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Contemporary Italian Architecture

Interview: Philip Johnson

Outhouse Memories



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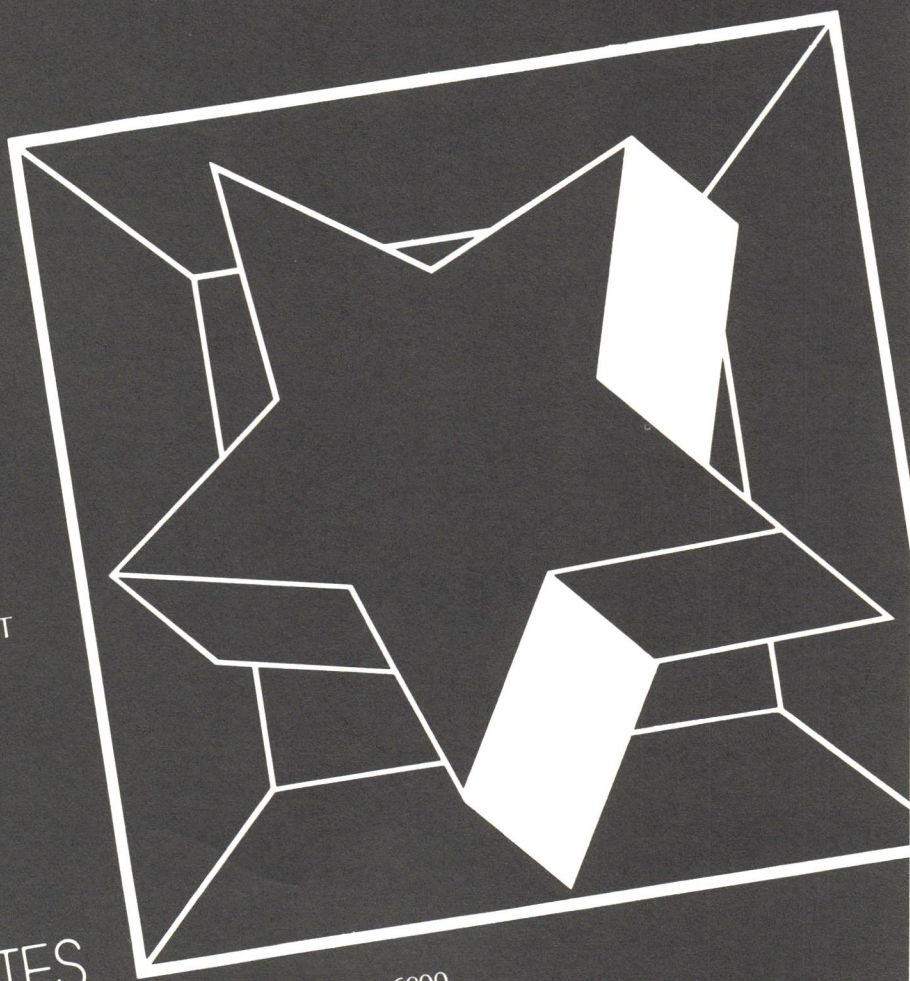
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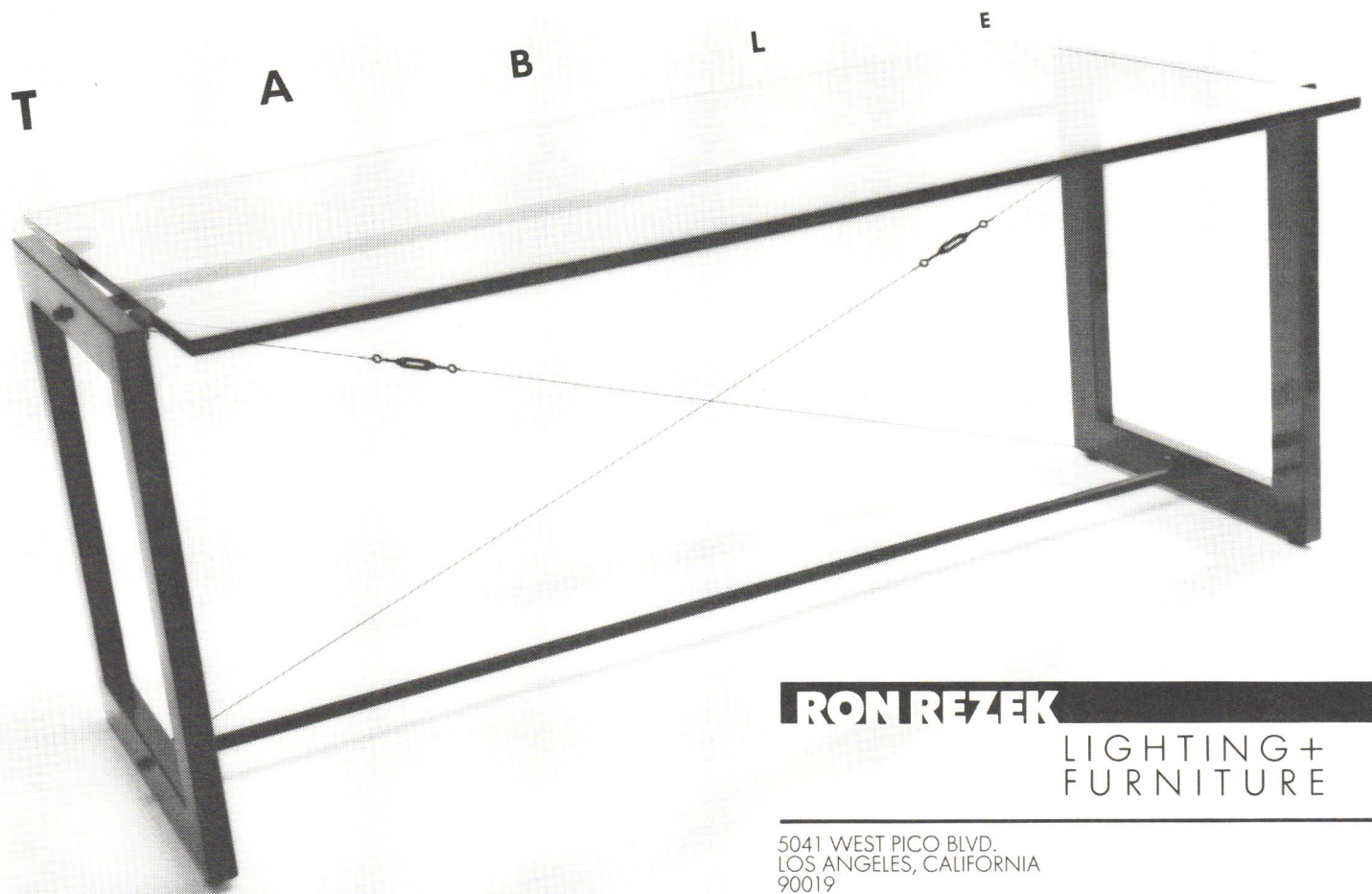
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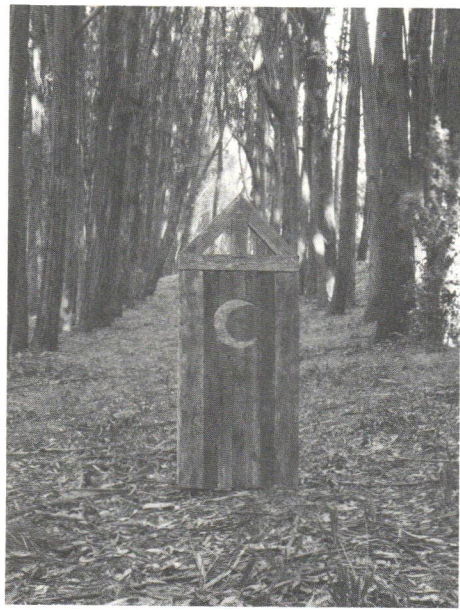
An increasingly important voice in art and architecture. It clearly takes its place beside its predecessor. □ **John Casbarian, Danny Samuels, Robert Timme/Taft Architects**

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ARCHETYPE

Not magnitude, not lavishness,
But Form—the Site;
Not innovating willfulness,
But reverence for the Archetype.

—Greek Architecture by Herman Melville



Photos by Henry Bowles and Kyle Thayer.

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Errata: We failed to credit Geoffrey Schnapp, a Ph.D. candidate in Comparative Literature at Stanford, for his translation of "Proto-rationalist Montreal" by Andre Corboz and Richard Bisson, which appeared last issue (*Archetype*, Vol. II, Number IV).

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Volume III, Number II

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As promised, here is our First Outhouse Competition issue. For those who sent in their often elaborate contributions, it has been a long time to wait for this moment. When Philip Johnson in an interview (excerpted in this issue) at Big Sur, California, alluded to the fact that he had been suggesting a competition for years, he probably didn't think that *Archetype* would take him seriously. But after a handshake sealed the decision, Johnson and his partner John Burgee wholeheartedly supported our efforts and generously donated the prize money. Also we would like to thank all those who sent their sometimes precious designs (we only lost one entry, for which we apologize).

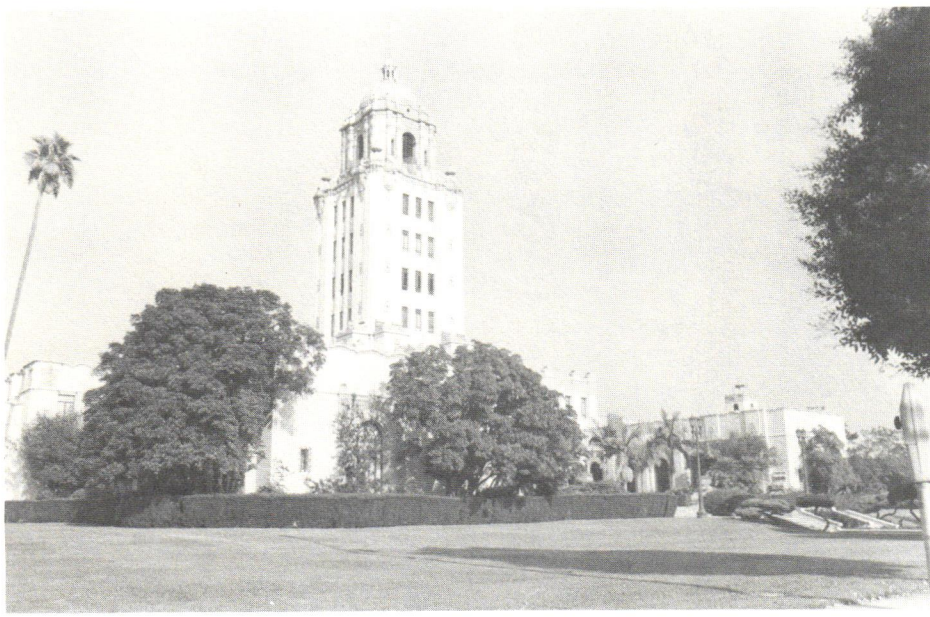
Despite the quest for unbuilt outhouse designs we received many entries that documented existing structures. *Archetype* decided to select the best outhouses of this group, rather than arbitrarily reject them on grounds of being already in use.

Competitions on the West Coast (Portland, San Juan Capistrano, Beverly Hills) are now fairly common, although doubts can be raised about their contribution towards improving the architectural culture. Perhaps their limited scope and elite nature sheds twilight onto this practice, which is widespread in European states. In Germany, for instance, while most competitions are open only to licensed German architects, their belief in competitions is still enormous. A couple of entire magazine sections and one exclusive magazine *Wettbewerb* (competitions) are devoted to this way of soliciting architectural ideas and solutions.

Both extremes, Europe and the West Coast, lead to

various mutations of competitions in general. On the old continent you have offices specializing in competitions, who try to make a living off of second-guessing the jurors. In the new world you have so few competitions it seems risky either to enter or to organize one. For those who are invited, this risk is offset by some front money which never really covers costs. The effort and cost for the client is usually far less than for a serious study, and usually extends the simple client/architect relationship to a more complete discussion of issues and problems of the project. If both client and architect take risks, the so-called professional adviser—who in most cases chooses the architects and jurors—is the only one who makes money. This new breed of intermediary goes from city to city selling competitions like a modern carpetbagger, turning a contest of values and ideas into a commodity.

Where lies the truth? Competition as a living or as an elite sport? Both have their shortcomings but we still support those systems which go beyond the simple client/architect relationship if only for the simple reason of stimulating excitement and controversy in architecture. Our little Outhouse Competition, as well as the recent Biennale Gate competition, are another category. They address the architectural idea rather than a specific program, and it is these competitions which stimulate a wide variety of people to participate. *Archetype* stands behind these small efforts and hopes that its olympic spirit shines through the foggy architectural sunrise of new and exciting values: *It is not important whether you win or lose, but it is important to strain your head and do it.*



The existing City Hall, Beverly Hills, William Gage, 1932. Photo by Canan Tolon.

NEWS AND REVIEWS

“Giorgio DeChirico”

Museum of Modern Art, New York
3 April – 29 June 1982

DeChirico's canvases reveal an obsessive absorption with a limited number of motifs, of visual phrases, upon which the painter focuses with unrelenting intensity. Each object or fragment is subjected to fetishistic attention, posited in numerous web-like compositions of line, light, and shadow. Its validity is tested, challenged, but never doubted, its integrity remains inviolable. The seemingly commonplace form becomes the cherished, irreducible entity, the ultimate signifier whose paradoxical opacity bespeaks the impossibility of identifying its signified. DeChirico's vocabulary is not a code that can be deciphered. “Meaning” cannot be derived from the particular elements selected, nor can one discern a logic or grammar which governs their combinations. The painter demands that we confront his canvases as totalities, that we do not dissect and analyze, but bare ourselves to the inexplicable and haunting effects of the whole.

DeChirico's compositions are among the most deliberate, the most self-consciously orchestrated of any in the history of painting. They contain nothing casual, spontaneous, or extraneous. From the early paintings on, he establishes a catalogue of elements, an index of forms which appear, disappear, and reappear again. “The Joys and Enigmas of a Strange Hour” of 1913 combines the essential elements of the early paintings: a sculpture of a reclining woman, an arcade, a red turreted tower, a brick wall concealing a moving train, and a pair of tiny figures conversing in the distance.

Once an element is chosen, it is rarely relinquished entirely, though it may resurface only after a gap of several years. The statue of Melancholy appears repeatedly in the early works and disappears during the still life period, only to return in “Roman Rocks” of 1921. Meanwhile, other forms are added to the repertoire along with new compositional devices and color combinations. In general, the works in the MOMA exhibit fall into three chronological groups: the somber, barren cityscapes of 1911–15, the brightly colored still lifes and interiors of 1915–17, and the urban scenes of the 1920s, which range from traditional realism to the surreal. Man is present in DeChirico's canvases throughout, whether explicitly in the pair of silhouetted figures in piazzas or as mannequins or stick figures, or implicitly as the architect of gargantuan arcades or the scribbler of cryptic symbols on blank walls and faceless dummies. A “self-portrait” done in 1913 is a still life featuring two industrial towers, a scroll, an egg, two sculpted feet, and an “X” etched on the wall.

DeChirico's fixation for certain forms anticipates that of the contemporary Italian architect Aldo Rossi, and Rossi has acknowledged his debt to the painter. Rossi makes use of similar motifs: tower, skyscraper, colonnade, and barrier wall. Of more interest than this formal resemblance, however, is a remark by Rossi, concerning his design method, that suggests the inevitable redundancy of an artist's formal repertoire:

In later designs, as with all my projects, its

elements became objects of my affection, of that particular affection which we have for things we ourselves have invented...the first emotions count less than the logical development of the facts, which in turn are self-fulfilled or renewed without ever being repeated exactly.¹

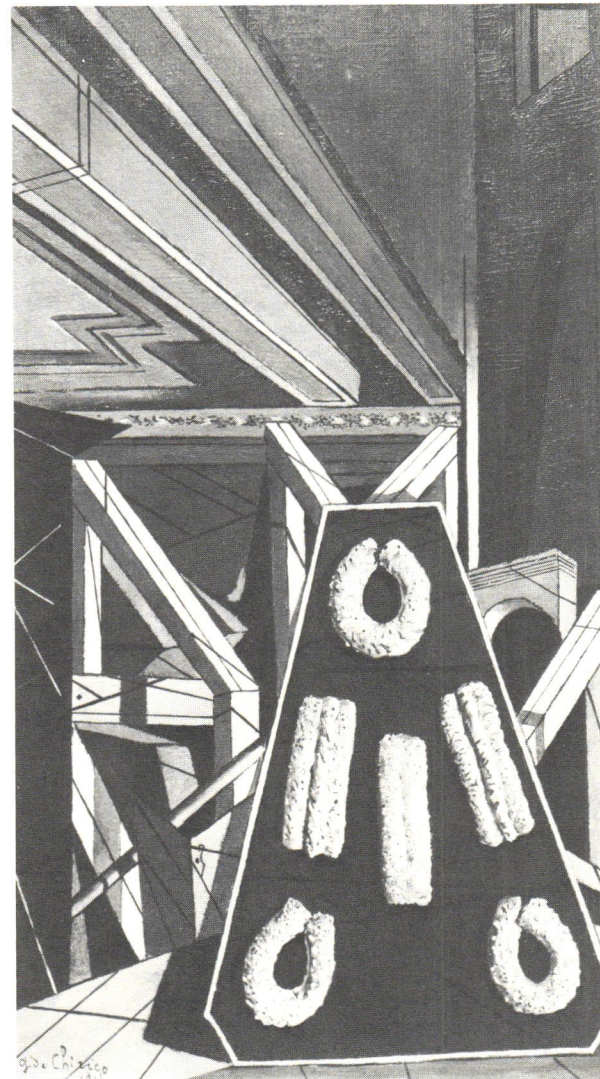
DeChirico's images constantly assert their visual nature; they insist upon being *seen* rather than analyzed. The allegorical and metaphorical titles of many of the paintings do not supply the “meaning” of the works. Rossi has written that “it is sufficient to look at things; art is the singular life established through this relationship of seeing.”² DeChirico's images call to mind Roland Barthes' comments on the objects of Robbe-Grillet's narratives. The writer relies on the sense of sight alone; objects are simply *there*, never alluding to something beyond, behind, or within themselves.³ They provide no thematic index, no metaphorical correspondences.⁴ DeChirico himself wrote that in art “all subject, all idea, all thought, all symbol must be put aside.” Thus, at one level the painter's approach closely resembles that of Robbe-Grillet's “white” writing. On a deeper level, however, the intentions of the two diverge. Robbe-Grillet's project, according to Barthes, is the destruction of the literary object. He divests it of its layers of applied meanings and associations, reducing it to a physical entity in a field of other such entities. DeChirico also sought to disengage objects from the hermeneutic matrix of possible readings. But the object in its physical, visible reality was not, for him, an end. Objects were unwitting and unpredictable signals propelling one into a state of heightened consciousness.

Access to this higher reality could not be assured through contemplation of any particular object or form; it could not be willed. Rather, one had to remain attuned to the visual realm, to be ever-sensitive to the presence of signs and clues which could appear at any time. For DeChirico these moments of insight often occurred in Italian cities, while gazing across sun-bleached piazzas. He would attempt to recreate these scenes on canvas, stretching and folding planes and surfaces to heighten the effect. The ground plane of his compositions often tilts up with the extreme verticality of Oriental screen paintings; the objects in “The Evil Genius of a King” cling to an incline like so many Cézannesque apples in a dish propped up by the inconsistency of its shifting perspectives. At times the ground plane disappears altogether, cropped off the photographic field. The figure in *The Joy of Return* is suspended in an angular, bottomless chasm amid the vertical planes of cardboard arcades.

Space in DeChirico's paintings is defined by the faceted concavity of these papery surfaces; it is the void in an origami of architectural scale. One is conscious of a zone beyond the architectonic structure of the foreground. In “The Delights of the Poet” the ubiquitous train snakes along behind a brick wall, marking, perhaps, a profane realm beyond the sacred calm of the piazza. In other works the cramped, converging arcades give way to a distant green sky that promises a release into the infinite. But this realm remains inaccessible; to wander to the

end of the inclined plane that is the street would be to reach the edge of a flat world. Balancing on the horizon line, one would peer over into the abyss of the universe. Neither can one seek refuge within the architecture of the immediate zone. Arcades are shadowy and foreboding, windows are mere blackened rectangles in impenetrable masses. Thus tiny figures stand cowering in the vast open spaces, huddled together in the anguish of exposure.

The harsh light and sharp shadows of DeChirico's paintings depict a world in which time seems to have stopped. In *The Serenity of the Scholar* a lonely puff of smoke hangs frozen in the sky above its chimney. This is the static realm envisioned by Borges in “The Secret Miracle.”⁵ Hladik, the protagonist, faces execution before a firing squad. At the moment the rifles are cocked he imagines that the physical universe has come to a halt. He believes that God has granted him one year in which to mentally complete the dramatic poem which is the culmination of his life's work. While his mind works away, the world remains frozen: a bee casts an unchanging shadow on the pavement, the smoke from his cigarette hangs in the air. Two minutes later, in actual time, Hladik completes the poem and wilts under the impact of the bullets. DeChirico, too, is obsessed with the suspended moment. The few stories he wrote are often set in piazzas at high noon, at the apex of the sun's passage across the sky. Behind this immobilized world are concealed the devious and sinister workings



Giorgio DeChirico, *The Regret*, 1916. Collection Munsen-Williams, Proctor Institute.

of a reality shrouded in mystery. In *The Mysterious Death* a hearse awaits a hidden corpse. The story merely announces the existence of this corpse, a notation made in the brief interval between twelve-thirty and twelve-thirty-two.

Yet the passing of time is acknowledged, if not in the individual paintings, then perhaps in the series of canvases that line up like stills from a film. Heavy shadows inch across the planes of the piazzas, angling across the spaces in increments, effecting almost imperceptible changes in the structure of the objects depicted. Again the comparison with the objects in Robbe-Grillet's fictions is enlightening:

...an object, described for the first time at a certain moment in the novel's progress, reappears later on, but with a barely perceptible difference. It is a difference of a situational or spatial order—what was on the right, for example, is now on the left. Time dislocates space...⁶

Like DeChirico's forms, "Robbe-Grillet's objects never decay: they mystify or they disappear; time is never a corruption or even a catastrophe, but merely a change of place, a hideout for data."⁷

For DeChirico, each painting is an attempt to create or recreate a moment of insight into the metaphysical. A geometric skeleton, whose forms are "portentous of symbols of a higher reality," underlies each composition. The triangle holds a particular resonance for him: "Draftsmen's triangles haunted me in the past and still do; I used to see them rise like mysterious stars beyond each of my pictorial images."⁸ At times he reveals these pure forms: *Spring* juxtaposes recognizable objects (a shell, a scroll, a sculpture of a boy) with unidentifiable Platonic solids. At other times he conceals them in the guise of objects. The toys of *The Evil Genius of a King* are merely decorated versions of the sphere, cone, and rod. In *The Seer* and *The Duo* DeChirico inscribes stars and circles on the skulls of faceless mannequins. Thus the painter attempts to summon up higher reality through the tools of his artistry. But one can also discover the metaphysical in the existing environment:

...we who understand the metaphysical alphabet, know what joys and sorrows are hidden within a portico, the angle of a street or even a room, on the surface of a table, between the sides of a box.⁹

Of the omnipresent shadow he writes: "its beauty is in its line: enigma of fatality, symbol of the intransigent will."¹⁰ The artist forever strives to capture this reality on his canvas: "one must fall silent when one has penetrated it in all its profundity. Then light and shade, lines and angles, and the whole mystery of volume begin to talk."¹¹

In creating a work of art the painter must attempt to escape the limits of logic and common sense and enter into the realm of vision and dream.¹² There is something mesmerizing in DeChirico's images. He narrates his stories as if in a trance, as if recounting the bizarre and inexplicable events of a dream. Yet DeChirico insists that one must not seek the source of creation in dreams, for "it is a curious fact that no dream image, strange as it may seem, strikes us with metaphysical force."¹³ Rather, we must seek the true essence in the commonplace forms we encounter in actual experience. Significantly, DeChirico uses Schopenhauer's concept of "revelation," which implies a *waking* into consciousness, to describe these moments of discovery.¹⁴ For DeChirico, "Art is the fatal net which catches these strange moments on the wing like mysterious butterflies, fleeing the innocence and distraction of common men."¹⁵

The artist presents ordinary objects in order that we may become conscious of their peculiar ability to transport us into the realm of the metaphysical. Similarly, Peter Eisenman has described the intrinsic content of Rossi's *Città Analoga* drawings as "the universe, the shadow of which they bring into consciousness."¹⁶ Rossi states that his forms derive from the observation and reproduction of his experiences. He notes that "In this process...there is a negative element, almost a basic sadness with respect to what is called invention, or creativity."¹⁷ The sadness does not derive from the artist's being

relegated to the somewhat passive role of receiver of images, but from his struggle to penetrate those images: "The sadness is present when something cannot be resolved with respect to an observed object."¹⁸ In DeChirico's terms, this might translate as a failure to reveal the metaphysical, "the great madness which will always exist and will continue to gesture and show itself behind the inexorable screen of matter."¹⁹ Madness is an appropriate term for these anticipated and inexplicable experiences, which DeChirico refers to as "enigmas."

DeChirico has set as his task the unveiling of the spiritual underpinnings of reality. It is a process of groping, of trespassing into the unknown, eyes wide open, brush and palette in hand. The pursuit is arduous, mystifying, and often fruitless. Many paintings reveal the artist's skepticism regarding man's ability to uncover the truth, whether through painting, poetry, or philosophy. The figure in *The Seer* is a faceless mannequin posing beside a blackboard covered with the tangled lines of some confused perspectival composition. In *The Philosopher and the Poet* two figures gaze at a blackboard smattered with random yellow dots. One figure is the tattered, hollow-headed mannequin, the other the bleached bust of a plaster cast. *The Great Metaphysician* is an unstable totem pole of ill-fitting scraps of wood. *Double Dream Spring*, in which an artist's sketch is propped up against a vivid sky, juxtaposes the thin, cryptic scribbling against an opaque world of brilliant, unyielding forms. DeChirico levels criticism at "systems" of thought. In *The Inconsistencies of the Thinker* he depicts a mannequin, unhinged and dismembered, that cowers, its back turned. The painter once wrote that "There are many more enigmas in the shadow of a man who walks in the sun than in all the religions of the past, present, and future."²⁰

For DeChirico, the quest for the metaphysical often ends in melancholy. The experience comes most often for him, as for Rossi, in the Italian city. Speaking of his countrymen, he states: "Our inveterate gaucherie and the effort we have continually to make to accustom ourselves to a concept of spiritual lightness, have determined the weight of our chronic sadness."²¹ His "disquieting muses" bring this sadness, as well as apprehension and anxiety about the transgression into the unknown. Unlike Robbe-Grillet's detachment, DeChirico finds it impossible to remain neutral toward the objects that surround him. Every form, each contour and hue, is charged with emotional intensity, from the "consoling red" of a tower²² to the "happiness of the banana tree."²³ Yet the qualities of objects are not consistent or enduring; they exchange meanings and reverse functions, sometimes evoking two simultaneous yet contradictory sensations. Thus the piazza of one story is seen as a benevolent realm with its "consoling portico" and "foolish tower," yet also bespeaks death, "a corpse one cannot see."²⁴ The artist must learn to grapple with these unreliable clues and must await their appearance. There is a primitivizing impulse in DeChirico. He expresses a desire to strip away the layers of civilization, the social codes and conventions that hinder our ability to penetrate to the essence of things. The artist writes: "Original man must have wandered through a world full of uncanny signs. He must have trembled at each step."²⁵

—Lois E. Nesbitt

NOTES:

¹Aldo Rossi, "My Designs and Analogous Architecture," in *Aldo Rossi in America: 1976 to 1979*, IAUS Catalogue 2 (New York: The Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies, 1979), p. 18.

²Rossi, p. 17.

³Roland Barthes, "Objective Literature: Alain Robbe-Grillet," in Robbe-Grillet, Alain, *Jealousy* (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1959), p. 14.

⁴Barthes, p. 14.

⁵Jorge Luis Borges, "The Secret Miracle," in *Labyrinths: Selected Stories and Other Writings* (Norfolk, Conn.: New Directions Books, 1962).

⁶Barthes, p. 23.

⁷Ibid, p. 24.

⁸Giorgio DeChirico, as quoted in "Giorgio DeChirico," exhibition pamphlet, (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1982).

⁹Giorgio DeChirico, writings, in Chipp, Herschel B., *Theories of Modern Art* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), p. 452.

¹⁰Chipp, p. 400.

¹¹Ibid, p. 398.

¹²Ibid, p. 401.

¹³Ibid, p. 448.

¹⁴Ibid, p. 397.

¹⁵Ibid, p. 448.

¹⁶Peter Eisenman, "The House of the Dead as the City of Survival," in *Aldo Rossi in America*, p. 9.

¹⁷Rossi, p. 19.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Chipp, p. 449.

²⁰DeChirico in MOMA pamphlet.

²¹Chipp, p. 449.

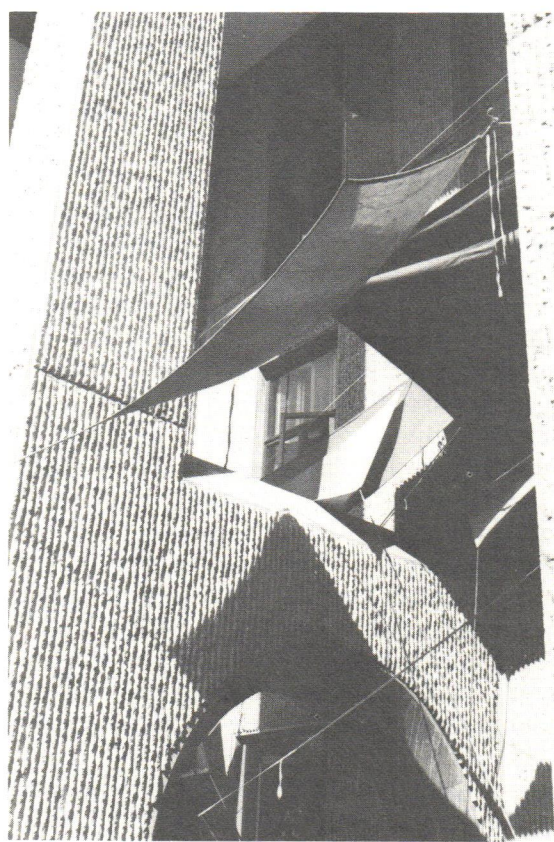
²²Ibid, p. 399.

²³Ibid, p. 400.

²⁴Ibid, p. 399.

²⁵Ibid, p. 402.

Editor's Note: This exhibition was made possible by a grant from Martini and Rossi, Turin, Italy, with additional support from The National Endowment for the Arts, Washington, D.C. Apart from the fact that Martini and Rossi is based in Italy and yet is underwriting an exhibition in the United States, its corporate sponsorship also has the notable distinction of not including an attempt to justify the exhibition on economic grounds or any of the other multiple justifications American corporations seem to need in order to support cultural activities.



Installation by Sandro Martini, Stanford, Spring 1982.

Sandro Martini at Stanford

During the spring of 1982, Italian artist Sandro Martini installed his hand-dyed banners at Stanford University's Law School. This otherwise undistinguished building served as the stage upon which Martini arranged his colorful display.

To say that Martini set up the banners is a bit misleading. Here as elsewhere, Martini arrives like an itinerant troubador with sketches and ideas in hand, but he then enlists the help of members of the local community—in this case, students living in the Italian theme house at Stanford—to arrange the installation. Since many decisions about the display are made on site, this means that Martini and the other participants are true collaborators. He finds it essential to work with the participants over a period of several days to establish a relationship; together they come to an understanding of the site and the character of the work they want to accomplish there. Apart from the relationship of the banners to the architecture and the dramatic possibilities the work opens up—they transform the otherwise forbidding exterior of the Law School—Martini's installations are true sculptures in that they commemorate event and celebrate site. Indeed, with the banners, event and site are inseparable—a condition uncharacteristic of most modern outdoor sculpture. Likewise, instead of being a permanent fixture typically totally unrelated to the site, Martini's banners are temporary and fully dependent upon the particulars of the site.

—Diane Ghirardo

Cities: Urban Lessons for San Francisco

Given the current infatuation with urbanism, contextualism and the City, it is hardly surprising that the lecture series at the Galleria last fall, "Cities: Urban Lessons for San Francisco," generated considerable interest in the architectural community. The fourth annual series sponsored by the San Francisco chapter of the AIA and the Museum of Modern Art presented six major figures: Reyner Banham, Heinrich Klotz, Moshe Safdie, James Wines, Spiro Kostof and Bernard Rudofsky, each of whom were supposed to address the question: "What makes certain cities great?" The far more complex question of how urban lessons learned in London, Frankfurt, Berlin, Los Angeles and Jerusalem can be applied to San Francisco was left largely unanswered and in some cases unasked. Local geographic, climatic and political conditions may play a greater role in urban growth patterns than we realize. The fascinating, if sometimes academic speakers only vaguely delivered what was promised in the title, and what is a genuine need today in this city: insight into the possible future course of San Francisco's growth.

In his witty and erudite talk Reyner Banham discussed the merits of three cities, two of which he knows well—London and Los Angeles—and one not so well—San Francisco. He is able to call L.A. a great city for the sheer chaotic urgency that somehow binds it together, and he admires London for the way in which its relatively homogenous urban texture of terrace housing is gently pierced by rays of individual expression.

Decidedly more cautious in discussing San Francisco, Banham admits it is a great city without saying exactly why. Clearly enough, however, San Francisco exhibits the four qualities that Banham feels distinguish the city from simply a large urban settlement. 1) Cities are elitist. 2) Cities attract talent, creating a large pool of displaced strangers. 3) People in cities have to re-invent meaningful human relationships, thrown out or forgotten when the security of the small town was rejected. This explains the obsessive production and consumption of culture and art in the city. 4) Cities are dangerous.

For planners and architects to tamper with any of these qualities, Banham feels, is to risk upsetting the balance of opposing forces by which one can call a city great. Whatever the intellectual merits of being able to see crime and opera as necessary by-products of a city, this position will hardly win broad popular support.

Henrich Klotz, director of the *Deutsche Architektur-museum* in Frankfurt, and the series' second speaker, is able to put the contradictory forces into productive practice. Many of his city's historically significant *villae* were in danger of becoming costly unused relics until the results of a state-sponsored building competition created seven new public museums. Many internationally known architects participated, including Richard Meier, J. P. Kliehaus, O. M. Ungers, and Leon and Robert Krier. Anticipating our question of why a city needs so many museums Klotz said, "People are always in search of things to do with their free time. Believe it or not, last year in Germany museum-going was more popular than soccer, long the national pastime." Banham's comment that urban dwellers have to re-invent relationships finds echo in Klotz's report on the current German obsession with museums. The important lesson to be learned from Frankfurt is, of course, successful conversion of old buildings to new uses.

Moshe Safdie, the series' third speaker, submerged any lessons in the old-guard pomposity of a Harvard professor. "To my surprise," Safdie gushed after showing a design of a canal and lake he did for a developer in Australia, "the familiar-looking S-curve of my canal fits perfectly the plan of the Grand Canal of Venice." The discovery came after working drawings had already been completed. It certainly is reassuring to know Safdie can draw such illustrious models from his unconscious. To be fair, however, his projects for the reconstruction of Jerusalem, the historical site of historical sites, were very impressive.

In his slick and entertaining lecture, "Identity in Density," James Wines barely touched upon the prescribed topic of what makes a city great. Instead Wines used the lecture format to promote SITE's latest project, *Highbury of Homes* (see book review of

Highbury of Homes, this issue). The research behind this interesting project approaches from a number of different angles the question of how to achieve individuality in a high-density urban context. Wines showed slides that reflected the scope of this research, everything from failed modernist utopias to the patterns of variegated cladding on Hoboken row houses. SITE, with Wines as spokesman and prime mover, has put together an attractive and convincing profile of what stands to be a very controversial project, although the now popular "aesthetic of dumbness" Wines invoked was greeted with only blank looks (and wincing) from the audience. By the time the slides dissolved into a SITE promotional film, it was clear that the audience would leave the Galleria well entertained and stimulated, but doubting whether SITE's answer to the identity-in-density question would work in San Francisco. As Wines himself pointed out, this city is blessed with a large number of older houses and flats that very directly reflect the identity of the owner.

In contrast to Wines' easy-going style, U.C. Berkeley professor Spiro Kostof delivered a highly academic but no less provocative lecture called, "The Aesthetics of Demolition: An Historical Look at Urban Renewal." This sober and impeccably researched presentation levelled a scathing critique of modern urban renewal practices (starting with Hausmann's Paris), by way of chronicling the gradual process of change typical of the growth of ancient and medieval cities. Obviously the grid is the culprit in this story because it swiftly and violently imposes its logical order onto the older city's untidy vitality. Without sounding preachy or overbearing, Kostof allowed the power and subtlety of historical antecedents to shine, pointing the way for intelligent growth in our own day.

The last speaker in the series, noted author Bernard Rudofsky (*Architecture Without Architects*, *The Unfashionable Human Body*, *Now I Lay Me Down to Eat*, among many others) showed slides of his favorite hill towns and spoke in an unassuming and intelligent manner. Rudofsky is a seasoned world traveller who holds degrees in architecture, engineering, drama and music; the experiences he has accumulated over the years bring an inimitable depth to his words, which command our respect and attention. Following the suggested format very closely (often reading from a prepared statement), Rudofsky discussed hill towns in Greece and Spain, comparing them with America's favorite hill town, San Francisco. He objected to the S.F. grid's utter disregard for the natural contours, but hinted that, even so, the hills gave the grid an interest missing from the many "flat" gridded cities.

