

ARCHITECTURE THAT INSPIRES FANTASY:

Narrative and Design Explorations

by

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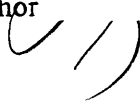
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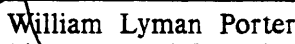
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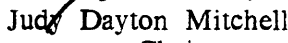



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**Architecture that Inspires Fantasy:
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by
Laurie E. Friedman

Submitted to the Department of Architecture on January 15, 1987
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of
Master of Architecture

ABSTRACT

The subject of this thesis is architecture that inspires fantasy and the important role that various buildings play in helping us understand and gain insight into both the physical and social contexts in which they exist. A collection of five fantasy-inspiring buildings, constructed during different decades and in different cities will be examined. Each will be the subject of both a short story revealing one viewer's fantasy, and a critical analysis that reflects upon the story by discussing specific building characteristics that spark the viewer's imagination. From these narrative studies will emerge design criteria and strategies for architecture that inspires fantasy to then be utilized in a design of a restaurant for the nuclear age.

Thesis Supervisor: William Lyman Porter
Title: Professor of Architecture and Planning

CONSTRUCT

An exploration is to be launched. It begins in various towns and cities throughout the country and into several special buildings. From these buildings, the journey will take us to familiar worlds to which we may never have traveled, then leave us at the fringes of Technology Square in Cambridge, Massachusetts...

To my family --

my parents,

& Michael and Richard --

whose support and encouragement help me realize many of my fantasies.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project has materialized from the energy and enthusiasm of many who both directly and indirectly were involved with it. I wish to express my deepest appreciation to everyone who has contributed, and especially to a few special people:

Sandy Isenstadt - whose love of learning is the inspiration behind this project. Thanks for your patience, for the time spent discussing the material with me, and especially for helping me keep everything in perspective.

Michael Gorski - who probably taught me how to draw perspective. Thank you for your insight into architecture during the past 5 years. Our casual discussions regarding the topic of this project have been enlightening and have helped me to better understand my intentions.

Catharine Verhulst - my reader and former T.A. who painstakingly and thoroughly read through my proposal and the material both contained and not contained in the following pages. Thanks for pointing me in many positive directions.

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Michael Friedman and Curtis Casewit - Thank you for editing and critiquing my writing.

Gary Cleff - who accompanied me on my quest to find fantasy-inspiring architecture. Thanks for understanding when, at times, I was in a world separate from that of the car in which we traveled.

The members of Bill Porter's Fall 1986 studio - who provided a welcome deviation from my work.

Sterling McMurring and Laurie Reed - Thanks for bringing the legend of Coyote Bill to Boston.

Suzanne DelaPorte - the Orange Julep connection. Thanks for reconfirming that the world outside of school actually exists and for just being there.

Most of all, I wish to thank **Bill Porter**, who believed in this project from its very inception. His insight, devotion to educating, and wonderful sense of humor have opened up many new worlds to me.

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World of bovine imposed upon gift shop.

ONE BUILDING, DIFFERENT WORLDS

BUILDINGS THAT INSPIRE FANTASY

"If everything is fantastic, nothing is fantastic."

--David Clayton

"On Realistic and Fantastic Discourse"

In a building that inspires fantasy, we are presented with one architectural composition that displays the confluence of several realistically-based worlds within which we can interact both physically and emotionally. These worlds are expressed by cues, which are visual signals to the viewer to begin a specific activity. One of the worlds which is always present in a building is that of the pragmatic, comprised of cues that communicate the normal functions of the building, as well as the appropriate activity to take place within. Thus, we perceive a building as "restaurant," as "house," or "office tower."

The unexpected presence of other worlds upon a building is the characteristic which differentiates a fantasy-inspiring building from the others around us. An unexpected world is made up of cues incompatible with those belonging to the pragmatic. It contrasts with the surrounding environment, it is peripheral to the operations of the building, and it reacts to events and common ideas at the time of execution. For example, the Seagram Building in New York City does not prompt fantasy, having ornamentation that expresses only its method of construction, communicating to us no more than "office building." It is self-referential. The Chrysler Building also expresses "office building;" yet, its ornamentation refers to a world of automobiles and assembly lines.

When the unexpected world intrudes upon the otherwise conventional building in an otherwise consistent surrounding environment, it becomes more conspicuous and readily isolated. We must now perceive it in its new context, and give it new identity and meaning by consciously searching our well of knowledge. According to Jerome Bruner, familiarity

paves the way for active association.¹ And if that association is meaningful, depending upon the historical and environmental context in which it occurs, we are transported to another place -- we engage in fantasy.

"The real supports the fantasy, the fantasy protects the real."

---Jacques Lacan

To appreciate the nature of fantasy-inspiring buildings, how they become meaningful and memorable, it is appropriate to draw the analogy between such buildings and Bilbo Baggins, the protagonist in the classic fantasy novel, *The Hobbit*.² With Bilbo, we fantasize his world in Middle Earth, his encounters with dragons and dwarves, and other types of creatures and events that could not possibly take place in our own world. But what enables us to participate in Bilbo's adventures is his character, which is made up of virtues we uphold and the emotions that we have all experienced in our lifetimes. He can be complacent with his very settled life; he can become agitated if that life is disrupted. He can show cowardice; he can demonstrate bravado. And these characteristics become outstanding, more meaningful because they are realized in a new context: not on a human being, but on a hobbit, whatever we imagine that to be.

These buildings, like Bilbo, are meaningful and thus the generator of fantasy. Whereas Bilbo is a hobbit who has been given human attributes, a fantasy-producing building possesses characteristics that do

not seem to belong to the built world; yet, because its cues or imagery created by the cues are taken from the familiar and appear in a new context, we must make associations with objects, events, or common attitudes. Such associations make us consider and reconsider our immediate surrounding and give us new insight into our condition, thus amplifying the meaning of both the context and the conflict. The climate is now optimum for us to engage in our own fantasies that take us away, even if momentarily, from our immediate context to one that exists only in our mind's eye.

¹ Jerome Bruner. "On Perceptual Readiness." *Beyond the Information Given: Studies in the Psychology of Knowing.* (W. W. Horton & Co. Inc. New York, New York, 1973) pp. 3-42.

² Despite recent critical appreciation for fantastic literature, *The Hobbit* is still considered a children's novel by the many adults that read, and interestingly enough, enjoy it.

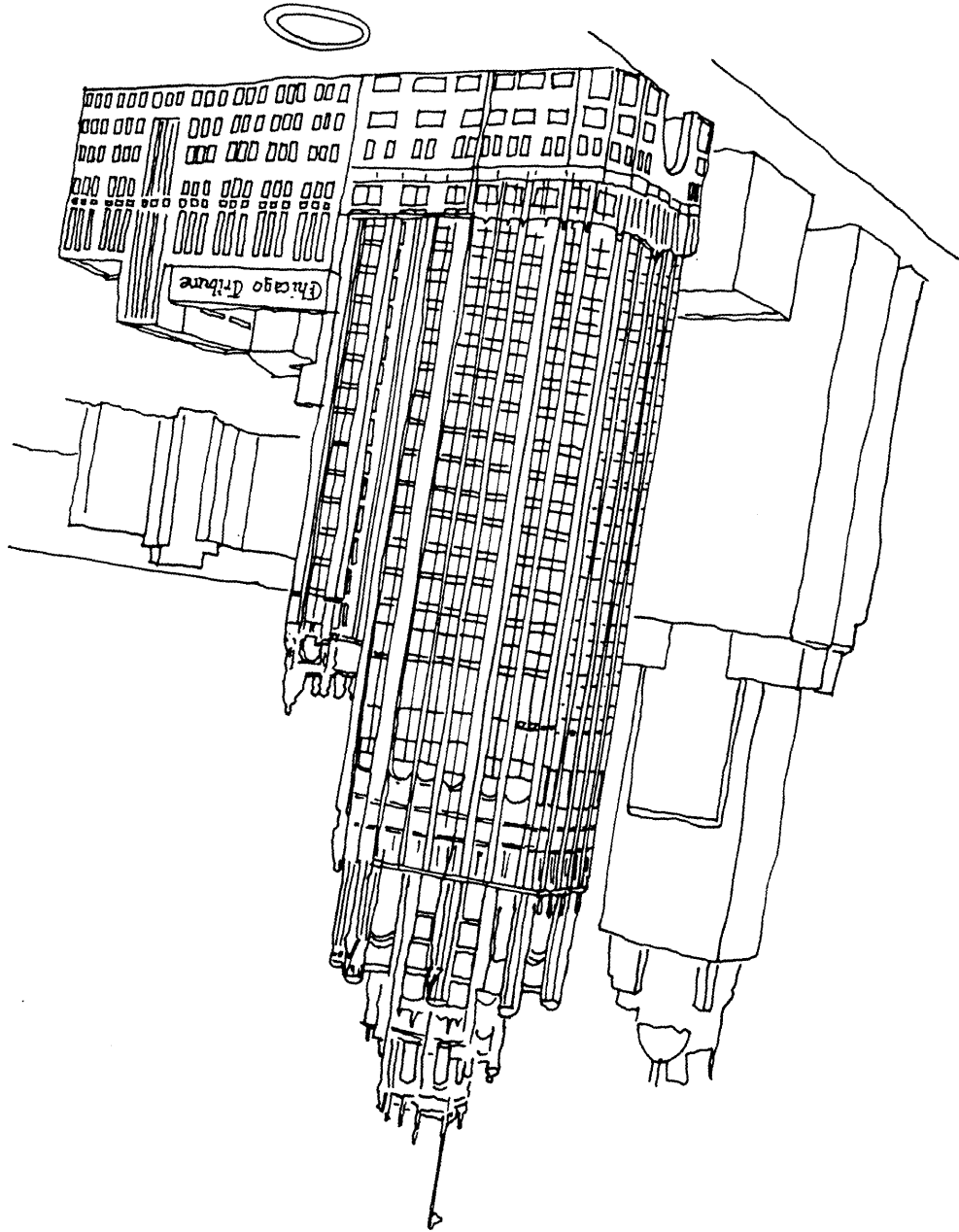


Photo by Sara Arditti

THE FANTASIES

*We shall not cease from exploration
And at the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time*

-- T. S. Eliot
The Four Quartets



CHICAGO TRIBUNE TOWER FANTASY

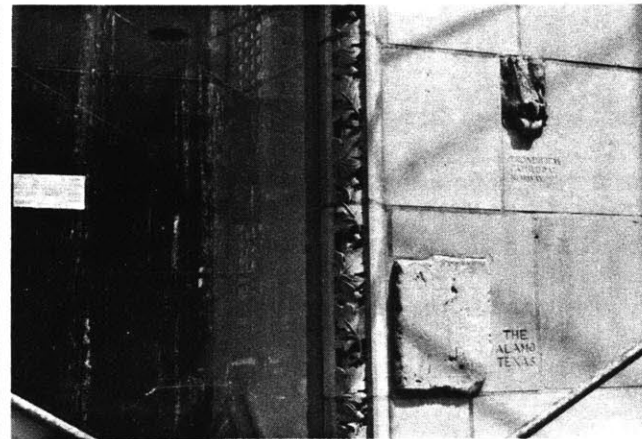
Our mission was about to begin. All of the necessary equipment was at hand: perma-bond glue and a shiny, light blue ceramic tile that had been part of a once newly-renovated facade of a corner drug store in a small midwestern town. I suppose that this type of tile, about a 1" by 1", reassured a local resident and customer that this drug store was sanitary --- tile is a surface that is easily cleaned. Sparkling clean. In the 1960's, it may have given the impression that the store was modern, stocking only the most innovative, up-to-date products. Now that the drug store was undergoing yet another facelift two decades later, the future of this tile was very uncertain. The sun had once reflected off of its surface. It had been rained upon, snowed upon, and most recently, walked upon. My plan, however, was to give the tile its place in eternity, to adhere it permanently on the Chicago Tribune Tower among the other rocks and remnants once belonging to famous buildings and monuments throughout the world.

To Randy, my partner in this escapade, the Tribune Tower represented the emergence from virtual obscurity to popularity of an architect who possessed a dream that his building design might evolve from a mere two-dimensional drawing to a tangible, almost imperceptably-scaled reality. As the story goes, Raymond Hood was so elated and overwhelmed that his entry was chosen as the winner among 263 submissions, that he ran throughout the streets of Chicago, drawings in hand, shouting, "I won! I won!"

As for myself, the Tribune Tower offered a trip around the world--to places and cultures I have never experienced, except through the pages of history books. I look up the cool, white stone facade of this Gothic Revival building, and notice the pieces of historical structures which have traveled so many miles before being embedded into this American skyscraper. My journey begins...

I am now in San Antonio, Texas. A pioneer cattle herder seeking refuge from Mexican soldiers who fervently believe that this territory belongs to their country. I breathe a sigh of relief when the earthen, starkly detailed building called the Alamo is in site. Perhaps these thick adobe walls will protect me and my family from the flaming arrows which started the blaze that destroyed my wooden home and stable. No one told us before heading out west that life in the New Frontier would be so dangerous.

Suddenly, my thoughts are drawn back over twenty centuries before, to a time when I was sent on a mission between two kingdoms in China. As I walk along the Great Wall, a sense of security fills me: it's not just that the wall protects me from the Huns on the north side, but its strong



appearance generated by the earth, stone and brick from which it's made, assures me that a trace of my culture will last beyond this instant, my lifetime. I am free to enjoy this moment, to absorb the mountains that cut sharply the morning's bright, blue sky.

Further west, I am a worker of the great Mogul emperor Shah Jahan, who has commissioned a monument to be built in honor of his late wife, Arjumand. In his grief, I am told, he summoned a council of architects from India, Persia and central Asia to design this mausoleum. Along with 20,000 other workmen, we work daily, in the rain or heat, so that this monument will be completed within the next ten years. The sun is beginning to set and my body tires from lifting and placing materials, such as red sandstone and pure, white marble, that come from all over our country and central Asia.

Now in Egypt, I am an ancient astronomer whose curiosity is aroused nightly when, in total darkness, I see miniature sun-like objects. As time transpires and the weather changes, I notice that these objects change position in the sky. We have been building this pyramidal structure for

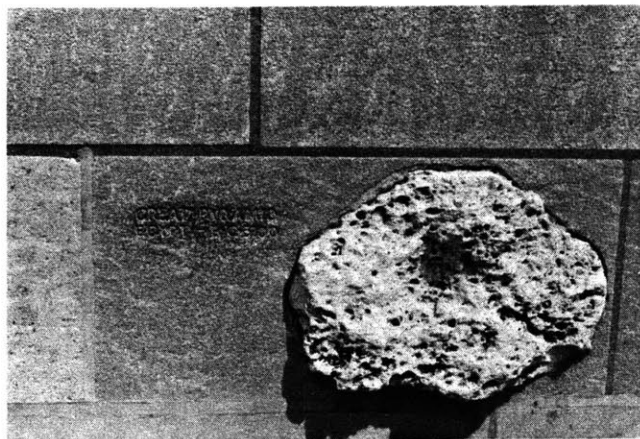


many years, its construction enabling me to observe this phenomena as I now come closer to the sky. Through the polished corridors, I can see a single star if only for a while. Moving upward, I finally arrive at a fairly large space that has very sharp top-edges so that I can see the stars as they pass over. Soon, however, this space will be roofed over.

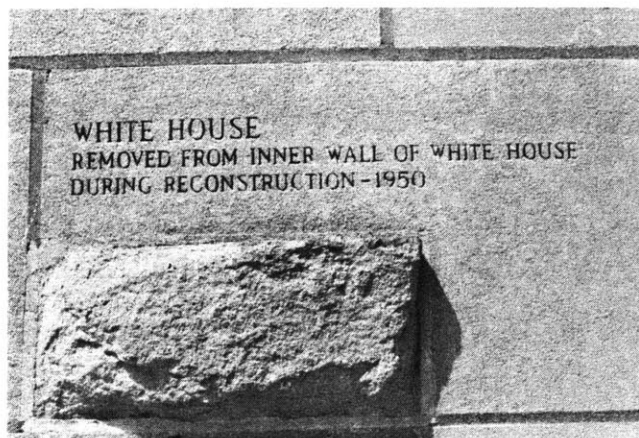
Back in the States, I'm now in Washington, D.C., in the White House, to be precise. Many images pass before me -- like the time President Taft, the largest president ever, became stuck in the bathtub. Or, Calvin Coolidge sneaking down to the basement every evening taking inventory of such items as pencils to make sure that nothing was missing that shouldn't be. It is hard to imagine that this building narrowly missed total destruction in 1814 after the British attempted to burn it down during the War of 1812. It was saved by a thunderstorm.

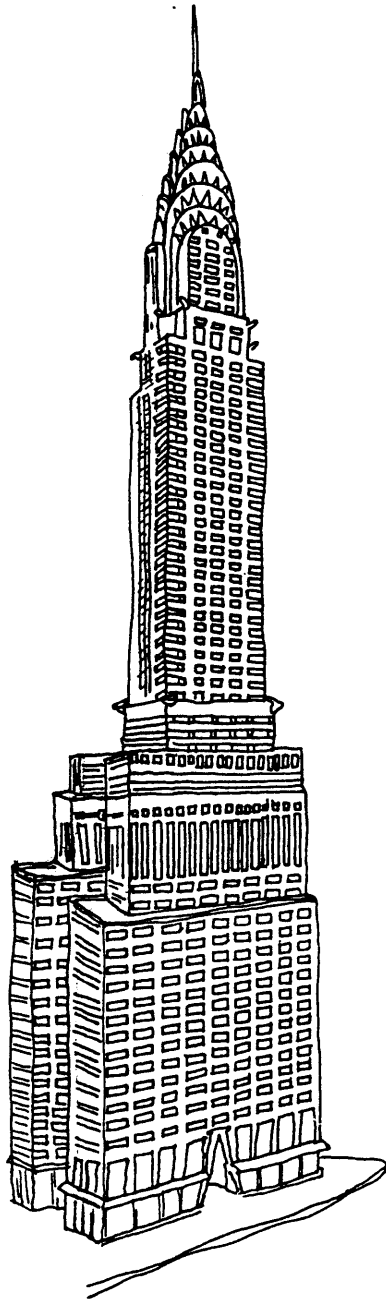
"So are we going to complete our mission?" Randy asks as he taps my shoulder.

I tremble as I suddenly return to the city of Chicago, twentieth century. "Of course." I reply. "McBride's Drug Store, as well as our act, must



always be remembered. Like the Alamo." I reach into my pocket for the glue and tile, hand the tile over to Randy, who holds the gluing surface upward. The glue is placed on the tile, we look around to make sure that no one can witness the operation, then nonchalantly place the tile on the south side of the Tribune Tower. We quickly walk away, headed into the direction of Gino's East. We were told that they have excellent pizza.





CHRYSLER BUILDING FANTASY

I really had to look as if I knew where I was going, that my path to get to the still unknown place must remain uninterrupted. Someone who had strayed from the crowd of passengers that had also exited the train at Grand Central Station asked me if I knew how to get to the Grand Hyatt Hotel. Obviously, she was unable to detect the nervousness behind what I had intended to be a cold, if not intimidating facade. I admitted that I had no clue as to the whereabouts of the hotel. Through the extensive waiting room with the appropriately enormous clock I dashed, trying to maintain my pace while scurrying gracefully around masses of luggage that created an obstacle course on the floor. Finally a patch of daylight, most welcome after being underground for the past 20 minutes, caught my attention and led me to the 42nd Street exit. I opened the heavy glass door and stepped outside, the winter chill concentrating immediately on my nose. This was my first visit to New York City.

Looking about and above, my sense of importance as a human being inhabiting the earth diminished as my sense of scale became distorted. The buildings were so tall and densely spaced as they lined the street that I felt as if I were in the Grand Canyon, the crowds of pedestrians along 42nd Street flowing like the Colorado River.

So I poured myself to the left and walked past the Hyatt, realizing quickly that this direction was upstream. A pause in my gait would probably make me vulnerable to being approached by an indigent needing a "quarter for a cup of coffee"; yet, despite my anxiety, I stopped to get a

sense of location, to see if I could recognize some structures. I looked up into the distance and suddenly I saw what I considered to be a long-lost friend: the Chrysler Building.

To see and experience the Chrysler Building was one of the goals of my trip to the East Coast. I developed a penchant for this building several years earlier while taking a course in the history of modern American architecture. More so than any other edifice, its image remained in my mind: perhaps because of its tapered crown comprised uniquely of six arcs, each one accentuated by triangular windows; maybe because my eyes were attracted to its stainless steel surfaces and automobile ornamentation (I had always enjoyed rendering or painting shiny materials.); or even because its curious form seemed to be the influence in the design of the Apollo spacecraft at their launching some forty years after the construction of this architectural landmark. Whatever the reasons, I knew that it was time to become acquainted with the Chrysler Building firsthand.



