

**TRANSFORMING AND REVEALING A FOOTPRINT OF
PLACE : New National Gallery of Art Project , San Jose , Costa Rica**


by
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B.A. in Design, University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida
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IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE DEGREE
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Submitted to the Department of Architecture on May 8, 1992
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ABSTRACT

The primary focus of this investigation is the insertion of a new piece in an environment where the natural elements of *site* and the man-made elements of *city* can begin to inform the ordering systems used in the design process. The existing footprint of the ruins of La Antigua Penitenciaría, in the center of the Costa Rican capital, San Jose, is transformed in meaning and character to become a cultural center for the city. The problem presented is a contextual one of making a place in the world through a reading, cataloguing and reinterpretation of *nature*, *city*, and *culture*. The goal of the process is a building that reveals the meaning of its present time and place, set in a landscape that tells stories of its past.

Thesis Supervisor: John Myer
Title: Professor of Architecture



Museo Nacional de Costa Rica.

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My heart and thanks go out first and foremost to my parents, for helping me in the long and sometimes painful undertaking that is Architecture. Without their love, encouragement, and financial support I could not have made it. Dad; a special thanks to you, as father and as architect; your support and critiques helped me get through these tough years. I still have the letter you gave me before leaving to M.I.T., and when the process of design at times became too confusing, I always turned to it, it always helped to keep me going. I plan to keep it by my drafting table always. I can only hope that I may continue to follow in your footsteps through the years...

Many thanks to:

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and of course,

Andrea,

this thesis is dedicated to you.

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Introduction: Dealing with the Issues

INTRODUCTION

" What will be has always been ... "--Louis I. Kahn

In all of our design endeavors, we are constantly searching for an order--a meaning and explanation to the world around us. As an architect this quest for order represents a means of making a place in the world. Our problem as architects is always a contextual one; one of reading a meaning and an underlying order in a particular site or place. For the most part even though we are dealing with a particular site and a particular period of time; we must always consider that which is not yet, and that which was. Kahn always referred to that which was as a volume in history he described as " volume zero. " He said that in this volume things possessed a quality in their beginnings outside of time. The hardest and yet most enjoyable period in the process of design is always the moment before things come into being; this is the moment of creation, it is a moment outside of time. It is also a moment in which order is born. In this investigation, I want to create that which does not yet exist using the footprint of that which already exists. This thesis represents my struggle in a search for order; in the context of a site, in between a world that contains both physical (man made) and natural attributes.

T.S. Elliot once wrote:

"Between the idea
and the reality
between the motion
and the act
falls the shadow"

For this design, that shadow is the ruined walls and footprint of *La Antigua Penitenciaría* atop a hill in the center of San Jose, the capital of Costa Rica. In one of my many visits to Costa Rica someone once told me: "although it might not seem so in the surface, this is a very



Author, Photo of one of " La Antigua Penitenciaría's " walls.

interesting place, you just have to scratch a little and you will be surprised at what you will find".

The process of time and culture has transformed the spatial qualities of place through the processes of addition, subtraction and renewal. A compound reading of these layers provides meaning to the place by assembling and gathering the elements which make up its architecture. " a surface which wasn't a surface before will come to the surface in the scar. Eventually, a victim of repeated blows, the scraped plane of the plate will have a surface made violently of surfaces. " These surfaces or layers have a characteristic of unfolding and revealing information contained within them. In many cases the juxtapositions created by these multiple layers serve to provide a comparative reading of what was there before, what is there now, and what could be there in the future. This juxtaposition provides meaning as a whole and gives the place its richness and continuity.

La Antigua Penitenciaría, a former prison, when it was built, had little connection to its site. It was placed there for convenience, far enough away from San Jose for security, yet close enough to notice its presence. Atop a small hill, and enclosed by heavy pentagonal walls, it was a literal fortress, as required by its program. By capping the hill, it denied the very presence of the hill, and as the city grew, it came to deny the city as well. There were however some features inherent in the design that could be transformed and used as components in a new design that would both respect this place but at the same time root it to the overall meaning of the site. The ruin lies precisely at the zone of exchange between the grid of the city, and the ordering system of the mountains. At the urban scale, the marginal zone established by the two orders of city and mountain colliding together acts as a wall in the horizontal direction, where some elements or buildings are allowed to pass through from one side to the other. The very walls that once separated the inside of La Antigua Penitenciaría from the outside world also act as connectors to it. Physically they begin to frame the inside world and the outside world and connect both of these worlds visually. Because some of the heavy walls along the perimeter of the penitentiary

Because some of the heavy walls along the perimeter of the penitentiary also act as retaining walls, they do reveal the tectonic nature of building on a hill, that of retaining and grounding. In the existing ruin, the pentagonal form focuses inwardly, again shunning acknowledgement of the hill and the city. However, the different faces of the pentagon do have the opportunity to connect. They address different perspectives and can be used to intensify the experience of inhabiting the hill. The struggle is geometry versus experience, with the goal of redirecting the inward focus of the geometry outwardly.

I am interested in investigating and revealing components of an architecture that talks about materials, about how it is made; one that is rooted in all of the past, present, and future. One that tells a story, that has a sense of mystery, serenity, excitement and silence. An architecture that is popular, that comes from the people; one that is born to distinguish and to define. "An architecture that knows it belongs in one place, not in any place, one that responds to local traditions, local climate, local materials and crafts, local ritual and symbol" (Roger Campbell). It is an architecture that is sincere and has sentiment. Like all of our languages architecture is constantly changing, but this change is dependent on a continuous and indispensable evolution. An evolution in which past, present, and future, feed reciprocally.

The vehicle that will be used to try to bridge the gap between "old" and "new" programmatically will be a museum. In Costa Rica particularly the role of the museum as a way of establishing a national assembly is very important due to the cross cultural identity of its citizens." The peoples of the region are becoming increasingly aware of specific values and creative potential of their varied heritage." (Samuel Rovinski, on cultural policy in Costa Rica). The museum will exhibit a collection of objects testifying to a national culture; it will provide a material summary of the past and present of Costa Rican culture, and it will rediscover man's physical relationship with nature. For this project, the architectural process is one of discovery. In rediscovering a dialogue with culture architecture provides new meaning by transforming and revealing a footprint of place. This footprint is a boundary of sorts, a



Author, Photo of perimeter wall along site.

place where there is a chance for the old and the new to meet. It represents an intersection of two worlds, in which there is an opportunity to bridge the gap.

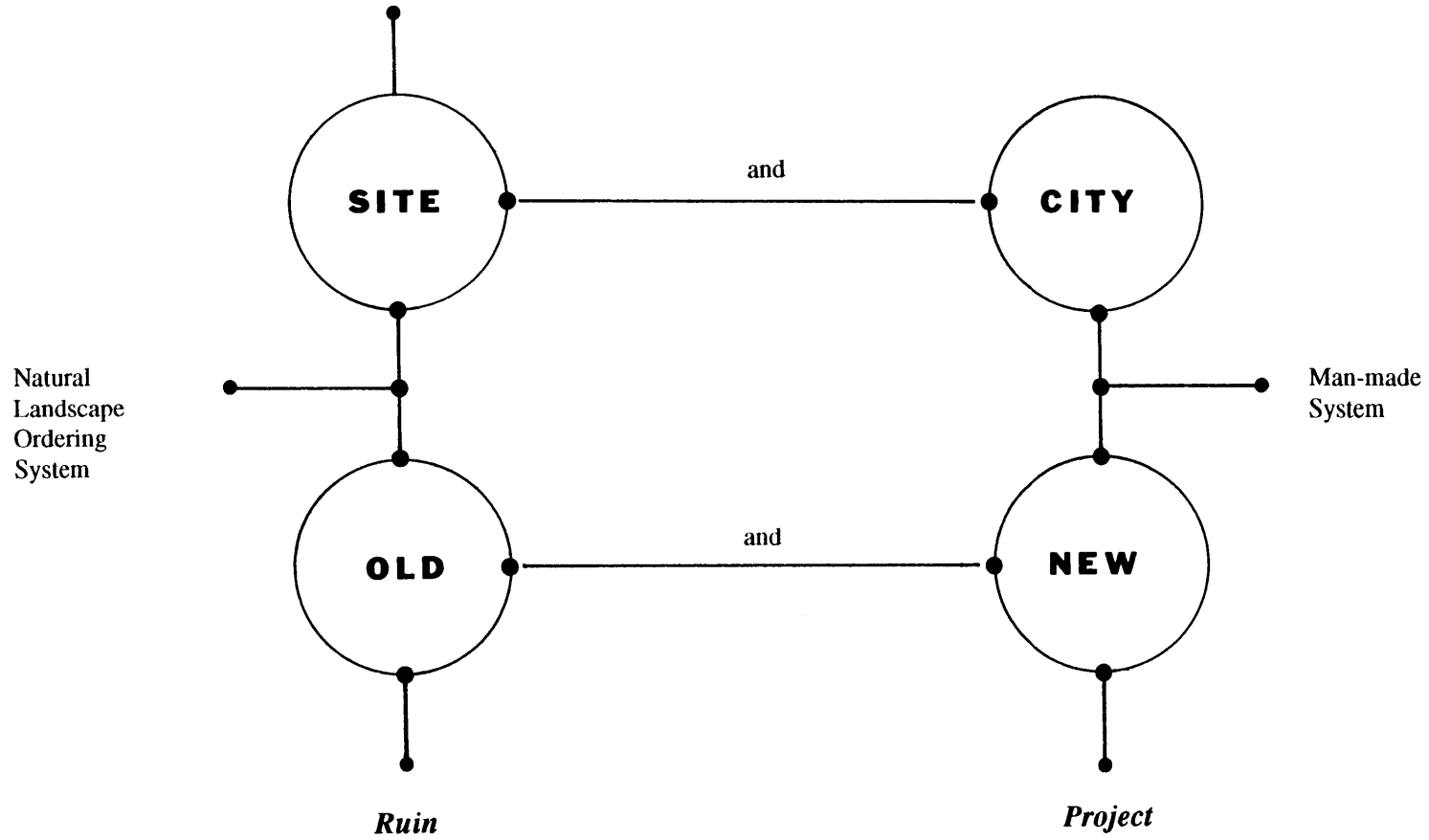
This diagram illustrates the contextual problem of making a place in the world through a reading and reinterpretation of the "footprint".

Since the ruin is part of the hill and the site, it is viewed as part of the overall (natural) continuum along the river.

The major issues that the project deals with are also shown:

- A. Site and city*
- B. Site and it's relationship to the ruin*
- C. Old and New*

Site is part of landscape, Ruin is part of hill, therefore also part of landscape.



Reveal - 1. To divulge or disclose; make known. 2. To bring to view, show. (ME *revelen* < Ofr. *revealer* < lat. *revelare* : *re-* (reversal) + *velare*, to cover < *velum*, vell.) Synonyms: reveal, expose, disclose, divulge. **Expose** is a stronger term referring to making public something reprehensible, such as a crime or conspiracy. **Disclose** means to make known something that has been under consideration but for valid reasons has been kept from public knowledge. **divulge** implies making known what has been a secret to a small circle.

Footprint - An outline or indentation left by a foot on a surface.

Place - 1. A portion of space; an area with definite or indefinite boundaries. 2. An area occupied by, or set aside for a specific person or purpose. 3. A definite location, esp.: a. an abode such as a house or an establishment. b. a business establishment or office. c. a particular town or city. 4. Place. A public space or thoroughfare in a town. 5.a. a space for one person to sit or stand, as a passenger or spectator.

Transform - 1. to change markedly the form or appearance of. 2. to change the nature, function, or condition of; convert. 3. To subject to a mathematical transformation. 4. to subject to a linguistic transformation. 5. elect. to subject to the action of a transformer.---intr. to undergo a transformation. The result, esp. a mathematical quantity, of a transformation. (ME *transformen* < Lat. *transformare* : *trans*, across + *forma*, shape) .

*Random House Dictionary of the
English Language- The
Unabridged Edition.*

Culture - 1. The totality of social transmitted behavior patterns, arts, beliefs, institutions, and all other products of human work and thought characteristic of a community or population. 2. A style of social and artistic expression peculiar to a society or class. 3. Intellectual and artistic activity, and the works produced by it.

History - 1. A narrative of events, story. 2. A chronological record of events, as of the life and development of a people or institution, often including an explanation of or commentary of those events.

Archaeology - 1. the systematic recovery and study of material evidence, such as graves, buildings, tools, and pottery, remaining from past human life and culture.

Order - 1. A condition of logical or comprehensible arrangements among the separate elements of a group. 2. a. A condition of methodical or prescribed arrangement among component parts, such that proper functioning or appearance is achieved. b. Systematic arrangement and design. 3. a. The existing structure or method of social organization.

*Random House Dictionary of the
English Language- The
Unabridged Edition.*

Context and Culture: The Costa Rican People

CONTEXT

THE COSTA RICAN PEOPLE, A brief history

" Costa Rica is a mysterious country... In what dark roots of time are the origins of this society, that breathes peace as it breathes air, enmarked in a natural world that looks like it was taylor made for man ? . We are just beginning to understand it. " (Carlos Francisco Echeverria, exministro de cultura, juventud y deportes).

As the program for The New National Gallery of Art is to express and embody the essence of Costa Rican culture; it is necessary to address the development and character of the Costa Rican people in the course of their history.

The name Costa Rica translated means "rich coast", however, for a country with a name that draws such connotations, it is rather a uniformly poor nation do to its lack of natural resources. The scarceness of these, has proven to be a blessing, rather than a curse; as poor regions are not the subject of dispute among those countries who persue power and richness. Costa Ricans are very much aware of the importance of their way of life in a region that is racked by violence and political imbalance. Their democracy and peaceful tradition have historically kept them uninvolved in the conflicts that have shaken the neighboring republics.

People who have visited and know Costa Rica, refer to it as an island of tranquillity compared to the rest of Central America. From its humble beginnings during the colonial period, Costa Rica acted long before other nations , to abolish slavery and establish free, obligatory, tax financed education. In 1948 the army was abolished as testimony to the unique character and peaceful nature of all Costa Ricans. This abolition has several functions; among them, making it possible for



Museo Nacional de Costa Rica

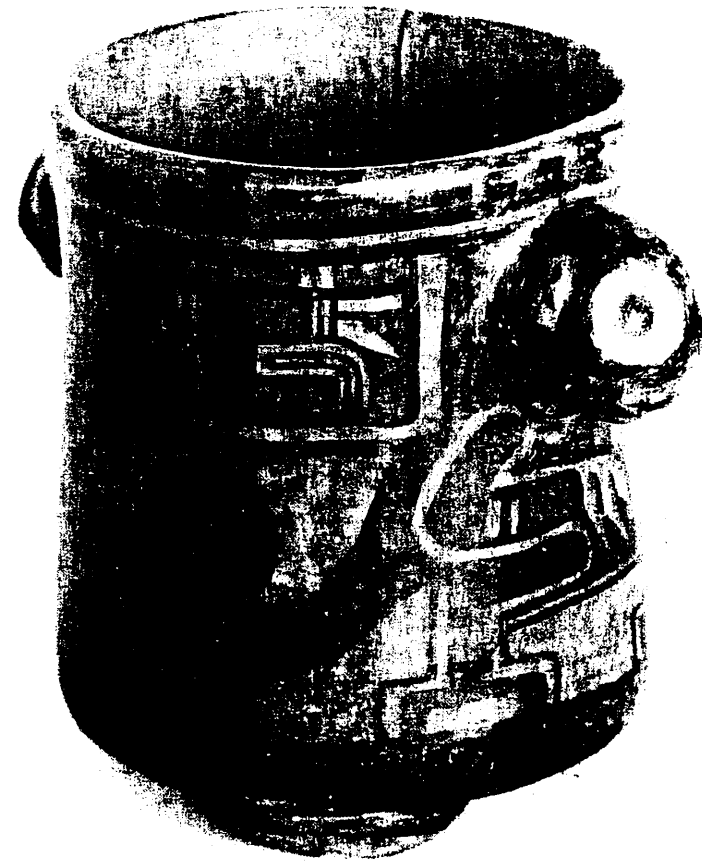
public funds to be used for development of education and culture. Currently about thirty percent of the national budget goes towards this end. Yet another thirty percent of this total budget is being used to protect national parks, specifically rain forests, and biological reserves to ensure their well being for future generations. It is said that Costa Rica is the only country in the world with more schools than soldiers.

The indigenous cultures in the area were never really conquered by the Spaniards, and as a result Costa Rica did not develop many of the class divisions that exist in other Latin American countries today. The country's poverty and isolation, in addition to a strong agricultural background has led to an independence of ideals and thought. The Costa Rican strong will and character is reflected in their hymn as a tribute to peace, the generosity of the earth, and hard work. However, this same hymn also warns that if threatened Costa Ricans will unite and "convert their rough farming tools into arms" as they have done in the past.

PRE-COLUMBIAN COSTA RICA

The Chorotegas

The Chorotegas were the largest and most developed precolumbian culture in Costa Rica; they migrated to the Nicoya peninsula from the south of Mexico in the thirteenth century. As a farming community they harvested corn; grew cotton, beans, and cacao, which they introduced to Costa Rica. The Chorotegas were outstanding farmers, they lived in cities of up to twenty thousand people, land was communally owned and their harvests were divided according to need amongst their people. The central part of the town contained religious centers, marketplaces and plazas. The women worked in producing various types of ceramic vessels and carved stylized jade figures in human and animal shapes. These were meant to bring good luck in hunting and could also have been used in fertility ceremonies. They also



Museo Nacional de Costa Rica

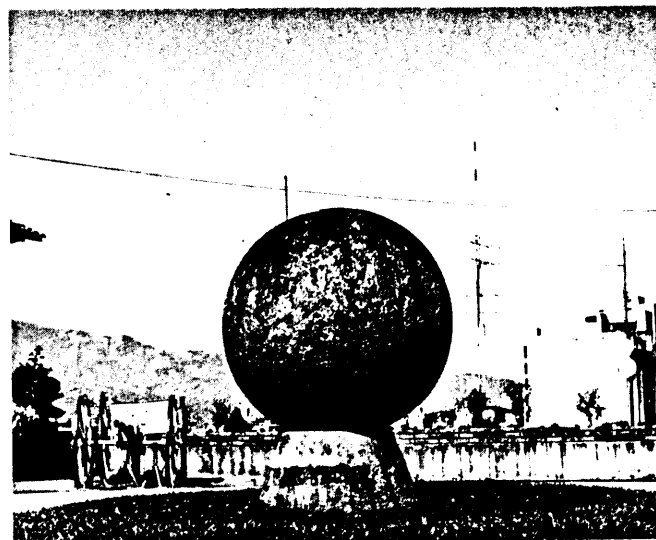
wrote on deerskin parchment, telling of past stories that were passed on from generation to generation. The Chorotegas had a permanent group of fighting men, whose job was to obtain land and slaves; these were sometimes used as human sacrifices, and at times eaten as a purification rite. Virgins at times, were also sacrificed and thrown into various volcanoes in the area.

The Chibcha

The Chibcha Indians migrated from Colombia to south pacific Costa Rica, they lived in heavily fortified towns and were obsessed with security. It is speculated that this obsession with security resulted from valuable gold possessions. These were fashioned into animal and sometimes human figures. Like the Chorotegas, the Chibca also were a fighting tribe, but differed in two areas; women also faught along with the men, and it was commonplace to fight amongst themselves for the best land and slaves. The Chibca believed in life after death; vultures and a variety of other animals were thought to perform the vital role of carrying the spirit to the other world.

It is thought that the Chibcha are responsible for the linear formations of granite spheres found throughout Costa Rica. These spheres range in size from 7.5 centimeters to 1.8 meters, and are almost perfectly spherical. Their careful placement and craftsmanship remain an archeological mystery to this date. Some archeologists believe that these could not have possibly been made by the Chibca, but fail to present any other possible explanation for their existence. There has also been widespread, but unfounded speculation, that the spheres were made by beings from other worlds.

Other Indians migrated to the lowland jungles of Costa Rica from Brazil and Ecuador. These smaller nomadic tribes lived hunting and fishing throughout the region. Of highest social rank, and characteristic to all of these tribes, warriors were revered and emulated in

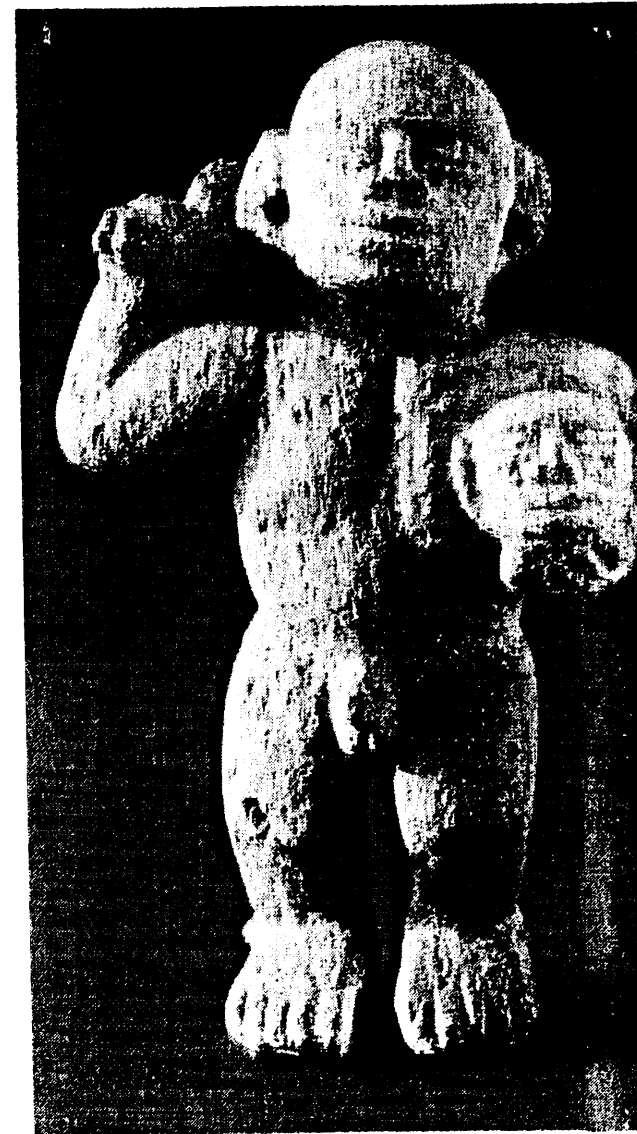


Museo Nacional de Cota Rica

stone figures. In their battles these warriors were known to decapitate the head of their enemy and keep them as trophies. The stone figures made by the tribe's women, depicted warriors with a knife in one hand, and a head on the other. These peoples worshipped the sun and the moon, believed that all things had souls, and buried their people along with their possessions in burial mounds that to this date account for the greatest number of precolumbian artifacts in Costa Rica.

COLONIAL COSTA RICA

After a violent storm wrecked his ships on September 18th 1502, during his last voyage to the new world, Christopher Columbus anchored his ships in the bay of Cariari (now Limon, a small province in the Caribbean coast of Costa Rica). After resting and making repairs to his ship, Columbus and his crew visited a few Indian villages along the coast. After returning to Spain Christopher Columbus mistakenly informed King Ferdinand that he had discovered a land rich in gold, whose friendly Indians could be easily conquered. A few years later (in 1506) king Ferdinand sent a governor along with a group of colonizers to conquer Veragua (a name Columbus used for the Caribbean coast of Costa Rica). After their ship went aground in Panama, the Spanish colonizers; fighting food shortages and tropical diseases, finally reached Costa Rica . When the Spaniards met the Indians and tried to conquer them, rather than feeding the invaders, the Indians burned their own crops and risked starvation themselves to avoid being conquered. The climate and terrain was devastating to the colonists, they did not know who or what they had to conquer. The Indians were decentralized and fought hard. After this attempt to colonize the Indians, Vasco Nunes de Balboa discovered the Pacific Ocean and the Spaniards started exploring the west coast of Costa Rica. After fighting with the Indians, the climate, and starvation, the Spanish managed to convert some thirty thousand Indians, and later as more colonists arrived, settlements emerged on both coasts (Caribbean and Pacific). The Spaniards settled in the highlands, because of their pleasant climate and fertile soils (



Museo Nacional de Costa Rica

Costa Rica has very fertile soil due to lava deposits from its two volcanoes).

Because there was no large exploitable work force in Costa Rica, due to Indian decimation during the fight against the Spaniards, Costa Rica's Spanish population remained relatively small. The Spanish population was not only scarce, but it also found it hard to survive do to a lack of Spanish government support and interest in Costa Rica. In 1723 the Irazu volcano erupted, destroying much of Cartago (the Spanish settlement in the highlands). With much difficulty and little support, the Spanish population in Costa Rica managed to survive and grow throughout the 1700's when three new cities were founded, among them San Jose, today the capital city of Costa Rica. San Jose was developed in the lowland region between the mountains that surround Costa Rica as a trading stop between the other coastal cities.

Because Costa Rica had no riches and was so difficult to reach (do to its mountainous surroundings) from Guatemala, Spain's Central American empire, it was for the most part left untouched by Spanish intrusion. This caused both the Spanish settlers and Indians to become self sufficient from Spain. In 1821, word arrived from Spain that on September 15th Spain had granted Costa Rica and its other Central American colonies independence. After a period of internal strife, Costa Rica declared itself a state in the then Federal Republic of Central America. Costa Rica grew largely undisturbed from the rest of the world as a society of coffee and later banana growers. As roads and later railroads were built, Costa Rica became the largest exporter of coffee to the European community, instigating great curiosity amongst the Europeans who started to travel in large numbers to the new "cosmopolitan" tropical frontier.

As European ideologies started to dissiminate Costa Rican culture and thinking, a new university was founded in 1844 by a group of Costa Rican politicians. In 1848 Juan Rafael Mora, a rich coffee grower was elected president, and later became a national hero by leading an "army" (a group of self-proclaimed farmers who were forced to act as soldiers)

to defend their country when it was invaded by American William Walker in hopes of converting Costa Rica into one of America's slave territories. The result of Walker's Central American conquest was the death of some twenty thousand men, and the creation of Costa Rican's most famed national hero Juan Santa Maria. As a young boy Santa Maria lost his life setting fire to a building where Walker and his army resided forcing him to retreat.

The first truly democratic election in Costa Rica was in 1889. The democratic tradition has endured with few interruptions. One in 1917 when Federico Tinico (minister of war and navy) overthrew an unpopular president. The brutal dictatorship lasted two and a half years with widespread opposition and public dismay. In the end, Tinico was forced to flee the country and a provisional president held office for a year until Costa Rica resumed it's democratic tradition.

Today, Costa Rica maintains its democratic tradition and it remains a vibrant example to the rest of Central America and the world, as a unified and peaceful nation of peoples, who as a relatively poor country rose from simple and humble beginnings to school its children as scholars and not soldiers. Costa Rica is a poor country with little material resources, but its people, culture, and ideals, make it fitting of its name "rich coast".

The Site: Site and City

THE SITE: SITE AND CITY

"Not only should we enjoy the beauty of our ruins, those barren spaces with their perversely blessed light, but we should face the awful ruin of those ruins just as squarely, for rust is what our metal substitutes for tears" --William H. Gass.

San Jose, the capital city of Costa Rica, is an animated, yet quiet city, centrally located in "El Valle Central" (central valley) between the rivers Torres and Aguilar. The valley and central part of the city are located at 3000 ft. above sea level. San Jose is one of four major provinces located within the Valle Central, originally developed as an agricultural center, surrounded entirely by mountains. The city serves as a link between other populated areas inside the valley.

The oldest part of the city and downtown area cover about forty-five square kilometers, with an estimated population of half a million (1984 census). San Jose is located to the west of "El Valle Central," enjoying temperatures ranging between twenty and twenty-two degrees Celsius year round. The oldest part of the city, today the commercial and financial district of the country, comprise an area of about twenty kilometers. Directly adjacent to this commercial and administrative part of San Jose is an area that can best be characterized as agricultural/industrial, currently undefined by the rigid grid of the city.

The city is organized by a grid system of avenues running east to west, and streets running north to south as stated by ancient Indian laws (interrupted occasionally by the topography). San Jose expands along the valley in an east/west orientation. The two rivers which mark the north and south borders of the city travel in this direction (the Torres river also demarcates the borders of the site). The site lies just to the north of the metropolitan area, where the city slopes upwards as it passes through the busy downtown area. The architectural character of the urban fabric

consists of buildings ranging from one to three stories. The area of the site can be seen as an area of transition between the commercial downtown zone and the agricultural zone of the mountain.

Yet the site lies in the heart of San Jose and is one of the few green spaces left in the area. The area adjacent to the site is heavily populated and is the commercial and cultural center of the country. As it rises over the city of San Jose "la Calle Cuatro" (Fourth St.) connects the busy center of town to the site.

The site lies in a marginal area or edge that stitches the grid of the city and the continuous landscape of the mountain together. This corridor of space is held together by "El Rio Torres" (The Torres River) and a linear area of green space that weaves its way along the river bank from one side to the other. This green space extends for about two kilometers both dividing and at the same time tying the rigid grid of the city and the ridge of the mountain. This narrow line of space is found within only a mile of "*La Avenida Fernandez Guel*", a major artery in the periphery of the central and most active part of the city. Currently this green corridor has been maintained by a law that prohibits any construction within ten meters of the river on either side. To this minimal green corridor of ten meters one may add several lots that are government property, and are set aside for public use. Some of these lots currently include a series of public parks, the largest "*El Parque Bolivar*," and a series of important government buildings and institutions such as libraries and schools. The other government owned property along this linear corridor of space is the site where the old penitentiary used to stand. This is the most important piece, and also most controversial, because of its prominent location and adjacency to the heart of San Jose. As it stands the site is an anchor along the corridor and because of its verticality becomes a phenomenal place to view the city and to be viewed by the city.

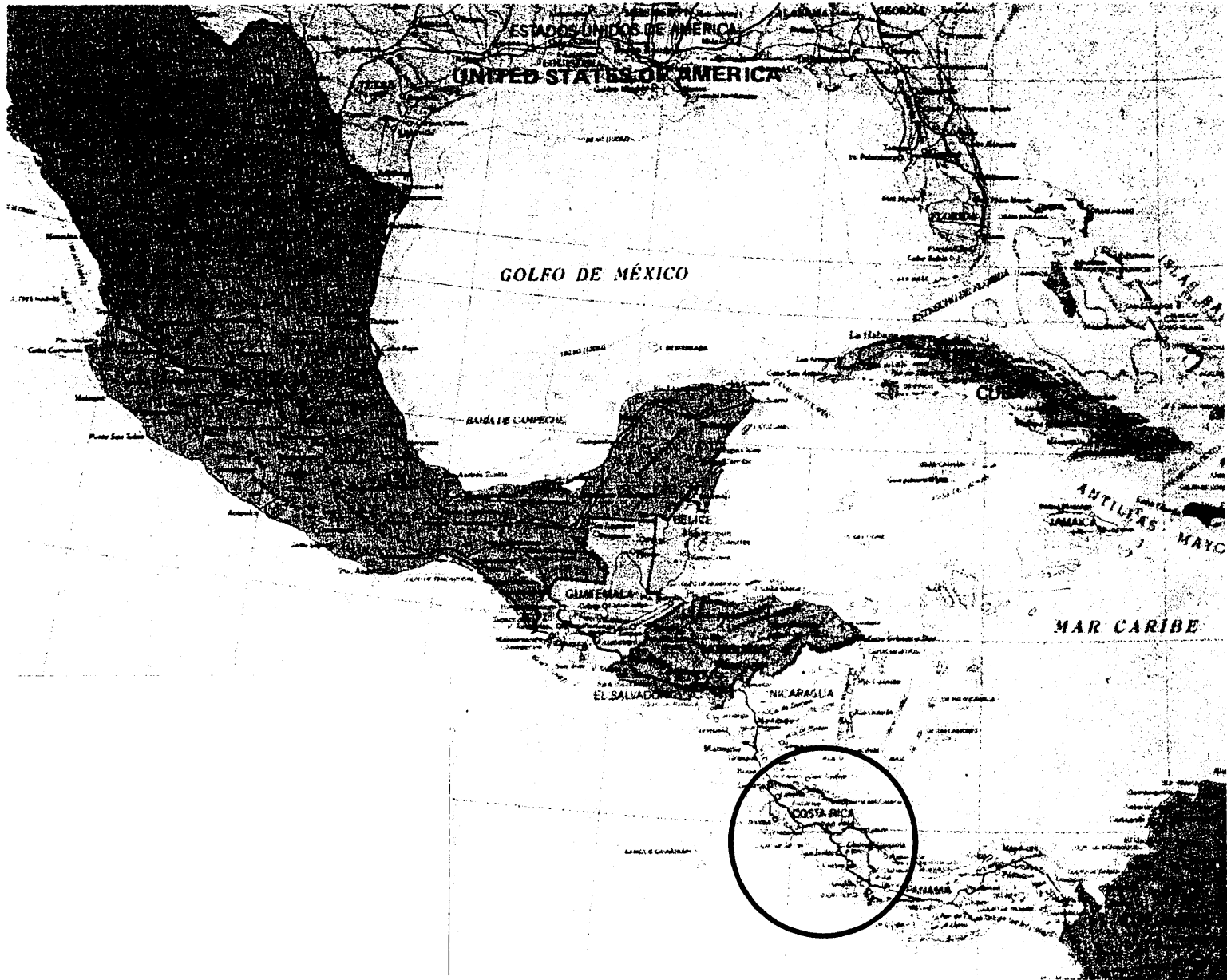
To be able to understand the site one must have a clear understanding of the corridor of mediating space upon which it sits. What does this corridor represent?, what can it become?; and what can I

do in this site along this corridor, that will anchor this hill to both city and mountain to make it a place between the earth and the sky. The site must be a connector of some sort, a bridge to link landscape, the city, and its inhabitants .

At present, the site is "the arena" awaiting human contact. It contains a "built memory" of past actions and time.

Map of Central America indicating Costa Rica's location.

*Map, Guías de Costa Rica S.A.
1991.*

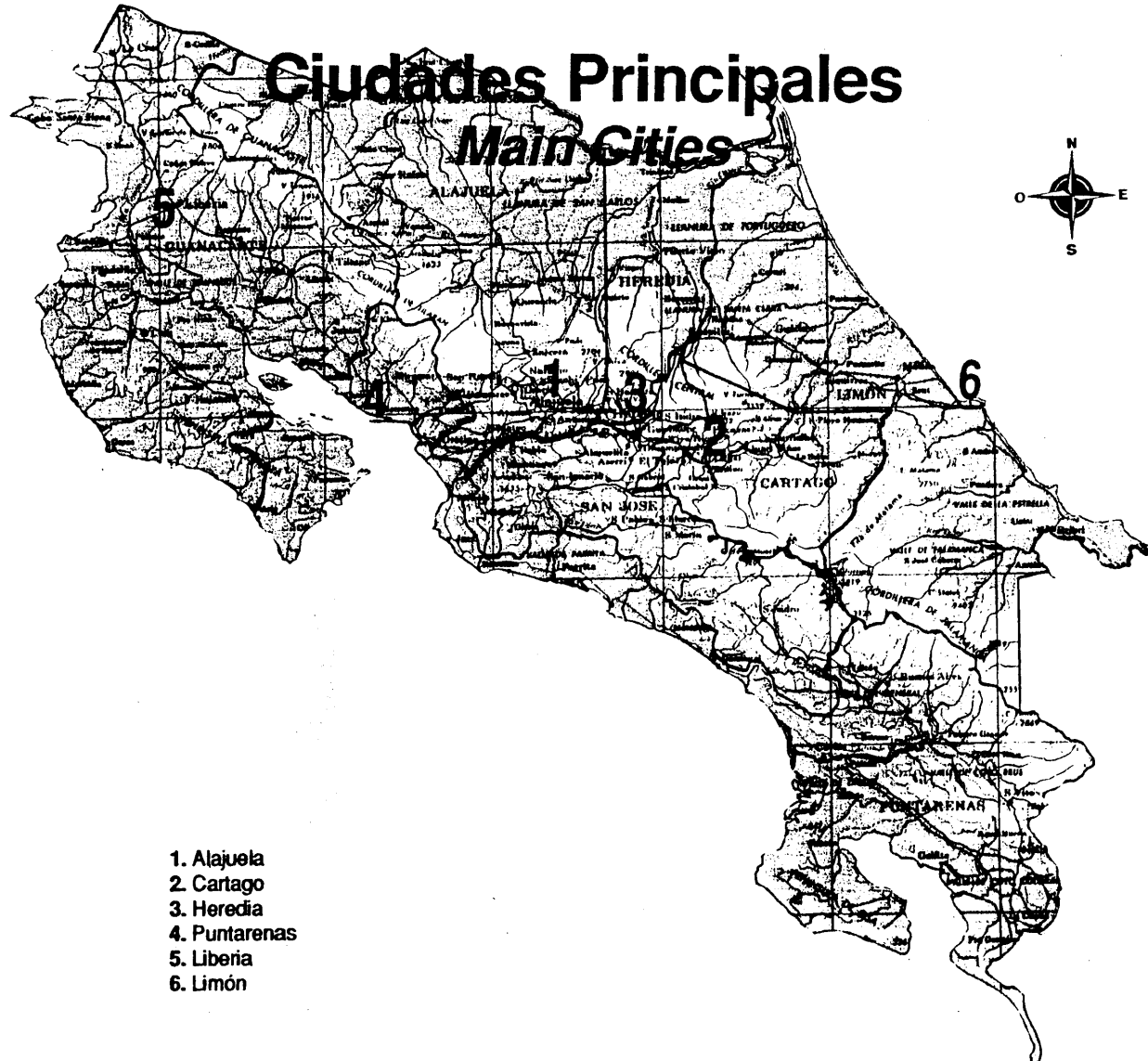


***Map of Costa Rica showing the capital of San Jose
and other important cities.***

*Map, Guias de Costa Rica S.A.
1991.*

Ciudades Principales

Main Cities

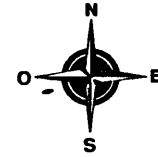


1. Alajuela
2. Cartago
3. Heredia
4. Puntarenas
5. Liberia
6. Limón

Map of City of San Jose showing neighboring areas.

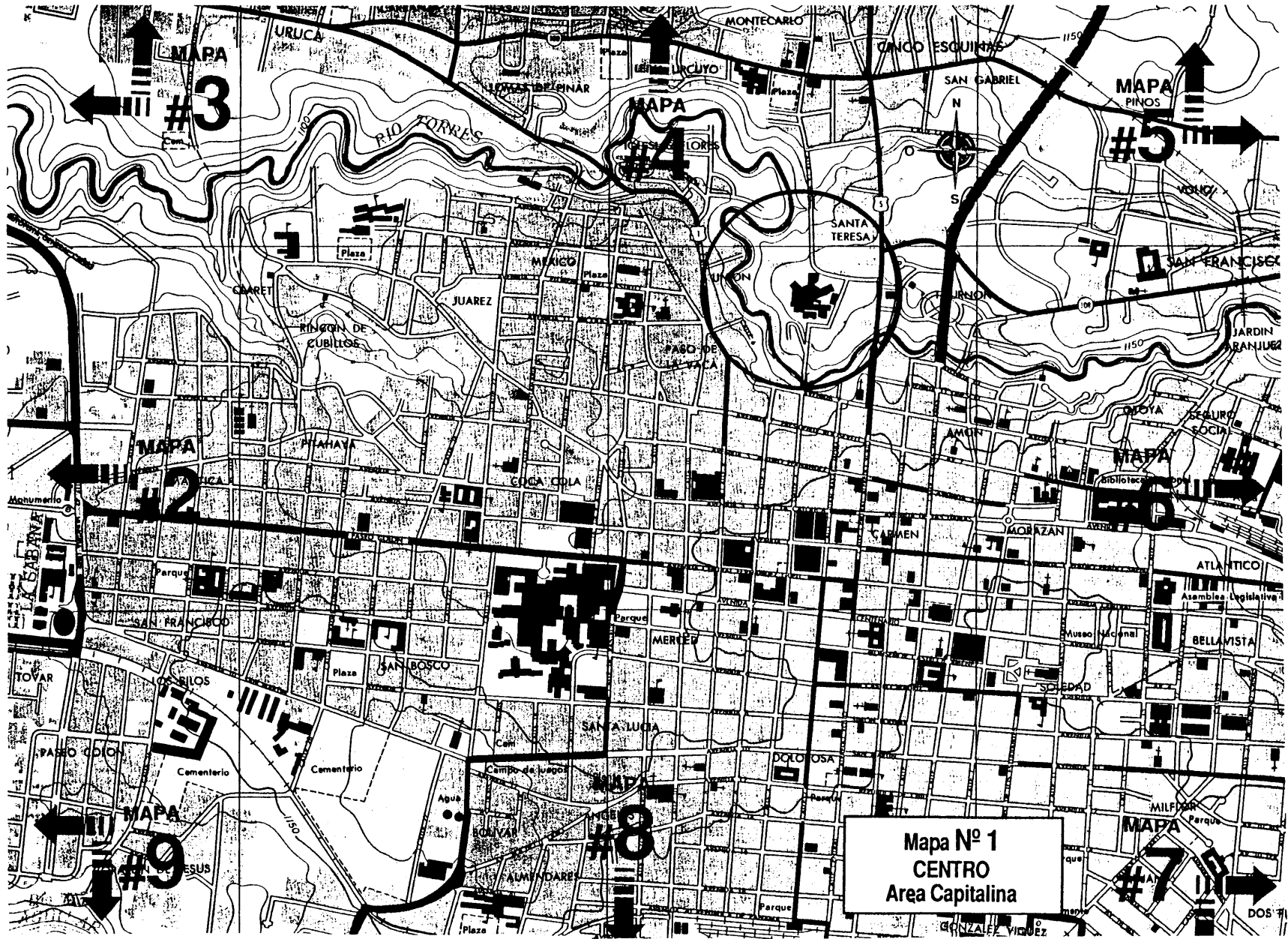
*Map, Guias de Costa Rica S.A.
1991*

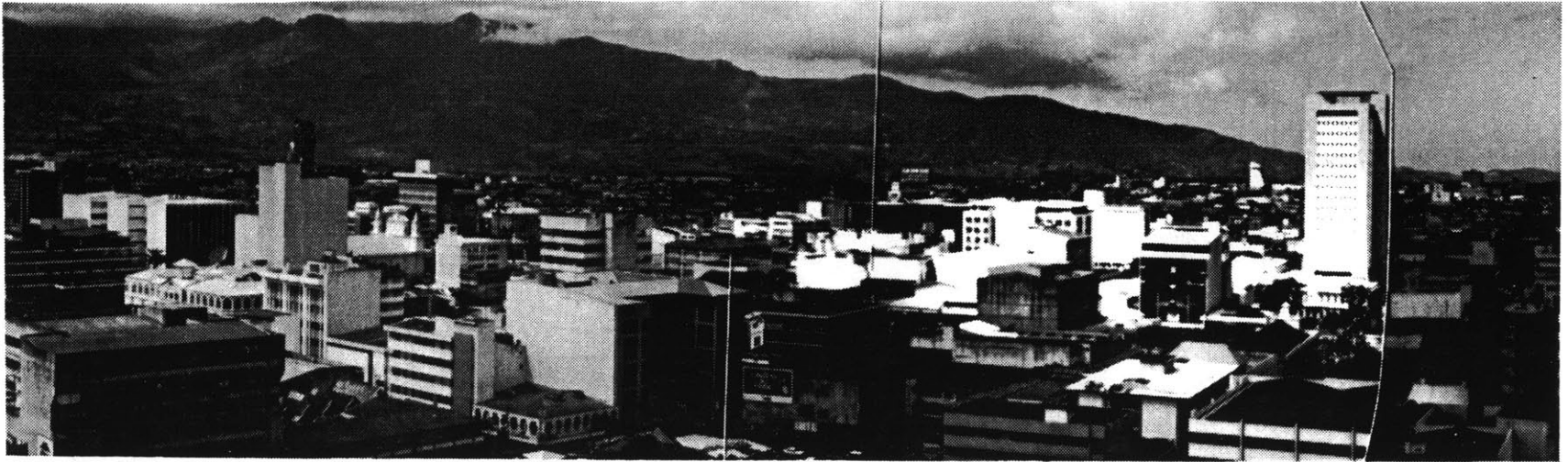
Key Map



*Central area of San Jose showing the site and its
adjacency to the city center.*

*Map, Guias de Costa Rica S.A.
1991.*





Panorama of San Jose to the West, showing valley and mountain range beyond. Also visible the character of the financial city center only blocks south of the site.

Photo by author



***Panorama of San Jose to the North-west
indicating site location.***

Photo by author

*View of Green corridor along the River torres
winding through the city to the east of the site.*



Photo by author

***Aerial photograph showing the site and Green
corridor along the River torres.***

*Aireal photo, Ministerio de Obras
Publicas.*



A. Photograph showing the narrow streets of the old city grid a few blocks to the south of the site.

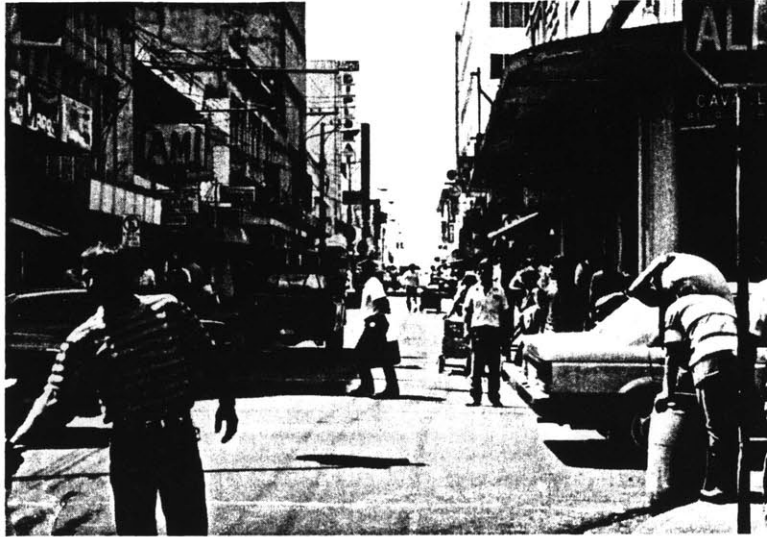
Also shown, are the stores of "El Mercado Central", the oldest market in the city. The streets are alive with a commercial facade of merchants defining the perimeter of the market.

B. This photograph shows a busy intersection in "la calle 4a" (the street on axis to the site) along the perimeter of the market. There have been various proposals to close some of these streets to vehicular traffic along the market, currently only a few have been closed off during market hours.



A

Photo by author



B

Photo by author

A. View of one of the many plaza's in the city. The city center and adjacent communities were constructed around these. The church was usually the first public institution that was built following construction of the plaza.

B. The plaza is also a refuge within the city, many of these have turned into parks that seek to relate to the world of the mountains beyond. The plaza becomes a way to connect back to nature within the city by bringing a small piece of the mountain to it.



A

Photo by author

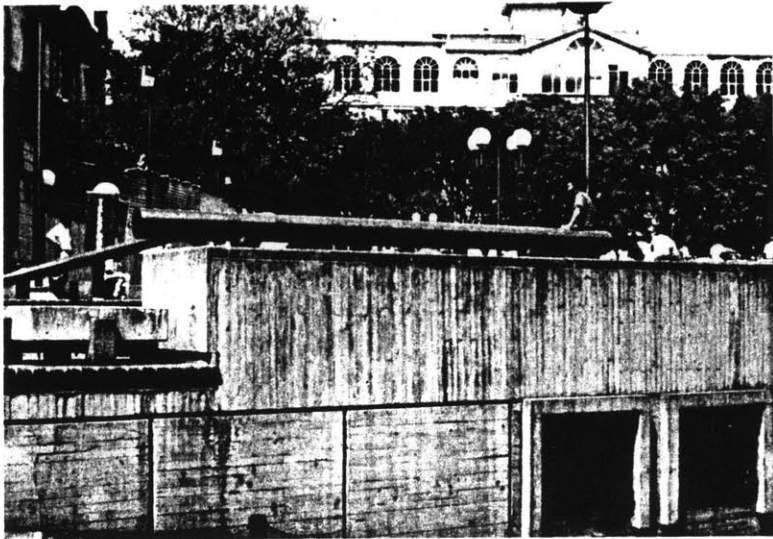


B

Photo by author

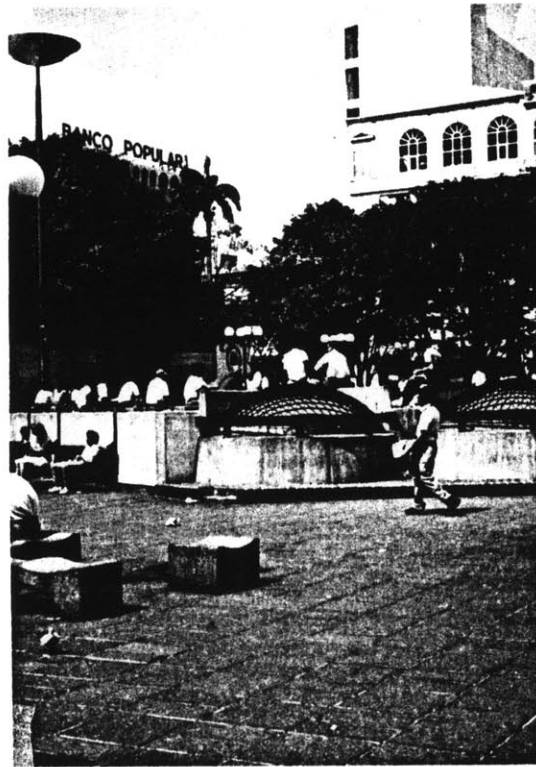
A. View of "Plaza de la Cultura". This plaza is habitated at the level of the city above, but also below, where a small museum of anthropology houses a collection of past Costa Rican Culture.

B. View of plaza above.



A

Photo by author



B

Photo by author

A. Some plazas have become promenades along city streets.

B. Along the edge of these promenades many vendors take the opportunity to sell their goods.



A

Photo by author

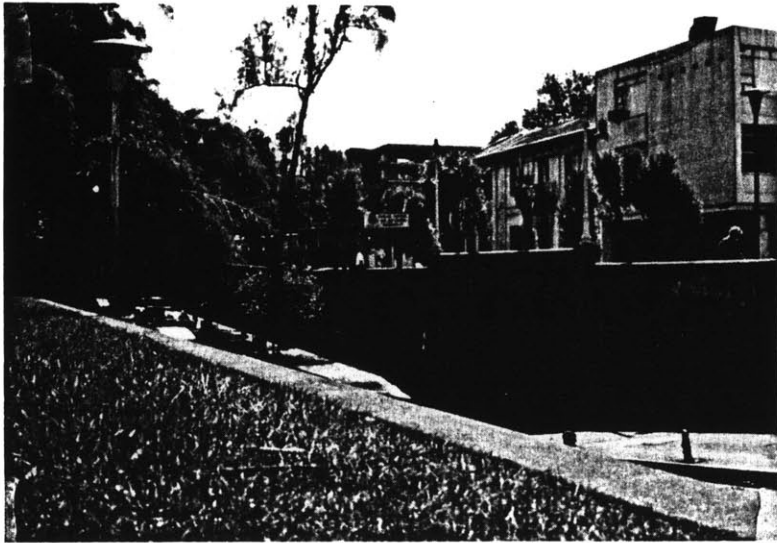


B

*Photo by
Museo Nacional de Costa Rica,*

A. This plaza, in the oldest part of the city, acts as a gateway between the older fabric that surrounds it and the new city.

