

RICE UNIVERSITY

Downtown Houston

Parking Garage

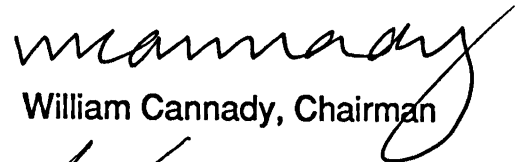
Interventions

by

Martin C. Feiersinger

A THESIS SUBMITTED
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
MASTER OF ARCHITECTURE

Approved, Thesis Committee



William Cannady, Chairman



Peter Waldman



William Sherman

Houston, Texas

December 1988

1)

The wheel of the design-process was brought into movement rapidly with the "discovery" of potential landscapes within the city of automobile accessible roof terraces in Downtown Houston, 120 feet above street level. Polaroid series, most of which were shot from the car, documented the various "journeys" through these places. Thereafter three parking garages were chosen for three experiments.

Three projects, independent of one another, were commenced at once, reflecting my interest in the simultaneity of different processes as well as in the dynamic influences within the process.

The three programs:

From a catalog of imagined functions, triggered by the "discovered landscapes", the following were selected:

First, **3 houses** for one person who seeks orientation and observes the city but lives in the greatest isolation; with the starting-point in "personal sensual experience".

Second, in opposition to the above, "public architecture" was discussed with specific **performance places**; with the starting-point in "collective experience / communication".

Third, in between the aforementioned poles a rather conventional program of an **athletic club** as well as a **night club** was given form.

December 1988

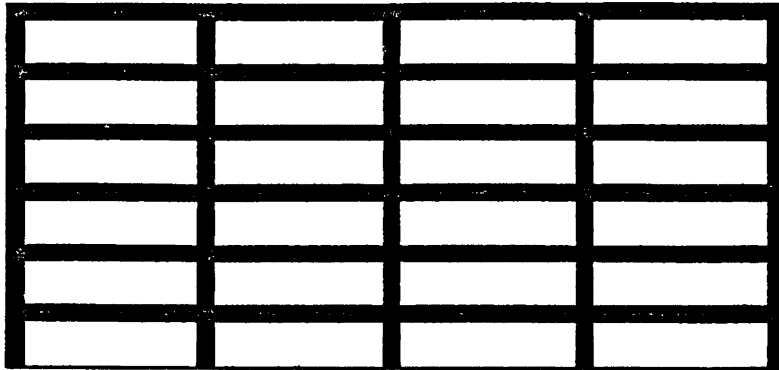
P A R A S I T I C A L A R C H I T E C T U R E S

Downtown

Houston

Parking - Garages

considered

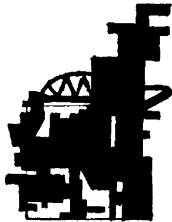
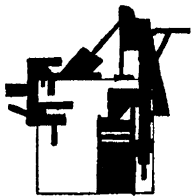
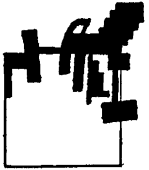
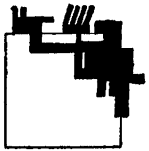
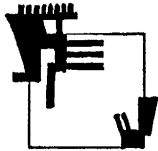
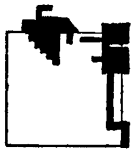
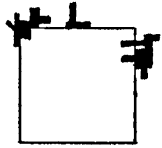
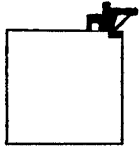
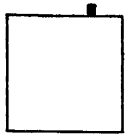


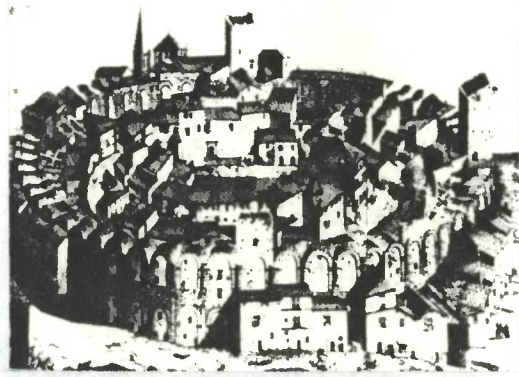
A PARKING GARAGE IS AN
UNFINISHED BUILDING

A PARKING GARAGE IS A
BASE FOR SOMETHING
TO COME

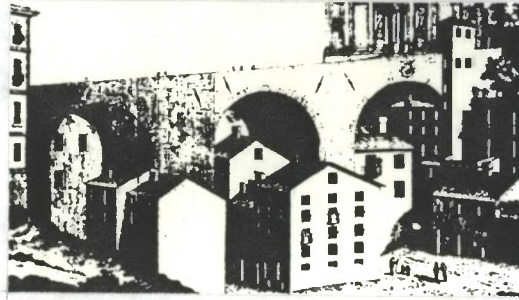
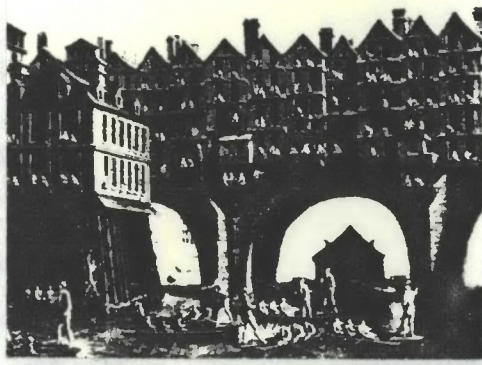
A PARKING GARAGE IS A
STORAGE BUILDING

par·a·site (par'ə sit') *n.* [L. *parasitus* < Gr. *parasitos*, one who eats at the table of another, parasite, toady < *para-*, beside (see **PARA-1**) + *sitos*, food, grain] 1. a person, as in ancient Greece, who flattered and amused his host in return for free meals 2. a person who lives at the expense of another or others without making any useful contribution or return; hanger-on 3. *Biol.* a plant or animal that lives on or in an organism of another species from which it derives sustenance or protection without benefiting the host and usually doing harm

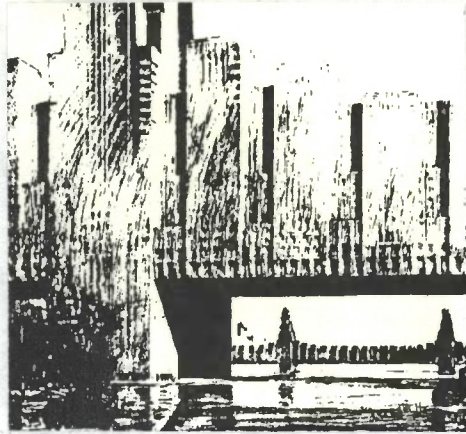




City in a
roman theater,
Arles, France



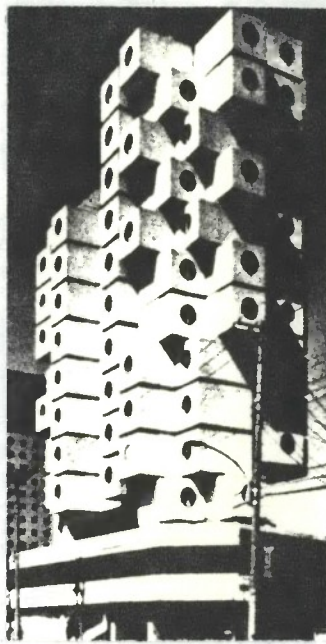
Houses
on a bridge,
Paris (1700)
and
Houses
under a bridge,
or
a bridge built over houses,
Genoa (1780)