I approached the corner upon which the building was situated -- it now seemed more earth-bound since the tower and its crown were no longer visible from this perspective. Indeed, the street-level materials were smooth and luminous, the deep gray-green panels speckled with silver. Reflective surfaces, angular geometries, and excitement abounded within the exterior entry cavity. I could not allow another moment to pass without making direct contact with the cool, shiny bar that would enable my grand entrance.

Once inside, I was greeted by orange marble and many shades and shapes of brown wood which instilled a feeling a warmth within my mind, then body. I felt like I was in a cathedral. Articulating or outlining the many geometries and organic references appeared at first to be strips of brass; however, a closer look showed that the reflective material was actually stainless steel that had picked up the earth tones of the predominant materials. Ironically, flecks of light were bouncing off of all the surfaces throughout the lobby, even though very little natural light penetrated within the volume. The prevailing light, however, emanated from many sources, each one celebrated by rhythms of Art Deco fixtures. The plain white surfaces of the lowered ceilings of the elevator lobbies often brought relief from the sheen to my eyes, as did the painted mural above upon which my eyes became fixed.

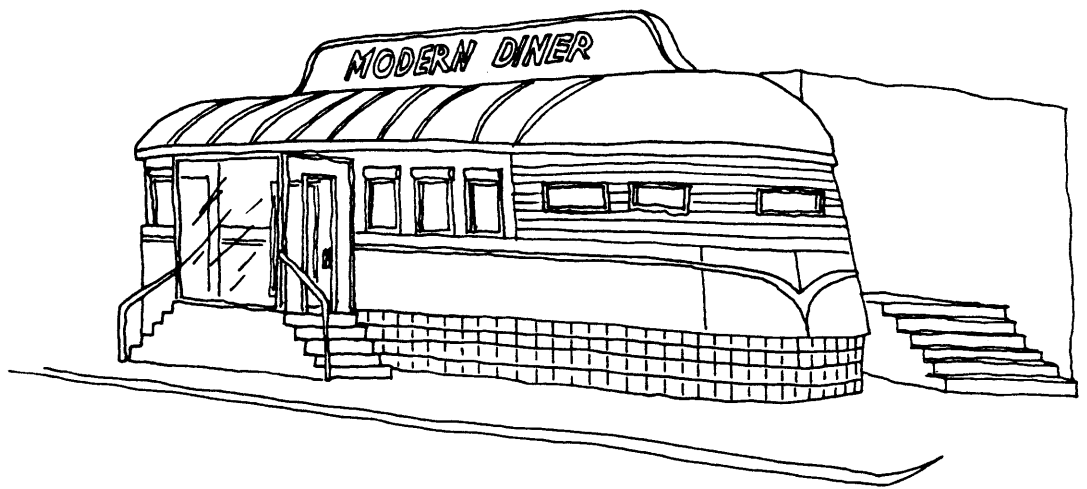
I began to imagine myself in the midst of the Depression admiring this building. Certainly, it is not fully occupied and it is rather quiet. I am unsure just how welcome I am inside. But I have nothing better to do with my time than to walk throughout this city. Somehow, when I stumbled across this building, my spirits were lifted in the same way that

they often are when I read a Marvel comic book, or even when I saw "Metropolis." The shiny surfaces and the mural telling tales about assembly lines and the potentials of our modern technology are infused with an infectious feeling of hope that tomorrow may no be too bad after all. But then again, what would it be like to work on an assembly line, doing the same chore hour after hour, day after day? I suppose that the repetition would be tolerable if the reward were a paycheck at the end of the week. So I place a stainless steel ornament on the hood of yet another car -- the finishing touch before the car leaves the plant.

As I begin to attach another hood ornament to another car, I hear the clanging of steel against steel. The assembly line abruptly stops, and I turn around to see a maintenance person repositioning his cart of equipment so that he can board an elevator. Evidently, the misguided cart had scraped a metal cornerguard.

I took my last look at this sensational lobby, very disappointed to be unable to experience the other floors to see if they were as excessively and expressively embellished. Evidently, only employees of the building's tenants were allowed above the lobby. Nevertheless, I left "my friend" in New York in very high spirits, knowing that she displayed all of her beauty especially for me.





MODERN DINER FANTASY

From my approach, the Sterling Streamline structure that housed the Modern Diner looked like it was out of another generation, the pre-jet age. Perhaps the building epitomized the modern with its smooth, curvilinear exterior skin which suggested an ability to cut cleanly through the air. Such physical qualities would enable this motorcar to attain the highest of speeds -- and imagine the thrill of traveling in one of these, then to have one in the neighborhood! I parked my car in the asphalt lot below the locomotive, anticipating a Sunday morning eating adventure in a world that differed from those within the many kitchens in the houses that were passed throughout my journey between here and Boston.

As I walked up the steps to enter the restaurant, the voice of the announcer at Penn Station in New York City shouting, "All aboard!" ran through my mind a few times. And like my reaction to that command at the train station in New York, I felt the sensation of excitement tinged with a slight amount of frustration about getting a prime window seat. I passed through the second of two glass doors and was first greeted by warm air smelling of grilled breakfast, coffee, and cigarettes, and then by the hostess. She told me that I had to wait before I could be seated, an indication that my prospects of sitting at the window were dim. In the meantime, I looked around at the shell of this supposed projectile, attempting to see modernization beyond the dark green naugahyde, the genuine and simulated wood surfaces, and the ornament reminiscent of the phonographs we had in elementary school which seemed obsolete even then.

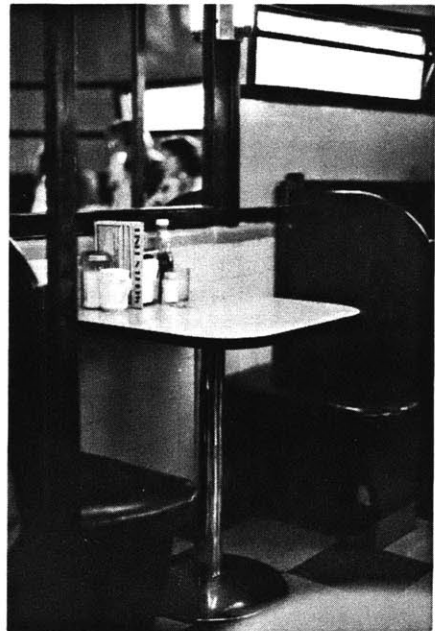
Not until I was seated in my mid-dining car booth, then able to look at the faces of those who appeared to be regular patrons at the counter, was I able to get into what may have been the spirit of this place in its heyday and understand the inspiration behind Edward Hopper paintings. I was unable to directly see the light of the outdoors, so I became a "nighthawk."

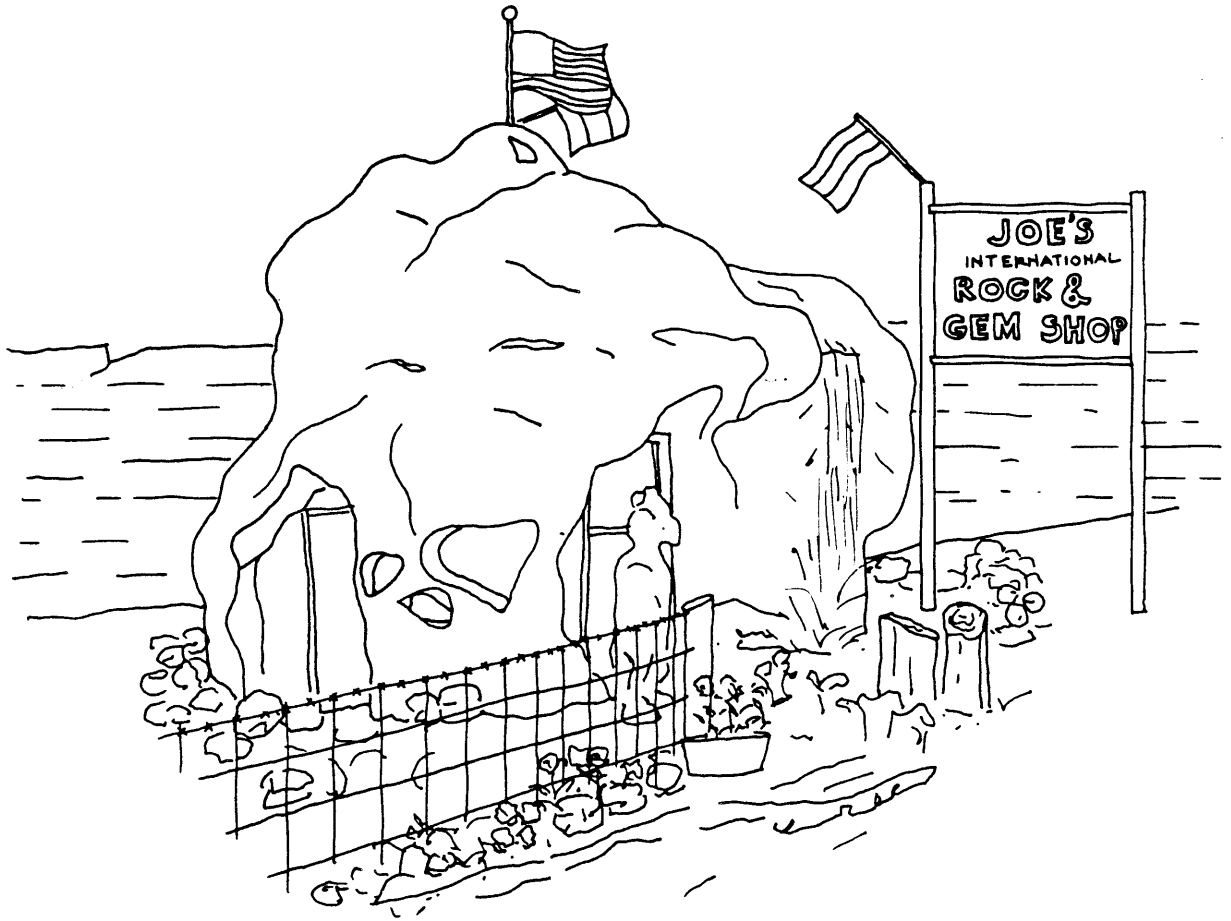
I imagined myself sitting alone at my booth, a half-empty cup of coffee and a burning cigarette in an ashtray on the table before me. The smoke mutes colors and creates a barrier between myself and the other patrons whose faces I would otherwise recognize. The condensation on the windows hinders my view outside. It seems as though many of us are here alone tonight, reading the newspaper or a paperback novel, listening to news broadcasts over the radio updating us on the world war we are now involved in, or just watching a teaspoon of sugar dissolve into a cup of coffee. The evening turns into the early morning and I now feel that I can leave the diner without my solitude being interrupted.

I snapped out of my trance at the sound of a plate containing my omelette being placed upon the formica table permanently fixed in this



very same location within the diner for several decades. A man with whom I later conversed was also very rooted in this restaurant, being a regular since its opening (he attested to the authenticity of the decor and furniture). Ironically, the diner itself was mobile, having been relocated from the downtown retail district to this residential neighborhood. But then again, I suppose the move was a most appropriate event in the history of this restaurant, proving that the potential of swift mobility suggested by its structural form is not just an illusion in the minds of its patrons.





ROCK SHOP FANTASY

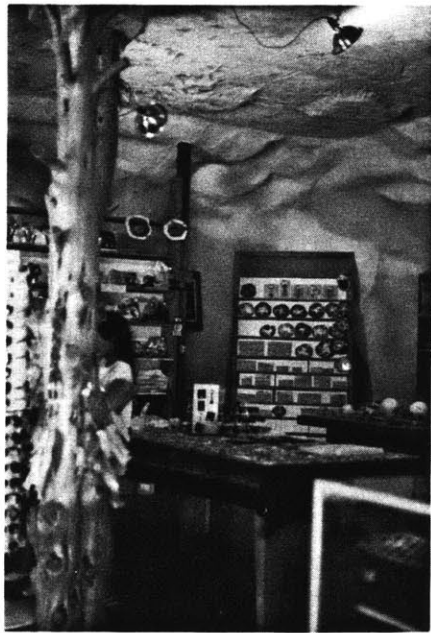
I was relieved to reach the information kiosk that read, "You are now leaving Zion National Park." The scenery was, indeed, breathtaking: weathered mountains of ochres and reds; dark green trees scattered about as if, for affect, to contrast with the terrain; dramatic changes in elevations. It was the narrow road running through the park that worried me: not only were there very few outlets, but there were several hair-pin curves that simultaneously winded around a mass of mountain on one side of the car and defined the edge of endless space on the other. A passenger throughout this drive, I would peer out of my window to observe the distant scenery with wonder and experience the more immediate steep cliffs by holding my breath. Occassionally, I would glance over at an amazingly calm Gary, who skillfully steered my car through the mountain pass. Ella Fitzgerald sang in the background, "Let's Call the Whole Thing Off."

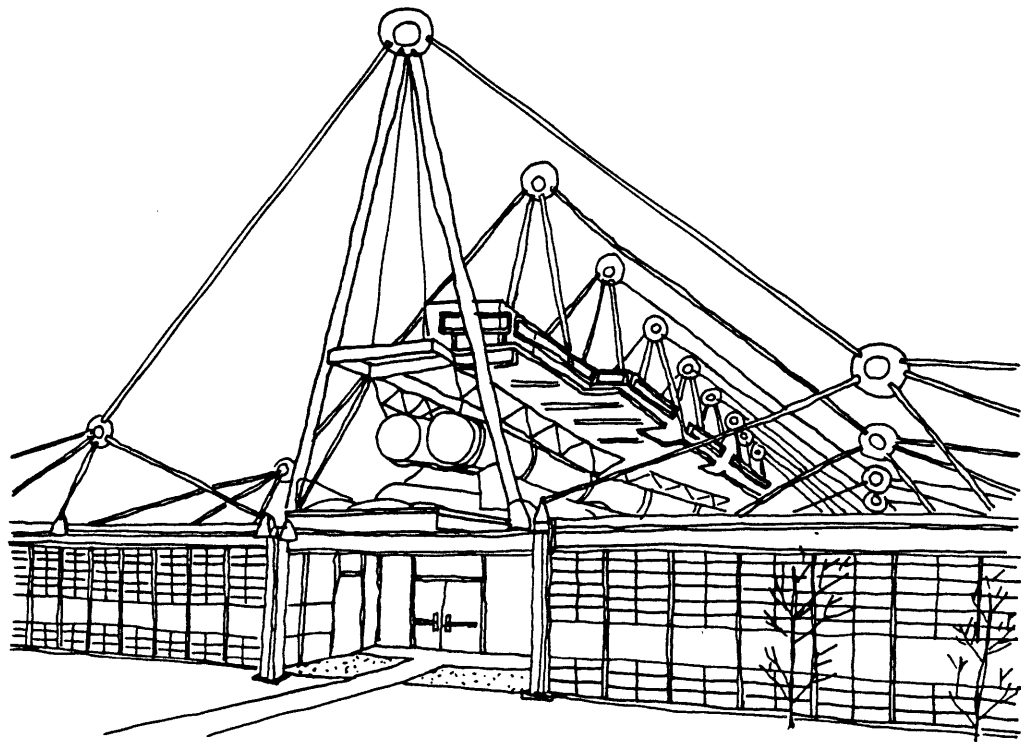
After bidding farewell to the park ranger, we continued north down a steep grade. The road twisted to the right, mountains on either side, then jerked back to the left -- suddenly, a view of the road and the valley into which it lead was framed in the windshield. In the distance, about a mile or so away, I noticed what seemed to be a rock misplaced within the flat valley floor. What was its origin? Perhaps it stumbled onto the floor after being dislodged from a weathered mountain? Its peaked top of light sand contrasted with the red and orange flat-topped mountains of the surrounding landscape. Immediately above the overscaled stone, several red, white, and blue flags waved against the brilliant blue cloudless sky.

Three minutes later, we pulled up to the giant rock alongside other cars belonging to travelers who were most likely lured to the site by this peculiarity. Could this be a building? If so, what exists within it? Fortunately, I noticed a sign announcing "Joe's International Rock and Gem Shop." Knowing this information, I not only realized that the building spoke for itself, but that I could actually enter it as if it were a cave.

As I left the protection of my air-conditioned car, I was immediately hit by a stagnant parcel of warm, dry air. I wanted to either retreat back to the car, or plunge into the nearest body of water after only seconds of exposure to the desert air. Instead, I walked toward the shaded entrance to the rock and was lightly sprayed by the cool mist of a waterfall which provided a refreshing sound. I momentarily imagined myself at a cooler, higher elevation hiking along the "Mist Trail" at Yosemite National Park in California; but rather than looking around and seeing rainbows through a screen of mist, I now saw flowers of purple, yellow, orange and red.

Now inside the cave, I was overcome by coolness and a slight mustiness to the air. I felt as if I were a character in a cartoon depicting prehistoric times with, of course, the modern amenities. Only the dinosaurs were missing. Before me were displays of sunglasses and light-speckled gems; to my right was Gary opening the glass door of the refrigerator containing cold beverages.





PA TECHNOLOGY FACILITY FANTASY

Our arrangements for meeting had materialized, despite the distance involved. I was driving down from Boston, and Mike was taking the train in from New York. As planned, we met each other outside an inconspicuous train station in New Jersey so that we could visit the town of Princeton and catch up on each other's lives as architecture students. Before either of us realized it (we were deeply involved in our reacquaintance conversation), we reached the interstate exit that would lead us to our desired destination.

We had to drive through downtown Hightstown, a city which seemed to fulfill my stereotypical image of a small, traditional Eastern town. It was quaint, it was warm. I expected to find a corner drug store with a soda fountain, my ice cream served most graciously by the pharmacist himself. As the main street slowly gradated into the residential section, it appeared to be a healthy and comfortable place in which families can flourish. But the scenery changed abruptly. Actually, the built scenery no longer existed.

I was surrounded by open fields, their flatness and neutral tone occasionally reinforced by a gas station, an office complex, maybe even a row of trees lining the highway. For the most part, however, I felt like I had returned to the midwest, where the monotonous landscape hypnotizes a driver into disregard of speed limits.

I was just beginning to accelerate when something in the distance caught my attention: behind a row of trees whose leaves had not as yet changed color was the a series of red mast-like objects. Such a mysterious

landmark in the scenery, especially against the gray sky, I thought aloud. How it fit into the landscape was something that Mike and I had to discover for ourselves. I suppose that seeing them from any direction would compel a driver or pedestrian continue to travel towards them, regardless of destination.

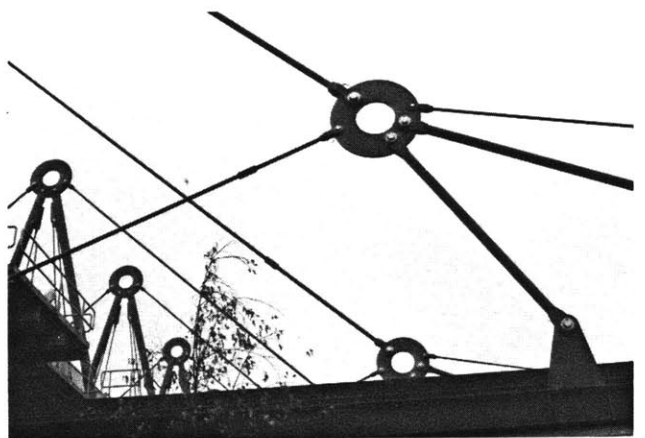
A few moments later, after the row of trees diminished into the open expanses, I noticed to my surprise that these masts were actually connected to a low building, not a ship, in a sea of shallow plant growth. Rather than emerging from the ocean, the building to which these masts belonged appeared to have randomly fallen on this site from the sky.

We pulled up into the parking lot, my car saved from complete camouflage by the gridded, smooth, and semi-reflective white surface of the exterior. For some reason, the building was approachable despite its extremely bizarre appearance. Or maybe because of its extraordinary appearance, I felt the need to scrutinize it more closely. Mike and I then left our asphalt wharf and went our separate ways, most likely in pursuit of the same discovery.



