THE PRESENCE OF THE PAST:

An Investigation into the Application of History
in Architecture After Postmodernism

by MARK C. MCCONNEL

BACHELOR OF SCIENCE IN ARCHITECTURE. 1987
UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA Charlottesville, Va.

SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF ARCHITECTURE IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS OF THE DEGREE **MASTER OF ARCHITECTURE** AT THE MASSACHUSETTES
INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY.

JUNE 1989

Signature of the author _____
                                                                           Mark C McConnel
                                                                    Department of Architecture
                                                                             May 12, 1989

Certified by _____
                                                                            Bill Hubbard, Jr.
                                                                 Associate Professor of Architecture
                                                                          Thesis Supervisor

Accepted by _____
                                                                            Bill Hubbard, Jr.
                                                                              Chairman
                                                          Department Committee for Graduate Students

The Presence of the Past:
An Investigation into the Application of History in Architecture After Postmodernism

by Mark C. McConnel

Submitted to the Department of Architecture on May 12,1989 in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Architecture.

ABSTRACT

This thesis is the partial result of an attempt to reach a basis upon which design decisions can be made where they concern history in architecture. It deals broadly with the Modern and Postmodern movements and what has become known as the body of eclectic sentiment. It does not try to codify into a set of hard and fast rules any principles about when and how to apply certain theoretical dogmas but, rather, tries to find a method of discovering how to formulate a design or philosophical stance, with regard to a specific project, to which the architect can ethically adhere.

As a test case, my exploration included the design of the J. Hobart Bell Memorial School of Architecture and Resident College at The University of Virginia. This project, juxtaposed with one of the greatest eclectic (historicist) works in our hemisphere, provides an opportunity to examine some modern ideas concerning history in architecture in relation to one that has influenced U.S. architecture for over 150 years.

Thesis Advisor: Bill Hubbard, Jr.
Title: Associate Professor of Architecture

i

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: "Who do ya love?"

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE

Michel Foucault quotes Jorges Luis Borges quoting a certain Chinese encyclopedia in which it is written that "...animals are divided into: a) belonging to the Emperor, b) embalmed, c) tame, d) sucking pigs, e) sirens, f) fabulous, g) stray dogs, h) included in the present classification, i) frenzied, j) innumerable, k) drawn with a very fine camelhair brush, l) *et cetera*, m) having just broken the water pitcher, n) that from a long way off look like flies."

Such a confused taxonomy with its disconcerting proximity of extremes and lack of any recognizable criteria of judgement makes this classification comically incomprehensible. And yet, what to our eyes seems merely to be classificatory disorder may well be "another" kind of order or, in fact, a more quotidian and immediate understanding of "an" order. On the basis of what criteria are we to allow certain things to cohere, and augment our understanding (work), and which to leave aside because of their "obvious" inappropriateness?

Certainly we as architects are inundated with orders, systems, manifestos, movements, and fads, each of which, when viewed from the position of its author or proponents, makes "absolute" sense and is considered of great value. Although it would be impossible for each architect to investigate every avenue of thought presented in the field, it is essential to the progress of his/her design work to constantly seek out those ideas in direct opposition to those long held. By constantly re-examining design values, the architect has the opportunity to either reinforce his long held beliefs, compromise, or take on an entirely new philosophy to guide his designs. This does not apply to specific principles of design discovered by the architect such as the nature of materials (concrete will continue to be concrete), the primal connection of the hearth (fire) to the ground (fact of history), or the shape of ionic volutes (also a fact of history), but to the *theories of their application* in architecture.
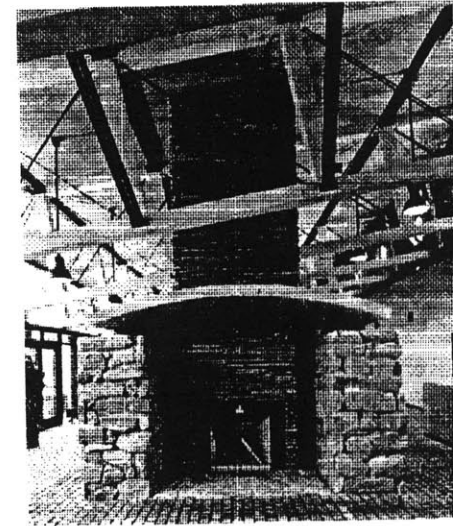
"Hearth"
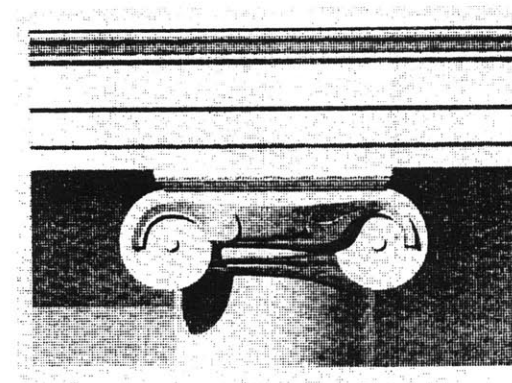
Ionic capital - second level of the Colosseum, Rome

2

The investigation presented in this paper is the result of a conflict I have experienced in my architectural education, that was purposely set up by me in the institutions I chose to attend. On the one hand I attended a school (that represented a school of thought) that relied heavily on historical referencing, believing that in so doing some of the damage done by the Modern Movement would be recompensed and by its connection with our collective (imagined) memory it would be better. The other school of thought was that, since we are living in a modern age, we don't need referencing to an architecture that is not of our age and embraced, more or less, the modernist ethos that the program, tectonics, and space alone dictated the form of the architecture. These two understandings of architecture have been with us and undergone stylistic gyrations since they evolved in mid 19th Century but are in the same form of arguments as at their inception but with a wealth of critical examples now present on both sides. One might observe that the modernists have made a more significant impact on our environment than did the eclectics because principles of the modern movement are so easily codifiable. However, in our society every person carries an enormous collection of associations with eclectic archetypes in his memory (Carl Jung called it society's "collective memory"). Perhaps this memory should not be completely disregarded as we try to design an environment which is enlightening, comfortable, and rich. I entertain a strong bias in this regard that will manifest itself throughout this paper.

Even before beginning my formal investigation I am convinced that this collective memory should **not** be assaulted with a historical eclecticism replete with literal icons from the past such as was the case with the Greek revival and neo-classical movements. The eclecticism of that time [the 19th century], like old imperialism, proceeded from a sort of natural history of civilization, from a systematic cataloguing of closed repertoires or from the realization of characteristic beauty or towards the assigning styles a value of illusionistic contents in the great history of urban typologies. Charles Jencks

4

presents the problem with this attitude: "In the nineteenth century there were many attacks on the facile mixing of styles, attacks on a weak aestheticism and a permissive jumbling of this and that. ... Between opportunism and freedom, shallowness and creativity, this eclecticism swung, never reaching a firm philosophical basis or teachable theory."[1]

Failure to incorporate a codifiable stance on the place that our architectural heritage should play in modern architecture has produced a weakly defined modern eclecticism that draws only upon the image of yet another eclectic era. The result of our adoption of such an ill defined and shallow type of historical referencing has widened the rift between the disciples of the modern movement and advocates of a referential architecture.

I am interested in discovering a method of working in architecture that permits a reconciliation between the divergent views on the process of architecture and avoids the "paste on" historicism .
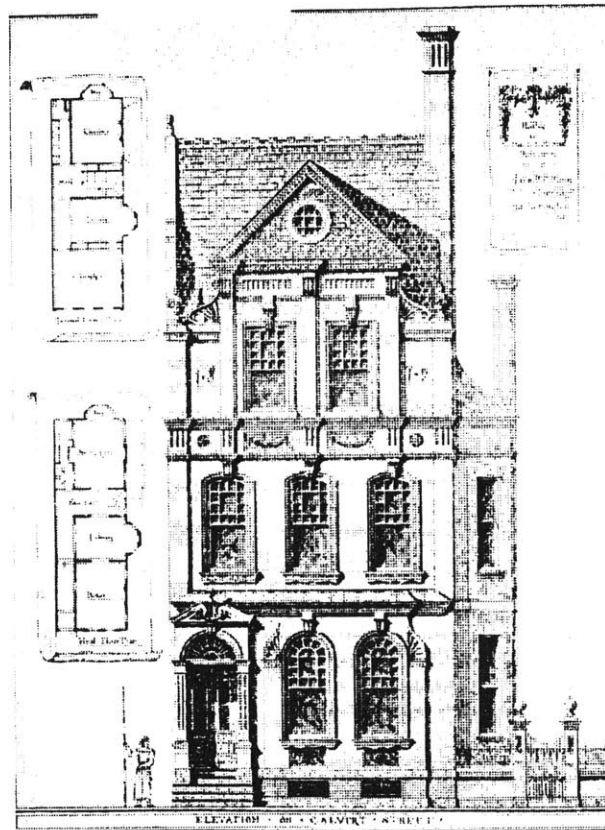
An example of 19th Century eclecticism

THE SITUATION

Thomas Jefferson may well have been America's foremost eclectic. He is certainly one of this countrys most well known "renaissance men" having some measure of expertise in almost all arenas, most notably, government and architecture. John Beckley writing in the summer of 1800 penned these words about Mr. Jefferson:

Jefferson, mild, amiable, and philanthropic, refined in manners as refined in mind, the philosopher of the world, whose name adds lustre to our national character, and as a legislator and statesman stands second to no man's — *Jefferson still lives*. On him then concentrate your present views and your future hopes. 2

He believed firmly in the future of this country and in all of the latest technology of his day. He was an inventor himself and established the U.S. patent office while serving as secretary of state under Washington.

He stated himself that his only joy in administering the office was that he was able to personally screen all of the latest inventions that passed through the patent process and frequently had the opportunity to test an inventions ability to perform. Jefferson was indeed on the cutting edge of his time in this and other fronts such as government, gardening (he had a 900 foot long experimental garden at Monticello), law, education, and scientific endeavors of all kind. Considering his progressive attitudes in almost every area, his apparently steadfast dedication to an architecture of the past appears to be somewhat an anomaly.

The method with which Jefferson applied what we now call "neoclassicism".or "eclecticism" was indeed at the cutting edge of architectural thought although it concerned itself with an architectural style and language developed over a millennia before his day. He applied neoclassicism with such rigor and devotion that it was largely because of him that it became our national architecture for 150 years, rather than one of the then popular styles. He wrote "But how

Jefferson by LaTrobe


The Jefferson Memorial. After his fsvorite style.

is a taste in this beautiful art [architecture] to be formed in our countrymen, unless we avail ourselves of every occasion when public buildings are to be erected, of presenting to them models for their study and imitation."3 One reason he was able to convince a young nation to believe that the classical tradition in architecture held some promise for the future was because he associated with the artifacts a complete set of ideals drawn from the short lived Roman Republic. He felt that the forms of antiquity, as well as being aestheticly pleasing (and more importantly - correct), were imbued with the very stuff of the democratic process and therefore democratic in *nature* and fitting of a new republic. I do not pretend that Jefferson did not genuinely like the way that classical works of architecture looked, or, in other words, did not find them aestheticly pleasing, in fact he wrote that he "stood staring at it [the Maison Carre] like a man at his lover" and "[it is] one of the most beautiful, if not the most beautiful and precious morsel of architecture left to us by antiquity....It is noble beyond expression."4 Beyond this sensual appeal was an intellectual awareness (alluded to in the latter quote) of the mathematics, geometries, theories, and most of all philosophies that deepened his affection for the works of the ancients.

Almost single handedly Jefferson brought Neo-Classicism to America convincing his kinsmen that it was their destiny to inherit that glory which was Romes. He provided models of the most revered of classical building for the people of America to imitate with precision such as the capital buildings in Richmond Va. and Washington DC. He introduced a little more license in the application of the orders at Monticello and numerous other private homes, which license was seized upon by the majority of the enlightened landed gentry in the area and has since over run suburbia to this day. But his most paradoxical use of classicism was to make its appearance in his last work, the University of Virginia. Here he stripped the orders off of the original edifices and applied them in every detail to buildings suited to the local building techniques in a manner similar to Palladio - his favorite reference. He
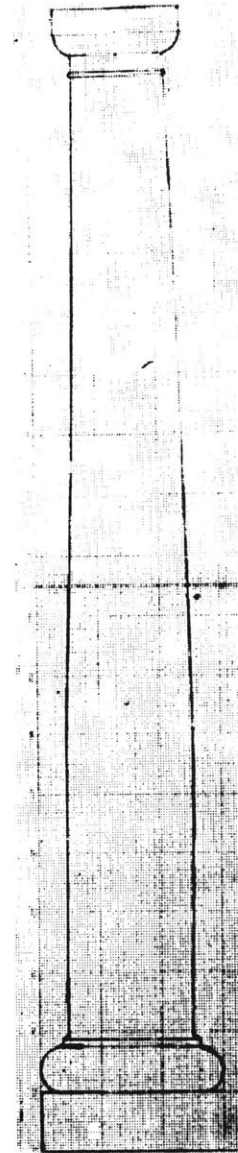
Jeffersons study for a column on the colonnade.

10
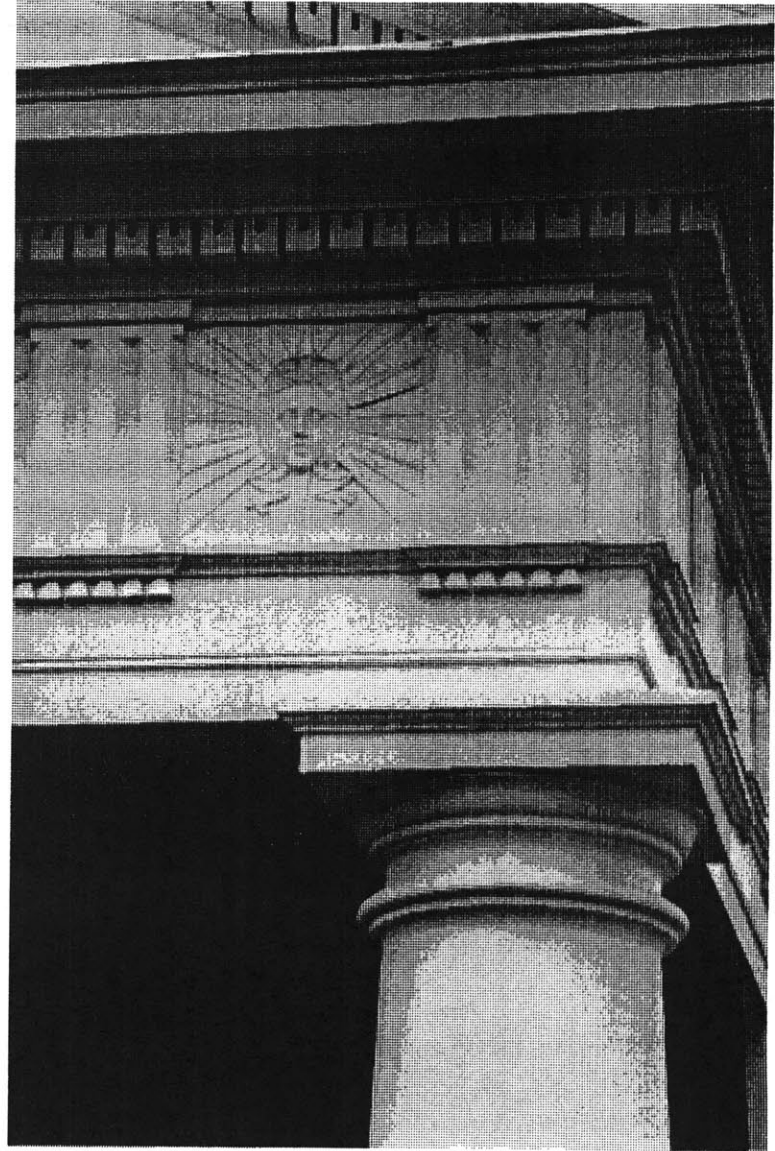
The cornice of Pavillion I from the Baths of Diocletian.

was very deliberate in the application of the rules and details but more importantly (and unlike most of the 19th century eclectics) he designed a work   of architecture that was grounded in a strong philosophy about education, antiquity, duty to community, the future of the new republic. So strongly are Jeffersons ideas documented in his architecture and writings about The University that they can be easily distilled and form a basis for further discussion on the continuing (modern) application of the same ideas.

West Colonnade

THE PRECIDENT

With Jeffersons dynamic achievements and considering the great esteem in which we, in general, hold his memory, it would be natural to suspect that our reverence for, and attention to, his designs for The University of Virginia (hereafter referred to as The University) would be due to an obvious sentimental attachment. This, however, is not entirely the case. Jeffersons designs for The University embody a thoroughness of thought about education, philosophy, building, history, and national direction seldom, if ever, so elegantly assembled in a work of architecture. He built a complex designed to make the participant therein reflect upon the nature of the place and the ideals underlying it. It was designed to influence the way education would be carried out and suggest ideas to the student and professor alike about their relationship to one another and to the world. He used the subtleties and details of the architecture to change the way people saw that very place from one moment to the next. In all, there are many logical and well founded reasons why The University is worth our study, not the least of which is the fact that it has succeeded to excite the imagination of American architects during the many decades since its conception.

Formally, Jefferson organized the school around a lawn in an open ended rectangle with student rooms, classrooms, and professors residences on the two long sides of the rectangle and the library closing off the short side of the rectangle. The student rooms are formed behind a low colonnade through which the larger pavilions are positioned at intervals along the lawn. In each pavilion was a classroom (down stairs) and the residence for a professor (up stairs) who taught in the classroom below. The library, with its associated classrooms, was the controlling element and gave a focus to the lawn. Behind each pavilion are gardens, some divided in half, bordered on either side by serpentine walls. At the other end of the gardens is an arrangement similar to the first, with student rooms, this time behind a less ceremonial (more rugged) arcade, and, where the gardens are divided in half, class-
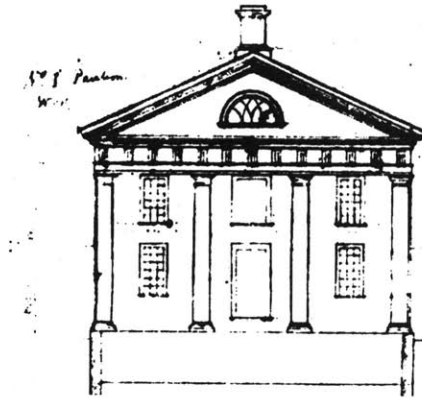
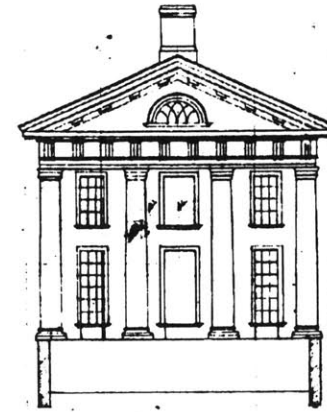Pavillion I

Pavillion II

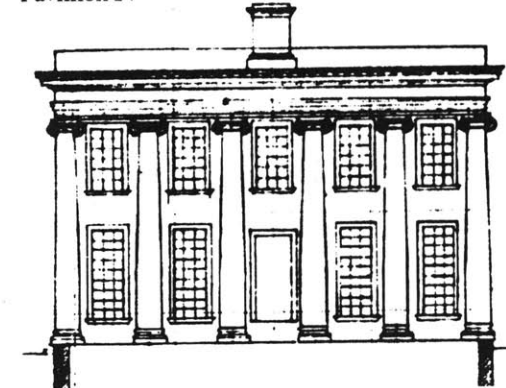Pavillion III

14
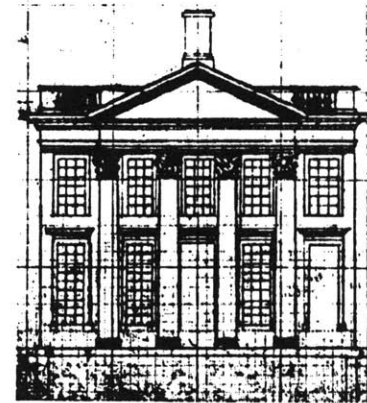
rooms and dining halls called hotels.

Formally Jeffersons plan sounds direct and simple. It is. And considered on the basis of a formal verbal account there is little to excite the imagination. But the formalities are just a framework or lifeless mannequin which Jefferson manipulated and upon which he draped his philosophical ideas. And as you stand in the lawn you are aware that there are ideas driving the organization. What Jefferson was, in fact, trying to do was bring into built form the intellectual embodiment of the "university process". That is, being that the process of higher education is a self motivated "happen anywhere" phenomena, although made more facile in the collective, it is not at all dependent on the bricks and mortar of the individual edifices themselves. The act of building the institution may well be a detriment to the very process of education because the existence of the THING as an institution implies salaries, government, statistics, etc. - none of which has anything to do with the intellectual process. In Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance Mr. Persig maintains that:

"The real University, he said, has no specific location. It owns no property, pays no salaries and receives no material dues. The real University is a state of mind. It is that great heritage of rational thought that has been brought down to us through centuries and which does not exist at any specific location. It is a state of mind that is regenerated throughout the centuries ....But the second university, the legal corporation, cannot teach, does not generate new knowledge or evaluate ideas. It is not the real University at all. Its just a church building, the setting, the location at which conditions have been made favorable for the real church (of reason) to exist. Most people...see the second university, but fail to see the first."5
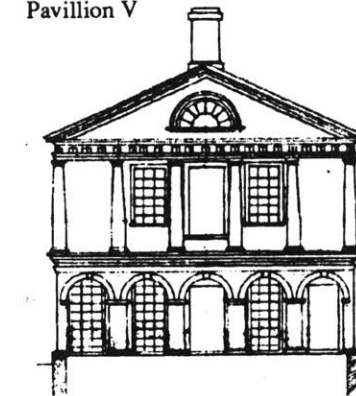
Being a severely practical man, Jefferson, no doubt was well aware of the "second university" but he was more than sympa-

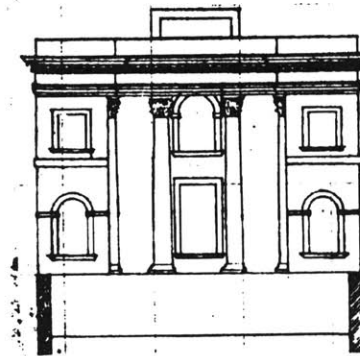Pavillion IV

Pavillion V

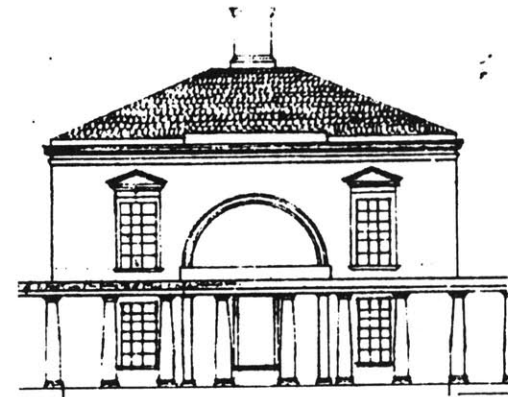Pavillion VII

Aerial view of Jeffersons University

thetic to the ideals of the "real" university and considered the task of designing The University more closely associated with the latter. Philosophically, Jefferson saw the The University as a metaphor for the very process of education to be carried on there. The library is that place that contains history, a deposit of all recorded knowledge, and serves as the fountain or source from which flows the beginnings of education. Education, in his mind, starts with what other people have found out before us and that is contained in history. So strong was his conviction about this principle that the organizing axis of the lawn starts from the center of the library and courses out in only one direction since the building is mono-directional. Reinforcing this idea was the choice of the Pantheon as model for the library building (as built "the rotunda" is one half the size of the original model). From the library the path of education takes one West, by the classrooms, professors, and fellow students all helping to shape the educational base you received from history. The path is built and disciplined (a private walkway for the professors is above you) and while nature is beside you it as a nature tamed and controlled by the intellect of man. At the finale of your formal education you would emerge to the West, the uncharted frontier of the intellect and of the United States. You go West to learn and tame and conquer, guided by the relentless axis that began behind you in the storehouse of knowledge.

The metaphor for education is, of course, the great underlying idea, but upon it Jefferson layered noteworthy examples of how to convey and improve upon that idea. He increased the importance of the rotunda by exaggerating the perspective when viewed from the open end of the lawn in at least two ways. First, he raised the rotunda and the apparent horizon, not only on its own very large base, but also by using a series of terraces with grass planted on their slopes so as to reduce the ability of the eye to find an easy scale.6 Secondly, the rotunda gains even more prominence by the exaggeration of perspective produced since the pavilions are spaced progressively closer together as they near the building. This also serves to
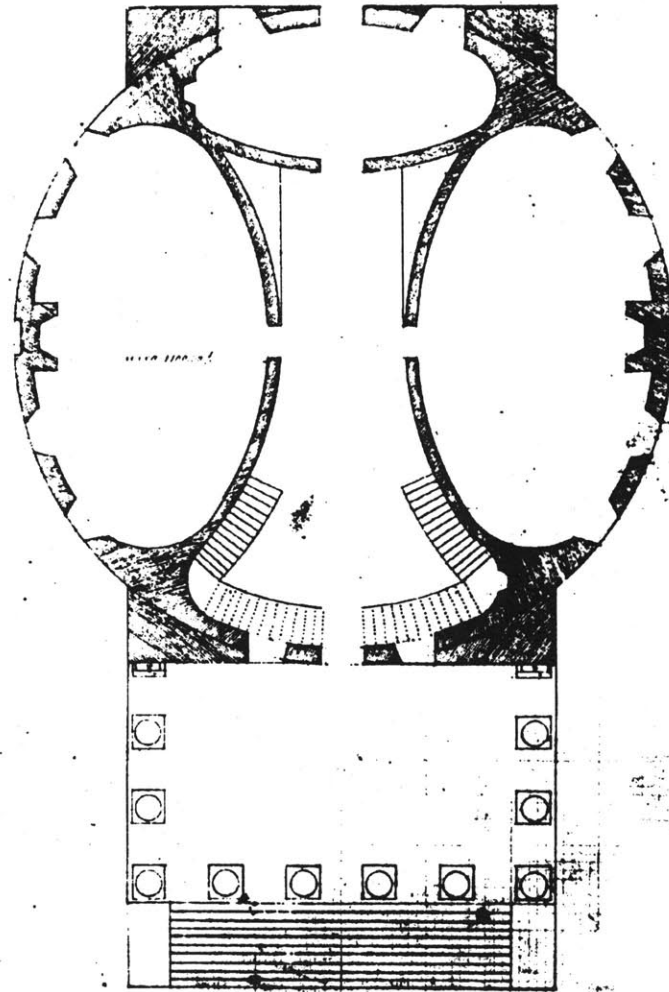

Pavillion VIII

Pavillion IX

Pavillion X

18
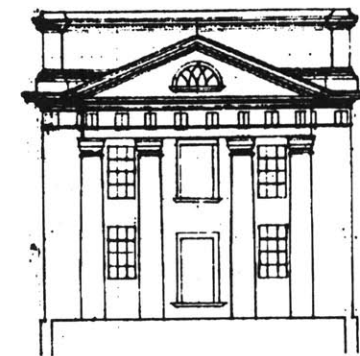
Rotunda 1st Floor

make the lawn seem more intimate when viewed from the other direction. The progression from one end to the other is also suggested in the classical orders used on each pavilion. On the facade of each pavilion is an order from a classical building, correctly represented in every detail, that Jefferson chose for the purposes of educating the architecture students specificly and the entire student body in general. These orders progress from the absolutely correct Doric of the Baths of Diocletians on Pavilion One to the "modern" Ionic of Scamozzi (influenced by LeDoux's Hotel de Guimard in Paris) on Pavilion Nine indicating a certain path or evolution of even classical knowledge

Citing all of the known representations of Jeffersons ideals embodied at The University would take some time and may not be within the scope of this investigation. I will, however, point out other manifestations of his philosophies as they apply in the development of this paper.

View of Rotunda from Lawn

SINCE JEFFERSON

Almost immediately after the death of Jefferson in 1826 the directors of The University began to derail his educational metaphor. Future expansion of the school was to be carried out in the manner of most of the major institutions in the country; with some semblance of a master plan but with no driving concept and, in most cases, completely separated from the town within which it was located. These two primary changes had a disastrous effect on the direction that Jefferson had foreseen for The University. In the first place, an institution built without some directing ideology is nothing more than a collection of buildings and the individuals inhabiting them (much like the lifeless "second" university mentioned earlier); with the built environment adding little or nothing to the acts of the institution. Secondly, the connection with the "real world" of the surrounding town is extremely important because it is society that helps shape the education and for whose benefit, we would

hope, it is undertaken.

Added to the changes mentioned above was a simple formal exercise that, more than anything else, symbolized the defeat of Jeffersons initial direction. In 1896 the rectors of The University, recognizing the need for more classroom space, commissioned the New York firm of McKim Mead & White to design a building that would close off the end of The lawn. Although the design was done in a neo-classical style of which Jefferson would, no doubt, approve, the placement of the building provided a terminus for the axis and cut off the view to the frontier West. Jeffersons metaphor was formally crushed. Although the students elevated the metaphor to the status of legend and it continues to live in thought, it has lost its physical and formal reality and remains spoken of in the past tense.

Upon first consideration of the need that U.Va. has for a new School of Architecture building the desire to rectify the wrong done by closing off The lawn came to the forefront of thought. One sentiment popular among those familiar with the situation, is


University medical complex
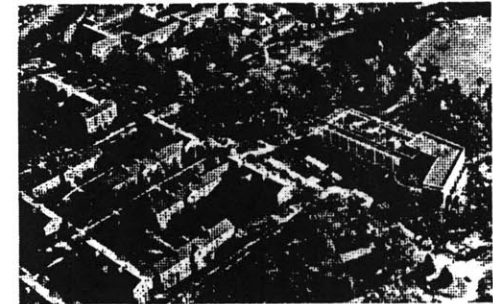
Gilmer Hall, the chemistry school

Cabell Hall which closed off the view to the West that Jefferson had so carefully orchestrated

that the first design move would be to re-move Cabell Hall (the McKim Mead & White building) and re-expose the original design metaphor. However pleasant the idea of giving the Jeffersonian metaphor a renaissance may be, the same historicist questions come into play as when you dis-cuss resurrecting any artifact from the past. Since it was built in the spirit of his (Jeffer-sons) day, would it have the same meaning for us? Would that meaning have any rele-vance and raise our level of understanding about the place? What, if anything, in the modern context (both built and intellectual) has changed that would invalidate or render mute the original arguments? Is it appropri-ate? Is it ethical? Only the latter two questions make no appeal to some logic and, although passing the barrier of the purely intellectual, remain paramount to our deci-sion making process. All the decisions pre-sented in the rest of this thesis will build upon the ethical adherence to what I have decided is an appropriate stance on the prob-lems at hand.
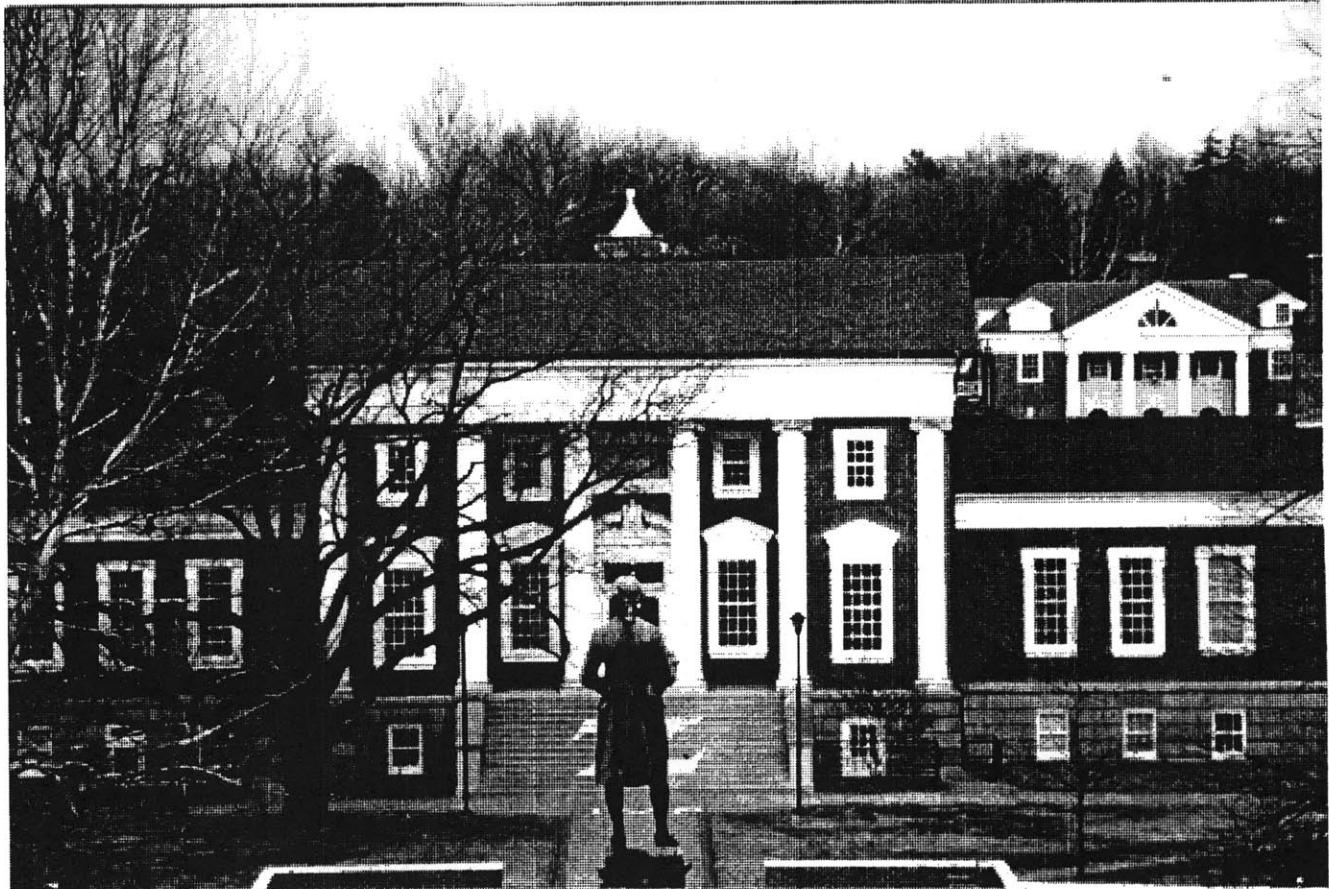
View towards the site from the Rotunda

THE DESIGN QUESTION

Unlike Jefferson, our understanding of the value of the past, or rather, the ideas developed in the past, lie not in the wholesale replication of ancient artifacts but the adaptation of their essence that applies to us and our day. In this problem I examine the most powerful reference at hand (among a few others) because these are in the collective memory of the people of that area. I seek to bring those references into our modern world and have them retain some of their emotive physiognomy and connection with the collective memory while not delving into the sentimental attachment we seem to have for things old.

