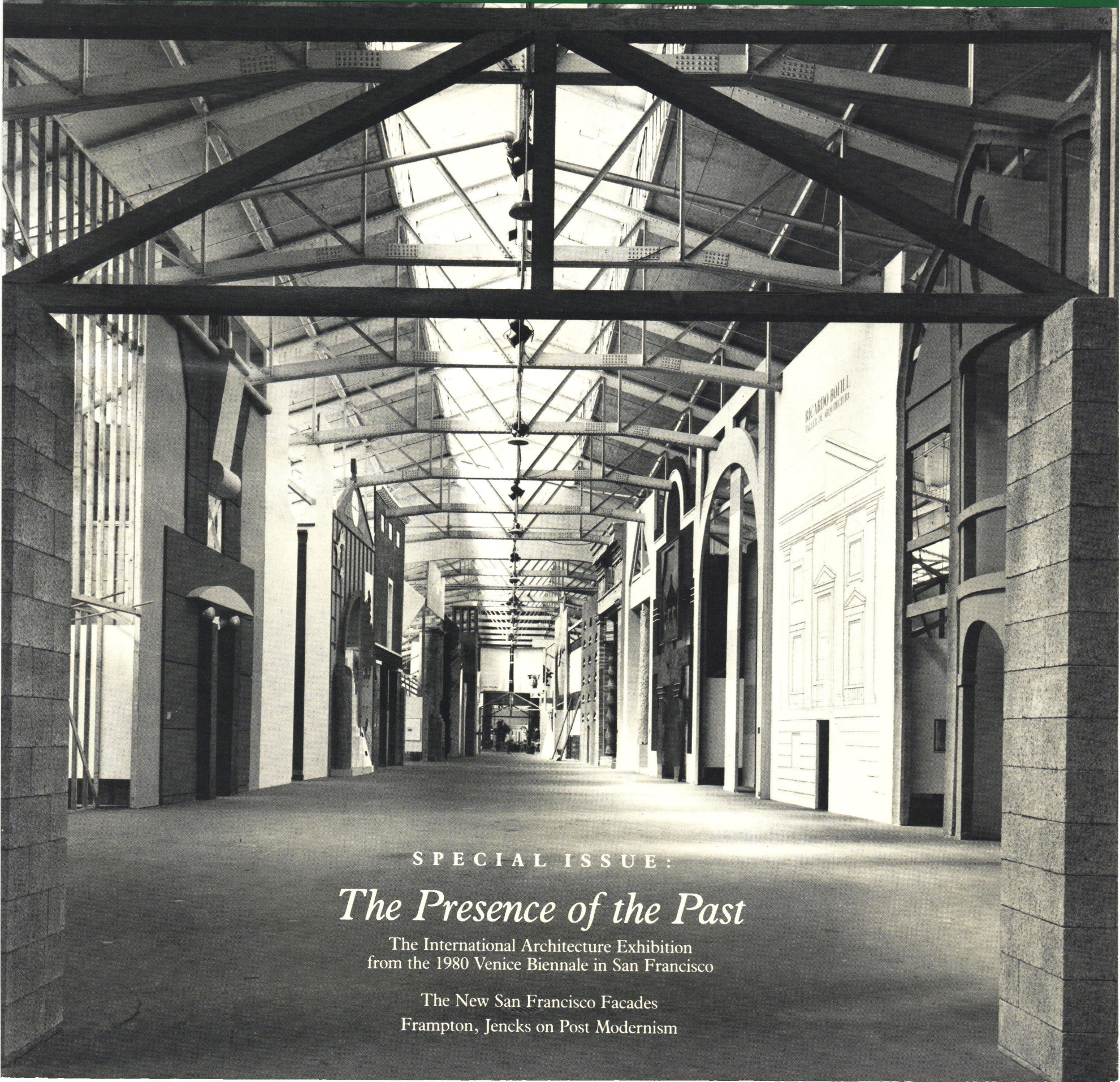


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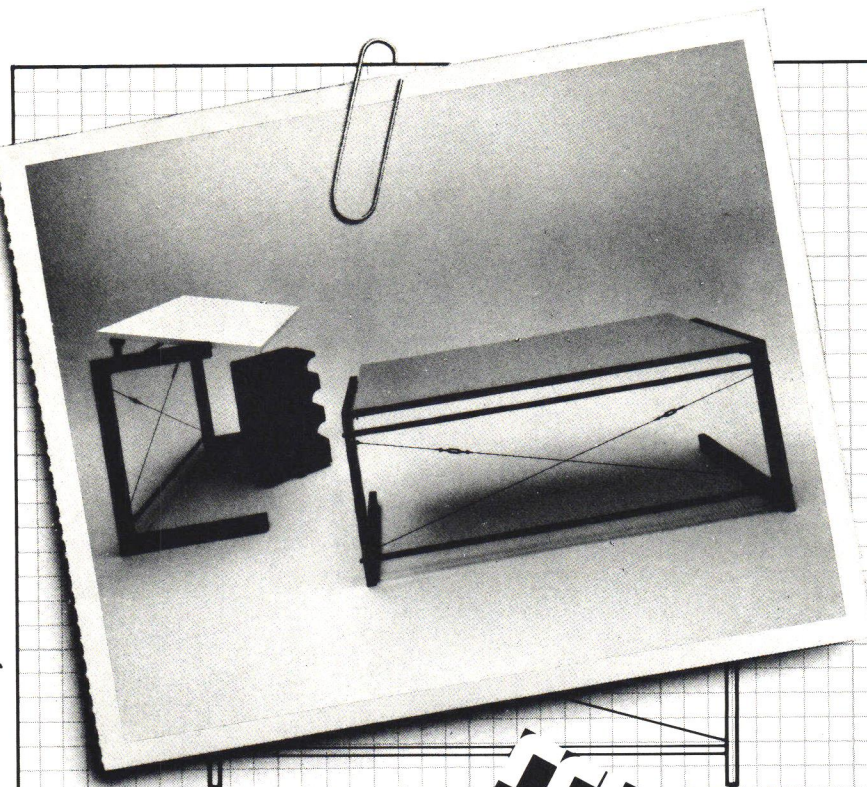
SPECIAL ISSUE:

The Presence of the Past

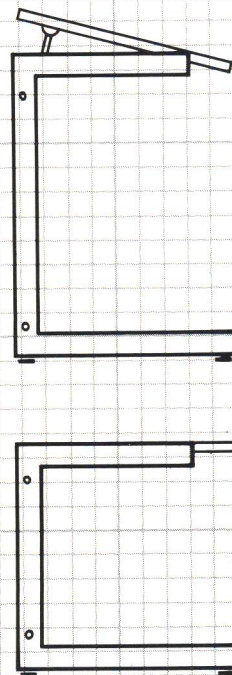
The International Architecture Exhibition
from the 1980 Venice Biennale in San Francisco

The New San Francisco Facades
Frampton, Jencks on Post Modernism

RON REZEK / LIGHTING (+ TABLES)



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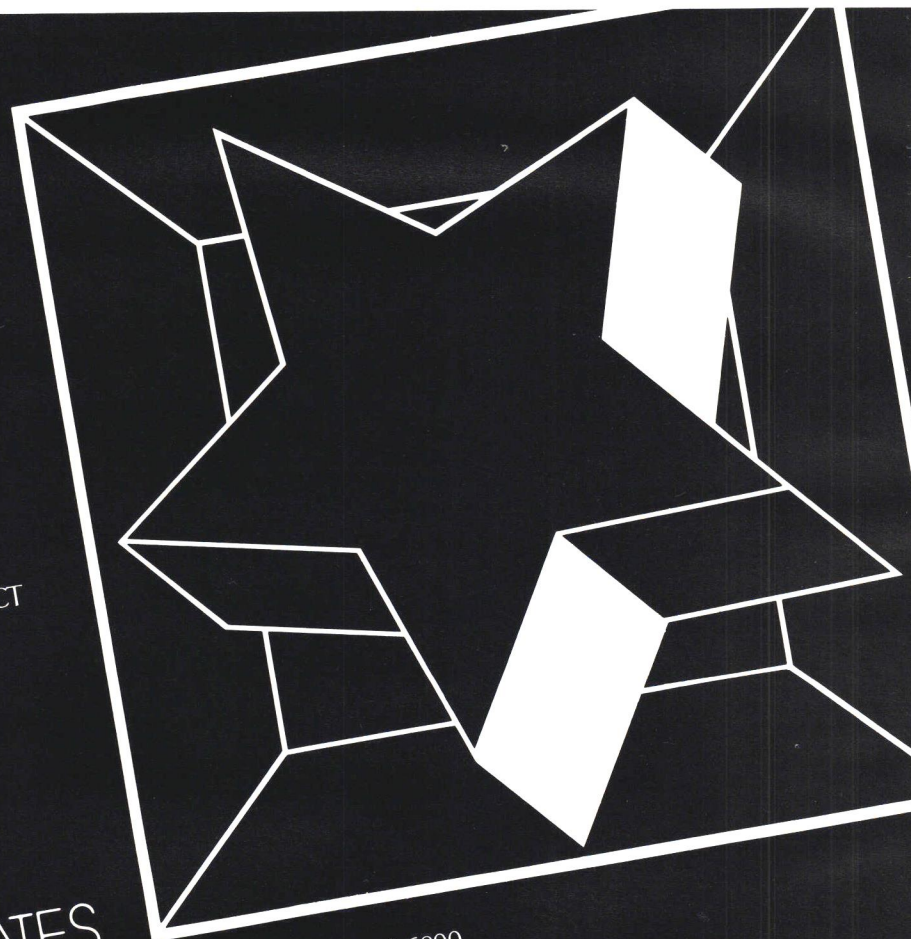
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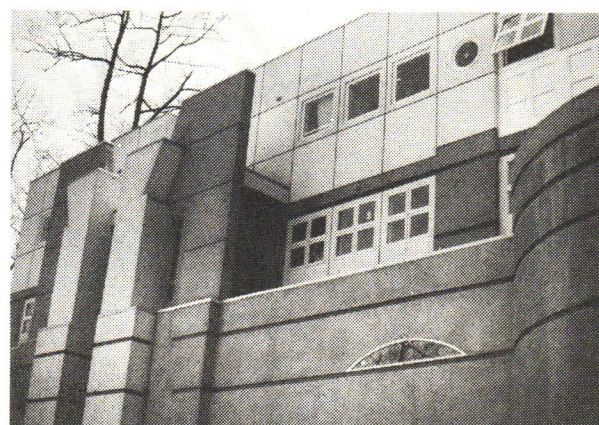
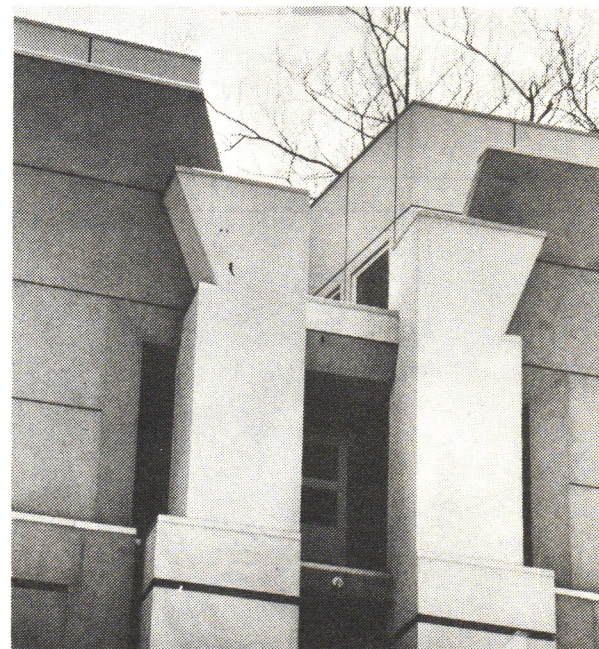
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It is a curious show. House-sized stage sets are lined up, each a world unto its own, jostling with its neighbors. The architects responsible form an odd neighborhood as there seems little in common.

There are some greats, near greats, average and a couple inexplicably included. The creators of this show make up an odd old-boy network—an Anglo-Italo-American cabal which decided who could be in this first Architectural Biennale. These choices probably account for the sometimes bitter and acrimonious reviews and catcalls from critics and other architects. But it remains an entertaining show and for this reason deserves attention. Since it has come to our home, San Francisco, *Archetype* has decided to feature this Presence of the Past, and hopes that the non-architectural public might benefit from it and make acquaintances with a larger world of architectural possibilities.

What is behind the facades is, of course, more interesting than the cardboard-thin stage-set front, but it is the facade that has gotten the attention. This is why there has been so much adverse criticism: typical is Bruno Zevi's comment about post-modernism: "It takes symbols, archetypes, and is content to play around with them, renouncing planning for scenography and cosmetics, without rediscovering the real workings of things."

Perhaps this is justified, as most of the facade builders of the *Strada Novissima* have built very little, some nothing at all. What is more interesting is that when the newcomers do build it is beginning to look a bit like facade architecture, scenographic and cosmetic. This could be due to higher building costs, less skilled labor, or the enormous difference between drawing and building. This is clearly seen with the new media hero, Michael Graves. Now that he is building, one can see an undeniable resemblance of the skin and overall quality of the Plocek house to the Biennale facade. The actual fabric of the house, the stucco detailing and window treatment are closer to the thin styrofoam facade than to substantial evocations of the drawings and



Recent construction photos of Michael Graves' Plocek House.

sketches of the very same house. Perhaps this is the essence and true nature of the new architecture. In the presence of post-modernist construction and building, the critics will have to reassess their evaluation of the Presence of the Past. ■

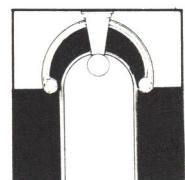
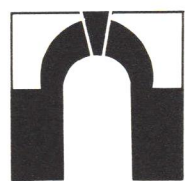
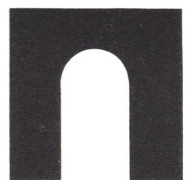
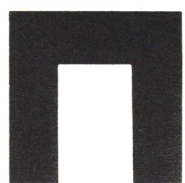
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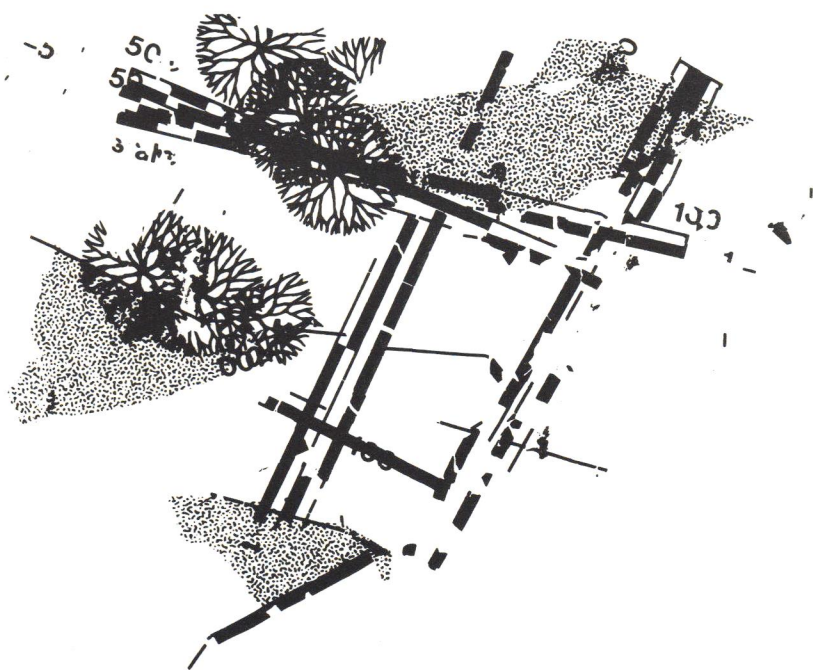
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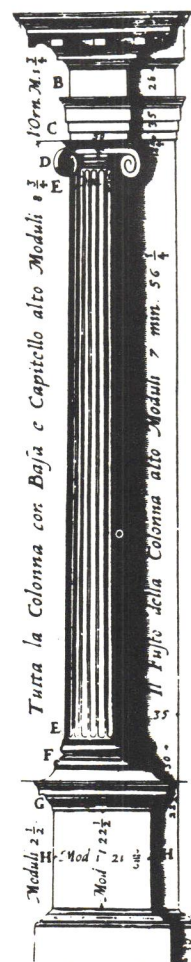
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Landfall, Anchorage, Disembarkment

The Presence of the Past gets off the boat

by Kyle A. Thayer

Landfall

...The town and anchorage suddenly present themselves to the excited stranger, and what a sight is here, what a contrast to the *latitude* and longitude, what a damper to the *climate* of Italy! Shade of Pocohontas, restless for the honor of the Old Dominion, retire once more to your repose! Spirit of Tasso linger yet amid the floral bowers of your beloved Italia! Ghost of St. Francis, welcome us to your chosen shores, where a forbidding climate and desolate scene confirmed the austerity of your followers!

[p. 104, *Sights in the Gold Region and Scenes by the Way*, Theodore T. Johnson, Baker and Scribner, New York, 1849]

If the Presence of the Past could tell the story of its own odyssey, what would it say? It first caught sight of San Francisco in March 1982 when entering the Golden Gate. Steaming past San Francisco, and only glimpsing the abandoned piers of Fort Mason, it pulled into Oakland, now the major container port on the west coast. From there the four large containers were loaded onto trucks for the drive across the Bay Bridge to Pier Two at Fort Mason Center, San Francisco.

What the Presence of the Past might have been thinking about its identity and destiny during this journey is not revealed here, but speculation serves to remind us that history is the memory and recounting of the journey, whether the telling of it inherits the fullness of travel (or the fullness of rest), or whether the telling of it lodges in the liminal twilight moments where the ship is neither *en route* nor *arrivée*. These moments fill the voyager

with simultaneous reflection on the past and anticipation of the future, and thus correspond to the mechanisms of history more accurately than a simple inventory of past events. The wonderful paradox of the Presence of the Past embodied in an exhibition of *contemporary* architecture is not cause for consternation, but must be celebrated and enjoyed. The past should not be enshrined in a hermetic case to be trotted out for special occasions, nor should it be completely forgotten or annihilated. What is the past if not something to be honored by its honest and fruitful employment in the present?

A history of the Presence of the Past emerges through an inspection of the exhibition sites in Venice, Paris and San Francisco. Reflection is balanced with anticipation, the old with the new, and the forward with the backward glance. Special emphasis is given to the history of San Francisco's Fort Mason because it is the most recent stop and therefore the least documented of the sites. The curtain goes up: enter Venice.

Early in the 14th-century the Arsenale was a place to house ships; over the following century and a half it was host to a "pre-industrial industry," in what was still basically an agrarian society. It was a place where application of the latest technological innovations produced ships, ship hardware, and machines and armaments of all types: "a site for every possible modern wonder," says Manlio Brusatin. Production inside the Arsenale went on at a furious pace, especially when compared with the timetables for construction of buildings, which often employed entire generations of workers and architects.

In considering the final product of the work, there is a critical measurement to be taken: is the product an object, beautiful, complete and autonomous; or is the product a tool with which one

goes on to create other objects. This is the debate, central to 15th and 16th century views of culture and construction, between *fabrica* and *machina*; *fabrica* is the external appearance of something as well as the process of building, and *machina* is its internal and inherent functioning. In Italy, according to general agreement (and Leon Batista Alberti), *fabrica* was *architectura* that should be seen and

The past should not be enshrined in a hermetic case to be trotted out for special occasions, nor should it be completely forgotten or annihilated.

beheld, and *machina* was in service to *architectura*. This relationship can be seen, for example,

...in the fever of erecting obelisks built by marvelous machines planned for their transport and setting up—gigantic towers which occupy the great printing plates of the "celebrated" architects who have invented them and, as any unique and unrepeatable work of wonder (effect of suddenness) they support the solitary obelisk which is as undamaged as it is vaguely superfluous by comparison with the apparatus of machines which have brought about its erection. After its construction (and *because of it*) the gigantic machines are bound to disappear. There is no longer a place for these machines.¹

An extreme case: frivolous objects created by frivolous machines. The machines are never given the chance to become *fabrica*. As useless curiosities after performing their highly specialized function, they are in danger of becoming monuments to a process.

Although the Arsenale housed the great industry of the day (and is therefore comparable to present day American shipyards and industrial architecture), its architectural life in Venice was and is *fabrica*. Its reopening in Venice in 1980 was greeted warmly by the townspeople who no doubt had wondered what secrets the mysterious building held. The machines and rope (the building is also called *La Corderia*) had long since been removed, but when the architectural section of the Venice Biennale moved in there it again turned into "a site for all possible wonder."

Inside the building a special street called the *Strada Novissima* was installed. Composed of twenty facades done by the world's leading avant-garde architects, the *Strada Novissima* is the show's most striking (and marketable) image. It affirms the primacy of the street in the agenda of urban design and renovation. In doing so it calls attention to the infinite array of human activity possible in intelligently designed and humanly scaled streets. Visitors

The Corderia of the Arsenale in Venice, 1829; the site of the 1980 Venice Architectural Biennale.



to the *Strada Novissima* were silently urged to participate in the freeplay and life of the theatrical setting.

The Biennale moved to Paris in 1981 where the choices of exhibition space and theme express a different, if equally striking and appropriate, response to the post-modern condition. Instead of the street, the directors of *La Festival d'Automne* chose the theme of place around which to hang the Biennale. The chapel of *La Salpêtrière* was chosen as the exhibition site because its group of airy octagonal chambers allowed a circular configuration, stressing the contemplation of "place" over the action of "street." Like the great mythological image of the snake eating its tail (symbolizing life, continuity and eternity), in *La Salpêtrière* the *Strada Novissima* curls in on itself, "eating its own tail," so to speak, to create the psychological map of the continuum of architectural history, and of our own subliminal responses to architecture.

La Salpêtrière was originally part of l'Hopital Général, the network of five "hospitals" established in 1665 to care for Paris' sick, destitute and mad (with only hazy distinctions made between them). As Foucault points out, "L'Hopital Général n'est pas un établissement medical. Il est plutôt un structure semi-juridique, ... un étrange pouvoir que le roi établit entre le police et la justice, aux limites de la loi..."² The architecture of *La Salpêtrière* reflects the schizophrenia of this false philanthropy (widespread in the Age of Reason): Monumental (self-aggrandizing) on the one hand, and enclosed (repressive) on the other. These two tendencies go hand in hand and lurk among the facades of Paris' coiled *Strada*. The facades surround the viewer like faces of so many asylum inmates. The distorted, unexpected mixture of styles expressing the years of repression that classical architectural language has suffered under the thumb of Modernism. At the same time, one sees the stagey grandeur and imposing presence turn many of the facades into monuments, both to the return of the architectural past and to the Architect himself.

La Place forces the viewer to encounter each facade one on one, in a psychological *pas de deux*. Where Venice's *Strada Novissima* beckons the viewer to take action, to enter into the dialogue of the street, *La Place* encourages moments of contemplation where questions of self and institution, of fancy and lunacy, meet gazing at beauty. Of course the historical and the theatrical are never lost: they are only reinterpreted in a manner befitting the City of Light.

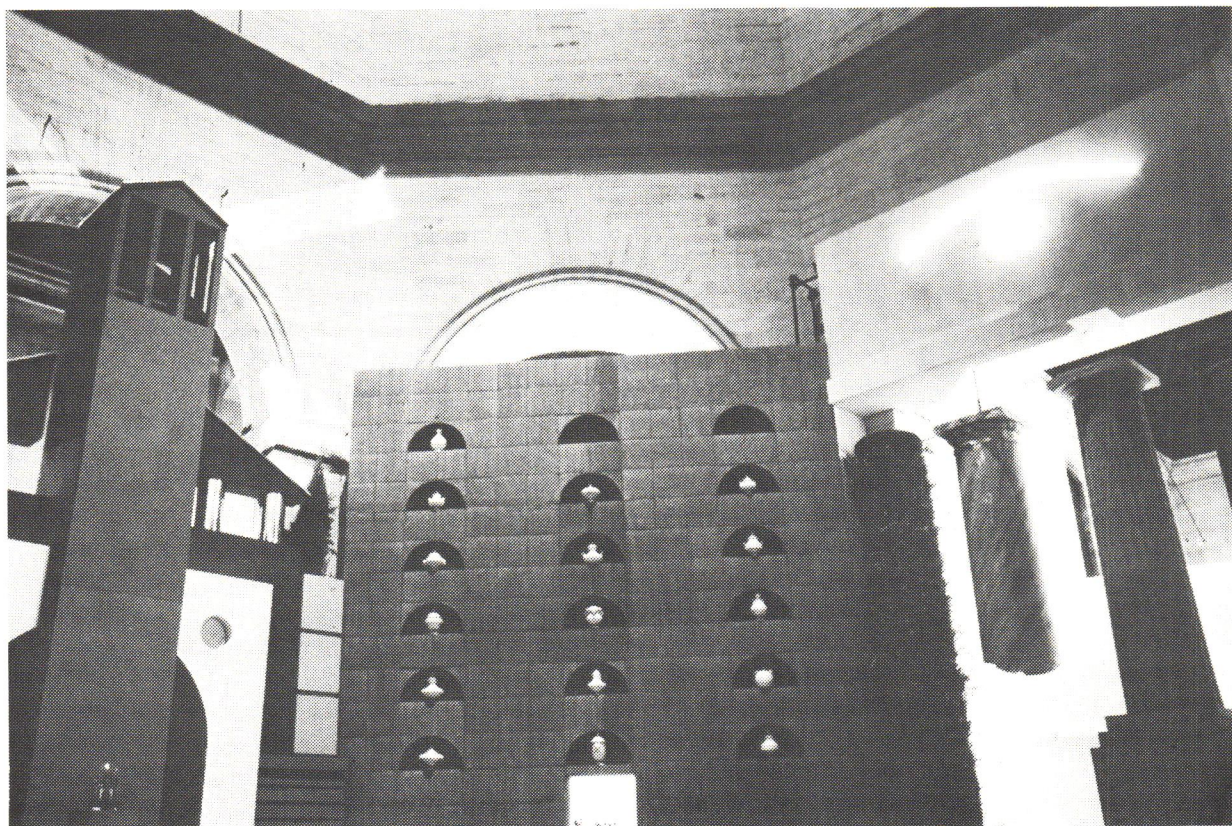
The Arsenale in Venice, a hospital chapel in Paris. What next? Where does the Presence of the Past lodge while in San Francisco?

