

**Bacon on Metal:  
Situations, Objects, and Architectural Connotation.**

by:  
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**A Thesis  
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of**

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**The Department of Architecture  
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Winnipeg, Manitoba**

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**BACON ON METAL:  
SITUATIONS, OBJECTS AND ARCHITECTURAL CONNOTATION**

**BY**

**JOSEPH ANTHONY TROPFMAN**

**A Thesis/Practicum submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of The University  
of Manitoba in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree  
of  
MASTER OF ARCHITECTURE**

**Joseph Anthony Troppmann 1997 (c)**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Despite the occasional spark, architecture is largely complacent in communicating with its public audience -often serving as a vehicle for the internal debate of the cultural elite(while advancing capitalist endeavor). Attempts to defeat this tendency, by the Post-Modernists in particular, has resulted in an under developed architectural communication relying on historical allusion. Subsequently, architecture has failed to address pertinent issues facing society - lacking potency and relevance to the public which it addresses. An architecture must be developed that understands its inherent capabilities and limitations to communicate to its public audience through architectural connotation — architecture that is conscious of its implicit meaning — such is the goal of this thesis.

Semiotics, visual art, and architecture (theoretical and built) provide a framework that permit an analysis of architectural connotation. Semiotic terminology including, sign, denotation and connotation, are translated to architecturally relevant terms. Works from the visual arts and architecture serve as examples of how connotation applied to the consumption of buildings and art. Architectural theory provides a basis for a definition of architecture and building that establishes the body as the 'site of reception' of architecture. In turn buildings are examined as a series of 'architectural objects': situation, surface, massing, space, program, event, and body. It is through a methodical re-composition of these elements into critical relationships that permits the production of architectural connotation - in theoretical and built contexts.

These theoretical propositions are then explored in a series of visual experiments. Through collage and computer animation the architectural objects and their relevance to communication are further clarified. In conjunction with these experiments a point form text entitled the connotation cookbook is developed as a portable theoretical precis of the investigation. The primary intention of the cookbook is to provide a resource for the production

of architecture that is interested in communicating to a diverse multi-cultural society. The ideas presented in the visual experiments and the connotation cookbook are then implemented in the design of a 15 story tall, 1 block large, multiple program building entitled the Offidental-Restactory. This investigation provides a comprehensive examination of how architecture is capable of communicating and carries it through from theory to building.



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**BACON ON METAL**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Architecture was once dressed in the stories and myths of its temporal context, communicating with its public audience. By doing so architecture maintained a prominent and relevant position within the public realm. In the absence of such communication can architecture not lose its relevance? Although premature, Hugo's quote "This [the book] will kill that [architecture]" gained truth with the early 20th century invention of the architectural avant-garde who mandated the purification of architectural form. With the avant-garde, architectural aesthetics resolved to lose public content<sup>1</sup> and retreat to an internal discussion based on the formal manipulations of "pure signs"<sup>2</sup>. Arguably, architecture has failed to address pertinent issues and is therefore lacking potency and relevance to the public which it addresses<sup>3</sup>.

It is necessary to interrogate architecture foundationally, and to identify how it is able to communicate. Architecture that communicates blatant and clandestine messages must be examined and dissected into manageable components. Communication through visual language is commonplace in the fine arts. It is also of primary curiosity to many semioticians; Such a discussion is familiar to architecture as well. There are clues within each of these fields that must be scrutinized and used as a framework to investigate visual connotation. The interrogation is situated amidst borrowed frameworks, semiotics, politics, and ideologies (the inclusion of exterior notions in architecture is one clue of many that provides insight into how we communicate).

It will be established that architecture and building are distinct entities. Buildings are physical objects that are observed and used by the body. While architecture is established in the mind of the observing body by reading buildings within their contexts. The body is the 'site of reception' of architecture, it is only in the mind that architecture may be developed as a direct or inadvertent effect of the sensory consumption the built environment. It is in the presence of 'critical relationships' that narratives and intentions are able to emerge and be read by an

observing or participating body.

In architecture, critical relationships can be identified as existing between 'architectural objects'. The isolation and identification of these architectural objects provides a framework for developing and interrogating architecture that communicates. It is through the critical relationships of situations, surface, massing, space, program, event, body and composition that narratives in architecture emerge as legible texts.

This investigation is set into five distinct yet interdependent sections of inquiry, the breakdown, readings, the connotation cookbook, conducting experiments, and the epilogue: the Offidental-Restactory. The breakdown interrogates, art, literature, and architecture and proposes how it is that they are able to communicate. The breakdown then proposes how to build up an architecture of communication that is relevant within contemporary society. Readings uses the frameworks of the breakdown to interrogate numerous architects and their projects, further demonstrating the relevance of architectural objects and critical relationships. The connotation cookbook provides point form notes on the implementation of the ideas of the breakdown. Then conducting experiments introduces a series of visual experiments that attempt to further articulate situation, surface, massing, space, program, event, body, and composition. The epilogue then provides a complete follow through of theory to building presenting the Offidental-Restactory. The intention is to provide a body of work that demonstrates the relevance its investigations to both architectural theory and built architecture

**PART A: BREAK DOWN.**

## FRAME A - SEMIOTICS

Semiotics provides key clues to the nature of communication through language, both literary and visual. It is through the writings of Roland Barthes and Umberto Eco that the first framework of discussion is formed. It is necessary to examine their definitions and to translate these into an architecturally relevant set of definitions.

Semiotics plunges into the questions surrounding communication through language. As such, it has developed terminology that permits discussion and comprehension by breaking down a complex subject. To establish means of architectural communication, as previously set out, it is necessary to adopt terminology (in particular, denotation, connotation, and sign) that has been established in the field of semiotics, mostly originating from Ferdinand de Saussure. The definitions of these terms vary within the field of semiotics as well as in the field of architecture. And further, to be useful, it is necessary to develop definitions that are specific to architectural inquiry.

## SIGN

In order to communicate, whether through denotation or connotation, there must be a sign. A sign is composed of two parts namely, a signifier and a signified.

... the signified is the concept, the signifier is the acoustic image (which is mental) and the relation between concept and image is the sign (the word, for instance), which is a concrete entity.

Roland Barthes<sup>4</sup>

For our intentions here the terms sign and signage must be defined. Sign refers to the combination of signifier and signified as developed in semiotics. Signage refers to billboards, media, etc. that name an object or building with text or icons. However, the revision of a sign into architecture is problematic, as pointed out by Peter Eisenman.

In architecture, when you build a wall, not only is it really opaque, but its relationship to a signified is very difficult to articulate. A wall is a wall, it is not a word, it *is*, it is never *about*. It is the thing that the word "wall" refers to, it is the opposite condition of a word: words are transparent whereas walls are opaque.<sup>5</sup>

With only the presence of the signified, the wall, there is no sign due to the lack or invisibility of a signifier. As Eisenman notes, architectural communication is perhaps not possible with a singular architectural element, i.e. wall, floor, or column. In relation to language, architecture always acts as a signified, as shown in **Table A**. In order for architecture to communicate through a visual language, architecture must also be available as a signifier. For architecture to be available as a signifier it must be established as an organization of archetypal elements that provide identity and purpose beyond a single element. When this condition is met architecture is able to act as a signifier for a visually based language, as shown in **Table B**. When architectural elements are composed into a house, the image of the house can act as a

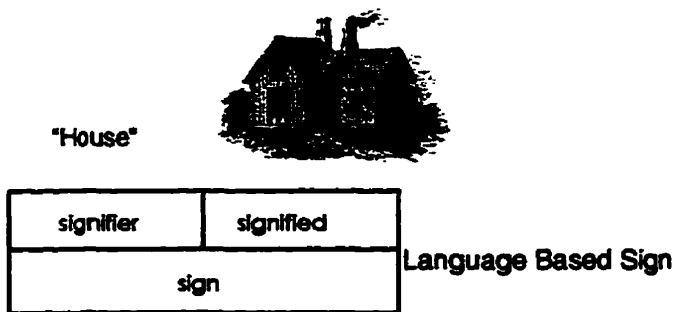


Table A.

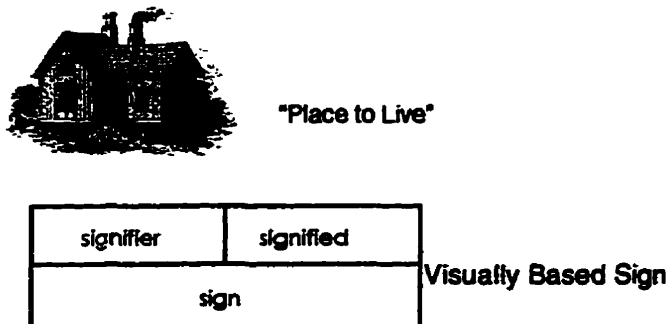


Table B.



signifier for 'a safe place to sleep, eat and live'. This sets up two types of signs; one with a literary signifier and the other with a visual signifier. Both of these signifiers are used extensively in architecture.

## COMMUNICATION

Both denotation and connotation are a primary way of conveying visually coded meanings through architectural form. Architectural denotation permits one to comprehend the urban fabric and formulate an educated reading relating common and personal knowledge to architecture. Architectural connotation allows one to embed a coded message in the experience of architecture to be potentially decoded by the viewers.

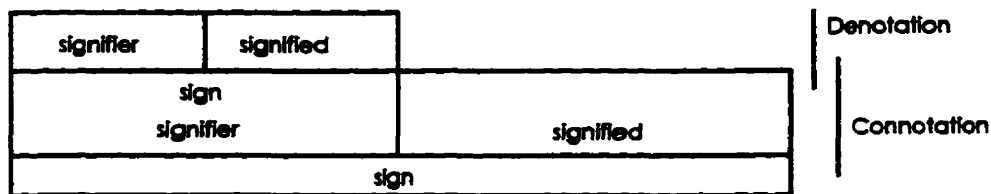


Table C.

## DENOTATION

A denoted message is a message that is coded in the primary plane of communication. The primary plane of communication is the initial sign, the linking of the word 'cat' with the physical cat, or linking the word 'house' to an actual house. Denotation does not rely on implication, innuendo, or extrapolation, these lie beyond the initial sign. This definition corresponds to the models of connotation and denotation that have been established by Umberto Eco<sup>6</sup> and Roland Barthes<sup>7</sup>, this model is shown in Table C. As will be demonstrated, this definition is appropriate for translation to architectural denotation. However, Geoffrey Broadbent<sup>8</sup> finds this definition too complex for architectural application, accepting a simpler definition by M. Pei. The limitations of Pei's definition of denotation, for architectural application,

will be established further on. As with sign, there are problems in the translation of linguistic denotation to architectural denotation when adapting the Barthes/Eco model. According to the Barthes/Eco model any sign where architecture is the signifier would be connotation. This is because architecture is always the signified to language, "that building", or "the Seagram's Building". The only model that accepts architectural denotation as denotation according to the Barthes/Eco model is when architecture is the primary signifier. This is to be considered pure architectural denotation, that is, when architecture is communicating through it's inherent visual language and its denoted message does not rely on literary language, refer to **Table B**.

In many cases it is not possible to separate the literary signifier from the architecturally signified. This causes the initial architectural signifier to exist beyond the initial sign, as in **Table D**. In accordance with the Barthes/Eco model, **Table C**, this places the architectural signifier at the level of connotation. Herein lies the problem of the translation of linguistic semiotics to architectural semiotics, but it is readily dealt with. When the condition exists where the initial architectural signifier is beyond the initial plane of communication, this is to be considered as Secondary architectural denotation.

In learning a language we connect signifiers and signifieds through formative experience as well as through the use of dictionaries and word of mouth. By being told the word "cat" and shown a cat we begin to learn a language. With architectural denotation the signified is related to the signifier by three methods; the organization of archetypes, the association of knowledge (both common and personal), and through assigned relationships. This is how we begin to learn the language of architecture. These methods can be present in isolation or combination, completing the sign through the linking from architectural signifier to signified, permitting the coding of a denoted message.

Archetypal denotation is based on visual language, this is pure architectural denotation, enabling architecture to be the primary signifier. The comprehension of archetype begins at the body. It is through an understanding of the use a particular organization of archetypes offers in

relation to the body.

... behind the plurality of the many forms in history lies a simple set of archetypes which we can call the grammar of architecture. These archetypes may be understood as images which can be identified in relation to both architectural form, function, and technology.

Thiis-Evensen<sup>9</sup>

The organization of the basic elements of architecture, including the roof, wall and floor, are a text to be read in relation to the human body (scale, function, and purpose). The reading of archetypal elements and archetypal buildings often relates programmatic function or usefulness to the human body to an architectural form. A gabled roof in isolation is an archetypal element that is read in relation to the body as a simple form of shelter from the environment. With the addition of the further archetypal elements of floors and walls one can make a suburban house, an archetypal building. The denotation of roof as shelter, wall as protection, and window as light, allow a person to determine what functions they can perform within a certain arrangement of archetypal elements. The size and proportion of opening determine whether they provide light, sight, passage through , or a place to sit. This is perhaps the base form of architectural denotation, relying on information that is imbedded within us and not necessarily provided by exterior sources, as much communication is.

It also happens that when we visit a palazzo like the one in Padua or travel through a particular city, we are subjected to different experiences, different impressions. There are people who do not like a place because it is associated with some ominous moment in their lives.....

Aldo Rossi.<sup>10</sup>

Architectural denotation through association enables collective and personal denoted readings of architectural forms. Association is a result of events, programs, and relationships being associated to a building through mass publicity, common knowledge, and personal experience. The understanding of an urban place or building is greatly effected by that which we associate to it. The initial meeting of a best friend or lover can make a specific architecture an important symbol in one's life. Architectural denotation through association occurs only at

the level of the initial architectural signifier, where the sight of an architecture (signifier) acts as a mnemonic vehicle of the event (signified). If the architectural signifier for the associated event is beyond the initial architectural signifier the sign is within the levels of connotation rather than denotation. This is where Pei's definition of denotation has fault. Personal readings of architecture are available on the plane of architectural denotation. This is in accordance with the Barthes/Eco model of denotation as in **Table B**.

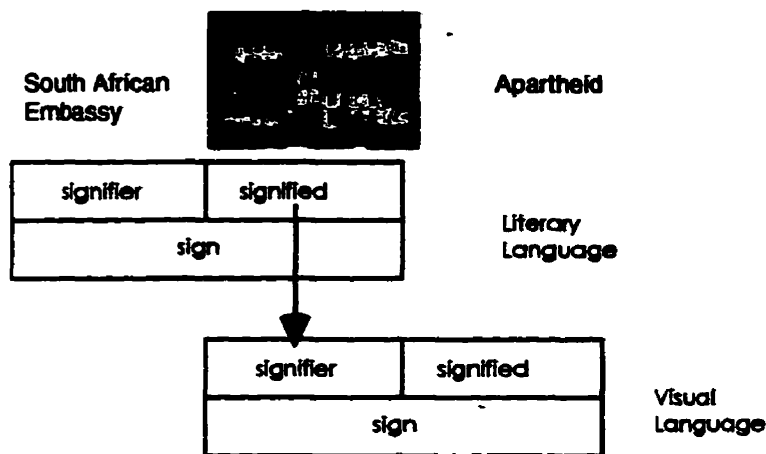


Table D.

The dissemination of information through the mass media greatly expands the realm of architectural denotation through association. For example, the knowledge of Apartheid in South Africa is made common through extensive coverage by the news media. At Trafalgar Square in London the South African Embassy is recognized through a literary sign ("South African Embassy" as signifier, the building as "signified"), this is secondary architectural denotation. **Table D** illustrates this specific instance of secondary architectural denotation whereby the initial architectural signifier is beyond the initial sign. The Apartheid becomes the signified on the plane of the architectural signifier of the building, denotation by association. It is important to realize how little control a designer has over associated denotation. The events and circumstance of the world are often mutually exclusive to a building, but they often effect how they are read. Politics and love are able to effect the reading of architecture even at the

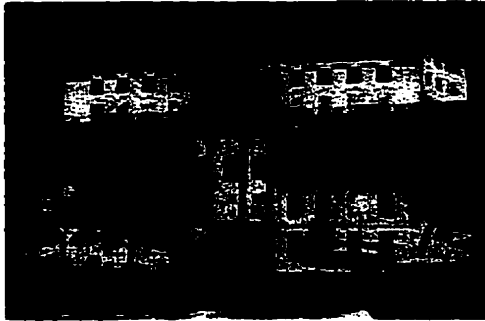


Illustration 1 and 2  
 Krzysztof Wodiczko. South African Embassy Projection. Trafalgar Square, London. 1985.

level of denotation.. Krzysztof Wodiczko projected a swastika onto the South African Embassy, a bold and controversial move that relies on the denoted message of two visual elements, the swastika and the building. The message that results from the comparison of the two signs is beyond pure and secondary denotation, it is connotation.

Assigned denotation is the result of the signified being assigned to a signifier by an authority, i.e., corporate, government, architect, or otherwise. Assigned denotation usually necessitates secondary architectural denotation rather than pure architectural denotation. This is because literary signifiers are usually used to assign the connections of signifier to signified, this is seen in Table E. Often, assigned denotation requires the naming of the building or the use of signage; the text of the signage acting as the initial literary signifier. Denoted meaning is assigned through applied surface, applied text or iconography, or the assigned association of program to an archetypal organization. Assigned denotation is well represented by monuments

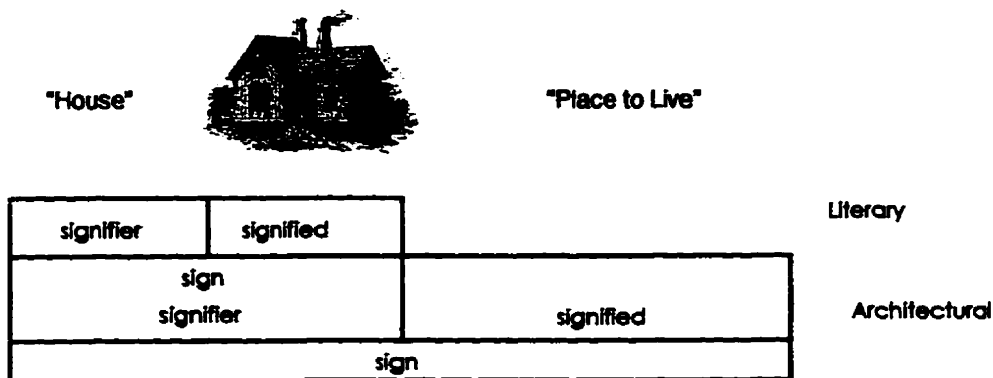


Table E.

and more recently through the establishment of corporate identities.

Assigned denotation is as simple as naming a building "The National Gallery", "The White House", or "The Seagram's Building". Alternatively, the application of Biblical events through relief sculpture also assigns a denotation of Christianity. Corporations have realized the power of assigned denotation and have used it to establish strong corporate identities. McDonald's has assigned denotation to the composition of an archetypal McDonald's building. As the elements are repeated, with minor variances, all over the world the linking of archetype to program is continually reinforced. Even if the building changed programs it would still be read as a former McDonald's. Assigned denotation is very much a part of how we read urban environments, link signifiers to signifieds. Assigned denotation is also possible at the level of pure architectural denotation. The repetitive use of architectural elements can provide a link between architectural signifier and signified. The consistent use of vinyl siding on suburban homes assigns a signified of a domestic program. Just as dictionaries provide us with a lexicon of language, so to does the built environment through its consistencies, and its differences. It is a contrived and controlled aspect of communication through buildings.

## **CONNOTATION**

There is connotative semiotics when there is a semiotics whose expression plane is another semiotics.

Umberto Eco<sup>11</sup> (Refer to **Table C**)

Connotation, meaning beyond the literal, occurs when the initial sign (denotation) is a signifier for another signified, see **Table C**. It thereby follows that architectural connotation is the presence of subsequent levels of signification beyond architectural denotation. As there are two possible models for architectural denotation, pure and secondary, there are the same classifications for architectural connotation, see **Tables A and B**. Subsequent levels of signification are what Barthes refers to as 'metalanguage', "a second language through which one speaks about the first."<sup>12</sup> It is through the metalanguage, which is synonymous with

connotation, "whereby concerns of one kind are written in the language of another." <sup>13</sup>

Barthes demonstrates the ability of chopsticks and their use to talk of Japanese culture in a broader sense.

Chopsticks have other functions besides carrying the food from the plate to the mouth (indeed, that is the least pertinent one, since it is also the function of fingers and forks), and these functions are specifically theirs. First of all, a chopstick - as its shape sufficiently indicates - has a deictic function: it points to food, designates the fragment, brings into existence by the very gesture of choice, which is the index; but thereby, instead of ingestion following a kind of mechanical sequence, in which one would be limited to swallowing little by little parts of one and the same dish, the chopstick, designating what it selects (and thus selecting there and then *this* and not *that*), introduces into the use of food not an order but a caprice, a certain indolence: in any case, an intelligent and no longer mechanical operation. Another function of the two chopsticks together, that of pinching the fragment of food ( and no longer of piercing it, as our forks do); to *pinch*, moreover, is too strong a word, too aggressive (the word of sly little girls, of surgeons, of seamstresses, of sensitive natures); for the foodstuff never undergoes a pressure greater than is precisely necessary to raise and carry it; in the gesture of chopsticks, further softened by their substance - wood or lacquer - there is something maternal, the same precisely measured care taken in moving a child: a force (in the operative sense of the word), no longer a pulsion; here we have a whole demeanor with regard to food; this is seen clearly in the cook's long chopsticks, which serve not for eating but for preparing foodstuffs: the instrument never pierces, cuts or slits, never wounds but only selects, turns shifts. For the chopsticks (third function), in order to divide, must separate, part, peck, instead of cutting and piercing, in the manner of our implements; they never violate the foodstuff: either they gradually unravel it (in the case of the vegetables) or else prod it into separate pieces (in the case of fish, eels), thereby rediscovering the natural fissures of the substance (in this, much closer to the primitive finger than to the knife). Finally, and this is perhaps their loveliest function, the chopsticks *transfer* the food, either crossed like two hands, a support and no longer pincers, they slide under the clump of rice and raise it to the diner's mouth, or (by an age-old gesture of the whole Orient) they push the elementary snow from the bowl to the lips in the manner of a scoop. In all these functions, in all the gestures they imply, chopsticks are the converse of our knife (and if its predatory substitute, the fork): they are the alimentary instrument which refuses to cut, to pierce, to mutilate, to trip (very limited gestures, relegated to the preparation of food for cooking: the fish seller who skins the still-living eel for us exorcises once and for all, in a preliminary sacrifice, the murder of food); by chopsticks, food becomes no longer a prey to which one does violence (meat, flesh over which one does battle), but a substance harmoniously transferred; they transform the previously divided substance into bird food and rice into a flow of milk; maternal, they tirelessly perform the gesture which creates the mouthful. leaving to our alimentary manners, armed with pikes and knives, that of predation.

Roland Barthes<sup>14</sup>

Connotation and denotation are products of the body consuming its visual, verbal and sensory surroundings. As products of the body, connotation and denotation ultimately exist only in the mind, at the 'site of reception.'<sup>15</sup> The ability to produce denotation and connotation, by linking signifier to signifieds, at the 'site of reception' can be said to be facilitated by the presence of 'displacement'.



## **FRAME B - CONNOTATION AS CONSUMPTION BY-PRODUCT.**

Displacement is the essence of communication<sup>16</sup>. It is reasonable to think that displacement facilitates the production of connotation. Analogously, if you submerge an olive into a beverage, the liquid level rises. The difference from the original liquid level to the new liquid level is considered as the space where communication occurs. Marcel Duchamp's Fountain can be analyzed in this manner. If the art gallery is considered the beverage, and the urinal the olive, it is the space created by their juxtaposition and the consumption of that space where the concerns of the Dada exist. Duchamp termed this space the "infra-mince", or the "infra-thin".

The infra-thin is simultaneously very thick and very thin. Its thinness is due to the fact that the actual difference between the spaces it connects is negligible, even in some sense non-existent; it is thick because getting across it is no simple matter ..... My revised fourth dimension, my infra-thin, is thus something lying between two-dimensionality and three-dimensionality. It is not the exclusive property of non-Euclidean geometries or avant-garde art but of cultures, in the selective build up of perceptually shared worlds; of the imagination, in its elaboration of virtual worlds; and of the quotidian experience of chance, delirium, necessity and fate.

Donald Kunze<sup>17</sup>

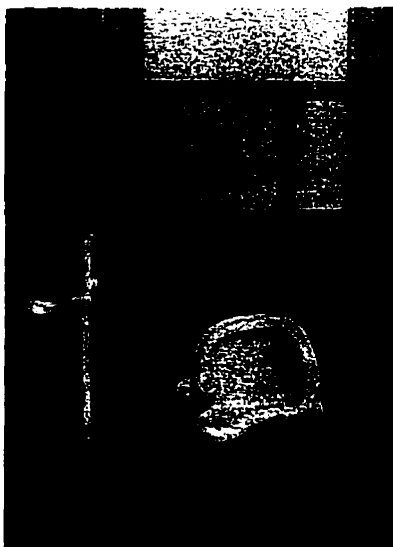


Illustration 3  
A washroom by Victor Horta

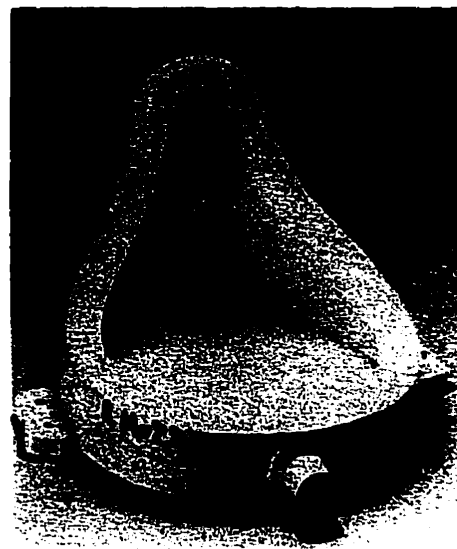


Illustration 4  
Fountain. Marcel Duchamp.

It is in the space of the infra-thin that the mind is able to produce connotation through the consumption of visual displacements.

The example of the urinal frames the establishment of the body as the 'site of reception'. The site of reception is where that which is considered art is produced and initially exists, although it can be spread through literary and oral communication. It is not the urinal itself that is art - it is the connotations that the mind produces through the visual consumption of the urinal in the gallery. The relationship of the urinal to the art gallery is a **critical relationship**. A critical relationship is said to exist when the relationship between objects (objects will be further elaborated shortly) facilitates the formulation of connotation at the site of reception (the body). Architecture is also fabricated in this manner.

Like human language in relation to speech, it enables formations to take place intelligibly, but it is never wholly identifiable with any one of the formations. We can only point to buildings, not to the architecture that make the buildings memorable, meaningful, and awe-ful.

Donald Kunze<sup>18</sup>

It must be established that architecture and building are not one in the same. A building is a physical construction of concrete, aluminum, glass - it is a material construct. Alternatively, architecture is mental construct made of a series of thoughts and deductions that are the product of the consumption of buildings. Architecture varies from body to body, lacking the definitive Cartesian nature of buildings. The trajectory of architecture can merely be pointed or oriented in a general direction, it is not defined by a finite x,y,z coordinate. Architecture is a cultural production, it is the result of a consciously designed artifact whose intentionality may be revealed through reading its underlying meanings. As such, it reflects the cultural conditions within which it is produced. Cultural understandings, that is, insights into the condition of the producing society, lie beyond the plane of denotation. Architecture is dependant upon the interpretations and interpolations produced by the mind as a by-product of visual consumption. Architecture is to be considered to exist at the moment that the mind links an architectural

signifier to a signified at the level architectural connotation, beyond architectural denotation, pure and/or secondary. Without architectural connotation there is no architecture, only building.

As Barthes noted:

Connotation is not necessarily immediately graspable at the level of the message itself (it is, one could say, at once invisible and active, clear and explicit but it can already be inferred from certain phenomena which occur at the levels of the production and reception of the message).<sup>18</sup>

It is difficult to say if architecture exists when the body is in a state of distraction<sup>20</sup>, or if the body must actively perceive a building in order to produce connotation. The majority of the connotations that will be discussed are produced through the discriminating and attentive minds of critics and theorists. Nonetheless it is the architects role to provide displacement and provide an open invitation of participation in the development of connotation. Architecture is established through the visual consumption of buildings; although architecture is not a necessary product of such consumption. The production of connotation at the site of reception relies on the viewer's active perception and the presence of adequate displacement at the site of the building. Hence, in order to establish an architecture the role of the viewer is as crucial as that of the architect.

## FRAME ( - PROFESSIONAL NECESSITIES.

Architecture must be able to address a public audience rather than an architectural elite audience, since any profession bears a responsibility to the public. This mandates an architectural communication that is accessible with limitations. This is to say that the architectural elite are to be appeased, but at the same time everybody that so desires should be provided a point of access into the architecture (beyond the physical and the denoted).

Analogously, the clever author provides a surface of interest and excitement (characters, plot, intrigue etc.) appealing to a wide audience. The author then invites the reader to look further and to examine the underlying connotations of the text; offering several levels of entry for the reader; each level providing further structures that permit and facilitate the comprehension of other thoughts, ideas and meanings. Facilitating connotation to a wide audience is often the mark of a great work of literature.

The novels of Italo Calvino actively invite the participation of the reader in the text. In *Invisible Cities*, Marco Polo relays metaphorical descriptions of cities that he has visited to Kublai Khan. Each story presents a city with a distinct identity; *Thin Cities*, *Cities and the Dead*, *Cities and Memory*, *Cities and Desire*, etc.. The reader is invited to read as a bystander, listening to Marco Polo speak to Kublai Khan. The reader is able to compare his/her own experiences in cities to those that are described. Slowly the reader and Kublai Khan realize that Polo is describing specific aspects of a single city, Venice the city in which they sit. This novel demonstrates the reader as a distant reader who is invited to produce connotation (continually link further layers of signifier and signifieds), but never acting as a signifier. In *If on a Winters Night a Traveler*, another Calvino novel, the reader is sutured into the text, made a participant and a co-conspirator in the creation of the story<sup>21</sup>. In alternating chapters the reader is established as a signifier to the text of the novel, a body that recognizes that it exists within the space of the novel. From the outset the reader is on a quest for a novel, originally *If on a*

*Winters Night a Traveler.* Slowly the reader finds themselves participating in a conspiracy of grand scale and implication. The reader is inescapably woven into the text, made a signifier to the text whose connotations involve and impact the reader. A reader does not have to be sutured to be capable of producing connotation, it is just a more intimate mode of interaction with a text.

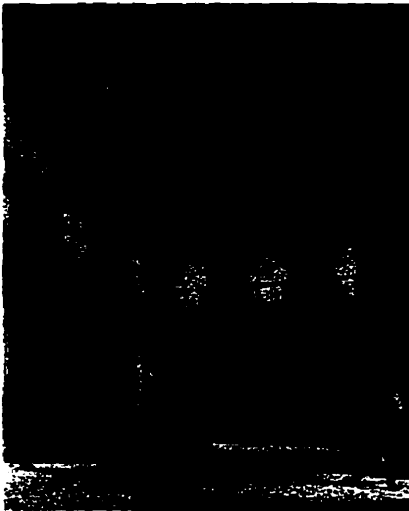


Illustration 5  
Melk Abbey, Library. Jakob Prandtauer.

As novels are read from the surface of the paper, people walk through, work in, and live in buildings, reading them in an altogether different manner. Viewing text from a different angle simply alters its shape and legibility, not what it is saying or what it connotes. Buildings can alter drastically from viewpoint to viewpoint, from birds eye to worms eye, potentially providing different compositions from a variety of angles. Through a phenomenological framework buildings can be seen as having an inherent ability to provide a text to be read, intricately weaving the body and the mind into the architecture, inviting the reader to participate in two capacities, as a 'distant reader' or a 'sutured reader'. The sutured reader recognizes his/her body as a signifier to the signified, whereas the distant reader recognizes him/herself as only a spectator. Suture is a condition and not a necessity, a building has the potential to suture one viewer, and not another (this will be covered in greater depth later). In order to assure the possibility of participation in either capacity several conditions of architecture must be

acknowledged.