The J. Hobart Bell Memorial School of Architecture complex is situated on Jeffersons axis but to the East of the rotunda, at the end of an open bowl affectionately known as "Mad" bowl after Madison Hall (the university presidents office) located at one end of the field and opposite the rotunda. Thus, Jeffersons axis courses from the rotunda through Madison Hall, Mad bowl, and into the site for the new architecture school. On on one side of the axis is a row of several large neoclassical houses as well as one especially large (and neoclassically correct) house that flanks the axis and faces parallel to it into the bowl. A set of railroad tracks curve gently through the site in a deep ravine.

The school complex will contain classroom, studio, and lecture hall space for approximately 350 students as well as the associated library and exhibition spaces. Also included is a "resident college" type of housing for 250 students and 20 professors and their families. Within the housing is a dining hall and (above it) a public information center and reading room with computer banks and reference material for general use.

The new school of architecture takes its formal arrangement ques from Jeffersons original campus in that the different parts of the school are on two sides of an open green space that I will also call "the lawn" (small "t"). Instead of using a bi-laterally symmet-
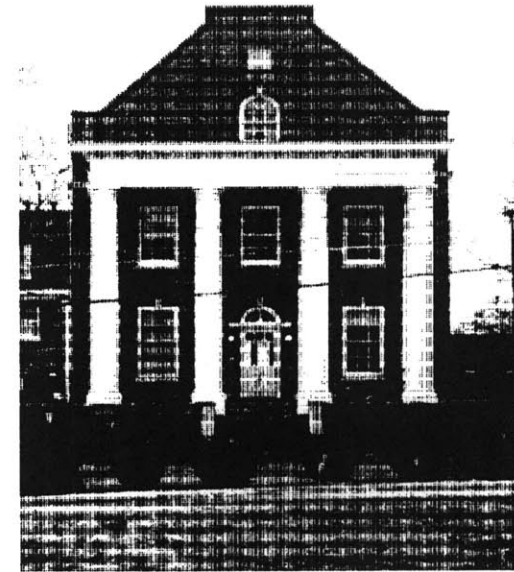
Fraternity house on Madison Lane

Another Fraternity house

The two houses closest to the site. The one on the left is on the site and will remain.

VIew into the site along Jeffersons axix.

View along the tracks that curve through the site.

rical distribution of uses I developed just the opposite. The parts of the program that would be thought of "daytime" institutional uses were arranged on the side of the lawn most closely associated with buildings of The University and the housing and "on their own" or "after hours" activities on the side more closely associated with the town. For example the dean and faculty offices, classrooms, lecture halls, exhibition spaces, and conference rooms are located on the university (Rugby Road) side while housing, studios, library, dining hall, and woodshop etc. are on the town (Madison Lane) half. At first glance the formal division of uses appears logical as well as in open contradiction to what Jefferson had in mind. It is, but it is also an attempt to introduce the student to the idea that the path of education is formed not only by the institution but by the world (town) of which they are citizens.

Although the primary reference to Jeffersonian ideals is exhibited in the reappearance of a lawn, here the idea is put forward that the Westward direction of Jefferson's lawn is no longer the salient element in the scheme. In fact, now the rotunda has two portico's (the second portico being added after the fire of 1889) helping to strengthen a modern idea that the axis representing the path of education is not monodirectional and that the frontier is no longer found solely to the West. The idea of the frontier has lost its physical significance permitting the axis to come full circle and become and infinite path along which we (the student) move, having our education formed and influenced continually, sometimes by formal and ordered institutions and sometimes by the seeming lack of order found in the world (represented here by the town). If there is a "physical" frontier in modern terms, space (whether architectural or of the "outer space" variety) is the logical designate.

The lawn in the architecture school begins with conditions similar to those of Jeffersons; relatively symmetric, axially organized, and downward sloping. The axis then becomes a line of registration or datum without the bi-lateral symmetry necessarily present in neo-classical schemes and, at the same time, begins very gradually to slope up-

Site plan in context of Jeffersons original University

31
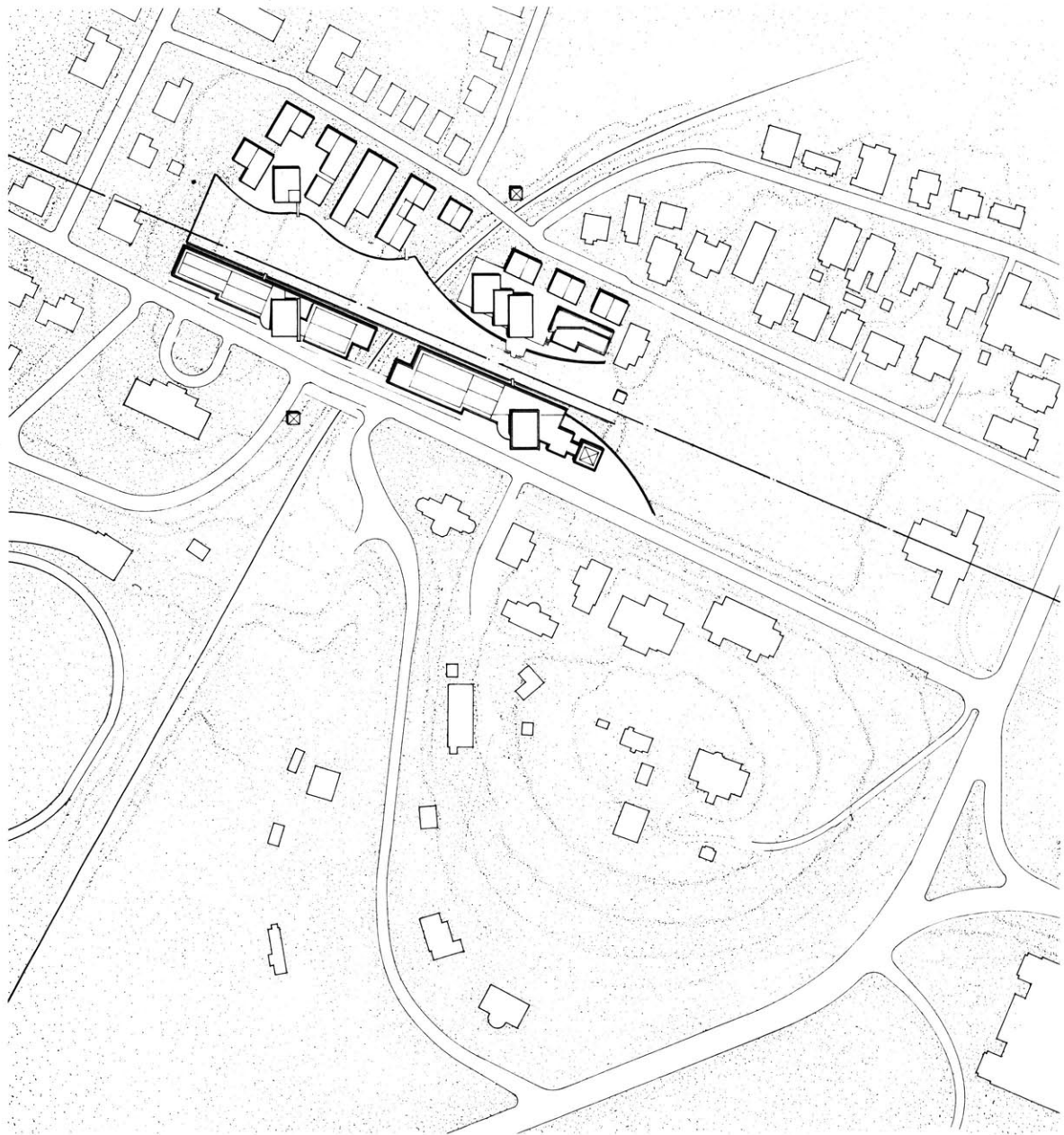
wards to the East. The slope of the lawn becomes progressively steeper (as if you were traveling inside the long side of an ellipse towards the end) finally coming to an end in a straight line with a slope steep enough to present some effort on the part of the pedestrian walking towards the artificial horizon. This permits the axis to become free of the earth and any terminus that the eye of the viewer might contrive for it. *The lawn is its own entity.* It is restrained on the sides by battered concrete retaining walls; towards the school by the unrelenting order of the institutional grid to form a straight line while the side towards the housing (town) exerts a different, more irregular, order and the lawn adjusts itself to that edge. The lawn serves as the common meeting place for the two, sometimes divergent, influences on the educational process.

Instead of the columns on the institution side of the lawn forming a colonnade in the traditional sense, as on The lawn, here the activity of the building is pressed to the edge of the line of columns giving the lawn a more immediate sense of juxtaposition with the buildings. The buffer zone traditionally created by the colonnade is used on the street side of the building, in effect buffering the building from the noise of the street rather than being that transition zone between the lawn (nature) and the building; buffering what is now the rough edge.

The other side of the lawn is of quite a
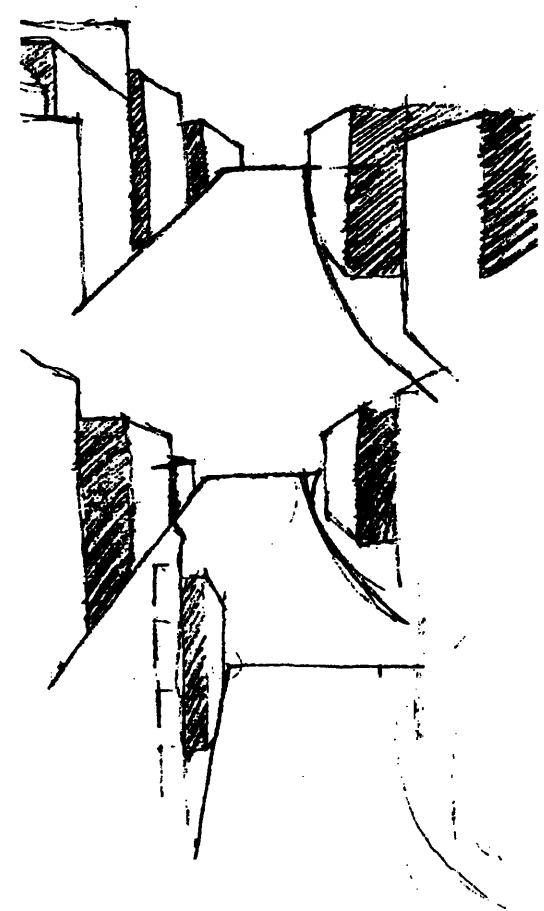
Sketches of the potential view down the new lawn.

34
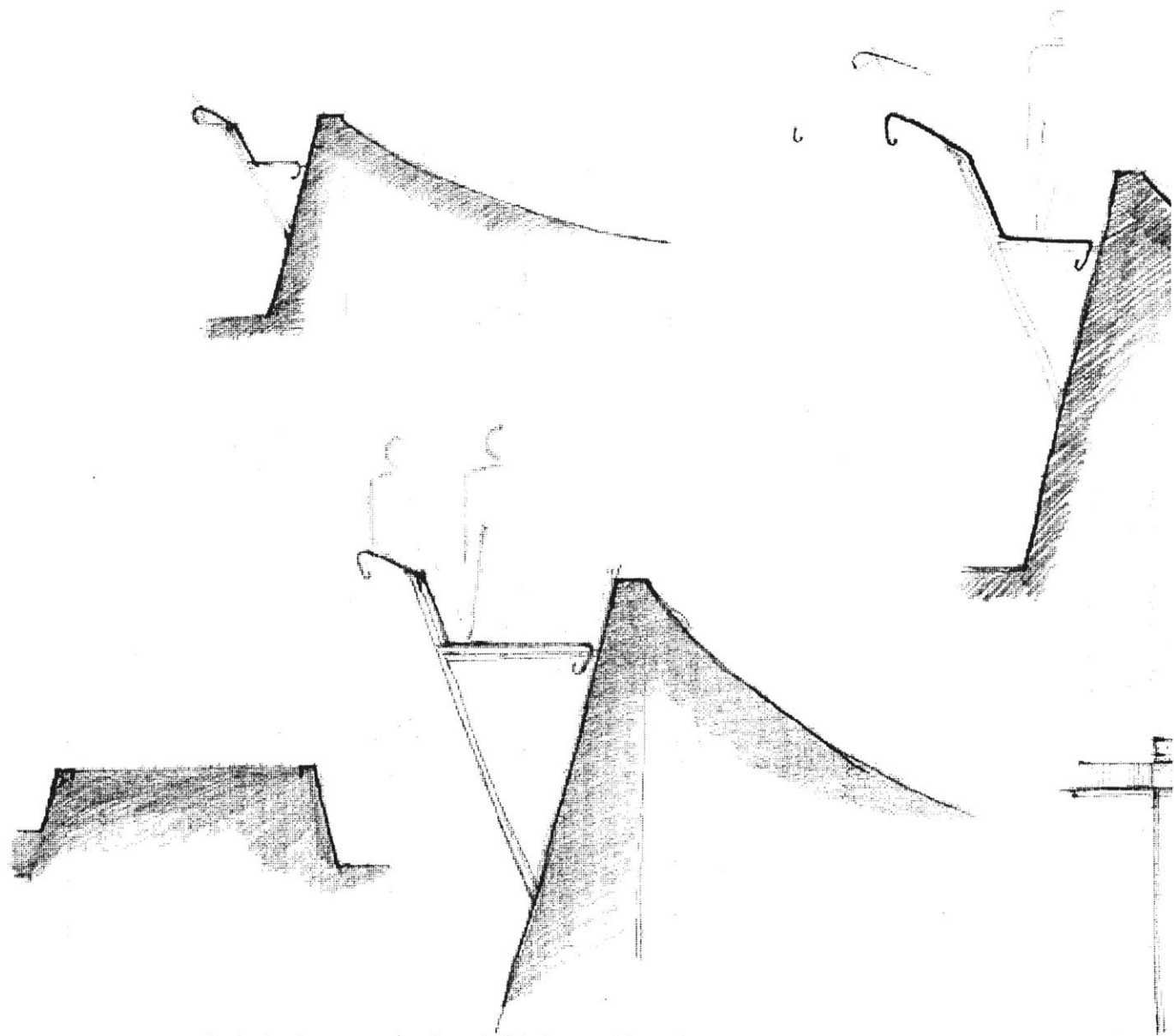
Study sketches concerning the end of the lanw and its section.
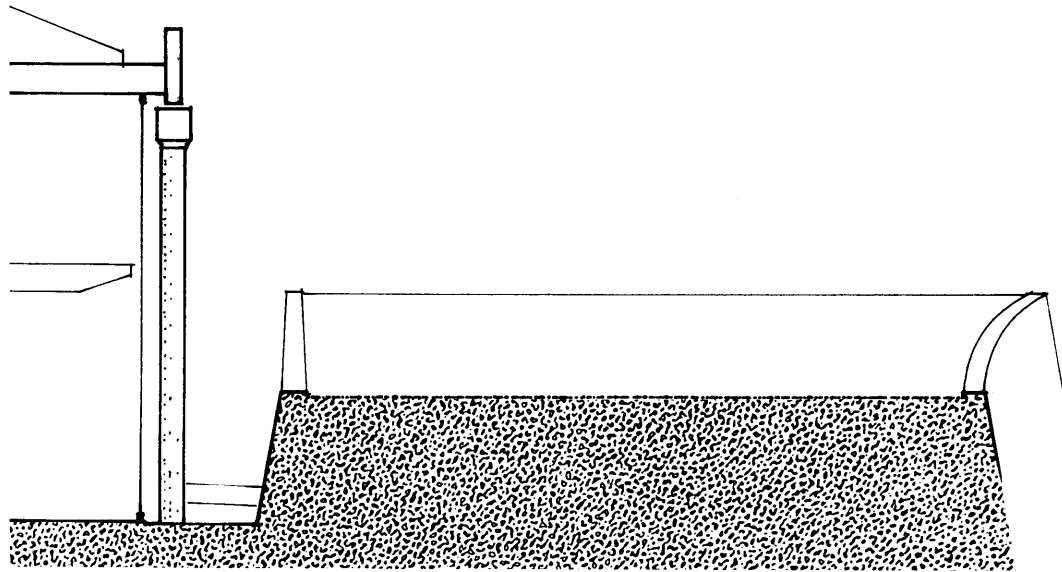
Cross section through lawn
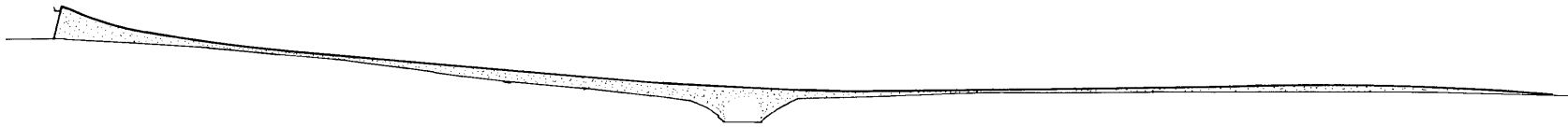
Longitudinal section through lawn
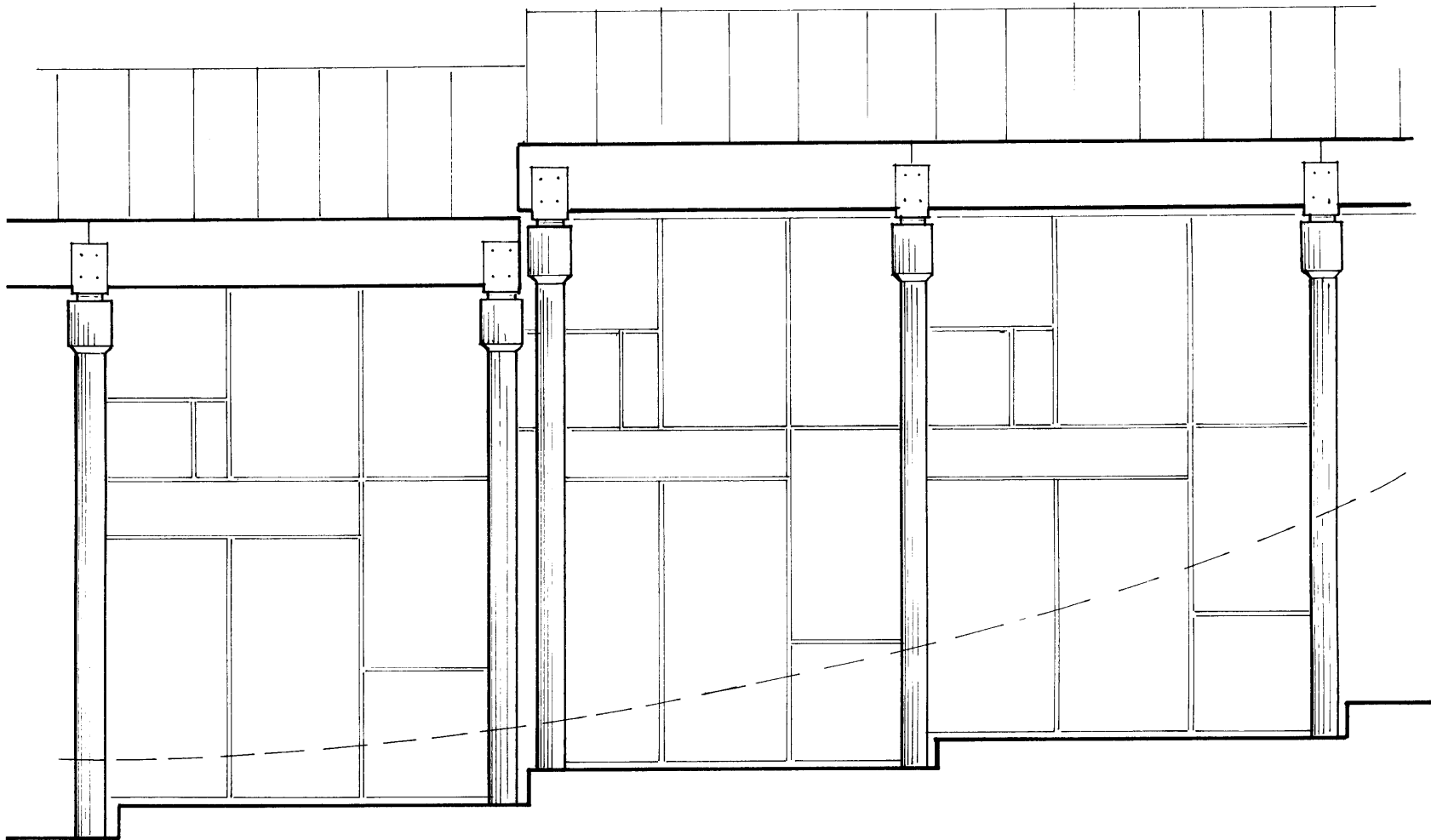
Elevation of new colonnade

37

different nature both programmatically and in the rendering of the forms. The housing units align themselves with the street, symbolizing in this case an alignment with the world at large and the form of the housing is itself derived from the house forms in the vicinity with similar dimensions separating the housing blocks. This would help promote the attitude among the students that, even though attending the institution, they are members of the larger world community surrounding them. While obviously connected in most aspects with its source, the town, it uses the structural grid size of the institution, the source of its physical reality. A dense "real" brick wall surrounds the town end of each building in direct relation to the "wall" construction of the local houses. This closure system breaks down progressively as it gets closer to the lawn and its termination in a column and lintel system.

Towards "Mad" bowl the housing forms an edge of a three building (type) complex with the library and studios, each building aligned with its specific purpose; the library with the university, the housing with the street, and the studios Northward for lighti and with a system to be explained later. The space developed between the buildings accentuates the dissimilar nature of the three buildings, being small enough to bring the different orientations into marked juxtaposition.

Two other direct references to Jefferson and his buildings occur in the overall planning of the complex that have more than the obvious formal importance. The first concerns itself with Jeffersons awareness of, and conviction to, the ideas of the French enlightenment where they concerned euclidian geometry. It was while serving as our minister to France just before the French Revolution that Jefferson frequently entertained the bright young stars of French architecture and since little building was going on at the time they (both Jefferson and the architects) spent their time discussing architectural theory. The belief held in common was that by using the principles of euclidian geometry, which they considered to be eternal (as do most mathematicians of our day), in a work of architecture, it to would possess
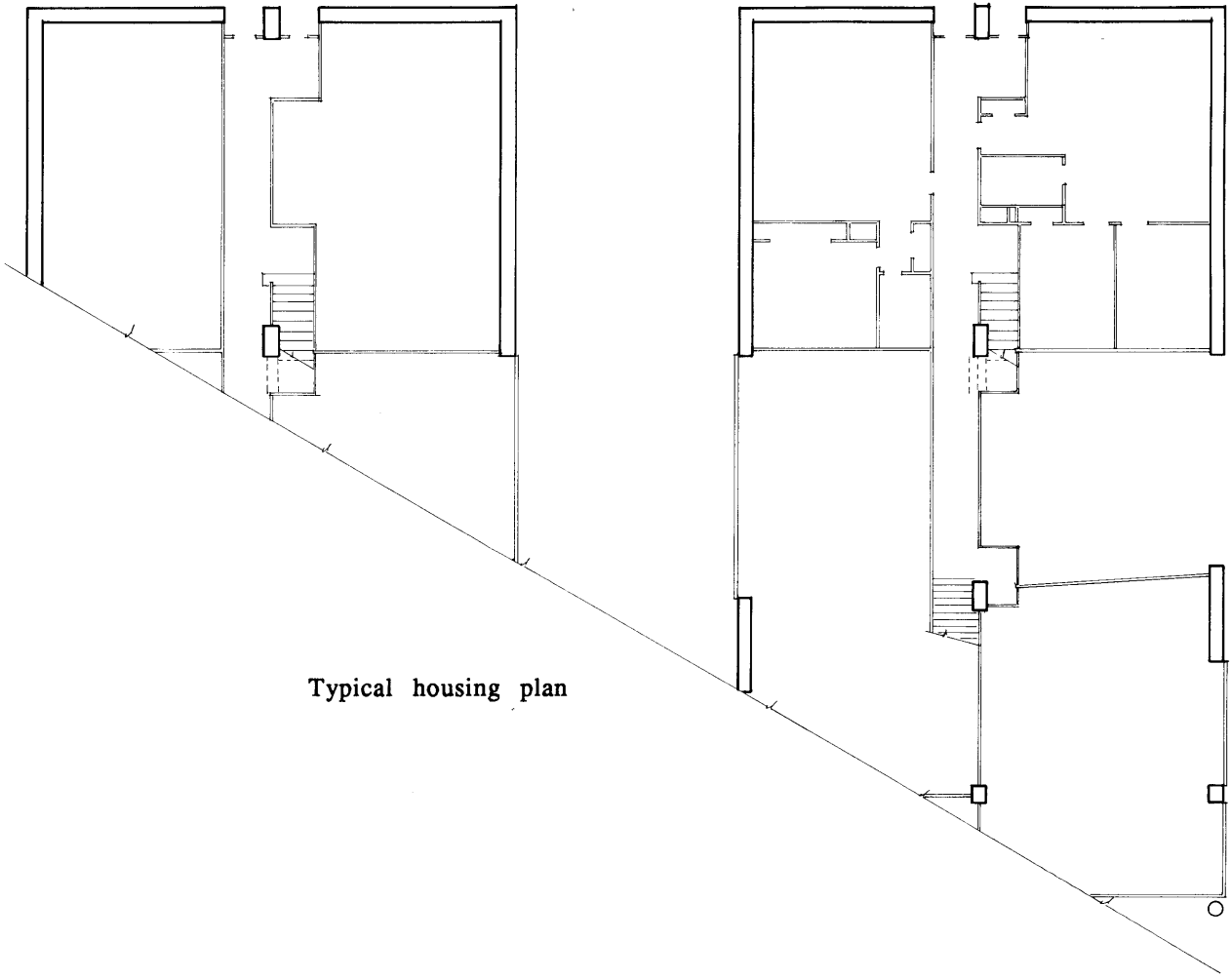
Typical housing plan
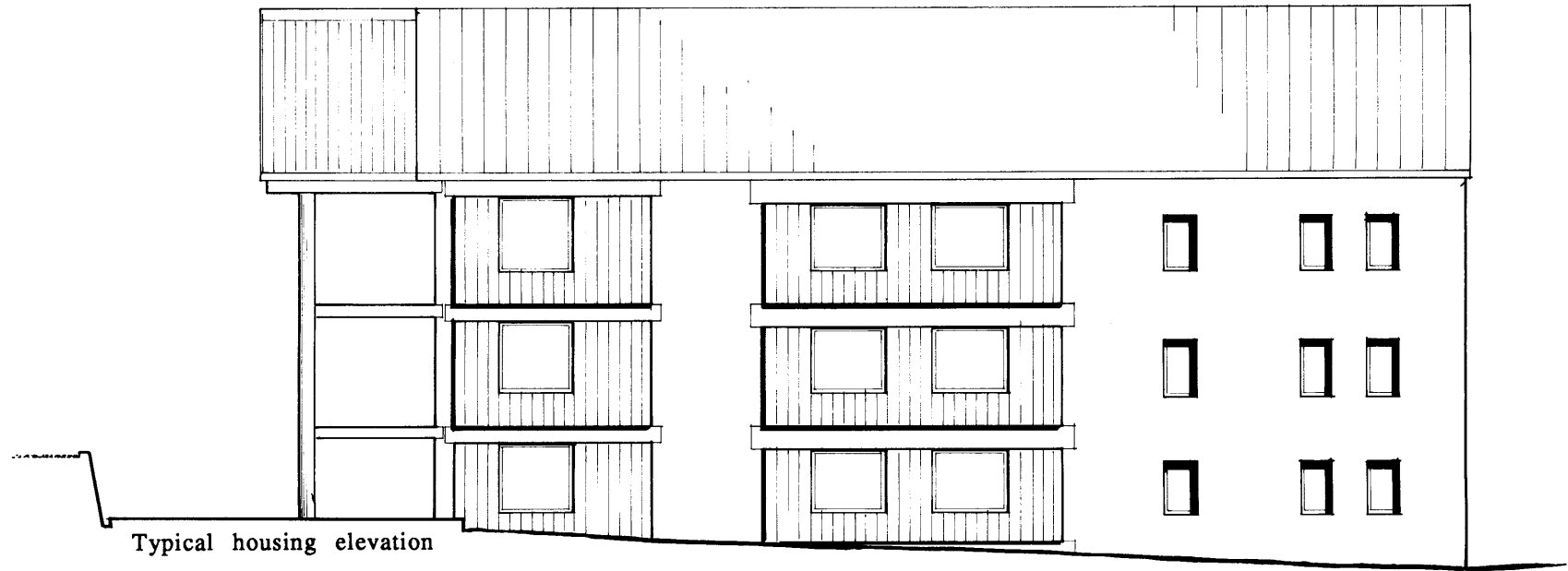
Typical housing elevation

Lower level plan

41
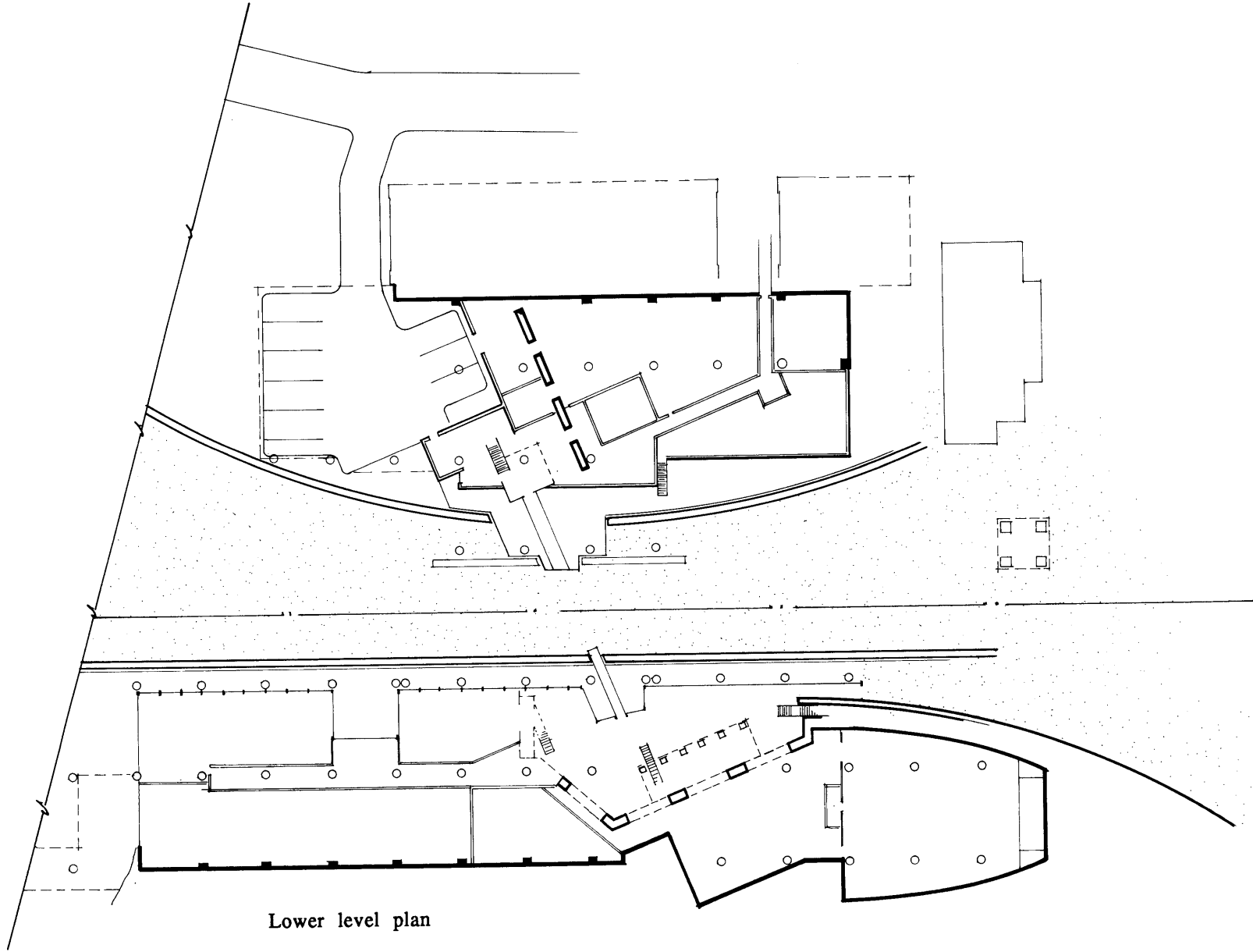
some of the same eternal qualities and become eternal in nature. The rotunda is, in fact, a perfect sphere inside of a perfect cylinder which, in elevation, is a perfect square.

To help kindle the idea of the world wide implications of what the students are doing in the school, a square aligned with the cardinal points is overlaid onto the plan. This establishes a cartesian grid which only activates a few portions of the complex; those dealing with our interaction with the world (ie. studios, exhibition space, visiting lecture hall, information center, and two distant points along the railroad tracks which pass through the site). This, in purely formal terms, also serves to identify the important structures by their grid rotation and, as mentioned earlier, brings the studios in more perfect line with the desired orientation for light.

The last direct reference is the use of the curved wall. When Jefferson used curves in the rotunda, particularly the elliptical classrooms on the first two floors, they were insular, inward looking, and perfect shapes in and of themselves. The curves as they appear in the architecture school are land forms that appear then disappear again into the earth leaving the viewer to discern whether the earth or the wall is the more stable of the two. They open outward and embrace the world as it moves in to help form the educational path, less complete and more of an *object trouvé* than Jeffersons.

While these references are of special interest to the architect, if the participant fails to notice the connection to history or to Mr. Jeffersons ideals the design (any design) must possess enough of its own integrity, or recognizable adherence to an architectural or philosophical stance, to fill the need in the participant to believe that it should be that way; that answers the questions if any should arise but seem so right that seldom any would.

