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Editorial

David Theodore

The Fifth Column is the *Canadian Student Journal of Architecture*. This student status has its advantages and disadvantages, its implications and its inscrutable mysteries. For example, the Journal, abbreviated in print as *TFC*, is now in its fifteenth year of production, but only its ninth volume. Students busy working on tremendously important design projects and keeping close track of *X-Files* cannot also do all the stuff that needs to be done for *TFC* to appear on a regular schedule.

Nevertheless, the goal of being Canada's national student architecture journal—of the students, and by the students, but for the edification and delectation of all—is still an important one. There is surely a place for a discussion of architecture at a level between the glossy allure of *Architecture* and the dull pallor of *JSAH*, between fanzines and trade bulletins, a space where people can get excited about architectural ideas, and not simply bemoan the decay of science, bewail professional crises, and beget discord. That discussion is the responsibility of students, who presumably can be interested in architecture without having to consider too many political or economic interests. (Student responses at McGill and elsewhere to recent fee hikes and budget cuts suggest that students haven't actually considered those interests at all; but student apathy towards and complicity with the administration of post-secondary education in Canada could be the subject of another angrier and more frustrated editor's thousand words). That accounts for "Student Architectural Journal"; the "Canada's national" part is a teeny little bit trickier to define from headquarters here in Macdonald-Harrington 103, but instinctively it feels important that *TFC* continue to have an ambitious mandate and wide geographic, if not social, distribution.

And speaking of McGill, this sesquidecennial of the founding of *TFC* coincides with McGill's 175th anniversary and the celebrations for the School of Architecture's Centennial. The ice model of the Roman Pantheon, built this winter on the lower campus, has already fallen to ruins (architects these days just do not know how to detail!), but anyone who is around McGill this year may want to stop by and see the arboreal staff allegories in the Centennial Garden, and the larger-than-life bronze of James McGill, sculpted by David Roper-Curzon, before they are vandalized. You've already missed the Garden Party: cricket matches, croquet, pipes and drums, and free beer for new graduates.

We've made some changes to the format of *TFC* which should allow the next issues to come out more quickly. First, we've suspended the tradition of theme issues. The problem is that the editors and staff who ended up working on particular themes, sometimes years after they were suggested, often had little interest in those themes. If themes were vague enough not to be faddish—like this issue's "The Image of the Architect"—then they were too vague to be interesting. Second, we solicited articles from writers rather than just waiting for articles to come pouring in. Third, we sought to include less research-oriented, more topical articles including film reviews, exhibition reviews, and reports on new construction. Fourth, we've tried to involve McGill alumni and some of the more experienced *TFC* writers—the eminent Ricardo Castro, the ebullient Pieter Sijpkes, the outspoken Peter Lanken. Those students who first launched *TFC* are still around—founding editor Mark Pimlott, for example, was back at McGill recently for thesis project reviews. He showed us some of the amazing things he does with rubber, but we were unable to force an article out of him. Some other old staffers show up here again: Lea Zeppetelli contributes an article with two non*TFC*ers, Jean-Pierre Chupin and Nicolas Reeves, and Hal Ingberg's recent exhibition of his Prix de Rome work is reviewed here.

With these changes there should be enough momentum now for us to publish the next issues of *TFC* more smoothly and more regularly. So let's keep those contributions rolling in. With this new format, all articles are very welcome. Architecture students and ex-students everywhere, send in your insightful rants, carefully researched essays, images, projects, ideas, plans. This journal is both opportunity and tool. Use it.

P.S. This issue is 100% Lewerentz-free.



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A Century of Ice: The Architecture of Phase Change

Pieter Sijpkes

The phrase “mon pays ce n’est pas un pays, c’est l’hiver” rings true for all Northerners, but it is particularly evocative for children and builders, who at the mere thought of winter conjure up visions of construction materials falling from the sky and water turning to rock. Snow forts and igloos have been the result of this insight by kids and the native Innu since time immemorial, while ice palaces have been built in Canada since 1883, as related in the excellent book *Ice Palaces*:

At the 1882 banquet of the Montreal Snowshoe Club, R. D. McGibbon suggested holding a regular winter sports festival, in order to enjoy and show off the glories of Canadian Winter.... Ideal weather helped to make the 1883 Winter Carnival a resounding success. An estimated 15,000 foreign visitors flocked to the city.... McGibbon’s inauguration of the ice palace was one of the highlights of the fête.¹

Designed by local architect A.C. Hutchison, this first Montreal ice palace was a grand affair erected on what is now called Canada Square. Built of ice blocks sawn from the frozen St. Lawrence river—a technique long used to harvest ice intended for refrigeration—

Hutchison's ice palace started a boom of palace building in northern cities. Ever bigger palaces were built in Montreal, Quebec, Ottawa, St. Paul, Minneapolis and Leadville, Colorado, up until the end of the century, when the fervour to construct ice palaces started to die down. Even though ice structures continued to be built throughout the 20th century, never was the monumentality of the early era matched.

Let's jump forward to the McGill campus in the 1970s. Studying at the School of Architecture in the early seventies, my student friends and I were quite intrigued by an ice structure going up one winter. Built of manufactured ice blocks, the structure's size seemed disappointing in the context of the surrounding buildings. Word had it that the sponsor of the winter carnival donated a fixed annual amount for construction, so that inflation had gradually reduced the size of structures over time. We asked ourselves how we might reduce the cost of ice construction. Observing frozen laundry on a clothesline led us to design a fabric-formed ice structure, supported by a wooden triangle suspended from three sturdy campus trees. A few frosty nights of hosing this assembly down transformed it from a flapping in-the-wind sheet of tensile fabric into a rigid, compressive structure. I will never forget the excitement of cutting the three steel wires that initially held up the structure (fig. 1). Professor Peter Collins had lectured us on the inconvertibility of tensile forces into compressive ones, and proposed "a wager of ten dollars" that the structure would not stand. Rarely did beer taste sweeter than the supply bought with that ten dollar bill.

Lesson no. 1: It can be quite delicious to disagree with your professors, particularly when you're right.

A few days later, after a short thaw, the structure collapsed suddenly, giving rise to another lesson.

Lesson no. 2: Lightweight ice construction has little resistance against even short-term melting.

When a cold winter struck in 1981, the frozen-fabric idea was taken up in a new context; this time I was a teacher and the students were designers in competition with each other. Ed Hercun's concept was chosen, and what a striking structure he produced! Three graceful hyperbolic paraboloids assembled from 20 foot-long scaffolding pipes covered by a sown-together nylon membrane were erected on the lower campus and sprayed with water. These three "hypars" formed a com-

plex double-curved nylon-reinforced ice space, admired by the master of the hyperbolic paraboloid, Felix Candela, when I once showed him photographs (fig. 2). The surface of the structure was barely an inch thick, and to make up for the sublimation of the ice ("gassing off"), we had to hose it down every other day. Frances Bronet, then a student, now the head of the School of Architecture at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy, NY, did a snappy computer analysis of this structure's behaviour under wind loading. Red neon tubes were fastened to the edges of the structure. The most beautiful pictures were taken at night, when the ice conducted light along its surface and glowed in a red hue. The McGill flag that we had proudly fastened to the top, almost thirty feet in the air, was gone the next morning.

Lesson no. 3: Never underestimate the energy and ingenuity thieves and vandals will expend on an unusual structure.

The following year we continued to work on the nylon ice method. Randy Cohen's attempt to create a thirty foot crystal 'needle' protruding from the frozen campus, Howard Davies' inflatables, Stefan Wisniewski's tents and, most dramatic of all, Mark Pimlott's attempt to create an ambitious structure supported by a cable slung from the roof of the McLennan Library, all were valiant experiments that year.

In the cable suspended structure, however, the "limits of growth" were stretched too far: the exposed site and a stiff wind made it impossible to perform the magic of turning the flapping suspended structure into a rigid, self supporting one by simply spraying it with water. The material kept folding when the structure deformed under the weight of the water or when wind deflected it. Instead of a graceful free-form structure, a frozen lump of nylon was the result of this exercise, jokingly called the "Edsel."

Lesson no. 4: New techniques bring new opportunities as well as new problems.

Back to "Pure Ice." The ice-on-nylon method was deemed not "pure" by some critics, so we turned to methods of casting lightweight, low-cost blocks. The ubiquitous two-liter milk carton was chosen as the most suitable form. We tried to recycle used cartons, but were slow at acquiring the 2000 units needed. Fortunately one student had connections to a milk processing plant, and soon a full truck with empty milk cartons pulled



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up to the school. Unloading 2000 cartons, filling them with water, freezing them, submerging them in hot water to shake the ice blocks from the cartons and laying the blocks on the catenary formwork in a slush mortar turned out to be quite a task.

Lesson no. 5: Doing even the smallest thing two thousand times takes a lot of time.

Sometimes I wonder: did architecture student Robert Libman plot his future as the founder of the Equality Party while he was drudging away in the bitter cold of 1983?

Lesson no. 6: Cause and effect are not always easily linked ("the butterfly effect").

The design that year called for a catenary arch, twenty feet high spanning twenty feet. A formwork, eight feet wide was constructed in a catenary shape by simply following the curve traced out by a free hanging rope, sagging between two nails driven twenty feet apart into the wall of the engineering lab.

The plywood form was, of course, reversed to turn the downward tensile curve into an upward compressive one (fig. 3).

When we finished laying the blocks on the form it was almost dark, and it was decided to take the form out only after the deep frost expected overnight had done its work on the slushy array of ice blocks. The next morning a small void had formed between the top of the form and the ice: the slush joints had expanded when they froze overnight and lifted the whole twenty-ton shell off the form; having made that happy observation we were confident that "we can take the form out now."

It was sweet to see the civil engineers scratch their head once more; lesson no. 1 was paying off. In addition to getting praise for simply standing up, this particular structure was appreciated for the effortless elegance that comes so naturally to the catenary arch, as the work of Antonio Gaudi shows over and over again.

Lesson no. 7: Don't worry about emulating concepts—just make sure to pick good ones.

Reusing the wooden catenary formwork ribs a year later, and rearranging them to form a dome rather than a linear vault, was a simple experiment meant to prove how much stronger a double curved shell is than a single curved arch. The idea was to use an inflated

plastic sheet as formwork between the radially arranged ribs; but hard-to-repair tears in the nylon made that plan impossible, and the plastic sheet was instead stretched between the ribs. The final form of the catenary dome was compromised by this change in technique: the level of grace of the previous year's arch was equalled only by the lumpiness of its successor.

Lesson no. 8: The aesthetic success or failure of a structure may depend on seemingly small variables.

The value of this experiment was revealed through the structure's demise. When the warm weather came, the dome melted on the sunny side, but of the six "slices" forming the original dome, two stood up for almost a week. This taught us that the double curved dome was much stronger than its single curved predecessor (which had collapsed quite suddenly).

Lesson no. 9: Double curved surfaces are much stronger than flat or single curved surfaces.

Every child discovers how easy it is to dig into a mound of snow or dirt, creating a cave. This "architecture of subtraction" is as old as architecture itself, and can be found in places as diverse in time and space as the dwellings dug from the ground now housing millions of people in China, the Roman temples carved out from the sandstone cliffs at Petra in Jordan, or the excavated churches of Ethiopia and Capadocia.

Making an "ice pub" for fifty people using snow and water was the assignment students received in the winter of 1994. After blowing a pile of snow twenty feet high with a snowblower, a dozen students dug to their heart's content. On a cold Friday night in January of 1994 we counted 52 people comfortably sipping drinks protected by the vaulted roof and walls of the ice pub.

Lesson no. 10: Subtraction can lead to the same result as addition in architecture, given the proper materials.

Centenary Ice: The Lessons Applied

In order to celebrate the School's centennial (later combined with the University's 175th anniversary), we came up with the idea of an ice structure. We wanted to evoke the grandeur of nineteenth-century ice structures using the experience we had garnered building with snow and ice since the 70s.

Lesson no. 2 had taught us that "small mass = short life," and ruled out a lightweight approach for a

structure that had to serve various functions for two weeks. Lots of mass was the only defense against evaporation, a possible mid-winter thaw or rain. Depending on conditions, mass can be obtained by ice blocks, huge amounts of snow, or by injecting and spraying snow with water.

The search was on for a massive structure that would not only be interesting to build, but would be architecturally striking as well. It may well have been the presence of Orson Wheeler's cutaway model of the Pantheon in the glass case on the third floor of the school that gave the idea of using the Pantheon in Rome as the inspiration for the Centennial ice structure.

The Pantheon fitted our bill perfectly: the structure would be massive as well as novel. We intended to give Montreal's traditional look-at ice structures a new live-in character, analogous to the change in antiquity from Greek look-at architecture to Roman live-in architecture. The Pantheon offered two main challenges: spanning the space with a massive dome, and decorating the structure and adorning it with a monumental entrance.

The most difficult decision was the one of picking the size of the structure. The ice structures of the 60s had shown that in the context of the campus, anything under three storeys was too small to "hold its own." The biggest clear span we had reached so far in ice was 20 feet with the 4" thick catenary ice arch (1983) and dome (1984). Doubling that span seemed too ambitious, so we chose a span and height of about 32 feet (or 10 meters). That gave the Ice Pantheon a scale of a bit less than one to five of the original Pantheon. A scale of pi (1 to 3.14) would have been the most elegant one, but that scale would have pushed the span to a scary 45 feet.

After choosing the size of the project, we next determined the method of construction. One idea, following lesson 10, was to push the snow up into a 35-foot high mountain, and to carve the Pantheon out like the '94 snow pub. It was rejected because of worries whether the snow would be sufficiently stable to hold up before it could be reinforced by injected water. The plan to use precast snow-ice blocks moved into place by a crane was deemed too expensive in crane time (lesson 5: it takes time doing many things over and over again). Finally, a technique used for centuries in adobe construction was adopted. Lightweight, eight-foot long curved plywood elements, laterally clamped together, were the basis of the system. By stringing the elements along to form two parallel circular walls, kept apart by notched, two by four spreaders, a four foot high "donut"

was formed, which was filled with snow. The forms were removed and reinstalled on top of the newly-cast snow below. Since the two-by-four spreaders holding the bottom of the form in place had to be pulled out of the wall, tell-tale holes were left, very much identical to the holes left by adobe construction. This system was very successful (following part one of lesson 4): the forms went up easily and the snow was dumped effortlessly by the frontloader of McGill's Facilities Development Department (fig. 4a, 4b, 4c). There was no shortage of snow in the winter of 95/96: like biblical manna, our building material fell from the sky in prodigious quantities.

Our pace of construction slowed down considerably when we reached level 4, 16 feet up. Handing up the forms to that height was becoming tricky in the wind, and the frontloader could no longer reach over the edge of the forms. We now had to shovel the snow from the frontloader bucket into the forms.

Even that method was impossible for the next level. For a while we used buckets and pulleys to get the snow in place, but 1600 cubic feet of snow were required per 4 foot layer of the structure. It became clear that working by hand we would run out of time. A roofer's motor-driven hoist proved to be too difficult to operate efficiently.

After discussions with the helpful people at Facilities Development, we conducted an experiment using the University's snow blower (fig. 4d). The machine was certainly able to blow the snow high enough; the problem was that it was hard to deposit the snow exactly in the forms. The filling of the first 4-foot layer of the structure resulted in almost as much snow falling inside the walls as inside the forms, and a massive cleanup of the inside space was needed. To avoid having to do this several more times, it was decided to try to roof the dome in one shot, rather than layer by layer. We also wanted to speed up the process: the opening date was only ten days away, and warm weather was in the forecast. The last twenty five feet of the thirty-two foot span was domed over in a hurry, using the inside as well as the outside wall forms, improvising patching for the pie-shaped spaces between the panels, and propping everything up from a central point on top of the scaffolding in the center of the structure. The beauty of the original design of the Pantheon became evident here: as the radius of the plan is the same as the radius of the dome, the curved plywood wall panels could be used as formwork for the dome as well (fig. 5).

On Tuesday afternoon, January 16, as snow was blown over the dome, disaster almost struck, (in accord-

ance with the second half of lesson no. 4). Even though the blower operator had become a real artist, controlling the machine and dropping tons of snow with pinpoint accuracy, because he had to drive around the structure in order to blow the snow on top, it was inevitable that the dome was loaded asymmetrically for a few minutes at a time. We all had the scare of our lives when the wooden props inside started popping and buckling. Fearing that the whole form might give way under the weight of tons of snow we stayed close to the exit. But even though the form work settled a foot or so, the dome consolidated and held. As with the catenary ice dome, the beauty of the dome was marred by the unevenness introduced by these unforeseen events. Lesson no. 8 was learned again.

The next day a week long thaw started, with temperatures as high as 10 degrees, and all of McGill seemed to be concerned about the well-being of the Pantheon. Despite the tropical temperatures, the thermal mass of the structure prevented disaster, losing only a few inches of its bulk in a week of thaw. Lesson no 2 proved its worth.

The form work could be removed the day the temperature returned to normal arctic levels. We were proud to be able to show Mayor Bourque the structure just when the dome could be seen without props; and it was another proud moment to welcome Principal Shapiro and Chancellor Chambers as well as many members of the McGill community into the structure after it was opened on January 26. That evening a concert by a McGill music student jazz combo was a magical experience: the cool music, the candle-lighting, and the hot mulled wine all contributed to the unique event. The massive snow walls and roof created an outstanding acoustic environment, while hardly a note could be heard outside in the crisp minus 15°C air.

The Ice Pantheon was built primarily to celebrate the Centenary of the School of Architecture. Friday February 2 was the night chosen to begin the centenary festivities. For the event Professor David Covo had carved into the portico pediment a marvelous scene portraying the Macdonald-Harrington building, the Engineering library, the Ice Pantheon and several reclining figures. A group of over 125 members of the School community gathered inside the Ice Pantheon after dark for a historic picture-taking session. The slow exposure time required, combined with the minus 18°C temperature, froze that event in our memory as well as in our limbs, as the suitably serious faces in the picture shows. The Centenary Committee Chairman, Professor Bruce



1 Jacques Rousseau



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Maintenant que l'édifice est parmi nous, qu'en penser?

La rue Sanguinet, du haut de la terrasse de la rue Sherbrooke jusqu'au Marché Bonsecours, est en questionnement comme elle est en voie de résolution. Une brève randonnée nous informe.

Du Marché Bonsecours, renouveau culturel, entre le port, le bassin des patineurs, son pavillon et la ville, par l'ancien hôtel Rasco, le tunnel Gosford, la petite rue Saint-Claude et le Château de Ramezay; l'Hôtel de Ville, le Champs de Mars (fig. 1), Chaussegros de Léry (fig. 2) et la cour municipale; de l'autoroute Ville-Marie (fig. 3), le Métro Champs-de-Mars, les édifices de la Banque Nationale à l'hôpital Saint-Luc; des résidences étudiantes et le centre sportif de l'UQAM en construction, du CLSC, du pavillon de l'Administration de l'UQAM en développement au pavillon de Design; du jardin Sanguinet qui entoure l'École des Sciences de la Gestion et les pavillons Athanas David et de Musique, la Cinématèque Québécoise en construction et aux Habitations Jeanne-Mance (fig. 4); du Cinéplex St-Denis en développement au CEGEP du Vieux Montréal; de l'ancien Mont St-Louis au terrain vacant le plus controversé de la rue Sherbrooke et au-delà le Carré St-Louis.

Dans cette promenade urbaine, le Pavillon de Design, non pas comme oeuvre d'architecte mais comme oeuvre, travail de l'architecture, revisite la tradition de Nolli. La rue, le parvis, la colonnade, le fronton et la nef. La tradition revisitée par les prérogatives du site, du programme et de l'architecte et son équipe. La colonnade précède le parvis, le fronton se penche vers la rue; de plein pied, la salle des fêtes du centre de Design rivalise avec le grand escalier qui s'amorce en vitrine. Avec lui un axe, une faille oblique, quelque fois encombrée, s'ouvre en une nef qui traverse l'école et aboutit au sixième étage sur une cour sur le toit. Issu d'une topographie artificielle, un belvédère, tel un campanile nous attend, plein d'humour et d'ironie. L'escalier d'issue, dans sa cage de verre, se pose dans l'axe du stationnement souterrain du complexe voisin!

Tous ces dispositifs que je décris rapidement nous parlent de culture architecturale dans la ville, pour la ville et donc pour nous.

Si le Pavillon de Design, même indiscipliné, nous parle aussi directement de notre culture, la rue Sanguinet, dans son élan de mutation, n'est-elle pas un site où les projets en cours peuvent encore nous révéler un visage de cette ville en quête de racines?

En effet, la rue Sanguinet est une affaire à suivre. La mémoire collective des architectes est-elle assez incarnée pour s'y manifester? A sa façon, Hanganu fait sa part et nous rend la promenade urbaine moins morose.

Maintenant que l'édifice est parmi nous, qu'en penser?

