

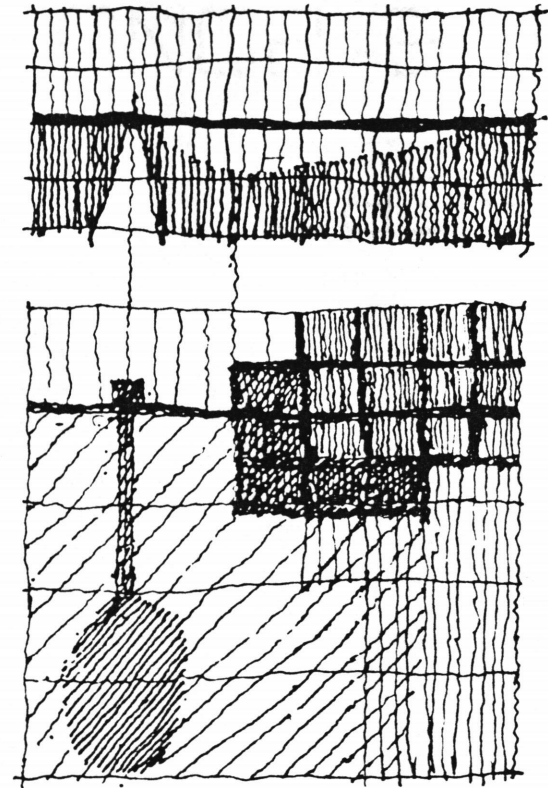
TRANSITION BETWEEN A TOWN AND CAMPUS: A WALL, A TOWER

by

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in partial fulfillment of the requirements
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ABSTRACT

To establish the in-between is to reconcile conflicting polarities. Provide the place where they can interchange and you re-establish the original twin phenomena.

Aldo Van Eyck

The thesis of this project focuses on the transition between a town and campus. The proposal is made for a shared urban room or plaza space that demarks the meeting place of the inherently different orders of the town and campus. Here a tower is proposed to better define the existing plaza space between four academic buildings. Finally, a wall reaching towards the town from the plaza space is proposed as an element of connection that defines a unique place between the town and campus.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank those who assisted me with the development of this work. Especially my family for their encouragement and support. My friends for keeping the task from becoming overwhelming. And my committee members for their guidance.

