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THE FIFTH COLUMN

THE CANADIAN STUDENT JOURNAL OF ARCHITECTURE

LA REVUE CANADIENNE DES ETUDIANTS EN ARCHITECTURE

ON THE ROAD AGAIN

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VOLUME 8. NUMBER 4

THE FIFTH COLUMN

The Canadian student journal of architecture La revue Canadienne des étudiants en architecture

The name of the Canadian Student Journal of Architecture, THE FIFTH COLUMN, is intended to be interpreted in a number of ways. First, there is an architectural reference, the preoccupation with the development of a contemporary order of architecture that is at once respectful of antiquity and responsive to new conceptions of architecture. Second, there is a reference to journalism and the printed column of text. Finally, there is the twentieth century political connotation, an organized body sympathizing with and working for the enemy in a country at war. These three references essentially define the role of THE FIFTH COLUMN. The magazine promotes the study of architecture in Canada at the present in terms of both the past and the future. It attempts to stimulate and foster a responsible, critical sensitivity in both its readers and its contributors. Finally, THE FIFTH COLUMN provides an alternative forum to established views not for the sake of opposing them, but to make it possible to objectively evaluate them.

Objectives

To promote the study and the appreciation of a sensitive architecture within the architectural community and general population, thereby positively influencing the development of architecture in Canada;
To promote a forum for and to encourage the dialogue between students, academics, professional architects and interested members of the "lay" population;
To provide a critical alternative to the commercial trade magazines by publishing a journal that originates from the schools, traditionally the vanguard of architectural thought.

Editorial Policies

1. To publish articles by students, academics and professionals and by other interested parties that would otherwise find little opportunity for expression and publication.
2. To publish a series of articles in each issue exploring a specific and relevant theme which contributes to an understanding and a greater awareness of current architecture.
3. To publish articles on the diversity of Canadian architecture as a means of promoting an understanding of these local traditions and their influence on current architectural thought.
4. To publish articles discussing historical influences on the development of architecture.
5. To publish student projects from the various schools in order to stimulate architectural debate.
6. To publish critical reviews of current works of architecture in Canada, as well as outside the country, in order to reflect on and positively influence the development of architecture in Canada.
7. To publish critical reviews of activities, publications, lectures and exhibitions of interest to our readership.

THE FIFTH COLUMN (Canadian Student Journal of Architecture)
published summer 1994.

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Le titre de la revue canadienne des étudiants en architecture, "The Fifth Column", a pour but d'inviter le lecteur à l'interpréter à plusieurs niveaux. Le premier niveau suggère une référence architectonique, celle consistant à l'élaboration d'un ordre architectural contemporain à la fois respectueux d'un passé antique et répondant aux nouvelles conceptions de l'architecture. Sur un autre plan, "The Fifth Column" rappelle son orientation journalistique par sa connotation avec la "colonne" imprimée d'un texte. Enfin, "la cinquième colonne", c'est aussi, depuis Franco, le nom donné aux partisans clandestins sur lesquels chacun des deux adversaires peut compter dans les rangs de l'autre. Ces trois références définissent dans son ensemble le rôle de "The Fifth Column". La revue a pour but de promouvoir l'étude de l'architecture au Canada, en terme de lien entre le passé et le futur. Elle tente également de stimuler et d'entretenir un sens aigu de la critique chez ses collaborateurs ainsi que chez ses lecteurs. Enfin, "The Fifth Column" propose un forum où il est possible d'établir différents points de vue, non dans le seul but de les confronter mais plutôt de rendre possible leur évaluation objective.

Objectifs

Promouvoir l'étude et l'appréciation d'une architecture sensible à l'intérieur de la communauté architecturale ainsi qu'à de plus larges groupes, et par conséquent influencer le développement de l'architecture au Canada; Promouvoir la constitution d'un forum dans le but d'encourager le dialogue et les échanges d'idées entre les étudiants, les architectes et les individus intéressés de toute autre provenance; Offrir une alternative critique aux revues de type commercial, en publiant un périodique ayant ses racines à l'intérieur des Ecoles universitaires, traditionnellement pionnières dans l'évolution de la pensée architecturale.

Politiques éditoriales

1. Publier les articles d'étudiants, de membres du corps académique, de professionnels ainsi que d'autres groupes intéressés, qui autrement ne trouveraient que peu d'opportunités d'expression et de publication.
2. Publier une série d'articles dans chaque numéro explorant un thème spécifique qui contribuera à une compréhension approfondie et à une plus grande conscientisation de l'architecture contemporaine.
3. Publier des articles sur les diverses facettes de l'architecture canadienne dans le but de promouvoir la compréhension de ces différentes traditions locales et de leur influence sur la pensée architecturale contemporaine.
4. Publier des articles traitant des influences historiques sur le développement de l'architecture.
5. Publier les projets d'étudiants des différentes Ecoles dans le but de stimuler le débat architectural.
6. Publier des comptes rendus critiques de différentes oeuvres architecturales au Canada ainsi qu'à l'étranger afin de s'arrêter sur et d'influencer le développement de l'architecture au Canada.
7. Publier des comptes rendus critiques des différents événements, publications, conférences et expositions ayant quelque intérêt pour nos lecteurs.

THE FIFTH COLUMN (La revue canadienne des étudiants en architecture)
publiée à l'été 1994.

THE FIFTH COLUMN, la revue canadienne des étudiants en architecture, est un organisme sans but lucratif, dont le but est de promouvoir l'étude de l'architecture. Les articles et opinions qui apparaissent dans la revue sont publiés sous la responsabilité de leur auteurs. Le but de reproduire dessins, photographies et extraits de d'autres sources est de faciliter la critique.

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A sincere thanks to Terry Galvin for his many efforts on behalf of the journal, as well as on behalf of the students at McGill. We wish him luck and success as he continues his educational journey at Penn.

S.V.P. adressez toute correspondance, articles et avis de changement d'adresse à:
Please address all correspondence, articles and notices of change of address to:

THE FIFTH COLUMN
815 rue Sherbrooke ouest
Montréal, Québec
Canada H3A 2K6

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EDITORIAL

The Chinese read time in the eyes of cats.

One day, walking in the outskirts of Nanking, a missionary realized he had forgotten his watch, and he asked a little boy what time it was.

At first the child from the Celestial Empire hesitated; then, reconsidering, he answered, "I am going to tell you." Not many moments later, he reappeared, holding a very fat cat in his arms, and looking at it, as they say, straight in the eye, he asserted without hesitation, "It is not yet quite noon." Which was true.

Charles Baudelaire, "The Clock"

Travel and exploration swept the world during the Renaissance, spinning between societies those fine initial threads which now mummify the Global Village in networks of information. The Roman Catholic Jesuit order, founded in the 16th century, and famed for its pursuit of scholarly investigations and missionary work, became instrumental in the dissemination of knowledge between East and West.

Seventeenth century Jesuit priest Athanasius Kircher was refused a mission to China at a time when many of the missionaries sent there had themselves begun to convert to Buddhism. He remained in Europe, became a centre of encyclopaedic knowledge, and, through writing books and collecting, emerged as one of the key recorders of the explosion of world civilization.

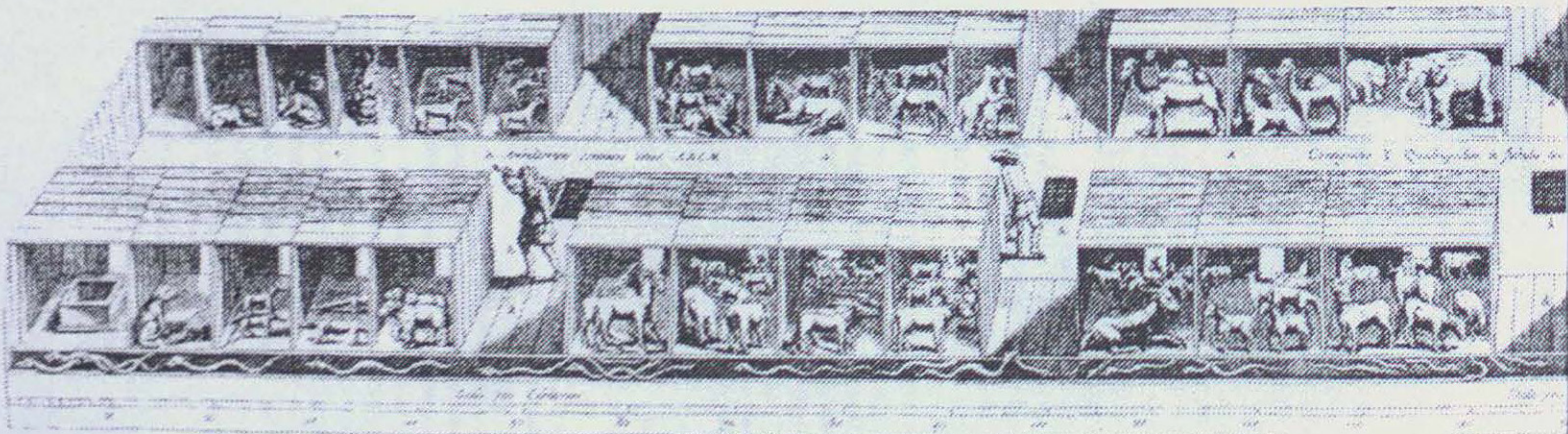
The growing Baroque fascination with origins and genealogy had led to a quest for the *Ursprache*, the font of universal language before Babel. World travel had brought new alphabets to be situated in history, including Egyptian hieroglyphics, and Aramaic and Chinese pictograms.

As travelling and collecting increased, this surge of available knowledge posed a challenge to a world whose most sophisticated ordering system had been draughted by magicians. The cabalistic format of *ars combinatoria* used great tables of symbols in rows and columns, which, read across or down, referenced significant numerical correspondences of the universe. Whereas, previously, mainly letters and numbers had been organized in this structure, the visual opacity of language in these foreign alphabets began to obscure the distinction between word and picture.

Frames and grids are devices employed to separate an object from its place of origin. This combinatoric grid, which had spatially organized the relationships within the matrix of symbols, now took precedence over the symbols themselves. At first, visual images, and later, the subjects which they depicted, would take on the abstract, ambiguous qualities of words. Kircher's drawings of the menagerie of *Arca Noë* (Noah's Ark), embody the antagonistic relation between a rigidly framed architecture and its animate inhabitants.

Kircher had also begun to build a private collection of natural and man-made articles encountered on the travels of the Jesuit network. In his book which documents the *Musaeum Kircheriana*, the drawings represent the corresponding struggle of temporal, sited matter whose natural relationships were being displaced by an enveloping colonial grid of homogeneous space.

Enframing each figure served to collapse the physical distance that had previously existed between subject and object, displacing depth of field by intangibility. Over time, the form in which symbols had been arranged became integral to the representation and perception of images. A crisis in representation followed with this division of perceptible 'form' from intentional or causal 'content,' echoing a similar disengagement of History and Mythology.



Artifacts brought back from Egypt or China to be placed in the Museum necessarily had been dislocated from their architectural environment; as well as being fragments of their culture they were often fragmentary in themselves. At the root of the Baroque quest for origins was a belief in the presence of a type of 'genetic code' (recording an invisible yet all-pervasive master-plan within an object) at an atomic level, so that any part would bear the same meaning or significance as a complete thing.

Instruments, ornaments and monuments could now be organized in a mania of information. The operating principle at work was the epistemological transfer of the source of meaning from the Macrocosm (outer space) to the Microcosm (inner space). Now the museological ordering and representations of life and space in the microcosms represented by the Museum and Noah's Ark remade the world accordingly. Modern progress advanced on the magical precept that, via the fictions of representation, reality could be changed, recreated, or transcended. However, for these 'sorcerer's apprentices,' the consequence of appropriating Baroque forms of thaumaturgy was that these universal correspondences had their own unruly dynamic of raw power which was to prove uncontrollable.

For 17th century Europe, Asia or Africa could represent the mysterious exotic East, or the dark, uncharted world which is completely *other* than oneself. A traveller in himself represents his world, but being both unified with and complementary to his world, he also brings along an ark. In his suitcase he arranges the essence of his existence, the particulars of his rituals, what he cannot obtain elsewhere and cannot live without; in it he places *the difference between where he is and where he is going*.

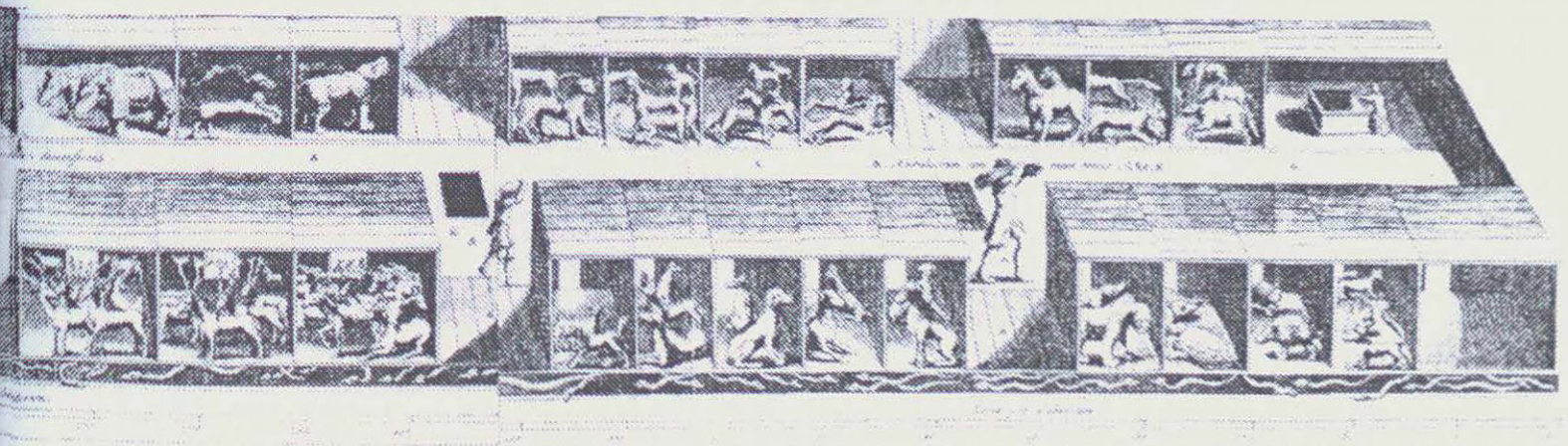
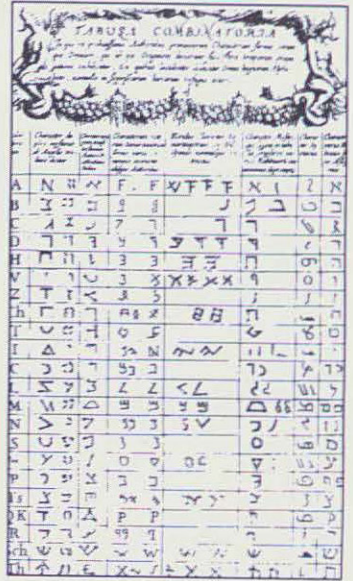
The itinerant hero is as rootless in a foreign land as his spoils are back at home. By contrast, an enlightened traveller, one who engages in the life of

another place, immersed without prejudice in its culture, may understand the universality of human existence by means of particular instances, seeing in the desires and creations, habits and rituals of the foreign society an opaque reflection of his own life. To this traveller, the world is a mirror.

The traveller who has a passion for life, however, brings something superfluous, because he knows that the symbolic exchange of trust between strangers made manifest in offering a reciprocity of culture - be it a capricious gift, a shocking image, or a ludicrous story - is what perpetuates the leakage of knowledge across borders, which, without levelling differences, recharges the resilient dynamics of a range of choices and freedom. This traveller is light-footed and yet able to respond to any situation. For such sage travellers are also messengers of love, mercurial recording angels, who steal memories only to weave narratives which enchant the world.

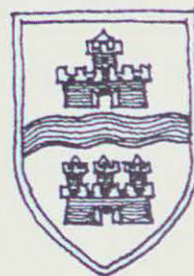
Is the world in which we live really 'disenchanted' as we have learned to believe, or have we merely become blinded to its enchantments? One hears the echo of Zarathustra, Friedrich Nietzsche's wandering poet-philosopher:

In order to see *much* one must learn to *look away* from oneself —





Budapest: Castle Hill
after Tamás Biczó



BUDAPEST REVISITED

Visiting Budapest in May 1990, in the company of a colleague and twelve McGill University scholarship students in architecture¹, brought back memories from the time when I was a student there almost fifty years earlier. During those years (1941-1944), I was imbued with the teachings of the Modern Movement, and therefore had little interest in the Eclectic and Secessionist architecture built during the 19th and early 20th centuries. However, revisiting the city of my *alma mater* this time around, I was awed by its unique beauty, and rejoiced that the centre of Budapest had escaped 'modernization.'

The beauty of Budapest derives to a large extent from its situation on the banks of the Danube River, as well as from its varied topography, namely the hills of Buda and the plain of Pest. Reminiscent of a stage set, the most spectacular views of Buda present themselves after sunset: from the left bank, where the prominent buildings of Castle Hill and the bridges linking the two cities are illuminated; reflected sparkling lights dance on the waves of the Danube. This enchanting scenery delights pedestrians strolling along the riverside promenade, diners in the restaurants alongside the river, and the inhabitants of adjoining buildings.

This majestic and peaceful setting, however, does not reflect the tumultuous history of Hungary and its capital city, whose citizens are daily reminded of former hardship by the sound of tolling church bells. Throughout the country, at noon, bells are rung in memory of Hungary's liberation from a one and a half centuries of Ottoman oc-

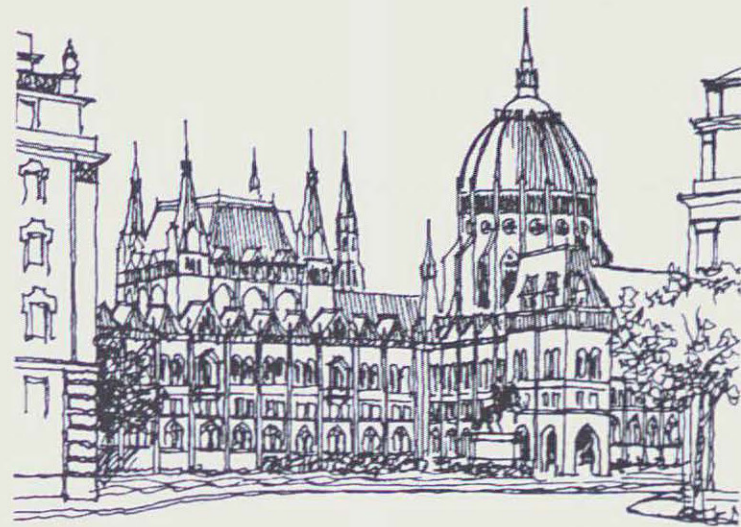
cupation which came to an end during the late 17th century. Since Hungary then came under Hapsburg rule, true liberty still had to wait until 1867, when the country, spurred on by the national uprising of 1848, regained its autonomy. At this time Budapest became the capital of the Magyars under the dual monarchy of Austria-Hungary. This event marked the beginning of the city's Golden Age which lasted until the First World War.

During the second half of the 19th century, Buda, Óbuda (Old Buda) and Pest, three cities with pre-mediaeval roots, were united into a single municipal entity called 'Budapest,' an action that heralded the beginning of a phenomenal period of growth. In 1857 the population of the unified city was a mere 116,683, but in 1869 it had already reached 270,476; in 1881: 360,551; in 1896: 618,000; in 1910: 881,000. Combined with a suburban population of more than 200,000, Budapest surpassed the one million population mark, making it the sixth largest city in Europe.

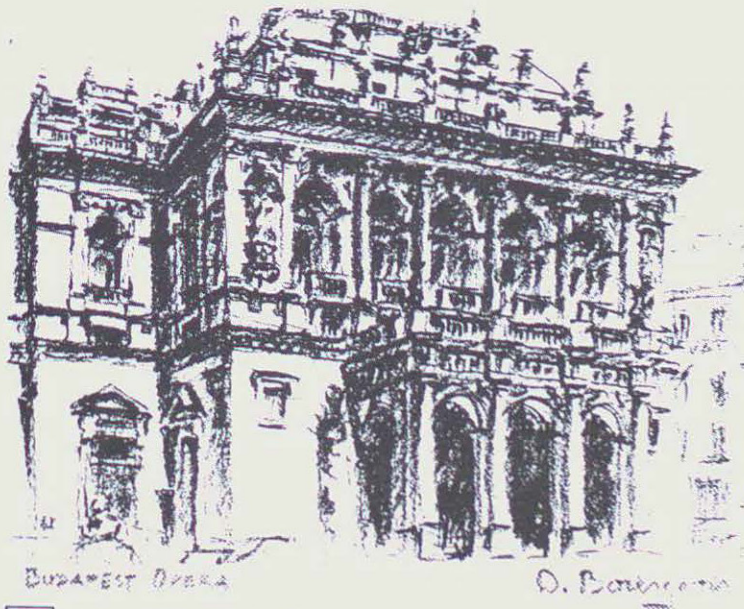
Most of the population growth occurred in Pest, on the plains of the left bank on the Danube River, rather than on the hilly right bank. Hence, both mediaeval and Baroque architecture are much in evidence on the castle hill of Buda, and in Óbuda, extensive Roman ruins still act as sentinels of antiquity. Pest, on the other hand, which developed quintessentially as a 19th century city, is devoid of any substantial mediaeval traces; instead it is a rich reliquary of Romantic, Eclectic and Secessionist architecture.

Pest was shaped by the influence of 19th century thinking in both town planning and architecture. The two semicircles of boulevards, the so-called Little and Big Ring Roads (the smaller of which replaced the mediaeval town walls and encloses the inner city), were derived from Viennese planning. The Andrassy Radial Avenue, linking the city core with the City Park, emulated Georges-Eugène Haussmann's radial boulevards of Paris, and the landscaped squares were reflections of London's urban design.

The Danube River was regulated with the building of substantial two-tiered limestone quays. Following the Parisian example, the upper level was to serve as a promenade while the lower level was designated for the loading and unloading of ships. As early as 1836, a suspension bridge designed by the British engineer William Tierney Clark spanned the river, and by the beginning of this century four additional bridges linked the twin cities Buda and Pest. One of these, the Erzsébet bridge, was a notable feat in bridge construction since it spanned the greatest distance of any bridge in Europe at that time.



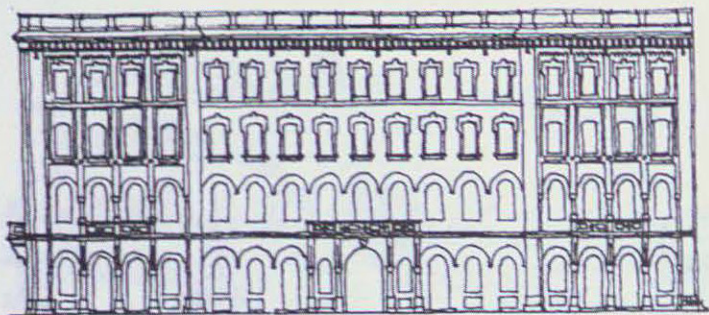
*Budapest: Parliament Building
Imre Steindl, architect*



BUDAPEST OPERA

O. Borkovits

During the second half of the 19th century, Budapest witnessed unprecedented activity in public building construction, in works such as the Parliament Building (1884-1902), the Agricultural and Justice Ministerial Building (1885-1886), the 'Kuria' or Supreme Court of Justice Building (1891-1896), the University Building and its Library (1872-1883), the Vigado Concert Hall (1859-1865), the Vigszinhaz Theatre (1896), the Royal Opera House (1873-1882), the Saint Stephen's Basilica (1845-1889), the Central Synagogue (1854-1859), the Academy of Sciences (1862-1865), the Mücsarnok Exhibition Hall (1895), the Western Railway Station (1874-1877), the Central Market Hall (1892-1896), and several hotels, including the palatial 'Hungaria,' the latter unfortunately having been destroyed during World War II. The most remarkable aspect of this era is the congruity of the Romanticism and Eclecticism of 19th century architecture on such a grand scale. The elaboration of ornamental details on the facades of these buildings created a rich iconography which entices continuous exploration made possible only at the slow urban pedestrian pace intrinsic to the last century.