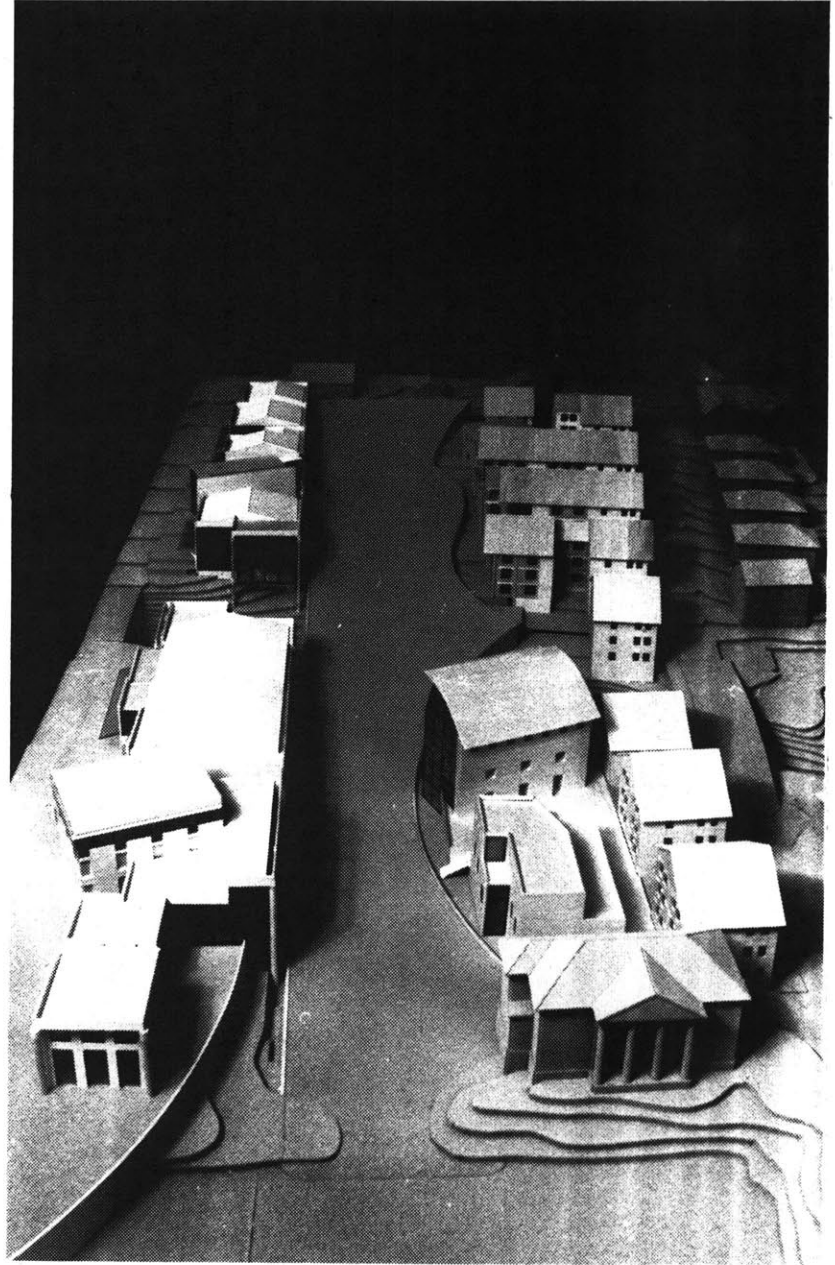For examples of constructional techniques used in the school see appendix "A".

Plan

44

Roof Plan
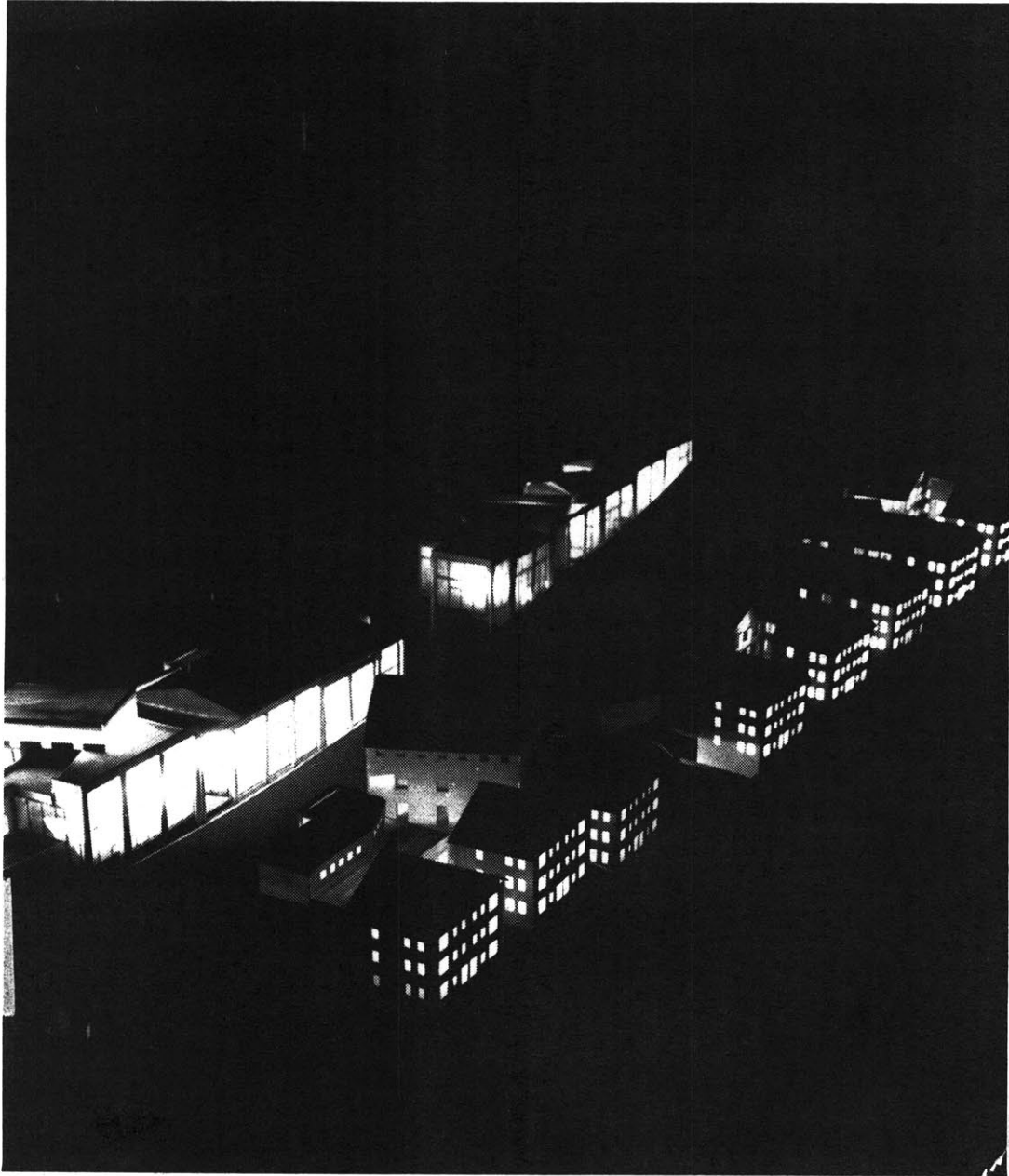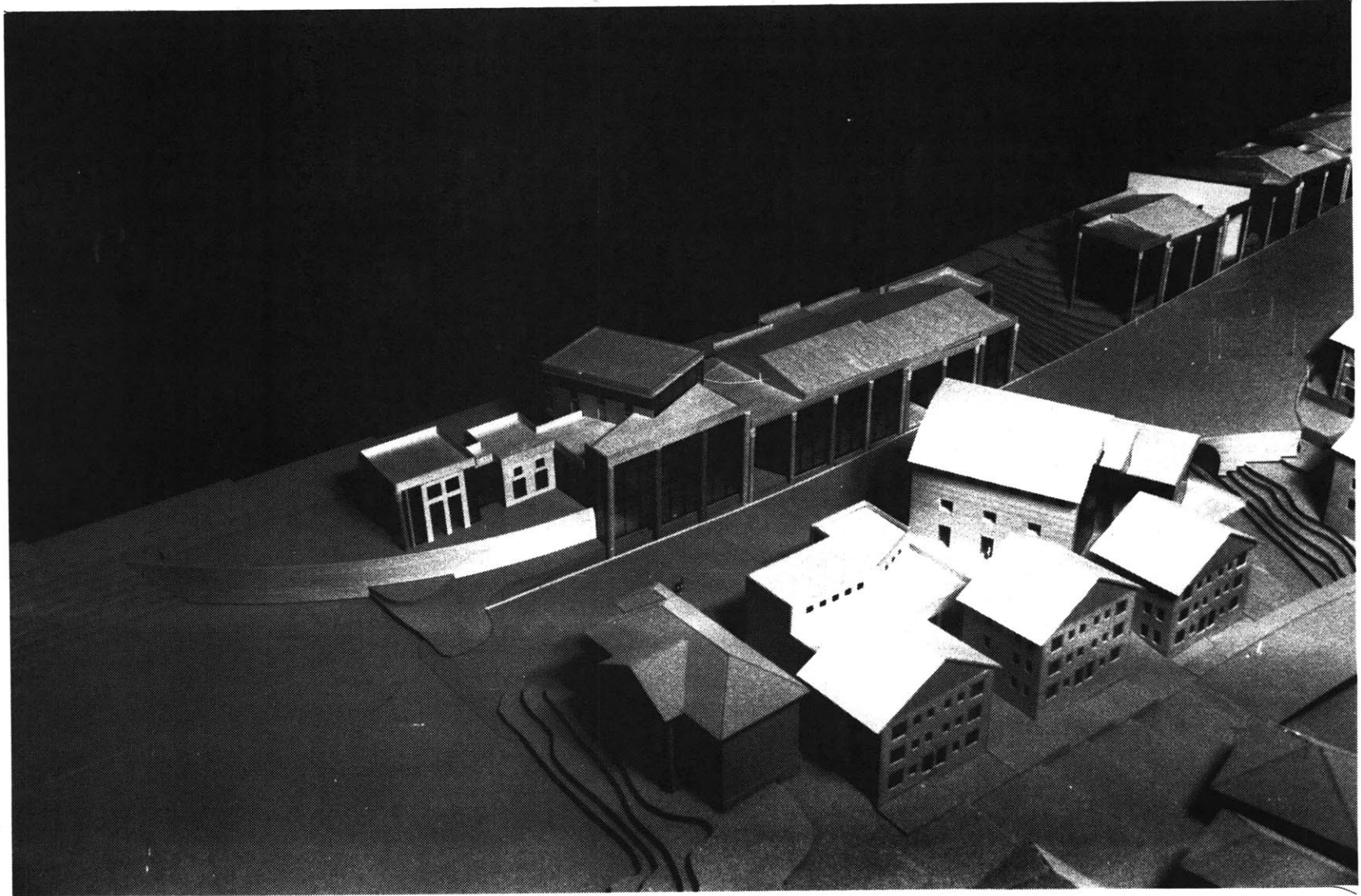
46
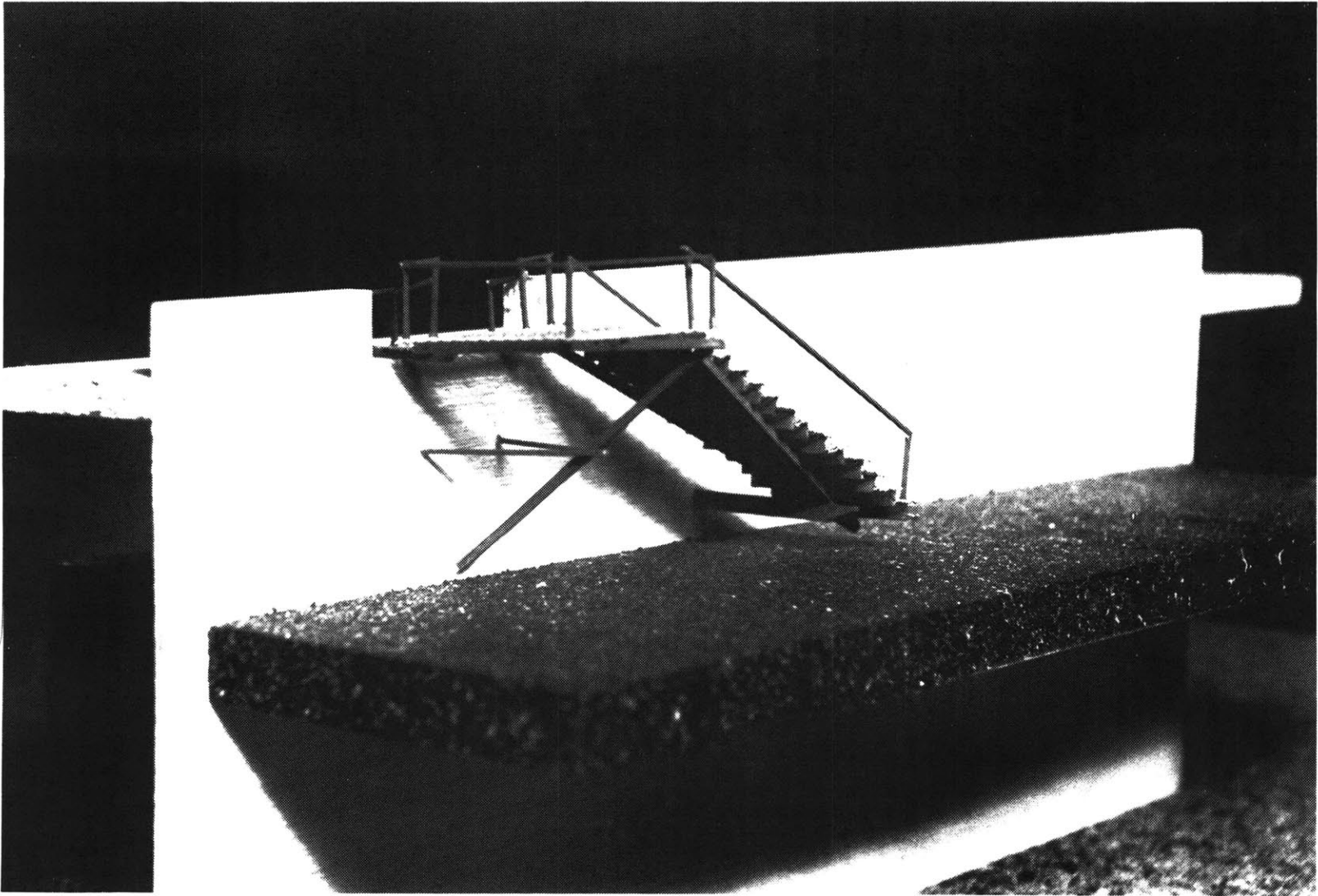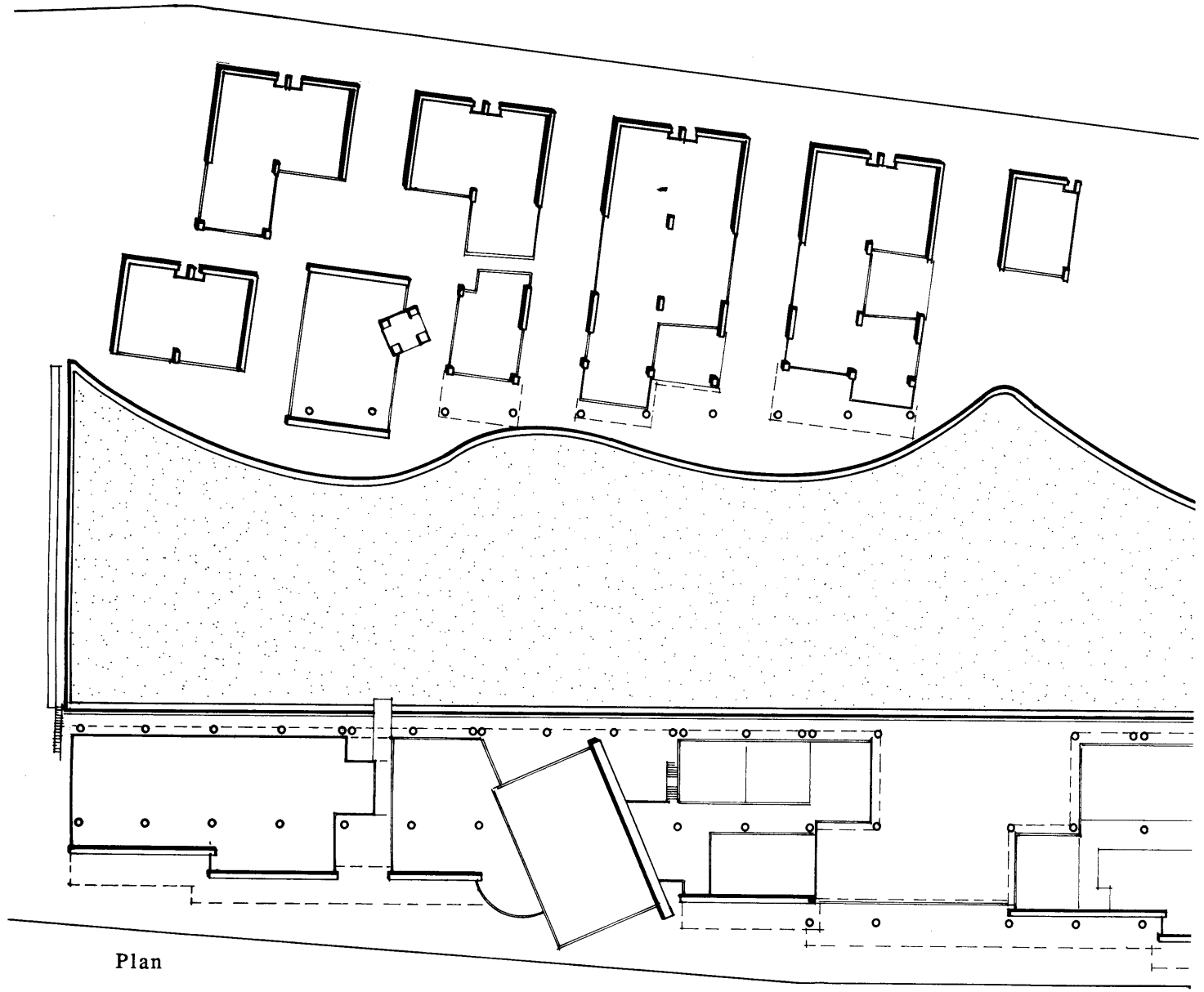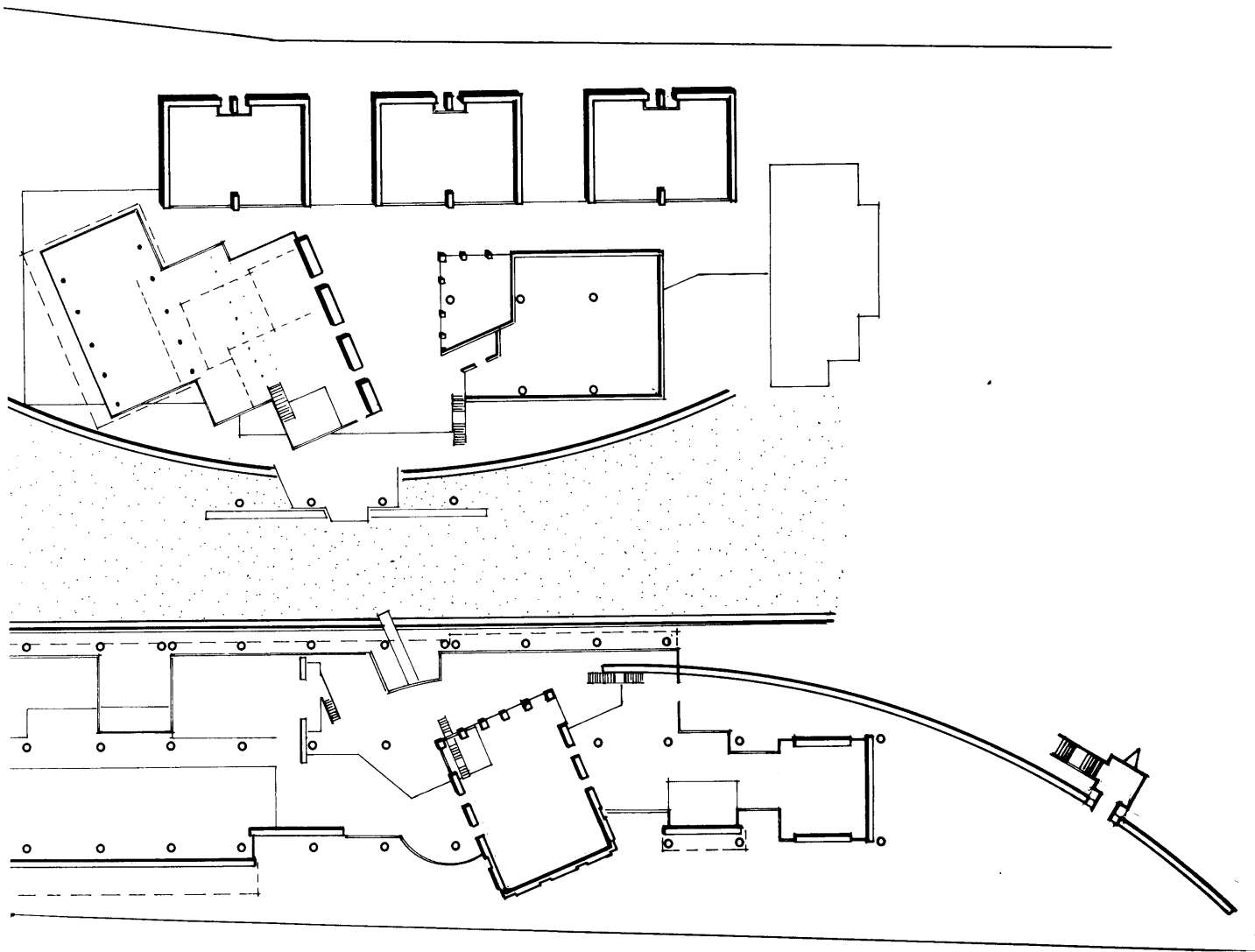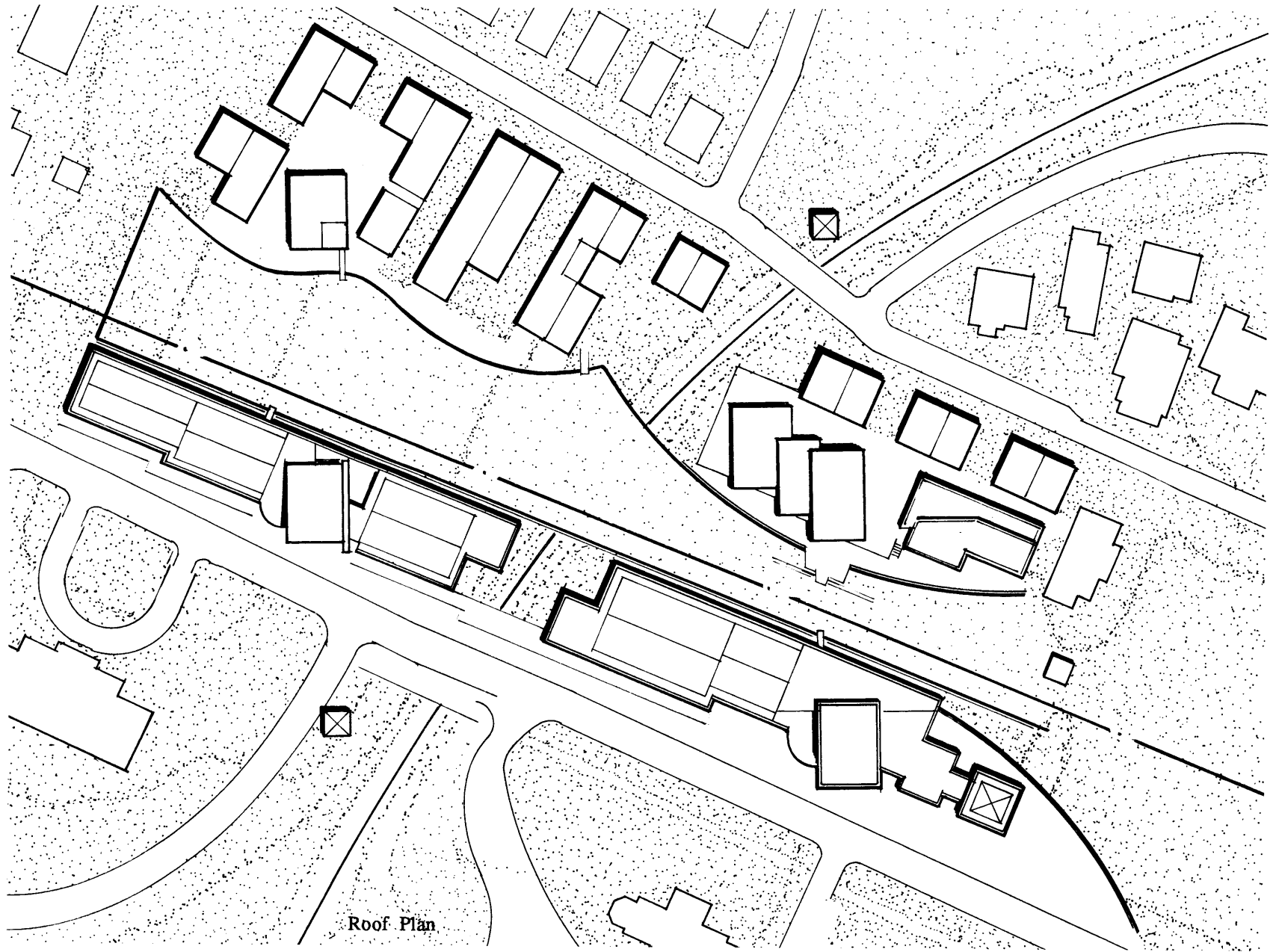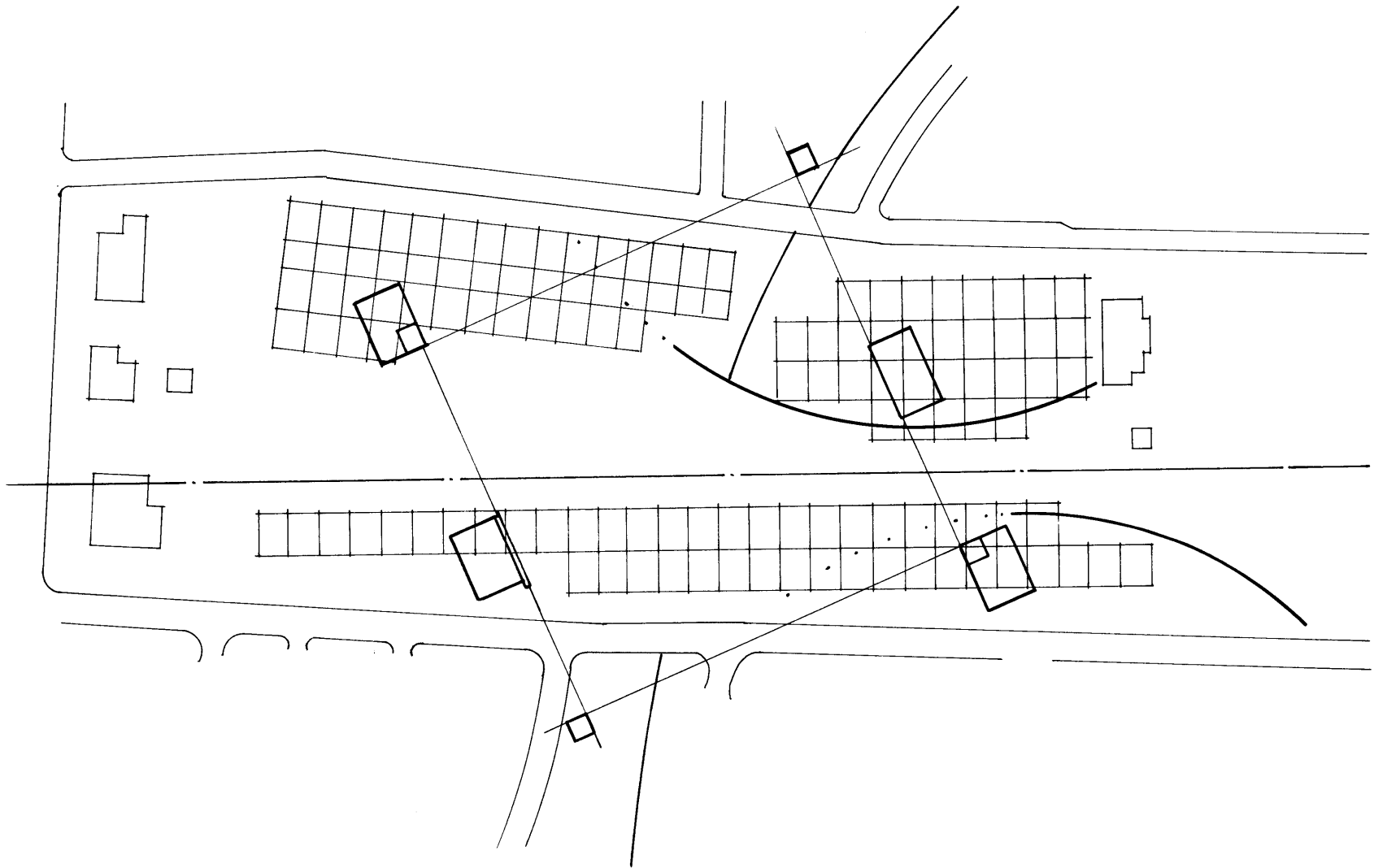
Diagram of grids; University, city, and cartesian.