B. gateway from the older part of the city.



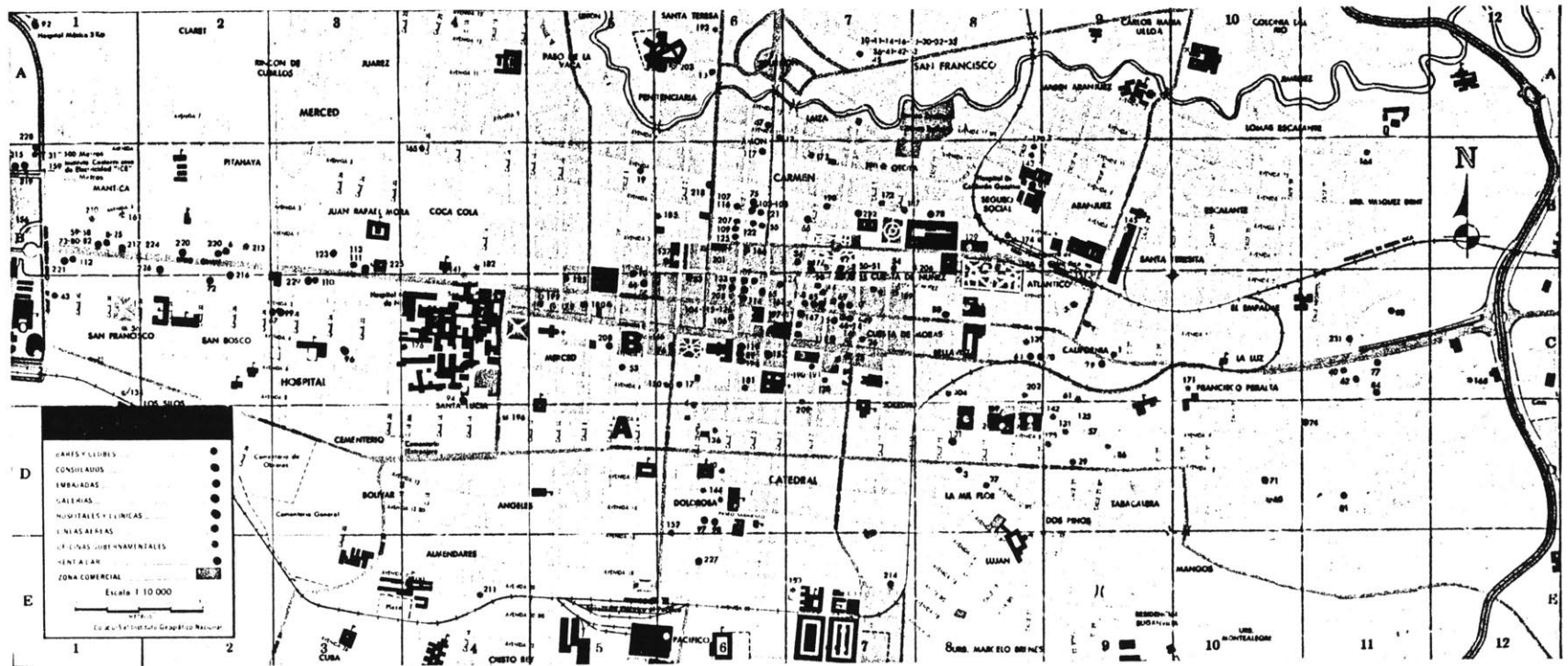
A

Photo by author



B

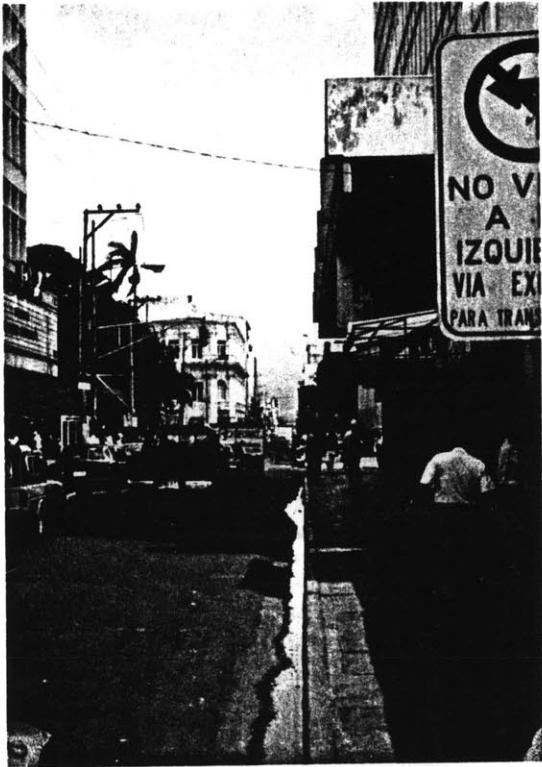
Photo by author



Map, Ministerio de Turismo 1989.

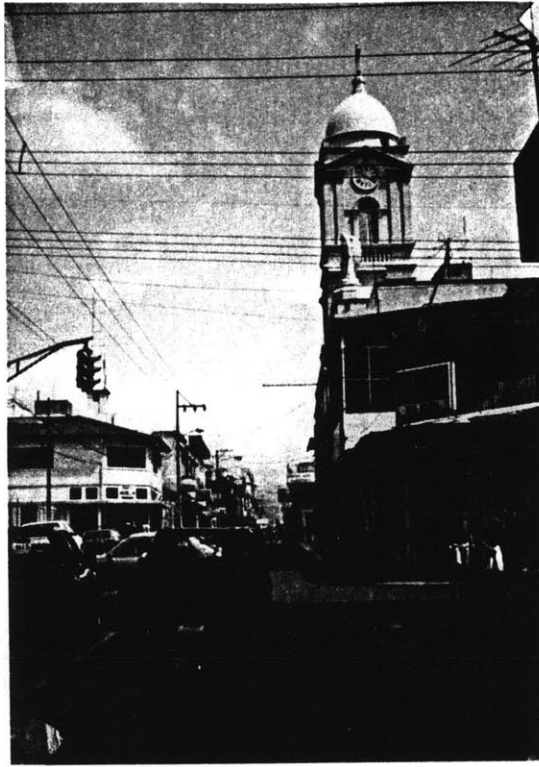
A. View along " La Calle Cuatro " toward the site from the city.

B. View along the same street showing the first basilica of san Jose where the city began construction.



A

Photo by author



B

Photo by author



Map, Ministerio de Turismo 1989.

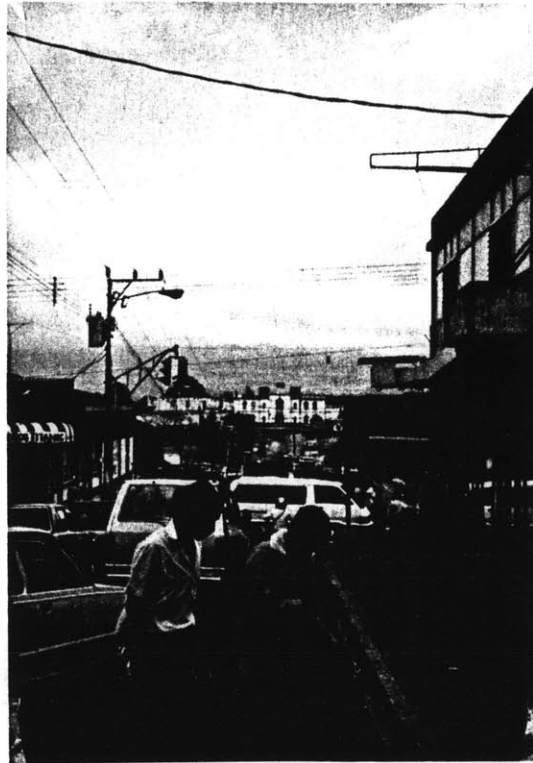
C. View from commercial center of the city toward the site.

D. View along " la Calle Cuatro " showing the site and the mountains beyond.



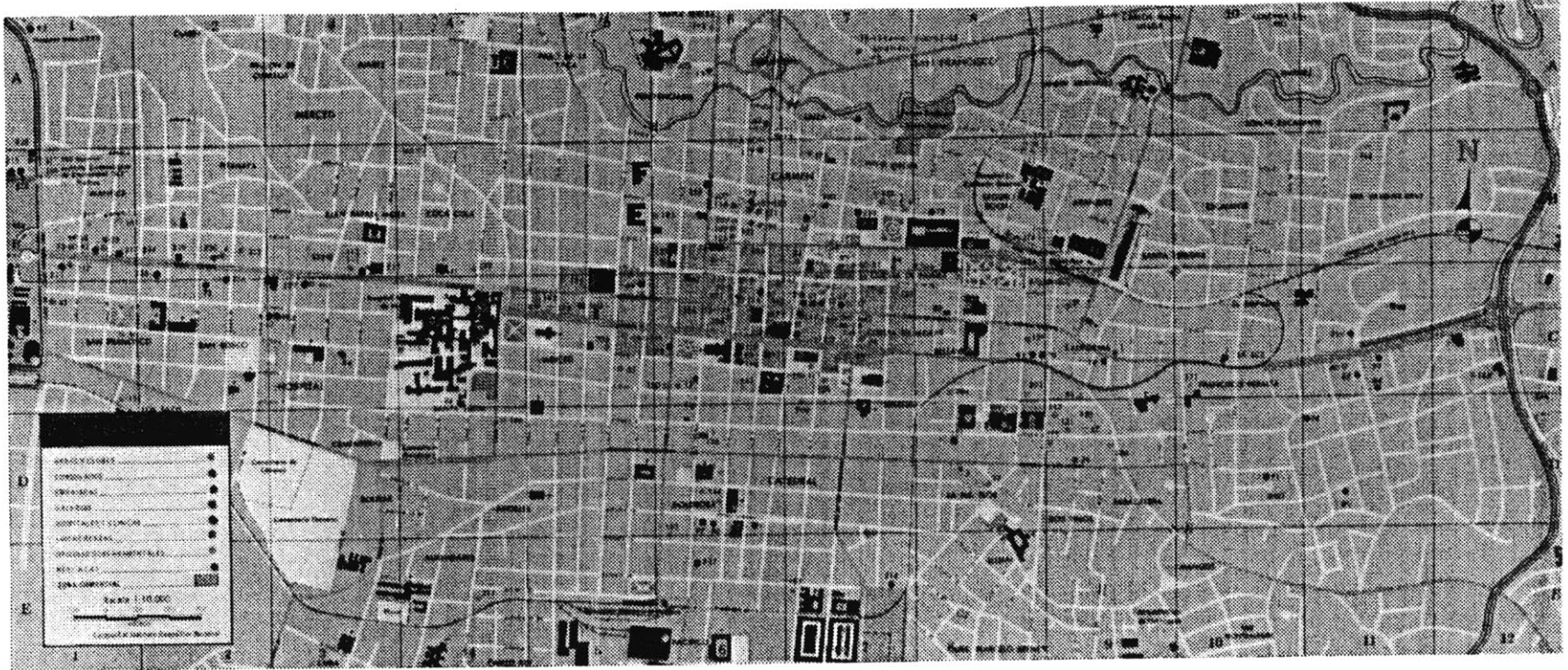
C

Photo by author



D

Photo by author



Map, Ministerio de Turismo 1989.

E. View along bus stop looking towards the site.

F. View of the site and mountains beyond exiting the city center.



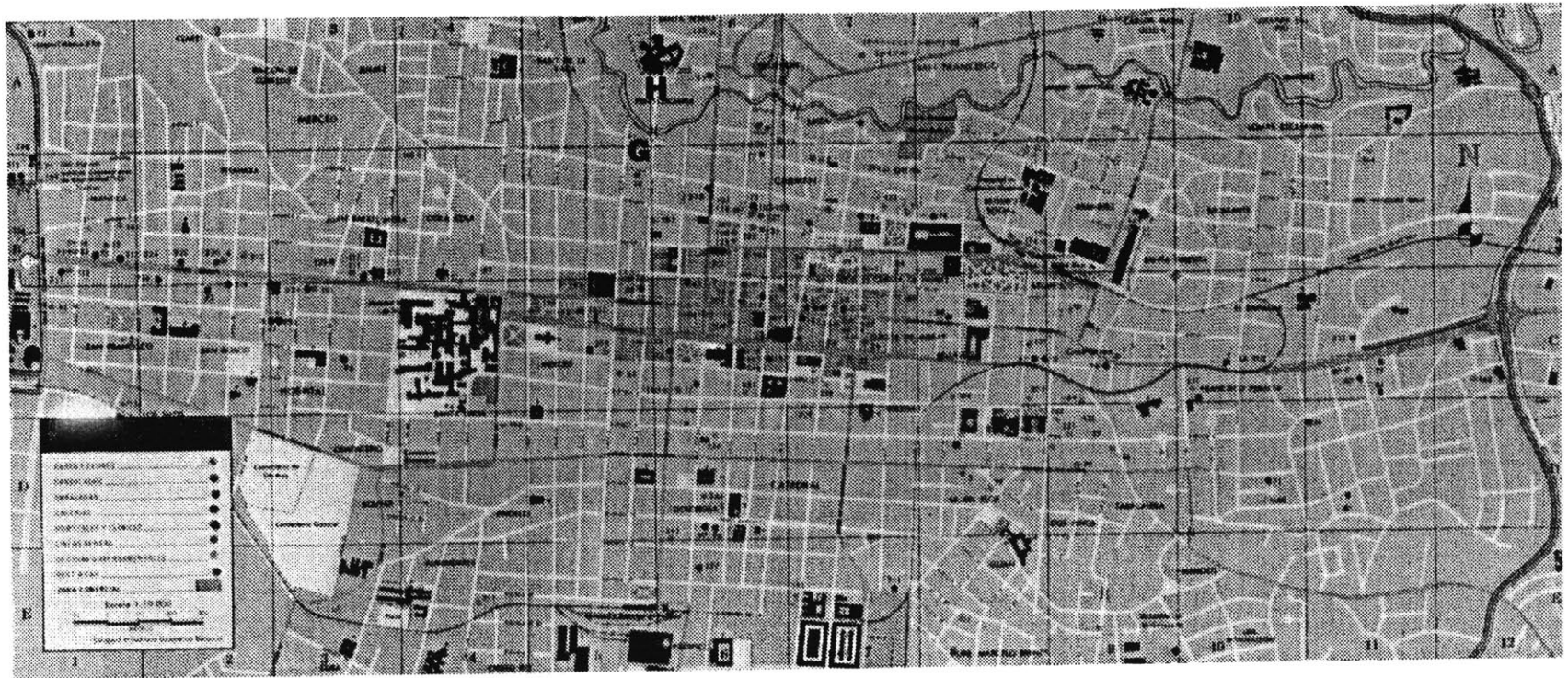
E

Photo by author



F

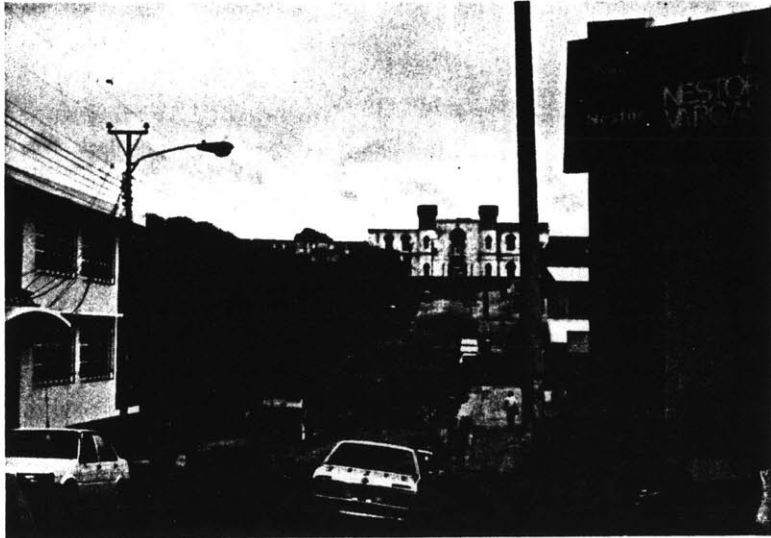
Photo by author



Map, Ministerio de Turismo 1989.

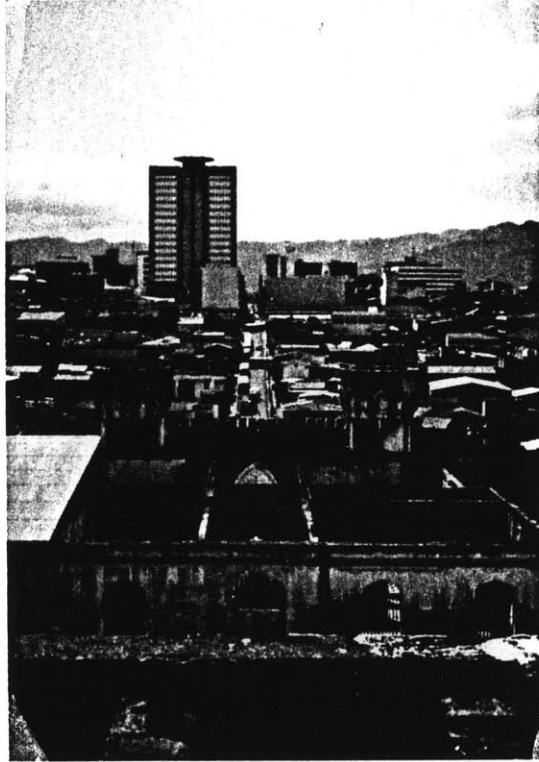
G. View of main Access to the site.

H. View of the city looking back from the site.



G

Photo by author



H

Photo by author

*I. View of main axis to site looking back toward
the city.*

H. View of turret from the ruins of the west wing.

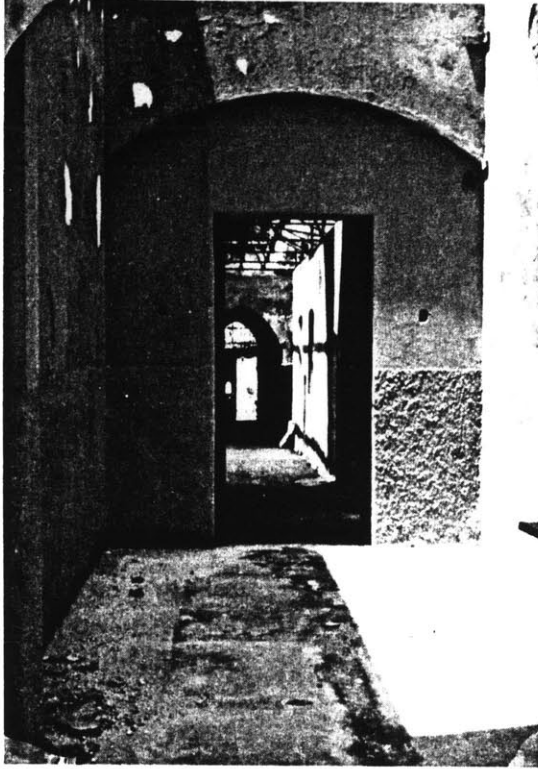


Photo by author

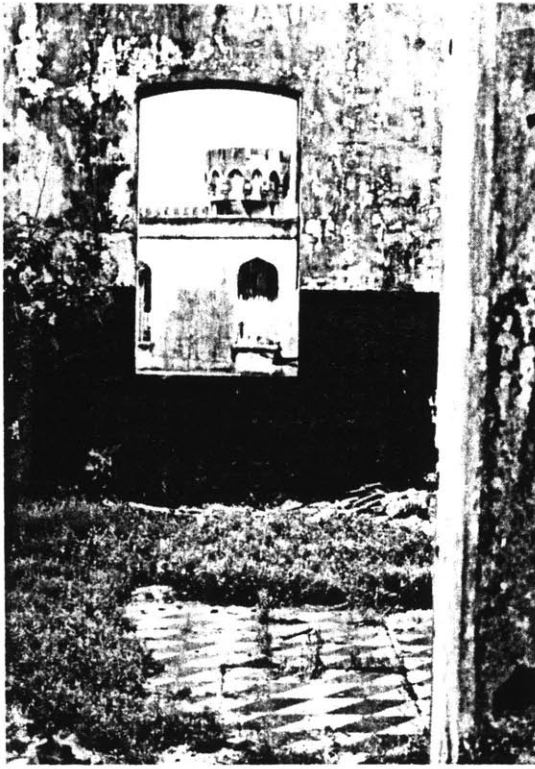


Photo by author

K. View of West west wing, first floor level.

L. View of West wing, second floor level.



K

Photo by author



L

Photo by author

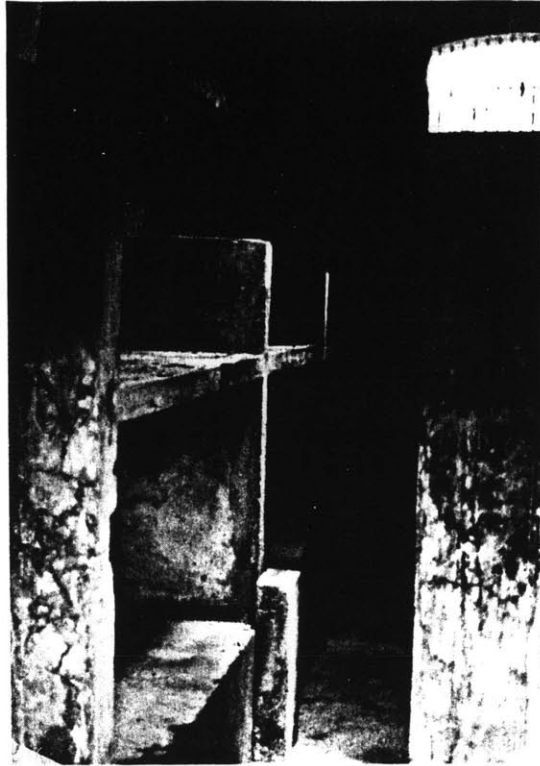
*M. View of West wing, showing main corridor
leading to cells.*

N. View of cell along West wing corridor.



M

Photo by author



N

Photo by author

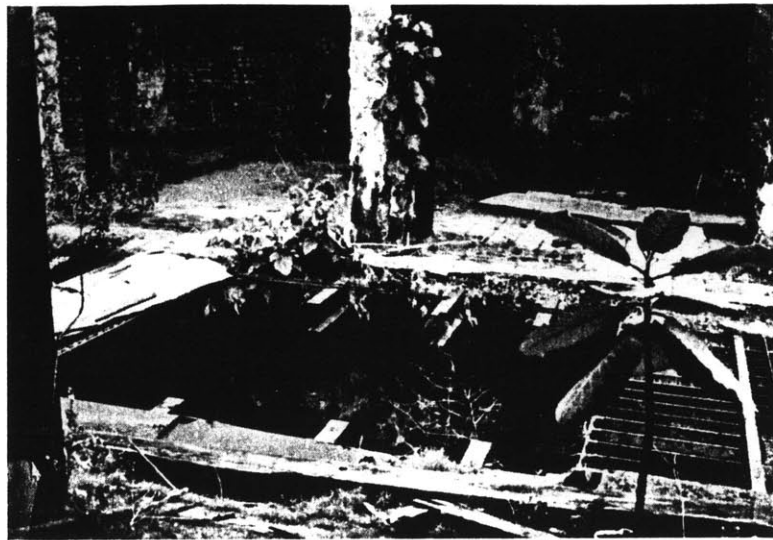
O. Detail of floor along West wing.

P. Detail of structure, West wing corridor.



O

Photo by author

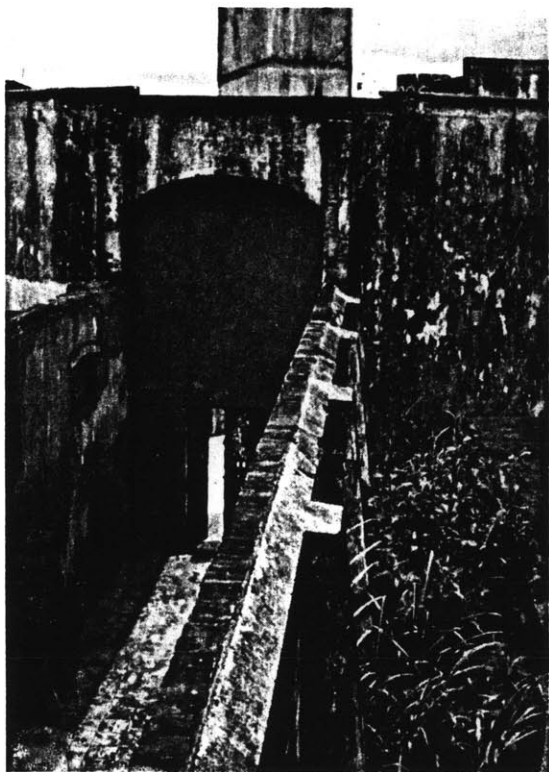


P

Photo by author

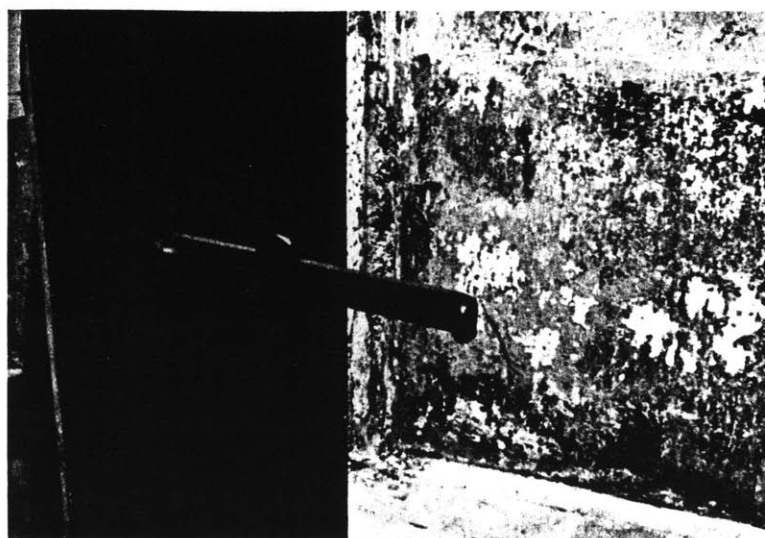
*Q. Detail of wall along main axis leading to
central space.*

R. Door detail along main axis.



Q

Photo by author



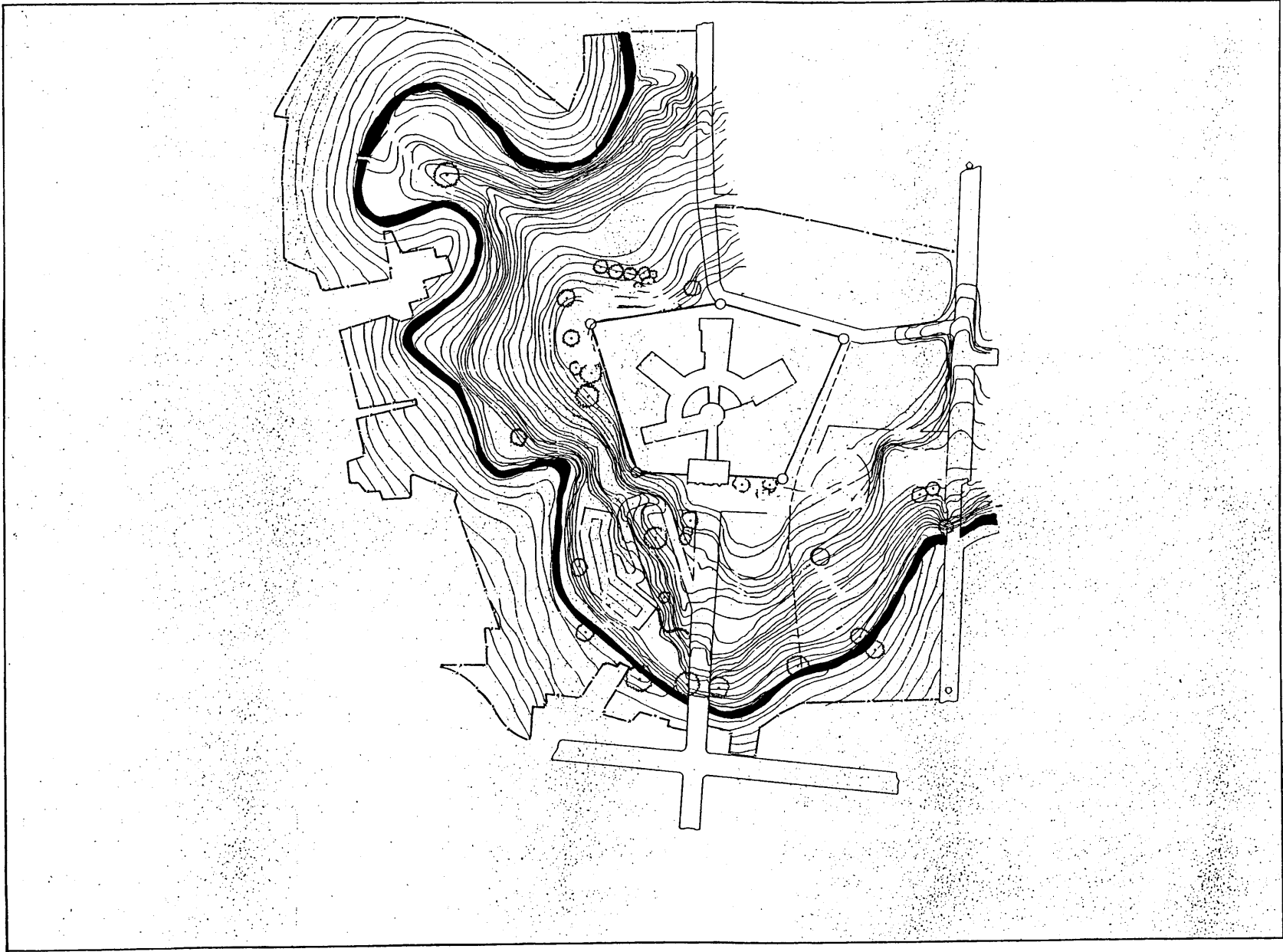
R

Photo by author

Original Condition of Site in 1908

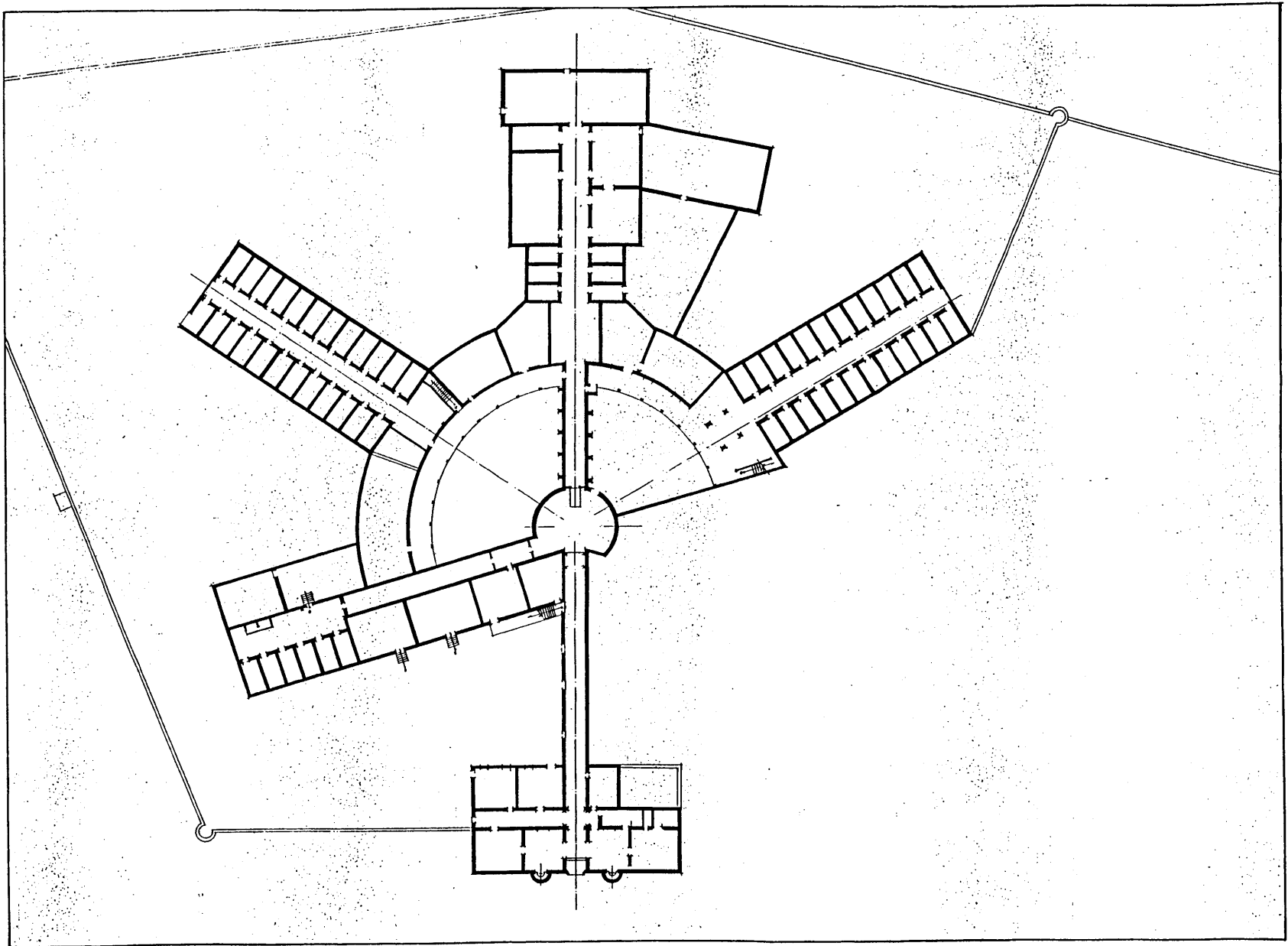
A. Site plan showing original footprint of " La Antigua Penitenciaría ".

*Departamento de Patrimonio
Historico nacional, 1908.*



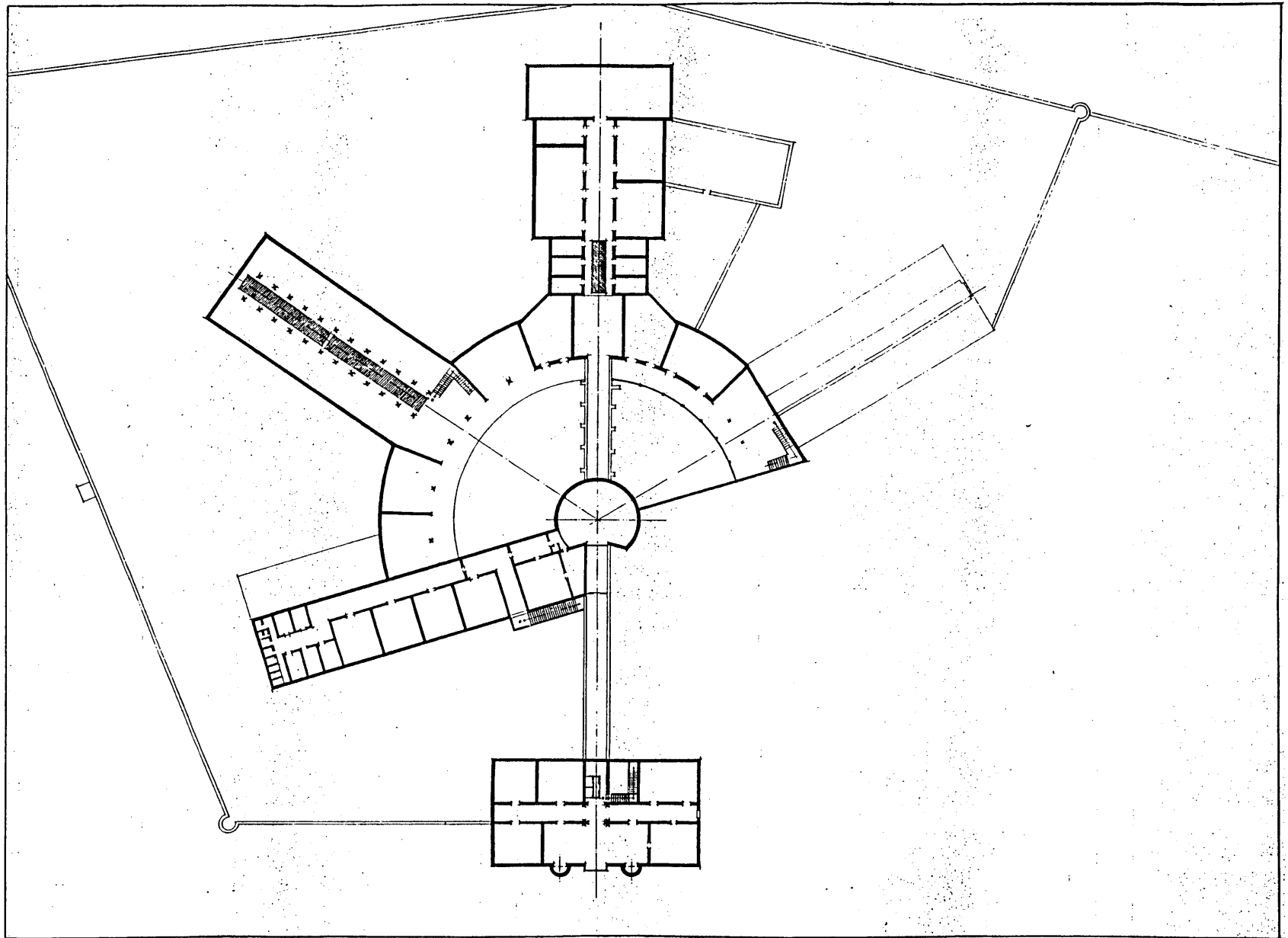
B. First floor plan, original condition.

*Departamento de Patrimonio
Historico nacional, 1908.*



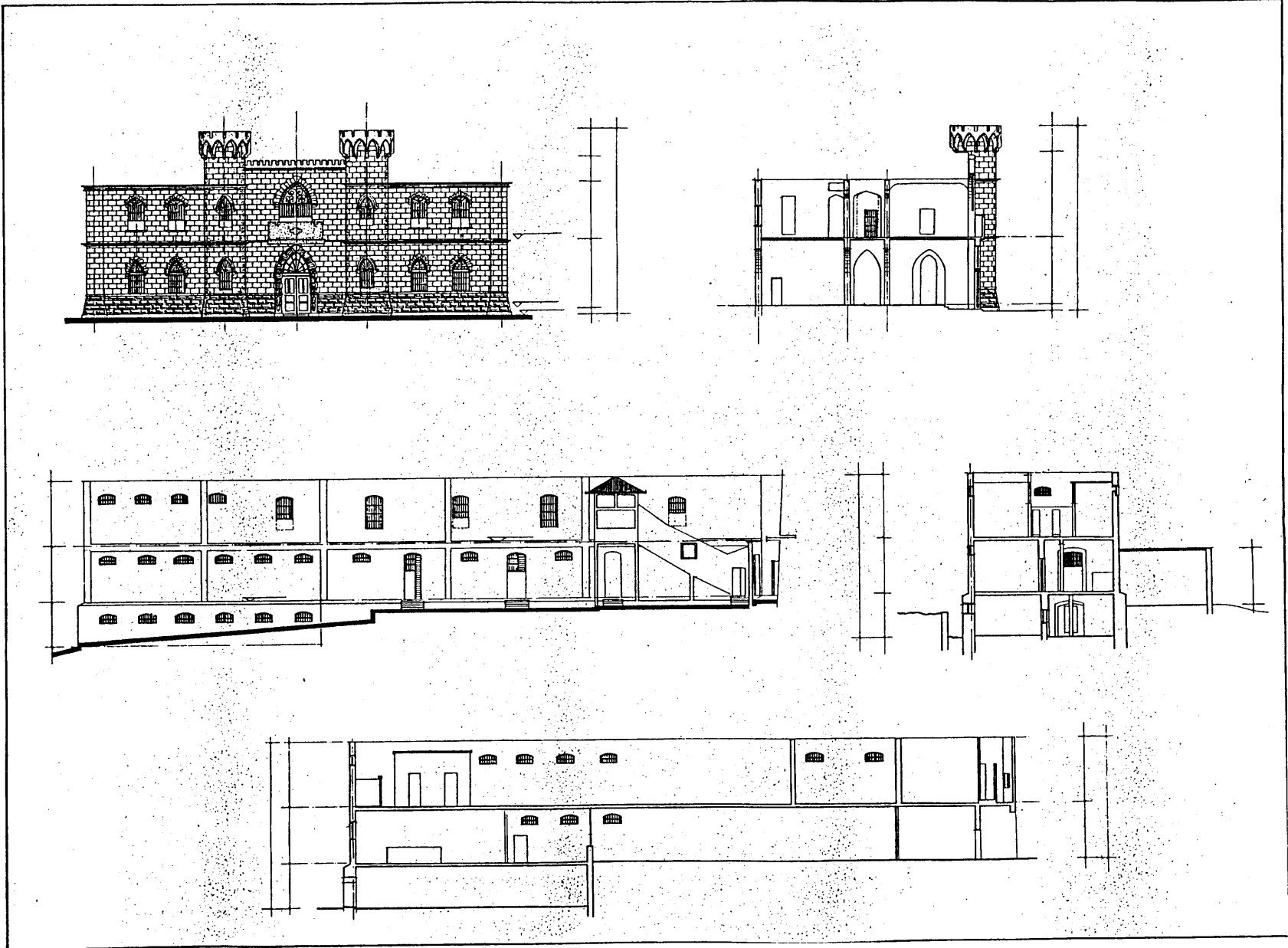
C. Second floor plan, original condition.

*Departamento de Patrimonio
Historico nacional, 1908.*



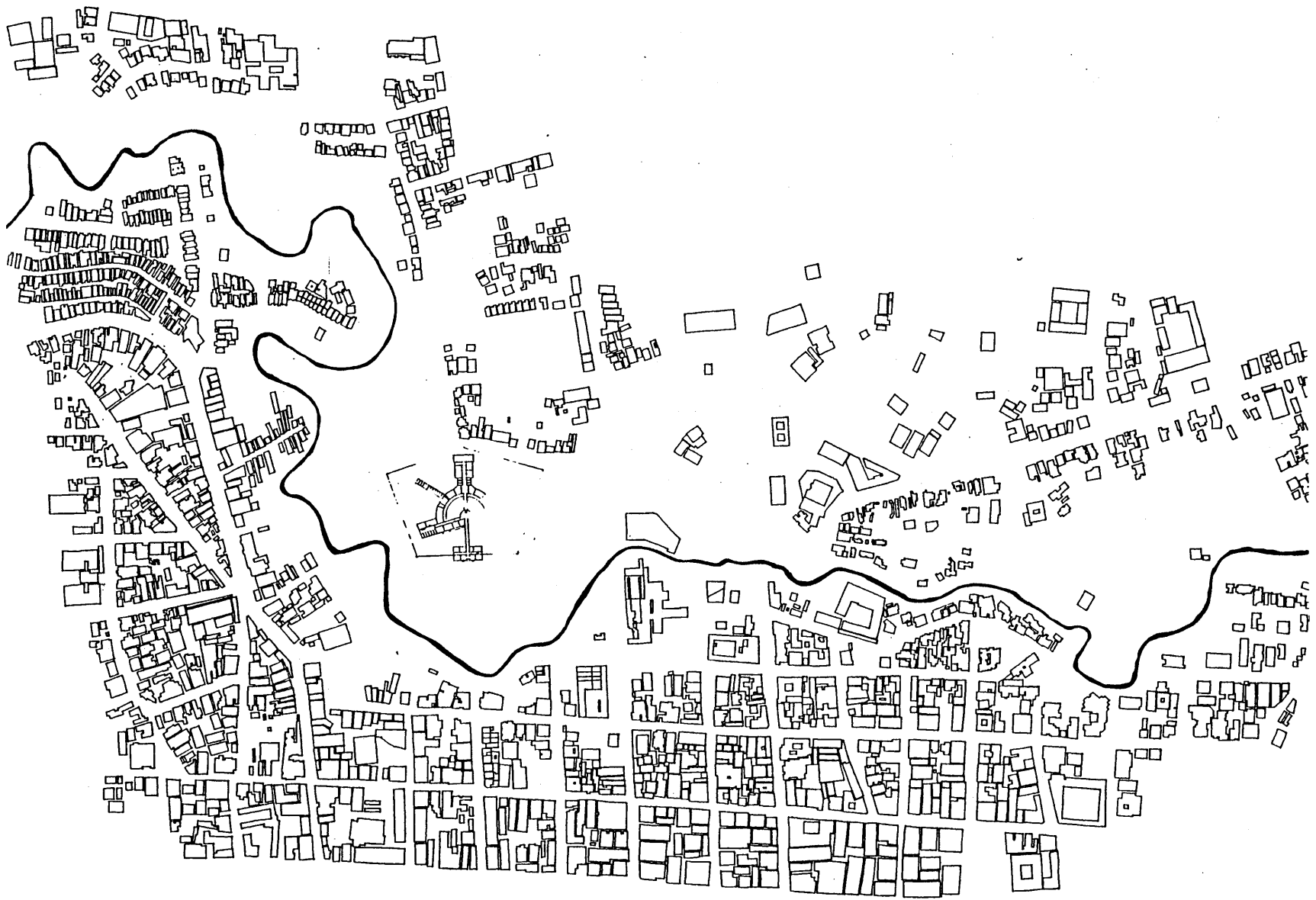
***D. Sections and elevations of main building and
West wing, original condition.***

*Departamento de Patrimonio
Historico nacional, 1908.*

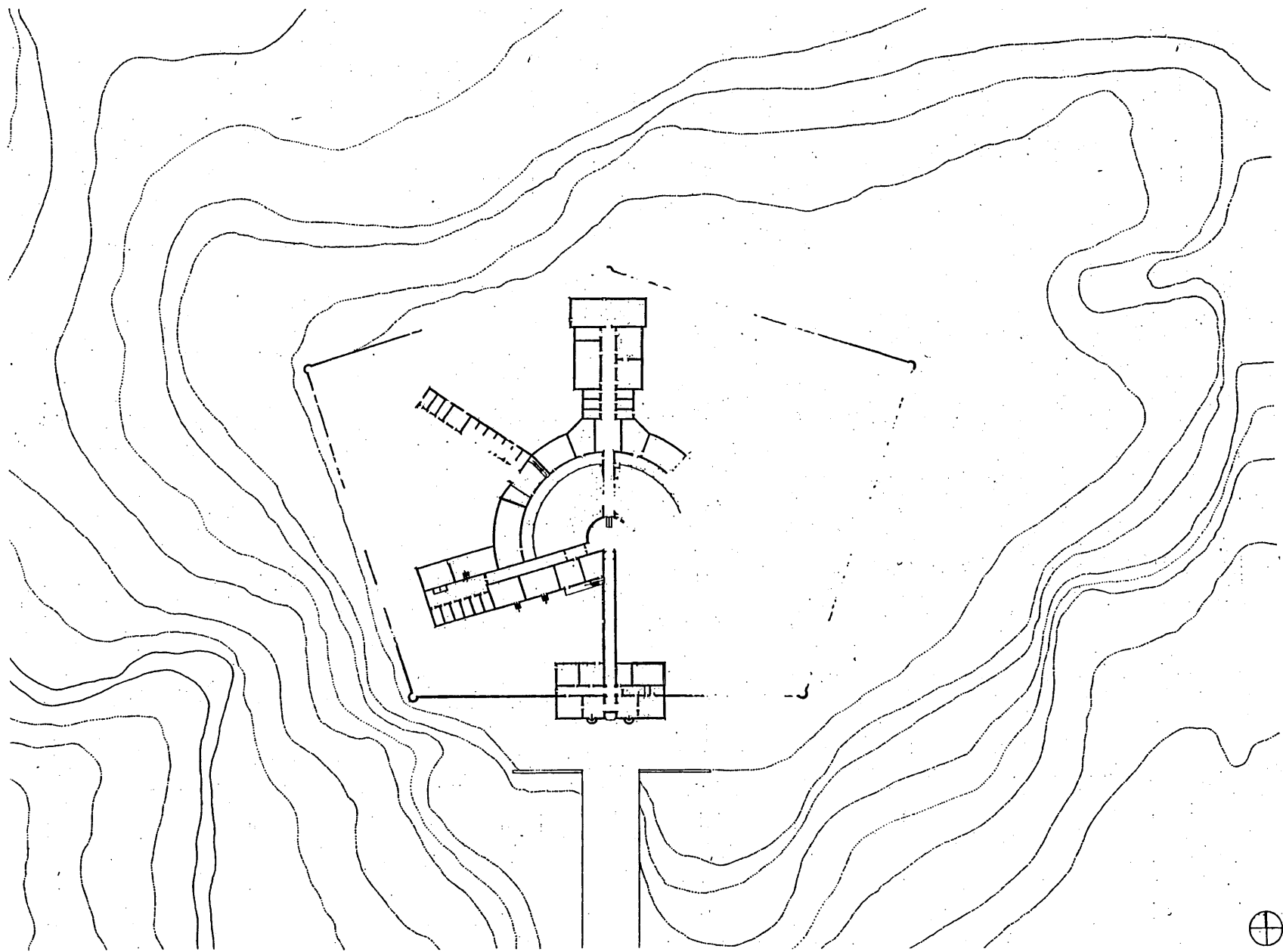


Present Condition of Site

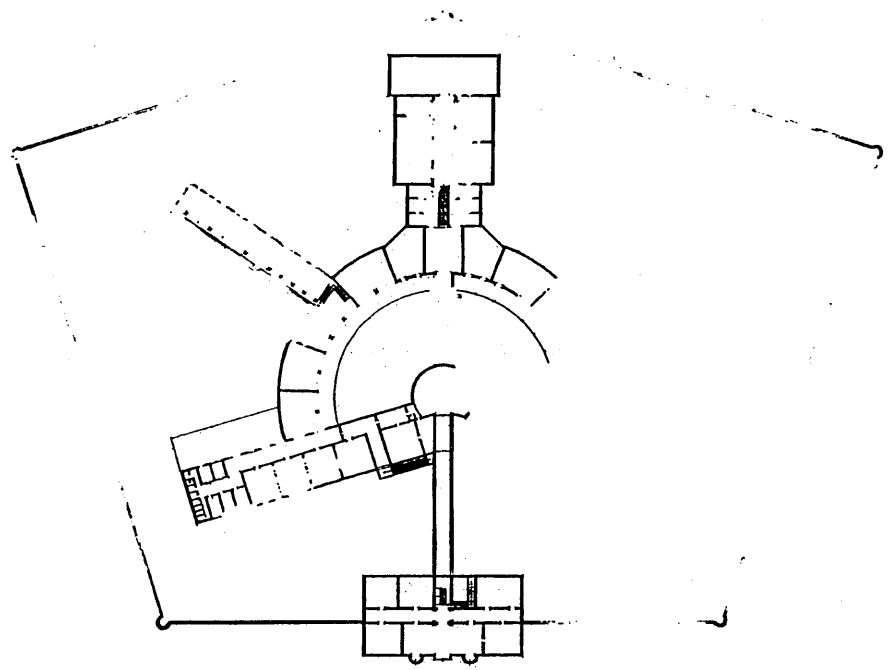
A. View of present footprint along the river Torres.



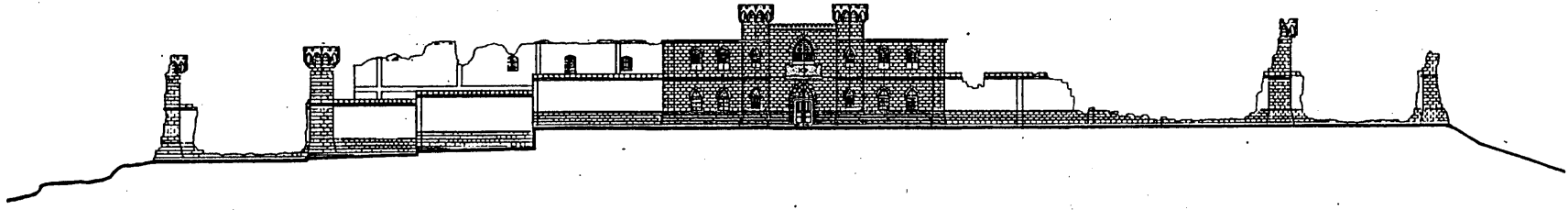
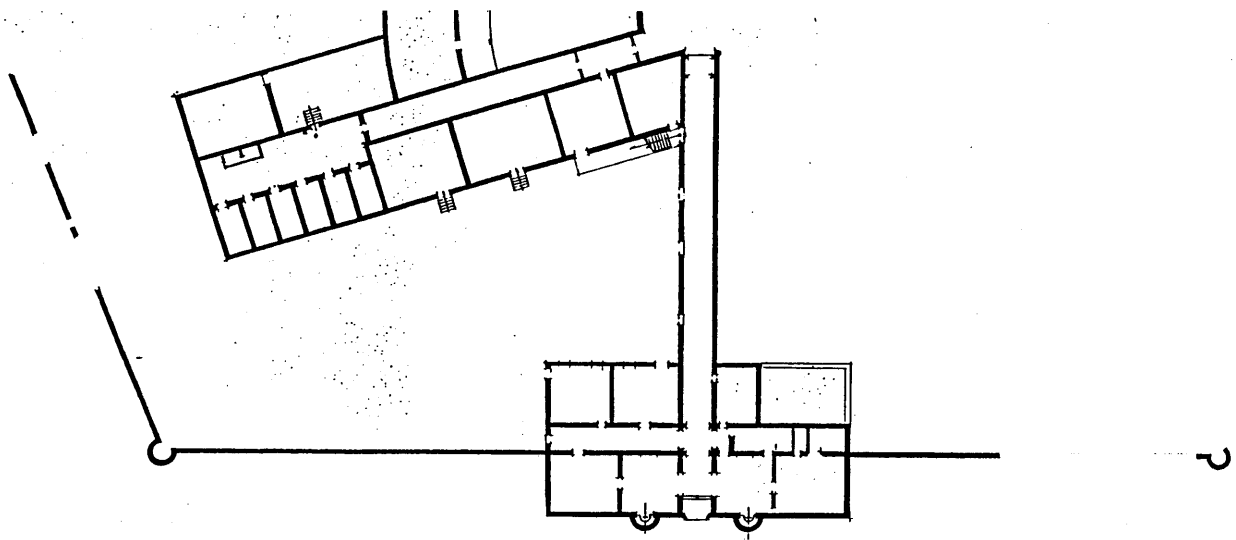
B. First floor plan, present condition.



