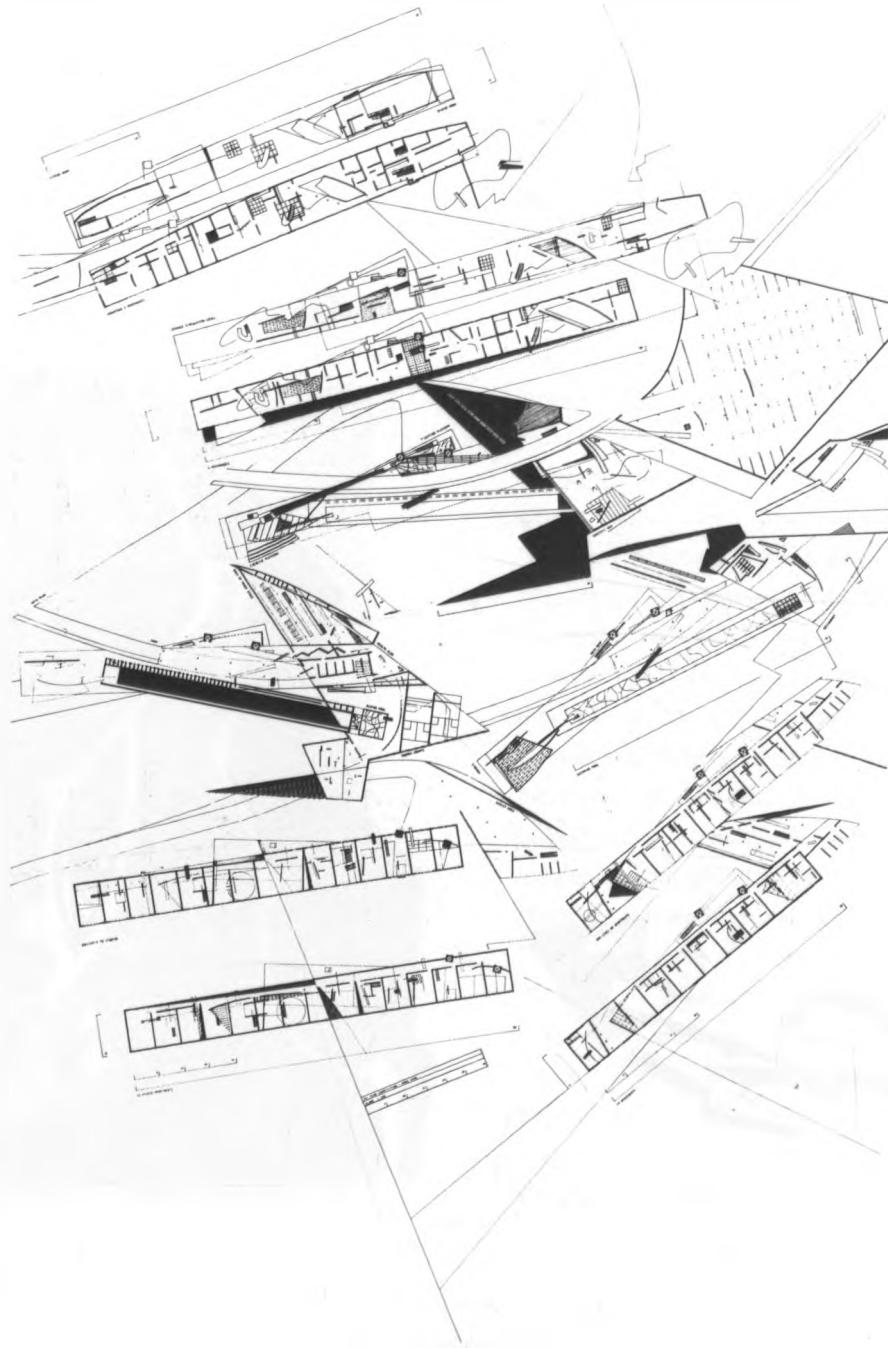
This highly charged relation to architecture, this dialectical ambiguity, is an essential feature of present-day building. Yet many of the architects who introduced the ironizing dialectic of historicism into architecture as a response to modernism's loss of articulation were among the first to give it up. They demanded a new absolute unequivocalness, and they became historians.

The result of such daring adventures — trying to reach identity with the historical styles and still stay in the present — necessarily leads to the announcement of the "end of postmodernism." The final stage seems to have been reached, yet there is still much to come.