Anchorage

Rising abruptly from the water, an amphitheatre of three or four ugly round-topped, barren hills, with their intervening holes, form the site of the notorious town of San Francisco.

(Theodore T. Johnson, p. 104)

Current Bay Area residents know Fort Mason Center as an outpost of artistic and cultural activity situated along the city's northern waterfront. Begun in 1976, the Center answers the challenge of converting an abandoned yet historically significant site into a stimulating cultural center of over five hundred organizations. Conversion on this scale had never been attempted before, so Fort Mason Center had



The octagonal central space of the chapel of Salpêtrière in Paris, the second stop of the *Strada Novissima*.

no models to follow. Since 1980 the Center has been completely self-supporting, (i.e., not dependent on a local pool of donors) making the principles and methods guiding its success replicable elsewhere. Thus, in addition to serving as a cultural resource for the community, the Center is a model for arts groups around the world trying to set up their own centers. Representatives from as far away as Latin America, China and Yugoslavia have come to San Francisco to find out what makes Fort Mason so special. Managing the development of conversion is one key; attracting high quality organizations, then interfacing them to achieve a balanced, mutually supporting whole is another. Plans for the future include construction of a 500-seat performance space, a San Francisco Bay Museum, and a Media Center, in addition to the ongoing general upgrading of the piers and warehouses. As it is, over 12,000 events take place there annually, attended by nearly 1.5 million people.

The history of the site goes back to the very beginnings of San Francisco. In 1776 the Spanish established a military outpost on the heights at the entrance to the golden gate (now the Presidio of San Francisco). Governor Diego de Borica recognized that the promontory rising out of the sand dunes 1½ miles to the east, called Punta Medanos, was also of strategic military importance: The promontory commands the passage between the mainland and Alcatraz Island, and overlooks the sheltered cove ¼ mile to the east called La Yerba Buena anchorage (now Aquatic Park). In 1797, de Borica erected Bateria San Jose at Punta Medanos, on what is now the site of Fort Mason. Shaller writes in 1808,

...(San Francisco's) entrance is defended by a battery on which are mounted some brass eight-pounders, which afford only the show of defense; and the place could make no resistance against the smallest military force.³

Since no enemy ever threatened the harbor, its defenses were never put to the test; La Bateria San Jose was soon abandoned and the guns deteriorated through disuse and exposure to weather.

In 1822 Mexico won independence from Spain, and California came under Mexican rule. By this time San Francisco had become an important port in the flourishing hide and fur trade. More and more ships visited the sheltered harbor that funnelled goods to young San Francisco and the expanding Mission Dolores compound. Ironically, the missionaries monopolized the fur trade, which the Spanish military had expressly banned.

The United States went to war with Mexico in 1846, and in 1848 took possession of all of California. At the suggestion of Colonel Richard Barnes Mason, military Governor of California, President Millard Fillmore in November 1850 set aside Point San Jose as a United States military reservation. While the Army was unable to occupy this post immediately, many of the settlers drawn west by gold fever found Point San Jose an inviting place to pitch their tents. Initial attempts to evict the squatters were not followed up because the small Army, engaged primarily at the Presidio, proved too weak to enforce the new government order. Grand private residences sprang up, three of which, dating from 1855, remain. John C. Fremont, California's military Governor for

Paris exposed the Biennale to a larger, if more critically divided audience and added a psychological dimension to the show.

a time in 1847, acquired a house there, but it was torn down in 1863 when reports of Confederate privateers in the Pacific spurred the Army to refortify the Point.

During the modernization of coastal defenses in the 1890s, the Endicott period, an 8" rifle on a disappearing carriage was emplaced on the point, behind and above old Civil War batteries. Named

Battery Burnham, this emplacement was constructed along the lines typical of that period—massive concrete and earthen works with underground magazines. The gun was dismantled in 1909; no enemy appeared to test the defenses.

The western half and the southern third of the post remained sand dunes until after the turn of the century. Following the earthquake of 1906, the southern portion of the post served as a refugee camp; also, in the days immediately following the earthquake, Fort Mason became the Army's headquarters for directing its efforts in the relief of earthquake victims.

As a result of America's expansion into the Pacific (Spanish-American War), army supply activity through the ports of San Francisco increased dramatically. In 1908, the decision was made to concentrate this function at a general depot at Fort Mason. The submerged land to the northwest of the reserve was acquired and in 1910 construction began on what came to be called the San Francisco Port of Embarkation. The Army considered the Port an important project, and hired the architectural firm of Rankin, Kellogg and Crane of Philadelphia to plant the three large piers and four concrete two-story warehouses built on the site. Later, three pier sheds and a fourth pier were added. These are the first Army structures in the Bay Area executed in the Mission Revival Style.

The Port of Embarkation was the control center for a huge logistical operation that moved 23 million tons of cargo and one million soldiers into the Pacific theaters during World War II. In 1962 the Department of Defense ordered transport operations moved to Oakland, and in July 1963 directed that the major portion of Fort Mason be declared excess. The western 44.5 acres were turned over the General Services Administration, which leased the piers and some buildings to non-military agencies and private enterprise. Later that same year Fort Mason was designated a Registered National Landmark.

Disembarkment

Vessels from nearly every quarter of the globe had brought the denizens of every clime, and verily to coin a suitable word, we were in the Cosmopolis of the World.

(Theodore T. Johnson, p. 105)

In Venice, mild publicity and advertising meant that most of the attendees not in harmony with the Very International Architectural Network of Drawn Engimas (VIANDE) faithfully sought out the Arsenale. While still a public success, the Venice Biennale was a coming together of the world's young architects, who, even in the face of some bitter disagreements, managed to realize a commonality of purpose.

Paris exposed the Biennale to a larger, if more critically divided audience and added a psychological dimension to the show. This was architecture speaking to people through their insides as well as through their eyes. As each attendee witnessed the individual facade, s/he was thrust into dialogue with her/himself, in a way not found in Venice, where the impact of the street as a whole was dominant.

The Cosmopolis of the World returns to San Francisco while the Biennale is here from May 20 to July 29, 1982. People, not just architects, will come from all over the country and all over the world to view the action in San Francisco. More people and more different kinds of people will be exposed to

post-modernism than ever before. No longer strictly a window looking onto the *machina* of the profession, the Biennale, in the hands of its American friends, sells a lifestyle, a way of approaching growth of our American cities.

More people and more different kinds of people will be exposed to post-modernism than ever before.

Claims that the show in San Francisco will remind Americans that streets and urban centers rightfully belong to people, not cars, lose force when confronted with the fact that the exhibition site is geographically sheltered from most of the city's pedestrian traffic. The *Strada Novissima* reaches out figuratively into the city through a newly erected gateway that does at least as much to reinforce the boundary between the grounds of Fort Mason and the rest of the city, as it does to welcome the viewer. It is not surprising (and not lamentable) that city and site have no interpenetration, given their historical relationship: Fort Mason was a vantage point from which to monitor the activities of ships entering the harbor, and later, the chief point of embarkation on the west coast. Fort Mason was San Francisco's original receptor/transmitter node built into the head of the city to process signals (information, goods and people), without actually partaking in the production, consumption or use of the materials. (Recall that the Arsenale was Venice's armaments factory and La Salpêtrière was the designated home for the deviants of 17th century Paris).

The receptor function which Fort Mason enjoyed in the 18th and 19th centuries was largely lost when modern bridges, highways and, later, the airport opened other avenues of entry into the city. The telephone diminished this importance still further. And now, in the age of instant telecommunications one can gain access to San Francisco without any

regard to local geography.

Bristling with lasers, video monitors and satellite communication systems, the new gate endorses these electronic marvels as valuable aids to mankind, even as it decries their bid to usurp altogether the human component from processes of communication and transportation. These devices are the new non-corporeal entrance points into the post-industrial city; it is likely that we will rely on them even more in the future. By imbedding these fantastic elements in the truss over the entranceway (which is like a soothing fabric of history), their alarming acceleration of processes and profound strangeness is put into human form, and the horror begins to be dismantled: what is humanly understandable is no longer threatening. The gesture of the gate is grounded in one of the great projects on the post-modern agenda: to dismantle the unreadable and illiterate monsters of modernism by means of history and a revitalized human architectural language.

The story of the Presence of the Past has sighted land, pulled into harbor, and gotten off the boat. It is here; it was there. To see in the trajectory of a journey (whether a lifetime, a walk to the corner store, or a string of words) those magic linking moments where "hereness" and "thereness" are temporarily displaced, is to renourish the power of the present to see the past and the future as aspects of itself. Thus renourished, History can be written and the presence of the past can come to be. ■

Footnotes

1. Busatin, Manilo. "The Tans Reopened: Machines and Workshops of the Arsenale of Venice." From catalogue, *The Presence of the Past, First International Exhibition of Architecture*, Edizioni "La Biennale di Venezia," Venice 1980, p. 342
2. Foucault, Michel. *Histoire de la Folie a l'Age Classique*, Paris 1961, chapitre II. Quoted in Mosser, Monique, "La Salpêtrière: Architecture Monumentale et 'Renfermement'." From catalogue, *Presence de l'Histoire, L'Après Modernisme*, Editions L'Equere, Paris 1981, p. 11
3. Shaller's Description of California, 1808, American Register, v. III. Cleland, Robert Glass, *A History of California; The American Period*, MacMillan, New York, 1922, Appendix B, p. 478

The empty Pier 2 at Fort Mason just after the containers were opened.



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Bruce Cost, *Director, Italian Marketplace*
Administrative Assistants: Elise Ezzo, Isaac Cronin

Installation

Batey & Mack, Design and Conception
Installation Coordinated and Realized by FM Productions
Production Manager: T. J. McHose
Site Construction Manager: Torben Torp-Smith
Subcontractor: Roy Tomlinson
Banners: Janet Whelan, Pischoff Company
Thomas Gordon Smith, Design, Sponsors' Pavilion
Construction: Jud Peake
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The Presence of the Past Comes to the City by the Bay

by John Gittelsohn

In the fall of 1980, Joe Weiner and Virginia Westover saw the architecture portion of the Venice Biennale, "The Presence of the Past." He says, "I immediately recognized that this was a major event." She says, "It really staggered us." He says, "It was her idea but she'll deny it." She says, "Joe was the original idea man." But they both thought, "Why not bring the show to San Francisco?" And if anyone could see this project through, he (real estate developer) and she (PR woman for various city arts groups) could get the job done.

By now, everyone has at least seen pictures of the *Strada Novissima*. Lined with 22 facades designed by some of the world's foremost avant-garde architects, the exhibit is a theatrical spectacle of doorways inviting entry. Made of canvas, styrofoam and chipboard and painted in fanciful colors, the arches, columns and other ornaments of the facades echo the show's title, "The Presence of the Past." The *Strada Novissima* makes architecture fun, and it has become perhaps the most significant event in the profession since Hitchcock and Johnson brought modern architecture to America with the 1932 International style exhibition.

We have all heard about the failure of modern architecture, which is blamed for blighting our cities with monotonous skyscrapers and replacing old neighborhoods with alienating slabs of steel and concrete. Although economics, government policy and means of transportation also shaped the current sorry state of our cities, architects have reacted to criticism by rebelling against the teachings of early modern heroes like Gropius, Mies van der Rohe, and Le Corbusier. Instead of saying, "Less is more," they now exclaim, "Less is a bore." Instead of likening the house to a "machine for living," they espouse "complexity and contradiction" and "radical eclecticism." The *Strada Novissima* represents a crystallization of this philosophical turn about.

But this article is not about the merits or drawbacks of post-modern architecture. Whether it is a style, fad or the wave of the future will be dealt with elsewhere. This is a story of how a husband and wife raised money, shipped goods, rented an exhibition hall, hired architects and builders and concessionaires and publicists; how they pooled their resources to produce a public event.

Raised by a father in the woodworking business and mother who was a sculptor, Virginia Westover developed an early interest in art and architecture. She became a reporter and spent seven years at the *Chronicle*, rising to become society editor. Growing bored with that routine, she went on to work as development coordinator for the Opera and then as publicist for the Symphony. In 1978, she went freelance, working for such other art institutions as the Museum of Modern Art.

A delicate, refined woman with a soft, calm voice, she sat in her office at Fort Mason one April morning as carpenters' hammers rang outside, driving the first nails into San Francisco's version of the *Strada Novissima*. "The show is sponsored by the Friends of the Biennale," she said. "It became clear about a year ago that we needed a broad group of sponsors—



Joseph Weiner, Fund Raiser; T.J. McHose, Production Manager; Virginia Westover, Project Director; Thad Carhart, FM Productions; Mark Mack and Andrew Batey, the Designers.

architects, members of the Italian community, arts groups, developers—to support the show. I wrote to everyone and made follow up phone calls. The committee has about 55 members. I'm proud to say I didn't get but three nos." Westover approached many of the contacts she had made during her years as society editor, contacts she knew were powers in the city's art and social world. The list of Friends reads like a social register: Kurt Adler, retired director San Francisco Opera; Henry Hopkins, director S.F. Museum of Modern Art; Alessandro Vattani, Consul General of Italy; Walter Landor, designer; architects Charles Moore, William Turnbull, and Marc Goldstein; Thomas Flynn, Sr. V.P. Bank of America; Walter Newman, Lita Viotor, Charlotte "Tex" Maillard among other names that pop up in Herb Caen. In fact, the morning I visited Westover, she showed me an item about the opening party for Philip Johnson which ran in Caen's column that day. "Sounds like fun..." she reads with suppressed joy.

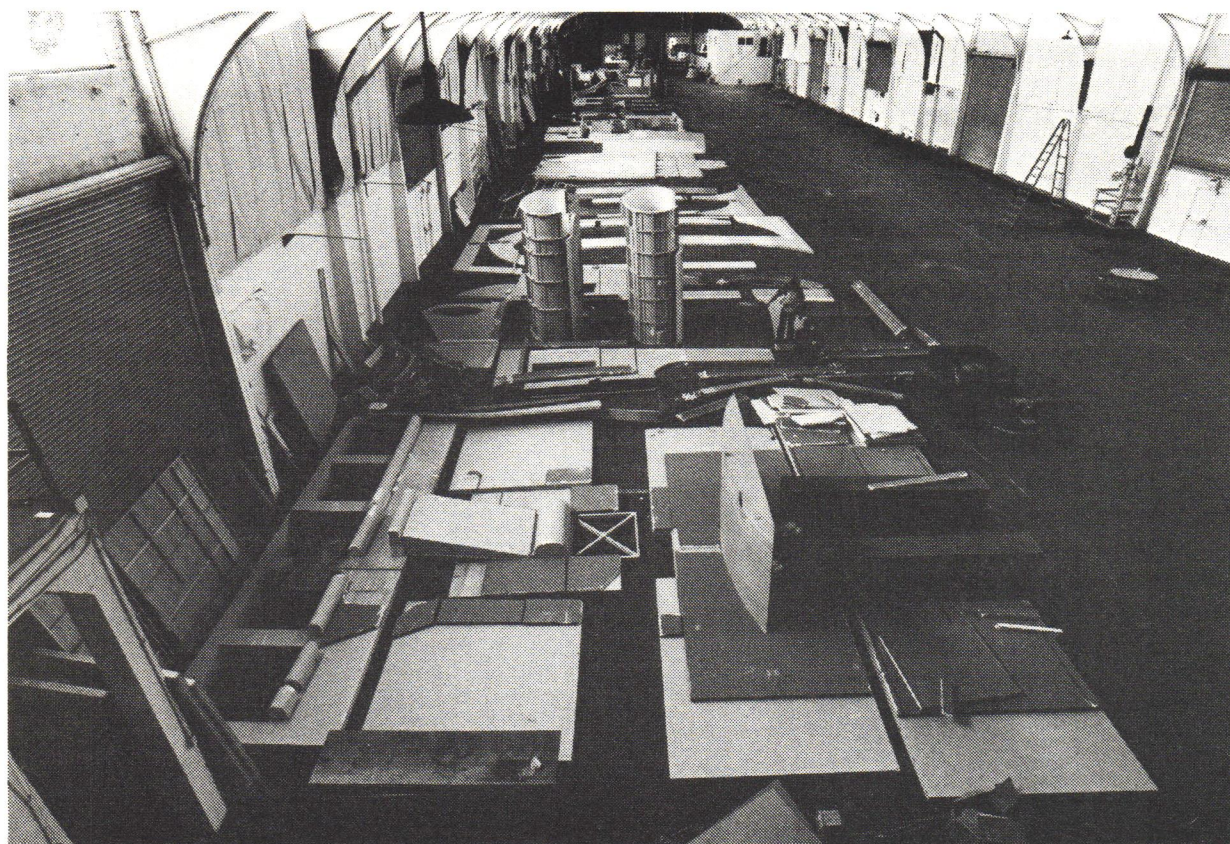
Bringing the *Strada Novissima* to San Francisco is only the first act planned by the Friends of the Biennale. If it proves successful, other musical, theatrical and art events will follow. Italian Consul Alessandro Vattani told me, "All of this was started to establish close cultural links between San Francisco and Venice. San Francisco's sister city is Assisi because it is the birthplace of St. Francis. But the cultural exchanges between San Francisco and Venice would have an added dimension because of the Italian city's great heritage. Both cities have an interest in the Orient, the pervasive presence of water, and a commitment to cultural history." Vattani told me that efforts were originally made to get Aldo Rossi's Teatro del Mondo to come to the

city, but that the structure failed to meet the Mayor's or fire department's approval. He said the *Strada Novissima* came to San Francisco mainly because Weiner and Westover were so enthusiastic. "Virginia and Joe thought that current events made the show appropriate to come here," he said.

One problem was finding a location for the show. The *Strada Novissima* runs 230 feet in length and its highest facades rise over 31 feet. The Museum of Modern Art expressed interest in having the show, but it was booked through 1983 and had no real place to put it. But on the city's northern waterfront, an ideal spot for the exhibit was found. Fort Mason Center, a military complex recently converted to a community center for the arts, had three long piers that once served as a debarkation point for soldiers sent to fight in Asian and Pacific wars. The piers contained more than enough space to house the exhibit, and their location provided a subtle reminder of the show's origins along the canals of Venice. "The Biennale represents the longest and most prestigious event the Center has ever had," Marc Kasky, Executive Director at Fort Mason said. "It's going to draw people from all over the country. The show is also relevant because it concerns preservation and that's a major factor in our policy here at Fort Mason."

In the spring of 1980, Paolo Portoghesi who curated the architecture portion of the Biennale in Italy came to San Francisco and approved of the site. There were already plans to send the Presence of the Past to Paris, marking the first instance of a Venice Biennale exhibit leaving its birthplace. San Francisco would become the show's third locale and now the real work began.

To ship the exhibit from Europe would be a



The initial layout on the floor of Pier 2 with Michael Graves' facade in the foreground.

costly undertaking. Prices for shipping are calculated on the value as well as the weight of goods and estimating the value of the *Strada Novissima* is a chore. At a cocktail party at the Italian Consulate, Westover was introduced to Captain Giorgio Celli of the Italian Line. After explaining her plans to the Captain, he promised to be at her service. "I was of course interested because the exhibition is from my country," he told me. He went to a shipping conference to negotiate a reduced rate for the shipment and won their approval. The *Strada Novissima* was loaded into eight 40 foot long cargo containers and put aboard the ship D'Albertis. It left Marseille in February 1982 and steamed through the Panama Canal and up to Oakland, arriving on March 17. The eight containers crossed the ocean for \$2,000 each, a fraction of what they normally would cost. "Of course we are interested in trade," Celli said, "But we are also interested in cultural activities of our country, and we wanted to do something. Maybe other companies prefer the revenue, but we have to think about being the national flag carrier of Italy."

From Oakland the goods were trucked across the Bay and unloaded at Pier 2 in Fort Mason. In early April, the scene inside the pier resembled an earthquake's aftermath. Pieces of styrofoam from Michael Graves' facade lay helter skelter across the asphalt floor. A column by Thomas Gordon Smith stood broken in half with the other pieces laying on the floor nearby. "It's a bit of a jigsaw puzzle," said Torben Torp-Smith, construction foreman of FM Productions. He dangled an unlit cigarette from his mouth and tugged at the brow of a sweat-stained fedora. "All of it's lying in indistinguishable piles of boards and battens and foam. There aren't any real plans, just some rough sketches and photos to go by," he said. He expected to spend between 150 and 200 man days with his crew of 20 workers just on the scenic elements. He had already run into problems with the difference in size between the bays of the original rope factory in Venice and the space between the trusses supporting the pier's

roof. He also said that he would have to cut into some facades because the trusses were lower than the tops of a few pieces. "We just go along from day to day to meet the needs that arise," he said.

The plan of the San Francisco exhibit was designed by Batey & Mack. They participated in the International Gallery section of the original Biennale and were recommended to the sponsoring committee by Robert Stern, American advisor to the Biennale. For their design of the *Strada Novissima*, Batey & Mack created a false perspective widening towards the pier's entry so as to draw spectators inwards and utilize the full width of the enormous structure. At the far end of the *Strada Novissima* is a piazza with restaurants, a bar and ice cream stand run by local Italian merchants. Mark Mack called his design for the piazza, "concrete-block heaven." The food stands are made of Batey & Mack's proverbial cinderblocks supporting 2 x 4 framing and counters made of wood decking. Painted canvas hangs overhead to continue the facade theme. Cafe style seating fills the piazza, allowing visitors to rest their feet and perhaps recall similar moments at Venice's Piazza San Marco. The only missing element is pigeons.

Facing the food stands are four facades designed by the San Francisco firms of William Turnbull, Dan Solomon, Batey & Mack and Skidmore, Owings & Merrill. Respecting the dimensions of the pier, the San Francisco facades are narrower than the *Strada's*. Except for Dan Solomon's twin-towered design, the facades avoid many of the urban ideas manifest in the original exhibit. Turnbull's and Batey & Mack's leave airspace between their neighbors. The Skidmore facade is of a non-monumental wood grid and canvas.

Beyond the piazza visitors pass beneath a set of banners for the far portion of the exhibit which includes the original International Gallery of drawings and models by architects who didn't contribute facades. At the center of the space stands the Sponsors' Pavilion, designed by Thomas Gordon Smith. The pavilion consists of three courts, each sym-

bolizing the traditional orders: doric, ionic, and corinthian. Murals modeled after Pompeian villas cover the courts' southern walls and illustrate each order. Between the columns of the courts hang pictures of projects by groups which contributed \$5,000, \$10,000 or \$25,000 to the show.

The Sponsors' Pavilion is perhaps the most novel addition to the original Biennale exhibit. Not because of its architecture, which is in keeping with the rest of the show, but because of its underlying meaning for the city, the exhibit and private sponsorship of art events. And this is where Joe Weiner comes into play.

Mr. Weiner began his career as an advertising man, founding a firm with Howard Gossage in the mid-fifties.¹ They had a large international clientele and decided they needed a special place for receiving visitors. So they purchased and remodeled the old firehouse at 449 Pacific Street. This first step into real estate led to other projects, such as One Jackson Place, another rehabilitation development. This pioneering renovation work was among the first in the nation, years before Ghiradelli Square or the Cannery popularized the idea among developers. "My career today is solely in real estate," Weiner said. "Due to advertising, most of our work was for the staging of events or ideas. It was like watering the top of a pyramid. Remodeling buildings was part of a piece. I made a career of doing developmental planning long before getting into real estate. And real estate I was doing for myself."

Among Weiner's current interests is his partnership in the redevelopment of the Oriental Warehouse, located in an area called South Beach, just below the San Francisco abutment of the Bay Bridge. The surrounding portion of South Beach is currently being developed into a 1,000 housing unit and mixed-use project by the Campeau Corporation. Adjoining the Campeau project, Dan Solomon's office is drawing up plans for another 840 residential unit and mixed-use project. Due west lie 195 acres of land belonging to Southern Pacific Company, slated for development over the next decade. And just north of Southern Pacific's land is the enormous Yerba Buena Center, with the newly completed Moscone Convention Center at its heart. The Yerba Buena Center will contain nearly 2,000 housing units, 10 million square feet of office space, theatres, and shopping areas. In the vicinity, developments

"All of it's lying in indistinguishable piles of boards and battens and foam. There aren't any real plans, just some rough sketches and photos to go by."

by Marathon Development Company, Taylor Woodrow, and other corporations are being readied for construction. The vast area stretching from the Embarcadero east to Highway 101, known as South of Market, is embarking on a period of growth that will shortly create the equivalent of a new city within the center of San Francisco.

The South of Market district now consists largely of old warehouses, parking lots, small industrial plants, scattered low-income housing clusters, miles of underused railroad tracks and decaying port

facilities. Until recently it was ignored by developers who found building in the Financial District more lucrative. But as the Financial District reached its growth limits and rental rates for office spaces soared above \$50 per square foot, the demand for new office space continued unabated. Speculators began eyeing South of Market for its proximity to downtown and relatively low land costs.

