

Architecture: As a Matter of Fact

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Thesis submitted to the Graduate 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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Dedicado
a la memoria de mis abuelos

por todo lo que nos dieron
con su ejemplo

Chuchu´

*When I examine myself and my methods of thought
I come to the conclusion that the gift of fantasy has
meant more to me than my talent for absorbing
positive knowledge.*

Albert Einstein

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Architecture: As a Matter of Fact

Opening Remarks

It is the creative event for which this thesis speaks. In it the constant and overlapping contradictions and ambiguities that comprise this human event are not given neat analytical explanations. There are no rational explanations to the creative act. This does not imply that there is no rational, logical, even methodical train of thought to and the dealing with that process. Yet we soon realize that the thought or idea (popularly known as "concept" in some circles), singular or plural, is not enough. An idea not externalized beyond oneself is only potential, not fact. Only when made does it become fact. Potentials are understood by one's intentions and intentions are strictly a human interactive phenomenon. They are internal standards.

But there are standards with universal value that allow the thing made to be evaluated, internally and to other things. Those standards are based on the sensual qualities of that made. We create those qualities in the process of translating ideas to form (into a medium outside oneself).

The intense beauty in the process of making is that it demands of you the romantic, the pragmatist, the philosopher and the artist to engage one another continuously. The dialogs created become harmonies in the music. The measure of its value being the joy it brings to one's ears when played.

It is the understanding of that music:
How it is written and played that we consider.

Philosophy

We do not build philosophy. We build things as fact. They are sensual. Those qualities are created and made from ones perception. That perception is rooted in what one believes: ones philosophy. Philosophy becomes the collection of positions on countless issues; fact and faith, tangible and intangible which we attempt to weave together as the fabric we drape ourselves with as our existence. Tangible samples of that fabric we create thru our talents and skills by what we make.

The thing made is then representative of ones philosophy; but it is the sole measure of ones talents and skills. Those three aspects are fundamental to the creative event. They provide for infinite variations by their mix. Ones philosophy is not solely proved or disproved by what is made. It is ones skill and talent that are measured by what is made. Weak philosophical positions can still form the foundations to the making of beautiful objects. Military hardware is proof to that fact.

But the awesome power of ones philosophy is its entrenchment in all aspects of ones being. From that perspective the significance of what one believes can not be overstated. It is the glasses thru which one sees.

The Measure of Things

Things that man makes can be grouped into two catagories. The first being those having a value when made, by their Presence alone, not born out of functional needs but rather out of their sensual and emotional dimensions. They provide for mans psycological self expression. The second group are those things which are born out of a need or created to meet a specific task. They have a functional goal. The second also has the sensual and emotional dimensions along with the functional demands.

When one evaluates an object in this second group its functional performance must be considered. Those two aspects of the second group (the functional and the sensual) are not dependent on one another. You can have something sensually unattractive that performs its function well. Conversely it is possible to have a beautiful object that does not perform well at all. Countless examples of both cases are possible. An objects failure in one aspect should not exclude it from being appreciated in the other.

In architecture, the measure of how well things function is of greater difficulty since many of the needs fulfilled by architecture are representational and the functional component then becomes more of how it works rather than does it work. The functional requirements of a ring are not as significant as those of an airplane. What the ring looks like is only restricted by the hand and finger. While the beautifully shaped airplane that can not maintain itself airborne is of great concern to those who fly. cont.

Things made by man with functional motives are more illusive. It is the presence when experienced that determines its value. Presence is strictly a positive measure, it has no negative dimension. The Ford Pinto by virtue of it being functionally bad and extremely ugly has a presence that approaches zero.

It is how and when the thing experienced touches you, in an intangible manner, that its Presence is revealed. This is of all things be it music, the arts, literature, architecture or nature. The touch is by its Presence.

Architecture

Architecture is art and has its seeds in the creative dimension that is irrational, illogical and intuitive. But it is more, for architecture has real requirements to meet. Those requirements are both quantifiable and representational. In that respect architecture is a much closer measure of a cultures values and aspirations than other art forms

It has been said that architecture is fifty years behind the art of painting. If that is considered a fair statement then there is much to be concerned about. It would be reasonable to state that painting has disengaged from its cultural base, becoming ever more esoteric to a smaller and smaller group, often times to the painter and his intimate peers. If that is the future of architecture then the camps will become more clearly defined.

Those that practice the "art" of architecture and those involved in the "profession" of architecture. Both equally narrow towards their obligation to the act of making. The "art" will become the trivial, with only the house, for those that desire purchased status. It will be filled with neat things. ... While the "profession" will continue to litter our urban environment with containers for peoples and little more. It would seem of rising concern that our schools are teaming with house, the single unit and the series. Not as objects that speak of its social grouping or of its relation to the individual, but as simplistic geometrical relationships within themselves.

As we continue to re-invent the wheel.

Industrial Design: A Parallel

Enduring architecture is always from the standards of the contemporary period it was created. The parallel with industrial design will bring to bear the idea that things with lasting value are still a product of its contemporary period. Reviewing the "classic" automobiles of the 1940's (those that have endured) one sees that they reflect the aesthetic values and sophistication of their era. They are still of great beauty and value today. These enduring designs were often fine examples of the technical know-how and understanding of their day, yet that is not a requirement to its lasting beauty. cont.

It would be safe to say that their beauty is not based on the contemporary standards of today, aesthetics or technical, but rather on the recognition of their value as objects with lasting Presence. A Presence that has endured the passing of time. Their presence has proved universal but still from their time.

No one believes (and those that do are wrong) that the thing to do is build yesterdays automobiles with todays technology and aesthetic sophistication and that alone will produce objects with lasting value. The same is true of the architecture we build. To assume that we will automatically create things of value by imitation of past forms is absurd from any perspective, regardless how "fresh" the interpretation. Not to mention that the culture we live in today has no spiri-tual link with those styles most imitated.

The weakness in the parrallel beteween architecture and industrial design is the symbolic oblications that structures lasting hundreds of years have to its culture. The symbolism associated with the religious experience (and the understanding of that) will not and should not produce a gothic style church in the twentieth century. It will allow a Ronchamp to be created.

Process

The creative act is not an intellectual exercize alone. Rather, the sensual translation of ideas and positions which one has formulated. The process of both formulating and translating those concepts into form is not a sequential path. The sequence in more from the undefined to the defined rather than the large to the small or vise-versa.

The process then allows for the testing of ones positions by measuring their consequences when represented as form and space.

Speculation

The positions one arrives at in the process of making are based on specu-lation of ones vision of the idea. It is its Presence which one speculates on. It is reasonable to state that the more one engages in the creative act (in any discipline) the more accurately ones speculation of what he has envisioned will be.

Style

Work with lasting value is still marked by the style of its time period. Style is not based on imitation of what was rather it is the individuals expression of what is today as a consequence of where it came from. The roots of ones expression of what is called style is ones philosophy, innate talents and acquired skills. Style is then revealed as ones manner of defining and translating con-cepts into their sensual expressions.

Translation

It is the translation of a thought into form that conveys ones perception, innate talent and skill of Making. The translation into form of ones intellectual position gives to the position a significance not present to it as thought alone, by the sensual properties inherent to the object. The dualism is between what exists in the mind and the thought presented or represented in the sensual object or the negative of that, space.

The intellectual framework of how the object came about will always fall victim to history. It is the translation as represented by the object (the thing made) that will speak of ones philosophy. And it is that which will endure.

The Sensual and The Intellect

Ones intellectual understanding surrounding an object is often times important to fully appreciate and evaluate the thing one experiences. As ones ignorance grows one becomes more dependent on the sensual dimension as the only measure to the value of an experience. That is one extreme. The danger at present is the other extreme. What comprises the intellectual framework to the work is increasingly esoteric to the point of needing a verbal explanation to complement the sensual experience. Without the explanation the work can (and should) only be judged by its sensual qualities.

The Chair and the Potter

The chair as an object has obligations to its physical composition thru its construction, materials and connections; all that is sensual to it. As an enduring object it must have a dialog among all that comprise it to produce a harmony greater than the mere collection of its parts. The music made by those harmonies is its Presence, which is more than simply a chair. But when the object is called a chair it also has specific functional requirements demanded of objects which interact with man. Those requirements are both quantifiable and representational. The value of the object now has a performance dimension as well as a sensual dimension. It is the dialog created by those two dimensions that give the object (chair) its endurance.

The objects Presence is not dependent on the intellectual framework surrounding its making. Yet knowledge of its making often acts as a filter for the evaluation of the sensual experience. The beauty of the flour vase is enhanced knowing it was turned by a master potter and his apprentice son on the turning wheel made by his father using clay prepared and set aside to cure by his grandfather in the home and shop built by his great grandfather.

Craftsmanship

Craftsmanship is the intimacy between the work and the individual. It is representative of one's skill and level of care revealed by the work, not merely the product of a technical process. Care is more than the relationship between the medium and the craftsman. It is to a large degree the measure of passion one has for one's work.

Presence

All man-made and natural objects have Presence. Spaces have Sense of Place which is the voids Presence revealed. The degree to which that is perceived is a measure of the significance of that object or space.

The values used in this determination eventually become a question of one's contemporary individual taste. Yet within this anarchy there are standards with lasting universal value. Those standards are what judges the contemporary with the passing of time. It is those standards that we search for and try to understand through our work: What is universal and enduring.

