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## ABSTRACT

### RECOMBINANT ARCHITECTURE ON MATERIALITY IN ARCHITECTURAL METHODS

by  
James P. O'Brien

This thesis is an argument for the development of a sound material method in architecture. In order to establish what constitutes a sound material method for artistic production, an historical survey is made of architecture, fine arts and literature in the 20th century. The primary method of research used is the critical analysis and comparison of artistic methodologies. Key sources in this analysis are Walter Benjamin's *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, and *The Author as Producer*.

It is found that artistic methods that use modern materials and methods creatively can be learned from to inform an architectural method. The final chapter outlines an initial attempt to demonstrate the research in what is called a Recombinant Architecture methodology. Of particular interest are new techniques advanced for (1) the use of modern materials, (2) the architect's relationship with manufacture, (3) the architect's interface with labor, and (4) architectural drawing.

RECOMBINANT ARCHITECTURE  
ON MATERIALITY IN ARCHITECTURAL METHODS

by  
James P. O'Brien

A Thesis  
Submitted to the Faculty of  
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of Master of Architecture

School of Architecture

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APPROVAL PAGE

RECOMBINANT ARCHITECTURE  
ON MATERIALITY IN ARCHITECTURAL METHODS

James P. O'Brien

---

Mark A. Hewitt, Thesis Advisor  
Associate Professor of Architecture, NJIT

Date

---

Peter C. Papademetriou, Committee Member  
Professor of Architecture, NJIT  
Director, Graduate Program,  
School of Architecture, NJIT

Date

---

Michael Mostoller, Committee Member  
Professor of Architecture, NJIT  
Director, Undergraduate Program,  
School of Architecture, NJIT

Date

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

**Author:** James P. O'Brien  
**Degree:** Master of Architecture  
**Date:** May 1995

### **Undergraduate and Graduate Education:**

Master of Architecture  
New Jersey Institute of Technology  
Newark, New Jersey, 1995

Bachelor of Architecture  
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University  
Blacksburg, Virginia, 1988

**Major:** Architecture

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of  
William F. O'Brien Jr. (1936-1992),  
Newark College of Engineering, Class of 1957.



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## CHAPTER 1

### WHY THIS THESIS ON MATERIALITY IN ARCHITECTURE?

Klaus Herdeg began to formulate the writing of his Decorated Diagram (a critique of the late modern architecture produced by prominent graduates of Harvard GSD under Walter Gropius) with the impetus from one question asked of him: "Why are there so many ugly buildings built by architects?" Thus Herdeg's critical writing began with attitudes TOWARDS built architecture.

The critical questions in formulating the writing of this thesis concern the attitudes OF architects themselves. And attitude undeniably affects architectural method, the "how" of architectural practice, with questions like: "How do I work as an architect?", and, "What do I use to build?"

This thesis is an argument for the development of a sound attitude towards materiality in Architecture. It is written with the belief that the definitive issue for developing creatively as an artist is one's attitude towards the proliferation of modern materials and methods of production in one's society. The artistic methods that will continue to create meaningful things will manage and use creatively the information related to it. Therefore, this thesis takes the position that a sound method of using modern materials is a requirement for producing meaningful architecture.

How do I logically arrive at this position?

First, in order to establish what indeed constitutes a "sound material method", the analysis of certain architectural methods of the twentieth century is made. Discussed are various approaches to modern materials and methods since 1900 not only from architecture, but also from the fine arts, literature and popular culture. The principal procedure used in assessing the validity and progressive or regressive nature of these key sources is the diagram and analysis of their methodologies.

For methods can be laid either chronologically, OR side by side to gain meaningful insights, as well as be compared on an interdisciplinary basis between those in art, architecture and literature. What is avoided in such an approach is the projection or assumption of a rigorous cause and effect implication.<sup>1</sup> This also downplays the importance of the question of representation, (the "representational" methods analyzed are shown to be regressive) and does not focus upon the evolution of styles often prevalent in historical surveys.

The architectural progress of the twentieth century shown in this thesis jettisons formal or even representational concerns. This survey begins with the modernist method engaged in the modes of production of its time, and proceeds to look at methods where the final criterion for it being progressive is no longer the completed work as a perfected object, but rather its

reception and effect upon the "modern vernacular" materials and methods of production.<sup>2</sup>

With the term "modern vernacular", I make the distinction from the start, that I refer only to the current, predominant culture of construction in a given society. I don't mean, under any circumstance, any other vernacular of, say, other societies, or of the past or the future for that matter. Today's modern vernacular is our current manufactured materials and the methods of producing them.<sup>3</sup>

Also, the descriptive term "progressive", and its opposite -- "regressive" -- are used in evaluating the methods analyzed. These terms qualify the relation of methods to the modern vernacular of their time.<sup>4</sup> A "progressive method" accepts the predominant modes of production of its time. It incorporates current technique in its creative work, and attempts to improve, refine and define it. A "regressive method" has little relation to the predominant modes of production of its time. It defends a way of working outside of the predominant modes of production of its time. Done for diverse theoretical reasons at various times, it often involves the defense of a "high art" refuge from the common, or clings to conceptions of the vernacular historically pre-dating its own time. In this manner regressive methods are elitist practices as they explicitly work in ways removed from more accessible, popular or common techniques. (If attempting to work WITH

common methods, they merely stylize them, leaving themselves open to both become consumed, and act as consumers in a mass culture society. See: Adolf Loos and the Viennese Art Nouveau, Chapter 2; and the L.A. School, Chapter 3.)

The historical analysis made in this thesis asks of each method:

What is the attitude of a work towards the modern vernacular of its time? Does it accept it or is it reactionary to it?

If reactionary,

What has been the basis of any historical resentment or protection of artistic turf from the modern vernacular?

If there is an acceptance:

What is the artists position within the modern vernacular method? Does it aim to improve it? Is it revolutionary?

If so,

What are the motives and methods that allowed the production of creative work in alignment with the modern vernacular to occur?

A particular assertion about the modern vernacular becomes pivotal as the historical analysis progresses beyond world war II. This assertion, found in all my primary sources, establishes a foundation for the remaining research. The modern vernacular escalates and intensifies, while the progressive artistic methods remain discrete, unconnected and isolated events. The authority of the artist relative to manufacture after world war II, as documented herein, is greatly diminished. Thus his

challenges in working with the modern vernacular are transformed.<sup>5</sup>

For this reason, although early twentieth century modernism is approached with respect and an acknowledgement of the fitness of its method for the state of the modern vernacular of its time, it is not treated as a goal of current architecture attuned to the modern vernacular. (The reader can be assured that this author is aware of those historical developments since the 1920's that have made it mandatory to work towards a critical theory of technology which transcends the modern (and Marxist) belief in technology's emancipatory power and which at the same time steers clear of either any demonization or worship of technology as an uncontrollable force.<sup>6</sup>)

The question of "how to act?" given the now dominant position of the modern vernacular in a mass culture society, remains. And progressive methods hinge on the artist's greatly limited ability to be creative within this modern vernacular. So, this thesis proceeds by investigating the following:

What is to be learned from the continual ascendancy and growth of the modern vernacular through the twentieth century?

Has the work of well-known architects today forged a connection or a separation with the modern vernacular?

Can progressive methods from fine art and literature serve as models for architecture now?

and,

Can the actions of certain "consumers",  
(those who function completely within  
the modern vernacular of mass culture)  
while not intending to "create art",  
serve as models for an architectural  
method now?

The question of "how to work as an architect" now focuses on establishing the place of the artist within an existing, predominant mode of production. The logical source for answers here is Walter Benjamin, specifically his "The Author as Producer" and "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction". But from Benjamin I also discover the value of my own closer look at the actions of particular "consumers" completely attuned to responding to mass culture's aesthetic imperatives. And so I analyze the methods and actions of the following consumers (initially having no pretenses to "high art", creativity or artistic production at all) within mass culture: the aesthetic methodology of inner city culture and that of an age group known as Generation X.

These examples, it should be pointed out, inherently function completely WITHIN the modern vernacular: their actions can only occur against its ever-present backdrop. They do manage to function progressively within it however, despite their limited capacity to act, to ultimately affect the making of things. The way in which they do this is analyzed and diagrammed, and the advantage they may have, coming of age attuned to the modern vernacular of mass culture, is discussed as to its relevance to coming of age



as an architect at the same time, in the same society.

With the focus now completely upon progressive tactics gleaned from an interdisciplinary analysis of examples from art, literature and mass culture, the development of an original theory for a valid architectural method is put forth.

The last chapter of this thesis assimilates this information in an architectural diagram and techniques called a "Recombinant Architecture Methodology". Of particular interest is the way a recombinant architecture methodology requires a new attitude towards: (1) the use of given materials (2) architectural drawing, (3) the architect's interface with labor, and (4) his relationship with, and ultimate effect upon, manufacture. (These methods markedly contrast a current architectural methodology, the L.A. School, shown to be regressive in Chapter 3.)

Advanced here is a way to effectively manage the relationships and information associated with the modern vernacular of mass culture. It is advocated as a way to ultimately affect the making, (or manufacture) of the modern vernacular, and define architecture as a discipline that can continue to create meaningful things. Some demonstrative projects illustrating the recombinant architecture methodology are to be given.

## Chapter 1 NOTES

1. Herdeg has made these points about the method analysis approach, and also states this approach is valuable and not often used in architectural criticism. Herdeg, op cit, Decorated Diagram, pvii.
2. Andreas Huyssen, The Technological Imagination, edited by Teresa De Laurentis, Andreas Huyssen and Kathleen Woodward, Coda Press, Madison, WI, 1980, p81-2. Also, the reader can be assured that this author is aware of those historical developments since the 1920's that have made it mandatory not to accept technology uncritically. This understanding transcends the modern (and Marxist) belief in technology's emancipatory power and at the same time steers clear of any demonization or worship of technology as an uncontrollable force.
3. The modern vernacular parallels more classical definitions of vernacular constructions. Understood as the "modern folk idiom", it continues to define (for today) the historical distinction between the "grand design tradition and the folk tradition". These two opposing traditions are always present. The modern vernacular maintains the tradition of low culture, folk culture, or, more appropriately for late-capitalism: "Mass culture". "The folk tradition is much more closely related to the culture of the majority and life as it is really lived than is the grand design tradition, which represents the culture of the elite. The folk tradition also represents the bulk of the built environment." Amos Rapoport, House, Form Culture, Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1969, p2. Also p6 and 7. Also see: Robert Redfield, in "Masscult and Midcult", Against the American Grain, Random House, NY, 1962.
4. My use of the descriptive terms progressive and regressive is similar to Nikolaus Pevsner's use in discussing design methodologies from William Morris to Walter Gropius in Pioneers of Modern Design, Chapter 1, pp19-39.
5. The statements made in this paragraph are investigated and supported with footnotes from my sources throughout this thesis. The most preliminary research of my sources indicates that they concur on the growing imbalance of the forces of production and of artistic control over them through the twentieth century. For the purpose of establishing the credibility of these statements at this point however, their major sources are noted here: Jurgen Habermas, "Modernity -- An Incomplete Project" in The Anti-aesthetic, edited by Hal Foster, Bay Press, Port Townsend, WA, 1983, p3-15.  
Walter Gropius, in Architectural Forum, May, 1952.  
Andreas Huyssen, The Technological Imagination, edited by Teresa De Laurentis, Andreas Huyssen and Kathleen Woodward, Coda Press, Madison, WI, 1980.  
Walter Benjamin "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction", in Illuminations, edited by Hannah Arendt,

Schocken Books, NY, 1968, p217-252. And "The Artist as Producer", in Reflections, edited by Peter Demetz, Schocken Books, NY, 1978, p220-238.

Concerning the position of the manufacturer as greatly enhanced since 1900, while that of the architect has not, see: Maxwell Fry, Art in a machine age, Methuen & Co., Ltd., London, 1969, p108.

Concerning the modern vernacular embodies the bulk of the built environment, see: Amos Rapoport, House, Form Culture, Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1969, p2.

Concerning the strength of the modern vernacular relative to architecture, see: Robert Venturi, Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture, The Museum of Modern Art, NY, 1966, p42.

6. Andreas Huyssen, The Technological Imagination, edited by Teresa De Laurentis, Andreas Huyssen and Kathleen Woodward, Coda Press, Madison, WI, 1980, p82.

## CHAPTER 2

### ARCHITECTURAL USE OF MATERIAL IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

#### 2.1 Introduction

The products of nature follow cycles of conception, birth, service, death and renewal, with each product dedicated to the survival of its species. All living things are temporal -- only the species aspires to eternity by maintaining homeostatic balance with the environment of which it is a part.

The manufactured materials of man are in no way different. They too, are temporal rather than eternal, with survival of the species dependant upon constant renewal. Manufactured materials, with all their applied symbols of value and style, and pretense of permanence notwithstanding, are transitory in character. They are constantly being made obsolete by advancing technology, changes in societal need and popular taste. For their useful life, it is hoped that they serve their purpose as humanely, honestly and efficiently as possible before they are superseded by other products, just as those of nature disappear.

Manufactured products come into being as a consequence of an intuitive spark and an innate capacity for synthesis that enables one to draw a unique and useful concept from what may appear to others to have been disassociated (or even unworthy, inappropriate) experiences.<sup>1</sup> I ask that the

reader keep this statement in mind, especially in the exposition of Recombinant Architecture in chapter 5, for it is a premise that unites the author's theories with those treated herein, although they may appear, at first, to be as dissimilar as black and white.

The manufactured building materials of architecture are a sub-category of manmade products. In exchange for energy abstracted as money, one party attains the energy of another crystallized into the form of a useful building product. Attached to this product, as an inextricable part of its purchase, is its design. The pretense of this design, whether real or a sham, is that the designer has exercised a commitment to human service beyond the cold facts of science & technology and the predatory grasp of capitalism and profitmaking.<sup>2</sup> Where does such a commitment come from in design? That will be examined shortly in the chapter. But the way in which this commitment is carried out, I assert here, must change and evolve as radically and as often as does the aforementioned evolution of manufactured products itself. What this has often meant is that the certain designer's methods in exercising this commitment have evolved in ways as unconventional as they were unpleasant to popular taste at first. This chapter documents some such changes.

It is the author's belief that we are now at a time when the evolution of the designer's commitment must be forced into another form. The goal remains the same sort of

material authority and societal commitment had by designers in other eras, but I envision the current form as one less heroic, less powerful and less central to the current modes of production than is generally viewed to be required today. It is this concept that I call recombinant Architecture.<sup>3</sup>

## 2.2 Precursors to Twentieth Century material use. The Great Exposition of 1851 to the formation of the German Werkbund, 1907.

It is natural that the invented form of a building material is based on the technology and skills available to a inventor at a given moment. If the service it performs lives up to expectations, people will accept it and may even find beauty in it. Once the material has come into being and demonstrated its value, it will enter into a cycle of ascending improvements, while at the same time it generally encounters increasing competition. When the purpose of a particular product evaporates, or it is superseded by a better (or less expensive) method of meeting the same task, production of it will cease and it will fall back to become a vestige of the taste and the technology of its time. Should it, however, possess a unique quality of expressive form, it may, in time, transcend its period to be appreciated as a cultural and aesthetic artifact of value beyond its original purpose.<sup>4</sup>

From time to time however, material developments may reach a plateau, where technology and function are in equilibrium. At such an interlude, 'design' (the third

element, along with technology and function, of material evolution) is granted great latitude. For the lack of tangible design improvements at such plateaus, design may make a floundering fool of itself for a while.

Manufacturers often take it upon themselves to give their products a semblance of progress by reliance on arbitrary form and other superficial implications of change at such times.<sup>5</sup>

This is the cultural and material situation in which the Great Exposition of 1851 at Hyde Park London, displaying industrial production from around the world, was undertaken. As hundreds of manufacturers exhibited there, thousands of visitors came and the quantity of products shown was immense. The aesthetic quality of the products however, was abominable.<sup>6</sup>

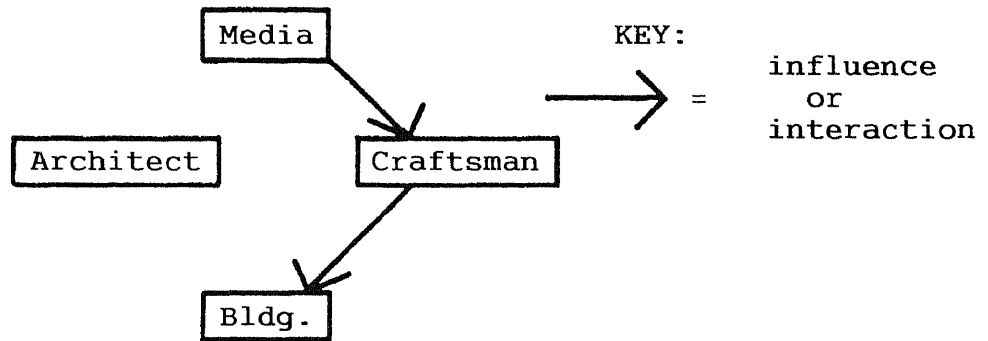
Carpet and tapestry designs, now mass produced, were poorly conceived. It seemed that even the world-renowned teachings of Persian carpets was completely forgotten.<sup>7</sup> Household objects were bulging and overdone. Their industrialized bases and shells decorated with applied ornament of all sorts, it seemed that the surviving craftsmen of the time had themselves been inescapably poisoned by the process.<sup>8</sup>

What had occurred in nineteenth century England was the unprecedented growth of manufacturers and merchants. Aided by English law's sanctification of the rights of private property and commercial freedom over any other imperatives,

England was wealthier and more productive, in terms of quantity of goods, than ever.<sup>9</sup> Such growth advanced the shift in material production from a craft-based to manufacture-based industry.

Non-manufactured, or craft-based production in the nineteenth century and prior, whether or not produced with an architect, had occurred through a 'pre-industrial'<sup>10</sup> methodology that can be diagrammed as follows:

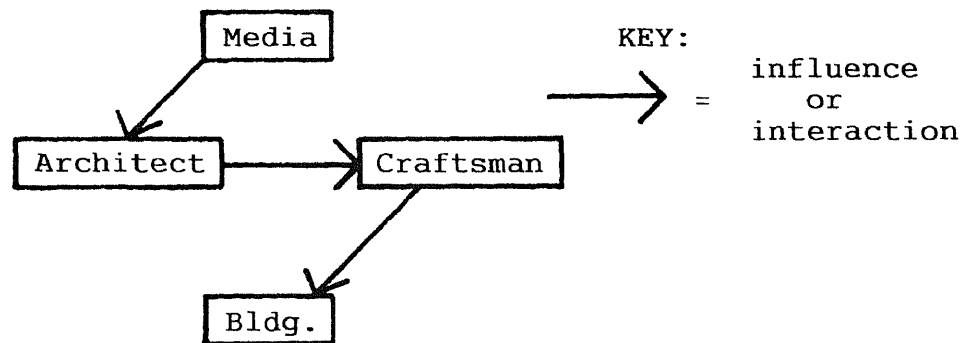
Diagram 2.1 The pre-Industrial Vernacular Methodology  
(Craft-based building without architect)



Pre-industrial production under the direction of an architect can be diagrammed as follows:



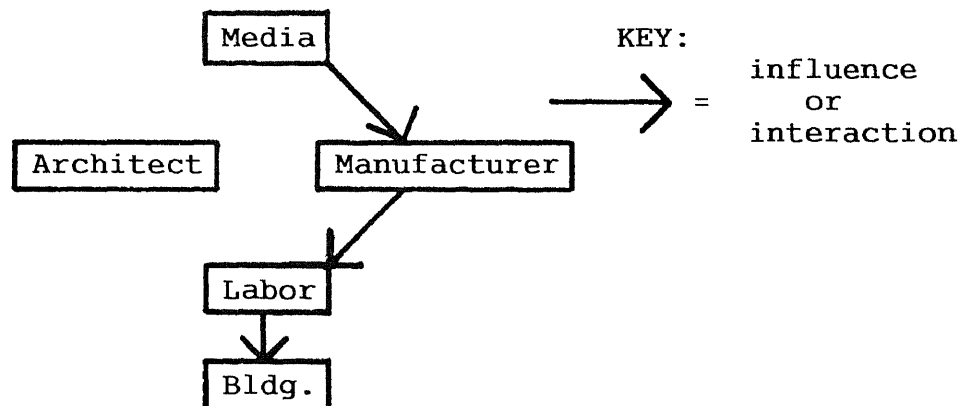
Diagram 2.2 The pre-Industrial Architectural Methodology  
(Craft-based building with architect)



The craftsman was essential in each diagram above, and the architect, when involved, interfaced with him - as a single entity or a guild - in a traditional manner.

With the industrial manufacture of materials greatly evolving through the nineteenth century, the 'modern vernacular' methodology began to emerge.<sup>11</sup> Manufacturers simply replace the craftsmen in the what remains more or less the same methodology diagrams, although more less-skilled labor is now present:

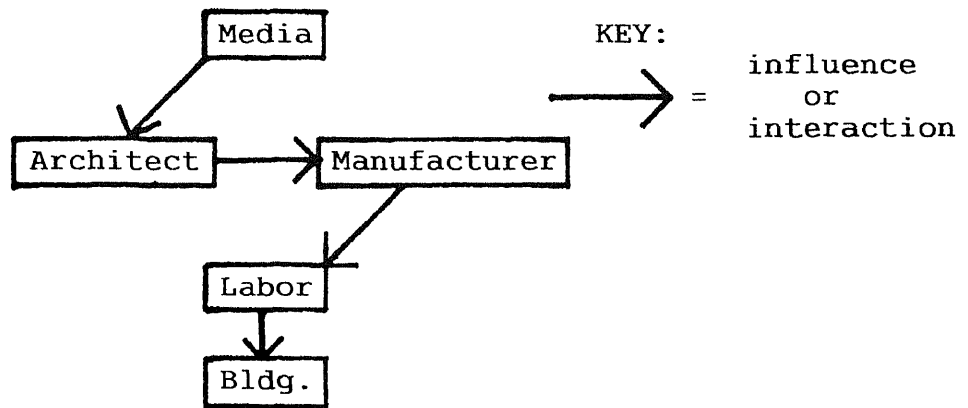
Diagram 2.3 The Modern Vernacular: Manufacturers Methodology  
(Manufacture-based building without architect)



Early modern production under the direction of a

architect can be diagrammed as follows:

Diagram 2.4 The Early Modern Architectural Methodology  
(Manufacture-based building with architect)



The awkwardness of the material products displayed at the Great Exhibition of 1851 evidence the difference between these two sets of diagrams and the struggle of the nineteenth century designer to adjust to the new sort of interface required. The manufacture is the entity now essential to each diagram, with whom an architect or designer, if present, must interface. This interface is required at a much earlier, less traditional time and place than before. These differences are characterized by the following three points:

(A) The craftsman's role is usurped by the manufacturing of goods to be installed by only specifically skilled or unskilled labor.

(B) The designer's primary interface must shift from the craftsman at the site to the manufacturer at the production of materials. (i.e. anywhere but at the

site; the factory, the showroom, the designer's or manufacturer's office.)

and, in acknowledging that materials and buildings have been and will continue to be constructed without designers' input, and that by definition such "buildings without an architect" constitute the vernacular method;

(C) The 'modern vernacular' method is now defined as 'unaided manufacture.'

But in a very basic sense we are already getting ahead of the facts of building production as it existed in 1851. For it wasn't until the end of the nineteenth century and the dawn of the twentieth, that the last diagram, the modern vernacular of unaided manufacture, got up to speed to actually predominate production.

A great concern over the immanency of this last diagram, however, was felt by those aesthetically trained - artists, designers and architects - who believed the ascendancy of unaided manufacture could only invade their own design turf and leave them odd-man-out. Thus many had already cast their opinions, decidedly and a priori, about the poor results to be expected from trying to deal with the uncoordinated mass-production of building parts.<sup>12</sup> Attempts to improve the quality of its results struck battle lines between art and technology that unfortunately remain

today,<sup>13</sup> and determined the pathos of the epoch, whether one suffered through it or managed to prosper in overcoming it.

Why was this? After all, the potter's wheel, the handloom and the printer's press are machines. And the development from such simple mechanical devices to modern machinery had been gradual and logical.<sup>14</sup> So why did the evolution of the machine in the end become so disastrous to artistic production? Why did nineteenth century England's affluence and acceleration in science and technique not include the arts as well?

Nikolaus Pevsner's answer is that rapid and competitive industrial growth in England between 1760 and 1830, his figurative dates of the Industrial Revolution there, simply left "no time" to devote to the skilled refinement of the innumerable innovations which swamped producer and consumer.<sup>15</sup> Working conditions were bleak then: men, woman and children worked 12 to 14 hour days from their fifth or sixth year on.<sup>16</sup> And so Pevsner states:

"the shape and appearance of all products were left to the uneducated (in design) manufacturer. Designers of some standing had not penetrated into industry, artists kept aloof, and the workmen (the closest to the new forms of production, and perhaps the best suited to comment on them) had no say in artistic matters."<sup>15</sup> As well:  
 "Liberalism ruled unchecked in philosophy as in industry, and implied complete freedom for the manufacturer to produce anything shoddy or hideous, if he could get away with it. And he easily could, because the consumer had no tradition, no education, and no leisure, and was, like the producer, a victim of this vicious circle."<sup>17</sup>

The Crystal Palace itself however, housing the exhibitions, turned out to be the only positive force in this exhibition. Its realization was perhaps a single stroke of genius in the otherwise less-than-revolutionary career of a gardener/greenhouse builder. As confirmed by historians Pevsner and Frampton, the Crystal Palace is the nineteenth century touchstone to the sensible development of mass produced materials for architectural use.<sup>18</sup> It stands out as the structure of its century that points more towards the developments of the twentieth century than it belonged to the nineteenth. And it stood apart from the products displayed within it.

Conceived by a non-architect, Sir Joseph Paxton, (1803-65), it was built entirely of iron and glass. It was designed for the industrial mass production of its parts, and hence was erected in less than four months. This achievement alone broke ground that the great bridge makers of the late eighteenth and nineteenth century had not: it was designed completely for and within the limits of repeatable mass production. Paxton himself had built greenhouse after greenhouse, and his single genius was in approaching the tremendous Crystal Palace (at over 1,800 feet long and one million square feet of surface area) no differently than any other. A manageable building module was laid down by him in concurrence with what off-site manufacturers could produce. This module was adhered to: governing part sizes & shipping weights and routinizing

assembly. Such rigor allowed for the attainment of one of its goals established as desirable AND economical at the outset: the use of glass panels of the greatest possible size.<sup>19</sup>

Still it was not Paxton himself, the gardener, who moved forward from here in refining standards and aesthetic principals in the realm of mass produced materials. It seems that the sense of responsibility the designer might have towards society to become involved deeply in the aesthetics of industrial production was not his calling.<sup>20</sup> While the great engineering achievements of the nineteenth century, numbering the Crystal Palace among them, are a precondition to the modern movement, others, cited by both Banham and Pevsner: the artist's emerging sense of a certain aesthetic responsibility to society, and the art and engineering synthesis that sprung from the short lived Art Nouveau style, cannot be found here.<sup>21</sup>

In the end, the horrendous condition of mass produced material design evident in 1851 built pressure for genuine improvement, forcing architects and manufactures of building materials alike off their late nineteenth century plateau, and towards twentieth century style modernism. Thus, not as a result of what Paxton did well in his building, but from what the majority of manufactured goods displayed inside the Crystal Palace did poorly, certain observers and critics -- non-participants really, in the displays of the Great Exposition itself -- produced the thoughts and theories

about just HOW it would be possible to begin to take aesthetic responsibility for industrial products.<sup>22</sup>

Discussions soon began in England and other countries as to the reasons for such evident failure. The formulation of a progressive tact for artists and manufacturers to subsequently take in the evolution of design for modern society is largely attributed to have evolved from three men: the designer and pamphleteer A.W. Pugin, critic and writer John Ruskin, and poet, designer, and socialist William Morris.<sup>23</sup> The establishment of an architect's responsibility to the industrial society in which he finds himself was their major thrust, and as already stated, a predisposing causes of modernism.<sup>1</sup>

It was William Morris who tangibly applied the thought common to both Pugin and Ruskin - one's responsibility to honesty and truthfulness in design and manufacturing<sup>24</sup> - in his live's work.<sup>25</sup> He too, was appalled at the direction of manufacture he saw as an adolescent at the Great Exposition, and is noted as the first practicing designer to begin to rectify the detached efforts of artists with their emerging

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<sup>1</sup> Also, Gottfried Semper raised questions about the impact of industrialization and mass consumption on the entire field of applied art and architecture that even today are far from resolved. As an observer at the Great Exposition, he soon reported back to his native Germany, in an official capacity, on what he saw. Most of this is expressed in his influential Science, Industry and Art, 1852. See Frampton, op cit, p109-10. Also, Henry Cole, Owen Jones, Matthew Digby Wyatt and Richard Redgrave developed a program of remarkably sound aesthetics in the Journal of Design and Manufacturers, put out BEFORE the Great Exposition. They freely admit however, that their principles are based on Pugin and Ruskin. See Pevsner, op cit, p46-7.

industrial society.<sup>26</sup>

His experiment was this: if decent, solid, and honest products could not be bought, then he would make them himself. Before he could settle down to paint or design in his first London studio in 1857, as he had intended to do, he found it necessary to make for himself the furnishings he needed in a way that satisfied him beyond the inferior, over decorated products of manufacture surrounding him. (He even commissioned his house, Red House, to be built for the same reasons.) With this impetus, rather than go on to simply paint as he might have done, he opened his own firm of Morris, Marshall & Faulkner, Fine Art Workmen in Painting, Carving, Furniture and the Metals in 1861.<sup>27</sup>

His firm was a place where he fulfilled what felt to him like his own personal obligation to make things the way he thought they should be made.<sup>28</sup> His point of departure in doing so was the social condition of art which he saw around him. Not involved in the developments of industry, art had no foundation in popular society. Morris wanted art not for a few, but for all in the society in which he lived. He saw artist as out of touch with everyday life, believing that as they dreamt of the Renaissance and Greece, few people actually pretended to understand or be moved by them anymore. Attributable to him, ordinary dwellings and everyday objects, the production of which was already dominated at this point by unaided manufacture, became once again worthy of the architect's and artist's attention.<sup>29</sup>



While Morris was indeed implying that the artist needs to be in touch with his current society - in his case an England leading the world in industrialization - he remained loath to embrace its actual manifestations of mass production and the ascendancy of the machine. And in this thesis' search for clues as to how a modern designer should act in an industrial society, here is where the influence of Morris ends. He and the industrial manufacturer were still too much at competitive and moralistic loggerheads. Herein lies a source of pain for Morris and a contradiction in his doctrine in terms of the industrial forces that were to define the next century. Although his products look strikingly clean in comparison to others of his time, making no pretense to being other than what they are,<sup>30</sup> he remained committed to the already disappearing nineteenth century ideal of the craftsman and his work. His workshops intentionally involved no machine processes.<sup>31</sup>

The ensuing Arts and Crafts Movement continued to evidence these leanings, bringing a revival of artistic craftsmanship, not of industrial art.<sup>32</sup> C.R. Ashbee (1863-1942), an Arts and Crafts follower of Morris, did, however, go one step beyond the doctrine of his master. Starting his own Guild and School of Handicraft in 1888, he evolved to the point where he broke away from what he called Ruskin and Morris' "intellectual Ludditism"<sup>33</sup> and pronounced that "modern civilization rests on machinery, and no system for the encouragement...or the teaching of the arts can be sound

that does not recognize this."<sup>34</sup> In this way Ashbee was one of the first Morris followers to pronounce, rather unassertively, a basic proposition of the coming modern movement in architecture.<sup>35</sup>

There is still an immense difference between this hesitating acknowledgement of machinery and an acceptance of it as the pivotal factor in modern design, a concern in which this thesis is rooted. And it wasn't until the writings of the leaders of the next generation that modern methods of production expressly receive a wholehearted welcome.<sup>36</sup> In this generation, the initiative to design with and for industrial production from the beginning came not from English theory but from the European continent and the United States; Germany becoming the intellectual center of progress. Along this line Pevsner's list of important architects at this time centers on the Austrians Otto Wagner (1841-1918) and Adolf Loos (1870-1933), the Americans Louis Sullivan (1856-1924) and Frank Lloyd Wright (1869-1959), and the Belgian Henri van de Velde (1863-1957).<sup>37</sup>

Let me be clear that in treating the above mentioned group of architects, I will now concentrate on the advancements that lead us most directly to the developments in Germany from about 1900 to 1914, namely the German Werkbund and Walter Gropius. This coalition of designers and industrialists unequivocally accepted the dominance of the machine. Indeed it was their design and their economic lifeblood to work with rather than without the products of

modern manufacture in an organized way. The industrial manner in which society was already functioning became their basis of a search for quality production.

Louis Sullivan is a precursor in fact, the rational logic of his theories of proper ornament, expressed in Ornament in Architecture, 1892, and Kindergarten Chats, 1901-02, were indeed modern and progressive. They focus on the principles of creating unadorned surfaces and structures proper for modern materials and society. He did not, however, explicate extensively on just how and why those unadorned surfaces and structures were to be made.<sup>38</sup> As a progressive thinker, Sullivan was rebuked in a most fundamental way when the States embraced the Beaux Arts injection it was administered in Burnham's Chicago World's Fair of 1893.<sup>39</sup>

Sullivan's own decorative motifs belong to the style known as Art Nouveau, as did those of Henri van de Velde.<sup>40</sup> Concern for industrial production in a different sense seems to have begun with van de Velde in the 1890's in Belgium, and from 1897 to 1914 in Germany, as he began to theorize and work on the possibilities of machine aesthetics. Van de Velde is credited with bridging the gap between the real engineering and technical developments of his time and the artistic style of his time, Art Nouveau.<sup>41</sup> He eventually developed this style into his own new doctrine of expressing the beauty inherent in machines.<sup>42</sup> He felt the powerful image of the machine would create beauty as soon as beauty

guides the machine itself. He acknowledged that the engineers of his time were those at the threshold of a new style, and that they were indeed the architects of the present day.<sup>43, 2.</sup>

His belief was that modern culture stemmed from those in touch with its advances. Knowledge of such rational processes came from the same men for van de Velde as for Adolf Loos: Engineers. Only Loos was as bold and consistent in this line of reasoning to call a mere plumber (in the general American sense) "the quartermaster of culture, i.e. of the kind of culture which is decisive today."<sup>44</sup>

Writing for newspapers and periodicals, by 1897 and 1898 he regarded engineers as the directors of his culture, and described the designer of his time as a systems man; an admirer of the more utilitarian, mass produced building products of English and mostly American origin, to the extent of either ignoring or removing the issue of 'proper'

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<sup>2</sup> As stated in Giedion, op cit, p24, and: Fry, op cit, p105: A great deal of the preparatory work to intelligently guide industrial processes was initially done by engineers. Structural examples and industrial methods with new materials were approached by Gustav Eiffel, Robert Maillart, Eugene Freyssinet and John Roebling. Eiffel effectively demonstrated the marriage of glass and steel in the walls of the main Paris Exhibition building in 1878. The bridges of Robert Maillart and the hangers of Eugene Freyssinet illustrated the suitability of new materials for arched and vaulted spans in particularly vivid ways. And in his bridges of John Roebling, the use of steel as a tension member was perfected. After the pioneering work of French engineer Marc Seguin. Roebling perfected the process by inventing it almost every step of the way. Such artist-engineers constructed great things in that early period, and originated a system of building that affected life at many points, yet a meaningful, even definite form for modern expression failed to emerge from them.

ornamentation or 'modern' style altogether.

Thus his chief rallying point in attacking the Viennese Art Nouveau Style, the Secession, was the need for a logical structure of products, clear logic in the use of materials and in manufacturing them that proudly and frankly exhibit their construction. All this of course necessitated a systematic discarding of ornament.<sup>45</sup>

He detested the Secessionists' deft stylizing of new industrial processes as mere image making. Instead, for Loos the development of utilitarian building components and systems was the means to a modern architecture.

Only a few years later similar views were expressed with equal conviction, and in a more comprehensive style of actual building, by Frank Lloyd Wright. His theories, however, remained isolated and somewhat misunderstood in America for a long time.<sup>46</sup> In European countries as well, very little direction for an organized, unified approach to mass produced materials was found before World War I, until a wide movement came about by the undeniable merit of German architects and writers. The movement they fostered proved strong enough to yield a universal style of thinking AND building with modern materials.<sup>47</sup>

The organization of a progressive theoretical direction was inherent in the German Werkbund, established in 1907. Hermann Muthesius (1861-1927) was a major force behind its formulation from 1903-1907. Peter Behrens was a major force in instructing its younger generation in the years that

followed, roughly 1907-1910.<sup>48</sup>

Muthesius, after studying English housing for Germany from 1896 to 1903, soon became the acknowledged leader of the German concepts of objective, utilitarian and economic imperatives in design with industrial products. This concept (expressed in the un-translatable German word 'sachlich') soon became the official doctrine taught in many of Germany's various building and industrial design schools. The campaign thus started soon infected the best and most progressive German industrialists, manufacturers, artists and designers in the years before 1907.<sup>49</sup> And the German Werkbund was the most important step towards the establishment of a recognizable style from among those individuals interested in the German 'sachlich'.

This coalition accepted mass production as a phenomena to be mastered; to be made into a tool one could properly guide and control.<sup>50</sup> Peter Behrens was the first German Werkbund architect given the opportunity to do so. Through the cooperation of an informed, Werkbund industrialist at A.E.G., Behrens brought an architect's direct influence to bear on all the products of a large manufacturing concern.<sup>51</sup>

As well he both trained and influenced the most important of the next generation of early twentieth century modern architects. At one time in his office worked LeCorbusier (1887-1965), Mies van der Rohe (1886-1969) and Walter Gropius (1883-1969).<sup>52</sup>

The architectural examples of Walter Gropius will now

be discussed.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> It is noted that the Italian Futurists of the time, especially the inspired work of Antonio Sant'Elia (1888-1917), also capsulized a fervent belief in the beauty and artistic potential of the machine age to an extent equal to the early German Werkbund. As is known, for mostly tragic reasons, this group was not afforded opportunity to build, nor organize as did the Werkbund. See Pevsner, *op cit*, p37 and p210-11.

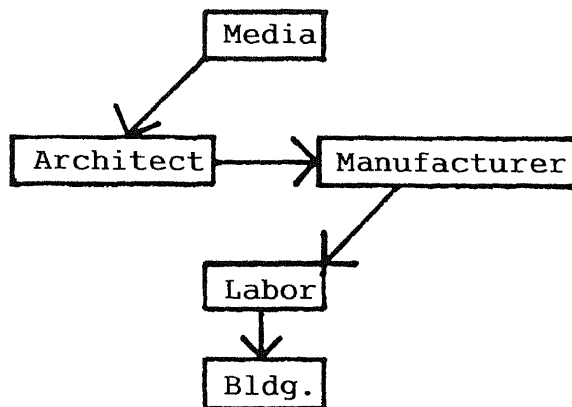
2.3 Walter Gropius and the Bauhaus.  
Early Modern architecture, 1909 to World War II:  
The Architect's Superior Material Sensibilities  
Foster Industrial Partnerships.

The consecutive exhibitions of the German Werkbund culminated in the 1914 Werkbund Exhibition in Cologne. There, a model factory was built by Walter Gropius, illustrating for a larger audience, the further refined sensibilities of his Fagus shoe factory of 1911.<sup>53</sup> (Figure 2.1, 2.2) By the 1914 Werkbund, it was clear that a new range of possibilities were being explored by Gropius. In him, an architect's body of work began to synthesize the theory of the Werkbund into built form.<sup>54</sup>

Walter Gropius had a grave understanding of what was at stake in his time. Fully fashioned in his mind were methods by which the architect could use his traditionally strong skills - a sensitive understanding of form and human needs - to creatively engage the modern methodology diagram that was capable of functioning without the architect.<sup>55</sup> Gropius asserted, in practice, the architect's direct influence and interaction as follows:



Diagram 2.5 The Early Modern Architectural Methodology  
(Manufacture-based building with architect)



Outside the Werkbund, few others developed such powerful ways to align with the unbridled forces of industry. Few found ways to employ, like Gropius, only their intellect and a greater sensitivity to material as their sole support. As architect Maxwell Fry observes in his Art in a machine age: "No one else had the same intellectual grip of the situation, the real feeling for industry (or was) so much in tune with the associated disciplines (as Gropius). Few of his contemporary architects thought of what the proposed fusion with industry truly implied."<sup>56</sup>

After the model factory of 1914, in the end of that same year, Gropius began to plan for the theory and organization of the Bauhaus. "The Bauhaus" commented Mies van der Rohe, "was an idea: 'Art and Technology -- the new unity'."<sup>57</sup> How would Gropius strike this unity and meaningfully engage the manufacturer's methodology diagram shown above? The endeavor was to discover the similarities

between these two conflicting spheres and make them generally known.

Gropius took over what was the 'German State School for Building' and renamed it the Bauhaus, or 'making house' in 1919. The school's prior director, Henri van de Velde, had been more concerned with liberating man FROM the tyranny of the machine than aligning architects WITH the forces necessary to continue to produce in modern society. Concentrating his efforts on spelling-out a tangible program bridging the gulf between artistic form and industrial production Gropius fashioned the program around his belief that "in an age of specialization, training in method is more important than information."<sup>58</sup> The school was at the same time a lab for handicraft AND standardization; a school AND a workshop. Student contact with manufacturer began in this setting, they went through the entire process of developing rough ideas into models, prototypes and smooth finished products, refined in all their details for the demands of mass production.<sup>59</sup>

Gropius outlined his approach in his circular to all teachers at the Bauhaus:

"The teaching of craft is meant to prepare for designing for mass production. Starting with the simplest tools and least complicated jobs, he (the Bauhaus apprentice) gradually acquires ability to master more intricate problems and to work with machines, while at the same time he keeps in touch with the entire process of production from start to finish, whereas the factory worker never gets beyond the knowledge of one phase of the

process. Therefore the Bauhaus is constantly seeking contacts with existing industrial enterprises, for the sake of mutual stimulation."<sup>60</sup>

As told by a former student in 1950:

"Gropius was the first man who interpreted the industrial revolution to us in terms of architecture" "He constantly investigated the great potentialities of industrial society and showed us how to assimilate them to our ever changing needs... he has shown us a place in society; he has shown us that mechanization and individual freedom are not incompatible."<sup>61</sup>

To Gropius, the call of the time was not to create beautiful architecture; but to define the new method of building. Thus the Bauhaus apprentice quickly internalized the bare facts of the modern vernacular diagram. The manufacturer was to remain the critical path; the primary liaison between materials, the architects drawings, and their opportunity to become realized.

Indeed design in an industrial society required that materials be designed before they are even produced, not to mention cut and fit on site. This is where any aesthetic is permanently ingrained in mass produced materials for their often long, systematically repeated lives. And so for architectural creativity to be truly useful, it was pivotal that the Bauhaus apprentice be taught that the point of interface in the design of materials is with the manufacturer.<sup>4</sup> The place for the architect, Gropius knew,

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<sup>4</sup> Bauhaus artist such as Lissitzky, Schlemmer, and Maholy-Nagy were also enlisted in this approach to industry-oriented artistic production. The functioning of various fine

was now more important towards the beginning of the process than at the site, after so many material decisions had already been made.

What kept this simple was it's clarity to the manufacturer at the time that the architects trained in this method certainly knew better as to what mass produced products should or could look like. The manufacturer saw only the commercial forces modulating his design efforts: the Bauhaus architect was trained both practically AND in the practice of modern design itself.

The manufacturer remained the man in charge of a work force (displaced craftsmen, as Gropius will point out below) who would produce the orders once they are designed and handed down. His workmen, whether one considers them displaced craftsmen or not, may have some experience, perhaps in related materials, but the architect as the professional designer should reign. The manufacturer remained comfortably the man in the middle in this early modern architecture. The quality of his products, and his profits, could increase with a small investment of working with an architect.

In Fry's critique of the pre-World War I years in architecture, he explains why this may have been an easier control for an architect to gain then, as opposed to today. He describes how industrial society was truly a different

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artists touched upon throughout chapter 2 will be further discussed for their progressive methodologies in chapter 4.

affair, in the first decades of this century. In many ways things were more controlled and smaller scale. Industry's methods less completely encompassed society, although its product were beginning to. Industry was more compact, concealed and personal; advertising was amateur; the press still local; population (or the number of consumers), before WW I, was in feared decline. Fry deduces that in this society the actions of manufacturing concerns were more manageable, and the situation more comprehensible and approachable; thus better suited for being permeated with a new set of ideas, injected by the architect.<sup>62</sup>

Gropius articulated, precisely and accurately, that the rationality of the early modern architectural methodology lies in the growing tendency towards:

(A) off-site rather than on-site production of building parts,

and,

(B) the site assembly of such parts.<sup>63</sup>

## 2.4 Modern Architecture from World War II to 1970

As already suggested, the two points listed at the end of the above section define to a great extent the manufacturer's vernacular. Their methods occurred with such frequency after World War II, with the great demand for housing and building, that the actions of unaided manufacturer became universally understood as the commonplace method.

Indeed a prognostication of the Bauhaus director began to bear out upon the reality of the profession: the manufacturer's vernacular became so commonplace that larger machine-made parts for building, bought "in the competitive market and assembled into individual buildings...like a box of bricks", could become the architect's tools and materials.<sup>64</sup>

In a desire "to arouse the architect to grapple with the enormous and undirected power of the American industrial machine before it is too late", Gropius warned an audience of fellow architects in a May, 1952 article in *Architectural Forum*:

"Today the architect IS NOT the 'master of the building industry'. Deserted by the best craftsmen (who have gone into industry, toolmaking, testing and researching), he has remained sitting all alone on his anachronistic brick pile, pathetically unaware of the colossal impact of industrialization. The architect is in a very real danger of losing his grip in competition with the engineer, the scientist and the builder unless he adjusts his attitude

and aims to meet the new situation...  
 The architect of the future - if he  
 wants to rise to the top again - will be  
 forced by the trend of events to draw  
 closer once more to the building  
 production."<sup>65</sup>

The problems an architect could address began only to be those of stylizing and representing a building material or technological process that was always completed before his arrival. Accordingly, the 'selection' of diverse, prefabricated materials became a primary activity of the architect.

Why did the architect's that followed Gropius NOT design many of the building components his generation had? Why wasn't the post-war architect of greater authority in the building industry?

This is generally thought to have occurred for two coinciding reasons in the post-war era, one chiefly economic and one fundamentally design related:

A) Manufacturers reacted efficiently to the economic mandate to build large quantities of housing in the post-war years. The mass suburbanization of our country after World War II saw 1/3 of our population move there between 1945 and 1975. Unaided manufacture developed the predominant methods of providing this housing. Therein the parameters of much material design, categorization and use was delineated for their own narrow purposes.

B) Architects did not remain as integrally involved in material development as had Walter Gropius. Concentrating on a 'pure form modernism' under the influence of Mies van der Rohe, the leading students of Gropius' teaching at Harvard GSD interpreted his

philosophy less rigorously.<sup>5</sup>

This second point will be discussed here, while a review of the manufacturer's unaided material developments will be made in the next section.<sup>66</sup>

The influential architects of this post-war period are predominantly that group singled out by Klaus Herdeg in his book The Decorated Diagram. This group is the Harvard graduated practitioners benefiting from the teaching ethos associated with Walter Gropius in his years at the Harvard Graduate School of Design, 1937-1953.<sup>67</sup> The best known are Edward Larrabee Barnes, I.M. Pei, Paul Rudolph, Ulrich Franzen and Philip Johnson. (Also included in Herdeg's analysis are Victor Lundy, John Johansen and two members of the Gropius collaborative firm TAC; John Harkness and Louis McMillen.)

They received wide publication and eager acceptance in the architecture magazines of the 50's and 60's, almost all finding early career success from residential projects selected as Record House of the Year or receiving AIA and other awards in this period.<sup>68</sup> Herdeg documents how the profession was wrapped up in the aesthetic direction of this group at the time as providing the most educated and

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<sup>5</sup> The strongest justification for this point comes from Klaus Herdeg, as this is the premise of his book entitled The Decorated Diagram, MIT Press, Cambridge, MA, 1983, see p13. Also this is supported by Andreas Huyssen, who states that the achievements of the pre-World War II modernists have been heavily distorted by being subject to the late moderns' mainly formalist approach, in: The Technological Imagination, edited by Teresa De Laurentis, Andreas Huyssen and Kathleen Woodward, Coda Press, Madison, Wisconsin, 1980, p82.



promising solutions to modern building issues.<sup>69</sup> The success of their work stood for the "consummation, if not consecration, of American Bauhaus teaching."<sup>70</sup>

But after having learned directly from Gropius, it is interesting to note just how much of his teaching this group either rejected or failed to implement in their own practices. Herdeg points out that all but the TAC office rejected Gropius' teamwork ethic for the establishment of an atelier office with themselves as masters.<sup>71</sup> And importantly, this group of late modern<sup>6</sup> architects are also known as 'pure form modernists', indicating their sublimation of any real material development for issues of form making and the creation of visual interest.<sup>72</sup>

Their work is an example of the inner contradictions between what they had been taught and the beliefs that they put into practice. In essence, Herdeg's analysis casts their work as the transference of the purity of consciousness, expected of them under Gropius at Harvard GSD, into a Miesian purity of form.<sup>73</sup> Remember, they were taught by Gropius to mistrust the notion of architecture as art; to NOT practice it as a profession of making beautiful things, but INSTEAD focus on DEFINING mass produced methods

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<sup>6</sup> The term 'late modern' (which I will use in this text) arose in 1977 to distinguish these architects from the post-modernists. Late modern architecture "takes the ideas and forms of the modern movement to an extreme, exaggerating the structure and technological image of the building in its attempt to provide amusement, or aesthetic pleasure." From Charles Jencks, Late-Modern Architecture, Rizzoli, NY, 1980, p7-8.

and materials. Yet they recast this material concern and theoretical rigor as a rigor of another sort: the diagrammatic purity of FORM and PLAN. (Figure 2.3) Nowhere is the architectural intent to deal with modern process when "visual interest" refers only to making beautiful - stylizing - the things handed down from manufacture.

They in fact concentrated heavily on a neoclassical symmetry learned from the deft orchestration of such things by Mies.<sup>74</sup> The best example of this is Philip Johnson's Glass house of 1949.<sup>75</sup> (Figure 2.4) Built amongst many privately owned wooded acres in New Canaan, Connecticut, it's predecessor was admittedly Mies; specifically his sketches for the Farnsworth house, itself built only three years earlier in 1946. In Johnson's own words:

"Many details of the house are adapted from Mies's work, especially the corner treatment and the relation of the column to the window frames. The use of standard steel sections to make a strong and at the same time decorative finish to the facade is typical of Mies's Chicago work. Perhaps if there is ever to be 'decoration' in our architecture it may come from the manipulation of stock structural materials such as these."<sup>76</sup>

Perhaps decoration in architecture was now to come from "the manipulation of stock structural materials", but for the pure form architect this would only reaffirm his stylizing role, and illustrate a certain contentment with a Miesian, premeditated use of modern techniques for decorative ends.<sup>77</sup>

Even in accepting this weakened position - the

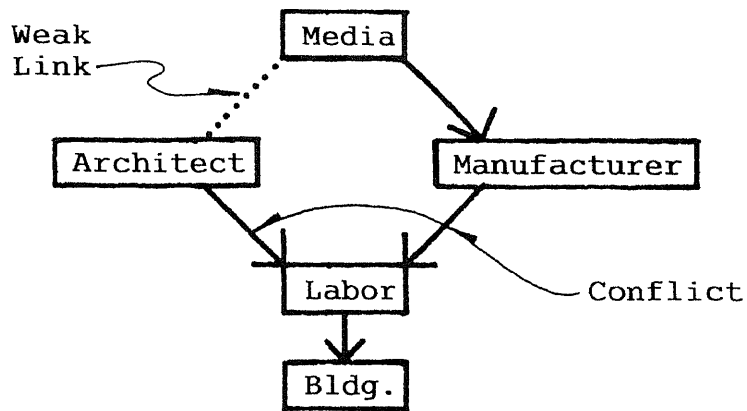
relegation to the design of manufactured hand-me-downs - I contest that pure form modernism made it a certainty that even any decoration of commonly used manufactured materials would not come from the hands of architects themselves.<sup>7</sup> Pure form modernism failed to even develop a code of symbolism OR humanizing elements in their formal pursuits. Their search for diagrammatic purity did not even include attempts to bring meaning to the extant manufacturer's materials they used. Failing to do this, the implication is that for the late modern architect the influence exerted in the methodology diagram is indeed disadvantageous to his authority in the process:

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<sup>7</sup> A Santa Monica experiment with "off the shelf" components, the house of Charles and Ray Eames, was built in 1949, the very same year as the Glass house, to much less fanfare and discussion. The intent, however, was markedly different than Johnson's. It illustrated that an architect could control materials even after they were developed into a manufacturer's catalogue of parts. "The resulting restraint and simplicity recalls Japanese domestic architecture without the severity of the International Style of Mies van der Rohe, to which it had been compared" (Grolier's Online edition of Academic American Encyclopedia, Grolier Electronic Publishing, 1993.)

As housing production occurs completely without the profession, one can only wonder what authority might have been gained from 50 years of more realistic experimentation such as the Eames'.

Diagram 2.6 The Late Modern Methodology Diagram



The early influence upon commonplace manufactured materials moves out of the architect's hands. The residual power to determine material developments, as will be discussed in the next section, is taken up by a greater degree of manufacture self-direction. The late modern architect's influence is, in fact, brought to bear late in the process, well after manufacturer's decisions have been made. Herein lies the late modern architect's less effective, less meaningful position. A situation that invites either the stylizing approach of this period, or a losing battle with manufacturer for aesthetic control.

Thus there has proved to be no future use for even the eloquent steel sections as Mies and his protege Johnson had laboriously designed them. The designs of the late modern architects, while carried widely in architectural journals, would not influence the manufacturing of building materials in the slightest progressive way.<sup>78</sup> The real work of material development was forced to continue elsewhere. In a

word it is exemplified in Levittown, and all that concept now signifies.

### 2.5 The Manufacturers' Vernacular

Manufacturers gained momentum and clout through building the housing needed in the post-world war II period, becoming both a supplier AND arbiter of material aesthetics by virtue of this broadening responsibility. They met building needs, at first, in ways unacceptable to late modern architects.<sup>79</sup> They provided Levittown after Levittown with naively applied symbolism, and provided electric appliances and wall-to-wall carpeting as pretenses of technical advances to meet human needs. Their use and development of materials, at first unsophisticated and imitative, will be discussed here.<sup>80</sup>

Shortly after the post-war period, the manufacturer's own material design capacities became more technically specialized and sophisticated. But to comment on this without having involved the preceding discussion of the divergent interests of the architect and the manufacturer through the post-war period would only confirm the typical negative impression gained from the cursory look. For at a cursory look, the materials developed autonomously from our profession are often seen as the things that appear to destroy, cheapen and decorate architecture. They are not readily apparent as being materials worthy of design attention today when viewed from THIS side of our fully entrenched split from their origin. But in understanding

the split that began with manufacturer and the pure form architects, we should now be as apt to study the manufacture-defined materials themselves, as we have been to study the theory and form of late modern architecture.

How does the manufacturer's vernacular establish their specific material uses? Initially this occurs through the well-known process of 'material substitution'.<sup>81</sup> As studied by Fernand Braudel, it is a process that picks up only where the last material technology has developed and forces new technology to suit the same function and aesthetic. Gottfried Semper described the material substitution he saw at the Great Exhibition of 1851, in his, Science, Industry and Art. There he pinpointed this vernacular process that has remained intact from the pre-industrial to the manufacturer's vernacular.<sup>82</sup>

It is in this way that, since World War II, millwork became standardized, and plastic laminate was developed, designed and stylized annually by manufacture to finish that millwork. Exterior siding, (the glass and steel curtain wall steered by manufacture only to commercial applications, generating the smaller scale storefront system approach, not even this being of architectural concern) became, for domestic use, a manufacturer's unaided search through wood, aluminum and vinyl. Interior wall finishes: gypsum board and wood veneer paneling, became a 4 x 8 foot exercise in plaster wall and wood carpentry emulation. Fireproofing (the great problem to be solved concerning steel, for which

the late moderns could have developed solutions) became an exercise in creative sheetrock layering. Roofing stagnated in the technologically vacant exercise of decorating pitches with modern roof tile replications, while the manufacturer's search into flat roof membranes, (their insulation and waterproofing) was only given serious and hence productive efforts in what manufacturers categorized as "commercial" applications.

The simple codification of material into such generally accepted categories as commercial, residential, industrial, and institutional also suit manufacturer's imperatives rather than demarcate intrinsic material characteristics. These categories are themselves another device of the manufacturer's vernacular. For once established, they simplify production within limits of use. Alternative uses that require extensive re-investment need not occur here. This of course focuses a specific material treatment on a specific product so that if one is reminded of the manufacture by name, he will immediately think of his prescribed use and his product. (This categorization is not often questioned except by such progressive architects to be discussed in the next section.)

The key, in-house entity in this process is the manufacturer's trade designer. He is armed with little more than technical knowledge of his trade and recent, a-historical knowledge of the manufacturer's approach. His role has become more sophisticated as technology advances

and material applications becomes more specific. Likewise his knowledge has become more advanced and specific. He therefore remains important due to his uncontested (by architects) practical intelligence.<sup>83</sup> Manufacturer's raw materials continue to proceed through him to unskilled labor, enabling the current vernacular to fabricate and erect complete, habitable structures.

The trade designers are, for example, at work for Alcoa, reviewing test results for their enameled aluminum panels' resistance to ultraviolet deterioration. They work at Andersen windows, trying to combine two old window models into a newer, updated design architects will use. They are hard at work in the Formica Corporation as well, where in the early 1970's they were designing laminate finishes to the likeness of various woodgrains, today they emulate diamond head metal plate, Absolute Black Granite, or the previously successful designs of the 1950's and 60's in retro patterns. Others are at Nevamar, Wilsonart, Pionite and Laminart making their own forays, or more often emulating how the trade designers at Formica so closely emulated Black Granite.

They are at Steelcase and Herman Miller debunking the modernist notion that has traditionally rationalized workers into grid-like "office cubicles"<sup>84</sup> (also known as "Veal Fattening Pens"<sup>85</sup>), with products like the Personal Harbor (Steelcase), and Relay (Herman Miller) systems.<sup>86</sup> (Figure 2.5) Others in this industry at Artec and Haworth follow



their lead.

These trade designers are designing and re-designing the changing workplace. Subtly and freely they were given this arena for their sole discretion. As Jonathan Crinion states: "Unwittingly architects and designers have ceded much of their power since World War II to manufacturers of systems furniture."<sup>87</sup> The old spatial concept of the office cubicle, once ripe for real architectural definition and research ever since the high rise office floor plan has meant "free plan", has been exclusively developed by manufacturers' trade designers since, while architects rarely propose detailed solutions for the incredibly complex and worthy issues of 'work' and 'office'.

They are at Lane Furniture, securing the finest Honduras Mahogany to be computer carved to the specifications prescribed by marketing and History of Furniture Style studies. Those analyzing the results of the studies and making then decision to procure the Honduras Mahogany are the ones labeled the trade designers there, while those who oversee the assembly line carving of wood and the piecing together of furniture anachronistically function as the manufacturer's craftsmen.<sup>88</sup>

Inherent in all these ways in which the trade designer uses a material is its resultant "prescribed aesthetic". This term is my own; I find the use of a colloquial term unavoidable on this point. The term is devised to encapsulate all of the manufacturer's material pre-

determinations. "Prescribed aesthetic" describes the finished products stylized by manufacturer and imbued with motifs (no matter how minor) that are not by nature integral to making the material useful in the most basic sense. Examples of this are: stamped or applied pattern, "grain", emulated finish, and importantly, ANY pre-determined use or categorization as part of its offering by manufacture. (It should be noted that the act of prescribing material aesthetic is often seen as part of the service of manufacturers, and referred to by an equally colloquial term: "value added".)

The arbitrary material categorizations proliferated by manufacture are an important issue. These anachronistic divisions seem fixed, but to persevere in questioning them is key. Superfluous divisions such as: industrial, residential, retail, commercial, institutional, and their qualifiers: high-end/low-end, upgrade/standard, or, substrate/finish are immaterial to the architect freely using modern materials and methods. These rigid conceptions have to be inserted into the living context in a creative, free manner to achieve the potential that they do not even claim to have.

Categorization gains manufacture a shallow breadth at the expense of depth. And left unquestioned, it limits the perceived options of an entire profession. The regressive architect points to the simplified way in which this categorization allows manufacture to push their "one answer

to every case" solutions and may then disavow himself of the modern vernacular altogether.

But it seems contradictory to architectural creation today NOT to scrutinize the underpinnings of the extensive manufacturer's prescribed aesthetics. For if this vernacular of our time indeed makes the architect more of a consumer, allowing him only minute decisions affecting the signifiers, not the signified things, then the key architectural determinant is to find a way to function creatively EVEN in that position.

The main reasons for this are: (A) it is not an architecturally helpless situation and, (B) since the manufacturer's vernacular is dominant, any breakthrough there would be timely and significant. For although the manufacturer can render common methods meaningless, and develop potentially ground breaking materials in only limited ways, there remains the possibility of improvement here. Such possibility is key. This because, as stated by Andreas Huyssen, technological progress, in art or industry, need not be completely identical with the way in which it is initially made to function. It will be remembered by the progressive architect that every technical advance holds a wide span of realizations, even though its potential is often limited by the very forces that develop it.<sup>89</sup>

Therefore, without an aversion to examining and using manufacturers' pre-aestheticized materials, the possibility is open to influence the design, aesthetic course, and use

of any of them.

Two significant 20th century architects attempted to understand and study the modern vernacular in this manner: Robert Venturi and Frank Gehry. They have recognized the pre-aestheticized nature of most of our common building materials, the distancing of this vernacular from architectural practice, and have attempted to build their practices on resolving this in a meaningful way.