In 1981 the San Francisco Planning and Urban Research Group (SPUR) published the first com-

The Strada Novissima makes architecture fun, and it has become perhaps the most significant event in the profession since Hitchcock and Johnson brought modern architecture to America with the 1932 International style exhibition.

prehensive study for the redevelopment of the district entitled *South of Market: San Francisco's Last Frontier*. The SPUR report stated:

In the last two years land values have skyrocketed, at least doubling east of Second Street...In the past ten years, ten million square feet of office space have been built in the South of Market area—two-thirds of all office space built in the city during that time...Housing costs in South of Market are escalating at a remarkable rate (as in the rest of the city) with buildings doubling in price in five years or less.²

Dan Marx, who researched the SPUR report, told me, "Fewer than 1,000 housing units per year have been built over the past three or four years in the city. At the same time four million square feet of office space per year for about 16,000 workers have been created." The SPUR report recommended the construction of 15,000 housing units in the South of Market area. Although this amount seems wishful at best, it would at best keep pace with the growing workforce. Most of the units would be one and two bedroom apartments and condominiums, catering to a city where 41% of the people live alone. Unless more housing is created in the area, the city is doomed to desertion at night, doomed to being choked with traffic by day, doomed to stretching its resources even thinner with a diminishing tax base serving more and more non-residents.

Reading the SPUR report or talking with architects, the example of North Beach as a livable community comes up again and again. North Beach's scale is small, consisting of blocks broken by alleyways and mews. Residents include low and high income people who work, shop and entertain themselves nearby. In addition the area has parks and a deep sense of history, all of which create an ideal place for urban living. To construct from scratch such a humane environment would require careful, imaginative planning and design. Many current residents of South of Market will be displaced with all the new building. Neighborhoods will lose the little cohesiveness they have. The SPUR report

recommended preservation of much existing housing and industry, but SPUR is only a non-governmental advisory body, and market forces have already begun to run these facilities out of the neighborhood.

Dan Solomon's drawings for South Beach show a remarkable sensitivity in providing for people's needs and wants in a phased development of low- to highrise buildings, stepping symmetrically around courtyards and small alleys, buffering homes from heavily traveled thoroughfares. Other plans I've seen, such as the massing study conducted by the Bay Group for Campeau Corporation, lack both a cohesive unity and a human scale. Dan Marx described early plans for Southern Pacific's development as "A Radiant City plus. A Century City north." Those original plans have been scrapped.

Joe Weiner's idea is to get the public involved, and his way of doing this is to bring the Presence of the Past to San Francisco with the Sponsors' Pavilion at its heart. "How do people's tastes improve?" he asked. "You expose them to new ideas. If 100,000 people see the thing, that will raise the level of awareness, of discussions, of debate. It will help create an architectural consciousness of what's happening in the future. Instead of bringing San Francisco to Mohammed, we're bringing the show here." His eyes sparkled.

"As we began getting into South of Market," he continued, "I began to see the possibility of development for San Francisco other than Manhattanization. You see, up until recently, everyone saw the city like a big thumb sticking out with nowhere to go but up. Over the past 30 years, the population of San Francisco has fallen over 10%. No new homes were made, but people continue to work here. As I started to sense what might happen to the city, it was like the dawn of a new period of growth."

When Weiner wanted the Biennale to come to San Francisco, he turned to the development community for financial support. "We didn't have the Italian government to support us," he said. "It gives the developers a chance to clean up their act," Ms. Westover told me. "My husband is very persuasive and he lined up most of the donors." But Weiner

insists on sharing credit for fundraising with Alan Furth and Greg Linde of Southern Pacific and Grant Sedgwick of Campeau Corporation. "If Alan Furth and Greg Linde didn't have that first fundraising luncheon, there'd be no cash," Weiner said. By the beginning of May, they had lined up pledges totalling nearly ¾ of the \$400,000 needed to finance the show, before it begins earning money through the \$5.00 gate charge. The Sponsors' Pavilion was Sedgwick's idea to entice contributions. "It also gives people a glimpse of things currently happening that effect the urban landscape," he told me. "It's a kind of overview of the leaders of the industry. What is the real estate industry? Who are we? Not many firms are exactly household names."

Among the donors at this writing are: Continental Development, redevelopers of the Ferry Building at the foot of Market Street; Gerald Hines Interest, Inc., builder of Philip Johnson's 101 California building; Southern Pacific, Campeau, Turner Construction; Lurie Company, owner of the San Francisco Giants and pressuring for a stadium to replace Candlestick Park; architecture firms, other developers and South of Market property holders. It will be interesting to see what reaction these displays provoke beside the festive fantasies of the *Strada Novissima*.

And for the show to succeed, it needs paying visitors. The Friends of the Biennale has allocated nearly \$120,000 from its \$600,000 budget for public relations and advertising. "Joe whistled in every favor from his ad days for the public service advertising for the show," Westover said. Public service commercials will be broadcast on 12 tv and 25 radio stations. 250 buses, 200 BART trains, and 20 large billboards will inundate the Bay Area with a media blitz, touting the message, "The most important architecture exhibition in sixty years comes at the most important time in San Francisco's growth."

Bruce Burtch of the Public Relations Group which has packaged the ad campaign said, "That slogan hits a couple of buttons. First it shows the magnitude of the show. And second it talks about the city's development. We developed a strategy,

The Strada Novissima under construction. One of the indispensable scissor lifts is on the right.



got top level material, brought in the heavy-weights in the media to get behind it, and have a good product to market." Over the phone, Burtch played the audio portion of the tv commercial. "We have Paul Frees doing the voice," Burtch told me. "He's like God when he talks." A crackling sound came over the receiver and I heard the voice that narrated *Shogun* "COME...FEEL the Presence of the Past," it intoned, "Acclaimed in Venice, Provocative in Paris, now making its only appearance in North America...the definitive look of post-modernism...Linger over a cup of espresso...It may not be for everyone, but it's not just for architects." With God talking, who could resist?

But can the voice of God influence the future of San Francisco. Once again, architects are only small pawns in the maze of economic, transportation, and governmental forces shaping the city. Following a model like the *Strada Novissima* won't do much to alleviate the city's housing shortage either. But if the public comes and begins to respond politically to the developments underway in the city, things may not end up as bad as some developers could make them. As Alessandro Vattani told me in his poetic Italian accent, "Man makes the city but the city forms the psychology of man."

In March a competition for an entrygate to Fort Mason was held. The gate was supposed to illustrate the Presence of the Past theme as well as the bridging of Venice and San Francisco. With almost no publicity, 171 architects submitted entries. There isn't much work around these days, so many architects have the free time to do things like that. But it is also a measure of the importance with which the architecture community views the exhibit. The winning entry was designed by Don Crosby of



Crosby, Thornton & Marshall. Rather than a classical keystone arch, he designed a metal frame supporting three video monitors, a 12 foot communications dish and an argon laser. The set-up is designed to send a time capsule in the form of a light packet into outer space. "It's the first time in history such a signal has been sent into space," Crosby said. "And the argon laser puts on a pretty spectacular light show." The time capsule will include shots of the *Strada Novissima*, the show's opening ceremonies, footage of historical architecture events such as the 1939 Treasure Island World's Fair and scenes of the 1906 earthquake and fire. There will

be contributions from local video artists and a recording of a satellite conversation between Mayor Feinstein and Mayor Rigo of Venice.

It is ironic that a video display should play the welcoming role in an exhibit dedicated to architecture. Nothing threatens the quality of our built environment more than apathy. And nothing induces apathy better than tv soap operas and video games, the new opiate of the masses. Society is becoming so attuned to video, that the only information people appreciate are the signals flashing across their television screens. The only space they are aware of is the 18" diagonal of their sets.

Is the Presence of the Past a last nostalgic look at the role architecture has played in civilization? Does it have anything to do with a future where we will be sentenced to electronic cottages? Thomas Gordon Smith remarked to me, "It's funny how the commercial for the show talks about houses and shops and buildings being represented on the *Strada Novissima*. Really they are just temples, monuments to architecture. They reminded me of the streets outside Pompeii where there are rows and rows of funerary monuments." Is the *Strada Novissima* a row of funeral monuments to architecture? What will the aliens who intercept the light-packet from the show's entrygate think of us earthlings and our stagesets? What will they think when they hear the voice of God saying, "COME...FEEL the Presence of the Past. It may not be for everybody, but it's not just for architects." ■

¹ See Tom Wolfe's *The Pump House Gang*, "What If He's Right?" A Story of Howard Gossage promoting Marshall McLuhan

² SPUR, *South of Market: A Plan for San Francisco's Last Frontier*, June 1981, p.8

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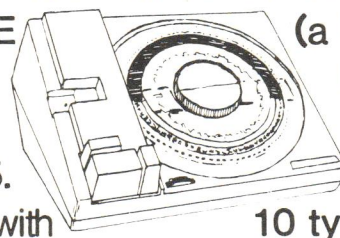
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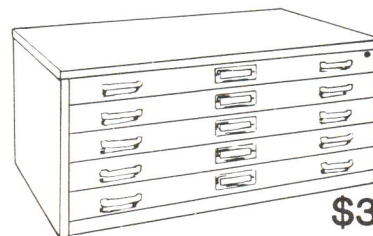
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The original facades from Venice 1980

The Strada Novissima was originally conceived for the Venice Biennale of 1980, and moved to Paris to pick up two new facades (Potzemparc and Montes); when it arrived in San Francisco, one of the original exhibitors pulled out (Venturi and Rauch). The empty space was turned over to Philip Johnson, not for a facade but for a shrine. The original installation was designed for the Arsenale in Venice, a colonnade with a balcony. This setting prompted many of the architects to adopt the columns as an element in their designs. These elements are missing in the Pier II at Fort Mason, which is a neutral, wide and low space spanned by steel trusses (18'6"). Adjustments in the sequence of the original facades had to be made to accommodate the new conditions, and trusses penetrate the upper portion of the facades.

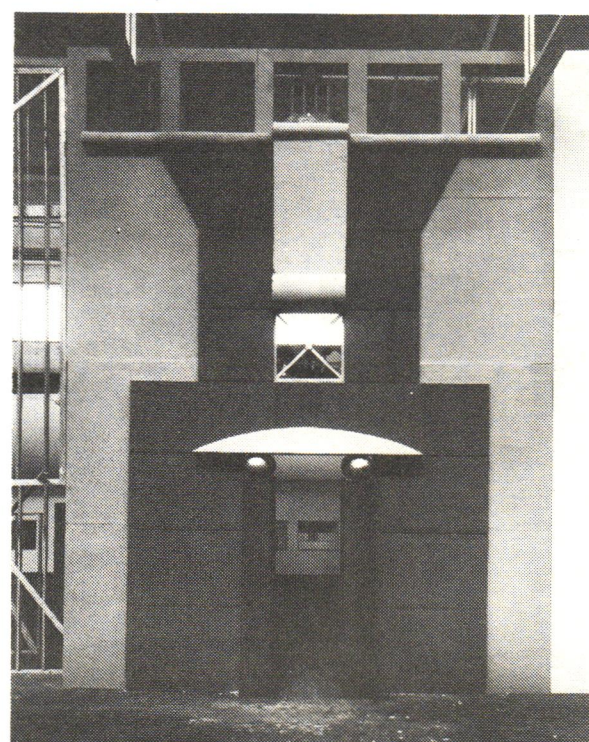
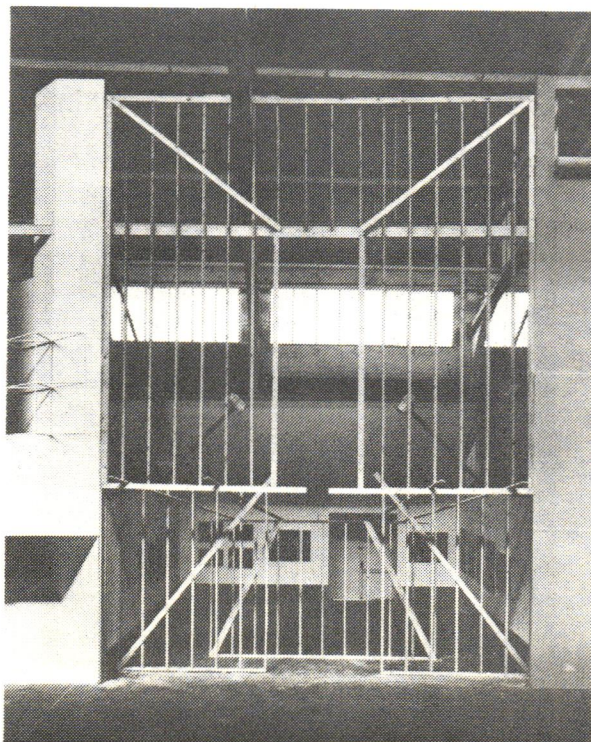
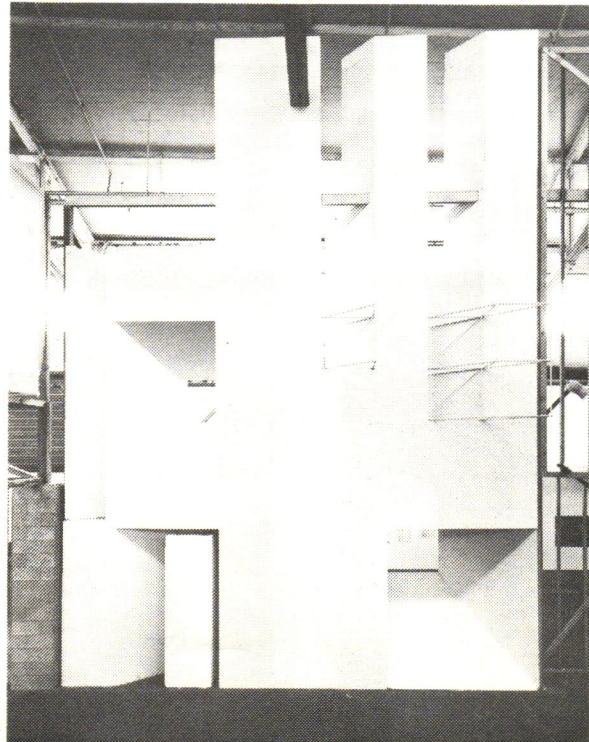
The Strada Novissima from the pier entry.



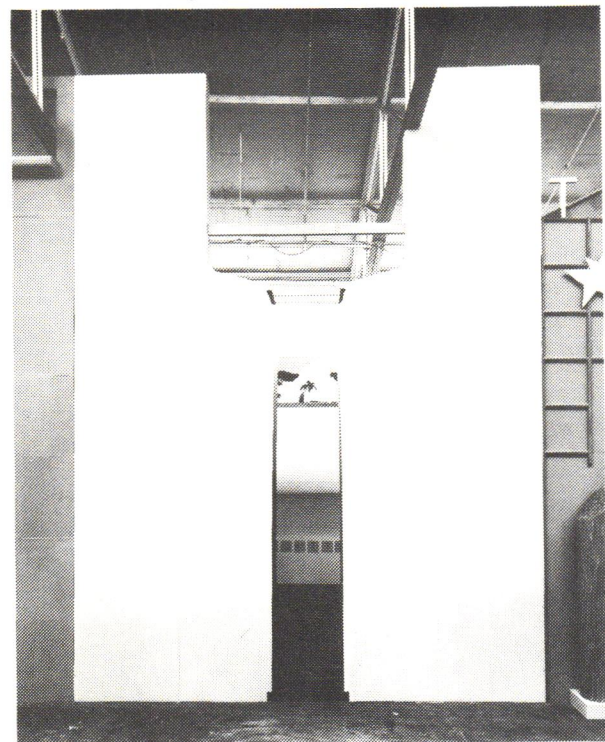
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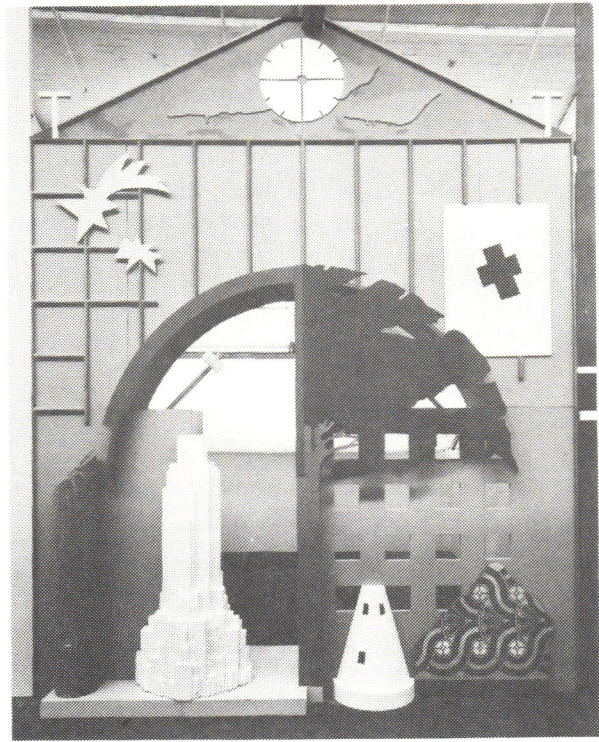
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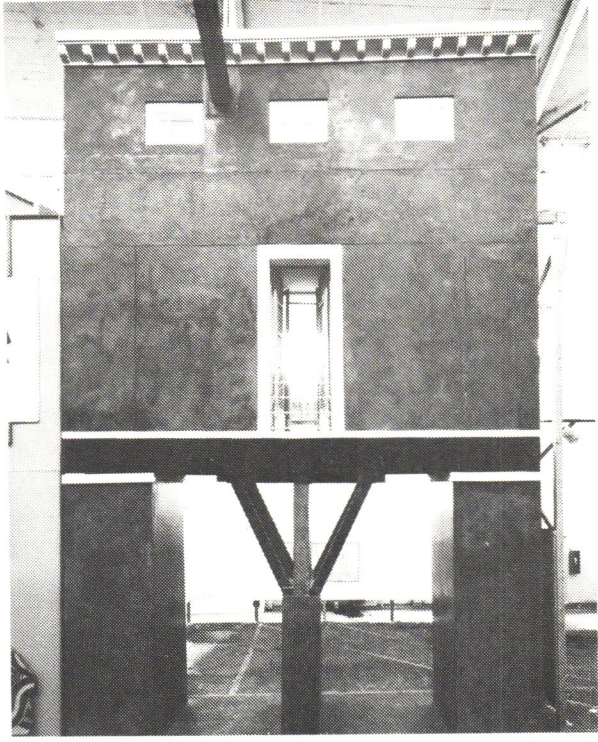
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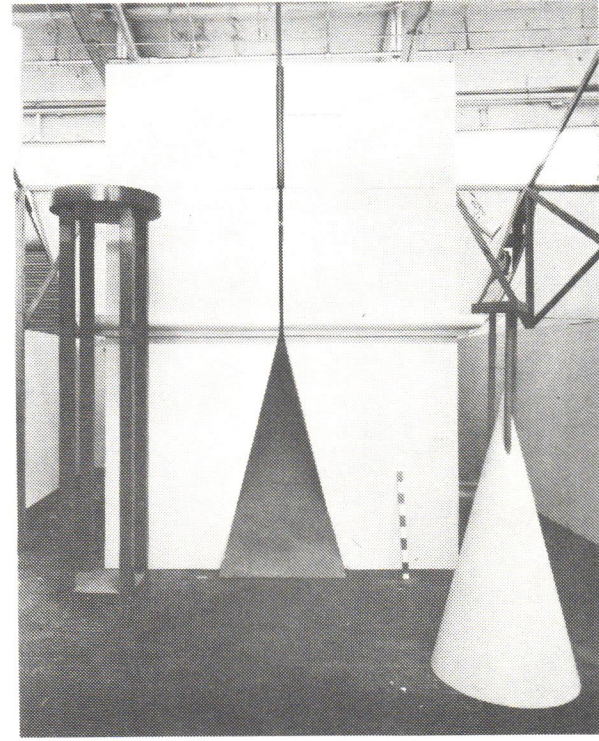
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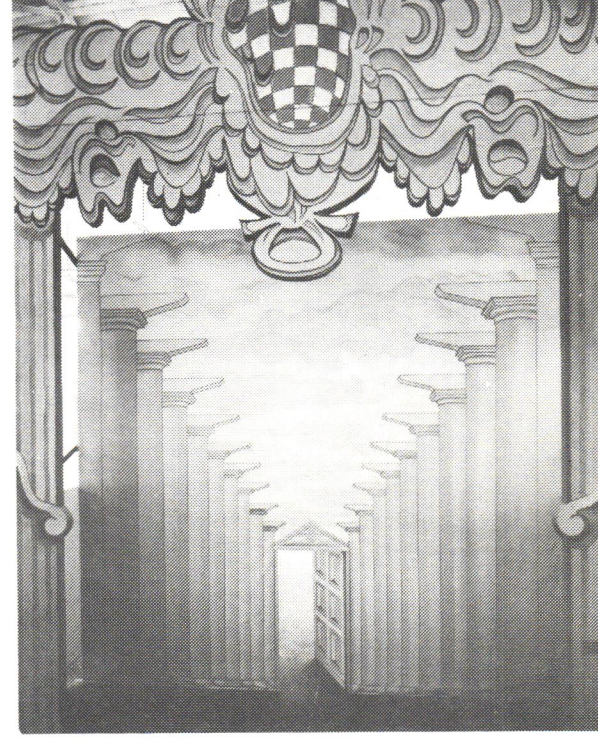
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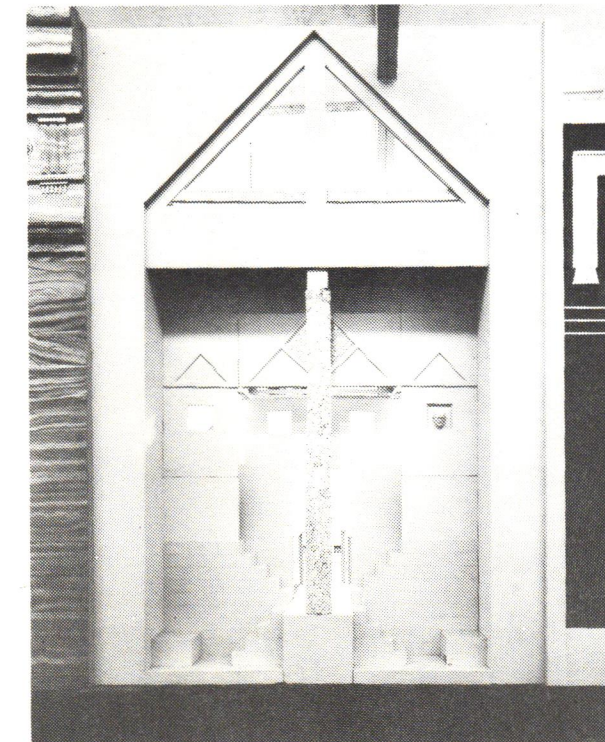
Christian de Portzamparc, France