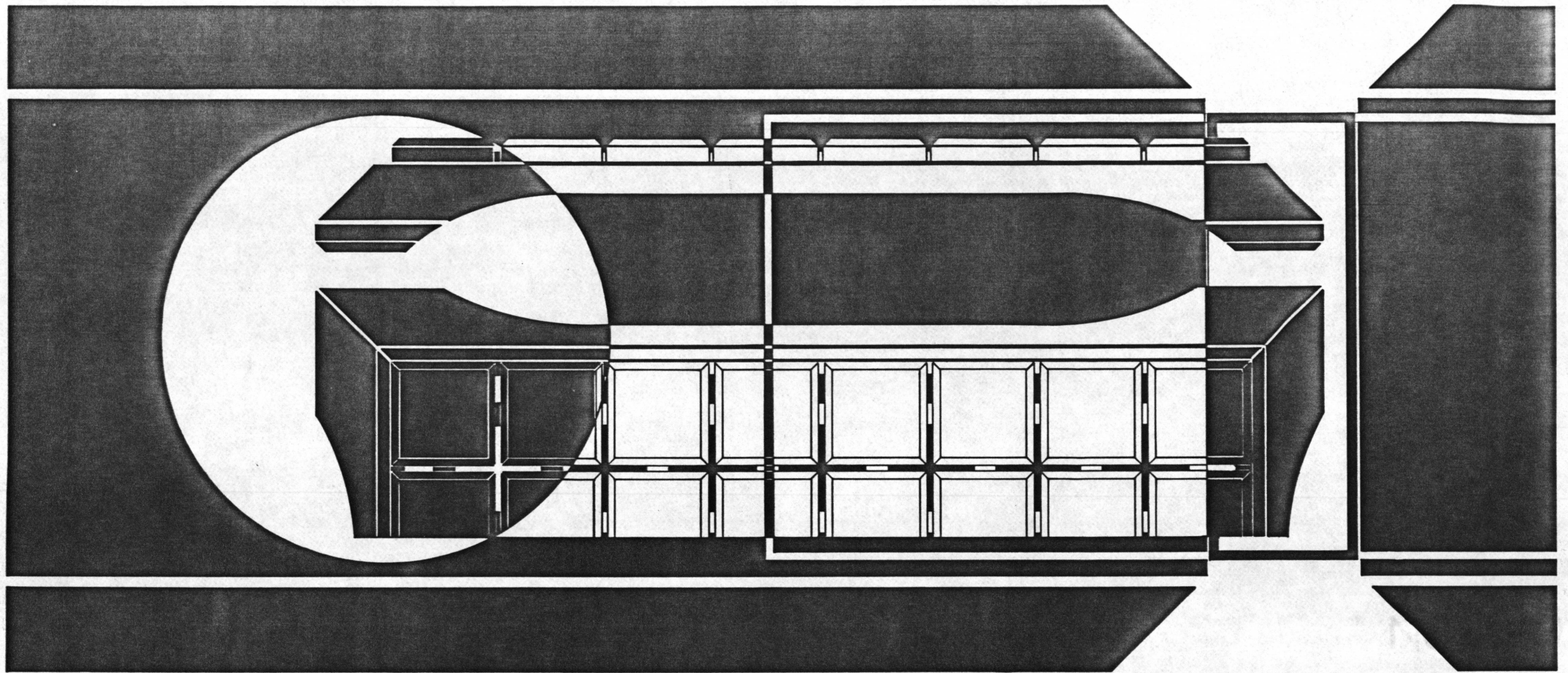
The Universal

As we continue towards a homogenous world civilization with decreasing regional differences; the standards for the measure of a work cease to be culturally defined. We then are at a juncture. Do we search for standards that appeal to our contemporary, only to find those standards more temporal than ever, no longer entrenched in our culture's values? Or do we seek to understand that which history continues to reveal as having enduring value?

It should be our hope to restrain that which is temporal in our contemporary work with the search for that which when created will have a Presence that will endure in time.

It is a curious fact— of which relativity is not the only illustration— that, as reasoning improves, its claims to the power of proving facts grow less and less.

Bertram Russell

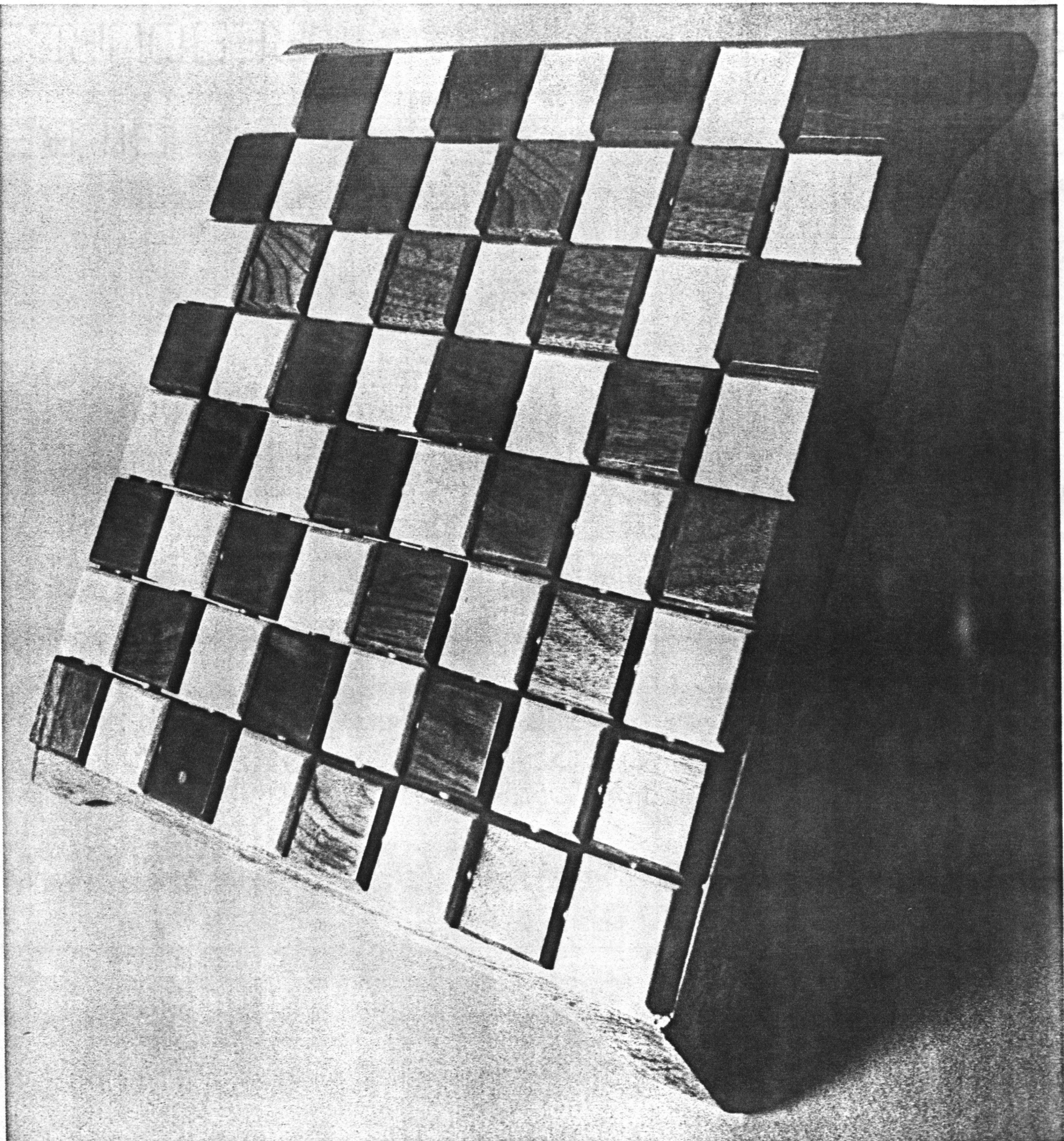


Chess board

The final board size is based on the appropriate area (territory) needed by the largest character so as not to crowd the square yet small enough to keep the playing field dense so the characters are seen as a unit on the battle field. As a member on the battle field, the chess piece on a specific square, signifies the dominance and control of that territory. The square symbolizes the territory. The borders between squares cease to be symbolic (the non-dimensional line) and are given width and depth. This strengthens the significance between one territory and the next. The baselines are distinguished from the sidelines by the color coding of those connecting dowels: There is a correct orientation of a chess board for play.

The wood frame defines the limits of the battle field and recognizes the relationship between the squares by their elevation and suspension from table surface. The frame also contains the outward thrust of the board thus maintaining the playing field flat and level though no square is directly in contact with any other. The board and frame are rigidly connected. The points of connection are subtly marked on the board.