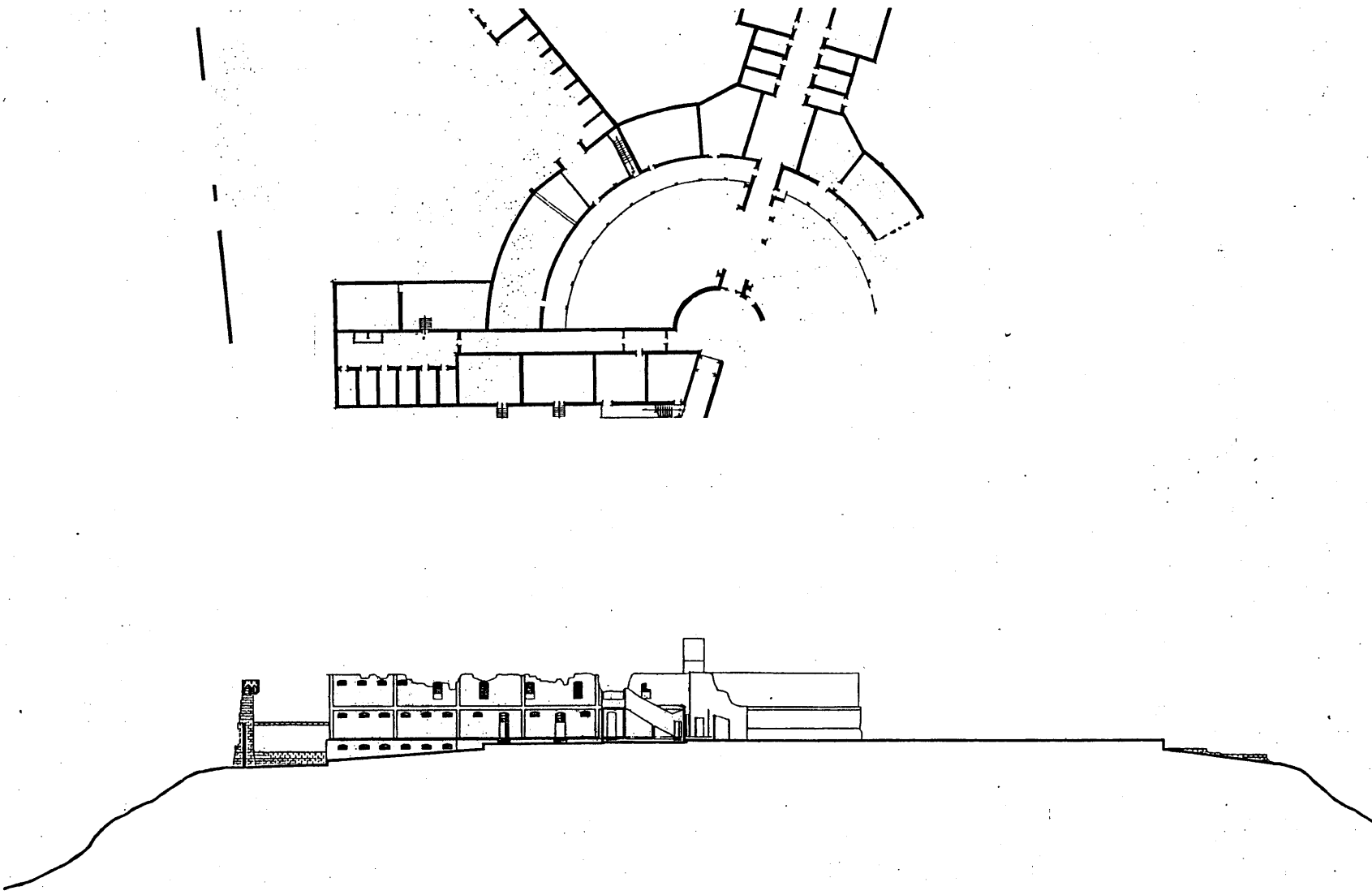
B. Second floor plan, present condition.



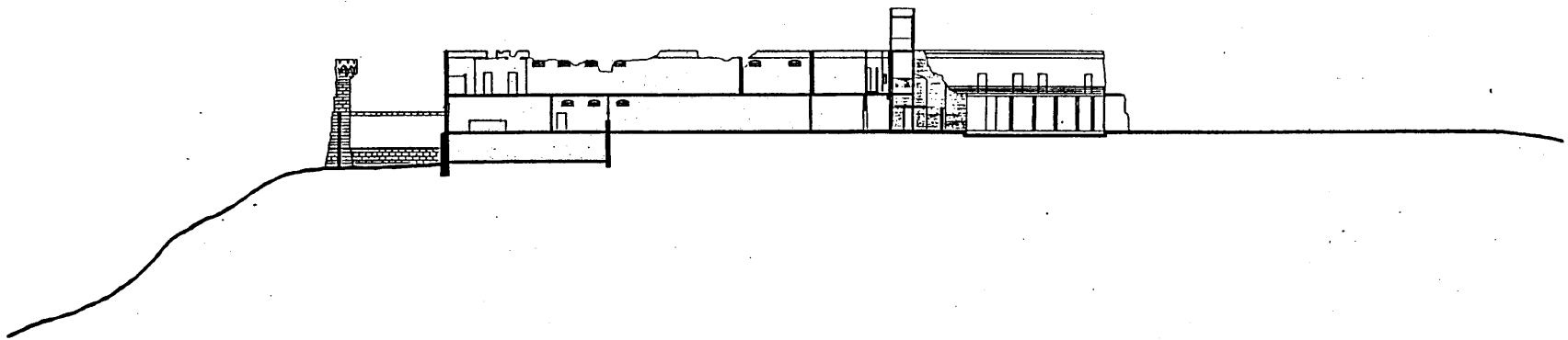
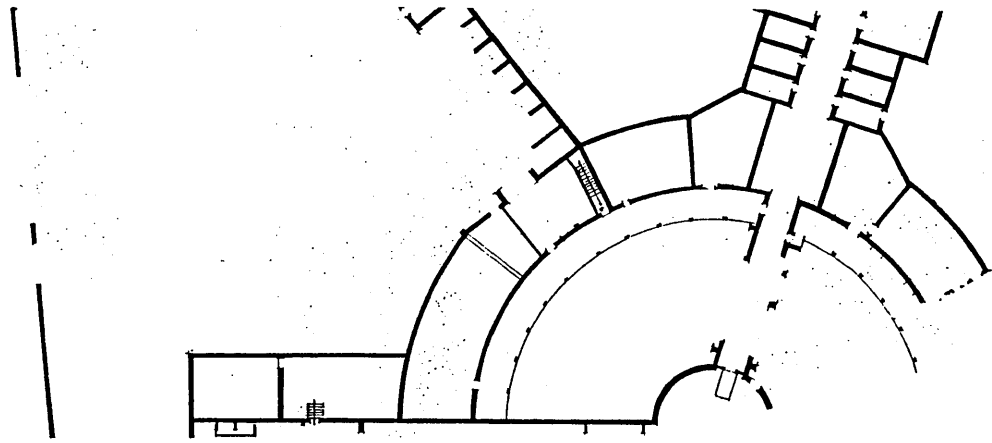
C. North elevation, present condition.



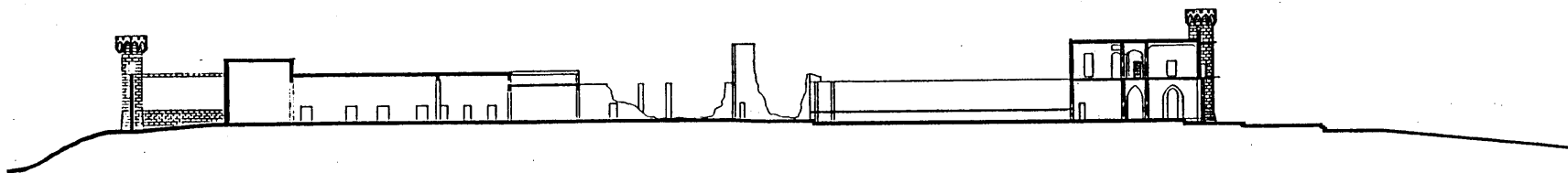
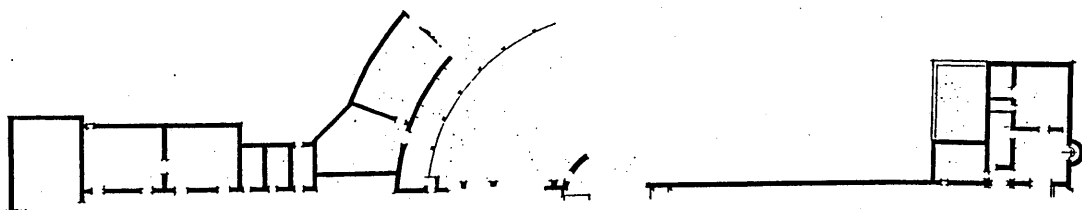
D. Elevation of West wing, present condition.



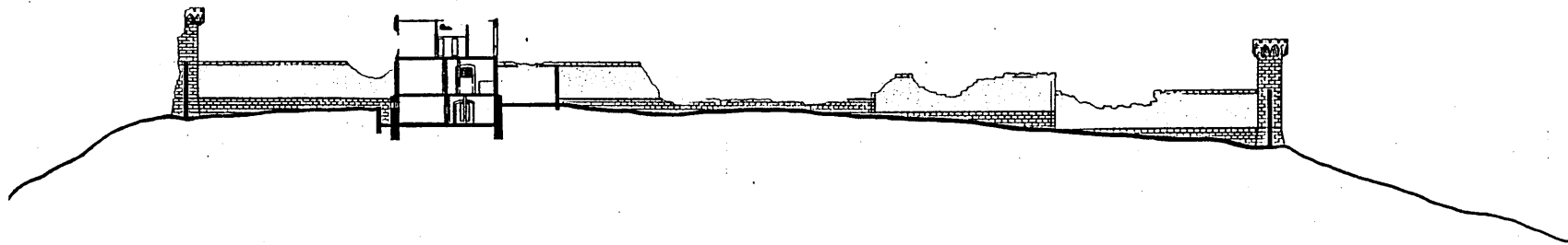
E. Section of West wing, present condition.



F. Section through main axis, present condition.



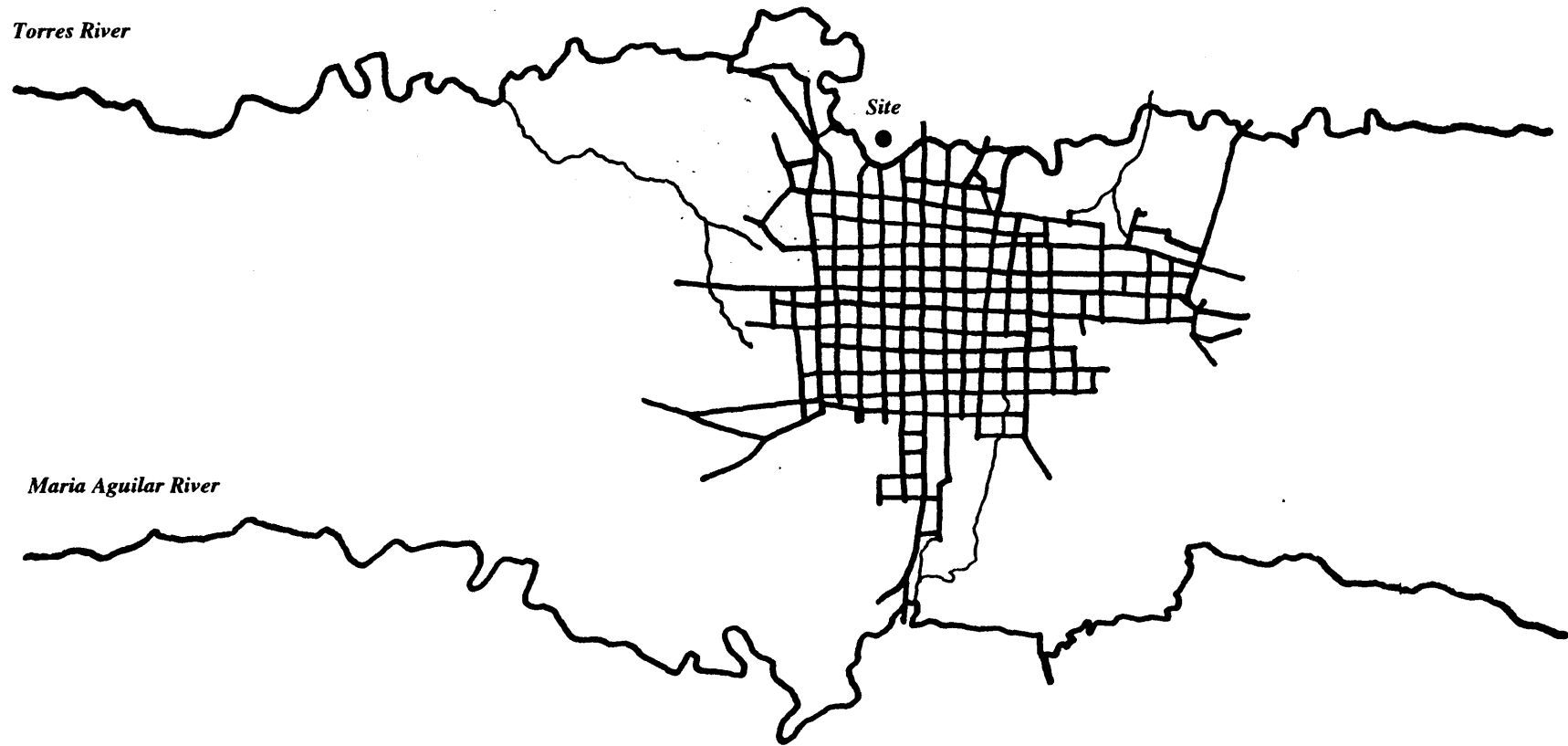
G. Cross section through West wing, present condition.



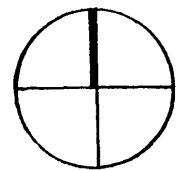
Historical Analysis of San Jose

View of the City of San Jose C.R. in 1889, showing the center of the city and the grid system of streets and avenues subdividing the landscape between the rivers Torres and Maria Aguilar. The city grew in an East West orientation do to the steep and mountainous topography to the North and South along both rivers. The dot above the grid indicates the location of the site prior to the building of the penitentiary.

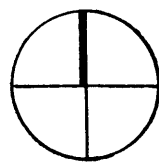
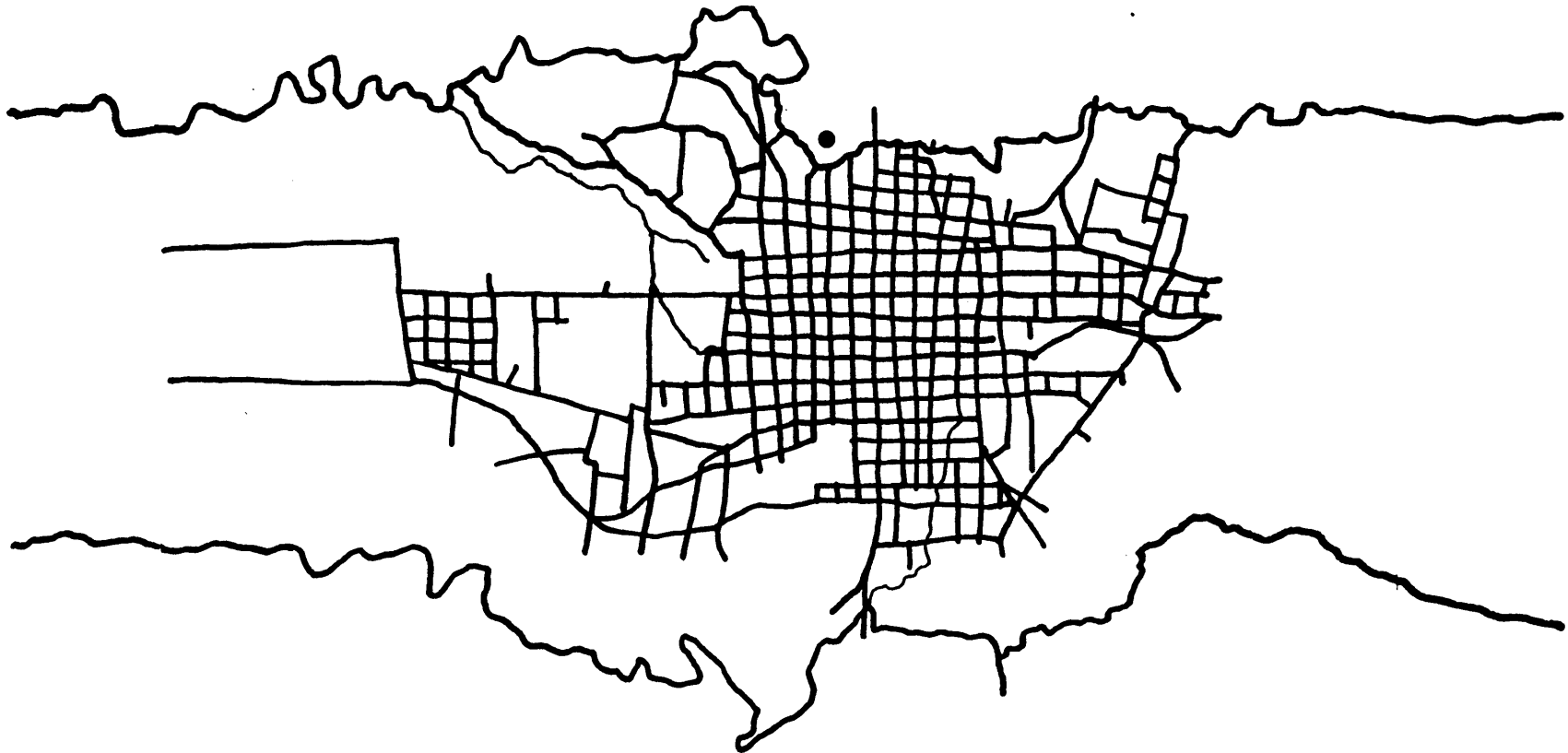
Torres River



Maria Aguilar River

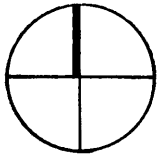
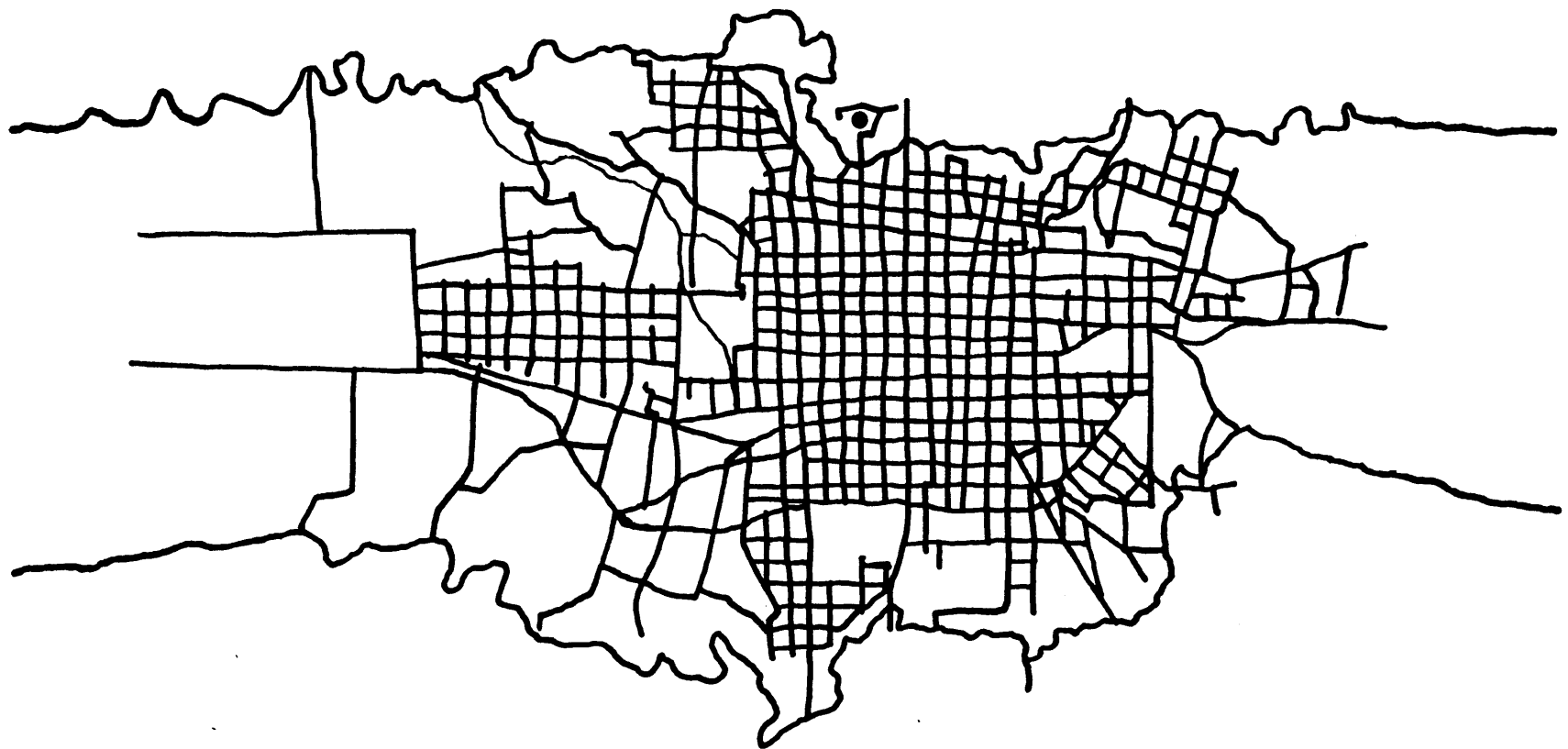


View of the City of San Jose C.R. in 1905, showing the growth of the city to the southwest of the site. Also starting to appear, the failure of the grid system along the edge of the Torres river do to the changing topography. Various larger parcels of land used for plantation around this date are also being bought and gridded to accommodate the growth, causing great problems and inconsistencies to the original grid system.



*View of the City of San Jose C.R. in 1924.
In this view, the penitentiary (built by 1908),
appears as the only built (and intentionally
separate) intervention on the other side of the
Torres river.*

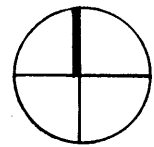
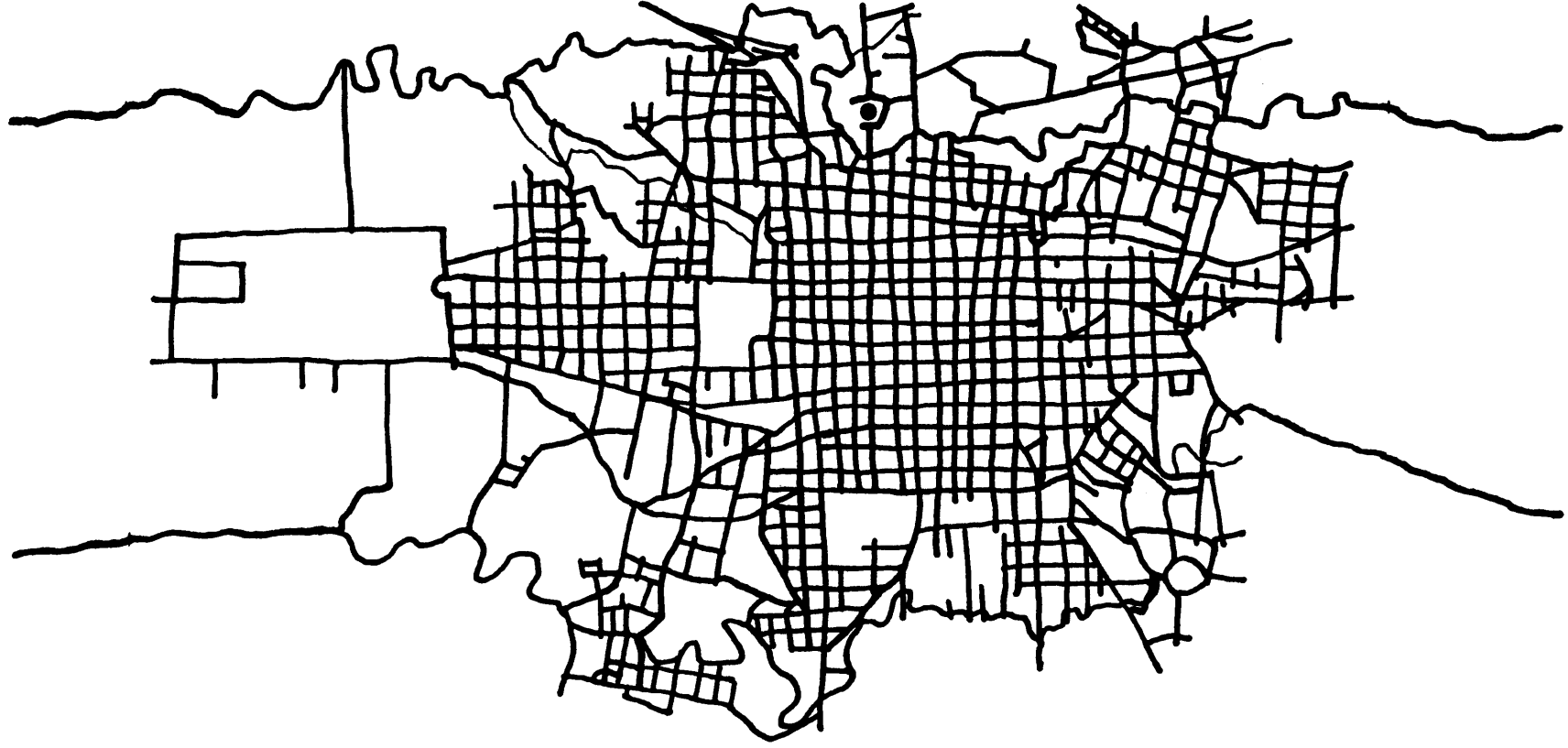
*The city is shown continuing it's growth now not
only to the west, but also to the east. The city
center and oldest parts of the city to the south of
the site, are by now a busy and congested
commercial area.*



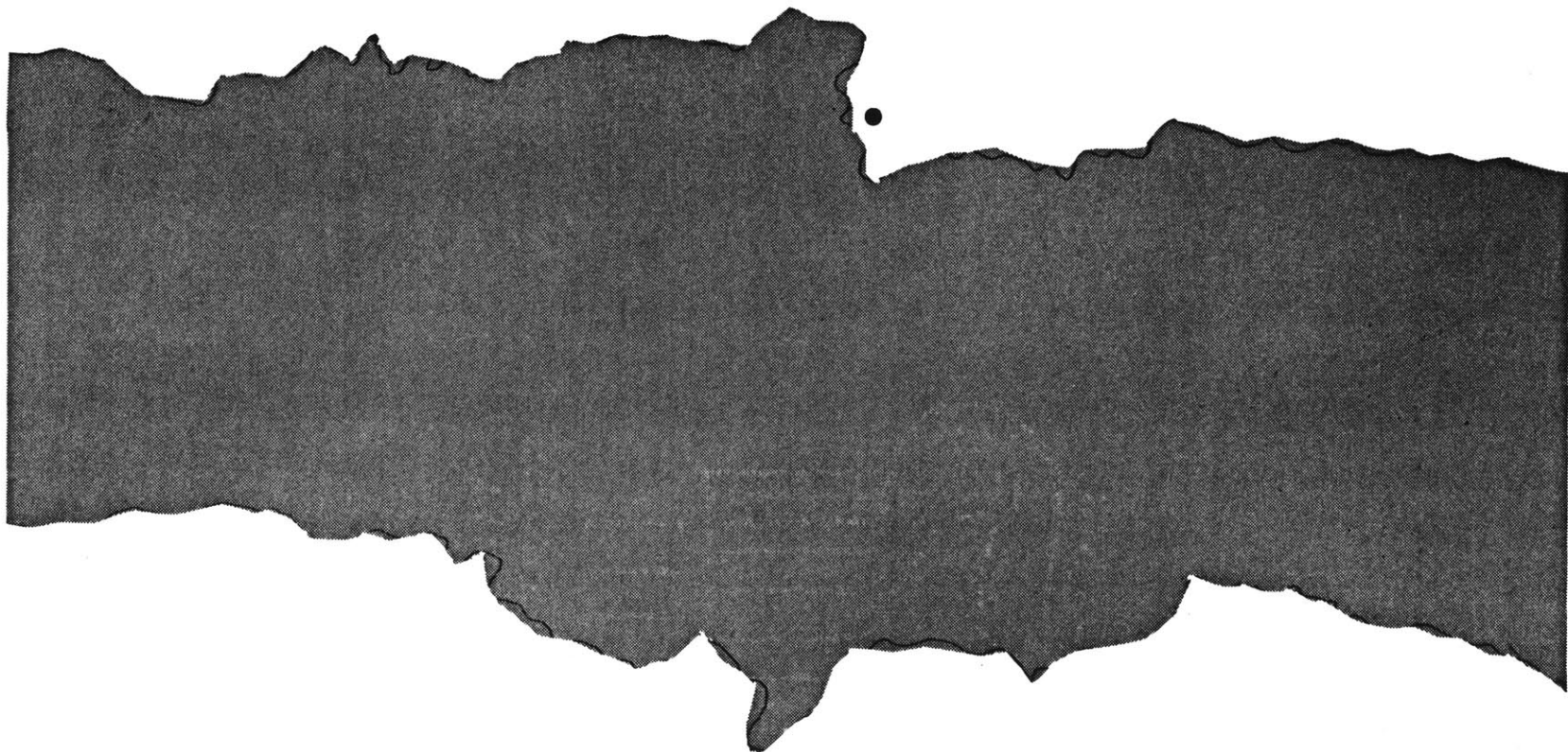
***View of the City of San Jose C.R. in 1948.
In this view the city is now beginning to encroach
the boundaries of it's two rivers.***

***The city cannot be contained by the topography
and physicality of the two rivers any longer. To the
north the Rio torres is no longer acting as the wall
that divided city and mountain, it is now a linear
gash stitching the manmade fabric of the city and
the natural fabric of the mountain beyond.***

***As consequence the site of the penitentiary is now
no longer a sepparate entity it is starting to become
part of the city, and a desirable location because of
its natural beauty and openness.***



***Conceptual drawing of the valley and containment
zone of the city between the two rivers.
Above, the dot indicates the location of the site
relative to this zone.***

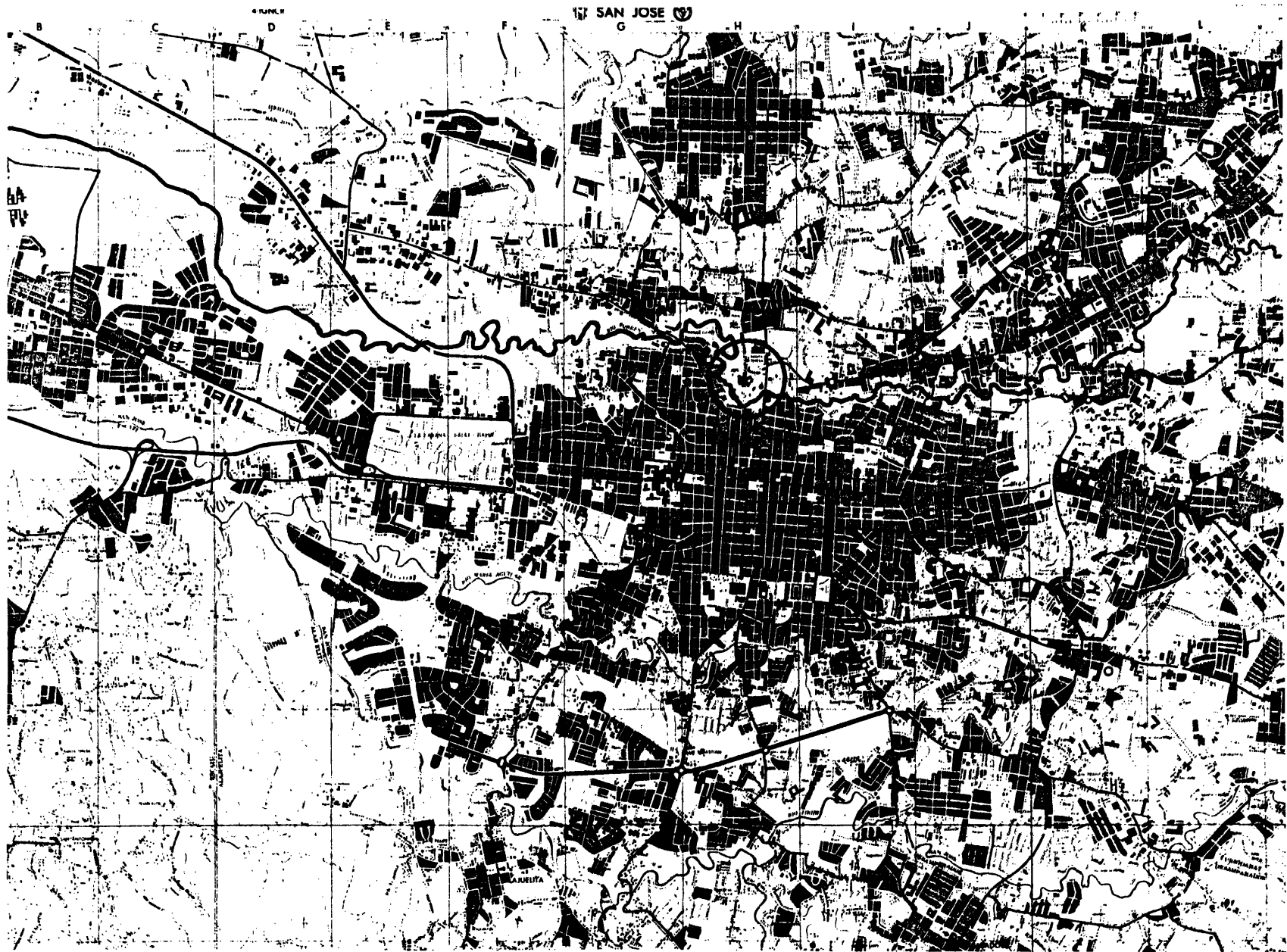


Urban Analysis: Present Condition

***Current map of San Jose, showing heavily
developed areas in gray.***

Also shown, the site and Torres River.

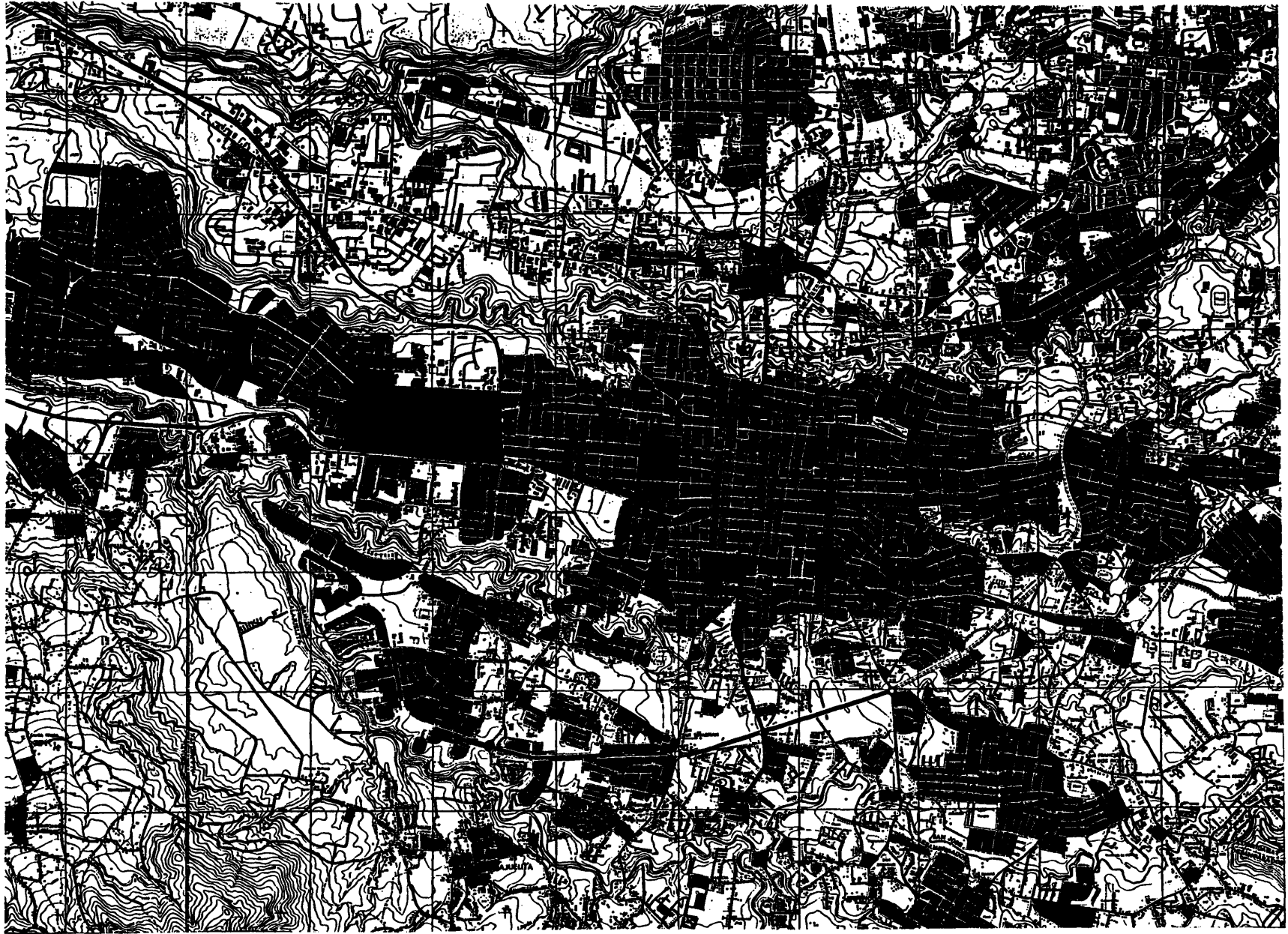
***Map, Ministerio de Obras
Publicas, 1987.***



***Transformation of city, showing it's growth
along the central valley.***

***A much more intense interchange between the grid
system and the natural landscape is also visible.***

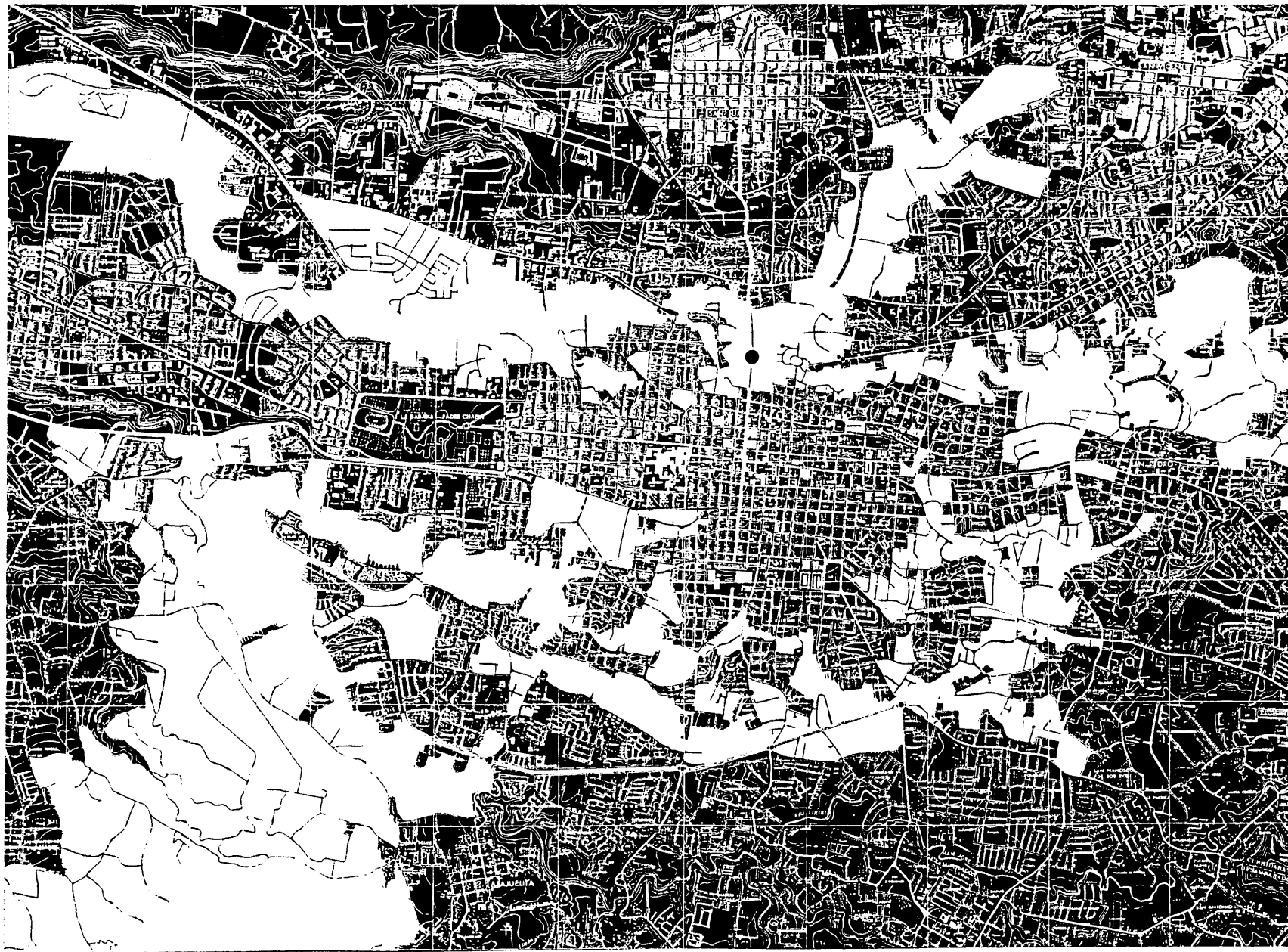
***Various parts of the city are now extending beyond
both rivers as various other small city centers are
formed.***



*Continuity of natural features along both rivers
defining the central valley.*



*The site and its relationship to the city grid, and
the continuous gap of landscape along the Torres
River subdividing city and mountain.*



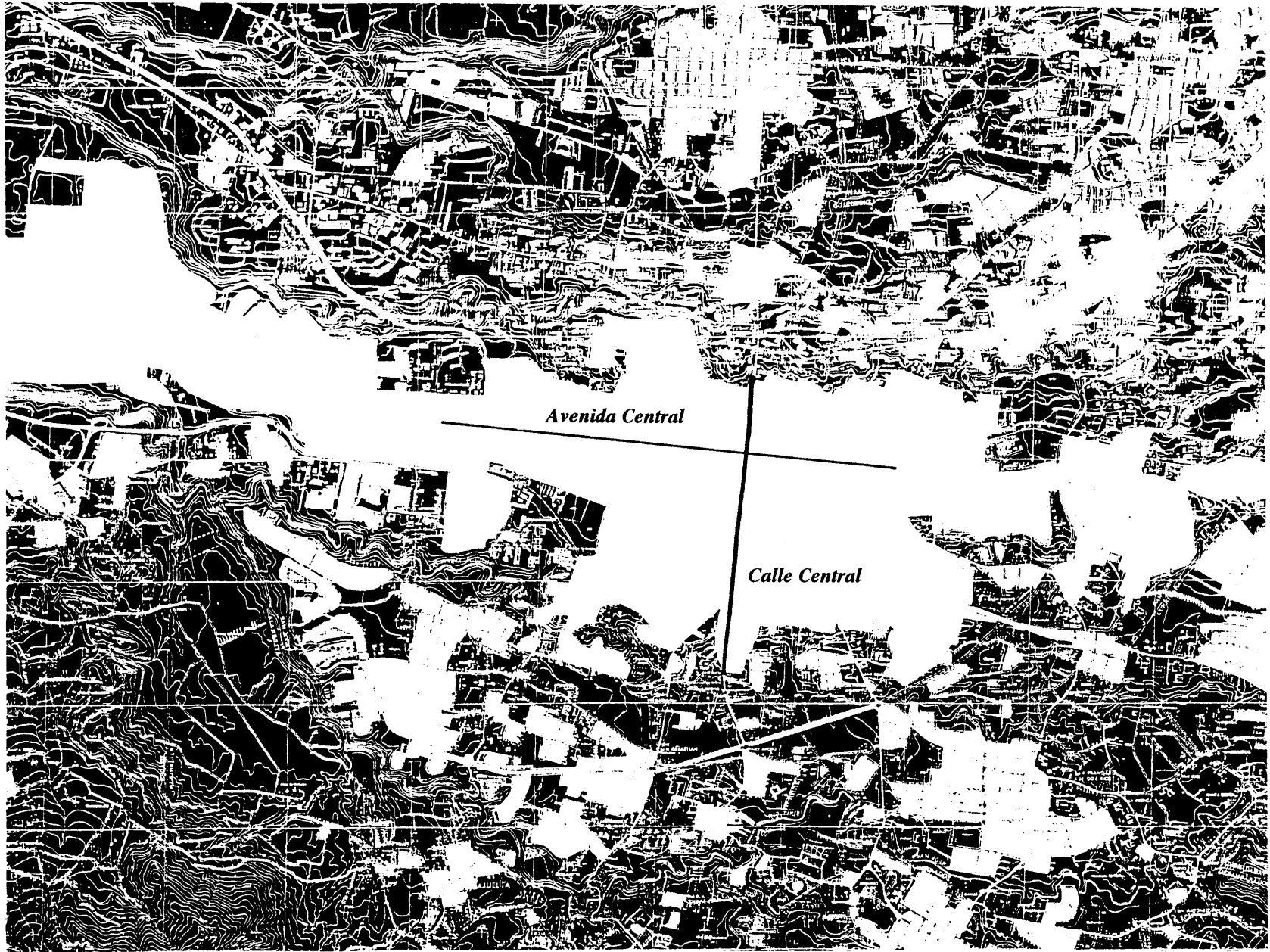
*Abstraction of valley showing the intersection of
"la Avenida Central" and "la Calle Central".*

*The beginnings of the city and its grid took place
at this intersection.*

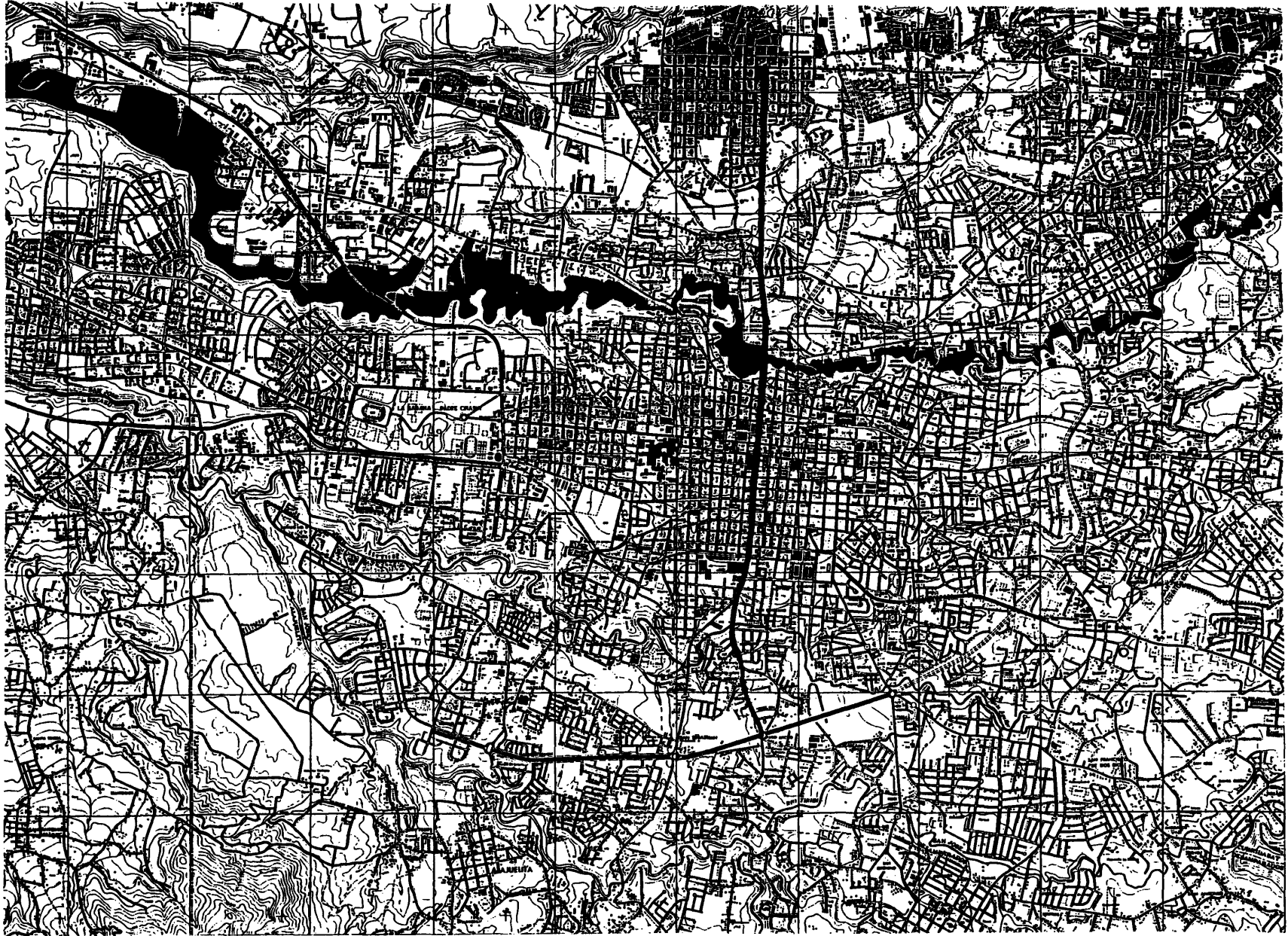
*The site is five city blocks above "la Avenida
Central".*

*To the north of the site and along "la Calle
Central" is San Juan, one of the many provinces
that were established as trading posts between
coasts by the Spaniards.*

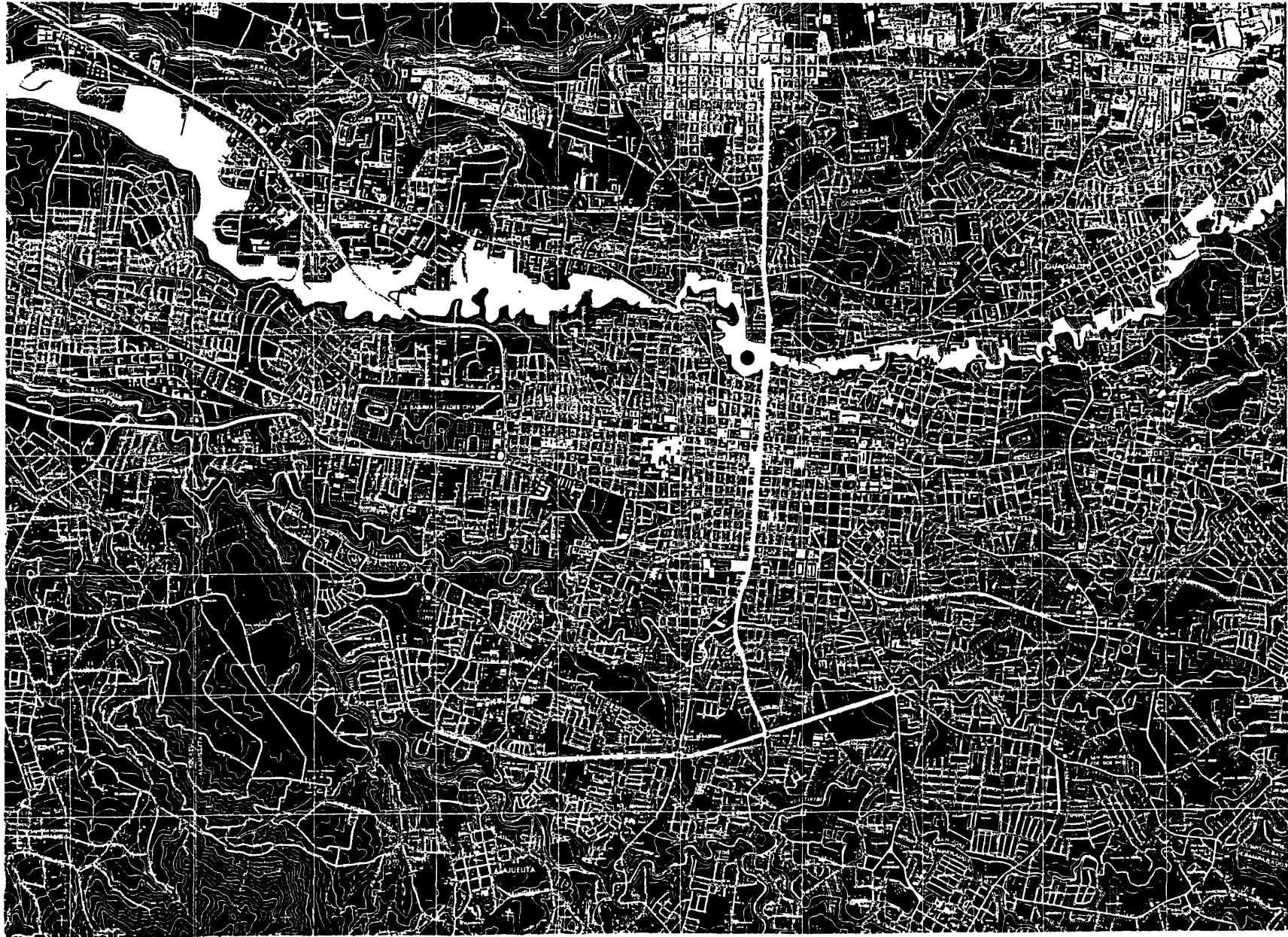
*"la Calle Central" in colonial times was an
important gateway to the city.*



*Continuos Green area along the River Torres
being bisected by "la Calle Central".*



Location of site within greenbelt.



