

La Serenissima

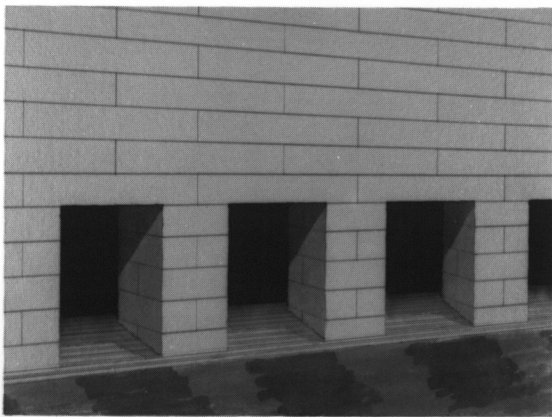
dedicated to the memory of my grandfather, T.R. Harrell

Robert A. Bristol, Jr

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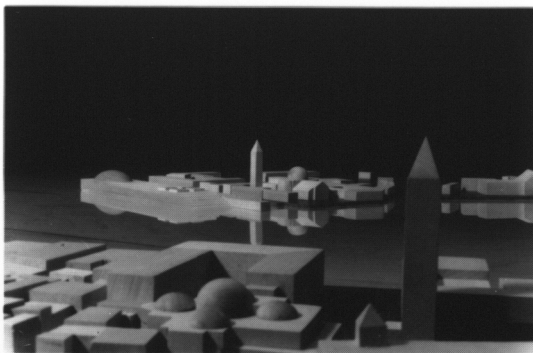
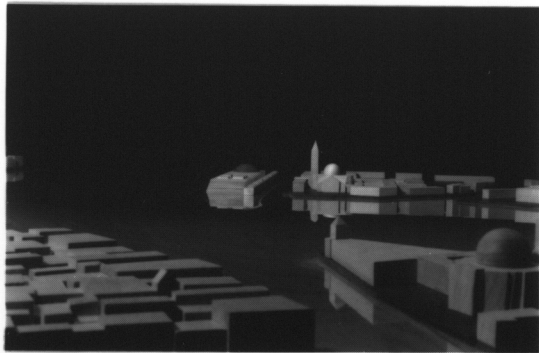
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Architecture is the frame, the stage, the backdrop for the events of life. It nurtures, it anchors, it inspires, it pushes. Its fundamental role in 20th-century society is one of ennobling a frustrated, pragmatic mankind. To this end, architecture should express dignity, will,

decency, power, serenity. True architecture embodies a feeling of timelessness. It relentlessly records the time of day, the weather of the seasons, the calamities of the ages. It is ruthless in its persistence; it reminds us each of our own impermanence.



I am proposing the construction of a monumentally-scaled building nested in the waters of Venice's Bacino San Marco adjacent to the island of San Giorgio Maggiore. Programatically, the building contains a theater, exhibition space, cafes, and a hotel/administration block. Typologically, it is a piazza. By way of an appropriate introduction, I can offer a brief discussion of the building in terms of its character and its contributions.

In character, the building is an argument for monumentality, for permanence, for timelessness. With its monolithic stone walls, its colossal stair, its massive steel beams, its expansive floor, and its abundance of pilings, the building is an exercise in redundancy. These redundancies provide resistance to all that is light, transparent, fleeting, and miserly in twentieth-century culture. Such is the nature of monuments: the very devaluing of the

material and the effort provides immeasurable human value. The building's configuration consists of an armature, a connection, and an appended body containing autonomous objects. This relationship embodies a certain aloofness, a detachment, which allows for the deposit, removal, redeposit and accretion of future layers of history. The building's aspect is that of a long, low, rectilinear object, tapered at one end, abrupt at the other. It shortens and lengthens with the surges of the tides. This suggests a rootedness to something permanent: the earth itself below the surface of the water. The building's fabric, precisely cut stones with dry joints, records time as weather burnishes its edges. Resisting tides, marking time, the building persists in the face of change.