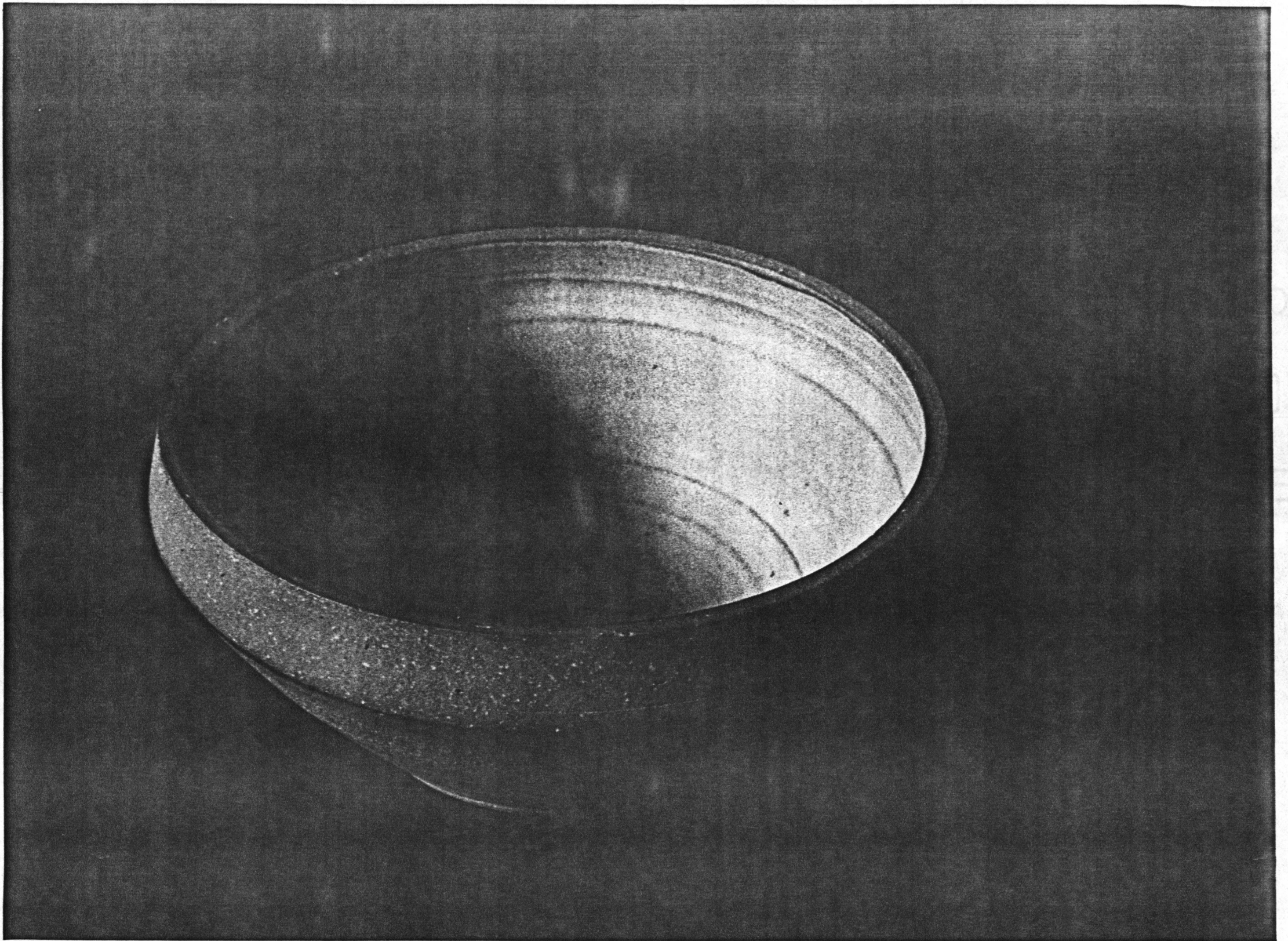
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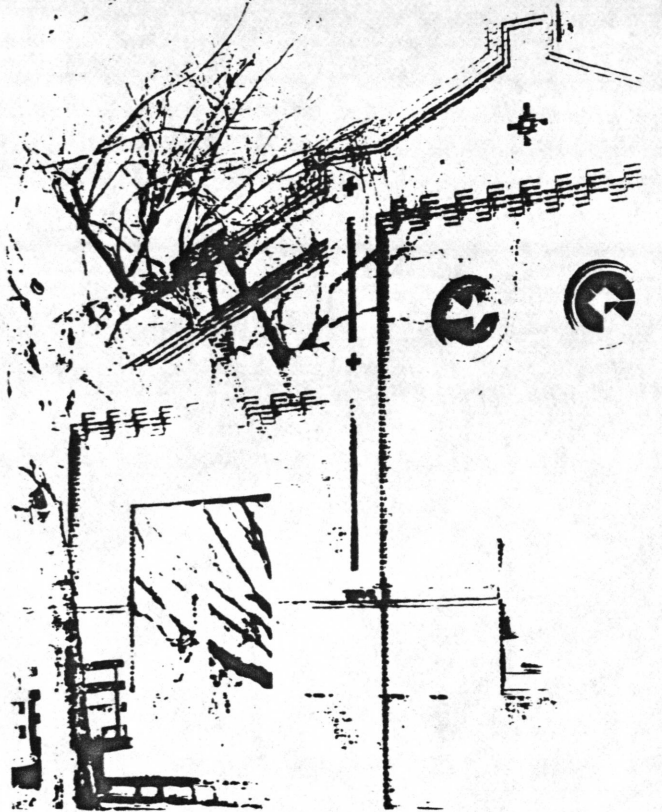
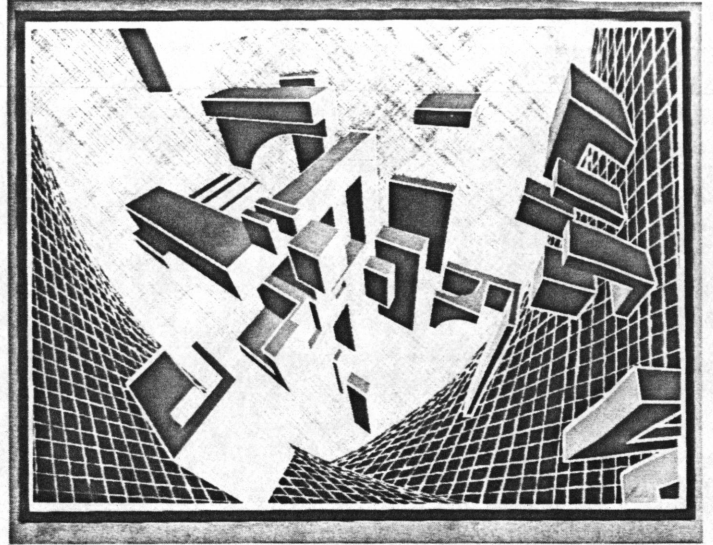
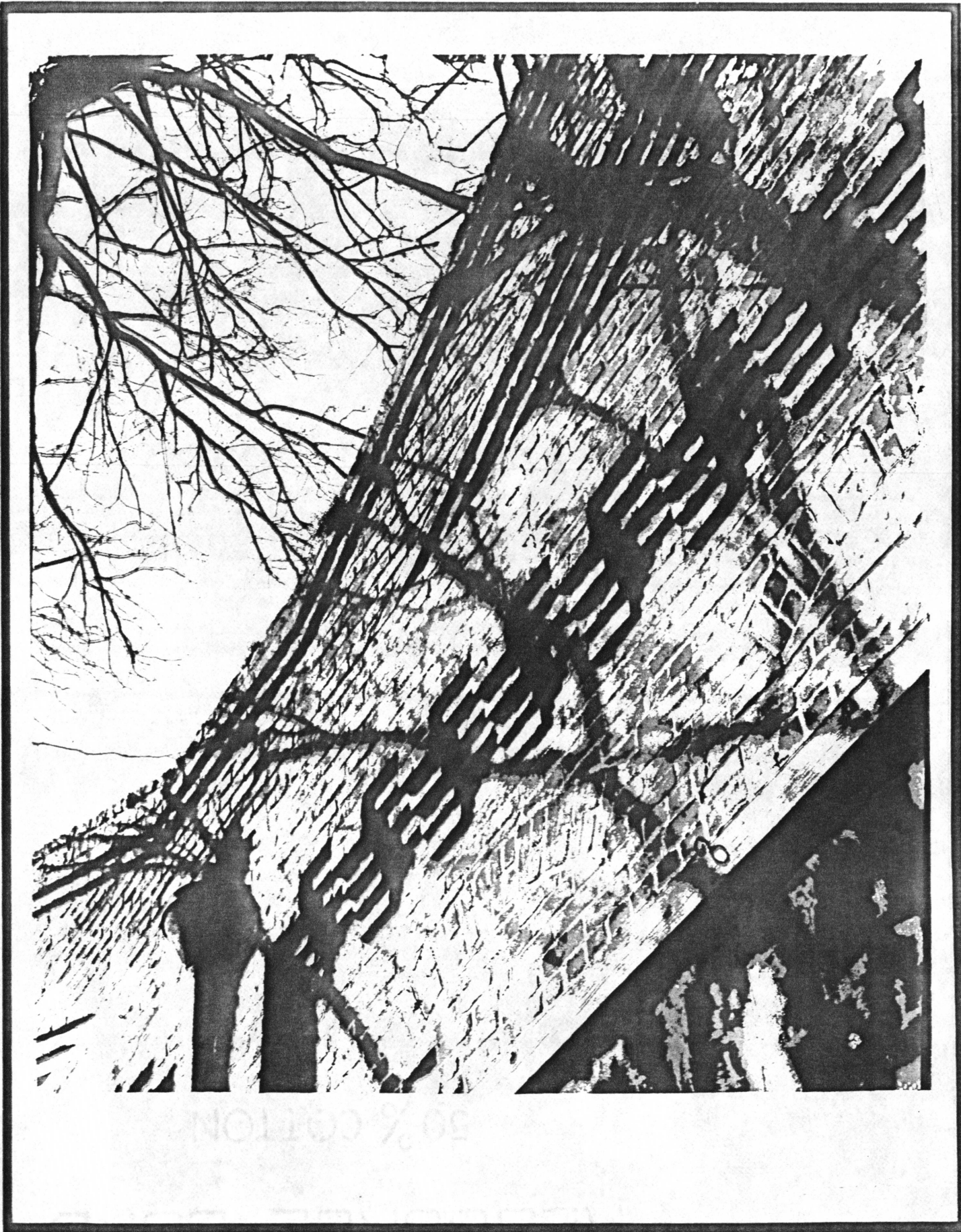
Company Logo

The signature and emblem of the group. Its only requirements are its strong and lasting identity.