This building appeared as an ocean liner that had landed in the port of its very own island, a setting which I began to inhabit and explore, if only partially. It was now just me, the building, and the rain-soaked grass which I had to walk on to experience this architectural phenomenon. I searched for a walkway that would surround the building and rescue me from the water. I finally realized the gravity of the situation, my heart beating faster, and tried to latch on to anything that would hoist me aboard the ship. I immediately grabbed onto one of many vertical red poles that seemed to be connected to the triangular mast above. But the deck was at least twelve feet above and no one appeared to be tending the steel upper deck to search for passengers who missed departure time and attempted to swim to the ship. I suddenly embarked upon a narrow strip of rocks on which I could maintain my balance as long as I could every so often hold onto a mast extension.

Arriving at the main entry and gaining a better view of the individual components working together as one building, I felt optimistic. Before me was this inhabitable machine that seemed to function entirely on its own, similar to a space-born dwelling out of *Star Wars* or *Star Trek*. But



unlike the sets from these two movies, this futuristic building was colorful, reassuring me that architecture of the future may not be stark and sterile. I was attracted to the surprisingly brilliant colors of the structure against the black and white skin: the dominating vertical elements were red, some of the horizontal structural elements were yellow. Only the blue sky was missing from the palette of primary colors. My imagination ignited, I was suddenly part of the future that was tangible and colorful. How did I arrive here on earth? Did I land with this spaceship? If so, why did I happen to land in the middle of cornfields? I was surprisingly composed despite the unexplainable situation.

The only noise I heard was the mesmerizing hum of the cooling system until I practically collided with Mike. I began to hear the sound of cars slowing down, then accelerating on the highway several yards away. Mike suggested that we continue our journey into the town of Princeton so that we could see an old house before dusk. It was the house where he lived as a boy.

THE ANALYSES



THE CHICAGO TRIBUNE TOWER

The Chicago Tribune Tower serves primarily as an office building that houses the production facilities for the daily newspaper for which it was built. Sheathed in Indiana limestone, the tower stands 36 stories and 456 feet above street level, as well as 7 floors below. It has a concealed steel frame structure fire-proofed with concrete. Nine-thousand three-hundred and sixteen tons of steel and 13,160 tons of stone went into the construction of this building, which also has 60 caissons descending 125 feet to the bedrock that enables this city to boast of some of the tallest buildings in the world.

The Tribune Tower stands along Michigan Avenue, a few hundred feet from the Chicago River and within the Loop. In 1917, when the publisher of the world-famous daily newspaper had outgrown its building on Madison and Dearborn Streets, a new site was sought that could not only accommodate larger facilities, but one that "should be close to the center of city; it should be on a switch track; and, if possible, should be located on the Chicago River in order to be near ships bringing newsprint direct from the Tribune's paper mills in Canada."¹

The current Michigan Avenue site, comprising an area equal to an entire city block, was selected and a competition announced for the design of a building that would be placed directly in front of the existing six-storey building that already housed the facilities.

"The site is a most happy site for a building of great beauty. It will command a general view from all directions -- it is the salient point of the potential wonder mile of North Michigan Avenue -- a place for the world's most beautiful office building!"²

In the 1980's, the site has definitely fulfilled the expectations of the coordinators and authors of the competition guidelines. According to Stuart E. Cohen in his introduction to the *Late Entries to the Chicago Tribune Competition*, the site today is integral to the "urbanism" of North Michigan Avenue. Now considered to be the "most important street in Chicago,"³ Michigan Avenue is lined with some of the tallest buildings in the world, the most exclusive hotels, shops, and residential units in the city, and the Chicago Institute of the Arts. Like many of the other streets in the Loop, Michigan Avenue hosts street performers and is congested by the quick pace of pedestrians and cab drivers alike. And when approaching the Tribune site from the south, just before crossing the bridge over the river, the Tribune Tower becomes the highlight of the strip. The entire building becomes a special event from this approach as, together with the Wrigley Building directly across the street, it forms a gateway to North Michigan Avenue that brings together and celebrates the three different levels that comprise the city: the river; the street; and the sky.

The southbound approach may not seem as dramatic, the anticipation undeveloped since the tower is obliterated by the other skyscrapers in its urban setting; yet, to stumble across it is a pleasant surprise, especially with its eye-level ornamentation which contrasts with the sometimes stark and always transparent, reflective bases of the newer

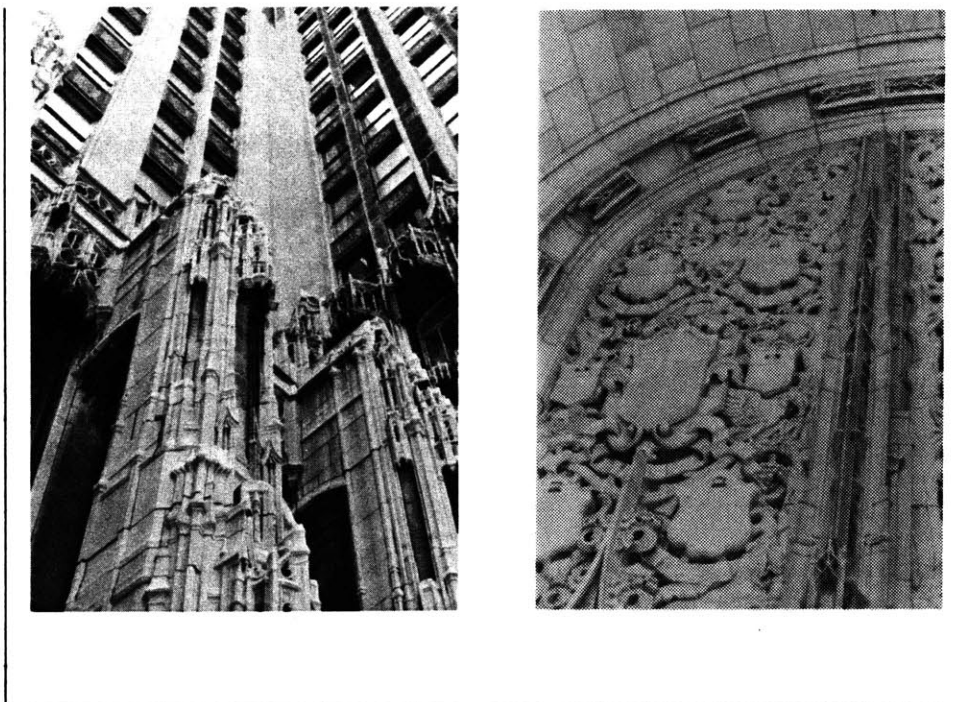
buildings along the way. The tower is pedestrian-oriented from this approach, a friendly building with a generous setback from the street that entices an individual to stop, see and touch its surprisingly rich surfaces -- and assign a story-line to a myriad of architectural cues that take us to distant lands.

To understand the cues that inspire fantasies of travel to different times and places, one must consider the social and historical context in which the 1922 competition for its design took place. First of all, the Tribune Tower was to be an image building, the "...most beautiful office building in the world," in a post-war era in a country that was increasingly powerful, yet culturally insecure. Chicago architect Stanley Tigerman feels that for almost 25 years before the competition, the nation of an emerging post-agrarian and post-industrial middle class saw itself with a new image -- that it was following in the footsteps of historically powerful nations.⁴

The United States was borrowing the forms and images from the architecture of these nations -- a privilege, at least in the hearts and imaginations of the middle class. Consequently, the Beaux-Arts influence, though challenged by the Modernist sensibility, predominated the American architecture scene, as demonstrated in the design of railroad stations, libraries, public buildings, and in the planning and buildings at the 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago. To the chagrin of Modernist Louis Sullivan, who reiterated dire consequences to the progress of modern architecture at the selection of Raymond Hood's Gothic entry,⁵ the Tribune Tower competition stimulated once more an interest in historical forms. Such forms, however, were to be used not upon a

building for the aristocracy or civic uses, but upon a commercial skyscraper whose users were part of an eagerly accepting and rising middle class. The Gothic style fulfilled the architectural fantasies of the skyscraper, a genuine American Contribution to the world of architecture:⁶ the style emphasized height and verticality. The Tribune Tower expresses the romantic notion of "skyscraper" with its seemingly heavy base that clutches the ground, an illusionistically lighter shaft that accentuates the vertical reach for the clouds, and a crown that interacts with the sky.

The Gothic style also stressed artisanry and organic ornamentation. The Tribune Tower displays intricately interpreted imagery taken from other cultures throughout the world. And in some cases, the cues are actual artifacts taken from architecture around the world. As emphasized in "Tribune Tower Fantasy," many associations and then fantasies are triggered by the building fragments once belonging to famous structures throughout the world that decorate the base at or slightly above eye



level. The writers of *The Story of the Tribune Tower* imply that the stones are a celebration of architecture and its history:

"These stones, many of them pitted and scarred with centuries of exposure, are mementoes of other masterpieces, precious relics of age-old structures, such as the Parthenon, the Great Wall of China, the Taj Mahal, Westminster Abbey, and others. They are placed in their new surroundings as a tribute from those who designed and built this modern masterpiece to the great builders of ancient times whose dreams and works have been the inspiration of centuries."⁷

It is not only the formally-trained architect who appreciates this example of bricolage. For many of us, these stones from other architectural settings conjure up images of places to which we have traveled in our readings or history classes, while others are associated with famous historical figures, such as Abraham Lincoln and Napoleon Bonaparte. To perceive, draw meaningful associations, then fantasize from these tangible objects is to see them in a new context against a fairly smooth limestone backdrop. We categorize their place and time among our many episodes of history lessons or past travels. The image, which may be based upon a picture or a setting that we have previously seen, appears before our mind's eye. And for what may be only a transitory moment, we become detached from our current urban setting into a different civilization. We can begin to envision ourselves in Egypt many hundreds of years ago, perhaps seeing the hands of the people who actually handled, then placed this one particular stone on the pyramids.

Other ornamentation applied to the building is borrowed from other cultures and mentally removes us from downtown Chicago. Stone

gargoyles symbolizing the four natural elements plus some virtues and vices meaningful to a middle class are reminiscent of Europe's great Gothic cathedrals, as is the tower which crowns the building as it is silhouetted against, or in some places, frames the sky. Over the doorway is a carved screen that depicts some of the characters in Aesop's fables.

The fantasies prompted by the Chicago Tribune Tower arise from cues whose imagery is based in other cultures from around the world. Such cues are part of an unexpected world when they are imposed upon the pragmatic world of a commercial skyscraper in an urban setting. This juxtaposition makes them easily isolated and inspires us as spectators to create stories whose plots are based in the places we have experienced in our travels or readings. Thus, the Tribune Tower becomes both meaningful and memorable to many a pedestrian.



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- ¹ *The Tribune Tower Story.* page 3
- ² *The Chicago Tribune Story,* page 3
- ³ *ibid.* pages 7-9
- ⁴ Stanley Tigerman *Late Entries.* (Rizzoli International Publications, Inc.) pages 13-14.
- ⁵ Disillusioned by the Daniel Burnham's Beaux Arts design of the 1893 Columbian Exposition, Louis Sullivan predicted that, "...the damage wrought by this World's Fair will last for half a century from its date, if not longer." This was in light of an emerging modernism that was displayed in the architecture of H. H. Richardson and Louis Sullivan himself.
- ⁶ Norbert Messler. *The Art Deco Skyscraper in New York.* (Peter Lang, New York, 1986) page 42.
- ⁷ page 34



Photo by Wurts Bros. appearing in 'The Art Deco Skyscraper...'

THE CHRYSLER BUILDING

The "Chrysler Building Fantasy" presents us with a scenario of a newcomer to New York City, a city that can be quite intimidating, even after several visits. Everything seems to be moving at a pace that is sometimes difficult to maintain, even fathom, especially when trying to absorb the amenities for which the city is best known. The train ride through the Bronx is enlightening, yet depressing to one who may be unfamiliar to the evolutionary processes of older cities -- just as the passenger develops second thoughts about leaving the protective stainless steel passenger car, the train commences its 10 minute journey underground. Finally, the train arrives at Grand Central Station, perhaps one of the first stops for many a visitor to the city, as well as a brutal initiation to more pleasant things to follow. The commotion is intense, the flow of traffic extremely non-directional, making it difficult to determine the exit.

Once the confusion is left behind, a new world appears: the pedestrians appear determined; a collection of skyscrapers, each one taller than one can experience in one take. And the quality of light... for the most part cool shadows predominate the sidewalk zone. To seek any warmth of light, the eye must travel upward beyond the height of the buildings. This reinforces the dominance of the skyscrapers. It also creates the manner by which one catches a glimpse of a familiar Art Deco landmark -- the Chrysler Building.

When it was built in the late 1920's and early 1930's, the Chrysler Building projected an image reflective of the interests of its owner, Walter P. Chrysler. Chrysler, who wanted his building to be "...higher than the Eiffel Tower," was intrigued by machines that powered transportation vehicles. The son of a locomotive engineer, he built a model of a steam locomotive as a boy, served an apprenticeship with a Union Pacific machinist, and took apart his first automobile eight times before driving it. While working as a manager for Buick Motor Company, he initiated the assembly line which increased production from 45 to 200 finished cars per day. Soon he developed the six cylinder car with a high-compression engine.

In early 1929, when he began to sense the onset of the Depression he liquidated substantial amounts of his stock portfolios, established trust funds for his two sons, and formed the Chrysler Building Corporation.¹ It would only seem appropriate for his building to be in the spirit of Art Deco, a style that "...symbolizes the marriage of art and technology in the machine age,"² with the integration of the machine into the creative process and production of ornamentation.

At the time of its completion, the Chrysler Building epitomized the idea of an animated metropolis, a self-contained city because it possessed some of the newest innovations in environmental systems that enhanced the quality of life of the predominantly male business person occupant: "a central vacuum cleaning system; under-floor ducts for telephone and electric wires; concealed radiators with individual thermostats; air-conditioning that provided cleaned, washed and tempered air throughout...; and an ozonating plant that supplied pure drinking

water.”³ Furthermore, it was deemed as a "City Within a City," having direct access to the subway, Grand Central Station, and other urban amenities such as banks, restaurants, and shops. It also contained barber shops and 2 gyms, among other things.

Even in the 1980's, the Chrysler Building maintains a strong image that is still celebrated: it is highlighted in the June, 1986 edition of *Manhattan, Inc.* magazine. A collage of legends about the building, "77 Stories: The Secret Life of a Skyscraper," features the plight of Dutchman Jaap Gillis, whose assignment was to search for a new midtown office building from which to conduct the business of an expanding European building company, Wilma Real Estate Investors. He ultimately chooses the Chrysler Building:

"Clients know the Pan Am Building and the Rockefeller Center because Pan Am is related to an airline, Rockefeller to oil. Chrysler is not so well known for its cars in Holland because we don't buy so many Chrysler cars. But they know immediately if you say Chrysler 'Building.'"⁴

Indeed, the skyscraper "conjures up memory and esteem" for its tenants, while providing for clients and pedestrians "the allure of automatic familiarity," profound strategy measures of any successful business. Over 50 years after its dedication, the Chrysler Building still remains popular at a time when we treasure our history and anything that hints at nostalgia. And no doubt does this intriguing building and its idealistic, romantic imagery telling of a future never realized, an "architectural frontier," take us back to the time when such utopian sensibilities were flagrant amid the harshness of economic realities. This fantasy is

realized because imposed upon the functional world of a commercial office building is another familiar world comprised of cues that are associated with the machine and transportation.

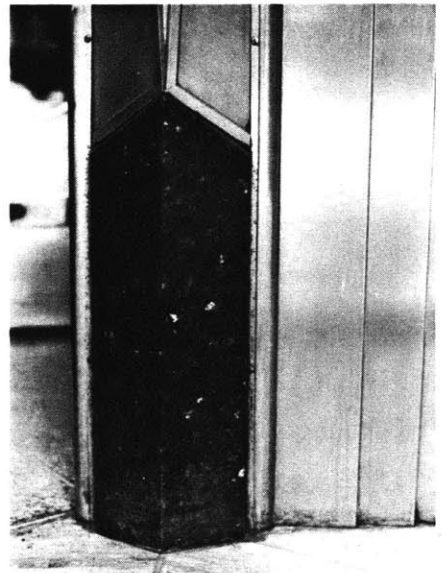
From the distance, the machine-influenced Chrysler Building is perhaps the most outstanding skyscraper comprising the Manhattan Skyline. For those of us familiar with the space program and other technological advances that have occurred in our lifetimes, the silhouette of the building appears as a space-ship departing from earth into space: its stainless steel crown composed of 6 arcs punctuated with triangular windows indeed assumes an untraditional building form that, with the needle atop, illusionistically enables the building to soar into the clouds with great ease. One begins to ponder the futuristic associations and fantasies reflected in this form at the time of the building's completion. Perhaps the sparkle of the sunburst crown and spire was suggestive of the glitter of the jazz age.

Although the building was never actually owned by the car company, the Chrysler Building is decorated with imagery taken directly from Chrysler automobiles, some of which is reinterpreted and repeated in the Art Deco language. For example, a gray and white brick frieze above the twenty-sixth floor depicts automobiles sporting mudguards, steel hubcaps on each wheel, and winged radiator caps on the hoods. Of course, each automobile is identical to the next, reinforcing the notion of Walter Chrysler's assembly line. Other levels of the facade display more imagery taken from Chrysler automobiles, such as eagles, acorns, and more radiator caps, all which are twice the human size and made of stainless steel.

In addition to being perhaps the most conspicuous building of the skyline, The Chrysler Building is also easily recognized at street-level at its location at the northeast corner of Lexington Avenue and 42nd Street. As the viewer in the story points out, the building ironically appears much more rooted to the ground than had been anticipated from a distance. The materials at the base appear heavy: dark green Norwegian granite containing flecks of silver creating a visual link to the stainless steel, begins its growth at the sidewalk plane, moving up and over the entries that are carved into the facade and lead to a comparatively more colorful world inside. This "growth," however, appears restrained, or better yet, as premeditated as the other design decisions affecting the ornamentation. Accents of stainless steel, prompting feelings of perpetual newness because it is unaffected by the elements that would age other less resilient materials, begin to occur at this level at places that indicate penetration inside, such as at doors and windows. Such thoughtful placement of objects of this non-traditional building



Photo by Kunio Owaki
from 'Manhattan, Inc.'



material resolves the formal composition of the facade by forcing the eye upward to make connections with the other accents of similar material that culminate in the arced tower. It also anticipates the arrival to many of the special events taking place within.

Norman Messler considers Art Deco lobbies, such as that of the Chrysler Building as "stage-sets" that provide "the greatest let-down from the tension of modern business" and offer the pedestrian "an elevated experience." He adds that today, they are regarded as "sacrosanct, overstylized interiors."⁵

Before we enter the Chrysler Building, however, a certain fascination with a romantic view of modern technology and yesterday's future has already been initiated. Are the stories revealed by the various cues on the outside consistent with those to be imagined inside? For the most part, our excitement with the building is heightened once we enter, a result of the warm colors of red marble, siena travertine, and blue



marble which come together to form organic, yet modernistic geometric designs, such as those appearing on the building's 30 passenger elevators.

The feeling of celebrating modern technology, however, is not carried on inside as it may have been 50 years ago. Instead, when we analyze the mural painted by Edward Trumbell that features the Chrysler Building amid portrayals of the assembly line at Chrysler automobile factories as well as representations of airplanes of the early 1930's, we begin to feel nostalgic in light of our present-day methods of production, our transportation, in our information-based society. The pull of nostalgia is reinforced by the ubiquitous wood, steel and marble surfaces that together create intricate ornamentation; it is pushed along by the austere and budget-worthy office buildings of our own time. Thus, the Chrysler Building, like nostalgia, prompts a feeling of optimism that displaces a prevailing bleak environment, whether today or during the Depression.



Art Deco elevator interior.

Norman Messler states:

"The success or the failure of any 20th-century architectural style may hinge not only on its modern or traditional aspects, but also on its spiritual aspiration. Call it charisma, fantasy, romance, or enchantment, Art Deco skyscrapers do not merely soar, they carry the spirit with them. And since these spirits still call up images of greatness, they continue to be magnets for those who enjoy great architecture just for the site of it."

The Chrysler Building, then, is a successful example of Art Deco because for over 50 years, it has been inspiring fantasy in the imagination of the viewer. The unexpected world of the automobile and machinery is imposed upon the pragmatic, dominant world of a commercial skyscraper in Midtown Manhattan. The cues become conspicuous to the perceiver not only because they depict a world incompatible with that of an office building, but because they are, for the most part, made of materials that are associated with machines, not buildings. Furthermore, many of them are actually taken from an object that was and continues to be familiar to us -- the automobile. The actual form of the building is also unique, making it stand out among the other skyscrapers with angular crowns. The interior instills in us a feeling of nostalgia because it displays a world familiar to a particular place in time when assembly lines were the means to mass production, when attention was given to ornamentation.

