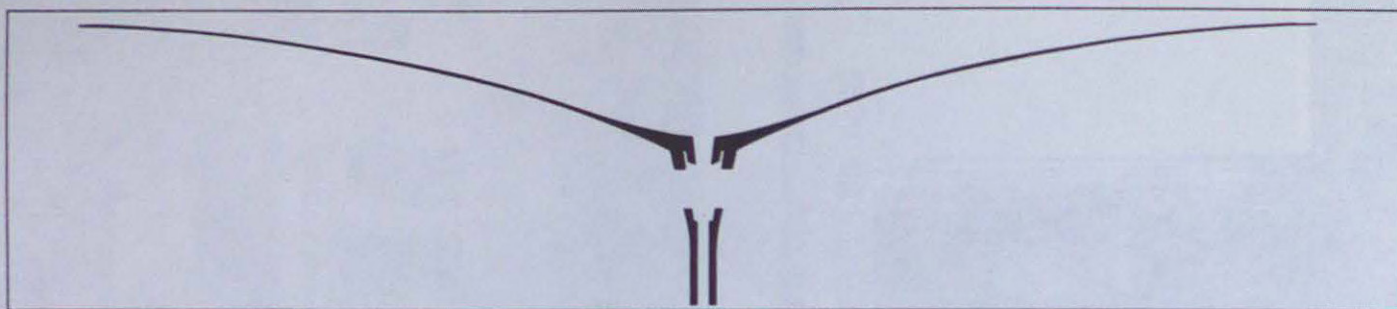




A M A N C I O W I L L I A M S

T E C H N O L O G Y A S G E N E R A T O R O F F O R M

by Eric Russell Bunge

Les oeuvres illustrees ici meritent une attention renouvelees non seulement en ce qui concernent leur contribution importante a l'architecture Moderne, mais egalement pour leurs exploits technologiques.

Two visits to Amancio Williams' studio in Buenos Aires, Argentina, last summer were sufficient to leave me with the uncomfortable feeling of having been in the presence of a genius. With respect to his approach to architecture, Williams is an architect in a class with LeCorbusier in that he feels that he has somehow been chosen to fulfill an enormous architectural task, one could even say, a mission.

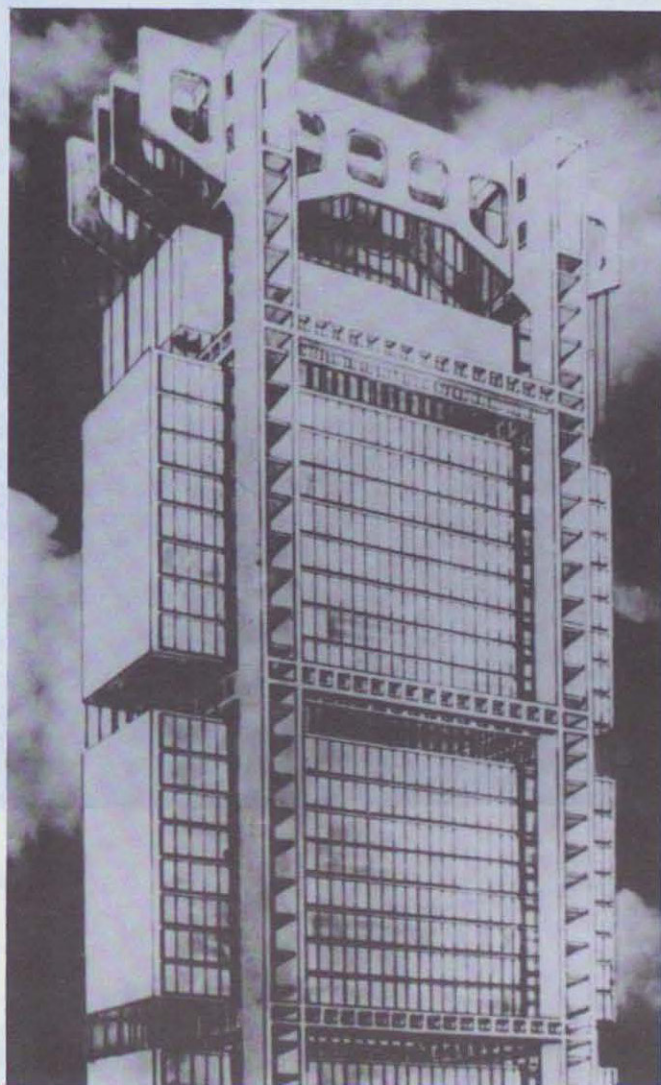
Unfortunately, the nature of his obsession with a few spatial paradigms and his uncompromising commitment to the purity of his architectural ideas has resulted mostly in a number of unbuilt projects which have been reworked and perfected over the past fifty years. His work demonstrates an unmistakable Modern signature not only in form (greatly derived from Mies Van der Rohe and LeCorbusier), but significantly in its worship of modern technology and concern for social welfare. Although Williams has strived to institute a typology of architectural form based on the logical consequences of new technologies and programs, his manipulation of technology is lyrical rather than mechanistic.

