January 1974

OPPOSITIONS 2

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In this issue:

Editorial Statement

As OPPOSITIONS advances from its first to its second issue it begins to define itself, irrespective of what the editors may attempt to establish as their joint editorial line. While this may immediately render any editorial statement superfluous, we nonetheless remain conscious of the need to situate OPPOSITIONS within a critical context.

It must have occurred to the readers of our first issue that OPPOSITIONS presents itself in a similar vein as the so-called "little magazines" of the twenties and thirties, and this is scarcely an accident since the editors continue to be admirers of such polemical journals as *De Stijl* and *L'Esprit Nouveau*. At the same time it is patently obvious that this is hardly an opportune moment for the spontaneous emergence of that kind of polemical magazine; the time for this kind of polemical discourse has passed and we have no interest in resurrecting it.

Nonetheless, as editors we have little desire to perpetuate the tenets of the liberal tradition; to publish texts simply because they are good examples of their kind or solely because they represent yet another idiosyncratic point of view. At the same time, it must be made clear that we are not concerned with presenting current issues in the same manner as the established architectural magazines, with their need to define and market the latest tendencies in built work. Rather, we are concerned with an aspect which must precede any built work — the ideas which inform any architecture.

In short, what we are striving for is the inducement of a number of specific discourses; namely, the critique of built work as a vehicle for ideas; the reassessment of the past as a means of determining the necessary relations existing between built form and social values; the establishment of a spectrum of theoretical discourses linking ideology and built form; the documentation of little known archival material as a means for advancing scholarship and thought in the field as a whole; and finally, the publication of reviews and letters that have a direct bearing on the discourses at hand. As to the last, they seem to us to be primarily twofold: firstly, an ongoing discourse on the place of physical form in architecture and planning today; and secondly, the indivisible ideological and socio-political implications of architectural production as a whole. For us the sum total of these efforts constitutes a new polemical form which is dialectical in nature rather than rhetorical.

This present issue continues our efforts to stimulate the presentation of arguments relevant to these discourses. Some of the pieces treat both the place of physical form and its socio-political relevance as one and the same issue: in the realm of contemporary issues, Stuart Cohen's unconsciously ideological critique of recent American housing and William Ellis' review of Reyner Banham's ecology of Los Angeles; in the realm of history, Colin Rowe's concern for the vicissitudes of such lost concepts as *character* and *composition* and by implication their relevance, if any, to our task today; in the area of re-lated arts, Rosalind Krauss' enquiry into meaning in contemporary sculpture. Finally, in the documents section, we present Julia Bloomfield's annotated bibliography of the works and writings of Alison and Peter Smithson; reprints of three little known texts by Philip Johnson from the 1930's; and Rem Koolhaas' and Gerrit Oorthuys' commentary on a previously unavailable project by Ivan Leonidov.

Thus, whatever our differences, OPPOSITIONS continues in this issue to assert our belief in the importance of theory as the critical basis of significant practice. We deplore the subtle absorption of architecture into the cyclical processes of relevancy and obsolescence. In subsequent issues we shall surely give the realists their due, but not without exposing them to critical reaction. And finally we believe that, if culture cannot transform the relationships of production, it certainly can make one feel the necessity.

Peter Eisenman
Kenneth Frampton
Mario Gandelsonas

Physical Context/Cultural Context: Including it All

Stuart Cohen

Stuart Cohen's essay is of particular interest for the editors of OPPOSITIONS because it represents the ideas of an architect of a younger generation. While Cohen was a student of Colin Rowe's his essay seems to represent a break from any doctrinaire Rowe position, toward a possible synthetic viewpoint. Through the analysis of two pairs of buildings Cohen attempts to interrelate notions used by opposing architectural tendencies — *inclusivism* and *exclusivism* under the theoretical construct of *contextualism*. This analysis brings to light both the limitations and the overlapping involved in the former terms, and thus the need for a more elaborate construct for these notions.

Stuart E. Cohen was born in Chicago in 1942. He has Bachelors and Masters degrees in architecture from Cornell University. While working in New York his design for a low-income public housing project won the firm he was with a *Progressive Architecture* design citation. Mr. Cohen has been a visiting critic at Columbia University. He currently has his own architectural practice in Chicago and is a Lecturer in architecture at the University of Illinois at the Chicago Circle.

2 Either consciously or unconsciously, architecture comes to embody the most stable and persistent values of a culture, and through this institutions become symbolized by their buildings; their values become associated with architectural forms.[1] These forms represent the architect's judgments of the natural world and the built environment, and it is this judgmental aspect of architecture that is at issue in current architectural critiques. To understand these critiques it is necessary to understand what modern architecture was and what judgments it implied.

The Modern movement in architecture presented a pseudo-industrial style of building that was intended to replace the academic eclecticism of the Beaux Arts — a style no longer seen as evocative or symbolic of the times. To do this it employed imagery related to machinery rather than to previous building, thus symbolizing its belief in a social and a physical utopia to be created by technology. As an utopian architecture, it generalized and idealized even the most specific and particular requirements in relation to its millenial fantasies. Modern architecture was a revolution whose ideas succeeded and whose anticipated utopia never ensued, making it impossible, historically, to judge it as better than what it sought so insistently to replace. This revolution's accepted premises, its architectural ideas and anticipated utopia, are still with us, and they may rightfully be characterized as having been exclusive of visual and social values other than its own. This exclusive stance was reflected by an insistence on a cultural, symbolic, and physical detachment from aspects of an existing context. The architectural manifestations of this were geometric, involving a fixation on buildings as free standing objects and as abstract form. This purist and abstract use of geometry[2] implied a Platonic and idealized view of the world. As a detached object the modern building could stand for, and literally represent, a fragment of the "new order," the better world to come, which would be realized when everything old had been torn down and replaced. Thus Modern architecture as a set of strategies for the planning and siting of buildings seemed to condemn all existing architecture by implication and any adjacent building by direct confrontation. This stance, when described pejoratively, has been called *exclusivism,* while an enlightened and unexclusive architecture would exhibit tendencies of *inclusivism.*

As a mode of critique, inclusivism is a point of view associated with the writing and the work of Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown, Charles Moore, and Vincent Scully. They argue that contemporary architecture, the legacy of a "heroic age" of Modern architecture, is exclusive, that it excludes from consideration most aspects of reality not provided for in its received polemic. Inclusivism's most articulate spokesman, Robert Venturi, in a highly personal statement, which also indicates his dependence on "pop" in the other visual arts, describes the variety of realities that he feels an inclusive architecture should synthesize: "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."[3] This "messy vitality," according to Venturi, seems to be a "pop" interest in what Charles Moore has called "the vitality and vulgarity of real commerce."[4] Extrapolating from a reading of Venturi or Moore,[5] one can make a valid work of architecture out of anything that is at hand: commercial or arcane symbols and forms, the relationship of a building to a site or context, the explicit trappings of a culture, or a local vernacular style — all of which presume that architecture is, and is to be judged by the presence of architectural ideas, images and that it is as well a formal organization.

Recently, inclusivism, as represented by Venturi's work, seems to have abandoned analysis of formal organization as a part of the critique.[6] In *Learning from Las Vegas* by Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown and Steven Izenour, Modern architecture is criticized entirely on issues of symbolism. Buildings are "ducks" or "decorated sheds." Modern architecture, the argument goes, by abandoning the use of applied decoration, began to decorate its buildings by articulating building elements such as structure
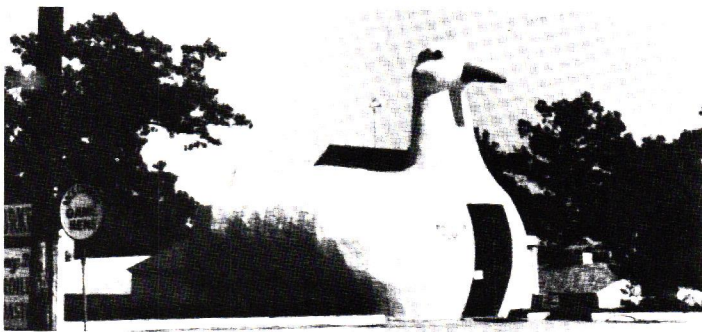
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and mechanical systems. This has resulted in the tendency to grossly deform simple buildings to serve the purpose of decoration, thus turning the buildings themselves into decoration.[7] For the purpose of Venturi's argument, it seems that decoration equals symbolism, for we are offered the Long Island Duckling (fig. 1),a roadside building deformed into a symbol — the "duck" — where *building equals symbol.* What is suggested as an alternative is the simple, straightforward building, the shed to which decoration is applied — the "decorated shed" — or *building plus symbol.* Through the continued citing of examples that only illustrate this issue, inclusivism now seems to deal almost entirely with architectural imagery, suggesting that this is to be taken as the sole dimension for evaluation. This is unfortunate. The chosen forms and their sources may now be clearer,[8] but what is the intended relationship of these forms to formal structure and of formal structure to meaning? Up to now it has been clear what inclusive architecture was *not,* but now, with its emphasis even further removed from formal analysis, as in *Complexity and Contradiction,* it is unclear what the organizational strategies for the forms of an inclusive architecture might be.

The idea of including by recognition or replication the defining aspects of a local physical environment is an empirical theory, or rather a set of design strategies, derived from the urban theories of Colin Rowe and presently being called *contextualism.*[9] These strategies, since they deal largely with urban models, are relatively detached from references to specific architectural imagery. For example, issues of site planning dealing with the relationship of one building to another are not seen as prescribing a building's architectural vocabulary, that is, its style. Contextual strategies and the general critique they imply began with the recognition of the inadequacy of Modern architectural design theory to deal with the traditional city as well as it dealt with the suburban site, its presumed ideal. This involved certain assumptions. The traditional city was seen as a solid with corridor streets, squares, and parks as intentional voids rather than as residual space. These were considered as being organized by grid, radial, linear, or composite propositions. Overlaid on the tradi-

tional city was the idea, if not always the fact, of the twentieth century city: free-standing buildings in a park-like setting. This was taken to represent our cities as they are to be found today. Urban formal typologies were to be treated as transcultural, that is to say, applicable without need for functionalist rationales (for if Americans won't promenade in urban plazas perhaps they will ice skate in them). Since an exemplar used was not a literal model for solving problems but an illustration of various modes of organizing and structuring urban form, one could compare plans at widely differing scales and buildings of widely differing use.[10] Further, it was assumed that one could morally operate in this way, making decisions that did not directly relate to many of our urban problems because Modern architecture had already amply illustrated the inability of built form alone to solve problems of largely social or economic origin.[11] These assumptions were not seen as an argument against the need for social relevancy in urban planning and architecture; rather it was felt that other values were also important. These values, largely visual and spatial, were, like a specific design solution, to be intuited from an accepted local context, a site and its surroundings. The design process was always to be empirical in its recognition of exigencies and irregularities. It was to produce a physical continuity of urban form that, if not literally an extension of the style of the adjacent architecture and urban fabric, would suggest the process of accretion by which the traditional city had developed. Design strategies would be largely those of infilling, completion, and occasionally subtraction or replacement as seen appropriate to a particular site. Ultimately these strategies were akin to renovations, the successful renovation belying its newness to appear locked into and dependent on its specific physical context, seeming to be that which it replaced. Two modes for accomplishing this were suggested. They dealt with either local or previously identified urban forms. These were the strategies of *response* and the *deformation of ideal types.* Without elaborating on these,[12] they might be simply illustrated by several building projects. Examples of modern buildings of *response,* or buildings made from the *outside in* would be Aalto's Pension Institute in Helsinki (1952) (fig. 2), which is the terminus of a terraced park;

Figure 2. Finnish Public Institute, Helsinki. Alvar Aalto, architect, 1952. Model and site situation.

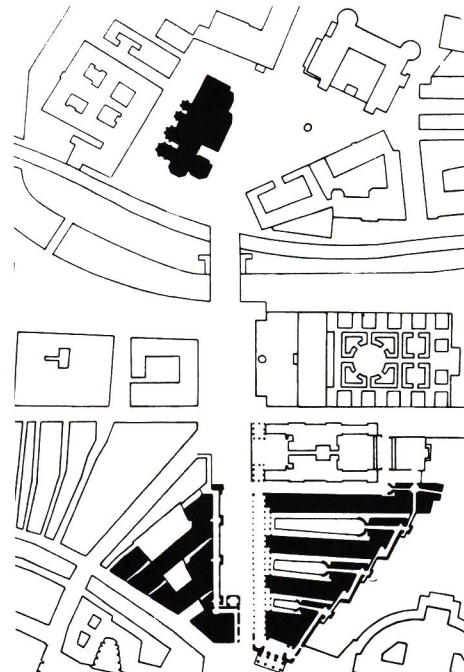Figure 3. Royal Chancellery, Stockholm. Gunnar Asplund, architect, 1922. Site plan.

Figure 4. Derby Civic Center Competition, Derby. James Stirling, architect, 1970. Existing and proposed alteration to town.

Figure 5. Architectural Project 1923. T. van Doesburg and C. van Eesteren, architects, 1923. Axonometric drawing.
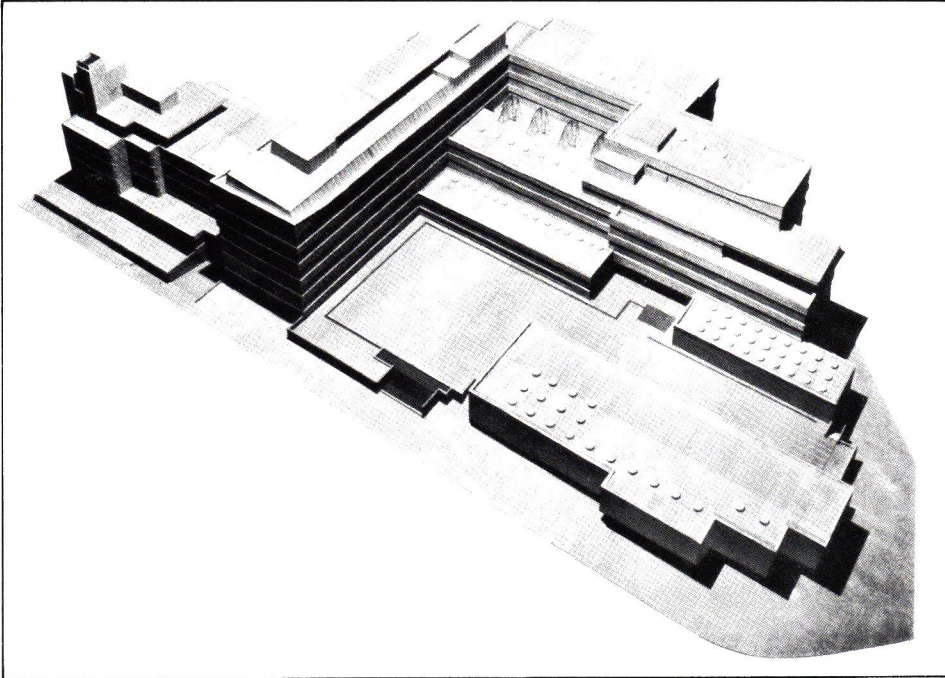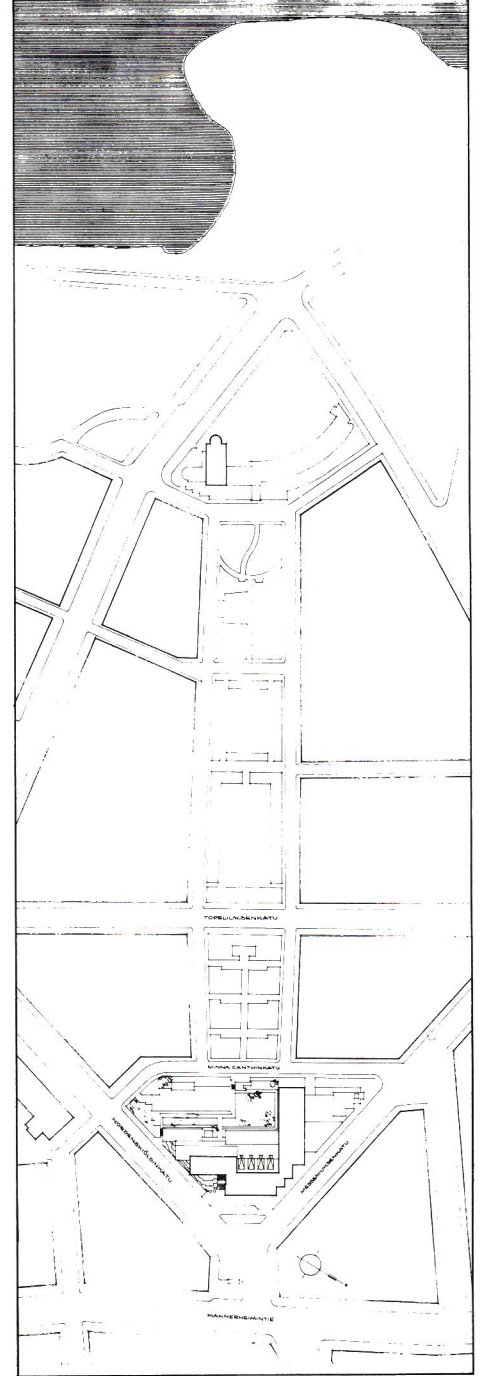

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and Gunnar Asplund's project for the Royal Chancellery in Stockholm (1922) (fig. 3), which to each side reproduces the adjacent urban configuration while forming one end of an urban axis. The application of an ideal type, either deformed or adjusted to fit a context,[13] could be illustrated by James Stirling's recent Civic Center Competition for Derby (1970) (fig. 4) with its references to the Royal Crescent at Bath. By comparison to these projects, the typical Modern building is usually idealized into a free-standing structure detached from its surroundings (an assertion of importance in an urban context). As an ideal volume, ıt can undergo only limited deformation, usually internally via program or externally via conformance to an aesthetic system. The house that van Doesburg and van Eesteren designed for Léonce Rosenberg (1923) (fig. 5) represents an example of this Modern ideal. It is all-sided and articulated in response to an aesthetic theory denying any possible conditions of site and entrance which might differentiate its sides. This ideal is now part of a tradition that *contextualism* and, one assumes, *inclusivism* both seek to deny.

Contextualism as a working strategy seems to have certain parallels to *inclusivism*. If this is true the comparison of these two positions may clarify questions as to what truly inclusive architecture as differentiated from Venturi's *inclusivism* should be. While *inclusivism* seems largely occupied with imagery and symbolism, and *contextualism* with physical organization, a comparison of these two positions might be made not in terms of their verbal statements, but by comparing projects their authors feel to be representative examples of each. To make such a comparison, one should compare projects similar in terms of building type and intended scope, program, scale, budget, materials, and even site. This is almost an impossibility in architectural criticism; however, the opportunity exists in relation to a series of housing projects, many of which have already been publicized with the result of pigeon-holing them into safely defined categories.

In the introduction to *New Directions in American Architecture,* Robert Stern asserts that an intellectual
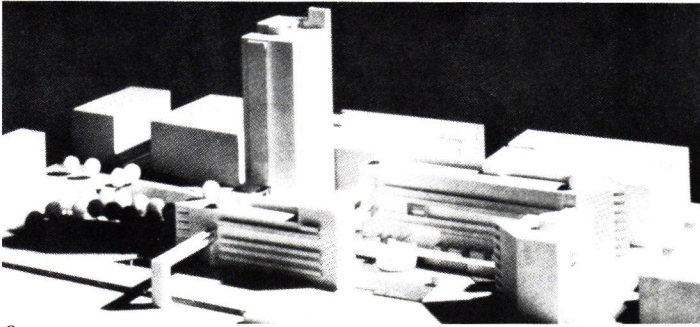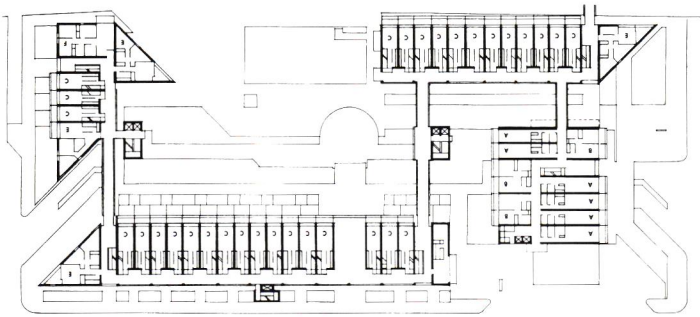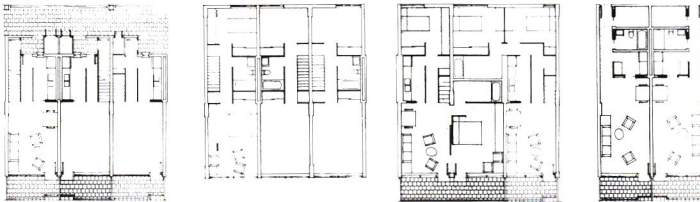

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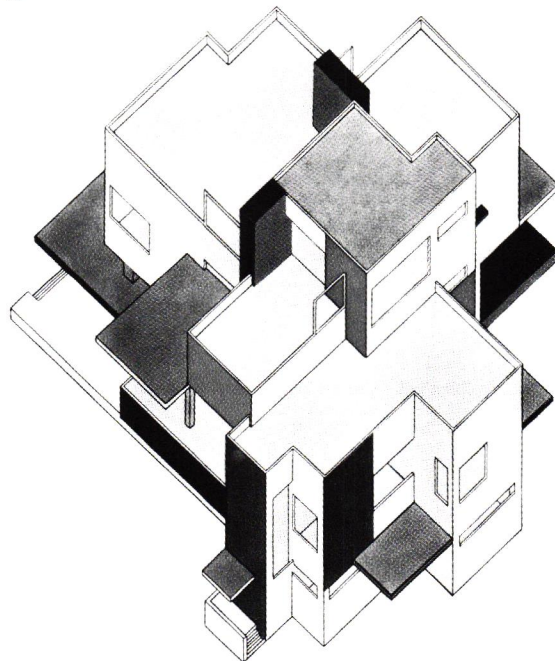
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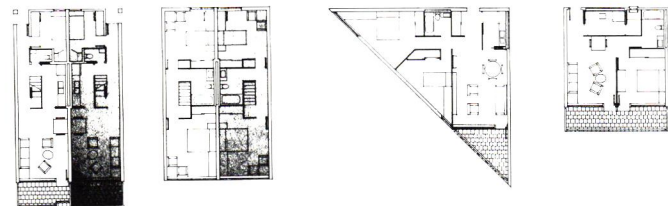
split, a sort of "generation gap," exists in American architecture that can be seen by comparing the first and third place entries to the 1968 Brighton Beach housing competition. These entries, and the split in opinion among the competition jury members, according to the chairman, Philip Johnson, "...is indicative of many problems in today's architecture and deserves full discussion and publicity."[14] The winning entry by Wells/Koetter (fig. 6) and the third place entry by Venturi and Rauch (fig. 9) are still being publicized (see *Learning from Las Vegas*) as an example of exclusivism versus inclusivism, a comparison that five years later seems unlikely to yield new insights. However, the comparison of these two projects as examples of contextualism and inclusivism may clarify the ways in which each is or is not inclusive architecture.

Both the Wells/Koetter and the Venturi solutions represent considered responses to certain of the urban issues of the Brighton Beach site. They represent opposite design propositions, involving the scale, physical density, and configuration of the urban fabric immediately around them. Both have larger implications as architectural and urban solutions. That the Wells/Koetter scheme as an urban proposition is traditional while the Venturi scheme derives more directly from sources that are modernist and utopian is an irony generally overlooked in the comparison of these two projects.

Venturi assesses only the question of architectural imagery, writing about his entry, "The decoration of these sheds is not in surface ornament . . . but in the symbolism of the elements, in their ordinariness. The substance and image of these buildings is not minimegastructural with interesting and picturesque complexities, such as zoots eight stories high and neo-constructivist bridges . . . . The substance and image are a combination of fairly conventional elements. . ."[15] Both of these projects seem ordinary, depending on the context in which they are considered.[16] Both are executed in adopted architectural vernaculars. The Wells/Koetter project, as vernacular, draws on the forms of recent Modern architecture. The breakdown of the facades into windows and unbroken surfaces that read vertically; the continuous applied balconies, bridges

Figure 6. Brighton Beach Project,
Brighton Beach, New York. Wells/Koetter, architects, 1968. Winning entry
model.

Figure 7. Brighton Beach Project. Wells/
Koetter, architects, 1968. Key plan.

Figure 8. Brighton Beach Project. Wells/
Koetter, architects, 1968. Unit plans.

Figure 9. Brighton Beach Project. Venturi and Rauch, architects, 1968. Third
place entry model.

Figure 10. Brighton Beach Project. Venturi and Rauch, architects, 1968.
Third and typical floor plans.

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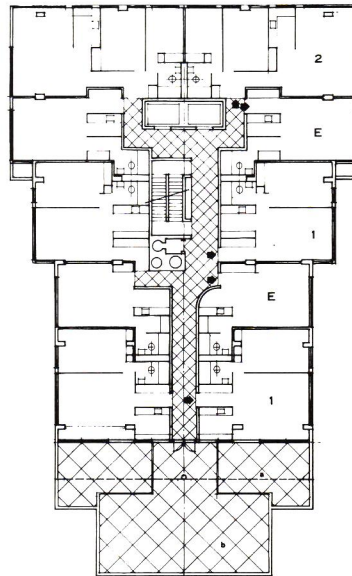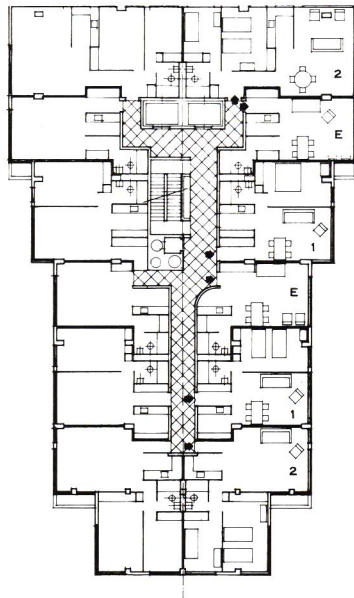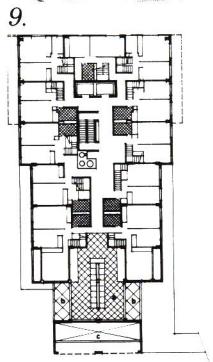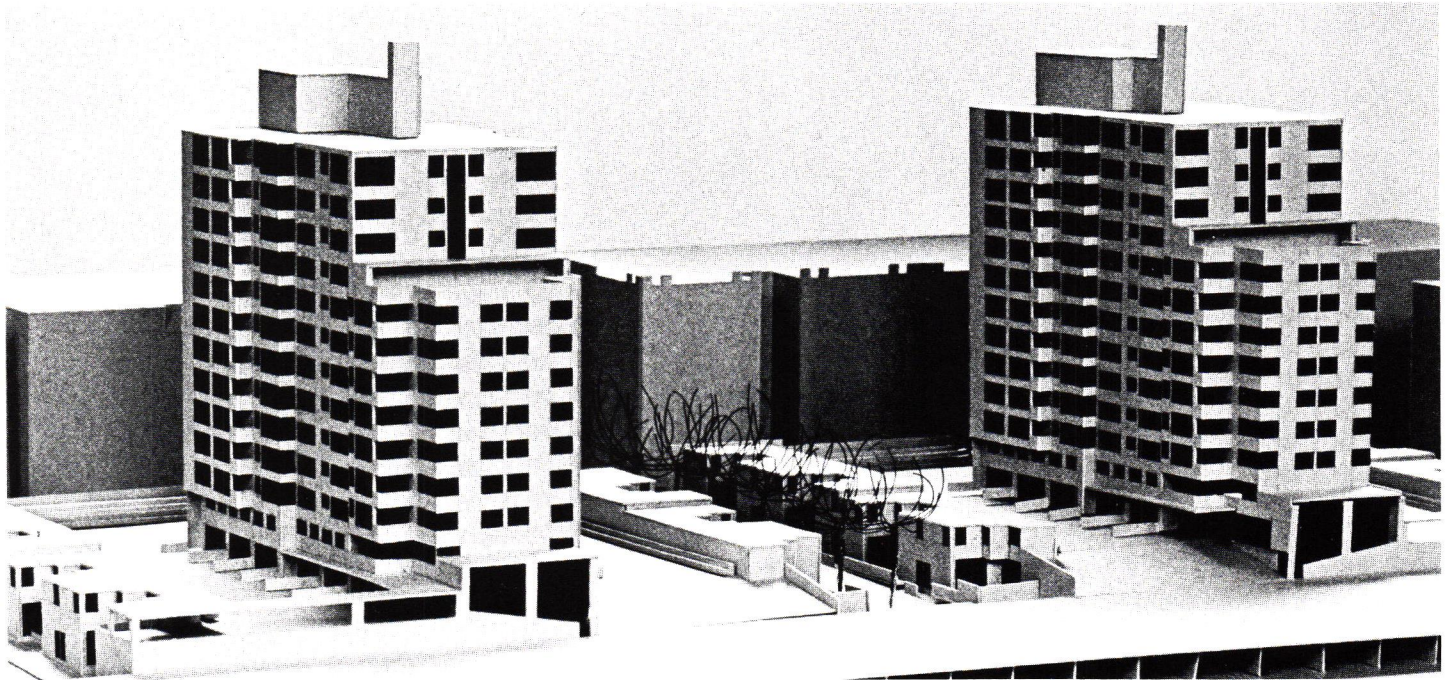
Figure 11. Married Student Housing at Harvard, Cambridge. Jose Luis Sert, architect, 1964. View seen across the Charles River.

Figure 12. International House competition entry. Romaldo Giurgola, architect, 1965. Model.
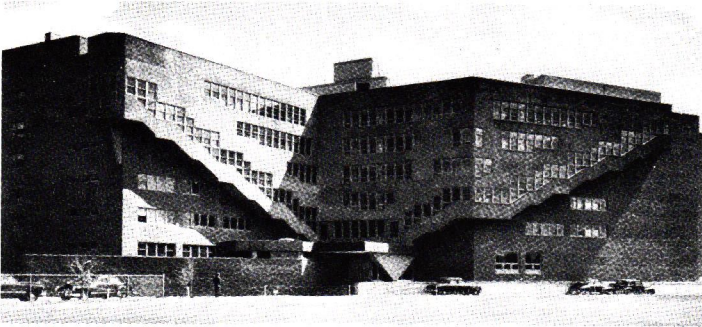
Figure 13. M.I.T. Baker Dormitory, Cambridge. Alvar Aalto, architect, 1942-1948. Rear of building.
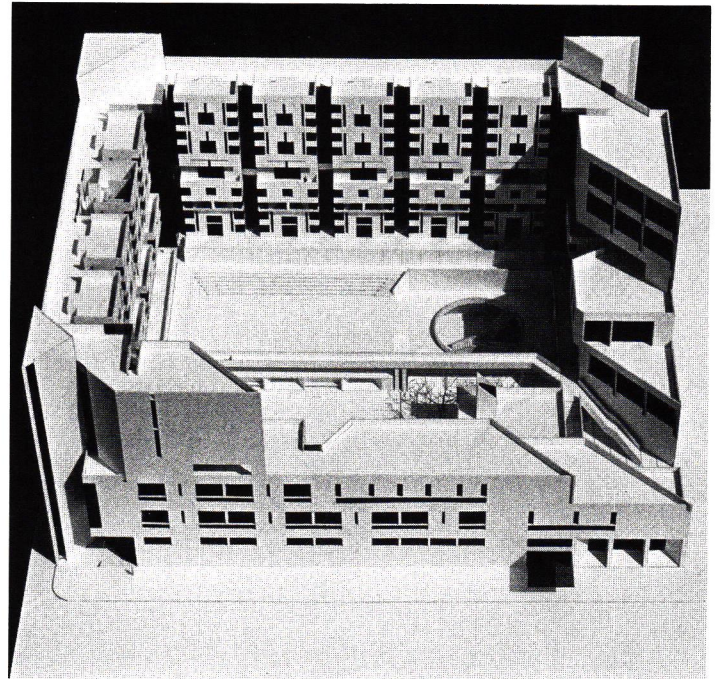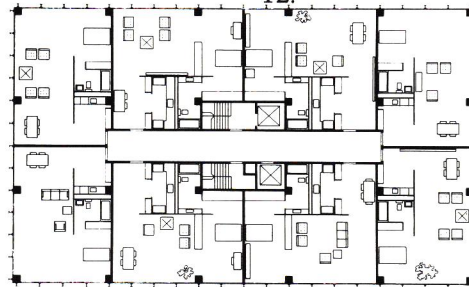
Figure 14. 860 Lake Shore Drive Apartments, Chicago. Mies van der Rohe, architect, 1965. Typical floor plan.
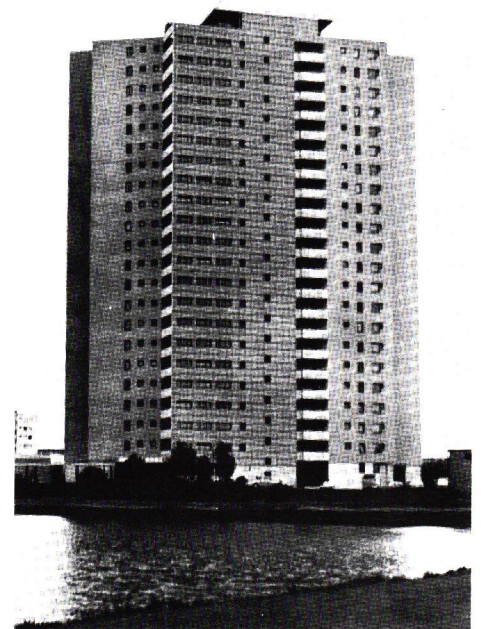
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and underpasses are somewhat suggestive of Sert's Married Student Housing at Harvard (fig.11) and the diagonal splaying of building ends to create corner entries to a court was characteristic of the work of many Philadelphia architects during the 1960's as seen in Giurgola's International House competition entry (fig. 12). The adopted architectural vernacular of Venturi's project is ostensibly that of the speculative builder's apartment house: its inherent possibilities as high art[17] probably relate, however, to Venturi's appreciation of certain of the works of Alvar Aalto: the severe visual quality of M.I.T.'s Baker Dormitory (fig. 13) or the ordinary facades and inflected forms of many of Aalto's apartment houses built in the 1960's (fig. 15).

What has been made into an issue in previous comparisons of these two projects is their architectural imagery, their respective choice of vernacular styles, and the significance attributed to this choice. If one must assess the architectural style of these two projects, it is difficult to see either as an appropriate judgment. What indigenous qualities of a Brighton Beach style (learning from Brighton Beach?) and its predominant building types does either try to include? Is Venturi's slightly "pop" appreciation of recent "builder modern" as a genre of *just plain folks architecture* really any less obviously an intruder in a visual sense than the Wells/ Koetter version. of "high fashion modern"?

Programmatically the Wells/Koetter and the Venturi solutions begin at the same point. They both break the apartment distribution down by the determination to plan the apartments as a combination of duplexes and flats. In both projects the studio and one bedroom apartments are always flats. Two bedroom apartments are planned as both duplexes and flats, with the two bedroom flats occupying special locations in the building's configuration (ends or corners), which offer multiple exposures. In both, the largest units, the three bedroom apartments, are always duplexes located at grade with separate exterior entrances and private gardens (figs. 8, 10). The circulation in both schemes is treated elaborately, when measured by the standards of publicly-assisted housing (figs. 7, 10). In both projects, the process of going to one's apartment on a typical floor is intentionally enriched by social and architectural allusions to a promenade. Apartment entrances often occur in individual or hallway alcoves while the vertical circulation is articulated in plan by freeing it either internally (Venturi) or externally (Wells/ Koetter) from the main body of the apartments. (This common strategy, which allows for the creation of residual spaces with qualities of *place* in conjunction with the vertical circulation, may be instructively compared to Mies van der Rohe's 860 Lake Shore Drive (fig. 14) as an illustration of an actual speculative builder's apartment house.) Venturi's treatment of internal circulation is no more simple and obvious than that of Wells/Koetter. Stylistically, the hallways of Venturi's tower suggest the apartment house, expanding to fill the zoning envelope, with gratuitous spatial, a kind of "let's make it work," nonchalance. In fact, like the neo-constructivist circulation of the Wells/Koetter project, Venturi's planning is informed by an architectural image, namely a nineteenth century notion of the picturesque, which is equally remote from the "dumb and ordinary" hallways of 860 Lake Shore Drive.

Wells/Koetter have packed their repetitive apartment plan into two simple building configurations: a single-loaded-corridor apartment slab whose choice and preferential orientation correspond to the site's preferred view of the water, and a double-loaded-corridor tower plan. The planning of a triangular two bedroom unit is used to produce the slab's splayed ends. While specifically stylistic, this does facilitate views, imply and reinforce the directionality of the space between the buildings in relation to the site's surroundings, and reinforce the frontality of the two eight-story slab buildings, where one fronts the water and boardwalk, while the other backs on Brightwater Court. The function of a diagonal end to affect the frontality of a street facade can be seen in Venturi's North Penn Visiting Nurse Association building (fig. 16). If the diagonals of Wells/Koetter's project are argued for in terms of formalistic urban intentions, then so must the aggressive deformation of Venturi's simple double-loaded-corridor towers into a "T" configuration with ser-

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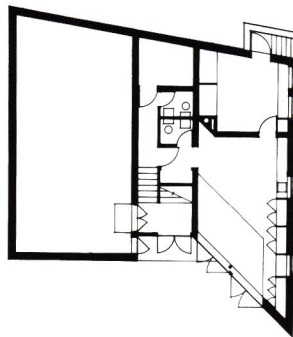
rated sides. Like the Wells/Koetter project, the Venturi buildings are formed to facilitate views (by stepping in plan), to reinforce the directionality of the space between them, and to reinforce the frontality of a side that is obliged to function as a front facade to Brightwater Court. Both projects are reasonably straightforward approaches to the building program, but both have deformations produced by issues of siting as well as by architectural style. Both are decorated, as Venturi suggests, not by applied ornament but by the symbolic images that a chosen part can carry. In Venturi's building it is the windows that are the obvious decoration.

In urban multi-family housing the element of greatest symbolic importance has traditionally been the entranceway. It has always commanded the bulk of the decoration while the rest of the building's facade has been limited to an arrangement of windows. Apartments, as an urban building type, are generally found behind masonry street walls rhythmically punctured by rectangular windows. We have come to recognize this older urban housing, in an almost functionalist sense, by a gradation of window sizes that suggest the repetitive diversity of rooms behind them. In the appropriately stripped-down aesthetic of "low-cost" housing, be it the International Style of the 1920's, or "builder modern," the window emerges as a kind of housing icon, an icon that serves to identify a familiar building type while providing a formal opportunity in its compositional use.

Examining the elevation drawings of Venturi's Brighton Beach project reveals his interest in the manipulation of this familiar element. The drawings show slightly oversized rectangular windows. Living rooms are indicated by a pair of double-hung windows in a single opening; bedrooms are indicated by a single window of varying rectangular proportions. Nowhere does program or plan explain the variety of rectangular proportions and sizes these windows assume. They have meaning only in their intended compositional function. On the east elevation (fig. 17) the living room of the corner apartment (south end) is marked by a large horizontally rectangular pair of double-hung windows flanked by a single vertical window

Figure 17. Brighton Beach Project. Venturi and Rauch, architects, 1968. East elevation from interior way.

Figure 18. Brighton Beach Project. Venturi and Rauch, architects, 1968. Half north elevation.

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with a common head elevation but shorter length. Adjacent to this "L" figure is another, shorter set of living room windows, a vertically compressed version of the standard living room fenestration. The sill of this window is set at the same height as the adjacent living room window and the visual effect is of an abrupt downward shift that corresponds to, and continues, a downward vertical reading established by the edge of a major break in the building's vertical massing (the 11th floor setback and roof terrace). A vertically extended window is used as a noticeable size variation on the established pair of living room windows to make a higher cornice-like reading of the top floor's fenestration. The north facade (fig. 18) facing Brightwater Court exhibits the largest and seemingly most arbitrary variation of window size and placement, denying any simple assumption that the building's floor plan may be read as coded into a fenestration pattern. This is no simple complexity in which facade and interior are disjoined. The drawing suggests a gauche version of Borromini's Oratorio di S. Philipi Neri facade, in which an implied concavity is produced illusionistically as a gesture toward implying an urban-scale entry space. Pushed to either edge of Venturi's facade are large living room windows, which read visually as bending downward. This reading is facilitated by the upward shift in sill height of the row of eight windows between them. The effect is to set up a tri-part division that perceptually detaches the center eight windows from the facade's flat outer edges. These windows diminish symmetrically in height towards the center of the facade while maintaining the same sill elevation. At the same time their rectangular proportions are varied from vertical, to square, to horizontal, in a progression toward a visual center that seems optically to recede in space.

Like the Venturi project, the Wells/Koetter scheme uses some of its architectural elements as decoration, but they seem more clearly applied. One could easily eliminate the projecting, continuous strips of Modernist balconies and the neo-constructivist bridges that interconnect the circulation. One should probably ask the degree to which the intentions would suffer if it were stripped of these? Very little, I suspect. One can easily imagine interchanging the

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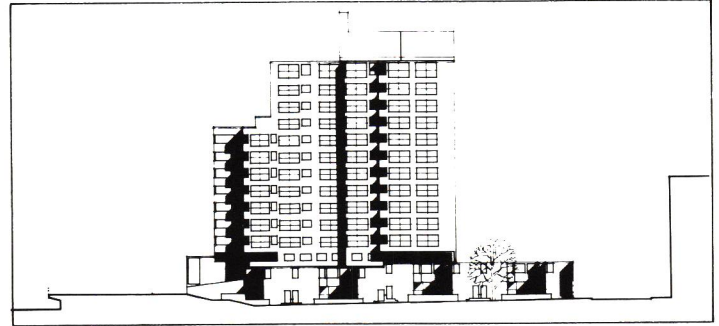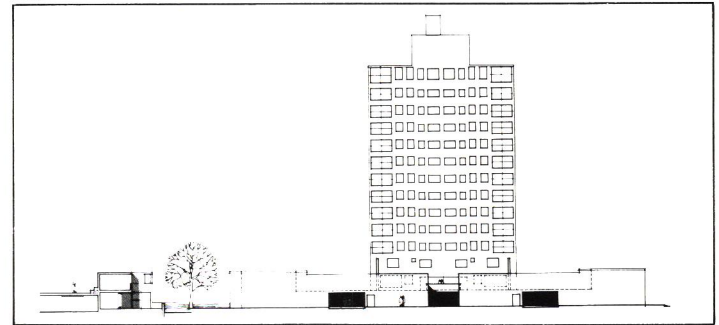
architectural styles applied to each of the two projects (perhaps not inappropriately considering Modern architecture's preference for detached building types). One can imagine the Venturi project, a bit deviant perhaps, done in an SOM glass curtain wall. Likewise, the Wells/Koetter buildings could easily be done in brick with double-hung aluminum windows, no bridges, and the directionality of their angles ends as rectangular steps in plan. So readily are the styles of "builder modern" vernacular and "high fashion Modern" mentally interchangable for these two projects, that there can be little question that previous comparisons dealt with style, imagery, and symbolism to the exclusion of other architectural issues.