Word for word and image for image, Rudofsky probably revealed more urban lessons than any of the other speakers, and at the end reminded us of something largely forgotten in this age of information. Quoting Louis Sullivan, Rudofsky said, "Knowing is of the head, Understanding is of the heart." It is up to us to translate our great capacity to know into a workable and human understanding. Even the most well-intentioned and well-directed lesson will prove ineffectual, Rudofsky asserted, unless we are ready to engage our hearts.

—Kyle Thayer

Portions of this review appeared in City Arts Monthly, November 1982.

Frampton Leaves the Institute

On November 29, Kenneth Frampton resigned from his position as Director of Programs at the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies in New York; at the same time, he severed his connection with the Institute as an editor of *Oppositions*, Oppositions Books, the IAUS catalogs, and as Director of the Board of Fellows of IAUS. That Frampton shaped many of the Institute's programs and set the standard for excellence in its publishing ventures is obvious from the high quality of the work produced. Less well-known, perhaps, is that—despite his extraordinary status as a critic—Frampton is a team player in a profession dominated by solo egotists. With his consistent sensitivity to the concerns of the Fellowship and everyone associated with IAUS, Frampton has been responsible for the lion's share of the

Institute's success.

Frampton resigned because of the recent political restructuring of the Institute and, more specifically, because the Board of Trustees effectively put the Fellowship into a state of suspension. The internal politics of the IAUS have always been byzantine and, on the whole, uninteresting, but that someone of Frampton's calibre finds it necessary to resign suggests that something has gone awry. Although others have left or seem to have become less involved with IAUS, none played as central and as respected a role as Frampton. He will continue as Professor of Architecture at Columbia University.

The IAUS is the loser in this case.

Beverly Hills Competition

Beverly Hills—wonder city of more than a thousand and one tales. A place where day-to-day existence follows no predictable order. Time is almost meaningless. Always ready to make up new faces, this city appears primarily as a stage-set for a glamorous life of perpetual festivity. By the time one has deciphered its story, the city has already undergone another transformation. There it lies before our eyes—brightly—like a patchwork blanket, varied yet patterned, if clumsily delineated and confined. People's faces are always in the lights but they reveal no age spots; not one shadow gives away the nature of their substance.

Beverly Hills presents an image of consumption which completely overpowers the modest image of urbanity presented by a single landmark—the City Hall. The impact of mass-media throughout the years has scattered Beverly Hills' image all over its gridded fabric. The city has turned into a scrabble board, a ground where images are created and renewed perpetually. This city remains an expanding enigma, whose flashy billboards, posters, and neon signs are the clues whose meanings are for us to decipher. The existing City Hall, though considered as an object of pride, cannot bring into focus the scattered image of Beverly Hills.

Designed in 1932 by William Gage in a Spanish Baroque style, the City Hall represented the "objet de grandeur" influenced by the City Beautiful movement. It stood as a symbol of aesthetics as well as morality, representing authority, security, prosperity and unity—in sum, the well-being of society. Now it sits insignificantly on a dormant site framed by two major axes: Santa Monica boulevards North and South; this site was chosen as the place to create the center of gravity that Beverly Hills needs.

"The stage is set for the realization of a dream." The City of Beverly Hills is treating itself to a new image. The City Council invited six internationally known architects to submit designs for a new Civic Center. Participating architects were Eisenman/Robertson, New York; Arthur Erickson, Los Angeles; Frank Gehry, Venice, California; Gwathmey/Seigel, New York; Charles Moore/Urban Innovations Group, Los Angeles; and Moshe Safdie, Boston.

The program involved building a new fire department headquarters, a police facility, a community center, together with the required parking. The library, currently located diagonally across from the City Hall on the southeast portion of the site, is to be retained and extended. The Police and Fire Headquarters lie to the south of City Hall on Rexford drive, and create a messy back entrance. Together with the parking facility, the new Police and Fire Headquarters were of primary concern along with their relationship to adjacent buildings and accessibility through the site. Unfortunately, the constraints of program, phasing and cost created severe conflicts with the original idea of the City Beautiful movement. Not only does Beverly Hills' future civic center have to be a beautiful "display of luxury," it also has to be inexpensive and functional.

It is hard to bring both the civic and the civil image together on the same site and avoid disturbances, difficult to balance these two forces of the administrative and the cultural. One requires a strict and regular pattern, whereas the other needs a looser ground for diverse activities to occur. The future civic center, crossroads for many different activities, must harmoniously combine leisure and duty, dream

and reality. It aspires to be a place for the daily as well as the historical, where posters, billboards, advertisements and signs are on the verge of being elements of knowledge, part of the city's cultural heritage.

After two months of intensive work, the six participating architects submitted proposals to a five-member professional Jury of Award under the guidance of the City's Professional Advisor for the competition, Donald J. Stastny. All six schemes were put on public display for three weeks in September 1982. The public had the opportunity to respond to the proposals before the jury made their final decision. After lively debate in the press and in numerous meetings, on October 19, 1982 the City Council—on the recommendation of the jury—awarded the commission for the Beverly Hills Civic Center to Charles Moore/Urban Innovation Group.

The success of Moore's entry was his ability to capture the dream of Beverly Hills' citizens. He understood and interpreted their desires by making a place which gathers all images as well as housing the civic identity of the city. Moore respects the Spanish Baroque style so popular in Southern California. This architectural language will be attached to the new structures with prefabricated facings. Thus, the diverse administrative and programmatic functions are concealed behind a curtain of homogeneity.

"This design does not treat the City Hall as an isolated and mummified object from some remote other culture," the Jury reported, "but considers it as a part of a larger, still living, still vital organism." Moore articulates the in-between spaces, plays with different surfaces and layers, and transforms the pedestrian's passage through the site into a decorated, leisurely sequence. He proposes a Baroque space, the "market place" of our social and cultural interaction; the outdoor plaza will be the stage-set for the festive and prosaic, with the powerful and majestic image of the city as a backdrop. Although completely detached from the rest of the city, the new civic center will reflect Beverly Hills' versatile character, and become, it is hoped, the gravity point the city has long been searching for.

Second in popularity to Charles Moore's scheme was that of Moshe Safdie. Its major design element

was an open-air central plaza with a sunken exotic garden. A reflecting pool, used to enhance the prominence of the City Hall, served metaphorically as a kind of pool-in-the-backyard, a focal point familiar to the inhabitants of the city. Still his attempt to create a social "market place" fell short; the scheme resembled a shopping mall, a cliché of the well-being of a society. This, together with certain functional problems, led the jury to call Safdie's proposal unsuitable for civic architecture.

Gwathmey/Siegel's approach, on the other hand, was mainly functional. But the severity of its architectural language offered too little to the citizens' desire for an imaginative backdrop for cultural and social interactions. Gwathmey/Siegel exposed and accentuated the administrative element to the detriment of the public spaces. Rather plain and flat-looking, the complex appeared to disregard Beverly Hills' dynamic and somewhat capricious character.

Among the most successful composition of public open spaces was the proposal of Eisenman/Robertson. It concentrated on securing a "civic look," using symbols and metaphors to express an urban architecture, but also contrasted these elements with naturalistic elements. The articulation was so subtle, so meticulous and precious that the citizens who reviewed it either overlooked it or found it dull. In addition, the Jury found severe, insoluble functional discrepancies.

Arthur Erickson proposed a formal setting for his bold, grandiose architecture. Yet the play with numerous axes deleted its impact, while the public spaces crumbled into bits and pieces. Erickson's device of lifting the "skin" of the ground and tucking the programmatic requirements beneath it, resulted in a monotonous repetition of small gardens. Both the Jury and the public were unenthusiastic about the whole proposal, disappointed specifically with its overformalization and impracticality.

Frank Gehry's scheme proposed to extend the city fabric of Beverly Hills into the Civic Center site, creating a scattered group of buildings in different styles that recalled a giant showcase for a collection of knick-knacks. Some citizens were amused by its

resemblance to a miniature golf course; others were offended, taking personally the fact that this scheme made no distinction between cultural places and playgrounds "as if Beverly Hills citizens' culture couldn't overcome the Disneyland looks."

The popularity of Charles Moore's scheme lies precisely in its ability to bridge the gap between the formal and the playful. Its success is due to the correct reading of a community's psyche. Moore is sensitive enough to propose a scheme which neither overwhelms nor underestimates the image of Beverly Hills and its citizens.

—Canan Tolon

New Magazines

Archetype welcomes two new architectural publications: *Cite* and *The Design Book Review*. *Cite* is a monthly Skylinesque review of architecture and design news in Texas, with special attention devoted to Houston. The debut issue included a crisp, critical article by Jeffrey Karl Ochsner on large architectural firms in Texas (a response to an article in *Texas Monthly*), an interview with Cesar Pelli, Houston zoning, Renzo Piano's design for the new Menil Collection Museum, a rejected Graves project, and much more. Intelligently written and attractively presented, *Cite* promises to fill a long overdue need for information about architecture in Texas. For subscription information, write to *Cite*, Rice Design Alliance, William Marsh Rice University, P.O. Box 1982, Houston, TX 77001.

The Design Book Review will commence publication in late January 1983. Edited by John Parman and Elizabeth Snowden, the DBR plans to carry approximately 75 reviews of current books in architecture, architectural history, criticism and theory, interior design, landscape architecture, planning, urban history, conservation and energy. It will appear quarterly, with an expected subscription price of \$12.00 annually. For subscription information, contact *The Design Book Review*, 1414 Spring Way, Berkeley, CA 94708. ■

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Zeppelin Postal Art

by John Wirth

Germany's sleek silver dirigible, the Graf Zeppelin, flew majestically and quietly through world skies until the burning of its sistership Hindenberg abruptly ended (so far) the age of airships. Having flown the North Atlantic in 1929, circumnavigated the globe one year later and opened regular scheduled service to South America soon thereafter, the Zeppelin transformed space and time. Millions in the rapidly growing cities of North and South America watched it glisten overhead. Although the Zeppelin had its military uses—the principal application in this country—it was a most visible mass symbol linking the social and technological transformations promised in the hopeful decade of the 1930s.

Philatelic art in many countries captured the Zeppelin sensation. Today the Zeppelin is an exotic, disconnected postmodern image at play in American popular culture. It is the moniker of a rock group, the brand name for pricey clothing and, most of all, the friendly, scaled-down promotional shape of the Goodyear blimp. (And we know what happened at Lakehurst in 1937.) However, to contemporaries in a number of countries the Graf Zeppelin was a focused, purposeful image, as the postal commemoratives reveal.

The Zeppelin's global reach is most appropriately the chosen image of Germany and the United States, two rival trading nations pressing competitive technologies and different great power interests in the Atlantic Basin.

Aspiring powers such as Stalin's Russia and Mussolini's Italy also found the Graf Zeppelin a useful image. The USSR harnessed Zeppelins to the socialist goal of national integration: it was a new technology to link the undeveloped East with European Russia. For Italy, the Zeppelin served to

symbolize the Fascist aspiration, which was to recover a glorious Roman past while embracing the modern. In each the image is different. The Soviet Zeppelin integrates a bustling tableau of the Five Year Plan being accomplished in four—the future is now. The Italian Zeppelin glides over the pseudo-antique Foro Mussolini empty of the masses who would fill it on command. It is here a power image of Fascism's fatal ambiguity: caught between a desire to ride the technological vanguard and a desire to recover the splendors of ancient Imperial Rome.

Another set of images was offered by some of the smaller countries that participated philatelically in the Zeppelin's coming. On the Liechtenstein and Paraguayan stamps, for example, the majestic Zeppelin arrives as a non-threatening guest from afar—over the Alps or across a tropical Brazilian inlet. Such a sunny view of technology seems lost to us, the victim of wars, cultural uncertainties, and the unintended consequences of technological change. The Latvian airship floats over Riga, capital of a now-vanquished nation.

Brazil's developmental self-image is startling. The Zeppelin was embraced with enthusiasm; a terminal for transatlantic airship service was installed in Rio de Janeiro, just as later an SST strip would be built for the Concorde. Brazil's Zeppelin postal image is

nationalistic; all the Zepp stamps are overprints on Brazilian national themes. The stamp shown here puts the mighty Zeppelin in the same airspace with Alberto Santos Dumont, the Brazilian inventor who flew an experimental airship around the Eiffel Tower. It would be a Brazilian future...not absurd: Brazil is becoming a world economic power. The same nationalizing theme was used later to commemorate the U.S. moon landing.

Despite the dissimilarities in the representations of the Graf Zeppelin by various countries, it provided a powerful image throughout the Western world. In its frequent conjunction with recent architectural realizations, the Zepp symbolized hopes for a better world based upon technological innovation. ■

John Wirth teaches at the Department of History, Stanford University.



Paraguay



Brazil



Russia



Brazil



Liechtenstein

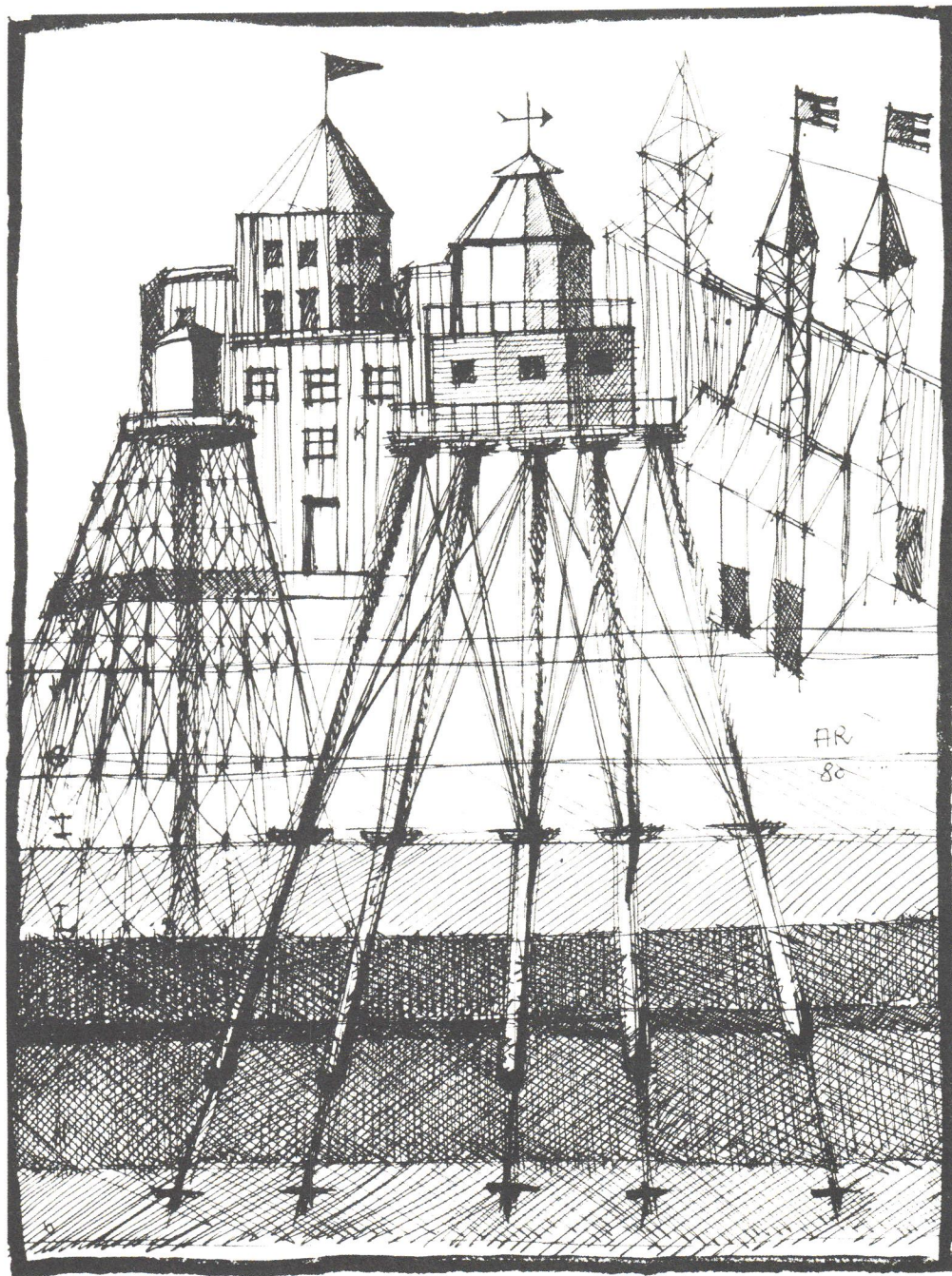


Italy



Latvia

Contemporary Italian Architecture



Aldo Rossi, 1980

by *Andrea Ponsi*

It is useful to re-examine the climate of continuous debate and reassessment of values in the late sixties and early seventies to understand the evolution and the present state of Italian architecture. At that time, Italy was at the peak of a 25-year period of post-war reconstruction, rapid industrialization and technological advancement. The so-called "economic miracle," which had its more exuberant phase between 1955 and 1965, had, in fact, transformed Italy from a basically agricultural society into one of the world's most industrialized countries. During this period, the unification of this new technological capability with a centuries-long tradition of craftsmanship and aesthetic quality created a vast output of finely designed industrial products which became known as "Italian Styling."

And yet, the promise of general well-being was limited. The greatly increased economic and buying power of the emerging middle class stood in stark contrast to the unchanged condition of a large stratum of blue-collar workers, farmers, and the continued depression of the poor and excluded South.

A major consequence of the rapid industrialization process was the uncontrolled migration of people from the South to the North, from the countryside to

the major urban centers. As a result, increased traffic, pollution, housing shortages, and building speculation were major threats to the survival of historic city centers and the natural environment. The pressure to pass into a socially equitable post-industrial society was opposed by the intrinsic conservatism of the clientelistic structure of power groups and the lingering traces of an ideology shaped during twenty years of Fascist rule.

At this time, the schools and universities were the theater of a rebellion against authoritarianism and reactionary cultural values, carried out in the growing awareness of the alienation produced by the myths of the consumer society.

Within this context of continuous debate, the schools of architecture were in the avant-garde in the research of a transformed society. Having already become mass "parking lots" for thousands of students who otherwise would have only increased the ranks of the unemployed, these schools were a fertile ground for the discussion of topics directly related to socio-political realities: the critique of capitalist planning models, the right of the people to participate in defining the built environment, the methodology of renovation and rebuilding in historic centers, and the establishment or renewal of an architectural language able to overcome the mechanistic vision of the Modern Movement.

The result of these concerns gave birth to several diverse approaches which, in the most general terms and with the limits imposed by categorization, are schools of thought which have dominated the architectural debate throughout the '70s and up to the present day.

They may be identified in the following terms: Participatory Design; "Neorationalism," the "Tendenza" (and its protagonist Aldo Rossi); and Radical Design.

PARTICIPATORY DESIGN

The physical presence within the context of socio-political realities was one of the major issues to evolve in the universities. The response to this problem was the argument that architecture no longer represents the designer's ideas and formal statements, but is rather an expression of the will and desires of the users themselves. In Participatory Design the architect's main goal is therefore to induce the direct participation of people in the decisions which generate the organization of physical space.

This approach, which finds its natural field of application in larger housing and urban design projects, has had a major impact at regional and local levels of power, primarily where leftist political coalitions dominated.

The most representative examples of Participatory Design are the projects directed by Giancarlo De Carlo at Urbino, Rimini and Terni, and the restoration and revitalization of Bologna's historic neighborhoods.

On the level of architectural language, Participatory Design recognizes the merits of the Modern Movement in drawing attention back to the significant components of physical space and their functional requirements. However, the principle behind the Modern method, based on a scientific commitment, is basically authoritarian. Precisely because of its scientific pretensions, it also represents a powerful obstacle. Participatory Design is an alternative to the stern, scientific authority which inhibits the users' free creation of their dwellings, buildings and neighborhoods.

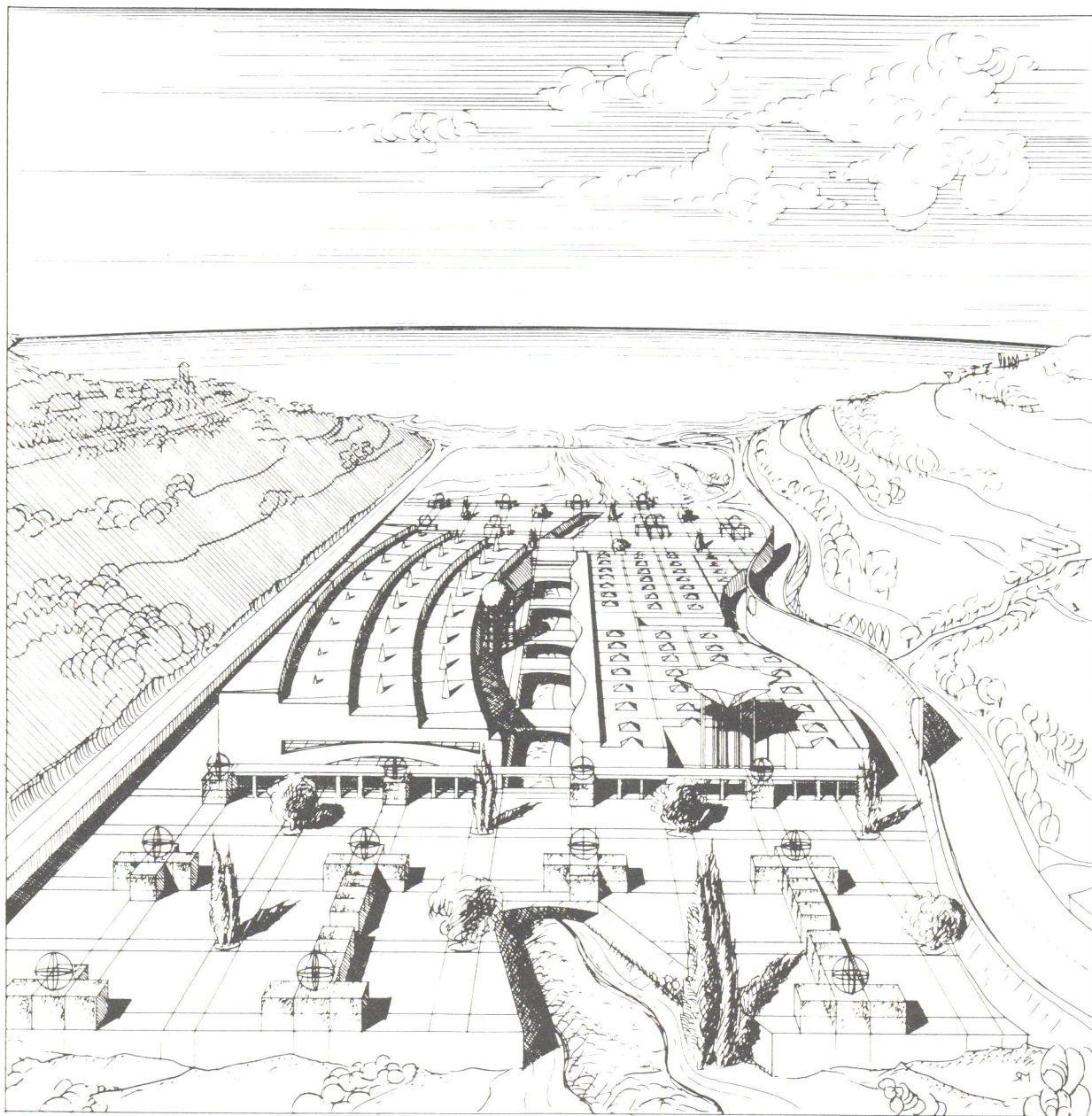
“NEORATIONALISM”

The search for an inter-disciplinary architectural foundation on which to base the social and economic goals of a renovated society is the general concern of the Neorationalists. Even if their theoretical approach is deeply rooted in pre-war Italian Rationalism and the social ideology of the Modern Movement, they also develop and revise many of the old axioms.

As the synthesis of social, economic, and symbolic experiences, the city is for the Neorationalists the scale at which every activity and project is related. But, where the Modern Movement urban theory was based on a mechanistic zoning approach, the Neorationalists aim to integrate the different activities within the urban fabric and to restore a continuity between architectural scale and urban scale. The means for obtaining such integration and continuity are found in the concept of “typology.” In opposition to the “typology of the machine,” which shaped much of the pre-war Rationalistic architecture, or the typology of archetypal elements of building (the “primitive hut” of Laugier), the Neorationalists investigate the typology of elements peculiar to the city itself—the streets, squares, parks, houses, institutions and equipment. These elements cohere with both the historic urban tissue and contemporary projects in order to make a unified and comprehensible urban experience.

Since the city in its essence has always been political, the recomposition of its spatial and institutional forms also has strictly political implications. This is not to say that the Neorationalists’ political critique implies a rejection of the conditions of the industrial society. Rather, they are strongly committed to the utilization of its methodological tools, mass-production methods and high technology.

The result of this approach is an architecture of technical integrity, made of large-scale, minimalist, and repetitive volumes. The powerful, sometimes overwhelming, territorial impact of this architecture, whose most representative examples are found in the work of Costantino Dardi, Emilio Battisti and Vittorio Gregotti, is an effort to show, as Gregotti says, the “compactness of engineering against the fracturedness of conventional buildings.”



G.R.A.U., Flower Market, San Remo, Italy, 1975.

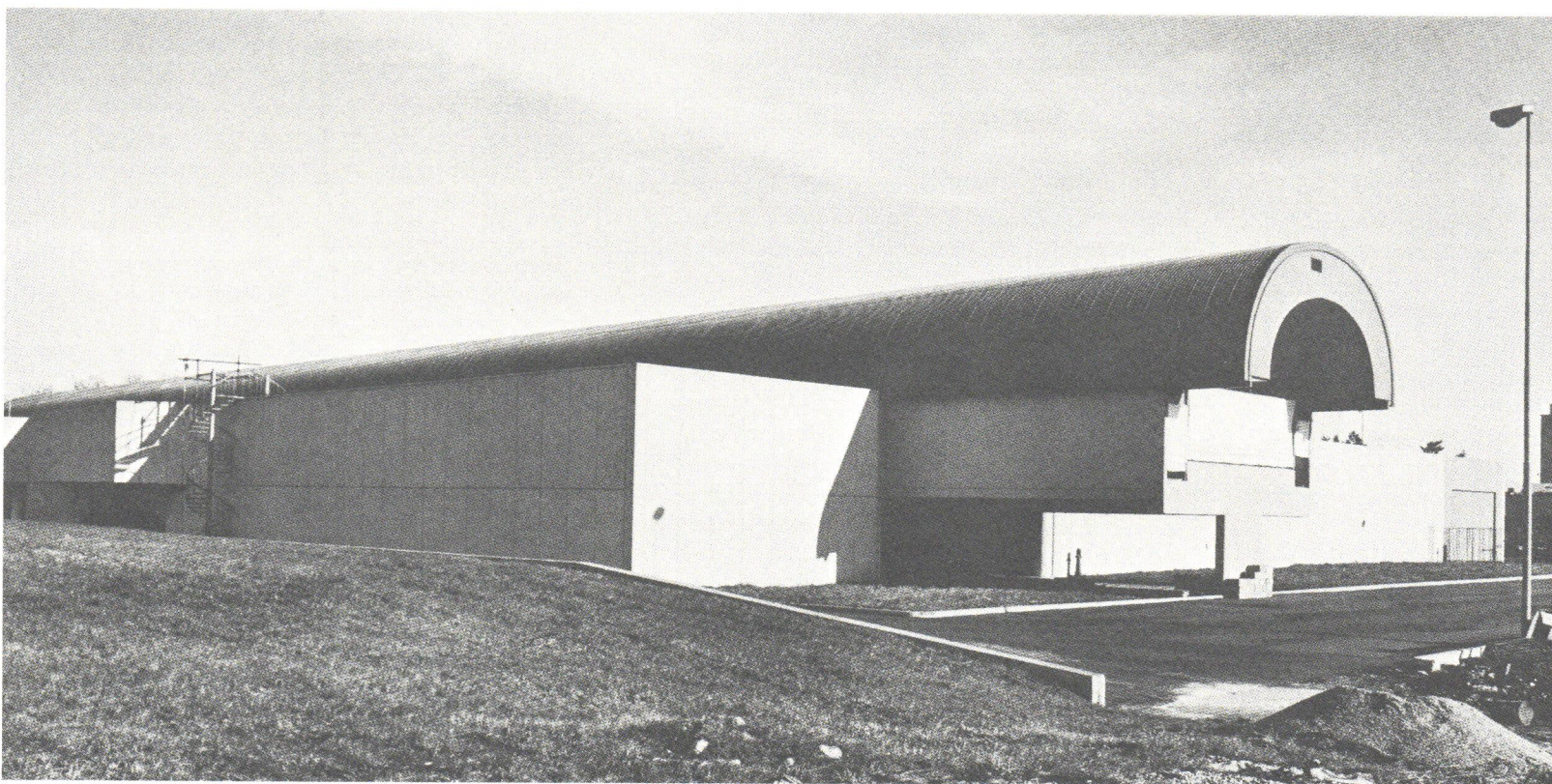
“TENDENZA” AND ALDO ROSSI

Aldo Rossi and the group of architects who go under the name of “Tendenza” (Tendency) are often identified with the Neorationalists. Even if they share similar political attitudes and a common concern for issues such as the autonomy of architecture, the city as the scale at which modern human experience relates, and the influence of pre-war Rationalism (in particular that of Loos and Terragni), the limits of the Neorationalist approach are clear to them.

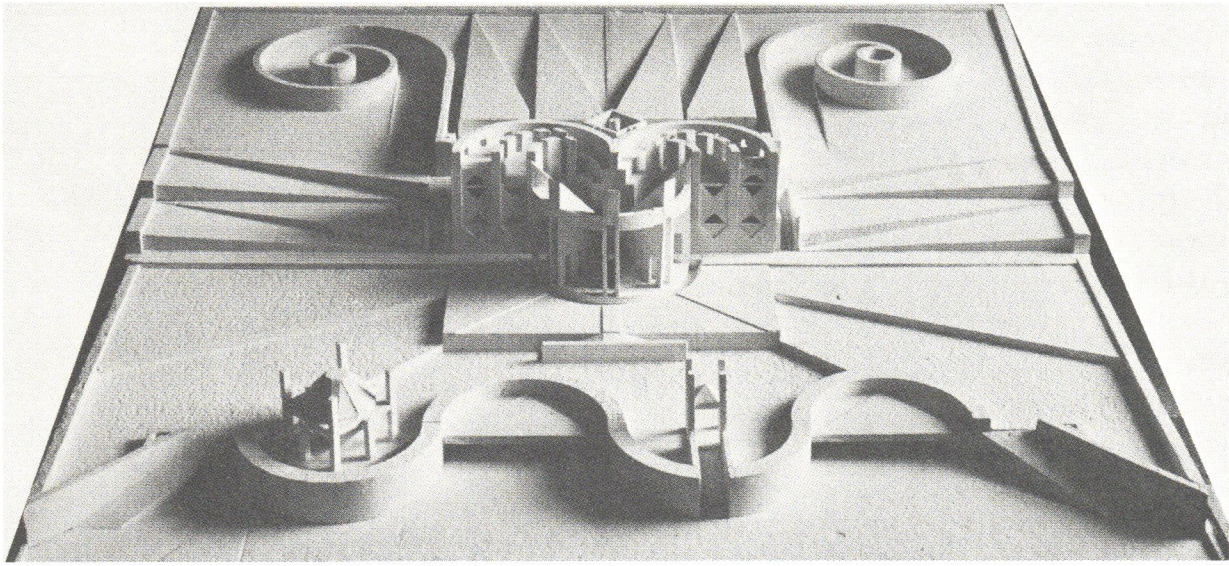
Where is the presence of the imaginary? Where is the “poetic” being? As in the painting of De Chirico and Carra, reality is something more than a physical assembly of objective facts. The world of existence is more complex and even more emotional.

It is a world which Rossi believes should transcend the alienation of the models proposed by technology, capital, and the consumer culture, it is a world which should recover itself in enduring principles, and have presence beyond history in the realm of memory.

Rossi is therefore looking for archetypal images of dwelling in opposition to the formal idioms of the



Vittorio Gregotti, Warehouse and offices, Como, Italy, 1975.



G.R.A.U., Cemetery, Parabita, Italy, 1967.

industrial society and its architectural “make-up.” By rejecting the symbolic aggressiveness of the architecture of power, he proposes a world without masters, experienced in the wider dimension of the individual and the collective memory. The continuous process of reduction applied to the architectural “sign” leads to the discovery of the primitive, nude, and even rough beauty of form: a window is treated as the “simplest” window; a pillar as, and only as, a pillar; a house as the child’s image of the archetypal house.

The functional requirements are resolved by referring to the nature of the place and by adapting typologies whose validity has been proven by centuries of discoveries, continuous use, adaptation, and modification. Rather than the “structuralist,” “historicist” or “semiological” approaches, Aldo

inspired it, whether the farmhouses of the Po Valley or the melancholy and misty landscape of the Milan urban periphery.

A similar desire for architectural purification, for inspiration from historical forms and for the creation of poetic space, is felt and expressed in an original way in Southern Italy and in Rome.

Where Milan had been identified with Rationalism since before the sixties, Rome has always been reluctant to accept the rigidity of Rationalist axioms and was drawn instead towards the Organic approach. In an environment charged by strong historical presences, already bathed in the warm atmosphere of Mediterranean nature and light, the school of thought personified by Rossi in the North is here molded creatively by the consciousness of place.

The work of Louis Kahn has had a particular influence on Roman architects. Kahn’s consideration of the “past as a friend,” of the force of archetypal forms and the coherent use of materials, has greatly affected the work of the younger generation. Most illustrative of this influence is the solemn and serene architecture of the GRAU group and Nicoletta Cosentino’s sensitive, poetic explorations into the nature of places.

RADICAL DESIGN

Once again we should go back to the atmosphere of the sixties to recall the beginning of one of the most original creations of Italian architectural culture: Radical Design.

The historical sources of inspiration of this movement were international: the European avant-gardes of the twenties, mainly Dadaism and Surrealism; the contemporary voices coming from America — the Beat Generation, Pop Art, “happenings”; the thought of Marcuse, McLuhan and Mao; the Paris of “Imagination in the Power” and, architecturally, the visions of London’s Archigram, the inclusive approach of Vienna’s Hans Hollein, and Robert Venturi’s explorations into Mass Culture.

The putative father of the Radicals was Marcel Duchamp. Just as Duchamp nullified every obsolete concept of art by abolishing the border between Art and Life, so the Radicals attempted to open up architecture to the point where architecture itself would become an obsolete concept. As Andrea Branzi stated: “The goal of architecture is the destruction of architecture itself.”

This revolution also had its slogan which represented the radicals’ architectural concerns: “Reclaiming the Environment,” “Unbalancing,” “Conceptual,” “Galactical,” and “Impossible” architecture.

Radical architecture was radical because it did not accept “historical compromises,” nor did it seek to be

built. It was mainly based on freedom of experience and anarchy of thought. The Radicals believed in schemes larger than a single discipline, in recycling all possible languages which constitute the everyday experience of life. When not engaged in “actions” and “events,” the Radicals tended to produce designs which were bizarre, colorful and decorative, formally outside any “ergonomic” limits and completely within the “affective” relationship between people and their things.

Now, at the beginning of the eighties, Italy finds itself again in an unstable period. The economic crisis shows no sign of loosening. The condition of the natural environment is growing worse. Speculation and the abuse of bureaucratic power are threatening the survival of the historic center. With 90% dependence on foreign energy, growing unemployment and continuous terrorist attacks, Italy’s situation grows more serious every day. Despite all of the problems, people have not yet lost their basic belief in the democratic institutions, nor their serenity, inventiveness and creativity.

Since professional jobs in architecture are extremely limited, the universities are still the most fertile ground for the development of architectural theories and planning policies.

The combative spirit of the 60’s has subsided and the students are back to the drawing tables. The younger generation of architects is dedicated to more introspective designs, often in the realms of memory and imagination. Participatory Design has shown itself a winning strategy, having now passed from the experimental phase into more common practice.

Within this school of thought, there is an increasing emphasis on energy conservation and ecological design.

Neorationalism is enjoying great success both inside and outside of Italy, but since it falls between the strict axioms of the Modern Movement and the search for a suitable post-industrial expression, it still occupies an ambiguous position, too often ignoring issues of human scale and psychological needs.

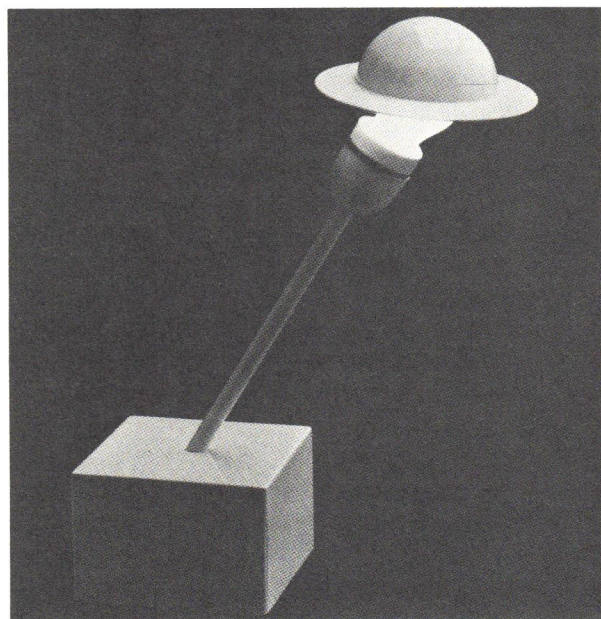
Aldo Rossi and the “Tendenza” movement represent a controversial and intriguing approach which, because of their forceful statements and exploration of spiritual values, is particularly appealing to the younger generation. In spite of its world-wide popularity it is not likely, however, that its influence will cross the ocean to challenge the supremacy of Postmodernism.