Qui d'entre tous les designers, architectes et ingénieurs, ayant réalisé des constructions, pourrait prétendre qu'un projet se réalise sans se voir altérer? Personne! Le Pavillon de Design n'échappe pas à cette réalité. Est-ce le fait de l'architecture ou le sort fait à l'architecture aujourd'hui? Quoiqu'on en dise, l'altération est d'ores et déjà une contrainte, une motivation, devenue incontournable.

Hanganu, bon homme, sait celà. Lors de l'inauguration du pavillon, il suggère que l'édifice est une toile de fond. Suivant le thème de la toile comme stratégie du projet, l'équipe de conception s'est efforcée de créer une architecture ouverte aux actes à venir, aux mouvances et errances des uns, aux contingences et intransigences des autres, à leurs valeurs explicites et implicites, leurs espérances, et leurs méfiances.

La toile de fond est l'espace tectonique choisi, témoin du flux et reflux des forces vives, qui s'inspirent et s'expirent les unes les autres, s'inhument et s'exhument les unes les autres pour former une architecture moderne, originale et typique de son temps.

Maintenant que l'édifice est parmi nous, qu'en penser?

Je ne saurais terminer ces commentaires sans parler de l'oeuvre de l'architecte.

Les sensibilités sont toutes différentes. Hanganu était artisan: menuisier, maçon, ferronnier dans un pays de traditions. Hanganu était poète dans un pays obscur. Hanganu était immigrant dans un pays renommé pour son accueil. Pourrions-nous comprendre son travail à partir de ces clefs: les traditions constructives, l'histoire de la Roumanie et les concepts de liberté d'expression et de tolérance, implicites aux terres d'accueil?

Ma lecture globale et subjective de l'édifice réside dans cette émotion que l'on ressent à y vivre et y travailler.

Que le projet de l'architecture est ardu à mener à termes et qu'il naît, asymétrique comme chacun de nous: petit pied, gros pied; oeil perçant, oeil qui louche; oreille alerte, oreille sourde. C'est dans ce projet, comme dans un combat pour la vie, qu'il cherche à harmoniser notre profond désir d'humanisme et notre soif de matérialisme. Si le construit n'est pas un auto-portrait



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de l'architecte, il est en tous cas l'expression d'une culture. C'est notre portrait, transmis par les pouvoirs évocateurs de la matière. Si l'architecture est à notre image, voilà donc le pavillon de design et toute la liberté et la tolérance qu'Hanganu et son équipe se sont accordées pour inscrire en béton brut peint blanc, blocs à la main, l'acier entre les dents, l'histoire douloureuse mais combien vivante de notre marche vers la lumière. Le Pavillon de Design nous dit honnêtement qui nous sommes. Un édifice qui nous dit combien il est difficile de faire résonner les traditions.

Dans cela, Hanganu n'est pas meilleur homme qu'un autre, il est franc et inquiet comme nous sommes libres et tolérants. Le Pavillon de Design est une leçon du coeur, de culture et de mains à la tâche. A ce jour, l'édifice public le plus humble et humain d'Hanganu et ses collègues.

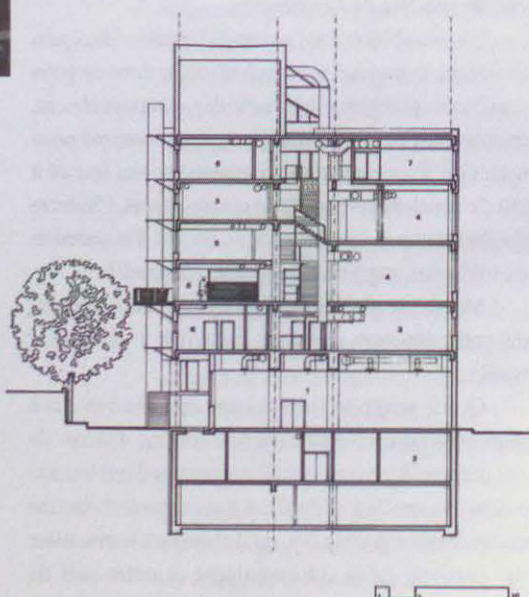
Jacques Rousseau est architecte et professeur à l'UQAM.



east elevation



view of Sanguinet Street



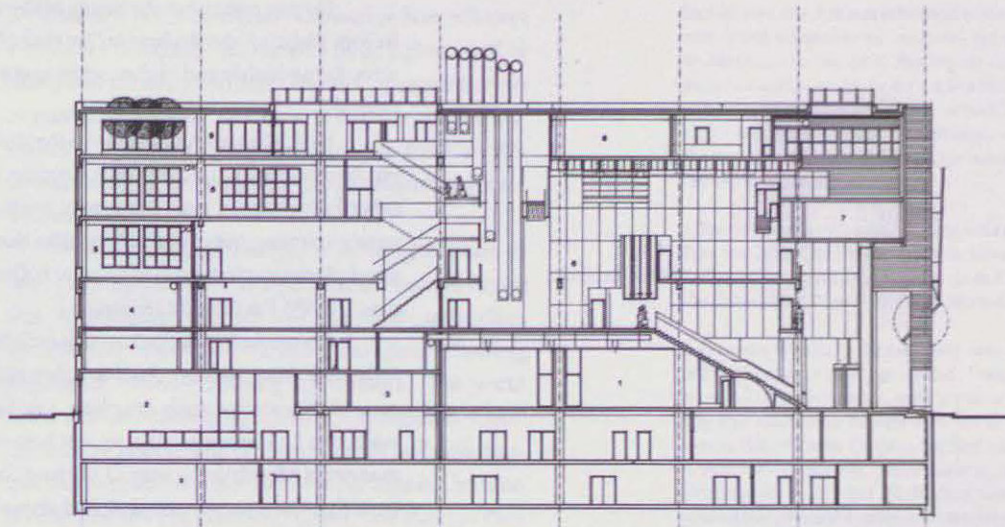
Cross Section

1. Exhibition space
2. Workshops and storage
3. Classrooms
4. Studio
5. Café
6. Teacher's Office
7. Computer classroom
8. Mechanical room

Coupe transversale

1. Salle d'exposition
2. Ateliers et dépôt
3. Salles de cours
4. Ateliers de production
5. Café
6. Bureau du professeur
7. Classe d'informatique
8. Salle mécanique

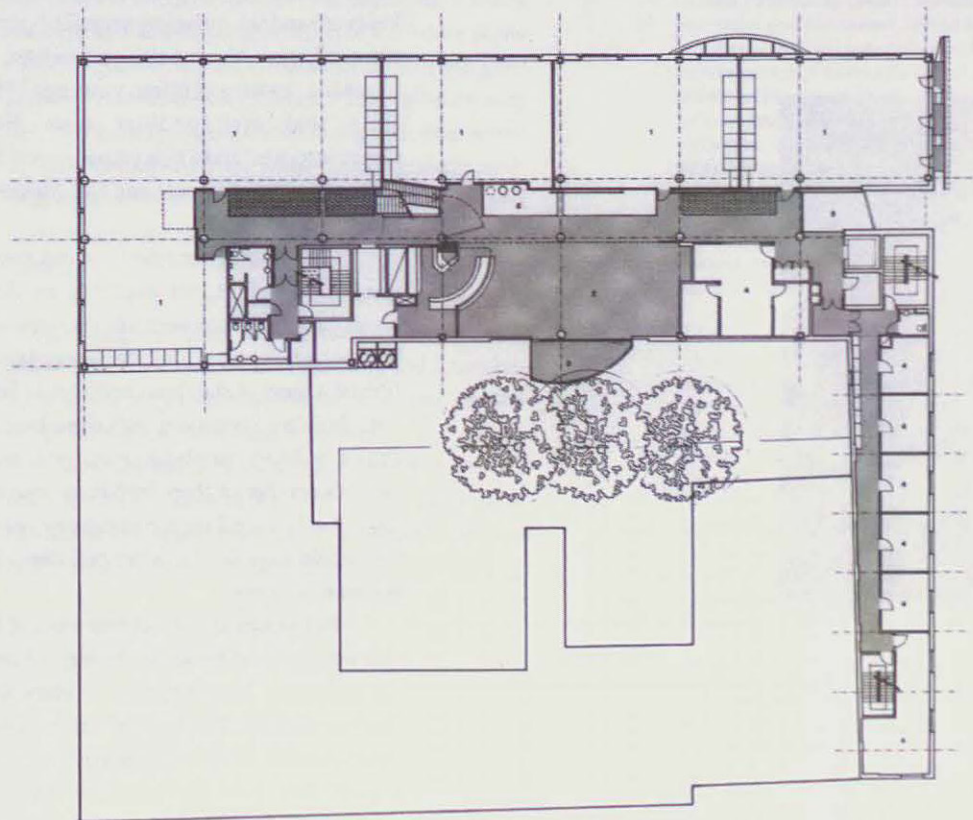
Faculté de design - UQAM
Dra. B. Hargrave architecte



- Longitudinal section**
1. Exhibition space
 2. Workshops
 3. Storage
 4. Classroom
 5. Studio
 6. Main atrium
 7. Research office
 8. Computer classroom
 9. Library

- Coupe longitudinale**
1. Salle d'exposition
 2. Ateliers
 3. Dépôts
 4. Salle de cours
 5. Atelier de production
 6. Atrium central
 7. Bureau de recherche
 8. Classes d'informatique
 9. Centre de documentation

Projet de design - 1990
Dra. F. Siqueira, architecte



- Third Floor Plan**
1. Studio
 2. Café
 3. Balcon
 4. Recherche office
 5. Void

- plan étage**
1. Atelier de production
 2. Café
 3. Balcon
 4. Bureau de professeur
 5. Vide

Projet de design - 1990
Dra. F. Siqueira, architecte

2 Peter Lanken



north façade

Do you remember the image of the spinning bird in Tom Wolfe's *From Bauhaus to Our House*? The logician who, flying higher and higher, spins in ever-decreasing circles?¹

Well, Modern Architecture—that is, the old Modern Architecture of Le Corbusier, Gropius, and all those other Europeans of sixty or seventy years ago—is now surely spinning out of control, just like that bird. And a good place to watch its dying dance is Dan Hanganu's new UQAM Pavillon de Design.

Everywhere you look in this building, there's a little trick from another time, another place. The concrete block exterior walls are plane, just like the stucco walls of a Le Corbusier villa, except here scribed in the manner of Mondrian by way of Michael Graves.² Those lines that Corb sometimes sketched above his roof gardens here appear as galvanised frames.³ Sant'Elia chimneys⁴—galvanised again—stand beside a roof garden straight out of Corb's big blue book of paradox.⁵ Somehow there's a Mies frame around some windows on the north façade.⁶ Inside, there are at least four different kinds of handrail, including several of galvanised sheet spun off from Alvar Aalto and twisted in a Daniel Libeskind drawing of fifteen years ago.⁷ There's even a little roof stair/podium from the Russian Constructivists,⁸ and a cute piano-shaped balcony from France by way of Atlanta and Des Moines.⁹ The mind spins.

The visiting architect's mind spins, thinking about all the effort that went into the detailing. And about the money that went into construction, for this is no low-budget project, despite its poor-boy affectations. (Priced a sheet of stainless checkerplate lately?) This is not a building consonant with these times of fiscal restraint, reduced maintenance budgets, and layoffs. In fact, it's another of those buildings where one thinks, "boy, if only they'd cut the budget by twenty per cent, this would have been a better building." The architect is certainly capable.

But sadder is the fact that most of those expensive architectural tricks are foreign—European—and old-fashioned. They represent a future that has been dead for decades. Whether any future now exists is another question; what is sure is that if there is a future, it is much different from that of the International Style. The backward gaze to an obsolete future, so common in recent Montreal architecture,¹⁰ betrays a strangely romantic, or provincial, or even colonial, attitude.¹¹

For this is Montreal, not Paris or Berlin. Montreal was the home of the two greatest architects in this coun-

try's history. Victor Bourgeois¹² showed us how to insert windows in a façade,¹³ and how to build a plane wall of small-unit masonry.¹⁴ Ernest Cormier¹⁵ showed us how to modulate a wall,¹⁶ and how to make a circular entrance.¹⁷ But that bird, born to the beat of the *Internationale*, is spinning too fast to understand local lessons.

The Pavillon de Design, in evoking a future of days past, reminds us how authoritarian that old future was. A lot of effort, after all, was spent in those old days on defining minimum building standards: ceiling heights for workers' housing, for instance. (The world has a way of transmuting minima into maxima, which can then be imposed on others.) That old authoritarianism shows itself: here is a display case; here is a bulletin board; here is a big glass sign board. Use them as they were intended. Use only as directed. Misuse is abuse.

If the UQAM students have any spirit at all, of course, they will subvert these strictures. Very quickly.

That old authoritarianism runs deep in the double helices of Modern Architecture. Taylorism,¹⁸ which was so important in the generation of the future of the 1920s, originated, in part, in the social theories that gave rise to nineteenth-century prisons.¹⁹ That vision appears here, atavistically, in the galleries facing each other across a multi-storey space, in the white-painted grilled guardrails, in the wire-protected fluorescent light fixtures, and in the regimented office doors in their projecting steel frames.²⁰

Here is the most dangerous aspect of looking back to that European future for inspiration. Because much of that style was intended to be shocking and iconoclastic, it is now easy to misapprehend, as it spins around us all, its original values and intentions.

The big truths of architecture are still true.²¹ We must not forget them as we wait for that old bird of Modernism to spin so fast that it disappears, as Tom Wolfe described, right up its fundamental aperture.

Shortly after this text was submitted to the Editors of *The Fifth Column*, it was returned to me, annotated in a manner reminiscent of Peter Abelard, or of my grade five English teacher. Evidently the references I thought were clear were not. In adding these notes, I have tried to keep as close to original sources as possible, and always to keep in mind Oscar Wilde's dictum, "Even things that are true can be proved." I hope that readers whose knowledge exceeds my own will point out errors and omissions.

1. Tom Wolfe was, of course, referring to Le Corbusier; see Tom Wolfe, *From Bauhaus to Our House* (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1981): 27. Earlier, he had applied the same image to Art Theory; see Tom Wolfe, *The Painted Word* (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1975): 112.

2. Reference is made to the essentially non-architectural grid in many of Piet Mondrian's paintings entitled "Composition" from about 1917 into the 1930's. These grids, and the planes they divided, found their way into architecture through the work of Theo van Doesburg, and, thence, that of Walter Gropius. See Sigfried Giedion, *Space, Time and Architecture* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1963): figures 81, 261 and 262. Michael Graves regularized and compressed this grid, and applied it to otherwise non-architectural planes. See the Crooks House, Fort Wayne, Indiana, 1976, and the Fargo-Moorhead Cultural Center Bridge, Fargo, North Dakota/Moorhead, Minnesota, 1977, in Karen Vogel Wheeler, Peter Arnell, and Ted Bickford, eds., *Michael Graves, Buildings and Projects, 1966-1981* (New York: Rizzoli, 1982): 83-90, 111-8. I consider these grids to be non-architectural because they abstract and diminish the tartan grid originally and triumphantly published by Cesare Cesariano in 1521. It was this tartan, architectural grid that marked the real beginning of complex, modern architecture by allowing the formal and rational ordering of all the parts of construction. It marked the end of an age in which, for instance, Alberti could scribe regular joints on irregular stonework; it led directly to Victor Bourgeois and Ernest Cormier and most of the great buildings of Québec. See Cesare di Lorenzo Desariano, *Di Lucio Vitruvio Pollione de Architectura Libri Decem, liber tertius* (Como: Gotardus de Ponte, 1521): f. LIII, r. and v. See also elevations of Alberti's Palazzo Rucellai of 1446-51 in Franco Borsi, *Leon Battista Alberti* (Oxford: Paidon, 1977): 64-5. For a general discussion of order, see Alexander Tzonis and Liane Lefaivre, *Classical Architecture, The Poetics of Order* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1986).

3. For instance, la Maison Citrohan, 1920; here Le Corbusier even drew a little awning. See Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeanneret, *Oeuvre Complète de 1910-1929*, 4th edition (Zurich: W. Boesiger et Oscar Stonorov, Les Editions d'Architecture Erlenbach, 1946): 31. Walter Gropius did it too, as at his Master's House at Dessau; he had curtains on his frame. See Hans M. Wingler, *The Bauhaus: Weimar Dessau Berlin Chicago* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1969): 409.

4. See Antonio Sant'Elia, Project for a Subway, in Sigfried Giedion, *Space, Time and Architecture*, figure 192. Some Sant'Elia drawings were exhibited at the Canadian Centre for Architecture in 1995; see Jean-Louis Cohen, *Scenes of the World to Come* (Paris: Flammarion/CCA, 1995): 34-5.

5. Serious students will understand that there is no such volume, and that it comprises the entire corpus of Le Corbusier writings. The most graceful, if not the earliest, exposition of the essential paradox of the great architect's work is by John Summerson. He writes: "In the course of [a conversation with Le Corbusier] we observe, naively enough, that 'the house stands in the garden,' to which Le Corbusier replies, 'no, the garden stands in the house,' proving his assertion by an executed design in which this is, in fact, the case. We suggest that 'a building is, in principle, four walls with windows for light and air,' and he replies that 'on the contrary, a building may just as well be four windows, with walls for privacy and shade....' *Heavenly Mansions and Other Essays on Architecture* (London: The Cresset Press, 1949): 190-1. For Le Corbusier's

Five Points of Paradox, see Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeanneret, *Oeuvre Complète de 1910-1929*, 128-9.

6. This clearly is not a Mies detail, but I didn't know how else to characterize the anomalous insertion of a galvanized structural steel section into the façade, surrounding the big aluminum window. Mies worked in the rational tradition of architecture, as did Victor Bourgeois. For interest, compare the wall sections of, say, Crown Hall, Chicago, in Werner Blaser, *Mies van der Rohe, The Art of Structure* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1965): 88 and 92, with those of Bourgeois's Entrepôts de l'Hôtel-Dieu, rue Le Royer, Montreal, of 1861.

7. Aalto's curves were generally simple, not compound. See the lecture hall ceiling of the Viipuri Municipal Library of 1935, and the Finnish Pavilion at the 1939 New York World's Fair. Paul David Pearson traces these curves to Le Corbusier's Maison Cook of 1926, and the Villa Stein of 1927. See Paul David Pearson, *Alvar Aalto and the International Style* (New York: Whitney Library of Design, 1978): 123, 181, and 229, note 6.12. Then see Daniel Libeskind, *Between Zero and Infinity* (New York: Rizzoli, 1981): 82-103.

8. See El Lissitzky's Lenin Tribune of 1920-4, in Selim O. Khan-Magomedov, *Pioneers of Soviet Architecture: The Search for New Solutions in the 1920s and 1930s* (New York: Rizzoli, 1987): 52.

9. See note 7 above. The curved wall was, of course, central to Le Corbusier's thought in the 1920's. My favourite example of the piano-shaped wall is at the Villa Meyer of 1925. See Le Corbusier and Jeanneret, *Oeuvre Complète de 1910-29*, 87-91. Then see Richard Meier's High Museum of Art in Atlanta, 1980-3, and the Des Moines Art Centre Addition of 1982-5, in *Richard Meier Architect 1964-1984* (New York: Rizzoli, 1984): 296-327 and 357-63.

10. For Sant'Elia's battered towers and metal projections, see the IBM Building. For Villa Savoye ramps, see the Jean-Noël Desmarais Pavilion of Le Musée des beaux-arts de Montreal. For a Vesnin Brothers Pravda Building canted wall, designed for the same purpose, see Le Centre Molson. For a Villa Stein entrance canopy, here with an added aileron, see the IBM Building. For Bauhaus balconies, different from Montreal balconies, see the Faubourg Québec residential development. For a 1932 Le Corbusier Zurich concrete roof canopy, see Le Centre Molson. For square windows in a Pavillon Suisse façade, see Le Musée d'art contemporain de Montreal. For Centre Le Corbusier bolted angle columns, see the addition to Westmount Public Library. For a Vyborg Mass Kitchen roof wing, see the IBM Building. For a whole bunch of European Modernist tricks, see the various projects submitted for the recent competition for La Bibliothèque d'Outremont.

11. Romanticism: the attraction to ideas or images remote in time and place. Provincialism: the desire to introduce locally the fashions of a remote capital of culture. Colonialism: the imposition of foreign styles or standards without regard to local conditions or traditions.

12. Victor Bourgeois, architect, Lavaltrie 1809 - Montreal 1888.

13. Several approaches: see, for instance, Les Entrepôts de l'Hôtel-Dieu, rue Le Royer, Montreal, 1861; l'Église Ste-Rose, 1851; l'Église St-Joseph-de-Chambly, 1881.