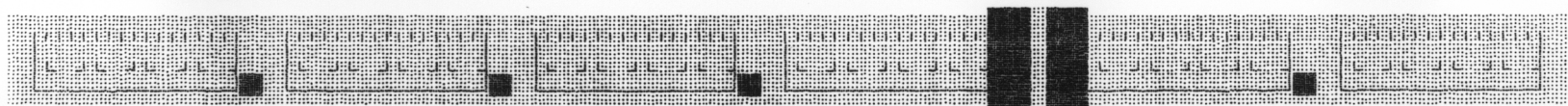
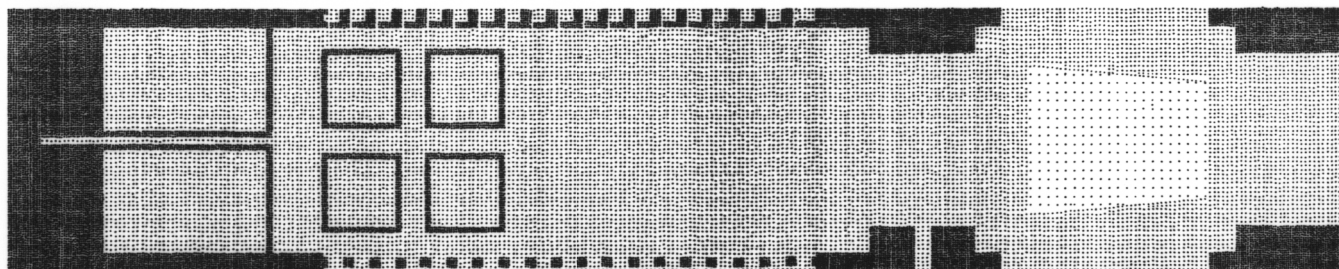
Beyond its immediate programmatic functions, the building contributes an adaptable frame-

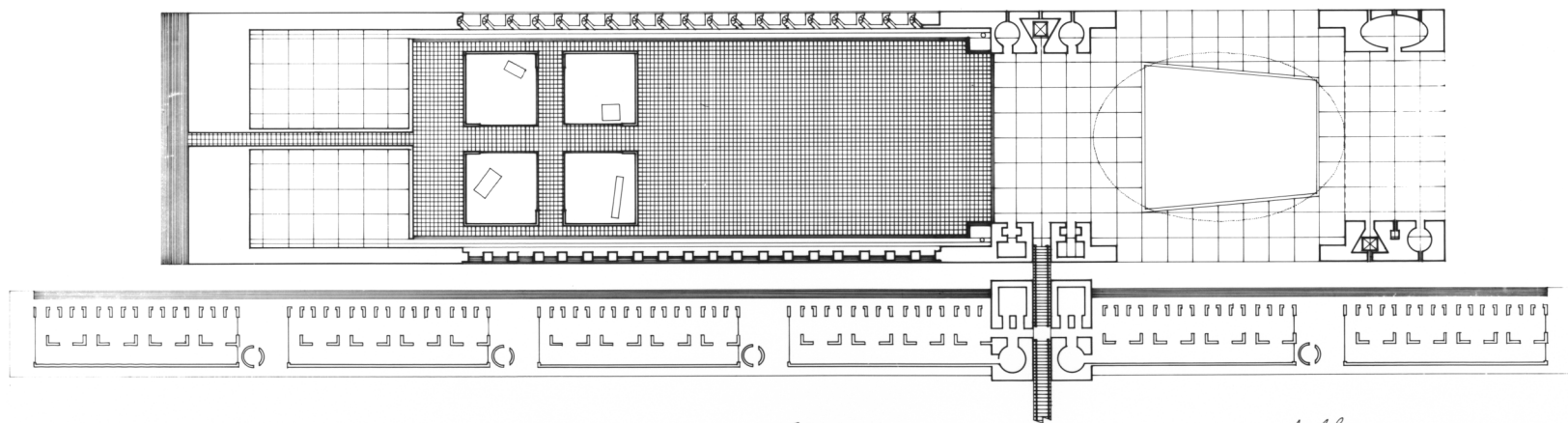
work for activity which will change over time. In its similarities, by its contradictions, the building helps expose and strengthen the character of Venice. The building breathes new life into the forgotten gardens of the Cini Foundation. It creates a destination and a boundary of activity to the drawing room that is the Bacino San Marco. It provides both a retreat from the density of Venice, and a platform from which to view the spectacle. It marks our era, our culture, and what we have lost. And it marks our effort, it marks our will.

