

Venturi & Corrigan

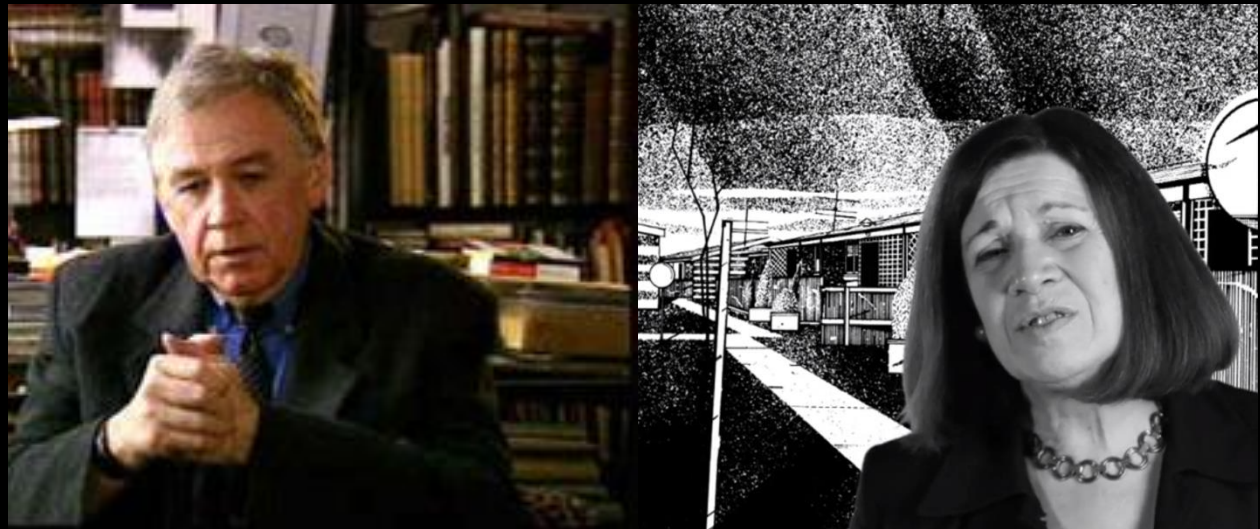
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Robert Venturi and
Denise Scott-Brown



Peter Corrigan and
Maggie Edmond





COMPLEXITY AND CONTRADICTION IN ARCHITECTURE

ROBERT VENTURI

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Note to the Second Edition

I wrote this book in the early 1960's as a practicing architect responding to aspects of architectural theory and dogma of that time. The issues are different now, and I think the book might be read today for its general theories about architectural form but also as a particular document of its time, more historical than topical. For this reason the second part of the book, which covers the work of our firm up to 1966, is not expanded in this second edition.

I now wish the title had been *Complexity and Contradiction in Architectural Form*, as suggested by Donald Drew Egbert. In the early '60's, however, form was king in architectural thought, and most architectural theory focused without question on aspects of form. Architects seldom thought of symbolism in architecture then, and social issues came to dominate only in the second half of that decade. But in hindsight this book on form in architecture complements our focus on symbolism in architecture several years later in *Learning from Las Vegas*.

4. Contradictory Levels: The Phenomenon of "Both-And" in Architecture

Contradictory levels of meaning and use in architecture involve the paradoxical contrast implied by the conjunctive "yet." They may be more or less ambiguous. Le Corbusier's Shodhan House (11) is closed yet open—a cube, precisely closed by its corners, yet randomly opened on its surfaces; his Villa Savoye (12) is simple outside yet complex inside. The Tudor plan of Barrington Court (13) is symmetrical yet asymmetrical; Guarini's Church of the Immaculate Conception in Turin (14) is a duality in plan and yet a unity; Sir Edwin Lutyens' entrance gallery at Middleton Park (15, 16) is directional space, yet it terminates at a blank wall; Vignola's façade for the pavilion at Bomarzo (17) contains a portal, yet it is a blank portico; Kahn's buildings contain crude concrete yet polished granite; an urban street is directional as a route yet static as a place. This series of conjunctive "yets" describes an architecture of contradiction at varying levels of program and structure. None of these ordered contradictions represents a search for beauty, but neither as paradoxes, are they caprice.

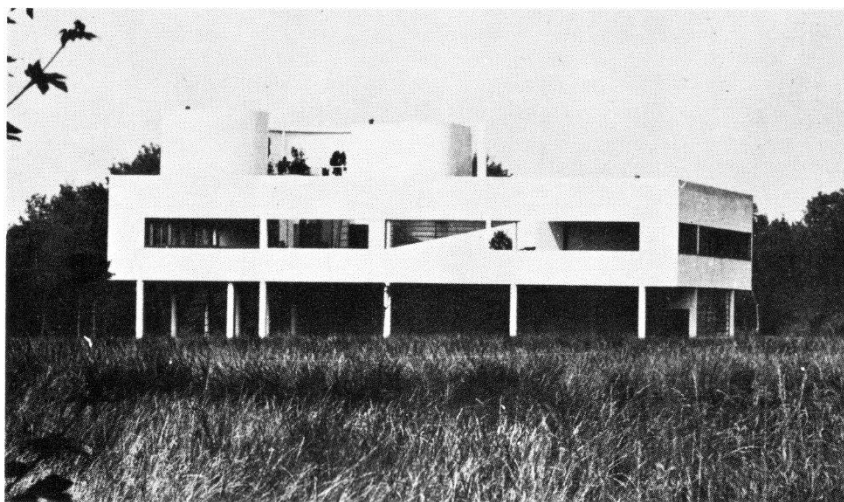
Cleanth Brooks refers to Donne's art as "having it both ways" but, he says, "most of us in this latter day, cannot. We are disciplined in the tradition either-or, and lack the mental agility—to say nothing of the maturity of attitude—which would allow us to indulge in the finer distinctions and the more subtle reservations permitted by the tradition of both-and."¹⁶ The tradition "either-or" has characterized orthodox modern architecture: a sun screen is probably nothing else; a support is seldom an enclosure; a wall is not violated by window penetrations but is totally interrupted by glass; program functions are exaggeratedly articulated into wings or segregated separate pavilions. Even "flowing space" has implied being outside when inside, and inside when outside, rather than both at the same time. Such manifestations of articulation and clarity are foreign to an architecture of complexity and contradiction, which tends to include "both-and" rather than exclude "either-or."

If the source of the both-and phenomenon is contradiction, its basis is hierarchy, which yields several levels of meanings among elements with varying values. It can include elements that are both good and awkward, big and little, closed and open, continuous and articulated, round and square, structural and spatial. An architecture which includes varying levels of meaning breeds ambiguity and tension.

Most of the examples will be difficult to "read," but this architecture is valid when it reflects the complexities



11. Le Corbusier. Shodhan House, Ahmedabad



12. Le Corbusier. Villa Savoye, Poissy

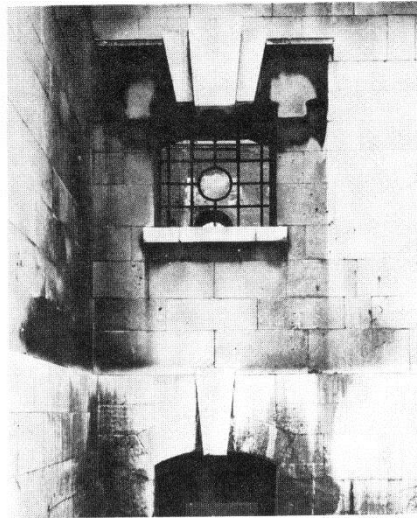
and contradictions of content and meaning. Simultaneous perception of a multiplicity of levels involves struggles and hesitations for the observer, and makes his perception more vivid.

Examples which are both good and bad at the same time will perhaps in one way explain Kahn's enigmatic remark: "architecture must have bad spaces as well as good spaces." Apparent irrationality of a part will be justified by the resultant rationality of the whole, or characteristics of a part will be compromised for the sake of the whole. The decisions for such valid compromises are one of the chief tasks of the architect.

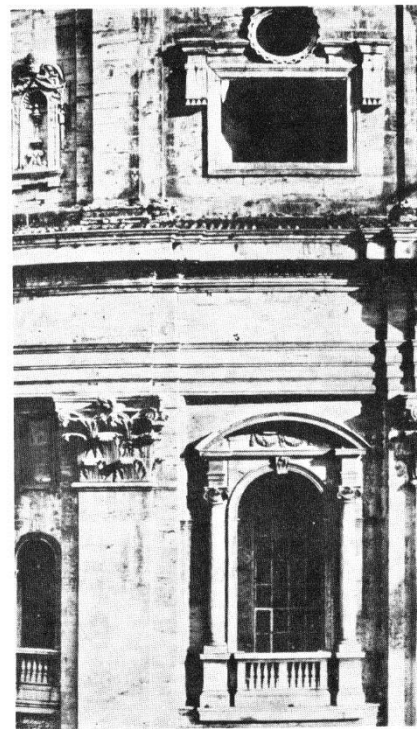
In Hawksmoor's St. George-in-the-East (18) the exaggerated keystones over the aisle windows are wrong in relation to the part: when seen close-up they are too big in relation to the opening they span. When seen farther back, however, in the context of the whole composition, they are expressively right in size and scale. Michelangelo's enormous rectangular openings in the attic story of the rear façade of St. Peter's (19) are wider than they are high, so that they must be spanned the long way. This is perverse in relation to the spanning limitations of masonry, which dictate in Classical architecture that big openings, such as these, be vertically proportioned. But because one usually expects vertical proportions, the longitudinal spanning expresses validly and vividly their *relative* smallness.

The main stair in Frank Furness' Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in Philadelphia (20) is too big in relation to its immediate surroundings. It lands on a space narrower than its width, and faces an opening narrower than its width. Furthermore, the opening is bisected by a post. But this stair is ceremonial and symbolic as well as functional, and it relates to the hall immediately beyond the opening, to the whole building, and to the great scale of Broad Street outside. The outer thirds of Michelangelo's stair in the Laurentian Library vestibule (21) are abruptly chopped off and lead virtually nowhere: it is similarly wrong in the relation of its size to its space, and yet right in relation to the whole context of the spaces beyond.

Vanbrugh's end bays in the central pavilion of the entrance façade of Blenheim Palace (22) are incorrect because they are bisected by a pilaster: this fragmentation produces a duality which decreases their unity. Their very incompleteness, however, reinforces by contrast the center bay and increases the overall unity of this complex composition. The pavilions which flanked the château at Marly (23) contained



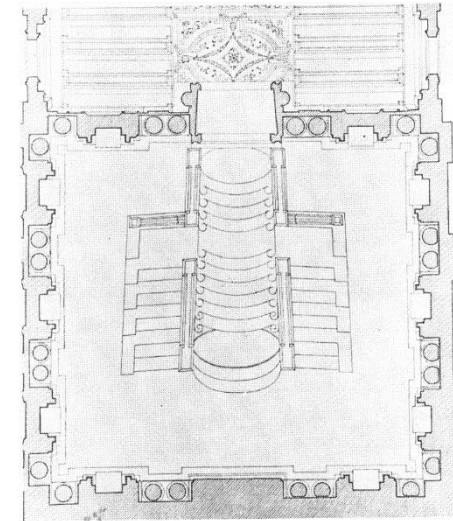
18. Hawksmoor. St. George-in-the-East, London



19. Michelangelo. Rear Façade, St. Peter's, Rome



20. Furness. Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia



21. Michelangelo. Laurentian Library, Florence. Plan



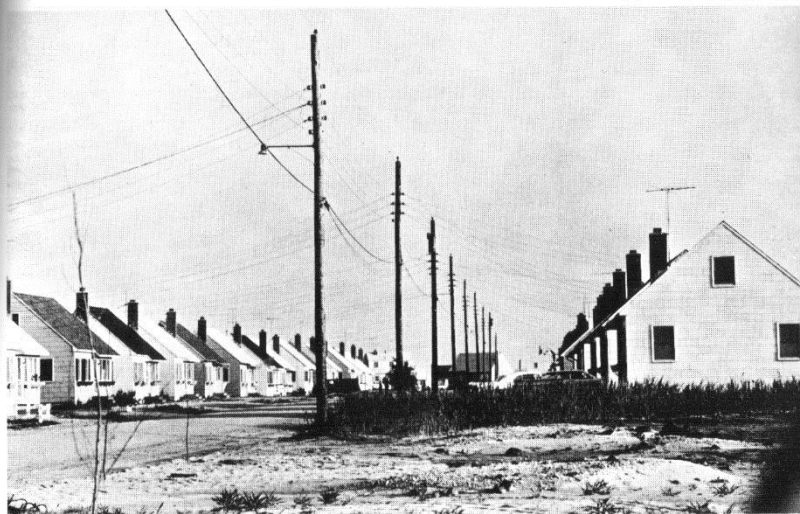
Venice



York



88. Highway, U.S.A.



89. Developers' Houses, U.S.A.

4. Headquarters Building, North Penn Visiting Nurse Association, Venturi and Short, 1960. (272–277)

Economy dictated a small building with conventional construction. The setting suggested a bold scale and a simple form to compensate for the large buildings around. The program dictated a complex inside, however, with varieties of spaces and special storage accommodations. Level parking for five staff cars on the steeply sloping site necessitated a retaining-walled auto court up front. And a pedestrian entrance with a minimum of outside steps similarly dictated a building immediately on the street.

The resultant building is a distorted box both simple and complex. Because they are adjacent and similar in area, the court and the building set up a duality. The prow of the building acts as an inflection toward the court to resolve the duality, yet this distortion of the boxlike building simultaneously enforces the duality by complementing the curved wall at the opposite side of the parking court and by making the court more symmetrical and, therefore, independent of the building. The building at this point is more sculptural than architectural. Outside spatial forces dominate the interior forces, and it is designed from the outside in. The “awkward” interior created here is a subordinate space—merely the dentist’s dark room.

Distortion works in the open side of the duality too: the slight curve of the retaining wall of the essentially rectangular court acknowledges and resists the pressure of the earth behind. The building box is distorted further by the east wall being parallel to the property line on this half-urban site. The surface of this originally plain box is also distorted. The windows on the front eat into it to provide integral overhangs toward the south. They also work integrally with the interior storage cabinets along that wall parallel to the roof framing.

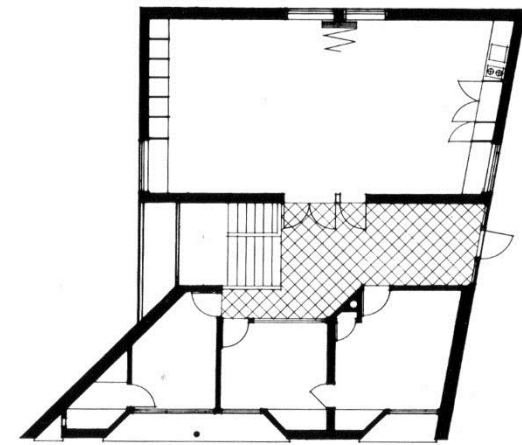
The window indentations become large and few, sometimes coupled as well as set back, and they increase the scale of the small building. On the outside the scale of the lower windows is increased by the device of an extended frame—in this case, an applied wood moulding which accommodates the contradiction between the inside and outside scales. The complex positioning of the windows and openings of this façade also counteracts the simplicity of the box. They are not random but rather an originally regular rhythmic series distorted by interior complexities and circumstances.