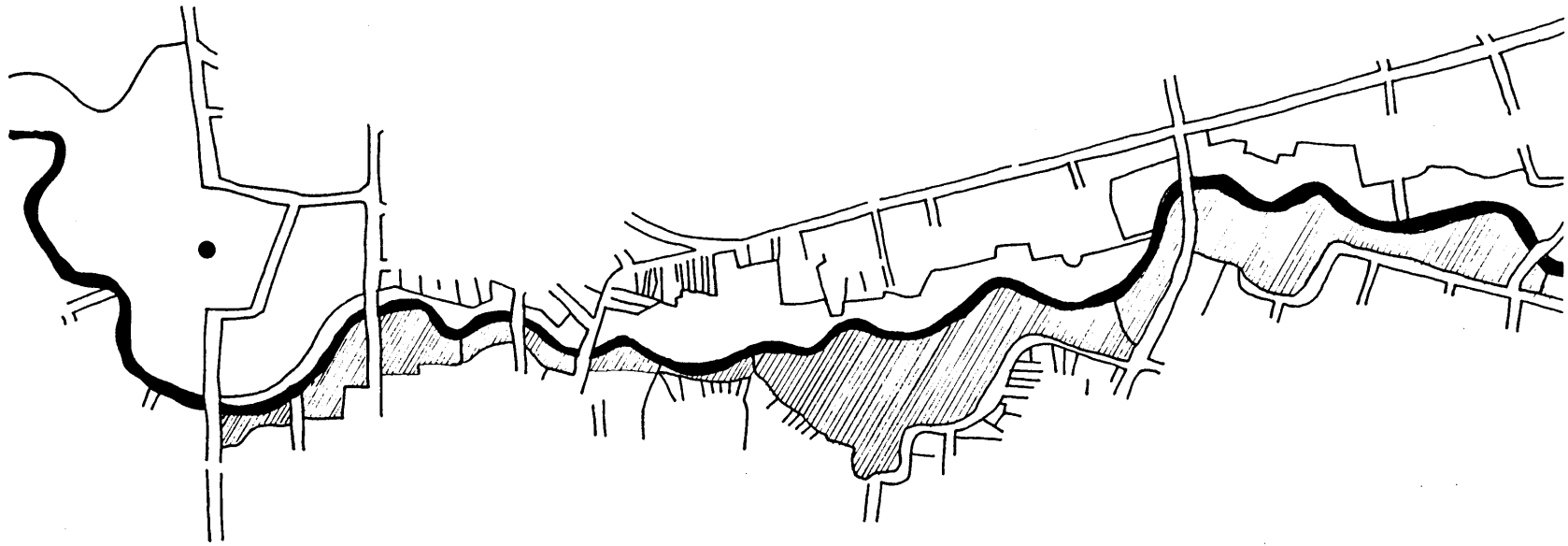
*the site now no longer along the edge of the city,
but existing as part of it.*



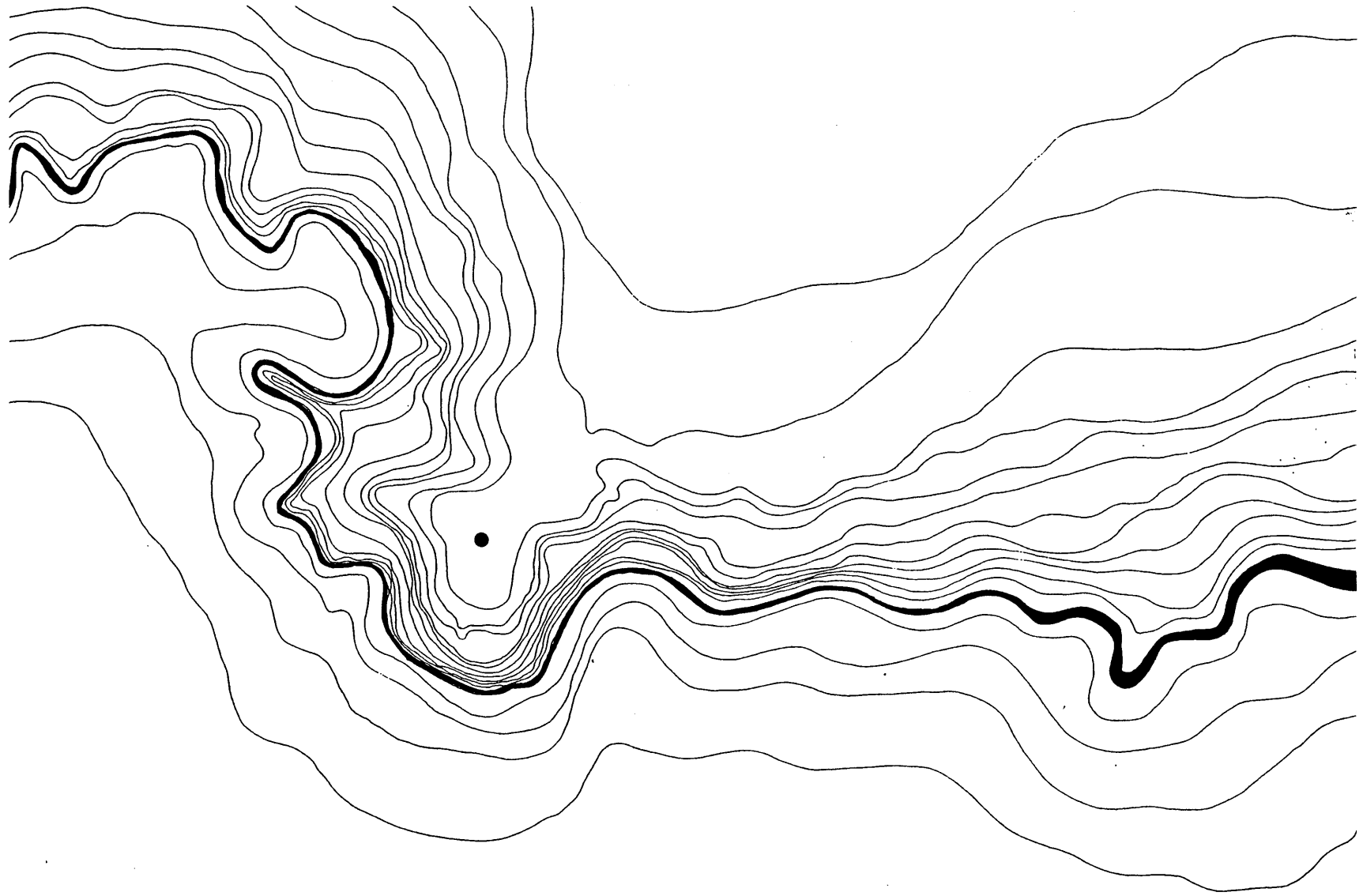
Site with proposed park system alongside the river.



Marginal area between city grid and river.



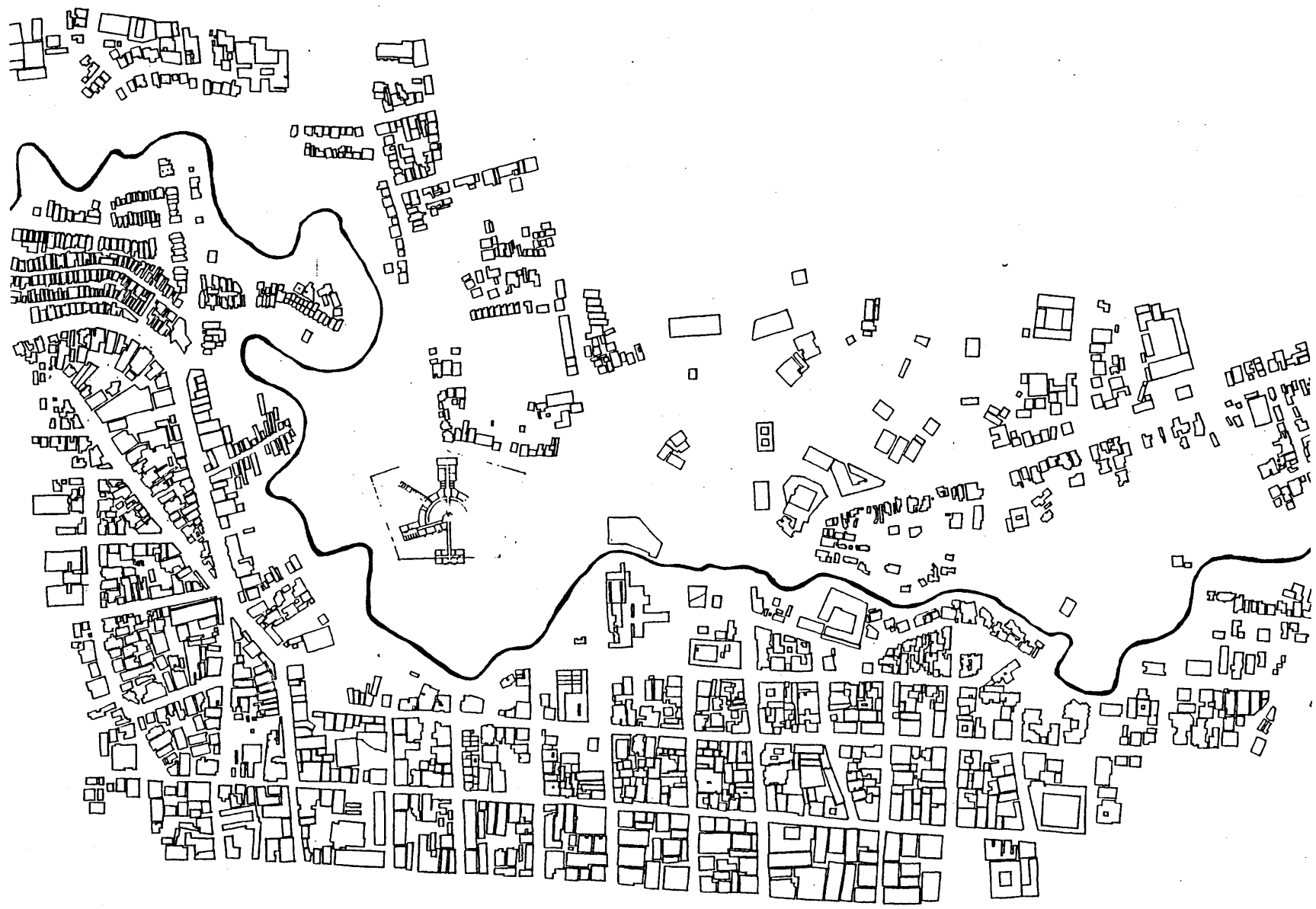
Topographic map of site along Torres river



***Map showing the city grid and the containment
within each city block.***

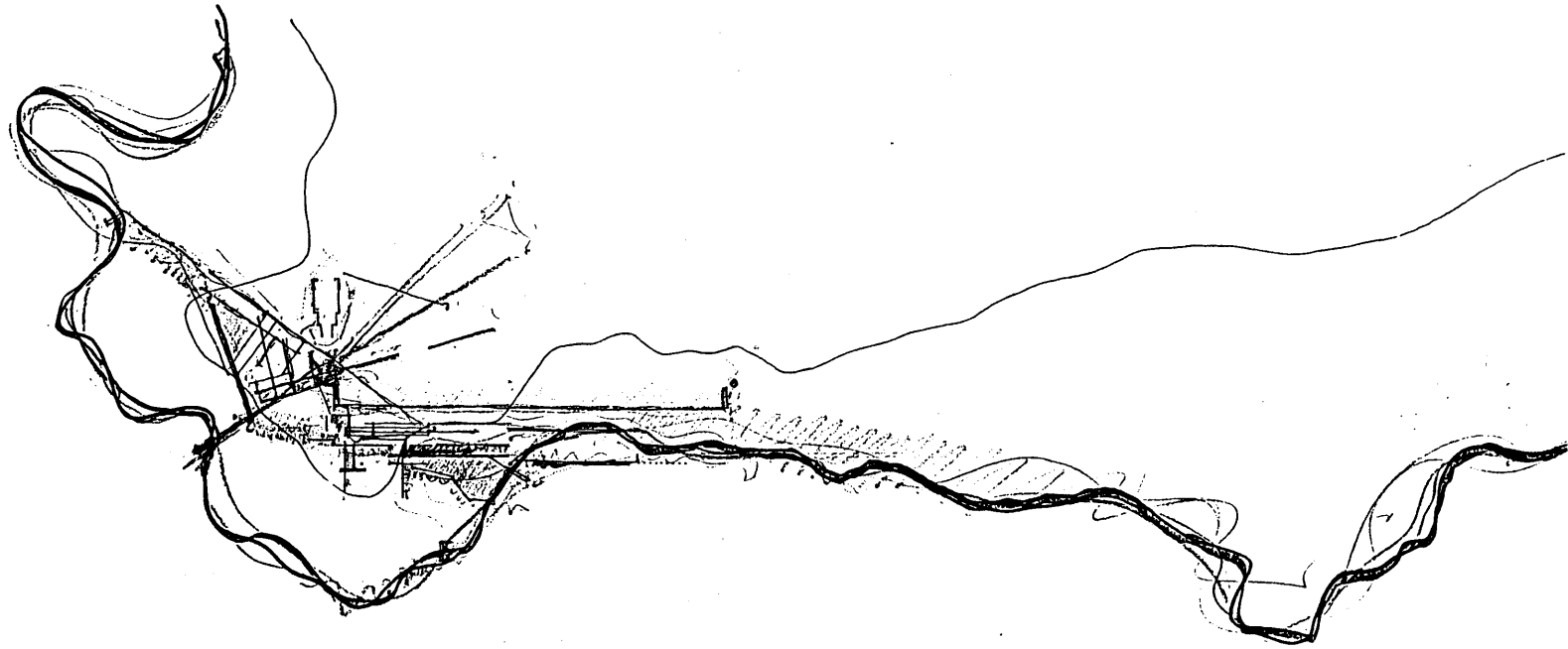
***Also shown, the ruins of "La Antigua
Penitenciaría".***

***The disappearance of the city grid to the north of
the river is also evident.***



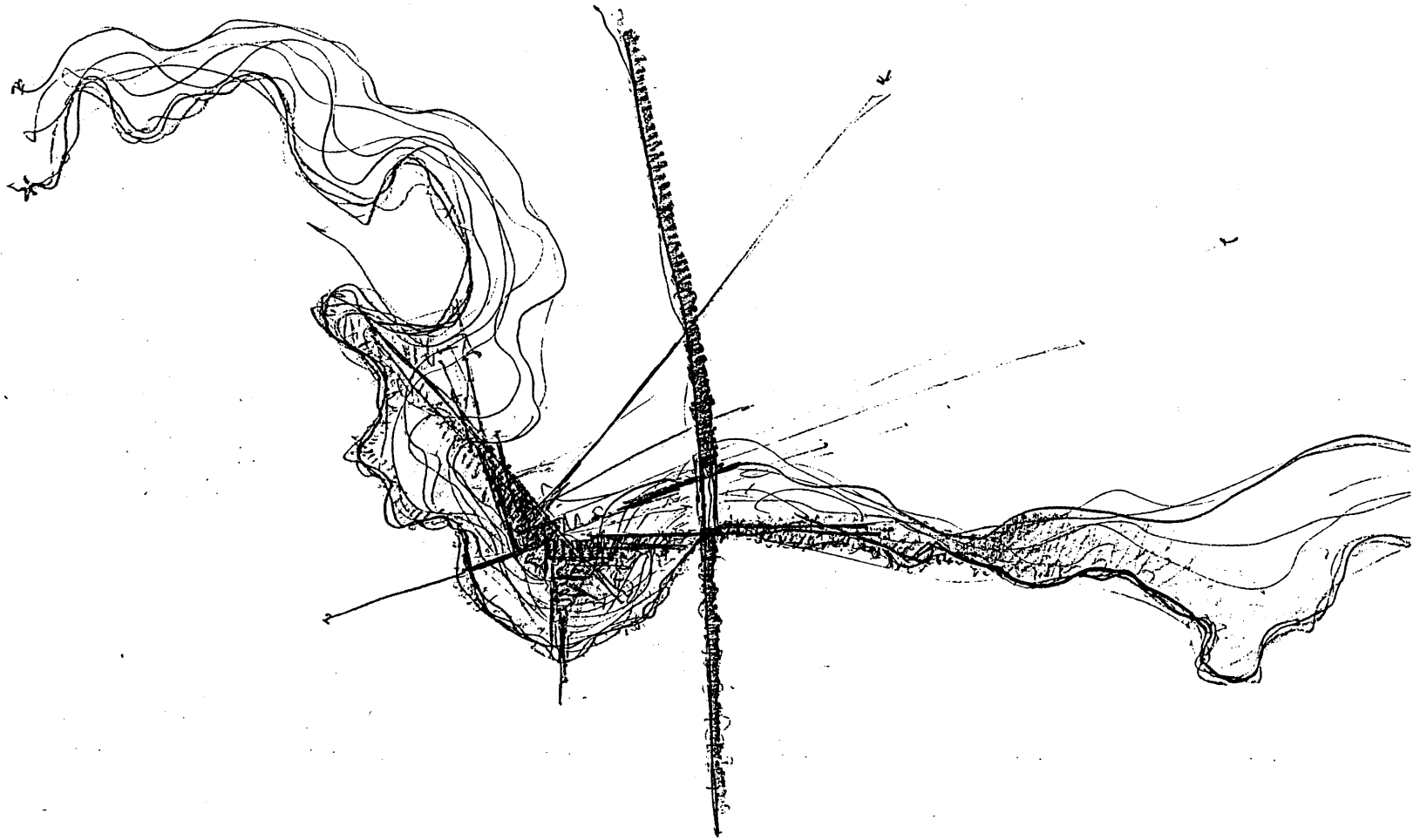
Site: Interpretation of Present Condition

A. Sketch of existing footprint analyzing the primary elements of the site; trying to reveal an underlying order that may begin to reconnect to the qualities of the surrounding landscape, but at the same time be rooted to the ruin.



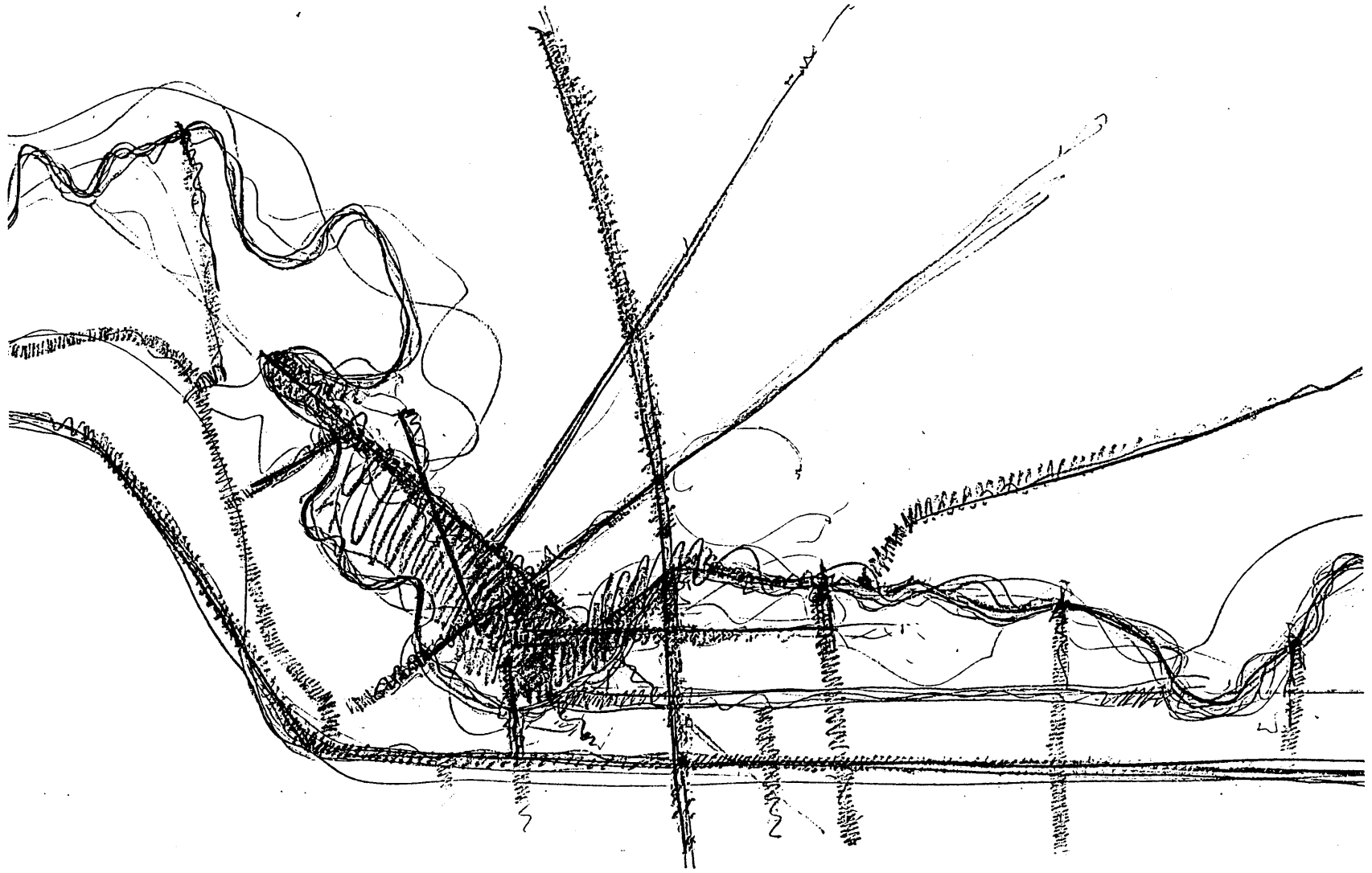
B. Sketch of existing footprint exploring the possibility of a continuous thread of landscape, that could begin to stitch city and mountain. The design, while being an anchor to the greenbelt along the river, should provide the continuity of place that is lacking in the present condition.

Also shown, the street currently severing the thread of landscape along the river, and the possibility of either continuing it beneath the greenbelt or possibly above it.



***C. Sketch exploring the condition of the city grid
as it encroaches upon the river Torres.***

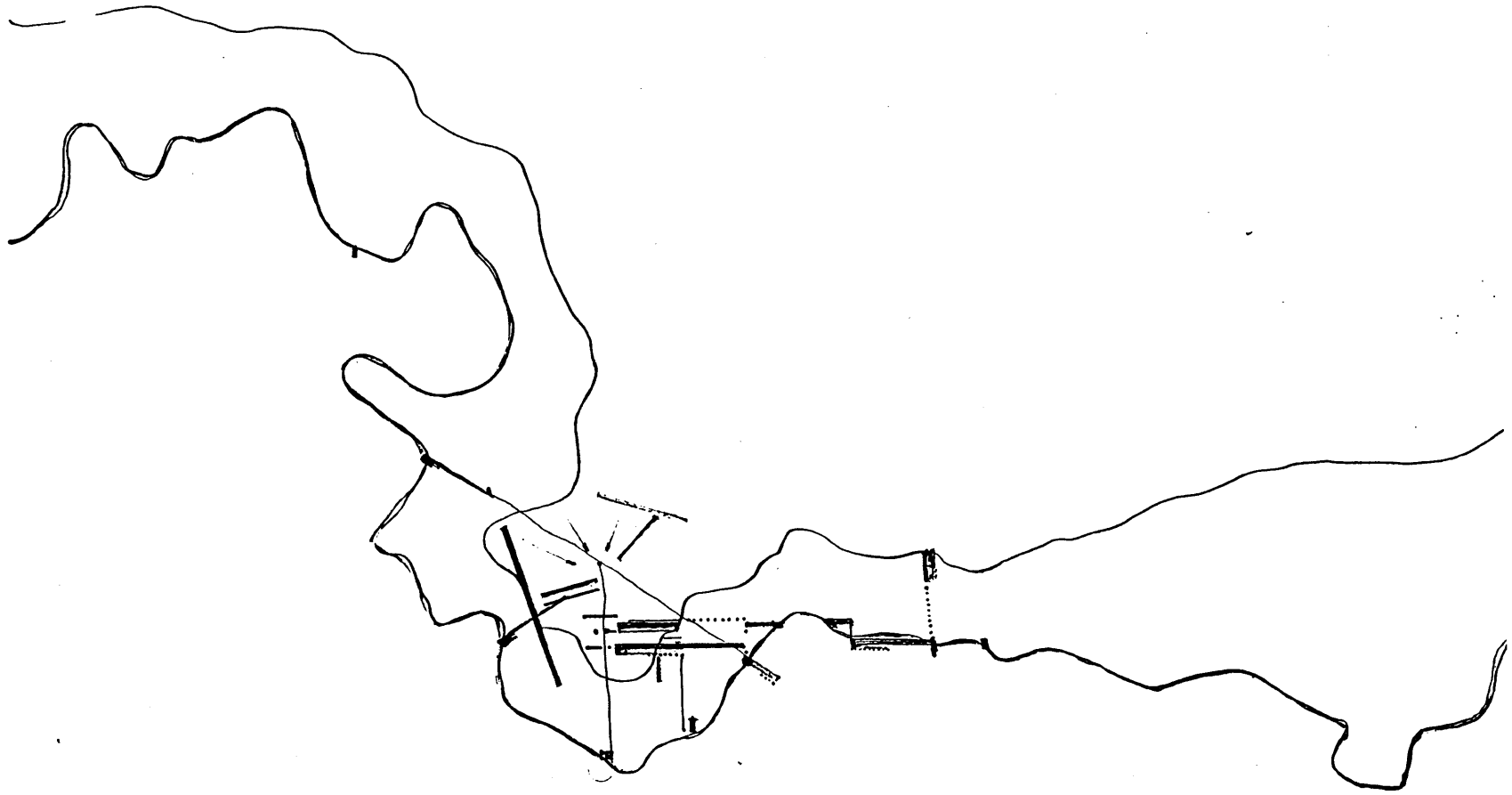
***The drawing also explores how both footprints of
city and site can coexist in the boundary defined by
the river without colliding.***



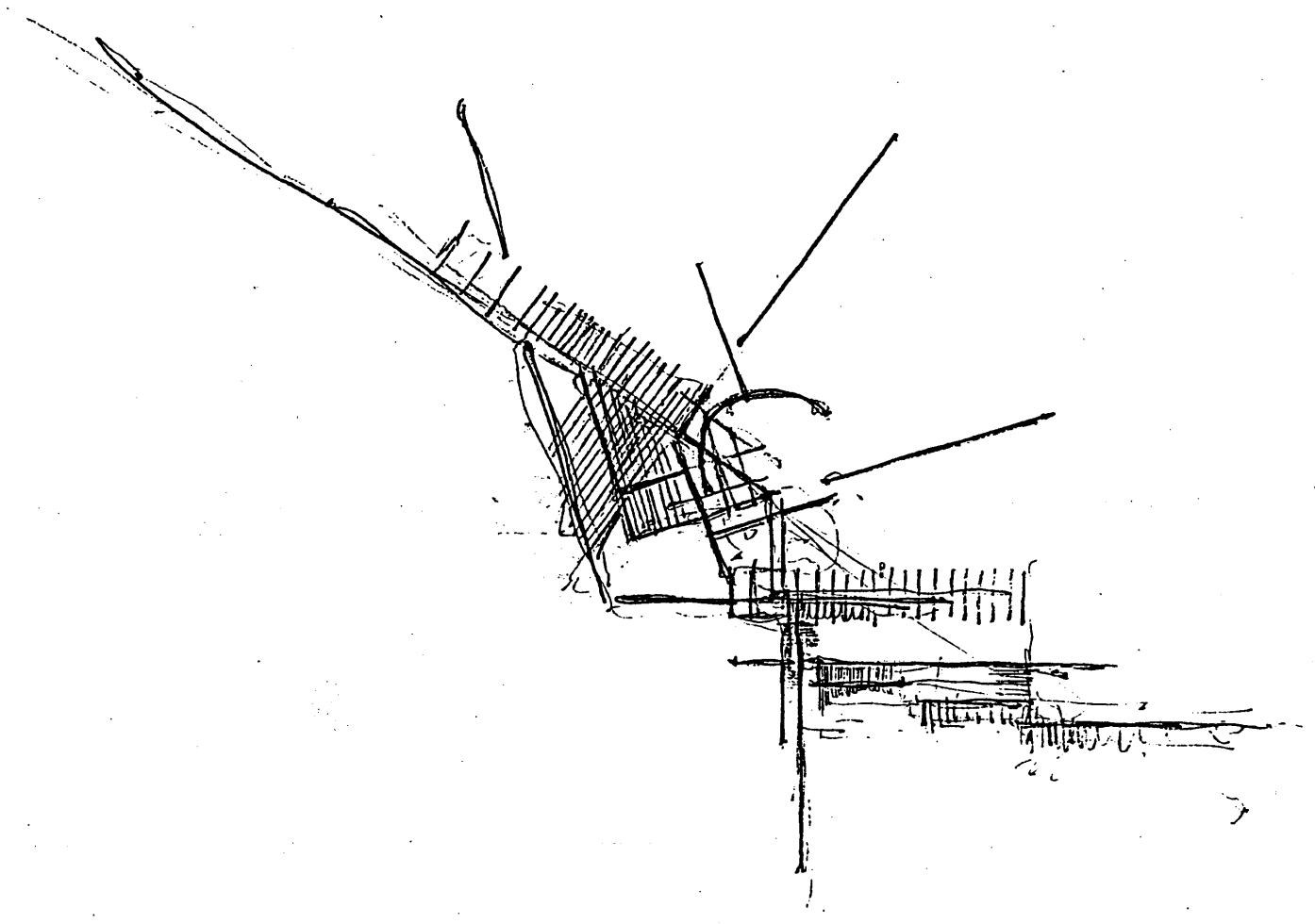
D. This drawing tries to simplify the important elements explored in the previous sketches at a scale that addresses both urban and building conditions.

Important points along the river are singled out, and ways to connect out to them now could begin to be explored in terms of building form.

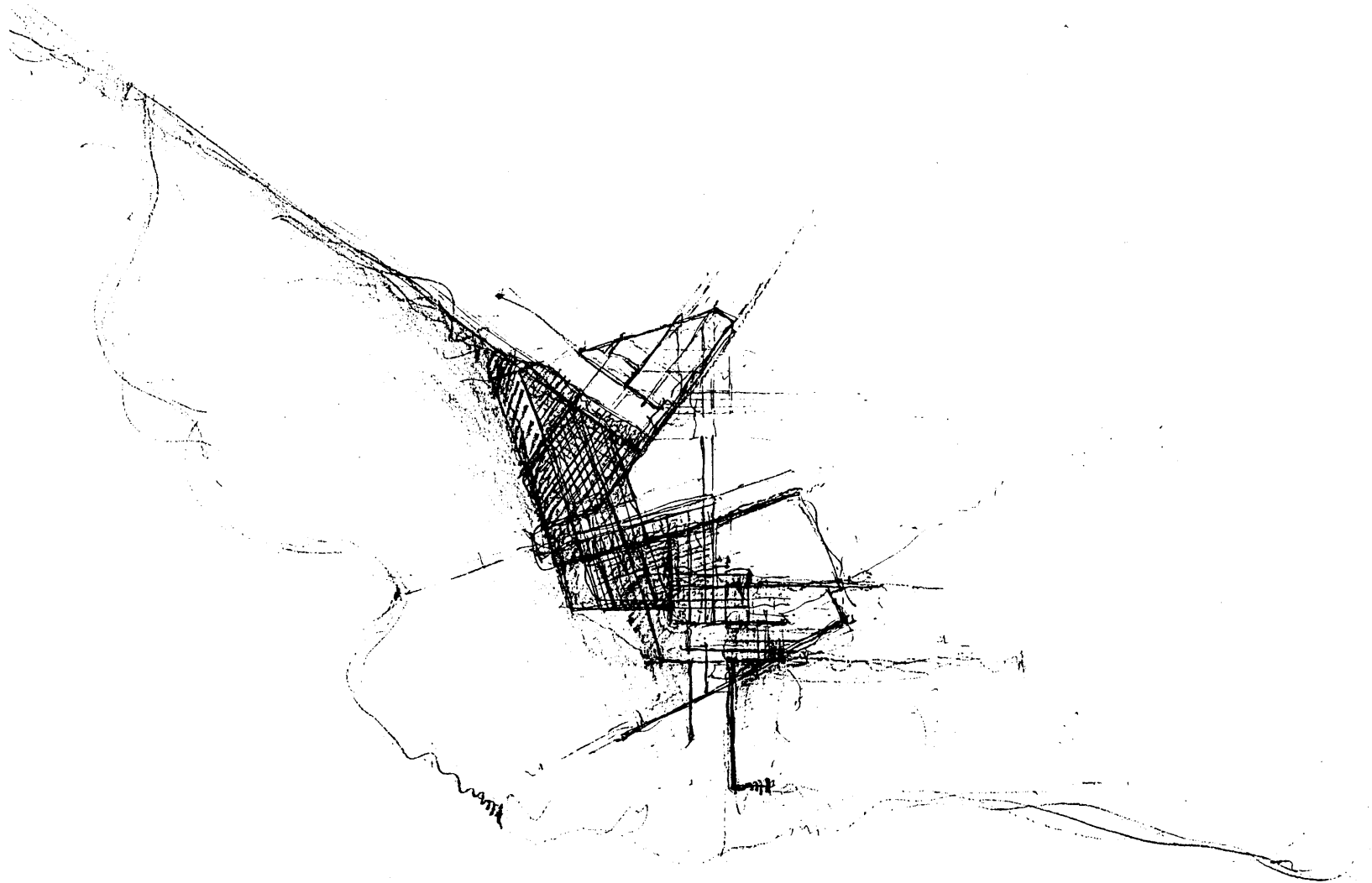
Diagrammatically important elements (that could begin to reconnect tectonically to the landscape condition) of the original footprint are also highlighted, and those that are irrelevant do to their structural condition (or lack any connection to the site) are left out.



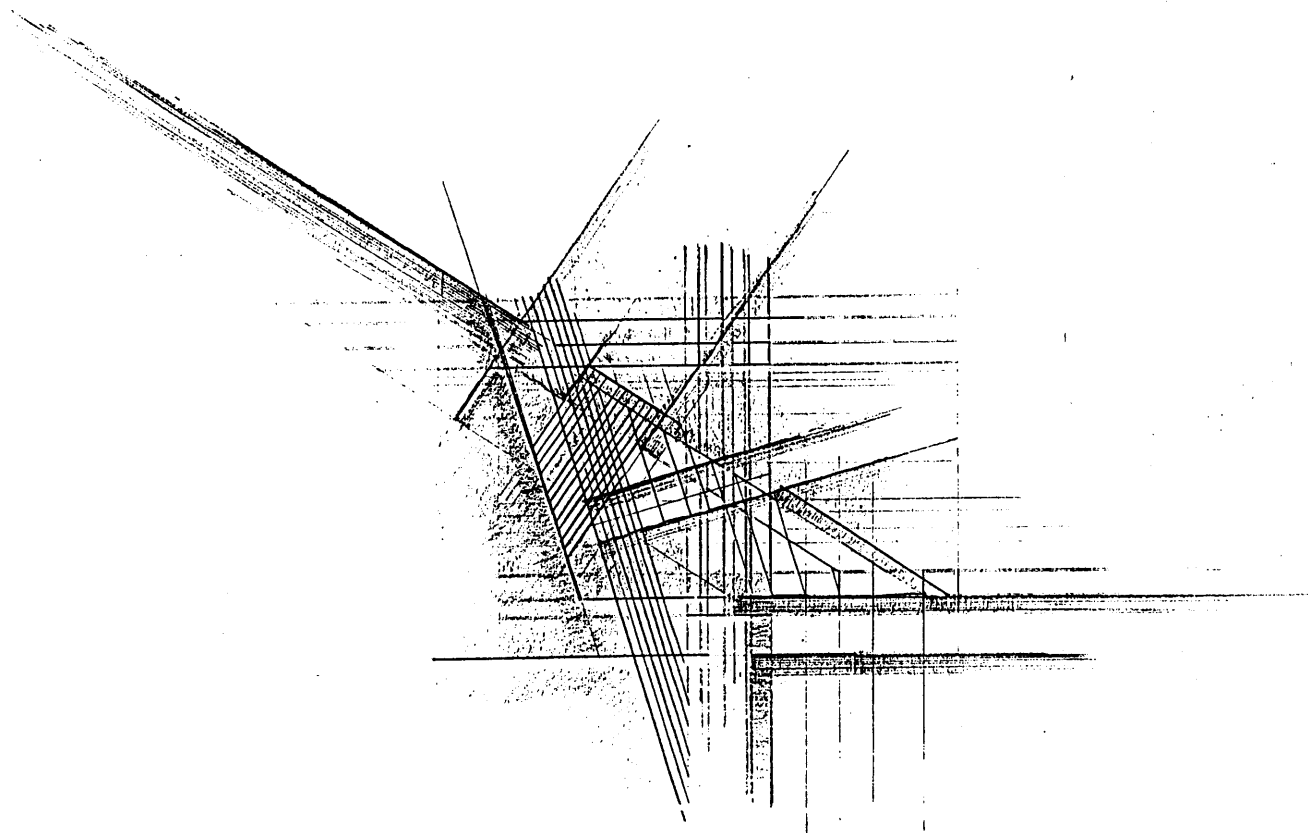
E. Sketch, now exploring the previous diagram at the building scale, addressing how the old building footprint could be transformed without being destroyed (from its previous state of intrusion in the landscape) and re connected to the site.



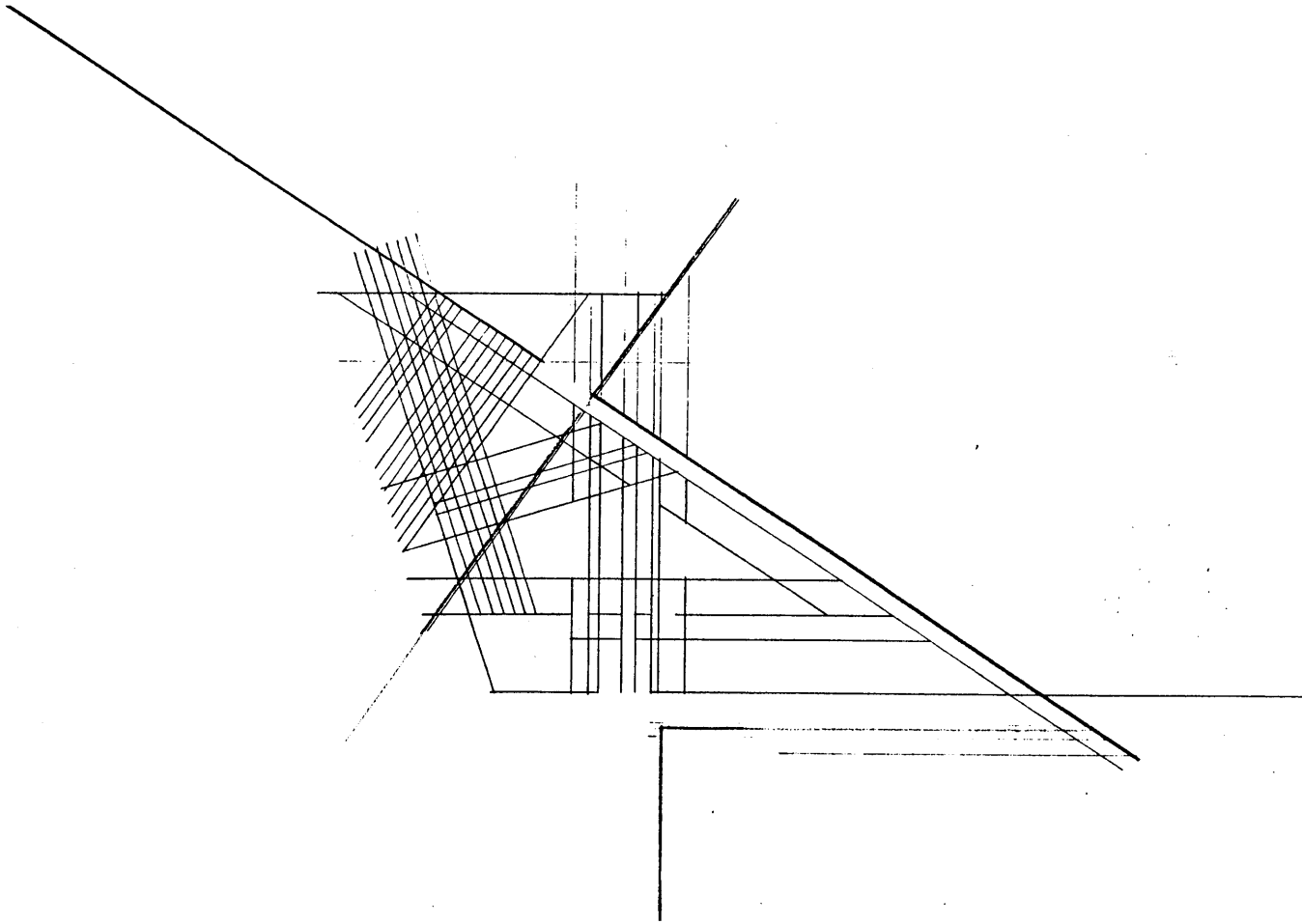
F. Sketch, looking at important building edges and their relationship to the river torres.



G. Sketch, revealing the original footprint's dimensional relationships, and transforming these so that they begin to associate with the movement of the landscape around them.



H. Further abstraction of previous sketch.

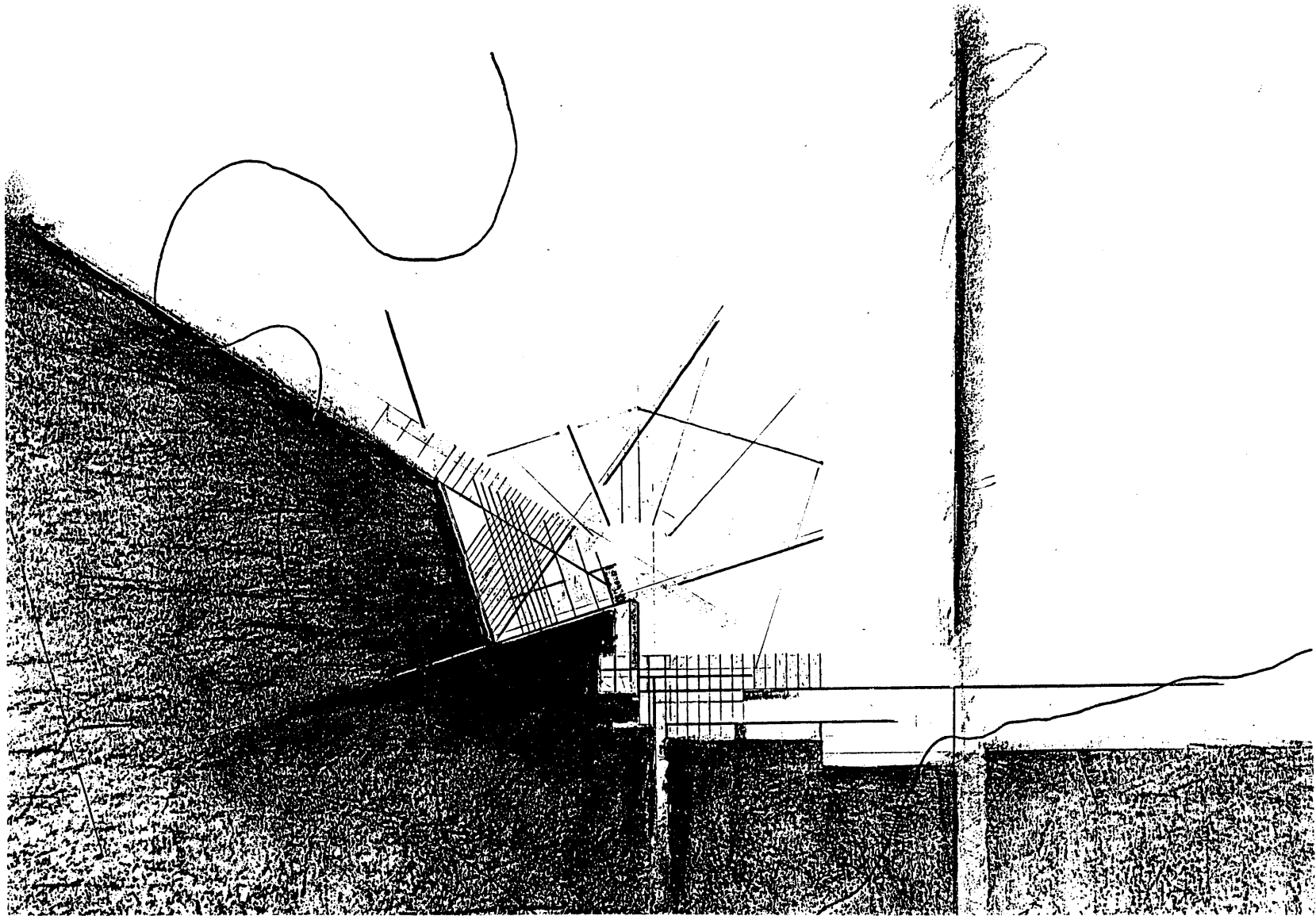


I. Conceptual drawing of existing footprint transformed from an inwardly oriented system to an outwardly oriented one.

The dark part of the drawing indicates the steeper part of the hill, which is usually in shadow as opposed to the top of the hill always in light.

The idea being that you would move from the city in "darkness" to the top of the hill "in light" and be exposed to the mountains beyond.

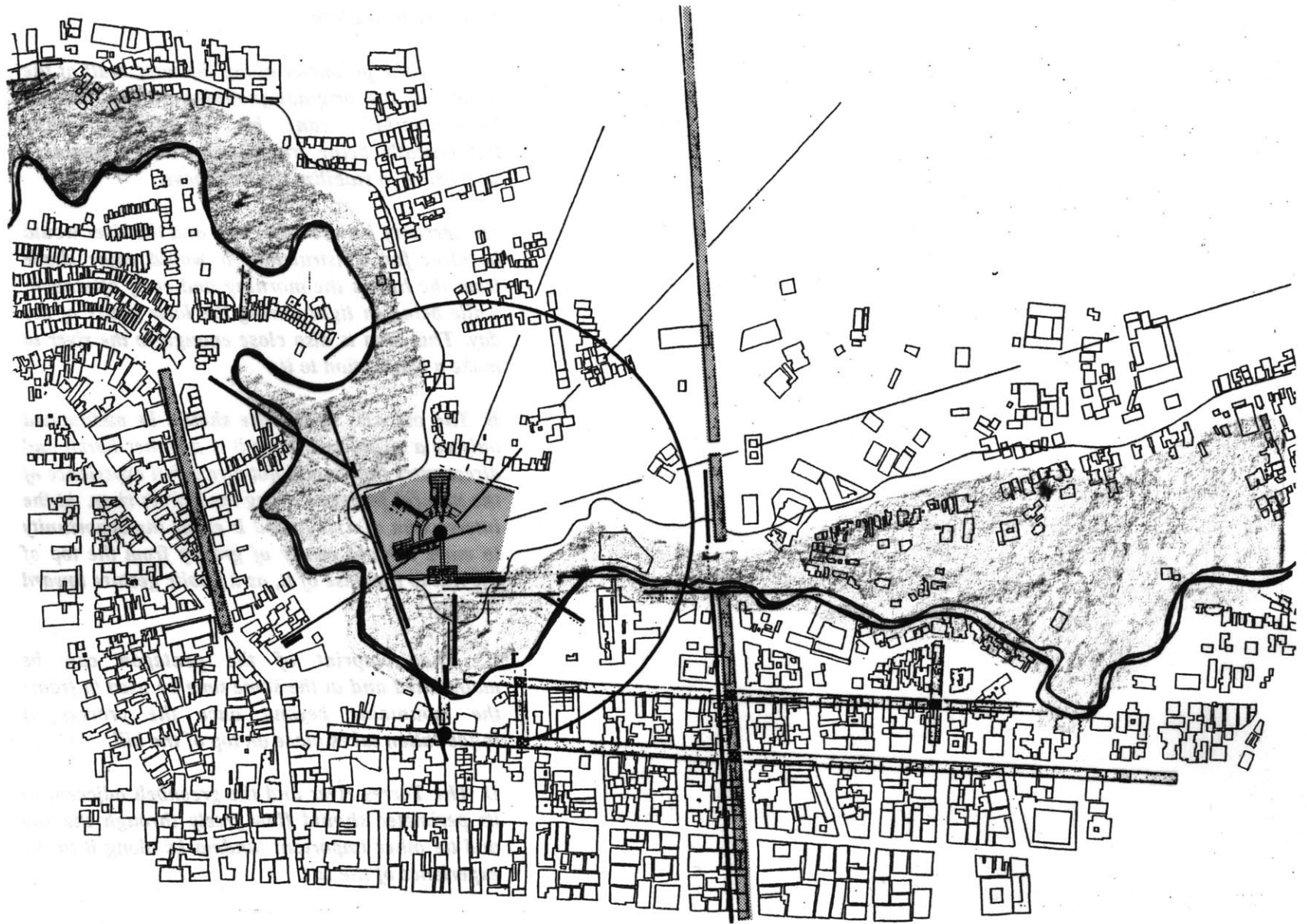
This drawing depicts that the experience of this place is of being between city and mountain, between light and dark.



J. Transformation Diagram of existing footprints.

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Page 174 is Missing



K. Synopsis of ideas:

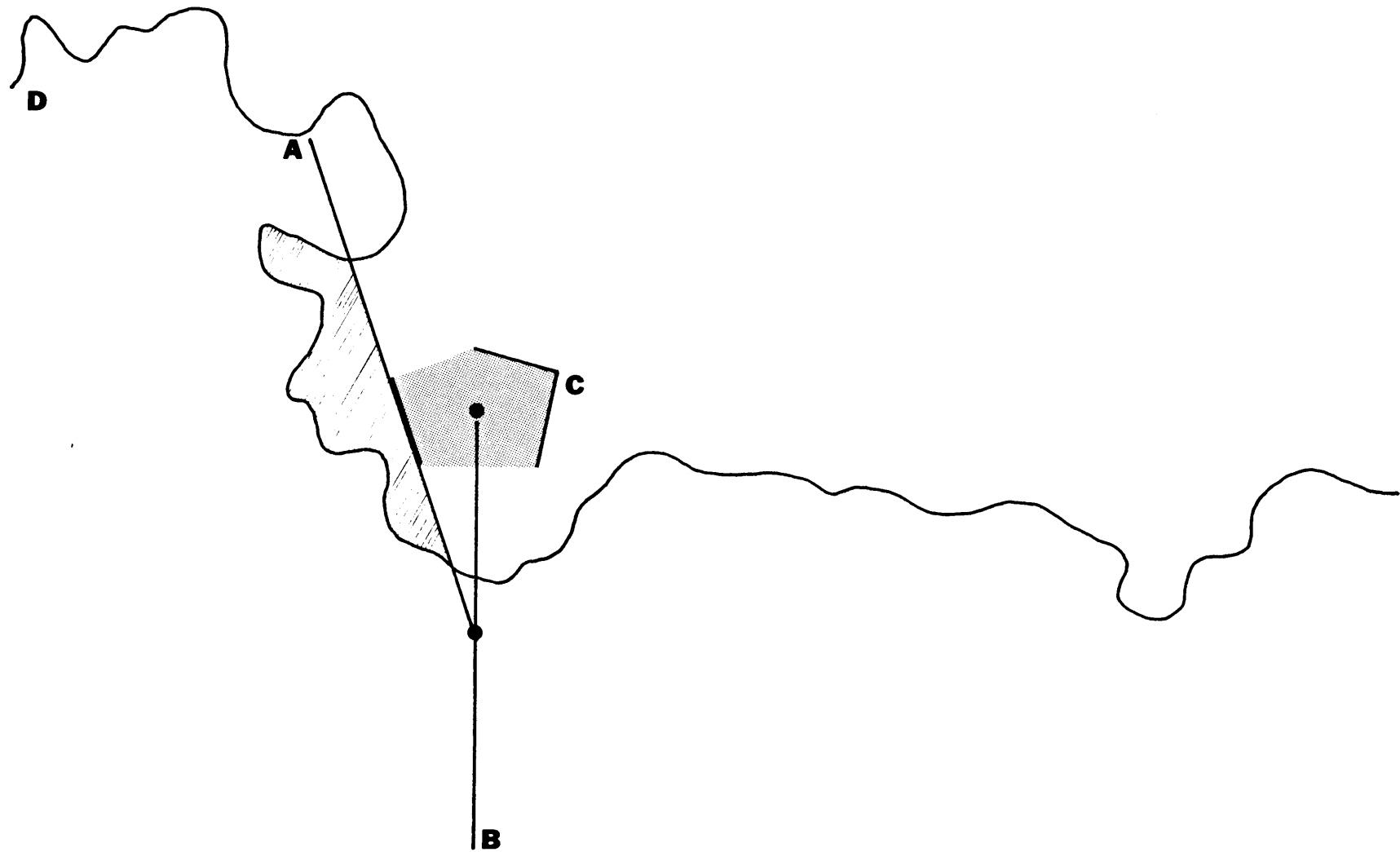
A. Using the perimeter along the west wall of the pentagon, the original footprint of "La antigua Penitenciaría" can be maintained while tectonically being transformed into a retaining wall below to stabilize the hill above.

The territory between this wall and the river would be ideal for construction. It would enjoy shade from the hill in the morning and early afternoon, while being in light during the later hours of the day. This area is also close enough to the river to make a connection to it.

