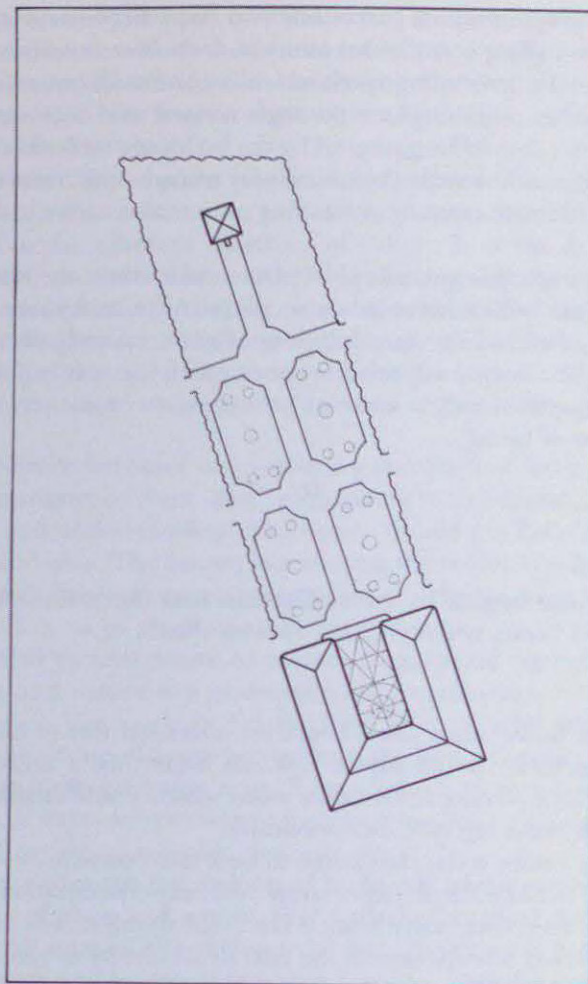


1. Site plan



2. Plan

HOUSE FOR PANZA DI BIUMO

*Après avoir rencontré l'homme d'affaires italien et grand collectionneur d'art contemporain, Giuseppe Panza di Buomo, Frédéric Urban entreprend une oeuvre d'art intitulée **House for Panza di Biumo** qui utilise la villa familiale de Panza comme point de départ.*

The "Client"

The Milan industrialist, Count Giuseppe Panza di Biumo, is generally regarded as having one of the world's foremost collections of contemporary art, much of which is installed at Villa Litta, Panza's family villa and private museum in Varese. It is, perhaps, his purchases of minimal, conceptual and environmental art — the "dematerialized" and "uncollectable" — that best reveal Panza's contemplative nature and aesthetic vision.

In the converted stables where Panza had exhibited Minimalist sculpture since 1969, the existential mood became increasingly pronounced through the mid-70's. In 1976, Maria Nordman created a penumbral space in which the solitary viewer gradually becomes the self-observed "subject" of the piece. Significantly, Panza situated the installation at the beginning of the complex, where it serves as a perceptual "decontamination chamber." He concludes with an ethereal suite of rooms by James Turrell, whose use of available light to determine both form and content is

the logical coda to Panza's pursuit of the dematerialized art object. It also establishes the crucial link to his earlier purchases of Kline and Rothko.¹

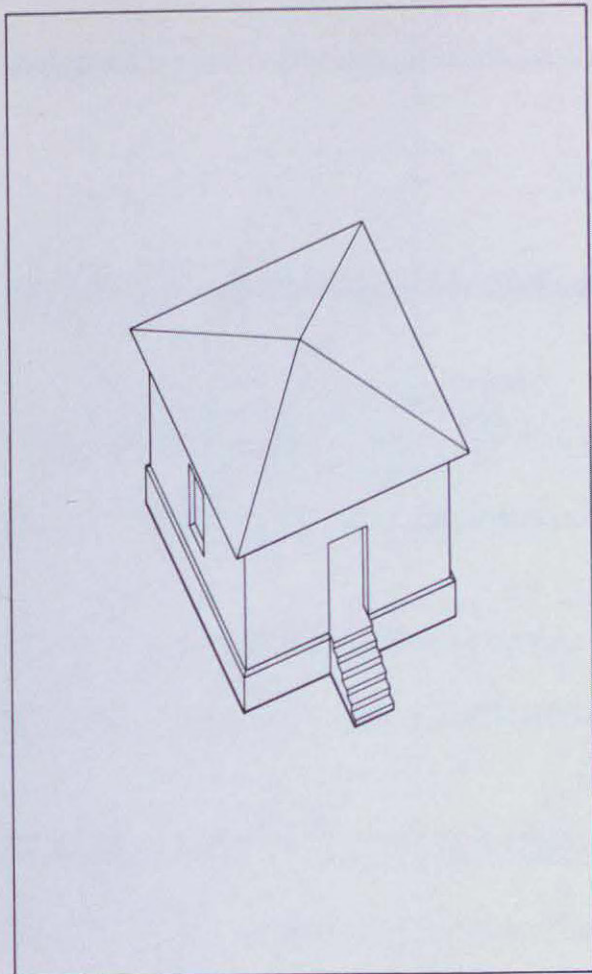
In 1984, eighty masterpieces from his collection — including seven Mark Rothko's, eleven Robert Rauschenberg's and twelve Franz Kline's — became the core of the collection of the new Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles.