Influenced by the more anti-academic and ironic aspects of Postmodernism, the Radicals now seem to live a quieter life. Once their polemical force started waning with the anticlimax which followed the “revolutionary years,” they found their most fertile ground of expression not at the architectural level, but at the smaller scale of industrial design. Ironically, the contribution of “radical” and sensitive architects such as Ettore Sottsass, Superstudio and Lapo Binazzi has strengthened the growing international reputation of “Italian Styling.”

Except among the Radicals, the wave of Postmodernism has only lightly touched Italian shores. The red-carpet reception organized at the last Venice Biennale by its strongest Italian exponent, Paolo Portoghesi, has provoked more curiosity than enthusiasm.

It is surely too early to assess the future role of Postmodernism in Italian architecture, but, at the present, it seems that its eclectic, cardboard, stage-set imagery can flourish better where the presence of history is felt more nostalgically than physically. ■

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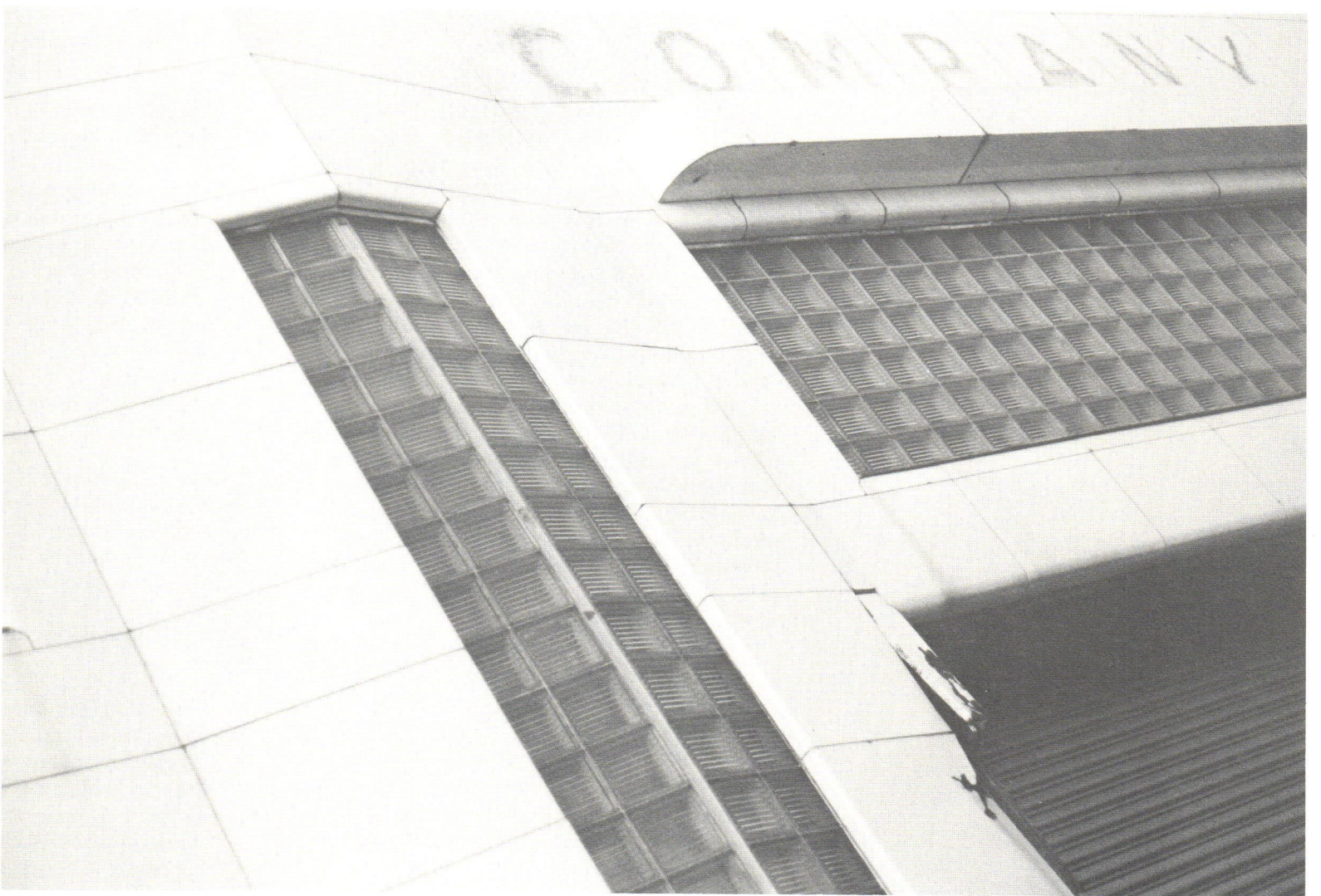
Ettore Sottsass: Table lamp, 1981.

Rossi prefers what he calls “analogical” thought, a term borrowed from C.G. Jung and explained by Jung himself in these terms: “Where the logical thought is what is expressed in words directed to the outside world in the form of discourse, analogical thought is sensed, yet unreal, imagined yet silent; it is not a discourse but rather a meditation on themes of the past, and interior monologue; where logical thought is thinking in words, analogical thought is archaic, unexpressed and practically inexpressible in words.”

Rossi, Scolari and Grassi propose an architecture of forms of existential meditation, forms which are outside any ideology, yet which represent the silent witnesses of the flow of everyday life and political events. In other words, theirs is an architecture of silence, made up of silent stairs, porticos and courts, brought to life by the presence of light and people, and by its consonance with the models which have



Participatory Design: Future tenants discussing Giancarlo de Carlo’s design proposal for Villaggio Matteotti in Terni, Italy; 1970–75.



All photos are of Dean Distributors, Inc., Townsend Street, San Francisco and were taken by Kyle Thayer.

The Immaculate Conception II

Aging and the Modernist Building

by Alice Jurow

Part I identifies a problem: why should there be a widespread, ill-defined feeling that “modern architecture does not age well”? We can perceive this failure to age well on three different levels—actual physical failure to stand the test of time, failure to achieve visually pleasing weathering, and conceptual failure, a symbolic breach of contract, where a building which owes its very style and meaning to newness is betrayed by losing that quality.

In a brief historic survey, we document attitudes and assumptions in the original thought of the Modern Movement which have contributed to this problem.

a. The Tradition of Craftsmanship and the Ascendancy of Form traces the rise, from about 1910 through the '20s, of a theoretical, formal, almost neo-Platonist approach to architecture which came to dominate new developments in the profession, taking precedence (with a few notable exceptions) over an emphasis on the craft of building. Focussing on more specific developments within the same time period, b. Futurism, Purism and the Rejection of the Picturesque documents the explicit bias against permanence, solidity and picturesque weathering which characterized these seminal movements. c. Artistic Permanence and New, Improved Durability shows the Modern Movement reaching a sort of maturity in the '30s; no longer revolutionary modernism seeks to associate itself with classicism and permanence. A key text, Hitchcock and Johnson's *International Style*, reveals the problematic obsession with finding perfect material through industrialization.

d. Industrial Craftsmanship

In 1910, Walter Gropius spoke of the “incontestable advantages of industrial production, i.e., best materials and workmanship and at a cheap price... it is the fault of speculative builders and entrepreneurs that housing has deteriorated so much in the last decade as regards taste and durability... bragging, superficial, sham comfort... at the expense of good material, solid workmanship, distinction and simplicity.”⁴⁰

Gropius carried this craftsmanly concern for “good material” and “solid workmanship” into his direction of the Bauhaus, which he founded in 1919. There, students spent most of their first three years of study in the mastery of a craft—pottery, weaving, metalwork, etc.—as a means of understanding the processes of physical design and production sufficiently to become good industrial designers or architects. Although the craftsman aspects of the

Bauhaus came in for criticism and were eventually de-emphasized, the Bauhaus attitude justified a continuing role for craftsmanship—as an adjunct to industrialization.

Norman Rice echoes this concern with material quality in a 1930 discussion of a Corbusier “Minimal House”: “Cheap materials and cheap construction are not rational solutions of the problem. Materials and methods should be the best. The real solution lies in industrializing them...”⁴¹ Moreover, as Corbusier himself noted, the craftsmanship of the machine age was expected to be not just good but perfect: “The standardized craftsmanship of the machine must be faultless in appearance as in technique.”⁴²

Mies stressed in 1924 that “The nature of the building process will not change as long as we employ essentially the same building materials, for they require hand labor...”⁴³ But not only have perfect new materials failed to appear; the demands of the building trades have insured that hand labor still largely dominates the process. Industrialized building is a goal of the Modern Movement still very imperfectly realized, and it is increasingly evident that industrialization may never be economic or appropriate for many kinds of building.

Thus most modernist buildings embody not machined perfection, but a painstakingly hand-built simulation of machined perfection. And design theories presupposing sophisticated technology have remained in practical and aesthetic conflict with the relatively crude existing building techniques.

e. Modernists in Retrospect

In 1949, an article by Walter and Ise Gropius appeared in *House and Garden*, titled “Time Mellowes This Modern House.” It begins:

A great deal of the charm of old houses is certainly due to the mellowing effect of time and of their well-established gardens. Modern houses are often photographed and published right after their owners have moved in. They are bound to look bare. It is obvious that the house and its surrounding landscape need years to come to terms with each other. The appearance of our own house in Lincoln, Massachusetts, has changed within ten years because the

landscaping and gardens have had time to grow up to our original plan.⁴⁴

This discussion, by a giant of the Modern Movement, of the “charm of old houses” would have been unthinkable in 1910 or 1925. It perhaps marks a sort of reacceptance of picturesque sensibility, although the emphasis is on the effects of mature vegetation rather than the weathering of the house itself. Even Johnson and Hitchcock had admitted that “trees and vines are a . . . decoration for modern architecture,”⁴⁵ and Mies’ renderings, for example, often show vines spreading delicately over the precisely drawn wall surfaces. But the Gropius’ image of house and landscape coming to terms with each other seems stronger, a signal of a new reconciliation between the ideal building and the real, changing conditions of time. Along these lines they further note, “The house plan responds well to the various claims of family life. It had been planned from the beginning not to create a “picture” or to perpetuate a status quo, however charming—but as a living organism, ready to serve as a background for constantly changing activities.”⁴⁶

Modern architecture by the late forties had come to include the relaxed informality of the California redwood regionalists — the school of William Wurster and his low-key, old-shoe buildings. In line with this general loosening up, Henry-Russell Hitchcock, in 1951 made an apology:

In 1931 it was hard to appreciate the originality in concept of Wright’s Millard house, because the patterned surface produced with the concrete blocks was so different from the smooth rendered surfaces which are still the sign-manual of the International Style, particularly as illustrated by Le Corbusier before 1930. Now, I think it is evident that such surface-patterning is a perfectly legitimate expression of the casting process by which Wright’s blocks were made. Above all, thirty years have proved that patterned concrete surfaces, like Wright’s of the 1920’s, generally weather rather agreeably. The rendered surfaces of the early “International” buildings of the same period too often cracked and grew stained, thus losing all that quality of platonic abstraction which made them so striking.⁴⁷

Wright published some of his own ideas on permanence in *The Natural House* (1954), describing the Willey house as “. . . well-constructed for a life of several centuries if the shingle roof is renewed in 25 years or tile is substituted. Perhaps this northern house comes as near to being permanent shelter as

any family of this transitory period is entitled to expect.⁴⁸ He is adamant, and opposed to much common practice, on the treatment of wood:

No painting at all. Wood best preserves itself. A coating of clear resinous oil would be enough . . . The only treatment we aim to give to any material is to preserve it pretty much as it is. A strange fallacy has developed that to paint wood preserves it. The reverse is true . . . When you seal wood off from this innate need to breathe, you have not lengthened its life at all, you have done just the opposite . . . When you coat anything in the way of a natural material you are likely to shorten its life, not preserve it.⁴⁹

Despite the mention of preserving the material “as it is,” Wright obviously does not expect his untreated materials to maintain a static condition; his aim is always “to develop the nature of the materials.”⁵⁰

The Seagram Building can be seen as another indicator of a mellowed attitude toward the ravages of time; William H. Jordy saw it this way in a 1958 review:

Moreover, where Lever House and practically all metal and glass buildings are designed for a perpetual present, the Seagram Building is the first major metal and glass skyscraper consciously designed to age as masonry buildings age. With time the bronze will darken and acquire a green patina. This corrosion of the surface should further unify the window wall as a massive entity.⁵¹

While no published remarks of Mies’ confirm that the building was “consciously designed to age,” that it was so described by a major critic is significant of a change in the value placed on aging.

Also significant is the tone, of nostalgia as much as kinship, with which architects have begun to look back at the early monuments of the Modern Movement, finding them in appalling condition after only fifty years. The author of a piece entitled “Modern Antiques” notes, “Few of these landmarks of twentieth century architecture have survived unaltered or unscathed; some of them have aged very well, others have suffered badly from poor maintenance.”⁵² A group of British architects visited the Villa Savoye in 1965 and, scandalized by its condition, helped raise funds for its restoration. Reyner Banham, however, could blandly remark in 1960,

The Barcelona Pavillion and the Villa Savoye are masterpieces of the order of the



Sainte Chapelle or the Villa Rotonda, and if one speaks of them in the present, in spite of the fact that one no longer exists and the other is squalidly neglected, it is because in a Machine Age we have the benefit of massive photographic records of both of them in their pristine magnificence, and can form of them an estimate far more plastically exact than one could ever from say, the notebooks of Villard d'Honnecourt or the Quattro Libri of Palladio.⁵³

Bernard Tschumi, on the other hand, wrote apropos of the 1965 visit, "The Villa Savoye was never so moving as when the plaster fell off its concrete blocks",⁵⁴ finding that only decay could bring a sensuous quality to the austere products of reason.

Increasingly since the sixties, historic preservation, nostalgia and post-modern eclecticism have gained momentum, all helping to re-establish the picturesque sensibility and the image of the well-weathered building in architectural as well as popular taste. Energy limitations have reinforced the ideal of long life for buildings (one of the three new virtues, along with loose fit and low energy). The Futurists' future has become our past, and we now expect buildings to be relatively permanent, to exist in a continuum of history, and to undergo functional and aesthetic change over time.

Thus, if we attend to the failures of modern buildings to age well (recognized in H.-R. Hitchcock's 1951 palinode no less than in the layman's outburst at the beginning of this article), it need not discredit the achievements of the Modern Movement. We may or may not be post-modern, but we can never again be pre-modern. We generally cannot return to the technologies, like fine joinery, or the materials, like stone, which enable some old buildings to become such fine antiques. But we can, and must, learn from the failures of the products of modern theory and technology if we are to make new buildings which age well.

We have seen something of the attitudes and intentions which led to the Modern Movement's producing buildings which fail to age well. With this background in mind, what can be learned from actual, visual, and conceptual failures in aging?

Actual failures are a kind of feedback, tending to encourage the continuing adjustment and refinement of technical practice. The architectural profession as a whole has learned and continues to learn about the durability of particular details and techniques. However, certain technical problems created by the aesthetics of modernism — flat roofs, clean edges, sheer surfaces — have continued to elude any definite solution, and where such features are used they tend to work against durability.

In limited-cost construction (i.e. most construction, but especially public housing), the aesthetic legacy of modernism becomes most problematic. A stripped aesthetic of elegant simplicity becomes paradoxically more difficult to carry off well as the budget is decreased. It is hard to hide sloppy construction, and continuous surface planes become increasingly unattractive as the surface finish becomes cheaper. Moreover, where maintenance is economically limited, a building which looks perfect when new and then rapidly becomes subject to imperfections can tend to lose credibility and respect. If it is, further, not easy to maintain, short of large-scale replacements, it may begin a cycle of neglect and devaluation.

The lessons of actual failure have led to general shifts of attitude, as well as technical improvements (certainly in this age of malpractice suits architects are more cautious about experimentation). Among others, Le Corbusier, "after a quarter-century flirtation with pure forms, turned after World War II to what became known as the New Brutalism—a building vocabulary of deliberately rugged, deliberately crude and imprecise surfaces and forms."⁵⁵

The problem of visual failure is more complex. We can see easily enough in the intentions of their makers why the beauty of modern buildings depends on pristine condition. Their aesthetics favored newness per se—cleanliness, clarity, machine-like perfection—and rejected the irregularities and nuances of weathered "uncultivated" materials. Modern buildings were not supposed to grow old gracefully, if grace was equated with picturesque qualities.



On the other hand, the classicist tendencies of many modernists led them back to antiquity, with the Parthenon invoked as their presiding spirit. Purity and whiteness might be found not only in a freshly whitewashed new structure but also in the bleached, time-washed ruins of ancient Greece. Modern architects claimed *timelessness* for their works, and most would probably have agreed with Auguste Perret's dictum: "Great architecture is that which makes great ruins." In its emphasis on massing and suppression of detail, modern architecture can even be interpreted as ready-made ruins; all the detail which would be obliterated by time is already gone.

And so, in our experience of deteriorated modern buildings as visual failures, we may just be caught in an uncomfortable transitional period, when the newness has worn off but the sanctity of ruin has not yet set in. It is really because modern buildings are still so current that it is painful to see them alter their appearance; we have different standards of good condition for historic artifacts, but we have not yet accepted most modern buildings as historic. When each crack and streak has become part of a general context of decay, many modern buildings may well make handsome ruins.

In the meantime, though, each crack and streak is a unique and disturbing flaw. Early modern buildings were, visually, the first buildings of their kind, and we are watching them grow old for the first time. If the sight is distressing, there are three basic possible responses: 1) we can learn to get used to the appearance of modern again, to accept it, or even, like Mr. Tschumi, to love it; 2) we can invest in continuing high maintenance for all modernist buildings, existing and to come; 3) we can modify our aesthetics and techniques so as to build in ways that accept aging more easily.

As expense is likely to preclude the second course, except in the case of a few special monuments, we are left with a combination of the other two, a combination of aesthetic acceptance and revised practices.

But acceptance may not be enough ever to give us a charitable view of some visual failure. It is possible that the aggressive attitude of the typical modern building to the forces of time, the defiance and rejection of the encroachment of picturesque aging, may set some buildings forever at odds with any sort of "pleasing decay."

Finally, on a conceptual level, modern architecture fails to age well only because of what it *means*, because of the expectations it sets up and frustrates, expectations of perfection and permanence. If much of the original conceptual framework of the Modern Movement has been outmoded or transformed, some part still holds us in an unbroken spell, otherwise there would be no problem of expectation and frustration.

Breaking the spell, a change in our expectations can avert such conceptual failure in the buildings we produce today. We can expect, like Bill Wurster, a new building to look as beat up on the first day the

client moves in, as it ever will. Or we can expect a building to look less effective when new than it will in ten years. Or we can expect that a building will become a bit shabby and flawed with time but that such wear will be offset by the increased sense of place and inhabitability that will develop over the years.

The attitude of lowered expectations, along with low tech, low energy, low maintenance and even low art, has become not only accepted but lately fashionable. But there is still a tendency for some buildings, especially those that claim the status of high art, to demand high technology, high standards of maintenance and high expectations. They seem to suggest a need for a more positive response than simple indifference to unchecked aging.

The positive response is to exploit the actions of time's passage, to design for enrichment rather than deterioration of the original condition, as Wright counted on time's passage to "develop the nature of the materials." New modernists like Herman Herzberger have done more than make concrete block, with its variegated weathering, a respectable modern material; Herzberger's buildings are deliberately incomplete structures that need to be finished by the processes of time and habitation.

Many of the forms and techniques that developed from the beginnings of the Modern Movement continue to be current, still consonant with our needs and esthetics. But where they are used, they should be used advisedly, with an awareness of their fragility and of the meanings that can be read into their decay.

Alice Jurrow would enjoy living in Milan but finds herself living in the Bay Area, practicing architectural restoration and writing about ruins. She has recently returned from a trip to India.

NOTES:

⁴⁰ Walter Gropius, "Programme for the Establishment of a Company for the Provision of Housing on Aesthetically Consistent Principles" (March 1910), reprinted in *Architectural Forum*, 130 (July 1961), pp. 49-51 (emphasis mine).

⁴¹ Norman Rice, "The Minimal House: A Solution," *Architectural Record*, 68 (August 1930), pp. 135-137.

⁴² Le Corbusier, "The MARS Group Exhibition," *Architectural Review*, 83 (March 1938), pp. 109-116.

⁴³ Mies van der Rohe quoted in Peter Blake, *Form Follows Fiasco* (Boston, Toronto, 1974).

⁴⁴ Walter and Ise Gropius, "Time Mellows This Modern House," *House and Garden*, 95 (January 1949), pp. 727-728.

⁴⁵ H.-R. Hitchcock and Philip Johnson, *The International Style* (New York, 1966), pp. 76-77.

⁴⁶ Walter and Ise Gropius, "Time Mellows This Modern House," *House and Garden*, 95 (January 1949), pp. 727-728.

⁴⁷ H.-R. Hitchcock, "The International Style Twenty Years After," (originally published in *Architectural Record*, August 1951) in Hitchcock and Johnson, p. 246.

⁴⁸ Frank Lloyd Wright, *The Natural House* (New York, 1954), p. 59.

⁴⁹ Wright, pp. 73 and 175.

⁵⁰ Wright, p. 59.

⁵¹ William H. Jordy, "Seagram Assessed," *Architectural Review*, 124 (December 1958), pp. 375-382.

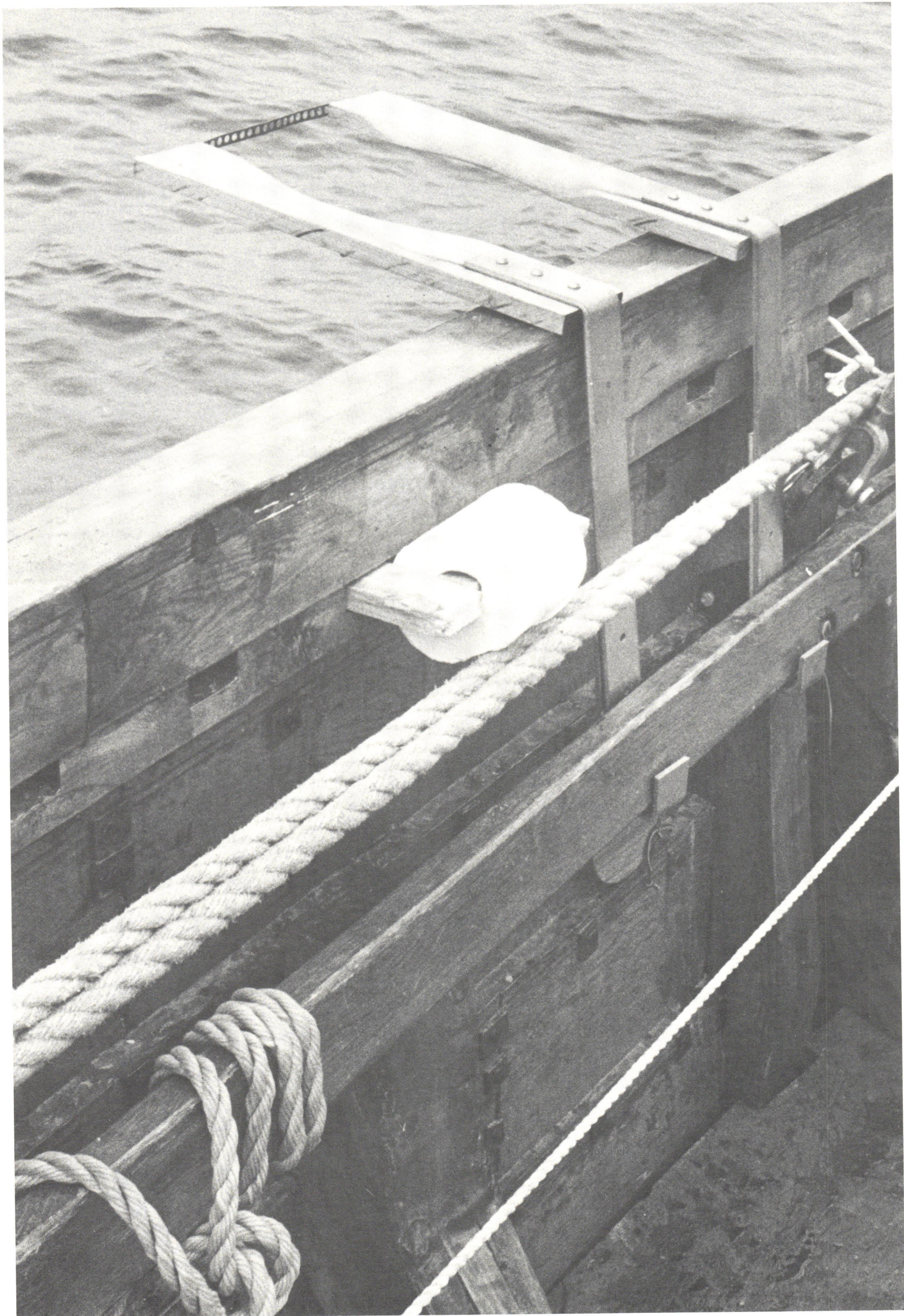
⁵² Cervin Robinson and Peter Blake, "Modern Antiques," *Architectural Forum*, 126: 4 (May 1967), pp. 80-86.

⁵³ Reyner Banham, *Theory and Design in the First Machine Age* (New York, 1960), p. 325.

⁵⁴ Bernard Tschumi, "Architecture and Transgression," *Oppositions*, 7 (Winter 1976-1977), p. 60.

⁵⁵ Peter Blake, *Form Follows Fiasco*, p. 41.

Building of the Quarter



The marine outhouse that accompanied a replica of a Viking ship on a recent voyage to Norway. Photo and design by Chet Gebert, Fargo, North Dakota.



Courtesy of Helen Arbuckle, San Jose, California.

OUTHOUSE

by Kyle Thayer

As part of the current reappraisal of the modernist idea of progress, architects have turned to the primal past of architecture itself for the legitimization of building in the present. Like Laugier's small rustic hut, the outhouse heralds a return to architecture's natural origins, and prompted Philip Johnson in a 1981 interview to exclaim, "I have been telling people this for fifty years: go build an outhouse. Your function is clear, the mass, division and height are clear. But think of the variations in the pitch of the roof, overhang or no overhang—it is endless." We took Johnson at his word and agreed to host the first International Outhouse Competition.

Architects, designers and students from the United States and Europe submitted designs which reopen important questions of architecture and human needs even as they draw from the rich scatological compost of outhouse lore.

Looking over the outhouse designs one is forced to ask whether the structure and function of a privy are really so clear. Cleverly violating the simplicity of the modest two-holer Johnson had in mind, many entrants took the given as a point of departure for their own flights of fancy. While the three winning designs may be buildable, practicality is hardly a prominent feature (John Long's Rose Privy is a possible exception) and certainly not what makes these entries winners. Rather, these and many other entries embroider the basic program with a context or idea that enriches the design. The outhouse of Vladimir Donchik, first prize winner, for instance, is set behind a tableau lifted from Monet's "Dejeuner sur l'Herbe"; the image communicates basic attitudes towards nature (the water surrounding this privy is clean enough for wading) and art (it is clean enough for *historical* wading). If the mark had been a house or skyscraper instead of a privy, the entries might have been more straightforward, and Johnson might have picked winners based on the refinement of structural detail he mentions above. Since this is the outhouse, or more precisely, the idea of the outhouse, judgment was based as much on the strength of the story and the drawing that tells it as on the actual design.

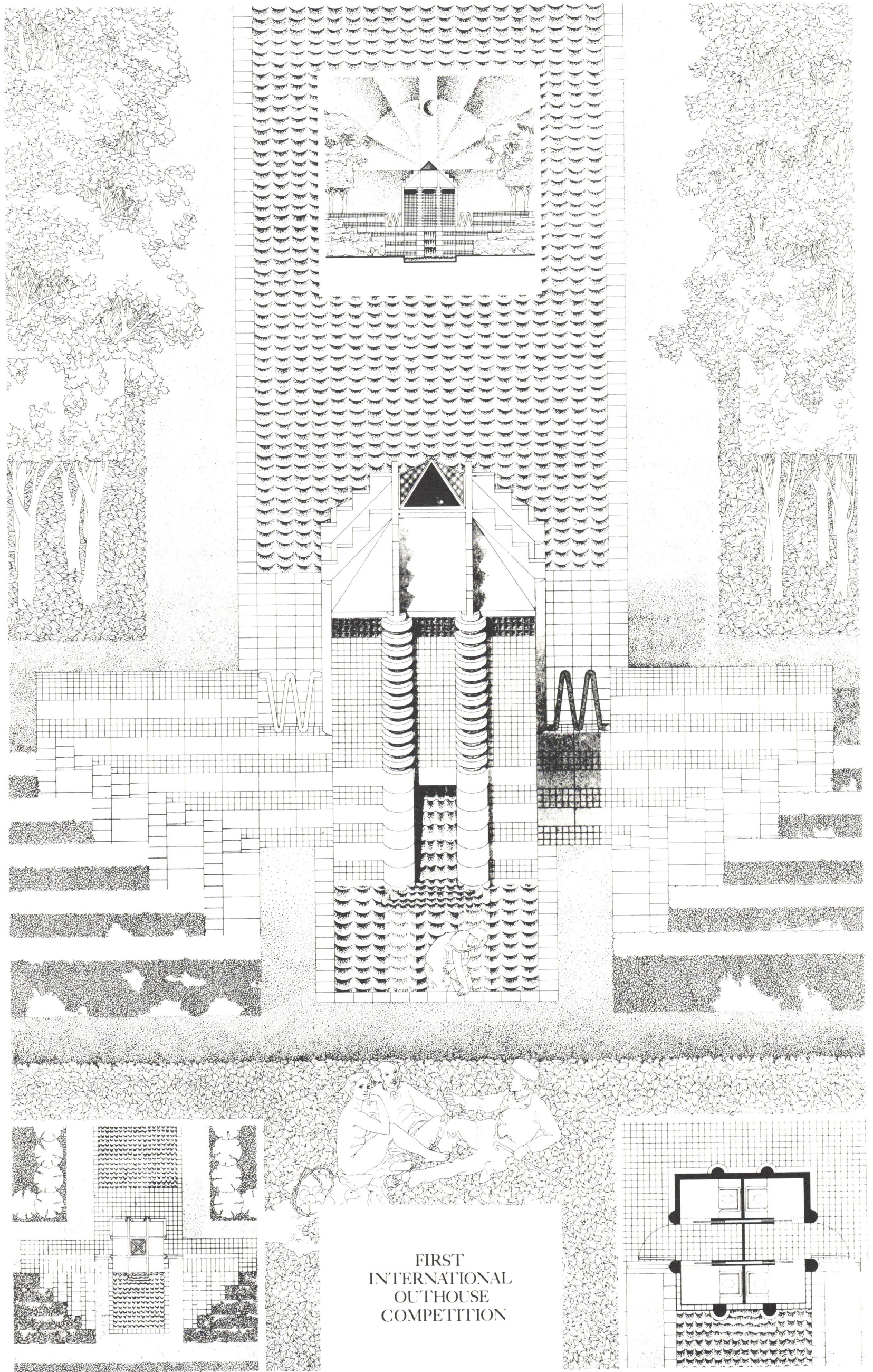
The idea of the outhouse struck an underlying vein that yielded rich mythological, primitive and semiological connotations; this response is only partly explained by post-modernism's steady "trickle-down" effect among the architectural ranks. More to the point, the question of where one defecates is a primary consideration in any culture and era, the present no exception.

Americans are now being made to question the wasteful practice of "flushing and forgetting" human waste (see Sim Van der Ryn, *The Toilet Papers*). As a noble energy-efficient precursor of modern indoor plumbing the outhouse is but one of many contrivances designed for salubrious, decorous elimination of wastes. But for Americans it holds a peculiar significance and popularity. When one privy site became full the structure was simply moved to a new location; this practice befits the restless and practical nature of a people growing up in a bounteous and nearly boundless land. Also, the separation from the bustle of the main part of the house offered a silent private place to mull things over. Mobility and privacy, two of America's hallmarks, are well situated in the mythology of the outhouse and partly account for the subliminal appeal of this contest.

Even more importantly, the outhouse is a reminder of a primitive past, one step removed from the bushes in the forest. Elemental architecture houses elemental human functions. The necessary refinement still barely conceals the timeless primitive and animalistic ritual. Man is momentarily thrust back into a state of nature where the necessary processes of his own body are a poignant echo of the larger cycles of the universe. Human excreta has fertilized farmers' fields in Asia for centuries. Our own obsession with hygiene, born in the Victorian era and popularized in the spanking white modernist kitchens in the twenties, has made us forget that human waste is man's only contribution to the energy cycle. A trip to the outhouse, in mind, body, or both is a meditative pause that reminds man of his place in nature's larger whole.

Put in these terms the fascination surrounding an outhouse design competition is readily explicable, as is the ritualist tendency prevalent among the design entries. More than a simple architectural exercise or a piece of Americana, the outhouse is charged with archetypal significance that cries out for expression, especially in modern design. Post-modernism's tepid rediscovery of meaning becomes ludicrous in light of the age-old truths suggested by the timeless and timely outhouse, as the drawings that follow make clear.

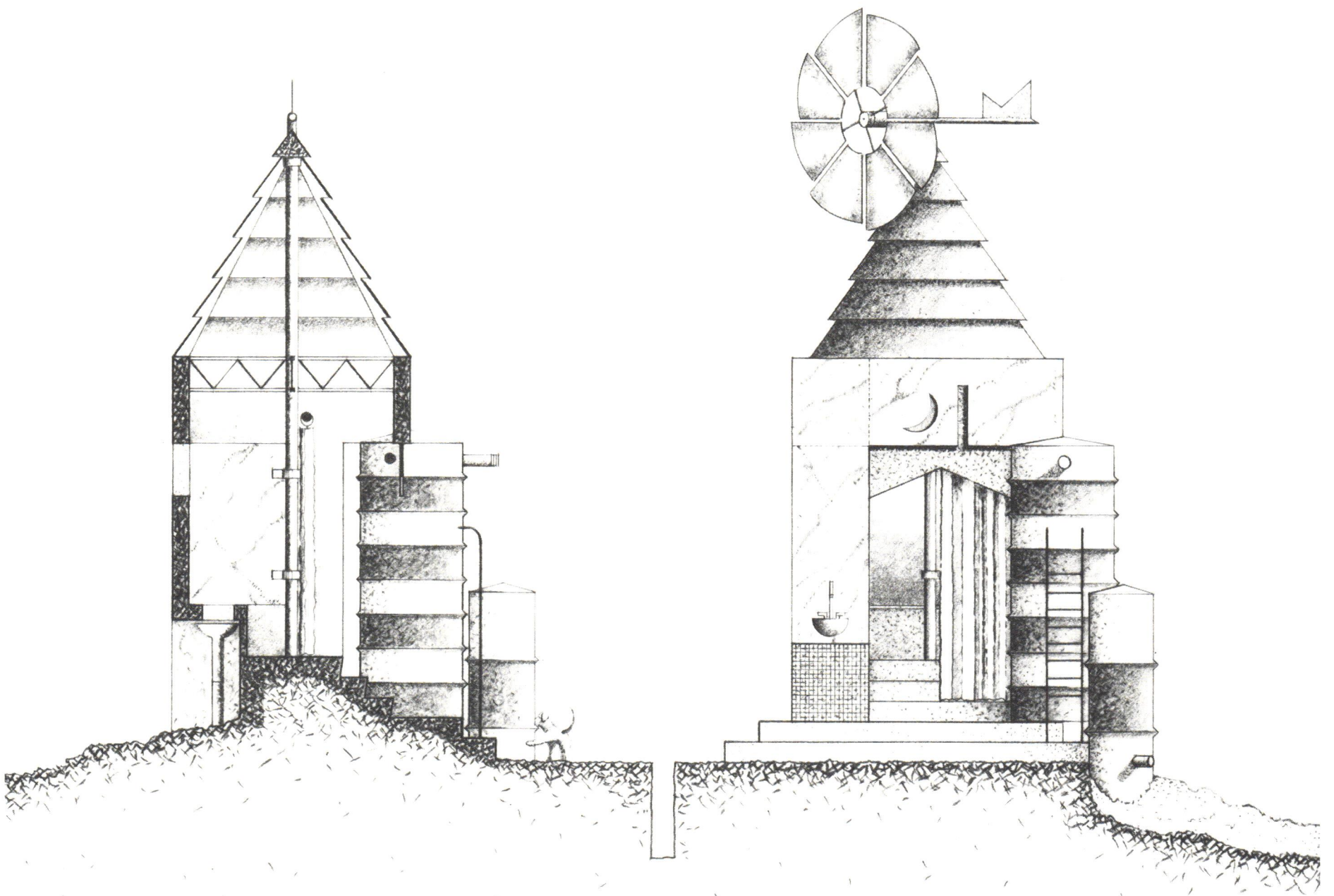
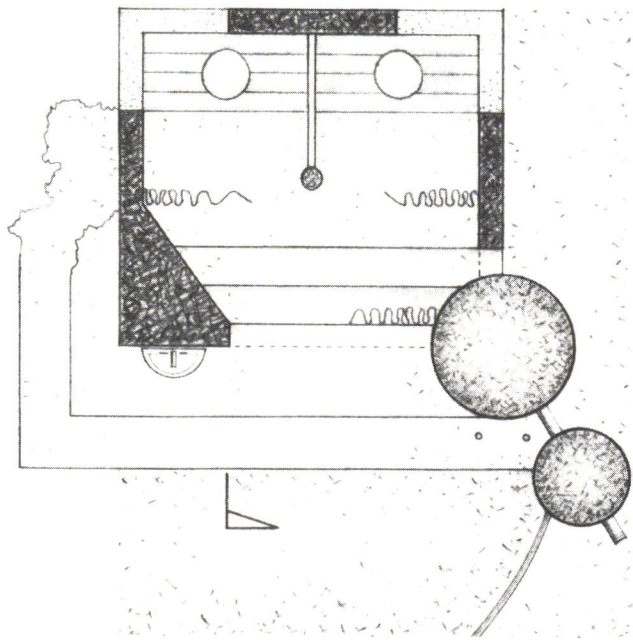
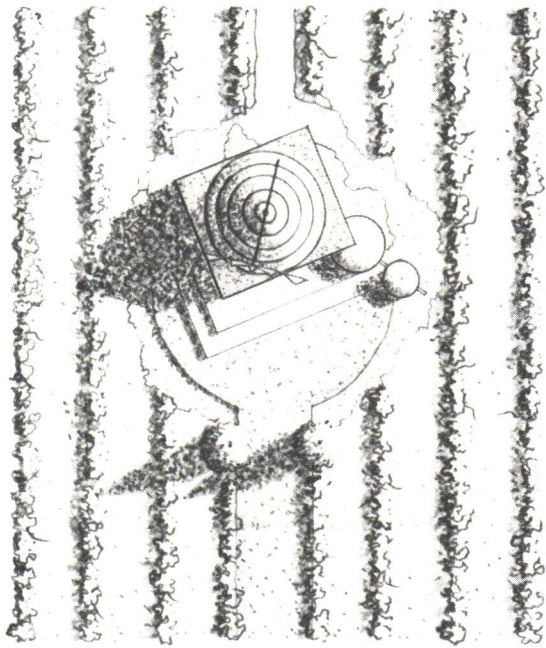
F I R S T P L A C E



FIRST
INTERNATIONAL
OUTHOUSE
COMPETITION

Vladimir Donchick, Chicago.