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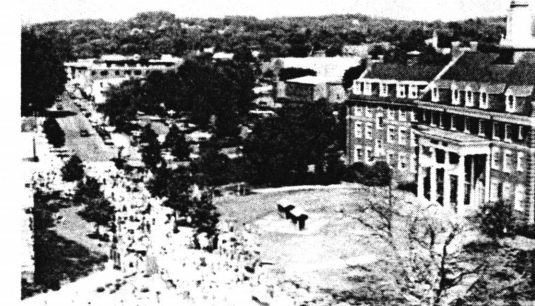
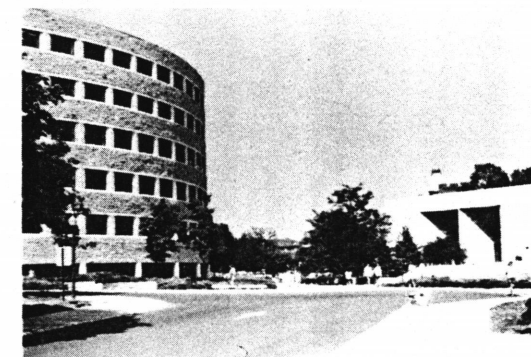
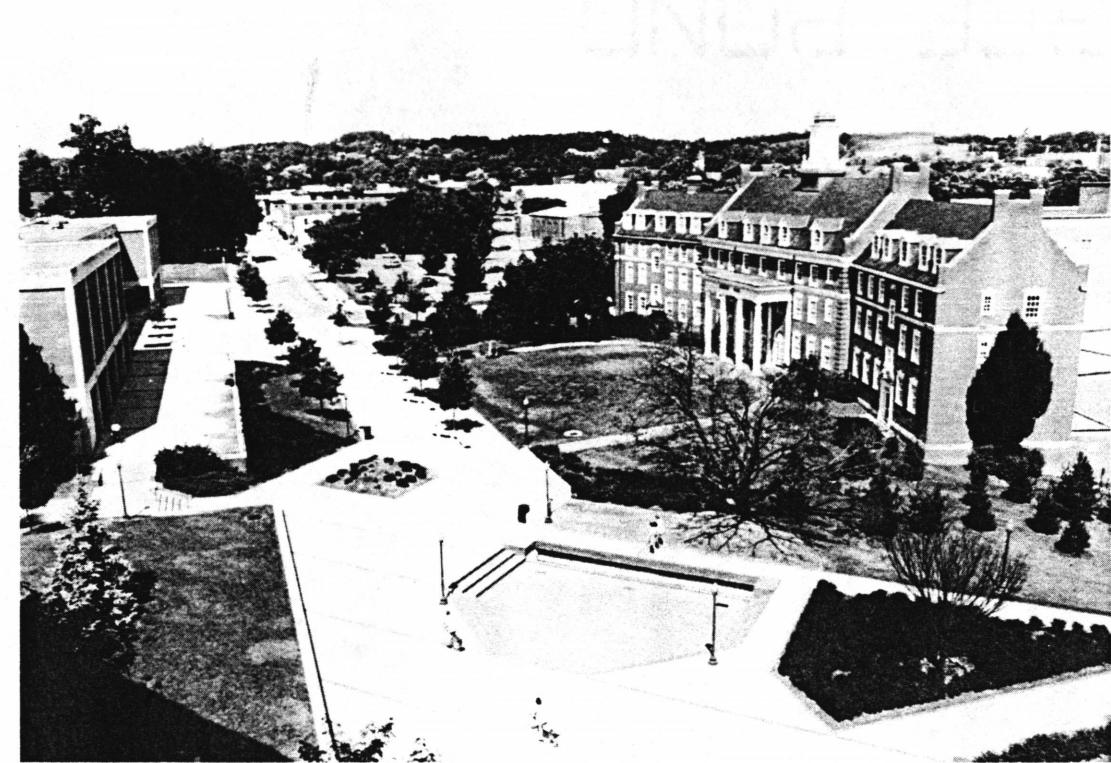
A WALL

A TOWER

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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VITA



ISSUE OF TRANSITION

The project site was chosen as a starting point because it borders the town and campus. The location of the site, near the center of the university town of Blacksburg, Virginia, is on the corner of College Avenue and Otey Street. College Avenue connects the original sixteen (four by four) blocks of the town with the oval drill field of Virginia Tech, at the center of campus. Because the project site borders the town and campus, it raises the issue of transition from one place to another. This issue becomes the central focus of the project.

The issue of transition from town to campus can be identified in several ways. First, there is a significant change of scale between the commercial buildings of the town and the

academic and residential buildings of the campus. Along College Avenue, for instance, are two and three story buildings with shops at the street level and apartments and offices above. Meanwhile, at the campus end of College Avenue is the university library which rises to six stories.

Second, there is a material transition from brick to stone as one moves from town to the center of campus. All of the campus buildings facing the drill field are of stone, while the student center and alumni center, located in the border area, are of brick.

Third, the spaces between the buildings of the town and those of the campus are different. Facades of the buildings of the