51

59

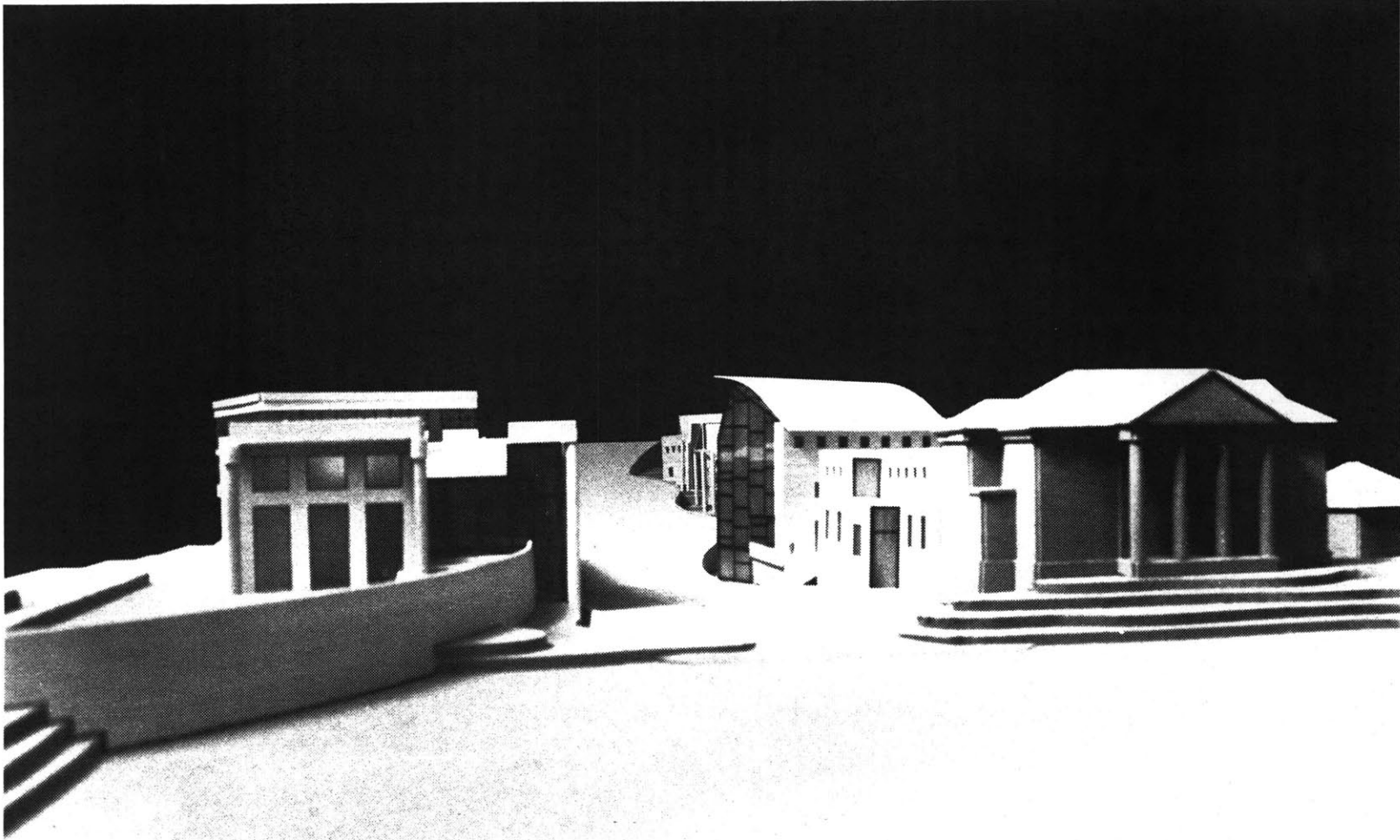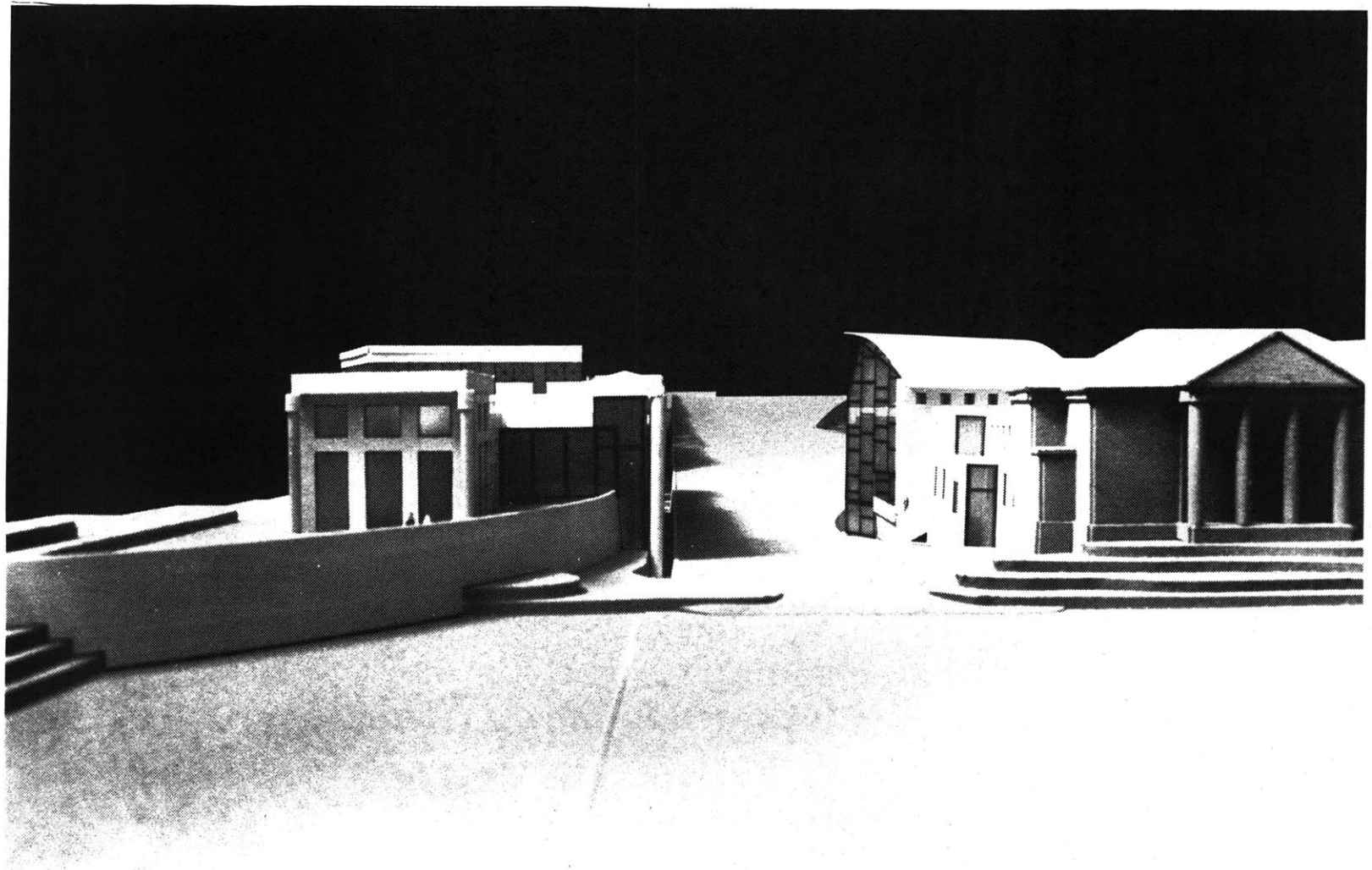95
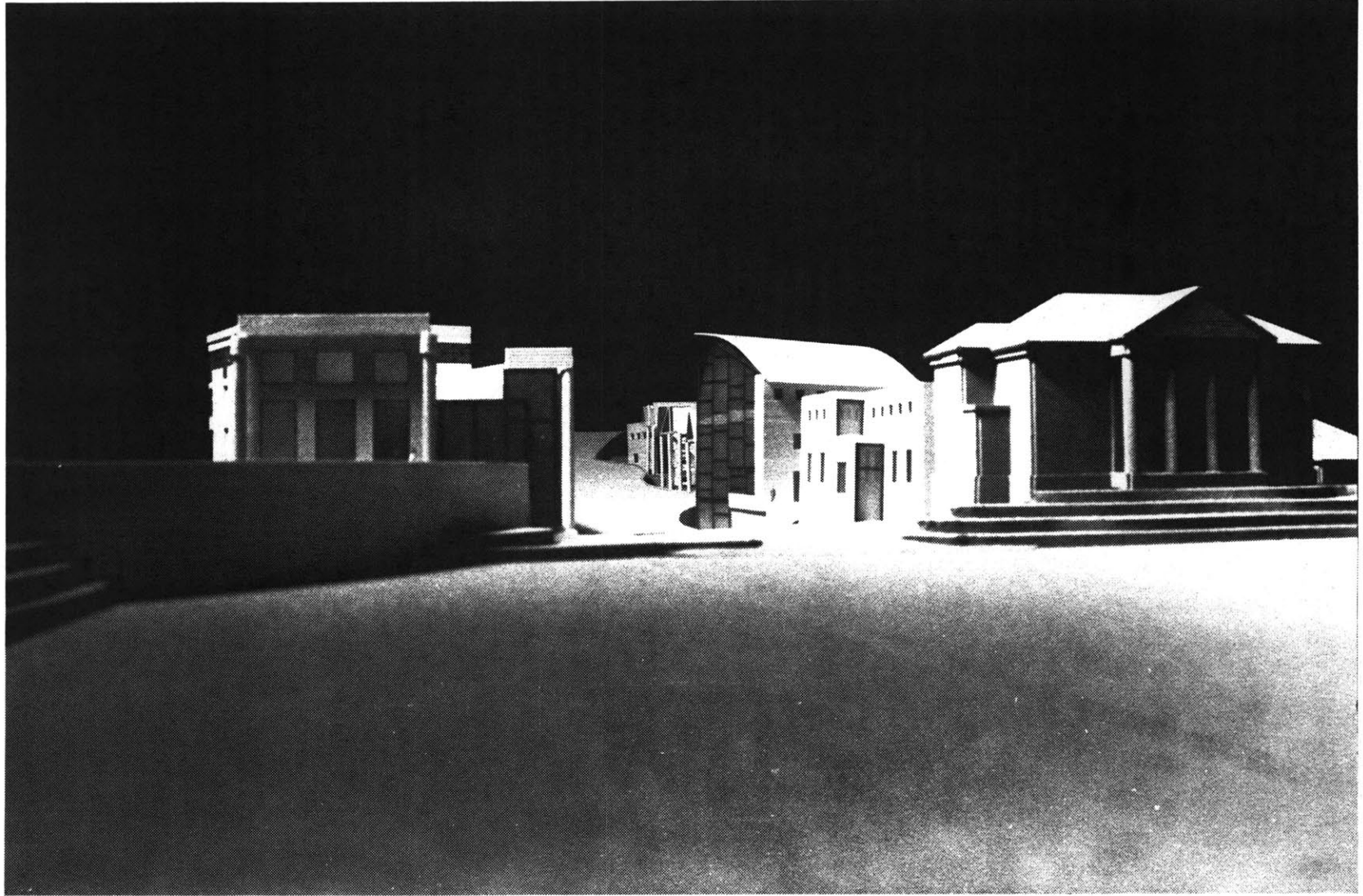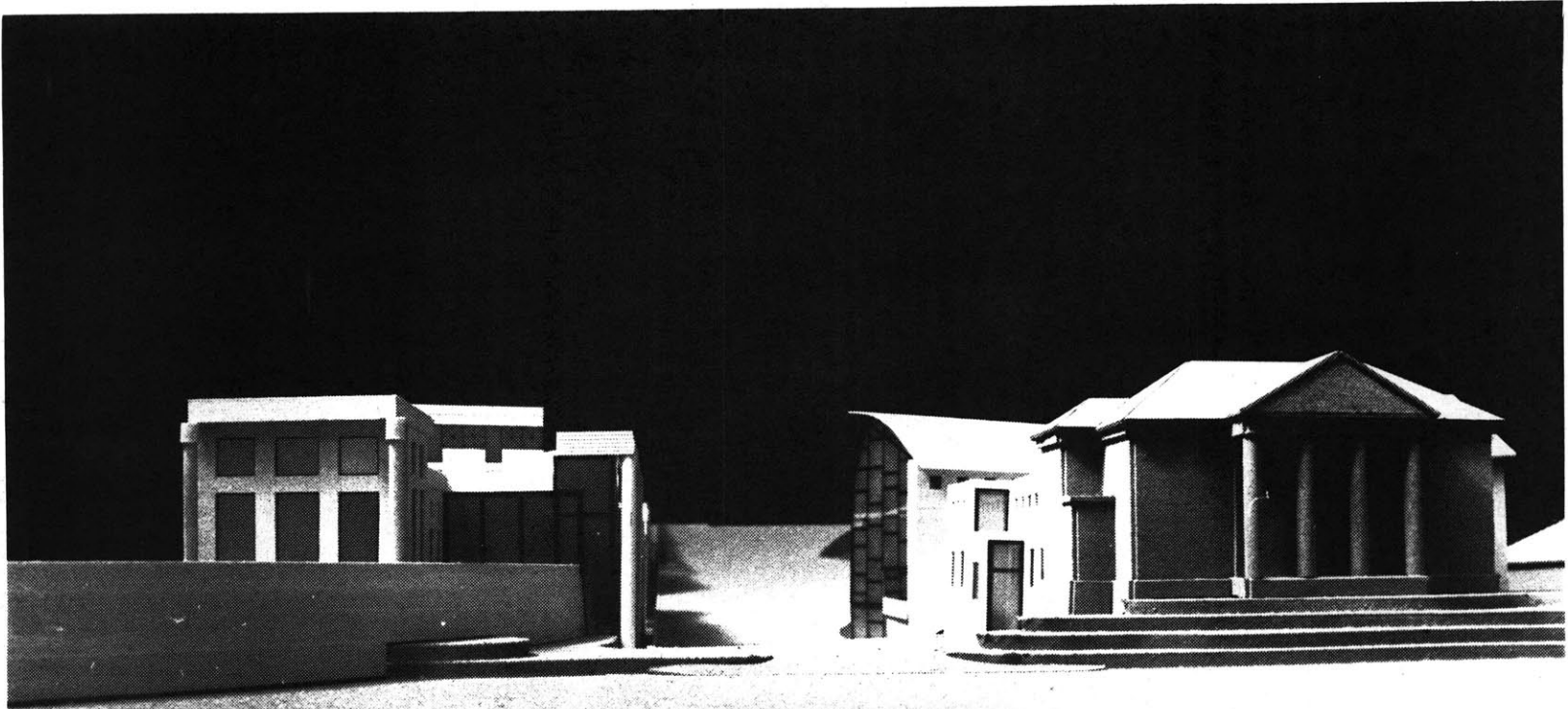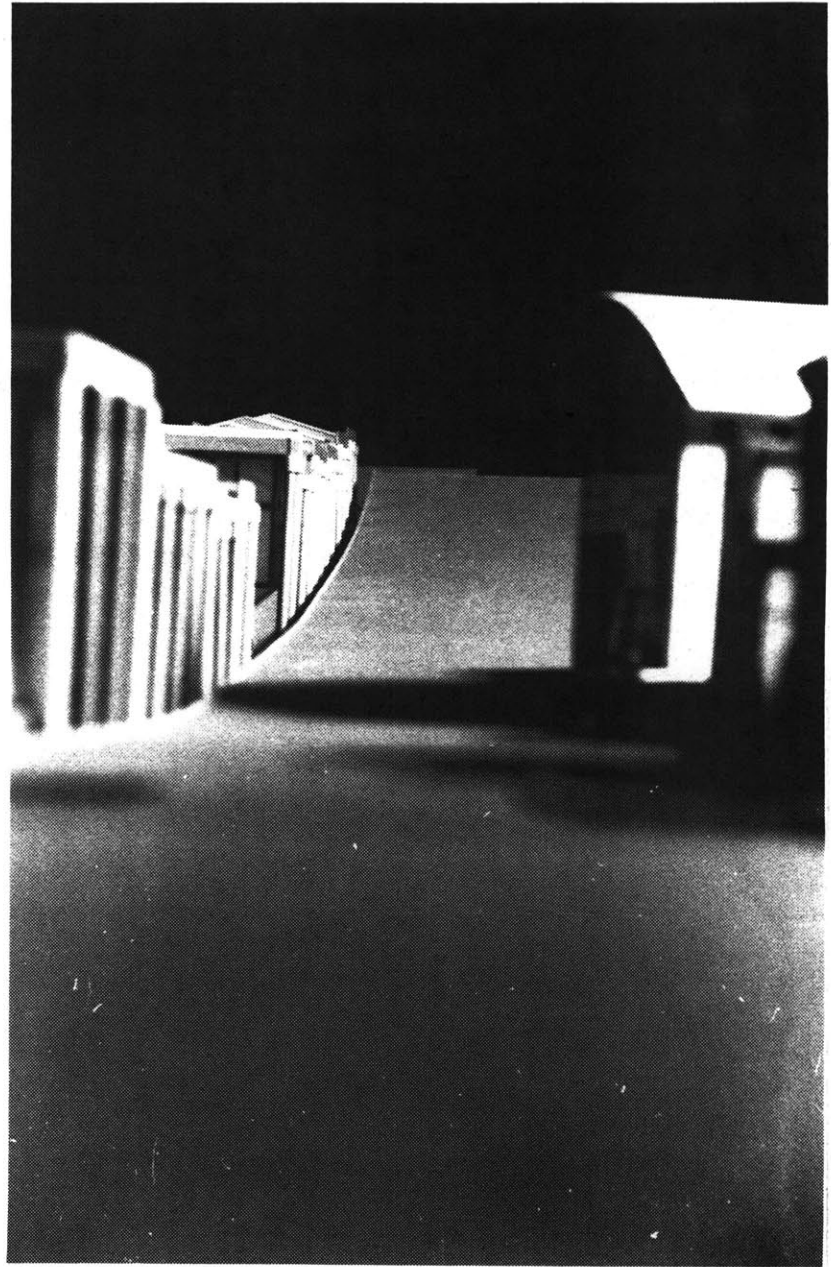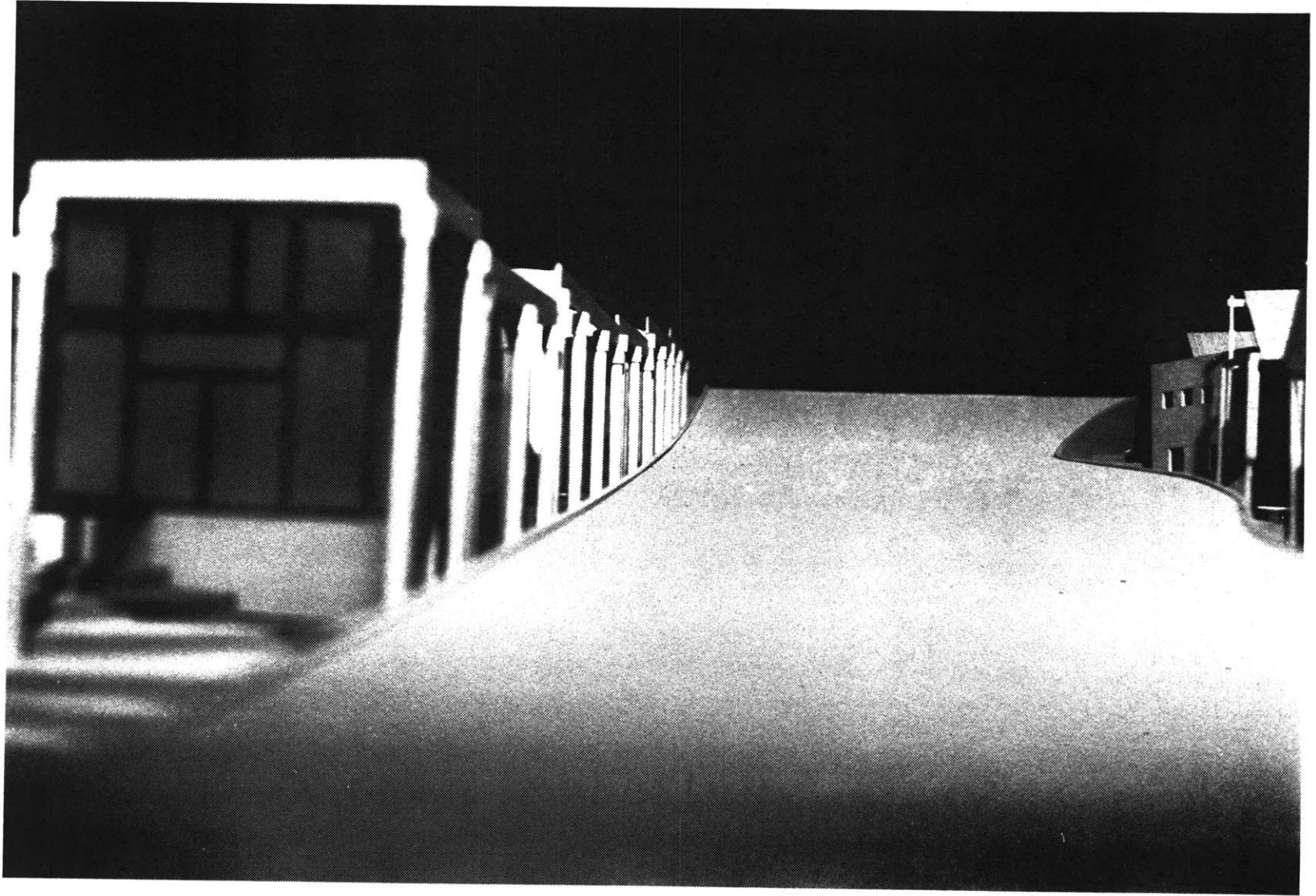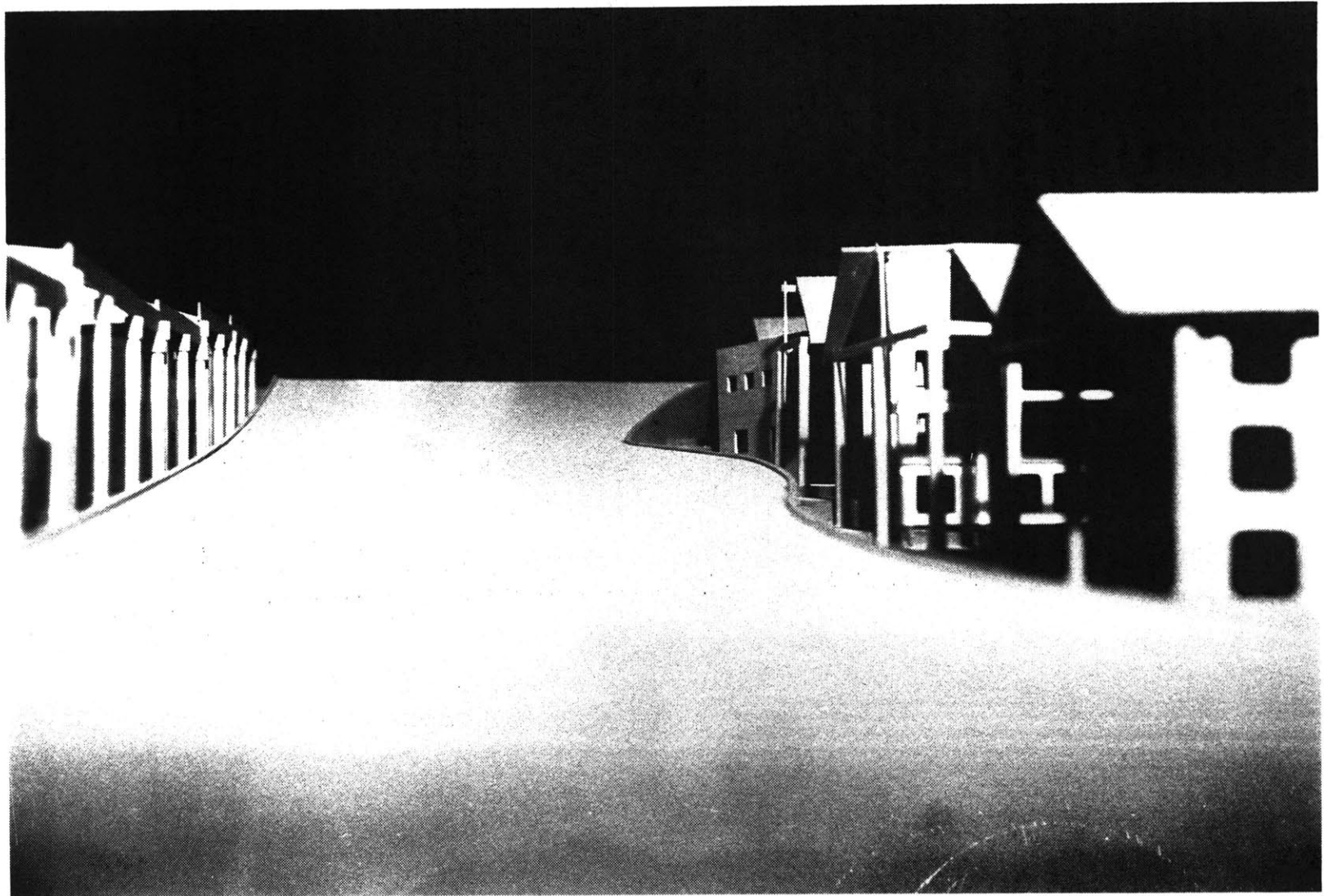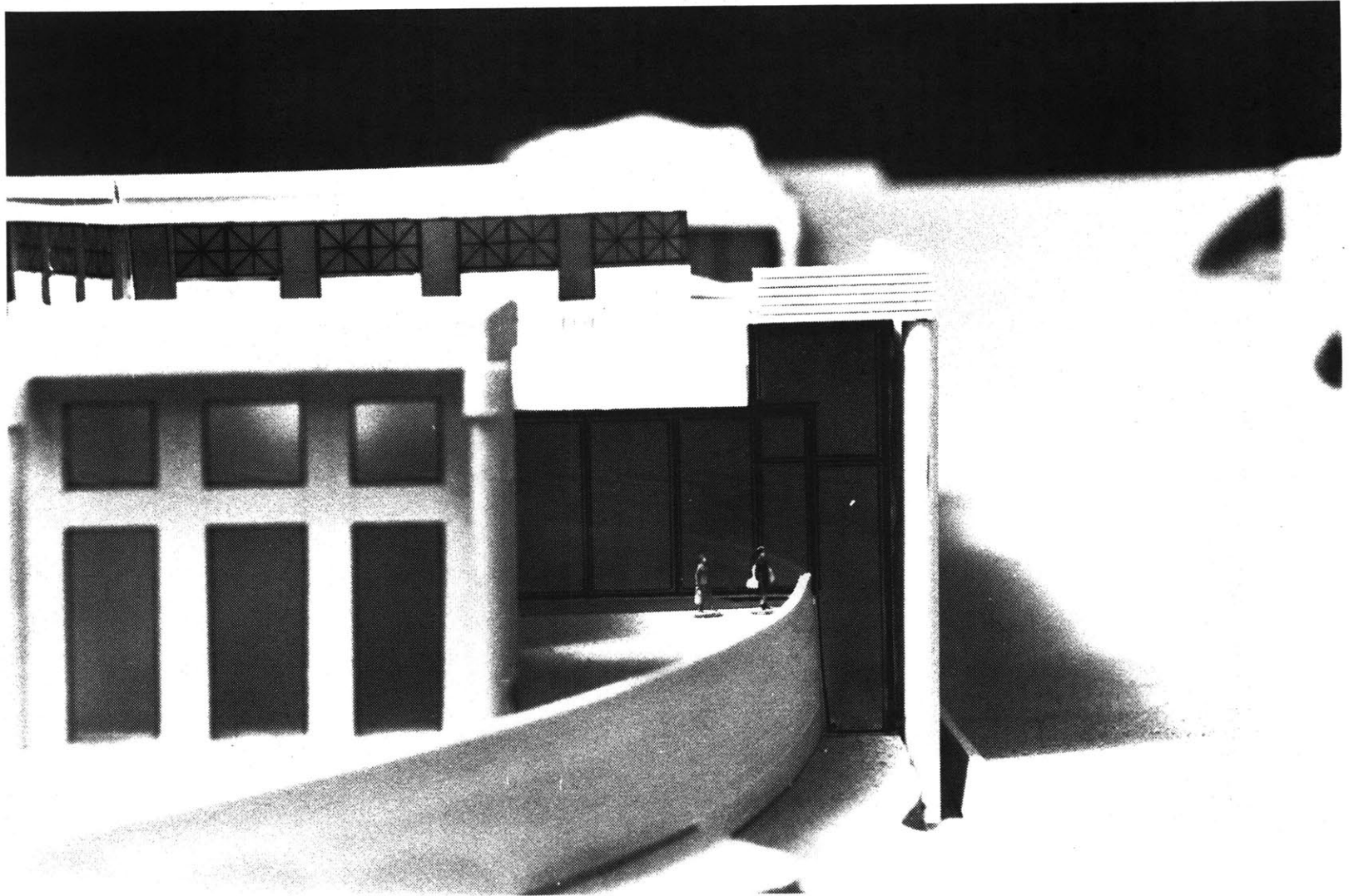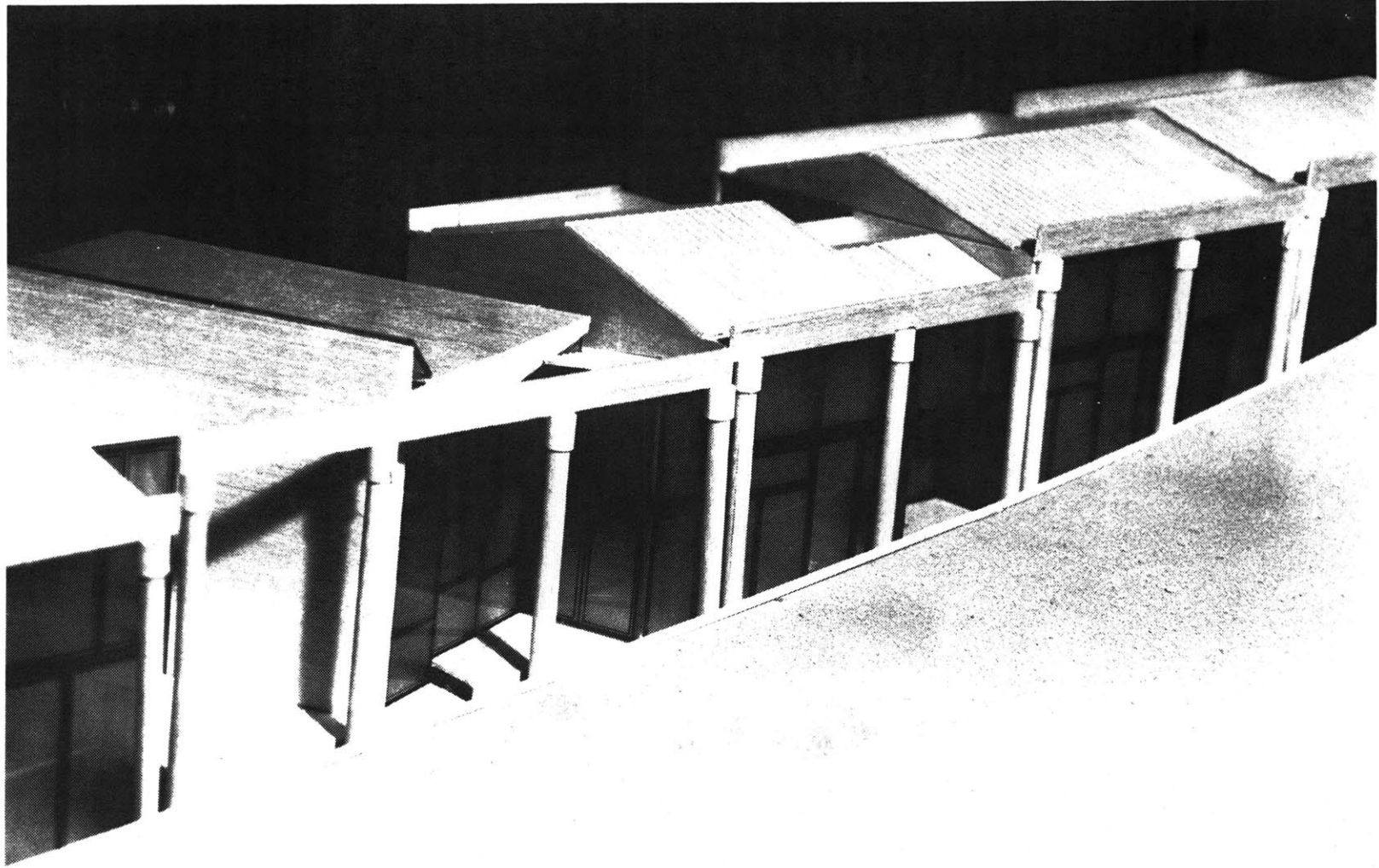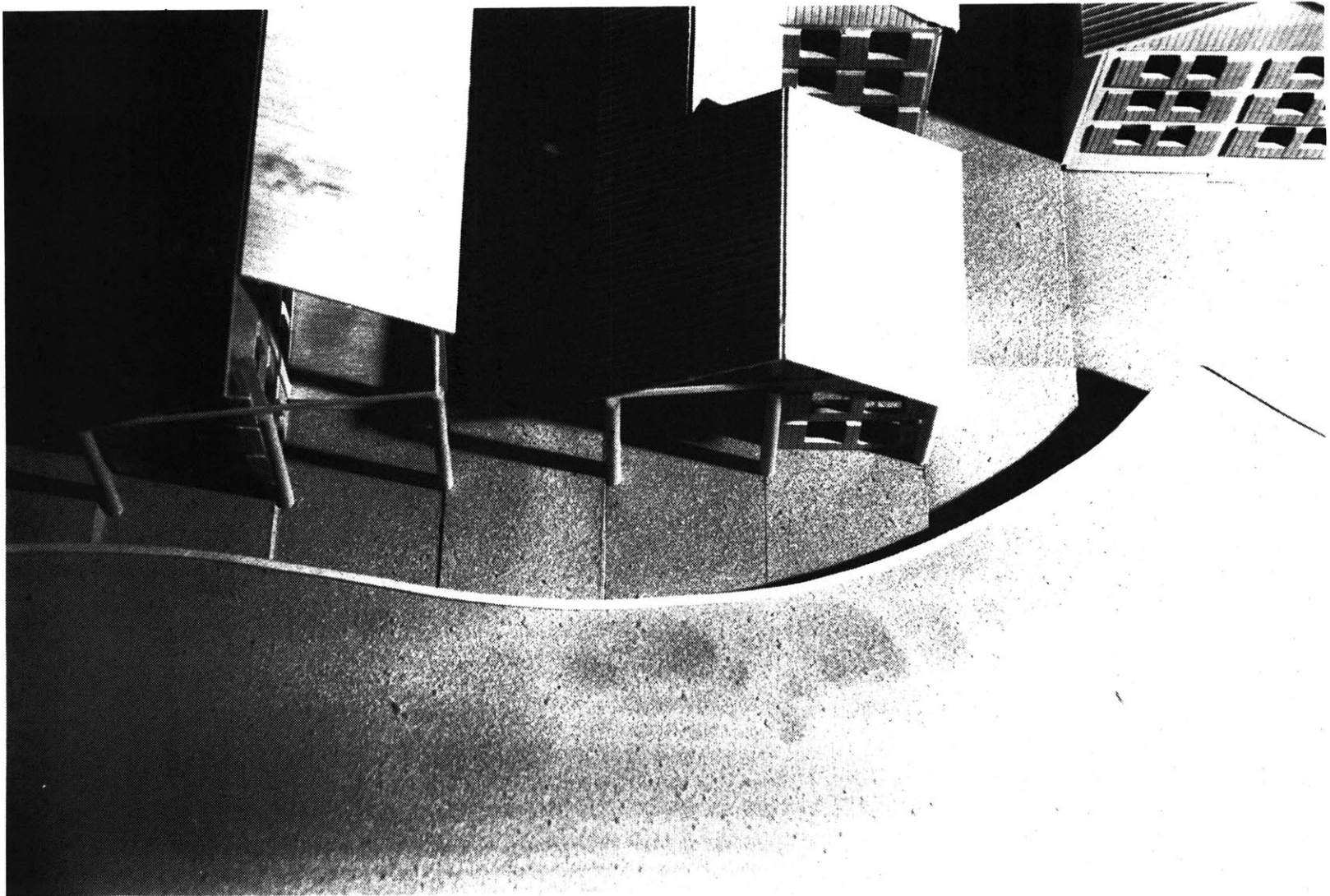