The idea that what an architect builds is a value judgment of a context is approached by Venturi and Wells/Koetter at different levels and in different ways. If Venturi's specific architectural imagery is his judgment of an appropriate response to a cultural context, Wells/Koetter's site planning is their judgment of an appropriate response to a physical urban context. It is in this area of consideration, passing judgment on a physical urban context, that the Wells/Koetter project is inclusive and traditional and the Venturi project is exclusive and derivative of Modernist utopian sources.

The Wells/Koetter project deals with a traditional notion of the city. Specifically, it deals with the site at Brighton Beach that is located adjacent to an open park at the physical edge of a grid infilled with six story residential apartment houses. This physical edge of buildings that front the boardwalk and the water is probably more appropriately seen as a zone, one block deep extending from the boardwalk to Brightwater Court with the building faces on the far side of Brightwater Court forming a second and less equivocal edge. Where one assumes the boardwalk to have had a real physical edge formed by buildings (as at either side of the site), this condition is now eroded through by development of free-standing modern residential towers facing the water, rather than edging it. The Wells/Koetter project proposes a courtyard *parti* opening to the water; the bulk of its elements are intended to extend the physical scale and height of the adjacent older housing onto the site. The wall of buildings lining the boardwalk is extended by implication across Brighton 4th Street and bent in along a diagonal surface back to the rear facade of the courtyard. From Brightwater Court the building complex walls the street like the older adjacent apartment houses. From the water it mediates between extending the wall of the boardwalk and accomodating an urban void, the park on Brighton 2nd Street. Having established the corner of Brightwater Court and Brighton 4th Street with a solid "L" configuration, opened diagonally, the major building masses and lower building elements suggest a zoning of the site into lateral bands of space running parallel to the boardwalk. This establishes a formal context in which the tower, defining a corner of the project's courtyard, functions as both an urban enclosing wall element and a free-standing object wedged into a sluice-like space. Visually and symbolically, the tower is made to stand in the park, flanked on either side by a major space, each defined by medium scaled enclosing walls and a diagonal surface (one new, one old) opening to the water. The waterfront becomes a defined edge by implication, with a lateral zone of semi-enclosed urban space opened to the water and backed up by the solid of the city. As a generalized *parti*, the Wells/Koetter scheme deals with the application of an urban type —the urban waterfront plaza. In a drawing for a waterfront residential development extending their Brighton Beach project (fig. 19), this type,[18] is made specific as an historical allusion. While based on the notion of a generic type, its realization seems accommodating to an adjacent back-up context of almost endless variety, that the scheme seems intent on relating to physically, making one skeptical that all those empirical variations, including one that resembles the Piazza San Marco, could ever exist. If in fact the scheme is a prototype rather than a suggestion to empirically adapt a type, one is hard pressed to see a proposition so flexible in relation to an imagined physical context, and so dependent on it for inflection, as exclusive or idealized.

If dealing with a prototype is an exclusive and idealized approach to design, what then are the architectural

*Figure 19. Brighton Beach Project. Wells/
Koetter, architects, 1968. Extension
of project as waterfront development.*

*Figure 20. New York Polo Grounds mid-
dle income housing project. Ballard/
Todd Associates, architects, 1964-1967.*

*Figure 21. Voisin plan for Paris. Le Cor-
busier, architect, 1922. Photo of model.*
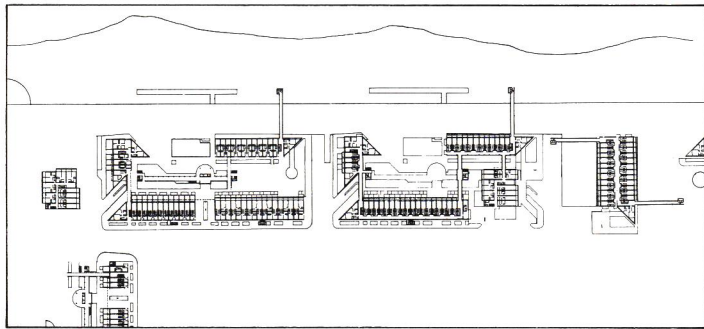
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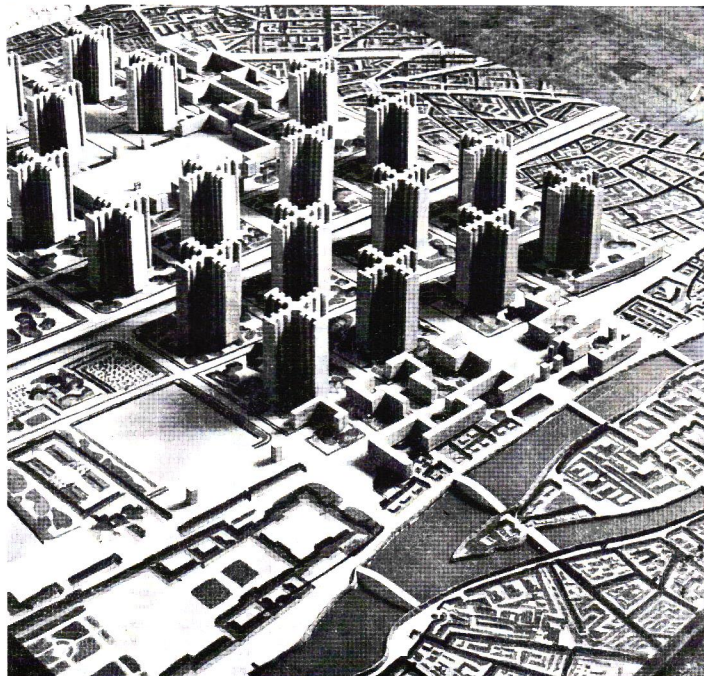
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specificities that make Venturi's towers physically in- 13
clusive? What act of recognition makes them specific to
this site and not a general proposition for something to be
built all along the waterfront, or anywhere for that mat-
ter? What urban values of scale, neighborhood, and place
typical of Brighton Beach do they recognize? What value
judgment do they pass on the medium-rise housing of the
neighborhood and its attendant urban definition as valua-
ble, appropriate and part of a pre-existing local lifestyle?
Aren't these towers with their token street-scale
townhouses, foreign to Brighton Beach, really just
another version of heroic Modern architecture's utopia
(fig. 21)? Aren't they an idealized construct, the city in the
park, invented again to make those unhealthy Jane
Jacobs slums right behind them go away (fig. 20)? Can
their "familiarity" ever overcome their meaning as a uto-
pian image (fig. 9)? If Venturi's two towers are a valid ur-
ban *parti* for their site, an urban edge, then aren't they
ultimately dependent on the existing urban fabric for
their appropriateness?[19]

The tower in the park or plaza, as an urban statement, is
valid as a formal proposition only as long as it is backed up
by the traditional city as a solid. A row of towers, as a
screen or pierced edge condition, works urbanistically for
the Brighton Beach site only as long as a wall of buildings,
a real edge, is maintained on the opposite side of Bright-
water Court. As an urban space opening to the water, the
quality of the space between Venturi's towers is as
vulnerable as Fifth Avenue's Grand Army Plaza. While
issues of urban form are not presented as a part of Ven-
turi's arguments about his Brighton Beach project, aren't
they, as aspects of an existing condition, important deter-
minants of any inclusive solution? Aren't qualities of
physical continuity, such as scale and building configura-
tion, also important carriers of familiar associations that
make the physical (contextual) determinants of architec-
tural form as important as perceived cultural ones?

In *Learning from Las Vegas* it is Paul Rudolph, not Wells/
Koetter, who is Venturi's real strawman. If one compares
Rudolph's Crawford Manor (fig. 22) and Venturi's Guild
House (fig. 24), we are told (by Venturi) that we are again

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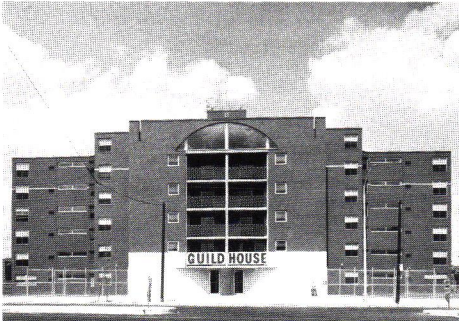
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comparing a "duck" and a "decorated shed." Many of Venturi's arguments are well taken, and Paul Rudolph, who has been characterized[20] as the arch "formalist" and "exclusivist" of the second generation of American modern architects, makes an easy target. The work of Richard Meier may be taken to represent a polar extreme to that of Robert Venturi with regards to issues of "good taste" and the "designed object." Further, Meier is usually associated with a series of elaborate, white, purist houses rather distinctly recalling the International Style of the 1920's, a style that is taken by Venturi to epitomize *exclusivism*.

If one chooses to compare the Guild House to Meier's recently completed publicly-assisted housing project, Twin Parks Northeast, it is obvious that no simple strawman comparison is possible. Both projects are comparable in visual terms for they both deal with similar images of housing as a vernacular building type. Unlike Paul Rudolph's Crawford Manor, with its futurist pseudomechanical shafts and counter-thrusting balconies, Meier's housing is a work of restrained, pared down, rectangular building volumes. Like Venturi's Guild House, Meier's buildings are basically housing slabs, but compared to the plasticity of the Guild House's front facade, Meier's housing is almost *anti-form*. It is the flat public housing-like rear facade of the Guild House (fig. 23) to which the exteriors of Meier's Twin Parks buildings should be compared (fig. 25). Both deal with an ordinary and identifiable image of housing. Venturi writes of the Guild House, "The dark brown brick walls with double-hung windows recall traditional Philadelphia row houses or even the tenement-like backs of Edwardian apartment houses. Their effect is uncommon, however, because they are subtly proportioned and unusually big. The change in scale of these almost banal elements contributes an expression of tension and a quality to these facades, which now read as both conventional and unconventional forms at the same time."[21] Like the Guild House, the Twin Parks buildings have planar brick surfaces with oversized windows that function both as familiar housing icons and as the elements of a carefully arranged composition. Both accept a reading of the window not as a void residual to

volumetric massing, but as the traditional window hole cut into a surface that maintains its planar integrity. Both accept the air-conditioning through-wall sleeve as being of visual importance, and use it as a secondary element to complete the reading of compositional units; in the Guild House facade they attach to the side of each window to produce a "T," whereas in Twin Parks Northeast they attach, visually, to an "L" window configuration to complete the reading of a larger square. In the Guild House, windows on both the rear and front facade are disposed in basically symmetrical patterns. This is juxtaposed with shifts in window location, and windows are pushed to the periphery of a surface or attenuated into horizontal slots in the front facade. By comparison, Meier's facades are far more neutral. After an initial consideration of proportion, figural quality and plan relationship, their compositional potential is played down in relation to their intended function as background and as the bland defining elements of urban street and courtyard-type spaces. The uniform grid composition is accentuated on the building's lateral faces by the same device of peripheral composition that Venturi utilizes. A facade of windows is terminated by a vertical reading of masonry surface pierced only by a line of air conditioner sleeves or vertical slot windows pressuring its edge.

Meier's Twin Parks Northeast is, like the Guild House, a fine example of new urban housing. It is (to use Venturi's label) a "decorated shed," that is, it applies imagery as decoration to a simple building program. Meier has solved the problem of his client, the New York State Urban Development Corporation, with a totally conventional notion of the rental apartment, a realistic choice for moderate-income housing.[22] The unit plans are designed slightly larger than FHA's minimum property standards and are uniformly insistent on clean, regular rooms affording the maximum usable interior living space (fig. 28). By comparison to Venturi's apartment plans, which are "inflected in shape" (fig. 26) to provide views up and down Spring Garden Street (not the waterfront), or to Rudolph's, which facilitate his expressionism (fig. 27), Meier's plans seem remarkably straightforward.
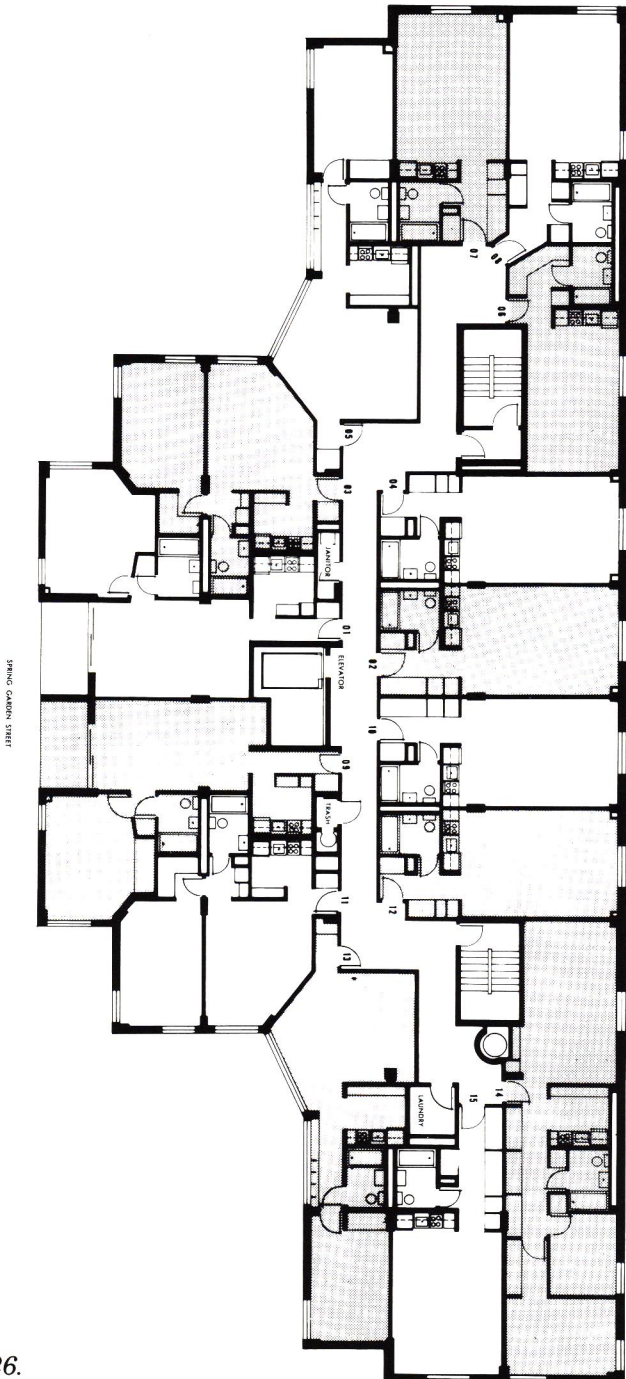
Figure 26. The Guild House, Friends
Housing for the Elderly, Philadelphia.
Venturi and Rauch, architects,
1960-1963. Typical plan.

Figure 27. Crawford Manor, New
Haven. Paul Rudolph, architect,
1962-66. Typical plan.
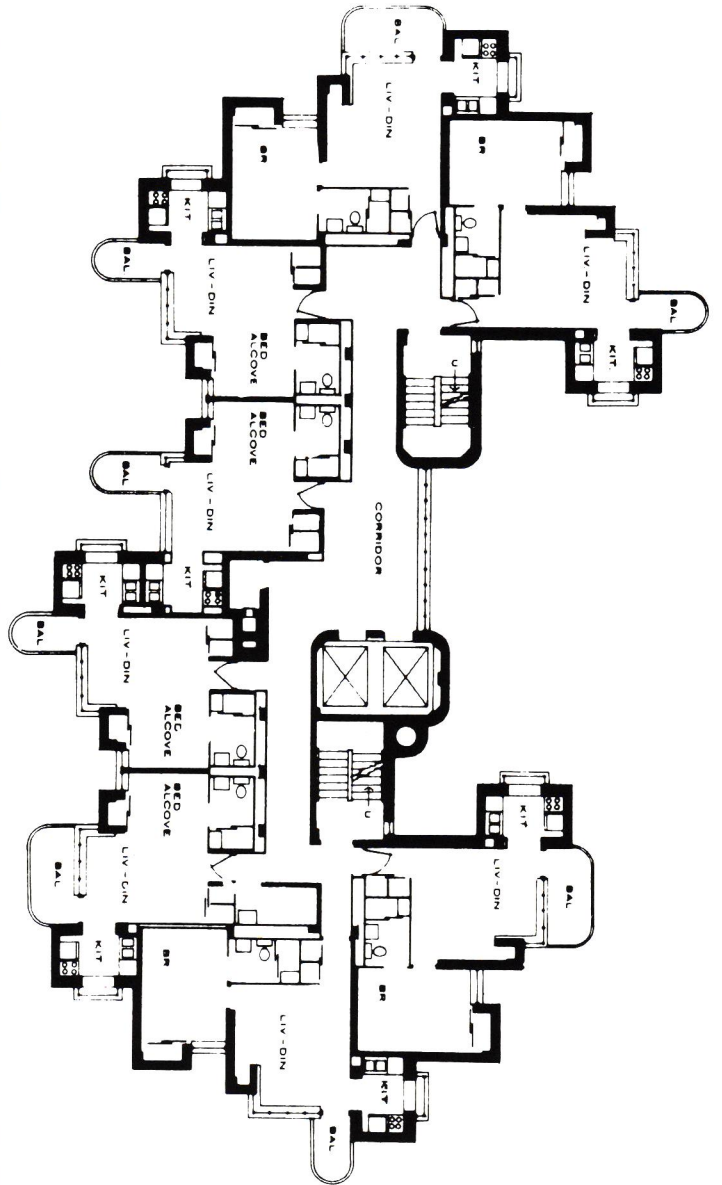
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Urbanistically, as specific gestures, both Twin Parks Northeast and the Guild House can be seen as examples of *contextualism*. In both Twin Parks Northeast and the Guild House the predominant design strategy is the completion and resolution of physical aspects of an existing urban condition: the site and its surroundings. These conditions are seen as resolvable in a building, but they depend directly on the inclusion or accommodation of other existing buildings which are seen both as setting the problem and as collaborating in its solution. Both Meier and Venturi began with a basically linear housing type that was then adjusted or deformed in response to the physical context and to architectural ideas about building orientation, entrance, and the definition of both street space and plaza or courtyard space. Here the specific architectural imagery adopted by both projects can also be seen as a choice that recognizes an aspect of a physical context — the visual appearance and familiar housing vernacular of the older apartment houses adjacent to each project. While the choice for Venturi may be socially appropriate and for Meier formally appropriate, the end result is the same, for they both deal sympathetically with an aspect of a physical context to produce a *contextualism* as well as a cultural continuity.

Meier deals with the physical context of the Bronx, an urban grid plan rather solidly built with medium-scale masonry buildings that line the streets. His buildings are sited (figs. 29, 30) with the intention of filling gaps in this configuration,[23] but are made to function as objects in a sculptural sense, that is in both having aspects of foreground (or something *new*), as well as background (or something *old*).[24] The opportunity for this duality was both pragmatic and formal. Pragmatically, it was possible for the buildings to function as background in their resemblance to their urban context for the following reasons: the economics of the job allowed the project to be planned as medium-rise buildings (with connecting towers) in scale with most of their surroundings. The client accepted the choice of a dark brown brick similar in color to the adjacent masonry buildings. Meier successfully prevailed upon the UDC to exercise its power to override local zoning, making it possible to build up to the
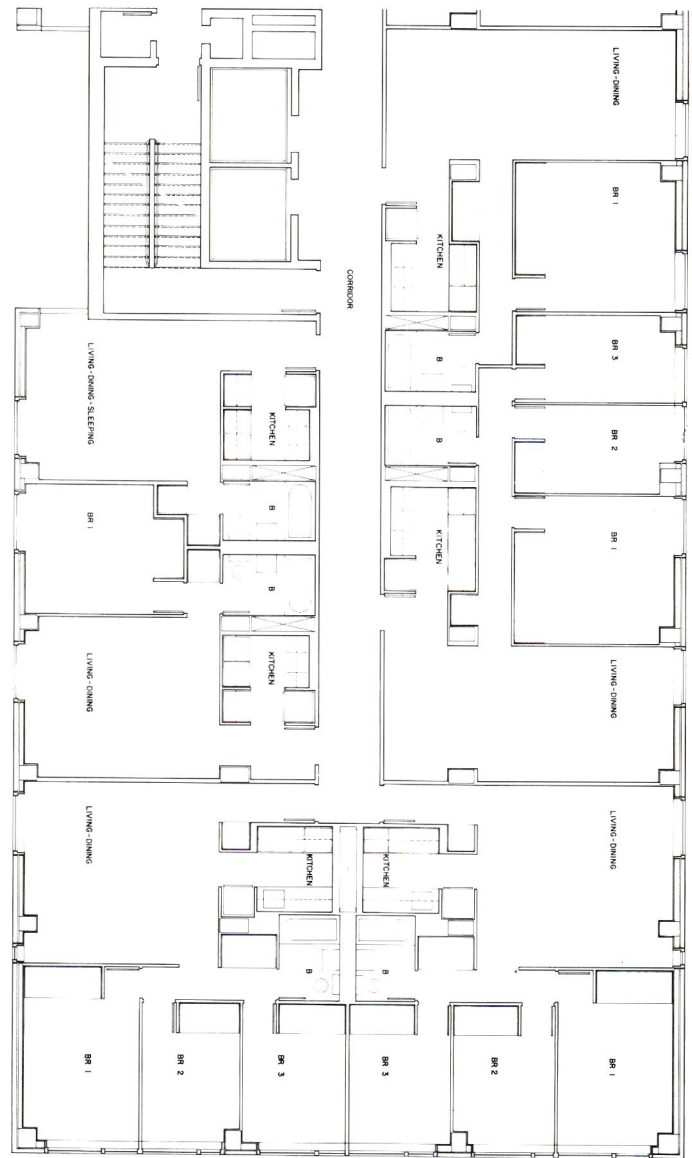
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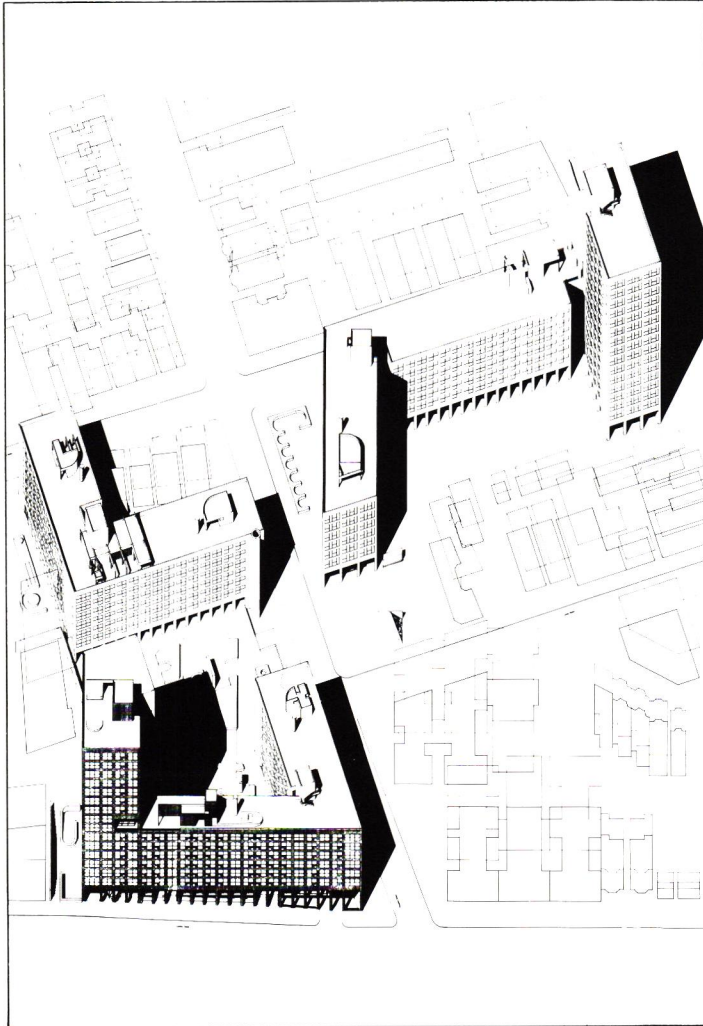
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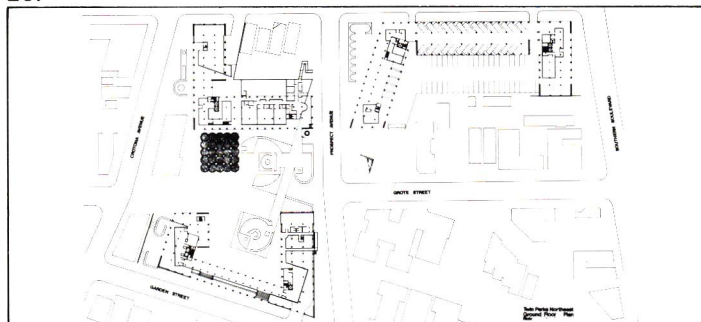
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street line rather than honoring zoning setbacks that legislate against maintaining an urban street definition.

Formally the opportunity for a duality between articulated architectural mass and background building was provided by the site's north-south grid, which is fractured by diagonal streets. The intention of the Twin Parks Northeast plan is to make street walls by using housing slabs as infill. As variations on slab housing types, the buildings are "L" or "U" shape in plan and define and enclose plaza-type space. The major space formed by the project occurs along the closed portion of Grote Street, but its definition also relies on existing adjacent buildings. The tower portion of the Garden Street building is dual functioning and seems intent on reconciling the two sets of grid directions bounding the site. From Garden Street it is a part of the street wall (fig. 31), while from the Grote Street plaza it reads as sculpturally detached from the slab (fig. 32), a pivot point moving circulation through the space toward the building's west entrance.

Unlike the Garden Street building the "L" shaped block between Crotona Avenue and Prospect Avenue acts as a background building from both its north and its south sides. From the Grote Street plaza it is a wall to the space forming one side of an inside corner whose other face is the back of an existing older apartment building on Crotona Avenue (fig. 25). The scale and masonry mass of this building is echoed by Meier's building. This indicates the recognition of the necessity of both the new and the old building to the plaza's spatial definition. From the 183rd Street side Meier's building is recognizably orthogonal to the street grid and forms a backdrop to the existing houses at the corner. These houses at Prospect and 183rd Street are oriented to the diagonal of Crotona Street and are seen as volumetric and object-like against the building wall behind them. The Southern Boulevard building fronts the project's other tower on the wide boulevard, providing views of the park it faces. This tower is oriented to the orthogonal street grid rather than to the angle of Southern Boulevard, relating to the older adjacent buildings on the block in siting if not in scale. The building extends west to define a street wall for 183rd Street; from

Figure 31. Twin Parks Northeast. Photo of tower from Grote Street Plaza.

Figure 32. Twin Parks Northeast. Photo of tower from Garden Street.

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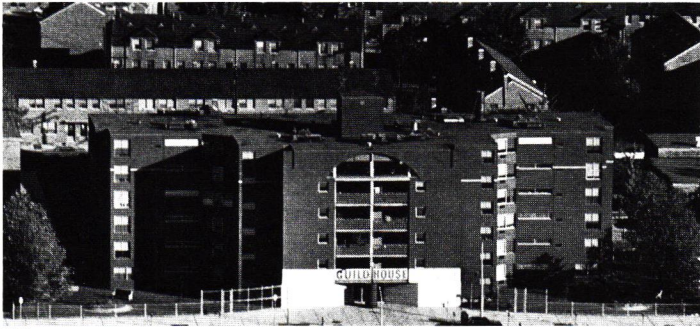
Figure 33. The Guild House, Friends Housing for the Elderly, Philadelphia. Venturi and Rauch, architects, 1960-1963. Existing urban context.

Figure 34. The Guild House. Rear facade from adjacent public housing.

Figure 35. Low rise public housing behind the Guild House, Philadelphia.

34.

35.

the north the facade that faces Prospect Avenue recalls the diagonal of Crotona Avenue and functions as one side of a gateway to the Grote Street plaza space.

Robert Venturi's Guild House (1963) (fig. 33) is a simpler but equally subtle completion of an existing urban context. In Venturi's judgment, the site demanded the recognition of Spring Garden Street, with the facade of an urban building (rather than a "pavilion") to relate to "the spatial demands of the street."[25] The desire to face the greatest number of apartments south to provide them with views of the street ("where the action is") is presented as a programmatic requirement. What we have, as a result, is a building configuration that has been differentiated into a front and a back. Traditionally this differentiation produces a "street" (front) facade whose configuration is usually closed and planar, engaging the adjacent urban context, and a "garden" (rear) facade, which is usually open and plastic, recognizing views or garden layout. In the Guild House, Venturi seems to have interchanged the physical configurations usually associated with the fronts and backs of urban buildings. A fragmented and picturesque "garden facade" with the strong centralizing effect of its entranceway, sign, kitsch balcony rails, and arched window, is made to function as a street wall, or more correctly, the building is made to "front" the street. In the reversal of an almost generic plan-type, the flat "front facade" is made to face rear. By doing this the long flat wall is made to serve two functions that explain this reversal of front and back. The flat wall works with the adjacent old industrial building (of the same color brick) to form one leg of an "L" (fig. 23), acting as a spatial edge to the low-rise public housing behind it. The public housing, sited like barracks in parallel rows, now defines courtyards whose missing closure has been provided by the long flat face of the Guild House (fig. 34). As a value judgment on the adjacent housing, Guild House was made not only to visually relate to it in genre, by the selection of similar building materials and a similar style of fenestration (fig. 35), but to relate to it as part of an interdependent physical context. Both the Guild House and Twin Parks Northeast successfully complete and replicate aspects of an existing physical context without implying

the devaluation of existing social or cultural structures by suggesting the further replacement of buildings that symbolize them.

In *New Directions in American Architecture,* Robert Stern characterizes exclusivist architecture in terms of its involvement with "ideal formal and social images," yet he recognizes the Guild House as "a subtle relationship between context and ideal."[26] This mediation is what we have called the *deformation of ideal types.* The Guild House, with its planar and articulated faces is a version of the general schema for a building differentiated into a front and a back. As has already been noted, the deformation with respect to its context involved reversing the plan configuration. Meier's buildings, as an ideal, relate to a modern housing type — the slab. They derive from the earliest version of Le Corbusier's *Unité d'Habitation,* the *Maisons à Redent.*[27] Like the housing in Le Corbusier's 1925 Voisin Plan for Paris,[28] Meier's buildings are deformed geometrically in response to their context. Although the *Maisons à Redent* in the *Ville Contemporaine* plan of 1922 (an ideal city)[29] are orthogonal, they undergo angular deformation to lock into the existing street pattern of Paris, suggesting a recognition of one aspect of their physical context.

If the use of *a priori* architectural forms and geometries can produce a situation exclusive of important cultural concerns, it is also true that the insistance, *a priori,* on an imagery or symbolism can produce an architecture exclusive of appropriate physical concerns. It is a failing of both *inclusivism* and *exclusivism* that they do not distinguish in a consistent way between the evaluation of architectural forms, formal organization, and imagery. Specifically by not allowing for such distinctions Venturi's use of the term *inclusivism,* as it has been my intention to point out, does not really describe an inclusive architecture. Of the projects considered, Venturi's Brighton Beach towers, The Guild House, and Twin Parks Northeast would be considered inclusive by Venturi because they utilize familiar housing imagery. The Wells/Koetter Brighton Beach project would be considered exclusive by Venturi because of its imagery. All of them except Ven-

22 turi's Brighton Beach scheme, could be considered to be contextual, that is inclusive of physical aspects of their context as form determinants. Of the two projects that do not fit both catagories (the two Brighton Beach schemes) each may be said to be inclusive of a physical context or a perceived cultural context, but not of both. Thus each of these two projects has, as its failing, excluded an aspect of concern on which the other has focused. *Inclusivism* as an architectural critique does not seem to allow for or accommodate this distinction. What we propose is *physical contextualism* (which is what the term *contextualism* has been used to mean thus far) and *cultural contextualism*, the former a contextualism of objects and the latter a contextualism of images. As design philosophies, *inclusivism* and *cultural contextualism*, as well as *physical contextualism*, deal with important and often overlapping concerns. As design philosophies they bring into focus sets of architectural determinants that should be considered in an inclusive architecture. As working strategies for architects who must not only approach architectural problems but cope with a significantly re-evaluated position in our society, these strategies help suggest ways to function in this new and vulnerable role. They emphasize an empiricism and flexibility in dealing with physical, cultural, and architectural inputs to the process of design, and stress the relativity of value judgment rather than its suspension. They are, if this description is correct, each partial models for an architecture unassertive and antithetical to the revolutionary vision. As such, their greatest failing might be a tendency to become reactionary, dogmatic or proselytizing; in other words, to try to be more than carefully considered architecture.

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Figure 36. The Guild House, Friends Housing for the Aged, Philadelphia. Venturi and Rauch, architects, 1960-1963. Front street facade.
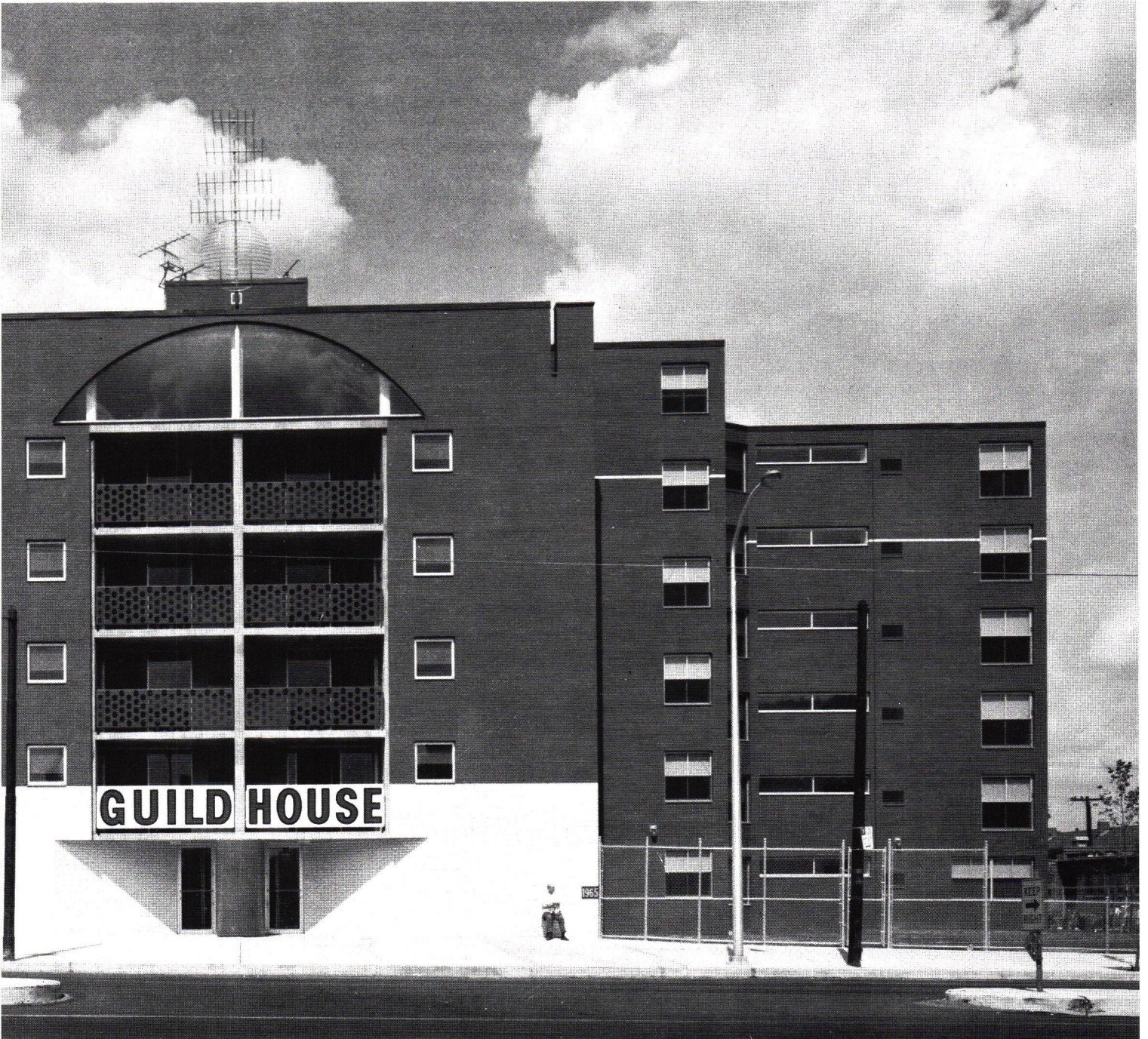
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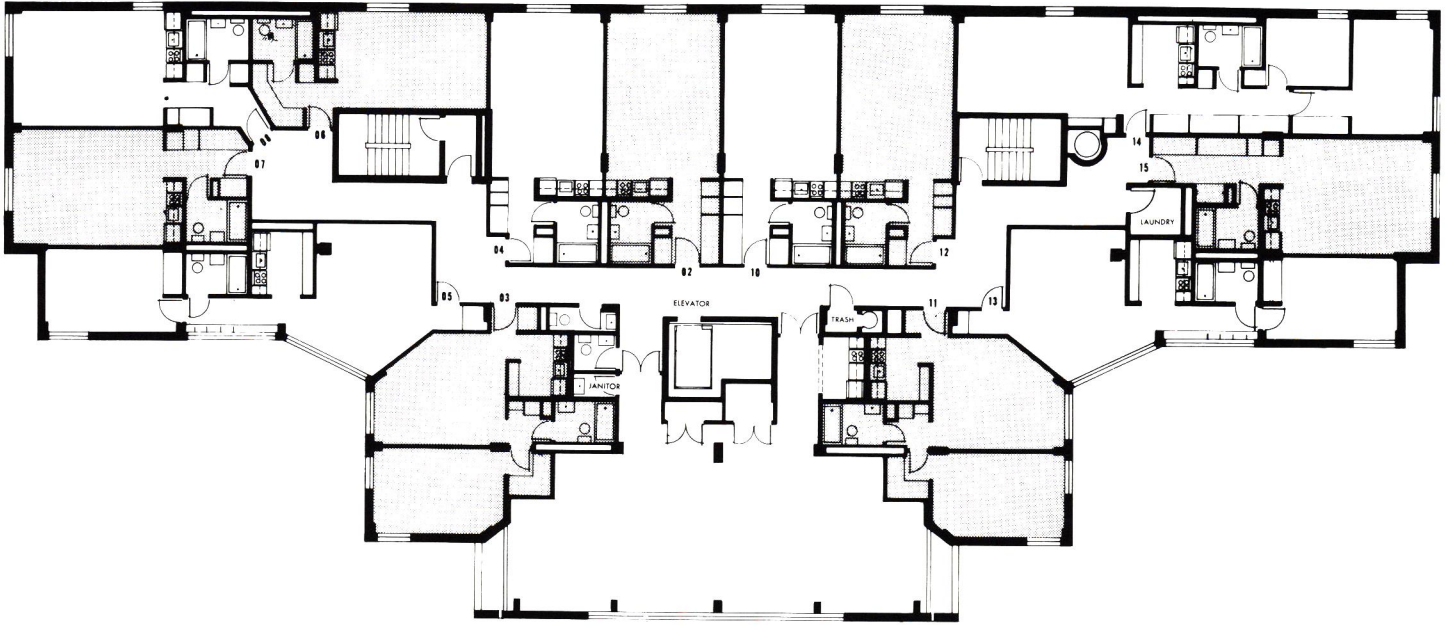
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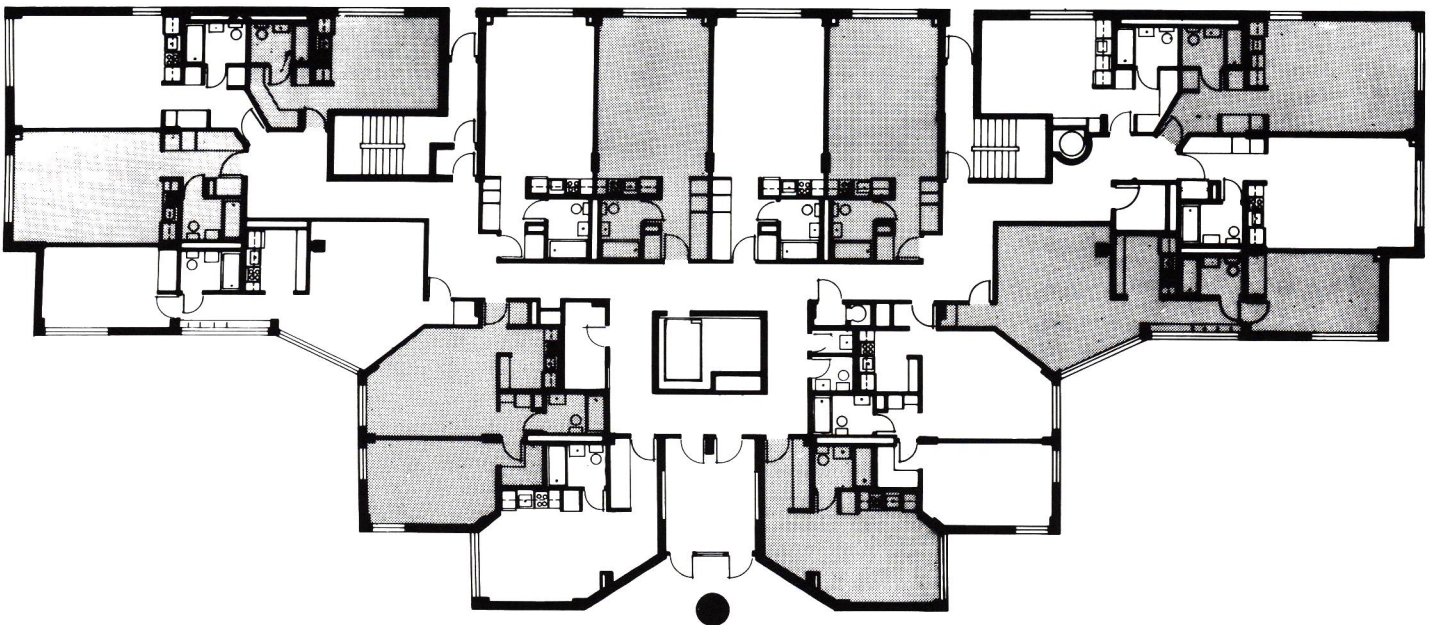
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Figure 37. The Guild House, Friends Housing for the Aged, Philadelphia. Venturi and Rauch, architects, 1960-1963. Typical floor plan with community room.