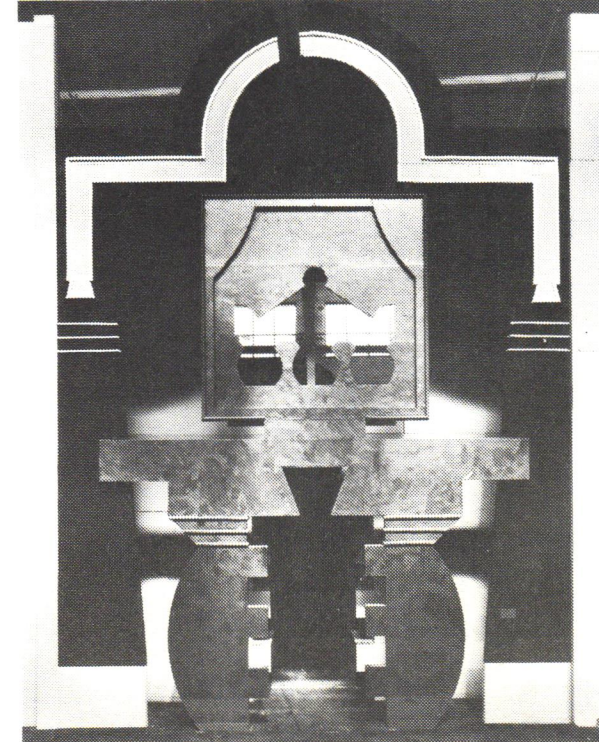
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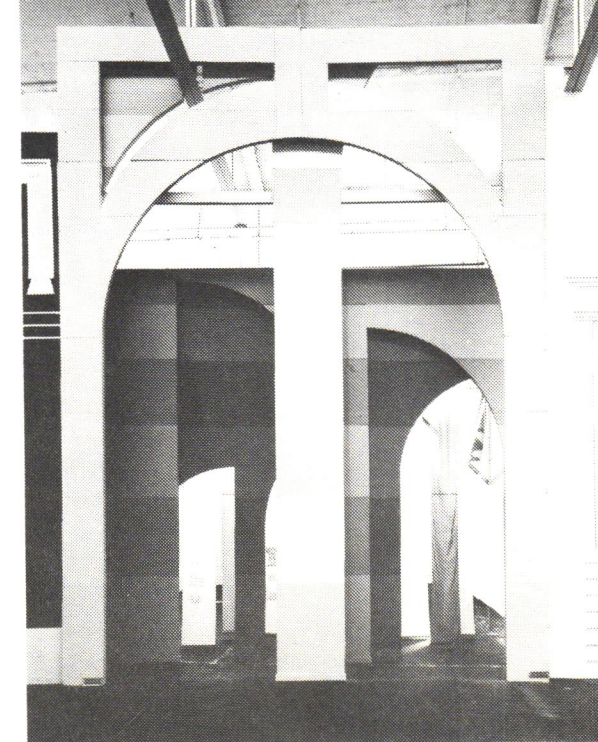
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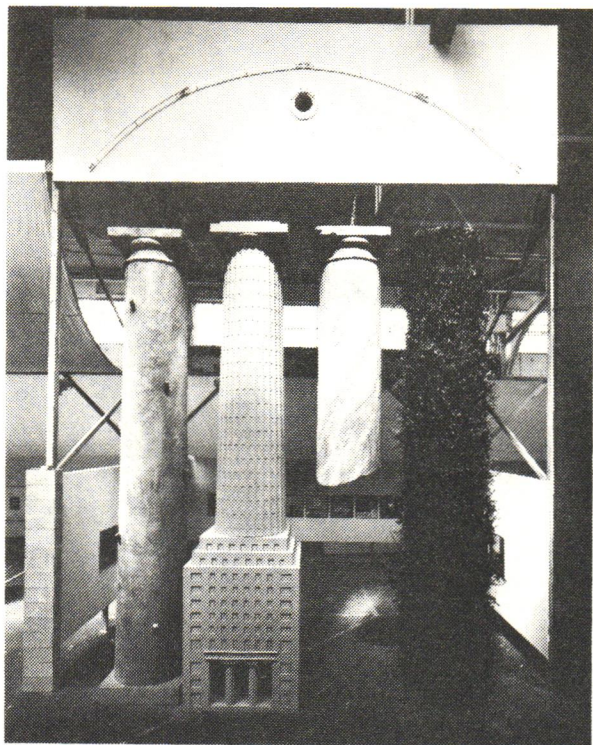
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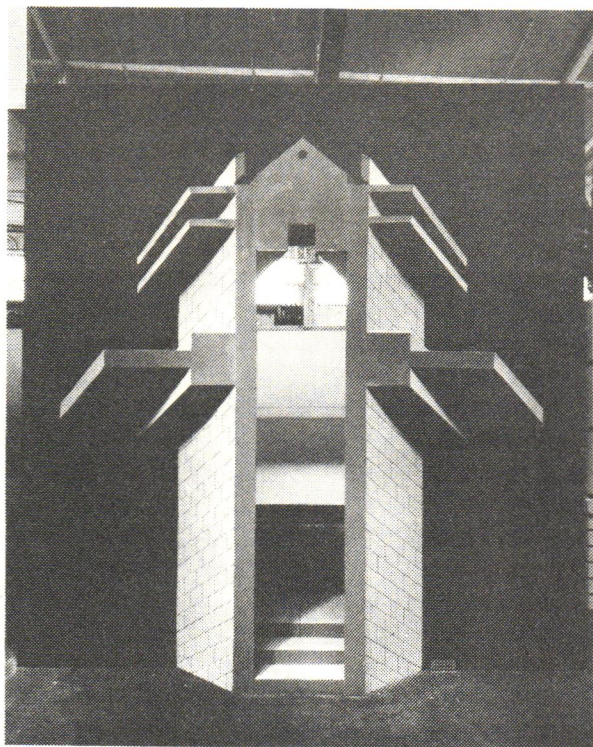
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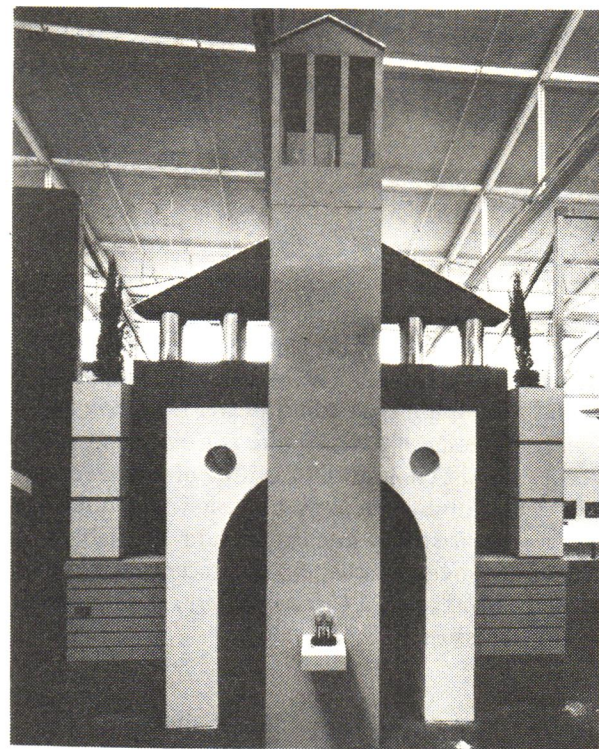
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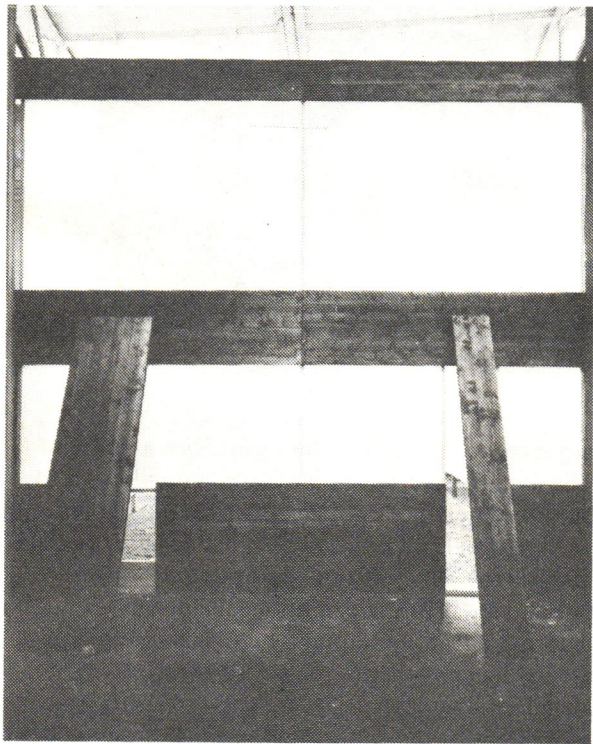
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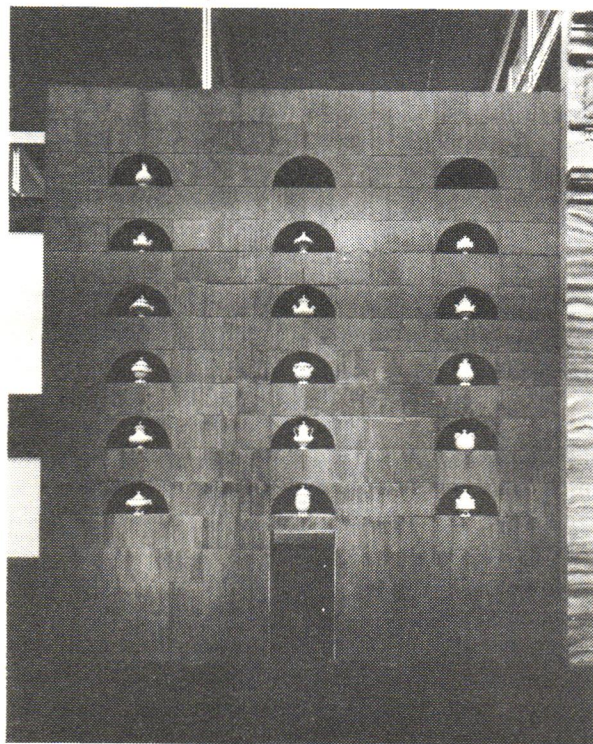
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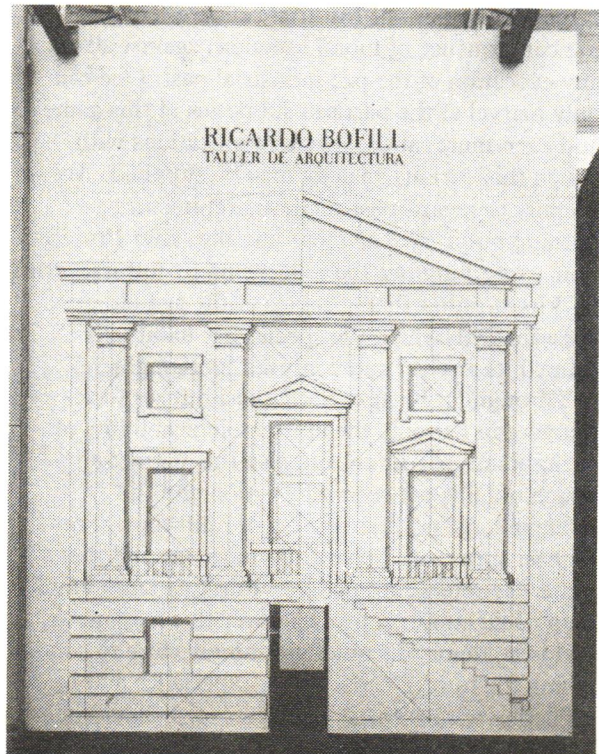
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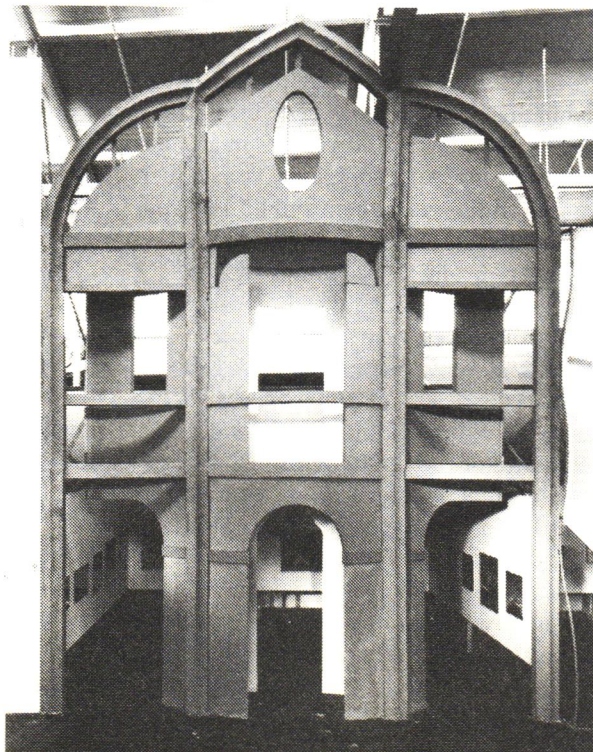
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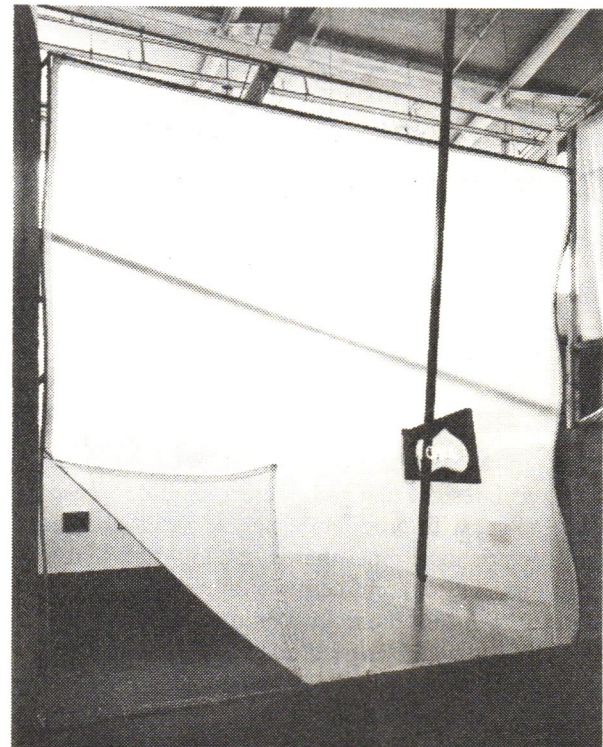
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Paolo Portoghesi, Italy



Rem Koolhaas/Elia Zenghelis, O.M.A., England and Holland



The Need for Roots

by Kenneth Frampton

Probably the most prescient and appropriate criticism of the Venice Biennale has been done by Kenneth Frampton in the Japanese journal *GA Document* #3 titled; "The Need for Roots: Venice 1980." Frampton is an editor of *GA Document* and *Lotus*, Professor of Architecture at Columbia University and a Fellow at the Institute of Architecture and Urban Studies. Frampton's vision of architecture has been consistently intelligent and remarkably free of historicist infatuation. His recent book, *Modern Architecture, a Critical History*, was reviewed in our last issue.

On the face of it the first Venice Biennale in architecture would seem to have accomplished two complementary but nonetheless contradictory things; on the one hand a polemical "Post-Modernist" demonstration that one cannot continue with the practice of architectural Modernism as a normative code, on the other the unintended proof that we will not be able to continue with the practice of architecture at all unless a concerted effort is soon made to distinguish in the sharpest possible terms between those principles and procedures which are essential for the continuation of a significant architectural culture (given the exigencies of capitalism), and the self-indulgent images of the moment which, lacking both density and referential resonance, do nothing save engender a set of seductive *simulacra*. In Venice we are witness to one of those public rites, now occurring with ever increasing frequency, in which our beleaguered profession makes yet another effort to validate its aims and procedures, both to itself and to society at large. With each throw of the dice the stakes are exponentially raised and the risk of total bankruptcy grows greater.

A quarter of a century ago the "avant-garde" went out of its way to establish architecture as a branch of applied science. It was then generally agreed by the liberal, technocratic intelligentsia,

In Venice we are witness to one of those public rites in which our beleaguered profession makes yet another effort to validate its aims.

that is to say, by the positivistically inclined intellectuals of design, that architecture should represent itself, along with product design, as a rigorous and technocratic discipline; that is, it should cease to proclaim itself as architecture at all. These protagonists felt that the field should immediately embrace the heuristic methods of operational research and ergonomics. The apparent, if limited, success of these methods at the HfG Ulm led to



The Corderia in the Arsenale, Venice, 1829

the fashion of transforming architectural schools into schools of environmental design. From the University of California, Berkeley, to University College, London; from Carbondale, Illinois, to Cambridge University, the strategy in each instance was more or less the same. The parent institution would establish a research arm whose envisaged role was to act as a Trojan horse with which to infiltrate and eventually transform the status of the discipline from within.

From 1960 onwards, with the publication of Reyner Banham's *Theory and Design in the First Machine Age*, the Modern Movement was written off for having been too artistic and emotive. For Banham and the English acolytes of the Dymaxion future, the Modern Movement in architecture had been nothing but a functionalist masquerade. Buckminster Fuller's frequent public assertion of the late fifties, namely that "most architects haven't the slightest idea how much their buildings weigh," was for them a metaphorical call to arms. The next decade saw the advance of advocacy planning as the only *scientific and socially legitimate* procedure to be used in the design of public works, but this too was soon to lose its credibility; in part due to the inherent resistance of the built environment to any kind of spontaneous transformation and in part due to the constitutional complexity of our pluralist society.

Today the wheel has come full circle and the very same modern architecture is now being rejected for having predicated its forms and procedures on the myth and reality of technocratic rationalism. The croupier seems to have cleared the table, the chips have been assigned new values and as the wheel

begins to turn, we hear the cry of *Rien ne va plus!* The metaphor of the casino is undoubtedly forced but it is surely no less felicitous than the reference to American Prohibition with which Paolo Portoghesi justifies the policy of the Venice Biennale. He presents it, as the title of his catalogue essay would indicate, as the end of the functionalist prohibition against history—hence the slogan *La fine del proibizionismo*. Herein, with excessive rhetoric he misrepresents the cultural complexity of the Modern Movement as having been nothing more than an extended moment of Futurist censure. He sees it as the consequence of moral sanction, against all and any evocation of the pre-industrial past. One can only marvel at the partisan subtleties of this game and even more, at the ironic ramifications with which this curious analogy may be supplied. Are we literally to regard post-modern architecture as nothing but a "fix" or more literally, after Prohibition, as nothing but the relicensing in cultural terms (as kitsch rather than alcohol) of the age-old depressant with which the species has habitually calmed its anxiety and confused its thought.

Throughout his text Portoghesi refuses to acknowledge not only the epistemological limits of thought and cognition, but also the distinction which obtains between intellection and the phenomenological perception of built form. Portoghesi apparently regards them as one and the same. He refers repeatedly to thinking *with* rather than *about* architecture, whatever this may mean, and in so doing he comes alarmingly close to confusing the human capacity for experience and reflection with ruthless strategies for behavioristic

control. Thus we find him writing:

The relationship with the history of architecture which the "post-modern" condition makes possible doesn't need the eclectic method anymore, because it can count on a form of "disenchantment," on a much greater psychological detachment. The civilization of the quantified image,...that knows the barbarities of the new imperialism and its progressive shattering can use the past without being more involved in illusory revivals or in naive philological operations. History is the "material" of logical and constructive operations whose only purpose is that of joining the real and the imaginary through communication mechanisms, whose effectiveness can be verified; it is material utilizable for the socialization of aesthetic experience, since it presents sign systems of great conventional value, which makes it possible to think and *make* others think through architecture. (my italics)

While it is obviously true that the effects and processes of power can never be totally transcended, it is also true that power can be effectively mediated. It is possible to evoke the potential *resistance* of architecture to the historically determined exigencies of both technique and power; for although architecture is contingent upon power it carries within itself the capacity to resist reductive authority. The nature of material reality and the way in which it is formulated is critical to this resistance, for there is sufficient evidence, in both the immediate and distant past, that architecture not only communicates through the successive presentation of schemata to the eye, but also that the more subtly articulated architectures of the past attained their impact—one might even assert their "life," in a literal and reciprocal sense—through a wide spectrum of sensuous perceptions, including a supplementary tactile range of aural, olfactory and bodily responses, to a set of acoustical, material and tectonic stimuli. A random listing of such stimuli indicates the potential range of this effect; the sound of water in an enclosed

Post-Modernism concerns itself not only with signs, but also with the "signs of signs".

court, the effect of induced air movement across the skin, the impact of the built environment on the labile body; that is the transformation of its rhythmic posture and gait by arcades, stairways, corridors, ramps and platforms, by passerelles and mezzanines, to cite only the more common elements which evidently exact their daily change upon the human frame. To these one may add the psycho-physiological sensations of passing from glare to shadow, from light to dark, or the immanent sense of vertigo to be induced by great height. More commonly one may depend upon the tactile resilience of revetment to the touch or of the paving to the feet, together with the natural perfume of the material lining; the odor of brick, timber, plaster, concrete, fabric, paint and even steel, the scent of plants, vegetation and incense. How can one not acknowledge that this spectrum is a critical complement to the poetics of architecture,

particularly in those traditions which lie outside the confines of Humanism? While this may risk yet another return to behaviorist perspective, what I wish to suggest is that a valid dialectical intersubjectivity between the species and its environment, as constituted through language and culture, may only be achieved through the recognition that the *visual* must be complemented by the *tactile*, as well as the "unseen" sights formulated by the unconscious, if any kind of ontological depth is to be realized.

This recognition, once admitted, undermines the visual emphasis of Post-Modernism, which in the name of the *vox populi* would inundate the future with an endless proliferation of simulacra; for Post-Modernism concerns itself not only with signs, but also with the "signs of signs" and while these displaced schemata may allude to identifiable artifacts drawn from the repository of history, they remain incapable of consummating the referential indications of the image. Portoghesi proclaims, as do many other architects in this Biennale, the victory of scenography over substance and cites in support of the scenic the entire corpus of the Humanist stage, from settings for masques or triumphal entries, temporarily inlaid into the fabric of the medieval city, to the permanent auditorium of Palladio's Teatro Olimpico in Vicenza.

The ideological significance of placing Scamozzi's false perspective for the Teatro Olimpico on the catalogue cover can hardly be overlooked particularly as this appears under the title "The Presence of the Past," strongly suggesting that the past can only be readily *re-presented* as simulation and that behind the *scena* anything might exist. Such an indifference to backstage reality is the touchstone of the Post-Modern mind; a sign, let us say, of the disenchanted Western intellect as it stands transfixed in sardonic reflection before the prospect of an ideal Enlightenment that is irredeemably lost; *Après nous le déluge*. This is surely the fundamental cultural stance behind Johnson's recent work, the irreverent parodies of the Gothic Revival and the Art Deco evident in his PPG headquarters projected for Pittsburgh and his Transco II tower designed for Houston. The same intent, while marginally less blatant, is also evident in the "cardboard" masonry revetment projected for the AT&T headquarters in New York. In each instance, the utter gratuity of the stylistic reference adopted only serves to emphasize the architect's indifference to the nature of the normative space within. Comprehending the equal indifference of techno-economic power towards the substance of art, the lucid intellect of late Capitalism opts for the penultimate display of exhausted historical styles. They pass from the grist of memory and technique like whitened ghosts; glistening, empty and transparent. Like Ludwig of Bavaria, but bereft of innocence, Johnson contemplates, without remorse, the last pinnacles of *Neuschwanstein* as they fade into the dark.

That Johnson should adopt such a position is totally coherent with the trajectory of his career; that Portoghesi should arrive at virtually the same threshold is more difficult to understand, for the intellectual justification of his Biennale policy has its origin in a high critical article that he wrote some twenty years ago. The differences and similarities between these two texts testify to a twenty-year development and in order to penetrate the complexity of Portoghesi's polemic, some comparison demands to be made between the argumentation of the two essays.

In his *Architettura e ambiente tecnico* of 1960,

after describing the exacerbating impact of Taylorization and automation on the nineteenth century division of labor, and after demonstrating the relation of these reductive processes to the global uprooting remarked on by Simone Weil, Portoghesi goes on to discuss the ideology of technocratic rationalism which was still uncritically integrated in the mainstream of the Modern Movement. Thus we find him writing:

Between the wars, in the enthusiasm of their efforts to highlight the formal possibilities of technology by integrating it with the aesthetic point of view, modern architects thought that once they had correctly set out on the path of quality in quantity, the problem of the dialectical relationship between art and society would be automatically and implicitly solved. The interlude of the war and political crisis brought to an end all cultural maturation of the formal themes and general principles of Rationalism, leaving behind, to a culturally immature professional class, the heavy burden of a methodology worked out from the somewhat Utopian model of a society which had already been transformed by the industrialization of production, along with a series of linguistic hypotheses, and a repertory of form linked to the often contradictory experiences of the avant-garde in the figurative arts.

The Italian post-war period was characterized by a wave of empiricism which was at times escapist, at other times a serious attempt at clarification; but in any case it reflected the mood of those years, in which, in the light of a ruined and divided Europe, it became extremely clear how inadequate was the rootless idiom of the avant-garde to express the human content of developing society. The advent of this complex of problems bound to occasional poetry and the environment as an episode, put off that critical and methodological revision which alone could have prevented architectonic culture from slipping into a series of mistakes...On the one hand then, we have an architecture of limited didactic value which may even be stunningly rich but could hardly be utilized, owing to the lack of that kind of internal discipline which is needed to approach a work; on the other hand we have disappointment and a mistrust of the values of architecture, of the meaning of works, and in the extreme form, the conviction that since every society has the architecture it deserves, the only way of effectively contributing to the revival of architecture is to take political action. And here one clearly sees the fallacy of considering one's responsibility as a citizen so great as to absorb, exhaust, and make meaningless one's responsibility as an architect and, why not, an artist.

In this same text Portoghesi was to characterize the predicament of the late fifties in the following terms:

Certainly the life of our time pushes the architectural idiom to master the new visual means, demands that a new scale be introduced in the designing of buildings and city space, that the speed with which means of transport move should determine the new face of the city. But we should not idolize novelty, or forget that it is the principle of rest which gives

value and sense to movement, or that the vision of speed will nullify the vision on the human scale, from the height and speed of man. A revival should bring about an *addition or rather a product, and not a mere substitution of values.* (my italics)

With a brief critical aside against the Futurist tradition in modern Italian culture, Portoghesi concludes with the following quote from Simone Weil's *L'Enracinement* (*The Need for Roots*, first published in 1949).

It is useless to try to turn away from the past and to think only of the future. It is a dangerous illusion even to think that is possible. The opposition of future and past is nonsense. The future brings us nothing; it is we who, to build it, must give it everything, even our lives. But to give one must possess, and we possess no other life, no other blood than the treasures of the past which we have inherited, digested, assimilated, and recreated. Of all the needs of the human spirit nothing is more vital than the past.

Superficially, *La fine del proibizionismo* of 1980 may be read as an updating of the thesis advanced in *Architettura e ambiente tecnico*. But on closer examination, it is clear that certain themes have been omitted from the substance of the later text. The cultural problems induced by Taylorization and automation do not apparently warrant inclusion in the second version of the thesis, as though this predicament had been miraculously overcome in the intervening years, while the Social Realist, facile application of vernacular elements which was initially questioned, does not now apparently merit a single word of reserve. In 1960, he had written with a certain scepticism:

Putting terra cotta tiles on houses, re-examining the problem of human space in the light of complex planimetric arrangement which avoid geometric regularity, and the overconfident indulgence in dialectical forms as a means of communication, are all fragmentary hypotheses, medicines which attenuate but do not cure the crisis in the human content of architecture...

Instead of intelligent reservation, we are now summarily informed that there is an acceptable and an unacceptable past and that the devaluation of images by virtue of their infiltration through the media must rightly be seen as the liberation of bourgeois culture from its aristocratic value structure. Thus, on both of the above counts we find his writing in the Biennale catalogue:

Mass culture produces a continuous wave of information and images that reproduce originals but that also tend to substitute and underate, rather than create sacred auras around them. Seeing purely negative phenomenon in this underating and qualification of access, means simply continuing to use an aristocratic viewpoint and now knowing how to grasp the liberating result and the egalitarian charge of this profanation of myth. Together with the inhibitions imposed by prohibitionism, the devotional attitude towards history hidden by the negation of its real value also collapses... thus, the end of prohibition and the recycling of traditional forms marks the definite separation in architecture from the near past, from

the inextricable mixture of Illuminism and Romanticism making up the modern tradition.

