

INDEX

3

Editorial

7

The White U: Towards a Possible
Japanese Classicism
Oliver Thill

14

A House for Sister Nabuko and her
Small Daughters Sachiko and Fumiko
Stefano Boeri

17

The Foundations of All Possible Buildings:
Three Houses for a Sister
Christophe Van Gerrewey

24

A Bagatelle under Military Dictatorship:
Artigas's *Balneario* in Jaú
Daniele Pisani

36

Imi, Imi, Machine and More
Freek Persyn

45

Thirteen Notes on the Villa Garzoni
Pier Paolo Tamburelli

52

A Park in the Shape of the World
YellowOffice

57

Fossil, Sphinx, Fossil, Sea, Moon
Stefano Graziani

66

Model Architecture
Kersten Geers

71

Reading the Monadnock Block
Job Floris

79

“Fünf auf der nach
oben offenen Richterskala”
Andrea Zanderigo

84

Purpose and Allusion: Hannes Meyer and
Hans Wittwer, Petersschule in Basel, 1926, and
Bundesschule–ADGB in Bernau, 1928–30
Guy Châtel

94

The New Naive
Milica Topalovic

104

A Letter to the Zoologist
Joana Rafael

110

The One-Trick Pony
Salomon Frausto

118

The Secret Life of the Horizontal City
Francesco Garofalo

126

The Baths: a Project for Villa Muggia
Salottobuono

131

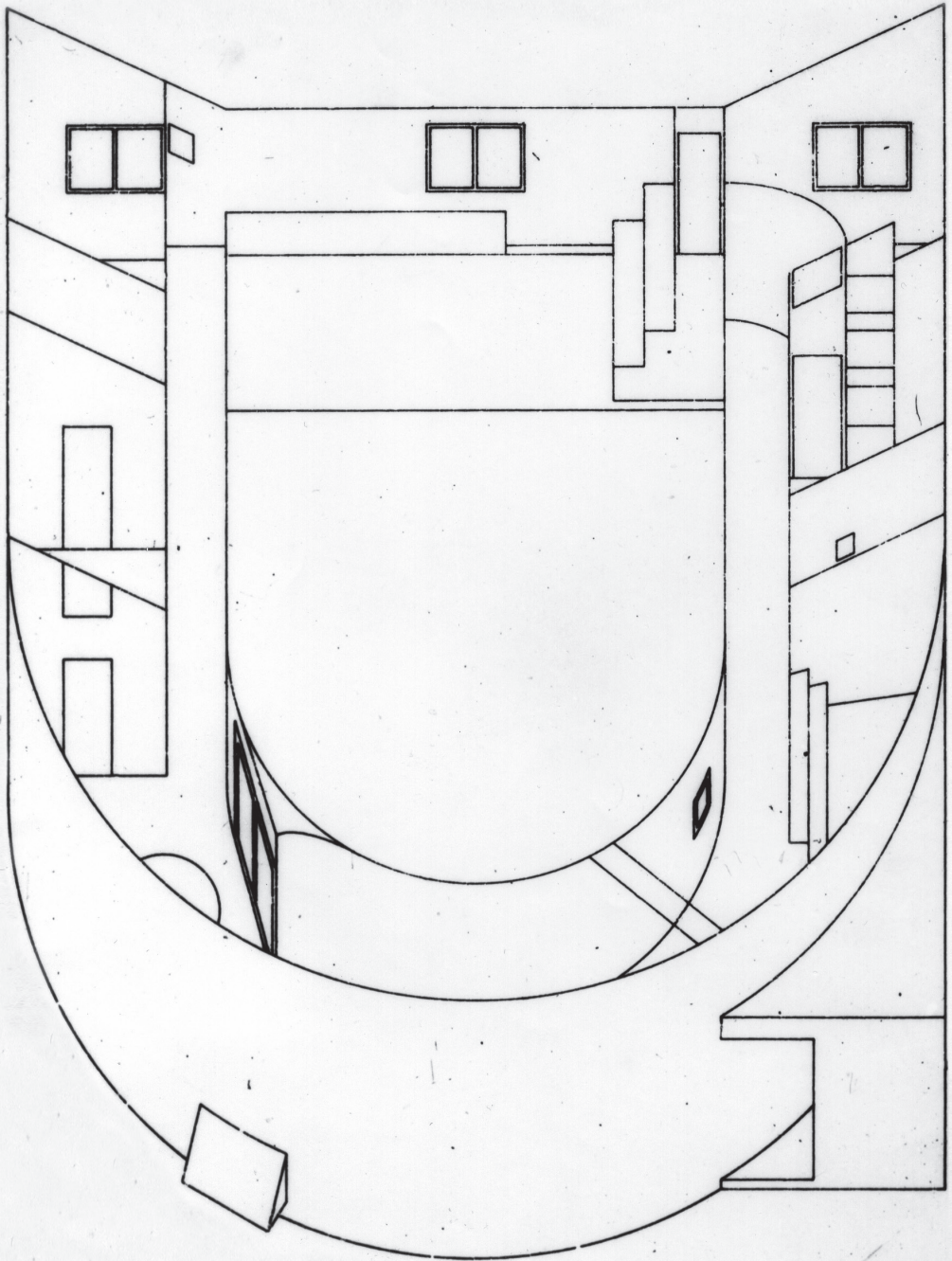
Broadcasting Architecture
Marco Brizzi

139

Unfolded Spiral
2A+P/A

145

Call for Papers
Islands



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San Rocco
Dorsoduro 1685/A
I-30123 Venezia
+39 041 0994628
www.sanrocco.info
mail@sanrocco.info

Editor
Matteo Chidoni

Editorial Board
Matteo Costanzo, Francesca
Pellicciari, Giovanni Piovene,
Giovanna Silva, Pier Paolo
Tamburelli

Graphic Design
pupilla grafik / Salottobuono

Copy Editor
Krystina Stermole

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Craziani, Office KCDVS, pupilla
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EDITORIAL

San Rocco is a magazine about architecture.

San Rocco does not solve problems. It is not a useful magazine.

San Rocco is neither serious nor friendly.

San Rocco is written by architects. As such, San Rocco is neither particularly intelligent nor philologically accurate.

San Rocco is serious. It takes the risk of appearing naive.

San Rocco will not last forever. There will be no more than 20 San Roccas over the course of the magazine's five-year plan.

San Rocco is the name of a place in Monza that is not a nice one. In 1971, Giorgio Grassi and Aldo Rossi engaged in a design competition for San Rocco. In the end, the project they designed was not built; ordinary housing blocks were built instead.

A few negligible drawings of the San Rocco project have survived in old monographs, along with a black-and-white photograph of the competition model. It is a picture taken from above of the white plaster model. Close to the buildings there is a large label that reads "MONZA SAN ROCCO scala 1:500" and whose lettering is in such high relief that it casts dramatic shadows.

San Rocco was the product of the collaboration of two young architects. The project did not contribute to the later fame of its two de-

signers. It is neither “typical Grassi” nor “typical Rossi”. Somehow it remains between the two, strangely hybrid – open and uncertain, multiple and enigmatic.

The purity and radicalism of the design does not involve any intolerance. San Rocco suggests an entirely new set of possibilities. It seems to represent the beginning of a new type of architecture, or the first application of a new – and promising – design method that has never been developed further.

San Rocco proposes the possibility of reusing architectural traditions that lie outside of individual memory (contrary to Rossi’s usual approach) without erasing individual contributions (contrary to Grassi’s usual approach). In San Rocco, common does not mean dry, and personal does not mean egomaniacal. San Rocco seems to suggest the possibility of an architecture that is both open and personal, both monumental and fragile, both rational and questioning.

This kind of situation has arisen in other moments in the history of architecture. It would be possible to compile a list of examples of this unlikely, generous, vulnerable and innocent architecture.

Innocent architecture is not utopian architecture, nor is it architecture de papier. Innocent architecture is always meant to be built, and sometimes it is. In its innocence, innocent architecture is serious.

Innocent architecture is not experimental. Innocent architecture is not open-ended. It is precisely defined and yet strangely generous. Its results are evident, but at the same time they are not entirely applicable.

Innocent architecture is not completely effective. Somehow it does not work; it is neither ripe nor stable. It is unfinished, either literally (like the Olympeion) or conceptually (like the Villa Garzoni). If built, it can easily be destroyed (e.g. Toyo Ito’s White U). It is both more promising and more disappointing, more daring and more incomplete, more dangerous and more paradoxical. What is discovered is not immediately present, but rather displaced or somehow postponed. Its formal resources are not immediately available.

Innocent architecture is enigmatic. You do not understand whether it is inspired or idiotic; it is architecture by Prince Myshkin.

Most of the time episodes of innocent architecture are the product of a collaboration (e.g. Rossi and Grassi, Burnham and Root, Meyer and Wittwer, Diotallevi, Marescotti and Pagano, etc.); something in them remains unclear, or open to further development. What the architects discover in these projects seems to lie beyond their goals; it is somehow greater and not completely under their control – weak yet convincing, brave yet naive. Innocent designs are ones whose ambition was somehow excessive; they are projects that never really found legitimate heirs to the colossal risks they ran.

Innocent architecture seems to belong to extremely broad formal traditions. The family of precedents (and descendants) of the Mondnock Building or the White U seems to be larger than the family of precedents of any other project by Ito or Burnham. Because of innocent architecture's promising openness, it is easier to approve of it than of its pedantic developments (thus, it is easier to go along with Kollhoff's design for the Frankfurt Ethnological Museum than with his later works).

Innocent architecture is not big. It is either colossal or small (or both, as in the case of the Zeebrugge ferry terminal).

Innocent architecture is not complicated. Much like a toy, it is comprised of just a few parts. Price's aviary in The Regent's Park is an example of a design that reaches innocent architecture's greatest acceptable degree of technological complexity.

Innocent architecture is white (e.g. the White U or the balneario in Jaú) or, at least, pale (like the Indiana Avenue Studios).



THE WHITE U: TOWARDS A POSSIBLE JAPANESE CLASSICISM

Oliver Thill

The White U consists of two load-bearing cast-in-situ concrete walls with a distance of about 4 metres between them. The house has a U-shape, with a lower connection piece at the end that encloses a little courtyard. The wall on the courtyard side is about 2.7 metres high and a third lower than the outside wall. Between the walls spans a sloped cast-in-situ concrete roof. The outside wall and roof plate are directly connected with each other, creating a sharp corner detail. The inside wall forms a little attic that prevents water from running directly over the wall into the courtyard. Seen from the neighbouring apartment building, the house is a carefully designed monolithic object with a massive, smooth concrete surface that is interrupted by only a few windows and skylights and a little entrance pavilion on the north side. The White U is not – as the name would suggest – white, but rather concrete-grey.

The front façade is bent away from the street and about 5 metres high. No windows interrupt the curved concrete surface. On the right hand side there is a little side building with two sliding doors that provide access to the house. The doors are opaque like the wall. Obviously, a sharp border between inside and outside is created here. To underline this attitude, the house is raised half of a metre above street level and placed on a base of three steps running more or less parallel with the wall. The result is an unusual, monumental and autonomous look that calls to mind the tomb of a Roman emperor more than a suburban bungalow. The design of the house feels slightly pathetic when one considers the informal layout of the surrounding neighbourhood, which is typical of Tokyo. The seriousness of the White U is ironically

**Previous page:
Rubble of the White U.
Drawing by Tommaso Corla.**

relativized by the solution devised for the driveway: the residents have to park their car diagonally in front of the façade in order to keep the vehicle on the property.

Upon entering the house, one reaches the very surprising main living space of the house via a small hallway. Placed between the two curved walls and under the sloping roof, the room almost makes a 180° loop. Lacking a visual end point, the space suggests movement: it is not a living room, but a *living corridor*. The phenomenon of movement is intensified by the fact that the higher outside wall produces an almost centrifugal force. Both walls and ceiling are finished with fine plasterwork and painted white, which produces a very abstracted space and contrasts with the more material-based aesthetic of the house's exterior. Clearly, the White U is meant to be understood as a space rather than as an object. Obviously, the true nature of the outer form is an inner form. The space is refined by one long skylight that slices radially through the half-circle-shaped space, creating a dramatic light effect in the generally dark space. To strengthen the scene, spotlights are placed along the base of the inner wall to illuminate the outer curved surface, where they project bizarre shadows when people walk by. The result is a distant and somehow strange spatial quality that evokes the character of an exhibition space. The only element suggesting a certain domestic cosiness is the soft beige carpet.

At the end of the living room a large window offers a view onto garden – and yet not really. The window slightly rotates into the living space, thereby focusing the view not on the emptiness of the courtyard – as one would expect – but on the beauty of the curved inner wall in order to show the inner form of the living room as an outside shape again. The effect is just like looking at the shell of an individual's life from the inside . . . The courtyard itself is very hermetic: almost completely closed walls reduce any relation of its space to the inner ones of the house to an unexpected minimum. Instead of giving onto the courtyard, therefore, the sleeping rooms have blind windows and are oriented towards the partition zone between the houses. A different patio type is composed here. Rather than creating an intense connection between the bedrooms and the courtyard, as usually occurs in traditional Asian houses, the courtyard is an autonomous space that is nearly independent from the house itself. However, this space is neither celebrated nor emphasized. There are also no signs of cosiness here, just concrete walls, a few windows, a rainwater pipe on the wall and an unpaved surface; essentially, it is comprised of soil and sky.

The patio thus becomes somehow cut off from the house – an area of contained yet uncontrolled nature.

The White U tries to escape from being Japanese. By being massive, symmetrical, heavy, curved, opaque and even monumental, everything is done to avoid resembling Asian vernacular architecture. An almost cynical and inhumane attitude seems to have been necessary in order to create this break with history, and the result is a very controversial but brilliant piece of architecture.

Unfortunately, the White U was demolished in 1997, so it is no longer possible to visit it, but those who had the opportunity to see it will never forget the experience. It can be understood as a mysterious but promising experiment that announces a possible Japanese classicism: you can sense the spirit of Palladio, Boullée and Schinkel filtering into Asia. Does the spirit of the Roman Empire infiltrate Japan here for the first time? The house can be seen as a manifesto declaring a new type of Japanese architecture, or a statement about the possibility of a monumental Japanese style. Surprisingly, it was the young Ito who designed the house. As a physical manifestation of a way of thinking, it became his San Rocco – an isolated, boyish trick never to be repeated or continued, and never fully refined. Next to the house just a few years later, he would build his own home – the very playful Silver Hut – in a neo-structuralist spirit that saw him return to everything from which he had tried to escape in creating the White U. With the Silver Hut he became Toyo Ito, the master of weightless architecture. The short but promising beginning represented by the White U thus came to a dead end – Ito-heavy was killed by Ito-light.











A HOUSE FOR SISTER NOBUKO AND HER SMALL DAUGHTERS SACHIKO AND FUMIKO

Stefano Boeri

There are houses that play host to many stories during their lifetime. These houses host generations of residents, and their uses and habits consequently change over time. Other houses, however, have a history that is dominated by and adapted to a single family and its fate.

Occasionally, a house endures for less than the lifetime of its first owners, whether due to natural disasters, war or some other cause, and such houses usually conceal stories that need to be told.

In 1976 Toyo Ito was a young architect in Tokyo. He had grown up professionally among the most famous and sophisticated Japanese architects (Kiyonori Kikutake, Togo Murano, Arata Isozaki, etc.) and had created a few promising works. By that time he had already opened a small professional studio in his own name, and in that year his sister gave him a task: to build a little house on a small piece of land next to their parents' old home.

For the young architect, the assignment would have probably presented another opportunity to test his abilities in the difficult task of designing a family home had it not arisen from a personal tragedy: his sister Nobuko and her two small daughters (Sachiko and Fumiko) had just lost their husband and father to cancer.

In the wake of this event, Nobuko and her daughters were anxious to leave their luxury apartment in a Tokyo tower block with its views over the city. They were looking for somewhere they could find refuge; they needed a place where they could be together and feel safe – a protected and introverted place in which to regain their strength.

The White U's history began in this way, with its client's desire to "be as close to the land as possible" and to have an "L-shaped" plan

that would allow her and her daughters to always be able to look at each other, perhaps through a garden. The house was also born from the way in which a young architect tried to meet these demands: he accepted them entirely, without discussion or mediation. While a sense of discretion often prevails in these cases, and the architect makes an attempt to tone down the client's requests (especially when linked to intimate and private emotions), in this case any notion of "distance", which is often what gives the architect a sense of authority, was entirely absent.

The White U thus had its origins in a space forged out of urgent, symbolic need, a condition to which the architectural response was not the logical composition of functional spaces (the kitchen, the bedroom, the sitting room) but rather the invention of a singular spatial concept: a cold, introverted yet rooted place – a niche-like home capable of protecting the solitude of a family enveloped in the mourning process.

Almost twenty years later, after having become an internationally renowned architect, Toyo Ito decided to tell the White U's very particular story, talking about the first sketches he produced on the drawing table, the tension that existed between the house's interior, which was conceived as an underground, labyrinth-like "tube", and the central, geometric empty space of the exterior, and the gradual creation of the small, cave-like area that enclosed a central patio, which became a kind of suspended space around which the family could gather instead of a garden. Ito has talked about the building process, during which, "every day towards midday", he would observe the builders at work, and about the ways in which he designed the movement of light and shade in the two white corridors and the fading of the sun in the communal space. He has recounted how this isolated, centripetal and introspective structure grew under the watchful eyes of the two siblings, who saw a small, elegant house take form, a horseshoe shape in exposed concrete with a roof that gently sloped down towards an internal patio and clear interiors cut by shafts of geometric light streaming in through skylights.

But Toyo Ito's story, unlike those usually told in architectural accounts, does not stop here. Ito also tells us how in the years after it was finished, the White U came under heavy criticism, and how some critics saw it as a Corbusian departure from the sophistication of traditional Japanese minimalism. He also recounts how this small, celebrated architectural creation was destroyed (definitively) well

before its time, just twenty years after its construction. The mother and daughters who had desired and shaped it would also be the ones who decided on its end: one by one, they had left the house, which had “become like a tomb”. The first to leave was the eldest daughter Sachiko. Later her mother left, and then the youngest daughter Fumiko moved out.

This was not, however, simply the gradual abandonment of a house. It was the liberating destruction of a space whose occupancy by someone else they could not contemplate; it was the disintegration of a place that symbolized for them the idea of an intimate and radical loss. The end of a particular period in the life of this family implied the abandonment of the architectural form that, for them, represented the transcription of that period in spatial terms.

Ito's story ends with a lucid examination of the fragility of this small and famous work. As he watched it being destroyed, he felt the forces of the metropolis penetrate the small area, where only fragments of bricks and mortar remained. Ito understood that it had been, above all, an excess of architecture which had led to the death of this place. “Every house”, he says, “is born from a dualism between the demand for a deeper form of life, a virtual demand that is often unconscious, and the possibility of staying open to the everyday dynamics of the family and its social rules.” Architects need to be able to respond to both these needs, to give space to the symbolic dimension, to that sense of an “other house”, as well as to allow the space to adapt itself to the vicissitudes and chance events of our lives. Architects should not try to determine these events or close off the possibility of change. “But the White U”, Ito concludes, “ignored this dualism. It only tried to respond to the first questions or needs.” The house was overly rigorous, and its originality, too fragile.

THE FOUNDATIONS OF ALL POSSIBLE BUILDINGS: THREE HOUSES FOR A SISTER

Christophe Van Gerrewey

“Even today the social feelings arise in the individual as a superstructure founded upon impulses of jealousy and rivalry against his brothers and sisters. Since the enmity cannot be gratified there develops an identification with the former rival.”

Sigmund Freud

“I am not interested in erecting a building, but in perspicuously presenting to myself the foundations of all possible buildings.”

Ludwig Wittgenstein

The fateful episode in his life is probably as well known as some of his philosophic aphorisms.¹ In April 1926, Ludwig Wittgenstein holds a teaching position in a primary school in one of the poorer areas of Lower Austria. It has been five years since his most recent book, the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, was published, and he has chosen a solitary, modest and ascetic life, refusing every ounce of the fortune he inherited after his father's death in 1913. One of the things he wants to teach his pupils is how to draw Corinthian columns. The results are not to his liking; the students do not succeed at depicting columns the way Wittgenstein has imagined it. He becomes angry and seizes a student by his hair; all drawing stops. Wittgenstein boxes the ears of one of his pupils, a sickly boy, and forces him to stand in a corner of the classroom. Subsequently, the pupil faints. Hearing about the incident, the boy's father attempts in vain to have Wittgenstein arrested. Despite being cleared of misconduct,

1

See, for example, Paul Wijdeveld, *Ludwig Wittgenstein: Architect* (Amsterdam: The Pepin Press, 2000), 35–37.

Wittgenstein resigns his position and returns to Vienna. He takes up a position as a gardener's assistant in a monastery, where he performs strenuous physical labour in the open air, trying to restore his inner peace. He considers becoming a monk, but he is advised that he will not find what he is seeking in monastic life.

Therefore, an offer from his elder sister Margaret Stonborough comes as a temporary relief. She has been thinking about building a house in Vienna. Contact has been made with the architect Paul Engelmann, and Ludwig is permitted to take part in the preliminary design of the house. Soon enough, however, he is the one in charge. His eldest sister Hermine describes the construction process in her memoirs: "Ludwig designed every window and door, every window-lock and radiator, with as much care and attention to detail as if they were precision instruments, and on a most elegant scale. And then, with his uncompromising energy, he ensured that everything was carried out with the same meticulous care."² The house comes together as a pact between Ludwig and his sister Margaret. When it comes to details and construction matters, Hermine writes, "Time and money were never allowed to matter, and I admire my sister for giving Ludwig a completely free hand in this respect. Two great people had come together as architect and client, making it possible to create something perfect of its kind. The same attention was devoted to the most inconspicuous detail as to the main features, for everything was important. Nothing was unimportant, except time and money."³ Not surprisingly, the building process takes two full years. At night, Ludwig is exhausted; the only thing that somehow helps him wind down is a visit to the cinema, where he sees American motion pictures. In 1928 the construction is finished, and Margaret moves into the Palais Stonborough on Kundmannngasse in Vienna.

In later years, after the death of the architect-philosopher, the house will be referred to as the Wittgenstein House; for many architects it becomes the most radical example of a minimalist architecture in which the extreme premises of the modern movement are given expression: as an architect, Wittgenstein was as modern as Loos wanted to be in his writings but was unable to be in his own architecture. For many theoreticians, on the other hand, it becomes the total embodiment of "negative thought"; Massimo Cacciari wrote in *Oikos* that in the house "there are no means of escape or 'withdrawal' into the 'values' of the interior".⁴ This mythic position in the history of architecture can be confronted with the *story* of the house – that is to say, with the ways

2
Ibid., 37.

3
Ibid.

4
Massimo Cacciari,
*Architecture and Nihilism:
On the Philosophy of Modern
Architecture* (New Haven:
Yale University Press, 1995),
129.

in which the architect wrote and thought about the existential task of building a house for his own sister. Three small fragments of text, and in particular their combination, are therefore important: a postscript in a letter from Wittgenstein to his sister Margaret (the commissioner and inhabitant of the house); a letter from Wittgenstein to one of his other sisters, Hermine (the Wittgenstein family chronicler); and finally a brief remark in Wittgenstein's *Vermischte Bemerkungen*.

The first fragment is addressed to Margaret not long before Ludwig's death: "Yesterday I thought, I don't know why, of the Kundmangasse & how delightfully you furnished it & how comforting. In these matters we understand each other."⁵ The second letter, to Hermine, is written shortly after the completion of the house on Kundmangasse, in November 1929. In it, Wittgenstein expresses his profound concern about the upcoming Christmas party: he fears that celebrating Christmas *exclusively* with the five Wittgenstein siblings (himself, Paul, Hermine, Margaret and Helene) will turn out to be a disaster, no matter in whose house the party takes place: "We are simply five rather rude and rough creatures for whom it is hard just to nestle close to each other. – But it all goes well if friends are present, for they bring to our company a happier atmosphere and all the other things that we lack."⁶ The third fragment, from Wittgenstein's *Vermischte Bemerkungen*, reads as follows: "Within all great art there is a WILD animal: *tamed*. . . . All great art has man's primitive drives as its groundbass. . . . In the same sense: the house I built for Margaret is the product of a decidedly sensitive ear and *good* manners, an expression of great *understanding* (of a culture, etc.). But *primordial* life, wild life striving to erupt into the open – that is lacking. And so you could say it isn't *healthy* (Kierkegaard). (Hothouse plant)."⁷

The important reference to Kierkegaard is clearly a reference to one of his later works, *The Sickness unto Death* (1849): the unhealthy life is the *despairing* life; despair is the real "sickness unto death". According to Kierkegaard, an individual is in despair if he is not able to align himself with the natural, primordial plan that is intrinsically interwoven with (his or her) human life. Although Kierkegaard's existentialism is surely of a Christian nature, in Wittgenstein's case (and in the case of the Wittgenstein House), it must be interpreted as radically modern: the *despairing*, unhealthy life is the life that cannot transcend its origins, that cannot autonomously decide what to do, what to ignore, what to say or where to go. So when Wittgenstein writes to Margaret that "in the matters of the house in Vienna" they truly understand each other,

5

Quoted in Wijdeveld, *Ludwig Wittgenstein*, 72.

6

Joachim Leilich, *Ludwig Wittgenstein: Brieven* (Amsterdam: Wereldbibliotheek, 2000), 113–115 (present author's translation).

7

Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Vermischte Bemerkungen / Culture and Value* (London: Basil Blackwell, 1980), 37–38.

what he means precisely is that they have found a common goal, an occupation and a project to share – but not a *real* project, since there is no objective and healthy or rational reason for members of the same family to have something in common or “to do” something together, let alone the building of a house. The unique “project” of the family has such a totalitarian nature that it immediately absorbs and deafens the founding of all other projects. The second letter to Hermine explicitly underscores this: “When friends are present on Christmas Eve, it will be totally different: they will be happy with their gifts together with us, and we will have a real reason to be together.” The combination of the two letters and the fragment from the *Vermischte Bemerkungen* indicates that it is nearly impossible for a modern architect-philosopher to build a house for his own sister.

Architecture can only be conscious, modern and *real* when it enables all subjects involved to become a subject. Architecture does not start from a fixed set of meanings, rules or principles. It provides a way to leave behind everything that one cannot bring into accordance with the conscious, autonomously written, designed and executed project that one has chosen to regard as one’s own life – or as the best way, for no matter whom, to *live*, hence the famous dictum of Wittgenstein quoted earlier: “I am not interested in erecting a building, but in perspicuously presenting to myself the foundations of all possible buildings.” Architecture has this generalizing and totalitarian characteristic: it is particular in its environment and its execution, but its scope is wide enough to attract, interest and involve every modern thinker. “Architecture”, wrote Paul Valéry in his *Cahiers* of 1911, “has to visualize the qualities in which it deviates from one human being, but agrees with the workings of the mind – of the virtual movements.” In the stories that Wittgenstein and his siblings constructed around the Wittgenstein House, a hindrance to the potentiality (of architecture) keeps appearing: *the house was built by the architect for his own sister*. This knowledge remains irreconcilable with the intrinsic mental project of modern architecture.

On the other hand – and this is another important characteristic – architecture as *matter* will always be stronger than theory, philosophy or psychology, which is to say that Wittgenstein can write and think about his difficulties with the Wittgenstein House (or I can reconstruct and conceptualize these difficulties) and neither he, nor his sister, nor her house will turn into plaster and crumble to pieces because of these problems. The life of matter and the life of the body go on.

The famous dictum of Le Corbusier (and of the modern movement in general) – “La vie sera toujours la plus forte” – has signed the contract between architecture and life: together they are always stronger than despair; they overcome the deadlock that is eventually presented by every mental construction. Neither life nor architecture can show the extremities of thought.

That is why, in order to see the extreme consequences or the fantastic results of the meanings and intricate relations and realisations that constitute modern life, next to architecture there is *literature*. Literature shows what would have happened if thoughts and stories could have had their way with life and architecture; only in literature can life and architecture truly become *text* – extreme, fantastic and entirely consequential. Parallel to the house in Vienna that was built and (partly) designed by Wittgenstein, there is the novel *Korrektur*, which the Austrian writer Thomas Bernhard wrote in 1975.⁸ *Korrektur* is the story of Roithamer told in two chapters by a nameless narrator. In the first chapter, entitled “Hoeller’s Garret”, the narrator visits an attic in which Roithamer spent the last months of his life before committing suicide. In this garret, Roithamer designed the Cone, a house for his sister in the very centre of the Kobernausser forest, and wrote the bulky manuscript *About Altensam and everything connected with Altensam, with special attention to the Cone*. Altensam was the estate where Roithamer spent his youth together with his beloved sister. Unfortunately, Roithamer’s sister, as the narrator writes, was not happy after she moved into the Cone: “Roithamer’s sister had been doomed, that splendid creature, who simply couldn’t bear the fact of the Cone, that her brother had made his idea come true, to build the Cone for her, meaning *for her alone and particularly in the middle of the Kobernausser forest*, Roithamer himself had fully realized, when he came back to England after the Cone was finished and presented to his sister, that the perfected Cone could not actually be the greatest, in fact the supreme happiness for her, as he had believed, could have believed, but that it actually meant her death, because there can be no doubt whatsoever that Roithamer’s sister was destroyed by the creation of the perfect Cone; from the moment the Cone was finished, when it was presented to her, she was suddenly a different person.”

The narrator makes no doubt about it: Roithamer knew what was coming. He knew that living in the Cone would lead to his sister’s death – to her self-chosen death, her suicide: “Roithamer so deeply knew his sister, and never ceased from deeply understanding her *anew*, that it

8

Thomas Bernhard, *Korrektur* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1975). The English translation quoted from in this essay is *Correction*, tr. Sophie Wilkins (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979).

was unimaginable that he should not have foreseen the effect upon her of his finishing the Cone and presenting the Cone to her. A man of such equally far-ranging and deep vision should not have overlooked this, that perfecting and presenting the Cone to his sister must result in her death.” And indeed, as the narrator, in the second part of *Korrektur*, entitled “Sifting and Sorting”, examines and quotes extensively from the manuscript of Roithamer, it becomes clear that Roithamer had known exactly what would happen, and succeeded in following his sister in death by committing suicide himself.

The life of Roithamer, in all kinds of details, is clearly based on the life of Wittgenstein – with one important difference: the building of the house for his sister is a very important event in both the lives of Roithamer and Wittgenstein, but for Roithamer, this very meaningful act of construction becomes entirely consequential, for it leads to his sister’s suicide and to his own. “We always went too far”, writes Roithamer in his manuscript, “so we were always pushing toward the extreme limit. But we never thrust ourselves beyond it. . . . We can exist at the highest degree of intensity as long as we live.”

This “highest degree of intensity”, the “push” towards the extreme limit, is only accessible to Roithamer in the textual domain of fiction, while for Wittgenstein, in the reality of life and architecture, it is not. What both architect-philosophers have in common, however, is their deeply rooted knowledge that the construction of a house for a sister is an exemplary existential (or rather non-existential) act precisely because it proves impossible to use it as a foundation for their lives. It is possible to go even further: the futility of every human existence which becomes apparent under the scrutinizing gaze of a clear, conscious and critical mind can only lead to the end of that existence. Under the veil of what seemed to be a natural act of brotherly and innocent love, Roithamer has prepared both his sister’s suicide *and* his own by building a house that was ultimately an act of existential despair, incestuous violence and far-reaching identification. Wittgenstein, too, could only enact his particular foray into the realm of architecture by building a house for his own sister, because the unexplainable and absurd blood bond that lies at the core of it is the inexplicable, “unthinkable” and inexpressible core of human existence itself.

These two lives and two houses are, on the one hand, like the real and visible side of the moon as seen from the earth, and on the other, like the dark side of the moon, which can only exist in thought and imagination. Together, they show that modern domestic architecture – just

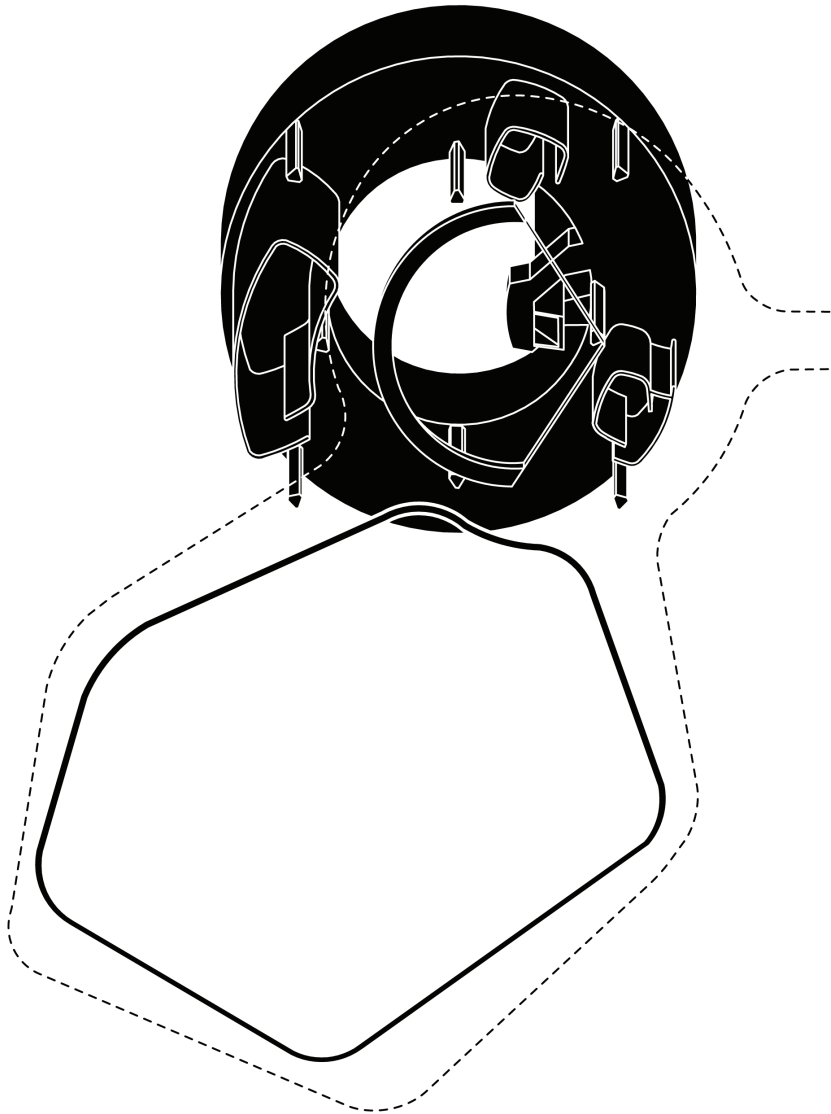
like every other project or occupation – remains irreconcilable with unconscious mechanisms that are just “there” without being “made”. The house that the Japanese architect Toyo Ito built for his sister can be added as a postscript to this dual story. The design of the White U started in 1975 for Ito’s elder sister. At that time she was in her late thirties, and she and her daughters, who were both still of primary school age, lost her husband and their father, who had struggled with illness for many years. Toyo Ito wrote about the construction in his text “About the Death of Domestic Dwellings”: “It is said that a house is the portrait of the family. This house was associated with a family which had just been confronted with death and withdrew from the world outside behind a concrete wall. The roof, which was inclined towards the courtyard, the inner garden which was laid out only with black soil, constituted the image of an introverted family.”⁹ After twenty years, Ito’s sister knew that she could no longer go on living inside of this house. It was designed under and for particular circumstances; it was a gift for a grieving family, for a mother and her two daughters in despair, but it was, just as in the cases of Roithamer and Wittgenstein, a house built by an architect for his own sister. A house that is imagined and designed for someone who is so near to the origin and the start of the architect’s own life – but for a life that is not *exactly* the same as that of the architect, as it is both that of another and that of a very similar person – can simply not serve as the foundation of an entire life. In 1998 the White U was demolished. It was inconceivable that anyone else would even consider inhabiting it. “There is always emptiness at the outset of architecture”, wrote Ito. It is precisely this complete initial emptiness that is lacking in these three stories about a house for a sister.

9

Toyo Ito, “About the Death of Domestic Dwellings”, in id., *Blurring Architecture* (Milan: Edizioni Charta, 1999), 80.

**A BAGATELLE
UNDER MILITARY DICTATORSHIP:
ARTIGAS'S *BALNEARIO* IN JAÚ**

Daniele Pisani



I

When João Baptista Vilanova Artigas was commissioned to design the changing-rooms and swimming pool of a modest sports centre in Jaú, a small country town in the state of São Paulo, several years had passed since the day – 5 April 1969 – on which he had been forced to retire from the Faculdade de Arquitetura e Urbanismo (FAU) of the Universidade de São Paulo (USP) where, as its undisputed charismatic leader, he had embarked on a programme of radical teaching reform.

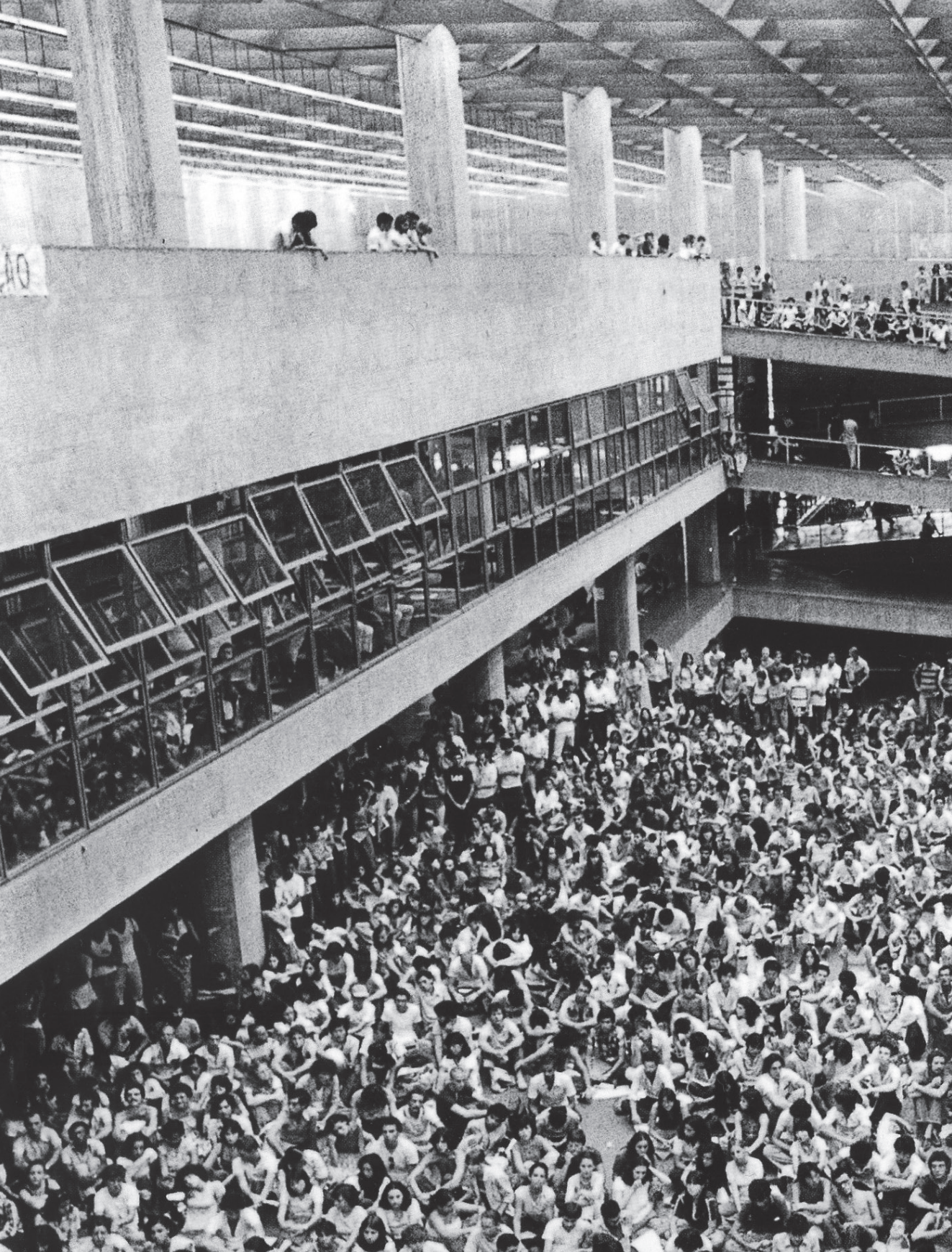
The military government that came to power on 31 March–1 April 1964 and subsequently barred Artigas from teaching – a job he adored – had singled him out right from the start as a “subversive” and therefore extremely dangerous figure. His political inclinations as a card-carrying member of the Partido Comunista Brasileiro (PCB) were no secret, and his role as a beacon to young students meant that even more urgent measures needed to be taken against him.