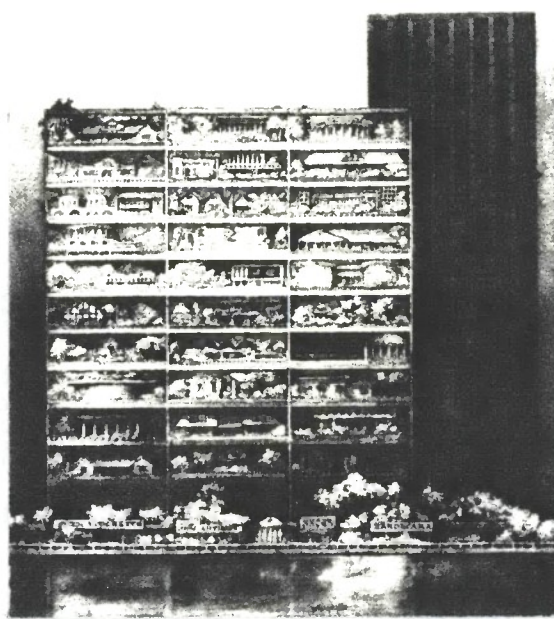
Early 20th century visions
of
apartments on bridges,
Hugh Ferriss (top), 1929
and
Raymond Hood (bottom), 1929



Living in a cemetery:
In Cairo's north cemetery
there live half a million
Egyptians in tombs
or houses built alongside tombs



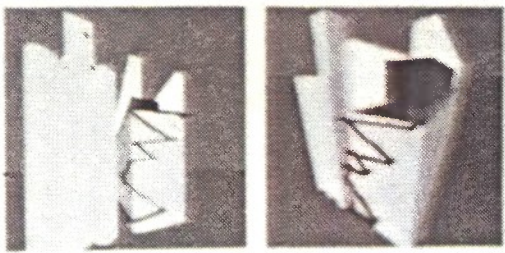
Living in a shoebox,
Nakagin Capsule Tower
Tokyo, 1970









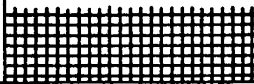





"Highrise of Homes"
experimental condominiums
with
small family houses
on a
structural matrix,
SITE, 1981



A theater
with a
smiling face
on top
of a
parking garage,
Houston

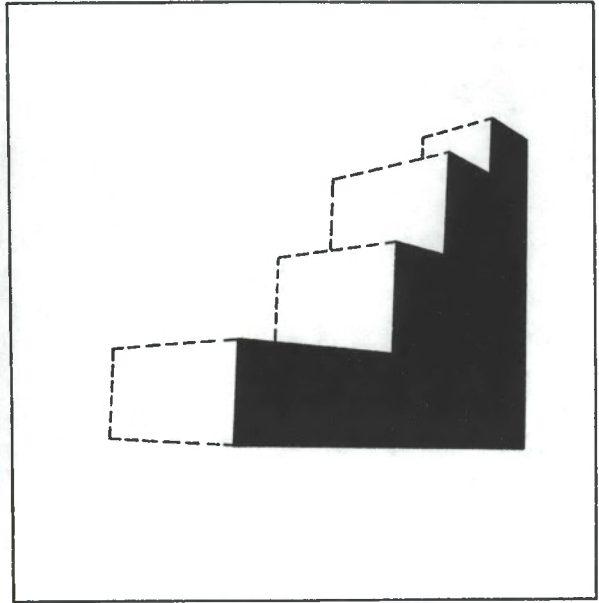


A place for
memory,
contemplation and
inspiration
on top
of an
abandoned grain elevator

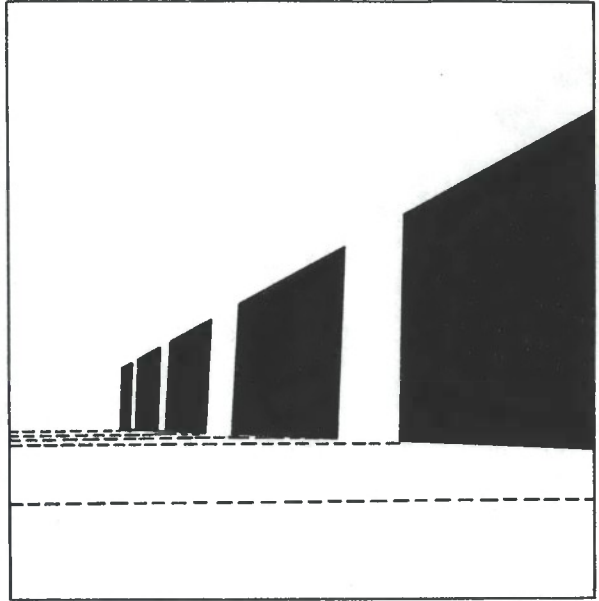
| | | | | | | | | |
|-----------|---|-------|---|--------|--|------|---|--------|
| | | | | | | | | |
| |  | |  | |  | |  | |
| | | | | | | | | |
| | A | | B C | | D | | E | |
| |  | |  | |  | |  | |
| |  | |  | |  | |  | |
| | | | | | | | | |
| | Bell | | | | | | | |
| Louisiana | | Milam | | Travis | | Main | | Fannin |
| | Leeland | | | | | | | |

- A 'Ramp Garage' *
- B 'Horizontal Floor Garage' *
- C 'Elevator Garage' *
- D First Methodist Church
- E 'Half Ramp Garage and Half Horizontal Floor Garage' *