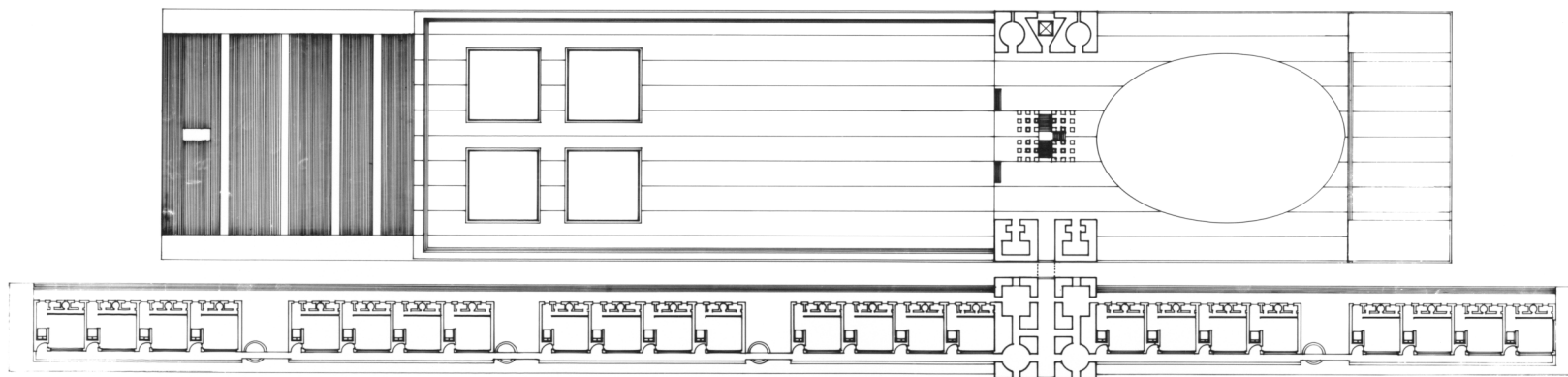
Through history, sailors referred to Venice as "La Serenissima." Literally translated as "the most serene," the word expresses more than "calm peacefulness." It bears connotations of magisterial grandeur, quiet self assurance, generosity, wisdom, grace, dignity. This quality is my hope for architecture.