Shortly after the coup he was imprisoned for twelve days, during which time his students mounted an exhibition of his drawings in a bid to secure his release. He then fled to Uruguay, where he remained for almost a year. On returning to Brazil he was forced to stay in hiding until his acquittal in 1966, whereupon he resumed teaching until his ten-year forced retirement from the architecture and planning school whose building he had designed.

Though designed in 1961, the FAU building – his true architectural manifesto – was actually built, paradoxically enough, during the years of military rule. The library, administration offices, classrooms and workshops gravitate around a large central space. Rather than floors as such, the building has a variety of mezzanine levels connected wherever possible by ramps. Artigas designed the interior as a continuum, a large atrium-like space that readily accommodates and adapts to various situations and functions. Most importantly of all, it is not closed off from the outside. The ramps perform the far from unimportant function of establishing an unbroken link with the street outside, and vice versa.

Thus the building is programmatically open to the city, while at the same time, and equally programmatically, it is also urban in concept. All its spaces are gathered under a single enormous roof with structural columns that allows natural light to penetrate. The interior is criss-crossed by flows in every direction, but its component spaces are not separated from one another or closed off. This is why it has such an urban feel: rather than mimicking the complexity of the city, it elicits

Next page:
internal courtyard of the
Faculdade de Arquitetura
e Urbanismo (FAU) in São
Paulo.





1
From a conversation with Mendes da Rocha on 30 April 2010. See also *Universidade de São Paulo: Faculdade de Arquitetura e Urbanismo. Anistia na FAUUSP. A reintegração dos professores cassados pelo AI-5* (São Paulo: FAU/USP, 1998), 19.

2
Artigas, Mendes da Rocha and Fábio Penteado were involved in the project, though Mendes da Rocha admits that it was essentially Artigas's work (from a conversation with Mendes da Rocha on 14 May 2010).

3
J. B. Vilanova Artigas, "Os caminhos da arquitetura moderna", in *Fundamentos*, 4/24 (January 1952), 20–25; reprinted in id., *Os caminhos da arquitetura moderna* (São Paulo: Cosac Naify, 2004), 49–50.

4
See A. P. Koury, *Crupo Arquitetura Nova: Flávio Imperio, Rodrigo Lefèvre, Sérgio Ferro* (São Paulo: EDUSP, 2003), 26; P. F. Arantes, *Arquitetura nova: Sérgio Ferro, Flávio Imperio e Rodrigo Levèvre, de Artigas aos mutirões* (São Paulo: Editora 34, 2002), 17, n. 19, for a bibliography on the subject.

responsible behaviour and awareness of others in its users. As such, it is an ideal place for "cohabitation".¹

Ironically enough, history decreed that the architect of this extraordinary building, intended as a place for cohabitation, would be banned from entering it for ten years, and that spaces designed to accommodate unforeseen uses ("where all activities are permissible", as Artigas often said) were kept under close surveillance by the military government.

However, it is the CECAP Zezinho Magalhães Prado housing complex in Guarulhos² (1967) that best illustrates the complexity of Artigas's strained relationship with the military government, because acceptance of the commission urged a resolute statement of principle on his part. He agreed to build what he believed in – and had long awaited the chance to build – even for the military government: a large-scale social housing complex for the economically disadvantaged that would make extensive use of prefabrication. The government's aim in committing to such a vast social housing programme may simply have been to win popular support. Be that as it may, Artigas agreed to play the game in the perhaps deluded belief that this might further his cause in some way.

Basically, this had been his attitude towards the reality of his situation over the previous twenty years. In "Os caminhos da arquitetura moderna" (1952), one of his most important articles, he asked: "What is to be done? Hope for a new society and go on doing what we do, or give up architecture, which is moving in directions hostile to the people, and devote oneself entirely to the revolutionary struggle?"

Meeting the radical implications of his question halfway, Artigas replied that both answers were unsatisfactory and proposed the interim solution of "a critical stance towards reality".³

According to a principle Artigas had shared with the official party line of the PCB, the transformation of society that architecture was committed to achieving depended on the contribution it made to the advancement of the country.⁴ However, the reality of the military takeover quickly disproved many of his earlier analyses: authoritarian rule had given rise to an "economic miracle", but as soon as the economic growth stopped the military dictatorship was thrown into crisis. Therefore, Artigas could hardly avoid questioning the cogency of his position.

Though not explicitly stated, these doubts seemed to surface at the start of the "O Desenho" lecture in March 1967 that marked his return to the FAU after his exile abroad and the period he spent in hiding in

Brazil. At this time he was gradually being ousted from the school whose building he had designed, though he was also beginning to receive work from the government. Dashing the hopes of his more radical students, who expected to hear fighting talk against the military regime, Artigas limited himself to expounding the various meanings of *desenho* and celebrating its apparent autonomy. Thus, *desenho* was a necessary tool in mediating between the project and the finished work, as well as a statement of “human intention, purpose and design in the spiritual sense” and “one of the concrete and necessary forms of human action in creating a properly human nature”.⁵

It is difficult to say if, or to what extent, his lecture may have been influenced by the presence of government informers in the audience, or by the need to toe the PCB line. What is certain, however, is that the “O desenho” lecture not only infuriated his young students but also publicly stated a course of action he had already expounded two years earlier: “Architecture lays claim to unrestricted freedom in terms of form, or rather, a freedom that overrides everything except the intrinsic logic of architecture as a form of art. As a tool for transforming the world, architecture has its own methods.”⁶

He had said precisely this in 1965, in an article published in the issue of *Acrópole* in which his pupils Sérgio Ferro, Flávio Imperio and Rodrigo Lefèvre had dissociated themselves from him,⁷ charging that his architecture was no more than a “luxury item” for the country’s elite designed to satisfy the latter’s need for self-representation. Though acknowledging the limitations of modern Brazilian architecture, Artigas attributed them to the country’s economic and political structure. He countered the uncompromisingly “maximalist” critique of the three young men with his distinctions, and their condemnation of architecture as being inevitably destined to become a product “of class” with a defence of architecture’s autonomy and, therefore, of its independence from the influence of heteronymous external contexts.

Had these words not been uttered by an intellectual who supposedly believed in historical materialism they would have raised few eyebrows. That architecture has its own non-heteronymous “methods” of “transforming the world” is something architects tend to believe on principle. But in 1965, on trial for his political views, irrespective of the excellence of his architecture, and with the FAU building, potentially an ideological and political manifesto, now under construction, Artigas dumbfounded his critics by asserting the autonomy of his architecture.

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See J. B. Vilanova Artigas, “O Desenho”, in *Revista do Instituto de Estudos Brasileiros* 3 (1968), 23–32; reprinted in id., *Os caminhos*, 108–118.

6

J. B. Vilanova Artigas, “Uma falsa crise”, in *Acrópole*, 319 (July 1965), 21–22; reprinted in id., *Os caminhos*, 102–107.

7

See S. Ferro, F. Imperio, and R. Lefèvre, “Arquitetura experimental”, in *Acrópole*, 319 (July 1965), 23–44, now in S. Ferro, *Arquitetura e trabalho livre*, ed. P. F. Arantes (São Paulo: Cosac Naify, 2006), 37–39.

This was also Artigas's declared aim in the Vila Alpina in Santo André: see *Vilanova Artigas*, ed. Instituto Lina Bo & P. M. Bardi / Fundação Vilanova Artigas (Lisbon: Blau, 1997), 170.

Artigas's only comment (cited in *Vilanova Artigas*, p. 194) was: "This pool complex became very important to me because of the social dimension the small changing-room facility eventually acquired. The mayor created a social cooperative with almost 7,000 members. It was moving to see how many people used the pool on hot days."

II

Dating from 1975, the *balneario* (pool complex) in Jaú offers a late but characteristic example of Artigas's output at that time. Though pensioned off from the FAU, he was extremely active as a practising architect. During Waldemar Bauab's term as mayor of Jaú (1973–77), Artigas had already completed or was still working on a vast array of projects, most notably the *rodoviária*, or bus station (1973).

His *balneario* intervention is on a very small scale. Basically, it consists of a swimming pool and a round building raised above ground level, joined by stone paving that encloses both in a mixtilinear perimeter. The most notable plastic feature is the staircase to the changing-rooms, which spirals around the tower that holds the water tank aloft, forming the hub of the entire composition.

Artigas clearly intended the swimming pool and changing-rooms, which are not simply juxtaposed, to function as interpenetrating elements within a single unified design. The building's ingenious structural system consists of two concentric rings of four pillars each supporting the changing-rooms, which itself forms a perfectly circular ring. The subtlety of the solution lies in the arrangement of the two rings of pillars, which are set at a 45° angle to each other instead of being radially aligned. This simple expedient enables structural features to be reduced to a minimum and avoids any sense of enclosure, literal or otherwise, in the ground-level area. The fact that the outside ring is unsupported at the friction point between the pool and changing-rooms allows the former to extend below the latter, resulting in a strong sense of interpenetration between the two, and in particular between the pool complex and its surroundings.⁸

Only a few years earlier, in the politically and programmatically inspired design of the FAU, this procedure of interpenetration between building and environments had achieved results of rare elegance and power. But what of a small sports centre built in Jaú during the military dictatorship?⁹

The anomalies do not end here. For example, the changing-room ring is a pure, absolute form, left entirely intact apart from the two doors to the men's and women's changing-rooms. The interior has been pared down to just two almost identical, equally unadorned changing-room areas that convey a peculiar sense of timelessness that is almost unique in the oeuvre of such a "committed" architect.

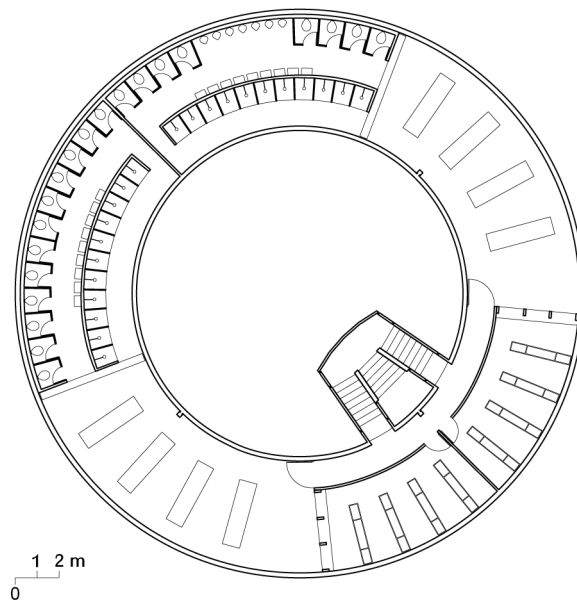
Clearly, the pool complex lacks the "bluntness" of many of his most successful designs. But as, and perhaps more than, in his other designs

of this period, like the Vila Alpina school in Santo André and the bus station in Jaú with its extraordinary and gratuitously over-the-top pillars, the pool complex epitomises the “unrestricted freedom in terms of form” and the “freedom that overrides everything except the intrinsic logic of architecture as a form of art” which Artigas had claimed as the prerogative of architecture in 1965.

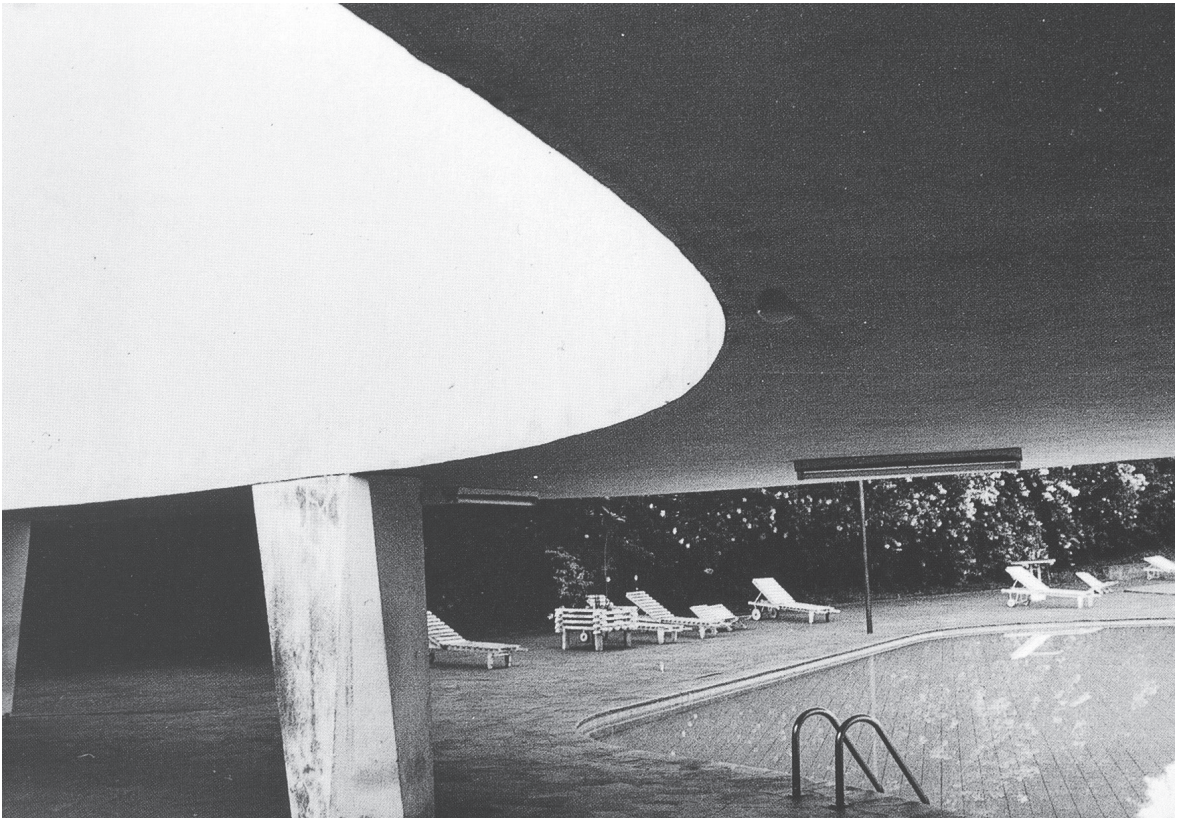
However, we still need to ask whether such a prerogative is even possible. Artigas clearly thought it was, and had actually said so – it is worth remembering – after the military had seized power. Without wishing to accuse him of lying, it seems reasonable to doubt his declarations.

This is best left as an open question, though doing so prevents us from understanding whether the Jaú pool complex marked a retreat in the face of a hostile regime that had denied the very *raison d'être* of his work, limiting him to something as (delightfully) “uncommitted” as a pool complex, or the exact opposite, a demonstration *tout court* that architecture can achieve relative autonomy even in decidedly hostile circumstances. The magical timelessness of the pool complex and its almost metaphysical nuances would suggest the former, and its understated playfulness, the latter. The truth is that the *balneario*, with the clarity of its compositional logic and the candour with which that logic was applied, continues to be enigmatic.

Plan of the *balneario* in Jaú.

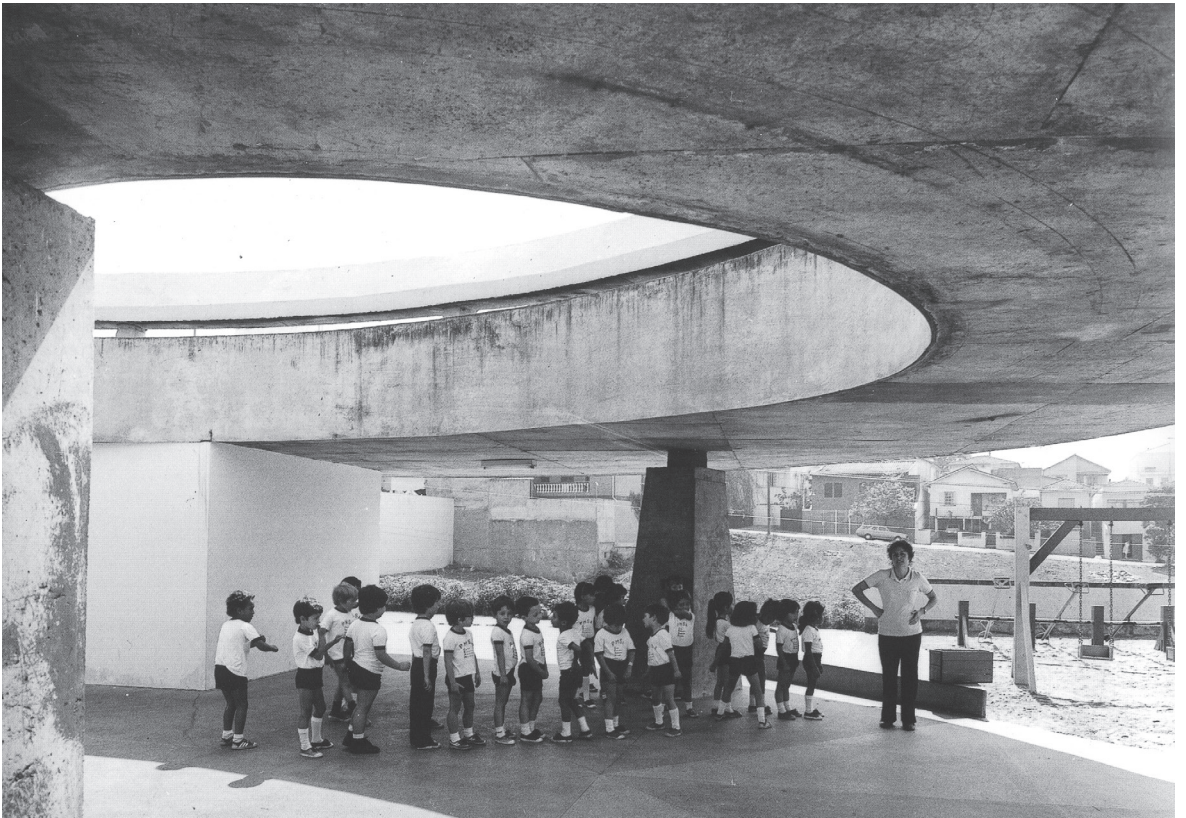


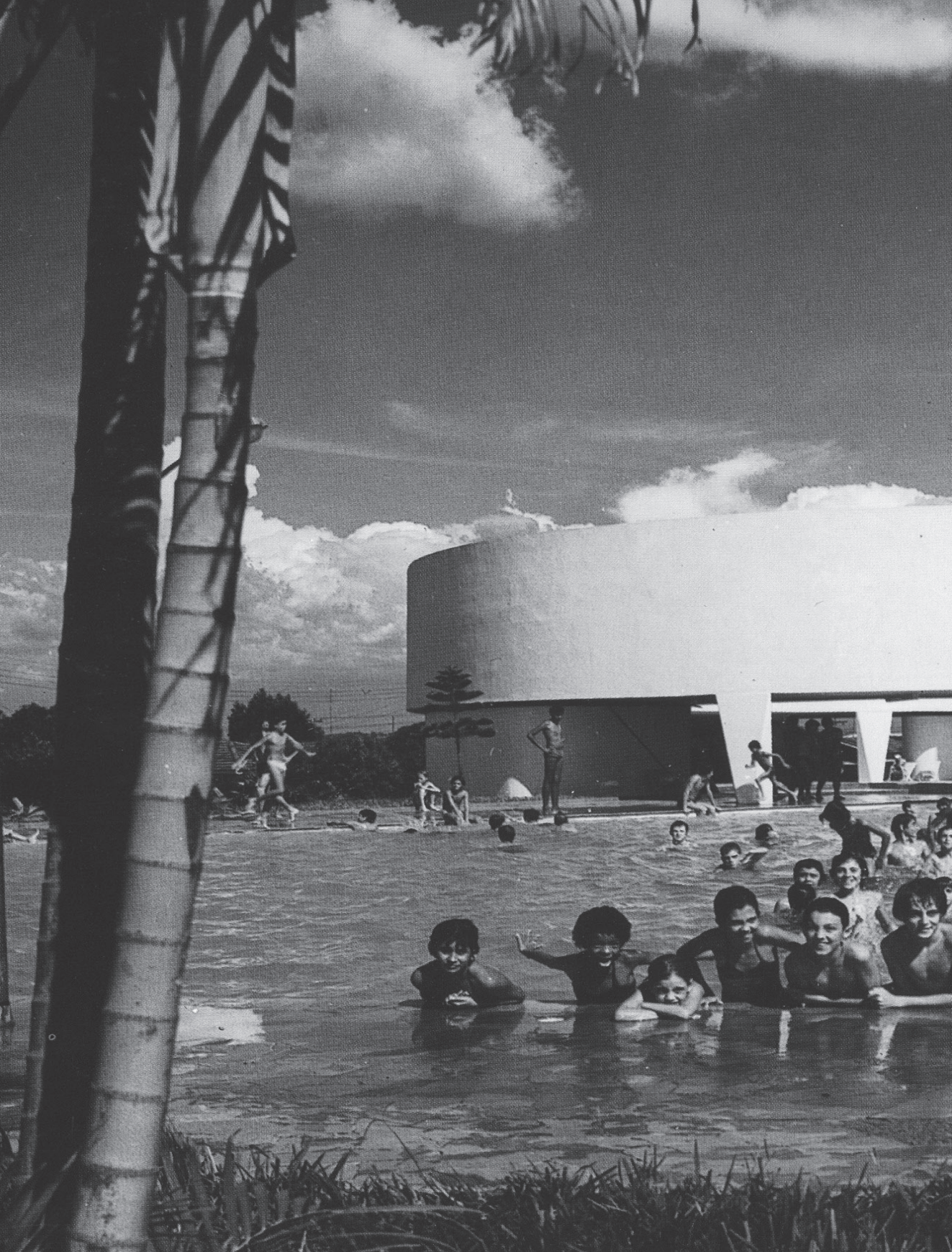
Changing-room and pool of
the *balneario* in Jaú.

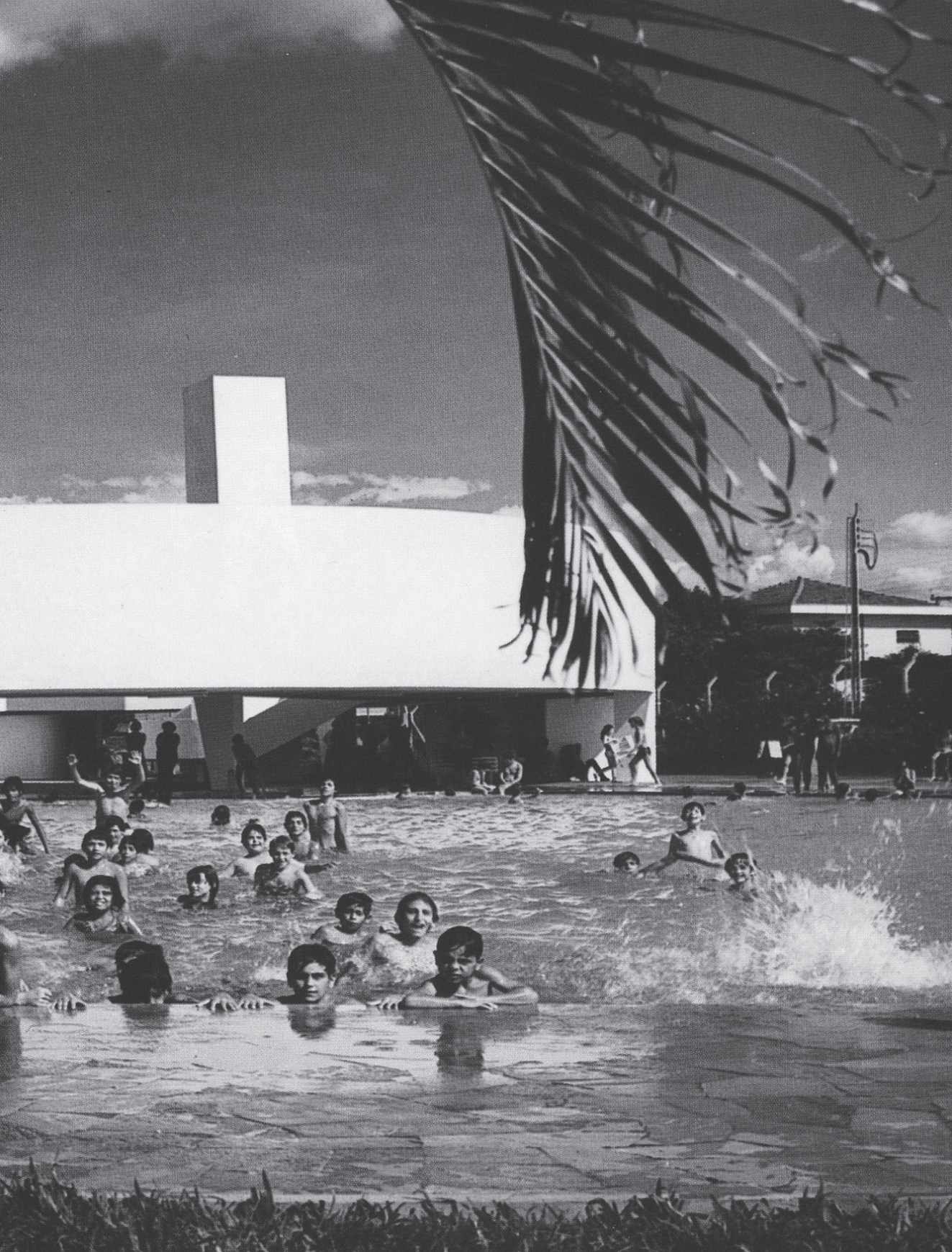


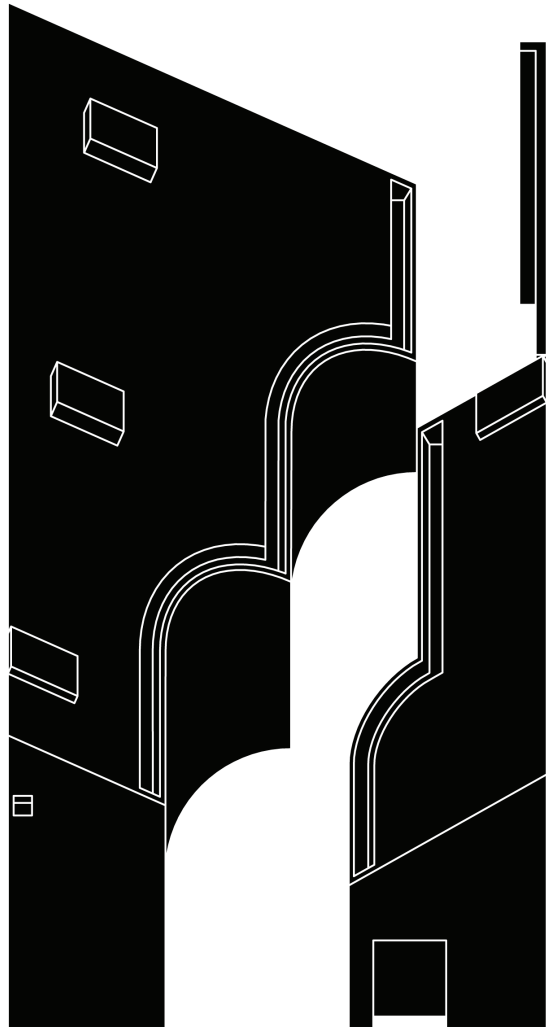
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balneario in Jaú.

Vila Alpina school in Santo
André (São Paulo).









IMI, IMI, MACHINE AND MORE

Freek Persyn

Imi Giese

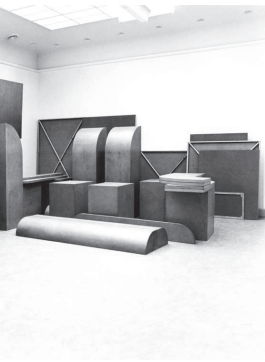
Browsing through a second-hand market in Berlin a few years ago, I came across a book on the German artist Imi Giese. It was being sold for 50 euro cents, and so I bought it without really thinking about it much. The book is very simple: it is an art publication, a catalogue of the artist's works. The works of art themselves are also very simple and slightly mathematical (or geometrical) in nature. All of the materials used to make these works of art are banal, or at least very ordinary. Some of the works are on A4 sheets of paper with bluish printed grids, which the artist used to perform counting operations using numbers. The paper used to produce these works is the kind one can find in any stationery shop. The forms printed on the sheets of paper (in other words, the digits) are in commonplace fonts – standard typewriting stuff. Although these elements are by now rather dated – no one uses a typewriter anymore, and graph paper has long since been replaced by CAD – the atmosphere of nostalgia they inspire is altogether unintentional, something acquired over the course of time. In essence, the works consist of ordinary paper bearing commonplace digits whose positions on the grid have been defined by simple counting operations: Giese inserted numbers within the squares of the grid by skipping the quantity of squares corresponding to each number's value. These counting operations – or mechanisms, so to speak – resulted in a form, a drawing comprised of numbers, and the conflict between the counting operation and the finite grid of the paper produces a tension between the two. It is a nonsensical tension, without apparent reason and without apparent result, but it is still something that

is there – something one can attempt to understand, though without success. The mental loop created (which hints at meaning but always escapes it) is a trap I fall into over and over again. In a way, the works are open-ended. They have no clear beginning or end; they are cyclical.

Imi Knoebel

Imi Giese had a friend called Imi Knoebel. This Imi is also a German artist, now more established and better known than the other. Some of his works can be found in famous collections around the world. The work I want to refer to here is called *Raum 19*, which was made in 1968. The oeuvres of the two Imis are intimately related: both artists have worked with prismatic objects, stark forms made of hardboard, with Giese rendering them more abstract by painting them in dark, uninviting colours and Knoebel leaving the smooth, fibred texture of the hardboard visible. These objects never stand alone: they are always part of a series. In addition, their form is not self-defined, for they are moulds. Knoebel worked in his studio, a large, almost monumental, classical space with high ceilings and tall arched windows, and the forms he employs in his work are derived from this space: windows were filled in, and then the infills were later removed. The forms that result from these operations almost seem like physical embodiments of memories. The fact that they relate to each other is no coincidence. First of all, there is the use of standardized building materials, the kind of stuff that is familiar to us from do-it-yourself hardware stores, such as wooden posts of standard sizes and hardboard panels, all of which are meant to be used as the basic materials for constructing any form one desires. In Knoebel's case, the materials are used as sparingly as possible, rendering everything in a muted colour palette of soft browns. The whole then becomes even more abstract, because the abstraction isn't emphasized in the same way as it is, for instance, in the sculptures of Sol LeWitt. The works are very matter-of-fact and present varying combinations. As they are installed and reinstalled (even by other artists), they show themselves to be less objects than possible sets of relations. Still, each feels like a whole: one clearly gets the sense that the forms are not random or isolated, but part of a system.

I cannot express it any better than Colin Lang has done in a text he wrote on the occasion of the reinstallation of *Raum 19* at the Henry Moore Institute in Leeds: "Knoebel eschews that 1960s allure of addressing his objects to some sentient body or cunning observer, and works instead to produce systems that announce simultaneously the inability,



Imi Knoebel:
Raum 19.

and inherent possibility, of producing new configurations of place. . . . Raum 19's intransigence – its refusal to address itself to an imaginary public or become a finished, idealized image of aesthetic reflection – speaks to a kind of autonomous social life of the object made manifest in each extant version of this work. Instead of providing a totality, or a critique of that totality, Knoebel presents us with a world in flux, a static object that acknowledges its own unfinishedness. Nothing could be timelier.”

Exactly as in the work of the other Imi, the system and set of relations that *Raum 19* engenders are open in terms of both their beginning and their end, like a machine designed to generate meaning.

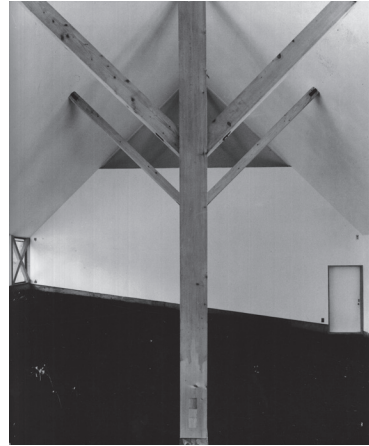
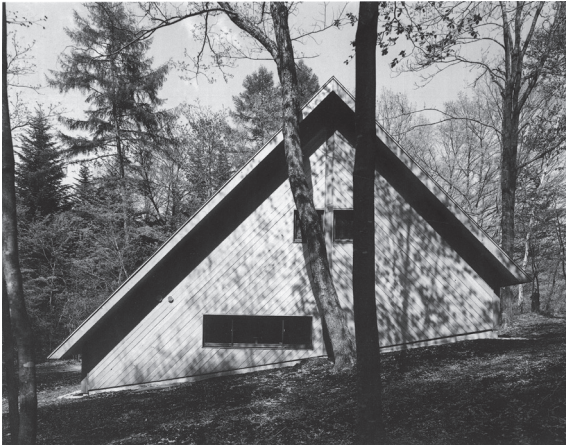
The Machine

In the oeuvre of Kazuo Shinohara, a Japanese architect who devoted himself almost exclusively to thinking about and building houses, the term “machine” has a very specific meaning. It doesn't refer to a specific aesthetic or imply increased efficiency. Instead, it suggests a kind of mechanical performance, not in a literal way, as in that a building moves or rotates or changes, but rather in terms of what the house sparks in the brains of its users; the term comes to signify an operation that is initiated, or a mechanism that is put into action and produces a result.

From the Tanikawa House of 1974 on, Shinohara has designed a series of houses that perform very much like the work of the two Imis. Stylistically, all of his houses are rather unrelated. Unlike his previous work, which Shinohara himself consciously categorized in different periods or styles, his work after the Tanikawa House focuses less on a predefined form and more on that form's performance. As a result, the forms of the houses are more varied, each one becoming more singular, and the link between them more latent.

The link between Imi, Imi and Kazuo is twofold. First of all, while the method they employ is rational, the resulting products are not. The strongest feature of their work – which I would almost say is its goal – is to be irrational. Secondly, although their work is highly formal, its most intriguing aspect is not its form, as such. Rather, it is what the form *does*: namely, installing a set of relations that is inherently unstable and almost contradictory. It is something impossible to grasp intellectually, something that one can only *experience*; it is simultaneously fleeting, dynamic and static.

All of this is very strikingly evident in the Tanikawa House, where the

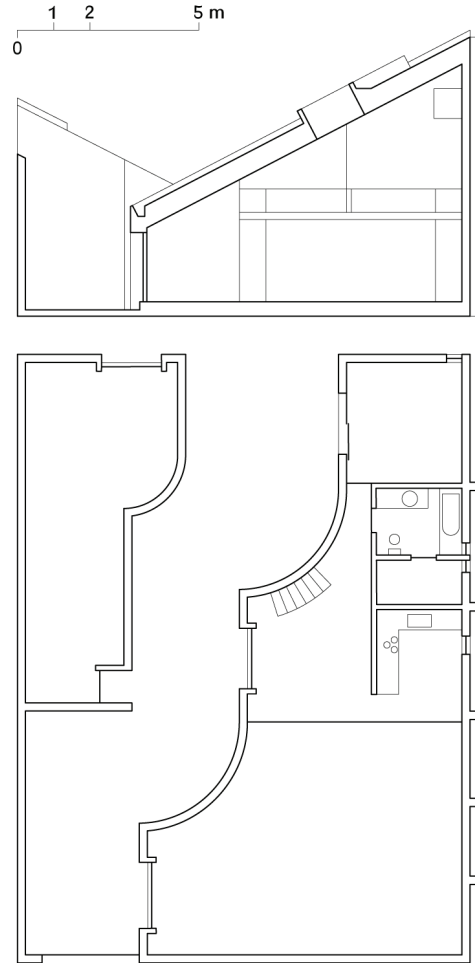


Tanikawa House.

roof and the floor are of two different worlds. The roof is inclined at a 45° angle, the most generic form a roof can take. It is not abstracted, but rather thought through as a constructed element. The load-bearing elements of the structure are engineered and optimized: the spans are reduced by secondary supports, the joints show a level of craftsmanship on the detailing and the eaves protrude and enhance the traditional character of the classic roof. The roof is not an image: it is itself, defining a space through its tectonic presence. The floor, on the other hand, is unrelated to the roof; it has a logic of its own. The floor basically follows the slope of the terrain and is of a completely different scale than the roof. The reason for the slope is that the site has a hill, a landscape element characteristic of the region of a much grander scale. The floor is thus the hill coming inside the house, remaining unchanged and then continuing on its way out the other side. The house is comprised of two things: the roof and the floor. Both are completely comprehensible, but they don't match. Each element has a clear focal point, but these are obviously different. As in Giese's mathematical calculations or the unfinished character of Knoebel's *Raum 19*, the friction between the two elements in Shinohara's design is not resolved. Both floor and roof are static systems, finite in themselves, and their coexistence creates a dynamic that never concludes or comes to an end. Their pairing creates a space that lacks a single centre. This inability to grasp the space as a unified whole – something that the quote above associated with *Raum 19* – is precisely the condition which allows the roof and the floor to produce what Colin Lang called “new configurations of place”.

Among the designs made by Shinohara in his “machine period”, there is one that is overshadowed by the stunning iconography of projects like the Tanikawa House or the house he designed in Uehara. This project was built in 1975 and is known as “the house in Karuizawa”. It is the only project by Shinohara that I know of which cannot be defined as a single object. Comprised of a house and a studio space, the project is set up as a pairing of two distinct parts. Formally, the buildings are closely related, for both have contours defined by corners that are alternately rounded or sharp. The gallery is a small, oblong space, 10 metres in length and characterized on the inside by a concave shape at one end, while the house is considerably larger, being a 10-by-18-metre square with two convex corners. Each has a pitched roof, but the roofs point outwards in opposite directions, a design choice that stresses their respective singularity: they are two, not one. Together they constitute a square plan of 13 by 18 metres with a void running through the middle. This void is what makes the project exciting. It has two open ends and is defined by the convex and concave shapes of the two small buildings on either side of it. Although essentially a leftover space, this empty area is the element of the design that has the most striking impact. As a result, one could say that the project contains not two spaces but three. The way these are designed creates a balance and makes them interdependent. The inside spaces achieve their clarity and autonomy thanks to the large, sloping roofs, for the planes of these roofs meet the irregular floor plan in such a way as to form a single unified space. At first sight, the house and the studio are undoubtedly perceived as distinct spaces (large containers, so to speak), but due to the peculiar combination of the sloping roof and the irregular floor plan, inside a sense of different scales and atmospheres is suggested. At some moments the space feels overpowering and monumental, and at others, intimate and small. Both interiors, completely rendered in white with reflecting marble floors, are worlds unto themselves: in their abstraction, they generate a complexity of size and scale that allows for the idiosyncrasies inherent in the programme of use of any house or studio.