The entrance on the court side at an intermediate landing is similarly complex in composition and bold in scale. It is made up almost equally of rectangular, diagonal, and segmental elements juxtaposed in a manner similar to some Renaissance doors. The rectangularity of the overall opening results from the block and plank structure of the building. In contrast the arch derives not from the nature of the materials and structure of its wood frame but from its symbolism as an entrance. Furthermore, and more important, as a circumstantial exception to the general order of the composition, it becomes a focus. The diagonal posts are expediencies similarly eventful: they shore up the center beam which supports the exceptional span of the roof planks at this opening, and they contrast with the post, which is vertical in the large window opening in the front, and more analogous in its position to the rectangular composition of the building. The big opening of the arch, appropriate in scale for a civic building, is juxtaposed upon the man-scaled doors, which are sheltered. There is a juxtaposition here of scales as well as shapes.

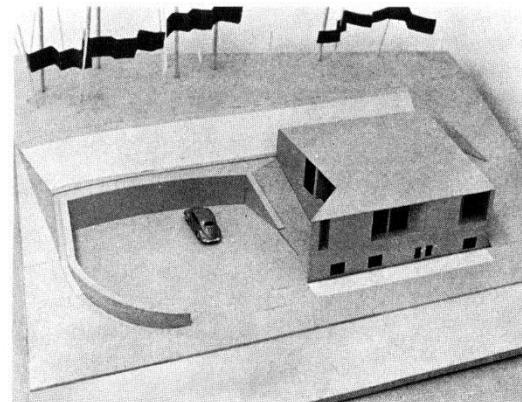
As for the program complexities of the interior, a hint of the storage intricacies is confirmed in the alternating recessions of windows and closets in the front. Another manifestation is the diagonal wall in the plan of the hall—another expedient distortion to accommodate the program complexities, which are squeezed inside their rigid enclosure.

The inconsistent floor and roof structure is similarly accommodating to the bearing walls of the rigid perimeter. The first floor front is a two-way slab accommodating the irregular interior bearing walls. Steel and wood joists for the floors and roof otherwise run variously parallel with the walls containing window storage combinations. Here, as in the entrance opening, the span is wood planks, which permit openings and windows to reach the thin cornice line and make the box look more abstract. I have already mentioned the expedient post, vertical or diagonal, used when these surface spans become exceptionally long.

To emphasize thinness of surface and contradict the plasticity of the form of the box, the stucco surface is detailed with a minimum of corner-turnings by means of the wood-surfaced window reveals. I have “destroyed the box,” not through spatial continuities but by circumstantial distortions.



272



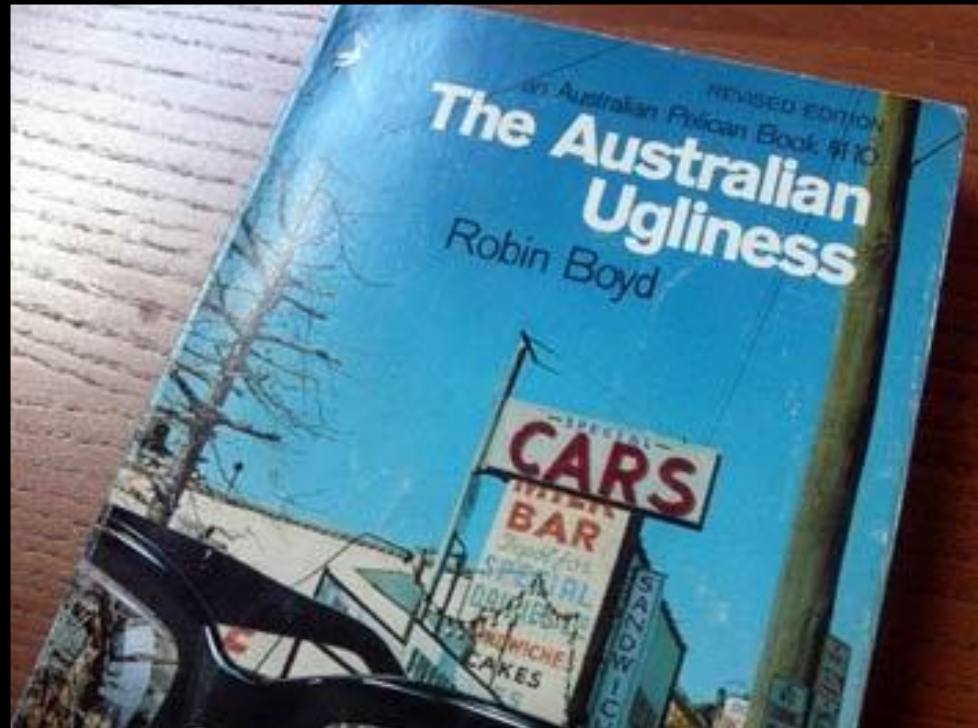
273



LEARNING FROM LAS VEGAS

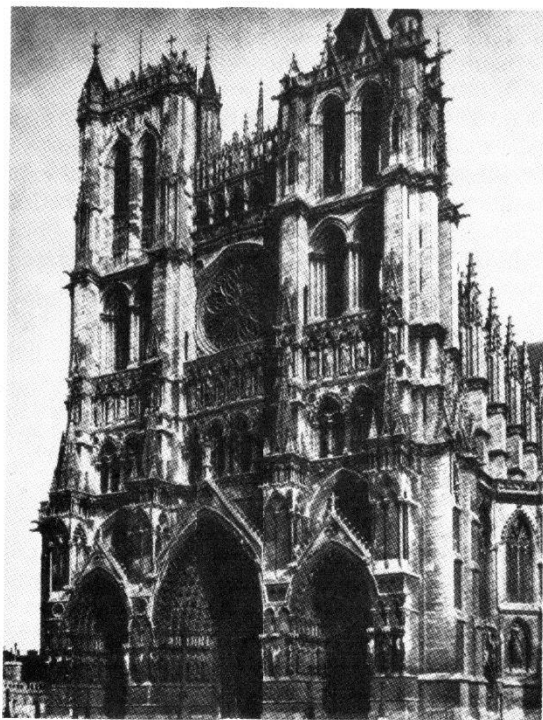
Revised Edition

Robert Venturi Denise Scott Brown Steven Izenour

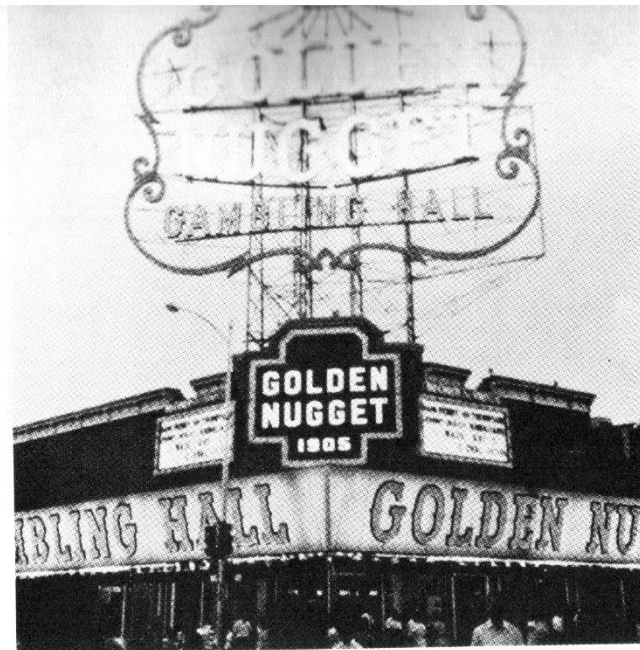




87. Metropole Cathedral, Athens



88. Amiens Cathedral, west front



89. Golden Nugget, Las Vegas, pre-1964



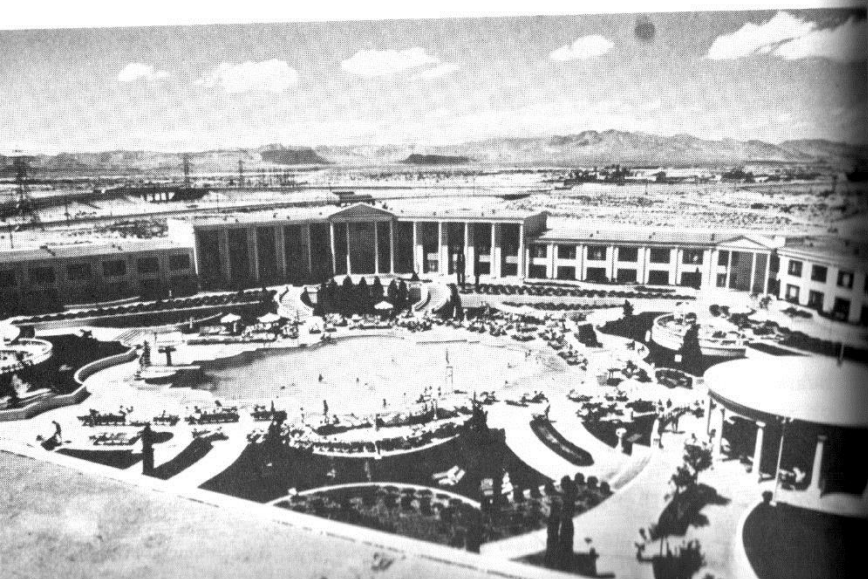
90. Golden Nugget, Las Vegas, post-1964



You don't come to Caesars Palace
to play solitaire...

Caesars Palace is the
premier destination of gaming, dining, shopping and
entertainment in Las Vegas.

Caesars Palace tourist brochure



OLD monumentality

The nave

The big

- ① HIGH
- ② LIT and WINDOWED
- ③ OPEN
- ④ SPACE
- ⑤ UNCLUTTERED

for communal crowds

- ① High for monumentality
- ② Lit and windowed: natural & simulated daylight falls on walls to clarify the great architecture
- ③ Open: to let natural light in and lately to integrate the inside & outside
- ④ Space: spaciousness for communal crowds
- ⑤ Uncluttered: don't clutter up the great architecture

NEW monumentality

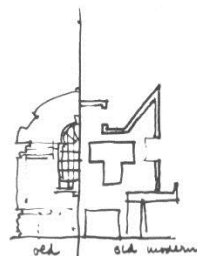
The chapels without the nave

The big

- ① LOW
- ② GLITTERING-in-the-DARK
- ③ ENCLOSED
- ④ MAZE of
- ⑤ ALCOVES and
- ⑥ FURNITURE

for separate people

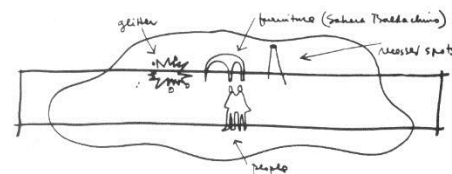
- ① Low for economy of air conditioning
- ② Glittering-in-the-Dark: perimeters dark in value, absorbent in texture to obscure extent and character of the architectural enclosure. Glittering light sources - mainly ornamental - and recessed ceiling spots to light people and furniture and not architecture.
- ③ Enclosed to exclude the outside to engender a different style and role inside
- ④ Maze for crowds of anonymous individuals without explicit communications with each other
- ⑤ Alcoves: people are together and yet separate
- ⑥ Furniture: objects and symbols dominate architecture.

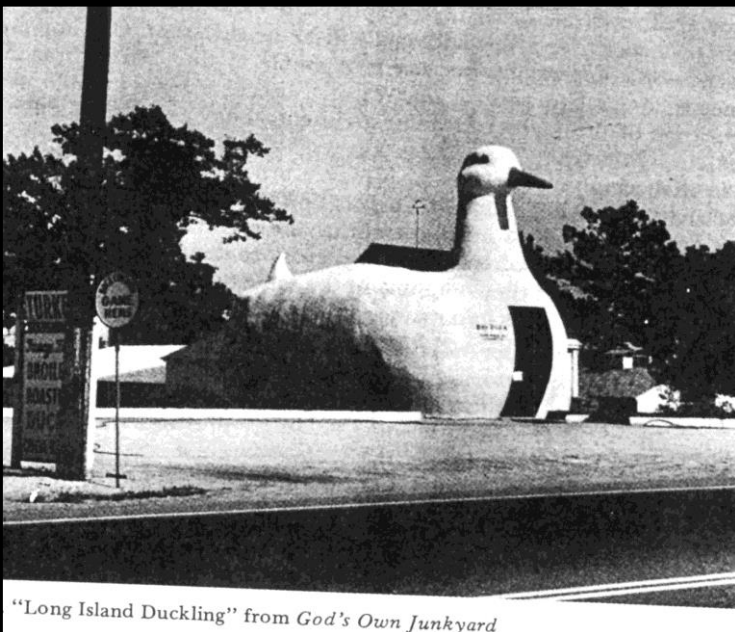


Part of Topic 8 (Building types)

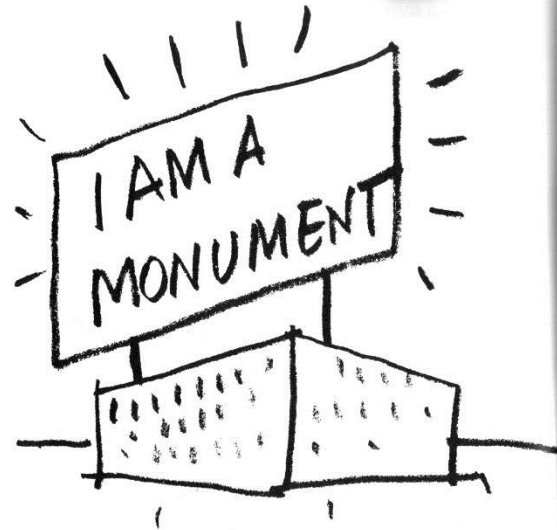
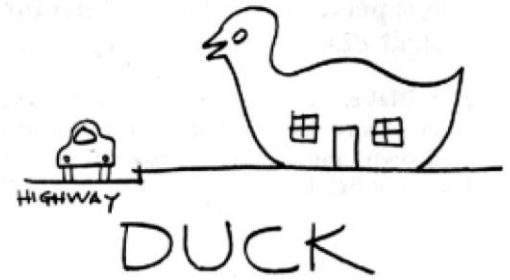
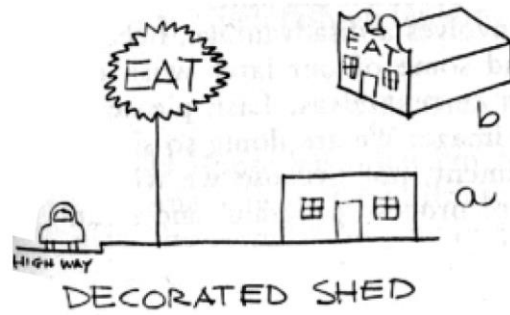
THE ROADSIDE INTERIOR