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- ¹ David Michaelis. "77 Stories: The Secret Life of a Skyscraper." *Manhattan, Inc.* June, 1986. pp. 120-121.
- ² Norman Messler. *The Art Deco Skyscraper in New York.* (Peter Lang, New York, 1986) page 8.
- ³ Charlie Kaplan. "The Chrysler Building: Art Deco Magnificence."
- ⁴ page 106
- ⁵ Norbert Messler, page 130.
- ⁶ *ibid.* page 30.



THE MODERN DINER

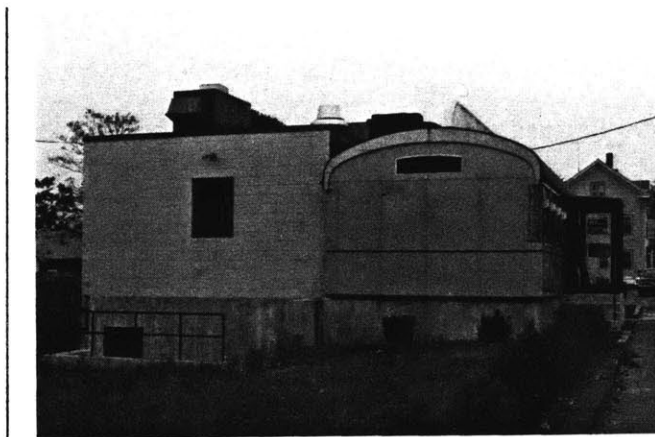
The Modern Diner has been part of the Pawtucket, Rhode Island building landscape since 1938. At its original Dexter Street location, it served for all but ten of the years as one of several eating establishments appealing to merchants and consumers alike in the heart of the city's shopping district and always as an accent in its setting.

Photographs of the diner at its previous location indicate that it stood at the end of a row of one- and two-storey masonry buildings that comprised a main street atmosphere. Such placement among these buildings established the metaphor of "train leaving tunnel," undoubtedly dramatizing the notion of speed and frictionless mobility. Or, like the engine train pulling other cars, the Modern Diner appeared to be pulling a row of buildings. These meaningful associations were advertising ploys making this restaurant outstanding and memorable among the others in the area. In 1975, the Modern Diner ceased operation, sitting idle on its Dexter Street site for ten years until it was forced to relocate to make way for a highrise housing structure for the elderly. The building was saved from demolition when it was accepted on the National Register for Historic Places -- the first diner in the country to earn such distinction. Remnants of old factory buildings still exist about the old site.

One "regular" of the Modern Diner, who has patronized it since he was a fourteen-year-old delivery boy for the *Daily Record* from Boston, claims that the restaurant operates like it did at its previous downtown

location: it still serves precisely as a diner, which is traditionally known for fast service and food at reasonable prices. Differences in program, however, do exist. Whereas before, the restaurant was a convenient place upon which to stumble, today, most of the patrons must travel by car to arrive at the site. The designers of the new site obviously realized that a location away from a "market place" would necessitate travel by car, so the restaurant practically sits in a parking lot, which is completely occupied, even on a Sunday morning. Inside, the function of food preparation differs slightly from before: the grill behind the counter is no longer used. Instead, the food is cooked in the kitchen located in a concrete block structure attached behind the dining car, much like the one in which larger dinners were prepared before the move.

Its current setting of the past year on the other side of the interstate in a residential area containing a supermarket as its only other commercial structure leads to disappointment for the viewer: the diner is now viewed as an object that no longer reacts to or interacts with the built environment. It stands by itself, a confounding situation which



is enough to distort the first-time visitor's sense of its location. Nonetheless, the Modern Diner still conjures up many a fantasy, though of the nostalgic vein, among its patrons and passerbys in the 1980's: the restaurant's unexpected form is that of a locomotive car which happens to be a genuine representative from the years considered to be "The Golden Age of the Diner."

The Modern Diner exemplifies diners that were produced prior to and during World War II. It is an authentic Sterling Streamline, a line of magnificent diners manufactured by Sterling Diners of Merrimack, Massachusetts. Richard Gutman, in *American Diner*, excerpted Sterling's advertisement, which justifies its design:

"Just as the magic of streamlining has drawn thousands upon thousands of new customers to the stramliners of rail and air; just so the stramlined eye appeal of Sterling Diners never fails...The sleek lines of Sterling Streamliners...practically shout, 'This MUST be a good place to eat.'"¹

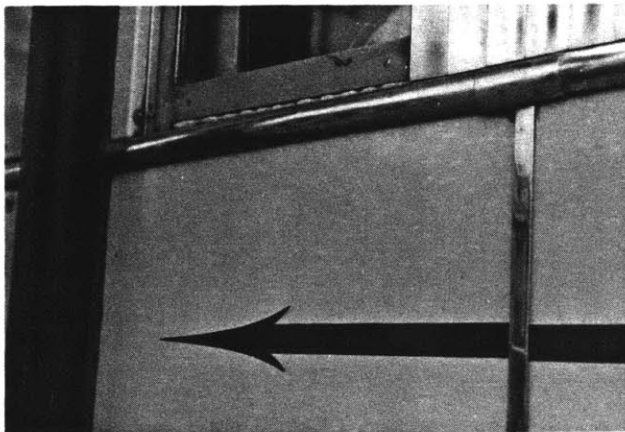
But to understand this visual strategy which lured many a customer to such eating establishments, a cursory overview of the evolution of



American commercial architecture in the historical context of world events must take place. Between 1919 and 1932, which Gutman regards as the years during which "The Birth of Modernism" occurred, the United States was euphorically recuperating from The Great World War. The prevailing attitude was to break away from the past. Designers, he felt,

"...tried to create contemporary styles to fit the new pace of living so they drew their imagery from machines with purely functional designs. This extreme functionalism was readily applied to architecture."²

Meanwhile, the use of the automobile was flourishing. Highways became crowded and retail business opportunities moved outside of population centers. Merchants along the road devised novelties to attract the motorist's attention. One approach was to literally blow up objects indicative of the merchandise inside, such as the duck-shaped building named the Long Island Duckling which sold poultry, made famous by Robert Venturi. Another approach, which came about during the Depression, was to devise a more modern, forward-looking and optimistic vocabulary despite the economic hardships that individuals



were enduring. The diner illustrated this design strategy. By the time of the Modern Diner, many of them were mimicking the streamlined locomotive, the "symbol of the era," bringing about the immobilization of mobility.³ According to Gutman, the concept of streamlining persisted for at least 25 years thereafter.

"Modern Diner Fantasy," reveals an assemblage of fantastic worlds that are a result of expectations that conflict with the reality. When the diner comes into view, a most surprising event, it appears as a lone engine train car in a yard, waiting to be attached to the others that it will pull. Perhaps this impression is reinforced by the particular direction from which the site is approached, since the first view of the building is its windowless rear that appears to be abruptly and orthogonally cut off, unlike its front that slopes down toward the ground plane, suggesting forward movement.

The Modern Diner can be considered what Chester H. Liebs in *Mainstreet to Miracle Mile* deems as "architecture for speed-reading" by virtue of its a-contextuality which attracts the attention of the motorist who, at a mere glimpse, may fantasize about a world set apart



from current environments. It is also designed to be a fantastic building for the pedestrian, who also is reminded of train travel. In addition, its scale matches that of a genuine locomotive train. Furthermore, its authenticity is reinforced by materials that allude to and allow for its modern image prior to the advent of the jet: its porcelain-paneled skin, along with the glass block below the nose of the train enables streamlined form suggestive of frictionless, thus quicker motion. And like the train car which is lifted approximately three feet off of the ground, the Modern Diner has its floor plane raised off of the street level: to board the restaurant, one must climb some steps, an activity that reinforces the special feeling of being a traveler.

For the fellow who has patronized the diner since its opening in 1938 when he was only 14 years of age, the Modern Diner was "absolutely sensational." But because many of us have traveled by jet that enables cross-country travel in a matter of hours as well as witnessed space voyages between here and the moon, our concept of sensational travel certainly is no longer epitomized by the train, at least in this country. Instead, the image of the diner, accentuated by the typeface of the sign, becomes nostalgic in the 1980's, which in itself makes eating in the restaurant a very special experience. We envision ourselves four decades earlier, perhaps as a character out of an Edward Hopper painting.

By the time we enter, the nostalgic mood has set in and then is amplified by the decor and the smells from the kitchen, especially if our expectations of "modern" consist of minimalism and white walls accented with geometric design in pastel colors. Inside the Modern Diner, the ambiance is warm, with its vaulted ceiling of tan enamel

trimmed in stainless steel, table-tops of light ochre simulated wood formica, 1' x 1' floor tile alternating between beige and siena, and coat/hat holders of dark brown wood. Both the counter stool top and the booth seats are a dark forest green Naugahyde. Some of the ornamentation, such as that on the speaker on the far-end wall, also is reminiscent of objects that were not necessarily produced during our lifetimes, but with which we are familiar.

But then there are cues that once again make us feel that we are on a train, not just in a diner from "the golden age." For instance, many of the windows, all of which are operable, are identical to those in the New York City subway cars. The interior cavity is an expression of the curvilinear exterior shell, the windows emphasizing the form by wrapping around the nose-end. The use of stainless steel at the trims and the backdrop to the counter is also reminiscent of the both the interiors and exteriors of trains. Finally, that we are elevated above the street level instills in us a feeling that we are, indeed, detached from the pedestrian and automobile world below.

¹ page 78

² page 79

³ page 80



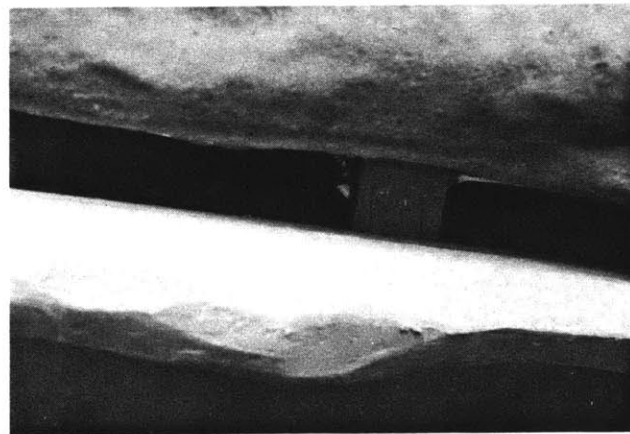
JOE'S INTERNATIONAL ROCK AND GEM SHOP

Shaped as a giant stone, Joe's International Rock and Gem Shop is located in Orderville, Utah, a very small town that sculptor Elbert Porter, who designed and built the structure, describes as the "...center of the geological formations laid down during the Mesozoic period, a period in which the dinosaurs lived."¹ Its site is along Highway 89, a road connecting Zion National Park with Bryce Canyon and Grand Canyon National Parks. The surrounding desert canyon valley landscape consists of flat-topped, weathered mountains stratified in warm tones of ochres and reds, punctuated with stunted tree growth of dull, deep green. The climate is harsh, especially in the summer when the dry heat creates daytime temperatures of over 100 degrees.

The shop was built in the early 1970's when Porter's life-size dinosaur sculptures were brought to the site from West Yellowstone, Montana where they had been exhibited as a tourist attraction for six years. Until 1977, the dino-sculptures and the rock building, which most likely served as a souvenir store and information center, worked together to recreate the atmosphere of the time and place in which dinosaurs inhabited the earth. When the dinosaurs were relocated to their current habitat at Dinosaur Gardens in Vernal, Utah, the rock structure was left behind to be purchased by Joe and Marie Caruso, the owners of a rock and gem shop further north up the highway. Undoubtedly, they felt that the structure would be the ideal building in which to conduct their gem business: not only would it be in a strategic location that is extremely visible from the road leading out or to Zion, but it would be

symbolic of their merchandise. Most importantly, however, this building would be enticing to the uncomfortable and restless traveler because of the fantasies it would initiate when the world of a souvenir store also becomes that of a cave inside of a rock.

As indicated in the story, the exterior of the shop appears as a "misplaced rock" amid the relatively flat floor of the valley. When the building is viewed from a distance, its undulating surfaces are reminiscent of both the textures and forms of the weathered mountains within Zion that have recently moved us. When in close view, one can both see and feel a surface similar to sandpaper -- after all, sand was actually mixed in with the paint, a device that most likely gives the illusion of authenticity of belonging to a place, as opposed to creating a place. The structure's cooler tones of ochre and rust against the warmer tones of the surrounding area create a juxtaposition that enhances its visibility from a distance; it is believed that this condition is temporary, that the existing coat of paint has faded, because the owners are considering painting the exterior -- a job that could cost them approximately \$12,000.



Separation of fiberglass shell from plaster cavity.

The rock shop is realized from an unconventional building system, a characteristic typical of what Michael Schuyt, George R. Collins, and Joost Effers consider as "fantastic architecture."² It has an outer shell of fiberglass separated from a cavity wall of plaster, both finish materials adhering to the wood structure by chicken wire inadvertently left exposed in various places in the interior. The combination of these most appropriate materials suggest that the design and building process for the rock shop is very similar to that which Elbert Porter used to create his life-size dinosaur sculptures, though the rock shop tends to be perceived as expressive rather than realistic.³

When analyzing the rock shop in terms of scale, the structure becomes a visual pun on two different levels. For instance, if it is looked upon as a symbol, the building is then an overscaled physical representation of the merchandise contained within, much like the idea behind Robert Venturi's "duck" or the hot dog-shaped restaurant Tail o' the Pup in Los Angeles, California. An example of "architecture for speed-reading,"⁴ the structure typifies the synthesis of advertising and architecture by serving as a sign. This strategy also works successfully within a more



Unintentional exposure of chicken wire.

urban context, where a deliberate lack of fit would attract the attention of an individual, whose process of perception is prolonged when reconsidering the visual cue.

Another way of viewing the scale of the shop, which is more appropriate in its context, is to study the building within its natural setting where the structure and its components appear minute relative to the overwhelming, awe-inspiring mountain peaks and accompanying deep canyons. This play on scale works advantageously -- the building is of human dimensions, accessible and friendly.

The only visible textures, besides the sandy fiberglass exterior shell, are transparent and light reflective, creating a juxtaposition of solid and lucid in the composition. Free-formed windows appear to be carved out of the rock and the glass doors have "overhangs" that mark the beginning of a journey into the cool, damp cave. The waterfall originating from a ridge about two-thirds of the height of the building is an unexpected event in such a hot, dry climate. Its location to the left of the doorway indicates the entrance to a building having no clearly defined front, rear, or side elevations. With its mist that sprays upon the traveler and refreshing sound, the waterfall, along with the unexpected appearance of flowers, plays pleasantly on the senses and becomes the cue introducing and welcoming us into a more controlled, idyllic world inside. It also is a cue that momentarily distracts us from the harsh desert climate, perhaps placing us in a higher, cool, and mountainous environment.

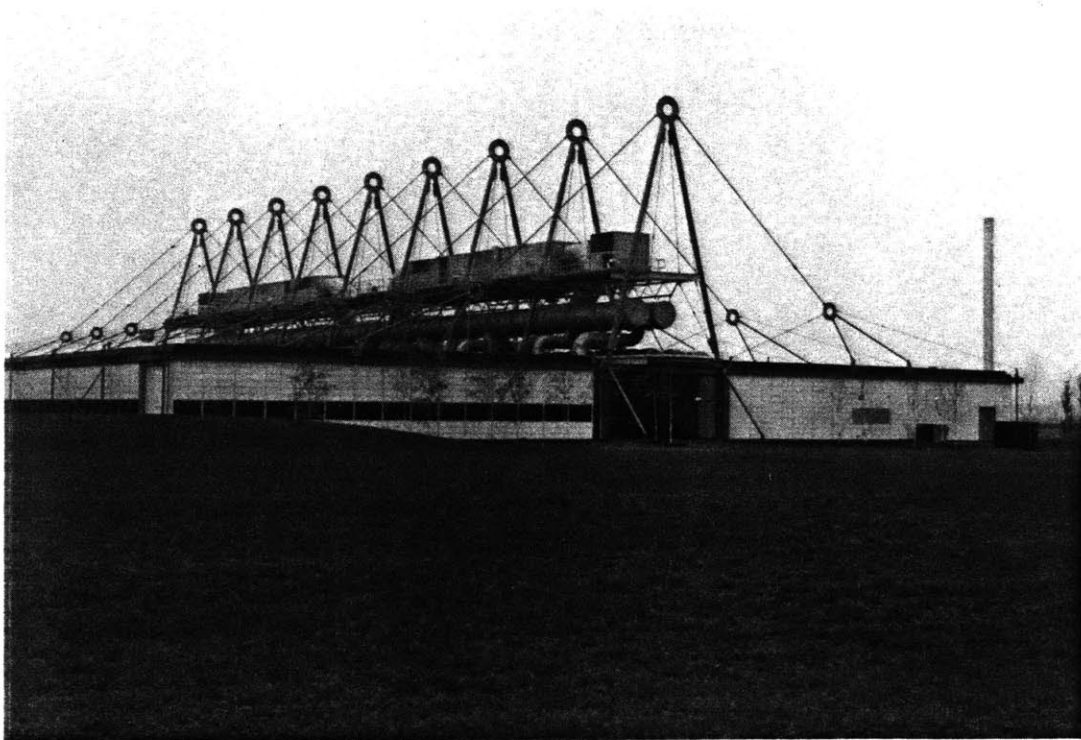
We are now physically and emotionally prepared to enter the rock structure. Immediately, we imagine ourselves in the protective cavity of a cave. It is a comparatively cooler world, made possible by conventional environmental systems. For example, the cool, musty, interior is the result of an evaporative air conditioning system that works optimally in dry climates. The gentle illumination not only contrasts sharply with the exterior light condition, but it is an exhibition maneuver that accentuates the interior surface of the structure and especially the merchandise by emphasizing its textures with dramatic highlights and shadow.

The surface of the interior cavity is similar to that of the exterior, with perhaps more undulation at a smaller scale. Its texture, however, is smoother because the unpainted surface does not contain sand. The one column standing toward the center is an actual tree-trunk, a cue that, for only a transitory moment, takes us back to primitive worlds. Then we are confronted with an assortment of commonplace souvenirs and sundry travel essentials.

Joe's International Rock and Gem Shop epitomizes a type of architecture that is often overlooked academically. And when it is finally analyzed, its buildings are viewed as an autonomous artifacts that trivialize not only the objects that determine their forms, but ourselves as consumers. Looking at the rock shop in its larger physical and social context, however, we see that the building is an appropriate addition to a widely-traveled highway running through the desert landscape, connecting

three national parks. It interacts with its setting. Most importantly, it interacts with the many travelers it greets because it interrupts the monotony of both long-distance driving and the settings and routines we experience in our daily lives. A fantasy made tangible, Joe's International Rock and Gem shop maintains the Disneyland spirit of vacation.

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- ¹ Elbert Porter. *Dinosaurs Return*. (Davis Printing)
- ² In their book, *Fantastic Architecture*, 1980, Schuyt et al categorize buildings and conclude that the structures are examples of "architecture done differently."
- ³ In *Dinosaurs Return*, Porter gives a complete verbal and pictorial description of the design and building process he used for his dino-sculptures.
- ⁴ Chester Liebs. *Main Street to Miracle Mile*.



PA TECHNOLOGY FACILITY

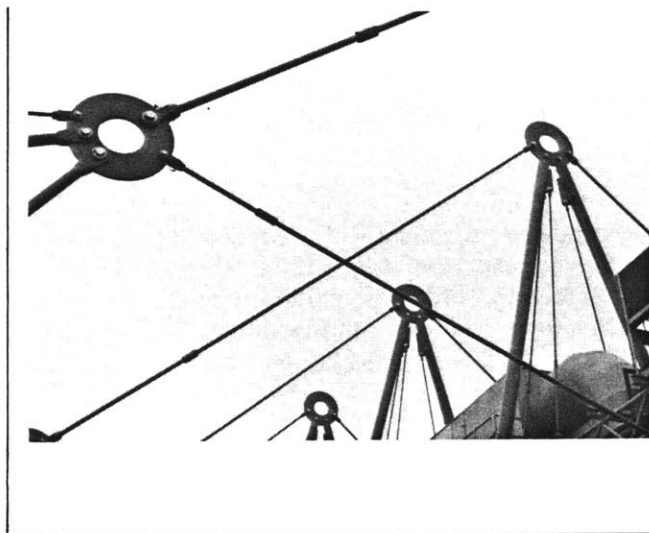
The PA Technology Laboratory and Corporate Facility is located along an open road in New Jersey between Hightstown and Princeton. Designed by British architect Richard Rogers in collaboration with the Princeton firm of Kelbaugh & Lee, this "High-Tech" building houses the Britain-based international management and technology consulting firm, PA Techonology. Inside, 150 scientists, engineers, and consultants create management strategies, invent and develop new products such as domestic telephones and the machinery to make them, and design futuristic factories for high-asset Fortune 500 companies.