The third space – the one outside – is made with completely different materials: it has rough, exposed concrete walls and the floor is paved in natural stone. Contrary to the inside, this space feels natural and tangible. However, while it is constructed using different means than the interior, it nonetheless functions in a surprisingly similar way. The varying heights of the walls and the meandering shape of



Karuizawa House: plan and section.

the floor plan create a set of differences within the design's central void, thereby giving it a sense of intimacy not usually associated with the average patio. The space changes its character from monumental to informal: sometimes it is open to the street, but it also has hidden corners as well, and all of this transpires in a space that clearly feels like a harmonious whole.

Comparable to the design strategy of the Tanikawa House, the house in Karuizawa can be read as two discrete systems: the walls and the roofs. It is the continuous confrontation of these two distinct systems that produces the open-ended space in which one lives. Unlike the Tanikawa House, the two systems in the Karuizawa design are not absolute. The floor plans are more interdependent than self-

defined, and the roofs slope in quite random directions rather than being centralized. Both systems have a casual air about them: they are matter-of-fact in a way that is similar to works of art by the two Imis. Most interestingly, their unassuming quality creates a set of relations which is multiple and diverse. The spatial and formal relations created – almost in an automatic way – generate a house that is neither neutral nor completely predefined. The house in Karuizawa is like a machine that only functions when it is appropriated and put to use.

I believe the strategy applied in the house in Karuizawa could be a powerful tool in today's society, which is always offering less and less stability. People are becoming increasingly aware that their identity is not singular, but multiple and diverse: national identity is losing its clarity, the city is losing its clarity, families are losing their clarity, and the houses we live in are losing their clarity . . . Too often, the system in which we operate is confused with other systems. Today's society cannot be read or experienced as a single system; instead, we are always forced to relate to and interact with several systems at once. It is the metropolis without density. In this unstable climate, today's architects and clients both seek refuge in the creation of objects. It would seem that the identifiable object is the only thing that can generate a reassuring clarity, as if its visual presence can offer stability. Buildings are being designed in a multitude of ways – with funny angles, graphic patterns, curved façades, tapered corners, swerving lines or graphic logos. The toolbox used to create architectural objects is expanding more and more by the minute; architects strive to provide each of their objects with an individual identity, using whatever means necessary.

The most obvious reaction to exaggerated creativity in the design of objects is to attack the toolbox: instead of funny angles or curved façades, we should return to the realm of the pure form, the generic façade and recognizable building components. This strategy is based on the belief that exercising restraint in the use of materials, shapes and forms will eventually lead to a higher level of clarity (and maybe a more transcendental one?). All things considered, it seems unlikely that stylistic purity will save us; offering a choice between a slick object and a pure one hardly seems like offering a choice at all. At most, this discussion distracts us from the issues that are really at stake, for the current tendency to focus on the object seems counterproductive. In a frenetic attempt to provide clarity, things are becoming even more clouded; with every self-centred object we add, the overall space of the metropolis becomes increasingly confused.

In all its mute beauty, the house in Karuizawa hints at another approach, one that focuses not on the object, but on the set of relationships that are created between objects. The most striking aspect of the design is that the house is able to do achieve this without making explicit references to the architectural past. Shinohara's design does not display a typological approach: the spaces that are made do not relate back to pre-existing models or make a recognizable reference to other things we know. Their scale and finish makes the spaces hard to grasp, because they seem undefined and open in their use. Nevertheless, the house's uninhibited use of the language of architecture succeeds in producing a set of spaces that, while they may not begin as such, have a clear potential to *become meaningful*. What Colin Lang said about Imi Knoebel's work can thus read almost like a mission statement for the spaces of the house in Karuizawa: "they are static objects that acknowledge their own unfinishedness", not in a material sense, but in terms of their meaning. As in the work of Giese and Knoebel, the friction between the elements in Shinohara's house is not resolved. Translating into architectural terms what has been said about the two artists' work, one could say that the house in Karuizawa works on different scales, and that the simultaneous coexistence of these scales has the inherent possibility of producing new configurations of space.

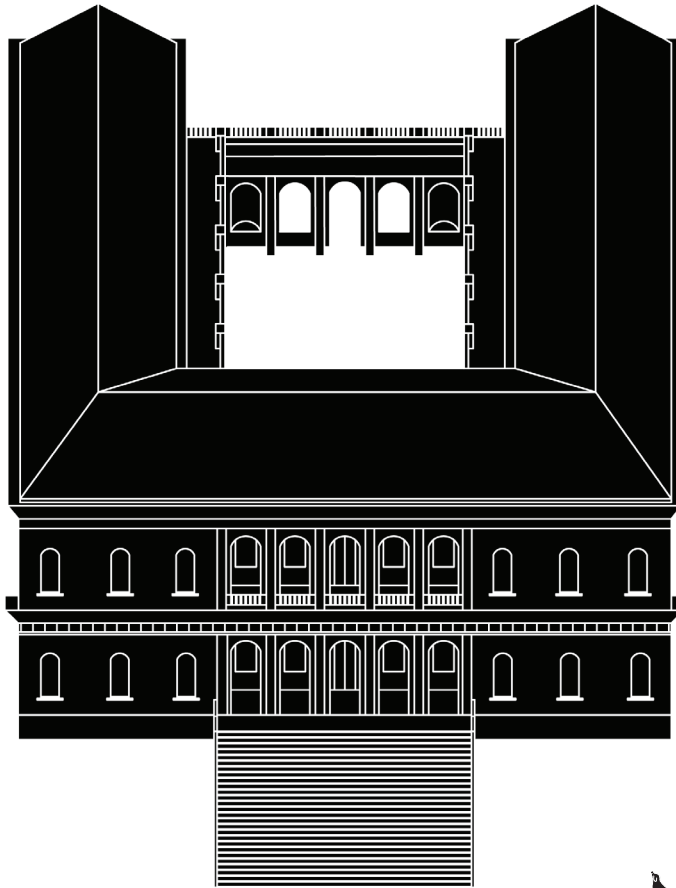
In the metropolis without density, where the relationship between different components is often unclear, I believe this strategy of attempting to make an architecture that produces relations, even if these relations are generated automatically and initially meaningless, to be a useful one.

There is no place where the multiplicity of scales and systems has as wide a range as in the metropolis without density, and no other territory offers as much friction between so many systems at once; the potential one can harness in the context of the metropolis seems limitless. The house in Karuizawa allows us to think about what would happen if, instead of focusing on objects, we were to try to develop an eye for the relationships that can form between them. The house in Karuizawa proposes thinking about buildings not as finite objects but as machines for generating meaning. The sites of appropriation they produce and the open-ended potential of these would surely spark things we can neither foresee nor imagine.

If we choose to look at things this way, we might even, in the end, produce meaningful space.

THIRTEEN NOTES ON THE VILLA GARZONI

Pier Paolo Tamburelli
pictures by Bas Princen



I

The visitor who enters the Villa Garzoni walks up a monumental staircase, steps under a loggia, crosses a wall, passes through a portico and eventually arrives in a courtyard. The courtyard is separated from the fields behind the villa by a wall. On the main axis of

the villa there is not a single room. The rooms on the two sides are separated from each other (in order to go from one room to the other, Mr. Garzoni actually needed to *exit* the building).

II

Of an overall footprint of approximately 1,700 square metres, more than 1,000 are either loggias, stairs, courtyards or porticoes. Therefore, 60% of the Villa Garzoni is a void.

III

The excessive amount of void enclosed within the building makes the Villa Garzoni appear fake. It seems like four lonely façades standing in the middle of the fog, or emptiness protected by screens.

IV

The Villa Garzoni is set on a podium in order to raise it up from the damp of the marshy terrain. As a result, the courtyard is some two metres higher than the surrounding fields. A wall with two niches and three windows encloses the courtyard towards the back of the villa. Seen from the courtyard, the agricultural landscape looks unreal (just as the villa looks unreal when seen from the fields).

V

Jacopo Sansovino built the villa for Alvise Garzoni in Pontecasale (near Padua) around 1540. It is a villa dropped into a swamp, built in a time of lost wars and economic crisis. The once mercantile Venetian aristocracy, after the discovery of the Atlantic routes and the reorganization of international trade, settled in the countryside and invested its capital in landed estates. This shift was directly connected with a specific architectural object: the Palladian villa. Palladio confronted this depressive economic turn with a complete package of architectural optimism. The Palladian villa was intended as the source of a

new rational agricultural production, and it was a tool for the reorganization of an entire landscape.

VI

In his 1972 monograph on Sansovino, Manfredo Tafuri points out that “[u]ntil Palladio arrived at the correct formula that distilled the particularity of each client’s project into a general typology, the villas designed by Giulio Romano (the Villa della Torre in Fumane), Sanmicheli (the Villa Soranza, and maybe the Villa Nogarola in Avesa), Falconetto (the Villa dei Vescovi in Luvigliano) and Sansovino tended to focus not on responding to their patrons’ specific projects by seeking a more general solution, but rather on exalting the individuality of each design, which they perceived, in a chivalric sense, as being heroic in nature.”

In fact, there is a *chivalric* tone in the Villa Garzoni; Sansovino’s solution is *proudly* absurd.

VII

The Villa Garzoni does not try to organize agricultural production; it simply imposes an abstract geometry without any consequences for its surroundings. The building’s only relationship with the fields is a formal one: the excessive (and almost offensive) horizontality of the façade echoes the fog and the flat landscape. The Villa Garzoni remains an “urban type” lost in the countryside. There is no connection between the building and the fields that surround it. What is metropolitan stays metropolitan; what is agricultural remains agricultural. The monumental steps brutally collide with the plain like the bow of a stranded battleship.

In contrast with the optimism of Palladio’s villas, Sansovino’s Villa Garzoni is a failure from the beginning. Yet Sansovino, in his sarcastic way, seems to be more honest than Palladio: the Villa Garzoni looks as lost as the Venetian Republic was in the days of its construction.

VIII

Tafuri, of course, sees the isolation of the villa as a representation of the distance that “separates the subject from the object of exploitation”. And perhaps this time he is right. Still, Marxism in this context sounds ironically consolatory for the desperate Venetian elite that commissioned villas in the sixteenth century.

IX

“Sansovino’s villa in Pontecasale, on the other hand, was something apart. Away in the Adige delta, soaked by rain and fog and battered by sun, it represented a beautiful aberration in the evolution of architecture that was to have no progeny. Sansovino envisaged the country villa that he built for the Garzoni family in the later 1540s as a rural palace of noble dimensions. Like the other villas in the Venetian tradition, it has the familiar central loggia and side blocks, but it is somehow too aulic for the country, like a Doge at a swimming hole.”

James S. Ackerman, *Palladio*
(Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1966)

X

Ackermann is right as well. The villa of Alvise Garzoni is a failure, and in many ways. Yet the Villa Garzoni is not a simple failure, or even a plain mistake. It is an exercise in failure, an episode of a larger human *art of failure* (something like an *art of fugue*). The Villa Garzoni reminds us that architecture is always unable to solve problems. The sympathy between the villa and its inhabitants (and human beings in general) is a sympathy based on failure, on the common and laughable human tendency towards failure, isolation and despair.

XI

The proud, seemingly endless, oversimplified Doric frieze and the exaggerated staircase in front of the

villa declare the violent innocence of the client’s ambition and the perfect sense of humour of the building’s architect. The villa’s inherent emptiness and its crude, ostentatious classicism are the direct expression of these parallel intentions. There is a desire to settle, to establish an idea of virtue, to stage a lifestyle, to adhere to a standard that suddenly appears necessary. And all of this was unattainable from the start, impossible precisely because of the violence of this desire. The architect was somehow indifferent to this particular ambition and yet simultaneously prisoner of another kind of ambition, and of defeat. The villa remains there, hostile and confrontational, yet childish and somehow sweet. Alvise Garzoni embraced the lost cause of monumental architecture with the stubborn enthusiasm of a Trojan or a Confederate soldier. The architect seems to have been less convinced. Contrary to Palladio, Sansovino does not seem to share the ideals of his clients. The Villa Garzoni oscillates between extreme commitment and extreme detachment. Here, innocence and cynicism coincide in a product with no possible use.

XII

The Villa Garzoni comes from the same wild innocence that William Faulkner attributes to Colonel Thomas Sutpen’s home in his novel *Absalom, Absalom!* of 1936. In both cases the villa is just a mechanism for the attainment of status, and in both cases the villa fails to bestow this status. In both cases the house remains a ruin in the middle of a marshy plain, and in both cases the architect is a great one (Faulkner states very precisely that the French architect hired by Sutpen “was a good architect. . . . And not only an architect as General Compson said, but an artist since only an artist could have borne those two years in order to build a house which he doubtless not only expected but firmly intended never to see again. . . . [O]nly an artist could have borne Sutpen’s ruthlessness and hurry and still manage to curb the dream of grim and

castle-like magnificence at which Sutpen obviously aimed, since the place as Sutpen planned it would have been almost as large as Jefferson itself at the time; that the little grim harried foreigner had singlehanded given battle to and vanquished Sutpen's fierce and overweening vanity or desire for magnificence or for vindication or whatever it was . . . and so created of Sutpen's very defeat the victory which, in conquering, Sutpen himself would have failed to gain."

XIII

While hunting down the French architect who had tried to escape from the construction site of what was supposed to become Sutpen's monumental house, the Colonel recounts his childhood and his activities in the West Indies. The narration of the building of the house (of its construction and of the French architect's unsuccessful attempt to escape from it) and that of Colonel Sutpen's personal history coincide. The house is in fact the main tool of the *entire plan and design* which Colonel Sutpen developed as an instinctive reaction when he *discovered innocence* (or actually discovered that "there existed all the objects to be wanted which there were, or that the ones who owned the objects not only could look down on the ones that didn't, but could be supported in the down-looking not only by the others who owned objects but by the very ones that were looked down on that didn't own objects and knew they never would"). The house and the architecture of the house (demanding the knowledge and the work of the French architect) are in fact essential to *the entire plan and design* ("I had a design. To accomplish it I should require money, a house, a plantation, slaves, a family"). The house belongs to *the entire plan and design* of Colonel Sutpen as a tool of oppression (and architecture belongs to the plan as a science of oppression), an oppression that, according to his *innocence*, is the instinctive answer to the very oppression that the house is meant to overcome. In fact, "His trouble was innocence. All

of a sudden he discovered, not what he wanted to do but what he just had to do, had to do it whether he wanted to or not, because if he did not do it he knew that he could never live with himself for the rest of his life, never live with what all the men and women that had died to make him had left inside of him for him to pass on, with all the dead ones waiting and watching to see if he was going to do it right, fix things right so that he would be able to look in the face not only the old dead ones but all the living ones that would come after him when he would be one of the dead."

What follows are excerpts from the story of the French architect's escape from Colonel Sutpen's construction site on the plantation of Sutpen's Hundred, Yoknapatawpha, Mississippi, which is recounted in chapter seven of Faulkner's Absalom, Absalom!:

"He told Grandfather about it," he said. "That time when the architect escaped, tried to, tried to escape into the river bottom and go back to New Orleans or wherever it was and he . . . sent word in to Grandfather and some others and got his dogs and his wild niggers out and hunted the architect down and made him take earth in a cave under the river bank two days later. That was in the second summer, when they had finished all the brick and had the foundations laid and most of the big timbers cut and trimmed, and one day the architect couldn't stand it anymore or he was afraid he would starve or that the wild niggers (and maybe Colonel Sutpen too) would run out of grub and eat him or maybe he got homesick or maybe he just had to go -" ("Maybe he had a girl," Shreve said. "Or maybe he just wanted a girl. You said the demon and the niggers didn't have but two." . . .) " - and so he went.



He seemed to vanish in broad daylight, right out from the middle of twenty-one people. Or maybe it was just Sutpen's back that was turned, and that the niggers saw him go and didn't think it needed mentioning; that being wild men they probably didn't know what Sutpen himself was up to and him naked in the mud with them all day. So I reckon they never did know what the architect was there for, supposed to do or had done or could do or was, so maybe they thought Sutpen had sent him, told him to go away and drown himself, go away and die, or maybe just go away. So he did, jumped up in broad daylight, in his embroidered vest and Fauntleroy tie and a hat like a Baptist congressman and probably carrying the hat in his hand, and ran into the swamp and the niggers watched him out of sight and then went back to work and Sutpen didn't see it, didn't even miss him until night, sup-

per time probably, and the niggers told him and he declared a holiday tomorrow because he would have to get out and borrow some dogs. Not that he would have needed dogs, with his niggers to trail, but maybe he thought that the guests, the others, would not be used to trailing with niggers and would expect dogs. And Grandfather (he was young then too) brought some champagne and some of the others brought whiskey and they began to gather out there a little after sundown, at his house that didn't even have walls yet, that wasn't anything yet but some lines of bricks sunk into the ground but that was all right because they didn't go to bed anyhow, Grandfather said, they just sat around the fire with the champagne and the whiskey and a quarter of the last venison he had killed, and about midnight the man with the dogs came. Then it was daylight and the dogs had a little trou-

ble at first because some of the wild niggers had run out about a mile of the trail just for fun. But they got the trail straightened at last, the dogs and the niggers in the bottom and most of the men riding along the edge of it where the going was good. But Grandfather and Colonel Sutpen went with the dogs and the niggers because Sutpen was afraid the niggers might catch the architect before he could reach them. He and Grandfather had to walk a good deal, sending one of the niggers to lead the horses on around the bad places until they could ride again. Grandfather said it was fine weather and the trail lay pretty good but he said it would have been fine if the architect had just waited until October or November. And so he told Grandfather something about it. . . . He and Grandfather were sitting on a log now because the dogs have faulted. That is, they had treed - a tree

from which he (the architect) could not have escaped yet which he had undoubtedly mounted because they found the sapling pole with his suspenders still knotted about one end of it that he had used to climb the tree though at first they could not understand why the suspenders and it was three hours before they comprehended that the architect had used architecture, physics, to elude them as a man always falls back upon what he knows best in a crisis - the murder upon murder, the thief thieving, the liar lying. He (the architect) knew about the wild negroes even if he couldn't have known that Sutpen would get dogs; he had chosen that tree and hauled that pole up after him and calculated stress and distance and trajectory and had crossed a gap to the nearest tree that a flying squirrel could not have crossed and traveled from there on from tree to tree for almost half a



mile before he put foot on the ground again. It was three hours before one of the wild niggers (the dogs wouldn't leave the tree; they said he was in it) found where he had come down. . . . It was late afternoon before they caught him – the architect I mean – and then only because he had hurt his leg trying to architect himself across the river. But he made a mistake in the calculation this time so the dogs and the niggers bayed him and the niggers making the racket now (Grandfather said how maybe the niggers believed that by

fleeing the architect had voluntarily surrendered his status as interdict meat, had voluntarily offered the gambit by fleeing, which the niggers had accepted by chasing him and won by catching him, and that they now would be allowed to cook and eat him, both victors and vanquished accepting this in the same spirit of sport and sportsmanship and no rancor or hard feelings on either side) as they hauled him out (all the men who had started the race yesterday had come back except three, and the ones that returned had brought others,

so there were more of them now than when the race started, Grandfather said) – hauled him out of his cave under the river bank: a little man with one sleeve missing from his frock coat and his flowered vest ruined by water and mud where he had fallen onto the river and one pant leg ripped down so they could see where he had tied up his leg with a piece of his shirt tail and the rag bloody and the leg swollen, and his hat was completely gone. They never did find it so Grandfather gave him a new hat the day he left when the house was fin-

ished. It was in Grandfather's office and Grandfather said the architect took the new hat and looked at it and burst into tears. – a little harried wild-faced man with two-days' stubble of beard, who came out of the cave fighting like a wildcat, hurt leg and all, with the dogs barking and the niggers whooping and hollering with deadly and merry anticipation, like they were under the impression that since the race had lasted more than twenty-four hours the rules would be automatically abrogated and they would not have



to wait to cook him until Sutpen waded in with a short stick and beat niggers and dogs all away, leaving the architect standing there, not scared worth a damn either, just panting a little and Grandfather said a little sick in the face where the niggers had mishandled his leg in the heat of the capture, and making them a speech in French, a long one and so fast that Grandfather said probably another Frenchman could not have understood all of it. But it sounded fine; Grandfather said even he – all of them –

could tell that the architect was not apologizing; it was fine, Grandfather said, and he said how Sutpen turned toward him but he (Grandfather) was already approaching the architect, holding out the bottle of whiskey already uncorked. And Grandfather saw the eyes in the gaunt face, the eyes desperate and hopeless but indomitable too, invincible too, not beaten yet by a damn sight Grandfather said, and all that fifty-odd hours of dark and swamp and sleeplessness and fatigue and no grub and nowhere to go and no hope of get-

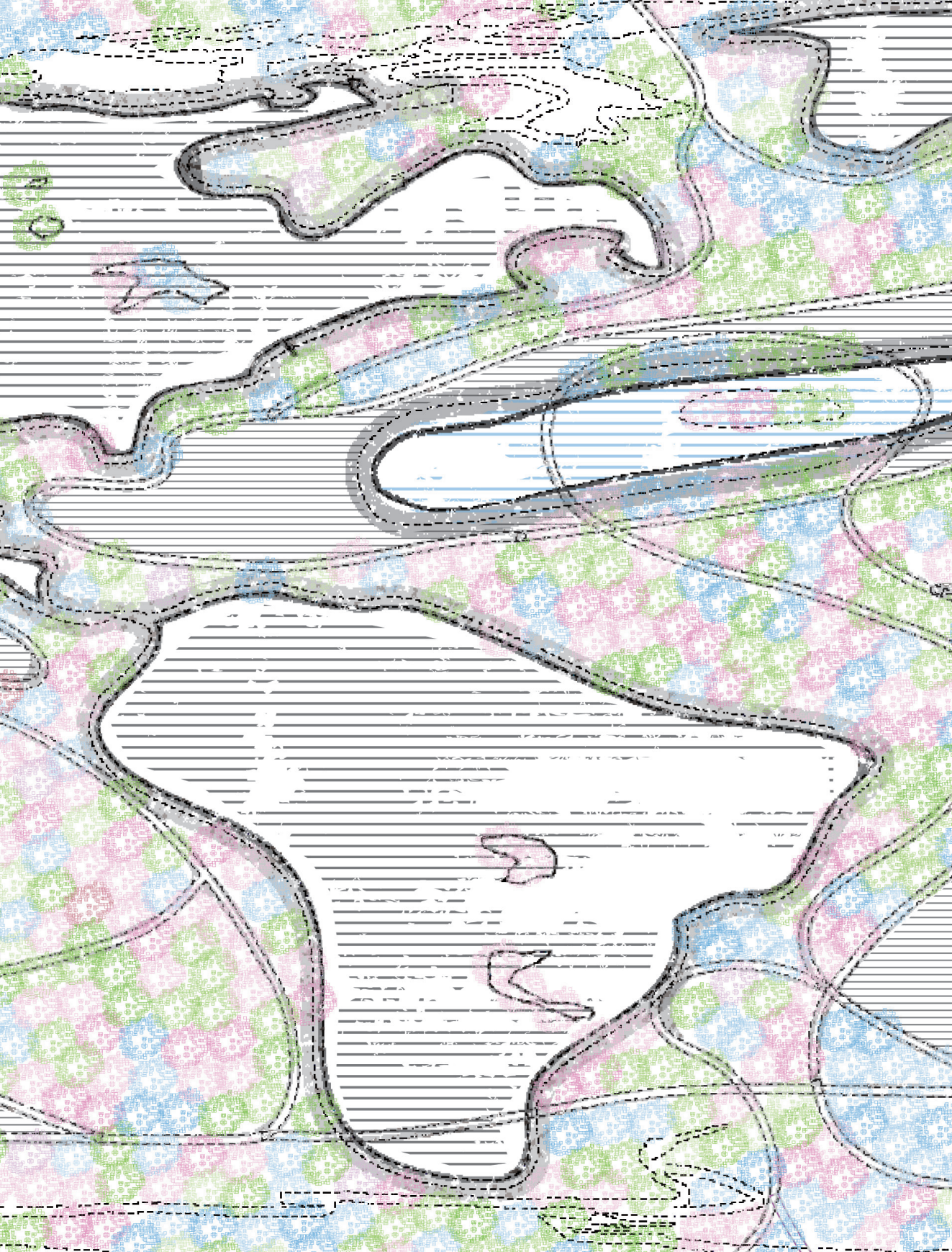
ting there: just a will to endure and a foreknowing of defeat but not beat yet by a damn sight: and he took the bottle in one of his little dirty coon-like hands and raised the other hand and even fumbled about his head for a second before he remembered that the hat was gone, then flung the hand up in a gesture that Grandfather said you simply could not describe, that seemed to gather all misfortune and defeat that the human race ever suffered into a little pinch in his fingers like dust and fling it backward over his

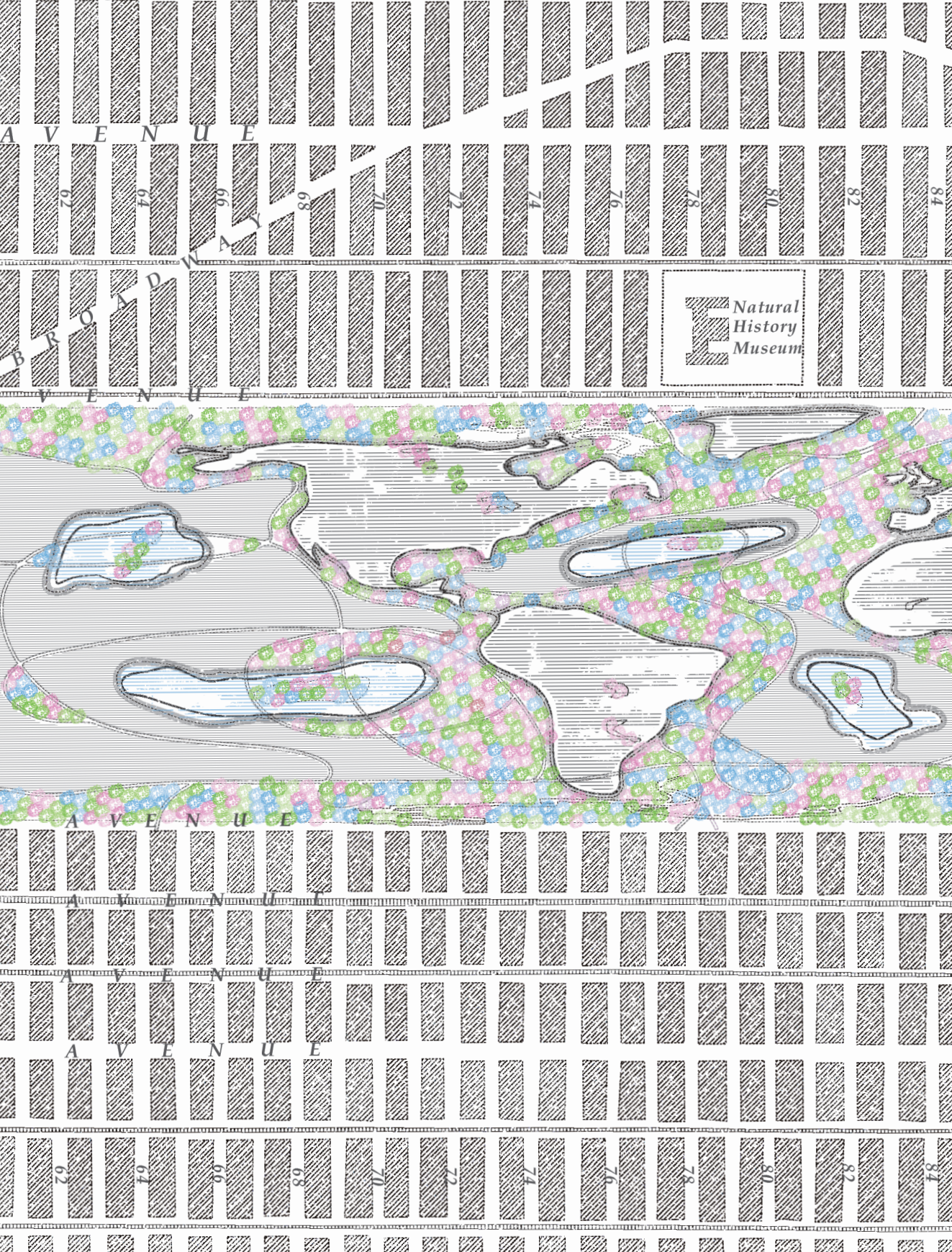
head, and raised the bottle and bowed first to Grandfather then to all the other men sitting their horses in a circle and looking at him, and then he took not only the first drink of neat whiskey he ever took in his life but the drink of it that he could no more have conceived himself taking than the Brahmin can believe that the situation can conceivably arise in which he will eat dog.

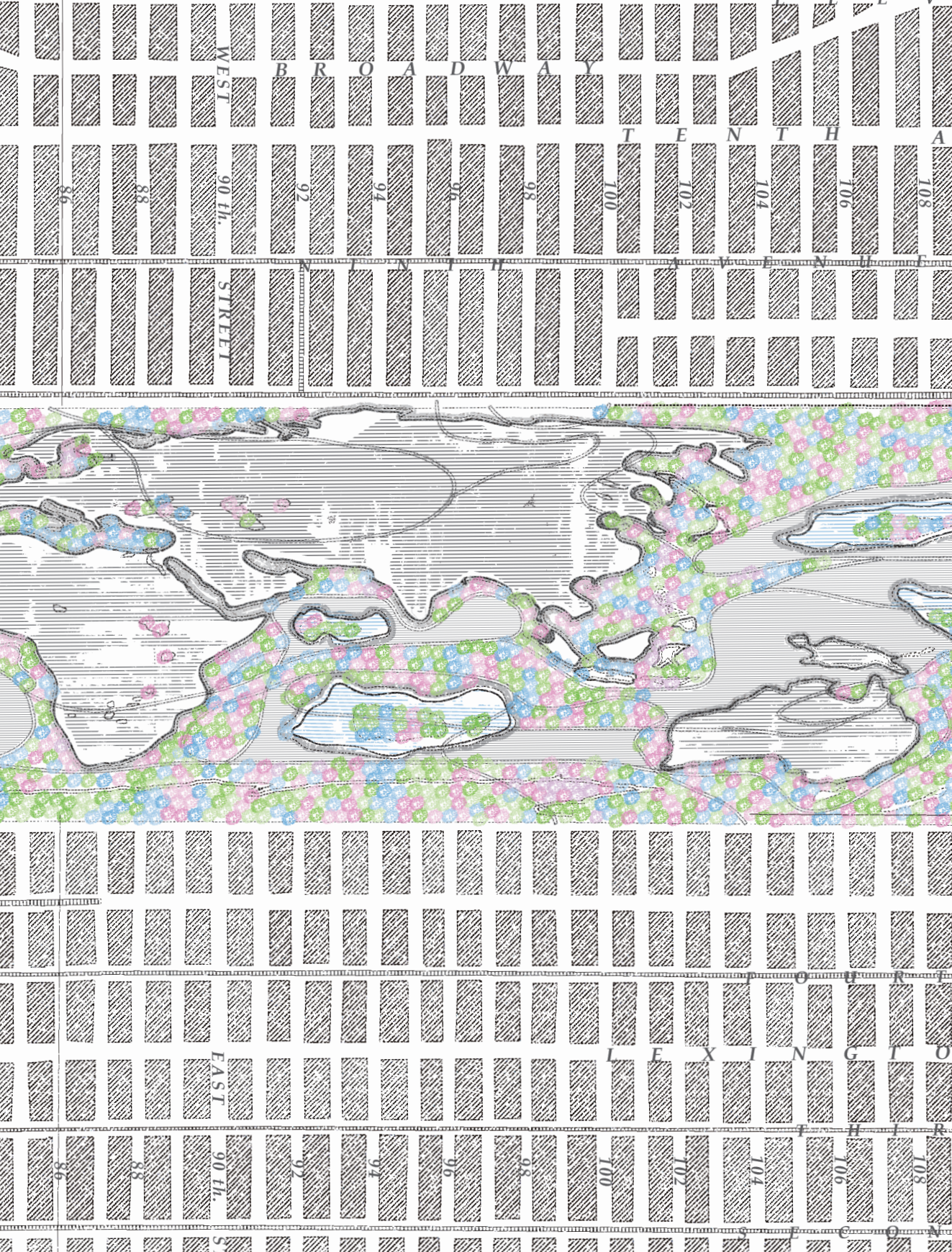
A PARK IN THE SHAPE OF THE WORLD

YellowOffice

On 21 April 1858 the *New York Daily Times* (later the *New York Times*) reported, with some perplexity, that thirty-three entries had been submitted for the Central Park competition. Among these, one of the entries proposed organizing the new park as a sort of miniature of the globe. Although the entry and the identity of its author were thought to have been lost, YellowOffice recently rediscovered the proposal and identified the man behind it. For the first time ever, the project's original drawings, as well as a short biography of their unlucky author, appear here on the pages that follow.







WEST

B R O A D W A Y

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STREET

EAST

L E X I N G T O N

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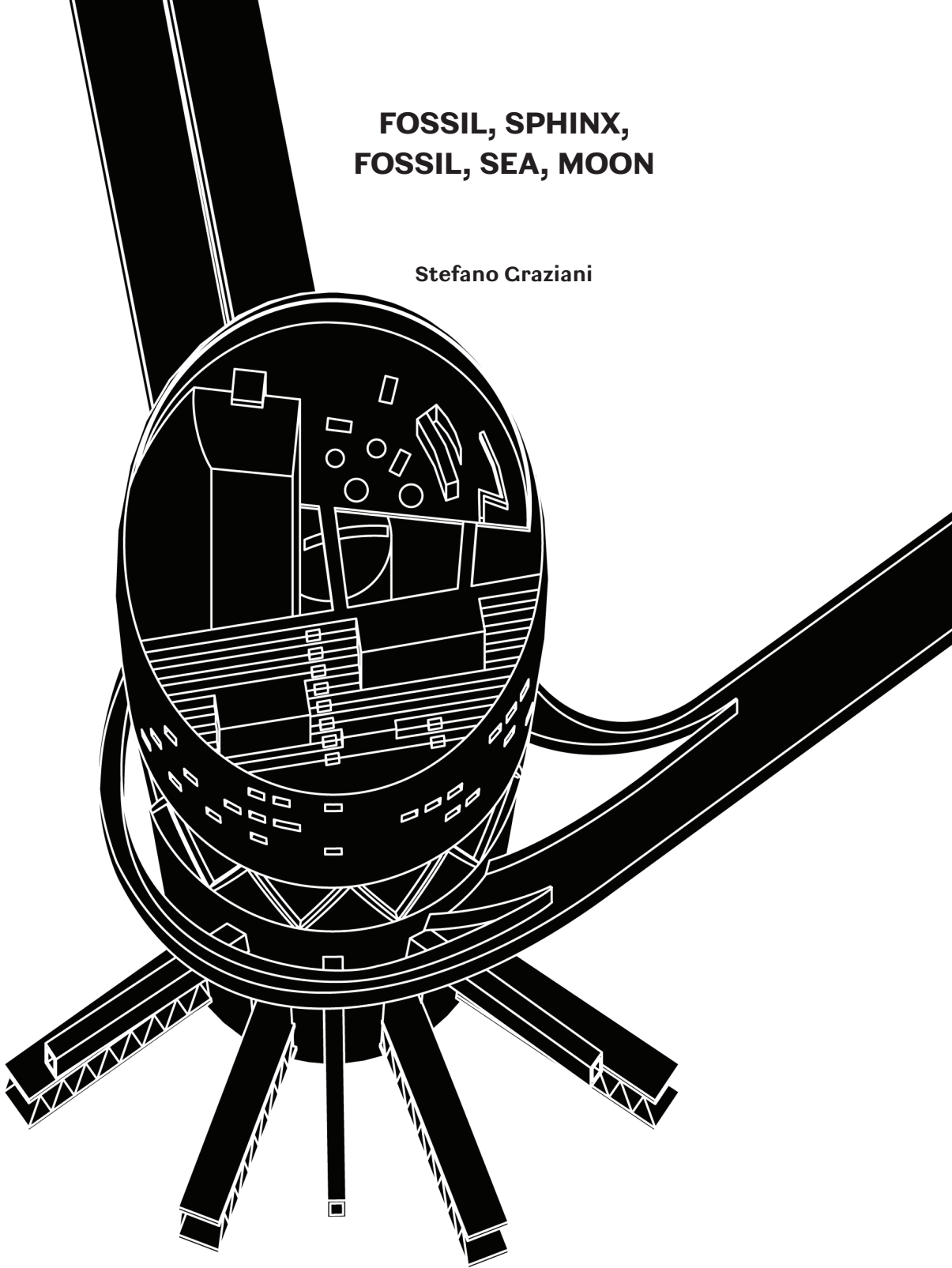
S

C O N

BENEDETTO DEPRETIS CHRONOLOGY 1797 Benedetto Depretis is born in Talla, close to Arezzo (Tuscany, Italy), to an old aristocratic family. He has six brothers. **1807** When Depretis is ten years old, his twin sister Carlotta dies of cholera. **1812** Depretis is sent to the seminary because his family wants him to become a Catholic priest, despite the fact that he used to faint in church as a result of the overly strong smell of incense. **1815** Depretis escapes from the Seminary and joins the French army. He is wounded by the Prussians at Waterloo, which results in a permanent limp. **1817** Depretis returns to Italy and settles in Turin. In March, he meets Margherita Pietraviva from Chieri. **1820** Depretis is employed at Turin's main cemetery and begins to experiment with plants and flowers and to compose poems. **1821** Depretis publishes a collection of ballads entitled "Canzoni dell'upupa" (Songs of the Hoopoe). The work is a commercial failure, but it is much appreciated by Ugo Foscolo. **1822** Depretis marries Filomena Bassi, whose family has important social connections. Margherita Pietraviva, in the meantime, has been betrothed to another man. Frederick Law Olmsted is born in Hartford, Connecticut. **1823** Maria Stella Depretis is born. Twenty-three trees are planted on Depretis' country estate to celebrate her birth. **1825** Depretis is arrested for gambling. **1826** Depretis abandons his family and flees to London, where he meets Ugo Foscolo shortly before Foscolo dies. **1828** Depretis returns to Italy and settles in Florence. He writes for the satirical radical journal *Cane a righe* (The Striped Dog) and has a love affair with opera singer Ottavia Piccolomini. **1829** Depretis collaborates with the Bohemian architect Joseph Fritsch on the Romantic English garden of Villa Medicea La Petraia outside of Florence. Fritsch becomes his mentor and role model in his pursuit of a new career as a landscape architect. **1833** Depretis joins the Giovine Italia (Young Italy) movement. **1836** Depretis is put in charge of the Boboli Gardens in Florence. **1837** Under the guidance of Antonio Targioni Tozzetti, Depretis becomes the designer and botanical advisor of the "Giardino dei semplici" in Florence, a garden of remarkable beauty thanks to the presence of native wildflowers and plants from all over the world. **1848** Depretis betrays his fellow members of Giovine Italia by revealing their names to the police. He receives money from the Vatican's secret police and travels to America on the *Titanic*. **1849** Depretis settles in Boston. During the summer, he meets Violet Loring Brace, who would prove to be the love of his life. **1852** Olmsted publishes *Walks and Talks of an American Farmer in England*. **1856** Depretis moves to New York with Violet. **1857** Andrew Haswell Green, who is on the Board of Commissioners of Central Park, wants European designers to be involved with the planning of New York's Central Park, so he invites Depretis to participate in the park's design competition. Olmsted works for the *New York Times* and travels through the American South. **1858** Depretis proposes organizing Central Park as an enormous map – a three-dimensional abacus with geographical points of reference that is characterised by the presence of widely varied species of flora, which he had studied and learned to cultivate during his time in Florence. Depretis' proposal is heavily criticized by the *New York Times* as "un-American" and "foolish". Olmsted and Vaux win the design competition for Central Park. **1859** Depretis loses all his money gambling and Violet dies of a nervous breakdown. Olmsted marries Mary Cleveland Perkins, the widow of his brother John. **1861** Disenchanted with the Yankees, Depretis joins the Confederate army and fights as a simple soldier at Bull Run and Antietam. **1862** Olmsted becomes Executive Secretary of the U.S. Sanitary Commission. **1863** Depretis dies at Cettysburg and is buried in Cettysburg National Cemetery under the name "Benedict Depritti". Olmsted becomes the manager of the Rancho Las Mariposas mining estate in the Sierra Nevada mountains in California. **1903** Olmsted dies in Waverly.