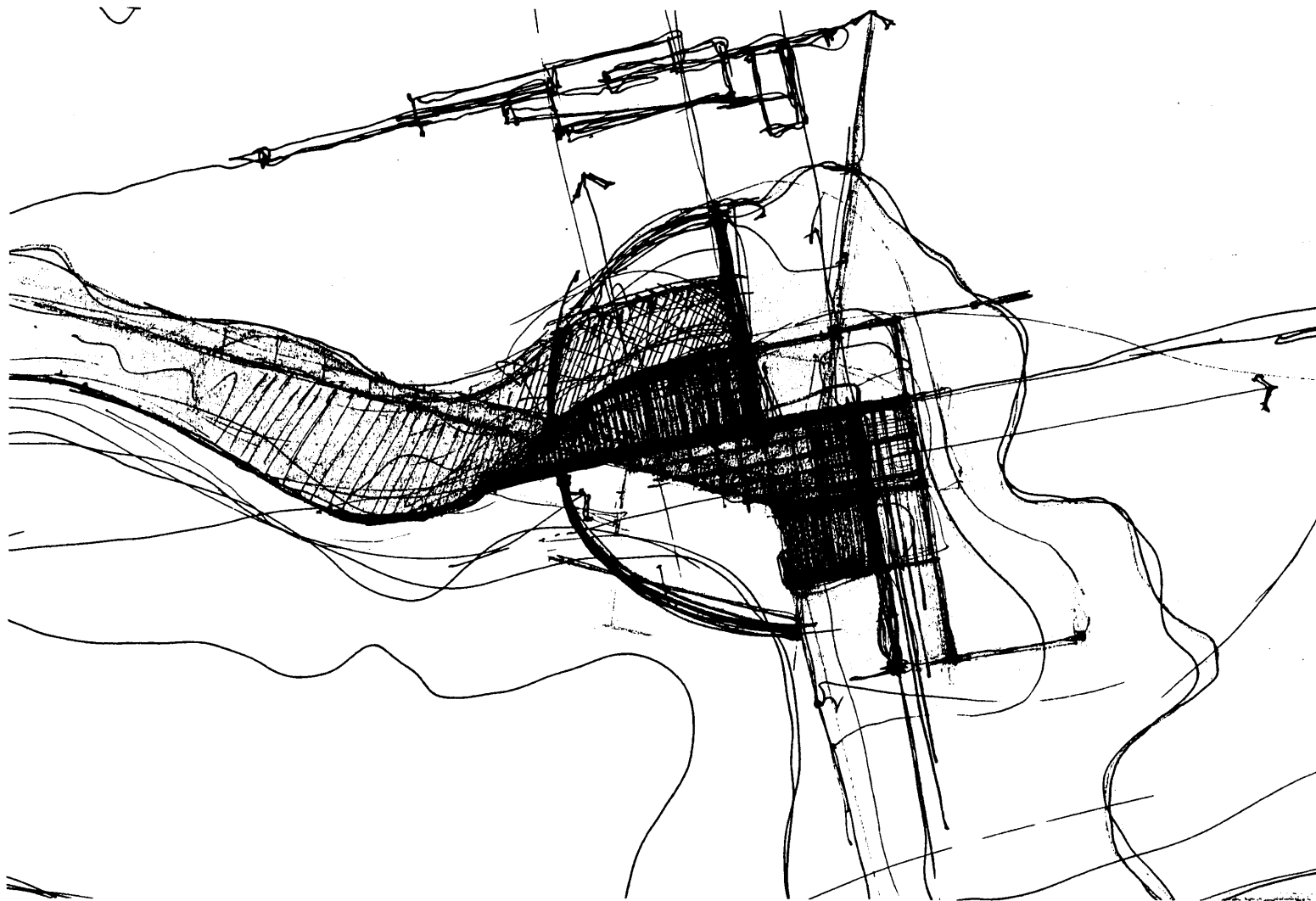
B. The old axis to the site should be maintained only as a visual one since it is a rather harsh and direct entry that would not give a full experience of the natural footprint along the Torres river. At the intersection of axis A and B exists the opportunity to move the old center of gravity from the top of the hill to the base of it, as a public gesture toward the city.

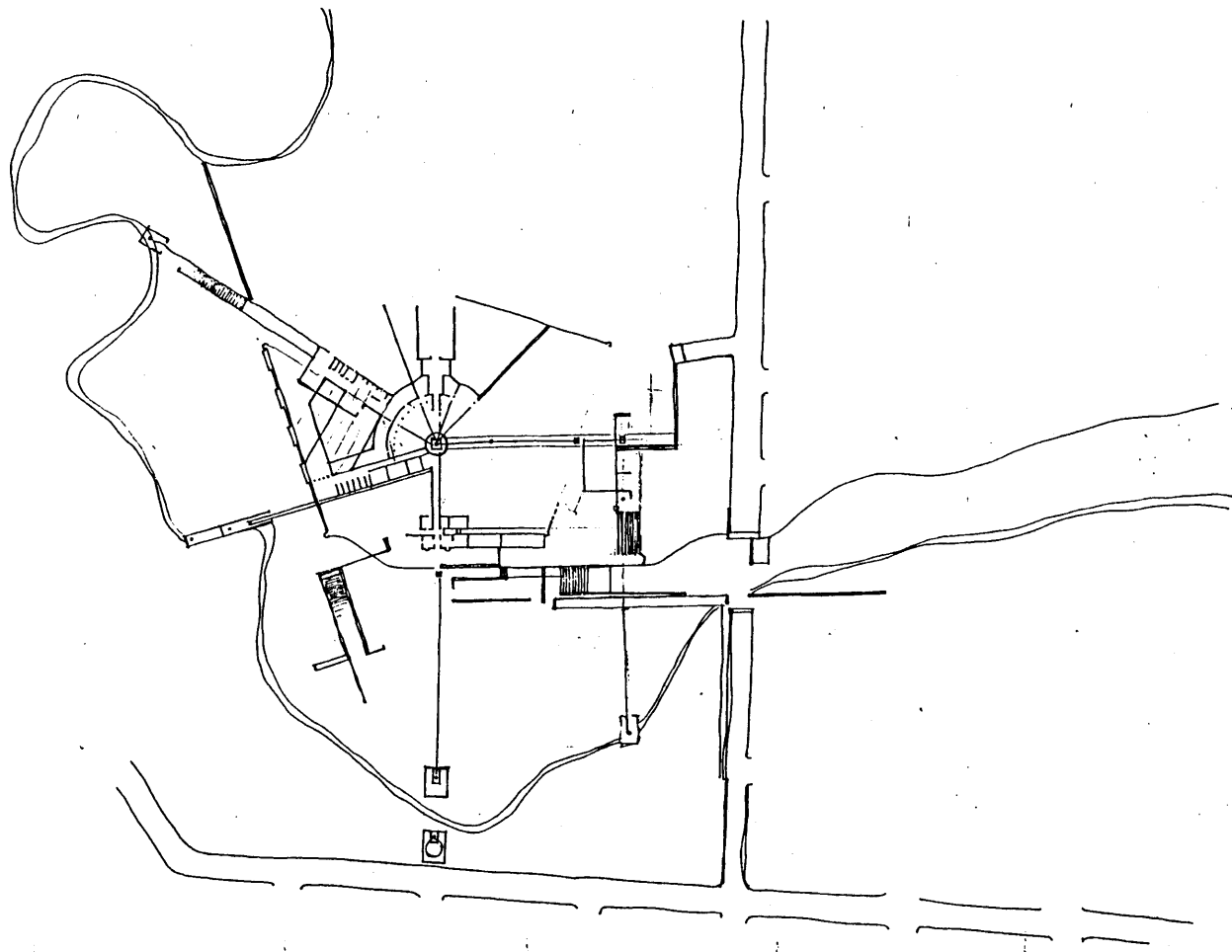
C. The footprint of the pentagon can be maintained and at the same time be used to frame the mountains beyond once the process of inhabitation takes place on top of the hill.

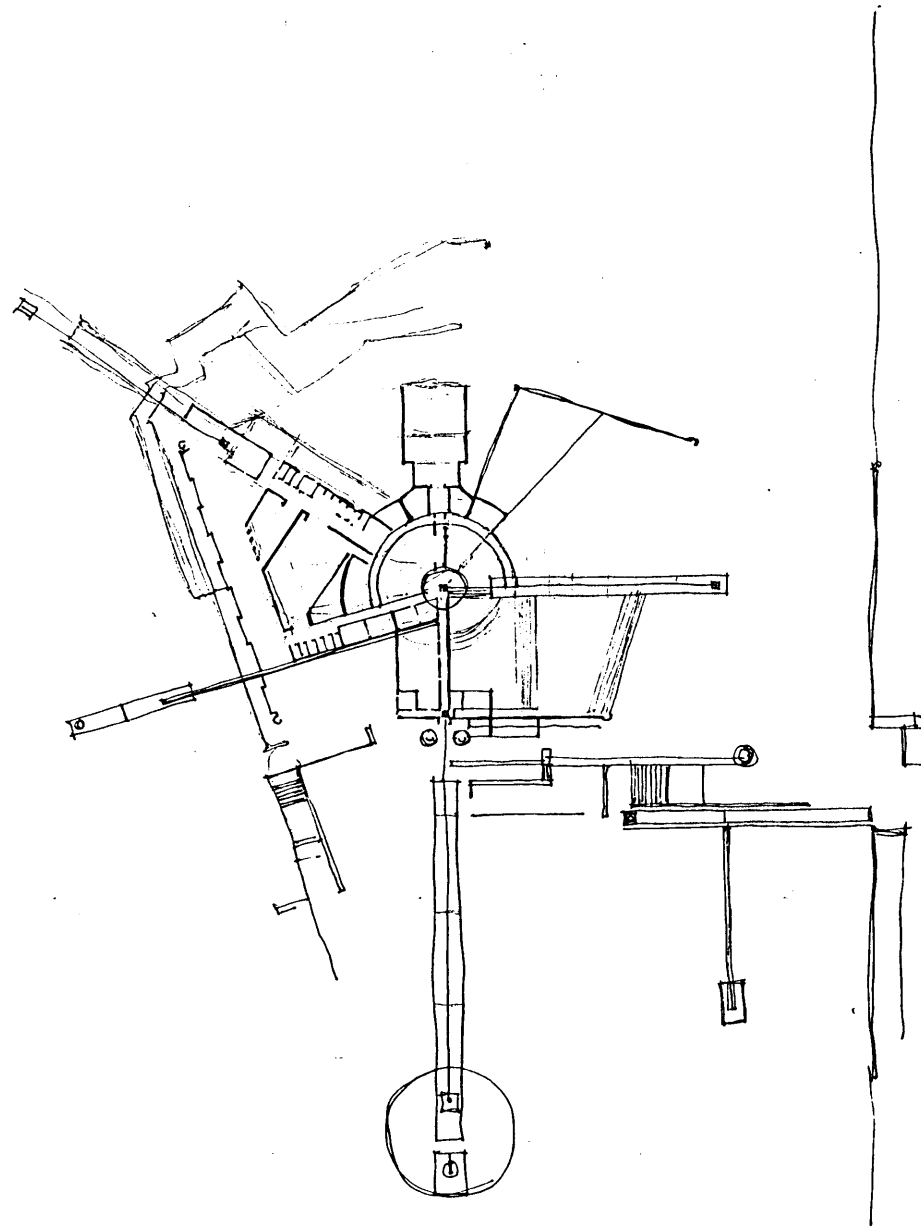
D. The Torres river and the greenbelt adjacent to its perimeter should flow freely through the site and tie other important landmarks along it to the experience of the site.

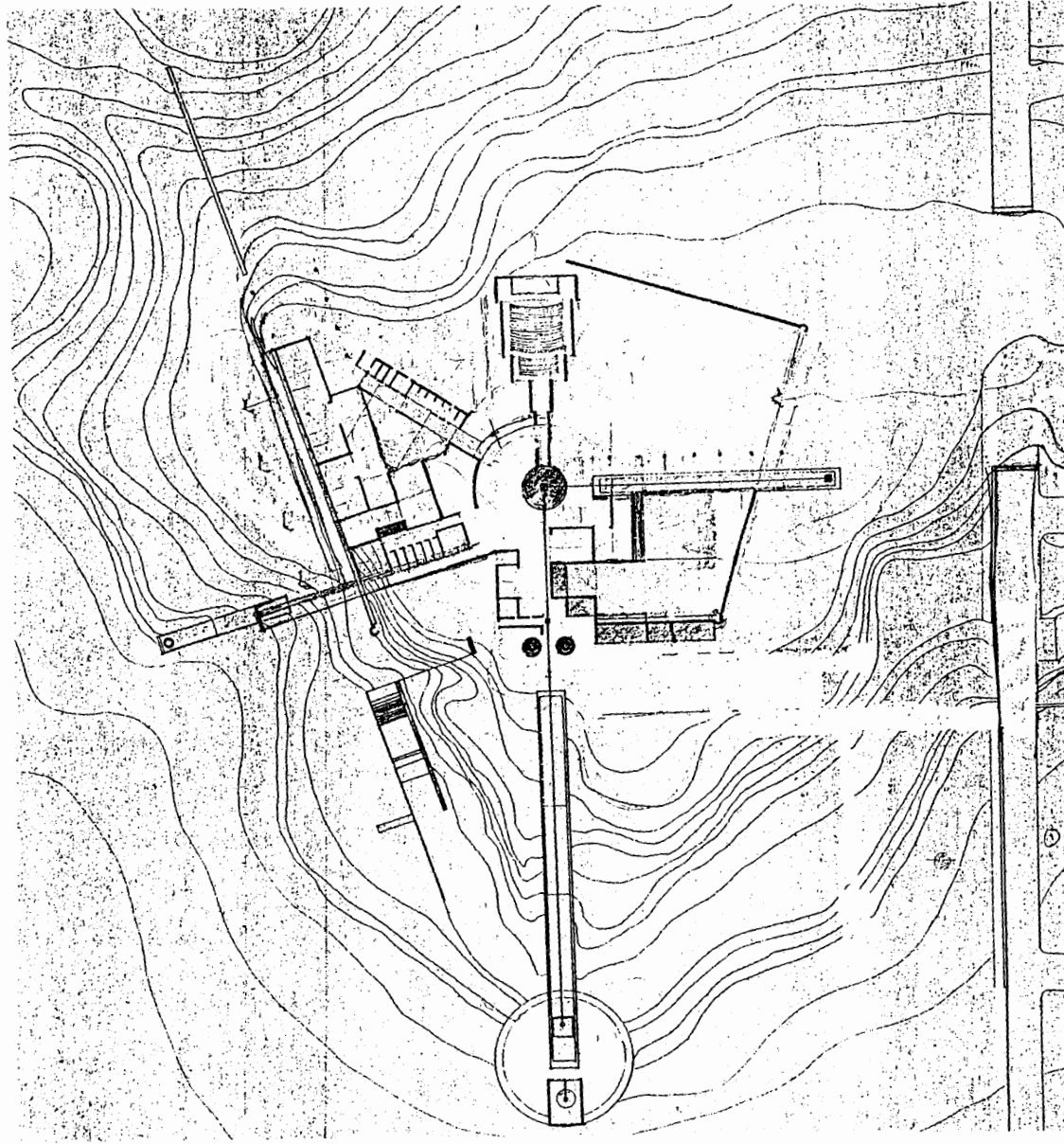


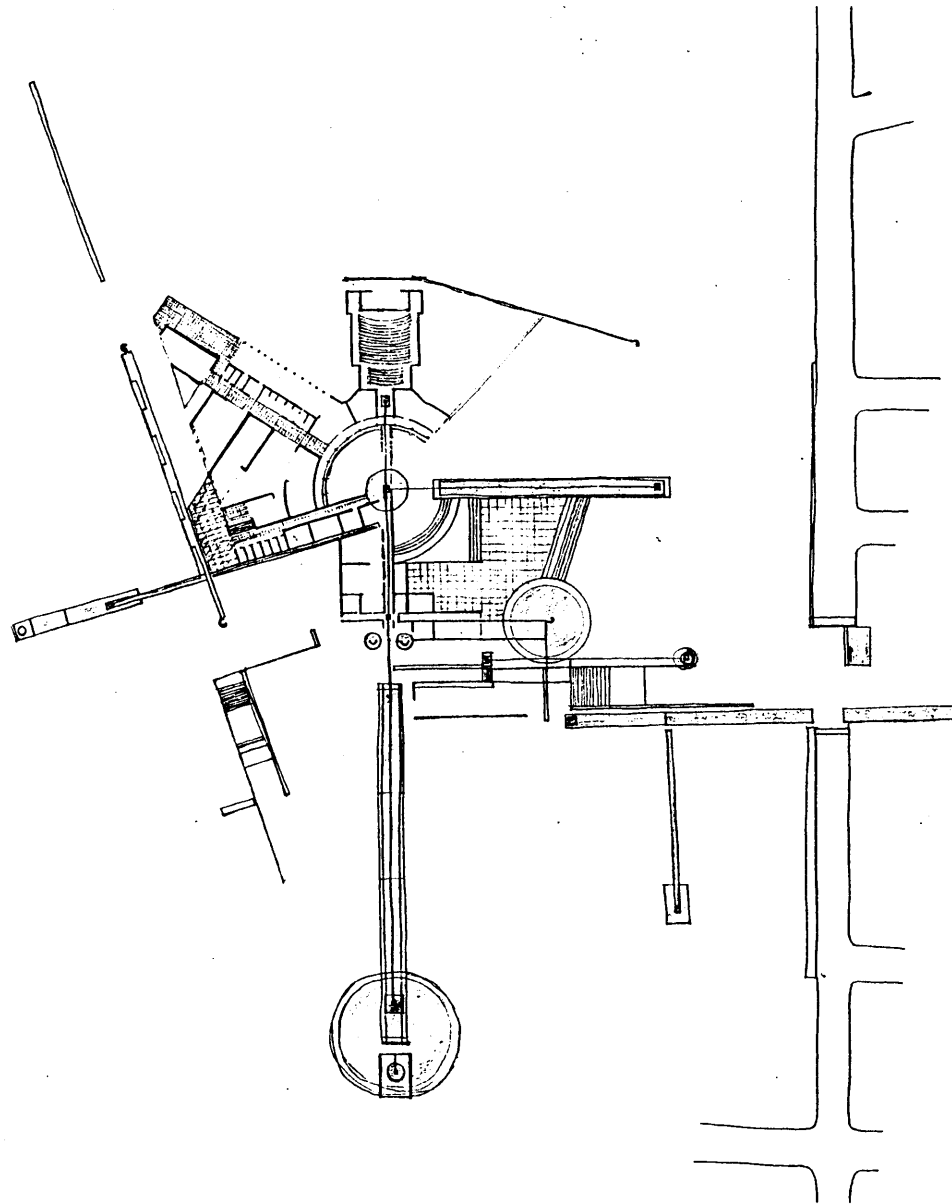
Revealing The Footprint: Sketches and Ideas