Budapest: Apartment Building
Hugo Mátyás, architect

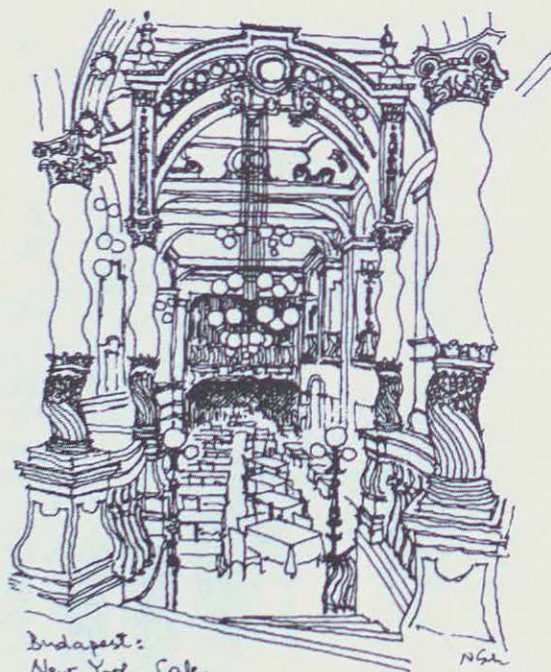
In response to the unprecedented population growth of the 19th century, the apartment house emerged as the most dominant building type in the Budapest cityscape. Like their Parisian antecedents, the attached rows of apartment houses framed the streets, and on wide thoroughfares the ornate facades of these multi-storeyed palatial residences vied for presence with those of public buildings. The planning of apartment houses also betrayed Parisian influences. Along major streets the ground floors of apartment buildings were allocated for commercial use, and the main entrance to each building led through a spacious *porte cochère* which opened upon a courtyard, frequently adorned by a fountain or sculpture. The main stairhall, often featuring a curved staircase, a 'dancing stair,' opened from the *porte cochère* and gave access to the more desirable front apartment suites, while secondary staircases leading to rear apartment dwellings were located in the courtyard.

Usually occupied by the landlord, the most prestigious dwelling unit, with a suite of large reception rooms facing the street, was located on the *piano nobile*. Its status was accentuated on the building's facade by decorative sculptures, pilasters and consoles as well as balconies and balconets with ornamental railings. In contrast to the *piano nobile* apartment, the upper-storey dwellings were less sumptuous, and the gallery-access rear dwellings facing the courtyard were small, ill-ventilated and lacking in privacy. As in Paris, the great variety of dwelling accommodation within a single building resulted in tenants of varying incomes, representing a cross-section of the city's population. This social feature, in conjunction with the mixture of commercial and residential land-use, generated patterns of pedestrian urban traffic which greatly enriched the vitality of street life.

A milestone in the history of Hungary was the celebration in 1896 of the 1000th anniversary of Magyar settlement in Europe. This was a momentous occasion for national assertion in peacetime, and coincided with a period of relative prosperity enjoyed by Budapest's bourgeoisie. The oldest underground metro line in Europe (apart from that of London) was built for this occasion and was located in line with the radial Andrassy Avenue which connected Vörösmarty Square

of the inner city with the City Park and Heroes' Square with its Millenary Monument. The centre of Heroes' Square is occupied by statues of the conquering Magyar chiefs; the backdrop is formed by a semicircular colonnade, between the columns of which stand statues of heroic kings, princes, and army commanders. Both the Art Gallery and the Museum of Fine Arts face this square.

Indeed, many buildings, public and private, were completed in time for the millennium celebrations. One such building, the New York Palota (1891-1895), a building of mixed commercial and residential usage having the famous New York Café at sidewalk level, epitomized in its architecture the ebullience of that age. The opulence of the cafe's interior, with its spiral marble columns, bronze statues, crystal chandeliers (now missing), mirrored walls, and frescoed ceilings, bordered on decadence. The New York Café became one of the most celebrated coffeehouses and the meeting place not only of the landed gentry and well-to-do bourgeoisie, but also of the avant-garde artists and writers of the *fin-de-siècle*.

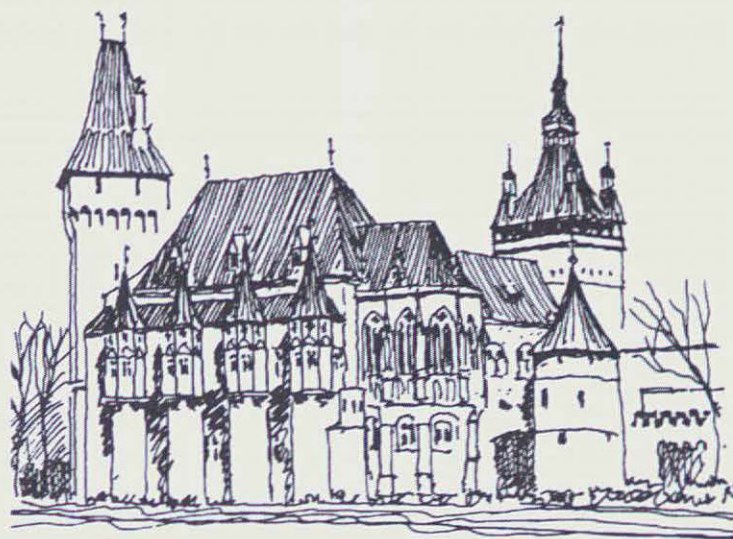


Budapest:
New York Cafe
Alajos Hauszmann, architect

As in Paris and Vienna, coffeehouses were numerous in Budapest, and citizens spent many hours daily in them reading, writing, talking, politicking, gossiping, playing chess, and, of course, drinking coffee. Since at the turn-of-the-century, apartments of the less well-to-do were usually drab and often crowded, spacious and well-lit coffeehouses with large windows opening upon the busy sidewalk offered their users a second, more elegant, home. Typically furnished with marble top tables, Thonet bentwood chairs, coat trees, and offering to their patrons a large selection of newspapers and magazines in bamboo holders, the coffeehouses were open from morning to past midnight and commonly served as informal clubs for their *habitués*. Throughout the day and evening various groups of literati, artists, academics, bureaucrats, and businessmen would coordinate their visits to the coffeehouse to meet friends and socialize. To be accepted as a member of a particular group was a sign of friendship, but 'loners' were also respected as *habitués*. After World War II, improved housing, changing life styles, television, high rents of shop-front space, and small espresso bars contributed to the decline in popularity of many coffeehouses in Budapest, as elsewhere in Europe.

The millennium was not only the impetus toward a fervour of building activities that shaped and beautified the city of Budapest, but it also stirred reflection upon the nation's cultural past. While Hungary's architectural links with the Western World were all too evident in its urban areas, the language of the inhabitants was unrelated in character, and so were the old Magyar traditions which still survived in rural areas. Predictably, a nation celebrating its millennium would also commemorate its origins and distant past. The millennial exhibition emphasized vernacular architecture by presenting a reconstruction of a village complete with church, meeting hall, store, school, and twelve indigenous houses, each furnished with household items representative of distinct geographic regions of Hungary. The various minorities then living in Hungary were also represented in the twelve prototypical village houses.

In contrast to the vernacular tradition, an unusual structure was also erected on the exhibition grounds that displayed in one building complex the principal Western architectural styles that had influenced Hungary's builders since the founding of the nation. Its designer, Ignác Alpár, succeeded in intertwining parts of existing Hungarian heritage buildings of the Romanesque, Gothic, Renaissance and Baroque



Budapest: Vajdahunyad Castle
Ignác Alpár, architect

periods into a coherent whole, a romantic castle-like structure built on an island in a man-made lake. This temporary exhibition structure greatly fascinated the public, so much so, that by popular demand it later had to be rebuilt in solid masonry. Located in the City Park and called Vajdahunyad Castle, this building serves today as an agricultural museum, but it also has become an unintended reliquary, since five mediaeval monuments which inspired its architecture, including the Transylvanian castle that lent its name, no longer stand on Hungarian territory.

The national consciousness nurtured by the millennial celebrations also found expression in the search for a new architectural style that would reflect the national character of Magyars. This gave rise to a Secessionist movement, whose leader, Ödön Lechner, turned to Hungarian rural folk art motifs for architectural inspiration (Bela Bartok and Zoltán Kodály pursued similar aims in music). Lechner's individualistic style also reflects Sassanian and Moghul architectural influences, acquired during his studies of the Asiatic past of the Magyars. His most renowned buildings in Budapest are the Post Office Savings Bank, the Geological Institute and the Museum of Applied Arts. A younger generation of architects (Károly Kós, Dezső Zrumeszky, Dénes Györgye, and Ede Toroczka Wigand among them) followed in the footsteps of Lechner. Their work was also inspired by traditional Hungarian architecture, especially that of Transylvania, as can be witnessed in the buildings of the Wekerle Settlement (1908-1913), a garden city in Kispest, and several buildings of the zoological and botanical gardens of the City Park (1908-1912).

Revisiting Budapest now, I became appreciative of the attention that the so-called Eclectic architects of the last century gave to the embellishment of their buildings facing public places: streets, boulevards, squares, and parks. This civic gesture brought about an urban design with many alluring streetscapes and an architectural vocabulary that was both rich and eclectic (a selection of what appears to be best of various styles) that could be enjoyed by the public at large. Eclectic design was also used in the interiors of these buildings, and in those turn-of-the-century structures designated for public use, such as operas, theatres, museums, cafés, and baths, which were conceived and built as people's palaces. While the abundance of hot mineral springs in Budapest had already been exploited by Romans and Turks, it was only during the 19th and the first decades of the 20th century that large baths were built as public institutions. The Széchenyi Medicinal Baths and the Gellért Medicinal Baths are but two examples of hedonistic opulence in public bathing establishments.

The inner city escaped the urban renewal interventions that radically altered so many city centres of the occidental world during the post-war period, with the result that Budapest emerged as one of the most well-preserved 19th century European cities. Both the scars left by World War II and the 1956 uprising, and the general lack of upkeep during the past five decades are still all too evident along side-streets of the inner city. Fortunately, the downtown area was spared the sterile large-scale construction projects built in many other cities during the last half-century. One hopes that the citizens of Pest will have the wisdom to recognize the unique character of their city, and resist the temptations of projects for urban renewal and high-rise buildings in their inner city.

The fortuitous preservation of Budapest's streets, squares and buildings enables visitors of this turn-of-the-century city to frequent places like the confectioner's shop Gerbeaud on Vörösmarty Square at forenoon, to lunch at the New York coffeehouse, and be enthralled by a performance at the Opera House in the evening, all three being establishments whose halls still echo the *belle époque* of the Hungarian capital.



*Budapest's Aviary of the zoological garden
Károly Kós and Dezső Zrumeczky, architects*

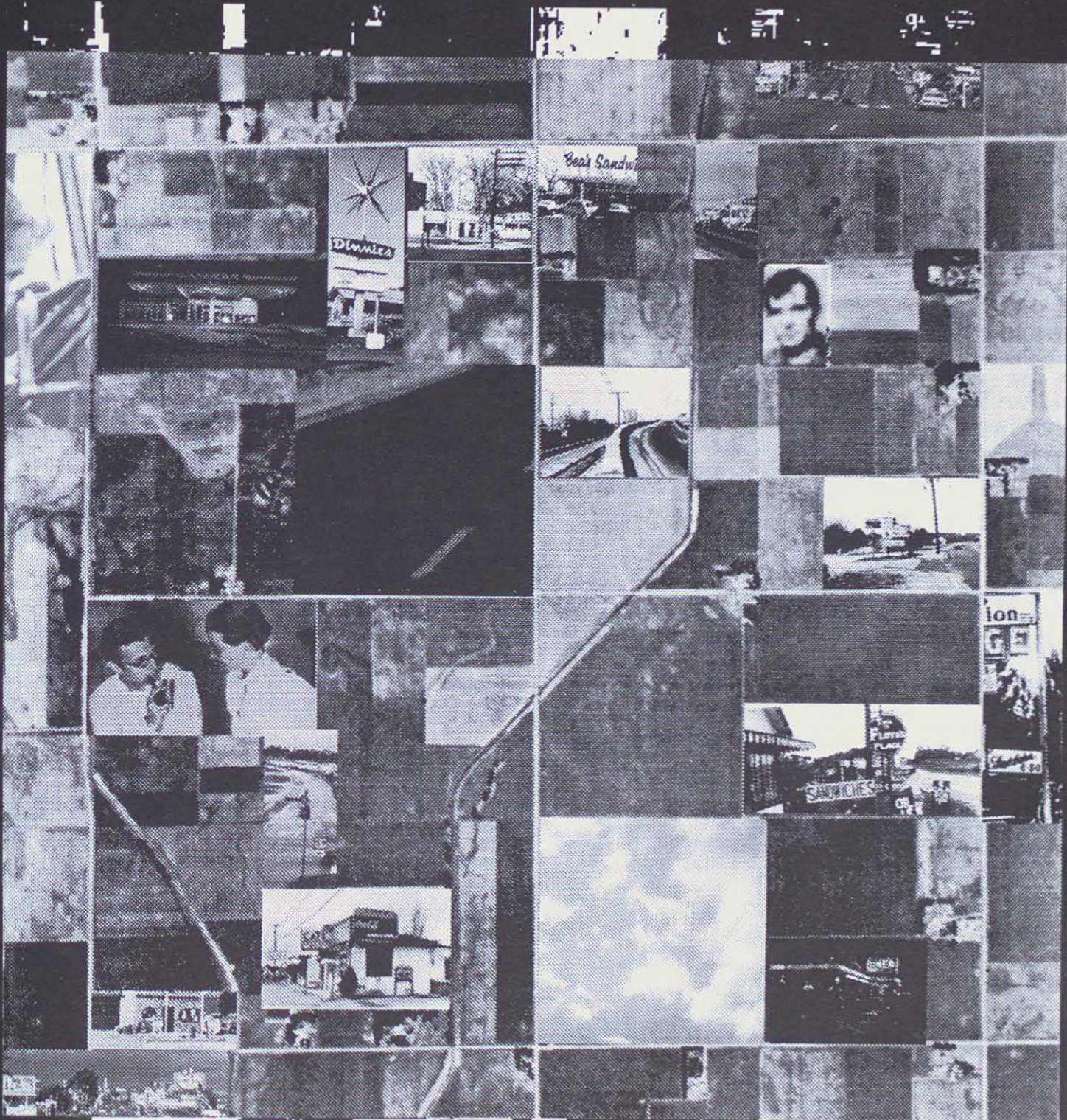
All illustrations are by the author, with the exception of the Budapest Opera drawing on page 5, by Dominic Bourgeois.

Notes:

¹The colleague who accompanied Professor Schoenauer on this tour was Professor Pieter Sijpkes. The 1990 Wilfred Truman Shaver Scholarship students were: Manon Asselin Scriver, Patrick Bernier, Dominic Bourgeois, Paola Deghenghi, Kelly Lee Gilbride, Matthew Colemar Lella, Bernard Olivier, Richard Adam Piccolo, Thomas Pushpathadam, Nicolas Leo Stephane Ryan, Mary Lou Smith, and Vickie Vinaric. Professors Schoenauer and Sijpkes have since led another Shaver trip which visited the city of Budapest. The students on the 1993 trip were: Jennifer Beardsley, Jean Chen, Nooruddeen Esmail, Michael Gross, Richard Klopp, Ian Kubanek, Frédéric Lacombe, Marie-Claude Lesauteur, James McLaughlin, Richard Miller, and Guy Trudel.

Norbert Schoenauer is Emeritus Professor of Architecture at the School of Architecture of McGill University. He is the author of Six Thousand Years of Housing, which documents vernacular housing among various cultures.

ON THE



On the Road with K rouac & Sartre

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ROAD

ON THE ROAD WITH KEROUAC & SARTRE:
THE CINEMATIC LANDSCAPE & THE LAST AVANT-

1

Picture them together, Jean Paul and Jack - the prodigal son of the exiled Quebecois - in a Hudson Terraplane, cruising along a two lane blacktop in a scenario jointly composed by Wim Wenders and Monty Python. Kerouac, the American outcast, whose books were once banned in his own home town, nevertheless became an icon of many things dear to the American soul - freedom, movement, the frontier, and a vision of a pastoral landscape which included the means of getting there. Sartre, that original 'dark angel of agony,' before Stanley Twardowicz, would have to drive, squinting through his Corb glasses over the too-high dashboard, because Jack liked to ride in the shotgun seat. Don't expect their dialogue to be little *bon mots*, these guys could be dead serious and capable of going just a little too far. One created and the other extended the parameters of existentialism - a life without place involving the cosmic decision of whether to accept suicide or merely go bowling.

It's a little harder to picture Sartre having tea with Jane Jacobs and J.B. Jackson¹, but in his analysis of North America he clearly summarized a vision of urbanity and landscape that they have worked hard to define.

While the meandering roads of Europe converge upon the city and end in an enclosed space, the gridded roads of North America run to the horizon and disperse the energy of the city to the countryside

- Jean Paul Sartre as interpreted in Phil Patton's Open Road

He saw the influence of his countryman Descartes in the gridding of the American city and the agricultural lands of the Midwest. And he saw that the road, and the commerce it supported, had usurped the function of the public square. Both of these visions are expressions of the ideology of Thomas Jefferson, who was so inspired by the Enlightenment that he made Cartesian charts to describe the availability of seasonal vegetables. Jefferson believed that a

'husbandry of the land' promoted ethical, moral, and social values supportive of a democracy. In a physical sense, Jefferson saw democracy as a kind of Cartesian mandala that might be impressed upon the landscape. The grid he created under the Land Act of 1796 was intended to sponsor a non-speculative, non-hierarchical land tenure in opposition to traditional European patterns. At the same time, Jefferson recognized that making places equally accessible was essential for this vision. On hearing reports of piracy along the expansion routes, he dispatched his Secretary of the Interior to investigate. When this official was murdered along the Natchez Trace, Jefferson decided to upgrade the trail to a highway, using the rationale that easy and secure travel was necessary for expansion, commerce and the national defense. Dwight Eisenhower, who ended World War II, engaged in a study of Germany's Autobahn. He resurrected Jefferson's



*Well, if you ever plan to motor west
just take my way
that's the highway
that's the best
get your kicks
on Route 66*

-Bobby Troup, 1960

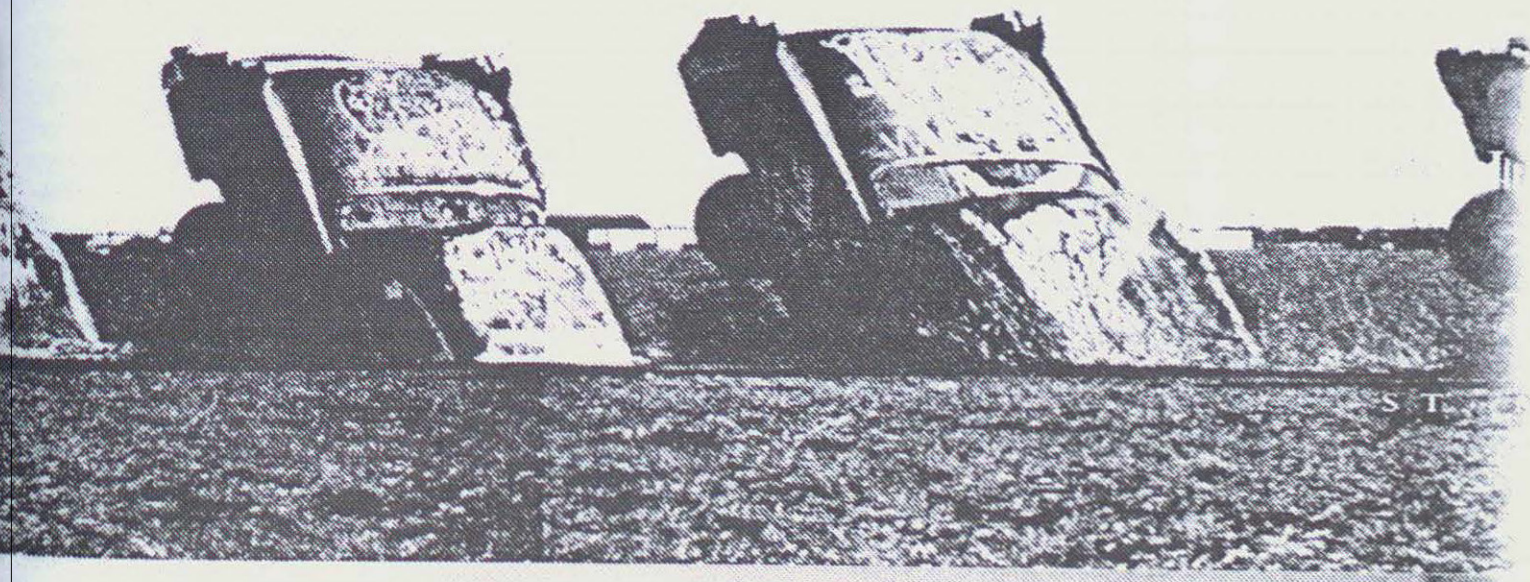
notion in creating the interstate highways that levelled the corduroy of mountain and valley, cleaving the core of many American cities, and turning the two lane blacktop² - where we left Jack & Jean Paul cruising - into a ghost strip.

Of course this landscape had already been defined before Jefferson was even the proverbial gleam in some colonial daddy's eye. Although, this definition, in European terms, was a 'non-definition.' With few exceptions, North American aborigines lived very lightly on the land. Their philosophy revered the landscape's natural beauty (is it jingoistic to think that North America is somehow special among continents?) and expressed ideas of symbiosis with flora, fauna, and landscape. Faced with a paradox like Picasso's appropriation of the 'primitive' African mask to create an avant-garde art, can we see our aborigines as 'primitive' because they lived with the same mobility to which we aspire today?³ Through vehicles like James Fenimore Cooper's *The Last of The Mohicans*, romantic stereotypes of Indians, colonists, and their landscape were big box-office attractions not only back in Europe, but even where the real thing was available. This began the tradition of accepting a simulation as being more real than the real, beginning with books like Cooper's

and leading through Hollywood towards Disneyland.

How the ideology of Jefferson and the North American aborigine might have influenced transcendentalists like Thoreau and Hawthorne is beyond the scope of this article, suffice to say, there is a shared idea of a pastoral continent, a kind of theme-park of nature's wonders, in their view of the landscape. Thoreau seemed unwilling to accept the compromise of the pastoral by the commercial which often

results from the overlay of capitalism. His opposition to this compromise can be defined as Romantic at best, or unpatriotic at worst, in the eyes of the larger culture. This categorization, which would continue and expand over the years, caused problems for Franklin Roosevelt when he attempted to develop the Tennessee River Valley as a public, rather than a private, exploitation of the natural landscape, as a means of providing employment for the public good. All of these notions are immanent in Frank Lloyd Wright's political exemplar Broadacre City:⁴ Jefferson's husbandry and the ethos of agriculture, Thoreau's retreat from urbanity, the car replicating the mobility of the horse, and the idea that the individual is celebrated over the collective in the suburban, non-existent city.



II

A diagram could be made to describe a system of overlays in the landscape ideology of North America, with certain shared characteristics and subsets which reflect interpretations in the American States, and in French and English Canada. While the States and Canada share a pattern of colonial development and use of natural resources, there are obvious differences in ideology, (the fur trade in Canada looks rather benign next to the slave trade south of the border) and patterns of settlement. Jefferson's grid was replaced in eastern Canada by the patterning of the concessions and seigneurial land divisions, as the St. Lawrence spawned a linear concentration reflected in the importance of the railroad, and later in the Trans-Canada Highway.

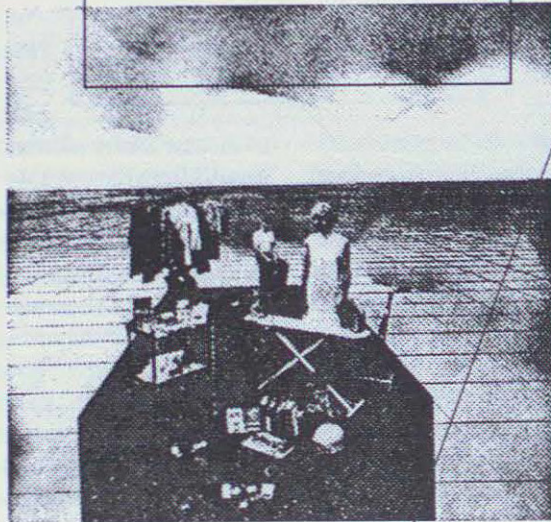
The family history of Jean Lebris de Kerouac moves through several of these subsets and provides a background for his vision of the landscape. His grandparents had immigrated from St. Hubert to find work in the New England textile mills. Jack's parents, Gabrielle and Leo, were able to raise *Ti Jean* (as Jack was called) within their ethnic family traditions through the framework of the church and the French schools of Nashua and Lowell. This sense of community and family tradition, which Jack abandoned for a life on the road, became increasingly significant to Kerouac as he grew older.