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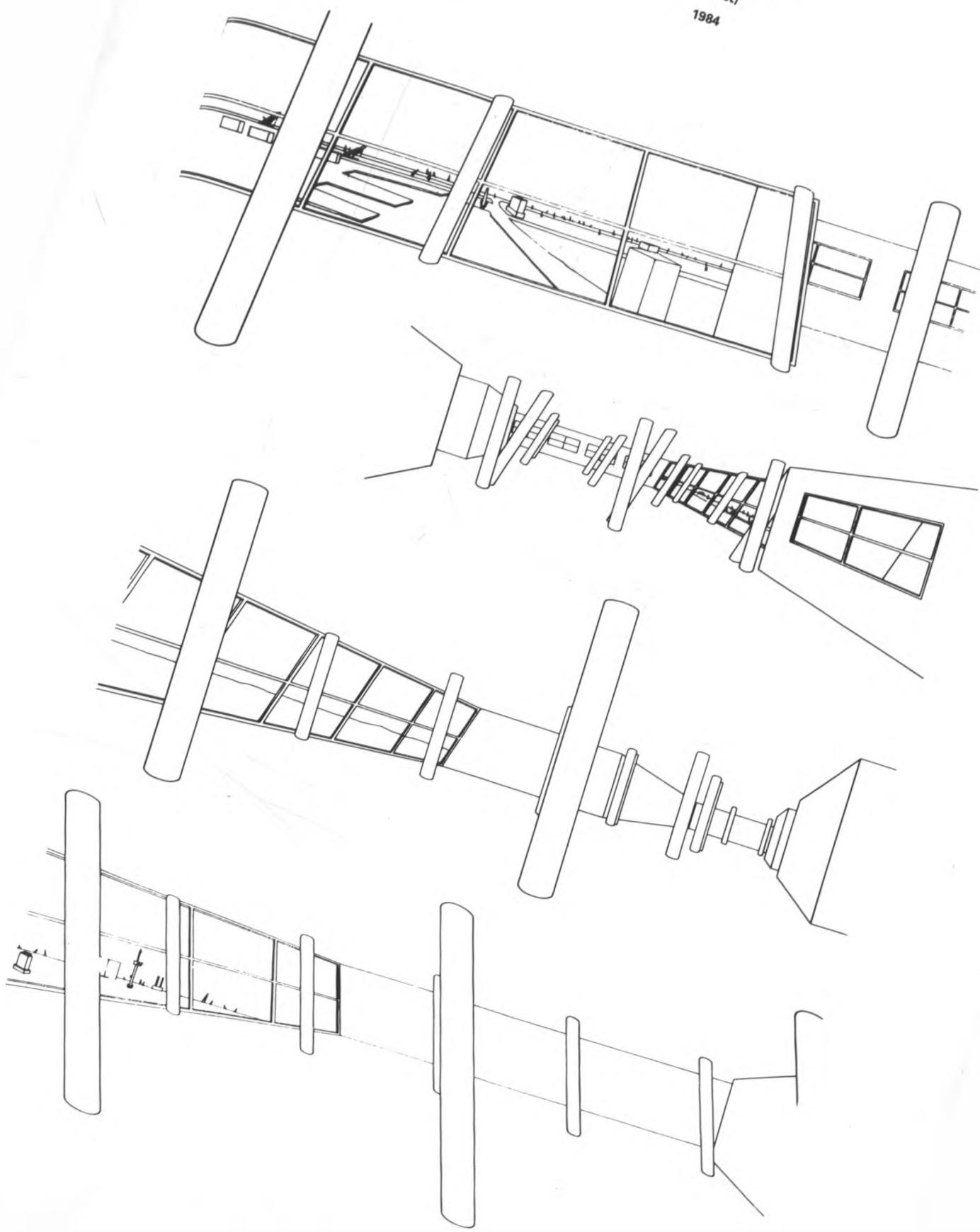
Zaha Hadid  
Site plans for The Peak,  
Hong Kong  
1982–83



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Zaha Hadid  
Site plans for The Peak,  
Hong Kong  
1982–83

Rem Koolhaas  
Interior view of office building,  
Churchillplein, Rotterdam  
(project)  
1984



## **Notes**

1 See *Jahrbuch für Architektur* 1983 (Braunschweig and Wiesbaden, 1983), pp. 26–37.

2 See Jürgen Habermas, "Die Moderne — Ein unvollendetes Projekt," *Die Zeit*, September 19, 1980; Habermas, "Moderne und postmoderne Architektur," in *Die andere Tradition* (Munich, 1981).