Although the Eco/Barthes model of denotation and connotation may be understood to demonstrate a 'proper' reading of the connotation, connotation is never definitive. In the presence of displacement there are many possible readings, each relying on the knowledge of past experiences of the viewer since it is formulated in the mind. Because of this control over the reading of architecture is not absolute to the domain of the architect. The architect merely has the ability to plant seeds and to believe in certain possible outcomes. For the architect to assume a fixed meaning is to alienate potential viewers with an ultimate result of failure. Barthes continually emphasizes that connotation is culturally and personally based, any architecture must account for this. It is conceivable that at a different point in history a singular reading would be more probable due to cultural homogeneity. However the world that we know build and inhabit is a metropolitan one. Additionally, the backgrounds and the cultural variety of the people varies greatly in any given locale.

In art, in architecture as art, we have the topical freedom of being able to speak of one thing through another - in fact, to speak of everything, even through the trivial and abject details of anything that happens to be at hand.

Donald Kunze<sup>22</sup>

Architecture, as will be further demonstrated, can support dialogue on any subject within and outside its field. It is through the inclusion of topics besides architecture that the current cultural condition can be expressed through architectural connotation. Vitruvius included 'nature and geometry' while Le Corbusier concentrated on the inclusion of the 'machine' in architecture. In these instances the architect expresses the nature of their specific cultural milieu through inclusions that exist exclusive of architecture. Le Corbusier saw the 'machine' as an icon of efficiency and progress that would move to better society. He sought an architecture that he believed 'proper' for an emerging society of greater potential. Just as the act of publication legitimizes theories and beliefs, the construction of buildings supports the exterior inclusions which they present as 'proper'. Consider the greater degree of validity provided to

Deconstruction following the construction of Parc de la Villette.

An architecture of displacement is at times clandestine and only subject to internal relevancy on formal terms<sup>23</sup>. However it is important to examine the critical relationships that are more obvious or blatant to provide a more open invitation to produce connotations. To accomplish this the vocabulary of architecture must be more open and free, perhaps even accepting the kitsch and the campy. Numerous contemporary architects, such as Frank Gehry, Rem Koolhaas, and Branson Coates Architecture, have started to do so.

It is necessary to develop adequate displacement to continually perpetuate connotation. Such a goal substantiates the long term presence of buildings in the urban landscape, justifying the repetitive nature of confrontation by its users. The depth and complexity of any architecture must facilitate connotations that are multifarious. Connotations in architecture must accept their presence in a pluralist society and acknowledge the need to alter over time.

**NATO Building Regulation No.7**

Many gaps are left, awaiting creative misuse by their colonizers, anticipating errant autonomies and local takeovers.

Brian Hatton<sup>24</sup>

This mandates an architecture of physical and functional flexibility designed in a manner that encourages connotative possibilities. This is furthered by spatial chance and composition where elements are composed into critical relationships that may vary by viewpoint; framed by one element from the Southeast and another when viewed from the West. There is potential for providing buildings that dramatically alter through the course of the day from opaque boxes to transparent containers. The continuing misuse and adaptation of elements in architecture should be encouraged to provide critical evaluation and to identify societal changes in attitude and perception. Architecture should always be re-contextualizing, always be questioning, and always be venturing to find the new, such a proposition closely relates itself to other modes of cultural production. Architectural connotation desires to be dynamic as its site, the mind, is constantly in motion relative to buildings and other bodies.

Architecture is by nature a spatial experience. Any attempts towards connotation should be inclusive of the phenomenological experience of architecture. The facade is not the end of the architecture, it is merely the mediating element. It is only through continual exposure and spatial progression should any building be able to be fully consumed, if such a feat is possible. This is not to exclude those who do not venture beyond the facade from the full connotative potential of the building. It is rather to provide a reason to explore behind the facade to experience a building in its entirety. The importance of spatial progression is substantially greater when considering that the body, where architecture is produced, is always in motion, shifting, jittering, walking, or running. This represents a paradigm shift from thinking that meaning in architecture relies specifically on the fixed building.



Illustration 6  
ZKM Media and Arts Centre, Karlsruhe.  
Architekturburo Bolles Wilson.



Peter Wilson graduated from The Architectural Association in London during the rise of the exploration of narrative architecture by the staff and students of the school. Wilson's architectural vocabulary was based on submarines, ships, and ninjas, organized into narratives. Methodologically, the projects grew from figurative studies to buildings, buildings where separate components interact in relationships to establish narratives. Where mass meets mass, handrail meets wall, materials intersect, overlap, or intertwine, at these opportunities narrations take form. The forms are born from the figurative narrative and in turn the architectural narrative permits the reenactment of a narrative in the minds of the viewers. The most explicit narratives are found in the early work of Architekturbüro Bolles-Wilson, such as the Comfort in the Metropolis house and the ZKM Centre for Art and Media Technology in Karlsruhe. The ZKM Centre for Art and Media is a collision of military shipshapes and shipbuildings, each ship composed in a relationship with the next. In this project the vocabulary of surface and mass is blatant in its reference as the primary mass of the building is identifiable as a navy airplane ship. The Münster City library, like the ZKM project, is a collision of ships and submarines. However, the Münster City Library presents a further refinement of Wilson's narratives where the resemblance of the ships begin to fade away into building.

The first shipbuildings were purposely crude, iconic. The references were refined in the Münster library, which is made up of a fleet of ships and half-ships, each with its own micro-narrative. It is a private language. I think one shouldn't discuss it, and certainly never with a client. It's something to conjure with at night when the office is empty, because it's difficult to discuss a metaphor and a working detail at the same time.

We use economies as an excuse to make buildings stronger. For example, as the sketches for Münster get to 1:50 and 1:20, various little sub-plots come into being, such as handrails which might refer to some of our earlier furniture pieces. The closer one gets, the more there is to gnaw on.

Peter Wilson<sup>25</sup>

Although Wilson begins to shirk the communicative potential of his methodology the Münster library reveals the potential of carefully contrived spatial progression and depth to reveal a narrative. The Münster Library is a meticulously detailed and layered building where "themes unfold in time and space as one moves, occupies and uses the library."<sup>26</sup> The

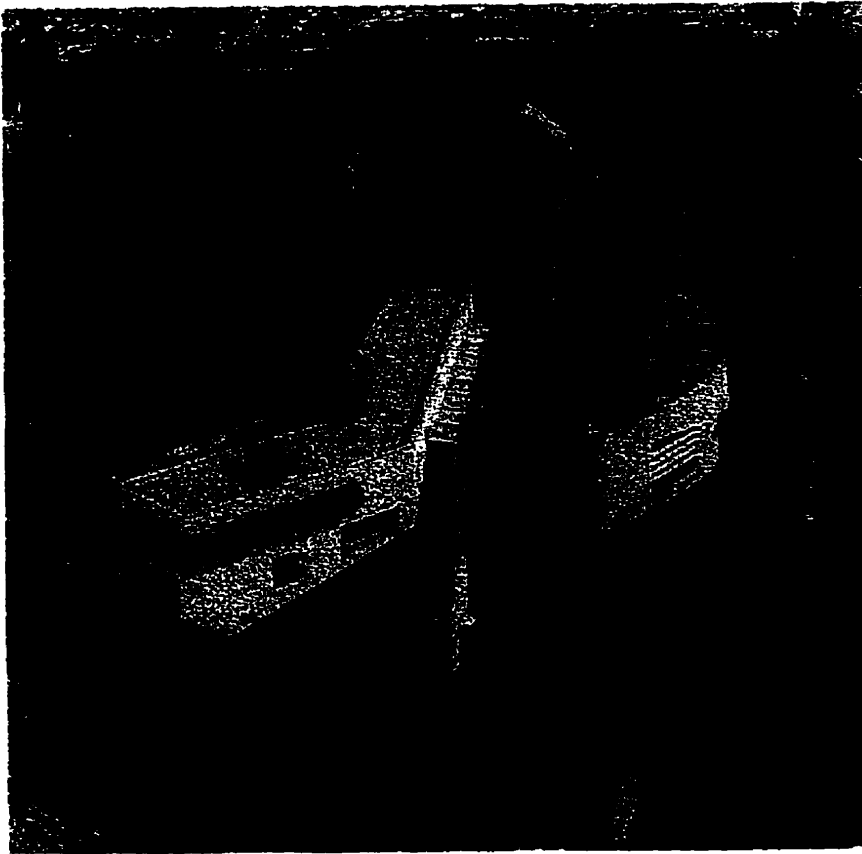
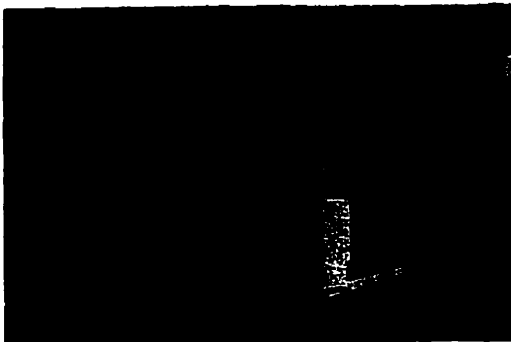
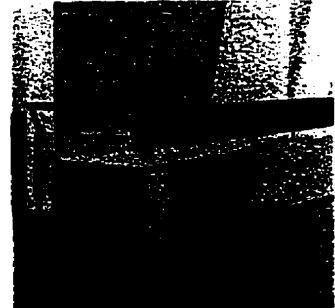
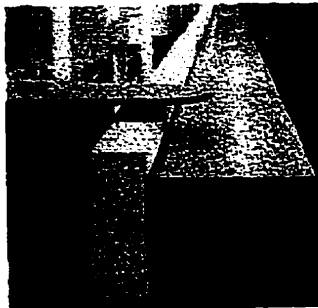


Illustration 7  
Munster City Library, Munster.  
Architekturburo Bolles Wilson.



Illustrations 8-11  
Munster City Library, Munster.  
Architekturburo Bolles Wilson.



complexity and high level of detailing on this building has been both commended and noted as the tragic flaw. A variety of materials are used in the project and find themselves bobbing and weaving, playing with each other in the narratives that Wilson admits underlie their origins. Particular materials take on a character, reacting in different ways with other materials. This is particularly evident on the interior. The critical relationships in the library are by no means blatant or readily accessible. However, it does provide a suitable example of the use of spatial progression and detail to establish narratives at a variety of scales from macro to micro. For the astute body there is a world of connotative meaning available at the Münster Library.

It is necessary for this text to recognize other attempts to achieve similar goals, one of which is Robert Venturi's *Learning From Las Vegas*. Venturi proposes the Las Vegas strip as a prototype for how architecture can once again address the public. The facade is put forth as the vehicle through which architectural communication must be reestablished. Venturi's new building type is the decorated shed, a box with a billboard facade. As much as this building typology is able to address the body when travelling in a car, it fails to offer any architecturally based reasoning for the pedestrian to enter. To drive by is to see all consume all that the building has to offer. In comparison to the depth and complexity of Wilson's projects, Venturi's decorated sheds come up short in their acknowledgment of what a building is and its communicative potential. Besides missing out on opportunities, Venturi's buildings lack the complexity required to be significant for any extended period of time making their relevance short lived.

It is argued here that the spatial experience of a building should include and intrigue the body. Bodies and other elements that surround and inhabit buildings are constantly in motion. At one moment a bank is business as usual, the next it is being held up by armed robbers. In each instance the potential for connotation is different. If you see Jack Nicholson sipping Earl Grey at your corner coffee shop your understanding of that architecture shifts, unless he is there every day. As political regimes rise and fall buildings are situated within different space.

The EUR in Rome, built by Mussolini, now exists within a different political space. Consider the reputation that the Nazis have provided Neo-classical architecture. This is the nature of architectural connotation that should be acknowledged.

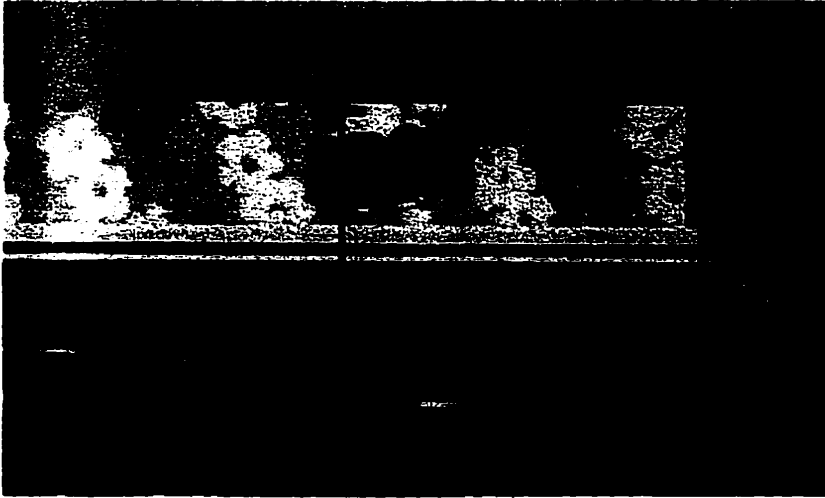


Illustration 12  
Best Product Showroom, New Jersey.  
Venturi, Scott, Brown.

## TEXTS

The communications of architecture, the meanings beyond the literal, are often referred to as texts. The texts of architecture are capable of involving exterior topics including politics, philosophy, and the human condition. It is argued that the text contains the responsibility, relevancy, and potential of architecture in regards to its cultural significance.

I would like to think of a text, whether book, paper, film, painting, or building, as a kind of thief in the night. Furtive, clandestine, and always complex, it steals ideas from all around, from its own milieu and history, and, better still, from outside, and disseminates them elsewhere. A conduit not only for the circulation of ideas, as knowledge or truths, but a passage or point of transition from one (social) stratum or space to another. A text is not the repository of knowledge or truths, the site for the storage of information (and thus in imminent danger of obsolescence from the "revolution" in storage and retrieval that information technology has provided as its provocation to the late 20th century) so much as a process of scattering thought, scrambling terms, concepts, and practices, forging linkages, becoming a form of action.

a text is not simply a tool or an instrument; this makes it too utilitarian, too amenable to intention, too much designed for the subject. Rather, it is explosive, dangerous, volatile. Like concepts, texts are complex products, effects of history, of the intermingling of old and new, a complexity of internal coherences or consistencies and external referents, of intention and extension, of thresholds and becomings. Texts, like concepts, do things, make things, perform connections, bring about new alignments.

Elizabeth Grosz<sup>27</sup>

The implications of architectural connotations are broad. As Elizabeth Grosz points out, the existence of an architectural text can potentially affect a culture. The connotations of architecture can transcend the functional intentions of the client, the connotations are able to contradict that which they contain. The texts of architecture that are produced by the mind may be inadvertent or contrived by the architect, neither being more appropriate than the other. It is however necessary that the architect is aware that texts will be produced and freely contribute to that possibility. It also necessary to realize that those texts will at times have little or nothing to do with architecture, but more to do with history, anthropology, science, pop culture, or politics.

The interrogation of architecture relies on comparisons, on the framing of architecture within both internal and external frameworks. If an artist uses certain mannerisms to communicate can these also be present in architecture? The result of the interrogation is yet another framework that is able to make sensible deductions of how architecture is able to communicate. Such a result will also facilitate the reading of the texts and connotations of architecture. These frameworks should also establish an attitude towards the proper, toward what architecture should be. Various architectures will be ridiculed some partially praised, and others previously ignored revealed as exceptional.

## **METAPHOR - AN ASIDE.**

"People invariably see one building in terms of another, or in terms of a similar object; in short as a metaphor."<sup>28</sup> The metaphor is by nature a displacement, it is able to communicate and establish critical relationships. However, the relative simplicity in which architecture has adopted the metaphor is not successful. In the 1977 text, *The Language of Post Modern Architecture*, Charles Jencks puts forth the metaphor as an appropriate method of re-establishing an architecture of communication. Often the architectural metaphor acts just as the one-liner in contemporary action movies such as *Terminator* or *Rambo*. Lines such as "I'll be back" pack a punch the first time around and quickly lose their appeal through subsequent viewings. Similarly, singular metaphors in architecture lose their relevance very quickly as they too are one-liners, lacking the complexity required to sustain repetitive viewing and usage. This is not to say that the use of metaphor in architecture is not acceptable, it is only the commonly accepted implementation of metaphor that is to be condemned.



Illustration 13  
TWA Terminal at JFK, New York.  
Eero Saarinen.

Jencks sees the intent of the building metaphor to be one that is clear and is appropriately based on the program. This is evident in his critique of the Sydney Opera House<sup>29</sup>. Jencks proposes a new name for the building, The Australian Cultural Centre, that would provide for a clearer metaphor. Returning to the idea of the one liner. Once the metaphor is understood that is the end of its use to the viewer, requiring only a momentary consideration. There is a danger

in this when considering that buildings have a permanence, they are seen and used everyday on a repetitive basis by numerous people. Meanings with singular intention easily bore and alienate a diverse metropolitan society.

There are further implications of Jencks "ducks" due to his proposed programmatic reliance of metaphor. In 1983 Nigel Coates wrote "metaphor was quickly discredited as the expression of obsolete contents."<sup>30</sup> Buildings change over time, change of program, change of situation, change of bodies. All of these effect the reading of a building. The singular metaphor that must be avoided to a building from rapidly becoming obsolete.

Following the Sydney Opera house competition, for which he was a judge, Eero Saarinen designed the TWA terminal at JFK airport in New York. This is a duck in the truest sense of Jencks' intentions. The birdlike form of the building relating directly to air flight, once again form follows program. On the interior Jencks relates the red carpeted walkways to the veins of the bird. The result is an easily identifiable and quickly consumed displacement, bird to building to program. The fast food of architectural communication. Metaphors should be used in order to create a more complex architecture that unfolds in space and time, unraveling through the curiosity of the viewer that it tries so hard to provoke.

## **FRAME D - THE NATURE OF THE OBJECT**

To further establish the possibility of connotation through visual discourse the term 'object, must be identified as a visual element and both the denoted and connoted codes that it carries. Barthes established the term object to facilitate his investigation of visual connotation in photography<sup>21</sup>. The term object encompasses both the denoted and connoted codes of an element. An object is an element that is visually recognized, such as an icon, an action, or a spatial configuration, and the meaning or understanding, both denoted and connoted, the element holds within its historical context, whether individual or collective. The Object widens the scope of inclusion, allowing connotation in conjunction with denotation, accepting the possibilities of visual elements. The importance of the object is that it accepts that denotation is rarely available without connotation, particularly in relation to other modes of cultural production. Through breaking down architecture into a series of identifiable architectural objects the task of composing displacement is eased.

The code of the connoted system is very likely constituted either by a universal symbolic order or by a period of rhetoric, in short by a stock of stereotypes (schemes, colours, graphisms, gestures, expressions, arrangements of elements).

Roland Barthes<sup>22</sup>

Architectural language, particularly since the modernist avant-garde, is limited in its use and manipulation of objects. James Wines put forth the consideration of "pure use" to free architecture of formal manipulations and to establish public communication<sup>23</sup>. Wines' transformation of "assigned use" to "pure use" is a consideration of functional program as object. For example in his High-rise Housing project, where suburban homes are inserted into an office tower without a curtain wall, the tower and the houses are read as objects. The relationship of these two objects provides a critical relationship that is available for the consumption of the body. It is in the spirit of communication that Wines designed this building. The further understanding of architectural elements as objects encourages compositions that



facilitate connotation, and a vital architecture. James Wines establishes the ability to use functional program as object. However, there are further architectural elements that lend themselves to this purpose including; *situation; surface, massing, and space; program, event, and body; and composition.*

The composition of objects can facilitate connotation through the production of architecture at the body. Buildings never begin as a singular object, they are always composed of many objects. This makes a building a **conglomerate object**, an object that is composed of other smaller objects. Consider the South African Embassy in London as a conglomerate object. The building itself composed of surface, massing, and space, all of which are based on a neo-classical vocabulary. The Apartheid contributes a significant event as an object, while the diplomatic activities of the building introduce program as an object. If this is one conglomerate object lets introduce a second conglomerate object, the swastika. When considering the swastika, visual signifier, and the Nazi party, signified, quickly there are connotations of the events and circumstances of World War II. Now place these two conglomerate objects in a relationship and we have a fresh composition of objects ready for visual consumption.

As culture expands through continuous production of art, architecture and literature, the number of objects steadily increases. As new compositions of objects are presented and subsequently consumed, new compositions become objects in themselves. This is the condition of continual cultural production, a result of history both recorded and within the memory. Culture is itself a palimpsest, its history is used as a stepping stone to attain new thoughts, it is an infinite self perpetuating journey. Temporally, it is natural that connotations of cultural productions take on greater complexity with multiple layers and multiple interpretations. It is the nature of the palimpsest to rely upon that which it adds to as culture relies on the objects that are already formulated and understood. Culture does not have a logical conclusion in the sense that there is no end without the extinction of the human race. New thoughts and

**ideas continually emerge and merge within the flux of our urban existence. The products of our culture represent our thoughts, beliefs and values at any given time. It is necessary for architecture to continually investigate, question and to address new forms and organizations that embody new connotations, relevant to its societal situation.**

## FRAME E - ARCHITECTURAL OBJECTS

### SITUATIONS

My practice of architecture depends on the manipulations of signs drawn from the environment and organized into dynamic spatial forms. Most signs, however clear - for example, a no-entry sign or a red traffic light - have an inherent irony, especially when moved into a new situation.

Nigel Coates<sup>24</sup>

A situation is that which encompasses a real or imagined realm, either physically, visually, or ideologically. Situations continuously encompass other situations and, at times, block other situations from view. For a situation to be consumed by the body it must be available either visually or mentally within the cone of vision or within a frame of mind. The placement of an object within a situation can form a critical relationship such as the urinal of Duchamp's Fountain to the art gallery in which it hangs. By altering the situation of the urinal, Duchamp has altered the connotations formulated by the consumption of the urinal. Methodologically, situation is to be considered as an object, as an element that is capable of carrying a denoted and connoted code. Buildings are able to act as situations by framing views and events just as they are within situations both physically (site) and mentally (historical, political, and ideological).



Illustration 14  
Bong Cafe, Tokyo.  
Branson Coates Architecture.



Illustration 15  
Bohemia Jazz Club, Tokyo.  
Branson Coates Architecture.

A site and the history of the site (associated denotation) acts as an object against which a building is read. Monuments are often placed on sites where significant historical events have occurred. In Oregon the Lewis and Clark Turn around commemorates the location where the famous explorers found the Pacific Ocean and turned back towards the East. Other events of historic significance, such as battles, meetings, or deaths, can provided a site with meaning. Often such sites are subject to annual pilgrimages or other rituals because of their historical and cultural significance.

Art galleries and museums explicitly illustrate the ability for buildings to situate other elements. Without the privileged context gallery Duchamp's ready-mades are substantially less successful. Through careful consideration of the other architectural objects, situations can be composed to provide a variety of displacements. Rafael Moneo's National Museum of Roman Art in Merida, Spain situates a large collection of Roman marble sculptures. The situation he provides is one of empathy: the space and massing is Roman in gesture, grand in scale, and uses Roman building technology; the surfaces of the building are in brick with variations in tone that reflect the gradations in the marble sculptures. Although the Roman sculptures are in



Illustration 16  
National Museum of Roman Art, Merida, Spain.  
Rafael Moneo.



Illustration 17  
Gehry Residence, Santa Monica.  
Frank O. Gehry.

Spain they feel at home in Moneo's building; absorbed and annunciated at the same time.

Where Duchamp uses shock Moneo uses sympathy in the generation of critical relationships.

This introduces an important consideration of the nature or extent of displacement.

Rather than using Duchamp as an example of shock, Frank Gehry's own house will serve as the architectural equivalent of shock better. Shock is capable of forcing the body out of distraction, or even as a force that threatens the body(subject)<sup>35</sup>. As such, shock is offensive and as it threatens the body it is natural for the body to reject it, at least at first. Gehry's use of materiality threatens the preconceptions of the typical passer-by. Moneo's example of sympathy is subtle and quiet, less apparent to those who are not alert, not clandestine but at the same time not boldly stated. Moneo's building is more likely to be observed, at first, in a mode of distraction than the Gehry house. In both instances repeat exposure, or familiarization contributes to the ability for the body to identify and read the critical relationships. Shock tends to wear off from continued exposure (consider how violence, sex, and coarse language intensifies on television, one boundary falls, then another). Similarly, repeated exposure to the subtle and unfamiliar allows the details to emerge. The brick wall that was invisible before becomes readily apparent, and the relationship between the sculptures and the walls become revealed. Shock and sympathy are different, connoting different attitudes towards their own interests. The shocking tends to have a more immediate effect, causing uproar and possibly outrage. Meanwhile the subtle operates at a clandestine level, requiring repetitive exposure to

provide familiarity. Back to situations.

In the sense that galleries show how buildings can situate elements within, buildings are also able to situate elements on the exterior through fenestration. This allows the building to establish a critical relationship between itself and that which it frames. For example, in downtown Los Angeles there is a pink stucco box office building, it is named the Ronald Reagan Building. Facing the building, across an empty lot, is Skid Row; an area with a large population of homeless people and one of the highest murder rates in the United States. The actions and activities of Ronald Reagan are associated with the building carrying his name. As the President of the United States Ronald Reagan built a reputation as a Republican 'war hungry' politician eager to support big business and capitalism. He is not known for lending to support social programs, health care, or any programs beneficial to the down and out of his country. Now the less fortunate of Skid Row literally live in the shadow of his legacy. This also introduces the ability for an ideology to situate buildings, directly effecting architectural connotation. Through a Marxist ideology the composition under discussion serves to support Marxism over Capitalism. The Ronald Reagan Building demonstrates how the rich benefit, and Skid Row demonstrates the human suffering of poverty due to a lack of jobs and social equity. Situation within situation, within situation. Block one from view the connotations change once again. A new narrative sequence is formed.

Ideologies are carried by the body. Every body, to one extent or another, holds its own ideology. This ideology provides an all encompassing situation that in effect frames what the body sees and consumes. A body with a post-modern ideology produces different connotations than a body with a Modernist ideology, or a feminist ideology. Critical relationships are established by architects with certain dispositions to begin with, it is usually bodies of similar ideology that praise those buildings. The Villa Savoye is important to both a Modernist and a Post-Modernist. The Post-Modernist uses the Villa Savoye to support his/her causes and beliefs by demonstrating the fallacies of Le Corbusier; revealing the fallacy of the

plastered brick walls; revealing its inability to age with dignity; exposing the ineffectiveness of Corbusier's machines in architecture. Meanwhile the Modernist believes the Villa Savoye to be a statement of what is right, a composition of better, cleaner, more efficient life expressed through its consideration of the machine, its division of man and nature, and its clever planning that considers the car.

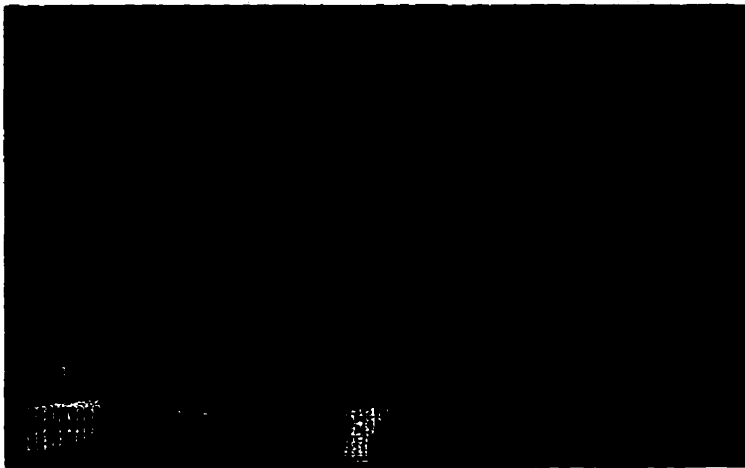


Illustration 18  
Hopper Residence, Venice, California.  
BAM Construction and Design.

Buildings are also able to situate elements on their exterior. This is a necessary condition of architectural photography where a focus or a particular framing occurs. Through this we are able to realize that buildings can situate elements on their exterior. Consider two objects, one of which situates the other. The first conglomerate object is a white picket fence situated by a baby blue two story suburban home with a gabled roof. This is a typical scene that connotes the American Dream of domesticity. Now re-situate the white picket fence in front of a corrugated metal wall with a door, no windows and a shed roof. This is BAM Construction and Design's Hopper Residence in Venice, California. In this composition the reading changes, the picket fence becomes trivial in its ability to divide space and protect the home in comparison to the imposing face of the home. The picket fence is still able to denote "home", but is left with connotations of its uselessness in a neighborhood that is informed by emerging values.

Buildings, by their nature, frame the everyday lives of the inhabitants of the city. As the

events of the city (fights, lunch, love, despair, etc.) happen they are framed and situated by buildings and urbanity. The city acts as a backdrop and a stage for everyday life. In Paris, people watching is an activity that is promoted by the arrangement of chairs and tables at sidewalk cafés. All of the seating faces the street, and patrons rarely face each other. The streets are a theatre, watched daily. The architectural implications of this are made more apparent by The Office for Metropolitan Architecture with the Kunsthal in Rotterdam. Here the multiple activities of the building frame and juxtapose one another. The East elevation suggests a lecture hall sitting atop a café, the café is beside a road, over which is a public thoroughfare through which we can see the art gallery. This building demonstrates the ability of a building to situate activities within itself. It explores this not only on the East elevation but through the trajectory of passages through the building. The art gallery can be seen from the road, through the thoroughfare, with the thoroughfare as a backdrop, or with the road as a backdrop. There are similar conditions available for all of the activities within. The organization of program and circulation is contrived to provide the possibility of fluctuating displacements. The implications of this on architectural connotation will be discussed later.

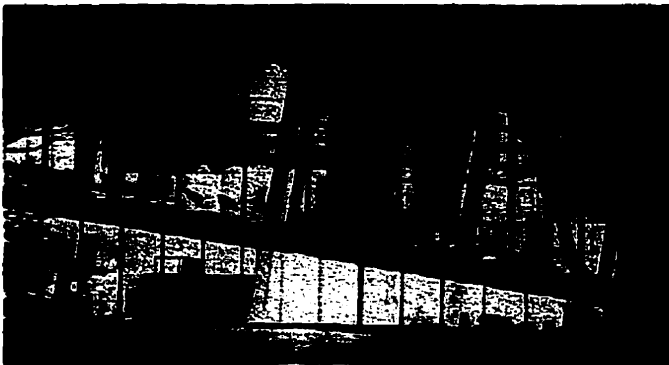


Illustration 19  
Kunsthal, Rotterdam.  
The Office For Metropolitan Architecture.



## **SURFACE, MASSING, AND SPACE**

### **SURFACE**

Surface defines mass, divides space, and provides the opportunity to be articulated and composed. There are many ways in which surfaces lend themselves to be exploited as objects. Phenomenologists recognize surface shape (concave, convex, etc.) to have connotative possibilities<sup>36</sup>, while Gothic cathedrals use relief sculpture to apply the tales of religion to their walls. Technology has furthered this potential, notably in Jean Nouvel's Institut de Monde Arab with a precise mechanical skin, and Toyo Ito's Tower of Winds and the Egg of Winds, both of which examine the ephemerality of surface, one through lighting and the other through video and architectural screens. Materiality is another prevalent use of surface as object. Materials have gained unique understandings as objects, acknowledging fine stone as luxurious and expensive and corrugated metal as cheap and industrial; subsequently linking surface to program. The Modernists attempted to state surface as neutral, to strip walls down to pure signs (signifiers without signifieds)<sup>37</sup>. The intention of this is to make formal explorations that are only architectural in nature. Connotations and displacements are still present but are clandestine, visible only to architects and those interested in Modernist architecture. It will be demonstrated that surface can be composed in critical relationships to other objects, situations, and/or within a single surface.