Jack Kerouac's first two published books define an evolution of the archetypal North American vision of urbanity and landscape. Inspired by Thomas Wolfe in *The Town and the City*, he tries to create a community of bohemians and hustlers analogous to the familial relationships in the working class mill town he knew as a child. But in *On the Road*, he moves his disaffected road warriors, Dean Moriarty and Sal Paradise, out of the city and into the unbounded American landscape described by Sartre.

They rushed down the street together digging everything in the early way they had which later became so much sadder and perceptive and blank.

*Drivin' along in my automobile
my baby beside me at the wheel
cruisin' and playin' the radio
with no particular place to go*

-Chuck Berry, 1964



But then they danced down the street like dingedodges, and I shambled after as I have been doing all my life for people who interest me, because the only people who interest me are the mad ones, the ones who are mad to live, mad to talk, mad to be saved, desirous of everything at the same time, the ones who never yawn or say a commonplace thing, but burn, burn, burn like fabulous yellow roman candles exploding like spiders across the stars and in the middle you see the center light pop and everybody goes... Awww! ⁵

While Kerouac eventually shared Thoreau's role as provocateur, *On The Road*, unlike *Walden*, accepted and even celebrated the compromise between capital and landscape. His characters were just as likely to be inspired by the glittering lights of Times Square in the October dusk as they were by a purple sun setting over the Rockies.

For Kerouac, the landscape of America was experienced by moving through it, and this sense of movement was more important than any particular vista. It is a cinematic depiction, rather than a painterly view and creates a literary metaphor for the colonial experience of discovery. The exploration accepts improvisation and chance (which preoccupies the art of the time from Jackson Pollock to Charlie Parker to John Cage), in the lack of a definitive destination, and in the type of movement: the societal exile of the hobo, the entropy of hitchhiking, and the middle class' acceptance of the automobile.

Kerouac's innovative methodology accompanies his vision. Parts of *On The Road* were written on a long scroll to replicate the continuity of the experience. The original manuscript was submitted as 175,000 words without punctuation. Influenced by the Bop music of Parker, Monk, and Gillespie, and by the broad gesture of contemporary painting, Kerouac called his writing technique 'sketching.' Fueled by alcohol and benzedrine, which exaggerated his depressive cycles, the author sought to commit words to paper in the same way Pollock

applied paint to canvas. The term 'beat,' as Kerouac saw it, had multiple meanings: the tired crash that followed exuberance, the rhythmic counterpoint essential to Bop, and, as a contraction of 'beatific', a kind of wonder, with roots in Kerouac's French Canadian Catholicism. The term came to define a new, uniquely American bohemianism that collected poets, writers, and painters, but for some reason, not architects.

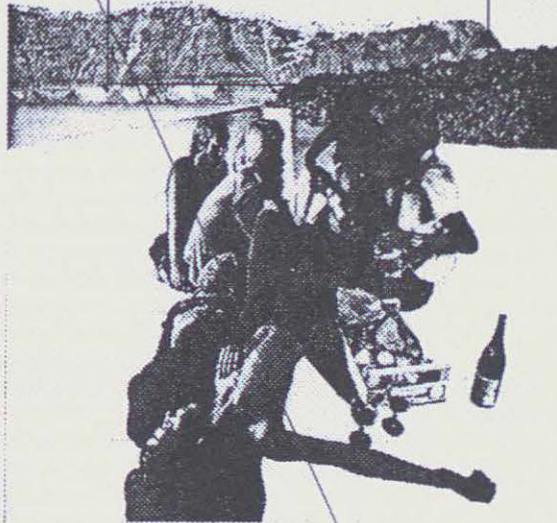
Kerouac's literary invention of the mid-fifties took place at a time when architecture and urbanism were moribund and perhaps more disconnected from the other arts than at any time before or since. A Miesian vocabulary had become corporately institutionalized and increasingly included elements of a mannerist Classicism.⁶ While there were a few architectural 'outlaws' such as Bruce Goff and Buckminster Fuller, only Frederick Kiesler (creator of the *Endless House* and a friend of Jackson Pollock), had a connection to the ongoing experiments in literature and in fine arts. Perhaps the absence of an architectural wing of the Beat movement can be attributed to contemporary aspirations for a corporate, rather than artistic, identity. One interpretation of this nineteen-fifties malaise might be that architecture had yet to recognize an influence even more subversive than the book or the lure of the open road: television - the medium that brought the landscape inside the home. Kerouac became a sometimes eager, sometimes reluctant, spokesman for this movement which soon captured the fancy of *Time* and *Newsweek* as a curious, rather than threatening, exception to the 'what, me worry?' era of the nineteen-fifties.



There are direct and indirect connections between the subject of this essay and its author. I grew up in Northport, a coastal village sixty miles from New York City, with the burden of Dad being a little strange. There were disappearances, odd friends and 'the jogging.'

*You, who are on the road
must have a code
that you can live by*

-Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young
1972



In 1958, before *Nike* and Jane Fonda, adults found running in public were taken away to institutions. When I heard that someone, perhaps more peculiar than Dad now lived in our neighborhood, I was greatly relieved. The Kerouacs lived two blocks away and Gabrielle (*Mémère*, as Jack called her) sometimes gave us cookies sweetened, in the old world way, with molasses. I have no memory of Jack, but I know that there were encounters between him and my father - introductions by Stanley and Bill at *Gunther's*, a bayman's tavern where hefty clamdiggers would sometimes joust with outboard motors while they were running. Today, the shellfish and baymen are gone, victims of the pollution of Long Island Sound, but *Gunther's* remains - an anachronism whose new neighbours include a *Gap* store, and a 'pirate atmosphere' restaurant.

In 1955, my folks had a debate over whether to buy a Dumont or a De Soto. The television set and the used car were both \$500.00. Today a colour TV is half that price while the cost of a comparable vehicle has increased tenfold - the electronic age has conquered the industrial. The choice between these American icons was resolved in typical consumer fashion - we eventually got both. And while I continued to read, I somehow neglected the autographed copy of *On the Road* in the bookcase, for its dehorned, populist derivative on the tube. *Route 66* premiered in 1962 with Tod (Martin Milner) and Buzz (George Maharis) standing in for Jack and Neal Cassady. The beat Hudson had been exchanged for that icon of youth culture: a Corvette, and although Maharis was allowed just a little ethnic menace, these road wanderers were well-scrubbed. While the show initiated a new genre, with episodes entitled 'How Much a Pound is Albatross?', the subversive nature of *On the Road's* cultural outlaws was exchanged for two nice boys gone to look for America on somebody's trust fund.

It was only when I arrived at university, along with a horde of similarly influenced Boomers, that I realized just how cool Jack was. In the sixties,

just after his ability to amuse their parents had faded, the young counterculture rediscovered Kerouac. Jack's narrative pointed to leaving home and going 'on the road,' escaping the gray flannel world of the nineteen-sixties. But this was a new scene, where instead of human interest articles in *Newsweek*, images of the music, the long hair, and the protests went out over the network to millions of potential acolytes. Where there had been maybe 5000 Beats in New York and San Francisco, there were now 5,000,000 Hippies coming from everywhere the signal reached. The age of the Revolution was now televised, from Chicago to Kent State to Patty Hearst and later to Tianamen Square.

The transmission and therefore the immediacy of these images made it impossible to maintain the kind of avant-garde the Beats had created in the nineteen-fifties. What had been a select circle now immediately became a populist movement with accompanying consumer goods like record albums and bell-bottom pants. However, the media revolution did spawn an architectural counterculture which attacked the tired remnants of Miesian Modern with a new media-conscious architecture.

In fact, for Britain's *Archigram*, Italy's *Superstudio*, and America's *Ant Farm*, the medium became the message in a series of projects that somehow extended Kerouac's legacy. *Archigram* proposed 'Instant Cities' unbounded by the materiality of buildings, a laughable idea until it happened a couple of years later at Woodstock. Then there was *Superstudio* representing our culture with endless Cartesian grids extending out into the consumer landscape - does this sound familiar? And what hyperbole would have come to Jack as he passed the thirteen Cadillacs embedded by *Ant Farm* in the railroad earth along the real *Route 66* in Texas?

IV

Had Kerouac wanted the glory, he could have led this revolution that he helped inspire, but physically and creatively exhausted from too much mileage, he returned to the embrace of a new wife and hometown. Ken Kesey, a bridge from Beat to Hippie, became the guru, recruiting a failing

Me and Saint Jack K.
*never had too much to say
Its easy driving with your feet
some good ole girl in the passenger seat
watching the road all day
Oh honey, what funny things you do say
But while you're out of your head
who's making the bread?*

-Everything But The Girl, 1990

Neil Cassady to reprise his role as driver, this time on the *Merry Pranksters* bus where the destination board read 'further.' Jack was not amused. He went on conservative William Buckley's TV show (drunk), to question the intellect, drug use and patriotism of former cronies Ginsburg, Ferlingetti, and Kesey as well as the generation that wanted him to be Saint Jack K.⁷

Kerouac felt that everything had become too easy, too accessible; one should have to work to establish an identity. Most of his circle forgave him this trespass, seeing a bitter, burned-out man trying to figure out what had happened to his bright star. Kerouac died in October, 1969 at age 46, at his mother's house in St. Petersburg, Florida, while watching television. The show on the tube was *The Galloping Gourmet*.

* * *

Jeffrey Hannigan is an Adjunct Professor at the School of Architecture of McGill University and a Lecturer at the University of Vermont. He was formerly associated with Robert Mangurian in the Works architecture group in New York.

Notes:

¹The nature of urbanism in North America is described in Jacobs' The Death and Life of Great American Cities. J.B. Jackson's view of the American landscape is contained in American Space and in his many essays on the subject.

²Descriptions of this most famous two lane blacktop, and the television show named after it, are contained in Route 66 by Michael Wallis.

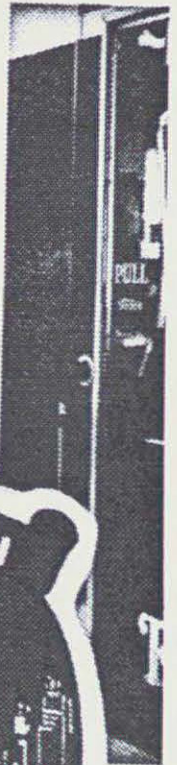
³The naiveté of native Americans to the idea of land ownership was fodder for comedians for years. Ultimately this joke was on us - the idea that anyone, even a Donald Trump or Olympia & York might 'own' a place like Manhattan is clearly ludicrous - in a real sense we are all just passing through.

⁴Wright explains, with the usual density, his vision for "Broadacre City" in The Living City.

⁵On The Road, 1957.

⁶Is Philip Johnson's AT & T building really any different from his earlier Lincoln Centre?

⁷Kerouac, a video docu-drama of Jack Kerouac's life, created by John Antonelli in 1985, contains scenes from the William F. Buckley and Steve Allen television shows and includes interviews with many Beat celebrities (now available in video rental stores).



• There are two standard Kerouac biographies. The first, Kerouac: A Biography, by Ann Charters is strong on his life and associations and the second, Kerouac, by Tom Clark has good descriptions of his methodology.

• For a selection of works by Beat writers and poets, see Ann Charter's Beat Anthology.

Photo Credits:

Anti Farm, Cadillac Ranch

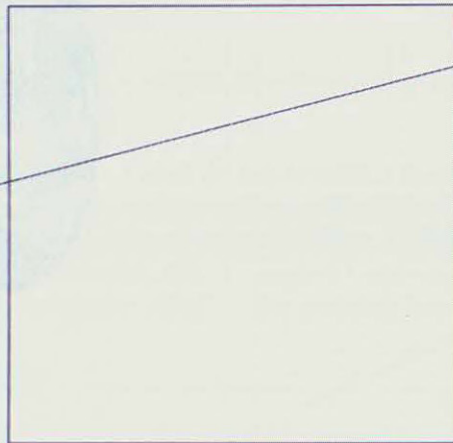
Superstudio, Domestic Grid

Archigram, Monograph

Archigram, Instant City

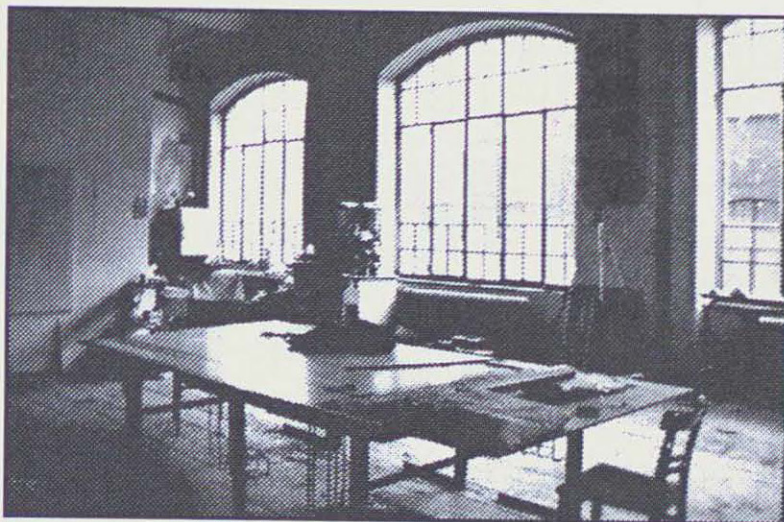
Route 66, Michael Wallis

The Route 66 board game



VOYAGES IN A CULTURAL ONION

"When we concentrate on a material object, whatever its situation, the very act of attention may lead to our involuntarily sinking into the history of that object..."¹



Vienna Studio at the W.U.K. on Währinger Strasse

PROLOGUE TO A VOYAGE

The formation of an architect is a delicate business. Travel plays a crucial role here, but let's define our terms. To consider the importance of travel to the education of the architect one must confront the enigmatic riddle of the Onion. 'Travel,' after all, could account for nothing more than the mundane displacement of a body over a given surface – usually the Earth's – but this is primarily a question of geographical skimming. Such surface skimming, at potentially dizzying speed, effectively permits matter to stay at the exact level of the absolute present.² This *alone* proves to be of little importance to education since it has little or nothing to do with Onions. When dealing with the labyrinthine qualities of this profound vegetable, 'travel' as movement is not very helpful, but 'travel' as *Voyage* is paramount. 'Voyaging' represents the educational potential of travel.



A thin veneer of immediate reality is spread upon the surfaces of things in the world. In recognizing this, we recall the elusive property of the Onion in its habit of continually presenting skins of transparent presence to the outside world. Regardless of what depth we excavate to, the Onion is tragically centre-less; and yet it is also centre-full by virtue of the focused nature of its surrounding skins. A city (another thing of the world) shares this intriguing property. Seeing beneath the skins without removing them is the trick. Through this we view the depths of the past within which the shadows of the future can be dimly discerned.³ The voyage is in the penetrating of these layers – sinking into the skins of the places we visit. A *voyage* is therefore about *seeing*. The movement is one of passage, from outside to inside. This is the sort of displacement that is the most fruitful to the traveller, and most epidermically reflected in the Onion.

We are familiar with the epic hero or heroine who undertakes the voyage of self-discovery, enlightenment, perhaps redemption – or even vengeance. Certainly travel is the vehicle for this positional change. In every darkened glass there are shadows of the Initial Voyage when, from the garden of Eden the first humans fled before an embittered, and for the most part disappointed, God. Travel as displacement is however not a prerequisite; recall the many voyages within voyages that Alice takes without actually *going* anywhere other than into the Wonderland of her own self-awareness. This is a journey which begins once in sleep and once at the portal of the mirror⁴ – a good place to start – but more on this point in a moment.

A Voyage is thus not necessarily a passage between places, but more importantly, from one position of knowledge to another. In this sense one could imagine travel as geographically limited as the Onion itself; for instance, travelling into the complex archaeology of place, object or self. Regardless of the distance travelled, a *Voyage* is essentially a personal displacement involving the peeling back of

layers, moving inward through our individual conceptual frameworks, in which we are enrobed – like Onions. The skins of cultural heritage are revealed through our travelling outside their geographical enclosure, making travel and Onions of crucial importance to the education of an architect – and to education in general.

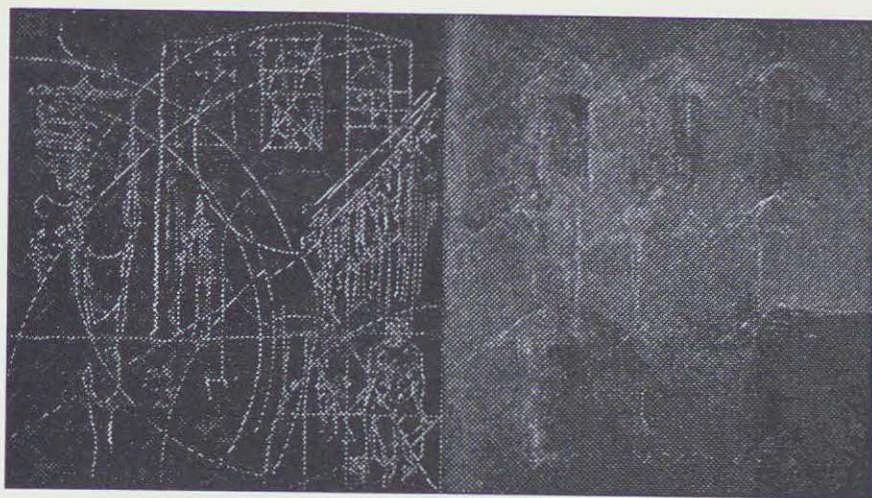


"And you?" the Great Khan asked Polo, "you return from lands equally distant and you can tell me only the thoughts that come to a man who sits on his doorstep at evening to enjoy the cool air. What is the use, then of all your travelling?" ... In fact, they were silent, their eyes half-closed, reclining on cushions, swaying in hammocks, smoking long amber pipes.... And Marco's answer was: "Elsewhere is a negative mirror. The traveller recognizes the little that is his, discovering the much he has not and will never have."

Italo Calvino. *Invisible Cities*

The mirror of elsewhere is the gift of travel. It too is a skin, although invisible, between the reality of corporeal space and the virtual reality of the inverted world of reflection. Here even the Onion fails us. In reflection the familiar is de-familiarized. It is from this dislocated vantage point – a point of departure – that one comes to understand the silent, sub-sur-

face reign of the familiar in our cognitive bias towards things both found and made. The traveller is forced by the voyage to confront his/her own personal Onion of the familiar – the inevitable result of dwelling in the world that is at once threatened, and yet so expanded by the timeless layering of familiarity.



The familiar is both sacred and invisible. It simultaneously occupies “all time” in the space of our subconscious and “no time” in the realm of conscious thought. The familiar is the grounding of identity, and yet by its omnipresence can remain unidentifiable. A fish, whose knowledge of water is vital, is incapable of understanding its ‘wetness.’ Wetness, after all, is a condition which depends upon the knowledge of dryness – an impossible condition to the curious fish who, by its terrestrial voyage, would suffer the fatal result of being killed by the very thing, that in another form, sustains its life.

It is through travel that the familiar can become refreshed and our awareness is increased by the acknowledgement of its reflection. Similarly, the familiar word can be renewed in poetry by its unusual relation to others in the disjunctions provided in

verse. Poetry creates gaps, or spaces in familiar sequences – in the textural⁵ layers of expectations, where emotion can exist. A Voyage, in a similarly penetrating fashion, can create the disjunctions where poetry can exist.

This article is about a study abroad that I undertook in the spring of 1990. Upon this occasion I consciously tried to reduce the amount of travel and instead focused on three European cities in which I would live and study. They were: Barcelona, Glasgow, and Vienna. I suppose if one were to extrapolate this objective towards slower travel to its potential extreme, one might imagine the ultimate traveller sitting like a Zen Monk before a garden of stone, silently contemplating the stillness of the inscrutably placed pebbles while the mind alone is in motion. Finding this difficult, I was resigned to explore the city through drawing and painting. The goal was to work in each city – creating a physical travel journal of impressions and research, almost like emblems, which could communicate metaphorically and graphically an ‘invisible city’

of personal experience and inquiry. The drawings became the vehicle of an inward search to disclose a city which was constructed in the imaged space of perception and sensation.

I left Montreal in early April to trace the essence of each city. This record is the physical consummation of the essentially immaterial lessons and sensual experiences of the foreign city. The accompanying images, to which the story is but a fragment, are from the work that was done in each of the three cities. This is a story and an observation. It is about travel, mirrors, the foreign city, and of course, Onions.





THE STORY

...“I speak and speak,” Marco says, “but the listener retains only the words he is expecting. The description of the world to which you lend a benevolent ear is one thing; ... That which I might dictate late in life, if I were taken prisoner by Genoese pirates and put in irons in the same cell with a writer of adventure stories [is another]. It is not the voice that commands the story: it is the ear.

Italo Calvino. *Invisible Cities*

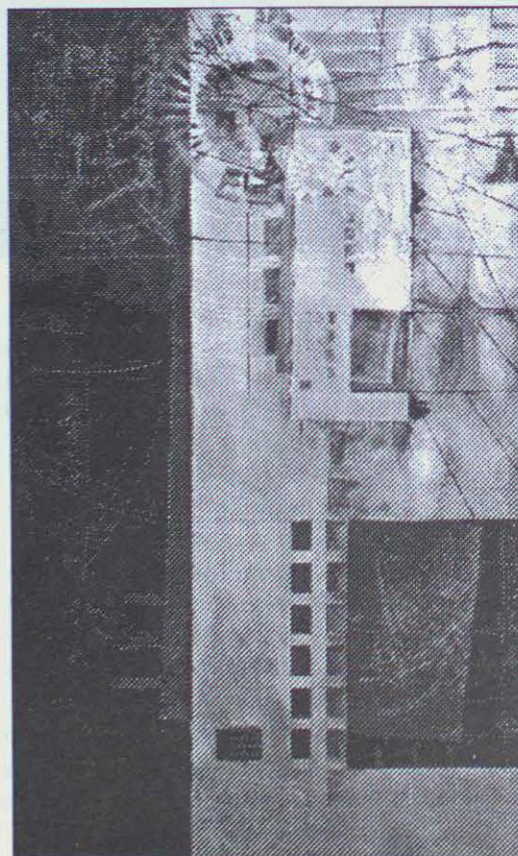
I arrived in Barcelona to set up my first studio in the Catalan capital of Spain. Ready to absorb the city like a sponge, from my meagre rooms in the old city, I emerged with the morning. With my tablets strapped hazardously across my back, my paints and brushes under arm, I squinted into the city with messianic enthusiasm.

I cannot remember my countless, shadowless steps under the austere verticality of the Mediterranean sun. It is only the works which now recall the heat which dried the pigmented edges of colour on my paper before I could replenish my thirsty brush. In them is the terra-cotta dust and salty sand of the Costa Brava which has long since left my lungs and filtered from my clothes and skin. The colours and the textures of each city got into the works, and the space of the imagination began to materialize beneath their layered surfaces like shadows in an amber resin.

Three months later the mists of Scotland penetrated the paper of the highland works, blurring their rugged chroma. The multicolored streets of Glasgow and the hardened face of industry offset the soft palette of Victorian fantasy. These contrasts found their shape in the canvas studies which I made there, as the summer closed about the Stone City and its river.

The icy austerity of Vienna and its sensually inverted passions drastically altered the palette of my later works towards a strange yellowing green of an incipient morbidity and the latent spiritual estrangement in baroque extravagance. The winter besieged the golden crispness of the Viennese Autumn, and as the Siberian crows arrived like the haunting sentinels of the encroaching winter, I left the third and last city of my study to return with much regret – and little capital – to Montreal.