3 Habermas, "Moderne und postmoderne Architektur," p. 10. See also Paolo Portoghesi, "Die Wiedergeburt der Archätypen," and Heinrich Klotz, "Aesthetischer Eigensinn," *Arch +* 63/64 (1982), pp. 89–93.

4 In art history, on the other hand, the controversy between pure history of form and iconology flared into a heated debate again immediately after the Second World War. In Germany, the works of Hans Sedlmayr and the main work of Günther Bandmann, "*Mittelalterliche Architektur als Bedeutungsträger*" (Berlin, 1951), served as important directives. In the United States, Rudolf Wittkower's 1949 book *Architectural Principles in the Age of Humanism* had the greatest impact on the discussion of modern architecture; Robert Venturi acknowledged this in his book *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*.

5 See Charles Jencks, *The Language of Post-Modern Architecture* (London, 1977).

6 Jost Hermand, "Pop oder die These vom Ende der Kunst," *Basis, Jahrbuch für deutsche Gegenwartsliteratur* I (1970), pp. 94–115; reprinted in Hermand's *Stile, Ismen, Etiketten* (Wiesbaden, 1978).

7 See, for instance, the work of Rem Koolhaas.

8 See Charles Jencks, *Late-Modern Architecture* (London, 1980).

9 See *Jahrbuch für Architektur* 1983, pp. 180–185.

10 This idea of architecture as a means of plastic elaboration of fictional form is discussed in detail in the chapter "Architecture as Fiction."

11 Gert Kähler takes this decisive point of view in his book *Architektur als Symbolverfall. Das Dampfermotiv in der Baukunst* (Braunschweig, 1981).

12 Le Corbusier, *Vers une architecture* (Paris, 1923). English edition: *Towards a New Architecture* (New York, 1960). See p. 31 of English edition.

13 Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture*, p. 26.

14 Ibid., p. 36.

15 Ibid., p. 40.

16 Ibid., pp. 20, 21.

17 Ibid., p. 146.

18 Walter Gropius, *Die neue Architektur und das Bauhaus* (Mainz and Berlin, 1965), p. 18.

19 Gert Kähler has illustrated this interdependence in detail in *Architektur als Symbolverfall* (note 11 above).

20 See Adolf Max Vogt, "Woher kommt Funktionalismus," *Werk-Archithese*, March 1977, pp. 23–30.

21 Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture*, p. 219.

22 Ibid., p. 201.

23 Emilio Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, "Futurist Manifesto" (1909), in *Archivi del Futurismo*, ed. M. D. Gambiello and T. Fiori (Rome, n.d.), I, p. 17.

24 Ibid.

25 Antonio Sant'Elia, quoted in Ulrich Conrads, *Programme und Manifeste zur Architektur des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Berlin, 1964), p. 32.

26 Ibid., p. 54.

27 Ibid., p. 32.

28 Karl Friedrich Schinkel, *Nachlass*, ed. A. Freiherr von Wolzogen (Berlin, 1863), p. 114.

29 Schinkel, in fact, recalled the simplicity of English brick architecture in his designs for a department store and for the Berliner Bauakademie — yet without renouncing ornament.

30 Karl Gutzkow, "Säkularbilder" I, in *Gesammelte Werke*, comp. rev. ed., vol. 9 (Frankfurt am Main, 1846), p. 144.

31 Quoted in Conrads, *Programme und Manifeste* (note 25 above), pp. 15–21.

32 Yet it would be wrong to judge all of Loos's work in the light of the priority of utilitarian postulates.

33 See Sebastian Müller, *Kunst und Industrie, Ideologie und Organisation des Funktionalismus in der Architektur* (Munich, 1974); Reyner Banham, *Theory and Design in the First Machine Age* (London, 1980; Cambridge, Mass., 1980).

34 J. Habermas, *Die andere Tradition* (Munich, 1981), p. 17. Habermas has to maintain the unity of form and function, as well as the successful synthesis of aesthetic

originally and functional orientation of modern architecture, in his defense of modernity.

35 The skyscraper of the Philadelphia Savings Fund Society, by Howe and Lescaze, was built in 1932. Raimond Hood's McGraw-Hill Building in New York (1931) is also among the first modern skyscrapers.