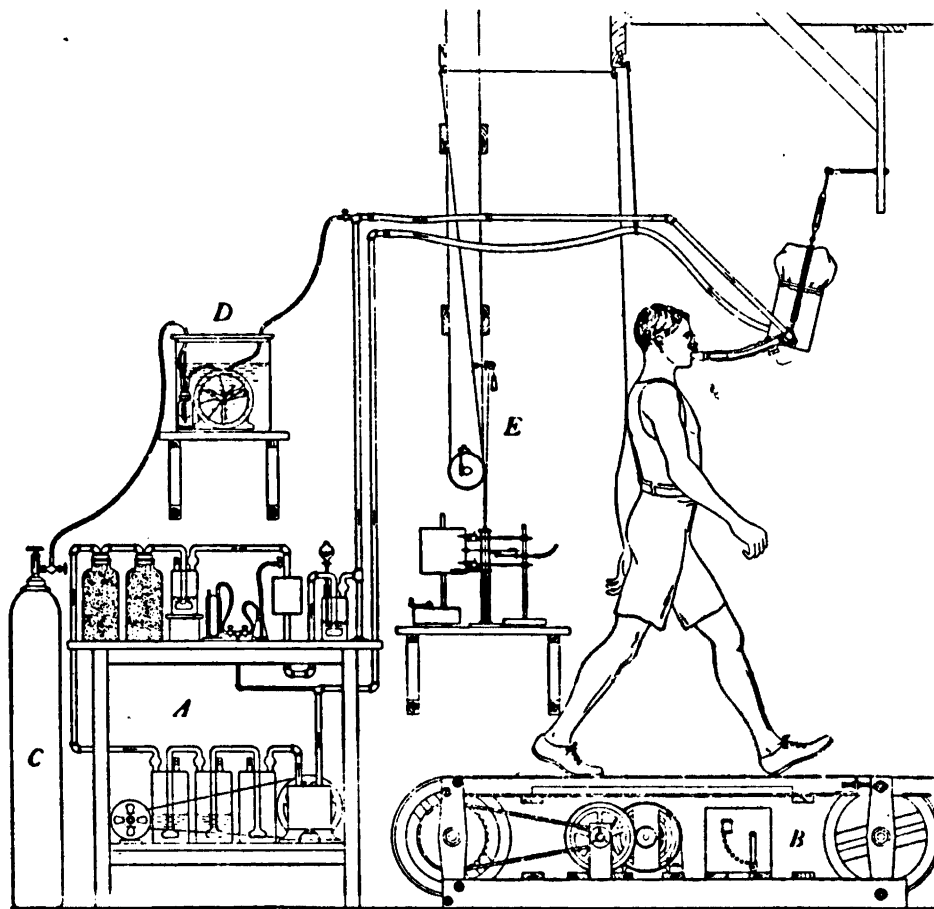
(* see: Garage Typology)



Clay Street / Monumental Stair



Clay Street / Downtown Edge



"It stops the brain," Max Beerbohm said of walking. But gratuitous wit is no match for experimentation. The practice of walking safeguards against certain diseases of internal organs, particularly those of the brain, which probably explains the poor state of the blood vessels and the general obtuseness of sedentary, motorized people. This diagram shows a contraption used for walking experiments: A, absorption apparatus; B, treadmill; C and D, oxygen supply; E, step counter.

CAPTION 1.

Walking



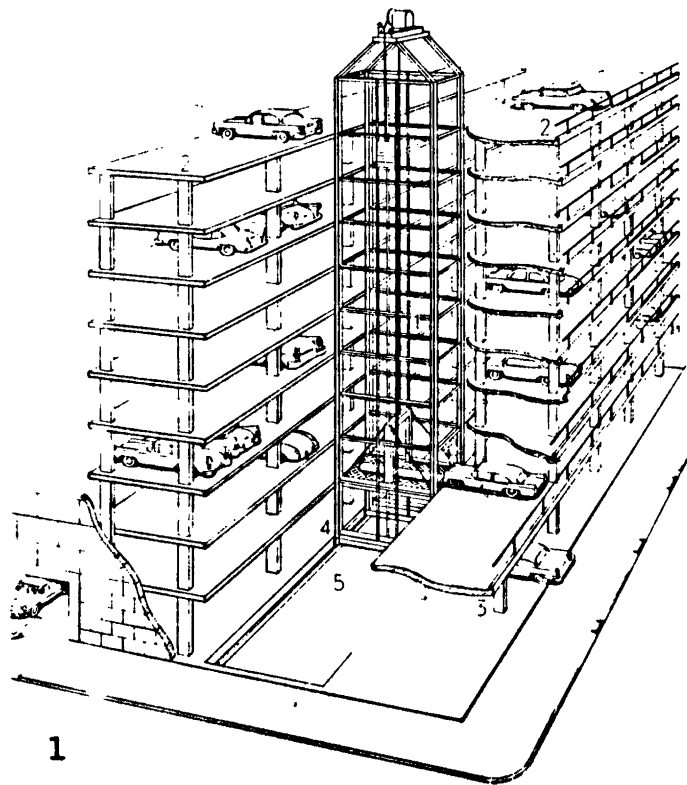
CAPTION 2.

MOVEMENT - a dynamic approach /
walking, running,
driving

0 mph - 65 mph
and the
changes
in the
perception
of
things

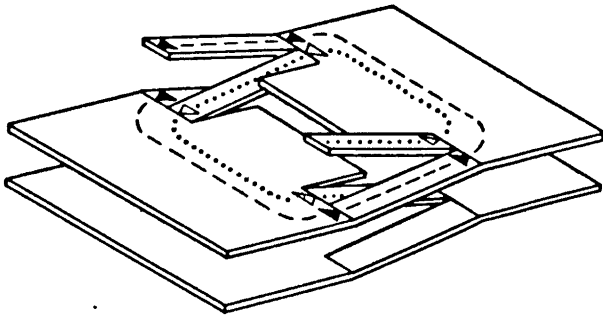
CAPTION 3.

Seeing
CARS
as
moving
living-rooms,
as
private spaces
in the
city

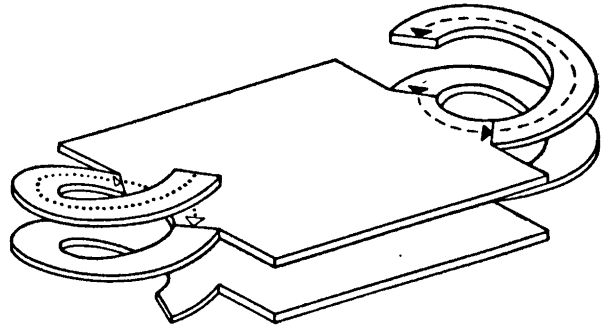


Parking Garage Typology

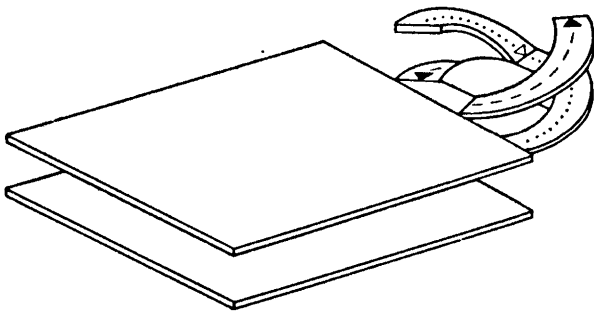
- 1 Elevator Garage
- 2 Straight ramps between split-level floors. Single-lane up and down ramps.
- 3 Single-lane up and down helical ramps, arranged opposite ends of the parking floors.
- 4 Single-lane up and down helical ramps with arcs of 180°.
- 5 Counter-rising single-lane up and down helical ramps.
- 6 Ramped floors with two-way traffic.
- 7 Separate ramped floors for up and down movements. Facilities for changing from up to down ramp are provided at the center of each floor.