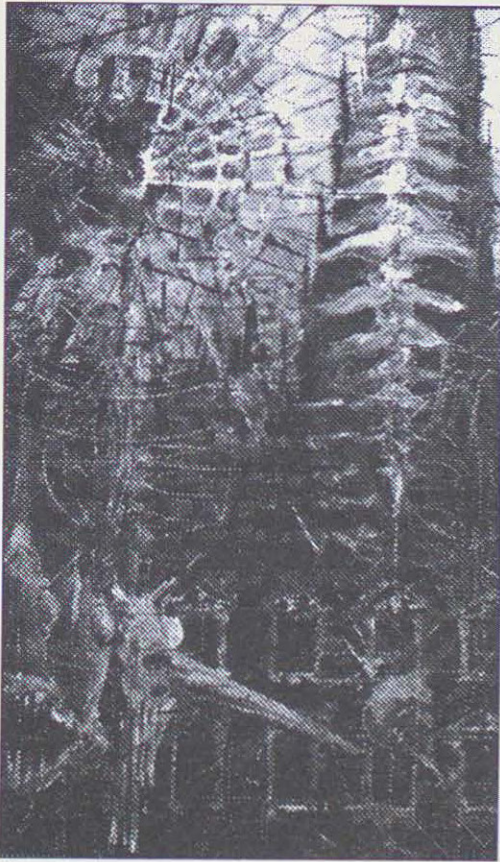
By the time of my return, almost ten months later, the study had evolved drastically from the course I had predicted – but this was part of its lesson. The work forms a body of collected emblems which were in some ways ‘found’ along the course of the study. The works were not static or self-contained as solitary signs, for it was through them that the archaeological record came to life during my research, in all its mystery and contradictions. I had come to see the foreign city as a giant, complex, and mind-boggling artifact: like some incalculably intricate machine of immeasurable illogic, which despite its wonderful disorder has a thread of the absolute.



THE CITY

The city is perhaps the most pertinent reflection of our social condition; it is here that we inevitably and often unwittingly speak openly of the order that is the pattern of our deepest cultural and intellectual questioning. As visitors to any foreign city discover, it is not *what* we see that is the voyage, but *how* what we see changes and colours the knowledge of ourselves and of the cities to which we return, finally affecting what we will make in them and of them.

As within any of the artifacts of man's making, the city contains the imprint of an insidious sub-text which has shaped and is shaping its creation. Mankind expends a great deal of energy organizing available material into hundreds of vast cities; all in a hopeless battle against the second law of thermodynamics (the propensity towards greater disorder). In this exhaustive enterprise each culture unavoidably creates, through time, a fossil record of their obses-



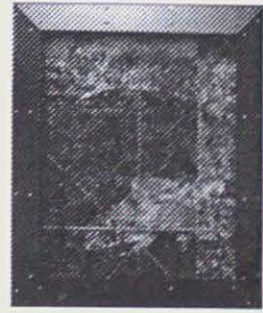
Voyages in a Cultural Onion

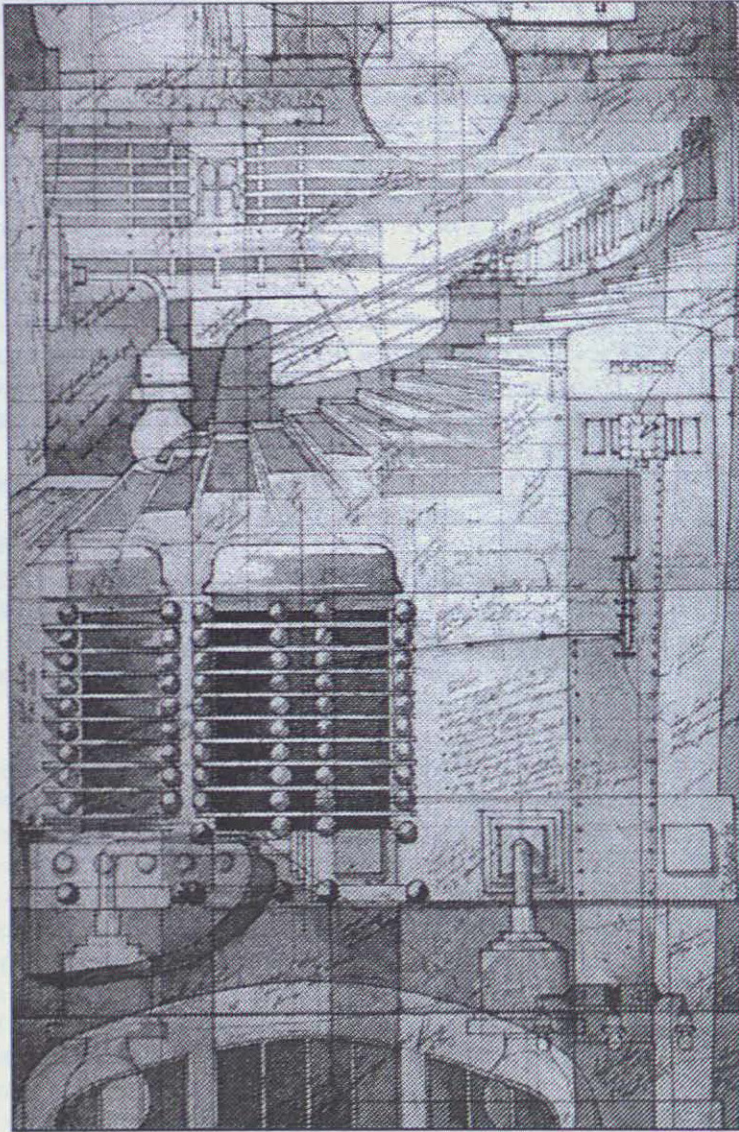
sions, fears, hopes and follies. Cities are the architectures of desire; they are the paradigms of our confusion and it is this that renders them indispensable as artifacts – events to be explored.

The study was an attempt to 'read' the urban subtext like Braille – that is not only with my eyes, but also through the touch of the pen, brush and knife upon the canvas of my inquiry. To the uninitiated eye of the traveller cities are like the indecipherable hieroglyphic texts of ancient Phoenician scribes. These imagined scribes of antiquity and those that followed, had an obvious problem with communication. This was due in part to their conspicuous lack of paper. But not easily hushed, they impressed grave words upon carefully prepared slabs of stone which were laboriously carried to and fro.

Upon receiving the message, the author of the reply would not have gone to the great trouble of preparing a new slab, but instead would have more likely saved the taxes of his kingdom for more noble pursuits, and instructed his scribe to engrave the reply between the lines of the previous message in a finer hand. The first great Ruler, not to be outdone by the frugality of his neighbouring pen-pal would have surely responded in kind with a still finer hand between the lines of the now double-font text.

Imagine if this ancient dialogue in stone were extrapolated onto a sort of great fractal palimpsest continuing in upon itself. – If the entire history of the land – its great wars, its magnificent victories, and the sufferings of its crushing defeats – the dramatic rise and fall of empires and the deaths of its great Monarchs; from the birth of prodigious tyrants and the fall of the Dark Ages followed by the brilliance of enlightened thought, to the passing of plagues and cataclysmic tragedy were all captured on a single textured surface, what a great artifact such a tablet would be! Now imagine, this encrusted slab of the ages beginning to grow – as we shrunk in relation to its vast expansion, until the tiny embrasures upon its surface; the multifold scratches of countless scribes began to appear as deep fissures. Then let it grow further as we continue to shrink until the first now enormous printed lines of the slab's initial message, become vast boulevards to our diminished size. Then the later texts would be as streets and alleys. And later texts still would be driveways and front paths, stair wells and even tiny hallways, or perhaps only the distance between you the reader and this page – then this slab of stone would be a city, and what else could it be – for is this not a city?





EPILOGUE

Often it is only in returning from a voyage that one is able to make sense of the footprints. The work carried out in each temporary studio progressed autonomously and the voyage strayed further and further from its intended path. I remember arriving back in Montreal, to find the numerous boxes, crates and brown paper packages which were the product of my travel. It did not look like much. It is amazing how small the collected work of ten months abroad can look when packed for maximum security and minimum postage weight.

But now, finally, I could open my mail.

Out of the tightly bound vessels, some of which I had not seen since my evacuation of Barcelona almost six months before, came hundreds of drawings, paintings, sketches, and scribbles. There were placemats scrawled with studies for larger works, notes and journal entries written in some now indecipherable hand on scraps of paper or crumbling napkins. There was an entire table cloth, (the type common to those unquestionably marginalized eateries sought out by the obsessively frugal) upon which I had planned one of the larger works in oil during an interminable wait for the chronically disinterested service typical of Spanish red light districts. I had tipped the waiter but stolen the cloth.

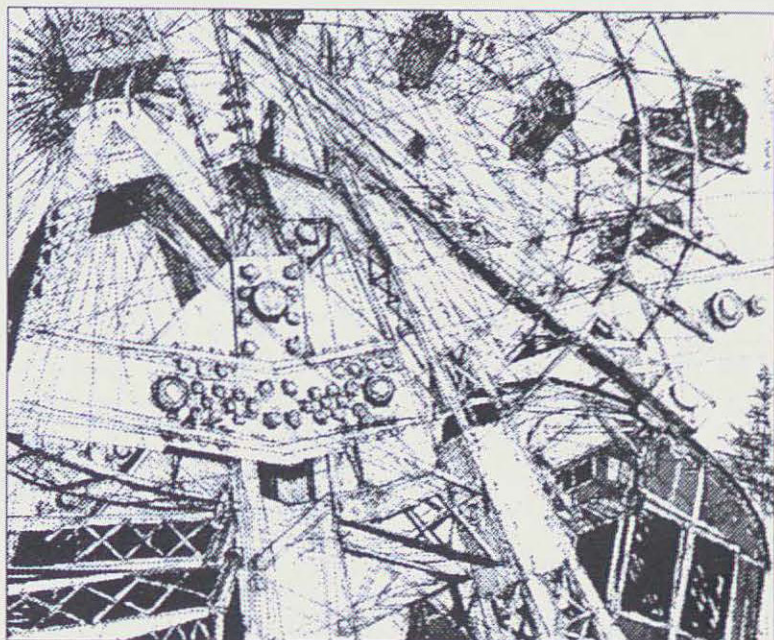
What presented the greatest fascination was the novelty of viewing all the works, from all three cities, together in one room for the first time. Until then the works had been carried out in isolation - one city at a time. Now the subtle changes in approach, palette and textures, size and preference of subject matter became apparent. It was in these discrepancies, these omissions, where I began to trace a second, parallel city of fragments. The reflected city of the unfamiliar was glimpsed in what was said or left unsaid - as in a darkened glass.

In fact, by the end of each three month stay, I was not drawing the city at all. The drawings became more and more abstract: establishing a symbolic dialogue between historical research and the immediacy of sensual impressions. In the patterns and reliefs, taken in some cases directly from the walls and streets, were layered and blended the weavings of a graphic story depicting allegorical relationships and associations consistent, not with the city as such, but with the mind's lattice upon which, as in warm wax or humid plaster, the sensual impressions of the city are impressed.

I believe that as one travels, the mind is stretched open and the foreign world of the unknowable becomes a force which floods in to fill the gaps as they appear between the contiguous layers of our Onion-like consciousness. The inherent educational grounding is in this deluge. This is a necessary passage, while the actual displacement of travel is the vehicle for its possibility.

In order to organize and make sense of the cultural and sensual confrontations that the foreign city provokes, the mind creates out of necessity a second city - almost as a defence. This second city is complete with paths and stairwells, sewers and towers similar to the original. It is a city of beautiful places - of light and colour filled with openness and the pleasant sounds of water and laughter; it is also one of fearful darkness and dangerous blind alleys. It is a city built not of earth and trees but of a billion tenuous silk-like threads of conductive tissues and synaptic connections. Like a coiled lattice of interwoven memories and experiences, this 'invisible city' is hung like a silvery net in the infinite electro-magnetic space of our minds. It is a city made of walls or skins which, although containing nothing, are yet as surely focused as is the Onion, or for that matter, the centreless darkness of the brain itself.

Into this gossamer structure of memory cells and neural ganglions the new impressions rush and are caught. Here within this existential urban plan, the electro-magnetic second city of memory, experience and confusion begins a reconstruction. This is the darkened glass,



and it is through this invisible mental city of the journeyman architect that the *voyage of travel* must occur. The wonder and paradox of the foreign cities we visit and all that they symbolize are embossed in this city of electronic pathways and synaptic traffic. This is where the true school of travel can be found. From this school the greatest lessons in architecture may be gleaned and, I think - more than anything else - it was this city that I finally began to draw.

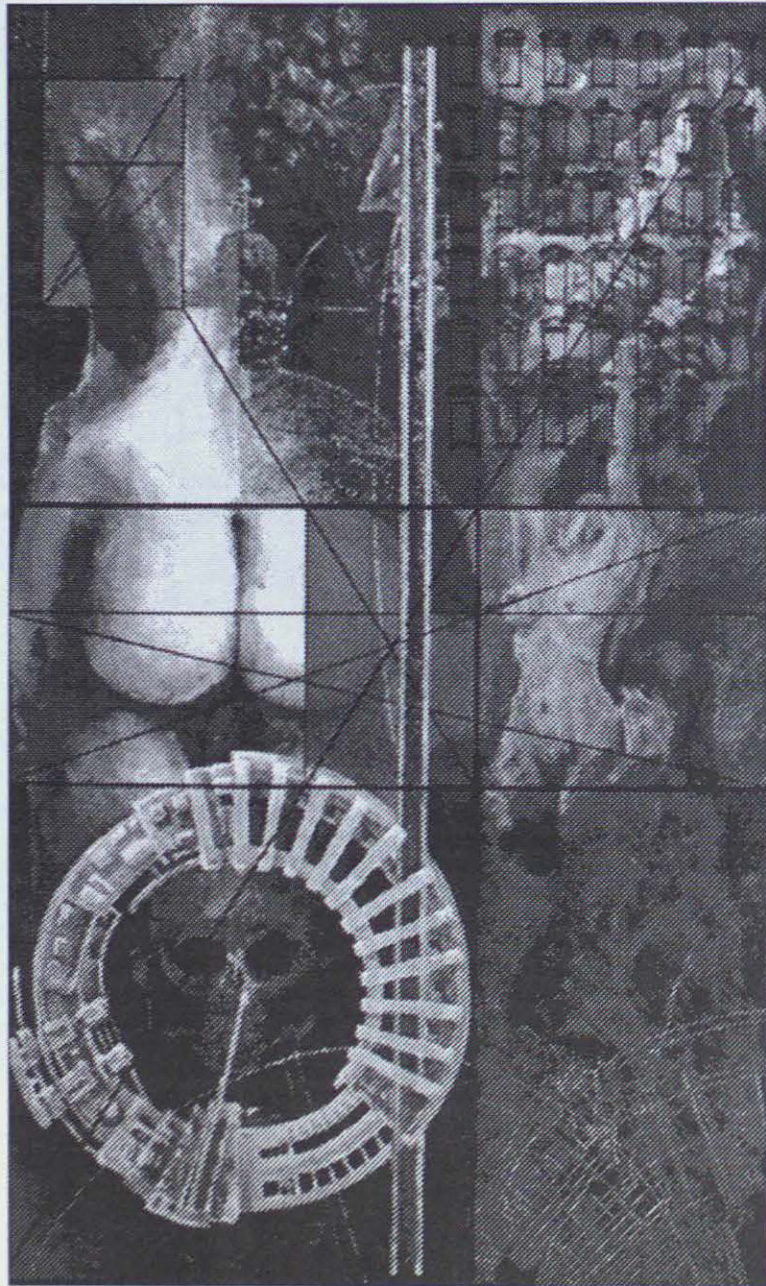
Notes:

- 1 Vladimir Nabokov, *Transparent Things*. New York: Vintage Books 1989.
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 Source quote

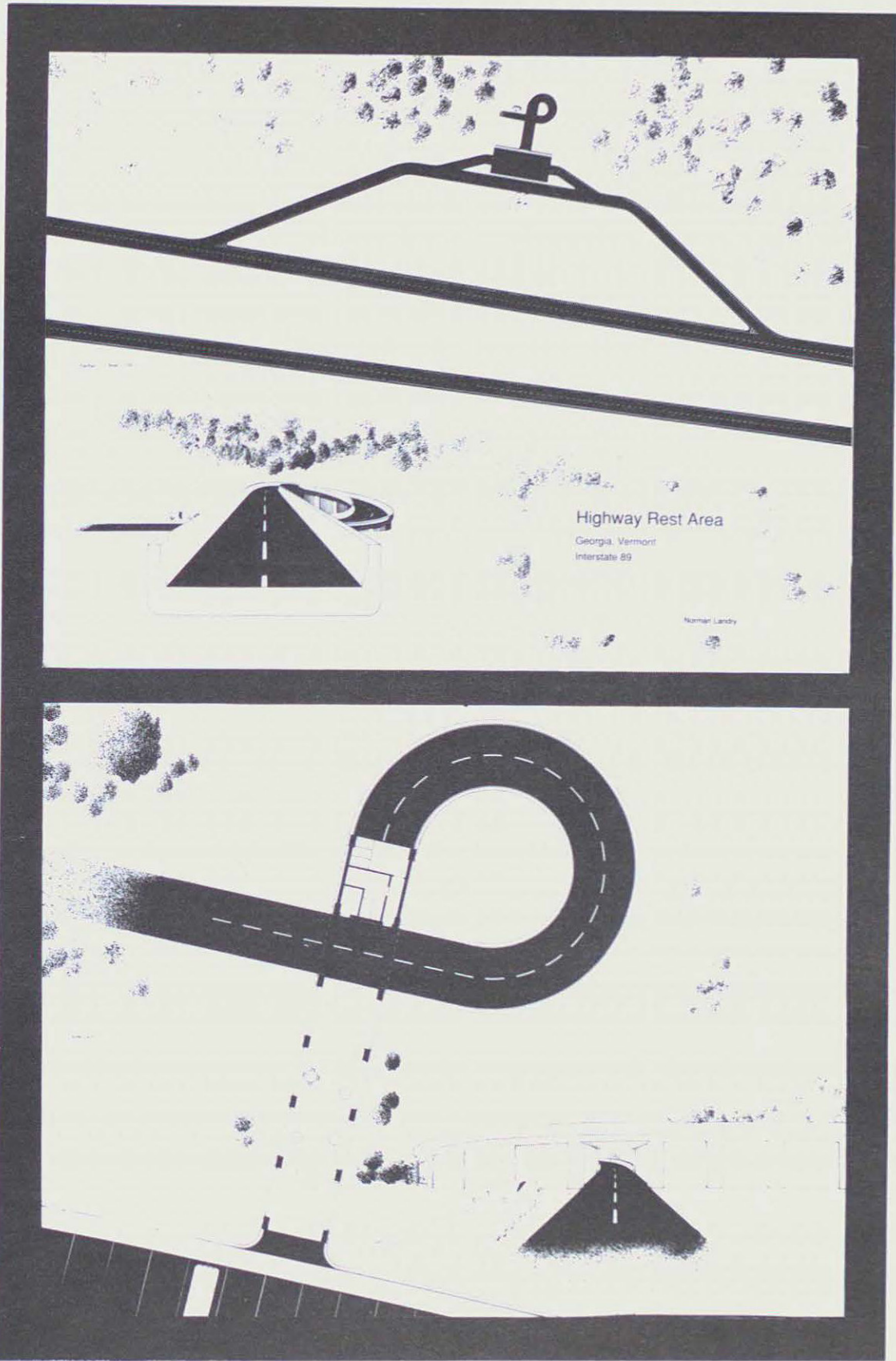


⁴ Architecture, as a mode of thought and action begins at this same door. It is in the void or gap between the images that the task is given shape and the questions are asked. The voyage is then the work of making. It is in this search undertaken in the work that the inchoate answers take form. Design is then a voyage of discovery, through which the pre-eminence of the physical crafted object is established. The architect *travels* through the work towards a personal understanding of dwelling. If architecture is to reconcile the stuff of the world with the consummation of human ritual space, it must be deeply indebted to the voyage of its inception.

⁵ "Textural" is used here in reference to its connection to text which is related to textiles and weaving since this is in fact what written "text" is – the weaving of words. Poetry is merely one loom, but it can be of the highest quality.



In 1990 Andrew Dunbar pursued an independent study of the city in the European context. He established work studios in Barcelona, Glasgow and Vienna in order to carry out the body of work which was the subject of an exhibition entitled City Works. He recently completed a Master of Architecture at the University of Pennsylvania.



Student Work

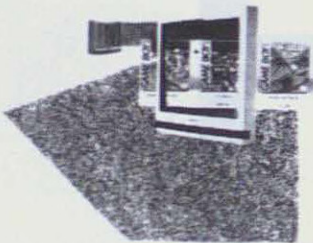
Norman Landry is a student at the McGill School of Architecture. This project was part of a second year studio conducted by Professor Jeffrey Hannigan, which explored the architecture and infrastructure of the American interstate highway system.



**Between Highway
and Home**
McGill Thesis 1993

Me and Pam, even before we were best friends, would meet at Dunkin' Donuts before class. She'd be there with Suzy and Mary, and I'd come later at a quarter to eight to have our daily chocolate cream donut and coffee. The place was close to our school so we'd push the fifteen minute recess to its limit and race over to DD's, braving the cold in our T-shirts to have a quick snack and chat. Sometimes we'd go out of our way to find a remote DD's and stay there for hours talking or just observing the people around us, trying to figure out their stories.

METRO SHOPPING



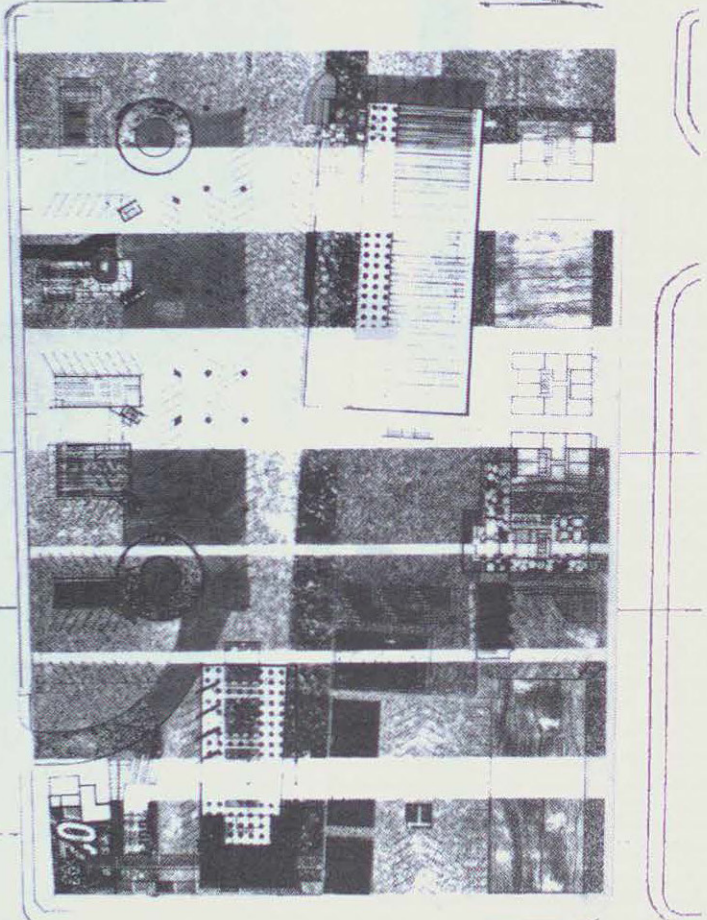
LIBRARY ARCADE

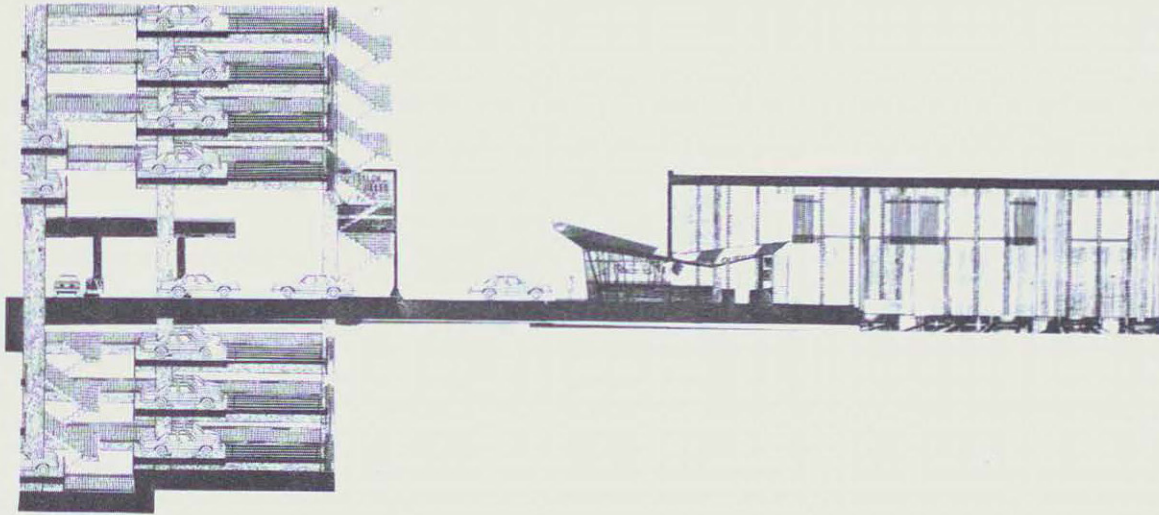


LAUNDRY PARK VIDEO STORE

In the landscape between highway and home, our commercial culture of Fast and More, Self-Serve and Drive-Thru comes in conflict with the internal, private world of home. Although the uniformity of mass consumerism appears in standard architectural types (Dunkin' Donuts is pink and orange with plastic swivel chairs along a windowed wall overlooking parking), this setting is transformed by the church group, the runaway, the nanny, the salesman, the truck driver and the gambler.