The Newspeak overtones of this argument are surely evident. First, the implication that the devaluation of canonic images and forms wrought by the media is in itself a liberating and democratic force, and second, an evident sanction imposed by the author on that sector of the past which happens to be possessed of its own rationalist but non-reductive tradition. I have in mind with regard to the latter the work of K. F. Schinkel, Henri Labrouste and Otto Wagner, but one of course could cite numerous other architects from the second half of the nineteenth century who would easily fit into this category.

This mocked-up street could be momentarily regarded as thinking with architecture rather than about it.

That the triumph of the media has simply been liberative with regard to architectural culture—presumably by making it more accessible to the populous—is surely an assertion which cannot be accepted since it is evident that the photographic image can easily constitute a reduction in its own right, particularly when it is *not* supplemented by other forms of information. Categorical examples of this manipulation have featured prominently in the recent “post-modernist” polemic, above all in the publications of Charles Jencks, which can be regarded as having played a seminal role in the crystallization of the “anti-rationalist” movement. This much is all too manifest in *The Language of Post Modern Architecture* and the more recent *Late Modern Architecture*, both of which are amply supplied with photographic images at the expense of any other supplementary format, such as plans, axonometrics, etc. (the ratio of the photographic to the drawn is something like 400 to 18). And this in itself would be only marginally misleading were it not for the fact that the allocation of illustrations rarely rises above the level of one shot per building. This same media-pathology also overtook Arthur Drexler's retrospective survey of the last fifteen years or so staged at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, under the title *Transformations*, where the dearth of plans or supplementary graphics reached absolute proportions and where the “one-shot-per-building” syndrome was maintained for well over five hundred examples. That the general public were duly mesmerized and distracted by this plethora of images was only to be expected but this measure of popular success in no way compensates for the fact that in terms of sustaining a significant architectural culture, the exhibition had a retrogressive impact; far from encouraging a deeper understanding of the modern predicament it simply served to mystify the public as to the fundamental issues confronting the practice of architecture today. Victor Hugo's prophecy that mechanical reproductibility in the form of the printed word would eventually kill architecture now finds unexpected vindication in the mesmerizing power of the photograph, particularly where this perspectival, one-point representation of reality is

the only information provided.

The primacy of the iconic is also equally evident in the Biennale although here, with most of the works being projects, many of the images are drawn or built in the Corderia dell'Arsenale, rather than being represented in the form of a photograph. Nevertheless the visual and frontal format is still the primary mode for representation and perception, even in the partially three-dimensional Via Novissima, where the star architects of the show have been accorded the privilege of realizing their didactic facades within the rational space of the Corderia.

This mocked-up street could be momentarily regarded as thinking *with* architecture rather than *about* it, although the full weight of these witty theatrical pieces were no doubt largely lost on the average visitor. The prevalent game seems to have been one of “inversion and denial” and those that played it to the hilt can be said to have enjoyed a certain measure of success within the context of the Teatro Portoghesi. The Tuscan collonade of the Corderia came in for the greatest amount of commentary, although only one architect, Hans Hollein, broke the rules sufficiently to incorporate the original structure within his set-piece. Others such as Gehry, Koolhaas, and Isozaki refused the elevational opportunity by battening-out their allocated bays in various ways so as to create an “anti-facade,” hostile to the theatrical simulation of the street. Others, such as Tigerman and Ungers, played the game of incorporating or inverting the profile of the existing column into their facades while Greenberg thought it fitting to give an Edwardian accolade to the Corderia, that is to say, to interpose a Lutyensian screen with the structural bay. Most took the Luna Park context as an occasion for pure scenography, notably Bofill, Gordon-Smith, Graves, Stern, Tigerman, and Venturi, while one, Massimo Scolari, thought of the charge as an occasion for art. Only three teams rendered their facade as a serious architectural statement: Franco Purini and Laura Thermes, who demonstrated once again their loyalty to the late Tendenza, the Studio GRAU who built an ossuary wall (presumably containing the ashes of world architecture) and Leon Krier who insisted that his Neo-Italianate vernacular be rendered in real material. There remained those who commented on the irreality of the situation, in both a local and universal sense and who played with history not as a scenography or as distraction, but as an occasion for didactic gesture. The first of these was Hans Hollein whose five column assembly rang the changes on the ambiguities of fact versus fiction and culture versus nature. The second was a half screen facade designed by Josef Paul Kleihues who played with images representing culture, nature, and history, including an enlarged version of one of Malevich's architektonica models.

What these indulgences might intend on the stage of world architectural history remains unclear as does the intent and the plastic syntax of many of the other architectural exhibits which in certain instances were arbitrarily accorded the less exalted status by being exhibited outside the Via Novissima. Many of these works, while not historicist, appear to have succeeded in re-interpreting an historical syntax in such a way as to create an expression which is evidently *open to further development*. These works deserve to be mentioned, if for no other reason than they all draw on traditions which are more or less *rationalist* and which at the same time are in no way reductive. I have in mind Batey and Mack's Napa Valley Homes (1979/80), Ricardo Bofill's monument

at La Perthus (1976), Pep Bonet's Casa Bonet (1976), Jean Pierre Buffi's French Cultural Institute projected for Lisbon (1979). Francesco Cellini's Co-operative House Aleph, near Rome (1977). Clotet and Tusquet's Pantalleria House (1975). Jeremy Dixon's St. Mark's Housing, London (1978), Arata Isozaki's Fujimi Country Club (1974), Edward Jones's Japan Architect Competition House (1978), J.P. Kleihues's Municipal Garage, Berlin (1976), and Aldo Rossi's Fagnano Olona School (1977).

Outside of these highly individual but nonetheless "rationalist" works, the Biennale can be divided into a number of distinct "schools" and thereafter into a heterogeneous and idiosyncratic body of work which seems to lack either commitment or any basis for adequate development. Among the "schools," the work of the Northern European rationalists led by Leon Krier and Maurice Culot exhibits an approach which is clearly committed to a method and a set of values which are oriented towards the European provincial city inspired, of late, by Heinrich Tessenow's *Handwerk und Kleinstadt (Craftwork and the Provincial City)* of 1918, it has recently mounted an unequivocal anti-industrial polemic which goes much further than the position adopted by Portoghesi in his *Architettura e ambiente tecnico*. This school—comprising a spectrum ranging from the Parisian based Portzamparc, Grumbach, and Montez on the one side to the Argentine architects Machado and Silvetti on the other (and including a wide range of ultimately more rigorous rationalists who have been pointedly excluded from this show, such as Miguel Garay, Jose Ignacio Linazasoro, and Rob Krier)—constitutes the most extreme anarcho-socialist, anti-technocratic yet rational approach to architecture today. It is a *rappel à l'ordre* made in the name of Tessenow and German Romantic Classicism, but with few exceptions, notably Krier's project for Bremen, it embraces a Neo-Classical or Italianate syntax which would never have been accepted by the anti-industrialists of the nineteenth century.

The brilliance and heroic commitment of this school can hardly be questioned. It begins to exhibit, however, two extremely disturbing tendencies. On the one hand a sentimental attitude towards the kind of Utopian life that is envisaged as taking place in the confines of its projected streets and squares. We are to take it that the Taylorization and automation that penetrate into every crevice of our present reality have been suddenly and miraculously eliminated. On the other hand, one can begin to detect an unfortunate deliquescence entering into its own architectural language. For the most part, these are *architectes du papier* and as one brilliant project succeeds to another and as one totally rendered Proustian, urban vista unfolds onto the next, the syntax of the "school" begins to disintegrate, that is to say, it starts to render forms which are a parody of its own code. Krier begins to lose the early exacting definition of, for example, his Royal Mint Square of his La Vilette proposal, while the Belgian wing even forgoes the typological rigor which was once the hallmark of its style.

A similar sense of closure or entropy begins to invade the Italian Neo-Rationalist movement, where the project becomes a graphic work in its own right, that is to say where the drawing is an end in itself, as in the work of Purini and Thermes, or in the strange parody of Krier indulged in by Guiseppe Grossi and Bruno Minardi. The stoic rigor still evident in the work of Giorgi Grassi is lamentably absent in this exhibition and one assumes that is exactly Grassi's non-reductive but unsentimental

rationalism which has led to his exclusion from the Biennale.

The other schools represented here are in my view entering a "closure" at an even greater velocity. The Neo-Lutyensian Classicism championed by Alan Greenberg or the reduced Beaux Arts indulged in by John Blatteau, surely have no entry upon the future if only because the architecture they aspire to can no longer be rendered with any kind of technological conviction. It is patently obvious that such ornate historicism is technically, economically, and ontologically debarred by the industrial destiny of the epoch, and Greenberg and Blatteau will be no more capable of returning to Edwardian England than Pugin was able to enroll himself with the security of a fifteenth century seminary. If one wants to emulate the "industrialized classicism" of our time, then surely Moscow University would be a more realistic example.

There is finally that school, or should one say following, enjoyed by Charles Moore of which perhaps it can be said that it is the quintessence of capitalist, industrial culture caught in its decline. It is an architecture of total disenchantment in as much as it seeks to provide an unchallenging domestic environment which is above all anonymous, comfortable, effortless, private, and as far as possible, cheap. Sensuous and occasionally unpretentious, above all without significance, it is the ideal style for the American suburb in the last quarter of the twentieth century. In this respect, it is eminently forgettable as one rambling balloon-framed assembly of supergraphic, dayglo-colored, clapboarded collage blends itself into the next without a trace. No *actual* school of architecture can be based on its example since it is totally bereft of any architectural principle. It rides roughshod on the legacy of the picturesque combined with de-constructed elements drawn from the heritage of the Arts and Crafts. Within the confines of its cynical freedom it is impossible to make a mistake, just as within its deceptively innocuous forms the elite can safely hide as though they were just plain, "consumerist" folks!

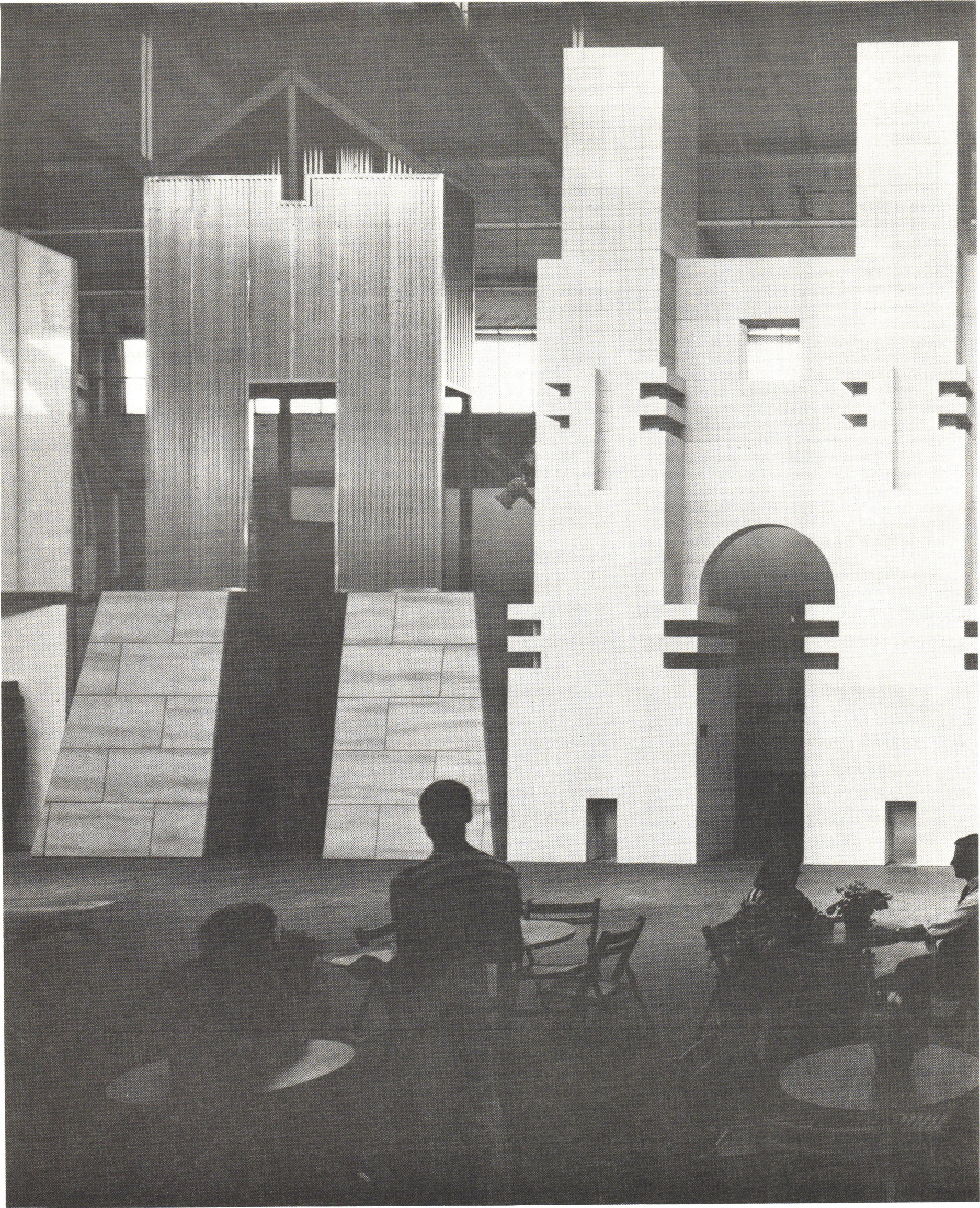
It is perhaps the omissions rather than the inclusions that are among the most shocking aspects of this year's Biennale, together with the ease with which the organizers of the exhibition have abdicated their critical responsibility. (To leave this to the outside critics, Messrs. Jencks, Norberg-Schulz, and Scully who do not comment directly on the work exhibited is hardly adequate.) For today, one cannot evoke the "presence of the past" without attempting to demonstrate to the public and to the profession alike, the way in which history has been mediated up to now and the way in which it might come to be mediated in future. For surely one has in mind a *répétition différente* rather than a simple-minded repetition, and the method by which this heritage is to be transposed and reinterpreted remains an urgent issue. This curatorial *lapse* becomes all the more critical when one starts to speculate about those who have been preemptorily excluded from this exhibition; architects who have long since made serious attempts to integrate the resonance of memory into the culture of the present. I have in mind not only Carlo Scarpa whose absence in my view is inadequately accounted for, but also such figures as Gino Valle and Jørn Utzon; the former, for his thermal baths built at Alpi Carniche in 1964, the latter for his recent Bagvaerd Church, built outside Copenhagen or for his unbuilt SilkenBerg Museum inspired by Chinese Buddhist cave sculpture which he once saw in Tatung, near Peking. Aside from

these men, one is stupefied by the distinguished Swiss, Spanish, and Portuguese architects who have been ruthlessly excluded from this public account, men such as Mario Botta, J.A. Coderch de Sentmenat, Rafael Moneo, and Alfonso Siza y Viera whose work has been by no means hostile to tradition.

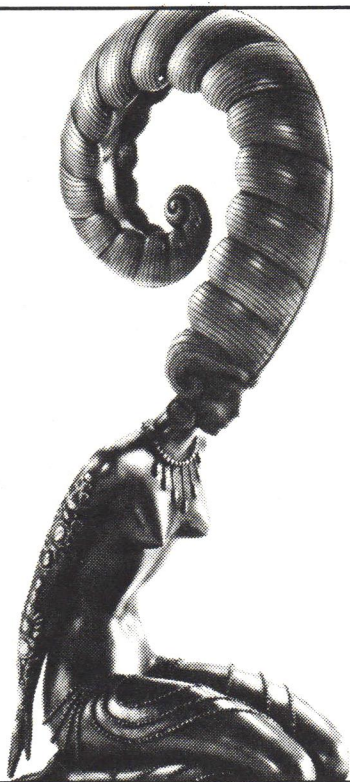
What is at stake here is not only a return to our own roots but also a respect for the entire corpus of world architecture; a feeling which one should be prepared to re-interpret and transcend without falling into the *lacunae* of kitsch. This culture must be seen as extending far beyond the brilliant but nonetheless narrow confines of Humanism and its local antithesis, the Arts and Crafts. The extraordinary stature of Scarpa, Aalto, Valle, Utzon, Wright,

It is perhaps the omissions rather than the inclusions that are among the most shocking aspects of this year's Biennale.

Kahn, and the early Ricardo Bofill resides in this—that each in his own way, attempted to reinterpret the traditions of the West in terms of the East and so overcame the closure of Humanism. And it could be said that the tragedy of this present Biennale (if one can use so forceful a term) resides in the work of Bofill, where one passes from high *Mudéjar* culture of Catalonia (Islamic by definition) as exemplified say in the Muralla Roja built in Alicante (1975) or in La Fabricca, the cement works restored by the Taller de Arquitectura in the same year, to Bofill's incomprehensible recent attempt to impose a totally empty Neo-Classicism upon the revolutionary society of Algiers. Between Utzon and the late Bofill there falls the shadow as to the way in which a world culture can be upheld and advanced, but one thing is certain: such a culture cannot be sustained by the "dominant" modes of Western architectural thought as they enter their decline. We have, in my view, but two choices; either to embrace the profound intuitions that the pre-Humanist Orient has had about the *tactile* significance of place or to face, without any redress, the prospect that neither late Capitalism, nor State Socialism, both subject to the dictates of Taylor, have any need within themselves for the dialectical realization of desire, as this may be embodied within the domains of culture and art.







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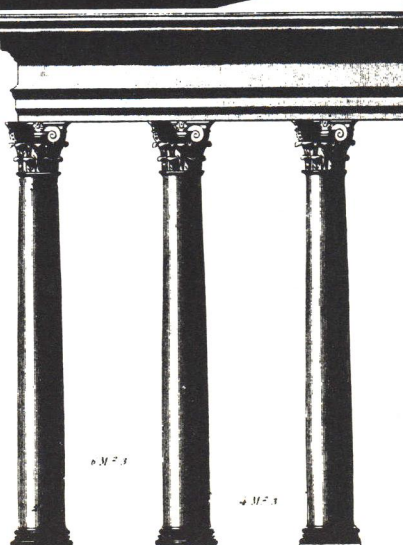
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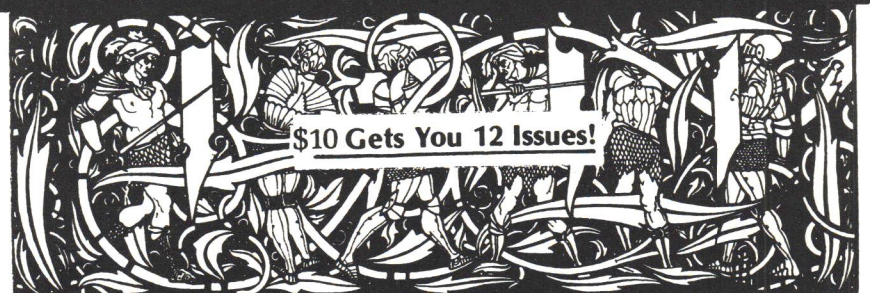
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The Installation of the Exhibition at Fort Mason Center, San Francisco

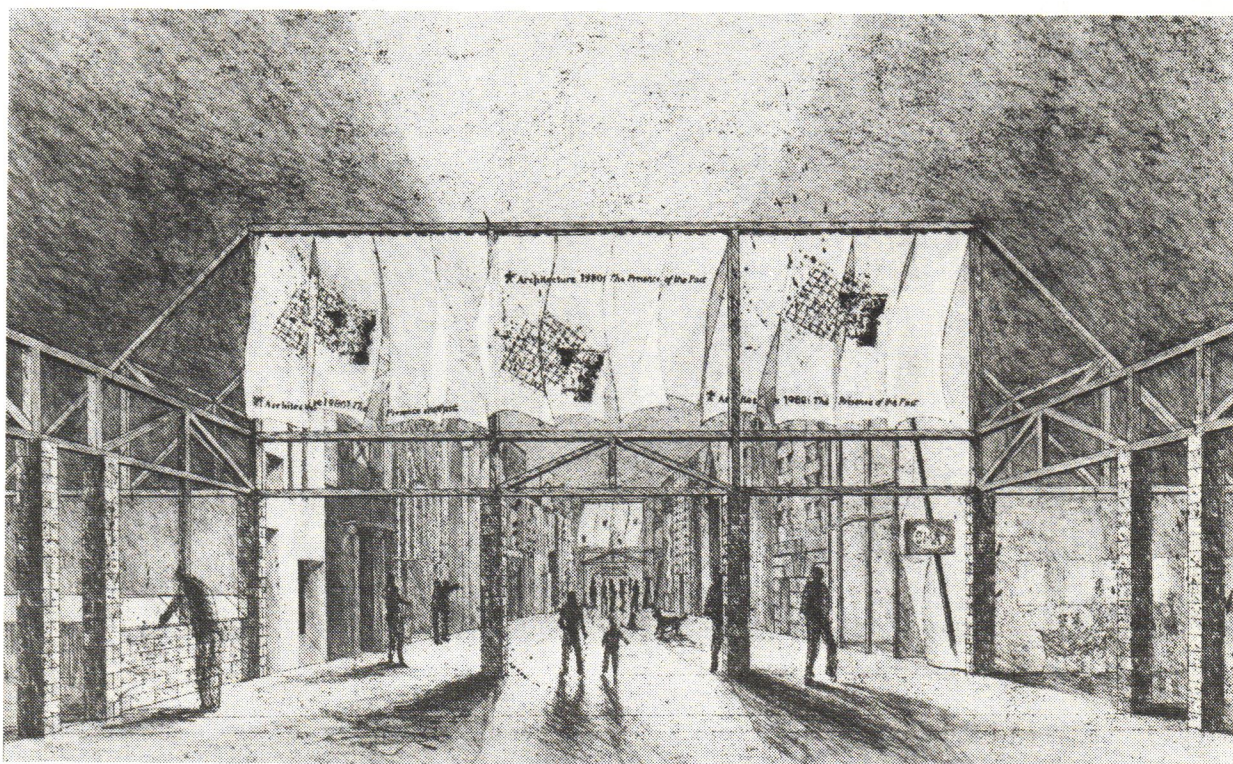
by Paul Roberston

For the San Francisco showing of "Architecture 1980: The Presence of the Past," exhibition architects Batey & Mack have divided Fort Mason Pier II into 3 segments: a street, a piazza, and a gallery space beyond. The street is the Strada Novissima, imported from the 1980 Venice Biennale with some alterations introduced in a Paris showing in 1981. The piazza is a special addition for the San Francisco show, while the gallery displays the work of fifty architects given wallspace in Venice—it also contains a "Sponsors' Pavilion," displaying the work of any architecture or development firm willing to ante up five, ten or twenty-five grand towards the production of this cultural extravaganza.

The exhibition originated in an unused rope factory, the Arsenale, an old, brick building of basilica plan, with nave and aisles all of equal width. There, the street was formed by attaching stage-set facades to the brick piers bordering the nave. Thus, both the width of the facades and the width of the street were determined by the existing structure. Behind the facades, the aisles were partitioned into individual exhibition spaces for the designer of each facade. The width of the street—a scant 15 feet—made viewing facades of three stories (as stipulated in the original design brief) difficult, but a continuous gallery over the exhibition spaces allowed one to peer over and through the tops of facades, so an overall view of those across the way could be pieced together.

Batey & Mack had to design the new installation for quite different conditions. The former military embarkation pier is more than thirty feet wider than the Arsenale, and beneath the steel trusses supporting its roof there are no interior columns to which facades could be attached, nor any gallery one could look down from. To compensate for the lack of internal structure, they designed wooden props for the facades, with 2 x 4 trusses exposed at the top, accentuating the stage-set character of the street, and sheet-rocked over below to enclose the exhibition rooms. They took advantage of the extra width by spreading the street into a wedge, a "forced perspective" which again accentuates its theatrical nature, and also compensates for the lack of a gallery by permitting an overall view of each facade from ground level. At entrance the San Francisco street is 3 times wider than the Venetian; at its narrowest end it is still 3½ feet wider, with the facades canted toward the wider space.

Here two objections can be made. The extra width of the street asks the viewer to stand back and judge the facades as wholes. This penalizes those architects who designed facades meant to be discovered during the visitor's passage down the narrow Venetian street, and appreciated from the often fragmentary glimpses from the gallery above, while it compensates for those architects (the majority) who, although aware of the dimensions of street and gallery in Venice, still designed with only the drawing board and the ideal photographic view in mind. The "forced perspective" turns the street, from the entrance, into a single tableau rather than



The design of the infrastructure by Batey & Mack, incorporating the Tom Ingalls banner designs. Rendering by Bruce Tomb.

a succession of images, a tableau depicting an architectural free-for-all, a shouting match among competing facades.

Yet these objections concern the original exhibition as much as the present installation, which is a highly competent translation of the original to new

The "forced perspective" turns the street, from the entrance, into a single tableau rather than a succession of images.

conditions—the American building practices (2 x 4's and sheetrock) and the specific site conditions.

Some conditions, however, are problems, and those which cannot be cured must be endured. The steel trusses at Fort Mason are spaced differently from the brick piers in Venice. They therefore only accidentally relate to the facades they intersect. The roof trusses are also lower than those in Venice. Incisions have been made in some facades to let the structure pass through. This unavoidable embarrassment should delight many.