A space inside a building that accomodates an organization with such diversified services necessitating different mechanical services must be flexible. Furthermore, the exterior should project an image consistent with the nature of operations of the High-Tech corporation within. These two requirements were the point of departure for Rogers who, with his structural engineers, developed the notion of suspending the utilities from steel masts atop the building so as to free up the space inside for maximum efficiency, employee interaction, and space alteration when necessary. A PA Technology press release quotes the architect on his design notion:

"Once the structure is there, it becomes economical to suspend the roof from the central spine, thereby offering column-free space in the form of an unconstrained umbrella roof over PA's ever-changing research and development activities."

Composed of nine triangular masts at 30 feet on center from which are suspended steel beams spanning 75 feet, the structure is a successful expression of the interior spatial requirements. This pragmatic world of the building, when combined with the fantastic image of high-technology which the clients wish to project, is the generator of a building form which in itself, is the cue to fantasy. We are thus taken alongside a ship or into a technological utopia, depending upon the context in which this building is considered.

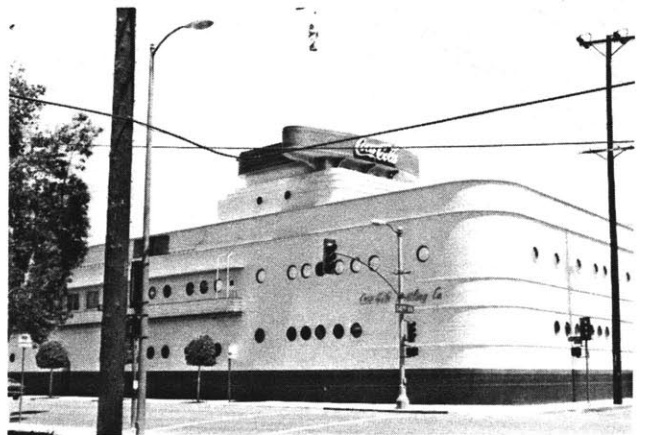
As indicated in "PA Technology Facility Fantasy," the building becomes an unusual event in its physical context. It is like many other High-Tech buildings that appear in Europe: it is an autonomous object that disregards the styles of the surrounding built environment. In fact, High-Tech eschews all other architectural styles of the past, and tries to express the unique function of each building component. Consequently, the PA Technology Facility as it appears in the landscape is a surprise to the motorist who has just driven through the narrow streets of Hightstown, then open farm lands and corn fields with an occasional business park or gas station. Perhaps we expect to see dispersed farm



houses, maybe even a few grain silos as if we were immersed in the landscape of the Midwest. Instead, we see in the distance behind a row of trees the red masts of the PA Technology Facility.

Daralice D. Boles, in her article which appears in the August, 1985 issue of *Progressive Architecture*, feels that the building with its "crisp mast and sheets" of tubular steel evokes the image of a ship. And when the building is finally seen in its entirety within its setting, the PA Technology Facility does, indeed, appear as self-contained as a ship on a sea of green grass, the asphalt parking lot serving as the wharf. The viewer becomes enveloped in a world created by the building floating on the land and piercing the sky.

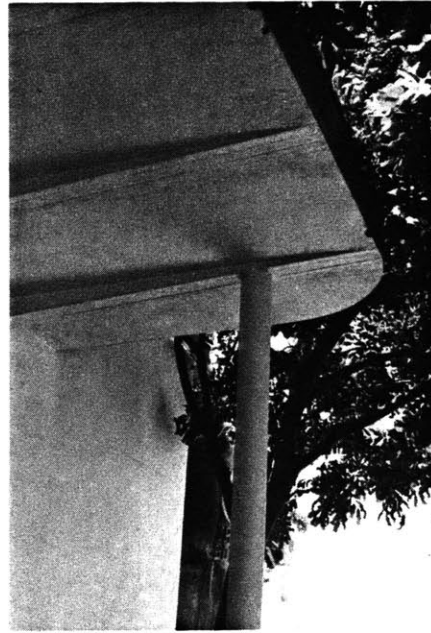
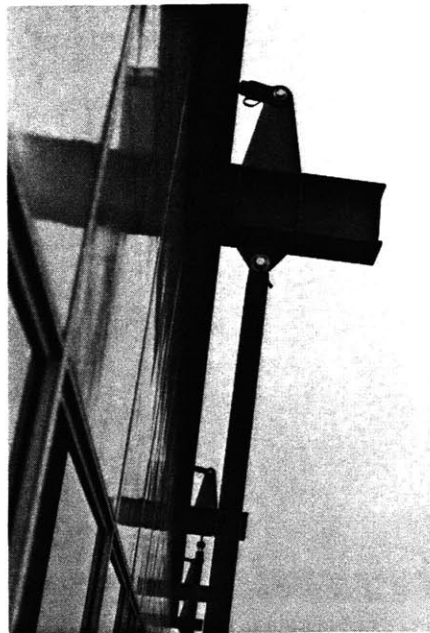
The idea of high-technology building as ship is reinforced several times within the composition of the building. The lightweight steel platform used to gain access to the mechanical systems resembles an upper deck. In fact, the seemingly lightweight structure that holds the building together emphasizes the horizontal, which again is characteristic of an ocean liner. In the interior, the color-coded HVAC, plumbing, and



Coca-Cola Building in Los Angeles.

electrical elements are exposed much like those contained in the cabin of a barge.

How would the ship metaphor have been expressed 40 years ago? The Coca-Cola Building in Los Angeles, California of the early 1940's is also evocative of a ship. Its comparison with the PA Technology Facility gives us some insight into the evolution of design strategies of architecture that inspires fantasy. In the Coca-Cola Building, the ship imagery is literal: circular windows that are associated with port holes; rounded corners; two tiers that resemble the actual massing; and steel decking. The structure is completely camouflaged by a stucco skin like many fantasy-inspiring buildings of that time. With the PA Technology Facility, the expression of the metaphor is abstract, accomplished by components that support the functions of the building and very little, if any, applied ornamentation.



Detail of PA Technology Facility. Detail of Coca-Cola Building.

When the PA Technology Facility is experienced as a product of a greater social context, that of an information-based society of the 1980's, the building presents a utopian view of technology. Its style originates in England where a tradition of rationalized industrial expertise was often introduced into lightweight construction, such as that which we see in the Crystal Palace and railway sheds.¹ It is a method of design that deviates from traditional architectural precedents. In England during the late 1960's, High Tech was not taken seriously. According to Peter Buchanan, "High Tech was still essentially anti-art, concerned with process and indeterminacy and promising jolly fun for all."²

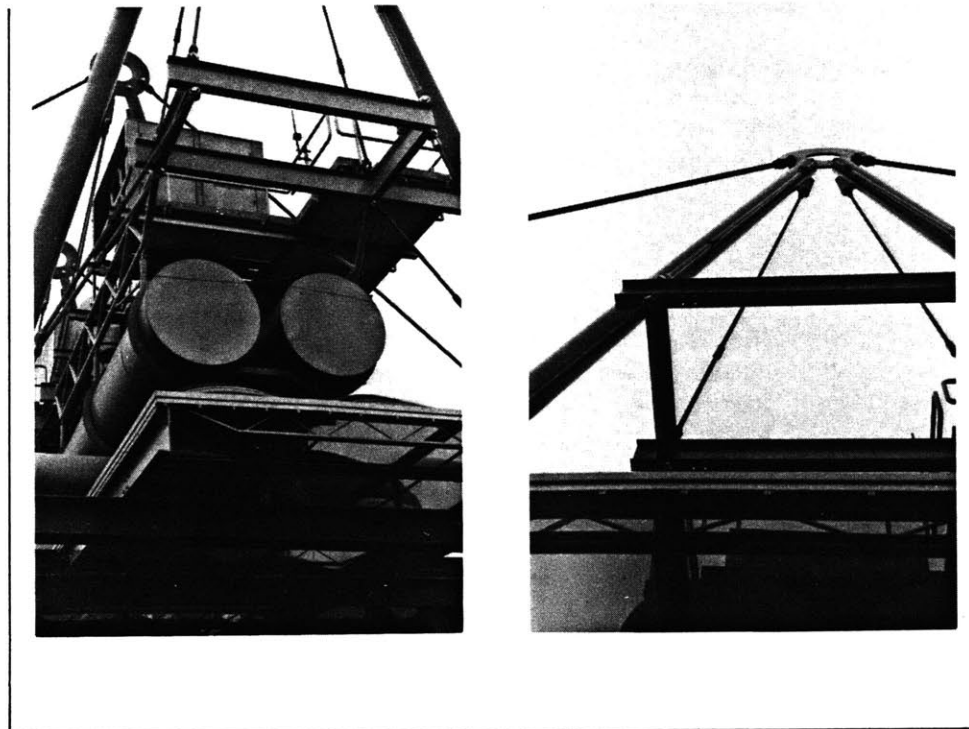
Today, however, High Tech is considered high art, a status recently attained with the advent of Piano and Rogers' *Pompidou Centre*. Its objective of space-making is to offer opportunities for the occupant to easily adapt the space for a variety of uses, as exemplified by the PA facility. In addition, the image that the High Tech building, such as the PA Technology Facility, projects is possibly the ultimate corporate style, one which Buchanan equates to the thoroughbred horse in English society:

"The image of the thoroughbred, coolly superior, refined and efficient, is what make High Tech so attractive to those organisational clients---often dealing in high-technology too---wishing to be perceived in similar terms."³

For the viewer, the technological utopia, the image of the corporation, is successfully communicated. The building reminds us of a stage set

for a *Star Wars* movie, a setting in a science fiction novel, or of Archigrams visionary illustrations of such dwellings as the "Walking City" or the "Plug-in City." These popular images of tomorrow suddenly and temporarily become today for many of us at the sight of the PA Technology Facility: the building appears self-supportive, one that functions independently both architecturally and environmentally.

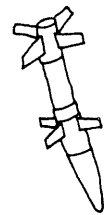
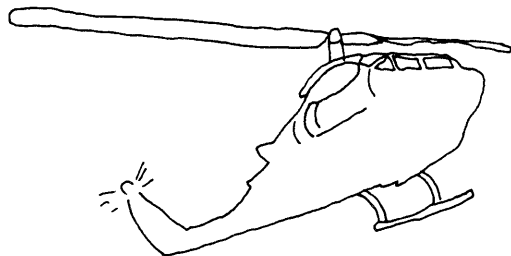
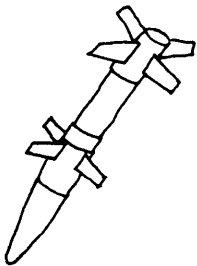
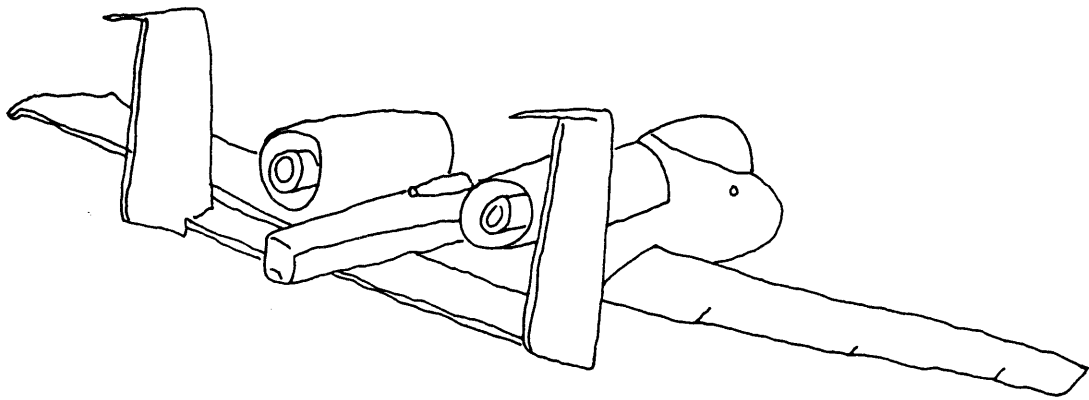
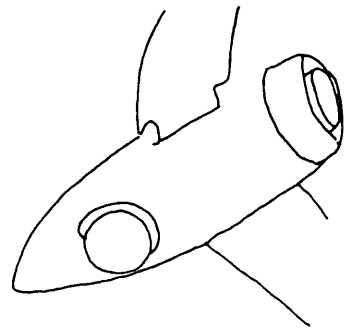
The PA Technology Facility presents to us the pragmatic world of an open workspace that houses an international consulting firm and the unexpected world of a ship and high-technology. Devoid of applied ornamentation insupportive of function, the building itself is the conflict of context, the cue to fantasy: it is self-contained, much like a ship to which its structure alludes and does not interact with its surroundings. It is an object in a neutral landscape. As viewers, we immediately become actors in a futuristic stage set created by the building, detached from our present world.



¹ Peter Buchanan. "High Tech, Another British Thoroughbred."
Architectural Review. July, 1983. page 13

² *ibid.* page 15

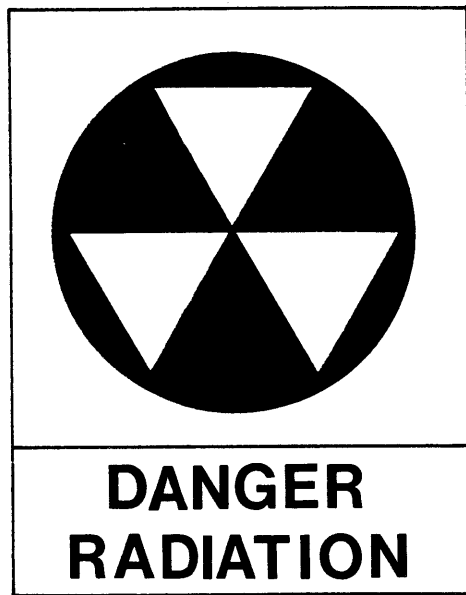
³ *ibid.* page 18



A RESTAURANT FOR THE NUCLEAR AGE

"Progress may have been all right once, but it went on too long."

-- Ogden Nash



THE INSPIRATION

The other day, I was approached in the parking lot by a man who expressed his admiration for a device that appeared in my car window. For some reason, our conversation shifted to the exorbitant cost a tuition at the Institute: he was grieving over his loss of Phd research funding this semester after receiving it for over 5 years. I, of course, had no sympathy for the gentleman and did not hesitate to tell him that many students in the School of Architecture have had to pay almost full tuition for at least 2 years. He looked quite puzzled and so that he could make more sense of the situation, I humorously told him, "Yes, it's true and the reason we have to pay our way is because we choose to have nothing to do with the production of nuclear defense weapons!"

Well, little did I know that he would be pro-nuke, that he would be lacking a sense of humor. My statement, equated with the fact that I was an architecture student carrying a camera (I suppose that we have the reputation of being bleeding-heart liberals), sparked in him a very emotional reponse. He insisted that people such as myself are prone to believing all the "unjustified myths" regarding the probability of nuclear accidents. "In fact," he said, "we just passed by the M.I.T. nuclear reactor. It's the green building across the street."

I already knew that. I also knew of Three Mile Island and Chernobyl, which I brought to his attention.

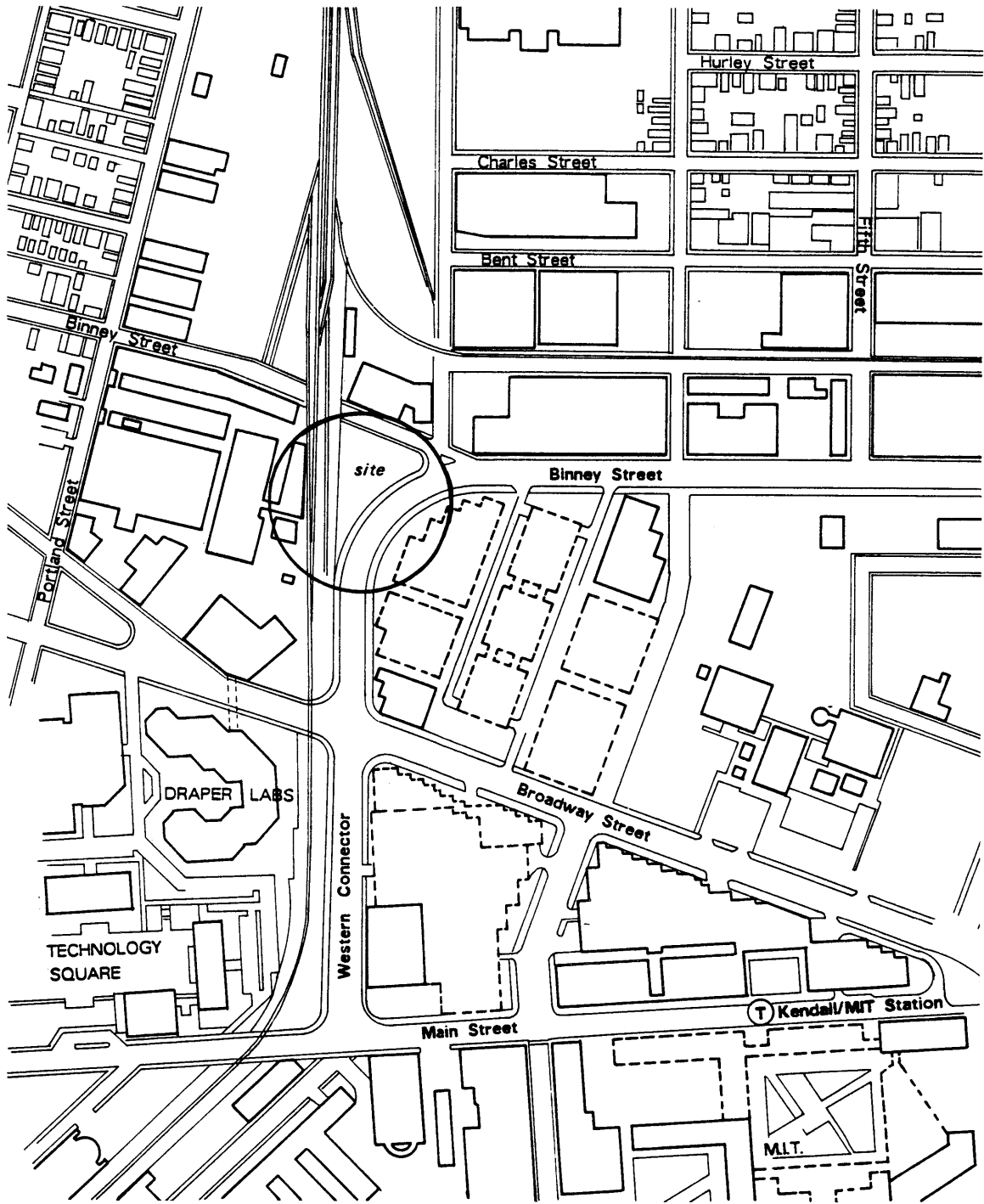
"Oh, but nuclear power is very safe. The people in Cambridge don't seem to mind it. Besides, it safer that a coal mine."

Fortunately (or unfortunately), we had to depart; yet, I was very embittered by his last statement, to which I would have loved to reply. I suppose that what bothered me most about his reasoning was the lack of insight: a person who works in a coal mine is aware of the dangers when making a choice of employment. As part of the M.I.T. community, I have no choice when it comes to situating myself near a potentially dangerous facility when I wish to receive a decent education. The literature inviting me to apply, then attend the Institute certainly did not mention the presence of a nuclear reactor on campus.

I thought further, about the nature of research that occurs on campus and in the surrounding Technology Square area, about the times I have seen the yellow and black signs saying, "DANGER, RADIATION" posted on chained barriers, about people demonstrating against the production of nuclear weapons in front of Draper Laboratories, where they are evidently designed. Is this where the intelligence for the "Star Wars" strategic defense system is being designed and developed? Perhaps "defense system" is a misnomer, because while its devices can supposedly intercept missiles and aircraft, is it capable of literally incinerating entire cities with an accidental flash of its laser beam.