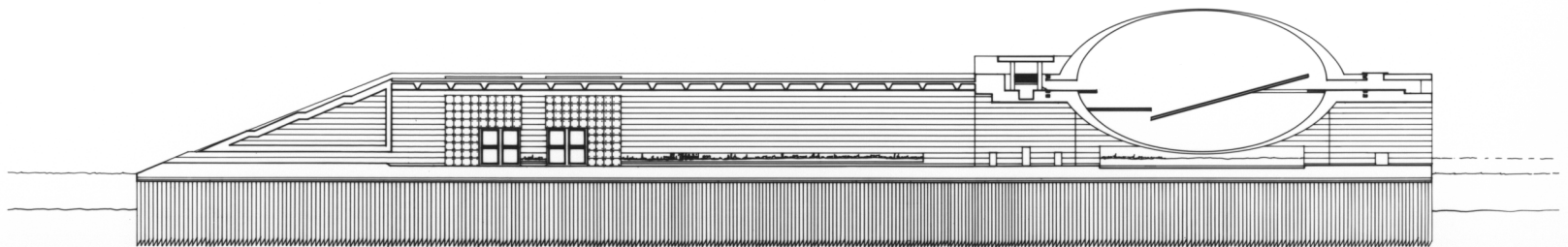


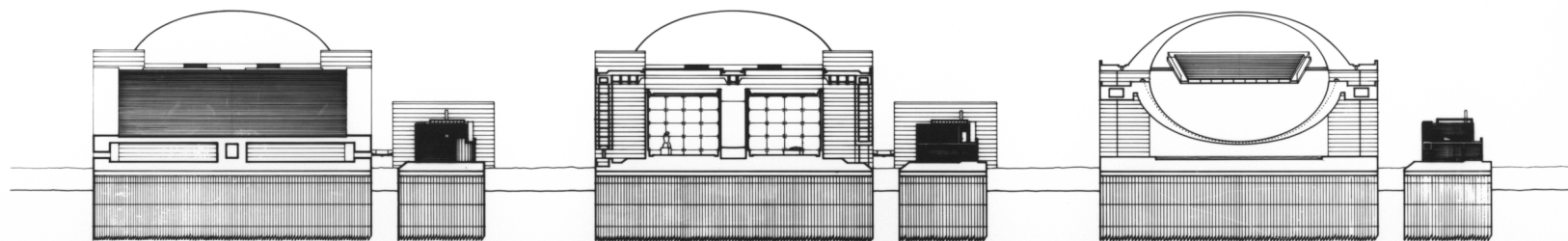
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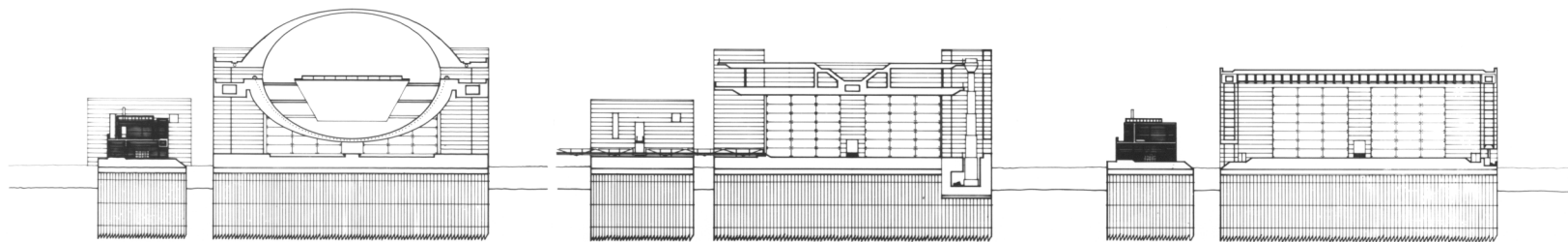