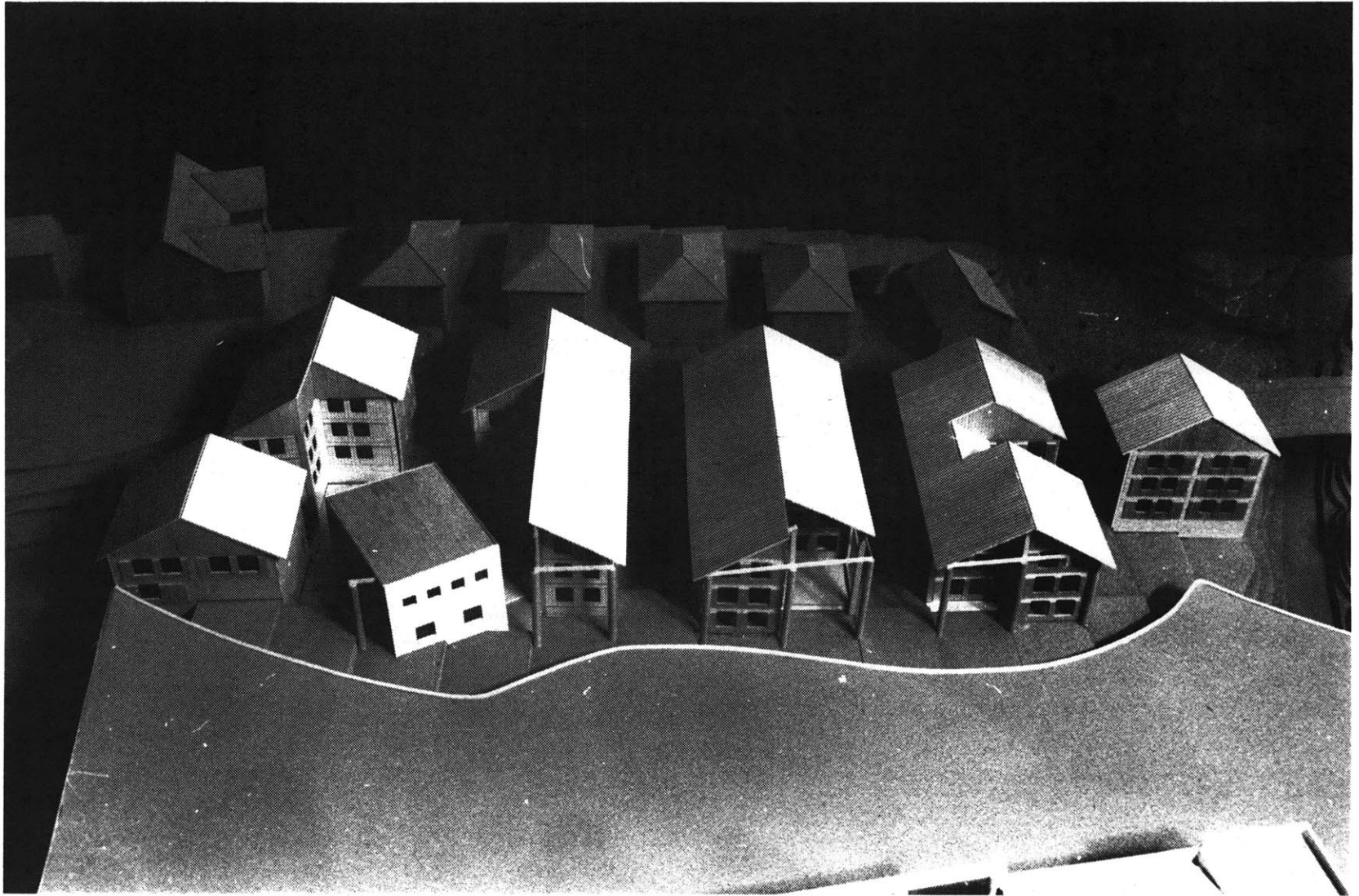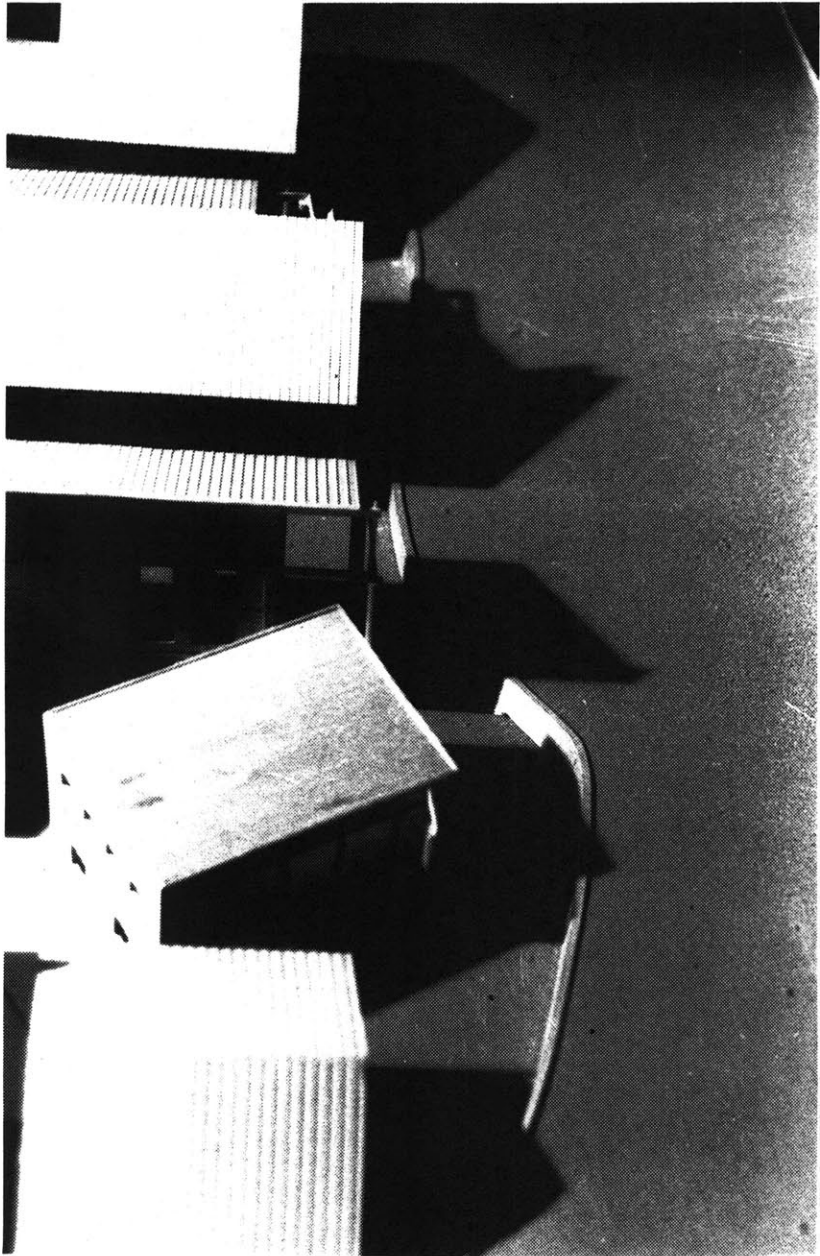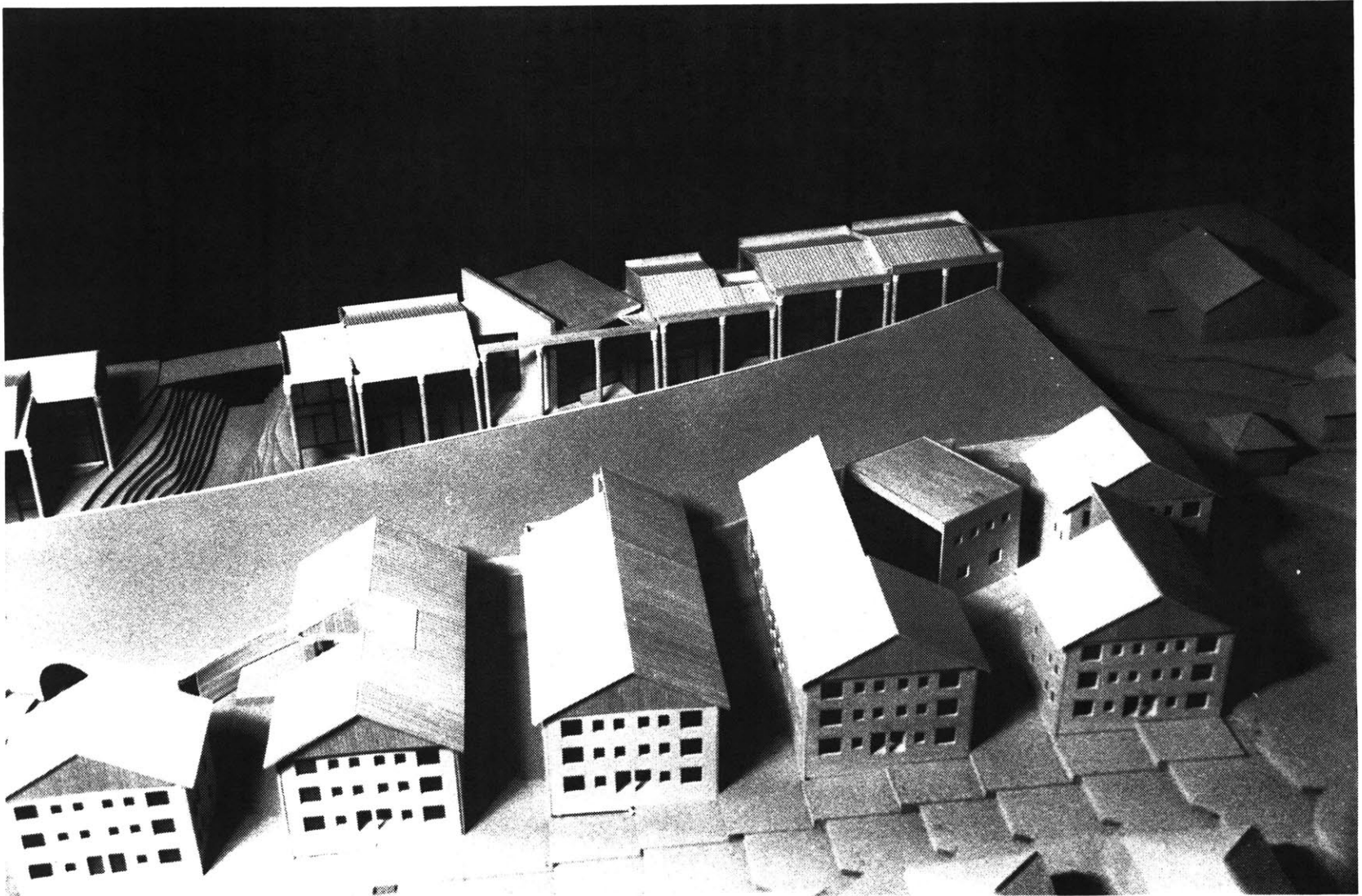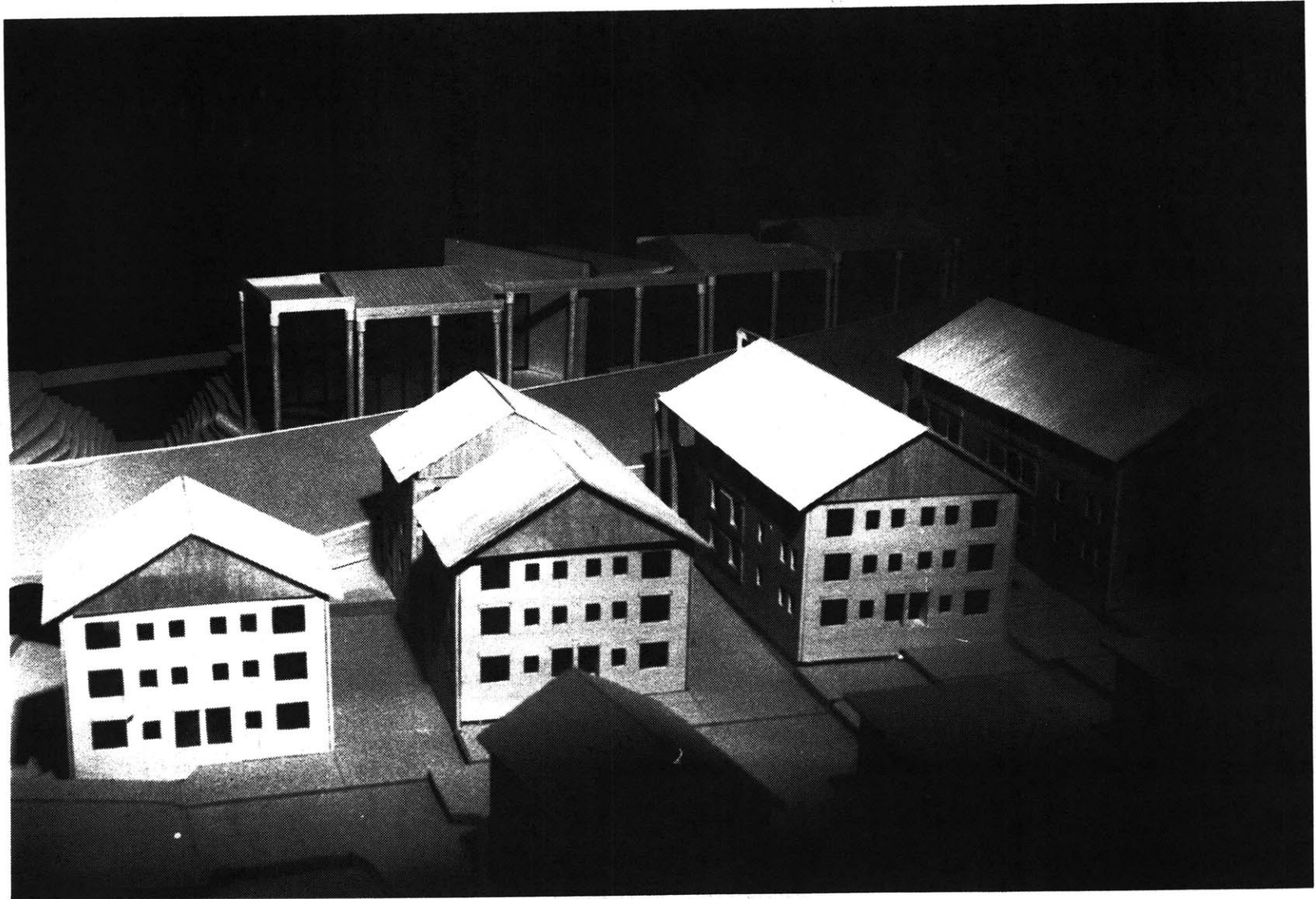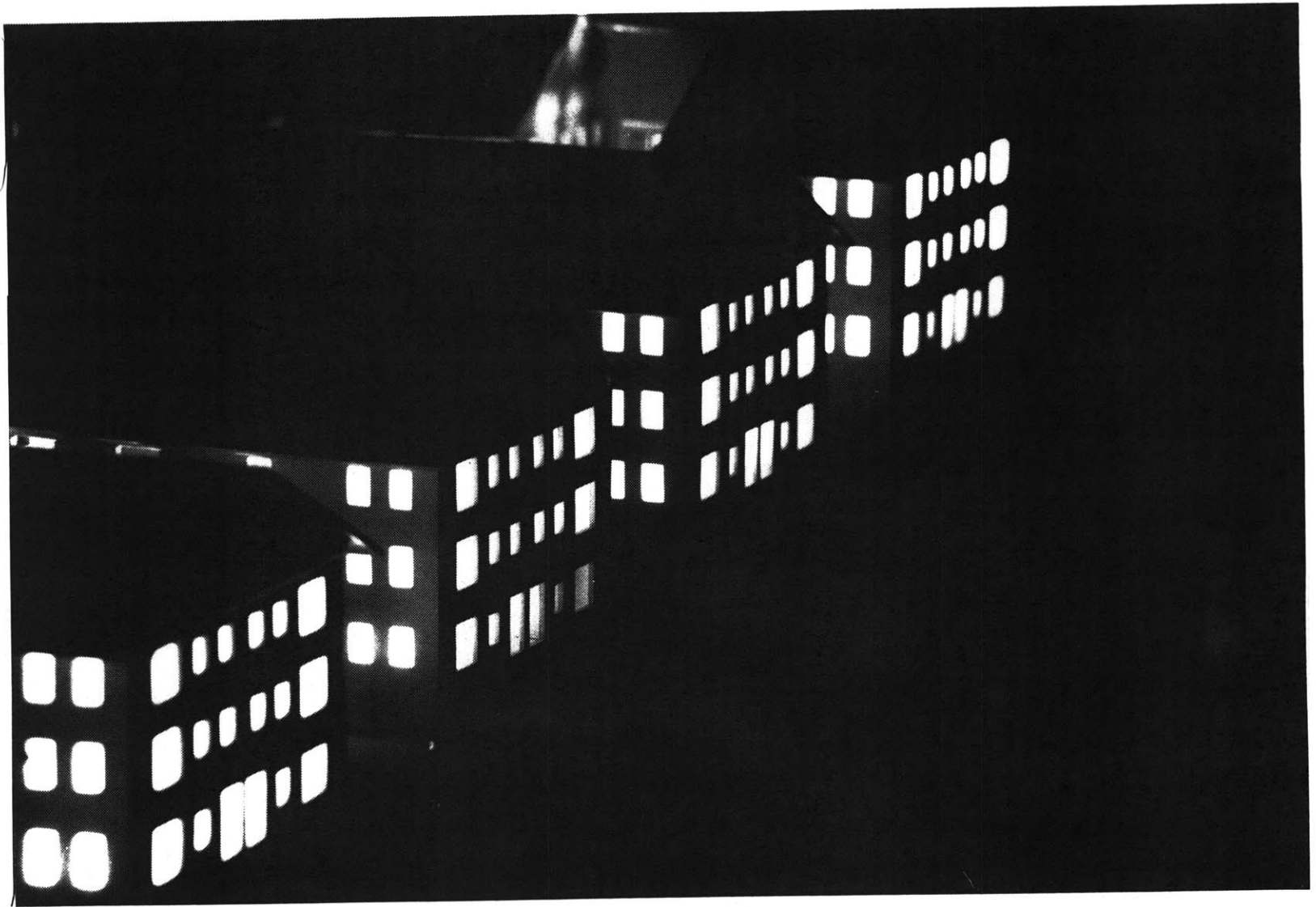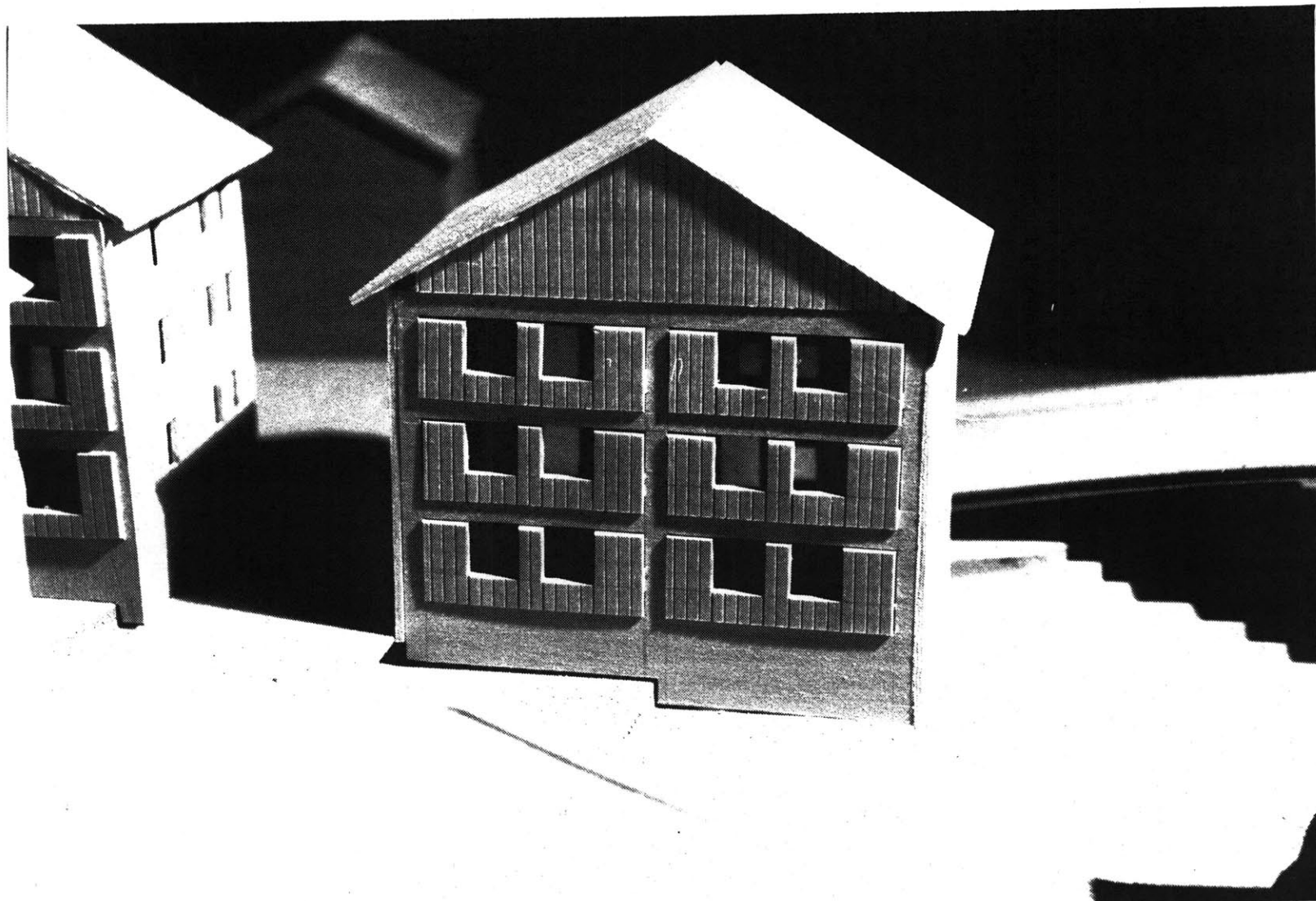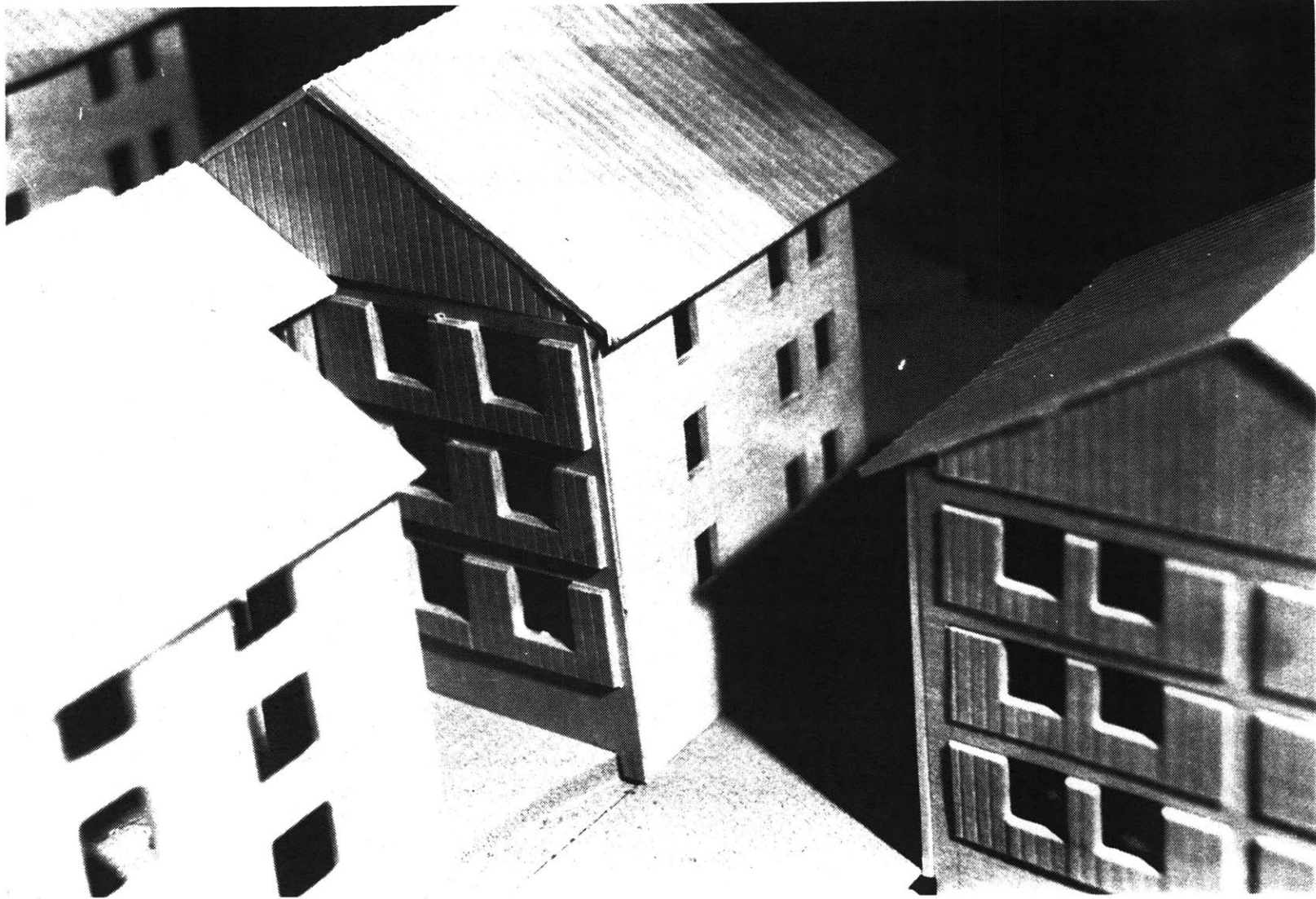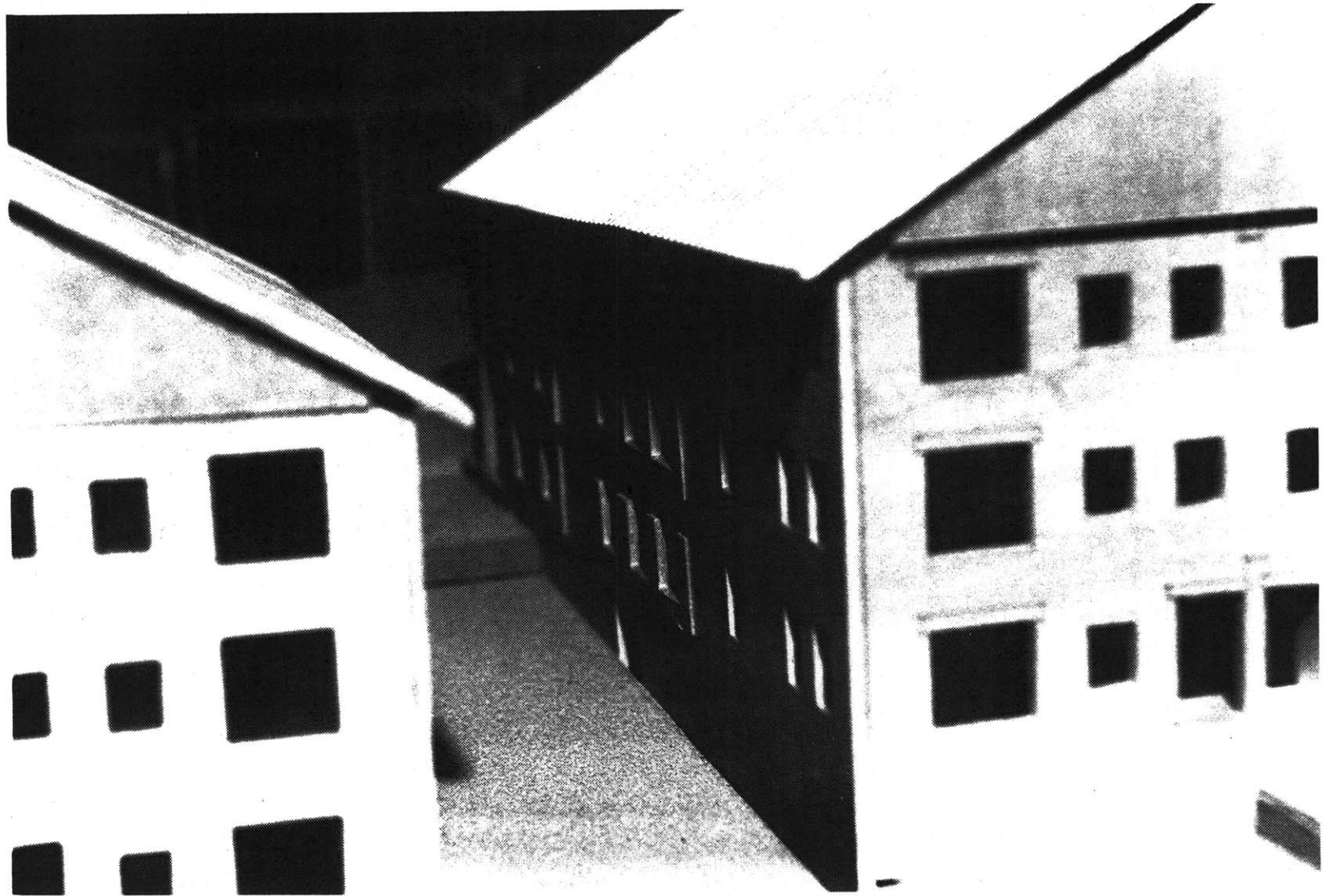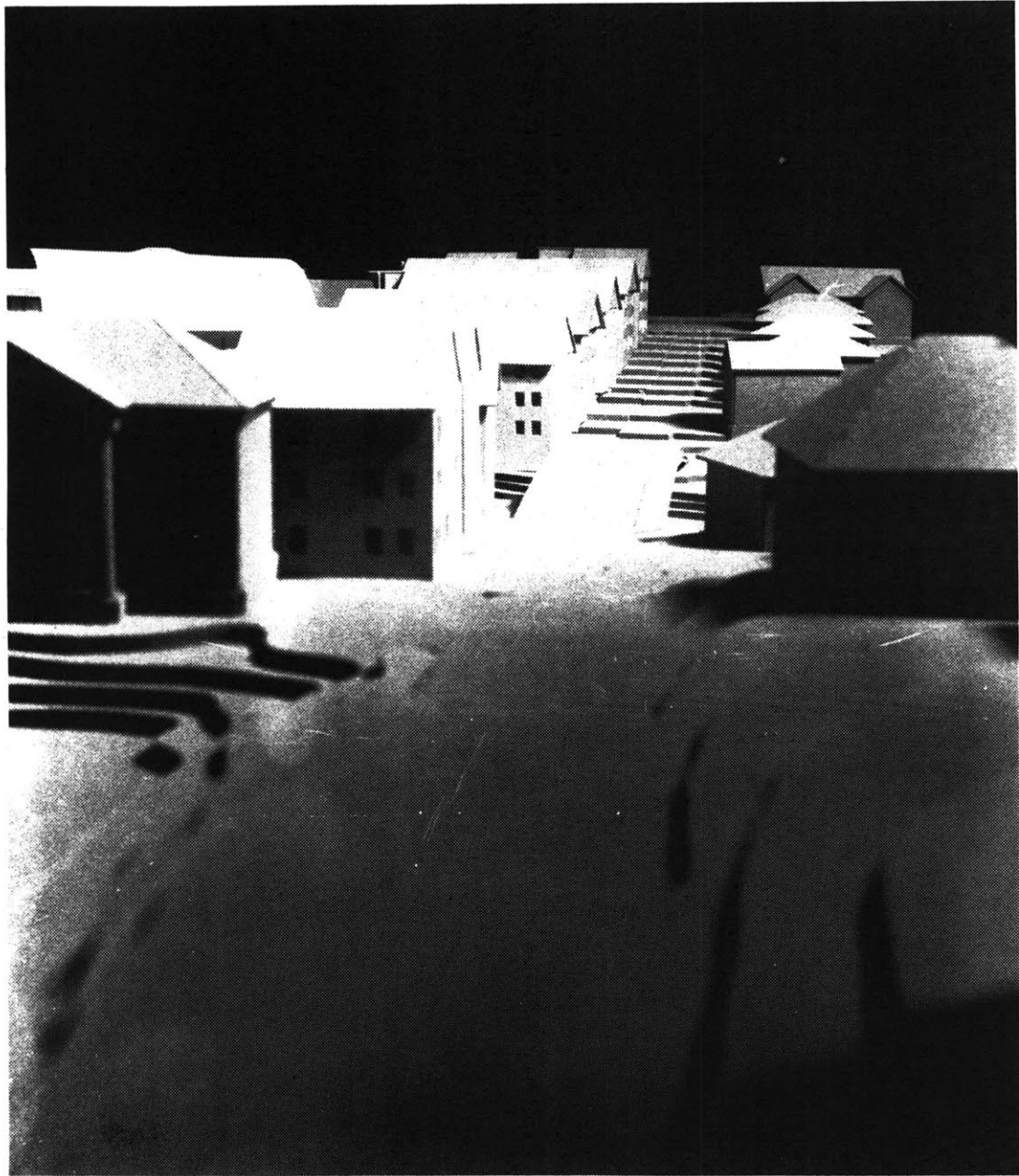