The surfaces of buildings and monuments have long served as records of politics,



Illustration 20  
Trajan's Column, Rome.

battles, and religion, inclusions from the exterior of architecture. The surfaces of Gothic Cathedrals provide a readily accessible ornamentation based on the historical record of Christianity. The building acts as a physical manifestation of biblical events that are presented in a visual manner for those who cannot not read Latin. Trajan's Column is adorned with the tale of the Dacian war, commemorating and perpetuating the Roman conquest of the Dacians. In this light Hugo's quote, "This will kill that," takes on a particular significance. In Toronto the Old City Hall has a surface application that reveals more possibilities of architectural connotation through surface. During the construction of the building one of the sculptors had a major disagreement with City council. Out of rage he carved the faces of the councilors onto the building with their eyes bulging and their tongues hanging from their mouths. They remain to this day. This use of surface explicitly demonstrates architecture's ability to include personal politics. More importantly this example shows how architecture is capable of acting against structures that made it possible or structures that a building contains. All of these examples demonstrate an explicit inclusion of exterior sources in order to provide displacement. These are all uses of surface articulation, a possibility shunned by the Modernists.



Illustration 21.  
Old City Hall, Toronto.

The white washed wall is an attempt to purify the dialogue of buildings to the purely architectural. The walls no longer speak of politics or religion, but instead speak only of architecture as 'pure signs'. A 'pure sign' is a sign with a signifier and no signified, a sign

without meaning. El Lissitzky's Prouns present a purified play of forms that investigate a machine architecture of dynamism. The Prouns avoid program, event, and body, and are composed only of mass and surface. Their dialogue is intended to be about architecture for architects, in which wider access is severed. However, even though the twentieth century avant garde denied the connotative abilities of the purified wall there is a dialogue present, that is clandestine and open only to the cunningly astute.

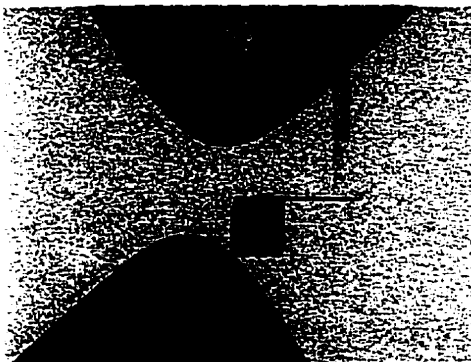


Illustration 22  
Proun 23 No. 6.  
El Lissitzky.

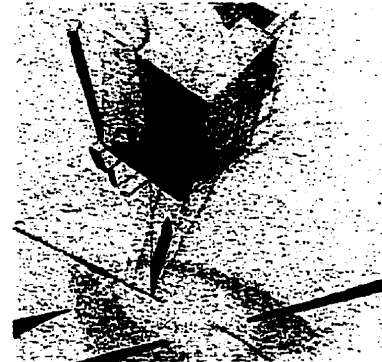


Illustration 23  
Proun 5a.  
El Lissitzky.

But clearly the white wall is far from neutral and silent. For the modern architect, it speaks volumes. Indeed, nothing is louder. The white wall is precisely not blank.

Mark Wigley<sup>28</sup>

In *White Walls, Designer Dresses* Mark Wigley provides ten takes on the architectural connotations of the white wall. Wigley argues that the white wall is in fact not a 'pure sign' and that it is based on exterior inclusions into architecture.

The white surfaces that traditionally mark cleanliness do just that, they mark rather than effect it. The whiteness of supposedly hygienic spaces originated with the garments and cosmetic powders that were periodically changed in order to take the sweat of the body out of sight but not to remove it. Putting on a new white shirt was equivalent to taking a bath. As Georges Vigarello argues: "it was the treatment of clothes which, from the sixteenth century, created a new physical space for cleanliness . . . the whiteness and renewal of linen took the place of cleaning the skin." The linen garments that were once hidden beneath layers of clothing slowly came to the surface to represent the condition of the body that they no longer even touch. The ideal of cleanliness that Le Corbusier appeals to originated as a style of clothing and a certain attitude toward clothing in general. It established a social order rather than a physical one. Even when laws were passed that controlled the

amount of ornamentation on clothing, the white fabric was able to articulate levels of social distinction. Cleanliness was a visual effect that marked one's membership of a social class rather than the state of one's body. The book of hygiene was a kind of label that classifies the person who wears it.

Mark Wigley<sup>39</sup>

The white walls of Le Corbusier that are supposed to be so silent are indeed not, they speak of social class, and of hygiene, but a hygiene based on fashion and not personal health. The stripping down of the walls is only visual, they are once again dressed in white, clothed in purity and made sanitary. The wall of 'pure sign' was never to be, it was always a sign, but the signified is clandestine. The Modernists deliberately attempted to conceal the layers of connotation that exist in their work, especially the significance of the white washed wall. As Wigley points out, "In a strange twist, the white wall was carefully silenced in the very moment of its success."<sup>40</sup> They did not intend to speak to a public, only provide them with a place to live and work. When one digs deep enough there is always connotation, even when there is said to be none.

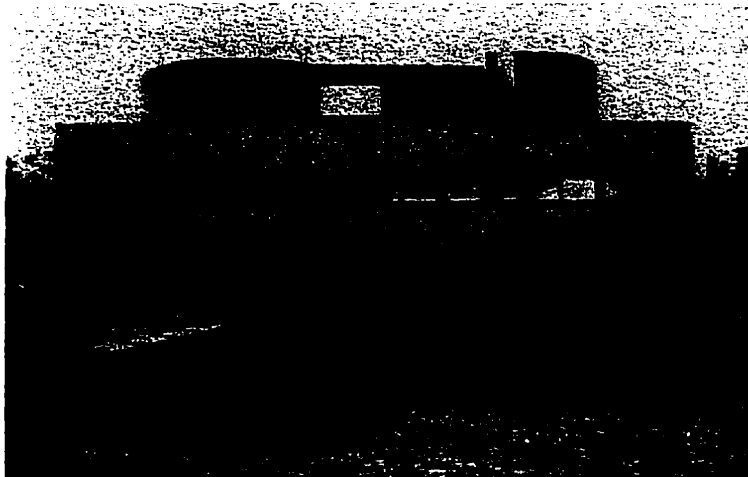


Illustration 24  
The Villa Savoye, Poissy.  
Le Corbusier.

As the white surfaces of the modernists facilitate clandestine connotation, other building surfaces are capable of more explicit communication. The rise of Post-Modernism provides a more open palette of materials that acknowledge the denoted and connoted codes of a variety of conventions and materials. Frank Gehry and Rem Koolhaas are both adept at using surface to their advantage.

Frank Gehry's home in Santa Monica acknowledges the denoted and connoted codes of the surfaces it utilizes. The home is a typical suburban home with wood clapboard siding. Gehry's addition uses materials that find themselves applied repetitively to make fences and to sheath temporary, industrial and service buildings. This provides an understanding of cheap and industrial to the surfaces of exposed plywood, chain link fence, and corrugated metal. On a level strictly based on the reading of surfaces, Gehry presents a contradiction between domestic and industrial. As the use of the other architectural objects is introduced the architectural connotations are refined, but now we are only talking of surface. The programmatic misuse of surfaces is also apparent in the work of OMA.



Illustration 25  
Gehry Residence, Santa Monica, California.  
Frank O. Gehry.

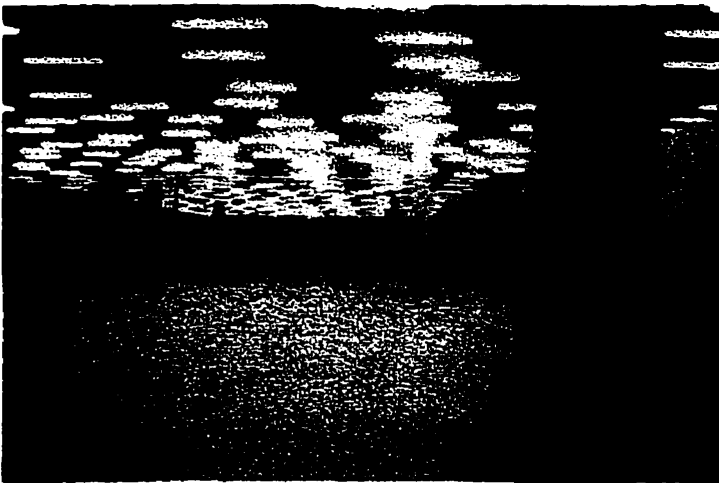


Illustration 26  
Kunsthel, Rotterdam.  
The Office For Metropolitan Architecture.

Materials inform us in our everyday urban experiences. Fine materials such as marble, granite, brass are materials that we associate with banks, expensive restaurants and stores. Architects have the ability to use this to their advantage, communicate simply and directly, or to

manipulate expectations and to use unexpected surfaces in unexpected places, like Frank Gehry. OMA's Villa Dall'ava in Paris had a missing railing around the lap pool at the completion of the project. Following much contemplation, a ring of orange snow fence was installed. The surface of the snow fence denotes a material that is used as a temporary barricade during construction, not to provide a fence for a lap pool. In Rotterdam the Kunsthal incorporates the use of industrial and cheap material to house 'high art'. The previous discussion on Rafael Moneo's National Museum of Roman Art is based on the consideration of surface materiality. The underlying connotations are provided by the critical relationship between the surface of the walls and the surface of the sculptures. It is commonplace in contemporary architecture to see the reconsideration of the applications of materials to provide architectural connotation.



Illustration 27  
Institut De Monde Arabe, Paris.  
Jean Nouvel.

The buildings of Jean Nouvel establish a new relationship between building and technology. While Gehry establishes a critical relationship between the addition and the original, Nouvel seeks to establish a critical relationship integrated within the building surface. The Institut De Monde Arabe in Paris uses mechanical irises to control the amount of light penetrating the building. The intricate pattern and the precision craftsmanship, present an

homage to the machine that is further advanced than Le Corbusier's inclusion of ocean liner handrails. The visual punctuation of the building's reliance on the mechanical skin to function properly is a critical relationship that facilitates a dialogue that is decidedly Modernist in nature. The critical relationship between the machine skin and the inhabitant demonstrates the dependency of the body on the machine to provide a comfortable interior climate. Further, the mechanical irises provide privacy while also allowing a unique view. As Gehry uses juxtaposition, other examples have used applied ornamentation, while Nouvel skillfully integrates a critical relationship into a surface through the combination of building envelope and environmental controls.

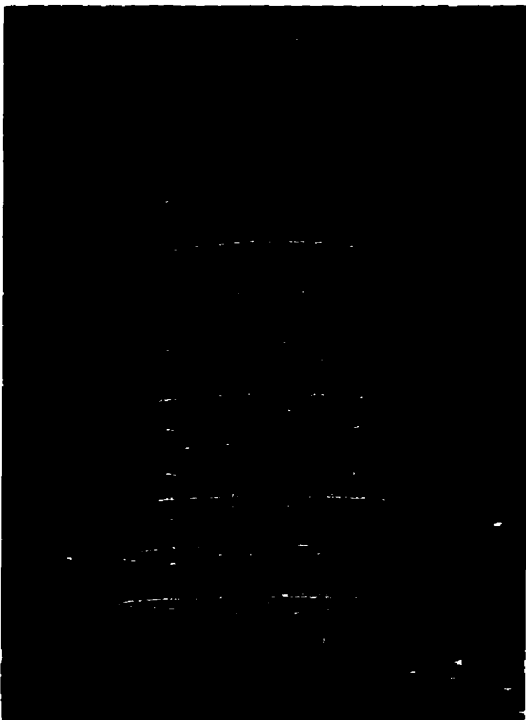


Illustration 28  
Tower of Wind, Tokyo.  
Toyo Ito.

Toyo Ito's Tower of Winds provides a very different critical relationship to Nouvel's where the relationship is between the surface and the city that situates it. The tower is situated in the centre of a bus terminal roundabout in Tokyo. During the day the tower stands as a 21 metre high opaque tube. At night it awakes from its dormancy to bob and flow to the sounds of the city and the movement of the wind. The perforated aluminum screen goes from opaque to

transparent as the lighting of the tower shifts. Circles of light stand and/or move up and down the tower. "The movement of light is controlled as if it were environmental music."<sup>41</sup> As night time transforms the city it also brings the Tower of Wind to life. The crucial critical relationships are the ephemeral surfaces tower to two situations, the city of Tokyo and the electronic age.

Ito's furniture, the exhibitions and artifacts such as the Tower of Winds and the Egg of Winds, do not celebrate the mechanicality of modernism so much as its dissolution, the inadequacy of any epic attitude. His objects can be understood as an investigation into the fugacity imposed by consumerism and its mechanics of acceleration, investigation into the provisionality in the material culture of our times, but also investigation into how these traits can only develop poetically from an appreciated technical skill, i.e, from within the system, interiorizing their capacity for material production. Thus, these objects come to signal what I modern thinking has always been an unresolved paradox: the narrow concentration between contemporary production and its mechanics of activation and intensification: fashion.  
Inaki Abalos and Juan Herreros<sup>42</sup>

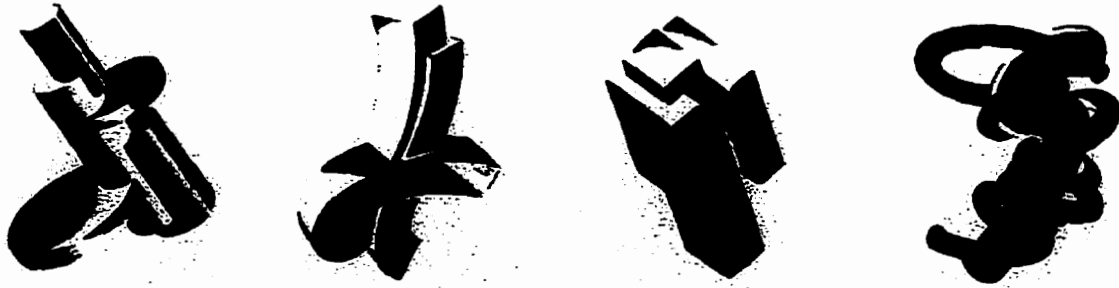
Ito encapsulates the life of the city into an element in the urban landscape. The likeness of the city in relation to the tower is in its ephemerality and its constant movement. Each responds to the environment that surrounds it, one to the people, and the other to the wind and the noise. Without the city the tower would be nothing, it would not be able to communicate the dialogue that has been discussed. There would be no critical relationship.

This overview of the use and consideration of surface as architectural object reveals many possibilities for critical relationships with exterior topics, with other surfaces, within a single surface, and within a situation.

## **MASSING**

Massing is the composition and form of solid volumes that define an architectural object, all mass is defined by its surfaces. For the sake of categorization the consideration of massing will be primarily focused on the profile of a mass and not the surface or the space. The mass of many building types is readily identifiable, such as grain elevators, old cathedrals, and office towers. The mass of a building can be seen as an object, to be read as an element that





Illustrations 29-32  
Massing based on machine gestures.  
Iakov Chernikov.

individually carries a meaning.

The Russian Constructivists saw the machine as an icon of the promise of prosperity provided by the machine age and the industrial revolution. In Chernikov's manifesto of constructivism the use of massing was based on mechanical connections, motions, and relationships; through clamping, embracing, mounting, integration, interlacing, and coupling, the mass of the building conveys a metaphorical relationship to the machine. The Constructivists provide an excellent example of the use of mass as an object, since surface is considered purified. El Lissitzky's *Prouns* are experimental compositions of masses that examine a dynamic aesthetic of masses based on the machine. The critical relationship of building to machine legitimized the machine and promoted the industrial revolution as proper for the provision of a better life.

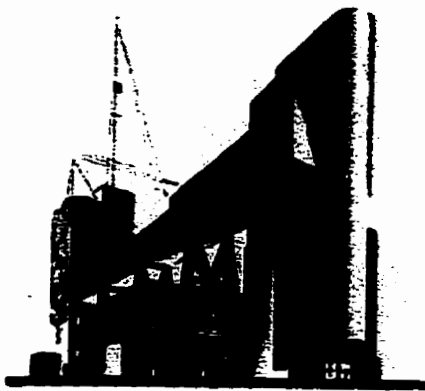


Illustration 33  
Harmony of Colours.  
Iakov Chernikov.

Even prior to the Constructivists the formal manipulation of mass played an important role in demonstrating the intentions of architects. The five platonic solids, sphere, cylinder, cone, pyramid, and cube, are vital to the origins and overall history of Western Architecture. True platonic solids are proportioned on equality, equal sides, equal angles, in order to provide a perfect geometry. Many architects consider the platonic solids and geometry as a *prior*. Often their use is considered sacred, as in the Egyptian pyramids. The sphere is considered to be the most perfect Platonic solid, due to its consistent equality. As the most perfect of the Platonic solids the sphere is usually implemented for important buildings, notably in Newton's Cenotaph by Boullée. As the use of the platonic solids emphasizes their truth, their dismantling is a sign of a reconsideration of what is true and proper in architecture. More recently, Deconstructivists find themselves breaking down the cube. Peter Eisenman calmly and rationally performs rotations, additions, subtractions, insertions, and explosions to break apart the equal sides, to provide offbeat rhythms and to obliterate the perfection of the Platonic world of forms. House III demonstrates this clearly. In Paris Bernard Tschumi provides multiple broken and dissected cubes, strewn out across Parc De La Villette, in essence these are all considerations of mass, with the surfaces and the spaces secondary to their interests. In either instance the platonic solids are objects, carrying both denoted and connoted codes that are furthered in depth by their composition in buildings.

Mass is also capable of anthropomorphic relationships such as embracing, shaking, pushing and other bodily gestures. Everyday practices also contribute to an understanding of massing relationships. Through eating we know piercing, cutting, prodding, poking, scooping, Each of these relationships is read at an intersection; fork to pie; hand to hand; knife to meat; soup to spoon. Buildings are no different where wall meets ceiling, floor meets column, handrail meets wall. All present the opportunity for a critical relationship. The Russian Constructivists relied on the meeting of building mass to building mass to express machine gestures. Kiyong Park's drawings of parasites in Manhattan are based on massing. The series



Illustration 34  
Parasites, New York.  
Kyong Park.

of pointy masses sitting, piercing, and grasping the skyscrapers of lower Manhattan. Between our knowledge of eating and thistles the masses are seen as threatening, and their intrusions on the buildings seen as parasitic.

The relationship of where the building meets the ground is an important connection of mass to mass, of building to Earth. Le Corbusier raised his housing on pilotis making a clear separation between house and ground. This relationship implicates the ground as an unsuitable place to live, suggesting that the ground is a primitive and less sanitary position for housing. Previously most European housing stock met firmly with the ground, this shows a distinct shift in values relating to housing. At Ronchamp Le Corbusier floated an enormous concrete mass above the heads of the church goers. Thin beams of light shine through the thin openings between the walls and the massive roof. The effect is sublime space where the weight of the roof emphasizes the intensity of the light entering the space. In *Archetypes in*

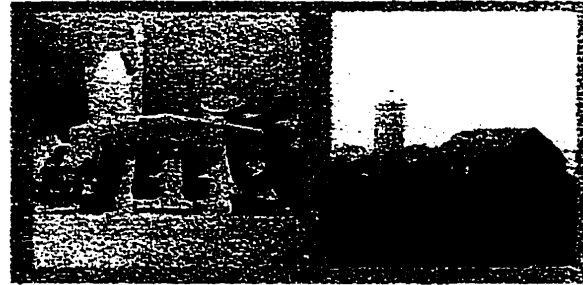
*Architecture* Thiis-Evenson notes buildings such as this as uplifting as the eyes of the viewer are directed towards the heavens. He suggests that such a spatial experience is suitable for a church in providing a religious experience. Mass is best expressed where a mass meets a mass. Le Corbusier meets two masses with a thin strip of space at Ronchamp, and at the Villa Savoye he separates the meeting of building and ground with more space. Connections can be solid or tenuous, leaning or propped, strained or relaxed, all are capable of establishing critical relationships that can reveal the intentions of the architect, the potential is enormous.



Illustration 35  
Rural Concrete Grain Elevator.  
Photograph by Lisa Mahar-Keplinger.

Massing compositions are often culturally specific even with a given building typology such as a place of worship, i.e., the Taj Mahal, the Hagia Sophia, Chartres. In attempting to formulate a suitable metropolitan architecture that addresses a multi-cultural populace, massing should play an important role. Many Post-Modernists recognize the ability for massing to introduce a communication that is more widely accessible than Modernism. Often massing is used in order to provide historical references for a building. Kirkland and Jones Mississauga City Hall uses mass to signify traditional building types common to Western culture, including a grain elevator and a clock tower. The building is a concatenation of masses that act together as

a precis of building typologies. The use of mass by Kirkland and Jones is commendable, but should have been investigated further to go beyond the limitations of Western building typologies. The metropolitan cities that now exist typically address a far broader range of cultures and values, both local and global.



Illustrations 36 and 37  
Mississauga City Hall.  
Jones and Kirkland Architects.

## SPACE

Surfaces and masses divide, subdivide, separate and organize space into urban and rural fabrics. Space exists without buildings, however buildings inhabit and arrange the space of the world. The division of space can be a conscious activity that is carried out by architects, builders and politicians. At a macro scale the division of world space is a political map that is forever in fluctuation. At the micro scale we see housing that is divided into particular arrangements of space which vary by culture and location, each arrangement able to reveal a different set of cultural values and beliefs. Space, as an architectural object, relies on the existence of other objects, namely surface and mass. Space is also inextricably linked to the architectural object of program. Spaces, and the relationship of one space to another space, are identifiable and carry both denoted and connoted codes.

Spaces are primarily read by their physical relationship with the body, how high, how wide, how long. Spaces can be intimate or grand in scale, however it is not often that one feels comfortable sleeping in a large open space in a building. Grand spaces have often found themselves linked to grand programs, consider old cathedrals, old bank buildings, or old government buildings. The people with authority and money also had the capacity to construct buildings that could awe the human body through their volume. This is one way in which space is used as an architectural object.

Spatial arrangements are also able to hold cultural signification. In Sapporo Japan Branson Coates Architecture collide Western and Eastern spaces into a single architectural experience. The Ark is a restaurant whose primary interior space is shaped like a boat, referencing the biblical ark. On the interior, the main vertical circulation is an oval spiral staircase that is suggestively Baroque in nature. While the remainder of the interior is divided into floors by space that is decidedly more Japanese due to the surfaces and the massing provided by traditional method of the framing. In effect Nigel Coates has furthered Kirkland and Jones amalgamation of Western typologies by juxtaposing multiple cultures into a single building. Whereas Mississauga City Hall primarily relies on architectural objects of mass, Noah's Ark uses architectural objects of space.

Domestic programs are often evaluated on the spatial arrangement of the rooms. For instance, in Nepal the kitchen is the most sacred place in the house. For this reason it is located on the upper most floor of the house, a space where visitors are not allowed to visit. In North American suburbs the kitchen is decidedly less important, taking a lesser position in the house. In North America the bedroom is believed to be the most private of spaces within the home, as such bedrooms avoid public exposure as much as possible. Because of this rooms such as kitchens are often found between the bedrooms and the street, in effect buffering public zones from private zones.

## PROGRAM, EVENT, AND BODY

### Thin Cities 4

The city of Sophronia is made up of two half-cities. In one there is the great roller coaster with its steep humps, the carousel with its chain spokes, the Ferris wheel of spinning cages, the death-ride with crouching motorcyclists, the big top with the clump of trapezes hanging in the middle. The other half-city is of stone and marble and cement, with the bank, the factories, the palaces, the slaughterhouse, the school, and all the rest. One of the half-cities is permanent, the other is temporary, and when the period of its sojourn is over, they uproot it to the vacant lots of another half-city. And so every year the day comes when the workmen remove the marble pediments, lower the stone walls, the cement pylons, take down the Ministry, the monument, the docks, the petroleum refinery, the hospital, load them on trailers, to follow from stand to stand their annual itinerary. Here remains the half-Sophronia of the shooting-galleries and the carousels, the shout suspended from the cart of the headlong roller coaster, and it begins to count the months, the days it must wait before the caravan returns and a complete life can begin again.

Italo Calvino<sup>43</sup>

## PROGRAM

Program is the actions of the human body and the apparatus that facilitates the actions that are intended in a given space — urinating into a urinal; or reading in the presence of books, book shelves, computers, and photocopiers. Program is available as an architectural object just as surface, massing, and space act as architectural objects. The presence of

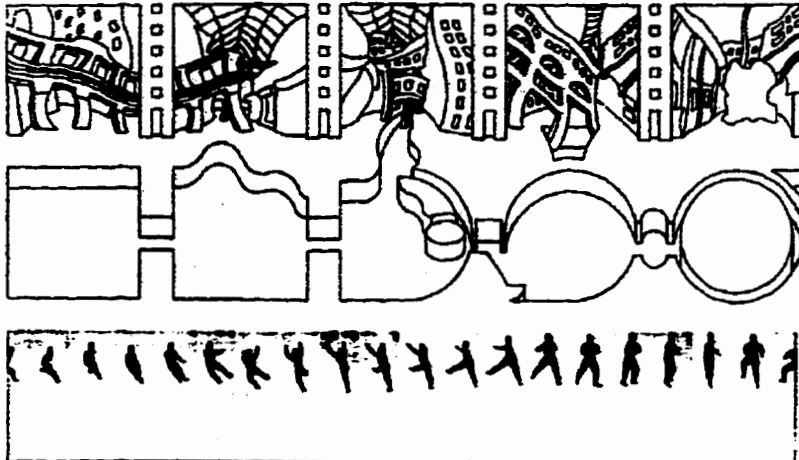


Illustration 38  
Excerpt from  
The Manhattan Transcripts.  
Bernard Tschumi.

program is essential to a building, it is why we build and is often directing and determining both its form and its meaning.

..the world is full of buildings where structuring the nature of activity is their chief preoccupation. What emerges is an understanding of architecture as a mechanism for determining the *proper* occupation and experience of a building.

This understanding suggests that the *program* of a building contains within itself all of the motivations necessary to determine form and space, and consequently, that the more fantastic and specific the program or activities that it is meant to contain, the better the building will be. The canon of modern architecture is replete with examples of this kind, where the emphasis is in celebrating its program in one fashion or another: form follows function, does it not? One expects, for example, that an institute for experimental film would be a much more interesting a building then a warehouse.

Kevin Alter\*\*

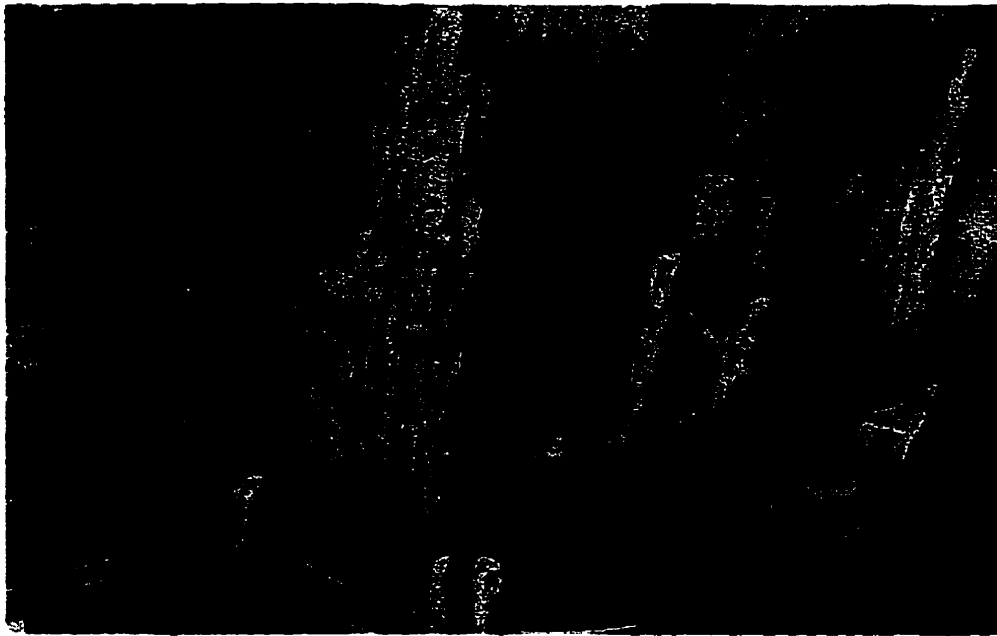


Illustration 30  
*Rock Climbers Meet With Naturalists on the Residential Parkade.*  
Eleanor Bond.

Eleanor Bond's paintings explore the use of program as object to establish critical relationships. *Rock Climbers Meet With Naturalists on the Residential Parkade* demonstrates the possibilities of combining programs in order to facilitate connotation. The parkade and its transformation are of particular interest to this investigation. The parkade, recognized mostly by its helical massing (typical to the entry/exit ways of many parkades) and its material,



concrete, serves as the base structure of this composition. The concrete parkade structure becomes one with rocks, the boundary between manmade and nature is blurred. The expected hard surface of the parkade is instead plush green vegetation, typical of a park or a forest. On this surface there are airstream trailers that denote camping. Bond's selection of objects is important to establish the relationships in the painting. For instance tents could have been used instead of the airstream trailers to denote the program of camping. However, the airstream trailers are towed by cars so they programmatically relate to the parkade and enforce the denotation of parkade. Overall the painting presents a number of programs, parkade, camping and nature. The parkade is enforced by the campers and blurred by the rocks and the vegetation. The title *Rock Climbers Meet with Naturalists on the Residential Parkade* adds to the reading of the relationships. The residential parkade is a place for rock climbing and a place where naturalists live, it is a parkade that has somehow been incorporated into nature. Programs against programs, all reconsidered, this painting is very architectural in nature.

James Wines High-rise Housing project presents the re-situation of a suburban housing program into a downtown high-rise program. The critical relationship of the two programs suggests that high-rise living is not what it could be, that perhaps suburbia has something to show high-rise dwellers. The action of transplanting suburbia into the high-rise is to provide a better living environment and increase the recognition of the building as housing. This is a simple dichotomous relationship of programs.



Illustration 40  
High-rise Housing Project.  
SITE.

The Kunsthal's mixing of programs is more complex than Wines'. In the situation section the ability of the Kunsthal to situate its own architectural elements was discussed, however most of these re-situations are distinctly programmatic objects. The Kunsthal is made up of an art gallery, a café, a lecture hall, a public thoroughfare and a road. The relationship of programs in the High-rise Housing project is read from the exterior and does not alter with a more intimate interaction. However, the Kunsthal relies on the interaction of bodies to facilitate connotation through program: Koolhaas relies on apparatus and the movement of bodies to show the program of public thoroughfare, cars to denote road, watching people for lecture hall etc. Whereas Wines relies on the composition of surface and mass. These are both valid methods of denoting program. The Kunsthal lays the seeds for perpetual connotation by situating program against program. Each program is itself in continual movement, bodies moving in and through for both regular programs and special events. There are always bodies walking through the public thoroughfare, and there are often lectures in the lecture hall. Everyday and every hour the composition changes, reading the Kunsthal relies on the randomness and chance of everyday life.

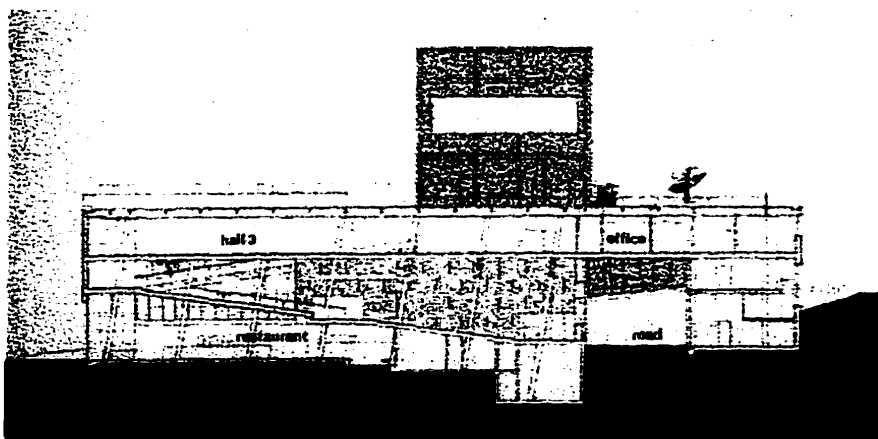


Illustration 41  
Kunsthal, Rotterdam.  
The Office For Metropolitan Architecture.