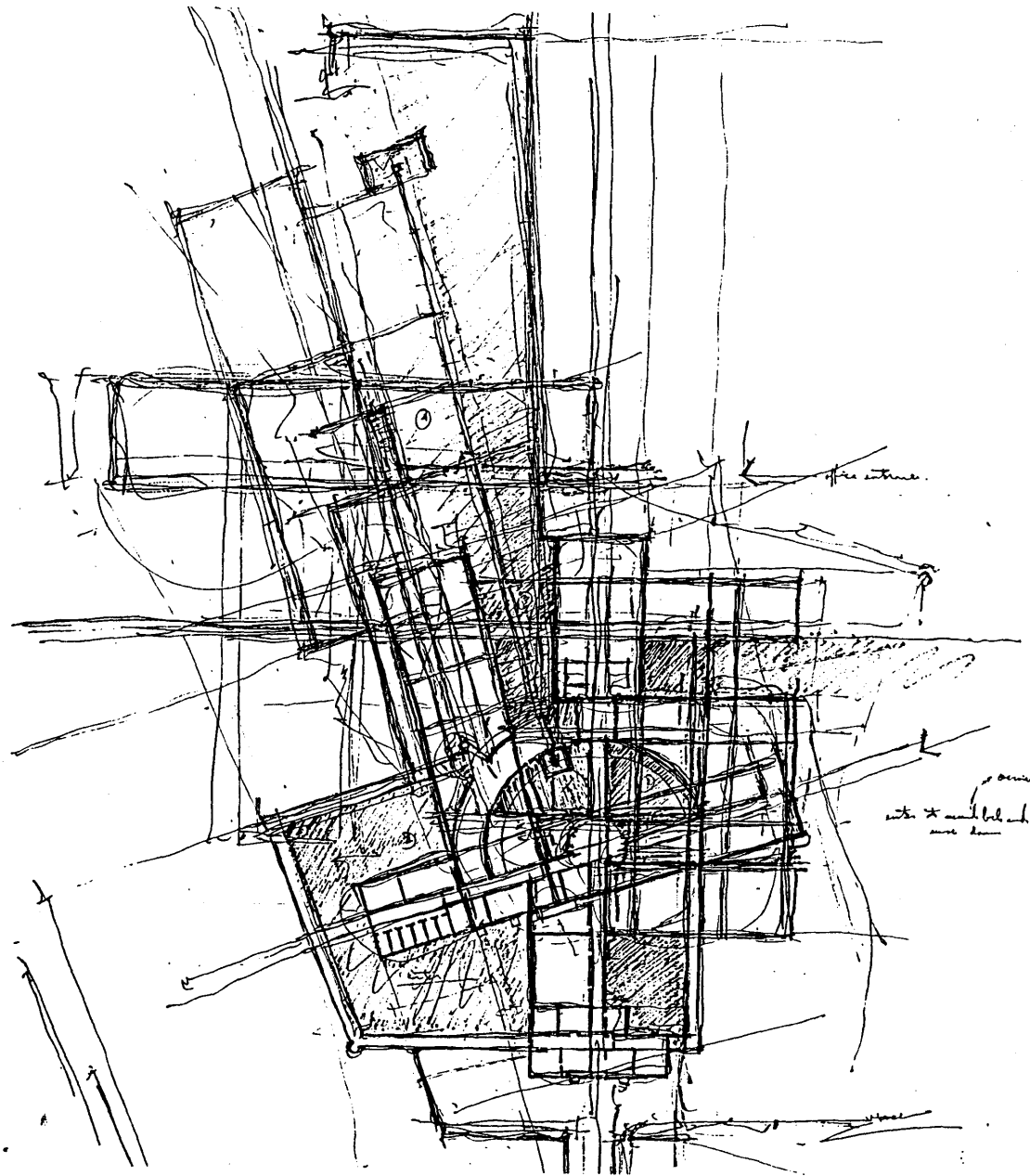


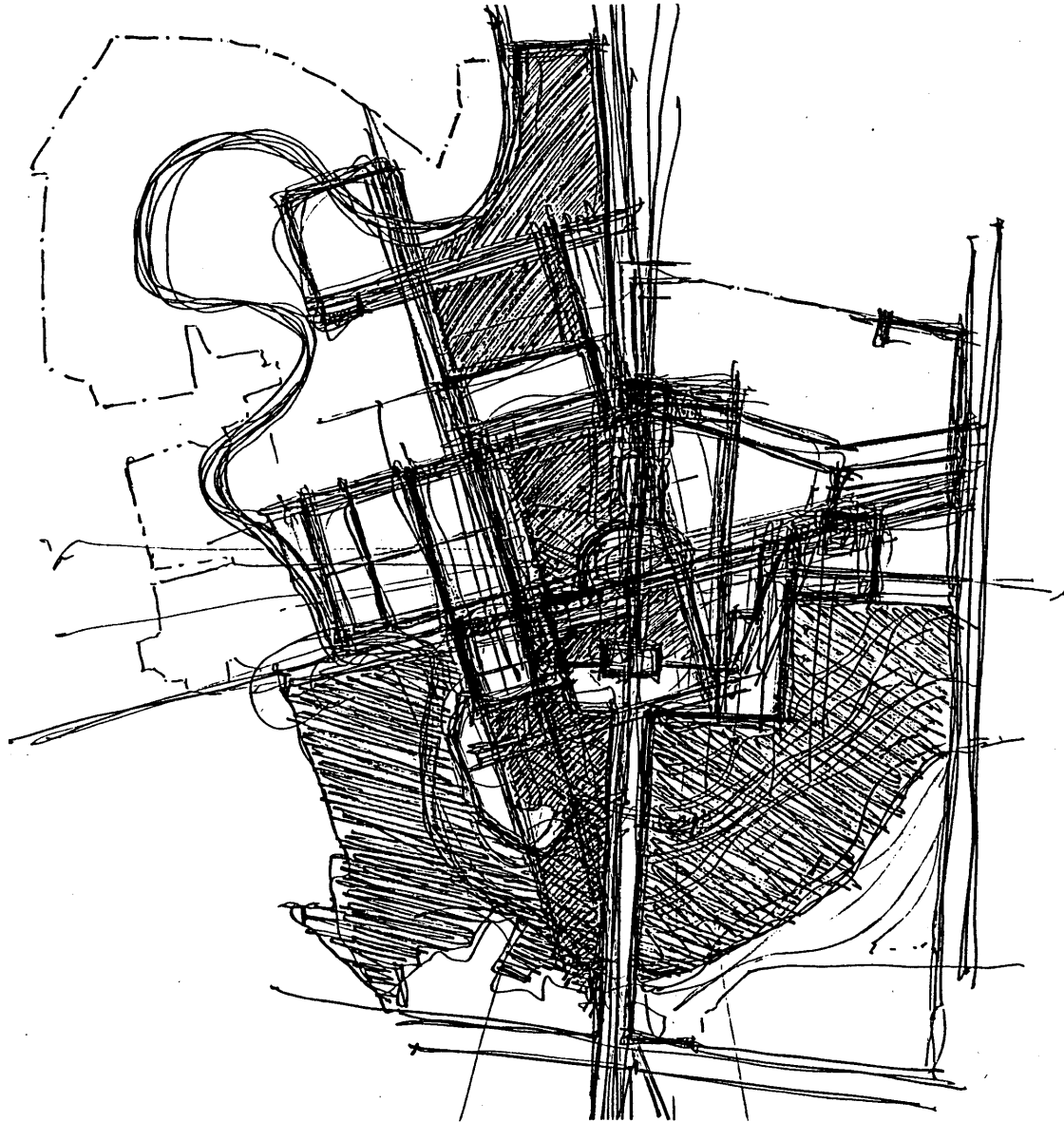


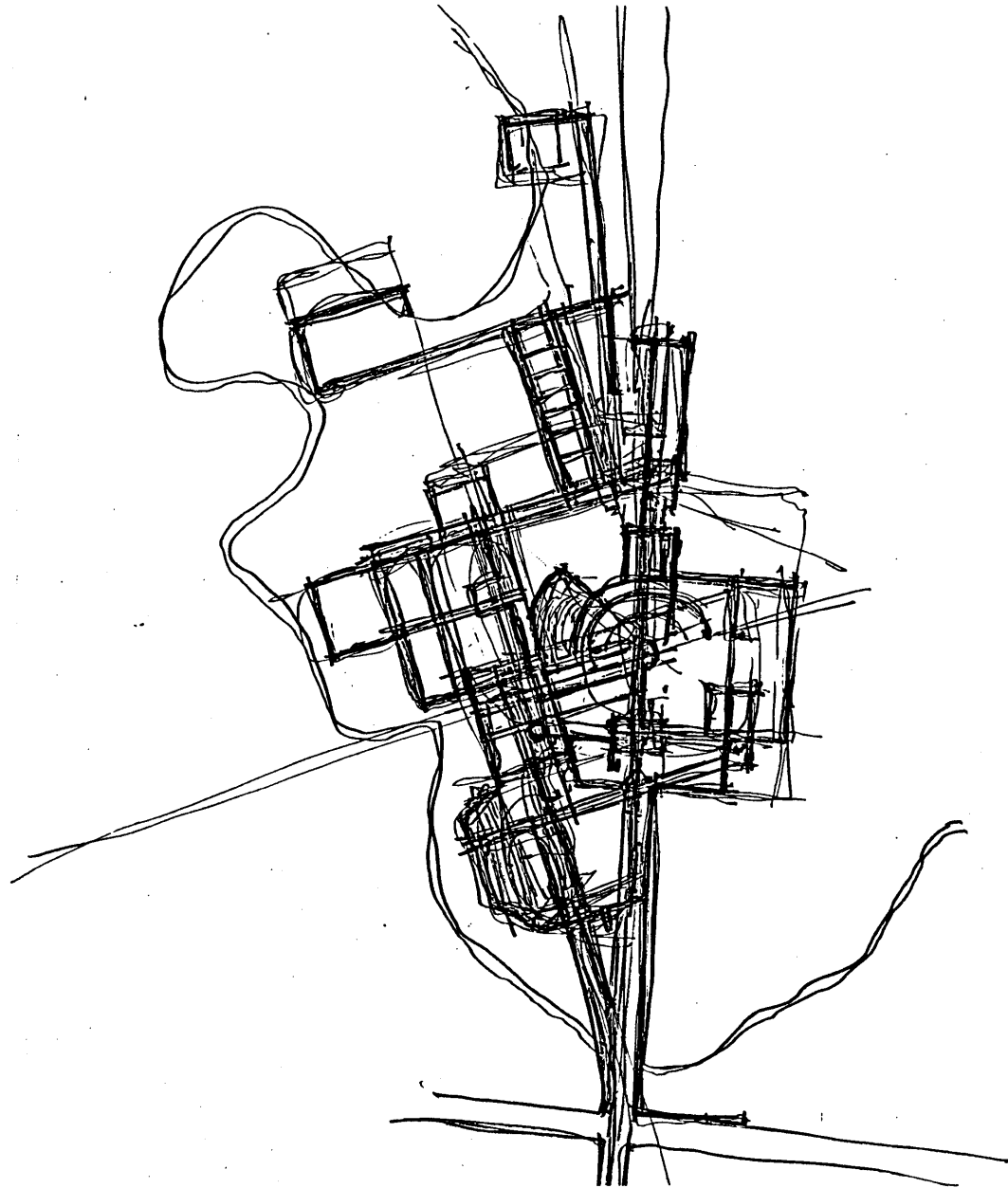


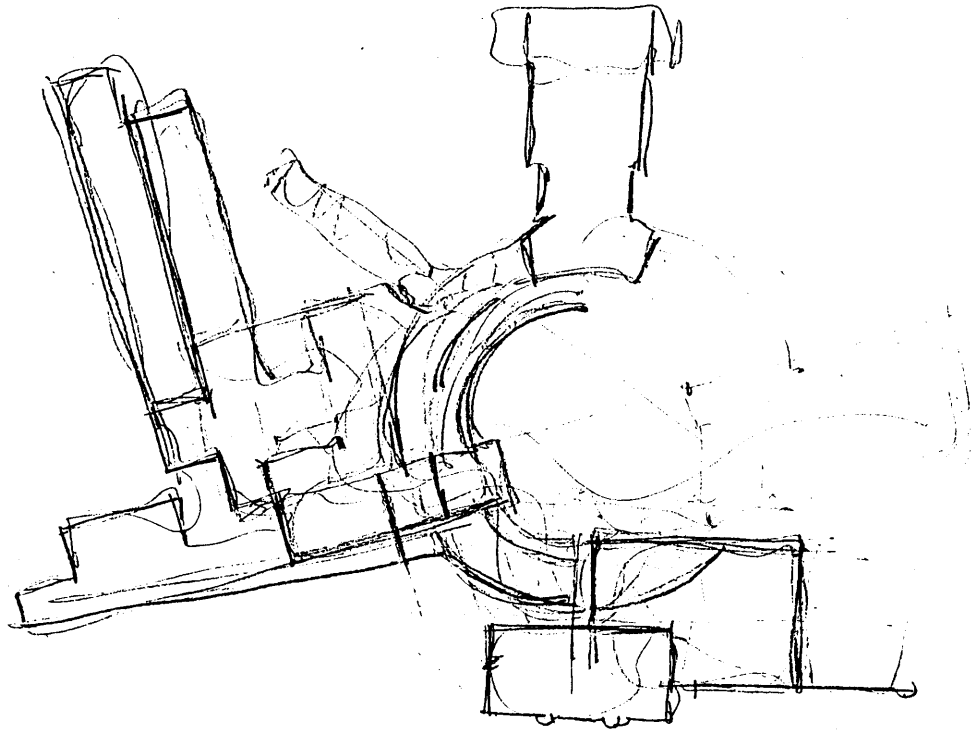


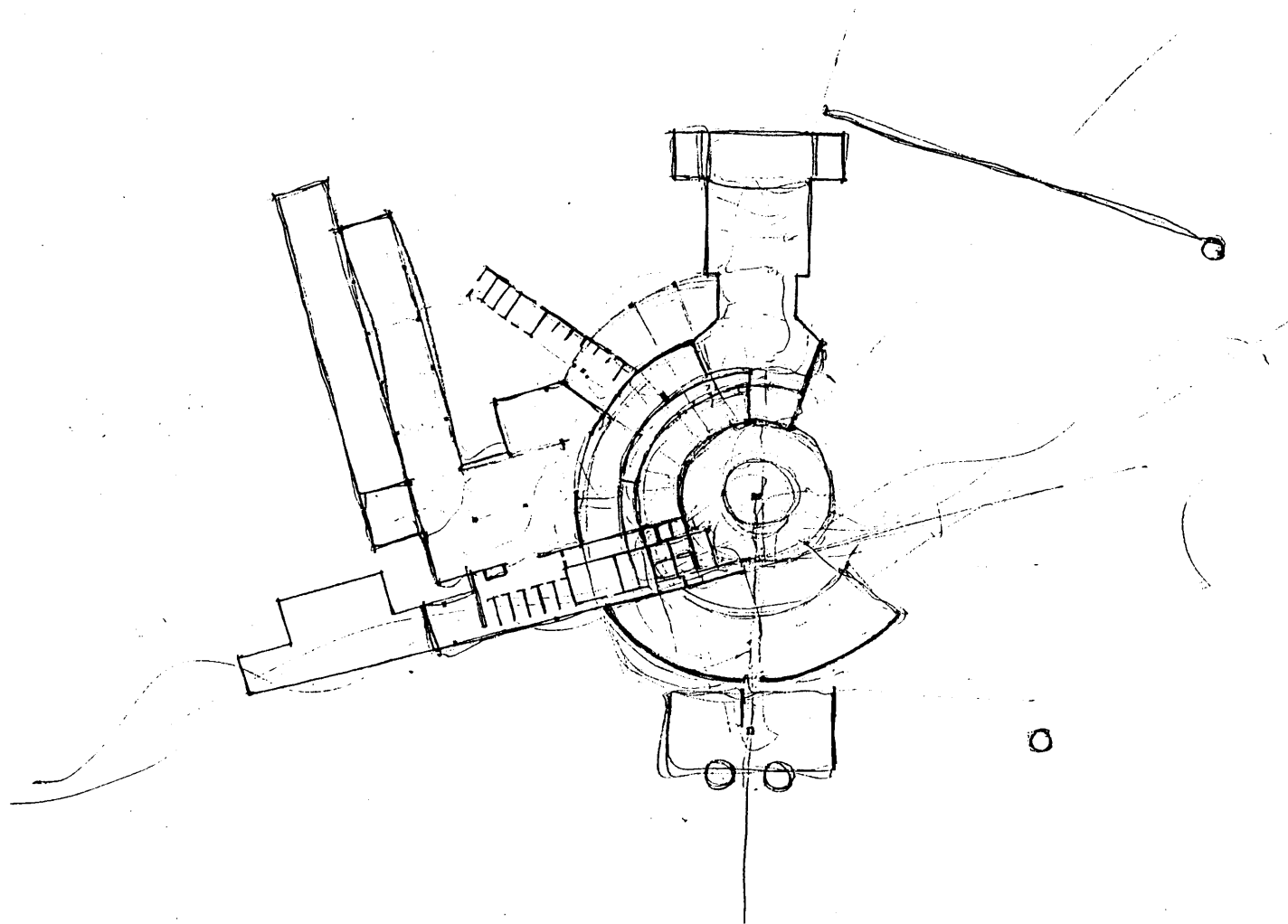


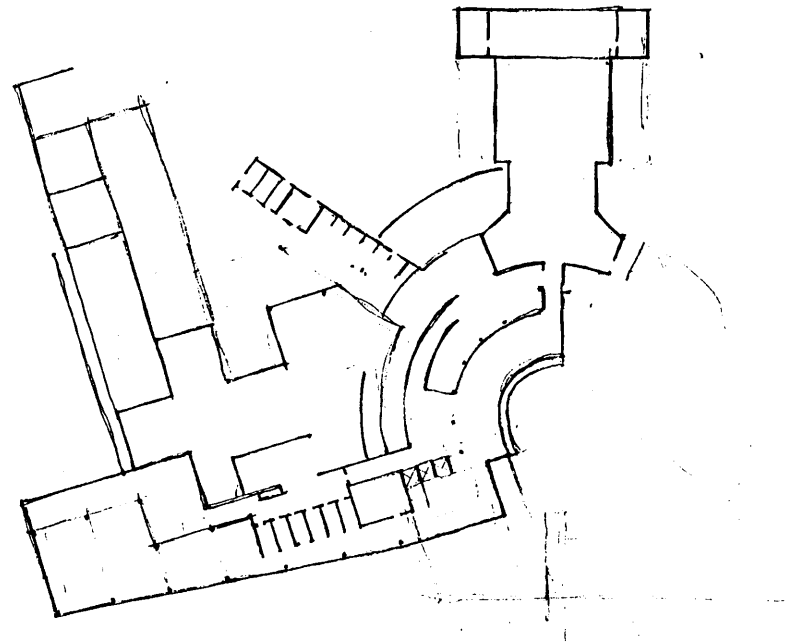


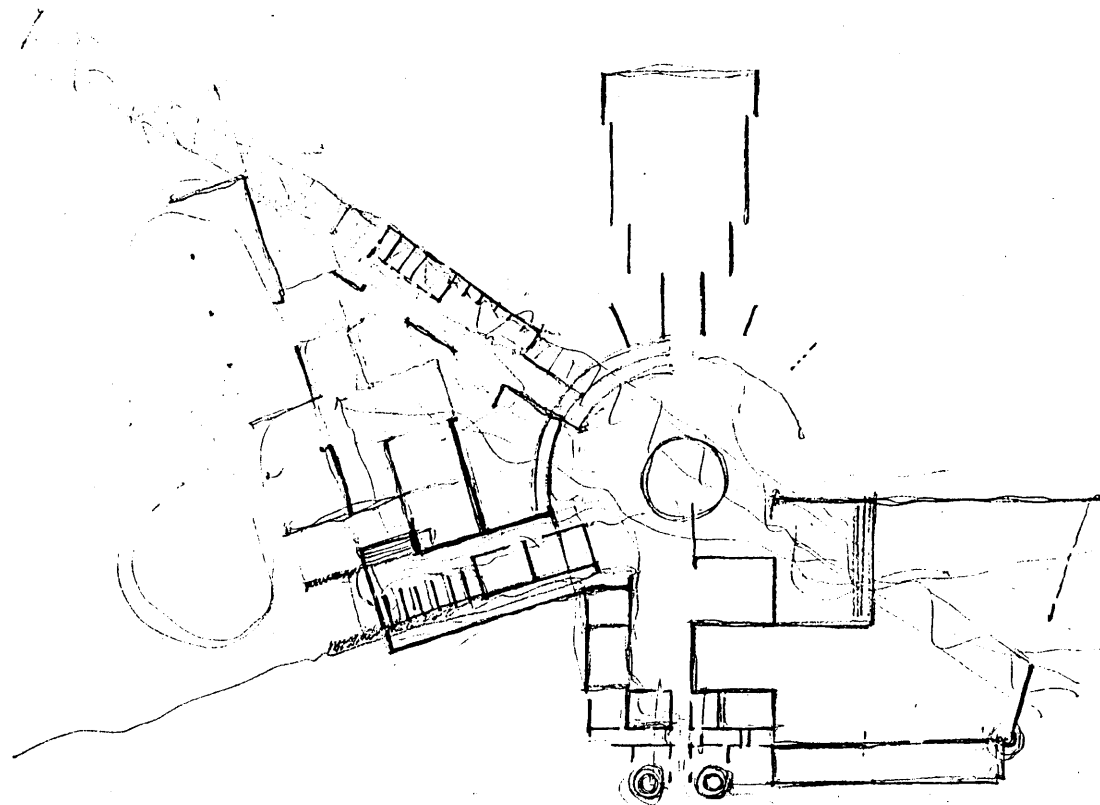


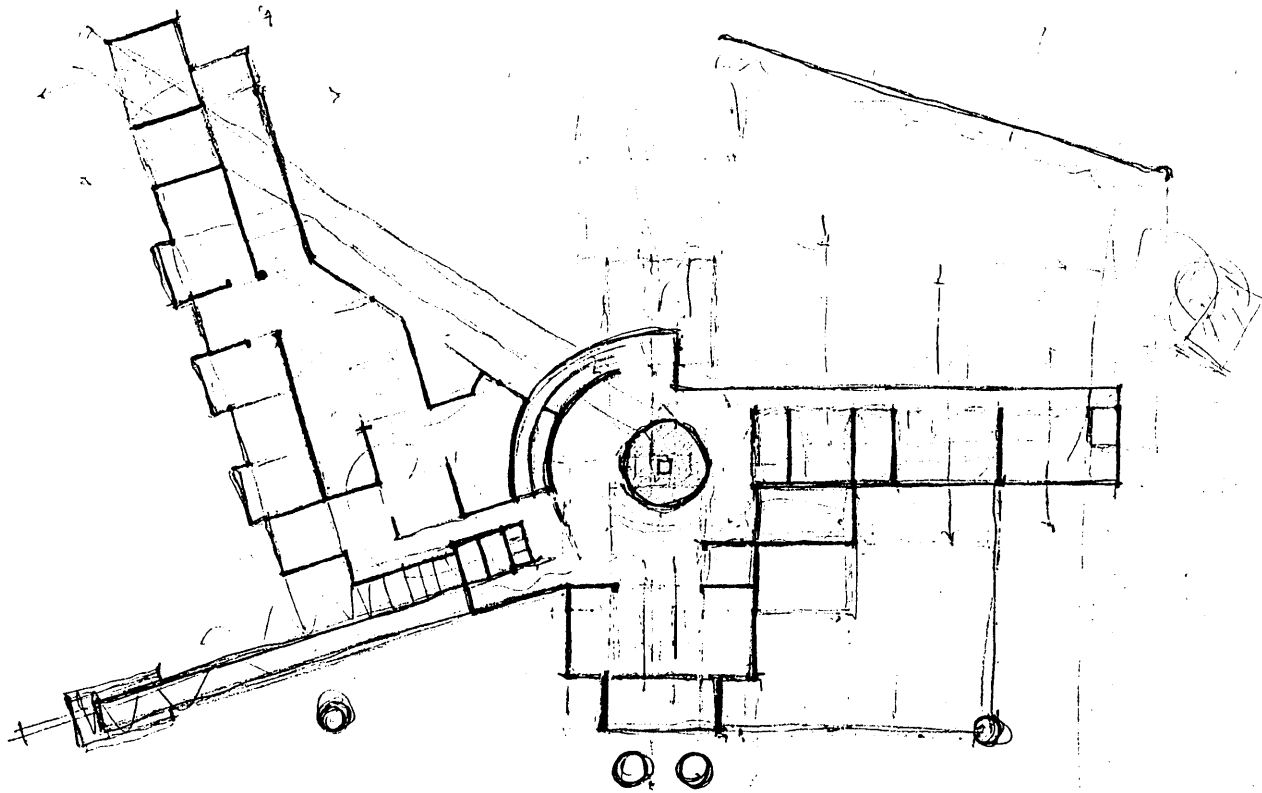


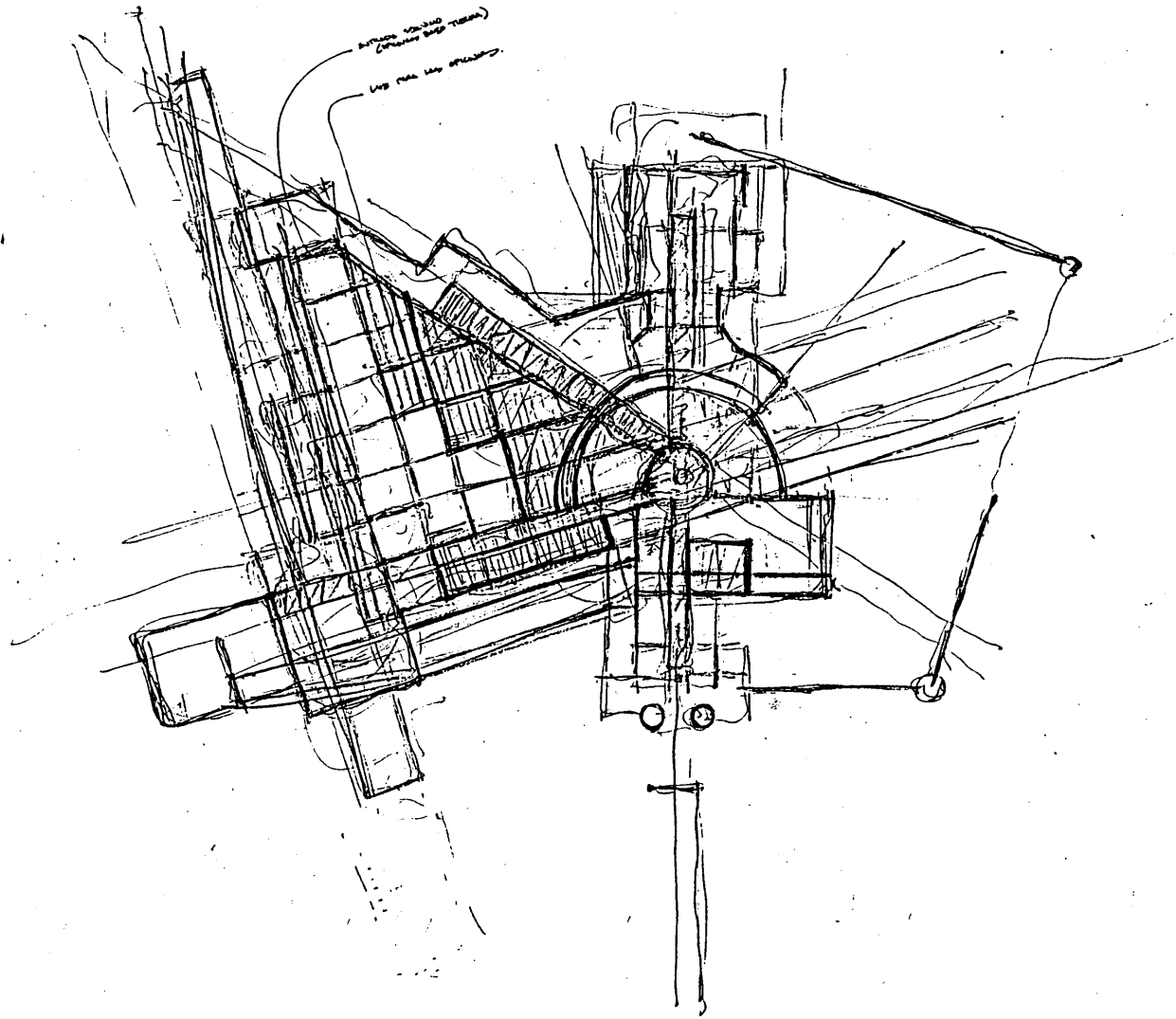


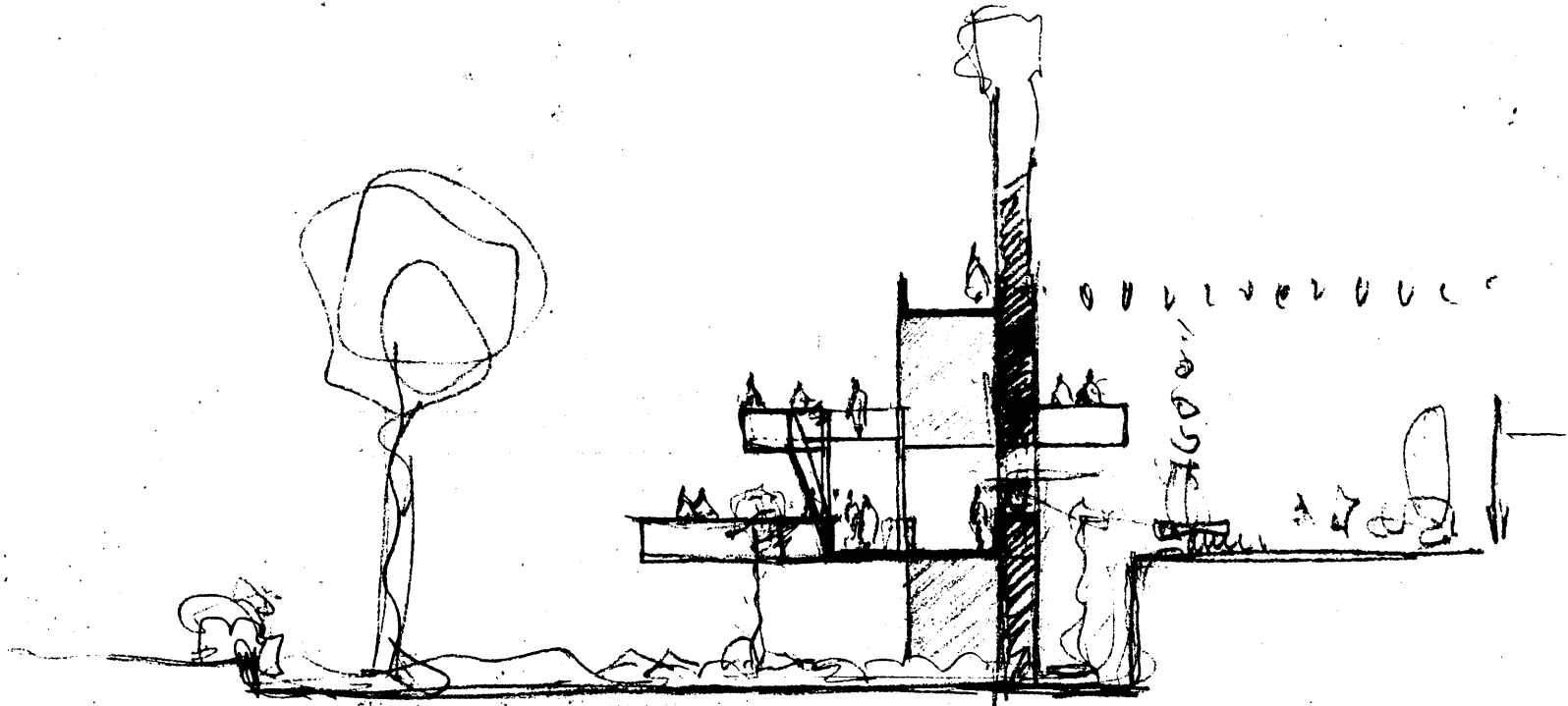


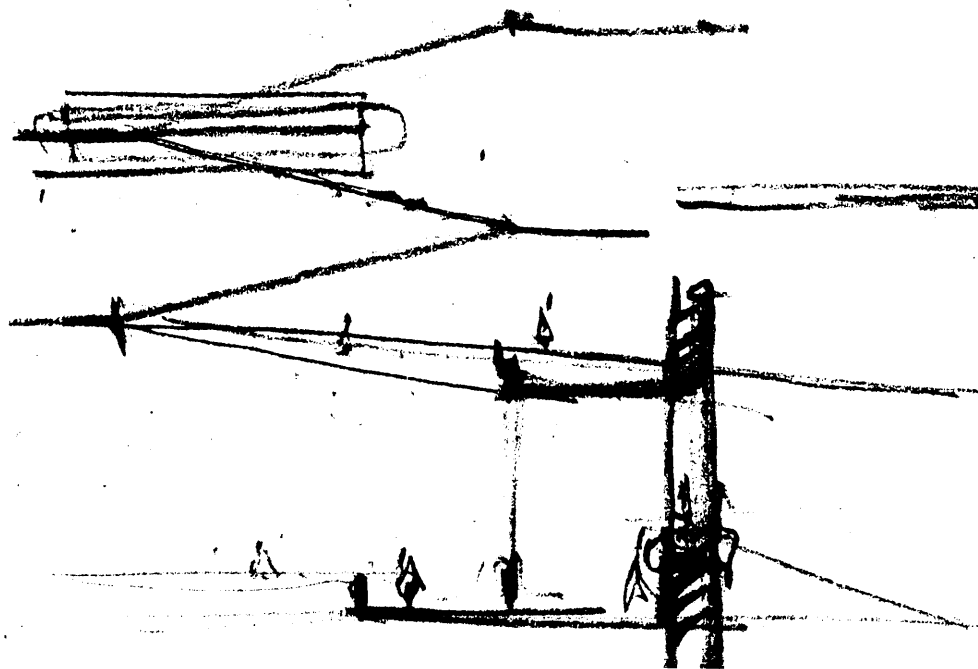


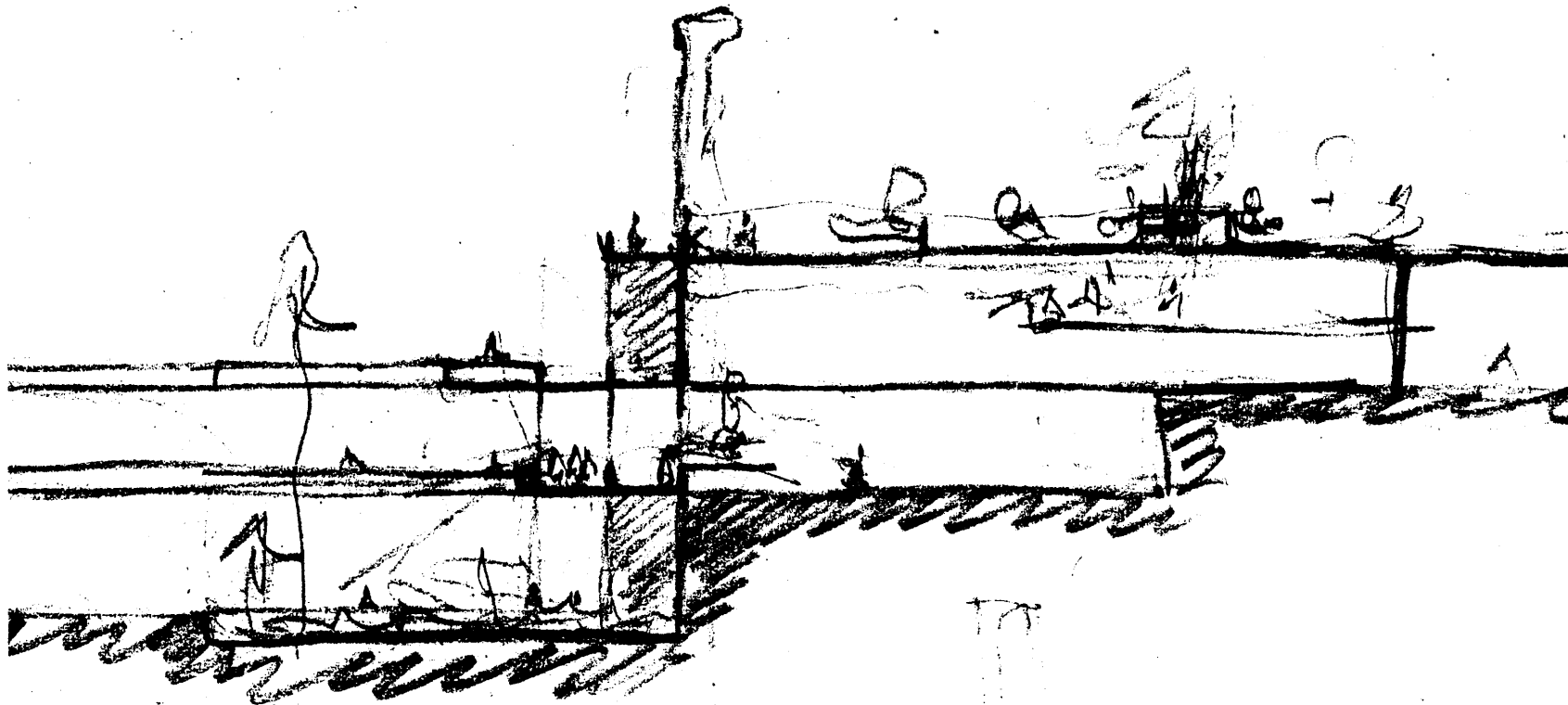


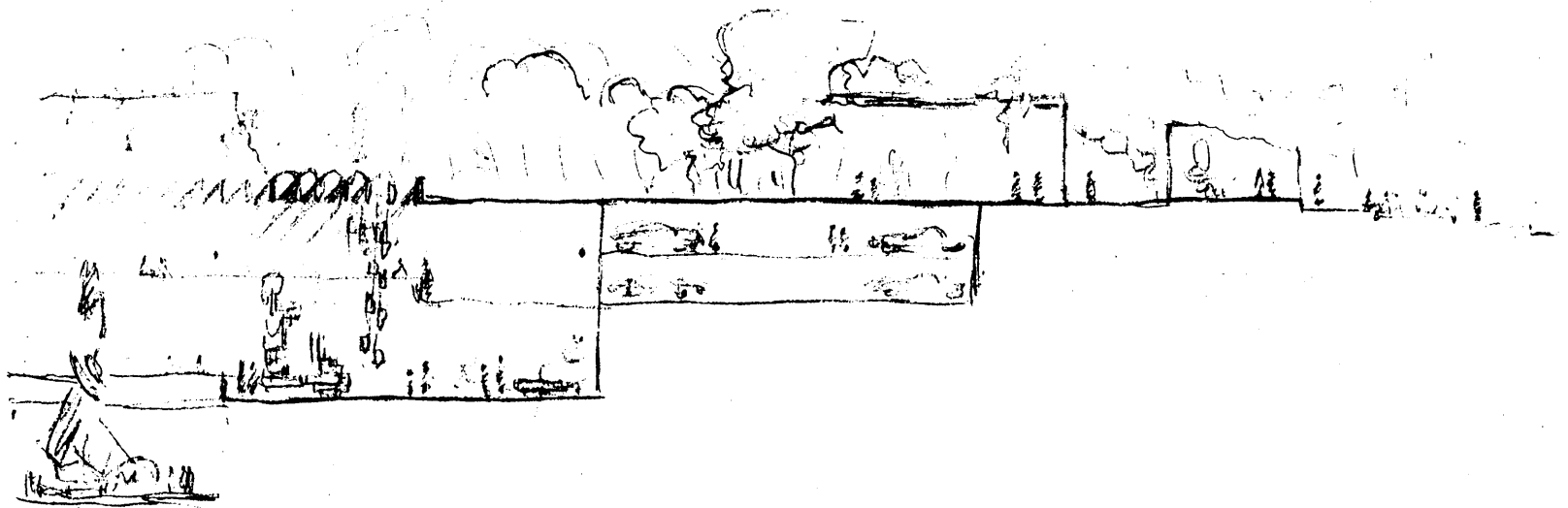


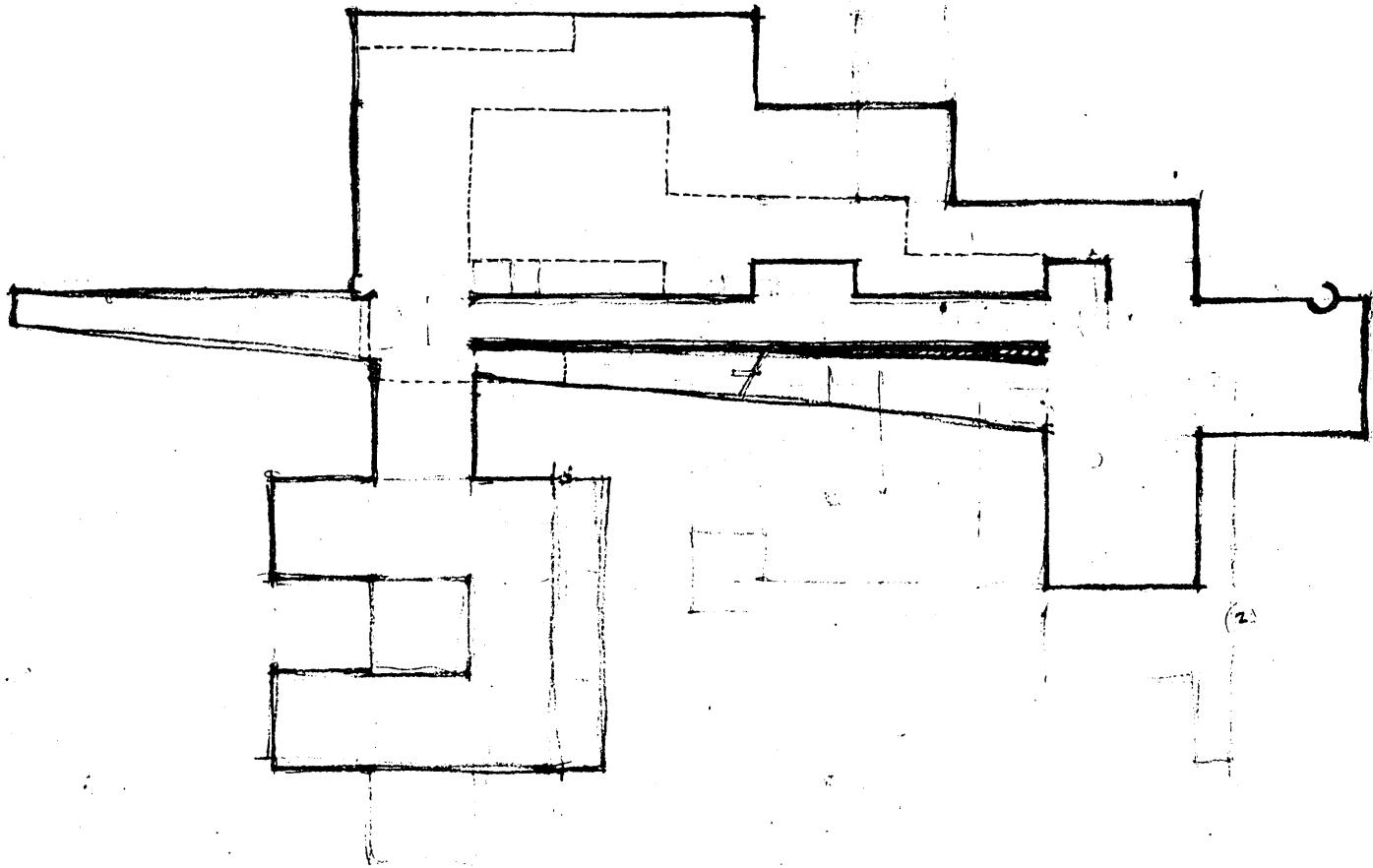


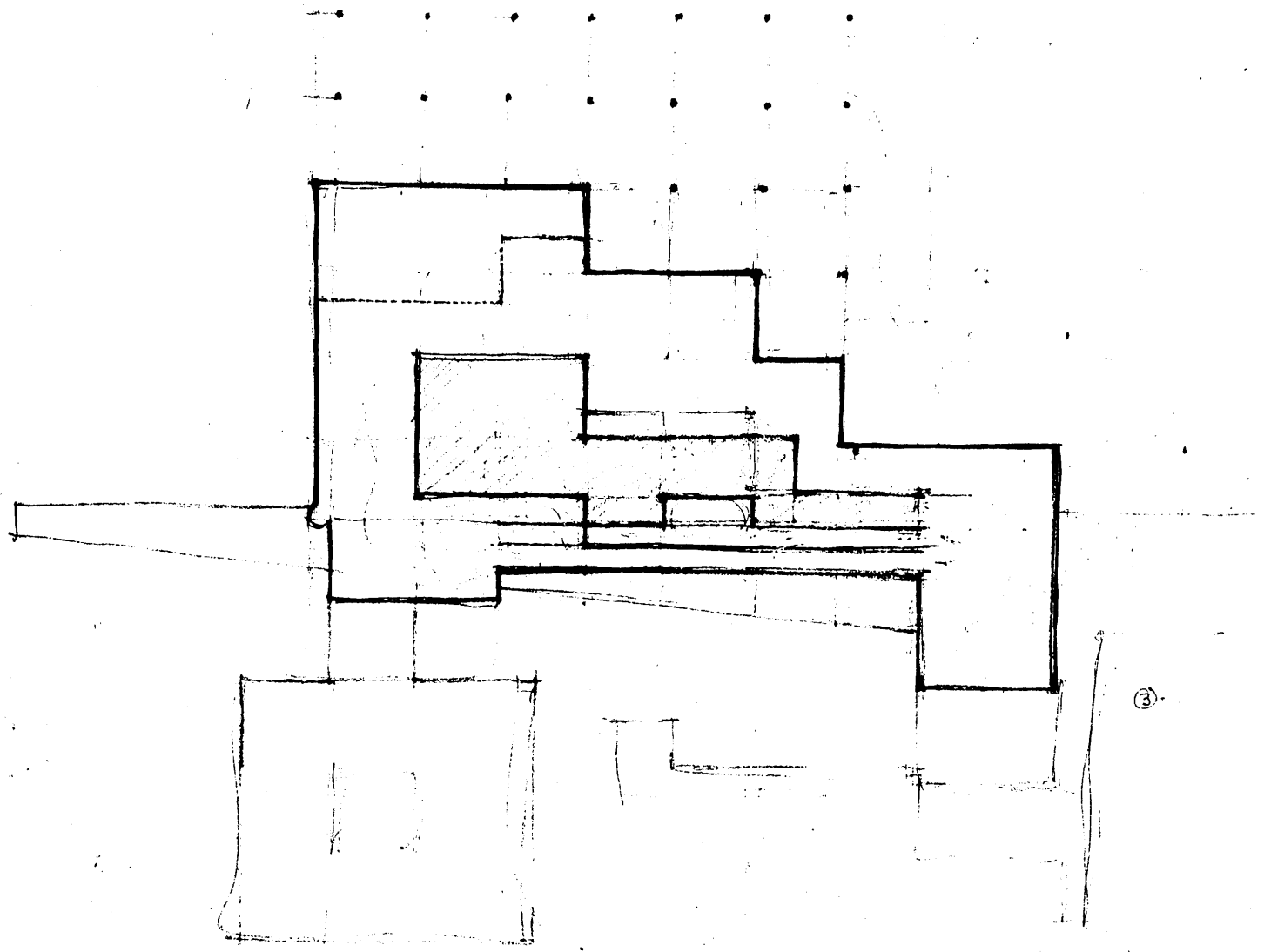


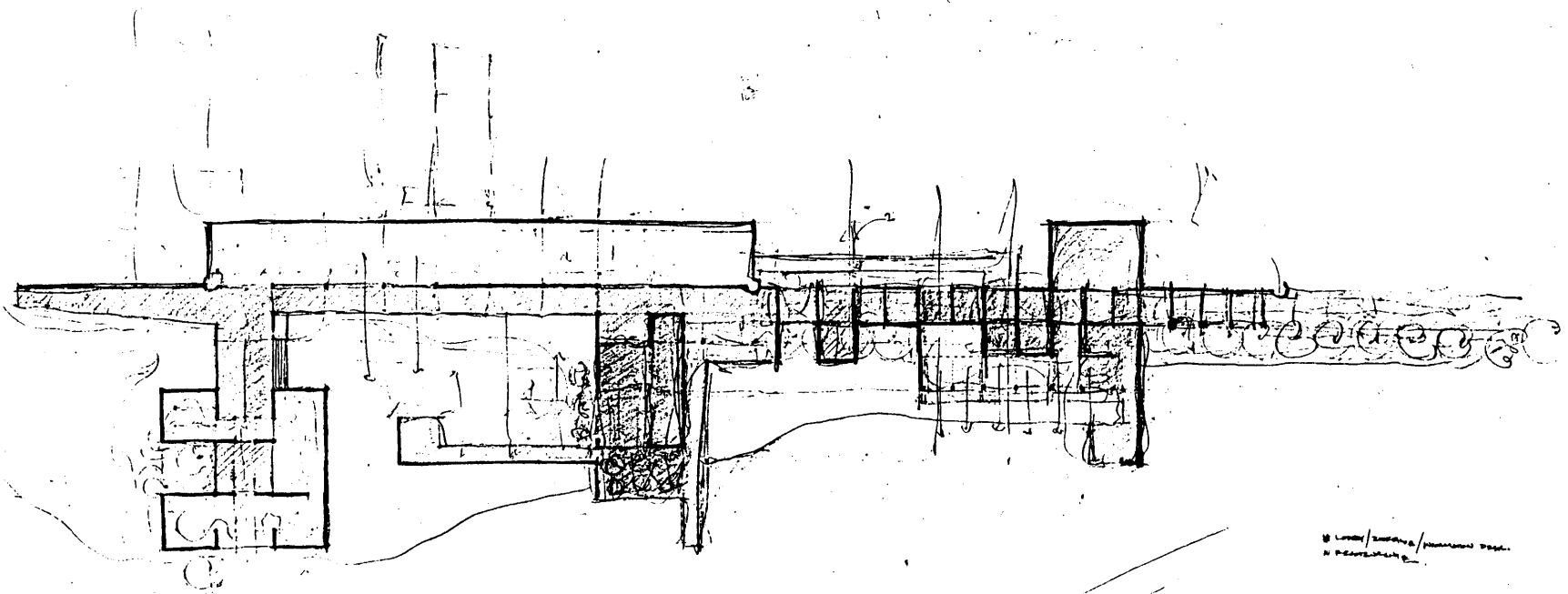












1. Lobby / Entrance / Reception Desk
2. Conference Room

Program

" History, Like nature, slowly shows us its enigmas. Historians, Anthropologists and Naturalists explore the world of human endeavors and slowly rescue symbols, testimonies, and footprints, that allow us to see the way; past and present becoming part of our own destiny collectively as a nation "

*Carlos Francisco Echeverria
Ex-Minister of Culture,
"Mas de Cien Anos de Historia"*

PROGRAM

"New National Gallery of Art"

The central piece of the program will be a museum. It is important for me that the program be an integral part of the ideas presented before; I chose to work on a museum because to me it is a place of cultural intersections, where the past comes together with the future ----- a connector. The museum will play an educational role, as well as an opportunity to establish direct contact between the public and the products of the mind. "Museums should not be buildings in which historic and artistic objects are accumulated, but centers for education and diversion, equipped to supplement the educational and cultural training of the people. "(Samuel Rovinski on cultural policy in Costa Rica).

PUBLIC AREAS:

1. Lobby/information desk/reception hall
2. Small library
3. Classroom space
4. Restaurant/kitchen
5. Restrooms
6. Bookstore
7. Gardens
8. Parking

9. Museum of Contemporary Art for Latin America, to include:

Exhibition space for the documentation of Costa Rican and Latin American Art and Culture.

- a. Temporary exhibit space
- b. Exhibition halls (large formats)
- c. Shops

10. Museum of Anthropology and History, to include:

Exhibition space for the documentation of objects relating to the country's history.

- a. Outdoor and indoor exhibit areas

Outdoor Spaces:

- 11. Outdoor theater
- 12. Sculpture Garden
- 13. Outdoor exhibit area

14. Museum of "La Antigua Penitenciaría", to include:

Exhibition space for the documentation of the historical memory and patrimony of The Old Penitentiary.

PRIVATE AREAS:

Office Space for:

**15. The Cultural Ministry of Costa Rica and
The Science and Technology Ministry of Costa Rica**

Support spaces :

- 16. Archives
- 17. Anthropology laboratory
- 18. Historian's office space
- 19. Drafting rooms
- 20. Offices for main body of both ministries
- 21. Conference room

- 22. Curator's office
- 23. Staff lounge
- 24. Restrooms
- 25. Storage space for works of art
- 26. Workshops
- 27. Service entrance

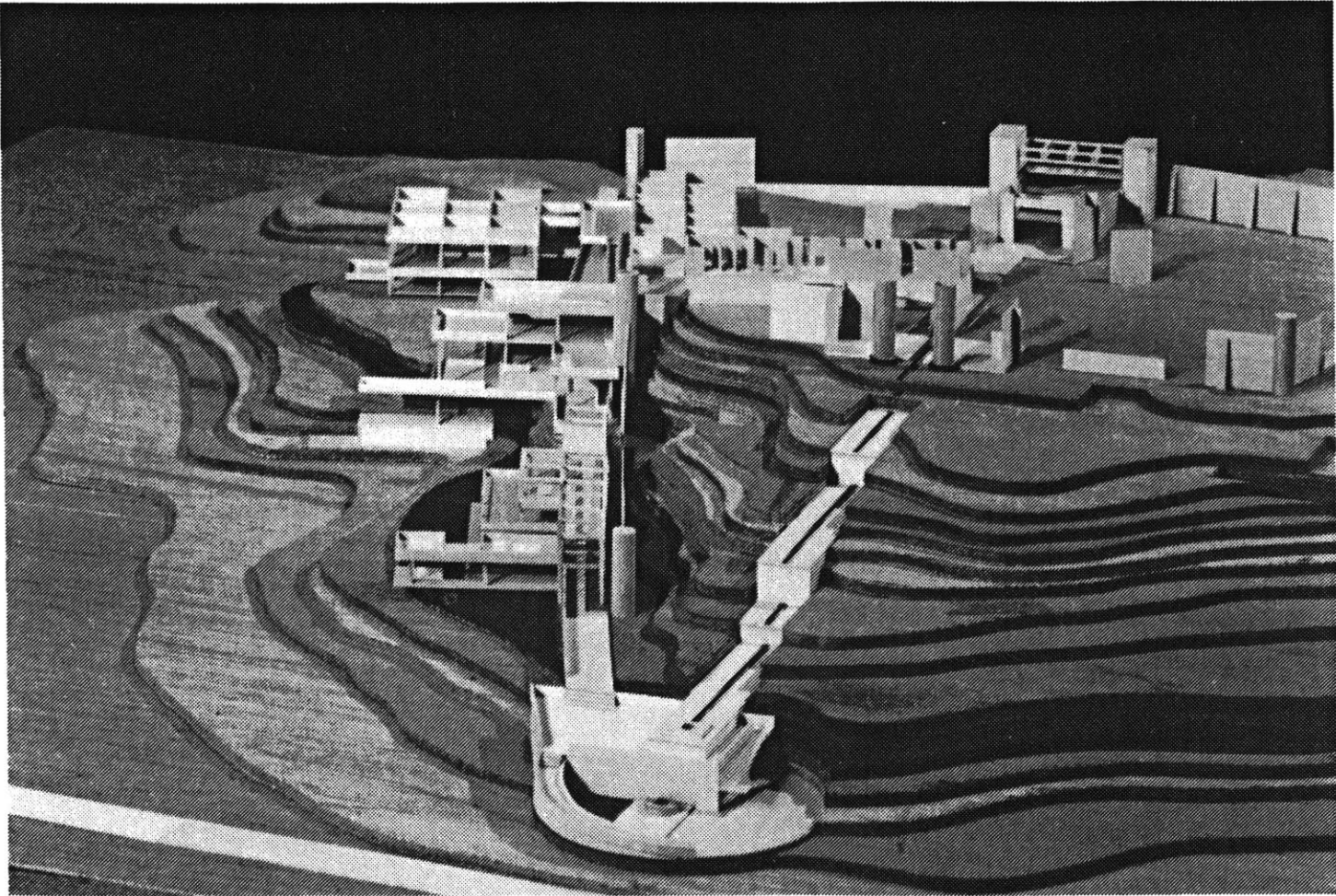
The Project

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

In analyzing the site, the city, the landscape, and the existing ruins, I found the opportunity to transform the meaning of its place and to reinforce its position as connector between city and mountain. To this end, I developed a design that works in four ways to intensify the experience of the site, both at urban and architectural scales. First, I celebrate the summit of the hill, by recovering it as a plaza, anchoring the buildings and serving in an overall promenade to pause in full light and enjoy a heightened perspective of both city and mountain. No longer is it impenetrable as a fortress; conversely it becomes pivotal in a scheme of opening and closure to frame both light and view. Second, I intensify the experience of moving up the hill by generating a promenade that reclaims the territory of the hill and particularly of the Torres River as a park. Third, I magnify the force of the wall as a retaining wall, by orienting the main building piece along the wall, and by using the existing physical wall as a generator of circulation for the entire project. Fourth, I redirect the focus of the site from an inwardly-focused fortress to an outwardly-directed reference. In the final reading of the project, one finds consistent reference to the existing footprint, both in the remnant of the pentagon, its turrets, and its ruined fortress, and to the stronger footprint of the overall site, that of an urban park.

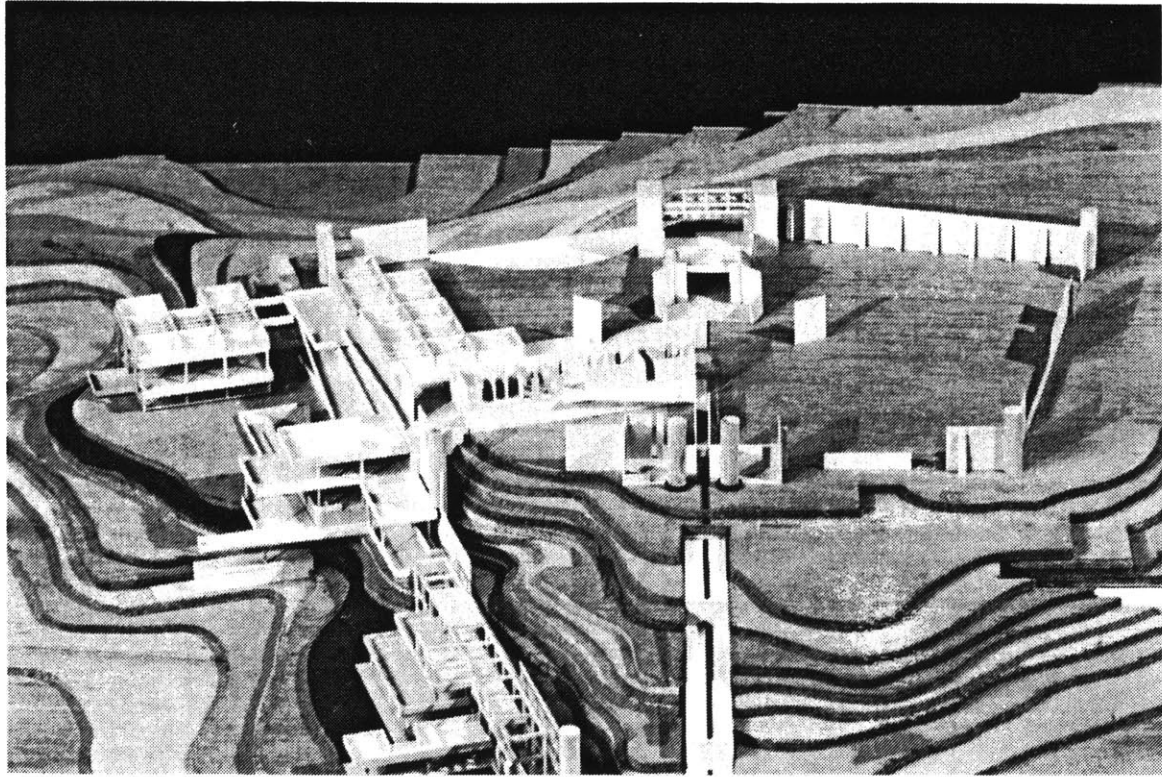
View of overall site as seen from the city.

From this perspective an entire history can be generated for the site. Two constructed axes exist. First, the old axis of entry, directly slicing into the hill is transformed as a visual axis intensified by the motion of water down the hill. Second, the axis generated by the Northwest retaining wall, which is intensified as the major built part of the site. Also visible are the turrets of the old fortress, and the new plaza generated at the summit of the hill.



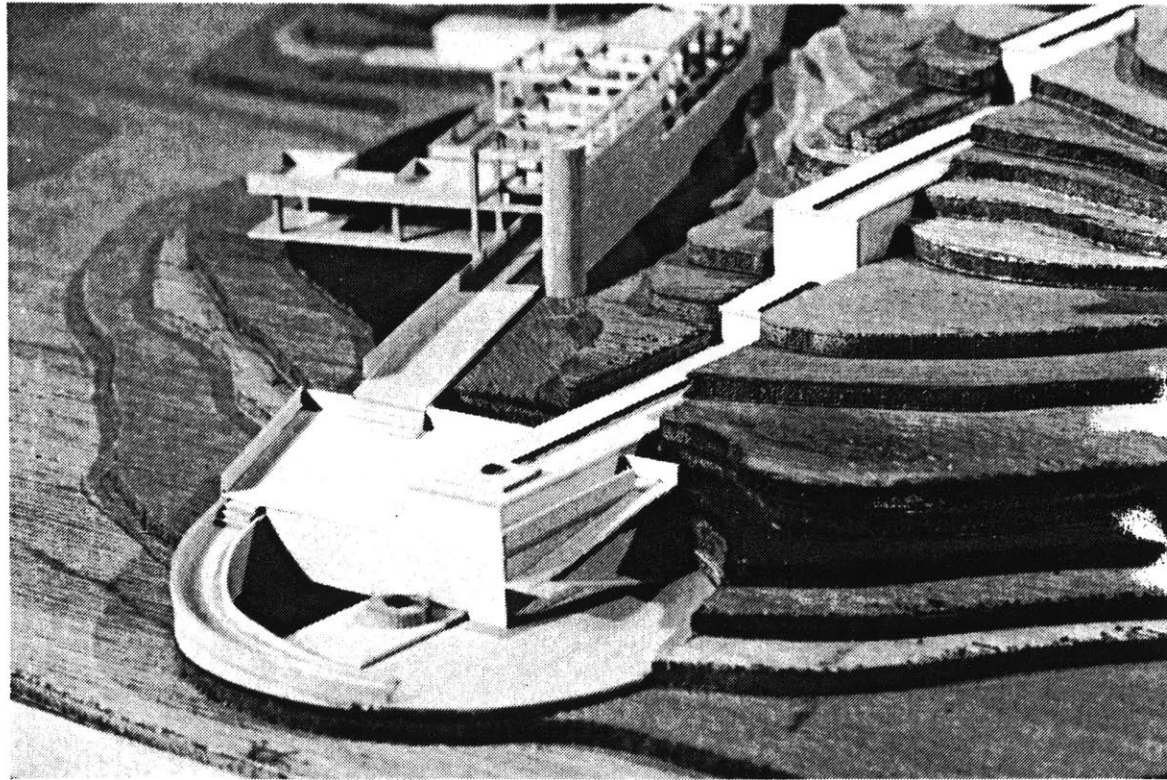
Overall view of built elements of project.

In this view, several key points about the massing of the project can be made. First, the building components are divided into separate built pieces, rather than one continuous mass. Not only does this serve to aid the programming of the project, but more importantly it acts as a spatial component of the experience of the site. You constantly move from light to dark and discover what is beyond. This connects directly to the experience of moving from the city (in darkness) to the hill (in light) and discovering the mountains beyond.



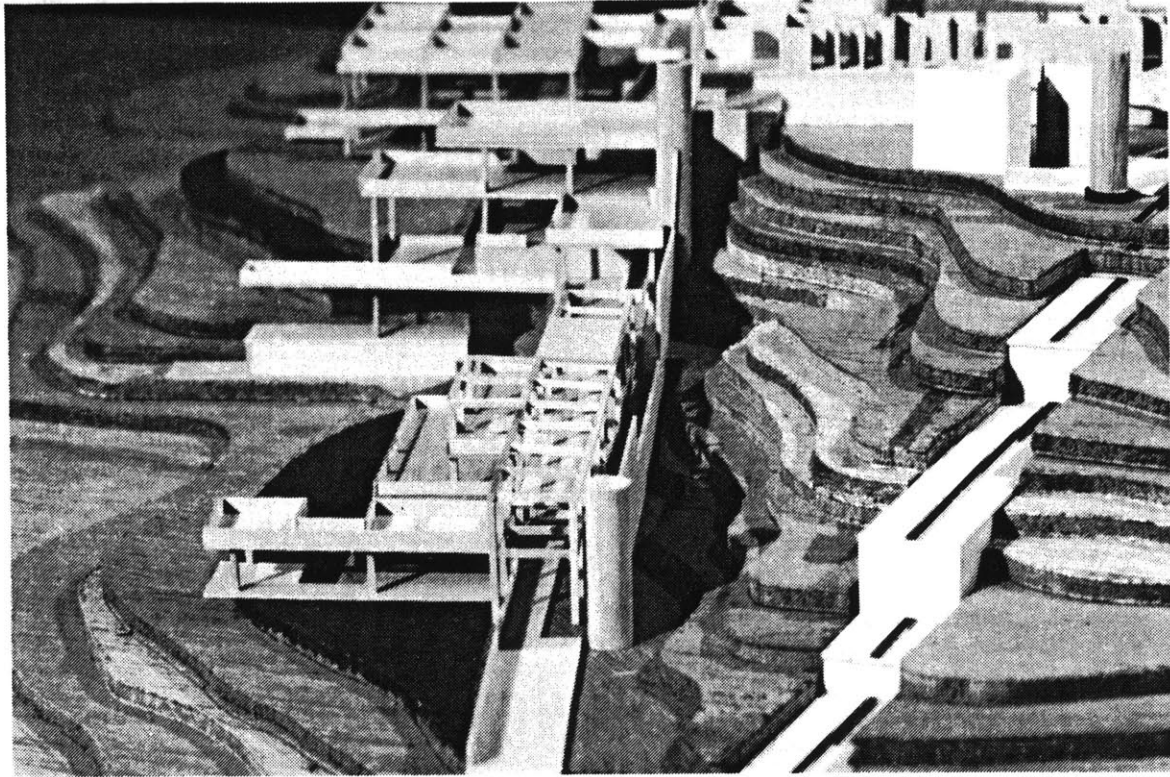
View of entrance and plaza

At the intersection of the two major axes, and at the entrance to the overall site from the city is a small plaza that serves as the first pause in the promenade through the project. This plaza acts as a place for reflection as it directly addresses the city from which one has come. It is on axis with a similar plaza downtown to which a direct connection can be made. Moreover, it is near a bus stop for public access to the cultural center. The plaza is defined by two features, a curved ramp at the base of the procession through the museum along the retaining wall and pool of water which is the base of the built stream connecting this lower plaza with the major plaza at the summit of the hill. This pool of water also makes the vital connection with the river, and thus addresses the park, and it reflects the sky and mountains beyond the city. This first plaza acts as a microcosm representation of the entire project and serves as an appropriate introduction to the site.



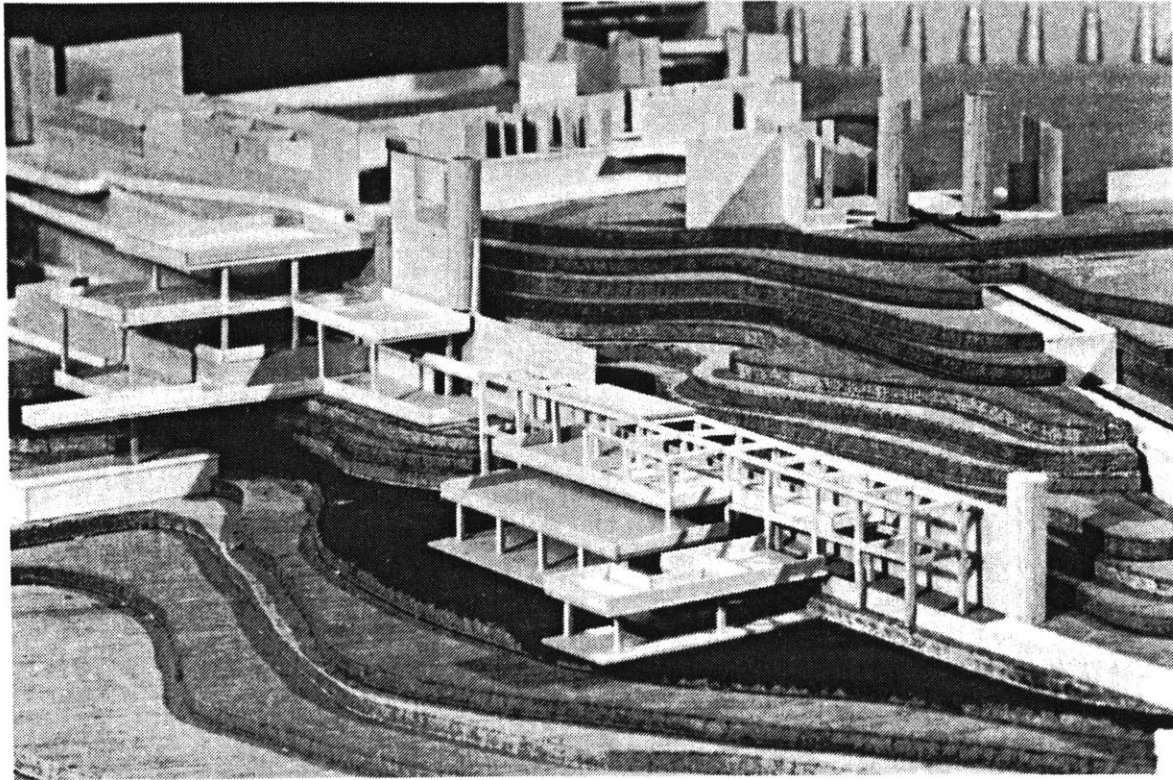
*View of sculpture court and information center
of park and cultural center.*

As one continues the promenade from the small plaza along the Northwest wall, the first built piece is an information center, with bookstore, cafe, and a sculpture court. The old wall is extended and reaches to this built piece, and serves as a backdrop for large format sculptures and archeological installations. The promenade moves directly along this axis, while stores and kiosks move off of the path perpendicular to the wall and reach into the river. At this point in the park, the river nearly converges with the wall, and the building sits directly on top of it.



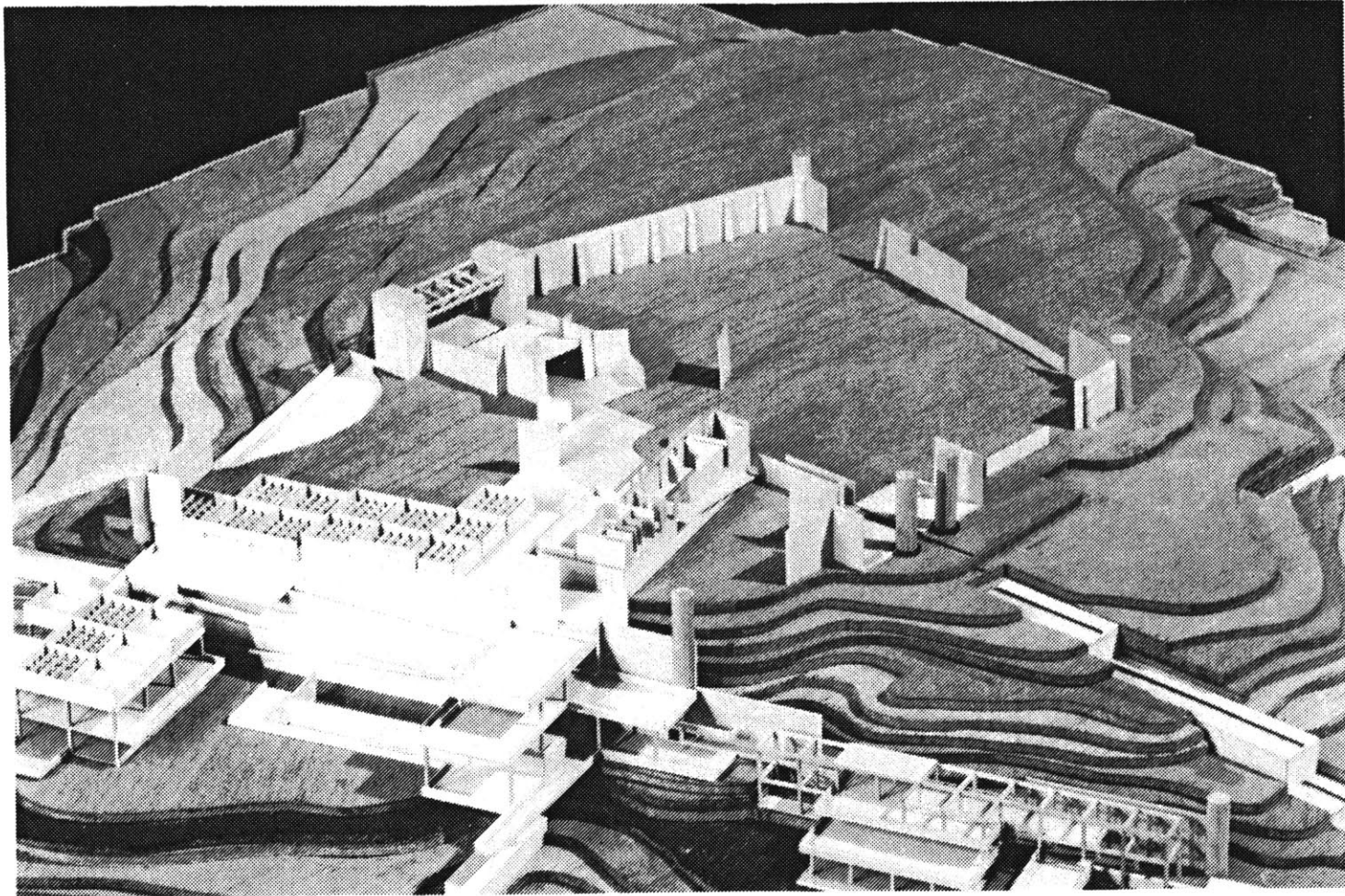
View of River Torres in relation to buildings

The River Torres flows roughly parallel to the wall and thus it maintains a constant dialogue with the buildings that compose the project. This view shows the information center piece sitting on top of and in the pool of the river as well as the main lobby and restaurant which act as a bridge over the river.



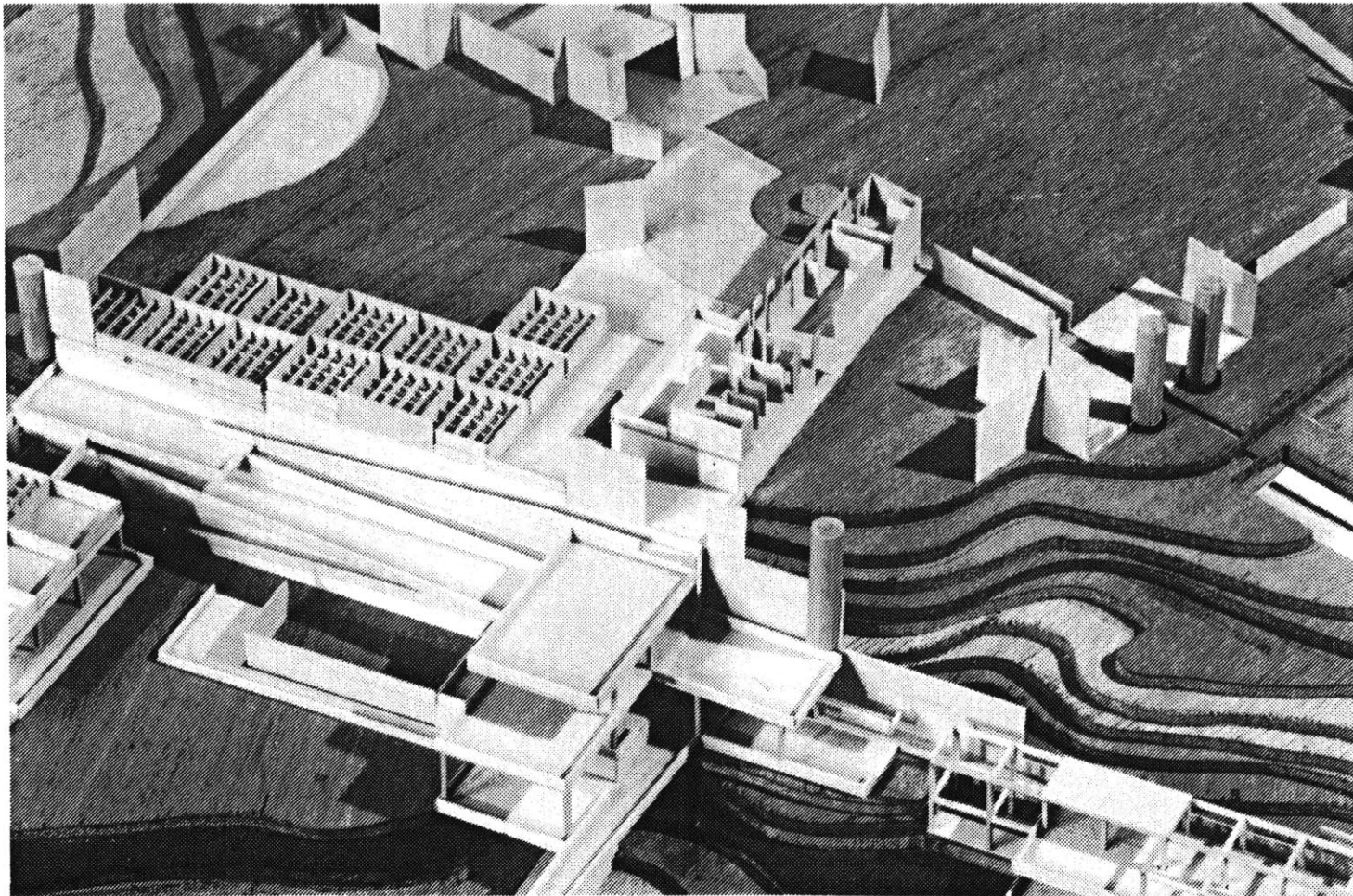
View of museum and wall

This view shows the wall as a connector between inside and outside. As one moves along the promenade, the procession is through different building masses, always returning to the light, and constantly referencing the wall. The turrets have been explicitly retained to act as points in the landscape from which to measure the procession through the site. The distance between the turrets measures roughly one city block and in the extension of the wall and the addition of a third turret, this dimension has been retained. In effect the wall is unpacked and measured and the experience of moving along it acts to discover this dimension.



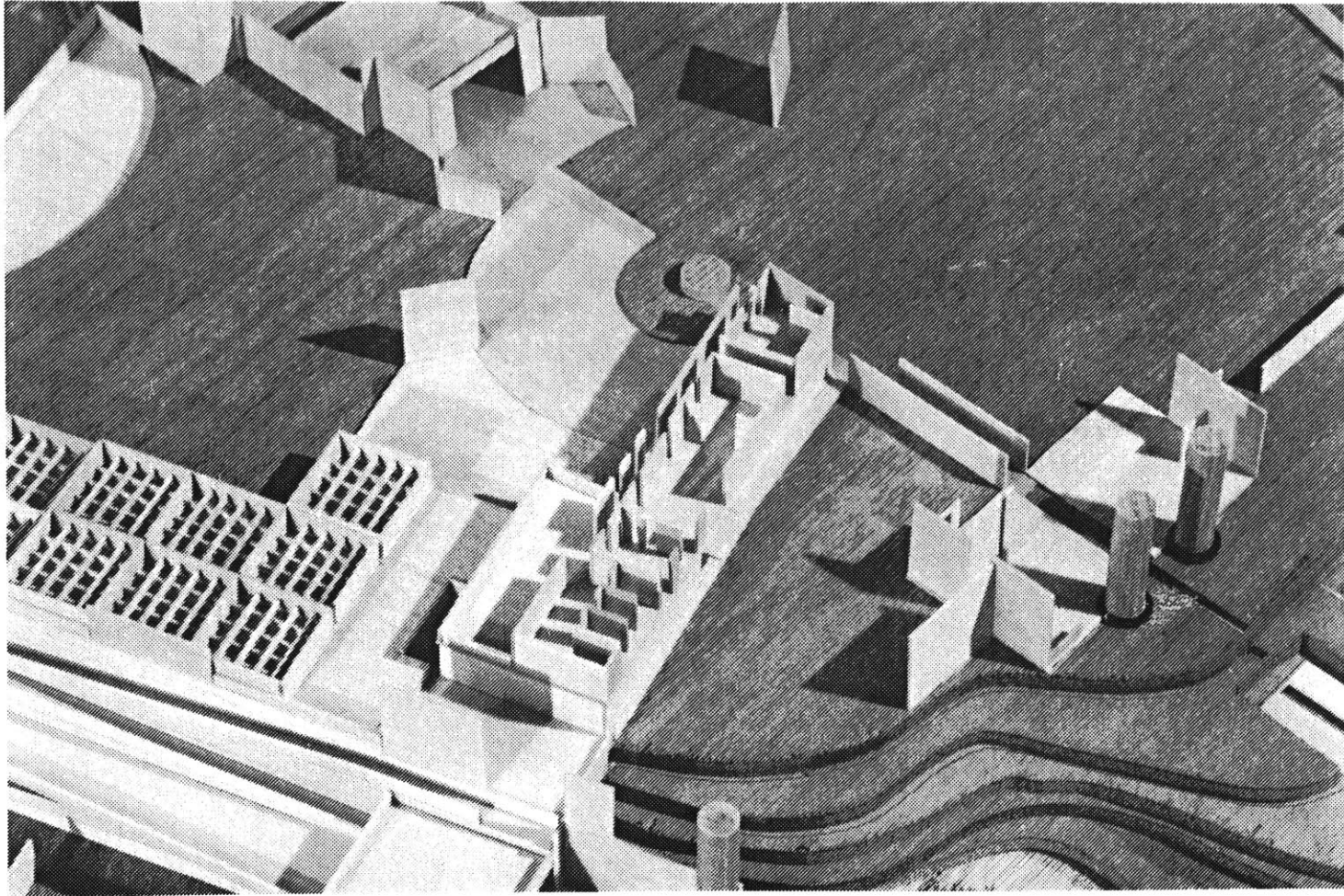
View of main gallery and sculpture court

At this part of the promenade, the main body of the wall is celebrated by acting as a vertical connector of the galleries with the plaza above. Leaving the information center, one passes into the main gallery piece, marked by one turret of the wall. The gallery and restaurant bridge over the river and serve as stopping places in the promenade, from which to survey the city. Exiting the galleries, one again enters into light and is confronted by the main mass of the retaining wall, which has been transformed and now supports a network of ramps that move up the wall through galleries and to the plaza above. These ramps themselves are generously scaled so as to act as more than mere circulation. From them one can view into the galleries or the sculpture court at the foot of the ramp, and even enjoy exhibits placed on the ramps themselves.



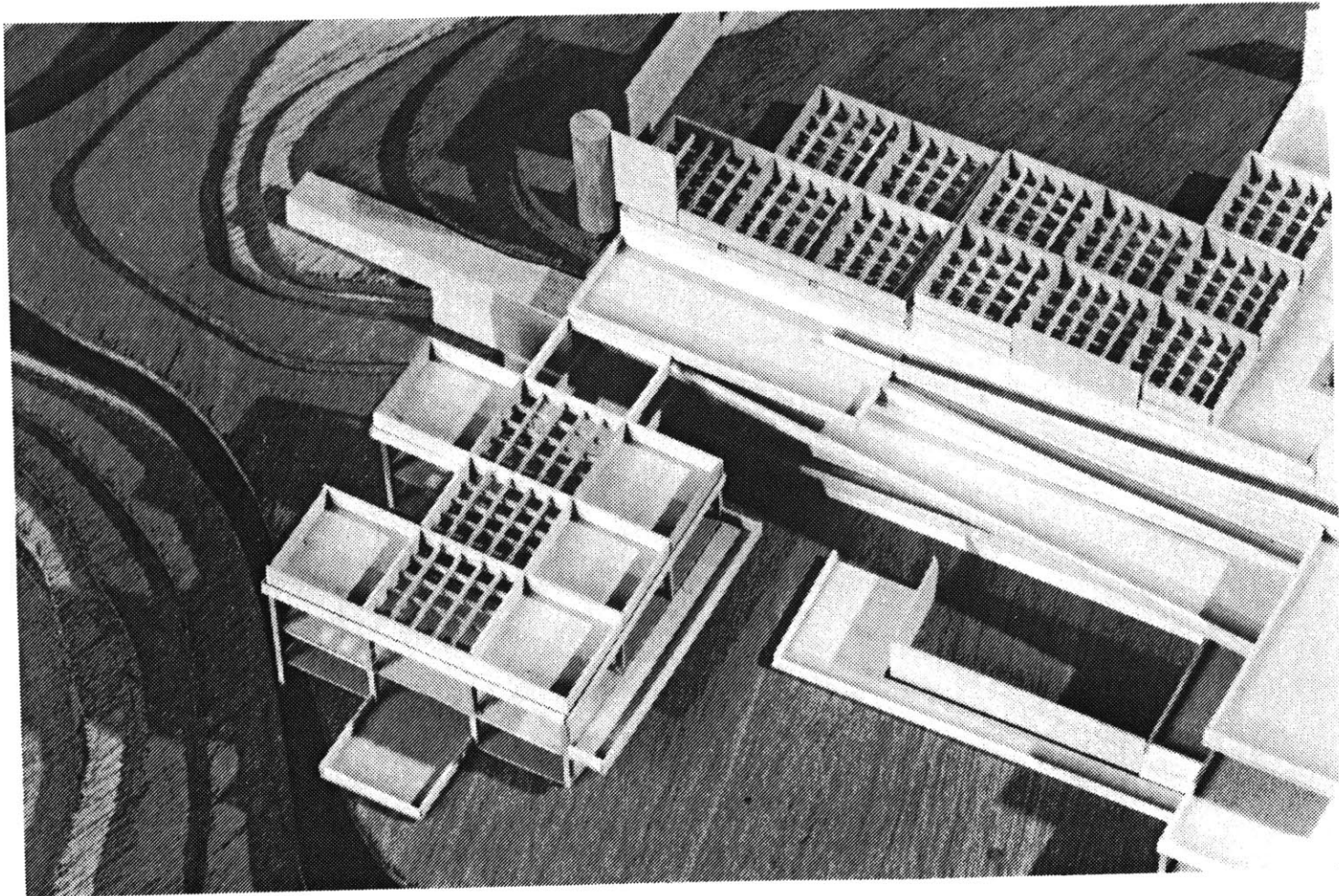
View of connection to existing ruins

As one moves up the ramps, and through the galleries, the promenade again finds a resting place from which to reflect on where one has been and to discover what is beyond. Here, one discovers the plaza at the summit, and specifically the ruin of the best preserved part of the old building footprint. Programmatically, this piece is the museum of La Antigua Penitenciaría, preserved as a memory of what once was on the site.



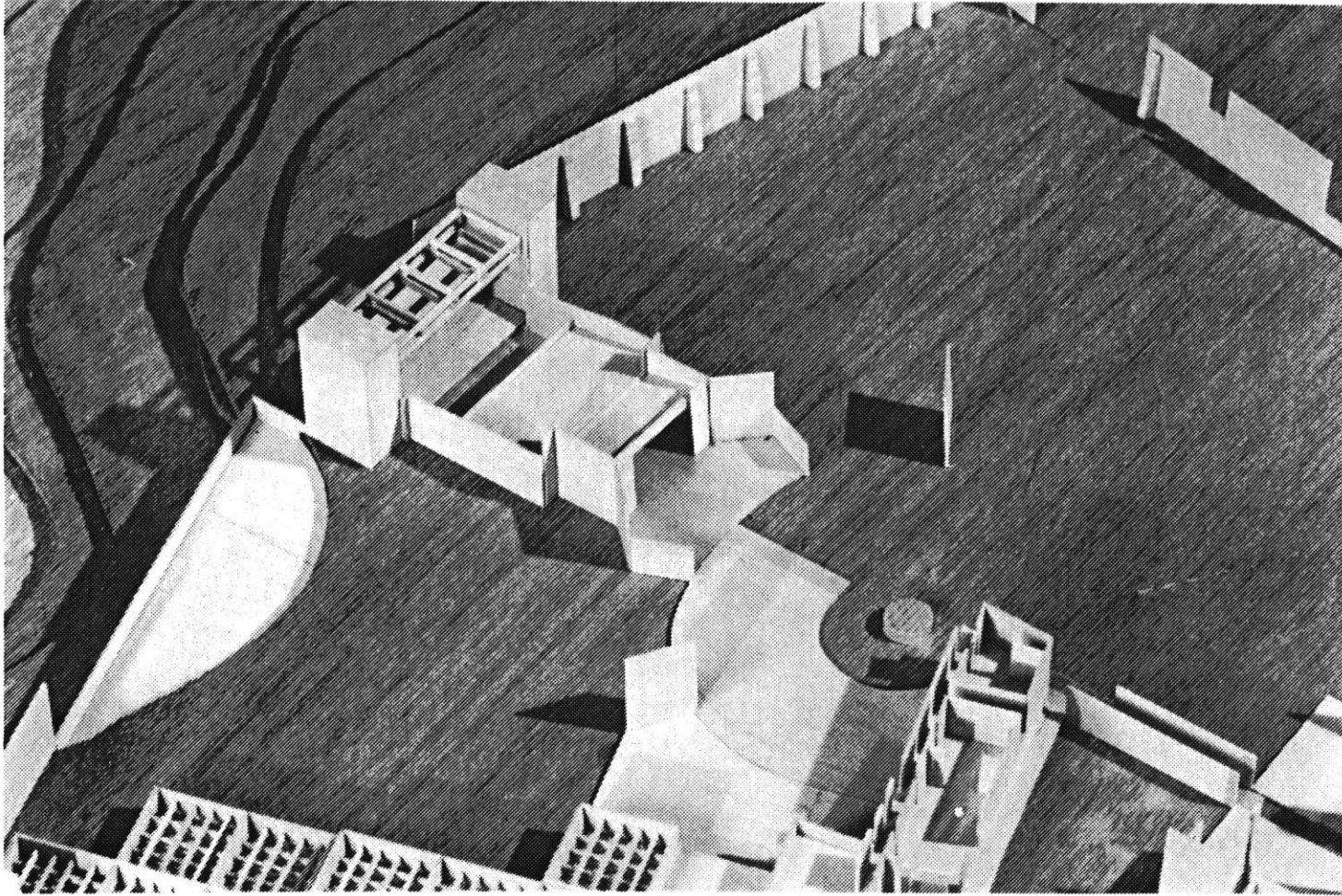
View of Museum of Contemporary Art of Latin America and Museum of Anthropology

The Museum of Contemporary Art of Latin America, projecting toward the landscape, houses exhibits that document Costa Rican and Latin American art and culture. The Museum of Anthropology houses objects related to Costa Rica's history and heritage.