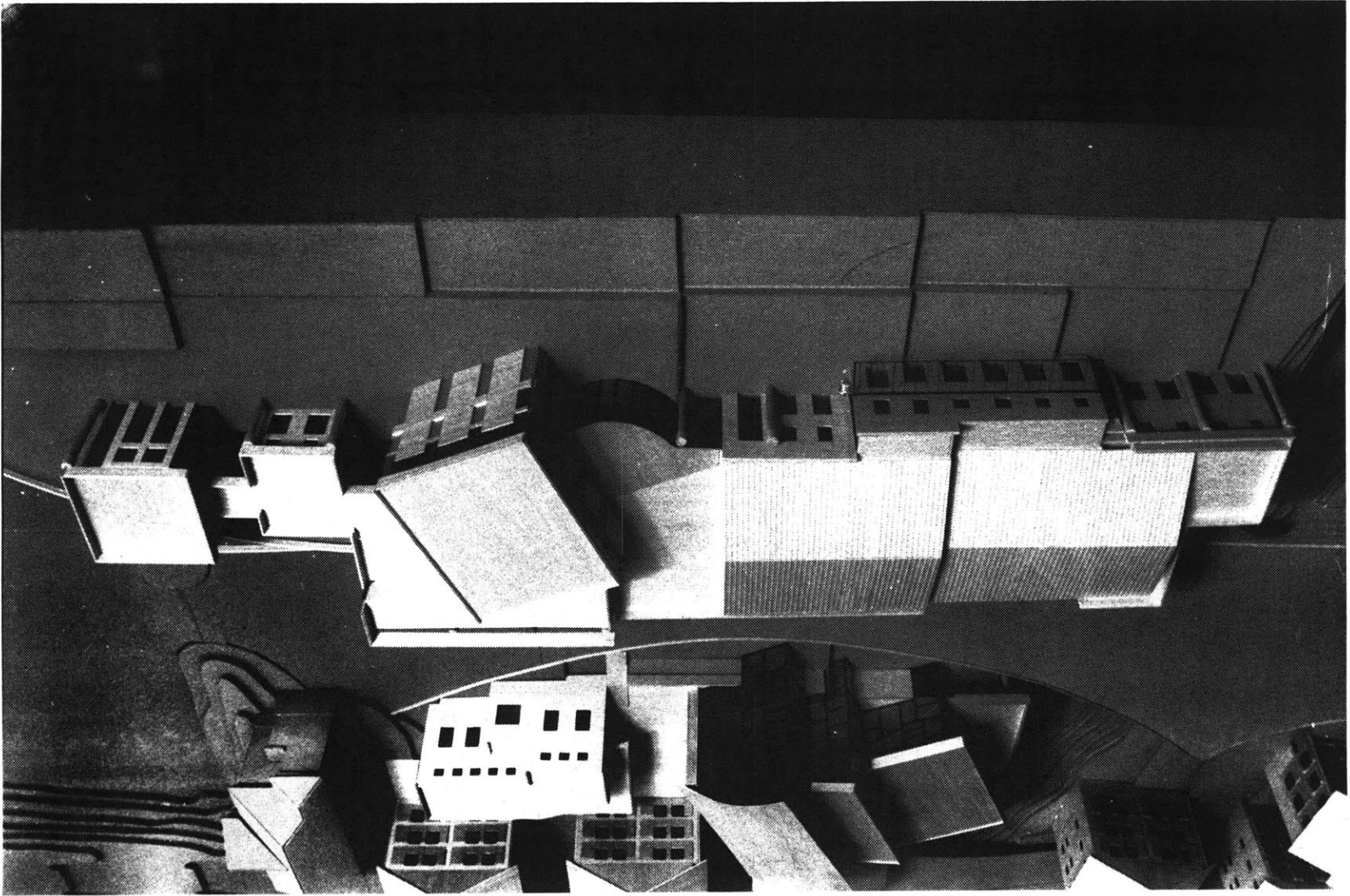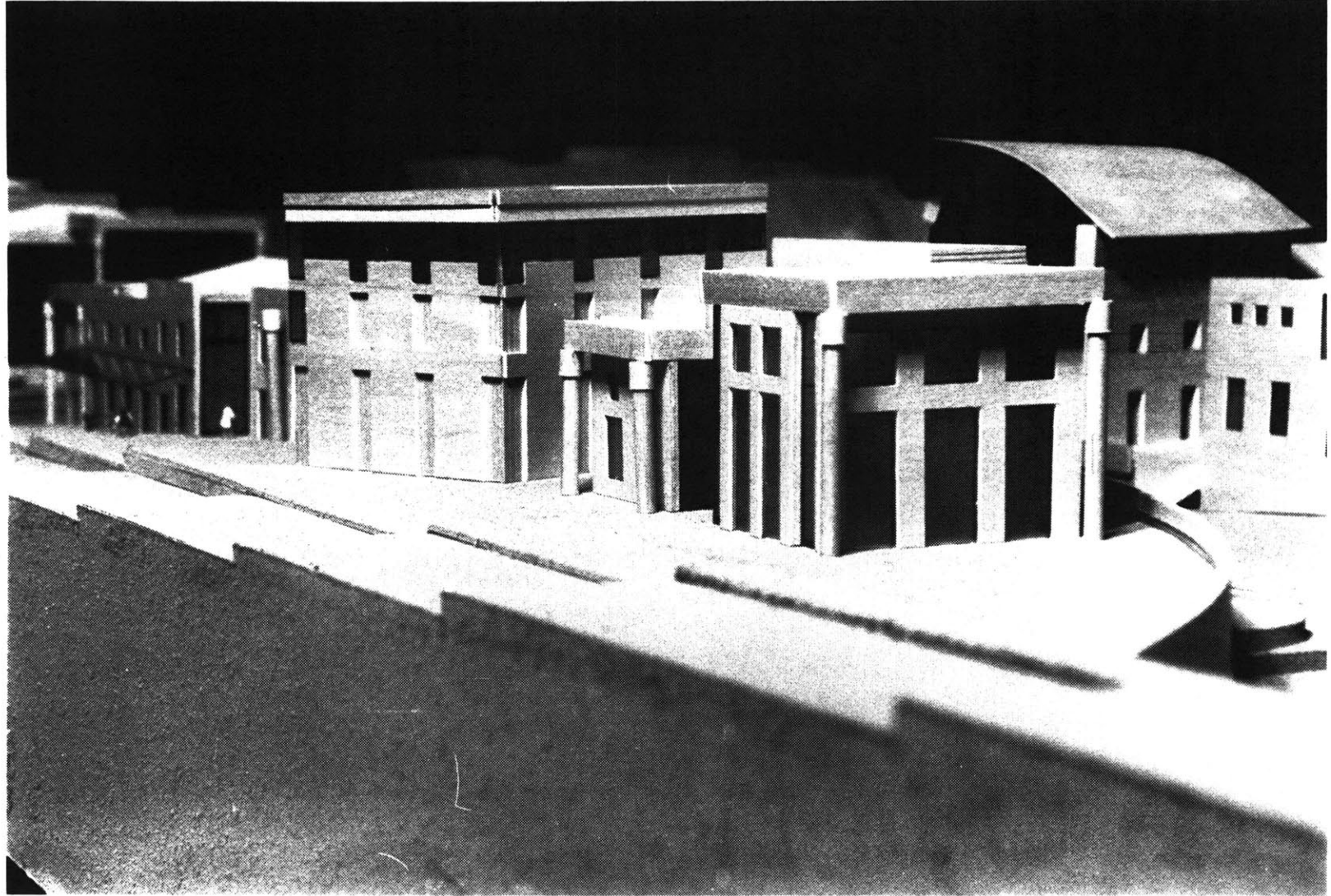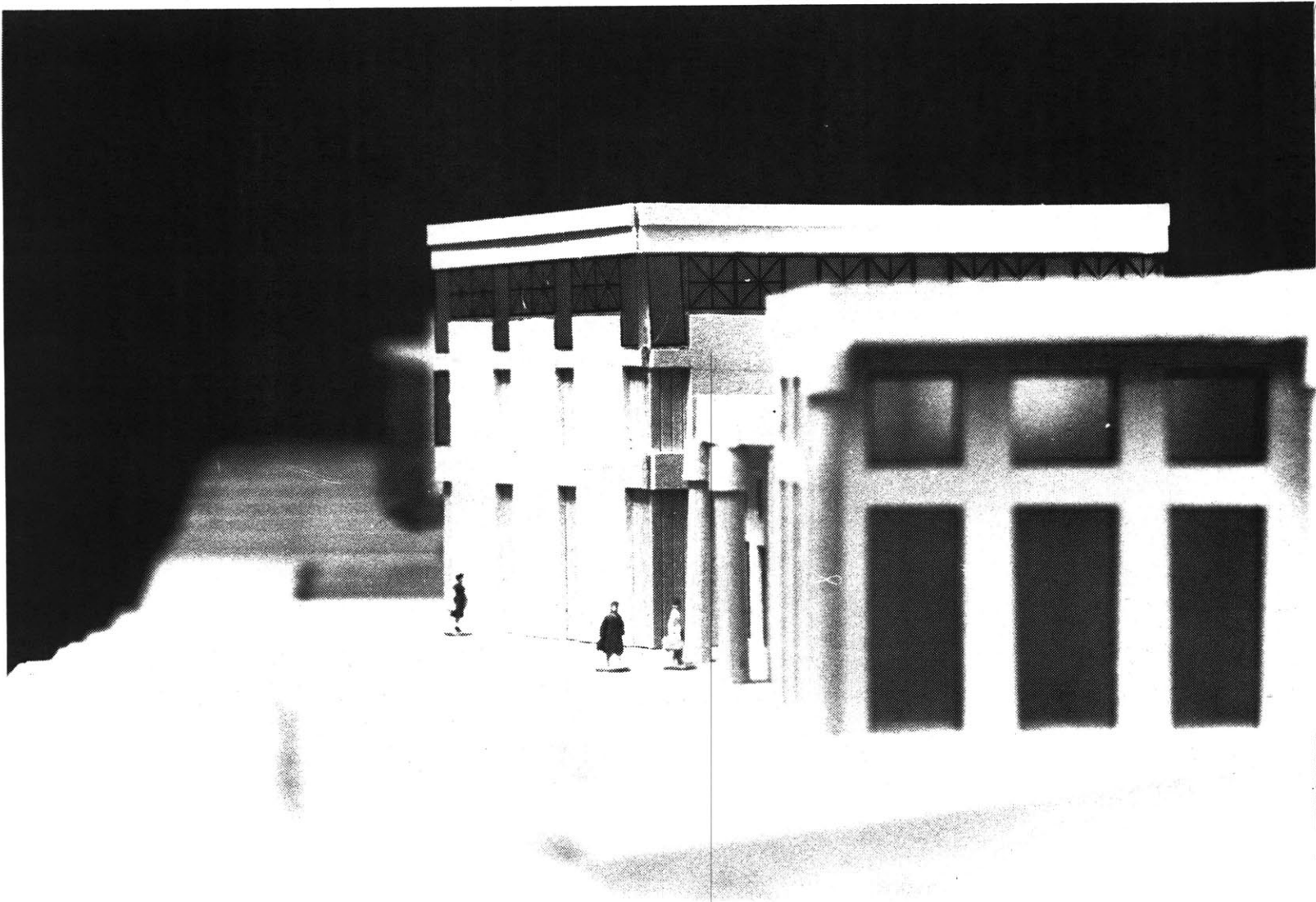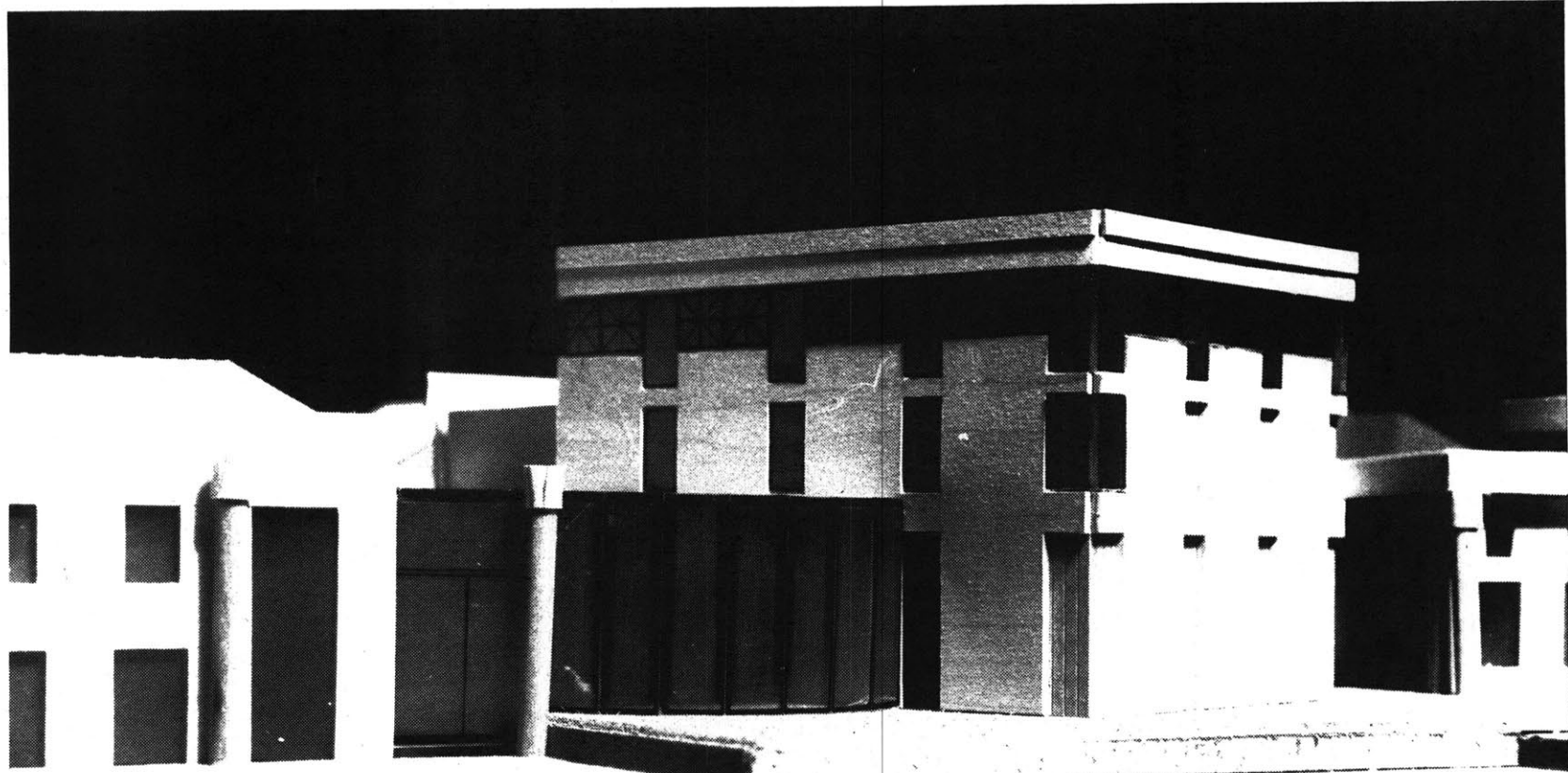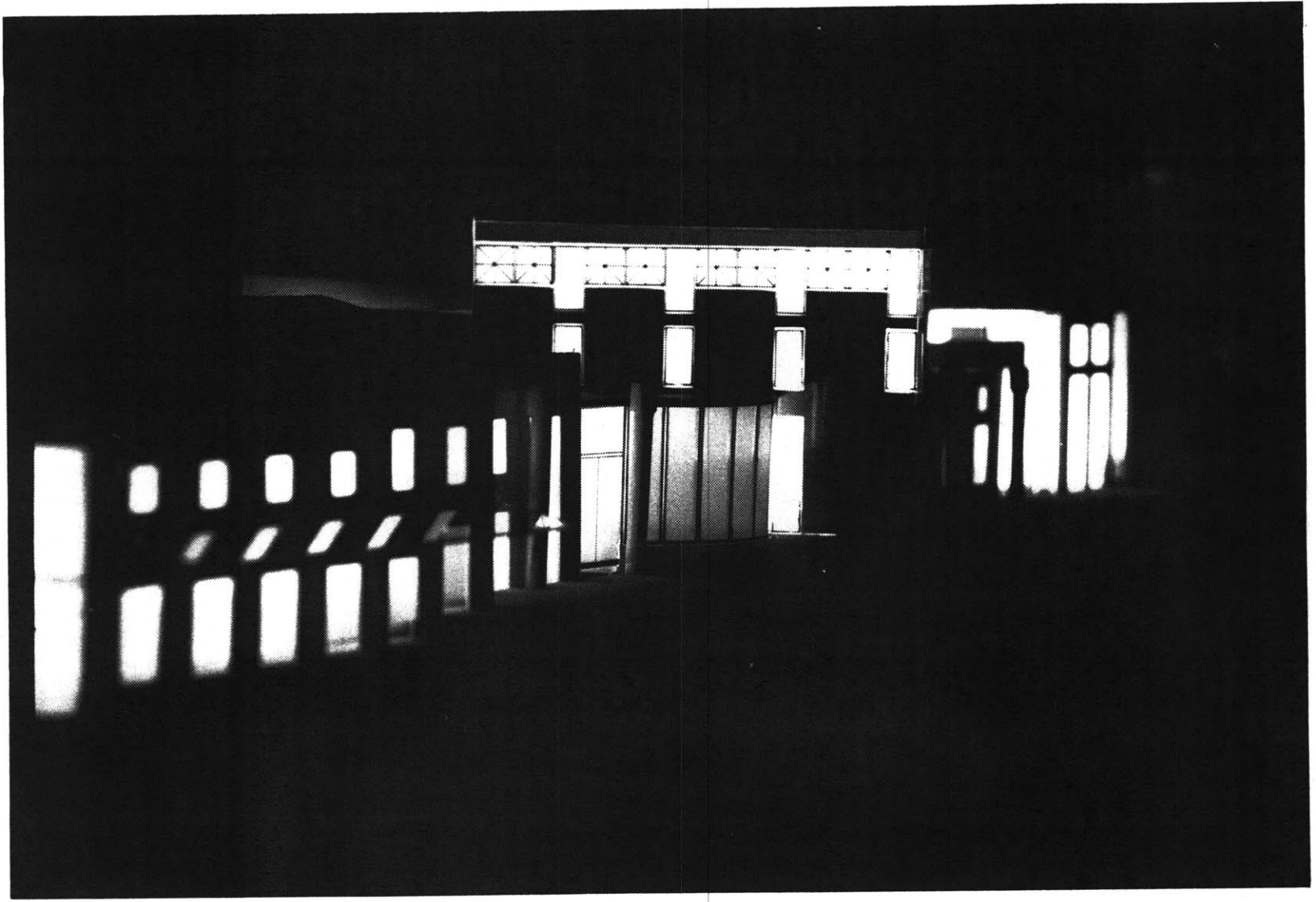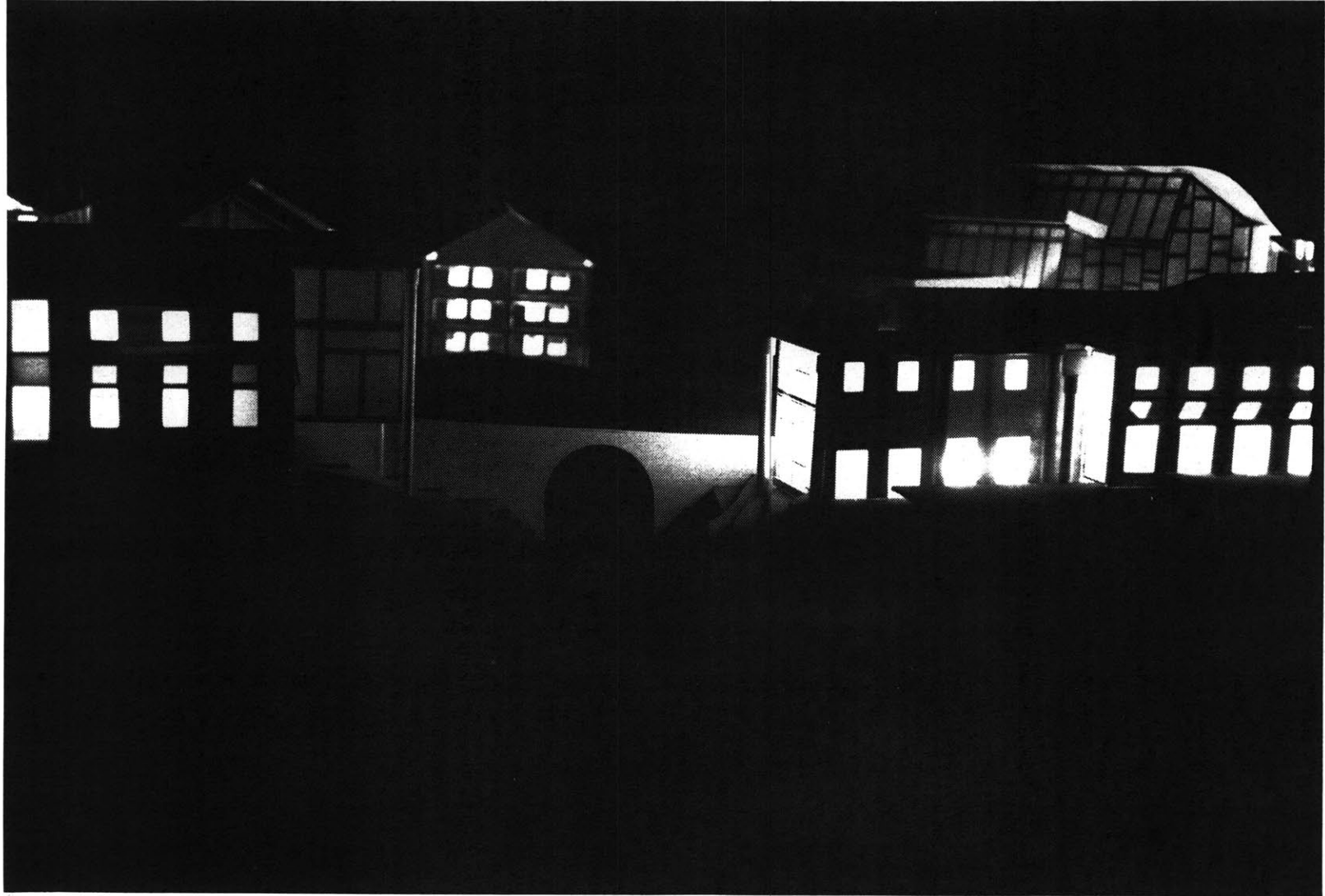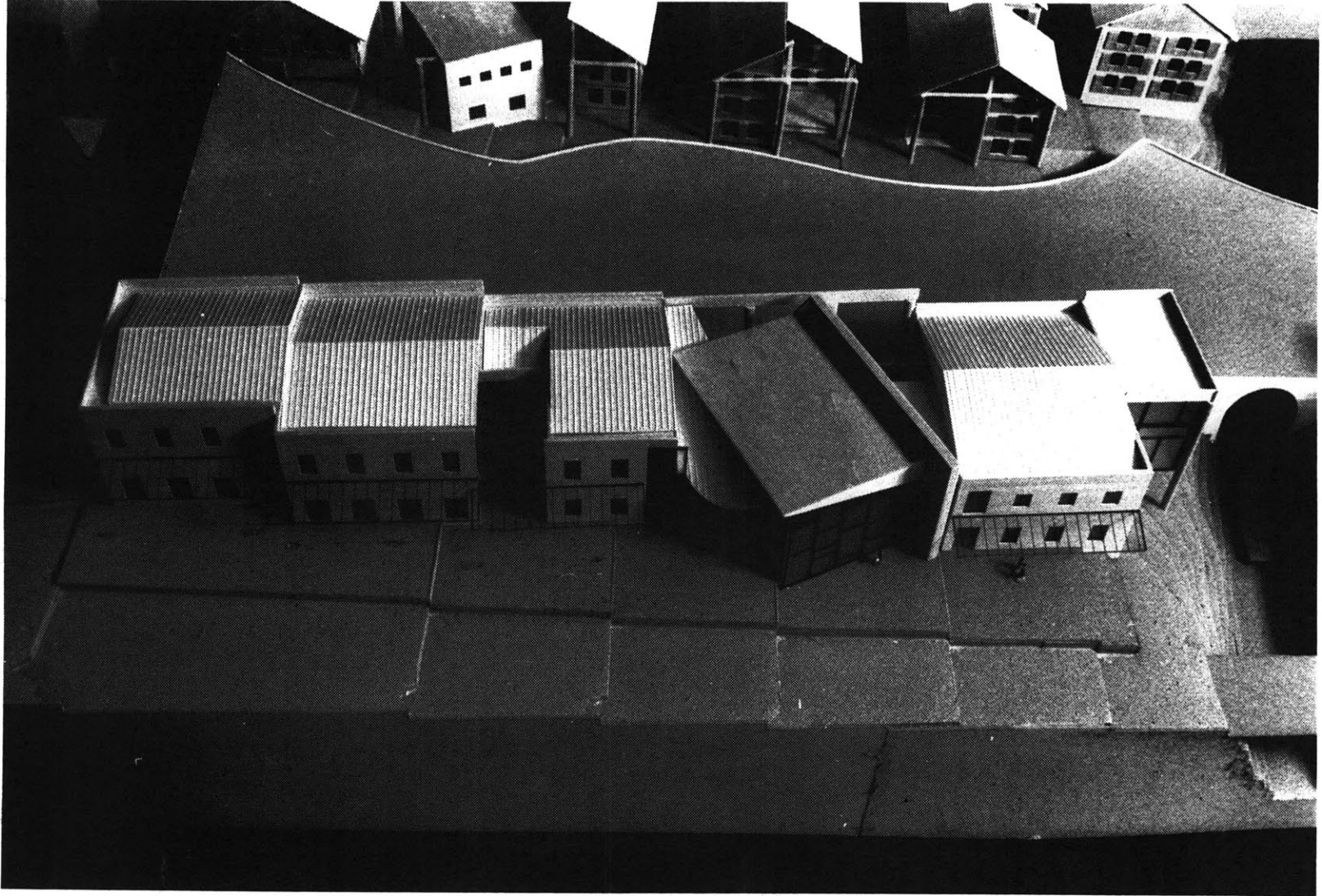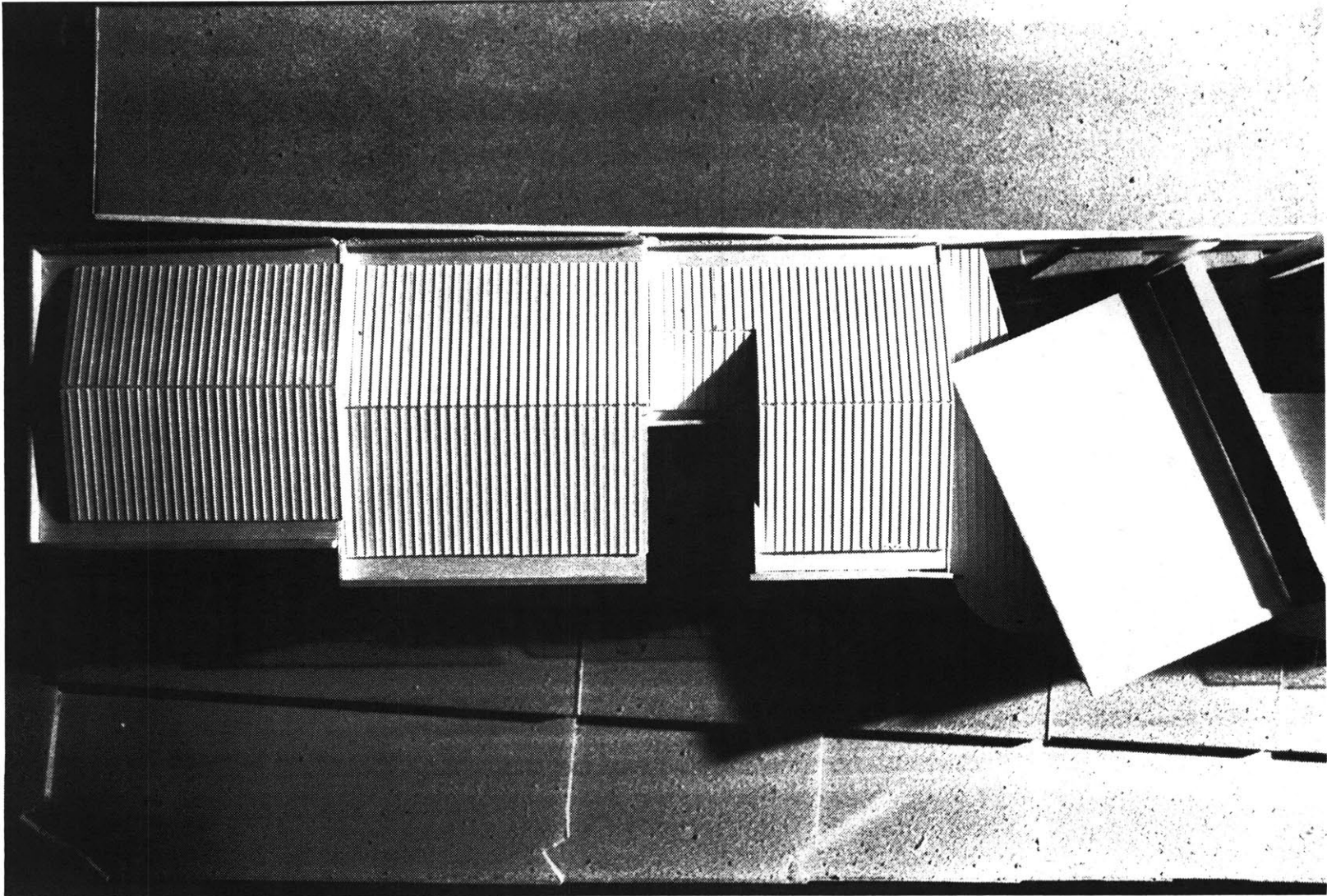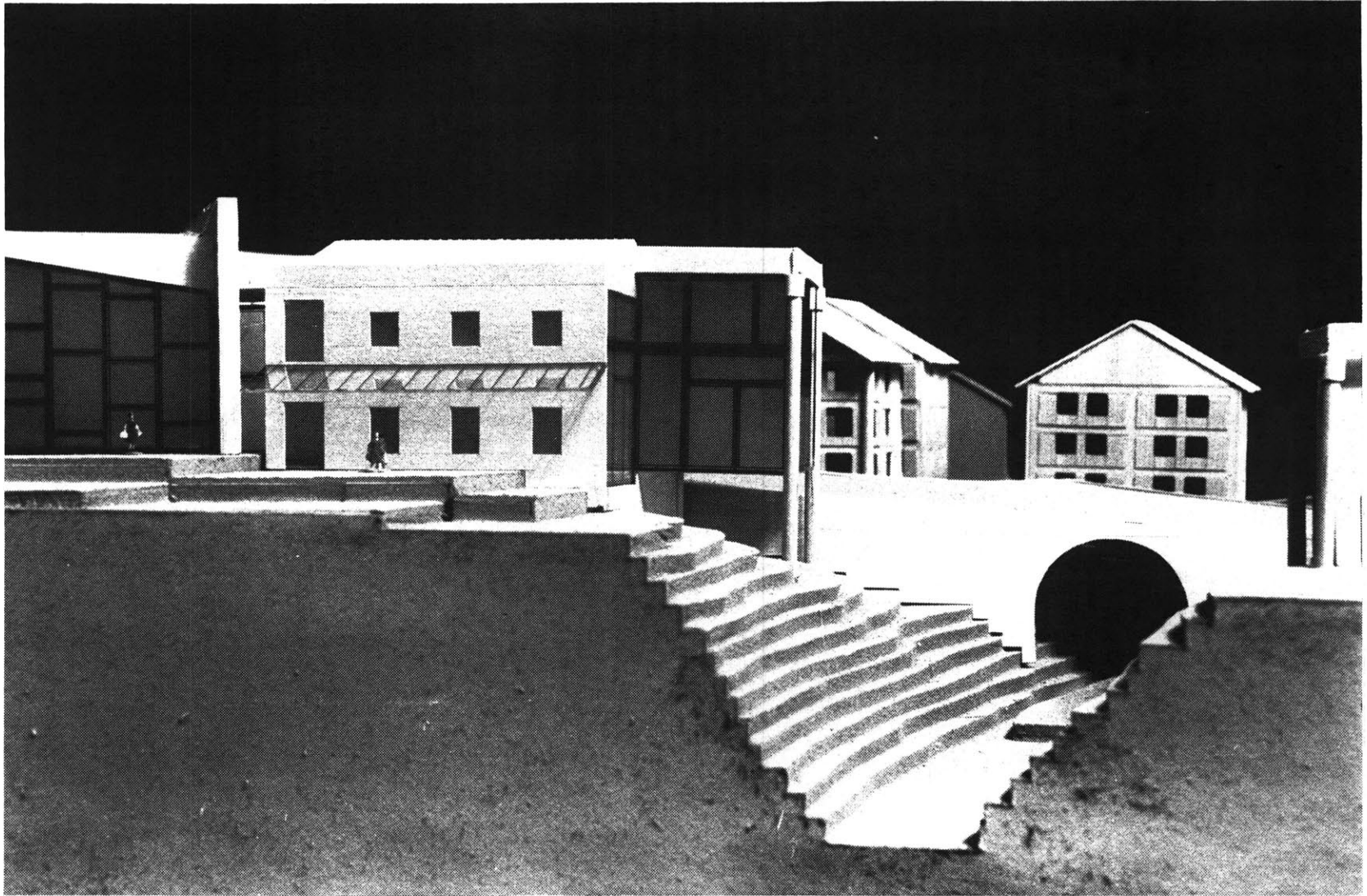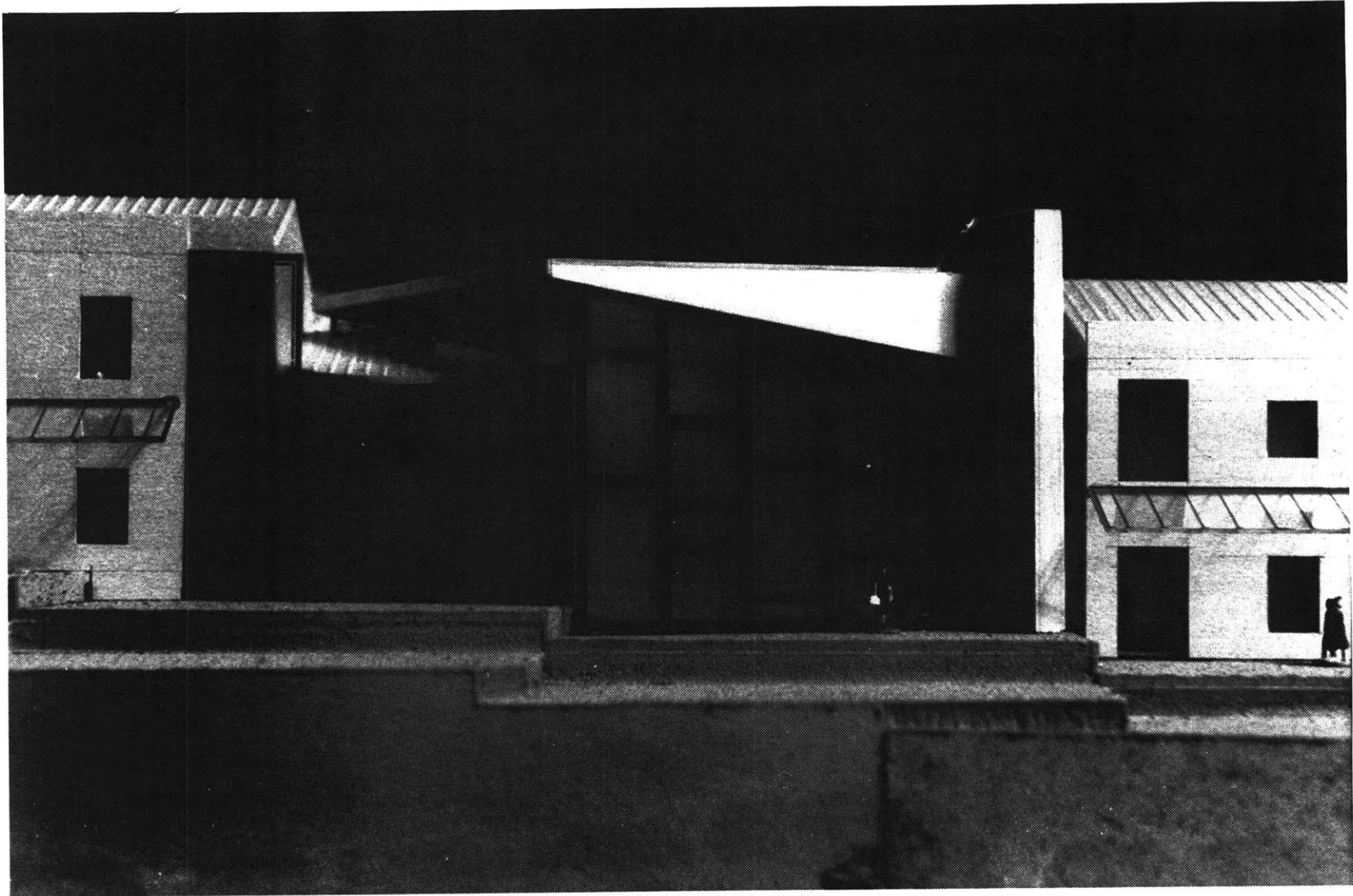