The work presented in these photographs therefore merits renewed consideration in the light not only of its important contribution to Modern Architecture, but also of its technological achievements.

I. Suspended Office Building (1946).

Although hanging constructions have been fairly common in recent years, this project was daring and innovative forty years ago. A series of steel slabs is suspended from the top of a reinforced concrete structure rising the entire building height. Since the tension bars supporting the slabs are much thinner than the columns typically used as structural supports, the office floor plans are almost unobstructed.





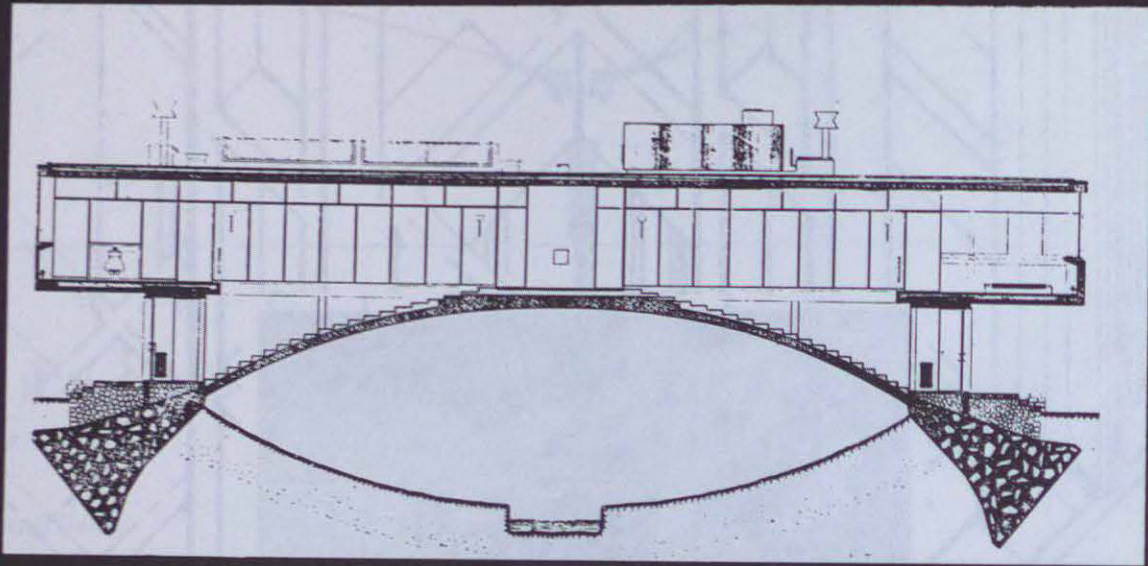
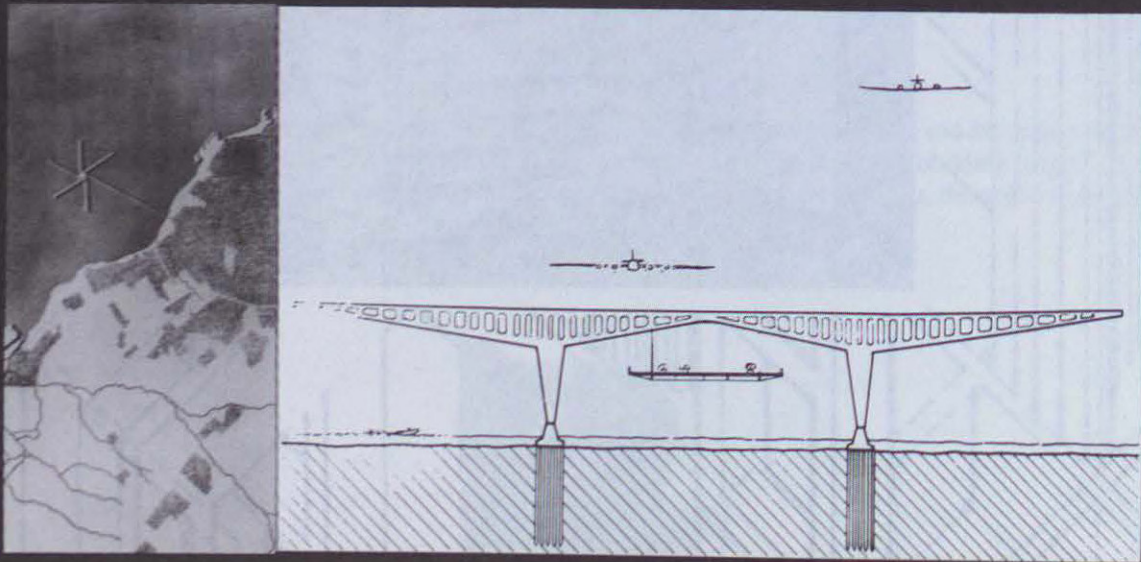