Architectural monumentality and the roadside interior

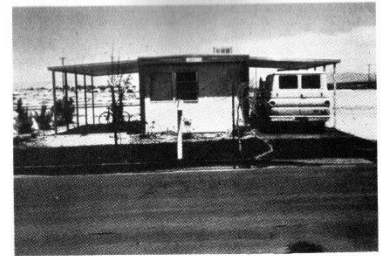




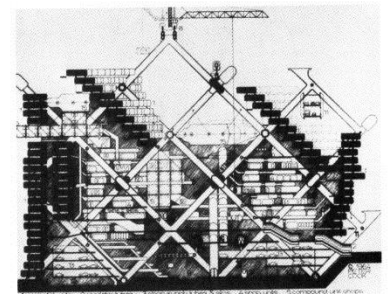
"Long Island Duckling" from *God's Own Junkyard*



139. Recommendation for a monument



140. Mobile home, California City, California



141. "Plug-in City," 1964; Peter Cook

PROJECT ROOM 1 AND 2 » 1 APRIL - 2 MAY 2014

LAS VEGAS STUDIO

Images from the Archives
of Robert Venturi and
Denise Scott Brown



LLV QUOTES

"Billboards are almost alright"

"if you take the signs
away there is no place"

"I.M Pei will never be
happy on Route 66"

"The pretty photographs that we and the other
tourists made in Las Vegas are not enough"

"Decoration is cheaper"

"the familiar that is a little off has
a strange and revealing power"

"It looks like what it is not only
because of what it is but also
what it reminds you of"

"Ugly and Ordinary"

"the \$10,000 stand with
the \$100,000 sign"

"a city is a set of
intertwined activities"

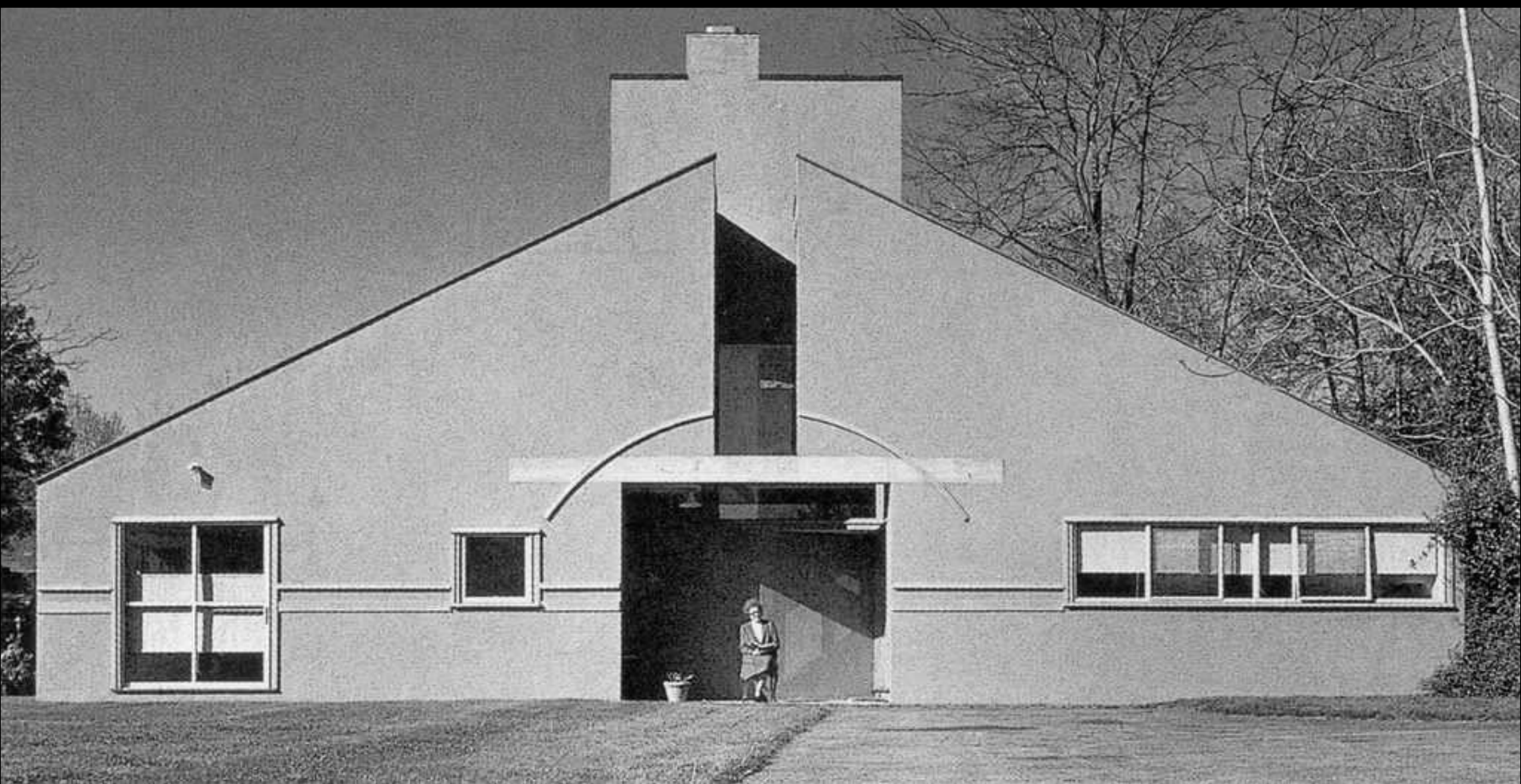
**LAS VEGAS
STUDIO**

AND LEARNING FROM

Surfers Paradise

Concept - 05.02.2014
RMIT Design Hub - Exhibition Design

**SEARLE & WALDRON
ARCHITECTURE**



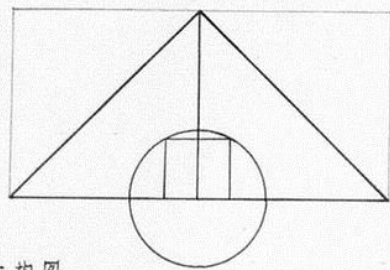
Vanna Venturi House, 1962



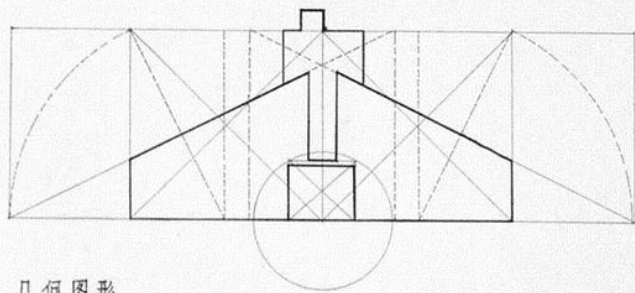


范例分析

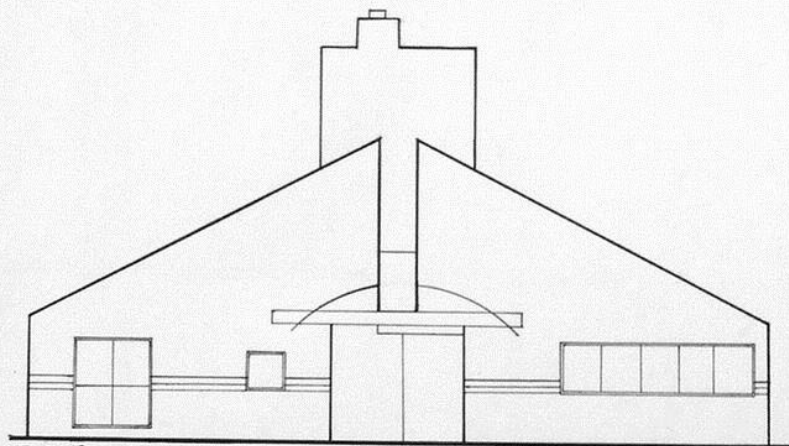
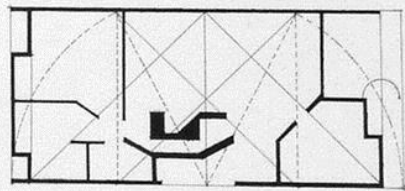
母亲之家



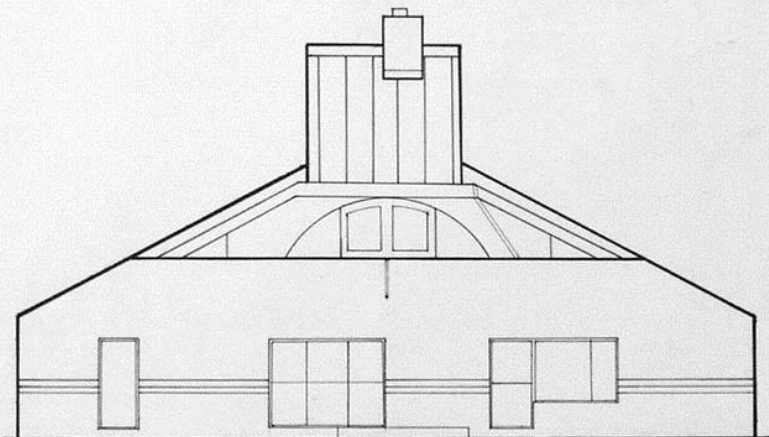
基本构图



几何图形

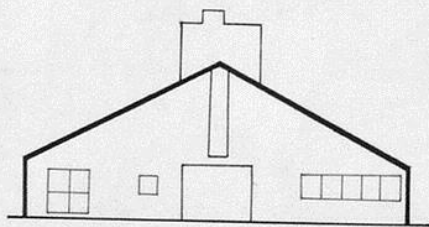


正立面

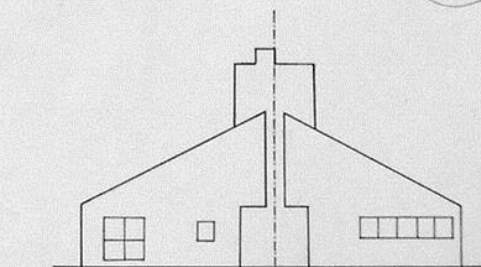
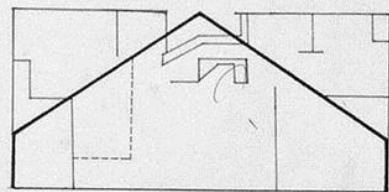


背立面

1:60

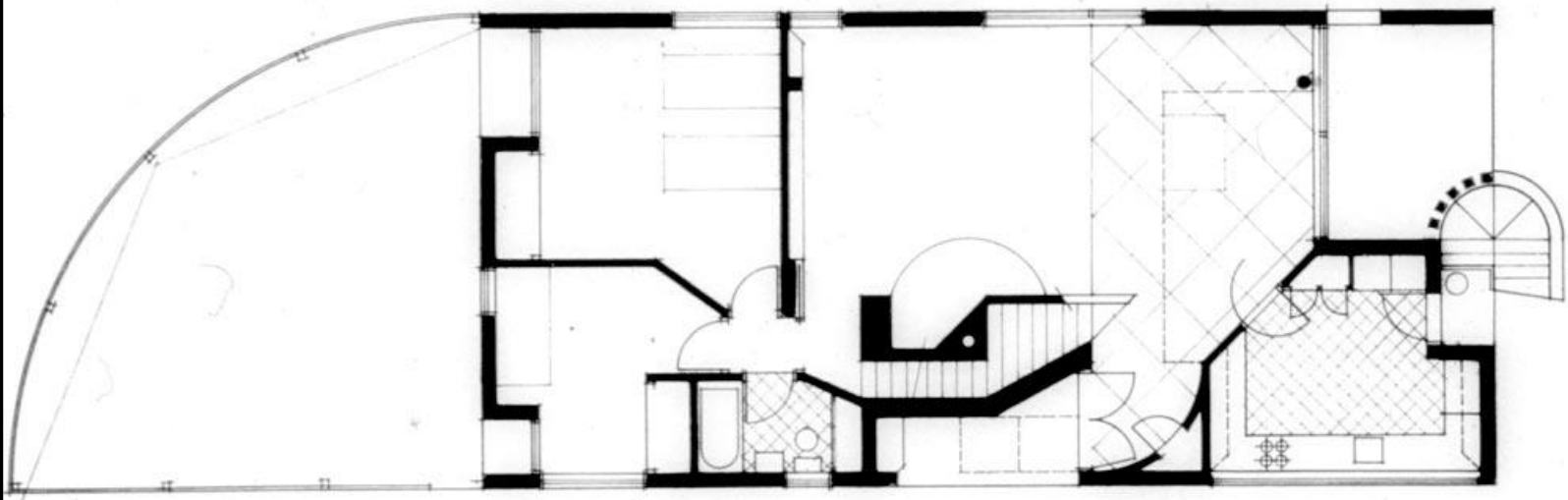


立面到平面



对称和平衡

Z



















Guild House, 1963





Lieb House, 1969

VENTURI, SCOTT BROWN AND ASSOCIATES

TIMELINE PROJECTS	1980	1975	1970	1965	1960
ACADEMIC	 USE in Y CREEK, CT	 COXE-HAYDEN HOUSE	 HOUSE in BERMUDA	 HOUSE IN WESTCHESTER COUNTY	 MOTHERS HOUSE
CIVIC	 ALESSI LIBRARY	 HOUSE IN DELAWARE	 SIGNS OF LIFE		
COMMERCIAL	 HOUSE IN GLEN COVE	 ECLECTIC HOUSE PROJECT	 HOUSE IN GREENWICH		
RESIDENTIAL	 HOUSE IN WAINSCOTT, NY	 HOUSE in VAIL	 TRUBEK & WISLOCKI		
GROUP					
SINGLE FAMILY					
STUDIES					
PLANNING					
PROGRAMMING					
DECORATIVE ARTS					
EXHIBITIONS					
SOME MILESTONES					