The "Architect"

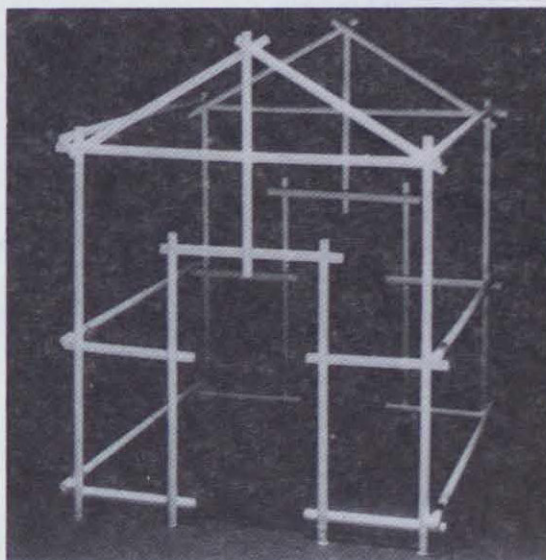
Since 1980, Frederic Urban's artwork has investigated primary notions about architecture and the relationships between architecture and the other fine arts. It is the kind of work that places itself in an "expanded field" and within "the modern tendency to broaden the boundaries of art by breaking its frame, both physically and conceptually."²

It examines social as well as art conventions. It situates itself between formal art categories and non-art categories: between art and architecture... Rather than reducing media tautologically to a single aesthetic problem, it positions itself in dialectical relation between categories to allow it to relate to social factors and specific contextual meaning(s).³

In 1981, Urban first met Panza, viewed his private collection and photographed Villa Litta with the intention of using Panza's villa as a vehicle for making an artwork.



3. Axonometric



Frederic Urban

The "House"

In 1985, Frederic Urban sent Giuseppe Panza three drawings called *House for Panza di Biumo*. The text for these three drawings includes (location plan, site plan and axonometric, respectively):

1. It is proposed that a house be built on the grounds of Villa Litta, Varese.
2. The location of the new house and its relation to the existing house establishes dialogue and opposition between the two.
3. As well as being an object to be confronted and a place for contemplation, the new house creates a paradigmatic relationship with the general notion of house itself and with Villa Litta in particular.

With Panza's interest and support, *House for Panza di Biumo* will be realized in three versions: *House/Custoza*, *House/Saguenay* and *House/Toronto*. Originally scheduled for construction and installation in the Summer of 1985, *House/Custoza* will be built on a site — one similar to the site proposed in the original drawings — at Villa Pignatti-Morano in Custoza, Italy in 1986.

Canada is the site for the second and third versions of *House for Panza di Biumo*. Early work has begun on *House/Saguenay* (to be built and installed on a site in Quebec) and

House/Toronto (to be built in a gallery in Toronto as part of an exhibition which documents the history of *House for Panza di Biumo*).

Rather than being a simple exercise in cross disciplinary discourse, *House for Panza Biumo* retains an understanding of the difference between art and architecture and uses drawing and sculpture to comment on architecture.

NOTES:

1. David Galloway, "Report from Italy," *Art in America*, December 1985, p. 10.
2. Melinda Wortz, "Surrendering to Presence," *Artforum*, November 1981, p. 64.
3. Dan Graham, "Situation Esthetics," *Artforum*, December 1979, p.25.

Frederic Urban is an artist who teaches at the School of Architecture, University of Waterloo.

(*House/Custoza* has been funded in part by a grant from the Canada Council).