Program can be examined more directly when looking at urban plans. For instance, Ebenezer Howard's Garden City plan. In this plan consider each program, industrial, agrarian, housing and park, as architectural objects that are placed in critical relationships to one another. The housing, that was typically placed on the outskirts of factory towns, is made central to the plan and provided with ready access to the parks. The housing is then surrounded by the agrarian and the industrial moved away from where people live. The placement of a green strip between the industrial program and the housing program demonstrates a concern on the part of the factory owners for the health and well being of their workers. With the polluting buildings away from the houses there would be less chance of side effect to the workers and their families. The underlying text in here is about the provision of a setting for a better life for factory workers, and owners who respect their workers.

Program has already been demonstrated to impact the reading of surface, massing, and space. Program is by nature invisible, it relies on associated and assigned denotation, associated through apparatus and the actions of bodies, and assigned by signage. It is a powerful architectural object when composed with consideration, especially at an urban scale. The potential of program expands as the number of programs grow.

## **EVENT**

Events belie forecasts; to the extent that events are historic, they upset calculations. They may even overturn strategies that provided for their possible occurrence. Because of their conjectural nature, events upset the structures which made them possible.

Henri Lefebvre<sup>45</sup>.

Events are the actions of the human body and the use or misuse of apparatus to make the action possible. They are spontaneous acts of life that are not specifically intended within a given space, such as the pushing over of a bookshelf with the intent to kill two lovers. Because of the spontaneous and uncontrollable quality of event, including their ability to directly work against architectural intentions<sup>46</sup>, they are not as controllable as program for architectural

connotation. However, it is not unreasonable to establish that space can enable events and force direction to them. There is no reason to push somebody out of a window unless there is an open window at least 4 stories high.

To really appreciate architecture you may even need to commit a murder. Architecture is defined by the actions it witnesses as much as by the enclosure of its walls. Murder in the Street differs from Murder in the Cathedral in the same way as love in the street differs from the Street of Love. Radically.  
Bernard Tschumi<sup>47</sup>

The question remains, how does event effect architectural connotation. The most explicit examples are the most extreme events such as love and murder. Consider the effects of Jack the Ripper on London. The event of murder now haunts otherwise unremarkable pieces of paving within the city that are now visited by tourists daily. Perhaps there are deeper effects of events on places and how these are inhabited. Consider Whitechapel, once the site of public executions in London. A place where the masses gathered to watch the guillotine drop. Ever since Whitechapel has remained one of the dodgiest areas of the city. Just a thought.

Hausmann's revision of Paris streets had numerous intentions, one of those intentions was the suppression of any mass uprising within the city. However, in 1968 the boulevards of Paris were filled with masses of revolting students, causing mayhem and social chaos. Following that event the connotations of Hausmann's Paris has been altered. It is not the control device that it was intended to be. The students overturned the structures that made their revolt possible.

The streets have become politicized - this fact points up the political void prevailing in the specialized areas. Social space has assumed new meaning. This entails new meaning. This entails risks. Political practice transferred to the streets sidesteps the (economic and social) practice which emanates from identifiable places. Hence the danger of new dissociations.  
Henri Lefebvre<sup>48</sup>

Events can be grand in scale, such as the Paris uprising, or silly and isolated, such as a person tripping on the sidewalk. Either way they contribute to a composition when they are

within the scope of vision of a reading body. Through the presentation of the projects of OMA Rem Koolhaas secretly admits to the importance of event on how we read buildings. This is most prevalent between the silver flaps of *S,M,L,XL*. The nature of the compilation of projects and other material compares and relates architecture to several exterior sources, some event like in nature. The presentation of the Fukuoka housing project finds itself situated within Japanese pornography, at times appearing as if one was peeking through a window and catching a glimpse. The purity of architectural representation is forever shattered. Most important is the giraffe in the backyard at Villa Dall'ava. Is this a ploy to make one question just who lives there, or a comparison of Rem to a Circus Master? Either the way the composition is effect and the reading of the building changes.



Illustration 42  
Villa Dall'ava, Paris.  
The Office For Metropolitan Architecture.

Whether events occur in public places or are seen by a peeping tom through venetian blinds, they happen everywhere and are unpredictable. In Alfred Hitchcock's thriller *Rear Window* an apartment block is subject to a series of events, Ms. Torso dancing in her underwear, a dog digging in the garden, and the overbearing possibility of a murder. All of these events effect the manner in which Jimmy Stewart's character views each apartment space across the way. In Jaque Tati's film *Playtime* there is a great scene where Mr. Hurlot is watching two families in a modern apartment block with window walls. One family is watching the television, however from Mr. Hurlot's point of view they are watching the family on the other

side of the wall, since the wall disappears behind the mullion. Mr. Hurriot thinks that the one family is watching and laughing at the other family who appear to be arguing. Two events composed in a certain manner, in this case producing humour.

The unpredictability of event makes it difficult to deal with. But in scenarios such as OMA's Kunsthal, the building accepts that events will happen and readily provides the opportunity for events to be situated or to situate the other activities of the building.

## **BODY**

**Bodies carve all sorts of new and unexpected spaces, through fluid and erratic motions. Architecture, then, is only an organism engaged in constant intercourse with users, whose bodies rush against the carefully established rules of architectural thought.**

**Bernard Tschumi<sup>40</sup>**

Tschumi suggests that many architects never intend for the body to be a part of their buildings and that bodies are intruding upon the perfection of architecture. Bodies juxtapose themselves against architecture through their own image and the events in which they participate. The architect must understand the juxtaposition of the body against architecture as a connotation procedure. One should understand that the observer is able to read connoted codes when others are present within a situation, because their presence alters the appearance of the building. As clothes dress bodies, bodies dress buildings. Bodies fill buildings, move in buildings and out of buildings - they live in buildings. As Tschumi points out, bodies effect space as much as the space effects the body.



**Illustration 43**  
**From *The Face*, October 1996.**

Bodies interact with buildings in two modes of operation, 1st person and third person. First person is the mode of observation and visual consumption, third person is the mode of being observed. In the first person the body is not acting as an architectural object, it is consuming compositions of situation, surface, massing, space, program, event, and body(in the third person). However, the implications of first person mode drastically effect how architecture is produced.

"Do you like what I've done with the room?"

The room, the sole one in the hut, looked no different to Pilar. Shelves, none any deeper than two inches, lined the walls from the floor to ceiling, most of them crooked and all of them populated by a strange array of knick-knacks - little colored jars, tiny stick dolls, peculiar jewelry, toy automobiles, plastic snakes, tins of gray powder. Her Grandmother had once made her living predicting the future, and Pilar knew that many of the items were props she had used, but they were such odd props - scraps of fabric, surprises from Cracker Jacks, chips of broken glass, tabs from beer cans - silly and inconsequential things.

"I can't see that you've changed anything," Pilar told her.

Maria walked to the bed and sat beside her. "The pillow used to be at this end," she said. "I moved it up there." She pointed to the other end of the bed and the crumpled feather pillow. "Now, when I lie down, the room is completely turned around.

Robert Boswell, *The Geography of Desire*.

Previously, the body has been framed as the 'site of reception' of architecture. This is the product of first person mode. Consider, the body is always in motion to some degree, shifting, jittering, walking, or perhaps running. This means that the site of reception is constantly in motion. The Robert Boswell quote demonstrates the implications of shifted view point to architectural connotation, it also shows its subtlety. To consider the 'site of reception' as dynamic represents a paradigm shift from previous considerations of architectural connotation.

First, if it is true that a spatial order organizes an ensemble of possibilities (e.g., by a place in which one can move) and interdictions (e.g., by a wall that prevents one from going further), then the walker actualizes some of these possibilities. In that way, he makes them exist as well as emerge. But he also moves them about and he invents others, since the crossing, drifting away, or improvisation of walking privilege, transform or abandon spatial elements. Thus Charlie Chaplan multiplies the possibilities of his cane: he does other things with the same thing and he goes beyond the limits that the determinants of the object set on its utilization. In the same way, the walker

transforms each spatial signifier into something else.

Michel de Certeau<sup>50</sup>

When in the third person the body acts as an object in isolation or in conjunction with program and event. The actions of the body can work in conjunction with apparatus (such as automated bank teller machines, fax machines, computers, bulldozers, shopping carts, etc..) to associate a program or event to its actions. Events will often see the misuse of various apparatus, such as the smashing of a bank machine, or the flipping of a car. In these instances the body is considered to be a component of the architectural objects of program or event. It is when a specific body is read as an element that a body acts as a body architectural object. Consider a cowboy, a priest, a police officer, a firefighter or Danny DeVito. All of these are bodies that bring significance to a composition. A cowboy in Paris, Danny DeVito in a restaurant, a priest in a bar, these compositions have displacement and facilitate connotation. Body is the basis of architecture and of building, it is the point of origin of architectural connotation and the purpose for building.

They walk - an elementary form of this experience of the city; they are walkers, *Wandersmänner*, whose bodies follow the thicks and thins of an urban "text" they write without being able to read it. These practitioners make use of spaces that cannot be seen; their knowledge of them is as blind as that of lovers in each other's arms. The paths that correspond in this intertwining, unrecognized poems in which each body is an element signed by many others, elude legibility. It is as though the practices organizing a bustling city were characterized by their blindness. The networks of these moving, intersecting writings compose a manifold story that has neither author nor spectator, shaped out of fragments of trajectories and alterations of spaces: in relation to representations, it remains daily and indefinitely other.

Michel de Certeau<sup>51</sup>

## COMPOSITION

Composition is the arrangement of architectural objects; situations, surface, massing, space, program, event and body. The composition is responsible for establishing critical relationships, thereby facilitating architectural connotation. Intentions are coded into compositions, surfaces against surfaces, masses in a certain geometry, masses wrapping



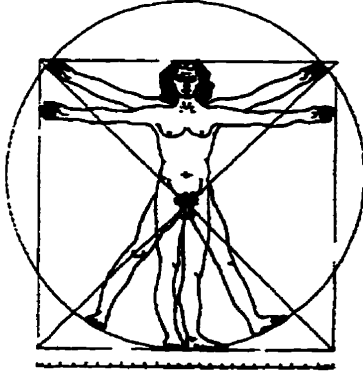


Illustration 44  
From *Classical Architecture* by Robert Adam.

masses, each with its own distinct surfaces, spaces, and programs. The composition of buildings is what the doctrines, treatise, and manifestoes of architecture attempt to govern by providing rules for meaning and intention.

Unlike the 'necessity' of mere building, the 'non-necessity' of architecture is undissociable from architectural histories, theories and other precedents. These bonds enhance pleasure. The most excessive passion is always methodical. For example, the Marquis de Sade's heroes enjoyed confining their victims in the strictest conventions before mistreating them according to rules carefully laid down with a precise and obsessive logic.

Similarly, the game of architecture is an intricate play with rules that one may accept or reject. Indifferently called 'system des Beaux-Arts' or Modern Movement precepts, this pervasive network of binding laws entangles architectural design. These rules, like so many knots that cannot be untied, are generally a paralyzing constraint. When manipulated, however, they have the erotic significance of bondage. To differentiate between rules or ropes is irrelevant here. What matters is that there is no simple bondage technique: the more numerous and sophisticated the restraints, the greater the pleasure.

Bernard Tschumi.<sup>52</sup>

Rules bind the composition of architectural objects. Vitruvius, Palladio, William Morris, Le Corbusier, and Robert Venturi are just a few of the rule makers, writing rule books through which architecture is measured. Rules are able to establish the cultural significance of a building; a building such as a church is sacred and as such must follow a set of rules and doctrines that may determine the plans, the sections and the elevations. Rules such as these may provide 'proper' proportioning systems and geometries that control the arrangement of surface, massing, and space.. It is rules that are able to assign meaning to specific

compositions such as a Latin cross plan with an entrance to the West. Geometries have long served as rules and have been assigned with much meaning and symbolism.

It is at work everywhere, functioning smoothly at times, at other times in fits and starts. It breathes, it heats, it eats. It shits and fucks. What a mistake to have ever said *the id*. Everywhere *it is machines* - real ones, not figurative ones: machines driving other machines, machines being driven by other machines, with all the necessary couplings and connections. An organ-machine is plugged into an energy-source-machine: the one produces a flow that the other interrupts. The breast is a machine that produces milk, and the mouth a machine coupled to it. The mouth of the anorexic wavers between several functions: its possessor is uncertain as to whether it is an eating-machine, an anal machine, a talking machine, or a breathing machine (asthma attacks). Hence we are all handymen: each with his little machines. For every organ-machine, an energy machine: all the time, flows and interruptions.

Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari<sup>53</sup>

With the site of architecture established as the body, the understanding of architectural connotation and how it is produced is radically altered. Considering that the body is in constant motion, the building rarely stands still in relation to the site of architecture. Between the building and the site of architecture is space where anything can happen. This means that compositions are in continuous flux, buildings are not viewed in plan, section, or elevation but are perceived in three dimensions with all of the activity of life running past and through. The vision of the body is blocked and obscured by other bodies, geometries can quickly fade in a crowd. Chance is significant, temporary programs such as hot dog carts and street vendors, events such as parades, riots, and dogs urinating all contribute to compositions. At times a building is everything, at other times nothing, the ebb and flow of everyday life takes its toll on the way that architecture is supposed to be consumed. Compositions thought to be static are dynamic, whether the architects admit it or not, the body knows it.

Compositions are a culmination of critical relationships of architectural objects. Where the rule used to be formed by geometry, they are now formed by relationships. Mass and surface making out in the corner while space and body have an affair in the loft. Juxtaposition, insertion, grasping, mounting, bracing, sitting, acting, moving, all become methods of

composition. All of the previous discussions on situation, surface, massing, space, program, event, and body demonstrate compositions, and for each architectural object there are different methods of compositions. Massing facilitates wrapping, splitting, and piercing, while surface allows juxtapositions, insertion, and assigned denotation, space can humble the body, programs can twist, wrap and situate, the possibilities are only bound by imagination. What is important is to compose with intention, to compose critical relationships that reflect and affect a culture. This is the role of composition - architecture as mediated space.

**PART B: READING.**

## **DOMESTIC DISPLACEMENTS.**

Domesticity is a widely confronted issue in recent art and architecture. The work of Gordon Matta-Clark, Frank Gehry, and Peter Wilson all inform and educate the debate on the condition of the home. Through the composition of architectural objects they have established critical relationships through which dialogue and debate have emerged. The domestic finds itself revised and revisited, resulting in both a critique and a new architectural form of the domestic adapted to current cultural beliefs and values.

The latently violent splitting of a New Jersey house by Gordon Matta-Clark demonstrates the basic act of spatial displacement. The act of splitting a house immediately alters the function of the home by rendering it useless as a means of shelter.

Matta-Clark always intended that his sculptural incisions in buildings should both change perceptions about 'the functionalist aspect of past due Machine Age moralists,' and respond to 'the ever less viable state of privacy, private property, and isolation'. He wanted to let the light penetrate, philosophically, metaphorically and architecturally.

James Wines<sup>64</sup>

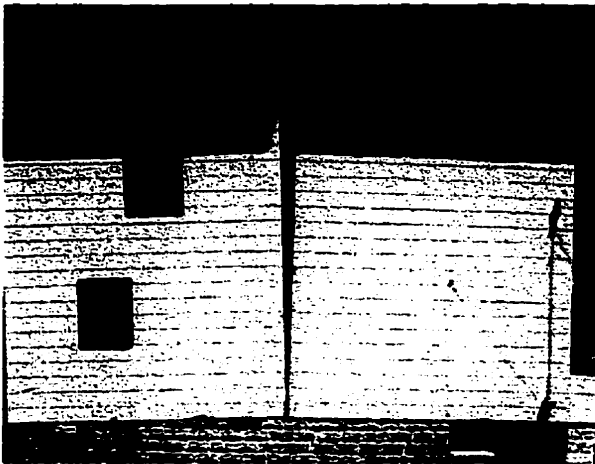


Illustration 45  
Splitting, New Jersey.  
Gordon Matta-Clark.

The revised incarnation of the house conveys the concerns that are inherent in Matta-Clark's work. The house is an architectural object that is a conglomerate of surface, massing, and space. Matta-Clark's revision of the house deals specifically with massing by splitting the house in half. An important note on this project is the critical relationship that is developed.

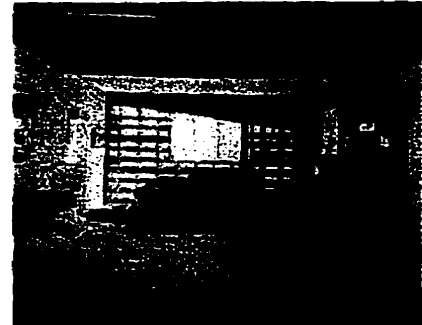
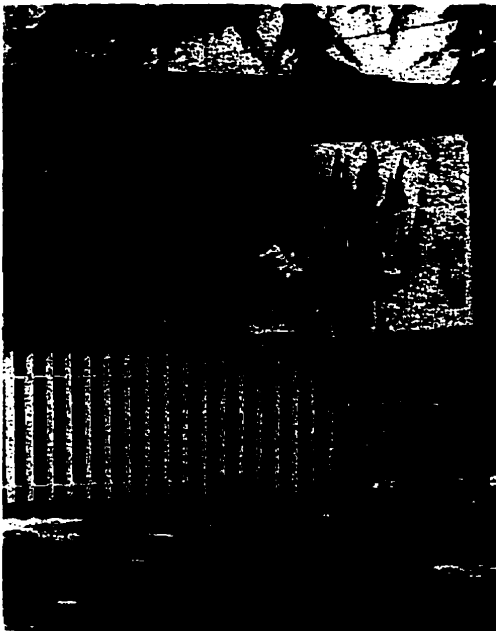
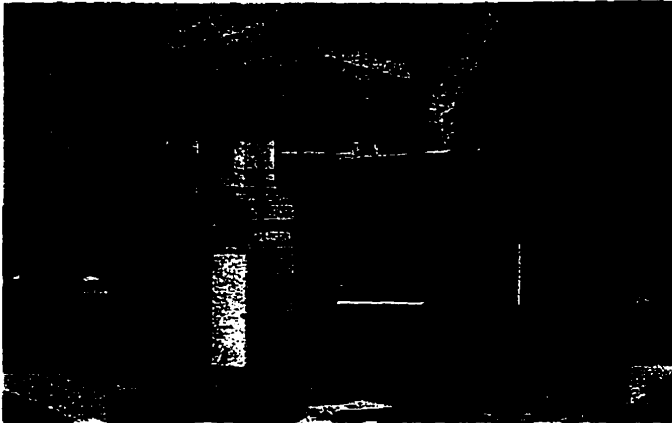
This is not a relationship of the two halves of the split house, rather it is a relationship of the split house to the memory of the once complete and inhabited house. In order to perceive this connection the mind must be able to link a series of signifiers to signifieds. The mind must be able to recall the condition of the house prior to being split and then link the visual signifier of the house to the signified of the domestic program that it once contained. Once this is done there are two conglomerate objects, the current split house, and the former sealed house. This is the critical relationship between which Matta-Clark's art may be read.

Although architectural in nature Matta-Clark's split house lacks the functions and programs that are so vital to that which is considered architecture. An important and useful example to further this discussion is Frank Gehry's house in Santa Monica. It is primarily through the consideration of surface and mass that Gehry's home is able to facilitate a dialogue on domesticity. On the interior of the house Gehry relies on memory, similar to Matta-Clark, while on the exterior the critical relationship is a palimpsest with new covering old.

The revision of the exterior of the house is a composition primarily based on the consideration of surface and massing. The chain-link fence, corrugated metal, and exposed plywood are all surface objects that are linked to programs because of their common usage and perceived cost. Although partially accepted into suburbanism, through service functions such as fences and sheds, these materials are not considered appropriate sheathing materials for domestic programs. For the passerby critical relationships are observed between the former house and the addition as a juxtaposition of the old and the new. The domestic surfaces of the old find themselves protected by the new industrial surfaces that wrap the original house. This is where the composition of surface and massing work together. As the addition wraps the house the hard industrial materials provide a protective shell for the seemingly feeble domestic structure which it contains. Chain-link fences and corrugated metal walls stand between the house and the streets and sidewalks. The appearance of the house is made foreign to its context because of its defensive nature and offensive aesthetic. However, behind the new

facades the same domestic activities of eating, sleeping, and living take place.

Perhaps the most intriguing displacement occurs along the side of the house where the kitchen is. The kitchen wall is made of corrugated metal and runs through into the backyard where it acts as a fence. Then between the metal wall/fence and the sidewalk is a more traditional white picket fence. The white picket fence is an icon of the American Dream of happiness, security, and a good suburban home. The critical relationship between the two fences shows the white picket fence as feeble and useless as it is reinforced by a larger and obviously stronger fence. This is a particularly potent point in an American city that has a



Illustrations 46-49  
Gehry Residence.  
Frank O. Gehry.

climbing crime rate that has caused wide spread feelings of insecurity even in the home. The white picket fence can no longer be seen as an adequate protector of space as it isn't only the neighbors dog that you don't want in your yard.

On the interior the drywall and plaster is stripped away to expose the innards of the suburban home. Relying on the recollection of a typical home the reader sees a rundown aesthetic furnished with typically nice furniture. Just as on the exterior, Gehry provides an unexpected programmatic juxtaposition of crack house to nice house. The surfaces of the interior denote a substandard or unfinished house with exposed studs and now drywall. The house reinvents suburban domesticity both inside and out.

Peter Wilson proposes a new shape for housing in the information age. For a competition entitled Comfort in the Metropolis Wilson deals with a new set of concerns as society enters another paradigm shift. This project situates itself across from Toyo Ito's Tower of Winds in Tokyo above the bus terminals. The tower and the street serve as the objects to which the house develops a series of critical relationships that introduce a revised domestic vision.

#### Glove and 2 Filters

A. Filter 1 - Mechanical Mask - Mechanical reflective louvres attempt to match the speed of the computerised light impulses. (unsuccessfully)

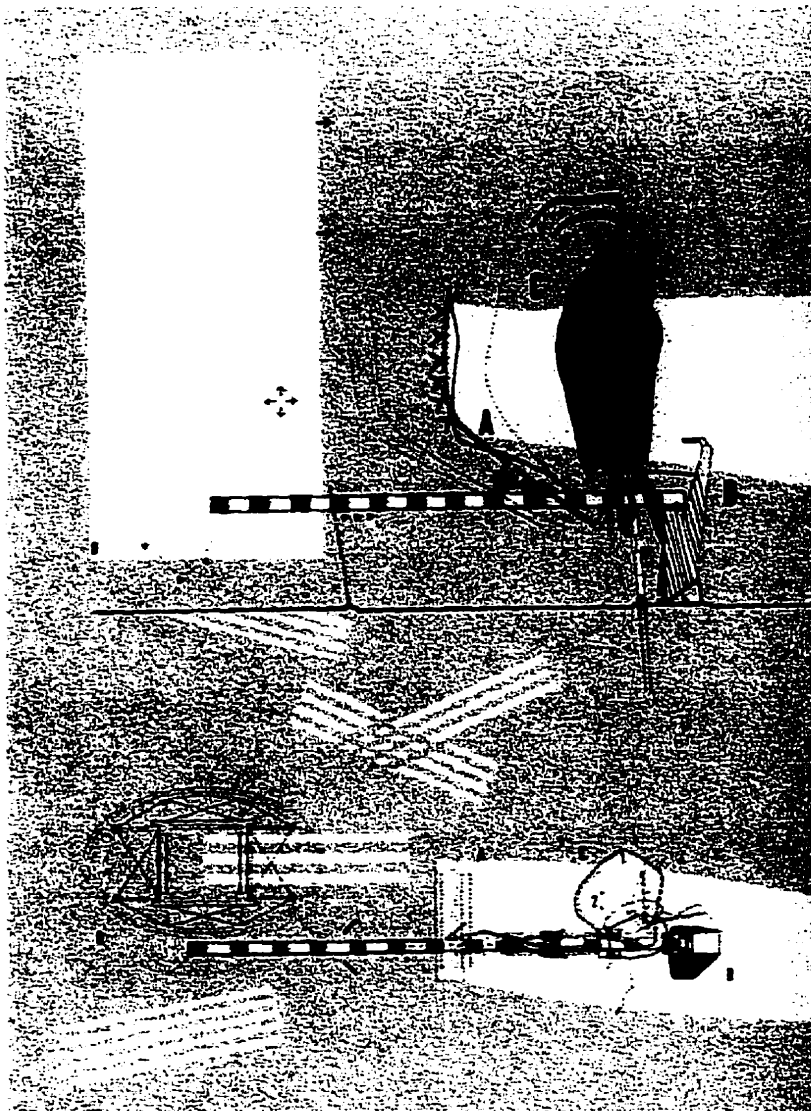
B. Filter 2 - Necessary Equipment, Stair, W.C., Cupboard.

C. The Glove - Walls inflated by the wind borrowed from the adjacent tower (containing cone of minimum electronic interference - an electronic shadow and the sleeping mat).

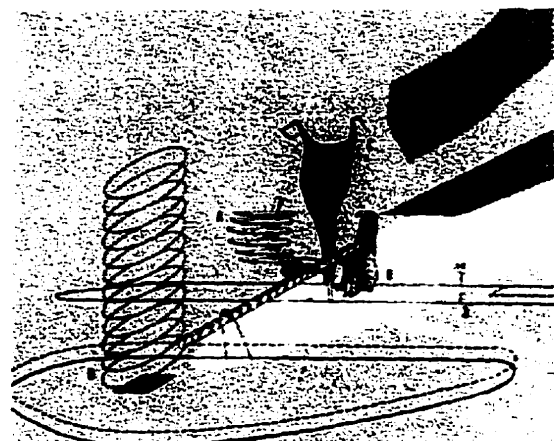
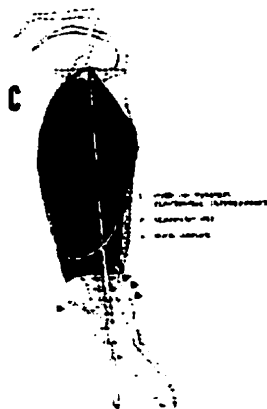
Peter Wilson<sup>55</sup>

In essence the house is comprised of a number of filters that exist to ensure the privacy and isolation of the inhabitant in the electronic age. Rather than simply providing quiet from the neighbors Wilson's house provides shelter from the motion of the city and from the electronic waves that bombard the Tokyo dweller. The inhabitant is protected by 3 filters, Filter 1, Filter 2, and the Glove. Filter 1 mediates between the home and the Tower of Winds, Filter 2 mediates between the home and the street, and the Glove provides the extra protection needed due to





Illustrations 50-52  
 Comfort in the Metropolis, Tokyo.  
 Peter Wilson.



the incompetence of Filter 1.

Filter 2 houses the functions of the house (washroom, storage, and food) and also acts as a filter to the street. This filter uses surface, massing, and space to its advantage to provide the necessary protection. The filter is submarine like in its compact spaces and its surface materiality. The plate steel surface provides a hard shell through which the inhabitant must pass to get to the living space. Once through the door the inhabitant climbs a ladder like stair to the upper levels. Such a stair space allows the person on top extreme control over anybody below, an added level of security when filtering the street level.

Filter 1 is made of a number of mechanical louvres that are defined by the surface and massing. The louvres are mechanical as they use gears to attempt to shelter the inhabitant from the fluctuations of the Tower of Winds. This is required to establish evidence of a previous paradigm where the machine played a crucial role. However, this project seeks to illustrate the machine as slow and unable to compete with the speed and wit of the electronic age. As the louvres of Filter 1 attempt to move fast enough to cope with the ever changing tower bits of light occasional beam through and hit the glove. The glove undulates with the wind, as its blackness hides it within the shadows. The glove serves as the back up to the mechanical filter, it provides an electronic shadow within which the inhabitant lives. Then within the glove is the cone of minimum electronic interference. This is the final protective layer that clears the air of all electronic waves and impulses, providing a place of solitude. This house is what Wilson feels is required for in order to provide comfortable living in the metropolis.

In the anthology *Stud: The Masculinity of Architecture*, Steve Cohen presents a reading of the bachelor pad based on the critical relationships of the programmatic spaces of Rock Hudson's apartment in the film *Pillow Talk*. Cohen's reading relies mainly on two architectural objects, space and program.

I will demonstrate how this multi-coded space represented the culture's deepest anxieties about the stability, coherence, and normality of American

maleness, underscoring the homophobia that structured the cultural meaning of 'masculinity' as the opposite of 'femininity'.  
Steve Cohen <sup>58</sup>

In the film Rock Hudson's bachelor pad has two floors, the main floor with the semi-public spaces, and the upper floor where his bedroom is. However, the apartment has two beds, one upstairs and one that folds out of the couch in the living room. Cohen sees this duplicity as a critical relationship of programs that suggests that each bed serves a different purpose. The living room and the bed are easily controlled by switches that can open the bed, dim the lights and turn on romantic music. This is clearly presented as the arena for heterosexual performance, a room dedicated to seduction. Alternatively, the upstairs bedroom is reclusive, a hidden place where Rock Hudson's character is able to shed his machismo bachelor attitude. Cohen reads the downstairs program and space to be a mask for the upstairs, a mask of heterosexuality. This reading is greatly effected by another architectural object, the body of Rock Hudson. Cohen's reading of this bachelor pad incorporates the private life of the actor, including his short marriage. This demonstrates the ability of the body to directly effect the composition of architectural objects and shift the architectural connotations. Although this space is filmic this reading demonstrates how to read domestic spatial configurations to produce connotation.

The home will continue to evolve and change and so will the spatial configurations and critical relationships within the home. The home serves as an open text that can reveal the values and beliefs of a given culture through the production of architectural connotation. These four examples of domesticity demonstrate the usefulness of the architectural objects in reading architectural connotation.

## **KOOLHAAS AND COATES, THE PRAISED AND THE IGNORED**

Intentions and connotations are abound in the work of The Office for Metropolitan Architecture. There is evidence of situation, surface, mapping, space and program, event, body and composition in many of their projects. It is through this consideration that Koolhaas formulates revised building typologies alongside a modest critique of Modernism. However, there are limitations to OMA's vocabulary of surface, massing and space as they consciously respect the boundaries of Modernist aesthetics. The work of this office is praised and has raised Koolhaas to the status of architectural superstar. Nigel Coates, of Branson Coates Architecture, explicitly recognizes the abilities of a building to provide architectural connotation that is relevant to a metropolitan society. In doing so the aesthetics of Coate's buildings fall far from Modernist boundaries, a move that has left his work on the fringe of the architectural community. This reading of buildings by both architects will show that both load their work with critical relationships that permit architectural connotation. Both of these architect know how to develop architectural compositions that are woven with their ideas and attitudes towards the culture and societies in which they work. Their differences will also emerge and perhaps provide an explanation for the praise of one and the relative invisibility of the other.