Figure 38. Ground floor plan showing main street entrance with column.

Figure 39. Detail of main entrance off Spring Garden Street.

39.

Figure 40. The Guild House, Friends Housing for the Aged, Philadelphia. Venturi and Rauch, architects, 1960-1963. View of the front facade down Spring Garden Street.

Figure 41. View of projecting central section of front.

Figure 42. View of the front facade showing adjacent buildings and street access.

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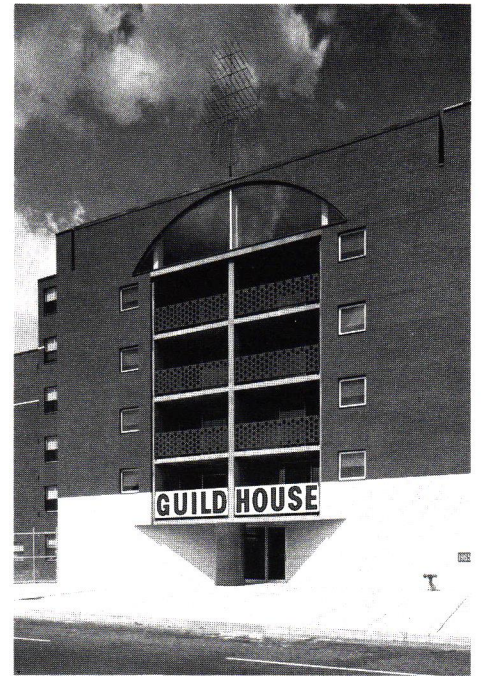
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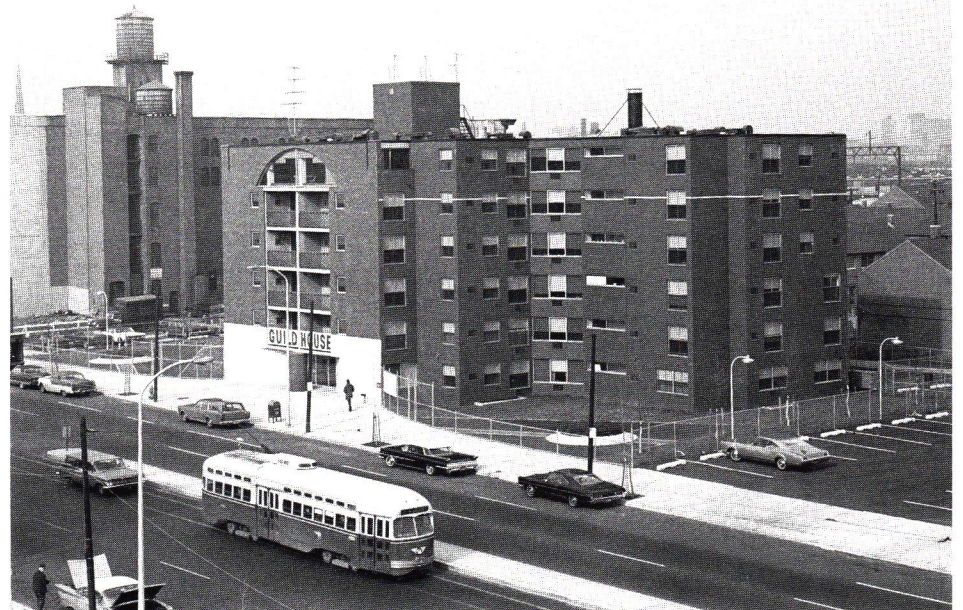
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Figure 43. View of Spring Garden Street.

*Figure 44. Detail of right front facade,
enlargement of Figure 36.*

*Figure 45. Site plan, front facade
facing Spring Garden Street at bottom.*

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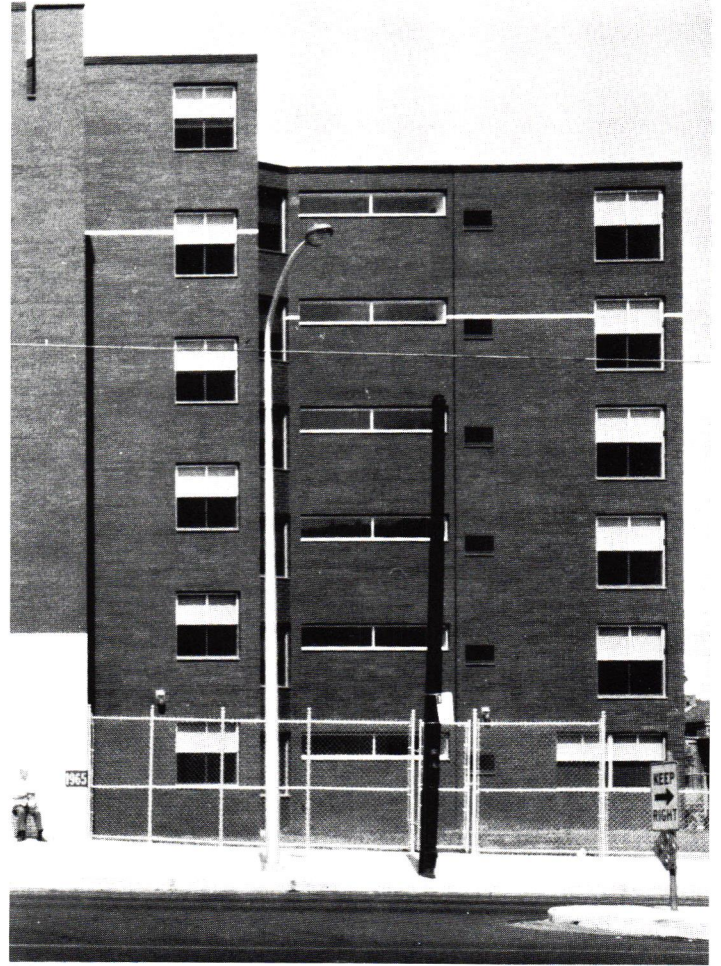
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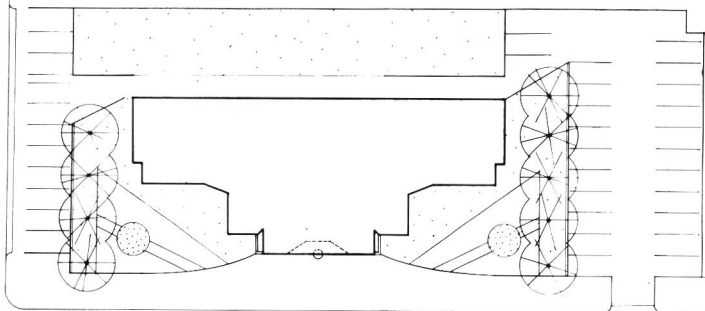
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Figure 46. The Guild House, Friends Housing for the Aged, Philadelphia. Venturi and Rauch, architects, 1960-1963. View of the rear facade.

Figure 47. Detail of double-hung windows on rear facade.

Figure 48. Detail of interior corridor graphics.

Figure 49. Detail of corridor graphics, hand-painted tile.

Figure 50. View from a room overlooking Spring Garden Street.

Figure 51. An apartment interior.

Figure 52. An interior corridor.

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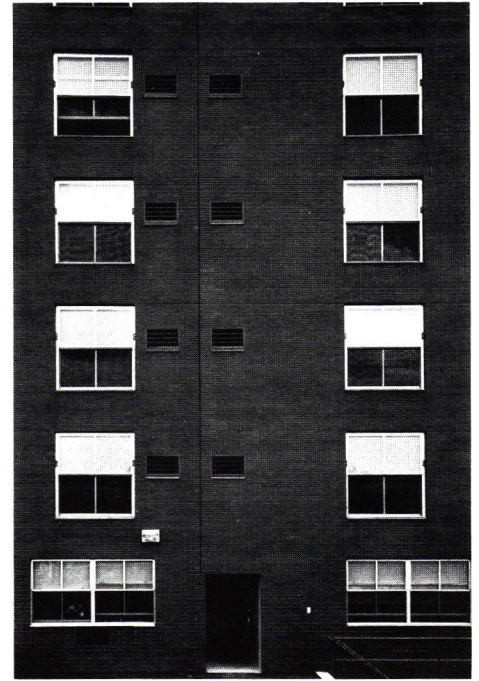
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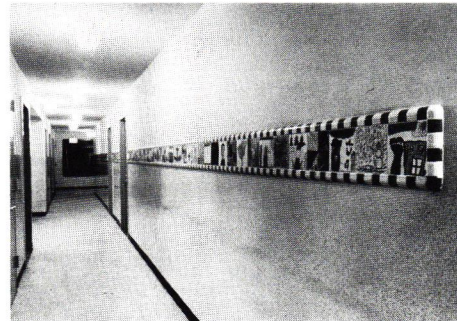
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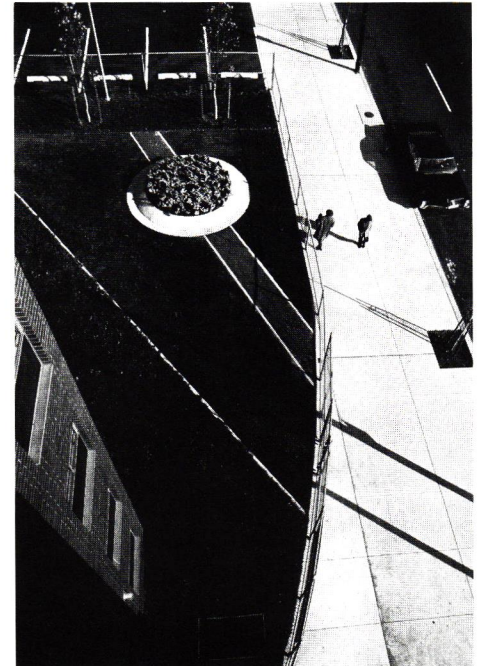
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Figure 53. A community room showing the arched front facade window overlooking Spring Garden Street.

Figure 54. John Rauch, Steven Izenour, Denise Scott Brown, and Robert Venturi.

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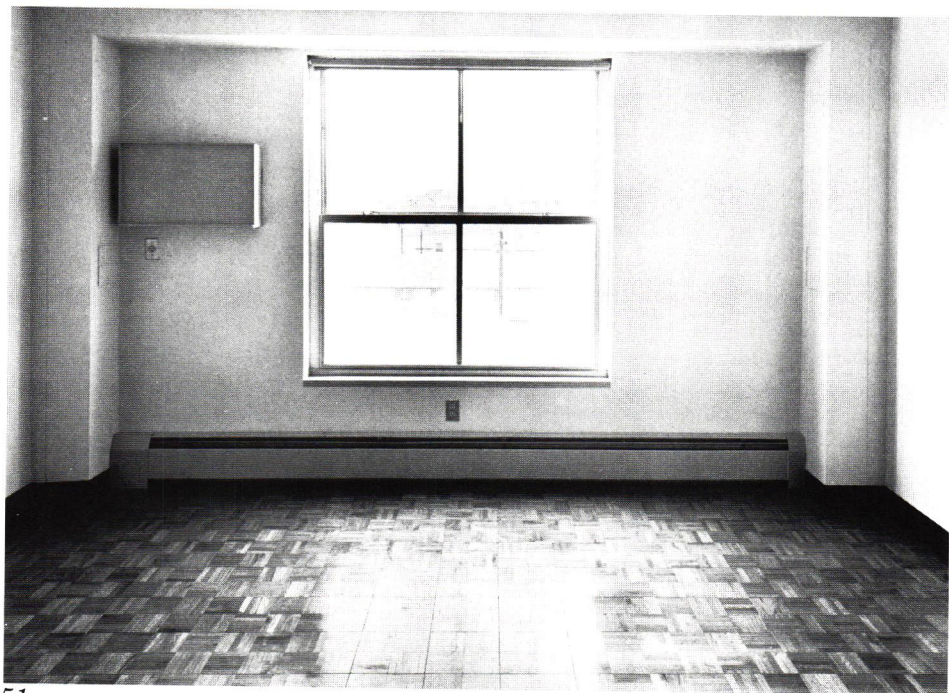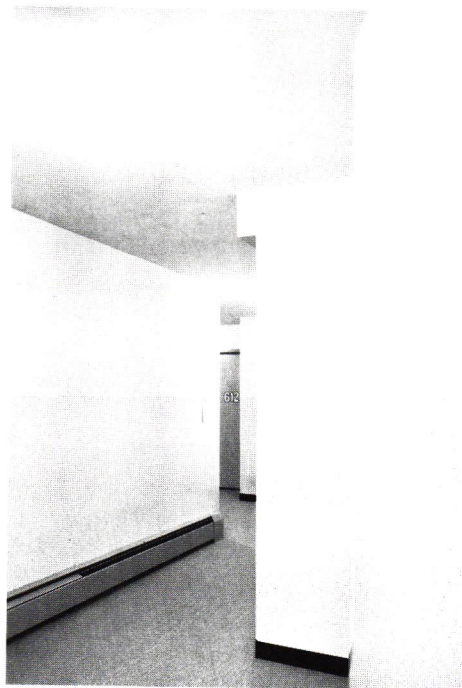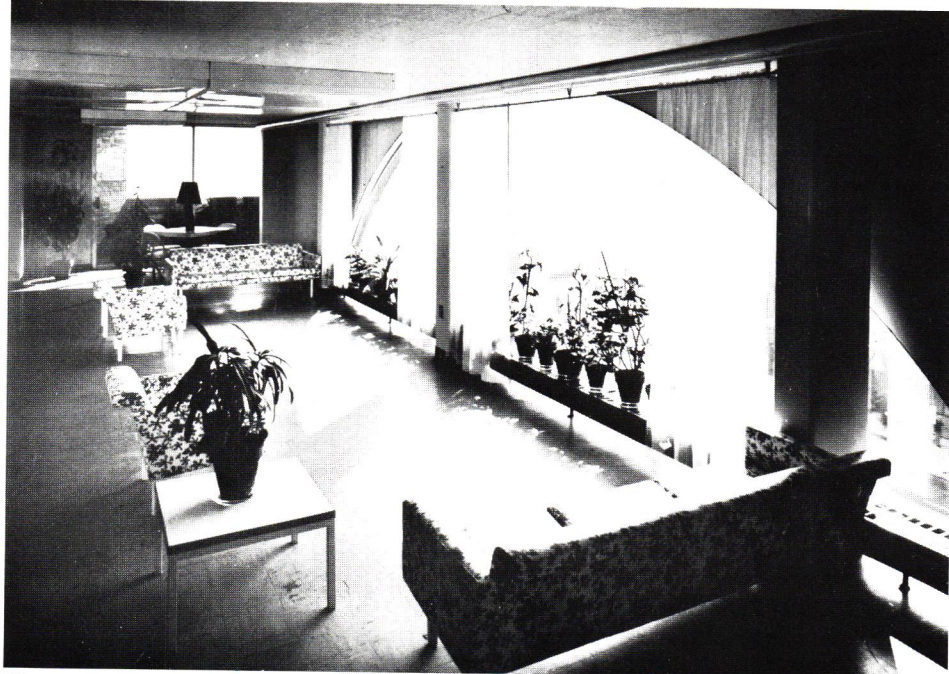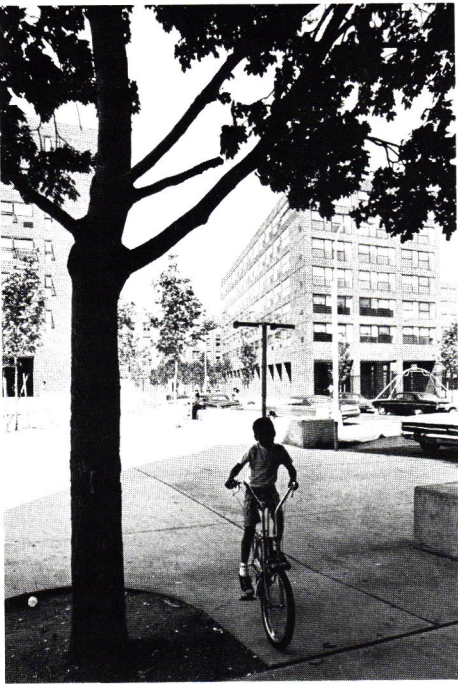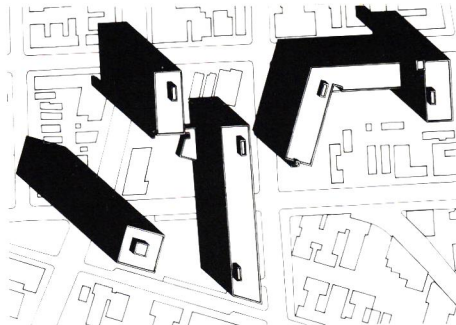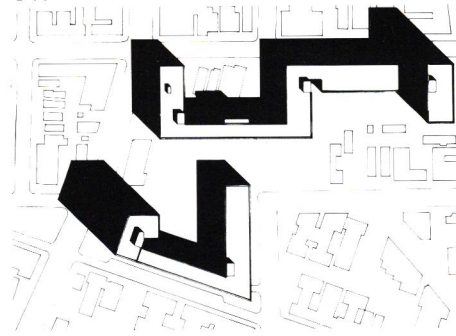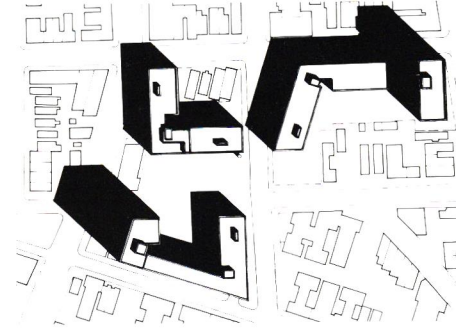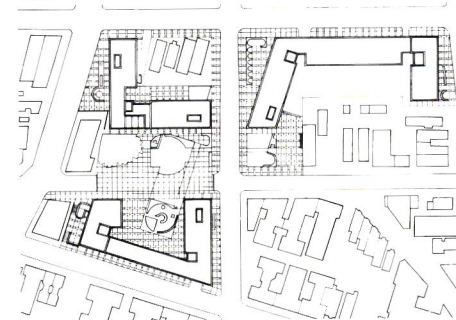
Figure 55. Twin Parks Northeast, Bronx. Richard Meier and Associates, architects, 1973. View up Prospect Avenue dividing complex.

Figure 56. View of Garden Street tower from Grote Street plaza.

Figure 57. First parti for site plan.

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Figure 58. Second parti for site plan.

Figure 59. Final parti for site plan.

Figure 60. Final site plan execution.

Figure 61. View from underneath
tower into Grote Street plaza.

Figure 62. Twin Parks Northeast, Bronx. Richard Meier and Associates, architects, 1973. View across Prospect Avenue looking into Grote Street plaza.

Figure 63. Plaza and bordering L-shaped block as seen from the Garden Street block.

Figure 64. View of the Garden Street tower from across the plaza.

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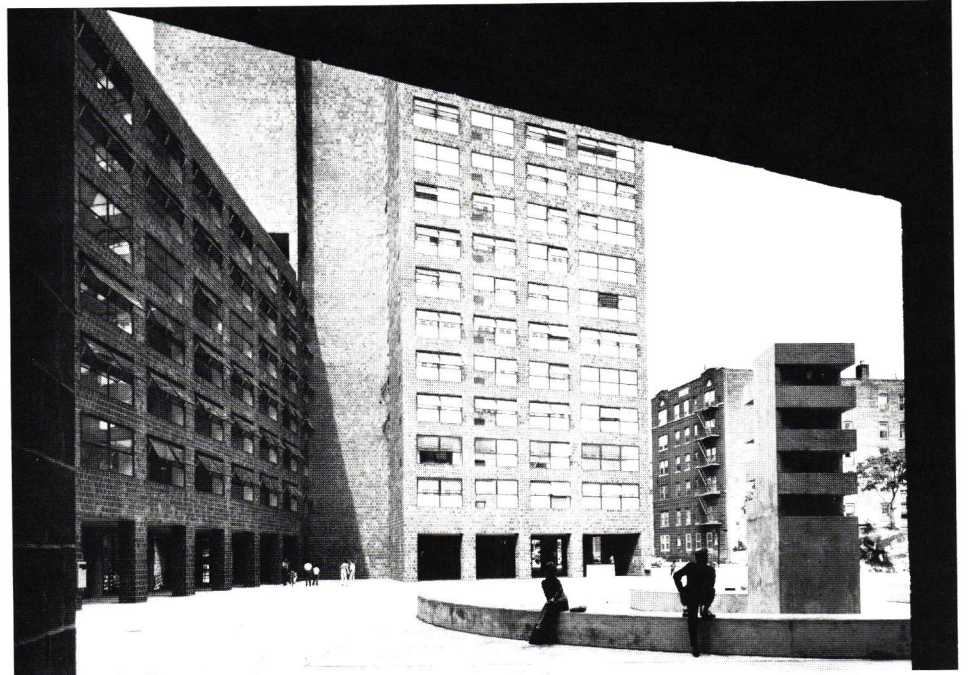
64.

Figure 65. View of the Garden Street tower down Crotona Avenue.

Figure 66. View of the tower block down Garden Street.

Figure 67. Detail of Garden Street tower and adjacent building.

66.

65.
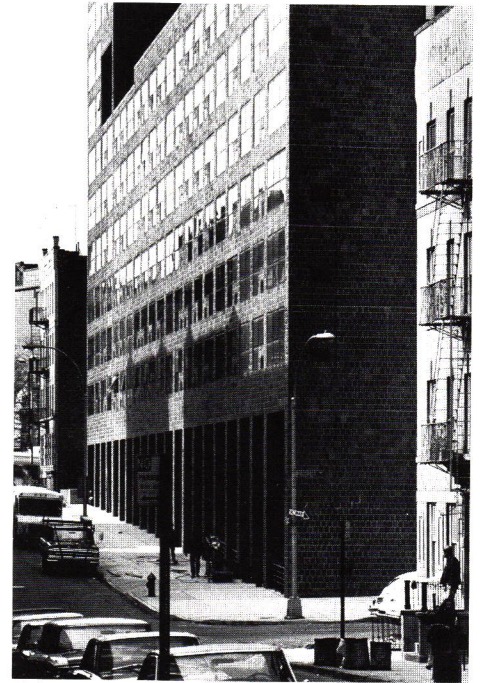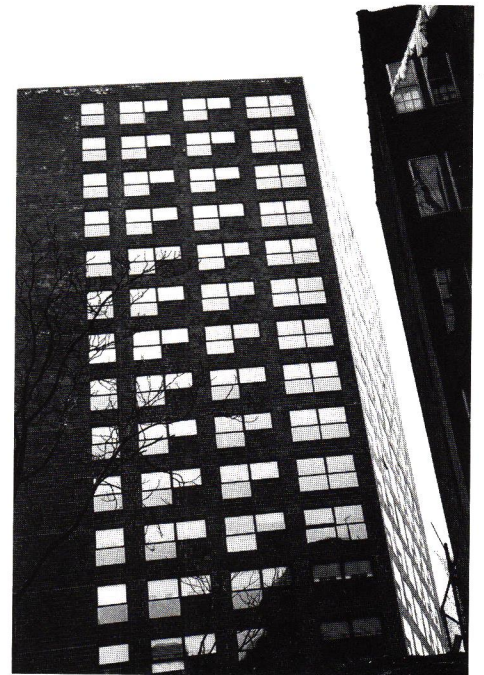
67.

Figure 68. Twin Parks Northeast, Bronx. Richard Meier and Associates, architects, 1973. View underneath the Garden Street block.

Figure 69. View of street level apartment block lobby.

Figure 70. View of the seating area.

Figure 71. View of the Grote Street plaza from underneath the Garden Street apartment block.

Figure 72. View of the L-shaped block across the Grote Street plaza.

Figure 73. View from Prospect Avenue of plaza and adjacent building.
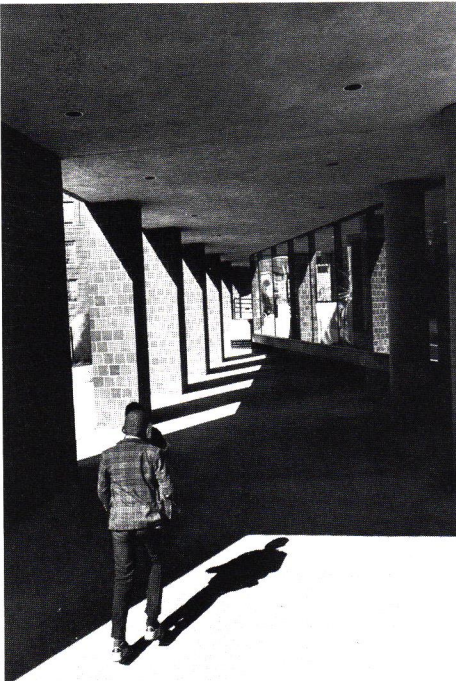
68.
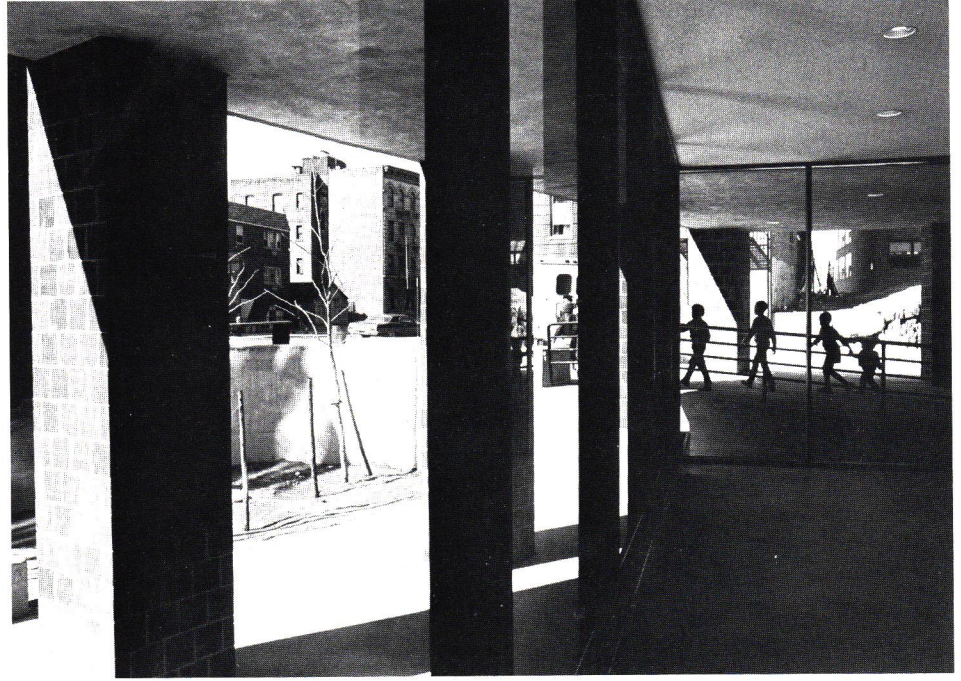
69.

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Figure 74. Detail of columns and L-shaped window configuration with through-wall air conditioner sleeve.

Figure 75. Seating area along Prospect Avenue.

72.

73.
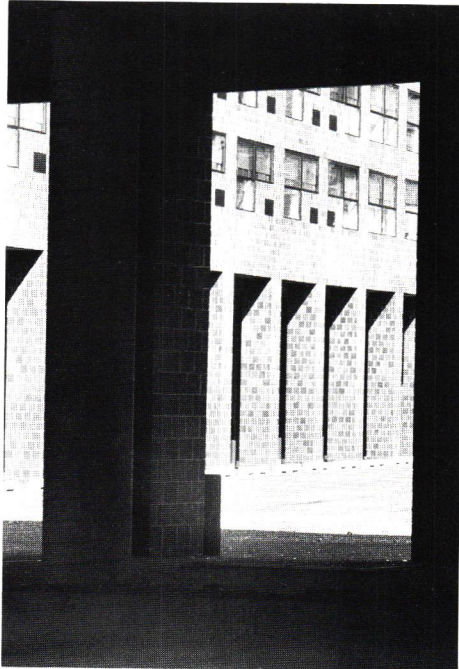
74.

75.

Figure 76. Twin Parks Northeast, Bronx. Richard Meier and Associates, architects, 1973. View of plaza play and seating area with surrounding U-shaped apartment block.

Figure 77. Grote Street plaza play area facing U-shaped apartment building.

Figure 78. View into the Grote Street plaza with sculptured seating and play area from adjacent apartment building.

Figure 79. Detail of the sculptured plaza.

Figure 80. Richard Meier.

Figure 81. Bedroom interior with window detail.

Figure 82. Interior corridor looking onto the Grote Street plaza.

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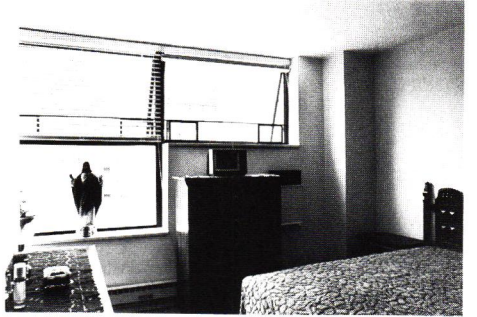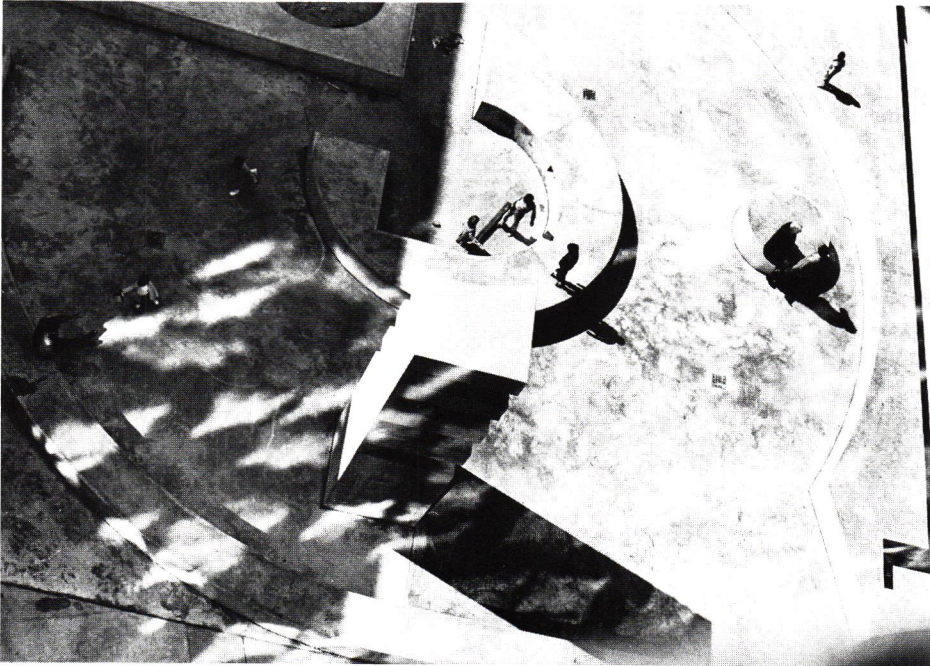
82.

38 1. Examples of architectural images of structural stability which have come to be identified with institutions are: Banks/Doric Temple Temples, Banks/Miesian exposed steel frame.

2. The continuance of this bias in contemporary architecture has been criticized as *formalism,* the uncompromising use of ideal geometries and the desire to make everything fit into a predetermined set of forms which are either incapable of, or never intended to accommodate all the messy problems of a real world. Charles Moore writes that "The perfectly natural attempts of the last several decades to find order by excluding disorder and confusion and organizing whatever fragment remains into a system is the order which characterizes, for instance, Frank Lloyd Wright's Hanna House, where everything is thrown out which does not fit the 'organic' geometry of the hexagon . . . ," from "Plug It in Rameses, and See if It Lights Up, Because We Aren't Going to Keep It Unless It Works," *Perspecta 11,* 1967, p. 38.

3. Robert Venturi, *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1966), pp.22-23. Venturi's statement might be compared with Claes Oldenburg's, "I am for an art that is political-erotical-mystical, that does something other than sit on its ass in a museum. I am for an art that embroils itself with the everyday crap and still comes out on top...," from "Environments, Situations, Spaces" exhibition catalogue, Martha Jackson Gallery, 1961, New York, New York; quoted Barbara Rose, *Claes Oldenburg,* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1970), p. 190.

4. Charles Moore, *op.cit.,* p. 43.

5. Robert Stern, *New Directions in American Architecture* (New York: Braziller, 1969), pp. 117-120 for references to articles by Venturi, Moore, Scully, and Lyndon on the general subject of *inclusivism* and for a discussion of inclusive and exclusive positions in contemporary architecture.

6. See Robert Venturi, *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1966). The book is a catalogue of examples that Venturi uses to illustrate *inclusivism,* many of which he discusses by the analysis of their formal organization.

7. While the results may be argued to have produced "decoration," such deformations may have been thought of as communication. The best examples of "ducks" also seem to be the best illustrations of "expressionism" in contemporary architecture.

8. On the question of what is to be included Moore writes, ". . . the includers . . . , like some playwrights make their order with *as much of life* as they can include, rather than as little . . ." and "I doubt that the message is that the architect who produces at enormous expense a replica of the commercial strip which could have been done as well without him is about to save the world . . ." *op.cit.,* p. 40. Also see *Learning from Las Vegas* .

9. This approach to urban design is the product of the graduate program in architecture at Cornell University which has been under the direction of Colin Rowe since 1963. The term *contextualism* was first applied to Cornell urban design work by Stuart Cohen and Steven Hurtt in 1965.

10. A method also employed by Venturi in *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* .

11. Also a position suggested by Venturi who writes, "The architect's ever diminishing power and his growing ineffectualness in shaping the whole environment can perhaps be reversed, ironically, by narrowing his concerns and concentrating on his own job." *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture,* p. 20.

12. See Thomas Schumacher, "Contextualism: Urban Ideals plus Deformations," in *Casabella* 359-360, 1971. The best catalogue of physical examples is Wayne Copper, *The Figure/Grounds,* unpublished masters thesis, Cornell University, 1966. Schumacher published a number of Copper's drawings. Also see forthcoming articles by Colin Rowe and Fred Koetter to be published in the Architectural Review.

13. This strategy, as process, is dependent on the phenomenon of collage. The incorporation of signs and commercial and historical allusions in Venturi's work is generally by collage, rather than by any reformulation of the chosen element.

14. Quoted in Robert Stern, *New Directions in American Architecture* (New York: George Braziller, 1969). For the full text of each juror's opinion see, *Record of Submissions and Awards Competition for Middle-Income Housing at Brighton Beach, Brooklyn, 1968.* Published by the New York City Housing and Development Administration, 1968.

15. Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown, and Steven Izenour, *Learning from Las Vegas.* (Cambridge: M.I.T. Press, 1972), p. 136.

16. In commenting on the winning entry, Romaldo Giurgola, a juror, remarked that it ". . . however brilliantly executed is 'more of the same' rather than something really new," *Record of Submissions and Awards Competition for Middle-Income Housing at Brighton Beach, Brooklyn, 1968.*

17. Denise Scott Brown writing about the intentions of the work of Venturi and Rauch states, ". . . we are part of a high art, not a folk or popular art, tradition. We are using these other traditions, as others have before us, for an ar-

tistic reason; but for a social reason as well. Here we differ from the Pop artists: they are socially interpretative, we are and should be socially constrained," "Reply to Frampton," *Casabella* 359-360, 1971.

18. Certainly Venturi, Scully, and Moore are right when they argue that the piazza is not American. Piazzas on the automobile plains of the central and western United States, where there are no pedestrians, are clearly absurd. Strolling is not an American pastime, but perhaps piazzas make sense in American cities when coupled with recreational or commercial attractions and when they form an exception to a densely packed urban configuration.

19. The office towers of Le Corbusier's 1925 Plan for Paris, adapted from his *Ville Contemporaine,* are dependent in a similar way on the old city. The edges formed by the remaining building facades act as the defining walls of what was conceptualized as a supra-scale courtyard space in which free-standing buildings might be located. This wall of old buildings also acted as the defining edges of what for compositional purposes was seen as a *field.* These edges determined the shape of the *field* effecting the inclination of the axial arrangement of the towers in plan.

20. Robert Stern, *op.cit.,* p. 8.

21. Robert Venturi, *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture,* p. 116.

22. Denise Scott Brown and Robert Venturi, "Co-Op City; Bronx, New York; Learning to like it," *Progressive Architecture,* February, 1970.

23. This would normally be impossible as a design solution under most zoning ordinances.

24. Venturi suggests that an inclusive architecture of "complexity and contradiction" accommodates and accepts the multifunctioning element. He writes, "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 ...," *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture,* p. 23. This also relates to the idea of figure/ground reversal in *Gestalt psychology,* a phenomenon which takes place when a background and a figure share figural qualities which allow their perceptual interchange. See Wolfgang Kohler, *Gestalt Psychology.* This is a possible model for a way in which an element can be multifunctioning in a formal rather than in a functionalist sense. Older "things" are generally taken to form a stable frame of reference, a kind of "background" against which "newness" is discernable.

25. Robert Venturi, *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture,* p. 114.

26. Robert Stern, *op.cit.,* p. 56.

27. *Maisons à Redent* is usually translated as "buildings with setbacks." The idea of the *unité* and the physical configuration are probably derived from the ideas of Charles Fourier and the plan of his Phalanstery.

28. The cross-shaped towers of the *Ville Contemporaine* are office blocks although they were carried into the planning of the 1940's and 50's as housing (which they were occasionally taken to be).

29. The *Ville Contemporaine* of 1922 is both an ideal city and a catalogue of parts for urban renewal. The plan illustrates both a new city, an image of a city, and a physical context for each of the building types employed. When this exemplar is applied to Paris, however, the *Immeubles-villas* housing type which is a solid block infill building, is unnecessary. The old city provides the equivalent urban function.

Figure 1. Reprinted from *Learning From Las Vegas* by
Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown, Stephen Izenour by
permission of The M.I.T. Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts;
©1972 The M.I.T. Press, p. 12; originally published in
Peter Blake, *God's Own Junkyard* (New York: Holt,
Rinehart and Winston, 1964).
Figure 2. *Alvar Aalto* (New York: George Wittenborn,
Inc., 1963), pp. 176 and 177.
Figure 3. Drawing by Wayne Copper.
Figure 4. James Stirling, "Derby Civic Center," *Domus*
No. 516, 1972, p.5.
Figure 5. Hans Jaffe, *De Stijl* (New York: Harry N.
Abrams, 1971), Pl. VII, p. 174.
Figures 6, 7, 8 & 19. Courtesy Wells/Koetter, Architects.
Figures 9, 10, 16, 17, 18, 23, 24, 26, 33, 36-53. Courtesy
Venturi and Rauch, Architects and Planners.
Figure 11. Knud Bastlund, *Jose Luis Sert: Architecture,
City Planning, Urban Design* (New York: Praeger
Publishers, 1967), p. 221.
Figure 12. Courtesy Mitchell/Giurgola Associates
Architects.
Figure 13. Frederick Gutheim, *Alvar Aalto* (New York:
George Braziller, 1960), fig. 46.
Figure 14. Werner Blaser, *Mies van der Rohe: The Art of
Structure* (New York: Praeger, 1965) p. 133.
Figure 15. *Alvar Aalto* (New York: George Wittenborn &
Co., 1960), fig. 46.
Figure 20. Vincent Scully, *American Architecture and
Urbanism* (New York: Praeger, 1969), p. 169.
Figure 21. Le Corbusier, *The Radiant City* (New York:
Orion Press, 1966), p.207.
Figures 22, 27. Courtesy Paul Rudolph Architect. Photo
by Robert Peron.
Figures 25, 28-32, 55-82. Courtesy Richard Meier &
Associates, Architects.
Figures 36,43,53. Photographs by Skomark Associates.
Figures 39-41, 46-48,51,52. Photographs by William
Watkins.
Figure 42. Photographs by George Pohl.
Figures 55,56,62,65-70,72-75,79,81,82. Photographs by
Dorothy Alexander.
Figures 61,63,64,71. Photographs by Ezra Stoller © ESTO
Figures 76-78. Photographs by James K. Karales.

Character and Composition; or Some Vicissitudes of Architectural Vocabulary in the Nineteenth Century

Colin Rowe

With this illuminating and vintage essay first written in 1955, more devoted to *character* than to *composition,* the author returns us to forgotten or even repressed categories which are of consequence today in-as-much as the socio-cultural dilemmas of the nineteenth century find themselves reflected in the problems of the present. Allowing for the special contingencies of the period, the pre-Raphaelite critique appears as relevant today as when it was first formulated. In his inquiry into the roots of our sensibility, Rowe pushes the frontier back beyond the Gothic Revival to the first half of the eighteenth century, to Robert Morris' lectures of 1734, wherein the word *character* first appears in Anglo-Saxon architectural discourse, as essentially inseparable from the concept of *genus loci;* a concept to be much cherished in the Fifties by the *Townscape* revival of the Picturesque.