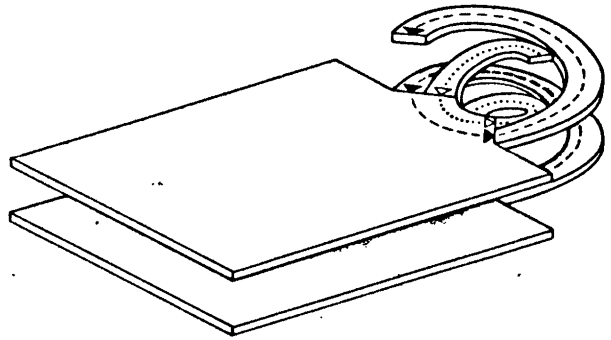
2



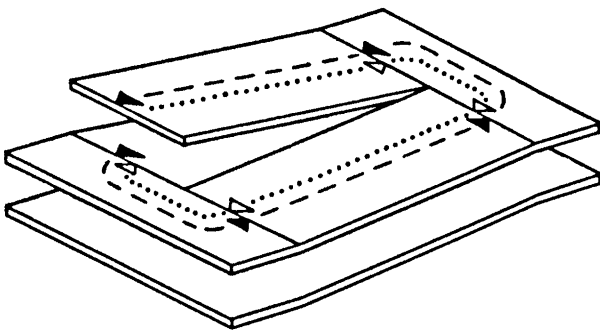
3



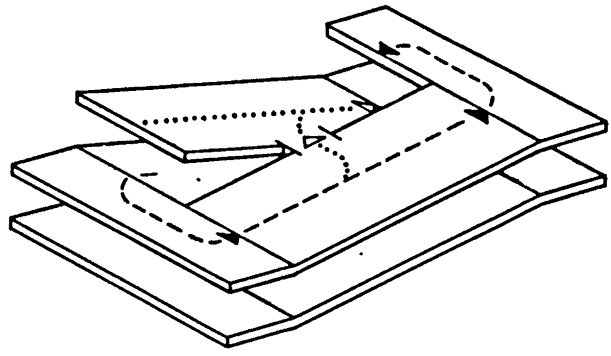
4



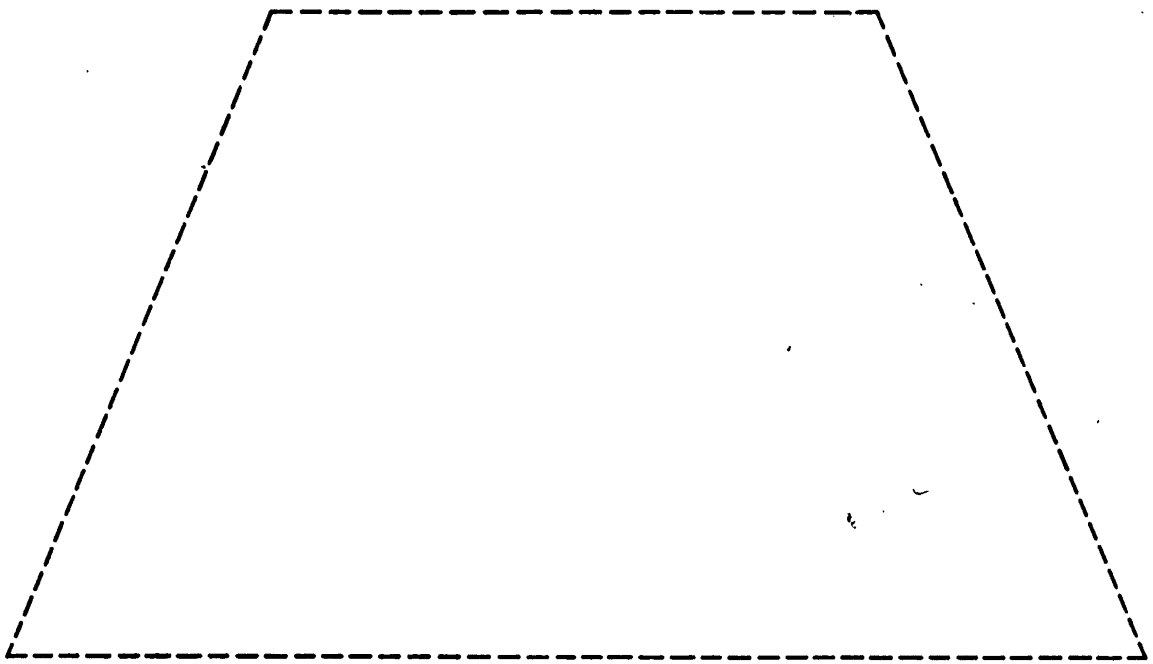
5



6

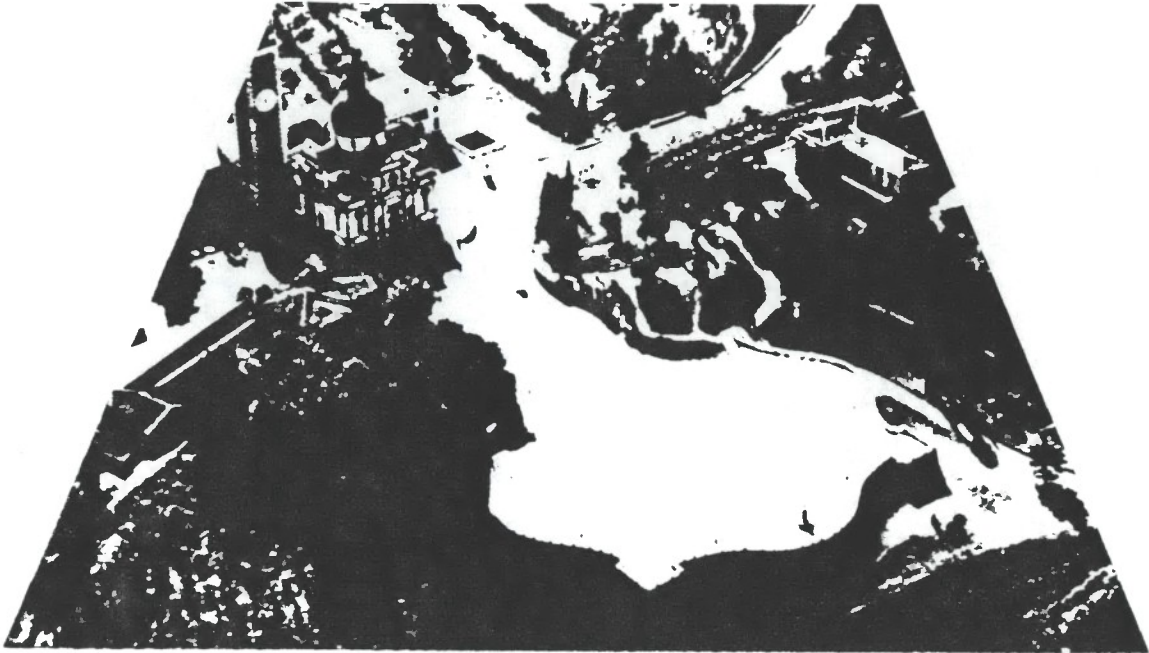


7



CAPTION ..