**FOSSIL, SPHINX,
FOSSIL, SEA, MOON**

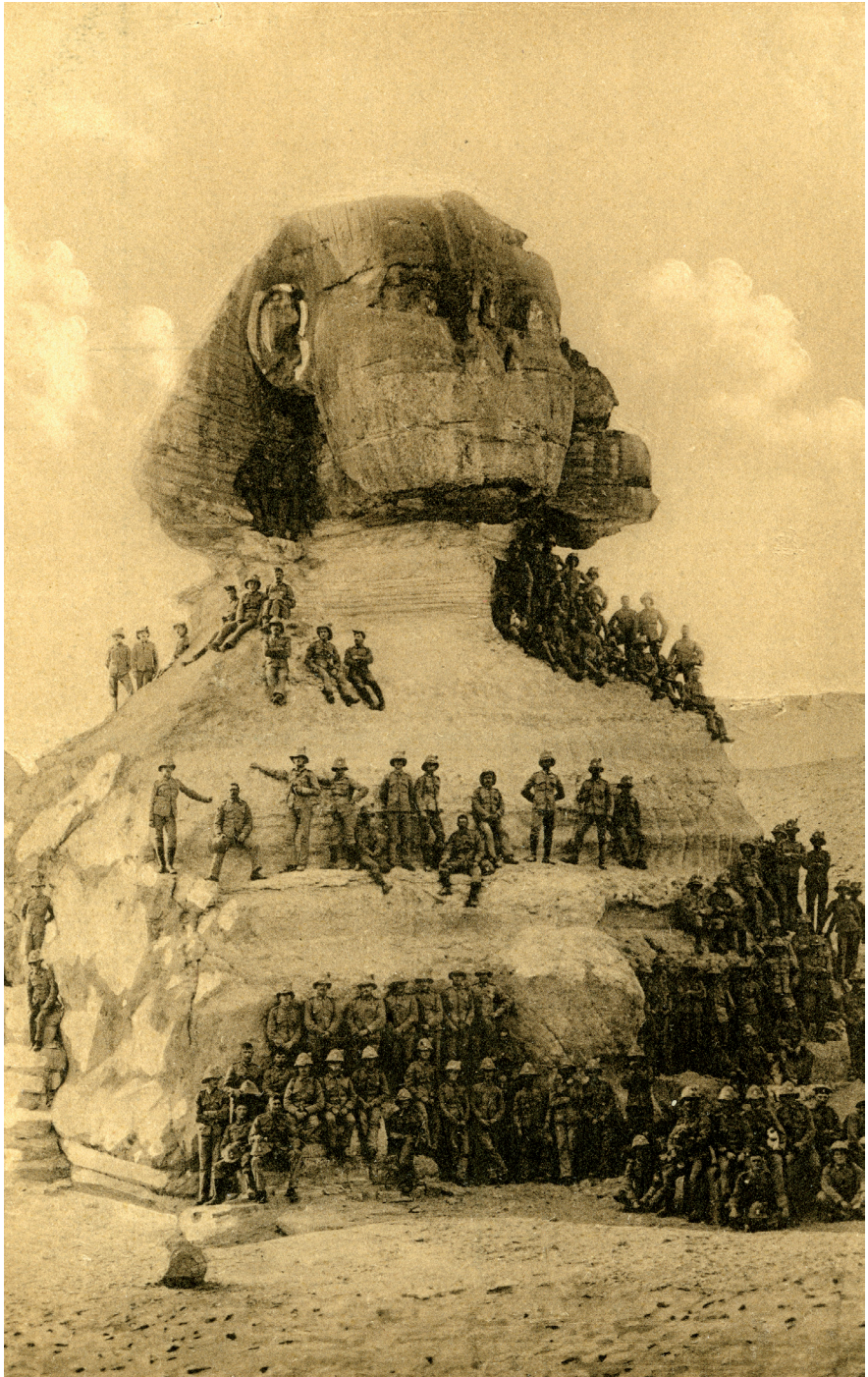
Stefano Craziani



In the following photographic essay Stefano Graziani constructs a sequence of the primordial elements that coincide in OMA's design for the Zeebrugge Sea Terminal (1989).

© Stefano Graziani. Courtesy Galleria Mazzoli, Modena.

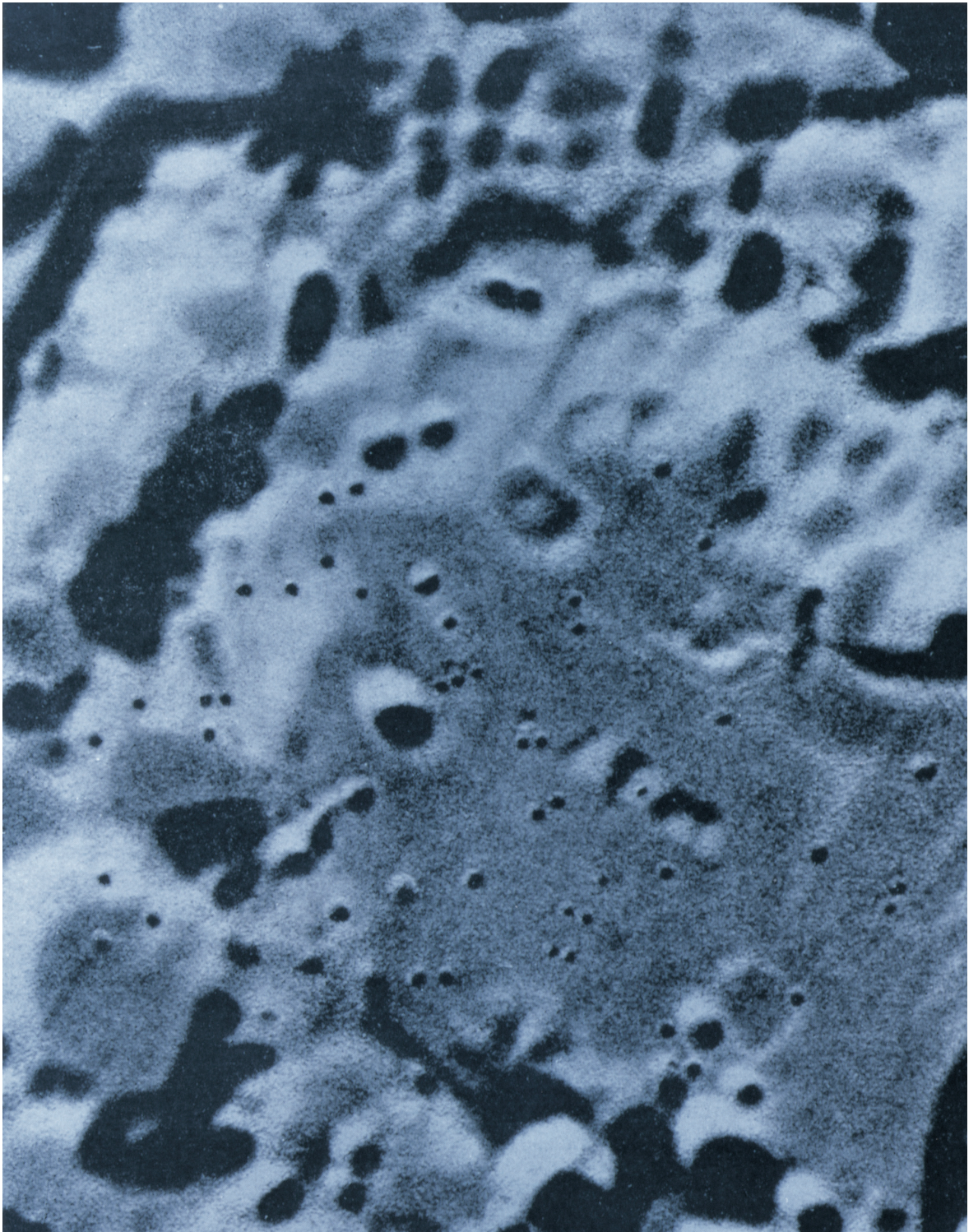






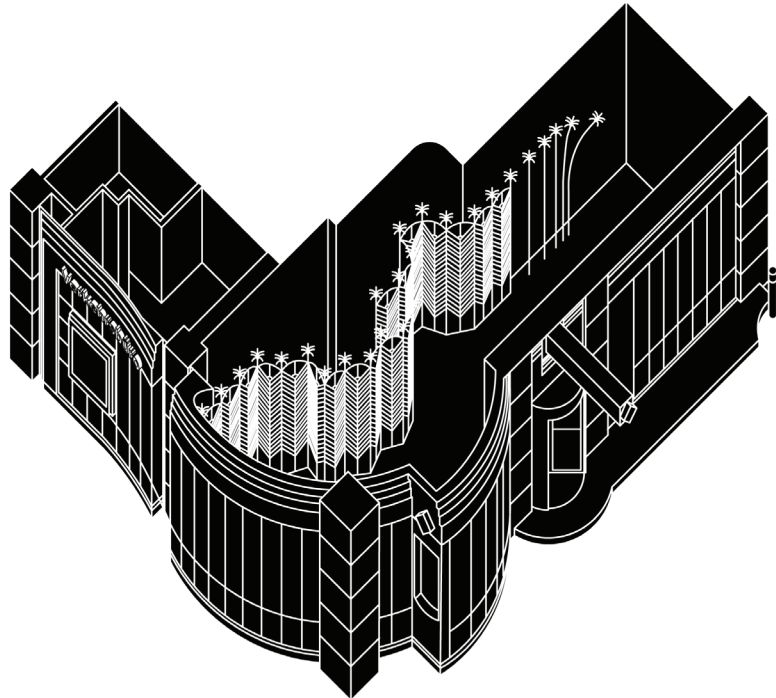






MODEL ARCHITECTURE

Kersten Ceers



Architecture as a Fata Morgana

From 1976 to 1979 Hans Hollein designed three travel agencies in Vienna. Verkehrsbüro am Ringturm, the smallest one, appears from the street as a curvy, blue pavilion that awkwardly inhabits the space under the heavy bluestone columns of a pre-existing office building. Closer examination shows that this apparent disconnection is merely a suggestion. The light blue, curvy façade masks a small corner shop with a complex plan that is carefully fit together like a puzzle within the constraints of the existing building. The travel and information

desk, back offices and storage are all contained within the seemingly elegant curve of the façade. Inside, things are precisely measured to the millimetre, and all of the elements, which are developed within the entire series of shops, are applied here with maximum economy. The small shop's particular location, large façade and very small size make it the most refined and accomplished in the series. The Verkehrsbüro am Ringturm is simultaneously very close to and very distant from "proper" architecture; it is an innocent attempt to turn something as brutal and vulgar as shop design into an exercise in architectural language.

A project for a shop interior cannot avoid dealing with the apparent uselessness and insignificance of the endeavour. Contrary to a "proper" architectural project, a design for an interior does not provide shelter and does not strictly organize spaces. It is a project of embellishment, the construction of a decor. The programme of the travel agency adds an interesting level of ambiguity, as it acts as a sort of portal to other exotic worlds. It is the place *par excellence* where the faraway outside world is evoked within its interior, exemplified in the dream of the future holiday destination. Hollein used this artificiality as an opportunity to escape the problem of interiority by means of constructing an interior world, to make a piece of architecture in some way, to accumulate and define architectural conventions. The travel agency becomes the context for a possible accumulation of architectonic elements – an architectural Fata Morgana.

The Model and the Sign

Once Hollein defined the inside of the shop as *the world*, a universe of its own, removed but complete, came into being – a place where one can find architecture. He filled the different spaces of the shops with as many architectural *clichés* as possible while investigating all of them. Each of the Viennese shops is populated with a tree trunk, a pergola and a baldachin, which are exotic incarnations of column, roof and wall. These elements of architecture (*Bausteine*) define the topology of the shop; they organize and divide the space, and they provide shelter. As such, they are not mere pieces of decor, for they actually "perform"; each element is *useful*. The elements are not simple representations of the *ideas of themselves*. They are presented as models of architecture rather than signs. The key elements in their appearance are their scale and materiality, which they possess while retaining their original function. Tree, screen and roof are no Venturian "Duck". In the case

of the palm tree, for example, we do not see an *image* of the tree but a proper *model* of it. Each of the elements *functions* as tree, screen or roof. A model is a rebuilt version of a reality, a transformed reality, but a new one nevertheless. As such, it does not require the thing to which it refers. It can exist perfectly and perform on its own. The trick with the model allows the elements to acquire architectonic status, for the model is limited, precise and 100% artificial. Each of the elements of which it is comprised surpasses and transgresses the original to become a better version of it: a remake, reinterpreted or *applied* version of the original. Hence, in its own context, it becomes Architecture.

This trick is applied in all of the travel agencies, but most convincingly in the Verkehrsbüro am Ringturm. Here the palm-tree/column motif developed in each shop is used in its most concentrated way. First, a line of palm-tree-like columns defines the limits of the accessible area in the virtual outdoors created within the shop. As a gesture that falls somewhere between wall and colonnade, the row of columns effectively separates the public part of the space from the private one. The columns serve as the structure for the screen that hides the “backstage” area. Second, seen in front of the wall, the trees become a colonnade. Finally, as a marker of the corner in the far end of the shop, the last palm-tree/column eventually takes centre stage, being presented as a single tree-column object. With its bent crown, it is placed in front of a *trompe l’oeil* view into which the desk, which looks like a model of a building, is incorporated. Desk, column and tree thus all become elements of an architectural vocabulary that is presented in the shop as the ABCs of architecture. The staged exception of the bent tree only underscores the status of the other tree-like columns as proper elements of architecture. In quite the same way, Bramante emphasized the antique character of all of the columns in the courtyard of Sant’Ambrogio by presenting the corner column as a tree trunk. By using an exception to emphasize the object’s image of origin, the *design* of all of the other columns becomes apparent.

Hollein understands that the only possible way to overcome the artificiality of interior decoration and its possible conflict with the building’s architecture is to make everything artificial, to allow nothing to be real. By using the model as a tool, Hollein escapes the need to decorate the space; the artificiality of the model allows for the creation of a new space, a parallel reality. In this world, each element is a presentation, depiction or representation of something else. In all of his shops, Hollein introduces the palm tree *as a model of a palm tree*:

a brass and stainless steel incarnation of a real palm tree that has deliberately been made artificial. In the first and biggest shop, the artificial palm tree is accompanied by an oriental baldachin with similar but more marked ambiguities. The structure places itself within the tradition of the baldachin in Renaissance and Baroque architecture. The stainless-steel flag and the frozen tissue in that shop touch on the border between architecture, sculpture and the found object.

The constructed universe of the shop is also a model in which the elements share a common level of reality and a common level of *finish*. The shop and the elements it contains attempt to be as close to architecture as is possible in an alternate reality. As a model rather than a sign, it is a proposition on reality, as all models are: virtual and limited, it is a Fata Morgana that is precise in its conditions of constructing reality because of its limitations. As a proposition on a real world, it becomes a receptacle of possible architectures, an accumulation of formal elements without a hierarchical relationship. In a universe without basic necessities, architecture becomes “a domestic landscape” – an accumulation of architectures without urgency, one that is more about the completeness of the universe than about sheer functionality.

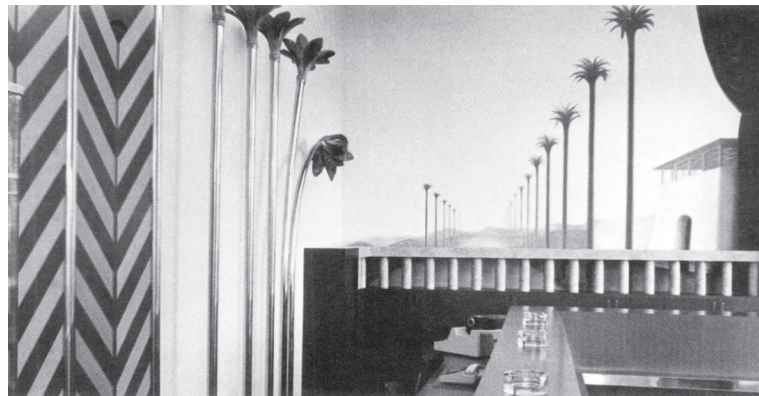
Maybe this makes the series of *Verkehrsbüros* into a treatise on possible architectures in the tradition of Fischer von Erlach’s *Historische Architektur*, a work that shows surprising classicism considering that it is a virtual travel guide. As a virtual travel guide, it imports exotic architecture to Vienna and Europe, just as it simultaneously exports “European classicism” as a framework of seeing and understanding the world.

Escapism and Innocent Classicism

In the first paragraphs of his *Omeros* of 1990, the Caribbean poet Derek Walcott introduces cameras into the *Odyssey*. Walcott’s appropriation of Homer’s ancient poem is an attempt to rewrite classical literature in the contemporary world. In his reworking of the story, the epic quest is set in a world of tourism, and the camera trained on Achilles could not be more appropriate. Tourism shapes the perception of the world based on the most accessible clichés. *Omeros* is contemporary literature built on classical themes, a careful assemblage of private fascinations and classical culture. Subduing his authorial voice, Walcott’s prose appears to come from a thousand-year-old vat of oral poetry. Still, at crucial moments the reader is confronted with

the story's contemporariness. Fragments of our contemporary world relocate the ancient myth in the harsh reality of the beach resorts and other trash of the twentieth century.

The travel agencies Hans Hollein designed in Vienna share a surprisingly similar intention with Walcott's book. The three projects are small exercises in classical decor. Fragments of exoticism – palm trees, wells, baldachins, birds, and other strange objects – are carefully combined into a larger whole. The different elements are carefully repeated but never copied in the different shops. For example, one finds palm trees in each but always made differently according to the overall composition. Made from stainless steel and brass rather than cardboard, these trees achieve an almost physical reality. The composition as a result has an almost haptic quality. What is constructed is not just an image, or a reference to an exotic classicism; the elements are *real*. This achievement of reality is crucial to achieving an escape from the fictional decor. The three different compositions intend to be another – in-your-face – reality, a context rooted in the dirt of tourism, with cash registers, ticket booths, brochure stands and screens. Every shop receives the power of a contemporary composition, combining the trash of found reality – charter holidays and sun-baked bodies – with an absolutely classical cultural heritage. Melancholic in the most romantic way, these shops are a *mise-en-scène* of the drama of tourism, one that ultimately showcases the drama of culture and architecture in our contemporary society. They are instant failures, dream machines, cultural vehicles from the past.

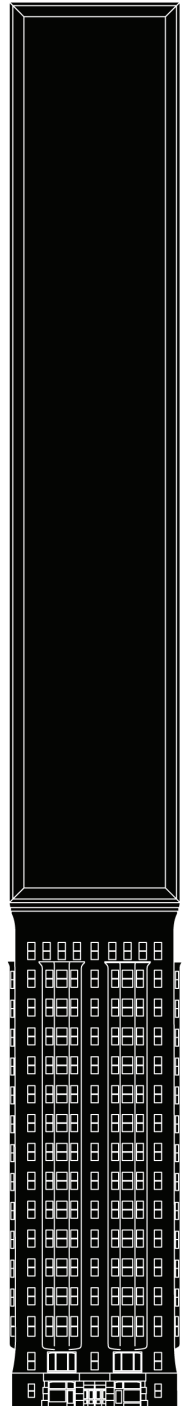


READING THE MONADNOCK BLOCK

Job Floris

The story begins in Chicago. In the period from 1880 to 1895, this city represented the most interesting architectural laboratory in the world and functioned as a pressure cooker. It was in Chicago that the very latest technological developments were rapidly put into practice and developed further. This “Boomtown” thus served as a precept for architectural and town planning developments in New York, which were subsequently adopted by the rest of the United States and, several decades later, in Europe.

This dynamic and very favourable economic climate was accompanied by the massive urbanization of Chicago. In just twenty years the city’s footprint grew exponentially from 35 square miles in 1870 to 170 square miles in 1890. This city of unbounded growth offered architects the ultimate environment in which to realize a substantial oeuvre. The hectic environment brought with it new building proce-



dures and conditions that required a different mentality. This new practice involved a considerable reduction in the time between the planning and realization of buildings, thus requiring architects to become competent in high-speed designing. New building materials and methods were increasingly employed, causing a huge acceleration in the realization process. In this situation, the architects saw themselves confronted with new design problems, ones with which their architectural vocabulary was no longer adequate to deal. After all, the majority of Chicago's architects were educated according to the principles of the European *Beaux Arts* tradition. These developments in particular formed a starting point for the quest to develop a new architectural language. The boundaries of the existing vocabulary were explored, tested and exceeded. So although the classical orders still provided the point of departure, the progressive programme caused these to become exaggerated to dimensions so gigantic that the proportions of these huge buildings were no longer in keeping with the examples from Old World Europe.



**View of the south section
by Holabird & Roche.**

In this dynamic environment, brothers Peter and Shepard Brooks operated as active entrepreneurs. Around 1880, Peter Brooks acquired a building plot of about 100 by 100 feet (about 9,000 square metres) to the south of Chicago's business district. This sheltered spot was not immediately earmarked for a building by the city planning department. After the city council subsequently reclaimed part of the plot with a local by-law in order to improve the city's infrastructure by laying a street, a plot measuring approximately 30 by 20 metres remained. On this remaining narrow plot, the Brooks brothers had no other option than to build upwards in order to make the venture profitable. For this reason, the then unusual idea of realizing a 60-metre-tall building was hatched immediately. This set of coincidental circumstances laid the foundation for a new type of building: the Monadnock Building thus became the first real skyscraper.

The current Monadnock Building is composed of two parts. This is because Peter Brooks was later able to acquire the adjacent plot, thereby allowing the building to be doubled to its current length. The name, however, continued to apply to the entire block. The proportions and the envelope of the extension remained the same, thereby making the extension a sort of extrusion, as it were. This pragmatic lengthening was prompted by the business instinct of the Brooks brothers, who were quick to realize that land in this area was going to rise in value.

In an architectural sense, the extension produced an intriguing new

situation. The two sections of the Monadnock Building appear to fuse together into one long slab, and yet any actual fusion is absolutely out of the question; that is to say, each section conveys a very different message, making the convergence of the two into something of a paradox. Ask yourself which part of the building was completed first. Which of the two sections is older? The obvious – but incorrect – answer would be that the richly ornamented section is the older of the two.

The more abstract northern section was designed by Daniel Hudson Burnham and John Wellborn Root and completed in 1890, whereas the richly ornamented southern section, designed by William Holabird and Martin Roche, was completed in 1892. The two sections are referred to together as the Monadnock Building, but each represents a separate juncture in time and has a different building method associated with it, and each uses a different architectural language, despite the fact that only two years separate the completion of the two sections.

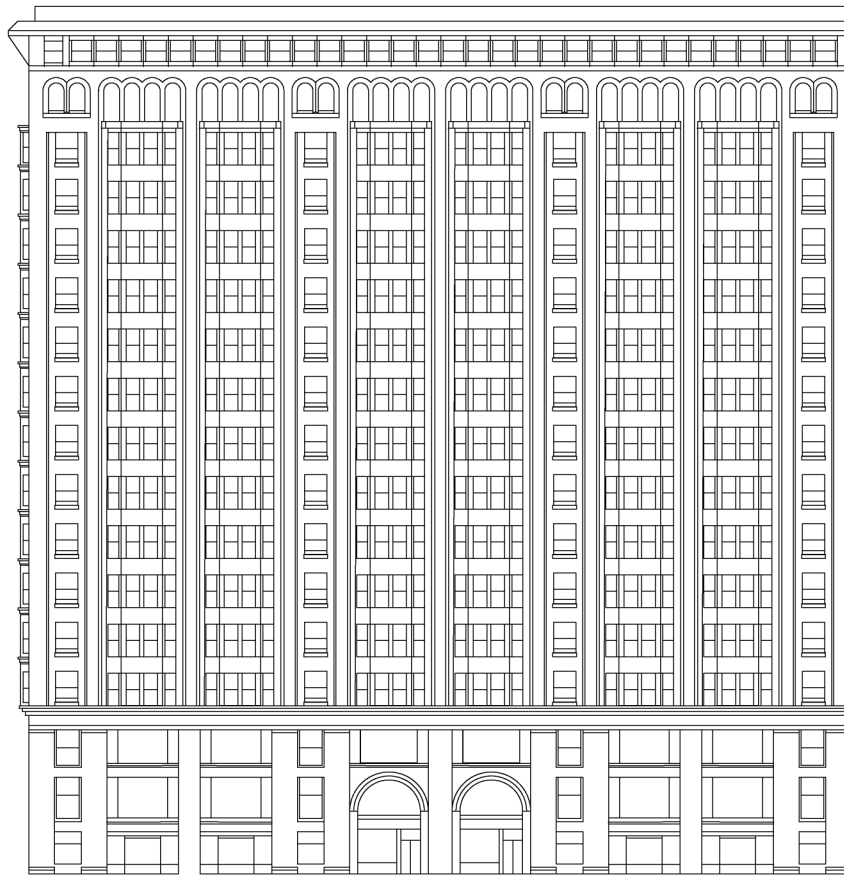
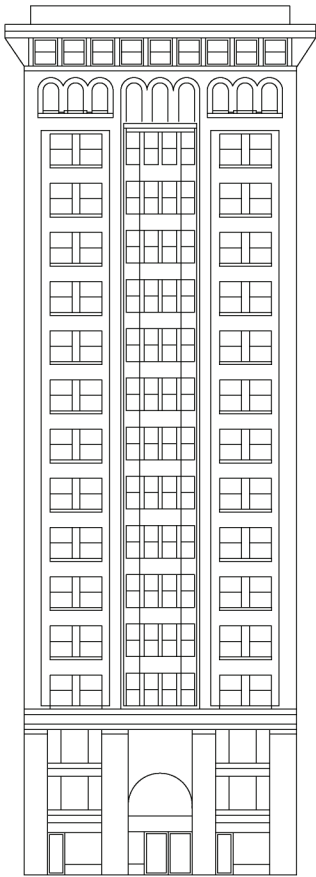
The part of the Monadnock Building designed by Burnham & Root – also referred to as the “Monadnock Block” – is built entirely from solid brickwork. This makes it one of the world’s tallest brickwork structures. Since brick dominates the building, steel plays an exceptionally subordinate role, being used only in a few places as anchoring. The Monadnock Building thus constitutes a huge solid block comprised purely of one single material. The architectural language used reveals that the building was very consciously designed to resemble a massif, and we will return to this later.

The Monadnock extension by the firm of Holabird & Roche, in contrast, consists of a steel structure. The expression of the slender façade is created by the use of a steel curtain wall, which enables large openings to be made in the façade. The generously exaggerated use of ornamentation seems intended to give the innovative curtain wall a more familiar and conventional appearance, and this intention succeeded to the extent that everyone assumes that this later extension is the oldest part of the building.

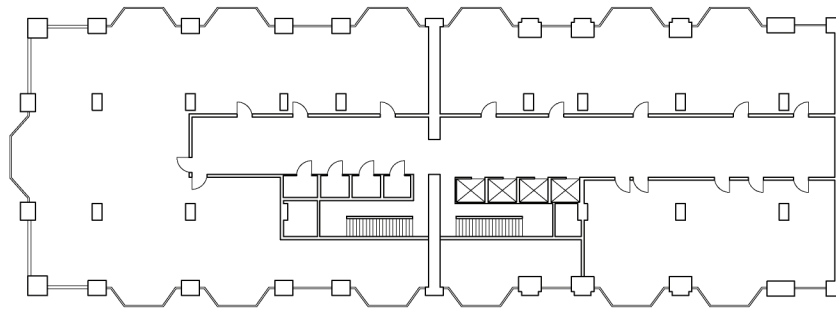
The Burnham & Root section of the Monadnock Block is less conformist. In 1881, Peter Brooks approached the firm of Burnham & Root with the request to design a new office building of unusual proportions: it was extremely tall and strikingly narrow. Daniel Burnham was the business brain in the firm, while John Wellborn Root had the sharper eye. Root concentrated primarily on the language and expression of the designs and recognized that this unusual commission was a rare opportunity. As a result, he immersed himself entirely in the project.



View of the north section by Burnham & Root.



1
0 5 m



No other project occupied Root to the extent of the Monadnock Block. He worked on it for ten years, from 1881 until his death in 1891. The final design constitutes the result of a long process of reduction through which the prevailing decorative means of expression have been scaled back ever further. Because the Brooks brothers were resolutely against the use of ornamentation – they believed this only resulted in pollution by pigeons – the need to develop and apply new means of dealing with scale became ever more urgent.

Within this restriction of ornamentation, Root still managed simultaneously to apply a refinement to his building in which the human scale reverberated. This operation serves to demonstrate Root's synthesis of craftsmanship and virtuosity. Thus the classical subdivision of plinth, central section and cornice is clearly ventilated. All these elements seem to be fused into the volume, which indicates that the building was designed around the idea of mass. In fact, the elements emerge from subtle manipulations of this mass, appearing to be carved or ground out of a lump of rock. The plinth is used to emphasize the massiveness of the volume by allowing it to bulge outwards enormously, thus creating reveals with an unprecedented depth of two metres. Another striking refinement is applied to the heavy corners, with a transition from being sharp-edged at the base to being increasingly rounded towards the cornice, all entirely in brick. The dominant vertical thrust of the façade is created by the bay windows, which provide a division of the façade's massive surface. This division does not detract from the building's solidity, however, because Root designed the bay windows in such a way that they appear to emerge from the façade. All the corners of the bay windows are rounded off, making them seem to curve up out of the façade. Just consider the amount of control over the design and construction process that there must have been, firstly in order to shape these bricks to the correct flowing radius, and subsequently to ensure that they were placed in the right position. These details indicate the distinctly conscious course taken to increase the solidity of the building to the extreme.

This is directly related to the meaning of the term "Monadnock", the famous name the Brooks brothers gave the building. The brothers were born in New Hampshire, New England, where Mount Monadnock lies. The mountain's name is originally a Native American word meaning "isolated mountain". The building's link with New England is further underlined in the naming of its various entrances, which all bear the Native American names for other mountains in New England. Carved

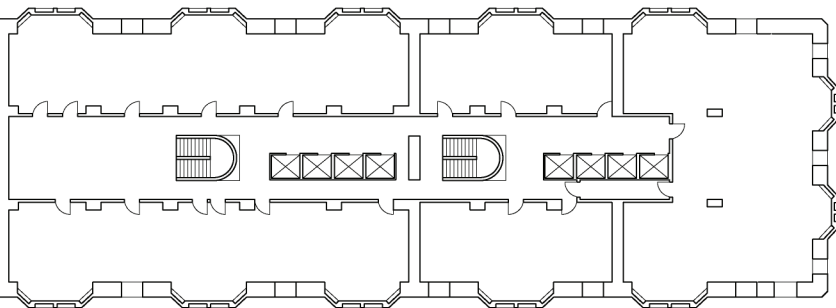
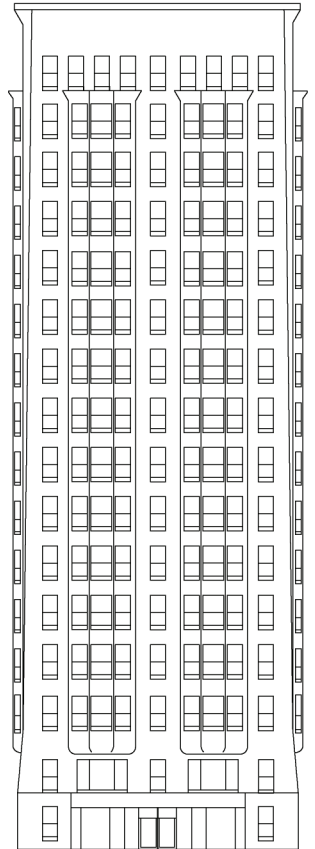
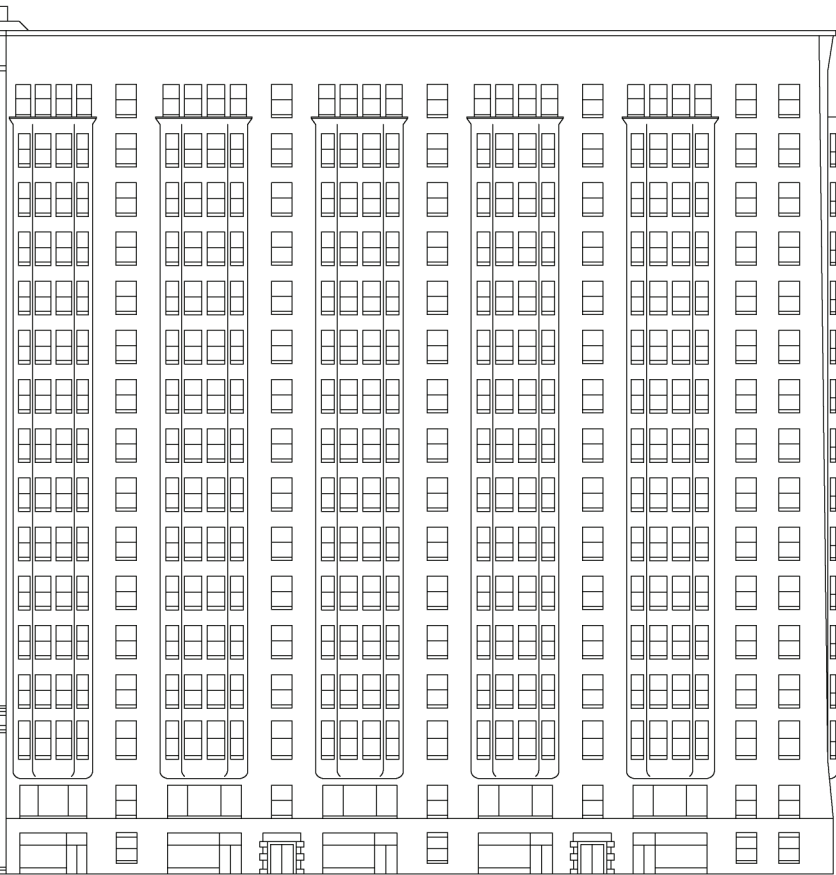
Facing page:
southern section,
Holabird & Roche.

into colossal stone lintels above the entry portals are the names of the Kearsarge, the Katahdin and the Wachusett. These days the term “Monadnock” is used to indicate a solitary type of mountain that is created by a process of erosion whereby the soft earth erodes away and only the hard rock remains.

The stark Monadnock Block represents Root’s most expressive work. The construction of this building was preceded by a quest to find the correct architectural language and reveals the passionate debate which resulted. In this debate, Louis Sullivan (1856–1924) is regarded as Root’s most evenly matched rival. Both were heavily influenced by Europe and remained oriented as such throughout their careers. Sullivan attended a course at the renowned Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris. During the American civil war, Root stayed in Liverpool, where he was confronted with the achievements of the English industrial revolution: steel construction and vast brick mills. In 1869 Root translated the work *Über Baustile* by Gottfried Semper, entitling it *The Development of Architectural Style* in English. These architects developed into each other’s greatest opponent in Chicago’s competitive climate. Their languages of design developed in opposite directions, so they adopted increasingly dissimilar positions in the discourse.

Two buildings best illustrate this difference: the Rookery Building (Burnham & Root, 1888) and the Auditorium Building (Adler & Sullivan, 1886–89). Both buildings are heavily inspired by Henry Richardson’s Marshall Fields Department Store (1885–87), a warehouse in Romanesque style. While Sullivan adopts a stylized form of the façade structure of the Marshall Fields Department Store, thus using free interpretation, Root keeps the language pure by strictly adhering to Richardson’s Romanesque system. The Rookery does indeed comprise a lavishly decorated building with Moorish and Venetian details, a collection of elements that all belong to the so-called Romanesque style. However, Root introduces variation within the framework of this restriction. Until a home-grown American architectural style had reached full maturity, Root emphatically chose to restrict himself to the existing architectural conventions. He stated that decoration should always play a subordinate role and that decoration must follow the form in which it becomes most effective. Sullivan parried this position on the role of ornamentation by asking, What is more essential to a tree, a twig or a leaf? Just as it is impossible to answer this question, it is equally impossible to say what is more essential to a building, the structure or the decoration.

Facing page:
northern section,
Burnham & Root.



Given this position, it is clear why Sullivan never succeeded in realizing a building with the same forceful directness of the Monadnock Block: it was never his intention to do so. And yet, Sullivan's opinion initially seemed to command more respect than that of Root. Sullivan was one of the few architects from the New World who was followed with interest in Europe. Adler & Sullivan's promotional powers are also apparent from the persuasiveness with which they laid claim to a new type of building. The Wainwright Building (St. Louis, 1891) was promoted as "the first poetic, vertical expression of the office-block type". This statement wrongly disregarded Root, for the Monadnock Block had been completed a year earlier, thus making it the first building of this kind.

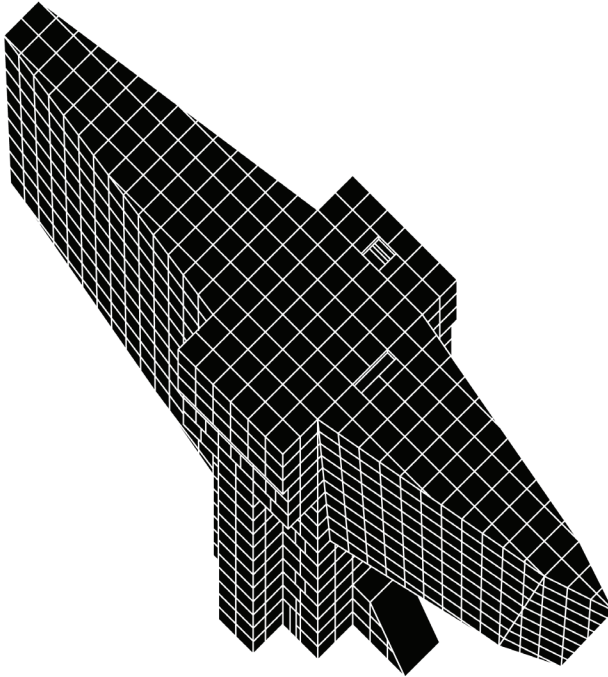
It is obvious that Old World Europe had no prospect of making up lost ground at that moment. Adolf Loos realized this immediately when he visited Chicago in 1893. At that time, however, Root's Monadnock Building did not receive the recognition it deserved in Europe. This building could never be counted as the work of a true artist, for its simplicity and austerity made it seem more the work of a labourer. This characterization actually reveals the heroic course that Root pursued with his Monadnock Block. No other building from this generation has the same sophisticated vocabulary; indeed, Root's language consists of an eccentric cocktail of complex conventionality and uncompromising brutality.



Among the Clouds, Monadnock Mt., N. H.