14. See, for example, l'Église St-Félix-de-Valois, 1854.

15. Ernest Cormier, architect, Montreal 1885 - Montreal, 1980.

16. See the Palais de Justice, rue Notre-Dame, Montreal, 1920.

17. See the Dow Tower, Peel Street, Montreal, 1935.

18. Frederick Winslow Taylor was the founder of the Harvard Business School, and the author of *Principles of Scientific Organization of Factories*

(London and New York: Harper, 1911). His method was to isolate individual skilled workers and to examine them at work, in order to codify the most efficient ways of accomplishing clearly defined industrial tasks. His effect was to increase general production and prosperity, and to reduce the worker to the status of a machine. His *Principles* was published in French in 1912, and was known to Le Corbusier. See Jean-Louis Cohen, *Scenes of the World to Come*, 69-75; see also Brian Brace Taylor, *Le Corbusier at Pessac* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts, Harvard University, 1972): 4-5.

19. It started with Jeremy Bentham at the end of the eighteenth century. His method was to isolate individual prisoners, and to keep them under individual surveillance, in order to ensure control and to prevent social contamination. His effect was, eventually, to restrict prisoners to individual cells, as in his Panopticon prison, instead of in general wards. See Jeremy Bentham, *Panopticon, or, the Inspection-House Containing the Idea of a New Principle of Construction applicable to any Sort of Establishment, in which Persons of any Description are to be kept under Inspection* (Dublin: Thomas Byrne, 1791). See Jeremy Bentham himself, stuffed, mounted, and in a glass display case, at University College, London. His theory was developed to the point of constructing individual boxes to isolate prisoners in chapel and in class. See Henry Mayhew and John Binny, *The Criminal Prisons of London and Scenes of Prison Life* (London: Griffin Bohm and Company, 1862). These works were recently displayed at the CCA, in an exhibition entitled, "The Idea of the Penitentiary," curated by David Vanderburgh and Cammie McAtee.

20. The archetypal image was also on view at the CCA: Joshua Jebb, *Report of the Surveyor-General of Prisons on the Construction, Ventilation and Details of Pentonville Prison* (London: William Clowes and Sons, 1844), plate 21, "Interior Perspective of Pentonville Prison, London."

21. "Be more specific: what are they?" said the note. Every serious student of architecture should have his [sic] own list. Mine are, at the time of writing, and not very originally: first, the Vitruvian triad of Utilitas, Firmitas, and Venustas, from the *Ten Books of Architecture*, III, 2, first rendered in English by Sir Henry Wotton in 1624, thus: "In Architecture as in all other Operative Arts, the end must direct the Operation. The end is to build well. Well building hath three conditions. Commoditie, Firmitas, and Delight," *The Elements of Architecture, Collected by Henry Wotton, Knight, from the best Authors and Examples* (London: John Bill, 1624): 1. Vitruvius also writes of Propriety, *Ten Books on Architecture*, II, 5-7, which, on the authority of Andrea Palladio, I have always considered to be part of Utilitas. He writes, "an edifice may be esteemed commodious, when every part or member stands in its due place and fit situation, neither above or below its dignity and use..." *The Four Books of Andrea Palladio's Architecture* (London: Isaac Ware, 1738), rpt. (New York: Dover, 1965): 1.

That makes three. The fourth is economy, discussed by Vitruvius, *Ten Books on Architecture*, II, 8-9, but taking its modern, rational meaning from the Abbé Laugier: "Do the minimum necessary." See Marc-Antoine Laugier, *Essai sur l'Architecture* (Paris: Duchesne, 1753), translated by Wolfgang and Anni Herrmann as *An Essay on Architecture* (Los Angeles: Hennessey & Ingalls, 1977).

The fifth and last is history. Just as automobile racing is as old as the second car, modern architecture is as old as the second building. The notion occurs often in the history of architecture, as each modern architecture is supplanted by one more modern. But it changed essentially with the publication of the first modern history of architecture, which Peter Collins considered to be Jacques-François Blondel's *L'Architecture Française de 1752-6*. From that time, it has been incumbent on architects to consider the place in history of each new building, as well as of each old one. See Peter Collins, *Changing Ideals in Modern Architecture 1750-1950* (London: Faber and Faber, 1965): 15-6, 29.

A Different Vision of Culture? The Daily Press Building in Timmins, Ontario, 1940-1995

Rudi Denham



In 1992, after a decade of controversy, the Daily Press Building in Timmins, Ontario, was declared an historic site by the National Heritage Board and the Ontario Heritage Foundation. On October 19, 1995, this same building became the first Heritage site to be demolished since the Canadian government began designating historic sites in 1919.¹ The Daily Press building was lauded by architectural historian Robert Hill as "an outstanding example of the 'moderne' style,... a key work in the history and development of Northern Ontario, and a landmark design in this province's architectural history."² The question arises whether the Thomson empire had a cultural responsibility to maintain this historical landmark. If not, should the City of Timmins and the Timmins taxpayers have accepted the responsibility? Why did this architectural landmark turn into rubble? Why did no organization or institution step in to rescue it? Governmental, cultural, and architectural preservation organizations all expressed interest in protecting the building, but none would assume responsibility for it.

The building was commissioned by Sir Roy Thomson, founder of the Thomson newspaper empire. Constructed in 1940 and located at the corner of Cedar Street and Second Avenue, it was a prominent landmark in downtown Timmins. The design, by architects George Yule Masson and Hugh P. Sheppard of Windsor, Ontario, provided an exceptional example of Moderne architecture, a style prominent from the 1920s through to about 1945. In contrast to the vertical, highly ornamental and angular effects of Art Deco, the Art Moderne style is characterized by curvilinear shapes, sweeping horizontality, and the use of glass block and long continuous bands of windows. All of these elements were present in the Timmins Daily Press Building.

While the exterior of the Daily Press Building was Art Moderne, many of the interior fittings, such as light fixtures, were Art Deco. The interior curved walls and elements of trim repeated the exterior curvilinear shapes, creating an integrated whole. The interior foyer, reception room doorways and exterior doors were recessed and flanked with glass panels. The highlight of the circular entrance lobby was a geometric compass design embedded in the terrazzo floor.

The building had a basement, two full floors, and a partial third floor. The basement housed the printing plant of the newspaper. On the ground floor were the composing rooms, advertising and accounting departments. The steel desks and metal light fixtures in the ground floor offices demonstrated modern efficiency

and functionality. In contrast, the second floor, which housed the CKGB studios and offices, as well as the newspaper's editorial room and publisher's office, was a model of comfort and luxury:

The *pièce de résistance* was the (octagonal) reception room, upon which the architects lavished considerable attention. Squared-off, deep seated couches and sleek end tables (ordered from the Taylor Furniture company of Toronto) were placed against the north and south walls of the room. Over a sixteen-petalled floral motif in the centre of a plush green and ivory rug, woven in England to the architects' specifications, stood a circular glass table. The mellow colour scheme was complemented by a soft glow from the vertical light fixtures. Doors occupied five walls, and a large glass bubble facing outward from Studio "A" dominated the remaining wall, which, like the rest, was panelled in veneer.³

The third floor housed a compact bachelor apartment with all the modern conveniences, for Thomson's use as a home-away-from-home.

When I visited the old Daily Press building in 1993, it had been empty for some years. The power had been disconnected. A layer of grime and a patina of neglect masked some of the architectural splendour. A small group of City staff, of which I was a part, entered the old Daily Press building by the narrow back door, where paperboys used to pick up their bundles for delivery.

Warped by the passage of time, the door groaned loudly as it closed behind us. I was momentarily enveloped by darkness until I turned on the little miner's lamp attached to my hard hat. Outside, the hard hats and bulky lamps seemed unnecessary; inside, they were a godsend.

We descended the concrete stairs into the murky darkness. I had to pick my way carefully, avoiding broken light tubes, deep puddles, and sudden changes of level in the floor. The hiss of the boilers and printing presses still seemed to echo through the space. The concrete floor was covered in great sheets of paint, which, having peeled off the ceiling, crunched underfoot like giant corn flakes. On the ground floor, a sole un-boarded window scattered daylight onto apparently random concrete pillars. Fifty years ago, even ten years ago, the room must have been as busy as a Victorian train station.

In the main entrance, the glass blocks flanking the double doors let in sunshine that reflected on the steel trim of the smoothly curved stucco walls. A set of broad stairs curved up to the second floor. The satin-smooth bronze top of the handrail had long given way to a chrome and paint-spotted railing. A maze of doors

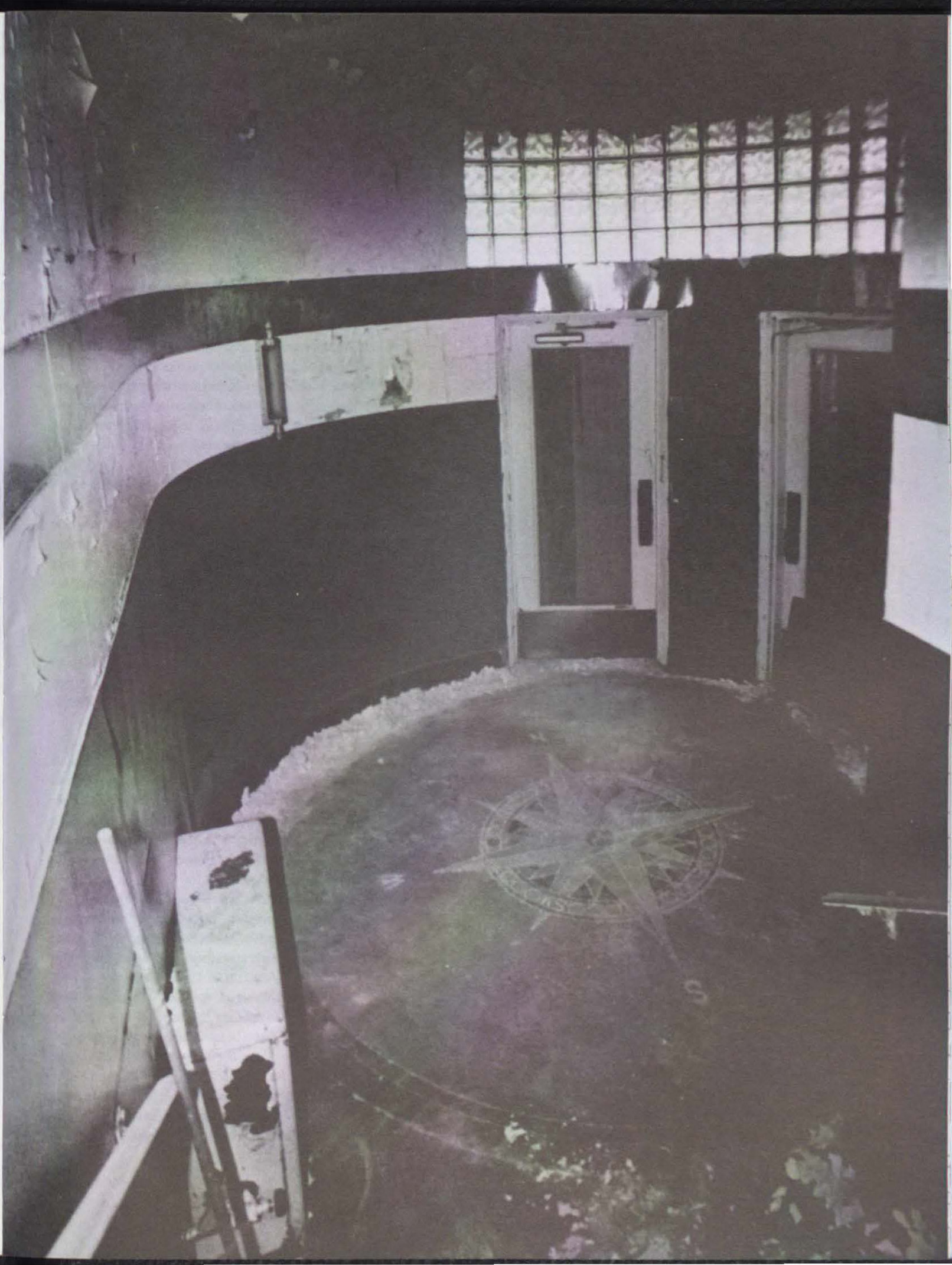
opened onto the central octagonal reception area. The floor had a linoleum compass pattern recalling the marble original in the lobby. Still, the ravages of time were not so evident here. It was not hard to imagine a CKGB announcer broadcasting the news amid ivory and green carpeting, custom made light fixtures, and elaborate Moderne decor. Some of the office doors still retained their embossed names: "Managing Editor," "Photography and Engraving." Square hatches, with doors that slid upward, were built into the walls of some of the newspaper offices. These doors led to tubes through which editors used to hurtle stories to the typesetting room on the main floor.

The top storey once housed the private apartments of Thomson and his partner, Jack Kent Cooke, who was the General Manager of CKGB Radio. In the centre of the stairwell, a cylindrical light fixture hung without its Art Deco shade. The smaller bachelor apartment belonged to Cooke; a lavish fireplace surrounded by glowing pink mirror tiles was the focus of the small living room. There was no view to the city from this room, though light filtered in through the glass block window. Lord Thomson's suite across the hall was much more grandiose than Cooke's quarters. The front room fireplace was inlaid with black and pink triangular and square mosaic tiles. From the living room, a door led out onto a curved balcony overlooking the city below. The kitchen was deep and narrow, with double sinks and rounded counters lined with open shelves. The benches in the seating area held only half-burned black candles; the lamp overhead, complete with its shade that looked like an inverted stainless steel bowl, was purely decorative.

We returned to the outside, into the glaring sunshine and the roar of traffic on Second Avenue. From this side, the Daily Press building showed its gleaming, white, smooth and comforting curves to the world. Its windows were boarded up, however, like sightless eyes. It looked abandoned and hopeful, awaiting its fate.

Roy Thomson, later Lord Thomson of Fleet (he earned his knighthood after buying the *Times* and *Sunday Times* of London), began his career in Timmins. Recognizing that radio would develop into a significant communications medium in the North, Thomson had bought two struggling radio stations, one in Timmins and one in North Bay.

Thomson's parsimony was legendary. He made his fortune through stringent cost-cutting and detailed budgeting. Manual typewriters were not replaced with newer equipment, and staff writers reportedly used





scrap paper rather than notepads on assignments.⁴ This penny-pinching may have hastened the demise of the Daily Press building.

On the other hand he could also be generous. Thomson donated \$110,000 and \$250,000 to North Bay for a swimming pool and a YMCA building to commemorate Canada's centennial.⁵ Perhaps a different vision of culture is suggested when sports facilities figure high in priority, but funding is much more scarce for the preservation of a historical site such as the Daily Press building. Thomson's generosity never extended, however, to the City of Timmins, where his newspaper career began. This lack of beneficence resulted in some resentment among Timmins residents and politicians, and was another factor in the eventual destruction of the building.

For 50 years the building was used as headquarters for the *Daily Press* newspaper and CKGB radio. During the early 1980s, rumours developed that new offices would be constructed. With a new facility imminent, Thomson paid little attention to the maintenance or refurbishing of the existing building. The paint began to peel, and torn pieces of plastic covered the windows. Already the decline of the building had begun.

After the new Daily Press Building was inaugurated in 1984, Thomson offered to sell the original structure to the City of Timmins for \$500,000. The City, perhaps expecting a donation rather than an acquisition, declined the offer.

The Thomson empire lost interest in the building after Roy Thomson died of a stroke in 1976 and his son, Kenneth Roy Thomson, became Chairman and President of the Thomson empire. The younger Thomson had very little attachment to Timmins. "It's a company asset," he said of the old Daily Press building, "It's got to be sold." He believed his father would have also tried to sell it.⁶

Between 1984 and 1987, a number of transactions involving the property took place, and owners came and went. After 1986, the building stood empty; an ad appeared regularly in northern Ontario newspapers offering it for sale at \$210,000. Then on December 10, 1987, John Butler, Publisher and General manager of the *Daily Press*, offered to sell the structure to the City for \$1, on the condition that it be used for cultural purposes. Included in the offer was a donation of \$100,000 to assist toward the renovations. The City considered the offer at a Council meeting on December 21, 1987. Moments after the delegations finished their presentations, City Council voted unanimously to decline the offer. It was

felt the building would require extensive and costly renovation.⁷

City Council's decision caused a flurry of articles in the *Globe and Mail*, and aroused the interest of conservation groups across Canada. Each group demanded that someone—more specifically someone else—take action. Eventually the City acquired the building anyway. They received it in 1994 in lieu of an overdue tax payment of almost \$90,000. A local group of concerned citizens continued efforts to have the building designated a national historic site, in order to make it eligible for additional grants. Finally, in 1992 the building was officially designated a National Historic Site.

The Timmins Library, looking to expand, expressed interest in using the building. In addition, the local museum, a municipal department, and a federally-funded Canadian National Exhibition Centre deliberated using the building, but no decisive plan was adopted. Instead, the City decided to demolish the building. Articles and letters about the decision appeared in newspapers all over the country. There were letters of concern from the Heritage Canada Foundation, the Ministry of Culture and other interested individuals and organizations. The provincial and federal governments offered technical advice and assistance, but would not intervene to protect the building.

On October 19, 1995, as a tour of delegates from the Ontario Museum Association and other dignitaries visiting the City drove by, a bulldozer levelled the building. The demolition crew salvaged only the terrazzo compass. In a ceremony in April 1996, the compass was mounted on the outside of the new Press building. This destruction of an important part of our historical and cultural legacy evoked an emotional response from architecture enthusiasts across Canada. Everyone cared. No one took responsibility.

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1. National Heritage Board Chairman Tom Simon, in "Thomson Building Coming Down," *Daily Press* (19 August 1995).

2. Robert G. Hill, *Biographical Dictionary of Architects in Canada, 1810-1950*, 1987.

3. Anita Spadafore, "Art Moderne in the North: The Timmins Daily Press Building," *Northward Journal* 54 (1990): 35-6.

4. Susan Goldenberg, *The Thomson Empire* (Toronto: Methuen, 1984): 13.

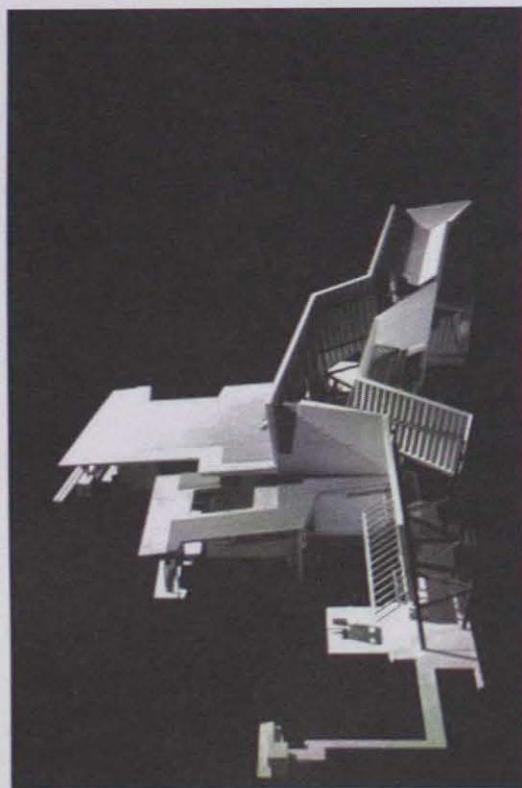
5. Vicki Gilhula, "Historical Building Is For Sale," *Globe & Mail* (26 August 1987).

6. Canadian Press, "Globe Story Stirs Interest in Timmins Press Building," *Globe & Mail* (14 September 1987).

7. Paul Vandenburg, "City Rejects Thomson Offer," *Daily Press* (22 December 1987).

An Interview with John Patkau

Marlene Druker



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John and Patricia Patkau founded Patkau Architects in Edmonton in 1978, and moved the practice to Vancouver in 1984. Their projects include the Canadian Clay and Glass Museum in Waterloo, Ontario, the Strawberryvale School (fig. 1) and the Newton Library in Surrey, British Columbia. The firm has won numerous awards, including four Governor General medals.

This interview was conducted by Marlene Druker in February of 1995 in Toronto at the time of the exhibit, "Patkau Architects: Selected Projects 1983-1994." We would like to thank Jennifer Flemming of the Design Exchange and Gobi Kim and Scott Francisco of Venue Magazine for their help.

The Fifth Column: What were the most valuable lessons you took away with you from your studies at the University of Manitoba?

John Patkau: Going to the University of Manitoba, I think, had some very important advantages. It was a relatively good school in a very isolated place. Living in an isolated place is a huge advantage because you are looking outside to what's going on in other places, you're looking everywhere. What I find in larger communities, when I come to Toronto or when I go to New York, is a greater level of self-satisfaction, a sense that what's going on here is important and we don't need to look outside. I think that's a tremendously provincial characteristic of big centres; and so I think that to become really sensitive, you need to be an outsider. Growing up in Winnipeg is a perfect way to learn to be an outsider.

The press often describes your firm as "Canadian." What does that description mean to you?

From the inside, it's hard to know if you are or if you are not a Canadian architect. Who says this anyway? Is it other Canadians, and do they have enough perspective to really know? I am a Canadian national, that's all I can say. Perhaps somebody from outside of Canada might be able to distinguish qualities which are uniquely Canadian; I don't know what they would be. I do think that we are very concerned with making buildings that are appropriate for their place, whether Canada or Tibet. I don't feel that I am limited to strictly Canadian architecture. If I were to work outside of Canada, presumably I would be doing work that would be appropriate to the place.