SEARCH

KEYWORD





Dixwell Fire Station, New Haven 1974





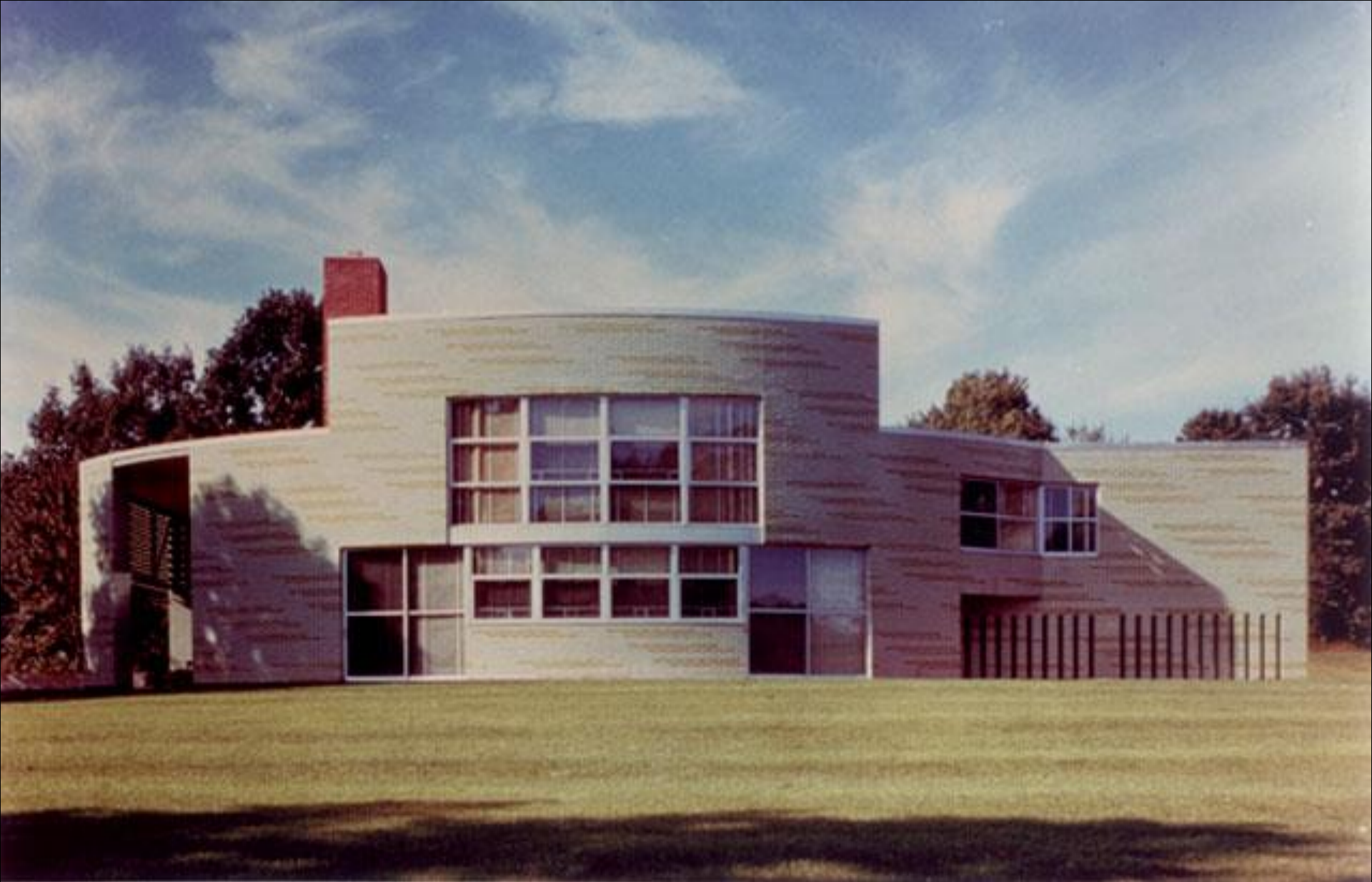
Fire Station No.4, 1968





Frist Campus Center, Princeton, 2000





House in Greenwich, CT, 1974



Franklin Court, Independence National Historical Park, Philadelphia, 1976



Best Langhorne Pennsylvania Showroom, 1979



BEST



Institute for Scientific Information, San Diego, 1979





Gordon Wu Hall, Butler College, Princeton University, 1980

Lewis Thomas Laboratory,
Princeton University, 1983



Seattle Art Museum, 1991



Sainsbury Wing, National Gallery, London,
1991





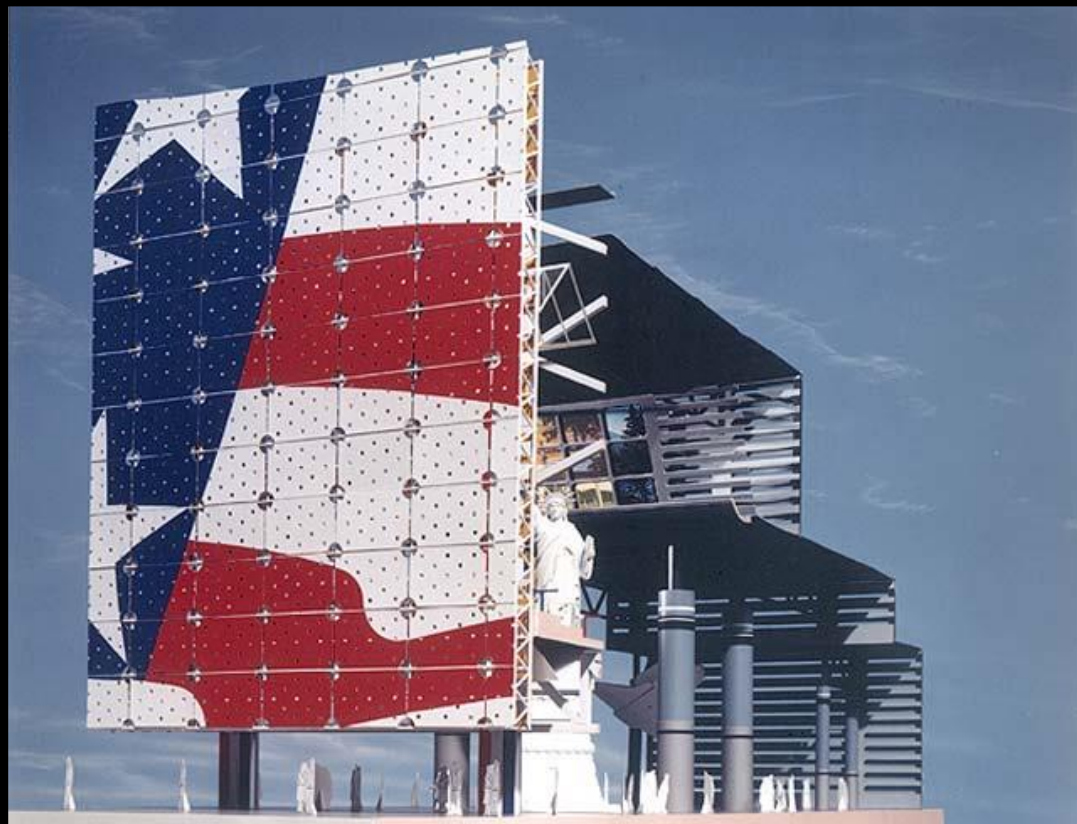
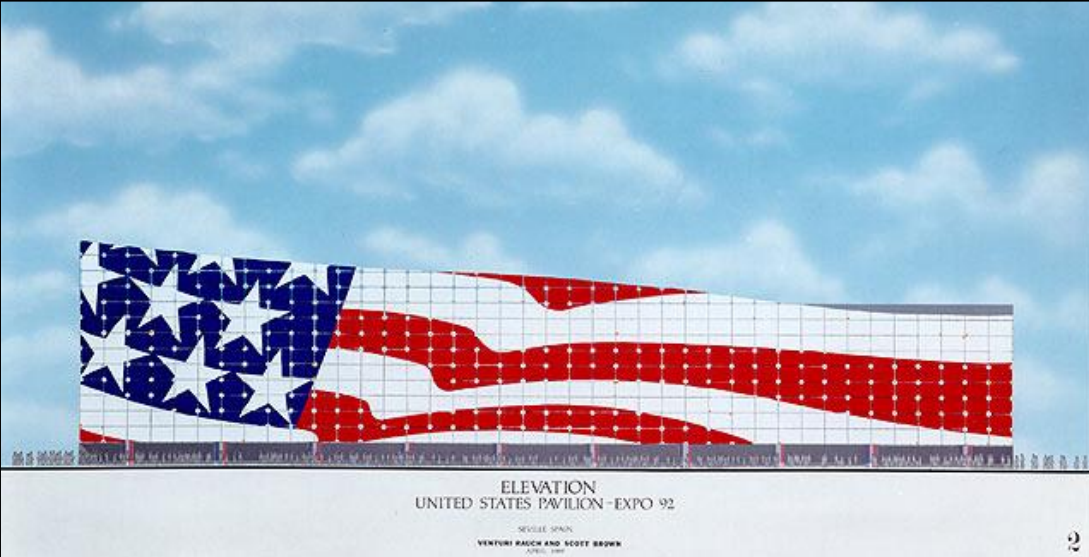
AMERICANS
IN PARIS
1860-1900



AMERICANS
IN PARIS
1860-1900

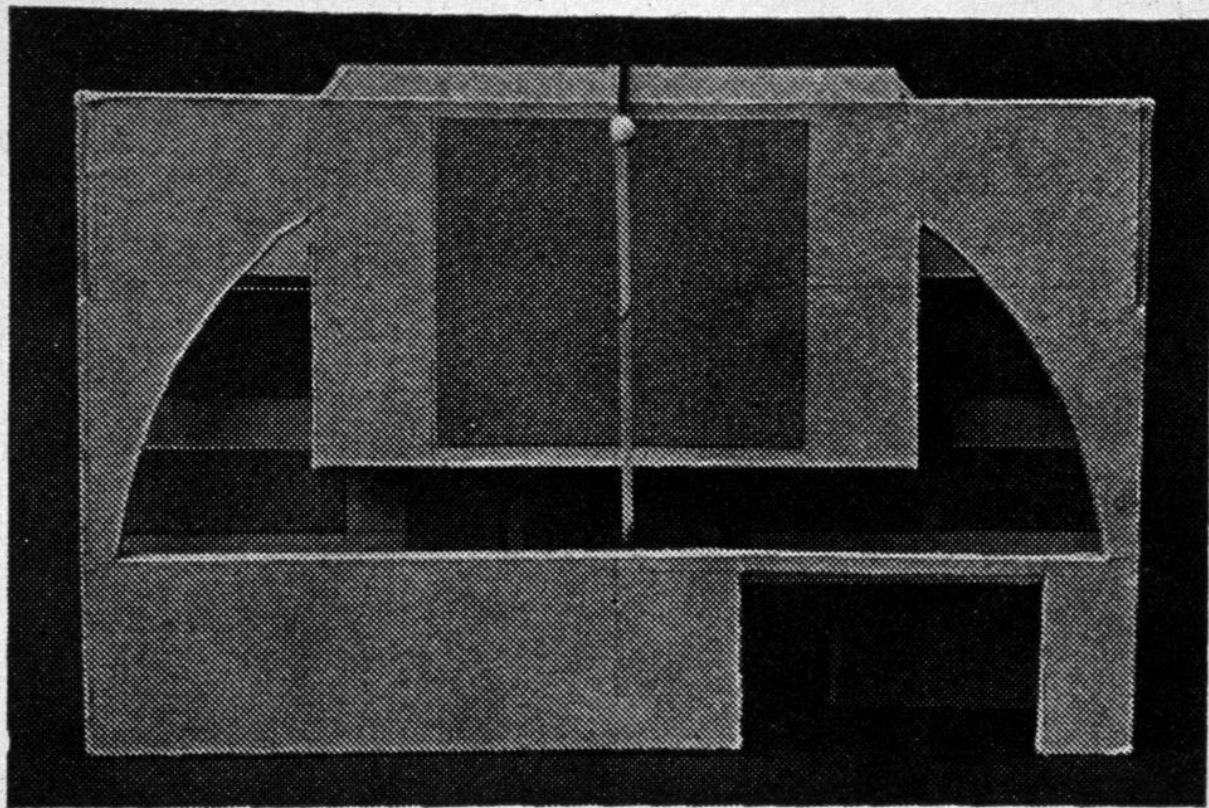
ON VIEW IN MET'S 5th
FLOOR Gallery

METRO



architecture stuff. I haven't really sat down and thought about it so I can argue about it, and be articulate about it, it just doesn't interest me.

Photo: George Pohl



"That bloke . . . with the eyebrows".

*"An
bec*

so now can I sort of unload on other people?
 If I do that sort of thing, I'm regarded as
 uppity or some such thing as that. I don't know
 how you write about that, I think I probably
 should say things like that but I don't want
 those sorts of hassels.

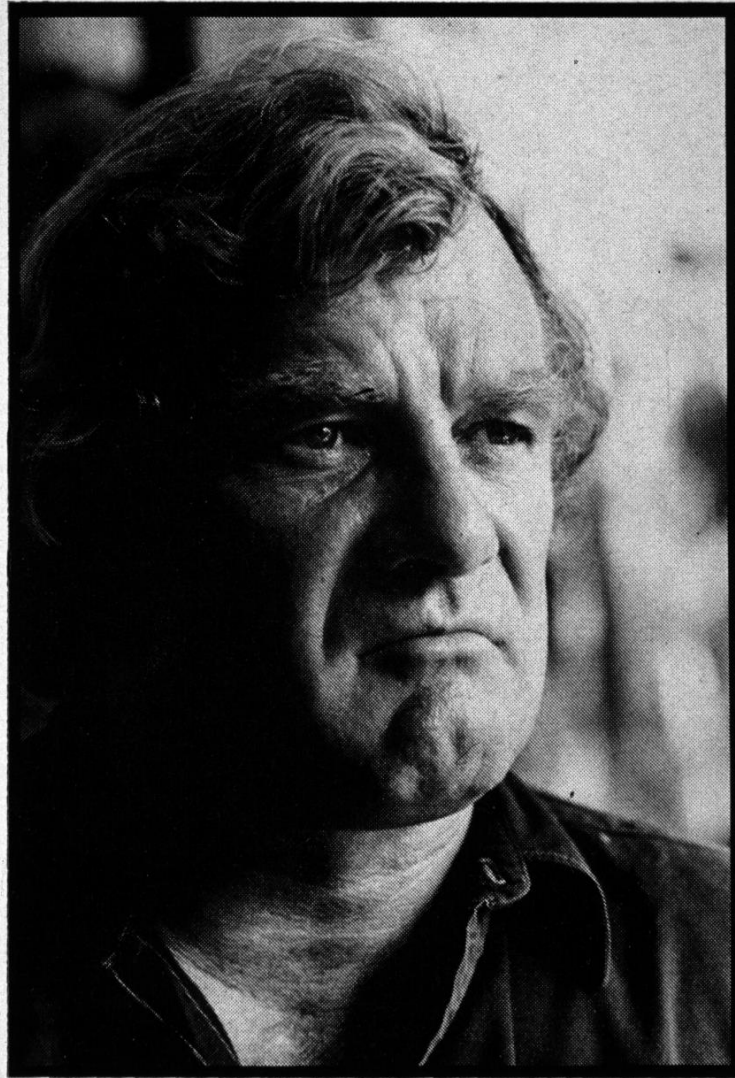


Photo: John Stewart

"I'm always bloody worried".



ARCHITECTURE IN AUSTRALIA, JUNE 1975. REGISTERED FOR POSTING AS A PERIODICAL — CATEGORY B.



buildings

GLAZED IDYLLS/IDOLS?

A look at some Antipodean versions of the American skyscraper—by Howard Tanner.

Imagine yourself as a company executive with one of Australia's leading corporate bodies . . . sitting in your private jet, glancing up from some papers and spying through the porthole window the city of Melbourne. The plane is descending into Tullamarine, and you can see the mass of suburbia spreading to the south, a multitude of red roofs and conventional bungalows, and rising out of this low architecture the pyramidal massing of the central urban district, a great build up of masonry, steel, concrete and glass, and this build up dominated by one tall black glossy building, your company headquarters, which rises, cathedral-like, above all the other structures. The plane lands at Tullamarine

. . . one leaves one pressurised air-conditioned capsule for another, the company limousine, and speeds down a six lane freeway with the tall black building providing a focus as the road penetrates the city fabric.

Leaving the car in the company car park, one ascends in a fast executive lift to the fortieth floor, to relax in another air-conditioned capsule, one's comfortable office, and take in the expansive views out over the city, to the distant hills and to the bay. One might reflect had the company/helicopter been available that the complexities of getting into the city and into the office would have been simplified, for its helicopter one floor up would have provided easier access.