“FÜNF AUF DER NACH OBEN OFFENEN RICHTERSKALA” *

Andrea Zanderigo



There's a rumour going around the suburban sprawl on the mainland close to Venice: some say that a retired *vaporetto* captain bought one of the waterbuses in which he used to ferry tourists and Venetians around the lagoon. Some say that he drove the thing up a minor inland waterway until he finally reached his house, which is apparently located somewhere in the countryside. It is also being said that he managed to haul the boat out of the water and put it on top of his house, where it still ought to be, partially inhabited. No one knows what the hell his wife thought of this provincial *Fitzcarraldian* event; no one even knows if he had actually seen Herzog's movie before embarking on his own adventure.

* "FIVE ON THE OPEN-
ENDED RICHTER SCALE",
EINSTÜRZENDE NEUBAUTEN,
1987.

1

Kollhoff did the same thing. Of course, being a deeply acculturated architect, he managed to do it in a much more refined and apparently less naive way. In 1987 he entered a competition for the extension of the two villas housing Frankfurt's Ethnological Museum (now the Museum der Weltkulturen) but instead presented a design for a new freestanding building to be placed in the garden in front of them. He repeated the footprint of one of those villas (in order to be site-conscious) and extruded it on three levels. A traditional staircase is located in the middle of one of the elevations. On top of this podium, he brutally placed a monumental shape that clearly resembles a (military) ship, or at least the hull of one. The presence of only a few small openings reinforces this resemblance. The ship "symbolically penetrates into the space between the villas", pointing toward the Main River and the skyscrapers of Frankfurt's financial district. Kollhoff adds (is he really *innocent* or not?) that "the villas are unaffected by the development, which in this way recognizes their historical importance", while his own drawings clearly demonstrate that the pre-existing villas are completely overwhelmed by the new museum. And that's not all: like in a sci-fi movie of the seventies, a graphic grid has been applied to every surface, from the completely glazed roof to the solid, slightly sculpted sides, which apparently were to be entirely covered by mirrored glass (a stealth-bomber strategy).

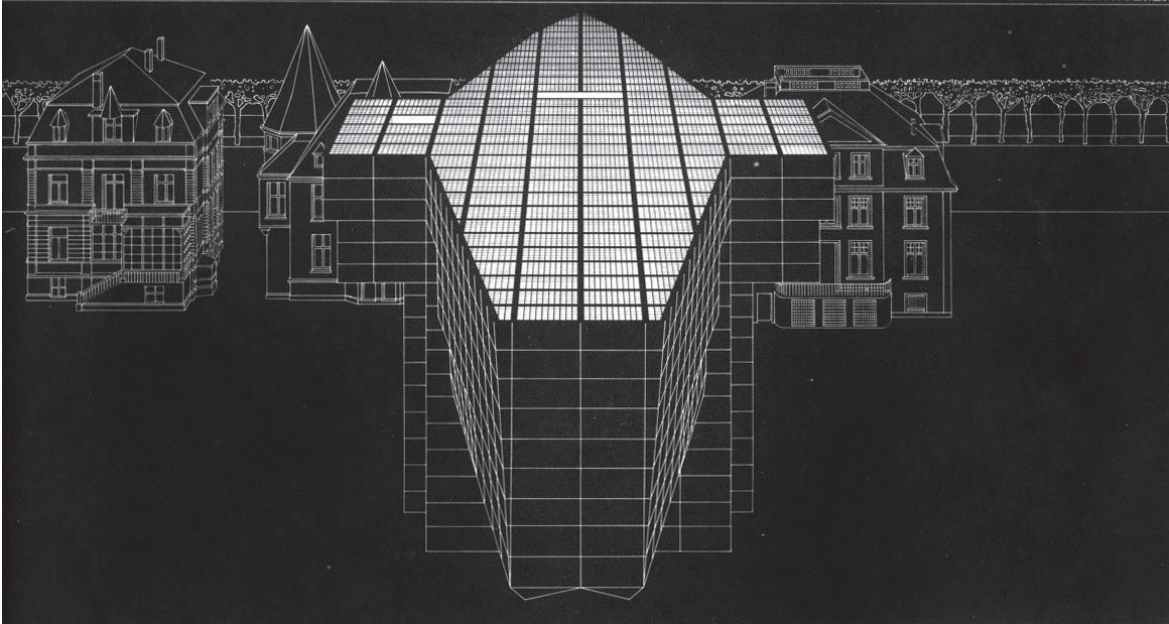
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Kollhoff accurately avoids any explicit reference for the shape, leaving its symbolism as "up in the air" as the suspended shape itself. He is walking the treacherous line that separates *proper* architecture from ignominious *architecture parlante*. The design's programmatic ambiguity – its openness to multiple, always debatable interpretations – allows him to escape from building a massive canoe to house the precious collection of Polynesian canoes. (Here, there is nothing as direct, and ultimately banal, as four large, open books designed to house a library.) But is it really a ship, in the end? Or is it perhaps an anvil? Might it be the same anvil that resounds at the beginning of Reitz's 1984 epic *Heimat*, calling home the Teutonic soldier returning from the Great War? Although lacking any direct evidence, Kollhoff must have come in contact with Edgar Reitz's work, for his interview with Wenders (appearing in *Quaderns*, no. 176, September 1987) testifies to a deep knowledge of the German film scene of the eighties. In *Heimat*, the anvil seems to represent a prototypical form for the entire Teutonic technological apparatus, which was especially focused on metalwork. As the grandfather forges fine tools using his anvil after the First World War, his grandson drives the ultimate BMW coupe through the German countryside at the beginning of the eighties. In Reitz's work, technology clearly shows its Promethean double nature, simultaneously embodying both progress and condemnation. Kollhoff's design for the museum is no different, because it stresses the vast distance separating the Stone Age technology of Polynesian canoes from the obscure floating mass of concrete, steel and glass. Here Kollhoff's dark side (a blurred *Groß Reich* ideology, according to popular interpretations of his post-reunification work) starts to emerge.

Kollhoff seems to have a persistent fascination for the shape of the anvil (as well as for that of the ship). One year later, in 1988, he would be on the same track with Atlanpole, a stunning proposal for the development of Nantes, a super-block in the countryside near the city. Although it is based much more on typologies, the competition entry has a form that lies somewhere between the blacksmith's tool and a chunky aircraft carrier. Both projects puzzle us with a certain drama in the perception of the scale. In Atlanpole traditional architectural elements (windows, loggias, etc.) suggest a human scale, while the sheer quantities involved and the project's syncopated, seemingly endless rhythm impede any normal relationship between the architecture and human body from being established. The calculated distortions of the towers' verticality above the giant podium and the empty vastness of the floating plaza found between the towers do not help at all. In Kollhoff's proposal for the Ethnological Museum, the perception of scale is virtually impossible. Yes, a staircase leads to the entrance door, but it's easy to misjudge its weird proportions, as it seems overly large for the under-sized, villa-like podium. The staircase is not even visible from the point where visitors enter the garden of the complex, or from the Main River and the city lying beyond its bank. Apparently, there are twelve windows in the section connecting the podium to the main volume, but due to their size and position, they appear as small shifts of the abstract overall grid of mirrored glass.

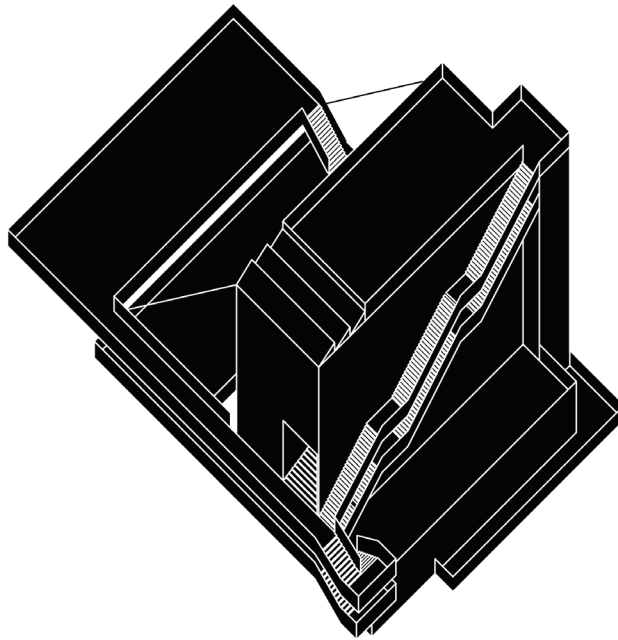
Kollhoff's proposal for the Ethnological Museum suddenly seems to cease being architecture and enter the virtual realm of models. Suddenly the villa-like podium becomes a pedestal that displays a model ship and the un-tectonic quality of the cladding acquires a more precise meaning. Following this avenue of interpretation, the building and the pieces of the ethnological collection coincide, like in a weird game of Chinese boxes. Certainly, a proper architectural idea of tripartition is somehow still recognizable, and some proper architectural elements still play a role, albeit definitely confused by an overly complex system of multiple references. In producing model architecture here, Kollhoff is clearly aiming at defining the precise quality of monuments. A true monument always eludes a sense of scale. Even more, a true monument always speaks of the complete impossibility of there being any relationship between its otherworldly scale and that of the human body, that is, human beings. Kollhoff definitely helps allow for the possibility of monuments to exist again, despite the Modern Movement's silent aversion to them.

Kollhoff's current production seems to have lost such depth. Certainly, his success since German reunification has been enormous, and not only in quantitative terms. Strangely enough, apart from the Netherlands only Germany and German-speaking countries like him (or it is that he likes them?); even his one Italian project is located in Bozen, which is in the Südtirol. He has cleverly managed to become the perfect, entirely reliable architect of Central Europe's conservative bourgeoisie. His architecture is now trouble-free (if not problem-solving), and both the free market and institutions love it. For critics, it is a love-hate affair. Some say that he is still radical, although working within the confines of his chosen language, that of classicism. Others say that he's old and dangerously cunning, and that his architecture is essentially boring and occasionally more borderline picturesque than classical. Sometimes, of course, he's still able to produce great works for the contemporary city (Delbrück-Haus, for example), but it is too easy to wonder whether their greatness is simply a result of the utter garbage that surrounds them. In any case, the best of Kollhoff's work today doesn't come close to that of the tightrope walker he used to be only a couple of decades ago, one who built a true masterpiece in front of Schloss Charlottenburg. What remains is merely the undeniably outstanding quality of the execution of his works, in terms of the premium materials employed, the ultra-refined detailing and the ability to convince developers to spend more than usual. But where have the inner consistency and endless complexity of his early projects gone? He has far too much talent for it to go to waste.



**PURPOSE AND ALLUSION:
HANNES MEYER AND HANS WITWTER,
PETERSSCHULE IN BASEL, 1926,
AND BUNDESSCHULE-ADGB IN
BERNAU, 1928-30**

Guy Châtel



The Petersschule project by Hannes Meyer and Hans Wittwer is basically known through two frequently reproduced documents: a precise, quite dramatically receding perspective drawing and a presentation sheet comprising an axonometric rendering superimposed on a site plan, a graph of light curves and, in the upper strip, a portion of an elevation and a cross section. Within the frame of this graphic sheet, the skewed position of the axonometry detaches the represented building from its background, isolating it as an object and suggesting unrest

– perhaps a state of weightless floating, or at least a disregard for gravity. This graphic twist stresses the most obvious feature of the project: the building is paired with a startling system of projecting platforms. The perspective drawing is no less evocative. Beyond depicting a building, it also represents a device, a towering corpus as the mainstay for the jutting decks and a grafted set of glazed corridors and stairways. The structure plainly dominates the site. Though its base leaves an important part of the ground unoccupied, it overshadows it entirely.

Both documents relate to a competition launched in 1926 for the design of a girls' primary school in Peterskirchplatz in the old part of Basel. Meyer and Wittwer considered the site to be overly small for the scope of the assignment. They calculated that the conventional development of a programme encompassing eleven classrooms, an art room, a gymnasium, a swimming pool, a kitchen and a canteen would leave only about 500 square metres of playground for the children. They therefore proposed developing the school vertically, starting from a reduced base containing the sport facilities, stacking the classes in threes on the east side of the block and providing the greater part of the recreational area above ground level on suspended platforms and roof terraces "where there is sunlight and fresh air". When invited to publish their project in the *Bauhaus-Zeitschrift* (no. 2, 1927), Meyer and Wittwer subjected it to a thorough revision, retaining the main features but optimizing their intelligibility to the utmost. Therefore, they evicted the entire system of circulation from the inner volume and exposed it on the outside, revealing its nature as the spatial binding agent. They condensed the rather complicated corpus into an elementary prismatic compound, articulating it as a main block with attached service units. Furthermore, they maximized the suspended platforms and freed the entire ground area from any enclosure, thereby retroceding it to city traffic. The whole reworking of the project obviously aimed at intensifying its Constructivist character and at having it meet the terms of the new architecture they had helped to propagate through their involvement with the ABC group and its journal.

The publication in the *Bauhaus-Zeitschrift* consists of a single page displaying the graphic sheet mentioned above, a project statement and a note calculating the incidence of daylight in the school's interior. The addition of the lighting calculation conveys the idea that the practice of architecture should rely on objective data and technical activity, that building must be governed by purpose rather than composition. However, it also introduces a paradoxical element in the ideological

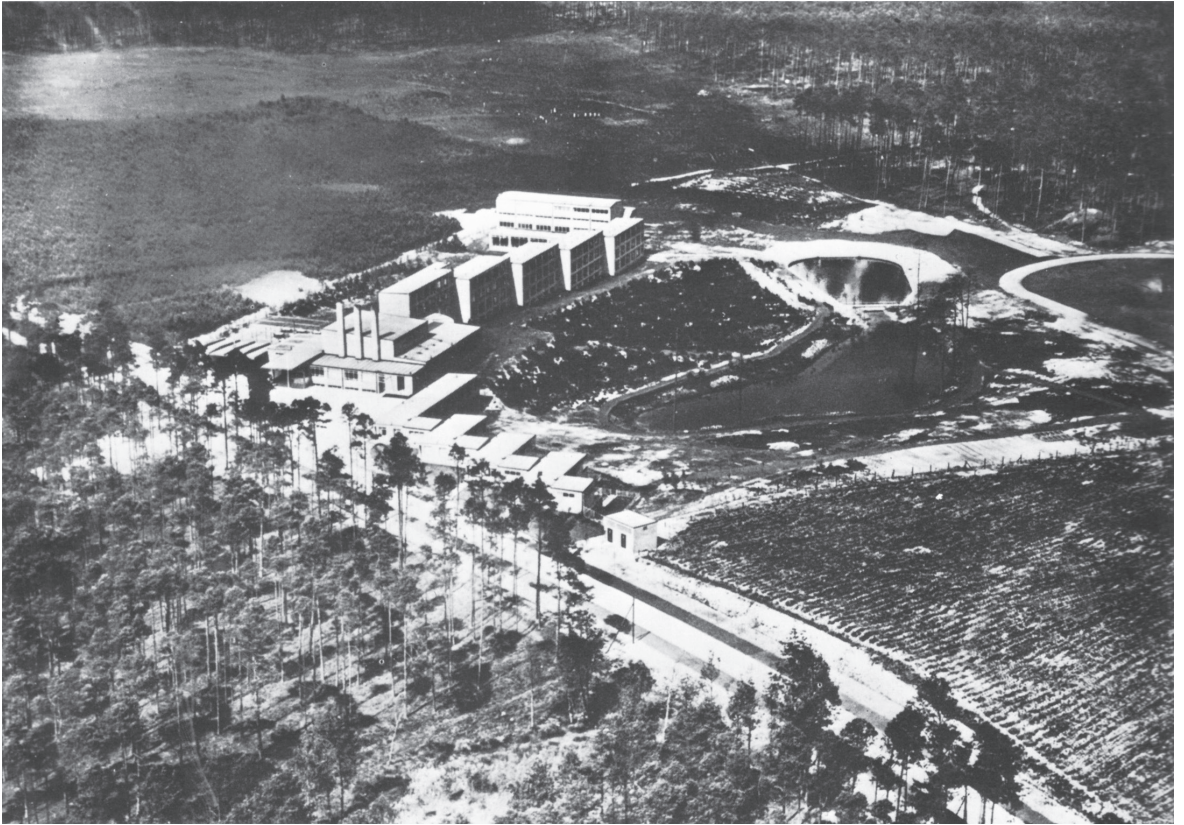


Hannes Meyer and Hans Wittwer, Petersschule, Basel, revised project: perspective drawing. As reproduced in: Martin Kieren, *Hannes Meyer: Documente zur Frühzeit Architektur- und Gestaltungsversuche 1919–1927* (Heiden, 1990), p. 150.

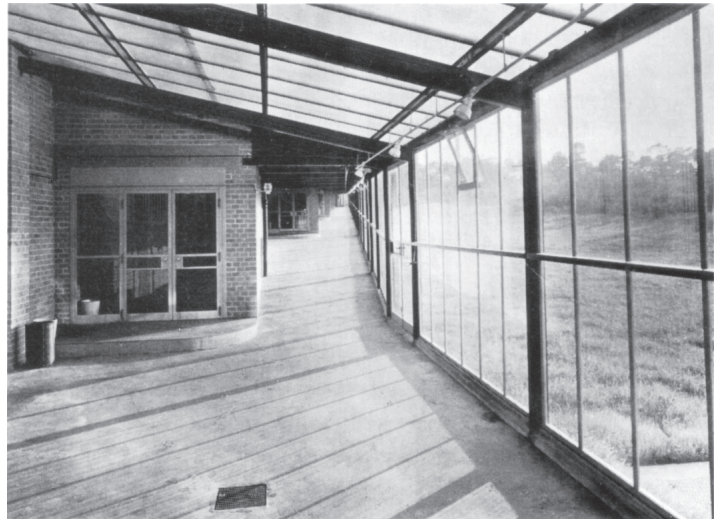
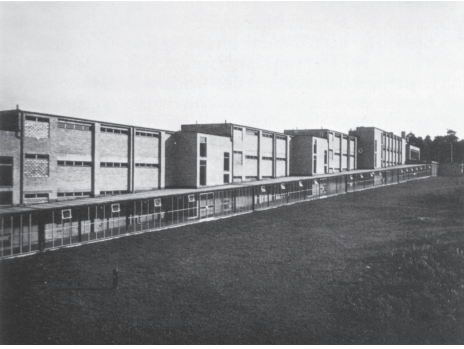
argument of the project. As stated in the explanatory note, and as corroborated by the comparative light curves, an ideal design for a school would call for the skylighting of all classrooms, and thus require even more space for building than that which had been allocated to the Petersschule. Thus, while Meyer and Wittwer present their project as a showcase of vanguard architecture, they equally designate it as a “compromise solution”. Just as the paradigmatic fibre is solicited to obviate the undermining effect of this incongruity, the astuteness of the graphic record is enlisted to rebut the deficiencies of reality: the soaring axonometric and perspective renderings supersede the surroundings – indeed, they obliterate the Peterskirche. The revised project is an indictment of the remnants of the past: old habits, burdensome conventions, obsolete traditions and historic Basel.

In *Die neue Welt* (The New World), a manifesto published in 1926, Hannes Meyer drafted a daring portrait of the “age of mechanization” and requested that artistic production honour its prerogatives. He claimed that the authentic witnesses of the new era were “unburdened by classical airs and graces, by an artistic confusion of ideas or the trimmings of applied art . . . : industrial fairs, grain silos, music halls, airports, office chairs, standard goods – all these things are the product of a formula: function multiplied by economics.” In accordance with an overall materialism, Meyer equated architecture with building. He endeavoured to dismantle architecture’s aesthetic pretence and aligned design issues with societal conceptions.

The publication of the Petersschule project coincided with Meyer’s engagement to set up an architecture department at the Bauhaus. He reported that when he was invited to take over the directorship from Walter Gropius, merely a year later, he found himself in a “tragicomic situation”: “As director of the Bauhaus I was fighting against the Bauhaus style.” What is more, in the two years of his directorate (1928–30) he engaged the school in an extensive cooperative effort. Collective identity was strengthened by organizing the students in “vertical groups” in which older students helped with the development of younger ones. The workshops were restructured in economically independent units. Meyer attuned their activities to concrete demands and favoured the industrial production of their output. In order to acquaint the Bauhaus’s “work brigades” with actual production conditions, he engaged them on several building projects. The commission for the Bundesschule–ADGB (the Federal School of the German Trade Union League) in Bernau, which he acquired via a “keenly contested



Hannes Meyer (and Hans Wittwer), Bundesschule, Bernau: aerial view. As reproduced in: Klaus-Jürgen Winkler, *Der Architekt Hannes Meyer: Anschauungen und Werk* (Berlin, 1989), p. 100.



Hannes Meyer (and Hans Wittwer), Bundesschule, Bernau: view from the north. As reproduced in: Klaus-Jürgen Winkler, *Der Architekt Hannes Meyer: Anschauungen und Werk* (Berlin, 1989), p. 101.

Hannes Meyer (and Hans Wittwer), Bundesschule, Bernau: interior glazed corridor. As reproduced in: Klaus-Jürgen Winkler, *Der Architekt Hannes Meyer: Anschauungen und Werk* (Berlin, 1989), p. 101.

competition”, became the occasion for the most far-reaching of collective undertakings: along with the school’s building department, he also involved the weaving, wall-painting and metal workshops in the realization and furnishing of the complex. Consistent with his functional stance, he required that all pipes and fixtures be exposed. Allegedly, he would not even permit the recruited students to draw elevations, for he considered the latter to be a logical consequence of necessary window dimensions and forecast relationships. Yet this anecdote doesn’t convey the full extent of Meyer’s position. By his own account, his approach to “functional building” went far beyond purely technical questions: “It was our hope to give added depth and richness to architecture through an analysis of the social situation and a careful study of all biological factors.”

Meyer, who had to work out his entry for the Bundesschule competition at the very moment he was preparing to take the reins of the Bauhaus, once more called on Hans Wittwer for assistance. The Bundesschule was intended to provide the delegates from the trade unions with further training during one- or two-month stays. The amenities were to support the improvement of the trainees’ general condition, while the “novel surroundings” were supposed to raise their “standard of living and culture”. In an explanatory note Meyer underlined that he won the contest because he “not only designed a striking set of buildings but also put forward a new form of socio-educational organization”. His proposal was based on a rigid grouping of the residents: “The 120 students of both sexes were organized in twelve cells of ten members each. Students roomed together in twos, and five of these pairs formed a cell whose members lived together, separate from the others.” The cohesion of the cells would rest on the comradeship between room-mates, and thereby underpin the school’s communal life. Between the communal centre and the main school wing, the student lodgings were accommodated in an indented sequence of three-storey units whose floors each hosted a cell comprised of five rooms. The dwellings for the teaching staff and their families were set apart in a staggered rank along the access road. According to Meyer, “The buildings were simply intended to reproduce these socio-educational functions in bricks and mortar.”

The complex is conceived as a deployment of distinct units. Meyer and Wittwer used the natural slope of the site to stress the planimetric indentation with stepped elevations. As in the Petersschule project, the main circulation system is developed as a separate appa-

ratus. In this case, however, it is not a ramified structure grafted onto the building mass that is intended to reveal flux and movement. In the Bundesschule, a cadence is given by the formation of the units. The circulation system is cleansed of Constructivist symbolism. The glazed corridor is laid at the side of the building's recessed alignment, trailing the slope all the way down from the community block to the school wing, where it then climbs up a staircase along the side wall and finally terminates across the corner with a cantilevered structure. The roofline of the pitched corridor cuts through the fenestration. Both interior and exterior are built up in bare materials (glass, brickwork and concrete), anticipating Brutalist anti-aesthetics (which is itself, indeed, an aesthetic) by some twenty-five years.

When the time came to reconsider the credentials of international modernism, its self-declared "functionalism" was called into question. In his *Theory and Design in the First Machine Age* (1960), Reyner Banham observes that while the term was chosen as a label for the new architecture, and thus facilitated the emergence of an International Style, it entailed a thorough misunderstanding of the aims and achievements of the progressive architecture of the 1920s: "Functionalism as a creed or programme may have a certain austere nobility, but it is poverty-stricken symbolically. The architecture of the Twenties, though capable of its own austerity and nobility, was heavily, and designedly, loaded with symbolic meanings that were discarded or ignored by its apologists in the Thirties." Banham doubts that the "ideas implicit in functionalism . . . were ever significantly present in the minds of any of the influential architects of the period". As a possible exception, he mentions the "short-lived G episode", not Hannes Meyer (to whom he paid little attention in his account).

Functionalism, since it presumes a comprehensive formal determination by forecasted usefulness, disregards an essential condition of the project, the fact that it still requires an exploration of possibilities, a set of choices and an act of judgement. Evidence for this is inherent to the project; forethought is immanent to it. This plants the seed of its significance. The project's meaning is imparted by the recognition that it decidedly could have been different, that its singular state and actual form were the object of thorough deliberation and resolved preference. Thus, a work of architecture bears witness to an attitude towards reality. As such, while purpose anchors the artefact in straightforward reality, its purposeful appearance conveys conceptions about man's connection to things and about the sense of making things. Purposiveness there-

fore construes reality and engages architecture in its representation.

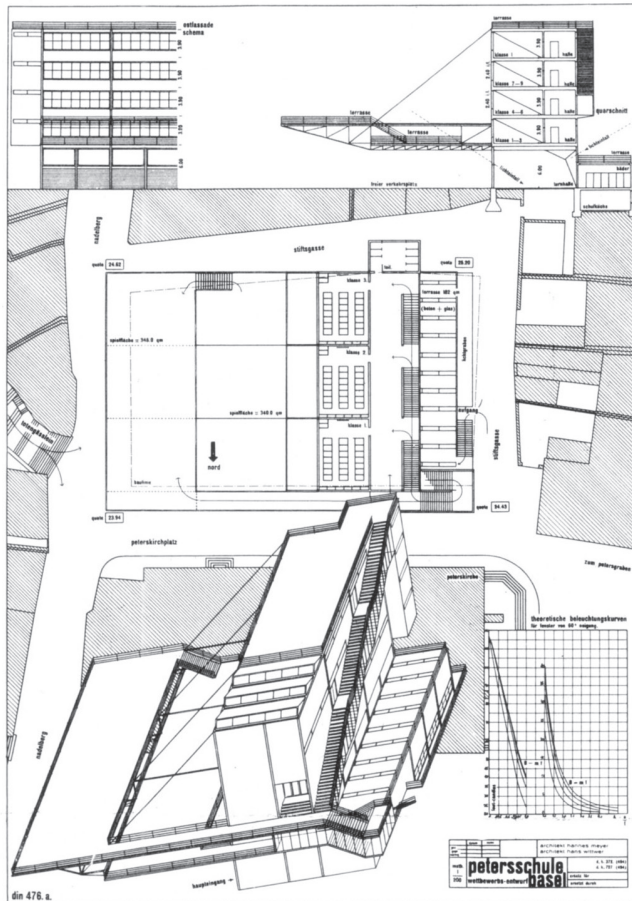
Being one of the most dogged functionalists of the time didn't prevent Meyer from encountering this thorny question. Since the Petersschule opposed reality, and thus was fated to find its way merely as an image, compliance with architecture's double bind (its need to be both purposive and emblematic) was clearly part of the deal. The case of the Bundesschule was different, however. At the time Meyer was fully engaged in the "proletarianization" of the Bauhaus. He obviously conceived his undertaking as part of an emerging collective effort that would reset production conditions and the division of labour. He probably thereby went so far as to infer an imminent transformation of the economical basis and thus of society. Manifestly, he had to commit himself to conceiving the Bundesschule in full compliance with his "new theory of building" – a theory he bizarrely envisioned as both a "system for organizing life" and an "epistemology of existence". The last term must refer to some sort of ontology. In architecture, however, an essentialist approach doesn't discard representation. In fact, the urge towards exemplarity was no less compelling here than in the case of the Petersschule. For the sake of articulation, he gratefully accepted the opportunities imparted by the building site. They allowed him to elevate the underlying functional diagram to the level of genuine architectural expression. As legitimate and formally efficient as this might be, he obviously sensed it didn't merge perfectly with the framework of his "objective" theory. In *Bauhaus und Gesellschaft* (Bauhaus and Society), a radical pronouncement released in 1929 at the very moment of the Bundesschule's realization, he concluded the text with this remark: "Finally all creative action is determined by the fate of the landscape – which for the man with roots there is peculiar and unique, and allows his work to be personal and localized." And although up-and-coming cosmopolitanism had always had a part to play in his reasoning, here he took his argument further: "For people without roots, work easily becomes typical and standard." This was obviously more of an after-thought than a concluding argument, a half-hearted recognition of the tedium to be expected from an architecture he had reframed as mere "building and social organization" that evidently unsettled his position. But he never went further in the avowal of functionalism's reductive character.

Still, Meyer had already conceded that all artefacts must be "the result of our speculative dialogue with the world" in *Die neue Welt*. As this dialogue necessarily relies on experience and imagination, it settles produc-

tive activity on subjective ground. In *Idéologie et appareils idéologiques d'état* (1970), Louis Althusser enounced that every practice is sited “under and through ideology” and that no ideology exists other than that which is “by and for subjects”. With ideology being “a representation of the imaginary relationship that individuals have with the real conditions of their existence”, every project is an ideological product and inevitably integrates imaginary conceptions of the world. To paraphrase Althusser, although these conceptions do not coincide with reality, and thus partake of illusion, they nonetheless “allude to” reality. It is therefore sufficient to interpret the artefacts in order to recover, from behind the veil of their imaginary representation of the world, fragments of reality itself.

Meyer’s inability to acknowledge the field of tension activated by architecture prevented him from sensing the critical capital attached to the paired research and representation of purposiveness. Yet it is precisely the call put out by the “illusiv allusions” tagged onto projects like the Petersschule and the Bundesschule that continues to spark architects’ imaginations. Meyer despised allusions and chased illusions. This then drove him to failure and made him destined for a wandering life.

Adolf Loos emphatically promised that the defeat of ornamentation would lead to fulfilment and salvation: “Soon the streets of the cities will shine like white walls. Like Zion, the sacred city, heaven’s capital.” Le Corbusier, for his part, rhetorically invoked a Solon to promulgate “la loi du ripolin – le lait de chaux”, a sweeping whitewash that would suppress ambiguity, restore purity and decency, and refit the world to the request of the “machine age”. An enlightened autocrat would indeed have been necessary for this to occur. By itself, architecture is unable to restore congruence or instate propriety. It doesn’t affect the base but meets with establishment in society’s superstructure. There it can instil some visibility, some distinction in the midst of deceit. Architecture adds a vein to the stratification of reality. Where it intrudes, it rarely achieves a whitewashing; rather, it calcimines our utensils. In the seclusion of his studio, Morandi purposively did the same thing with bottles, cans and pots. The act of whitewashing these objects provided him with the stock upon which to draw in his attempt to paint still lifes as landscapes: at once easing nearness and bringing in distance.



Hannes Meyer and Hans Wittwer, Petersschule, Basel, revised project. Published in *Bauhaus-Zeitschrift*, no. 2 (1927). As reproduced in: Martin Kieren, *Hannes Meyer: Dokumente zur Frühzeit Architektur- und Gestaltungsversuche 1919–1927* (Heiden, 1990), p. 158.

THE NEW NAIVE

Milica Topalović

*Here we stand
Like an Adam and an Eve
Waterfalls
The Garden of Eden
...
From the age of the dinosaurs
Cars have run on gasoline
Where, where have they gone?
Now, it's nothing but flowers
...
This used to be real estate
Now it's only fields and trees
Where, where is the town?
Now, it's nothing but flowers*

Talking Heads, "(Nothing but) Flowers",
Naked album, 1988

Garden

It looks like it's about trees rather than about architecture, and about gardens and forests instead of a city. Buildings and trees change places: trees are in the foreground, colourful and detailed, and buildings are in the background as discreet contours.

Garden Ideology

Each tree or plant is considered a unique being and is represented as such. Groups of trees and plants are not organized according to any formal school of landscape

design. They are organic, as found; each group is an unrepeatable fragment of a larger continuum of Nature. Trees are the main protagonists in the space of the New Naive.

Garden Sociology

Trees are selected based on their physical characteristics. The trees depicted are young, with slender forms. They are of ordinary, unremarkable species, the kind found in suburban tree nurseries, at wasteland sites and on high-rise balconies. They provoke sympathy with their fragility and simple beauty, and they look as if they need care; they are the innocents among trees.

Allegory

Chairs, small furniture and sometimes everyday objects, bikes, garden tools or kitchenware are also represented as personalized and unique participants of this space. The little garden habitat provided by trees is populated in this manner. The chair-characters are small, often zoomorphic and grouped in the space playfully, as it were, avoiding orderly or hierarchical configurations. Through this allegorical scene of everyday life, human presence is conveyed, in a soft focus.

Stage

The loose constellation of greenery, furniture and other things is lifted out of a familiar domestic setting and placed against a bright, abstract background (a reflective surface or a shadowless white). This simple gesture carries out a more complex operation, through which the space of everyday life (community space, domestic space) is, after a long absence, brought back under the lens of theoretical and aesthetic architectural inquiry. In the New Naive's airy *mise-en-scène*, everyday routines – such as reading, talking with a friend or relaxing under the trees – are performed as aesthetic rituals.

“As Humans Do”

Though often absent from the image, the New Naive’s human character introduces a particular cultural ethos: an air of restraint, a simple manner of life. Everything that used to “make homes so different, so appealing”, modern consumerism and pop culture, has departed. The implied individuals don’t “share space” with artworks, or with any other objects that would promote their social status, political orientation or sexual identity. The living space appears calm, tensionless and freed from any aesthetic pluralism, from parallel narratives and jump cuts. There are no external agendas or other will: culturally, the New Naive is a homogeneous territory.

Liberation from Architecture

Architecture has a weak expression, providing no more than a subtle backdrop in this theatre of the everyday. Though at first it may seem abstract or minimalist, the design process is more focused: the usual interest in the strong outward appearance of an architectural object is tempered, and attention is instead deflected away from the object toward the foreground, the enclosed space, the light, the action. The roles are reversed; architecture steps down and sets landscape and interior free from their traditional subordinate roles. In this seemingly benign transformation, a quiet revolution takes place: New Naive architects declare the suspension of the profession, design without obligation to architecture as it is usually known.

Unlearning

It looks like the New Naive architect also searched for ways to unlearn his skills. For example, he tried to move against the drawing rhetoric he had been taught, replacing his usual technical repertoire with a new authority derived from the drawing of children. The childish, naive-looking manner in which the space is depicted seems to suggest that leaving behind formal jargons of architecture can enable a more essential

understanding of space to emerge: a space of sensation, of bodily experience, a “space before the analytical distancing that language entails”.¹ This would allow qualities of randomness, spontaneous creativity and balance with Nature, a return to both the design of space and its inhabitation. All it takes to change architecture is changing its language, and this, in turn, will change space and life itself.

A Hypothesis

Clearly, what is at stake are, on the one hand, human relationships: the multiple, often indeterminate groupings in contemporary society, including family and neighbourhood. On the other hand, there are the relationships between people and nature. Both domains are seen as threatened and nearly dissolved in present-day society and the present-day city. The New Naive proposes that both could be restored to their vital, even native, modes in an environment freed from the normative influences of architectural and urban space. A new kind of architecture – one attuned to the body, the senses and a delicate childlike quality lurking in contemporary urbanity – could contribute to the vision of a close-knit urban society living with nature. This agenda is being formed through several distinct architectural strategies.

Plan as Natural Order

A plan is a “horizontal world” composed fact-by-fact, with careful attention. An apparent intellectual structure organizing the plan, such as universality or hierarchy, is withheld in favour of less controllable principles, such as juxtaposition, simultaneity and proximity. The rhetoric of the plan avoids the usual syntax; the plan doesn’t say much about the programme. Space is conceived as “organic”, elastic. Sometimes it is compressed to the utmost, into a kind of a cellular structure, and at other times structure is irregular and open: things can just happen amidst the forest of trees and columns. In this procedure,

naivety and the nature metaphor go hand in hand. The effort to conceal the presence of design intelligence here – to “look undesigned” – serves as a promise of an architecture based on the natural order.

The New Primitives

Among links between the New Naive and other currents of artistic naivety – for instance, at the beginning of twentieth century in the works of Henri Rousseau, Paul Gauguin and the Fauves – is their shared fascination with the primitive. Surely, the primitive is never a quest for the lost past or mythical origins, but rather an intervention in a specific social, psychological and cultural context. Like in any accomplished naive genre, proponents of the New Naive present this case lightly, turning it into a piece of fiction: they talk about nests and caves, and build tree houses and primitive huts. Naives, of course, know no shame – and therein lies their power. For avant-garde art, “primitive” essentially meant “pre-modern” – the (exotic) world standing in conflict with forces of colonial modernization – but in this case, the interest in the primitive has an entirely opposite character. It suggests a future, post-modern and post-urban condition in which the city dweller begins to seek a place of escape, away from the city and “the obsessive homogeneity of the modern dwelling”.² That idealized locus is no longer in a distant “land of exotic otherness” as it was for the avant-garde but, surprisingly, is found in ordinary, even banal, places: in suburban houses, shops, town halls. It is the attraction of “the other and the outside” revealed among “us”, in the “here and now”.

White-out

To construct such a space of fresh aesthetic and cultural sensibility from an ordinary, banal one, the New Naive, in keeping with its character, applies a strategy of erasure. Buildings often appear like white erasures, Baldessari-style cut-outs placed within images – white ideograms, at once abstract and

iconic. Caught by a flat, white object floating in the image space, the eye tries to extrude it, to put it on the ground or “redraw” the missing part of the image. Additional visual techniques used in the construction of the image bring naive art to mind once again: the treatment of composition as a two-dimensional collage, illumination without cast shadows, scale and perspective manipulation. Miniscule furniture or thin, small building elements, for example, are crucial to effect of familiarity and pleasantness that the space as a whole achieves. Looking inside, into the white interior, the erasure of elements, details and textures produces a similar effect. In even light, white surfaces collapse together, and space loses depth. Failing to cast shadows, the objects and human figures appearing in images lack context and seem to be pasted to the surface. The action of looking turns into an unconscious attempt to reconstruct spatial relations. The resulting image is not strange, and not even new. To the contrary, through subtle manipulation of ordinary, recognizable relations (colour, scale, proportion, etc.), the New Naive succeeds in transforming precisely the familiar image into an object of fascination.

White Noise

Save for, perhaps, its associations of lightness and simplicity, and for a distant relation to early modern architecture, the use of white is not symbolic; in fact it seems that the opposite is the case. Here, white can be understood as an absence of meaning, an erasure in both physical and semantic space. It should be admitted: architecture can be unbearable. It can be polluted; it can overstimulate the senses and the mind with the static of countless distracting references and narratives written into building elements, material surfaces and architectural relations. Against that visual and semantic noise, erasure is used as a counter-principle, creating a unifying quality of “silence” that is of the kind found,

for instance, in a white-paper model. White is thus much more than a colour: it is the main design strategy, a (metaphorical) operation of turning a building into paper. It is the way of thinking, the logic of architecture. In this approach, naivety is indispensable. The strategic withholding of knowledge (an apparent naive ignorance) nonetheless wields a critical edge. With systematic brilliance, the proponents of the New Naive “don’t understand” architecture precisely in order to open up a space for “wonder” about what it might be. Not only architectural axioms, but also every architectural concept and object are brought into question: what is their necessity or redundancy, their essence? What remains after erasure are a few irreducible facts, concepts and forms – the beginning of a new language.