The press that I've read qualifies "Canadian" as "a Canadian understanding of Landscape," something that relates to attitudes towards landscape prevalent in Canadian writing or painting or art.

I would like very much for the work to contribute, not to some fixed idea of what Canadian culture or landscape is, but to what it is becoming.

In an interview I read, you quoted Michael Benidikt from For An Architecture of Reality who said, "Architecture shouldn't try to compete with other media—it has another role." How do you view architecture's role within global culture?

Electronic media, movies, television, and even print, unlike architecture, are not tied to location. These media can be very successful at developing universal themes, on a global basis, even if they deal with local subjects. A cops and robbers show that takes place in Los Angeles can have a mythological dimension. I think that there are many very powerful media; these media generalize, they tie together a global culture. Architecture certainly has an interest in this. Most of what we see is a manifestation of this global culture—perhaps that is architecture's problem. In my opinion, any culture needs to define itself both globally and locally. Without both aspects, it is an incompletely defined culture. We are part of both a world-wide cultural development and a local cultural development, and if we don't take care to develop our local culture as much as we invest in the global culture, then we will continue to be colonials; we will continue to be the outposts of a dominant culture located elsewhere. The only way we can become authentically mature is by counterbalancing the global culture with the local one.

Architecture has a huge role, a huge opportunity here, because it is necessarily grounded in place. It is necessarily tied to the dirt and to the climate and to the sunshine of the place in which it is located and as a result, it has a natural ability to deal with the local. I'm not denying that it has a role in the development of global culture, but I see it having a particularly important role as a counterbalance to other media, which are very good at dealing with global issues but not necessarily good at dealing with local issues.

It seems that your work benefits from good architect-client relationships. I would expect that to be important.

Yes, that's true. It is impossible to build a good building without a good client. There is a definite role for the client to play in the building process. I don't want the client to be an architect, I want the client to be a client. It is never a question of the architect or the client imposing his will upon the other, but of the two working together towards the building.

Which projects are you most pleased with?

That's a good question. I don't want to offend any of my clients by saying I like one building more than another...

...especially since we've already established that good clients make for good buildings.

In all seriousness, it is critical to the success of the project that the clients be good. The vast majority of our projects have had good clients. I think, typically, I'm happier with the more recent projects, not because the more recent clients are better, but because our skill is getting better. The more recent projects, such as the Barnes House and the Strawberryvale School, are, in my mind, the ones that are most successful because they have used knowledge gained from preceding projects.

Do you think the amount of time you have to work on a project affects its relative success? I was thinking about the Canadian Clay and Glass Gallery in Waterloo and whether you thought the project turned out better because it was put on hold and then revised.

Definitely. I think that the building that we finally constructed is a much better building than the original competition entry. It has the benefits of editing and also the benefits of some maturity. We waited a couple of years before we designed the building and we were better architects by that time. I also think that the edited version is a more lean and minimal response and that it is stronger for that.

Could you elaborate on the process of editing a project down to its bare essentials?

It's a long process. Inevitably we have great difficulties with schedules on our projects. We are always struggling and we find that the projects where we have been given extra time by the client are the ones that have turned out best, by far. They are also the ones on which

we tend to lose the most money. I think we need a long time to distil projects. It's difficult, because in our present context, time is the most important element; time is what we don't have. I don't mind not having good budgets but I am frustrated by not having enough time.

How important is site supervision to achieving craft in the finished building?

Craft is extremely important to us but I differentiate craft from workmanship. Good workmanship is something the architect strives for, but the architect is not building the building, someone else is building the building. The workmanship that you get is somewhat limited by the abilities of the builders. To my mind the level of workmanship is not as interesting as the level of craft, because there is no conceptual order to workmanship; there is just good skill versus bad skill. What is interesting to me about the notion of craft is the idea of making and how that idea is manifested in the design so that the way things are put together within the design represents an idea of craft. How that is actually done by the workman is a separate issue which doesn't have the same intellectual content, and is, therefore, not as interesting to me.

Have you ever been disappointed by a building where the craft did not come through as a result of poor workmanship?

Workmanship is often disappointing. The building process is inevitably one of getting a less than perfect result, but then that's true of everything. More important is the idea of making and yes, there are projects which have disappointed me as a result of my own failure to deal with issues of craft as well as I would have liked. I think that those projects are typically earlier in my development—I shouldn't say mine, I should say in the development of the firm because the work is really a product of many people's efforts.

What were the biggest surprises in your buildings? Did the final appearance of the buildings differ from the way you had imagined them during the design process?

I'm not so surprised anymore. With experience you tend to understand what the buildings will become. The surprises are at the beginning when you move away from always working as a student or as a young architect in drawings and models to translating them into

reality. As more of those representations start to take full size, you are astounded by the impact that size has. I vividly remember one of our first houses, the Appleton house, which has a giant column in the centre about which the entire house is organized. The house is in Victoria, and I remember we visited from Vancouver. We got there late in the day; I walked in and there was this column and I was just overwhelmed by it. That was, in many ways, the most startling experience that I have had about the transformation from drawings and models to reality. That was the first big, powerful gesture that we had attempted. Subsequently, we are becoming jaded and expect things to turn out as we have planned.

How do you test your design ideas during the design process?

We do everything we can. We begin in drawing form but we quickly move to models; we work with both drawings and models. We are a small office with a big model shop. We really use models to understand the projects in a fully three-dimensional way and I think that it's reflected in the final buildings. The buildings tend to be three-dimensionally more ambitious, I think, than the norm.

Some people are very talented at perceiving the building from drawings, but the model is a more powerful representation than drawing, at least for us. It has proved to be critical in understanding what's going on. Our buildings are becoming increasingly irregular and geometrically ambitious, which is not possible to understand in drawing form.

Have you thought about switching to computer modelling?

We think about it all the time, but we haven't. I think that real models are still as quick and easy to manipulate as computer models. I don't think that computer models are better than real models so we see no need to start using computers. At some point in the future, when computers become more powerful, that may be different.

How do you feel about the fact that people tend to experience architecture second-hand, less by visiting the building itself and more and more through representation—drawings, photographs, models?

I think that the world of second-hand is actually not bad. We have first-hand experience of drawings, models, photographs, et cetera. They have a life that is parallel to the life of buildings, but they don't represent them. They are something other than buildings, which retain the qualities of those buildings.

I've seen representations of the Clay and Glass Gallery post-design study model. Did you use it as a tool to understand what had been done in order to take those lessons on to future projects? Did it lead to any regrets about decisions that were made in the design of that particular building?

There are no regrets about the building because that's the past. The post-design model is about the future so I don't focus on representing what the building might have been. There are several issues which I'm concerned with in these models: one is understanding more clearly the ideas that were driving that building and expressing those ideas in a more conceptual way. Another is trying to understand what those ideas become when you transfigure them. This is an incomplete model with fragmentary qualities, and the ideas are manifested in a way that is different from the building. That is what sparks the ideas that are involved in subsequent projects. In this case, the Newton Library was very self-consciously derived, in part, from the Clay and Glass Gallery post-design model. If you look at the structure of the Newton Library and look at one edge of the fragmentary model of the Clay and Glass gallery, you'll find some striking similarities, because the formal ideas in the model were developed in that subsequent building.

Are the post-design models removed from site and from context?

Yes, it's more of an exploration into architectural concepts, as opposed to the projects which are obviously preoccupied with context, with the environment. This is our complimentary activity where we have the freedom to focus exclusively on architectural language and architectural structures.

Marlene Druker, B.Arch. '94 McGill, is a former editor of The Fifth Column and is currently studying nautical architecture in Alaska.

Drug Addiction Rehabilitation

Benjamin Mark Rankin



The program of this rehabilitation facility is based on that of the Therapeutic Community of Daytop Village in New York State. Located on a rural Virginia site, the buildings house about one hundred people, primarily heavy narcotic drug abusers, who stay on average from 18 to 24 months. The daily life of the community as well as specific therapeutic encounters are designed to change the residents, to give them new values, and to enable them to experience and develop positive personal relationships.

The rehabilitation program works through peer support and teaching. The belief that no one can fight off addiction alone leads to an emphasis on communal living. Deviating members are seen as a threat to the community; strict rules are enforced through various sanctions. In order to eliminate awkward institutional relationships between professionals and patients, the facility is run entirely by recovered addicts.

An existing gazebo on this rural Virginia site acts as a gateway to the community precinct. Here addicts must ask themselves if they are ready to change their lives. The prospective resident then moves toward the facility along a passage which gradually closes off the distant view and opens up towards the main buildings. Newcomers descend into the building to the "prospect chair," formed by the exterior wall of the passage, where they are interviewed. This chair marks the entry to and edge of the community.

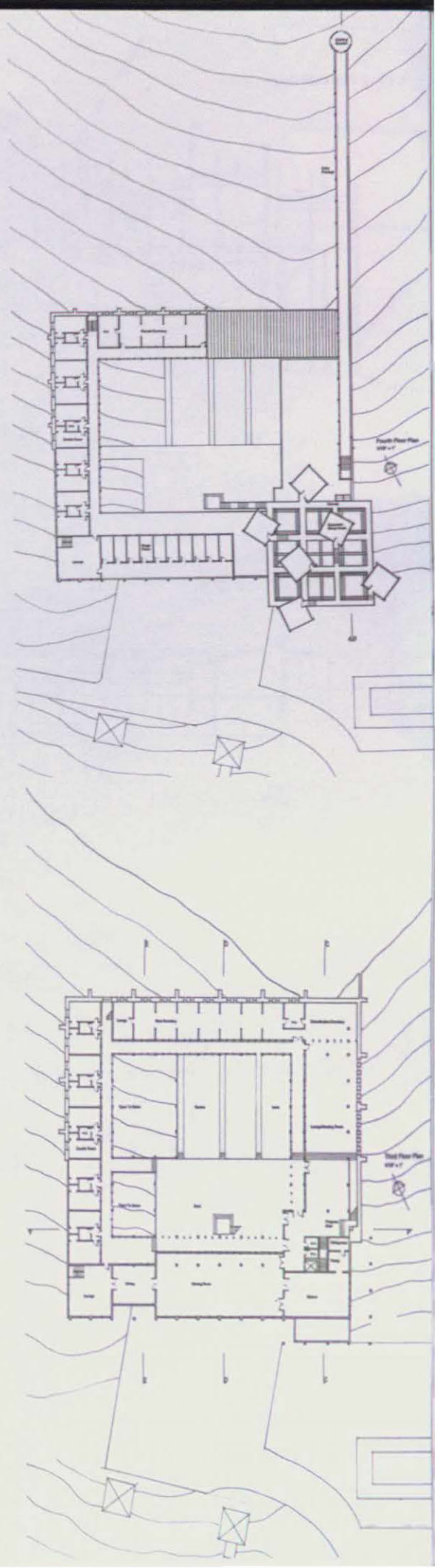
The plan of the living quarters maps the linear progression through and hierarchical organization of the residents in the program. Newcomers are housed in rooms closed to the outside and open, without privacy, to the interior: they live first in a dormitory which opens inward onto a common lounge. Through the course of rehabilitation this relationship is inverted. The resident gradually gains more private quarters that open up to the exterior. The transformations from closed to open are emphasized through a change of construction systems, from one of solid concrete walls to one of open timber frames.

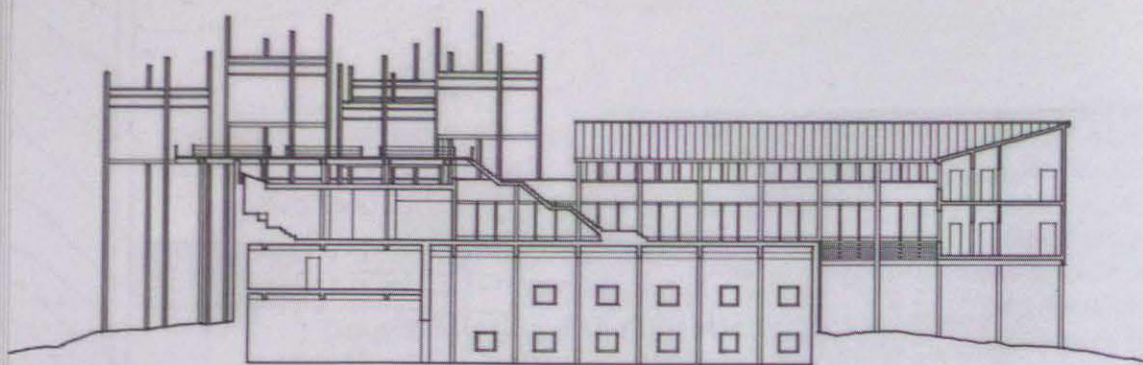
Two elements are placed at the edges of the forest through which the exit road passes. The internal element is a tower at which departing residents can pause to look back at the buildings. Here recovered addicts must decide that they are ready to leave the community. At the other side of the forest, the reformed addict leaves through an external gate, a guard booth which controls the mundane daily traffic between the community and the rest of the world.



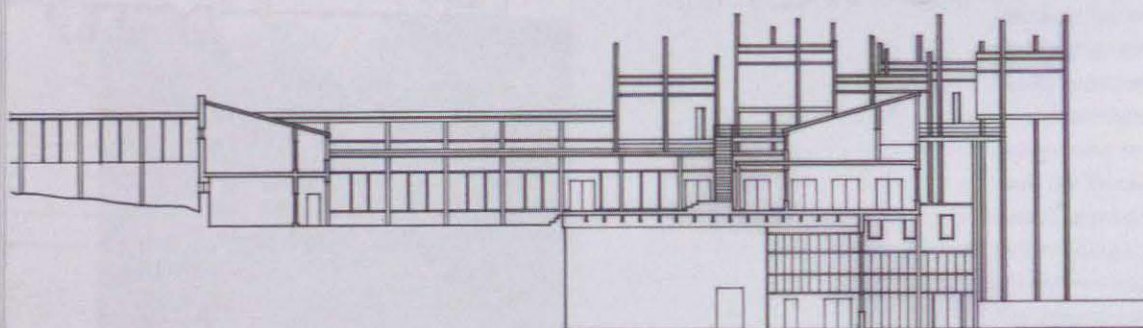


Benjamin Mark Rankin, B.Arch. '95 McGill, works for the firm Shalom, Baranes Associates in Washington, D.C.

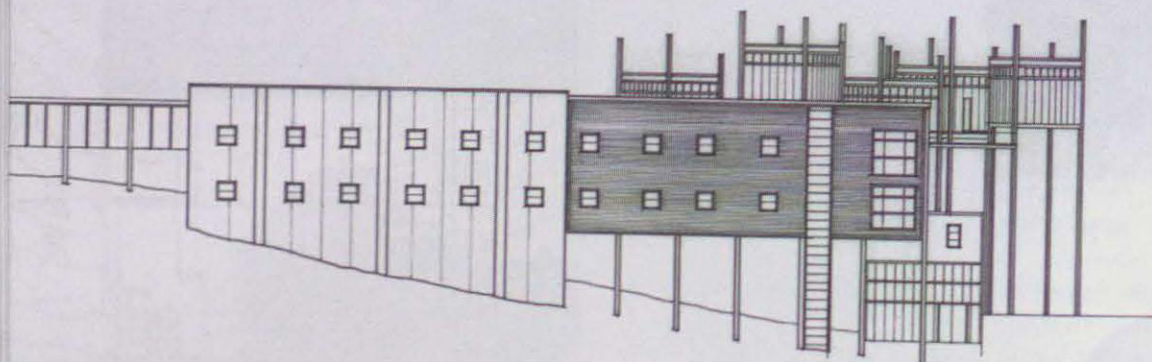




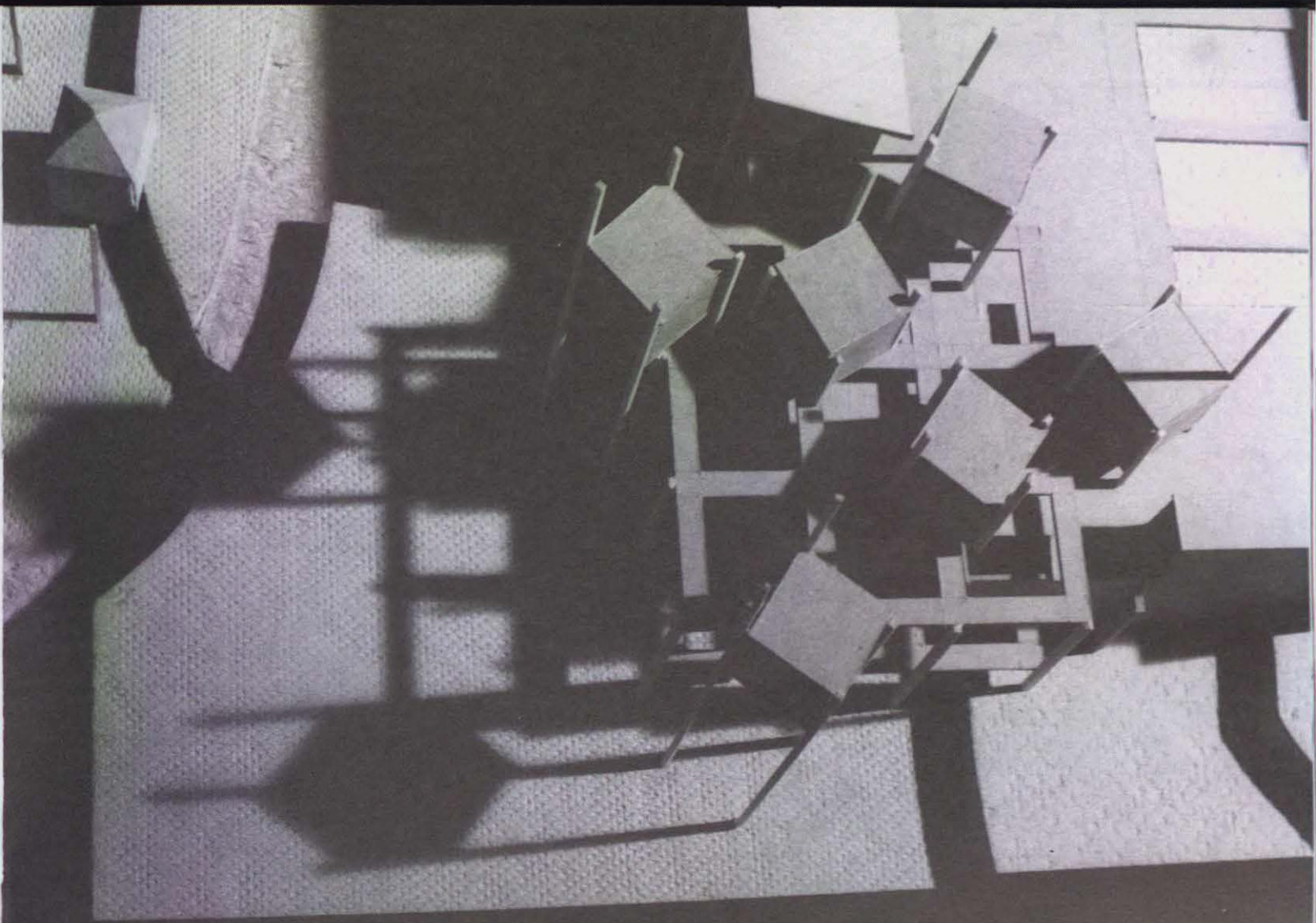
Section F-F
1/16" = 1'



Section D-D
1/16" = 1'



West Elevation
1/16" = 1'



(Etain ∪ Obsidienne) λ Khan:
Concours International d'Idées pour
la Reconstruction des Souks de
Beyrouth

Jean-Pierre Chupin
Nicolas Reeves
Lea Zeppetelli

Sans méfiance, l'architecte-nomade qui s'attaque à la reconstruction de lieux mythiques est appelé à parcourir un long périple dans des strates et des profondeurs inconnues, verticales et horizontales, naviguant à l'estime, sans carte ni boussole. Ici, les villes multiples de Beyrouth, vécues et imaginaires, s'entrelacent et se superposent, entrevues de très loin comme des destinations inaccessibles. Des trajectoires inexplorées relient ces cités couvertes, découvertes et recouvertes par la poussière des âges. Elles attirent le voyageur vers une expédition insolite, avec un mandat singulier: placer des repères qui permettront à la reconstruction des souks de Beyrouth de devenir leur carrefour.

Les conditions du concours

Tandis que le gouvernement libanais cherche désespérément à regrouper ses forces et à se reconstituer sur les zones dévastées par la guerre, le consortium industriel, financier et politique SOLIDERE lance une série de projets de rénovation urbaine. Le premier en date, la reconstruction des souks de Beyrouth, donne lieu à un concours international d'idées. Il vise à reconstruire le quartier des souks pour créer un centre public, dynamique, intégré dans un vaste schéma de développement, destiné à devenir le lieu d'émergence d'une identité nouvelle (fig. 1 et 2).