## 2.6 Robert Venturi

The previous section defined two aspects unique to the state of architectural materials in the latter 20th century: (1) a lack of professional interest in and understanding of some common materials, and, (2) the case of a professional designer not having authority over such common materials when he does build with them. This scenario seemed uncanny to Robert Venturi in 1966, for indeed it is unusual historically for professional designers to lack in the area of applicable material knowledge of their time.

Whereas with Walter Gropius architectural control of some sort was implicit, it is quite unique to be living in a time where lack of control is implicit. Only in such an era could something such as "use the conventional unconventionally"<sup>90</sup> be said and actually make sense. In stating this in his Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture of 1966, Robert Venturi pointed a way to move forward. With his focus on the attitude of the architect

towards his job rather than on problems OUTSIDE the profession, Venturi put forward these observations:

"The architect's ever diminishing power and his growing ineffectualness in shaping the whole environment can perhaps be reversed, ironically, by narrowing his concerns and concentrating on his own job. Perhaps then relationships and power will take care of themselves. I accept what seems to me architecture's inherent limitations, and attempt to concentrate on the difficult particulars within it rather than the easier abstractions about it."<sup>91</sup>

He goes on to quote Epoch and Artist here, positing this is correct "because the arts belong...to the practical and not the speculative intelligence, there is no surrogate to being on the job."<sup>92</sup>

The difficult question remains: Just how are relationships and power to "take care of themselves?" For if architects are focused, yet if they concentrate on the wrong things, ignore the timely things, see only the romantic, pristine vernacular of farmhouses for example, rather than the modern vernacular and its prescribed aesthetic, nothing will be "taken care of", no progress will be made. How is one to responsibly achieve this "narrowing" and "concentrating" on his own job?

It is first important to point out that, when specifically referring to materials and common methods in a section entitled 'Accommodation and the limitations of Order: The Conventional Element' in Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture, Venturi recognizes that the

act of creating architecture has become a process of selecting as much as creating.<sup>93</sup> And in attempting to create architecture through the process of selecting from of the prescribed aesthetics of our modern vernacular, he states:

"the main justification for (common) elements in architecture is their very existence. They are what we have. Architects can bemoan or try to ignore them or even try to abolish them, but they will not go away... because architects do not have the power to replace them."<sup>94</sup>

Venturi makes it clear that he is not referring to:

"sophisticated products of industrial design, which are usually beautiful, but to the vast accumulation of standard, anonymously designed products connected with architecture and construction" and to "elements which are positively banal or vulgar in themselves and are seldom associated with architecture."<sup>95</sup>

These are indeed the modern vernacular's materials with their prescribed aesthetics.

In addressing a vital concern for architecture in his time, Venturi also saw it necessary to take a very anti-heroic approach to solving it. Indeed he is known for this, but on the material issue too, he specifically defends the need for an anti-heroic stance. In justifying his approach to using common things, he states:

"I am taking the limited view, I admit, but the limited view, which architects have tended to belittle, is as important as the visionary view, which they have tended to glorify but have not brought about."<sup>96</sup>

I feel this was precisely justified under Venturi's

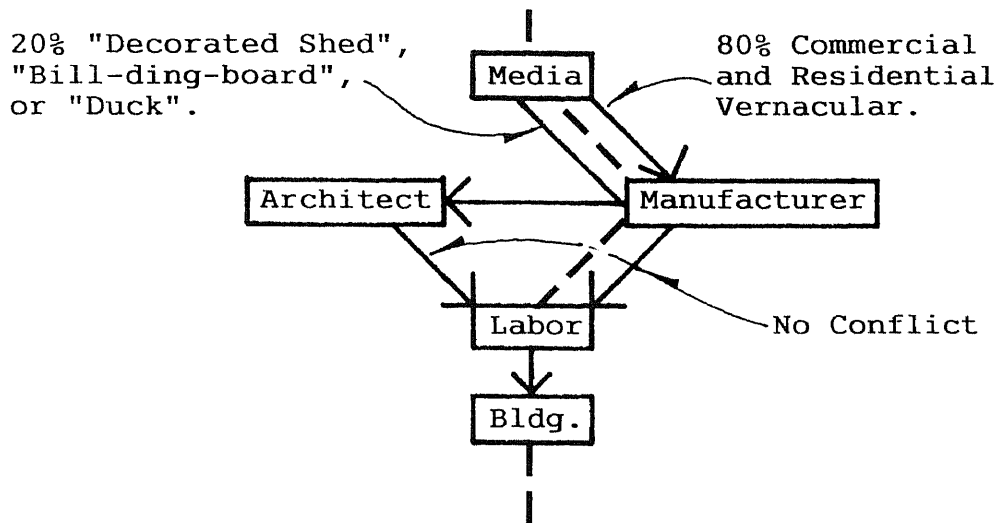
predicament, in 1966, as it is now, for it is a stance empathetic with the condition of the architect entering the game already odd-man-out of material developments, and thus disadvantaged - better: disenfranchised - from the start.

As a well-schooled, Rome Prize architect, Venturi was to make it clear that, yes, he DID have the education to mock the trade designer's simplistic logic, but he was choosing NOT TO in order to find something useable there. For he was following, with all of his education, a most rudimentary platitude of resourcefulness as a disadvantaged architect: "If all you have are lemons, make lemonade."<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> In fine art, this is concurrent with the developments that followed after Duchamp - Rauschenberg, Johns, and Pop Art. Also Marshal McLuhan's thesis on the media society. See Chapter 4.

Diagram 2.7 Venturi Methodology Diagram



His method greatly accepted the vernacular arrangement that already so dominated in commonplace construction. With Venturi, most materials would continue to flow through manufacturer to labor to building unhindered by him. Upon the small percentage of material where he discovered the opportunity to act, he did. These episodes he separates out of the process as the parts in which he was interested, could affect or manage. (Venturi went on to label these areas infamously as "the decorated shed", "the duck", or the "building-board".) There was no conflict at the direction of labor, as seen in the late modern methodology.

Venturi's ways of using conventional things inherently understood that in order to work as a disenfranchised architect, the Gropius/Bauhaus sort of teamwork with industry BEFORE materials are cut and fit would no longer be possible.<sup>9</sup> It became obvious to Venturi that such an

<sup>9</sup> Venturi's acceptance of conventional elements also shifted the focus away from an emphasis on the late modern concern for purity of form and towards an renewed



approach was not even desirable. Such a basic questioning of Bauhaus modernism's basic precept of the strong role of the architect is a persuasive sort of postmodern criticism, one far more potent than mainstream postmodern architecture was to become. This marked an important change for architecture, and for Venturi it placed the focus on creating with materials only after the manufacturer has already had his final say; AFTER things were pre-aestheticized, designed, fabricated, and delivered for use.

Venturi also learned to work on this aesthetic frontier from Pop Art - an artistic theory itself accepting the current-day difficulties with authorship and authenticity in modern creation. The Pop examples were there as early as the post-war 1950's. The art world grasped the relative weakness of the individual artist versus the power of all the extant, mass produced images with Jasper Johns' Target, 1955, and Robert Rauschenberg's Monogram, 1955 (to be discussed in chapter 4). Only in 1966 did Robert Venturi assemble for architecture what would be a working method for a profession similarly disenfranchised. With an affinity for things made by artist, ad-man or raw vernacular need, he articulated the first architectural response to the issue of creating under a current disadvantage with a new, disconcerting contradiction in terms: unfamiliar-but-

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architectural historicism. This is what the postmodern architects developed from Venturi's theories. It is not this author's belief that this is the prime value of Venturi's work.

commonplace materials. His call to use the conventional unconventionally brought to architects the "reliable", first hand proof of their lack of presence in the very common manufacturer's vernacular process.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Venturi's description of modern materials as the things that are already manufactured for our use, despite our yes or no, parallels the postmodern literature of Peter Handke begun in the 1960's and 70's. Handke is concerned with the pre-defined meanings buried within our common language.

Both men deal directly with what are inevitably the tools of their trade; Handke with everyday language and Venturi with everyday materials. They concentrated precisely on the failure within their own professions to directly look at the problems caused by the use of these everyday tools. Both discover the overwhelmingly postmodern distinction of feeling helpless in regards to the proliferation of these tools, thus their shared anti-heroic stance admits to the artist's disenfranchised position. But as creators, they project their uniquely creative ways upon those thing that, by convention, they have been forced to use. The way back to influence over them is to first accept their influence and second to work to rearrange, juxtapose, and point them out as significant problems. Perhaps then redefinition of, and/or influence upon them can occur. Neither man seeks a high art refuge from having to deal with these things. Rather knowledge of the most appropriate position of the artist in order to affect change is intuitive to them. What can be learned from Handke's own methodology is discussed in Chapter 4.

## 2.7 Frank Gehry

No better mode of action exists for seeing and dealing with the real vernacular processes that surround us then acting at the frontier exposed by Venturi. Venturi and Denise Scott Brown have been persuasive educators on many forms of the vernacular from Levittown to Las Vegas to main street and roadside architecture.

To practice as an architect in a way that incorporates these studies would be to act in the realm, as once defined by Giambattista Vico, of "topical" thinking: thought concerned only with the specifics of its time and place, where the architectural experiment is right down in the thick of things.<sup>97</sup> Here one acts one step at a time, always experimenting with things practicable in the present. Not nearly the Fountainhead vision of Ayn Rand's all powerful, never yielding architect, it is a position just one small step ahead of the mundane that fills our world.<sup>98</sup> Since Venturi opened the door to the readymades of the modern vernacular, it is Frank Gehry who has made good on practicing there.

Indeed he acknowledges a debt to Venturi, but he has exercised a gutsy, "street corner bravado" Venturi writes about but does not have in his buildings.<sup>99</sup> Gehry's instinctive, artistic response to the ugliness AND beauty of Los Angeles includes Venturi's teachings in a body of work that shows a current architect literally affecting the current vernacular.<sup>100</sup>

In his own residence, completed in 1978 in Santa Monica, California, (Figure 2.6), Gehry directly acknowledges a familiarity with the most urgent precondition of his suburban context: the Levittown conception of housing. In his words, he was interested in "the distortion of the rough wood butcher tract housing technology".<sup>101</sup>

He could not evaluate the manufacturer's aesthetic in his own, typical home by leaving the finished surfaces intact. Hence he exposed the edges, layers and substrates of those typical, pre-aestheticized materials to get at their making. Also, he imported other materials that were not so pre-aestheticized. From the manufacture-defined realm of 'industrial' materials he starkly called attention to their special quality of not having been "designed yet"<sup>11</sup>, before he got to them. It was these industrial, un-aestheticized materials he made stand out in his architecture. As critic Carol Burns states: "industrially produced materials were not developed nor had they been used with any aesthetic intention. By employing common materials in uncommon places, [sound familiar?] removing them from the neutral condition of the perceptual field to make them the object of attention, Gehry points out our capacity to see the commonplace and shows the richness of things that were not considered rich."<sup>102</sup>

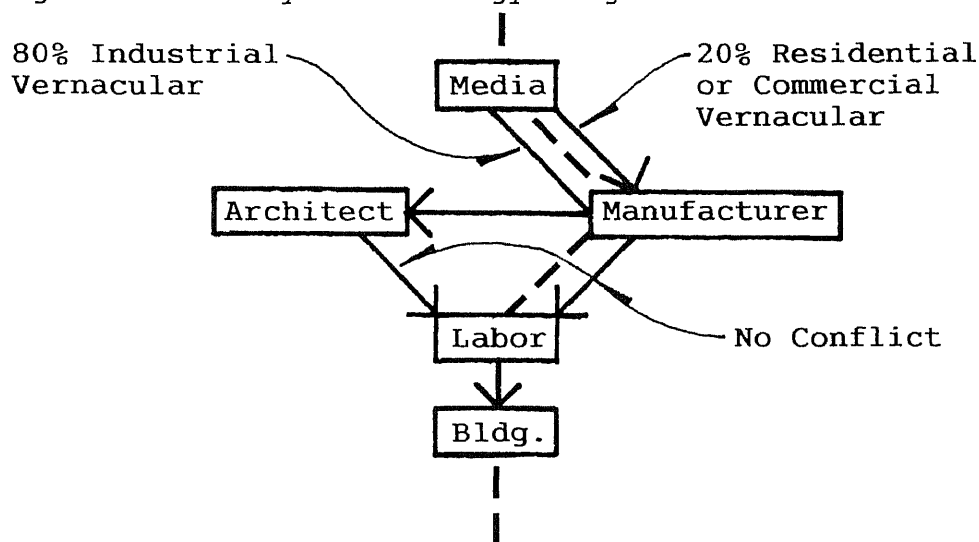
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<sup>11</sup> "not yet designed", in reference to materials, is another colloquial term. It is unavoidable here, as it is the opposite of a previously used colloquial term; "pre-aestheticized materials".

This small minority of undesigned materials existed in the industrial rather than the residential vernacular because it had not been as cost effective for manufacturers to heavily pre-aestheticize industrial materials. It is this important lesson, I feel, and none other, that we should learn from Gehry's importation of industrial materials into his residential work: to focus our attention on the points in the vernacular where manufacture has not inflicted its total aesthetic control.

Gehry's work does not alter the vernacular arrangement too greatly:

Diagram 2.8 Gehry Methodology Diagram



He simply separates out of the process those un-aestheticized parts he can expose and/or can affect. There is no conflict at labor as seen in the late modern methodology, although Gehry does contest the trade designer's own brand of practical intelligence with his own by sometimes taking on his role. But in acting right at an exploitable "seam" of the vernacular to gut the

aestheticized or exploit materials "not yet designed", Gehry proves to be a far more creative influence upon them than the trade designers had been.

Indeed architects BELIEVE they can be more creative than the trade designer, but Frank Gehry found the materials and situations in which to PROVE this is true. And he continued, like Venturi, to show the value in not being afraid to work at that level.

Another issue is put to rest by Gehry's topical presence: the fact that neither abstraction nor representation are at the core of an architectural material dilemma. For all he learned from artists, he remained based in the process of making. His material explosions were not about deconstruction or style, but about exposing the process. This in effect voids the importance of the modern-postmodern argument. The position is to accept and use one's intellect on what remains the current architectural determinant: the modern vernacular process now more powerful and beyond the individual's control.<sup>12</sup>

## 2.8 After Gehry

Since Gehry began to work, some architects have developed a not-so-innovative style similar to Gehry's. The L.A. School architects discussed in Chapter 3 carry the low-art material innovations brought about by Gehry to a high-art refuge.

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<sup>12</sup> Mike Kelley is the contemporary artist dealing with precisely this issue today. What can be learned from his methodology is discussed in Chapter 4.

Their approach accepts the divergent paths of the architect and the manufacturer rather than challenges it. No place does the manufacturer or his influence enter into their practices. They perceive solely themselves as standing between raw materials and the labor that puts them together according to their custom designs. This allows them to focus only on an obsessive, high-tech stylizing of materials. Such action I define as regressive and elitist.

Thus the following critique is important to understand a current, critically acclaimed methodology that does not substantially deal with the problem of creating given a modern vernacular now more powerful and beyond the individual's control: the pivotal architectural determinant discussed here.

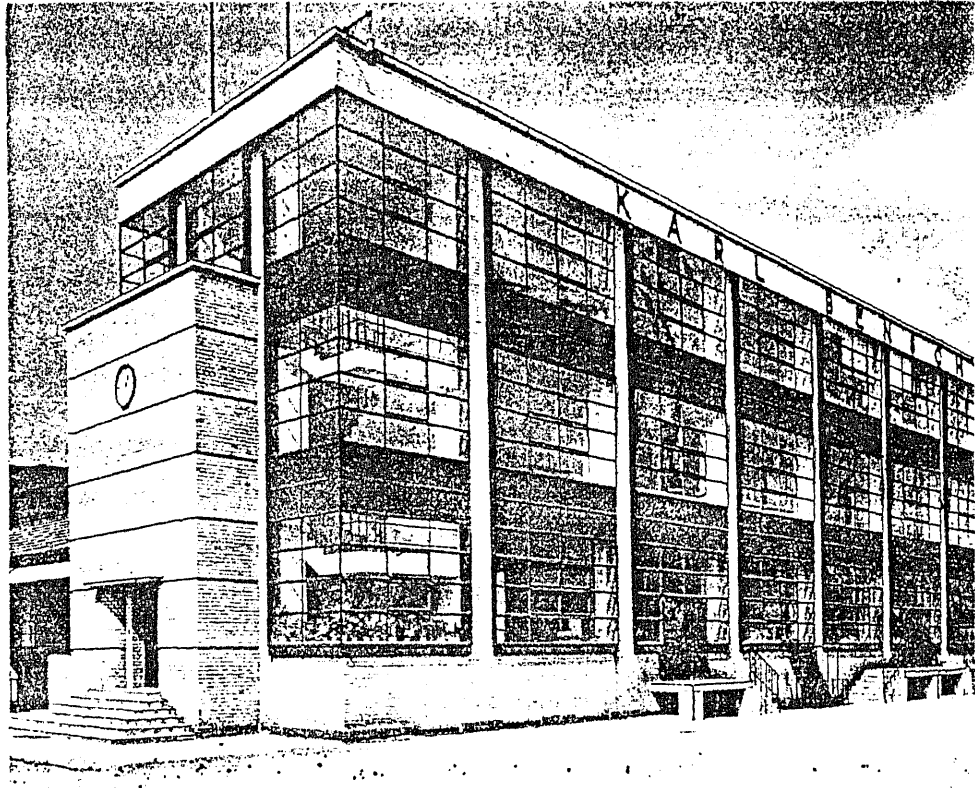


Figure 2.1 Walter Gropius and Adolf Meyer, Fagus shoe factory, Alfeld, 1911.



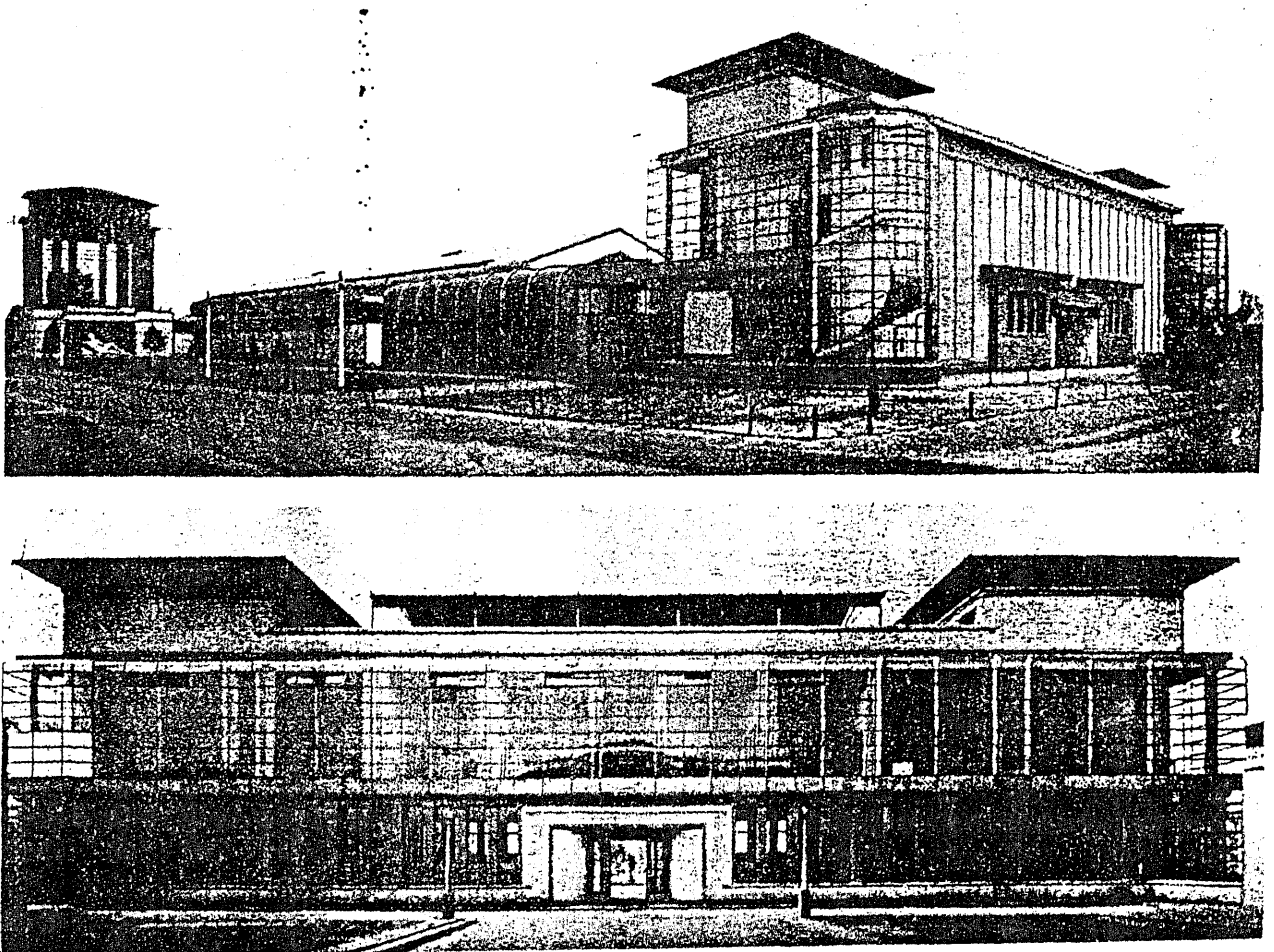


Figure 2.2 Walter Gropius and Adolf Meyer, Model factory, Werkbund Exhibition, Cologne, 1914.

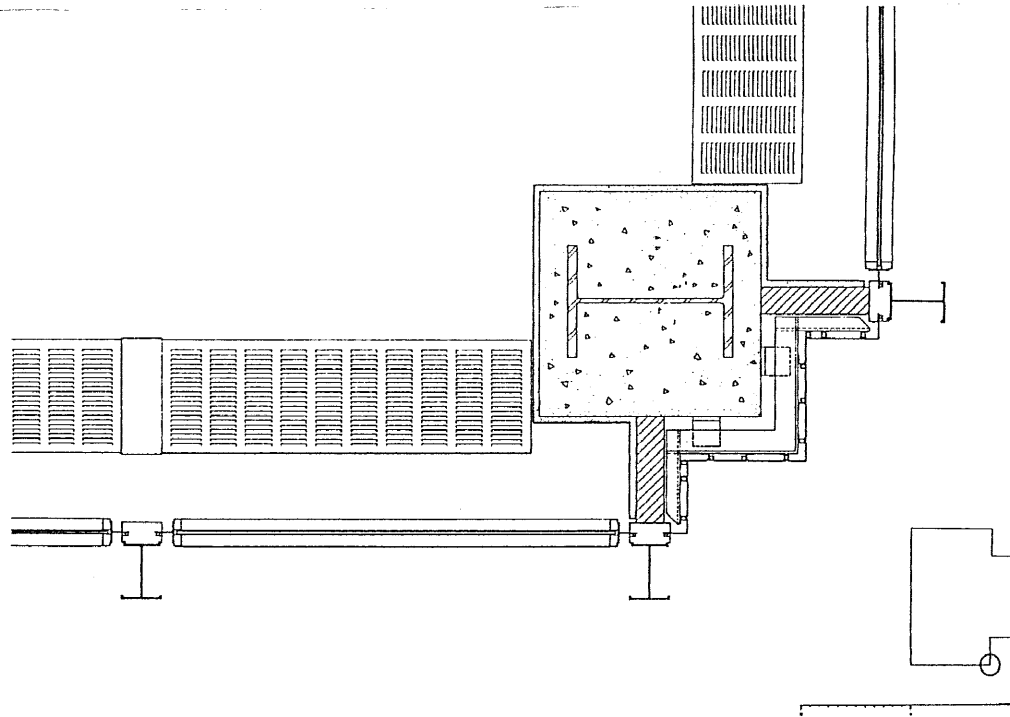
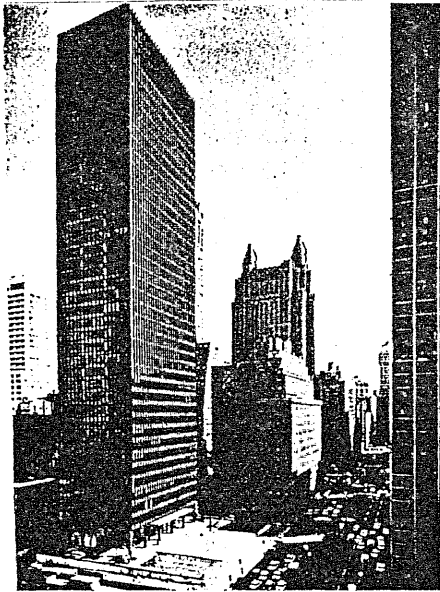


Figure 2.3 Mies van der Rohe and Philip Johnson, Seagram Building, exterior view, structural plan of one corner's main pier and decorative projecting I-beams, New York, 1954-58.

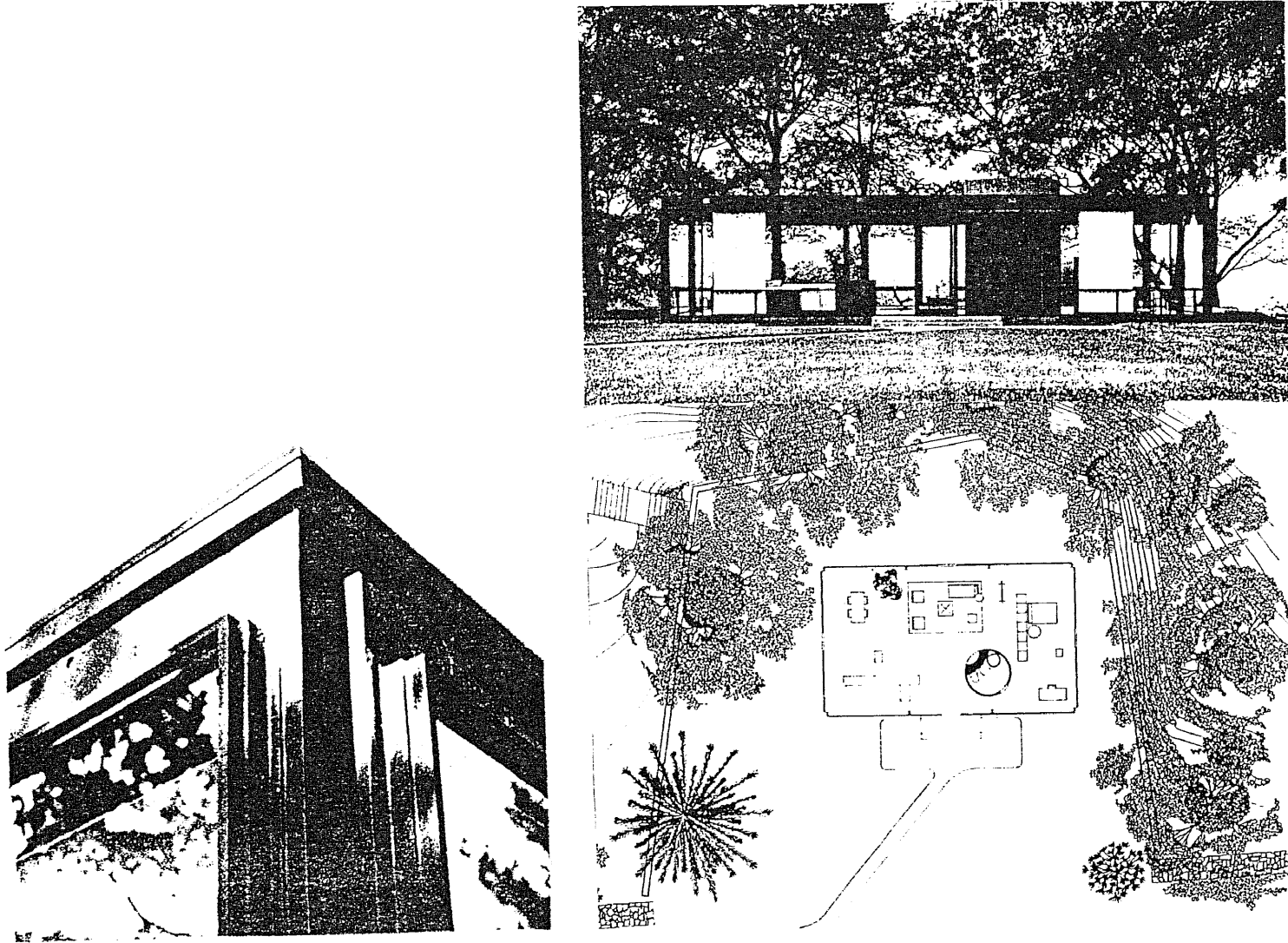


Figure 2.4 Philip Johnson, Glass House, New Canaan, 1949.

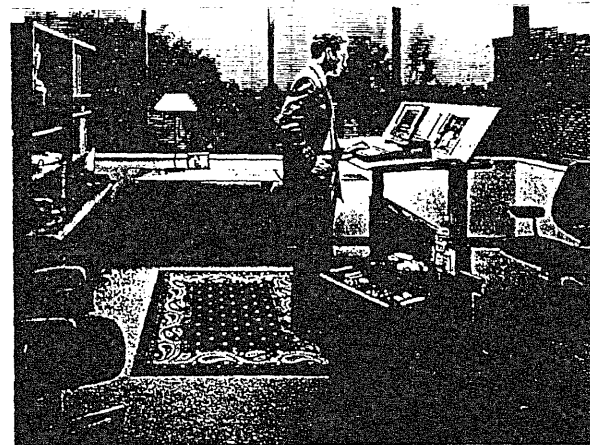
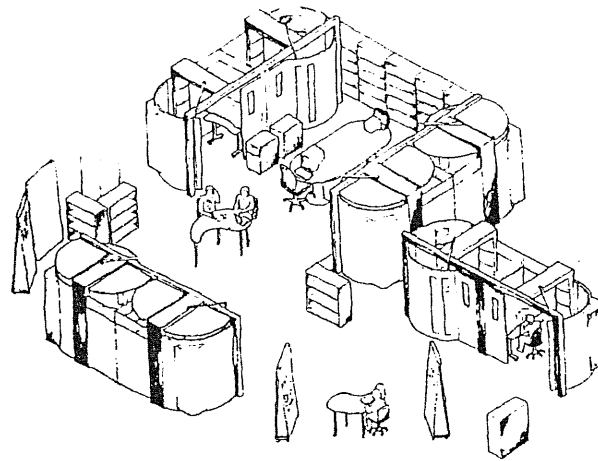
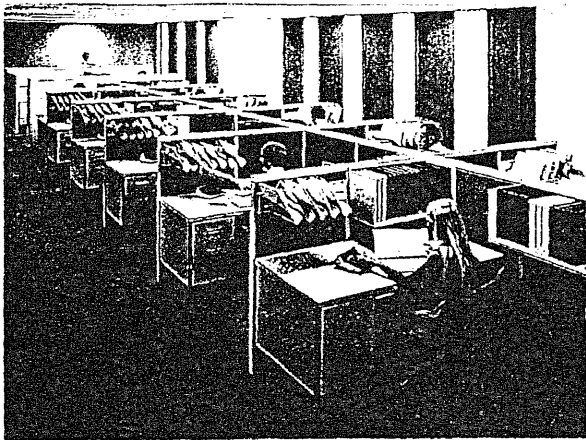


Figure 2.5 Left: modernist space planing, right bottom: Herman Miller's Relay system: providing only pieces of movable furniture, not fixed partitions or cubicles. right top: Steelcase's Personal Harbor system: creating flexible personal space that also frees-up team and meeting spaces.

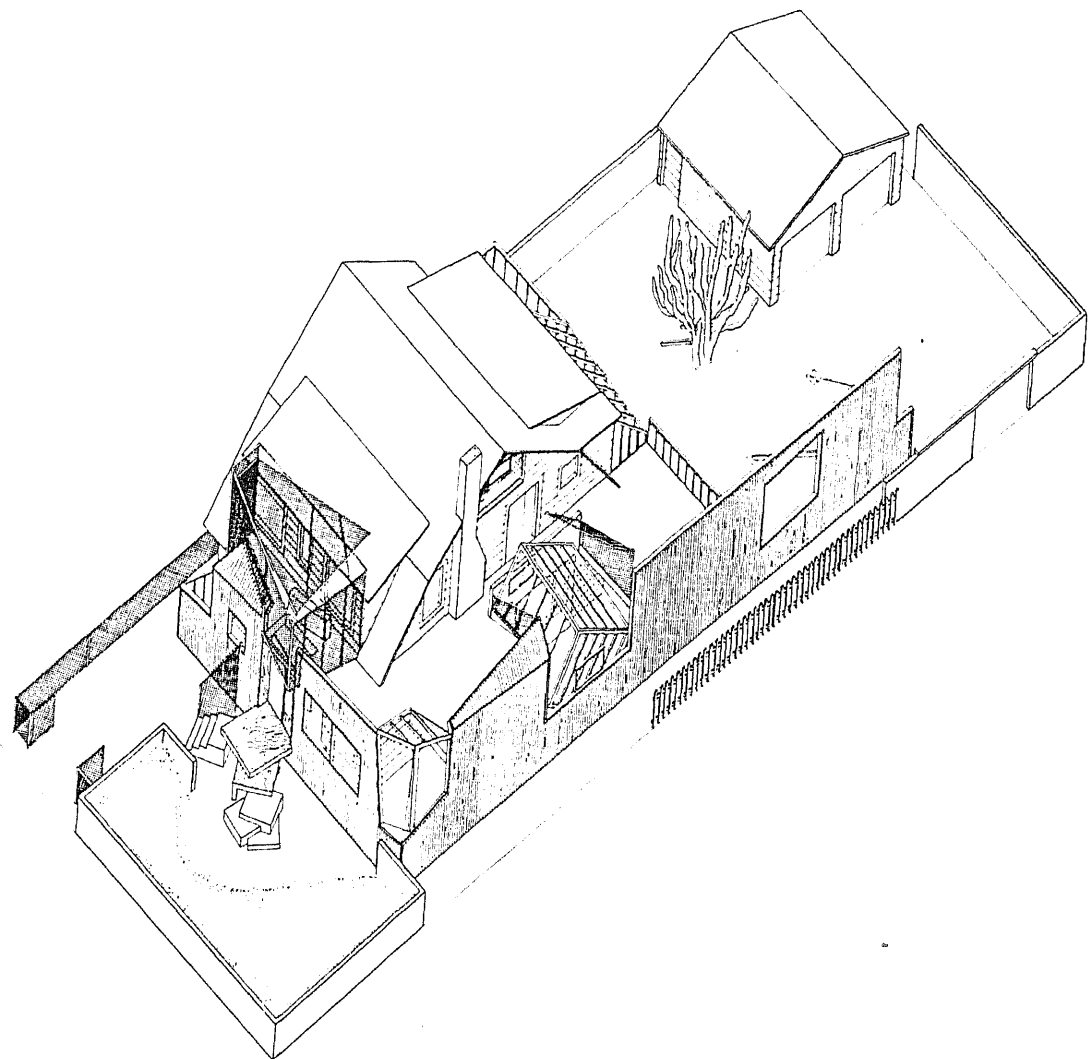


Figure 2.6 Axonometric drawing, Gehry House, Santa Monica, 1978.

## Chapter 2 NOTES

1. Arthur J. Pulos, The American Design Adventure, MIT Press, Cambridge, MA, 1988, pvii.
2. Arthur J. Pulos, The American Design Adventure, MIT Press, Cambridge, MA, 1988, pvii.
3. Pulos, The American Design Adventure, op cit, pvii. Much of this introduction, when not referring to the Great Exhibition of 1851, or my own theory of material use, is taken from Pulos' Introduction to his book. I am grateful for his ability to encapsulate there an accurate introduction to a difficult topic I had been struggling to summarize.)
4. Arthur J. Pulos, The American Design Adventure, MIT Press, Cambridge, MA, 1988, pvii.
5. Arthur J. Pulos, The American Design Adventure, MIT Press, Cambridge, MA, 1988, pvii.
6. Nikolaus Pevsner, Pioneers of Modern Design, Viking Penguin Inc, NY, 1960 edition, reprinted 1988, p41. Also supported by Maxwell Fry, Art in a machine age, Methuen and Co, London, 1969, p103-4.
7. Pevsner, op cit, p42.
8. Pevsner, op cit, p42.
9. Pevsner, op cit, p40.
10. Amos Rapoport, House, Form and Culture, Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1969, p2-3, 4 and 8. Rapoport devises three terms to describe the historically evolving folk or common building methods. Initially he uses 'primitive', followed by 'pre-industrial vernacular', then the term 'modern vernacular'. These last two terms indicate the difference between the production of a crafts-based and a manufacture-based society, respectively. 'Pre-industrial' vernacular means the use of skilled building tradesmen for construction.
11. Amos Rapoport, House, Form and Culture, Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1969, p2-3 and 8. Rapoport devises three terms to describe the historically evolving folk or common building methods. Initially he uses 'primitive', followed by 'pre-industrial vernacular', then 'modern vernacular'. These last two terms indicate the difference between a crafts-based and a manufacture-based society, respectively. 'Modern vernacular' indicates increased specialization and many discrete building types, each built by a team of specialists with skilled or unskilled labor. It is the "modern folk idiom", p7.
12. Giedion, op cit, p26.
13. Kenneth Frampton, Modern Architecture, a critical history, Thames and Hudson, London, 1985, p110.
14. Pevsner, op cit, p43.
15. Pevsner, op cit, p44-5.
16. Pevsner, op cit, p45-6.
17. Pevsner, op cit, p46.
18. Pevsner, op cit p 2 and 11, and Frampton, op cit, p34.
19. Frampton, op cit, p34.

20. Paxton developed, or fell back to, as is well-known, a career of creating period style chateaux and structures after 1851. See: Spiro Kostof, A History of Architecture, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1985, p636.
21. Reyner Banham, Theory and Design in the First Machine Age, MIT Press, Cambridge, MA, Second Edition, 1980, p14. Also in: Pevsner, op cit, p118.
22. Frampton, op cit, p109, alludes to this with Semper's comments on the Exhibition. Also Pevsner, op cit, p22, alludes to this with William Morris' revulsion at the Exhibition.
23. Banhan, op cit, p14.
24. Pevsner, op cit, p23.
25. Pevsner, op cit, p20.
26. Pevsner, op cit, p21-2.
27. Pevsner, op cit, p22 and p49.
28. Pevsner, op cit, p49.
29. Pevsner, op cit, p23.
30. Peter Stansky, Redesigning the World, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, 1985, p4.
31. Indeed the prevailing industrial system of producing things, Morris believed, would inevitably deal the death blow to art altogether: "Art...will die out of civilization, if the system lasts. That in itself does to me carry with it the condemnation of the whole system." Morris maintained a lifelong hatred towards the modern methods of production that was sustained by most of his followers. See: J.W. Mackail, The Life of William Morris, London, 1899, reissued in the World's Classics, O.U.P., 1950, p106.
32. Pevsner, op cit, p24-5.
33. Pevsner, op cit, p26, from: Idem, Craftsmanship in Competitive Industry, Campden, Glos., 1908, p194.
34. Pevsner, op cit, p26, from: Idem, Should We Stop Teaching Art?, London, 1911, p4,; Where the Great City Stands, London, 1917, p3.
35. Pevsner, op cit, p26.
36. Pevsner, op cit, p27.
37. Pevsner, op cit, p27.
38. pevsner, op cit, p28-9.
39. Fry, op cit, p104.
40. Pevsner, op cit, p29.
41. Pevsner, op cit, p146-7.
42. Pevsner, op cit, p29.
43. Pevsner, op cit, pp29-30.
44. Adolf Loos, 'Ornament and Crime', in Trotzdem, 1900-1930, Innsbruck, 1931, p78.
45. Pevsner, op cit, p30.
46. Pevsner, op cit, pp31-2, and: Fry, op cit, p104.
47. Pevsner, op cit, p32.
48. Pevsner, op cit, pp32-3.
49. Pevsner, op cit, pp32-3.
50. Pevsner, op cit, p35-6.
51. Giedion, op cit, p25.
52. Fry, op cit, p109.

53. Fry, op cit, p106.
54. Pevsner, op cit, p38.
55. Fry, op cit, p107.
56. Fry, op cit, p107.
57. Giedion, op cit, p17.
58. Giedion, op cit, p11.
59. Giedion, op cit, p25.
60. The Theory and Organization of the Bauhaus, Weimar, 1923. Also, Marcel Franciscono, Walter Gropius and the Creation of the Bauhaus in Weimar, Univ. of Ill. Press, Urbana, Ill., 1971.
61. Giedion, op cit, p11.
62. Fry, op cit, p108.
63. Giedion, op cit, p77.
64. Giedion, op cit, p77.
65. Giedion, op cit, pp77-8.
66. It is probable that manufacturers took design cues from the pure form architects before designing and marketing their own products. If materials were used in a new, valid way by architects then, it could result in the familiar cycle of cuing manufacturers to those things. These as yet "undesigned" materials could then be consumed by the manufacturing realm, economic and market forces, as well as the manufacturer's own designers, may have debased the products themselves, and popularized to their own, different ends. In this way, a once "raw" material becomes another, pre-aestheticized manufactured material. Architects may then have removed themselves from the material development, design and marketing loop. My critical analysis, however, remains the same: the architect and the manufacture began to take separate roads in this period, and this separation remains.
67. Herdeg, op cit, p.vi.
68. Herdeg, op cit, pp12-3.
69. Herdeg, op cit, pp11-13.
70. Herdeg, op cit, p12.
71. Herdeg, op cit, p12.
72. Herdeg, op cit, p12.
73. Herdeg, op cit, p13.
74. Herdeg, op cit, p12.
75. In the work of these Harvard school architects, Herdeg feels the most dramatic and best know declaration was staged by Johnson in the Glass House, Herdeg, op cit, p12. Also Jencks, op cit, footnote 6, p147.
76. Kenneth Frampton, Modern Architecture, a critical history, Thames and Hudson Ltd., London, 1980, p240.
77. Frampton, op cit, p240.
78. Note that the development of curtain wall technology pre-dates this group.
79. These early, minimally prefabricated houses were just as apt to look like a pseudo hand-made house as the craft-made house of the 19th century. Manufacturer produced dwellings were only minimally industrialized in their structure of

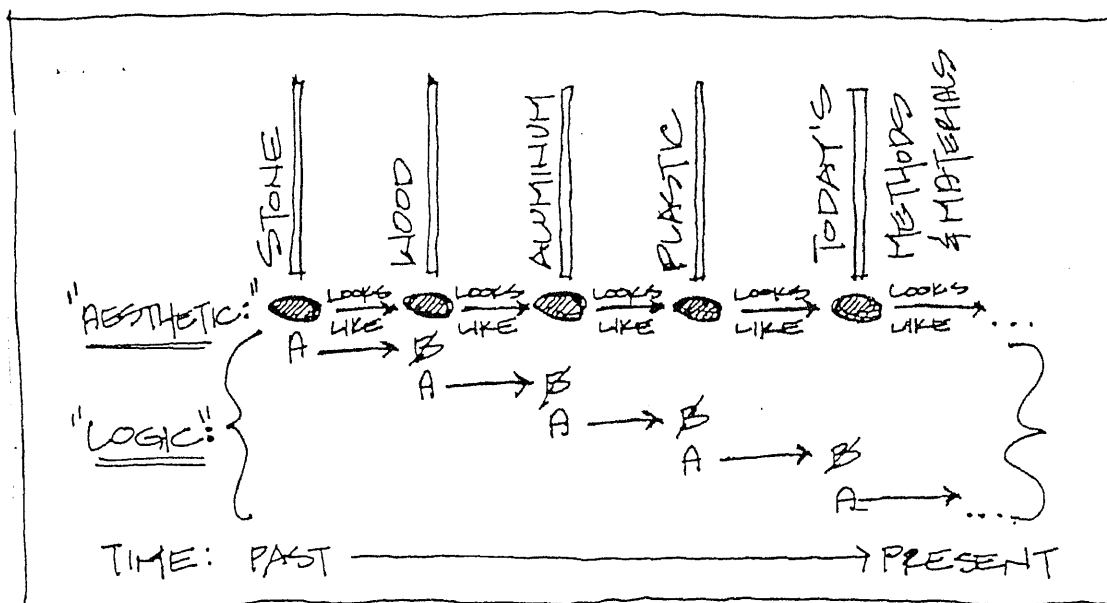


wood or steel frame, yet maintain exterior facades designed by manufacture to emulate the work of the crafts-based, pre-industrial vernacular. Giedion, op cit, p26.

80. As has been well documented, the Levitt developments, and all that are modeled after them, have mastered and since controlled the required political and economic aspects of building industrialized domestic architecture in this country. This includes industrialization from the scale of a handful of custom homes to the more obvious mass-acreage schemes. The lessons to be learned about this control of the more straight-forward side of the profession are indispensable yet simple to comprehend. Therefore any disagreement with the predominance and the success of the Levittown model should only come from dissatisfaction with its weaknesses in OTHER areas, such as, (A) its barely acceptable meeting of aesthetic concerns and user requirements, and for the purposes of this thesis, (B) its entrenched material use. Those faults are of course the meat of the arguability of their success. It is in attacking those shortcomings that an architect should generate more than mere frustration over the fact that those types are "the way" to build housing in America. It is in discussing the shortcomings of their material use that this thesis will proceed.

81. See Fernand Braudel, The Structure of Everyday Life, and Material Life 1400 - 1800, Harper and Row, New York, 1982. Braudel documents the history of such material substitutions.

82. To use the developments of residential siding as an example -- from stone to wood to aluminum to vinyl to...? -- one might diagram what the trade designer's A to B logic of material substitution as follows:



83. This situation is analogous to something more closer to home in the architect's office: the technically skilled CAD operator in charge of rendering and animation. The given tools, shapes and textures in the CAD operator's drawing program can define the extent of his knowledge about geometry, massing, color and texture, when not educated in design. Yet in rendering and animating with CAD as his tool, he is in control of many design issues. He is faced with design related decisions constantly, armed with only the particular software package's arbitrary library of responses.

84. Insite, v.III, #2, November 1993, p.60, by Jonathan Crinion.

85. This term for office cubicles coined by Copeland in Generation X.

86. Insite, v.III, #2, November 1993, p.54-65, by Jonathan Crinion, refers to Steelcase's The Personal Harbor, and Herman Miller's Relay System systems research on pp58-60.

87. Insite, v.III, #2, November 1993, p.55, by Jonathan Crinion.

88. Source: Charles W. McBride IV, The Lane Co., Altavista, Va.

89. Andreas Huyssen, The Technological Imagination, edited by Teresa De Laurentis, Andreas Huyssen and Kathleen Woodward, Coda Press, Madison, Wisconsin, 1980, p82.

90. Robert Venturi, Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture, the Museum of Modern Art, NY, Second Edition, 1977, p42.

91. Robert Venturi, Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture, the Museum of Modern Art, NY, Second Edition, 1977, p14.

92. David Jones, Epoch and Artist, Chilmark Press Inc, NY, 1959, p12.

93. Venturi, op cit, p43.

94. Venturi, op cit, p42.

95. Venturi, op cit, p42.

96. Venturi, op cit, p42.

97. "Topical" is used as defined by Giambattista Vico. See David Kunze, Thought and Place: The Architecture of Eternal Places in the Philosophy of Giambattista Vico, Peter Lang Publishers, New York, 1987.

98. Saint's Image of the Architect provides excellent, multiple accounts of architects' roles in the entire building process, thus debunking high design and the "egoist" architect mentality.

99. Thomas Hines, Frank Israel: Buildings and Projects, Rizzoli, NY, 1992, p214.

100. Thomas Hines, Frank Israel: Buildings and Projects, Rizzoli, NY, 1992, p214.

101. Carol Burns, from 'The Gehry Phenomenon', in Thinking the Present, Princeton Architectural Press, New York, 1990.

102. Burns, op cit, p77.

## CHAPTER 3

### AFTER GEHRY. CRITIQUE OF LOS ANGELES ARCHITECTS: THOM MAYNE, MICHAEL ROTONDI, ERIC OWEN MOSS, AND FRANK ISRAEL.

#### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter is an attempt to come to an understanding of the issues at stake in the work of current Los Angeles based architects. Such a local focus is needed in order to look at a generation of architects born into the freedom allowed by the innovative practice of Frank Gehry. While cognizant of this freedom, none of the architects to be discussed here would consider themselves to be Gehry "followers". Rather, architects working since Gehry's general acceptance simply acknowledge that he created an open artistic climate of which they all are beneficiaries. <sup>1</sup>

This climate has been manifest to the greatest extent in Southern California; notably in the city of Los Angeles. Architects with a practice based in this area function in a diverse regional culture; one open to experimentation not only since Gehry but as a pre-condition. Los Angeles continued through the 1980's and early 90's to be a fertile architectural climate with a willing audience, or clientele, for the work of the architects to be discussed here. This Chapter is an investigation as to whether architecture under such conditions has fostered a material attitude or theory progressing in any way further than either Gehry's or any

other approach outlined in this paper thus far.

Four architects have been selected as those who define the most developed possibilities to emerge from these Southern California conditions. They are Thom Mayne and Michael Rotondi of Morphosis, (having left Morphosis and started his own practice, Rotondi is still relevant.) Eric Owen Moss, and Frank Israel. These architects are acknowledged to represent the most talented and the most refined sensibilities of those working in and around Los Angeles today.<sup>2</sup> Each with slightly divergent interests, their work does converge in their identification as the most accomplished examples of an architectural school of thought. They have been frequently described as the foremost architects of the "L.A. Style" or the "L.A. School", the term I will use here.<sup>3</sup>

### 3.2 Precursors to the L.A. School

Morphosis, Eric Owen Moss, and Frank Israel emerged influenced not by Gehry's theories or methods as much as the liberating facility of his presence. The virtues of an architectural "lineage" cohesive only in its ability to afford successive practitioners more freedom to work has been outlined by Philip Johnson in his preface to a 1991 Rizzoli biography on Moss. The three generations of architects, Johnson asserts, that widened the margins of acceptability for this generation of Los Angeles architects

are: (1) "the 'heroic period': Mies van der Rohe, Le Corbusier etc..." (2) "the Bauhaus epigones" (including Johnson himself), followed by (3) "Gehry, Eisenman et al." And following them, "Finally there is Eric Moss's generation..."<sup>4</sup>

This lineage is plausible for indeed Frank Gehry has cited Philip Johnson as a liberating influence on several occasions. He confirms the freedom this ancestry afforded HIM, in his case, not so much on his work but on giving him the nerve, so to speak, to freely create. He acknowledges Johnson's "tremendous generosity to younger people..."<sup>5</sup> in the way he would frequently recommend that young practitioners be offered work in which he had a hand in controlling. Johnson's liberating effect on the profession created a climate in which it was easier for people such as Gehry to work. Likewise, Gehry is aware that he has established an agreeable climate for a younger generation of Los Angeles architects, much in the same way.

As to the actual aesthetic forerunners leading up to the methodologies employed by the current L.A. architects -- my central concern here -- there is a different set of architectural influences. In this respect Johnson suggests a more "craft inspired" lineage of "Sullivan, Mackintosh, the Vienna Workshop, Barcelona, and Scarpa". Noticeably Gehry is not present. Johnson states: "Today (the L.A. architects) hark back more to the arts and craft movement of the turn of the century..." Scarpa is so prevalent to this

line of reasoning that the potential influence gives Johnson pause. He goes into more detail: "Carlo Scarpa; a man whose interests about how things come together lie outside the modern main line. With the typewriter supports he designed for the Olivetti showrooms, Scarpa could have been Eric Moss's grandfather." <sup>6</sup>

If that smacks a bit too much of hyperbole, as indeed it is, a closer look at Gehry's thoughts on this is helpful. For even Gehry's work, with all its formal similarities to some work by Moss and Israel is only so similar in its image. While he is the direct predecessor in terms of acceptability, he too sees an attention to detail in the newer L.A. architects and marks that concern as differentiating him from them.

Gehry stated his discomfort with the rote assumption that his concerns in architecture are manifest in the generation that follows him -- especially in Morphosis, Moss, and Israel -- in statements made after participating in a jury of a number of L.A. architects. Gehry came to some conclusions about this when he says: "And it became obvious to me that the real influence, aesthetically, is not Frank Gehry, but Carlo Scarpa, and Thom Mayne and Morphosis, because they have started an architecture of detail." It is this concern over detail that he is at odds to understand, and he elaborated on it: "All the work submitted shows pieces of stairways. The first picture in everybody's proposal was a stairway with a weird handrail, and then a

light fixture at the end of a hall. It was fragments of buildings. Now maybe I'm the one who started looking at fragments -- the fracturing of buildings -- I don't know. I don't think so -- I think it was in the air -- but I see Scarpa in that, and it's not at all what I'm interested in. If you look at Thom Mayne, and Eric Moss, and recently Frank Israel -- except for their occasional use of galvanized steel of something like that -- I think their detailing and attitude is quite different from my own. I'm not interested in the detailing."

For the L.A. architects discussed here, the details of their work, as for Scarpa, are far more important than they were to Gehry. With this obsession over detail, a claim of Gehry's "logical" rank as their aesthetic forerunner is void. Gehry goes one step further to implicitly distance his methodology from theirs: "All that fussy detail, it's pretentious, in a way. I don't mean to indict all of them, because I really like them, but that's where I go off on the other side. I'm making the case that they aren't really influenced by me -- I may have been what broke the line of the enemy." <sup>7</sup>

If Gehry gave them license to 'do what they want to do', it has not been at all implicit that what they want to do is carry the same concerns for material use as Gehry. I think Gehry himself makes that painfully clear.

As far as aesthetic influence on Gehry is concerned, he credits Alvar Aalto. His first interest in architecture

came as a direct result of a presentation of Aalto's he witnessed on his bent plywood furniture research.<sup>8</sup> This is fitting, for Gehry's methods, like Aalto's, are tied to the way in which an architect works with the modern modes of material production. He has also had the experience of using his creativity in steering a relationship with manufacturers and manufactured materials like Aalto. The active pursuit of basic relationships with the makers of modern materials also markedly sets Gehry apart from the methodologies of Morphosis, Eric Owen Moss and Frank Israel.

### 3.3 Theoretical Background:

#### The Post-Modern Critique.

If not aligned with Gehry's material and aesthetic concerns, it is possible now to explore what the working sensibilities of Morphosis, Moss, and Israel have been. As components of the larger post-modern critique of contemporary culture, the L.A. School: (A) holds an anti-modern view towards form making and technology, (B) is inclined to representations of our de-centered society, and (C) has developed rationale justifying the anomalous or plural influences in their work.

With most of their work completed between 1980 and the present, we can examine their major concerns through an analysis of their published work and writing. To begin, a look at the stated concerns of Morphosis, Moss and Israel from the early 1980's is still particularly relevant. For their views are consistent concerning where they have come



from as designers, or what, in other words, they perceive to be their predicament as late 20th century architects.

### 3.3.1 An Anti-Modern Stance

For Morphosis (Thom Mayne and Michael Rotondi), even their early work establishes an acute awareness of their coming of age after abundant examples, and failures, of International Style modernism. Early projects such as the 2-4-6-8 house, Venice, 1978, eclectically mixed media to maximum contrasts rather than replicate modernism's material purity, and show a honest interest in construction. Later, the imagery of work such as their 72 Market Street restaurant, Venice 1983-85, and Kate Mantilini restaurant, Los Angeles, 1986, began to express Morphosis' skeptical attitude towards technology in more representational and figurative ways. Indeed this is done by the entire L.A. School by rendering their ambivalence in sculptural, semi-functional centerpieces or appendages to their buildings. (Figure 3.1)

Such imagery counters the optimism of the International Style, but parallels its penchant for representational architecture. For indeed the L.A. School is as concerned with fracturing complete forms and dramatizing the questionable aspects of technology as the Late Moderns were with upholding diagrammatic purity and dramatizing the potential of mass production.

Having already experienced first hand the polluting and destructive potential of the machine, The L.A. School

inherently questions "the mechanical nature of our world with its aspirations for an architecture that optimizes technology"<sup>9</sup> Aiming to represent this condition, sculptural imagery of "used up", redundant, or rusting technology are often created to more or less useless ends, albeit useful to the L.A. School's anti-modern stance. This melancholy 'Technomorphism'<sup>10</sup>, as critic Aaron Betsky calls it, represents the L.A. School's view of the predicament of designing in the late 20th century.

The text of an early California architects anthology of 1982, The California Condition, illustrates such reservations about high modernism shared by Eric Owen Moss and Frank Israel:

Eric Owen Moss:

"We live in a time when the self-assured ideological positions of the early 20th century seemed to have blurred. Early practitioners of modern architecture anticipated the coming of a new world for a new man, served from a dusty, eclectic past, built with clean, functional off-the-shelf parts. This architectural language was fresh and meaningful, particularly as it was understood as an integral component of a social and artistic experience.

Sixty years later this experience has quite obviously been vitiated -- still seen, but it is no longer felt. When modern architecture jumped the Atlantic it dropped a large amount of its social content in the sea. Particularly in America the language of modernism has often been an issue of image, lacking social and cultural moorings." <sup>11</sup>

Frank Israel:

"When I lived and practiced in New York, my work endorsed a polemic which challenged the tenets of modernism. In

Los Angeles, making architecture demands quick responses to situations that defy the past. The materials and craft of putting materials together borrow from yesterday in a brusque manner." <sup>12</sup>

This anti-modern position has been maintained through the completely current work of Morphosis, Moss and Israel. Notably it is manifest in Morphosis' ambiguous representations of the machine and their preference for overlapping and colliding geometries; in Moss' preference for incomplete forms rather than wholes; imbalance rather than static arrangements. And for Frank Israel, his anti-formal, episodic approach to renovations such as Propaganda Films in Los Angeles, 1988, and the Bright and Associates Office in Venice, 1991. They all bespeak the same challenge to modern purity. (Figure 3.2, 3.3, 3.4)

To re-use modern doctrines, at this point in time, can plainly not be justified by any one of these three architects, given their overt skepticism. All claim to, (and DO) challenge modernism's reductive, exclusive form making tendencies. As a rule, they violate any geometry or organizing principles that inhibits change and difference to the extent that if a program or site does not contain change and difference, they insert it themselves. The L.A. School emerged questioning from the start the net results of modernism and a technological society, and they often delight in going out of their way to illustrate their lack of confidence in it. <sup>13</sup>

### 3.3.2 Representations of the de-centered Society.

Los Angeles is a peripheral place; a network of edge cities. It is America's most advanced physical manifestation of our de-centered society. As a metropolis containing over 100 ethnic groups speaking 80 different languages, and where no single way of life or industrial sector dominates, Los Angeles presents the designer a continuum of juxtaposed opposites and contrasts. <sup>14</sup>

Since Frank Gehry explored the fractured forms of his own Santa Monica home in the late 1970's however, an architecture reflecting the many aberrant conditions in Los Angeles can be quite traditional, almost expected, today. Whereas the Los Angeles environment was only a causal influence UPON Gehry's architecture, representing the de-centered nature of the post-modern city is a prime generator of both the form AND substance of the work of Morphosis, Moss, and Israel.

For Moss, this is an exploitable "given" of the dispersed city, and so he has always built a clash of differences and counterpoints into all of his work. As early as the 708 house, designed for himself in the Pacific Palisades, in 1981, he orchestrated various cladding materials in a way that parallels in elevation the mosaic of Los Angeles neighborhoods in plan. The predominance of periphery developments and their edges are conditions almost transplanted onto the facade of the 708 house in its conflicting and skewed brick courses, polka dots and stucco

joint lines. (Figure 3.5)

For Thom Mayne the concept of the de-centered city is an acknowledgement that "the permanency of localization no longer exists."<sup>15</sup> This allows Morphosis to appropriate local influences, such as site characteristics or material use, and overtly screw them up from the start. Morphosis has distorted buildings such as the Venice houses through a technique Jencks calls the "contrived botch",<sup>16</sup> This is an art of carefully placed incongruities designed ever so conscientiously into the fabric of a work; an architecture of discrete geometries and elements where none win out over any other. (Figure 3.6) This representational architecture is purely a reflection of our societal de-centering and of the existing, not-so-contrived abnormalities of Los Angeles.

For Frank Israel, expressing the sort of concurrent pressures found in Los Angeles is one of his more refined sensibilities. His well-planned compositions adroitly rectify the conflicting pressures his OWN diverse forms generate amongst each other. With the same fracturing hand, Israel reconciles his forms in a way more appealing, artful and controlled than even Gehry or the entire city of Los Angeles have themselves done. In the Goldberg-Bean House, Hollywood, 1991, Israel orchestrates diverse spatial collisions and fractures -- even the colors -- to fittingly render the whole in an almost peaceful way. (Figure 3.7) And in the Virgin Records Conversion in Beverly Hills, 1992, he has almost perfected a sophisticated control of his

"casual" gestures in plan through a deliberate "disharmonious harmony".<sup>17</sup> (Figure 3.8)

While the de-centered city (and its inhabitants) are forced to embrace a heterogeneity, the L.A. School is an architecture that willfully decided to embrace and mirror it in forms. Labeled "Hetero-architecture"<sup>18</sup>, its "main point... is to accept the different voices that create a city, suppress none of them, and make from their interaction some kind of greater dialogue."<sup>19</sup> This implies the creator has the artistic freedom to embrace and represent multiple accounts of anything under his control: be it formal, structural or spatial. (Figure 3.9)

To investigate how the L.A. School represents these multiple accounts in building, I will discuss their rationale for the existence of plural and anomalous forces in architecture.