House and City

In a quintessentially modern house (think of the Villa Savoye, for example) everything “seems to be disposed in a way that continuously throws the subject toward the periphery of the house”, toward the view. “The look is directed to the exterior in such a deliberate manner as to suggest the reading of these houses as frames for a view”³ or in fact a series of overlapping frames. The relationship of modern dwellings to the city in which they are found is almost always that of “lookouts dominating a world in order”,⁴ as Le Corbusier himself wrote. In this sense modern architecture had reinvented a window frame as a problem of urbanism. In a similar manner, New Naive houses are often conceived as viewing devices. Series of overlapping (white) screens frame and make a montage of views of both interior and exterior into what appears as a single, three-dimensional display of simultaneous images (for example, “grey rooftops”, “a green wall”, “a bedroom with a cat”, “a clear sky” and, ultimately, “whiteness” itself). Against an abstract white screen, a framed view often loses depth and transforms itself into an illusion of an image display, enhancing the

perception of a house as a technological artifice. Through the seemingly “endless” layering of screens and frames, domestic life is directed as an elaborate spectacle of voyeurism and performance – of looking while simultaneously being aware of being watched. In contrast to modernist “lookouts” dominating the orderly world, these houses are inward-looking, and even slightly defensive; the subject of fascination is the interior. An occasionally revealed view of a city introduces a sense of detachment: when displayed against a dematerialized white surface, a regular, dense and chaotic cityscape, for example, turns into a fictive image of a historical artefact that looks as if it is losing its purpose. Through the fiction of the framed view, the New Naive creates a place of escape from the city. A house becomes a detached, futuristic lookout with a view of the city of the past.

The New Naive Is Not Naive

Naivety was often misunderstood. Anything from Gustave Courbet’s *Deer in the Forest* to Andy Warhol’s *Flowers* was regularly being taken at face value. But the myth of innocence and ignorance is not relevant here; the artless and the artful, the naive and the worldly usually take each other’s guise. It is understood that the naive manner is not “sincere”, but rather stylistic and strategic.

As an artistic strategy, naivety emerged in the early twentieth century as one of the modern avant-garde movements. Interestingly, the pejorative sense of naive as “gullible” and “uninformed” appeared at precisely the same moment, eclipsing the prior affirmative connotations of “natural” and “unaffected”.⁵ Naivety began to represent a counter-world to that of modern European civilization: the black, the primitive, the wild, etc. More than that, however, it began to include everything “exotic” beyond the geographical limit, the experience of life that lay outside definitions of modern normalcy and “the homogenizing control of (modern) knowledge”.⁶ A similar fascination with the vernacular,

the spontaneous and the ordinary can be traced throughout modern architecture. Seen in this way, the function of naivety appears corrective, critiquing and balancing the dominant knowledge regimes of the modern era. An assumption can be made that, in a sense, the Modern and the Naive always went together. Since the beginning of the twentieth century, naivety has been used as a strategy of intervening in the history of modernism.

Intervention

The ways in which the New Naive questions modern paradigms have already been hinted at in this text: its distrust for universal models, its reinvention of architectural language, its disinterest in the idea of a city as an intelligible spatial entity. New Naive architects seem to suggest that architecture can continue to be a relevant reflection of society but in a radically reversed perspective: they propose that the house offers a means of reinventing a city, a family and a community as a way to reform society, and they see locality as an agent of shifting balance between urban space and nature, and promote everyday life as the critical cultural practice. This is small-scale modernism, if that is conceivable. In any case, they seem to know much more about the power of small things.

Moreover, it is a modernism for a complex world, one that is not just universally growing and progressing, but also ageing, stagnating and shrinking. In this context, the relevant knowledge of architecture concerns not only the problem of growth, but also that of erasing its traces.

Epilogue

In its indirect and unpretentious way, the New Naive is thus concerned with envisioning the future of the urban. It might be called modernist, or it might not; it doesn't matter, really. Sure, they bow to the twentieth century, from l'esprit nouveau to the culture of

congestion, but what they really want to talk about are some clean white spots and some small trees that they see springing up in the cracks of the global metropolis. So, what will happen to cars and parking lots? And what about suburbs and malls? And what about towns and cities?, I hear you asking. They don't know, actually; nobody does. But if we give it some time, the world may turn out very differently. As in the song, in the end there will be nothing but flowers.

1
Beatriz Colomina, *Privacy and Publicity: Modern Architecture as Mass Media* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1996), 264.

2
Toyo Ito, "Theoretical and Sensorial Architecture: Sou Fujimoto's Radical Experiments", 2*C* (Barcelona), 50 (2009), 8.

3
Colomina, *Privacy and Publicity*, 283.

4
Ibid., 306.

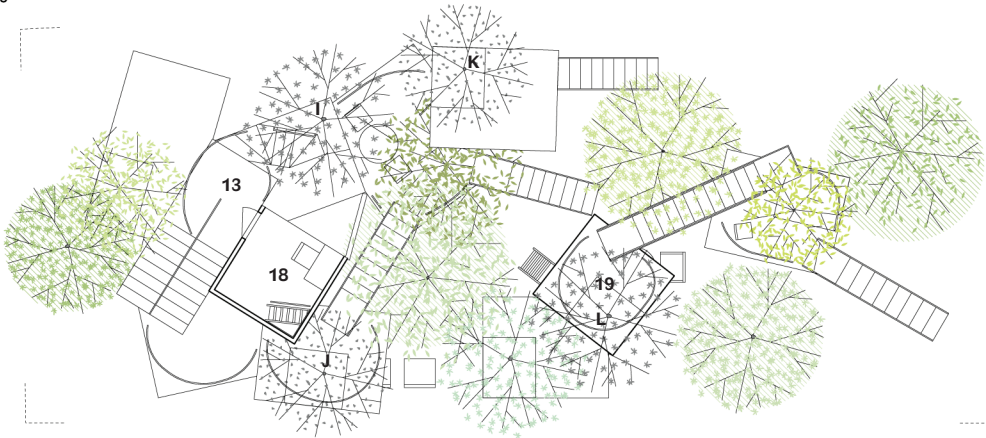
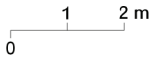
5
Kelly Mark Cresap, "Warhol and the Art of Cultivated Postmodern Naivete", Ph. D. dissertation (University of Virginia, 1998), 15; downloadable at www.lib.virginia.edu/etd/theses/cresap98.pdf.

6
Christopher Green, "The Exotic in the Banal: The Other Side of the Douanier's Charm", in *Henri Rousseau* (Riehen and Basel: Beyeler Museum AC, 2010), 17.

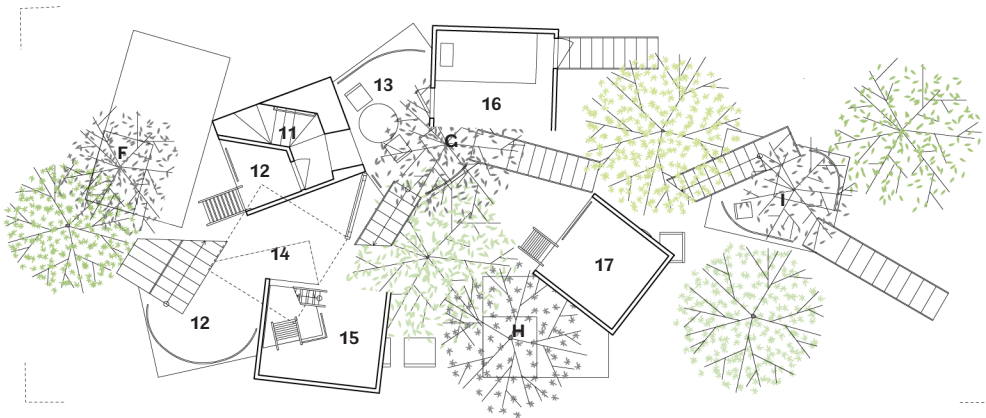
Facing page:
Sou Fujimoto Architects,
House Before House,
Tochigi, 2007-2008.

- 1 Living
- 2 Outdoor Living
- 3 Outdoor Dining
- 4 Kitchen
- 5 Master Bedroom
- 6 Bathroom
- 7 Guest Room
- 8 Storage
- 9 Bench
- 10 Parking
- 11 Inside-Outside Inversion Stairwell
- 12 Attic Room
- 13 Outdoor Terrace
- 14 Floating Living Room
- 15 Cushion Room
- 16 Children's Room
- 17 Floating Terrace
- 18 Study
- 19 Observation Platform

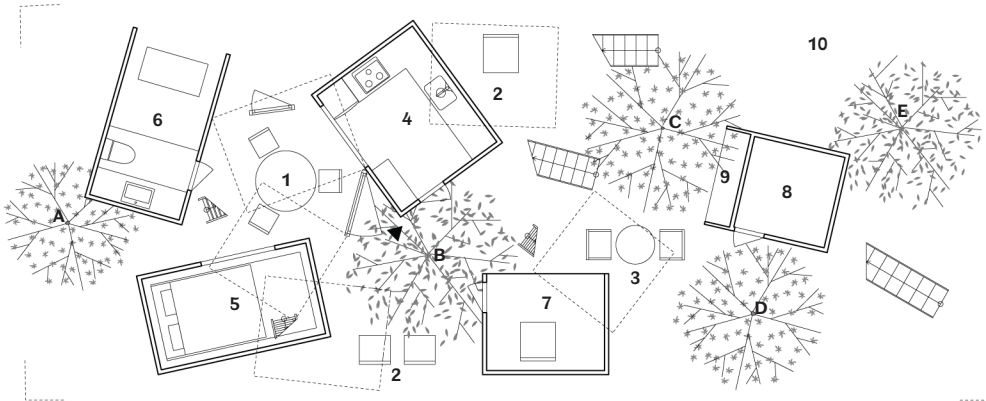
- A *Cercidiphillum japonicum*
- B *Styrax japonica*
- C *Fraxinus japonica*
- D *Quercus serrata*
- E *Lionya ovalifolia* ssp. *neziki*
- F *Davidia involucreta*
- G *Stewartia monadelph*
- H *Benthamidia japonica*
- I *Symplocos chinensis* var. *leucocarpa* form *pilosa*
- J Japanese maple
- K *Prunus x subhirtella* cv *Autumnalis*
- L *Carpinus laxiflora*



Third Floor Plan

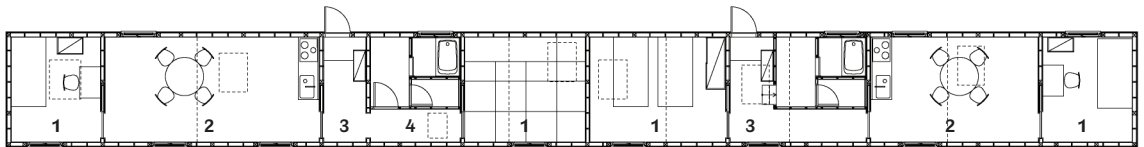
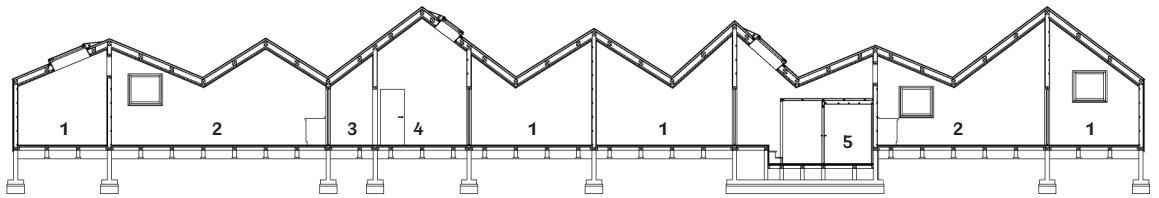
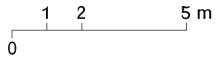


Second Floor Plan



First Floor Plan

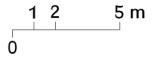






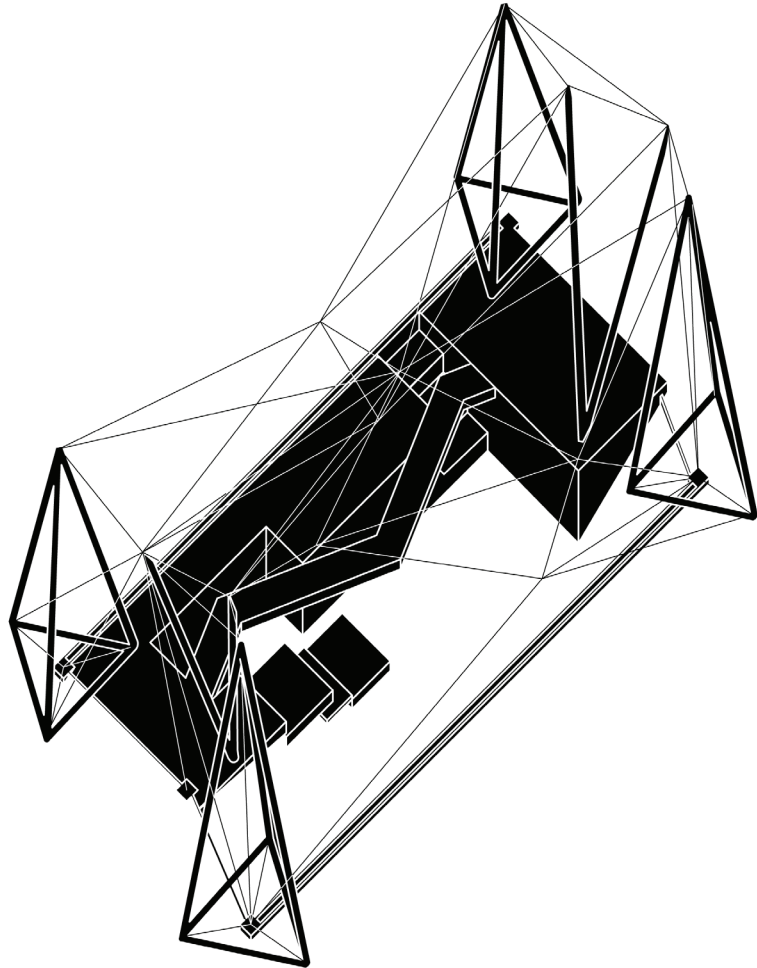
**Anne Holtrop, Trail House,
Almere, 2009.**

Photograph: Bas Princen.



A LETTER TO THE ZOOLOGIST

Joana Rafael
pictures by Alessandro Sambini



Professor Sir Patrick Bateson
President of the Zoological Society of London
Outer Circle
Regent's Park
London NW1 4RY

London, December 2009

Dear Professor Sir Patrick Bateson,

A LETTER TO THE ZOOLOGISTS

In all innocence and a healthy interest on the Northern (Snowdon) Aviary, I address this letter to you. It follows an investigation on the architectural culture of the London Zoo and relates to the idea that the ornithological pavilion, walk-through aviary from 1961-64, was designed with the welded aluminium mesh enclosure only as temporary feature, to be there as long as the community of birds need to establish, or achieve permanent acceptance of the area as habitat and therefore not leave.

For the birds that inhabit the structure, as for the practice and the interest of zoology and the life and work of the architect that signed the aviary, I wonder if the idea was to be considered. So many times mentioned as hostile to flight or of difficult cleaning the mesh accommodates little ingenuity but respects an aesthetic socio-technological construction like show window, promoted as focal point for bird keeping. Once temporary rather than utilitarian, it is to be recognized the progress its removal seems to entail and how admirable it would be to open that aviary to the sky.

Architecturally speaking, in between the trees, the four corners marked by tetrahedral held in mid-air would frame the bird's territorial behaviour as the only physical manifestation of the aviary. In addition, once surpassed the state of grow and their protective apparatus, the tensistructure gripped by cables anchored into the ground by two V-shaped welded aluminium columns 80ft high, to serve as impressive perching positions. Settled in place at the service of "the lightweight dream in which people, and animals, were to be liberated from the constrains of shelter and the dynamic forms in which free-flight was, by necessity, tethered to the boundaries of freedom" (Steiner, 2003: 21).

To the purpose of the grand design, the mesh removal would certainly certify the possibility of the Northern (Snowdon) Aviary's nesting boxes, as once recognized by Reyner Baham, a prolific architectural critic, to prove "the difference between a great building of the twentieth century and a major building of the nineteen sixties" (Reyner, 1996: 121). By other words, to prove the difference between a great modernistic building and a major building of a time and from a generation of architects committed to the future and sustained by confidence in rational debate and action to help and to create encouraging ambience for the seeding and development of architectural ideas. Probable reason for the choice Antony Armstrong-Jones made for Cedric Price and that Price extended to Frank Newby, the investigative structural engineer, member of the Team X.

Both highly inspired, creative and adventurous in the approach to design, their proposal had been consulted together with Peter Scott, the celebrated ornithologist and conservationist formerly Fellow of the Zoological Society of London and one of the founders of the World Wide Fund for Nature, in the past World Wildlife Fund. Despite no documentation or certified description being released, to leave the aviary indefinite follows Price's known belief in indeterminacy. Moreover if birds become spaced, confined to the neighbourhood of their nest as defence reaction and/or method of ensuring that food supply is neither wasted nor exhausted, as is thought since Aristotle (4BC) and confirmed by Henri Howard in 1920, "because the territory is the property of the animal and leaving it is to venture" (Deleuze, 1988: A for animals), why should one aviary not give maximum free-flight space?

On the condition of the correct housing of birds, and since it is a subject as complex as the birds themselves, present-day techniques to be perfectly reasonable, responsible and humane in practices of conservation of species, especially of keeping certain birds, are still to be improved, as your contemporaries willingly admit. For as much we are proud of the great advances that wept through your profession, cleaning old-fashioned ideas and prejudices reverberating from the old ethical issue normally directed to the zoos, or to its predecessor's reasoning, much value and scientific worth may at the same time be gained from simple experiments and informed technical scientific awareness.

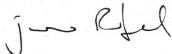
However, in front of such a respectful career you have in ethology, I must confess certain inexperience, especially as regard the proposition I am posing to the zoological society you preside. It may be that the relationship between architecture and animal behaviour is not limited to strategies of territoriality. Or that, territoriality is not limited to spatial or epistemological arrangements.

I know or I believe to know that, since late summer 1965, date of the aviary's opening, a variety of birds, approximately 150 of 45 species, most Asian and African had been housed in the aviary Cedric Price signed, and that the birds currently housed, nomadic or partially migratory are part of the effort your society maintains to integrate the IUCN Red List Endangered Species, the world's main authority on the conservation Status of species. Such a jurisdiction must, by definition correspond to certain duties and obligations on efforts to preserve zoological species but, in light of today's increase of interest in natural resources and on benefits for threatened species, used as regard as conservation tools, those should cohere with methods to perpetuate zoological facilities.

Nevertheless, listed as historical monument or architectural notable construction commissioned to truly "display the natural characteristics of the animals", as László Moholy-Nagy stated in *The New Architecture of the London Zoo* for Peter Chaimers Mitchell and John James Joss's (1913-114) *Mappin Terraces*, and Berthold Lubetkin's (1932) *Penguin Pool*, the Northern (Snowdon) Aviary is effectively a glorious birdcage, whose challenge stands to serve this brief eulogy.

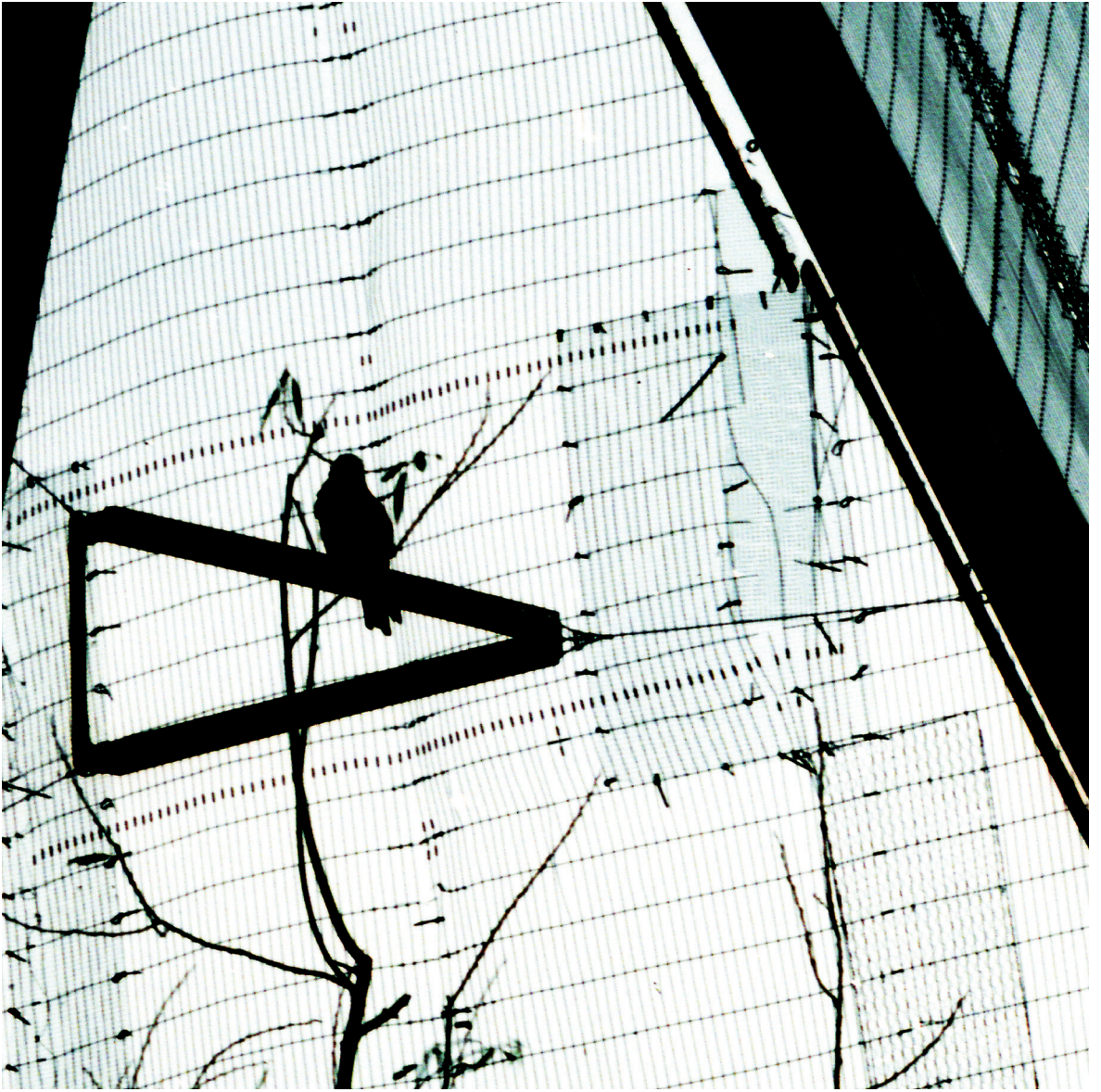
Looking forward for your opinion.

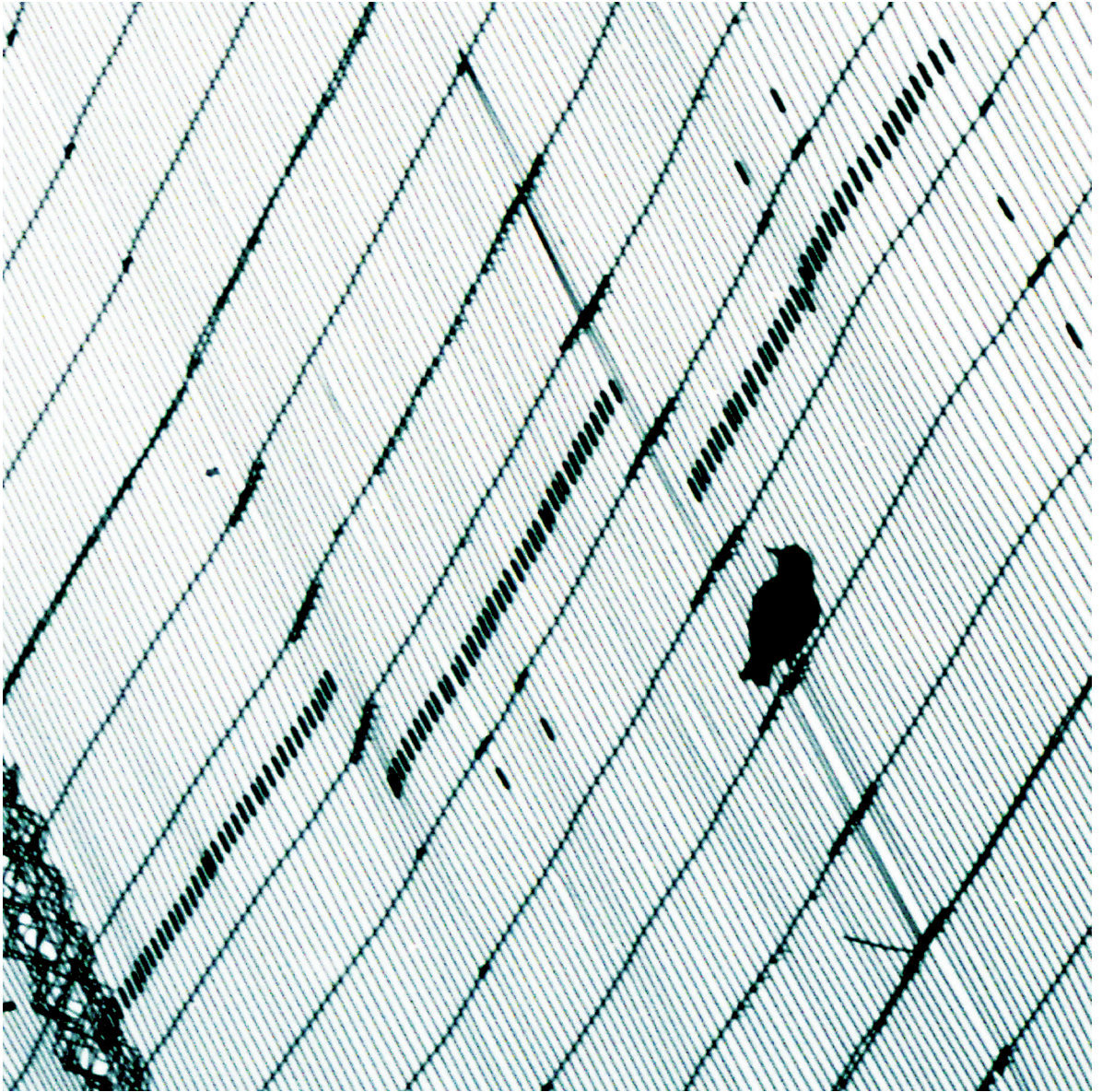
Yours sincerely,

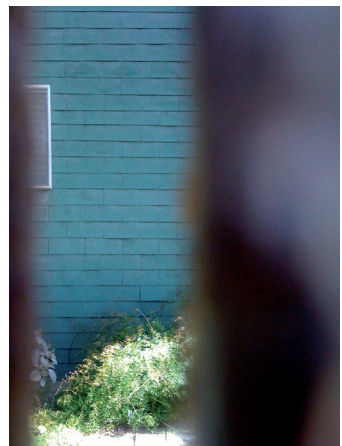
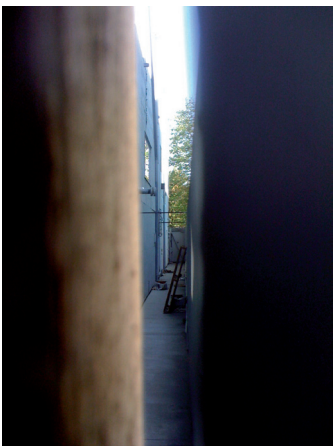
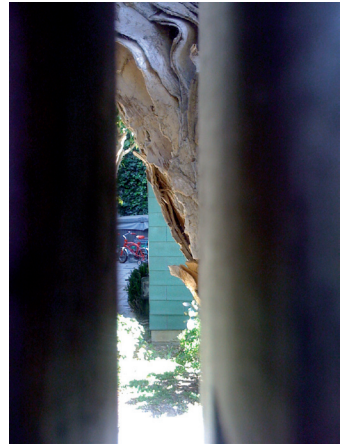
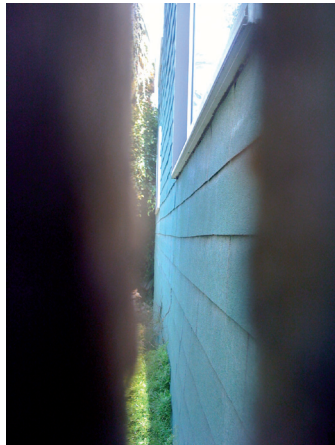
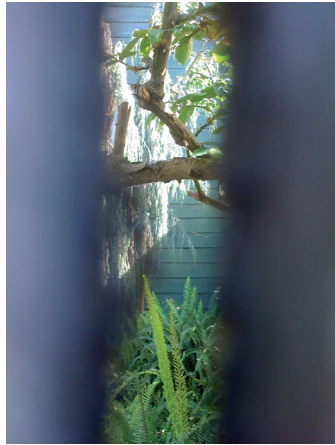


Joana Rafael
Mrs, Ma, Dip Arch



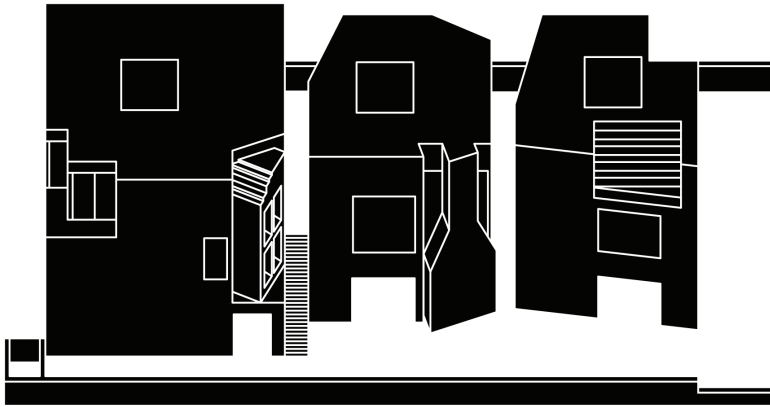






THE ONE-TRICK PONY

Salomon Frausto



What is there possibly left for a critic to write about the architecture of Frank O. Gehry that hasn't already been written? There are those critics who laud him for his artistic genius and whimsical buildings, feting him as the world's best architect since that other Frank who did that other Guggenheim. Then there are those critics who squawk at the mention of his name, accusing him of self-plagiarism or, in the words of the English writer and broadcaster Jonathan Meades, being a "one-trick pony's one-trick pony". Whichever opinion one sides with, there is no doubt that the realized pen strokes of the Canadian-born, Pritzker Prize-winning Gehry have left their indelible mark on contemporary architecture culture, as well as on the popular imagination, for generations to come.

Facing page:
Pictures through Indiana
Avenue Studios' wooden
fence, 2010.
By Giovanni Piovene

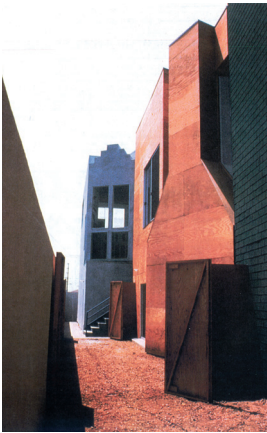
With the conversion of his own abode in Santa Monica, California into a personal testing ground for architectural experimentation, Gehry fully bloomed onto the architecture scene in 1978 at the late age of nearly fifty. The adulation for this project would only be drowned out by the applause he received two decades later for the titanium-clad Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, credited for revitalizing the long-dormant Basque city. From his early acclaimed projects to his latter-day celebrity-status-making buildings, Gehry's architectural *métier* has always centred on the act of balancing context, abstraction and materiality.

Indiana Avenue Studios – the three 1,500-square-foot live-work artist units designed and built between 1979 and 1981 in Venice, California – are exemplary of this approach to architectural production. The modest project shows how Gehry makes architecture that successfully frames its respective setting with freshness and originality, anticipating what will eventually characterize his signature style of sculptural forms and material experimentation.

It would be the recognition of his Easy Edges corrugated cardboard furniture series of the late 1960s and early '70s—one of his first design experiments using quotidian materials and Pop Art aesthetics—that would welcome Frank O. Gehry into the Los Angeles art community (whose elite had long shunned him), eventually leading to the commission by three local artists for the combined living and working spaces on Indiana Avenue in the Oakwood neighbourhood of Venice.

The neighbourhood, one of the few historically African American communities on the west side of Los Angeles, was founded in the 1930s, during the period of racial segregation, as a settlement area for African Americans migrating west to work in the local oil fields. The construction of the San Diego Freeway in the 1960s cut through the neighbourhood, causing a steady increase of poor Mexican and other immigrant populations to move into the area. Located a few blocks inland from Venice's coastal tourist zone, the three-volume building was the first in a series of local initiatives aimed at revitalizing the economically depressed area. By the 1990s the neighbourhood would become greatly gentrified yet ethnically diverse.

Nestled in a suburban sea of single-family houses and low-rise, mixed-use buildings, each of the three box-like volumes – clad spec-



Frank O. Gehry, Indiana Avenue Studios, Venice, California, 1979–81. View of entry path.

**Next page:
Frank O. Gehry, Indiana Avenue Studios, Venice, California, 1979–81. View of unit one.**



tively in dark green asphalt shingles, untreated plywood and sky blue stucco – is tightly lined up from east to west on the forty-foot-wide site, enclosed by a high fence for the security of its residents. Entry to the westernmost and centre units (respectively faced in shingles and plywood) is gained directly from a car garage and the easternmost unit (covered in stucco) by an enclosed walkway. The former two units are comprised of double-height spaces, while the latter unit, located above the car garage, is a single storey high.

Set against the low-lying Venice skyline, each unit – trapped within the tightness of the site – is distinguished by an idiosyncratic form that is subtly integrated into the neighbourhood. In accordance with California Coastal Commission regulations, the building height is limited to twenty-eight feet, causing Gehry's tripartite composition to pop out of a quintessential American suburban canvas. His intervening volumes frame what already exists. Oversized commonplace building elements – a staircase, a chimney, a bay window – break up the exterior massing, casting shadow and giving depth to the volumes. He creates a continuity of shape and colour, sketching a new horizon of distorted and radically foreshortened perspective against the California sky.

Wrapped in standardized building materials that match the materiality of the local neighbourhood, the exteriors of the three volumes, which are constructed of conventional wood framing on concrete footings, are camouflaged within the existing landscape. Further developing the language of his pink bungalow in Santa Monica, the interiors are left unfinished, revealing the compound-treated joints of their drywall skin along with visible studs, joists and rafters. Gehry reveals – and aestheticizes – the often-concealed methods of American building construction. This “unbuilt” aesthetic continues to inform his later work and to leave its traces in projects realized by other architects, like the Office for Metropolitan Architecture, whose Prada Epicenter Store of 2001 in New York, built more than two decades later, has exposed water-resistant, greenboard drywall in its interior.

Gehry's Pop sensibilities, which were nurtured by the ideas of such Pop artists as Robert Irwin and Ed Ruscha, with whom he shares many aesthetic affinities, come alive at the Indiana Avenue Studios. Following in the vein of Pop Art – a term first coined by the architects Alison and Peter Smithson in 1956 to describe the use of objects, symbols, materials and technologies from mass culture into the production of art – Gehry creates Pop Architecture. Much like Ruscha's seemingly flat paintings of the late 1960s, Gehry's exterior composition on Indiana Avenue stresses

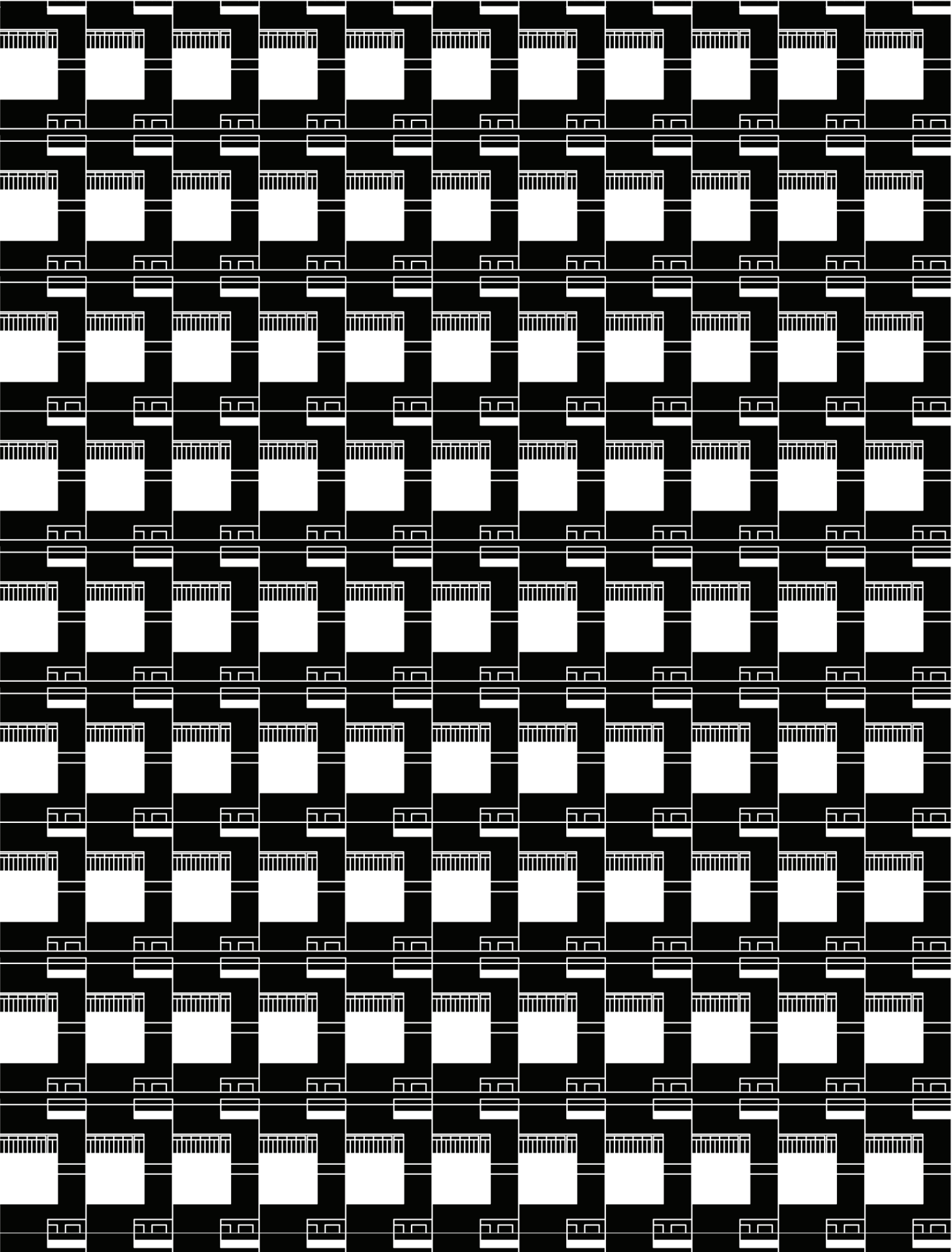
frontal presentation and the flatness of colour bound by hard edges. He plays with colour, objects and symbols of everyday life to create a lucid and cogent architectural composition – a truly postmodern architecture that’s aware of its own making.

Setting aside matters of taste or whatever the critics write – whether one loves his early or late work better, or prefers his designs of sticks and stone versus those of steel and glass – Gehry has consistently practised architecture. His enduring interests have taken him from his beginning explorations in normative, Cartesian-based building to his latest CATIA-produced constructions. He has been consistent in developing his architectural ideas and composing his own architectural language of oversize scale, material experimentation, site-specificity and playful imagery. This isn’t to make the claim that all his projects have pushed the boundaries of inventiveness or appropriately related to their respective contexts. It is merely to suggest that Frank O. Gehry may be a model for those architects patiently searching for their own idea of architecture in an epoch of instant gratification. Perhaps Frank O. Gehry is a one-trick pony – the idiot savant whose consistent interest has been in sculpting a culture and practice of architecture.