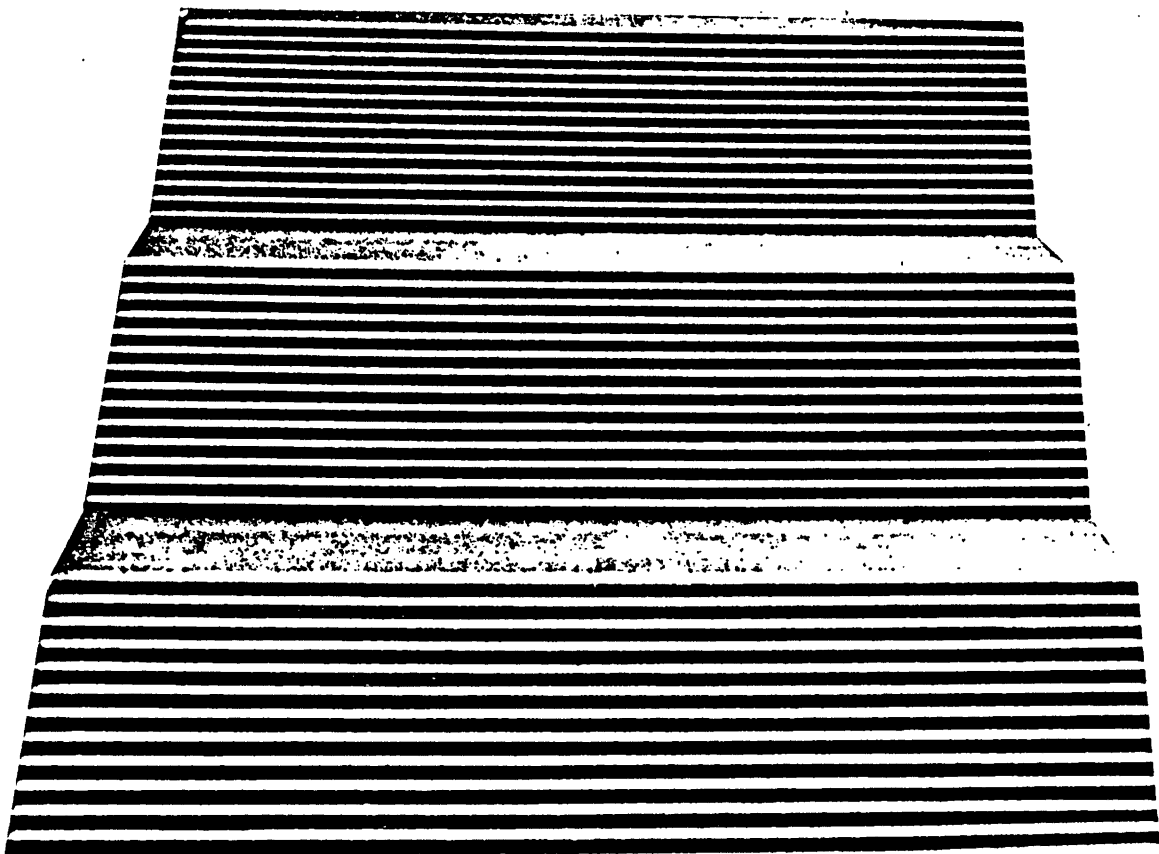
Seeing the roof of a parking garage
as a
DESERT
in the city,
where nothing grows
and
where nothing takes place



CAPTION 5.

Seeing the roof of a parking garage
as an
ELEVATED SQUARE
with qualities similar to famous italian piazzas,
like
Piazzale Michelangelo in Florence
or
Piazzale Monte Berico in Vicenza

(... these two italian squares, on the other hand,
can be seen as grandiose parking lots)



CAPTION ...

Public

STAIRS

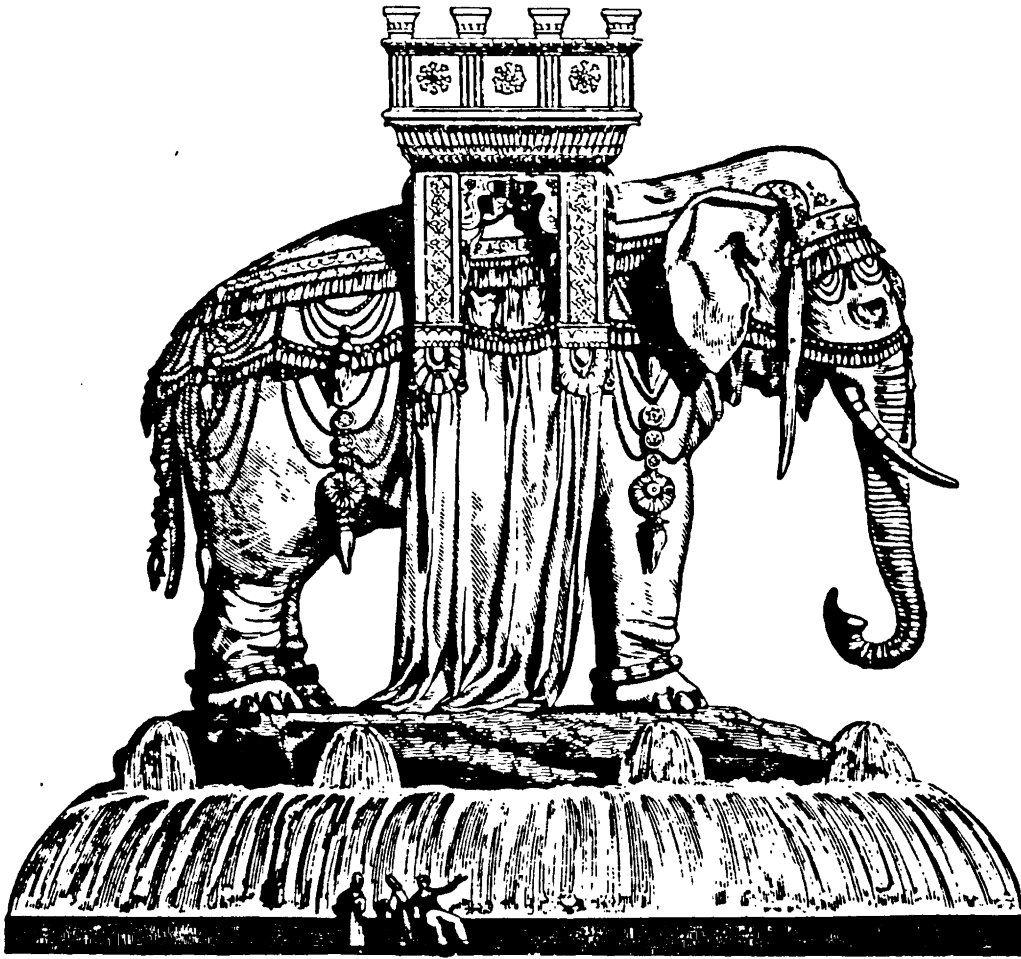
Disappeared

7.

STAIRS - ELEVATORS

changed perception of space

(... a stair and an elevator are as
different from each other as a
film projection and a slide projection)



CAPTION 8.