Le quartier à rebâtir est vaste: environ 60 000 m². Quelques édifices ruinés y subsistent: bâtiments des anciens souks, édifices à bureaux, mosquées. En pente descendante vers le nord, le terrain suit une ligne sinueuse d'escarpements. Le programme couvre 132 000 m²: au sud, les boutiques des souks, des marchés publics, des bureaux, des équipements publics et des espaces résidentiels. Au nord, des bureaux principalement, des équipements publics, des commerces de détail et un grand magasin.

Le programme comporte de nombreux paradoxes, illustrés entre autres par l'absence de données archéologiques dans les documents du concours. Le quartier des souks, dernier refuge beyrouthin des modes traditionnels de commerce et d'habitat, constituait le coeur historique de la ville. Les historiens y retrouvent le reflet du cardo et du decumanus romain, et des fortifications qui dominaient la mer. Tout projet négligeant cet aspect risquait de ne jamais voir le jour face à des protestations dont l'ampleur s'annonçait internationale.

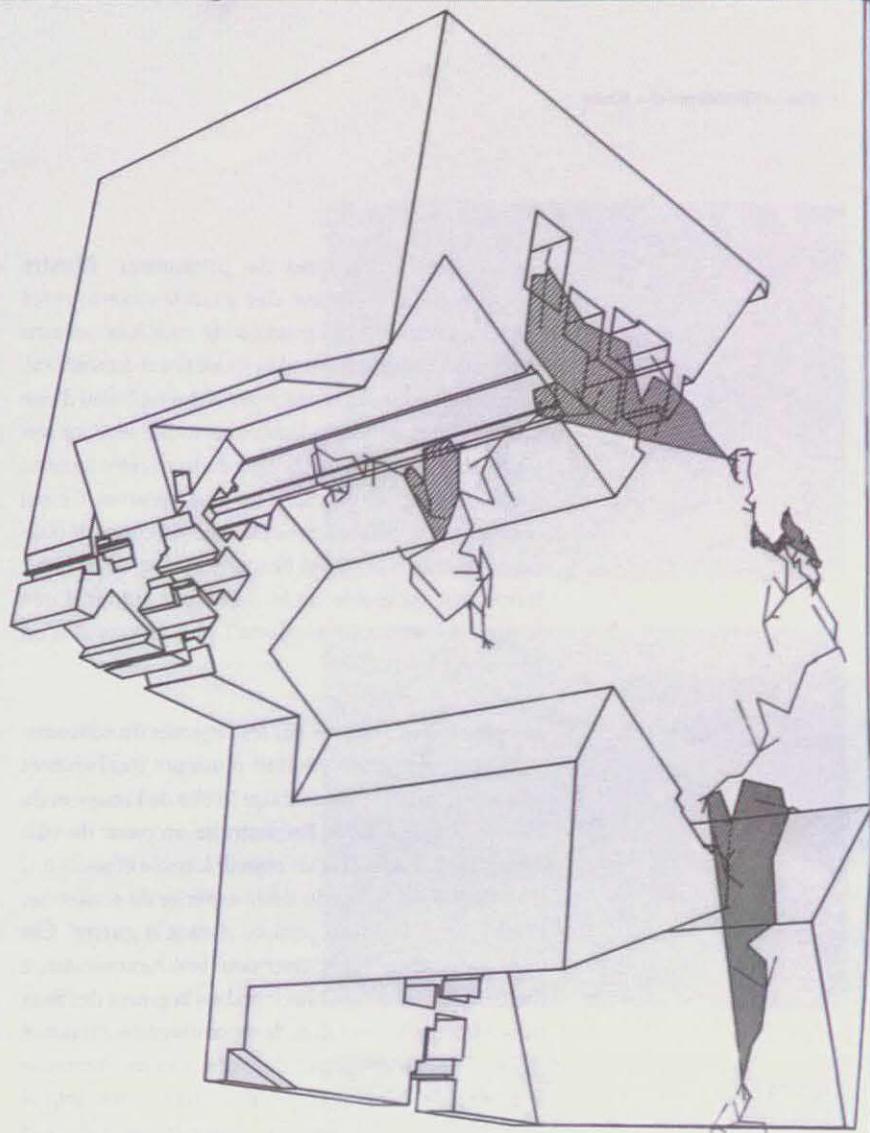
Cet écho historique se double d'une lourde charge symbolique. La ville plus récente, géométriquement planifiée à la française ou anarchiquement bâtie selon



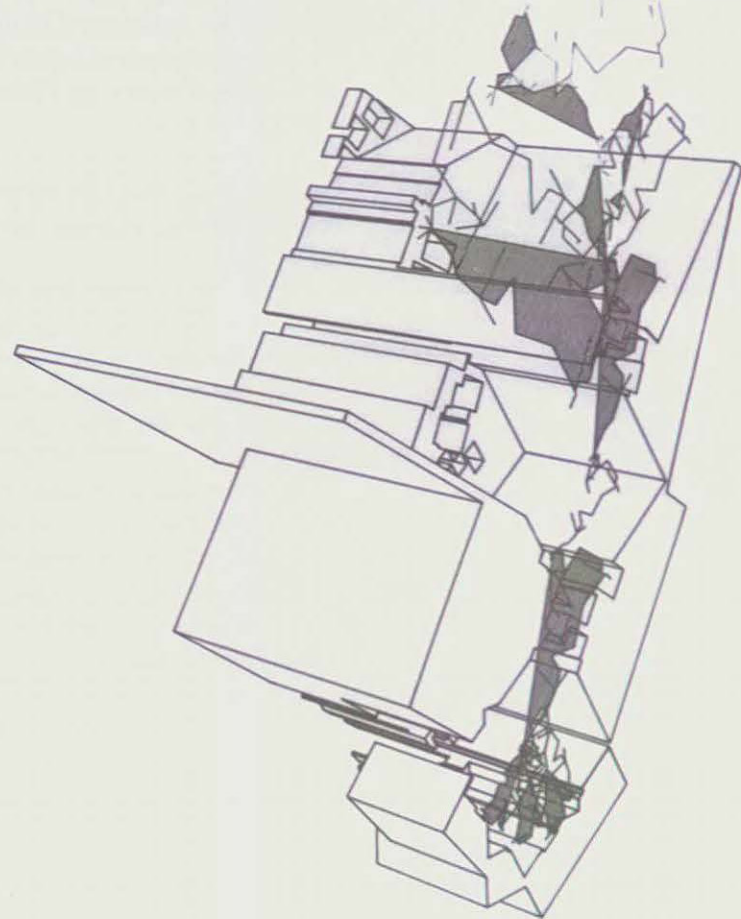
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Genèse d'un projet de concours: transformation d'un cube titanesque par les trajectoires phéniciennes du commerce de l'étain et l'obsidienne, selon une opération dite "morphogramme". Pour obtenir la trame spatiale des souks, le cube est remplacé par le Khan Antoun Bey, édifice commercial aujourd'hui détruit. Les trajectoires commencent à gauche aux trois grands ports phéniciens (Béryte, Tyr et Sidon), et aboutissent à droite sur les côtes de France et d'Angleterre, après un périple de plus de 6000 km (fig. 10).



un sauvage urbanisme de promoteur, illustre éloquentement le drame des grandes métropoles contemporaines: implantation de modèles urbains étrangers au mépris des traditions locales et du contexte. Le quartier des souks restait avant la guerre le lieu d'une identité urbaine spécifiquement beyrouthine. Pour son malheur, il s'étendait sur la ligne de front entre factions rivales, lieu des destructions les plus massives. Ce qui en subsistait après la guerre a été achevé à coups de bulldozer, comme si la société libanaise, disloquée en luttes fratricides, incapable de se regrouper autour d'une identité collective, ne supportait plus ce rappel d'un temps où elle était une.

Les problèmes soulevés par les objectifs du concours

Le programme révélait plusieurs incohérences tant au niveau des intentions qu'à celui de l'image et du rôle de la ville à venir. Reconstruire un cœur de ville dynamique et actuel est un objectif louable et réaliste. Il n'en va pas de même du désir explicite de ressusciter l'ambiance et la poésie perdues durant la guerre¹. Ces intentions auraient pu passer pour une reconnaissance du rôle essentiel de l'architecture dans la genèse des lieux bâtis. Mais que penser alors de ce commentaire prononcé au beau milieu des souks dévastés, lors de l'entrevue télévisée de personnalités libanaises, selon lequel l'architecture n'a qu'une importance mineure dans la réussite où l'échec des villes? Cette contradiction fondamentale contaminait plusieurs aspects du projet, hypothéquant la crédibilité du concours. Plusieurs zones de confrontation en résultaient:

- La quantité de surface à bâtir impliquait une densité et des hauteurs incompatibles avec l'atmosphère recherchée;
- Le programme prévoyait 2500 places de stationnement en sous-sol, au milieu de strates archéologiques potentiellement très riches;
- Sous le registre "espaces résidentiels", supposant le désir de réimplanter une population locale propre à enrainer rapidement le nouveau quartier, n'étaient prévus que des logements pour courts séjours et un hôtel;
- Entre les souks et les rivages est prévu l'aménagement d'un centre des affaires manhattanien, comme ceux qui se sont construits dans les grandes métropoles asiatiques, qui sera loué par de grandes corporations à des loyers stratosphériques.

Derrière les intentions d'une ville aux ambiances retrouvées se profile l'inquiétant projet d'un souk

simulacre, disneyworld libanais planifié pour le divertissement des cadres de passage. Aucune vision globale, ni historique, ni urbaine, ne vient tempérer la vacuité désespérée de ce futur urbain. L'attitude des organisateurs face à l'architecture trouve son paroxysme dans l'incroyable commentaire retransmis aux concurrents quelques mois après le concours, selon lequel une équipe d'urbanistes et d'architectes locaux s'appropriait à prendre les meilleurs éléments de chaque projet, et à les combiner pour créer un vrai projet urbain. Cette mentalité d'équarisseur, ce pillage sélectif dénote à quel point la notion d'architecture reste pour beaucoup un effet de surface, un travail strictement formel sans cohérence intrinsèque, sans contact aucun avec la réalité des choses, de la ville et des gens.

Néanmoins, le souk restait pour nous une occasion de confronter avec le réel des stratégies de conception trop longuement élaborées au niveau théorique, et assoiffées de programme. Le travail de conception s'est concentré sur deux axes en constant dialogue: un axe chronologique, qui oriente un rituel de refondation de la ville et tente d'en restructurer la mémoire; un axe topographique, qui explore le processus par lequel les formes et les lieux prennent sens en contexte donné.

Le développement du projet/La question du stationnement automobile

L'attitude des Beyrouthins vis-à-vis la préservation des traces historiques ne se compare pas avec celle qui a cours dans une Amérique du Nord assoiffée de racines: peu de valeur est accordée à ce qui est souvent vu comme un obstacle au progrès. Mais l'importance archéologique du sous-sol n'en reste pas moins incompatible avec les surfaces de stationnement requises. Délibérément en désaccord avec les conditions du programme, le projet réduit le nombre de places de moitiés, et répartit le reste entre le site et sa périphérie. Pour compenser les stationnements éliminés, des stations de transport en commun ont été placées aux entrées du site.

L'axe chronologique: une refondation en six étapes

La guerre s'insinue sur le rêve morbide d'une *tabula rasa*. La logique de guerre est l'éradication de la mémoire. Le champ de bataille est à la fois le reniement d'un passé pesant et la construction d'un avenir criblé de séquelles. Un projet de reconstruction ne pourra jamais se mesurer à la guerre par la puissance des énergies déployées, ni par la générosité des intentions qui le fondent: il lui faut au préalable apprivoiser la

mémoire du lieu. La mémoire est une construction collective dont on peut repérer quelques traces, conserver quelques reliques, ou raviver des instants précieusement symboliques. Mais les traces de la mémoire sont réfractaires au simulacre. Un fragment du passé ne prendra de valeur que lorsque les habitants du lieu lui auront accordé, par leurs visites et leur attention, une reconnaissance effective.

Les six fondations du quartier des souks

L'exploration des couches souterraines prépare les fondations du quartier à venir. Le phasage s'organise en trois étapes: l'ouverture des axes de circulation, l'excavation des grandes places publiques, et l'ancrage des édifices. Trois étapes intermédiaires feront l'objet de célébrations publiques, structurant la genèse progressive de la ville.

Fonder: ouvrir et commencer (fig. 3)

Cette étape vise à révéler le sillon des anciennes fortifications et les grands axes des anciens souks, qui deviendront ultérieurement des galeries souterraines. Les habitants pourront régulièrement y renouer avec la rencontre fortuite des tracés romains rectilignes et des fortifications sinueuses.

Fonder: appuyer et marquer (fig. 4)

Des architectures éphémères recevront et informeront les visiteurs et les passants. Une fois les fouilles complétées, les rues seront recouvertes en prenant soin de ménager des puits-fenêtres sur les éléments significatifs, axes d'espace qui reconnecteront la ville enfouie avec le ciel.

Fonder: reposer sur... (fig. 5)

De grands réservoirs archéologiques potentiels sont excavés. De grandes places seront établies aux endroits mêmes de ces excavations; elles en reprendront la forme inversée. Plus que des cryptes ou des cavités troglodytes, elles annoncent les espaces de la ville future. Leur forme précise dépendra du résultat des fouilles. Avec les sillons, elles participeront au réseau souterrain de la ville.

Fonder: constituer (fig. 6)

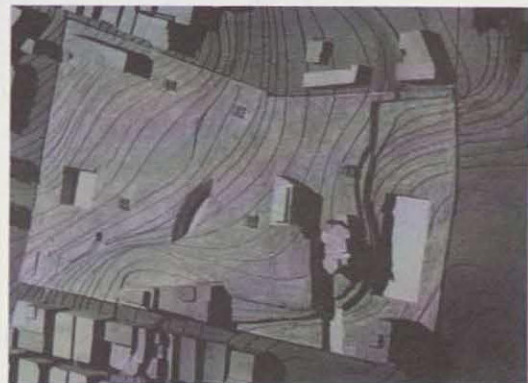
Cette phase sera l'occasion de grands rassemblements publics autour des zones excavées, et d'une première présentation des reliques archéologiques. Des passerelles, simultanément



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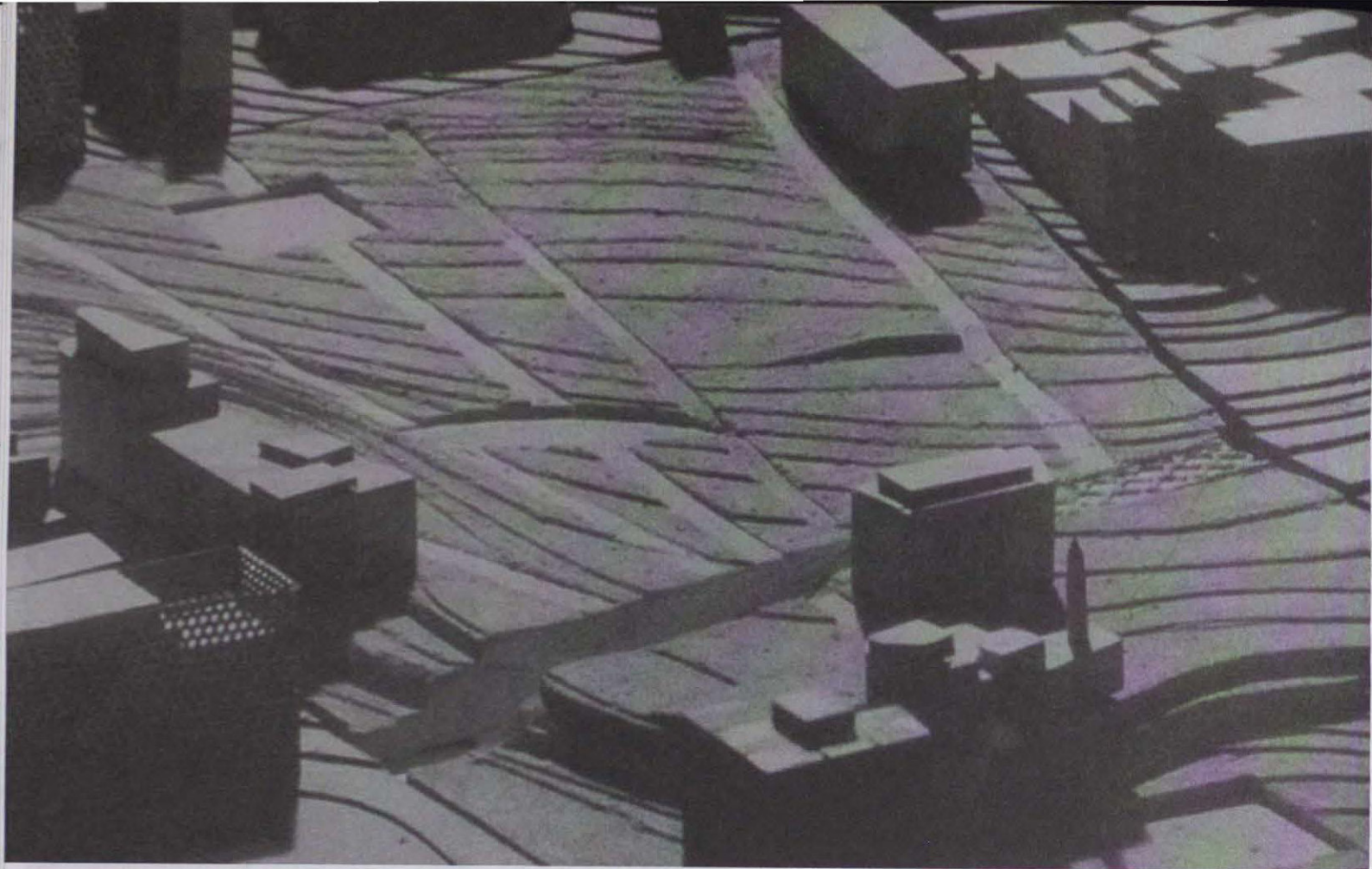
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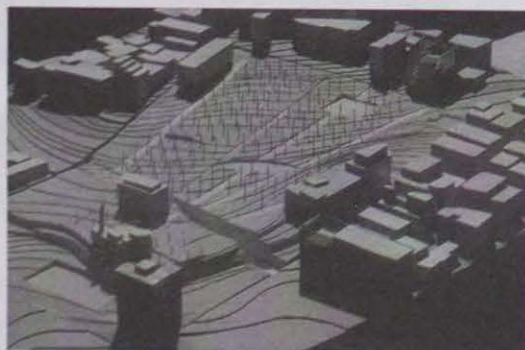


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observatoires et lieux d'exposition, seront lancées sur ces imposantes exhumations.

Fonder: établir l'assise d'un mur (fig. 7)

A intervalles réguliers sur le site non excavé, des pieux de béton supporteront de grandes dalles: ce second sol, préservant le terrain pour le futur, recevra de nouvelles constructions. Ce sondage partiel maintiendra le secret du lieu pour les générations futures.



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Fonder: établir (fig. 8)

Le site est désormais propice à l'établissement des nouveaux édifices. La refondation symbolique a précédé la refondation architecturale: la vie urbaine reprend ses droits.

L'axe topographique: le lieu comme strate finale et origine de trajectoires

A la mémoire constituée par les traces archéologiques s'ajoute l'immense imaginaire du Proche-Orient, lieu d'origine des civilisations occidentales. S'y enchevêtrent les reflets de villes stratifiées au cours des siècles; de tours qui montent jusqu'au ciel; de jardins suspendus; et maintes apparitions fugitives flottant au-dessus des horizons mythiques du Levant qui, conduisant la raison aux

franges de l'irrationnel, dissolvent la frontière entre architecte-créateur et architecte-démiurge.

Pour cartographier le territoire où évoluent ces images, deux inversions sont proposées. La première restructurifie la ville en ordre inversé: sous terre se déploie un firmament virtuel; au sommet s'étend une terre portant jardins, cascades et grands arbres; entre les deux, les strates des souks et de l'habitat (Fig. 9). La seconde organise la morphologie des souks, coeur et âme du projet, en réfléchissant par rapport à la rive les trajectoires de très grands et très anciens voyages.

La strate des souks: l'étain et l'obsidienne

Si les Beyrouthins d'aujourd'hui ne peuvent être directement reliés aux Phéniciens, la région est au carrefour de deux trajectoires phéniciennes légendaires: celles du commerce et celles du nombre. Cette mémoire perdue à travers l'histoire tumultueuse de la ville. L'importance simultanée de ces deux trajectoires n'est pas un hasard: les affaires et le nombre font bon ménage chez un peuple dont la culture et le commerce sont indissociables. La strate des souks est obtenue en croisant certaines trajectoires phéniciennes de commerce avec la trace du Khan Antoun Bey, édifice commercial majeur détruit durant la guerre.