Other countries seem to favor the limitation and eventual disappearance of nuclear weapons throughout the world, while some leaders feel that the build up of weapons is insurance against enemy attack. Until an arms limitation agreement is reached, tensions will continue to grow, many of us fearing the day that the weapons are intentionally or unintentionally put into action. A bomb can drop anywhere in the world and the fallout will affect all of Earth's inhabitants.

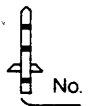
And with each gentle spray of cool mist that falls upon the exposed skin of my face, arms and hands as I walk past that green building across the street off of Massachusetts Avenue, I cannot help but wonder if some invisible substance is penetrating into my body, altering the genetic information that has belonged to my families for centuries.



----- proposed construction

———— built or under construction

DIAGRAM 1



TECHNOLOGY SQUARE AND SURROUNDING AREA

THE EXPLORATION

The design on the following pages is an example of architecture that inspires fantasy: it combines the pragmatic world of a restaurant with the unexpected world of high-technology in the nuclear age potentially going awry.

The first level of pragmatic decisions involves the overall site design. Located at the head of where a road called "The Western Connector" curves into Binney Street at the northern edge of Technology Square, the chosen site currently exists as a triangular plot of grass. Its western edge parallels railroad tracks and an old brick industrial building whose site-facing facade contains a cloth sign reading "One Kendall Square." Across the street defining the northern boundary of the site is a corrugated metal building which would otherwise be inconspicuous if a red-lettered sign saying "Metropolitan Pipe & Supply" were absent (diagram 1).

The nuclear restaurant site has three components: parking; the restaurant itself; and an open park area (diagram 2). Dependency on the automobile determines that the efficiency of the site design is contingent on the placement of the parking area, although ample parking will exist nearby with the proposed parking structure on the vacant lot across Binney Street. The logical location for the parking lot is toward the northwest corner of the site, where it is accessible from the Binney Street extension and visible at high speeds to the motorists traveling either west on Binney Street or north on The Western Connector. As a

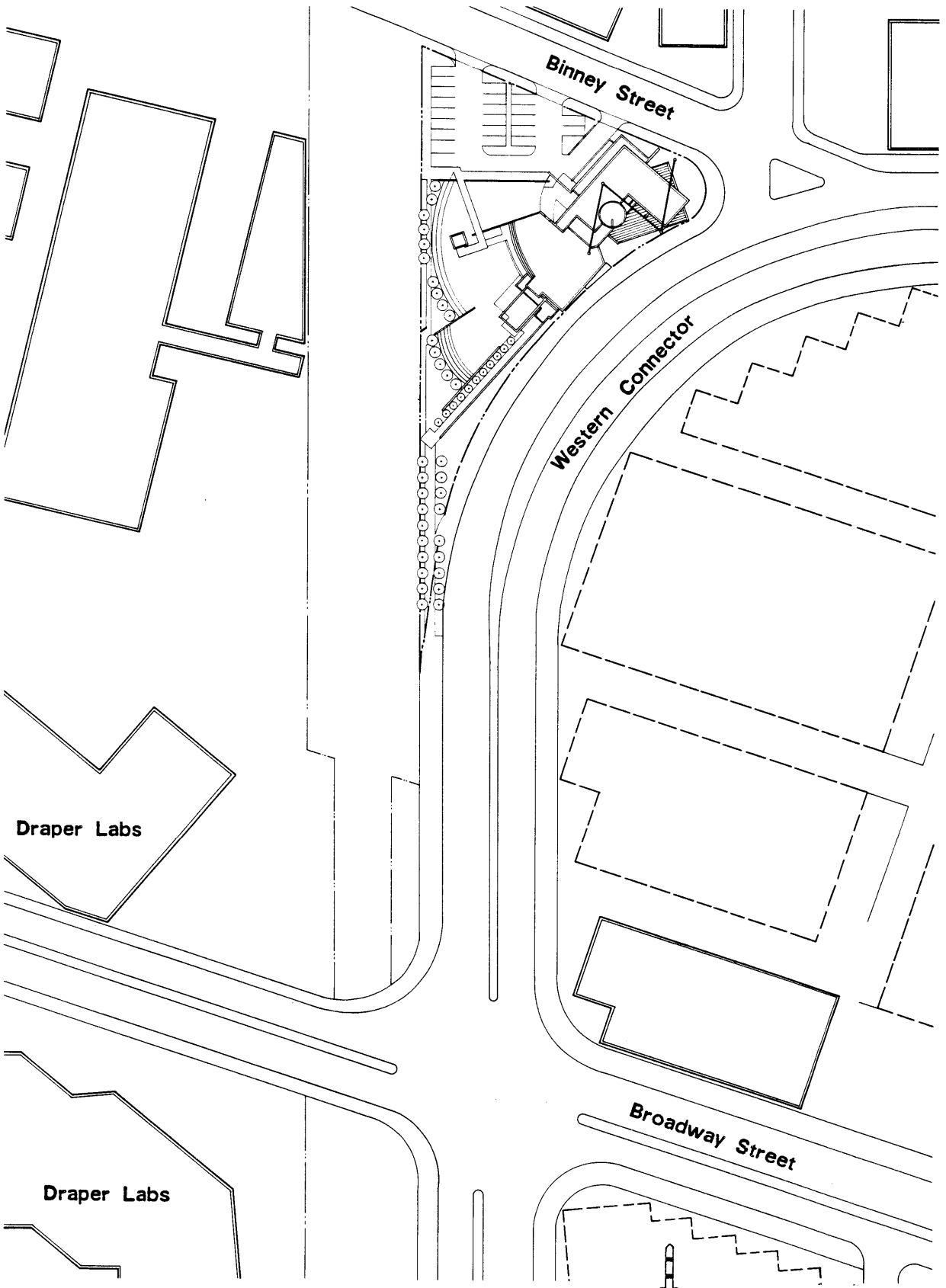
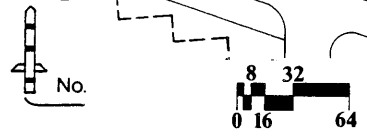


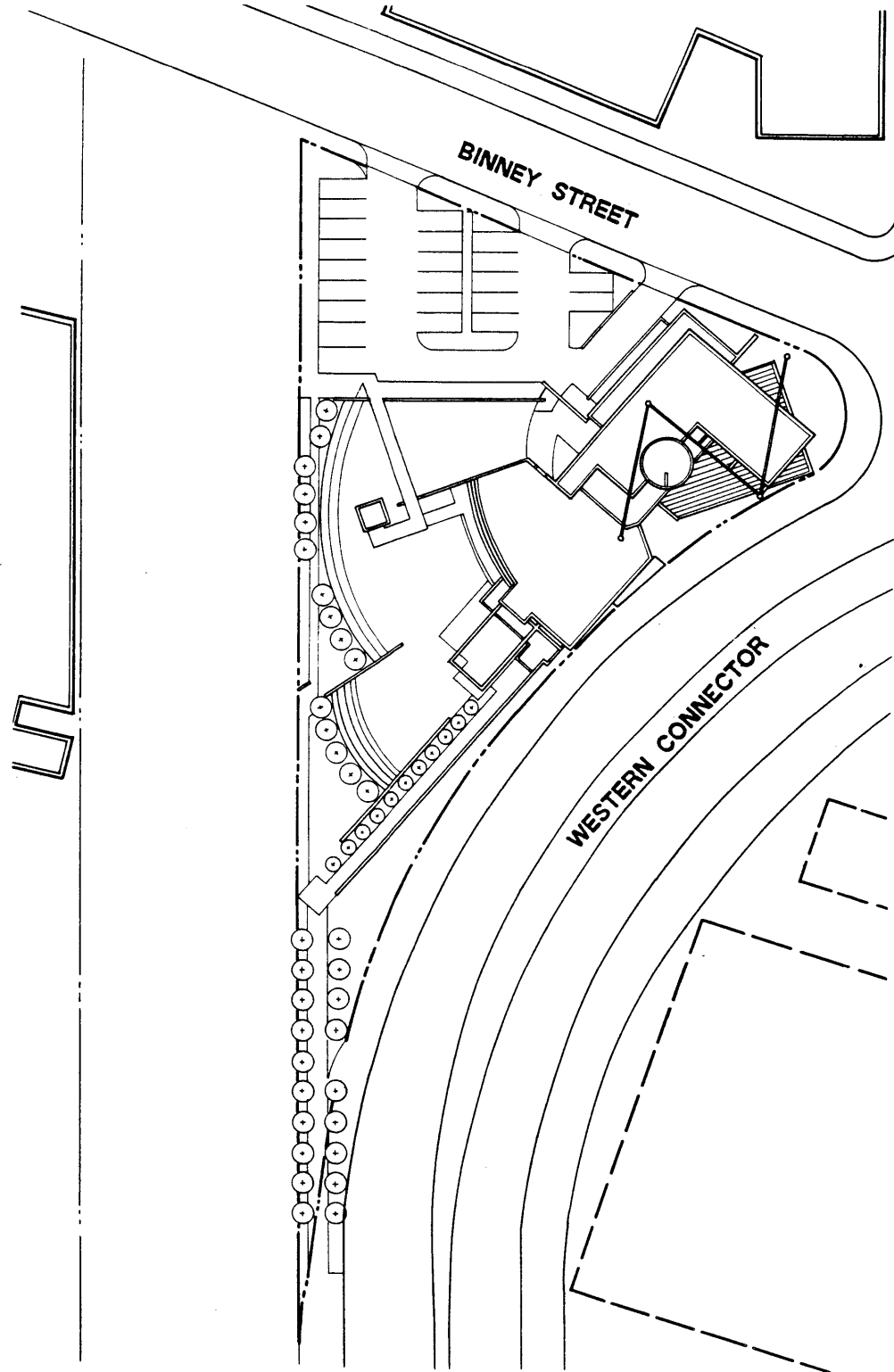
DIAGRAM 2

SITE PLAN

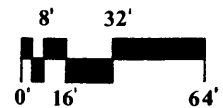
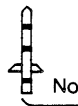


commercial building, the restaurant must be the outstanding element on the site. It must also be "architecture for speed-reading" on a stretch of parkway without stop signs or lights. Accordingly, the building is placed lengthwise along the parkway edge moving toward the east corner. By default, the open park occurs along the western edge. Coincidentally, this location is ideal because it provides a public edge that can readily be experienced by pedestrians and bicyclists who may short-cut their route between M.I.T. and East Cambridge.

Once the site diagram is resolved, the pragmatic world of planning a restaurant begins (diagram 3). The first consideration is the location of the kitchen: for ease of delivery and trash removal without interfering with the flow of customers, the kitchen is adjacent to the service area along the east end of the parking lot. Located approximately 5 feet below street level, the kitchen is accessible from the service area by a ramp. The dining areas are in proximity to the kitchen: waiters and waitresses can view all of the tables from stations just outside of the kitchen and they need not carry plates of food to the other end of a long restaurant. Since the restrooms must be highly reachable and visible, they are located off of the entry area. The small, glass-enclosed entry area at the western end of the building is adjacent to the outdoor park and sculpture garden which becomes its extension when the glass doors are opened when the weather is warm and dry. The bar occurs off of the entry area so that customers can utilize the larger space while waiting for a dining table. In addition, others who come to the restaurant to exclusively use the bar do not have to interfere with the operations of the food service or the diners.



SITE DEVELOPMENT



Imposed upon this restaurant is the unexpected world of nuclear weapons and warfare made familiar to us by the news media and entertainment industry. Its cues combine to create to an architectural composition that screams out against the sterile, stereotypical suburban office complex region of Technology Square and the happenings within its many stark buildings.

If the building and its site design were actually constructed, pedestrians and motorists would first notice that facing the parkway and Technology Square is a high-tech facade, an appropriate appearance when considering the nature of the local industry. The restaurant, however, is outstanding among its immediate neighbors which are decaying red brick buildings once used as factories. The predominant surfaces of the nuclear restaurant facades are: 12" x 12" concrete block, cool white, similar to that used on the second Draper Lab building; dark grey glass curtain wall, also taken from the Draper Lab architectural vocabulary; and silver aluminum insulated paneling appearing as if it were the exterior of aircraft and submarines. Exposed steel trusses dominate the roof that they support in places.

The growth of the new building from an entire site excavation is an unusual occurrence in an area where everything but the subway station seems to float upon the landfill. The pedestrian and bicyclist questions the origins of this crater; the motorist is confounded by the sight of a formal row of trees disappearing into the unknown. The mystery of the hole in the earth is further complicated by its edges controlled by either retaining walls for the linear or steps for the curved. The patron enters the restaurant below by walking either down the southern ramp

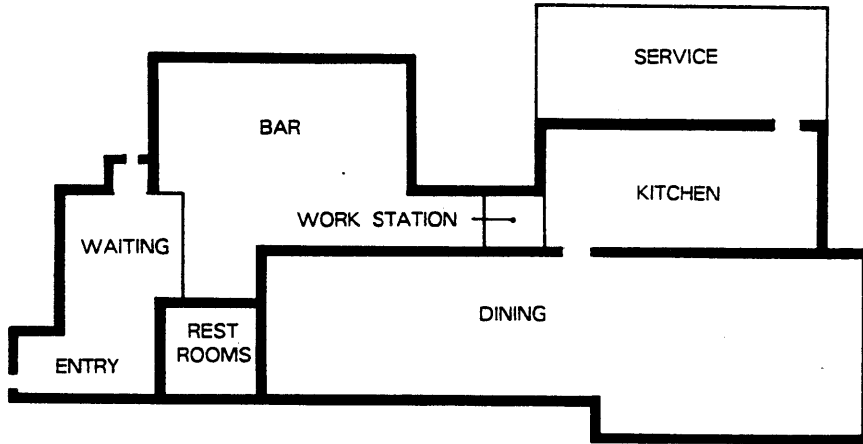
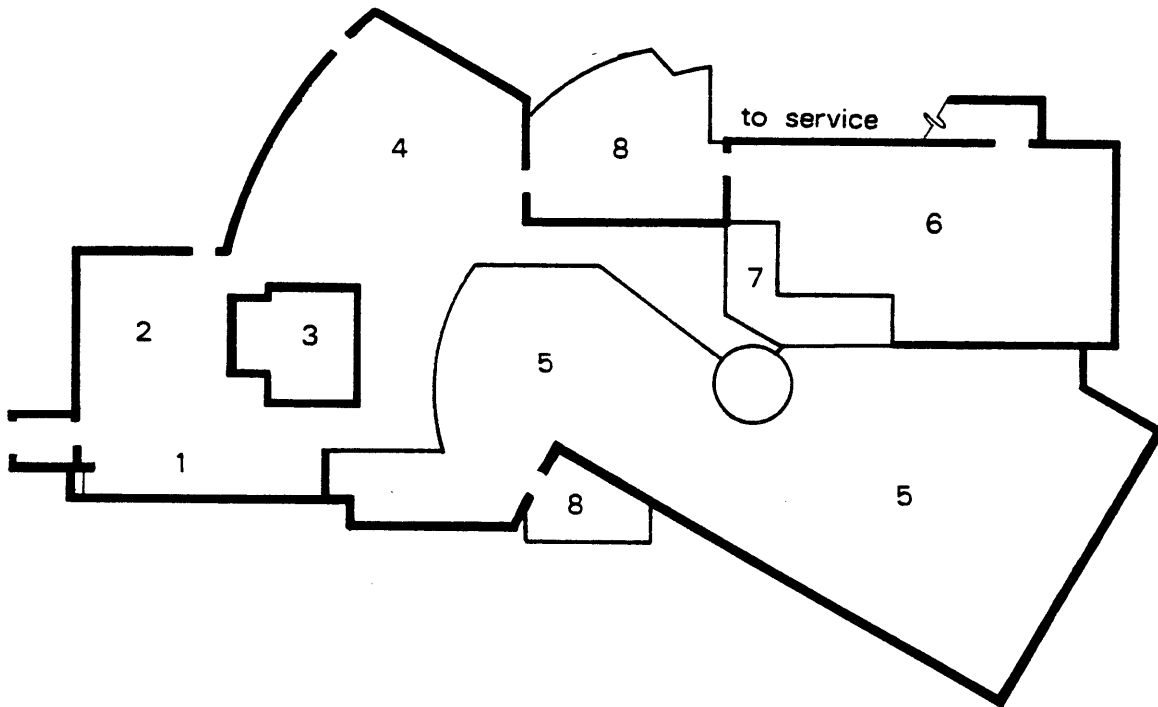


DIAGRAM 3 RESTAURANT BEFORE "EXPLOSION"



- | | |
|--------------|-------------------|
| 1. RECEPTION | 5. DINING |
| 2. WAITING | 6. KITCHEN |
| 3. RESTROOMS | 7. WORKSTATION |
| 4. BAR | 8. OUTDOOR DINING |

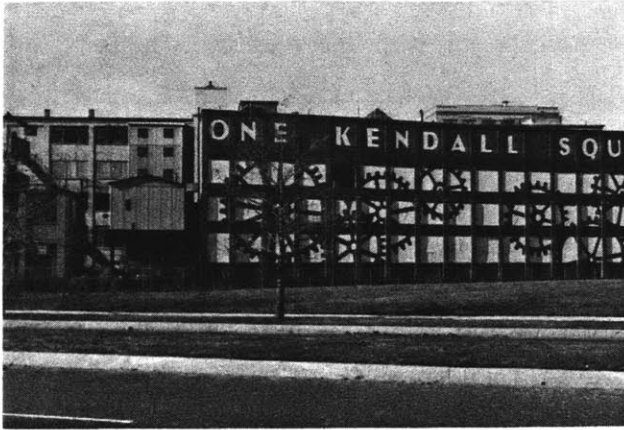
DIAGRAM 4 RESTAURANT AFTER "EXPLOSION"

or across a bridge connecting the parking lot with the elevator. Inside the excavation, the customer becomes part of the subterranean world that obstructs the view of the office park world above.

The highlight of the restaurant occurs in the interior: a circular sundial sinks 6" into the floor of the defined circulation path it terminates. Perhaps this hole is where a bomb dropped? Obviously, then, this is the origin of the explosion which created the skewed middle ground. But maybe the sundial is symbolic of the clock that occurs in other restaurants, such as diners. It functions as a time-keeper: it is an inversed sundial that tells time by a projection of light, not shadow, upon the marked floor.

Another inexplicable occurrence is a stark concrete structural grid having a bay size and orientation determined by the northern Draper Laboratories building. Could this intact structure have survived the explosion and thus become a ruin about which the restaurant is built? Or maybe like the 12" x 12" concrete block, it represents the graph paper on which weapons and machinery is designed? Exploding out from the western end of the building to the tiled deck of the outdoor park and sculpture garden, this uniform grid is the counterpoint of the chaotic wall fragments and artifacts that oddly and whimsically decorate the interior.

Many of the smaller-scaled details have been taken from other sources and, like the stones on the Tribune Tower facade, become noticeable and achieve meaning by being used in new contexts. The smaller windows of the south and north elevations are taken from jets, while



Industrial building facing site.



Kendall Technology Square.



View down Main Street, Kendall Square.

those on the curved edge of the bar are the hatch windows that a pilot lifts to enter a fighter bomber. Tips of B-52 bomber wings become tables, helicopter propellers become ceiling fans, shells of DC-10 jet engines become luminaires, life jackets become seat cushions, and a series of missiles becomes a wall surface.

In the past, many fantasy-inspiring buildings have celebrated technology, as we see in the Chrysler Building, the Modern Diner, and, more recently, in the PA Technology Facility. The nuclear restaurant in the heart of the high-tech industry, however, is intended to make us question our intelligent endeavors and whether the world is, indeed, safer with such developments as the "Star Wars" defense system. Perhaps, then, the restaurant inspires positive fantasies of survival after the blast -- the building was erected from the ruins. As a celebration of life with its "peace park" adding color to an otherwise colorless building, the nuclear restaurant can serve to awaken our consciousness about the potential dangers of nuclear weapons.



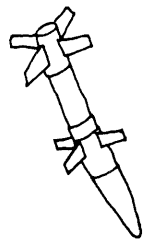
Draper Laboratories.