Between an urban highway and a row of low-rise apartments, community living crashes into car culture as collage: billboards and markets drop into Metro tunnels; video games and books stack in a used car lot; a laundromat washes over asphalt watching a movie park and ball courts; daycare children play with a 1000 parked cars; coffee stains used magazines; TVs and pizza slice into the bowling alley.

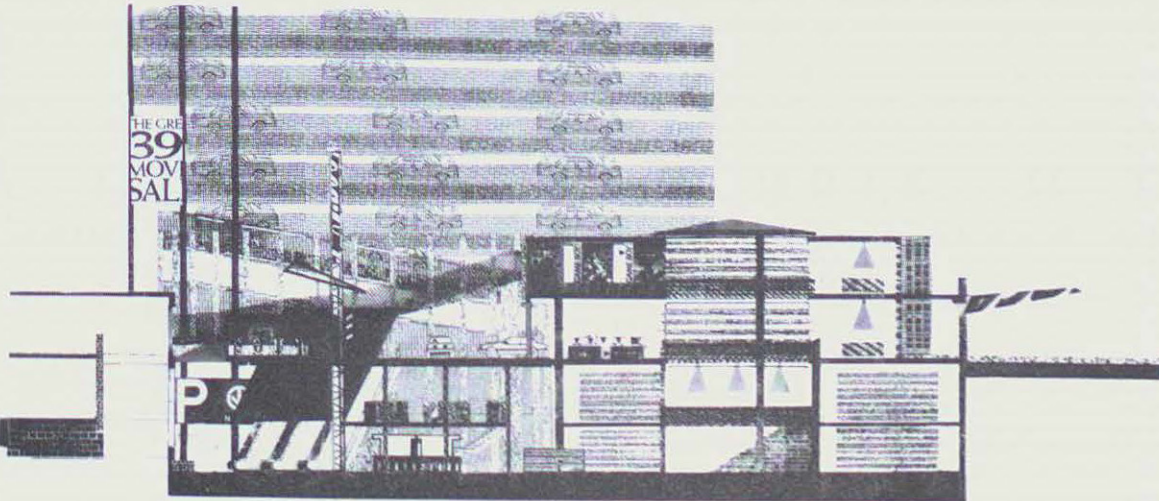




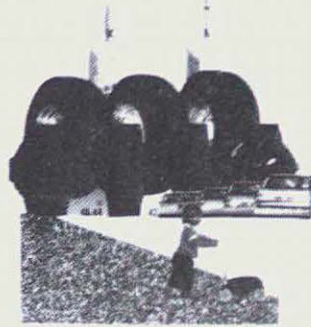
DAYCARE PARKING GARAGE



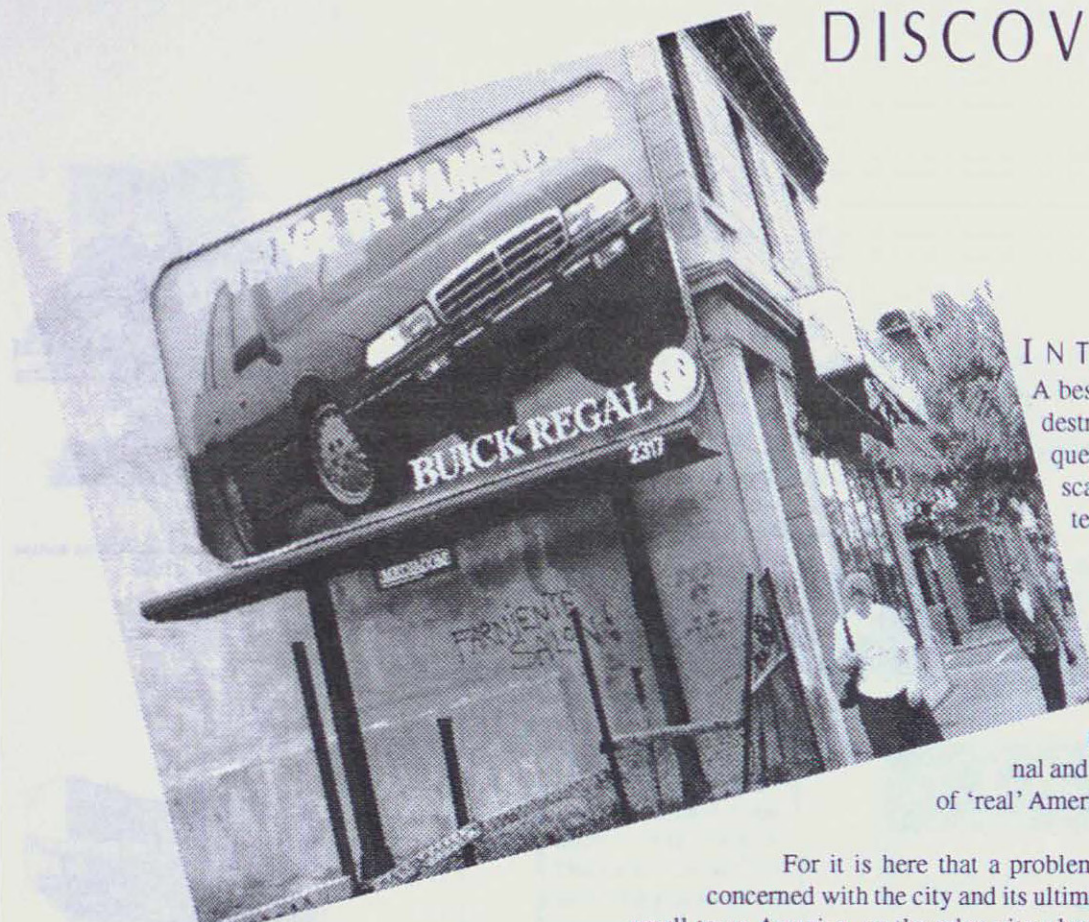
COFFEE SHOP USED BOOKS



TRADE & POOL-HALL, BOWLING



DISCOVER AMERICA*



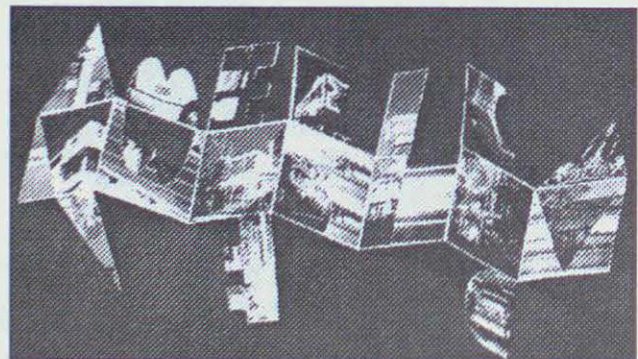
INTRODUCTION

A besieged territory (the landscape), cities self-destructing, densification and urban sprawl, the question of urbanity or of a domesticated landscape are at the centre of the debate on architecture and urban design in America...

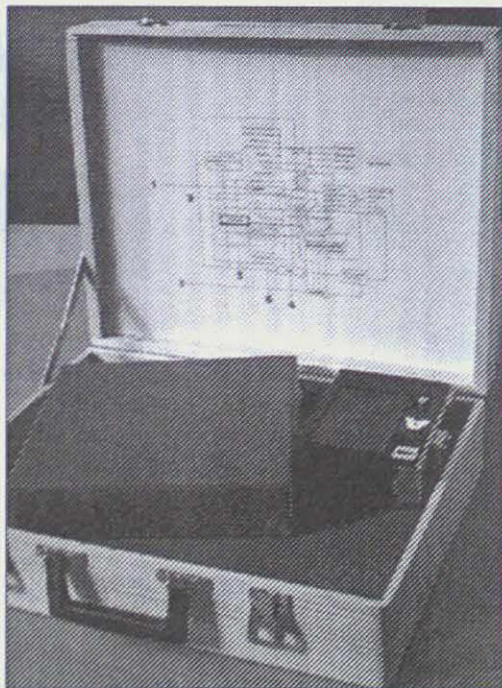
The studio is based on the research of the diverse spatial, material and social conditions which form the American environment today. It is the exploration of these 'other' spaces, interstitial lands, banal and forgotten, which may permit the discovery of 'real' Americas...

For it is here that a problem exists: many studies and arguments are concerned with the city and its ultimate realisation, the suburb and the image of small town America, or the edge city phenomena. The in-between - the ubiquitous space of America - and the difficulty of its appropriation are not really considered.

A hypothesis is proposed: the public facility acts as catalyst and connection in changing the direction of America!



Fold Out America Maud Paulin



Travel Kit Louis-Charles Lasnier

The Changing Direction of A M E R I C A

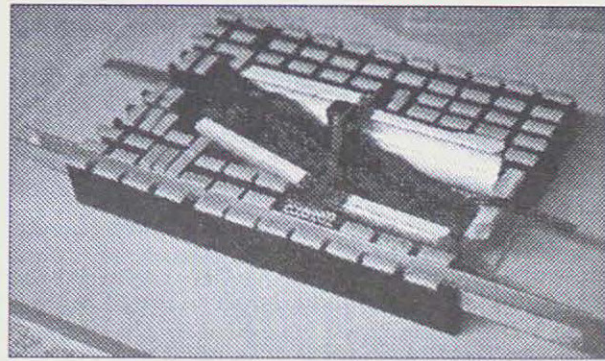
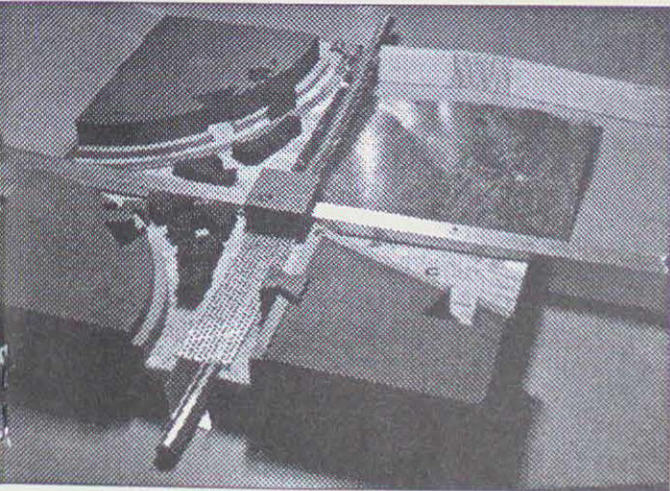
Traditionally the public facility and its architectural infrastructure has anchored our understanding of the territory. The siting of these structures in the territory implicitly means a strategic action. The choice of a site and the elaboration of a programme (in what forms does social life exist?) are tactical elements which begin a process of architectural communication. The syntactical and tactile developments of a building and its environment are other elements which follow.

The research on cultural expression (the changing direction...) is communicated through the realisation of the project. The project represents through technique, spatiality, materiality, as well as its relationship to the landscape, our desire to live taking form.

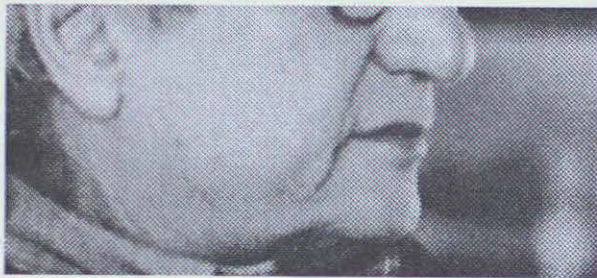
The studio proposes the study of the role of the public facility as a structuring element in a community and territory, as well as the realisation of the architectural project - tactile, and spatial expressions of our culture.

**This is an account of a year long studio held at UQAM for final year students. The studio included several French exchange students and was conducted by Randy Cohen of Atelier Big City, Montréal.*

CP Lines in Montreal West Louis-Charles Lasnier



Francon Quarry Gael Botrel



[FRANK O. GEHRY]

This interview was conducted by TFC editors Tom Balaban, Greg Dunn and Terrance Galvin on November 9th, 1993, during the 1993 Charrette with F.O.G. Associates at McGill University. The Charrette problem was to design and build a float for Montréal's St. Patrick's Day Parade, held in March 1994.

During the course of our discussion, Frank Gehry spoke about the effects of global media and technology as they relate to his own practice of architecture.

I ' v e a l w a y s s o r t o f

TFC: Considering that this issue of THE FIFTH COLUMN is about architecture and travel, you must have insight into the travelling architect, since you're on the road incessantly these days?

FG: Well, I travel a lot for work, not so much for pleasure. But wherever I am I go to museums and look at paintings. That's my favourite activity.

TFC: Are there some striking museums that interest you, either for their architecture or for their collections?

FG: Yes. The Kunsthistorisches in Vienna. And there's one in Frankfurt I like called the Städtisches Kunstinstitut.

TFC: Are you referring to good museums as in good buildings or great collections?

FG: I'm referring to good collections - not to architecture. Although Venturi's extension to the National Gallery in London is good - it's not my kind of architecture, but when you come up to the top of those stairs and the shift off-axis isn't perpendicular, it's just slightly off, I love that move. He took very strong advantage of that. And even though the galleries are decorative, they really work and they're beautiful for showing the paintings.

TFC: In your own practice, how many buildings do you have going on right now?

FG: Well, we're doing a building in Bilbao, Spain that has just started construction. There's one in Germany near Hannover, which is under construction - the foundations are finished and they're just starting to frame. There's one in Basel, Switzerland that will be finished in January 1994, and a housing project for the masses in Frankfurt that we're just starting and should be under construction soon. There is also Walt Disney Concert Hall in L.A. that's under construction.

TFC: It appears that much of your recent work has been

public commissions, won abroad through competitions, etc. What part of your projects remain private houses for clients, and how do the two commissions vary?

FG: Well, we're doing a house in Cleveland for a rich guy, who's driving me nuts. I can't do that. I have a hard time doing houses for really rich clients like him. It's hard to get excited about solving the guy's bathroom with saunas. It's a collaboration, I've got Philip Johnson and Claes Oldenburg involved, and we're getting Frank Stella, I hope.

TFC: Stella is actually building something?

FG: Stella has been designing buildings. Have you seen any of them?

I work hard to make it look
spontaneous
when it's
highly contrived.

TFC: No I've just seen his paintings.

FG: He designed a museum in Groningen, Holland. It's not going to be built, but some of the shapes are familiar to my work. Although he has his own way of doing it. It's pretty interesting.

TFC: Does it have the same sort of colour and movement to it as his paintings?

FG: Yes, it's quite beautiful. Stella wants to be an architect. Judd wants to be an architect. Don Judd does architecture too, he even has his own architectural firm. He wants to make everything square, in four boxes or in three boxes. It's really



nice, but the architecture is very uncomfortable, like his furniture. Judd is very pontifical - he'd be good for an interview.

TFC: Has your practice changed significantly with being on the road so much; there must have been a time when you were in the office much more in Los Angeles than you are now?

FG: Not really, I feel like it's about the same, but maybe I'm wrong. I mean I've always sort of been on the road. For years I never got any work in L.A. The Disney Concert Hall is really the first big project. They don't like you in your own city usually. I'm not like Aalto who got a big run in his own backyard - they liked him at home.

TFC: But the media has changed all that as well. In Aalto's days you couldn't be in six places within the same day whereas now you can. The other day, I heard a funny story about Safdie receiving a fax of a 1:1 wall section in the airport. He was telling a local architect that he spends half his time with airport fax machines, trying to edit design drawings. He wants to design it all, although he is always in different places with three offices on the go.

Since you're here in Montréal now, when you're away, how do you stay in contact with the office?

FG: When I'm on the road, I don't contact the office very much. I'll go home now and work very intensively for a couple of weeks and get a lot of work done.



it's highly contrived, so people think I change it. There are two or three buildings that are now finished that I've never seen, such as the Herman Miller project in Rocklin, California.

I've never seen the Sirmai-Peterson House either. Nor have I yet seen the American Center in Paris since it has been completed - it's been a year since I've been there. Once I receive a commission, I do it and it's done. I guess I'm more interested in the design process than in the final product. The reasons I didn't see the Herman Miller project was that the client changed from the time I started the design. The people I was working with by the time the job was complete were no longer there, so it wasn't interesting to go and visit. I realized then that the interaction with the people and the clients - the whole *Gestalt* of it - was the important thing. The building without that is sort of dead to me.

TFC: That thought leads to a comment you made at your lecture at the Université de Montréal last week. You stated that you have a few clients who will push you, and you have to restrain them from giving you their wallet. Do you think that those are actually your best buildings, that those are the ones where you have been able to explore more, or is it a cliché to say that a tighter program can often produce better architecture?

FG: I think that human nature is such that you've got to have something to work against. And so, when you're completely free, when you've got no constraints, nothing guides you.

TFC: That leads us to the next question, regarding how much on-site adjustment your buildings get. What role do supervising architects play in the production of the architecture after the working drawings are done?

FG: Not very much in the way of design. When we're finished working drawings, we're finished. I don't change the design, although it may look like I do. I work hard to make it look spontaneous when

If I made the rich client's house green, blue or indifferently, he wouldn't notice. He trusts me, he wants the thing to be idiosyncratic, he wants it off the wall, he's very anxious that it be the best thing I've ever done, you know. I tried to explain to him that there has to be something to push against. The problem with a rich client's house is that there is no social issue. There's nothing compelling to make you believe that you're spending your time in a meaningful way. I mean it's a 20 million dollar house. I said, why don't we spend 5 million and give 15 million to

charity. He doesn't want it. I was raised with this Jewish liberal ethic that you have to do good. It's a do-gooder ethic. It's not necessarily a good one, but that's the one I inherited. And I think that most of us are in that state in some way or other.

TFC: One issue that *THE FIFTH COLUMN* is dealing with is how the media explosion has changed both the practice of architecture and the perception of architecture by the public. I remember Steven Holl lecturing on a project in Japan where they worked all day and then faxed drawings out of the office at 6:00 p.m. It would be morning in Japan, where they would work all day and fax back the drawings. Holl's office would arrive in the office the next day and continue the design. They could fast track the project by working, in essence, twenty-four hours per day.

FG: Yes, I did a project where I experienced that too. They're very fast, the Japanese, and they build quickly. They build in six months what takes us a year and a half. I think Japan is unique though, it's not like anywhere else.

TFC: Everyone that works in Japan says the same thing, that it's a very special place compared to North America.

FG: It shows us back home what's possible. The problem with experiencing Japan is that you wonder

why our guys can't do it. But we've got unions and a different work ethic.

Architecture is not in the consciousness of the power structure.

I remember when I came out of school,

the media didn't pay much attention to architecture and we were always feeling like nobody cared. I'm sure in Canada, architecture is not in the consciousness of the power structure. Brian Mulroney or Jean Chrétien never knew anything about architecture, whereas François Mitterand does. For better or for worse, Mitterand knows who I am and he knows who the architects are - he is close friends with Jean Nouvel.

It's different in America. Clinton probably doesn't know who we are or why architects are important. He'd probably never hire an architect. So I think that raising the consciousness of the general public about



the value of architecture and its potential is probably worth all the media attention, if they get it right. The trouble with current politics is that now the media is on

a stream towards social consciousness in contrast to free-for-all pluralism. So you read the editors of magazines running editorials on how things have finally come back to social awareness, whereas it never left. I don't know of any architects who aren't socially aware.

TFC: In terms of socially conscious design, what about the lead-coated copper used on some of your buildings? I read some material about it being illegal to specify the use of lead-coated copper in Canada.

FG: It's now illegal in L.A. too.

TFC: How are you dealing with that, considering that for a while a large part of your designs were using lead-coated copper.

FG: We only used it in two buildings out of a hundred (laughter)...

TFC: Wasn't it used in the Toledo Art Building and on Newbury Street, in Boston as well as in a couple of your private houses?

FG: Yes, I used it in the Schnabel Residence. Well, lead-coated copper is used all over the world and has been for centuries. The word 'lead' is what bothers everybody, but you know it's a lead coating on the copper that washes off and goes into the groundwater that causes worry. The problem of using lead is apparently not founded on health reasons, but more on psychological grounds. And there's always a health risk, so why take it.

When we did the Boston project, the Boston building department did extensive research before they approved the use of lead-coated copper. They did all kinds of testing and came back and said it was safe. In Toledo, we asked the city to do the same, and they did and they approved it. In the Schnabel Residence we asked the city the same and they approved it. On the Disney Concert Hall we wanted to use it and the

county of L.A. said we couldn't use it, so we used a tin-coated copper.

TFC: Which doesn't have the same black patina finish?

FG: No, it's not as nice, but we're finding that you can mix the coating, which we're doing now. You can put two percent lead into it, which is really negligible, and it becomes a pewter colour with a beautiful surface that has a patina of some sort. Now we're doing aging tests on it to see how it reacts.

TFC: Throughout your practice, did you not initially work more in models than in working drawings? It appeared that you modelled first and drew afterwards. It always seemed to me that the design progressed from the sketch to the model to the drawing.

FG: For every job we make program models. We build the site context at two scales and we make

I can hold
the whole design
suspended, like a hologram,
completely in my head.

blocks that fit the program, so you can look at the blocks and you can look at the site. I can look at it all and get into my head the scale of the thing, so I know what size it is and what kind of problems it presents. Then I do sketches in my book, lots of them which all look like scribbles. Afterwards, when you look at them, they look strangely enough like the building. There's one on the Toledo project that looks exactly like the building - even I can't believe it. There's a lot of detail in that sketch, although it's just a scribble.

TFC: Alvar Aalto used to describe this process as a kind of pre-knowledge of the site. In his initial sketch would be

all the elements that would carry right through to the working drawings. He seemed to know so much about the design through his intuition of the site that it seemed uncanny.

FG: But as you get older you get that way. It's like practising anything else. Now, I can design a building completely in my head. When I was younger, I used to hear that Frank Lloyd Wright could do that, but now I can also do it. I can hold the whole design suspended, like a hologram, completely in my head. And I can draw it, not so you would understand it but so that it's sort of transmitted to the drawings.

TFC: And then your drawings are interpreted by the staff?

FG: Yes, then we make models of those drawings and the models are very strange sometimes. The clients look at them and get really scared. But they know that there's a building going to be built and they know I get done on time and close to budget. We've got a good track record so there's a trust to begin with for most clients. When there isn't it doesn't move. I have a few clients I'd like to build for, but we aren't in sync, so why do it?

TFC: That must have been another big change in your practice. Do many clients contact you now, because they have seen your work published in some magazine?

FG: Not as much as you think. The way you're suggesting is that the floodgates are opened. That's not true. No Canadian company, competition or client, has ever called except the Montréal Museum of Decorative Arts (Château Dufresne). I was called to one competition last year in Toronto and they threw me out. They asked us to send in our stuff and then they wrote me a letter saying that we didn't make it through the first cut. It's a lot like that.

TFC: Then, why do we have the impression that you are building in such a prolific manner?



FG: Because you think I'm omnipresent and all over the place. I have a steady flow of work and I'm not complaining, but it's not that much different from how it's always been, except now the projects are a little better. In the case of private commissions, most good clients are so involved with the process, that they do relate as design participants and that's normal. I like that, but there are limits. In my own case, Ron Davis is sure he designed his own house. He even took credit for it in his own publication, excluding me, which was not fair.

TFC: It appears that his paintings and the house were conceived in the same spirit.

FG: Yes, we worked together, but he could never do that house alone.