### 3.3.3 Plurality and Anomaly as a Rule.

For the L.A. School, the prerequisite for architectural work is the active promotion of non-rational conditions over the rational. If they indeed have an "opposite" tenet to the International style's purity, it is their claim to the legitimacy of pluralism: giving credence to the irrational, anomalous, multiple and improvisational forces as much as any other forces determining design.<sup>20</sup>

But creating architecture in such an off-hand manner that appears natural AND "suppresses no voice", is a

difficult thing to do. The L.A. School architect has to work hard at creating his careful accidents and deft collisions of form. <sup>21</sup>

As early as 1982, Eric Owen Moss had paved the way for the acceptability of this irrational, idiosyncratic, or just plain personal style when he stated:

"Conviction must now be totally personal. It is unlikely to find collective sympathy or reinforcement in any current artistic or historic perceptions." <sup>22</sup>

Later, in a 1991 monograph, he wrote:

"There seems to be a need to find an analytical side, or a causal explanation for everything. We need to be able to give things a sequence, a method, a logic. Simultaneity is a different reality, which you can't explain that way. There are possible linkages; it's not that logic doesn't exist, but that it's plural..." "The point is that the anomaly is the rule and the analytic is an intervention in the anomaly." <sup>23</sup>

The predominance of the anomaly is nowhere more abundant than in his 1989-91 renovation of the buildings at 8522 National Blvd. in Culver City, known as 8522. This is one of the many warehouse-to-workplace conversions an L.A. architect is frequently faced with. These projects present a building shell of generally rational column bays and orthogonal surfaces into which a new client's program will be inserted. Having little or no historic significance to either client or architect, an almost natural first response to these existing spaces is an arrangement of apparently illogical new constructions within. Not only do new forms

differ markedly from the existing, they can appear unique from one another as well. The scale and geometry of new forms can be so diverse that some appear so large and uncommon that they can only be partially understood. Some forms can only be glimpsed at the places where they surface, or appear, in the plan of the existing building. (Figure 3.10)

At 8522 Moss connects office suites with multiple insertions of elliptical, cylindrical and other spatial aberrancies. He creates apparently unplanned events along a necessary interior circulation spine that more or less respects the existing warehouse grid. Here the new can be seen as a planned argument for plurality and difference against the unflinching backdrop of the existing.

The logic of developing retro-fit work in such a way is not lost on Frank Israel. He has perfected an approach to these jobs of creating an "office village"<sup>24</sup> within existing building shells. In both the Propaganda Films project and the Bright and Associates offices, Israel develops his own episodic scenography. The various functions of conference rooms, work rooms, offices and waiting areas somehow take place within a sequential arrangement of assorted sculptural entities. (Figure 3.11, 3.4)

Israel also chooses materials in an eclectic way that compliments his juxtaposition of the anomalous and the constant in forms. Each object in a Israel creation is not only unique in form, but it displays a different material in



an almost merchandising manner. In doing this Israel admits "...there is nothing particularly coherent or practical about an unpainted plywood wall butting into a piece of glass." <sup>25</sup> But it is by his holding up and "showing" the viewer, for un-obvious reasons, specific materials (along with their curious forms) that Israel reaffirms the value he places on the anomalous.

Morphosis brings this interest in the irrational to the level of high art. Even without the benefit of a grided warehouse building against which to react, Morphosis has perfected an ability to literally create anomaly and dissimilarity from the ground up. Their work can be seen as an evolution of an exceptional ability to fabricate a tension between the regular and irregular, even if it has to be done "from scratch" in places where tension did not formerly exist. As their technique improved, this idea began to physically take center stage and then dominate their designs.

The first buildings where this approach is realized are the 2-4-6-8 House addition, Venice, 1978, where materials are juxtaposed for maximum contrast, and the Venice III House addition, Venice, 1983-85, with its tectonic interest in representing construction. (Figure 3.12) Here difference originates even from among the materials the architects willfully elected to build with. As their work progressed, unreconciled forces came to be represented not merely through such material juxtaposition, but in more

representational centerpiece contraptions such as the Kate Mantilini restaurant orrery, 1987, and the Cedar Sinai Medical Center "electronic tree", of 1988. (Figure 3.15, 3.16) These sculptural feasts-for-the-eyes perform minimal functional tasks with the maximum of designed complexity and irrationality. In succeeding projects however, such as the Arts Park Performing Arts Pavilion, L.A., 1989, and the Crawford Residence in Montecito, California, 1992, Morphosis' artifice expands from a concentration on these centerpieces to the entire building-as-sculpture. These projects manage to weave all that is multiple, anomalous, non-functional and irrational into every space of the entire building. (Figure 3.2 bottom, 3.13) Here, the creation of an architecture of anomaly needs most completely to be contrived. While a warehouse renovation already provides a field of sameness against which to react, both object AND field must be composed by the architect here. In these projects, a newly contrived anomaly can contrast only with a newly created sameness.

#### 3.3.4 A Post-Modern Pretext

What do the three concerns to the L.A. School architects discussed above have in common? What is the GENERAL justification for: (A) a rejection of the purity of high modernism; (B) an acceptance and understanding of our de-centered society ; and (C) a rationale of protecting from criticism the irrational and anomalous? The consistent

beliefs of Morphosis, Moss, and Israel indicates they share a certain understanding of the predicament of living in the post-modern conditions of our society. This reveals a certain reliance on the post-modern discourse of such writers as Hal Foster, Fredric Jameson, Jean Baudrillard, Andreas Huyssen, Jurgen Habermas, Francios Lyotard, and others.<sup>26</sup> These scholarly sources generate the descriptions of our modern city form, and this form is indeed Los Angeles's -- a peripheral place; a network of edge cities: de-centered. This city form is the physical manifestation of our society they have referred to as: post-modern, post-industrial or the consumer society.<sup>27</sup>

Their critiques embody the three main themes outlined above. For example, (A), a rejection of high modernism, is a trait that can be found in many OTHER forms of post-modern cultural production. This has been discussed by Frederic Jameson. He indicates the Pop Art of Andy Warhol, the music of John Cage, punk and post-modern rock such as the Talking Heads, the fiction of William Burroughs and Thomas Pynchon, and the films of Godard as examples of this rejection of modernism that parallel that rejection in L.A. architecture. Jameson notes that most of these post-modernist artists emerged as specific reactions against the established forms of high modernism in their fields.<sup>28</sup>

Descriptions of (B), the de-centered city and its heterogenous society, are perhaps best made by the post-modern theorists Jean Baudrillard and Hal Foster. While

Thom Mayne relies on observations in Hal Foster's Recordings to describe Morphosis' intentions along these lines <sup>29</sup>, Baudrillard has elaborated upon the ability of contemporary edge-city architecture to degenerate both space and time. He has been keen in exploring how, in cities such as Los Angeles, this dissolution leaves no place for a "scene", or universally experienced real events. Public spaces are now devoid of spectacle, and private places have lost their secret, secluded nature to the omnipresence of information technology. This has occurred to the extent that both public AND private space now exclude any unplanned interaction, or "scene", from regularly occurring. The person, in effect, becomes only an information recipient here. Wherever he might wander he only receives multiple signals from all manners of networks of influence. <sup>30</sup>

In a city composed of such Baudrillardian enclaves, the warehouse renovations of Moss and Israel are taken as an opportunity to interject a new community there: the office village. Since little interaction occurs elsewhere in the de-centered city, these places, in their ad hoc layouts, are attempts at representational plurality. Their free composition is an attempt to allow anything to happen in a city of isolated events -- even if only among the fixed subset of inhabitants allowed inside.

Frederic Jameson also establishes a grounding for (C), the L.A. architects' deference towards anomalous or irrational forces. He has described how the forces of

consumer society don't offer any coherent pattern or rationality to our lives.<sup>31</sup> How the current state of our technological culture leads to the fragmentation of everything: the self, meaning, and social interaction. The L.A. architects acceptance and cultivation of the irrational, anomalous entity can be seen as emulation of this assessment of our post-modern consumer culture. As the consumer's discontinuous experience of isolated signs and "material signifiers" fails to link up into a coherent sequence (<sup>32</sup>), so likewise the L.A. architects practice their calculated informality; seeing neither the validity nor the obligation to develop straightforward, simple architecture.

By way of these disjointed conditions, a difficult to explain encounter with one of Moss' preposterous conical-elliptical spaces -- both violated and truncated -- can be seen as something created by a technique that mirrors much of the post-modern experience. (Figure 3.23)

To the architects of the L.A. School then, the post-modern critique is a conceptual common ground, one just as evident as the effects of the automobile, the single family house and television upon the development of Los Angeles itself. And as critic John Chase observed, even Los Angeles is no longer a city devoid of traditions. Post-modern culture IS this city's tradition, while it is the foremost example of it. Full of designers acutely aware of this, "Los Angeles now has its own architectural tradition of

frequently iconoclastic reactions, so that making a one-of-a-kind gesture becomes part of a tradition of one-of-a-kind gestures." <sup>33</sup> So these skills of Morphosis, Moss and Israel are not so unique. They are however, the most proficient at accepting and mirroring the aberrant, the plural, and the periphery -- principle conditions in Los Angeles.

What should remain clear however, is the fact that the post-modern critiques make no definitive statements as to WHAT, exactly, should be done, in order to effectively progress in such an environment. In other words, the implications for creating are not spelled out. Clearly, a simple mirroring of the current conditions has not been suggested or condoned by any of the cultural theorists. Indeed Hal Foster states that a reaction to high modernism does not justify, ipso facto, that "post-modernism is...pluralism". Neither does the lack of a center precipitate the "notion that all positions in culture and politics are now open and equal...the apocalyptic belief that anything goes".<sup>(34)</sup> In acknowledging that an industrial culture has not formed any meaningful pattern,<sup>35</sup> it remains clear that "architecture, even when pluralistic, is never enough." <sup>36</sup>

Open to question then, are such things as the architectural use of anomalous forces and idiosyncratic forms. Are they only a guise of real pluralism, one masking the new private fortresses, privileged enclaves and secure office villages they've created? In a de-centered society,

does the appearance of pluralism affect a useful politic of dealing with pluralism? And most important for the purposes of this essay; what does the L.A. Schools' theory say about materiality? Is their use of materials consistent with the pressures our post-modern consumer culture has put on the tradition of building? Is it progressive in relation to modern modes of production?

For this -- for an investigation of the material attitudes of Morphosis, Moss, and Israel as manifest in their built architecture -- we can look to section 3.4 on their design intentions, and finally, to section 3.5 on the methodology(ies) they employ.

### 3.4 Design Intentions

#### 3.4.1 Representing Technology: The Useful and the Useless, Malfunctioning and Dead Technology.

The L.A. School's representational intentions with materials began with the aforementioned Venice houses by Morphosis and the 708 House by Moss. From those more playful material combinations it has evolved to an architectural technique that Thom Mayne labeled "dead tech"<sup>37</sup>, and to the anti-scientific approach of Moss. The technomorphic and anti-rational techniques are their way of obviating their anti-modern stance in built forms.

Dead tech is truly the L.A. School's own, refined artifice of representing their view of technology.

Described as "high-tech after the Bomb or ecological catastrophe,"<sup>38</sup> it marked a new attitude towards modern materials and methods coming out of Mayne and Rotondi's Sci-Arc school. "Whereas modernists had a faith in industrial progress, signified by the white sobriety of the International Style, the post-modernists of Sci-Arc had a bitter-sweet attitude towards technology"<sup>39</sup>. They did however, continue "the modernist impulse of dramatizing technology"<sup>40</sup>, in order to manifest their anti-modern stance in built form. Functioning as architects aware of both the useful and useless aspects of the machine; the deleterious and the positive effects of technology and industrial progress, the L.A. School has less than the standard high modern idealism about its potential, and cannot help but represent it in more ambivalent terms.

"Morphosis started this tradition with their 72 Market Street, a Venice restaurant finished in 1985, (Figure 3.14) and developed it further with ... Kate Mantilini's 1987, and (the aptly named) Club Post Nuclear, 1988."<sup>41</sup> "The mood conveyed by such buildings is an ambiguous mixture of aggression and hedonism, ... functionalism and uselessness"

<sup>42</sup> A sense of a transience and looming catastrophe are created in this rustic elegance directly as a result of their use of materials. The use of rusted, or rusted-looking, parts and finishes and an over-built or additive approach to detailing make it appear as if their constructions are always in need of some architectural



prosthetics to assist malfunctioning members.

In doing this correctly, or tastefully, as Morphosis, Moss and Israel have all done, they have developed a "convention, (or) shared aesthetic and attitude" of creating a "calculated informality", something that Jencks has labeled "en-formality".<sup>43</sup>

The centerpiece sculptural element is one of the most representational ways the L.A. School puts this en-formality to use in depicting dead tech. For the L.A. School the dead tech sculpture is a "technomorphic contraption"<sup>44</sup> that can form the focus of any given building. The "electronic tree" with TV monitors mounted in it in the Cedar Sinai Hospital waiting room and the orrery in Kate Mantilini's restaurant are the most convincing example of this. (Figure 3.15, 3.16) Put together with planned redundancies and intentional inefficiencies, their en-formality "has made an art of the carefully controlled mistake".<sup>45</sup>

The L.A. School, Eric Moss in particular, actually seek out, as models, things that are inefficient, that don't work well. They enjoy coming across models that serve both their interest in malfunctioning technology and their symbolic need to represent it in a building. For Moss such a model is an old railroad car. Illustrative (representational) of technology, but with "grease in its wheels", it "sometimes goes off the track". He also cites American helicopters shipped to the Middle East that "get sand in their propellers and don't work".<sup>46</sup> As to why these models don't

work, or what development they underwent, or might require, the L.A. School architects have not expressed concern. This is distinct from an interest in how things work, in what makes technology effective. Such interests were purely high modern concerns. (Figure 3.17, 3.18)

Perhaps their representation of inefficient technologies is merely an endeavor that efficiently creates more work for itself. (Figure 3.19) And while it serves the symbolic ends of useless or dead tech, it projects something troubling: a false construction history. For these are the NEW things of contemporary architects' own creation; designed and built at ONE instance, not over time. Yet their intentionally designed inefficiencies require they be artfully patched-up with additional members right away; just to make them stand erect. Thus they are born at once with built in problems AND the added-on solutions to solve them. The problem lies in their appearing to have what the L.A. School would call a "heterogeneous" or "simultaneous" history created by a single hand.

#### 3.4.2 Contrived Archeologies: Projecting an Artificial History.

The issue of useless and dead tech representing a false construction history points to the L.A. School's greater need to contrive meaning, and thus histories, for entire works. This need follows directly as a result of things they have rejected in theory: for if modern society is

expunged of the ability to communicate a universal sense, as the post-modern theorists have contended, and technology is relegated to a jumble of ineffective, false starts, as both theorists and architects have documented, where do architectural structures derive their meaning? What brings them together as intelligible examples or architecture? For the L.A. School the answer is a matter of their own invention, and it begins with the grounding of projects in personal and contrived histories.

Perhaps this is fitting in Los Angeles, a city with a short history itself. Given a Los Angeles audience -- their clients -- that may have even shorter, if not contrived, personal histories themselves, the client can often stand in agreement with the necessity of a inventing the past. He can share the L.A. School's rejection of modern ideals on the basis that excessive mass production and the uniformity it brings robs them of what little personal identity and past they have themselves. This making personal believes and identities sacred (no matter how rational they may or may not be) to the extent that the L.A. audience may actually look for the idiosyncratic over the perfected form.

But the point to be discussed here is that the L.A. architect's idiosyncratic creation is in reality a studied, calculated an perfected "imperfect-looking" thing. It is contrived.

And the L.A. School does not stop there. They ultimately expand to entirely contrive archeologies and

manufactured pasts for their work.<sup>47</sup> The foremost example of an L.A. architect's purely invented history for a project is Thom Mayne and Morphosis' Sixth Street house, a work in progress produced between 1984 and 1988 for the architect's Venice bungalow. (Figure 3.20, 3.21) As Morphosis describes it: "this project accepts the suburban context as a point of departure".<sup>48</sup> Gracefully embracing a typical residential lot devoid of outstanding features, Morphosis accepts its lack of a history as just cause to invent one. The house utilizes ten found objects (from "parts of discarded machinery or dead tech" found at the site<sup>1</sup>) that Morphosis elevates to cult status for the purposes of the design at hand. Through the "invention and importation of ten found pieces, whose original purpose has been lost, (they) bring to the site an imagined prehistory -- a contemporary archeology"<sup>49</sup>. As plan generators, this array of ten found objects quickly goes to work forming ten meaningful "events" in the house. This meets the needs of other L.A. School design intentions such as the appearance of plurality. And

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<sup>1</sup> I find it important to note here that the things the L.A. School considers to be found objects are indeed a dated understanding of the idea. Their conception of found things as "things discarded after their use by someone else" was relevant to artists in the era of Duchamp or even Rauschenberg (see chapter 4 for full explanation).

Today, even Moss' found objects; industrial vernacular "undesigned" things such as rebar and reinforced concrete pipe, are not consummate with what found objects can mean at this time. As stated in chapter 2: since Gehry the pre-aestheticized object of manufacture is the found object of today. These are the things that seem to oppress the architect, these are the things that the L.A. School explicitly does not deal with, and these are the things with which Pop art began, and Mike Kelley developed further, both to be discussed in chapter 4.

where the "effects" of various found objects collide, the delineation of complexly designed, useless dead tech apparatus can occur.

"Part diagram, part conceptual sketch, part melancholic portrayal of a lost wholeness," Morphosis' Sixth Street House drawings "suggest a complex civilization that has been dug up after it has been destroyed by a neutron bomb that has left the skeletons." <sup>50</sup> But where is this "civilization that has been dug up"? Where is the "neutron bomb" that created this "life after the holocaust" <sup>51</sup> existence where fragments of a technologically advanced past take on such great significance? Certainly those only exist in Morphosis' perfected artifice of the contrived archeology.

Eric Owen Moss has a predilection for un-graspable geometries that relies as much on story telling apparatus as the Sixth Street House does upon found objects. By insisting on the use of un-definable wholes and partially revealed objects, Moss favors the rationale that some other, greater force, beyond man's control, affects his work. He has indicated that various failed scientific attempts to explain natural phenomena in understandable ways is a basis for this <sup>52</sup>.

Often only fractions of larger things intercede with his buildings similar to the way a small portion of an iceberg emerges above water. A skewed and mostly missing barrel vault can appear only sporadically in different spaces of a building, or a void can be carved out in the

shape of an unseen cone. (Figure 3.22, 3.23)

Moss is resolved on the point that there needs to be such things that cannot be grasped completely by the building OR the viewer, and so this represents his own manufacture of a greater story or past.

Another road to creating a contrived history for his architecture was forged by Michael Rotondi. Without the luxury of Thom Mayne's found objects, Rotondi utilized an intentionally obscure method of communication with his builder to achieve the same results. As a "prehistory" requires design over time, Rotondi deftly emulated an historical process from the ground up by employing a willfully enigmatic design process.

For a small house for himself, he designed in tandem with the builder, Rotondi responded to the work done during the day with a new set of sketch-drawings he did each night.<sup>53</sup> (Figure 3.24) Construction drawings and verbal communication were discouraged. As Rotondi said: "The objective was to produce a project over a long period of time like a city develops -- starting, stopping, remembering and forgetting. This results in (the house) being a heterogeneous system of related and unrelated parts."<sup>54</sup>

All of this house's difference and heterogeneity is merely opportunistic however. Rotondi's design process was operated like a scientific experiment with a pre-determined hypothesis: the architect manipulates a control group of data until his desired result -- the illustration of

"improvisation" -- is achieved. "Remembering and forgetting" function merely as convenient vindications to freely alter geometries, distort half-erected forms, invent rationale, and finally, create a "prehistory" from his intentionally drawn-out process of design itself. In this way the nakedness of building something new is blocked by the architect's projection of an artificial history.<sup>55</sup>

The above examples from Morphosis, Moss, and Rotondi all conspire through various methods to a constructed past or design history. Necessarily they employ new materials and technology, but the designers simultaneously invoke them as historical artifacts, giving them a patina or allowing them to rust as evidence of an "industrial archeology".<sup>56</sup> Unfortunately, this results in the paradox of a NEW creation staking a claim to pre-dating the architecture to which it grants a past.<sup>57</sup>

Without the early modernists' confidence in industrial society, the L.A. architects' designed histories are truly their own authentic contributions to the art of representing technology.<sup>58</sup> And this is the primary means through which they authenticate their work. I cannot, however, overlook the contradiction in this. For even a skillfully created false archeology cannot be allowed to stake a claim to authenticity with modern materials.

### 3.4.3 Insisting on the Uniqueness of the Object: Reviving "Aura" in Post-Industrial Artistic Production.

Not only is the L.A. School's approach to authenticity

rooted in contrived histories, such an effort counteracts an historical dialogue concerning creation in a industrial and post-industrial society: the problem of authenticity with modern modes of production.<sup>59</sup> Their design intentions have as a net goal the fabrication of an object with an unique aura, something the objects of post-industrial production no longer have.<sup>60</sup>

The L.A. School architects are aware of the observations of Walter Benjamin that form the basis for this modern discussion of authenticity.<sup>61</sup> Their efforts however, do not internalize the revolutionary intent of his words. When he states that "that which dwindles in the age of mechanical reproduction is the aura of the work of art"<sup>62</sup>, Benjamin was not making a call for the RETURN of authenticity. He did not conclude that the task is to RE-create an aura in modern works, rather he looked for works that left that aura behind.

Indeed Benjamin warned against artificial approaches, such as the L.A. School's technomorphism and invented archeologies, as false attempts to restore a uniqueness to the work of art: "unique existence of the work of art (is) determined only by the history to which it was subject throughout the time of its existence. This includes the changes it may have suffered in physical condition over the years as well as the various changes in its ownership."<sup>63</sup> It follows that, given mass production, this uniqueness cannot be instantly created through plural or anomalous



constructions, nor invented by creating "the history to which it was subject" in one swift stroke. The unique existence of the work of art is solely a result of its past.

Of Benjamin's artist/contemporaries, neither Bertolt Brecht, Marcel Duchamp, nor the Dadaist artists strove to revive the aura of the work of art.<sup>64</sup> Rather their work explored, concurrent with the changes in the modes of production, the development of an art with no pretense of aura or uniqueness at all. For such an art, an understanding of materiality relies on an understanding of the way things are produced. An effort is made to search for the best place of artistic influence within modern production, (not a way to represent design intentions with it), in order to achieve a lasting artistic impact on mass produced things.

The L.A. School's design intentions however, contrive to the creation of a pre-modern model of the authentic work. Moss's 8522 National Blvd., Morphosis' Sixth Street House, or an Israel office-village seem painstakingly to do this. They prefer that their own personally inscribed authenticity be etched directly onto the mass-produced things with which they build. Without a true concern for modern methods as they exist, the L.A. School's customizations can imply a greater past or some desired material effect, but it is clear that their claim to authenticity relies solely on those implication.

Benjamin makes clear that to CREATE such falsity in a

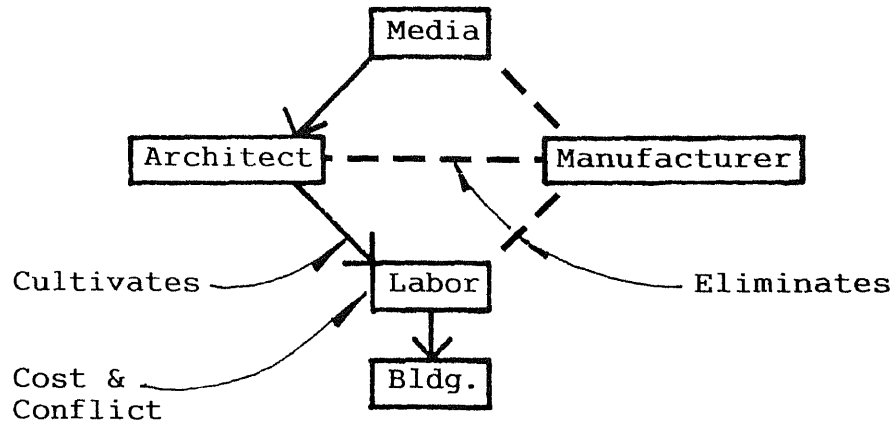
NEW object is a danger: "what is really jeopardized when the historical testimony is affected is the authority of the object."<sup>65</sup> The three design intentions of the L.A. architects as inter-linked in affecting the authority of their objects. The representation of dead tech, the false archeologies, and the re-creation of uniqueness are self-effacing. They counteract, by their own talented but contrived artifice, their intention to restore an authenticity to the architectural object.

### 3.5 The Methodology of the L.A. School

How do the L.A. architects work? The defining aspect of their methodology is the high degree of control they exercise in the building process. As this is a general statement, I will proceed in this section to show how their detailed control is manifest in, (A) an intense interface with labor, (B) the prominence of the architectural task of drawing, and ultimately in (C), a weak connection with manufacture.

The most glaring disparity between the L.A. architects' working methodology diagram and one I would consider to be progressive is their insistence on the architect's position as the fulcrum of an intense interface between the building material and labor.

Diagram 3.1 L.A. School Methodology Diagram



This is a methodology that allows nothing to be taken for granted. No details, materials or components can be accepted, be "worked out", or designed by anyone other than he. A great deal of work and communication is constantly required of such an architect. The concentration of work and control on the left side of this diagram becomes the defining element of the L.A. School methodology.

Of course, the L.A. architect can draw only from his limited knowledge of what we call raw materials, ("Media" at the top of the diagram) just as manufacturers continue to do the same. This usurps the role of the manufacturer altogether. From here the architect's and the manufacturer's intentions (and knowledge) take independent courses. Common manufacturing methods are impeded from affecting labor under the architect's control in this methodology. Favored instead is the architect's own personal material knowledge, requiring a focused working relationship with labor to communicate it. Any of the

manufacturer's material experience or influence, typically directed to labor, is discouraged; inter-communication between architect and manufacturer is minimized.

What are the parameters an architect sets when working this way? They can be completely personal for they are subject only to his compulsions. And compulsions themselves are liable to develop to the level of fetish in a methodology that elevates the architect to the extent shown in the diagram. Such a method is open to fetishistic abuses when one entity, the architect, functions as both judge and jury of the relevancy his knowledge has to materials and their production. The fetishistic response can bring a once-simple joint or connection to the level of determining the entire character and form of a project. Any architectural (or artistic) whole is often subservient to the tyranny of the fetishized part when this is the case. (Figure 3.25, 3.26)

The process of rendering a fetishistic approach in modern materials, (and communicating it to labor) raises a myriad of concerns that only the architect himself is concerned about. Just completing this sort of work relies on a rarified commodity in our society: labor well-versed in a particular architect's language.

### 3.5.1 A Preferential Relationship with Labor

The unbalanced methodology diagram calls for a uniquely close working relationship with some elements of labor, one

rarely achieved today. This preferential relationship is pursued by the L.A. School none-the-less despite the opposition of this method to the predominant types of labor and modes of production available in a post-industrial society.

The difficulty in setting up such preferential relationships is evident when one considers the L.A. architect's deference to idiosyncrasy and anomaly. The details, configurations and joinery of such things will invariably be atypical to the common methods of using mass produced materials. The L.A. School's working method is expensive and time consuming to build, none-the-less to design and draw. Eric Owen Moss confirms this when he says: "The buildings I've done are expensive because of their labor costs. In order to make the form, the object, you find some cheap material, so you can afford the labor."<sup>66</sup> A short-cut around this difficulty and expense would be to grant the architect labor that has developed a complete understanding of the way he thinks: labor to whom the architect's atypical construction methods are typical. But trying to fully understand and keep step with an architect's variegated material dialectic as it evolves from one project to the next is a life long task. Therefore, an ideal state of the architect-labor relationship can occur only when labor -- a contractor -- almost pairs-up with an architect for life.

Such a pairing-up, regardless of its smarting of an

Arts and Crafts or even Gothic sensibility, is actually practiced by the most successful of the L.A. architects. Michael Rotondi departed from Thom Mayne and Morphosis, in 1991, during the firm's apex of recognition, to establish a brilliant example of this. Perhaps one of the primary factors smoothing his departure and the initiation of his own work was the certainty of his partner in his new ROTO Architects design and build firm. This partner is none other than his favored contractor par-excelance from the Morphosis days: Read Miller, replete with MA in Music Composition and Literature.

The two built Rotondi's own *P/A* award winning CDLT house (mentioned earlier for the false design history it willfully portrays), through their close process of intense, daily communication. Such an archaic arrangement with over-educated, well-paid (but not TOO well-paid) labor -- sanctified by the L.A. School architect -- conveniently eases the architect's burden of communicating the idiosyncracies of his fetishistic approach to material use. This opens the door to hallowed grounds of L.A. design: the direct translation of any one of the architect's sketches into built form by an all-understanding contractor. Indeed the hyper-sensitive craftsman-contractor becomes almost and extension of the idiosyncratic, detail-obsessed architect's brain. (Figure 3.27, 3.28)

The point of the Rotondi example is that such a close relationship is aberrant in the modern method of building.

The streamlined operations of a life-mate contractor directly translating the ideas of an L.A. architect into built form conveniently alleviates the architect of the messiest of circumstances his atypical mode of operation creates for him. This is the burden of actually creating the time-consuming, endless construction drawings he would need to communicate his ideas to the "average" contractor.

### 3.5.2 The Burden this Method places on Drawing

Without the luxury of a preferential relationship labor, it is incumbent upon the L.A. School architect to furnish the "average" contractor with an arsenal of construction drawings to provide him with a working familiarity of his particular mindset. This drawing task is not something the L.A. School has taken lightly, indeed they've turned their own requirement for complex descriptive drawings into one of their strongest suits. Presentation and construction drawings, as well as presentation models, are a major component of doing and presenting their work.

What of course predominates in building, is the need to work with the average contractor or to communicate design intentions to an unknown contractor -- one selected in the bid process. While the average contractor may be the lowest possible denominator in the creation of architecture, I ask: why should this inhibit the architect's abilities? The difficulty in the L.A. School is precisely here; in their distaste for working in the typical structure of the modern

process of building, replete with the common knowledge of the average contractor familiar with common manufactured materials and methods. Communicating architectural ideas outside this knowledge base places an unusually heavy burden on drawing to the extent that it becomes THE major task of completing their architecture.

In terms of construction drawings, the L.A. architect designs in a way that only he is able to properly inform labor in all areas. Few standard details or practices of manufacture, with which labor is familiar, are allowed to creep in. This demands a practice I would describe as the L.A. architect's ever tightening zoom lens of design development. Ever zooming in on infinitely smaller details, he spins off original construction detail after original construction detail -- often as much as the budget can withstand. His design, here-to-fore known only to him, is only revealed in the painstakingly completed set of *Final Working Drawings*. This can be a voluminous stack of one fresh detail after the next. As well, the L.A. architect can invent novel approaches to communicating these facts, ranging from the obscure (Figure 3.29) to the oversimplistic (Figure 3.30, 3.31).

Regardless of whether they're drawn in an inventive or a typical manner, the net results of excessively unfamiliar construction drawings can quite often be alienating to the contractor. This alienation is as likely to occur as a result of some inherent design genius they might contain as



by their blatant disregard for any patterns of standard practice. Certainly to challenge the status quo is progressive, but persistently altering things can insinuate genius as much as ignorance of basic fact.

Alternately, this could be interpreted solely as an elitist practice. Elitist when the point is to stand alone from what has already been done -- and defiantly so -- not so much to debate the commonplace, but for the elevation of one's own methodology or theory.

Regardless of it's originating from design genius, ignorance, or an elitism, the L.A. architects' drawings are willfully different. In their presentation drawing too, it is clear that no one else could design as they do:, that no one else could come as close as they to drawing or understanding them. (Figure 3.33, 3.33)

Always at odds to communicate what a complicated affair their buildings are, the L.A. School is again unlike Gehry in this regard. Rather than his more straightforward approach (even when drawing a fractured plan) they simply cannot present drawings one at a time. (Figure 3.34) Drawings must simultaneously show multiple views of the L.A. architect's work. They present "complex images that combine perspective, plan, elevation and detail -- all in one drawing. In fact all the L.A. School adopts this convention of superposition." (Figure 3.35, 3.36, 3.37, 3.6)

This is not something I would desire to take away from them, for it is part and parcel of their whole methodology.

"As important as their buildings are the obsessive drawings".<sup>67</sup> The inventiveness and obscurity of their drawings only facilitate their chosen method of operation.

To the detriment of the built work, however, these process-oriented presentation drawings "liberate the project from the propulsive forces of production"<sup>68</sup> (just as their models do.) That is to say they keep their design intentions at a distance from the physical world and from common methods and materials. Rather than convey the facts of building, these drawings isolate the designers personal vocabulary from that of modern production even further. This appears as an inequity since traditionally architecture insists that the building be the ultimate verification of the graphic representation.<sup>69</sup> As such, drawing should be bound to the more objective common ground between the designer, the viewer, and the one who is charged with building it. But what the L.A. School does is give drawings and models at least equal status with the built work. Thus the two are placed in open confrontation.<sup>70</sup>

Los Angeles based architecture critic John Chase would argue the L.A. architects give drawings and models even MORE than equal status with their built work. He argues they use them as their primary selling point and as ends in themselves:

"The recent rise to fashionable status of shows of architectural drawing and models as art objects in themselves has been part of a trend to lay claim to the status of art for some art forms that have traditionally been defined as

applied rather than fine arts. No matter how beautiful the drawing or the model, it is supposedly a means to an end and lacks that quality of "purposiveness without purpose." demanded of art by Kant. Presumably the drawings and models are representations of something else, even if this something else is only conceptual. The reason for the architect's desire to ape (imitate) the artist is not difficult to fathom. The modern media society of movies, television and magazines has defined the most desirable roles as those in which the individual personality plays the greatest part. Artists, entertainers and politicians have the greatest latitude to display their character in their respective roles. Artist may not have nearly the celebrity value of entertainers or politicians but they make up for it because the expression of their personalities is supposedly carried out in such a profound manner as to render it respectable as art.

Drunk on this heady brew of celebrity and respectability, the vanguard distances itself from the social purposes of architecture. The architect's role becomes closer to that of the vanguard artist who produces one-of-a-kind objects for collectors (clients) as the ultimate consumer item. The production of drawings and models for publication and exhibition for a relatively small audience of fellow designers, journalists, and assorted cognoscenti becomes a closed cycle."<sup>71</sup>

The whole venture comes down to the drawing as object and the building as object. How will it be resolved? What will the relation between the two be? If an architect's drawings and models are elevated to the level of art, what is the importance of the materiality of the buildings themselves?

### 3.5.3 A Weak Relationship with Manufacture

I see very little that is important, revolutionary or useful for architects in the future from the materiality of the L.A. School's buildings. Just as Walter Benjamin was concerned primarily with asking what is the attitude of a work of art towards the modes of production of its time, I am likewise concerned with the L.A. School.

I have found incorporation of typical methods of production in a way useable in the future not to be a major concern of the L.A. architects. No common material is revolutionized or improved in a way usable on a level greater than the project at hand. No indications are given for the future life of materials the L.A. School architects use. For example, Moss' use of reinforced concrete pipe as columns (and rebar as structure or ornament) in the 8522 National Boulevard buildings has advanced no further use or adaptation of those materials. (Figure 3.38) Since his gestures with them in 1988, no subsequent developments, such as the architect gaining more aesthetic authority over the process of making those materials, has occurred. This because developments cannot evolve when future material influence is not a concern. Such material uses are merely opportunistic, industrial bin-of-parts selections made by Moss, that, in the way he detailed them, are neither inexpensive to build nor driven by research and development, Neither do they desire to change the forces of their production that will continue to make them. Instead, the precision cutting and filling with concrete of Moss' pipe

columns represents an atypical, labor intensive process that in no way furthers or improves the types of columnar supports or decorative column covers typically used in such application.

Likewise, Moss' tectonic use of chains, valves and pipe ladders as decoration on the Gary Group building offers no new or inventive material use beyond the purely ornamental function they perform on that specific project. (Figure 3.39) As well, Moss' custom steel work and trademark material juxtaposition in the Lawson-Weston House main space make no lasting contribution to the position of the architect or his expertise in his society. (Figure 3.40)

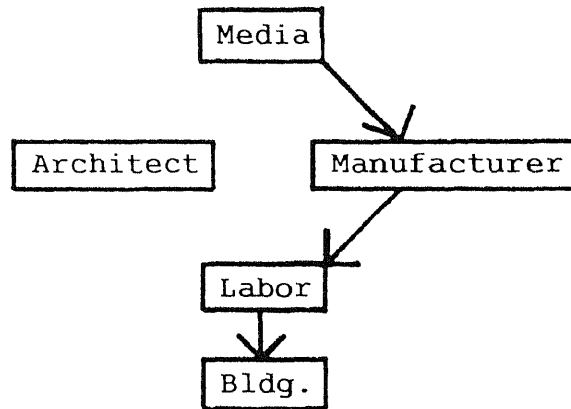
Israel's tasteful and polished re-use of underlayments such as plywood, exposed by Gehry decades ago, likewise make no lasting impression upon architectural production. (Figure 3.41)

Finally, Morphosis' high art of dead tech material stylization needs to be seen for the isolated, fetishistic exercise that it is. (Figure 3.42)

What lack of any lasting effect on architectural production that these approaches have in common arises from the fact that they deliberately take place APART from the major force in contemporary material production: the manufacturer's vernacular methods of construction. For the L.A. School's unique brand of material use certainly does not aim to suggest that a dialogue or exchange be opened with the manufacturers of materials. In contrast to the

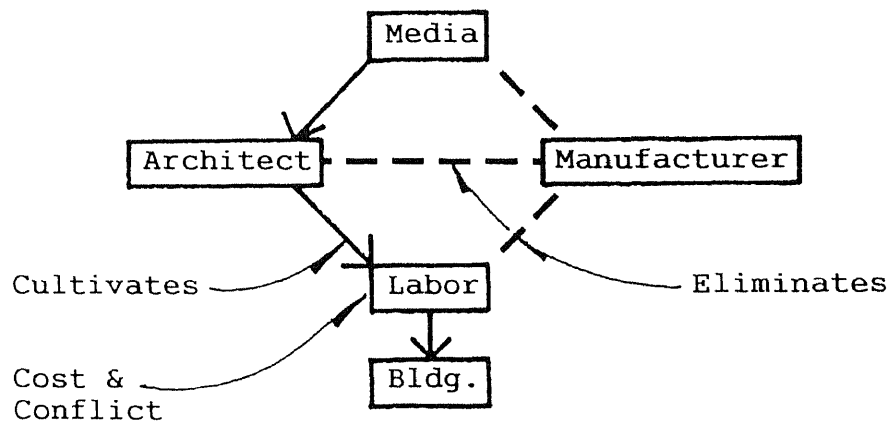
manufacturer's method, where only he interfaces between materials and labor:

Diagram 3.2 Modern Vernacular: Manufacturer's Methodology



The L.A. School architect strives to be that sole entity interfacing between materials and labor to the exclusion of the manufacturer. His struggle is to wrest the line of material influence away from the manufacture and divert it solely through himself:

Diagram 3.3 L.A. School Methodology Diagram



Despite the persistence of memory labor has of the prevailing methods of manufacture, notice how the L.A. architect not only eliminates the influence of manufacture upon any labor in his employ, he also avoids contact with

manufacturers himself.

Manufacturers hold a body of information the L.A. architect does not want communicated either to him or "his" labor. This forces the manufacturer's knowledge and experience to remain at its own dead end in the L.A. School's own designs (and otherwise proliferate without them.) The L.A. architect's own intuitive body of knowledge alone directs his work. And as no new or foreign information on what how to design can enter this loop, personal tendencies, as we have already seen, become fetishized as the sole basis for design. Future commissions are only taken as opportunities to reinforce them, and the manufacturers' influence moves further and further away.

This is evidenced by the L.A. School architects' gradual shift AWAY from their initial material concerns as they built more. Early works such as Moss' 708 House or Morphosis' 2-4-6-8 House were based in a simple interest in construction. But the ensuing success of the L.A. School only gave them the momentum to completely avoid communication with the modern vernacular structure as it exists. When evolved, their mode of operation has forsaken common methods only to set up private and improvisational ones, taken to the extreme in Morphosis' Crawford House, Moss' Lawson-Weston House, Israel's Goldberg-Bean House, and Rotondi's CDLT house. These projects illustrate a way of working that, in looking at the L.A. School and the modern vernacular diagrams simultaneously, strives to create the



modern vernacular's inverse.

Admittedly, as seen in chapter 2, the professions's inter-relation with manufacture is a venue that has drastically changed since the heroic modern models, such as Gropius, Breuer and Aalto, dominated it with claims to greater sensitivity to material than manufacturers. But since then, innovators such as Venturi and Gehry have been shown to use their own unique understanding and acceptance of modern methods use the given process of manufacture to their own creative advantage.<sup>72</sup>

But to avoid communication with manufacture is the most detrimental response because the two sides are then locked in a competition or a mutual exclusion when they needn't be. And as competition and mutual exclusion suggest, one must prevail or find greater acceptance than the other. Would not the more accessible system prevail; the least elitist; the most flexible, common and open to change? Is this a description of the L.A. School? It does not appear to be. Rather it has been the hybrid artistic methodologies (such as Gehry's or Venturi's) that work with manufactured materials, not in opposition, that are progressive. Such methods, integrating in some way the knowledge of artist AND manufacturer, are to be discussed in other creative disciplines in chapter 4.

### 3.6 Conclusion: The Regressive Qualities of the L.A. School's Methodology.

In this chapter I critically evaluate the L.A. School's

methodology as it relates to the modern modes of production in our society. While they do recognize the propensity of industrial and consumer forces in our society to subsume architecture, they have merely set up an architectural system that can function outside and independently from these forces. They oppose the modern vernacular to the extent that their decisions are precluded from being based on what can work within that vernacular. Their work, although highly creative, excludes itself, to the greatest possible extent, from the forces that typically influence their society. This categorizes such actions as elitist in their very essence.

Their work can also be categorized as creative acts Hal Foster calls a "post-modernism of reaction". These are creative actions that may be rooted in a valid post-modern critique but have the following theoretical weaknesses:

A. the conception of art "in therapeutic terms" as "an image drawn over the face" of current cultural ills such as rapid modernism,

B. the exploitation of cultural codes (like heterogeneity & the lack of a center), rather than questioning them, and,

C. the rejection of modernism on the basis of blaming it for the creation of the ills of "modernization", i.e. creating our world of displaced, signified things.<sup>73</sup>

The L.A. School's application of a post-holocaustal or any style or affectation onto modern materials; their "fatalistic belief that nothing works"<sup>74</sup> is, as Foster

states, NOT a post-modern doctrine.

None of the implications of living in our society of signifiers can be sensed in the L.A. architecture, in the way it is un-avoidable to sense in the post-modern literature of Peter Handke, a progressive methodology to be discussed in chapter 4.

Finally, in a post-modern culture they claim to understand, the L.A. School architects fight the tide of their own theoretical support. Their desired effects are attempts to wrest a meaning from materials already co-opted by the existence of the manufacturer's prescribed aesthetics. Relying on no research, information or individuals involved in building other than themselves, this is clearly regressive in relation to the role of the architect in his society in the future. The modern vernacular will continue to function entirely, whether the L.A. architect practices or not. The question of how an architect can function creatively WITH the modern vernacular, given its ability to quickly copy, consume and outdate any style, remains open.

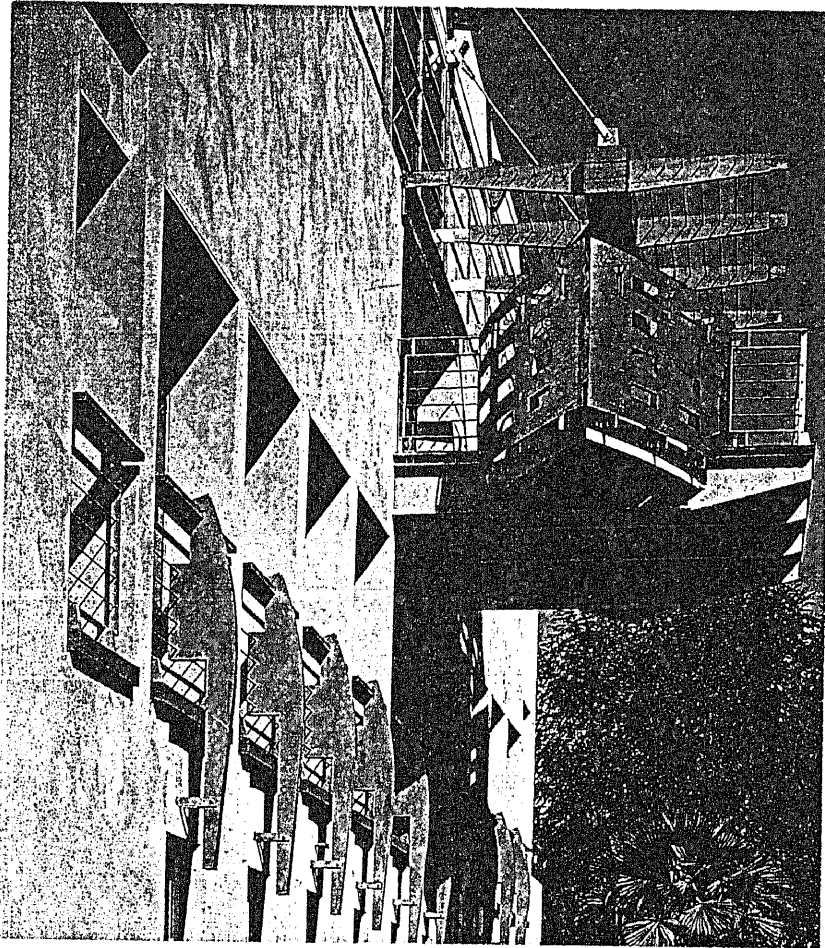


Figure 3.1 Israel, Weisman Art Pavilion, Beverly Hills, 1991. Photo Grant Mudford.

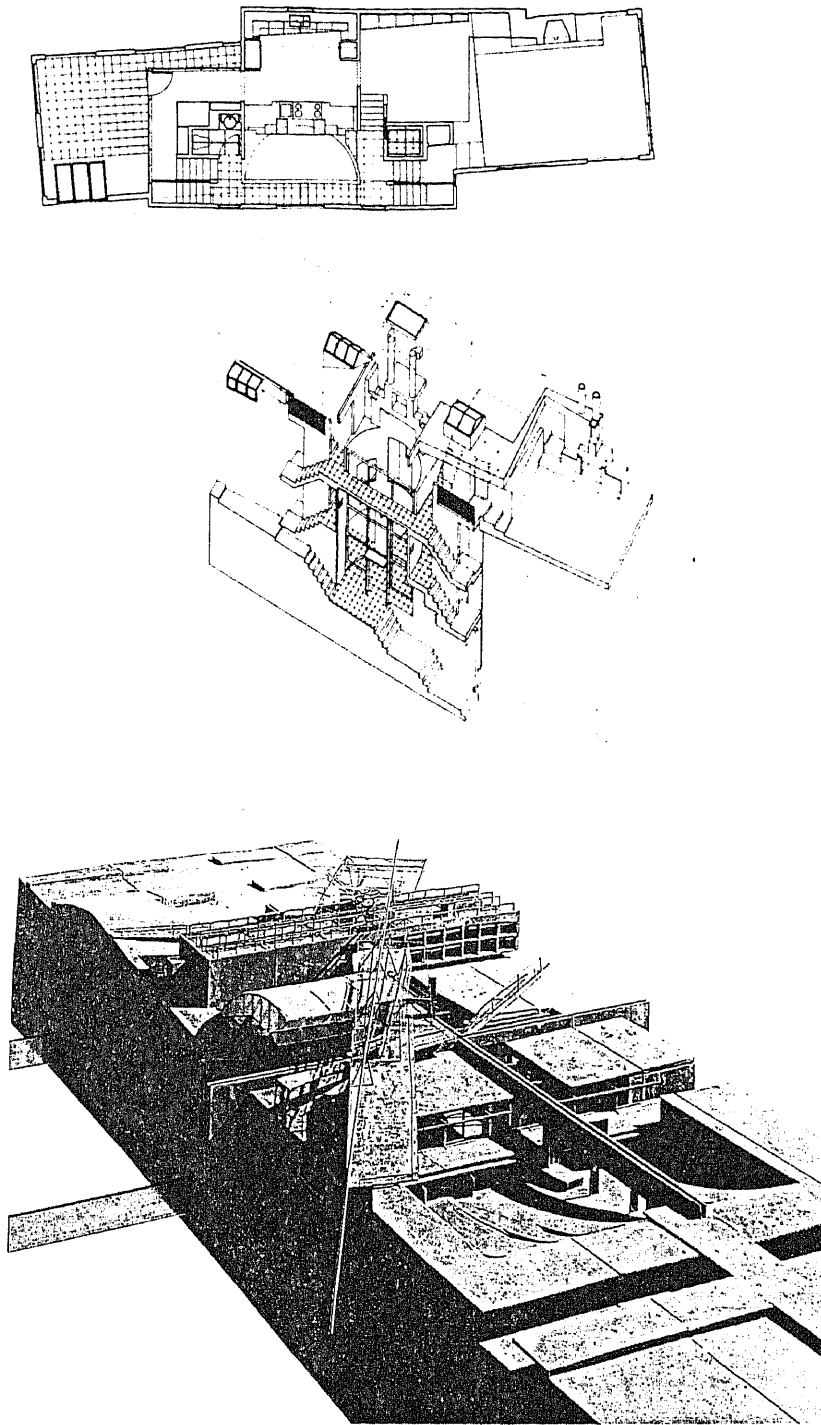


Figure 3.2 Morphosis, top: Lawrence House, plan and axonometric drawing, Venice, 1982, bottom: Arts Park Performing Arts Pavilion, model, Los Angeles, 1989. Photo Morphosis.

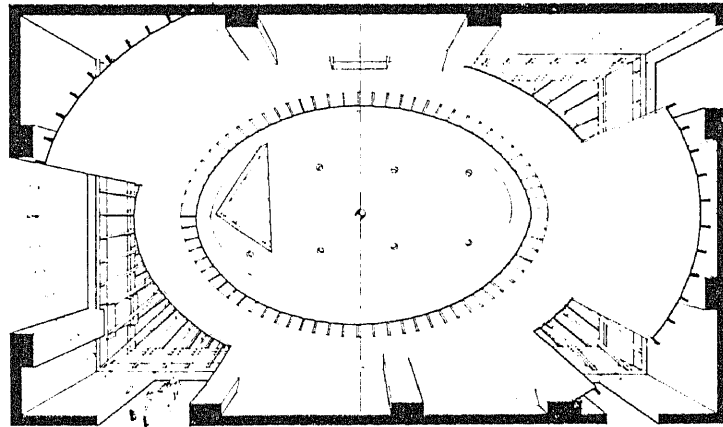
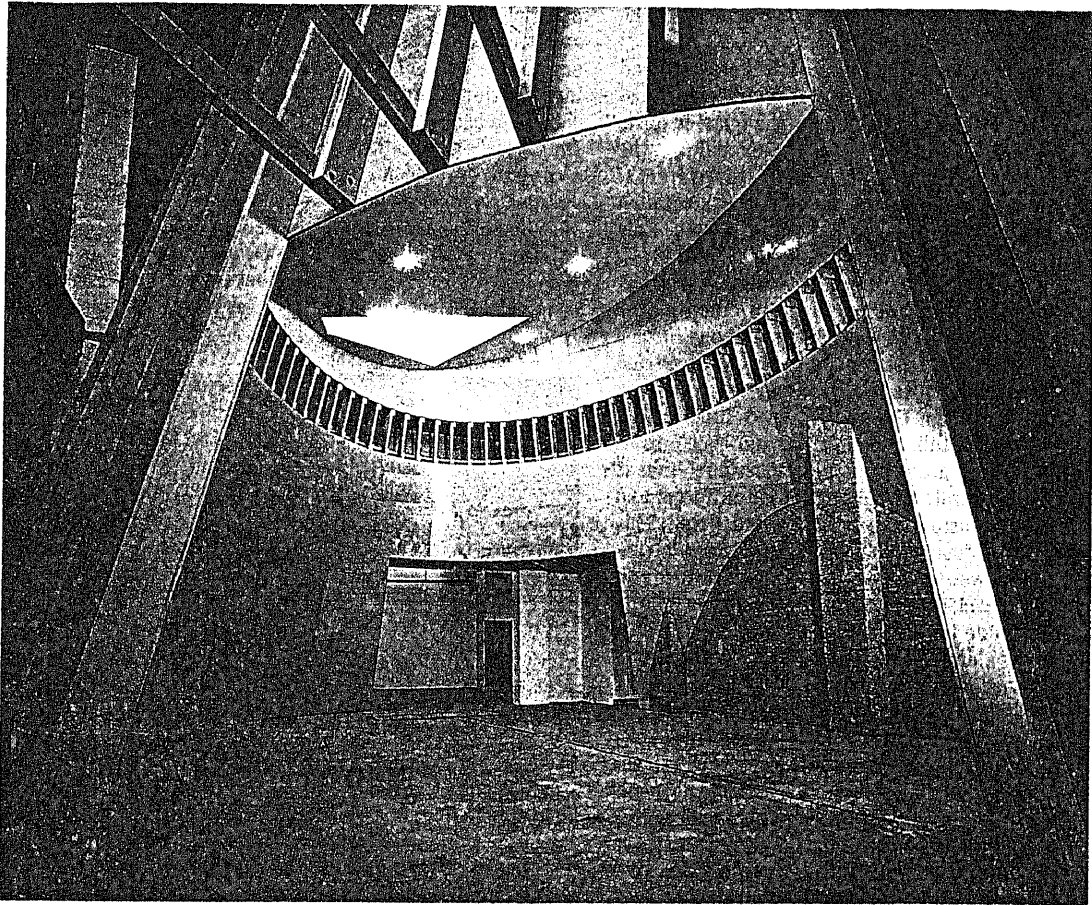


Figure 3.3 Moss, 8522 National Boulevard, conference room, Culver City, 1986-1990. Photo Alex Vertikoff.

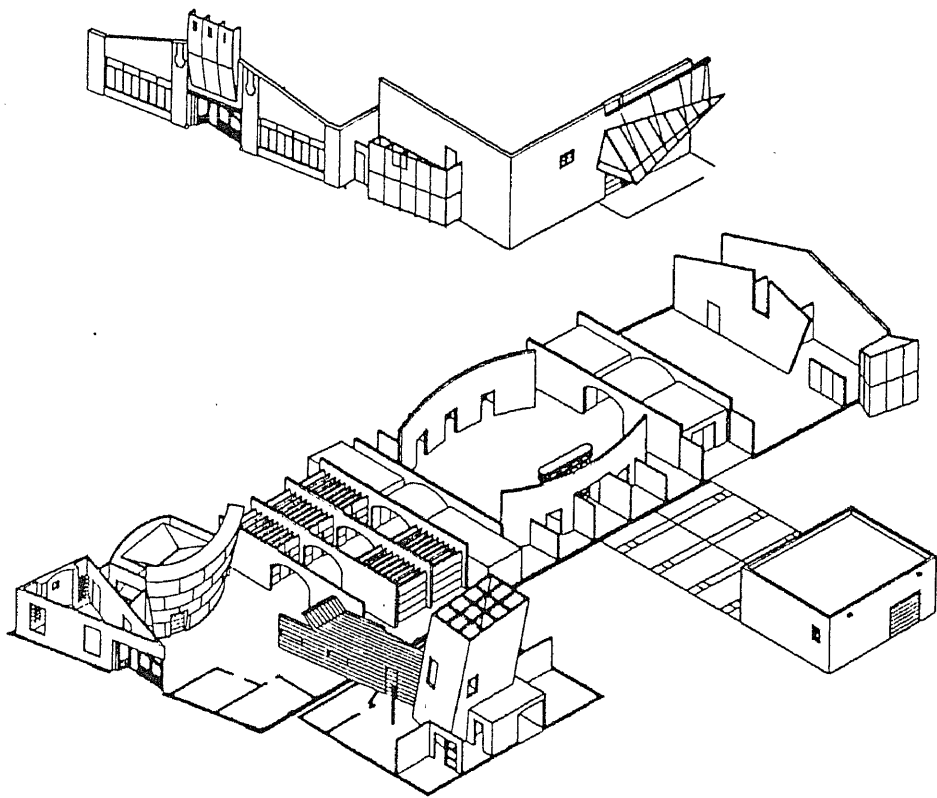


Figure 3.4 Israel, Bright and Associates, exploded isometric, Venice, 1991.

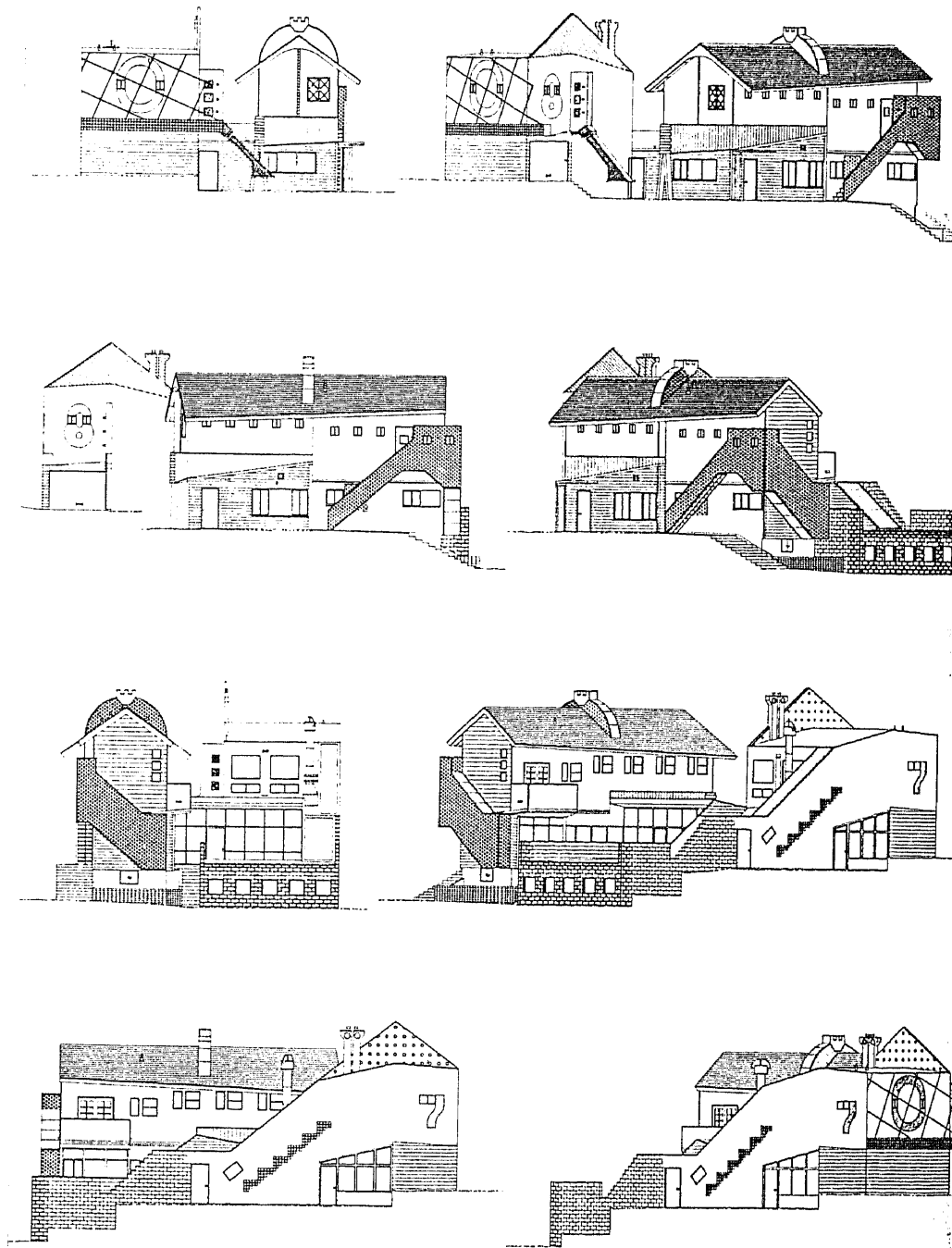


Figure 3.5 Moss, 708 House, elevations, Pacific Palisades, 1981-1985.



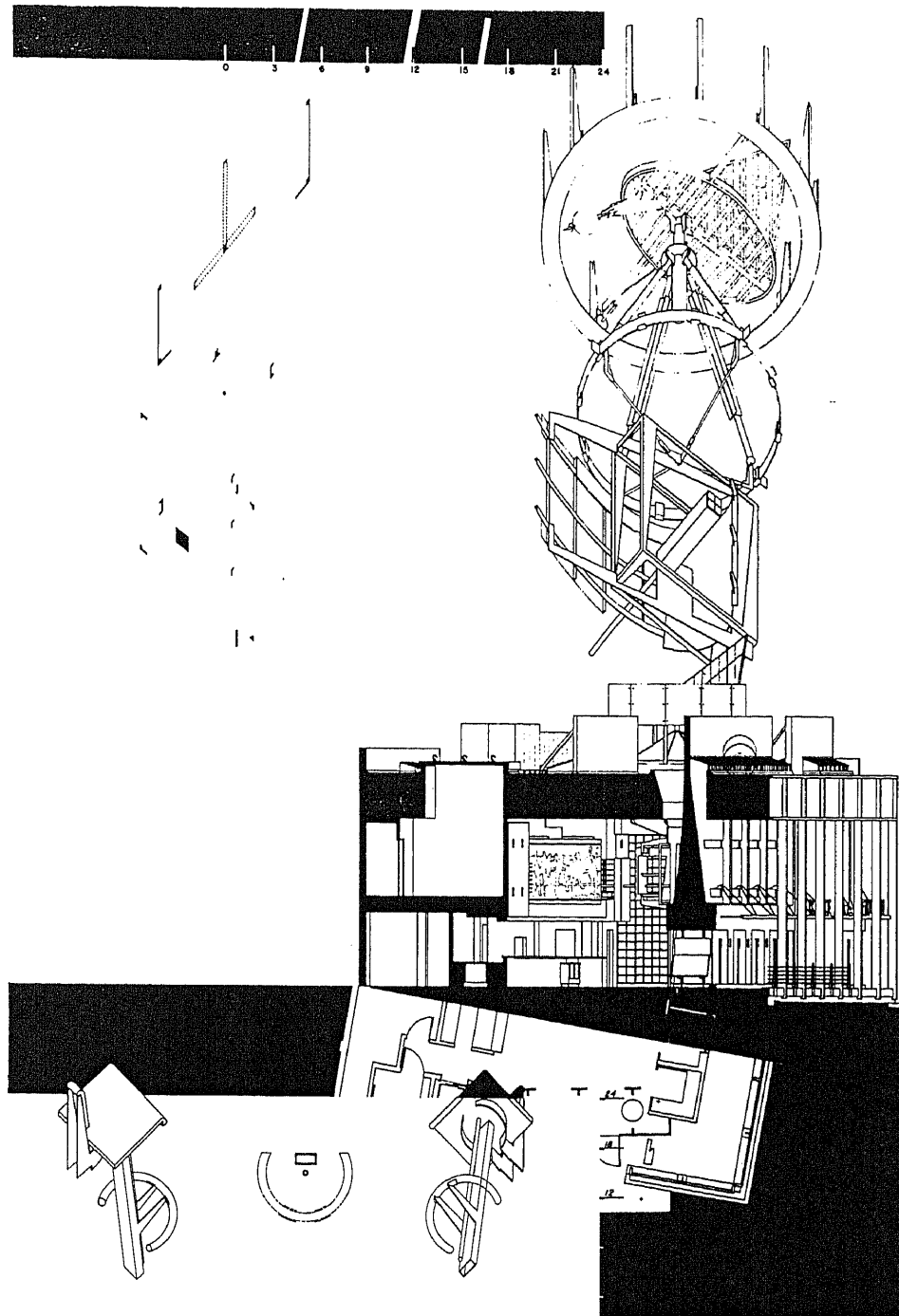


Figure 3.6 Morphosis, Kate Mantilini Restaurant, plan, section and isometric drawings, Los Angeles, 1987.