OMA's Kunsthall in Rotterdam is a composition of surfaces, masses, spaces, and programs. Like Frank Gehry's house this project relies heavily on surface objects and their programmatic understandings. Programmatically the Kunsthall is composed of a modern art

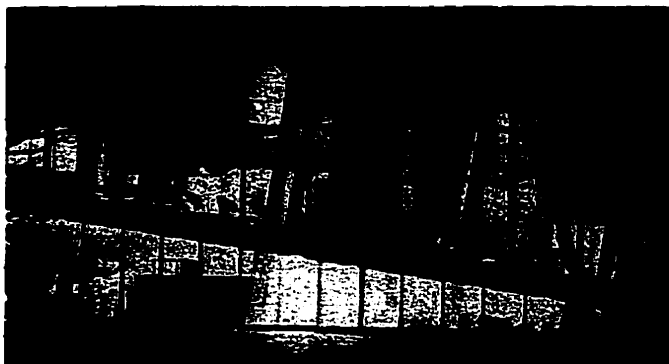
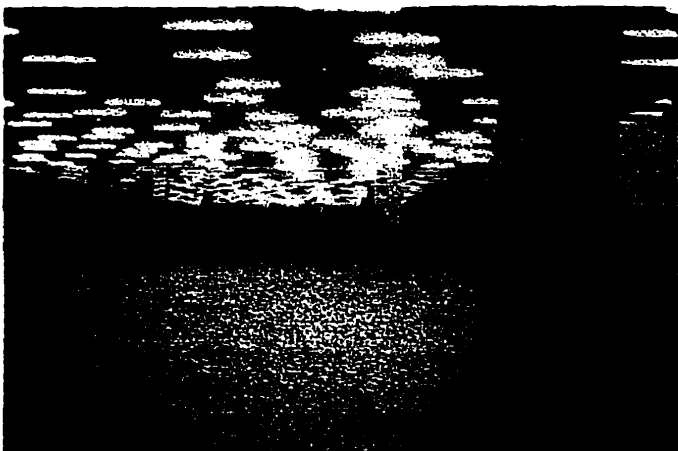
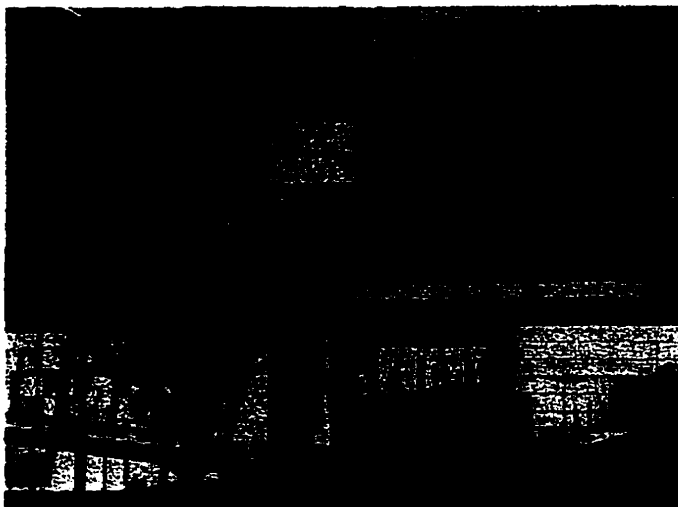


Illustration 53  
Kunsthall, Rotterdam.  
The Office For Metropolitan Architecture.

gallery, a lecture hall, a café, a public thoroughfare, a garden and a road. One wall of the art gallery is constructed entirely of U-glass which is commonly used in European factory and warehouse buildings as a means of letting in light. The central tower is clad in corrugated fiberglass, which is commonly used in North America for deck roofs. On the interior of the building the concrete work is crude and there are trees that are used as columns. Yet there is still marble clinging to the outside of the box.

NATO Building Regulation Number 11:  
'One thing is used as another, one thing made of another' (Jasper Johns)  
Brian Hatton<sup>57</sup>



Illustrations 54-56  
Kunsthal, Rotterdam.  
The Office For Metropolitan Architecture.

This gallery is a potluck of material that are commonly related to programs that are not found in the Kunsthall. Here lies an important set of critical relationships that can be read in a number of ways. One way of reading these relationships of surface and program is that the program is being brought down from the former grandeur of the art gallery. The lower class cladding and interior finishes represent a shift in importance of 'high art' to society. Alternatively, these relationships can be read in a manner similar to the anti-art of Duchamp. Perhaps Koolhaas is challenging the expected aesthetics, craftsmanship and quality of the art gallery, in effect suggesting that these are not the elements that make architecture. Beauty is not necessarily a concern because architecture must be concerned with other less trivial matters.

Through contamination rather than purity and quantity rather than quality, only Bigness can support genuinely new relationships between functional entities that expand rather than limit their identities. The artificiality and complexity of Bigness release function from its defensive armor to allow a kind of liquefaction; programmatic elements react with each other to create new events - Bigness return to a model of programmatic *alchemy*.

Rem Koolhaas<sup>58</sup>

More significant to this reading than the use of surface is the spatial organization of the building that is provided by the surface and massing. This organization demonstrates a strategy that is based largely on the critical relationships of the various programmatic elements of the building. Further, this strategy allows body and event to come to the foreground of the architectural compositions that are possible, probable and completely improbable.

#### Compositional Method III

Ramped Superposition was the new organizational idea reached in the library project for Jussieu in Paris. He had worked out part of this in previous ramped schemes for the private house, the Kunsthall, etc., and in his schemes Karlsruhe. Ramp as floor, column grid as order, blob as incident ... this is his most advance point. Again the problem is the same: no top, no bottom, no representation, no scale - just a facade of glistening glass scales. It's enough to drive you crazy if you're trying to read the building in a conventional sense. But that's your fault, stupid, because such buildings are not meant to be understood at first, second, or third glance. These problems constitute The New Modern Aesthetic & Orthodoxy.

Charles Jencks<sup>59</sup>

The Kunsthall is by far the most significant built project by OMA that explores the potential of

communication by weaving architectural elements into a composition of chance. The trajectory of ramps leads the body through the building from program to program. From every vantage point the building is modified. Numerous combinations of programs are available as the body moves in relation to the building. Trees are seen as trees, trees are seen as columns and trees are seen as handrails. The art in the gallery can be seen in the gallery, from the pedestrian ramp, through crowds of people or from the road. The café may be seen from the inside and the outside, in conjunction with and in isolation from the lecture hall, the road or the public ramp. Compositions are fleeting and momentary at best. The lecture hall situates well known bodies over the café, and also in the café for a drink before or after. The East elevation is the climax of programmatic juxtaposition, where five programs meet, street, art gallery, pedestrian thoroughfare, cafe, and lecture hall. Koolhaas' placement of adjacencies and the use of transparency recalls the humor in Jaque Tati's *Playtime*.

For a box this project does a lot, at times providing plentiful displacement for public consumption, at other times very little. This is a strategy that if employed at an urban scale would be explosive. The Kunsthal's largest draw back is the likeness of the programs. A greater variety of programs could invite a greater variety of people and provide more opportunity for event and body to contribute. This is why it is a shame that OMA's Parc de la Villette scheme finished second to Tschumi's. As an unbuilt project, the reading of program against program, event beside program, body within a mass will be left a seed within your mind, ready to play with at the Kunsthal.

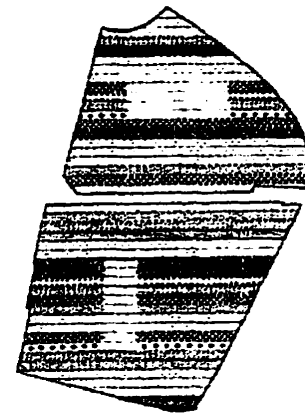
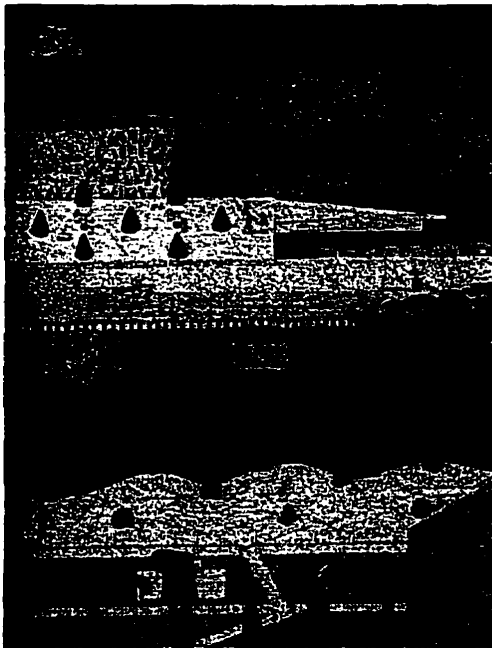
#### Compositional Method II

Crazy logic. Again, like Le Corbusier (and James Sterling), Rem loves an upside-down logic, a crazy rationality which no one would think of except perhaps a mad Cartesian. This method fits surrealism to a T and is why I used to write about Rem as a Surrationalist. His Kunsthal in Rotterdam, sited half on the side of a road-bank and flat park area, inverts expectations. Any normal architect would have shown the drop in section on the elevation and would have had a clear route and entrance. Instead, Rem places a huge rectangular box slope and plane, enters by the middle of the building on a ramp, hangs masonry above glass, changes material-Juxtaposition!-at each corner, he uses orange I-beams for ornament (Mies as ornament, how

very P-m), ramp as exhibition space (how very dizzy), and tree stumps as columns (how very surreal). It works much better than customary logic. I love the statue of the beduin and camel that graces the orange Miesian cornice. It provides just the representation and small detail needed. Rem hates it.

Charles Jencks<sup>60</sup>

Even though left as a schematic design, OMA hint at the possibilities of their Parc de la Villette to communicate. What is perhaps most impressive is their understanding of how the landscape can contribute the reading of programs and surfaces.



Illustrations 57-58  
Parc De La Villette, Paris.  
The Office For Metropolitan Architecture.

At La Villette the soil is often sterile, and our vegetal strategy implies fertility. We take advantage of the need to transport new soil to the site, turning this importation into an additional theme: the differentiation of the nature of soil strata required (healthy soil, peat, etc.) by juxtaposing natural and artificial vegetal sets and by clearly showing the diverse strata in elevation to accentuate further the third dimension of the landscape.

Rem Koolhaas.<sup>61</sup>

With sterile against fertile, perhaps Japanese garden against French garden that is within an English Garden beside an agrarian crop. The strata of the ground partially constructs the history of the site and establishes critical relationships of surface, and growing masses. Out of this spawns dialogues concerning the treatment of the land by those who have used it and abused it. By proposing to place the agrarian against the manicured a critical relationship of



dependence and leisure/beauty is formed. Micro-narratives begin to emerge as landscapes interact in a variety of critical relationships.

The La Villette scheme divides the plan into 5, 10, and 15 metre programmatic strips of permanent and temporary programs. With this distance programs will situate other programs and provide the moving body with a dynamic composition that can change by the minute, the hour, the day, or the week. This presents the possibilities of the strategy used at the Kunsthall at a larger and more explosive scale. The connotative possibilities seem endless.

NATO Building Regulation No.14  
Hybrid structures, open to co-presence of diverse categories of meaning.  
Brian Hatton<sup>62</sup>

While Koolhaas maintains a conservative aesthetic the boundaries of Modernist aesthetics have been crossed and obliterated by Branson Coates Architecture. Their projects explore the possibility of a cross-cultural architecture in metropolitan societies.

NATO's approach, combining elements of narrative, references to places and processes and fragments of films, thrived on ethnicity, exuding a 'spirit of raucous ethnicity', as Coates noted. Branson Coates' work is of particular interest in this context because it shows how complex and subtle the issues of 'ethnicity' are in the contemporary world.  
Clare Melhuish<sup>63</sup>

Baroque stairways, Roman pediments, Greek columns, Egyptian hieroglyphics, and a mass that eludes to Noah's Ark. These are conglomerate objects from a variety of Western cultures that are composed to make Branson Coate's Ark project in Sapporo, Japan. The realization of this project was largely due to an interest in western architects by the Japanese that also brought Frank Gehry, Peter Salter and Peter Wilson to do project in Japan. The Japanese went looking for tourist architects to provide them with their own souvenirs of another culture. In reference to another Branson Coates Japan project, "Here, it was the architects themselves who were perceived as 'ethnic', and the client's expectation that the project's 'foreignness' would be emphasized as much as possible."<sup>64</sup>

It is specifically through the use of conglomerate objects made of surface, massing, and

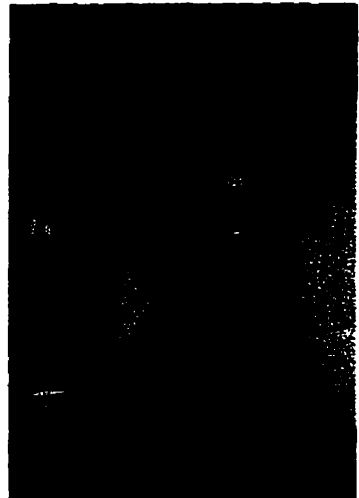
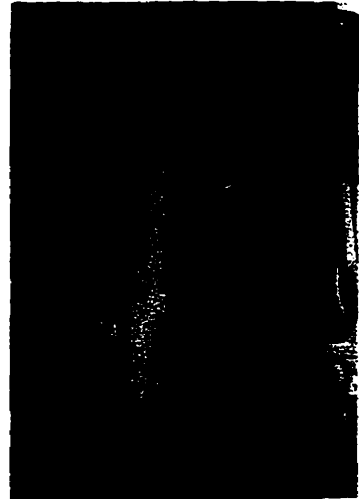


**Illustration 59**  
**L'Arca di Noe, Sapporo.**  
**Branson Coates Architecture.**

space, that the connotations of the Ark are facilitated. The entry mass of the restaurant has the profile of the bow of a ship with a heavily textured surface that provides a relic-like appearance. The mass and surface along with the assigned denotation of the name "The Ark" enable the building to denote biblical reference. This reference is then confused by the surface articulation of the hieroglyphic-like eye on the bow. The ark mass is then joined to an element whose surface and massing are reminiscent of a Roman temple. Further cultural juxtapositions of surface, massing and space are found on the interior. At the back of the dining rooms is a stairway that is baroque both in trajectory and plan. The red velvet handrail for the Baroque stairs is more typical of a Broadway or West End Theatre. However, in the section of the building the massing of the wood (surface) frame structure at the roof and above the main floor recalls traditional Japanese structures. It is this Japanese framework that supports the

postcard mess of Western space.

The critical relationships of importance are the conglomerate of Western architectural objects to their Japanese structure, and the relationship of the whole to the culture in which it is situated. The Japanese have become collectors and users of Western culture in ways that we consider odd. For instance, the use of English words on T-shirts for their aesthetic values rather than their meanings. This is clearly the intention of Nigel Coates, to provide a postcard collage of Western architecture that does not provide an accurate or complete history but rather



Illustrations 60-65  
L'Arce de Noe, Sapporo.  
Branson Coates Architecture.

a unique object formed from narratives from the West. There is a curious aspect to this project in that the surfaces and masses that are of Western cultural icons are hung from a frame that is Japanese in nature - the composition of the wood massing of the framing of the floor and roof is very Japanese-like. In effect a tourist postcard collage of the history of Western buildings is applied onto a Japanese frame. This strategy is also adopted in the Hotel Otaru which is also in Japan. In this hotel each room is themed and filled with objects of western culture, Egyptian and Greek. Each room contributes bits and pieces to the make up the whole, like collecting figurines and placing them in their respective squares on a shelf. Both of these projects are cultural collections and collisions that are blatant in their use of icons that are recognized as compositions of architectural objects. Each project is packed with powerful cross-cultural critical relationships that are capable of breeding connotations that could previously not be realized. It is only through Coates ability to transcend the limitations that Modernism has placed on architects that a true multi-cultural architecture begins to emerge.

In an unbuilt project in Bierut Branson Coates further refines cultural cross-overs through



Illustrations 66-67  
Hotel Otaru, Japan.  
Branson Coates Architecture.

surface, massing and space.

...a scheme for an apartment block in the Christian quarter on a street once lined with opulent mansions. It was emphasised that the flats should be modeled on the Parisian enfilade system - the 'ethnicity' of Christian, colonial Bierut - providing a continuous flow of spaces to accommodate very large family groups and a maid. Branson Coates interpreted the brief in a rather different way, and turned the ethnic reference into a source of aesthetic expression. One huge main internal space was created, equipped with screens allowing the occupants to create their own, more flexible enfilades. Although the flats would almost certainly have been air-conditioned, they explored the seeds of the idea that the cross-walls might be adapted to function as the chimney draws out the stale air, in the manner traditional Middle Eastern cone structures. Huge balconies on the cool north side, with views over the bay, allowed the whole family to eat together outside, screened behind an undulating external skin made of steel cable, which is also referred to as the 'corset'. Wrapping around the glazed facade on the side of the building and visible on the skyline, it was intended as a reference to the strict covering of the body fundamental to Arab, as opposed to Western culture.

Clare Melhuish<sup>65</sup>

The exterior composition of surface and mass connotes the traditions of dress in the Arab culture. While the interior spatial configuration is adapted from Parisian housing models and the massing composition of the interior introduces an element of vernacular. Coates actively attempts to meld cultures and make an architecture that reflects the conditions of cross-cultural living that now exist. There are compositions of programs, masses, surfaces, and spaces that denote particular cultures. When these compositions are brought together in a careful and skillful manner there are multifarious possibilities of commentary.

From a lineage of the Situationists, Archigram, Bernard Tschumi, Istanbul, Morocco and NATO, Branson Coates Architecture has developed a sensitivity to culture that allows them to invent building typologies and aesthetics that address contemporary cultural conditions. Meanwhile, The Office for Metropolitan Architecture maintains a use of surface, massing, and space that does not stray far from the boundaries of what is considered to be Modern. The use of strongly iconic and kitsch architectural objects by Branson Coates Architecture provides compositions that are more relevant to a multi-cultural society.

## **PART C. CONNOTATION COOKBOOK.**

## **CONNOTATION COOKBOOK**

- 1. Architecture is a cultural product, as such it is one of the many recording devices of the ideas, beliefs, and conditions of a particular point in time in a particular place. Herein lies the 2nd nature of our professional obligations, along with the safety of the public.**
- 2. Architecture and building are not the same. Architecture is produced by the body, it is a by-product of the consumption of buildings, it is synonymous with architectural connotation. This means that the site of architecture is constantly in motion relative to buildings.**
- 3. Through the consideration of building as a composition of architectural objects, surface, situation, massing, space, program, event, and body, critical relationships must be developed to provide displacement.**
- 4. Architectural connotation is produced by the consumption of displacement. Displacement is found in between critical relationships of architectural objects, such as the Villa Savoye to the landscape.**
- 5. In the presence of displacement there are many possible readings, each relying on the knowledge of past experiences of the viewer since it is formulated in the mind. Because of this control over the reading of architecture it is not absolute to the author. The author merely has the ability to plant seeds and have belief in certain possible outcomes.**
- 6. Singular metaphors (ducks) must be avoided, as meanings with singular intentions easily bore and alienate diverse metropolitan society.**
- 7. Architecture is by nature a spatial experience. As such, any attempts towards connotation should be inclusive of the phenomenological experience of architecture. The facade is not the end of the architecture, it is merely the beginning. It is only through continual use to develop familiarity and intimacy that any building can be fully consumed( if such a feat is possible). This is not to exclude those who do not enter, but to give them reason to go beyond the surface and to experience a building in its entirety.**

8. As bodies of various cultures have mixed to create metropolitan urbanities, so must buildings become cross cultural creatures in order to address a multi-cultural society. This involves the use of surface, massing, and space compositions from a variety of cultural sources including religious, institutional and vernacular building typologies.
9. Critical relationships are enhanced by the inclusion of thoughts and objects from the exterior of architecture. Blatant inclusions can spark curiosity, while clandestine inclusions remain for the cunning and the astute.
10. Style itself becomes an architectural object, loaded and iconic, available for use in establishing critical relationships.
11. Geometries collapse in a crowd. The crowd is part of the composition of the building that is consumed by the viewer. It's actions, movements, and bodies effect architectural connotation. This is the nature of program, event, and body and how they effect meaning as much as surface, massing, and space.
12. Programs against programs, bodies against surfaces, void behind mass, space defined by program, like Deleuze and Guattari's machines architectural objects feed off and support one another to form dynamic compositions that facilitate connotation. Urbanities become more dense, the unemployment office in the K-Mart, the homeless shelter wrapping the bank, buildings reflect the dynamic motions of everyday life.
13. It is possible that such an exploration can undermine and marginalize those who have controlled architecture, and this is a valid goal.



**PART D. CONDUCTING  
EXPERIMENTS.**

## CONDUCTING EXPERIMENTS

The isolation and definition of architectural objects is the first stage in developing an understanding of how to facilitate the production of architecture. The next stage is application through experimental composition. The experiments reinforce the categories of architectural objects already examined, while further exploring the nature of the object, and of course, aim to develop architectural connotations.

Through the composition of objects critical relationships are sought out and developed with the intent of facilitating architecture. Intentions will be made explicit, and where possible alternate readings will be examined. Two concurrent series of experiments, *Tainted Space* and *Hybrids*, examine various applications of the thesis. The *Tainted Space* series presents the consequences of the body in third person mode in architectural connotation. The primary object categories used are program, event, and body. The *Hybrids* series initially investigates surface, massing, and space, but quickly finds itself implicating other objects.

## TAINTED SPACE

## **TAJ MAHAL**

**Intentions:** to present the effects of specific bodies acting in third person mode when acting in a composition. This piece also introduces the notion of multi-cultural or cross cultural examination and inclusion in architecture.

### **Objects:**

**A - A body in third person mode, a cowboy.**

**B - The Taj Mahal. A culmination of Surface, Massing, and Space into a complete object with a broad understanding.**

**Critical Relationships:** The relationship of the cowboy to the Taj Mahal introduces a number of issues by using the specific body of the cowboy as an object. The cowboy is widely understood to be a North American cow rustler that lives on the prairies and in the deserts. When situated with the Taj Mahal the immediate understanding is one of tourism, a body from another country visiting this important cultural symbol. Of course there is also a possibility that somebody has constructed a mini Taj Mahal of the Mojave Desert and this cowboy is just passing through. One connotes a collecting society, the other a travelling society. All this is brought about by the placement of a body, used as an architectural object.



## **PREPARING FOR THE 3D ATOMIC DRIVE-IN**

**Intentions** - to exploit the inherent voyeuristic tendencies of the glass house through re-situation. Further to stretch the understanding of program through the odd placement of welders?

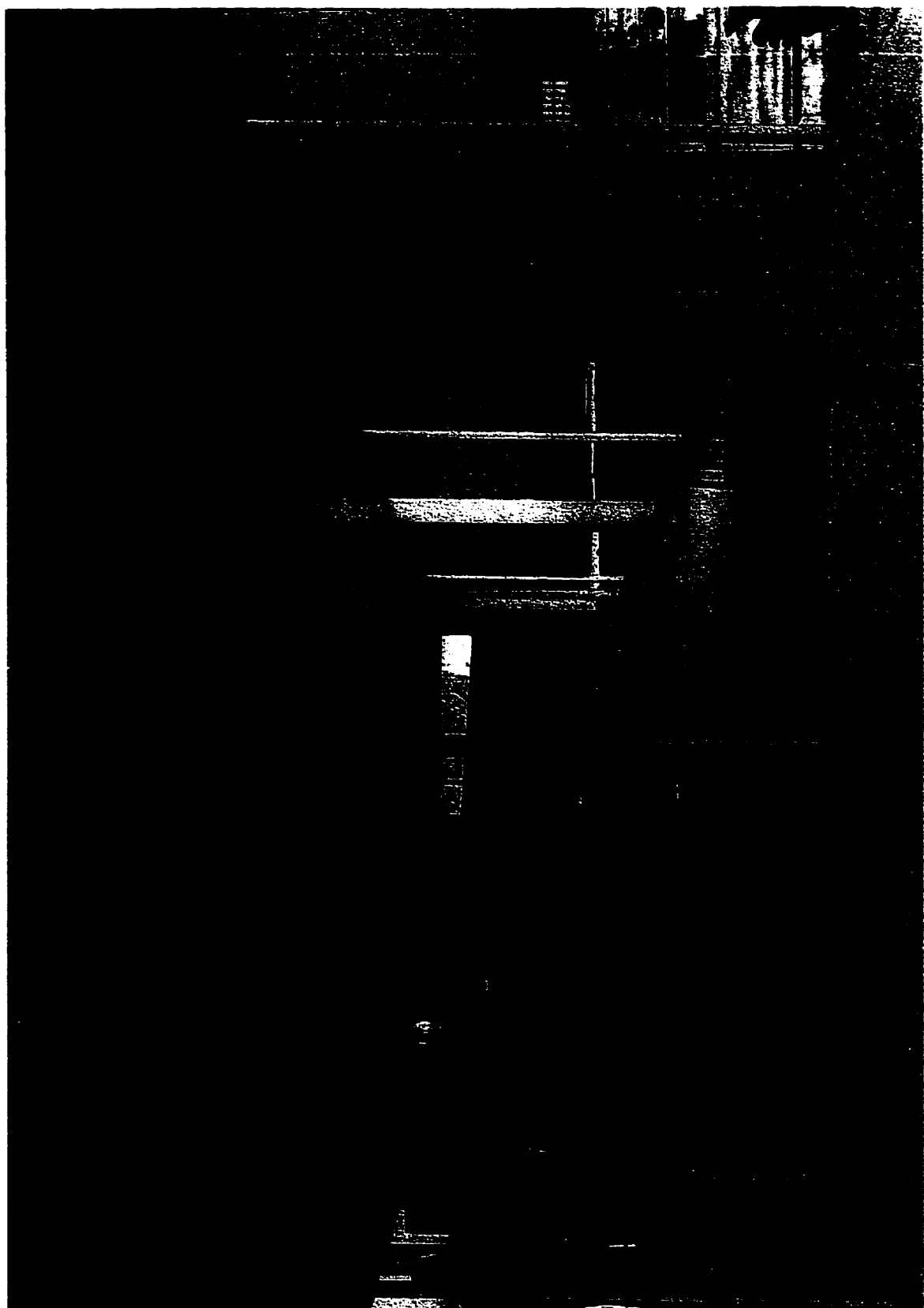
### **Objects**

**A - Farnsworth House.** The Farnsworth House is a conglomerate object made of surface, massing, space, and program. This example relies also on assigned denotation as the use of this house as a strong example of modernism is common. There is also associated denotation due to the events that happened between Mrs. Farnsworth and Mies following the completion of the home.

**Welders** - It is by the recognition of their apparatus on their bodies that one is able to recognize this bunch as welders. This is by nature programmatic.

**Drive-In** - A conglomerate object of surface massing and space, that is also recognized by its apparatus, the screen and the parking lot. This is how it is recognized as a drive-in movie theatre.

**Critical Relationships** - The relationship between the glass house and the drive-in provides a reading of the inherent voyeuristic abilities of the glass house. Because of this there is a programmatic redefinition of the home. In its former situation the surrounding nature provided a peaceful surrounding in which to live. Here the house functions much like a panopticon, providing a premium view point of the screen. The welders throw a twist into this composition. In relationship to the house the welders can be read as a repair or demolition crew. This can connote the ill state of modernists ideals, or the complete dismantling of the same by a post-modern era. In culmination with the drive in and the house perhaps they are there with virtual reality helmets on to watch a new breed of drive-in movie.



## **HOMICIDE**

**Intentions** : to present the ability for event to alter architectural connotations.

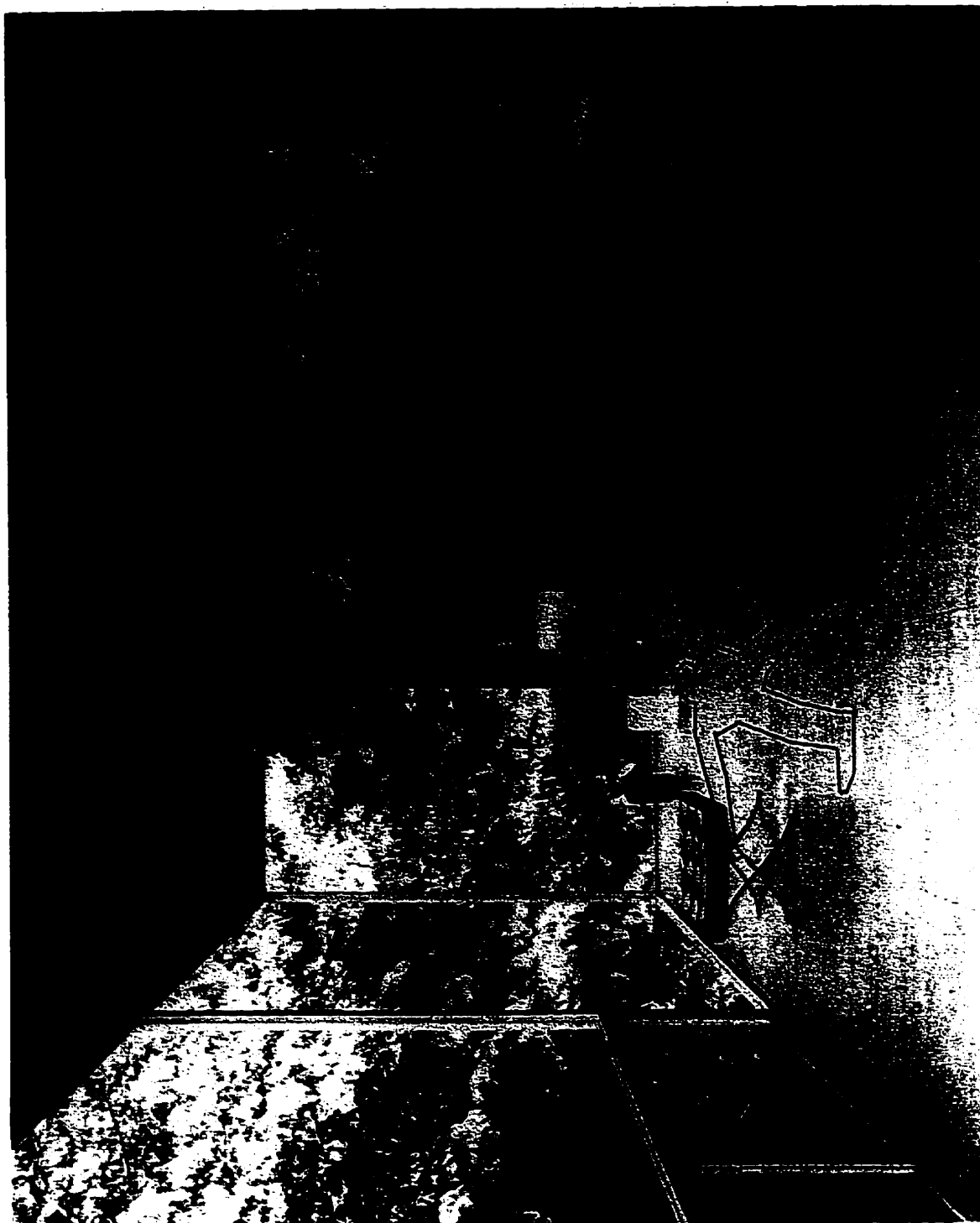
### **Objects:**

**A - Farnsworth House.** The Farnsworth House is a conglomerate object made of surface, massing, space, and program. This example relies also on assigned denotation as the use of this house as a strong example of modernism is common. There is also associated denotation due to the events that happened between Mrs. Farnsworth and Mies following the completion of the home.

**B - The event of a homicide is the second object in this composition.** The recognition of event in this piece is interesting as it relies on the residue of the murder, the chalk outline of the body. Here we rely on the reading of surface (the outline) and

**Critical Relationships:** The critical relationship is the murder to the Farnsworth House, an event marking a space and creating a displacement. The connotations caused by the event of murder in a place are not readily identifiable, but do have the ability to cause discomfort. The space is changed in meaning, for how long depends on how wide spread knowledge of such an event is. If the murdered body was famous, the media will propagate such knowledge. If not, the knowledge could fade relatively quickly. Events can effect spaces and places forever or for the duration of their activity. Event is not controlled.