Ironically, Batey & Mack have hung unbleached muslin banners, creating a lower ceiling, to compensate for the pier's great height and where there are no facades to provide human scale. Beneath two such banners and a decorative wood truss is the Piazza, where they get a chance to make display and pier work together.

The piazza is a rectangle with four facades by San Francisco architects decorating the west wall, while the east is dedicated to alimentation and elimination, with four shops for food and drink, and lavatories.

The food counters are concrete block and wood

constructions designed by Batey & Mack in their distinctive idiom. Above them, and flanking San Francisco on the west, are simple gable facades of fabric stretched over stud walls just barely visible behind. These abstracted facades form the field against which the four on display are to stand as figures. They are propped by the same wood constructions used in the Strada, but are narrower, so they fit neatly between the trusses.

Everything's set. No nasty trusses poke through the objects on display. One takes an espresso to a seat on the eastern side and observes San Francisco's Facades of the Future. Or past/present.

And the layman is astonished. Never had he imagined that a "three story urban facade" would not be merely difficult to design, but so utterly evasive of definition. To the wondering eye a shrunk skyscraper, two silhouette columns, a quonset outhouse, and one caged drape.

Dan Solomon's is not an urban facade but an urban gateway, a reduced facsimile of a project soon to be built in Oakland, where two highrise buildings flank a freeway exit ramp. Coyly copying Vienna's Karl Marx Hof (a socialist housing project of the twenties), he has slammed two glass box skyscrapers (symbols of monopoly capital) on top, as if for propriety's sake. If he gets the fog machine he's asking for, the composite effect should be somewhere between Busby Berkeley and Hugh Ferriss—such are the vagaries of political thinking. The piece is beautifully crafted by the Durney Brothers contracting firm.

William Turnbull's facade is an urban gateway of a different sort, referring to the gardens glimpsed beyond gates in Mediterranean countries. Instead of reducing scale, he increases it. His two cut-out Palladian columns are so large one cannot see their capitals, presumably shrouded in the overhanging green scrims representing foliage. Rhododendrons droop over the heads of visitors beyond. Turnbull's



The Contextual Facades in the Marketplace by Batey & Mack.

entry contrasts neatly, though accidentally, with Solomon's; the images are complementary.

Solomon takes his imagery from an urban project; Turnbull's is conditioned by the fact that his work is almost entirely suburban. Batey & Mack's is, with the arguable exception of this installation, exclusively so. Since the name of the game is publicity, one recognizes the pressure to create an appropriate corporate image, just like all the other architects in the exhibition (except those who, perhaps unwittingly, appropriated someone else's image). Yet it seems somewhat *gauche* for the installation's designers to produce the one entirely free-standing facade, leaving those poor, naked props in view of the entire piazza. The object itself is rather clever, employing the corrugated tin and 2×4 's of their more recent projects, with, as a gesture to the city, a base of imitation travertine, and, as a gesture to hepcat-ism, a rather austere geometry borrowed from Italian rationalists, old and neo-

The entry of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (designed by Marc Goldstein, Richard Tobias, Jared Carlan and Michael Chow) is a visual/verbal pun on the firm's most famous product, the "curtain wall." Behind a grid of 2×4 's, like a skyscraper's grid of mullions translated to the low-budget idiom of the show, is suspended a sailcloth representation of a New York brownstone facade, with folds of cloth sewn on to form cornice, lintels, and window sills, rippling slightly like an old building seen reflected in mirror glass.

Beyond the piazza, through another banner & truss gateway, is the exhibition hall for those architects lucky enough to be admitted, but unlucky enough not to have facades of their own. Their works are displayed in stud & sheet-rock aisles, which seem to have been disturbed from a calm orthogonal disposition by the violent insertion of a foreign body: the Sponsors' Pavilion, reminder of architecture's glorious present. Designed by Thomas Gordon Smith to fit a tight budget, its most important distinguishing characteristic is vinyl flooring (rather than the asphalt of the Pier) painted to look like three kinds of marble. Three courts, Doric, Ionic

and Corinthian, are all of the same painted plywood, distinguished only by the architectural details of the trompe-l'oeil frescoes on their southern facades, and the insertion of one Doric column in the Doric Court, two Ionics in the Ionic, and, if Mr. Smith can get someone to loan him one, a Corinthian in the Corinthian.

With the Sponsors' Pavilion wedged into the serrated rows of gallery aisles, the last great room of the exhibition has the air of a maze: a fit place to lose one self, and from which to return. Whether the Sponsors' Pavilion should, however, be likened to the Minotaur's lair is a matter of aesthetic taste and political conviction.

And these are the gems of the Human Soul,
The rubies & pearls of the lovesick eye,
The countless gold of the akeing heart,
The martyr's groan & the lover's sigh.

What was half-baked is now warmed-over. As the two-year old Venice Biennale architecture section finally reaches San Francisco, its title, "Architecture 1980: The Presence of the Past" has a certain kazoo-like resonance. If a bass drum still sounds beneath it, the persistent publishing efforts of Charles Jencks, Robert Stern and Paolo Portoghesi, those determined proselytes of the "Post-Modern," cannot wholly be credited. For the fashion parade of the Strada Novissima is also the record of a futile search for architecture's platonic form.

To deny that such a form exists is not to discredit the search. The exhibition contains work by some of the ablest architects working today, and one's respect for them goes beyond merely appreciating the hard work of mastering a craft; they had to redefine architecture just to convince themselves it was something worth doing. They had to find a ground of certainty from which to act.

But no ground of certainty is eternal, and a platonic form is not an essence to be bottled. Nor less, sold. The mingling of morbidly pompous facades with comic ones is not the pageant of King Lear, but a display of wares. One does not so much respond as choose. The architects, in reducing their

work to logos displayed to consumers along a shopping arcade, reduce architecture to a mere sign, a sign that tells us a building is architecture, a feature increasing the market value.

The developers sponsoring this show may sincerely wish to "improve people's taste," but the word "improve" has a peculiar history. Raymond Williams notes, "In its earliest uses it referred to operations for monetary profit, where it was often equivalent to *invest*, and especially to operations on or connected to land..." I'm not accusing the sponsors of cynicism, though doubtless the hope that the exhibition's aura will reflect on their work when it goes before the planning board has encouraged their contributions, but we should also credit them with a sincere concern for the future of our city (though a concern different from those other racial and economic groups), an insecurity with "cultural" issues, and a desire to be understood and appreciated.

But the "Strada" transforms culture into snobism—"I like this and not that"—and transforms history into a marketable commodity. An exhibition whose theme was to be, according to a press release, "San Francisco urbanism," and architecture's "Return to the Street" seems only to herald gentrification.

What is important, as architect/exhibitor Dan Solomon says, is to look *behind* the facades, at the perspectives offered of the relation of history to the building of cities.

What's behind the facades of the San Francisco exhibitors? Neither Batey & Mack nor Turnbull have much to propose on the subject of San Francisco's development; through no fault of their own, their work has, as noted, been restricted to the suburbs.

S.O.M. and Solomon, the two exhibitors blessed with urban commissions offer quite different displays. S.O.M. declines to exhibit its work. Instead, on one wall they paint a trapezoid full of words, words like "Inigo Jones" and "pediment." This is supposed to represent "the mound of history" from which one can take what one chooses. I share the reluctance to reduce history to columns and keystones, but I can't accept that our relation to history is merely a matter of choice.

S.O.M.'s decision not to expose any architectural intentions or even aspirations is tremendously frustrating. Not only will this firm, because of its powerful clients, have a tremendous impact on the shape of this city; it is also one of the most important patrons of architectural exhibitions and publications in town. This concern cannot be called merely cosmetic; it has been essential in creating the feeling that an architectural community exists in San Francisco. If they have more to offer than cash-for-culture and slickly detailed highrises, they should show it.

Dan Solomon, like the best European exhibitors, feels the "Presence of the Past" is due not to a resurrection, but to persistence. His display, admittedly showing off the commissions he has been lucky enough to get, concerns San Francisco's urban pattern of streets, blocks and building types; how planning laws favoring highrises with plazas in front disrupted it, and how new planning laws and new patterns of investment can restore and extend the urban fabric. One may agree or disagree with his analyses and proposals, like or dislike his style, but one's response is no mere matter of taste; behind his urban gateway is a description of our city, with proposals deriving from this interpretation which are either to be approved, amended or condemned. ■

The Presence of the Past San Francisco 1982

A. ENTRANCE/EXIT LOBBY

1. William K. Stout Architectural Books
San Francisco's distinguished architectural bookstore has provided a Pier 2 branch with a wide variety of literature on architecture.

2. Entry Gate Competition

On display are 23 designs selected from the 171 entries submitted to the competition to design a special entrance gate for the exhibition at Fort Mason Center. Preliminary drawings for the winning design by Donald A. Crosby of Crosby Thornton Marshall Associates are included.

B. STRADA NOVISSIMA

Twenty architects were invited by the Venice Biennale to each design a full-scale building facade to be constructed of temporary materials for presentation inside the old Corderia (Rope Factory) at the Arsenal in Venice. The facades were restricted in size by the architectural limitations of the Corderia. The architects were asked to design a facade for a home, office, or public building, no more than three stories high. Each reflects the individual architect's response to the theme of "The Presence of the Past"—to use the resource of architectural history as an active basis for contemporary design. Many of the architects are exhibiting drawings, plans, and photo-documentation of their work in the areas behind their facades.

1. Rem Koolhaas/Elia Zenghelis, O.M.A. (England)
2. Paolo Portoghesi (Italy)
3. Ricardo Bofill (Spain)
4. Charles W. Moore (United States)
5. Robert A. M. Stern (United States)
6. Franco Purini/Laura Thermes (Italy)
7. Thomas Gordon Smith (United States)
8. Studio G.R.A.U. (Italy)
9. Arata Isozaki (Japan)
10. Stanley Tigerman (United States)
11. Christian de Portzamparc (France)
12. Allan Greenberg (United States)
13. Fernando Montes (France)
14. Massimo Scolari (Italy)
15. Hans Hollein (Austria)
16. Léon Krier (England)
17. Joseph-Paul Kleihues (West Germany)
18. Oswald Mathias Ungers (West Germany)
19. Michael Graves (United States)
20. Frank O. Gehry (United States)
21. Costantino Dardi (Italy)

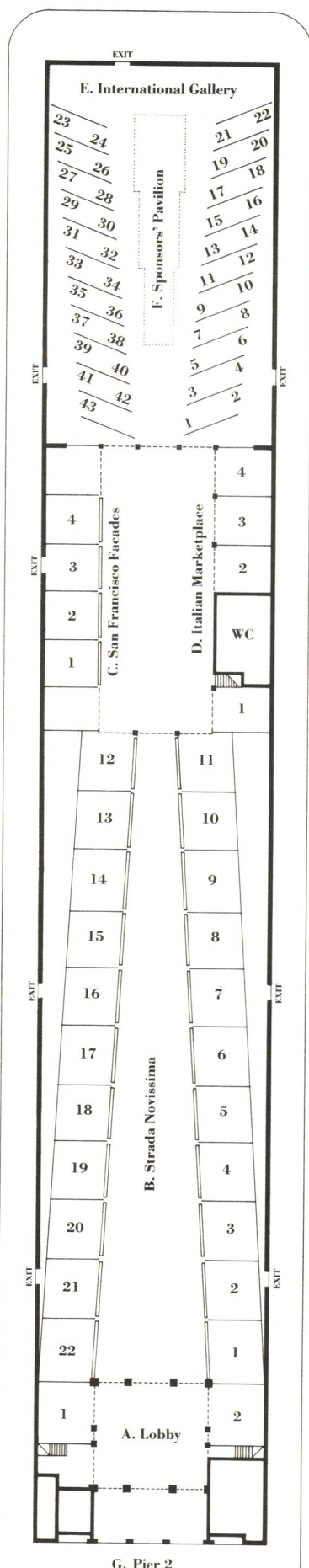
16. HOMAGE TO PHILIP JOHNSON
A special exhibit originated for the Venice exhibition, this selection of 18 buildings shows Johnson's recent interest in "after-Modern" architecture, as well as his earlier interest in historical forms.

C. SAN FRANCISCO FACADES

Four San Francisco architectural firms were invited to create a facade for the Marketplace plaza. Each of these facades followed guidelines similar to those on the Strada Novissima, yet these are slightly narrower to conform with the bays of Pier 2 and to better represent the scale of San Francisco houses.

1. Andrew Batey and Mark Mack,* Batey & Mack
2. Daniel Solomon, Daniel Solomon & Associates
3. William Turnbull,* MLTW/Turnbull Associates
4. Jared Carlin, Michael Chow, Marc Goldstein, Richard Tobias, Skidmore, Owings & Merrill

*The drawings of Batey & Mack and William Turnbull were withdrawn from display in the International Gallery to be exhibited behind their facades.



D. ITALIAN MARKETPLACE

Exhibit-goers are able to choose from the finest Italian foods available in San Francisco without leaving Pier 2. A central plaza area with cafe style dining features six of the City's most highly regarded food purveyors.

1. Harry's Bar—wine, beer, and selected mixed drinks
2. Caffè Roma and Victoria Pastry Co.
3. Vivande Italian Delicatessen and Cuneo Italian/French Bakery
4. Modesto's Ristorante and Vivoli's Ice Cream

E. INTERNATIONAL GALLERY

43 architects from 11 countries show drawings, plans, and photo-documentation of their work.

Austria

1. Hermann Czech
2. Boris Podrecca
3. Heinz Tesar

Belgium

4. Yves Lepère
5. Thierry Verbiest/Michel Benoit

England

6. Jeremy Dixon
7. Edward Jones
8. Quinlan Terry

France

9. Jean-Pierre Buffi
10. Alain Sarfati
11. T.A.U.

Italy

12. Francesco Cellini/Nicoletta Cosentino
13. Claudio D'Amato
14. Giangiacomo D'Ardia
15. Paolo Farina
16. Giuseppe Grossi/Bruno Minardi
17. Pierluigi Nicolini
18. Yasufumi Kijima
19. Monta Mozuna
20. Architektengroep VDL
21. Joe Coenen
22. Francisco Biurrun Salanueva
23. Pep Bonet/Christian Cirici
24. Lluís Clotet/Oscar Tusquets
25. Guillermo Vazquez Consuegra

Switzerland

26. Jean-Marc Lamunière

United States

27. Bruno Reichlin/Fabio Reinhart
28. Thomas Hall Beeby
29. John Blatteau
30. Stuart Cohen
31. Friday Architects
32. Helmut Jahn
33. Eugene Kupper
34. Rodolfo Machado/Jorge Silvetti
35. Kemp Mooney
36. Richard B. Oliver
37. Taft Architects
38. Burkhard Grashorn
39. Heinz Hilmer/Christoph Sattler
40. Gerd Neumann
41. Herbert Pfeiffer
42. Ante Josip von Kostelec
43. Werner Christian Wontroba

F. SPONSORS' PAVILION

The Sponsors' Pavilion is devoted to exhibiting current projects of many of the corporate donors to "The Presence of the Past." This material is in no way related to the principal exhibition of the Venice Biennale but, in the words of historian/critic Charles Jencks, "introduces something of the American corporate spirit" into the San Francisco edition of the show. Participants in the Sponsors' Pavilion are among those listed in the Funding section of this exhibition guide.

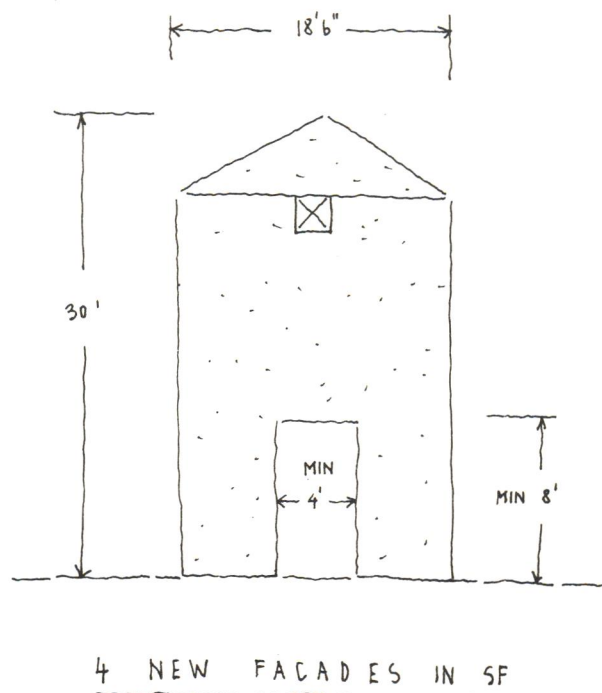
G. PIER 2, FORT MASON CENTER

Built in 1910-12, the Piers at Fort Mason served as a staging area for an Allied expedition in WWI, and as the major embarkation point to the Pacific during WWII. In 1962 the Defense Department moved all its troops and transport operations to Oakland and, a decade later, the old fort, along with several thousand acres of California shoreline, was turned over by Congress to the National Park Service. This land became one of the nation's first urban parks—the Golden Gate National Recreation Area. Today the buildings serve as a community cultural center administered by Fort Mason Foundation.

H. ENTRY GATE

Designed by Donald A. Crosby, Crosby Thornton Marshall Associates (not on map).

The New Facades



The committee of the Biennale (Amici de Biennale) wishes to add four new facades to the original Architecture Exhibition of 1980 in Venice. In contrast to the "Strada Novissima," the new facades will be situated on a "plaza" opposite the eating and seating area of the exhibition, creating a new urban experience. While the original facades of the "Strada" were based on the grid of the Corderia (rope factory of Venice, the original location of the exhibit), the new facades are based on the grid of Pier Two itself, which is approximately 18'-6".

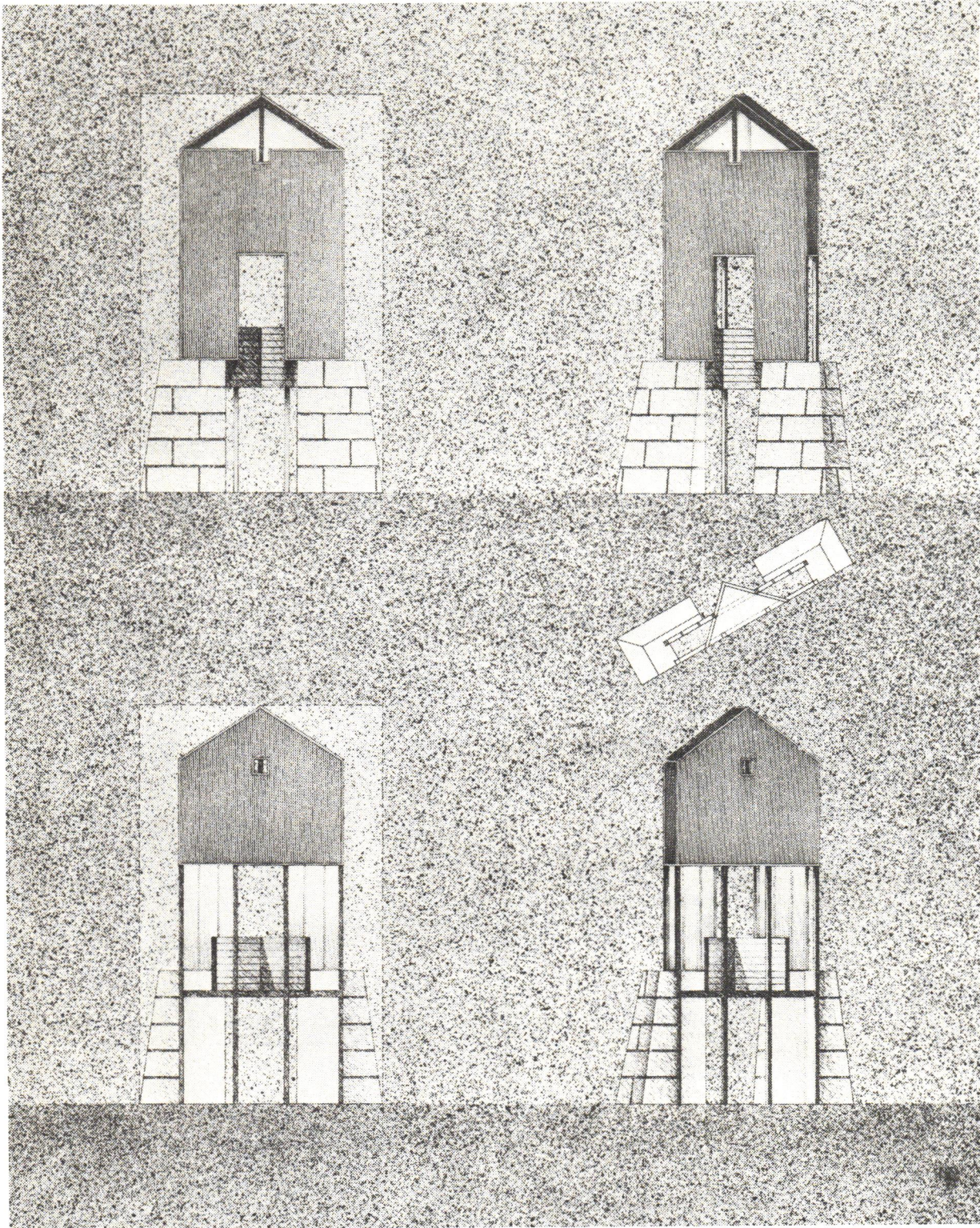
The theme of the facade is San Francisco urbanism. The parameters are as follows: an opening of min. 4' wide on the "ground floor level" and some indication of "three stories." This can be fenestration or any scaler device. The facade should be 30' in height, 18'-6" wide, and 4' deep.

The budget for each facade is six thousand dollars (\$6,000.00). The building technique may be of any sort, but it must be easy to carry out. In order to keep within the budget, one should use low-cost and easily accessible materials, i.e., paint, wood, paper, etc. The back of the facades should be of a minimal finish. See attached information on "Strada Novissima."