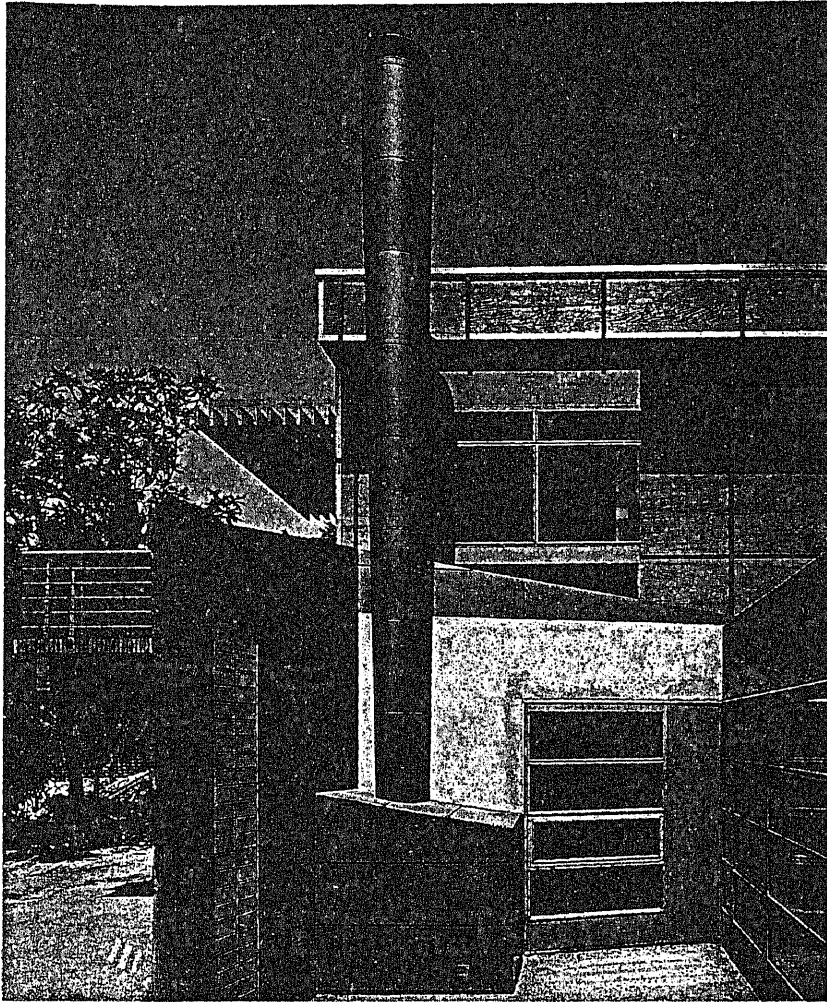


Figure 3.7 Israel, Goldberg-Bean House, Hollywood, 1991.  
Photo Tom Bonner.

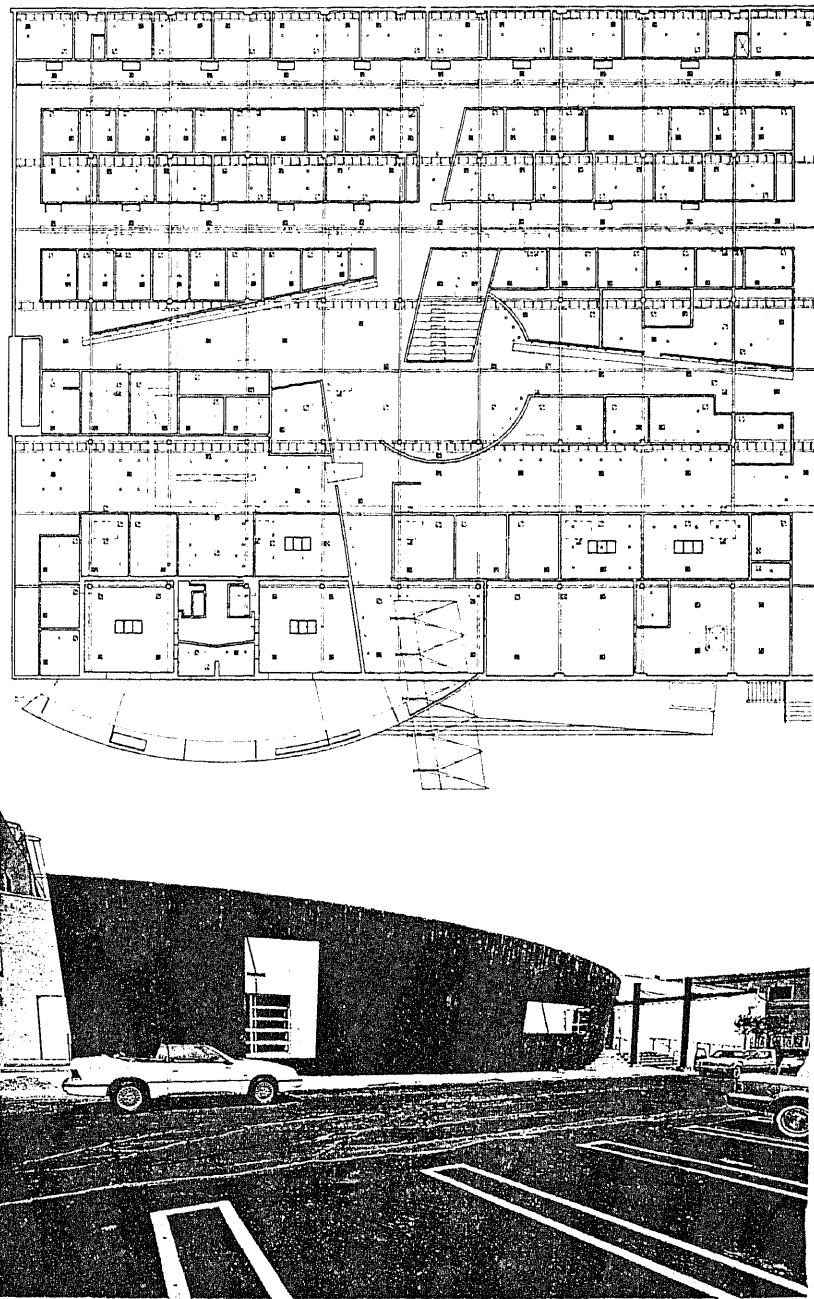


Figure 3.8 Israel, Virgin Records, warehouse conversion, plan and exterior view, Beverly Hills, 1992. Photo Tom Bonner.



Figure 3.9 "Statue of Multi-cultural Liberty", R.J. Matson, from 13th Generation.

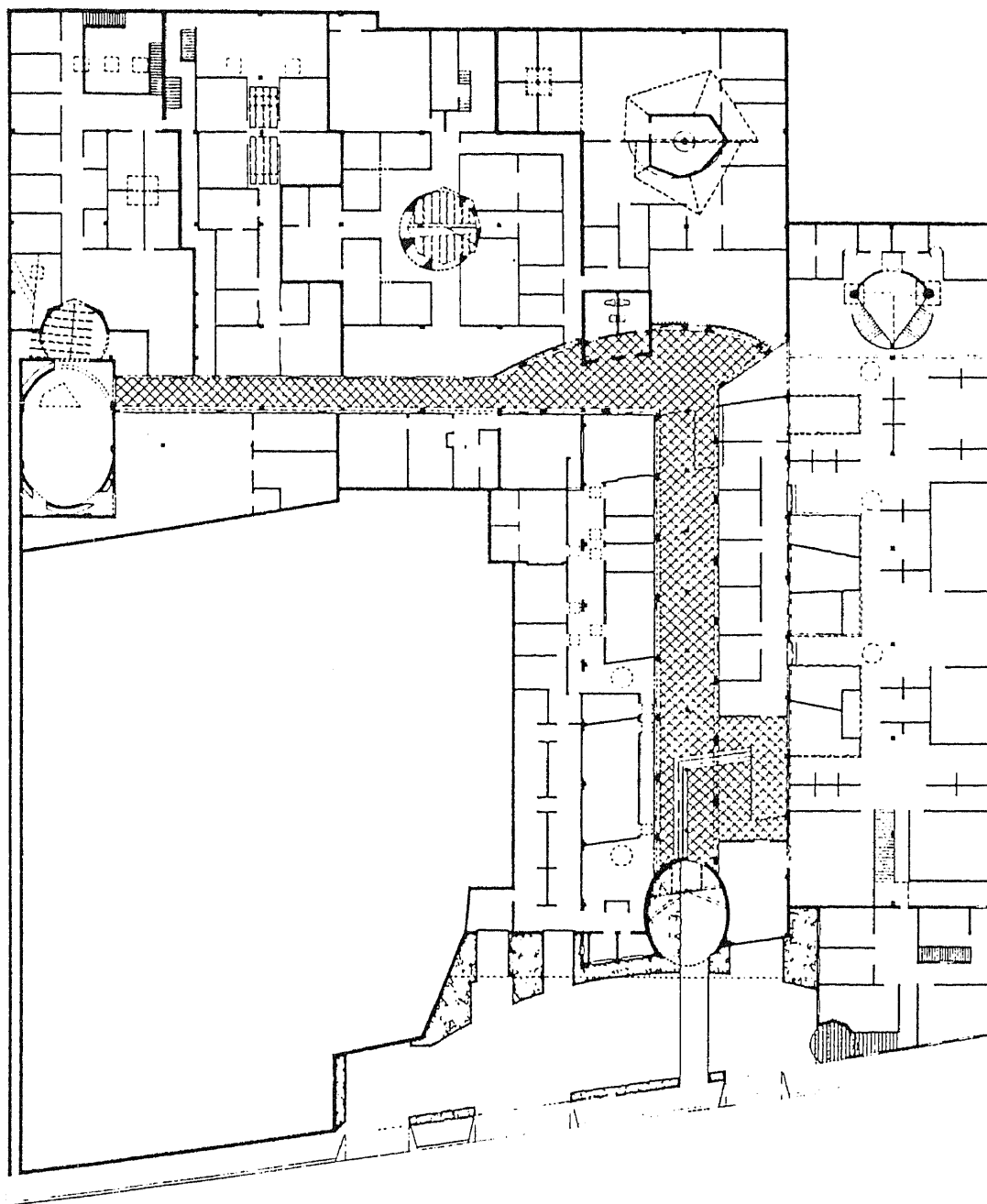


Figure 3.10 Moss, 8522 National Boulevard, plan, Culver City, 1986-1990.

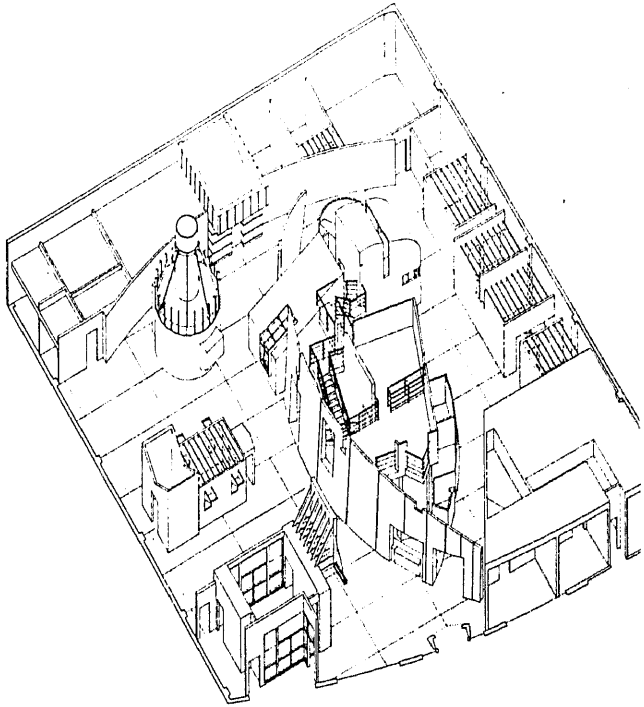


Figure 3.11 Israel, Propaganda Films, office village interior, isometric drawing, Los Angeles, 1988.

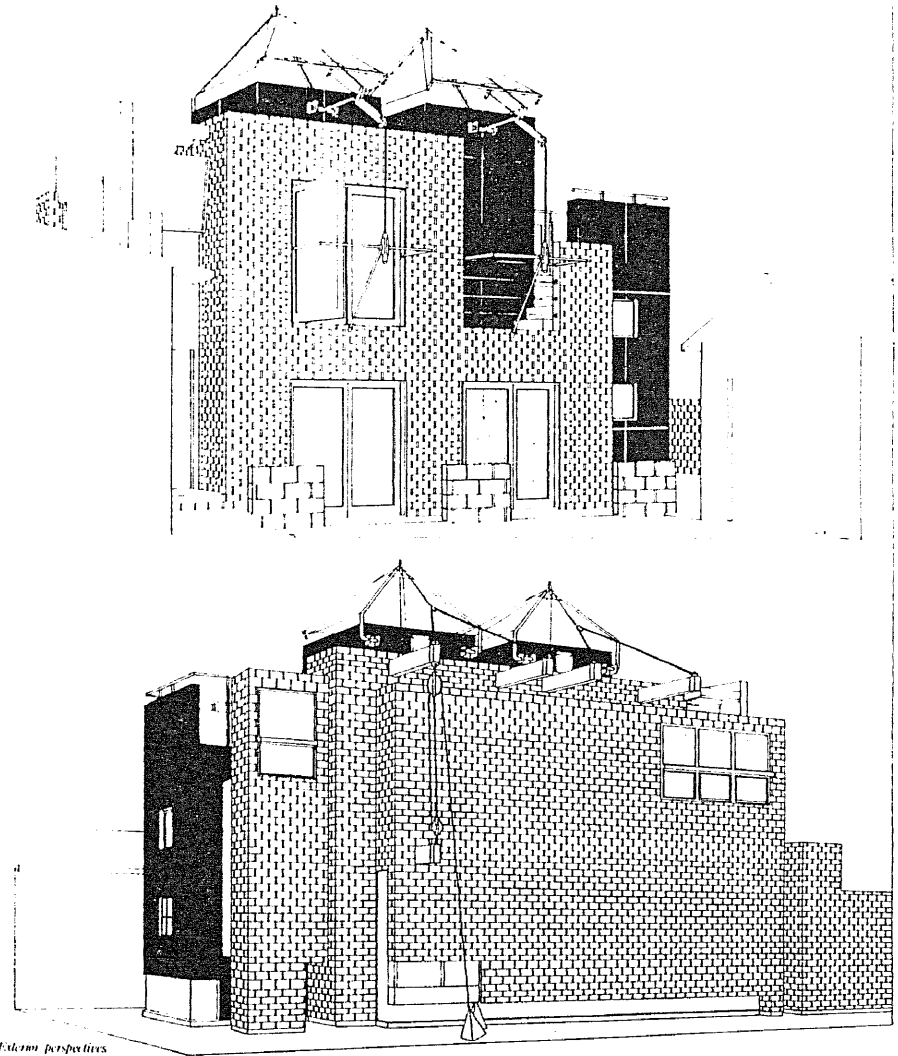
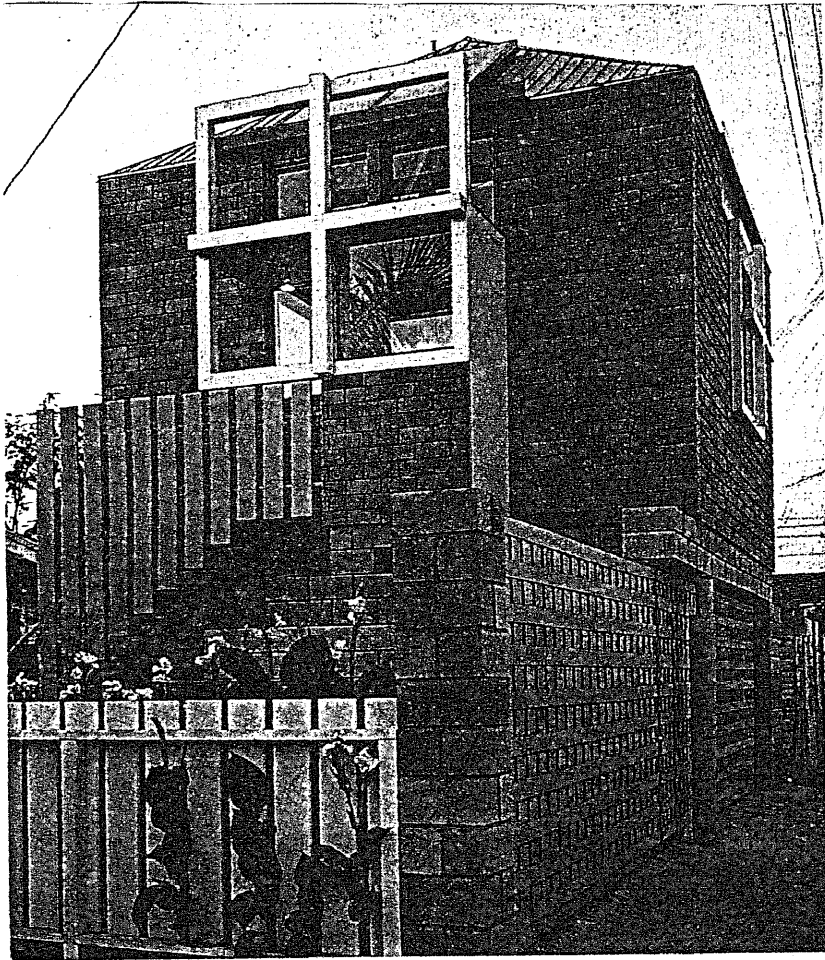


Figure 3.12 Morphosis, left: 2-4-6-8 House addition, Venice, 1978, right, Venice III House addition, exterior perspective drawing, Venice, 1983-1985. Photo Marvin Rand.

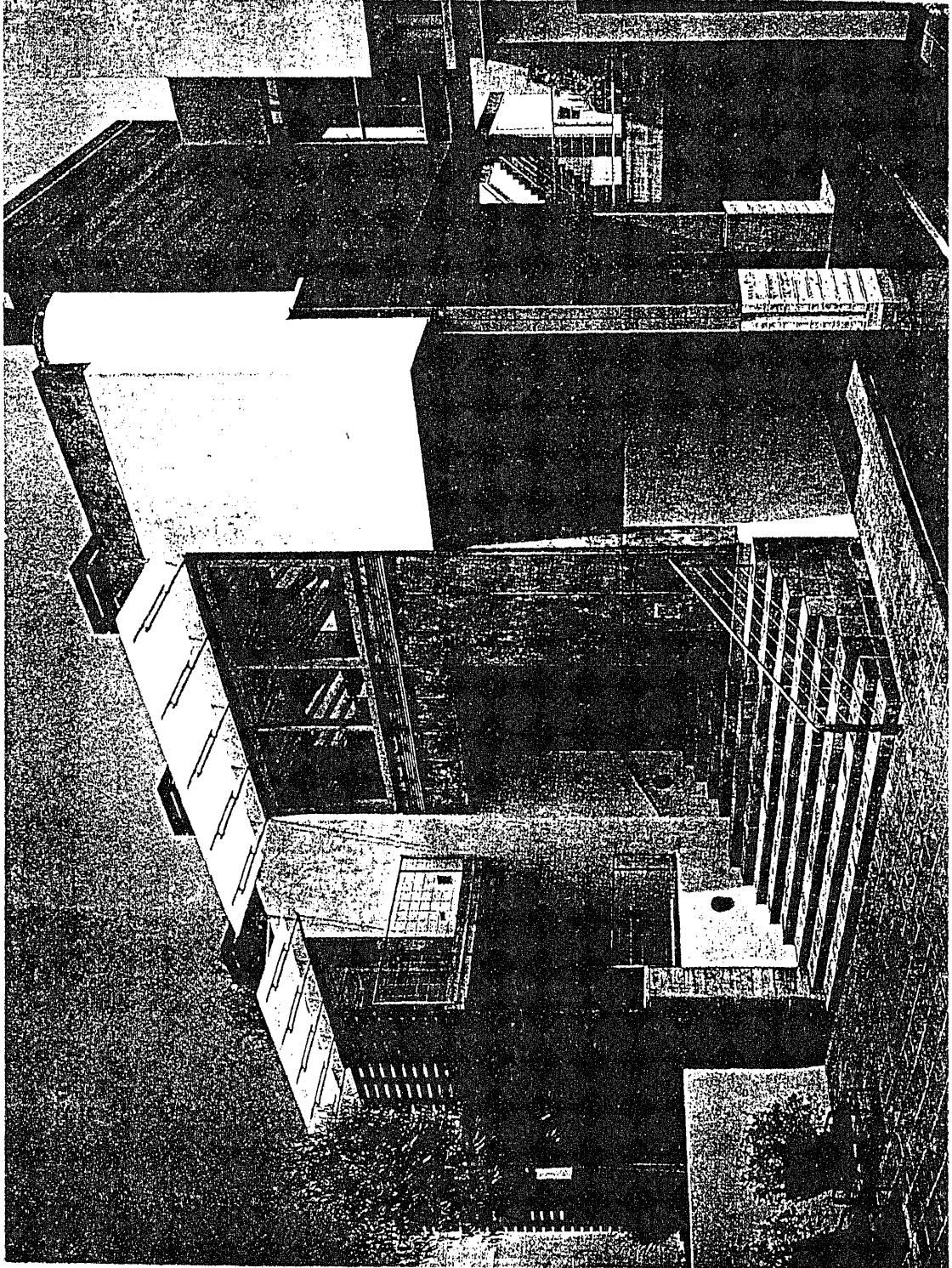


Figure 3.13 Morphosis, Crawford Residence, Montecito, 1992.



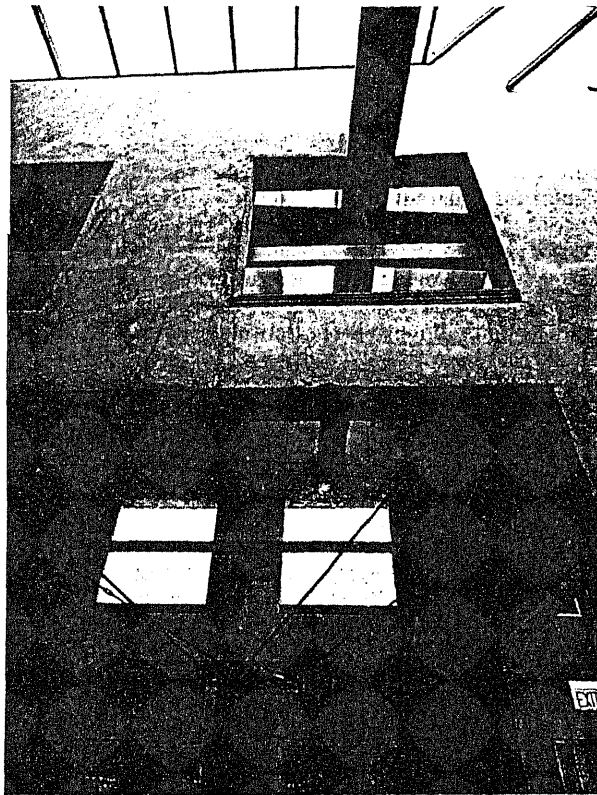


Figure 3.14 Morphosis, 72 Market Street Restaurant, Venice, 1985.

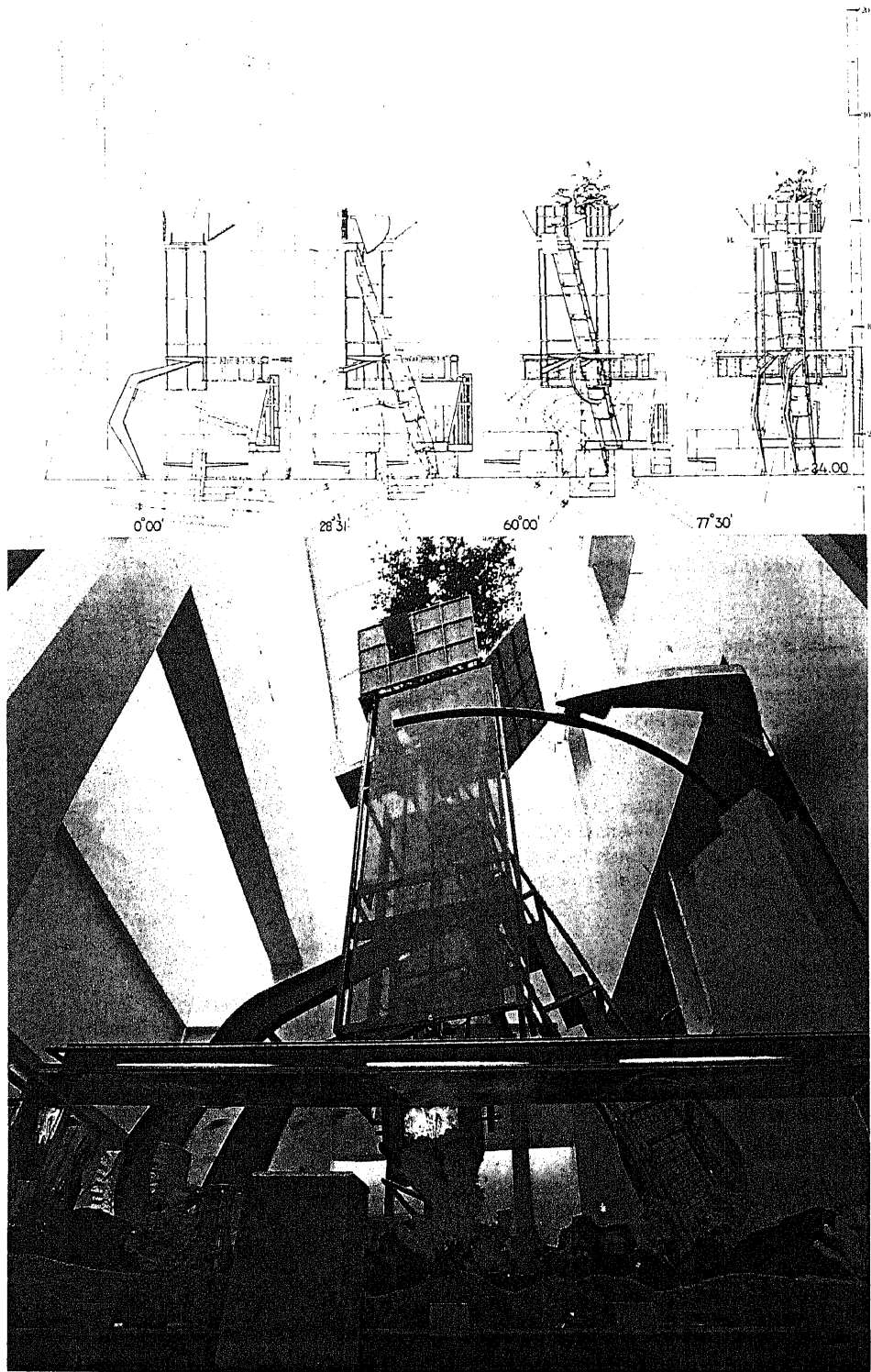


Figure 3.15 Morphosis, Cedar Sinai Medical Center, top: drawings, bottom: upper view of electronic tree, Los Angeles, 1988. Photo Charles Daniels.

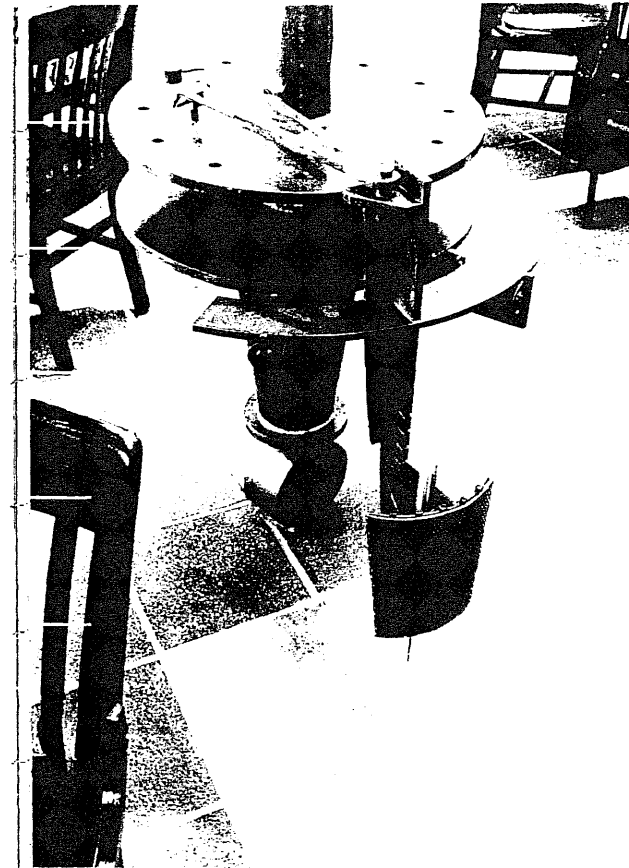
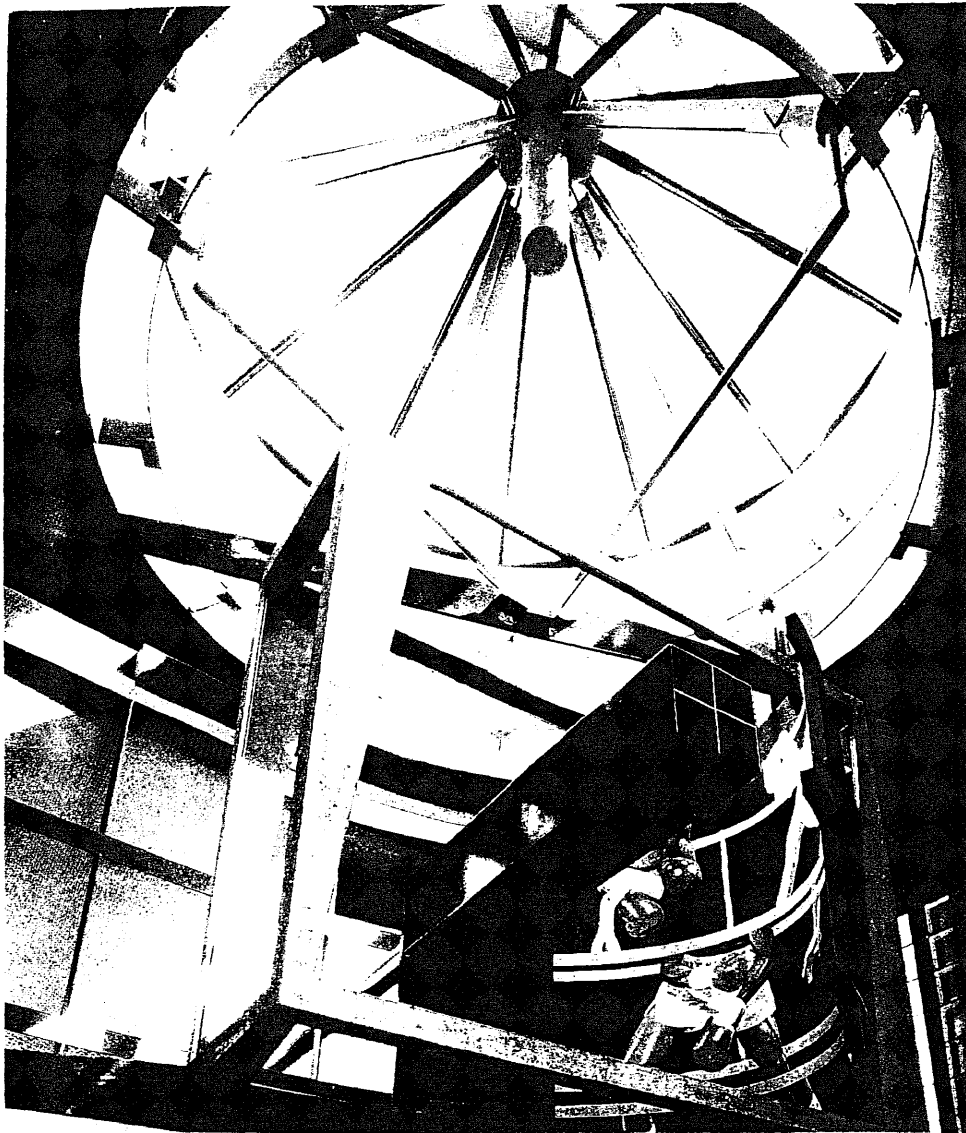


Figure 3.16 Morphosis, Kate Mantilini Restaurant, orrery,  
left: upper view, right: lower view, Los  
Angeles, 1987. Photos Morphosis.

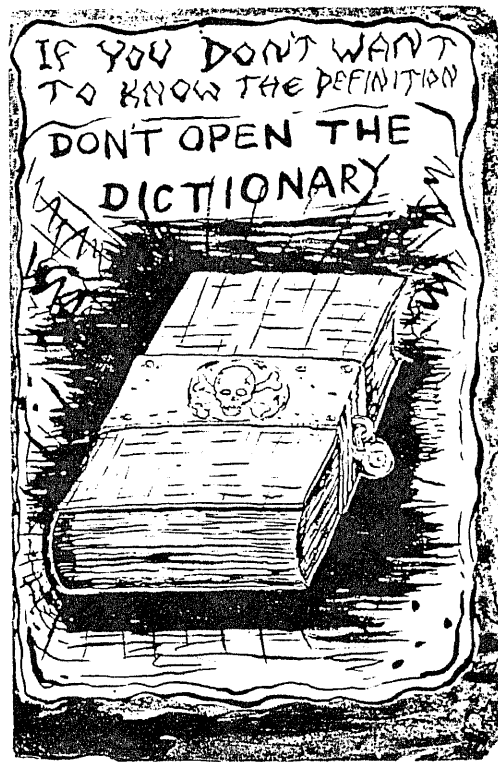


Figure 3.17 "If You Don't Want to Know the Definition, Don't open the Dictionary", Mike Kelley, from The Sublime, 1984.

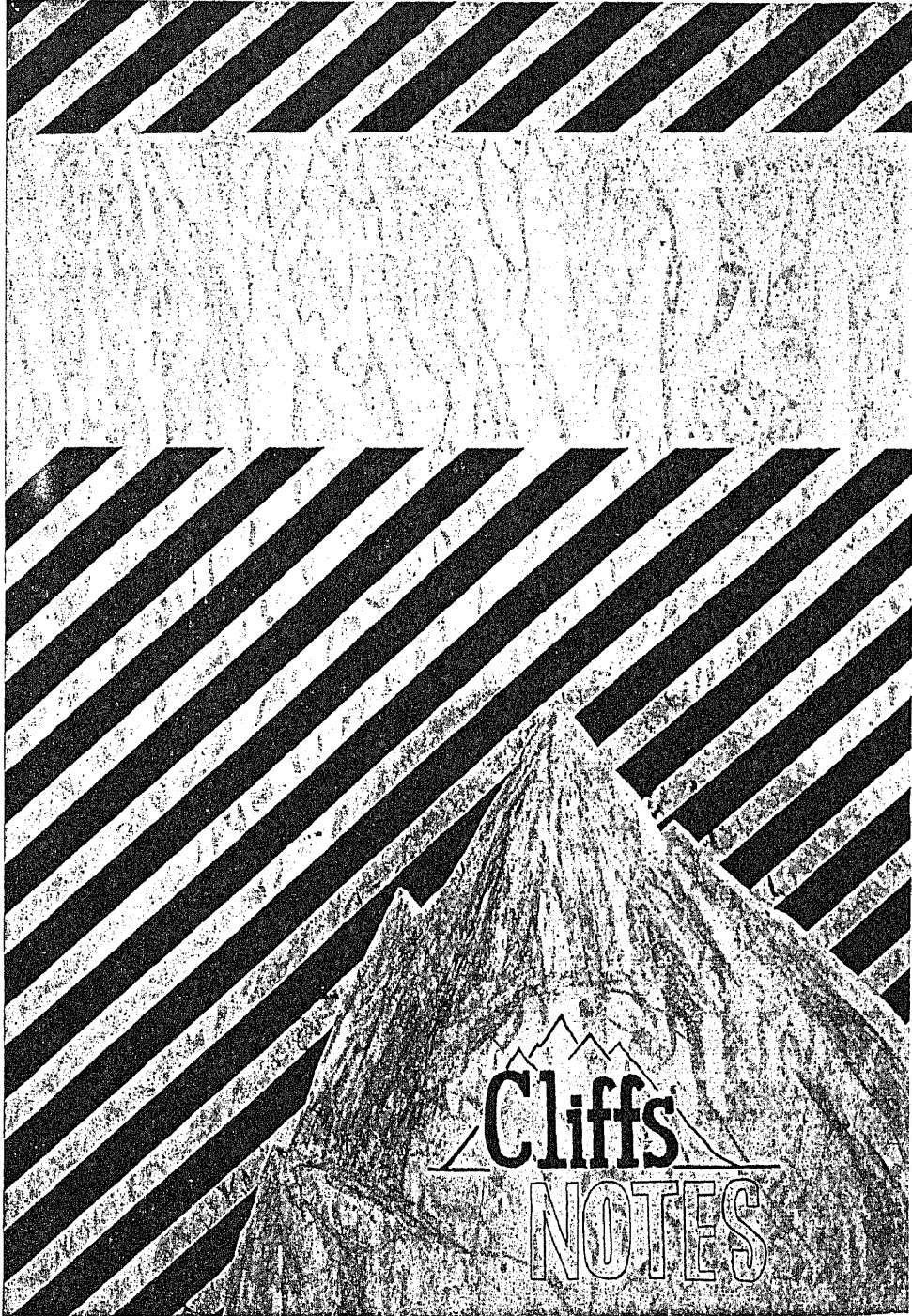


Figure 3.18 "Know Nothing", Mike Kelley, from The Sublime, 1984.

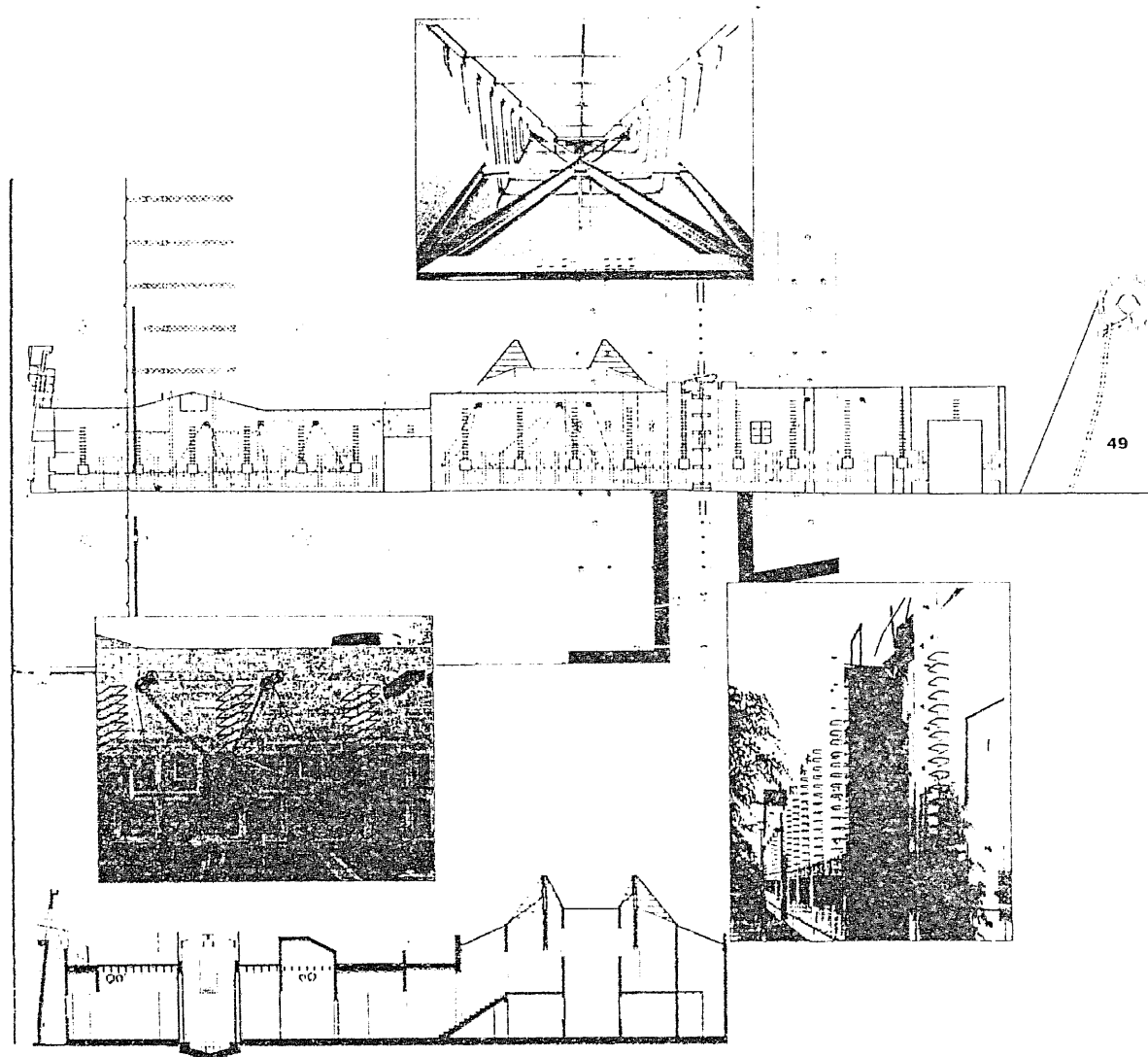


Figure 3.19 Moss, The Gary Group building, details, elevation, and section, Los Angeles, 1988-1990.

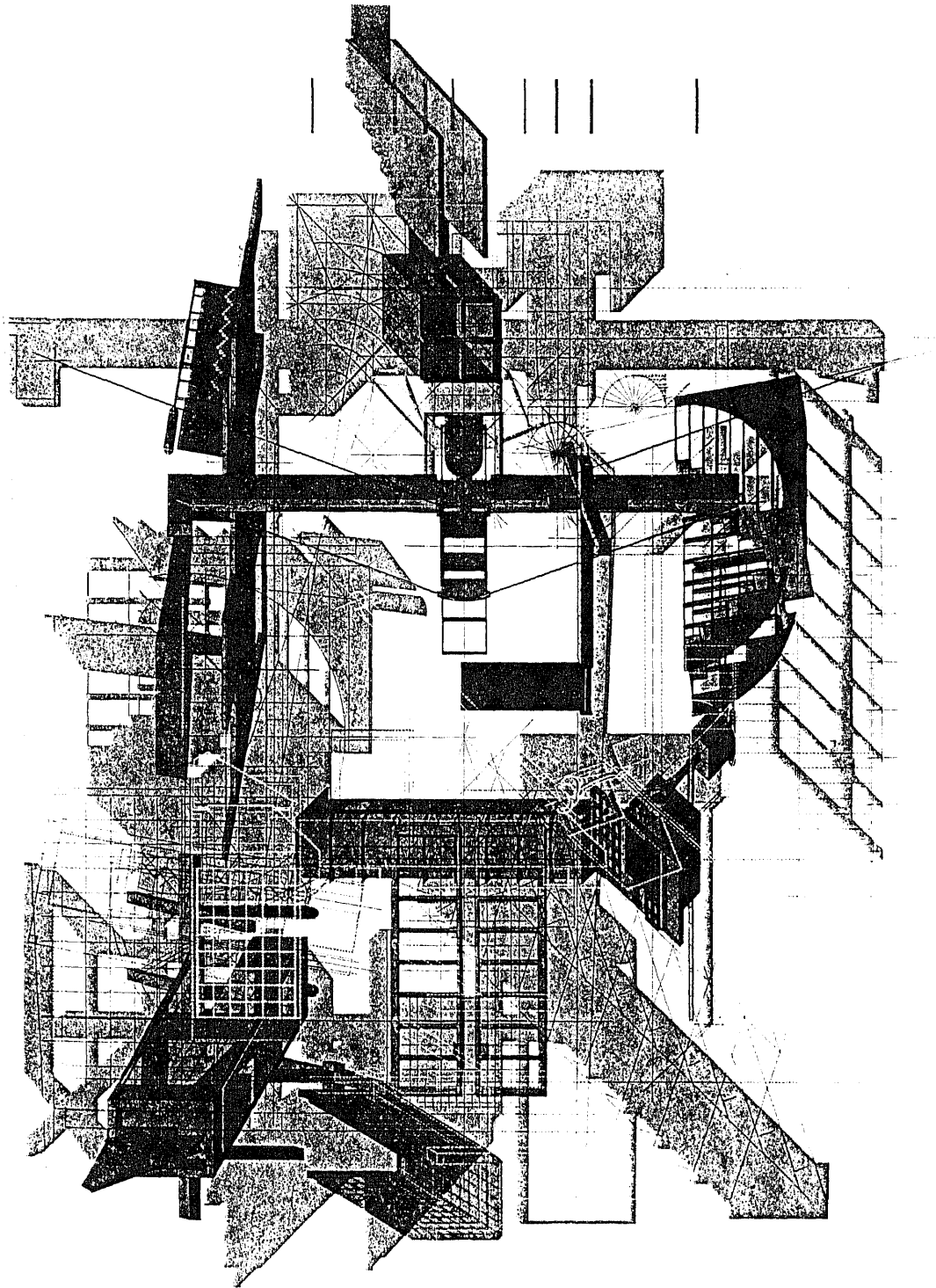


Figure 3.20 Morphosis, Sixth Street House, plan drawing, Venice, 1984-88.

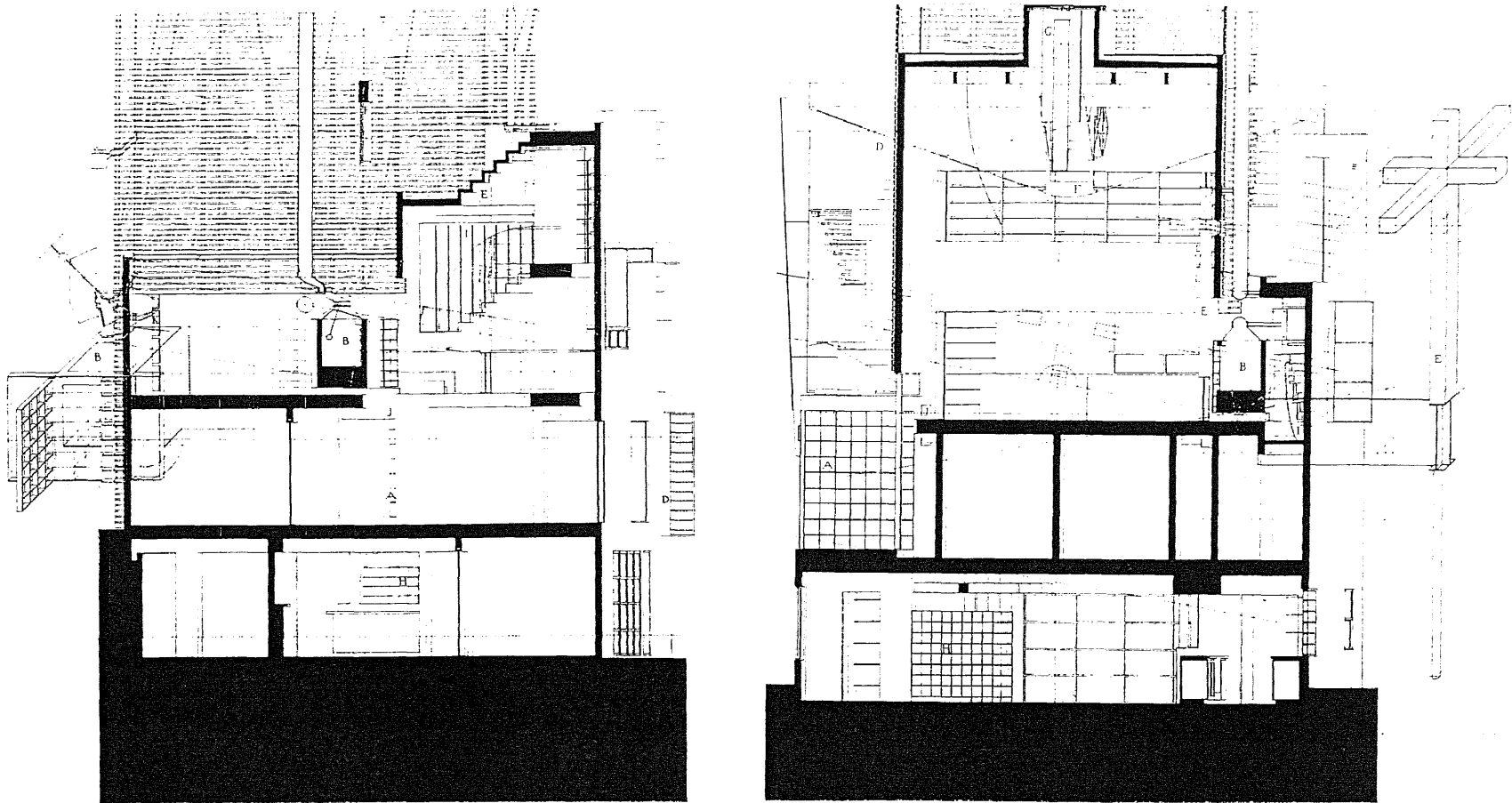


Figure 3.21 Morphosis, Sixth Street House, section drawings, Venice, 1984-88. (Note that the ten found objects are lettered to indicate their location in the sections.)



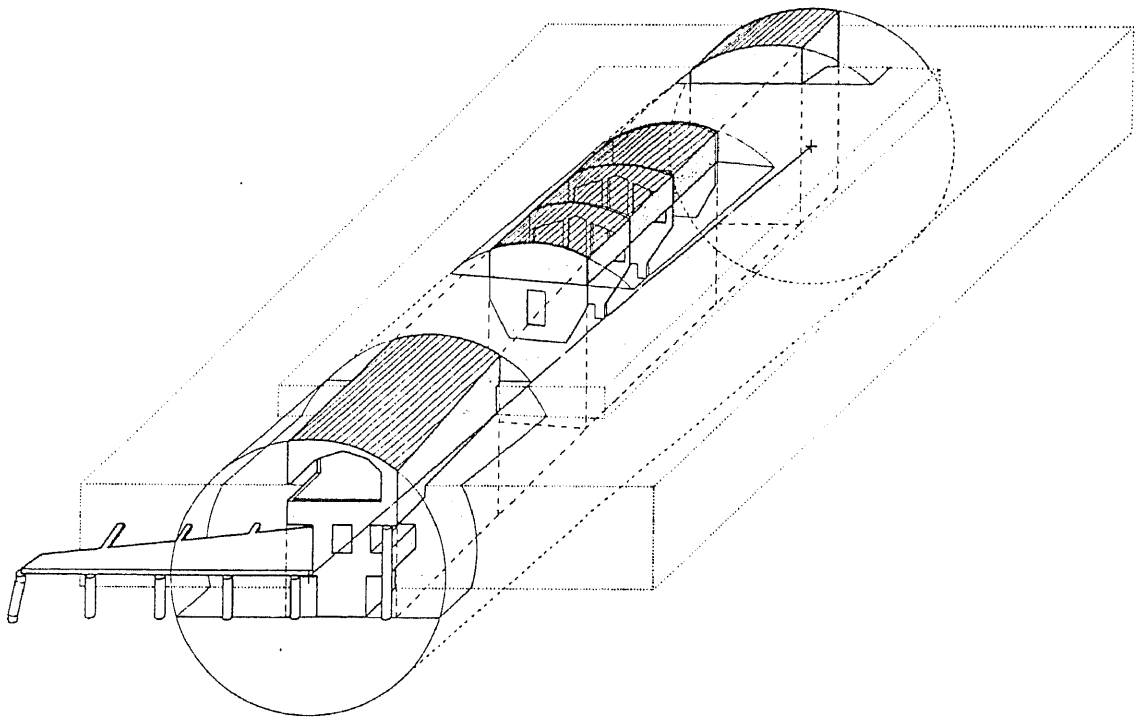


Figure 3.22 Moss, 8522 National Boulevard, axonometric, Culver City, 1986-1990.

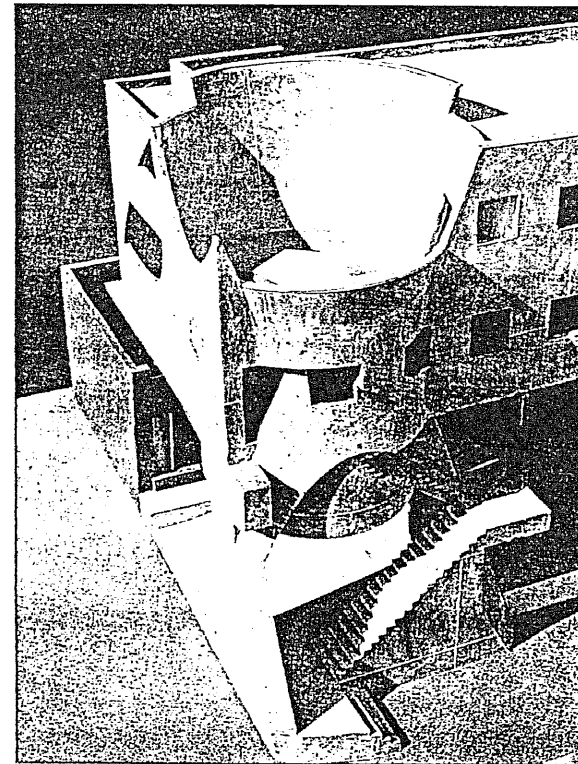
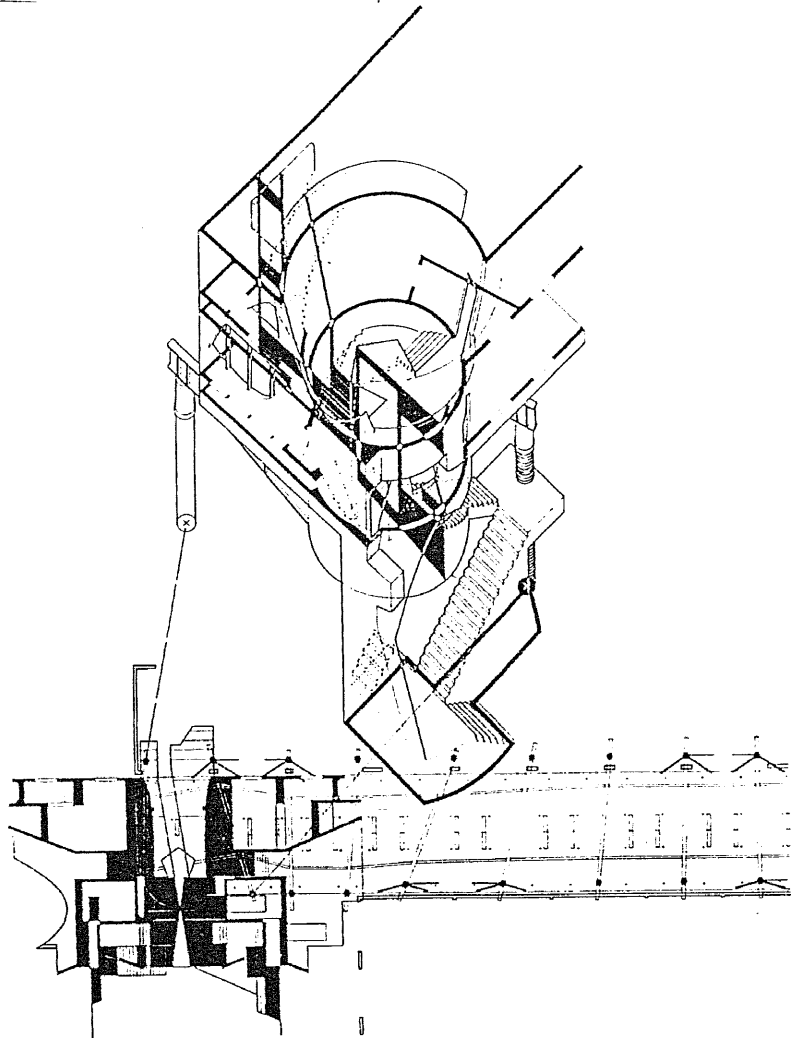


Figure 3.23 Moss, Samitaur Office, drawing and model view, Los Angeles, 1991.

# CDLT 1,2

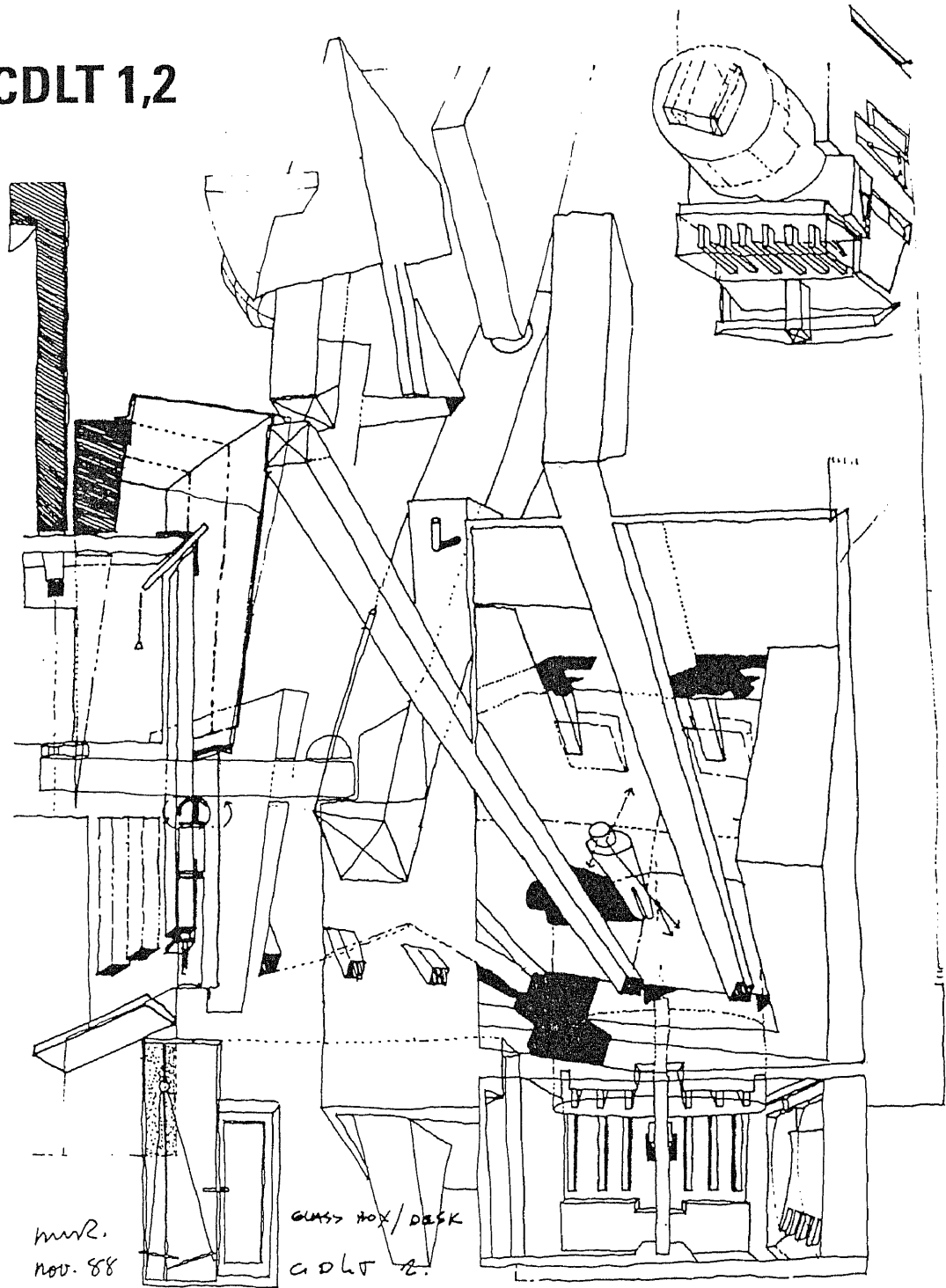


Figure 3.24 Rotondi, CDLT House, architect's drawing, Los Angeles, 1987-1991.