This kind of cityscape closely relates to the early twentieth century futurist visions of the city. Designers, such as Sant' Elia and Le Corbusier, were planning the perfect city, linked by park-separated freeways and dominated by elevator-serviced tower blocks. The car would be king, with trains, aeroplanes, and even dirigibles tying into the efficient transport grid. These visions of the city were expertly translated into reality in America in the 1950's by firms of architects such as Skidmore Owings & Merrill and road engineers such as de Leuw Cather.

Machine technology was used to full effect to make a simplistic architecture of structural forcefulness yet detailed with almost classical restraint. Beautiful craftsmanship and design provided an ultimate standard in mechanised comfort and facilities. This was the contemporary American vision of the dream city with freeways feeding the far-flung suburbanite into his office and providing a protective, isolated environment all the way,

post World War II planners held to be of paramount importance.

The urban neuroses that developed out of this inhuman separatist environment are now well known. Henry Miller's novel 'The Air Conditioned Nightmare' comes to mind. Jane Jacobs rallied with 'The Death and Life of Great American Cities' to show the important function of the urban neighbourhood unit. However, Australian cities have not had this part commercial/part residential flavour for almost a century, so the pattern of live-by-day/dead-by-night urban quarters is accepted here with the exception of a few mixed function areas on the periphery of the central urban area.

The confusion between social ideals and the combination of glass, metal and bureaucracy that was revealed in the new office blocks of the 1950's is well explained by Charles Jencks in 'Modern Movements in Architecture' (Penguin Books Ltd., England (1973)): "... the social Utopianism which existed in the work of Le Corbusier, Gropius and the CIAM Architects became deflected just as their modern-aesthetic—the International Style—triumphed around the world in the fifties. In effect, what was known popularly as 'Modern Architecture' became accepted by most national governments as well as the leading international corporations and it was most importantly stripped of its social idealism. As a result of this mixed success, modern architecture became identified with the bureaucracies that commissioned, inhabited and sometimes even designed it."

(It is interesting to note BHP's request for a building to have "a fundamental structural integrity expressed in the overall design and not influenced by transient fashions or stereo-typed design", and to provide "as much public space as possible at ground level . . . It must be a significant landmark and at the same time blend with the city skyline".)

It can be taken then, that the clients required a building conveying symbolic qualities of honesty and dominance.)

To resume with Jencks:

"The ambiguities that this could produce were extraordinary, since much of the International Style had previously been associated with progressive social institutions. Perhaps to take on some of this Welfare State flavour, the big corporations accepted the modern movement in its glass clad package form. This started its final development with Lever Building (by Skidmore Owings and Merrill) on Park Avenue in New York City, 1951,

seven years later, across the street with the Pepsi Cola and Seagram Building. But two questions emerge. Is it more important that the curtain wall develops aesthetically from a light close mesh pattern to a heavy articulated one, or the fact that Mies van der Rohe and some of the best American architects spent their greatest energies in refining the exterior wrappings for monopolies which produced soap, whiskey and soda-pop?

"Secondly, is this repeated use of a curtain wall sufficient to articulate the rich and diverse content which occurs behind them?"

"As Park Avenue became a street lined with such anonymous expressions of Corporate America, the International Style became equated with the Bureaucratic School of Architects that produced it. This contradiction between technical and visual excellence on the one hand, and the undeniable banality of the building task on the other, became so obvious by the early sixties (in the US) that the curtain wall and its related aesthetic fell into disrepute to be replaced by other approaches" . . . notably precast solidarity and sculptural forms.

S.O.M. Lever Bros. Bld., New York City



Photograph from Modern Movements in Architecture.

Aa

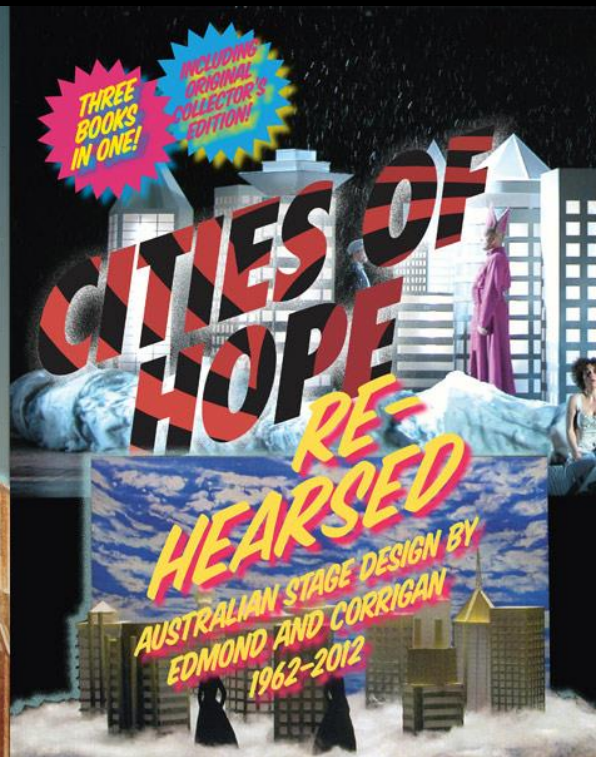
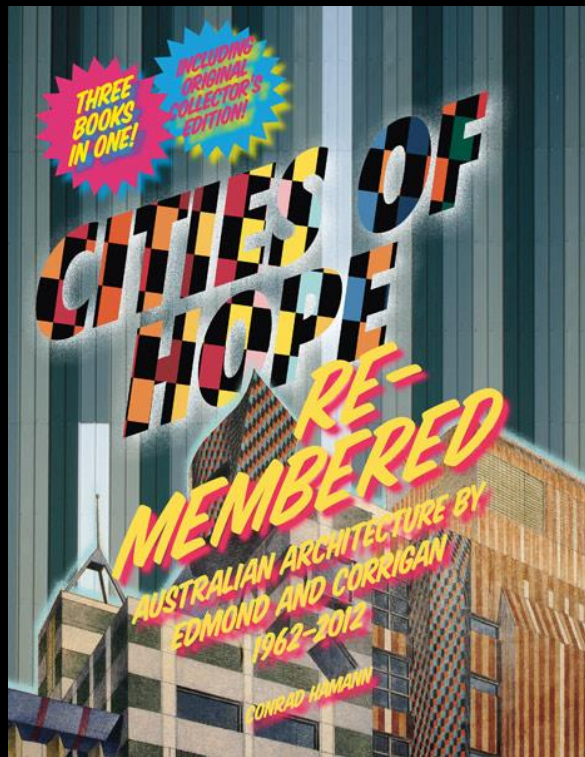
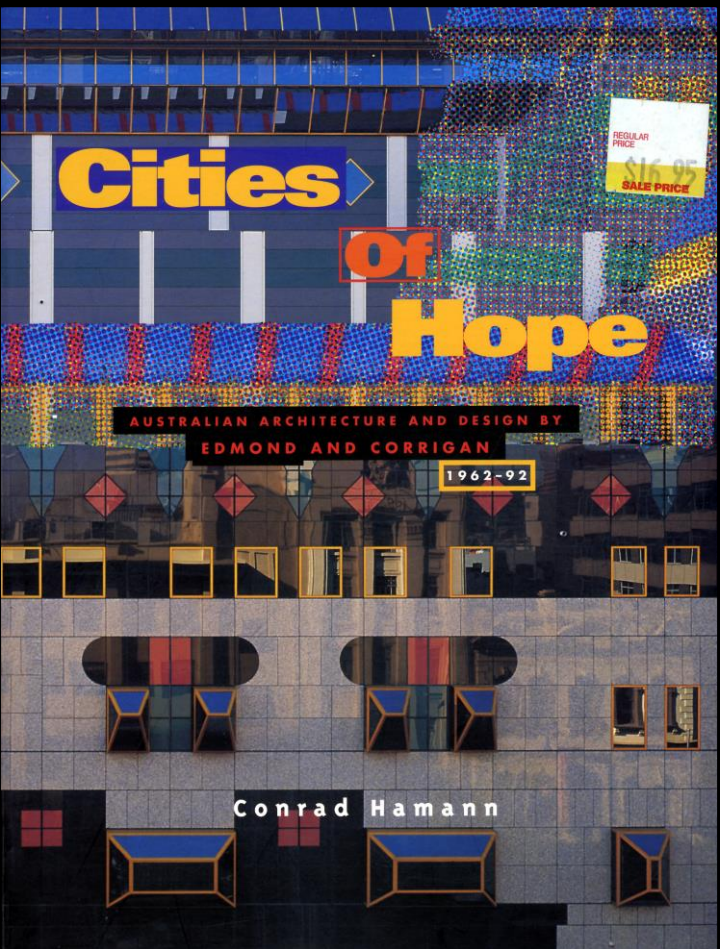
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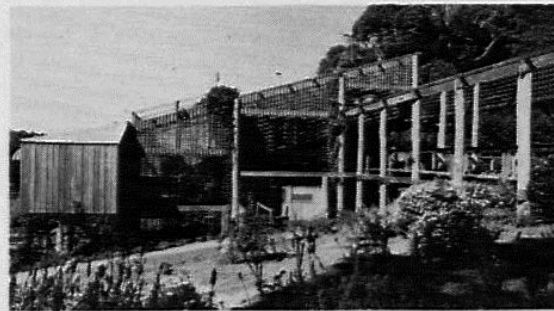
PETER CORRIGAN PENTAGON MEMORIAL FEDERATION SQUARE



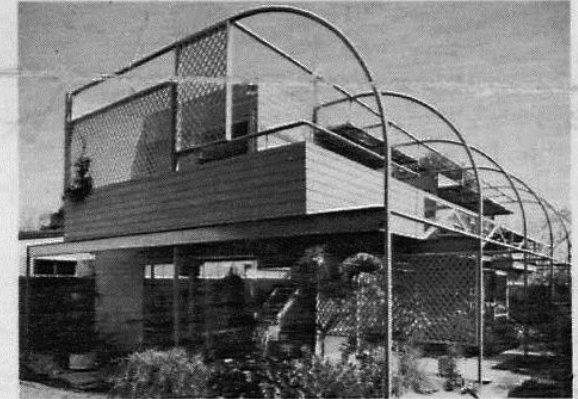




Colvin House
Lawrence Court
Warrandyte
Kevin Borland
1975



Jackson House
Shoreham
Daryl Jackson Pty. Ltd.
1979-1980



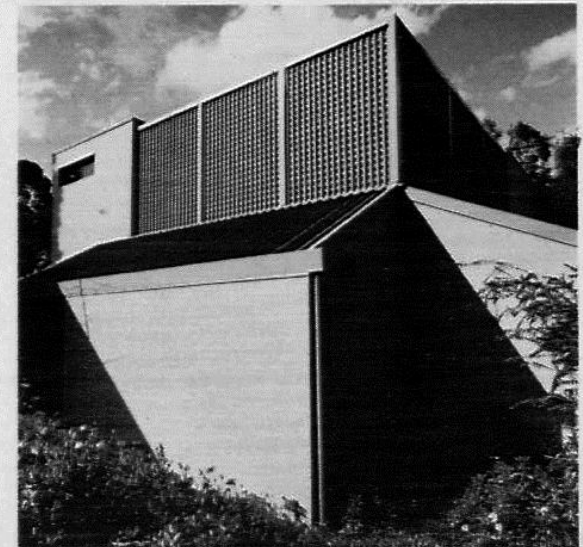
Carmichael House
Sandringham
Cocks & Carmichael
1970-1980



Porritt House
Mount Martha
Peter Crone
1978



Resurrection School Hall
Corrigan Road
Keysborough
Edmond & Corrigan
1979



Scroggie/Clair House
Kensington Road,
South Yarra
Gunn Hayball Pty. Ltd.
1977-1979



House
Toorak
Max May Pty. Ltd.
1977-1981

Australian Architecture and the Stage, 1979

by Peter Corrigan



St Joseph's Church Surrey Hills

Floating World — set 1975



Figure 141 (see pp. 89, 100)

The Pleasures of Architecture conference, Sydney, 1980: the Completion of Engehurst exhibition design, general themes and proposals