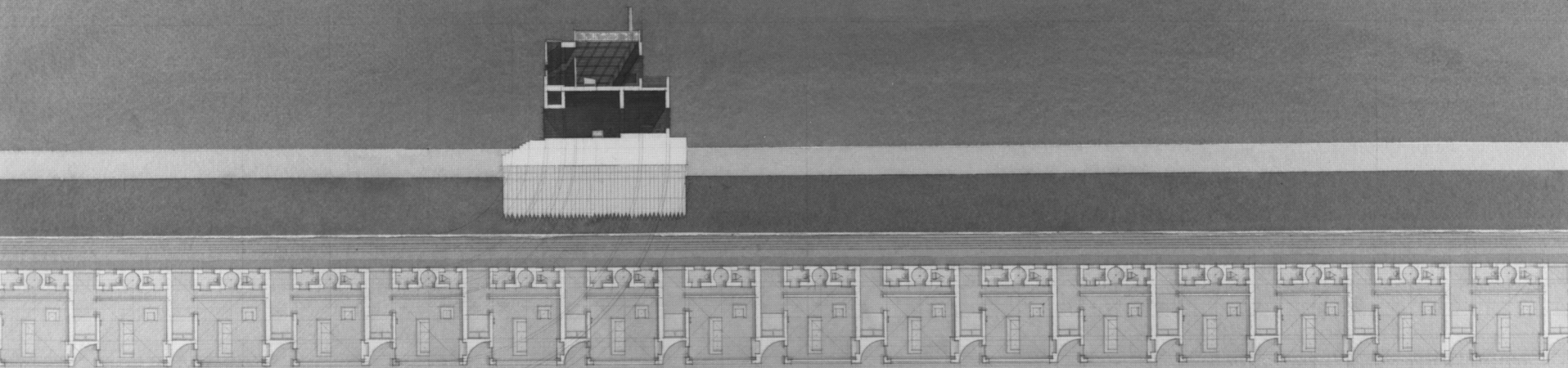




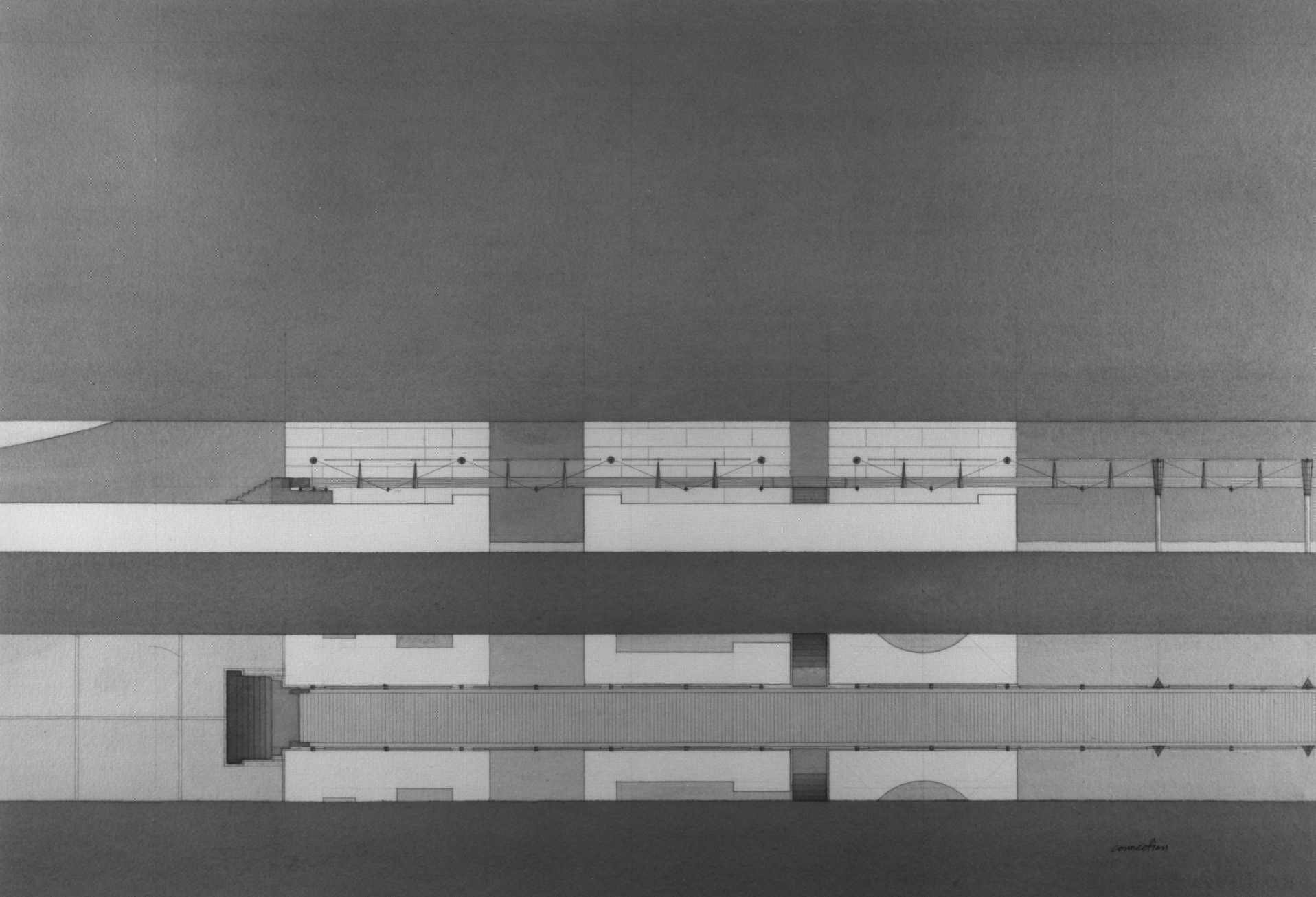




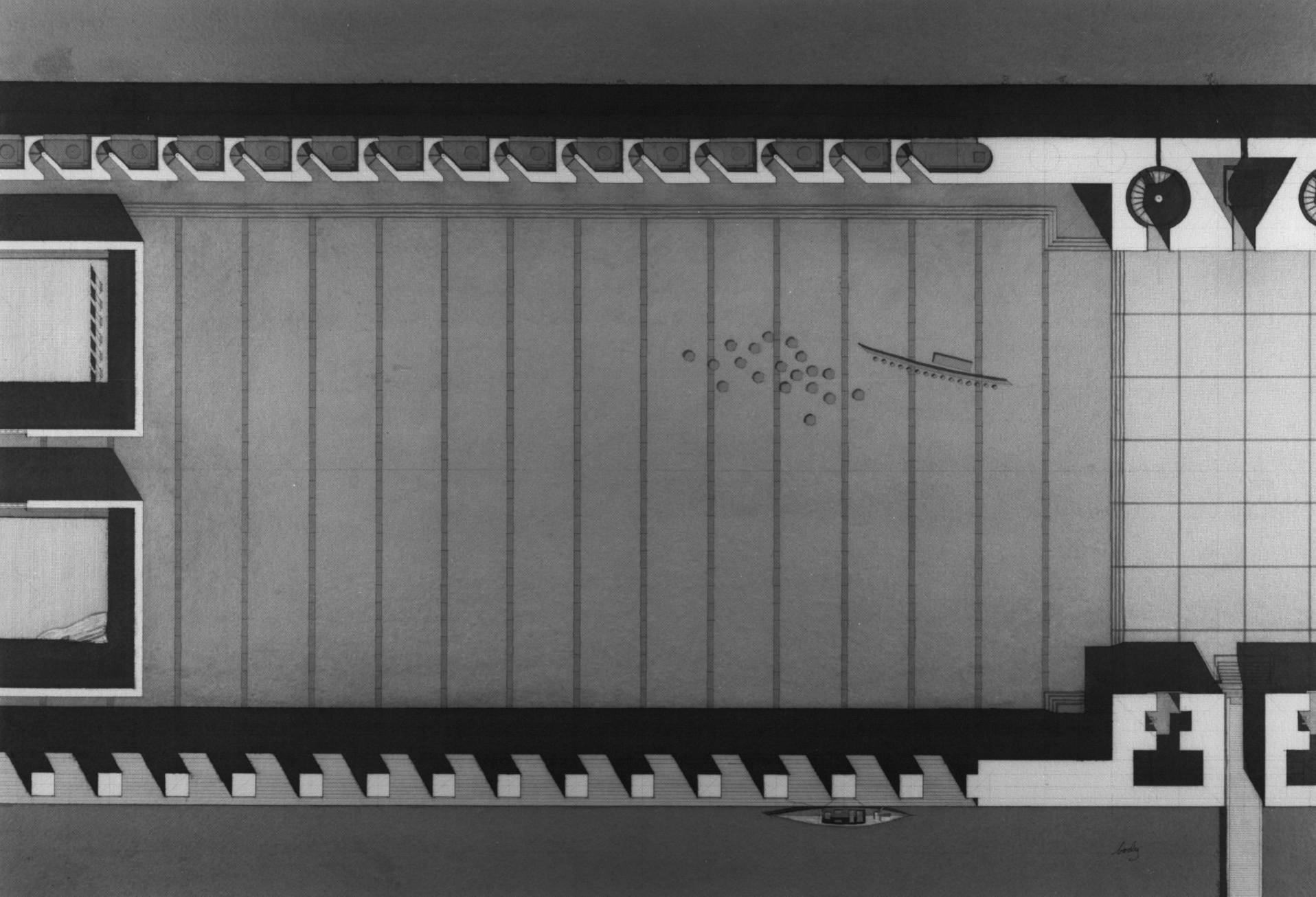


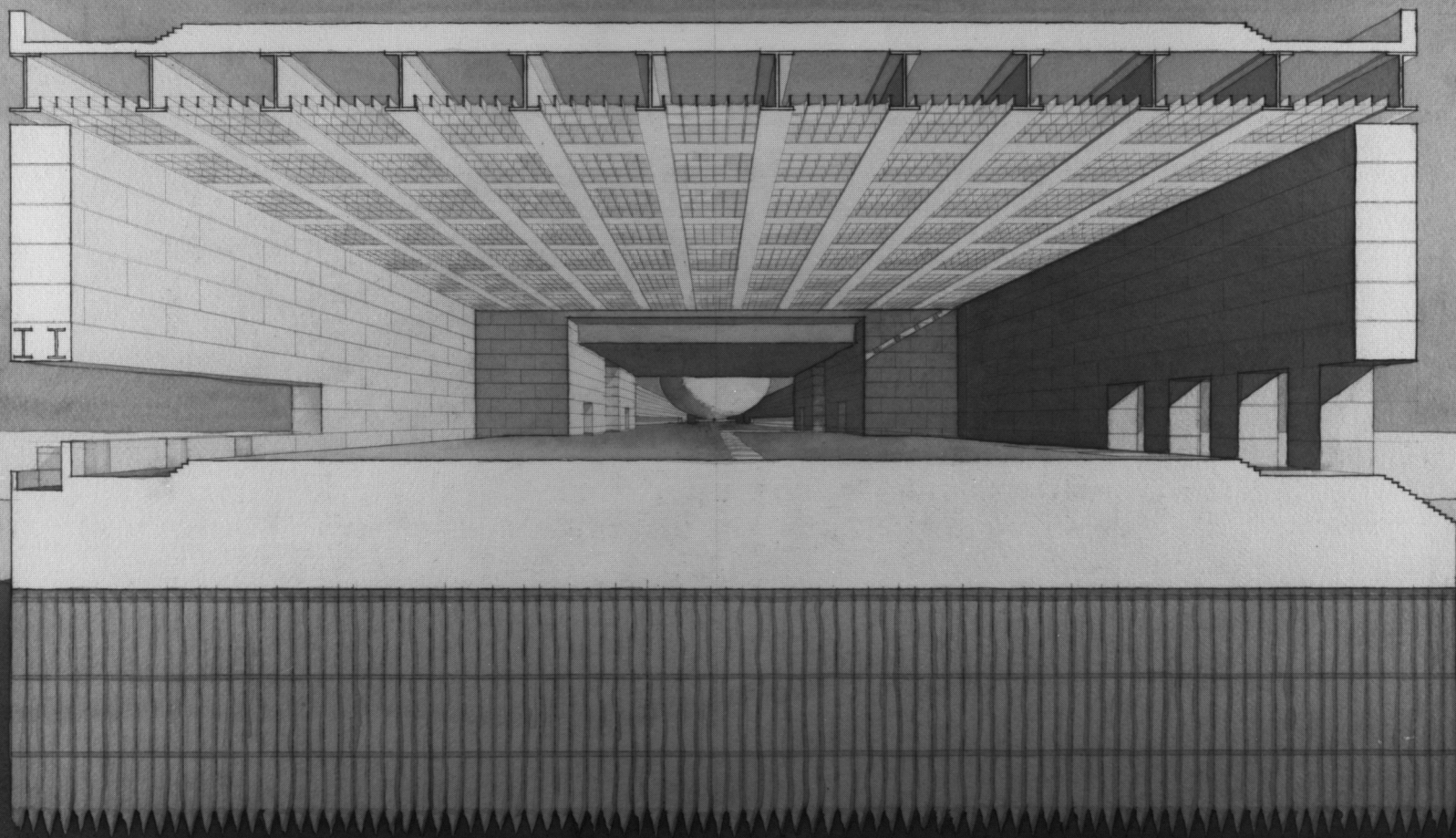


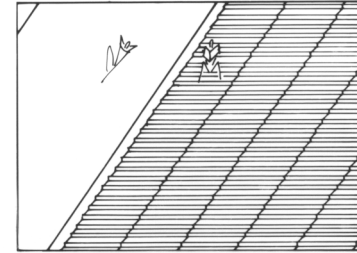
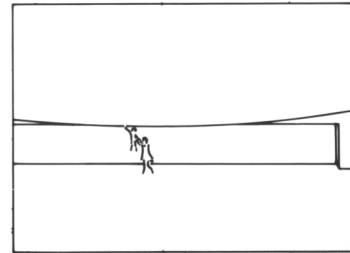
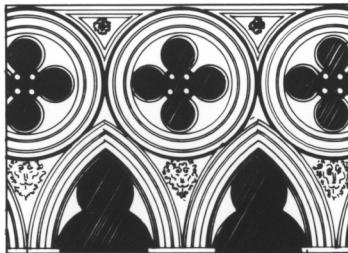
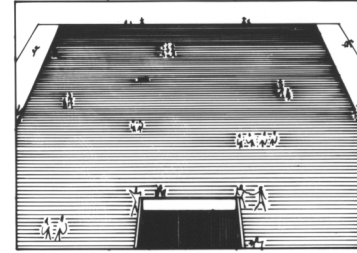