He tried to make three-dimensional work. That's the way I got into it. I liked his paintings, and he used to come to my house and he was making shaped canvases, and he didn't know how to describe them, so I taught him how to do descriptive geometry. I taught him how to draw these shapes and that's when he asked me to design him a studio, and I said, "well, I'll use this studio as a way to teach you how to make three-dimensional objects." It was a waste of time - he had a blind spot for three-dimensions. It's amazing, because the paintings are very spatial and three-dimensional. He understands three-dimensional space in two dimensions, but he can't understand three-dimensional objects, so he could never have built that house on his own, his genius is not in that area.

TFC: Although you don't perceive building in Canada, I want to know if you think the forms and construction techniques you work with in warmer climates could be pulled off in climates such as ours?

FG: Well, I'm working in climates like Minneapolis. The Winton Guest House, a series of little boxes connected with joints like that, was built

in snow country and it doesn't leak. Everybody said that it wouldn't work, but I took a shot at that. The client insisted that it had to be a sculpture in the garden, and I explained to him that if we put objects close to each other, we'd get these V-shaped cracks that would allow them to be sculptural objects. When I explained to him that was really important to do in order to get what we wanted, but was going to be terrible to solve technically, he opted out. We ended up making copper silos instead.

TFC: Would you please explain the process behind the Disney Concert Hall project in L.A.?

FG: I won the competition for the Disney Concert Hall. Before the competition, they asked me to be interviewed just because I was an L.A. architect and they wanted to look like they had asked an L.A. architect, so I subjected myself to the interview process.

A lot of architects are trying to recreate Rome in L.A.

ess. It was a funny process, they guaranteed me that if the jury picked my scheme they would make it public but I wouldn't necessarily get the job. The jury did pick my scheme but they reneged, saying they didn't want to make it public, because they didn't want to embarrass the Disney family. And then, Mrs. Disney assessed the models and picked mine, even though she didn't know who I was or which one was our project.

TFC: Mrs. Disney is still alive?

FG: Yes, she's in her nineties now. She picked my model and they said "thank God, that's the one the jury picked." It worked, although politically it was a fluke. I had the best scheme for L.A. because I know

the place. Stirling and Hollein and Böhm - more Hollein and Böhm in the competition - had a prediction to think that L.A. was goofy and that Disney Hall had something to do with Mickey Mouse and theatre. Stirling took it more seriously, but he didn't understand the L.A. context, so his normal contextual games didn't work. I was the only one who understood Los Angeles; I tried to explain it to them all, but they didn't hear me.

TFC: Did you do much of your research for the Disney Concert Hall before you got the commission?

FG: No, because prior to the competition there was an acoustician from France acting as a consultant. He had met with Stirling, Hollein, and Böhm and concluded that all four schemes had problems, but by the time we got there, he was gone. Disney loved our design, but they knew it wouldn't work because of what the consultant had told them previously, so we had to find a new acoustician. Disney had heard about Dr. Nagata in Japan and they liked him, so it was pretty much determined before we got there. They said that they wouldn't put me in a situation with somebody I didn't like or respect, so they let me have time with him. I had worked a lot with acousticians before, mainly doing outdoor music facilities, and it was something I was interested in. I asked the L.A. Philharmonic to take me to Berlin to meet with Hans Scharoun's acoustician who was still alive. And I asked Dr. Nagata to meet me in Berlin to have dinner with Dr. Kramer and I told him, "You know, since acoustics is not an exact science and this cranky 82 year old German knows everything there is to know about it, I think we owe it to ourselves to hear him out." So we went to Berlin, and Kramer took us to several concert halls and talked about what was crucial to him. He said that the wide hall had to be a certain shape, with the orchestra at the wide point, like the Berlin Philharmonie, and Nagata said the opposite. And they sat there bowing and scraping, respecting each other but they were saying very different things.

TFC: So how did you finally decide on who to work with?

FG: Well, we had already picked Nagata, so we didn't choose Kramer, who subsequently died. You know, I may have outsmarted myself in building all those concert hall prototypes. We'll know when the building is complete. I believe that in a concert hall, museum, or any institution, you should make a comfortable room where people are happy and become engaged. Scharoun certainly created that kind of mystical space in his architecture. I don't like the architecture of his interiors, and yet when you're there it's just an incredible people-place. It remains a mystery how he did it, I can't put a finger on it, but when you go to his library or philharmonic in Berlin, one feels that on the tips of Mr. Scharoun's fingers there was a profound humanism that he had the ability to communicate through architecture.

TFC: But Scharoun's scale and spatial sense are fantastic, although the buildings are so large.

FG: I was just there a few weeks ago and I still couldn't figure it out. Le Corbusier, Mies van der Rohe, Frank Lloyd Wright, nobody could do it quite like this. And yet his architecture is felt, it doesn't make rational sense, does it?

I then made models of the original scheme for the Disney Concert Hall that they liked; I made models of Nagata's and of Kramer's ideal hall and I made models of all the halls they liked, such as the Boston Conservatory, the Berlin Philharmonic, and so on. There were some consistencies among the schemes; I made models of them all at the same scale so that conductors and musicians could sit around the table and tell me how they felt about the spaces. It was a way of doing research and communicating with them as to what was important.

We made thirty different schemes, from the ridiculous to the sublime, testing seating arrangements, acoustics and so on. The L.A. Philharmonic wanted 2500 seats, although it was clear that concert halls with over 2200 had more acoustical problems. People responsible for the finances insisted that we

needed those extra 300 seats. I made models showing 2200 and 2500 seats where you could feel the difference in intimacy even in the model. We tried to take a 2200 seat hall and squeeze in extra seats and got up to 2380. Then, I went to the board and showed them these models. We now have a 1:10 model which is very compressed - you feel the compression - it might be a tad claustrophobic, but it'll feel like an old-fashioned hall in a sense, because modern halls have wider seats and are more plush than this one.

One thing I realized in Berlin is that half of the typical audience is below thirty, and that makes a big difference in the ambience. I'm worried that the Disney Concert Hall may be too compressed, too focused on the music for the American audience. Whether this intimacy will create an audience is difficult to know in advance; we'll see when it's done.

TFC: I have a question about the L.A. context. It seems most architects try to see the city as a downtown with everything branching off it, whereas L.A. developed as a strip.

Do you find a lot of architects in L.A. trying to do that or vice versa?

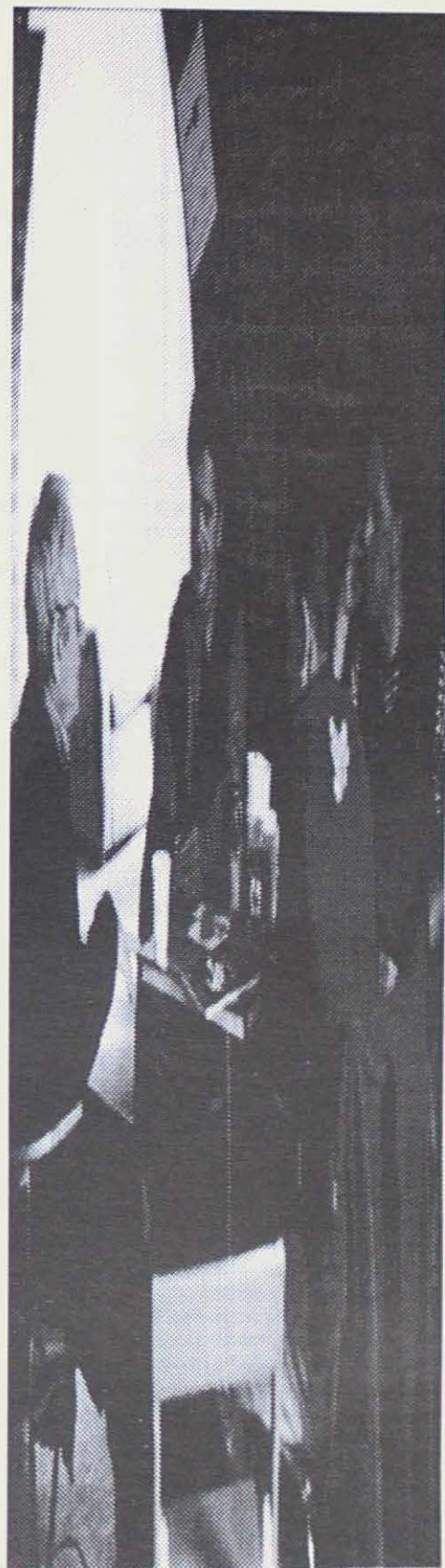
FG: Well, L.A. grew as a car city and the suburbs of every city in the world are growing as car cities so that's why

they look alike. But whereas L.A. was a premonition of the future, it has done a strange thing in the last twenty years. It's trying to find a downtown in the spirit of the European cities. It doesn't work. It looks weird and they don't use it properly. A lot of architects, like Robert Mangurian and others, are trying to recreate Rome in L.A. which I don't understand. It doesn't make sense.

TFC: Do you believe there's an L.A. school of architects?

FG: Well, I know I'm called the father of something, although I don't relate to the work of Thom Mayne, Eric Owen Moss, or Franklin Israel as architecture that looks like mine. I think they come from the world of Scarpa and detail. Perhaps I made a

**They tore down the Paris
that I was relating to and
they built back Danish
social housing.**



breakthrough in the relationship with the east-coast American press that has helped them. Because there is a context like this, their work is a lot freer, the expression looks easier and stranger.

I like Scarpa, but I don't think that kind of detail has much to do with the world we're living in now. Our world is faster. Personally, I think there are more important things to do in architecture than to fuss about detail.

TFC: But again, Scarpa embodied a different ethos. The pop-art movement celebrated the fastness that you refer to. That's why the question arises about site supervision during the building process, following the working drawing stage. Because there are so many forms, how do you get the contractors to know what to build? I always thought that you would have tight site control. Do they simply work from the working drawings or is there someone from the office on site day and night?

FG: We get control a lot through the drawings and through the supervising architects. I believe Marc Salette goes once a month to Paris to supervise the American Center.

TFC: How have recent technologies changed the ways in which you practice architecture? I was asking one of your design team about your use of the CATIA software, and he confessed that most of the working drawings are still done manually.

FG: I don't know how to turn the damn thing on (*laughter*)... I'm not like Eisenman, I don't like the computer drawings. Computer drawings appear in publications because the editor has acquired them through somebody in the office without my knowing it. *Architectural Design* published a thing on this house with computer drawings and I was furious. I never use the computer for presentations - I don't get into it except as a tool for construction. We use a computer to digitize the models and they're not perfect, you know. I work really hard to get things visually the way I want them and to make sure the shapes are exactly the way I want.

Lately, we've been making these wooden blocks, solid block mock-ups of the shape of the outside, in order to have a block to make plastic casts from or just to verify the shapes. Now we use the CATIA computer software to get it really perfect, it's like a shop drawing to test the shapes. At the same time, we also make interior models, big ones that you can get your head in, and we have a little camera that goes in. We have a TV set, and that little camera even has a machine that makes a little polaroid. You can push a button when you get a view you want to keep, and we record the working session with the models in those pictures. And we keep them in little packets which are dated. During the design process, you sometimes go off on a tangent that you discover you don't like, so we can go back to the model pictures and find out what went wrong, pull ourselves back to that point and go forward again.

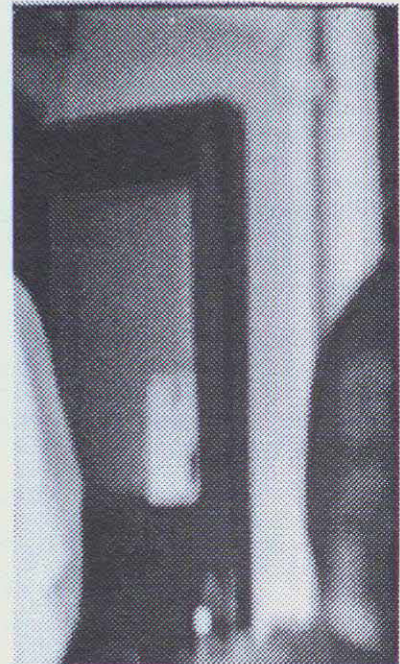
The only difficulty in modelling with the computer is that it takes too long. When you push a button to make a shape it takes 12 to 14 hours to cut the shape. The only good thing we're finding is that we can input the shapes in the evening and go to bed and get up in the morning and they are ready. We're learning how to finesse that process but it's just the beginning. For Disney Concert

Hall, we undertook the laborious task of making a new model from the computer data, which took a long time.

TFC: One advantage of being on the road is that you see things afresh when you're not from a place. Can you read Prague differently than an architect who is local because it is unfamiliar to you?

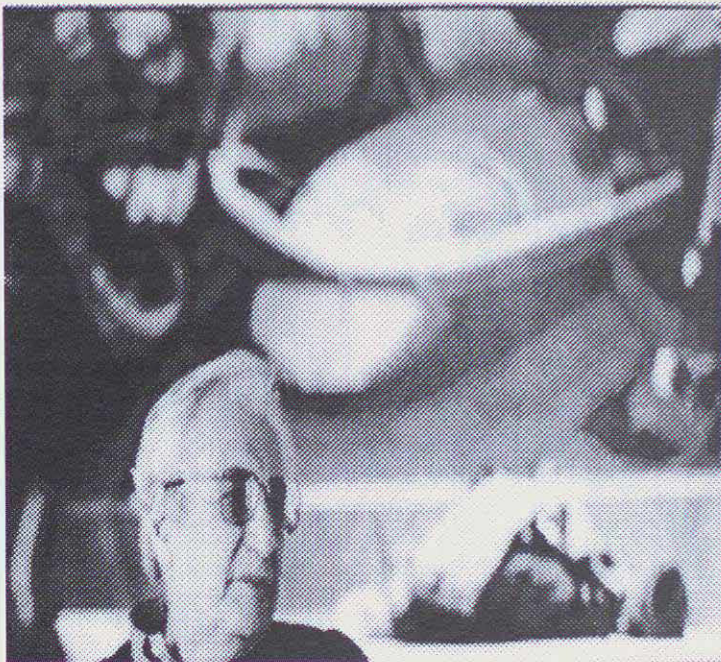
FG: Yes, but I don't know that I've read it; we'll see when it's finished. I think I have this feeling for the building in Paris, because I spent a lot of time there - I have a feeling that I did all right there. If you went to the second Vitra project in Basel, I think I integrated the building into that community the best I've ever done. I feel good about it. However, a year from now they're going to tear down half the buildings around it and it's going to change. And other architects aren't going to do the respectful thing, so it's going to change.

That's what happened in Paris. They tore down the Paris that I was relating to and they built back Danish social housing, and so my building looks like a relic of the past, and Jean-Louis Cohen will probably write an article saying "why didn't they tear this one down too?" Reading the context of a place is an ephemeral thing.



TFC: Well, that's what the site/design challenge presents.

FG: And it can become a crutch, you know. Bad architecture uses context as a crutch, as a way of creating the constraints that we say are good for us because they're givens. But they're not real, they're fantasies although they sound real.



TFC: If you respect the context literally, you end up with superficial context by trivializing it - a common design problem. From my point of view, contextual reading is seldom formal, it's more a question of capturing the essence.

FG: Yes, it's a subtle thing. You see it very much in Kahn buildings, where those guys mutilate Kahn because they love him so much. You can't grab Kahn, you see. I think Jonas Salk really wanted to do the right thing. I've talked with him and he loved Kahn. He thinks he and Kahn designed the Salk institute together.

TFC: What about the travelling architect and architecture? We make assumptions about people in different countries, different mixes of people, different age groups, different mentalities, etc. One has these expectations of a

with a diagram. I showed them a little model of what I was trying to do. Prague was a bunch of facades with a corner piece in the middle of the facade that creates an implied tower. From a distance you really see towers, but when you get up close to the buildings, they have a fairly flat facade with a bay window. It's really that image and the texture of Prague that was important - the windows, the scale and the plaster. The ever-present 19th century texture of the place was what I wanted to draw from.

The clients, Nationale-Nederlanden, asked me specifically not to copy the language of Czech Cubism. They didn't want another architect from America to come there and make these sort of pseudo Czech-Cubist buildings. So, in the making of the model, I had designed two towers, one glass and one solid with capes around them. I could go up so high, and then I had to pinch it in, because of the view of the next-door neighbour up to Prague Castle at that point. This in turn influenced the windows, although it didn't have to, but we felt that it was important for everybody to have a good view of the castle. It would have been impolite to take the view away. So that pinch on the first model made it look like a mannequin - a woman with a flared skirt.

I got a lot of flak from the Czechs, who told me how they were intellectually predisposed toward abstraction.

particular culture before we spend a certain time there, and sometimes we're really surprised by our preconceptions.

FG: Well, basically, I think one has to be very careful. Take for example, our experience in Prague. My normal process is to work with a model and explain to them the exact design

TFC: Did you call the project Fred & Ginger?

FG: No, I didn't. We worked with a local architect named Vlado Milunic, one of those great people you'd be friends with because he'd save your life. An incredible human being who is also very funny, he spent four years in prison with Vaclav Havel, where they became friends. President Havel very much wanted Vlado to do the building, but the committee didn't want his design proposal, so they married us together. We took pictures of these models that looked like the female figure, which I sent to the local architect, and he started calling it Ginger, so I said then the other must be Fred. Some of the press

picked up on it.

Because the thing looked literal, I got a lot of flak from the Czechs, who told me how they were intellectually predisposed towards abstraction. I got these lectures, it was great - somebody would take me aside and whisper in my ear, "you know, we don't like really literal metaphors," and I answered, "you know, I'm not doing it really," but I could never explain it. I got these wonderful critiques from the chief librarian of the university, who took me aside and said, "Mr. Gehry, you're making a big mistake, we do like abstraction you know," and from Havel who said, "I hope this becomes more abstract." He was polite. Every time I tried to explain, I would get deeper in the hole, until finally I said, "just wait and I'll show you, please give me a break." Anyway, in the end, they realized what I meant to do.

So those are the nuances of a local culture, but it's all over the place. Mrs. Havel likes Prince Charles and she hates what I'm doing. The head of the architecture school has come out publicly against what I'm doing, because he thinks it should look like American or European Modernism - Gordon Bunshaft or Walter Gropius style buildings. Even the architecture critic for the newspaper has come out against our design. The mayor finally put it to a public referendum, which is unheard of, because there was so much controversy. We received 65 percent of the vote so we got through.

The sickening part of it is that they built two or three really horrible buildings in Prague in similar locations and nobody said a word. The critic didn't say a word; Mrs. Havel didn't say anything; President Havel never said anything; the university architect never said anything and they've been built. They're sort of blank boxes, bigger than mine, totally out of context, terrible things trashing the 19th century city. No respect for Prague. But because they're dumb and ordinary, nobody says anything. That's human nature wherever you are, you know. You could be anywhere and human nature is the same.

TFC Thank you, Mr. Gehry.



Sketch of the Winton Guest House, 1985

GEHRY PROJECTS (cited chronologically according to construction completion):

For a full list of works (1962-93), please see **GA Architect 10: Frank O. Gehry, 1993.**

Prague Office Building (Nationale-Nederlanden), Prague, Czech Republic, under construction, 1994
Walt Disney Concert Hall, Los Angeles, Ca., 1992-96
Vitra International Headquarters, Basel, Switzerland, 1993
The American Center, Paris, France, 1993

University of Toledo Art Building, Toledo, Ohio, 1992
Schnabel Residence, Brentwood, Ca., 1989
Vitra Design Museum, Weil am Rhein, Germany, 1989
360 Newbury Street, Boston, Ma., 1988
Sirmai-Peterson House, Thousand Oaks, Ca., 1988
Herman Miller Inc., Rockland, Ca., 1987
Winton Guest House, Wayzata, Minnesota, 1987
Ron Davis House, Malibu, Ca., 1972

Backdoors and Stereotypes

Travel persists in memory as a collection of experiences or incidents strung together temporally by a chronology and spatially by a path. So essential to the planning and execution of a trip, these organising sequences form the common thread connecting the various beads of memory. The blunt edge of time acting on this thread causes it to fray, releasing beads from their ordered positions. We are then left holding the individual sensations that may begin to speak to us in entirely new ways. The following collection of four of these beads is a consideration of the different types of preconditioning that can shape perception at the moment of experience. It begins at the end of a voyage...

3 After the third day of fasting or illness, the body goes through a brief period of rejuvenation. This is how one of my travelling companions explained my state of apparent well-being under the noon sun among the ruins of ancient Priene. After the third day... how symbolic. In my case, it happened to be three days of testing my internal constitution — a common ritual upon arrival in Turkey.

4 Priene is situated on a south facing slope, in the transition between the horizontal plains and marshes stretching out before it and the vertical sheer mountain cliff standing behind. On top of this cliff stood the acropolis: a spiritual place and a fortified refuge. A plan of the site on a pamphlet depicted a wall encompassing the city and the rear of

the acropolis. A small broken line indicated a path zigzagging from the town site up the cliff...

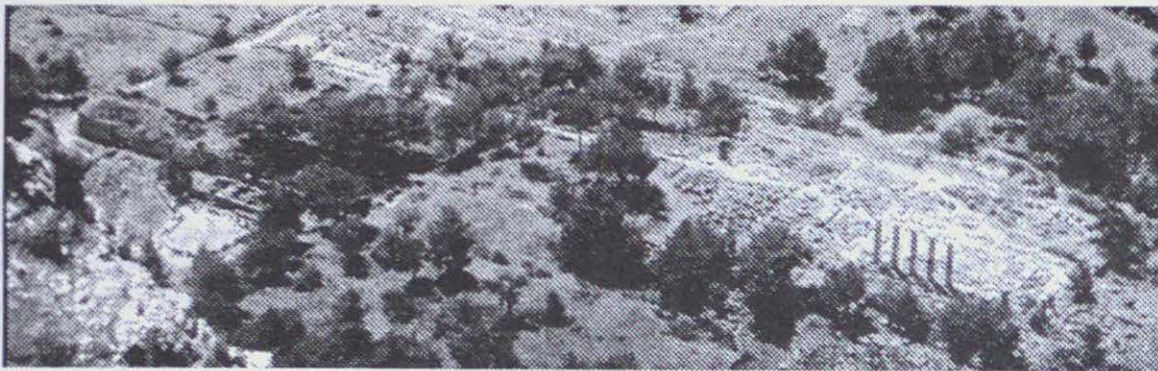
I was drawn to the cliff, this backdrop of Priene, which thrust heavenward behind the lonely re-erected columns of the Temple of Athena. With a ration of water and a few biscuits, I departed from the group in order to find a vantage point from which I could perceive the rigid order of the city. The city grid, for which Priene is renowned, was disguised by the undulating topography.

Conscious of my tenuous physical state, I proceeded up the steep rocky ground beyond the grassy steps of the amphitheatre, temporarily relieved by the generous shade of a coniferous grove. Scattered boulders and talis marked the abrupt stone face of the cliff. Although I had climbed a significant distance, the trees prevented any possible glimpse of the city I was leaving. I looked up at the ominous unshaded rock face, and with my hand reached up towards its baking surface...

Anyone who climbs, knows about setting progressive goals: mine was merely to get a view over the trees.



body



9 Alone on an exposed rock face in a foreign land, with a half-litre of water and no assurance that the nausea and dizziness of the preceding days wouldn't suddenly return, I proceeded. From one outcrop to the next, over loose rock and occasional vegetation, I gradually rose up above the trees, and the ruins slowly came into view. *From the next level point I would stop, photograph, and descend. From the next level...*

10 I suddenly found myself walking on a terrace of solid rock. Before me lay a path, distinctly recognizable by the pattern of stairs worn almost to obscurity by centuries of natural forces. This path appeared out of nowhere — even after a later search, I could not find its lower terminus. It beckoned me forward, against my better judgment. Zigzagging over a carefully designed ascent, the path was in places less than a foot and half wide between the cliff face and the stony ground far below.

11 My goals now extended from one hairpin corner to the next, where I would briefly yield to the tug of my conscience telling me that I had gone too far, and that I must return. The city was now coming into full view. From this aerial perspective,

the ordering grid was easily perceived - only the amphitheatre was still hidden.

My water was warm and nearly depleted, and the heat radiating from the rock equaled the intensity of the sun's direct rays. The time to meet back with the group was approaching. These thoughts were circulating in my mind, but my uneasiness was disappearing. I became aware that I had passed the crucial point of no turning back. I *would* climb to the top, and from the acropolis, I would gaze down on Hippodamus' grid, superimposed on the peninsula of rock, which projected into the sea of fields stretching out to the horizon of haze.