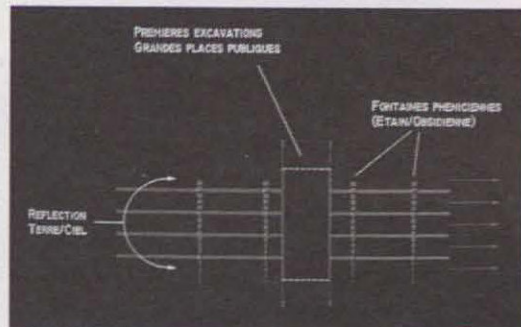
Le khan, l'étain et l'obsidienne

L'étain et l'obsidienne constituaient les marchandises les plus recherchées parmi celles que transportaient les Phéniciens.² C'est ce qui motive le choix des voyages phéniciens, comme premier élément du croisement. En une deuxième inversion (la première étant celle des strates urbaines), ces voyages sont reflétés par rapport à la rive comme une image à la surface de l'eau. Les points correspondant aux ports de commerces sont matérialisés par de petites fontaines d'étain portant le nom des ports en lettres d'obsidienne (fig. 10).

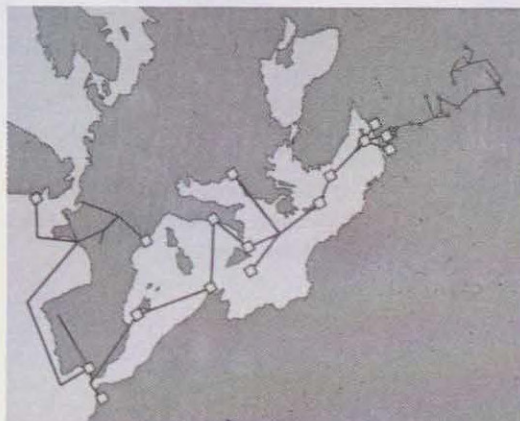
Avant la destruction du site des souks, un très grand édifice, le Khan Antoun Bey, s'élevait en front de mer (fig. 11). Il constituait l'un des noeuds de la distribution des marchandises, qui arrivaient en gros par bateau. Il a été choisi comme second élément du croisement, du fait qu'il matérialise des valeurs encore actives qui ne distinguent pas commerce et culture.

Un calcul sans nombres

L'opération qui permet ce croisement, appelée **morphogramme** appartient à une vaste famille de transformations appelée λ -calcul (lire "Lambda-calcul"), qui peut être décrite comme un calcul dans lequel les

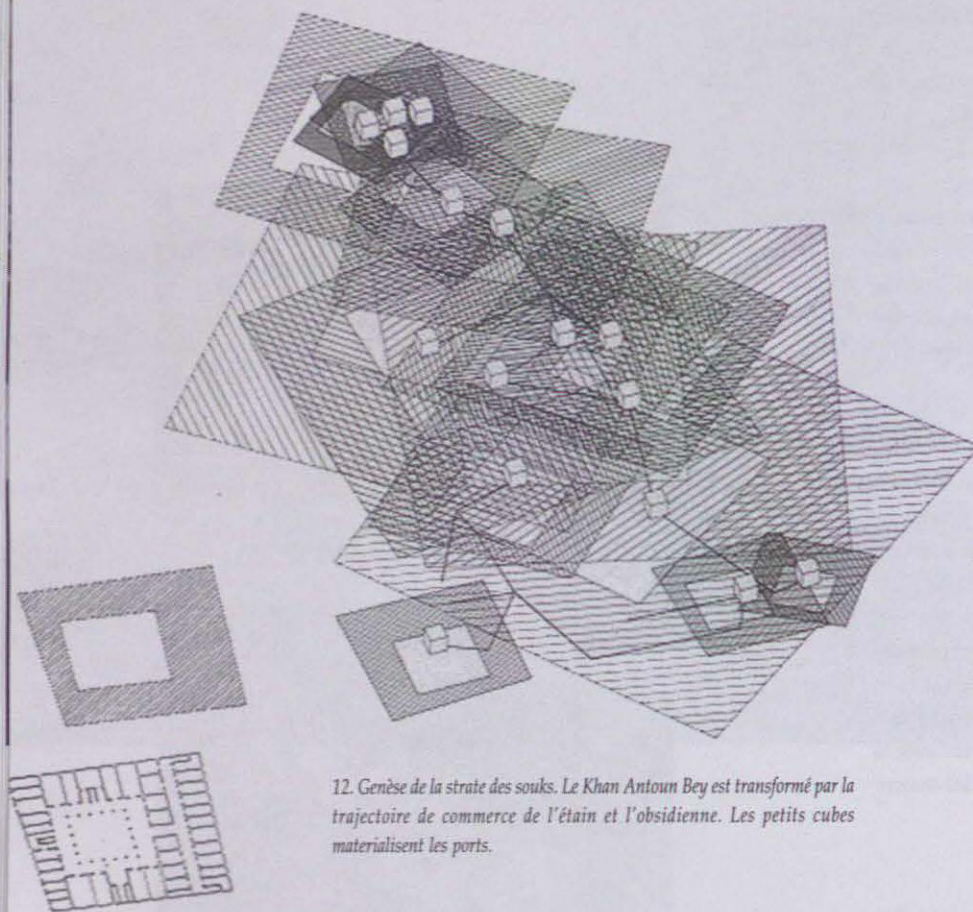


9. Première inversion: les constellations se retrouvent sous terre. Les traces archéologiques sont reflétées au sommet des immeubles.

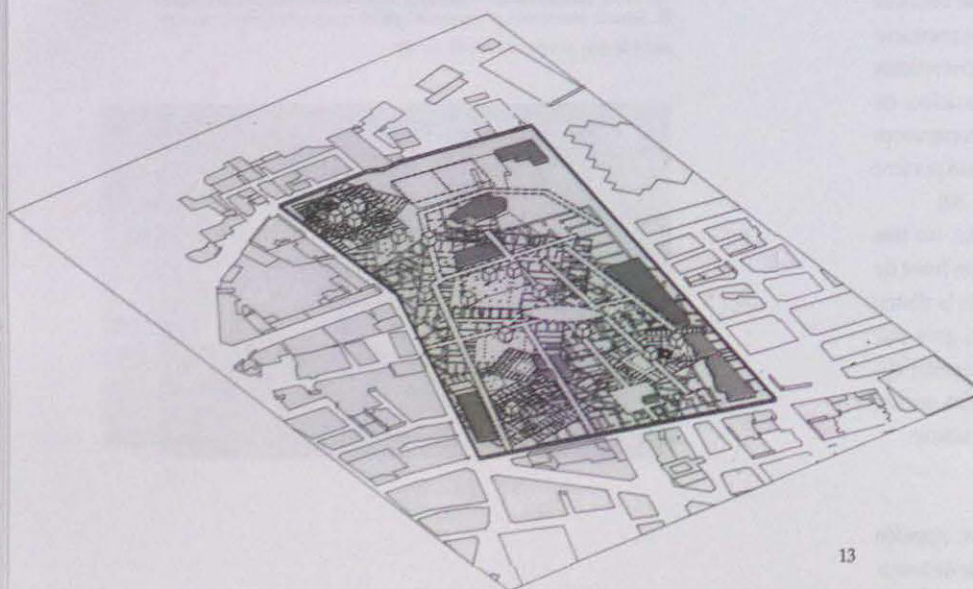


10. Seconde inversion. Les trajectoires phéniciennes sont reflétées par rapport à la rive, et mises à l'échelle du site.





12. Genèse de la strate des souks. Le Khan Antoun Bey est transformé par la trajectoire de commerce de l'étain et l'obsidienne. Les petits cubes matérialisent les ports.



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Transformation morphogramme: Ce processus informatique intensif est une tentative pour employer la puissance de l'ordinateur dans la genèse d'une morphologie complexe, en la limitant à des moments précis de la conception. Le résultat de la "transformation morphogramme" est une géométrie à deux ou trois dimensions, une proposition d'organisation spatiale destinée à orienter la répartition des masses et des lieux, imprimant dans la structure même de l'espace le passé mythique de l'endroit. Les géométries ainsi engendrées, singulières au travail informatique, ont été baptisées "architectones informatiques".

Le terme "architectone" est bien sûr utilisé en référence à Malévitch, dont les sculptures architectoniques en plâtre étaient destinées, si un programme et une fonction leur étaient impartis, à devenir architecture. Sans élaborer sur ce thème, mentionnons que le travail de Malévitch implique l'idée de formes architecturables préalables à toute architecture. L'origine de ces formes est à rechercher dans la réinterprétation constante de formes symboliques ou mythiques à la lumière de développements sociaux, culturels ou technologiques. Elles naissent et meurent selon les lieux et les époques, et sont ouvertes à tout processus visant à les rendre architecturales. Si les architectones de Malévitch nous apparaissent aujourd'hui à l'évidence comme architecturaux, il n'en était pas de même à l'époque de leur création; il faut peut-être voir dans leur apologie de l'orthogone une manifestation précoce des morphologies impliquées par l'industrialisation à grande échelle des techniques de construction. L'architectone informatique se situe sur un plan comparable: manifestation des possibilités formelles induites par l'informatique - d'ampleur comparable à celles amenées par l'industrialisation - il reste en attente d'un projet d'architecture fautive duquel il demeure strictement idéal.

Critères de conception des petits lieux du souk:

1. Création d'un labyrinthe: après quelques pas dans les souks, le visiteur qui se retourne ne doit plus voir la sortie; les orientations des axes piétonniers secondaires ne doivent pas donner d'indications évidentes d'orientation.
2. Création d'espaces précieux: Les bazars et les souks du Proche-Orient se caractérisent par la présence d'espaces enclos: de petits souks au sein des grands, isolés de tous côtés comme de petites bulles, accessibles uniquement par une entrée que l'on barricade la nuit. Les souks aux bijoux et les souks aux épices entrent dans cette catégorie.
3. Proscription des angles inutilisables: La disposition des khans dans la trame compositionnelle engendre parfois des rencontres de mur selon des angles trop aigus pour être utilisables. Ces angles ont tous été éliminés à l'échelle du passant, soit en les recoupant, soit en les utilisant comme voies d'accès latérales.
4. Localisation des éléments du programme selon les géométries rencontrées: Les différentes échelles des occurrences du Khan provoquent des géométries extrêmement variées. Les géométries plus éclatées ont été associées aux éléments plus contemporains du programme: cafés, bars, cinémas...
5. Sens des objets selon l'échelle d'occurrence des souks: les souks apparaissant à petite échelle ont été utilisés pratiquement tels quels.

nombres ne sont pas nécessaires. Pouvoir traiter des objets non numériques (ici objets graphiques) étend à l'infini le paysage embrassé par le calcul, reléguant le calcul numérique au statut de cas particulier parmi tous les calculs possibles.

Une géométrie itérative

Le λ -calcul se prête remarquablement bien à l'itération, opération qui consiste à réappliquer successivement une opération sur son propre résultat. Sa répétition à l'infini produit des géométries fractales, très complexes. Le souk offre une occasion unique d'explorer le potentiel architectural de telles géométries, replis d'espace et de matière aux échelles multiples, susceptibles d'engendrer l'émulsion de pleins et de vides qui permet la ville.

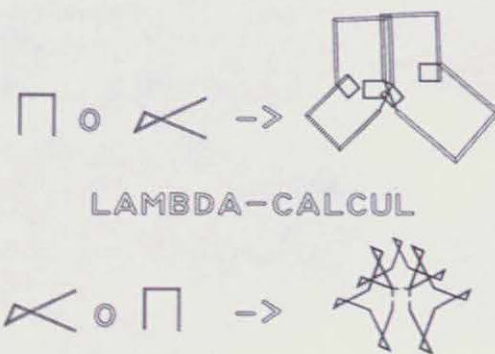
Le programme du concours offrait la possibilité de reconstruire le Khan Antoun Bey. Le projet proposé va plus loin et utilise la trame spatiale du Khan comme élément de base pour la trame des souks. Les trajectoires phéniciennes répartissent, par le biais du morphogramme, une vingtaine de souks sur le terrain (fig. 12). Plusieurs essais de répartition ont été tentés, en faisant varier les paramètres de la transformation. La sélection entre ces essais s'est faite de façon purement intuitive, selon le potentiel de chaque essai à engendrer un espace possédant les caractéristiques d'un labyrinthe, et en vérifiant la compatibilité des espaces générés avec le programme.

Ensuite, deux processus d'élagage ont été appliqués. D'abord, la trame créée s'est vue tranchée par les grandes voies de circulation, les places publiques, et les limites périphériques du projet. Cette étape a déterminé la morphologie des îlots des souks, encore recouverts par le tracé fort complexe des différentes occurrences du Khan (fig.13 et 14). Le second élagage, à très petite échelle, a consisté à parcourir le site pas à pas, en établissant un par un les espaces des futures boutiques, en creusant dans l'enchevêtrement des tracés, comme avec une machette virtuelle, des cavités hospitalières et utilisables. Cinq critères de base ont présidé cet élagage.

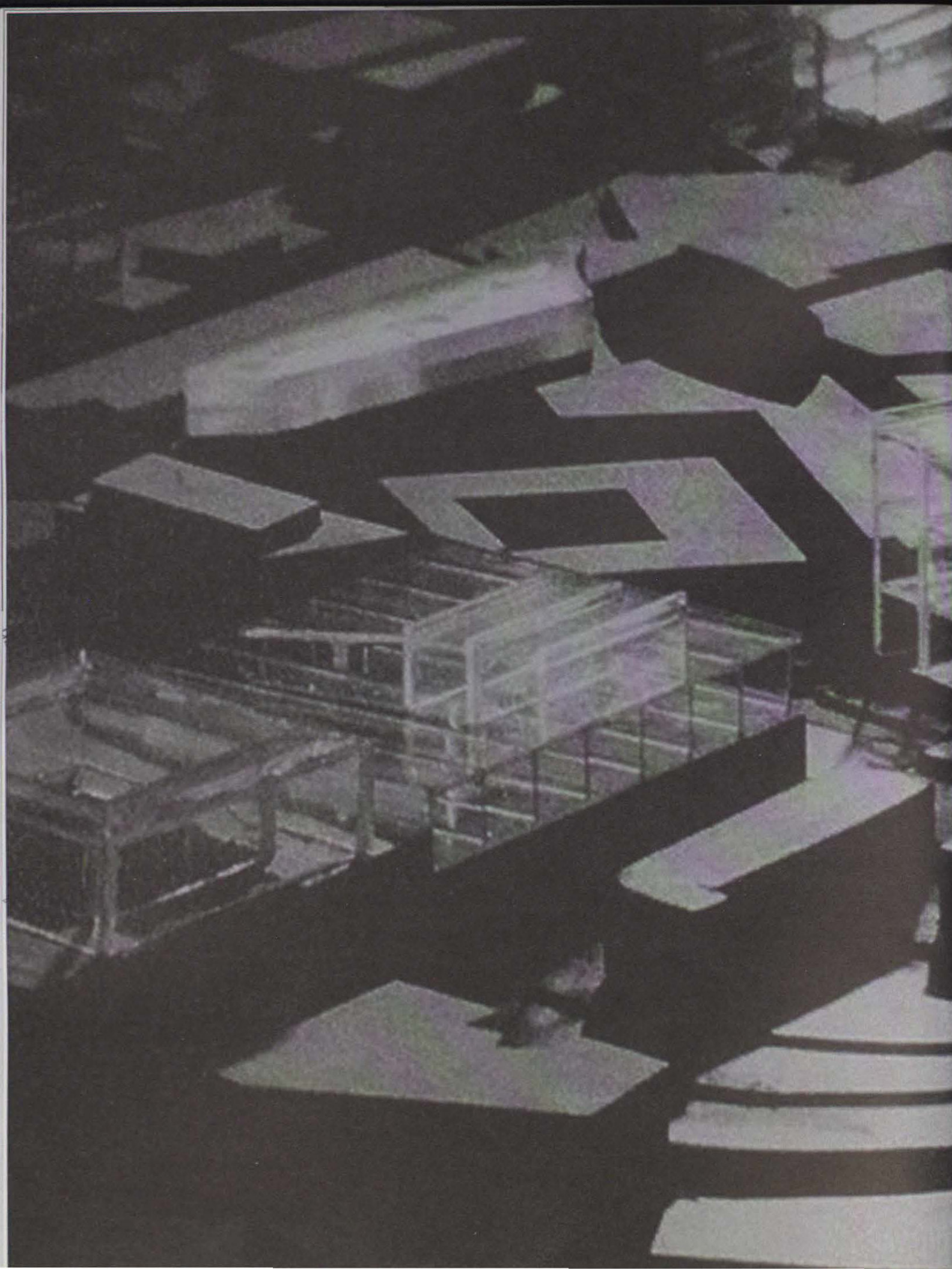
A l'emplacement original du Khan Antoun Bey s'élève un grand magasin qui en reprend la typologie générale. Intérieurement excavé selon un grand espace cubique, disloqué selon une faille centrale, il voit l'une de ses moitiés désaxée pour refermer la place nord du site. Il s'élève à la triple origine du reflet des trajectoires de commerce, qui comprend les villes antiques de Béryte, Tyr et Sidon.

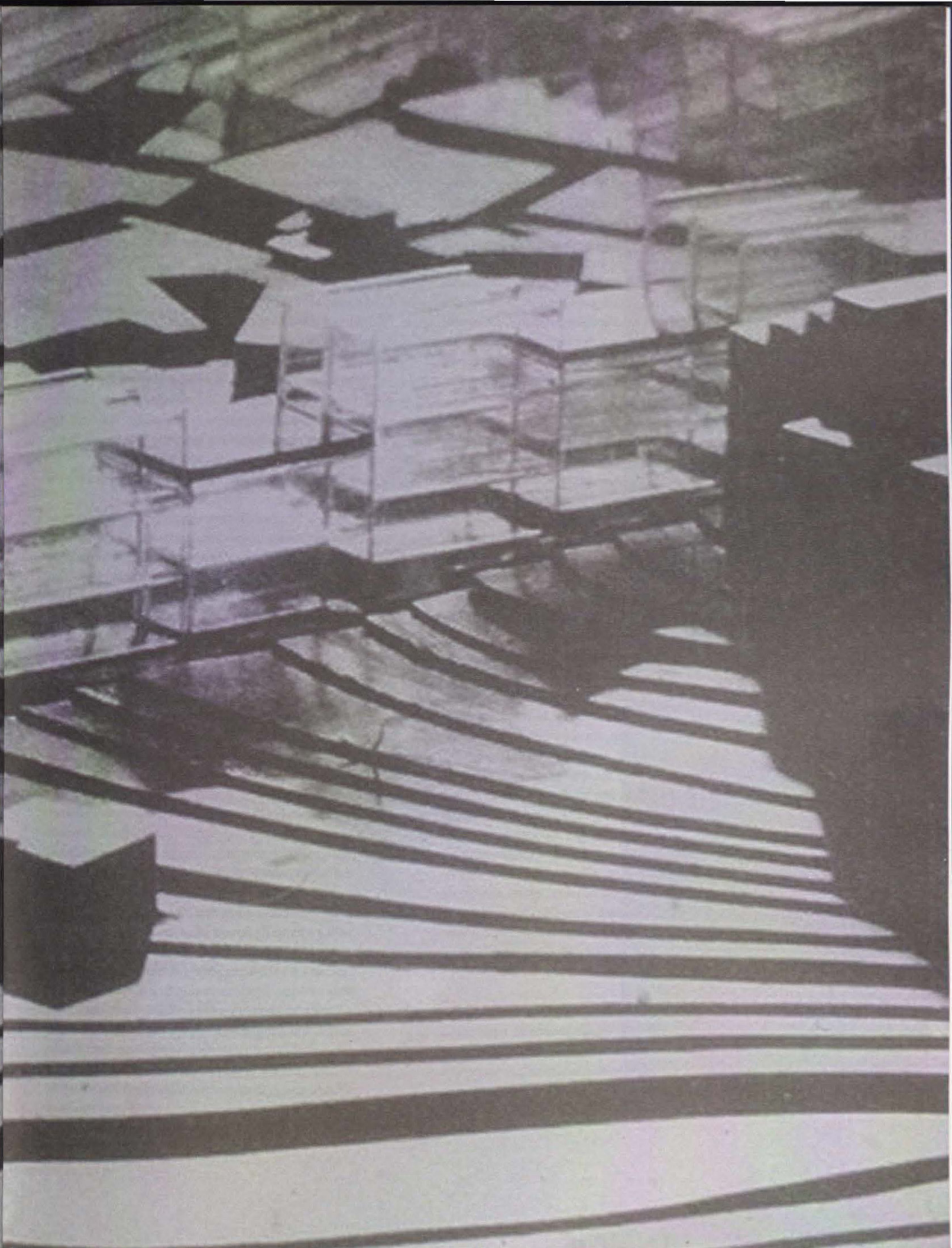


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Le λ -calcul: le croisement de deux formes génère une troisième forme. Le résultat dépend de l'ordre des facteurs.