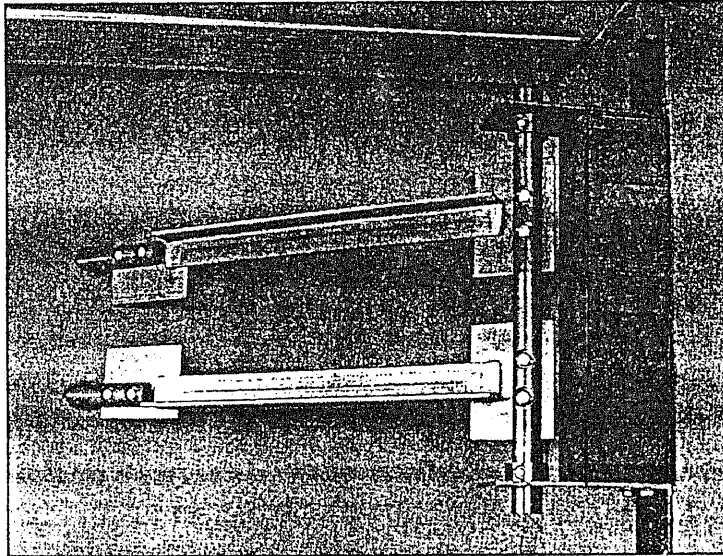


Figure 3.25 Moss, 8522 National Boulevard, column connection detail, Culver City, 1986-1990.

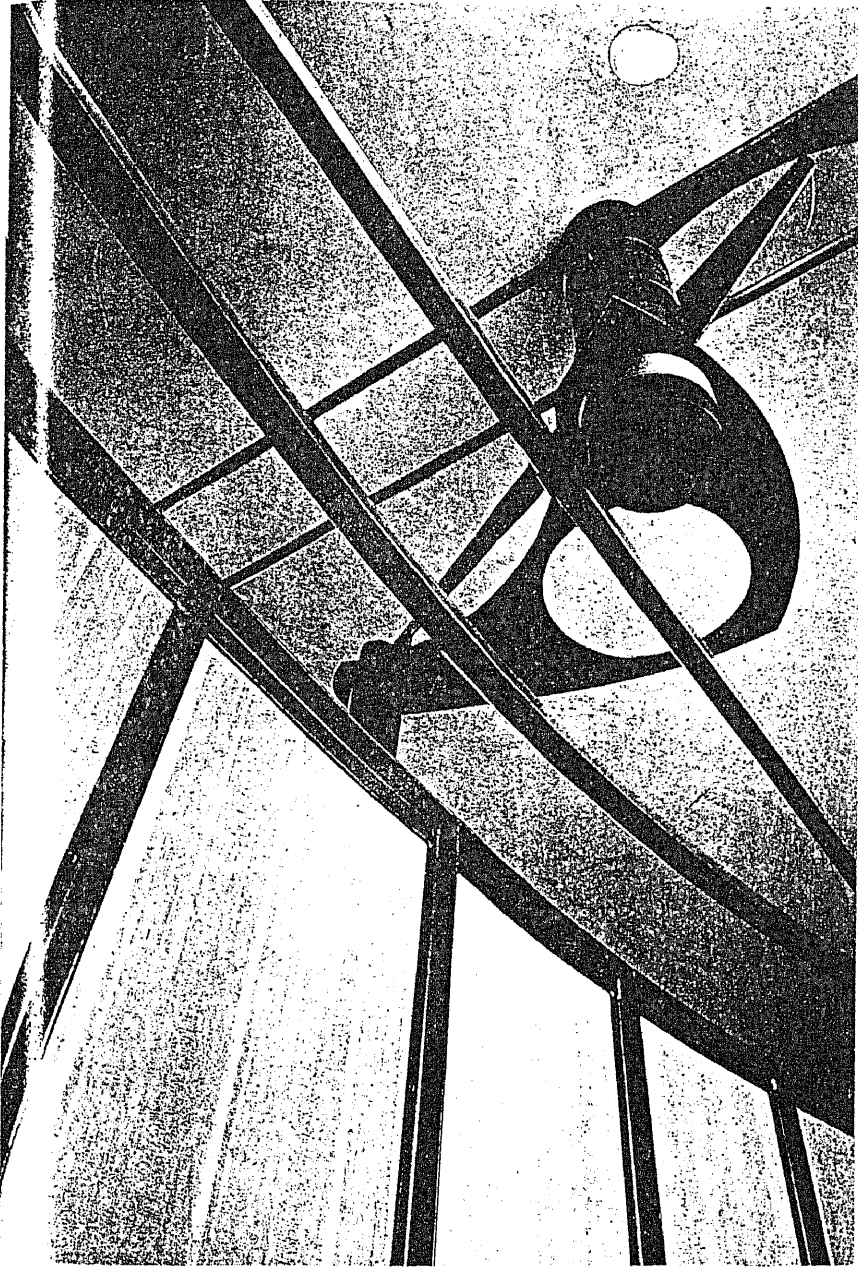


Figure 3.26 Morphosis, Leon Max interior renovation,  
connection detail, Los Angeles, 1988.

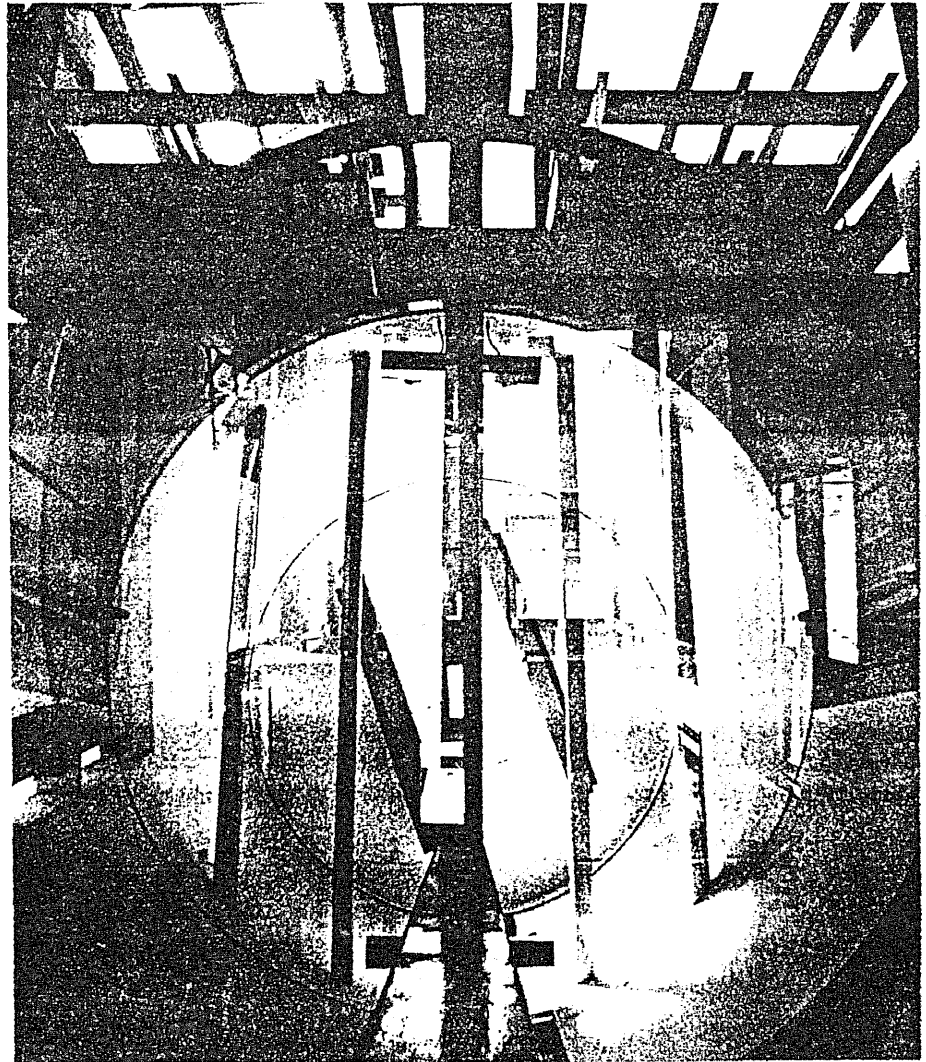
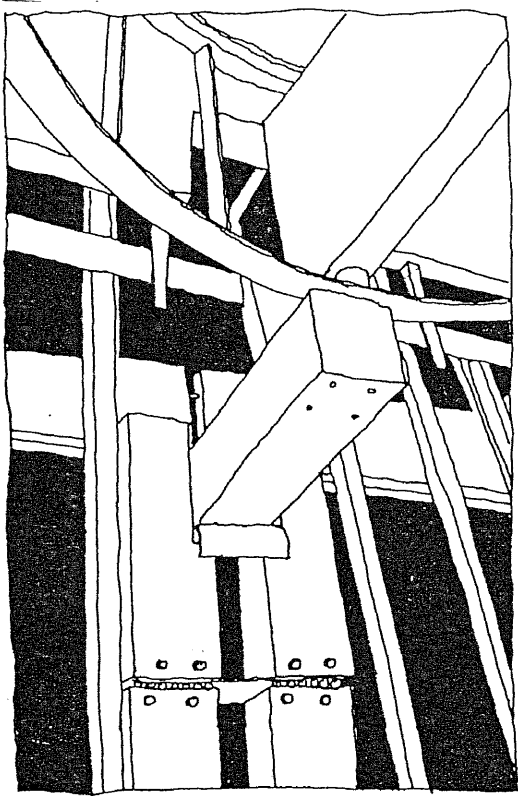


Figure 3.27 Rotondi, CDLT House, left: architect's freehand sketch, right: interior photo, Los Angeles, 1987-91.

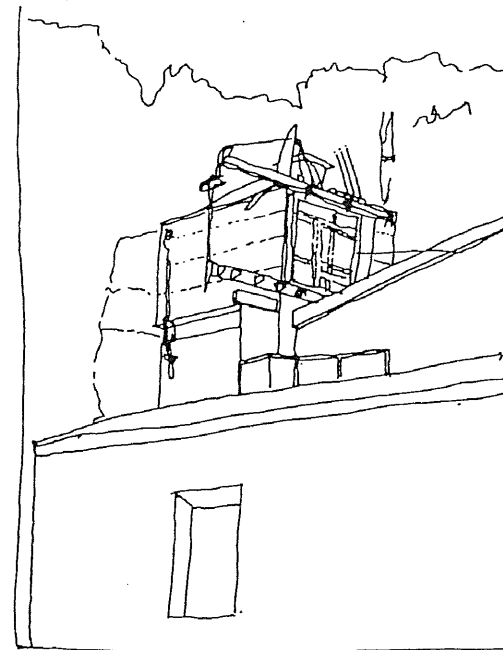
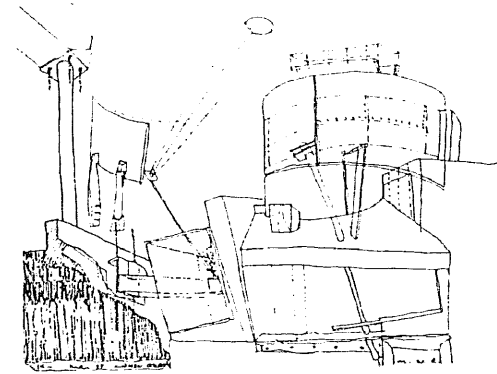
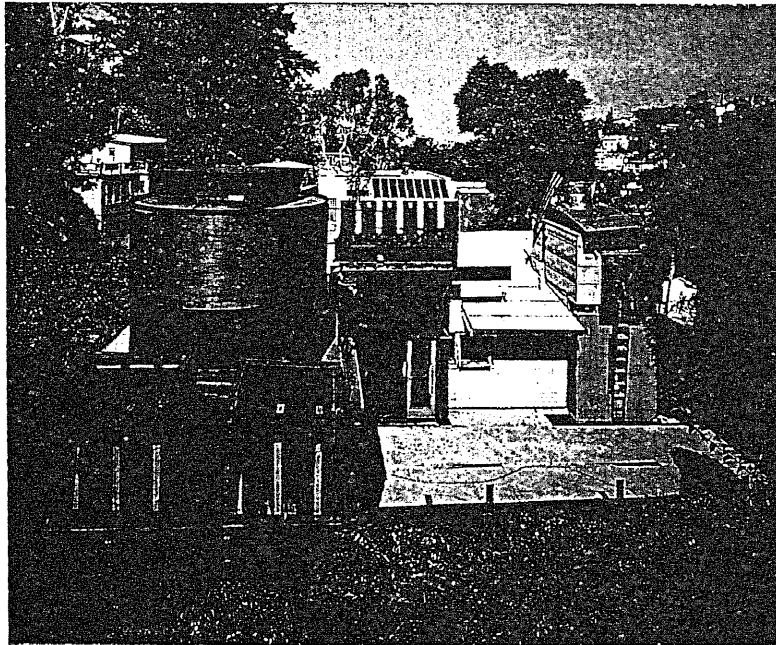


Figure 3.28 Rotondi, CDLT House, left: architect's freehand sketches, right: exterior photo, Los Angeles, 1987-91. Photo Charles Jencks.

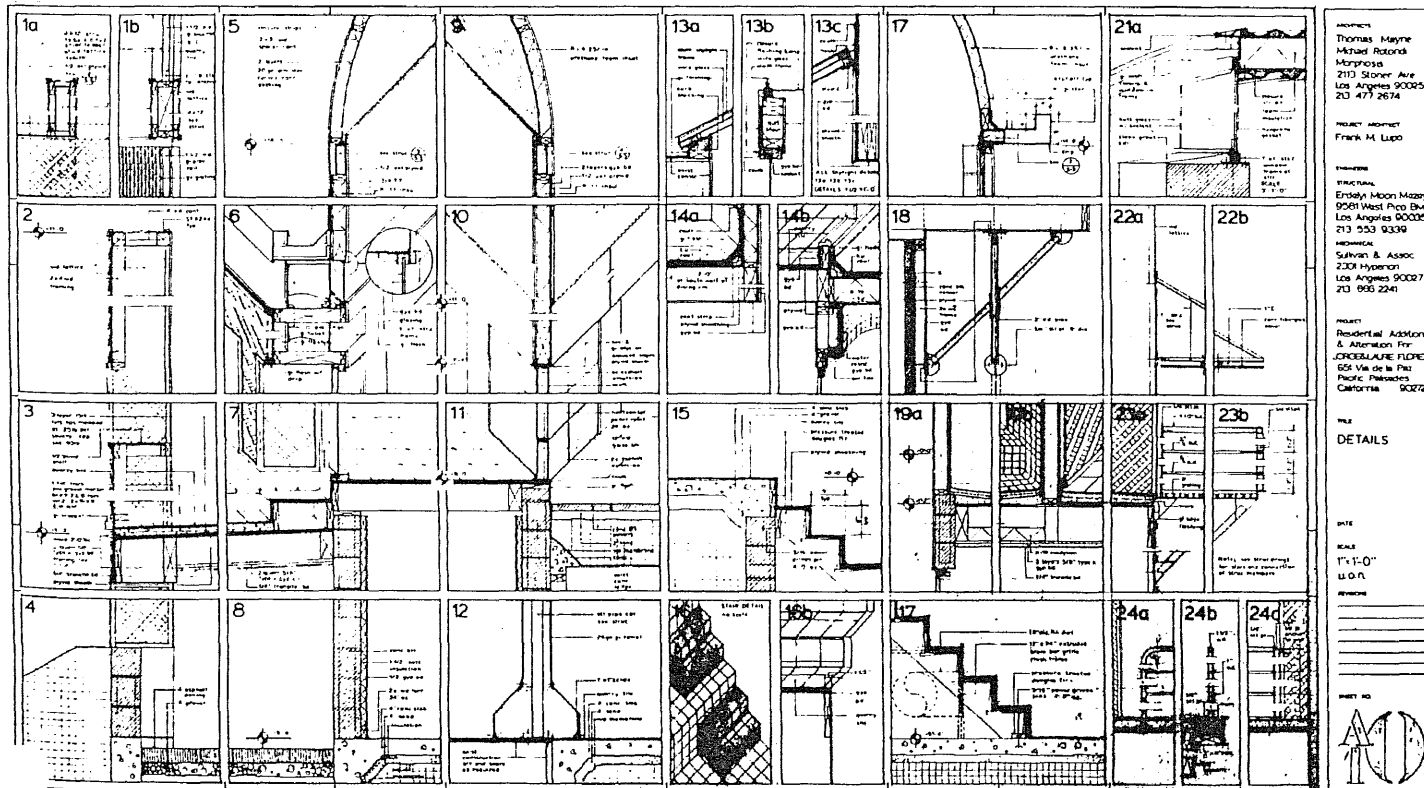
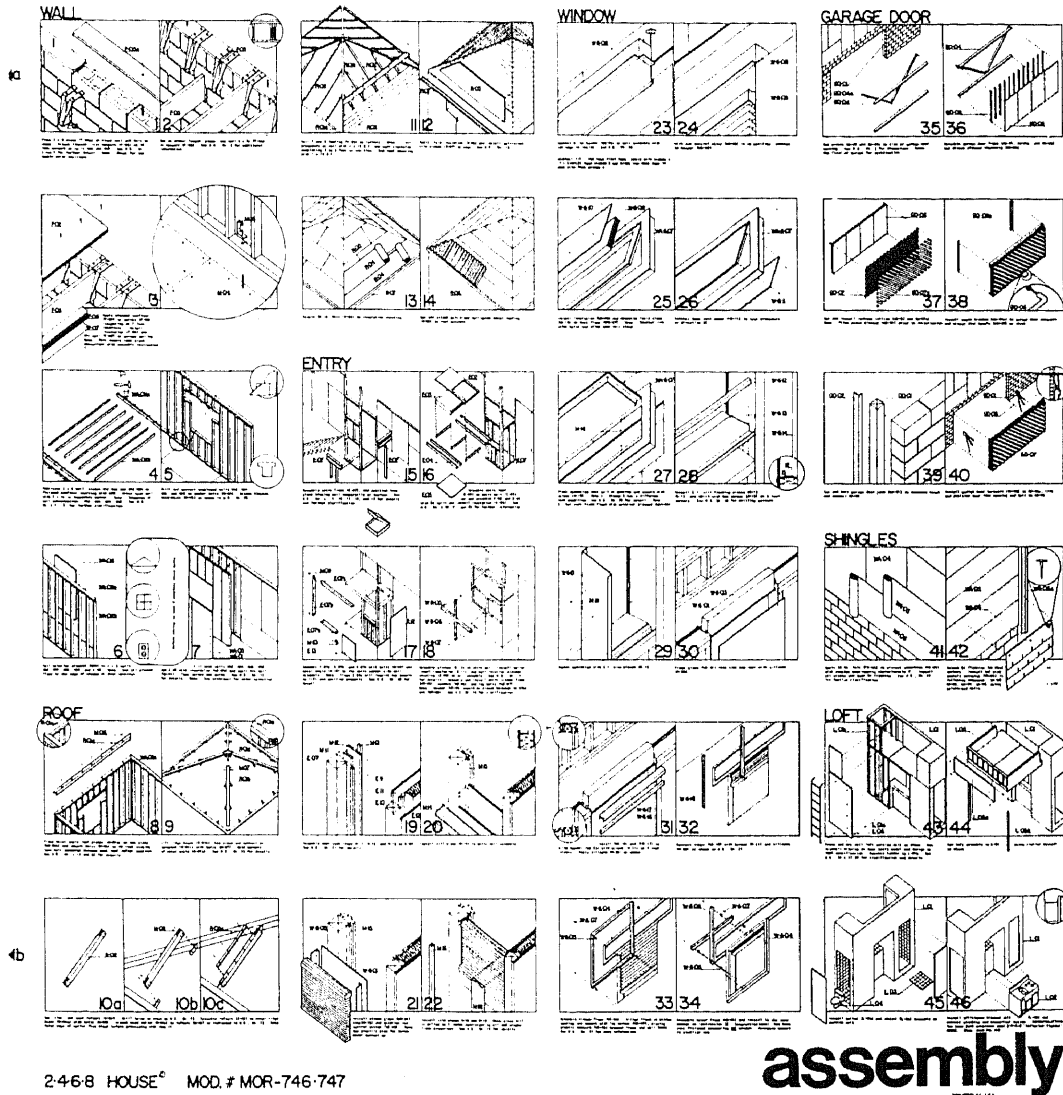


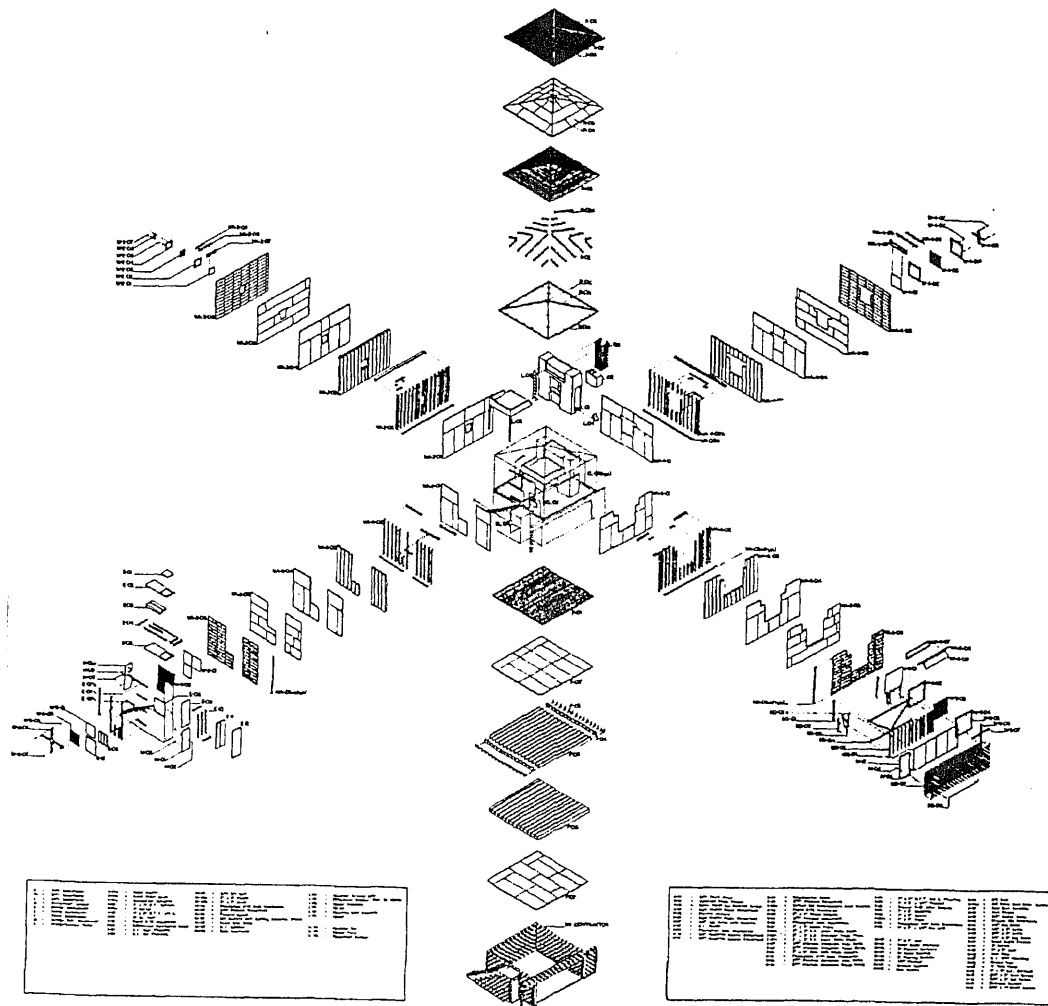
Figure 3.29 Morphosis, Flores Residence addition, construction drawing, Pacific Palisades, 1979.





Because we wished to communicate with the client and were interested in the formal terms of the design of the house, we created a "Revell-like" kit. This kit documented the project in a familiar format that could be understood by a layperson and could help to alleviate some of the fear and confusion inherent in undertaking such a formidable task. The kit contained two posters which cataloged the building materials and described a basic step-by-step construction assembly. A pocket-sized set of working drawings served as the major means of communication with the client.

Figure 3.30 Morphosis, 2-4-6-8 House addition, assembly drawing, Venice, 1978.



*Morphosis kit drawing: parts*

2468 HOUSE<sup>c</sup> MOD.# MOR-746-747

**parts**  
PRINTED IN USA

Figure 3.31 Morphosis, 2-4-6-8 House addition, kit of parts drawing, Venice, 1978. (Getting so close to the manufacturer's vernacular way of drawing that it becomes redundant to the graphics and literature of product specification that already exist. Although this is perhaps intended, there is no discovery of the further possibilities along those lines nor attempt to incorporate manufacturer's information.)

*The building is a theoretical sphere. But the sphere is modified to accommodate the specifics of the city, the program, and the site. Thus the project is simultaneously theoretical and pragmatic. Symbolically the roof (a portion of a globe) is a primitive, idealized form of both earth and sky.*

*The top of the globe is the curved roof form. The top of the top is cut off. The circular plan of the globe appears only where it crosses the southeast corner of the site. The theoretical perimeter of the circle as it traverses the city beyond the Convention Center site defines a hypothetical limit for extending the grid in the air. Nara Convention Center's three pieces form, and are formed by, the dissolving globe which will move Nara past the past, into the future.*

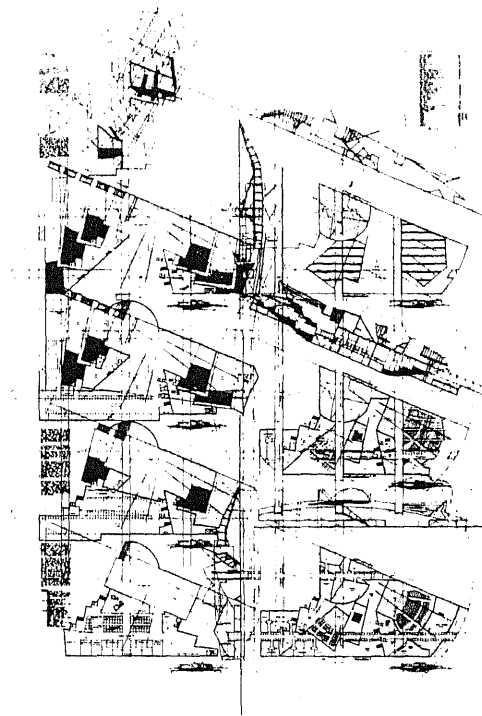
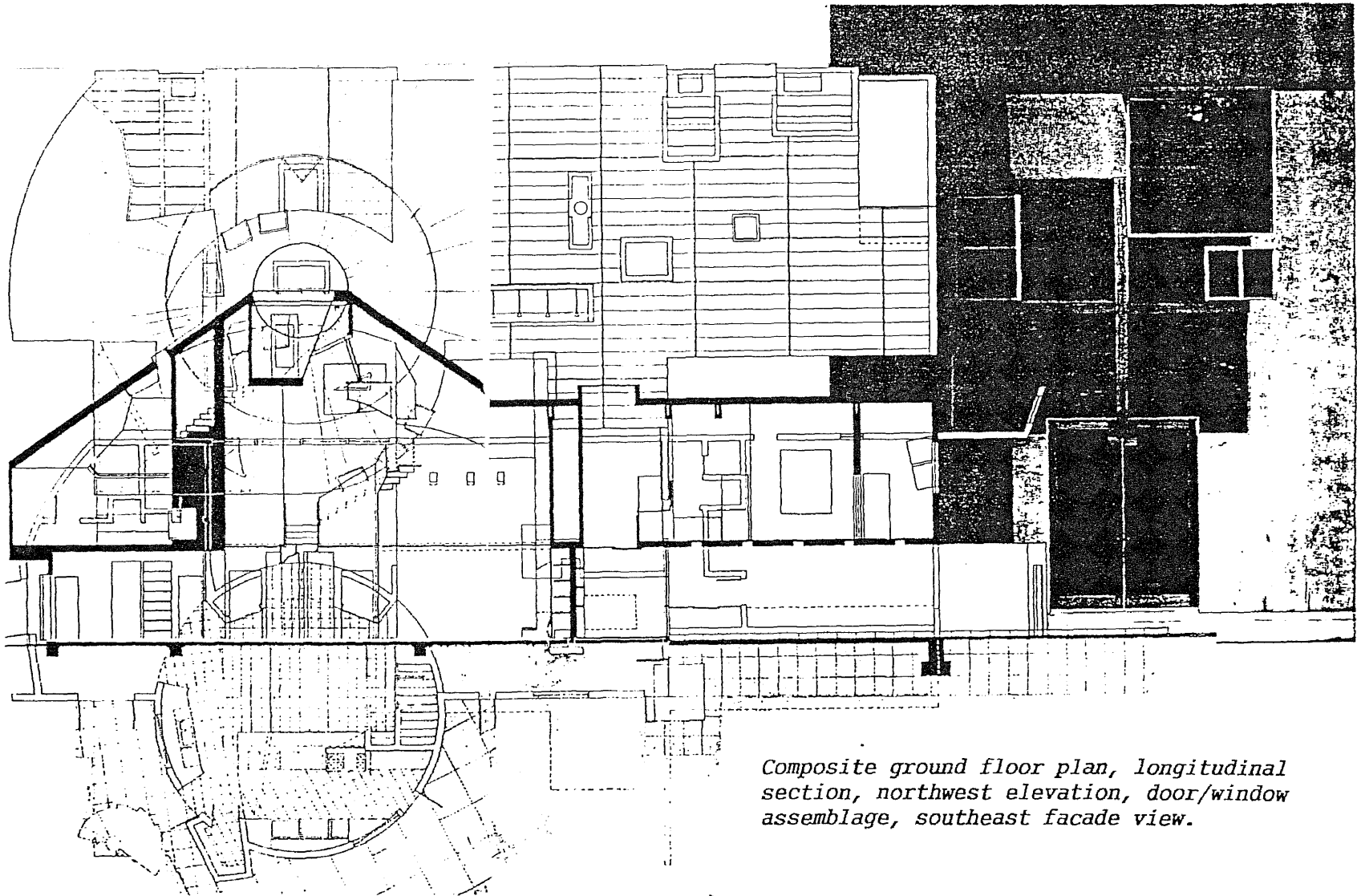


Figure 3.32 Moss: Nara Convention Center, project description and plan, Nara, Japan, 1991.



*Composite ground floor plan, longitudinal section, northwest elevation, door/window assemblage, southeast facade view.*

Figure 3.33 Moss, Lawson-Weston House, Los Angeles, 1992.

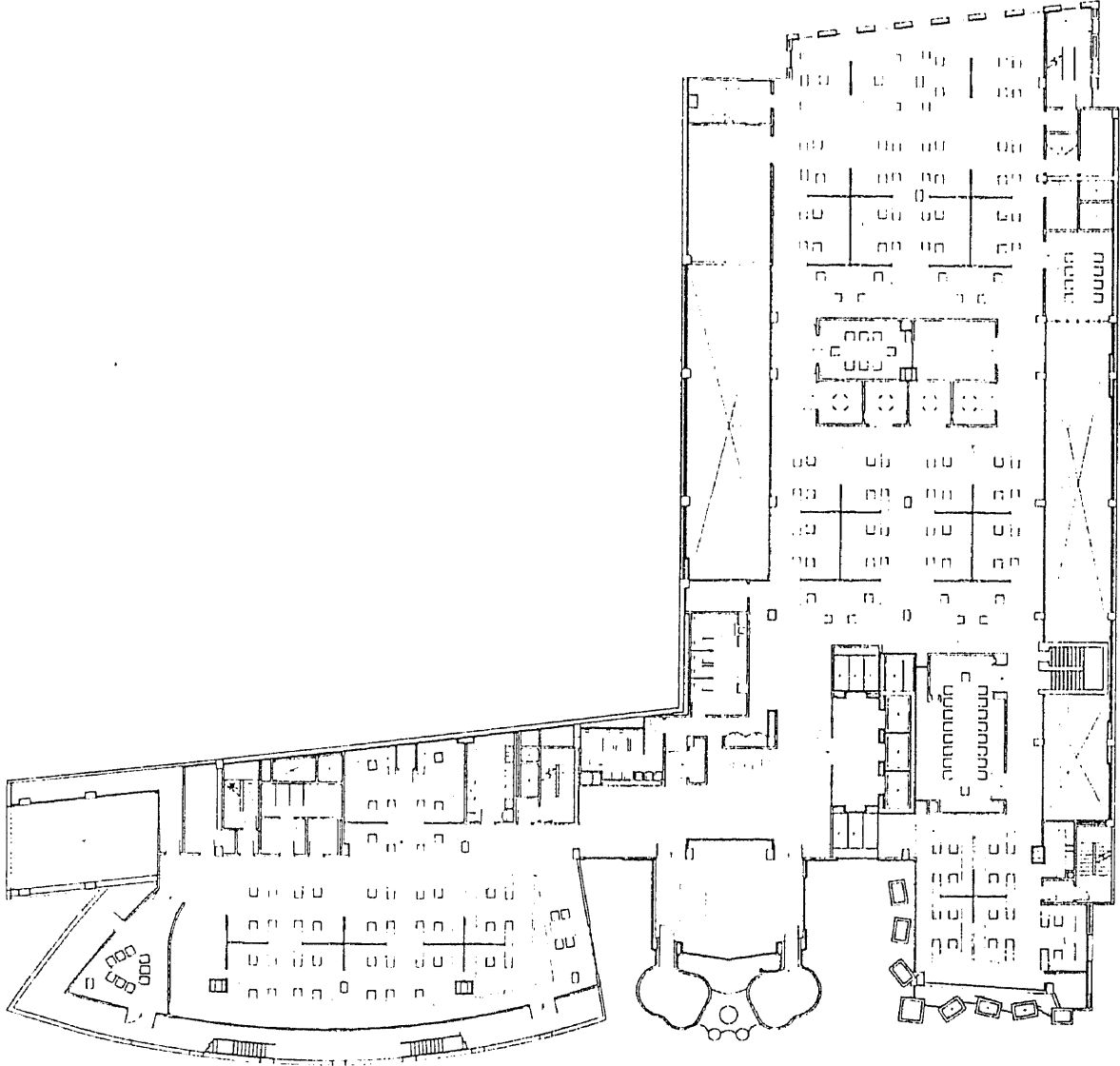


Figure 3.34 Gehry, Chiat/Day/Mojo offices, plan, Venice, 1989-1991.

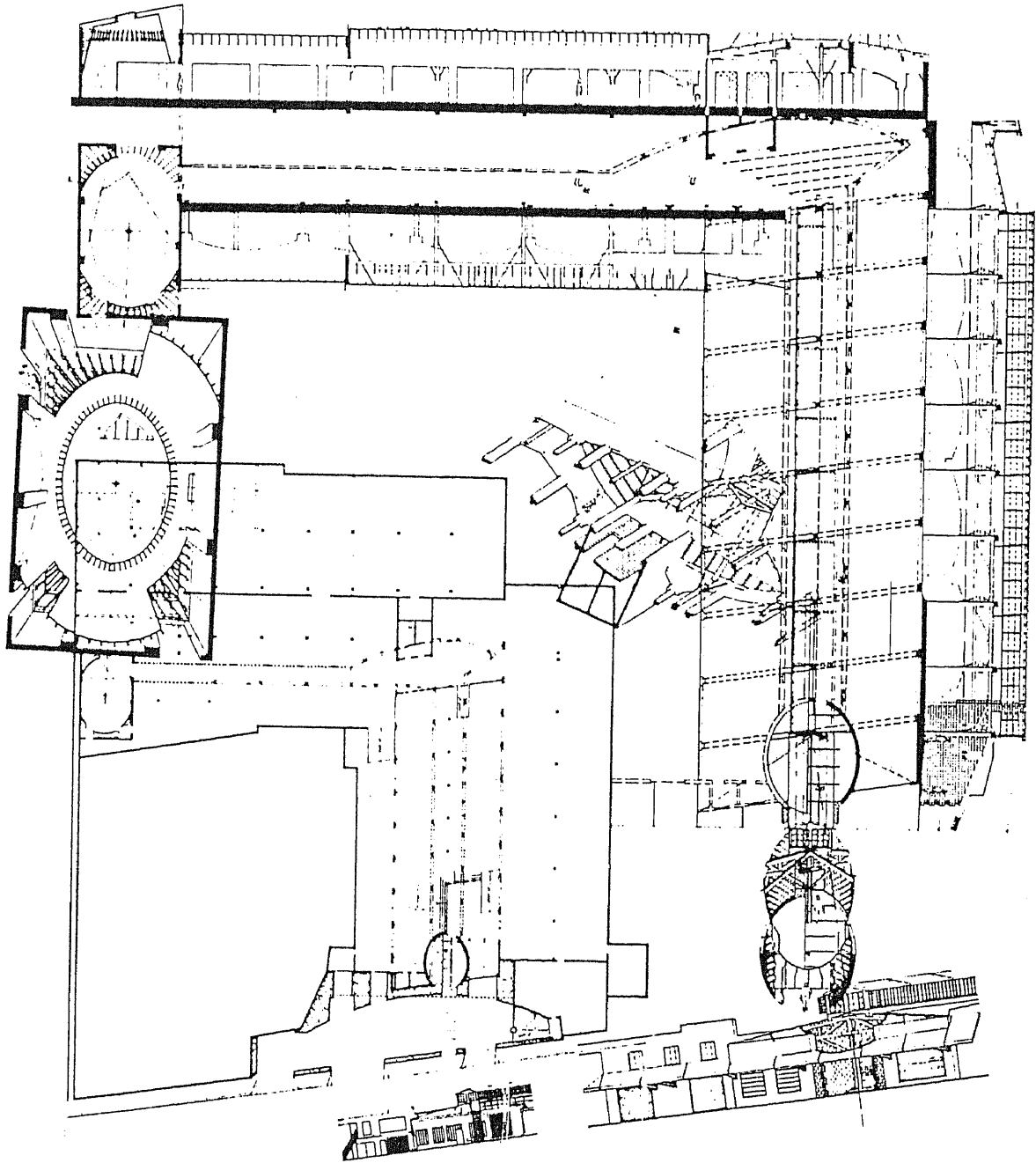


Figure 3.35 Moss, 8522 National Boulevard, plan with axonometric and other drawings, Culver City, 1986-1990.

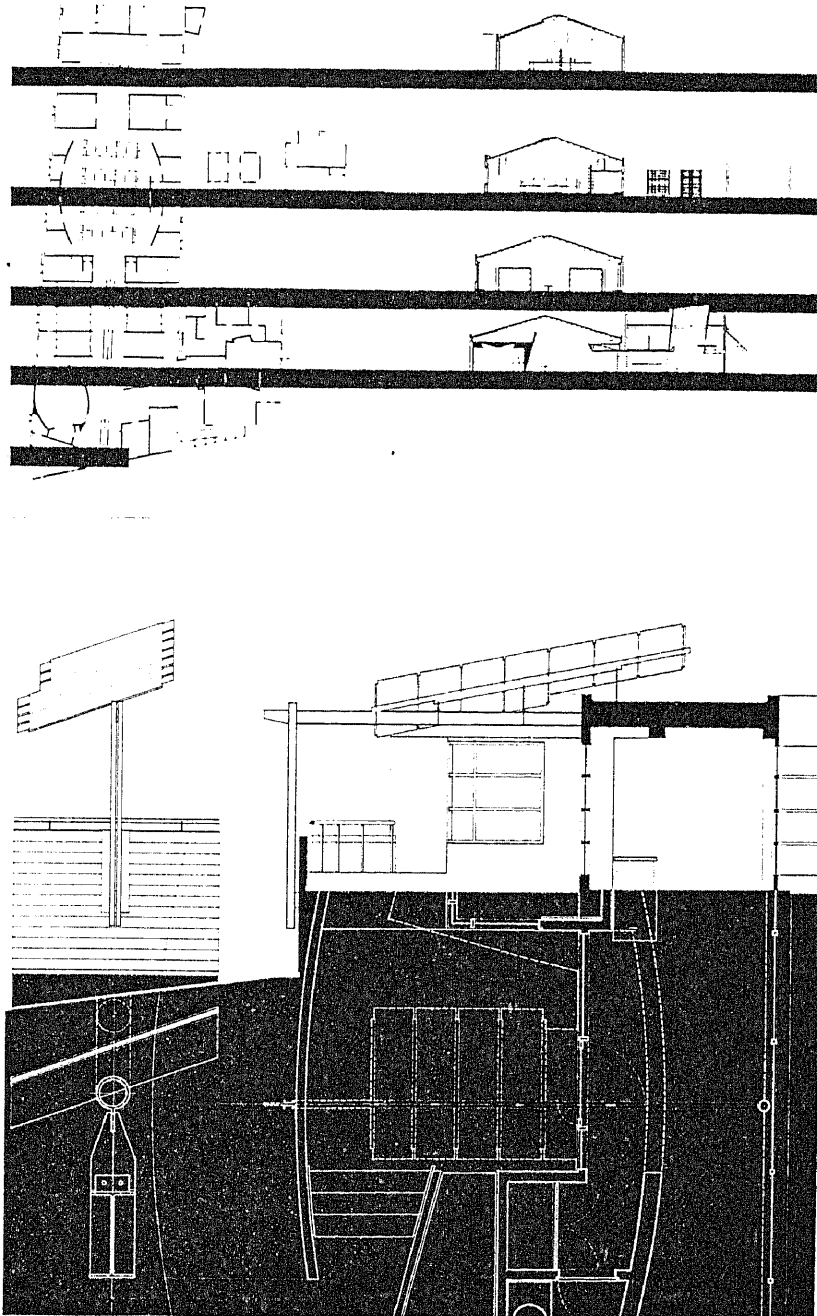


Figure 3.36 Israel, top: Bright and Associates, ground plan with cross sections, Los Angeles, 1988, bottom: Goldberg-Bean House, entry canopy plan/section/elevation, Hollywood, 1991.

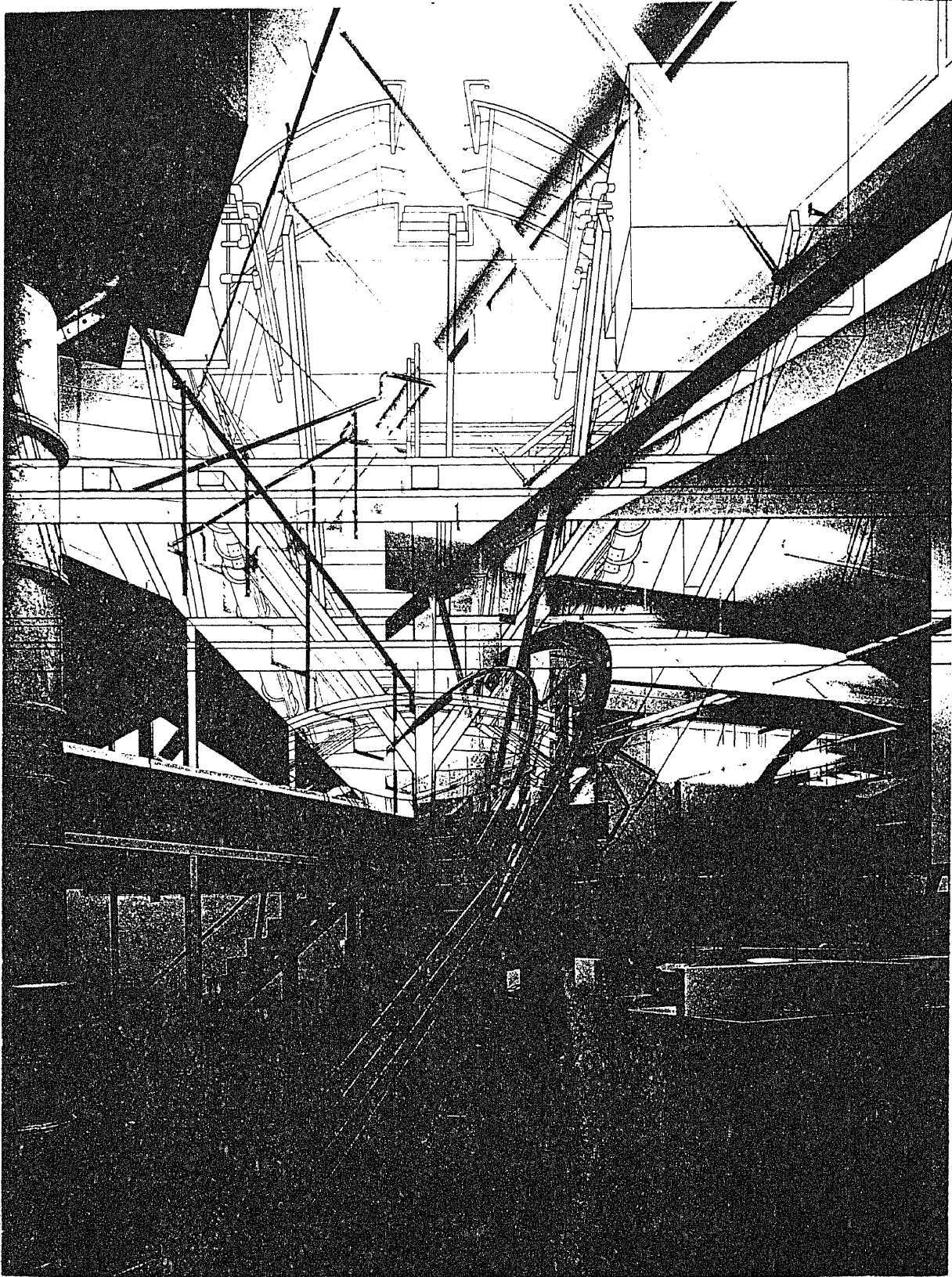
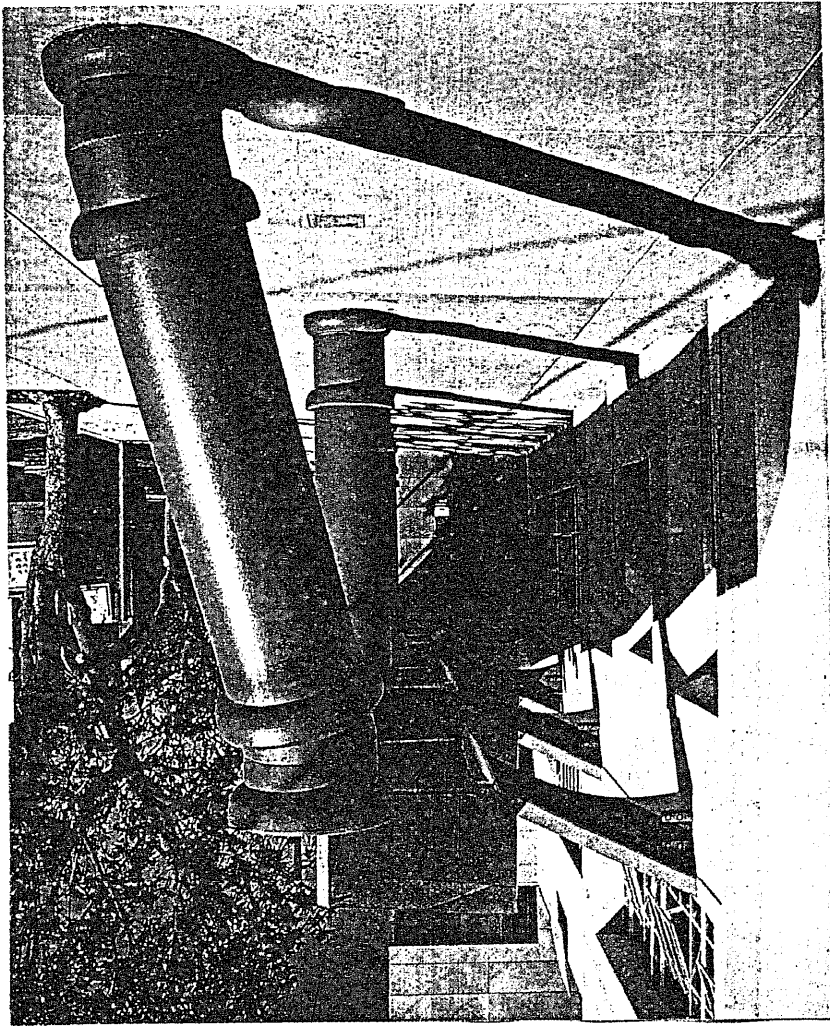
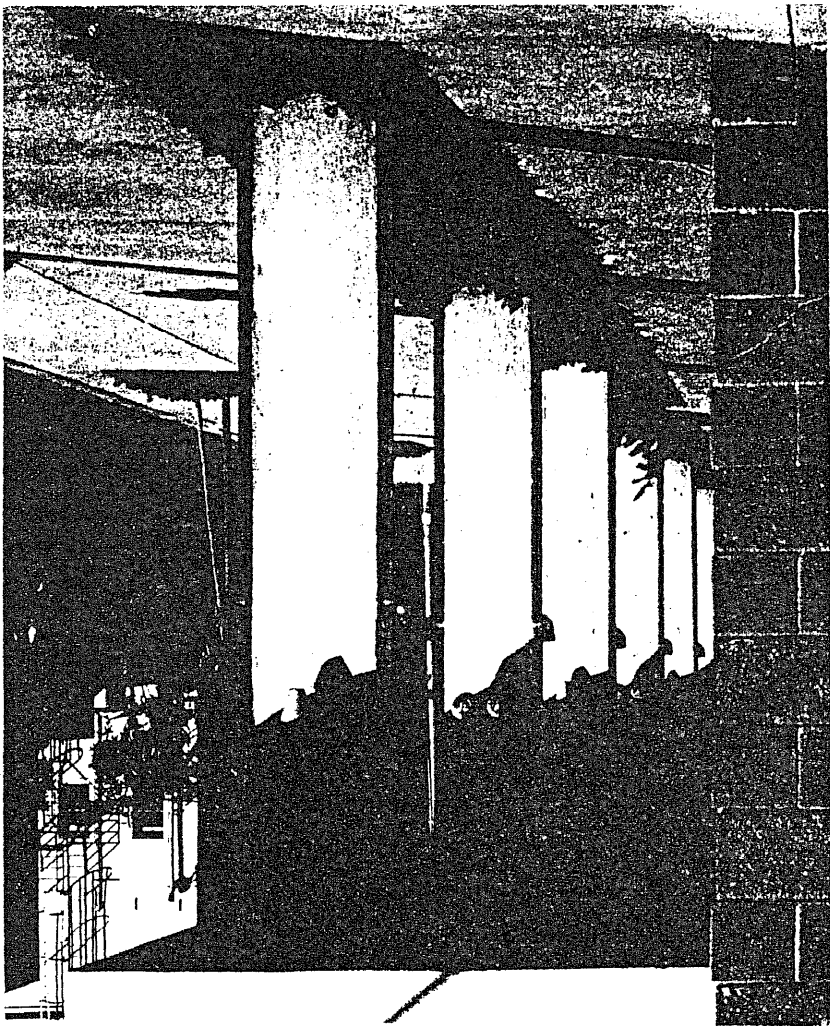


Figure 3.37 Moss, SMA Offices, photomontage, Culver City, 1990.



Figure 3.38 Moss, 8522 National Boulevard, 8522 National Boulevard, two views of exterior columns, Culver City, 1986-1990. Photos Donatella Brun.



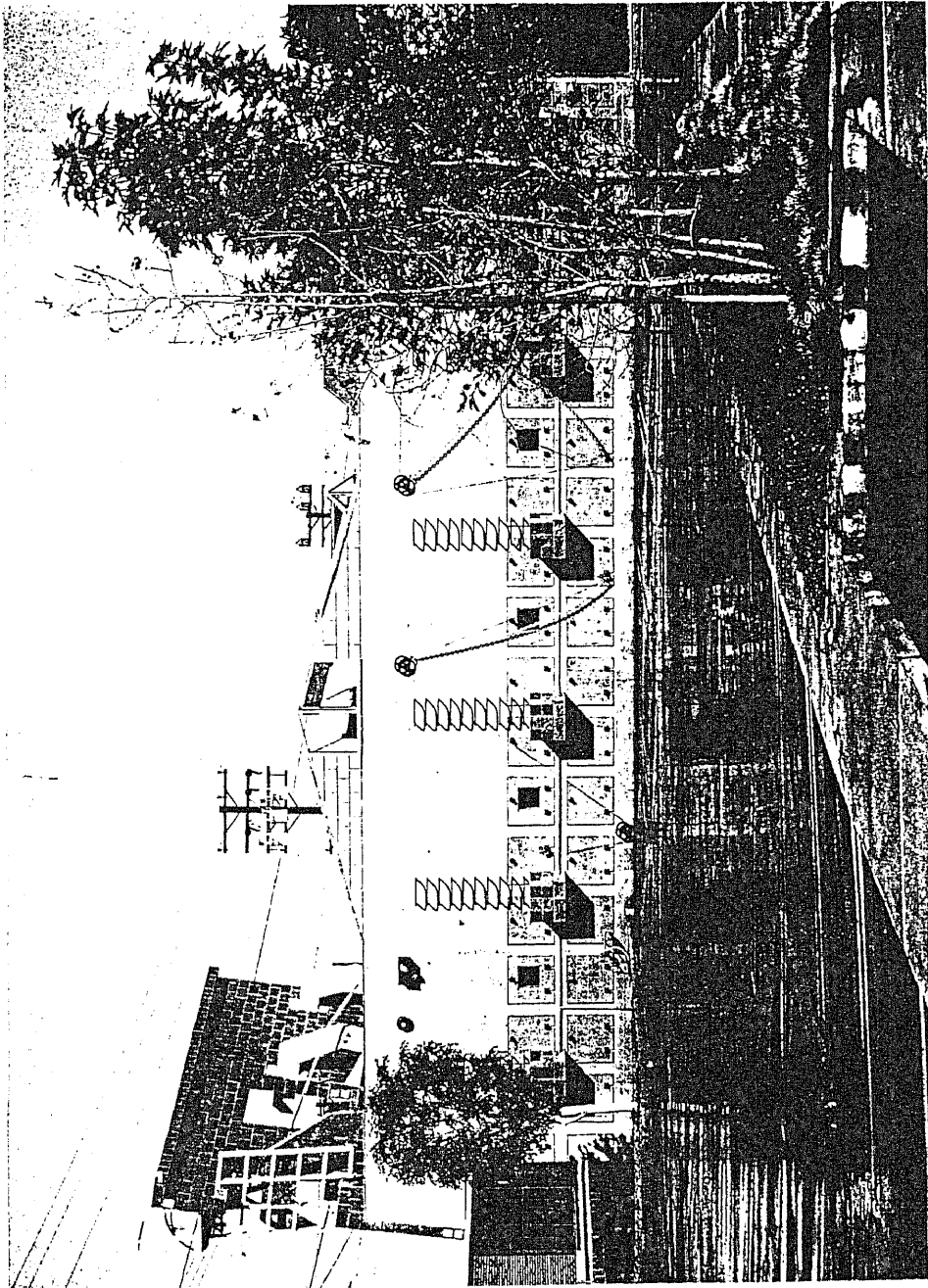


Figure 3.39 Moss, The Gary Group Building, exterior elevation, Los Angeles, 1988-1990.



Figure 3.40 Moss, Lawson-Weston House, interior main space, Los Angeles, 1992. Photo P/A.

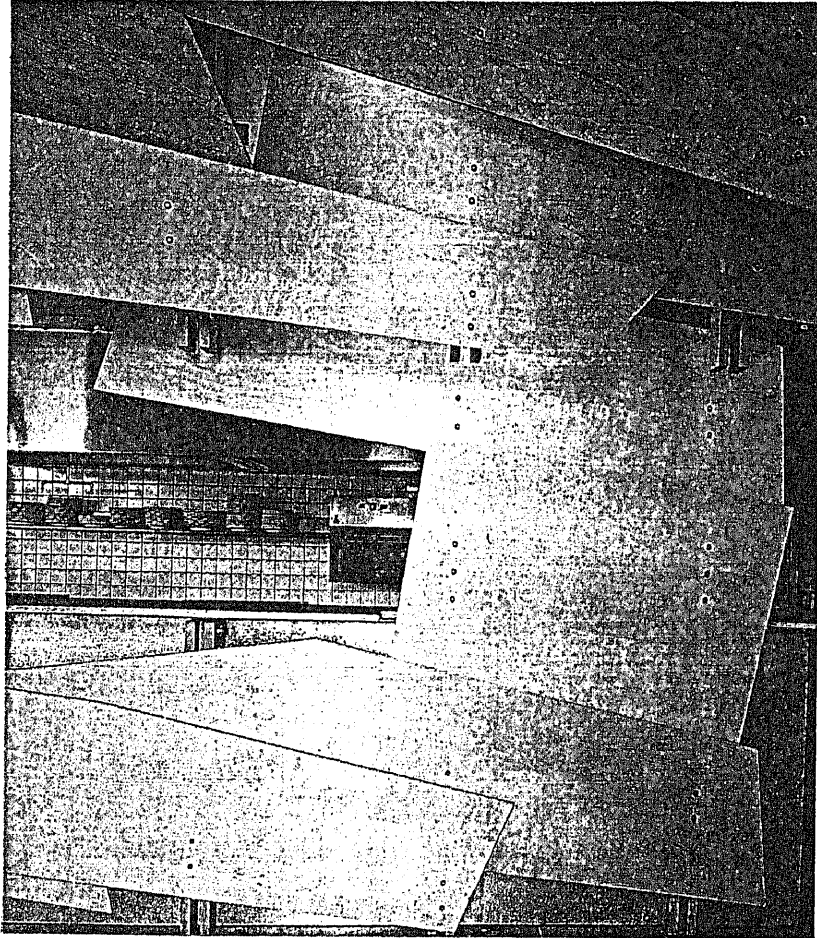


Figure 3.41 Israel, Speedway Cafe, interior photo of plywood use, Venice, 1991. Photo Grant Mudford.

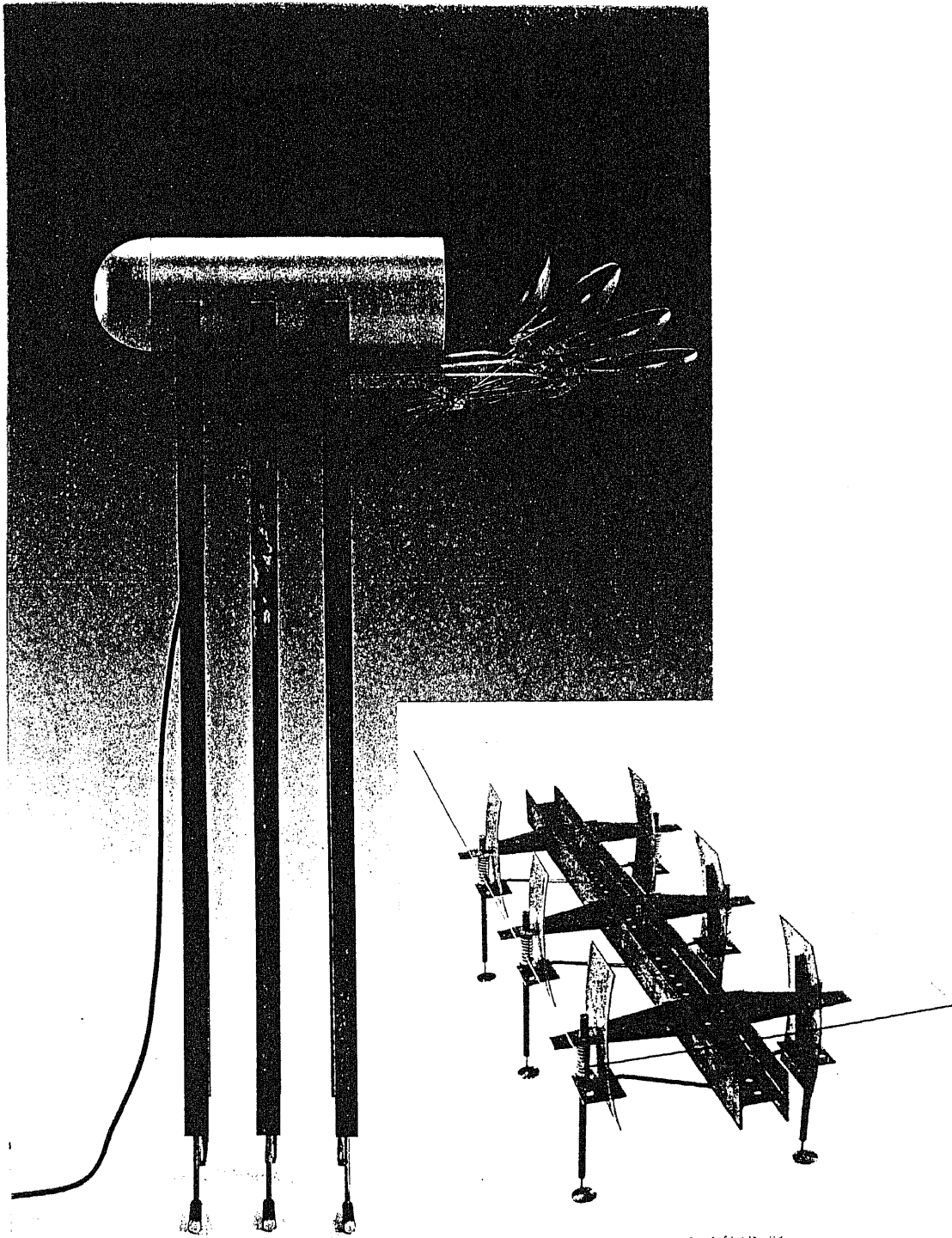


Figure 3.42 Morphosis, furniture, The Barking Dog, inset: conference table. Photos Morphosis.