12



Buildings are appropriated in a twofold manner: by use and by perception - or, rather, by touch and sight. Such appropriation cannot be understood in terms of the attentive concentration of a tourist before a famous building. On the tactile side, there is no counterpart to contemplation on the optical side. Tactile appropriation is accomplished not so much by attention as by habit. As regards architecture, habit determines to a large extent even optical reception. The latter, too, occurs much less through rapt attention than by noticing the object in incidental fashion. Architecture has always represented the prototype of a work of art the reception of which is consummated by a collectivity in a state of distraction.

Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," *Illuminations*. Trans. Harry Zohn. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1978.

Prague is rapidly approaching the nature of most other European cities in the way that it separates the visitor from the true aspect of its being. On this third visit in three years, I noticed a transformation from its gray essence into a colourful new theme park. The scaffolding has left behind a veil of freshly plastered hope - a fragile shell for the city's ego, a mask for its soul. This shell has come to include the interiors of cafés, hotels, tourist bureaus, and many public spaces: façadism, as an expanding bubble of visual control, separates the visitor from the inhabitant. Much like the Velázquez painting, *Las Meninas*, the essence seems to lie outside the depiction...

15 The Obecni Dům café at Nam. Repubiisky stands in all its nostalgic opulence inside a cage of scaffolding before the soon-to-be-renovated Municipal House. It is entered from inside the Municipal House, directly left of the base of the stairs leading up to Smetana Hall, a large concert hall. Compared to the dinginess of the entrance, the café appears like the sparkling jewel on a tarnished ring. The richness of the renovated space and its faithful use of former mate-

rials quenches the eye. The vast height gives it a theatrical air. At first, one dares not enter - the attire of a worn traveller feels grossly inappropriate.

Two young servers dressed in formal black suits smiled and ushered me in. The air was fresh, an oasis to the dusty heat of the city. Water gushed from the wall opposite the entrance into a stone basin. Its sound wove through the conversations emanating from the tables, creating a tranquil murmur. The setting was perfect, but something did not seem right.

Looking around the room, I began to understand the strangeness of the situation. The mix of local aristocracy and shorts and t-shirt bearing tourists was odd. At the entrance to the kitchen stood young, pimple-faced, multilingual waiters and waitresses. They alternated between giggling amongst themselves and nervously surveying the hall lest they should break the illusion they were paid to maintain. An American was sitting with some casually dressed businessmen and artists at the other kitchen entrance. He occasionally walked in and out of the kitchen, serving himself and



psyche

speaking casually with the employees. His was the only voice that carried above the murmur, but he didn't seem to care - he owned the place.

18 The illusion of this place was that it shouldn't exist at all. I decided to leave. Instead of exiting through the main doors onto the street, I climbed the stairs to the concert hall foyer, where paintings by Alfons Mucha decorate the walls and ceilings of this aging arched space. A small metal-clad concession filled a corner niche. I bought a historical booklet from an old man sitting there in absolute silence. Unable to see through the dingy windows of the locked concert hall doors, I hurried up one of the two symmetrical staircases that spiral around an old wire-framed elevator.

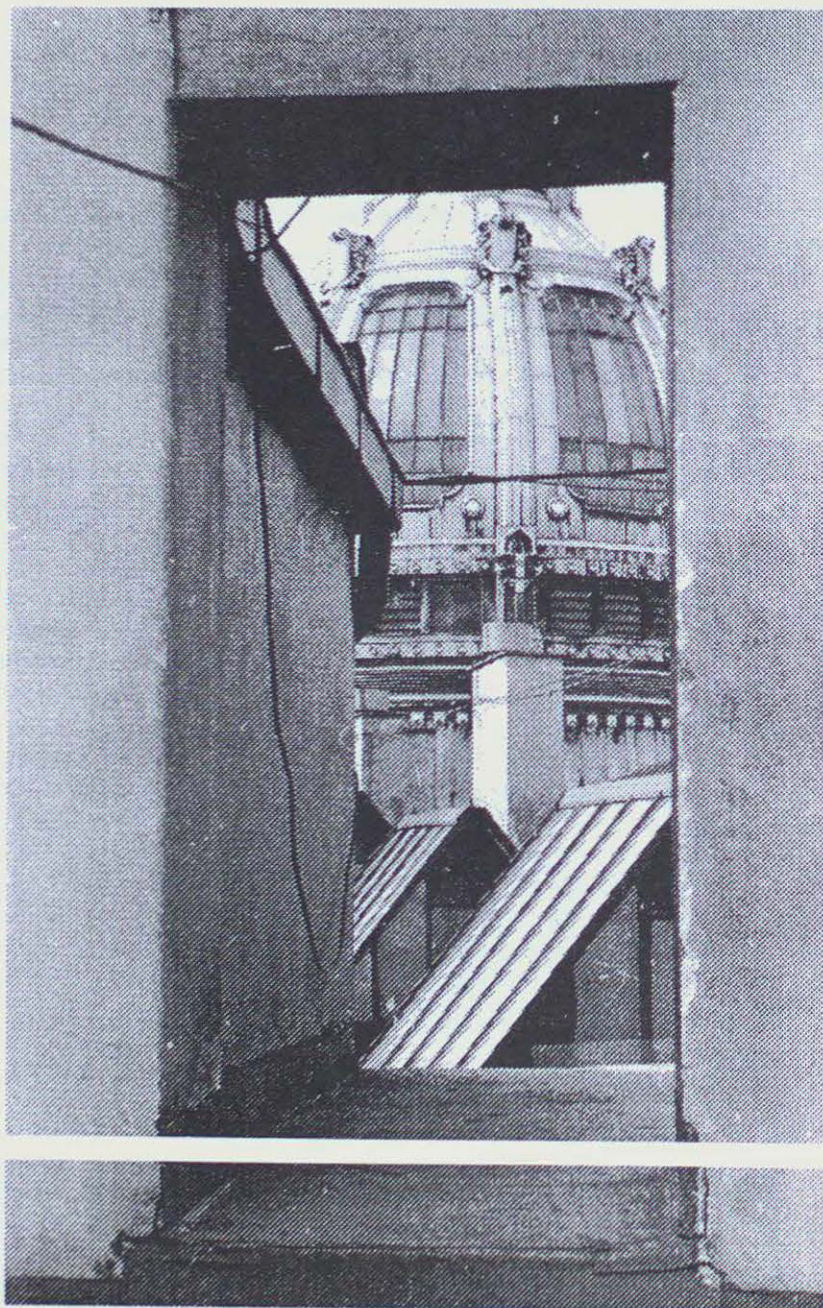
19 On this upper level, a hall of shiny new boutiques and galleries contrasted with the unfinished surroundings, and drew me from the dark foyer. I saw a door partially ajar, ventured through, and found myself walking along the perimeter of the concert space. I climbed up several flights of a smaller curved staircase. Through an open window in the stairwell, I noticed that I was about six stories above ground. Soon I arrived at the top. I judged myself to be behind the centre of the stage, in line with the building's central axis. Faced with yet another door, I opened it.

20 Light flooded the large attic before me, through a pitched glass ceiling on which a layer of grime prevented a view of the sky. A giant oval lightwell, centred over the concert

hall, covered most of the floorspace. Standing for a moment, I took in this privileged sight before proceeding around the lightwell to the space

beyond. I looked into the recesses of the attic, and suddenly froze. Across the room, I saw a long table flanked by two benches, and covered with bottles and food. A jumble of pin-ups hung from the sloping wall directly behind the table. I realized that I was not alone in this magical place. Yet there was nobody in the room, only the sounds of the city coming in from a rough

wooden door hanging open. Sensing that I was trespassing, I nervously escaped out onto the roof, knowing that in all likelihood someone would probably be sitting at the table when I returned. Outside, among the cupola, skylights, and unpainted Jugendstil relief, unseen from the street below, I felt that I had finally pierced the membrane of the city.



October 17, 1993
When I was teaching at Cooper Union in the first year or two of the fifties, someone told me how I could get onto the unfinished New Jersey Turnpike... It was a dark night and there were no lights or shoulder markers, lines, railings, or anything at all except the dark pavement moving through the landscape of the flats, rimmed by hills in the distance, but punctuated by stacks, towers, fumes, and coloured lights. This drive was a revealing experience. The road and much of the landscape was artificial, and yet it couldn't be called a work of art. On the other hand, it did something for me that art had never done. At first I didn't know what it was, but its effect was to liberate me from many views I had had about art... Later I discovered some abandoned airstrips in Europe - abandoned works, Surrealist landscapes, something that had nothing to do with any function, created worlds without tradition.

Tony Smith, Minimalist, in Samuel Wagstaff, Jr., "Talking to Tony Smith," *Artforum*, Vol. V, No. 4, Dec. 1966.

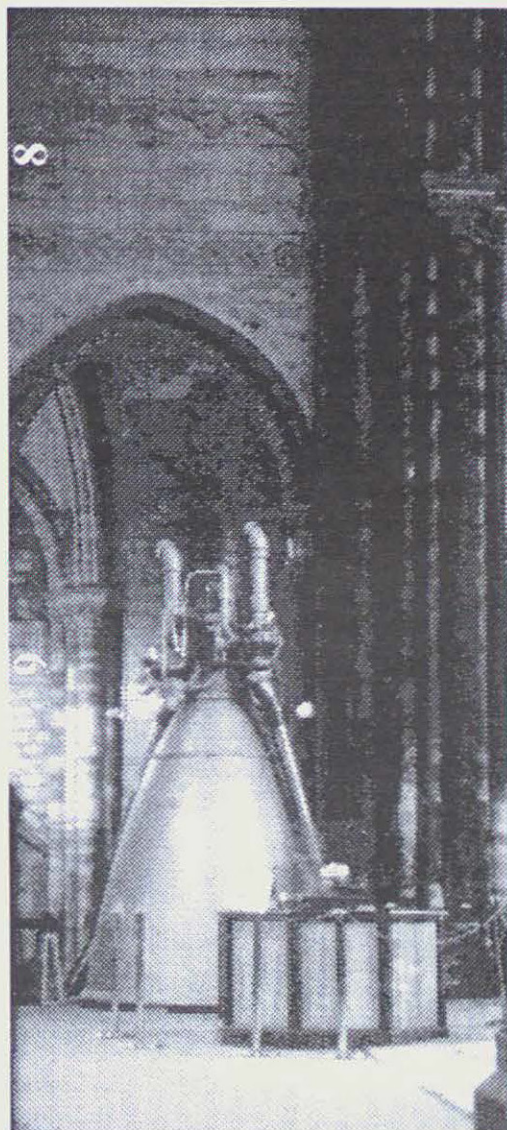
PARIS, FRANCE August 24, 1991
I found the Conservatoire des Arts et Métiers to be exactly as described by Umberto Eco in *Foucault's Pendulum*. In fact, the only reason I was even aware of the existence of this archive/museum was because of the vivid images portrayed in the book. Actually, this is not entirely true. I had heard of the name once before, in connection with the SI system in physics class. Apparently, before the standard metric unit was measured as a fraction of the distance light travels in a second, it was defined by two lines inscribed on a platinum bar stored under controlled conditions. I remember my fascination with the idea that something as arbitrary as the distance between these two scratched lines would be the standard for all lengths - the king's foot - by which the world would be measured. That platinum bar can be found at the Conservatoire, or perhaps it was the kilogram?

March 1991, p. 7
To enter the Conservatoire des Arts et Métiers in Paris, you first cross an eighteenth-century courtyard and step into an old abbey church, now part of a later complex, but originally part of a priory. You enter and are stunned by a conspiracy in which the sublime universe of

heavenly ogives and the chthonian world of gas guzzlers are juxtaposed.

On the floor stretches a line of vehicles: bicycles, horseless carriages, automobiles; from the ceiling hang planes. Some of the objects are intact, though peeling and corroded with time, and in the ambiguous mix of natural and electric light they seemed covered by a patina, an old violin's varnish. Others are only skeletons or chassis, rods and cranks that threaten indescribable tortures. You picture yourself chained to a rack, something digging into your flesh until you confess.

Beyond this sequence of antique machines - once mobile, now immobile, their souls rusted, mere specimens of the technological pride that is so keen to display them to the reverence of visitors - stands the choir, guarded on the left by a scale model of the Statue of Liberty Bartholdi designed for another world, and on the right by a statue of Pascal. Here the swaying Pendulum is flanked by the nightmare of deranged entomologists - chelae, mandibles, antennae, proglottides, and wings - a cemetery of mechanical corpses



text

that look as if they might all start working again at any moment - magnetos, monophase transformers, turbines, converters, steam engines...

10 *The Pendulum* told me that, as everything moved - earth, solar system, nebulae and black holes, all the children of the great cosmic expansion - one single point stood still: a pivot, bolt, or hook around which the universe could move. And I was now taking part in that supreme experience. I, too, moved with the all, but I could see the One, the Rock, the Guarantee, the luminous mist that is not a body, that has no shape, weight, quantity or quality...

Umberto Eco,
Foucault's Pendulum
New York: Ballantine
Books, 1989.

25 I felt strangely connected with this place. My experience was an extension of the fictional events that were situated there — it was as though I had stepped onto the stage of another reality. I was alone in my space, isolated by my memory of it. The occasional person shuffling through became appropriated into my experience, and thus, left the spell unbroken.



October, 1993

But what was Smith's experience on the turnpike? Or to put the same question another way, if the turnpike, airstrips, and drill ground are not works of art, what are they? - What, indeed, if not empty or "abandoned," situations?

...On the one hand, the turnpike, airstrips, and drill ground belong to no one; on the other, the situation established by Smith's presence is in each case felt by him to be his. Moreover, in each case being able to go on and on indefinitely is of the essence.

Michael Fried, "Art and Objecthood," *Minimal Art: A Critical Anthology*. Ed. Gregory Battcock. New York: E. P. Dutton, 1968.

DRESDEN, GERMANY June 1991

My head bobbed drowsily on the early morning train taking me northward along the Czech Vlatava and Labe rivers, which are the Elbe in Germany. I tried to imagine what I would see during my first visit to the eastern Bundesländer of the reunified republic of Germany. En route to Leipzig, where I would meet for the first time relatives separated by the Iron Curtain, I planned to make a stop in Dresden.

20

My knowledge of the city was limited to banal geographic facts and to the historical event for which it is most famous: its annihilation on the night of February 13, 1945 - an effort to precipitate the end of the war. 135,000 dead. The *Florence of the Elbe* reduced to ashes. Kurt Vonnegut described the experience through his alter ego, Billy Pilgrim:

33

He was down in the meat locker on the night that Dresden was destroyed. There were sounds like giant footsteps above. Those were sticks of high-explosive bombs. The giants walked and walked... There was a fire storm out there. One big flame. The one flame ate everything organic, everything that would burn.

May, 1991 p. 133

It wasn't safe to come out of the shelter until noon the next day. When the Americans and their guards did come out, the sky was black with smoke. The sun was an angry little pinhead. Dresden was like the moon now, nothing but minerals. The stones were hot. Everybody else in the neighbourhood was dead. So it goes.

Kurt Vonnegut, *Slaughter House - 5* London: Grafton Books, 1970.

My greatest impression of Dresden was its stillness. Leaving the train station at Dresden Neustadt, I proceeded along a pedestrian street bearing a typical communist name, *Street of Liberation*, which led into the old city via the Augustusbrücke. The sun was shining and there was a light breeze. Lined with Modernist apartment blocks, bursting flower beds and trees, this street had an eerie hush - the way screams are hushed in dreams, or like the deafening clamour of church bells engulfing all other sounds. It was an experience similar to watching a silent movie. Any sounds that one might hear, such as those coming from the audience, would be removed by a degree from the film proper.

34



21



history



23 The city had been rebuilt, but not resurrected, and the signs of its death were everywhere. Charred stones mixed with new ones, forming Lego-block facades on historic buildings. Less-fortunate structures, like the Frauenkirche, still lay in piles of stone untouched for nearly half a century. A blackened stone sculpture of a person crouched in fear with his head in his knees stood outside the Albertinum at Trennplatz. Inside, an exhibit of Käthe Kollwitz's haunting charcoal drawings and sculpture - spanning two world wars - showed a woman's lucid perspective of the atrocities of man's wars.

Enough of the old city existed for me to get a sense of its past splendour: Gottfried Semper's famous opera house, finally restored in 1985; the late-Baroque Zwinger complex; and portions of the Residenz Schloss, including the Fürstenzug - a 102 metre long mural of the 93 palace princes, depicted on 25,000 Meissen porcelain tiles. The collection of Old Masters at the Albertinum, founded by Augustus the Strong in 1706, and the jewellery collection in the neighbouring Grünen Gewölbe were stunning. As I walked from cabinet to cabinet, I wondered who all the people were who replaced the citizens of Dresden, and now call this city their home. Is a city defined by its inhabitants, or vice versa? Monuments become empty without the memories that inhabit the peoples of its tradition.

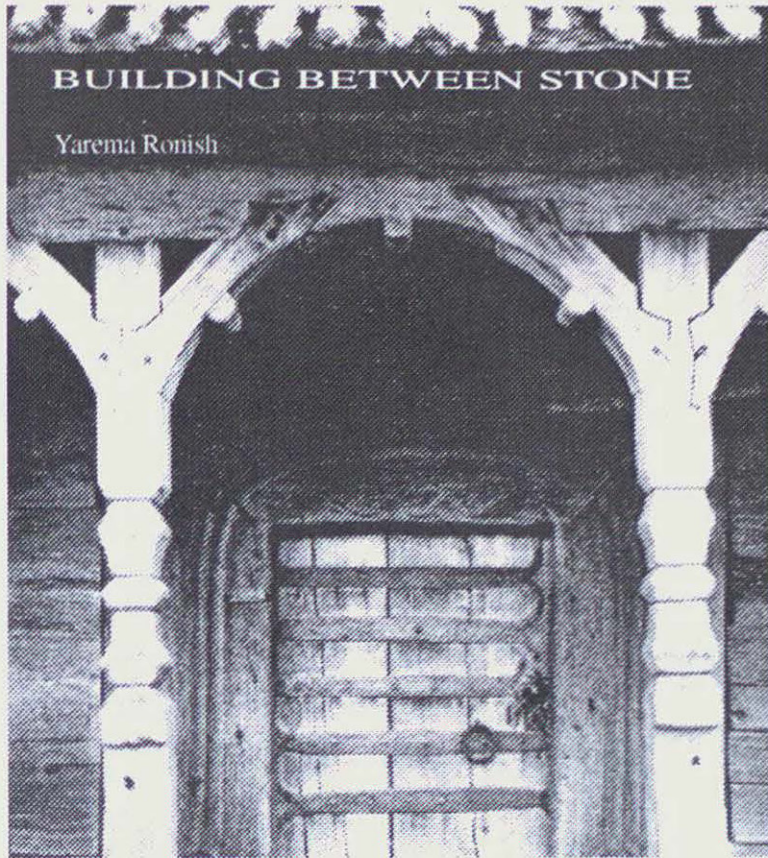
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* * *

Architecture is recognized and appreciated for different reasons by visitors and by inhabitants. For the visitor, the relationship tends to function on an iconic level, the emphasis being on visual qualities. One might assume then that the visitor's aesthetic perception would be more objective than that of an inhabitant, whose intimate tactile knowledge of the architecture obscures the appearance of it. However, the 'objective' view of visitors is similarly distorted by their individual perspectives. These individual perspectives or *filters* are uniquely constructed by a multitude of factors, including but not limited to body, psyche, text, and history. Each of the four preceding accounts would have occupied a fundamentally different existence in memory had they been experienced through any other filter. Thus perception and memory are intertwined in all experience.

Richard Klopp is student at McGill School of Architecture. He claims to do his best work while travelling, "because things just seem to make more sense on the road, when your awareness is heightened, and you take little for granted - where time and space are precious commodities."



BUILDING BETWEEN STONE

Yarema Romish

Gallery and entrance of the Church of Saint Paraskewa. Photo: Florian Zapletal

Vernacular architecture is commonly seen as a static phenomenon, originating in closed societies resistant to change. It is assumed that because vernacular architects rarely travel outside their region, they lack an awareness of concepts and forms produced in the cultural mainstream. However, as is illustrated by two remarkable buildings in the Carpathian mountains of Ukraine, the work of a folk architect practising in a rural area may demonstrate an understanding of architectural forms and principles which originated in distant cities. Although the relationship of a city to dependent rural areas is seen as one of domination, cities always exist in relation to rural areas on which they depend for food, raw materials, manpower and other, more subtle resources.¹ In Ukraine the architecture of the city, after the Counter-Reformation, belonged to the dominant culture of landholders, and was built of stone by local and foreign masons. In rural areas, a vernacular tradition of wood construction was perpetuated by carpenters' guilds, and, although architecture was commissioned by the wealthy, its iconography reflected the preoccupations of the folk culture. Although it may seem that these two streams of architecture evolved simultaneously and independently of each other, this was in fact not the case.

¹Spiro Kostof, *The City Shaped* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1991), 38-39

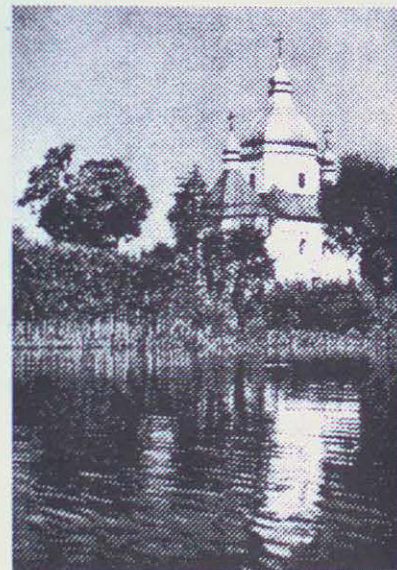


Church of Saint Paraskewa. Photo: Florian Zapletal

As contact between cities and rural areas increased in Ukraine in the 16th and 17th centuries, partly due to the growth of market towns, folk arts and high culture overlapped in music, painting, and architecture.² As Ukraine and indeed the rest of Eastern Europe emerged from a series of national wars in the 17th century, a surge of building activity followed, during which the stone architecture of cities and rural wood architecture developed similar massing, proportions, and details.³ A century later in the Carpathians, exchanges between the folk and the elite culture were still in evidence. In Central Ukraine, urban architecture drew on vernacular precedents for new resolutions of massing,⁴ while in the Carpathians, vernacular architects evolved church typologies based on the massing of German stone churches⁵ and the arcades typical of urban European dwellings.⁶ In addition, icon painters trained in market towns filled commissions both in the Carpathian region and in the urban centres surrounding it.⁷ Meanwhile, rural woodcarvers were hired in the cities to carve wooden screens and rocaille for churches built of stone.⁸ As Thomas

Hubka noted in an influential article on the design methodologies of vernacular builders, "folk and elite architecture overlaps on many levels and influences occur both ways, but certainly not only one way."⁹

Both the Struk Church in Jasynja and the church of St. Paraskewa in Nyznje Selysce, built of wood in the Carpathians between the 18th and the 19th century, derive from urban stone prototypes. In their plans and details these buildings can be seen as refinements of architectural prototypes of both Western and Eastern European origin, given form within a repertory of local building techniques. As such, they document the dissemination of architectural ideas in proto-Enlightenment Europe, and the mediation of these ideas by the building traditions of the Carpathians. Today, as travel and communication technologies erode the critical distance between the observer and the work of architecture,¹⁰ the vernacular buildings of the Carpathians provide superb examples of openness to external ideas combined with critical distance in the production of architecture.



Church of Saint Michael in Polonky, Central Ukraine, 1777. Photo: H.N. Lohvin.

²O. K. Fedoruk et al., *Ukrainske Barokko v Evropejskim Konteksti* (Kiev: Naukova Dumka Editions, 1991), 7.

³*Ibid.*, 10-11.

⁴H. N. Lohvin, *Po Ukraini* (Kiev: Mystetstvo Editions, 1968), 43.

⁵Paul Magosci and Florian Zapletal, *Wooden Churches in the Carpathians* (Vienna: Wilhelm Braumüller, 1982), 30.

⁶P. H. Yurchenko, *Dereviana Architektura Ukrainy* (Kiev: Budivelnik Editions, 1970), 109.

⁷V. I. Svienszka and V. P. Otkovich, *Ukrainian Folk Painting of the 13th-20th Centuries* (Kiev: Mystetstvo Editions, 1991), 17-21.

⁸Fedoruk et al., *Ukrainske Barokko*, 104-105.