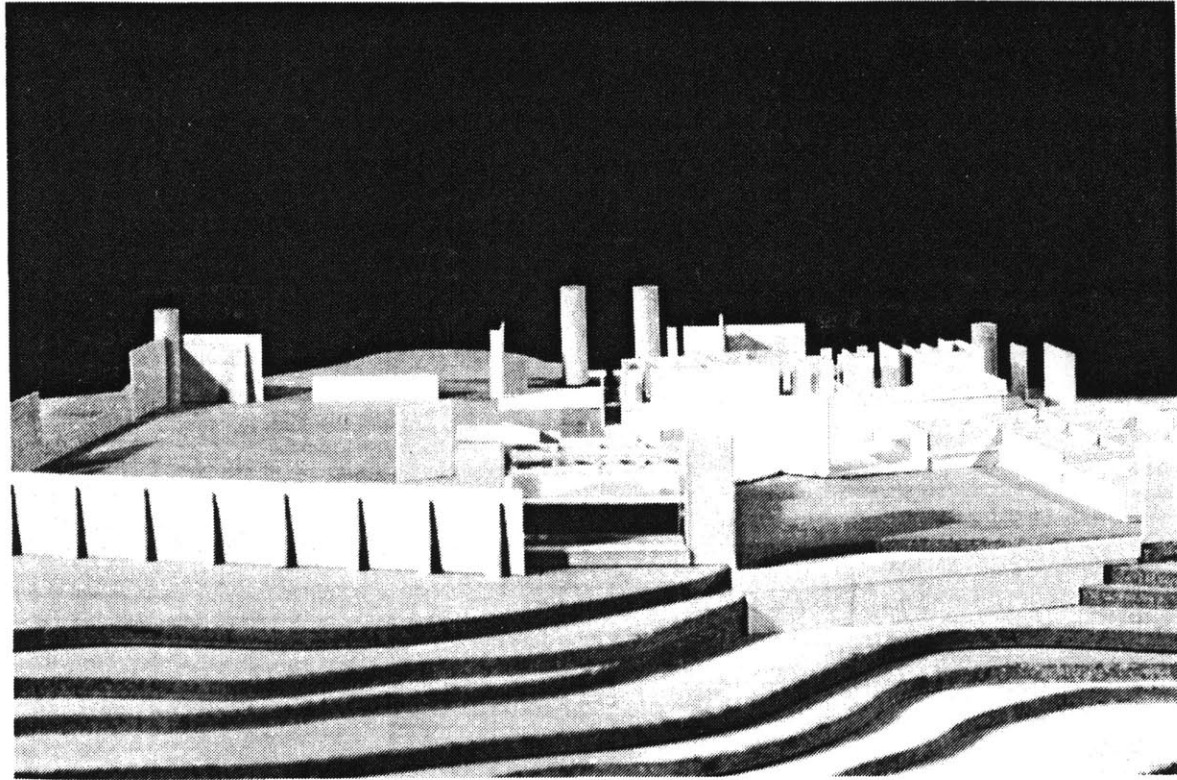
View of Plaza and Theatre

At the summit of the hill, the former inwardly focused footprint of the prison is transformed to a grand plaza looking out to the city and to the mountains. An important feature of the plaza is the performance hall, which is left open to the mountains and the sky. Although it utilizes the footprint of the prison exactly, it reverses the former condition of total closure. Another aspect of the plaza is the circular pool of water at its center which recalls the geometry of the former footprint and transforms again the condition of total closure. Not only does the pool reflect the sky and the mountains, but it also acts as the start of the stream that falls to the first plaza at the bottom of the hill. Thus, it returns to the beginning of the promenade, and makes the connection between the city and the mountains.



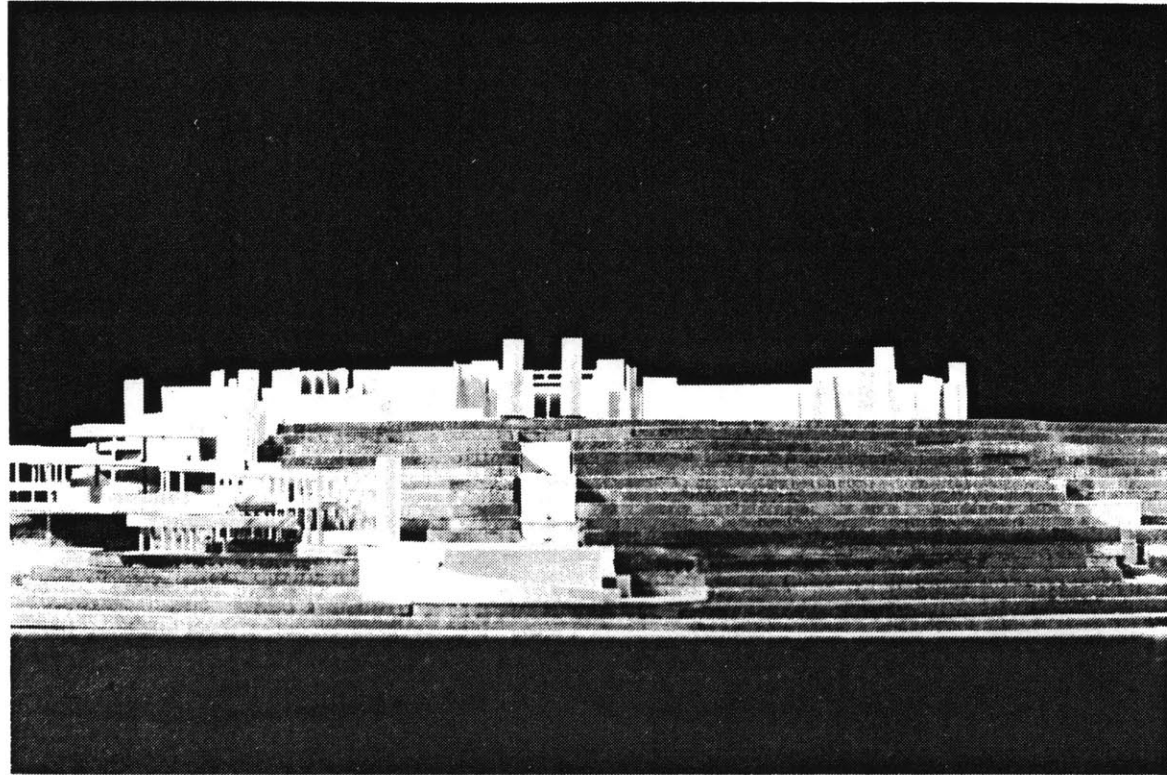
View from performance area back on the old axis toward the city.

This view displays the overall transformation of the footprint in several key ways. First the theatre opens the closed forms of the prison while retaining the form of the footprint. Second, the turrets serve to frame the view looking back toward the city. As free-standing elements, they act as frames equally from either side--city or mountain.

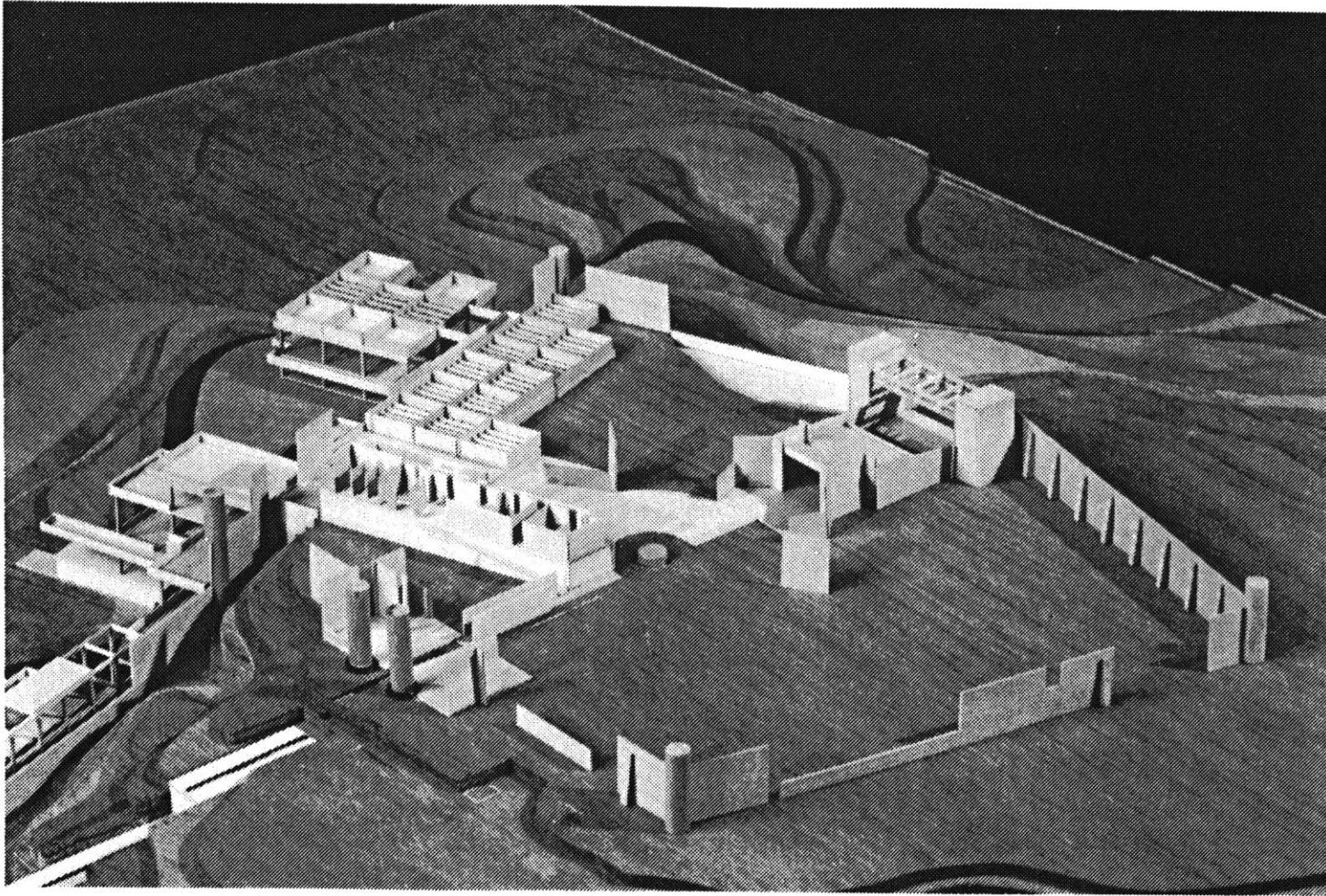


View along old axis from city

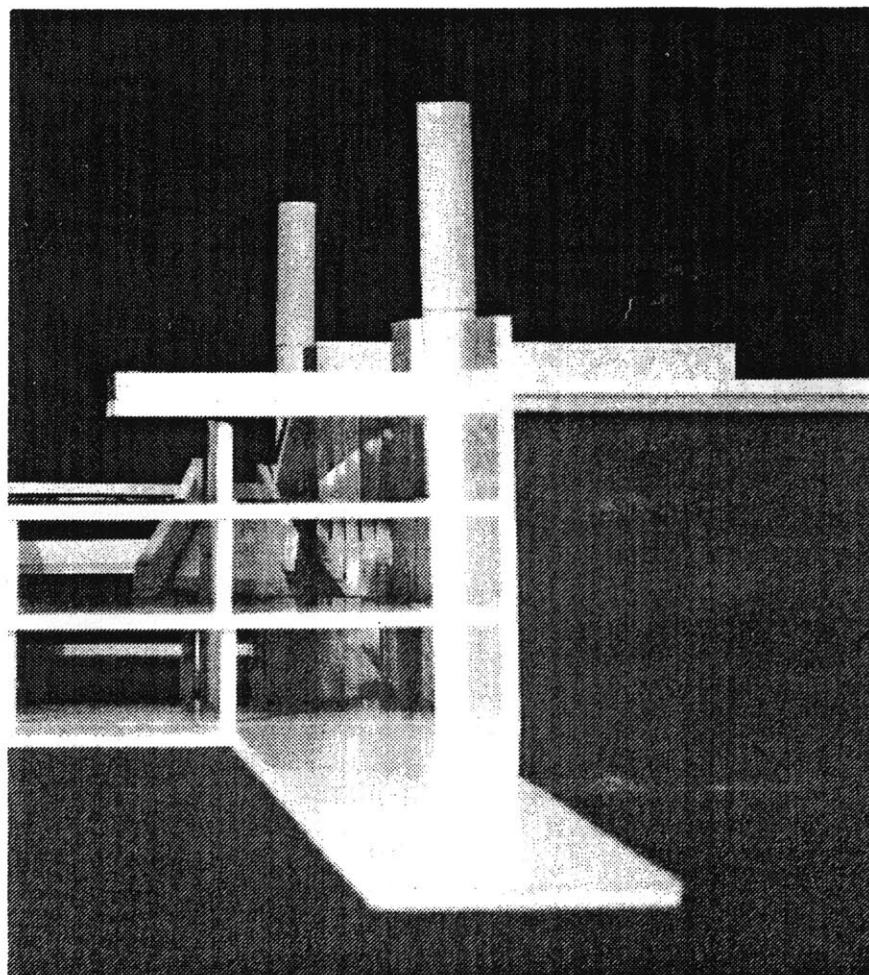
This view displays the shift of building mass from the top of the hill to the side. In doing so, it reveals the tectonic qualities of the site as a hill, and it reveals the overall transparency of the building elements on the top of the hill, displaying their ability to act as connectors between city and mountain. This is precisely the view of the site as seen from downtown San Jose.



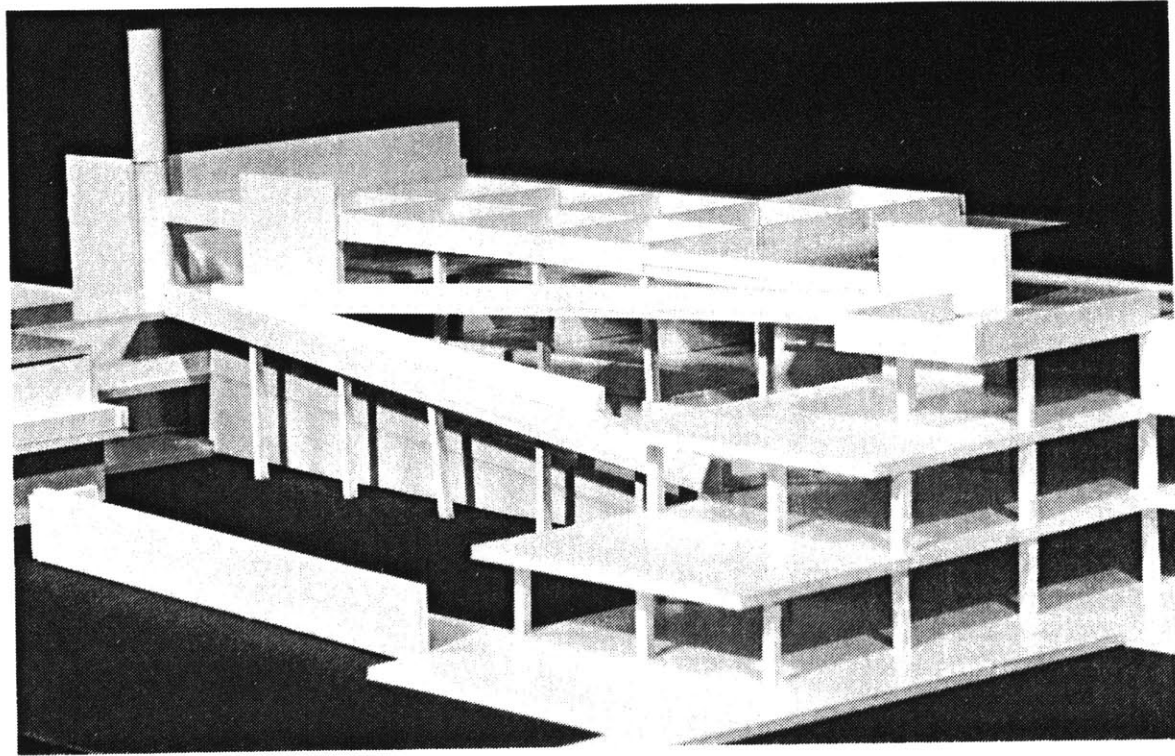
Aerial view of overall site

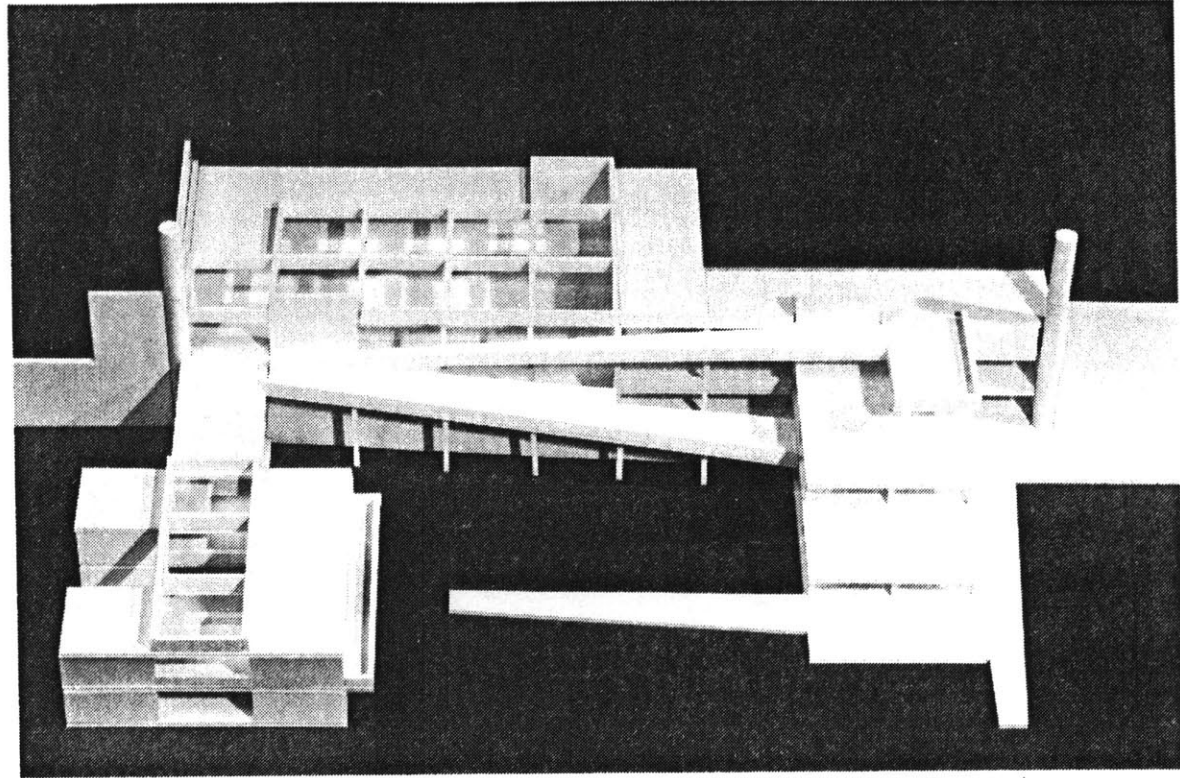


View of main entrance and ramp

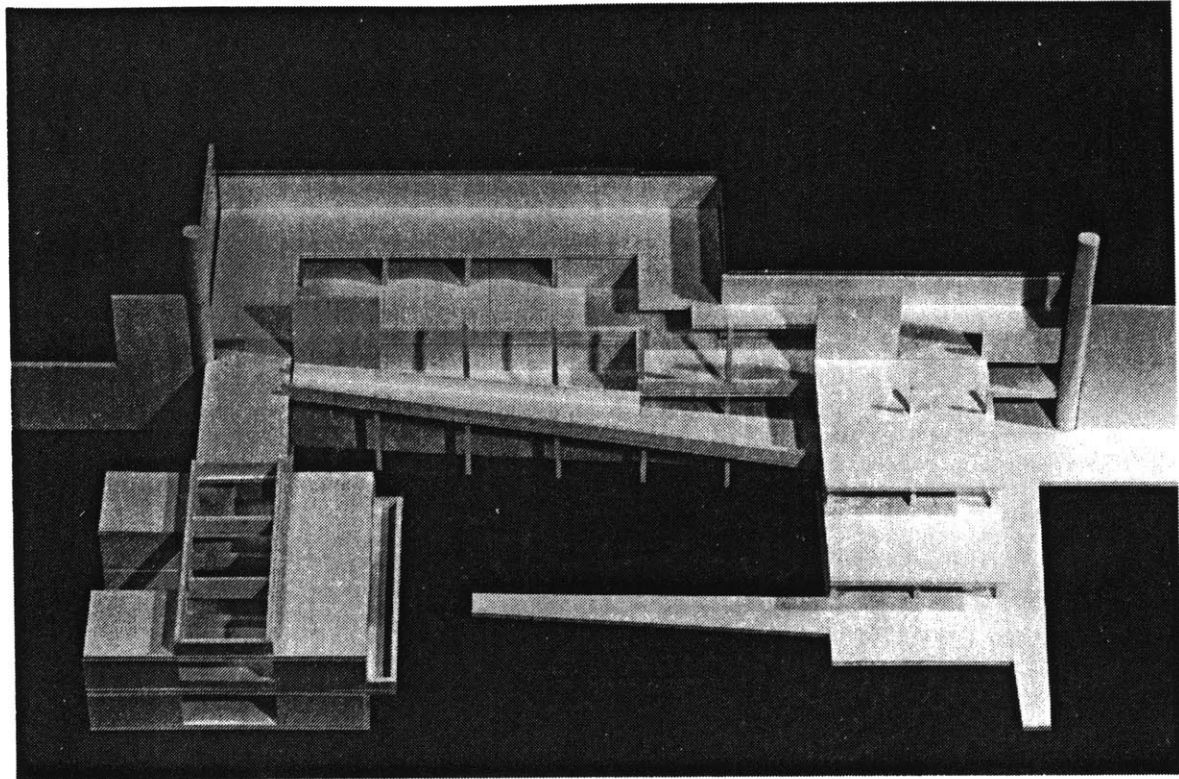


View of lobby and sculpture garden

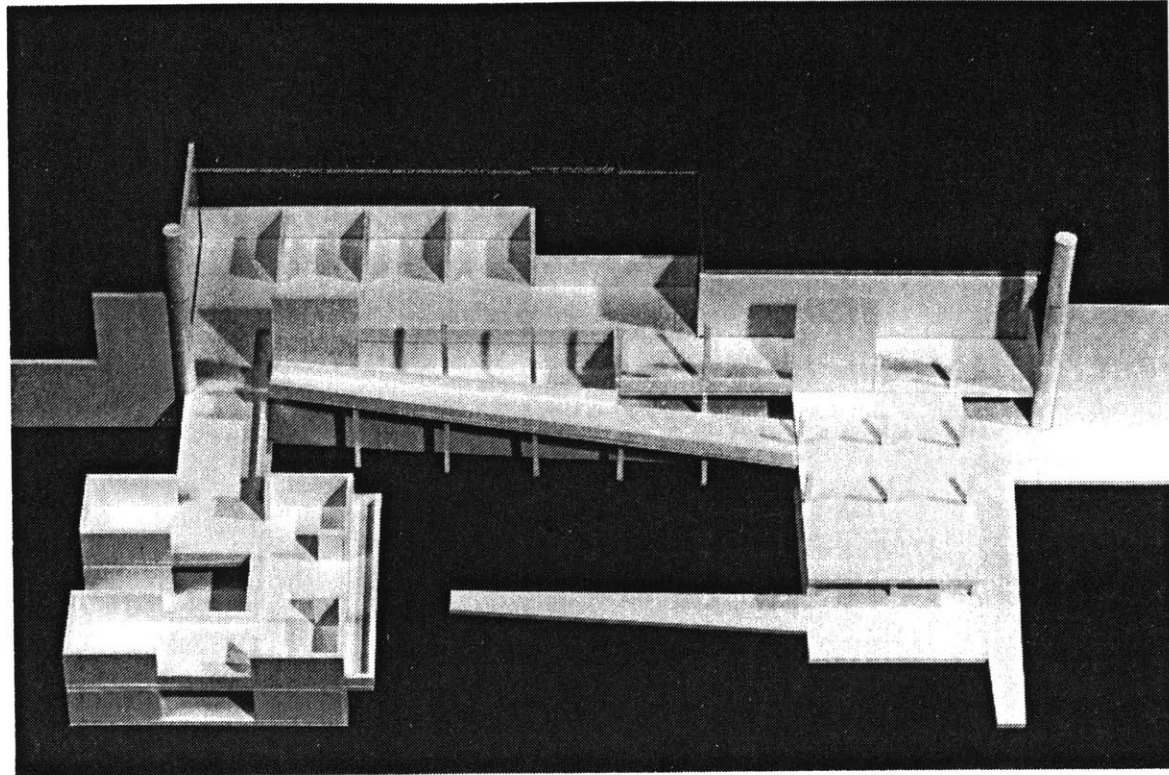




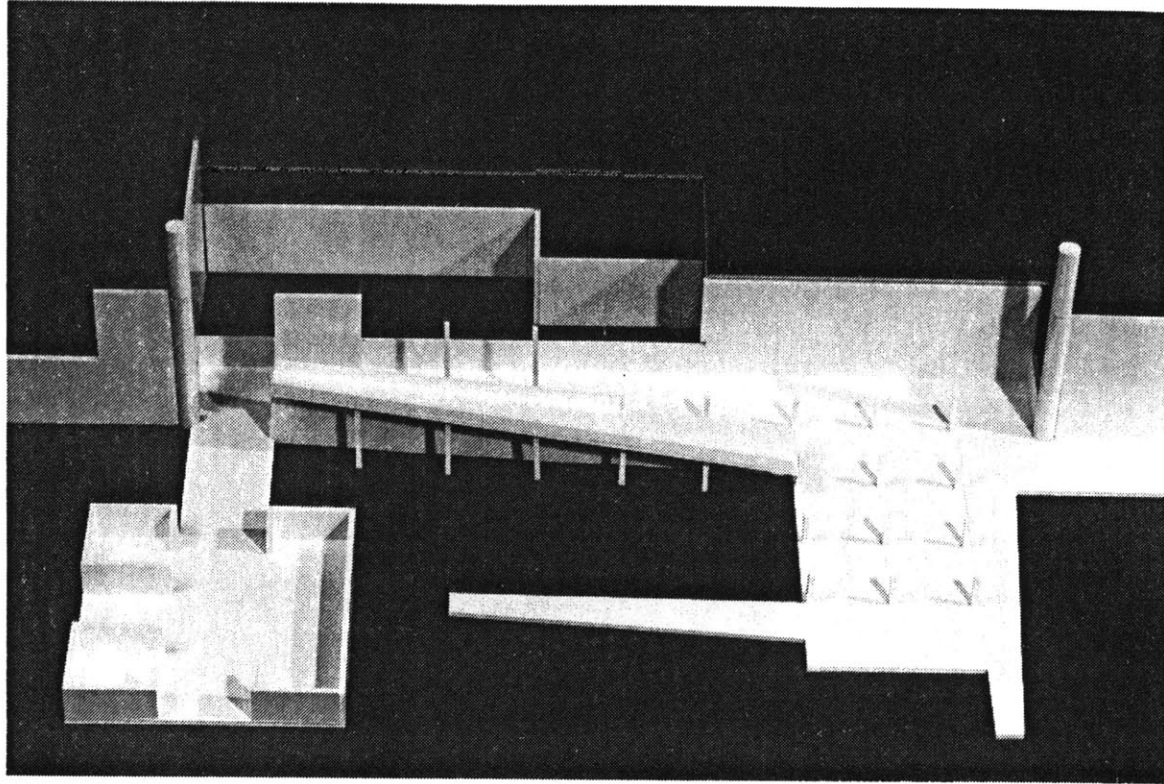
View of plaza level



Third floor gallery level

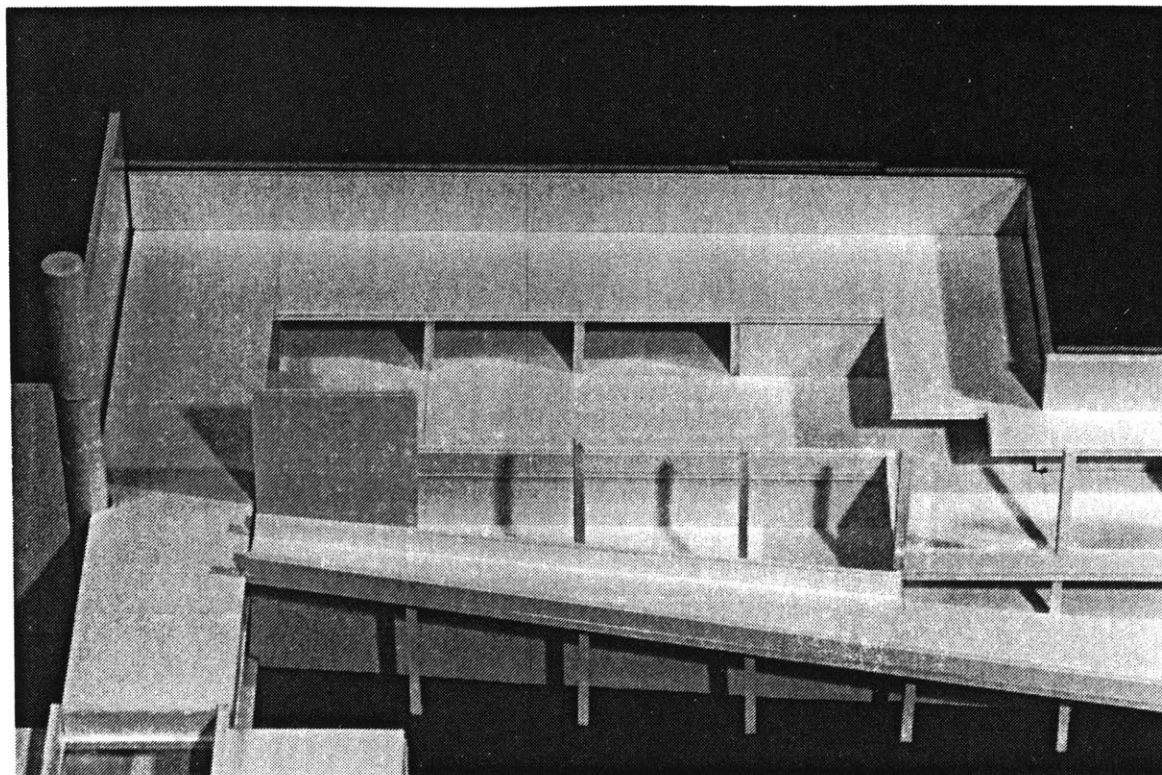


Second floor gallery level

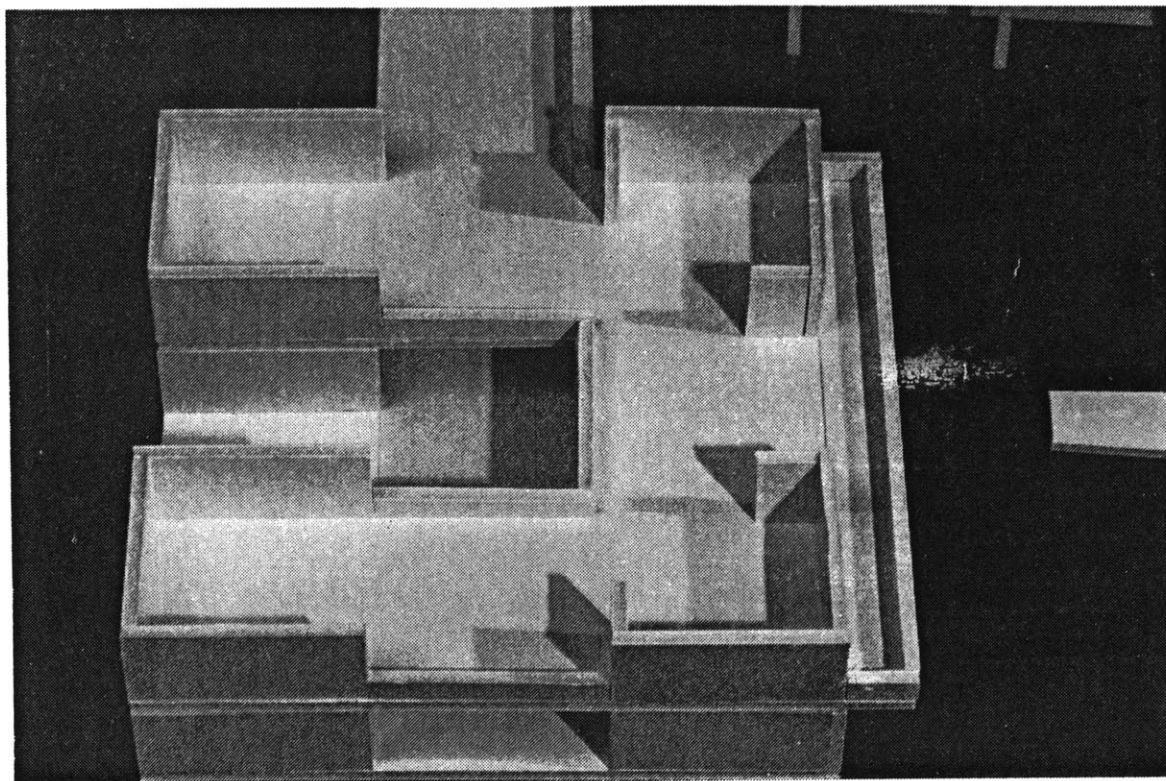


First floor gallery level and lobby

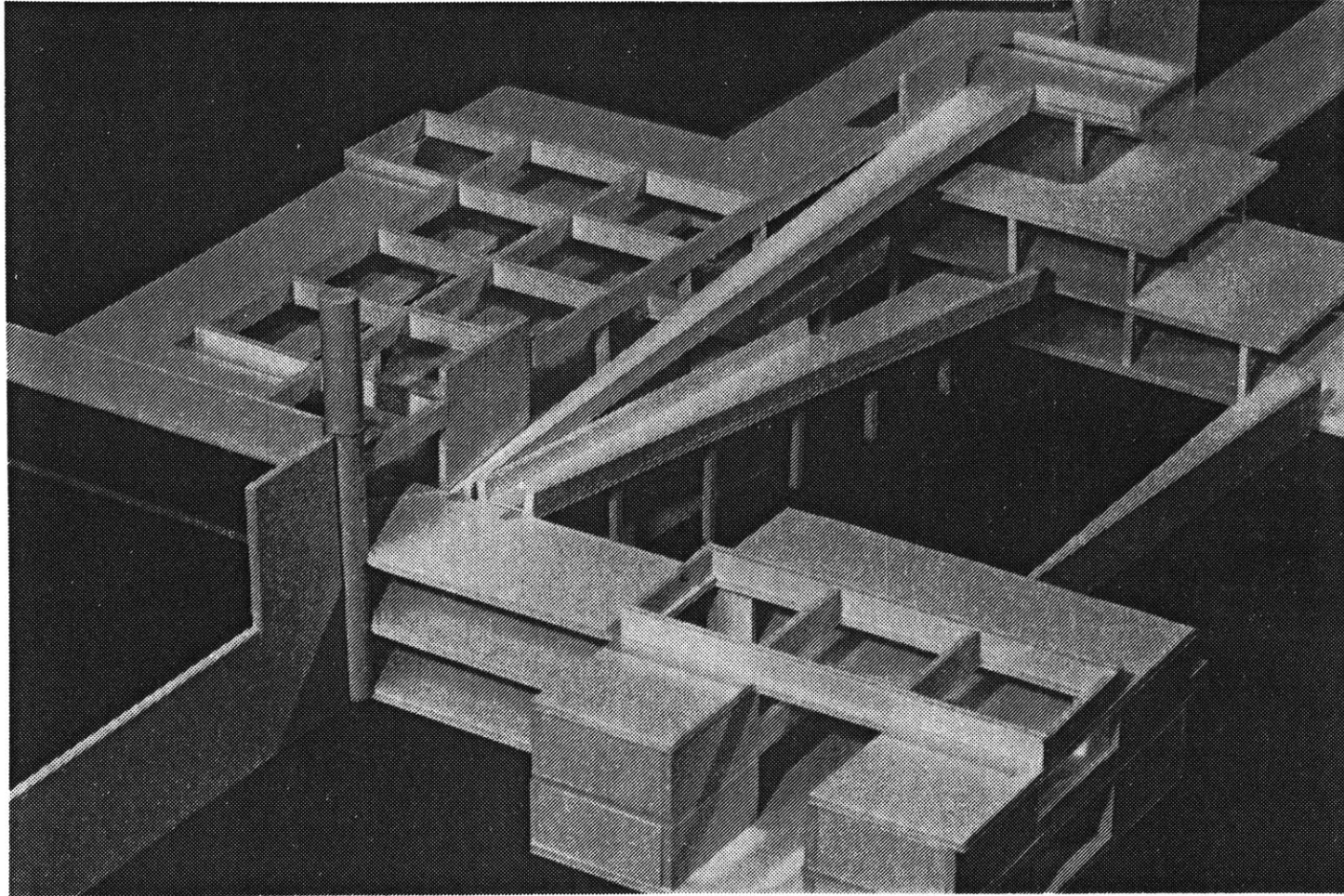
View of central space, Anthropology museum



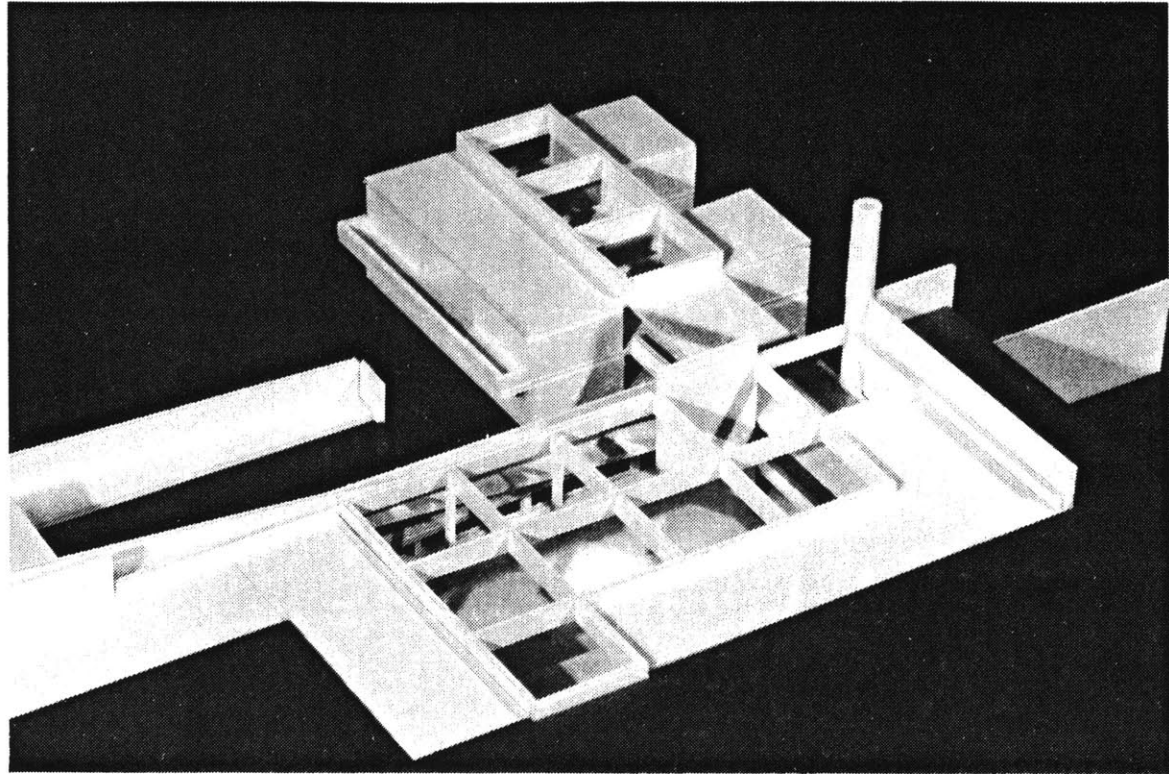
View of central space, Art museum.