## Chapter 3 NOTES

1. Susan deMenil and Bill Lacy editors, Angels and Franciscans, Rizzoli, New York, 1992, p.6.
2. Confirmed by the constant singling-out of Morphosis, Moss and Israel by various Los Angeles Architecture biographers: Carl Jencks, Heteropolis, London, Academy Editions, New York, 1993, specifically chapter 3; L.A. Forum for Architecture and Urban Design, Experimental Architecture in Los Angeles, introduction by Frank Gehry, Rizzoli, New York, 1991, specifically the comments of Gehry, p10; and again in deMenil and Lacy, Angels and Franciscans, op cit, p13.
3. The term "L.A. Style" has been used by Jencks in Heteropolis, Academy Editions, London, 1993, on the jacket notes, p.8, and throughout the book. He refers to either the "L.A. Style" or "L.A. School". A similar term: the "Gehry-Schule", can be found in L.A. Forum for Architecture and Urban Design, Experimental Architecture in Los Angeles, Rizzoli, New York, 1991, with introduction by Frank Gehry, essays by Aaron Betsky, John Chase, and Leon Whiteson, pp47-48, p88.
4. Eric Owen Moss, Eric Owen Moss, buildings and projects, Rizzoli, New York, 1991, p7.
5. deMenil and Lacy, op cit, p13.
6. Moss, op cit, p7.
7. deMenil and Lacy, op cit, p7, p13.
8. deMenil and Lacy, op cit, p8.
9. deMenil and Lacy, op cit, p74.
10. Aaron Betsky, Violated Perfection, Rizzoli, New York, 1990, Chapter 8; Technomorphism, pp183-203.
11. La Jolla Museum of Contemporary Art, The California Condition, La Jolla, California, 1982, p70.
12. La Jolla, op cit, p49.
13. John Chase, The Garret, the Boardroom, and the Amusement Park, in Journal of Architectural Education, November 1993, 47/2. The similar views of the author expressed on p85, substantiate this paragraph.
14. Jencks, op cit, jacket notes and p7.
15. A.D., Architectural Monograph #23, Morphosis, London, Academy Editions, New York, NY, 1991. "Connected Isolation" essay by Thom Mayne, p9.
16. Jencks, op cit, p57.
17. Jencks, op cit, p.65.
18. Jencks, op cit, jacket notes.
19. Jencks, op cit, p75.
20. Jencks, op cit, p75-7. Jencks refers to the opposite of L.A. School "hetero-architecture" as being "mono-logical" architecture.
21. Jencks, op cit, p20.
22. La Jolla, op cit, p70.
23. Moss, op cit, p12.
24. Jencks, op cit, p6, 66, and 75. The office village is taken by Jencks as a valid, new solution to the demands of many post-industrial office programs. These are heterogeneous

spaces, "convivial bazaars where anything may happen" that Jencks claims "are particularly suited to the small, fast-changing and networked companies that occupy them for brief moments." Such workplaces are required by Israel's advertising agency, design firm, and film and record company clients. However, he too notices the exclusivist, class-system manner in which "these tiny urban villages turn inward; defensive responses to a hostile, polluted environment." Jencks recognizes that only among a fixed subset of exclusive individuals allowed inside can "almost anything can happen" there.

25. La Jolla, op cit, p.49.

26. Baudrillard, Simulations, Semiotext(e) Publications, New York, 1983; Lyotard The Post-modern Condition, Univ. of Minn. Press, Minneapolis, 1984; Foster, Recordings: Art, Spectacle and Cultural Politics, Bay Press, Port Townsend, Washington, 1985; Habermas, Modern and Post-modern Architecture, pp317-29, in John Forester, Critical Theory and Public Life, MIT Press, Cambridge, MA, 1985; Jameson, Post-modernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism, New Left Review 146, pp53-96.

27. As well as being referred to as: late-capitalistic; the information age; the media society; or the culture of the spectacle.

28. See Jameson's collected essays, and Post-modernism and Consumer Society, pp111-125, in The Anti-Aesthetic, edited by Hal Foster, Bay Press, Port Townsend, Washington, 1983.

29. A.D., Architectural Monograph #23, Morphosis, London, Academy Editions, New York, NY, 1991, "Connected Isolation" essay by Thom Mayne, footnotes refer to Foster.

30. Baudrillard, The Ecstasy of Communication, essay, p126-34, in The Anti-Aesthetic, edited by Hal Foster, Bay Press, Port Townsend, Washington, 1983. Also see Baudrillard, Simulations, op cit.

31. Jameson, Post-modernism and Consumer Society, essay, pp111-125, in The Anti-Aesthetic, edited by Hal Foster, Bay Press, Port Townsend, Washington, 1983.

32. Jameson, in Foster, op cit, p32, p119.

33. Chase, in L.A. Forum, Experimental Architecture in L.A., op cit, p134.

34. The Anti-Aesthetic, edited by Hal Foster, Bay Press, Port Townsend, Washington, 1983. Preface, page xi.

35. Jencks, op cit, p61.

36. Jencks, op cit, p77.

37. Jencks, op cit, p53.

38. Jencks, op cit, p53.

39. Jencks, op cit, p53.

40. Jencks, op cit, p53.

41. Jencks, op cit, p53.

42. Jencks, op cit, p55.

43. Jencks, op cit, p55.

44. Jencks, op cit, p44, p57.

45. Jencks, op cit, p57.

46. Moss, op cit, p15.

47. Chase in JAE, op cit, p77: Chase points out the

requirement that commercial and entertainment architecture manufacture a past. While analyzing the vanguard, L.A. School architecture however, he fails to include the manufactured past as an artifice of they too, employ. I should like to note here that it is a central device for them.

pp75-87,: Also, Chase notes their personal use of materials, but does not position that as only part of the larger issue that vanguard architecture requires manufactured pasts and contrived archeologies to substantiate those material uses.

48. deMenil and Lacy, op cit, p74.

49. deMenil and Lacy, op cit, p74.

50. Jencks, op cit, p61.

51. Jencks, op cit, p61.

52. Moss, op cit, p12.

53. Jencks, op cit, p61.

54. Jencks, op cit, p61.

55. George Wagner, Thom Mayne, Sixth Street House, Harvard University GSD, Cambridge, Mass, 1989, p22.

56. Wagner op cit, p22.

57. Wagner op cit, p22.

58. L.A. School's dead tech and contrived archeology skills would be parallel to Adolf Loos' critique of the Art Nouveau.

59. Wagner op cit, p23.

60. Walter Benjamin, Illuminations, edited by Hannah Ardent, Schocken Books, NY, 1968, p221; "...that which withers in the age of mechanical reproduction is the aura of the work of art."

61. Wagner, op cit, p23. Wagner uses Benjamin's text, however incorrectly, to justify the work of Thom Mayne and Morphosis.

62. Benjamin, Illuminations, op cit, p221.

63. Benjamin, Illuminations, op cit, p220.

64. Benjamin, Reflections, essay "Author as Producer", edited by Peter Dementz, Schocken Books, NY, 1986, pp229-236: For Benjamin's accounts of Brecht and the Dada movement.

65. Benjamin, Illuminations, op cit, p221.

66. A.D., Architectural Monograph #29, Eric Owen Moss, London, Academy Editions, New York, NY, 1993, p11.

67. Jencks, op cit, p61.

68. Wagner, op cit, p11.

69. Wagner, op cit, p12.

70. Wagner, op cit, p12.

71. Chase, in JAE, op cit, p85.

72. This reference to creative use of manufacture's products refers to Gehry's Easy Edges furniture designs with corrugated cardboard, his Formica experimentation and his recent bentwood furniture. With Formica, Gehry was confronted with a piece of pristine plastic supplied by Formica to launch their new, manufacture-designed, product. Gehry physically shattered the pieces so that the boring homogenous material, once laden only with Formica's intentions, revealed other possibilities. He put it to structural use a series of furniture and accessories that Formica had never intended. Also included here are Gehry's initial use of chain link and industrial vernacular materials for domestic applications.



Venturi can also be used as an example for his acceptance of commercial vernacular methodologies in projects such as the Best showrooms. These acknowledge the places where manufactured materials and methods can be accepted relatively unquestioned, while other areas (the facade, entrance, or signage) require closer manipulation and design.

73. Foster, The Anti-Aesthetic, op cit, preface, page xii.

74. Foster, The Anti-Aesthetic, op cit, preface, page xi.

75. Klinkowitz, Peter Handke and the Post-modern Aesthetic, 1983, pp2-3.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE ARTIST'S RELATION TO PRODUCTION: THE DEBATE ON ARTISTIC METHOD OUTSIDE ARCHITECTURE.

#### 4.1 Introduction: Twentieth Century Political Use and Cultural Criticism of the Modern Vernacular affect Methods in Literature, Art and Consumer Culture.

Thus far in this thesis only architectural methods have been discussed. But indeed most of the debate concerning how to create within the modern vernacular of one's time has historically occurred outside the limits of strictly architectural theory. This because, as we have seen, the new developments of modern vernacular production do not depend on architectural production per se. In other words, it is not that new modes of production need to find their place in architectural theory, it is that architectural theory must find its place among these new processes. And since architectural methods cannot be found that exemplify ALL the progressive methods of action relative to the modern vernacular that have already occurred in the twentieth century, this chapter takes an interdisciplinary view of progressive methodologies.

How and where have other progressive methods taken place? Changes in politics, culture and technical production occur and bring about changes everyday life which often get picked up by art and literature and, at times, architecture.<sup>1</sup> For example, it is not arbitrary to begin

this chapter with an example of Theodor Adorno's theory of technology and artistic production. This because the previously discussed L.A. School architecture can be seen as a late-coming, regressive architectural method illustrating the lingering strains of Adorno's philosophy.

As a result of the experience of German fascism and American capitalism in the 1940's and 50's, Adorno asserted a thesis that, like the L.A. Schools' rejection of the modernist faith in technology, justified a total separation of artistic method from modern production methods.<sup>2</sup> He was not alone then, as now, with the L.A. School methods extant, in defending the tradition of autonomous art.<sup>3</sup>

This was a view of the modern vernacular as the rationality for human domination "per se". Adorno believed artistic technique is concerned with the intrinsic nature of any object with which it is involved, while productive technique is not. This lead him to go so far as to say that the "technification" of the work of art aimed at its abolition.<sup>4</sup> By holding onto the essential autonomy of the work of art in the face of modern modes of production, Adorno then, like the L.A. School today, excluded a priori the potential emergence of a new kind of art in which aesthetic form and modern methods could be successfully mediated.<sup>5</sup> Other methods in literature and art, to be discussed here, did not hold this view.

Adorno was correct about the pitfalls and dangers of the USE of new modes of production like the electronic

media, film and radio. To the extreme right German fascism provided him a disturbing example of the modern propaganda tool.<sup>6</sup> Technological advance was often used to legitimize bourgeois domination in capitalist economies.<sup>7</sup> New modes HAD been used politically and with negative impact.

But while Adorno was drawing on his historical experiences, writer Bertolt Brecht and critic Walter Benjamin were drawing on theirs. They had already responded to developments in the Weimar Republic through the 1920's and 30's (including the German Werkbund already discussed, and German Dada, to be discussed) with their own position in this debate. The respective historical differences between Adorno and Brecht & Benjamin influenced their rejection or acceptance, respectively, of modern forms of production into artistic method.

Brecht and Benjamin saw in the mass produced methods then evolving rapidly in Germany a way in which artistic production could come into the fold of the modern methods.<sup>8</sup> Their critique began with an understanding that new technologies penetrate art to finally abolish the myth of autonomy altogether. Particularly Benjamin articulated that what is lost in the age of mass production is the aura of the work of art itself.<sup>9</sup> But to these two men -- Brecht as a writer who put this into practice and Benjamin as a critic -- this did not appear, as it did to Adorno, irreconcilable with continued artistic creation. Rather it required that the artist consider and alter the new conditions for

producing distributing and receiving art.<sup>10</sup>

To Benjamin and Brecht, the ultimate criterion for the success of a work of art was no longer the perfected work as a fetishized object, but rather its EFFECT upon the modes of production in its society.<sup>11</sup> The perfected work, the purist, modern work was not key. They conceptualized the artist not as creator but as producer and technician who would do more than just deliver his works to the productive apparatus which would then market and distribute them. The production of critical art was not sufficient unless accompanied by the attempt of the artist-producer to change the apparatus of distribution and production itself.<sup>12</sup> And importantly for the discussions of method below, their critique DID NOT say the artist must continue to create only by dealing with the intrinsic materiality of the object. Thus they did not accept that the artist's sensibilities need always be different than those of the forces of production, as did Adorno, and saw no problems of technique. The progressive effect of the work upon the society in which it finds itself is what counts.<sup>13</sup>

The work of Brecht illustrates a method that welcomes this critique. He exemplifies artistic production that tolerates its technification. He welcomed the invasion of media technology into the sacrosanct sphere of "high" literature and theater. Thus his own theory and practice of the learning play and epic theater are discussed below as the experiments in method that they were.<sup>14</sup>

The leftist critique of Benjamin's writing informed large segments of the avant-garde from Dada to World War II.<sup>15</sup> But after World War II (as discussed in chapter 2 and as Huyssen notes in The Technological Imagination) the achievements of the pre-World War II modernists have been bastardized and heavily distorted by being subject mainly to formalist and intrinsic approaches.<sup>16</sup> Thus the post-war methods from other artistic disciplines discussed here are much more progressive than the late modern architectural method seen in chapter 2. These interdisciplinary methods transcend the modernist and Marxist belief in the emancipatory power of technology, and at the same time steer clear of any demonization or worship of it as a dictator of "pure form" and/or an autonomous force.<sup>17</sup> Rather they are examples that take technology, their modern vernacular methods, and even consumer culture, as the non-partisan givens of their milieu. (Here I am referring to the literature of Peter Handke, the lineage in art after Duchamp, and current creative consumers discussed in this chapter.)

Their methods exemplify just how it has evolved in late-consumer society that the realm of the artist exists out in the sphere of pure consumption, yet he can progressively affect the modes of production. Knowingly without an inclination nor the ability to accept OR reject the modern modes of production of their time, they treat the modern vernacular only as the given tool that it is. The

change that is attempted in all these examples is to alter the artistic methods themselves, not the greater, more enduring forces of production in which these methods find themselves. Their goal is artistic production, and, as each is successful in the end, their methods are instructive to the formulation of an architectural method.

The artist as producer, albeit radically redefined since Benjamin's conception and purpose for it, remains.

#### 4.2 Interdisciplinary Progressive Methodologies

Examples for creating within the modern vernacular come from:

1. Literature: Bertolt Brecht and Peter Handke.
2. Art: since Manet: Dada, Duchamp, Rauschenberg, Pop, Kelley.

and,

3. Consumer Culture: Inner city and a disenfranchised generation.

##### 4.2.1 Literature

Bertolt Brecht: the operative Modern critique.<sup>1</sup> Bertolt

Brecht wrote the satirical poem 700 Intellectuals

Worshipping an Oiltank as a parody of the rampant worship of technology towards the end of the stabilization phase of the

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<sup>1</sup> In analyzing Brecht's method here, it is noted that his approach is consummate with the greater authority relative to manufacture thought desirable under pre-war modernist, and indeed Marxist, beliefs. But as he neither demonized nor worshiped it, he was able to outline a progressive methodology in his own profession.

Weimar Republic in 1929. In this poem Brecht attacked the cult of technology epidemic among writers and artists in Germany, as it was indeed widespread in most industrialized countries.<sup>18</sup> But unlike Adorno, his concern was not to salvage high art from the encroachments of technology and mass culture. Brecht did not attack the intellectuals for taking an interest in the oiltank. His satire aimed rather at the transformation of the oiltank into an object of worship and mystification.<sup>19</sup>

Brecht attacked the ideological function of the technology cult because he was convinced the artist could learn from new media, not that new media would "control" the artist. Transformation was to occur, in Brecht's formulation, at the artist's method of producing art itself, and it would tolerate that transformation.

He introduced the concept of: *Umfunktionierung*: Functional Transformation, to refer to this. Brecht was the first to make of artists and intellectuals the far reaching demand not to supply the materials of production without first changing it, the best one could, in accordance to the way society at the time could use it.<sup>20</sup> Brecht wrote that artistic "works ought no longer to be individual experiences (have the character of works) but should, rather, concern the use (transformation) of certain institutes and institutions." <sup>21</sup>

What were these institutions that contain the "typical materials of production"? For a modernist writer this



referred to the emerging industrial methods that should be put to use by an artist. At the time, theater was in effect falling behind newer forms of disseminating artistic work, as a result of the ability of film and radio to put new industrial processes to good use. For theater to move forward, Brecht did not suggest a spiritual renewal, a new authenticity nor a new form of representation, as the L.A. School proclaims in architecture, rather he suggested technical innovations.<sup>22</sup>

The regressive theater, art and music Brecht saw floundering in their attempts to compete with film and radio, were those that attempted to bedazzle the viewer. They often turned their use of modern vernacular processes into elaborate works full of "new" things; machines, contraptions, used as props to create an artistic illusion. Brecht's crucial observation was that such work used the apparently well-tried apparatus at their disposal, but in reality did nothing but supply a derelict one. "The lack of clarity about their situation that prevails among musicians, writers, and critics," says Brecht, "has immense consequences that are far too little considered. For thinking they are in possession of an apparatus that in reality possesses them, they defend an apparatus over which they no longer have any control and that is no longer, as they still believe, a means for the producers, but has become a means against the producers." <sup>23</sup>

The theater popular in his time employed complicated

machinery and gigantic supporting staffs to pull-off the effects its writers had in mind. Indeed, this theater BEGAN with a "desired effect", and, only after that effect was established, employed ANY means -- extensive labor and contraptions -- to "pull-it-off". Referred to as dramatic theater, this was theater not only where the ends justify the means, but where the ends (desired effects) have NO relation to the means (elaborate apparatus). While these means were put to good use in the emergent film and radio industries, Brecht was quick to point out this theater could not find the proper attitude to put new technology to a similar good use. Thus the sophisticated effects become the "means against the producers" to which Brecht refers.

Again the L.A. School is the architectural parallel to this. It is not a great leap to make the translation of Brecht's criticism of dramatic theater to the conditions of architectural production. Both dramatic theater and the L.A. School require considerable artistic effort and an expensive company of workers to align the desired effects with what can technically be "pulled-off". Actors, new technology and modern materials are analogous here as the "materials" of the architect or the writer. The L.A. School, as has been shown, tries to mold modern materials to fit the representational concepts of the architect (dead tech, etc...) in the same way that actors and new technology of dramatic theater were always subservient to the a priori "desired effects" the writer wished to represent. And the

presence of "materials" being so forced to play a pre-determined role, regardless of the role already fashioned for them by manufacturer's and their society, is common to these forms of derelict architectural and theatrical production.<sup>2</sup>

So what was Brecht's method that counteracted the derelict one of dramatic theater?

First, his was a theater that did not attempt to compete with the newer modes of dissemination of an artist's work, like film and radio, by creating bedazzling effects. And secondly, concerning man's relation to new technologies: factory work, industrial production and the alienation of the worker therein, he did not create elaborate plots and fictive stories. He did not dream up modern machine nightmares to be played out on stage (like the L.A. School architect creates fictional nightmares of post-holocaustal doom to be represented in building).

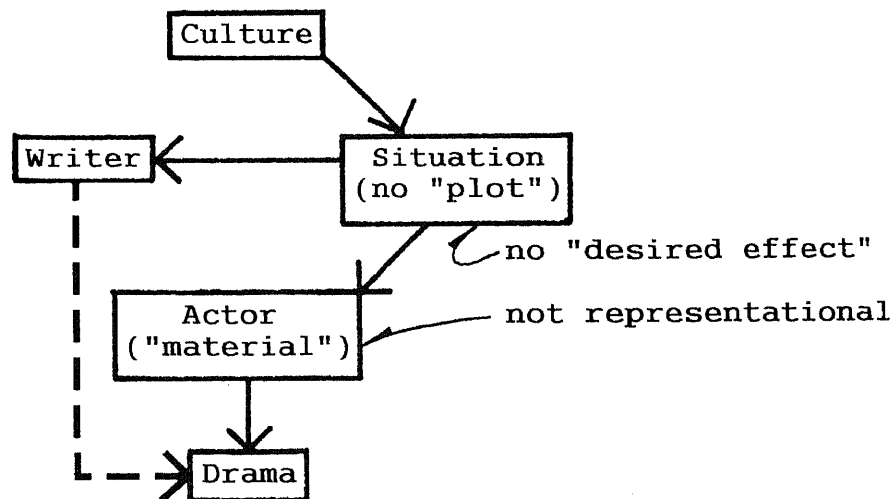
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<sup>2</sup> Eric Moss explains his own struggle to get things built in this way: "The buildings I've done are expensive because of their labor costs. In order to make the form, the object, you find some cheap material, so you can afford the labor." (Moss, Eric Owen Moss, Architectural Monograph #29, London, Academy Editions, NY, 1993, p.11) It is clear that the object, its pre-determined form, precedes consideration of the material issue in this method. Even more convincingly, Peter Cook explains Morphosis' design method in the Rizzoli biography as the process "of discussing architecture, explaining architecture, refining the discussion, refining the model, explaining the model, and then, (his emphasis) but only then, stretching and twisting the methodology..." so that "... the idiosyncracies are deliberately created as well as absorbed." (Morphosis, buildings and projects, Peter Cook, George Rand, Rizzoli, NY, 1989. p9 and 13.) These deliberately created idiosyncracies have clearly become the 1990's "means against the producers" equivalent to 1920's dramatic theater's "gigantic supporting staff" and "sophisticated effects".

Like the progressive acceptance of new modes of manufacture for an architect, Brecht sought to use and learn from new modes of production by having each work enter into a debate with them. This debate is what Brecht used to replace any "desired effect". With no a priori intentions, Brecht's was a theater (referred to as "epic theater") that left him in no position to become enslaved by technique, as were his contemporaries. When compared to the current state of film and radio in his time, Brecht's epic theater was THE contemporary form of theater.<sup>24</sup>

The ability to diagram Brecht's form of theater reveals it's usefulness as a method -- a translatable example of artistic activity, rather than a style:

Diagram 4.1 Brecht methodology diagram



Brecht dispensed with plot. He replaces this with what he called "situations" that explicate those real situations modern man finds, himself, in the modern vernacular. He did

not greatly affect these situations or his actors. To keep his writing (and his actors) secondary to the situations, he gave little stage or "character" directions. Situations AND actors were to come to the stage as the were.<sup>25</sup>

And so here is an important analogy between Brecht's method and architecture. Actors were Brecht's "materials", that he allowed to represent nothing but themselves. And actors merely "present" or "display" situations. Governing this was his "wish to move the theatrical spectator away from empathy or identification with the play's characters"

<sup>26</sup> It was fruitless for him to "affect" or alter their emotions and characterizations, for they will act, despite his yea or nay. Brecht didn't tamper with them so that the viewer can focus on his debate about the modern vernacular. This is akin to a progressive architect's approach: manufactured materials exist, with the dominance of the manufacturer and their prescribed aesthetics, despite our yea or nay. As Venturi said, "they are what we have...because architects do not have the power to replace them, nor do they know what to replace them with". Like actors, it can be fruitless to "affect" or alter them once manufacture and their culture have already done so. There remains plenty of room for creative action, as Brecht found, to enter into debate with them, for originality is more a matter of new relationships between known things than of pure invention.<sup>27</sup> There is plenty of room for an architect OR a writer to create "drama" when he combines, juxtaposes

and arranges the vernacular materials intelligently.<sup>3</sup>

Continuing to speak of theater AND architecture simultaneously, such work is not about drawing out the beauty or qualities of the actors (or materials) but about the common "situations" (modern vernacular) in which they are found. And the downplay of detailed control of the materials (or actors) allows the spectator, too, to arouse his own capacity for action.

And activating the viewer is important to Brecht. His situations were not novel, but to be so familiar to the spectator that he could begin to reflect more deeply on them. It marks a contrast to the dramatic theater's "wearing down of the spectator's capacity to act". To outline this and other contrasts with dramatic theater, Brecht laid down a set of notes that indicate the change in emphasis between dramatic theater and the epic theater he was trying to establish.<sup>28</sup> This comparison, replicated below, still serves as a clear description of the differences between merely supplying productive materials and transforming them.

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<sup>3</sup> This is precisely what Brecht did in his best work of situational theater: Mother Courage, The Measures Taken, and Three-Penny Novel.

Dramatic Theater

## Plot

Implicates the spectator  
in a stage situation

Wears down his capacity  
for action

Provides him with sensations  
decisions

## Experience

The spectator is involved  
in something

## Suggestion

Instinctive feelings  
are preserved

The spectator is in the thick  
of it, shares the experience

The human being is taken  
object  
for granted

He is unalterable  
to

Eyes on the finish

One scene makes another

Growth

Linear development

Evolutionary determinism

Man as a fixed point

Thought determines being

Feeling

Epic Theater

## Narrative

Turns the spectator into  
an observer, but:

Arouses his capacity  
for action

Forces him to make

## Picture of the world

The spectator is made  
to face something

## Argument

Brought to the point  
of recognition

The spectator stands  
outside, studies

The human being is the  
of the inquiry

He is alterable and able  
alter

Eyes on the course

Each scene for itself

Montage

In curves

Jumps

Man as a process

Social being determines  
thought

Reason

(Many aspects of a recombinant architecture, when  
opposed to the L.A. School, are similarly compared in my

translation of this chart in chapter 5.<sup>29</sup>) In literature, post-modern examples of a progressive methodologies soon followed Brecht. Of these, the writing and drama of Peter Handke speaks most to the methodology of working to affect the modern vernacular materials of one's time.

Peter Handke: the operative post-modern critique. The use of, abuse of, and our being used by the central material of communication -- language -- is the post-modern writer Peter Handke's main concern. It is through this that he is able to ask important questions: How are we what we are? What is our relationship to the structure of the modern world? As Peter Handke is a writer, he explores these questions with his primary tool: language. To remain focused on this, he quite often eliminates plot as did Brecht, and has gone so far as to present theater that also that requires no actors. His fiction contains little characterization. Rather, characters are defined by the way they speak and by the way they interpret what others are saying. In short; by the way they relate to official and vernacular language; be it that of their culture, their town, their government, their clique or their own family.

Autonomous processes of industry that began in Brecht's era and concerned him have more completely taken hold by the time of Handke's post-modern work.<sup>4</sup> His fiction and

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<sup>4</sup> His career begins with an address at Princeton, to the literary association *Group 47* in 1965.



theater expose a debate not unlike Brecht's -- but this time concerning language and language alone -- to the extent they take on the "experimental" nature and single-minded concern for modern problems that Brecht had. For Handke the emphasis is the way in which autonomous processes have effected our very language. Large bodies (governments and corporations) have created such things as double-speak and official jargon that rephrase reality (i.e. "friendly fire", "casualty", and "physically challenged"), oxymoronic language, (i.e. "virtually spotless", and "fresh frozen") especially in advertising, has gone unchallenged, and personal and regional groups create their own, all contributing to a central post-modern condition: the displacement of the real, signified things.<sup>30</sup>

In his work, Handke writes as one who is often himself extremely puzzled by his own culture's use and abuse of language. He indeed entered the literary world as one nauseated by "pre-determined"<sup>5</sup> language as the hero in Sartre's Nausea is by things. But for post-modern sensibilities, this state is a given, and is the necessary beginning of consciousness for one who wishes to function, none-the-less create, in the modern vernacular of his profession.<sup>31</sup>

In a similar way, an architect can be puzzled and even nauseated by the prescribed aesthetics and the displacement

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<sup>5</sup> "Pre-determined" language is to be taken as Handke's equivalent to the "pre-aesthetized" materials of manufacture.

of the signified things that results from unaided manufacture's use of materials. The parallel that will be drawn in discussing Handke here is between an architect's materials and a writer's language.

What modernists such as T.S. Eliot and Thomas Mann mourned as the death of the meaning, the post-modernist writer such as Handke celebrate as the birth of writing. Able to use only provisional, referential language, not what it signifies, Handke is not put off by this. Importantly his reaction to those disturbing conditions that are part of our society is to meddle with the people, places and things that proliferate them. He does not ignore, regret, or work outside this mess, rather this is his sticking point to developing any meaningful literature.<sup>32</sup>

For the pre-determined use of language, like manufactured material, is "extant" today. It is a pre-condition whose rules and flexibility must be tested as we find them. On this point progressive artists stand alone from those that acknowledge these conditions but do little to affect -- or even find -- their root causes.

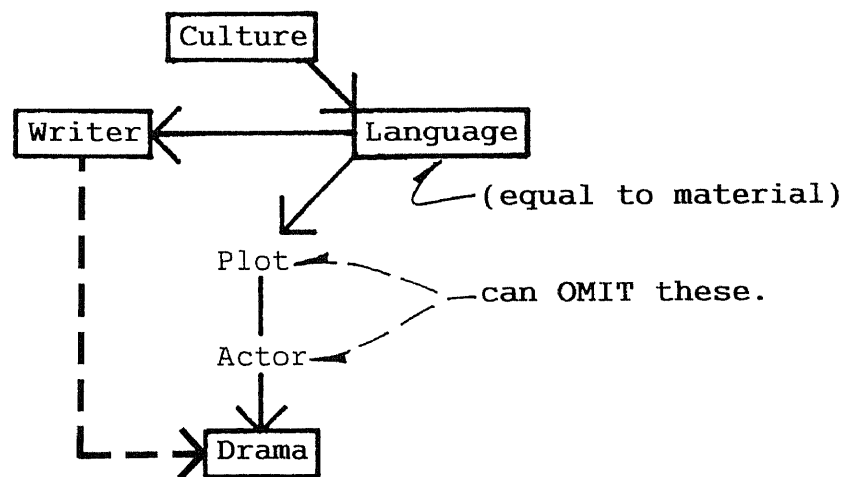
Handke's techniques include often placing words of disputable meaning in "italics", thus separating them from the things not in question. This is to call attention to the dilemma a protagonist might have; such as constantly misinterpreting the intended meanings of others. He'll frequently use socially accepted "givens" of language to ends other than those intended. He'll employ repetition to

render meaningless disputed words and meanings. And he'll "expose" abuses of language through the use of knowingly designed constructions that defeat meanings with which he doesn't agree.

He has been able, in successive works, to focus on what portions of language an artist, a writer, can and cannot influence. Some of his techniques are to eliminate dialogue between the cast of a play, and rather direct it all towards the audience. In his Offending the Audience, the typical form of dialogue is objectified. Rather, random phrases are spoken out to the audience; thus he is able to see, mock, and get out from underneath the usual form. Self-Accusation is a fictional piece in which Handke succinctly chronicles a man's inability to comprehend the "manufactured", pre-existing meaning of the language of others throughout the stages of his life. The reader slowly becomes aware of the central issue; that language pre-defines our world, steers us through it, and forces us to adopt it. Kaspar is a stage piece in which a man of inferior intellect is none-the-less "taught" how one is to use language, only to subsequently be destroyed by the language so "taught". It describes one "experiment" on one sub-par man, but is surprisingly not unlike the typical, seemingly less-controlled way in which we learn to communicate as architects: being taught a system of graphic communication with great detail and elaboration that can, when not relevant to our society, be the sole means of own failure.

In the novel Slow Homecoming, a character's own peace with the physical world is gained only through his drawing completely subjective graphic representations of it. This is his condition despite the fact that he is completely at home classifying things in his highly objective profession as a geologist. In A Ride Across Lake Constantine, interpersonal and conversational language is brought to the level of farce. From simple situations arise reversals of meaning and complex misunderstandings between characters. Only their estrangement from their common tools, the language they themselves use, can result.

Diagram 4.2 Handke Methodology Diagram



In Handke's method both plot and actor can be omitted to allow the work to concentrate solely on language: the "material" of his work. And although he negates many things, like the usual elements of conflict between characters or within a protagonist, he is always able to create something: drama. In this drama he forces upon our

consciousness the tension that arises from a sense of a stricken, debilitated human capacity to communicate at the hands of modern language. It is a condition we constantly protect ourself against in order to make it manageable, but Handke forces us to see it.<sup>33</sup> This had its counterpart in Robert Venturi in architecture at about the same time. Venturi sensed the architect's "debilitated capacity to communicate" at the hands of pure form modernism, or the International Style. He established this position in Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture, 1966, and began to research vernacular things that DID communicate through Learning from Levittown and Learning From Las Vegas, 1972.

Thus in considering both Handke and Venturi simultaneously, I can explicate this struggle to create, (for the analogous terms are always used in the same sense) as it exists for the writer to the architect:

The struggle of a creator is to use words/materials in a way to make something with which he agrees; to create a story/built form solely under HIS control. However, these words/materials already contain meaning (pre-definitions/pre-aesthetics) due to the individual creator entering "situationally" into a larger process. Thus both the realms of language and material hold the possibility of being nauseating or confusing to the creator.

The existing meanings of even the smallest parts a given profession can become problematic. This is a dilemma

to the extent that, if he were to use a "style" with its own fixed system of arrangement, the creator can become argumentative and debilitated by the clash of that system and the reality of existing meanings in his trade. This to the extent that a coherent story or built form cannot be completed until he first works-out his problematic relationship to the existing "things".

Hence a story or built form dealing with this problematic relationship deals with the inner conflicts between the creator and his "tools". The chief revelation of the creation is to uncover truths about the words/materials themselves, and reflect on our own ability to create with them.

In such a method, the writer feels he is operated upon, as much as he operates with, language.<sup>34</sup> So too, a progressive architect must operate WITH the modern vernacular as much as it operates upon him. Handke elaborates on this, saying:

"People fail to realize that literature is made with language, and not with the things that are described with language"<sup>35</sup>

For an architect I can restate this as:

"People fail to realize that architecture is made with materials, and not with the things that are represented by those materials."

#### 4.2.2 Art

There is an etymology in the fine arts that has dealt with the modern vernacular as a central and defining conditions

of society more directly and more timely than in other disciplines. The fine art of the twentieth century has more quickly come to terms with modern methods, and so its examples are more familiar and well-known. They define a more consistent evolution of creative thought about the vernacular. One can begin at least with Manet on this point.<sup>36</sup> But in the interest of maintaining the materialist analysis of concern in this essay, I will concentrate on an etymology wholly within the twentieth century. I will look closely once we arrive at the materialist analysis of culture Walter Benjamin recognized in his time as progressive -- Dada -- and end with a current artist: Mike Kelley.

To look for the influence of mass production in twentieth century art, we have to first look for the introduction of an icon of mass production -- the "sign" -- into painting. As a quick, pictorial image, a sign is a command whose message comes all at once, and means only one thing. This is a foreign concept in a once-pastoral art world. So while the Industrial Revolution began to appear in landscape paintings in late nineteenth century -- factories in the field -- the sign found its way into art latter.<sup>37</sup>

This happened after 1910 with Cubism, specifically its use of lettering and newsprint and iconic parts of objects - like a guitar's fret -- that could stand for the whole.<sup>38</sup> After World War I the true home of the quick message, the

mass produced rhetoric of an emerging mass culture, was New York. And an artist located there would be inundated with this to the extent that it could become his total subject matter. Initially this was Joseph Stella in the teens and twenties. By 1920 he was painting only the lingo of the streets and the Brooklyn Bridge.<sup>39</sup> After Stella, and prior to World War II in America, there was only Stuart Davis. He painted his images of mass culture from the 1920's through the 50's.<sup>40</sup> Davis' images of five-and-dime items and the signs of mass culture were on their own in America until around 1955, when others did enter this realm, but for a different reason.

The Dadaists in Europe, however, had known since the nineteen-teens and twenties, that modern subjects could be found basically anywhere. And to focus on just one aspect of the movement, the Dada subject was found in seemingly unimportant objects, the language of the printer, the journalist and film, and everyday things, made by the thousands, everyday.<sup>41</sup> "Let us think back to Dadaism," Benjamin writes, "the revolutionary strength of Dadaism consisted of testing art for where its authenticity lies. (Look at their) still-lives: put together from tickets, spools of cotton, (and) cigarette butts...linked with painted elements. The whole thing is put in a frame. And thereby the public was shown: look, your picture frame ruptures time; the tiniest authentic fragment of daily life says more than painting. Just as the bloody fingerprints of



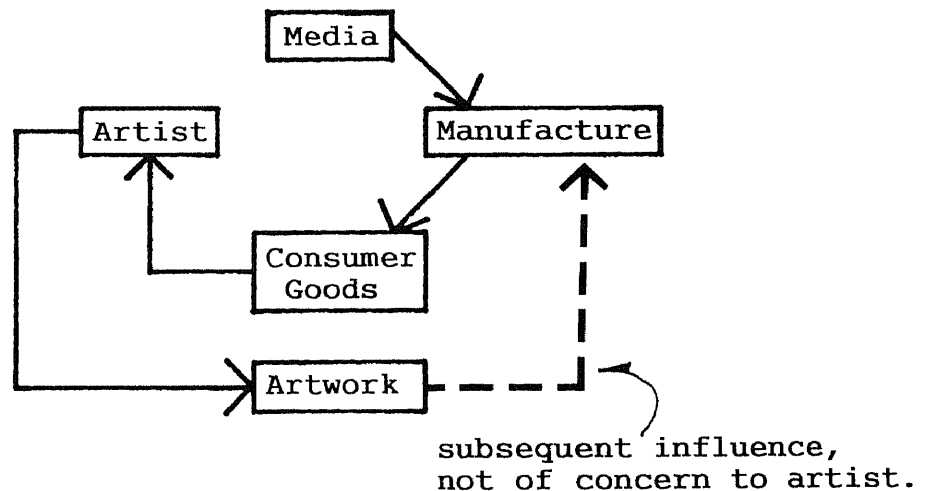
a murderer on the pages of a book says more than the text."  
42

While this was at the same time interpreted as making art meaningless by portraying meaningless things, Dada also served the development, since Manet, of a realistic art rooted in the present time.<sup>43</sup> Dada could not say anything about the creations of modern production without at least saying: 'How interesting it is in its own right!', or that 'mass-produced minutiae can have more significance than an heroic, or an Expressionist's, inward-looking work of art'.<sup>44</sup> Dada began to display objects of production for what were initially ancillary traits: their ability to communicate life to many people. Thus began the free transcendence, by Dadaists and then Duchamp, of the arbitrary boundaries of specialization in the processes in production. An artist could illicit the meaning, where no manufacture had tried to inscribe it, from even a specialized object. Boundaries that, to the traditional artist made the manufactured world so reproachable, so unworthy of investigation, so "non-art", were now opened. This was possible with those cultural artifacts that everyone shared; in other words mass produced, cheap, everyday things. These were now the things that "everyone could agree upon", at least to the extent that they do carry a singular meaning and everyone could afford them.

This was not lost on Marcel Duchamp. He was acutely aware that the world was already filled with "interesting

objects", and the artist need not add to them to make art. Thus the "readymades": "common things like a snow shovel, a bicycle wheel, or a rack for drying bottles, which he exhibited as objects devoid of aesthetic interest, but classified, by context, as "art". His Fountain of 1917, a porcelain urinal was the most aggressive of these.<sup>45</sup> (Figure 4.1, 4.2) Its simple transformation from intended use, (that which society constitutes as its usefulness) to some other use -- even art -- pointed out the specialization in the mass-produced process. What Duchamp proposed with his readymades, instead of an heroic or hands-on method for creating art, was that the artist just "pick" an object, and that "this ironic act was equivalent to creation -- a choice of mind rather than of hand."<sup>46</sup>

Diagram 4.3 Duchamp Methodology Diagram

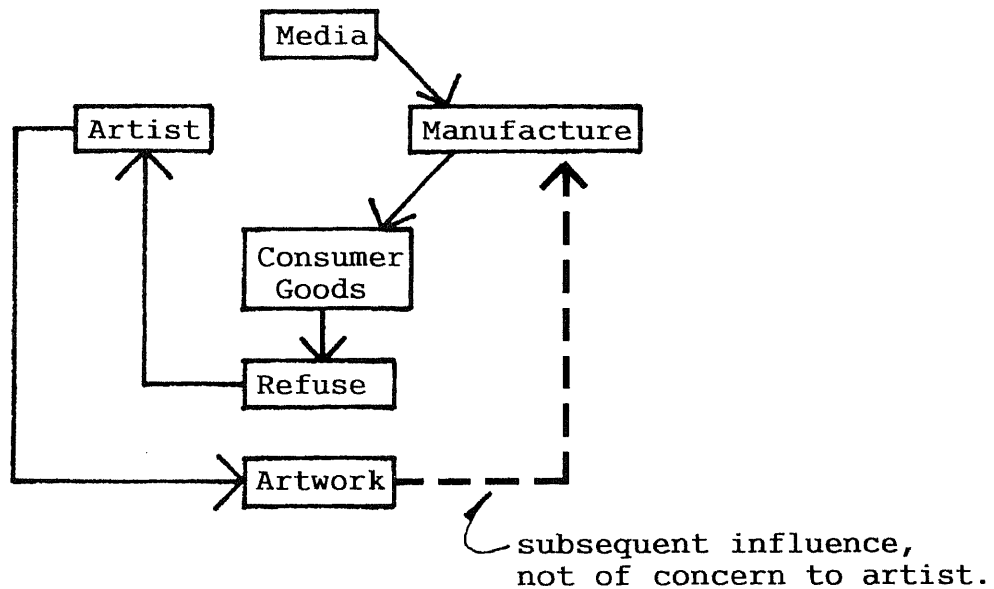


During the 1950's, some American artists began to realize, but from a different vantage point, what Duchamp

and the Dadaists in Europe had known about three decades before: it seemed that with mass production abundance and consumption meant disposability, not durability: replacement, not maintenance. The New York City dump testified to the fact that Manhattan threw away more manufactured goods in a week than eighteenth-century France produced in a year. American artists in the 1950's realized that modern subjects could be found in the landscape of waste, the language of junk; that the true nature of the modern vernacular was revealing itself in what it threw away.<sup>47</sup> Among them was one budding master, Robert Rauschenberg.

What Rauschenberg saw in the refuse of mass culture was its complete kit of parts. The modern vernacular was still completely present even in its trash, through which he picked, to furnish the entire palette for his art. His combines, as his assemblages were called, were full of irony and puns as were Duchamp's works.<sup>48</sup> (Figure 4.3, 4.4) A walk around the streets of New York City could supply him with everything he needed. He adjusted Duchamp's methodology diagram in only a subtle way:

Diagram 4.4 Rauschenberg Methodology Diagram



By the 1950's, Duchamp's and the Rauschenberg's methods of operation had become the prototype for the art of entropy.<sup>49</sup> The works of Duchamp, Rauschenberg and Jasper Johns became the most liberating forces to a general reaction in the 1960's against the "post-painterly", well made, canvas painting. To continue to focus on the modern vernacular of mass culture is where Claus Oldenburg, and Andy Warhol, and Pop Art worked. Warhol of course could exploit it to encompass his entire life and persona, beyond the mere works.

While with Rauschenberg it was still possible to communicate with simple found things discovered on a stroll around the block, with Pop art we come closer to the conditions of mass culture we face today: dealing with things we are force-fed to "find" everyday -- the new but "junky" mass produced products of consumer culture. For

although it is a world of ever "new" things, much of it we naively discover to be junk immediately after a second look. These are still the most common, interesting, revealing and communicative things available.

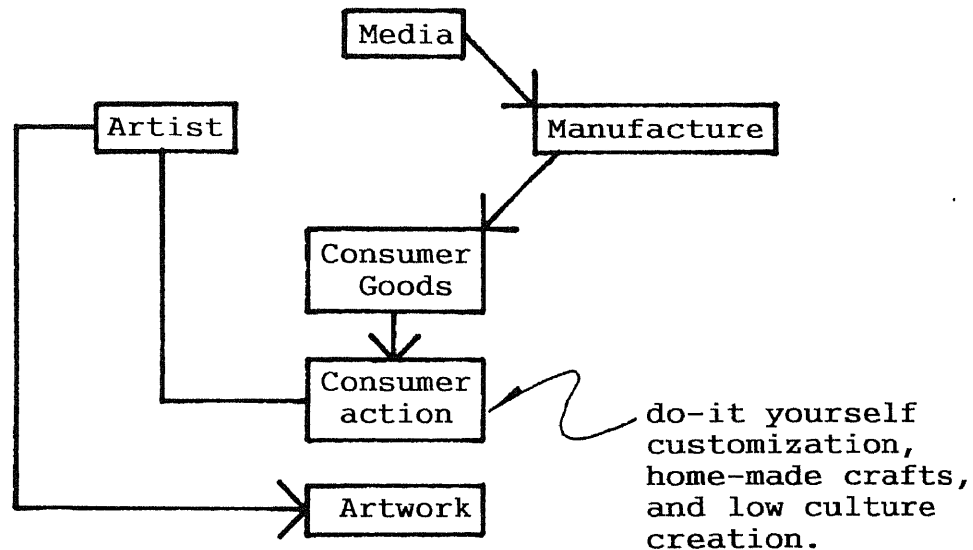
However, in our day they are the things being mercilessly planted at our feet, everywhere we turn, by a consumer culture that WANTS us to "find" them, of course, buy them. The effect of this on creating art was well described by Lawrence Alloway in 1959, the critic who first used the phrase "Pop art". In terms of materials and technique, he said:

"Mass production techniques, applied to accurately repeatable words, pictures, and music, have resulted in an expendable multitude of signs and symbols. To approach this exploding field with Renaissance-based ideas of the uniqueness of art is crippling."  
"Acceptance of the mass media entails a shift in our notion of what culture is."<sup>50</sup>

Accordingly, Rauschenberg incorporated into his work of the 1960's no longer the discarded object, but "found images" from TV and advertising, useless or "refuse" only in their excess and over-exposure. (Figure 4.5) These were the images too, of Warhol and Lichtenstein and Pop.

Today, a further pursuit of this topic can be found in the work of the current artist Mike Kelley. And what is the development with Kelley? He continues a discourse between the art and the non-art world, subtly picking up on another minor shift in the methodology diagram now seen to be evolving from Duchamp to Rauschenberg to him:

Diagram 4.5 Kelley Methodology Diagram



With his LHOOQ in 1919, Duchamp once satirized the middle-brow cult of art and its tendency to raise the great dead artists to the posthumously appointed role as a divine creator.<sup>51</sup> With his Fountain, 1917, any given consumer good of the middle-class could become art. Rauschenberg found "refuse" as the second stage of life for consumer goods. For artist Mike Kelley, his look at consumer goods becomes infected with a nuance specific to our time. He does not explore the slick, newest-thing-out consumer goods: those Madison Avenue creations Pop once exploited. Instead it is the things "not for sale", (outside of bargain basements and second hand stores) that he depicts. Kelley's art investigates a predominant sub-culture of late capitalism: the things supposedly developed "outside" Madison Avenue's commodifying grip, and finds them to carry various traits of mass-production and prescribed aesthetics in their own

right.

He finds home-made stuffed animals, Sunday school, arts-n-crafts felt banners with cheerful messages, afghan tapestries home-knitted, none-the-less, to the directions of mass produced patterns, and workshop "how-to" and "do-it-yourself" diagrams and books by Time-Life Inc. The "do-it-yourself" books, for example, were created for the "home-owner" to "beat those Madison Avenue types at their own game". And so Kelley explores John Q. Public's home workbench approach. He builds the actual contraptions (a birdhouse, a kneading board, a picnic table), as well as creates amusing satires of them with the requisite home improvement store materials. (Figures 4.6, 4.7, 4.8, 4.9, 4,10, 4.11)

The workaday man's home workbench approach, like the arts-n-crafty felt banners with friendly sayings, attempt to circumnavigate actually buying the consumer goods of the modern vernacular. But the home-made birdhouse and felt banner are found to be permeated none-the-less with the same telling traits of mass culture, and Kelley merely satirizes these. The real creators of these objects, consumers, are found to be limited in their choices for making their supposedly "custom" things. And their imagination, their ability to think creatively, seems significantly curbed by the pervasive afterimages of all those modern vernacular goods they apparently repudiate to create their own. Their home-made results sometimes only willfully replicate (in

materials and method) what Madison Avenue continues to create at equivalent or superior price and quality. Things they could have bought completed, off-the-shelf, at a fair price, in the first place.<sup>52</sup>

The way in which modern vernacular methods have thus permeated our entire culture is different and more pervasive than in the time of early modern architecture, Dada, Duchamp, late modern architecture, Venturi and even Gehry.

As Benjamin speculated, the best we can hope for is a directing effect in our creative work. We can no longer act as the early modern architects did, for with expanded methods and our limited knowledge of them, there is no basis to a claim that we are more sensitive to the nature of "raw" materials than are manufacturers.<sup>53</sup>

Thus this look at fine art has taught that we work with raw materials in only a secondary way, focused on creating from within the process of the modern vernacular, not at the origins of materials. In all the fine art diagrams, the actual source of "raw" materials is now secondary to the way in which the artist acts within the vernacular process of his culture. Progressive methods have evolved to the point where they function aware that there is no longer a notion of anything being "undesignated" or "uncommodified" when both the "discarded object" AND the "do-it-yourself" object are themselves commodities.

The only distinction that remains is that, for some reason, some pre-aestheticized, new objects of manufacture



are still rejected or ignored by high culture. This marks, de facto, the distinction between high art and low art today.

But why would certain products of the modern vernacular be determined to be "below" high art? What would determine that they are to be off-limits to them? Cannot art and creativity affect ALL commodities of the modern vernacular equally?

In the interest of proving that there is no demarcation as to where the creator's effects can be felt even when working in only a secondary way in the processes of the modern vernacular, the following section describes consumers who have no intention to create "high art" at all. Those discussed below manage to function in some way progressively within the modern vernacular process, to influence modern modes of production.

#### 4.2.3 Consumer Culture

Fredric Jameson asserts that we live in a consumer society that renders opposition difficult.<sup>54</sup> He refers to a general powerlessness to affect actual (signified) "things" of our society. We have choices indeed, but the powerless Jameson describes refers who controls what gets produced and why. In a consumer society, consumers merely select "from among a pre-determined system of differences" that alter a "signifier", not the core of the thing signified, or "chosen". By paying for any number of options and upgrades

"offered" by the maker, they do not significantly alter the objects they acquire. As well there is no apparent rhyme or reason to the actions of choosing.<sup>55</sup>

This description of consumer society I will not debate. It has already been discussed as a source for the L.A. School architects in chapter 3, although they had not found a progressive method to work within it. The best methods for meaningful action, given the consumer's limited capacities, come from those with very limited financial resources: those with little of the currency required to make and pay for the extensive choices under the system of differences consumer society provides.

For without means to participate in the choosing of pre-aestheticized options and upgrades, these groups must consume in creative and unexpected ways, and in so doing, discover their power to affect the core of the things they CAN afford in ways that high culture never thinks to do.

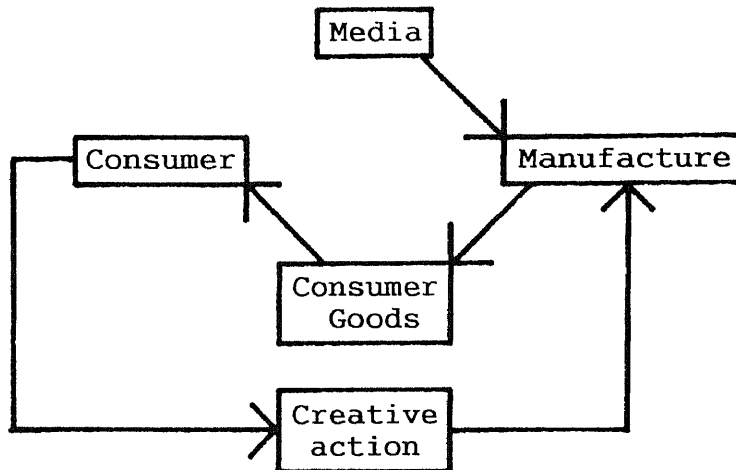
The most adroit consumers have the smallest amount of resources to procure just what it is they "want". Two of these groups today are marginal -- disenfranchised -- in our society because of what they can't afford to buy: (1) a generation coming of age in the 1990's, post-Reagan, post 1980's greed years, and, (2) creative consumers in the isolated and depressed economy of an American inner city: they are (1) Generation X, and (2) certain inner city consumers.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> These are just two examples of other consumers who have acted similarly within consumer society already. Although not the first to do so, Reyner Banhan notes such action as the work of

What do they do? They distort the intentions of the manufacturer to such an extent as to force a reinterpretation of his products on the producer. They begin only after the purchase of the cheapest, most fettered-down types, and develop customization techniques that affect (are picked-up and co-opted often without credit by) manufacture:

Diagram 4.6 Creative Consumer Methodology Diagram



Since they cannot consider paying for upgrades that determine an object to be "high end", they customize their own purchases. Those who CAN afford to choose upgrades from among manufacturer's system of differences see no appeal in this customizing approach. They are the high culture then,

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1960's California automobile, skateboard and surfboard customization effecting the manufacturer's of their trade, as relevant to Los Angeles architecture in his Los Angeles, The Architecture of Four Ecologies, Harper & Row, NY, 1971, pp47-9 and 221-2. The inner city culture and generation X today are merely representative examples of those earlier aftermarket attempts that affect the making of things.

and to high culture consumption of no-frills and off-price goods means low culture (until the GAP came along), and base functioning in consumer society.

Not so to the creative, disenfranchised consumer. On this point the disenfranchised aftermarket artist can transfer more influence to manufacture than all the buying power of the affluent. Their customizations and unexpected uses are themselves filtered back through the manufacture of goods to appear as traits of future products. That is the yield of the disenfranchised action. (It is also an example of low culture leading high. Clearly, what low culture has found at cut-rate prices and re-made to their own specifications or put to new use will be re-sold as "high-end" the next manufactured go-around.) They indeed define the nature of the signifying object to a greater extent than those who can afford to, and do, chose from among manufacturer's pre-determined system of differences because low culture's "differences" are at once products of their own invention taken up by manufacture. (Figure 4.12)

The profit-taking of manufacture in this process *does* have a progressive function: it allows other objects to become "off-priced" and open to low culture's creativity as a result of manufacture's appropriation of the previous. The cyclical nature of this is of course implicit; the creative one "must keep moving", as they say. At the point that inner city style is being sold to high culture at the prices they normally pay for "high culture goods", the gears

of creativity are once again moving down below.

In our inner cities, an obvious example of this is the development of what once seemed an inappropriate clothing style selected from *only* those things that are currently affordable. The methodology here: using a "palette" of things for which a great premium is not already being exacted by the market, recalls Duchamp. Their technique is to use inappropriate choices and new or unusual combinations of manufactured givens. This develops many here-to-fore unintended styles and thus personally affects "value", value manufacture had not yet seen in these things. At present, this is an oversized, "gangster" aesthetic, but that style itself is insignificant, and must, in any event, change as manufacturer's arrives at the creative consumer's same conclusions in order to profit from it.

From inner city culture also comes the penultimate example of this in terms of popular music: rap. It is full of musical sampling and reuse. However, there is something to be learned from a musical aesthetic cultivated by the alternative music of Generation X. The alternative music aesthetic has altered and since been capitalized upon by the forces of production in the music trade. Largely a product of a moderately privileged middle class, the creators of this music are acutely aware of the commodification apparatus of consumer culture for they have grown up completely within it. But accepting this as a given, the Generation X development in music is a search for

"unconsumable" sound. They have an understanding of the lack of permanence and value that commercial success holds from witnessing the brilliantly functioning commercial apparatus as it swelled in the 1980's culture of financial and material excess. So they produce a non-commercial sound, stating it can have value since that which IS commercially successful does not.

This can be interpreted as approaching the problem of mass commodification from the opposite side of the coin, compared to the inner city example above. The creative output is indeed unusual and "hard to consume" relative to the well-known formulas of popular music heard before. The artistic subversion here is that the artist's aesthetic must be maintained regardless of the prior output, beliefs and tastes of the producers. This because a counter-intuition about "what works" or what sells in consumerism is what is really being offered by the artist. His creative work is in steering a new tact towards what can be considered successful. The result: new forms emerge regardless of the apparently well-tested tastes and rationale of those long at the helm of production.

In summary, the techniques of the creative consumer function to "commandeer" or "adjust" the prescribed aesthetics of traditional producers. There is no intent to un-seat the producers in a revolutionary way. It is accepted that the consumer's creative energy would be wasted in forcing that unlikely event. Therefore, the anti heroic

creative consumer generally starts with what are considered un-valuable things and thinks about, re-uses, alters and debates them independently. This is because although prescribed aesthetics exist in ALL products now, the manufacturers (and, incidentally, high culture) treat some of them as more valuable than others. When the manufacturers' "invaluable" thing is ensuingly used, and defacto declared "valuable" by a *consumer*, that newly declared value is totally user determined. The result: new forms emerge regardless of the established tastes and rationale of those who will remain at the helm of production. This, perhaps, can be a valuable technique in architecture.

To distort the aesthetic intention of the manufacturer (no matter how second-rate it may have been) to such an extent as to force its reinterpretation on the producer, directs him subversively and demotes him to a mere "maker" or "assembler" of goods. The consumer then exercises the sort of "organizing function" Walter Benjamin calls for in such a culture.<sup>56</sup>

#### 4.3 The collective traits of the methods analyzed.

(Figure 4.13) The organizing function called for by Walter Benjamin is common to all the progressive methods shown in this thesis.<sup>57</sup> (This does not include late modern architecture or the L.A. School) As the twentieth century evolved from an industrial to a consumer culture, the nature

of this organizing effect in artistic methods of all sorts has merely transformed to adjust to the cultural changes themselves. The notion of the autonomous artist indeed subsides, yet what endures is the quality of the organizing effect Benjamin called for: one that puts an improved apparatus to function, and which incidentally is able to induce more consumers (the artists themselves now) to affect the producers.<sup>58</sup>

Since the early modern architecture example, the media is accepted by the progressive architectural examples *after* it has filtered through the manufacturer. Brecht and Handke recognize this in a parallel way by accepting their "material" -- actors (Brecht) or language (Handke) -- after it is influenced by the culture and situations of their time.

In art since Duchamp and Dada, the progressive methods recognize the fact that the first use of new media (by the forces of production) is not always its best use.<sup>59</sup> They have shown that much creative action can occur well after the *manufacture, use and discard* of modern materials. Venturi and Gehry also saw the opportunities there for architecture. Indeed Venturi and Gehry exemplify the artistic tendency seen in Figure 4.13 *away* from the detailed design of materials, yet with the intention to gain *more* meaningful influence over them. This was through their unique understanding of the role and sphere of influence available to them in the vernacular of their time. They



compose artistic "wholes" from variegated parts, becoming experts at that scale of orchestration. This is the art of 'composition with what is there', something Duchamp and Rauschenberg had done earlier in fine arts. They have an organizing function remote from "raw" materials that allows them to hold onto *ideas*, not specific techniques, as the key currency of their artistic production.

In dealing with the modern vernacular as it evolves to now loom larger than the individual artist, we get to the point where the sanctity of even the found object no longer exists. The "thing being exposed" at one time by Gehry or Rauschenberg is imbued no longer with the qualities of the common or found object. There remains no thought in the progressive artist's mind of finding the "undesigned", when even the *underlayments themselves*, (after having once been exposed by Gehry in architecture) are subject to the modern vernacular process of bastardization. As we have seen, this bastardization can sometimes occur even at the hands of other artists themselves in the case of the L.A. School's regressive methodology. In so doing, (and in attempting to build a representational aesthetic into their work) they are, along with the late modern architects, the only artists to take a position in the method diagrams *redundant* to that of the manufacturer. (The early moderns were not redundant to manufacture, but collaborative.) The progressive methods are not enticed, as is the L.A. School, to re-invent a false sense of the artist's autonomy nor an aura about the work of

art they produce.

As well, to look at the vernacular process for its "seams" for the unexploited "edges" of its prescribed aesthetics is no longer considered by the progressive methods. Manufacture is no longer thought of by Mike Kelley or the creative consumer as having seams. All is handled and predetermined prior to use by them. What is internalized is that, functionally, consuming is a required first step before even acting to alter the materials of the vernacular process itself. Therefore, progressive artistic production today generally starts with what are considered un-valuable consumer goods and thinks about, re-uses, alters and debates them independently. The goal of creation is not the hedonism or the cult of acquisition associated with base consumerism. Rather, even the acrimonious parodies of Mike Kelley take their place to debate the functioning of consumer culture and post-consumption consumer action.

At this point commonalities integral to consumer based artistic production can be extracted from a broad view of the tendency towards which these methods are leading. First, note that processes such as the creative consumer's are cyclical. "Raw" media is somewhat extraneous to the critical cycle occurring between consumer and manufacturer. The manufacturers' capitalization on new ideas actually helps to sustain and recirculate the process itself. Perhaps the artwork of Duchamp, Rauschenberg and Kelley can be thought of as having the same cyclical effect on modern

materials since their artwork can influence society and public taste.

Thus, in remembering that ideas are the key currency of the artist, it can be understood that to cultivate and fix a representational style with modern materials marks an art as delinquent. This because what can most easily get picked up by the vernacular process is the physical manifestations of a style. In order to continue to develop the key currency -- IDEAS -- to "*keep moving*" is fundamental to the artist. This is to mean that to "move through" specific representational styles -- to render them NOT central to any aesthetic idea, but rather make representation as important or as unimportant as is deemed necessary at the moment -- is imperative. To become attached, or even consider attachment to one's art for its pure representational technique must not occur. Specific styles of representation are inconsequential tools that may or may not be cognitively used by the artist. The effect of the work remains central. And that effect, as has been shown, can be internalized as method. The ideas that drive those methods are the artist's patentable, authentic creations. The development of further ideas legitimize him, not the temporal manifestations of them so easily grafted by the process. Thus representational style is now the baggage of any progressive art, its excessive weight can deny a method life or integrity past the moment its Rizzoli publication has trumpeted it.

This analysis is perhaps not new in fine art.<sup>60</sup> But to put this in terms of architecture, I will revive a question posed by Herbert Muschamp in 1990:

"Why should the bastardizing forces of marketing be considered any less influential now than the forces of industrial production were to the moderns? Ours is, after all, a culture and an economy in which marketing has been supplanting production as an economic force. This new era, to paraphrase Mies, is a fact. It exists irrespective of our yes or no."<sup>61</sup>

Why are there no architectural methods that plainly react to this statement today?<sup>7</sup> I have yet to uncover the reason in the research for this thesis. I would like to propose in chapter 5, however, possible architectural techniques that internalize the above discussion.

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<sup>7</sup> I have considered and dismissed the notion that Deconstruction in architecture responds to this in a meaningful way.