36 Henry-Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson, *The International Style* (New York, 1932 and 1966), p. 11.

37 This chapter corresponds to the text of a lecture I gave in the summer semester of 1971 at the Kunsthistorisches Institut der Freien Universität Berlin. See also Christian Borngräber, *Stil novo* (Frankfurt am Main, 1979).

38 See John Cook and Heinrich Klotz, *Conversations with Architects* (New York, 1973), pp. 147–177.

39 Hugo Haring, *Schriften, Entwürfe, Bauten* (Stuttgart, 1965), p. 77.

40 Haring, as quoted in Conrads, *Programme und Manifeste*, p. 117.

41 Source: *Bauwelt* phonograph record.

42 Theodor W. Adorno, "Funktionalismus heute," in *Ohne Leitbild—Parva Aesthetica* (Frankfurt am Main, 1967; fifth ed. 1973), pp. 104–128.

43 As quoted in Conrads, *Programme*, p. 70.

44 Sigfried Giedion, *Space, Time, and Architecture*, third ed. (Cambridge, Mass., 1954), p. 493. On the history of the "free ground plan" see Heinrich Klotz, "Materialien zu einer Gropius Monographie," in *Architettura*, 1971, pp. 184 ff.

45 Adolf Behne, "Dammerstock," in *Die Form* (V), 1930, pp. 163–166, as quoted in Norbert Huse, "Neues Bauen" 1918–1933 (Munich, 1975), p. 95. Huse introduces the corresponding passage as follows: "For the architects of Dammerstock living in a housing unit stops at the door. They did not realize that the conjoining of the units presents an equally important task as the design of the units themselves, and thus they were satisfied with merely adding them on. The result was not the liberation promised in their programs but a new compulsion."

46 See Philip Johnson, "The Seven Crutches of Architecture," in *Yale Perspecta* 3 (1955), and *Writings* (New York, 1979), pp. 134–140.

47 Ibid.

48 See Cook and Klotz, *Conversations*, p. 34.

49 *Ibid.*, p. 32.

50 Henry-Russell Hitchcock, *Philip Johnson* (1932; New York, 1966), p. 14.

51 Jencks, *The Language of Post-Modern Architecture* (London, 1977), p. 130.

52 *Ibid.*, p. 127.

53 The difference between the pluralism of styles on the entire architectural scene and the possible choices available to individual architectural firms should be taken into consideration.

54 Jürgen Joedicke, *Architektur im Umbruch* (Stuttgart, 1980), p. 103.

55 Reyner Banham, *The New Brutalism* (New York, 1966).

56 The Airport Hotel in Chicago, by Portman and Associates, was completed at the same time as the Equitable Building.

57 See Cook and Klotz, *Conversations*, p. 83.

58 *Ibid.*, p. 67.

59 *Ibid.*, p. 80.

60 *Ibid.*

61 On Pelli, see Barbaralee Diamonstein, *American Architecture Now* (New York, 1980), pp. 176–179.

62 *Ibid.*, p. 177.

63 *Late Entries to the Chicago Tower Competition (II)* (New York, 1980), p. 14.

64 See *Jahrbuch für Architektur* 1981/82, pp. 97–109, and *Jahrbuch* 1983, pp. 242–243.

65 I introduced *anpassendes Bauen* as a preliminary concept at the 1975 symposium of the International Design Center in Berlin. See *Lotus International* 13, p. 24.