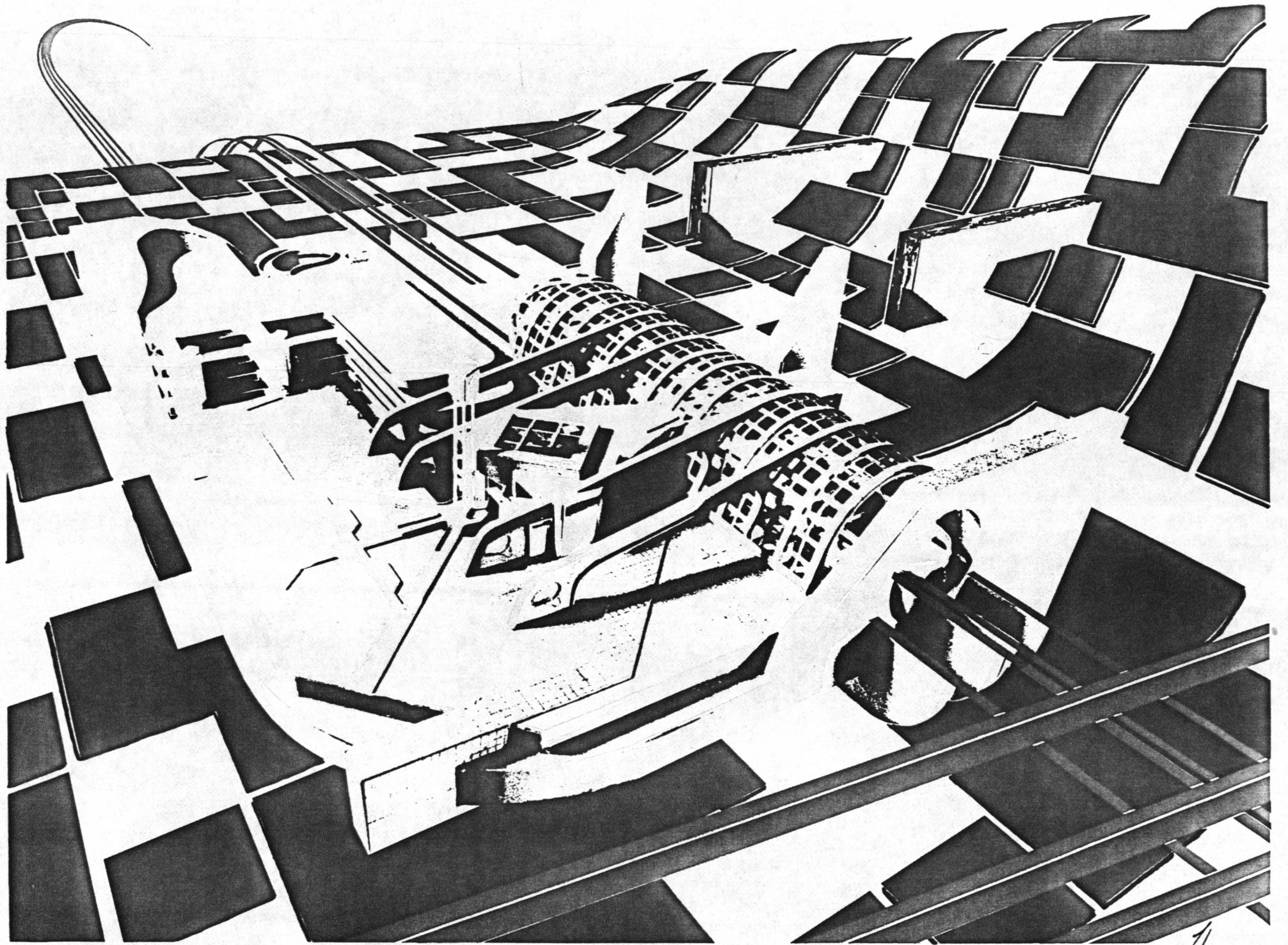
Pottery

It is the pleasure associated with the Making that brings the enjoyment to the work, not ones natural talent or skill in this medium. The pleasure comes from the dialog between the hands, eyes and the nature of a curve.



Serigraphs

By its nature it is interpretive. If of lasting value, by its Presence, it will endure. They are valued by the intellect thru the sensual.



2-29

Long & distant path



Train Station

A commuter train station in an urban environment to act as a catalyst for urban renewal in the older downtown, adjacent to a civic landmark.

Program Summary:

1. Parking for 400 automobiles.
2. 68,000 sq./ft. to include: restaurant, lounge, snack bar, and small retail shops and all support facilities i.e. ticket, baggage counter, security, restrooms etc.
3. 2- 800 ft. train loading platforms to accommodate four (4) trains. Access to the platforms from above or below. Trains to continue on thru after loading.

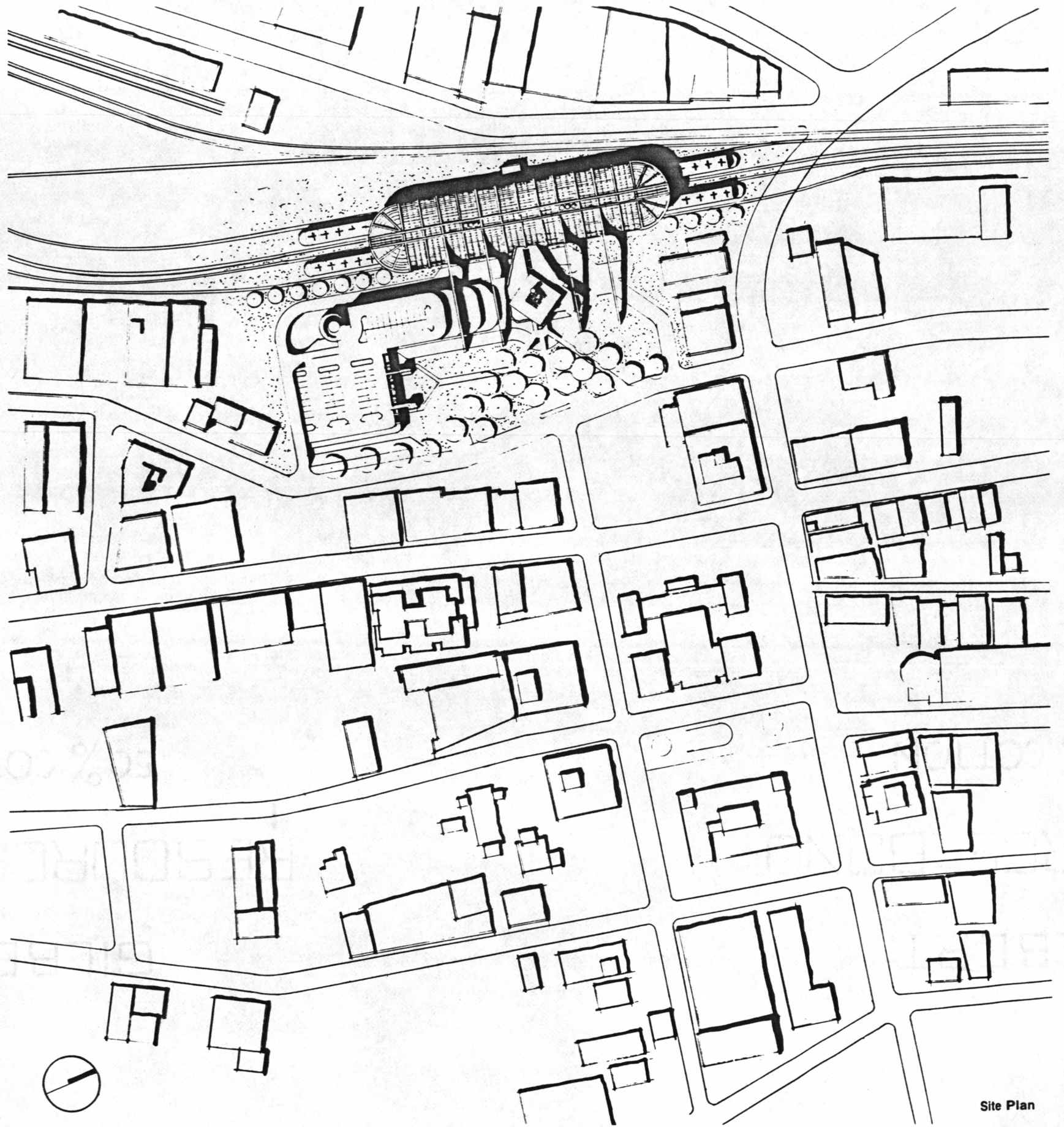
Site:

Older warehouse area in downtown Roanoke, Virginia. Property currently owned by Norfolk Southern Railroad.

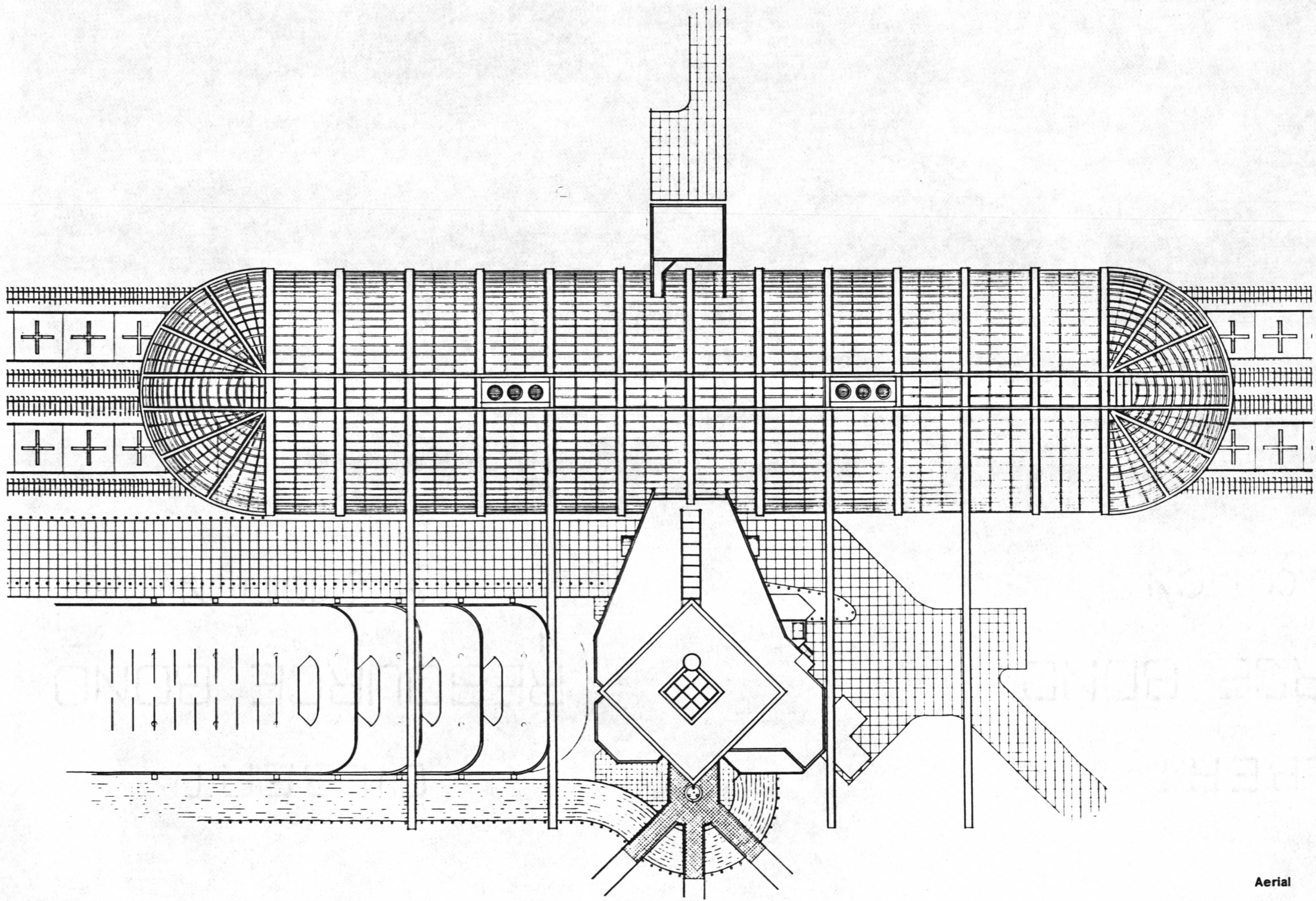
The disproportional physical needs between the area needed for the automobile, the area needed for the train and the functional space requirements of the building itself made the expression of those three parts a reasonable way to organize the program components. It then became an issue of the interfacing of the parts. The joints between the parts become the spaces created by the proximity of the structures to each other. The connections are then made by the voids in-between. It is the relationship created by the three parts (the dialog with each other) that produce the object "train station".