Les places ont été traitées de façon individuelle. Une ancienne mosquée s'élève au nord du site, dominant une vaste place en contrebas. Profitant de cette situation, son minaret devient le gnomon d'un très grand cadran solaire, tracé sur la place par des jeux de pavages. Au centre des souks, une autre place s'étend selon une forme délicate délimitée par deux arcs de cercles. Aucun accident, aucun ressaut ne vient troubler la netteté des parois curvilignes. Lieu d'apaisement spatial, elle se veut contrepoin à la turbulence des souks. Au sud, une petite place prend acte de l'existence d'une seconde mosquée sauvegardée, et lui compose un écran au moyen de nouveaux édifices.

La strate des habitations

Elle est engendrée à partir du tracé d'habitats anciens. Il n'existe pas à proprement parler de maison libanaise, sinon un curieux artefact culturel créé par les promoteurs de la fin du siècle dernier et qui visaient à séduire la clientèle locale. Il semble résulter du croisement d'une maison arabe à cour carrée avec quelque palais vénitien. Il existe par contre une "maison beyrouthine", dont quelques rares exemples subsistent. Des pièces regroupées autour d'un puits forment une cour intérieure irrégulière, ouverte sur un côté. La strate d'habitation utilise cette seconde maison pour transformer la maison libanaise, en une autre opération morphogramme. Afin d'atteindre une échelle compatible avec des lieux domestiques, la transformation morphogramme est appliquée deux fois de façon récursive sur les deux maisons (fig.15 et 16).

Pourquoi utiliser un objet aussi artificiel que la maison libanaise dans une tentative de créer un lieu contextuel? D'une part, l'aspect artificiel et fabriqué de cette dernière ne lui enlève pas un certain intérêt au niveau spatial; et cette récupération d'images au profit d'activités spéculatives, si malaisée soit-elle sur un plan strictement éthique, a résulté en un grand nombre de constructions, qui rendent le modèle représentatif du lieu. D'autre part, elle représente la difficile recherche d'identité qui marque l'architecture libanaise, et la population libanaise en général.

La strate des jardins

Dans ces jardins suspendus seront replantés la totalité des palmiers et des cèdres du site d'avant la guerre. La transformation morphogramme évoque d'une part le tracé des murailles et des anciens souks, et d'autre part la trace de l'ancienne mosquée au nord du site. La

strate recouvre le sommet de tous les édifices quelle que soit leur altitude. Elle apparaît comme un jardin initialement plan, qui aurait subi une dissociation verticale le distribuant sur différents niveaux. Le vocabulaire formel évoque une faille ou fracture géologique.

La strate des bureaux

Organisée comme un rempart autour des souks, elle s'élève sur plusieurs étages. Des créneaux au sud laissent entrer le soleil; les interstices entre les édifices, sorte de portails sur la ville, évoquent de grandes colonnes basaltiques jaillissant de la terre. Par leur échelle et leur contact au sol, elles rappellent les circonstances géologiques qui ont créé le mont Liban.

Conclusion: l'histoire, l'ordinateur, et la question du sens

L'arrivée de l'informatique en architecture pose aux architectes la question fondamentale du sens, en étalant de façon criante la dissociation de la forme et de la signification. Cette déconnection paroxystique est induite par la technique même: l'ordinateur scalpe l'objet de toute signification, puis le convertit en une séquence de phénomènes électroniques. Que le résultat obtenu ait un sens dépend du processus inverse qui recodera ces séquences, et de la présence d'un observateur qui interprètera ce recodage en fonction de son histoire, de sa culture, et du contexte.

Le rôle de l'observateur dans la genèse du sens se rapproche ici des interprétations sartriennes et foucaaldiennes: le sens n'est jamais contenu dans la forme, mais naît de la rencontre de la forme et d'une conscience. Les partisans de cette thèse citent plusieurs textes informatiques d'écriture automatique, donnant souvent des phrases compréhensibles. D'autres théories du même ordre portent sur des formes géométriques ou des séquences musicales. Toutes tendent à présenter le cerveau comme une machine à fabriquer du sens, même à partir de formes insensées.

L'ordinateur nous remet constamment face à la question première du projet d'architecture, celle du sens inhérent, injecté ou induit. Une question qui nous pousse trop souvent vers des voies de garage de toutes sortes - idéologiques, techniques, historiques.... Il serait imprudent, et surtout stérile, d'y tenter une réponse trop rapide. Face à cette question, le projet (Etain ∪ Obsidienne) λ Khan se place délibérément en situation instable, en introduisant des géométries, des rituels et des transformations justifiées à priori par la décision

consciente des architectes, à partir d'observations tirées du contexte. Les formes de base sont choisies par une équipe étrangère: rien ne leur garantit à priori une reconnaissance par les Beyrouthins. Mais cela ne rend pas ce projet exceptionnel. De multiples plans d'urbanisation se fondent sur les mêmes prémisses: mais beaucoup adoptent une position difficilement acceptable, par l'emploi de stratégies d'urbanisation uniformes et homogènes d'une ville à l'autre, et dont la signification locale est quasiment inexistante, depuis la trame spatiale jusqu'au design des édifices.

(Etain ∪ Obsidienne) λ Khan constate dès les premiers temps la force symbolique des souks de Beyrouth, et la puissance fragile des images qu'ils évoquent. Conscient de l'impossibilité de maîtriser ou d'épuiser ces images, le projet en propose une cartographie volontairement incomplète. Il tente non pas de se fondre à ces images, mais de montrer, à travers des dispositifs visant à les rendre précieuses et essentielles, naviguant au plus près des contingences topographiques et archéologiques, que l'importance et l'identité d'un lieu ne sont jamais séparables des attentions qu'on leur accorde.

1. A cette fin, l'un des cahiers fournis regroupait un ensemble de dessins, de peintures, d'extraits littéraires et de poèmes, destinés à donner aux concurrents éloignés une idée de l'esprit du lieu.

2. L'importance de l'obsidienne au Proche-Orient est attestée jusqu'à l'aube des civilisations urbaines, dans les ruines de Çatal Hüyük plus de 7000 ans avant notre ère.

3. Cette conclusion doit être tempérée: l'ordinateur n'est pas entièrement responsable de la forme produite. Il ne fait qu'assembler fragments architectoniques, lexicaux ou musicaux. Chaque terme prend tour à tour le rôle d'élément *signifiant* ou d'élément *contextuel* dépendant de l'observateur. Pour donner un électure architectonique à un tel travail, il faut un lexique de formes pré-existantes et une banque de règles d'assemblage. C'est au niveau de la définition de ces éléments, du développement des règles et des paramètres d'assemblage, que peut prendre place un travail de conception à part entière.

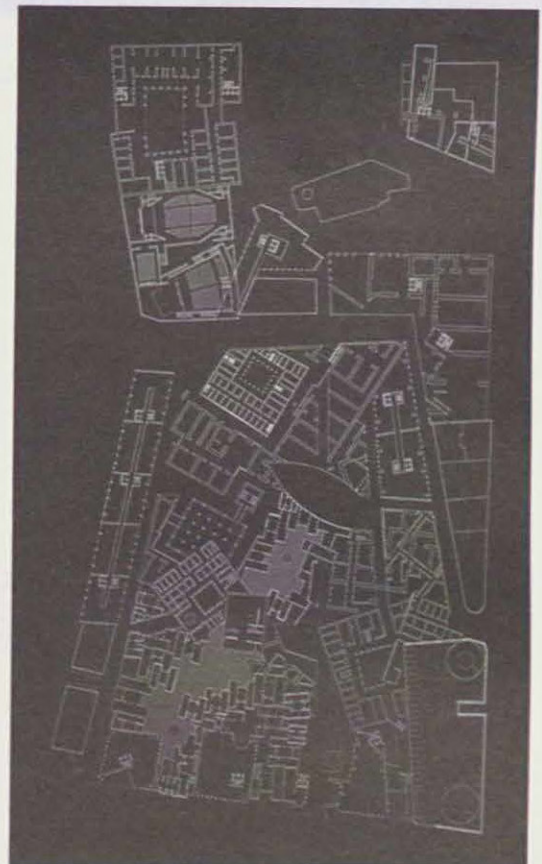
Jean-Pierre Chupin est architecte à Montréal et enseignant à l'Université du Québec à Montréal. Il est actuellement professeur invité à l'Ecole d'architecture de Toulouse.

Nicolas Reeves est architecte à Montréal et enseignant à l'Université du Québec à Montréal.

Lea Zeppetelli est architecte à Montréal et enseignante à l'Université de Montréal.



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Wet Architecture: Rogelio Salmona's Quimbaya Gold Museum¹

Ricardo L. Castro



I. Coffee in Bogotá

It is also refreshing to hear the water, to see it flowing. I use water as company. The trajectory and the sound seem very important to me. In the Guest House, in the patios, there are meetings of water. In the Alhambra the water flows and remains in the ponds, then goes out and falls. I try to have waters meet, even to have them form filigree, to go out, to be heard, to be seen and to be accessible to the touch.²

On many evenings during my visits to Colombia in the early 1990s, I sat with Rogelio Salmona in his atelier, located on the top floor of the building he designed for the Colombian Society of Architects. We sipped coffee and contemplated the panorama of Bogotá's urban texture against the overwhelming verticality of the Andes, the gigantic natural limit to the city's eastward growth. With the tape recorder running, we discussed the current state of architecture in Colombia. In contrast to the political situation of the country, architecture is healthy and strong, in part due to

Salmona's great influence. One evening, Salmona described his deep fascination with the concept of "encanto"—enchantment. I could not have found a more appropriate idiom to describe the Quimbaya Gold Museum.

The Quimbaya Gold Museum and Cultural Centre in Armenia, Quindio, Colombia, is a wet building. It enchants because instead of protecting itself, it embraces and takes advantage of water. Like the object that intercepting light casts shadows, making known both its presence and that of the light, the Quimbaya Gold Museum is fully revealed only when it interacts with water. The building engages us symbolically and experientially through a mesmerising interpenetration of form and water, using and controlling water in its various states and at various scales. While the surrounding landscape gently welcomes and celebrates rain, the action and presence of water alchemically transform the Museum, enhancing the experience of the place with reflections, smells and colours. The flow of water through the interior spaces, for example—through the spouting fountains, down the various canals and over the surfaces of the building—is mirrored almost every day at a larger scale when one of the region's tropical storms turns the whole complex into a truly wet artifact. Then, as if the Museum were a baroque fountain or some pre-Columbian ceremonial site, water activates the porous building surfaces of brick and tile. Although traditional brick and clay tablets are used, their arrangement and combination with pre-cast concrete elements such as fountain walls and basins, or with metal elements such as skylights and windows, create an exuberance of surfaces, patterns and earth colours. These combinations serve both to hold and control water and are enhanced in turn by the water's presence. This sensitivity to water "is something that has not been lost in European architecture," claims Salmona: "Here we have forgotten that in Bogotá, in the Viejo Caldas, even in Cartagena every thing becomes wet. Stones become wet, then they start drying and the sparkling on them changes. There are different degrees of shimmer. As they dry, they change colour. This is a very important fact."³

II. A History of the Quimbaya Gold Museum

Rogelio Salmona designed the Quimbaya Gold Museum and Community Center in 1985. The complex, which belongs to Colombia's "Banco de la Republica" (Bank of the Republic), was inaugurated in 1986. A

terracotta building made of several kinds of brick and clay tablets, it is located on a sloped site at the north entrance of Armenia, capital of the Department of Quindio, on the national road that connects this city with the northern part of the country.

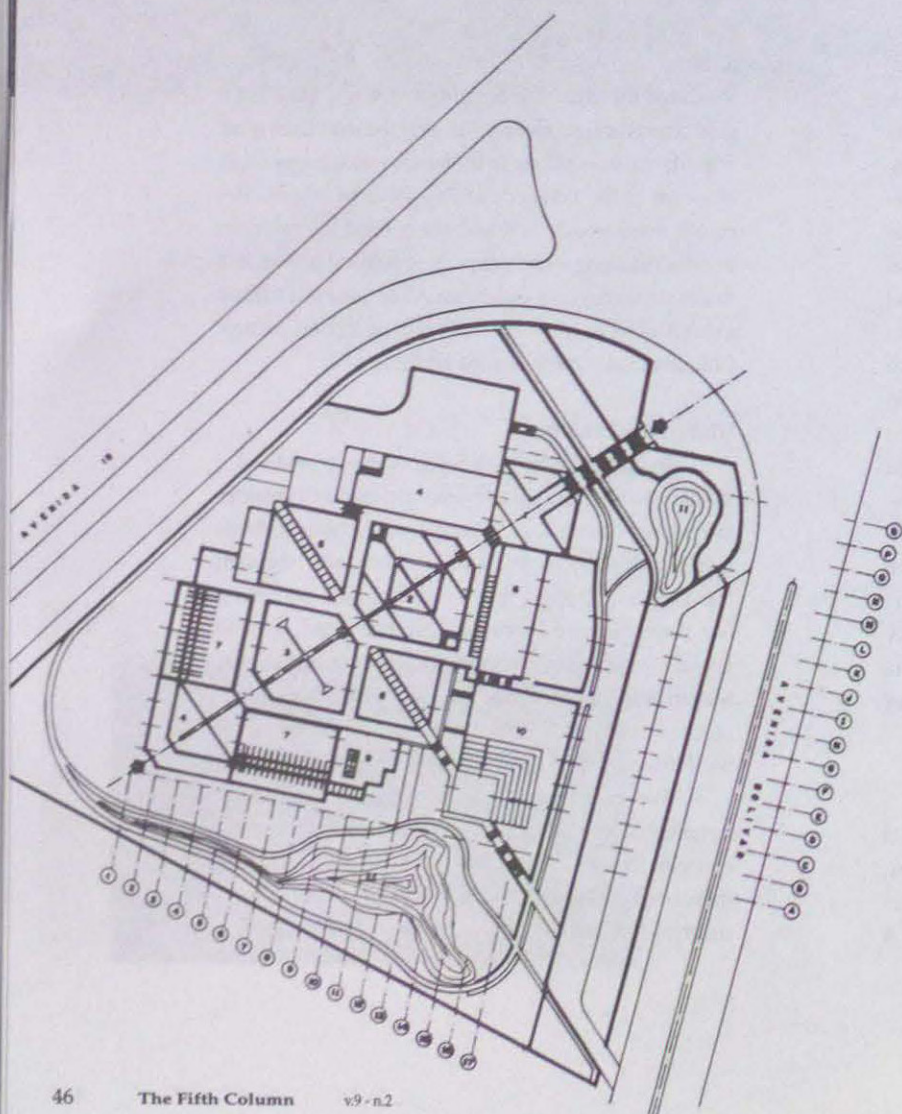
Armenia is a modest and rather recent city. It is one of the coffee centres of the country. Here, the softest type of the aromatic plant is grown on the slopes of the Central Range of the three mountain chains that form the Colombian Andes. The foundation of Armenia dates back to 1889, the time of the so-called *Colonización Antioqueña* (Antioquia Settlement). In the mid-nineteenth century, settlers coming from the Northern region of Antioquia colonized a vast territory known as Viejo Caldas. Viejo Caldas had already been settled, although unsuccessfully, by the Spanish Conquistadors in the sixteenth century. For three centuries, until the 1800s, the region remained mostly abandoned and covered by jungle. In 1966, Viejo Caldas was divided into three new departments: Caldas, Rizaralda and Quindio.

Before the arrival of the Spaniards, though, a tribe of famed Indian goldsmiths known as the Quimbaya inhabited the area. Although thousands of Quimbaya gold objects are in collections all over the world, the most important pieces belong to the famous and unique Gold Museum of the Banco de la Republica in Bogotá. Recently, the Banco de la Republica opened the museum in Armenia along with several other cultural centres and museums throughout Colombia. All of these institutions exhibit objects from the national collection of pre-Columbian and colonial gold artifacts.⁴

III. Wet Architecture

In Armenia, Rogelio Salmona has re-ordered a local landscape through a series of architectural gestures impregnated with a geometrical will. These gestures help us, visitors-*flâneurs*, in our "promenade" through the complex, directing our movement and controlling our views. Salmona also uses geometry and place to evoke a pre-Columbian past. Inspired by the ancient Mayan cities of Chichen Itzá, Uxmal and Palenque, the outdoor and indoor places of the Quimbaya Museum result from a skillful weaving of masses and courtyards.

We enter the museum high on the slope of the mountain along a North-South axis which diagonally connects four courtyards. As in the Mayan complexes, these courtyards are linked at the corners. The two main courtyards of the complex are defined by galleries that



wrap around the central space. This is another spatial type dear to Salmona, derived not from the Romanesque cloister that it resembles, but from Medieval pre-Columbian American architectural forms.⁵

Water accompanies us on our promenade down the stepped courtyards. Calm water appears in the two triangular basins that symmetrically flank the path. It re-appears in the fountains and canals, descending at different speeds through the two intermediate courtyards. Finally in the fourth courtyard, tranquil water fills the triangular basins that again symmetrically flank the canal and stairs. At this point, the canal abruptly stops. The liquid disappears almost magically, to be conducted underground beyond the walls of the complex where it joins the stream that originates in a pond next to the entrance. This pond feeds the hydraulic complex of the Quimbaya Gold Museum in two different manners. In the interior, an architecture of courtyard troughs controls and canalizes the water. In the exterior, water runs freely through an architecture of sinuous canals and free-form ponds, nourishing the lavish landscape of regional plants that surround the northern part of the complex.

As at the President's Guest House in Cartagena, another of Salmona's outstanding buildings from the 1980s, it is possible to walk over the roofs of the entire complex of the Quimbaya Gold Museum. The vertical dimension and the concepts "above" and "below" acquire true meaning here. From the roofscape the building unfolds progressively, revealing layer after layer: rooms and stairs behind the galleries, aediculae, a new transversal axis directing the visitor's attention to the outdoor theatre, the lush garden and the mountains to the North and East, a view of the valley and far away mountains to the South and West. Walking on the roofscape evokes memories of wandering on roof-terraces of Mayan palaces and ceremonial compounds.

IV. A Reading of the Quimbaya Gold Museum

The canals in the courtyards of the Quimbaya Gold Museum—which Salmona calls "atarjeas" using the old Spanish-Arabic name—are subject to various interpretations. They may refer to Colombia's European past, symbolizing the utopian world of the Islamic garden so pervasive in the Spanish Colonial heritage of the Americas, as they do at the Guest House in Cartagena. But the canals are also related to the geometrical patterns that are carved or depicted in such pre-Columbian artifacts as the elegant Tumaco printing clay rolls, the Quimbaya gold ornaments, the inexplicable Nazca land-

scapes, and the richly decorated surfaces of Meso-American architecture.

Reference to the Columbian Southwest is ever-present in Salmona's surface treatment of the courtyards. In the archeological zone of St. Agustin, unknown carvers sculpted the rocky bed of a river creating a hydraulic and sculptural masterpiece. Known as the "Lavapatas" (feet washing basin), the sculpture comes to life as the river flows through it. After a thunderstorm we realize that the entire museum has been similarly conceived to act as a gathering device for and container of water. When viewed from the terraces, the courtyards and the geometrical canals carved into the floor acquire a new presence: the complex clearly reveals its hollowness, as if it were a pre-Columbian clay vessel.

Salmona's multi-faceted exploration of the symbolic and experiential aspects of water may well serve to explain the notion of enchanted domain, *lugar encantado*, which the architect is so fond of. It is this awareness of the qualities of water that makes the Gold Museum a unique building. Having been nourished by an early tradition, the museum speaks of a new tradition. Thus despite times of great disillusion and architectural banality, here resides a significant work. In combining the simple ingredients of building with a deep knowledge of landscape, forms, history, and local culture, Salmona demonstrates that he is an architectural sorcerer capable of creating an enchanted place.

1. This essay is an abridged version of one of the sections in my book *The Marvelous-Real and the Architecture of Rogelio Salmona* (forthcoming). In 1988 I visited Cartagena and participated as a guest teacher and critic in the International Workshop on Republican Architecture offered by Los Andes University. During this stay of several weeks in Cartagena I succumbed to the spell of this magic city and to that of one of Rogelio Salmona's highly praised buildings, the President's Guest House. Project grants from the Canada Council allowed me to return to Colombia in 1991 and 1992 to document the Guest House, the Quimbaya Gold Museum and several private houses, and to interview Salmona extensively.

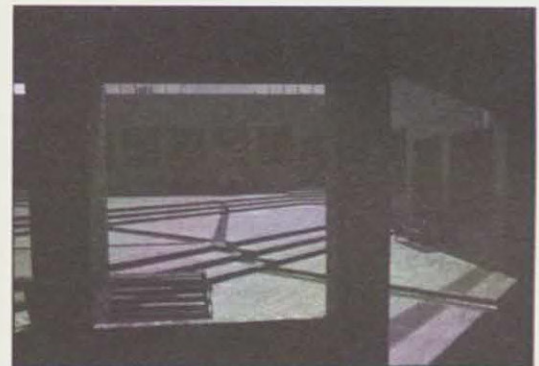
2. *Ibid.* p. 18.

3. *Ibid.* p. 19.