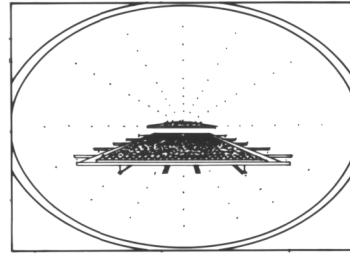
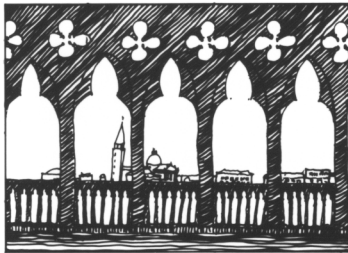
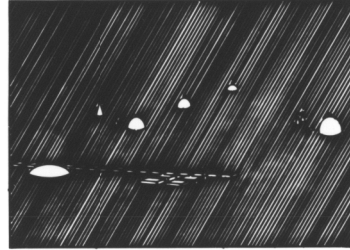
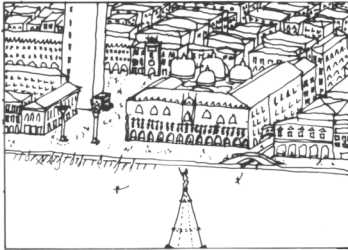
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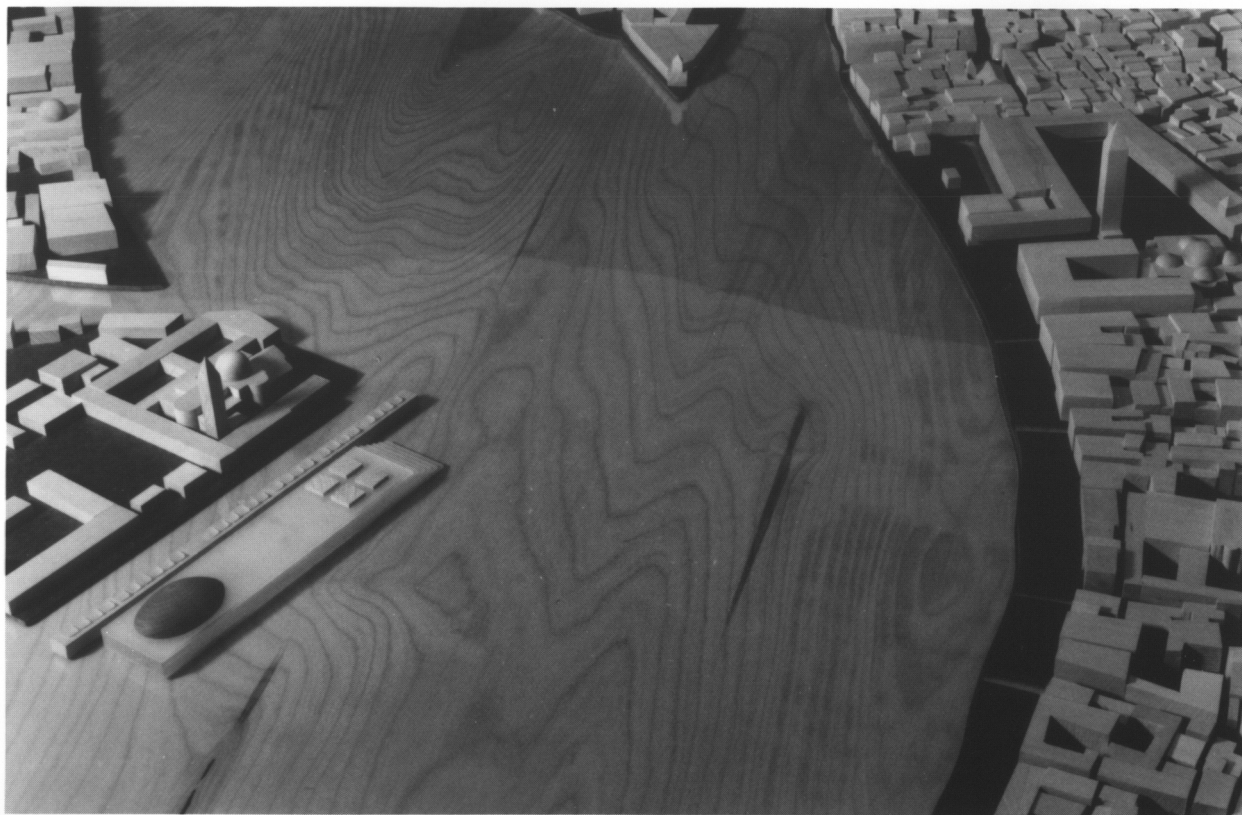
connection







scale



Vita	Robert A. Bristow, Jr. Born January 17, 1962. Richmond, Virginia.
Education	Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. M. Arch., 1995. University of Virginia. Graduate Study in Architectural History, 1991. University of Virginia. B. A., English Literature and Composition, 1984. Woodberry Forest School. Diploma, 1980.
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Experience	Paul Rudolph, Architect: June 1994-August 1995. Aldo Rossi, Studio di Architettura (New York), Free-lance. Tram Construction. Aspen Cabinet and Millwork. Redbrook Lumber and Cabinetry.

Thesis submitted to the faculty of Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Architecture

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