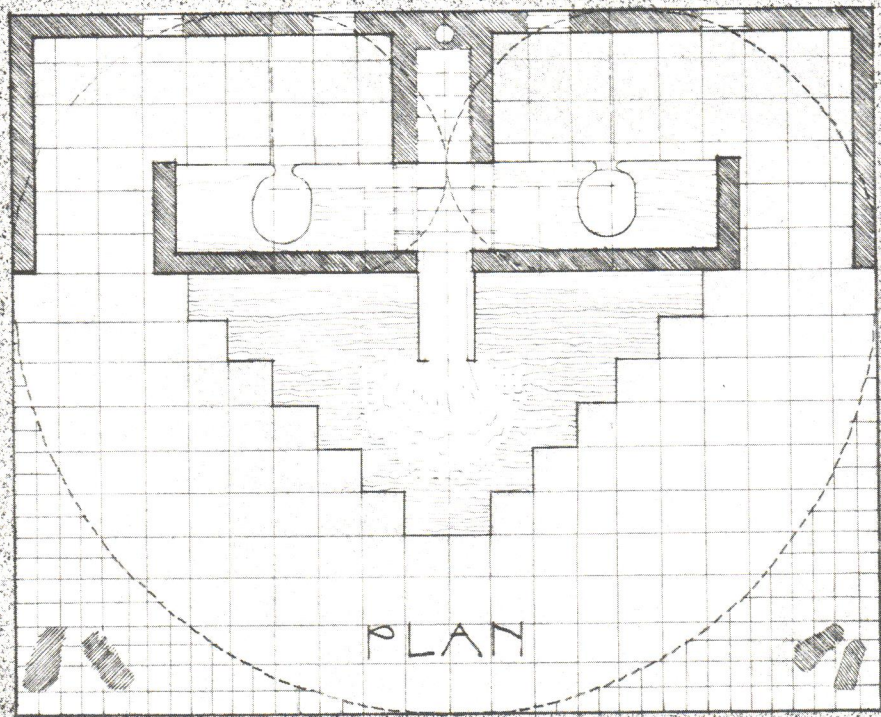
O U T H O U S E
I N A R O S E G A R D E N



The outhouse stands atop a windy hill in a rose garden. It contains an integrated energy system that produces fuel gas and fertilizer from the raw wastes of garden visitors. The wind plant generates heat energy, which hastens the decay of the organic matter, and mechanical energy to pump water through irrigation devices. Methane gas for the fuel needs of maintenance equipment and digested sludge for fertilizing the roses is produced. The perfume of the roses and a well ventilated enclosure provide relief from foul odors. Principal design elements and materials include: polished white marble cladding; vented metal conical roof; yellow and grey striped methane digester and sludge tanks; aquamarine and white striped canvas curtains.

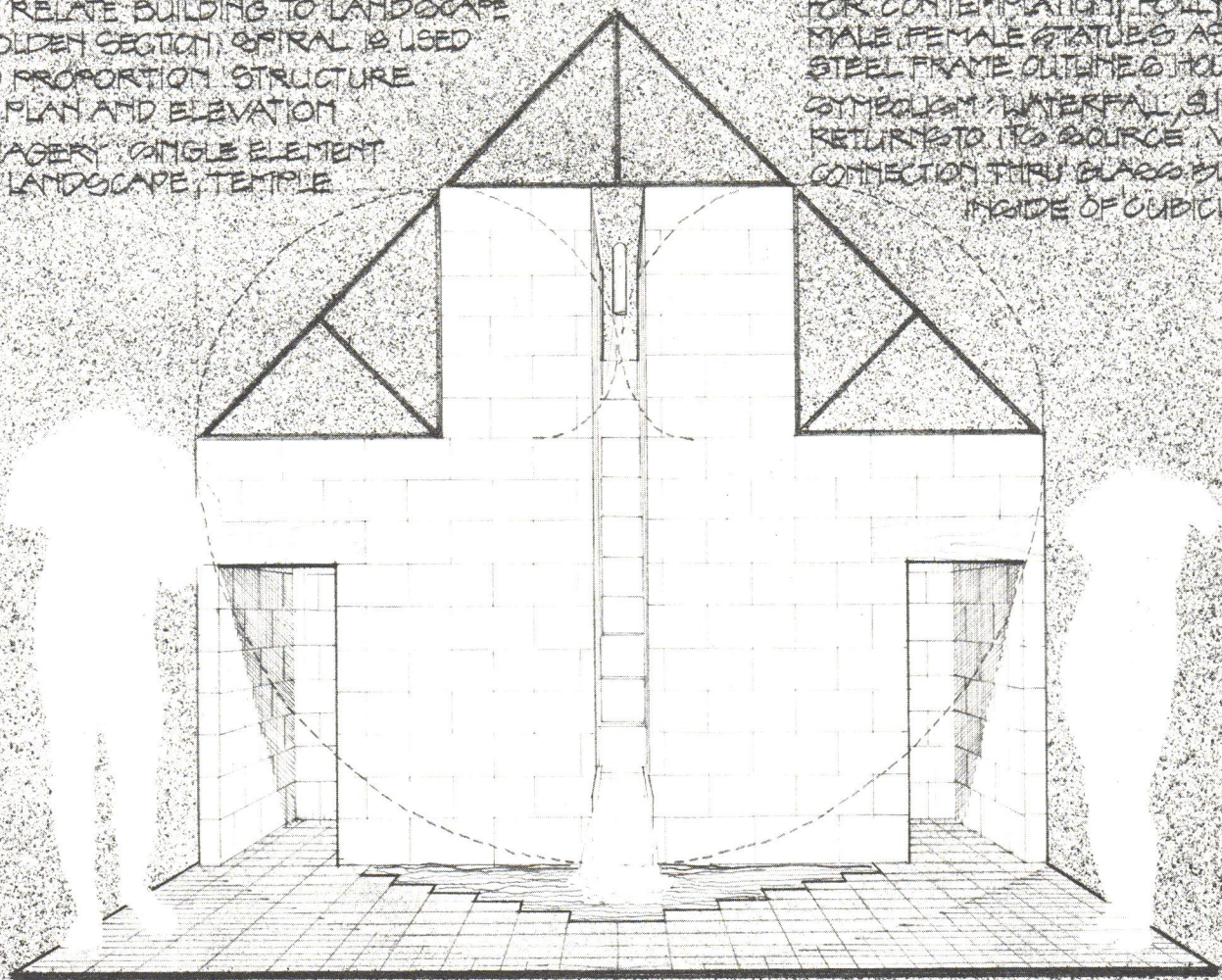
John Long, San Francisco.

THIRD PLACE

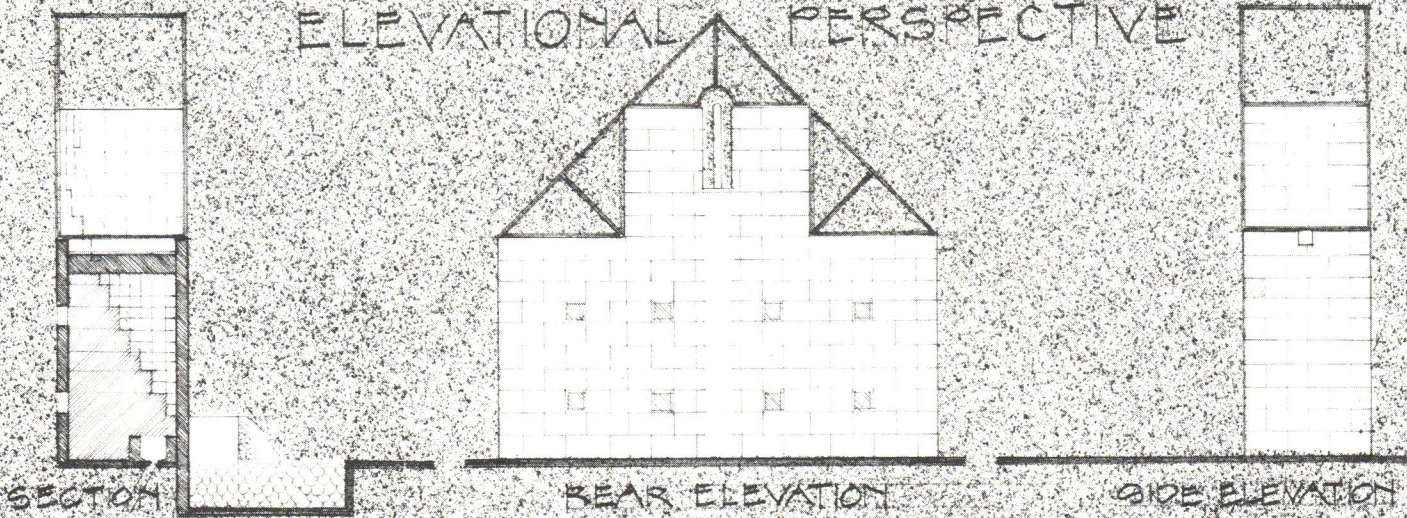


TO RELATE BUILDING TO LANDSCAPE
GOLDEN SECTION, SPIRAL IS USED
TO PROPORTION STRUCTURE
IN PLAN AND ELEVATION
IMAGERY SINGLE ELEMENT
IN LANDSCAPE, TEMPLE

FOR CONTEMPLATION, FOLLY;
MALE/FEMALE STATUES AS LIGHTS
STEEL FRAME OUTLINES HOUSE FORM
SYMBOLISM WATERFALL, SUBSTANCE
RETURNS TO ITS SOURCE, VISUAL
CONNECTION THRU GLASS BLOCK TO
INSIDE OF CUBICLE



ELEVATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

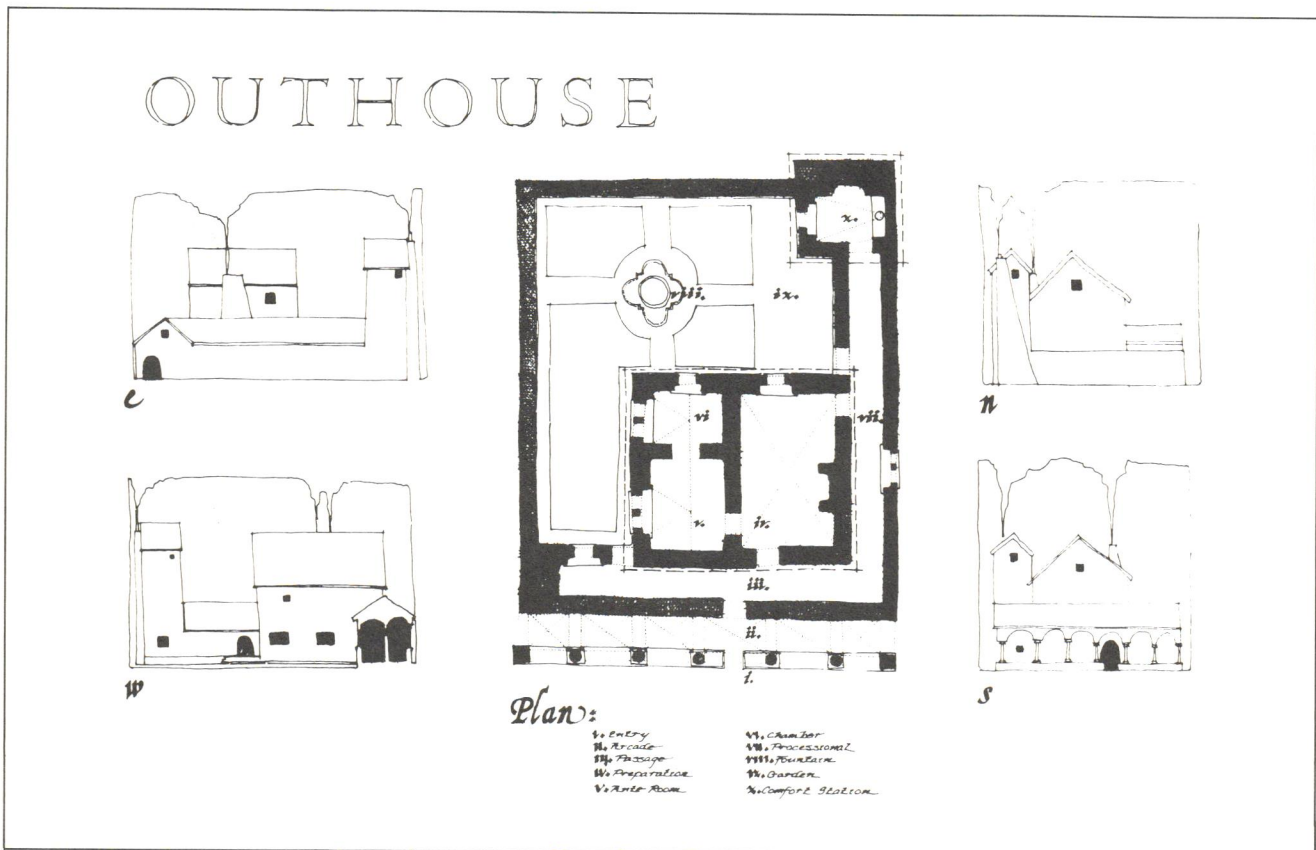


OUTHOUSE AS FOLLY

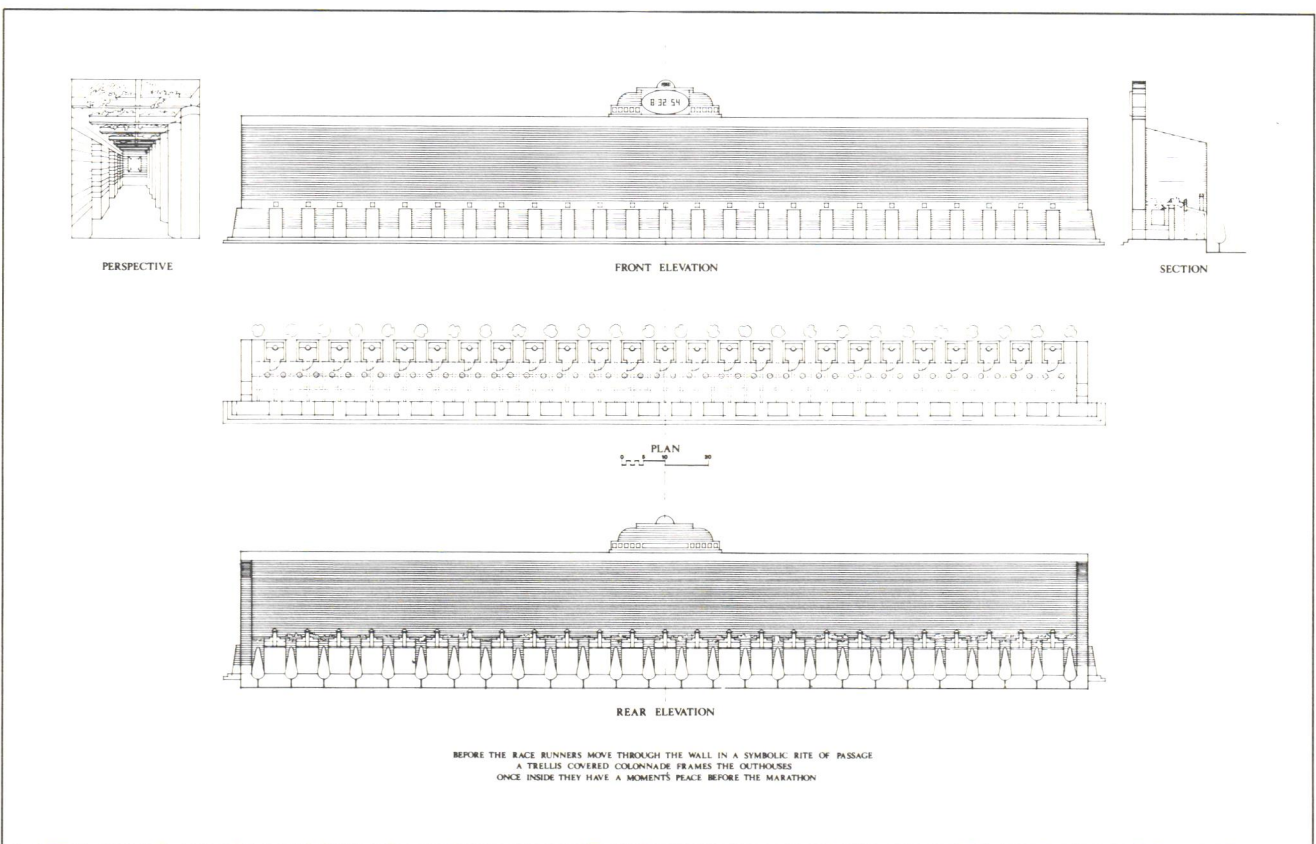
Mark Duffy, San Francisco.

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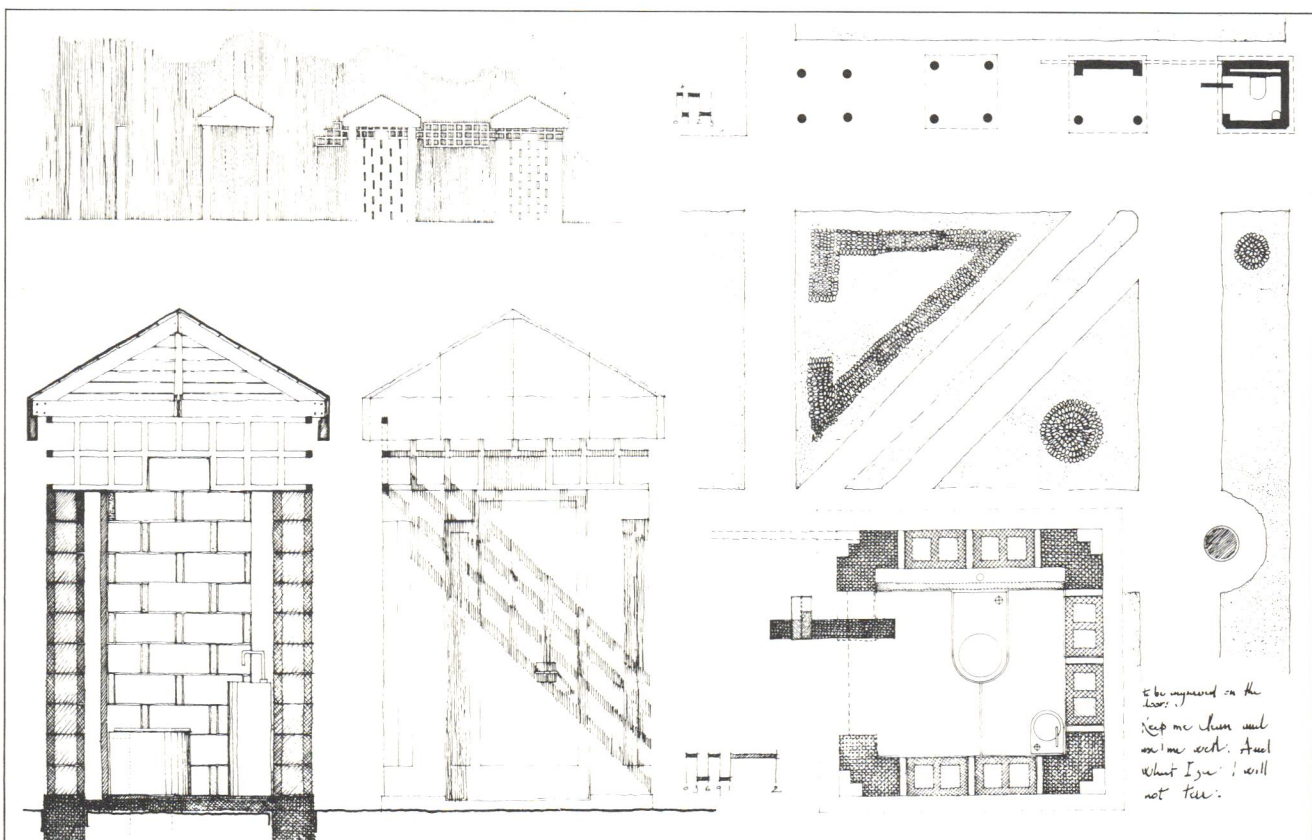
OUTHOUSE



Richard J. Soloman, Chicago.

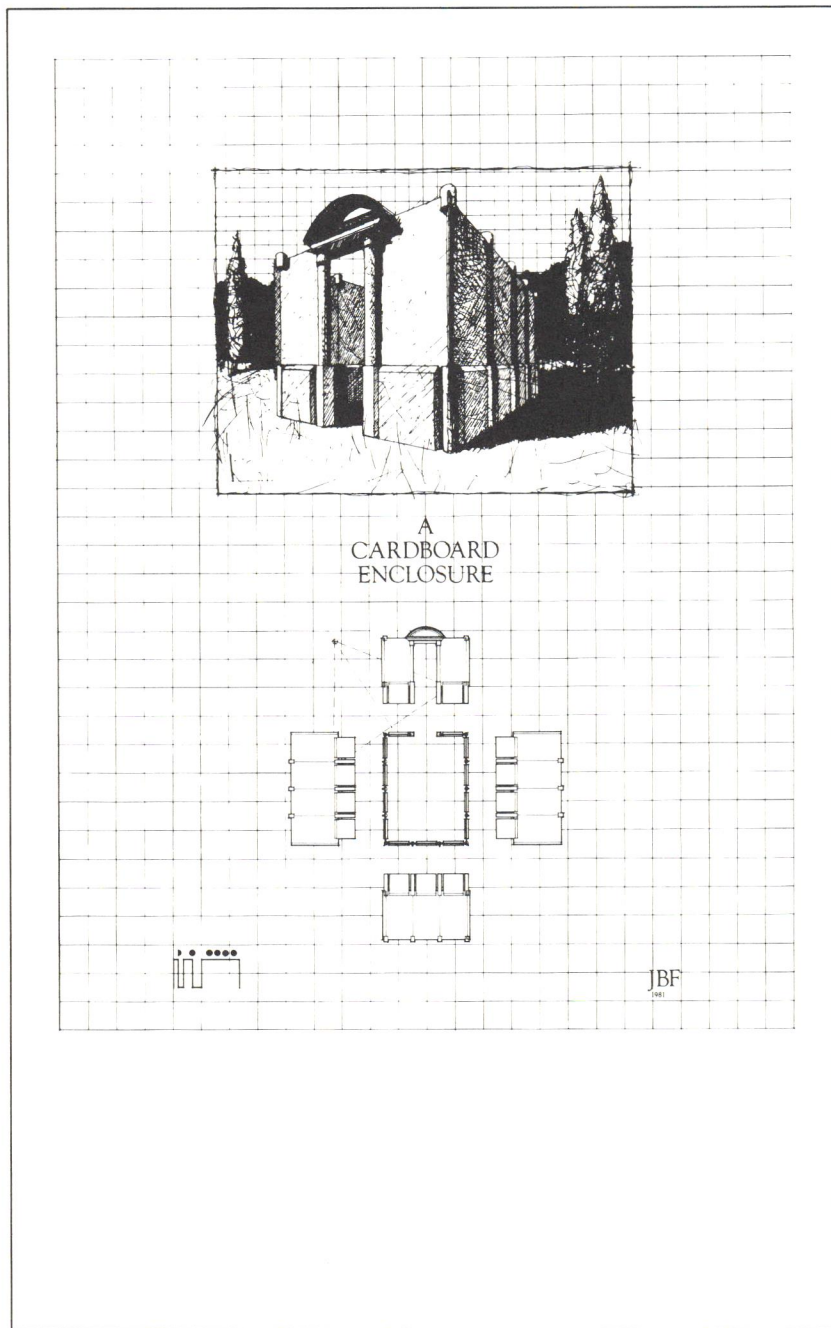


William Steinberg, Montreal.

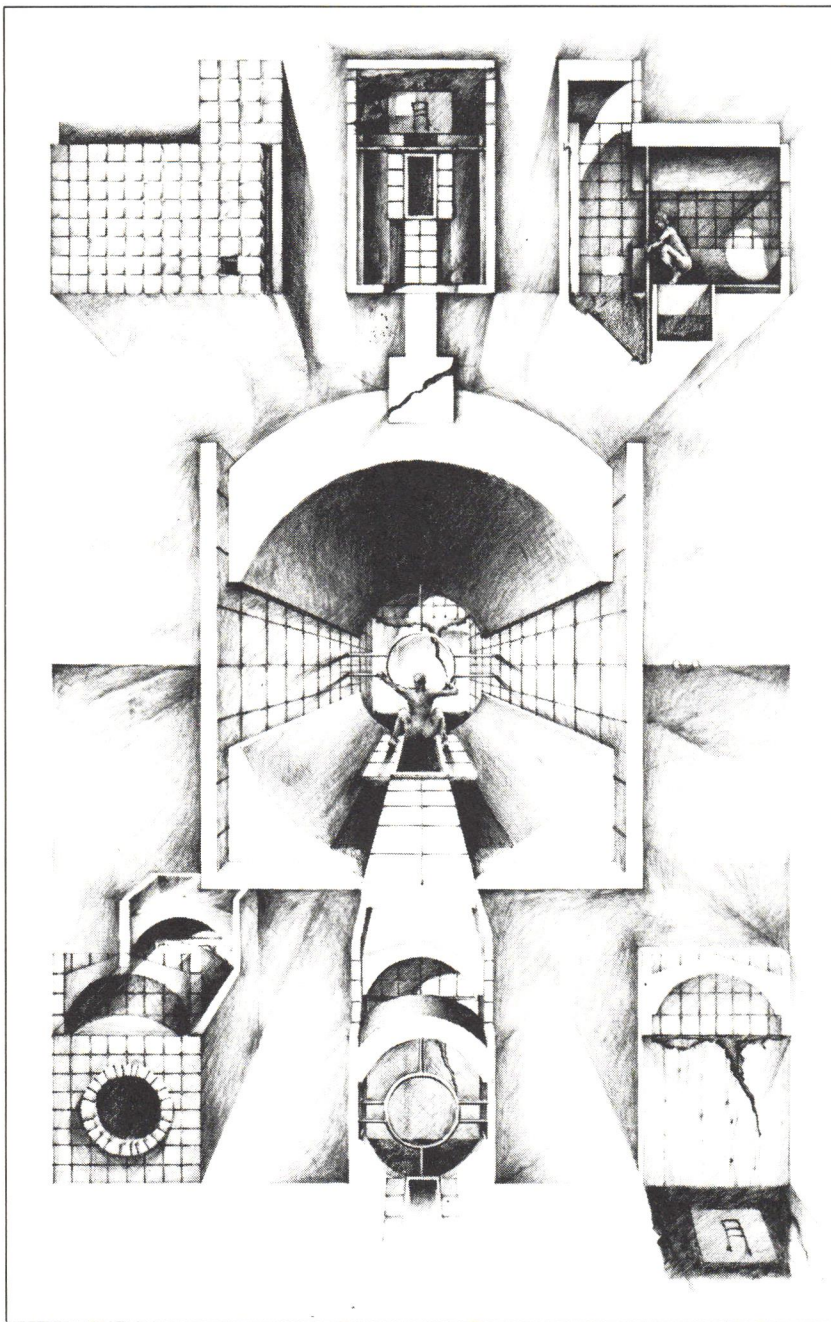


Marco Frascari and Edson Mahfuz, Philadelphia.

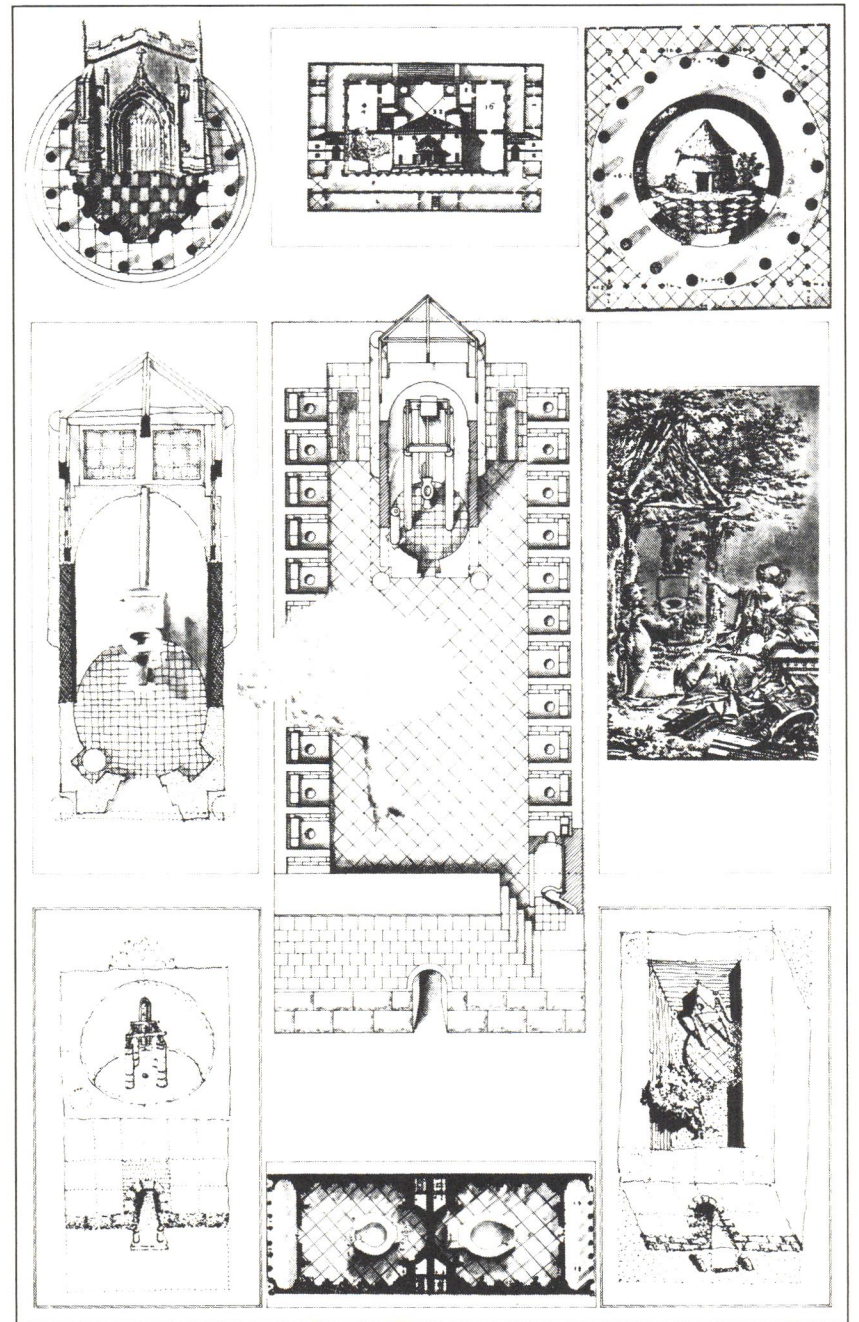
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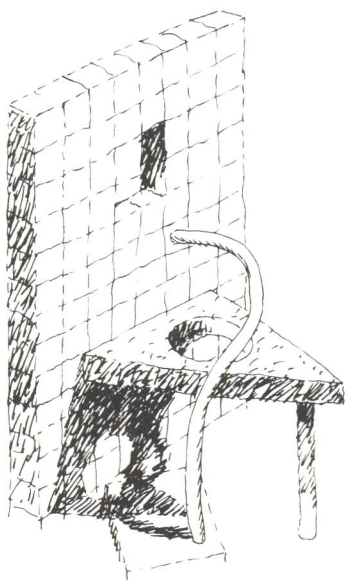
James Bernard Fox, Providence, R.I.



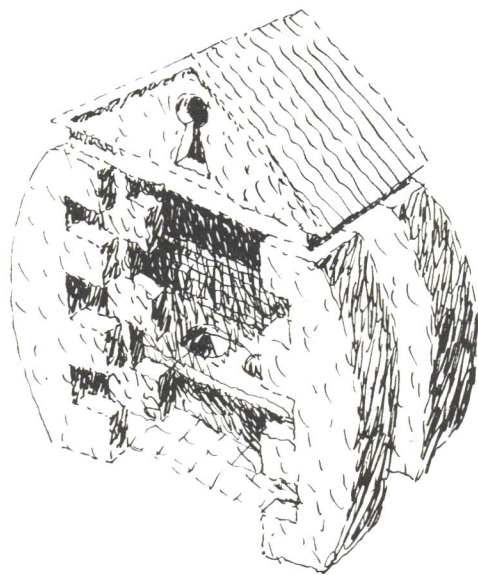
Mark Hesselgrave, Menlo Park, Ca.



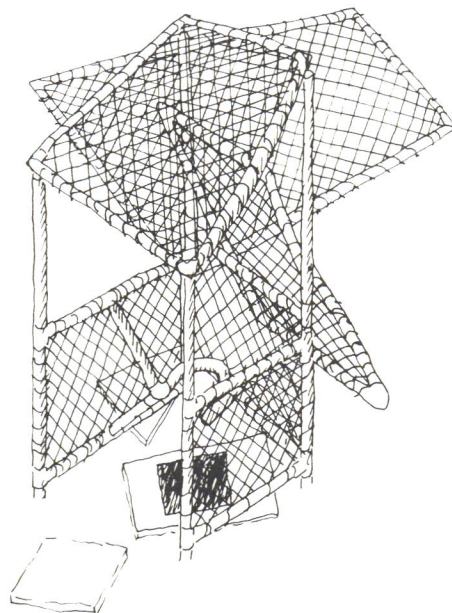
Steven Marc Shapiro, and Chris Cowansage, Philadelphia.



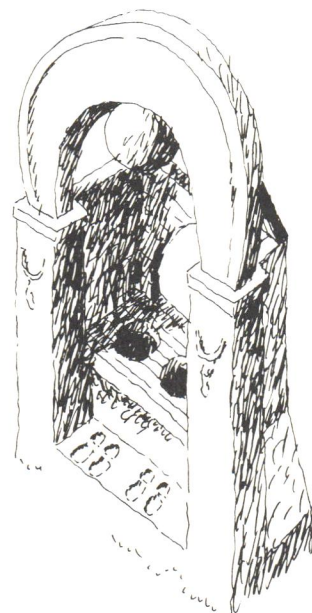
Koolhaas



Stern



Gehry



Moore

Excerpts from an Interview with Philip Johnson

Archetype's conversation with Philip Johnson in fall 1981 covered a full range of topics: California, history, language, architect/client relations, sociology, architecture schools and the outhouse. We have gathered and condensed some of the highlights of the three-hour conversation, which we present here with Johnson's permission. The accompanying drawings by Mark Mack depict possible outhouse competition entries by "famous" architects, although none of the famous names actually participated. The drawings are a humorous reminder that the outhouse is for everybody, even big-name professionals.

Johnson: Schools of architecture are very dulling and defeating things. Whenever I lecture at schools I advise the students to leave. But then I quickly add that if they want to get on in the organized world as it is, they had better stay. School is better than eleven years of apprenticeship, whatever the silly laws are. Most of my buildings were built before I was licensed.

I tell students: go to building. Build an outhouse. Nobody has yet taken me up on this and I've been telling people for fifty years. There is only one thing to do: go build an outhouse. Your function is clear, the mass, the division and the height are clear. But think of the variations. The pitch of the roof. Overhang or no overhang; it is endless.

Archetype: I think our magazine should stage a competition in your name.