## **ARCHERS**

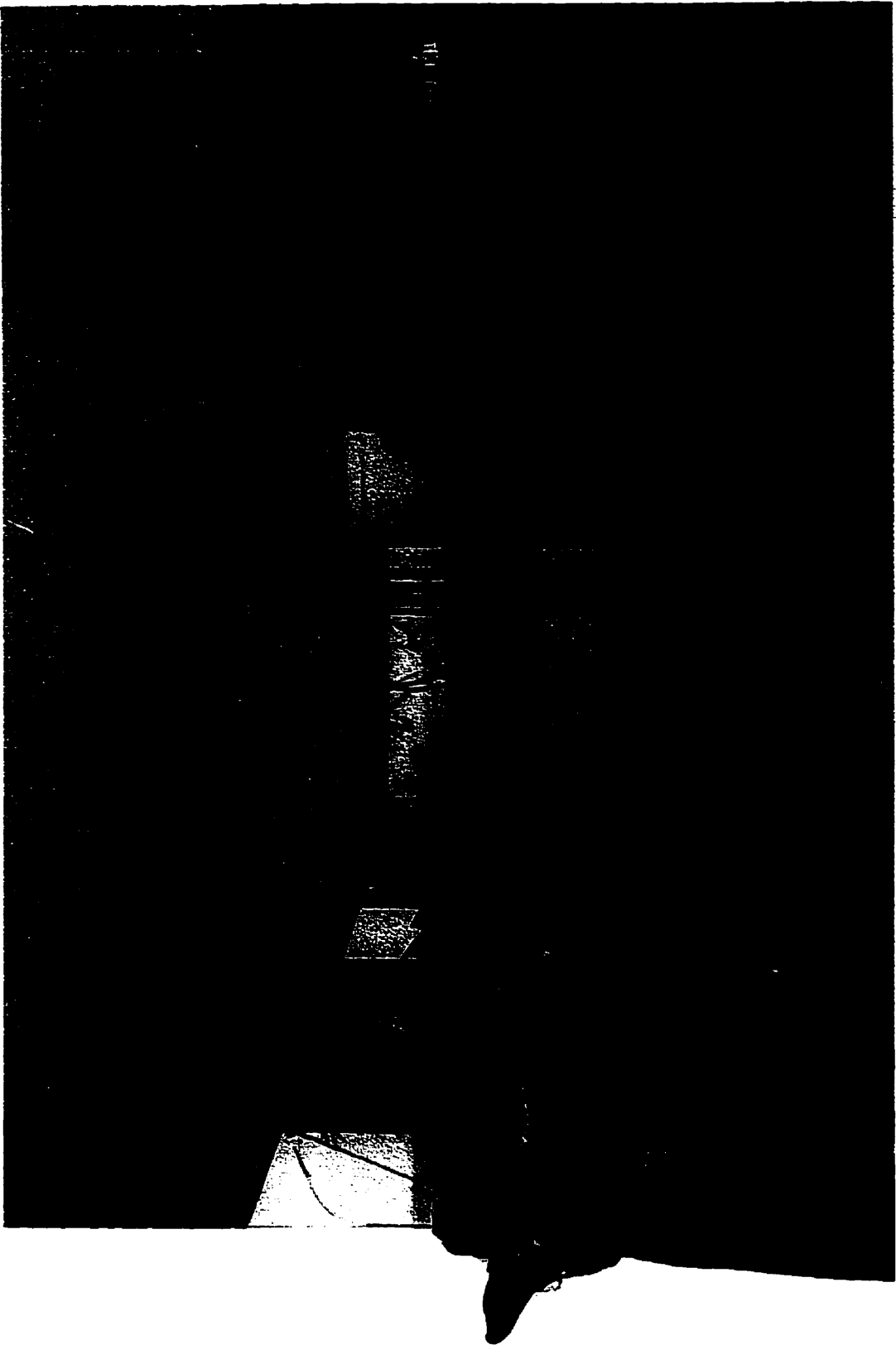
**Intentions:** To use an event object to critically analyze the notion of universal space.

**Objects:**

**A - Archers -** The archers are recognized as a programmatic object by their use of apparatus and the position of their bodies.

**The Bacardi Building by Mies Van Der Rohe -** This building is a conglomerate object of surface, massing, space and program. It is a modern icon that clearly expresses Mies' notion of universal space through the building situation on a pedestal and the spatial organization of the building.

**Critical Relationships:** The understanding of the archers changes from program to event due to their situation in an unexpected place. They sit on the pedestal of the building that acts as the space in front of The Seagram's Building, it is a space for walking and not for sitting, etc. This questions the idea of public space that Mies puts forth by using the space for something that is not intended or wanted. In effect the universal space is tainted by event.



## **TOURIST**

**Intentions:** To investigate the effect of a specific body when placed in a culturally loaded space..

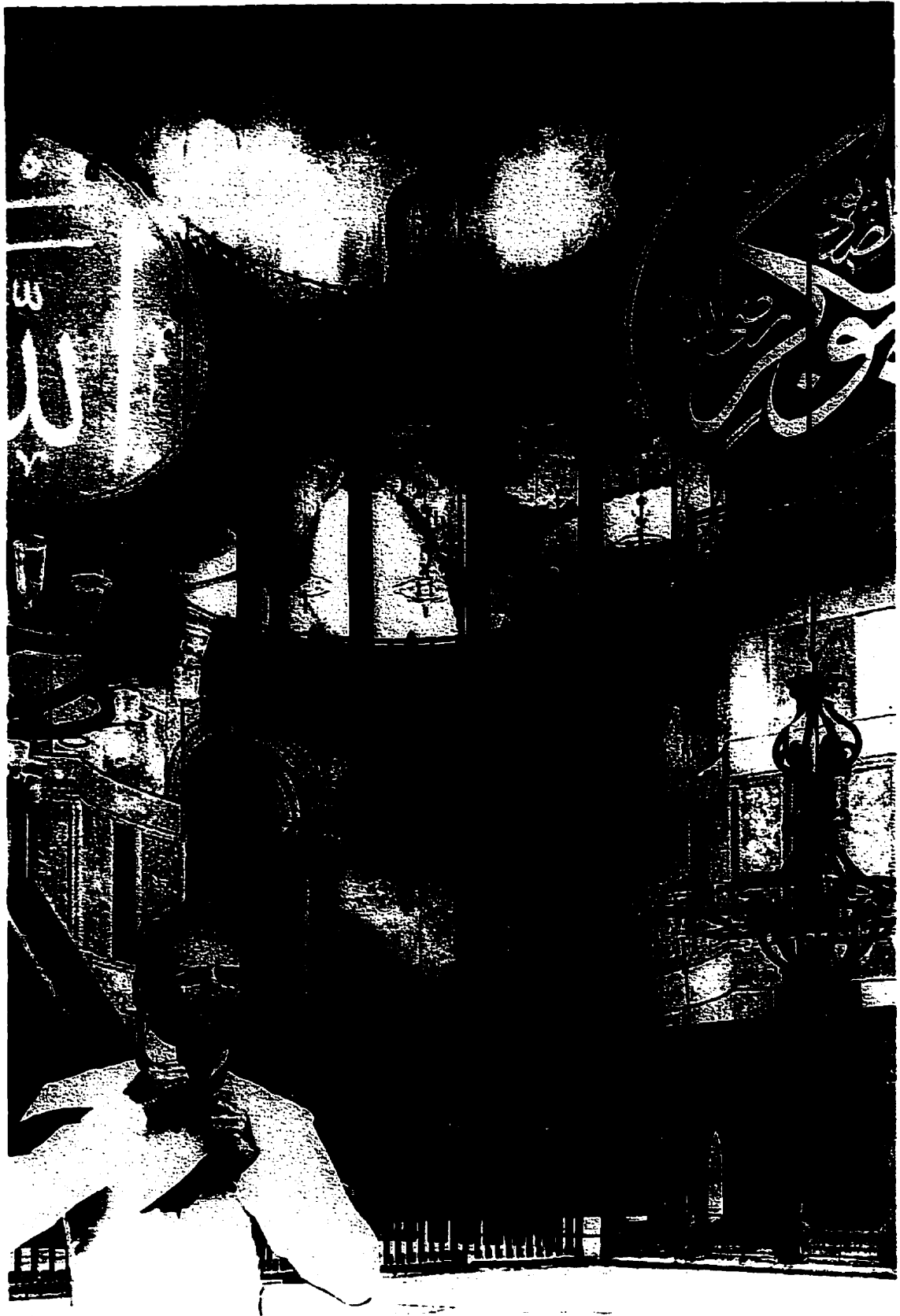
### **Objects:**

**A - A body in third person mode, Bruce Willis. An action movie actor from movies such as Die Hard.**

**B - The Hagia Sophia - a conglomerate object of surface, massing, space, and program. It is a well known cultural icon of Turkey that has stringent access restrictions to tourists, one of which is no shoes. .This object has assigned and associated denotation, it has an assigned use and function and is associated to a particular culture.**

**Critical Relationships:** Bruce Willis is apparently dressing himself in a sacred place.

There are a number of connotations. Bruce Willis is known as an action movie star, his characters in films carry guns, kill the bad guys, in general not a guy to mess with. Here he is seen doing an act, event, that is not suitable for this space. This could show ignorance on his part for the traditions of a foreign culture | which he is a tourist, or a blatant disrespect by an American tough guy.



## **MUSEUM**

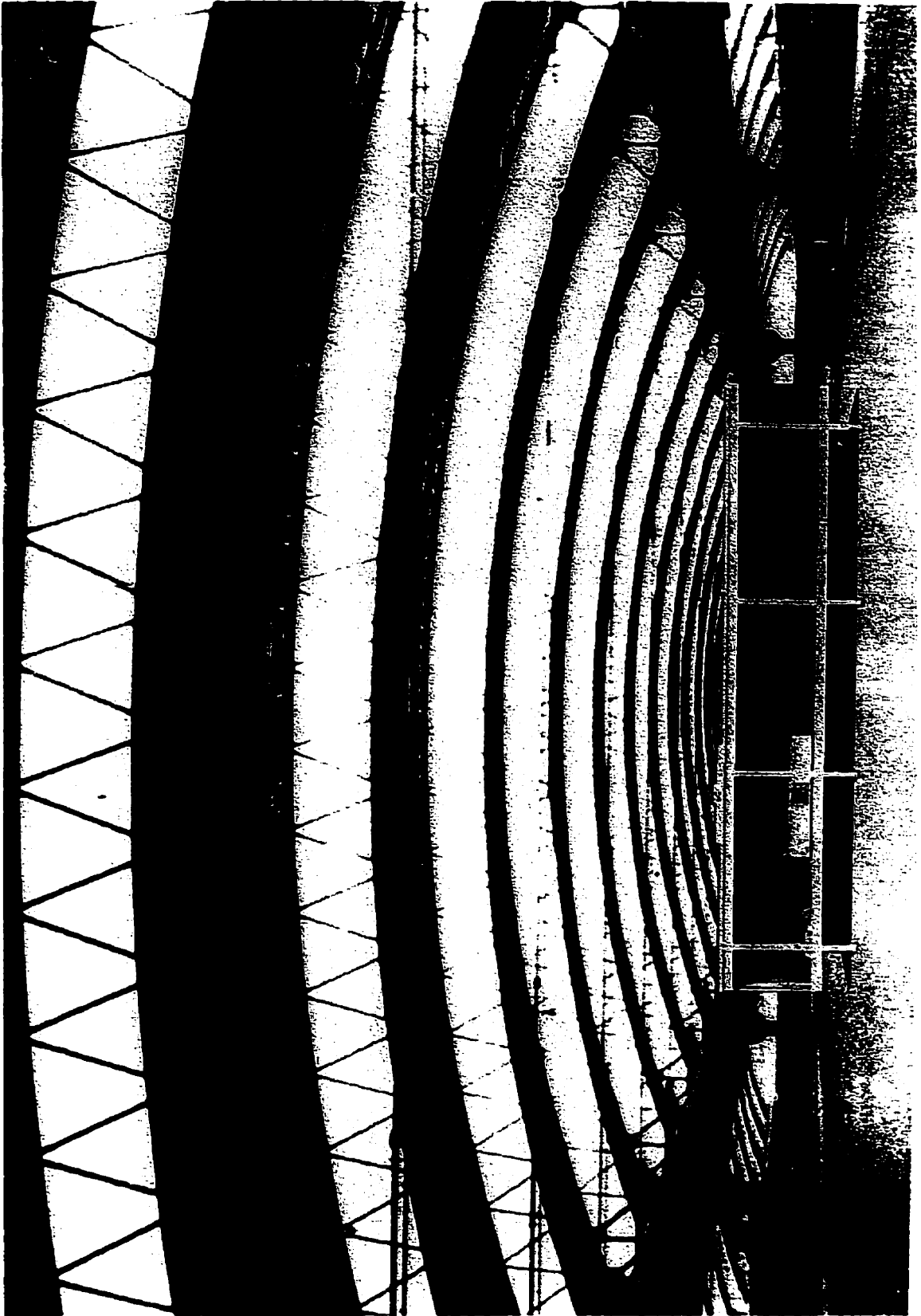
**Intentions:** To investigate the use of program as object, without the use of bodies, by re-situating an architectural icon.

### **Objects:**

**A - Farnsworth House.** The Farnsworth House is a conglomerate object made of surface, massing, space, and program. This example relies also on assigned denotation as the use of this house as a strong example of modernism is common. There is also associated denotation due to the events that happened between Mrs. Farnsworth and Mies following the completion of the home.

**B - A Warehouse space** whose program is identifiable by its large open space provided by the mass of the building..

**Critical Relationships:** By re-situating the Farnsworth house from its site to the inside of a warehouse space a critical relationship is established. The program of the house changes at the level of connotation from house to museum piece. By housing the house it suggests that it is precious and should be protected from the weather to prevent degradation. This presents the Farnsworth house in a different light than the other experiments, upholding the building as an important example of the history of modern architecture.



## **HYBRIDS**

**NATO Building Regulation 15.  
Overlaying, meshing, splicing, and weaving are basic procedures.  
Brian Hatton**



## **DOMESTIC PROSTHETIC I**

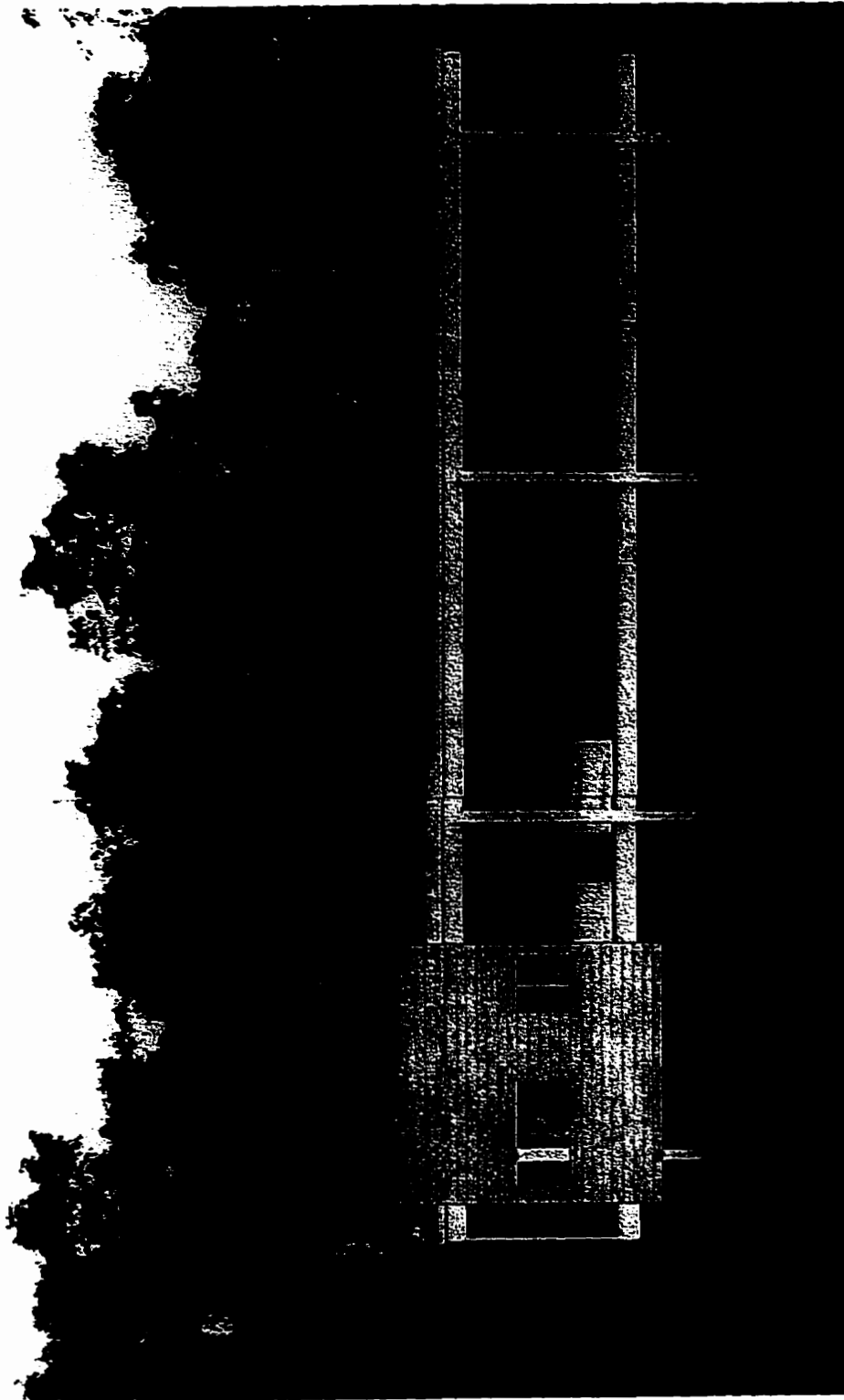
**Intentions :** The intention of this is to use surface to apply a more domestic functionality to the Farnsworth House.

### **Objects:**

**A - Farnsworth House.** The Farnsworth House is a conglomerate object made of surface, massing, space, and program. This example relies also on assigned denotation as the use of this house as a strong example of modernism is common. There is also associated denotation due to the events that happened between Mrs. Farnsworth and Mies following the completion of the home.

**B - A wall of pink vinyl siding.** The surface of vinyl siding is programmatically linked to the suburban home here it is commonly used as a sheathing material.

**Critical Relationships:** The relationship between the added wall of vinyl siding and the Farnsworth house facilitates connotation through the use of surface. The new wall that covers the bedroom of the house provides a screen behind which the inhabiting bodies can be covered. The vinyl siding can be seen as providing a sense of security and privacy that is expected in domestic dwellings but is not provided by the glass house. In effect it suggests that the Farnsworth House has short falls in terms of its operation as a house.



## **BILLBOARD FACTORY**

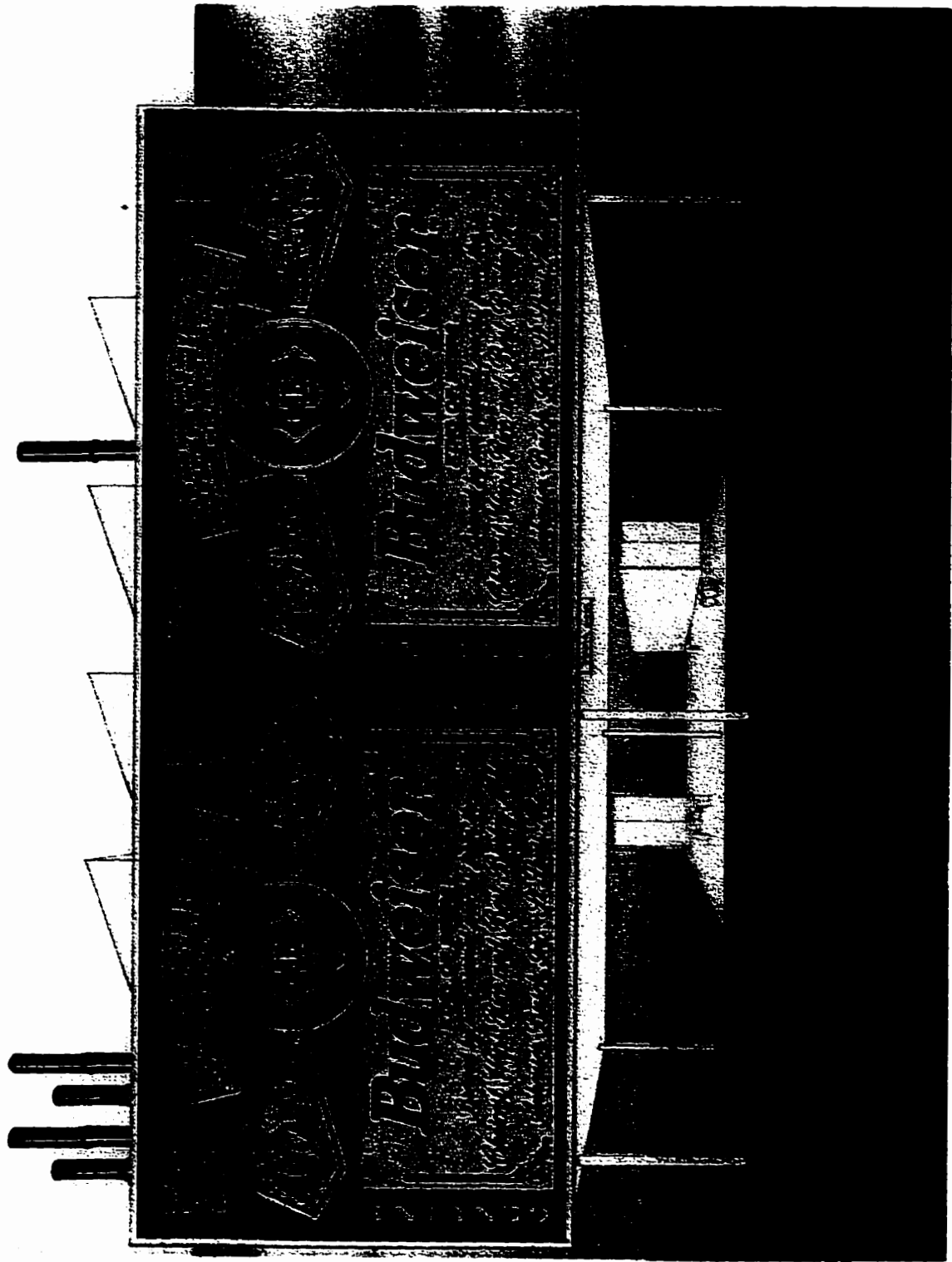
**Intentions:** The intentions of this composition is to use surface and mass to create a new hybrid building that is able to create a dialogue on contemporary issues.

### **Objects:**

**A - The Billboard** is an architectural object that is recognized most by its surface, in this case the Budweiser add, then by its relationship to the ground, raised in order to be seen.

**B - The Factory** which is recognized through massing, the saw tooth windows and the smoke stacks rising above the billboard. The semi trailers provided a programmatic reinforcement of the recognition of the factory.

**Critical Relationships:** The hiding of the factory behind the billboard out in a field spurs questions of why is it hidden? This piece was generated from the notion that the factory is seen as a polluter, a building that people do not want, but also must exist. This is a hybrid of two typologies where one that is acceptable tries to hide the other from sight. Out of sight, out of mind.



## **HOME FOR THE WAYWARD**

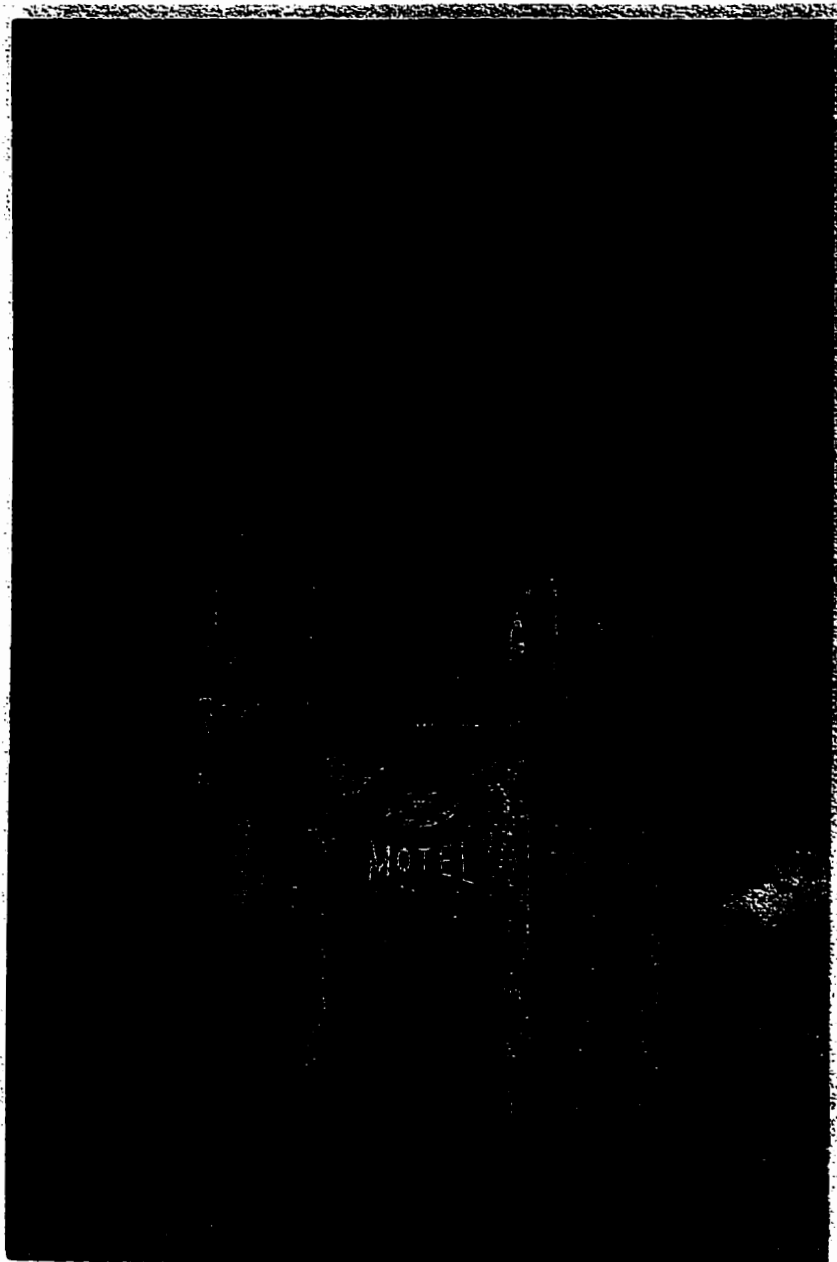
**Intentions:** To investigate the transition of program in a readily identifiable building typology.

### **Objects:**

**A - Chartres Cathedral -** is a conglomerate object of surface, massing, space, and program. Its denotation is assigned by its name, and is widely known due to the stature and importance of this particular church.

**B - The Starlight Hotel -** This sign from 1970's USA supplies an assigned denotation of hotel. It uses surface and program as architectural objects.

**Critical Relationships:** The sign provides a critical relationship that plays with the expectations of the viewer. The hotel sign is not visible on this composition from a distance, it is only as the viewer gets close that the sign emerges and changes Chartres from a church to a hotel. Just as many bars now inhabit old churches a new program has arrived to this one. It can be read as a church that caters to the Catholic, or perhaps as a sacrilege of an important icon.



## **PROSTHETICS**

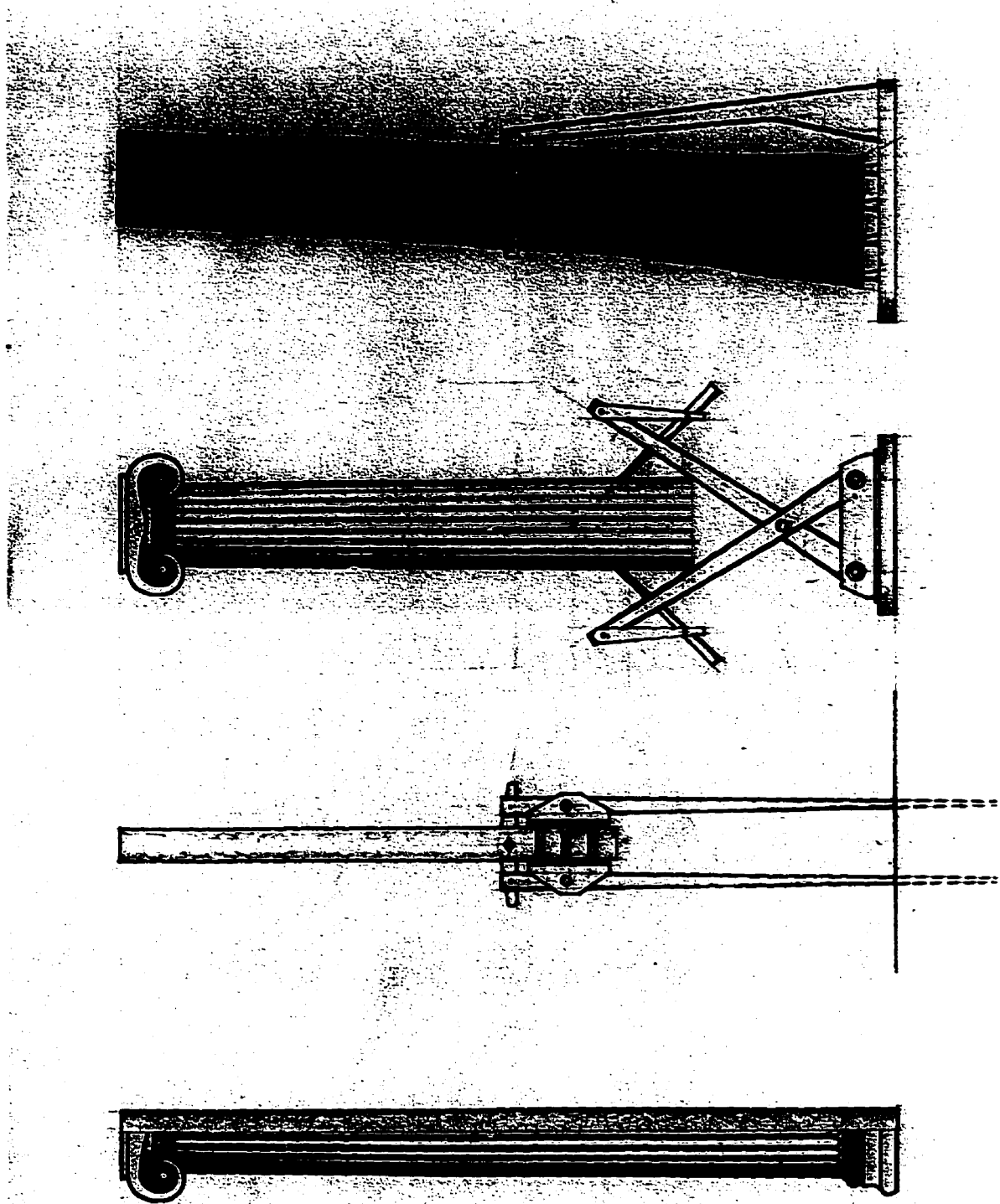
**Intentions:** To investigate the implications of massing at a closer level of detail.

**Composition A:** The first column juxtaposes ionic and modern together. This undermines the intentions of both of the columns. Each is recognized specifically by its massing in this drawing. It can be read as demonstrating the uselessness of the articulation of the Ionic column. It could be read as a necessary dressing of a pilotis in order to provide a public appearance, as the column will look only Ionic from a certain point of view, however it will never appear as a mere pilotis.

**Composition B:** This composition brings in gestural elements of massing composition with the clamping of the pilotis and the piercing of the ground. The relationship of the prosthetic reveals a need of the pilotis, a deficiency perhaps.

**Composition C:** This composition provides a similar investigation as the previous but with an Ionic column. The traditional base of the column has been replaced by a mechanic base that attaches to the Ionic top in a tenuous manner. This suggests a dislike between the top and the bottom, a necessary mechanical base that helps and disowns the top at the same time.

**Composition D:** The column is here replaced by a tree, this in itself is a displacement of expectation. At the same time it provides a clear inclusion of nature into the composition. This nature is however aided by a mechanical structure that once again has a tenuous connection. This can read in a number of manners. The mechanical base pierces the bottom of the tree as the tree leans on a steel support. It can be seen as a relationship between nature and machine that is necessary but strained.