66 Oscar Newman, in *CIAm '59 in Otterlo*, ed. Jürgen Joedicke (Stuttgart, 1961), p. 86.

67 For a more detailed treatment see Heinrich Klotz, *Gestaltung einer neuen Umwelt* (Lucerne, 1978), p. 12.

68 BBPR stands for Banfi, Belgiojoso, Peressutti, and Rogers.

69 Cook and Klotz, *Conversations*, p. 244.

70 Newman, *CIAm '59*, p. 94.

- 71 Ibid., p. 27.
- 72 Ibid., p. 92.
- 73 Ibid., p. 96.
- 74 Ibid., pp. 95–96.
- 75 Ibid., p. 91.
- 76 Ibid.
- 77 Ibid., p. 86.
- 78 Ibid., p. 85.
- 79 Ibid., p. 93.
- 80 Ibid.
- 81 Ibid., p. 161.
- 82 Ibid., p. 168.
- 83 Ibid.
- 84 Ibid., p. 84.
- 85 Ibid., p. 182.
- 86 Ibid.
- 87 Ibid.
- 88 Aldo van Eyck, in *Meaning in Architecture*, ed. Charles Jencks and George Baird (London, 1969), p. 173.
- 89 Newman, *CIAM '59*, p. 150.
- 90 Ibid., p. 150.
- 91 Ibid., p. 169.
- 92 Ibid.
- 93 See the section on the Zwolle development below.
- 94 As quoted in Banham, *The New Brutalism* (New York, 1966), p. 73.
- 95 Ibid., p. 72.
- 96 Ibid.
- 97 Ibid.
- 98 Ibid.
- 99 Ibid., p. 73.
- 100 Ibid., p. 134.
- 101 Newman, *CIAM '59*, p. 32.
- 102 Ibid., p. 33.
- 103 See note 46 above.
- 104 Conrads, *Programme und Manifeste*, pp. 149–152.
- 105 Newman, *CIAM '59*, p. 81.
- 106 Ibid., p. 84.
- 107 As quoted in Conrads, *Programme*, p. 158.
- 108 Ibid., p. 110.
- 109 Ibid., p. 158.
- 110 Ibid., p. 159.
- 111 Manfredo Tafuri and Francesco Dal Co, *Architektur der Gegenwart* (Stuttgart, 1977), p. 407 ff.
- 112 Ibid.
- 113 See Moshe Safdie in *Zodiac H 19*.
- 114 See Romaldo Giurgola and Jaimini Mehta, *Louis I. Kahn* (Zurich, 1975), p. 25.
- 115 Kahn's philosophy of architecture is summed up in the statement that it should be guided not only by human needs but also by human "desires and wishes."
- 116 Kahn gives an especially accurate description of this building in Cook and Klotz, *Conversations*, pp. 206–209.
- 117 This is the title of a chapter in Giurgola and Mehta's *Louis I. Kahn* (Zurich, 1975).
- 118 Cook and Klotz, *Conversations*, pp. 212–213.
- 119 See Vincent Scully, *Louis I. Kahn* (New York, 1962), ill. 7.
- 120 Cook and Klotz, *Conversations*, p. 196.
- 121 Ibid., p. 179.
- 122 Louis I. Kahn, personal conversation with the author, 1969.
- 123 Cook and Klotz, *Conversations*, p. 243.
- 124 Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown, "Funktionalismus ja, aber . . .," *Werk-Archithese* 84 (March 1977) pp. 33–35.
- 125 See, for instance, the sections on Frank Gehry and Ralph Erskine below.

126 Cook and Klotz, *Conversations*, p. 242.

127 Ibid., p. 243.

128 See the above section on Philip Johnson.

129 Achille Bonito Oliva, *Transavantgarde International* (Milan, 1982), p. 6.

130 The building was not executed, and thus the surrounding facades are very isolated at the present.

131 See Kahler, *Architektur als Symbolverfall* (note 11 above), pp. 182 ff.

132 Venturi had called Rudolph's buildings "heroic."

133 Remark made in a conversation with the author in September 1969, in New Haven.

134 Robert Venturi, *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* (New York, 1966), pp. 22–23.

135 The use of prefabricated mass products in an ennobling context — a novel idea around 1960 — is comprehensible in its relation to Pop Art, as Venturi always stressed.

136 See Venturi, *Complexity and Contradiction*, pp. 71–89.

137 "Witty: what else can we be, using archeological forms, without being lugubrious — Lutyens realized this many years ago." Quoted in *L'architecture d'aujourd'hui*, no. 197 (June 1978), p. 7.

138 The false facades of the "western towns" were still surrogates for the lack of a better solution.

139 Brody: the architect of the existing building.

140 Cook and Klotz, *Conversations*, pp. 238–239, 243.

141 This is not changed by the fact that the advertising interests of this private institution may be connected with the use of such a sign.

142 Denise Scott Brown, in Cook and Klotz, *Conversations*, p. 251.

143 Ibid., p. 257.

144 See Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown, and Steven Izenour, *Learning from Las Vegas* (Cambridge, Mass., 1972), pp. 138–141.

145 Cook and Klotz, *Conversations*, p. 248.

146 See *L'architecture d'aujourd'hui*, no. 184 (March/April, 1976), p. XLVI.

147 See Charles Moore, Gerald Allen, and Donlyn Lunden, *The Place of Houses* (New York, 1974).

148 *L'architecture d'aujourd'hui*, no. 184 (March/April 1976), p. 60. [The version given in the present book has been clarified slightly. — Ed.]