Fountains,
Floated Squares,
Floated Buildings

3) Anticipated "Table of Contents" of the Design

Summer 1988

R. Reading

A text

The city

C. Contemplating

The read

Inventing models

W. Writing

A new text

Interventions

R. Reading

**Reading the city
Reading architecture**

R.1. The chosen book

**Downtown Houston
Endless, heterogenous book**

R.2. Method of reading

**Starting in the middle
Reading forwards and backwards without the limitation of
linear continuation - multidirectional reading
Search for relevant chapters
Looking for a text that triggers an imaginative process
Looking for a text that forms productive constructions with
one's inherent memory
Overreading pages which aren't able to form thought-machines
Overreading pages of unchangeable constitution
Marking of chapters which form an idea-machine of interaction**

R.3. Marks for rereading / the found

**Parking garages
Parking garages which aren't hybrids (used only for parking)
Rational structures
Huge buildings of an unfinished character
Buildings which ask for continuation of construction
Buildings which want to be inhabited in various ways**

R.4. Lateral reading of the found

R.4.1. Daytime - nighttime discrepancy

**Daypopulation, nightpopulation
Daycity, nightcity**

R.4.2. Generic space

**Storageroom
Vicinity to officespaces**

R.4.3. Static element garage

R.4.4. Dynamic element car

Privacy-cell

R.4.5. Prostheses

Automobile

Elevator

Escalator

Officechair - Wheelchair

R.4.6. Private garage at the other end

Generic space (private)

Multipurpose room

C. Contemplating the read

C.1. Parking garage buildings

Potential ground with open character

"Free" land and foundation

Ability to form thought-machines

New uses

Nightuse of empty garages

C.2. Continuation of construction

C.2.1. Methods of intervention

C.2.1.1. Complementation

C.2.1.2. Transformation

C.2.1.3. Superimposition

C.2.1.4. Fragmentation

C.2.1.5. ...

C.3. Employment of abstract models

As thought patterns, not as formal inspirations

(The used models are to be extended within themselves - for experimentations with multiple infections, multiple parasites and multiple accidents in order to change the level of their influence)

C.3.1. Infection model

(INFECTION - 1. an infecting; specif., a: the act of causing to become diseased b: the act of affecting with one's feelings or beliefs 2. the fact or state of being infected, esp. by the presence in the body of bacteria, protozoans, viruses, or other parasites 3. something that results from infecting or being infected; specif., a: a disease resulting from infection (sense 2) b: a feeling, belief, influence, etc. transmitted from one person or another 4. anything that infects *)

Invasion of something not thought of

Sudden appearance

Temporary appearance

Regular recurrence

Permanent infection

Increase of infections

Invasion in a harmful, destructive way

Subversive character

Irreversibility

Correction of consciousness

Unknown influence

C.3.2. Parasite model

(PARASITE - 1. a person, as in ancient Greece, who flattered and amused his host in return for free meals 2. a person who lives at the expense of another or others without making any useful contribution or return; hanger-on 3. Biol. a plant or animal that lives on or in an organism of another species from which it derives sustenance or protection without benefiting the host and usually doing harm *)

Visible invasion and growth

Gets attention by wearing an unusual costume

Is welcomed if not invited

Takes advantage of its host

Grows without hesitation on the surface

Takes over in a slow, "visible" way

C.2.3. Accident model

(ACCIDENT - 1. a happening that is not expected, foreseen, or intended 2. an unpleasant and unintended happening, sometimes resulting from negligence, that results in injury, loss, damage, etc. 3. fortune; chance (to meet by accident) 4. an attribute or quality that is not essential 5. Geog. & Geol. an irregular formation 6. Law an unforeseen event that occurs without anyone's fault or negligence *)

Inherent element in any movement

Happening either too fast or too slow

Manipulation of time for realisation

Error of perception

C.4. Imagined constructions / Diary of houses

(0) Zero house :

A car that doesn't move, a car without engine, the fixed cabin

(1) Bachelor's house :

He who doesn't own a car lives in a parking garage

He occupies exactly one parking space

He "nestles" in the garage

(2) Lighthouses / Nighthouses :

(related to Calvino's houses in the black box

on top of a silo at Studemont)

Illuminated during the night in the big, black night space

(3) Agent's Apartment :

In anticipation of a future (fictionary) movie

Heavy superficiality

Tourist attraction - "point of interest"

(4) Detective's Office :

Hidden behind big, postmodern cornices with several "eyes" viewing down to the city

(5) Advertisement studio :

Billboard house

(6) A house housing machines :

Weather station

Environment observation

(7) Rosegarden

Blooming once a year

Labyrinthical access

(8) Hidden, secret house

Conspiracies

A building that no one knows but everyone has heard of

(9) Endless corridor building

Perepathetic's obsession

(10) Oasis
Palmtrees, spring, breeze

(11) Threshold house
Indicated only by a door

(12) Trojan horse

(13) Athletic club
Torture chambers

(14) Bar
Nightclub

(15) Casino
Big window

(16) Radiostation
Wrapped around the base of a tall antenna

(17) Cosmopolitan lodge
Heliport

(18) Water tower
Skypool

(19) Bridge building
Skywalk

(20) Observatory
Eye to the sky

(21) Research center
Study cells

(22) Psychiatric institution
City neurosis center

(23) Visitors Center
Architecture viewing machine

(24) Gallery
Cars

(25) Dislocation house
On big screens various places of the world can be seen
House of endless journeys

(26) Dance stage

(27) Stage-set museum
Illusionistic city
Accessible depot

(28) Stair building
Forming an outdoor theater
Intensified city

(29) Elevated Piazza
A present to the city
A place with a view
Crowning the roof of a garage

(30) Mountain
Subliminal landscape
Big rocks, trees, waterfall

W. Writing

Based on the read

Influenced by the contemplated

W.1. Theme of the new text

**Confrontation of a rational, generic structure
with a sophisticated, distinct structure**

W.2. Three variations of a theme

**Three independent designs
with different programs and locations
In search for limits in different directions**

W.2.1. Exploring the Individual edge

**With a building for an ignorant excentric
A house for only one person who never has people visiting**

W.2.1.2. Location : Fannin garage

W.2.2. Exploring semi-private communities

**With a building (or series of buildings) for an athletic club
With torture chambers as well as pleasure spaces**

W.2.2.2. Location : Clay Garage

W.2.3. Exploring the public edge

**A building for the "urban public" -
a specialized public, since this is the only way to
work with - for city plays
A theater for urban visions**

W.2.3.2. Location : Main garage

Maisons de Plaisance (tn)
Parking Garage Interventions

THREE downtown parking garages form the setting for an urban experiment with several *pleasure houses*. These houses dwell in the three found, potential landscapes in order to further utilize and redefine them. For this review I would like to illuminate the aspect of *Maisons de Plaisance* - architecture and hence describe three different programs in this manner.

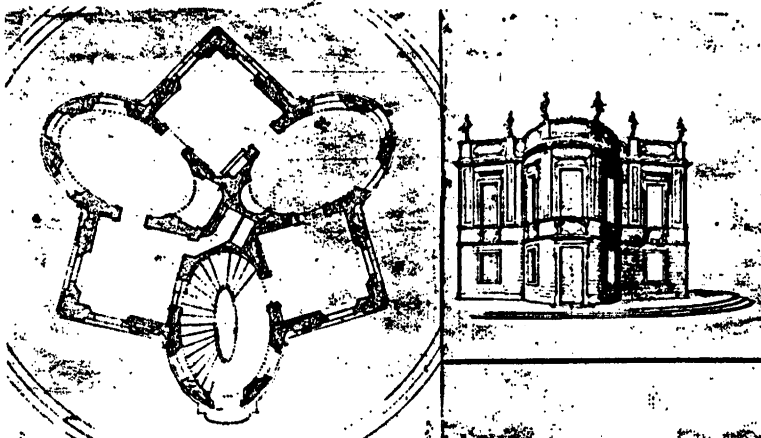
First, **Individual** pleasure places (1) are considered: one house is dedicated to the night - with a big window to observe the sky (a); another house is dedicated to the morning - shaped to capture the first sequence of the day (b); and moreover there is a house dedicated to some evenings - in form of an internalized bathing temple (c). All three houses are to be built of plywood, steel profiles and sheetmetal. For this investigation Fannin garage is the setting.