Johnson: I would be delighted. I'll give the prize. A thousand dollar prize for an outhouse. It's got to be a two-holer, by the way. Two holes give you the right proportion.

A competition is important because it focuses people's minds. If you don't take it too seriously (of

course you can't help taking it too seriously, alas), it is something valuable for simply calling attention to various directions. Without the Tribune Towers competition we wouldn't have the history of the skyscraper, and all minor skyscrapers.

But it has to be buildable. It can't be a fantasy, otherwise there isn't any point. Frank Gehry would win, I should think; Graves might do a pretty moon. But how practical would it be?

Drawing should never be an end in itself. If you start comparing it with other forms of drawing, or with the artists, you always need the impact of a real building. Frank Gehry, strange as he is, is a building architect. He draws things he knows the size of perfectly well—a 2 by 4, a piece of sheet metal, or a sheet fence. I don't make drawings. I actually make oceans of them (of course we all do); but the drawings never leave my wastebasket. I am old-fashioned. I was brought up in the Bauhaus where drawing, like history, was considered one of those sinful things.

I was always hated as a kid because I insisted that architecture was all caught up in history. I never did history. It's just that nobody else bothered. They thought it was a sin, or stupid. I come from an historical point of view which is why I can say these things. Historians have to take in each other's wash. How could one be an historian and not talk about post-modernism? I can very easily. I don't know what it is. What's more, I don't care. But they have to say modernist/post-modernist to make these kinds of distinctions or they couldn't be historians.

Two good historians who use their eyes first and write afterwards are Hitchcock and Bob Stern. Each comes to their criticism through their eyes. I wonder if the English and the Italians do as well. They are much brighter than we architects are. No doubt about it, they say things that help me enormously.

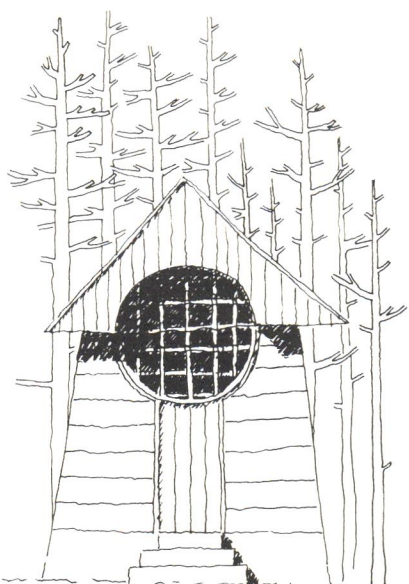
But they deal in words, and as architects we can't deal in words. We deal in forms. Words are merely the results of the way people talk. For instance, I used the word "monumental" during the first twenty or thirty years I was writing. Then for a while I had to stop using it because it meant something anti-architectural. "Monumental" meant something useless, like a crystal cathedral. Now I can use it again.

Clients seem to think I understand what they want; I'm not sure that's a virtue. When somebody like Corbusier, who is a bad client architect, really is the kind of man who makes statements in history books, and people like me represent the next range, the next architecture, I am not sure we have any comparative features today. I don't mean to indicate that we are in a worse period. We don't have the old world, period, as the British call it. There is no Mies, no Corbusier, no form creator like Wright. *Domus* called me the new hero in an age of non-heroes, because I am opening things up. Letting-it-all-hang-out business. Makes it practically Californian, doesn't it? Before we all drift off into the ocean...

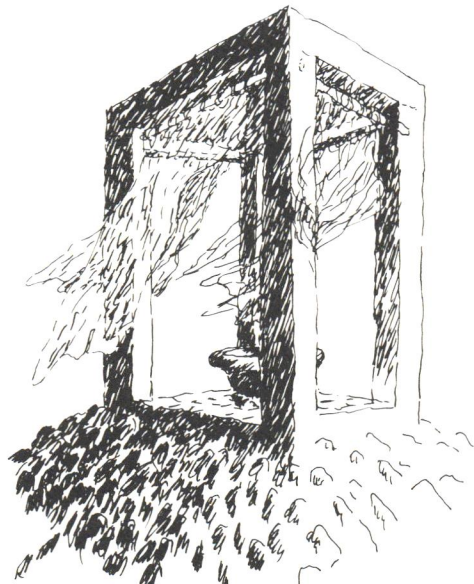
There is no Bay Area style. The book by that name has no basis for critical comparison; it just jumps around. One should be more specific in talking about the shingle period. The beginning was Coxhead, Schweinfurth and so on, with a little Maybeck thrown in.

Maybeck was a genius, and he would fit today perfectly. The hero of us architecture people is Maybeck, not Wright. Wright was a formative. Maybeck was indifferent to the history of the world. He never had any feeling for another way of looking at things. He must have been a fascinating man. But California is a strange place. The more it tries to fit in somewhere, the less it does.

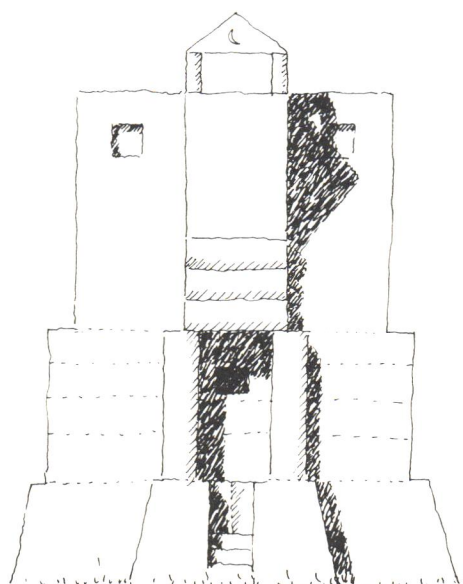
Venturi



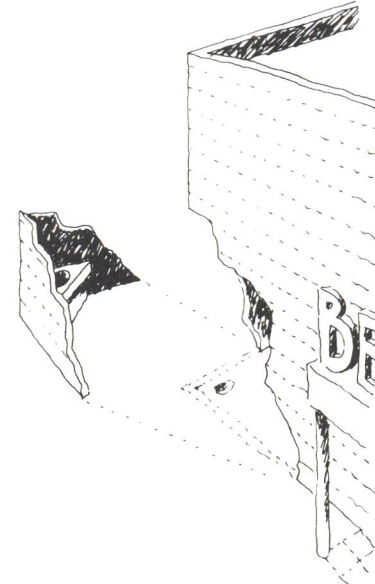
Abraham



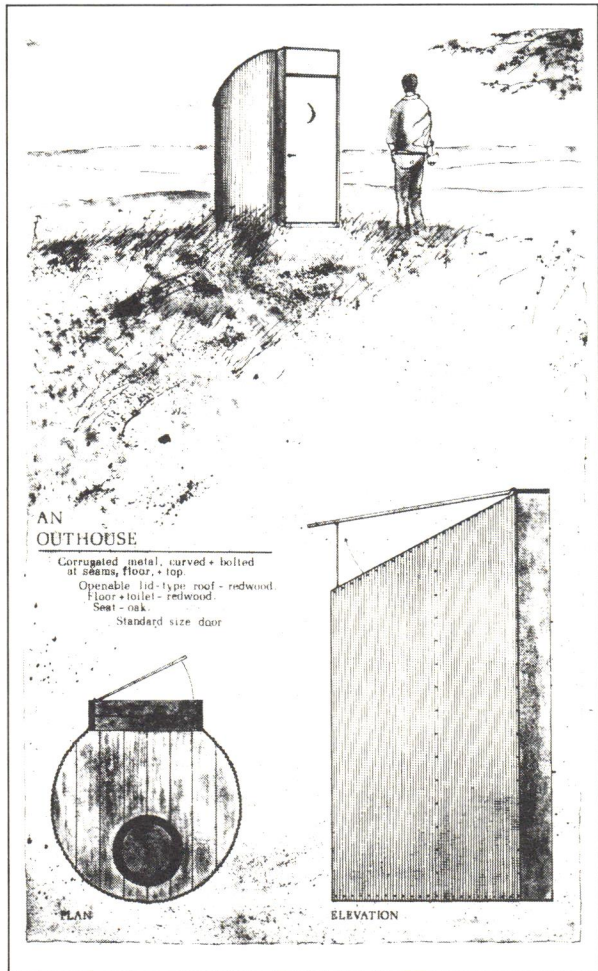
Graves



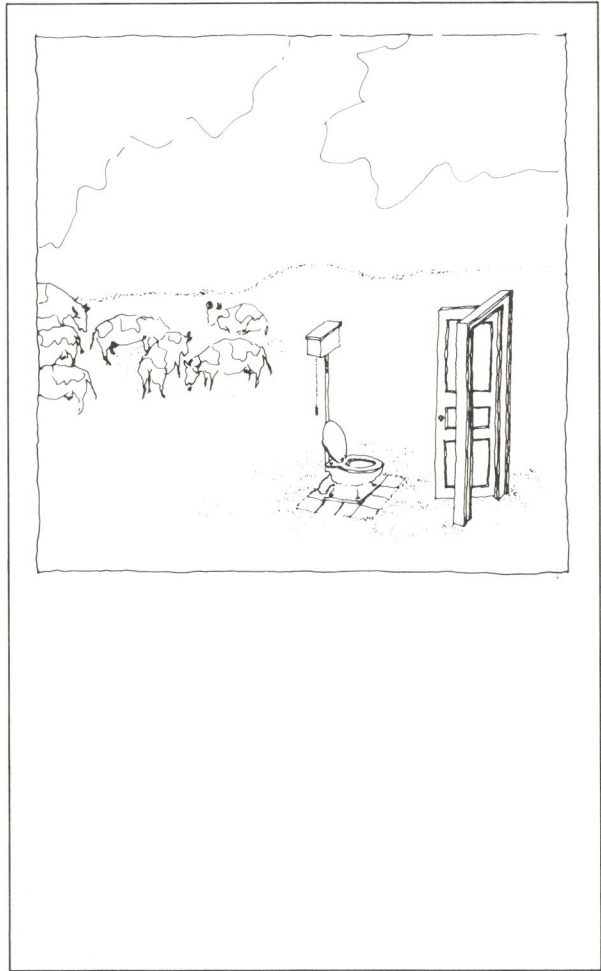
SITE



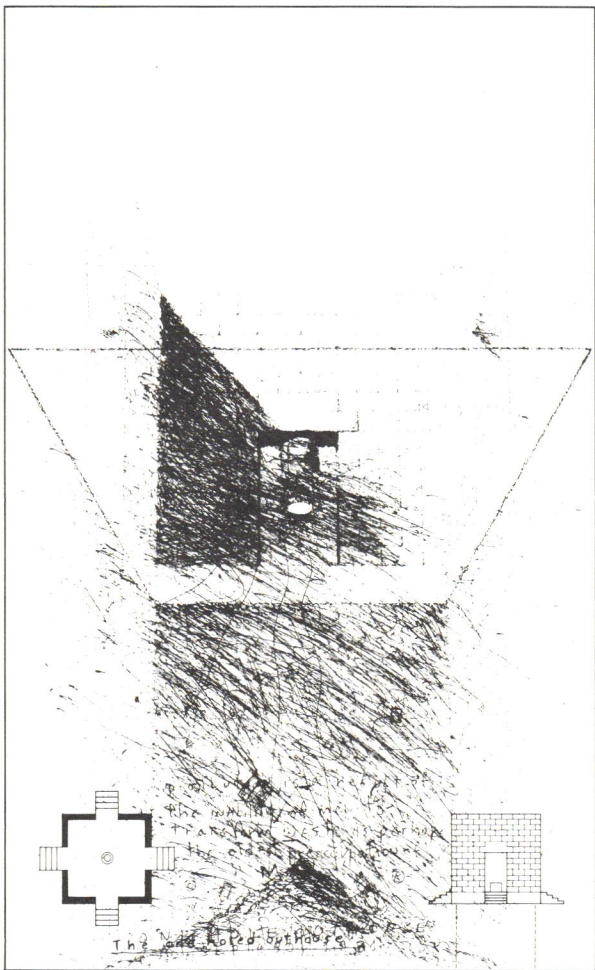
EDITOR'S CHOICES



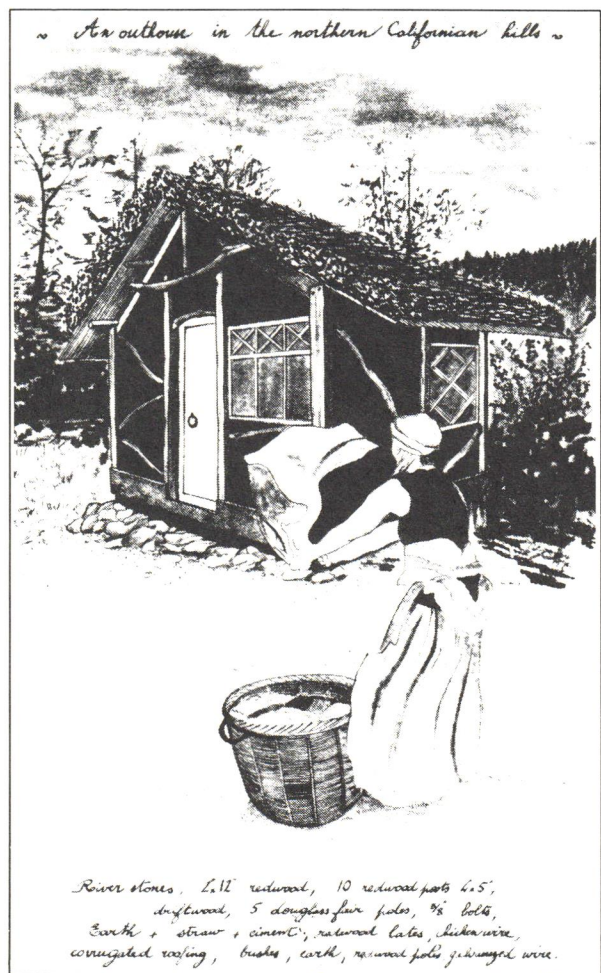
Werner Maasen, St. Louis, Mo.



Canan Tolon, Berkeley, Ca.



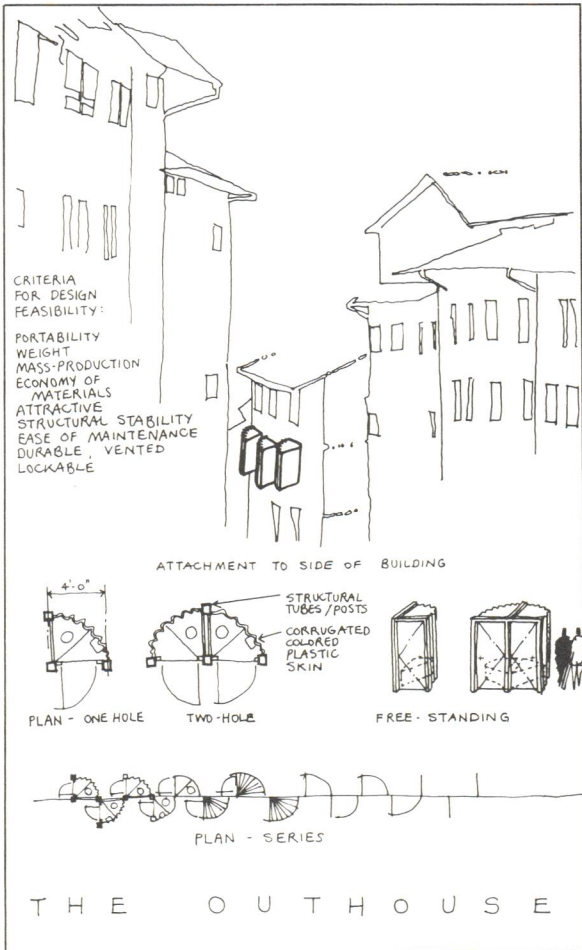
Bruce Tomb, San Francisco



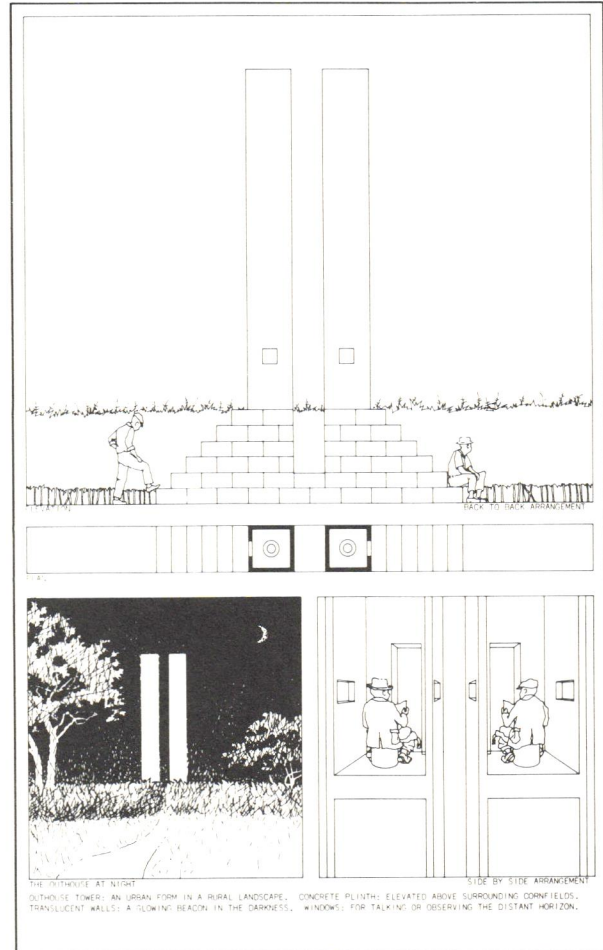
Frederick Bekas, San Francisco.

Overheard at the judging:

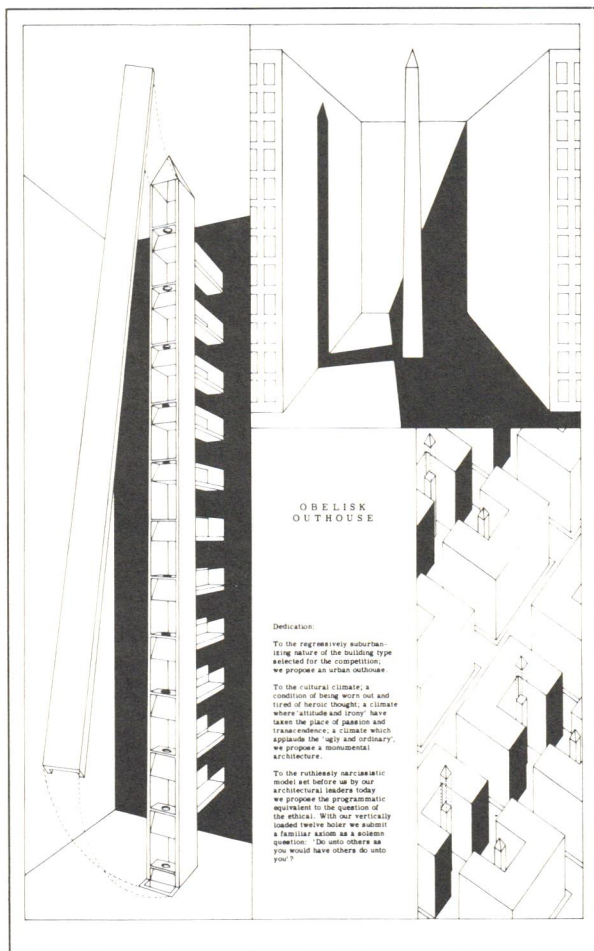
EDITOR'S CHOICES



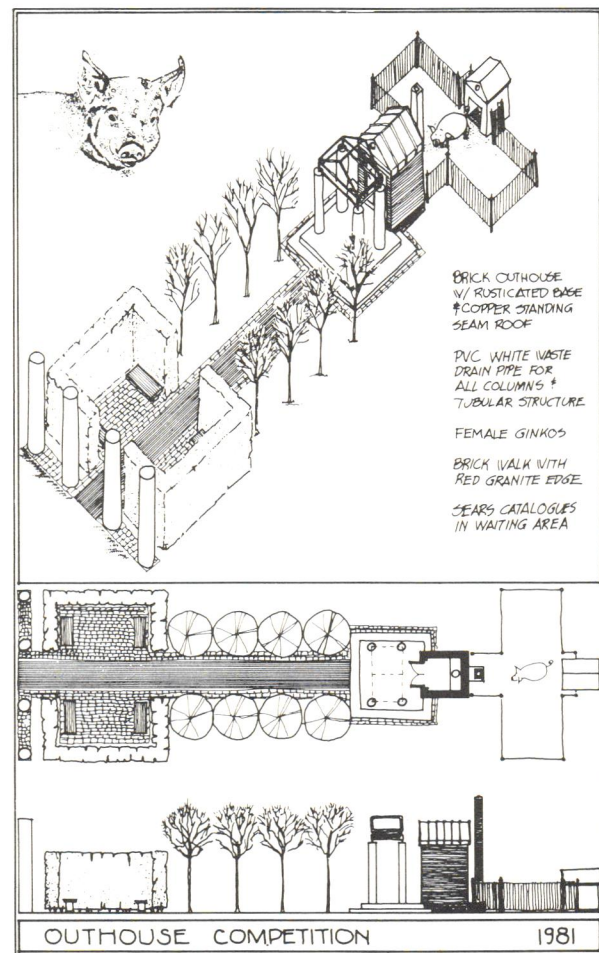
Martin Bernstein, Palo Alto, Ca.



J.J., San Francisco.

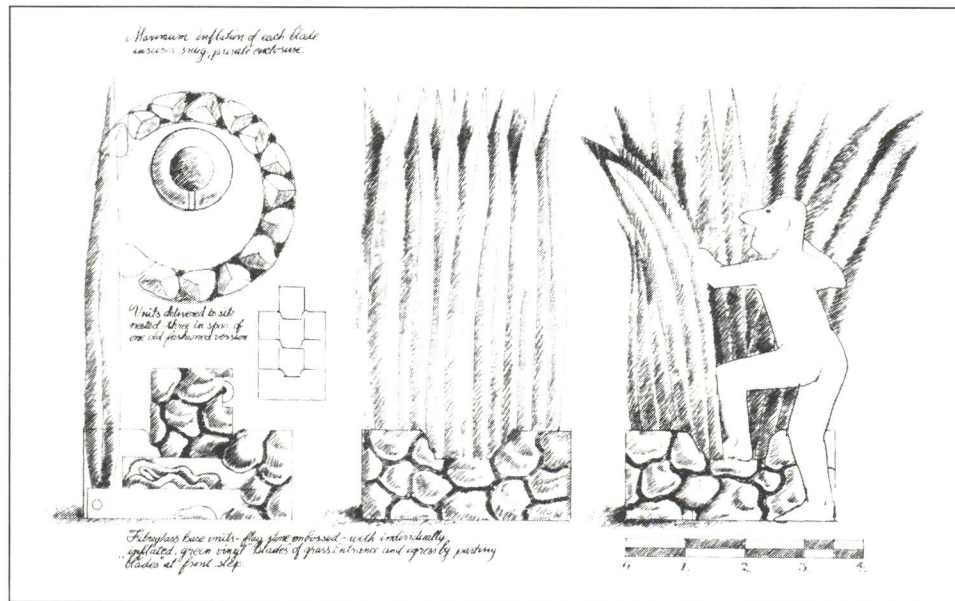


Myron Lohe, New York.

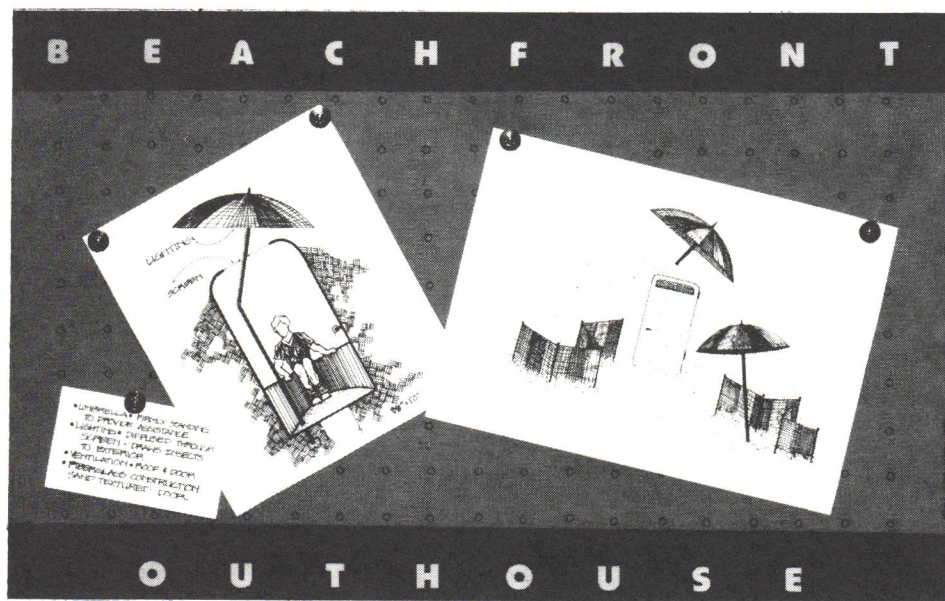


W. Davis van Bakergem, St. Louis, Mo.

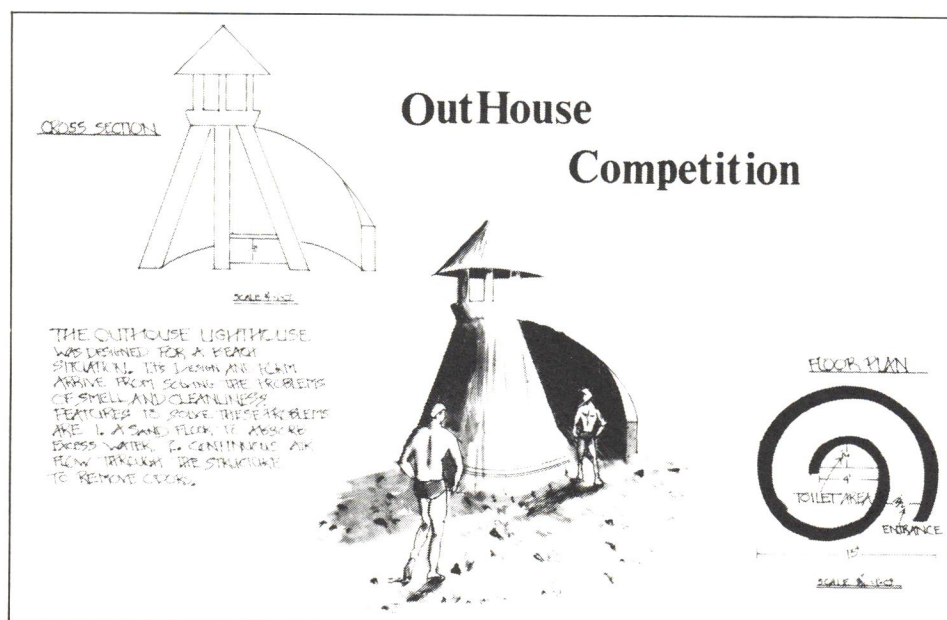
... the best ones were not satisfied with the program ...



Lawrence Green and Bill Morrisch.

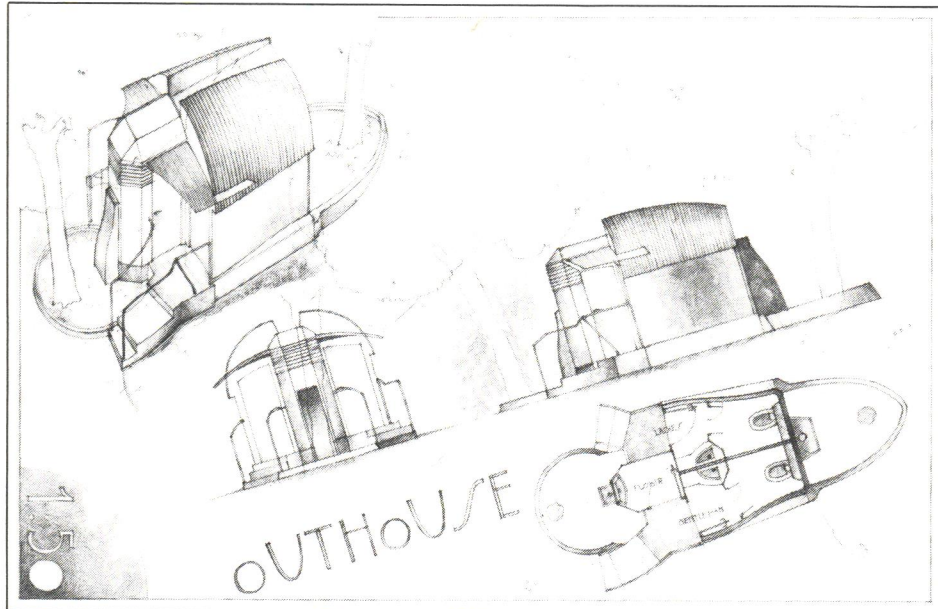


Erin O'Bannon, San Diego.



Tony Melendez, San Diego.

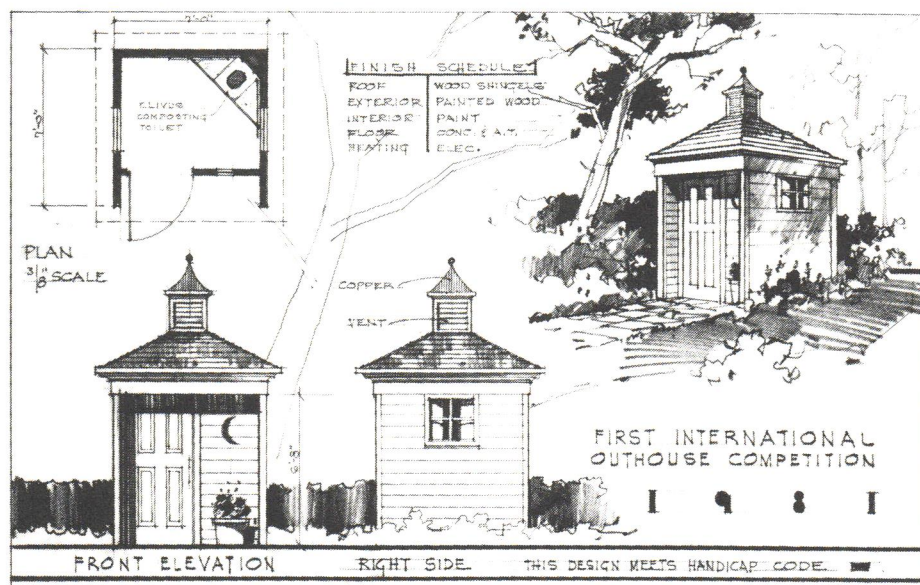
. . . it's a maze—you go straight through . . .



Manfred Partl, Graz, Austria.



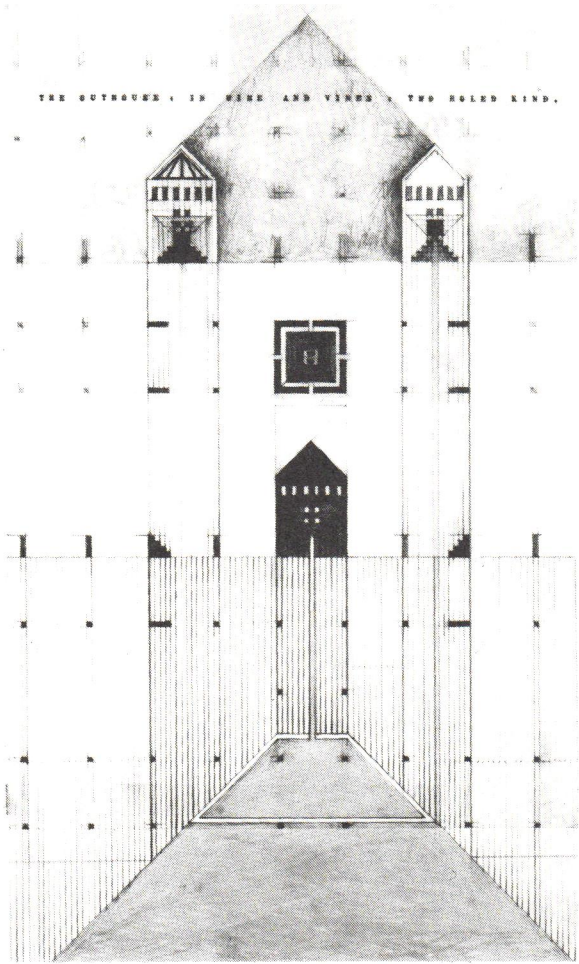
Andreas Gruber, Graz, Austria.



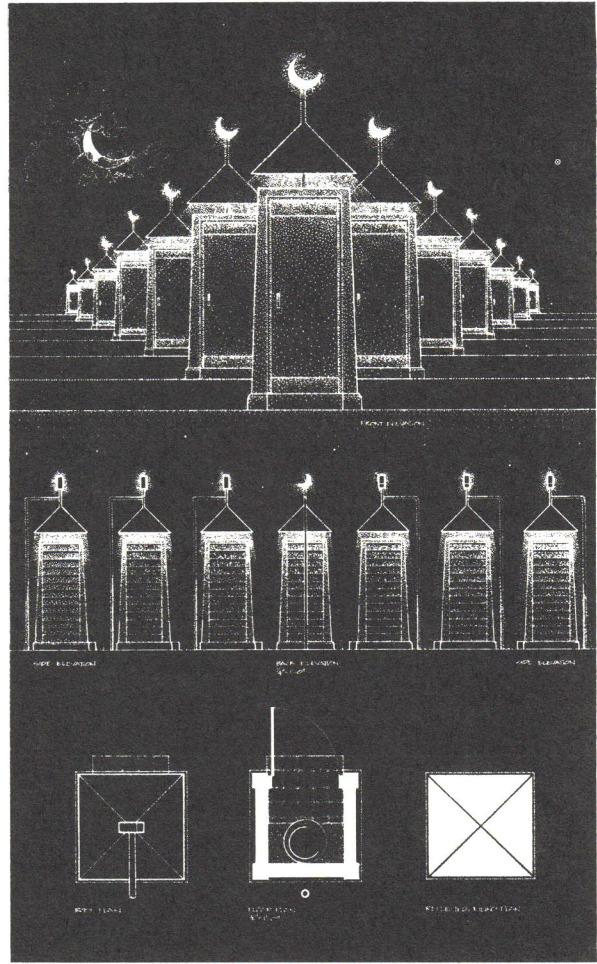
Gil Petroff, Columbia, S.C.

. . . trying to figure out what it all means . . .

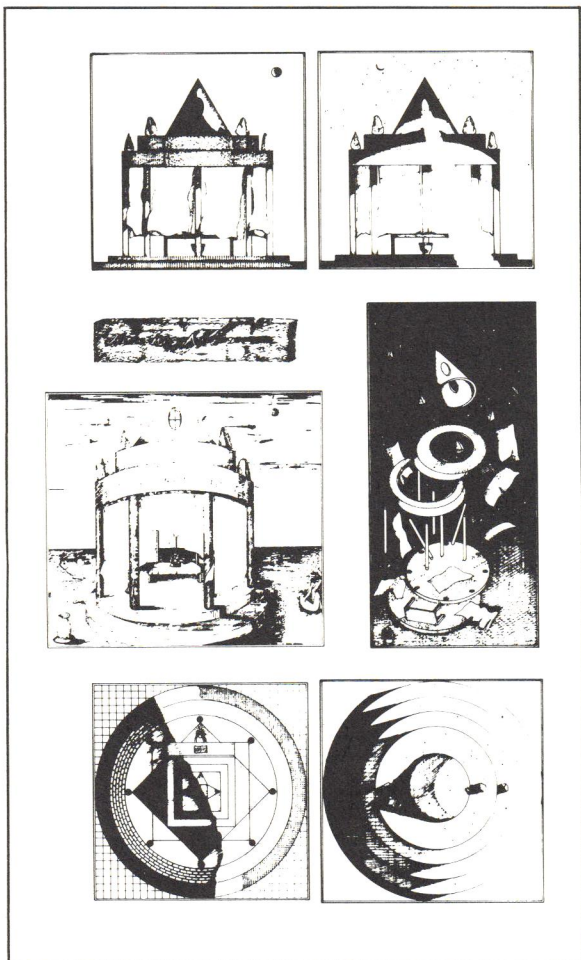
E D I T O R ' S C H O I C E S



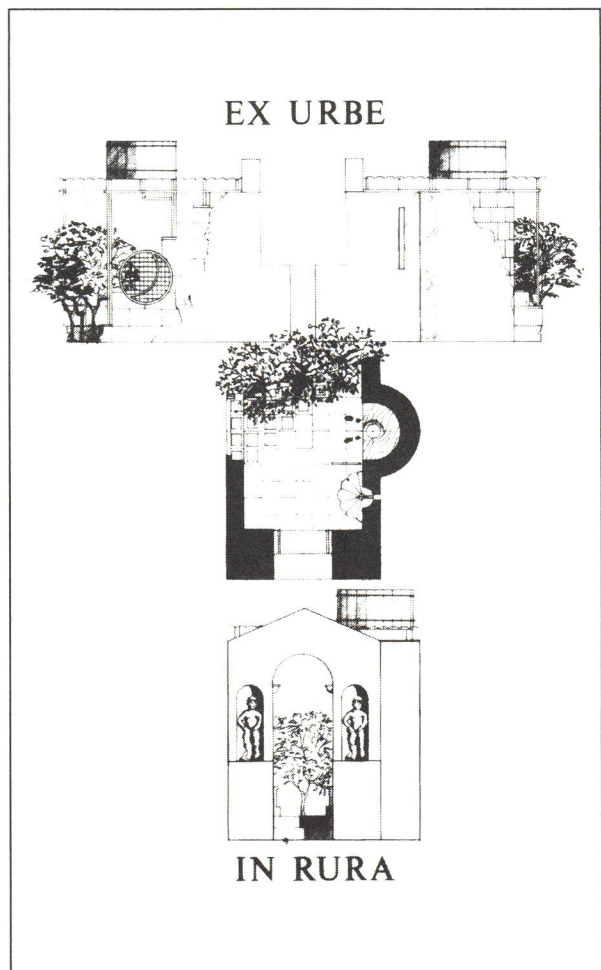
Barbara Stauffacher Solomon, San Francisco.