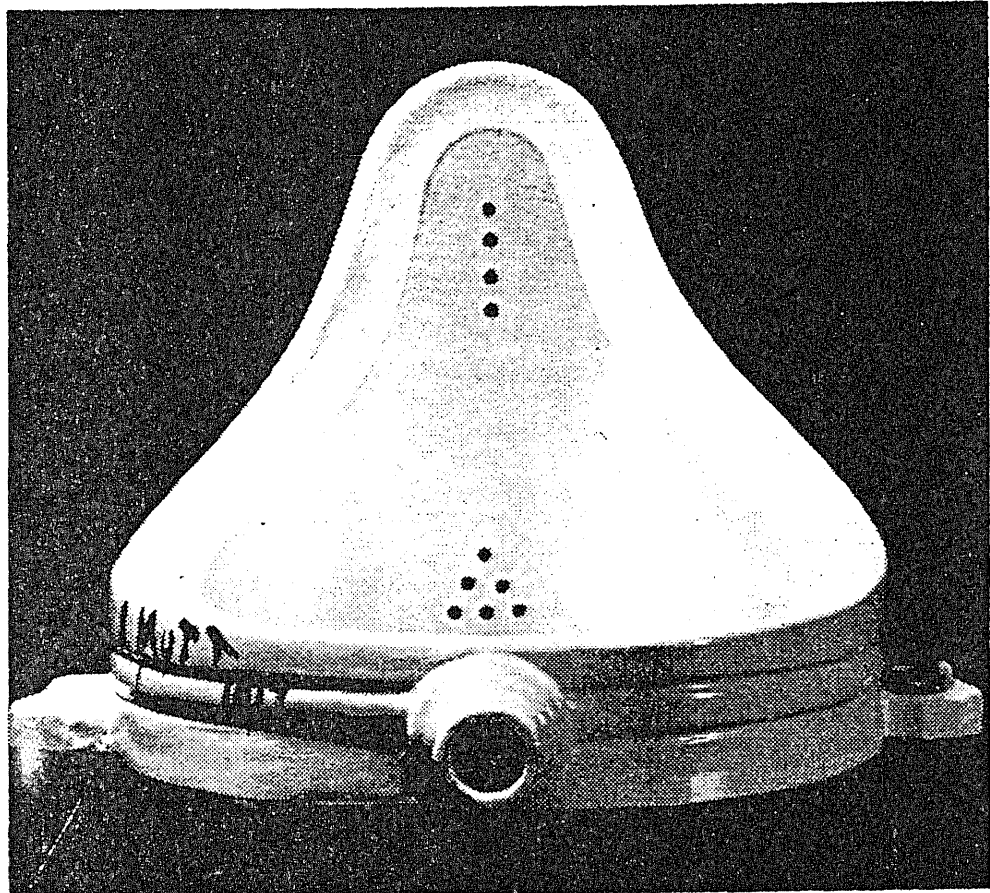


Figure 4.1 Duchamp, Fountain, 1917.

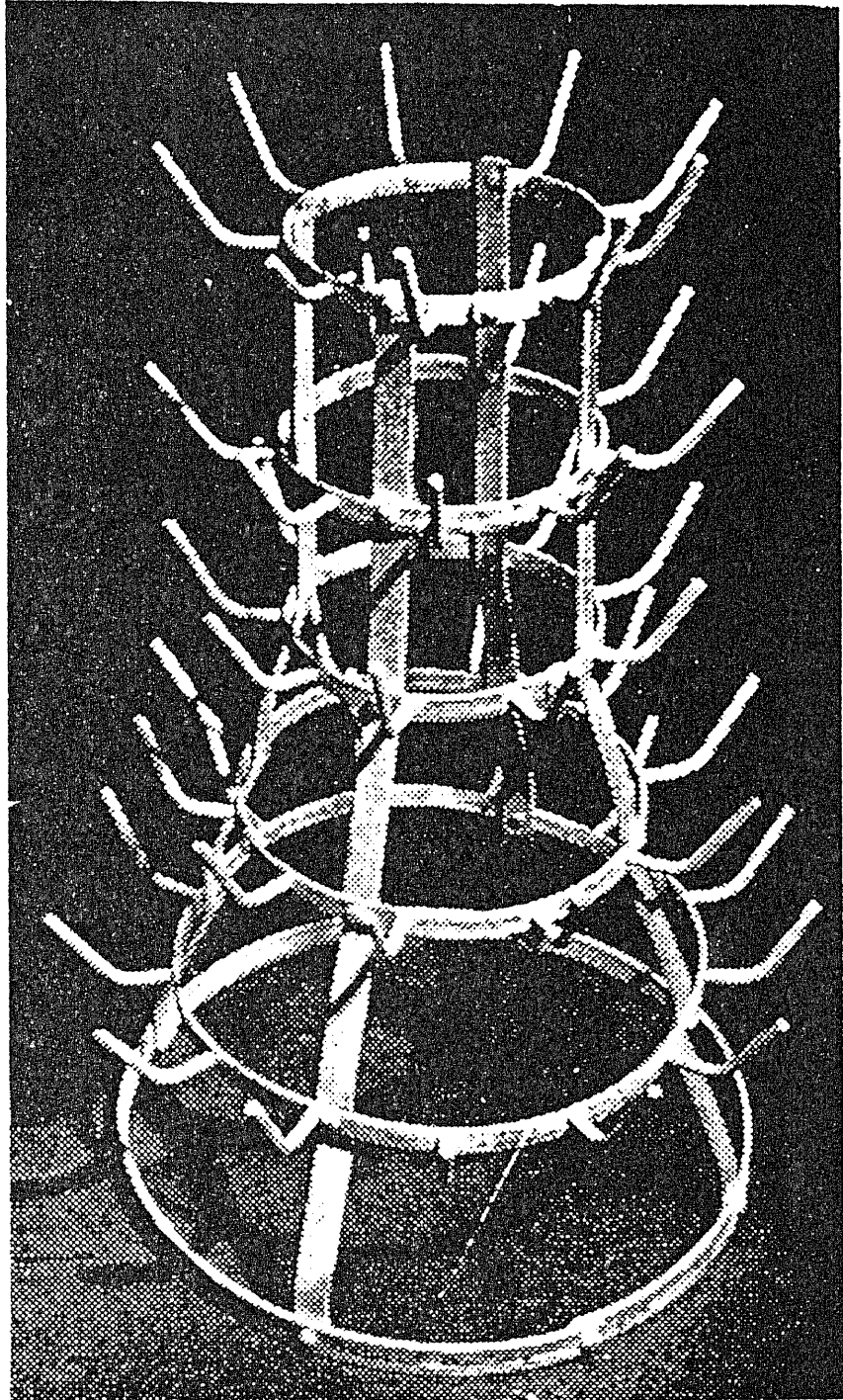


Figure 4.2 Duchamp, Bottle Rack, 1914.

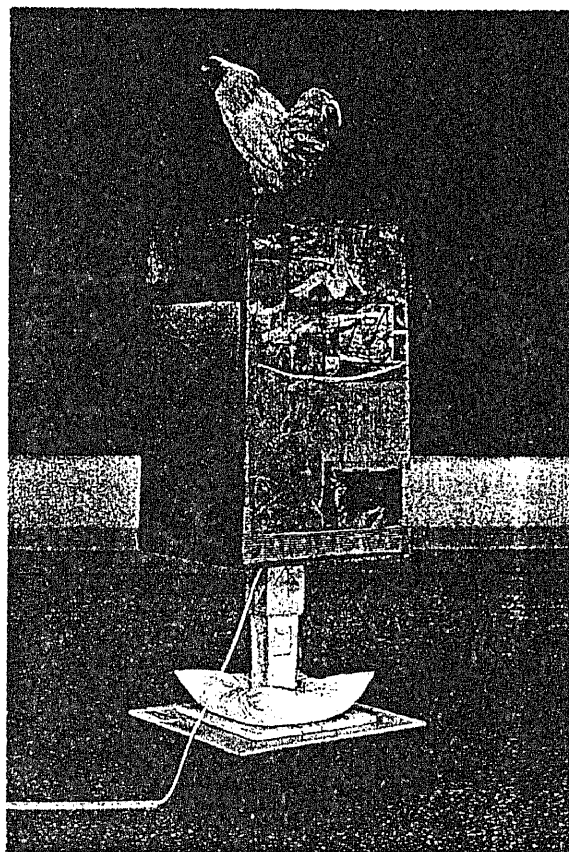


Figure 4.3 Rauschenberg, Odalisk, 1955-1958.

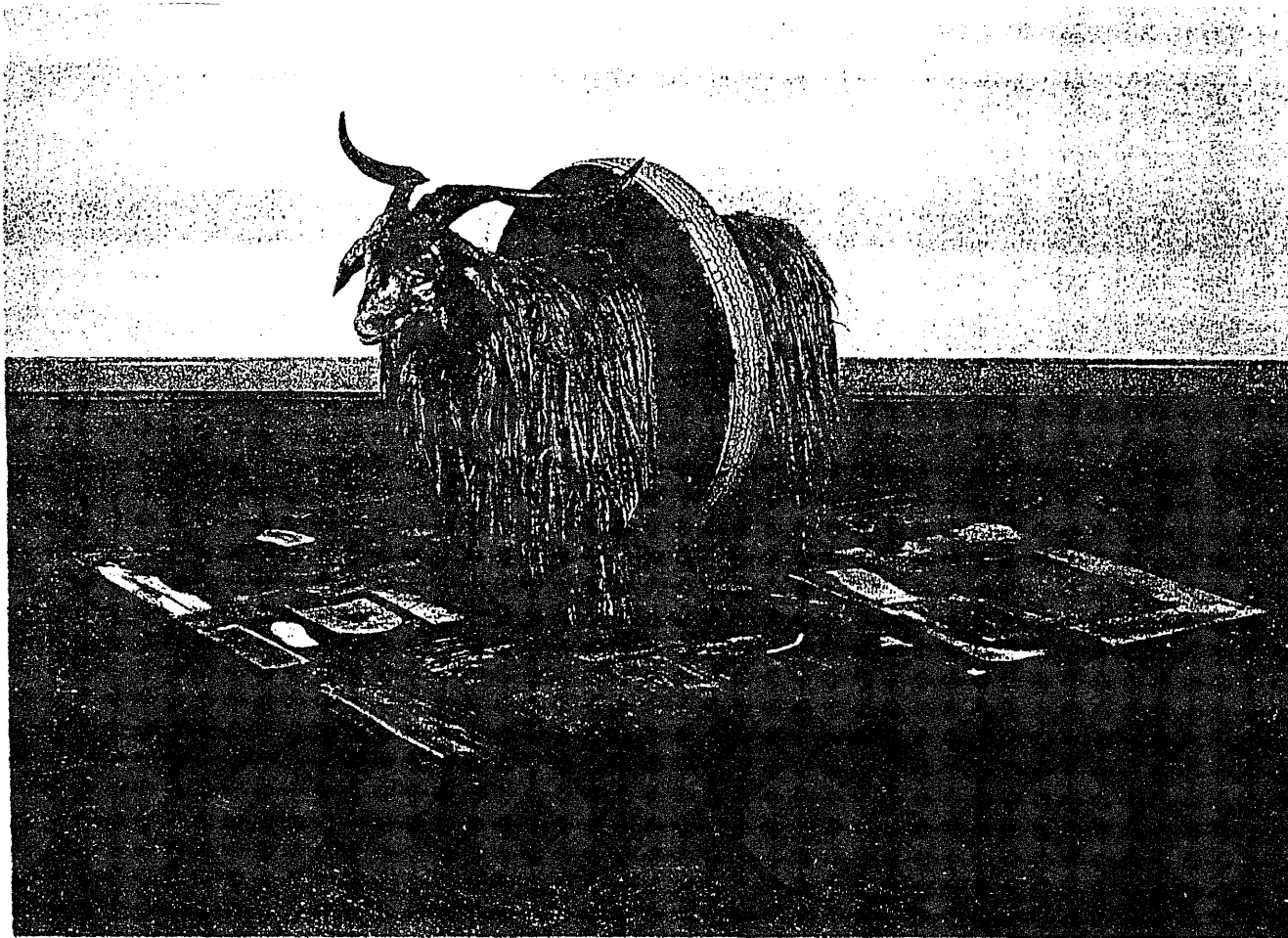


Figure 4.4 Rauschenberg, Monogram, 1955-9.



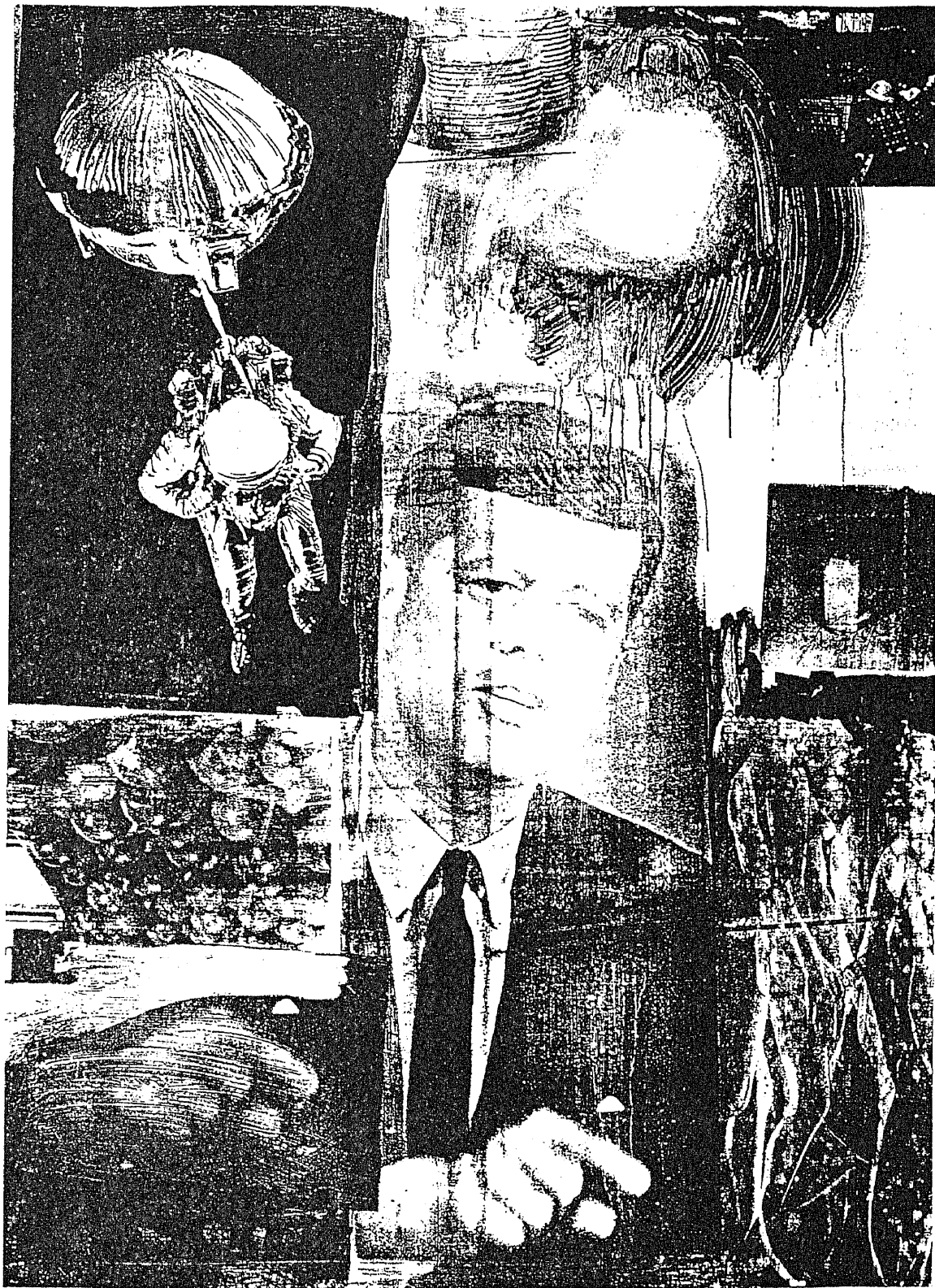


Figure 4.5 Rauschenberg, Retroactive I, 1964.

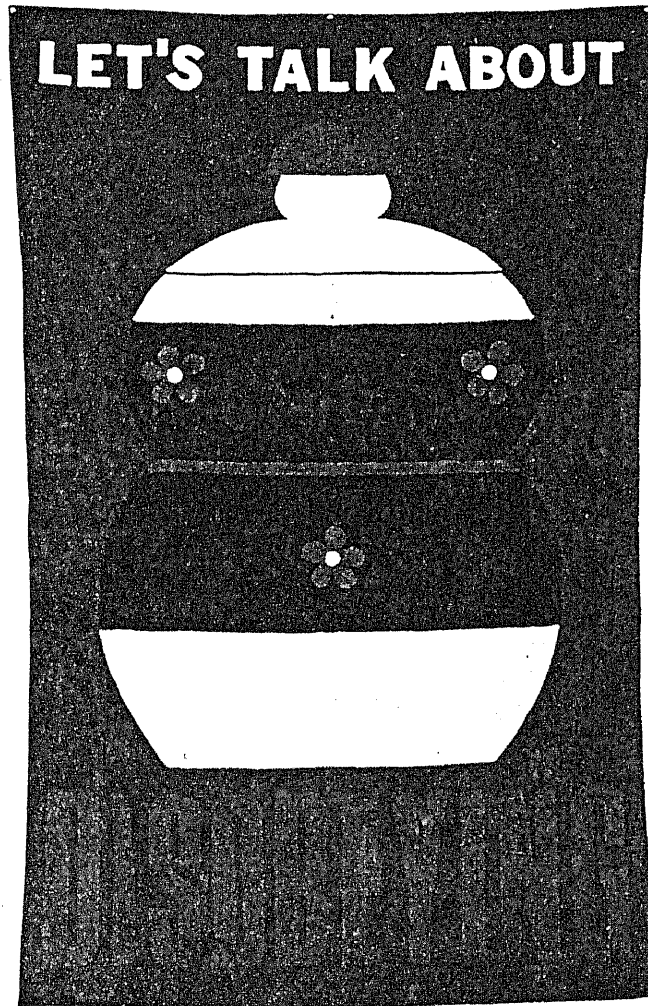


Figure 4.6 Kelley, Let's Talk, 1987.

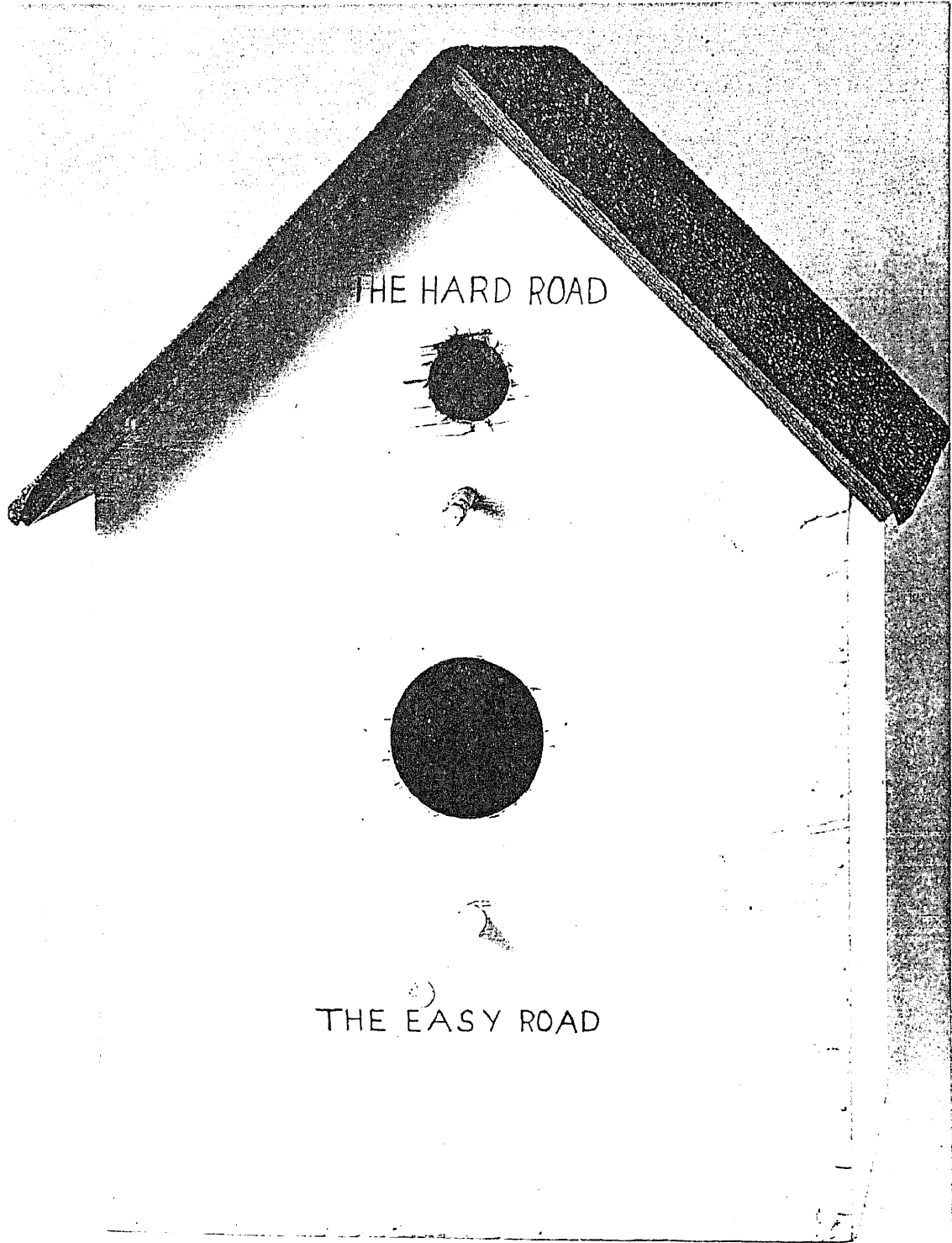


Figure 4.7 Kelley, Catholic Birdhouse, 1978.

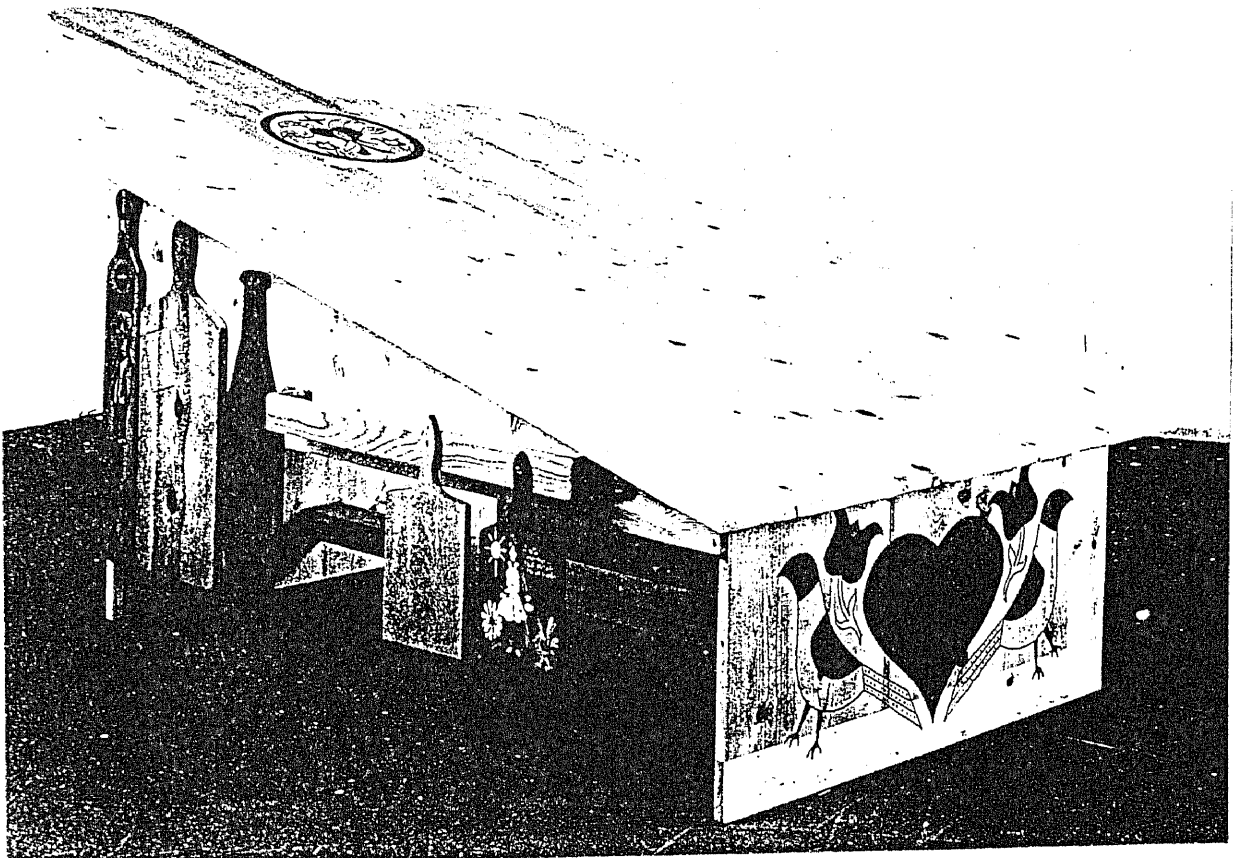


Figure 4.8 Kelley, Kneading Board, 1992.

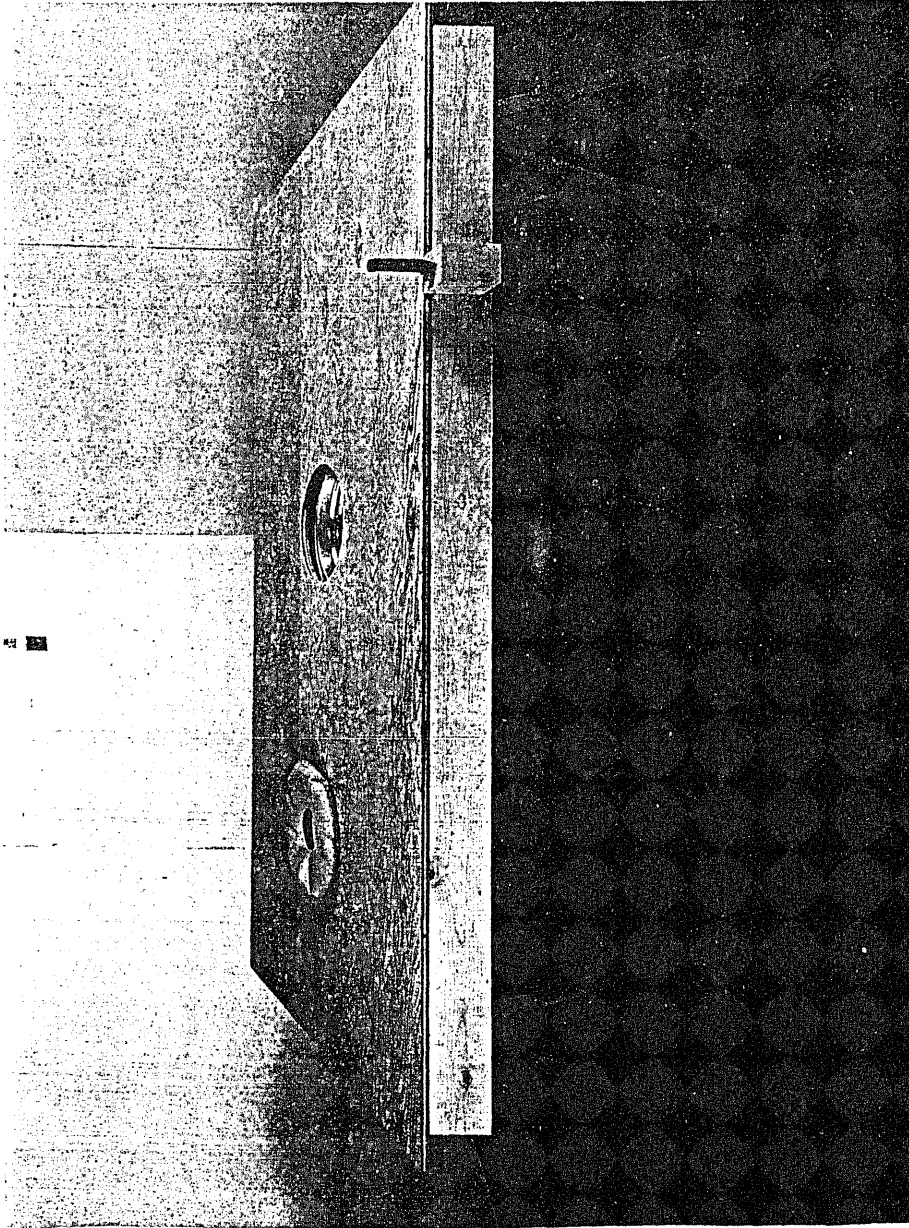


Figure 4.9 Kelley, Torture Table, 1992.

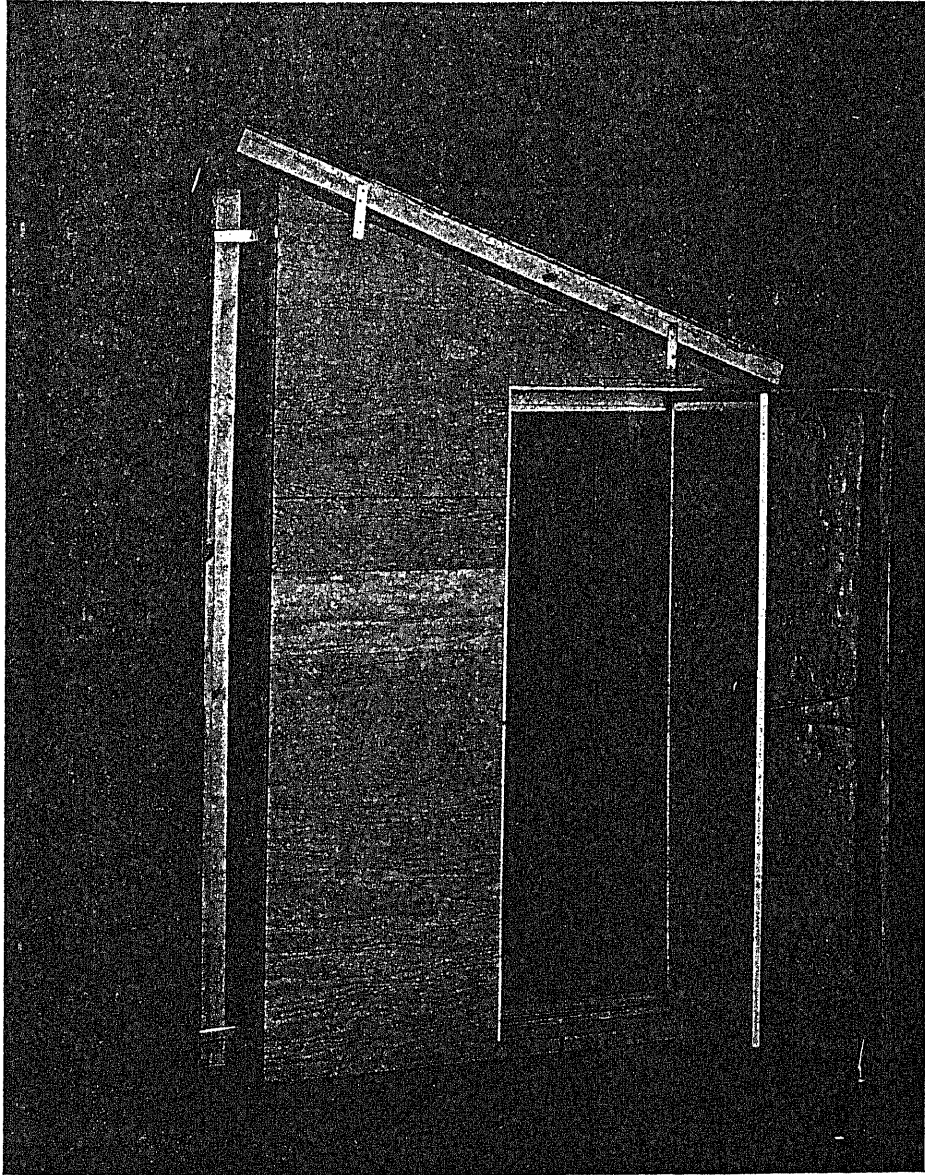


Figure 4.10 Kelley, Orgone Shed, 1992.

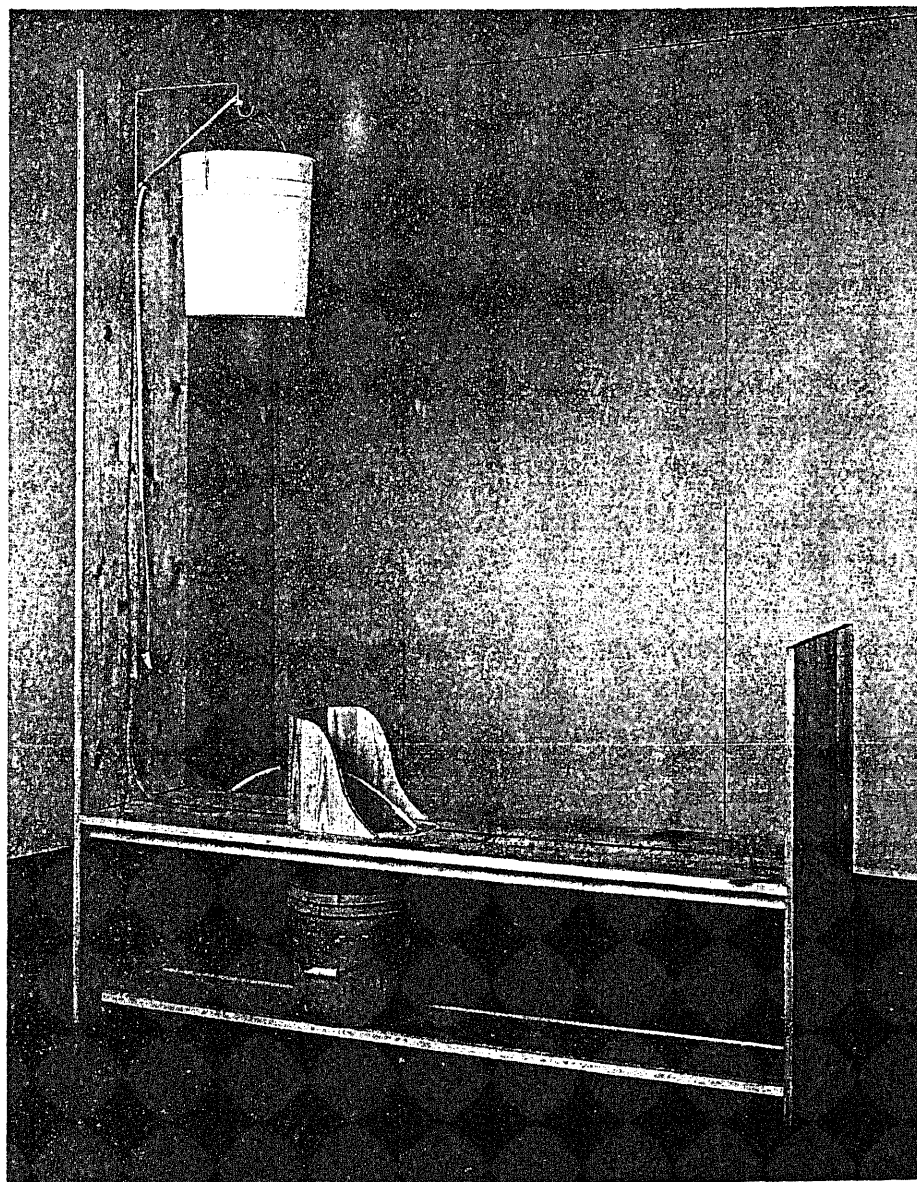


Figure 4.11 Kelley, Colema Bench, 1992.



Figure 4.12 Oversized pants. Photo Marc Baptiste.



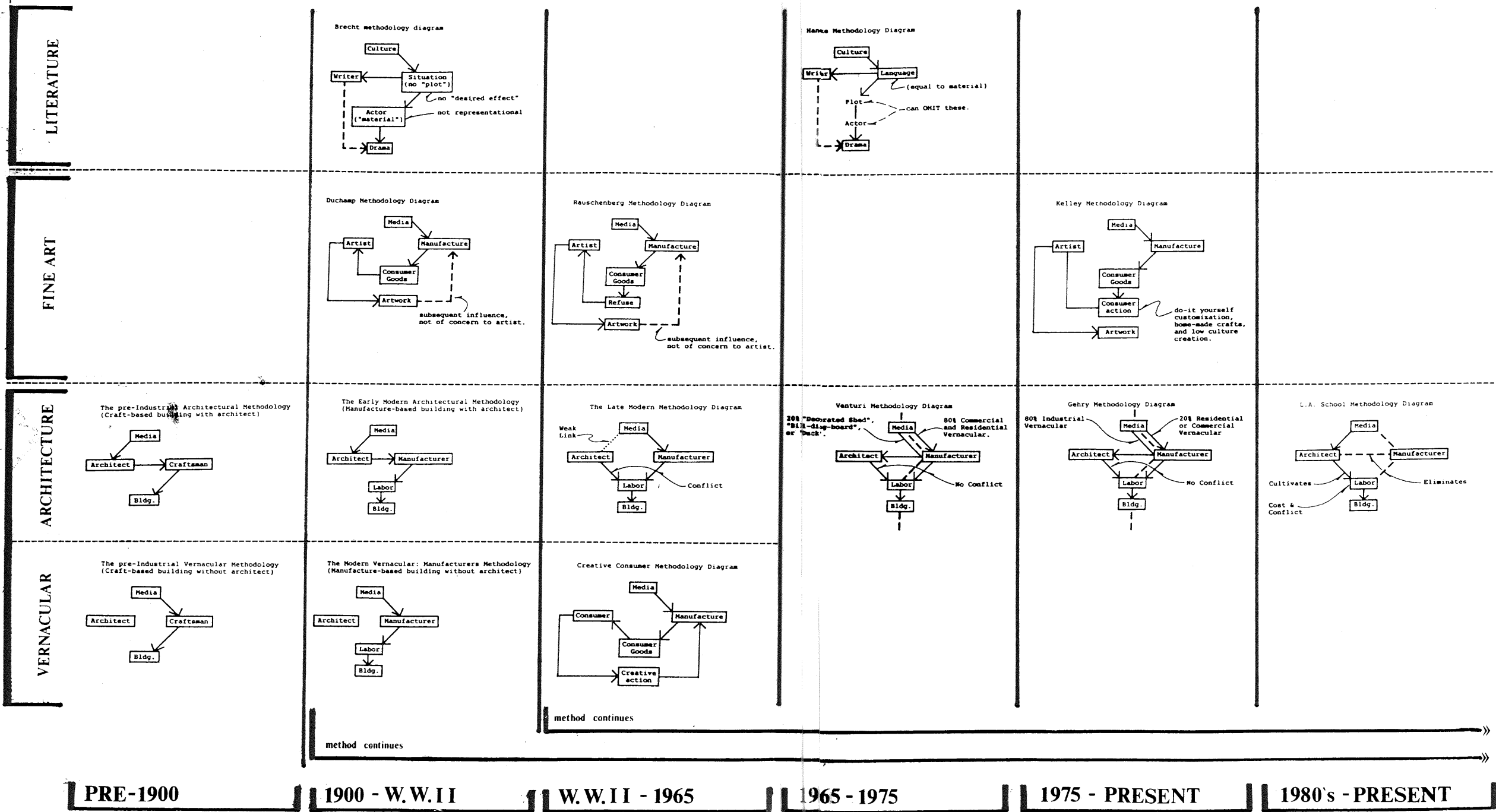


Figure 4.13 All Methods Analyzed.

## Chapter 4 NOTES

1. Andreas Huyssen, The Technological Imagination, edited by Teresa De Laurentis, Andreas Huyssen and Kathleen Woodward, Coda Press, Madison, WI, 1980, p82.
2. Huyssen, op cit, p81.
3. Huyssen, op cit, p80.
4. Huyssen, op cit, p81.
5. Huyssen, op cit, p81.
6. Huyssen, op cit, p81-2.
7. Huyssen, op cit, p79-80.
8. Huyssen, op cit, p81.
9. Walter Benjamin, Illuminations, edited by Hannah Ardent, Schocken Books, NY, 1968, p221.
10. Huyssen, op cit, p80.
11. Huyssen, op cit, p81.
12. Walter Benjamin, Reflection, edited by Peter Demetz, Schocken Books, NY, 1978, p228-9.
13. Huyssen, op cit, p81.
14. Huyssen, op cit, p80.
15. Huyssen, op cit, p80.
16. Huyssen, op cit, p82. Also chapter 2 of this thesis, section on 'Modern Architecture from World War II to 1970'.
17. Huyssen, op cit, p79 and 82.
18. Huyssen, op cit, p79.
19. Huyssen, op cit, p79.
20. Benjamin, Reflections, op cit, p228.
21. Benjamin, Reflections, op cit, p228.
22. Benjamin, Reflections, op cit, p228.
23. Benjamin, Reflections, op cit, p233-34.
24. Benjamin, Reflections, op cit, p234.
25. Another innovation of Brecht's that kept the focus on his "situations", and is perhaps translatable to an architectural method, was his "principal of interruption". This too was a method employed to focus the audience's concentration on the "situations" he was presenting and counteract any illusion they might have about witnessing a "performance". He often used song as this interrupting device, much like commercial announcements do in film, television and radio. In arresting any continuity his theater might have, all focus remained on his situations, assembled between interruptions. See: Benjamin, Reflections, op cit, p234-35.
26. Richard Gilman, editor, The Making of Modern Drama, Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, NY, 1974, p218.
27. Gilman, op cit, p217.
28. Gilman, op cit, p217-18. These comments and the chart itself began in 1930 for his play Rise and Fall of the City of Mahogany. They "remain the basis of his theatrical thinking from then on", p217.
29. Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown et al, seem to be emulating this chart of Brecht's as well. They list contrasting views of a profession in Learning from Las Vegas in a likewise manner, although without reference to Brecht's

chart.

30. Klinkowitz, Peter Handke and the Post-modern Aesthetic, 1893, pp1-4.
31. Gilman, op cit, p269.
32. Klinkowitz, op cit, pp2-3.
33. Gilman, op cit, p275.
34. Gilman, op cit, pp270-1.
35. Klinkowitz, op cit, p9.
36. With Manet (1832-1883) begins modern art based on culture. As culture must be something "common to a mass of people", this signals the movement of "high art" into the "low art" realm of vernacular things. He dealt with questions related to the expression of the newly acquired wealth of the petite-bourgeois in late nineteenth century Paris. He attempted to bring the abundant examples of non-aristocratic men and women he found in Paris' burgeoning street life, as subject matter, into the aristocrat-minded salons. In the process he brought a little high art to low culture, and a little low culture to high art. His subject matter was mostly human culture, not yet the culture of man's material production.
37. Hughes, The Shock of the New, Knopf, NY, 1892, pp325-7.
38. Hughes, op cit, p327.
39. Hughes, op cit, p327.
40. Hughes, op cit, pp330-3.
41. Hughes, op cit, p66 and 333.
42. Benjamin, Reflections, op cit, p229.
43. Hughes, op cit, p66.
44. Hughes, op cit, p68.
45. Hughes, op cit, p66.
46. Hughes, op cit, p66.
47. Hughes, op cit, p333.
48. Hughes, op cit, p335.
49. Hughes, op cit, p387.
50. Hughes, op cit, p342.
51. Hughes, op cit, p66.
52. Kelley has also discovered the unpublished artwork of the workaday, 9 to 5, man: his hand drawn, photocopied, back office pin-ups with sayings like: "You Want it When?" or "The Flogging Will Continue Until Morale Improves" or "What part of 'NO' don't you Understand?". He brings to the fore how these completely non-commercial things, minor acts of creativity, are accepted, reproduced and consumed by countless others without the time or motivation to create the simple images themselves. They are subject then, to the same sort of commodification as a Big Mac. Hence there is no escape.
53. Benedetto Gravagnuolo, Adolf Loos, Theory and Works, Rizzoli, NY, 1982, p20.
54. Foster, op cit, preface, page xi. And Jameson, "Post-modernism and Consumer Society", in Foster, op cit, p111-25.
55. Comparing the consumer's condition to that of schizophrenia, Jameson says it "is an experience of isolated, disconnected, discontinuous material signifiers

which fail to link up into a coherent sequence." The consumer thus does not know his personal identity, since our feeling of identity depends on some kind of persistence over time. The success of consumer culture thrives on change, not persistence, of any given identity(s). Foster, op cit, p119.

56. Benjamin, Reflections, op cit, p233.

57. Benjamin, Reflections, op cit, p233.

58. Benjamin, Reflections, op cit, p233.

59. Huyssen, op cit, p82.

60. Hughes, op cit, p385-7.

61. Herbert Muschamp, "Proliferations", in Thinking the Present, Princeton Architectural Press, NY, 1990, p106.

## CHAPTER 5

### A POSSIBLE METHOD FOR A RECOMBINANT ARCHITECTURE.

#### 5.1 Introduction.

The important questions posed in the previous chapters could be framed strictly in terms of the practice of architecture.

To do this one might ask the following:

*1. How might an architect "commandeer" or "adjust" prescribed aesthetics (like the creative consumer) in order to compel new forms to emerge regardless of the tastes and rationale of those in control of production?*

*2. Why is the manufacturer's first use of a material generally accepted as the only use for a material in architecture?*

*And in investigating this further,*

*3. How should an architect act in a society where "raw" materials themselves are not as important as the role of and the prescribed aesthetics of the manufacturer? Or as understood from the previous chapter: How should an architect act given he is a consumer?*

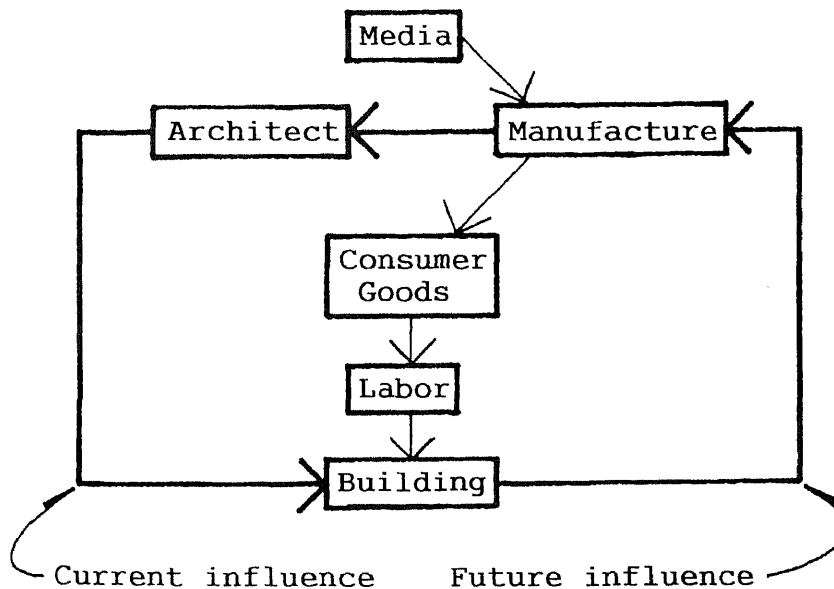
*And lastly, after learning from the evolution of 20th century artistic methods:*

*4. How might an architect reflect the artistic tendency AWAY from detailed control of specific media?*

To enact an architectural method that answers these questions, that literally makes good on the ideas evolving in art since Duchamp and in literature since Brecht is a difficult proposal. But as an initial attempt to suggest results I will advance a possible diagram for architectural design. I will attempt to outline a sophisticated "method of choosing" and to show how the methodological tools already discussed might meaningfully affect the things from

which the disenfranchised architect will inevitably choose from now and again in the future.

Diagram 5.1 Recombinant Architecture Methodology Diagram



The main considerations in this diagram are:

1. The architect has no direct connection to the media ("raw" materials), as is the norm for progressive artistic methods in a consumer society.
2. All material information is received from manufacture, as is the norm for progressive artistic methods in a consumer society. And, like those artistic methods, the architect's judgement is applied to the USE of each discrete material regardless of the its prescribed aesthetic or categorization by manufacture.
3. There is no direct interface with labor involved in putting up a building. Interface is with manufacture.
4. The greatest emphasis is placed on the influence of manufacture *as a result of* the architect's built works. This

sustains the cyclical nature inherent in a consumer society. Notably: material influence emanates from manufacture, passes through the architect, through his building, and *back* through the manufacturer as a result of the architect's creative use.

While this diagram evolves clearly from the progressive methods seen thus far, specific architectural aims and techniques for achieving them should be proposed as well. Towards that end, I have been able to articulate suggestive examples of some five possible techniques. They will be discussed in the following sections. Briefly, they are:

1. *Relationship with manufacture.* A close acceptance of and learning from the material expertise of manufacturer's could be pursued. Their dominance of material production, *per se*, should be accepted.

2. *Use of materials.* Techniques of material use could be devised to be compelling enough in their own right to *AFFECT* the manufacturer's prescribed aesthetics and categorization to change.

3. *Architectural drawing.* The architect should state his case for material use clearly by speaking in the terms and language used by manufacture. The best way to do that may be to push the manufacture's own information back at him in a recognizable but compellingly new way. The existing graphic and written specification information of the manufacturer's vernacular could be the architect's chief means of communication.

4. *Interface with labor.* The architect as consumer

makes his significant decisions concerning the research and use of modern materials and methods before the building labor is called in. Little or no personal or customized direction of building labor is required.

5. *A Non-representational Approach.* The currency of a new architectural method would be a style of decision-making in which one is compelled more by the search for exploitable areas of manufacturer's categorization and prescribed aesthetics than by the cultivation of a representational style.

A detailed description of these 5 concerns follows.

## 5.2 Possible Aims and Techniques of a New Architecture.

### 5.2.1 Relationship with Manufacture.

The only architectural turf that modern manufacture can be perceived as having invaded is the promulgation of their self-serving *material categorization* and *prescribed aesthetics*. This has already been discussed as a negative aspect of the modern vernacular. The relationship to be cultivated with manufacture then, could be a close acceptance of and learning from only his technical expertise. The manufacturer's expensive research and development efforts could be accepted at face value to create the architect's personal library of material information. With a desire to know all the existing things,



to catalogue them according to his own prerogatives, and to create with them in the future, the architect would personally procure the hard material data only to later argue or contend with it through his creative re-use of it. For only by first objectively assembling a library of things to use can one later criticize the material production process through a work. When such a work is consumed, its criticism is consumed as well.

This may appear at first as a betrayal of the traditional aesthetic training of the architect for something less worthy. But the "manufacturization" of an architect hardly ever makes a manufacture of him. Why? Because his aesthetic education will always give him a means of dealing with this manufacturer that make the manufacture more like him than he like them.<sup>2</sup> The concept should be not to diminish aesthetic education to account for production, but to raise production to the level of the aesthetic architect by having that information occupy his sole library.

Perhaps after creative re-use of manufacturer's information the unintended effects (dashed lines) of Rauschenberg's and Duchamp's methods could be completely intended in an architectural method. Indeed this effect should be the goal. The sarcasm and parody of Mike Kelley could be put to good use to influence manufacture. And like the acts of the creative consumer, to provide directly usable criticism of manufactured materials would be once

again "topical" thinking along the lines of Frank Gehry. It would be engaged in theory that is practicable NOW, in the present.

### 5.2.2 Use of Materials

In appraising just what would constitute "*new material uses compelling enough to affect manufacturer to change*", I understand that change in consumer society occurs only when it is economically compelling to those involved. And economic compulsion is precisely within the power of creative new material combinations. For what is a new classification or use of material in architecture if not an increased venue for the manufacture of it? If this appears an infrequent, improbable occurrence at the hands of an architect today, remember that in creative consumer action it transpires regularly to feed the process itself.

Specifically for architecture materials could be used with a particular indifference maintained towards their existing *categorization* and *prescribed aesthetics*. Thus the brunt of material work would rest in making independent judgements as to HOW every given material can best be put to use, regardless of the price level, category or aesthetic already assigned to it. Some specific techniques that might achieve this are outlined in the remainder of this section:

#### 1. "*Making Inappropriate Choices*" (or "*Size 58 pants*".)

(Figure 4.12) The concept of making inappropriate choices given the architect's limited capacity to affect the

signified materials comes quite clearly as an analogy from the disenfranchised but creatively functioning consumer. By observing the tactics of other disenfranchised groups one could discover a way to bring into architecture their manner of circumnavigating their disenfranchising set-up through the use of various slang, in the most general sense.

With slang a group can proclaim of the system by which it is oppressed and excluded: "this system is not OF us, we did not create it. We will work within its current framework but not by your rules, but will modify them to meet our concerns. What seems to you as "inappropriate choices" (be it of words or materials) are the underpinnings of our own language and rules -- our OWN categories and aesthetics."

And so, just as the creation of a slang evolves in disenfranchised segments of society it could evolve in architecture. It could be defined equally in architecture as actions perhaps unintelligible to others that say by their very existence "we believe in our system more than yours".

Slang occurs not just in language alone, but in dress, hair style, writing style, consumeristic style, and many other forms. As an architectural method it could appear as inappropriate choices in material use. Indeed there exists a whole range of inappropriate choices that can occur within the limits of what is deemed acceptable, advisable and permissible according to the manufacturers of architectural

materials. Given objective research in the ways in which it is acceptable, advisable and permissible to change manufactured things, one can calculatedly change them in those acceptable, advisable and permissible ways yet mismatch and rearrange them to the point of newness or absurdity. One can create an architectural slang, embarrass the manufacturer, give him a new venue for production or force a new interpretation upon his product. This possibility remains to be exploited in architecture, whereas we have already seen it in other arts.

The intent for architectural progress? To refuse to accept the role of material specifier happy with only the authority to change things in the insignificant "acceptable, advisable and permissible ways" of manufacture. To re-introduce personal expression into the oppressive realm of pre-aestheticized materials.

(I have included the Appendix an illustration of how one educated and apprenticed in architecture arrives at the possibility of inappropriate choices within the limits of what is deemed acceptable, advisable and permissible according to the manufacturers of architectural materials. See Appendix.)

2. *"Destruction of the pre-aestheticized commodity"*. The cavalier attitude towards manufacturer's categorization and prescribed aesthetics begets an intentional disregard and withdrawal from what is the commonly perceived value of given materials. Rather than ignoring or playing along with

disagreeable, prescribed aesthetics, a cathartic regurgitation is required. And without the power, position or finances to recreate the process on our own terms, subterfuge is an available methodology. This will distance oneself from others, via the anti-social aspect of a disenfranchised group's slang, in order to gain the freedom to play with one's own language and allow it to develop.

Through debasement of the marketed, valuable assets of a material, an architect can say: "I know what the manufacturer thinks is important to ME, so I'll destroy it, to show that your value points are not MINE; your marketing DID NOT recreate my needs, my wishes. The premium items for which you make me wait and pay more, I do not value most."

As has been said of the methods of Peter Handke, his work is "a display of the artist's compositional sense of how the game of life is played." In terms of architecture, this knowledge of the game can be manifest in playing with the manufacture defined technicalities and rules of ordering an object.

Perhaps this means scrutinizing the arduous process of actually getting what you want from the manufacturer; accepting a 12 week "lead time", endless phone calls, down payments, re-tooling charges, and shipping charges for a specific material only to tear all the manufacture instilled aesthetic from it once received. To tear off the veneer just after it's been so specifically ordered, with the finish so meticulously applied, and gut it, high school

science experiment style. Why? Not to expose how nice its structure could be, but to show how heinous the odds and ends of its once "undesigned" substrates are. Once the pre-aestheticized commodity is destroyed one could create a "companion piece" with the "excess" of a pre-aestheticized object as in Figure 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.4, 5.5, 5.6.

3. *Deferring responsibility for the "inbetween" spaces in the assemblage of manufactured materials.* (Figure 5.7) The traditional architect's responsibility for orchestrating and designing the spaces between the various manufacturer's proprietary obligation for their own material does not allow an architect to remain concentrated on the organizing effect of his creative work. To be avoided today is the "arranging" of relationships between manufacturers and between contractors in the traditional sense of designing custom details that simply link diverse products together. This is an apparent shirking of responsibility that would appear to many as regressive, but these are increasingly grey, complicated, undefinable and generally irrelevant details to the significant aesthetic value and organizing effect of any given project. (Figure 5.8) The aesthetic value remains in the use of the materials themselves, not a tasteful orchestration of things within the sphere of this "inbetween" space.

I understand that to act "inbetween", where manufacturers have limited their responsibility for their own products, is an opportunity, but it only seems as such

if one steps away from it, to deal with it on the larger scale of a building as a whole. This is an attempt to interpret the methods of Duchamp, Rauschenberg and Kelley. Remember: without an architect, the modern vernacular can construct an entire building, weather-tight and safe, entirely of pre-approved components that do not require an architect's stamp. When an architect is involved in building, suddenly the successful marriage of these pre-approved components becomes his primary concern. He is forced to focus on the tasteful composition and custom detailing of their connection, even though these components designed by others are not concerned with any other manufactured materials outside their proprietary domain. It is a worthless responsibility to marry these diverse components that want to know nothing of each other. (See Appendix.)

Pinpointed as the party to take responsibility for this "inbetween", real authority can be exercised only by highlighting the possibilities for new marriages that creatively combine, couple, link, separate, raise, lower, align, or juxtapose things from diverse categories of disparate materials that have no way of organizing themselves to each other. The governing question in doing this as an architect could be: Is it possible to complete an entire project without making decisions "inbetween" that the modern vernacular deems significant enough that I should take responsibility for them? Perhaps the project of Jean

Nouvel illustrated here comes closest to this. (Figure 5.9, 5.10, 5.11, 5.12, 5.13, 5.14) And perhaps the architect is the entity most likely to find new uses by trying this since no one else in the modern vernacular is paid to look "inbetween".

When an architect creatively works "inbetween" the manufacturer's liability is to be forced to highlight his lack of participation in events outside his narrowly defined world. The given library of details is to be forced together experimentally, compelling the manufacturer interested enough to provide the final technical information. A manufacture may not know what the architect's aesthetic intent is for the "inbetween", (which is to say for the building as a whole) but the designer is quietly the most influential in such a project. No longer would a design aesthetic be able to be negotiated out of a project. It would be hidden within the logic of combinations, assemblage, and juxtapositions. The ultimate recombinant act would be to create with total aesthetic control in a project, without applying the architect's stamp to a single construction document. My model for such action? The nameless deli's, chinese restaurants, markets and bodegas coming into existence daily in New York City. Why? Because they are created from a true vernacular and economic need. The small business owner's entire investment is at stake when such projects are undertaken, therefore the project WILL be built and WILL succeed, *no matter what*.



They exemplify true modern vernacular construction. They un-selfconsciously seek out existing vernacular methods of structure, enclosure, symbolism and display that meet economic and human needs. The things they use are necessarily of today's culture of construction.

### 5.2.3 Architectural Drawing

Beautiful drawings handicap architects. Did you ever look at a engineer's drawings? There is nothing there. Nothing other than what matters. They understand where the modern vernacular has already passed judgement on the pertinent decisions of material use. They understand the valuable decisions, and although they don't often make the most aesthetic choices, they know where these real important decisions do lie. The engineer will not draw elaborate or extensive construction details because he knows where adequate details already exist; pre-drawn and pre-approved.

Elaborate construction details do not reveal that an architect understands where, with whom and why the most relevant decisions in the modern culture of construction lie. They point indeed, in the opposite direction. The architect can manage to pour over drawings that do nothing but distance himself, the contractor and the client from the project. These drawings confuse and escalate the costs incurred by the contractor, completely misinform the client, and hopelessly raise his expectations in ways that the architect does not recognize. Custom construction drawings

divert the architect's energies and attention from the crucial decisions that affect the modern vernacular.

The determining aspect in proposing a new approach to drawing is to recognize that all the pre-aestheticized things of manufacture are already "pre-drawn". As known quantities of manufacture they are all necessarily "pre-drawn". (Again the Appendix is provided to detail this.) The "pre-drawn" things have been developed by manufacturer's with their own system of details, finishes, and assembly illustrated in sales literature, shop drawings and a library of details and specifications that exists in conjunction with every available manufacture designed thing. All of this information should be accepted as the total package of each "pre-drawn" thing.

It is precisely by accepting the "pre-drawn" thing into his own method of drawing that the architect remains concentrated on his central task. Indeed it is not possible to draw them one's self in a slightly different way, for to draw them differently is not to draw the thing at all. To draw a pre-aestheticized thing differently is to draw something that does not exist. Only manufacture will change the actual "pre-drawn" thing if the architect's recombinant organizing effect is so compelling. To affect this change the architect must state his case clearly, and the best way to do that is to push the manufacture's own information back at him in a compellingly new fashion.

Written specifications augmented by a collage of

manufacturer's own "pre-drawn", technical illustrations and construction details can communicate an entire project. Clarified by an architect's diagrammatic site plan and/or massing sketch, not a single architect-designed working drawing or material component need be used.

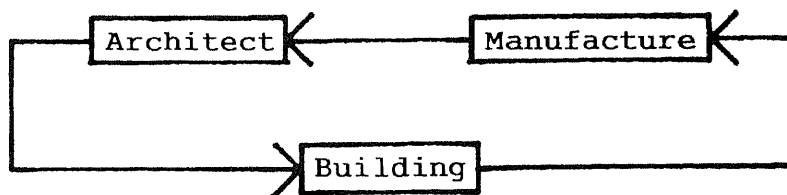
#### 5.2.4 Interface with Labor

The research of and creative use of modern materials and methods occurs before the building labor is called in. Little or no personal or customized direction of building labor is required.

A lesson retained from the early modern architectural methodology is not their detailed material control, but the fact that all significant decisions affecting manufactured materials no longer occur with labor at the site. While the early moderns could claim a great degree of material knowledge, the architect in consumer society cannot. Consumer society removes the architect from an intimate relationship with raw materials, giving the manufacturer a leg up in determining their use. But to revert to a detailed direction of labor like the L.A. School does (and the early moderns did not) will not bring back a lasting material influence.

Importantly, as a result of accepting the "pre-drawn" things of manufacture discussed above, although no direct relationship is cultivated with labor, COMMUNICATION with labor can remain clear. All elements of the drawings and

written specifications contain the basic components of the modern vernacular which labor is accustomed to seeing. The architect's innovative material USE does little to alter the proven methods and means of assembly with which labor is concerned. Remember: labor is peripheral to the heart of the recombinant architectural diagram:



#### 5.2.5 A Non-representational Approach.

It is clear that all progressive methods discussed in this thesis have not been predominantly representational in nature. The currency of these methods remains ideas, and so there should be no room nor consideration for a representational intent, *per se*, in a new architecture.