A
HOME FOR
MR & MRS GRAEME BLUNDELL
-and all
their friends

JOHN VERGE	BORN 1921 IN ENGLAND
ANASTASIA POM	DIED 1984 IN AUSTRALIA

DEATH 1782 IN ENGLAND
DEATH 1884 IN AUSTRALIA

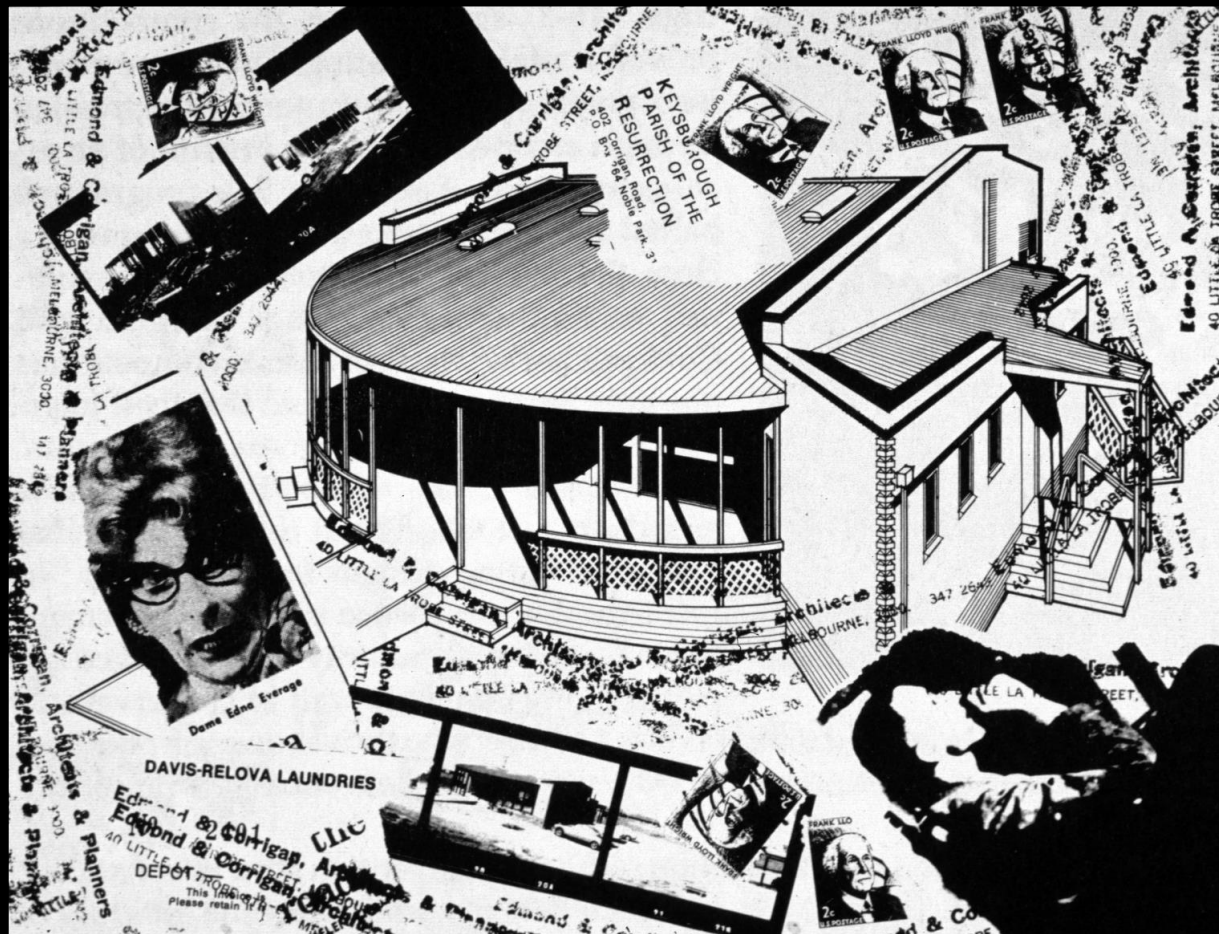
FOUR MELBOURNE ARCHITECTS

Greg Burgess Peter Crone Norman Day Edmond & Corrigan

**EDMOND & CORRIGAN**

Powell Street Gallery South Yarra

8-22 September 1979



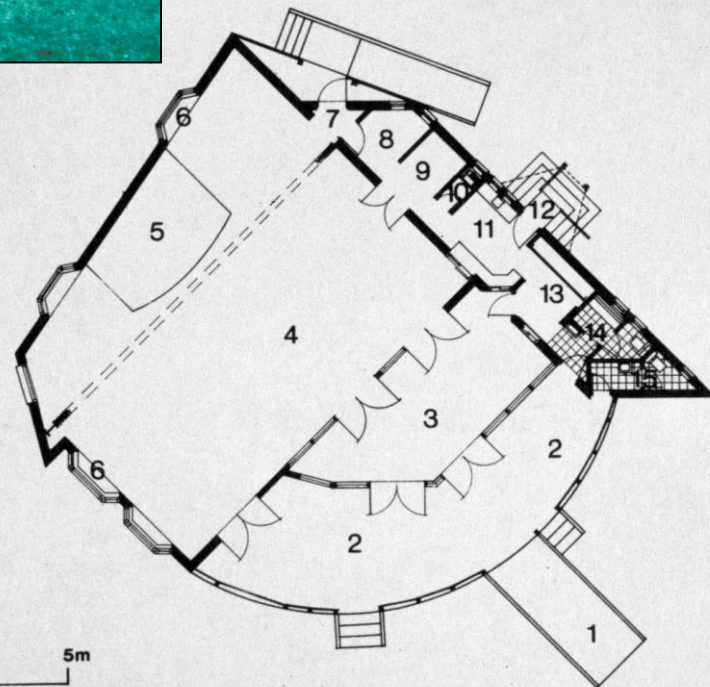


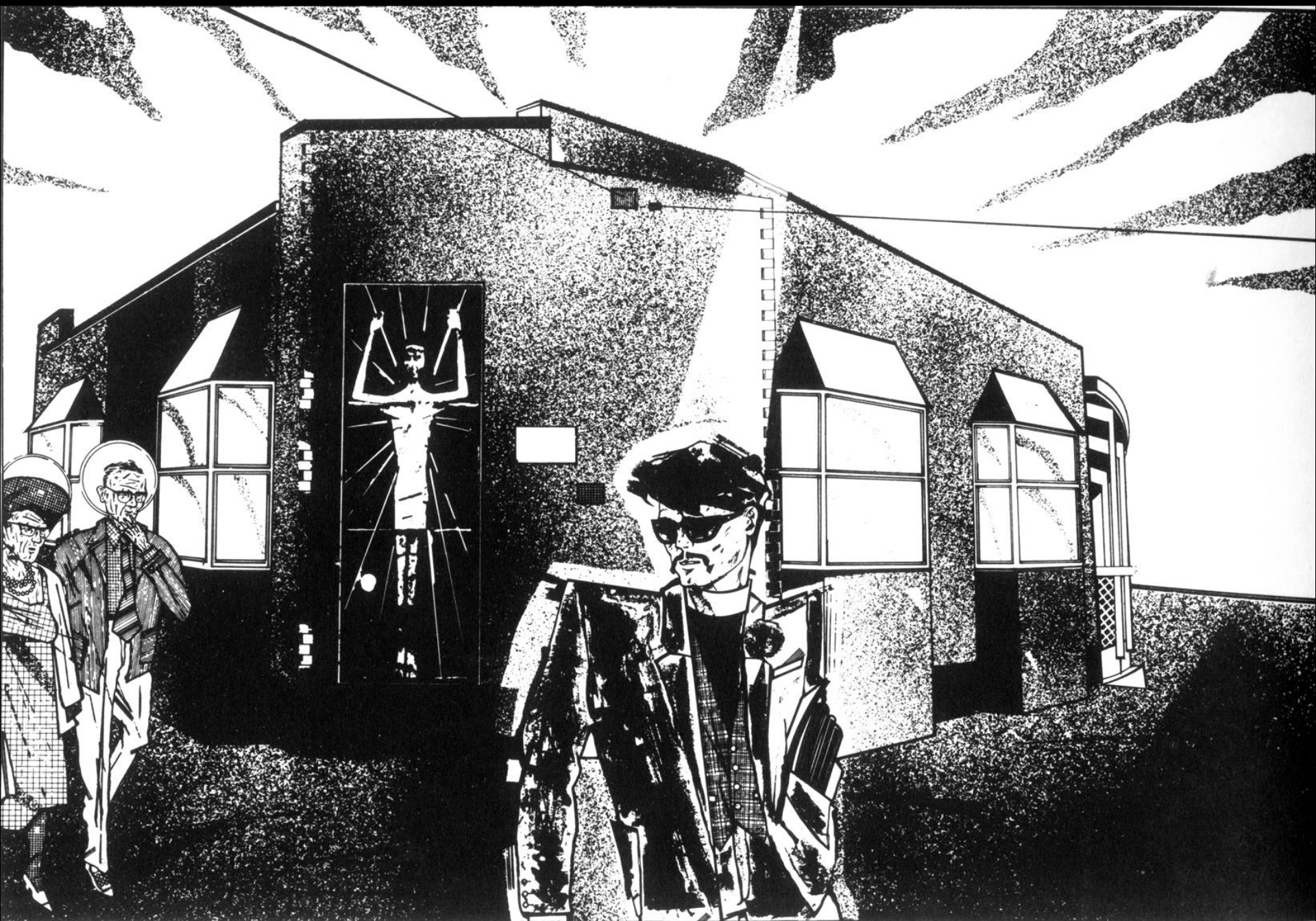
Edmond & Corrigan.

Exhibition. 1979



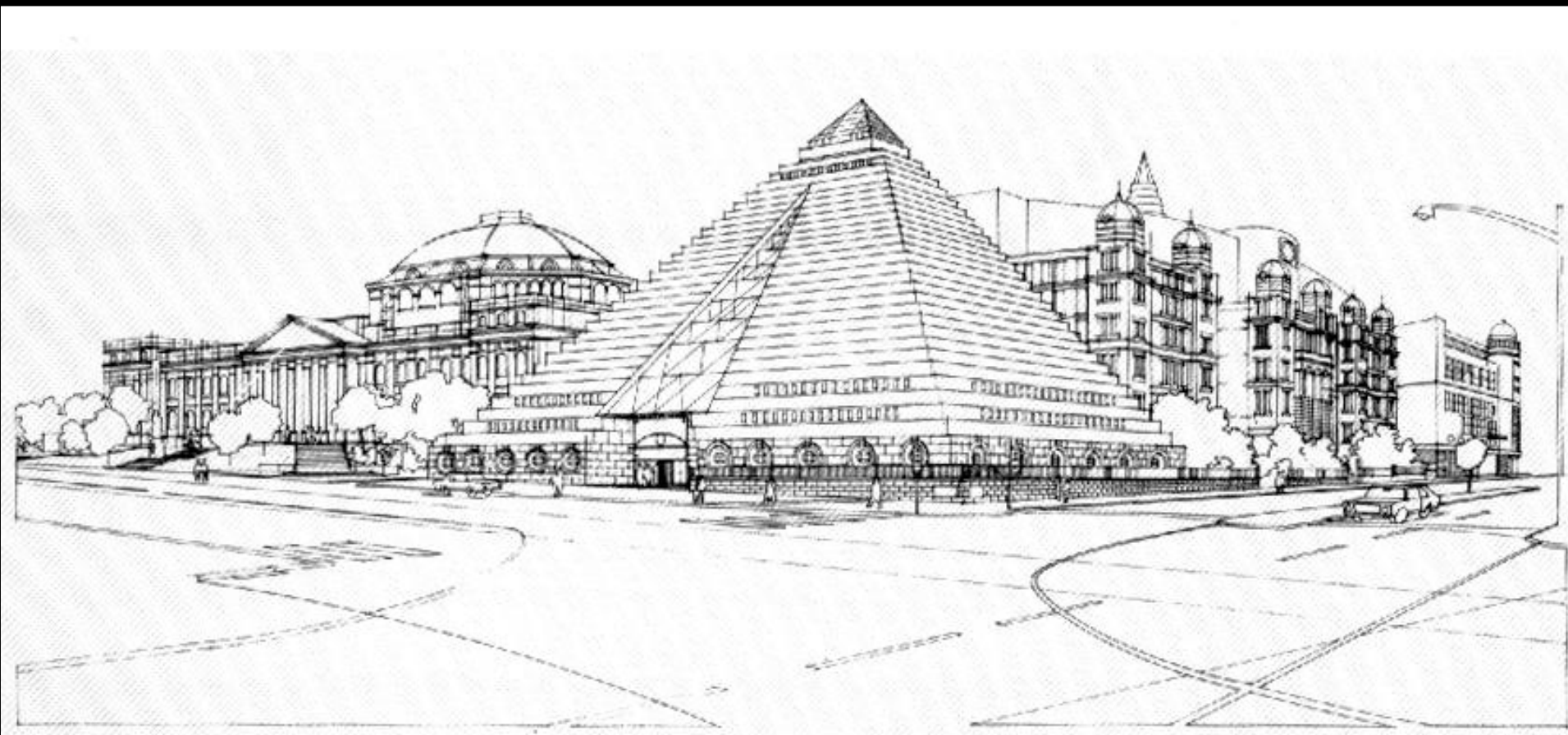
Kesborough Church of the Resurrection, 1976



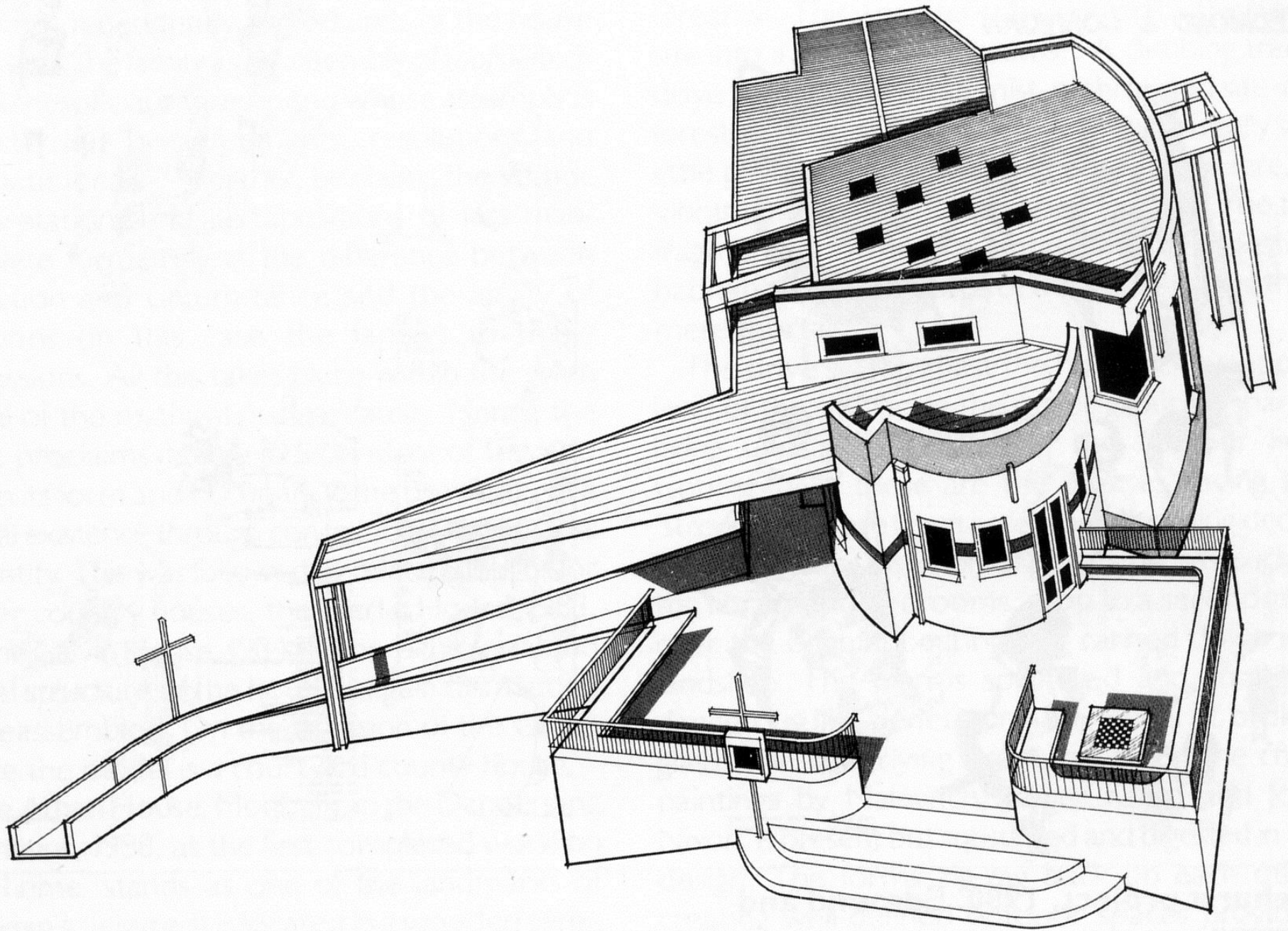




Stockman's Hall of Fame, 1980



State Library and Museum of Victoria scheme, 1985



Chapel of St Joseph, 1978

St Joseph's, Box Hill North



St Joseph's, Box Hill North





Figure 74 (see p. 65)