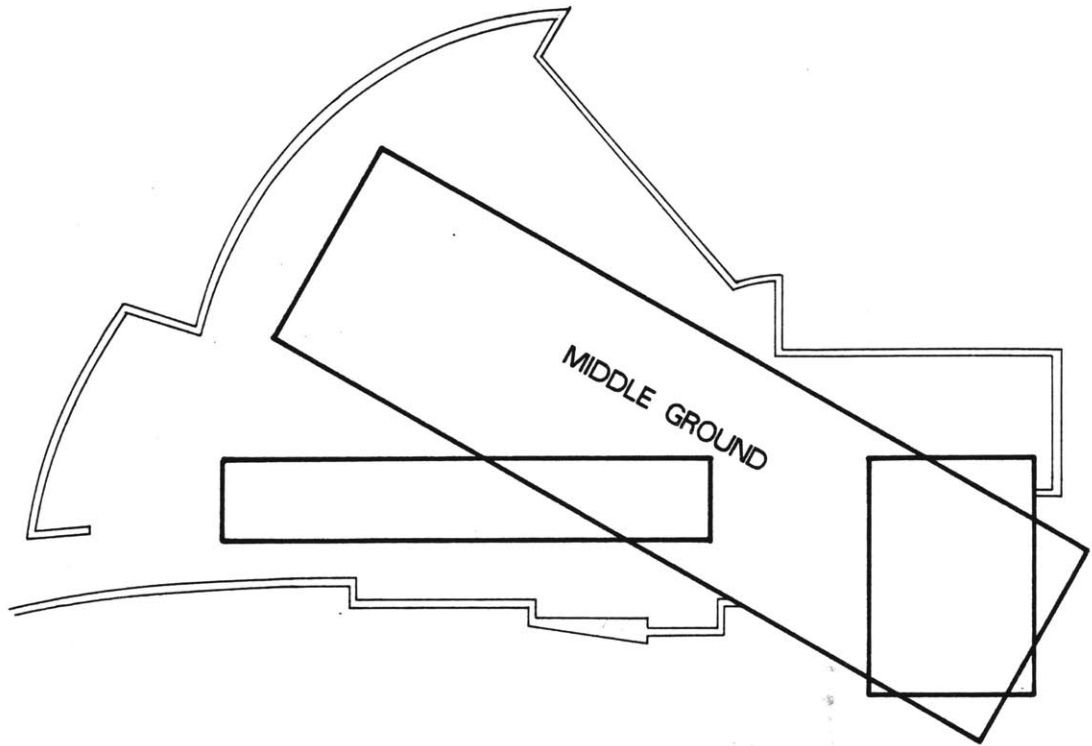


View of Kendall Square from site.

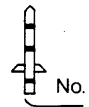
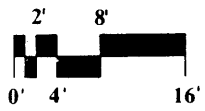
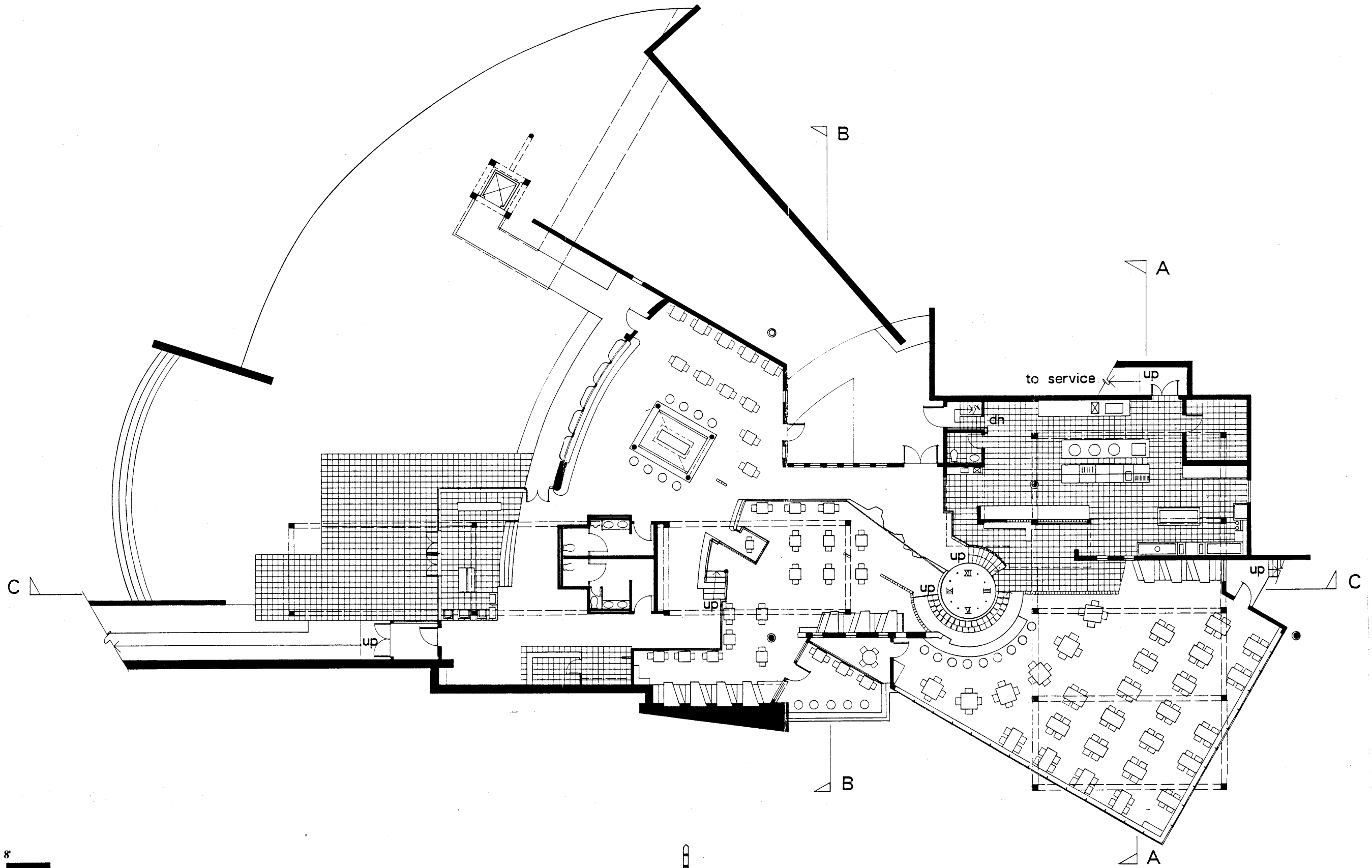


View of site and surrounding area.

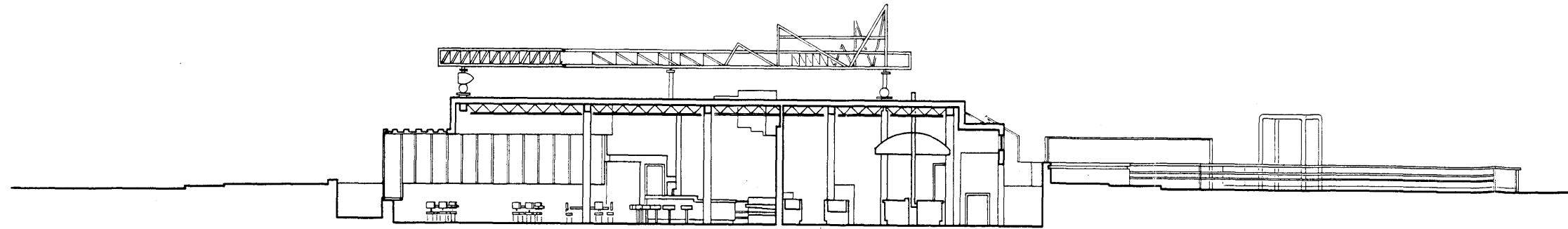




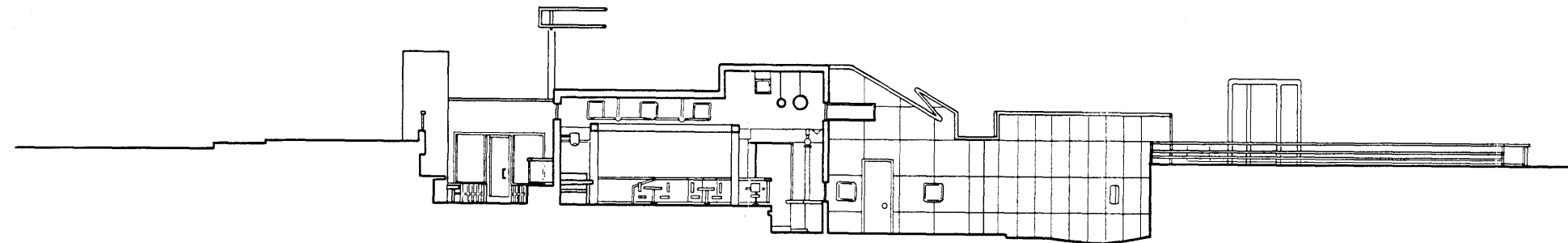
View down Western Connector to site.



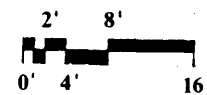
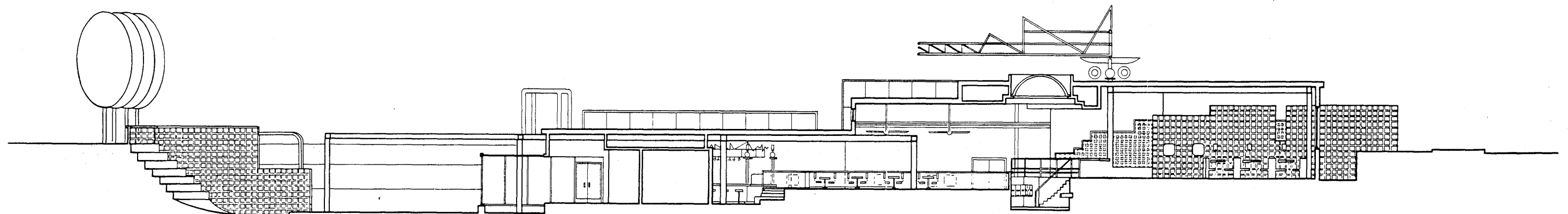
FLOOR PLAN



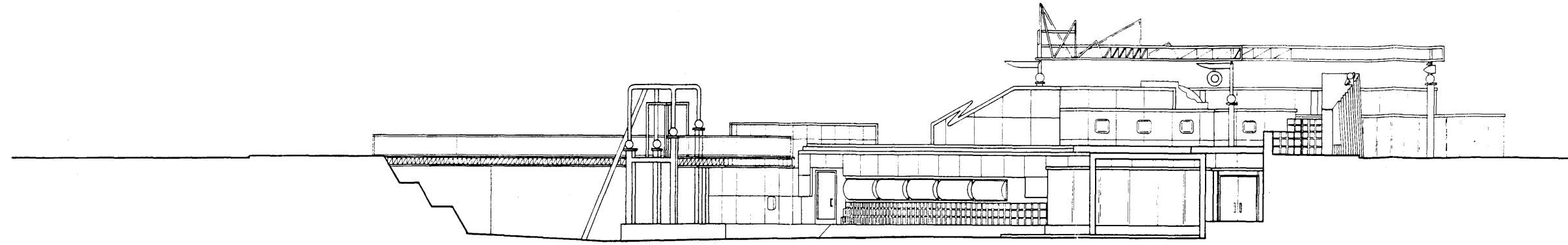
SECTION A-A



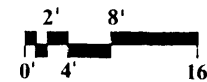
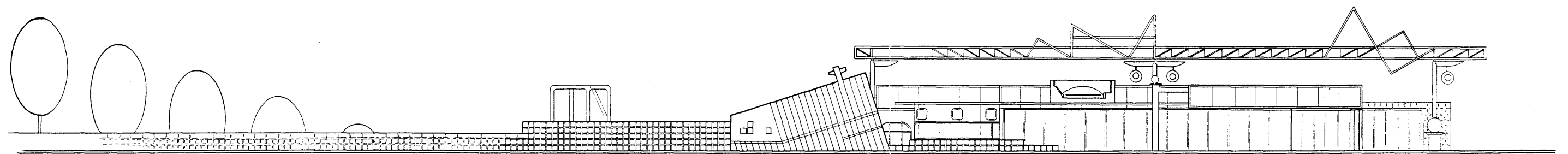
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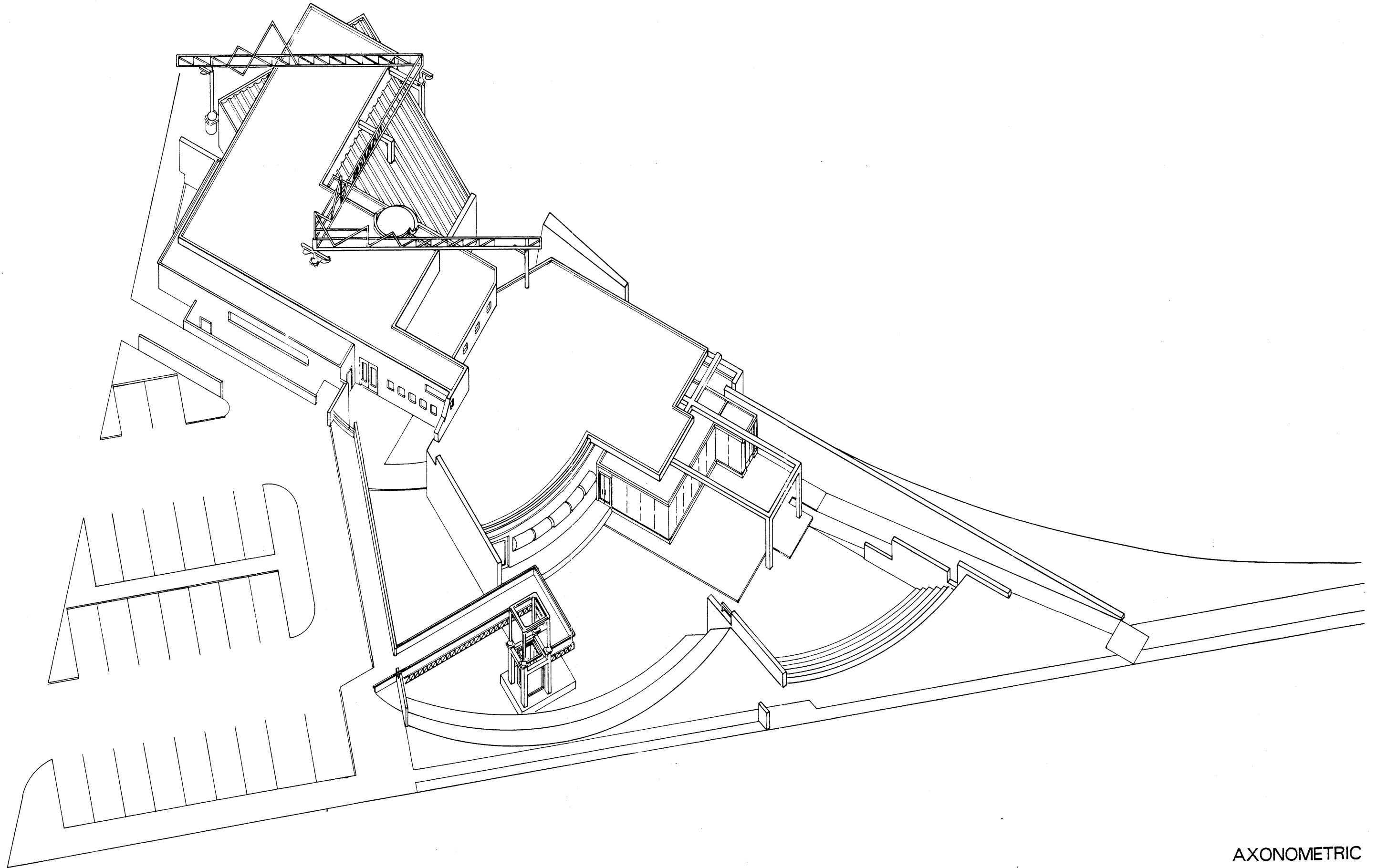
SECTION C-C