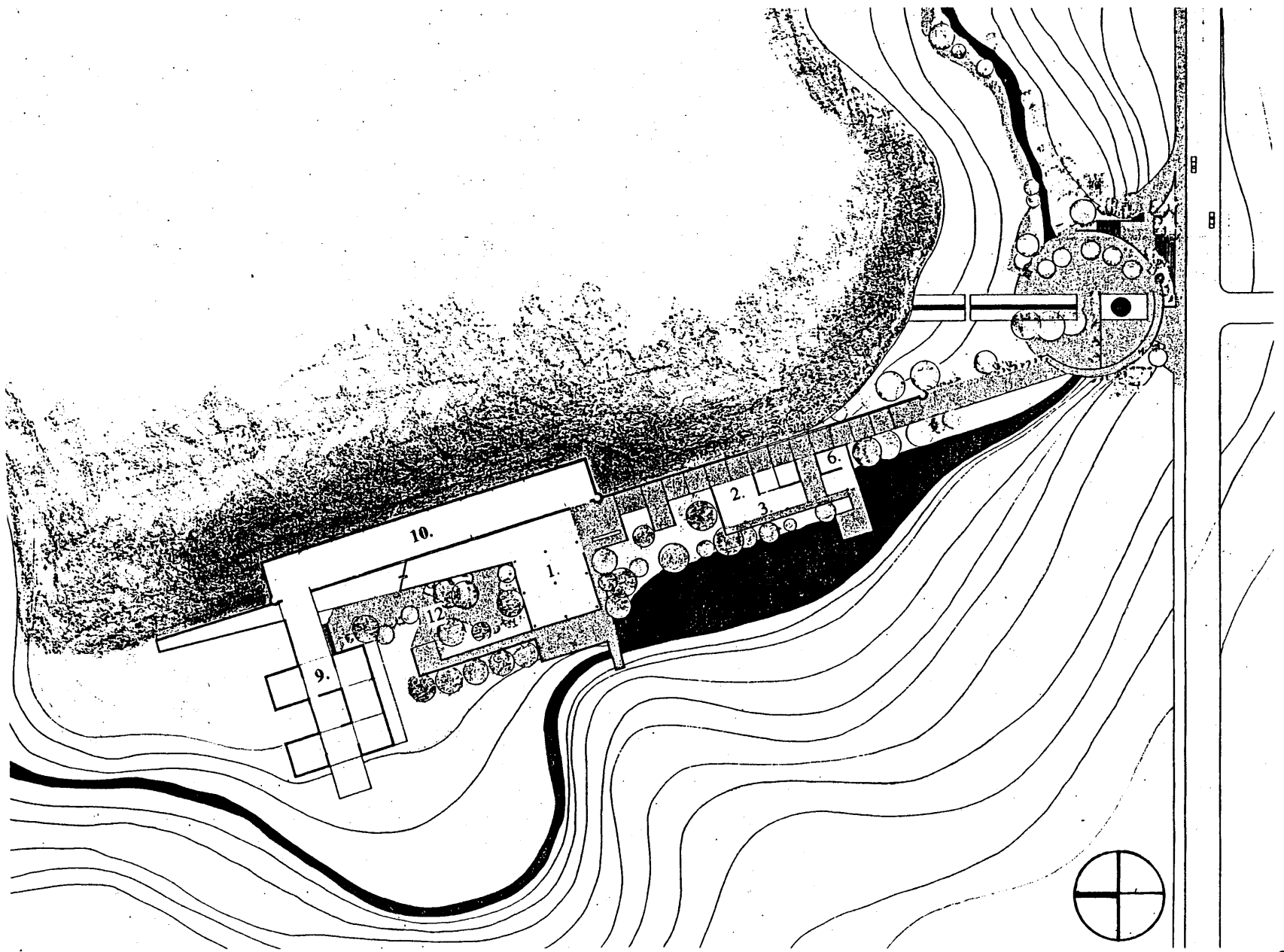
Overall view



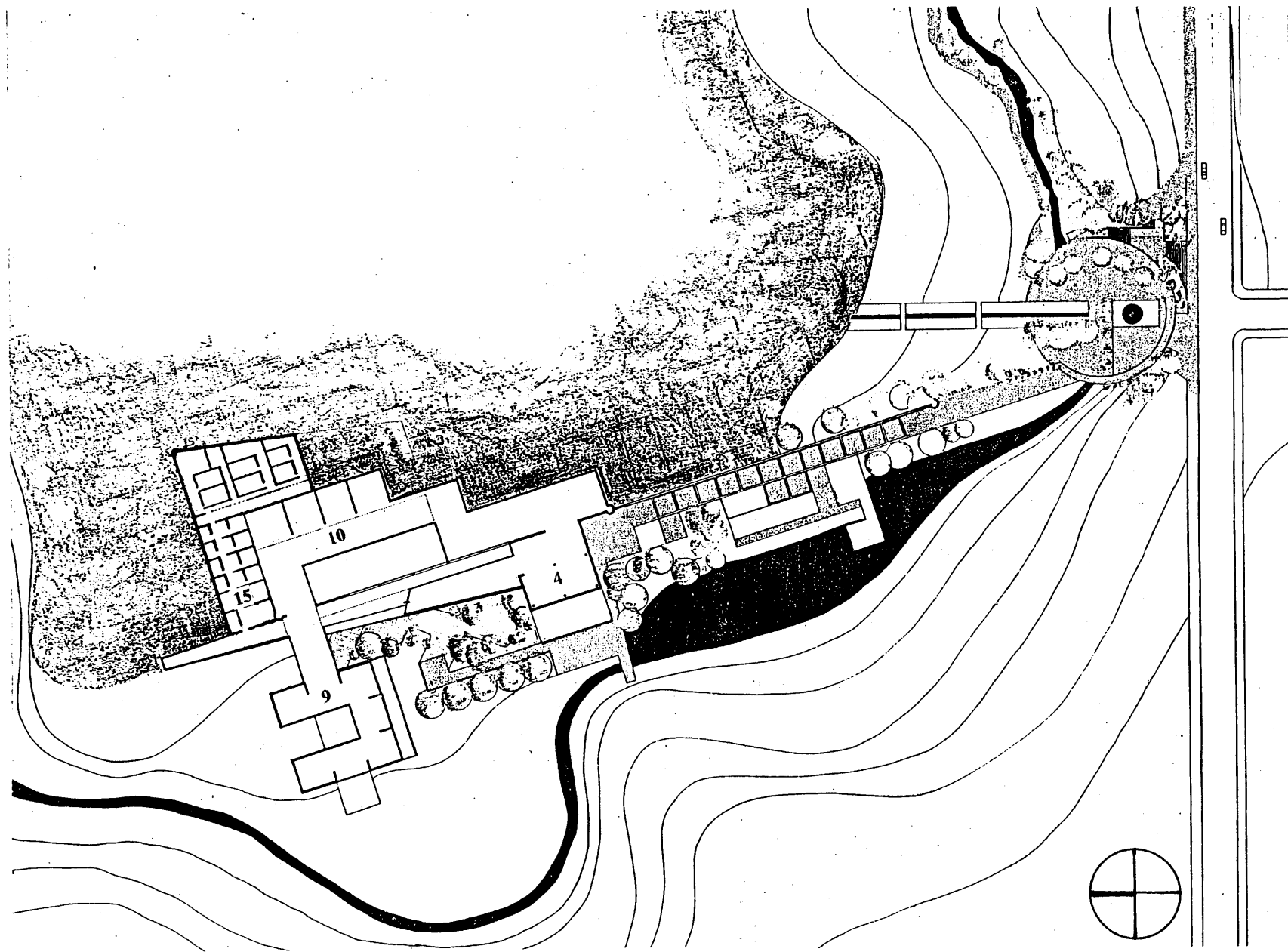
View of main gallery from hill



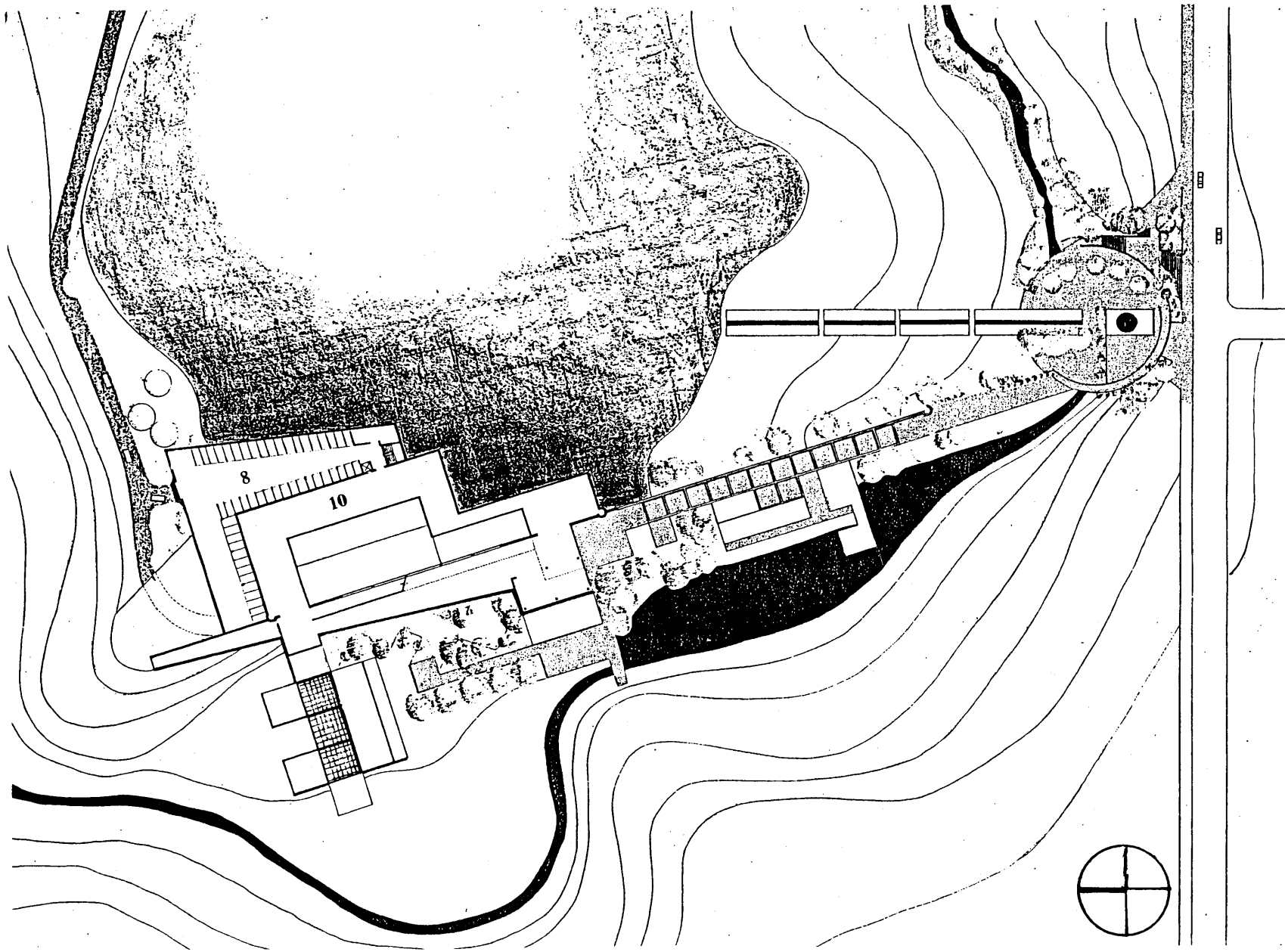
First floor plan



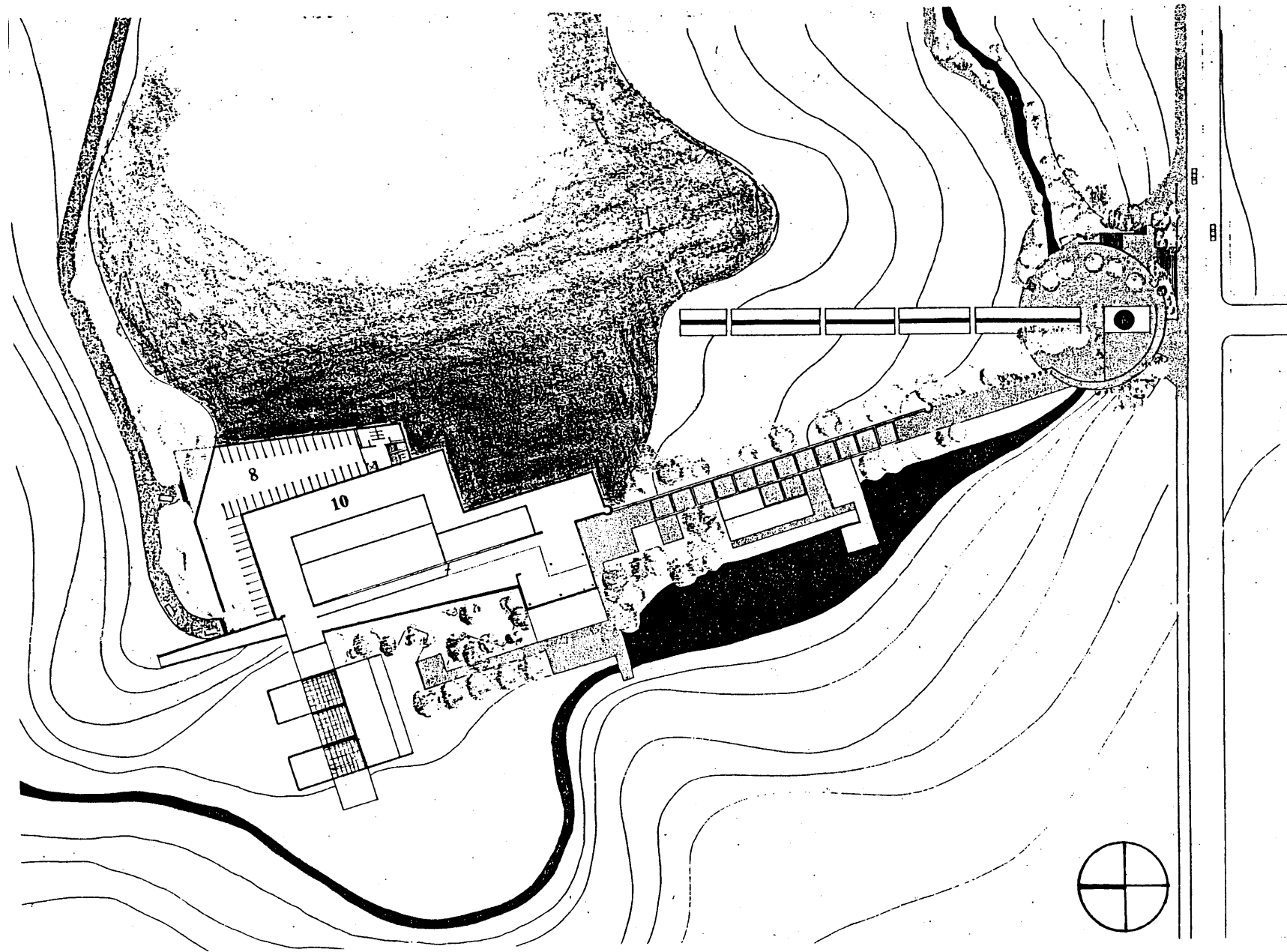
Second floor plan



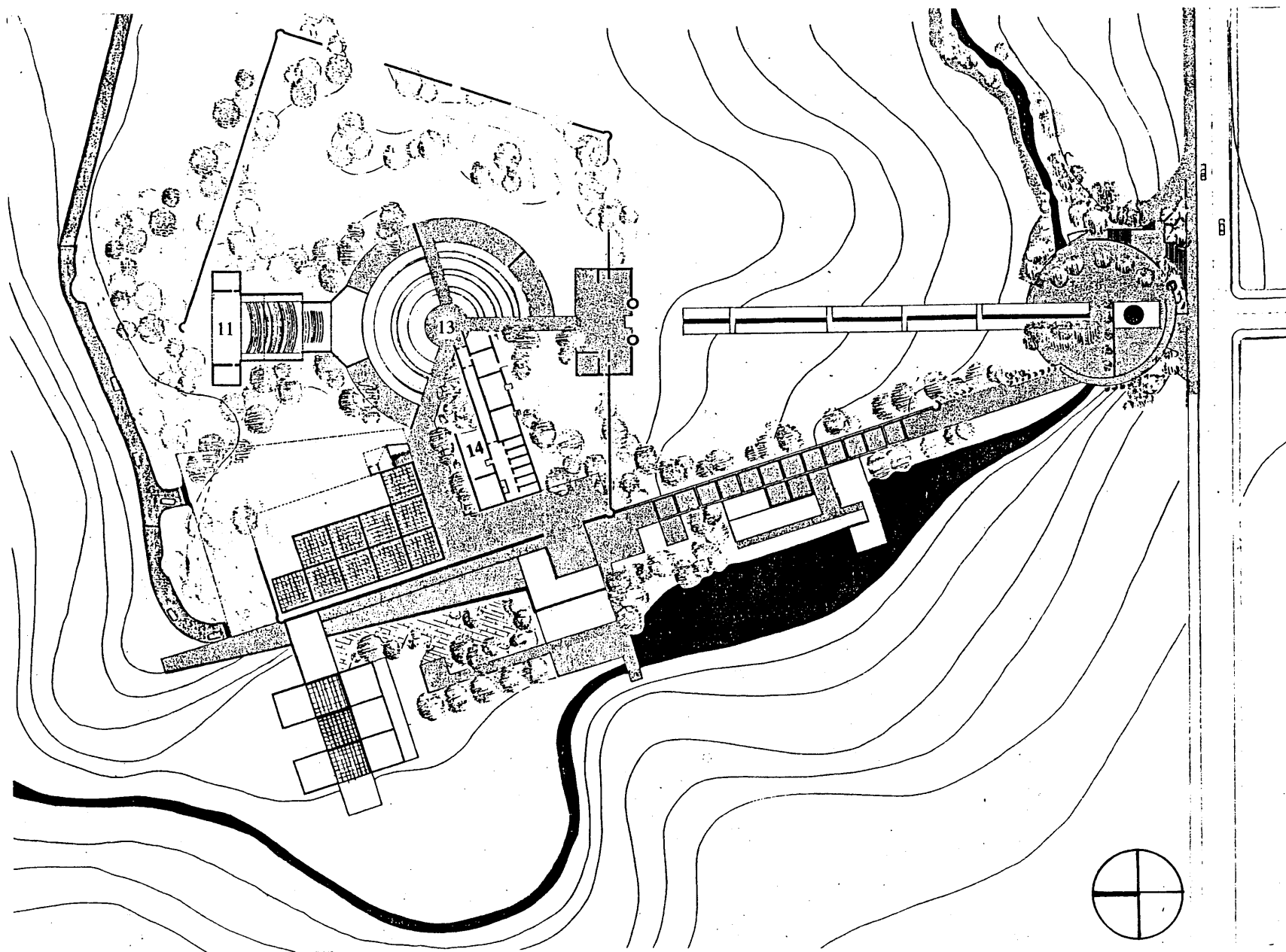
Third floor plan

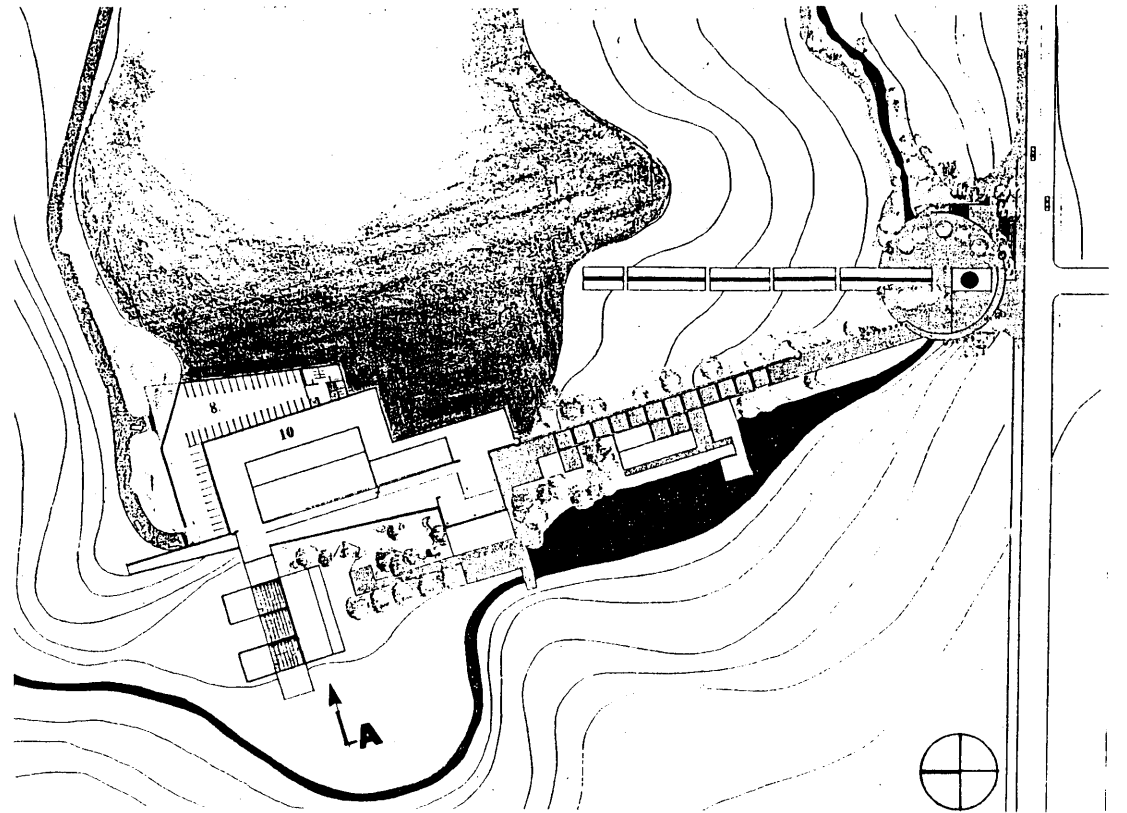


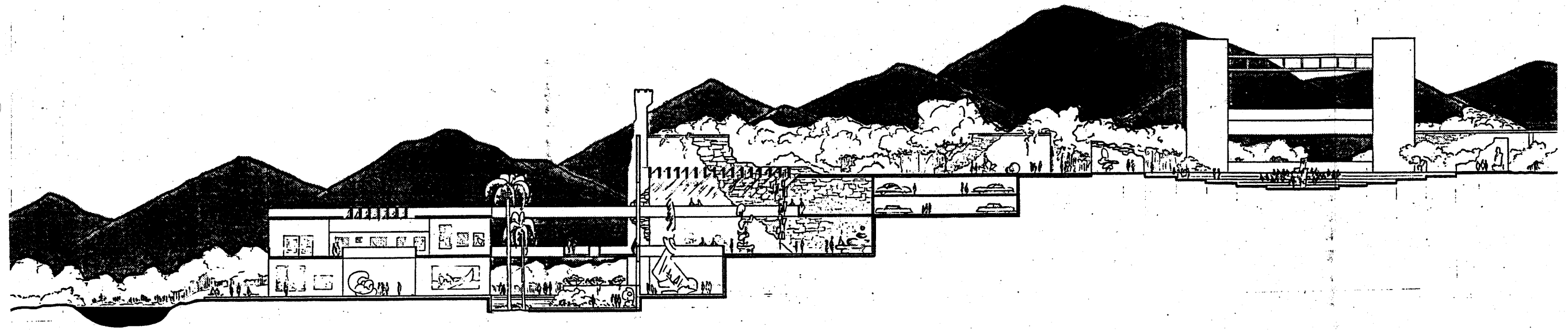
Third floor plan and upper level parking



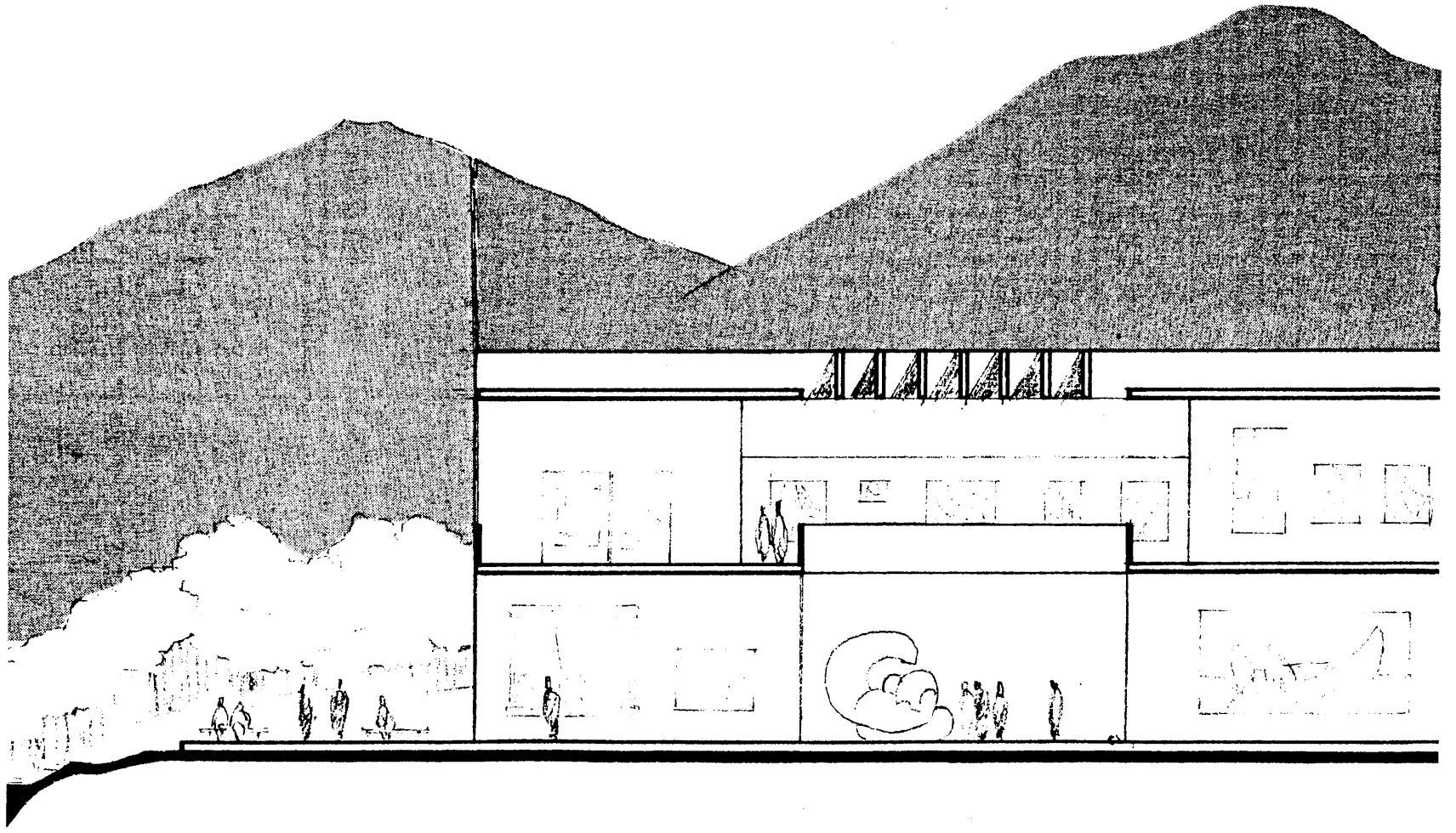
Plaza level



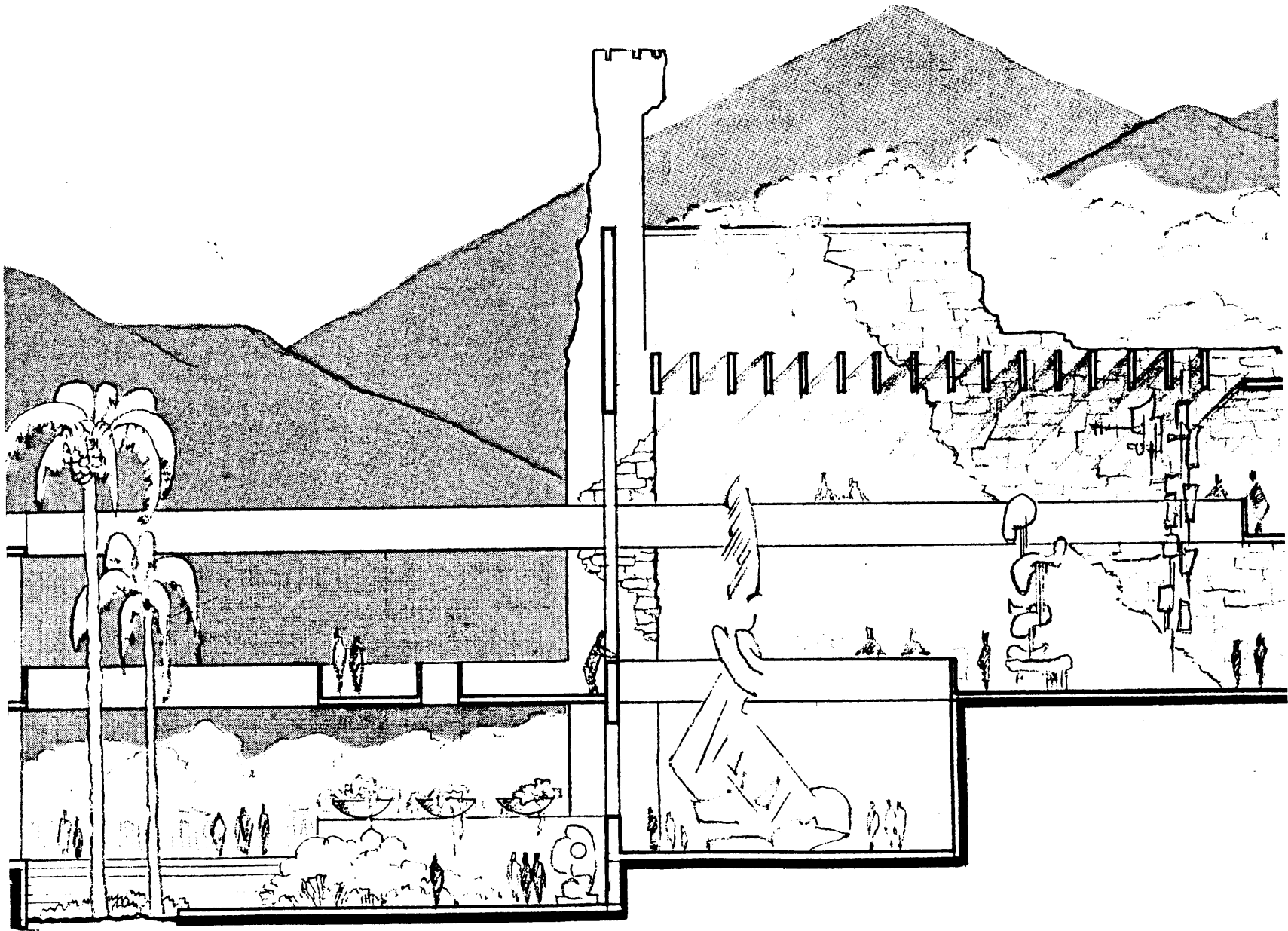




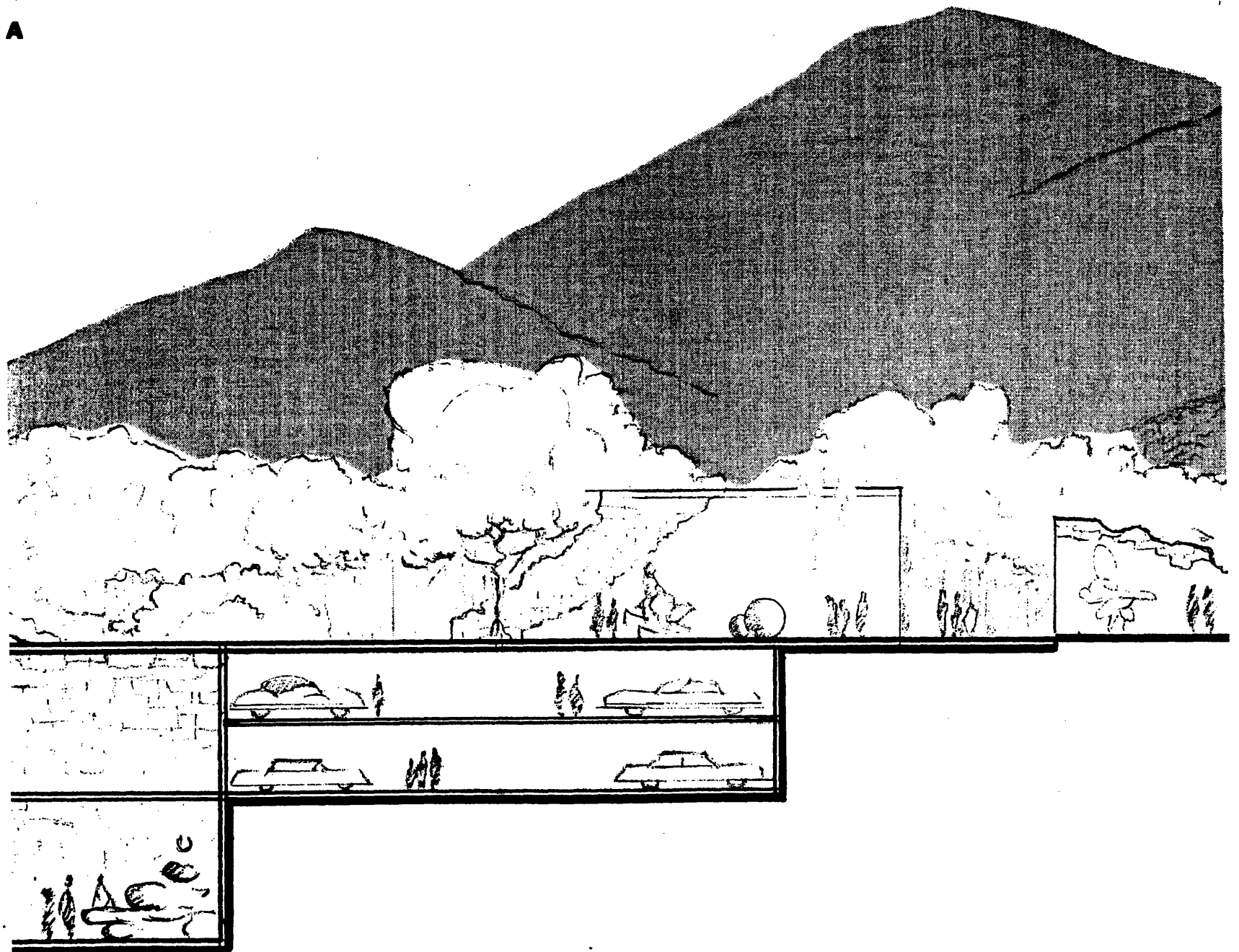
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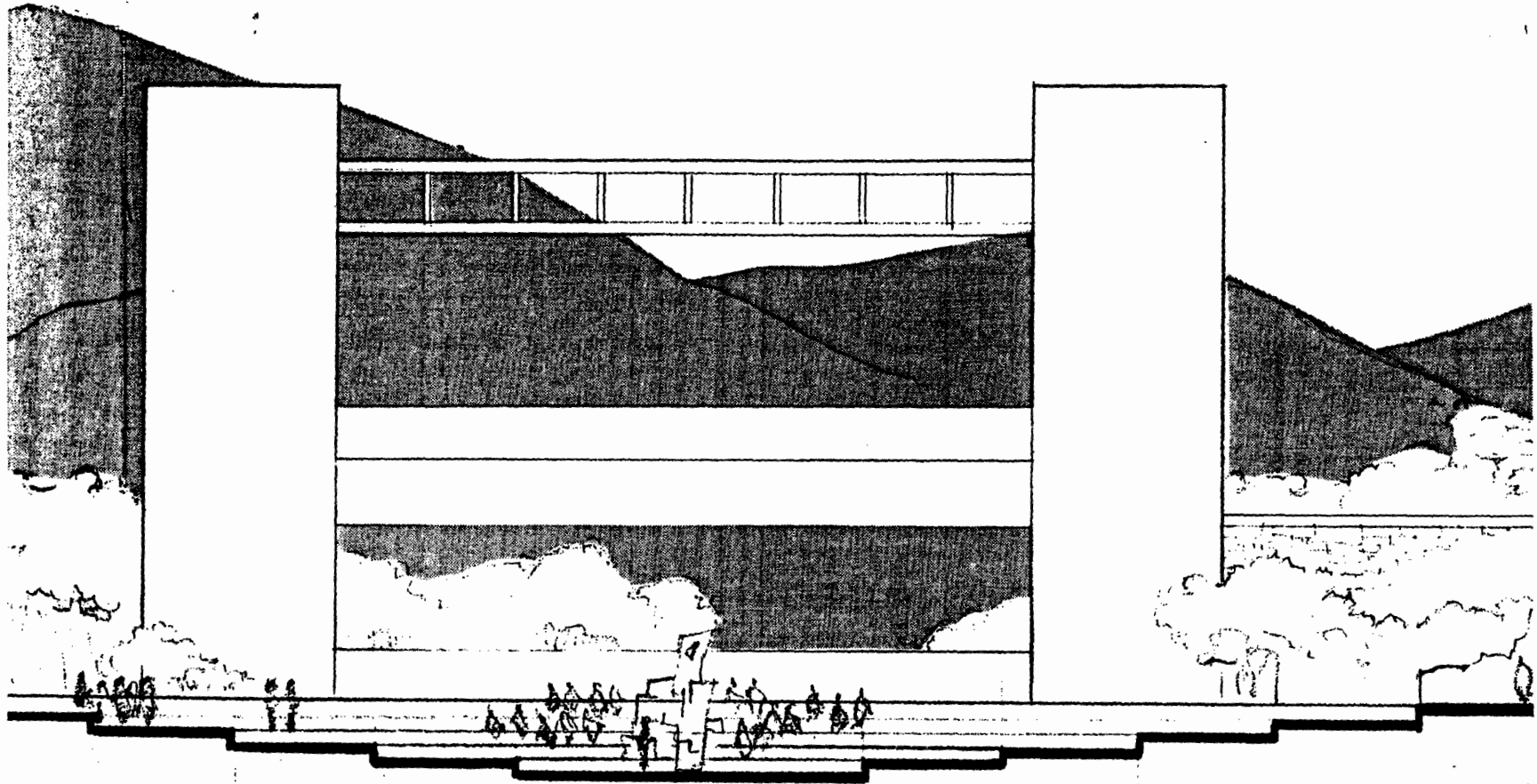
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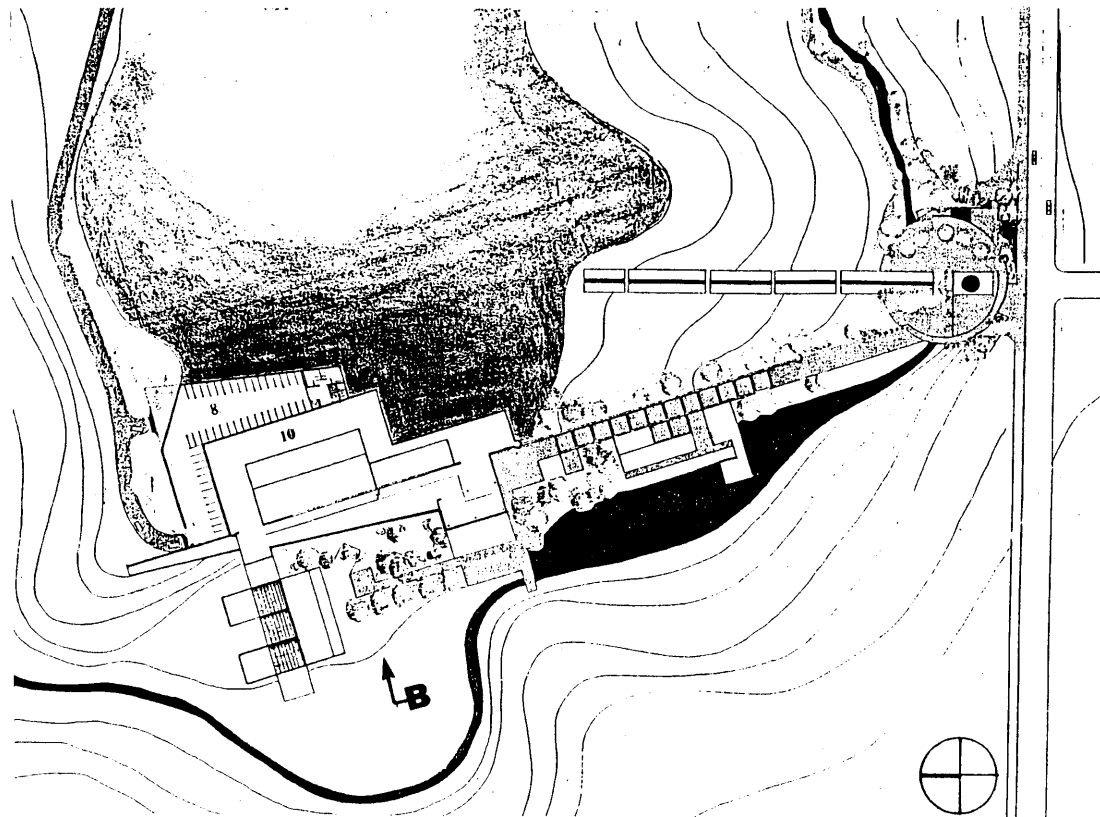


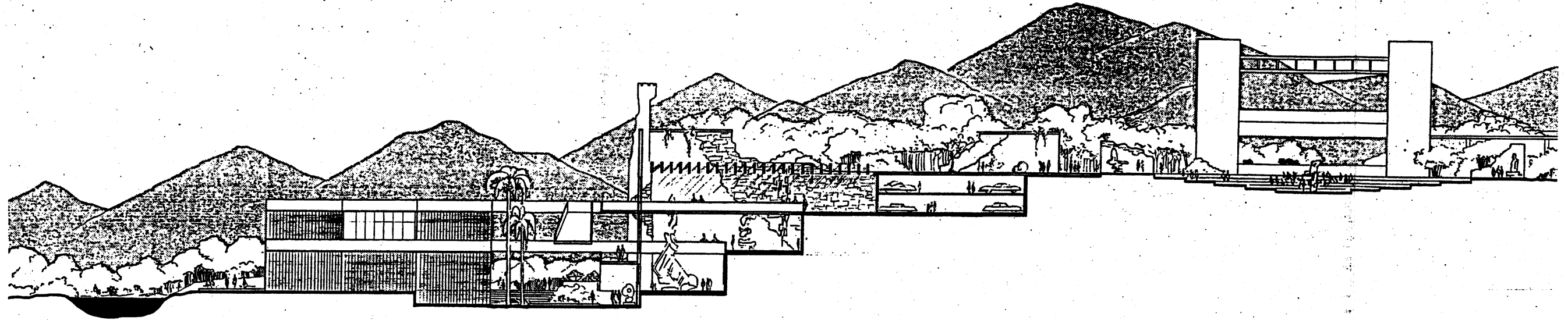
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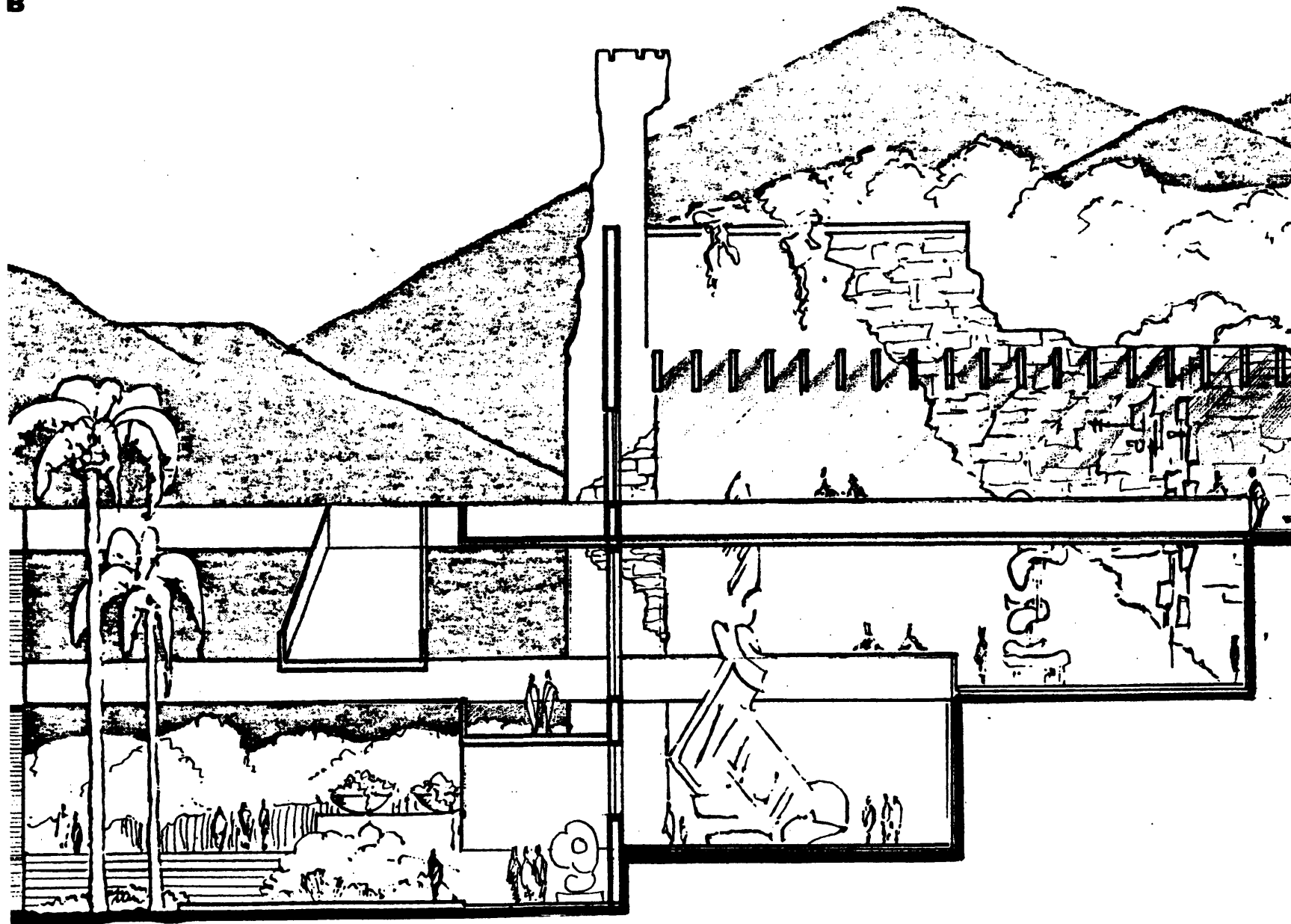
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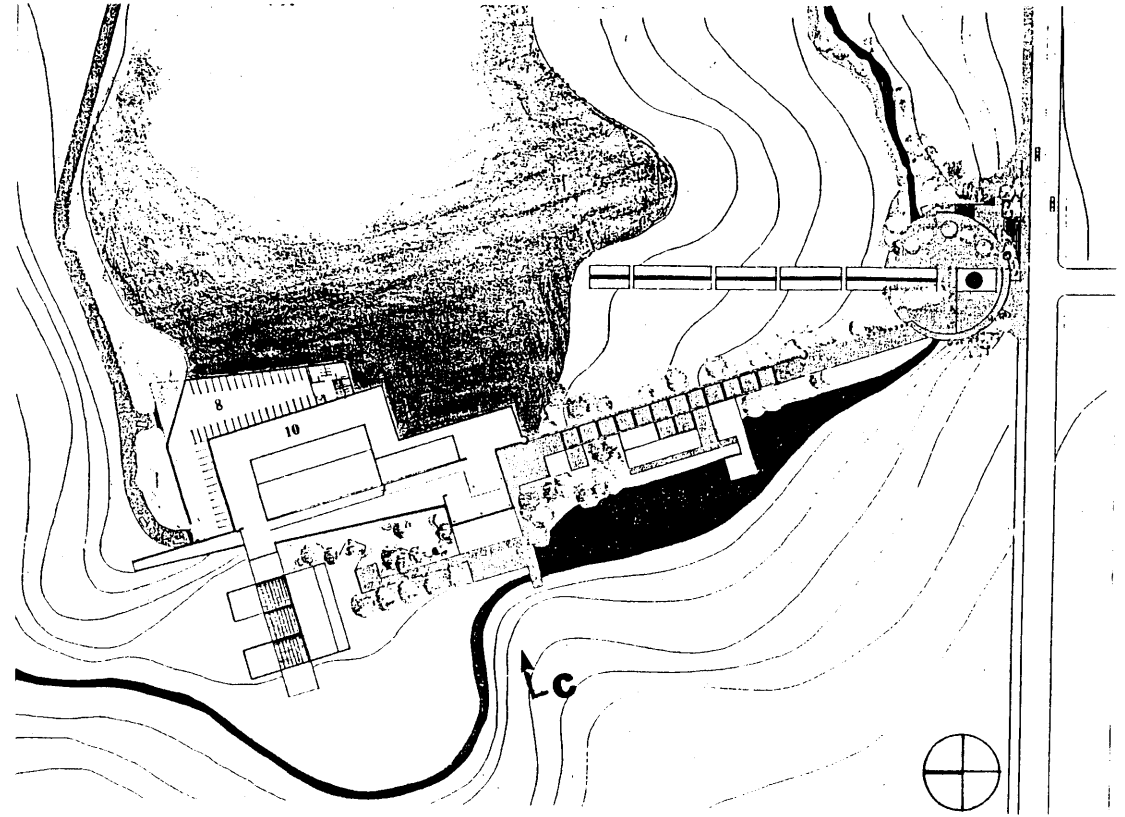


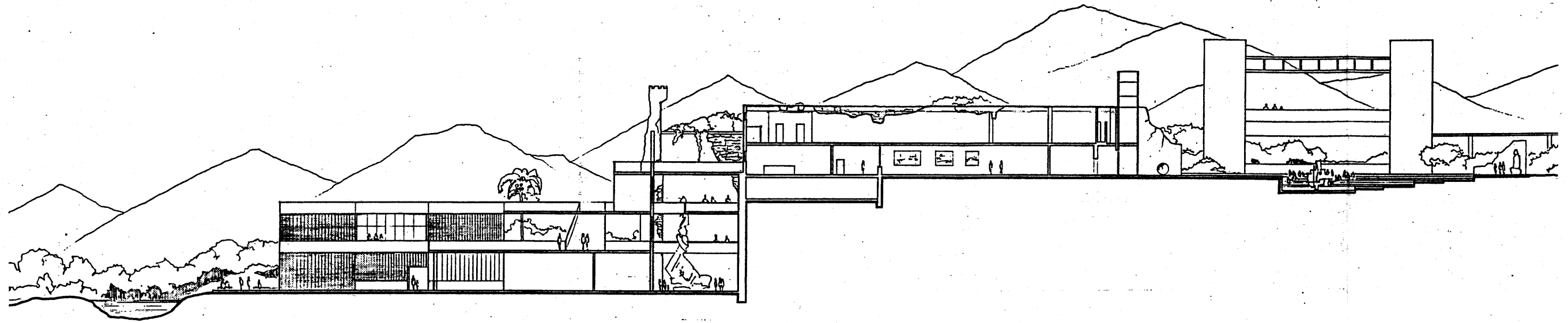




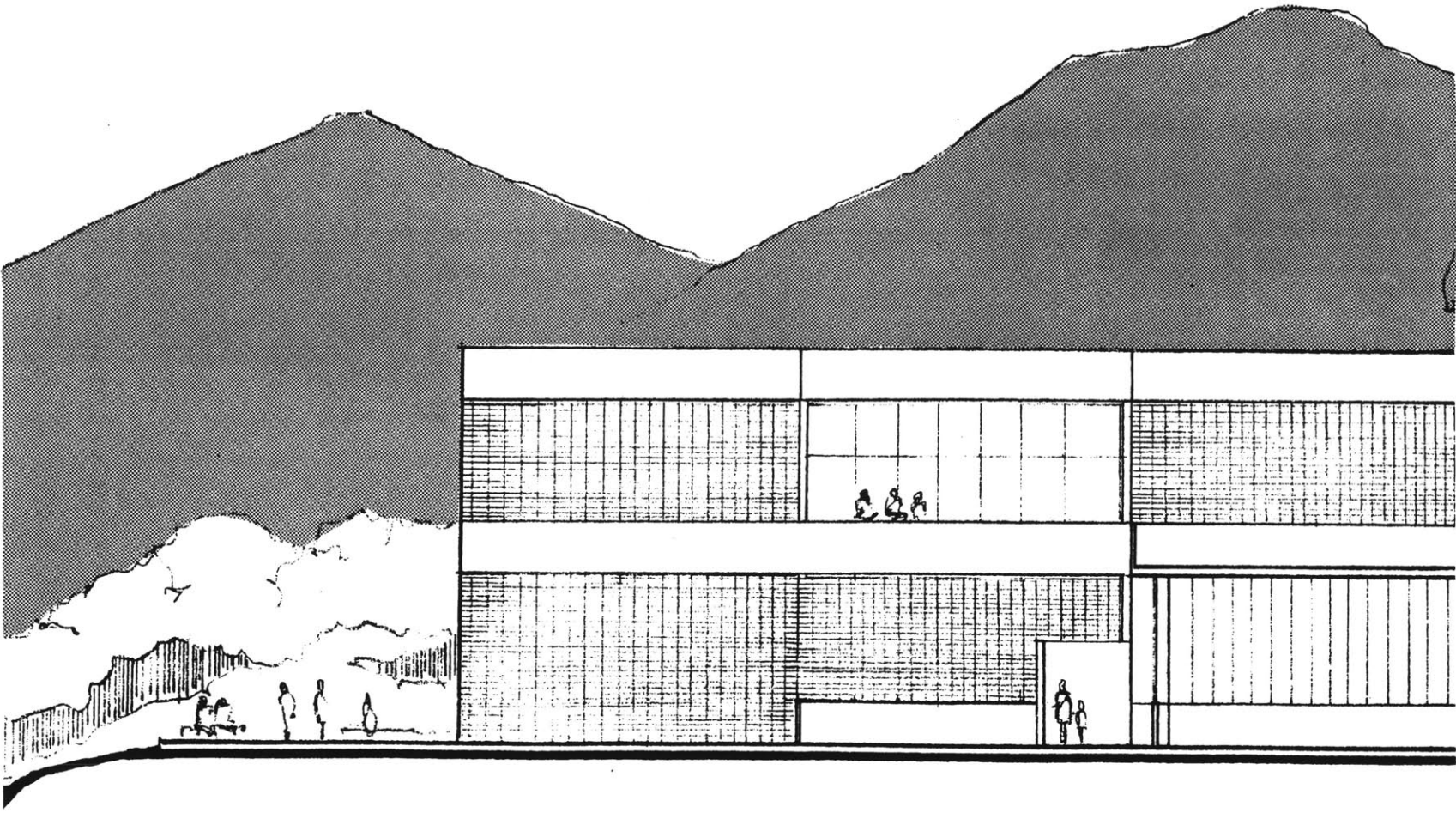
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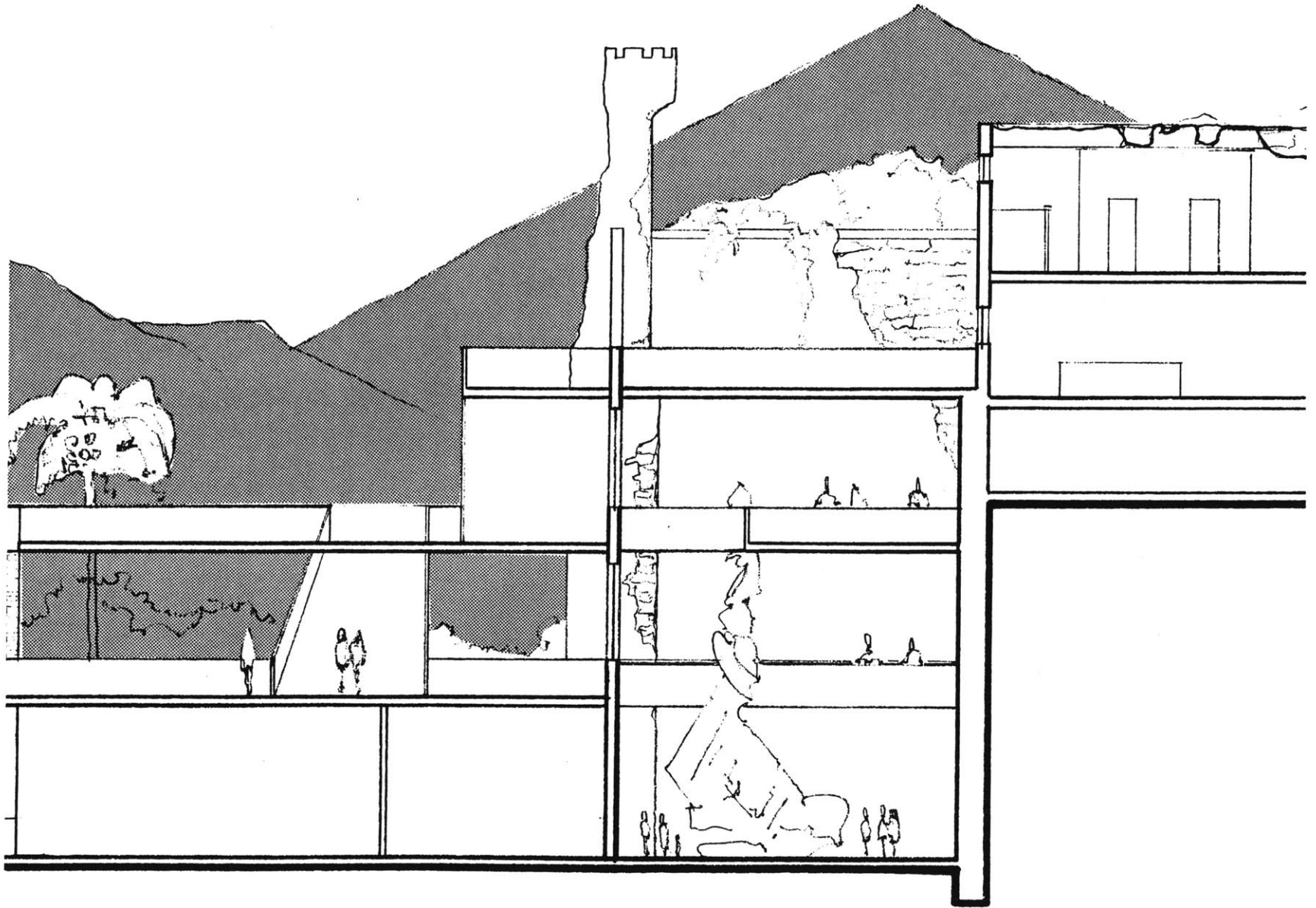




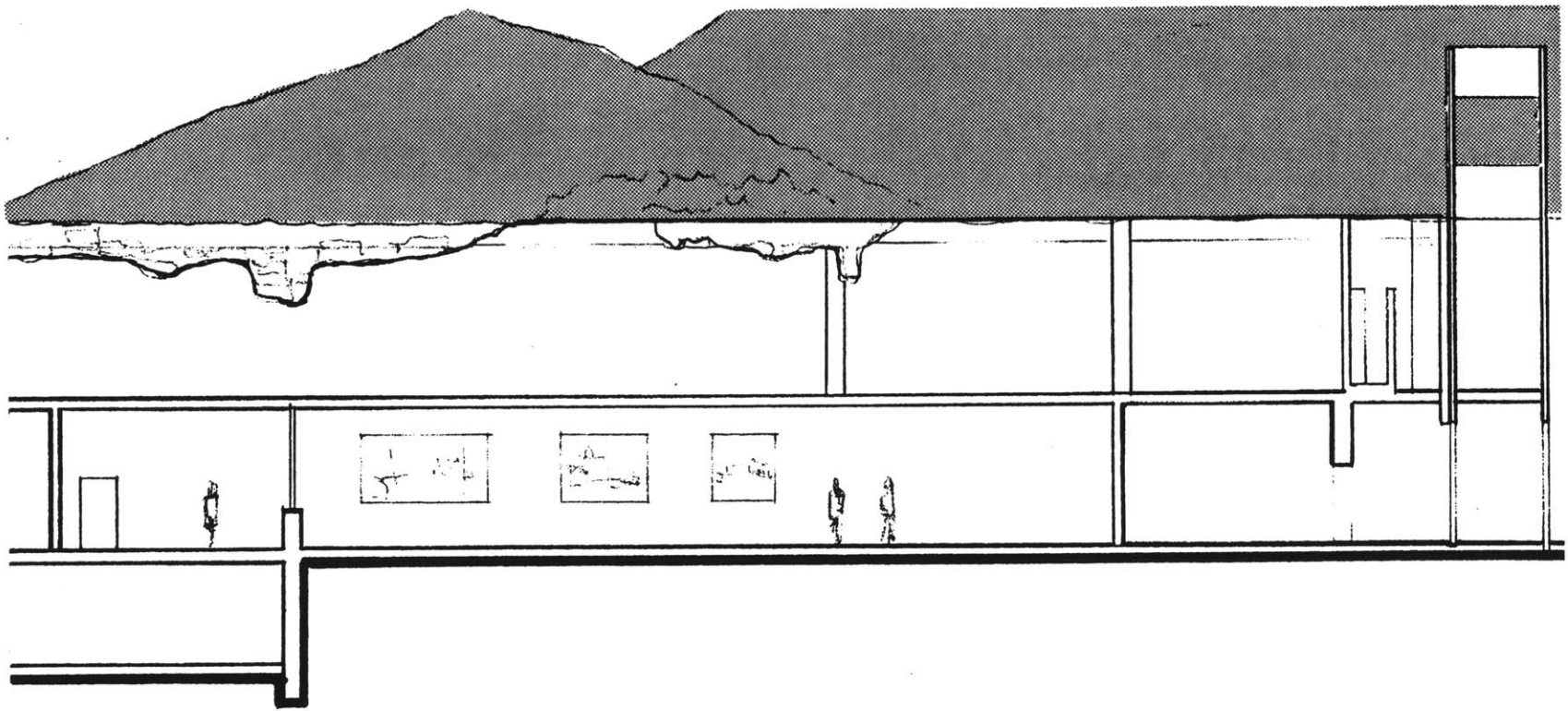
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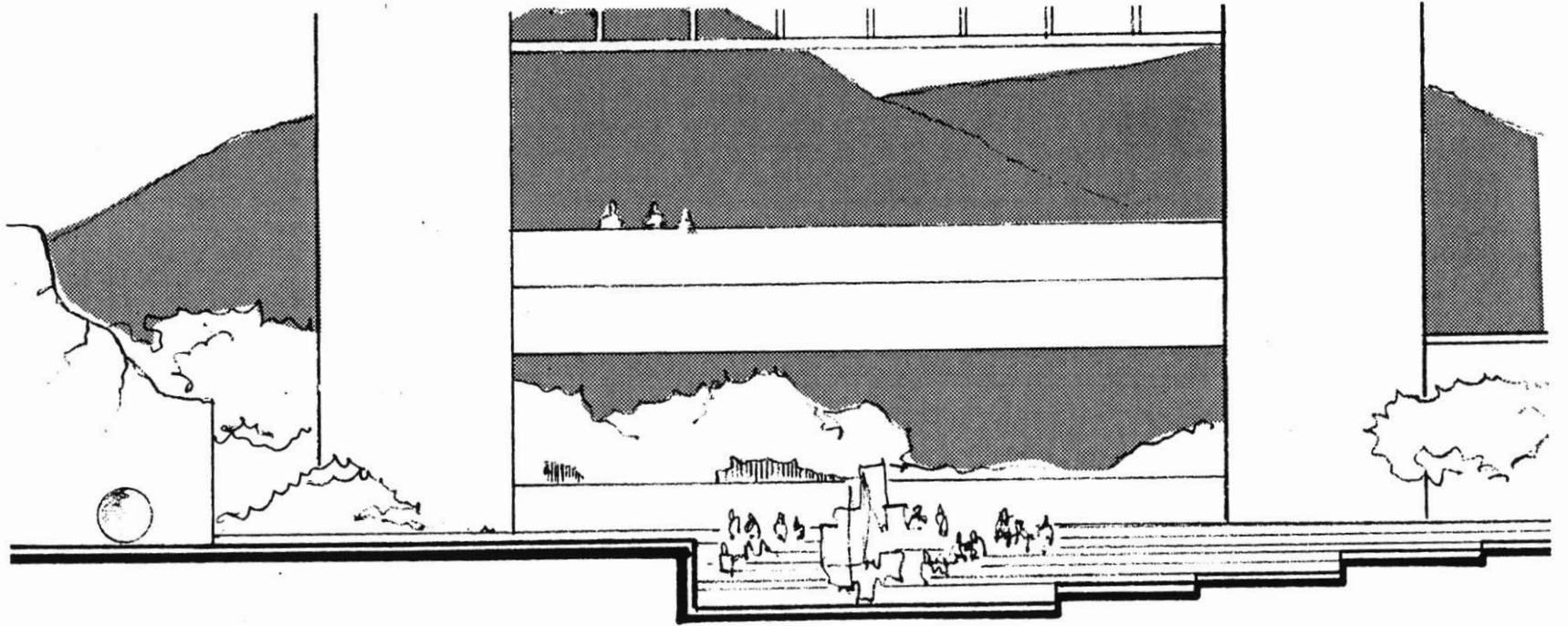
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**" The end of all our exploring will be to arrive at where we started and know
the place for the first time ".**

T.S. Eliot

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