## **GARDEN FACTORY**

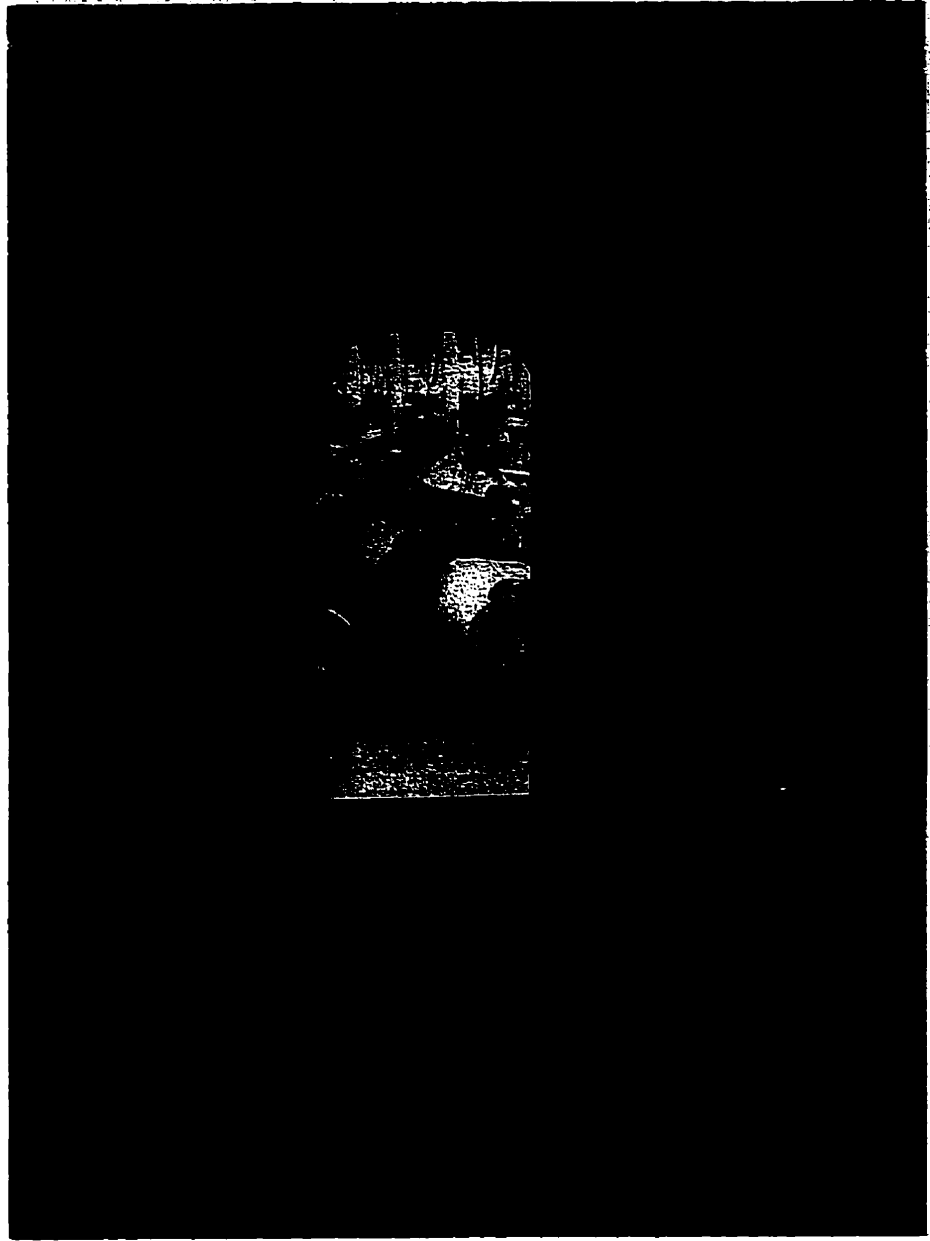
**Intentions:** To investigate the juxtaposition of unexpected programmatic objects.

**Objects:**

**A -** An English garden, identified by the surface and mass of its foliage.

**B -** The Factory which is recognized programmatically by its apparatus through the door from the garden.

**Critical Relationships:** The Factory is concealed within a garden, this is the relationship. It can be read as providing a pleasant working environment for a factory, or an attempt to conceal a factory from sight, like with the billboard factory.



## **BROTHEL**

**Intentions:** To utilize surface, massing, space, and program to explore a more complex layering of critical relationships.

### **Objects:**

A - Chartres Cathedral - is a conglomerate object of surface, massing, space, and program. It's denotation is assigned by its name, and is widely known due to the stature and importance of this particular church.

B - The Brothel Sign - A Las Vegas-esque sign that assigns the denotation of brothel.

C - The grain elevators that are identifiable by their massing.

D - An English garden that is identifiable by its symmetrical space and the crisp mass of the manicured trees along with their foliage surface.

**Critical Relationships:** The sign and Chartres have a relationship that transforms the program of the church. Its new program is very much opposed to the one that is understood to inhabit the church. In front of this stands the grain elevators, denoting and industrial agrarian understanding, in front of which is the garden. Between the grain elevator and the garden we see two different relationships to the land, one for providing food and industry, the other for providing leisure space. While the brothel provides both pleasure and industry. Specifically where this composition is supposed to go is a bit of a mystery, it is intended to provide a more urban depth than the other experiments and not specifically work as a whole. The composition is like putting together two critical relationships that seem to work, the brothel cathedral and the grain elevator garden, and waiting to see what happens.



## **CROP SITUATION**

**Intentions:** To introduce a surface that can re-situate other elements in order to explore a constantly dynamic connotation.

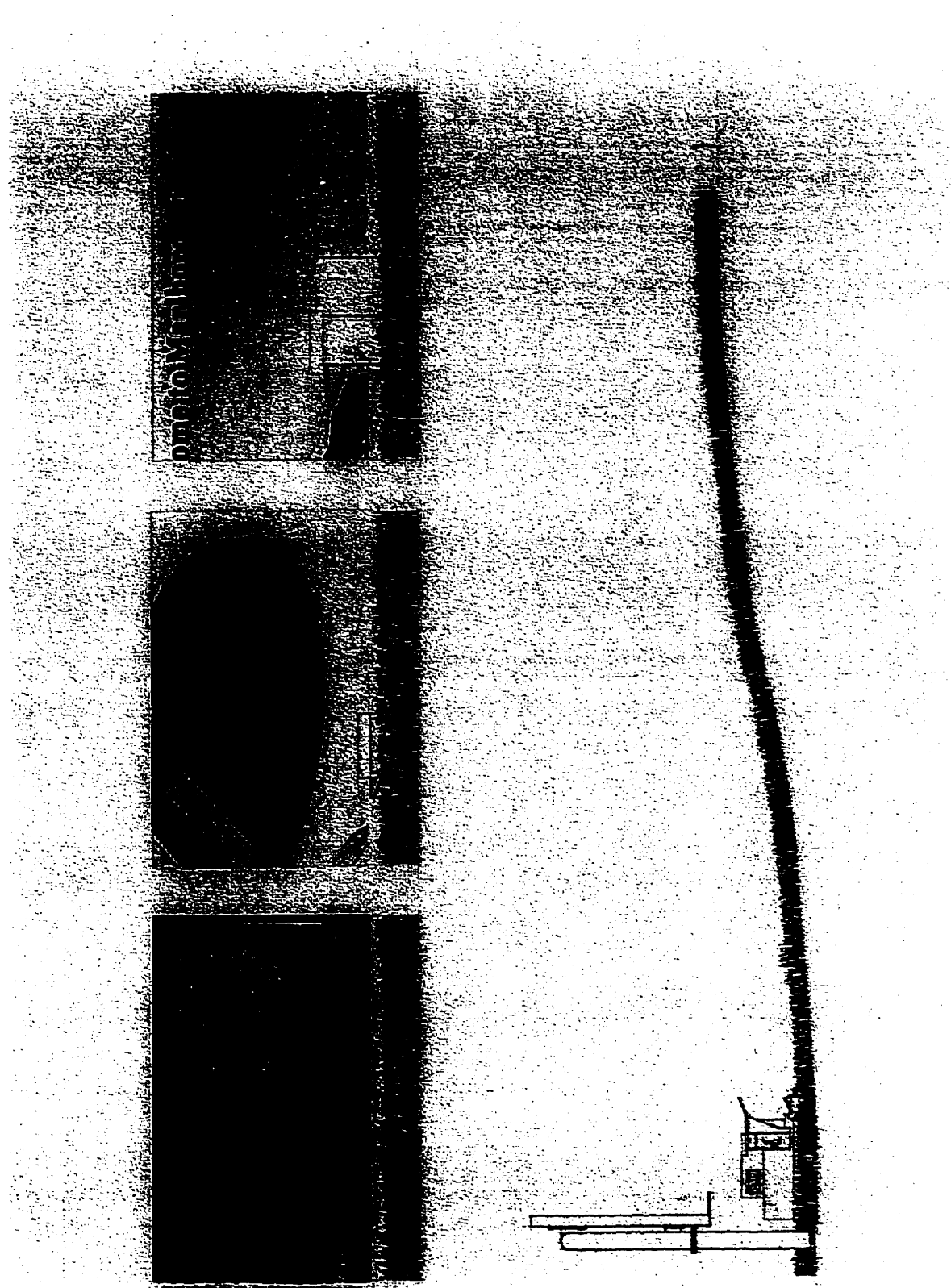
### **Objects:**

**A -** Wheat field, read by its mass.

**B -** The combine, also identified by its mass.

**C -** A three part rotating billboard.

**Critical Relationships:** The slope of the field enables the combine to travel under the sign and then from the road be seen as situated within the sign. The field itself is situated by the billboard, the relationship depends on the image on the board. If the billboard has a Marlboro Man on it there is a relationship between the icon and the land, the Marlboro Man should be at home on the farm. Or if the billboard had political advertisements for the Reform party, or the Progressive Conservatives. Then through associated denotation the policies of each party could be read in relation to the farm.



## **DOMESTIC PROSTHETIC II**

**Intentions:** To use massing to explore similar intentions as Domestic Prosthetic I.

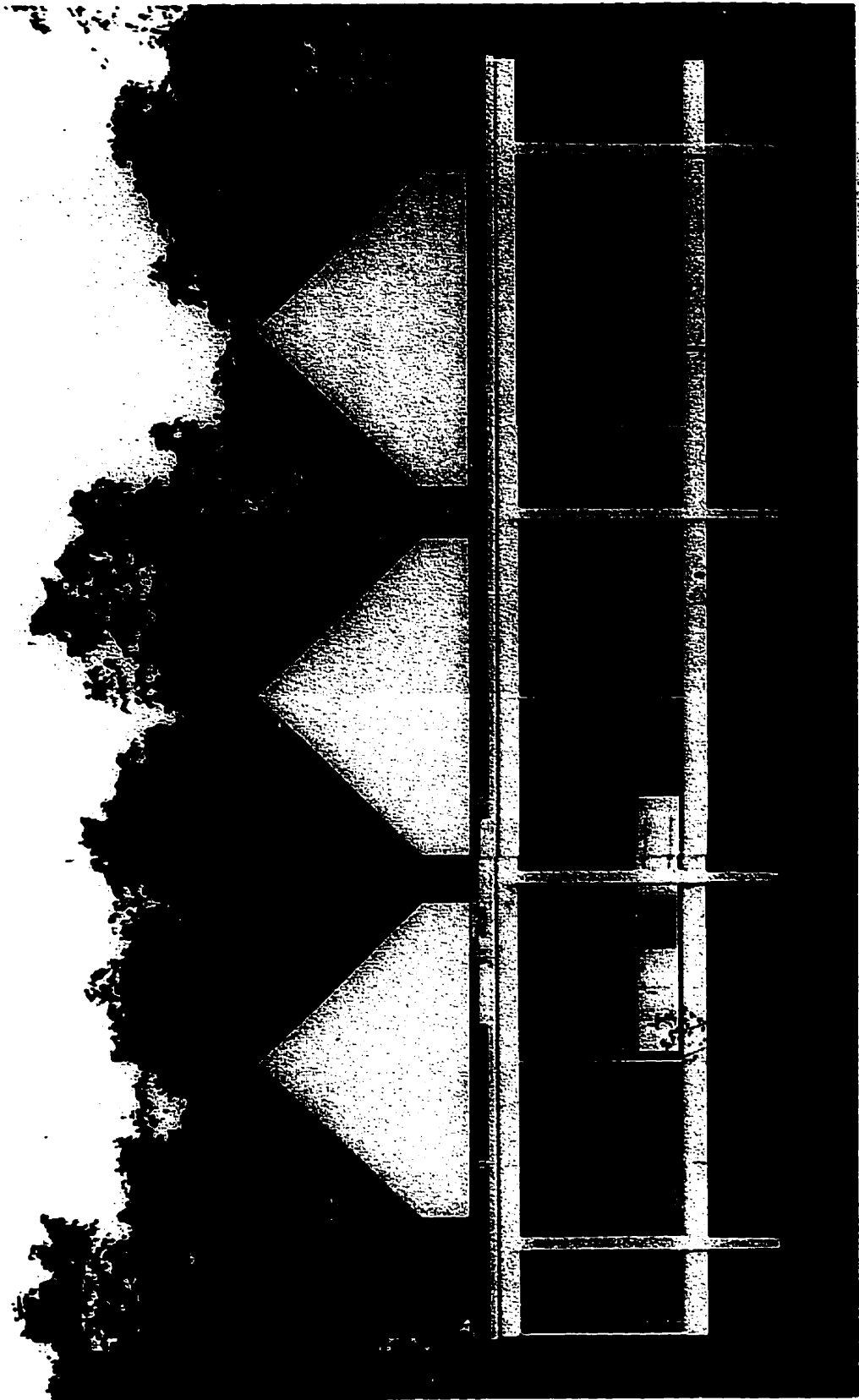
**Objects:**

**A - Farnsworth House.** The Farnsworth House is a conglomerate object made of surface, massing, space, and program. This example relies also on assigned denotation as the use of this house as a strong example of modernism is common. There is also associated denotation due to the events that happened between Mrs. Farnsworth and Mies following the completion of the home.

**B - Gabled masses that are pierced into the Farnsworth House.** The recognition of the masses is through associated denotation to suburban houses.

**Critical Relationships:** This critical relationship is based on the composition of massing.

Whereas Domestic Prosthetic I uses surface to provide a domestic element, this composition relies on the recognition of gabled masses. Those elements pierce the roof of the Farnsworth house, this connotes a relationship that is less than civil. The somewhat domestic elements are forcefully applied to the house, it is in this displacement that a layer of connotation can be derived. The house is presented as deficient in its provision of the notion of home and requires additional elements to provide such an understanding.





## **GRAIN ELEVATOR I AND II**

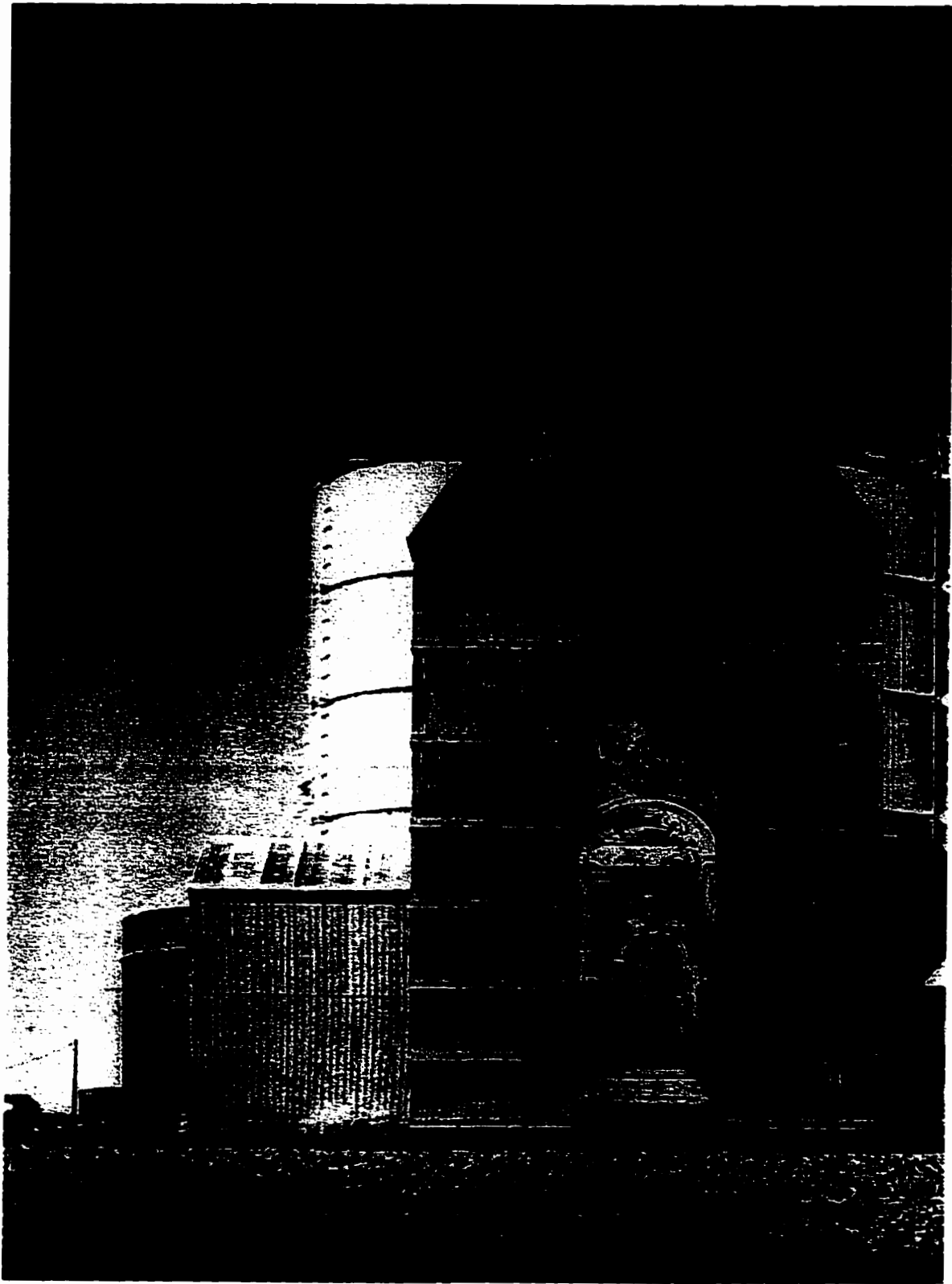
**Intentions:** To explore the architectural element of space through 2 experiments with a grain elevator.

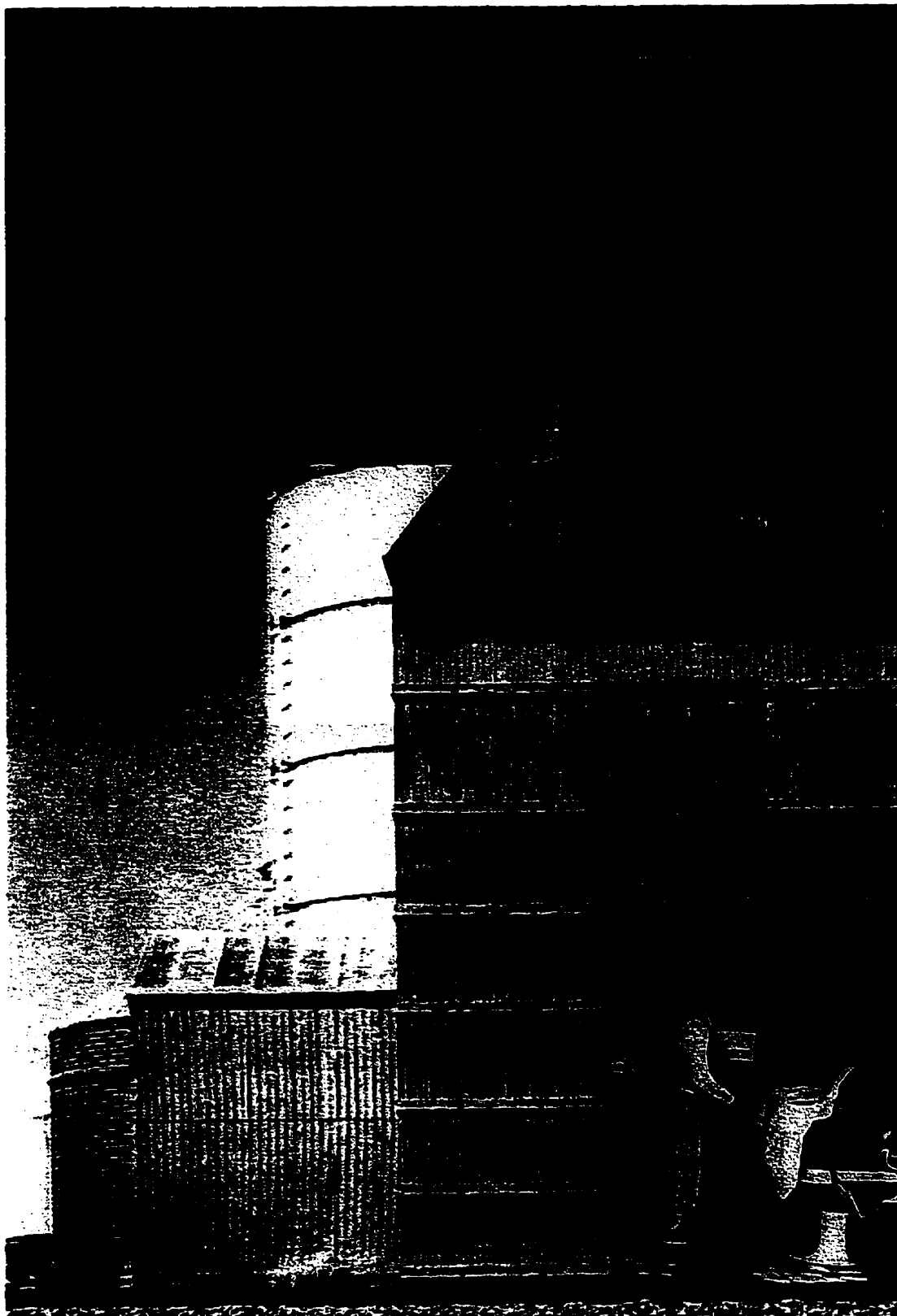
### **Objects:**

**A - Grain Elevator -** The grain elevator is mostly recognized by its massing and secondarily by its materiality. We of course understand grain elevators as necessary functional buildings for agrarian industries, and one with this mass and surface to be in the country.

**B1 and B2 -** Two interior spaces that are defined by surface, massing, and program. The first space is a library from a monastery, the second space is a barber shop. The library is defined by its books, program, and the composition of surface and massing denoting it as a grand and well crafted place. The barber shop is recognized by the actions of the people in the room and the apparatus, the scissors and the chair.

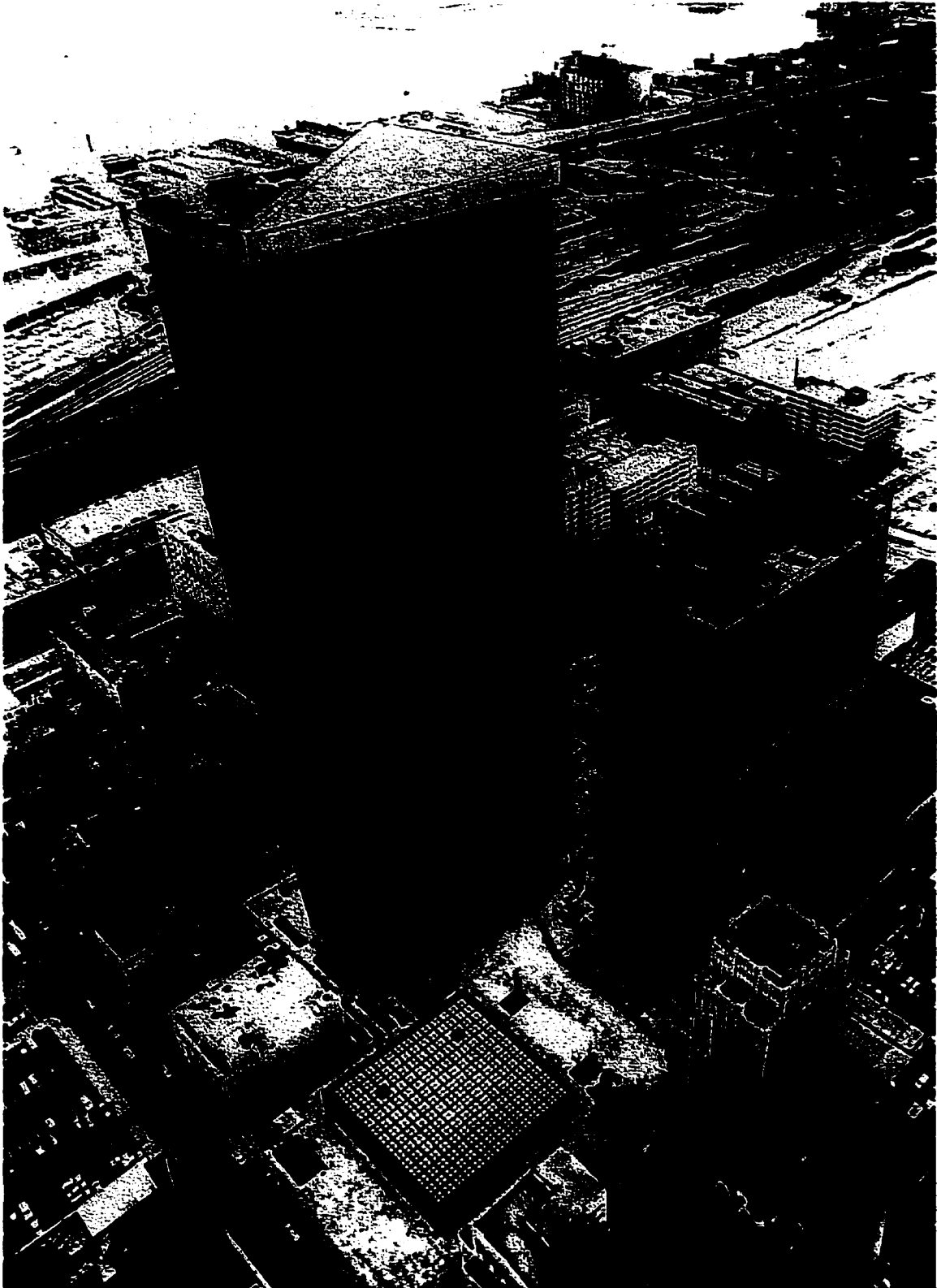
**Critical Relationships:** Each of these compositions provides an unexpected juxtaposition of the grain elevator and the expected interior space. Between the two they also play with scale. The library can be of a scale proper to our conception of a grain elevator, while the barber shop shrinks the grain elevator to a mini-theme park size. Both demand a reconsideration of the denoted and connoted codes of the grain elevator, the library has crafted and polished stone walls while the grain elevator is made of corrugated metal. Does a barber shop belong in a mini grain elevator? These compositions do not particularly communicate a clear message, but do carry the ability to make one reconsider both elements, the grain elevator and the program, what kind of space is expected inside?

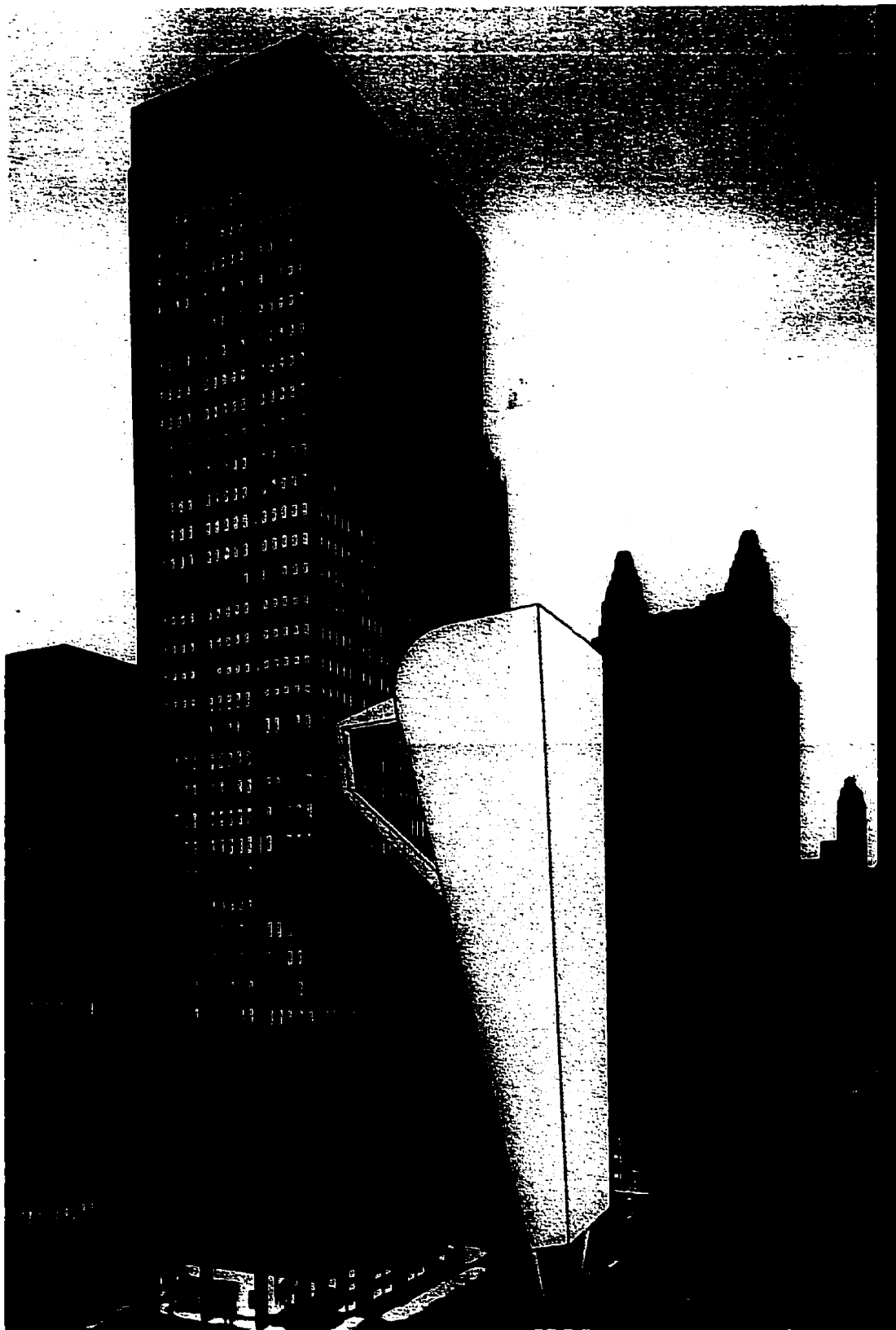




## **MASSING ATTACKS.**

These two experiments rely on the massing vocabulary of appendages to two Mies van der Rohe projects. The critical relationship on both cases is between the appendage and the building. One of the images sees an ornamental addition to the TD Centre in Toronto, the other is a leaning appendage to the Seagram's Building. Both of these images are experiments that explore how masses connect and relate to each other, there is no intended specific understanding. The consumption here is left for the reader, as a site to apply the framework that has been set out.





## **BACON ON METAL : SITUATION EXPERIMENT ONE.**

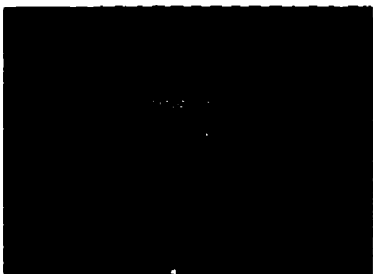
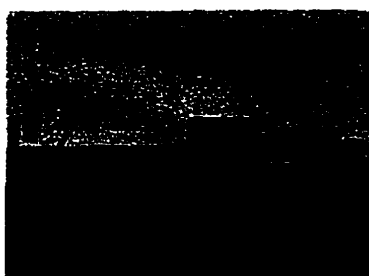
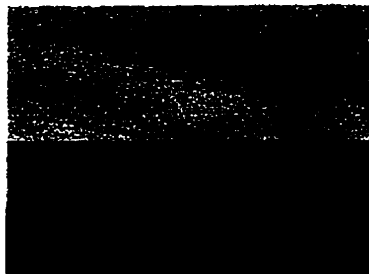
This is the initial experiment investigating the implications of space and movement on architectural connotation. The intent is to provide a series of dynamic architectural conglomerate objects, a billboard, a drag race, a single painting gallery, and an approaching semi-truck, to be read against or within each other, depending on the point of view. Each element can be viewed in a number of different compositions, varying by time and viewpoint, this seen clearly at several points in the animation.

There is a drag strip on the open desert, at the midpoint of the track there is a billboard and an art gallery facing each other. The gallery is a rusty train car without any wheel, it is retrofitted with a stainless steel frame that supports the floor, ceiling, and the Francis Bacon painting. The ends of the car are open. The painting end covered in glass, with the glass surrounded with a solid oak frame, the opposite end open with a laminated cherry inoperable door in between the painting and the stairway entrance. The gallery explores the use of architectural objects in a number of ways. The use of massing is prevalent in the composition of the train car and its new legs and interior. A frame is set into the train car, it touches the car with pointy little feet, touching but barely. In the shadows, from the lighting, the connection between old and new appears even more tenuous. The stairs avoid touching the desert floor, a gap of light beams between the stringers, under the solid wood risers. This relationship is echoed in the tenuous connection of the gallery and the land. Little stainless steel pins attach the gallery to the ground, with reflections and the right light the gallery could appear to be floating, like a mirage. The rusted surface, the stainless steel surface, the cherry, the maple, all are a use of surface architectural objects. The opposition of the shiny and the rusty, clearly showing difference, adaptation of an original for a new use, program.