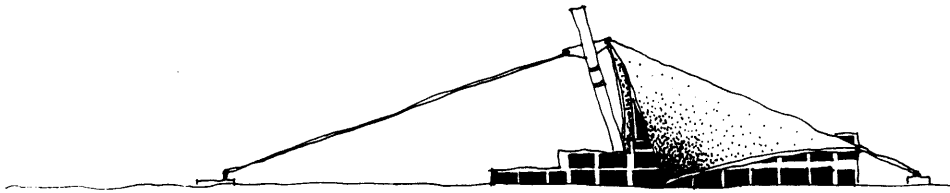
EAST ELEVATION



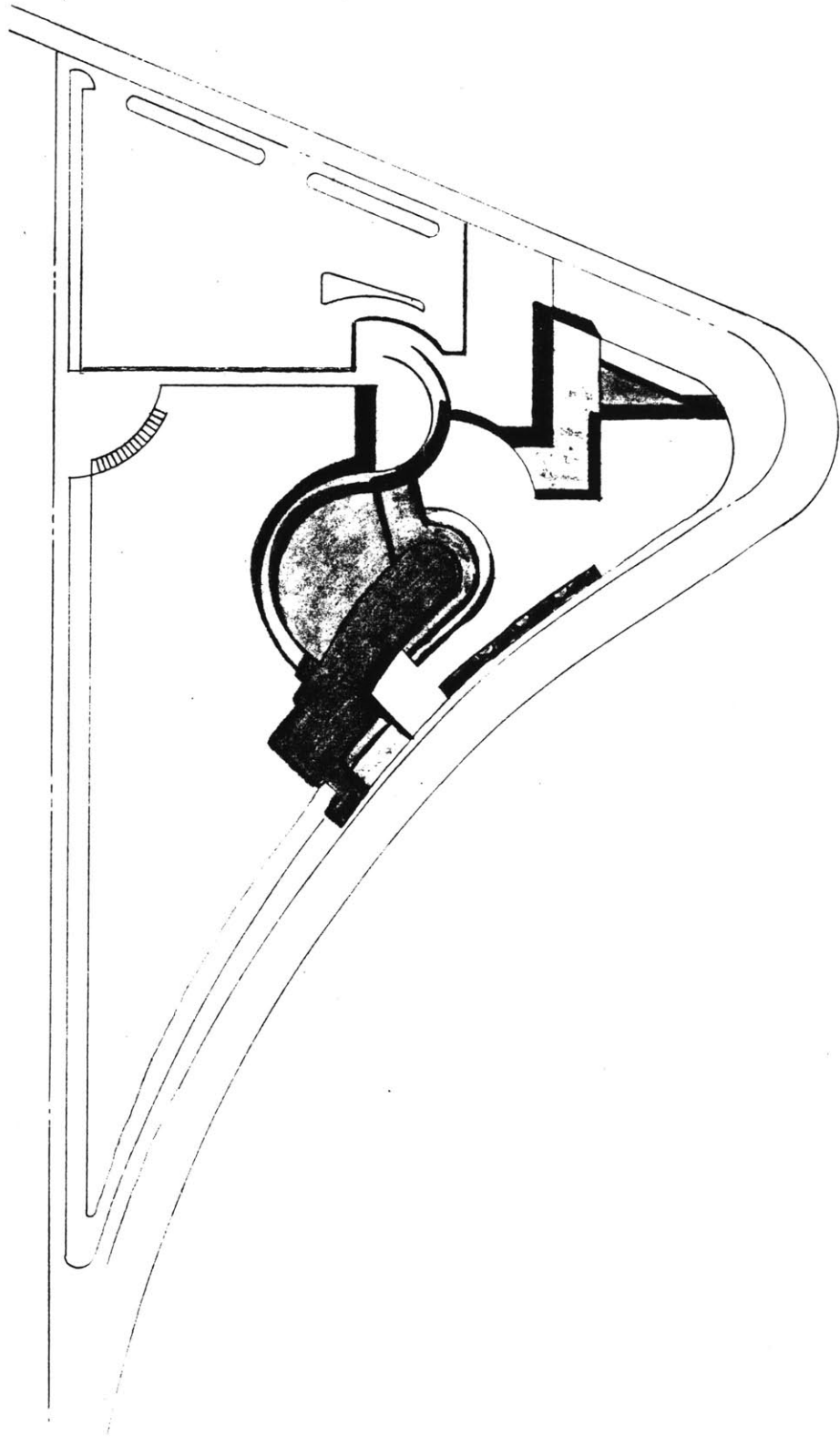
SOUTH ELEVATION



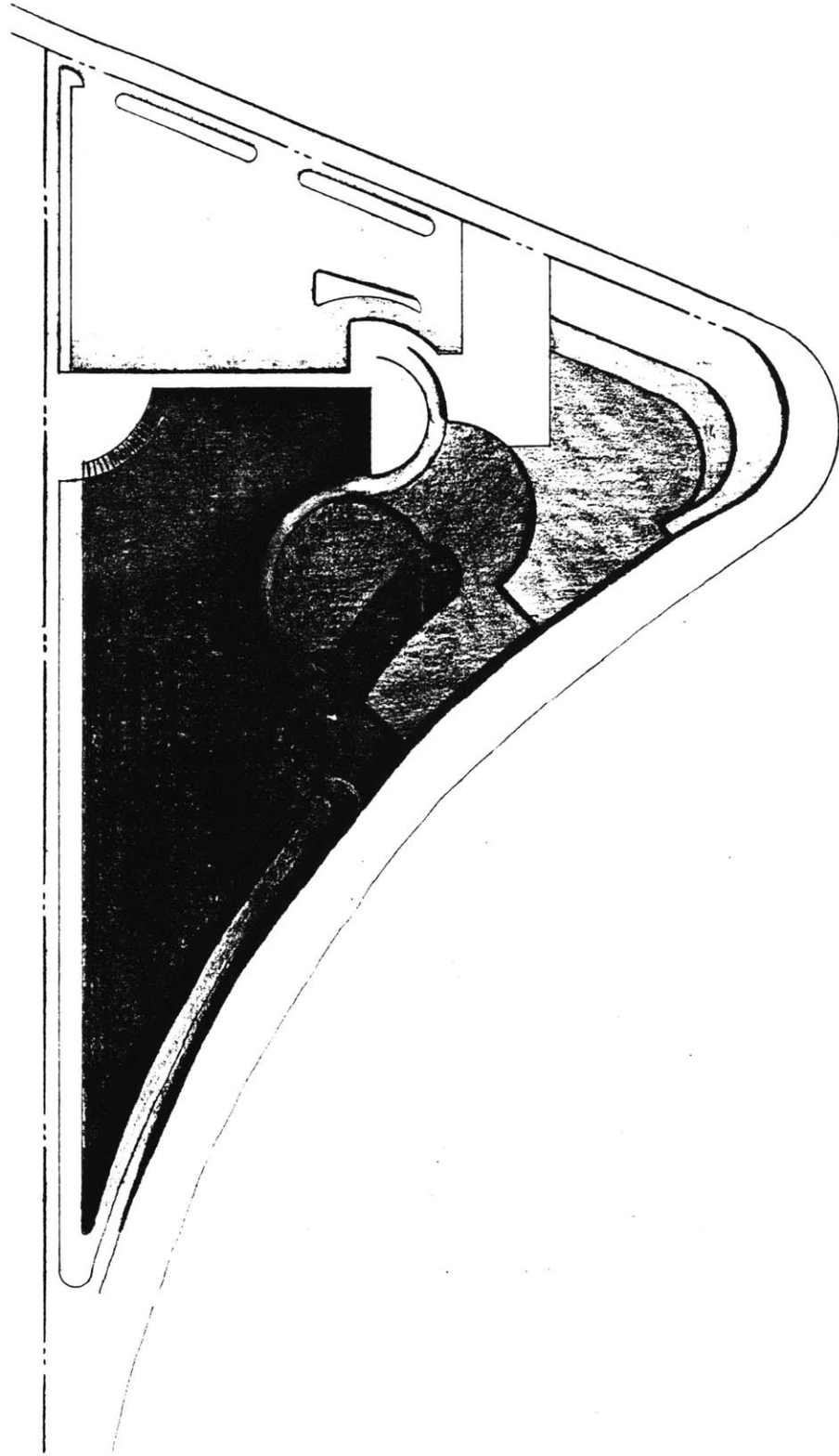
AXONOMETRIC



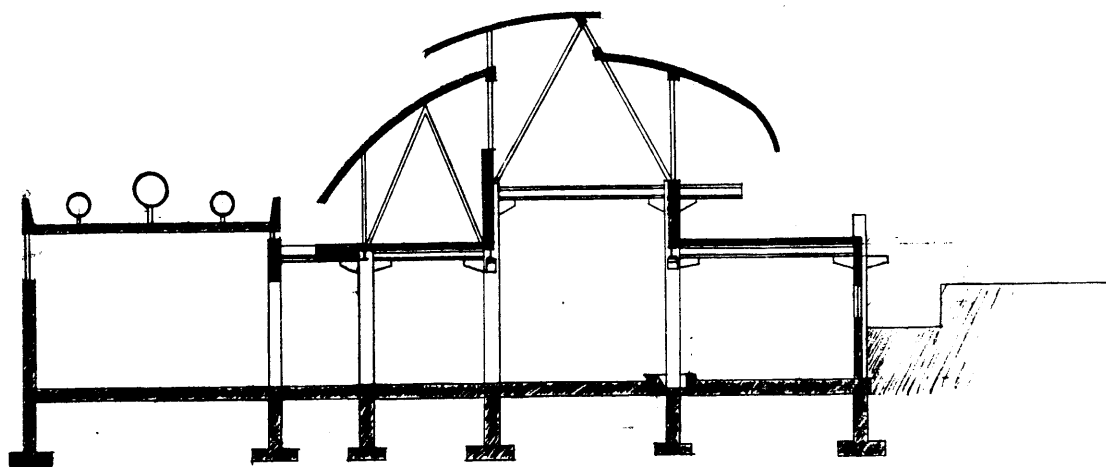
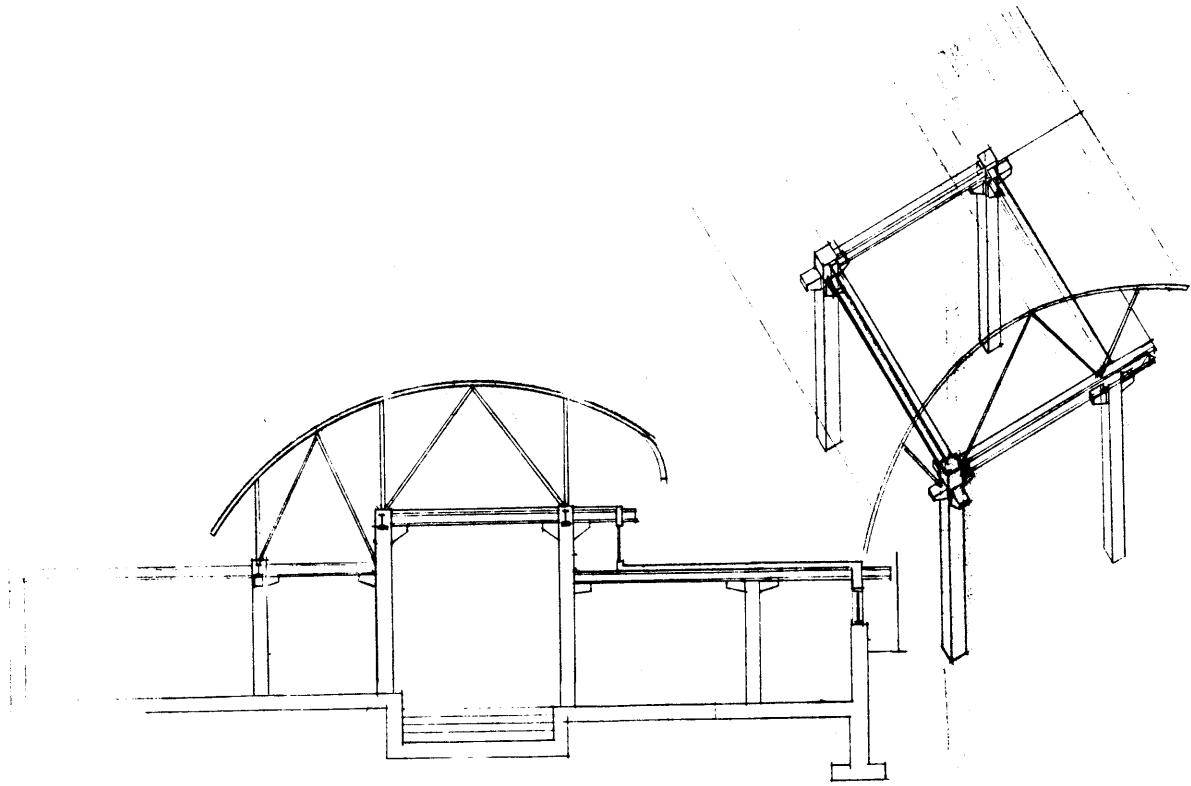
. PROCESS



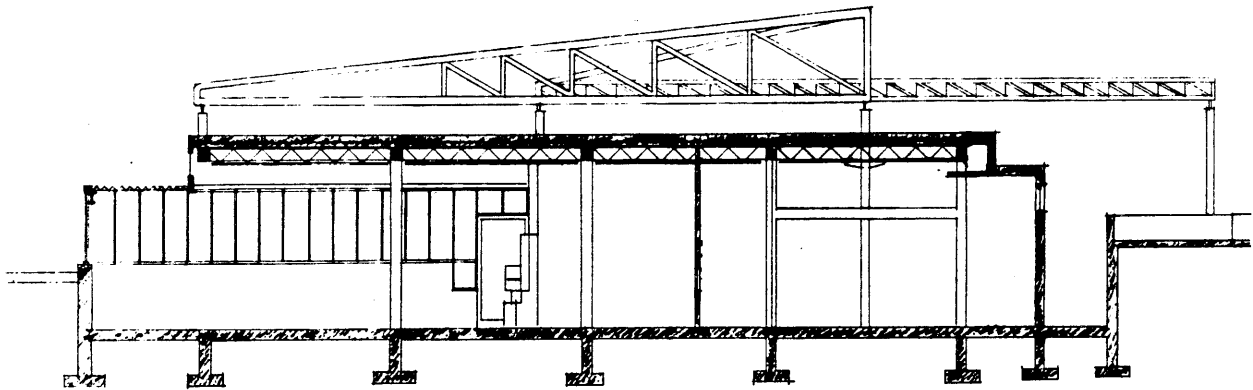
PROCESS *Initial massing study.*

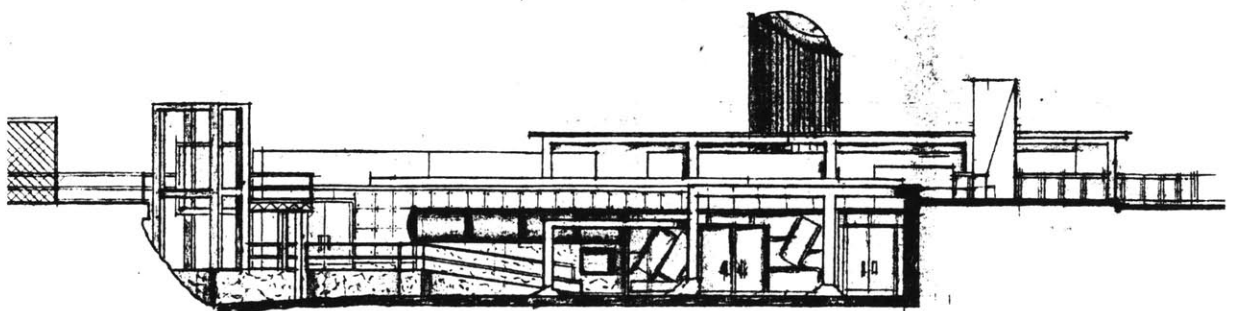
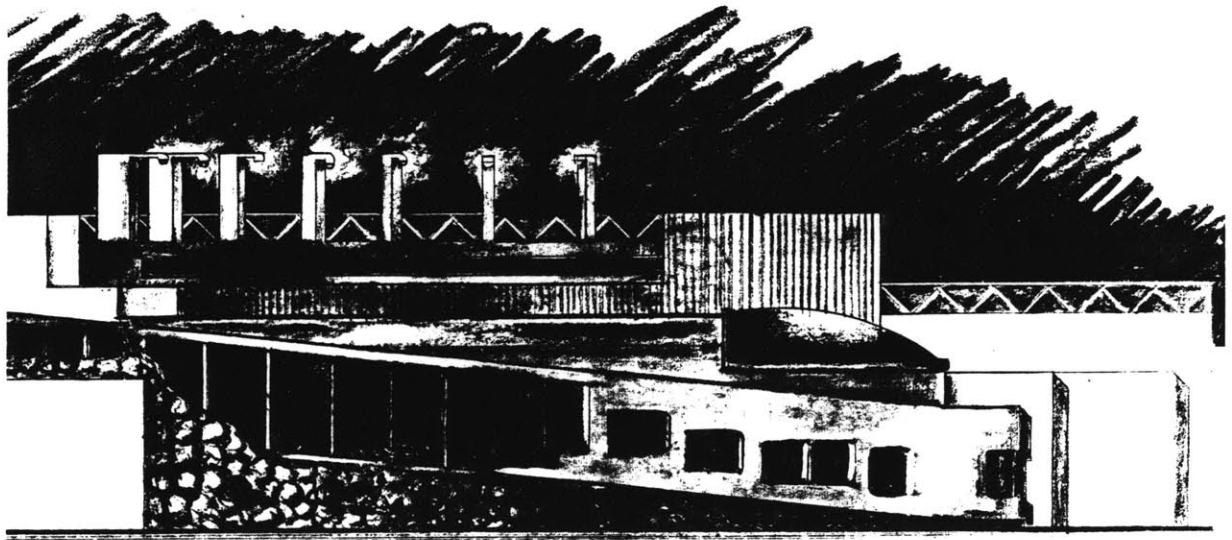


PROCESS *Initial ground form study.*



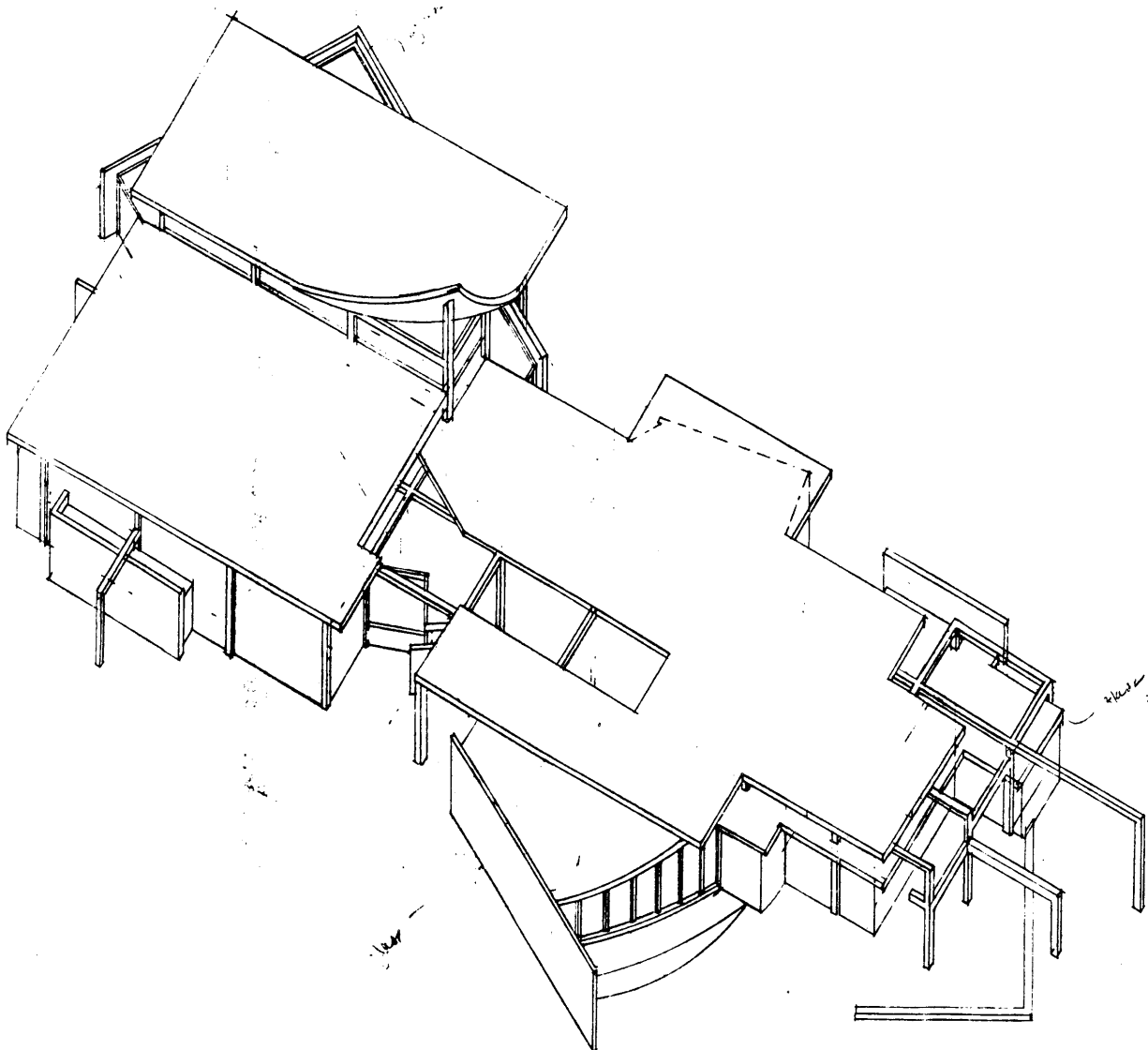
PROCESS *Section studies.*



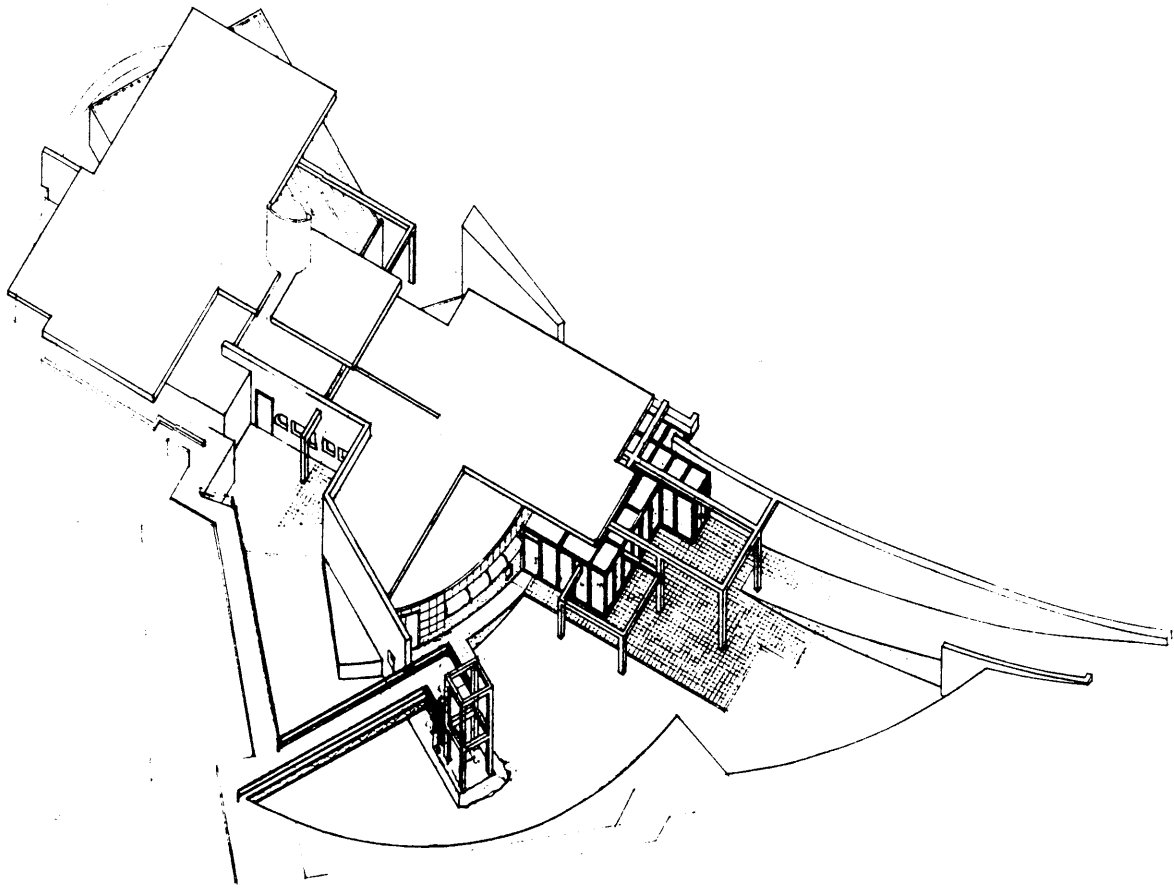


PROCESS *Elevation Studies.*





PROCESS *Axonometric studies.*



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