Perhaps a style of decision-making will arise as one is compelled by the search for more exploitable areas of the modern vernacular. This because where the architect's research next focuses, he is sure to find the manufacturer's categorization and prescribed aesthetics extant. To counter these prescribed aesthetics with the architect's own representational aesthetic would constrain an architecture just as the architect concerned with style and tasteful combinations as per the existing prescribed aesthetics is

constrained. To freely move through the manufacturers' categories and style classifications is merely necessary -- neither a restriction nor a main premise to be illustrated. But no representation or theory should be provided to take their place. It should be remembered that representational styles can be fixed, easily fixed and duplicated by the manufacturer's vernacular. The L.A. School serves as a case study of this.

Indeed when comparing a recombinant architecture to an architecture of representational style, the L.A. School, I can use Brecht's famous chart with little alteration. This because the distinction between the progressive methods and the stylizing ones in any discipline are the same. This comparison chart also outlines, in the right-hand column, possible tenets of a recombinant architecture.

L.A. School  
(Dramatic Theater)

1 Dictates how things are best done.

2 WEARS DOWN VIEWER'S CAPACITY FOR ACTION:  
2a "I could never do that well, that beautifully."  
2b Total architecture, viewer surrounded by the complete creation.

3 Provides viewer with sensations.

Recombinant Architecture  
(Epic Theater)

1 Admits things have been done by others architect is just taking a crack at it.

2 AROUSE'S VIEWER'S CAPACITY FOR ACTION:  
2a "Hey I could do that,...or maybe this, or...THIS!  
2b Not total creation. Discrete objects assembled, pushed together in an inconclusive manner.

3 Forces viewer to make decisions.

4 An "experience".

5 Viewer faces the architect's decisions, opinions and techniques.

6 Suggestion of an undefined "newness".

7 Instinctive view of the traditional process of building preserved.

Instinctive feelings about architect's influence on material preserved.

Instinctive belief in heroism of architect preserved.

8 The viewer must be in thick of it, play his role in the architecture, as the architect believes he "wasn't formerly involved in architecture."

9 The viewer's ability to produce taken for granted.

10 The viewer's ability to produce is unalterable.

11 Eyes on the finish.

12 One project begets another.

13 Growth of architect's influence over "others".

14 Linear development. Consistent.

4 A "picture of the world."

5 Viewer must face decisions, opinions and techniques existing in the world around he and architect.

6 Argument with a definable present.

7 Brought to the point of recognition of the modern process of building.

Brought to the point of recognition of others' influence on material.

Brought to the point of recognition of the disenfranchised position of architect.

8 The viewer stands outside, studies the architecture, as the architect believes he is "involved in architecture daily."

9 The viewer's production is the object of the inquiry.'

10 The viewer's ability to produce is alterable and able to alter the architect's ability.

11 Eyes on the course.

12 Each project for itself.

13 Montage of existing influence of "others".

14 Sporadic development. In fits and starts.

15 The architect participates in the building process at a fixed point.

15 The architect's participation in the building process is an evolving process.

16 Thought determines being. Architect as creator determines materials/meaning.

16 Social being determines thought. Consumer society determines materials/meanings.

17 Moves back to identification with materials and how they are used.

17 Move away from identification with materials and towards consumer process.

18 Elements of education, talent or myth placed between viewer and the architecture.

18 Elimination of artificial distance between viewer and the architecture.

19 New preferred over existing.

19 An investigation of existing.

20 Transcend existing methods by new alternatives offered.

20 Transcend existing methods by debating their structure.

*(Note "viewer" can also be read "manufacturer" in chart.)*

### 5.3 Conclusion

The relevant impasse is not between capitalism, commodification, and bastardization on the one hand, versus aesthetic quality on the other; but between a marginalized profession and its society's methods and materials of construction.

The chief suggestion of recombinant architecture is that the architect transform himself from a supplier of quality products to one who only fashions the process with his ideas. This is NOT a position more marginalizing than the present state.

The proposal of recombinant architecture indeed approaches the position of the manager more than the heroic creator. But does the heroic creator as seen in the L.A. School supply a more meaningful architecture? Does his own perfected style, when applied to manufactured materials, supply a more honest or valid aesthetic quality than that of the manufacturer's prescribed aesthetics? Unfortunately it does not. A consumer society leaves the architect interested in the regressive work of heroic creativity at the margins of the built environment today. Not unlike the dramatic theater of Brecht's time and the Broadway musicals of today, the most basic vernacular methods of manufacture always appear as a force against them.

Artistic production is a mediating activity in a consumer society as much as a creative one. The need in this thesis for my own colloquial terms makes clear that the decisive point is the matter of how we fill our heads about our society -- in our self-education, our apprenticeship experience -- with a modern "palette" of things.

For whom does the architect work? With out a doubt it is for a client. The profession is one reliant on patronage and may always be. But the issue of finding patronage for a marginalized profession raises the question of HOW to work. This does not mean to build in order to please the client, but rather to remain vital to the things the client needs.

Notably this is to:

design things he can relate to,



with a creativity he, as a consumer, can relate to, with materials he understands: *the modern vernacular*.

Do most architects have proposals for the functional transformation of so much as a single material of manufacture; for the dysfunctional "inbetween" of modern materials; for transcending the material categories of house, office, and institution common to their time? I believe they do. The more completely they can orient their talents towards this, the more progressive will be their ideology, the greater their demand, and necessarily the higher the technical quality of their work.

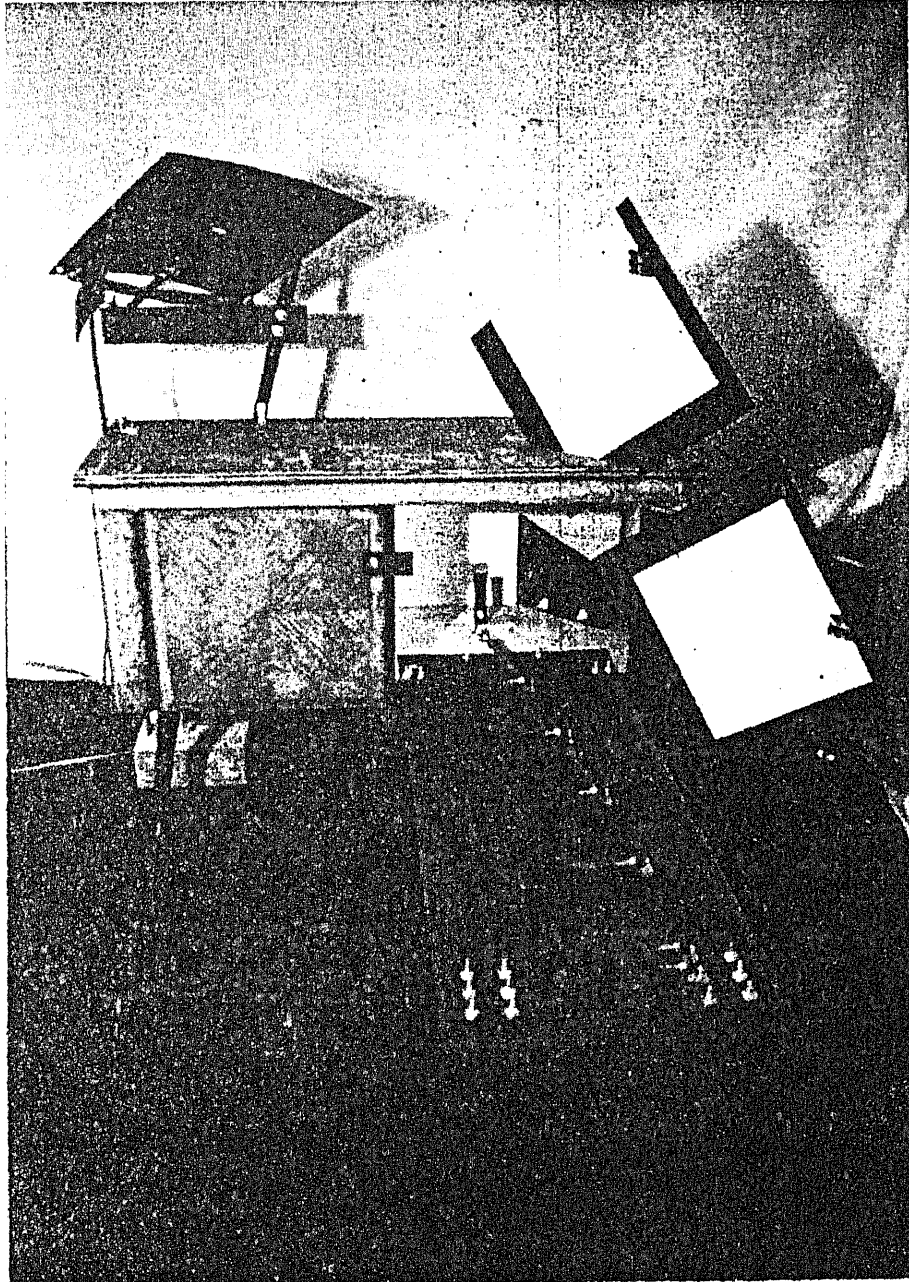


Figure 5.1 The Piece Dividend, front view.

Making good on the fabled post cold war "Peace Dividend" (not on the post-holocaustal style of the L.A. School) the Consumer-Designer's "Piece Dividend" can be the fashioning of self-determined functions and aesthetics from the manufacture's "excess".

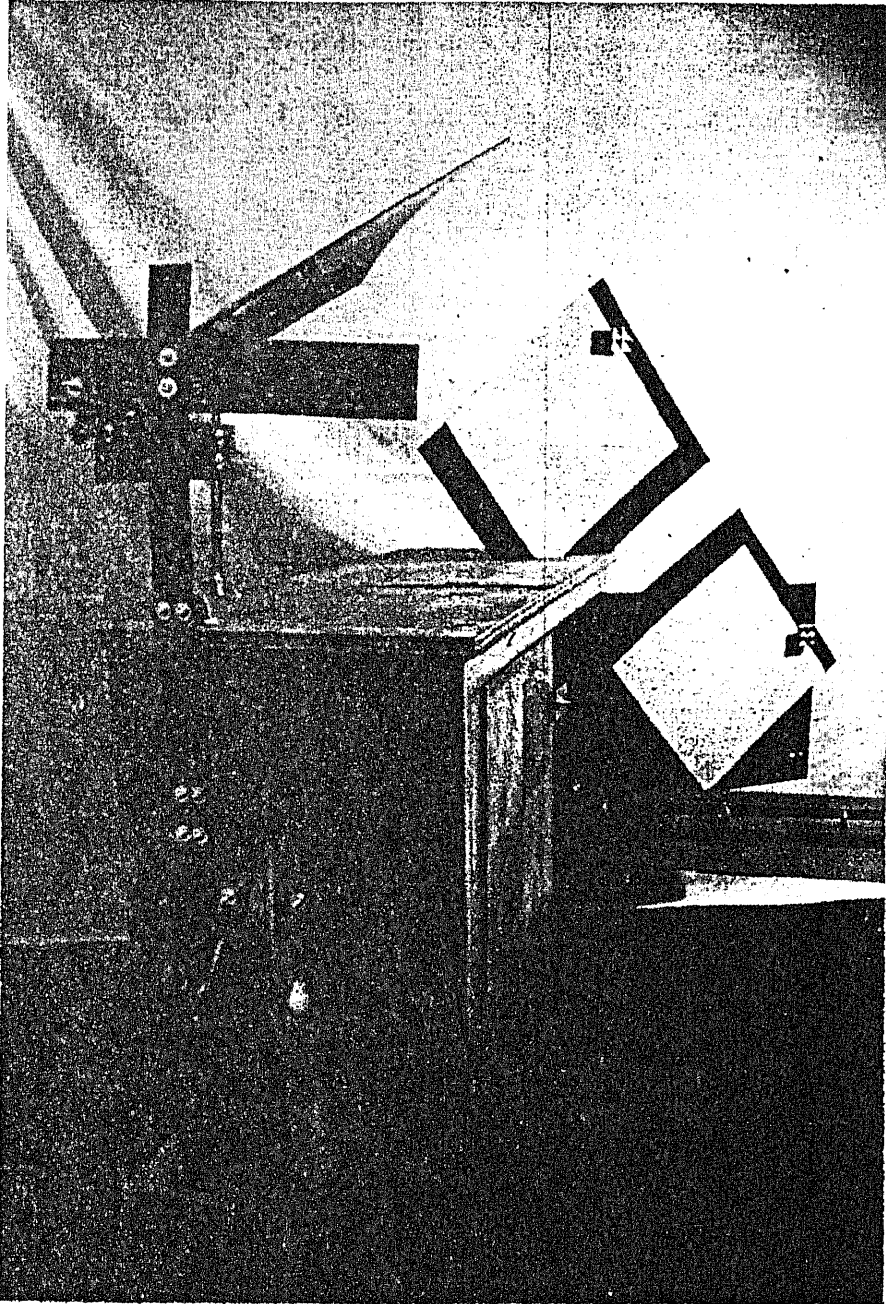


Figure 5.2 The Piece Dividend, side view.

American manufacture methods are geared towards adding elements, not eliminating them. Therefore the manufacturer's "excess" can be more valuable as a "companion object" to the functional core than it was when forced to skin it. This old freestanding cabinet can tolerate the careful removal of its plastic laminate veneer. But what of those removed pieces? They function as a new tabletop, door handle, sculpture, and new legs with concrete because two of the existing legs were relocated on the piece.

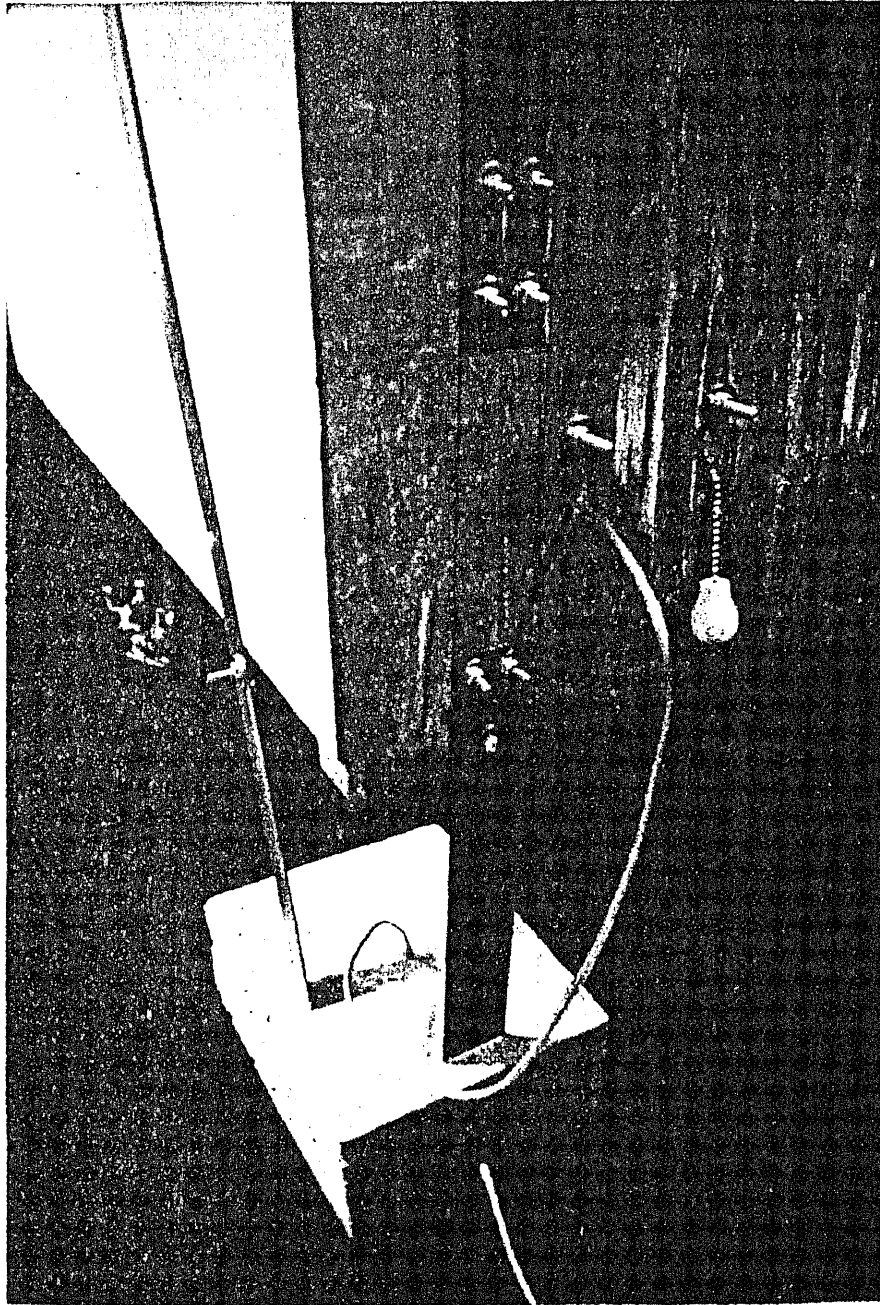


Figure 5.3 The Piece Dividend, detail, removed leg 1.

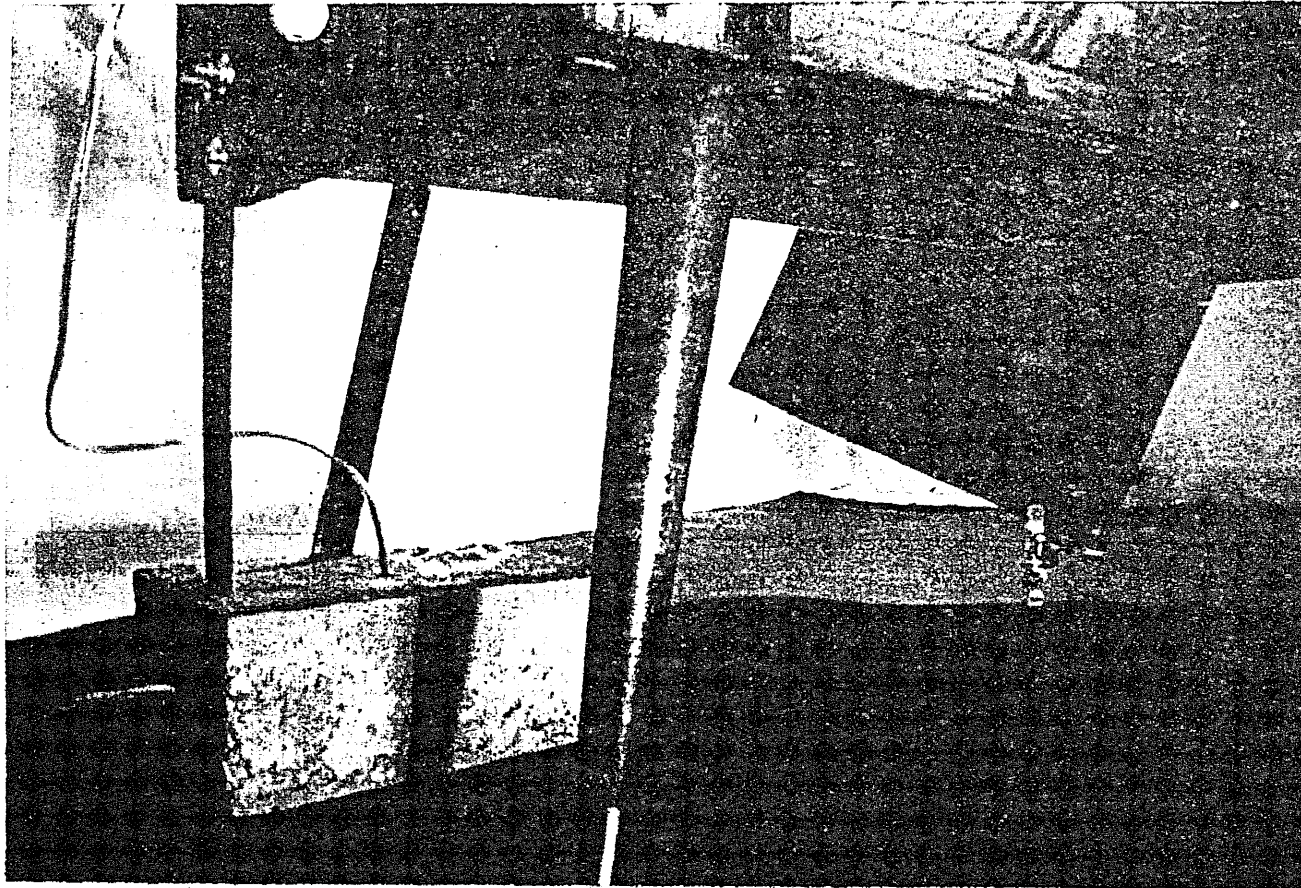


Figure 5.4 The Piece Dividend, detail, removed legs 1&2.





Figure 5.6 Tangerine In 3 Stages, the tangerine has floppy skin that can be carefully peeled and stand on its own along side the edible slices of fruit.

THE WORK "INBETWEEN", A RECOMBINANT APPROACH.

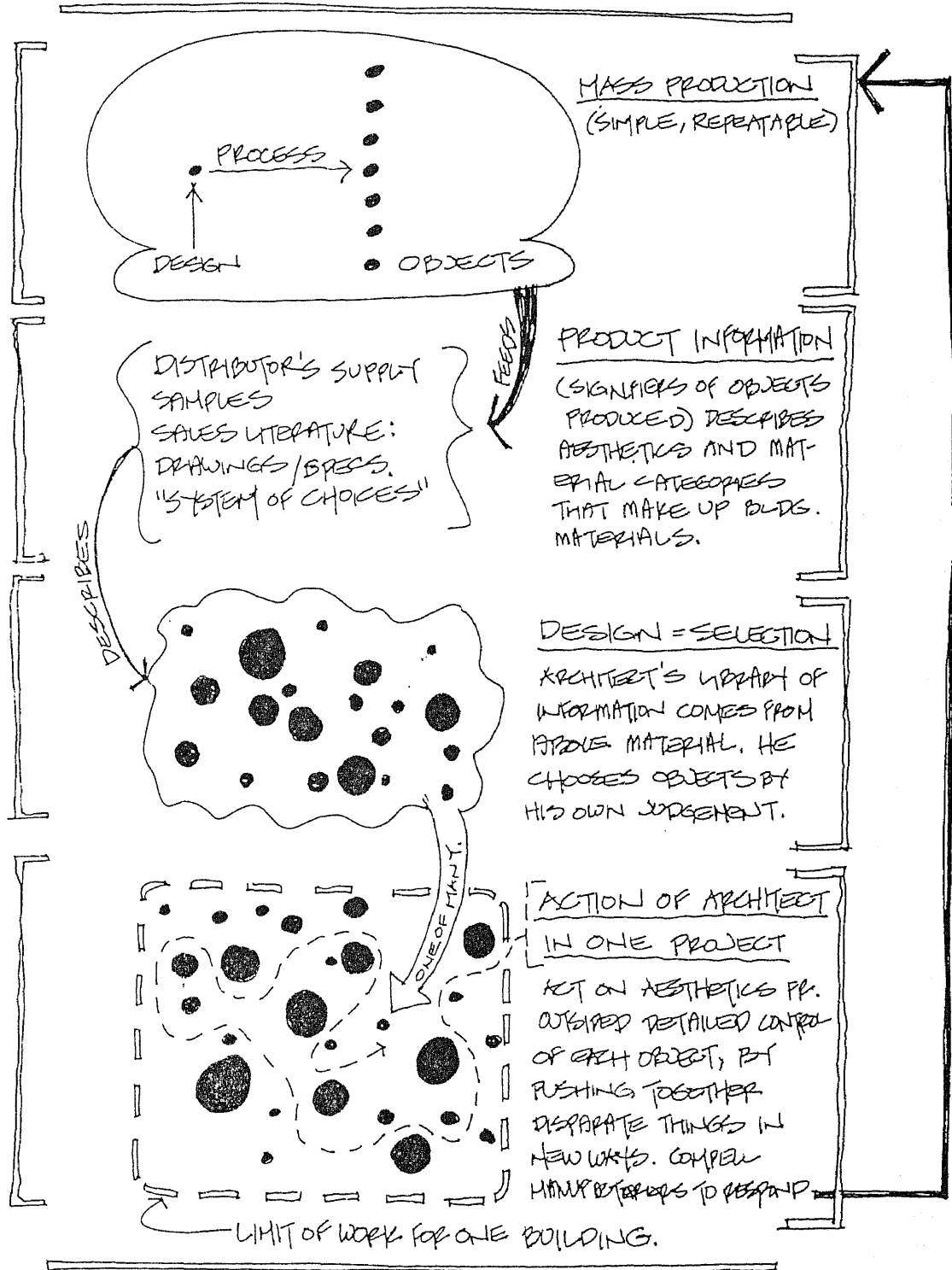
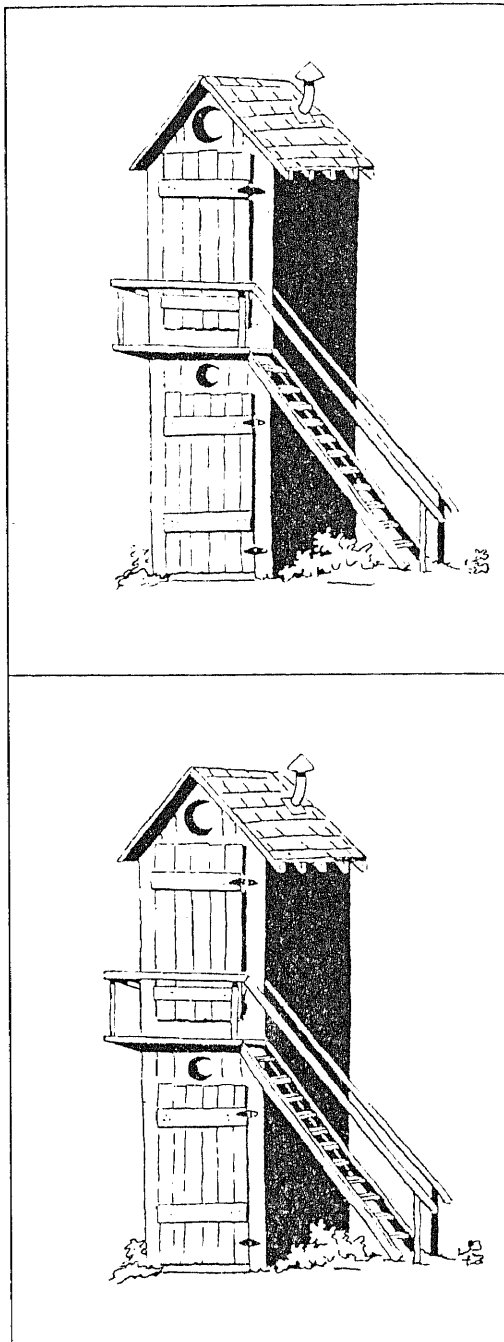


Figure 5.7 The Work "Inbetween", A Recombinant Approach.





Double Hierarchy, 1988

### OUTHOUSE ARCHITECTURE.

The work "inbetween" can be akin to taking on the responsibility to design an outhouse, for the first time, to be built by two different independent manufacturers under only the architect's direction. The first will say: "I'll design the thing that drops the crap in the hole." The other says: "I'll make the hole". The architect, it is implied, must say: "I'll make sure the crap is dropped over the hole. I'll make sure the hole is under the crap. I'll make sure the crap is not dropped under the hole. I'll make sure the hole is not too small that the crap overflows it. I'll make sure that the hole doesn't smell. I'll make sure the hole, that I haven't designed, looks the way the client wants it to look (who's never seen one before). I'll make sure the thing that drops the crap, (a thing I am not trained to engineer) looks like I assume it should look, although I don't really know what it "should" look like. And on and on and on...

Figure 5.8 Left: Mike Kelly, Double Hierarchy, drawing, 1988. Right: text, Outhouse Architecture, by the author.

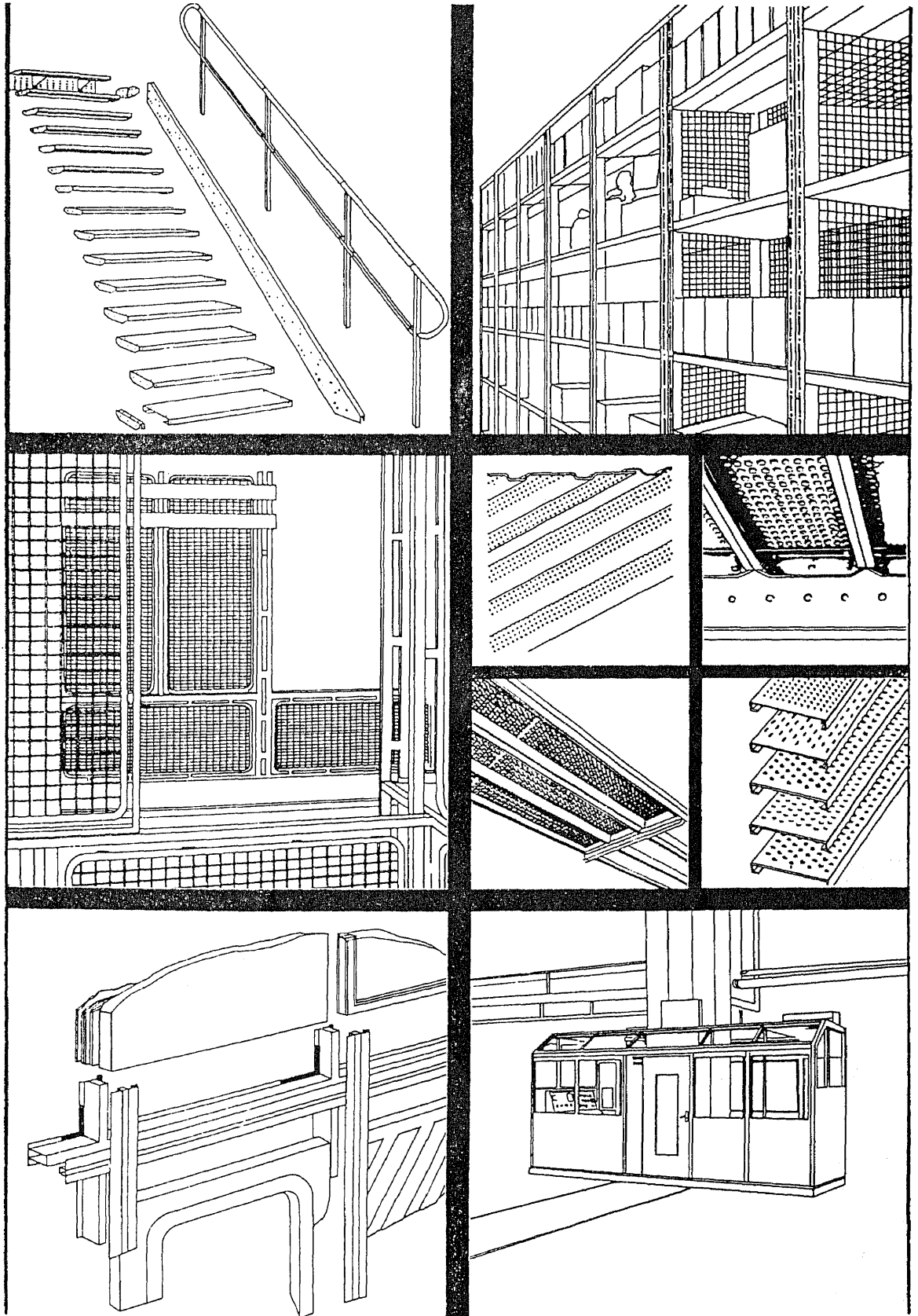


Figure 5.9 Nouvel, Nemausus 1 building, Nimes, France, 1986.  
 Drawings of pre-manufactured components used.

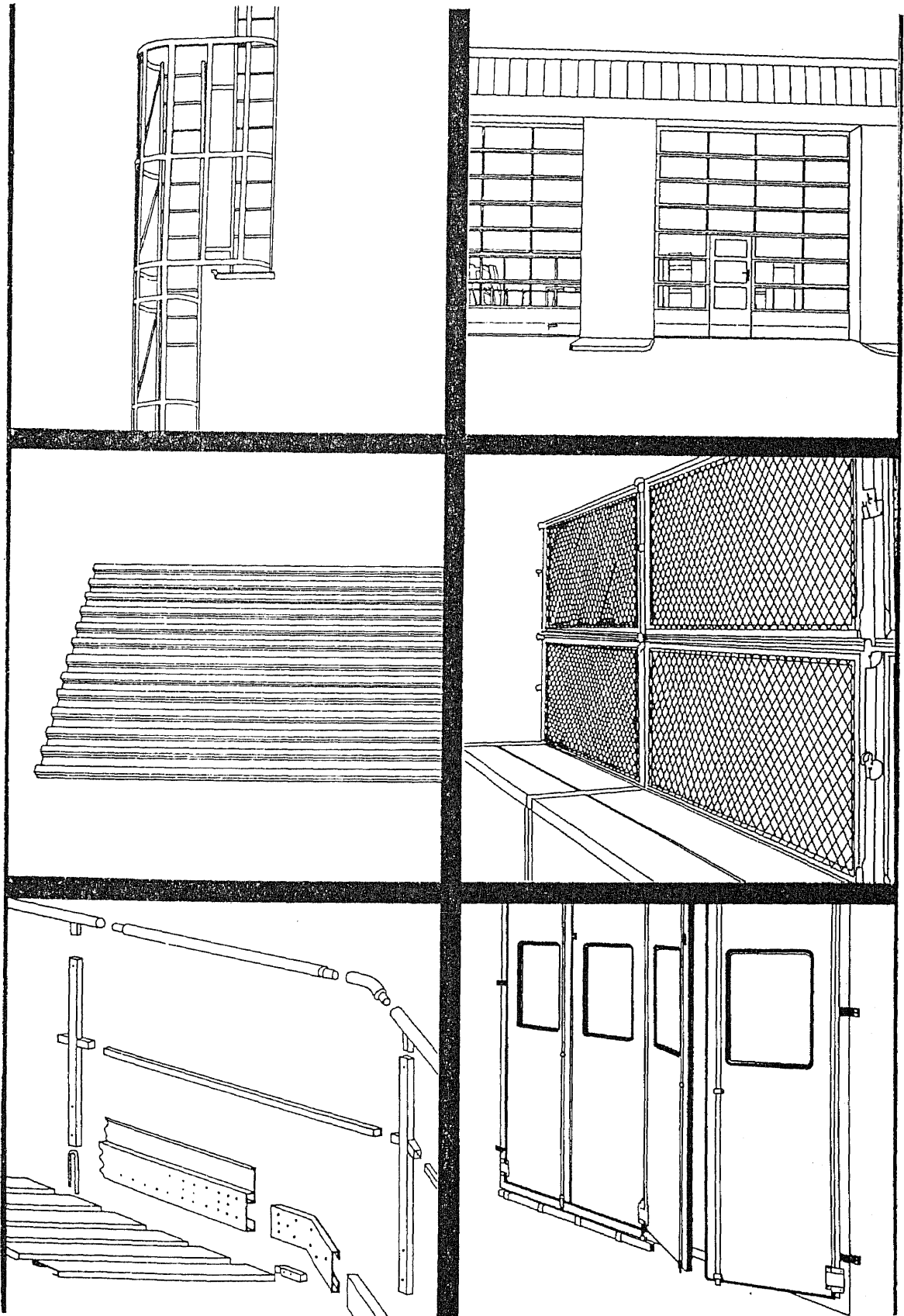


Figure 5.10 Nouvel, Nemausus 1 building, Nimes, 1986.  
Drawings of pre-manufactured components used.

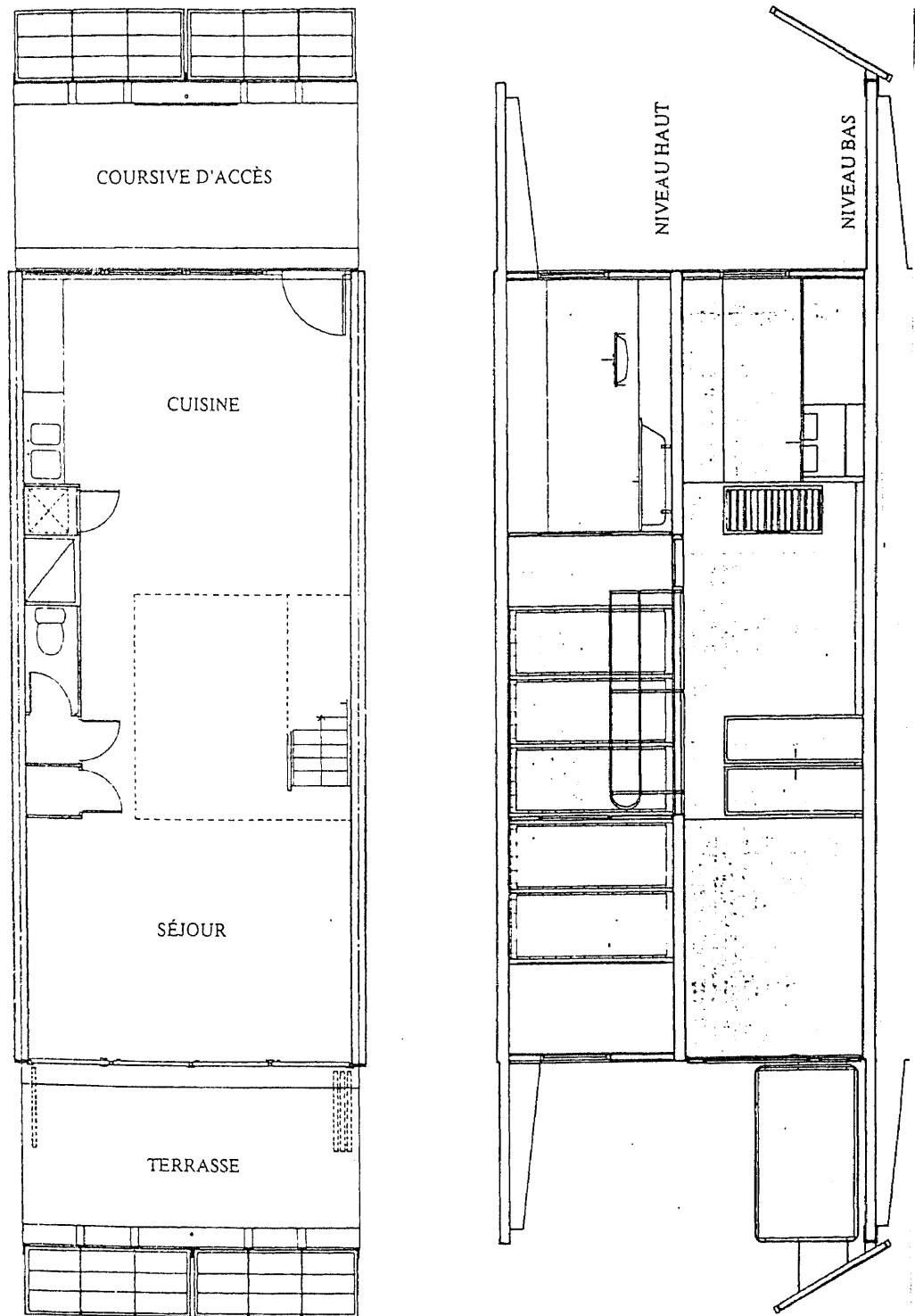


Figure 5.11 Jean Nouvel, Nemausus 1 building, unit plan and section, Nimes, France, 1986.

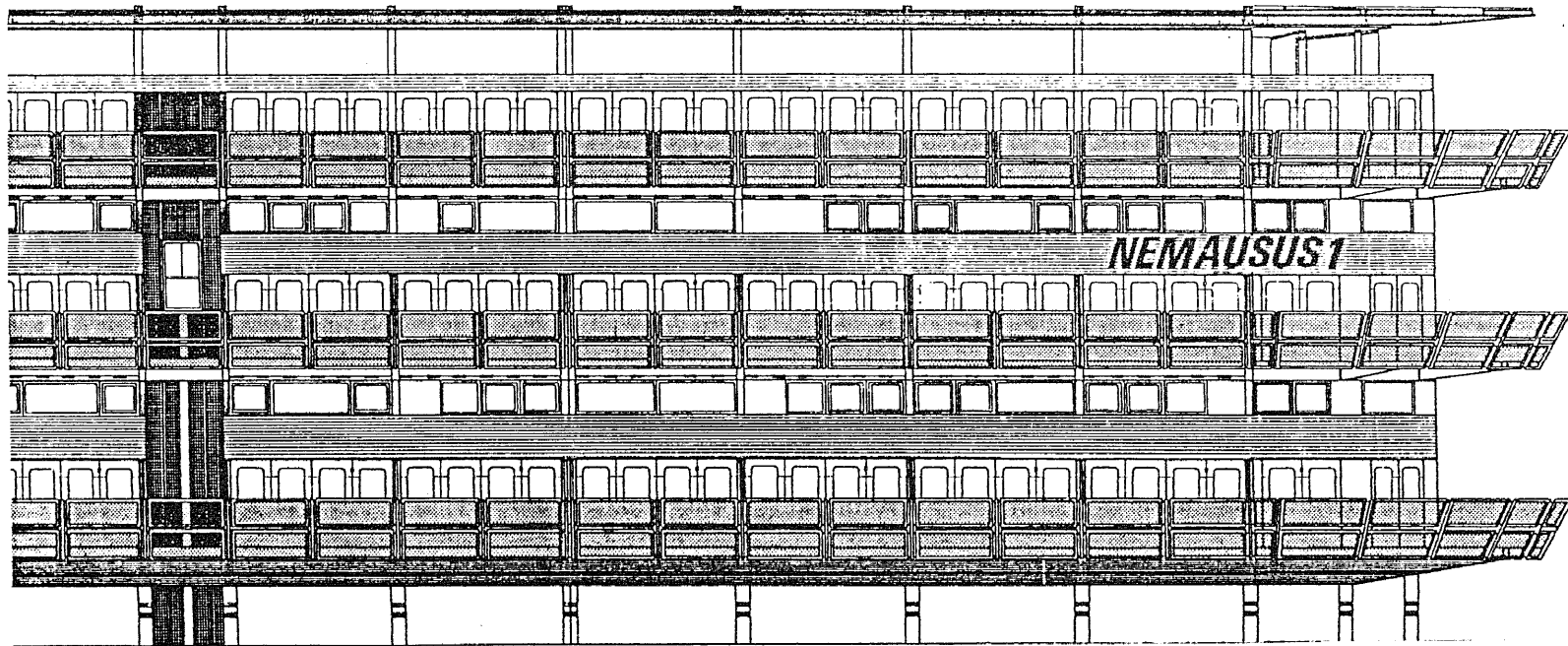


Figure 5.12 Jean Nouvel, Nemausus 1 building, elevation,  
Nimes, France, 1986.

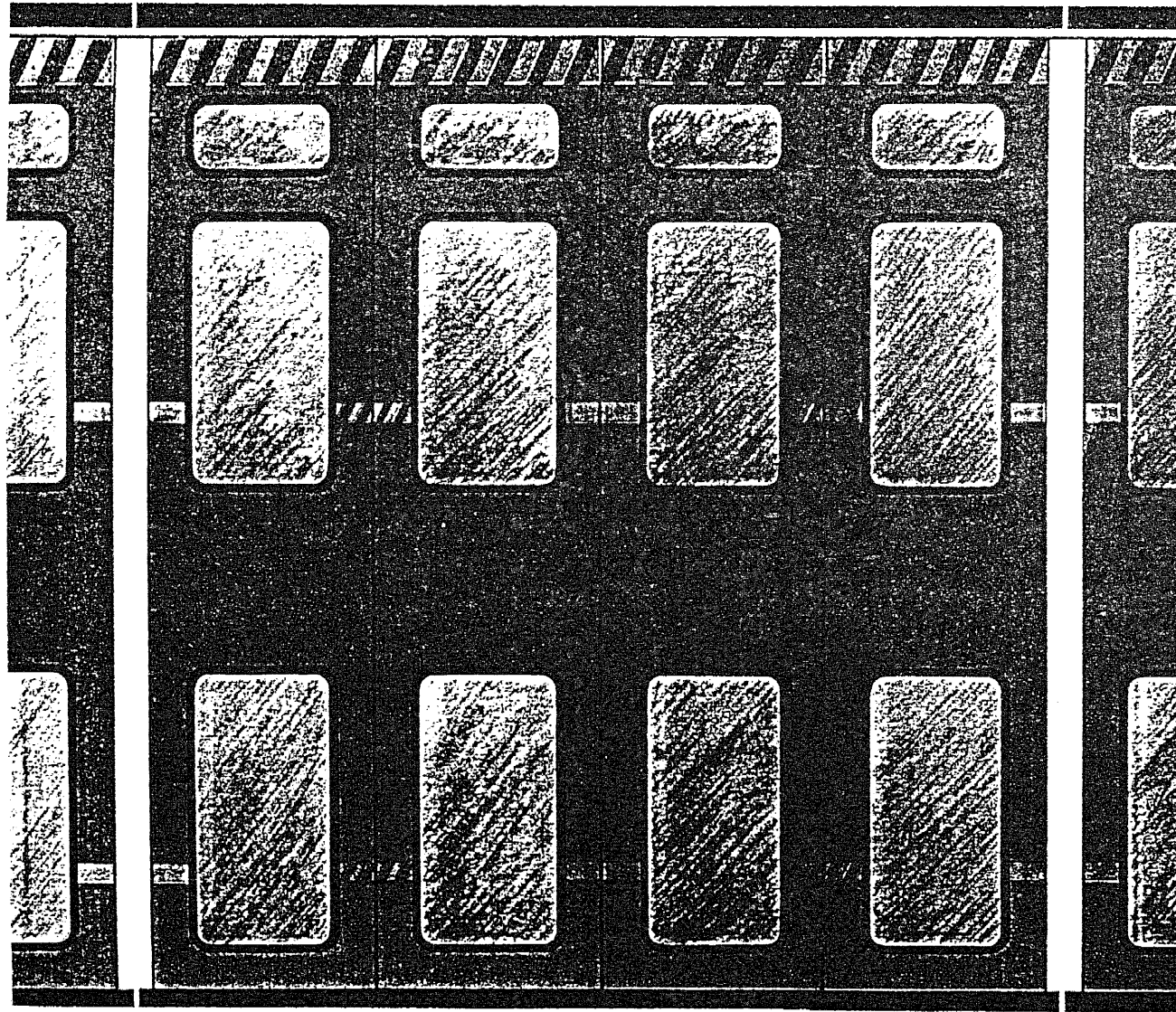


Figure 5.13 Jean Nouvel, Nemausus 1 building, elevation detail, Nimes, France, 1986.



Figure 5.14 Jean Nouvel, Nemausus 1 building, perspective view drawing, Nimes, France, 1986.

## Chapter 5 NOTES

1. Robert Hughes, Shock of the New, Knopf, NY, 1982, op cit, p66.
2. Benjamin, Illuminations, op cit, p217-42. My statements are analogous to the sentiments of Benjamin: specifically that the "manufacturization" of an artist hardly ever makes a manufacture of him. The artist's aesthetic education will always give him a means of dealing with this manufacturer that make manufactures more like him than he like them.



## APPENDIX

The architectural disenfranchisement is not so obvious as it is when looking at the economically disenfranchised groups in our society. The architectural is handed out with a smile. It comes via the civility and full color photos of manufacturer's literature handed out at luncheons they host in architectural offices. *They* hand out the disenfranchising pre-determinations, *we* proliferate it in its uncritical use. Manufacturer's can afford to buy architects lunch only because architects buy into their pre-determined categories and use: compelled to choose from among their irrelevant options: tailored for our predictable architectural styles. Which came first? Who is responsible? It doesn't matter, the architect is the one who must change. In order to freely investigate this, I developed the following un-footnoted text as a biography of an architect:

Self-Accusation

(after Peter Handke.)

or

*The Work of art in the latter stages of the age of mechanical reproduction.*

He applied. He was accepted. He went. He showed up the first day. He was present.

He was taught. He learned. He learned to draw. He learned to draw black. He learned to draw not-black. He was told to draw everything in between black and not-black. He drew things he was told to draw. He drew minor variations of

things he was told to draw. He drew only what he saw. He drew only what was "there".

He discovered color. He ignored color. He ignored color because he wasn't yet told what to do with it. He was told he doesn't know enough to know what to do with it. He put color aside. He thought he had many other things to pick up.

He was prodded. He was pushed in a particular direction unbeknownst to him. He was hardly encouraged. He was hardly motivated because he was hardly encouraged. He didn't go very far in the direction he was pushed. He went in other directions in which he was not pushed. He went far.

He went in directions that were not considered beneficial to go in. He went in directions he was embarrassed to discuss. He went in directions he wanted to discuss but did not know how to. He pretended not to be going in directions in which he was going when others saw him going there.

He occasionally went home. He visited family. He visited friends. He visited friends who were also being educated. He spoke with them. He spoke with them about many things. He spoke with them about things they had never spoken about before. He spoke with them about things they never thought they would ever be speaking about. He never spoke about what he was being taught however. He never thought to ask about what the other was being taught. He went back.

He went in new directions and pulled out. He went in new directions while already deeply involved in others. He went in new directions and was unaware he was doing so.

He travelled. He saw things he was told to see. He saw things he was told not to see. He saw things he was neither told to see nor told not to see. He deliberately refused to see things he was strongly encouraged to see. He saw things others had strong opinions about. He saw things others had no opinions about. He saw "new" things he had seen one thousand times before. He drew things. He was told to draw things. He drew things next to things he was supposed to draw but could not draw. He never drew what he saw. He never saw what he drew when he looked at a drawing he did. He remembers things. He remembers things he drew. He remembers things he saw. He remembers things to this day that he saw incidentally on the way to things he was told to see that he has since completely forgotten. He remembers things he neither saw nor remembers seeing. He remembers things he did not draw. He remembers those things well. He "completed" his travels. He went back.

He only now began to have ideas. He began to have ideas

others have had. He copied ideas others had. He became conscious. He had ideas no one has had. He had ideas that were the antithesis of those had by others. He began to have ideas contrary to the ideas of the directions in which he was still being vaguely prodded. He began to exclusively have ideas that were contrary to things he had just recently learned. He began to learn things only if he was able to register his own conflicting ideas about those things right away. He began to feel vaguely contrary.

He played. He played to spend the money he had earned by working "part-of-the-time". He played to relax. He found himself able to relax. He relaxed although he had done little to require relaxation. He had ideas he was able to forget by playing and relaxing more. He had ideas he generated while playing and relaxing but could not remember afterwards.

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He began to record. He began to record directions in which he was vaguely moving. He recorded in broken writing. He recorded in broken drawings. He recorded in broken speech. He could not find the means through which to record the ideas he had. He began elaborately prefaced statements that ended in mere two word, vague descriptions of an idea. He began protracted drawings he was never able to complete. He could not record all his ideas. He began to record differently.

He recorded by NOT writing and NOT drawing and NOT speaking.

He did not speak. He did not draw. He did not write. He did not commit any significant external acts for an extended period of time. He committed vaguely significant internal acts. He recorded within himself what actions there were within himself.

He internalized images of things that occurred outside himself.

He fixated on things. He fixated on people. He fixated on ideas. He created such massive constructions internally that they may have well existed. He did not go, even internally, in the directions in which he was still being mildly prodded by others.

He had been there "long enough". He had accumulated enough time, it was determined, located in a particular environment to be legally considered as having been present at that particular environment. He was considered educated.

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He worked. He worked in a manner that is know as working "full-time". He had never previously done anything in that sustained manner and to that extent generally considered something done "full-time". He worked enough consecutive months in that particular manner to be considered one who "has a permanent full-time job". He worked full-time in the field of his prior choice. He worked full-time in a field for which he was considered educated. He worked full-time in order to be considered as one who was participating in "his" profession on a "full-time basis". He worked full-time because he was expected to.

He could no longer obey only his own ideas. He was not afforded the opportunity to develop or express his own ideas while working "full-time". He was not encouraged to express his own ideas in their totality. He considered this fortunate however, as he was only capable of half-articulating his own ideas. He believed his own ideas were not that good. He recognized that his own ideas were now in a completely different environment, yet a hostility to them still existed.

He was not interested in playing or relaxing. He was not interested in working "full-time". He changed.

He had previously become adapted to an environment contrary to the nature of his ideas. He was now in an environment contrary even to the development of those ideas. He became interested in expressing his own ideas solely due to their being contemptuous. He conditioned himself to the expression of ideas only under contrary circumstances. He now saw no other things he could call "ideas" other than those things that were contrary. He now discarded ideas that were not contrary to something else. He became. He became a man.

- - - - -

He had been asked to draw. He began to draw. He was paid primarily to draw. He now drew things, was only to be interested in drawing things, and was paid only to draw things that were "going to be there". He was not to draw anything that was "not going to be there".

He had not previously been educated about "things that were going to be there". He began to look for things that were "going to be there". He found many pre-existing things that were "going to be there". He found many pre-existing things that were manufactured solely because they were "going to be there", regardless of where "there" was going to be.

He found that all of these pre-existing things were already

drawn. He failed to recognize the significance of the fact that those things had already been drawn. He failed to recognize the preeminence of the drawing over the thing. He recognized that many, many, many things had already been drawn. He initially failed, however, to recognize the significance of that fact.

He continued to draw. He was now cognizant of the existence of many things that were "going to be there". He allowed what he desired "to be there" to now become completely conditioned by what he had repeatedly found "to be there" somewhere else. He re-drew in his plans many of the things he desired "to be there". He failed to recognize however, the importance of the fact that these things were already pre-drawn by "someone else". He re-drew them anyway, and he inevitably, but always unintentionally, drew them incorrectly.

He continued to continue to draw to the point that he found the pre-existing things were already drawn so thoroughly that, aside from drawing them incorrectly, it would be impossible to re-draw them any better, more accurately, or more completely. He found that to re-draw a thing that had already been drawn was to draw that thing incorrectly. He finally recognized the preeminence of the drawing over the thing, when he isolated the fact that his attempts to draw things already drawn by "someone else" frequently got him into serious trouble.

He did not like that. He did not like drawing things that had already been drawn. He did not like the task of drawing ONLY those things that were simply "going to be there", yet still being incapable of drawing them correctly. He believed then that there was nothing he could correctly draw.

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He "managed projects" and he continued to continue to draw. He began to intentionally (rather than inevitably UN-intentionally) change the things that were already drawn in order to achieve "desired effects"; in order to "design". He initially felt it was necessary to change them in ways that it was not advisable, permissible or even possible to change them in order to achieve his "desired effects". He found that to be an unpracticable idea. He then researched and discovered only the ways it was advisable, permissible and possible to change things. He proceeded then to change things only in those ways it was advisable, permissible and possible. He found there was a simple, formulamatic way of doing that. This was considered to be "successfully managing a project".

He neither liked nor disliked doing that:

He had no particular feelings for it.

He could muster no rationale for changing things, one way or another, within the parameters of what was advisable, permissible or possible. He preferred, as a matter of fact, that someone else make those decisions about changes to pre-existing things; things that had already been drawn; although this was his largest responsibility. He found it did not matter to him one way or another what decision someone else made about those things within the realm of what was considered advisable, permissible or possible.

He became bored. He no longer found himself able to relax even if he were interested in doing so.

He had an idea. He discovered that these things that had already been drawn could be changed in all ways that were advisable, permissible or possible without drawing those changes. He found first that these decisions could be made in the written word. He found second that these decisions could be made in a written code; an "order". He then found that these decisions could be made solely by telling them to someone else. He liked that. He found that these decisions could be delegated solely by telling someone else that they were responsible for making them. He found that these decisions were everything when it came to "(drawing, or not drawing) the things that were going to be there". He found that these decisions could be made instantaneously, with documentation to come only later, and that many parties involved often preferred it be done that way.

He liked this. He liked that there could be very little to do, once research was done, to affect great decisions that remained within the realm of those things considered "advisable, permissible and possible". He found that there was no special responsibility or liability he needed to take on for the making of such great decisions. He found he now cared about these changes he had previously not cared about solely because he needn't take responsibility for them. He found he now cared about these decisions only because others involved in them actually assumed he cared about them. He found that both people and aesthetics could be jerked around in this manner.

He now began to make decisions about these things that were completely within the parameters of what was advisable, permissible or possible in only arbitrary and capricious ways. He began to make what were considered "weighty" decisions in a groundless, trivial manner. He did so only because he knew the people involved in executing those decisions would not only consider them inappropriate, but feel compelled to execute them anyway; and that the "thing

to be there" would still be a thing considered "advisable, permissible and possible" regardless of the irrationality of his decisions about it. He also began to make what people considered very insignificant, minor decisions in a serious, reflective, grave and time consuming manner. He did all that only because all those decisions, no matter what their degree of rationality, resulted only in a pre-existing, pre-drawn thing that was still considered "advisable, permissible and possible". He empirically validated the following fact: all the irrational decisions in the world could be made about a pre-existing, pre-drawn, "thing to be there" with out amounting to a hill of beans.

-----

He found the more he looked, the more he saw pre-existing "things to be there". He found the sooner he looked, the sooner he found pre-existing "things to be there" were already there before he. He found the bigger he looked the bigger the pre-existing "things to be there" were. He found the pre-existing things could combine to encompass entire projects.

He found the more he looked between the pre-existing things the less he saw. He found the more he looked for people between the pre-existing things the less people he saw. He found the more he sought out relationships between pre-existing things the more he found only himself in a "space".

He found the relationships between the pre-existing things occur in an increasingly grey, complicated, undefinable and generally irrelevant way. He found these relationships occur in a "space" between all the things that "are to be there". He found this space to be both trivial and overwhelmed by the predominance of the pre-drawn things. He found it irrelevant to the significant aesthetic value of any given project. He found however, this to be the area in which he was encouraged by others to take responsibility and incur liability.

He found he was encouraged to work in this "space" (as much by recent tradition as by the general undesirability of the job), by every party surrounding him in every given project. He found no one else interested in this space. He did not find it interesting solely due to that fact.

He found the nature and extent of the work necessary to take responsibility for this space to be: excessive, thankless, without proper compensation, unable to be assessed as to what would be proper compensation, basically consisting of choosing from among inconsequential "differences", pointless, invariably unable to meet its demands, invariably unable to limit its own parameters and scope on even the

smallest of projects; unending, relatively unimportant in comparison to other things; against his nature, relatively "fussy", petty, ignoble, time-consuming, costly, a "catch 22" situation, a no-win situation, a dead-end, non-productive work, and boring.

He found, as a matter of fact, that when pressed, each party responsible for a given "thing to be there" was extremely frightened and or traumatized by this "space".

He found as well, that no party responsible for a given "thing to be there" was particularly interested in the decisions that go into the making of any OTHER "thing to be there", no matter how significantly or extensively it comprised the "project at hand". (He understands fully that it is simply not in their best interest to care.) He does not find, however, that their lack of interest makes it in his best interest to care. He acknowledges as well that it must be a hell of a lot of fun to design the "things that are to be there", without a care in the world for any other "thing to be there", and repeatedly get away with it. He was more concerned about this lack of a larger view than ingratiated by the encouragement and "opportunity" to function as a permanent Johnny on the Spot in this "space".

-----

He had spent enough time. It was deemed that he had spent enough time participating within his chosen profession on a full-time basis that he was then offered the opportunity to qualify to be considered as one who is always, from that point on, completely within the profession, regardless of where, under whom, and how frequently he actually "participates" within the profession. He accepted this opportunity to so qualify. He managed to successfully qualify. He became a "professional architect".

He now carries the credentials to legally assume complete responsibility and liability for all decisions he makes. He has already found, however, that the majority of the decisions he made, which constituted the bulk of his "full-time" working responsibility, required no liability be taken for them. He had indeed already found that it is possible to complete an entire project composed of pre-existing things: things already drawn; without making decisions significant enough that responsibility be taken for them.

He believes this to be a desirable way to work in comparison to other possible ways to work. He believes this to be a positively progressive way to work in order to gain more meaningful responsibility and shed less significant responsibility in his chosen profession. He believes it's apparent shirking of responsibility would appear contrary to



what many believe to be progressive. He therefore believes it to be a "good idea".

He believes that the pre-existing things are drawn so thoroughly solely due to the fact that the world around those things is viewed to simply not exist. He refuses to be designated as that party responsible for this space that contains all the different, discrete ways in which each and every pre-existing thing is combined, coupled, linked, separated, elevated, lowered, aligned and/or juxtaposed. He believes he can be responsible for this space in a more over-all, general, and creative manner when acting at a greater distance from its trivialities.

He believes as well it would be unreasonable to avoid using these pre-existing things, regardless of the fact that each thing does not recognize the existence of any other thing or of the space between the things. He therefore finds he is interested in pawning-off responsibility for this complicated space to someone else or to no one else in particular. He finds he may be able to work better this way, standing away from; above; and out of range of this "space" in which he had been told to unite thousands of things that do not speak the same language. He finds that this is a space that any sane person would find a demented, senseless and unbalanced atmosphere in which to work.

He believes his "desired effects" can be achieved rationally within this irrational "space" relegated to him only by encasing all decisions about, and responsibility for it into the decisions made by others about the pre-existing things.

He does not believe this "space" represents his last vestige for control. He believes it represents his oppression.

He believes that this "space" is dangerous.

He believes that to continue to take "passive" responsibility for this space erodes his profession. He believes that "actively" taking NO taking responsibility for this space would be a sensible way to act at this time.

He therefore believes it would be desirable to take on entire projects solely in order to design them without taking on any liability for their "being there"; although he would admittedly be solely responsible in the general sense for "their being there".

He believes that this would be a difficult task. He believes, however, it is currently the only prudent task to undertake. He believes it is profoundly more plausible than acting within this space in ineffective ways, yet deeming

oneself to be responsible for it. He is completely intrigued by the prospect of undertaking this task.

He is going to undertake it.