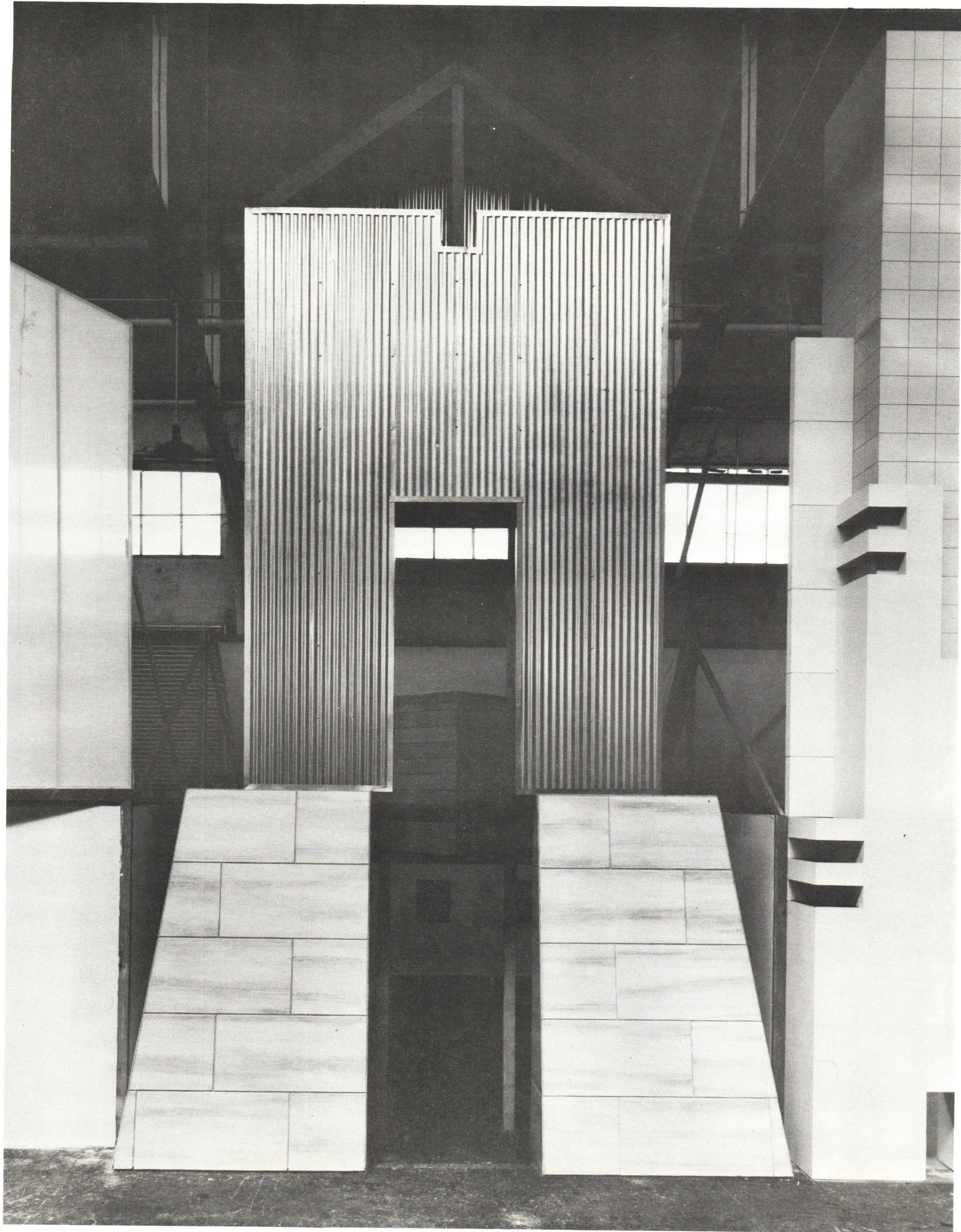
AB & MM

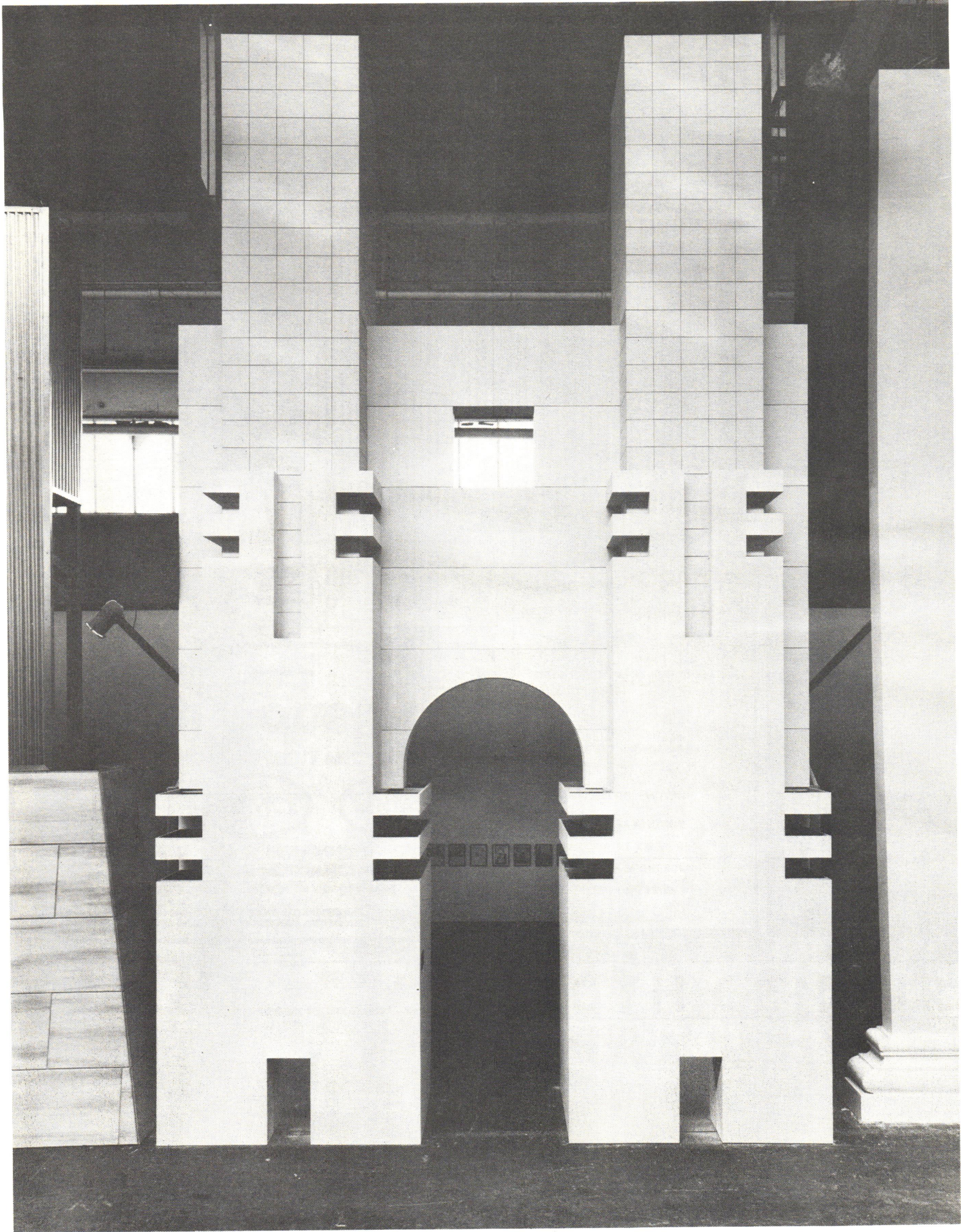
Batey & Mack

Our hut stands as a symbol of our own archetypal repertoire. It arrived from the rural hills of the Napa Valley to the pier as a not so innocent bystander. The hut is made of “real” materials recalling the indigenous and constructional aspects of early California architecture. Elevated onto a “false” (faux travertine) urban pedestal, the hut hovers over the plaza unafraid of being spoiled by the urban and contextual influences. In this climate of aggressive contextualism, where every facade competes for attention, a real context seems to be lost in the shouting. It is our intention to evoke the return to a “primitive and silent” attitude of building, where context is not literal but rather analytical and elemental. This “primitive” ideology provokes a relevant discussion of today’s architecture, falseness (facade) vs. trueness (building). We hope to announce from our fundamental balcony the redemption of architecture through its own primeval truth: the art of building.



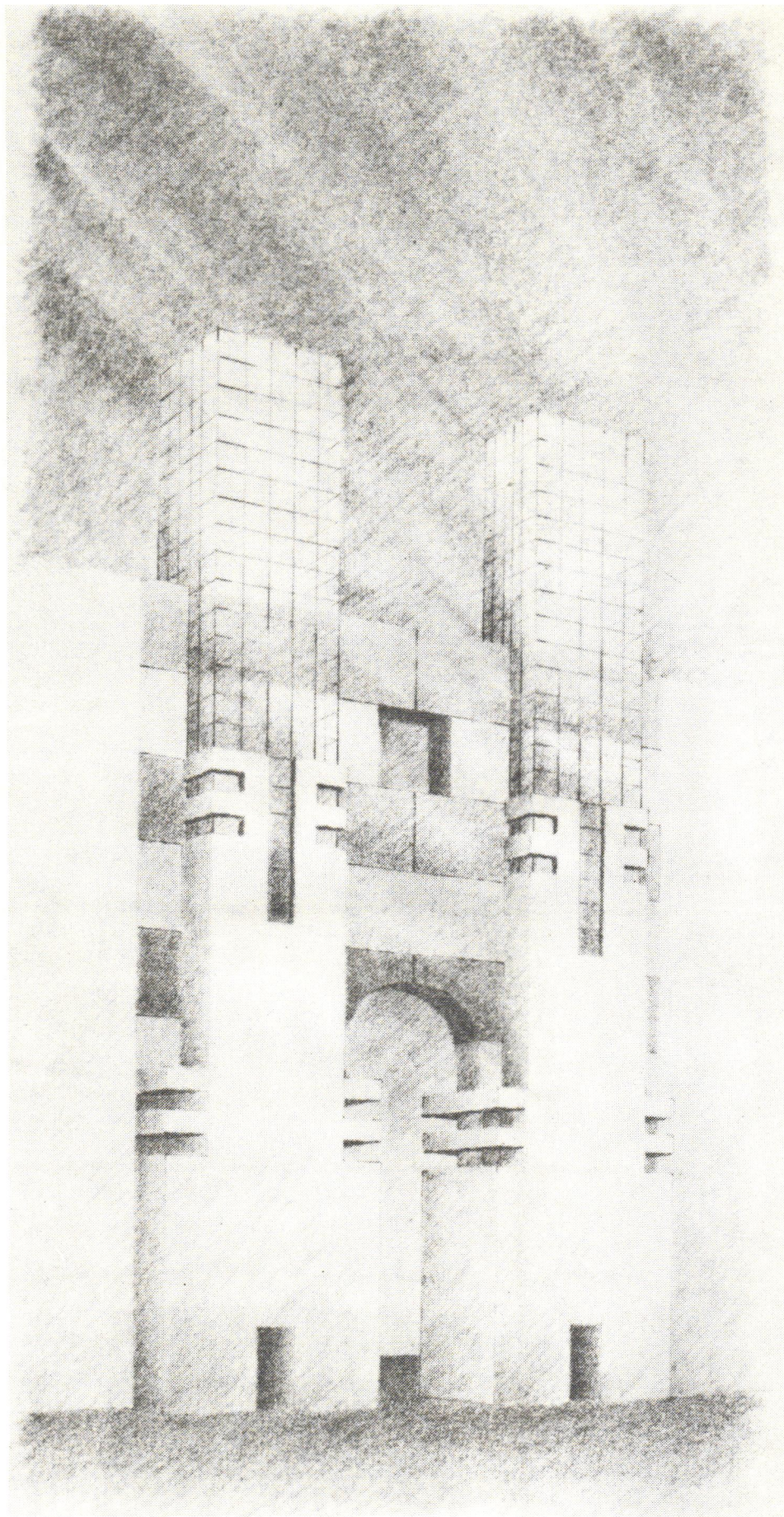
Rendering of the Batey & Mack facade by Bruce Tomb.



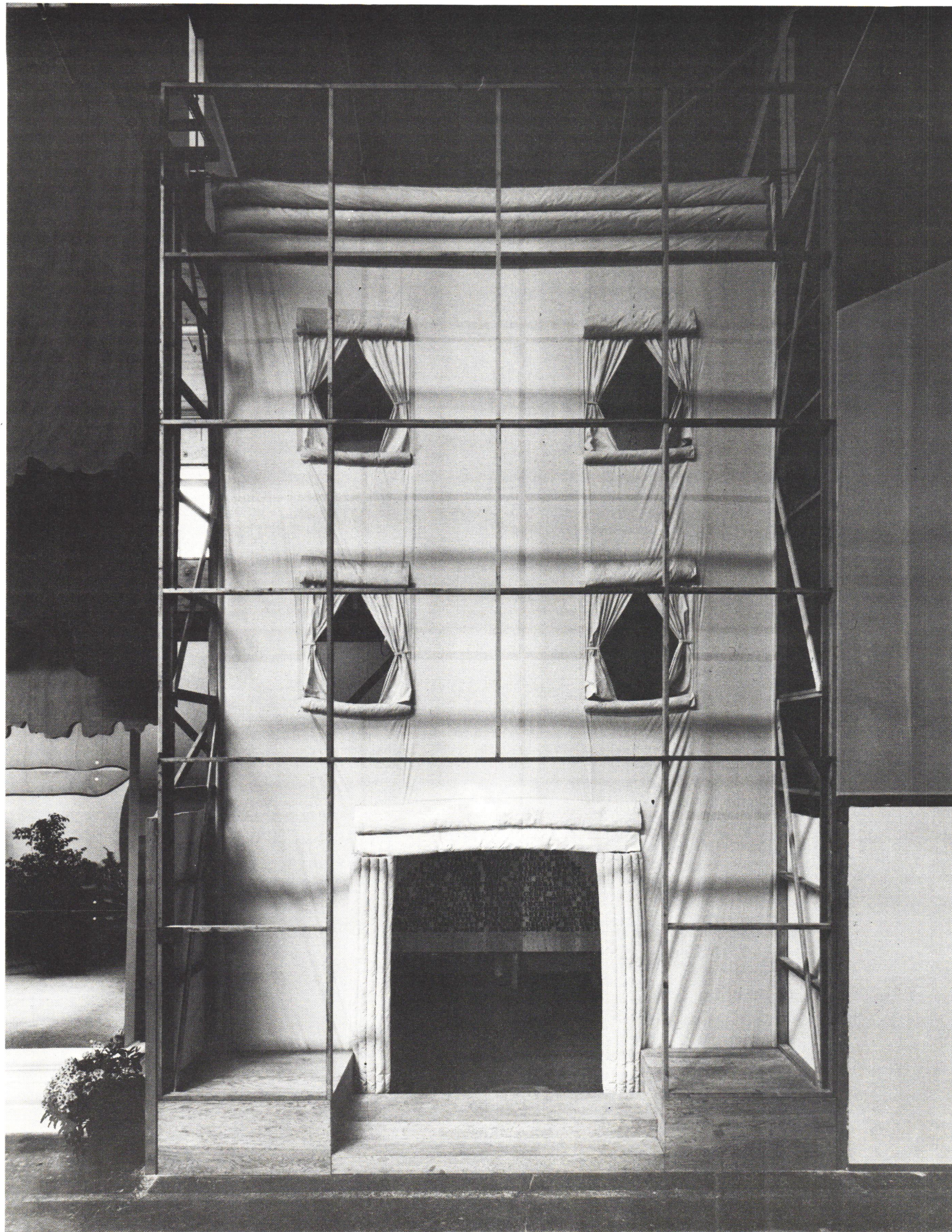


Daniel Solomon

For me, the Presence of the Past does not mean revival of classical decoration. It does mean stretching backward across the catastrophe of post-war urbanism to seize the continuous threads of urban culture at the point they became unravelled. Our Biennale facade is based on our housing design for Oakland City Center. This design, like our other urban housing, seeks to organize the bright, sunlit accommodation of the Modern Movement according to permanent principles of street grid, city gate, and court.



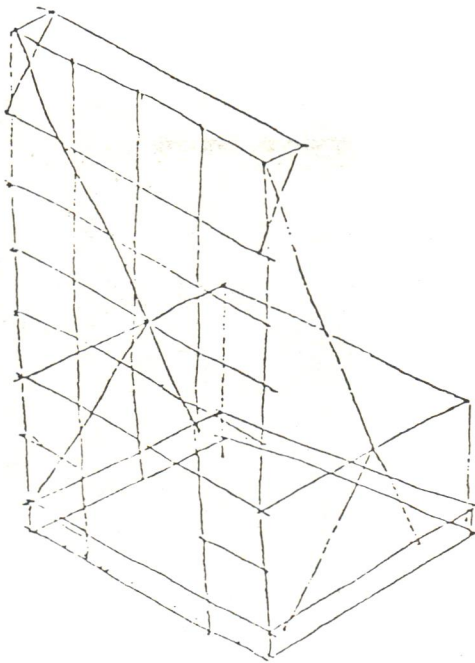
Rendering of the Solomon facade by John Long.



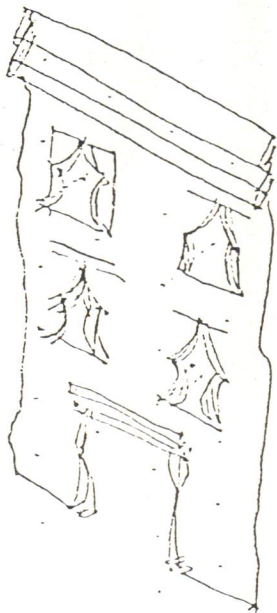
Skidmore, Owings & Merrill

The SOM design may be viewed as three vertical planes. The grid, a frame inherent in the making of many contemporary buildings, forms the initial plane. The curtain wall, also a part of the current vernacular, forms the second plane. Together they form the "facade." Finally, the third plane schematizes the compost heap of history which post-modernism simply drills through but does not seem to burrow within.

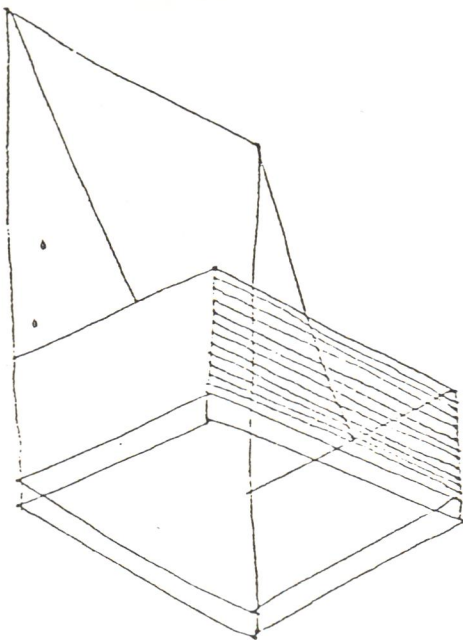
Jared Carlin, Michael Chow, Marc Goldstein,
Richard Tobias, Skidmore, Owings & Merrill



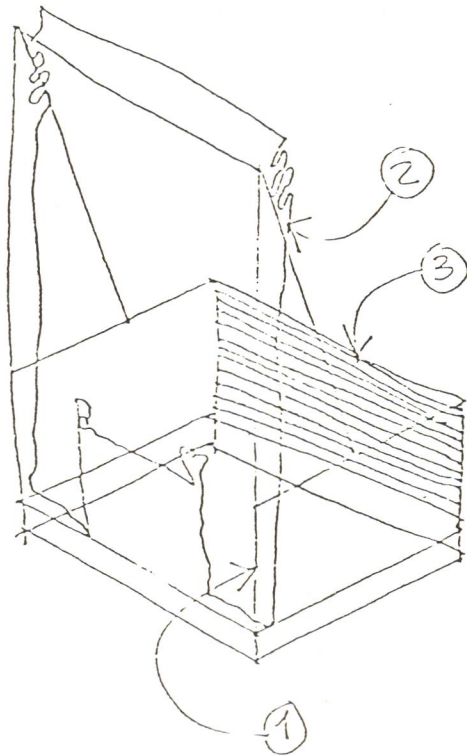
① WALL #1



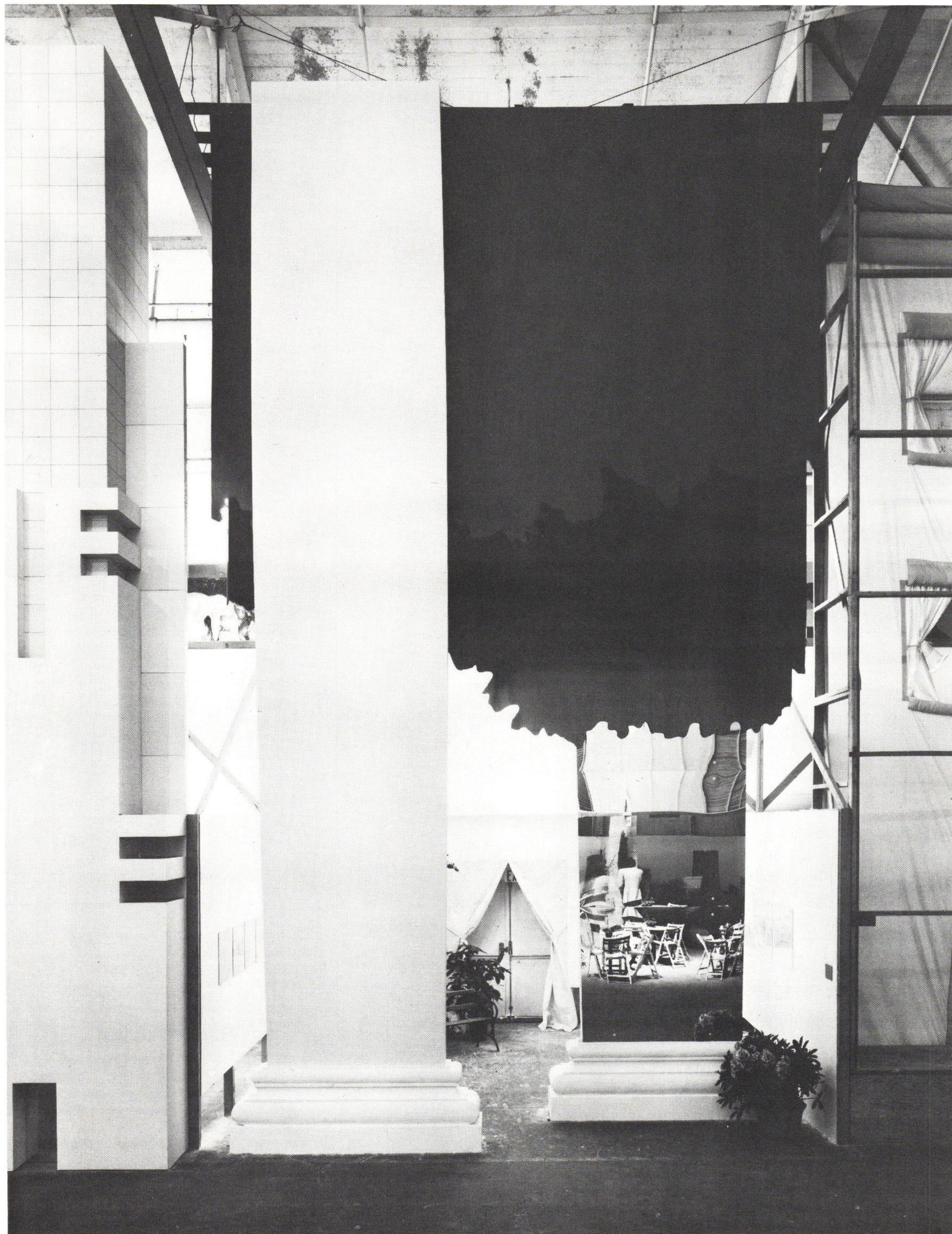
② CURTAIN



③ WALL #2



④ CURTAIN WALLS /
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Necrolatry, or Learning from Los Muertos

by Bruno Sfasata

The history of this exhibition is emblematic of the architecture it celebrates: as it has traveled from Venice (1980) to Paris (1981) and now to San Francisco and Tokyo, this gigantic snowball has picked up new acquisitions along the way. Both the exhibit and the architecture consist mainly of accretions of bricolage which the thin scaffolding of post-modernism is ill-equipped to support.

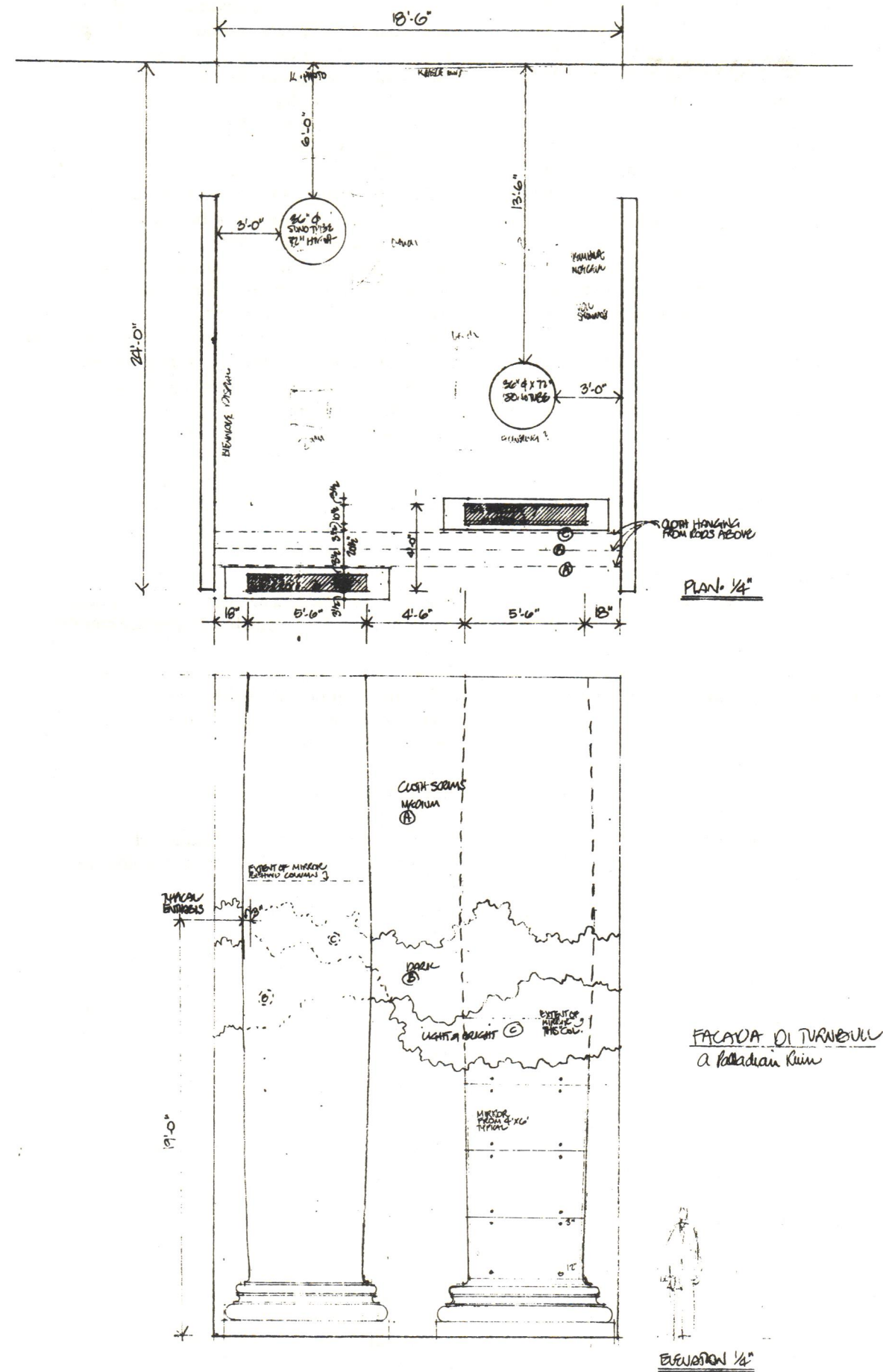
The Strada Novissima cuts into the virgin turf of Fort Mason independent of its *genius loci*. A Spanish garrison in the late eighteenth century and a U.S. Army reserve in the nineteenth, Fort Mason became the center of the Army's troop and cargo transportation during World War II. The Arsenale in Venice was likewise the heart of production in Renaissance Venice, where everything from war materiel to oars, sails, and boats was fabricated. Although the latter has a far older urban history than Fort Mason, both nonetheless have precise and rich references in the urban geography. "The Presence of the Past" speaks to none of this.

In fact, one might even go so far as to say that the exhibition bears no relationship to the theme of the city at all. San Francisco has a rich architectural heritage, as the exhibition and publicity notes, but that heritage is a complex history of public and private space, boundaries and monuments, streets and parks, ethnic diversity and speculation, exploitation, and especially destruction of its oldest and most gracious buildings. Facades as pure facades only bring to mind this rapacious past, particularly when the artifice of these facades is so raw and bald. Somewhere along the line it must have struck someone as peculiar to have an exhibition of *new* works which celebrate the "presence of the past" in a place where the past is manifestly all about us—Venice and its *fabbrica*, and now San Francisco and its Gateway to the Pacific.