4. The design and program of the Quimbaya Gold Museum incorporate a Cultural Center for the city. The program includes a documentation center specialized in regional themes, a hall for travelling exhibitions, a multi-use hall for concerts, theater, lectures and movie and video screening, an outdoor theatre, a children's wing and staff offices, as well as permanent exhibition facilities where the gold and ethnographic pieces are displayed.

5. I refer here to Medieval American architecture as defined by Pál Kelemen in his *Medieval American Art*, rev. ed. (New York: Dover, 1969).

Ricardo Castro is a professor at McGill University presently on sabbatical. He enjoys drinking coffee in Bogotá.



How I Read Lacan and Still Managed To Get an Architectural Education: A Discussion about Gender and Spatial Perception

Amal Andraos
Bruce Eckfeldt
David Theodore

From 1992 to 1995 a group of students met weekly at the School of Architecture, McGill University, to discuss the subject of "feminism and architecture." Although an earlier reading group organized by a faculty member in 1991 involved some practising architects, the new group was a direct student response to a perceived lack of such discussion in the school's curriculum. Almost all participants were undergraduates; in fact, the schedule was tailored to accommodate them. Readings were chosen based on individual and group interests. In its third year, we changed the reading group's focus to "gender and spatial perception" in order to indicate better to newcomers the range and themes of the discussions. (A selection of the readings is given in the notes to this article.)

In May 1995 three of the original members met again to evaluate and discuss the group.¹

Carol I still find a lot of what we read impenetrable—the "Manifesto for Cyborgs," Lacan and of course Judith Butler.² I often agreed with something—Butler's worry about the limits of social construction theory, for example—but then when we met, it seemed as if we had all read different books!

Bob I see that as an advantage of our method. Because we started out knowing so little, we were forced to go through the readings carefully. Ironically, the discussions were less critical last year when we had graduate students who were well-read in feminist theory. They always knew the author by reputation, good or bad, before they read the texts, and those reputations blinded them to weak arguments. Why do you need Lacan to know that visibility is not always a good political strategy?³

Anastasia You don't; but you need scepticism. The discussions taught me what I didn't know, and exploded the preconceptions I had when I entered school. If I hadn't participated in the discussion group, it would have taken me much longer to develop a critical attitude towards what I do in design. Put on a postcard, feminism for me is a way of keeping questions open. "Gender" is a question that can always be asked; I now ask it of everything.

B Aha, a testimonial: "How I read Lacan and still managed to get an architectural education."

C Scepticism is ok, but ignorance also breeds complacency. Unfortunately some students, men and women, object to the whole idea of feminism. For them, society seems perfectly democratic; achievement is based on merit; "he" is a naturally inclusive, universal, unambiguous term for both men and women.⁴

A Well, because women—even the first students during WWII—often win prizes and awards, achievement can *appear* to be based on merit. Still, I don't feel that women are separated and treated differently at McGill. We're certainly not separated physically.

B It's not that women are kept in a ghetto and beaten. But gender and femininity and feminism are almost *always* pushed out of sight. By the time we graduate, McGill students have had about an hour total of exposure to the topics of gender and feminism, and that hour is in first year history classes. We have only one female faculty, but an all-female office staff.⁵

C That history class is also the only required course in which students must write an essay, in a four year program! That's why I thought a reading group on feminism and architecture—sorry, gender and spatial perception—was such a good idea. It was a chance to read and to think about something other than circulation patterns or re-bar spacing.

B Why are architects always so reluctant to figure out re-bar spacing?

C There are ideas that are fascinating to think about and that make sense in historical analyses, but that are also almost irrelevant to the design process. Diana Agrest's article on the the body in the city, for example, is interesting as feminist architectural history, if tendentious,⁶ but her designs hardly stand out as feminist.

A Who says the concepts and ideas gathered under the term "gender" can or should have anything to do with "spatial perception"?

C Yes, that's fundamental: What does feminism have to do with architecture?

B You will never get through complex work like Bloomer's if you keep questioning that premise.⁷

A But constant questioning lets us see Barbara Duden's work on the female body as an argument *towards* a history of the body, and not simply as a description of incontrovertible facts.⁸

B I think that the distinction between historical analysis and design is not important. Feminist historians who analyze space and architecture using the categories of feminism and gender can change the way you design: they made me careful not to segregate or deny the women who I am designing for in exchange for abstract formal values.⁹

C But surely you don't need feminism to tell you that? Marxism or humanism or Christian charity—any ethical thinking will help you to understand the real effects, social and physical, of what you build.

B Of course you need feminism; feminism specifically addresses the oppression of women. It supplements or rewrites marxism and humanism by insisting on the importance of private and domestic space: reproduction is a form of production, the private sphere includes citizens.¹⁰

A And I'm concerned that in watching out for those real effects, you end up simply making a functional checklist—Christopher Alexander patterns taken from feminist collectives. Is there a vestibule? Can you manoeuvre easily with a pram? Are stairways well lit? That's where the Matrix group goes wrong—defensible space O.K., but only as something to be considered, like HVAC systems.¹¹

B But those checklists can obviously shape and reflect larger ideas. When Beecher designed a new kitchen, it was in order to effect a new role for women in society: to reinforce or change the way women lived their lives and how they interpreted those lives.¹²

A Still, there are different kinds of larger ideas. I mean the kinds of ideas that Pérez-Gómez talks about when he rhapsodizes over Michaelangelo or Colonna: that architecture embodies rituals, symbolizes the cosmos, gives order and purpose to human existence, connecting finite and mortal lives to an apparently infinite and immortal universe.¹³

B OK, but Pérez-Gómez always seems to say "man's existence," not human existence, and as a historian discussing the history of architecture he's right to speak of man's order, man's rituals, man's symbols. But we no longer live in the Italian Renaissance; very few people ever did. To speak of "man" now is no longer to speak of the human. Only the most naive liberal essentialist would argue that women and men are, deep down, equal.

A But on the other hand, only the most equally naive conservative essentialist would claim to know the exact differences between man and woman, male and female.

C What about Rebecca Horn? Which of her pieces, because of their morphology, directly address gender? Only those that attach to or fit around or ignore the biological markers of gendered bodies—usually breasts and genitals, but, more vaguely, hair, blood and skin? Which are about more general, humanist ideals?¹⁴ For example, in the piece that brings an image of the blood system outside the body, when "human" experience is at stake in her work, I think she works with a "generic" i.e. male-body.

B But Horn's mamillary black lung surrogates conform much more closely to the biological givens of sexual dimorphism than architecture ever can.¹⁵ Even Loos's fur-draped bedroom for his wife Lina is feminine more through symbolic associations—warmth, softness, dim light—than through formal or spatial emphases.

C I still don't know that there are any other important connections between feminism and architecture. Yes, there is a fascinating history of women in architecture as users and producers, a heritage open to the same kind of collection and analysis as art history or literature,¹⁶ but I'm not sure that there is much of an argument for female architecture that addresses feminist concerns. You have art and then you have female art—do you have female architecture?

A Of course you do: spaces for shared domestic work with communal kitchens and daycares, more secure environments, especially adequate lighting at night, care in the design of entrances and parking garages.

C Right, and those are practical, functional concerns, that, as we said, Matrix and Hayden and others cover quite well. But we changed the name to "gender and spatial perception" in order to ask whether men and women, because they perceive their *bodies* differently, perceive *space* differently.

B And to ask whether men and women perceive their bodies differently.

C Don't you think there is a gap between those feminist concerns and the concerns of gender theorists? The feminists who discuss design often have essentialist beliefs about women's bodies and rigid gender categories.¹⁷ The gender theorists, however, speculate with the same fixed categories on which the feminists base their arguments.¹⁸

A What about the feminist gender theorists who design? Don't Bloomer and Diller bridge that gap?¹⁹

C I don't find the gender concerns of those architects the most compelling parts of their projects; and they don't take on the complex debate between essentialist and constructionist theories. Sex does not equal gender. The seemingly natural biological differences between male and female begin to blur as soon as we start to identify the cultural determination of biology; cultural ideas about the roles men and women should play are very often justified retroactively by referring to biology.²⁰

B But biology is not by that knowledge undone.

C Nor made. Talking about gender difference is different from living it.

A And talking about architecture is different from making it (as I always forget). Architecture is about space, form, light. Even Freud says that sometimes a cigar is just a cigar.

C Unfortunately, more often the feminist psychoanalytic theorists follow Lacan, who thinks a cigar is just a sign of the Phallus which is just a symbol of the rule of order.²¹

A Why can't we maintain that symbolic dimension? Kitchens rather than temples could be the focus of our imaginations. They are pragmatic, but they organize and express social relations just as much as traditional architectural monuments.

C Because I don't want to use all that I've learned merely to predict some ideal to which we should be moving. I'm pro-symbolic, but anti-idealist: the feminist agenda should to have more women in architecture, period, without speculating whether they will make better architecture, or worse, or not change it at all. If they turn out to be thatcherites and formalists, or technocratic, schlocky functionalists, *tant pis*.

A But our education *would* change if instead of one female professor we had a dozen; and I suspect that the world would be different if women were eighty-eight per cent of architects rather than 0.002 per cent.²²

C Why stop there? The slogan to sum up an analysis of gender and spatial perception should be "Women in Architecture," not "Better Architecture." Schools must make explicit the presence of women as producers, users, designers and patrons of architecture, even if this means a generation or two of students who know Eileen Gray,²³ and nothing of Borromini or roof details.

A That's too stark for me. It reduces women to their bodies once again. Shouldn't architecture be positive and not just something to be endured? I, and I think most women—not just white-middle class males—are attracted to architecture precisely because we want to deal with those overarching humanist ideals. I want to compare myself to the best, to work in that tradition: could one really work outside of it?

B I agree. Yes, we need women in architecture schools, in architectural design, in the architectural profession, but also in architectural theory and architectural history. When di Giorgio explains Renaissance proportions he shows the male body, complete with a little erection. I think we need to establish retroactively the female body there, too, which we can't do without a vision of Better Architecture, a set of critically-derived standards to guide our work.

C But even in First Year we were told to design a house as if the social context—the nuclear family—was set, fixed and natural. If teachers don't raise issues about gender when we're designing houses, then when are we going to learn to design critically?

A I guess this is where I came in. Our discussions gave me a set of critical tools, but they are still quite separate from the set of design tools that I learned in the studio. It's frustrating that I've had to gain the critical tools myself, and disappointing that most of my colleagues still ignore the problems of gender, when those problems now seem so urgent.

C But you can name drop Lacan!

B And they still gave you your degree.

1. We are indebted to Annmarie Adams for her initial encouragement and continued help, and to McGill University School of Architecture for their support. We would also like to thank all of the reading group participants, especially those regulars who could not attend this final meeting.

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Amal Andraos, B.Arch. '96 McGill, divides her practice between Montreal, Paris and Beirut.

Bruce Eckfeldt, B.Arch. '95 McGill, is working in Minnesota. He just got a raise.

David Michael Theodore, B.Arch. '96 McGill, appears elsewhere in the journal.

Exhibition Review: Topographies of Anomaly and Indeterminacy

David Theodore

Hal Ingberg, Prix de Rome Canada, 1993/1994
Centre de Design de l'Université du Québec à
Montréal
17 January to 4 February 1996

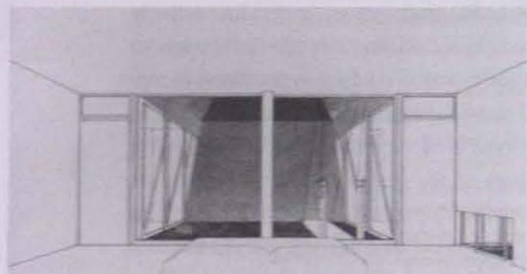
"People may say what they like about the decay of Christianity; the religious system that produced green Chartreuse can never really die." Saki.

The Canada Council are trying to establish more architectural culture. They do it in a well-established fashion, namely, by sending young talents off for a sojourn in Rome. The lucky winners of the Prix de Rome (and Quebec has had its share since 1987 when the prize was constituted—Jacques Rousseau, Philippe Lupien, Sophie Charlebois, and in 1993-94, Hal Ingberg) get to spend a year in an atelier on the Piazza Sant'Apollonia. On their return, they must present evidence that they have done something other than drink wine and argue with waiters—some tokens of their increased architectural culture. Presumably all Canadians benefit from this augmentation.

The 1993/1994 Prix de Rome winner, Hal Ingberg, McGill and SCIARC graduate, an "individual actively engaged in the field of contemporary architecture whose career is well under way and whose work shows exceptional talent," chose to present the results of his Romish lessons in the form of an exhibition. Installed first in the exhibition room of the new Pavillon de Design de l'UQAM, the show, "Topographies of Anomaly and Indeterminacy," was at the time of writing set to travel to a half dozen architectural schools in Ontario and Quebec.

The Prix de Rome program is about the problems of architectural culture more than the problems of architecture. Whereas architecture depends on built form, architectural culture depends on images and texts, representations of architectural ideas not always based on built form. Thus architecture exhibitions have their own little Pullman car on the gallery circuit. Galleries get not the experience of the building itself, but the Art of the art of building. Derided as paper architecture, theoretical projects go in and out of galleries with little direct effect on the built environment (where the construction industry, based on building, drinking, and swindling, holds sway). At their worst, these graphic forays rebound in graphic architecture, decon appliqué and precast Scarpa "details." But at their best, theoretical paper projects are able to situate architecture in culture





(if only through photomontage), producing the beginnings of architectural culture. It is in the galleries, then, and not in the buildings, that we begin to understand architectural culture as an exciting set of ideas, ambitions, speculations and possibilities focused on but never limited to the building itself.

Two of this gallery show's three parts are documented in a toothsome catalogue prepared in part by TFC alumni Tom Balaban and David Morin, with essays by Ingberg, David Bass and Georges Adamczyk. The catalogue includes drawings and photographs of the model of "La Villa Indeterminata," a theoretical project based in the tradition of the Italian humanist villa, and photographs of the Italian landscape glossed by an essay entitled "Plastic Surgery, Biological Operations and Natural Healing." The writing, although concise, can be self-conscious. Ingberg tries too hard in his essays to reconcile all contraries by subsuming them under metaphors drawn from gardening, biology and medicine. The powerful clarity of the photographs and drawings is undermined and not elucidated by this compressed telegraphic prose. Sometimes the fault is editorial—"La Villa Indeterminata" begins with a dangling participle and proceeds through an inconsistent parallelism to paragraphs muddled by misplaced and missing commas. But more often the images are simply more beautiful, more pointed and more evocative, than the attempts to articulate the intentions behind their making.

The third part of the exhibition, a slide show, documents an interesting project not illustrated in the catalogue. Determined to leave his mark on the place that marked him, Ingberg stripped the walls of his temporary atelier, exposing the history of the place, and then re-covered parts of them in green-Chartreuse green encaustic. Apparently some Waterloo students on their work term in Italy helped Ingberg in this task of dubious colour. The intervention, despite its Latin source—Ingberg saw the technique on some frescoes at Pompeii—seems altogether wholesome and, well, Canadian. Somehow the phrase "Prix de Rome" evokes that notorious Mediterranean tableau of sex and antiquity so attractive to eighteenth- and nineteenth-century minds, a picture of the sensuous Italian sun shining both on marble and brown skin. But the atelier remodeling sodatic debauchery and corruption, that necessary completion to the education of any sophisticated European, but rather a portrait of *un jeune homme, venant de sortir du bois*, wandering through the landscape of a culture that can be studied and observed, but never assimilated.

The best part of the exhibition is Ingberg's photographs of "anomalies and indeterminacies," fourteen of which are published in the catalogue. The power of the photographs lies in Ingberg's willingness to let the camera include, to frame pictures in a way that shows their subjects in context, a context which thus becomes a part of the subject in a mobius strip of subject and context. [Let's talk for a minute about self-conscious prose. -ed.] He has a keen eye for the point where nature and architecture combine, and then where the resulting combinations re-combine, capturing in his photographs a "precise rendering of the ambiguous." These combinations include ruined arches sprouting trees, Etruscan tombs and overgrown trashed cars. In these photographs architecture itself becomes a natural force, the ruins of which intrude upon and persist in nature; decay and ruin become a process of growth and change; the unfinished the permanent; wild nature more purposeful than the remains of art and architecture. (Still, the fascination of this condition *qua* condition escapes me. Trees growing out of the walls of your house—haven't they heard of building maintenance?)

Ingberg's attempt to use these images as a design tool is less successful. In *La Villa Indeterminata*, Ingberg transforms and extends a medieval storage depot into an intriguing underground villa. A number of inversions (the Miesian glass box placed underground, the "roof" garden appearing as three sunken courtyards) result in a complex environment (much like the spaces of OMA's Dutch House) that David Bass rightly compares to a Klein bottle. The Villa spaces are simultaneously open and closed, inside and outside, *en bref*, indeterminate. Still the project is less resonant, less productive than Ingberg's crisp black and white photographs of the original structure. There is no power in his graft of a modern villa and a medieval tower, for the indeterminacies of the addition are formal and spatial, not the result of time and change, but of prochronistic architectural intentions. The graft is successfully seamless, but sterile.

Perhaps the problem with the Villa is that in this theoretical project, Ingberg is able to ignore what in built form would probably annoy the hell out of him: the prescription of a vulgar domestic life. The ways of living set out by the program and planning are not indeterminate, but rather all too overdetermined, as if the culture of global suburbia had reached back into history and consumed even medieval lives. A series of sharp Resor House-like perspective drawings is symptomatic here. The prescribed details, including, centrally,

a large television set, present a thoroughly modern suburban way of life, devoid of the temporal ambiguity so valued in the photographs.

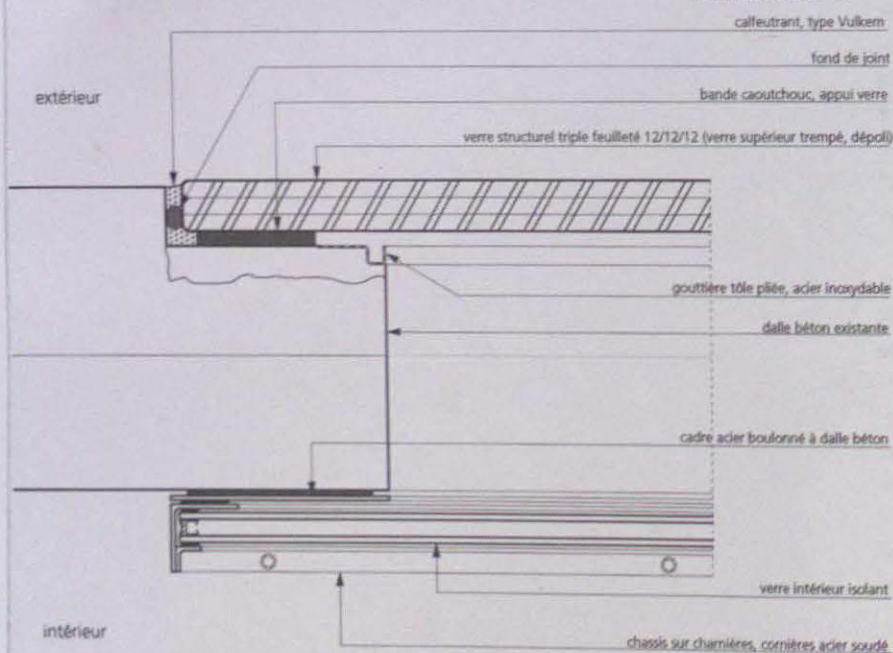
But one exhibition at a time. Ingberg knows that his project has no client but himself, and has bracketed the problem of personal culture in order to address ideas about architectural culture. Ingberg can single-handedly undo the evil effects of global capitalism in his next project. Here he has clearly, frankly and elegantly exhibited the results of a stay in Rome. And, after all, he has successfully meshed some aspects of his person with his projects. For apparently the inspiration for the green Chartreuse encaustic both on the walls of the atelier and on the model of *la Villa Indeterminata* came from an awe-full green Chartreuse jacket brought along from Canada. Would you rather he had left it behind?

David Michael Theodore enjoys listening to terribly bad musicals on Sunday afternoons.



Detail, 899 Sherbrooke St. E., Montreal

Paul Laurendeau



Afin d'introduire de la lumière naturelle dans des bureaux situés en sous-sol d'un immeuble sur la rue Sherbrooke à Montréal, deux ouvertures ont été créées dans la dalle de béton au plafond. Cette dalle sert également de parvis d'entrée à l'édifice et requiert une intervention discrète pour éviter de créer une obstruction visuelle à l'extérieur.

Deux trous ont été sciés dans la dalle avec réserves pour accueillir deux plaques de verre structural devant être posées au même nu que le niveau supérieur de la dalle. Des appuis de caoutchouc, un fond de joint et un calfeutrant créent un lien étanche entre le béton et le verre. À l'intérieur, un verre isolant est fixé à la face inférieure de la dalle pour éviter que la chaleur ne se condense sur le verre supérieur en hiver.

Paul Laurendeau est architecte à Montréal.