The vicissitudes of *character* as the essence of built form, from its initial picturesque appearance in the eighteenth century, to its classical eclipse at the end of the nineteenth century, is the central substance of Rowe's thesis, *character* and *composition* being fatally and reciprocally related to each other throughout the whole period. Thus Soane's emphasis on *composition* at the beginning of the nineteenth century reduces *character* to the consequence of establishing a proper typology of building, Soane in his extraordinary confidence coming as close as any English architect of the period to embracing the Neoclassical idea of an *architecture parlante.*

Thirty years later, the unconscious utilitarianism of Ruskin has already substituted *invention* for *composition,* and *character,* arisen from previous dependency on either typology or the picturesque, overwhelms *composition,* and in so doing derives its authority from the painful conjunction of strict utility, material probity and structural assertiveness. This mid-century moral hysteria reduces, in Rowe's words, a building like Butterfield's St. Savior's Vicarage to an assembly of "characteristic particles"; and it is not until the end of the century, in that complacent twilight of British Imperialism, that *composition* once again gains sway over *character,* the latter becoming in the worldly hands of Richard Norman Shaw the mere psychological accessory to *composition,* be it Picturesque, Palladian or a subtle mixture of both. One might add, although the author doesn't venture this conclusion, that there is barely a suggestion of *character* after Shaw until it re-emerges as a conscious reflection of a renewed interest in Palladian composition with the New Brutalism of the Fifties.
K.F.

Colin Rowe has been Professor of Architecture at Cornell University since 1962. He has also taught at the Universities of Liverpool, Texas and Cambridge. After graduating in architecture from Liverpool, he also studied at the Warburg Institute with Rudolf Wittkower and at Yale with Henry Russell Hitchcock.

The shelves of any representative architectural library in the United States or Great Britain might suggest that between 1900 and 1930 the major critical interest of the architectural profession throughout the English-speaking world lay in the elucidation of the principles of architectural composition. Certainly a surprising number of books on this subject were published during these years and, if few have appeared since the last date, it is equally evident that very few were published before the first.

A Discussion of Composition, Architectural Composition, The Principles of Architectural Composition[1] — the titles are familiar and the publications, all showing allegiance to closely related critical patterns, now have a flavor of the period. The aim of such books as these was avowedly pedagogic, and (using the word in no derogatory sense) their authors evidently entertained an academic ideal. Sharing a common critical vocabulary, and apparently enjoying a common visual experience, these writers felt no compulsion to lead an attack on either the present or the immediate past; and while they had no inherent connection with the modern movement in architecture, they were not always insulated from contemporary development — nor necessarily without enthusiasm for it. Making no overt display of bias and by no means simply committed to retrospective attitudes, they were preoccupied with the survival of certain standards of urbanity and order, certain received ideas which for them were identifiable with tradition; but above all, as the titles of their books continuously reaffirm, they were anxious to extract from historical and current precedents a formal common denominator — the quality which they recognised as *correct composition.*

These books are usually to be found in close proximity with, and often on the same shelves as, the manifestos of the specifically modern movement which were published during the same years; and, apart from the obvious differences in temperature between the two styles of publication, there are other differences which invite notice. Thus the most cursory reading of any of the pronouncements of the great innovators of the 1920's suggests that for such figures as Le Corbusier, Mies van der Rohe, and Gropius, the existence of any such *principles of composition* as the academicians presumed was not only dubious but irrelevant. These men were convinced that an authentic architecture could only be a rationalization of objective facts. One might believe that for them "composition" implied a regard for mere appearance, had suggestions of subjectivity, of formalism. And however highly formed their buildings may have been, they were certainly unanimous in asserting their innocence of formal intention. "We refuse," writes Mies, "to recognize problems of form; but only problems of building"[2]; and, even though this statement may be no more than a matter of polemics, the assertion of such opinions is enough to indicate a state of mind which could only regard the idea of composition as a discreditable one.

It is for reasons such as these that around this apparently innocent word inhibitions have gathered thick, so that except in its esoteric sense, as a reference to a composition within the post-Cubist tradition, a tendency might be noticed to use it only with considerable reserve. Sometimes, indeed, it is positively anathematized; and then, as for instance when Frank Lloyd Wright pronounces: "Composition is dead that creation may live"[3]; then there seem to be evoked echoes of similar scruples already experienced by architects and critics of the nineteenth century.

"I am always afraid to use this word composition," Ruskin announces, and when, as the major apologist of the mid-Victorian epoch, he *was* obliged to use it, he guarded himself against possible misinterpretation by means of elaborate footnotes: "The word composition has been so much abused, and is in itself so inexpressive, that when I wrote the first part of this work I intended to use in the final section of it the word 'invention' and to reserve the term composition for that false composition which can be taught on principles."[4]

That a single word can be productive of such alternatives of damnation or involved reserve no doubt says much for the meanings with which it has been endowed; and possibly the evidence of such elaborate semantic diffidence

does bring us face to face with a recurring critical dilemma, important not only to the mid-nineteenth century, but also to the present day.

Now the composition books are partly, but not completely, discredited; and the pronouncements of the innovators of the nineteen-twenties are partly, but not completely, accepted. Thus one group of critical standards survives with diminished prestige, while another has not achieved comprehensive definition. Modern architecture has professedly abjured composition; but the composition books recognize no situation in which their theory could become an irrelevance. The composition books are judiciously disinterested, catholic, temperate, and pragmatic; the classic manifestoes of modern architecture are partisan, exclusive, inflammatory, and doctrinaire. In any final analysis of its theory, modern architecture seems to rest upon a conviction that authentic architectural form can only be engendered by recognizing the disciplines which function and structure impose. But the authors of the composition books find that this thesis cannot engage their convictions. For them it is by no means an article of faith, rather it is an interesting supposition; and while they are indisposed to quarrel with it, they are definitely unwilling that it should form the focus of their critique. A truly significant building for these theorists is not an organization derived from functional and structural disciplines — although these may have contributed to it — but pre-eminently a structure, organized according to *the principles of architectural composition* and infused with a symbolic content that is usually described as *character*.

According to this doctrine the presence of both good composition and appropriate character is essential in a successful building, and the presence of the one is not automatically productive of the other.

> Proper character does not necessarily accompany the securing of good composition . . . . A factory may display all the correct graces of classical architecture but may look like a public library. On the other hand a church may be recognized as a church on account of the associated elements — the spire and stained glass windows — but be entirely lacking in the principles of good design.

Proper character and principles of composition are not synonymous; they appear together only by a conscious effort of the designer. They must both be present in a successful piece of architecture.[5]

Character is seldom, if ever, defined, but it is generally implied that it may be at once the impression of artistic individuality and the expression, either symbolic or functional, of the purpose for which the building was constructed. Often, however, it is admitted that the presence of character has not always been a necessary attribute of architecture; and when this admission is recognized, and when it is observed that the present day has imposed critical tabus on characterization also, a further dimension to the problem is suggested. And since both words are now somewhat suspect to strictly orthodox contemporaries, their suspicions do prompt some investigation of a possible relationship and the ideas which this relationship has involved.

It is perfectly clear that in the strictest meaning of the word any organization is a composition, whether "correct" or not; it is also evident that any building will display character, whether intentionally or otherwise; but if such general definitions of both terms are to be accepted then further inquiry will be blocked; reactions such as Ruskin's or Wright's to specific meanings of the word composition will become inexplicable, and the expression of character will be assumed to represent an interest of all architects at all times.

But as might be expected, the introduction of both words into the critical vocabulary of architecture seems to have been an achievement of the eighteenth century. Certainly after 1770 both become fairly frequent, whereas before 1700 one is apt to look for either of them in vain. Thus neither Alberti, Palladio, nor the elder Blondel, to select three crucially important theorists, seem to have envisaged the working out of an architectural theme to have been a matter of informing composition with character. For them the process of design was a Vitruvian one involving "invention," "compartition," "distribution," "ordinance"; while, what the later eighteenth century understood as "the arts of composition," earlier critics

44 usually described, with somewhat different meaning, as "the arts of design."

Possibly the word composition makes its first decisive English appearance with Robert Morris' *Lectures on Architecture* in 1734. "Architecture is an art useful and extensive, it is founded upon beauty, and proportion or harmony are the great essentials of its composition," writes Morris; and with this idea of a "composed" architecture it is interesting to notice that much of what was later referred to as character is already implied, for architecture "is divided into three classes, the Grave, the Jovial, and the Charming [and] these are designed to be fitted and appropriated to the several scenes which art or nature has provided in different situations." While "A Champaign open Country requires a noble and plain Building . . . . A Situation near the Sea requires the same, or rather a Rusticity and Lowness . . . . The Cheerful Vale requires more Decoration and Dress, and if the View be long or some adjacent River runs near by it, the Ionic Order is the most proper."[6]

But in spite of Morris' example, neither composition nor character seems to have enjoyed an immediate success; it was not until the later eighteenth century, with such figures as Robert Adam, that the use of the first became more general. With Adam, composition is associated with "movement," and from the preface to his *Works in Architecture* it may be seen how "movement" was connected with the appearance of a diversified form. In his well known definition "Movement is meant to express the rise and fall, the advance and recess, with the other diversity in form, in the different parts of a building; so as to add greatly to the *effect* of the composition." While "movement" also serves to produce "an agreeable and diversified contour that groups and contrasts like a *picture* and creates a variety of light and shade which gives great spirit, beauty, and effect to the composition."[7]

Thirteen years later in his celebrated advice to the architect, Sir Joshua Reynolds gave a more august confirmation to these pictorial points of view: the architect "should take advantage *sometimes* to that which the Painter should always have his eyes open, — the use of accidents to follow where they lead, and to improve them, rather than always to look to a regular plan . . . . As buildings depart from regularity they now and then acquire something of scenery . . . ."[8]

By this shifting of emphasis from the work of architecture in itself to the effect of the work upon the spectator the late eighteenth century was able to accomodate a conspicuously dominant academic theory and a powerfully subversive undercurrent. But, however significant was the complex of new ideas which now demanded expression as "composition," even as late as 1806-9 Sir John Soane's *Royal Academy Lectures* still observed the standard academic pattern. In his lectures Soane very briefly alluded to the "principles of architectural composition" (possibly the first English appearance of the term?); but for him the arbiters of architectural form still remained the orders, and the problem of architectural design a problem of ordinance.

As a kind of semi-official and perhaps retarded index to the history of ideas, the articles on architecture in the earlier editions of the *Encyclopedia Britannica* might be allowed to illustrate the changing thought of this time. Thus in the First Edition of 1773 an unexceptionable statement of the academic position is provided. Architecture, one reads, is an art for use and ornament, and of its ornaments the column is the chief. No mention is made of "composition," but it is stated that architecture, being governed by proportion, "requires to be guided by rule and compass," i.e., it is a geometrical rather than a pictorial art, so that after a distribution of the elements necessary for convenience the process of architectural design becomes in theory an ordering of columns, a problem of ordinance.

In the next five editions the same ideas are repeated and it is not until 1832, in the Seventh Edition, that there is a distinct break. Now, quite suddenly, the article is prefaced by an analysis of "the different architectural styles,"

while its principal section consists of a discussion of what was previously taken for granted — "the elements of beauty in architecture." The specific problems of an architecture of columns have now ceased to be of absorbing interest, and significantly in their place "the principles of composition" have at last emerged as a predominant discipline, although at this date, unlike the early twentieth century, it was believed that no *single* set of principles was to be found. The methods of composition, it was pronounced, must differ "in the widely differing species of architecture whose tendencies in the one are to the horizontal or depressed, and in the other to the vertical or upright lines and forms. This being the case it will be necessary to treat of them separately for rules which apply to the one are totally inapplicable to the other . . . ."

This final expurgation of academicism from the *Encyclopedia Britannica* (almost one might feel as a by-product of the Reform Act) did not pass unnoticed. The *Architectural Magazine,* for instance, was enthusiastic in its approval, and the *Encyclopedia* could scarcely have any longer postponed its change in tone, for by then the "legitimate" architectural tradition which it had for so long upheld was obviously in a state of complete disintegration.

It seems to have been in the prefaces to those many early nineteenth century publications devoted to small houses and villas that the ideas were popularized to which the *Encyclopedia Britannica* at last gave sanction. Throughout the books of such architects as William Atkinson, Robert Lugar, Edmund Aikin, C.A. Busby, J.B. Papworth, Francis Goodwin, and P.F. Robinson, the words "composition," "character," "effect," "interest," "expression," are liberally scattered; and the further these architects succeed in emancipating themselves from the Anglo-Palladian tradition, the more prone are they to the use of this new vocabulary.[9]

Lugar, for instance, speaks of "composing architectural designs for dwellings," and makes it clear that the architect "should frequently compose with a painter's eye." Busby, although he concedes that it is the Greeks "to whom we are indebted for the three most beautiful of the orders of architecture," finds "as appears from the great similarity of their buildings," that they were "not deeply versed in composition." Aikin discovers "contrast and variety essential to architectural beauty"; they are qualities which impart "character and interest to any composition." But he cautions that "in carrying into execution the designs of modern villas," the architect should be careful "to avoid the contrast of equal parts; to reject the square and the cube, and thus escaping monotony, the composition will acquire character and expression." Robinson from the first conceives the building itself as a picture, and for him, following Sir Uvedale Price, it is not possible that "a union of character can prevail until the principles of painting are applied to what in any way concerns the embellishment of our houses."

From this evidence it is possible to assume that the word "composition" really entered the English architectural vocabulary as a result of the formal innovations of the Picturesque, and that it was conceived as being peculiarly applicable to the new, free, assymetrical organizations which could not be comprehended within the aesthetic categories of the academic tradition. The comparable evolution of a similar but not identical evolution in continental Europe, which it is not proposed to trace, was presumably more intimately involved with the whole rationale of Romantic Classicism, and seemingly the emergence of the idea of character was integral to both these developments.

The introduction of the concept of character as a critical term is generally presumed to be derived from Shaftesbury; but with the exception of Robert Morris, already noticed English architects again seem to have been somewhat slow in applying it to their purposes. Emil Kaufmann[10] has indicated how early the word became naturalized in French architectural circles; but in England, like the complementary term "composition," it seems scarcely to have made any decisive appearance until the 1790's, when curiously it has already the air of

46 being very well established. Thus Repton, in his *Sketches and Hints on Landscape Gardening* distinguishes the different *characters* of houses and grounds and presents the idea of character as a congruity of mood very much as Morris had understood it sixty years previously.[11]

And this interpretation of character was consistently echoed, as for instance by John Buonarotti Papworth, when in his *Ornamental Gardening* he advises that if the site for a proposed house be a plain,

> embellished with tall aspiring trees, particularly a mixture of the pine, beech and fir, with the oak and elm, and the distant scenery composed of long ranges of lofty hills and the spires of towns and cities, the features of the architecture should be Grecian . . . . Upon similar principles if the ground be part of a hill and the forms of the trees more round, or the structure broken and romantic, the Gothic of massive or delicate forms may be used; the former where the effect is rocky, bold and prominent, and the latter where its parts are polished and refined.[12]

But this conception of character had further implications. A building should not only be animated by the mood of a landscape but it should also disclose purpose; so that in his *Rural Residences* Papworth introduces a complementary proposition that

> The practice of designing the residence of a clergyman with reference to the characteristics of the church to which it belongs where the style of architecture is favourable to such selections, is desirable not only as relates to tasteful advantage; but as it becomes another and visible link between the church itself and the pastor who is devoted to its duties; and also leads the spectator very naturally from contemplating the dwelling to regard the pious character of its inhabitant.[13]

In addition to such connotations the word might be used quite indifferently as referring to a class, species, or style; buildings might show "a fancy or varied character," or might be erected in "the Gothic character"; or they might suggest a certain social expressiveness, displaying "a character becoming. to an English gentleman, plain and unaffected"; but on the whole, however various might be the interpretations of character, its presence was envisaged as determined by some evident particularity. It is thus in his *Encyclopedia of Cottage Farm and Villa Architecture* that Loudon defines the term for the average naive reader of his day:

> Character in architecture, as in physiognomy, is produced by the prevalence of certain distinctive features, by which a countenance or a building is at once distinguished from others of the same kind. Hence, numbers of buildings like numbers of human beings, may exist without exhibiting any marked character. On the other hand there may be buildings, which from their general proportions being exalted, and from all their parts being justly distributed, exhibit what is akin to nobleness of character . . . . In general whatever is productive of character in a building must be conspicuous and distinctive; and it should rather consist of one than many features.[14]

On the strength of such casual references it is not easy to appreciate the disruptive force with which the idea of character, throughout the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, was imbued. But the demand for expressed character as a prerequisite of good architecture was perhaps the principal agent in dissolving the hierarchy of value to which the academic system had been committed. The academic tradition had been preoccupied with the ideal and with its physical embodiment as a visual norm; it had promulgated laws and had been indisposed to concern itself with exceptions to these; "the whole beauty and grandeur of art consists in being able to get above all singular forms, local customs, particularities and details of every kind,"[15] says Sir Joshua Reynolds. But it was now precisely these "singular forms," "local customs," exceptions, those accidents of which Reynolds had himself inconsistently approved, which had become full of interest and "character"; and perhaps in no way is the Romantic revolution so completely represented as by this discovery. "The perfectly characteristic alone deserves to be called beautiful," Goethe had written, "without character there is no beauty";[16] and character became one of the most familiar, the most repeated motifs of the new era.

Figure 1. Woolley Park, Berkshire. J. Wyatt, architect, 1799. South East Front.

Figure 2. Endsleigh, Devonshire. J. Wyatt, architect, 1810. South West View.
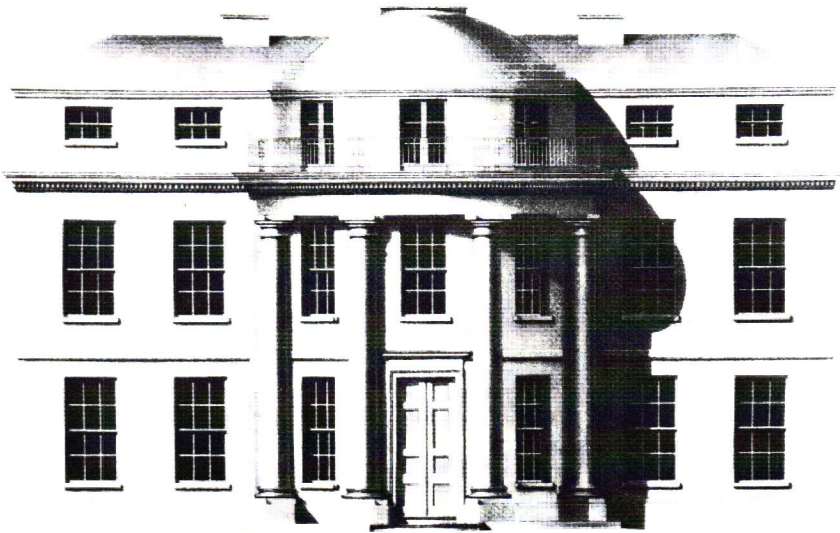
1.

2.

48 Thus, and again in his academy lectures, Sir John Soane invokes the characteristic almost, one might feel, as a counter to Reynolds' earlier insistence on the ideal:

> Notwithstanding all that has been urged to the contrary, be assured my young Friends, that Architecture in the hands of men of Genius may be made to assume whatever character is required of it. To attain this object, to produce this Variety it is essential that every building should be conformable to the uses it is intended for, and that it should express clearly its Destination and its Character, marked in the most decided and indisputable manner. The Cathedral and the Church, the Palace of the Sovereign and the dignified Prelate; the Hotel of the Nobleman; the Hall of Justice; the Mansion of the Chief Magistrate; the House of the rich individual; the gay Theatre, and the gloomy Prison; nay even the Warehouse and the Shop, require a different style of Architecture in their external appearance . . . .[17]

And if Soane had scarcely meant that differences of character necessitated literal differences of style — as already noticed — this conception of character as a subjective expression of purpose was shortly to lead to just this idea.

The effects of this recognition of "characteristic" beauty could obviously be illustrated by the comparison of almost any buildings of the mid-eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and such houses as Woolley Park (fig.1) and Endsleigh (fig. 2) might be allowed to indicate the transformation. Thus, although it would now be absurd to state that Woolley Park lacks character, it is obvious that an exhibition of character was not its architect's aim. It is an impersonal building, and a critic of the early nineteenth century would not have considered it to be a "characteristic" work, nor yet an example of "architectural composition." In Woolley Park the architect may be said to have been concerned not with the "characteristic" but rather with the "typical." It aspires to be an ideal and a general structure, and its architect, concerned with typicality, operates within a given and known quality. The building is determined by certain irreducible formal restrictions. Such character as it does display is conventionalized and limited to the Ionic mode implicit in its columnar motif, and this same motif enforces regulations which infuse the entire facade. Essentially Woolley Park is an ordinance of columns, a geometrical exercise in the consequences of bringing together columns and walls.

Endsleigh, however, is independent of any such ordinance, and its architect, emancipated from the necessities of system, inspired by a pictorial ideal, has constructed a species of architectural scenery. But it is not only in this irregular distribution, in this composition, that the house deviates from the inherited academic canon. It is more particularly by its evocative, its "characteristic" appeal. Contemporary observers of Endsleigh undoubtedly found its quasi-Elizabethan undress, its naturalistic charm to be full of character; but almost certainly they were led to discover this same value in its roof, its chimneys, and its porch. "The porch, the veranda, or the piazza are highly characteristic features," wrote Andrew Jackson Downing of similar buildings at a somewhat later date in the United States. And again, "The prominent features conveying expression of purpose in dwelling houses are the chimneys, the windows, and the porch . . . and for this reason whenever it is desired to raise the character of a cottage or a villa above mediocrity, attention should first be bestowed on these portions of the building."[18] Downing's dictum might be accepted as having been fundamentally of English origin, and his "prominent features" are in fact the same character — contributing "distinctive features" by which, to refer back to Loudon, "a countenance or a building is at once distinguished from others of the same kind." They are at once the expressions of purpose and the inspirations of certain less defined chains of associations; and this Janus-like quality which they reveal, and which seems to have been understood to be their charm, is central to the idea of character.

The cult of character was simultaneously a cult of the remote and the local, of the very specific and the highly personal. Fundamentally it was a revolt against the ideality of the academic tradition. The multiplicity of appearances which the academic tradition had felt obliged to abstract to a single type was now found in itself to be

significant; and the "characteristic" form of Endsleigh derives from an attempt to accept this multiplicity and to give individual expression to both the distinct attributes and the indefinite overtones assumed to be inherent to each and every part of the building. Both functions *and* associations, since the first are particular and the second private, were acceptable evidence of this multiplicity. The expression of the first was the product of pragmatic argument, the expression of the second the product of sentiment. Character was empirical and psychological and the tone of the age accepted it as at once the mark of common sense, the sign of sincerity, and the accent of the natural man. It was, one might be disposed to say, a democratic value; and, since certainly the idea of a constant characteristic attribute, an attribute which transcended style, offered a kind of egalitarian common denominator for the appreciation of all styles, the vernacular themes previously considered irrelevant or low could now, as at Endsleigh, achieve an architectural legitimacy, while simultaneously historical and geographical panoramas could be opened which had previously been considered bizarre. Thus, as the source of that extended receptiveness which distinguishes the nineteenth century, the demand for character seems also to stand as the guarantee of its formal anarchy; for by its simple recognition, liberalized in his sympathies and enfranchised of time, the architect was now heir to all the ages, and for him not only the whole of nature, but the whole of history had become present — and available.

The magnitude of this revolution has perhaps been obscured by the willingness of neo-Georgian criticism to see the Picturesque merely as a harmlessly aberrant activity of the eighteenth century connoisseur, or alternatively as the first evidence of that decline in taste which brought all to confusion. Obviously there is no change so abrupt as might here be implied, but by 1800 the impetus of the new attitudes had gained in velocity, and by 1830 their success was complete.

Almost immediately, however, the new principles enjoyed the penalties of success, and as ideas generally received, they were laid open to the scepticism of the minority. The entertainment of doubt bred a conviction of error, and by the 1840's a sharp reaction was defined. Already by 1842, that most respected architectural authority *The Ecclesiologist,* reviewing a new work on church architecture, complains that throughout the book the author lays too much stress on what he denominates "effect," and "the picturesque," "pleasing effect," "proportion," and "varied outline."[19] For the serious Gothic Revivalist these words were coming to imply "a painful sense of unreality"[20] and the architect or critic who could use them could scarcely be completely aware of what a later critic called "the deep objective truth in pointed architecture."[21]

But this revulsion was not confined to the Gothic Revivalists and in 1844 C.R. Cockerell, who certainly found no "deep objective truth in pointed architecture," was equally damnatory of the eclectic picturesque, which he found to be "the most emasculating vice, the most uncertain treacherous *ignis-fatuus;* a principle of pseudo-life, ever without fruit or result. If the artist or life-battler would effect aught consistent or real he must work out *one* rule of action, and adhere to that and make it fruitful."[22]

On these points, if on nothing else, *The Ecclesiologist* might well have been in complete agreement with Cockerell, since like the Gothic Revivalists he required single-mindedness and demanded something *real.* "A *real* Swiss cottage in Switzerland is as characteristic as picturesque; for this simple reason because it *is* real,"[23] *The Ecclesiologist* declares in 1846; and again in 1851 the same review finds that in the Crystal Palace, "the construction is almost entirely real, all beauty in the fabric depending on the development of that construction."[24] Architecture, according to that most literate of Gothic Revivalists, Street, is not to be judged in "a mere artistic light," but only "in proportion . . . as a work is entirely and undeniably real so essentially is it good in the first place."[25] "Rough stone walls are thoroughly good and real," he says elsewhere, and from his *Brick and Marble Architecture* it may be learned that the whole value of the middle ages lies in its "intense desire for reality and practical character."[26]

Instances of this demand for "reality" could be multiplied, but in its consistent recurrence throughout the more self-conscious criticism of the day, there may be seen the same pattern of thought which Ruskin's carefully guarded use of the term *composition* implies. The architects of the mid-century had reacted against their own inherited disposition to think in terms of the Picturesque; and an architecture so evolved they now believed to be logically indefensible. "There is nothing in the world so indefinable and so entirely depending on taste or caprice as what is called 'picturesque,'" is a fair sample of the attitude of *The Ecclesiologist*.[27] The Picturesque was now found to be emphasizing the pleasure of the eye, rather than the rational existence of the object. It had aimed to produce "effect," and, if by means of certain visual stimuli, it had induced an atmosphere in which certain states of mind were possible, its success was assured. But the mid-century architects had come to require that their visual stimuli should be capable of more rational, or at least more *mental* explanation. Picturesque phenomena could now only be offensive if not the seeming product of necessity, only meretricious if pursued for their own sake. "The true picturesque," wrote a contemporary, "derives only from the sternest utility";[28] and in this new climate of feeling, composition became a word which the semantically scrupulous were happy to neglect.

But character, on the other hand, had now acquired a new dimension of meaning. "I recollect no instance of a want of sacred character, or of any marked and painful ugliness, in the simplest or most awkwardly built village church, where stone and wood were roughly and nakedly used," says Ruskin in the *Seven Lamps of Architecture*,[29] and this one remark is enough to indicate the nature of the change.

From the height of the mid-century the engaging gingerbread of such structures as Endsleigh had become not so much "characteristic" as artificial; and a house of this kind seemed now to be not so much a house as the spurious biography of one, scarcely so much a building as a building transposed according to the necessities of theatre. "A very unaffected parsonage is building by Mr. Butterfield at Coalpit Heath, near Bristol. We think he has succeeded in giving the peculiar character required for such a building." It is again *The Ecclesiologist*,[30] and St. Saviour's Vicarage, Coalpit Heath (fig.3) might well stand as an almost perfect exemplification of the new interpretation.

Obviously it had come to be felt that, as so far expressed, character had been an affair of the surface only, that the Picturesque had played with "the characteristic" as an idea rather than it had respected character as "a fact." Picturesque eclecticism was now seen to have detached the externals of every style from the particular conditions of which they were the physical embodiment, and then arbitrarily to have infused these externals with a universal and an apparently self-generated spirit, by appeal to which, though all styles had been provided with a means of resurrection, they had also been condemned to an afterlife as backdrops to an unchanging psychological constant. And this constant, character, unconditioned by systems of ideas, casually enjoying a haphazard relationship with history, using its styles merely as a variable decor, had now come to appear an unjustifiable impersonation; while the history which it presumed seemed an endless charade, an irrelevant display, where constantly changing scenery and costumes, agreeably titillating the spectators, might provide the actors with pleasing opportunity for the display of their unchanging selves but could otherwise have no relationship to the performance.

The architects of the mid-century, and not only the Gothic Revivalists, revolting against these further implications of the Picturesque, seemed to have sensed that character can hardly initiate itself, and that personality is not extraneous to a specific culture but partly its result. Thus, while they still saw character as a pre-eminently "natural" quality, they no longer accepted it to be the mark of some "natural" man, untrammelled by society and freely operating in a cultural vacuum. Instead they came to envisage it as the product of specific circumstances, as the vindicating evidence of a genuine interaction between a given individual, given material conditions, and a given cultural milieu. Character became now a quality to be ex-

Figure 3. St. Savior's Vicarage, Coalpit Heath. William Butterfield, architect, 1845.

Figure 4. Kingscote, Newport. R. Up-
john, architect, 1880.

Figure 5. Griswold House, Newport. R.
Hunt, architect, 1862.

4.

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tracted. It was implicit in the limiting data of the problem — from them it was to be deduced and through them revealed; so that as the former idea of "the characteristic" receded, there emerged a new and "real" conception of character as a form of exposure or revelation.

So much is obvious; but this mid-century conception consistently eludes adequate summary. Contemporaries experienced it, expressed it, but were scarcely able to reduce it to words. Perhaps it was most completely illuminated by *The Seven Lamps of Architecture;* but possibly it was most succinctly defined by Horatio Greenough:

> When I define Beauty as the promise of Function; Action as the presence of Function; Character as the record of Function; I arbitrarily divide that which is essentially one. I consider the phases through which organised intention passes to completeness as if they were distinct entities. Beauty being the promise of function, must be mainly present before the phase of action; but so long as there is yet a promise of function there is beauty, proportioned to its relationship with action or character. There is somewhat of character at the close of the first epoch of the organic life, as there is somewhat of beauty at the commencement of the last, but they are less apparent and present rather to the reason than to sensuous tests.
>
> If the normal development of organised life be from beauty to action, from action to character, the progress is a progress upward as well as forward; and action will be higher than beauty even than the summer is higher than the spring; and character will be higher than action, even as the autumn is the resume and the result of spring and summer. If this be true, the attempt to prolong the phase of beauty into the epoch of action can only be made through non-performance; and false beauty or embellishment will be the result.[31]

In these two paragraphs Greenough condenses much, though not all, that was implicit in the less stringently analytical criticism of his day; and from them it may be sensed how character which, in the first case, had been appreciated as a subjective and empirical value, was now transposed as an objective and transcendental one; and

how — at the most abstracted level — it could further be understood as the eminently moral resolution of the dialectic between being and becoming, of a conflict between "beauty" and "action."

The idea was elevated, in practice contorted; and in fact the intensified evaluation of character now simply brought on that brutalizing of the Picturesque which might be considered the central crisis of the charade. For, since it was now "non-performance" to "attempt to prolong the phase of beauty into the epoch of action," and since the "promising" condition "beauty" was now organically predestined to suffer transformation through the workings of the "higher" quality, character, it was essential that it should bear the scars of the ordeal. Thus, although it has rarely been associated with such buildings as St. Saviour's Vicarage, the American sculptor's reasoning provides almost perfect explanation of this house and of all those other buildings of the mid-century in which the distinction between the characteristic and the visually pleasing has been forced out *en clair,* buildings where character has ceased to be a lyrical adjunct to a pictorial composition and has now been erected as an inexorable absolute which need not beguile but which might outrage. And, if at St. Saviour's Vicarage, Endsleigh and all other *cottages ornées* have been made "real," this same reappraisal of character as an almost mystical "record of Function" could obviously be illustrated just as adequately by the American equivalents of these buildings.

The parallel would not of course be exact, since by English standards the Picturesque is a retarded movement in the United States, while in America, except in certain Anglophile circles, the Gothic Revival is largely without Tractarian nuances; and in addition, since structural techniques are dissimilar there is a further distance which must be observed. But, after allowing for some chronological variation and further distinctions of content and medium, such a house as Kingscote in Newport, R.I. (fig. 4) could reasonably be allowed to represent Endsleigh, while Richard Morris Hunt's Griswold House also in Newport (fig. 5) might provide a complement to St. Saviour's Vicarage. And if the charms of the first are less

enting than those of its English equivalent, the "realism" of the second is scarcely any less ambivalent.

For in seeking to make character a specific value the architects of the mid-century had been led to a very complicated knotting together of commitments. The demand for characteristic expression had been a corollary of the Romantic consciousness of nature and history, freedom and individuality. But a less ecstatic approach to nature and a more sophisticated historical culture, with a recognition that freedom predicated necessity, and individuality society, had resulted in a much more closed and highly charged situation. "If he is in earnest his work will not be deficient in character,"[32] *The Ecclesiologist* says of the architect; but, if it was now impossible to be in earnest about the Picturesque — because it was wholly empirical, because it required taste rather than faith from its adherents — what contemporary alternative was there? Apparently there was none. Picturesque ideals had penetrated the last strongholds of the academic tradition. The fundamental question was therefore one of limiting the Picturesque, of rendering it by an increased cultivation of its twin bases in "nature" and "history"; that it was a question of making the Picturesque objective by implicating it with function and techniques, and of making it legitimate by restricting its expression to one style. Thus, paradoxically, from the demand for reality there resulted a simultaneous commitment to a structural ideal and to an archeological one.

It is possibly from the force of this antithesis that much architecture of the mid-nineteenth century acquires its distinctive hardness and ferocity. Character as organic to technique and performance was not to be detached from the cognate idea of character as intrinsic to style. The two ideas were interactive; and thus, while the one, by requiring the exhibition of qualities inherent in the substance of building, generated a tradition which has been continuous, it did so, at least partly, by means of an emotional sub-structure provided by the other.

The High Victorian interpretation of character has had a long and distinguished progeny; but the degree of tension implicit in its formulation of ethical rationalism, its intellectual austerity, its compulsive but not convincing logic, made it too strenuous a system to be long sustained, and by the seventies a new situation had arisen.

As explanation of the spectacle of the so-called Queen Anne Revival and as a commentary on the failure of the Gothic, an anonymous critic was quoted at length in *Building News,* January 16, 1874:

> In certain aspects the Gothic Revival may be aptly compared with the pre-Raphaelite movement in painting. Both were profoundly in earnest, and in both the rejection of certain qualities of artistic attractiveness ultimately led to a protest from within their own body. The dominant motive in the Gothic Revival was constructive. It sought eagerly to reveal the rudimentary impulses in building, and devoted its energies into carrying into view the structural facts which are actually important. The pre-Raphaelite movement showed an equal worship of naturalism. Everything was to be true and natural and nothing was to be composed. Indeed it may be said that the revolution in both arts involved a neglect of composition, and as a consequence, both revolutions failed in giving to their less imaginative efforts those lighter graces which composition alone can supply. It is a desire for the lighter graces of composition that lies at the root of the new love for the style of Queen Anne . . . . [33]

Contemporary criticism of the Gothic Revival was rarely upon this level, but in general observers made the same point which is summarized by a correspondent of the *American Architect and Building News* who signs himself "Georgian": people did Queen Anne because they liked it and "after all this is not a very bad reason."[34]

Thirty years earlier, even ten, it would have seemed one of the worst of all possible reasons, but in the more relaxed atmosphere of the seventies the doctrinaire commitments of the mid-century were no longer to be tolerated; "the lighter graces of composition" could once more be exercised without a sense of shame; and, while a patronage of Gothic Revival principles persisted, they were no longer generally received as sanctioned by dogma. They were

Figure 6. Grimsdyke, Harrow Weald. Richard Norman Shaw, architect, 1872.

Figure 7. Bestwood Lodge, Nottinghamshire. T. Harris, architect, 1888.
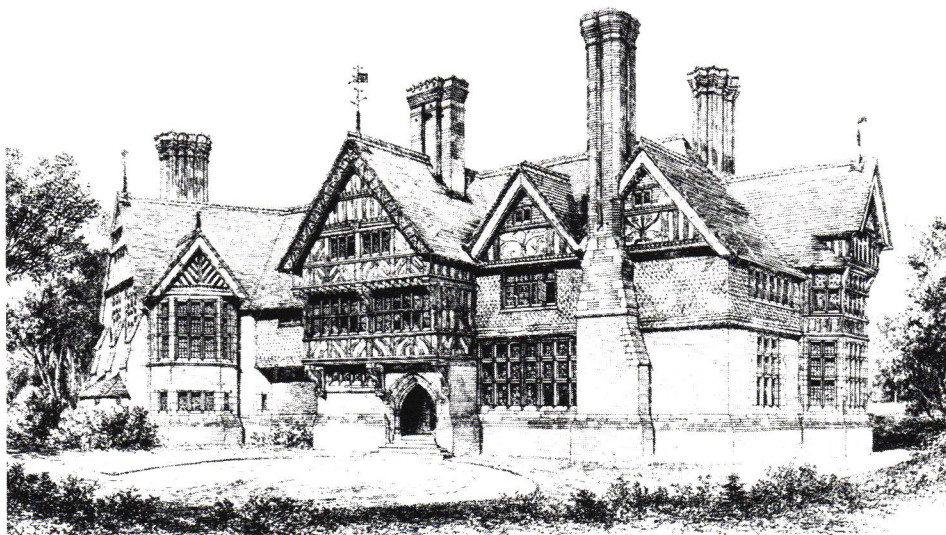
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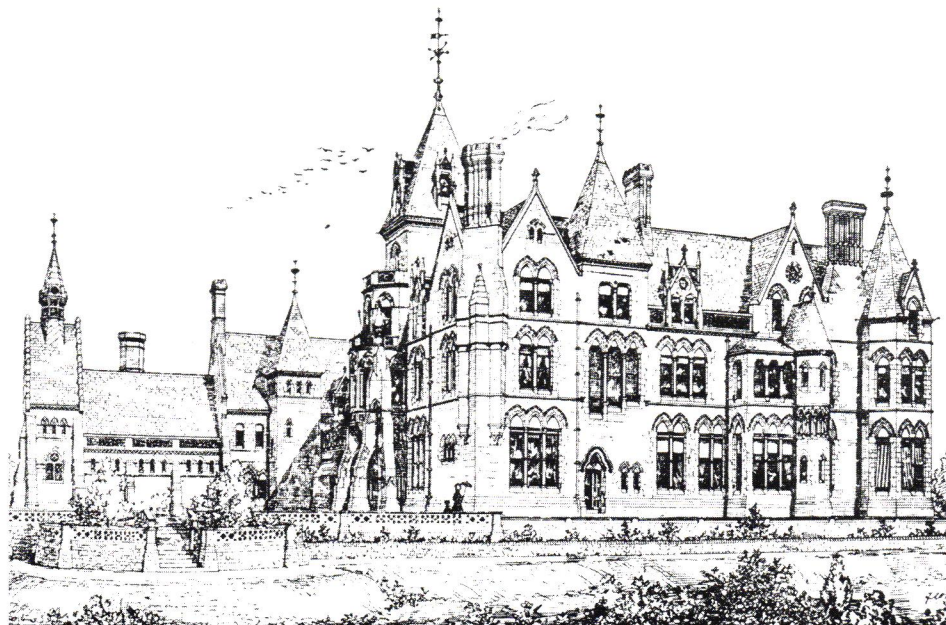
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Figure 8. 170 Queen's Gate, London. Richard Norman Shaw, architect, 1888.

Figure 9. Watts Sherman House, Newport. H.H. Richardson, architect, 1874. Drawing by Stanford White.

Figure 10. H.A.C. Taylor House, Newport. McKim, Mead, and White, architects, 1886.
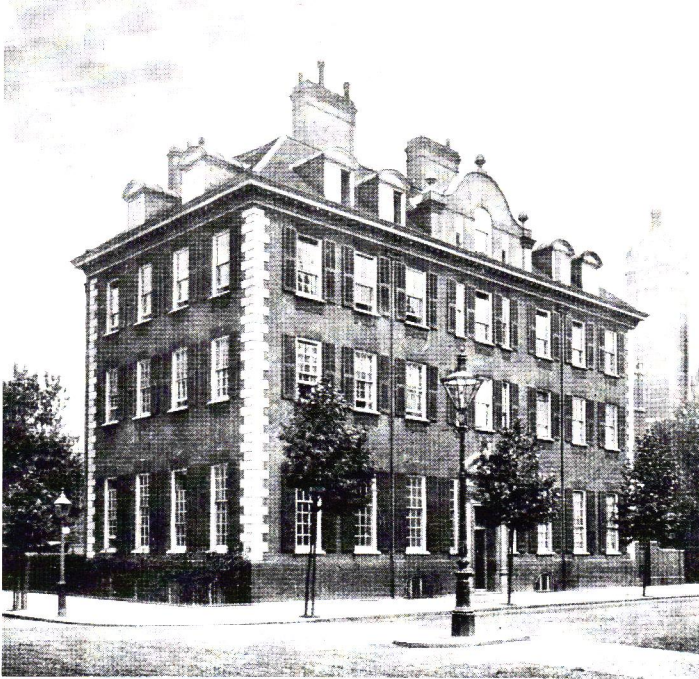
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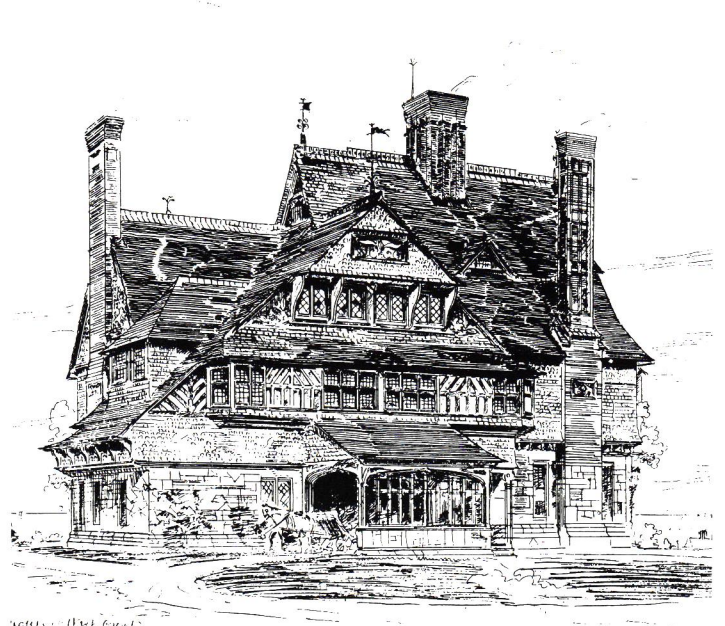
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regarded rather as principles which, according to the architect's tact, might, but need not necessarily, be adhered to. Thus in much the same way that academic theory had continued, as a type of survival doctrine enjoying a sentimental rather than an active endorsement, so Gothic Revival ideas persisted into this neo-Picturesque phase.