From the squat and pitted "amoebic" columns of the gateway to the Strada itself (too well-publicized to merit elaboration here), "The Presence of the Past" is more necrolatry than necropolis. The "polis" in necropolis designates it as a site, a real physical place where the dead are entombed, or perhaps those parts of the city which shelter its past—in San Francisco, for example, names of places which no longer exist, such as the China Basin. Necrolatry, on the other hand, is worship of the dead, the use of ritual or formulae to pay homage to them. "Necrolatry" is tied not to a site but to belief and to ritual, and as such bears only the most tenuous relationship to anything tangible—much like these fragile and disembodied facades.

Not an urban past, then, nor the real past of a real site, but rather an illusion drained of reality and fabricated of fantasy and illusion. Perhaps here, with this post-modern and well-traveled Biennale, necrolatry grounds itself in reality by becoming necrophagia, and the carrion is the dismembered body of the discipline of architecture itself. ■

Bruno Sfasata is a freelance critic for Italian and American architectural publications; this is his first article for Archetype



Facade Di Turnbull, A Palladian Ruin
Working Notes

1. Sono tube columns to be painted, color to be selected. Provide 1" plywood tops. Rent 6" diameter flowering trees in terra cotta pots.
2. Colors to be selected: Hangings: Dark, Medium and Kelly green. Columns: light light lavender white. Light light blue white. Shadow colors to accent bases.

3. Mirrors: Fasten with standard rosettes. Edge with sheetrock J moulding.
4. Hang drapes from metal pipe at ceiling.
5. Sheetrock: Flat finish. Spackle base as required to achieve profile and accept paint.
6. On ceiling in front of columns give 9" piece of mirror the width of column.

Charles Jencks and Paolo Portoghesi

Charles Jencks

A competition for the entry gate to Fort Mason in celebration for the Presence of the Past exhibition was held in January of 1982. One hundred and seventy one entries were scrutinized on March 26th 1982 by Charles Jencks, Maggie Keswick, Thomas Gordon Smith and Francesca Valente. Andrew Batey observed the process for Archetype. Jencks was really in charge and we interviewed him afterwards not merely about the gate competition but about architecture. Since Jencks has been so closely identified with Post-Modernism, one sensed a certain sense of remorse or self-blame for the course upon which architecture has embarked. It was advertised that Jencks would be a judge and he felt that this influenced the submissions. The following interview attempts to assess Jencks' position with this in mind.

In setting the gateway project, we wanted to set several important problems. One was arriving by car, the automobile, through a gate; a modern chariot of fire which has been suppressed in most cities. Nineteenth century train stations used or celebrated this concept. We said the gate had to signal San Francisco-ness and Venetian-ness and the Presence of the Past. All of which you could say are not very important ideas, but at least they're ideas directly from the exhibit. They are appropriate, and it is a valid challenge.

Out of 171 entries—and 171 is a lot of entries—there was a lot of creativity and vitality. But it was interesting that no one or no ten people emerged as often in an exhibition or competition of this kind. There are usually two or three very good schemes and clear winners. There weren't in this competition. Instead there were a lot of failed jokes and all sorts of things. There were certain categories that the majority fell into because, I feel, we don't have a tradition of representation re-emerging.

Representation is, in architectural terms, a literal as opposed to figurative use of symbols, icons and signs. So it could be writing on the wall, an identifiable figure or a conventional one. When asked to design a gateway that represents San Francisco and Venice, most of the entrants fell into kitsch because they lacked a tradition which allows representation to exist without dominating other concerns. Although critics who ally post-modernism to the consumer society and to kitsch obviously have a certain validity (as shown by the entrants to the portal gate competition), up until six months ago it hadn't been so commercialized. It has been involved with commerce: the big firms in New York are doing it and don't even know quite why they're doing it. They know that it's very popular, and so, in a sense, that is destroying the movement.

...And to take Frampton's position of saying that any accessible language, any images that are figurative tend towards kitsch, is to avoid the really difficult problem today: to find valid content in our architecture and represent it. Technology and abstraction are no longer valid content for representation.

The reaction to events such as this gateway competition are natural, but they are part of the problem, not a solution. I would say this: If one

looks at representation, it has to be first of all multiple-coded in order to overcome the one-liner.

Let me go back to the idea of polysemy or types of ambiguity. Supposing you use four systems of meaning and you overlay them. Then they tend to give you a rich result which avoids kitsch simply because of the interaction of those meanings. It doesn't necessarily avoid it, but it certainly avoids the one-liner effect. And I think that's something that could be taught and is of interest when it gets over the modernist or exclusivist problem.

Now ornament in our culture does tend toward kitsch, but obviously it needn't. Ornament has a kind of multiple coding. There are seven or eight different things it can do. It can give scale to a building. There are aesthetic codes of ornament around a credible content. They don't believe in what they're asked to design. There's a very direct correlation between credibility, which is necessary for the public realm, and the design act. If you don't believe in what you're trying to represent very strongly, then you'll fall into the realm of kitsch.

Stylization is terribly important and removal from the cliché. You have to use cliché. But you have to stylize it in such a way that it doesn't short-circuit the perception of the sign.

It seems to me that any great designer—I mean Corbu or, I would say, Graves—has a mind stocked with historical memories, some of which are popular. And he can draw on that as a storehouse. He knows how to displace the cliché, but he can still call on it. So it's like any living language which is both mixed up with a repetition and a difference. You can teach this. I would, I guess, go back to a traditional role, of classicism and the Beaux-Arts, although God forbid both.

The latest issue of *Free Style Classicism* shows the shift in my own style of thinking, and a shift in your thinking towards a voluntary simplicity, which is a response to the understanding of our awkward juncture in history. We are in this runaway situation where we have to simplify certain things. The situation is like Pandora's box, but I don't look at it negatively. I think what we must do when Pandora's box is opened is to look through the mess and identify what is really good. I have a feeling that a lot of people want to shut the box again. I wouldn't do that; it can't be done anyway. The modernist kitsch that was unleashed by the modern movement was no better or worse than the present day post-modernist kitsch. They're exactly equal, and they're both the result of consumer society.

I have argued that our problem is not one of form, but one of content. Living in a post-Christian society, which believes almost nothing, I think we are historically unique in the sense that we are agnostics. We don't believe in Capitalism or Communism. All the major ideologies have failed. We don't even believe very much in having a gross national product that grows. In England, the working class doesn't even want to be better off. I mean you'd think the basic human drives would go on, but they don't. This is a kind of degree zero of content in culture and it's a disaster for architecture.

Since society—the client—has become more or less confused—agnostic—we then fall back on history. What else could we do? I mean we take out our loan from the bank of history and we hope. That's helped for five or ten years to fill this vacuum of content, but it can't go on much longer. Because it comes in the form of deficit spending and produces kitsch. We need to identify areas that are credible.

And they may be small and minor, but I feel that they are around. The notion of anthropomorphism is one. Basically it's the ultimate fallback. You can fall back on the human condition and anthropomorphism. And obviously notions of community, notions of the city. I feel that the city culture is the most vital philosophical position today. We all more or less live out our existences in cities. It's either the world-village or the city. It's the background for action. So I think that although we do live in an agnostic culture, it isn't degree zero. To think that it's completely zero-degree would be to fall again into kitsch.

Krier has played a key role. The only thing is that it's at the expense of not building. And at the expense of holding a Luddite position for polemical reasons. You know he has unnecessarily polarized the position. He, along with Frampton and, I may say, Vidler and Eisenman and certain East Coasters. If you dichotomize everything into avant-garde and kitsch, you may end up with a very pure position that is uncontaminated. I agree and he (Krier) is a saint. But you know you crucify saints and you get rid of them. Because architecture is public. It has to be existential. It has to be built. It suffers that fallible, political act. You're getting your hands dirty. If you don't, it's not really architecture.

If we come back to architecture and groups, we just formulated this group in Los Angeles called the L.A. School. And like the New York Institute (I.A.U.S.) or the Chicago Group, it is a public interventionist body which will produce counter-schemes, one hopes, and those are public acts. That is public realm. But it's an institutional body and it's formed out of diverse forces and people. I think there's a very encouraging counter-trend in architecture today on the East Coast, and that trend reverses the trend of the last 30 years, which was a trend towards mid-culture. The trend is through the Institute and through a whole lot of architects identifying each other. You find the elite has been reasserting itself in its leadership role and they've been managing to get the top commissions. They haven't gotten them all, but there's a kind of counter-action where we see that the top 15 or 20 architects in New York or Chicago are trying to get the top 15 or 20 jobs going.

Now you didn't find that in the '50s or the '40s or even the '60s. You found them in mid-culture, in the Emory Roths, in the big, corporate—if you like—whores getting all the work. And now they're having trouble. Now they're having to sit up and look at name architects. I feel that this has come from an interventionist position. That's why I think it's very important that every city form a kind of explicit counter-culture, counter-architectural-culture, and create architecture as a culture with the backing of developers, with the backing of the media. What you're doing with *Archetype* is part of the thing, although I think you really haven't yet formed that nucleus of power, money, expertise, and culture. You have not created the architectural culture of San Francisco, although you have all the components. That's what's so fascinating because the components are now around. What is really happening is that the knowing consumer is catching up with us and waiting to be led.

I think one has to look basically at the power structure very explicitly. Who are the top ten corporations that commission the major buildings? Who are the top ten families that run the culture? Who are the top ten performers, as they say in stocks? Who are the top ten architects? And you have

another list: Frank Gehry, Charles Moore, Roland Coate. How can you get the top ten architects to get the top ten jobs and be commissioned by the top ten patrons? It's a very kind of brutal, straightforward question.

Now mass culture is looking towards elite culture very closely. Witness the fact that Michael Graves appears on the cover of airline magazines and he's on the upcoming cover of the *New York Times* magazine and soon on *Time* magazine. Now he has turned into a mass cultural phenomenon. Witness that many other people on the East Coast will have that happen to them. Good architects you know. I mean you may happen not to like them. Richard Meier or someone. But still they are so much better than the mid-cult architects. Whatever one feels about Richard Meier, he's ten times as good as even Marcel Breuer. Now that's very encouraging, that counter-trend. And I feel that you can form a group that the power structure has to listen to, and will listen to and follow if you give them the lead.

Forming a group and having regular meetings at different places, that's how we're doing it in L.A. Every time you meet, you pick up another patron, and another large developer, and another large organization—a large bit of the power structure. And you just talk to them. You get a nice mix of people so that you orchestrate the values you already believe in. And put forward continual events. I mean I think we have to create architectural events. The Biennale is a classic example. We have to create the news and then report on it and then make sure that the culture follows it. ■

Paolo Portoghesi

Paolo Portoghesi talked about the Paris installation to Le Monde on the 15th of October, 1981. An abbreviated selection of the Strada Novissima was shown at the Festival d'Automne in the chapel of the Salpêtrière. The interview was conducted by Mathilde La Bardonnie and translated by Rodger Swarth.

In former times, an architect was frequently asked to design a stage curtain which represented a city. Think of the *trompe l'oeil* of the Olimpico Theater, built by Palladio according to biblical designs, or even those of Ledoux for the Besançon theater. "It's absurd to fixate on the theatricality of the city, for it's the theater which was architecture," says Paolo Portoghesi, director of the architectural section of the Venice Biennale. "Those two simple phrases, 'former times,' and 'theater' would suffice to sum-up, or, if nothing else, to define the theses of the post-modernists: they believe in the street, in the plaza, those urban conventions which express collective values, and therefore an identity. They are as much a dialect, a language, or even particular *cuisine*..."

It is appropriate that the visitor to the exposition of the Chapel of Salpêtrière finds himself in the middle of a theater, in the middle of 14 doors, of 14 architectural self-portraits created by those who have been admitted to the body of the "group" which stemmed also from exclusions... Here, the use of reality is poetic: a play on clichés. No, it's not a *pot pourri*, only a "condensation" of the dreams of those conservative innovators for whom "architecture

expresses an institutional alliance between men and their surroundings, an alliance whose essential element is duration."

"Post-modernism is an ambiguous but effective classification," said Mr. Portoghesi. "This exposition is perhaps 'strange'; it brings together diverse people from different parts of the world, people who move about with the same sense of mind. The United States is no longer the unique center of the post-modernist style. What we see is more like a wave. In Paris there will be less American architecture presented than in Venice. If Charles Jencks had forged the 'post-modernist' slogan, it is after all in Latin Europe that the problems of tradition had been more authentically posed. The modernist movement, that intellectual alliance, was born in Northern Europe. That historic turning point, filled with promises and great hopes, goes back 100 years. And behold, sixty years later, how a minority of specialists extolled the virtues of functionalism in the name of perpetual change. Instead of real change however, it deprives people of fixed reference points, of archetypes, and of conventions tied to the social functions of buildings.

"Architecture cannot be a voluntary act but a cumulative one. To go beyond modern architecture, the architecture which has imposed an international style, is to desire the rebirth of vernacular values; to no longer confuse architecture with technique; to no longer feel that urbanism is ugly. Urbanists affect the lives of millions of people, and no one accuses them, for we know that namely they, as well as architects, are responsible. ■

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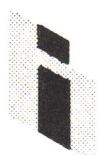
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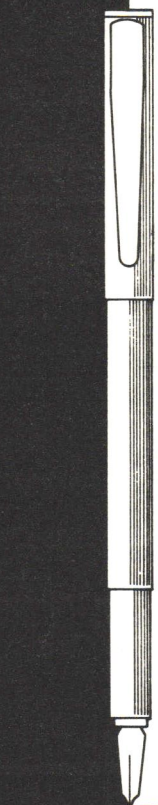


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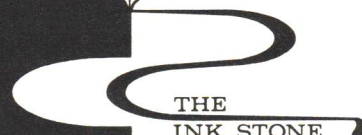
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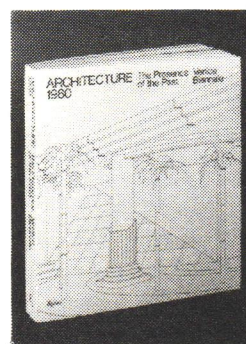
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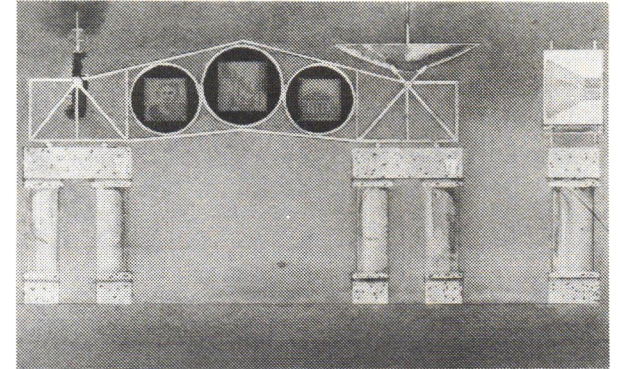
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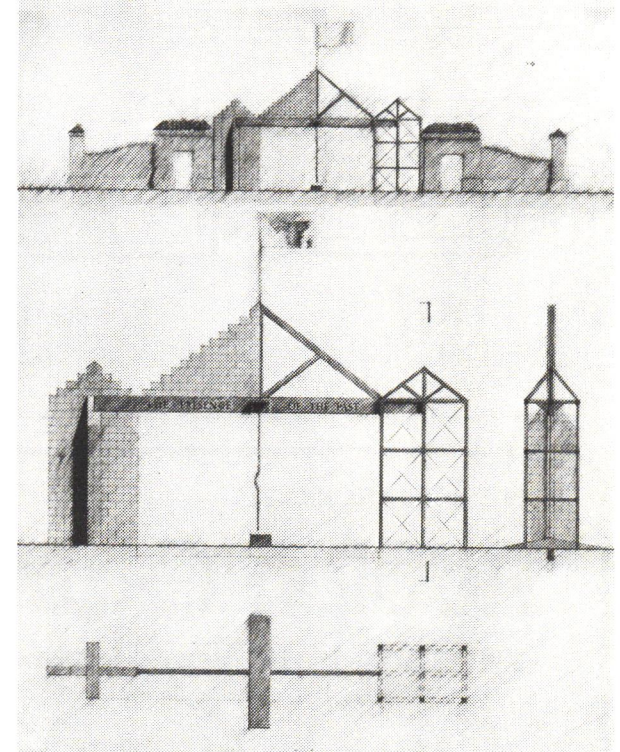
The San Francisco Gate Competition

A competition was held for a site at the car entrance to Fort Mason, at the perimeter of the complex. Bureaucratic obstacles prevented the erection at the proposed location. Now the built work stands directly in front of Pier 2, which houses the show. The runners-up were elegant and intriguing, and we include some of the best of the 171 entries.

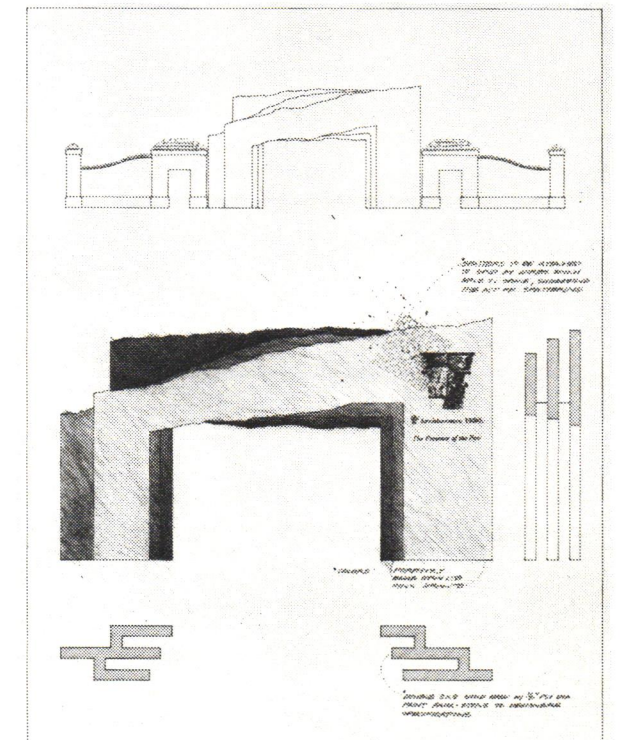
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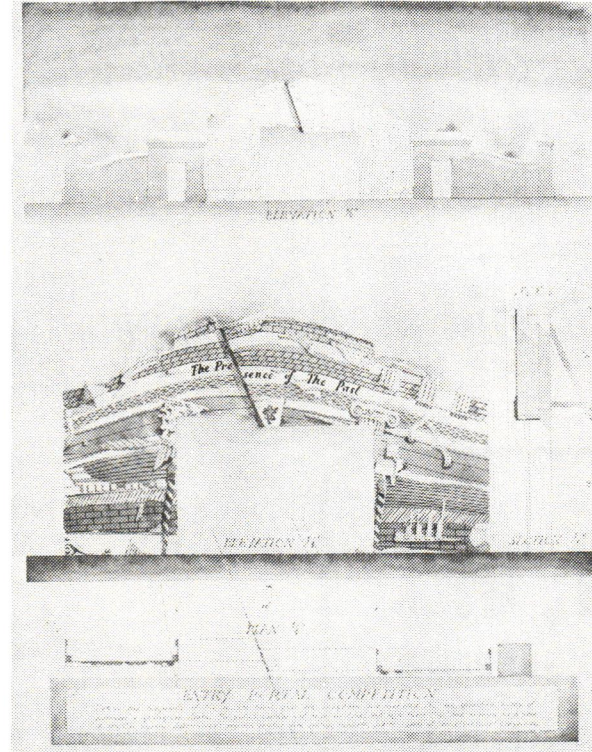
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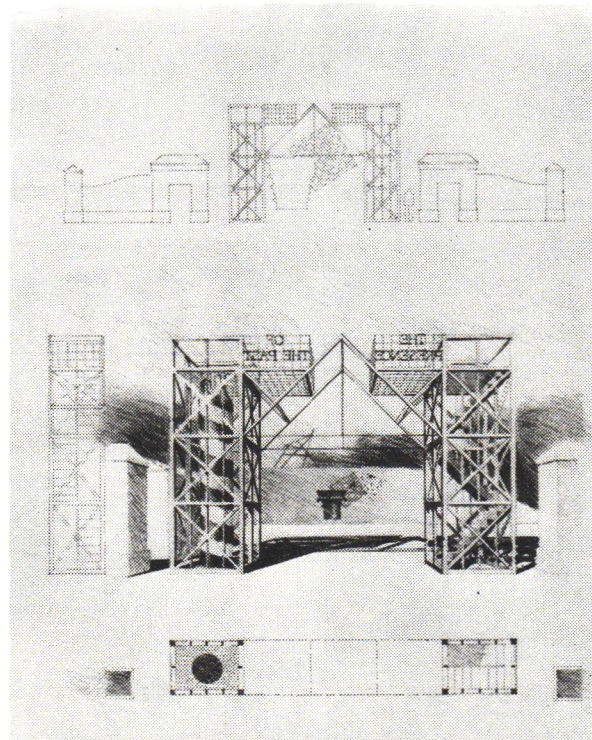
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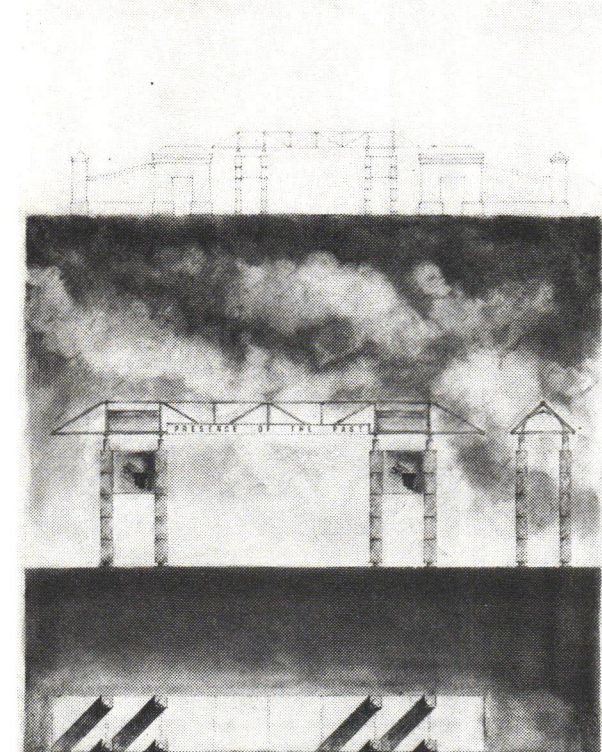
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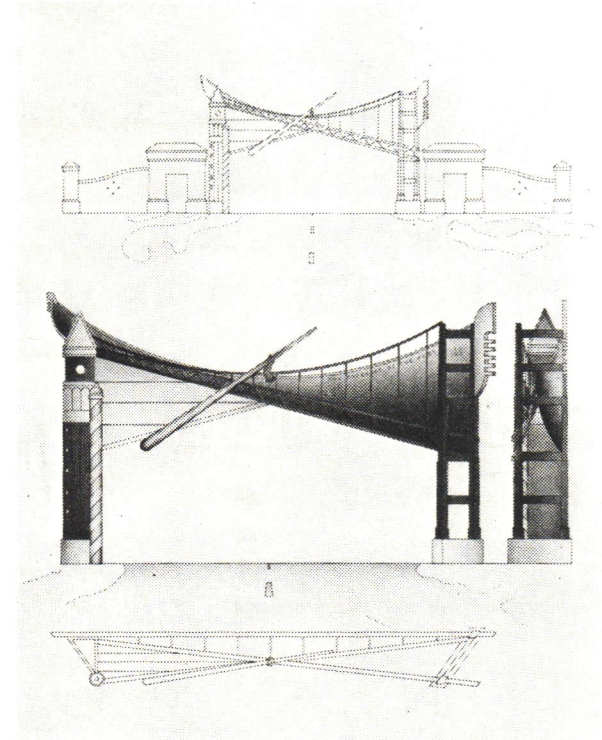
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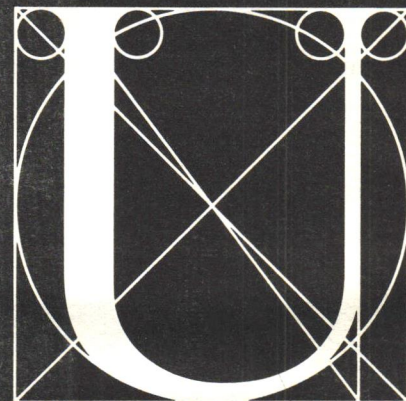
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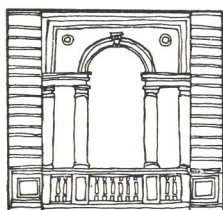
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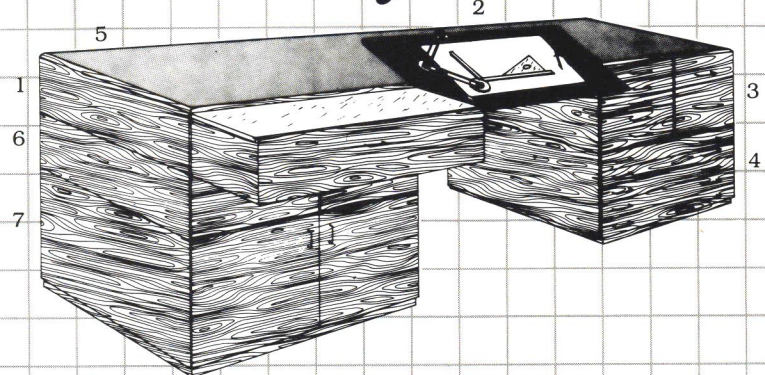
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