FIG II. House over the Brook in Mar del Plata, Argentina (1942-1945).

Williams described this house as "... a form in space that does not deny nature." The bridge-like structure is both structurally exciting and poetic in its response to the existing brook. The structure, which operates as a whole, is composed of the flat slab of the main floor connected to the curved slab below by thin transverse walls. The horizontal thrust is absorbed by the two pillars and angled foundations at each side of the brook.

FIG III. Airport for Buenos Aires (1945).

Williams' choice of the river Plata as a site for an airport in Buenos Aires is not only logical in view of circulation requirements, but sensitive and poetic in the relationship of the river to the supported runways.



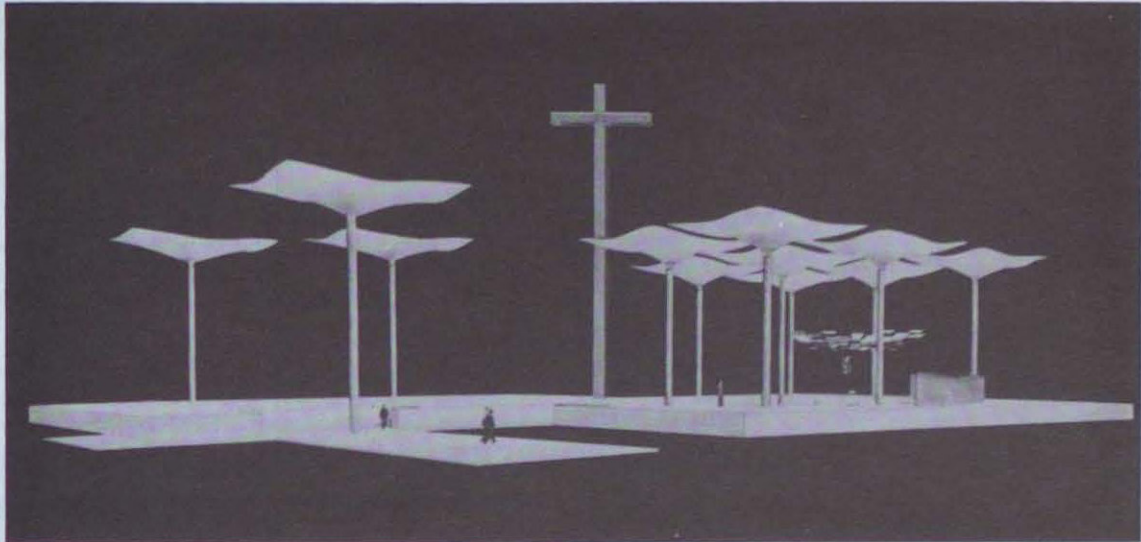


FIG V. Shells of Minimal Thickness (1951-1966).

Conceived as independent structural units, these shells can be grouped together to cover large areas.

Eric Russell Bunge is a third year architecture student at McGill University.