Not unexpectedly, after the rigorous demands of the mid-century, in both theory and practice there was now a conspicuous slackening of creative nerve, and for some years there is a hiatus in the production of significant criticism. It might be said that these ensuing years are marked by a sense of drift, by a general agreement to doubt the mid-century theoretical structure, but by no particular willingness to demolish it; and it might also be observed that neither the mundane scepticism nor the aesthetic languor which came progressively to dominate the period were exactly propitious for the inspiration of any new critical synthesis. It is symptomatic of the new spirit that even the historian of the Gothic Revival should find himself exposed to the cogency of its empirical judgments; since Eastlake, as the final test of a good building, proposes the question which some years earlier might have seemed the supreme impertinence — "Is it offensive to the eye?"[35] Presumably this question was frequently asked, and, as by the exercise of a simple pragmatism, the Gothic Revival came to be judged and found wanting, so architects were enabled to celebrate their new feelings for textural effects, for increased light, for sparkling detail, for formal qualities admitting no regulation other than that of individual taste.

This sudden disengagement from a High Victorian "reality" now conceived as being profoundly unrealistic, is merely one indication of that general movement towards an art of pure form which typifies the later nineteenth century. The opposed demands of style and structure had been proved too great, their antithesis had been discovered an irrelevance, and the new satisfaction with the visual image as adequate in itself had prompted a distinctly less exacting ideal which acted to dissolve both archeological and structural demands. Obviously histori-

cal reminiscence did not cease, but convictions as to its ultimate significance became progressively modified. No longer preoccupied with "truth," as required by the Gothic Revivalists, but rather with "effect" as understood by the Picturesque, architects were again led to recognize frankly compositional disciplines.

But if it could now be asserted that attractive visual appearance was enough, it was still equally mandatory that appropriate character should be displayed, and the contradiction was apparently not a source of embarrassment. Character was by now imbued with an irresistible emotional potency, and although its High Victorian dignity appears as insidiously devalued, the demand for characteristic expression continued unabated. From the seventies onward it is evident that the ascription of character to a building is an act of unchallengeable praise, and Eastlake, for instance, writes of a certain church that "The Picturesque grouping of the aisle windows, the rich inlay and carving of the reredos . . . even the iron work of the screen, are all full of character, and that type of character which if verbally expressed could only be a synonym for artistic grace."[36] Clearly character is no longer the new and poetical architectural attribute which it had been for the Picturesque, nor is it the objective architectural condition arrived at by the unyielding and energetic analysis which it was for the mid-century. It is now a luscious psychological accessory of composition whose necessary presence it is assumed that no critic will deny.

In such terms one might distinguish the manors of Norman Shaw — of a compositional brilliance before unknown — from the mid-century achievements of a Butterfield or a Teulon. In mid-century terms the achievement of Norman Shaw is irresponsible, sentimental, and shameless. In Shavian terms the works of the mid-century are defiant of composition and express their defiance in the form of deliberate clumsiness, excessive vigour, and superfluous brutality; for unlike the Gothic Revival, Norman Shaw's is an essentially "compositional" architecture, and in such a house as Grimsdyke at Harrow Weald (1872) (fig. 6) he reasserted the compositional ideals of the Picturesque with an unsparing virtuosity.

Compared with any house of the mid-century Grimsdyke is immediately satisfying to the eye. Where a house of ten years earlier shocks – Bestwood Lodge for instance (fig. 7) – Grimsdyke soothes; and where Bestwood Lodge is strident, Grimsdyke is ingratiating. At Grimsdyke, unrelated to any systematic scheme of thought, by now quite divested of ideally Romantic overtones, displaying a more complicated and synthetic, a more brilliant and cloying orchestration, at once sentimental and surreptitious, character is exhibited with an assurance and a weightiness which were before unknown. Where once it had been edifying, it is now seductive; and where once it had been "real," it is now unabashed.

It may be felt that the idea of character, almost like the Romantic conception of individualism, had passed its creative zenith in the fifties and sixties, and that, as the century wore on, the demand for it could no longer initiate further significant developments. In fact, as the ideological excitement of the Gothic Revival receded into the past, as High Victorian activity came to be found increasingly intemperate, and as the *laissez faire* empiricism of the seventies (so well represented by the earlier Norman Shaw) came to appear excessive, so the expression of character came to be increasingly codified and restricted.

A matter of sixteen years separates Norman Shaw's Grimsdyke from his 170 Queen's Gate (fig. 8); their American equivalents, Richardson's Watts Sherman House (1874) (fig. 9) and McKim's H.A.C. Taylor House (fig. 10), are separated by only eleven; but during these years, as the "propriety" of these later houses shows, the extreme characterization which the Gothic Revival had demanded had become unacceptable. A new urbanity had emerged and character was already restricted to that "correct" character, which it is permissible, which it is indeed necessary that a gentleman should display; while if there were no gentleman who would yet assail directly the mid-century critical canon, there were many who now felt obliged to propose some alternative.

Surprisingly, John Root in Chicago was one of these, demanding that truth, sincerity, reticence, modesty, the distinguishing marks of the gentleman, should also be recognized as the marks of excellence in building[37] — a thesis which, with the very slightest modifications, has persisted down to our own day and which was perhaps most aptly summarized by John Belcher's *Essentials in Architecture* (1907). The architectural qualities that Belcher recognizes as "essential" — Strength, Vitality, Restraint, Refinement, Repose, Grace, Breadth, Scale — are very much an index to the feelings of the time, while their mere enumeration is sufficient to suggest how tempered by taste the violent individualism of the mid-century had become by the early years of the twentieth. Character, it may be suggested, had at last been translated as the outward sign of judicious behaviour; and, just as the gentleman will signalize a specific activity by a change of clothing, so it seems to have been hoped the building would defer to the conventional wardrobe by which its purpose might most appropriately be expressed.

And, as both 170 Queen's Gate and the H.A.C. Taylor House illustrate, this transformation of the "natural" man of the first years of the century into the responsible gentleman of the last was not without its effects on the organization of the building. Both houses of course are extreme and precocious examples of a general tendency, and the final critical attitude which they predicated hardly emerged with any degree of clarity for some years, scarcely indeed until the publication of Guadet's *Eléments et Théorie de l'Architecture* inspired a series of American and British attempts to provide its English equivalent. It is thus that from approximately the year 1900 onwards there followed that succession of treatises, the composition books, which prompted this investigation. They were a means by which it was hoped that certain nineteenth century problems might finally be put to rest.

"Composition," Frank Lloyd Wright tells us, "is dead"; and although this seems doubtful, if it is indeed the case, it would surely be injudicious to probe into the precise circumstances of so recent a demise. It might rather be suggested that at some time in the 1920's the central tenet of the composition books, that architecture has at all times

and in all places been determined by the interaction of composition and character, came to seem as improbable as it did in the mid-nineteenth century; and that at the same time the claim of early twentieth century architectural theory to reveal the underlying and permanent attributes of architectural experience came to present itself as no more than the rationale of an eclectic situation.

> Composition is the keynote of architectural design. Whilst primarily the plan of a building dominates its external expression, yet devoid of a sense of "Composition" the external effect may be dull and uninteresting despite a good plan; and with a proper appreciation of contrasts and values the same work may be masterly. Detail is secondary, and may be bad or entirely omitted, on a building the mass of which is effective and even spectacular.[38]

Difficult though it sometimes is to disagree with pronouncements of this order, it might be guessed that it was against what seemed to be their unduly self-assured tone that architects like Wright revolted. For where the mid-nineteenth century reaction against the Picturesque had attempted to achieve some kind of synthesis between the laws of structure, the nature of materials, and the intimate and objective qualities of style; the late nineteenth and early twentieth century reaction was led almost exclusively to emphasize phenomena of vision; and, by using history as a kind of dictionary, to deduce from it certain formal schemes apparently quite extrinsic to any particular style or culture. In fact, by detaching the irrational element of style from the recently abstracted principles of composition, the dominant theory of the early twentieth century to some extent recapitulated at a more refined and sophisticated level the situation of c. 1830; while as a corollary, the later protest against this eclectic theory very curiously paralleled the earlier protest of the mid-nineteenth century.

But composition can scarcely have suffered so drastic a fate as character, which now can only appear as the *leit motif* of an era gone beyond recall. An architecture which aspires to abstraction, which professes a demand for anonymity, which seeks "what is typical, the norm, not the accidental but the definite ad hoc form"[39] can scarcely require the display of character; while the preference for impersonal, neutral, standardized solutions is equally incompatible with the idea of characteristic expression.

According to N.C. Curtis (one of the most distinguished of the eclectic theorists), "the architecture of antiquity was not strongly characterized. The Greeks were not under any necessity for distinguishing between the different types of building by accentuating their character."[40] According to Guadet, "La recherche du caractère est d'ailleurs une conception relativement moderne. L'antiquité a bien des édifices nettement caracterisés, mais elle ne paraît cependant avoir fait du caractère un mérite capitale."[41] But if it must be doubted whether modern architecture, any more than that of antiquity, entertains a problem of character, it should be recognized that in the problems which character initiated, problems which for the nineteenth century were insoluble ones, there are to be found origins of some of the more significant attitudes by which the present day is distinguished.

Perhaps at no time other than the late eighteenth century has architectural thought been confronted with so explosive an idea; and certainly no other architectural explosion can have created so portentous a vacuum. Unlimited experiment was justified by the emergency; the wildest non-conformity flourished exotically among the debris. New experiences were stimulated by the chaos, new energies released by the confusion; both by arbitrary choice and pressure of circumstances, new conceptions of form were generated. By the demand for character, order was atomized. It was reduced to *characteristic* particles; and not until this requirement was dissipated could any effective synthesis of these be envisaged. As a projection of these circumstances the critical embargo upon the term becomes comprehensible. It is an idea which, by emphasizing the particular, the personal, and the curious, will always vitiate system; and it is, maybe, the fundamental demand which typifies the architecture of the nineteenth century.

Notes

60 1. J. V. Van Pelt, *Discussion of Composition* (New York, 1902); J. B. Robinson, *Architectural Composition* (New York, 1908); N.C. Curtis, *Architectural Composition* (New York, 1923); H. Robertson, *Principles of Architectural Composition* (London, 1924).

2. Philip Johnson, *Mies van der Rohe* (New York, 1947).

3. Frank Lloyd Wright, *Modern Architecture* (Princeton, New Jersey, 1931).

4. John Ruskin, *Stones of Venice* (London, 1850), Vol. 11 Ch.VI, paragraph 42 (no pagination). "I am always afraid to use this word Composition; it is so utterly misused in the general parlance respecting art. Nothing is more common than to hear divisions of art into 'form, composition, and color,' or 'light and shade and composition,' or it matters not what else and composition; the speakers in each case attaching a perfectly different meaning to the word, generally an indistinct one, and always a wrong one. Composition is, in plain English, 'putting together'...."

5. E. Pickering, *op.cit.*, p. 278.

6. Morris, *Lectures on Architecture* (London, 1734), p. 67-8.

7. Robert Adam, *Works on Architecture* (London, 1773).

8. Sir Joshua Reynolds, *Literary Works* (London, 1835), Vol. II, p. 76, from Discourse III delivered in 1786.

9. William Atkinson, *Views of Picturesque Cottages* (London, 1805); Robert Lugar, *Architectural Sketches for Rural Dwellings* (London, 1805); C.A. Busby, *A series of designs for villas and country houses* (London, 1808); Edmund Aikin, *Designs for Villas and Other Rural Dwellings* (London, 1810); J.B. Papworth, *Rural Residences* (London,1818); F. Robinson, *Rural Architecture* (London,1833); F. Robinson, *Designs for Ornamental Villas* (London, 1836).

10. Emil Kaufmann, *Architecture in the Age of Reason* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1955), pp. 100-31.

11. J.C. Loudon, *The Landscape Gardening and Landscape Architecture of the Late Humphrey Repton,Esq.* (London, 1840), p. 39.

12. J.B. Papworth, *Ornamental Gardening* (London, 1818).

13. Papworth, *Rural Residences* (London, 1818),p. 45.

14. J.C. Loudon, "The Principles of Criticism in Architecture," *Encyclopedia of Cottage, Farm and Village Architecture* (London, 1833), p. 1120.

15. Sir Joshua Reynolds, *op.cit.*, Vol. 1, p. 333, from Discourse III, delivered in 1770.

16. The sentiment is expressed in Goethe's *Von Deutsche Baukunst*, 1770-3.

17. Sir John Soane, *Lectures on Architecture* (London, 1929), p. 178.

18. A.J. Downing, *Cottage Residences* (N.Y.,1873), p. 12-3.

19. "Mr. Petit's Remarks on Church Architecture," *The Ecclesiologist*, Vol. 1, 1842, p. 87.

20. G. E. Street, "On the Revival of the Ancient Style of Domestic Architecture," *The Ecclesiologist,* Vol. XIV, 1853, p. 70.

21. "Mr. Petit's Ecclesiological Position," *The Ecclesiologist,* Vol. VI, 1846, p. 129.

22. C.R. Cockerell, "Royal Academy Lectures," *Atheneum*, London, 1843.

23. *The Ecclesiologist,* Vol. VI, *op. cit.*

24. *Ibid.,* Vol XII, 1851, p. 241.

25. *Ibid.,* Vol XIV, *op.cit.*

26. G.E. Street, *Brick and Marble Architecture in the Middle Ages* (London, 1855), p. 109.

27. *The Ecclesiologist,* Vol. 1, 1842, p. 94.

28. Unknown source.

29. John Ruskin, *Seven Lamps of Architecture* (London, 1849) , p. 45.

30. *The Ecclesiologist,* Vol. VI, *op.cit.*

31. *Henry T. Tuckerman, A Memorial of Horatio Greenough* (New York, 1853), p. 133, from an essay by Greenough, "Relative and Independent Beauty."

32. *The Ecclesiologist,* Vol. VI, *op. cit.*

33. *Building News,* Vol. XXVI, January 16, 1874. See *Eléments et Théorie de l'Architecture* (Paris 1902),Vol. I, p.108.

34. *American Architect and Building News,* Vol. II, October 20, 1877.

35. C.L. Eastlake, *The Gothic Revival* (London, 1872),p.333.

36. *Ibid.,* p. 324.

37. Harriet Monroe, *John Root* (New York, 1896), p. 77 and *passim.* From a paper read before the Chicago Architectural Sketch Club, January 3, 1887, and published in *The Island Architect.*

38. H. Robertson, *Principles of Architectural Composition* (London, 1924).

39. Peter Blake, *Marcel Breuer* (New York, 1949), p. 129.

40. N.C. Curtis, *op. cit.*, pp. 3-4.

41. Guadet, *op.cit.*, p. 133.

Figure Credits

Figure 1 & 2. D. Linstrum, *Sir Jeffry Wyatville:Architect to the King* (London: Oxford U. Press, 1972), pp. 76 and 88.

Figure 3. H.R. Hitchcock, *Early Architecture in Britain,* (New Haven: Yale Press, 1954).

Figures 4,5 & 10. H.R. Hitchcock, *Rhode Island Architecture* (Rhode Island Museum Press, 1939), p. 53, 174, 66.

Figures 6 & 8. R. Blumfield, *Richard Norman Shaw* (London: B.T. Batsford, 1940), figs. 6 and 42.

Figure 7. G. Rendel, *English Architecture Since the Regency* (London: Constable and Co., Ltd., 1959), pl. 53.

Figure 9. *New York Sketchbook* (Boston: J. Osgood and Co., 1875), drawing by Stanford White.

The Fountainhead

Rosalind Krauss

Since its inception over ten years ago, Minimal Art has been thought of as an enterprise whose meaning is entirely circumscribed by negation. Rejecting this view, the author locates the content of Minimalism in relation to the concept of intention and the model of a public language.

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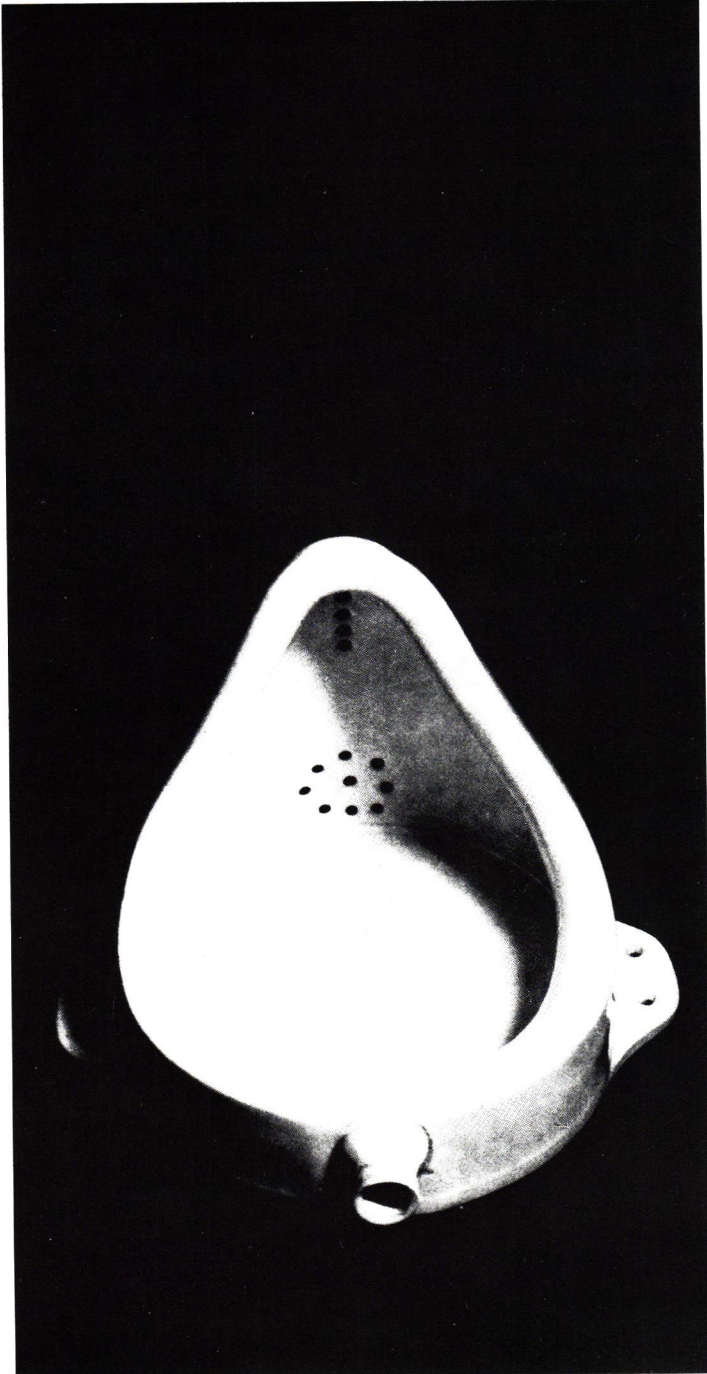
1.

I am thinking of Duchamp's *Fountain,* of the work that he created through inversion, by placing a urinal on a pedestal and signing it "R. Mutt 1917." (fig. 1) I am thinking of how that 90° rotation of the object created something whose thoroughly androgynous character seems to reflect the complete doubleness of its possible meaning. Because there are two ways of reading *The Fountain* ; and although at first they may seem mutually compatible, each a minor variant of the other, they are in fact opposed. They are like two paths with a common origin, which nonetheless lead in divergent directions.

The first reading addresses itself to the question of intention and goes roughly like this. The finished work of art is the result of a process of forming, or making, or creating. It is in a sense the proof that such a process has gone on, just as the foot-print in soft ground is proof that someone has passed by. The work of art is thus the index of an act of creation, which has at its roots the intention to make the work. Intention here is understood as some kind of prior mental event that we cannot see, but for which the work now serves as testimony. It is a common enough reading of the readymades in general, and *The Fountain* in particular, that they represent or hypostatize pure intention — that since the objects in question were not fabricated by the artist but merely chosen by him, the arthood of the object is seen as residing solely in its capacity to register that decision, to render it up, as it were, into the physical world.

That first reading of the readymade is, of course, co-terminous with the notion of artistic process as expression (or self-expression). It seems very logical to say, "Art is an expression of something," and if asked, "An expression of what?" to answer, "An expression of the artist, of what he had in mind — or an expression of the way *he* saw something." (In the case of Abstract-expressionism this answer becomes particularly compelling, since every mark on the canvas asks to be read in the context of a private self from which the intention to make that mark has been directed. The public surface of the work seems to demand that we see it as a map from which we read the privately held cross-currents of personality — of the artist's inviolable

Self.) But this is the logical connection that the second reading of the readymade asks to be destroyed. For the second reading points to the fact that there need be *no* connection between the final art object and the psychological matrix from which it issued, since in the case of the readymade this possibility is precluded from the start. *The Fountain* was not made (fabricated) by Duchamp; only selected by him. Therefore, there is no way in which the urinal can "express" the artist. It is like a sentence which is put into the world unsanctioned by the voice of a speaker standing behind it. Because maker and artist are evidently separate, there is no way for the urinal to serve as the externalization of the state or states of mind of the artist as he made it. And by not functioning within the grammar of the aesthetic personality, *The Fountain* can be seen as something that puts distance between itself and the notion of personality per se.

To take that second reading of *The Fountain* seriously is to be confronted by a particular model of the Self, in which the self is not seen as existing prior to experience, but rather as discovered *in* experience. That notion of the Self is, of course, in no way tied exclusively to Duchamp. By the early 1960's it operates in the most diverse places. It functions, for example, in the poetry of Lowell and Berryman in that "the self is terminal, physical, isolated, and it depends heavily on specific information —the names of friends, doctors, stores, places, and the like. There is (almost) a grasping after concrete detail as a way of authenticating the self. It is as if the confessional poet were saying that because he has documentary evidence of his experience, he must therefore exist."[1] And it emerges as the particularly urgent claim of the later philosophy of Wittgenstein, in which the language-game is a therapy aimed at severing the logical connection between meaning and mind.

In the *Blue Book* for example, Wittgenstein asks what it means to make the claim that we know a tune: does it mean that before we sing it we have quickly whistled it to ourselves silently, or that we have a picture of the score in our heads — a mental image of the tune — from which we read off the notes as we sing them? Is claiming to know the tune dependent upon having it stored up someplace inside us, like beads already positioned on a string and ready to be pulled out of our mouths? Or is it simply singing the tune, or perhaps hearing many tunes and saying "that one just then is the right tune." The tune, and the question of just where it is stored when we claim to know it, widens out in *The Investigations* to memory images and to the bases for all claims to know. Again and again, Wittgenstein tried to sever the certainty of these claims from a picture of a mental space in which definitions and rules are stored, awaiting application. The relationship between that attempt and the second reading of *The Fountain* is just this: the arthood of *The Fountain* is not legitimized by its having issued, stroke by stroke, from the private psyche of the artist; indeed it could not have. So it is like a man absent-mindedly humming, and being dumfounded if asked if he had meant *that* tune rather than another. That is a case in which it is not clear how the grammar of intention might apply.

Wittgenstein's was an attempt to confound our picture of the necessity that there be a private mental space (a space available only to the single self) in which meanings and intentions had to exist *before* they could issue into the space of the world. The model of meaning that Wittgenstein implores us to accept is a model severed from the legitimizing claims of a private self. And the significance of the art that emerged in this country in the early 1960's is that it staked everything on the truth of that model. Therefore, if we read the work of Frank Stella or Robert Morris merely as part of a text of formal reordering, we miss the meaning that is most central to that work. Further, we may miss or misconceive the way in which that very notion of meaning persists in the best art of the present.

It is common enough to say of Stella's painting that it is structured deductively — that all internal differentiations of its surfaces derive from the literal aspects of the canvas edge.[2] Thus in the early black paintings, like *Die Fahne Hoch* (fig. 2), we point to the way he begins with the midpoints of the vertical and horizontal sides and forces the stripes into a repetitive, unbroken declaration of the ex-

64 panse of the painting's four quadrants in a double set of mirror reversals. Or in the later aluminum paintings, where the canvases begin to be shaped with notches cut out of the traditional pictorial rectangle, we note that the stripes perform a more self-evident reverberation inward from the shape of the support, and thereby seem even more nakedly dependent upon the literal features of that support. It seems easy enough to say this, and further to add that the effect of this surface, flashed continuously with the sign of its edge, has purged itself of illusionistic space, has achieved flatness. And that flatness, we think, is the flatness of an object — of a non-linguistic thing. Yet we would be wrong, in the way that half-truths are wrong; for we would not have said enough.

Die Fahne Hoch is deductively structured; so is *Luis Miguel Dominguin* (fig. 3). But both paintings arrive at a particular configuration, which is the configuration of a cross. We could call this accidental of course. Just as we could conceive it as accidental that the cross itself relates to that most primitive sign of an object in space: the vertical of the figure and the horizon-line of a nascent ground. But the three-way relationship that fuses along the striped surface of these pictures is a kind of argument for the logical connection between the cruciform of all pictoriality, of all intention to locate a thing within its world, and the way in which the conventional sign (in this case the Cross) arises naturally from a referent in the world. The logic of the deductive structure is therefore shown to be inseparable from the logic of the sign; both seem to sponsor one another and in so doing to ask one to grasp the natural history of pictorial language as such. The real achievement of these paintings is not only to have fully immersed themselves in meaning, but to have made meaning itself a function of surface – of the external, the public, of a space that is no way a signifier of the a priori, of the privacy of intention.

And the privacy of intention is, of course, a model in time for the same kind of things for which illusionism in painting serves as a spatial model. We can think of various kinds of illusionistic spaces: the orthogonal grid of classical perspective; the more nebulous continuum of at-mospheric landscape; the undesignated, infinite depth of geometric abstraction. And in each of these pictures of the world, space itself operates as a pre-condition for the visibility of the pictorial events — the figures, the depicted objects — which appear within it. We consider that the ground (or background) in a painting exists somehow before the figures, and even after the figures are placed on the ground we understand that the ground "continues" behind them, serving as their support. In illusionistic painting "space" functions as a category that exists prior to the knowledge of things within it. It is in that sense a model of a consciousness which is the ground against which objects are constituted. On its most abstract level, traditional picture-making is an argument about the nature of appearance, suggesting that its very possibility depends on a consciousness that is the ground of all re-latedness — for all differentiation, for the constitution of perceptual wholes — and that that consciousness operates within the priorness of a mental space. Thus, just as intention can be understood as a necessarily private event, because it is an internal mental one that externalizes itself through the selection of objects; the objects that appear within pictorial space can be seen as issuing from an internalized, prearranged set of coordinates. As one moves within the history of painting to Postwar American art, that is, to Abstract-expressionism these two aspects of priorness fuse and become more nakedly the subject of the pictures themselves.

The meaning of Stella's expurgation of illusionism is unintelligible apart from a will to lodge all meanings within the conventions of a public space, and thus to expose illusionistic space as a model of privacy — of the self conceived as constituted prior to its contact with the space of the world.

If the surfaceness of Stella's paintings cannot be described outside of his project to prove the externality of language, and therefore of meaning, the sculpture of Robert Morris in all of its "objecthood," cannot be understood outside of a parallel project: the body as a complete externalization of the self. That aspect of the self comes to light in what Husserl calls the paradox of the alter ego —

Figure 2. *Frank Stella,* Die Fahne Hoch, *1959.*

Figure 3. *Frank Stella,* Luis Miguel Dominguin, *1960.*

2.

3.

Figure 4. Robert Morris, Untitled, *1965*.
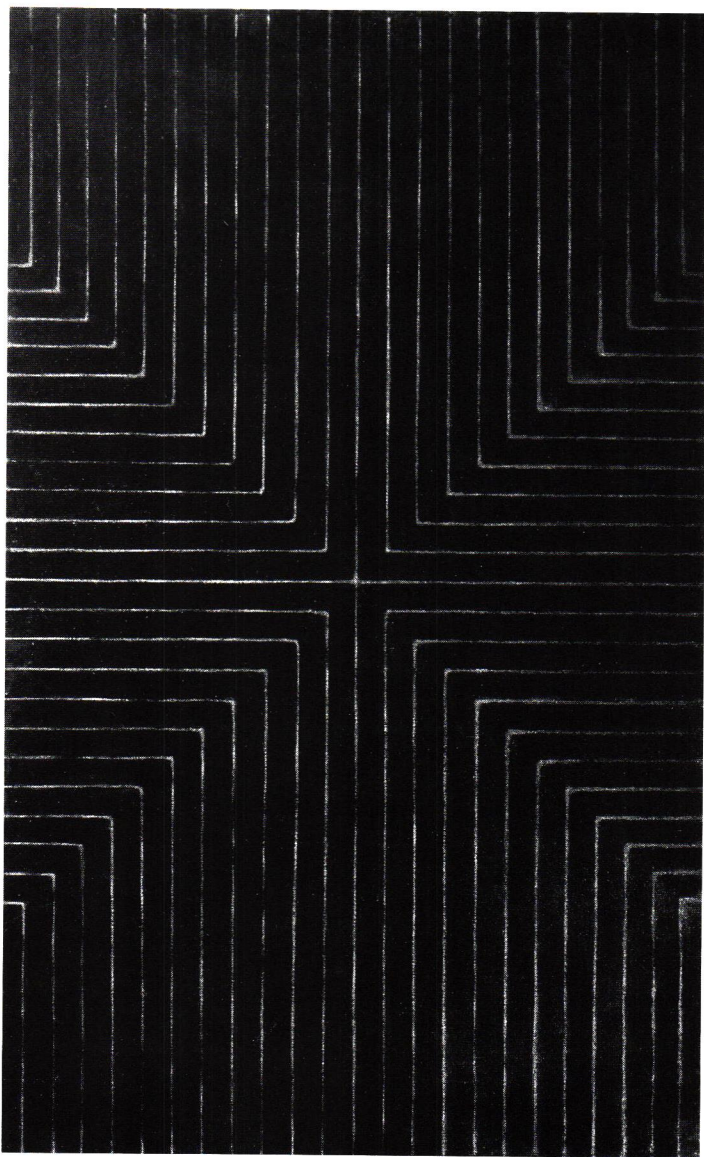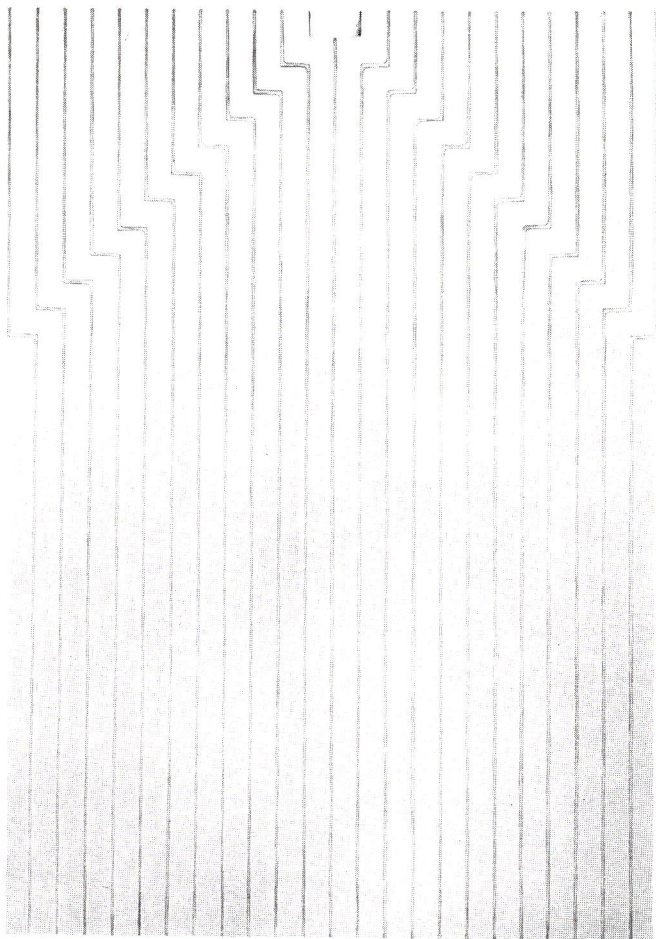
66 the way in which the picture of the self as a contained whole (transparent only to itself and the truths which it is capable of constituting) crumbles before the act of connecting with other selves and other minds. Merleau-Ponty describes this paradox as the separation of two perspectives; for each of us — he and I — there are two perspectives, I for myself and he for himself and each of us for the other. "Of course these two perspectives, in each one of us, cannot be simply juxtaposed, *for in that case it is not I that the other would see, nor he that I should see*. I must be the exterior that I present to others and the body of the other must be the other himself."[3] The revelation of this leads away from any notion of the consciousness as unified within itself. For "at the very moment when I experience my existence . . . I fall short of the ultimate density which would place me outside time, and I discover within myself a kind of internal weakness standing in the way of my being totally individualized: a weakness which exposes me to the gaze of others as a man among men."[4]

Morris' three L-beams (fig. 4) serve as a certain kind of cognate for this naked dependence of intention and meaning upon the body as it surfaces into the world in every external particular of its movements and gestures — of the self understood, that is, only in experience. For no matter how clearly we understand that the three L's are identical, it is impossible to experience them — the one up-ended, the second lying on its side, and the third poised on its two ends — as the same. The L-beams have been described as suggesting "a child's manipulation of forms, as though they were huge building blocks. The urge to alter, to see many possibilities inherent in a single shape, is typical of a child's syncretistic vision, whereby learning of one specific form can be transferred to any variation of that form."[5] But that seems exactly to violate one's actual experience of the works, in that what Morris refers to as "the known constant" — that ideal Cartesian unity — recedes into the ground of the work as a kind of fiction crowded out by the emergence of absolute difference within the particularity of the actual space. The space of experience, the space to which one's body appears, if it is to appear at all, suspends the axiomatic coordinates of an ideal space.

4.
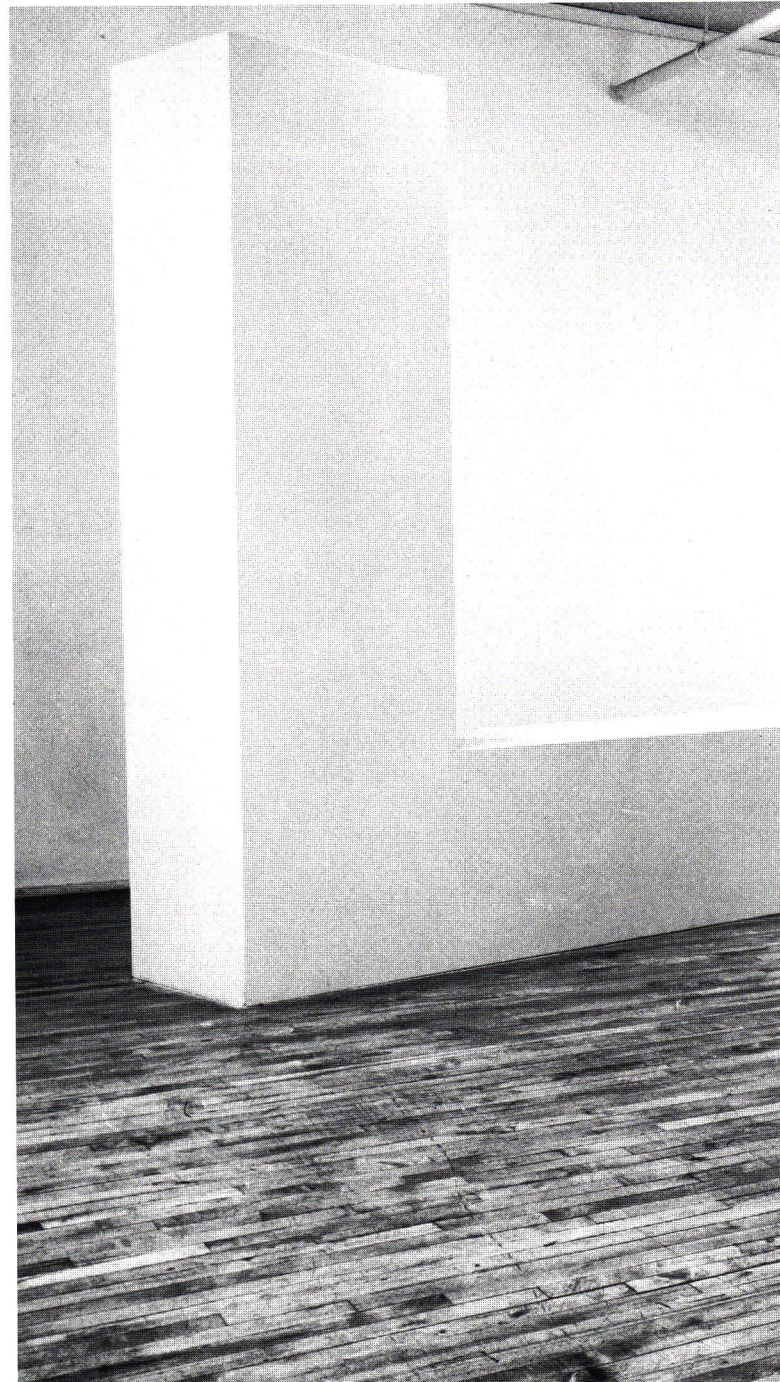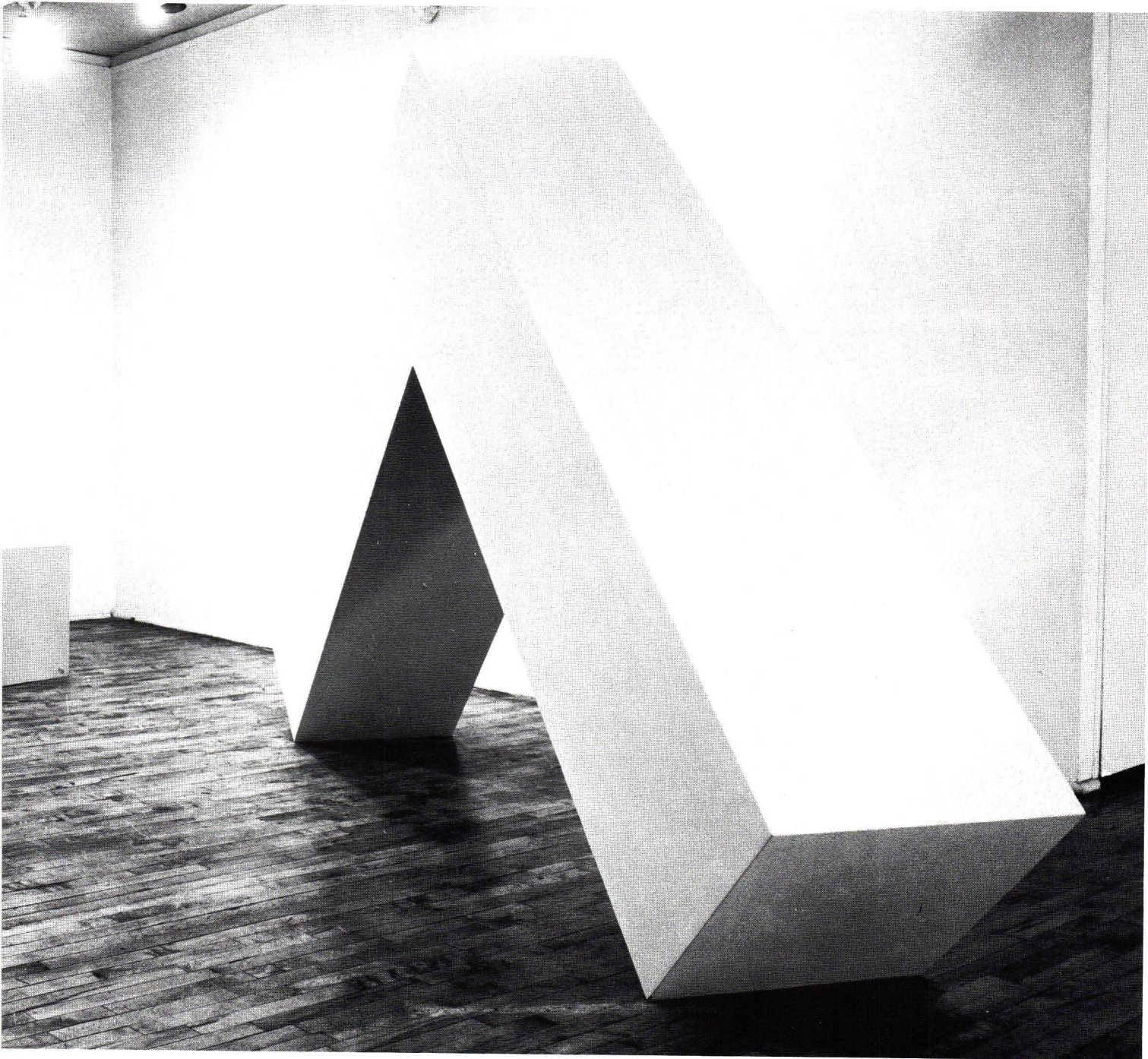
Figure 5. Robert Morris, Untitled, 1967.

Figure 6. Robert Morris, Slab (Cloud), 1962.

Figure 7. Robert Morris, Untitled, 1967. A rearrangement of Figure 5.