**Frank O. Gehry:
Indiana Avenue Studios,
Venice, California, 1979–81.
Interior of unit one.**

**Next page:
Frank O. Gehry, Indiana
Avenue Studios, Venice,
California, 1979–81. Plans,
sections and elevations.**





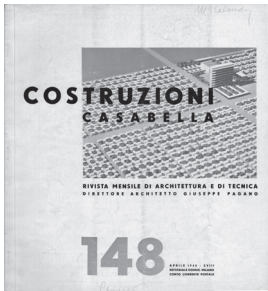
THE SECRET LIFE OF THE HORIZONTAL CITY

Francesco Carofalo

The horizontal city was a project-manifesto prepared by Irenio Diotallevi, Franco Marescotti and Giuseppe Pagano for publication in a monographic issue of their magazine *Casabella* under very particular historical circumstances: the crisis of Fascism, the Second World War and the shift towards democracy.

The searchlights of history have, for many years, lit up the backdrop to this process, which has been considered as the prevalent drama, rather than the architects involved who, instead, experienced a very specific crisis, to which this project belongs. Placing it within this story does not attenuate the innocent and radical sense of this experience, which provokes its discussion here, but reveals further meanings.

A rare few of those who will read this text will have ever come across the original publication. In the memory of the majority, the project coincides with the image of the model, in which the rectangular carpet of patio houses was juxtaposed with the slab of the hotel-residence. In reality, we are dealing with an “integral and organic” project, in the words of Pagano. The proposal confronted all aspects of design, from the scale of the city to the building details. Italian modernism was not



without similar proposals, all indebted to Corbusian models, though this particular one is so accurate and powerful that it overshadowed all others (Giuseppe Vaccaro, for example, in 1937 used an issue of *Domus* to promote a “casa-collina”, a hill-shaped housing type).

Issue 148 of *Casabella* contained 47 outline drawings and charts realized in ink for the publication, 9 images of 2 models, and 45 photographs, for the most part derived from investigations of housing conditions in Milan, made in 1938. The authors defined a complementary trio. Giuseppe Pagano was still a young man, though only by current standards, which have deferred the adult age to “over forty”. His biography is far too complicated to be summarized here, but it should not be taken for granted. The official version celebrates him as the champion of modernity, a talented cultural organizer and a martyr redeemed of his Fascist leanings in the Nazi concentration camp where he was deported for participating, after 1943, in the Resistance. In reality, Pagano managed a process focused on the modernization of Italian architecture and society, obviously authoritarian in nature, though attentive to the forces at work and with a ductility somewhat concealed by his controversial tone of speech, setting him against others who sought to fulfil the same role, such as Marcello Piacentini and the intransigent natives of Como, Pier Maria Bardi (a sort of Tom Wolfe of Rationalism) and Alberto Sartoris.

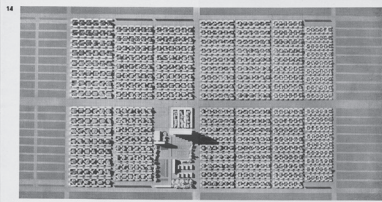
Diotallevi and Marescotti, in turn, formed a complementary couple of young collaborators. The first was an engineer, and the second an autodidact with no university education. Of the trio, Marescotti was obviously responsible for the drawings and was the creator of extraordinarily seductive images, dry as they may be. Here we must point out something more than a simple biographic curiosity. Marescotti worked for five or six years in Rome before arriving in Milan and collaborating with Pagano – a collaboration that was not professional, but rather graphic, editorial and, we could say, “research-based”. His talent for drawing, whose Roman background is evident in the drawings of his first project for “la casa dell’uomo”, was perfected while working with Armando Brasini and later, for a brief time, with Guido Fiorini. The great baroque visionary and Le Corbusier’s engineer-friend had one thing in common: both worked as set designers for the cinema. Marescotti developed entirely different ideological positions, though under the absorbed, rigid discipline of the director, his “hand” continued to work. This ambiguity is not rare, even in the most radical environments of the modernists. Those who have seen the drawings

of the Russian Constructivists know that a pictorial education united with an idea of the architect as artist and idealist, supported solely by the technique of drawing, was an anything but secondary aspect of the so-called Soviet avant-garde.

The project was presented in the magazine in a circular layout. After the editorial by Pagano, the description began with the “house-unit”. The derivation of the project from Hilberseimer’s 1931 proposal is acknowledged without any problems, though the development is very accurate. The mechanism is based on maintaining the fixity of the L-shaped corner, considering the communal and technical parts of the dwelling as fixed and not subject to growth, and allowing the two wings to extend. In this way, the rectangular blocks created by the units, all of the same size, can be composed within the macro-rectangle measuring 750 by 400 metres. There was no further investigation of the sociological consequence of living alongside neighbours with identical family compositions – that is, with similar daily habits. The division of any heterogeneity remained one of the constants of functionalism. However, the project was less precise about who would promote the construction, about whether the homes were to be owned or rented by their inhabitants and, in general, about the economic regime that this optimized city was to have produced.

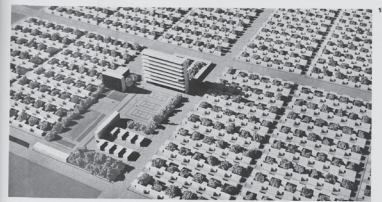
The description continues with a discussion of the principle of aggregation of the elementary unit, investigations of living conditions and urban planning comparisons in favour of the benefits of the model (sections, land use, healthiness); this was followed by the famous test in Milan and, finally, building techniques and furnishings. These last sections were linked to advertisements in the magazine that, then as today, financed architectural publications.

Pagano’s discourse functions as a counterpart to the transparency of the images. The modern city could be reduced to two models: the vertical and the horizontal. The second was to be preferred because it matched the single-family ideal: it was less collective. Everything depended upon the achievement of a competitive density of 250 inhabitants per hectare. The second reason for preferring the horizontal is to be found in a Mediterranean ascendancy, its coherence with “Hellenic civilization”. The conclusion was political: the realization of these projects required the surpassing of “surviving conceptions of the liberal system”; what was required was a “more organic and integral plan” and, more precisely, the expropriation of central parts of the city. The final lines that evoke the “defence of the race” are not



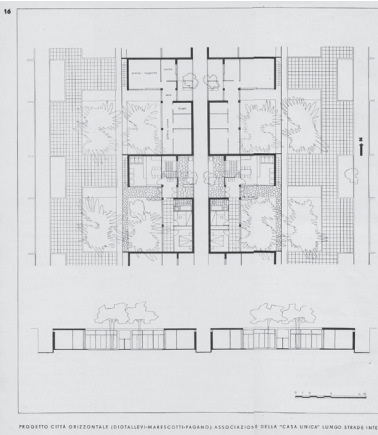
QUARTIERE DELLA CITTÀ ORIENTALE

La serie delle tre parti (D, E, F) del quartiere della Città Orientale, che si sviluppa lungo l'asse stradale principale, è caratterizzata da una serie di edifici a tre piani, con facciate in mattoni e balconi in ferro battuto. Le unità abitative sono disposte in modo da creare una serie di cortili interni, che favoriscono la ventilazione e l'illuminazione naturale. Le scale sono disposte in modo da creare una serie di percorsi pedonali, che favoriscono la mobilità e la socialità.

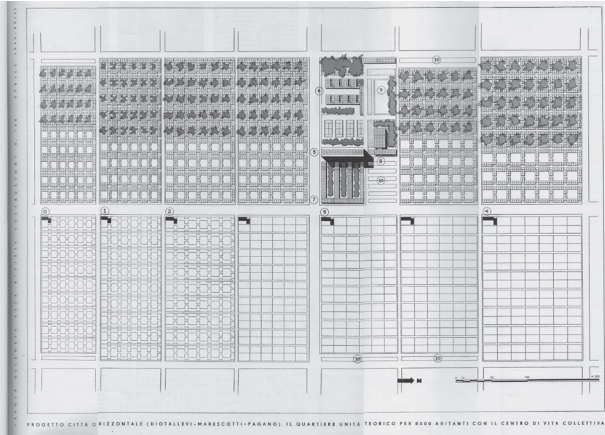


QUARTIERE DELLA CITTÀ ORIENTALE

Il quartiere della Città Orientale è un esempio di architettura moderna, che si integra con l'ambiente urbano esistente. Le unità abitative sono disposte in modo da creare una serie di cortili interni, che favoriscono la ventilazione e l'illuminazione naturale. Le scale sono disposte in modo da creare una serie di percorsi pedonali, che favoriscono la mobilità e la socialità.



PRODOTTO CITTÀ ORIENTALE (DOTTALINI/MARSCOTTI/PAGANO) ASSOCIAZIONE DELLA "CASA NUOVA-LUNDO STRADA INTERNA"



PRODOTTO CITTÀ ORIENTALE (DOTTALINI/MARSCOTTI/PAGANO) IL QUARTIERE UNITÀ TEORICO PER SEDE ASSISTENTI CON IL CENTRO DI VITA COLLETTIVA

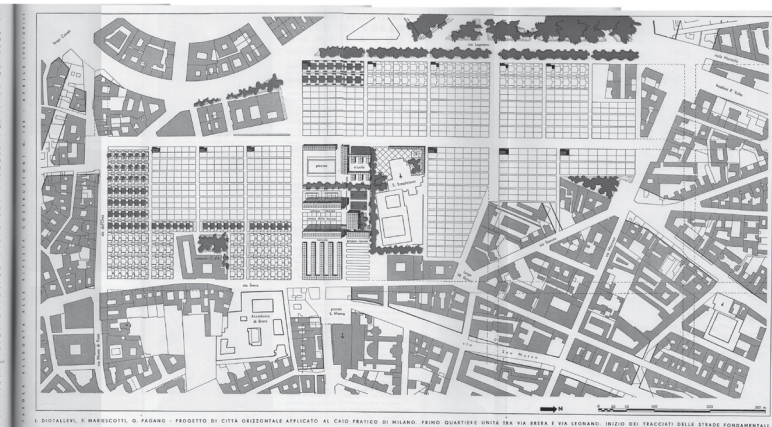
CITTÀ ORIENTALE (D.M.P.P.) QUARTIERE UNITÀ PER FAMIGLIE NUMEROSE

INDICAZIONE AREA	Altezza	ML	ML/abitante	C.C.
N. 214 (1a tip.) per 3 abitanti	6,00	2000	333,33	100
N. 215 (2a tip.) per 3 abitanti	8,00	2700	337,50	100
N. 216 (3a tip.) per 3 abitanti	8,00	2700	337,50	100
N. 217 (4a tip.) per 4 abitanti	12,00	3000	375,00	150
N. 218 (5a tip.) per 4 abitanti	12,00	3000	375,00	150
N. 219 (6a tip.) per 5 abitanti	15,00	4000	400,00	200
Zona verde (100 m. x 100 m.)	0,00	10000	10000,00	42,5
Spazio pubblico (100 m. x 100 m.)	0,00	10000	10000,00	42,5
Spazio verde (100 m. x 100 m.)	0,00	10000	10000,00	42,5
Spazio pubblico (100 m. x 100 m.)	0,00	10000	10000,00	42,5
Spazio verde (100 m. x 100 m.)	0,00	10000	10000,00	42,5
TOTALE	7504	30000	4000	100

LEGGENDA

TABELLA DEGLI ALLOGGI, VANI E PERSONE E INDICI DI AFFOLLAMENTO DEL QUARTIERE CENTRIO

Tipologia	Altezza	ML	ML/abitante	C.C.
N. 214 (1a tip.) per 3 abitanti	6,00	2000	333,33	100
N. 215 (2a tip.) per 3 abitanti	8,00	2700	337,50	100
N. 216 (3a tip.) per 3 abitanti	8,00	2700	337,50	100
N. 217 (4a tip.) per 4 abitanti	12,00	3000	375,00	150
N. 218 (5a tip.) per 4 abitanti	12,00	3000	375,00	150
N. 219 (6a tip.) per 5 abitanti	15,00	4000	400,00	200
Zona verde (100 m. x 100 m.)	0,00	10000	10000,00	42,5
Spazio pubblico (100 m. x 100 m.)	0,00	10000	10000,00	42,5
Spazio verde (100 m. x 100 m.)	0,00	10000	10000,00	42,5
Spazio pubblico (100 m. x 100 m.)	0,00	10000	10000,00	42,5
Spazio verde (100 m. x 100 m.)	0,00	10000	10000,00	42,5
TOTALE	7504	30000	4000	100



DOTTALINI, MARSCOTTI, PAGANO - PRODOTTO DI CITTÀ ORIENTALE APPLICATO AL CAIO PATRIZIO DI MILANO. PRIMO QUARTIERE UNITÀ TRA VIA BERGAMO E VIA EDUARDO. INIZIO DEI TRACCEATI DELLE STRADE ORDINAMENTALI

to be misunderstood; they refer to healthiness and hygiene, though they are striking and lead one to think of a deliberate dramatization.

To understand what happened during the passage from Fascism to the post-war period, it is necessary to study the period when twentieth-century Italian architecture truly examined and questioned itself, and implemented a process of self-analysis with respect to its underlying social mandate. At this point we are faced with a revelation: that the entire history of early modernism, the manifestos and relationships with Fascism that have filled books, was also a “battle of styles”, one less characterised by drama. When compared, the years between 1940 and 1945, still in shadow, contain the most important lessons for the passage from “form” to “reform”. There was widespread ferment in Italian architecture in the early 1940s. This was not simply an understanding of the destiny of Fascism, on its way to collapsing in the spiral of the war. Architects felt that they had to prepare for a new “reconstruction” in a general sense: a moral, economic, social and organizational reconstruction. Someone, in particular, understood during those years that the future dialogue with the ruling class would no longer take place through a convergence on the choice of a style and that the force of conviction would no longer be the fullness of a form but rather a global, objective proposal designed to deal with housing problems within the framework of political choices and specific know-how which would surpass the very horizons of the discipline.

Initially there were ideas about how to reconstruct Europe after its conquering by the Axis and then, only later, Italy, though under the continuity of the regime. Projects like the horizontal city were also ways of maintaining a role for architecture and for the architect in a future that was, in any case, imagined as totalitarian. The reconstruction turned out to be much different, and it ordained the defeat of the radicalism of architects like Marescotti. After the editorial failure of their book on public housing, when Italian construction adopted the “Manual” by the neo-Realist Ridolfi, Diotallevi was named director of public housing in Milan, and Marescotti began his university teaching career. Without this context, the re-reading of the project by DMP (this is how they signed the captions) would be less productive.

The innocence of the horizontal city is first and foremost intrinsic; it is that of a device, which becomes clear when it is dropped into the centre of Milan. The church of San Smpliciano remains rotated and trapped like a fragment, like the monuments of Paris in Le Corbusier’s “Plan Voisin”. For those familiar with the city, the idea of walking out

of the gate of the Accademia di Brera to find themselves confronting a sea of one-storey houses produces a sensation of vertigo. In reality, a podium united the houses, establishing a new horizon surmounted by monuments and new tall buildings. We must remember that the authors of the project calculated the application of their plan to the historical centre of Milan, the *cittadella spagnola*.

According to the editors of *San Rocco*, it is possible to call an anonymous architectural vocabulary “innocent”, and by this definition, what we are talking about is certainly a moment of innocence for the “città orizzontale”, which is both an anti-formal manifesto and a collaborative effort (although, as we have seen, it was actually carried out by three rather complementary characters). Finally, it is a projective innocence in the sense that it is once again of interest to us when, faced with the complexity of the city, we are tempted not only to accept it, but also to glorify it in aesthetic terms. And thus a diagram, a parameter or a slogan (density!) appears to put us back into play.

Italian architecture has always oscillated between intransigence and realism; it has sublimated radical tensions in projects while being the object of a much more moderate and pacific experience of building. In the end, its best expression continues to be that which is capable of maintaining the balance between opposing pulsions, which was so evidently demonstrated in the Tuscolano horizontal dwelling unit designed by Adalberto Libera. The 216 Ina Casa apartments are the only example of carpet housing constructed in Italy and bear a significant resemblance to the manifesto of the trio published in *Casabella*. Like the latter, the project even features a linear building for singles and couples. All the same, there is a profound difference between the Milanese manifesto and the Roman fragment. This is revealed in the small rotations in plan, the use of materials that mediate between city and privacy, the construction of an entrance gate and a hierarchy not present in the original device, and in the details that are surprisingly preoccupied with decorative dignity. Within this realism, which does not cancel out the radicalism of the model, lies the lesson that I wish to embrace, though without repressing admiration for the horizontal city.

I would like to thank
Maristella Casciato for
loaning me issue 148 of
Casabella and for the
information with which
she provided me.

THE BATHS: A PROJECT FOR THE VILLA MUGGIA

Salottobuono
with Annapaola Busnardo
and Francesco Librizzi

Once upon a time in Imola there was a country house.¹ The house was transformed into a hunting lodge in the eighteenth century. Then the building fell into ruin. Just a few rooms, a *salone* with columns and frescoes on the vaults and a monumental stairway remained.

In 1936 Piero Bottoni designed an impressive transformation² of the old lodge into a modernist villa. The old, monumental stairway led to a bare wall with no openings on the upper level except for an enigmatic door. Below the level of the door, two large, modernist windows introduced a brand new underworld. The eighteenth-century *salone* floated on top of this new ground level, suspended and perfectly useless. A bridge³ spanning from the monumental entrance to the rest of the house cut the lower level at a height of roughly two metres, thereby preventing any possibility of using both levels. By cutting the old pavement, the *salone* was transformed into a precipice, a dried moat spanned by a fragile drawbridge. The Villa Muggia took the form of a Turandot castle. It is easy to imagine the spoiled daughters of the Muggia billionaires waiting for the hesitating, clumsy knights of the mediocre Italy of the 1930s to cross the drawbridge and rescue them. But the story actually ended tragically: when Fascism went from ridiculous to miserable, the Jewish Muggia had to leave the villa in 1943. The villa then became a local headquarters of the SS and was subsequently bombed by the US Air Force in 1944. Now the complicated ruins of the villa (possibly the most radical, surreal design of Italian modernism) wait in a silent, provincial garden.

Salottobuono proposes to go on with the series of reincarnations of the old hunting lodge and to transform the ruins once again: this time into a system of public baths and swimming pools. A balneario for Imola.

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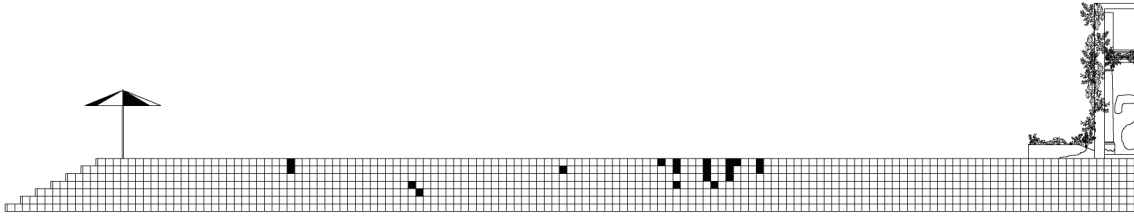
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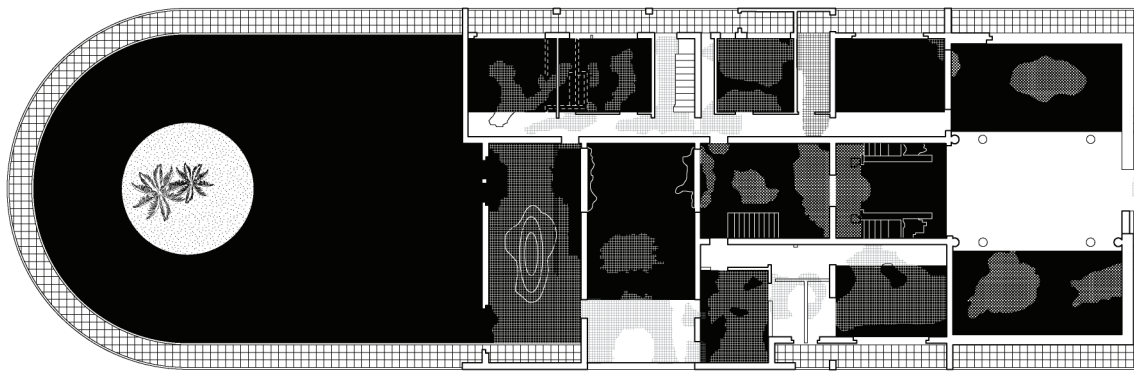
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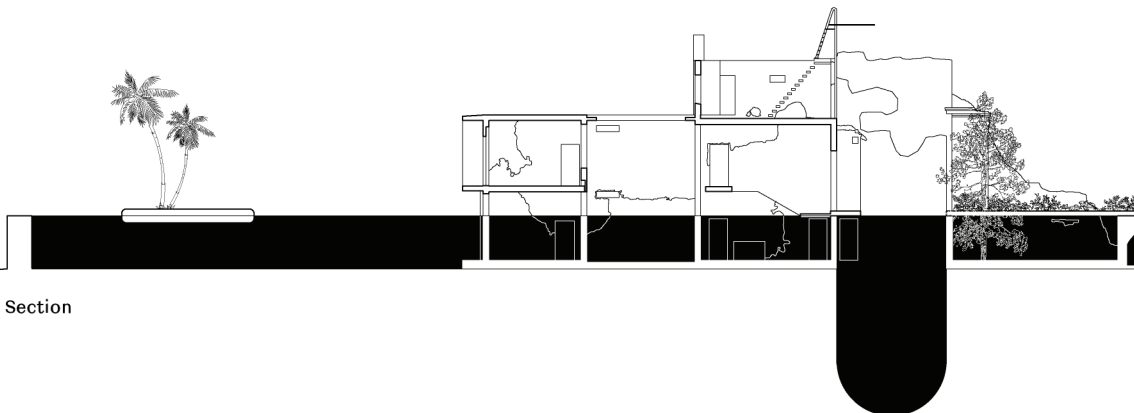




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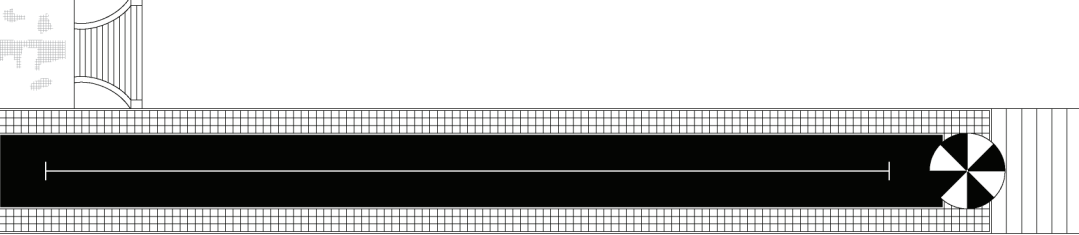
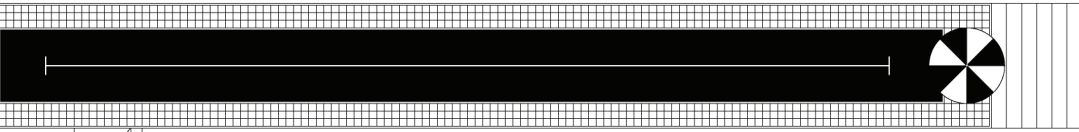
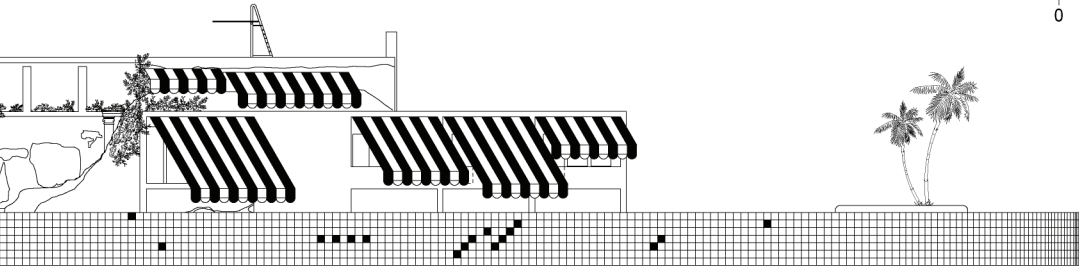


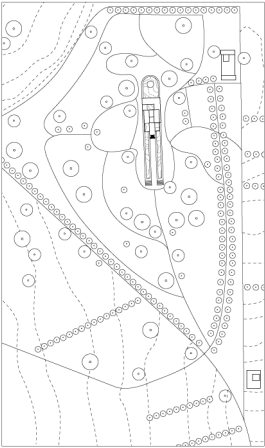
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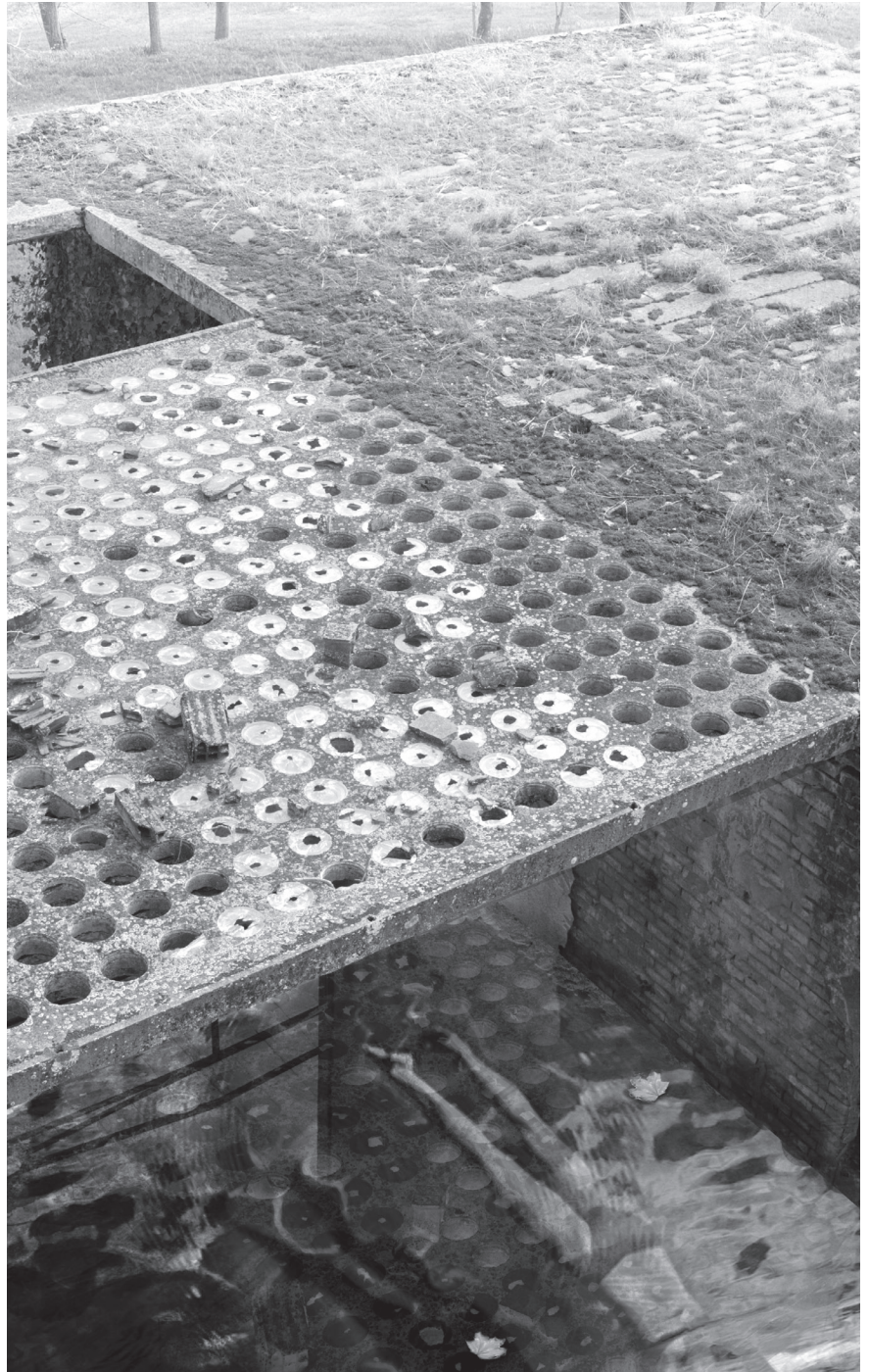
Section

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Villa Muggia: site plan.



BROADCASTING ARCHITECTURE

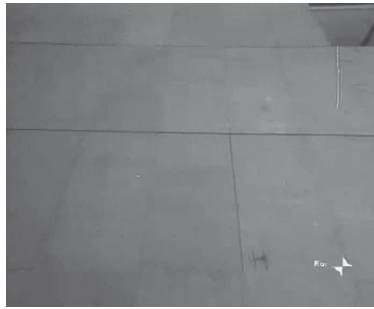
Marco Brizzi

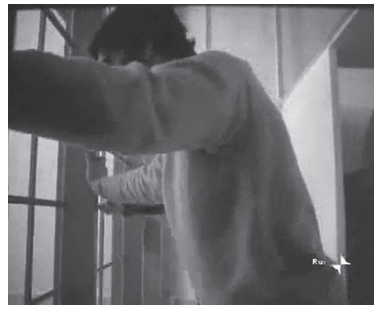
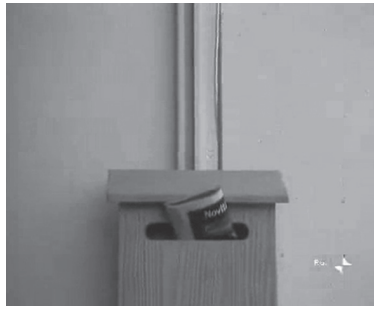
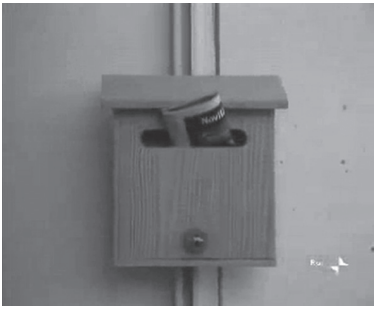
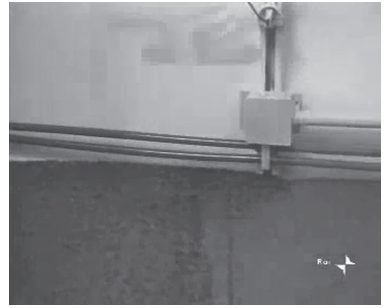
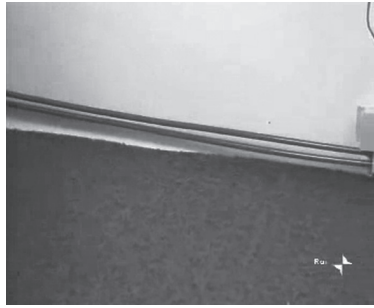
Three men are shown pushing the glass wall of an apartment backward, thereby increasing the volume of the space. The camera captures the simple geometry of the building, a cube open on the two opposite sides that frame the landscape. A forty-year-old Renzo Piano explains that this is an experimental dwelling “whose outer shell and structural elements cannot be changed, but whose interior space can be altered”. This is the so-called “evolutionary home” that the Italian architect had just designed and built with Peter Rice in Bastia Umbra, near Perugia, as part of a programme conceived to house some of the mental patients who had recently been released by the “Basaglia Reform”. (Note: Franco Basaglia is one of the most important representatives of anti-psychiatry; his reform brought about the abolition of mental health facilities in Italy). “The house”, says Piano, as cranes pull up trusses that will support the floors in a dry assembly, “can be modified quantitatively, meaning that one can use the minimum available floor area of 50 square metres or extend the apartment up to a maximum of 120 square metres. But the dwelling can also accommodate different uses, and its inhabitants can employ its rooms in different ways. What is more, they can also choose varying degrees of finish, ranging from a rougher one to others that employ more refined materials”. The images I am describing come from one of the last episodes of the TV show *Habitat, un ambiente per l'uomo* (Habitat: An Environment Suited to Man), which was broadcast in 1978 by RAI, the Italian state-owned television network, and was part of a series of episodes called *Cantiere aperto* (Open Construction Site). Through his or her television screen, the viewer was able to visit modifications made to the built environment

and was invited to ponder their meaning; the TV audience was thus made to understand both the transformations in the environment and the design process that produced them. The camera footage shot on site for the show was complemented by a live debate in the television studio following a journalistic model that, as Italian television critic Aldo Grasso has pointed out, went beyond a merely descriptive and informative approach. With *Habitat* (1970–78), Grasso has said, “the idea was to move public opinion regarding the concrete problems of safeguarding Italy’s natural and artistic heritage”. The author of this programme and the curator of its cultural agenda was Giulio Macchi, a film director (he had worked with Roberto Rossellini, Jean Renoir, Luigi Comencini and Luciano Emmer) and a true pioneer of the popularization of science and technology on Italian television in the 1960s and 1970s. With *Habitat*, Macchi continued along the same path he had set out on in 1966 with another TV show, *Orizzonti della scienza e della tecnica* (The Horizons of Science and Technology), the purpose of which was to make technological research accessible to a broader audience by making it relevant to their everyday lives.

Here the challenging idea of disseminating knowledge about technology and science through television as part of a project of social development is very important. Using the medium of television to help people understand the role and potential of architecture as a tool re-employed the same techniques that characterized the medium of documentary films. Continuing to think about the Italian scene, other examples of this can be found in the work of Giancarlo De Carlo, Carlo Doglio and Ludovico Quaroni, whose *Cronache dell’urbanistica italiana* (Report on Italian Urbanism), *La città degli uomini* (The City of Men), and *Una lezione d’urbanistica* (A Lesson on Urbanism) were produced in 1954 on the occasion of the Mostra di Urbanistica (Urban Planning Show), which was a part of the tenth edition of the Milan Triennale. These films were made in order to promote a form of collective “participation” in the making of public space, so much so that De Carlo himself wanted these movies to be screened in cinemas so as to disseminate a broader understanding of issues related to urban planning. Taking a slightly different track but employing the same popular-science approach, there was *La giornata nella casa popolare* (A Day in Social Housing), a documentary made by Piero Bottoni in 1933 that followed in the footsteps of Ernst May’s work of 1928, which he had produced to promote the *Neues Bauen* movement in Frankfurt. Along the same lines, an informative atmosphere marks film material related









to architecture that, in the TV show curated by Giulio Macchi, seems to be reviving the ambitions of the dream of social Enlightenment as embodied in projects like Diderot and D'Alembert's *Encyclopédie*.

There was more besides this, of course, and while it didn't directly emerge from TV shows like *Habitat*, it started to modify how to think about and extend the potential functions of architecture. In the 1970s, the architectural crowd realized that film was not merely a tool for documentation and popularization; it was also an expressive medium capable of opening up the design process to new forms of communication. The very needs of the design process, in fact, are what explore and renew the potential of the tool of film. The architectural vanguard grabbed hold of it, taking a lesson from the contemporary arts. The result is films like the one made by the Californian architects of the firm Ant Farm entitled *Media Burn* (1975), which narrates the media events conceived by Chip Lord and Doug Michels as an expression of a critical view of the media itself and its effect on the built environment. The films by Superstudio, on the other hand, such as *Architettura interplanetaria* (Interplanetary Architecture, 1971), *Supersuperficie* (Supersurface, 1972) and *Cerimonia* (Ceremony, 1973), which have a solid narrative and oral structure, tend to catch the viewer unprepared: the character of the images, which depict the most figurative and radical architectural visions of the avant-garde, is countered by a detailed, reflective narration that resembles the kind used in documentaries about science or anthropology. The film made by the architects thus becomes a device aimed at promoting architecture's goals in an unconventional way. Though apparently different, the film *Ornamento e delitto* (Ornament and Crime, 1973) by Aldo Rossi with the collaboration of Gianni Braghieri and Franco Raggi (directed by Luigi Durissi) does a similar sort of thing. In the film that complemented the *Architettura-Città* exhibition curated by Rossi himself as part of the fifteenth Milan Triennale as well as in the book *Architettura Razionale*, or *Rational Architecture* (which, as architecture critic Luka Skansi has pointed out, is indissolubly linked to the film), fragments of films by Luchino Visconti, Federico Fellini and Mauro Bolognini are coupled with photographs of some of the works of "historical" rational architecture presented in the exhibition along with images of the industrial suburbs of Milan. Texts by Adolf Loos, Walter Benjamin, Karl Marx and Hans Schmidt create a "collage" that, by means of those very images, presents what can truly be considered an "architectural essay".

From this point onward, the employment of film and eventually of

video as media and design tools in the hands of architects developed rapidly. The images and the descriptions of architecture that appear in the media and on the Internet today present a dense and complex panorama in which the project's functions expand, thereby constantly redefining their domain of action and mediation. Architecture is ever more the protagonist of communicational activities that are often triggered by their very authors within a system that doesn't seem to need practices of effective popularization like the ones employed in *Cantiere aperto*. However, at the same time, the production of architecture videos is a widespread phenomenon, due to the ready accessibility of the necessary instruments as well as to the promotion of original practices of diffusion and sharing on the Web.

If observed today, the experience generated by *Cantiere aperto* when it was being broadcast seems like an interrupted discussion. If, on the one hand, Renzo Piano's description of the evolutionary house can be considered as somehow describing the goal of a modernist ideology of architecture that reveals itself when that modernist ideology meets mass communications, on the other it represents the epilogue of a long period in which educational and cultural engagement played a prominent role in Italian television. It was, in fact, in the late 1970s when the state television monopoly ended and private television stations were born, and so the scene was about to change. Architecture, as it is described in film and on TV today, aspires to exceptionality and novelty. It seems as if it is on hormone therapy: highly peculiar, at all costs, architectural works are presented with words that emphasize each and every element, thereby relegating to the background any attempt to generate a popular understanding of them. Macchi's television, on the other hand, tended to discreetly illustrate the daily, mundane dimension of architecture; he favoured its contents rather than its author, and he sought to explain rather than to astonish.

In an age when television, abdicating its potential as an educational medium, seems to be oriented exclusively towards entertainment, watching Macchi's *Cantiere aperto* allows us to reflect upon the opportunity of finding a new challenge in architectural films and television today. Perhaps this is the "cantiere aperto" we should be investigating now, in order to be able to participate in the construction of a higher awareness of the discourse that architecture can promote in contemporary society.

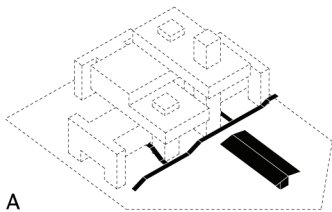
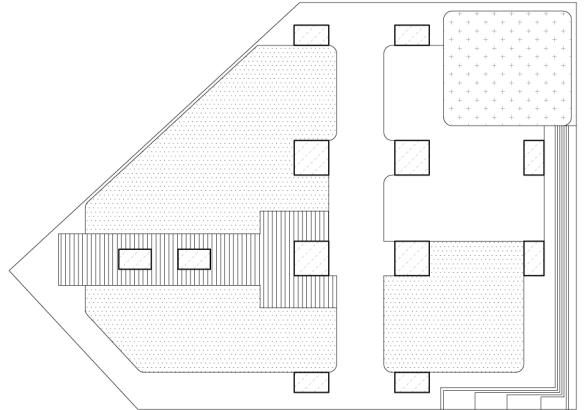
UNFOLDED SPIRAL

2A+P/A

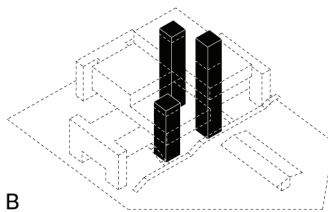
The Dutch pavilion at the World Fair in Osaka 1970 fully represents the principle of the spiral movement beloved by J.B. Bakema. The pavilion consisted of three containers linked to towers that rose from the water, like a spiral.