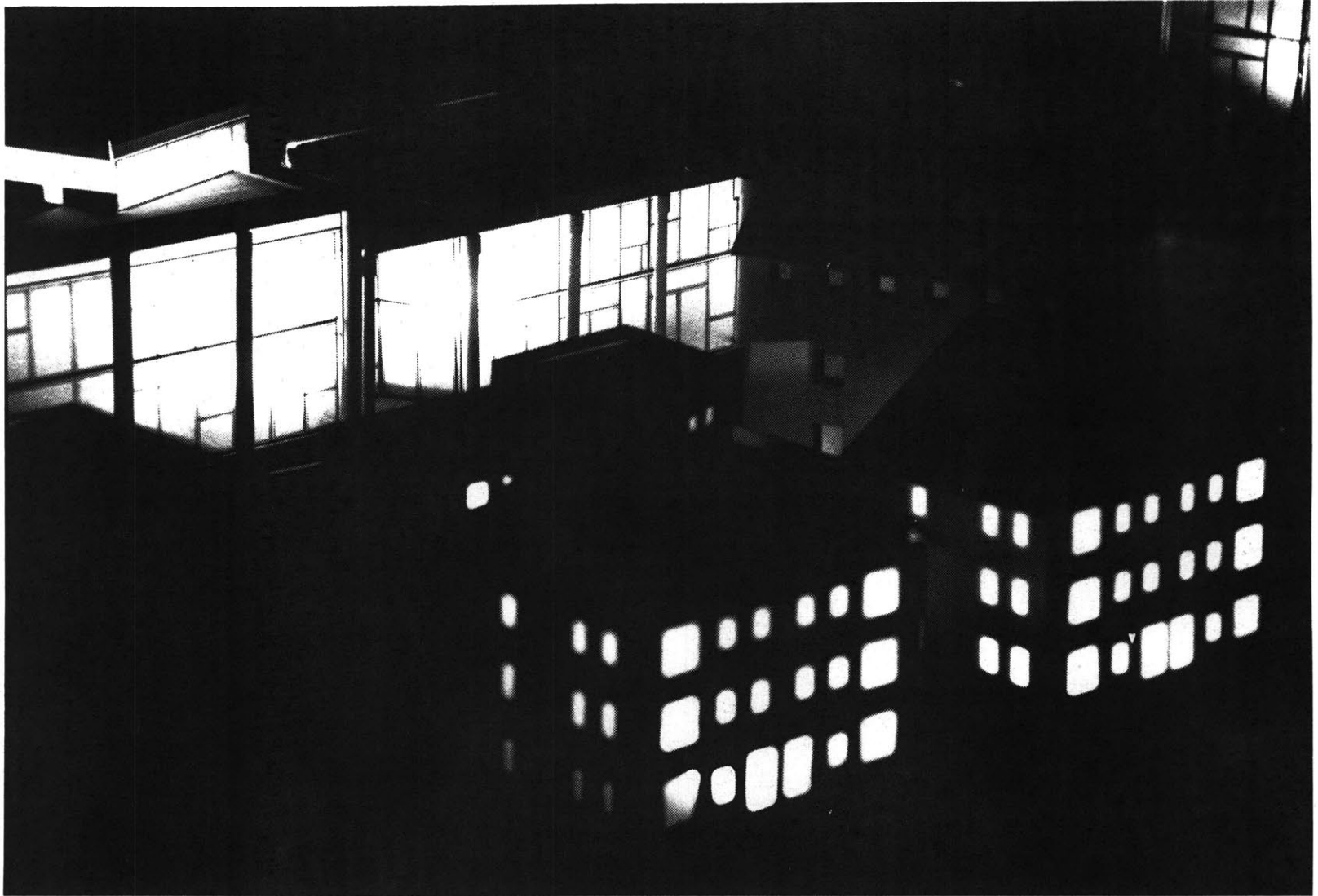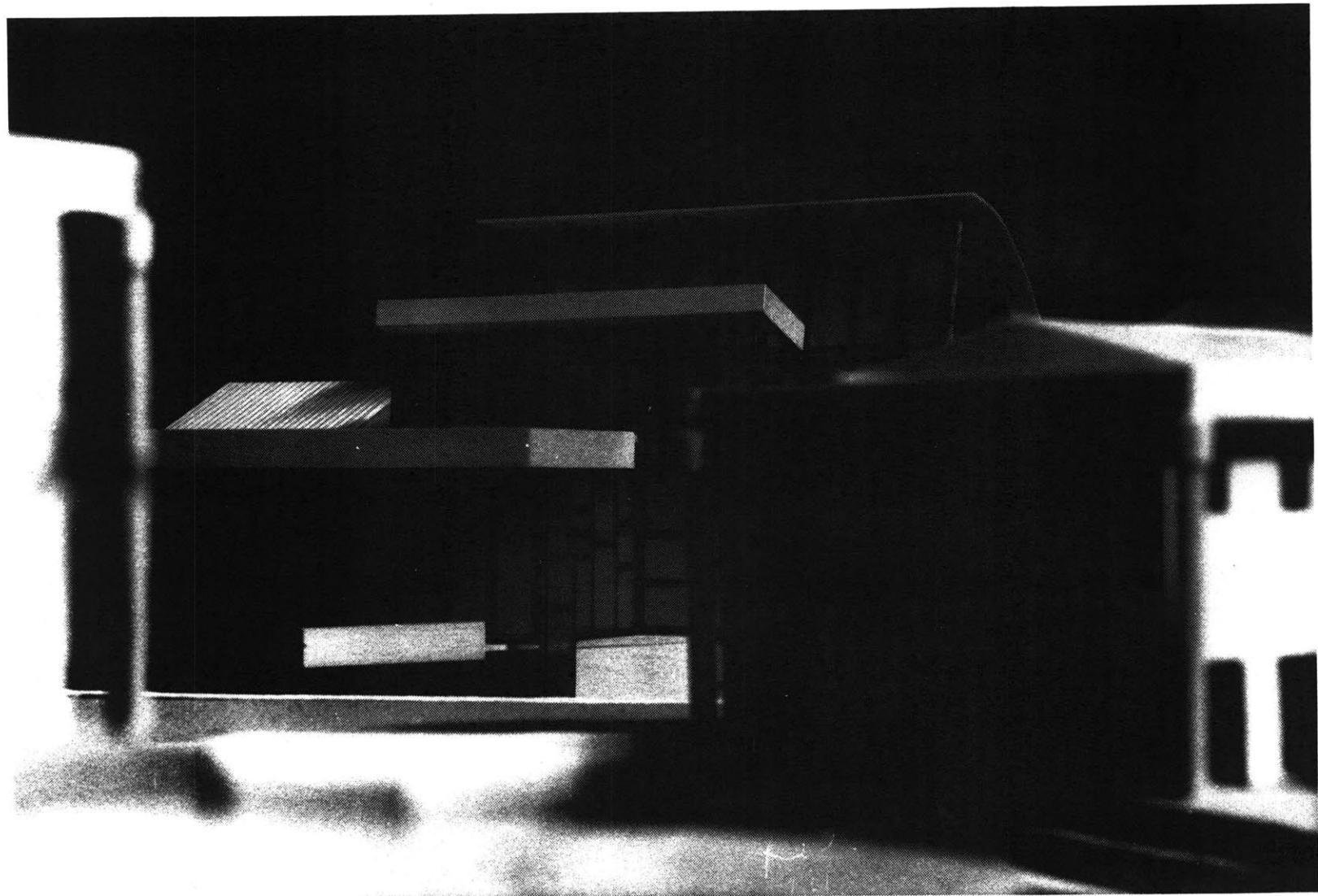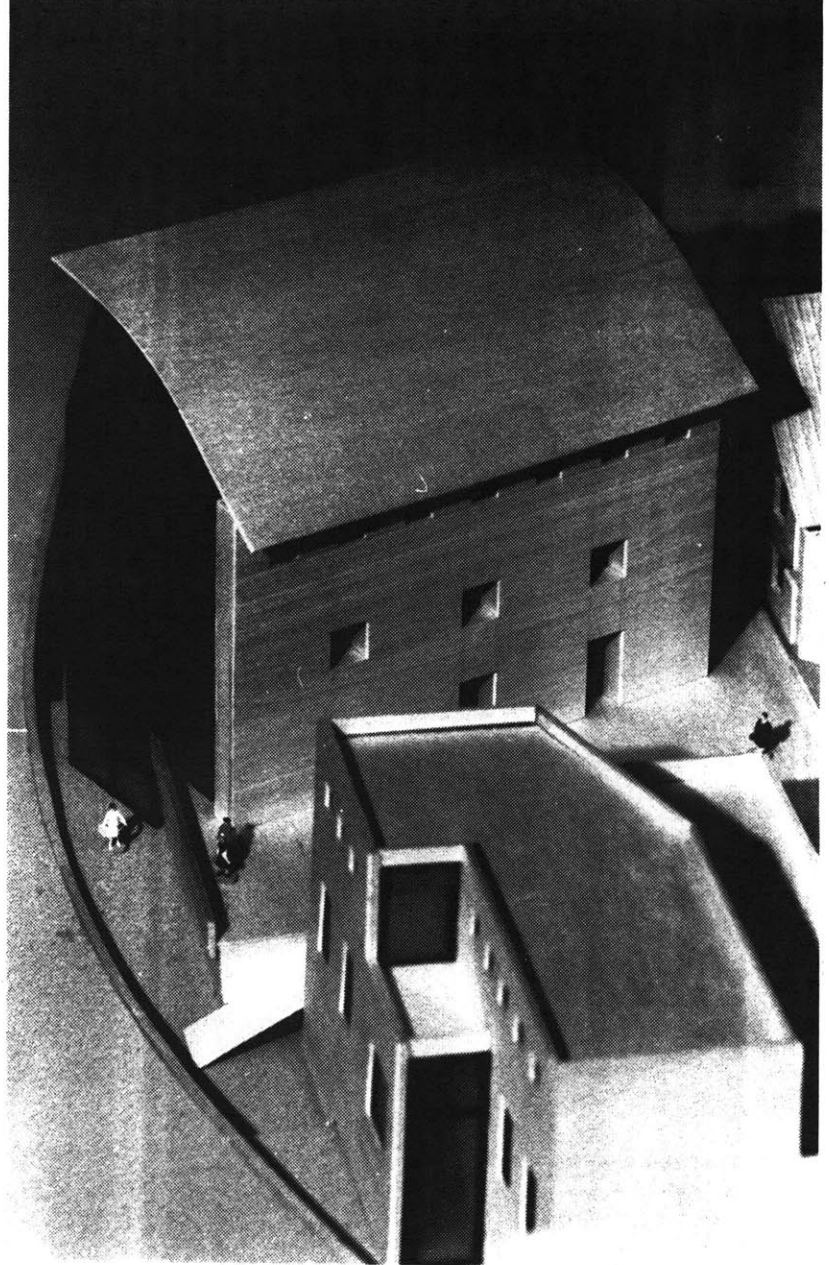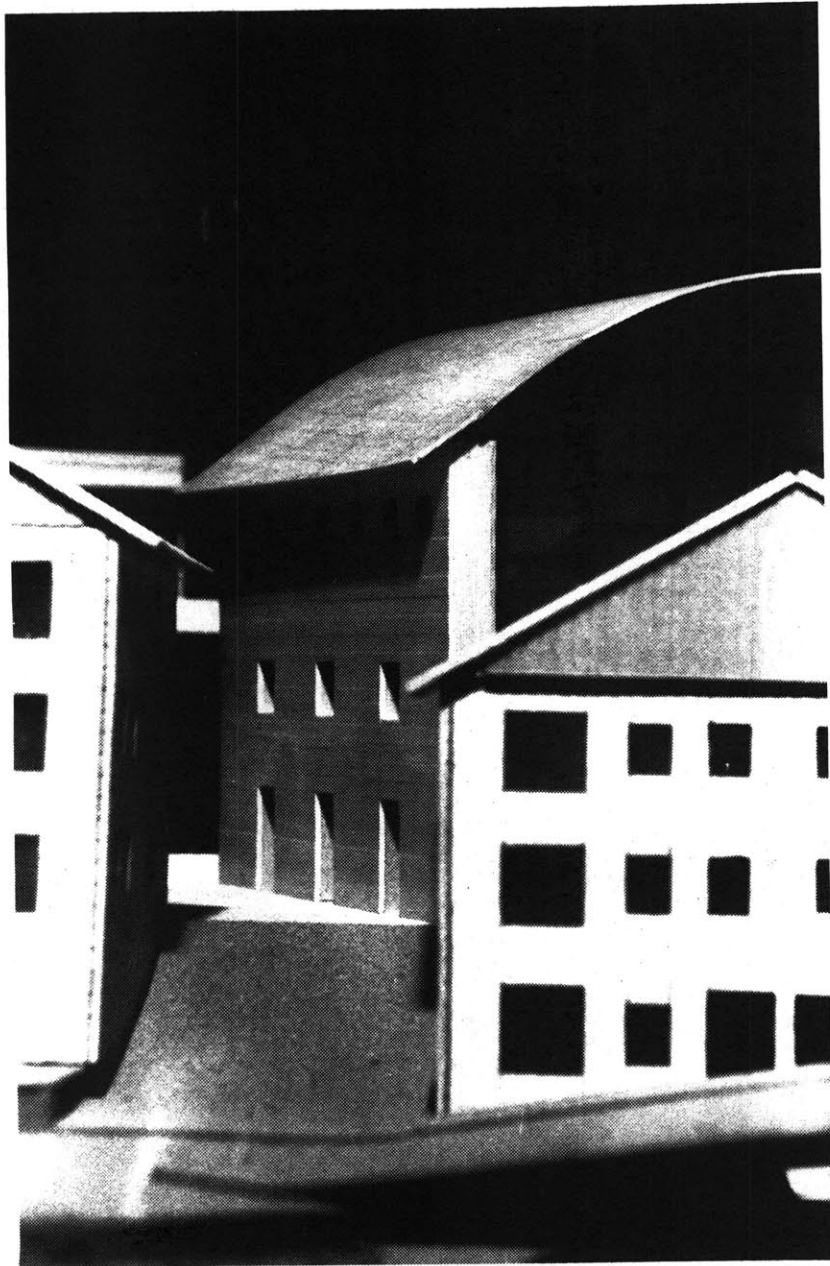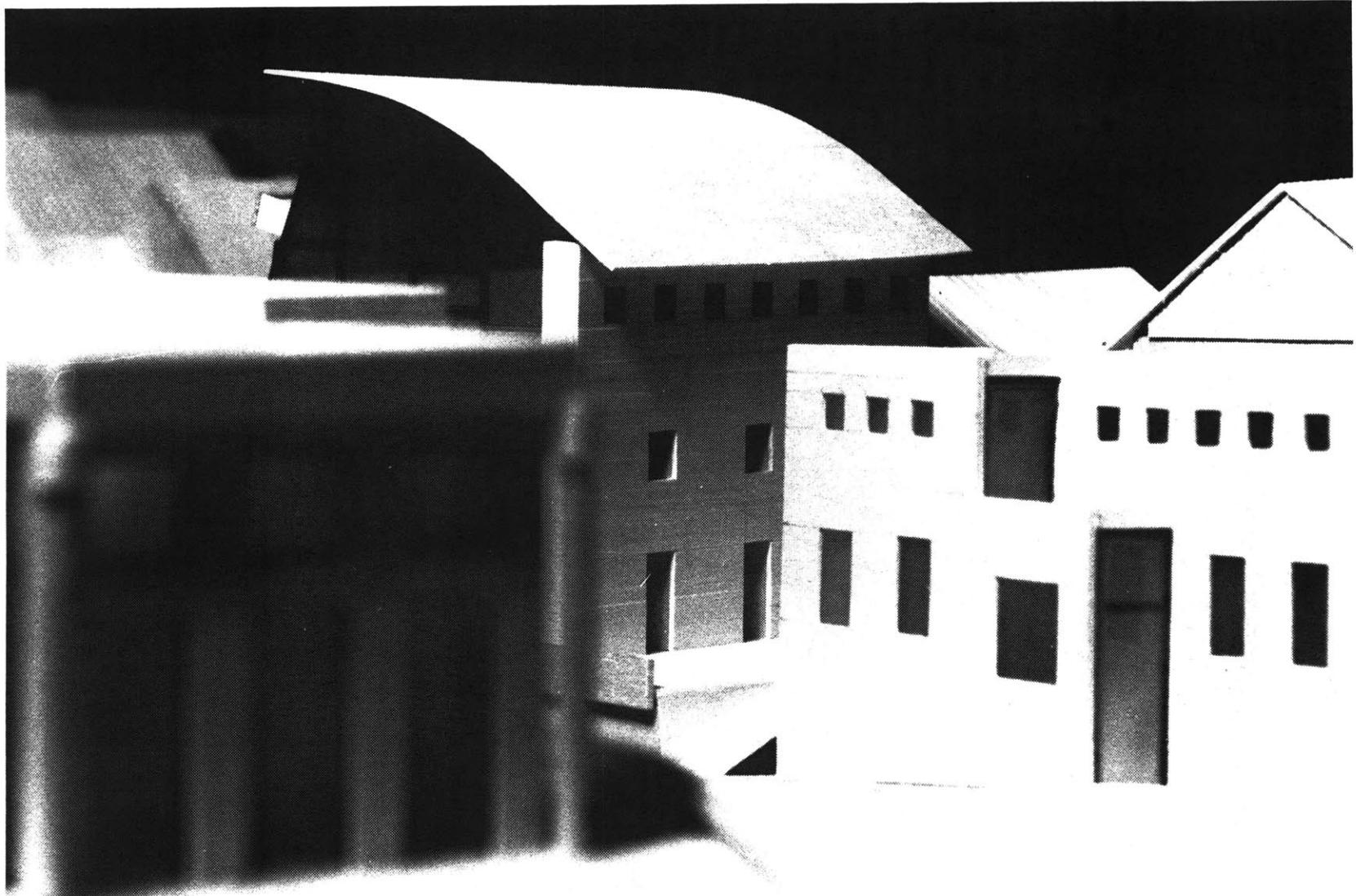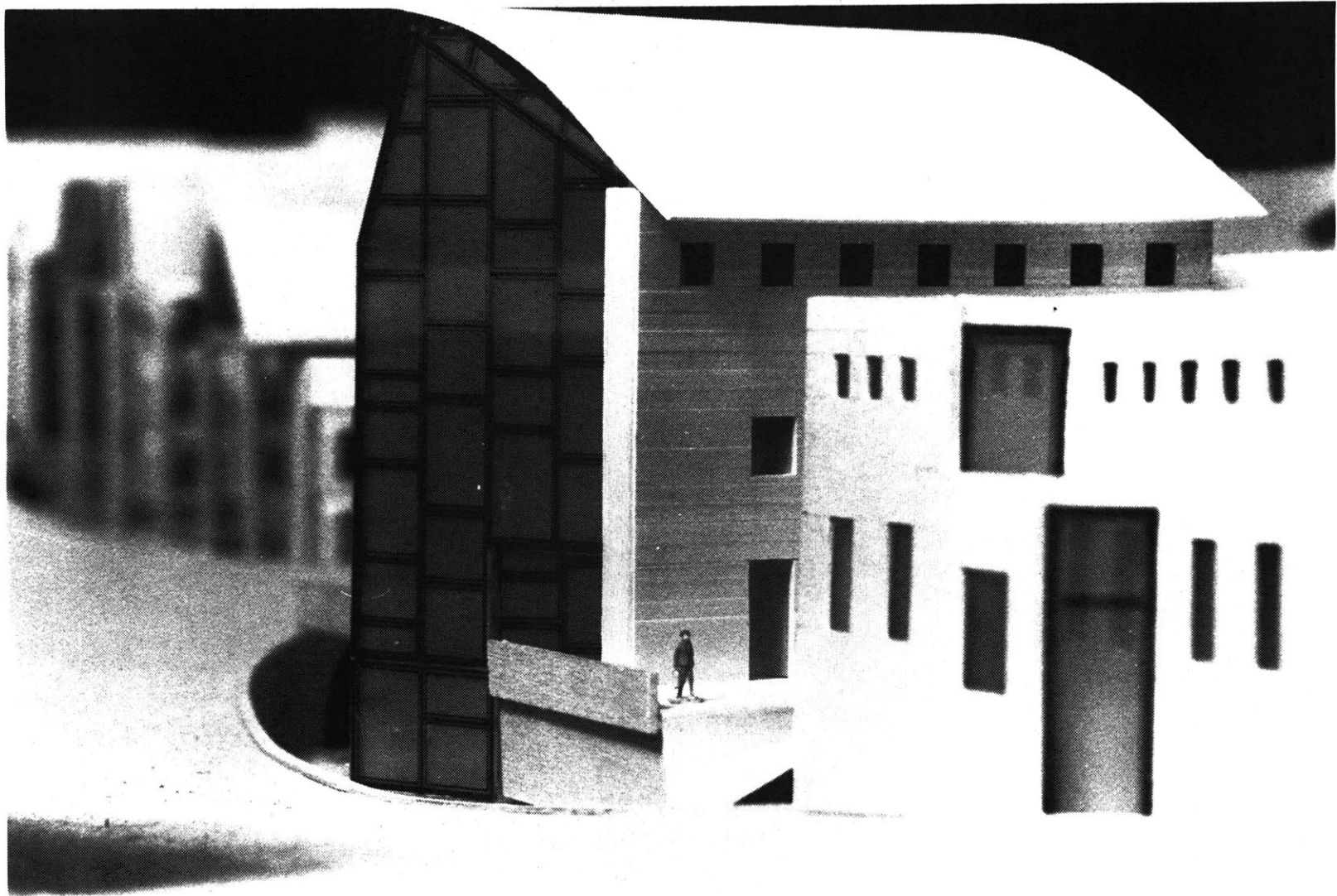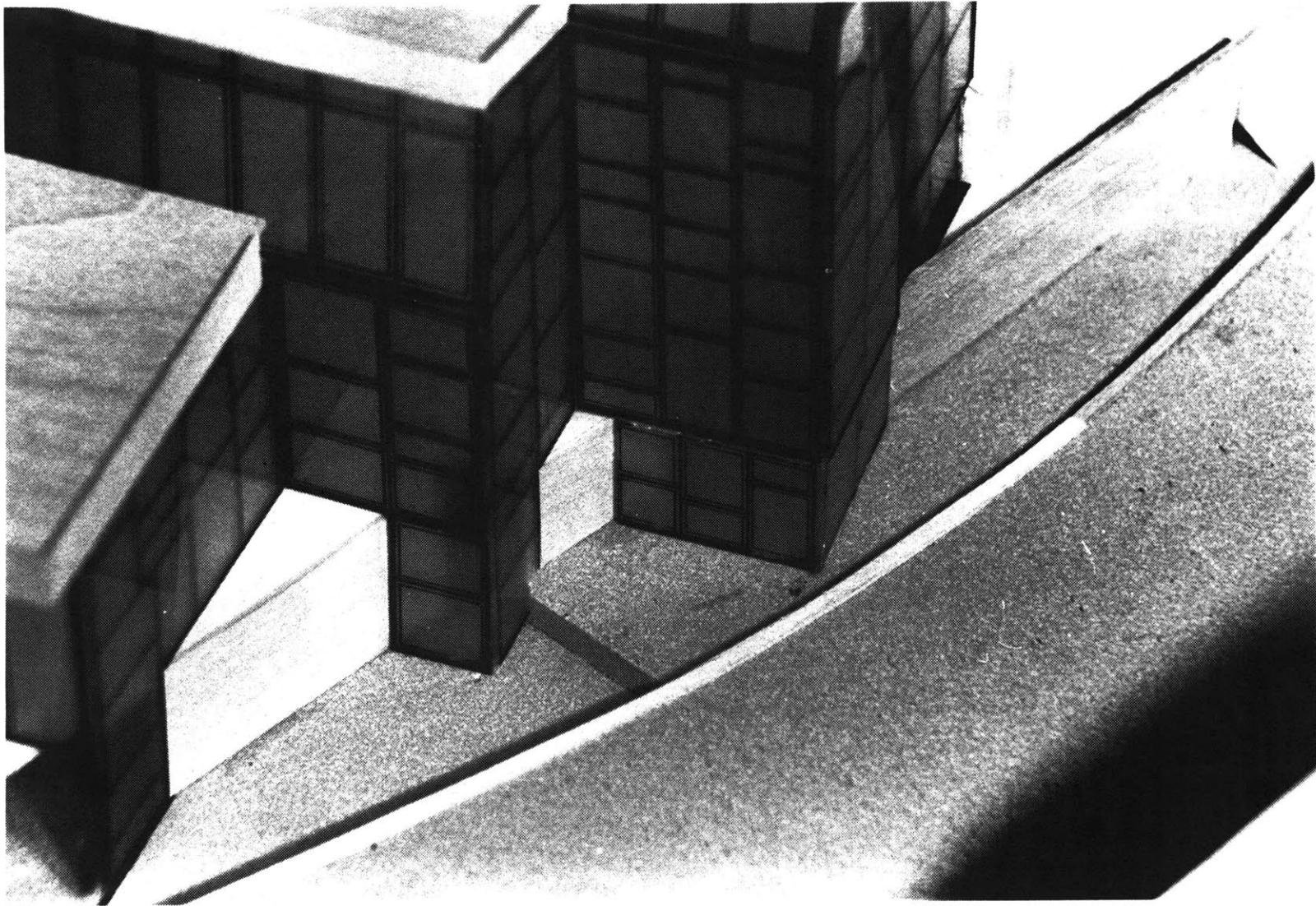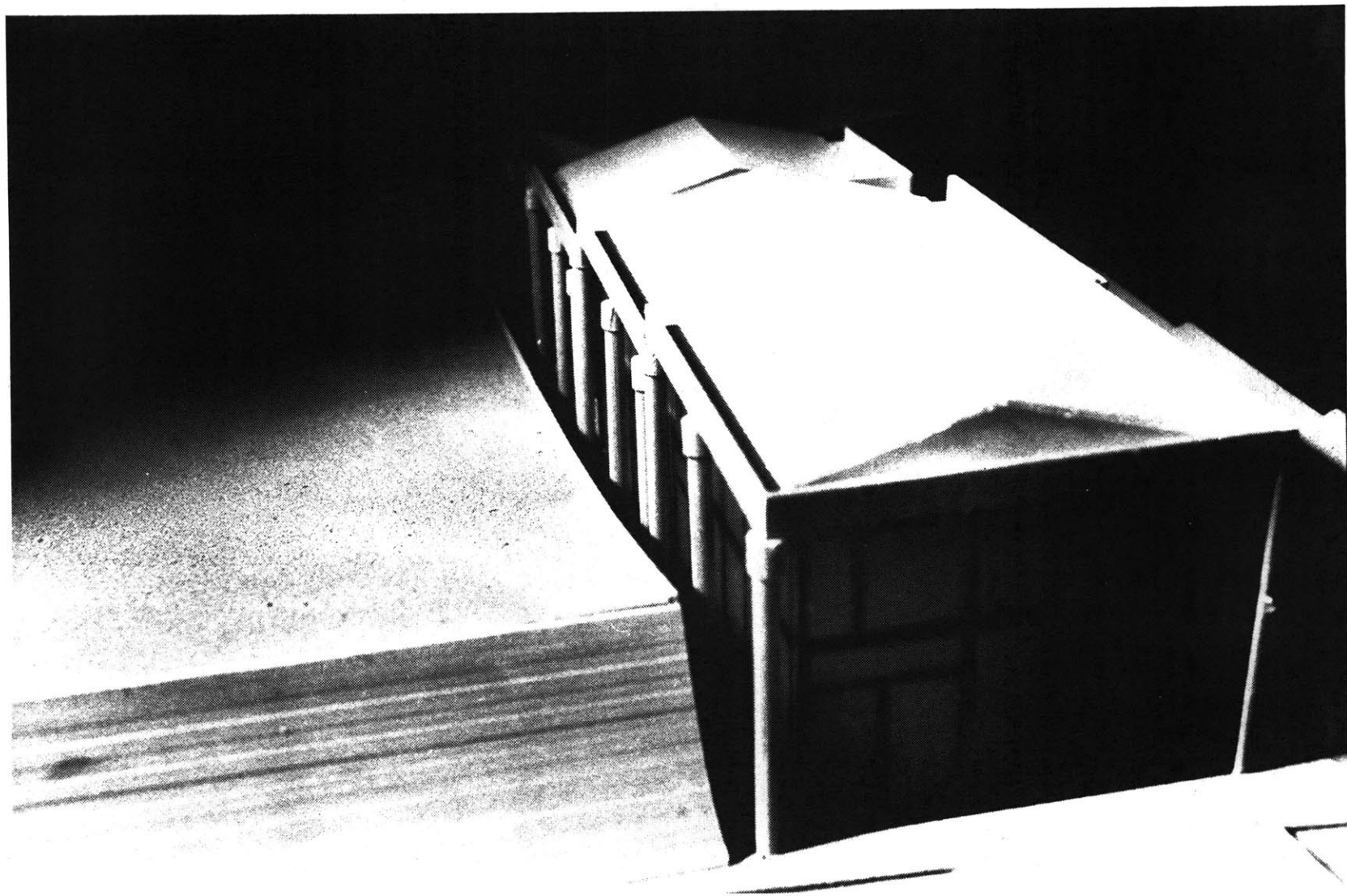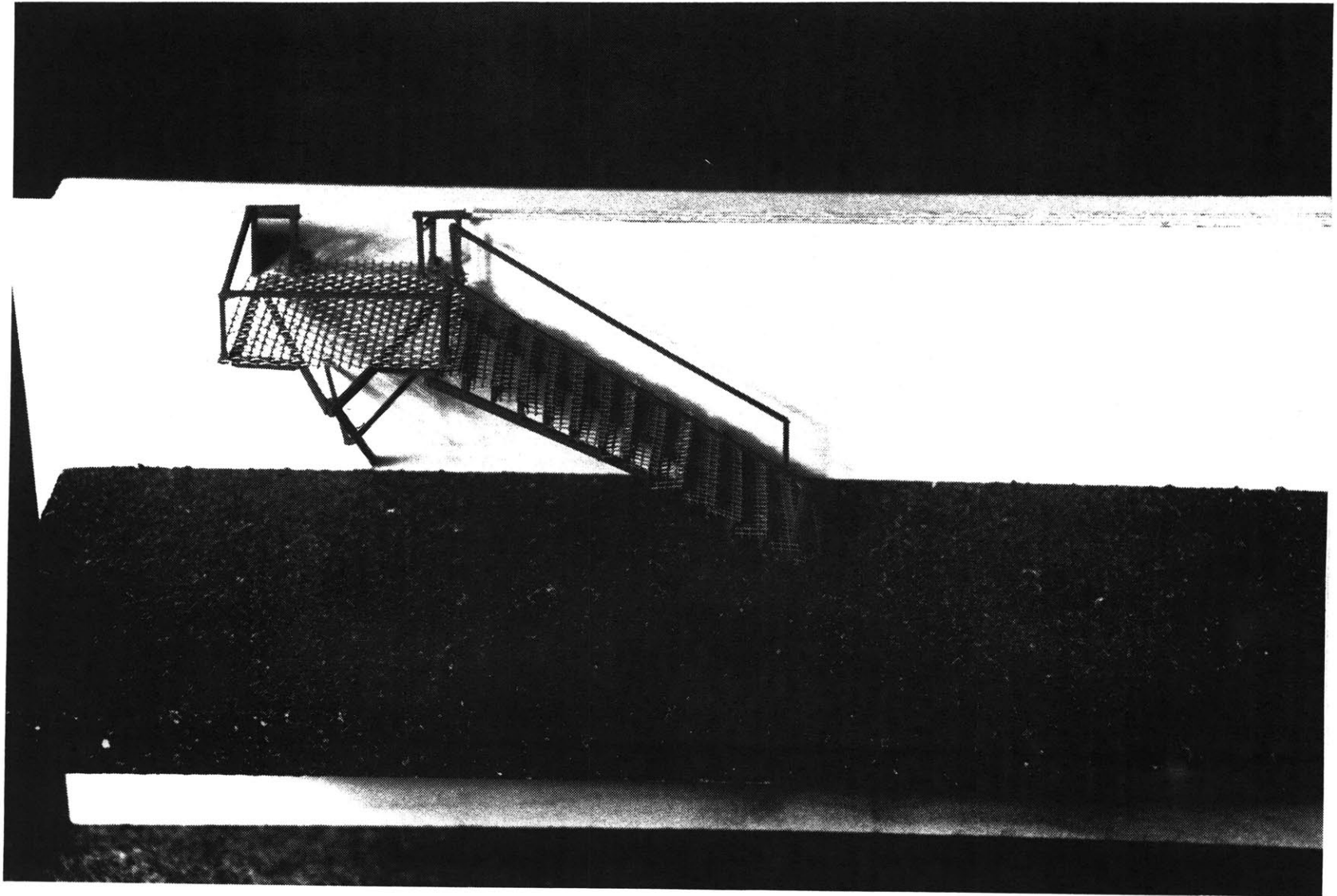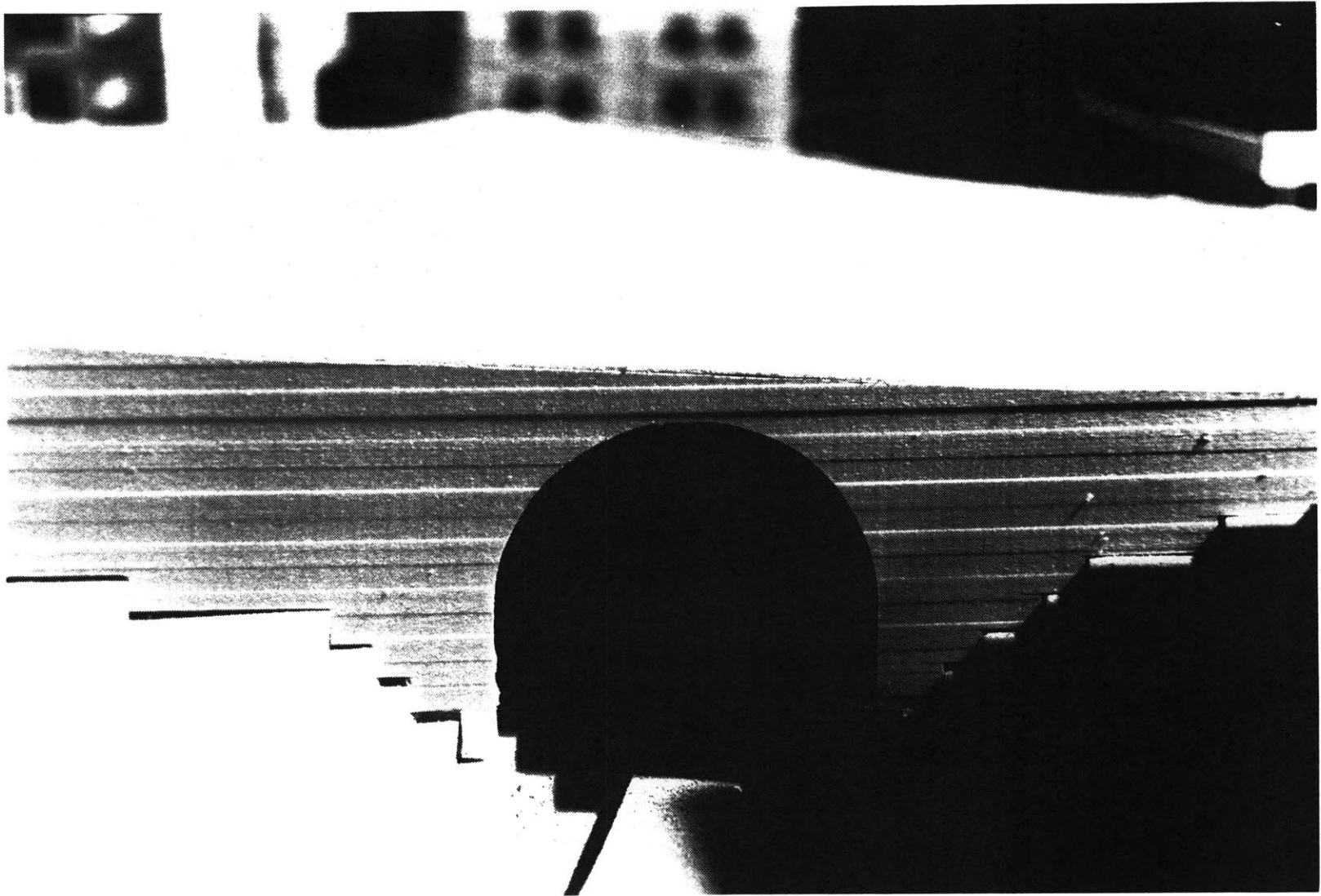
PART II