KPR, School, Stage 2: cloister, south end

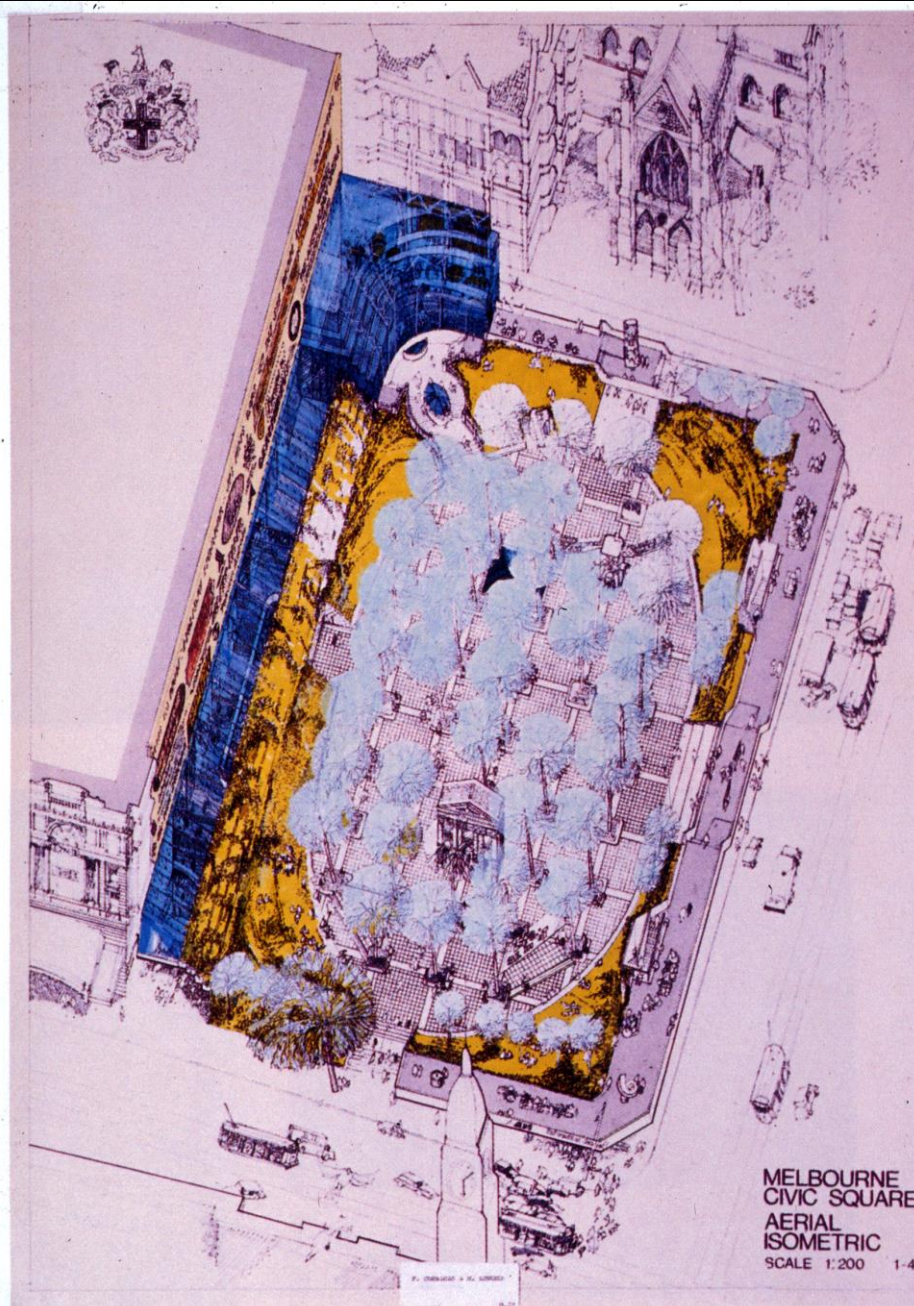
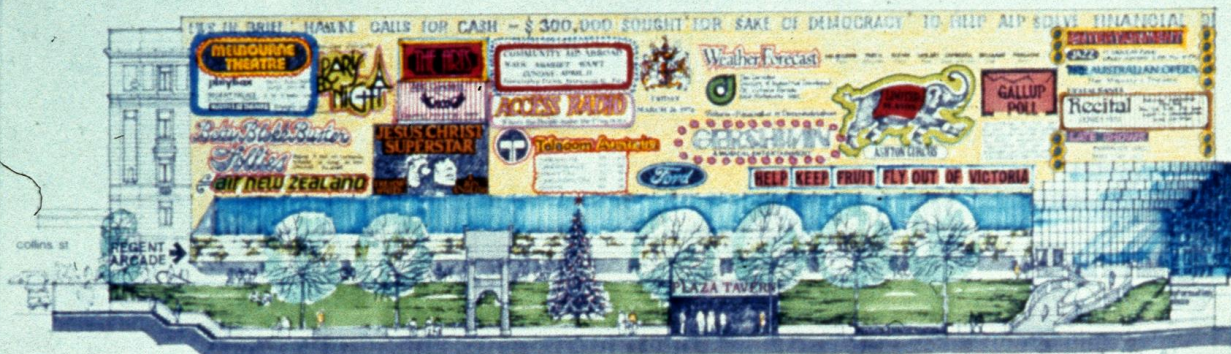
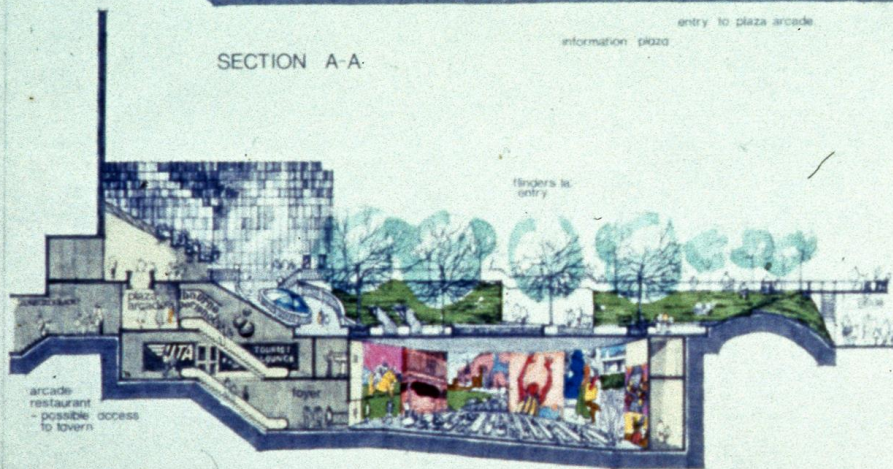


Figure 92 (see p. 78)

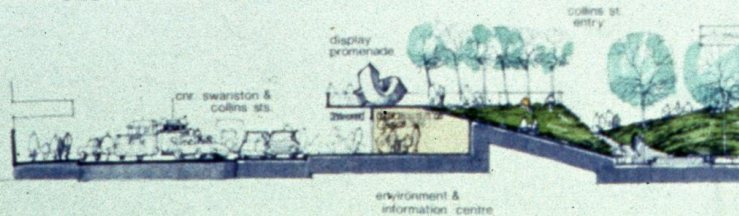
**Melbourne Civic Square competition: aerial
projection**



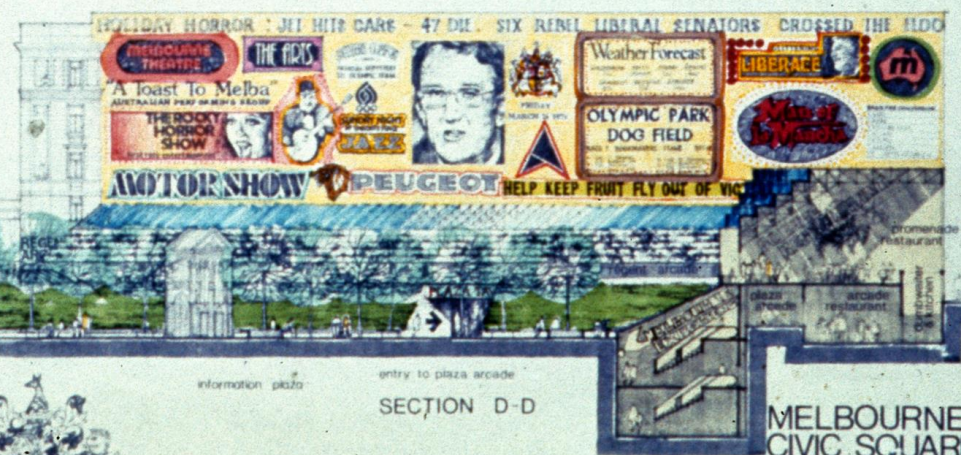
SECTION A-A



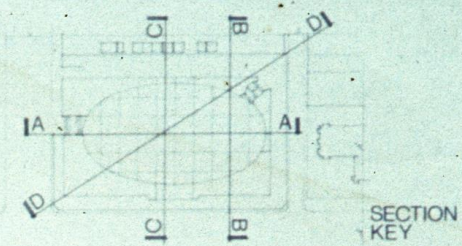
SECTION B-B



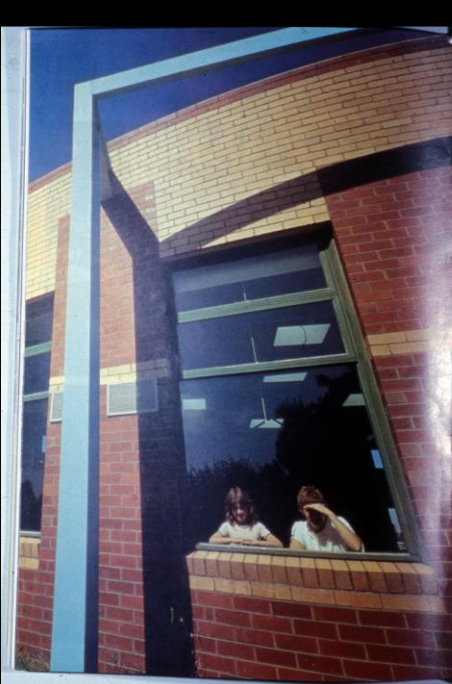
SECTION C-C



SECTION D-D



MELBOURNE CIVIC SQUARE



Facing page: St. Joseph's, Box Hill North

Jennifer Taylor

Jesuit Centre, Department of Architecture, The University of Sydney

Suburban passion

More passion in the suburbs

The church of St. Joseph is a small, strongly sensitive building in the Melbourne suburb of Box Hill North. It comes from the office of Edmund and Corrigan, principal designer Peter Corrigan, and was completed in 1975. Corrigan speaks of the building as being vulnerable and the word is appropriate. Vulnerable is an unusual adjective to apply to architecture but it provides the clue to the gentle and moving quality of this unassuming building. St. Joseph's warrants close attention as a successful work from a serious theorist.

Corrigan's counter establishment stand has generated a level of critical debate that was aroused by Richard Moulden's somewhat colourful "Passion in the Suburbs" article in the *Renascence* Church at Kewborough in 1977. In recent years his work has been given considerable coverage both in Australia and abroad. Despite this, Corrigan is not always understood. The intellectual content of the work suffers from overrepresentation, and his non-conforming ideas, and sometimes behaviour, have brought a level of notoriety that counters credibility. He is correctly known as a talented charlatan and a highly involved designer, but not always recognised as one of the most incisive and inventive minds in architecture in Australia today.

The theory

Corrigan's thesis is well known but stands repeating. He is seeking an identifiable, representative Australian architecture to be achieved within the limited economic scope accorded the average building. This he believes can be accomplished by respecting the everyday life patterns of the majority of the Australian people, those who live in the belts of suburbia, and by drawing on those inexpensive elements of their world for the imagery of architecture. Given his background at Yale under the tutelage of Robert Venturi, this attitude is not surprising. What is surprising is that he has been virtually alone in Australia in his adherence to this contention as the philosophical basis for design.

The influence on Corrigan from his North American experiences in the late sixties and early seventies is clear in his

concepts. In spirit the Box Hill church is closely related to Venturi's estimated early works, and evident are parallel means such as the dominating steel frame outline of the Benjamin Franklin House in Philadelphia. On the other hand, Corrigan's imagery about his architecture sets it apart from the sophisticated and often contrived essays of his American mentors. The complexity of his work does seem to arise from the intentional revolution of the relationships of the particular spaces rather than from artifice and contrivance for its own sake. The constructed works lack the ironic overtones that contribute to the American projects' appeal to the intellectual elite.

It is common parlance and practice today to aim for visual integration of new work by adapting motifs and materials derived from existing adjacent buildings. On evidence, this in no way guarantees success. Corrigan's work may seem to support this idea although this is not the kind of compatibility for which he is looking. He uses forms and textures that are familiar, while not necessarily local in origin, in the hope that this familiarity will make the users feel comfortable and "at home" in the new buildings. When applied to institutional buildings this is also debatable. It represents an aim for the smoothness of the awesome or exciting environments of the church, opera and movie house of other years. Nevertheless, it is the basis for the development of St. Joseph's church and Corrigan's complex of buildings at Kewborough. Yet the architecture of both is anything but commonplace. For all of Corrigan's sincerity, the buildings do not quite fit the polemic and are better because of it.

Kewborough is the more self-conscious and the far more clever solution. Here the bold forms and strong colours of the church group contrast with the uniform standard houses of the surrounding suburbia. The loosely structured complex of vigorous buildings provides contrast and stimulation rather than accord and harmony. Its success comes not from banality but from the freedom afforded by the drama and casual ad-hocism of the architecture.



Box Hill, Kewborough Church, Kewborough

The theory

Corrigan's thesis is well known but stands repeating. He is seeking an identifiable, unpretentious Australian architecture to be achieved within the limited economic scope accorded the average building. This he believes can be accomplished by respecting the everyday life patterns of the majority of the Australian people, those who live in the belts of suburbia, and by drawing on those inexpensive elements of their world for the imagery of architecture. Given his background at Yale under the tutorage of Robert Venturi, this attitude is not surprising. What is surprising is that he has been virtually alone in Australia in his adherence to this contention as the philosophical basis for design.