Instructions:

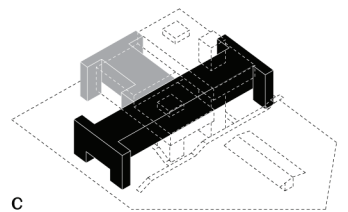
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2. Cut out shapes around solid lines
3. Score along broken lines
4. Glue tabs where numbers match



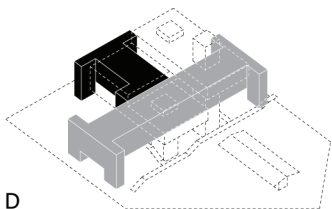
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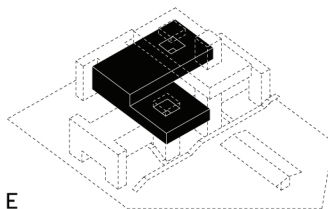
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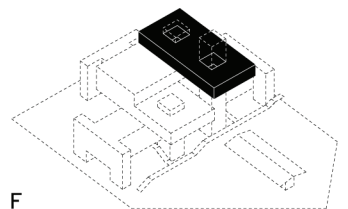
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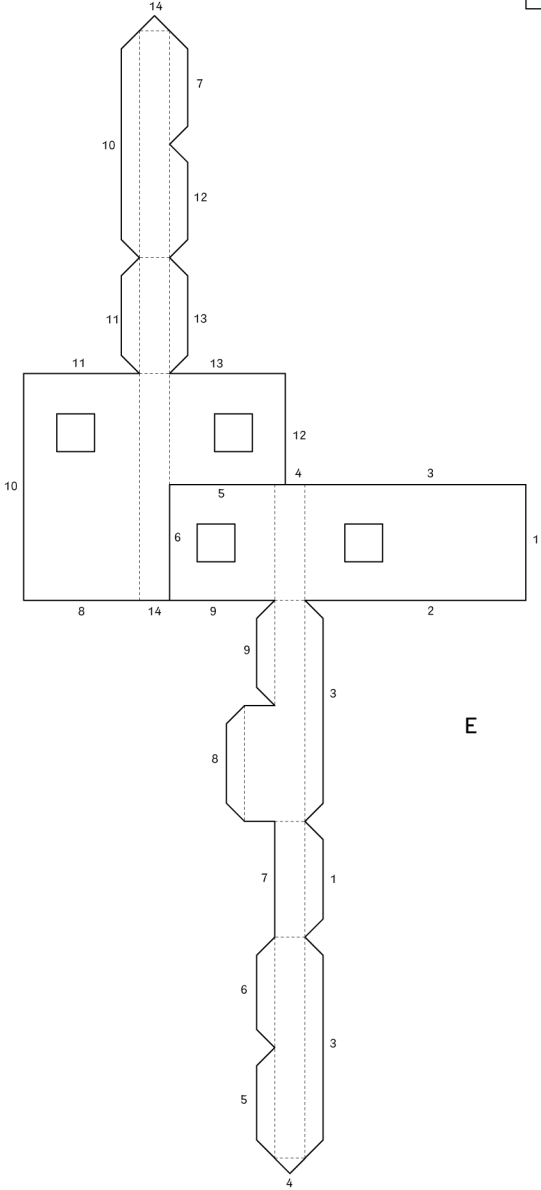
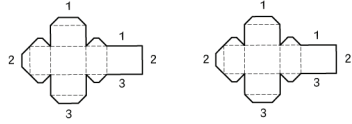
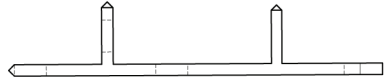


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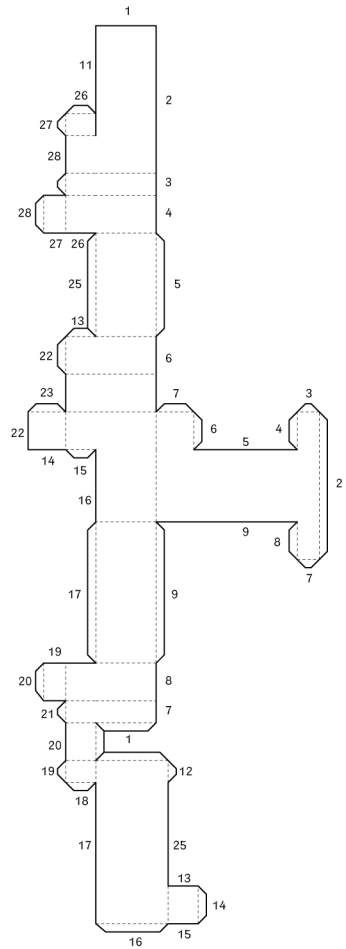


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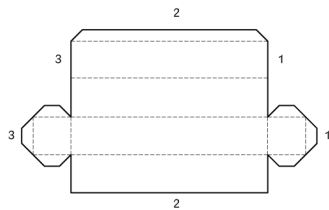
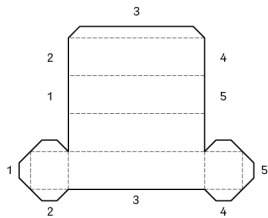
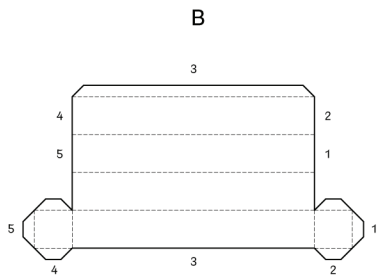
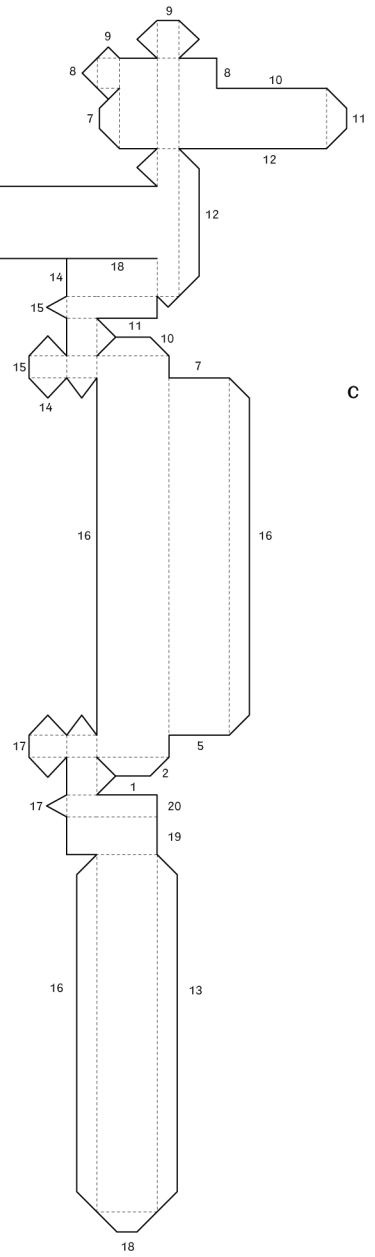
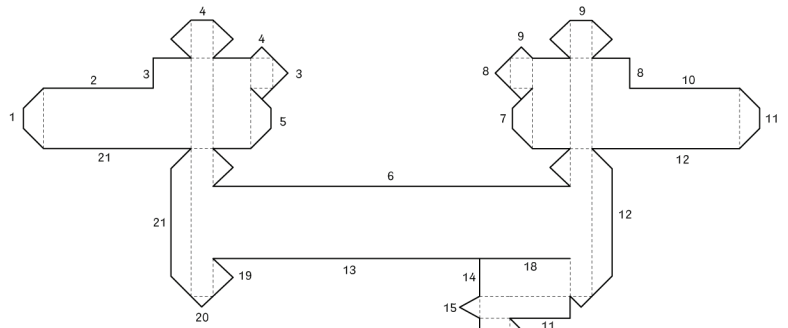
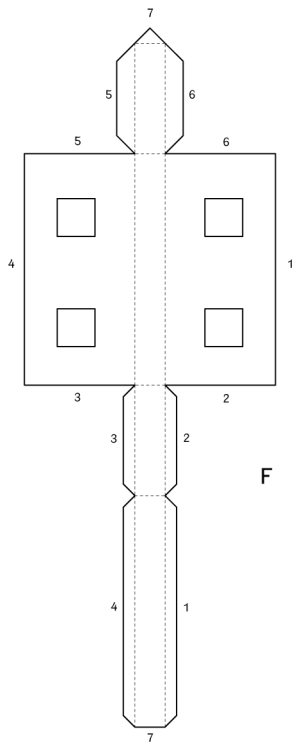
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The future of COMPETITIONS - TELL THEM WHAT THEY NEED

Historically the architectural competition has been a testing ground for new ideas. It was understood as a space in which research and development, as well as the creation of critical architectural proposals, were possible. Today, competition architecture has increasingly become a service provision for the jury and a fulfillment of the technical requirements of the brief – in other words, simply what is needed to win the competition.

Needs are generating ideas whereas ideas should be generating needs.

The outcome is often predictable and conventional, stripping competitions of their significance as a critical tool.

Stimulus

- What needs to be changed, and how, in order to make competitions once again a tool for generating new ideas?
- What can be changed to improve the interaction between commissioner, client and end-user in the competition process?
- How do the mechanisms of competitions affect the built environment?
- What is the potential of architecture competitions?



THIS TIME YOU ASK THE QUESTIONS AND YOU GIVE THE ANSWERS

This competition attempts to instigate change by challenging the established in a critical but constructive manner. Join us by contributing the questions not yet asked!

There are no fixed requirements regarding submitted material. Entries could be in the form of a text, manifesto, collage, illustration, SMS, image, fax, diagram, installation, paper architecture, runners up, brief, historical material, etc.

The essential idea is to explore the potential of the architectural competition – it is up to you how to communicate it. Please address the principle question of how to return to a condition where competitions generate ideas rather than simply deliver solutions. The format and material should be in relation to the concept of your submission.

We challenge experienced architects to take part and share their perspective on the matter

The jury

- Boris Broman Jensen (DK), architect, associate professor Århus, Ph.D, Harvard fellow.
- Gary Bates (NO / USA), architect, teacher and curator, founding partner of Spacegroup
- Markus Miessen (GE / GBR), professor, architect, writer, curator, founding partner of nOffice and Studio Miessen.

The entries will be judged anonymously.

Submitted material should reach us by the 1st of November

submission@conditionsmagazine.com

CONDITIONS ANS, Fjordveien 3, 0139 Oslo, Norway
T: +47 97183747
Questions: info@conditionsmagazine.com

www.conditionsmagazine.com



WHAT EVER HAPPENED TO ITALIAN ARCHITECTURE?

**CRITICAL POSITIONS ON ITS PAST, ITS
PRESENT, AND ITS FUTURE**

**ISTITUTO SVIZZERO DI ROMA (ISR)
VIA LUDOVISI 48, 00187 ROMA, ITALY**

**FRI OCTOBER 15, 2010, 10:30-20:00
SAT OCTOBER 16, 2010, 10:00-19:30**

In the second half of the twentieth century, such singular figures as Aldo Rossi, Vittorio Gregotti, or Manfredo Tafuri, and collaborative practices such as Archizoom or Superstudio, not only shaped the architectural culture within Italy, but also took a prominent position on the stage of international discourse. Italian architecture gradually disappeared from the limelight as commercially driven forms of building replaced politically motivated manifestos and bold architectural visions in the advent of postmodernism.

How has Italian architecture since developed? What does Italian architecture mean today? What is the background against which architecture is currently produced in Italy? An inherent part of every society, architecture works as an indicator of political, economic, and cultural conditions, as well as their

transformations over time. A goal of this symposium is to consider the architectural production in Italy and the role of the architect with respect to a larger socio-cultural context.

Speakers include Alberto Alessi, Sandy Attia, Pippo Ciorra, Fabrizio Gallanti, Francesco Garofalo, Filip Geerts, Joseph Grima, Mark Lee, Elli Mosayebi, Matteo Scagnol, Paolo Scrivano, Martino Stierli, PierPaolo Tamburelli, and Mark Wasiuta.

This two-day symposium is initiated and co-organized by the Depart Foundation and the Istituto Svizzero di Roma; and curated by Reto Geiser.

With the support of the Swiss National Science Foundation and develop^{RE}

*www.istitutosvizzero.it
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CALL FOR PAPERS

San Rocco 2: Islands

San Rocco is interested in gathering together all possible external contributions. San Rocco believes that architecture is a collective knowledge, and that collective knowledge is the product of a multitude. External contributions to San Rocco might take different forms. Essays, illustrations, designs, comic strips and novels are all equally suitable for publication in San Rocco. In principle, there are no limits – either minimum or maximum – imposed on the length of contributions. Minor contributions (a few lines of text, a small drawing, a photo, a postcard) are by no means uninteresting to San Rocco. For each issue, San Rocco will put out a “call for papers” comprised of an editorial note and of a list of cases, each followed by a short comment. As such, the “call for papers” is a preview of the magazine. The “call for papers” defines the field of interest of a given issue and produces a context in which to situate contributions.

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES **A** External contributors can either accept the proposed interpretative point of view or react with new interpretations of the case studies. **B** Additional cases might be suggested by external contributors, following the approach defined in the “call for papers”. New cases might be accepted, depending on their evaluation by the editorial board. **C** Proposed contributions will be evaluated on the basis of a 500 words abstract containing information about the proposed submission’s content and length, and the type and number of illustrations and drawings it includes. **D** Contributions to San Rocco must be written in English. San Rocco does not translate texts. **E** All texts (including footnotes, image credits, etc.) should be submitted digitally in .rtf format and edited according to the Oxford Style Manual. **F** All illustrations and drawings should be submitted digitally (in .tif or .eps format). Please include a numbered list of all illustrations and provide the following information for each: illustration source, name of photographer or artist, name of copyright holder, or “no copyright” and caption, if needed. **G** San Rocco does not buy intellectual property rights for the material appearing in the magazine. San Rocco suggests that external contributors publish their work under Creative Commons licenses. **H** Contributors whose work is selected for publication in San Rocco will be informed and will then start collaborating with San Rocco’s editorial board in order to complete the preparation of the issue. Proposals for contributions to San Rocco 2/ISLANDS may be submitted electronically to mail@sanrocco.info before 15 October 2010.

An island is any piece of land that is surrounded by water. An island is any object lost in an endless extension of a uniform element.

As such, the island is *isolated*.

The island is by definition remote, separated, intimately *alternative*.

The island is *elsewhere*.

Islands can be natural or artificial: atolls, rocks, volcanos, oases, spaceships, oil rigs, carriers.

In his *L’île déserte*, Gilles Deleuze divides islands into the *oceanic* and the *continental*. Oceanic are “originary, essential islands”. Continental are “accidental, derivative islands”.

San Rocco 2 will try to use *oceanic* and *continental* as categories to explore *the possibility of architectural islands*, either literally or by analogy.

Oceanic islands are the *radical* islands, truly *isolated*, not only in space, but also in time. Oceanic islands have no past. Oceanic islands are immediately a “new world”, a reconstruction, a miniature, a utopia. Oceanic islands need to contain everything, because they cannot rely on anything else. Oceanic islands are “a world”, one that appeared all of a sudden. Oceanic islands are fortresses (and fortresses are always doomed to surrender). Contrary to an archipelago, which is a *project of a civilization*, an oceanic island is a project of a world (and a *project of escape*).

Continental islands, on the contrary, are the product of the erosion of a continent. Continental islands are linked to something that exists close by or that existed sometime before. Like icebergs, they are the ruins of what previously contained them. Continental islands are fragments. They presuppose a totality (either lost or promised), to which they belong. Continental islands can be part of a larger ensemble: a continent, an archipelago, a city. Continental islands are “urban” islands. They host the domesticated heterotopias that are necessary in a city: prisons, zoos, hospitals, theme parks.

In the next pages San Rocco presents a provisional list of islands we would like to explore in detail:

A. OCEANIC ISLANDS

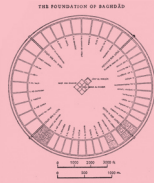


Figure 20. Baghdad: The Round City of Al-Mansur, plan
 This plan is believed to be the plan of the Round City, which was founded in 762 AD. The plan shows a central square with a cross, surrounded by concentric circles and radial lines. The plan is based on a drawing by the architect Al-Mansur, which was found in the ruins of the city. The plan shows a central square with a cross, surrounded by concentric circles and radial lines. The plan is based on a drawing by the architect Al-Mansur, which was found in the ruins of the city. The plan shows a central square with a cross, surrounded by concentric circles and radial lines. The plan is based on a drawing by the architect Al-Mansur, which was found in the ruins of the city.

33°02'N 44°26'E/ Baghdad

Possibly the most radical *island city* ever built (even more than Venice or Tenochtitlan) is Al Mansur's Baghdad. The round city was not only walled off and surrounded by water, and not only isolated in the desert, but also stubbornly utopian, and deliberately *different* from anything else. Even if Creswell lists at least twelve known circular cities dating to before Al Mansur's city (see the list in K. A. C. Creswell, *A Short Account of Early Muslim Architecture* [London: Penguin, 1958]), Baghdad stands out as the most radical, most accomplished example. The design of Al Mansur's city is as notorious as it is unknown. Only descriptions survive. Nothing of Baghdad's original construction remains. No ruins, no drawings. The descriptions of the city are fascinating but unclear; the absoluteness of the circular border and of the monumental centre of the city combine with a dark zone in between, whose purpose remains unknown. The city was enclosed in a circle about two kilometres in diameter, which led it to be known as "al-Mudawara", or "the round city". A ring of residential and commercial structures ran along the inside of the city walls. In the centre of the city lay the Golden Gate Palace (the Caliph's residence) with a green dome, which was thirty-nine metres high, and the mosque. Surrounding the palace was an esplanade, in which only the Caliph could come riding on horseback. The walls were pierced at inter-cardinal points by four gates that opened towards Kufa, Basra, Khorasan and Damascus, with roads radiating outward in those directions. Each gate had double doors made of iron. The thirty-metre-high wall was about forty-four metres thick at the base and about twelve metres thick at the top. This wall was surrounded by another wall

with a thickness of fifty metres, protected by solid glacis and by a water-filled moat. The walls were made of mud bricks. Al Khatib states that in each of the layers there were 162,000 bricks.

The founding of Baghdad was astrologically planned, and the architects (the Zoroastrian Naubakht and the Jewish Mashallah) decided the date of foundation (30 July 145 AH, or 762 AD) by considering the horoscope of the Caliph and then translated it into the city plan.

By the tenth century, the city's population was between 1.2 and 2 million, making it the largest city on the planet at the time.

On February 655 AH (1258 AD) Baghdad was besieged by the Mongols, led by Hulegu Khan. On February 10, Baghdad surrendered. The Mongols swept into the city on February 13 and began a week of massacre and destruction. Many quarters were ruined by fire or looting. The Mongols massacred most of the city's inhabitants, including the Caliph Al-Musta'sim, and destroyed large sections of the city. The canals and dykes forming the city's irrigation system were also destroyed. San Rocco proposes imagining a reconstruction of Al Mansur's Baghdad.



45°59'N 1°12'W/ Fort Boyard

Fort Boyard is a pile of stone located between the Île d'Aix and the Île d'Oléron in the sluice of Antioch, on the west coast of France. It is 61 m long, 31 m wide, and 20 m high.

In plan, Fort Boyard looks like a cookie (a Pavesino, to be precise) or a little primordial bug. As an object in the sea, it seems like the boat version of the Slag Brothers' Boulder Mobile in Hanna-Barbera's *Wacky Races* cartoon. Strangely enough, this clumsy, funny – and actually quite little – thing is a fortress.

It is no surprise that this military machine never worked. The construction of the fort was first considered by Louis XIV, but Vauban, his leading military engineer, advised against it. Construction of the fort did not begin in earnest until 1801 under Napoleon, in order to protect the arsenal of Rochefort from possible incursions by British navies. Following difficulties in establishing a firm base, the project was suspended in 1809. Construction resumed in 1837 under Louis-Philippe. The fortifications were completed in 1857, with sufficient room for a garrison of 250 men. However, by the time of its completion, the range of cannons had markedly increased, thereby making the fort unnecessary for national defence. In 1988 restoration work commenced on Fort Boyard in order to prepare it for a television game show, also named *Fort Boyard*.

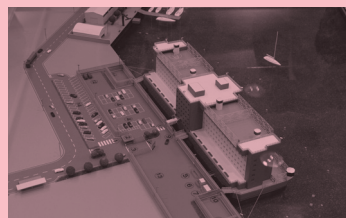


37°10'N 12°43'E/ Ferdinandea

It was the end of June, 1831, when some earthquake tremors were felt along the southwest coast of Sicily. The sea was turbulent and the air smelt of sulphur. Then a column of smoke was seen at a distance of thirty miles from Sciacca. On the same day, the brig *Custavo* passed through the area, confirming a bubbling in the sea that the captain thought was a sea monster. Another ship reported dead fish floating in the water. July 17 was the time for the earth's rebirth, a spectacular and terrifying event accompanied by the release of lava, ashes and lapilli and the creation of towering water columns. At its largest, the island reached a circumference of 4.8 kilometres and a height of sixty-three metres. It had a circular form and an irregular skyline.

A dispute over the sovereignty of the new Mediterranean volcano immediately erupted, at first between the United Kingdom and the Kingdom of two Sicilies. For

the British, the island was the property of the UK and hence was quickly named Graham Island. At the same time, Ferdinand II, who was in Sicily during the summer of 1831, and after whom Sicilians christened the island Ferdinandea, sent ships to the nascent island to claim it for the Bourbon crown. The French Navy also made a landing, naming the island Julia. Even Spain declared its territorial ambitions, for the island had a useful position along the Mediterranean trade route, and so for five months the conflict raged in newspapers and diplomatic offices as the various nations fought over the piece of basalt. However, as quickly as the island had appeared, it disappeared. By December 17 the island had vanished completely. Today, the "island" lies six metres below sea level. The rush to plant a flag on such a provisional piece of earth seems like a sort of geopolitical farce, a Swiftian bagatelle that ridiculed nineteenth-century diplomacy. In 2000, renewed seismic activity around Ferdinandea led volcanologists to speculate that a new eruptive episode could be imminent, and the seamount might once again emerge as an island. To forestall a renewal of the property disputes, Italian divers placed a 150-kilogram marble plaque on top of the volcano. It read: "This piece of land, once Ferdinandea, belonged and shall always belong to the Sicilian people." But six months later the stone had been fractured into pieces. Was it an accident? Who broke it? Good old Colonel Gaddafi? Perhaps it is the beginning of the screenplay for a new Bond film: "The Island That Lived Twice".



The Floating Prisons of Fincantieri

Fincantieri (<http://www.fincantieri.it>) recently proposed resolving the problem of Italy's overcrowded jails by constructing floating prisons that could be moored in abandoned harbours, in military arsenals or along unused

stretches of the nation's coast. The proposal grew out of similar interventions recently studied and developed in the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and the US.

The new floating prisons are expected to be realized in twenty-four months. Fincantieri's design includes 320 sixteen-square-metre cells, which can host 640 prisoners. The floating prisons will be 126 metres long, 33 metres wide and 34.8 metres high.

The project is composed of modules and, as a result, can be expanded. The area for the prisoners is 5,000 m², while the offices, talking areas, infirmary and multipurpose hall occupy 3,900 m². External spaces come to a total of 2,700 m². The prison's volume is 83,000 cubic meters and its tonnage is 24,800 CT. The floating prison will be easily linked with the shore, without increasing the costs associated with a traditional prison on the mainland.

San Rocco does not know more about this design.

Can you find information? Could you propose a design by using this data as a point of departure? What if these floating prisons could move, like Roman galleys? Could they perhaps combine tourism and punishment? The Love Boat meets Ben Hur . . . ?



35°19'N 136°42'E/ Hashima

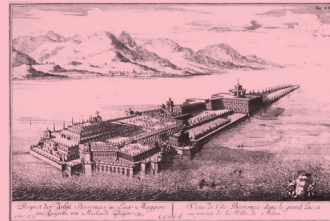
There is no time left for a pacific compromise: the climax of Battle Royale has been reached. The Wild Seven declare war on adults. Tokyo is under attack, while Japanese society is collapsing: *At the dawn of the millennium, the nation collapsed. At fifteen percent unemployment, ten million were out of work. 800,000 students boycotted school. Adults lost confidence and, fearing the young, eventually passed the Millennium Educational Reform Act, aka the BR Act . . .*

To a movie director's eye, there could be no better place

to stage the "Battle Royale" than Hashima Island.

Hashima may be the monstrous masterpiece of Westernized, industrialized Japan. For almost ninety years, thousands of people, many of whom were probably forcibly recruited from other parts of Asia, inhabited the world's most densely populated island in order to dig coal for Mitsubishi. Like a fortress standing fiercely upon the sea and surrounded by high walls, the island possessed an air of self-sufficiency. Every basic need could be satisfied on the island, except finding a place to be buried.

Nowadays, an ashen daylight pervades the deserted island. Only ghosts have remained in Hashima, whose nights are darker than darkness and whose days are grayer than rotting concrete.



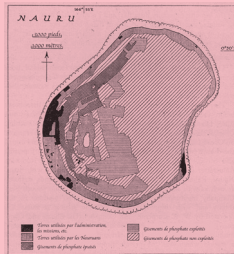
45°53'N 8°31'E/ Isola Bella

Isola Bella, or "the beautiful island", is a little island in northern Italy's Lake Maggiore. Isola Bella is one of the about sixty historical "buildings" appearing in Fischer von Erlach's *Entwurf* of 1721. Isola Bella is depicted as the last illustration in the second book as the last *classic* episode before the exotic architecture that dominates the third.

Fischer's Isola Bella looks far emptier and far more slender than the real one (the real island measures about 320 by 400 metres). Fischer's Isola Bella is portrayed with the same extremely elongated perspective as the pool in OMA's "The Story of the Pool". The elongated perspective is a way of introducing the issue of remoteness into the drawing. Both island and pool seem to stretch towards something far away.

However, if the pool is clearly moving, due to the efforts of the Constructivists escaping the USSR, Isola Bella is supposedly idle. But are we sure? As with the

Constructivists in the pool, we suspect that there is a secret hidden within Isola Bella. Can it move as the pool does? Is it possible that the Isola Bella will one day escape from Lake Maggiore? Maybe move to Lake Como? Or to Switzerland?



0°31'S, 166°56'E/ Nauru

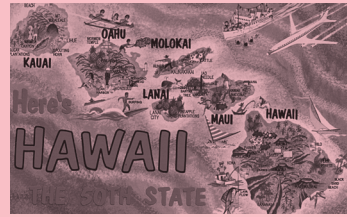
Nauru is a 21.4-square-kilometre island in the middle of the Pacific.

It is a phosphate rock island whose phosphate deposits originated from the droppings of sea birds. Nauru's phosphate deposits are close to the surface, which allows for simple strip mining operations. Nauru was a «rentier state» with the highest per-capita income enjoyed by any sovereign state in the world in the late 1960s and early 1970s, until the deposits ran out during the 1980s.

After the phosphate reserves had been exhausted and the environment had been seriously harmed by the mining, the government resorted to unusual measures to generate income: Nauru has used its position as a member of the United Nations to gain financial support from both the Republic of China and the People's Republic of China by changing its position on the political status of Taiwan, and from Russia by not recognizing the breakaway region of Georgia, Abkhazia.

Nauru is the only country in the world without a capital city. From 1907 to 1995 a railway existed for the mines. There is one airport, and there are two taxis. There are no personal taxes in Nauru. The unemployment rate is estimated to be 90%, and the government employs 95% of those Nauruans who do work. There is no tourism, because there is little to see or do in Nauru, and there are no facilities for tourists. What is to be done for Nauru?

B. CONTINENTAL ISLANDS



36°22'N to 37°50'N 24°25'E to 25°54'E/ Cyclades/ 18°55'N to 28°27'N 154°48'W to 178°22'W/ Hawaii

Archipelagos seem to have been particularly good locations for the development of civilizations. Ancient Greece is probably the best example, and Hawaii was on the same track before it was “discovered” by Cook in 1778. The geography of the archipelagos seems to reappear in the urban settings of their cities. Athens, for example, can be understood as a translation of the archipelago landscape of the Cyclades into a city. This condition at least resurfaces in the contemporary city, where a few rocks (the Acropolis, Filopappos, Lycabettus) emerge from the seamless ocean of apartment blocks; a particular landscape seems to persist as the unconscious model for the production the city. So would it be possible to imagine a parallel urban archipelago using a different landscape as the inspiration? For instance, if Athens is the city that corresponds to the Cyclades (to a “circular” archipelago), what kind of city would correspond to Hawaii (to a “linear” archipelago)?



32°47'N 129°52'E/ Dejima

Dejima was a small artificial island constructed in 1634 on the orders of shogun Iemitsu Tokugawa in Nagasaki Bay and was originally intended to accommodate Portuguese

merchants. After an uprising of the predominantly Catholic population in Shimabara, however, the government decided to expel all Western nationals except the employees of the Dutch East India Company. During the period of self-imposed Japanese seclusion (approximately 1639–1854), Dejima served as the sole conduit of trade between Europe and Japan. Dejima was a small island, measuring only 120 by 75 metres, and was linked to the mainland by a bridge guarded on both sides. It had houses for about twenty Dutchmen, warehouses and accommodations for Japanese officials. The Dutch were watched by a number of Japanese officials, gatekeepers, night watchmen, supervisors and interpreters. The interpreters made it unnecessary for the Dutch to learn Japanese, and as a result they could be kept ignorant of local conditions. Any Dutchman who showed progress in learning the language would, under one pretext or another, be put on board the next outbound ship.

Every Dutch ship that arrived in Dejima was inspected, and its sails were seized until it was set to leave. Religious books and weapons were confiscated. No religious services were allowed on the island. For two hundred years, Dutch merchants were generally not allowed to cross from Dejima to Nagasaki, and the Japanese were likewise banned from entering Dejima, except for prostitutes; the desperately materialistic Dutch–Japanese partnership allowed only commercial and sexual exchanges. The Dutch East India Company's trading post on Dejima was closed in 1857, once Dutch merchants were allowed to trade in Nagasaki City. Dejima was destroyed during the modernization of Nagasaki harbor in the twentieth century. Parts of Dejima are now reconstructed to attract both European and Asian tourists.



8°16'N 98°30'E/ Ko Tapu: The James Bond Island

Two men stand back to back on a beach and are ordered to walk twenty paces, but when it is time to turn and

fire, the one with the golden gun has vanished, leaving a disappointed Roger Moore abandoned before the surrealistic backdrop of Ko Tapu Island, inside the Phang Nga Bay in Thailand. It is 1974 and we are on the set of *The Man with the Golden Gun*, the ninth movie in the James Bond series, in which the MI6 agent must battle the infamous killer Francisco Scaramanga, interpreted by Christopher Lee, to recover a (sustainable?) solar-powered secret weapon, the “Solex Agitator”. In the film, Scaramanga's hideout is on Ko Khao Phing Kan, so Ko Tapu is often referred to nowadays as “James Bond Island” both by locals and tourist guidebooks. Ko Tapu was selected for its unnatural appearance and seemingly inherent evilness. This steep, rocky monolith, which is about twenty metres tall, makes one think of the flying stone in Magritte's *Castle of the Pyrenees* landing on the water or of a Piranesian ruin. The natural island of Ko Tapu seems like a piece of rotten architecture, a wild Asian Böcklin floating in warm seas. According to James Bond cosmology, wicked nature equals architecture, and architecture equals the mad attempt to conquer the world. The intimate cruelty of architecture is once again discovered (and defeated) by James Bond, thank Cod.



51°27'N 0°59'E/ Maunsell Sea Forts

As an extended plot in the North Sea, lying outside the three-mile limit of the UK's jurisdiction, the Maunsell Army Sea Forts were three of the larger shore-based installations that a civil engineer named Guy Maunsell (1884–1961) designed for the Ministry of Defence to help defend the Thames Estuary from enemy attack via air or sea. Built between May 20 and December 13 in 1943, the Maunsell Sea Forts were serviced by the Thames Estuary Special Defence Units to provide anti-aircraft fire and to prevent ships from being lost en route to the capital due

to the magnetic influence of the mines laid down by the Germans during the outbreak of World War II. During the war the forts shot down twenty-two aircraft and about thirty flying bombs. Each of the three Forts consisted of seven separate fortresses positioned in clusters with a central radar/control tower surrounded by four 3.7-inch heavy anti-aircraft gun towers and one 40-millimetre Bofors light anti-aircraft gun tower with a searchlight tower at the rear interconnected via tubular steel walkways. Floated out to sea and grounded in water no more than thirty metres deep, the fortresses, abandoned after the war, were self-contained, with fuel and food supplies as well as living and sleeping accommodations for a 120-strong full-complement crew. The Maunsell Sea Forts seem to form a strange archipelago of (apparently) funny and fragile tin soldiers with huge heads and skinny legs. The forts stand on the water like clusters of huge mechanic mosquitoes. Their grouping is enigmatic. Do the forts communicate with each other? Do they want to speak with somebody or something else? Do they want to surrender and simply collapse into the water? Or do they want to betray?



45°26'N 12°20'E/ Venice, Fountain, Theatre and Vago
Monticello

Around 1560, Alvise Cornaro, a versatile and powerful figure of the Venetian Renaissance, presented a visionary project for the basin in front of the Piazza San Marco in Venice. The aim was to boost the capabilities of the water surface as a public space, thereby physically conquering it. Three elements were displayed: *un teatro*, *uno vago monticello* and *una fontana del sil*. The theatre, shaped in the Roman manner, was supposed to rise from the water close to the Punta della Dogana, in a

place where the lagoon floor was higher. The most unusual element of the design, a proper hill covered by trees and lawns, was placed on a line connecting the Piazzetta with the island of San Giorgio and had a belvedere resembling a small temple at its summit. A fountain fed by water from the mainland was supposed to stand in between the two columns of the Piazzetta. Obviously, the eccentric proposal remained on paper. Unconscious traces of Cornaro's project for the basin can be found, however, in Andrea Palladio's monumental attempt to define the vast water surface a few decades later. The ghost of Cornaro's island floats in the middle of the three Palladian churches that face onto the basin.

C. CATALOGUES

A Universal History of Micronations

Islands often offer the opportunity to establish a "micronation". Micronations are entities that claim to be independent states but are not recognized as such by world governments or major international organizations. Micronations are usually eccentric and ephemeral in nature, and they are often created and maintained by a single person or family. They usually have bizarre and suspect fiscal regimes.

A universal history of micronations should include episodes like the following:

In 1967, Italian engineer Giorgio Rosa realized a 400-square-metre platform in the Adriatic sea, eleven kilometres off the coast of Rimini, immediately beyond the boundaries of Italian waters. The platform was supported by nine pylons and was furnished with a number of commercial establishments, including a restaurant, a bar, a nightclub, a souvenir shop and a post office. In old newspaper photos the platform looks like a modernist pavilion, like a brutal version of Farnsworth House suspended on the water by means of heavy pillars (it somehow calls to mind Tígermann's famous 1978 collage "The Titanic", with Mies' Crown Hall sinking into the water). The artificial island declared independence on 1 May 1968, under the Esperanto name "Insulo de la Rozoj", with Rosa as the self-declared President. As a national anthem Rosa selected

“Steuermann! Laß die Wacht!» from Richard Wagner’s *Der fliegende Holländer*. The new state was presented in a press conference on 24 June 1968. Rosa’s actions were viewed by the Italian government as a ploy to raise money from tourists while avoiding national taxation. On 25 June 1968 (fifty-five days after the declaration of independence) a group of Carabinieri and tax inspectors landed on the “Isola delle Rose” and assumed control. The platform’s Council of Government sent a telegram to the President of the Italian Republic, Giuseppe Saragat, to protest the “violation of its sovereignty and the injury inflicted on local tourism by the military occupation», but this was ignored. Soon afterwards the Italian Navy used explosives to destroy the facility, an act later portrayed on postage stamps issued by Rosa’s «government in exile».

After occupying one of the Maunsell Sea Forts (Fort Roughs) in 1975, Michael Bates introduced a constitution for a micronation called “The Principality of Sealand”, which he then provided with a flag, a national anthem, a currency and passports.

In August of 1978, while Bates and his wife were in Austria, Alexander Achenbach, who described himself as the Prime Minister of Sealand, hired several German and Dutch mercenaries to spearhead an attack of Roughs Tower. They stormed the tower with speedboats and helicopters, and took Bates’ son hostage. Bates later retook the tower, however, and captured Achenbach and his mercenaries. Achenbach was subsequently charged with treason against Sealand and was to be held unless he paid 75,000 DM. The governments of the Netherlands, Austria and Germany petitioned the British government for his release, but the United Kingdom disavowed his imprisonment, citing a 1968 court decision that declared that the platform did not fall under British jurisdiction. Germany then sent a diplomat from its London embassy to Roughs Tower to negotiate for Achenbach’s release. After several weeks of negotiations Bates relented and subsequently claimed that the diplomat’s visit constituted a *de facto* recognition of Sealand by Germany. Following his repatriation, Achenbach and Cernot Putz established a “government in exile», sometimes known as the Sealand Rebel Government or the Sealandic Rebel Government, in Germany.

A Catalogue of *Oceanic* Islands

San Rocco is interested in developing provisional catalogues of *oceanic islands*.

As *oceanic islands*, San Rocco accepts: islands, oases, spaceships, carriers. Catalogues do not need to be complete, but they do need to be precise. Objects need to be represented in hardline drawings in scale (either in plan, section or axonometry). Proposed catalogues must be composed of at least three objects.

A Catalogue of *Continental* Islands

San Rocco is interested in developing provisional catalogues of *continental islands*.

As *continental islands*, San Rocco accepts all islands included in a larger system (an archipelago, an urban environment, etc.). Catalogues do not need to be complete, but they do need to be precise. Objects need to be represented in hardline drawings in scale (either in plan, section, or axonometry). Proposed catalogues must be composed of at least three objects.

A provisional list of “urban” islands could include: Alcatraz, Treasure Island, Yerba Buena Island and Angel Island (San Francisco), the Donauinsel (Vienna), the Île de la Cité (Paris), the islands in the Baía da Guanabara (Rio de Janeiro), Gezira and Zamalek (Cairo), the Île aux Hérons, Île Notre-Dame, Île Sainte-Hélène, Île des Soeurs and Île de Boucherville (Montreal), the Malo Ratno Ostrvo (Belgrade), Manhattan, Margitsziget (Budapest), the Isola Tiberina (Rome), Theodore Roosevelt Island (Washington, DC), and so on.

SAN ROCCO - INNOCENCE A present from 2A+P/A * Stefano Boeri on the house Toyo Ito designed for his sister Nobuko and her daughters * Marco Brizzi on Renzo Piano's television programs * Guy Châtel on Hannes Meyer's schools * Salomon Frausto on Frank Gehry's Indiana Avenue Studios * Francesco Garofalo on Irenio Diotallevi, Franco Marescotti and Giuseppe Pagano's horizontal city * Kersten Geers on Hans Hollein's Travel Agencies * Stefano Graziani's photos of OMA's Zeebrugge ferry terminal * Job Floris on the Monadnock Building * Freek Persyn on Kazuo Shinohara's houses * Daniele Pisani on Joao Batista Vilanova Artigas's *balneario* * Joana Rafael writes a letter to the London Zoo * Salottobuono proposes restoring Piero Bottoni's Villa Muggia * Pier Paolo Tamburelli on the Villa Garzoni * Oliver Thill on the White U * Milica Topalovic on the "New Naive" * Christophe Van Gerrewey on the art of building a house for a sister * YellowOffice reveals an unknown design for New York's Central Park * Andrea Zanderigo on Hans Kollhoff's design for Frankfurt's ethnological museum.