J. Norman, Chicago.



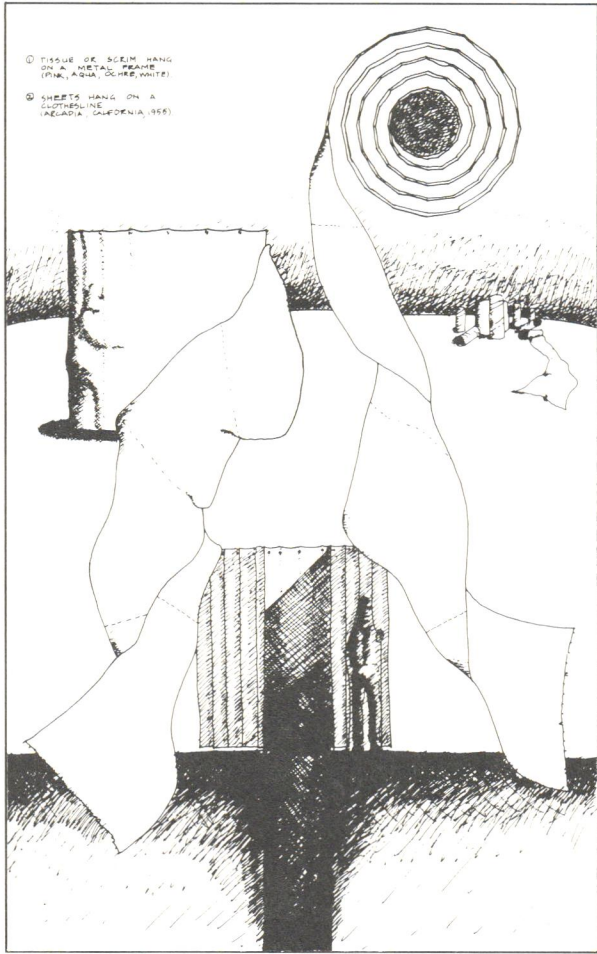
Gianni Veneziano, Chicago.



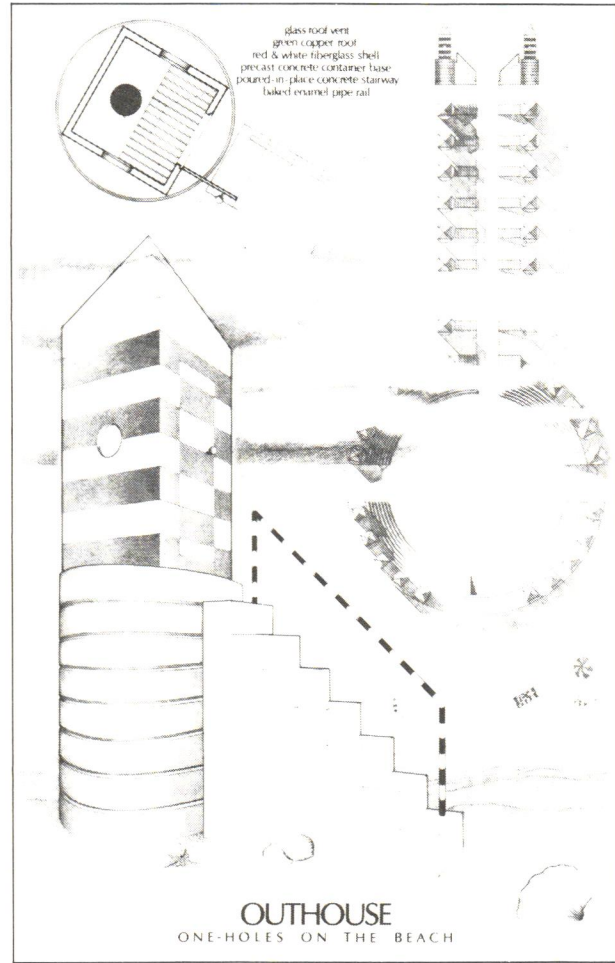
Paul Adamson, San Francisco.

. . . all idea no architecture . . .

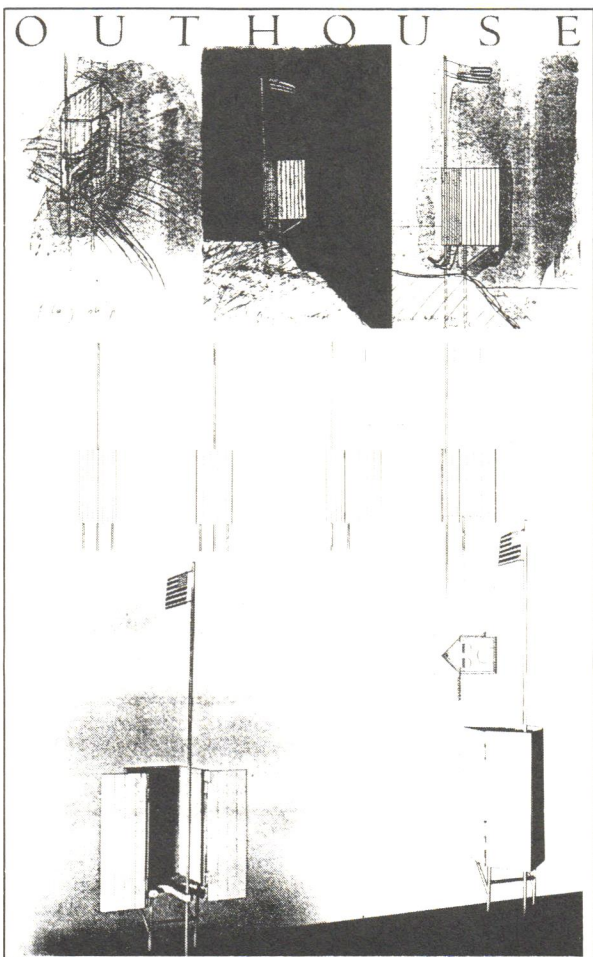
EDITOR'S CHOICES



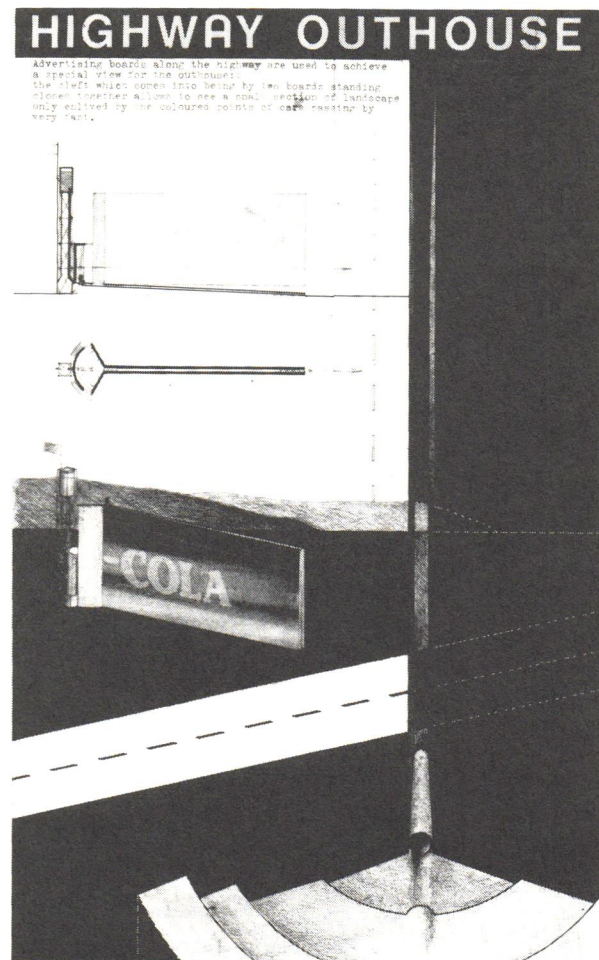
Jim Hill, San Francisco.



David Woolf, Brooklyn, New York.



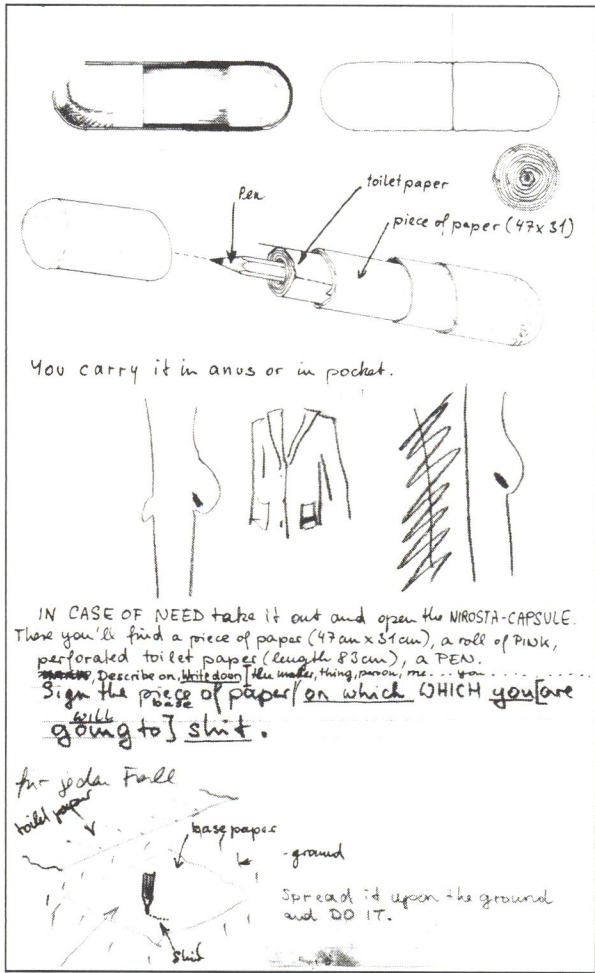
Richard Manahl, Graz, Austria.



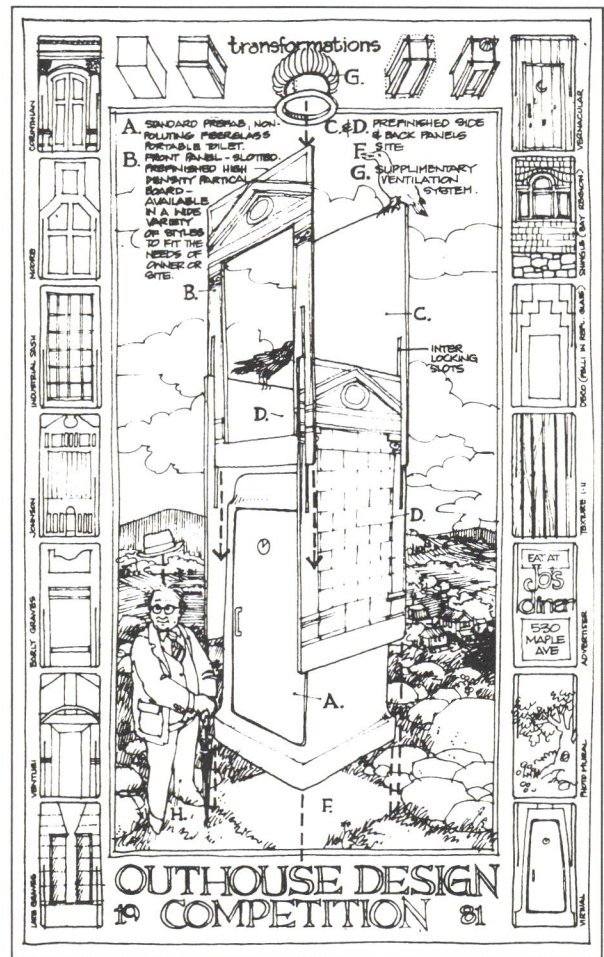
Richard Manahl, Graz, Austria.

... one for Graves, one for Venturi, one for Eisenman ...

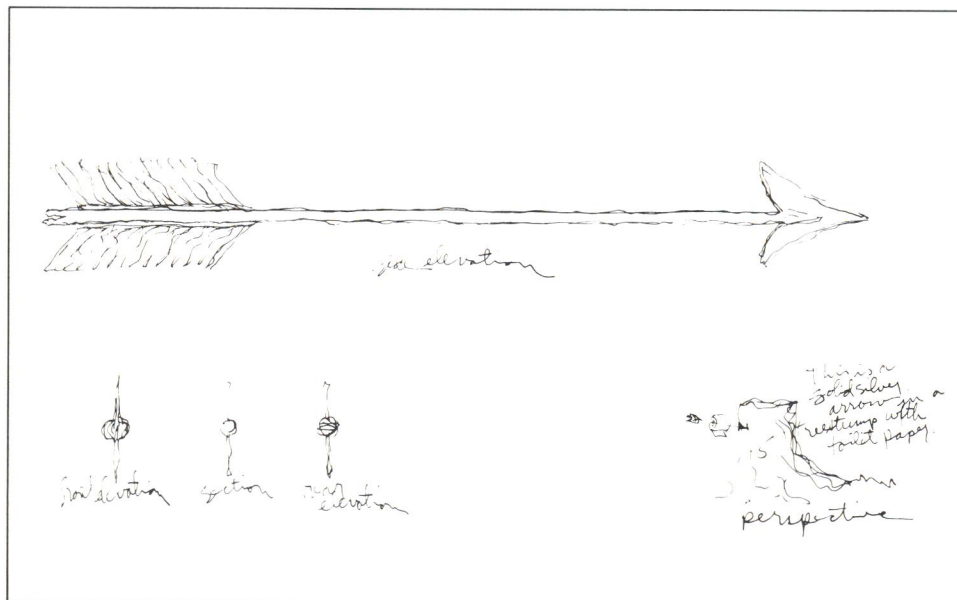
EDITOR'S CHOICES



Hans Alexander Pauer, Graz, Austria.



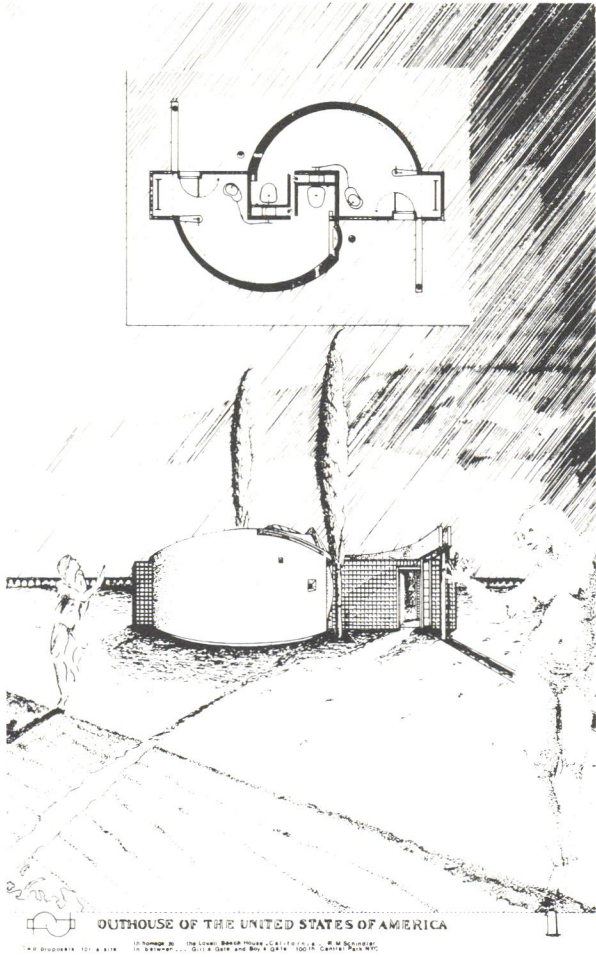
Jon Worden, San Francisco.



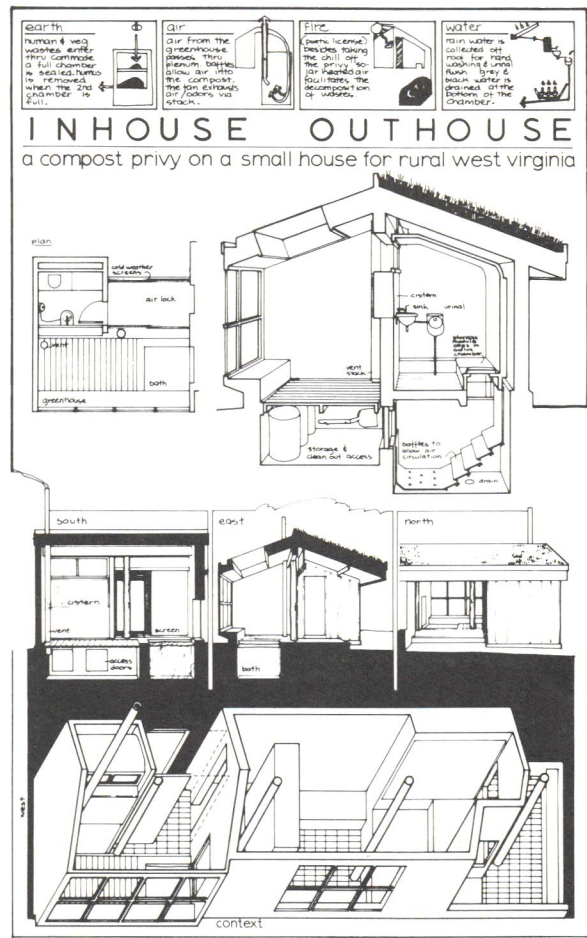
Phil Holden, Wilmette, Ill.

... it's a joke ...

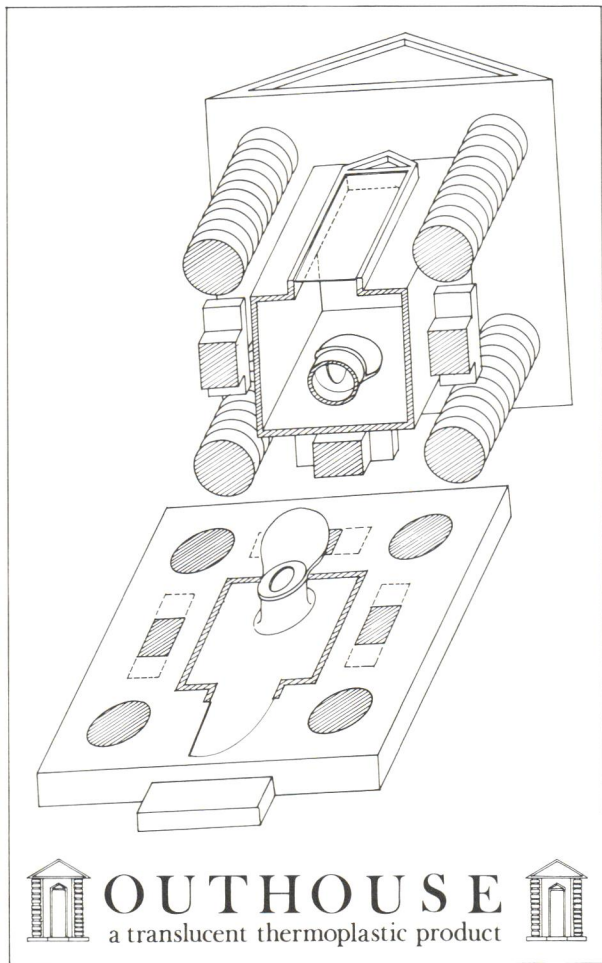
EDITOR'S CHOICES



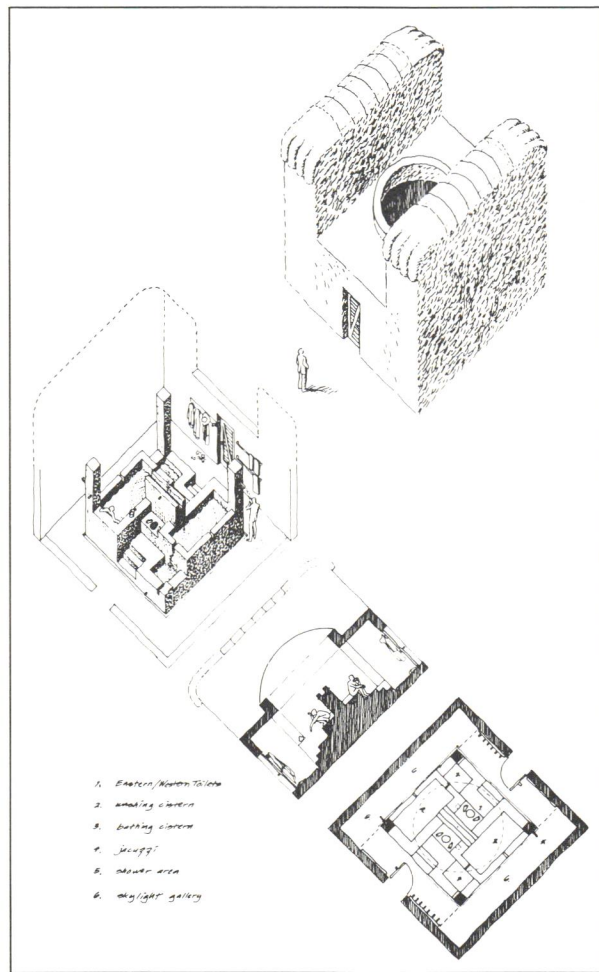
Michel Mossessian, New York.



Bruce Osen, Beckley, West Virginia.



Christopher Hill, Chicago.



James Gilliam, Fairfax, Ca.

. . . we are picking, we are the judges, we are going neoclassical . . .

Outhouse Memories



Thomas Cole's Outhouse, Catskill, New York. Photo by Charles D. Winters.

When Philip Johnson, longstanding champion of urban architecture, suggested a reexamination of the outhouse, ironically, he also touched a sympathetic chord in America's heartland. Of course the mention in *Preservation News* exposed the contest to a broad audience. Even so, no one foresaw the lively interest and support we received from preservationists and built outhouse enthusiasts from all over the country. Of the 171 entries, 50 documented existing structures that could not be judged by the designed entry standards. But in art as in science it is often worth noting the unexpected results as well as the expected. The built outhouses are a viable response to the competition, and are a welcome companion to the frivolity of the drawn designs. They provide a valuable historical perspective on what might have turned into simply an academic exercise. We are pleased to present a sampling of the many interesting structures which are either still in use, part of a national historic site, or which live in the memory of a user.

The theme of memory runs throughout the built outhouse submissions and goes hand-in-hand with its sister, inspiration. As an object of memory, the outhouse can evoke a forgotten chapter in the user's life, but it also provides a private place where the user can relax, reflect and project.

The phenomenon of outhouse as temple of the muse is well represented among the built outhouse entries we received. From the door of the Thomas Cole outhouse in Catskill, New York (left), the artist could view the panorama that inspired the romantic landscape painting of the Hudson River School. Another example of the inspirational privy is the beautifully panelled and plastered structure (not pictured) situated "at the end of a lilac-lined cut stone walk," at Lansing Manor, Blenheim, New York, which was frequently used by James Fenimore Cooper. Cooper was Yale roommate and friend of Jacob Livingston Sutherland (who married Francis Lansing), and to whom Cooper dedicated his first major novel, *The Pioneers*. "One can wonder," writes Bruce Sherwood, director of the Historical Preservation Commission, Orlando, Florida, "whether the comfort of the Lansing outhouse influenced Cooper's musings and comments on political justice in *The Pioneers*." James Fenimore Cooper and Thomas Cole are just two examples of the generations of American artists and writers who have turned to the outhouse as a place for clear thinking and vision.

Certain objects may trigger the human memory; a particular outhouse, often from childhood, can trigger strong memories in a former user. For instance, Miami's Molly Lesnick (p. 34) longingly recounts the changes in interior decoration and the library of her family's Pennsylvania outhouse. Hers happens to be a fond reminiscence, but not all outhouse memories are pleasant. For one thing, the smell of an overfull outhouse can get pretty overpowering, but Bob Douglas of St. Peter, Minnesota, alerts us to other dangers:

The sensation, nay torture, of having to sit on an ice-cold, frosty-morning privy seat in mid-January in Minnesota is an unforgettable experience, something I would not wish on my worst enemy. But sitting is only half of it; getting up is even worse. I always felt that my *derrière* wanted to stay glued to the icy seat. My father told me such experiences helped develop character. I told him they developed open wounds.

Such testimony is given half in plaintive horror and half in sentimental fascination. However one chooses to look at it, the outhouse is a potent form able to bring to the surface hidden memories. Part of this ability is due to the scatological lore surrounding the structure; it is worth noting some historical examples from Europe.

Any discussion of historical precedents has to include mention of the 18th century's predilection for linking the written word with the excretory functions. Jonathan Swift uses the metaphor throughout his work, but examples may also be found in Sterne, Pope and Fielding. In his *Tale of a Tub*, Swift portrays critics as those who:

In their common perusal of books, singling out the errors and defects, the nauseous, the fulsome, the dull and the impertinant, with the caution of a man that walks through Edinburgh streets in a morning, who is indeed as careful as

he can to watch diligently, and spy out the filth in his way; not that he is curious to observe the colour and complexion of the ordure, or take its dimensions, much less to be paddling in, or tasting it; but only with a design to come out as cleanly as he may.¹

This vivid image needs no further explanation for us to get the idea: Writing, whether it spurts out of the end of the author's pen, or flows majestically from an author's insides into the light of day, is one form of human excrement. This is no less true in our own day than it was in 1704, although a modern writer such as Joyce has reinterpreted the relationship and transposed some of the terms. The famous "outhouse" scene in *Ulysses* finds Bloom sitting in the "jakes" completely absorbed in the words of a favorite theater critic:

Asquat on the cuckstool he folded out his paper turning its pages over on his bared knees. Something new and easy. No great hurry. Keep it a bit. Our prize titbit. *Matchem's Masterpiece*. Written by Mr. Philip Beaufoy, Playgoer's Club, London. Payment at the rate of one guinea a column has been made to the writer. Three pounds three. Three pounds thirteen and six.²

The time Bloom spends in the privy is measured by the payment Mr. Beaufoy received for writing the article Bloom is reading. Bloom's consumption of writing is a comment on how it was produced, and echoing Freud, Joyce in his own way brings money into the equation of words and excrement.

The epitome of privy revelatory experiences was probably Luther's formulation of the doctrine of justification by faith, which came to him suddenly while seated on the "privy in the tower." Although Lutherans hotly debated the issue in 1911 (after nearly four centuries of distorted and cleaned-up versions of the story perpetrated by repressed Lutheran scholars), the words of Luther himself are very clear:

These words "just" and "justice of God" were a thunderbolt in my conscience. They soon struck terror in me who heard them. He is just, therefore He punishes. But once when in this tower I was meditating on those words, "the just lives by faith," "justice of God," I soon had the thought whether we ought to live justified by faith, and God's justice ought to be the salvation of every believer, and soon my soul was revived. Therefore it is God's justice which justifies us and saves us. And these words became a sweeter message for me. This knowledge the Holy Spirit gave me on the privy in the tower.³

Thus the fundamental axiom of the Reformation which jostled Christianity off its foundations, changing it forever, was born in a privy. In some respects the garderobes, jakes and privies of historic Europe are a long way from the American outhouse; but in that each is the setting for what our plumbing age calls "going to the bathroom," both the European privy and the American outhouse nurtured moments of solitude in which, as we have seen, genuine flashes of inspiration and revelation could occur.

This tradition of memory and inspiration is seen more directly in the built outhouse entries we received than in the drawn designs. Actual testimony from users, along with letters describing historically important outhouses, and the artists who used them, place the competition in an empirical/historical reality which the drawn designs alone often fail to communicate adequately.

—Kyle Thayer

NOTES:

¹ Jonathan Swift, "A Tale of a Tub" in *Gulliver's Travels and Other Writings*, The Riverside Press, Cambridge, 1960, p. 290.
² James Joyce, *Ulysses*, Random House, New York, 1934, p. 68
³ Luther quoted in Norman O. Brown, *Life Against Death*, Wesleyan University Press, Middletown, Connecticut, 1959, p. 202.

Old Time Outhouses

Not since *The Specialist* by the late Charles (Chic) Sale hit the best seller list in 1929 has the outhouse evoked much literary interest. Other books on the subject have been written but were less successful. It is the story of a country carpenter who specialized in the construction of outhouses.

The privy often matched the architectural style of the main dwelling and was situated a discreet distance away. Sometimes it was constructed of left-over lumber and supplies from another project, with certain embellishments.

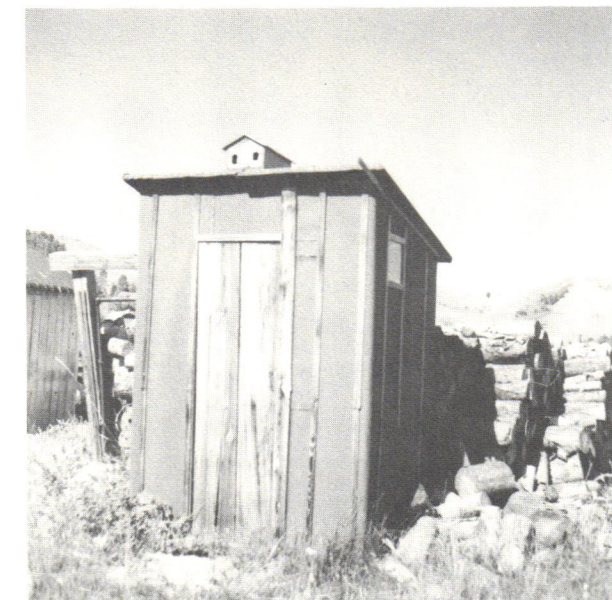
Advances in plumbing technology have contributed to the disappearance of the outhouse from the landscape.



Ventilator cutouts were a matter of personal choice. Sometimes the Specialist did hearts for newly married couples, but half-moons seemed to be the most popular.

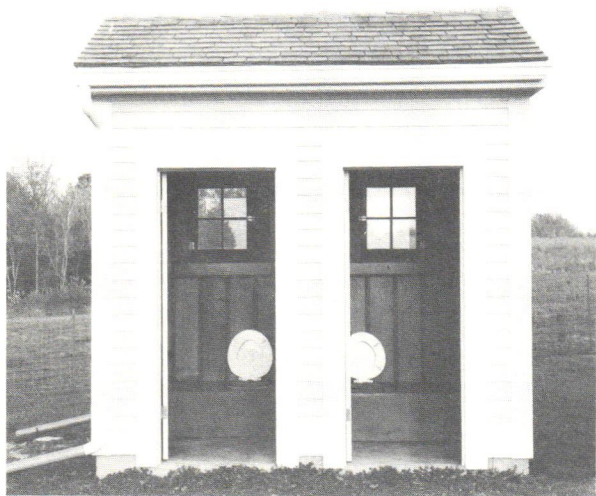


A four-way hip roof with cupola is the distinguishing feature of this stage coach inn rest stop near Jolon, California.



Placing the privy near the woodpile was strategic planning. The woman of the house might make four or five trips a day. On the way back she could pick up several pieces of wood for the kitchen stove wood box. Make every trip count.

—Helen Arbuckle, San Jose, California.



Whitney E. Kerr, Kansas City, Missouri.

Reminiscence

I write this from Miami, Florida, but our outhouse is located outside the family's country house (a log cabin) near Lopez, Pennsylvania.

Our outhouse was built approximately 33 years ago by my three brothers and some friends the summer when I was ten. It was built of solid seasoned cherrywood boards. The cherry had been lumbered on our property some years earlier and stored in the woodshed by my father. The wood has a natural grey mellowed look and shows no signs of deterioration. In our family we say "I'm going out to the cherry

house," not to "the john" or "outhouse."

Our outhouse is a simple one-holer built on a raised platform which is solid from wall to wall. There is a short wooden step directly below the platform on which one can rest his feet. About 20 years ago a portion of the hole was gnawed by a half-starved porcupine, making it unsafe for toddlers and uncomfortable for the rest of us. A conventional toilet seat now covers the hole and it is much more comfortable.

The roof is pitched so that snow will slide off and there is a peek hole space at the top front. The roof is tarpapered in green. One of the large back panel sections is detachable, allowing for the annual or biannual removal of wastes to a compost site in the woods. After each use the pit is sprinkled with lime; a large bag of it sits at the left front of the outhouse.

As for outhouse decor, next to the lime bag (and a china cup) is a broom. Hanging on the right hand wall for many years was a magazine reprint of "Horse of the T'ang Dynasty" with a write-up underneath describing the history of this *objet d'art*. Unfortunately, the porcupine got the reprint too, which was replaced with a magazine portrait of Van Gogh's "White Roses" (also with a written history). The inside of the door, the left side wall and back wall of the outhouse once had pictures of the Beatles (John, Ringo, Paul and George), but these were replaced in the late '60s with magazine pictures of adorable babies, grinning apes, toothless boys, squirrels and hound dogs. At one time the left side also featured a

bookshelf with Zane Grey novels and other Westerns. This was removed by an irate wife when all my brothers' children learned to read (the wait had become interminable).

The door to the outhouse bolts closed from the outside, so that you know that the place is empty if the door is fastened shut. If the door is wide open, the outhouse is occupied or is being aired out. The best approach is to leave the main house singing, or cracking twigs.

The outhouse is located beyond the woodshed, on the site of a 100-year-old roadway, now unused and gone to forest. It's a pleasant stroll from the side porch of our old house to the outhouse on the edge of the woods. Early in the morning you can sometimes see deer from the throne, and occasionally a porcupine.

We are all very proud of our cherry house and even city folk find it "charming" (that is, if it's not raining).

—Molly Schmitthener Lesnick, Miami, Florida



Max Miller, Chalet on Lake Wabunsee, Kansas.

Mr. and Mrs. Bill Carroll and Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Moberly, Gays, Illinois.



The Skycrapper

The entire story of this toilet can be summarized in one word—water, its use and its abuse.

Nearly one half (45%) of all the drinking water used domestically in this country enters and exits each household through the toilet. Our nation's waters are conveyor belts for sewage removal, and in urban areas multimillion dollar treatment depots are required to treat this polluted water. In trying to restore nature's balance, the people end up drinking chlorine.

Here on the banks of our nation's largest free flowing water system—the Missouri and Mississippi rivers—the water has been classified by the Clean Water Commission as unsuitable for "whole body contact" recreation due to its fecal coliform count. As a country we have chosen the porcelain potty over the quality of our free-flowing rivers, streams, and groundwaters.

The processing of the human body's excess nutrients—called "wastes" by those who choose not to use them—can be done in a cost-free and ecologically sound manner by any one of several types of composting toilets.

If these human by-products are allowed to mix with a source of carbon (sawdust, leaves, toilet paper) in an aerobic (oxygen-rich) environment at moderate temperatures (50°F. +), the aerobic bacteria present will dominate the anaerobic bacteria. The result will be a composting process at elevated temperatures (160°F.) that destroys all of the human pathogen indicator organisms.

This is what the Skycrapper is designed to do on an owner-built scale: reduce a household's excess human nutrients to an organic-rich humus, which when used as fertilizer returns to the soil where common sense says it belongs.

—Doug Elley

From "The Skycrapper Poop Sheet," Vol. 1, No. 1, *Lupus, Missouri*, April 1981. Used with permission.

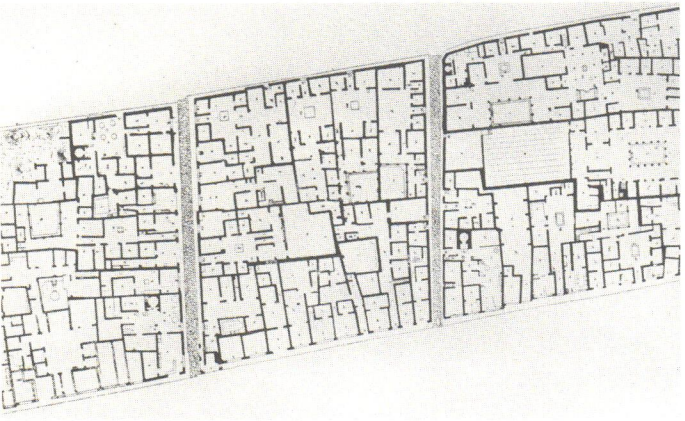


Whitney E. Kerr, Kansas City, Missouri.

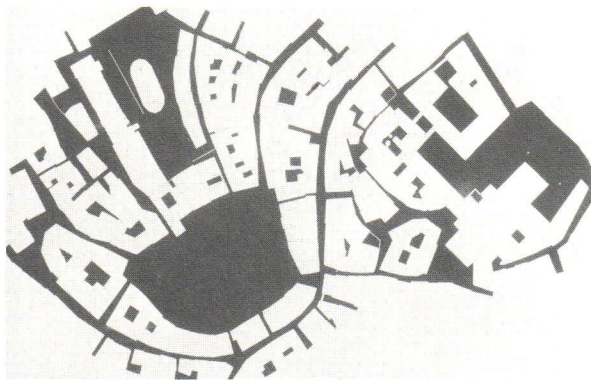
I hereby dedicate this toilet to the bountiful
blessing of waters above and below the surface
of our land.