5.
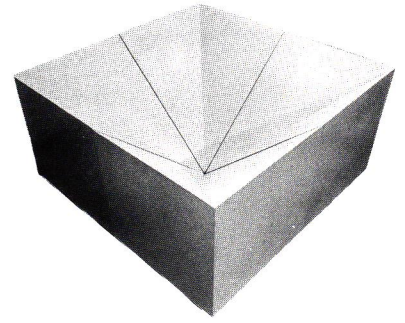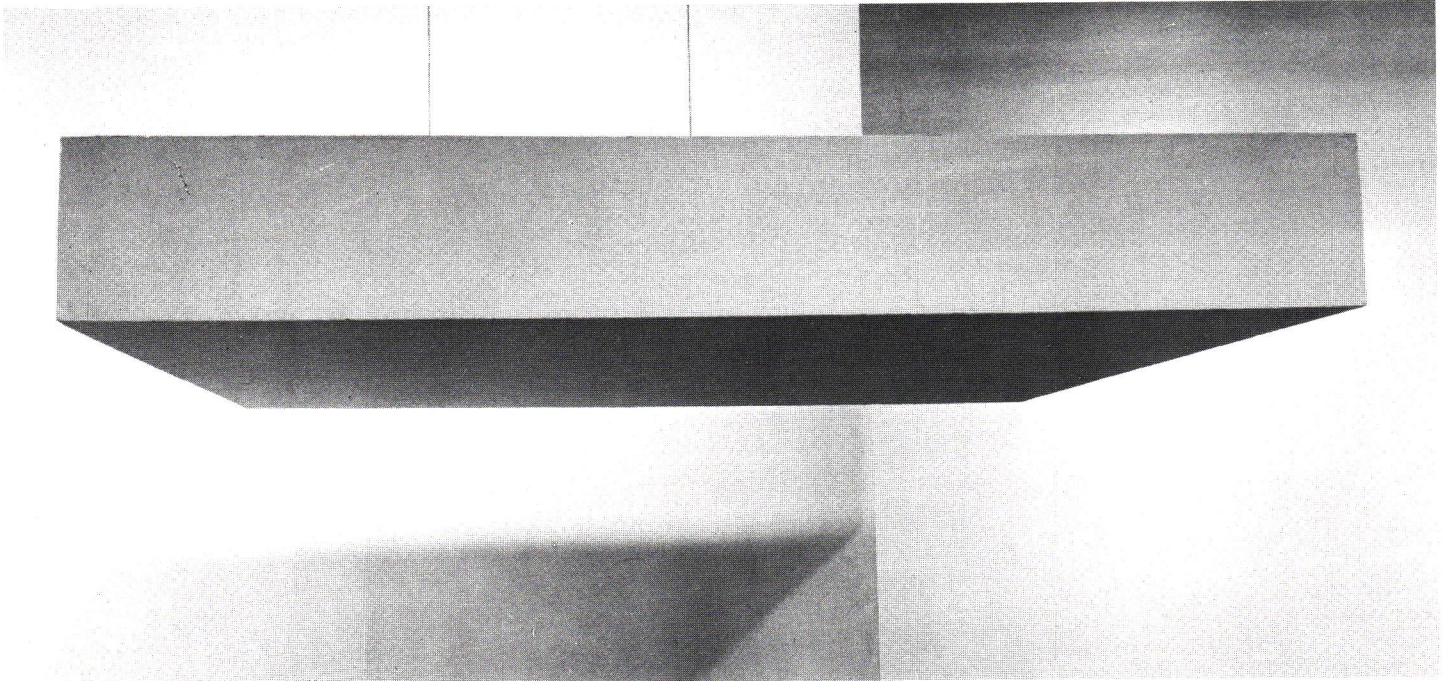
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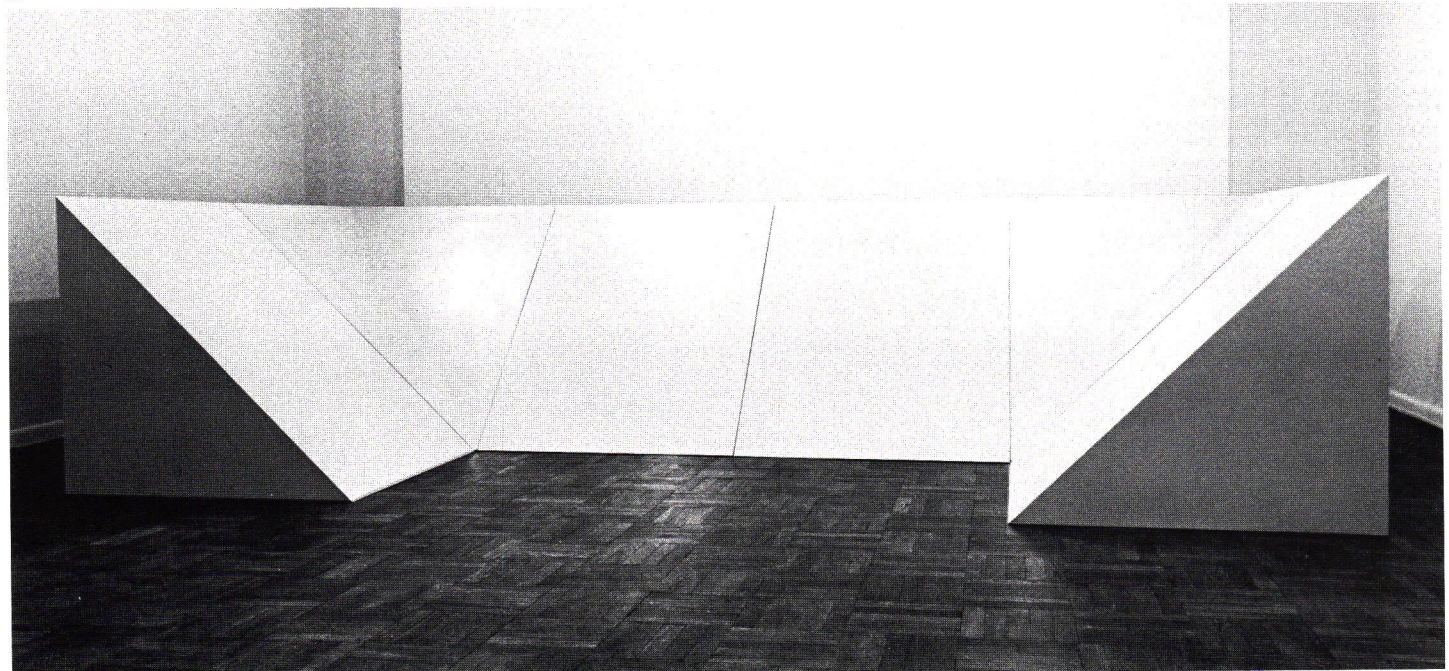
7.

We explain space in terms of these coordinates when we think of it as an absolute grid which nonetheless seems to converge in depth because we are badly placed to see it. We attempt to clarify this apparent contradiction by imagining ourselves suspended above the grid in order to defray the distortions of our perspective, and to recapture the absoluteness of its total parallelism. But the meaning of depth is nowhere to be found in this suspension. "When I look at a road which sweeps before me towards the horizon, I must not say either that the sides of the road are given to me as convergent or that they are given to me as parallel: They are *parallel in depth.* The perspective appearance is not posited, but neither is the parallelism. *I am engrossed in the road itself,* and I cling to it through its virtual distortion, and depth is this intention itself which posits neither the perspective projection of the road, nor the 'real' road."[6]

The project of Morris' sculpture has consistently been to defeat the diagrammatic. In lodging meaning in the work's surface, he defeats the way that surface in traditional sculpture is taken to be a kind of figure seen against the ground of the object's known mass or weight. The suspended beams (fig. 6) are not weightless, but neither are they part of a grammar of ponderation; they are more like a way to make space specific by the amount of surface it takes to displace it. Or, in the sectional fiberglass pieces (fig. 5) the specific configuration of the work is not allowed to become a figure seen against the ground of the object's "real" structure. The notion of a fixed, internal armature that could mirror the viewer's own self, fully formed prior to experience, founders on the capacity of those separable parts to shift or to have shifted (fig. 7),[7] to formulate a notion of the self which exists only in *that* moment of externality within *that* experience.

More than any other American sculptor, Morris has persistently written about his own work and about the work of fellow-artists. In one of his earliest essays, Morris speaks of his preoccupation with strong, three-dimensional gestalts.[8] "Characteristic of a gestalt," he wrote, "is that once it is established, all the information about it, *qua* gestalt, is exhausted. (One does not, for example, seek

the gestalt of a gestalt.)" The body of criticism that has grown up around Minimal Art over the past five or six years has, strangely enough, understood the meaning of that statement, and indeed the meaning of the gestalt itself, to be about a latent kind of Cartesianism. The gestalt seems to be interpreted as an immutable, ideal unit that persists beyond the particularities of experience, becoming through its very persistence the *ground* for all experience. Yet this is to ignore the most rudimentary notions of Gestalt theory, in which the properties of the "good gestalt" are demonstrated to be entirely context-dependent. The meaning of a trapezoid, for example, and therefore its gestalt-formation, changes depending upon whether it must be seen as a two-dimensional figure or a square oriented in depth — a meaning that can in no way precede experience. Morris himself points to this when he says, "it is those aspects of apprehension that are not coexistent with the visual field but rather the result of the experience of the visual field." In the visual arts it was Stella's and then Morris' work that finally discredited the persistence of Cartesianism and posited meaning itself as a function of external space.

The profound reorientation of art and of its meanings that begins with Minimalism continues into the best art of the present. It continues without break and with no loss of energy. But that is the subject of another essay.

Notes

70 1. Mark Strand, "Landscape and the Poetry of Self," *Prose,* Spring, 1973, p. 171.
2. See Michael Fried, *Three American Painters* (Cambridge: The Fogg Museum, 1965), and Fried's subsequent essays on Stella.
3. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Phenomenology of Perception* (London: Routledge & Paul, 1962), p. xii.
4. *Ibid.*
5. Marcia Tucker, *Robert Morris* (New York: The Whitney Museum, 1970), p. 25.
6. Merleau-Ponty, *op.cit.,* p. 261.
7. When these pieces were first exhibited in 1967, they were rearranged every day by the artist into different configurations.
8. Robert Morris, "Notes on Sculpture," *Artforum,* February, 1966; reprinted in Gregory Battcock, Ed., *Minimal Art* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1968).

Figure Credits

On Reyner Banham's Los Angeles: The Architecture of Four Ecologies

Reyner Banham. *Los Angeles:
The Architecture of Four Ecologies.*
New York: Harper and Row,
Publishers, 1971. $6.95.

William Ellis

Three years after the publication of the book *Los Angeles: The Architecture of Four Ecologies* by Reyner Banham, we publish this new review by William Ellis. First, because most of Banham's writings — and in particular his books — seem worthy of a critical view, regardless of time. Second, while there has been much criticism both pro and con about the book, it has never been reviewed from what could be described as an antithetical position. William Ellis criticizes from a position which sees Banham's romantic view of Los Angeles as an image of a possible future, which implies a passive acceptance of society as given rather than its critical re-evaluation. Finally, there is a certain aspect of ironic relevance in looking at Banham's paradigm in light of our present "energy crisis." It should be noted that this critique was requested by the editors before the "energy crisis" had become a current issue; hence our concern about the nature of Banham's model can be understood to have little to do with matters of immediate relevance. It is also worth noting that there has been little comment on this book from the architects of Los Angeles. It is hoped by the editors that such a presentation will be forthcoming if not directly in the pages of this magazine then at the White and Gray Conference to be held in Los Angeles in May.

William Ellis was born in 1933 in Louisiana where he practiced architecture for six years before coming to New York in 1967. A Fellow of the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies, he has collaborated on projects for various agencies including the National Endowment for the Arts, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and the New York State Council on the Arts. He has been a visiting lecturer at Hunter College and The University of Kentucky. At present, he is a design and planning consultant in New York City, Assistant Professor of Architecture at The City College of New York and a Visiting Lecturer in architecture and town planning at The Cooper Union.

Figure 1. David Hockney, A Bigger Splash, 1967. This painting originally appeared on the cover of Reyner Banham's Los Angeles: The Architecture of Four Ecologies.
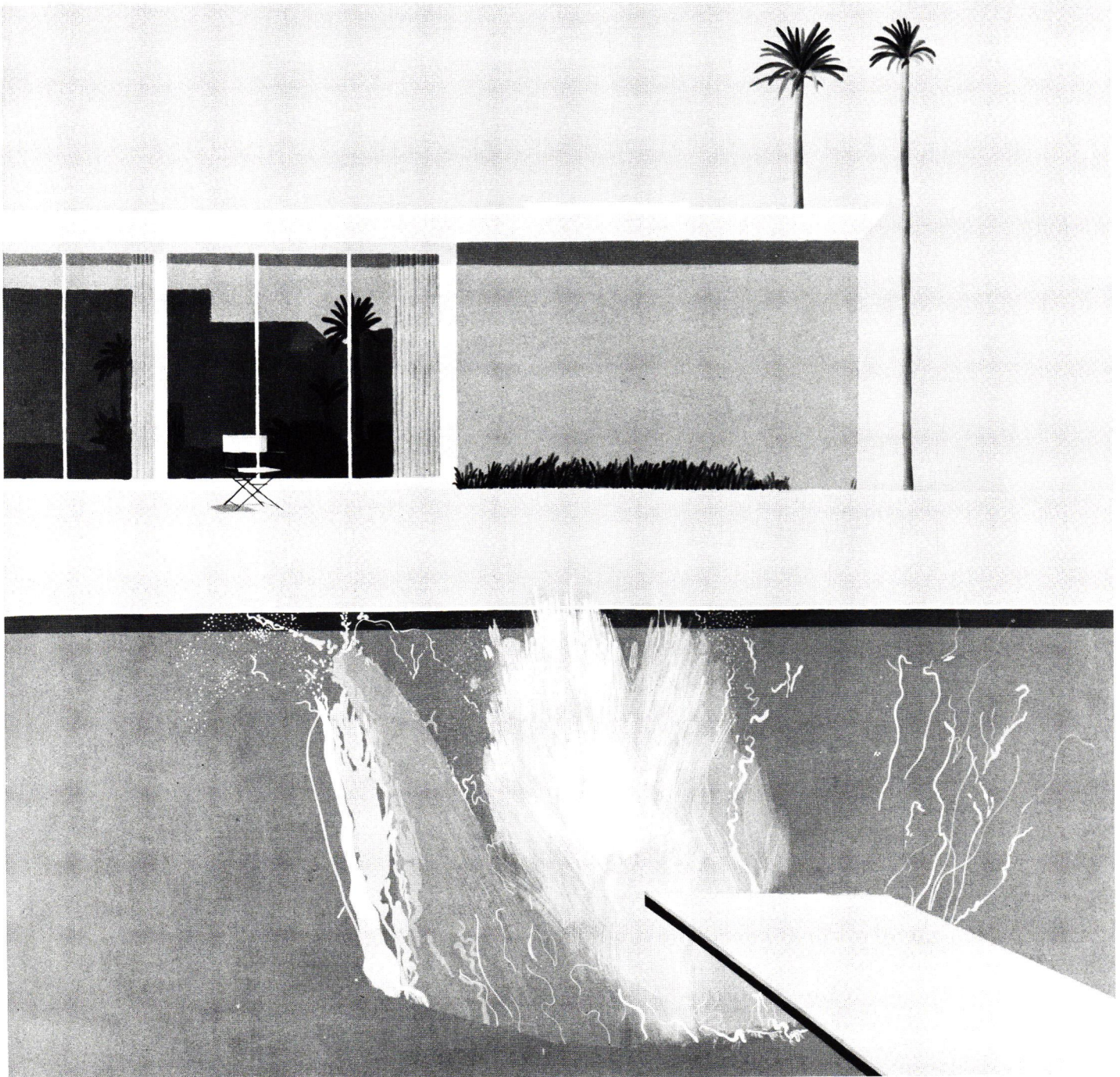
In the two years since its publication, this book has been the subject of several reviews. Yet it is probably not untimely to offer another. Reyner Banham's contribution to a continuing debate on architecture is always worthy of examination. But at the same time, the current energy crisis — whether real or only apparent — can be taken as a pretext for another look at the book, and also the position it represents; because this "crisis" can be seen to emphasize the questionable nature of some suppositions that lie beneath them both. It is ironic that the present technocratic concern over an energy shortage should reveal propositions about a Los Angeles "ecology" to be intellectually suspect, shortsighted, and equally technocratic; when as recently as four years ago they might have been assumed by many to be reasonable — or even *avant garde*. But at a more profound level it is symptomatic of the predicament of a society that dismisses the value of any norms besides those generated by the processes and products of industrial technology.

Banham has consistently advanced the ideal of an *objective* environmental condition based on the mandates of technology, which would transcend the stylistic vagaries inherent in what has always been called architecture. He has suggested that by stripping away *artifice* our proper, *natural* condition in an era of industrial technology would be revealed. We can understand that he would be tempted to think of Los Angeles as ready-made to illustrate this position, combining as it does an image of chic irreverence for established urban values with a life-style based on individualism and egalitarianism, expendability, mobility, random and non-hierarchical pattern. However, the book actually shows Los Angeles to be quite far away from a state of technological objectivity, a fact which in large part may account for his ironic treatment of it; and in the end, the book is important only to the extent that it reveals Banham's particular way of using history. While everyone necessarily selects facts to fit a preconception of the way things should be, this book illustrates Banham's dubious use of his particular selections, one which allows the *status quo* to be passed off as a normative model.

The book itself is a disappointment compared to his *Theo-* *ry and Design in the First Machine Age* and *The New Brutalism*. It lacks the focus and firm ideas of these earlier books, which were given substance by balanced scholarship and conviction. Here, forsaking Buckminster Fuller and the Smithsons for Pop America and Ray Bradbury, he seems unsure of — though devoted to — his subject; and it shows through in an aimless quality that pervades the book. Because of his apparent confusion of some issues and his ironic approach, it is difficult for the reader to see Los Angeles as either the unique or the paradigmatic entity it is suggested to be. The few clear intellectual commitments he makes are compromised by their relation to his set of private enthusiasms, and we are left with a *soufflé,* which while apparently meant to be iconoclastic, fails to discredit any entrenched ideas.

He divides the city into four geographical segments; the seashore, the suburban foothills, the plains of the interior, and the freeway network — a man-made geographical entity that ties the other three parts together. Each of these is presented as a separate "ecology" generating its own architectural response; building up to an ineffable "unity" that escapes many observers because of its singular nature, and made comparable to other more easily recognized unities only by employing the unique local "language of movement." The final chapter presents Los Angeles as a great cosmopolitan city with its own corporate personality; a phenomenon representing the current most potent version of the bourgeois Virgilian Dream: the good life in a tamed countryside; a depository of an architecture whose self-evident quality has been generated spontaneously by the strength of that vision. He concludes that Los Angeles stands as an instructive example for the architect; a cue to bridging the gulf between him and "the thoughts and aspirations of the human race beyond the little private world of the profession."

His impressionistic appraisal of Los Angeles perhaps has the virtue of a fresh approach to complex urban issues; he lets the place speak for itself once it has been construed according to his particular viewpoint. However, in his almost overwhelming euphoria it causes him to dismiss some issues, which if not paramount, are still crucial.

74 Item: while he extolls L.A.'s guargantuan water pipeline system as the great engineering artifact it is, he says nothing about the immense cost of this or other services — roads, sewers, power — needed to support the attenuated way in which its population is distributed over the landscape; not to mention the basic costs of this dispersed pattern itself in terms of land and "improvements." Item: he omits entirely any consideration of that segment of L.A.'s population unable to take part in its freeway extravaganzas because of economic incapacity, infirmity or old age. What does the city do with them? They rattle for hours through the "Plains of Id" on buses, part of a public transit system of outrageous and almost incomprehensible inconvenience — or they walk, if they can, or — they stay at "home."[1]

Other aspects of Los Angeles are addressed, but with a light-hearted, ironic humor; a device that allows almost any issue to come up looking good. These are cast as somehow loveable circumstances of ordinary human frailty which if we do not already understand them we should begin to do so quickly or be left hopelessly behind. Item: he assumes smog to be endearing and almost never apparent, or, we are told, you get used to it and wear it as a red-eyed badge of courage; you are proud of it in a way; besides, the Foothills culture isn't bothered by it. Item: he pretends that even the most wretchedly decimated beach settings are thrilling frontiers for an adolescent, nihilistic self-encounter with surf and board. Item: he imagines the freeway system supplies the Angeleno with his best two hours of the day — darting into exits, crossing lanes at speed; passages on this subject might have been written at the wheel, wearing a pair of Italian net-backed driving gloves. (Interestingly, Banham learned to drive in L.A.). Item: (on Disneyland) "It is an almost faultless organization for delivering, against cash, almost any type at all of environmental experience that human fancy, however inflamed, could ever devise." Facing this text is the *papier-maché* doll of the Matterhorn, just over one-hundred feet high, a scale we can assume to be insufficient to satisfy a really inflamed fancy. Item: the Plains of Id — the great flat endless center of L.A. — are not banal, so much as they are (seen from the Griffith Park Observatory) "with-

out doubt, one of the world's great urban vistas — and also one of the most daunting . . . . In addition the great size and lack of distinction of the area covered by this prospect make it the area where Los Angeles is least distinctively itself . . . . this is where Los Angeles is most like other cities: Anywheresville/Nowheresville." Amen. But here his distortions amount to a veritable confusion. If what he says is so, how is L.A. unique? The fact is that it is not; and the same observation could just as correctly be made about some of its other supposedly unique features. Its vast freeway network is just as typical, if still pre-eminent, of those in most American cities — from Shreveport, Louisiana to Boston, Massachusetts, to perhaps even Toledo, Ohio. The same might be said for its affluent suburbs. L.A. is hardly alone among American cities in its highly developed suburban accommodations; it differs only in the witless, precarious relation they bear to the foothills from which they hang; and perhaps their "special" kind of unity—a derivative aberration on the Bay area Ranchburger style, slightly modified by late Hollywood Palmtree. And Downtown: "above all, (these buildings) are not Los Angeles." Whether this represents a genuine confusion or a grim determination to have it both ways, we almost forget to ask: what then, are they? while agreeing with him that "they are, frankly, a gutless looking collection, but not gracious with it." We can only add the suggestion that L.A. is hardly unique in this category either.

We can sympathize with his seeing only the best in Los Angeles. Things are pretty dreary in England for most people these days. But for many Englishmen — including, apparently, Banham — tradition, chill and tight quarters weigh heavily upon the imagination. Los Angeles, like most American cities, is very un-English. It inevitably appeals to the English type who for whatever reason takes a romantic view of the New World. It is sunny (theoretically), warm (always); a tropical version of the cities that dissatisfied Englishmen have always dreamed of for this hemisphere; as un-English as the Vitruvian urban frameworks which heretical Englishmen originally set up here. Their attraction for an island-bound imagination is hardly diminished by the fact that they were ex-

panded from those Latin beginnings in a hodgepodge of land-grabbing waste and sprawl into their present state of nowhere; where the illusion of life has replaced the direct experience of life by technological means; the automobile and the telly; the tract-house and the air-conditioned office; Disneyland. Besides, it's trendy. For *place* it substitutes a system of roads carrying automobiles from no place to no place. Its basis is literal movement. Its products are the ultimate *kitsch* trivia, the results of aesthetics "conceived in terms of mass production for a changing public market."[2] It has no past; thus its abuses can be described easily as virtues with which we are simply unfamiliar.

If Banham ignores some issues and ironically distorts others, he does commit himself to a point of view on some questions of obvious significance for architecture and urbanism. The first is his treatment of the L.A. conception of mobility versus settlement. Basically, his view constitutes the purest historical determinism. Los Angeles is pictured as the place where the road is the place; the product of technological developments and social forces assumed to be continuing along a known and inevitable track, and which are already replacing "traditional" ideas of *place* with modern ideas of movement, irrevocably leading to the decentralization of urban settlement and the levelling out of the inhabited landscape. That this is demonstrably true, and that as a trend it is likely to continue, can be readily granted: Francoise Choay has defined the "ontological set" of urban space in the era to come. She calls it the "Space of Connection" and she contrasts it with the medieval "Space of Contact," Baroque "Scenic Space," and the "Spaces for Circulation" of the nineteenth century.[3] She specifies its sources in "the develpment of increasingly abstract means of communication . . . (which) will gradually supplant *space* in its previous informative and formative role."[4] She refers here to developments in the nineteenth century, and since that time the increasingly abstract nature of communications has become the elaborate and paramount condition we observe today. Yet the important thing to realize about her description is that it posits a technological and physical *context* full of *possibilities* in terms of settlement types and

concepts. Neither freeway systems nor fields of individual tract houses nor the more opulent forms of suburban accommodation necessarily fulfill — or even correspond to — Choay's description. Banham, in his enthusiasm for what Los Angeles represents to him, has wittingly or not treated it idealistically — as a model for settlement pattern; a Utopia, convenient in that it already exists. Although our settlement patterns long have been characterized by great dispersion and uniformity, this condition is a "natural" consequence of historical events and forces which might best be treated not as a normative model itself, but rather as a *context* to be organized *according to normative models.*[5]

It can be useful to apply the same kind of non-determinist attitude to the concept of city as social place: Yet on this issue as well — L.A.'s version of the public realm versus the private one — Banham takes a characteristically passive stand. He describes those Angelenos able to afford its life-style as history's recipients, by assumed right, of the "standard myths of the Natural Man and the Noble Savage." The description is remarkable for its philosophic distance between its materialist transformations in Southern California and its antecedents, however romantic, in the eighteenth century. Although there may be no longer the operational necessity for a public life in an age of abstract communications, one suspects there is still a complex of psychological ones, lying close to essential aspects of our nature, that suggest ideas of Social Contract as much as Noble Savage. But one core of these myths remains in Southern California: the concept of *individualism,* heightened to its most conscious level as a way of life. However, Banham equates this concept simply with *privacy,* and the Good Life with the cultivation of a purely private existence given meaning only by access to a certain range of pleasure gratifications. He seems to be saying that social history in California has passed up the notion that Community and a Public Life have anything to do with Individualism and the Good Life. He calls the remnants of public space "Enclaves," characteristically praising them for their quality, and at the same time leaving the impression that they might just as well wither away.

We wonder whether Banham is not deluding himself here, overstating his case in order to convince us. He sees even Rodia's Watts towers as a purely private act. Surely, even if we put aside the individualistic, aberrant appearance of these towers, and grant their links with that kind of "innocence" that serves Banham to describe surfers, hot-rodders, freeway tyros, sky and scuba divers, the nature of these towers as a public act of tribute must still be acknowledged as their essential quality. It would seem appropriate here to remind outselves of Ortega y Gasset's observation that two decisions combined to create the peculiarly novel circumstance we know as civilization: the decision to mark out from the rest of the world a special space to be the shared *polis,* and the commitment of individuals to *live together* around it in community; and to the extent we discard this symbiosis between the public realm and the private one, we both lose that civilized circumstance and destroy the capacity to rebuild it.[6] Banham glosses over all the limitations inherent in a society whose technology not only perpetuates privacy but tends to increase it, leading to the inhibition of exchange, the narrowing of choice, the limiting of ideas and the polarization of opinion and power — the Closed Society. Francis Carney, an Angeleno and a political scientist at U.C.L.A., has given us a succinct conclusion on the question of individualism at the expense of a sense of community or "even a memory of community" in Los Angeles. Referring to the more apparent problems of smog and other pollution, he notes that Angelenos live in the hope that a bureaucracy from which they are completely estranged will solve these problems by technological means, any political ones being closed to them because they can never come together in groups to *act.* Their "freedom" and individualistic existence results paradoxically in a powerlessness. And "the powerless can never be free."[7]

There is some recent empirical indication that the lack of a concept of community, able to accommodate a developed public existence, is beginning to have some negative effect on Los Angeles. Statistics tell us that for the first time in many years Los Angeles County, Orange County and other portions of southern California have shown a net loss in migrant population. This could be the result merely of a temporary drop-off in local industry, or it could be that Los Angeles is in a transitional period of growth and change on its way to a purely decentralized "Middle Landscape"[8] in which it may at present find itself too dependent on what little center city still remains. But while Los Angeles is unlikely to undergo many drastic changes in the near future, it is interesting to speculate that the Plains of Id may be able to stretch conveniently just so far; or that the Foothills which constitute a kind of high-water mark in suburban accommodation may be filling up to the extent that even the suburban idea itself is in danger of being compromised; or it may just be that the burgeoning of Los Angeles County has simply demonstrated one big Hawthorne Effect, in which any change produces only a short term positive result, the backlash of which has set in on what was once a novel choice of settlement pattern and life style.

On the issue of Pop America and its contribution to a developing urbanism, Banham takes his most clear-cut stand. His position is simple and characteristic — total enthusiasm modified by ironic affection. Although he again seems confused and almost self-deluding in his effort to connect L.A.'s examples of popular building with its first rate "received" architecture, he continually catalogues the joys of its "pop ephemera": hamburger joints, driftwood restaurants, auto sales establishments, the electronic signscape and the rest of the Strip, together with "dingbat" apartment structures and endless fields of tract houses. In this particular theme of style and taste Banham is at once at his most romantic and most pedantic. It is characteristic of his approach to use words which can be interpreted simultaneously as both damnation and praise. He maintains a delicate tension between his obvious appreciation of the city's more "ridiculous" architecture and the very fact that he is presenting it as ridiculous. His effort to lend respectability here tends to confirm the fugitive nature of the subject; and it also provokes some too arcane distinctions: driftwood modern is O.K. ("loveably ridiculous"); while Caesar's Palace in Las Vegas is plainly deficient ("Beaux Arts"). It seems fair to suggest that we could better appreciate such fine distinc-

tions only after their commonality had been established — two pieces of *kitsch*.

But while we can agree that popular taste and boredom with established forms have important, if diffused, effects in the conception and organization of our surroundings — both for architects and the rest of the human race — the same can be said of traditional standards, exceptionally persuasive forms produced by individuals, and boredom with the *kitsch* structure of anonymous cultural baggage. The fact that Banham's criticism rests on such issues necessarily requires either agreement or disagreement on the same essentially sentimental grounds. Some of the dilemmas that surround this esthetic issue of *kitsch* in our urban environment have been summed up elsewhere by Kenneth Frampton:

> Taken at face value, 'liking what one hates' seems a Newspeak method with which to make value judgments or through which to arrive at some desired future state; the latter presumably being the *sine qua non* of all planning activity. Such a sophisticated rationalization leaves one with two outstanding questions of a highly critical nature. Is it that the inevitability of kitsch is only to be transcended through such a perverse exploitation of our industrial capacity to induce and satisfy mass taste in the endless promotion and repetition of kitsch? Or is it that the present triumph of kitsch is a testament in itself, without the illuminations of Pop Art, that our urban society is organized towards self-defeating ends, on a socio-political basis that is totally invalid?[9]

Beyond this it can be observed that though *kitsch* thus far appears to be inevitable as a fact of mass taste, it is not necessarily *the* inevitable technological style, and need not be considered *the* inevitable model for popular ingestion. It appears that Banham, through the attempt to establish an iconoclastic position, has forced a range of material into his argument that makes it difficult to sustain. In this connection it is crucial to point out that popular culture today contributes what it always has contributed — a foil for "high" culture. Our cities are cultural artifacts that still require both areas of public reference *and* honky-tonk strips. It has always been silly to imagine one without the other, and it still is. What is finally so curious about Banham's position on this subject is his presumption that we should change our *attitudes* toward this popular culture; that we should begin to think of it as a model for *all* the aspects of our total culture, rather than merely one aspect that exists, always has and always will.

That the present turn of events, the energy crisis in particular, puts the Four Ecologies of this book in an embarrassing light is all too obvious. But even if it were to be only temporary, it has illumined a crucial weakness of Banham's position. If Banham presents the strange phenomenon of an historian who professes the evil of history, and an architectural historian who suggests the evil of architecture; if he represents the equally dubious one of a critic who equates a particular style (in this case Los Angeles) with *no* style; i.e., to technological objectivity, then strangest of all, he presents the paradox of a critic who is ethically neutral.

To understand the fallacy of his position one must first realize that it is fundamentally a rationale for a dearly held *image*. This imagery is essentially that of Italian Futurism around 1914, which featured a celebration of waste, movement, speed, violence, machine-heightened energy, flux in the form of continual destruction — especially of traditional institutions — and their replacement by a romanticized landscape populated with piston symbols. It was imagery in the most extreme sense in that it was preoccupied with the physical object and the *ad hoc* event rather than with the structure and organization that support them.

Banham has been the most vociferous protagonist for this polemic and for the plug-in/plug-out, clip-on/expendable, bubble and tube image of environment that has arisen from it. He has persistently proferred this imagery as being representative of the only direction for architecture in a milieu of mass-production and mass-taste. It has led him to suggest, in his *Theory and Design in the First Machine Age*, that Le Corbusier failed to produce the Dymaxion House because he had fallen away from

modern architecture's Italian Futurist beginnings, and unwittingly had adopted the traditions of mainstream Mediterraneanism; that aesthetics and "styling" should be "conceived in terms of mass-production for a changing public market" instead of attempting to develop norms and types not arising directly from the industrial process (i.e., norms and types arising from what he sees as "elitist" taste).[10] It has caused him to dismiss, in a number of articles, the necessarily historical character of knowledge and practice; to confuse tradition with traditionalism; to assert that our future should no longer involve itself with history or any other institution except Science, which he has assumed to be without any history or tradition — an entity whose development he has supposed involves a continual process of institutional amnesia.[11] It has persuaded him, in *The New Brutalism*, to hold out the hope that this particular style could lead to a condition of technological objectivity based on the products and processes of industry.[12] It has compelled him always to support the Archigram group and their images of transient, random organization (suppression of structure) isolated, *ad hoc* event (aggrandizement of physical object) expendability, disposability, waste; total dependence on machine-aided energy — imagery masquerading as technological objectivity.

But while his support of Archigram projects could proceed in the 1960's under the assumption that they were "no-style" because they were able to pass — apparently — as anonymous machines rather than as conventional architectural images produced by a small, elite group; L.A.'s popular building, though the same kind of iconic cudgel as Archigram, is a present fact, not a loaded image of a possible future. Banham's current support of it makes more apparent than ever the weakness of his particular position: *its essentially passive stand on ethical issues*. While professing to be active, the program it represents is really quite the opposite. If, as Bucky Fuller has asserted, the status quo is an "unhaltable trend to constantly accelerating change," then Banham has accepted this status quo with a vengeance. His position assumes *what is* is the model for *what's right*. Although it is patently ideological, as all our models must be — even our models of nature are based in artifice, and thus in aesthetic prediliction — Banham's model claims to be value-free, and partly so by virtue of its ethical neutrality. Thus the imagery it generates, if not value-free, always assumes its own value to be self-evident. But it fails to perform the basic function of ideological models: the rational subversion of present reality. Ortega y Gasset has suggested the ingenuousness of pointing out deficiencies of our current ethical predicament, because everyone already realizes it. But compared with his milieu of just forty years ago, ours already may have retrogressed to the point that we can seriously wonder if even this is any longer the case, and we can be reminded of his overriding implication that the present ethical decay in our society corresponds not merely to the gradual and assertive evolution of "the masses," but more directly to the default of the minority which has traditionally adopted critical standards in respect of that society.[13]

This book documents Banham's development toward a point at which he can be said to have relinquished any ethical position whatsoever. He has moved naturally from the clip-on vertical sprawl of Archigram imagery into the United States toward a euphoria over its discard, throw away culture, the ideal of the automobile and the transistor radio — the one an overt piston symbol, the other a more sublimated version; and into an excelsior over horizontal sprawl — horizontal or vertical, it doesn't matter. But if in *Los Angeles* he chooses to wish away structure for *ad hoc* event, we wish he could have brought the sum total of events up more firmly for us to see. As an aggregation of such events, Los Angeles may be too yielding and amorphous a subject to treat in a way that sustains the reader without an even more extensive use of photographs and drawings than the book already employs. His arguments, and the ironies he uses to buttress them, may have been better served by a larger selection of visual material as dense and seductive as the painting by David Hockney that appears on the dust jacket.

Indeed that painting seems to say it all, and more convincingly than Banham. It is an evocative and ambivalent selection, both an elegant and vulgar representation of

the color, flora and life style of L.A., done in terms of a specific but typical view; a heat-haze sky over an endless sea just out of sight, but still there beyond the rim of a pool into which some Angeleno has just made *A Bigger Splash.* The analogies between this work and Los Angeles are rich, to say the least. It is framed in precise and elaborate geometrical constructions — suggesting reference to a devalued Platonic world — upon which are hung a number of elements, symbols of the American Pop vacation *cum* American Pop existence; and which is violated by the rather tedious and ephemeral splash itself. The Angeleno is nowhere to be seen. It results in a feeling of emphatic emptiness and banality. The Case Study cottage as the symbol of an affluent solitude; the individual disappearing into his own privacy; The Noble Savage by Madison Avenue; the Angeleno as the technologically sponsored Natural Man; the real estate developer as Rousseau.

The contradictions that come out of Banham's description of L.A. at least help us to appreciate it as a "real" place. We can think of it as fun, free, loose, and even important. But one thing is certainly true: there is still evil in the Garden. Paradoxically, L.A. in his interpretation now closely parallels the conventional liberal establishment wisdom. It represents a cultural condition in which iconoclasm can be said to have merged with establishment prejudices. Put together with the fact that its structure and life style correspond with the way in which the great mass of Americans already are living, this creates a heady combination of *chic* and acceptance for any theories that may be formed around it as a supposed model. Even the "eastern establishment" can be said to harbor affection for it.

That Banham now openly supports a Los Angeles style is an interesting development of architectural historiography. The more crucial issue, however, concerns the points that inform a Los Angeles style, or any other. This brings us back to his dilemma and perhaps even the dilemma of "architecture" — with its connotations of constant, arbitrary values — set in a context of "popular culture" with its inferences of utilitarian necessity, anonymous

preference and "change." The so-called energy crisis is a timely subterfuge which can be used to indicate that our society, like Banham's position, confuses the importance of material things — a short view — with the significance of ethical commitments and symbolic values — a long view. Like the bourgeois society he suggests offers a link between architects and "the rest of the human race," he confuses the libido of the private individual with the super-ego of society. But adopting the one as a model at the expense of the other gets us nowhere. The task involves the critical revaluation of our present condition, not its passive acceptance. Architecture as we have always known it has always played a part in this process. It has always taken its essence from normative models as well as from transient "facts," and from this duality it derives its meaning. Setting matters in this light may not solve our problems, but it might at least allow us to begin pursuing the *meaning* of architecture for our age rather than simply assuming it has none, or that we already know what it is. If the meaning of architecture in our secular society is a question, then abstaining from ethical positions is unlikely to bring us closer to any answers.

Notes

80   1. Peter Plagens, "Los Angeles: The Ecology of Evil," *Artforum,* December, 1972, pp. 67-76, *passim.*

2. Reyner Banham, *Theory and Design in the First Machine Age* (London: The Architectural Press, 1960), p. 329.

3. Francoise Choay, *Espacements: essai sur l'evolution de l'espace urbain en France,* 1969, *passim,* (Manuscript).

4. Francoise Choay, *The Modern City: Planning in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Braziller, 1969), p.9.

5. William Ellis, "The Natural Town and the Spaceless Milieu," *Casabella,* No. 359-360, p. 68-70.

6. José Ortega y Gasset, *The Revolt of the Masses* (New York: Norton, 1957), pp. 150-153.

7. Francis Carney, "Schlockology," *The New York Review of Books,* June 1, 1972, pp. 26-29.

8. William Ellis, *op.cit.,* p. 67.

9. Kenneth Frampton, "America 1960-1970. Notes on Urban Images and Theory," *Casabella,* No. 359-360, p. 36.

10. Reyner Banham, *op.cit.* This sounded supportable in part, but for Banham this idea corresponded to the assumption that buildings might best take the streamlined shapes of high-performance automobiles; an assumption that essentially confuses object *type,* object *shape,* and object *function;* and the same confusion encourages him to propose *kitsch* products of technology as inevitable — and proper — results of the mass-production process.

11. Stanford Anderson, "Architecture and Tradition That Isn't 'Trad, Dad,'" *The Architectural Association Journal,* May, 1965, *passim.*

12. Reyner Banham, *The New Brutalism* (London: The Architectural Press, 1966)

13. Ortega y Gasset, *op.cit.,* p. 87 and *passim.*

Figure Credit

Figure 1. Courtesy of Kasmin Limited.

Rejected Architects, *Creative Art,* 1931
The Berlin Building Exposition of 1931, *T-Square,* 1932
Architecture in the Third Reich, *Hound & Horn,* 1933

Philip Johnson

The Enlightenment bears within itself two contradictory movements: the one, the promise of a rational restructuring of society through its direction by meritocracy; the other, the liberation of men from their historical oppression by a violent resolution to the class struggle. The one is to be found within Le Corbusier's introduction to the last chapter of *Vers Une Architecture,* "the machinery of society, profoundly out of gear, oscillates between an amelioration of historical importance and a catastrophe. . . Architecture or Revolution. Revolution can be avoided." The other is to be found in William Morris' challenging words, "What business have we with art at all unless all can share it."

These statements refer to a conflict that is deeply embedded within the tradition of modern architecture, for far from being apolitical, modern architects have consciously projected their works into the political arena. Frank Lloyd Wright for all his anarchism was notoriously political, for text after text testifies to his "cause conservative" including this contradictory passage which may stand for all. "Were man . . . brought up in the gospel of work rather than the prevailing gospel of as much as possible of something, for as little as possible, he could, with his feet on his own ground, become an independent unit in a society completely capitalistic." This is not that far removed from the stance of Buckminster Fuller, who when finally challenged is compelled to admit that he doesn't like discussing the laws of the universe and money in the same

breath; Brahmin nineteenth century *noblesse oblige* — scientific determinism as the white man's burden.

Our presentation of these hitherto little known texts by Philip Johnson are to be seen in this context, for Johnson more than any other architect of his generation, entered the political arena in earnest. Despite his origin, these are the writings of a man of the Prussian Enlightenment for all that this particular moment had finally spent itself in the morass of the First World War. That Johnson's romantic allegiance to this moment in the Thirties (the moment of Schinkel and Hegel as well as that of Mies) contributed to his involvement in fascism is by now the stuff of history. Nevertheless, it is by no means beyond the crisis of our time. Henry Ford's peremptory dismissal notwithstanding, history is a vast wave, the breaking of which we cannot see. We cannot repudiate politics for they return to haunt us, since the intrinsically public aspect of architecture presents an inherently political object. This much was evident to Hans Schmidt when he wrote critically of the foundation of CIAM in 1927 that "if it were to take up an anti-capitalist stance, it (the congress) would obviously lose any possibility of practical everyday work for both its participants and the whole organization."