Second, **group** pleasure places (2) where various games will be played are considered: on one hand there are houses for playing handball (d), there are houses for circuit-training/"torture chambers" (e) and there is a dance house/gymnastics house (f); on the other hand there are houses to play chess (h), to play cards (i), and to play pool (j). A threshold house in which one may change clothes and wash (g) acts as an intermediate element between the two kinds of game-spaces. The proposed primary materials are reinforced concrete and (light weight) steel frame construction. All these objects are given support by Clay garage.

Third, **public** pleasure places (3) are considered: a Trojan horse-like object tries to call attention to itself above all by its excessive use of artificial light at night; it is basically one moveable object but it can be dismantled into a lightwall piece (k), a bar or movie screen piece (l), and a lighttower or kiosk piece (m). All three pieces are to be constructed of woodframe and covered with glass in an intense blue color. The area for the movement of these objects is one city block, atop Main garage.

The single objects are developed independently, starting with particular prototypes. With the main concern in their own unity these objects seem like "strangers" in their juxtaposition, one not knowing the other. In a process of "acquaintance" various reactions will be provoked. While a set of buildings will be presented - showing the first phases of their being - the question about the final results of interrelation or the absence of interrelation is yet unanswered.

(tn) "*Pleasure Houses*" - a term used by Fischer von Erlach in his *History of Architecture* for garden palaces or pavilions based on unusual and ideal floor-plans. He himself designed a series of garden pavilions in the early 18th century which shows a play of simple geometric forms - ellipses, squares, rectangles, hexagons and octagons - producing regular figures which, in elevation, were often crowned with "belvederes". The illustration shows one of the few pavilions that was realised (in the park of Schiöss Klesheim, Salzburg).



Maisons de Plaisance



a)



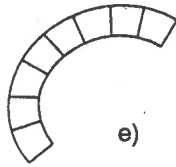
d)



k)



b)



e)



l)



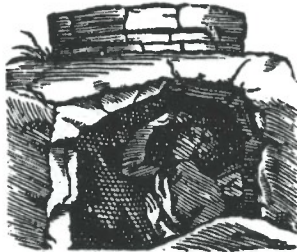
c)



f)

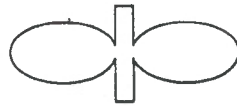


m)



(1)

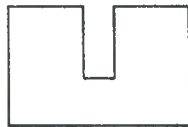
— Ex obscuro spectabile calum est.



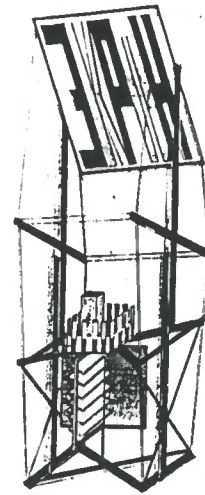
g)



h)



i)



(3)



j)



(2)

(1) ... A person in isolation seeks orientation by observing stars, the sun and his own interior.

Illustration: Emblema IX from *Emblemata Sacra*, 1636.

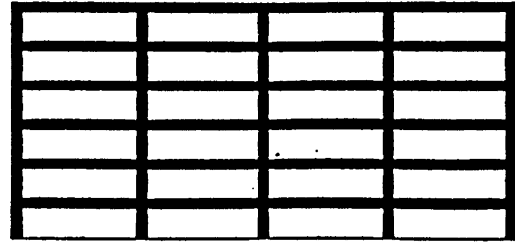
(2) ... Limited groups of people meet in *spartan* and *sybaritic* rooms.

Illustration: Palm Room of the Hotel Excelsior, Lido, Venice.

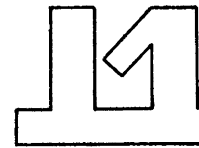
(3) ... Strangers are attracted and entertained.

Illustration: G. G. Klucis, Design for Screen, Rostrum and Kiosk for the Fourth Comintern Congress 1922, Moscow.

4.b NEITHER/NOR



(1)



(2)

NEITHER/NOR

Two objects are observed, the one is a Parking Garage in the Central Business District of Houston, which occupies one of 331 city blocks - about 62,500 sf. The other is a mysterious glass-object, that moves around on top of the other object, and occupies less than 1,350 sf. (3). Whereas the first one is built and present in the city the other is drawn and present only in my mind. In form of plain specifications I try to present them in a similar manner:

Concrete Container (1)

Authorship: Unknown employee(s) of an architectural firm (4) under consultation of several engineers.

Client: Developers who acquired three adjacent Downtown-blocks with the objective of erecting officetowers; only a parking garage was built though.

Function: Day-use - Parking/storage of 1200 cars during officehours (5). Night-use - none.

Location: Downtown block, defined by Main-, Polk-, Fannin- and Clay streets.

Size: 256 ft by 252 ft, 70 ft high, 8 floors
Grid: 28 regular areas (25 ft by 54 ft), 17 "hook-up" areas (8).

Construction, Materials: Post and beam construction in reinforced concrete, partially prefabricated with massive corner elements (emergency stairs).

Duration: one half was considered permanent with the possibility of adding 2 or 3 floors to it while the other half was thought of as temporary and to be replaced by an office tower within few years (9).

Colors: untreated concrete; painted yellow lot-marks. Black letters THE MAIN GARAGE in Futura font are underlined by a red metal beam.

Ramps, Stairs: The eight levels are connected by two ramps for each floor, one is 54 ft wide and the other 35 ft. The inclination is 5%. There are 4 staircases in the 4 corners.

Machinery: 4 elevators provide convenient access to the different floors.

Lighting: Security lights fixed on the ceiling are operated throughout the day and provide a minimum of lighting.

Wood & Glass Container (2)

Authorship: Known architect

Client: Same architect

Functions (6): Dayuse - Cafe, hang-out "place". Nightuse - Bar, Performance art object, Bandstand, Stage, Screen, Lighthouse.

Location: Various places on the roof of a parking garage (7).

Size: 54 ft by 25 ft, 40 ft high, 2 floors.

Construction, Materials: Light-weight wood frame construction with metal joints, crossbraced. All moving parts are steel. All sides are covered with glass, the floor of the stage is made of sheets of stainless steel, the material of the roof of the two sliding boxes is glass.

Duration: 365 days

Colors: color of wood and steel itself. Dark blue glass (10); as well as an unlimited palette of colors produced by several lighting circles, slide and film projections.

Stairs: 2 stairs in axis with the 2 doors connect the 2 levels.