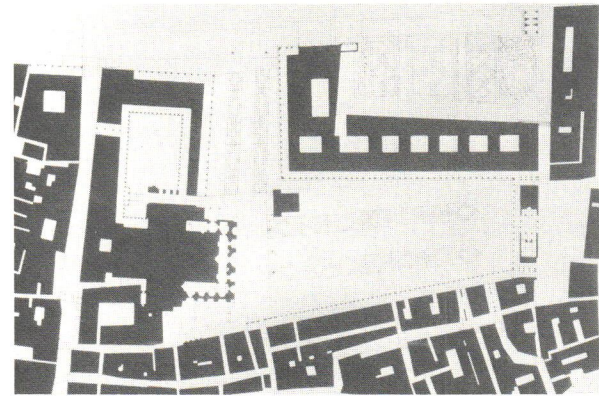
Skycraper, Lupus, Missouri.



Pompeii, Plan.



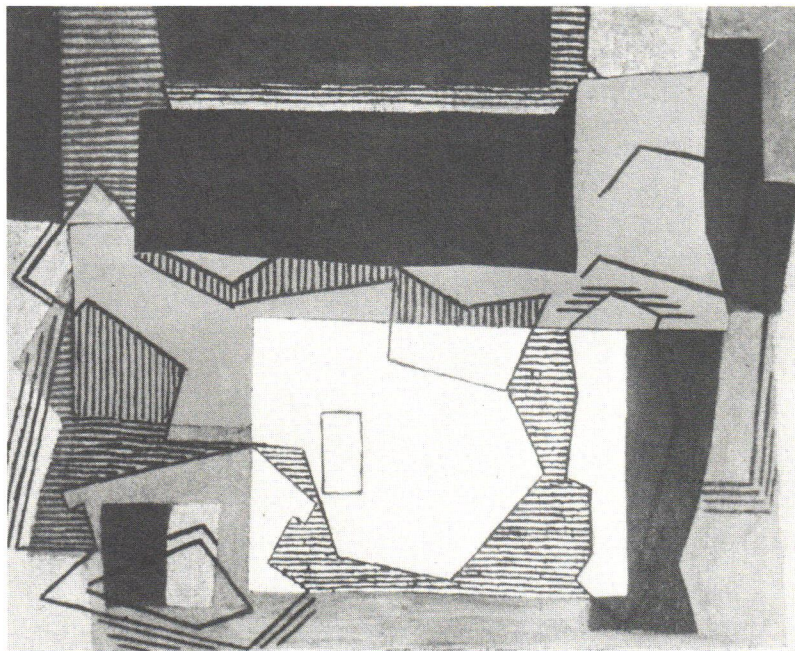
Piazza del Duomo, Siena.



Piazza San Marco, Venice.

Urban Design at Cornell

Colin Rowe's Studio Turns Twenty



Juan Gris, *Still Life*, 1922

by Thomas Schumacher

Like most developments that influence architectural thinking, Colin Rowe's Urban Design studio at Cornell began as a reaction to a status quo. In the early sixties there were at least three *ancien regimes* active in American practice and ripe for critical inquiry: 1) A modern method of urban design, the "city-in-the-park," best represented by Le Corbusier's *Ville Radieuse*; 2) "Townscape," a term coined in England by Gordon Cullen and itself a critique of the *Ville Radieuse*; and 3) "Process Planning."

Rowe perceived when he began the program that neither attitude toward form (1 and 2, above) could suffice as a paradigm of macro-design because each had reduced the conditions of modern life to an inadequately small number of variables (and probably the wrong ones at that). Nor could process planning—like the endless manipulations of alternatives in Alexander's *Notes*—lead to the design of anything whatsoever. In addition, many still believed (as many do even today) that buildings should be designed from functional criteria, and that their forms ought to *express* those activities housed within.

The corollary for urban planning lay in a properly multi-colored land-use map. The watchword was complete functional separation of land uses; housing from commercial, public from industrial, pedestrians from automobiles, and so on. It was as if modern planning had come about as the result of the invention of colored zipatone. Good macro-design exhibited as many colors as possible in the same way that good micro-design exhibited the auditoria on the exterior.

The street was still perceived as evil incarnate. As a result, it took many years to change the terminology from the idea of "continuous buildings" back to "corridor street." Le Corbusier was still alive, both literally and metaphorically. More importantly, the idea of the relationship of building to open space, house to yard, street to building, were all held within an abstraction of land coverages (quantifiable) on the one hand, and visceral asymmetrical balance (compositional) on the other. Fronts and backs of buildings were seen as virtually interchangeable. The "best" buildings were totally plastic, with neither front nor back. Towers rose sheer from street to crown. The spaces "in-between" were leftovers of building mass and development parcelling; it is by now an old tale.

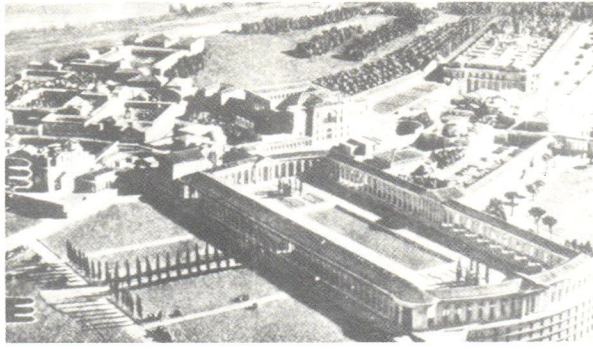
Against this scrim of modern planning's formal paradigms, Rowe's Urban Design Studio set out to make some sort of compromise or mediation with the traditional city. The modern town seemed to accommodate increased density, multiple modes of traffic and mass transit, while the traditional town seemed to accommodate the human spirit.

The techniques used to facilitate such an accommodation were much closer to those of the 1920's than one might have expected. Perhaps in unconscious imitation of Le Corbusier's "Architecture can be found in the Parthenon and in the telephone," Colin Rowe said, "as far as I'm concerned everything is architecture. There's micro-architecture like spoons and tables, and there's macro-architecture like London and Paris." And this capacity (a veritable *need*) to shift the scale to "solve problems" required its own paradigms of Juan Gris and in the gridded cities of ancient Rome. Hence, the epithet "Juan Gris/Roman."

In an American context the grid of ancient Rome could be seen as the original version of a system that



Nolli Map, Piazza Navona.



Hadrian's Villa, Tivoli.



New City Project, Harlem, New York.

covered the continent from Brooklyn to Bakersfield. Moreover, the intersection of grids, the splaying of grids, the fraying of grids—all patterns that could be shown to have an analogue in cubist paintings—were also a significant part of the American landscape. It didn't matter that the density of the American town hardly resembled that of the ancient *Castrum*. Of more importance was the idea that the shifted grid of cubist painting—the “cubist egg-slicer” as it was called—with its emphasis on an iridescent edge between two fields, could be seen as an analogue to the “neighborhood” and as a formal metaphor for urban space. In this manner figural space could be entrapped without resorting to forms that might imply a Burnhamesque eclecticism, forms that would clearly break from modern architecture's directives toward asymmetry and edge relief.

The purpose of introducing the Juan Gris (and Picasso, and Braque) metaphor was to involve the students with the gestalt properties of figure and field and their various states of ambiguity. The alternating reading of figure and field, of object depicted in terms of its contour vs. its density and total volume, were the main heuristics of this lesson. The method was saved from falling into a “Gestalt Romanticism” by the fact that the pictorial effect of the cubist painting was never the object of the analogous exercises. In this regard specific urban precedents immediately replaced the shift of scale necessitated by the cubist painting. Some examples are worth noting: The Piazza del Duomo in Siena became far more important for its space and object ambiguity than did the more figural, and more famous Piazza del Campo. Piazza San Marco in Venice remained more influential than Piazza Navona in Rome,



Roma Interrotta, Sector VIII, Detail of Largo Cattaneo and Piazza Terragni.

primarily because of the simultaneity of readings between the Piazza S. Marco and the “Piazzetta” that connect it to modern architectural space (e.g., the ground plan of Le Corbusier's Villa at Garches).

Hadrian's Villa at Tivoli represented another formal analogue (as Rowe and Koetter explain in *Collage City*), one for which the characteristic figure/ground drawings were never deemed useful. (Even the reconstructions of Villa Adriana exhibit little figure/field reversal between space and object.) But if Piazza del Duomo in Siena could be seen as a paradigm of spatial composition, then Villa Adriana was its counterpart in terms of the relationship between the “ideal” and the “circumstantial.” In that vast collection of *objet-trouvé*, of remembrances from the remotest outposts of the Empire, were exhibited scores of examples of geometric adjustment, intersecting axes, and collisions of “set-pieces.” Its ruined state made the complex all the more enticing for the variety of conceivable interpretations.

As one reviews the chronology of the Urban Design Studio, two rather significant changes are apparent. First is the gradual change in composition from “Juan Gris” to the “Roman.” This occurred over a long period of time, but it becomes quite apparent in projects dating from the mid-1970s—around the time of the Roma Interrotta Project. The reasons for this shift are somewhat obscure but may be related in part to influences on Rowe and his students by recent developments in avant-garde architecture on both sides of the Atlantic. The effect of this shift was to overcome an unnecessary (in my view) reliance on edge composition and re-emphasize the spatial qualities of the interventions.

The second change is characterized by a greater interest in the real size and scale of spaces. In many early projects there was a tendency to design so abstractly that the scale of the project did not matter. A given space might be so long or twice that length. In some projects (Harlem and Buffalo in particular) the size of the interventions got so out of hand as to rival the Ville Radieuse itself. In the later work, however, although the scope of projects remained large, there seems to be a greater willingness to approach pieces of each site individually. The need to tie fields into an overall pattern via enormous gestures of open space now has been supplanted by greater emphasis on individual streets as literal

spatial connectors.

Modern Urbanism has had one of its greatest difficulties in the reconciliation of the systematic and the idiosyncratic. Since the early twenties designers have oscillated between the creation of the perfect unit of urbanism that could be multiplied ad infinitum over the cityscape and a critique of such mindless manipulations. Many recent failures resulted from laying down a carpet of repetitive urban parts that conflicted with an existing pattern. But repetition is no evil per se, as the endlessly repetitive streets of the eighteenth and nineteenth towns of England, Holland and America explain so well. Nor is the idiosyncratic a necessary evil (despite the recent warnings from Venice). It is obviously a question of balance, a balance never attained by either the European urbanists of the early twentieth century or their American “reformist” counterparts. With hindsight, the idea that Hilberseimer's Rees Park Project for Chicago or Radburn might become normative is patently absurd. Unfortunately, the same “Atlantic Ocean” division seems to exist today. A survey of recent European projects—particularly those influenced by Rossi's book *L'Architettura della Città*—would undoubtedly display even more carpets. The Americans, for the most part, have escaped to the suburbs.

The Urban Design Studio at Cornell has been one of the few places where such questions have come under serious discussion and, in some measure, solved. And while the term “formalism” may be legitimately levelled at the work to come out of the studio, these authors no longer take it as derision. ■

Thomas Schumacher is an Associate Professor of Architecture at the University of Virginia.

Archetype asks practicing architects to review books of particular interest to them, but we ask them to eschew the traditional scholarly format either in favor of a commentary on the book's impact upon their own work or a summary of the work's place in recent practice. Architect Thomas Schumacher chose the latter approach for his discussion of Colin Rowe and Fred Koetter's Collage City.

Colin Rowe and Fred Koetter, Collage City. MIT Press, 1978. 186pp, \$27.50

Travelog

by Mark Mack



Herman Czech, Hummel Gallery, Vienna 1980. Quiet, thoughtful architecture in Old Vienna.

VIENNA

On the way from the Vienna airport to the center of town, I found architecture in the empty and cool halls of the Academy of Applied Art. Here in the building where Josef Frank (1885-1967) taught the generation of architects that now shapes Austrian culture, the work of Frank himself was on display. Probably the most influential architecture exhibition in years, a long overdue celebration organized by former pupils Joseph Spalt and Hermann Czech, it displayed Frank's personal view of architecture in a manner at once friendly and exhilarating. From his eccentric "accidental houses" to his rational housing schemes, Frank retained a touch of humanism and personal expression (see *Archetype* Volume I, No. IV, Hermann Czech's "Josef Frank"). Frank's reputation in Vienna's avant-garde has been growing steadily for decades. While Adolf Loos was the hero of rational symbolic functionalism and carried Vienna through the sixties and seventies, Frank seems to be the next hero on the horizon. His prophetic views of architectural theory and practice are closer to the more individual, historic, pluralistic and rational demands made on architecture today. Bored with the striking conceptual materialism of Hollein and others, Vienna seems to be discovering the silent sensualism of a functionalist humanism. The new architecture addresses the regional and cultural heritage of Vienna as opposed to the more international and universal concerns of the seventies.

Hermann Czech's cafe and shop designs are probably the most articulate in this silent and calm architectural approach. His *Hummel* gallery in Vienna's intimate first district shines unassumingly

in a new light of possible architecture and evokes an attitude of reconstruction without destruction.

Unlike America, where the historicist and eclectic architecture is glorified for its fantastic, romantic and humoristic connotations, the new Viennese architecture celebrates material subtleties and historic academicism, and draws from the historic vocabulary and symbolic contextualism of the region.

Missing Link's Travel Office (A. Krischanitz and O. Kapfinger), opposite the Gottfried "Semper" Art Museum is a good example of these new sensibilities on a very small scale. As in the neighboring shops, the facade embraces the structure of the building. The refined use of materials (cherrywood, fir, brass and stucco) calms and quietly enhances the interiors, while symbolic and ironic references (door handles in the motif of Semper's rusticated columns) are underplayed. The leaning sign reminiscent of the advertising script found all over Vienna and the brass security screen spell out "closed" when shut.

While the young and restless Viennese architects fall uncomfortably into the embrace of historic liberation, the old guards have already converted without painful confessions. In some instances (Palais Ferstel) historian and architect band together to construct a piece of "true" historicism in reinforced concrete among the eclectic styles of the Ringstrasse.

This ultimate exploitation of architectural history stands in sharp contrast to the wild architecture of the southern Austrian province of Styria, where Günther Domenig achieved Professor status while shocking Vienna with his "loud" and "shouting" bank building two years ago (published in *Progressive Architecture* and *Domus*).



Outdoor museum of indigenous farm houses in Stübing near Graz.

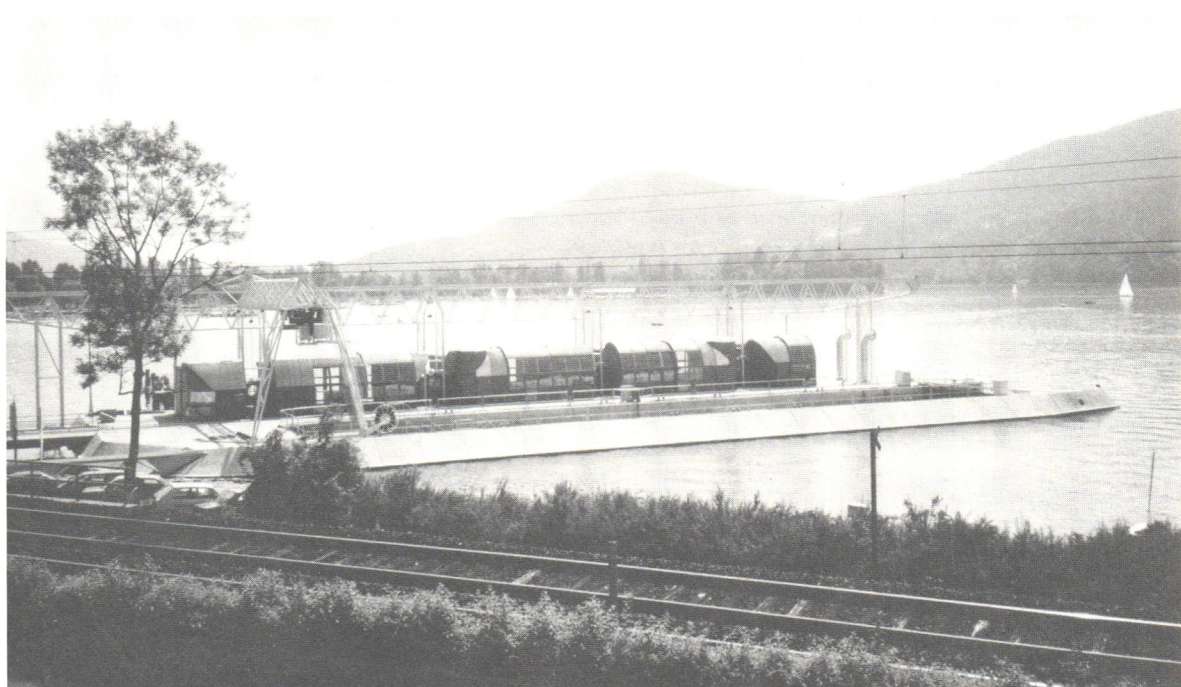
STYRIA

While Vienna consistently looks down on unruly architecture, behind the Semmering (a pass dividing rural from urban, and a former imperial resort), the architects of Graz have a history of their own which goes back to the sixties. Fantastic mega-structures and experimental space articulation à la Archigram and Superstudio found fertile soil and grew rapidly in the autonomous drafting studios of the Technical University. Frederick St. Florian (Rhode Island), Bernard Hafner (UCLA) and Raimund Abraham (Cooper Union) emigrated to America to pass on their intense and personal view of architecture grounded in these independent years in Graz. While strong political independence among Styrians dates back to the earliest days of Austria, the cultural defiance of Vienna becomes more apparent when acted out in a common ideology.

A recent exhibition called “Styrian Architecture” attempted to create this platform of ideology. The diversification and individualization of architecture was shown as an expressionistic religious attitude overlaid with structural articulation forming a romantic futurism with new materiality. In contrast to the subtlety of Vienna, the Styrians explore the order and conservatism of their own culture within forms new to the context, determined by the liberated use of different materials, the incorporation of alternative energy consciousness, and a queer traditionalism. The architecture ranges from the anatomical structural expressions of Günther Domenig, to the efforts of his former partner Eilfried Huth, who arrives at architectural decisions in a participatory process. Others waver between structural formalism and naive expressionism. The healthy diversity between Vienna and Graz should help each city to find itself among its own extremes.

Vernacular Museum

Tucked away in a green valley not far from Graz, and embraced by ripe and alpine timber, is a series of about seventy-five vernacular farm houses gathered from all over Austria and reassembled on the site. This open air museum is overpowering in its richness of detail and variation of type according to climatic and functional requirements; from the mud-covered log cabins of the lowlands to the primitive alpine wood church shelters — the whole range of Austrian architecture is presented in a life-like setting. From the gardens and food shelters to the interiors of bedrooms, the museum is like a time machine exploring the evolution of building types, details and lifestyles. These unassuming buildings where ornamental and functional requirements are in balance may contain a key to present architectural discourse, and point towards aesthetic and human solutions free from architectural academicism and mannerism. While this museum is enjoyed by everyone from preservationists to laymen, it serves an almost polemical need for architects. It redefines architecture by helping to rediscover traditional building forms and underlying typologies. The layman sees into the relationship between function as it relates to ornament which leads to a questioning of ornamentation as only an expression of sentimentality in the environment.



Günther Domenig, Drydock on the Wörthersee, Corinthia, 1981.



Josef Plečnic, Ljubljana. Urban mending on a small scale. Columns as identifying elements. Photo: Renate Kordon.

YUGOSLAVIA

Austria was once a large empire with many provinces embracing a variety of ethnic territories. After the boundary shifts following the World Wars, today’s Austria is confined to a relatively small area without access to the ocean. Former Austrian territories (now parts of Italy and Yugoslavia) that border the Mediterranean continue to attract pleasure-seeking Austrians. The former Austrian region around Trieste, the peninsula of Istria and the province of Croatia sparkle with architectural rarities. Centuries ago the Venetians founded towns along the Istria,

complete with campanile, piazzas and pedestrian dominated streets which are still well preserved. Like walking through Leon Krier’s drawings, this is a pedestrian oriented, mixed use terrain of covered plazas and street vitality. The public atmosphere is only darkened by the aimless consumption of a disoriented leisure society which claims urbanity as relaxing and exotic territory. They deny the emotional demand of their own city at home by looking the other way when urban centers are senselessly destroyed in the name of functionalism and capitalistic greed.

A gem of urban architecture boasting many fine examples of urban infill is the inner city of Ljubljana, the former Laibach. It was transformed by an architect named Josef Plečnic, who after studying under Otto Wagner in Vienna and practicing successfully in Prague and Vienna, came back to his home town and made good. With very simple architectural manipulations, the inner city is held together and made into a pedestrian dominated paradise. Building bridges, columns, walkways, promenades, market halls and public access ways, Plečnic mended the already fragmentary city built up over the centuries. Each insertion or intervention is characterized by a distinctive architectural element, usually a column. The elements establish visual connections between each other and guide one like a familiar thread through an unfamiliar environment. These techniques of urban intervention are practical ways to mend cities suffering from loss of continuity, damaged by thoughtless construction practice. Plečnic’s Ljubljana is a dream come true, probably best illustrated in his three-part bridge over the Drau—two pedestrian bridges flank one for cars. Plečnic might have already known that the automobile would destroy the character of his city if it were allowed to take over, so he demonstrably allowed one bridge for cars and two bridges for pedestrians, a bright look towards the future.

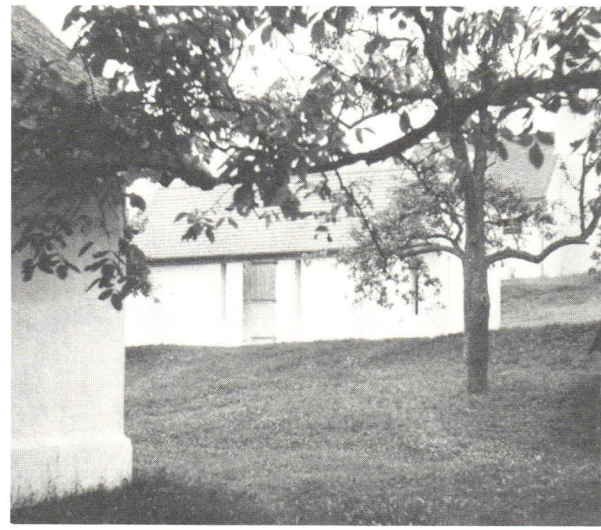
TOWN & COUNTRY

The primitive urban sophistication of Plečnic and the primitive rural excellence of Walter Pichler, an Austrian artist working near the Hungarian border (in Burgenland), elaborate a schizophrenic dichotomy of living in our society. In the late sixties Austrian architects and artists started to move to the country to escape the claustrophobic academic and intellectual interactions of the city in order to regain a sense of reality, and a basic understanding of life under the wide-open sky of the countryside. Here protected from the constant prying of their peers (part of the coffeehouse academicism), architects could ideally produce independent work. While for some the isolation has turned into stagnation, Walter Pichler has continued to progress. His ritual architecture, houses and sculptures are silent monuments to regional handicraft and typology. With the help of local labor, Pichler has created a personal universe—the building surrounding his center, and the studio in which he labors relentlessly on his mythical sculptures. He almost closes himself into his own creation preparing for the eternal departure. The “houses” for his hauntingly beautiful sculptures are simple structures tucked into the hillside, subtly exploring architectural definitions and elements: the column, the wall, the moving parts, the roof and the transition from ground plane to wall. The calmness of Pichler’s architecture is offset by the intensity of his sculptures—skulls of shiny polished metal, a clay torso with brass ribs on a wooden branch skeleton—crafted so that they move silently like bank safe doors. Pichler returns periodically to his studio in Vienna to partake in the stimulating intensity unique to Vienna.

An existential tour de force of macho intellectualism and peer competition is nourished in the crowded bars and cafes. After sundown, the cultural Schikeria (Chic-eria) consumes at least one hangout, bar or cafe. Needless to say the demand for new hangouts is tremendous. Young architects traditionally design them with material vigor and conceptual force (take for example Loos’ American Bar). Hermann Czech’s silent *Kleines Cafe* and *Wunderbar* are superseded by Coop Himmelblau’s artistic definition of “burning” architecture. *Roter Engel*, a new mix of performance space and bar hangout,

features slick aluminum lances over the entry, piercing the refurbished traditional loft space in the former Jewish quarter of Vienna. This architecture completely lacks the understated ambiance which makes bars and cafes a welcome background for conversation. The consumption of international imported wine is mixed with the consumption of cheap-thrill architecture.

A far worse example of this recent trend in cafe architecture is *Sancto Spirito*, designed not by an architect but by a philosopher. Here eclectic ornamentalism and symbolic expressionism shake hands, amounting to little more than naive surface stimulation. Reminiscent of American post-modern eclecticism a la Moore and Stern, the future for the Schikeria looks rather dangerous. The Viennese, always proud of their cultural superiority, have finally thrown in the towel and become truly international. ■



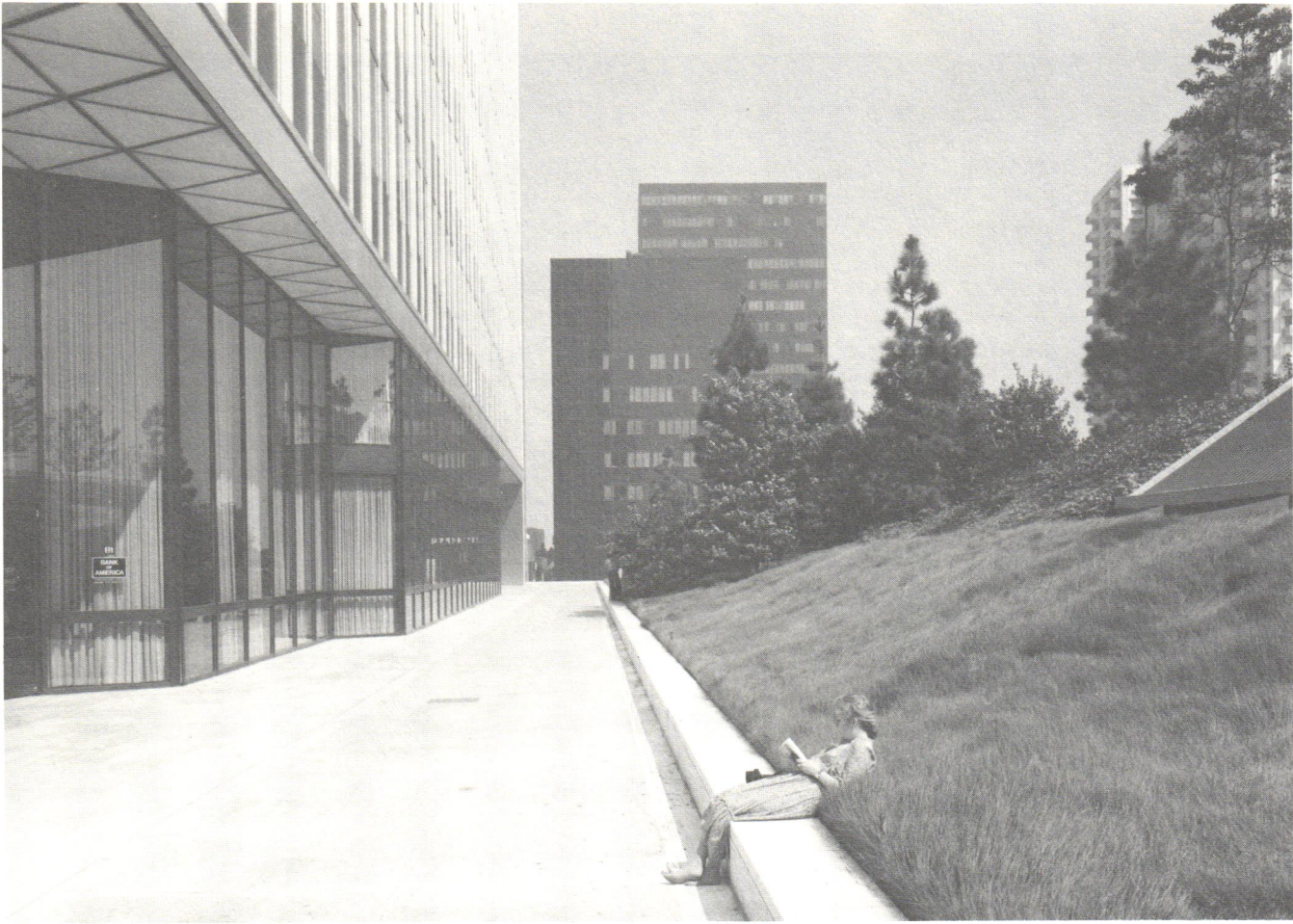
Walter Pichler, Martin a.d. Raab, Burgenland. This compound of vernacular-inspired buildings houses Pichler’s evocative sculptures.

Herman Czech, Kleines Cafe, Vienna, 1974. The old coffee house tradition continues for a new generation. Photo: Jerzy Surwillo.



Josef Plečnic, Marketplace (Tržnicol), Ljubljana, 1939–40. Façade towards the river dividing the city. The three bridges (*Tromostage*) are in the background. Photo: Renate Kordon.





Century City, 1981

Lunching in Los Angeles

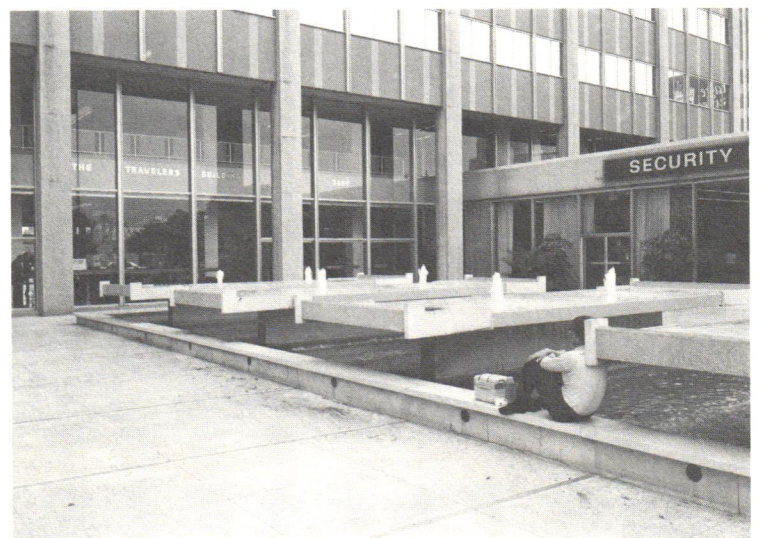
Anthony Hernandez (b. 1947) is a photographer from Los Angeles who has exhibited at the Whitney Museum, New York, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art and the Museum of Fine Arts in Texas. He is the recent recipient of an NEA photography grant which will allow him to continue photographing everyday life in his home town.



Security Pacific Plaza, downtown L.A., 1982



Century City, 1981



Mid-Wilshire, 1982

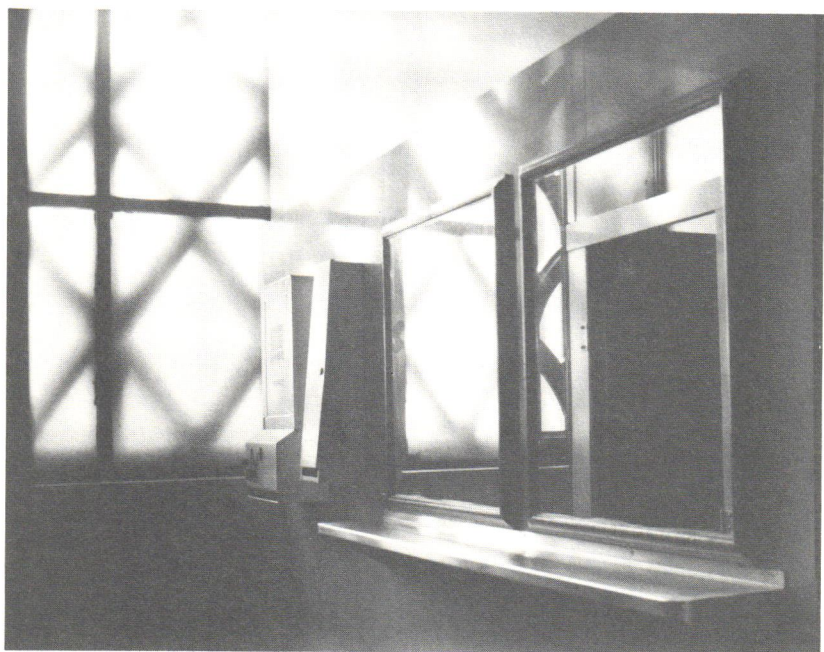
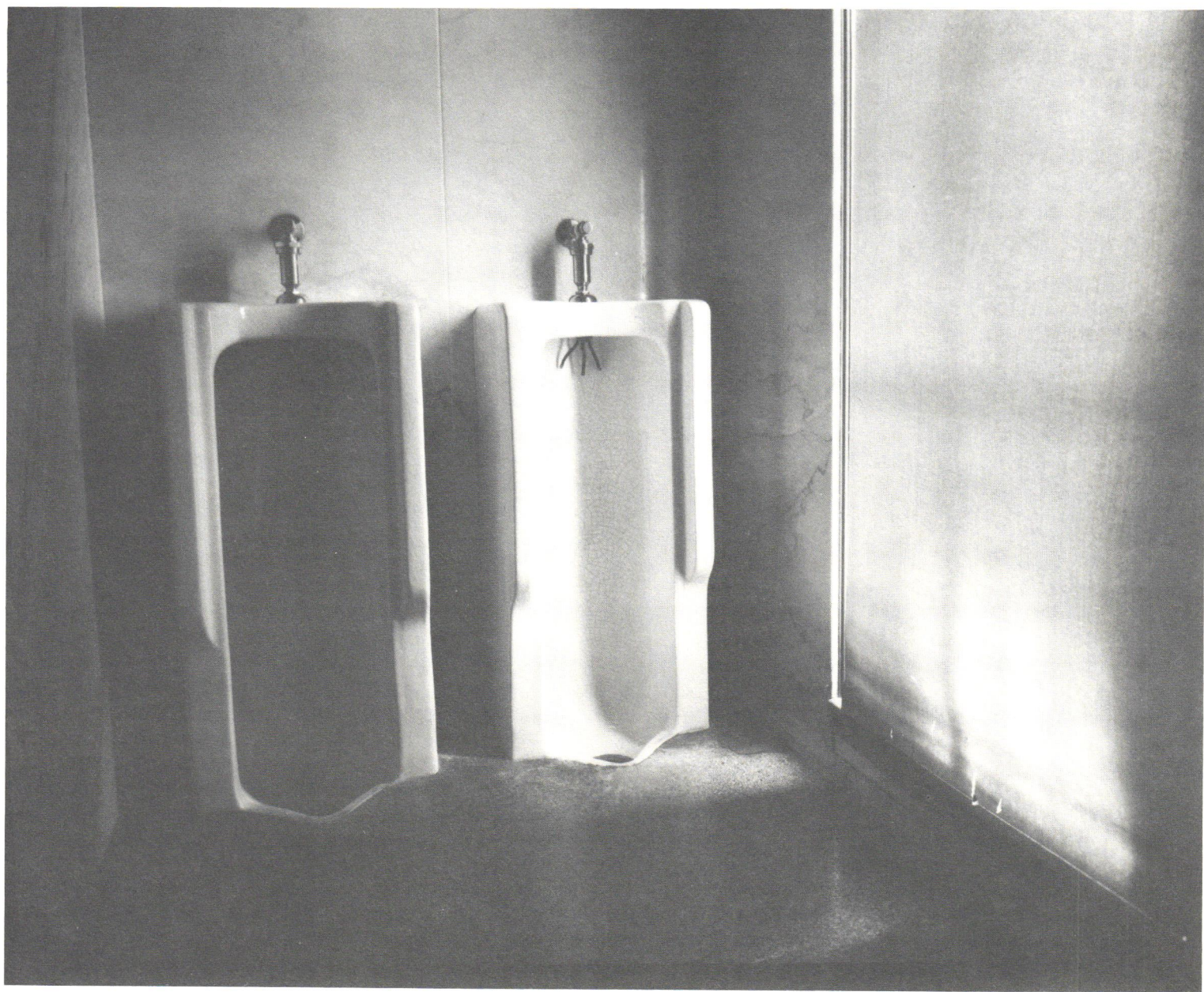


Mid-Wilshire, 1982

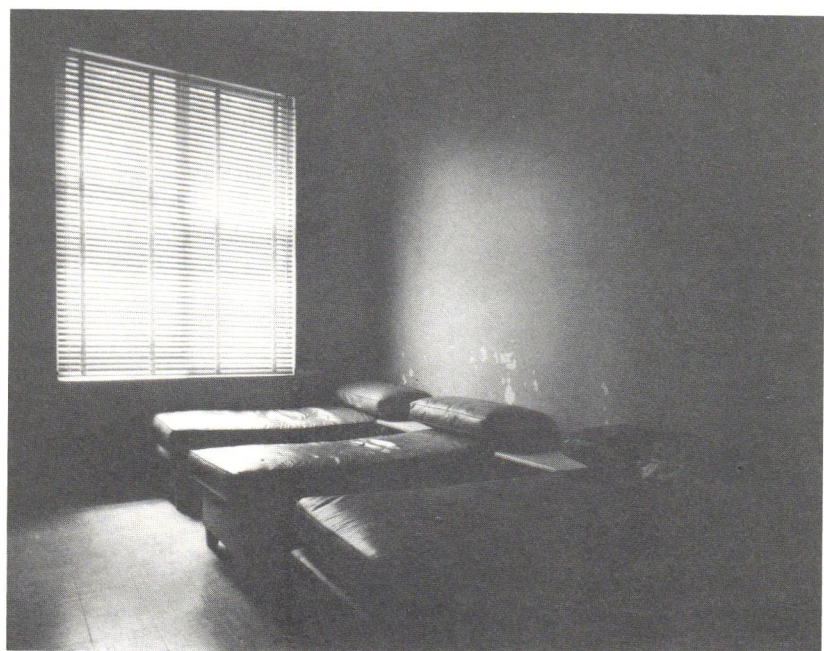
Berkeley Bathrooms

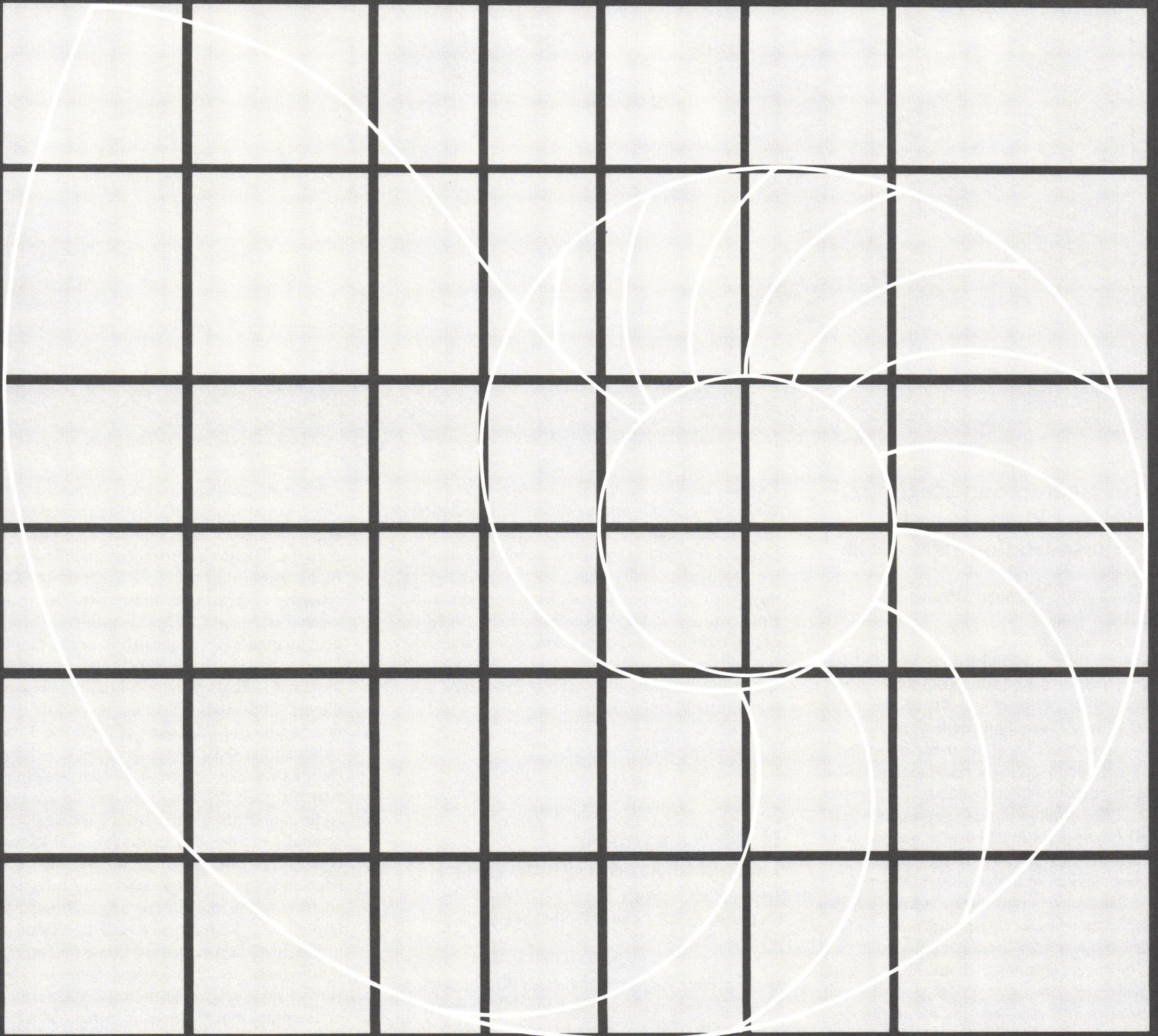
This series of photographs hopes to draw attention to the underrated but very handsome public bathrooms at the University. These beautifully constructed rooms of marble, brass, oak and porcelain are rapidly being replaced by tiny fluorescent cubicles. Without some public acknowledgment that bathrooms are worth preserving, soon we may lose these restful rooms.