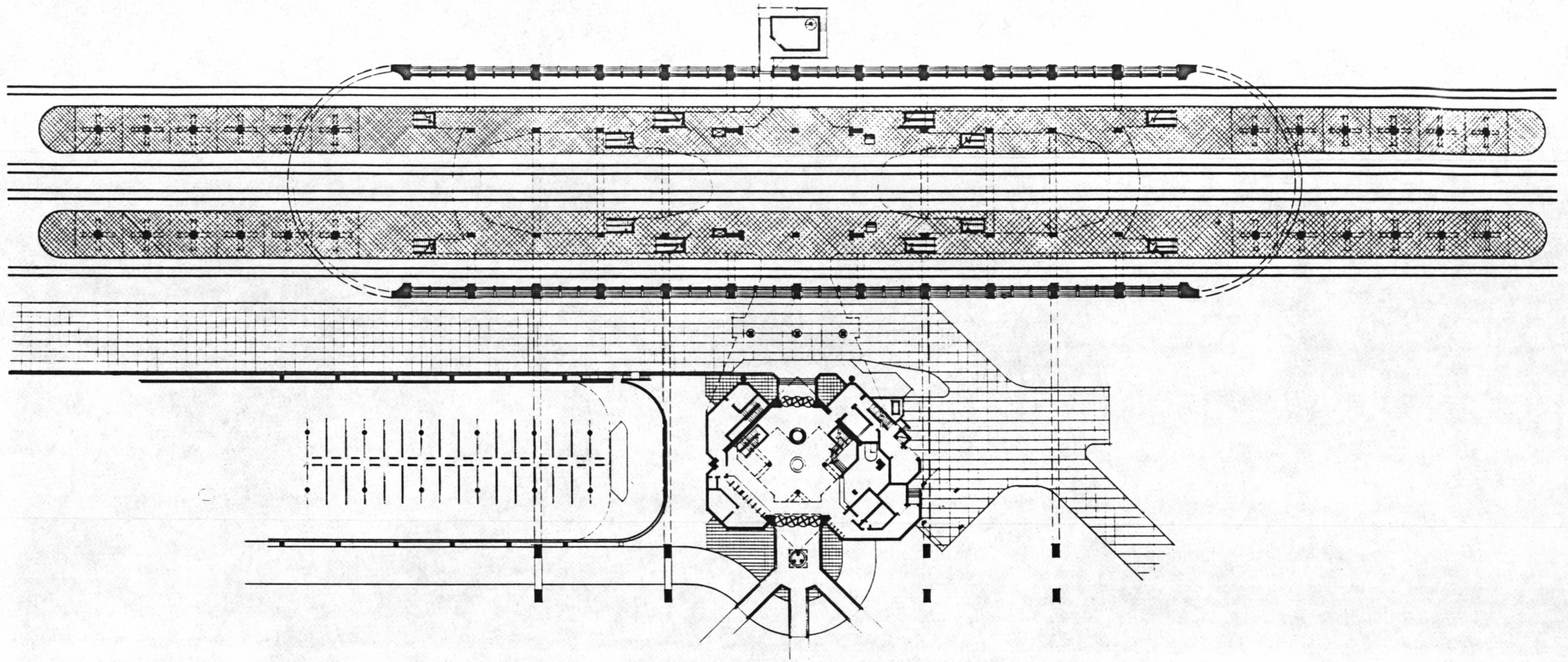
As a train station the arrival and departure of the pedestrian is of great significance. Accommodation for effective automobile and public bus passenger pick-up and drop-off leads to the second (rear) entrance. The main entrance (pedestrian entrance) is identified by the clock tower. After parking the individual enters as a pedestrian.

The station is to be more than a processing point for the movement of people. The facilities are arranged to provide an end point to a journey rather than a simple point of transfer.