The animation is powerful in that it allows the examination of the composition from multiple viewpoints. The view from the car of the drag racer, the view of the art viewer, the view

of the drag race audience who can watch track aside or from atop the gallery. The drag race goes, the person walks up to see the painting, at one point they collide. The Art lover sees the painting with a billboard and a drag race behind it, while the car drivers see their audience standing beside a mysterious box, and perhaps get a glimpse of light through the box. After this there is another example of multiple view points of the billboard. The billboard is seen changing by one of the drag race watchers, then the rest of the change is seen by the art watcher. To the drag race watcher the billboard is in isolation, situated by the desert, meanwhile the art watcher sees the Francis Bacon painting in front of the billboard. The painting finds itself in three different compositions due to the changing billboard alone.

All of the architectural objects are used in this investigation. Situation, surface, massing, space, program, event, body, and composition are all evident. The gallery box uses surface, massing, space and program, The billboard primarily relies on surface for its relationships, the



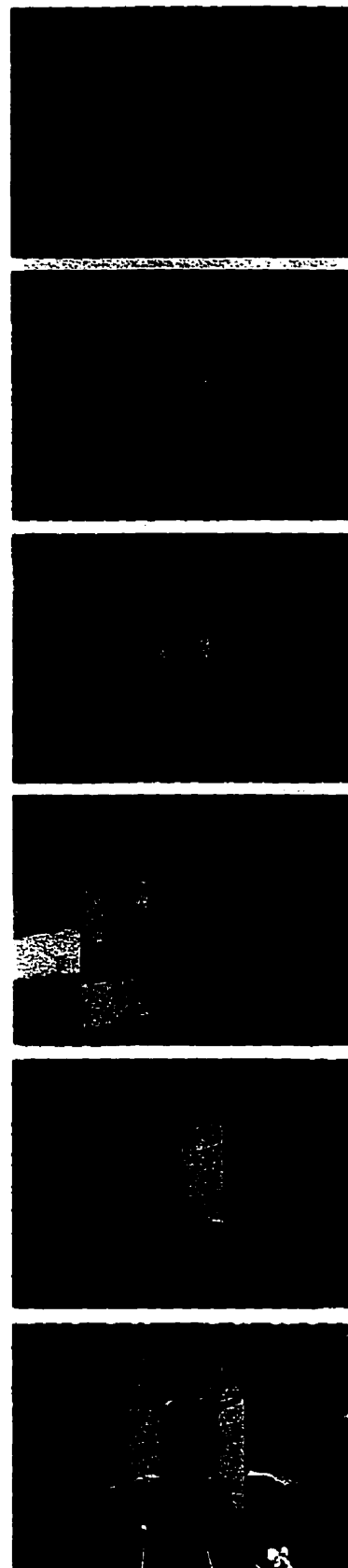
drag race relying on program, and the entirety of the composition relies on situation and the idea of re-situation to provide a dynamic connotation. The intention of this animation is not to communicate a particular message, the goal is to present a composition that acknowledges movement and flux, a composition that begins to address buildings in a setting that is as complex as that of the city.



## **BACON ON METAL : SITUATION EXPERIMENT TWO.**

This animation intends to explore the ability of surfaces and surface openings (fenestration) to provide a number of re-situations of a single element. This is an investigation into the nature of spatial progression and its effect on architectural connotation. This is an exploratory step towards the notion of dynamic connotation.

Two copies of the same Francis Bacon painting are situated within a short sequence of spaces. One of the paintings is larger than the other. The viewer enters the gallery and is introduced to the painting in one of two ways. The viewer can see the large painting on their left in a very confined viewing space, or they go right to the window. Here the viewer will see the smaller painting through an opening that prevents any extensive vision of the billboard. Past this the main room shows the painting, hung on thin stainless steel rods, situated against the billboard. As the billboard revolves the painting is re-situated. If the viewer turns around they are able to see a fragment of the larger painting through the window, and also see the larger painting on their way out. When the viewer looks back through the window, from main room to passage, there is the opportunity to see another viewer where they previously stood.



The billboard also finds itself in a number of compositions. The billboard is the first framed element that the viewer sees as they enter the gallery. This framing provides more of a curiosity of what is beyond rather than any information or displacement. This framing is not meant to communicate, only to draw the viewer further into the space.

**PART E. EPILOGUE.**

The epilogue examines the implementation of the theories from the text and the visual experiments to design built form. The design attempts to provide a dynamic composition where critical relationships are able to alter due to the motion of the observing body. In order to provide such a composition the building had to be multi-programmatic and spatially layered. The architectural objects of situation, surface, massing, space, program, event, body, and composition, all impact the design of this project.

The official-restactory is a composite program made up of a shoe factory, three generic office spaces, two residential blocks, a restaurant, retail space, and an aprogrammatic space. The aprogrammatic space is a policy based program where anything goes. For 48 hours anybody can claim a portion of space. Following that time the occupant is not allowed to reclaim any space for another 96 hours. The result is a dynamic program rather than a fixed one, such as the retail space. This space will hopefully be riddled with events that will juxtapose themselves onto a billboard or a person buying clothing.

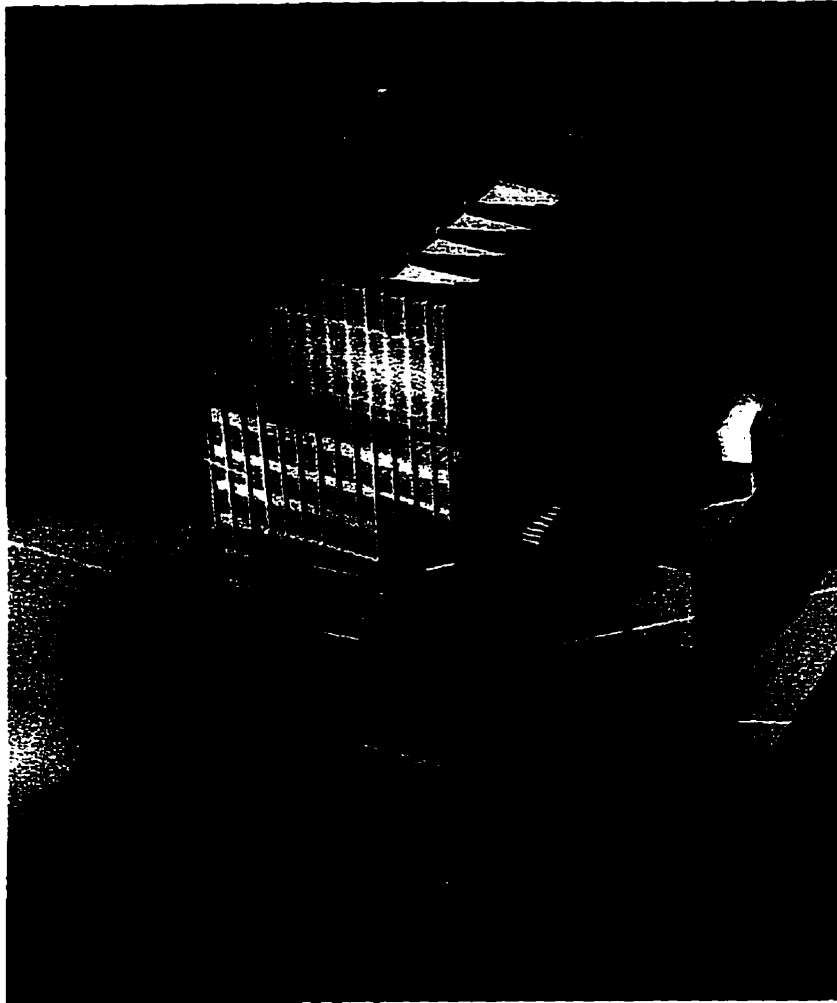
The project presents generic and specific programs in order to develop strategies for both known and unknown programs. The generic programs are placed in thin buildings. There are three thin buildings that are composed in relation to one another. Through various openings the generic programs are composed against one another. By using glass that is not highly polished and shading it from the sun numerous openings are provided that allow a street observing to see the programs and events that are behind the walls. Each thin building has its own surface materiality that is also able to situate the other buildings. Perhaps most obvious is the ability of the brick building to provide a backdrop for the activities of the other two generic office blocks.

The shoe factory is one of the fixed programs. The space, the massing and the surface are composed in critical relationships with the other parts of the building and to their own program. The marble cladding provides a critical relationship between a material that is expected to clad banks and institutions, but instead it covers a factory. The factory inhabits

prime space as it is the highest program in the building. This is an unusual position for a program such as this, by way of its connotations, to be in. On the roof top is a Corbusian garden that is juxtaposed against the smoke stacks of the factory, another critical relationship of objects. The factory also provide a different view when the sun goes down. At night the corporate logo is visible, this is when the smoke stacks, connoting pollution, are not visible. Both this and the garden provide a dialogue on the attitudes of our society towards factories.

The result is a building that is rich in opportunity for architectural connotation, some of it is planned and much of it may be spontaneous. The buildings presents a complex space that is inhabited by several masses and programs that move in relation to the moving 'site of reception' of architecture. Critical relationships are both fixed and fleeting. Fleeting relationships are developed through spatial progression and through the provision of a dynamic program. All of this combines into a design that begins to express the implications of this text on architectural connotation.

GENERIC ONE



SHOE FACTORY

RESIDENTIAL TWO

GENERIC TWO

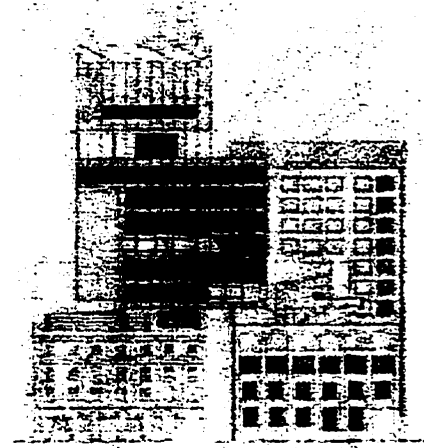
RESIDENTIAL ONE

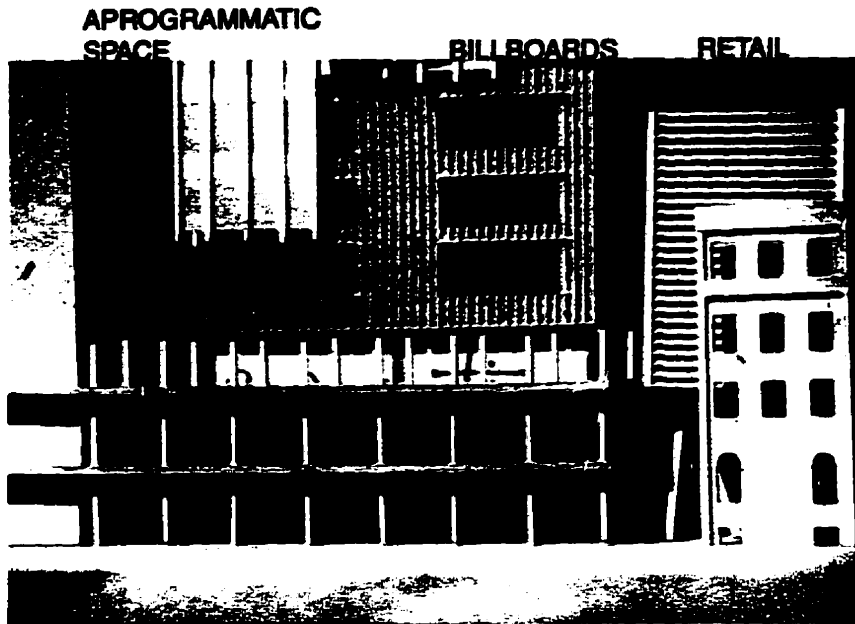
JAPANESE RESTAURANT

FRONT ELEVATION



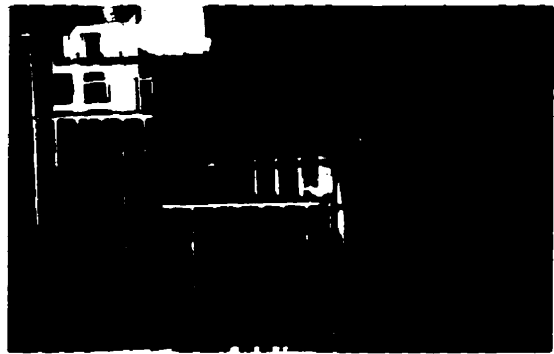
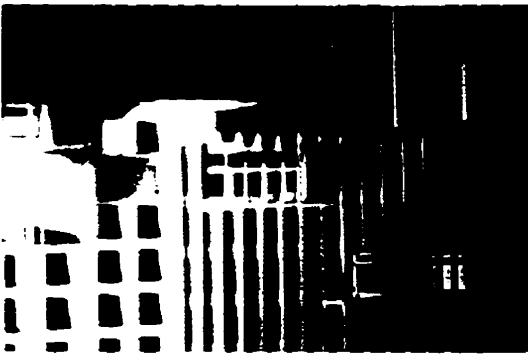
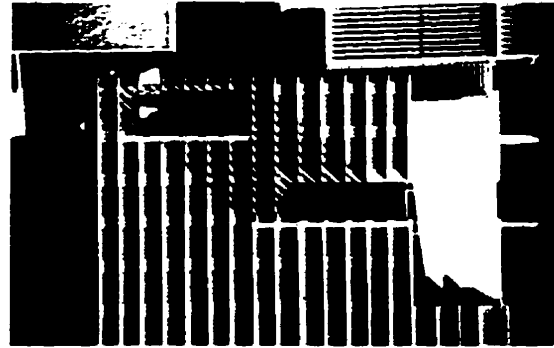
SIDE ELEVATION





The aprogrammatic space is a space where anything can happen. Any portion of this space may be claimed by an individual or a group for a period of 48 hours. After their time is expired they may not claim space for another 96 hours. The result is a dynamic program that re-invents itself every 48 hours. The bodies and apparatus that are used in the aprogrammatic space are layered on top of rotating billboards and retail space. The aprogrammatic space wraps and contains the retail complex in a distinct massing relationship. The surfaces of green marble and stainless steel are Miesien in origin. This provides a critical relationship between Mies' universal space and this universal space. The space here takes the notion of universal further by having a non-determined program.

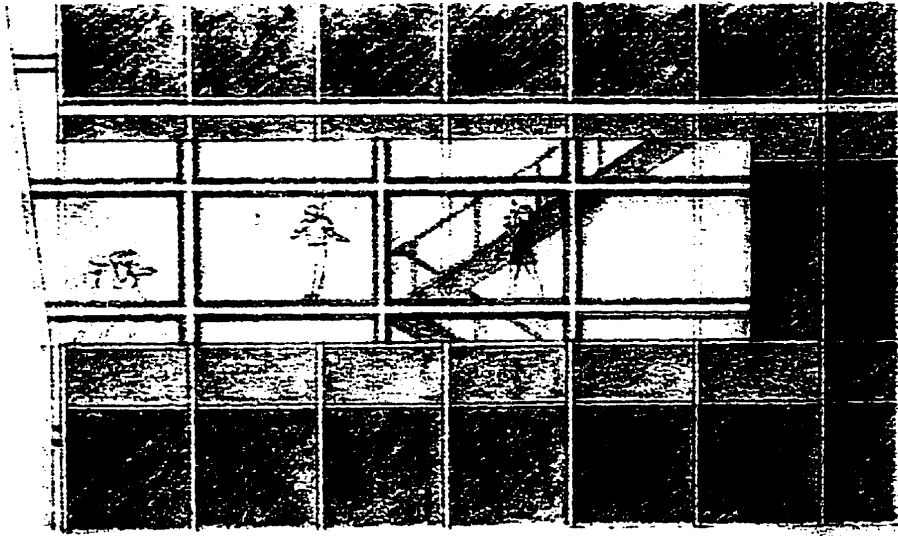




This series of photographs demonstrates the how the framed openings can situated one program against another from one view, while situating one program against a different program from another view. The thinness of the generic office buildings permits a complex layering of surface, mass, space, and bodies that are involved in events and programs. These layers move in relationship to the observing body providing a dynamic composition for consumption.



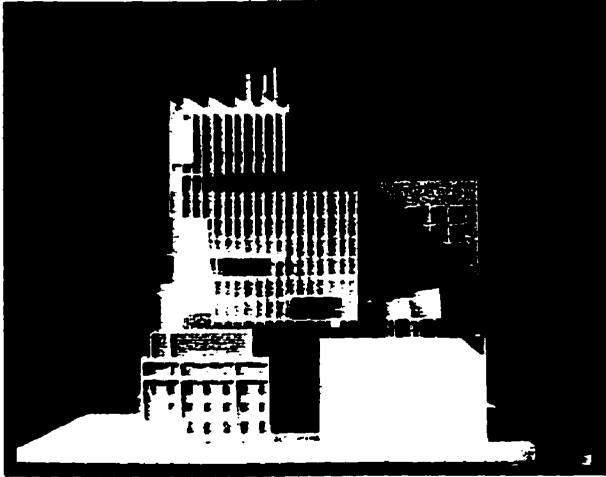




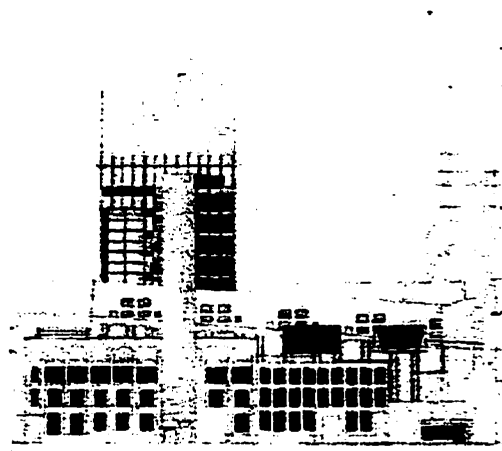
This detail illustrates the ability of the thin buildings to situate each other in a number of compositions. In this scene there is an attempted murder that is being observed by the tanning salon patrons in the adjacent building.



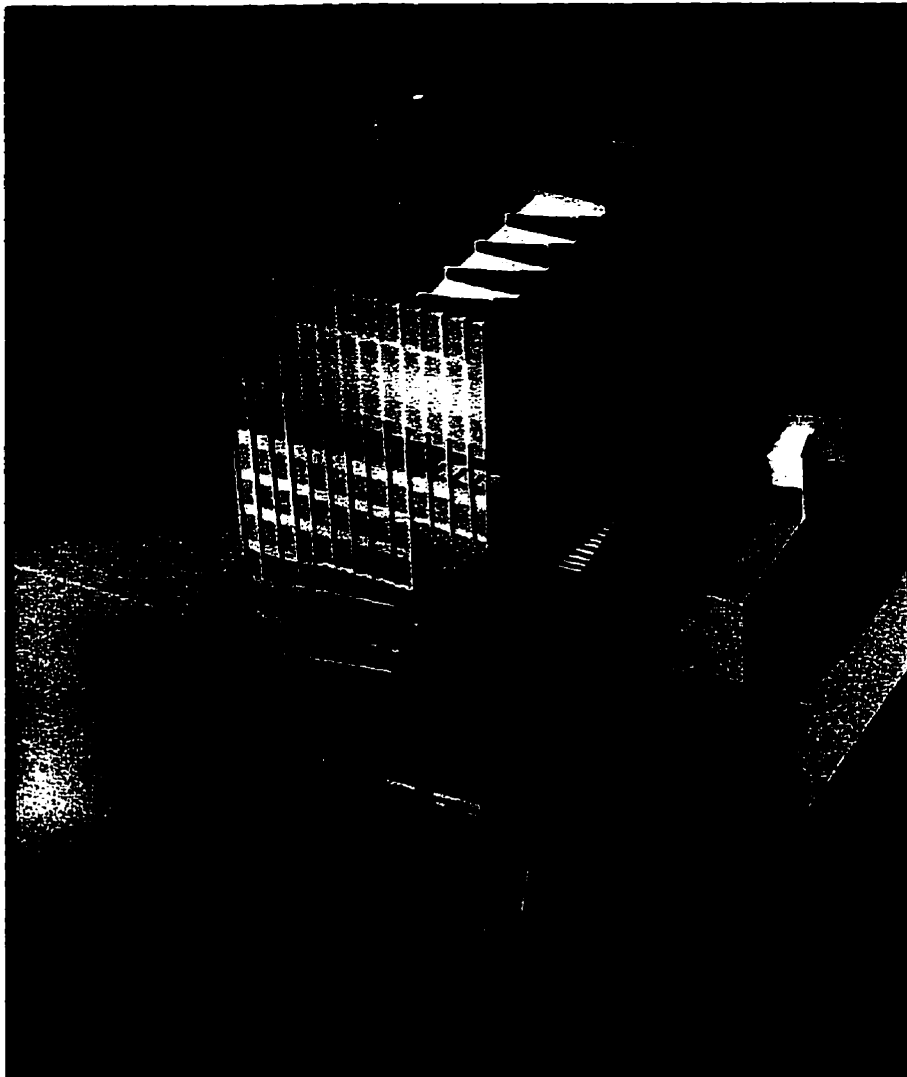
The buildings also play with the transition from daylight to moonlight. Perforated aluminum screens are used to provide mass during the day and void at night. Above illustrates such an instance on the front facade. A mass emerges from behind the screen and the most visible office block. The masses that are distinctly separate from the rear elevation are now interwoven in a new architectural text. The factory also uses a screen to exploit day/night transformations of surfaces and masses.



**SIDE ELEVATION**



**REAR ELEVATION**



**BACK ON METAL**

**And all lived happily  
ever after.  
THE END.**

**PART C. NOTES.**

- <sup>1</sup> Wines, James. *De-Architecture*. New York: Rizzoli International Publications Inc. 1987. Wines refers to the public content of Gothic religious structures as important precedent when considering public communication. The simplification of architectural form denies this possibility.
- <sup>2</sup> Tafuri, Manfredo. *Architecture and Utopia*. The reduction of architecture to "pure signs" sets the stage for the architectural avant-garde from that time forth.
- <sup>3</sup> The failure of the post-modernists in the vein of Stern, Graves, Rossi, etc.. is a sentiment that is also supported by Wines in *De-Architecture*.
- <sup>4</sup> Barthes, Roland. *Mythologies*. New York: Hill and Wang. pg. 113.
- <sup>5</sup> Eisenman, Peter. "Architecture and the Problem of the Rhetorical Figure." *Theorizing a New Agenda for Architecture*. Princeton: Princeton Architectural Press. 1996: pg. 178.
- <sup>6</sup> Eco, Umberto. *Theory of Semiotics*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. 1976.
- <sup>7</sup> Barthes, Roland. *Mythologies*. New York: Hill and Wang. 1972.
- <sup>8</sup> Geoffrey, Broadbent. "A Plain Man's Guide to the Theory of Signs in Architecture." *Theorizing a New Agenda for Architecture*. Princeton: Princeton Architectural Press. 1996: pg. 124-139.  
In this article Broadbent sees Pei's definition of denotation: *Denotation* - The meaning which a form has for all who use it (the intrinsic meaning of water), to be the one appropriate for architectural use.
- <sup>9</sup> Thiis Evensen, Thomas. *Archetypes in Architecture*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987.
- <sup>10</sup> Rossi, Aldo. *The Architecture of the City*. Cambridge: MIT Press. 1982: pg. 29
- <sup>11</sup> Eco, Umberto. *A Theory of Semiotics*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976: p.55
- <sup>12</sup> Barthes, Roland. *Mythologies*. New York: Hill and Wang. 1972: pg. 115
- <sup>13</sup> Kunze, Donald. "Architecture as a Site of Reception Part 1: Cuisine, Frontality and the Infra-Thin." *Chora Volume 1 Intervals in the Philosophy of Architecture*. Montreal: McGill Queen's University Press. 1994: pg. 84
- <sup>14</sup> Barthes, Roland. *Empire of Signs*. New York: Hill and Wang. 1982: pg. 17.
- <sup>15</sup> Donald Kunze develops the body as the site of reception of architecture in his article in Chora 1 and Chora 2, see bib.
- <sup>16</sup> Kunze, Donald. "mind itself may be regarded as nothing more then the process of displacement"
- <sup>17</sup> Kunze, Donald. "Architecture as a Site of Reception Part 1: Cuisine, Frontality and the Infra-Thin." *Chora Volume 1 Intervals in the Philosophy of Architecture*. Montreal: McGill Queen's University Press. 1994.: pg. 97
- <sup>18</sup> Kunze, Donald. "Architecture as a Site of Reception Part 1: Cuisine, Frontality and the Infra-Thin." *Chora Volume 1 Intervals in the Philosophy of Architecture*. Montreal: McGill Queen's University Press. 1994.: pg. 85
- <sup>19</sup> Barthes, Roland. "The Photographic Message." *Image, Music, Text*. Fontanna Press: London. 1977: pg. 16.
- <sup>20</sup> Benjamin, Walter. "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction". *Film Theory and Criticism*. New York: Oxford University Press. 1992.
- <sup>21</sup> "Miller defines suture as that moment when the subject inserts itself into the symbolic register in the guise of a signifier, and in doing so gains meanings at the expense of being"  
Silverman, Kaja. "From the Subject of Semiotics." *Film Theory and Criticism*. New York: Oxford University Press. 1992.
- <sup>22</sup> Kunze, Donald. "Architecture as a Site of Reception Part 1: Cuisine, Frontality and the Infra-Thin." *Chora Volume 1 Intervals in the Philosophy of Architecture*. Montreal: McGill Queen's University Press. 1994: pg. 84.
- <sup>23</sup> In the essay "The Photographic Message" Roland Barthes establishes that photography also carries a conoted code because it is designed and contrived. To to the nature of visual designs this is true of architecture as well.
- <sup>24</sup> Hatton, Brian. "NATO Building Regs." *NATO: Gamma City Issue*. London: The Architectural

- Association. 1985: pg7.
- <sup>25</sup> Wilson, Peter. *Western Object Eastern Fields: Recent Projects by Architekturbüro Bolles Wilson*. London: The Architectural Association. 1989, pg.5.
- <sup>26</sup> Sanin, Fransisco. *Münster City Library Architekturbüro Bolles-Wilson + Partner*. London. Phaidon Press Limited. 1994, pg. 14.
- <sup>27</sup> Grosz, Elizabeth. "Architecture From the Outside". Anyplace. New York. Rizzoli International Publications Inc.
- <sup>28</sup> Jencks, Charles. *The Language of Post-Modern Architecture*. New York. Rizzoli International Publications Inc. 1977: pg. 40.
- <sup>29</sup> Jencks, Charles. *The Language of Post-Modern Architecture*. New York: Rizzoli International Publications Inc. 1977: pg 42-45.
- <sup>30</sup> Coates, Nigel and Bernard Tschumi. *The Discourse of Events*. London. The Architectural Association. 1983: pg 18.
- <sup>31</sup> Barthes, Roland. "The Photographic Message." *Image, Music, Text*. Fontanna Press: London. 1977.
- <sup>32</sup> Barthes, Roland. "The Photographic Message." *Image, Music, Text*. Fontanna Press: London. 1977: pg. 18.
- <sup>33</sup> "Pure use" breaks down into generic building types - the house, the office, the school, the museum, the public hall, the church, etc.-and these reflex shelter profiles may be the nearest equivalent we have to symbols in our environment. If "pure use" is treated as subject matter, it can relate to the architectural vision the same way a human figure or a still life relates to a painter's eye. Pure use is there to be used.
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- <sup>34</sup> Coates, Nigel. "Ecstacity". *The Idea of a City*. London: The Architectural Association. pg. 151.
- <sup>35</sup> Cousins, Mark. From a series of lectures given at The Architectural Association on Ugliness 1994-1995.
- <sup>36</sup> Thiis-Evensen, Thomas. *Archetypes in Architecture*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1987.
- <sup>37</sup> Tafuri, Manfredo. *Architecture and Utopia: Design and Capitalist Development*. London: MIT Press. 1976. Pg. 152.
- <sup>38</sup> Wigley, Mark. *White Walls, Designer Dresses*. Cambridge: The MIT Press. 1996. pg. xiv.
- <sup>39</sup> Wigley, Mark. *White Walls, Designer Dresses*. Cambridge: The MIT Press. 1996. pg. 5.
- <sup>40</sup> Wigley, Mark. *White Walls, Designer Dresses*. Cambridge: The MIT Press. 1996. pg. xiv.
- <sup>41</sup> Ito, Toyo. *El croquis Volume 71*. pg 50..
- <sup>42</sup> Abalos, Inaki and Juan Herreros. "Toyo Ito: Light Time." *El Croquis Volume 71*. pg 40.
- <sup>43</sup> Calvino, Italo. *Invisible Cities*. New York: Harcourt Brace and Company. 1974: pg 63.
- <sup>44</sup> Alter, Kevin, "Provisional Architecture." *Center Volume 9*: 161-167.
- <sup>45</sup> Lefebvre, Henri. *The Explosion: Marxism and the French Upheaval*. New York: Monthly Press Review. 1969: pg. 7
- <sup>46</sup> This is a point well established by Bernard Tschumi's writings in the early eighties. Refer to *Architecture and Disjunction* and *Questions of Space*.
- <sup>47</sup> Tschumi, Bernard. *Advertisements for Architecture*. London: The Architectural Association. 1979.
- <sup>48</sup> Lefebvre, Henri. . *The Explosion: Marxism and the French Upheaval*. New York: Monthly Press Review. 1969: pg. 72.
- <sup>49</sup> Tschumi, Bernard. *Architecture and Disjunction*. London: MIT Press. 1994: pg. 123.
- <sup>50</sup> De Certeau, Michel. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Los Angeles: University of California Press. 1984: pg. 98.
- <sup>51</sup> De Certeau, Michel. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Los Angeles: University of California Press. 1984: pg. 93.
- <sup>52</sup> Tschumi, Bernard. *Questions of Space*. London: The Architectural Association. 1990: pg. 53.
- <sup>53</sup> Deleuze, Gilles and Felix Guattari. *Anti-Oedipus Capitalism and schizophrenia*. Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press. 1983: pg1.

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- <sup>55</sup>Wilson, Peter. *Western Objects, Eastern Fields: Recent Projects by the Architekturbüro Bolles Wilson*. London: The Architectural Association. 1989: pg. 39.
- <sup>56</sup> Cohen, Steve. "So Functional for it's Purpose: Rock Hudson's Bachelor apartment in Pillow Talk". *Stud: The Architectures of Masculinity*. Princeton: Princeton Architectural Press. 1995: pg. 28.
- <sup>57</sup> Hatton, Brian. "NATO Building Regs." *NATO: Gamma City Issue*. London: The Architectural Association. 1985: pg7.
- <sup>58</sup>Koolhaas, Rem and Bruce Mau, *S,M,L,XL*. New York: Monacelli Press. 1995: pg. 512.
- <sup>59</sup> Jencks, Charles. "39 Steps to Surfing or the Trajectory of Rem Koolhaas". ANY Volume 9, pg 43.
- <sup>60</sup> Jencks, Charles. "39 Steps to Surfing or the Trajectory of Rem Koolhaas". ANY Volume 9, pg 43.
- <sup>61</sup>Koolhaas, Rem and Bruce Mau, *S,M,L,XL*. New York: Monacelli Press. 1995: pg. 931.
- <sup>62</sup> Hatton, Brian. "NATO Building Regs." *NATO: Gamma City Issue*. London: The Architectural Association. 1985: pg7.
- <sup>63</sup> Melhuish, Clare. "Branson Coates Architecture". *Architectural Design Volume 66*. pg 77.
- <sup>64</sup> Melhuish, Clare. "Branson Coates Architecture". *Architectural Design Volume 66*. pg 81.
- <sup>65</sup> Melhuish, Clare. "Branson Coates Architecture". *Architectural Design Volume 66*. pg 81.

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