Apart from this, these texts elliptically reveal the displacements of history; the lost works of Muschenheim and Clauss and Daub; the forgotten importance of Lilly Reich in the formation of Mies'

sensibility; the unique role of Howe and Lescaze in the so-called *international style.* Johnson's barely concealed distaste for the program of *Die Neue Sachlichkeit,* his anticipation of the new monumentality, his indifference to the culture of social welfare, his super-annuated idealism, his discomfort at the unnecessary vulgarity of cultural racism — in all this his division from Catherine Bauer, the one other American critic of modern architecture who had his respect, is patently clear.
K.F.

Philip Johnson was born in Cleveland, Ohio in 1906 and graduated from The Harvard School of Design in 1943. He worked as Director of The Department of Architecture at The Museum of Modern Art from 1930 to 1936, 1946 to 1954, and is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters. His built works have included the famous glass house in Connecticut (1949), The Munson Williams Proctor Institute in Utica, New York (1960), and the New York State Theater at Lincoln Center with Richard Foster (1964). With John Burgee he has designed The Boston Public Library (1973), the I.D.S. Complex, Minneapolis (1973), and the Art Museum of Southern Texas, Corpus Christi (1973). His published works include *International Style* (1932) with Henry Russell Hitchcock, *Machine Art* (1934), and *Mies van der Rohe* (1947).

Figure 1. Project for Kharkow Theatre.
Clauss and Daub, architects.

Figure 2. Model for a house in
Pinehurst, N.C. Clauss and Daub,
architects.

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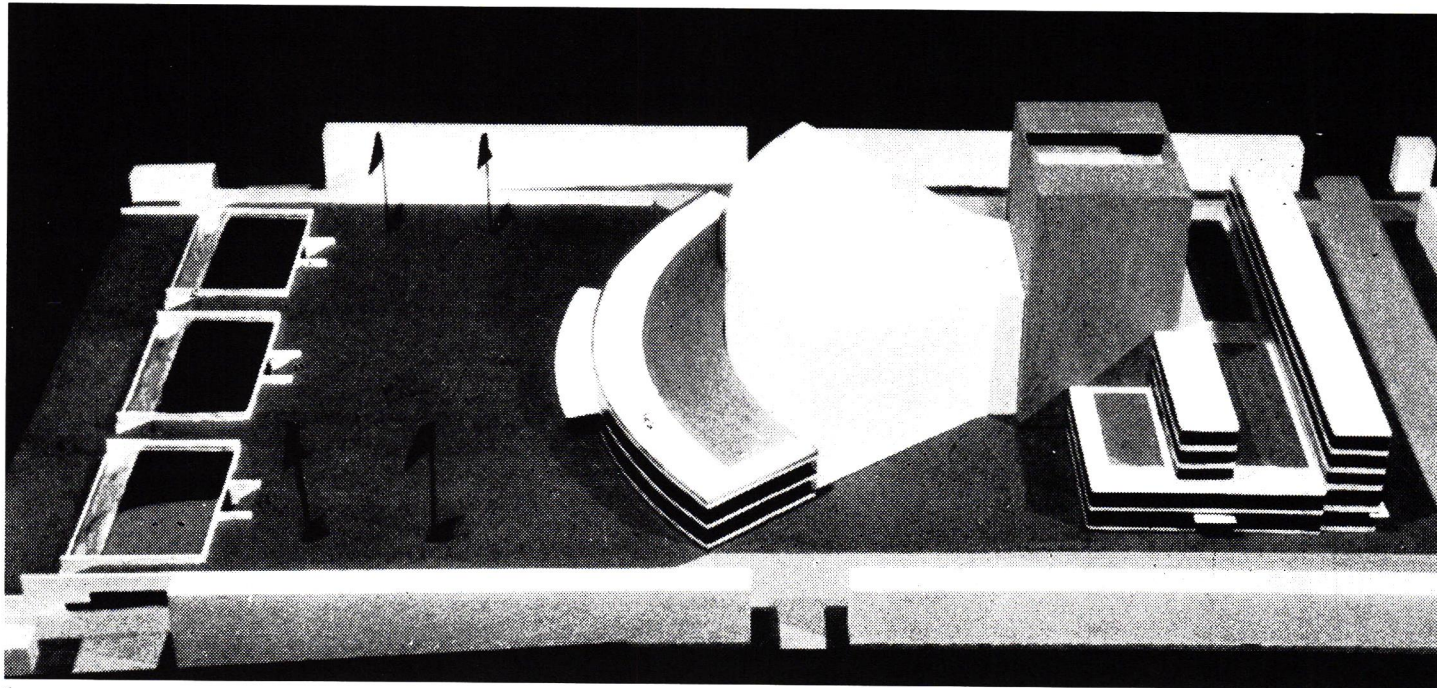
Rejected Architects

The day after the Rejected Architects opened their Salon des Refusés, Mr. Ely Jacques Kahn stated to the press that no models had been refused by the League because they were too modern. This is quite true. The Grand Central Palace contained work as modern as that displayed in the Fifty-Seventh Street Show. The o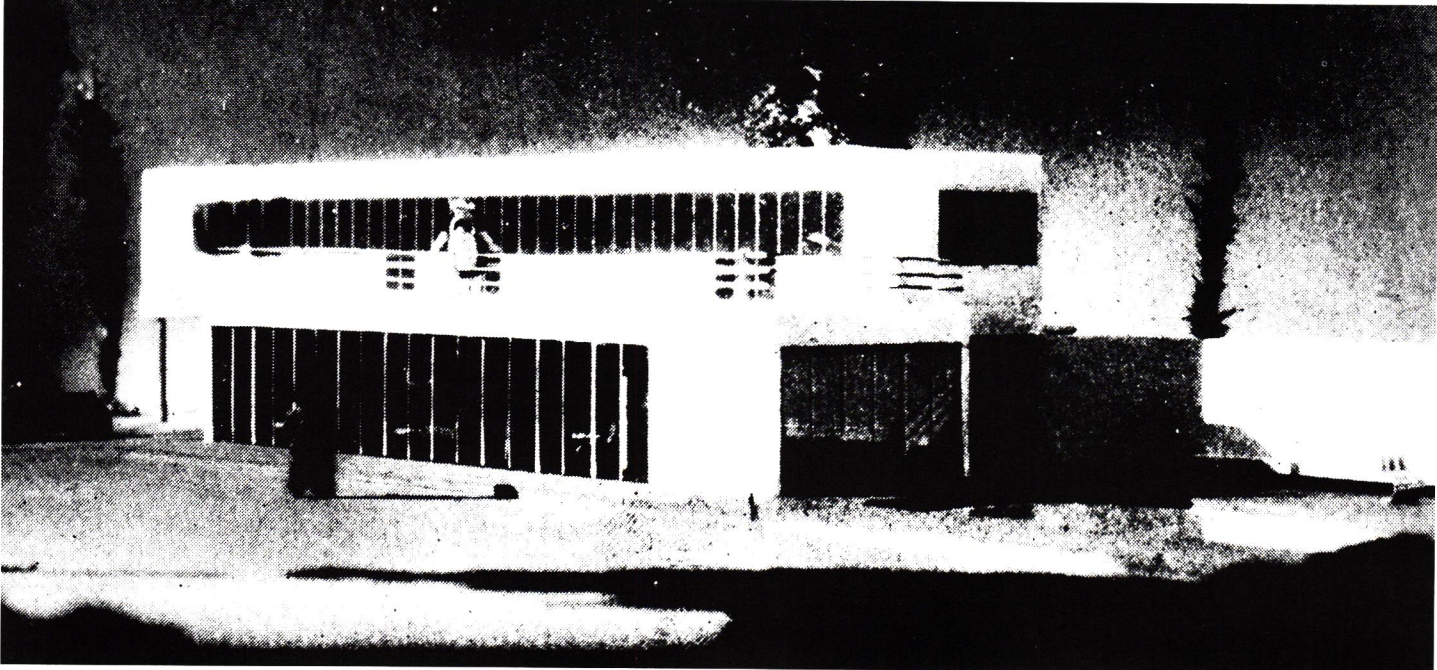fficial explanation, however, smacks too much of the smug rejection slip: "The number of exhibits submitted was so much greater than could be accommodated that the Committee selected what they considered the best work." Nevertheless, it is more than mere well-grounded rumor, that the officials believed these rejected models unqualifiedly bad — not architecture but unrealizable dreams.

One may, therefore, question the critical ability of Mr. Kahn and his Committee. If the nine rejected models are to them bad architecture, how could this jury in all conscience accept Bel Geddes' project for the Kharkow Theatre Competition, which appears to be very similar, indeed, in the opinion of those versed in the latest work of the International Style, to Alfred Clauss's model for the same competition which was among the exhibits in the rival Show. Moreover, if the Committee could accept Mr. Kocher's fine model for the Darien Art Guild, how could they place it next to Philip Goodwin's pseudo-modern house? The Committee may be competent to choose among English houses, but the conclusion is unavoidable that, not understanding it, they have a positive prejudice against the International Style. Howe & Lescaze's excellent model of the Philadelphia Bank, though admitted, was tucked away in a corner. The disillusionment of one League member was painful when he was finally convinced that Kocher's Aluminum House was actually a part of the Exhibition sponsored by the League. On the other hand, the reasoning behind the juxtaposition of this house and the colossal Rome Academy Zeus is baffling to many more than to the conservative Leaguers.

The public found a new thrill in the Rejected Architects. Here was the chance to witness an unusual fight. Not every day does the orderly profession of architecture dramatize itself in a blaze of controversy. The hullabaloo was initiated by the critics who, bored with the eternal monotony of the League's offerings, jumped at the chance to support a rival group. Mr. Edward Alden Jewell of the *New York Times* and Mrs. Helen Appleton Read of the *Brooklyn Eagle* waxed enthusiastic. So universal today is the romantic love for youth in revolt, especially in the realm of art, that one by one the other writers climbed on the Rejected Architects' bandwagon.

Mr. Deems Taylor, for example, who dubs himself an "ultra-modernist," in architecture is shocked by these "fishbowls and factories." He falls into the common error of assuming that the modern house must be an expression of functionalism absolute, without concern for design. Yet consider the front of the Pinehurst house by Clauss & Daub. Instead of being placed every sixteen feet on the facade, the posts are set back within the living room, an arrangement that decreases the interior circulation and increases the cost of construction. But this non-functional cantilever does give a unified expanse of glass necessary to the design, which would be spoiled if heavy verticals interrupted the facade. But Mr. Taylor draws, in common with the other critics, the false conclusion that modern architecture is a glass architecture. Glass is no more an essential element of this style than of any other. It is only true that glass is often desirable to the modern architect or his client. There are, however, a great number of works in a variety of materials from marble to wood. And the windowless factory, for example, is a direct contradiction of the statement that the style always admits sunlight in the greatest quantities possible.

Miss Bauer's refreshing article in the *New Republic* is unique among the reviews. She has sensed the "subtle balance" by which Clauss & Daub have avoided monotony in their series of small houses. She does not allow her ideal of a non-individualistic architecture to stand in the way of her appreciating the very individual excellence of Clauss's arrangement of this series.

Mr. Douglas Haskell, unlike Miss Bauer, is troubled by the "monotony." He would have more texture of surfaces, more ornamental freedom. It is admittedly a shortcoming of the models that they do give the impression of paucity

84 of materials. They are mostly white, unavoidably suggesting stucco, because models are most easily made of papier-maché painted white. There is, however, an endless number of surfacing materials the modern architect can use: metal (as in Mr. Kocher's aluminum house), brick or glazed tile (as on the McGraw-Hill Building), wood, stone, or even marble. The wish for more individual, more varied, more "interesting" exterior treatment savors of the romantic love of the Cape Cod Cottage or Norman Farmhouse because they fit into the landscape or are made from stones gathered from the very soil of the countryside, or because they are "homey."

The critics of both the Rejected Architects and the League Show have been uncritical. None considered the Salon des Refusés as representing a new style of architecture, ignoring the catalogue which listed the elements of the International Style. Not only have they not recognized the style but they have not even remarked on the chaos in contemporary building. There is a general feeling prevalent that modern architecture is functional (a much misunderstood and abused word) or is somehow synonymous with glass, steel and concrete. Hence, the architect frames his ideas in steel and glass and concrete, and lo ! he ends up with a piece of modern architecture. One indication that the style is not to be summed up in terms of construction material alone could have been plainly seen by the critics in William Muschenheim's beach houses, one of the few executed works illustrated at the Rejected Architects. These houses are built of wood. The fact that they are in the International Style, as they very decidedly are, must therefore be dependent on characteristics other than construction materials.

There might have been general criticism of the effect of the setback on the beauty of high buildings. No notice was taken, however, of how the setback complicates the otherwise good design of William Muschenheim's model of a skyscraper, or of how the imposing use of simple bands is vitiated by the law-abiding pyramidal set-back in Raymond Hood's recently constructed McGraw-Hill Building. There might also have been discussion of foreign influences on the young architects. How independent and original are the designs? The very obvious influence of Le Corbusier apparent in the wind shelters and circular staircases of Stonorov was not remarked.

The League fared no better with the critics than did the Rejected Architects. It is hard to follow their sweeping approval of the Swedish display, as though the work were all by one man in one style. And yet we find work as different as Ostberg's eclectic Town Hall and the disciplined Exposition buildings of Asplund or the Club House of Sven Markelius and Uno Ahren in the International Style. Surely an alert critic would have compared the unequivocal presentation by the Rejected Architects of the International Style with those examples of the same style in the Swedish section.

So, a Salon des Refusés has again served to announce a new departure. The International Style comes to New York. Of course, there have been pioneers. Mr. George Howe's courageous decision to leave a conventional practice to join with the young Lescaze; Lawrence Kocher's and Lonberg-Holm's impressive work on the *Architectural Record* have started the ball rolling. The trips of Norman-Bel Geddes and Joseph Urban to Europe have made ribbon windows the mode, even if these men themselves have never fully understood the new architecture. But it remained for the Rejected Architects to give the International Style what might be called its first formal introduction to this country.

Figure 3. Beach Houses. William Muschenheim, architect.

Figure 4. Philip Johnson.
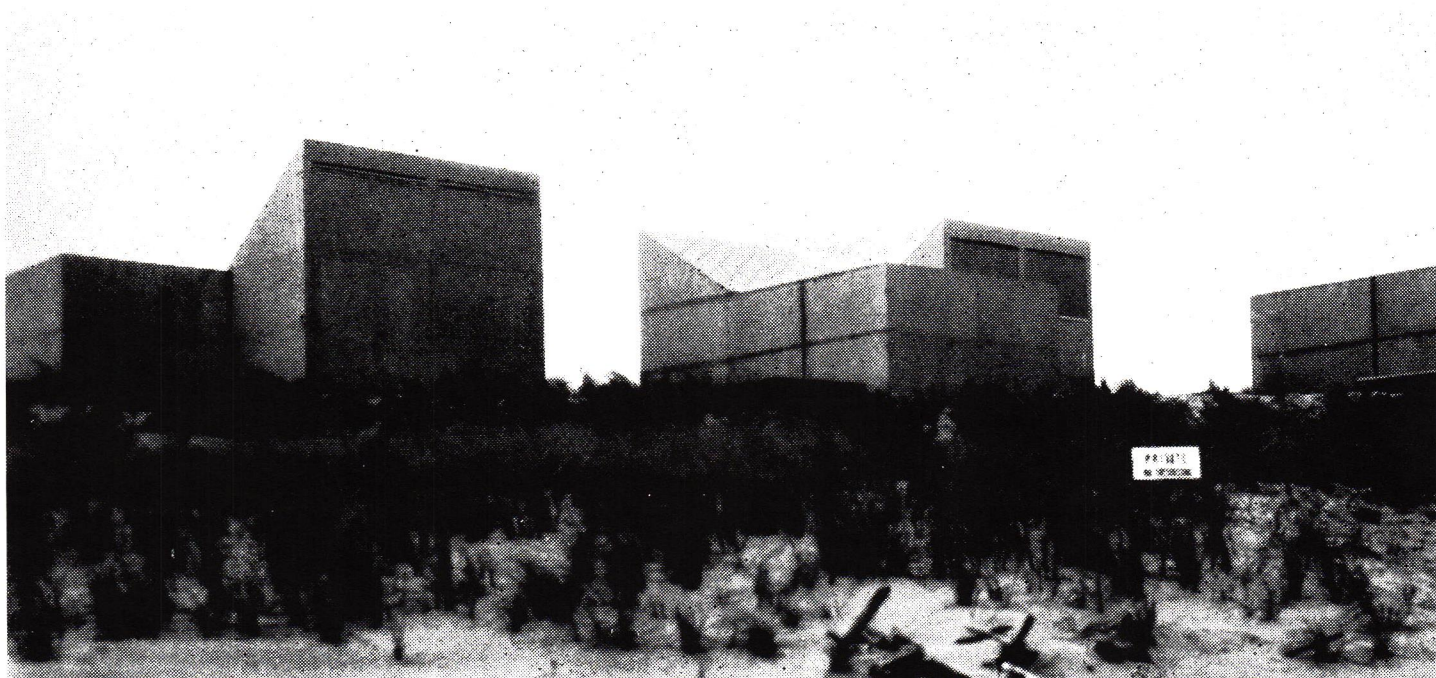
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Figure 1. Berlin Building Exposition.
Mies van der Rohe, architect, 1931. Col-
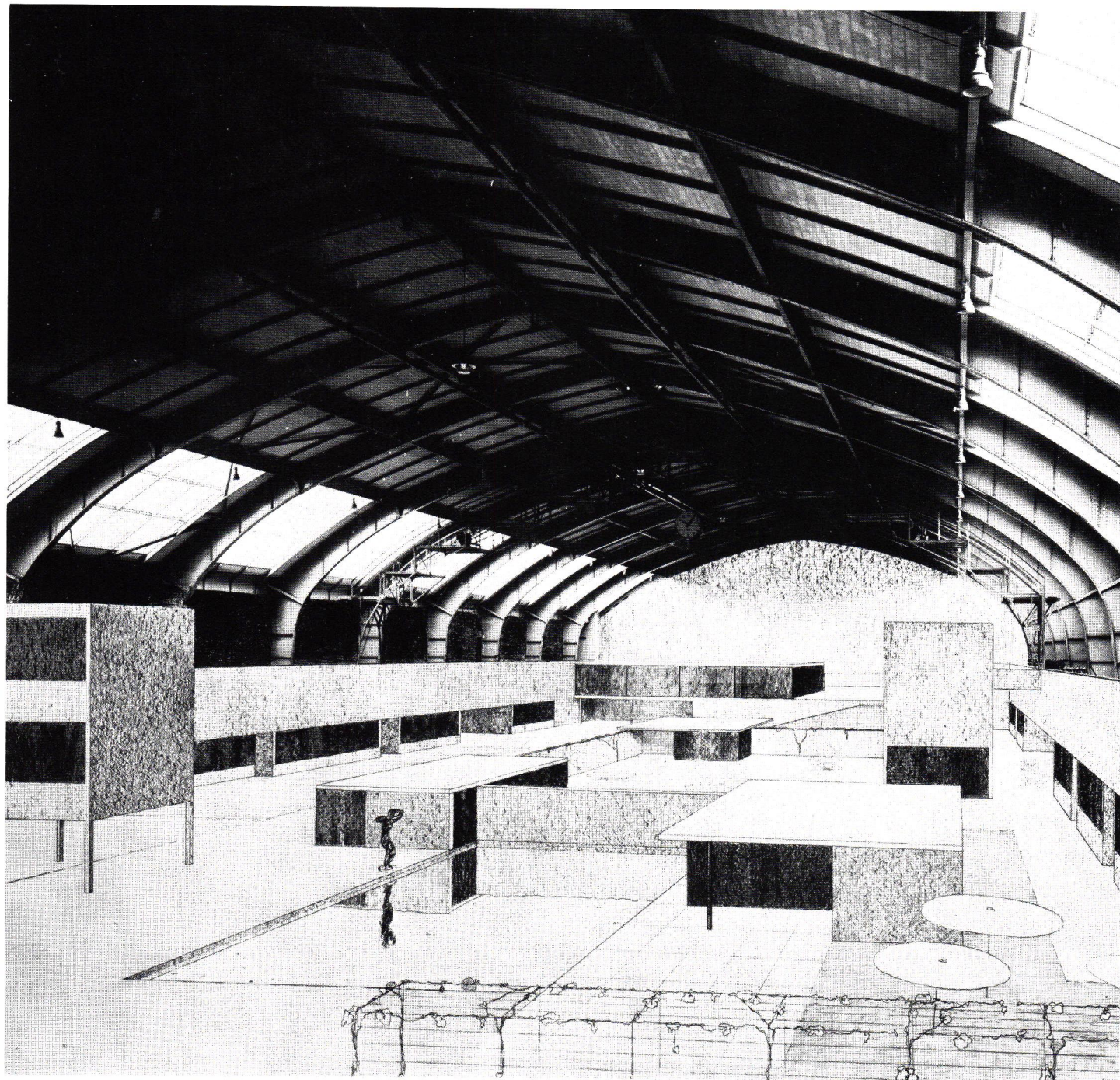lage of exposition interior.

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The Berlin Building Exposition of 1931

The Berlin Building Exposition of 1931 was the largest of its kind ever to be held. With Teutonic thoroughness every material, every method, every theory that had to do with building was shown in the Exposition. The result of this thoroughness, plus an extraordinary lack of funds for proper presentation, made the Exposition, with brilliant exceptions, boring.

The two sections which held the main interest for the layman at least were the International City Planning exhibit, in which, incidentally, America showed up extremely poorly, and the hall devoted to the Exhibition of the Modern Dwelling. This latter, of which Mies van der Rohe was the Director, is the only part of the Exposition which merits discussion from a strictly architectural point of view.

Here two principles of exhibition were employed which American architectural societies might well imitate. In the first place, the Director alone has complete charge of choosing the architecture to be represented. Were New York Exhibition Committees to adopt a like procedure, it would preclude English Tudor houses being shown next to aluminum ones. Moreover, industrial exhibits are selected and arranged by the Director. This would preclude such dreary monotony as the second floor of the League shows. Such an understanding with the Director has a further advantage of creating much better advertising for the exhibiting company than the former hit-or-miss-method. The result of the new system in Mies' hall is a clear expression of contemporary architecture in the International Style. Even men such as Erich Mendelsohn, who would be considered among the most modern in America, were omitted from the German show.

This severe restriction in the type of architecture shown is not surprising after the recent Expositions in Stuttgart, Vienna, Brunn, Dresden and Stockholm, which were all strictly International in style. Only in England and America does modern architecture have to rent shop windows in order even to be talked about.

What is surprising, especially to an American, is that Mies van der Rohe was chosen to direct this section; the best architects so seldom receive official recognition. In America, since the days of Sullivan at least, contempt for the great amounts almost to tradition. But Mies has a reputation as Director of Expositions that awakens the respect of the most conservative architects. In the Stuttgart Exposition of 1927, he directed the building of the most famous group of houses in the International Style.

The Exposition this year, built only temporarily and inside a hall where false lighting spoiled much of the effect, has not the importance of the Stuttgart Exposition. Also the time is not so propitious. In 1927 the International Style was struggling for recognition. In 1931 a like Exposition is no great novelty. While not startling, it supplies on the other hand proof of the integrity of a style that in the past four years has persisted without any essentially new developments.

The most important single exhibit was the one-story house by Mies himself. It was built on the same principle as that of his Pavilion in the Barcelona World's Fair in 1929. A large flat roof slab with partitions both solid and transparent divides the space as convenient. Instead of the usual facades patterned by window openings, there are interlocking planes of glass and stucco. This three-dimensional type of composition defies photography or even appreciation from but one point of view. Only by walking through the building, can an idea of its beauty be obtained. The solid partitions do not stop with the roof but run beyond and enclose part of the garden. Thus the bedrooms, though for practical purposes enclosed in the glass wall, are, in feeling, as large as the space enclosed by the solid wall.

There are only two interior doors in the house, the ones which connect with the service quarters. Elsewhere they are replaced by overlapping spur walls which may be enclosed by heavy velour curtains.

The glass walls are let electrically into the ground, making of the whole interior a porch entirely open to the garden. At night the dark silk curtains preserve privacy.

The interior of this house shows the simple device Mies uses to achieve his effects — the contrast of chrome steel posts against the plain white plaster or richly grained woods, blue silk hangings and the leather upholstered chrome chairs on a dark brown carpet. There are no patterns anywhere, nor any moulding on the wooden panels. There are no windows, only glass walls. The materials themselves and the contrasts give elegance and beauty.

This way of designing a house to include part of the garden within its walls, to have as elements not absolutely separated rooms but, with spur walls for partitions, a single space, is typical of Mies' interpretation of the modern style.

The layman has peculiar difficulty in appreciating the house when he sees it for the first time. He is likely to miss the usual doorways and windows; the facade seems lacking; the walls do not follow the roof line. Yet there is actually no confusion. The construction system is absolutely regular and the roof plane is a simple rectangle. The lines of the walls, as shown on the plan, make a well-balanced abstract drawing. The house appears to be spread out loosely, but a strong sense of order binds the whole.

Americans always ask two questions about living in such a house: "What about privacy in a glass house?" "How can it be heated in winter, or kept cool in summer?" The answers are simple. The transparent glass walls open toward the garden which is presumably large and private. In the bedrooms the partition walls outside the house provide privacy. Toward the street, what glass is necessary is either frosted or covered by net curtains. Experience in such houses has proved that heating is not difficult, although, naturally, more expensive. The problem of the sun is solved by the projecting roof slab.

The German critics have quite another set of objections to the house. In post-war Central Europe partly because of lack of money, partly on political grounds, there has grown up a faction of young architects who believe that architecture, to be of value, must be directed to a social end. Mies' house does not fulfil such a proposition. It is ad-mittedly luxurious. It could not possibly have use as workers' dwellings. The faction of sociologists claim, therefore, that Mies' exhibit has no value for contemporary architecture and though this claim is exaggerated, there is some justification. The problem of the expensive house does not exist in Germany today, and hence the problem of housing the poor cheaply and well is extraordinarily acute.

Walter Gropius, the builder of the Bauhaus, is one of the most prominent architects of this sociological persuasion. He constructed for the Exposition the common-rooms of a large workers' apartment house that is much the same as his exhibit in Paris of 1930 at the Salon des Artistes Decorateurs, the clean lines and simple form of which stood out so prominently amid the French exhibits.

These architects often stress in their projects at least the expression of needs which people, in their opinion, ought to have. Thus in the exhibit of Walter Gropius, and in that of his co-worker, Marcel Breuer, there is emphasis on sport, although in the latter's work it is again the house of a well-to-do man. With this sociological point of view, seems to go a worship for the purely technical as such. Breuer uses the standard Zeiss-Ikon spotlights for instance, believing apparently that because they are technically perfect they must be aesthetically good. Gropius always employs the latest artificial composition such as lincrusta or trolit — one often suspects, just because they are new. He is at his best in a room such as here pictured. The arrangement of shower cabins on the left, for example, the white lacquered wood panels, alternating with the brilliant red rubber curtains, has a clean machine-like rhythm. The house for sport of Marcel Breuer shows an ingenious method of giving that sense of openness and space which is essential to modern architecture. The house is composed of one large room to be used for living and sport. In a row off this are tiny cabins which may be shut off by collapsible walls of felt and leather. The three other illustrations are of sleeping, bathing and dressing cabins.

The rest of the Exposition hall contained houses and

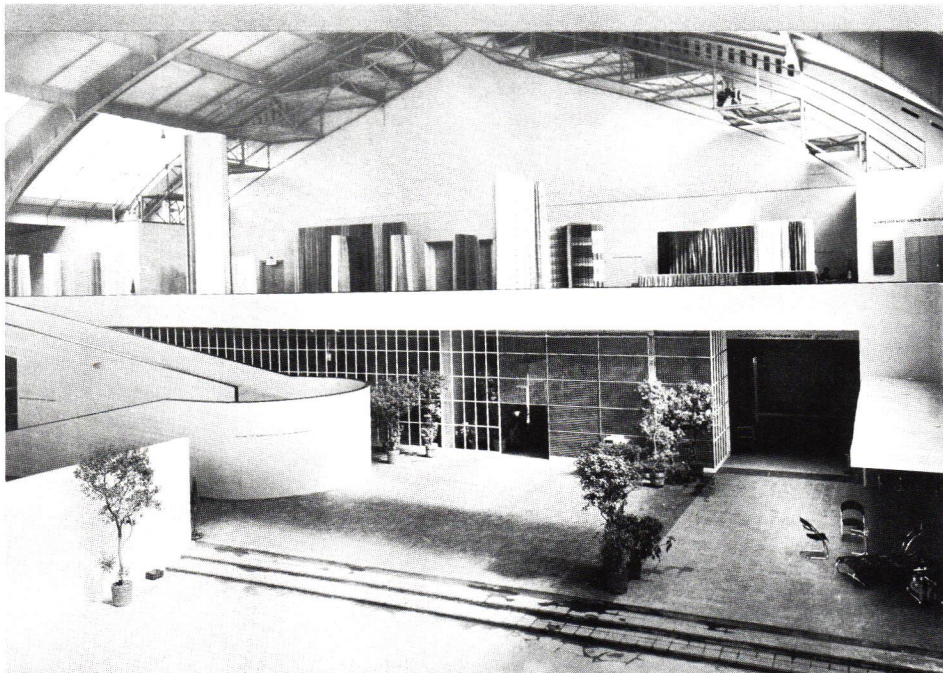*Figure 2. Berlin Building Exposition.*
Mies van der Rohe, architect, 1931. Plan
of house in the exposition.

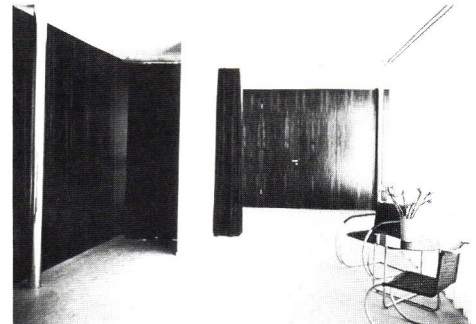*Figure 3. General View of the Hall.*

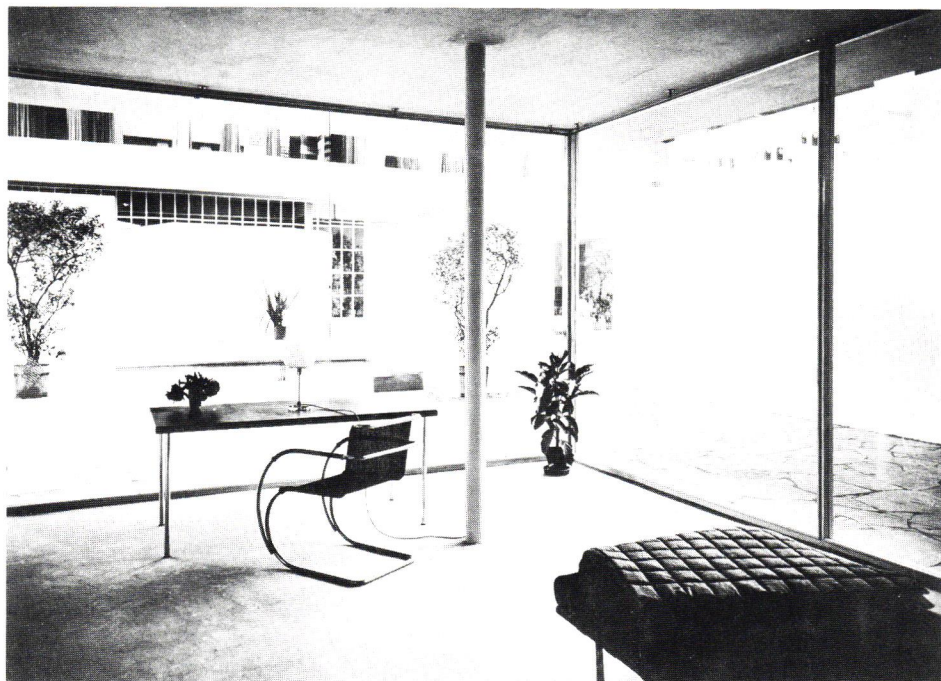*Figure 4. House in the exposition.*
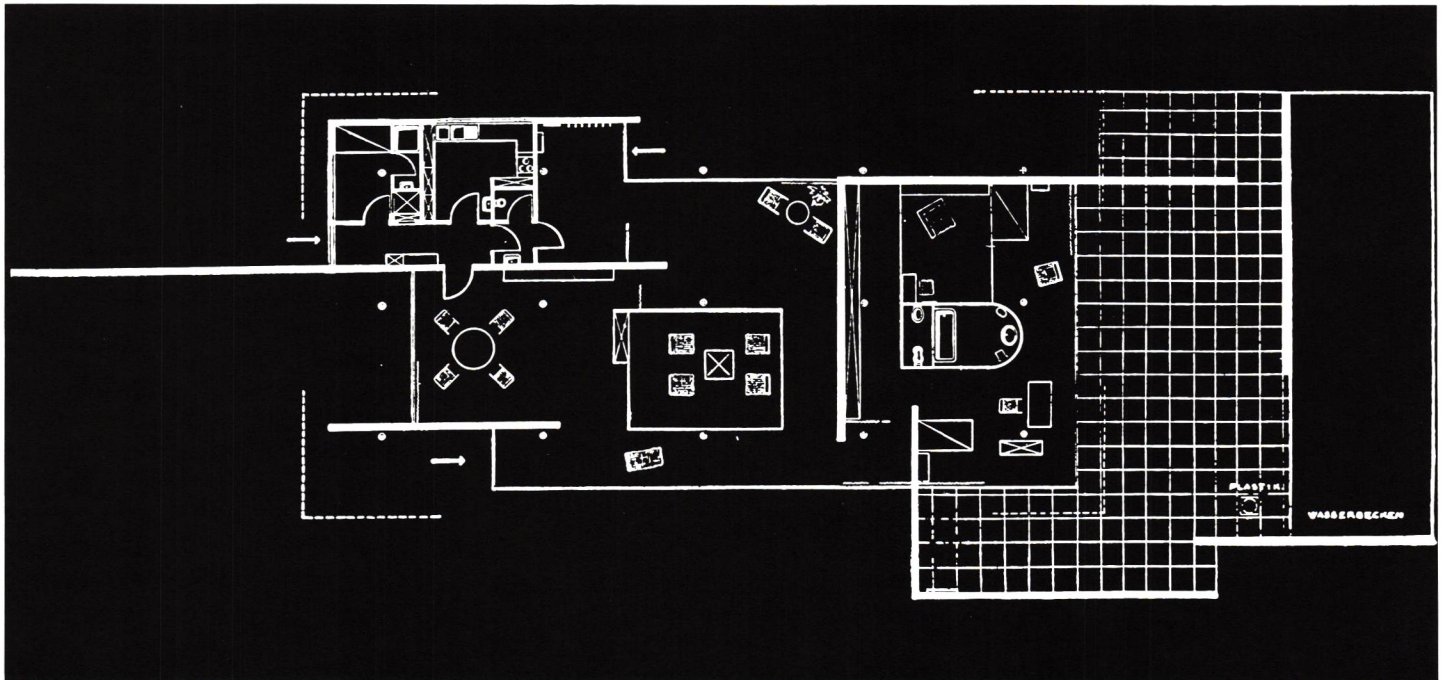
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Figure 5. *Berlin Building Exposition. Mies van der Rohe, architect, 1931. Interior of house looking onto the terrace.*

Figure 6. *Apartment for a bachelor.*

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apartment interiors by most of the leaders in the International Style in Germany. There was nothing, however, outstanding. Otto Haesler, the most practical and prolific builder in the International Style, was represented by an earlier design which in no way measures up to his best work.

Joseph Albers, a teacher at the Bauhaus, exhibited a modern room without steel furniture, which showed that the style is not dependent on any one material.

The industrial exhibits in the hall were placed in the gallery. The principle that the exhibits should be chosen and arranged by the Director met with such success at the Barcelona World's Fair in 1929 that it was adopted again this year in Berlin. Even Wertheim's, the "Macy's" of Berlin, voluntarily submitted to this dictatorship. Lilly Reich, who has long worked with Mies van der Rohe, was in charge of the exhibits.

The theories of display, insofar as it can be considered a part of architecture, have changed much in recent years. In shop windows in New York, for instance, the progress has been from the crowding of windows with all the wares to the display of one shoe or diamond on a velvet ground, and from that to the "modernistic" settings in Saks' windows.

In Europe at least two other types have succeeded to this Saks'-window period. One is practiced by such masters as Moholy-Nagy and Herbert Bayer. Instead of using arbitrary angles, circles, zigzags and cylinders of the Saks'-window School, these men, drawing undoubtedly partially from Russian Constructivism, employ settings that are, or seem to be, actual constructional units. Much use is made of moving arrows, startling primary colours and shiny materials such as chrome steel, tubing and glass.

Lilly Reich's displays represent the other new type. Whereas in the Saks'-window period cork and silver paper cylinders seem to be put on display, and in the constructivist work, primary colours and metal tubing, in Lilly Reich's glass exhibit it is obvious that glass is being displayed.

Lilly Reich, instead of composing a setting in which the articles of display are later placed, makes up the composition of the articles themselves, leaving the background as simple as possible. The effect avoids bareness because in the case of small objects, many are used, and in the case of glass or stuffs, large amounts are shown.

Repetition was once considered monotonous in advertising. Under Bauhaus' leadership repetition is at last recognized as the best means of attracting attention.

Another principle of display is that whatever the setting, it must be made of good permanent materials which lend their elegance to the objects displayed. Thus in the Wertheim display, Frau Reich has used black transparent plate glass, framed by chrome bands.

In the glass exhibit the sheets of glass in steel sockets make the design of the display and so deceptively simple is this three-dimensional design that the visitor remembers vividly the colours and texture of the sheets of glass and is quite apt to forget the underlying cleverness of the designer.

This type of display has not yet reached America. Yet the International Style of architecture itself was not heard of until a few years ago. Now, however, through the work of established firms like Howe & Lescaze, and in the projects of dozens of young men throughout the country, the style is gaining ground.

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It would be false to speak of the architectural situation in national socialist Germany. The new state is faced with such tremendous problems of reorganization that a program of art and architecture has not been worked out. Only a few points are certain. First, *Die Neue Sachlichkeit* is over. Houses that look like hospitals and factories are taboo. But also, the row houses which have become almost the distinguishing feature of German cities are doomed. They all look too much alike, stifling individualism. Second, architecture will be monumental. That is, instead of bath-houses, Siedlungen, employment offices and the like, there will be official railroad stations, memorial museums, monuments. The present regime is more intent on leaving a visible mark of its greatness than in providing sanitary equipment for workers.

But what these new buildings will look like is as yet completely unknown. Germany as the birthplace of modern architecture can hardly go back to Revivalism since there exist no architects who could or would design in styles. Nor is it possible that they will adopt the Bauhaus style. It is not monumental enough and it has irretrievably the stamp of Communism and Marxism, Internationalism, all the "isms" not in vogue in Germany today. Somewhere between the extremes is the key; and within the Party are three distinct movements each of which may win out.

First and up till recently the strongest are the forces of reaction, with Paul Schulze-Naumburg at the head. He is the enemy of anything which has happened in the last thirty years. His book *Art and Race*, contains the most stupid attacks on modern art which he considers mere interest in the abnormal, a point of view which he defends by showing juxtaposed clinical photographs of physical abnormalities and modern paintings. In architecture, he approves of nothing since the War, and is himself the architect of many simplified but Baroque country houses including the Crown Prince's Palace in Potsdam. As a personal friend of the leaders of the party he is strongly entrenched.

Paul Erwin Troost, best known to Americans as the designer of the interiors on the S. S. Europa, is a friend of

Hitler's and is also a strong conservative. (That some Americans might consider the Europa modern merely shows that "modern" with us has hardly caught up with reaction in Germany.) The strongest single factor in favor of this group in the new state is that Hitler himself is an amateur architect. Before he entered politics he earned his living as a draughtsman and renderer in Vienna and Munich. This fact, combined with the tradition in Prussia from Frederick the Great to Wilhelm II, that the ruler be his own architect, makes the outlook depressing.

The second group and at present the strongest is that represented by the Kampfbund fur Deutsche Kultur, an inner party organization for the purification of German culture. Their architectural hero is the newly appointed director of the Prussian state art schools, Paul Schmitthenner. Though an outspoken enemy of *Die Neue Sachlichkeit* he claims modernity. His houses are sound, well proportioned but uninspired adaptations of the vernacular of the early 19th century, much in the same feeling as the best adaptations of the Cape Cod farmhouses in America. His larger buildings are in a half-modern tasteful style, better really than much work in Germany, more modern in intention. It is notorious that official architecture is conservative and Schmitthenner occupies the position formerly held under social democratic regime by Hans Poelzig and Bruno Paul. He is as competent an architect as either of them.

The third group is composed of the young men in the party, the students and revolutionaries who are ready to fight for modern art. The most powerful of these is the new director of the National Gallery, Alois Schardt. So far the battle has been fought in the field of painting and mainly around the names of those venerable German artists, Nolde and Barlach who are especially hated by Schulze-Naumburg. In architecture there is only one man whom even the young men can defend and this is Mies van der Rohe. Mies has always kept out of politics and has always taken his stand against functionalism. No one can accuse Mies' houses of looking like factories. Two factors especially make Mies' acceptance as the new architect possible. First Mies is respected by the conservatives.

Even the Kampfbund fur Deutsche Kultur has nothing against him. Secondly Mies has just won (with four others) a competition for the new building of the Reichsbank. The Jury were older architects and representations of the bank. If (and it may be a long if) Mies should build this building it would clinch his position.

A good modern Reichsbank would satisfy the new craving for monumentality, but above all it would prove to the German intellectuals and to foreign countries that the new Germany is not bent on destroying all the splendid modern arts which have been built up in recent years. All revolutions, seemingly against everything of the past, really build on the positive achievements of the preceding decades. Germany cannot deny her progress. If in the arts she sets the clock back now, it will run all the faster in the future.