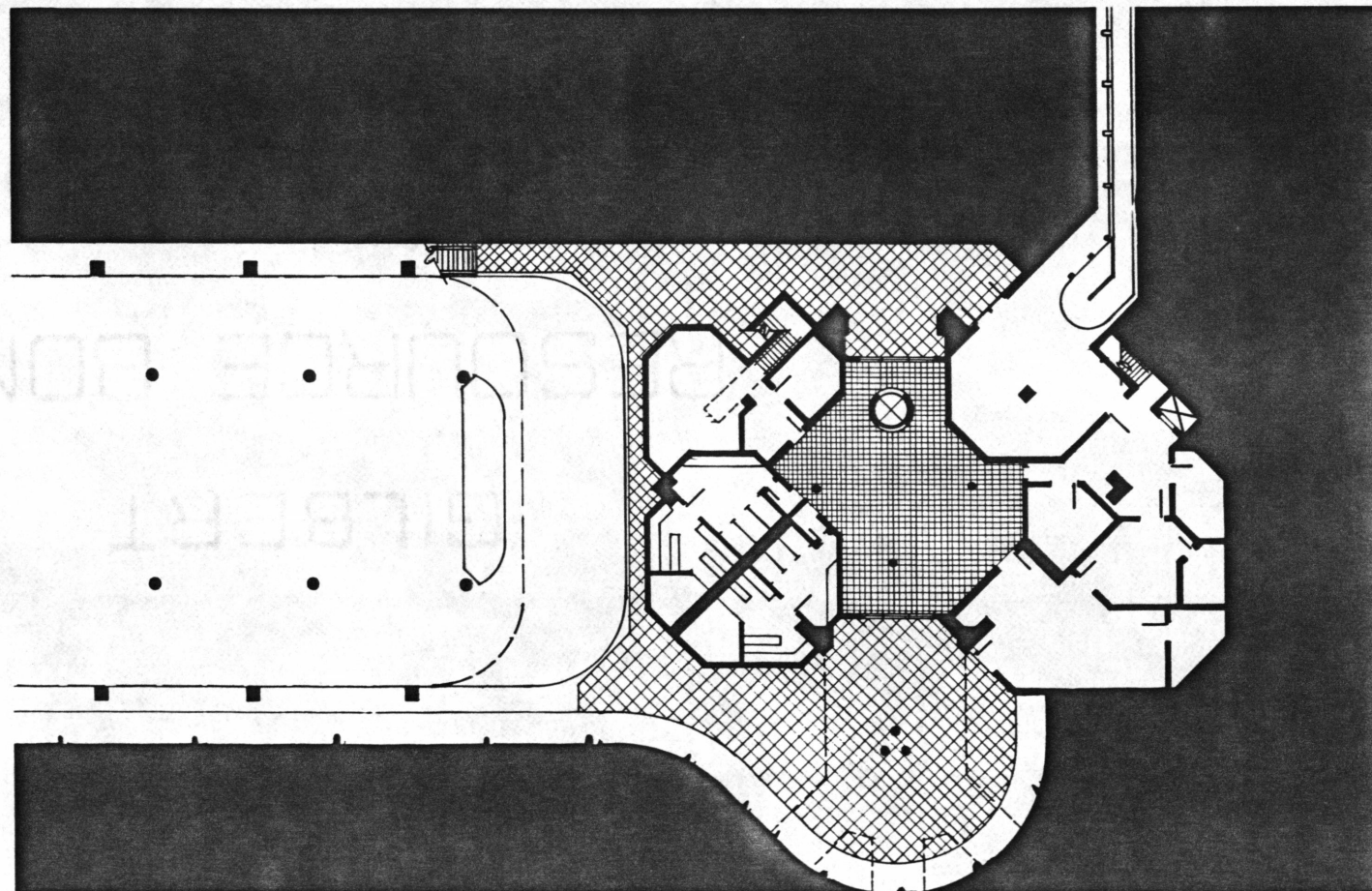
Site Plan





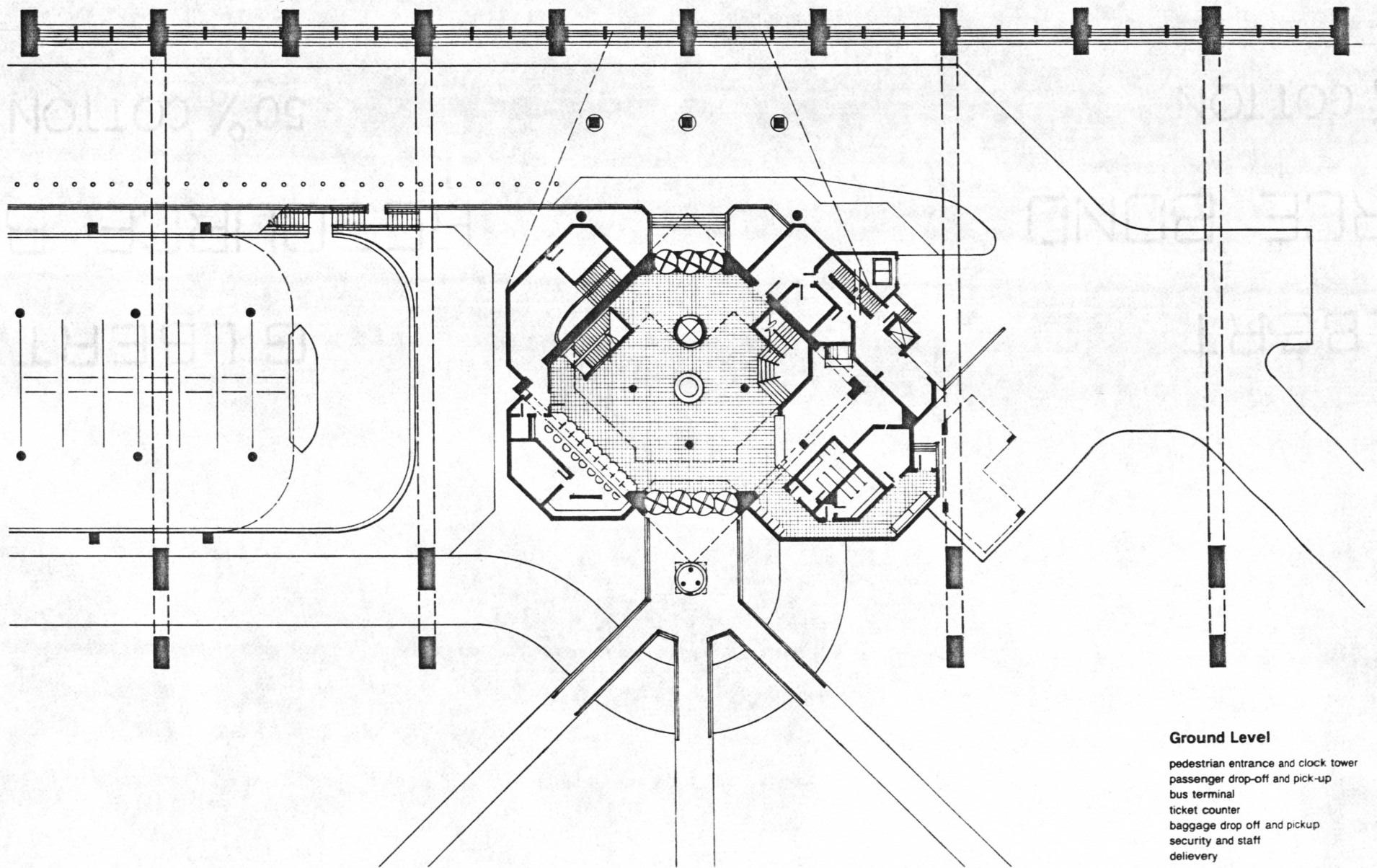
Platform Level

2- 800 foot loading platforms with elevators, escalators and stairs
train crew quarters



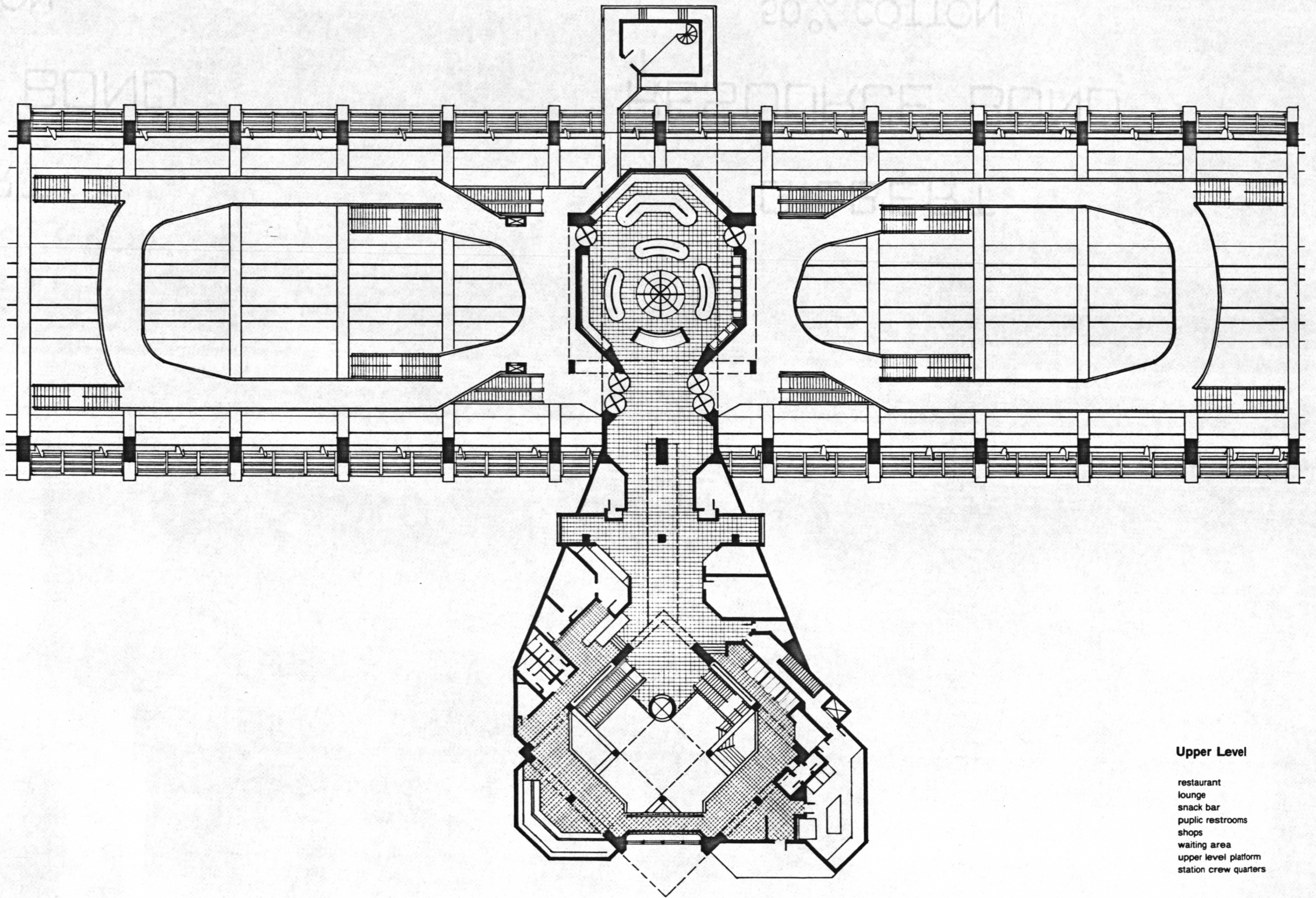
Lower Level

employee lounge and lockers
security and detention
accounting
baggage processing and pickup / delivery



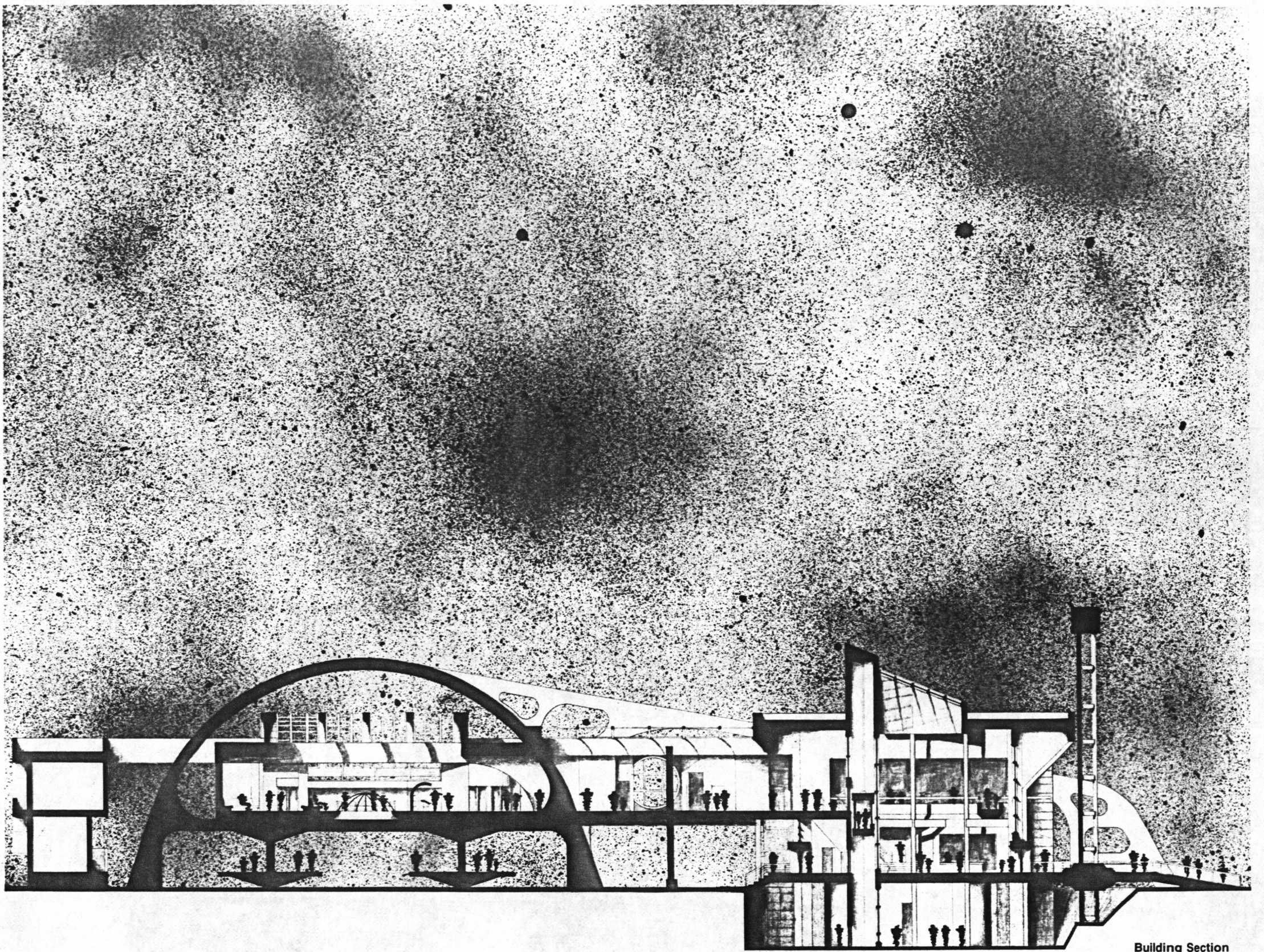
Ground Level

- pedestrian entrance and clock tower
- passenger drop-off and pick-up
- bus terminal
- ticket counter
- baggage drop off and pickup
- security and staff
- delevery