—Geoffrey Nelson



A native Californian, Geoffrey Nelson grew up in North Africa, later returning to California to attend U.C. Berkeley (B.A. History, 1978). Since then he has worked as an editorial photographer for *Travel Holiday*, *The Cook's Magazine* and *Women's Sports*. His latest project is photographing apartment building lobbies in San Francisco.





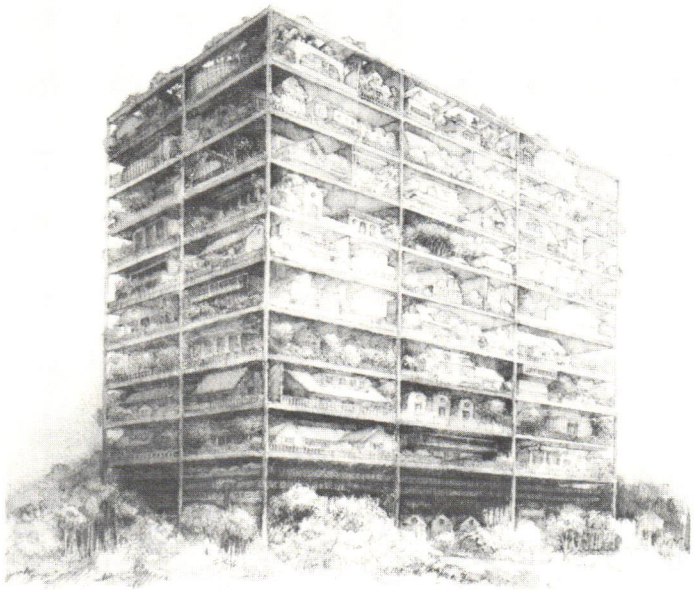
C C A I A

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Highrise of Homes
by SITE. Drawing
by James Wines.

R E V I E W S

From Streetcar to Superhighway: American City Planners and Urban Transportation 1900–1940

Mark S. Foster

Philadelphia: Temple University Press,
1981, 237 pp.

As blessings go, the automobile has proven to be a mixed one: whatever is arguably positive about the way it enhanced the personal mobility of Americans is surely offset by the economic dependence on foreign oil, the destruction of the urban and rural landscape by crowded and ugly roads and highways, and by the destructive pollution of internal combustion engines. The automobile also permitted suburban sprawl to an unprecedented degree: people in the twentieth century can live forty to fifty miles from the workplace, and cities are surrounded by mile after mile of “bedroom communities” which lack the diversity of urban centers. City planners in the first four decades of this century were not gifted with such hindsight, however. Optimism about the beneficial effects of new transportation technologies informed the work of many city planners, for the automobile especially seemed a vehicle which promised greater prosperity and less crowded cities.

Mark S. Foster examines city planners, the automobile, and public transportation in *From Streetcar to Superhighway: American City Planners and Urban Transportation 1900–1940*. Foster neither condemns early planners for naiveté nor exonerates them of responsibility for the consequences of their plans. He argues instead for an assessment less dominated by a present-day need to assign the blame for urban ills. Planners on the whole did support suburbanization and an increased dependency on the automobile, but they believed that large, new, and clean suburban houses would improve the quality of life for Americans, and that the transfer of large numbers of people to the suburbs would actually enhance the metropolis. Along with most of their contemporaries, city planners found that the automobile offered Americans greater freedom, more choices, and greater privacy for travel; almost nobody doubted that these were desirable goals. Even where planners voiced doubts about such trends, the fledgling city planning groups lacked the political clout to effect radical changes, much less deter Americans from buying cars or moving to the suburbs. Instead of seeing early planners as ill-informed or inept, Foster’s text presents them as trying to grapple with rapid, widespread changes with few tools or guidelines—and even less power. By the time the profession had begun to take on definitive shape after World War I, suburbanization and wide acceptance of the automobile were already facts, and mass transit was in serious trouble. The latter ranked particularly low on the federal agenda after World War I: the automobile seemed to take care of public needs, and for many decades, other social programs received the benefits of government largesse long before mass transit did.

In his thoroughly researched and impeccably presented study, Foster recounts the hectic and confusing development of transportation with special reference to the cities of Los Angeles, Denver,

Detroit, Boston, St. Louis, Chicago, and Washington, D.C. Among the many fascinating and ultimately sad details he offers is the picture of planners competing with urban renewal advocates for scarce urban land—the former to build highways, the latter to evacuate the poor from downtown areas. *From Streetcar to Superhighway* provides an all-too-timely reminder of the problems public transportation has faced since the appearance of the automobile and of the difficulty of liberating Americans from their costly driving habits.

—Diane Ghirardo

H. H. Richardson: Complete Architectural Works

Jeffery Karl Ochsner

Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1982.
466 pp., \$50.00

When Henry Hobson Richardson died in 1886, he had already earned recognition as the foremost architect in America; evaluations of his work in the succeeding century have only added lustre to his reputation. It comes as something of a surprise, then, that only a handful of studies on his work exist, and only three could be classed as major studies; none attempts a full documentation of Richardson’s designs. Jeffrey Karl Ochsner’s *H. H. Richardson: Complete Architectural Works* marks the first effort in over ninety years to compile a complete record of Richardson’s designs, and the book succeeds admirably on many scores.



Fig. 1: H. H. Richardson. F.L. Ames Gate Lodge, 1880-1881.
North Easton, Massachusetts.

For each design or project, Ochsner provides dates, descriptions, information about patrons, sites, and a brief account of the building’s fate over the decades. Where the attribution of a design to Richardson is uncertain, Ochsner makes note of the scholarly controversies and presents his own considered evaluation. Where possible, each project is documented by from one to four or five photographs. Due to space limitations, plans are not always included, and often there is little opportunity to illustrate Richardson’s detailing—surely an important and interesting aspect of his work. Likewise, although the short essays describing each project are informative, they are not true analyses of the structure, nor do they single out the distinguishing features of the buildings. In fact, the works receive a generally evenhanded treatment, as if all were equally interesting, and yet the volume would have been enhanced by longer and more substantial analyses of the most interesting buildings. More importantly, Richardson built a significant number of buildings in several very limited categories—railroad stations, libraries, and churches especially—yet Ochsner rarely links these projects to one another or examines modifications or variations which Richardson introduced over time. Given the large number of projects and space limitations, however (the book already numbers 466 pages), it would have been difficult to satisfy all of these imperatives. As a document and as a reference work, Ochsner’s book is an admirable achievement, and it clarifies areas where further work remains to be done.

The book is as much a chronicle of Richardson’s work as an architect as it is an account of wanton destruction. The toll of structures which have been demolished is incredibly high, especially in view of Richardson’s status even before he died. Worse, there seems to be no principle by which decisions to destroy the buildings have been made, except perhaps short term needs.

—Diane Ghirardo

Highrise of Homes

SITE in collaboration with The Cooper Union.
New York, Rizzoli International Publications, Inc.
1982, 107 pp.

If *Highrise of Homes*, the book that explains SITE’s latest project, wasn’t such a great deal of fun, one would be tempted to dismiss it as frivolous, dumb and unworkable. Since it is conceived in a “climate of questioning,” the project does do what it sets out to do: It asks and answers the important question of how one achieves “identity in density,” although the answer it provides may be just a clever rephrasing of the question.

Highrise of Homes (henceforth *HOH*) proposes to insert sprawling suburban homes into a highrise steel structural framework, giving city dwellers a chance to express their individual identities in a high-density urban context. This intriguing idea comes as a welcome alternative to the tyranny of the curtain wall now gripping our cities. In asking us to consider the

unlikely marriage of domestic romanticism and urban functionalism, *HOH* jogs our standard patterns of thinking about skyscrapers and houses; this may be its most important effect. Yet suburbia with a vertical component seems about as vital as a corporate office tower turned on its side; this is no marriage made in heaven.

SITE seems to believe they can take the home out of suburbia without taking suburbia out of the home; that is, owner control of his home's public image, privacy, and a yard and garden—all benefits of a rural or suburban setting—are, according to SITE, directly transplantable to an urban context. This attitude seems to forget that a good portion of the character of the house stems from its *opposition* to the city.

For instance, part of the experience of non-urban living is the approach to the house: Freeway to main road, main road to street, street to driveway, driveway to garage, and garage to home. Orchestrated by the automobile (and broad expanses of land), this modulated approach, like it or not, constitutes the dominant pattern of non-urban living in America. If, as SITE clearly believes, architecture “should evolve from the outside in” (p. 96, *HOH*), and not the other way around, the approach to one's ninth floor mock-Roman Villa—the jump from the cab to the curb and the curb to the elevator—should be a singularly disorienting experience. The instant expression of identity that SITE counts on won't even be noticed from the street.

What is of interest occurs inside the structural grid. The individual domestic inserts are the seats of identity, however hollow or imaginary. Each dwelling and yard will nurture the suburban reverie (not the public image) of its urban owner. SITE is correct in asserting that individual choice plays a role in who builds what next to whom within the highrise grid. But claims that the sum of these choices is a celebration of chance à la Marcel Duchamp, underestimate the homogenizing force of the grid and misunderstand the work of Duchamp.

Quite apart from the pros and cons of the proposed physical structure, it is worth examining SITE's theoretical framework, filled as it is with inconsistencies and contradictions of thought.

The supportive grid for the individual houses is the only element which could conceivably be interpreted as architecture, but its entire existence in the project is intentionally anonymous. The true aesthetic content is the collective individuality of the inhabitants. (p. 96, *HOH*)

Just as the name implies, collective individuality is a group of people being individual together. Some individuality. The sense of identity *HOH* hopes to achieve is reduced to a busy blandness. Viewed from the outside the effect will be more of uniformity than random diversity. Not only does SITE seem to recognize this, they go so far as to state it explicitly, contradicting their earlier premise:

It is assumed that some of the Highrise of Homes inhabitants would hire distinguished “high art” architects to design their houses. This process would bring into focus one of the projects (sic) most revolutionary aspects—that is, its *capacity to neutralize even the most assertive and individual architectural styles once installed within its homogenizing context.* (p. 67, *HOH*; emphasis mine)

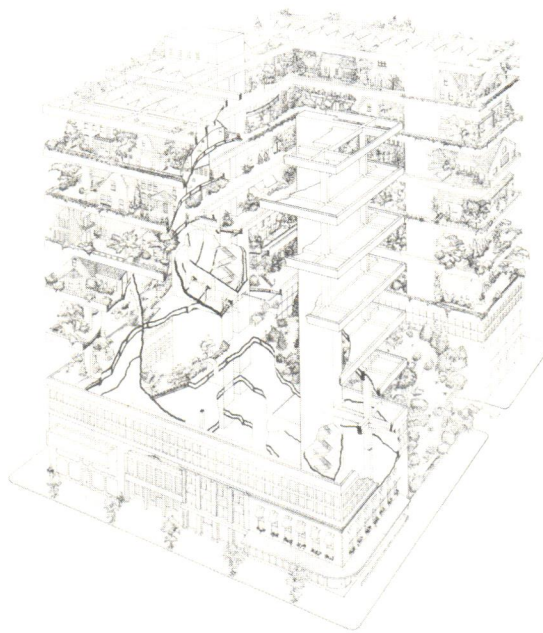
SITE cannot seem to make up their mind what effect the structural grid should have. Is it anonymous, silently allowing individuality to flourish? Or is it highly visible, forcefully suppressing even the most strident individuality? SITE tries to play it both ways and ends up tripping over their own dogma.

Another theoretical stumbling block is SITE's perception of how operations of chance and indeterminacy can influence architecture. They complain that architecture is a latecomer to the game of chance; the other arts—painting, poetry, dance, and so on, already draw heavily (and consciously) from its dictates in expanding the scope and strength of their medium. What is needed, SITE claims, is a Marcel Duchamp of architecture, someone “with courage and insight to examine every hypothesis and every assumption” (p. 69, *HOH*). These concerns are noble and probably well-directed, but to imply that *HOH* fits into these roles is absurd. Two self-created

barriers stand in the way: The stable framework on which chance operations can occur is mistaken for chance itself; and the “anything goes” spirit supposedly guiding choice of housing designs within the framework is fettered by the catalog of suggested home styles SITE hands to prospective owners.

SITE's architectural contribution to the project, the structural grid, is a rigorously engineered skeleton that must minimize the impact of chance through mathematical calculation of stresses and loads. Of course the structure would fall down unless the beams and girders are combined in this highly determined way. SITE's theoretical statements misplace the locus of chance.

The *Highrise of Homes* is the architectural equivalent of what Marcel Duchamp once referred to as “canned chance.” In this respect, the project becomes the stage for an infinite variety of unpredictable performances. (p. 66, *HOH*)



Drawing by Dean Treworgy.

Duchamp never built stages for chance; rather, the objects he built were themselves the results of chance and change. For instance, in his “Trois Stoppages-Etalon” (standard stops; 1913–1914), Duchamp created new standards of measurement based on the laws of chance; these rulers became the art world double of the standard meter, a platinum bar kept at an even temperature inside the Bureau of Weights and Measures near Paris. A description of the piece:

From a height of one meter, he dropped a thread one meter in length upon a canvas, fixed it with varnish in the shape it had assumed, and placed a sheet of glass over it for protection. This process was repeated twice. Three wooden “rulers” were then cut to conform to the curves of the dropped threads, and the mounted threads and rulers were then placed in an elegant wooden croquet box.¹

Where Duchamp creates a completely new standard unit, mimicking the arbitrariness and solemnity of the platinum bar, SITE, to carry out the metaphor, seizes the meter rule and carefully measures the room in which Duchamp conducted his operations. Put another way, SITE seems to think they are casting the dice when in fact they have built the dice table and sent out invitations for people to play. In this respect SITE differs only in intent from the 19th century city planner; the former points to their structural grid as a desirable and fertile site for spontaneity, while the latter hailed the street grid as a way of ordering the messy vitality of urban growth. In any case, the forces of chance, indeterminacy and spontaneity continue to work together whether or not they are invited.

Another self-inflicted deterrent to the highly esteemed operation of chance in *HOH* can be found in SITE's invitation for owners to choose their own “unique” home out of a catalog. They have resurrected the spirit of 19th century architectural pattern books, which sought to aid low and moderate income families in choosing a “personalized house form.” By codifying and packaging building styles in the name of individual choice, SITE promotes a variety within limits that is far different from the radical overhaul of architecture's premises originally

suggested. Indeed, however one feels about *HOH* as a demonstration of urban housing alternatives, one wonders at the collage of conflicting ideas that make up SITE's theoretical position.

To be fair, SITE does not pretend that *HOH* is the only solution to the identity-in-density question. In this respect, the exposure *HOH* has received so far has drawn public attention as much to what form personalized housing might take, as it does to SITE's specific answer. In this climate of questioning, SITE hopes that *HOH* will surface as a fun and workable solution. But like SITE's Best Products showrooms of the seventies, the success of *HOH* will depend on strong public reaction *and* broad support from a buying public. The short interview section near the back of the book is a way of grounding the project in an empirical reality (what are people thinking?), while testing the waters in a not-so-subtle bit of market research (what will people buy?). Still the interviews, together with the evocative drawings and some interesting research, almost offset the pop phrasings of theoretical issues that clog this book.

Man has a need to put things into form; the accidental, it can be seen, is just the form of formlessness, often used as an excuse for the artist's naive refusal to commit himself. Accident and chance will continue to occur whether or not man openly invokes them.

—Kyle Thayer

NOTES:

¹Tomkins, Calvin, *The Bride and the Bachelors*, The Viking Press, New York, 1962, p. 33.

The First Moderns: The Architects of the Eighteenth Century

Joseph Rykwert

Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England:

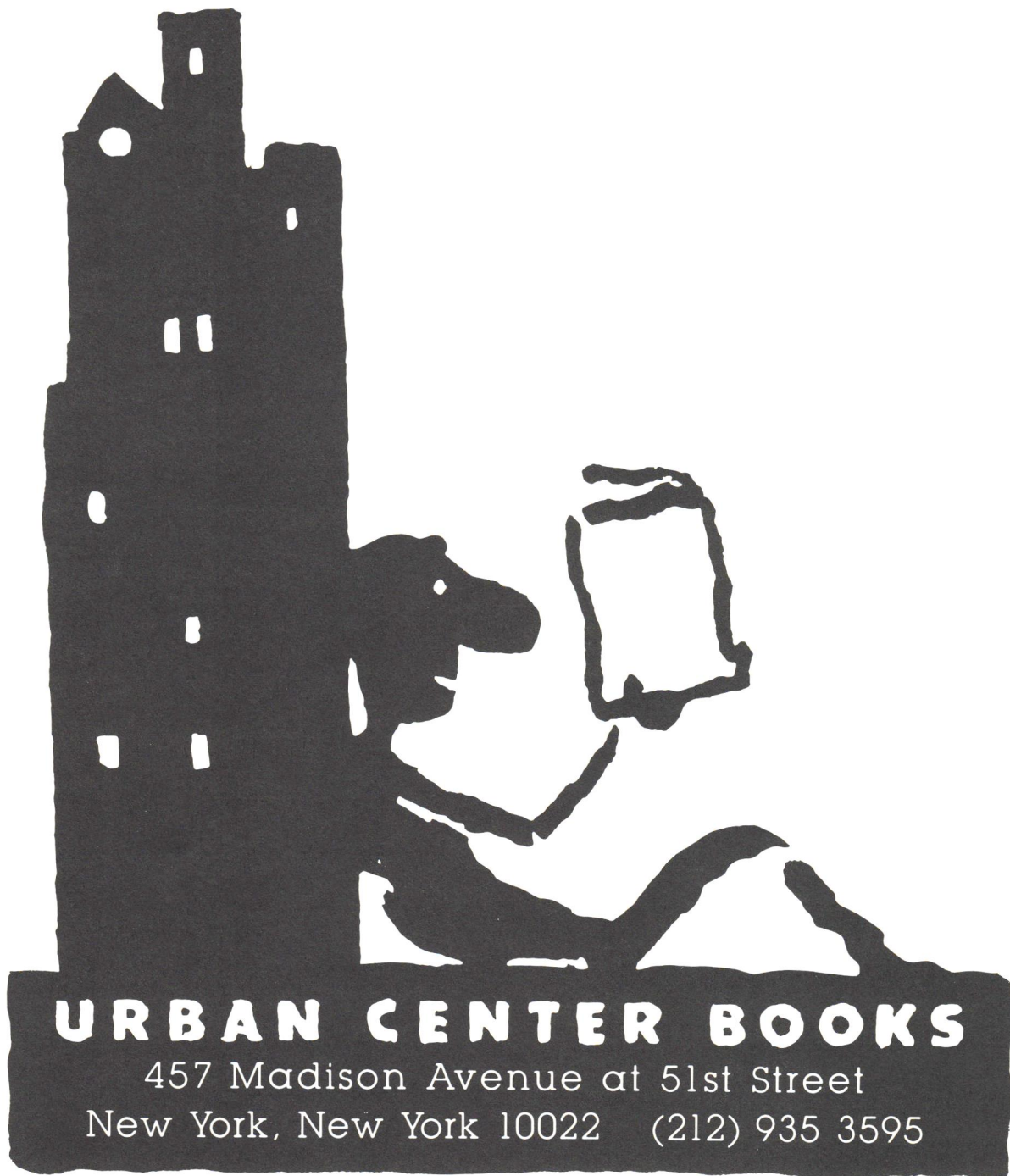
The MIT Press, 1980

585 pp., \$50.00

On first consideration, the title of this new volume by Joseph Rykwert, one of the most wide-ranging and consistently thought-provoking of contemporary architectural historians, would appear to be a contradiction in terms. It requires a perverse stretching of definitions to conceive of the classicism of the Louvre or the neo-classicism of the Pantheon to be of the same spirit and style as Le Corbusier or Gropius, men who were, if anything, in revolt exactly against the classicism of the Beaux-Arts school. Yet this is exactly the sort of perverse, apparently contradictory association upon which Rykwert thrives and which, in the end, leads to a restructuring of how architectural history is done.

The subject of Rykwert's book is the architects and architectural theorists in France, England and Italy from about 1675 to 1770. While traditional architectural history would classify these men as either classical or neo-classical in outlook, Rykwert shows them to be “modern” in several ways. They are modern if one is discussing the “Quarrel of the Ancients and the Moderns,” the contemporary debate over the possibility of surpassing the achievements of antiquity. On another level, Rykwert plays with similarities in their architecture to present-day building. Thus the Louvre becomes the first building with reinforced masonry construction, analogous to the use of reinforced concrete in modern buildings. Similarly, Lodoli is considered as a possible “proto-functionalists.” Finally, Claude Perrault, the focus of Rykwert's opening chapters, could be considered the first modern because of his formulation of a theory which defined architectural beauty as a composite of Form and Taste. It does not matter that Perrault himself thought the latter to be the greater beauty. As Rykwert is careful to show, Perrault's followers could and did extend this distinction to draw conclusions about the primacy of form in architecture, conclusions with which many modern architects could agree.

But Rykwert is only indirectly concerned with discovering the roots of modernity in the eighteenth century. His primary purpose is to show the development of architectural theory during this period within the context of larger intellectual and social movements. The result is the most broad-ranging, eclectic history of architecture I have ever seen.



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Perrault's ideas, for example, are discussed within the context of Jansenist theology, Cartesian rationalism, musical theory, and French courtly politics and intrigues. Even the history of typefaces is used to elucidate Perrault's contribution. One never knows quite where Rykwert's search will lead next. There is a captivating analysis of Piranesi's caprices, an account of English architecture which develops from a study of John Dee's translation of Euclid, a deep concern with the introduction of all things Oriental, including coffee, into Europe, and an excursus on the history of gardens. Architecture held a special fascination for the polymaths of the day; Rykwert imitates them in his multiplicity of interests. He is particularly interesting on the role of the esoteric and arcane in the thought of the time. Thus the shadowy image of the Temple of Solomon lurks through much of the text, serving as a benchmark for all discussion. Astrology and mysticism are given prominent play. Above all else it is freemasonry which holds Rykwert's attention. At times everyone in the book appears to be a mason, from Louis XV to the Jesuit priest Laugier to Christopher Wren. What the significance of masonry was for their architecture, however, Rykwert can never clearly say.

This, in fact, is an example of Rykwert's biggest failing. The fascination with detail, which makes the book a treasure-trove of information, is often at the expense of analysis. It is not an easy book to read. There is no introduction, no conclusion to speak of, and rarely does Rykwert pause to collect his thoughts and summarize the results. Nor has he been helped by his editors at the MIT Press. It is perhaps unavoidable that the many and lengthy footnotes had to appear in abbreviated form at the end of the chapters, but too often the citations in the notes fail to appear in the bibliography. The unnumbered illustrations are often ignored in the text; almost all are of a uniformly low quality, something not to be expected in a \$50.00 book. And there is in Rykwert's writing itself a certain ambiguity and denseness, which results in several sentences being indecipherable even after several readings. An example is the delightfully entitled final chapter, "Truth stripped naked by Philosophy." This could be a reference to the frontispiece engraving by Cochin for the French Encyclopedia, or it could refer to Duchamp's similarly named work—we are never told. It is not a book, consequently, that one can read through quickly and know what the author was trying to say.

It's a shame that the book isn't more accessible, because Rykwert is trying to do something very radical in it. He has made architecture an integral and integrated part of the general intellectual and cultural history of the eighteenth century, something which everyone would agree it is, but yet which few people have the breadth or experience to explore. For those people interested in the reconciliation of architecture and history, this book will be required reading for a long time. For those who are interested in the origins of the modern ideals of Form and Taste, the book, while difficult, will be rewarding. It won't have all the answers, but it is as wide-ranging and detailed a survey as one can find.

—Peter Hirtle

Peter B. Hirtle teaches in the Program in Values, Technology, and Society at Stanford University.

GA Houses 10

ADA Edita, Tokyo

March 1982, 176 pp., \$20.00

GA Houses 11

ADA Edita, Tokyo

May 1982, 176 pp., \$20.00

GA has acquired the well deserved reputation of publishing some of the most beautifully printed and lavishly illustrated architectural magazines around. Unlike *Architectural Digest*, GA is not padded by ads for trendy new items, nor does GA cover the homes of the rich and famous. Another virtue of GA is that, unlike *Progressive Architecture*, new and interesting buildings need not be sought every month; hence GA can afford to be reflective and selective. This is an *architect's* publication, by and for architects, and even though it only secondarily addresses the non-professional, it does so successfully: hyperbole

and rhetoric are kept to a minimum, and the presentation of buildings is straightforward.

Two recent issues of *GA Houses* (numbers 10 and 11) are monographs on "New Waves in American Architecture." Senior and long-established American architects who typically represent America overseas (Graves, Meier, Johnson, Pelli) are ignored in favor of less famous but often no less talented architects. *GA* has not adopted rigid stylistic criteria in deciding what work to include, and indeed, selections range from Robert Stern and Thomas Gordon Smith on the one hand to Stanley Saitowitz and Batey & Mack on the other.

Perhaps the architects represented in *GA 10* and *GA 11* are separated most crudely by their willingness to employ clever devices, cutouts and curlicues of all sorts to give their work appeal. This is particularly true of Thomas Gordon Smith's Laurentian and Tuscan houses in Livermore, California. Onto the prosaic skeleton of a typical California tract home are

pasted columns, capitals, crests, and arches, all painted in colorful pastels and all a bit embarrassing. Peter Waldman, Jeremy Kotas and Mark McInturff fall into the same general category, although all three show more restraint than does Smith. The work of Batey & Mack, Stanley Saitowitz, Ralph Lerner, Daniel Solomon and Steve Holl shows more promise and indeed, more variety. Although their houses are quite different, none relies upon tricks or facile devices to accomplish its goals. Batey & Mack's homes consist of simple, crisp volumes, impeccable craftsmanship, adroit use of modern industrial materials: and yet they achieve the lyrical brilliance so utterly lacking in fussy, post-Modernist designs. Whether the discreet little Anti-villa in Napa or the opulent and stately Holt House in Corpus Christi, Batey & Mack's work vigorously binds industrial materials (concrete block, industrial steel sash doors) with ancient motifs without tarding them up with historicist bric-a-brac.

Daniel Solomon and Ralph Lerner address the problem of multiple dwelling unit programs, and despite programmatic and stylistic differences, both offer solid contributions. Lerner's Artists and Writers Housing in Rye, England, and Solomon's infill housing at Castro Common in San Francisco represent sensitive responses to urban sites wherein the architects attempt to reconcile modern needs and sensibilities with vernacular traditions.

Despite the fact that *GA* publishes only houses in this series, and that the architects chosen are a select group indeed, no attempt to promote a particular trend or style is evident: indeed, quite the contrary. They scrupulously avoid playing favorites, to the point where some celebrated but uninspiring work may receive too much press. Most of the choices are excellent, however, and no one does a better job of documenting representative examples of contemporary American homes than *GA*.

—Diane Ghirardo

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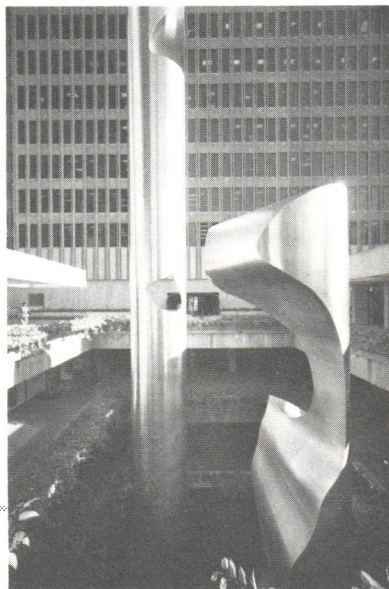
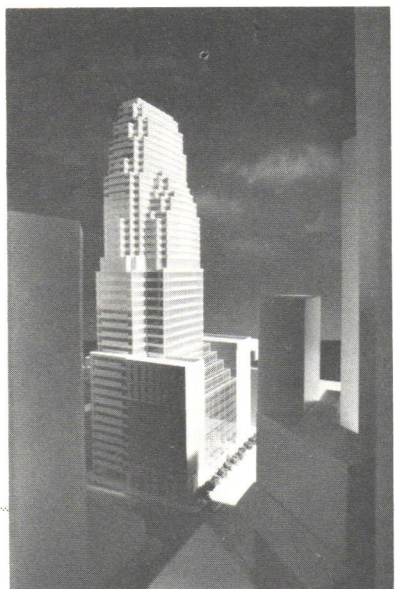
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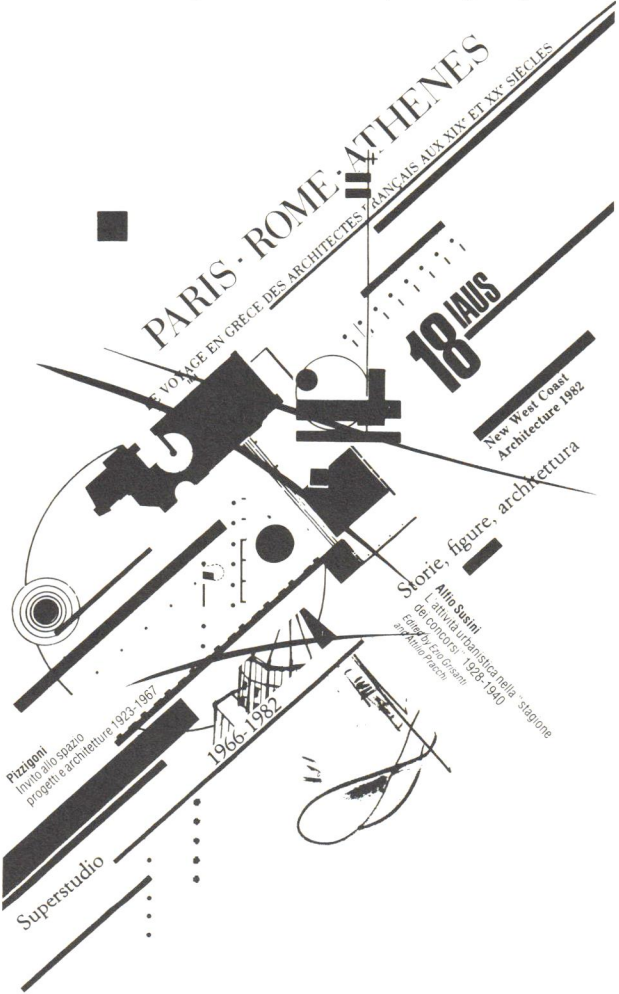
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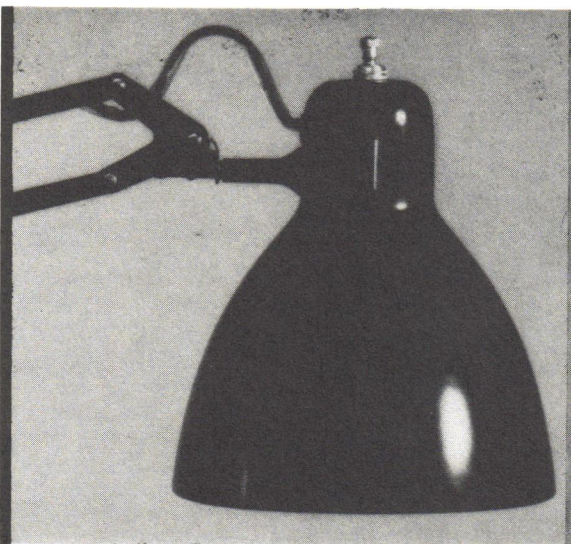
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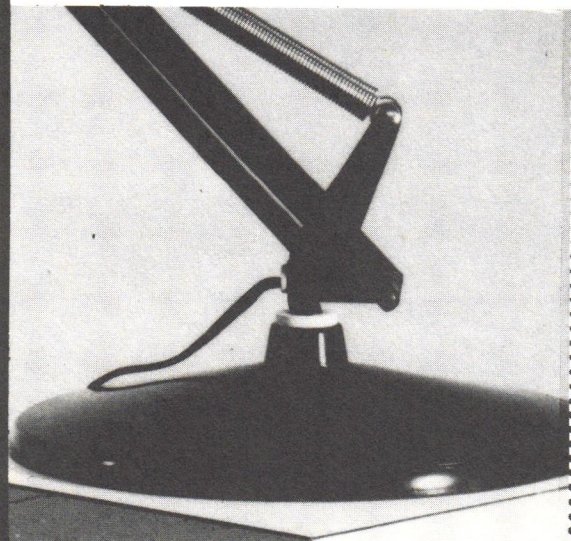
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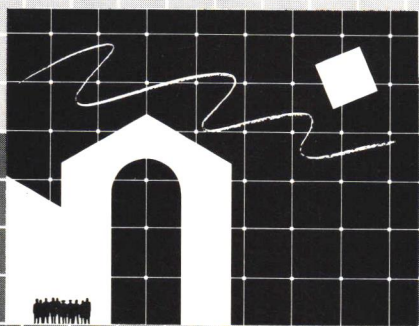
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