⁹Thomas Hubka, "Just Folks Designing: Vernacular Architecture and the Generation of Form,"

Journal of Architectural Education Vol. 32, No. 3 (February 1979): 27-29.

¹⁰Paul Virilio, *The Lost Dimension* (New York: Semiotext(e), 1991), 13.

In the years between the first and the second World Wars, Florian Zapletal, a Czech journalist and ethnographer took nearly 500 photographs of wooden churches in the Carpathian mountains of Ukraine, which form the geographic and cultural boundary between Eastern and Central Europe. Zapletal, who was stationed in the region as a soldier during the first World War, was fascinated by the wooden churches built using log construction between the 16th and the 18th century. Returning to the region in an administrative post, Zapletal amassed glass plate photographs of over 150 churches, which today represent the most complete documentation existing on these buildings, many of which have since been destroyed or modified. Zapletal commented that “these churches would be the pride and the joy of any people, but present day Rusyns value them little, if at all, replacing them whenever possible by banal stone structures.”¹¹ Ironically, the wooden churches of the Carpathians are characterised by the use of architectural paradigms originating in stone construction. Superficially, the Struk Church resembles centrally planned Byzantine churches of Eastern Christianity. The church of St. Paraskewa, with its tall spire, looks vaguely Gothic and recalls in plan the nave churches favoured by Roman Catholicism west of the Carpathians. The presence of these two types of churches within 80 kilometres of each other confirms the position of the Carpathians as intermediary between Eastern and Western European culture. The variety within these churches shows the regions’ permeability to both surrounding cultures.

The plan of the Struk Church is a centralised Greek cross, in which a central square covered by a domed ceiling is surrounded by four square arms of smaller size. The diagonal of the smaller squares is

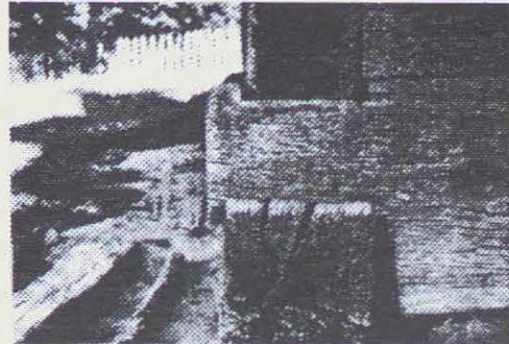


Log construction corner joint in Kosiw, Carpathian Region. Photo: P.H. Yurchenko

equal to the side of the larger square, a proportion used in both wood and stone churches in Ukraine which corresponds to a method of laying out the plan on the ground.¹² The sequence of spaces answers the needs of the Orthodox liturgy for a vestibule, nave, and chancel, oriented from east to west. The plan of the Struk church can thus be seen as a refinement of the type of centralised Byzantine plan used in both wood and stone churches in Ukraine since the 10th century.

By contrast, the plan of the church of St. Paraskewa, consisting of a rectangular nave with a small chancel on the eastern side, is clearly related to the church architecture of Western Christianity. Zapletal noted that

“there is much evidence (especially in ground plans adapted to the Eastern Rite) that this Gothic type of Rusyn church arose *insitu* and was developed by degrees, although obviously under the influence of Gothic stone architecture, which was indeed brought by German immigrants.”¹³



Log construction corner joint in Novoselysja, Carpathian region. Photo: P.H. Yurchenko

The adoption of forms derived from stone construction, for instance in arches and arcades, did not imply an imitation of the detailing of stone. The material joints in Carpathian wood churches make no reference to stone construction techniques. Instead, the use of log construction and shingle roofing gives prominence to the massing as well as to such details as the joining of corners and the treatment of the roof surface.¹⁴

¹¹Magosci and Zapletal, *Wooden Churches*, 25.

¹²Yurchenko, *Derevyana Architectura*, 125.

¹³Magosci and Zapletal, *Wooden Churches*, 30.

¹⁴Yurchenko, *Derevyana Architectura*, 5.

In the arcade of the church of St. Paraskewa the arch form is developed from the braces which consolidate the posts and the beam, curving up from the posts to meet a similar curve carved into the beam. The lap joints, although well executed and not concealed, are de-emphasized by three round protrusions which unify the arch form. The origin of this detail is unknown, but it exists in a large part of the Carpathians, as well as in regions of Poland and Slovakia.¹⁵

By contrast, the cantilevered galleries of the Struk church appear to originate directly from the techniques of log construction, although other details inside the church point to translations from stone. The cantilevered brackets supporting the gallery roof have a zigzag profile, a form which both throws off water and acts as a scaling element, relating the height of the gallery to the height of the church. Inside, semicircular arches cut out of the log walls connect the interior spaces, similar to the way arches are used in the interiors of Byzantine stone churches.



Church of the Resurrection (Struk Church) in Jasynja, Carpathian Region, 1824. Photo: Florian Zapletal

The presence in these buildings of architectural paradigms derived from stone construction presents a curious condition of ambiguity. It implies that for these architects, form is independent of material and develops from cultural ideas potentially shared by the high culture. Details become the means by which these ideas are translated in established construction materials and methods.¹⁶

The profound continuity between urban and rural architecture in 17th and 18th century Ukraine invites speculation on the means by which architectural ideas were disseminated. Unlike elite 18th cen-

tury architecture, preoccupied with the development of sophisticated means of representation, folk architecture "is a non-literary method of design which stores its complex traditions not in treatises and drawings, but in the minds of its builders."¹⁷

As discussed previously, certain forms and ideas were adapted by folk architects from the buildings of foreign immigrants.¹⁸ Rural master-craftsmen were hired in cities, gaining experience of urban architecture. Itinerant painters working in urban centres and rural areas depicted churches of wood and stone together with Renaissance palaces adapted from West European engravings.

Taken separately, neither of these arguments is sufficient to explain the remarkable transmigration of forms between the wood architecture of the Carpathians and the stone architecture of Ukrainian cities. However, because in vernacular architecture change occurs as a result of small but significant modifications,¹⁹ the convergence between the architecture of cities and rural areas from the 16th to the 18th centuries may well have been the result of such small scale exchanges.

The refinement of architectural ideas through such incremental change is in direct contrast to the role of change and travel within the elite culture. In 18th century England, for instance, the Grand Tours of architects such as Burlington and Wren brought about abrupt changes in architectural design and methods of building. Wren's voyages to Italy provided him with both the prototype for the dome of St. Paul's, and the knowledge needed for its structural resolution. Whereas Wren imported both the form and its method of construction, the Carpathian vernacular architects used the image of an imported form within a vocabulary of local building methods.

In adapting plans from Eastern and Western sources, and in using architectural elements such as arcades and arches derived from the vocabulary of urban stone construction, the Carpathian folk architects were not merely imitating stone buildings. Rather, the use of the plan and construction details as elements of an architectural

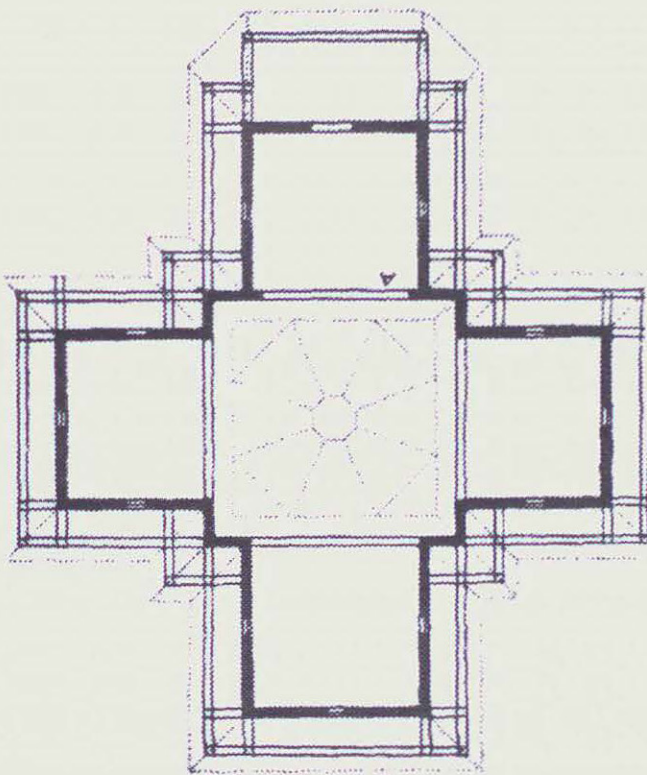
¹⁵Yurchenko, *Derevyana Architektura*, 164.

¹⁶Marco Frascari, "The Tell-the-Tale Detail," *Via* 7 (1984): 23-37.

¹⁷Hubka, "Just Folks Designing," 28.

¹⁸Lohvin, *Po Ukraini*, 354.

¹⁹Hubka, "Just Folks Designing," 28.



Plan of Struk Church. Source: V. Sicynski, *Drevene stavby v Karpatske oblasti* (Prague, 1940). Reprinted in *Wooden Architecture of the Carpathians*.

language allowed the architects of these two churches to interpret architectural paradigms from outside of their region within congruent buildings. Unlike the cultural displacement of the travelling voyeur, the migration of architectural ideas and their translation into buildings through the plan and building details results in poetic adaptation and incremental change, both primary characteristics of vernacular architecture worldwide.

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Yarema Ronish is a student at the McGill School of Architecture, and is of Ukrainian origin.

MYTHO - TECHNO

The following two anecdotes are true stories, which occurred over the course of a train journey through India, during the summer of 1992. They both point out ironies experienced in the culture of the Other, the recognition of which is an essential aspect of travel.

Technology Transfer: the Computer Check-in

The approach to Bombay from the aeroport reveals a section through the most impoverished conditions imaginable - driving past the shanty towns of plastic and straw, the monochrome soot-coloured forms of shelter and inhabitants are reminiscent of 19th century chimney-sweeps. Pedestrians pushing carts laden with goods vie with bicycle delivery boys and every type of motor vehicle possible; old cars and taxis, buses and scooters (with or without sidecars) jockey for position amidst a throng of beeping horns and revving engines. From this vantage, following the serpentine flow and avoiding the chaos of oxen and vehicles, my most vivid memory is still the pungent stench of human excrement and fermenting garbage under the noonday heat.

And yet, this entire late 20th century caravan moves forward, past the road builders flinging pick-axes in the thirty-five degree humidity, past the women supporting pails of spilling water atop their heads, past the sleeping beggars, whose families search the ground for food with their coal-black piercing eyes. On several occasions we make eye contact, and someone who will never be able to travel to Delhi, let alone Montréal, displays a chalk-white smile or waves a hand in recognition. In recognition of what, I ask myself?

I commence a universal game by mimicking the gestures of a child, who is sporting sunglasses, riding in the car ahead of our taxi. He is one of half a dozen who are crammed into the rear seat of a hatchback, precariously moving forward, as we communicate through this little game we've invented. Copying each of my movements, he is finally outwitted as I unclip the sun shades from my glasses, a gesture which he cannot duplicate with his plastic Raybans. The six children roar with laughter at our little game, retaining this most remarkable gift of wonder.

We are finally let out at the Garden Hotel in Colaba, a well-to-do epicentre of Bombay. Arriving in a palatial courtyard and tired from our long journey, our real travels in India are only about to begin. We follow the doorman as he carries our bags into the lobby, and are welcomed by a long counter, behind which stand several Indian gentlemen. I remark that there is a large IBM compatible sitting on the hotel check-in desk.

"Would we care for a room?" the first hotel employee inquires, as he straightens his tie and informs us that a room for three persons is 1040 rupees, roughly \$32.00 per night.

"Yes," I reply.

The head clerk, who is standing in front of the computer, turns to the second employee and requests a room for three. This gentleman picks up a pen and asks the third employee to record our entry. The third clerk opens a huge ledger and proceeds to record our passport numbers and places of residence. This gentleman then shouts room 312, and a fourth employee, who is dressed in labourer's clothes, reaches behind him towards a large key-board matrix and detaches our room key from the hook. He then hands this key to the fifth man, who moves hurriedly around in front of the counter while clapping his hands, calling aloud to the sixth man who arrives to continue carrying our bags up to our room. We are already familiar with this sixth man, since he was the first man who greeted us upon arrival in the courtyard.

Finally, we all pile into a tiny elevator - the three of us, the sixth man struggling with four large rucksacks, and the seventh man whose job is to operate the elevator up to the third floor. I imagine that, eventually, our reservation was put into the computer that sat silently upon the counter as we checked-in to the hotel. Compared to our streamlined check-in system, where a sole clerk coordinates the entire hotel with one handy laptop, the Indian social structure still demands that everyone play a role in the event.

It is 3:00 p.m. as I stretch out on the double bed, fan purring overhead and refrigerator motor droning in the corner of the room. After tea and soft drinks are delivered via room service, I wash my face with tea and decide to rest until sundown, waking to the appearance of a purple-rose sky, amidst rooftops speckled with heads peering out over the street.

This first encounter epitomized Indian culture's use of Western technology. We had been in India exactly two hours.

TRAVELS IN INDIA

Mythology Transfer: the Flying Baby

While Pepsi, Walkmans, Western cinema and television dominate the reveries of most Indians more than they do my own, the local dweller, accustomed to squatting close to the land in his rural setting, looks conspicuously out of place squatting on the molten asphalt of Bombay, Delhi, or Calcutta - a product of mixed signals.

Being immersed in Indian culture, a culture rich in mythology and storytelling, would account for the strangest conversation having taken place twice in the past five days in two separate towns. Upon informing local merchants that we are from Canada, they recount a recent story published in an Indian journal which shows a photograph of a Canadian baby born with wings. Evidently, Canadian doctors are fascinated by the little Icarus, but his mother is afraid that he will fly away. The second person, who recounted this marvellous incident while I was sitting in his carpet shop in Rajasthan, elaborated that the baby could go and get his mother fresh fruit from anywhere in the world, although he had to be wary of big birds in Canada that could potentially hurt him. When I suggested to both *raconteurs* that this story was possibly a fiction, they emphatically replied:

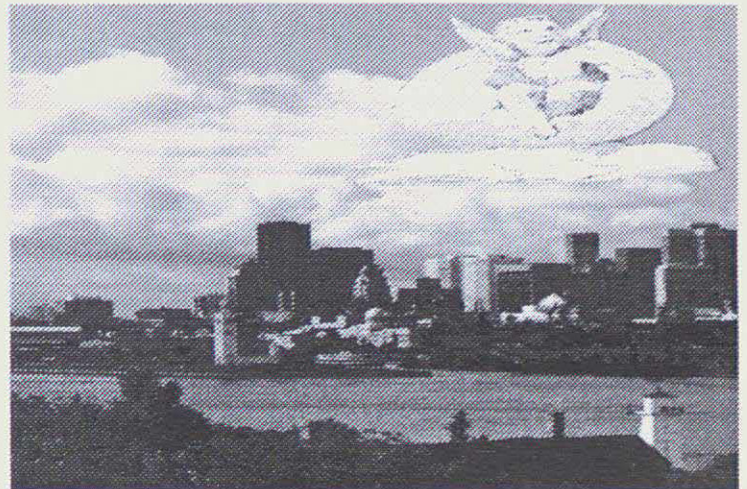
"Hearing story is one thing, but on seeing photograph, we have to believe."

"Have you seen him?" one excited assistant to the carpet-bagger wondered out loud.

I played innocent and apologized for having left Canada to go abroad before the flying baby was born. Nor had I seen the photograph of my angel compatriot while travelling in the Indian subcontinent.

"You don't happen to have the newspaper article lying around anywhere, do you?" I inquired casually.

"Yes, yes, of course - it is somewhere in the shop," we were assured. Several assistants proceeded to search high and low for the photograph as we sat sipping spiced Kashmir tea and looking at carpet designs. We soon departed with new carpet in tow, having been once more seduced by consumerism, but without a single pixel of proof of the flying baby phenomenon.



*Sighting of the Flying Baby from Canada
Times of India, Monday, July 11, 1992*

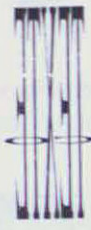
Throughout the rest of our journey, I was convinced that they had seen the story in an Indian version of the *National Enquirer*, but still could not discount the fact that we were among a people actively steeped in mythology, which I hold in deepest respect. After all, in the west, we invented Icarus and the Minotaur. The Hindus represent equivalent images in the characters of Hanuman (the flying monkey-god) and Ganesha (the elephant-headed, 'monstrous' progeny of Siva and Parvati). Considering that the Hindu pantheon houses more than 33,000 gods, what is one more baby bird added to the lexicon of Canadian deities?

Several months after returning to Canada, an Indian friend found a copy of the seminal photograph, and was kind enough to forward the image, which is reproduced above. I have been watching the Canadian skies for flying babies ever since.

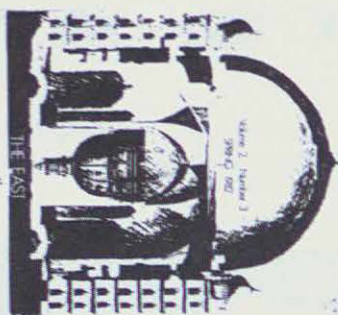
Terrance Galvin is an Adjunct Professor at the McGill School of Architecture. He is currently pursuing doctoral studies at the University of Pennsylvania.



THE FIFTH COLUMN

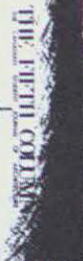


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FOR A CANADIAN ARCHITECTURE
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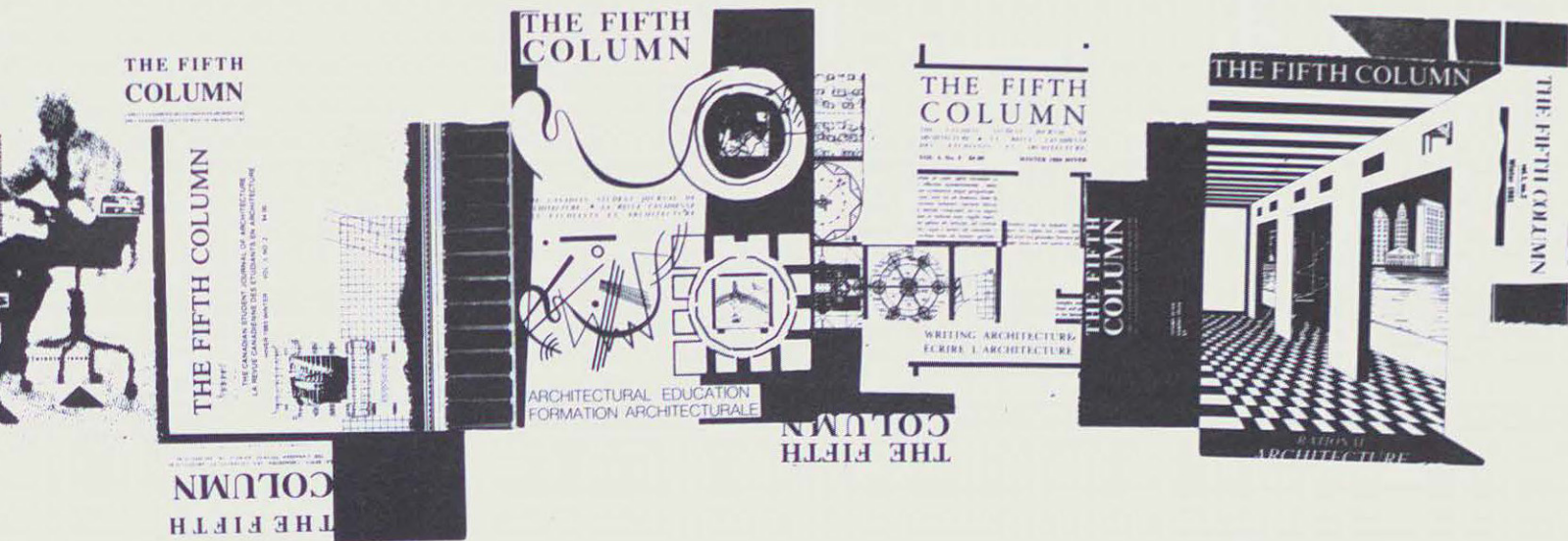
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THE FIFTH COLUMN

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THE FIFTH COLUMN, as a national journal, is calling for increased participation from students, professionals and the general public. Material is welcome and needed to raise the level of debate and broaden the appeal of the magazine. For further information, contact your Regional editor of THE FIFTH COLUMN. THE FIFTH COLUMN, en tant que revue nationale, cherche à accroître le nombre de ses contributeurs. Par la présente, nous lançons une invitation tant aux étudiants qu'aux professionnels à participer au contenu de la revue. Pour plus de renseignements, communiquer avec votre rédacteur régional de THE FIFTH COLUMN.

The Secret life of Buildings

volume nine, number one:

The Construction of Memory

We experience the most unforgettable movements when certain aspects of the world, whose existence we completely ignore, suddenly confront us with the revelation of mysteries lying all the time within our reach and which we cannot see because we are too short sighted, and cannot feel because our senses are inadequately developed. Their dead voices speak to us from nearby, but they sound like voices from another planet.

- Giorgio De Chirico, 1928

Behind a curtain, there is a play unfolding in which buildings act on the stage of feeling and memory. To experience architecture profoundly we enter this secret life of buildings. To be human we need more than containers and supports for our bodies. Buildings are vessels filling with time, holding it and making it visible to man. The making of architecture is part of the search to figure and communicate meaning in life, to mirror an ideal of (im)permanence and (im)mortality.

Deadline for submissions is October 1, 1994

I Read *The Fountainhead*...

volume nine, number two:

The Image of The Architect

I don't intend to build in order to have clients. I intend to have clients in order to build.

- Howard Roarke in *The Fountainhead*

Fifty years ago Ayn Rand introduced Howard Roarke in her bestselling novel *The Fountainhead* and since then architects have been trying to live up to - or live down - the mystique of the profession which Roarke personified. Throughout history the aura surrounding "the architect" implied genius, creativity and integrity. Since *The Fountainhead*, other images ranging from the 1949 movie adaptation of the novel to recent popular movies and television sit-coms, have added to the collective consciousness. What are the effects of these media representations upon the public's views of architects and upon architects' own self-images? How accurate are media depictions of architects? In a world where image overpowers substance, how do architects counter or reinforce stereotypes to present themselves to the public?

Deadlines for submissions is January 1, 1995

Please submit articles on Mac disk to:

La Vie Secrète des Bâtiments

volume neuf, numéro un:

La Construction de la Mémoire

Parfois un mur, en cachant derrière lui un train qui brièvement s'éloigne, définit ce qu'est l'horizon. La nostalgie de l'infini nous apparaît alors derrière la précision géométrique du carré. Nous sommes à jamais émus quand certains aspects du monde, jusque là ignorés, tout-à-coup nous révèlent des mystères depuis toujours sous nos yeux, mais semblant parvenir d'une autre planète.

- Giorgio De Chirico, 1928

Sur la scène de notre mémoire, derrière le rideau, les bâtiments jouent leurs rôles secrets. Ils ne sont pas que ces contenants, passifs et familiers, de nos corps et de nos gestes. Ils retiennent en eux le flux du temps, lui donnent forme, le rendent palpable. Construire nous aide à comprendre ce lieu où nous sommes et les itinéraires qui le traversent. Nous vous invitons à nous faire parvenir des textes qui se lieraient, directement ou indirectement, à ce thème.

Prière d'envoyer vos projets d'articles avant le 1 Octobre 1994

Lire *The Fountainhead*...

volume neuf, numéro deux:

Les Architectes et Leur Image

Il y a aujourd'hui cinquante ans, Ayn Rand créait dans son roman *The Fountainhead* le personnage de Howard Roarke qui a, depuis, incarné l'idéal qu'ont tenté d'émuler de nombreux architectes. Bien avant Ayn Rand et son surhomme-architecte, la profession était déjà associée à l'idéal humaniste du créateur génial, intègre, élitiste. Plus récemment, les médias ont offert au public d'autres images de ce que sont et font les architectes. Ces images correspondent-elles bien à la réalité de la profession architecturale? Comment les architectes se perçoivent-ils eux-mêmes? Peuvent-ils changer la perception de leur profession de façon à mieux correspondre à leur réalité - ou leur idéal?

Prière d'envoyer vos projets d'articles sur disquette Macintosh avant le 1 Janvier 1995 à:

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McGill School of Architecture MacDonald-Harrington Building
815 Sherbrooke Street West Montreal, Quebec H3A 2K6 Canada
or by E-Mail at 5column@chassegros.architecture.mcgill.ca

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