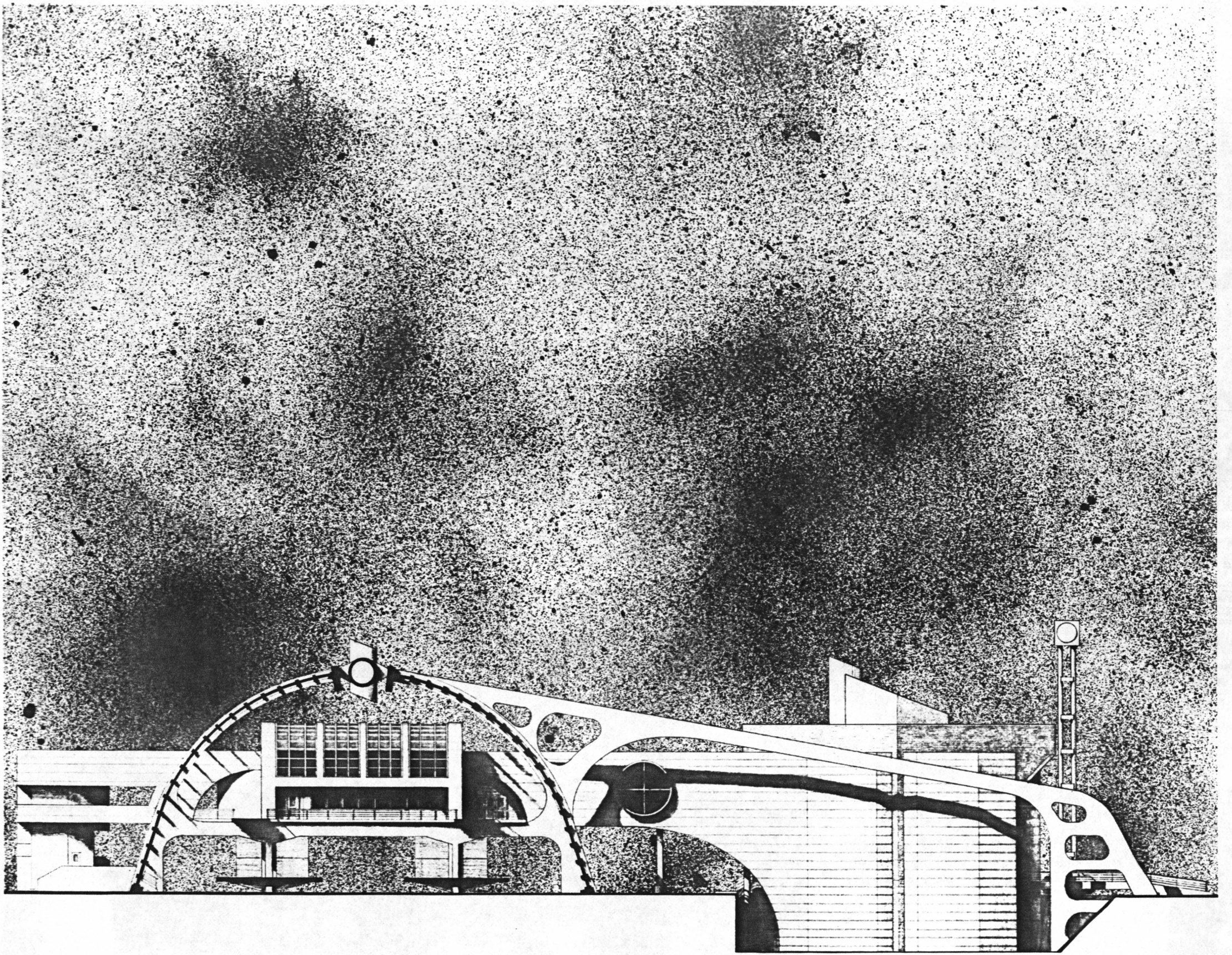


Upper Level

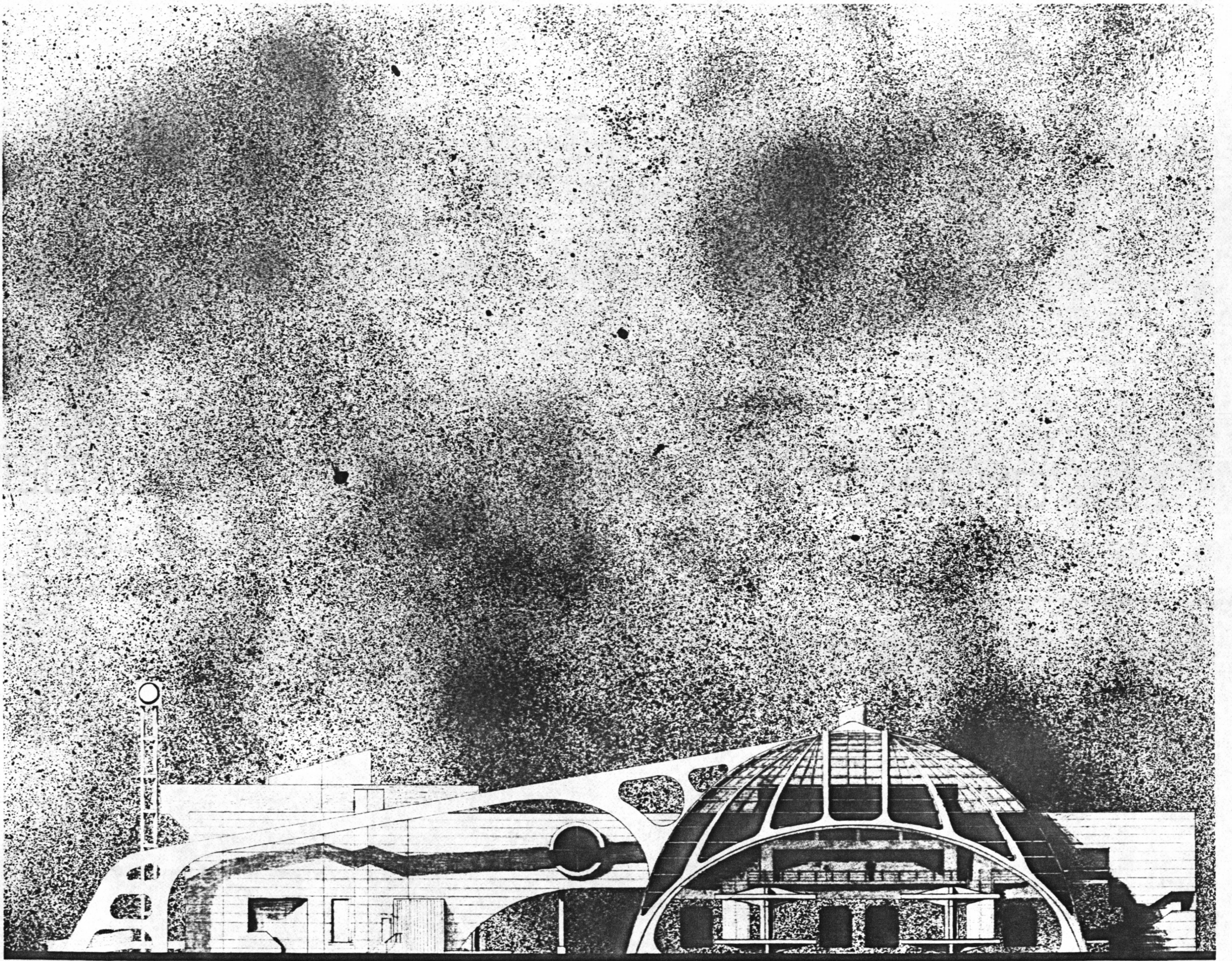
- restaurant
- lounge
- snack bar
- public restrooms
- shops
- waiting area
- upper level platform
- station crew quarters