Rejected Architects

Figure 1. Philip Johnson, "Rejected Architects," *Creative Arts* (June l931), p. 435.
Figure 2. Philip Johnson, "Rejected Architects," p. 444.
Figure 3. Philip Johnson, "Rejected Architects," p. 433.
Figure 4. Courtesy Philip Johnson.

The Berlin Building Exposition of l931

Figure 1. Courtesy The Museum of Modern Art Mies Archives.
Figure 2. Philip Johnson, "The Berlin Building Exposition of l931," *T-Square* (January l932), p. 19.
Figures 3,4,5,6. Courtesy The Museum of Modern Art Mies Archives; originally published in *T-Square*.

Ivan Leonidov's
Dom Narkomtjazjprom, Moscow

Rem Koolhaas and Gerrit Oorthuys

Ivan Leonidov remains one of the most enigmatic figures of the heroic period of Soviet architecture. His contribution to the work of the late twenties is intense, but highly elusive. One could make the claim that his unique sensibility was much more important than the specific arrangement of his designs. A strange, ethereal hedonism pervades both his earlier and later periods — it is the common link that runs through his work from beginning to end and places it outside the mainstream of Modern architecture. Where the earlier work projects small living units wherein workers take their *cafe au lait,* in luminous cruciform gymnasia-cum-winter gardens; the later work indulges directly in symbolic parodies of historic form. As Koolhaas and Oorthuys point out, the historicist swing to Social Realism is reflected in Leonidov's own work: his monumentality previously Neoclassical in its affinities, shifts from the transcendental lucidity of the Enlightenment back to the palate and sensibility of orthodox medieval iconography. In all this, Kasimir Malevich remained as Leonidov's distant but ever present master.

Rem Koolhaas was born in 1944 in Rotterdam, Holland. He studied architecture at the Architectural Association in London. His projects have included: "The Berlin Wall as Architecture" (1970), and "Exodus, or the Voluntary Prisoners of Architecture," with Elia Zenghelis (1972). He has lived in the United States since 1972 on a Harkness Fellowship, working on a book to be titled *Delirious New York.*

Gerrit Oorthuys was born in 1936 in Amsterdam, Holland and studied architecture at Delft University, where he now teaches design and the history of Modern architecture. He worked in Rietveld's office and has organized exhibitions on Constructivism, Rietveld and Mart Stam, on whom he also wrote a monograph.

Figure 1. Ivan Leonidov, 1933.

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1.

Ivan Leonidov (1902-1959) was born in Tversk, the son of a peasant family. At twelve, he became an apprentice Icon painter; after the revolution he was a student at the new art schools, first as a painter; later, under Alexander Wesnin at the Wchutemas in Moscow, as an architect.

In 1927 his diploma design for the Lenin Institute ("the collective scientific center for the entire USSR") propelled him to immediate national and international stardom. The older Constructivists recognized him as a major talent, capable of giving Constructivism a much needed new impulse.

Leonidov spent the next five years of frenzied architectural activity designing a comprehensive sequence of institutions that would define and establish the new communist culture. His workers clubs, office buildings, Columbus Memorial Palace of Culture and linear city, Magnitogorsk, were each as much concerned with programmatic invention as with formal pursuits, so that the typical Leonidov project should be considered equally as a building, a manifesto and a Russian novel.

After 1930 he came under increasingly violent attack for the pervasive ambition of his work. A new term, "bad-Leonidovism" was coined by his enemies at that time, to denote and include everything wrong with Constructivist and "Formalist" architecture: its "lack of realism," "Western influences," "idealistic tendencies" and "disregard for local conditions."

Through these attacks, Leonidov lost both his teaching position at the Wchutemas, and, as a direct consequence, his apartment.

The official architectural sponsorship long enjoyed by the Constructivists, now shifted away from Modernism towards a politicized amalgam of classicistic and folkloric styles, according to the doctrine of Socialist Realism. It was in this situation that the Soviet Government organized, in 1933, a competition for the Dom Narkomtjazjprom, the headquarters for the Ministry of Heavy Industry, and therefore the center of all planning activity in the Soviet Union.

Figure 2. Ground floor plan. Circular club in the north, main entrance from Central Park Mall leads into central lobby with access to the three towers; exhibition and collective-social facilities are underneath the tribunes along the Red Square.

Figure 3. Site plan, showing the triangular area of the Kremlin, the new Central Park with paths, waterworks and pavilions, the Moscow River in the South, the Bolshoi Theater (black rectangle) and Swerdlofsk Square in the North, the widened, split-level Red Square, the Lenin Mausoleum (small black square close to the Kremlin wall), St. Basil's Cathedral (open square) and the Dom Narkomtjazjprom Project (large black rectangle.)

Figure 4. Model showing tribunes along the Red Square, hyperboloid club and "sheaf of towers." (The triangular tower is hidden behind the round towers. Originally, a miniature version of St. Basil's Cathedral — built entirely of woodshavings, "a kind of curly cloud" — was part of this model. It so seduced Alexander Wesnin, one of the competition jurors, that he took it with him.)
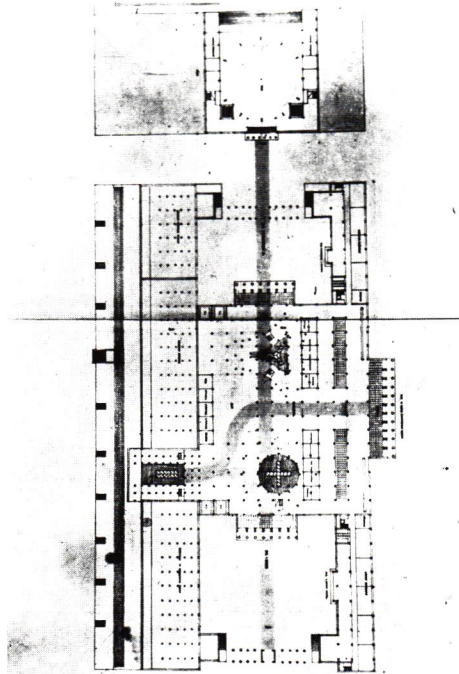
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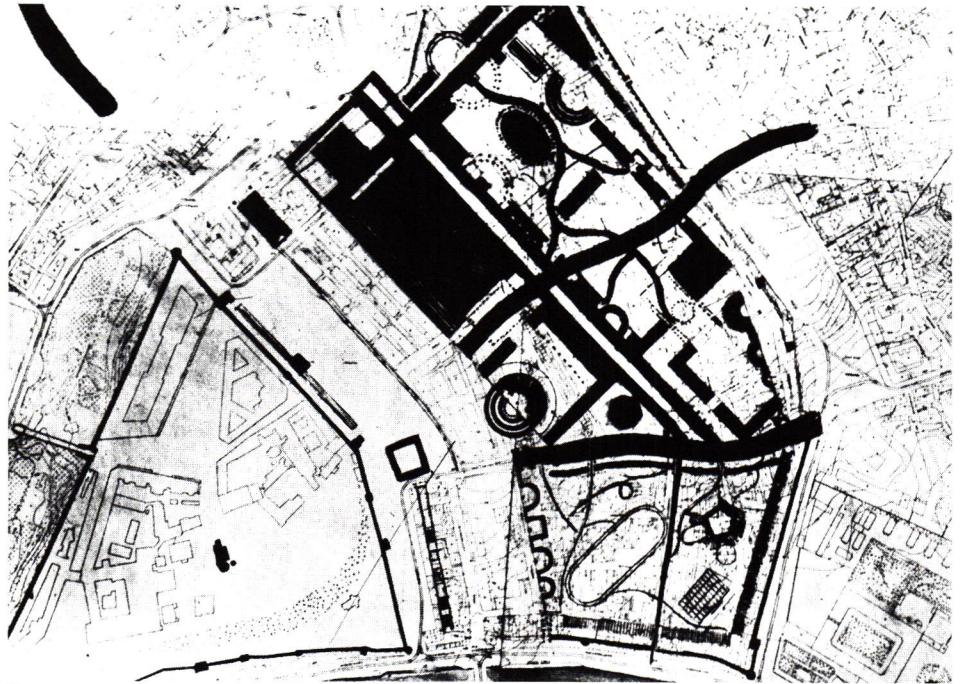
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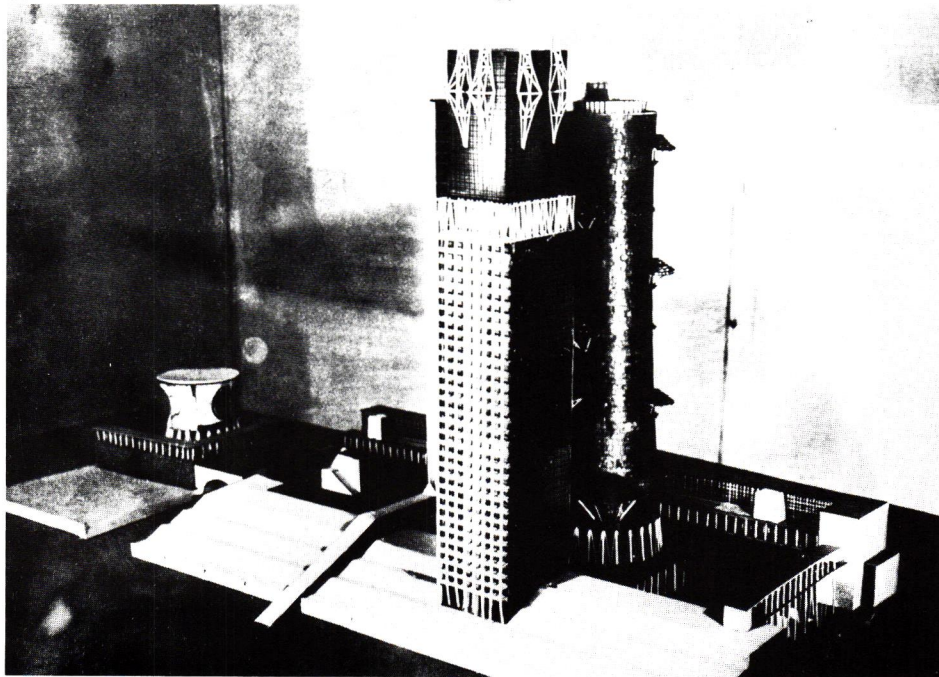
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Figure 5. Dom Narkomtjazjprom Project, Moscow. Ivan Leonidov, architect, 1933. Plan of the three towers. (Gridded part of rectangular tower is Kremlin-facing loggia.)

Figure 6. Section. From left to right: office structure on top of colonnade along Central Park Mall; the round tower with double-height social lobbies con- nected to external viewing/relaxation tribunes; rectangular tower with "sky-performance" platforms On ground floor level the section shows three-story lobby — "a forest of oblique columns and elevators rising at unpredictable locations"; exhibition halls underneath tribunes; drop towards the original level; and St. Basil's Cathedral.
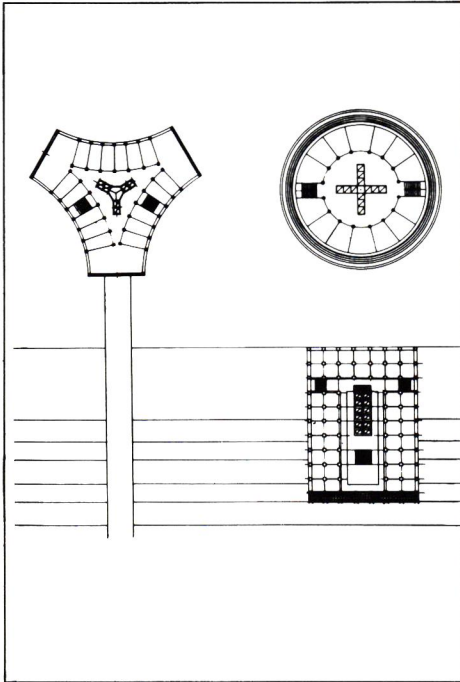
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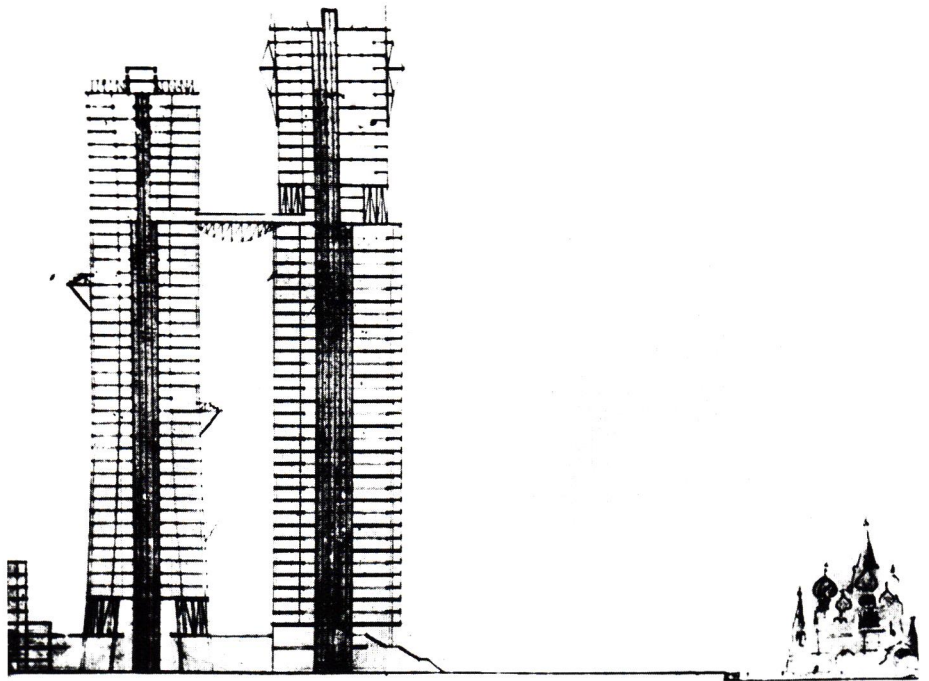
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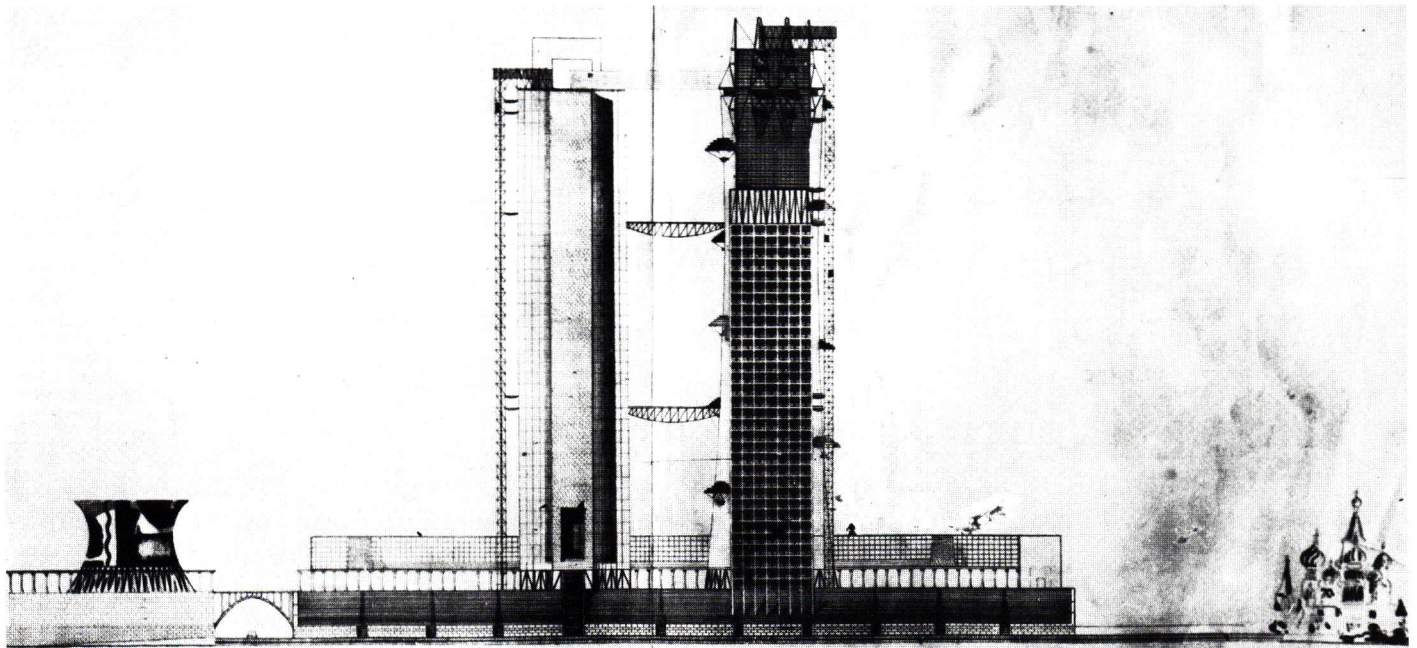
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*Figure 7. Elevation showing the towers
and intended "dialogue" between
polychromed shell of the club and the
extravagant onions of St. Basil's.*

It was to be built on the Red Square in an obvious attempt to incorporate the glory of the past, and the physical symbol of the Russian sensibility into an architectural monument to the power of the Soviet state.

The Dom Narkomtjazjprom project.

Leonidov's design shows the strain of all these developments. It is less concerned with programmatic fantasy and less formally pure than his earlier projects. The temptation is strong to interpret this building as a heroic parting shot or a tragic testament, but to do so is to ignore the overwhelming conviction and invention of this project, which is, in fact, only the first manifestation of a direction Leonidov was to pursue until World War II, with results at least equal to his earlier, better known work.

Commenting on his proposal, Leonidov wrote:

> Until now, the Kremlin and St. Basil's Cathedral have been the architectural center of Moscow. Obviously, the erection of an enormous new complex on the Red Square will affect the status of the individual monuments which constitute this center. I feel that the architecture of the Kremlin and St. Basil's Cathedral should be subordinated to the Dom Narkomtjazjprom, that the new building should occupy the central position in the city.
> The architecture of the Red Square and the Kremlin is subtle and majestic music. To introduce new instruments of a colossal order of scale and loudness in this symphony is only permissible if this instrument will dominate and surpass all other objects of this composition in architectural quality. Not pomposity, not inflated falsehood of forms and details — but simplicity, severity, balanced dynamism and massiveness should determine the design for Dom Narkomtjazjprom. In the composition, historical elements should be subservient to the dominant object through the principle of artistic contrast.[1]

In his design, Leonidov demolished all existing structures in the area — including the famous GUM department store and the so-called China City, a notorious *îlot in-*

salubre — to create a new Central Park. Echoing the typical bend of the Kremlin east wall, the park runs along the formal plain of the Red Square as a "natural" counterpart; penetrating the center of Moscow beyond the Kremlin zone, it reaches northward to Swerdlofsk Square (in front of the Bolshoi Theater), and slopes down toward the Moscow river to the south.

The main entrance to the park is from the always crowded Swerdlofsk Square, where a central mall distributes visitors to the public facilities scattered throughout the new green.

Formally, the facilities in the park present a confrontation of agitated and serene elements. There are violently winding paths (sometimes making a loop so that theoretically a person walking in the opposite direction can be encountered twice), small amphitheatres for spontaneous expressions of health and love of life, a running track, shell-shaped benches, penta- and heptagonal pavilions, glittering icosahedral shelters, fountains, abstract and figurative monuments, and also Roman symmetries and Beaux Arts axes — an expressionist invasion of curves has insinuated itself into the remnants of Leonidov's earlier rectilinearity.

In this context, determined by the east wall of the Kremlin and its exotic skyline, the architectural and symbolic incidents of the Lenin Mausoleum, St. Basil's Cathedral in the south and the Bolshoi Theater in the north, the new Central Park and the Red Square (which after the proposed demolitions is twice its original width— the new part is on a higher level than the old to allow for more spectacular effects, parades and demonstrations), Leonidov inserts "a sheaf of towers on a podium."

The three skyscrapers, which are rectangular, triangular and round in plan, differ in height and texture. The podium is broken up into two parallel structures, sandwiching the towers between them. The western half, which defines the new edge of the now split-level Red Square, is its three-dimensional extension — a sloping grandstand of stone steps from which to watch rallies and
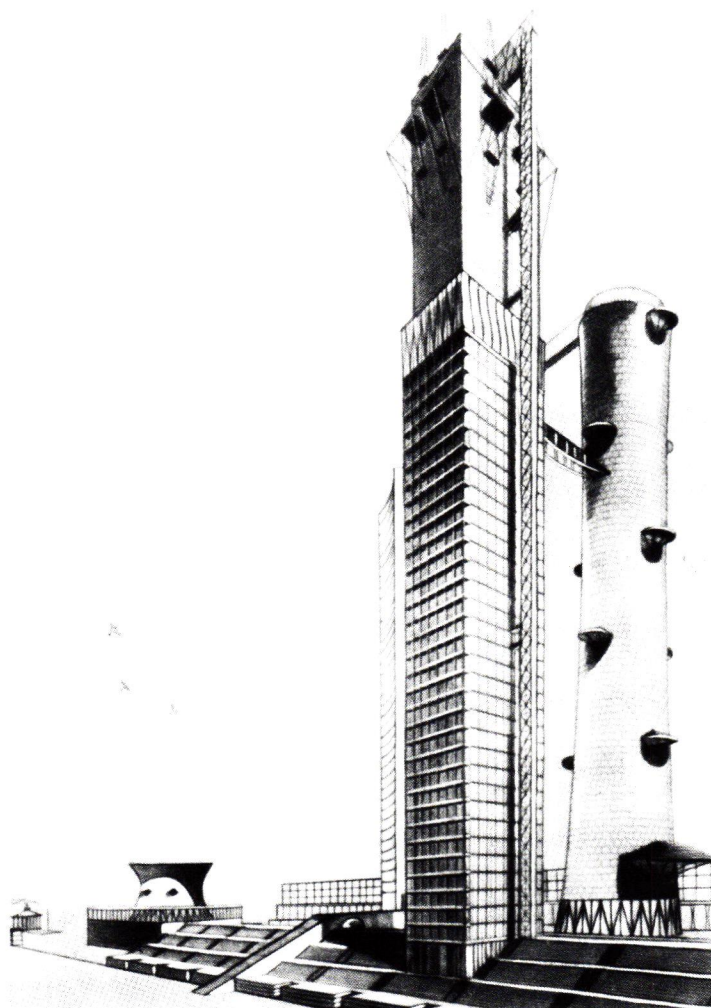
8.

parades. With public facilities —large exhibition and mass meeting halls, kindergarten, creches, cafeterias, library and polyclinic underneath the tribunes — it is an instrument to enhance and expand the political energy generated on "the central meeting place of the proletarian collective" — the Red Square.

The rectangular tower rests partly on the top of the tribunes, while its other half extends above them to create a special covered viewing area. A ceremonial stair descends from a gate in the triangular tower over the tribunes towards the entrance of Lenin's Mausoleum, its doors always slightly ajar, even at night, to suggest imminent resurrection.

The east side of the podium — a nine-story office building — is incorporated in a colonnade along the central mall. On the third floor level, two bridges connect this block with the grandstand roof so that a proletarian circuit incorporates the total complex into the public realm.

Between the two halves of the podium, at the base of the towers, is a three-story, rooflit lobby; its main entrance is from the Central park, but there are secondary entrances to the north and south. Through its height and the idiosyncrasy of the tower plans, this lobby is a disorienting forest of curved and leaning columns and agitated elevators rising at unpredictable locations.

To further involve this gigantic complex in the activity and physical context of central Moscow, a hyperboloid club-auditorium is located in the middle of an imaginary line between the Bolshoi Theater and St. Basil's Cathedral, creating a sequence of three strong, equivalent *Gestalts* of escalating architectural extravagance. The shell of this mediating structure, which is exactly as tall as the highest onion of St. Basil's, is decorated with abstracted architectural motifs (cypress trees, pools, amphitheaters) in Leonidov's favorite colours — gold, black, red and copper green — similar to those of St. Basil's onions.

The rectangular tower is a version of Leonidov's glass

Figure 8. Dom Narkomtjazjprom Project, Moscow. Ivan Leonidov, architect, 1933. Perspective, showing relationship of club with neoclassical Bolshoi Theater in background.

Figure 9. Perspective of rectangular tower, showing external lift for tourists, liberation of inner glass tower from stone harness and platforms for "sky-performances." (Plane is prototype of ANT 600, Maxim Gorki, a flying communications-propaganda center.)

Figure 10. Isometric, showing club, podium and "sheaf of towers."

Figure 11. Early sketch.

Figure 12. Perspective of the Red Square after Leonidov's interventions.

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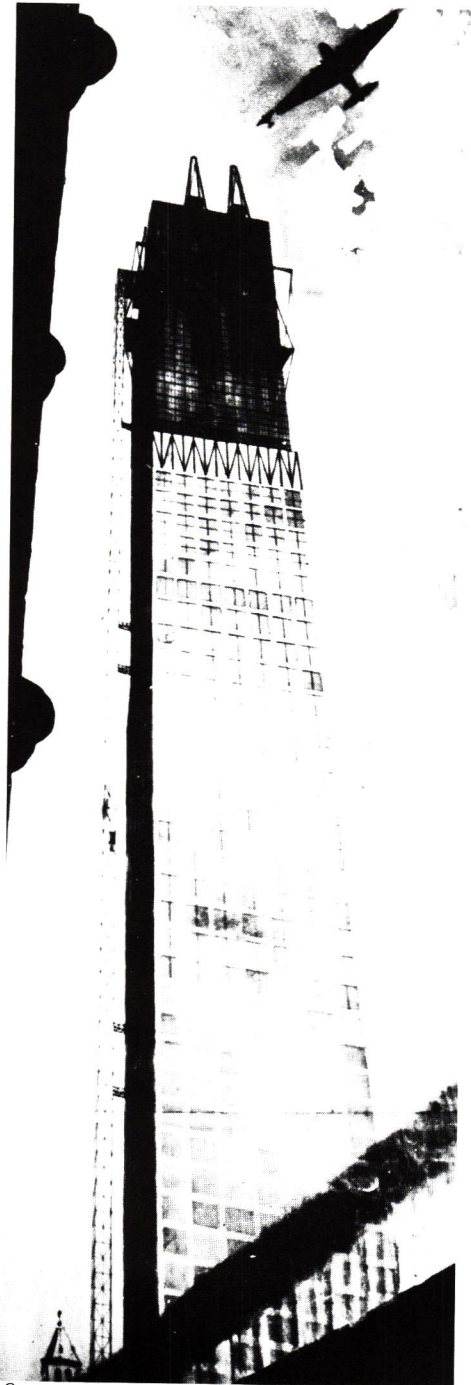
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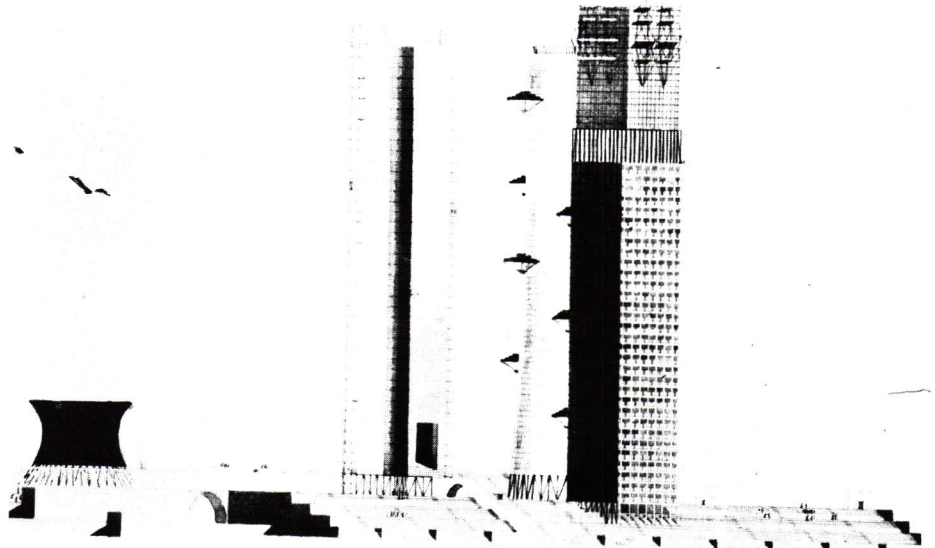
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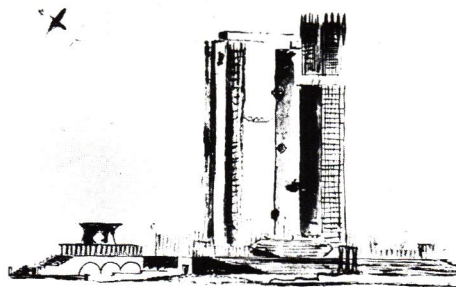
11.
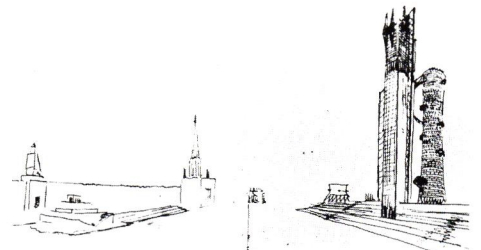
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Figure 13. Dom Narkomtjazjprom Project, Moscow. Ivan Leonidov, architect, 1933. Photomontage of Dom Narkomtjazjprom on old Kremlin gravure: "... a mutant cultural harvest..."

Figure 14. Early sketch.
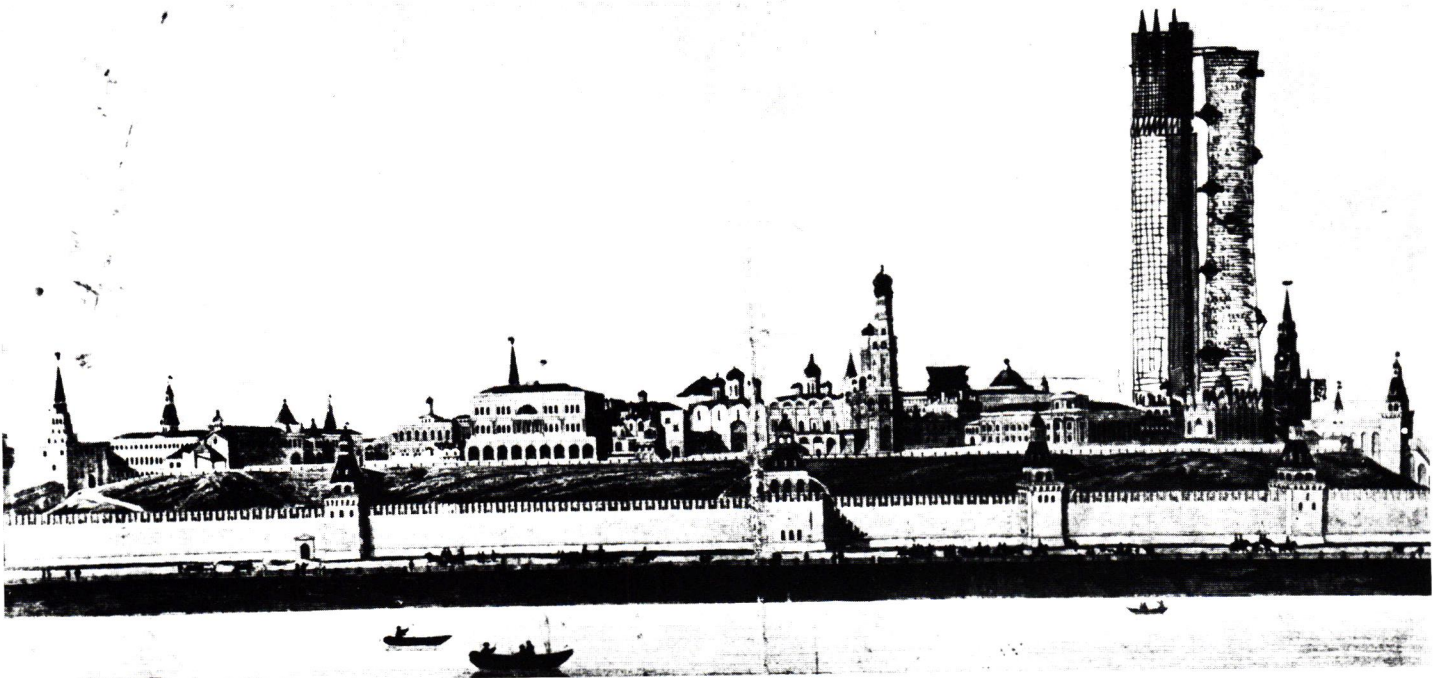
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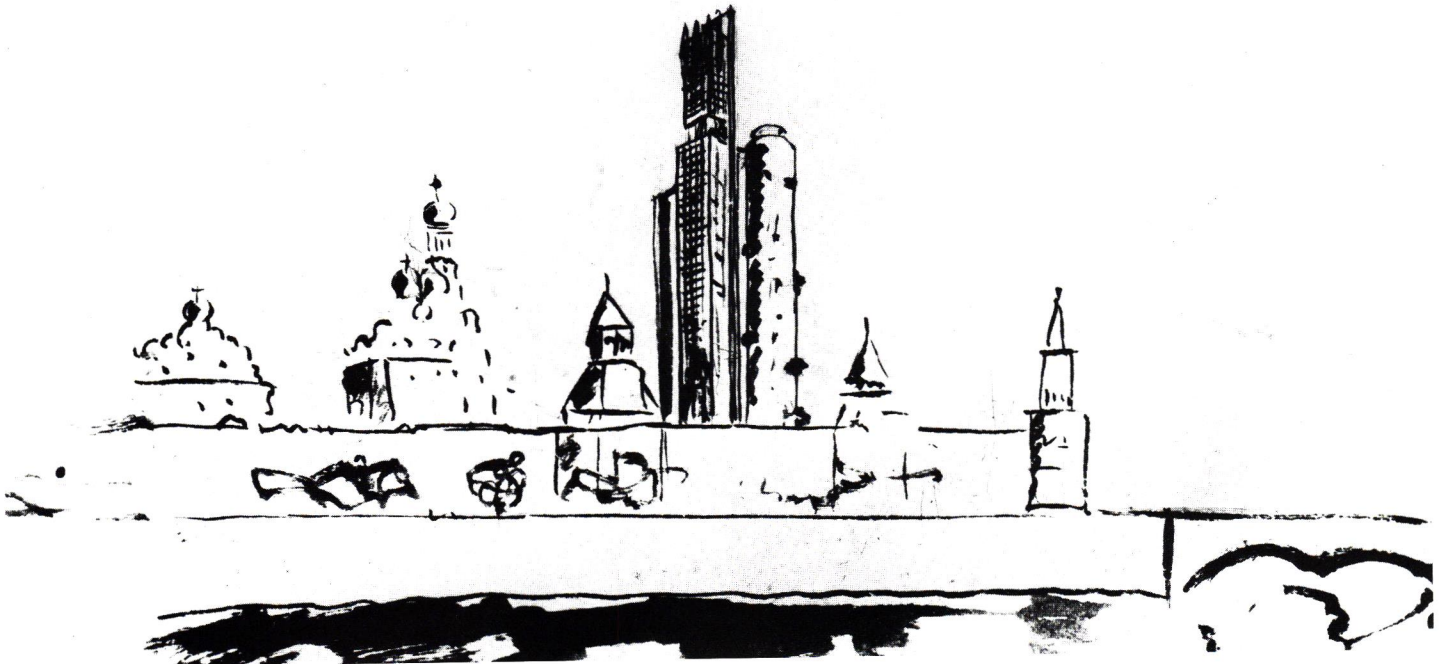
14.

prisms in Magnitogorsk; its lower two-thirds caught in a wide-mazed stone harness through which the glass is visible. On its west face, the harness projects beyond the circumference of the inner tower, creating a loggia facing the Kremlin on each floor. The section shows that floors occupying the total area of the plan alternate with smaller U-shaped floors — their extremities connected by the external loggias — to create double-height central voids on each office floor, through which the elevators travel up and down. Three open floors separate the lower part of the tower from the glass top; here the external elevator deposits sightseers at the viewing gallery, a greenhouse-restaurant and a bridge to the round tower. The glass top is equipped with eight pointed steel structures that support platforms for "sky-performances," to be watched from Red Square.

The second tower, the triangle, is composed of three narrow stone piers connecting three concave walls of glass. At the top, a heavy bridge connects this tower to the roof of the round tower which, partly hidden behind the first, tapers towards the middle and flares out again towards the top. Its skin of black glass bricks makes the entire tower an electrical torch at night. Gilded tribunes mushroom outwards at regular intervals along this smooth black stem; connected to double-height lounges inside the tower, they provide relaxation and viewing podia for the office workers.

Leonidov predicted an increased, if not pervasive, use of curves of the second degree as the essential characteristic of the architecture of the future; glass carries the same connotation when confronted with stone as systematically as in this design. The sequence — rectangular tower with glass hidden in stone, triangular tower curved in plan with glass alternating with stone, and the round tower curved in plan *and* in section and built *entirely* of glass — corresponds to a gradual unfolding of the future away from the past, i.e., from the Kremlin, within a single design. Standing on Red Square, the spectator faces only stone surfaces directly; the future is glimpsed as a reflection in the glass curve of the second tower.

On Leonidov's site plan, Ivan the Great's belfry is the only structure inside the Kremlin walls that is accentuated. Obviously this aggregate of three bell towers topped with gilded domes was a conceptual model for the larger project, which although on a new order of scale, takes its place in the medieval skyline as if a potent fertilizer had been applied to the sacred ground of the Kremlin, stimulating a mutant cultural harvest.

The Dom Narkomtjazjprom project suggests that Leonidov was sufficiently in agreement with some of the attacks on Modern architecture — especially its alleged inability to relate positively to historical and physical contexts — to modify the original dogma and invest alternatives. He responds to the idiosyncrasies of the Kremlin by equipping his building not with literal quotations, but with an original category of "equivalent elements" — the stone harness, the stainless steel spires, the gilded mushrooms, the strident hyperboloid — all new and unfamiliar forms, yet clearly the offspring of the existing flamboyance. On any other location, this building would have been ridiculous; any other building on this location would have been absurd.

Note

1. From the unpublished notes of Ivan Leonidov.

Figure Credits

Figures 1-14. Courtesy the authors.

Figure 1. Cover of Uppercase 3, *March, 1960, containing Smithson studies of association, identity, patterns of growth, conducted during 1952-1959.*

Figure 2. Page from Uppercase 3, *March, 1960.*

Figure 3.Cover of Carre Bleu #1, *Paris, May 1960, which contained an article by Alison and Peter Smithson, "Architecture and Art."*

Figure 4. Page from Uppercase 3, *March, 1960.*

1.
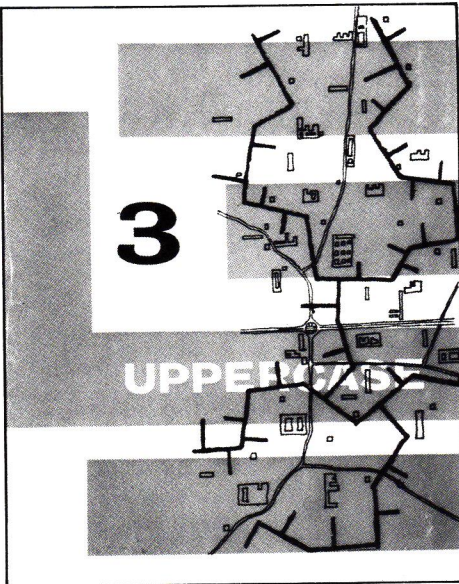
PATTERNS OF ASSOCIATION

In a tight knit society inhabiting a tight knit development such as the Byelaw Streets there is an inherent feeling of safety and social bond which has much to do with the obviousness and simple order of the form of the street: about 40 houses facing a common open space. The street is not only a means of access but also an arena for social expression. In these 'slum' streets is found a simple relationship between house and street.

How would people use 'good' environment? How many of the traditional acts of expression (of joy, time passing, faith, play-teaching) are likely to continue to want to find expression?

The scratching disturbances on the drawing indicate the zones of social contact

2.

3.

4.

A Bibliography of Alison and Peter Smithson

Julia Bloomfield

The relevance of publishing a complete bibliography of the Smithson work to date is surely directly related to the importance of their theoretical work in establishing a specific critique of the precepts of modern architecture, particularly as these were formulated in the pre-War declarations of CIAM. As they wrote in *Uppercase 3* of 1960, "It seemed that through the very success of CIAM's campaigning we were now faced with inhuman conditions of a more subtle order than the slums. The planning technique of the Charte d'Athène was analysis of functions. Although this made it possible to think clearly about the mechanical disorders of towns it proved inadequate in practice because it was too diagrammatic a concept. Urbanism considered in terms of the Charte d'Athène tends to produce communities in which human associations are inadequately expressed. It became obvious that town building was beyond the scope of purely analytical thinking — the problem of human relations fell through the net of the 'four functions.' In an attempt to correct this the Doorn Manifesto (1954) proposed: 'to comprehend the pattern of human associations we must consider every community in its particular environment.'"

The development of this extensive and still-continuing Smithson critique is the substance of this bibliography. An initial examination of this "map" reveals at once the way their criticism has developed from the initial Brutalist formulations, dependent on the new British sociology of the early Fifties, with its reappraisal of the Bethnal Green Street. This assessment is modified following the Smithson's first visit to the States in 1958, when they consciously accept the affluent automobile society and the much-vaunted mobility — both social and physical — that is supposed to go along with it.
K.F.

Author's Note: This bibliography includes, in chronological order, the essays, books and other writings by Alison and Peter Smithson, (identified by **bold type**), together with the publications on or including their built work, their projects and their writings. I have also shown the definitive articles on New Brutalism whether written by them or others. The unattributed listings were published unsigned.

Julia Bloomfield was born and educated in England. She has worked in administration, draughting and research for several architectural firms in London, including Alison and Peter Smithson. In 1970 she came to New York and continued to work, mainly in research, for various architecturally oriented organisations, including The Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies.

axon.   axonometric
col.   color
drwg(s).   drawing(s)
ele(s).   elevation(s)
il(s).   illustrated, illustration(s)
iso.   isometric
pers.   perspective
pln(s).   plan(s)
por.   portrait of Alison and Peter Smithson
secn(s)   section(s)

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