Utility-, Restrooms: Located within base/carriage.

Machinery: Within the construction frame of the base/carriage there are 2 engines for linear movement as well as 2 engines with sophisticated gears for maneuvering the carriage. 12 wheels distribute the load of the object to the garage ceiling while it is moving. At every temporary location four supporting pillars in axis with the garage columns distribute the load. Alongside the edges on top of the base/carriage there are rails to move the two boxes. Both boxes are equipped with two engines for an independent movement. Furthermore there is a mechanism for unfolding a roof within the open box. This is a gyrosopic motion operated by only one engine in each box.

Lighting: Light changes the object. Natural light gives it a voluminous, massive appearance whereas artificial light reveals the filigran construction and/or lights up the object in various colors. There are 1200 lightbulbs, fluorescent lights, spotlights, lightbeams etc. to be operated in various ways.

(3) By means of a parallel description of these two very different objects the line between them as well as the incommensurability of them shall be emphasized (since the direction of incommensurability is between different not-architectures rather than between not architecture and architecture).

(4) Architects who used to be busy designing Highrises.

(5) With the possibility of 5000 people being there at one time and an enormous traffic jam and series of accidents within the building.

(6) The program is written by the architect.

(7) Since this object is changing places within the course of the year.

(8) In other words: a rather illogical adjustment to the site.

(9) The only hint for this comes from the location of the ramps.

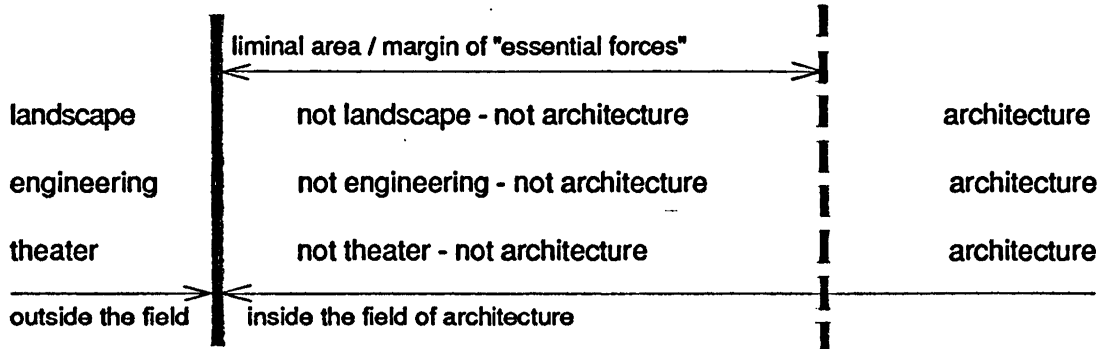
(10) Just like Yves Klein International Blue.

NEITHER/NOR

The question here is not whether something is "within" or "outside" the field of architecture. Neither is it a mobilisation of terms for a "fight" for a particular kind of architecture (1). It is about refined consciousness. It is about an awareness of productive forces, and it is a tracing where architectures' essence is derived from. It is about a necessarily "expanded field" (2) of architecture.

In expanding the field of architecture borderlines are not suspended but rather redefined. Looking at the limit (3) is of importance. Therefore I will introduce 2 diagrams (4):

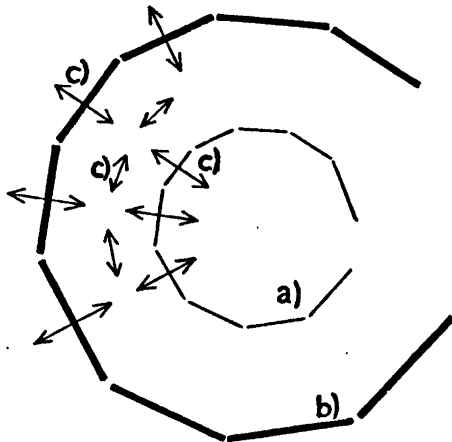
Discussing the *limes* of architecture:



Discussing the *limes* of, e.g., sculpture:



In a more general point-of-view the above diagram could be shown as a closed, circular system formed by many marginal poles. The center area would then be called "architecture"(a). The term "architecture" then would be as far away from the heavily loaded term of "pure" architecture as it would be from "generic/banal" architecture (they both belong to the margin/liminal area (b)).



a) "architecture" ... between an understanding of backdrop production in its best notion and an understanding of systematization and functionalization of complex tasks in order to reduce complexity, with the side effect of reducing possibilities, for clear, singular interpretations as its worst notion.

b) transitional zone, engaged in active dialogue with a larger cultural field; "liminal area", where the opposed ideas of origin-ality and sophistication have their presences.

c) direction of influence and definition.

(1) As there was a "fight" for Modern Architecture (against eyes that don't see, etc.).

(2) Referring to an essay by Rosalind Krauss with the title "Sculpture in the Expanded Field", Spring 1979.

(3) Peras, limes, Grenze

(4) These diagrams are triggered by graphs in the aforementioned essay by R. Krauss, but they don't refer to them.

NEITHER/NOR

"If something is many(fold), *what* is it then ?"(1)

The two particular objects looked at find themselves within an *expanded field* of architecture.
But "where" within the field are they located ?

Concrete Container

not architecture:

no enclosed spaces, no windows, no doors, no walls, no roof, no base, no face, no cornices, no finishing, no furniture, no water, no place for people to stay, no place for privacy, no extravagancies, (no design), not for people

not engineering:

if seen as an elevated street for low speed, than it lacks precision and logic of Highway or Street constructions, too many hook-ups in its construction, too many columns, too simple

not a provisional arrangement:

deep foundations, heavy, durable material - reinforced concrete, no anticipated destruction date

not landscape:

no vegetation, no growth, no potential of change in itself, no variety

Wood & Glass Container

not architecture:

no foundations, no fixed location, no permanent appearance

not engineering:

too many concerns other than construction, too concerned with changing appearances.

not sculpture:

it serves practical purposes, it is functional, it houses utility rooms, restrooms, etc., it has an *inside*, it is furnished

not an orientational marker/

lighthouse:

not reliable, not stationary, not calculable

not a billboard:

it doesn't advertise something other than itself

(1) TN. "Wenn etwas *vieles* ist, was ist es dann?" quote from a Wim Wenders movie.

5) Conclusion / Critique

Installation

In addition to the specific requirements for the major reviews I tried to emphasize a different, particular aspect for every review. This was a very helpful method throughout the semester but problematic for the final review since I produced a whole set of new drawings - especially computer images - to replace the previous ones. A pragmatic presentation of all previous "themes" together would have represented the project in a clearer and more descriptive way.

Jury

Despite an agreement of the jury in the high quality of the proposal there were two basic reservations stated:

- a) Related to the nature of the thesis - its "Rhizome"-like structure without a clear line of argumentation. Questions and answers seem unclear which results in difficulties in criticising the thesis.
- b) Related to the function and necessity of "abstract models" - parasite, infection, accident - which I introduced as a theoretical ground prior to the design. In the final review problems with these models arose out of a misunderstanding of them as key-issues in the design process.

December 1988

6) Drawings and Models - Fall 1988

a) Private Houses

b) Public Places

c) Club