149 This has been changed since the college was built.

150 See *Town Houses — The Chicago Seven of the Graham Foundation Competition* (Chicago, 1978).

151 See *New Chicago Architecture — Beyond the International Style* (New York, 1981), p. 59. (The building is Crown Hall.)

152 See Paolo Portoghesi, *Le inibizioni dell'architettura moderna* (Bari, 1979), illus. 1 and 2.

153 Thomas Gordon Smith, "Die Gabe des Janus," in *Jahrbuch für Architektur*, 1983, p. 146.

154 Ibid., p. 145.

155 Oswald Mathias Ungers, "Das Recht der Architektur auf eine autonome Sprache," in *Kunst und Gesellschaft — Grenzen der Kunst*, ed. H. Klotz (Frankfurt, 1981), pp. 69–93.

156 Adolf Behne, *Der moderne Zweckbau* (1923; repr. Berlin, 1964), p. 59.

157 For more on the New York Five, see the section devoted to them in this volume.

158 Arata Isozaki, in *GA Document*, special issue, 1970–1980, p. 20. For a more detailed treatment of Ungers's work see H. Klotz, *O. M. Ungers 1951–1983* (Wiesbaden, 1984).

159 Jürgen Pahl, *Deutsche Bauzeitung* 1966, 7, p. 585.

160 Ibid.

161 Oswald Mathias Ungers, *Die Thematrisierung der Architektur* (Stuttgart, 1983).

162 See H. Klotz, *Architektur in der Bundesrepublik* (Berlin, 1977), pp. 285–288.

163 Reprinted in *Alvar Aalto 1898–1976* (Helsinki, 1978), p. 33.

164 Aalto had already made the angle displacement an even more pronounced motif

of his ground plants. Louis Kahn's design for the Parliament in Dacca also needs to be remembered here.

165 See H. Klotz, "Die 'Berliner Schule' 1963–1967, Oswald Mathias Ungers als Lehrer," in *Jahrbuch für Architektur*, 1981/1982, p. 123 ff; *Bauwelt* 73 (1982), no. 48 (December 24).

166 *Veröffentlichungen zur Architektur*, ed. O. M. Ungers, November 1, 1965.

167 Leon Krier, "A Monument in Berlin," *Art Net* 1975, p. 7.

168 *Veröffentlichungen zur Architektur*, June 8, 1967.

169 Jörg Pampe, "Zum Entwurfstudium in Seminar von O. M. Ungers an der Technischen Universität Berlin," *Jahrbuch für Architektur* 1981/1982, p. 131.

170 Aldo Rossi, exhibition catalogue, ETH Zurich, 1973, p. 6.

171 Ibid., p. 10.

172 Ibid.

173 See Ingo Bohning, "Autonome Architektur" und "partizipatorisches Bauen" (Basle, 1981), pp. 75–79. Bohning reads in Rossi's monument at Segrate only the level of meaning of abstract geometry.

174 Aldo Rossi, exhibition catalog, ETH Zurich, 1973, p. 16.

175 Oswald Mathias Ungers, "Das Recht der Architektur auf eine autonome Sprache," in *Kunst und Gesellschaft — Grenzen der Kunst*, ed. H. Klotz (Frankfurt am Main, 1981), pp. 69–93.

176 Aldo Rossi, exhibition catalog, ETH Zurich, 1973, p. 6.

177 Quoted from notes of a conversation with the author on February 17, 1981.

178 From an unpublished text: Entwurf einer Planung für ein Gebiet am Ufer des Verbindungskanals, 1978.

179 Ibid.

180 The catalog of the fifteenth Triennale (ed. Massimo Scolari) opens with an announcement of the publication of Tessinow's "Osservazioni elementari sulla costruzione."

181 Rossi's collaborator Gianni Braghieri made an essential contribution to the student-village project.

182 A good analysis of this building is given on pp. 93–114 of Bohning's book (note

173 above). However, I disagree with his speculation that this building might symbolize a dirigible.

183 At first, the horizontal windows were retained with the new facade. See Aldo Rossi (Florence, 1979), p. 52.

184 Aldo Rossi, *L'architettura della città* (Padua, 1966; English edition, revised by Rossi and Peter Eisenman: *The Architecture of the City* [Cambridge, Mass., 1982]). Quotations in the text are from the English edition except where there are substantive differences from the original.