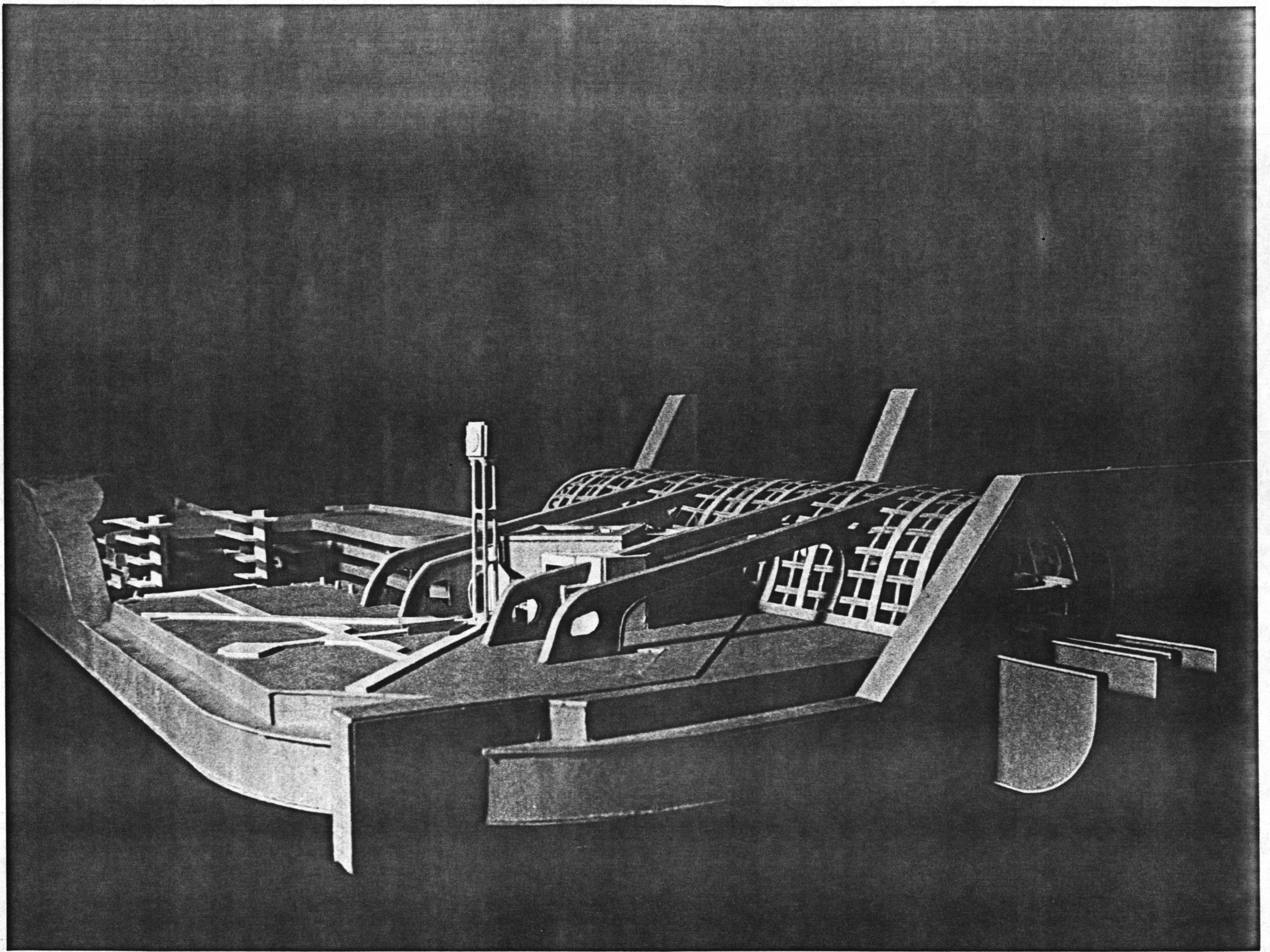
Building Section



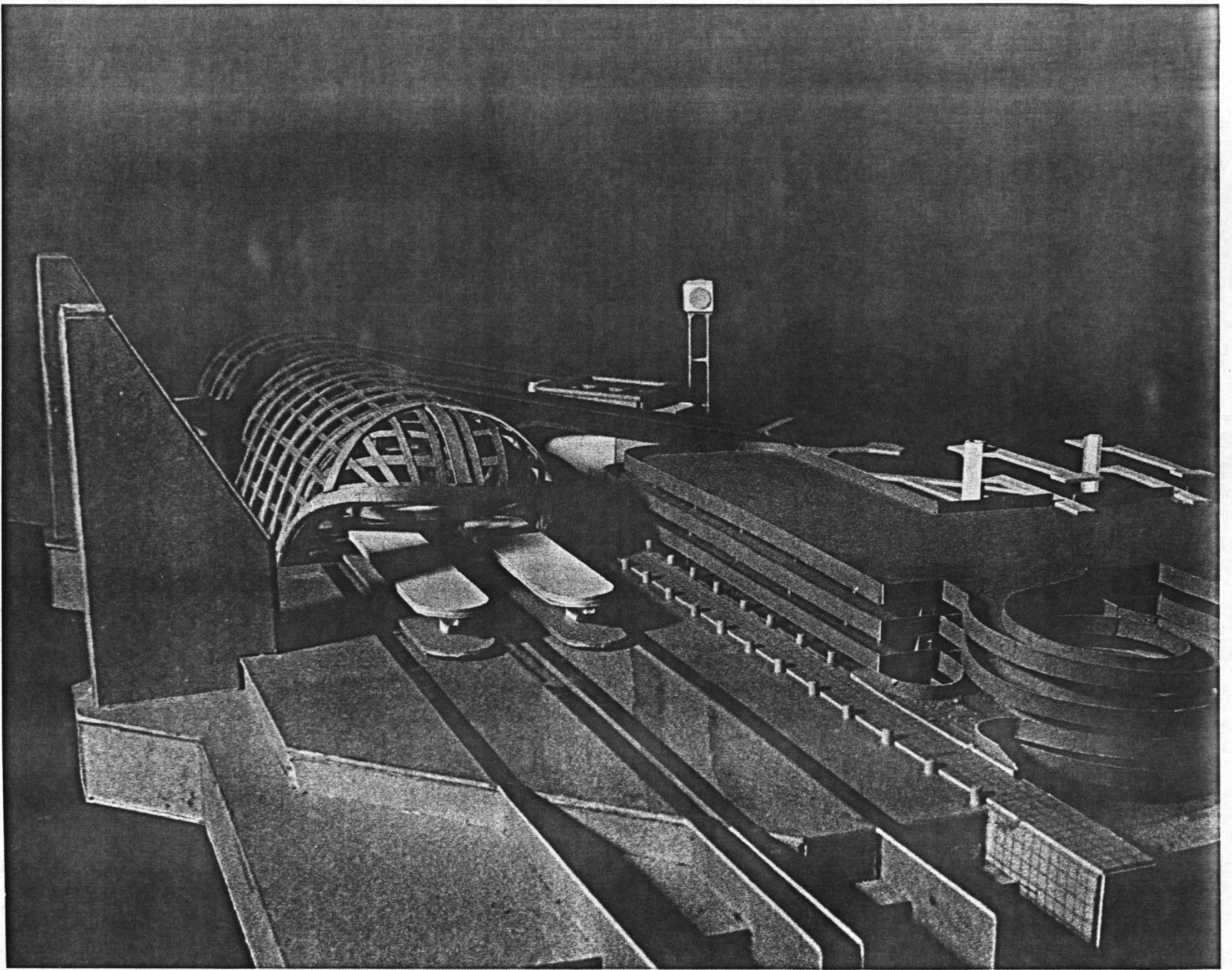
Loading Platform / Parking Section



Elevation



the Object



the Approach

What They Mean *

Process:

A succession of actions undertaken to bring about some desired result; a series of gradual changes moving towards some particular end.

Function:

The normal or proper activity of a person, institution or thing.

Functional:

Serving or having a particular use.

Act:

That which is being done or which has been done.

Architecture:

The art or science of building.

Translation:

The act or process of turning into another language.

Contemporary:

One belonging to the same time or period with another or others.

Speculation:

The process or act of conjectural contemplation.

Concept:

That which is conceived in the mind; a general notion or idea.

Conjecture:

A guess or inference based on the supposed possibility or probability of a fact or on slight evidence.

Thesis:

A proposition, statement or assertion laid down or stated, one to be discussed and approved or to be maintained against objections.

Creative:

Bring into being; cause to exist; produce; specify to evolve from one's own thought or imagination.

Thought:

The act or power of thinking.

Philosophy:

The love or pursuit of wisdom; the study or science of the truths underlying all knowledge.

Presence:

The state of being present.

Art:

A system of rules to facilitate the performance of certain actions, skill in applying such rules; opposed to science.

Analytical:

In the manner of analysis.

Analyze:

To determine essential features of; to study critically; to separate, as a compound subject, into its parts or propositions.

Temporal:

Having limited existence.

Style:

A characteristic mode of presentation in any of the fine arts; external manner, mode or fashion.

Building:

The act of one who builds.

Making:

To bring into existence by shaping a portion of matter or by combining parts or ingredients.

Existence:

The condition of being; the state of existing.

Object:

That toward which the mind is directed in any of its states or activities; what is thought about, felt, believed, or seen; some visible and tangible thing

Language:

A system of communication between humans through written or vocal symbols; employed in any art, branch of knowledge, or profession.

Symbol:

Something standing for or calling something else.

Thing:

That which may become an object of thought whether material or ideal, animate, inanimate, actual, possible or imaginary.

Sensual:

Pertaining to the body and the physical senses as distinguished from those of the spirit.

Feel:

The act of feeling; intuitive knowledge.

Intuitive:

Perceived by the mind immediately without the intervention of reasoning.

Reason:

To draw conclusions or inferences from fact or premise.

Intention:

The state of mind with which an act is done.

There is an enormous vacuum where a few decades ago there was the substance of education. And with what is that vacuum filled: It is filled with the elective, eclectic, the specialized, the accidental and incidental improvisations and spontaneous curiosities of teachers and students. There is no common body of knowledge, no common moral and intellectual discipline. Yet the graduates of these modern schools are expected to form a civilized community. ... When one realizes that they have no common culture, is it astounding that they have no common purpose? That they worship false gods? That in the fierce struggle for existence they are tearing western society to pieces? ... We have established a system of education in which everyone must be educated, yet there is nothing in particular that an educated man must know.

Walter Lippman 1940

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Abstract

As reality continues to shift from the made fact to the idea: We conclude that creativity is a state of mind; measured by what is made. It is only when extended beyond oneself that an idea can become real to more than one. We Extend thru our talents and skills. The significance of that made is its Presence measured in time.

The supreme misfortune is when theory outstrips performance.

Leonardo da Vinci