The influence on Corrigan from his North American experiences in the late sixties and early seventies is clear in his



Figure 163 (see p. 114)

Kay Street Housing: south-side units

The ACI Architecture Award 1983

Ministry of Housing, Victoria

1 Kay Street,
Carlton
Edmond and
Corigan

2 Nelson Road,
South Melbourne
Project architect,
Robert Pierce

3 Station Street,
Carlton
Peter Crone

4 Caroline Chisolm
Terrace, Keysborough
Edmond and
Corigan

5 St Georges
Road, North Fitzroy
Norman Day

6 Emerald Hill
rehabilitation
Project architects,
Adler and Engel





Belconnen Youth Centre, 1988



Figure 193 (see p. 122)
Dandenong TAFE wing,
1985-8: north-east exterior
and Stud Road entry
 (photograph: John Gollings)

Figure 195 (see p. 123)
Dandenong TAFE wing:
entry doors (photograph:
John Gollings)

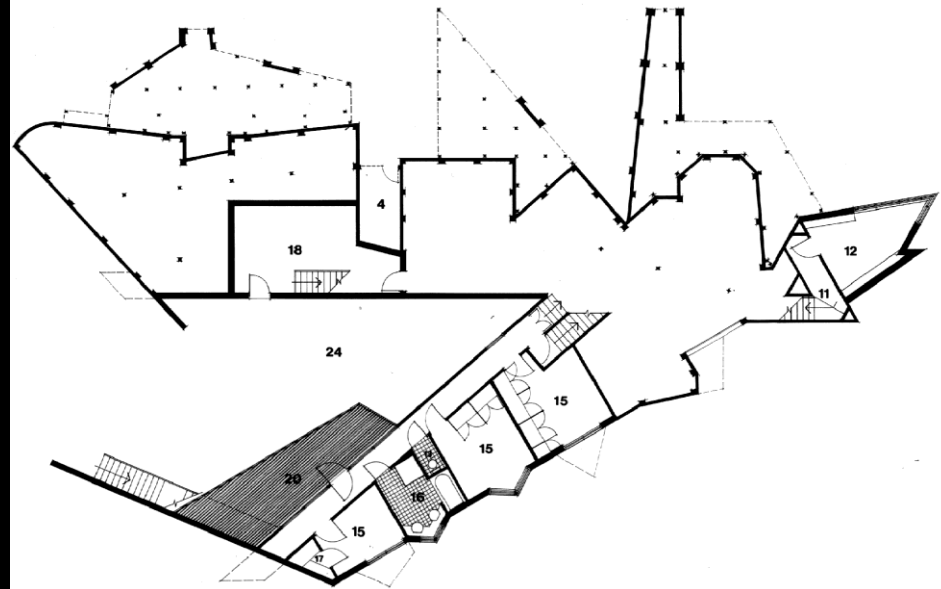
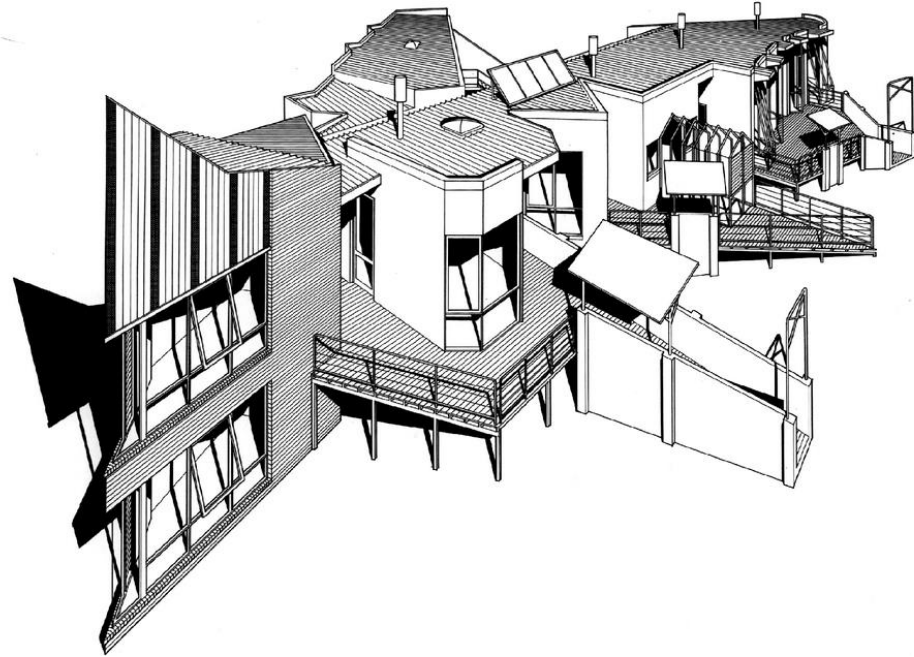


Figure 196 (see p. 123)
Dandenong TAFE wing: stair handrail in
Hair and Beauty section (photograph:
John Gollings)





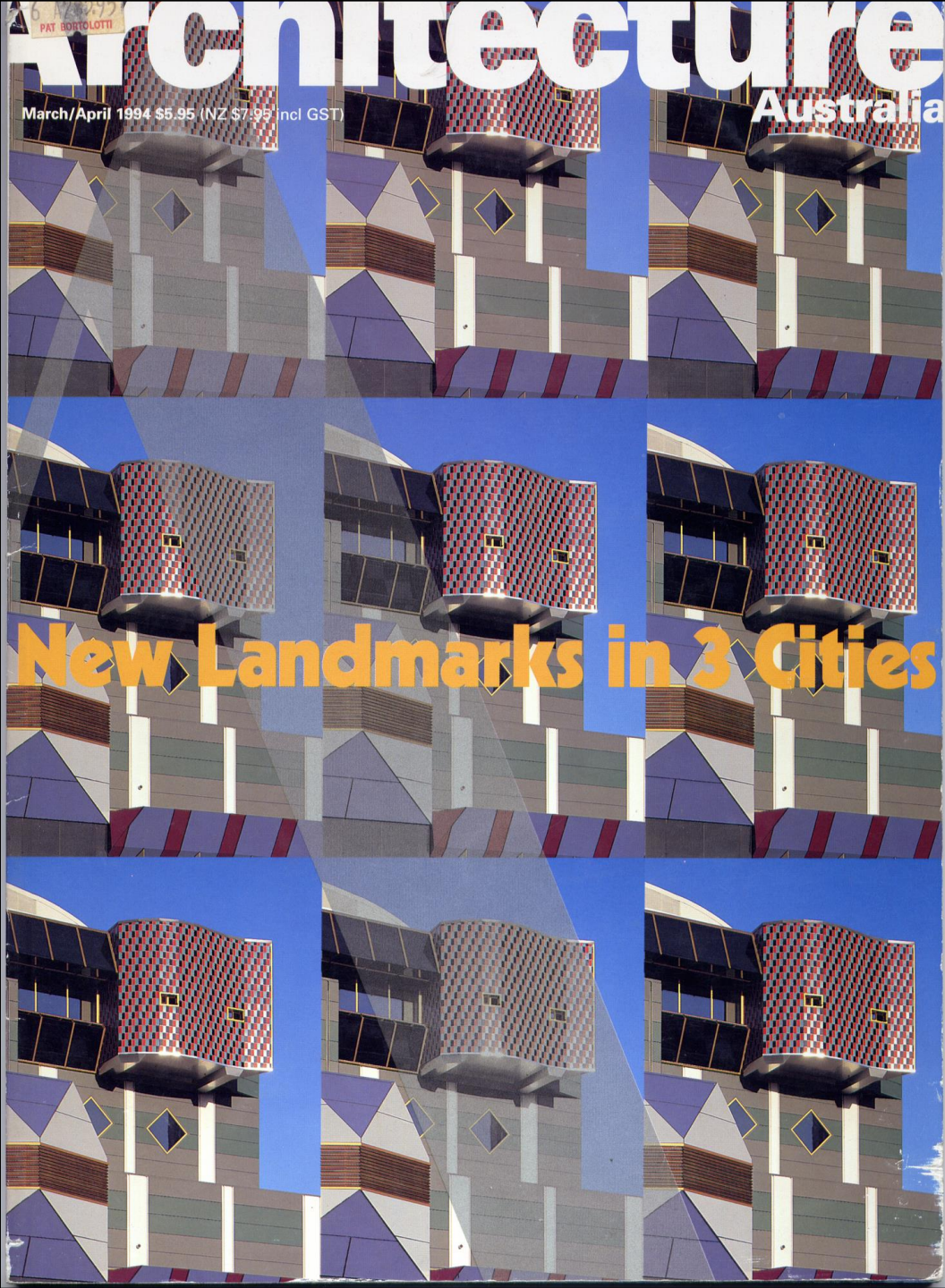
Edmond and Corrigan, *Athan House*, Monbulk, 1989. Photograph: Ian Davidson.



Athan House, Monbulk, 1988

RMIT Building 8, 1993





Architecture
Australia

March/April 1994 \$5.95 (NZ \$7.95 incl GST)

New Landmarks in 3 Cities

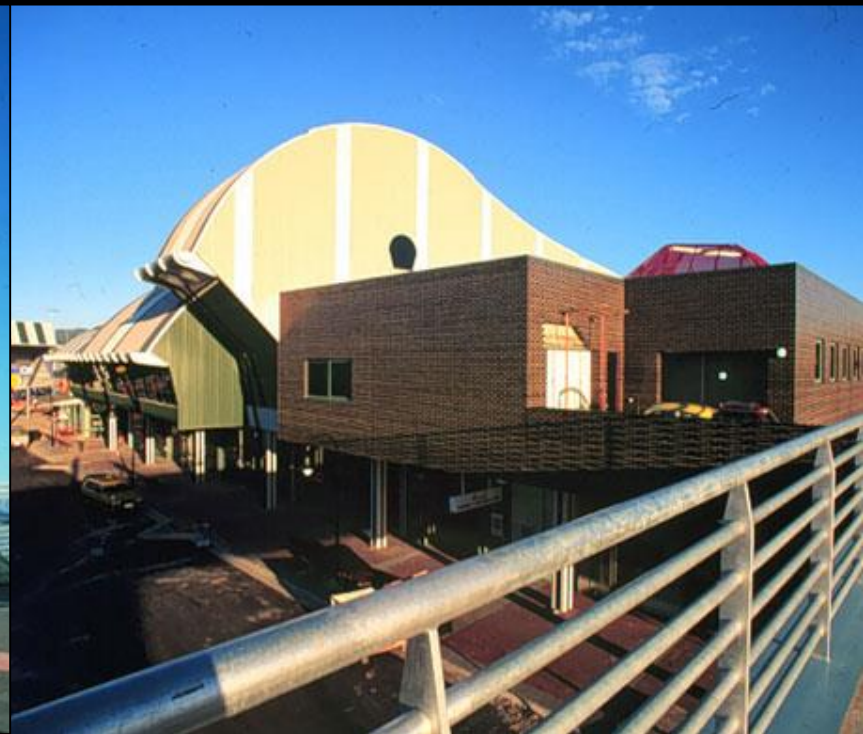


VCA School of Drama, 2002

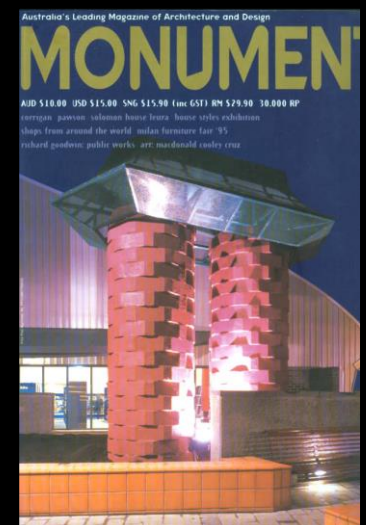


Niagara Galleries, 2000





Ringwood Library, 1995
Demolished 2014





LAS VEGAS STUDIO > IMAGES FROM THE ARCHIVES OF ROBERT VENTURI & DENISE SCOTT BROWN

THE VENTURIS AND I

Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown make no claim of my trade, which is the imaging and building of places invoked by human beings. Their work suggests to me a moral engagement, and I note here how the utilitarian of the profession has been questioned by Scott Brown's populist agenda. Some years ago, I read excerpts from Robert Venturi's *Complexity and Contradiction*. The originality of the ideas blew me away and I wrote a glowing letter to the author (which with youthful enthusiasm some weeks later I received an inscribed copy of the book which, "treasures for the time" it had it was later to be stolen by a fellow student from California). The cover of the book was particularly exciting. It was a drawing of a modern public building by Robert Venturi with a starting front elevation, which showed the American flag hanging horizontally (that would be the front entry). This simple gesture struck me as daring in its celebration of identity, but after my first week in New Haven, it quickly became apparent to me that this horizontal flag business was perfectly normal in the US of A.

For at least two decades a comparable confusion swirled around this text, because the solemn grandeur of late modernism was being threatened by such life-affirming ideas as "main street is almost right" and the "decorated shed" is preferable to the building as a sign. Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown reaffirmed the progress of history and made an act of faith in the culture around them. The Venturis looked at the mundane real world of the USA and politely proposed that architecture might be more than the model and lecture of beauty. It should engage with experience. The Venturis suggested that a way forward might harmonise reason and imagination, that an empirical truth could offer a creative promise. Mine was a fraught relationship with them at Yale, their Las Vegas studio seemed too structured and too far from the mother ship. I considered *Complexity and Contradiction* as the more vital and important work, while still a student. I wrote a long article for *Architecture Australia*, which made some short, decent, S. Kilde's judgements, which I regretted a bit too late. At least I wrote a glowing apology when I saw the error of my ways and this was graciously accepted.

During a later time spent in Boston I found the atmosphere in the Graduate School of Design at Harvard a little more congenial upstairs in the Landscape Department (first established by Charles Corbett in the nineteenth century). Here I met a charming Frank Gehry who showed me great generosity. On my return flight home I stopped off to attend a party at his home in Santa Monica, California. Swept up by the glamour of L.A., I purchased a copy of *Learning from Las Vegas* at the local bookshop and a sophisticated drinker offered it to Harry Cobb (my patient Dean at Harvard), Peter Eisenman (a fellow and excellent Harvard staff member with whom I shared an office) and Robert Venturi (who by now was truly tired of me but he politely signed along with the others).

LAS VEGAS STUDIO > IMAGES FROM THE ARCHIVES OF ROBERT VENTURI & DENISE SCOTT BROWN

At the time I distinctly remember I considered asking Charles Jencks and then deciding not to bother with his signature as he was merely an ambitious English historian; a toadstool amongst these gorgeous flowers of architects. Frank Gehry's Pomona wife was far more impressive. When I received the RIBA Gold Medal in 2004 I received, to my surprise, a lovely cryptic letter from the Venturis. I treasured it but, as they say, the dog ate it and it disappeared. Some months later I found myself writing yet another apologetic, wedding, shamefaced letter to the Venturis. In my mind's eye I could plainly see the patient, weary look on Robert's face and the pinching at the corners of Denise's mouth. But they were steady as ever and I promptly received a replacement copy.

The Venturis raised the possibility of a "speaking" architecture, an architecture of identity, alive to a vernacular, which could bring new life to the contemporary city. They proposed an architecture of symbols that could offer a deeper level of meaning beyond the spatial and the visual. Here the medium was not the message, in an article that ran under the title: "My architecture attempts to celebrate the Australian-ness of our lives". In the Australian edition of *Vogue Living* (October, 1984), Betsy Brennan interviewed me regarding my time in the USA.

"One of the reasons I went to Yale was because Robert Venturi was teaching there. I thought his ideas represented a sense of a national vision, rather than the universal truths that are constantly being sought in architecture. A more modest basis from which to work; we are Americans why don't we use the stuff we've got rather than looking to Europe or history books. That appealed to me – the possibility of an art coming out of a community. But, also, I could get Australia into sharper perspective from there. A lot of the things architects tend to despise began to interest me, not so much because of their intrinsic worth but because they had some cultural cogency. Cream bricks, timber windows, red tiles – not just these obvious bits of technology but the type of mentality behind them particularly in suburbia. Liking or not liking it didn't seem to be the issue. These points of taste began to annoy me, as they did Venturi. When you can put things together that don't immediately appeal or fall within a cream-to-white colour scheme, there's potential energy to be had."

Most significantly, the Venturis made their own projects. Robert's light wit, as well as the body of work, clearly indicated in his remarkable house for his mother, Vanna Venturi. We can examine the work and, looking at it, we find out who they are. Metaphoric architects should take note. With the Venturis examination of a new typology we start to confront the end of the old. Enlightenment model of a "top down" architecture. We hear the roar of sand through the Post-modern hourglass.

Peter Corrigan

The Venturis raised the possibility of a "speaking" architecture, an architecture of identity, alive to a vernacular, which could bring new life to the contemporary city. They proposed an architecture of symbols that could offer a deeper level of meaning beyond the spatial and the visual. Here the medium was not the message. In an article that ran under the title: "My architecture attempts to celebrate the Australian-ness of our lives", in the Australian edition of *Vogue Living* (October, 1984), Betsy Brennan interviewed me regarding my time in the USA.

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