185 Rossi, *The Architecture of the City*, p. 179.

186 Rossi, *L'architettura della città*, p. 104.

187 Rossi, *The Architecture of the City*, p. 136.

188 Ibid., p. 126.

189 Rossi used the Italian word *ambiente*. It is rendered as *context* in the English edition; however, a better rendition might be *milieu* or, of course, *ambience*. — Ed.

190 Rossi, *The Architecture of the City*, p. 126.

191 Ibid., p. 124.

192 Ibid., p. 54.

193 Ibid., p. 53.

194 Ibid., p. 126.

195 Ibid., p. 107.

196 Rossi, p. 94 of German edition of *L'architettura della città* (Düsseldorf, 1973).

197 Rossi, exhibition catalog, ETH Zurich, p. 10.

198 Giorgio Grassi, *Freiebutter* 12 (1982), p. 87.

199 Ibid., p. 86.

200 Carlos M. Aris and Agostino Renna, in Giorgio Grassi, *Projekte und Entwürfe, 1960–1980* (Berlin, 1981), n.p.

201 Vittorio Magnago Lampugnani, "Die schwierige Einfachheit," in *Giorgio Grassi* (note 200 above).

202 As quoted in Aris and Renna (note 200 above).

203 Giorgio Grassi, "Architektur — Probleme und Realismus," *Archithese* 19 (1978), p. 21.

204 Ibid., p. 18.

205 Ibid.

206 Ibid., p. 19.

207 Ibid.

208 Tolkien's hobbits prefer round doors and windows, and semicircular door openings occur in East Asian architecture.

209 Kenneth Frampton points this out in his preface to Mario Botta's *Architettura e progetti negli anni '70* (Milan, 1979).

210 See Kähler, *Architektur als Symbolverfall* (Braunschweig, 1981).

211 Aldo Rossi, exhibition catalog, Milan, 1973, pp. 116–119.

212 In *Fragmente aus einem persönlichen Museum*, exhibition catalog, Superstudio, 1973, p. 20.

213 In *Superstudio, 1966–1982. Storie, figure, architettura* (Florence, 1982), p. 85.

214 See *Archithese 1* (1972).

215 Verbal statement by Adolfo Natalini.

216 See "Das Prinzip Reihung in der Architektur," *Dortmunder Architekturhefte*, no. 2 (1977).

217 Josef Paul Kleihues, in *Transparent 4* (1976), p. 22. In 1972, Kleihues had designed for Baselitz a "house with a fractured base" (figure 370 above). The narrative detail of the fracture may have had a subjective origin or may have been an allusion to Baselitz's method of painting. The reference to Donald Judd is much more direct: The austere frame structures of the Düsseldorf project recall his sculptures.

218 See *Jahrbuch für Architektur* 1981/1982, p. 110 ff.

219 See *Lotus 11*, p. 26.

220 See Rob Krier, *Stadtraum in Theorie und Praxis* (Stuttgart, 1975).

221 Ibid., p. 68.

222 See, for example, Karl Gruber, *Die Gestalt der deutschen Stadt*, second edition (Stuttgart, 1976).

223 Oswald Mathias Ungers, in *Architektur in der Bundesrepublik*, ed. H. Klotz, p. 294.

224 See *Wohnbebauungen*, ed. O. M. Ungers (Berlin, 1968), pp. 45–52.

225 Leon Krier alluded to his special relationship with Ungers in a drawing entitled *Difficult Access to O.M.U.*, reproduced above as figure 381. See Leon Krier, *Drawings 1967–1980* (Brussels, 1980), p. 48.

226 See also the Richmond Hill House by Thomas Gordon Smith, completed in 1982, which is decorated with pseudo-Pompeian wall paintings. (*Jahrbuch für Architektur*, 1983.)

227 Maurice Culot and Rob Krier, in *In Opposition zur Moderne*, ed. G. R. Blomeyer and B. Tietze (Braunschweig, 1980), p. 127.