It is important for me to understand from whence my ideas of the application of history in architecture have come and what forces have influenced not only my thoughts but the thoughts of a generation of architects now creating the world. Please bear with me as I trace the genealogy of influences and respond to them as I clarify my own personal modern eclecticism.

CONCERNING HISTORY

The deluge of movements and "isms" (not the least of which is Post Modernism) that have incessantly pelted the progression of modern architecture has all but flooded out what could be seen as a natural progression of modern (not Modern-Movement) architecture. From a historical point of view they have contributed to a confusion that has become ubiquitous today and seems to stem from the difficulty we have in describing the scope of architecture. This confusion arises from our inability or unwillingness to reflect upon the nature and means of architecture and how these two principles are acted upon by our memory.

Man builds the way he does because he has a mind and thinks and reasons and remembers. We can assume that the first builders concerned themselves solely with "rational architecture" which is admittedly a redundant expression. We usually say that we have a rational understanding of an idea or phenomenon when we are in a position to articulate and order its different features, and since the fundamental preoccupation of architecture is order all of those ideas and experiences of shelter which lead to firmness, commodity, and delight we could rule out the very idea of architecture being irrational. This is not to say that there are not many works in the catalogue of architecture which seem to be without reason or within which the rational of the designer is completely hidden if present at all. Rather, the concept of architecture is based on the rational understanding of shelter and if it were possible to confine the designers mind solely

to this understanding he would no longer produce architecture but would produce buildings.

Building refers to the craft of constructing shelter. It refers to the material techniques of construction, systems, services, structure, and formal disposition, to name a few. Building comprises the knowledge and experiences that man has accumulated in dealing with the many variencies of erecting shelter. Architecture appears to be the product of artistic intention and metaphorical interpretation, not, like building, of necessity. It is exactly this distinction that has led to the confusion in dealing with the history of architecture as well as design in the post modern era.

It has been stated that architecture is the art of building or an art in and of itself. I would never call into question statements of such authorless sanctity, rather I would like to concern myself with a definition less broad and perhaps more penetrating and deliberate: Architecture is the mythical representation of building, and it is this feature which accounts for architectures ability to organize itself into a body of technical and aesthetic knowledge. I raise, therefore, the more traditional questions concerning the nature and scope of architecture; the natural link between the building and memory; the reductive and essentialist nature of all formal stylization; the mythical and emotive nature and status of recognizable architectural artifacts; and, at first, the influence upon our thinking of the various aspects of the Modern Movement.

Architecture as the result of artistic intention and metaphorical interpretation imitates the world by producing resemblances and does not address abstract reason but sensuous perception. They are concerned with outward appearances and employ illusions (and allusions), analogies, reflections, metaphors, and images that are wanting and incomplete; fashioned anew with each work, these models are freely represented and are the tools of the architect. Ideally, in the mind of the modern eclectic, if there are recognisable incidents of imitation they should not be understood as aping and mimicry but rather as the free, and therefore wanting and

106

incomplete, production of an analogon.

Modern architects and critics have been openly contemptuous of artistic and architectural imitation since they divided the history into two distinct halves; the wholly irrational and sentimental past and the wholly rational and intellectual future. Questions of representation, figuration, and ornament (even ornament that was indeed structural) were ruled obsolete and dismissed as irrational and illegitimate on the assumption that modern man had risen above such fetishes, especially if the item or ornament alluded to was part of the established architectural past. The ideology of modern architecture thought it had rid itself of this whole of languages and language, human institutions and conventions with a stroke of the eraser, proclaiming its obsolescence in the new times. But it had continued to live in the memory of man, renewing itself constantly since it was fed by the "presence of the past," by messages that continue to originate from that set of tangible things called historical heritage as a whole, and from a new viewpoint produced by the recollection of human progression.

The constructional puritanism of the Modern Movement made architects blind to the fictitious nature of their craft. It made them forget that the true nature of the art of architecture lies in the distance it establishes between itself and its model while never breaking that connection. Representation and figuration is said to have been superseded by abstraction or a non-figural display of the essences. Yet in the aesthetic of Modern architecture we find that the desire for abstraction has yielded outright realism. While at first glance the paradox is apparent, the problem is mostly semantic in nature as most of the modern movement architects' concern was for confounding abstraction with the raw immediacy of the reality of the products of the building industry. The Modern ideal of dealing with the facts and only the facts is rational indeed but has nothing at all to do with abstraction. If anything, the "facts" of todays rapidly changing technology carry a realism that is dated and, therefore, not general enough to warrant the use of the term abstraction. Archi-

tecture always works with the facts of technology, but the sympathy that architecture has with technology need not be instanced by the literal adoption of those facts. Instead, architecture receives from technology "facts" and returns to the world "forms" rich with meanings and allusions.

Charles W. Moore wrote:

> "'the past' lies in everyone's mind and imagination. It is the places we have visited or lived in or read about or imagined. For decades we have been told that the normal urgent human interest in all this is 'nostalgia,' a rather cheap emotion that has no place in architecture, which must purge itself of all that, to become a formal philosophical 'statement' by the architect, and that if the possible inhabitants of the architecture do not respond to either its 'rational' or its 'functional' qualities, then we architects will soon commence their 'education' so they indeed eventually want what we are providing.

[Clients still need to be educated but not to the servility of the modern movement]

That presumption, mercifully, is collapsing. There is finally stirring the realization that buildings are brought alive by the investment of human care and energy and love [and memory] and that to have enough of all these the buildings need to be able to receive the investment not just of their architects, but of everybody else concerned, too, especially their inhabitants [this can happen through what the architect has learned about them]. Buildings thus energized are not going to be designed in private by an architect communing with himself; they will be given shape by him (or her) all right - that is a learned capacity. But their images, and direction, and content will have to come mostly from peoples memories and imaginations and will therefore embrace the past, individual and collective,

historic and imaginary. Buildings cannot any longer stand free of human energies and recall: they must absorb and embody them."7

T.S. Eliot said in Tradition and the Individual Talent

"Tradition is a matter of much wider significance. It cannot be inherited, and if you want it you must obtain it by great labor. It involves, in the first place, the historical sense ... and the historical sense involves a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence ... No poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone. ... What happens when a new work of art is created is something that happens simultaneously to all works of art which preceded it. The existing monuments form an ideal order among themselves, which is modified by the introduction of the new work of art among them ... Whoever has approved of this idea of order ... will not find it preposterous that the past should be altered by the present as much as the present is directed by the past. And the poet who is aware of this will be aware of great difficulties and responsibilities."

History is the record of powerful emotions and astonishing deeds as well as a timeline of the cotedian life of man. With skill of narration and architectural juxtaposition, the architect can stop us in our tracks and cause us to evaluate all of our present actions and decisions in the light of the age of the cathedral builders of Christian piety ar the era of dazzling innovation and finesse by which the Baroque is known to us. Most of us are conscious of history as a series of epochal events. More subconsciously, however, we experience a second, more mythical dimension of history in objects, where things not only 'have a history' but also 'are history.' Habitual use tends to concentrate historicity in things, to preserve their historical character in forms: in which certainty and familiarity are condensed into the quality we also

know as 'home.' We feel the loss of the past in these objects more keenly than the forgetting or the loss of the historic bygones. Hence the yearning for the ancient, the tradition and the time-honored forms and the plea for continuity and historical identity. Hence also the rush for substitutes and the revelling in museum consumption and "easy" paste on historical references in our popular architecture.8

Of the two breaks in some sort of continuity in the treatment of history, the Modern Movement and Post Modernism, the latter represents little more than a consumer oriented rush to the marketplace with a recognizably different product. This latest trend in building differs from modernism only in the style of wrapper and not largely in content thus leaving the desire for a satisfying reference to a historical continuity far from satiated. Since the need explored earlier remains unmet by Post Modernism I will address it only by reference to a remarkably apt quote by Andrew Batey speaking about a design done by Mark Mack. He said:

"The insubstantial artificial building materials which have produced the Post-Modern aesthetic suits the confused language of lowered expectations and applied ornament. This has increased the distance between the natural environment and the built artefact. The structural vernacular combined with the desire to fit the building into the landscape reinforces the notion of permanence, and counters the vicissitudes of fleeting trendiness now rampant in architecture."9

...HOW DO WE JUDGE THIS?

The archetypal presence of the past is the irreducible core of architecture. When we build a house and city we summarize the existence and meaning of the past in that place. To make the smallest action within the realm of architecture is to uncover the vital relationships between place, culture, and architectural work and our memory of all three. Historical dialogue is inevitable,
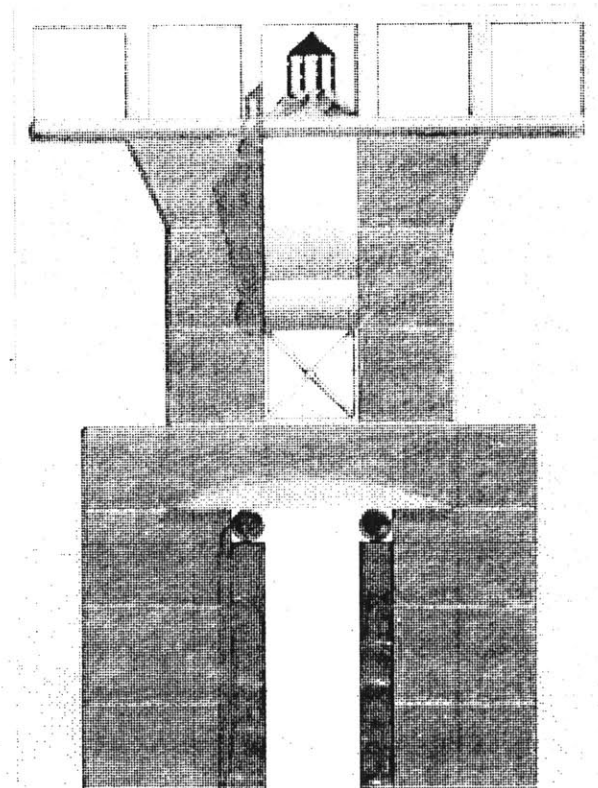
An example of the "cartoon" referencing

but to make a line on the ground - axial or surrounding - is a primordial act, beginning in the unconscious recesses of our memory, and always new. The history of architecture should speak of the genealogy of that line and its projection into wall, roof, street, and city.... The archetypal relationship of wall to floor, floor to city, is the reference within which history is grounded and made alive in our presence. The relationships of wall to floor and floor to city are the result of architectural facts and it is the *architectural fact* that allows us to make history modern without falling into the trap of caprice.

I agree in part with Joseph-Paul Kliehues when he wrote

"Contrary to the 'architecture parlant' of the French revolution, the speaking architecture of Eclecticism stands out by way of further complexity. The power of form evocation in the way it was used by Boullee would be supplemented, just as would be the literary originality and the immediately conceivable contexts of Ledoux's architecture through the conscious injection of historical quotes, *which expand the language of architecture and urban design less through their formal aesthetic quality than because of their origin.*"10

Within the confines of my understanding of modern eclecticism, the memory of an archetype or architectural element can be addressed in at least two ways: either by making the association to the archetype clear as just that; or by appealing to the emotional and intellectual associations connected to that archetype. A clear example is the contrast between Pfau Jones' tract house and Peter Forbes Maine retreat. While Pfau Jones' house presents an image of the archetype, a billboard of "house", the house by Forbes conveys the emotive associations of the Rhode Island "stone ender" and the ideas of hearth, warmth, history, etc.in a clearly modern way. Both methods are different interpretations of similar architectural facts. The reasons to apply either method (or both) are both project and designer specific - nei-
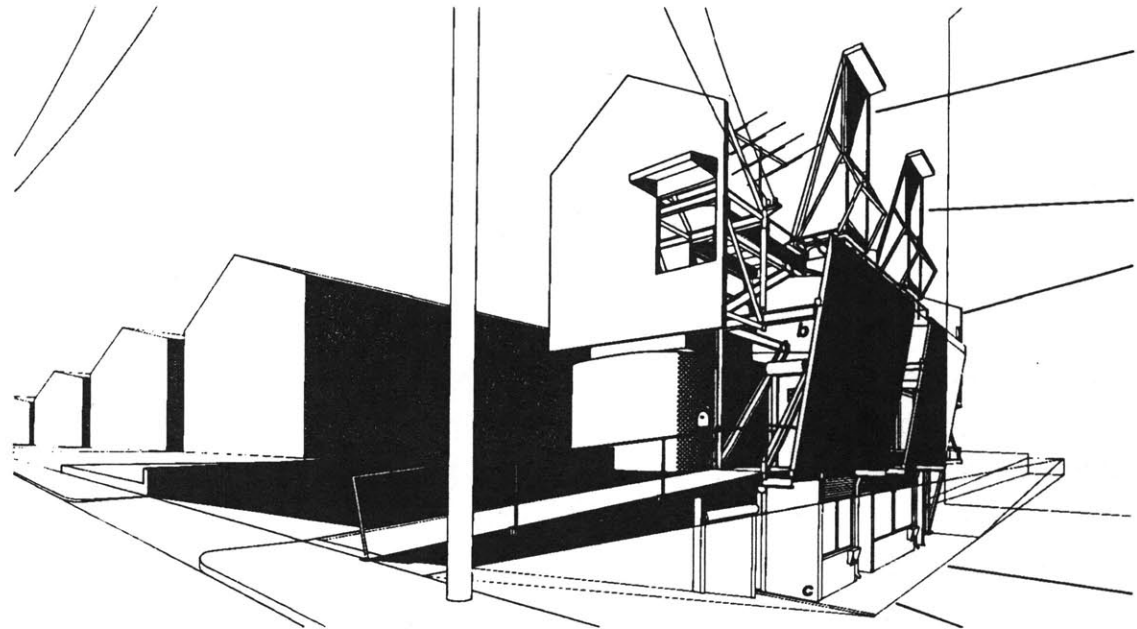
The "Tract House" by Pfau / Jones

ther method is right or wrong in and of itself. But rather it is both the appropriateness of application and the clarity with which the idea is applied that can be judged to be either well or poorly executed (*in relation to the intention of the designer*). It is the propriety of their application that can be judged, and it is in this arena that the difference between the post modern historicist cartoon application of history can be compared with the masterful referencing of history by Aalto, Wright, and many Japanese architects.

These masters (and others) not only referenced history in an elegant, emotive and convincing way, they designed their buildings as convincing and complete creations - *first*. In other words, regardless of the complexities of historical and emotive referencing developed in a given project, these architects (particularly Aalto) clearly developed a convincing overall design, with all of the relationships to site, structure, light, and program considered, before concerning themselves with the references to the collective (or architectural) memory. The development of the two parts of the design oc-curred simultaneously and that the overall design was never driven by, but simply informed by, the referencing - having begun first with a powerful and convincing idea and the architectural facts. The facts upon which so much of the design decisions are based align themselves with the stance taken by the architect and direct the "ethical" adherence to that stance. For example: in Frank Lloyd Wrights prarie houses the stance was taken that the hearth was the metaphorical center and anchor of the house, inseperably connected to the earth below. That was the stance. The design referenced oriental and scandinavian (inglenook) architecture but only insofar as those references contributed somthing to the design and could be supported by, or brought about by, the architectural facts stemming from the design stance. Wright never forced historicity on his stances but let the references stimulate the imagination and memory of the participant in a satisfying way because they possessed their own logical *raison d'etre*.

Aalto developed the same sort of satisfying referential connection in his use of the
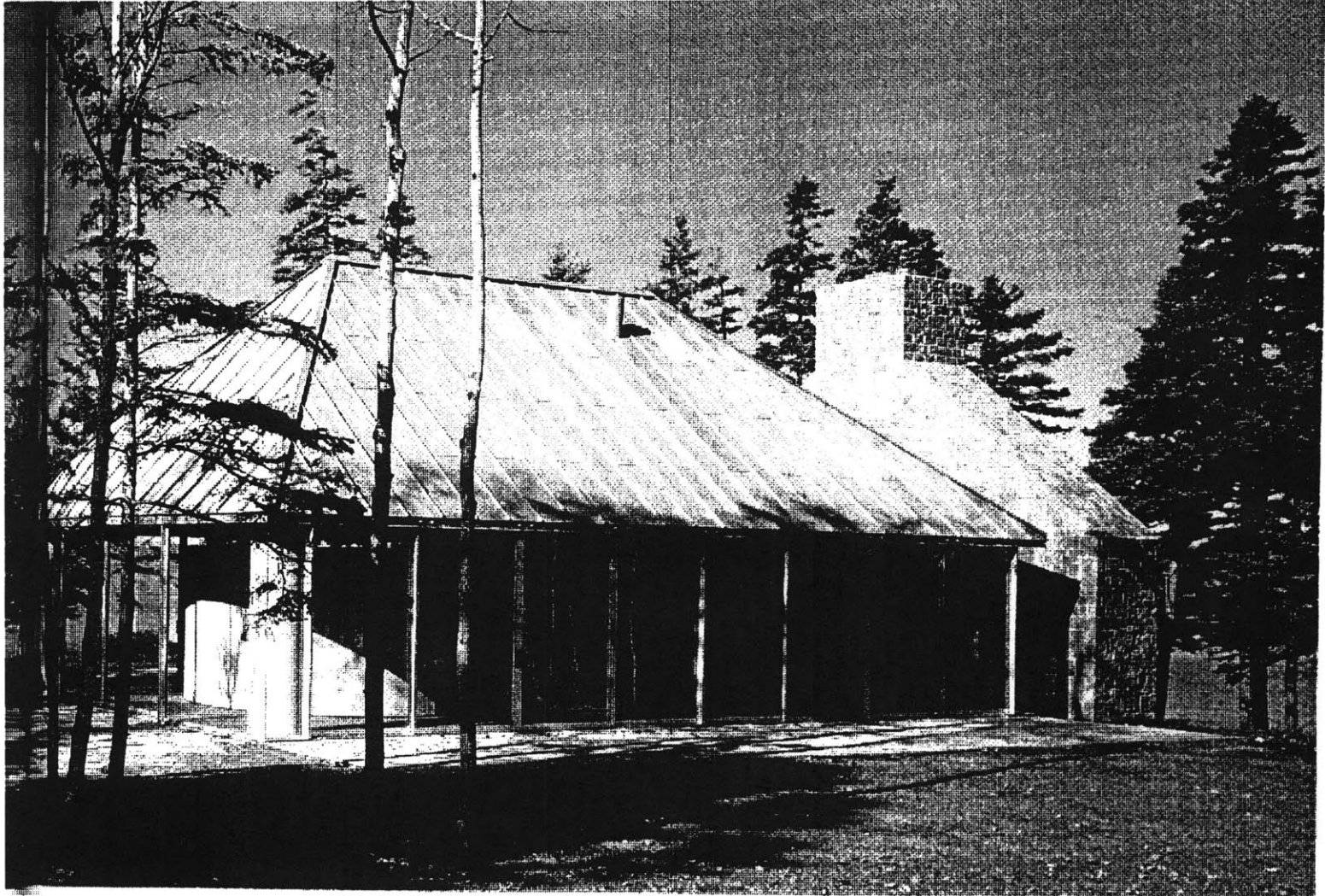
"Maine retreat" by Forbes. " ...elementary and refined, an architecture of essences."

Aalto's columns in Finlandia Hall

Aalto's columns at the bath house / sauna, Villa Mairea.

column. He demonstrated that the column should not borrow its figurative richness from the emotive physiognomy of a non architectural world, nor from the self-indulgent commemoration of abstraction, but from architectural history itself and the emotive power we have attached to it.11   In a column's ability to conjure up in the mind the primitive post, papyrus column, corbusian column, or the doric (such as the columns in Aalto's Finlandia Hall), it is perpetually bound to references which belongs to a history that repeats itself. Most importantly with Aalto is the fact that the different types of columns he used belonged to the system of construction and metaphor expressed throughout the entire work. In fact the pedimented form of the temple and that of the suburban house carry with them not only archetypal inferences but deeply rooted emotional associations (whether real or learned) that appeal to the collective memory.

History in architecture is necessarily inescapable and potentially exhillirating but has no place when considered in exclusion of the architectural facts.

"Last, and above all, no history can ever equal the scope of living experience. The architect must feed more, as a natural process, on the sources of his own origins, of his own wanderings, the sources of his apprenticeship, of his own environment and of the environment he creates for the living of others, as well as the sources of the 'Other" through whom the desire for an architecture can exist."12

APPENDIX A

The following images represent an attitude that would be present in the actual construction of the school.
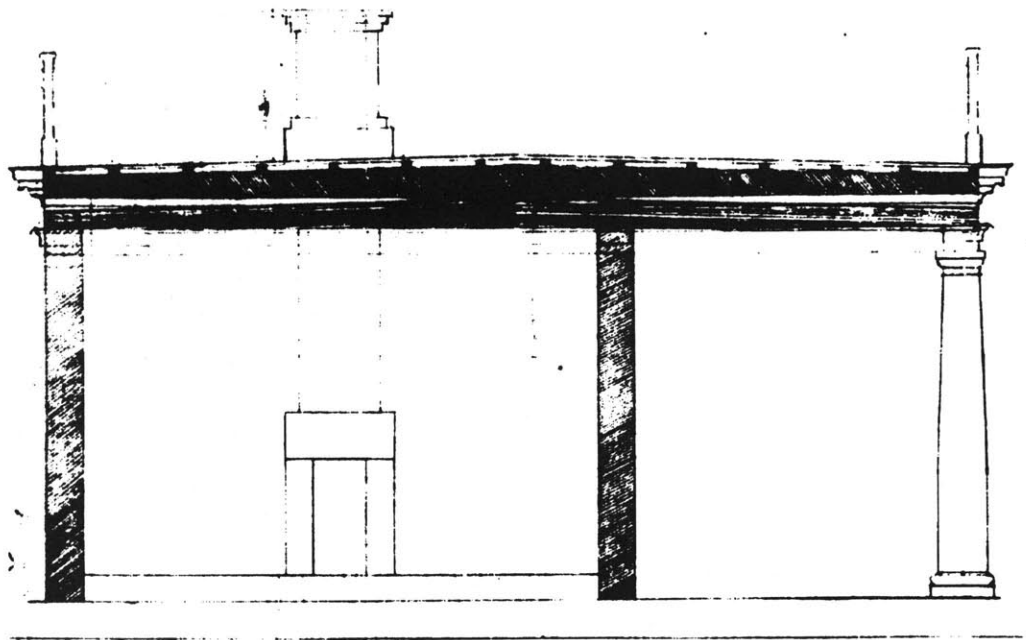
Section through student room on the colonnade.
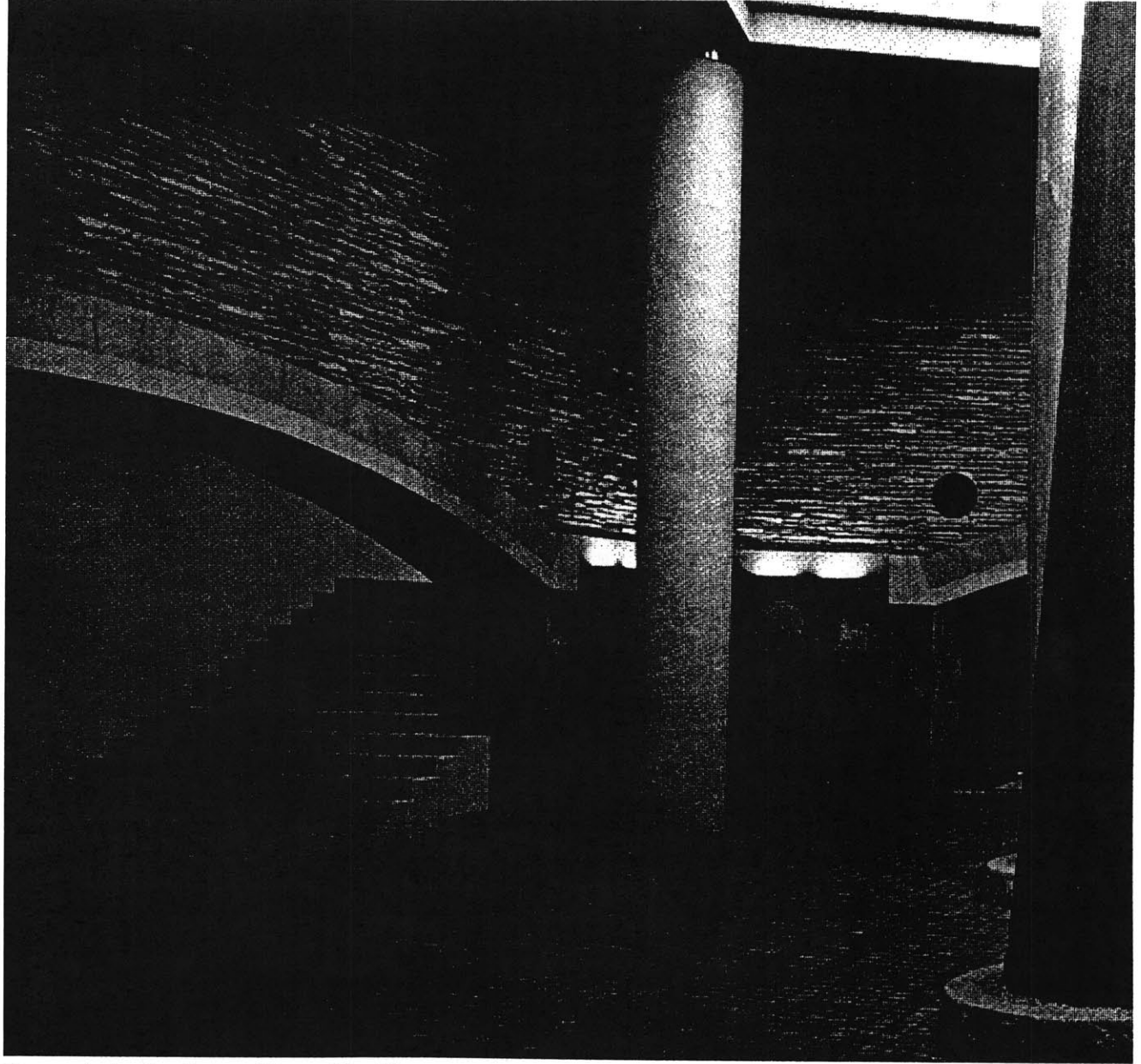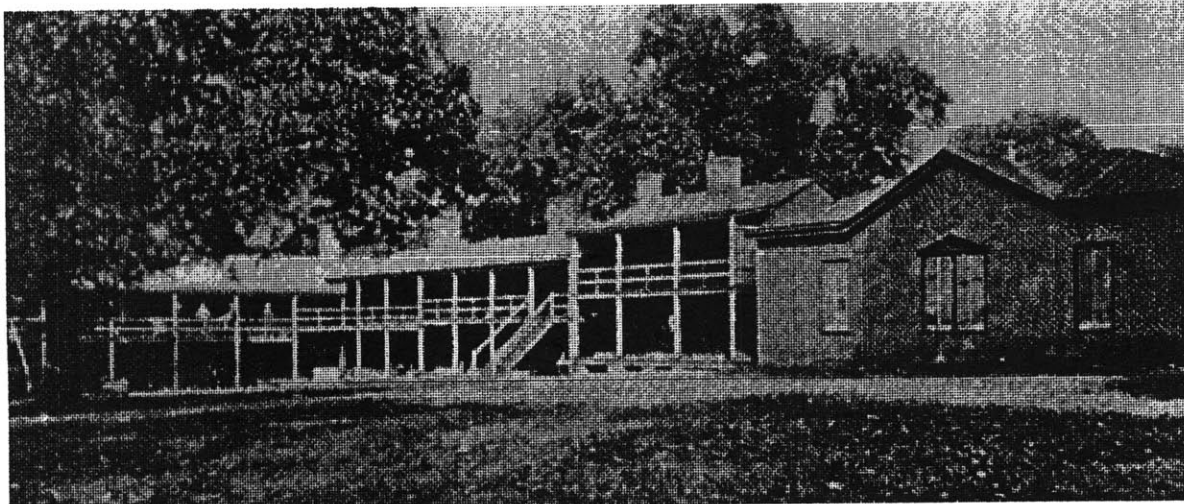
Heavy arched system that would be used in all basement areas.

Student housing that existed on Carrs Hill.

Simple tectonic system that would be used in the studios.

126

FOOTNOTES

1. La Biennale di Venezia, Electa Editrice, Milan, 1980, pp 30

2. Malone, Dumas. Jefferson and His Times vol.3 p.484

3. The papers of Thomas Jefferson, ed., Julian P. Boyd, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, 1953, Vol. 8 p.534.

4. Papers, Vol. 9 p. 220

5. Pirsig, Robert M.; Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance, pp. 132

6. This, unfortunately, makes the axis and "path of education" seem to careen down into the base of the hills near the open end of the lawn.

7. La Biennale di Venezia, Electa Editrice, Milan, 1980, pp 240

8. An important point, which is raised by so much eclectic work today concerns the question of pastiche and it is to this that I would like to turn in showing the work of the Post-Modernists. Pastiche has two popular meanings; it means a work of art which is a medley of various sources, and a work that recalls the style or subject matter of a well known author. In short, either a hodge-podge or a cliche, or more likely both together, a mish-mash of stereotypes. Involved in these judgements, however, is the truism that one man's pastiche is another man's creative interpretation of tradition.

9. La Biennale di Venezia, Electa Editrice, Milan, 1980, Ibid, pp 81

10. Ibid, pp 212

11. Keeping in mind the fact that the emotions, images, and associations, etc. that we attach to an artifact (whether the artifact is architectural or not) are a product of our age and education, our understanding is limited

by the mere fact that we live <u>now</u> and we can <u>never</u> understand the emotions and associations originally evoked by a certain artifact. This makes any artifactual retrieval from a period other than our own truly eclectic since we cannot apply the element with all of the associations previously attached to it. Just as we could not use the Chinese animal classification in our day and hemisphere without being eclectic we cannot use a column from the pantheon without also being so (no matter how correctly we apply it) - because we are incapable of understanding the artifacts in the way they were originally understood.

12. Jean-Mark Lamuniere, Ibid, pp 224

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bookstin, Danial J. *The Lost World of Thomas Jefferson*, H. Holt, New York, NY, 1948.

Borsano, Gabriella, ed. *La Biennale di Venezia*, Electa Editrice, Milan, 1980.

Dale, Peter A. *The Victorian Critic and the Idea of History*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Ma, 1977.

Ferro, Marc. *The Use and Abuse of History*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1984.

Frary, Inha T. *Thomas Jefferson, Architect and Builder,* Garret and Massie, Richmond, Va, 1939.

Hubbard, William. *Complicity and Conviction: Steps to an Architecture of Convention,* M.I.T. Press, Cambridge, Ma, 1980.

Jencks, Charles. *Post Modernism: The New Classicism in Art and Architecture,* Academy Editions, London, 1987.

Jencks, Charles. *What is Post Modernism?* Academy Editions, London, 1986.

Kidney, Walter C. *The Architecture of Choice: Eclecticism in America,* G Brazillier, New York, NY, 1974.

Lambeth, William A. *Thomas Jefferson as an Architect and a Designer of Landscapes,* Houghton Miffun Co., Boston, Ma, 1913.

Lottinville, Savoie. *The Rhetoric of History,* University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, Ok, 1976.

Malone, Dumas. *Jefferson and His Time,* Vols. 1-6, Little, Brown and Company, Boston, Ma, 1948.

McLaughlin, Jack. *Jefferson and Monticello, The Biography of a Builder,* G. Braziller, New York, NY, 1974.

Mink, Louis O. *Historical Understanding,* Cornell University Press, Ithica, NY, 1987.

Nichols, Frederick D. *The Architectural Drawings of Thomas Jefferson,* The University Press of Virginia, Charlottesville, Va, 1969.

Pirsig, Robert M. *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance,* Bantam, New York, Ny, 1974.

Porphyrios, Demetri, ed. *Building and Rational Architecture A.D.54,* A.D. Editions Ltd., London, 1984.

Porphyrios, Demetri, *Sources of Modern Eclecticism,* Academy Editions, London, 1982.

Porphyrios, Demetri, ed. *Classicism is Not a Style,* A.D. Editions Ltd., London, 1982.

Watkin, David. *Morality and Architecture: The Development of a Theme in Architecture,* Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1977.