228 Ibid., p. 121.

229 Bernard Huet, "Petit Manifeste," in *Rational Architecture* (Brussels, 1978), p. 54.

230 See Blomeyer and Tietze (eds.), *In Opposition zur Moderne* (Braunschweig, 1980), p. 122.

231 Richard Meier, in *DLW Architekturforum 1981* (brochure).

232 It must be noted that the Salzman house was jacketed in wood.

233 Richard Meier, in *DLW Architekturforum 1981* (brochure).

234 See Charles Jencks, *Late-Modern Architecture* (London, 1980).

235 John Hejduk, *Seven Houses* (New York, 1980), p. 118.

236 John Hejduk, in *10 Immagini per Venezia* (1980), p. 66.

237 Meier and Gwathmey continued to adhere to the modernist abstraction. Eisenman and Hejduk had gone over to a narrative architecture, yet they avoided all historicizing forms.

238 Charles Jencks, *Post-Modern-Classicism* (London, 1979), p. 108.

239 John Jacobus, *James Stirling* (Stuttgart, 1975), p. 145.

240 Nikolaus Pevsner, *The Buildings of England* (Cambridgeshire).

241 Jacobus, *James Stirling*, p. 66.

242 James Stirling, "Anti-Structure," in *James Stirling* (exhibition catalog, RIBA, 1974), p. 37.

243 James Stirling, "Baubeschreibung des Berliner Wissenschaftszentrums" (January 1980; unpublished).

244 See the works of Colin Rowe.

245 Peter Cook, *Experimental Architecture* (New York, 1970), p. 71.

246 Hans Hollein, lecture, February 1, 1962; printed in *Bau* 2/3 (1969), p. 5.

247 Ibid.

248 Ibid. (continuation, p. 6).

249 Walter Pichler also took part in this exhibition, and his work showed the same tendency.

250 Hans Hollein, unpublished text, 1979.

251 Hans Hollein, unpublished text.

252 Ibid.

253 See Charles Jencks, *Modern Movements in Architecture* (Harmondsworth, 1975), pp. 51–58.

254 This facade later gave rise to a cult of technological details.

255 Hans Hollein, in *Dortmunder Architektureft*, no. 3 (1976), HH 4.

256 In a conversation with the author, Hollein pointed out that this connection is important to him, and that he considers those illustrations that cut off the upper connection to the older building to be falsifications of his intentions.

257 Walter Pichler, "Absolute Architektur" (1962), as quoted in Conrads, *Programme und Manifeste* (note 25 above), p. 174.

258 Hans Hollein, in *Bau* 2/3 (1969), p. 15.

259 *Bau* 1/2 (1968), p. 16.

260 Hans Hollein, in *Bau* 1/2 (1968), p. 2.

261 Hans Hollein, in *Archigram* (New York/Washington, 1973), p. 6.

262 As quoted in an unpublished description of Haus-Rucker-Co.

263 Ibid.

264 Laurids Ortner, *Hans-Rucker-Co., Stadtgestaltung, Projekte* (exhibition catalog, Linz/Danube, 1977), introduction.

265 Heinz Holtmann, in *Sonnenuntergang* (exhibition catalog, Kunstverein Braunschweig, 1974), introduction.

266 Ibid., p. 3

267 Berger's subtitle for this collage — *Activation of the Architectonic Data* — sounds vaguely provocative. See *Werk 7* (1970), p. 470.

268 *Jahrbuch für Architektur* 1981/82, p. 173.

269 See Mats Egelius, "Ralph Erskine," in *Global Architecture* (Tokyo, 1980).

270 See, e.g., "Participations," in *Architectures en France Modernité Post-Modernité* (exhibition catalog), pp. 74–82.

271 Verbal statement by Lucien Kroll to the author.

272 This form of organization is not comparable to the usual handling of projects in large architectural firms (i.e., separate groups working on individual buildings under the supervision of the head of the firm). In Kroll's firm, different groups work on the same project, and the results have to be compared and brought into congruence.

273 As quoted in Ralph Brüderlin, "Partizipatives Bauen," *Baseler Magazin* no. 5 (March 5, 1977), p. 11.

274 Frank Gehry, as quoted in Diamondstein, *American Architecture Now* (New York, 1980), p. 43.

275 Ibid., p. 46.

276 Ibid., p. 41.

277 Ibid., p. 36.

278 Ibid., p. 46.

279 *Jahrbuch für Architektur* 1981/82, p. 157.

280 Ibid., p. 160.

281 Ibid., p. 153.

282 "An Interview with Michael Graves," *Via* 4 (1980), p. 40.

283 See the section on Thomas Gordon Smith in the present volume.

284 Rem Koolhaas, verbal statement to the author.

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