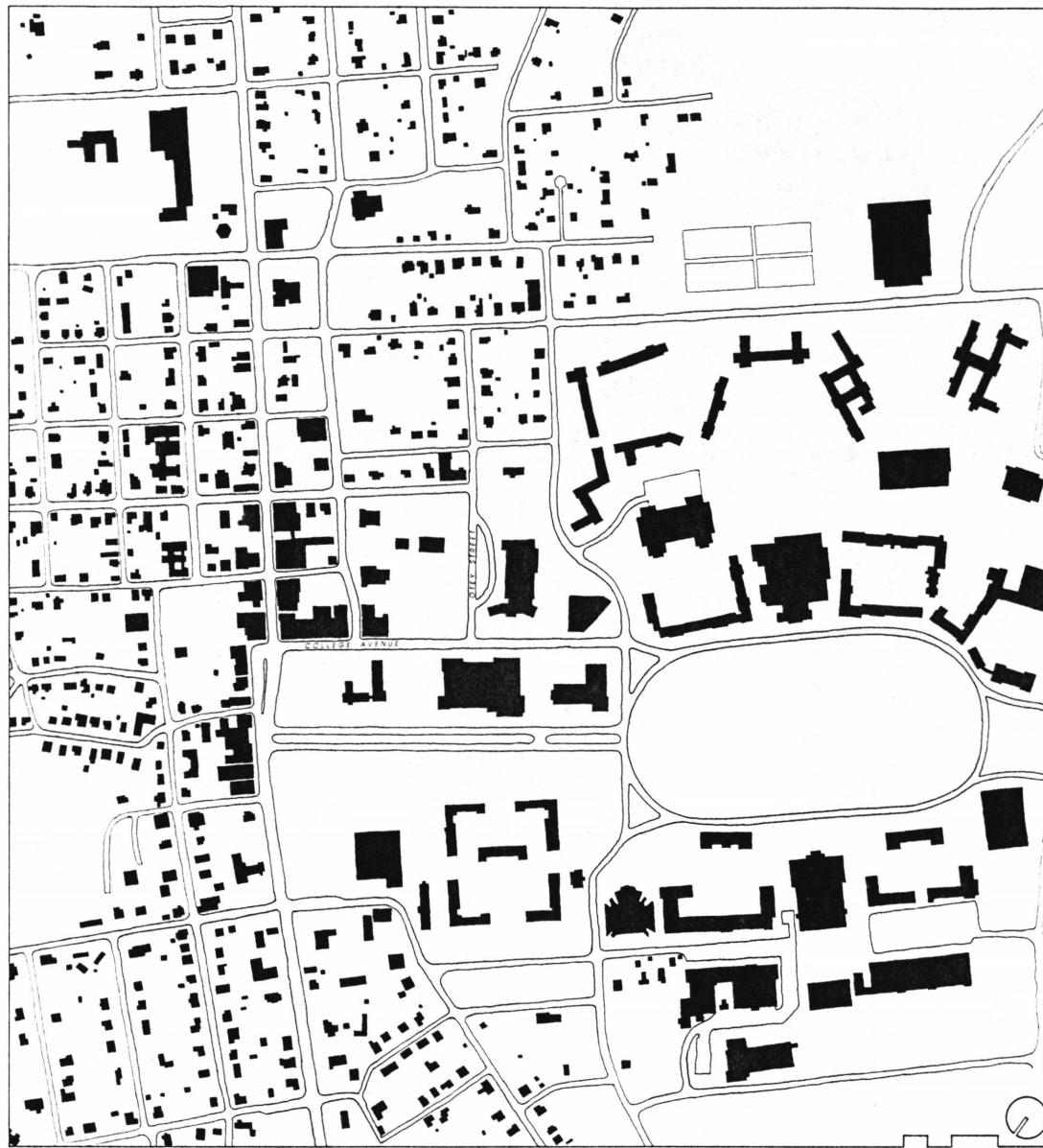
town are typically connected, forming walls parallel to the street. Opposing walls on either side of the street form the narrow spaces of the town that act like hallways through which cars and pedestrians pass. The campus, on the other hand, is characterized by open green spaces and long vistas.

Finally, and perhaps least obvious, is the transition between the order of the town and the order of the campus in plan. The buildings of the town follow the orthogonal order that was first established when Blacksburg was founded. The result is that each facade is parallel to the street. Meanwhile, the campus buildings follow a radial order established by the drill field at the campus center. Thus the

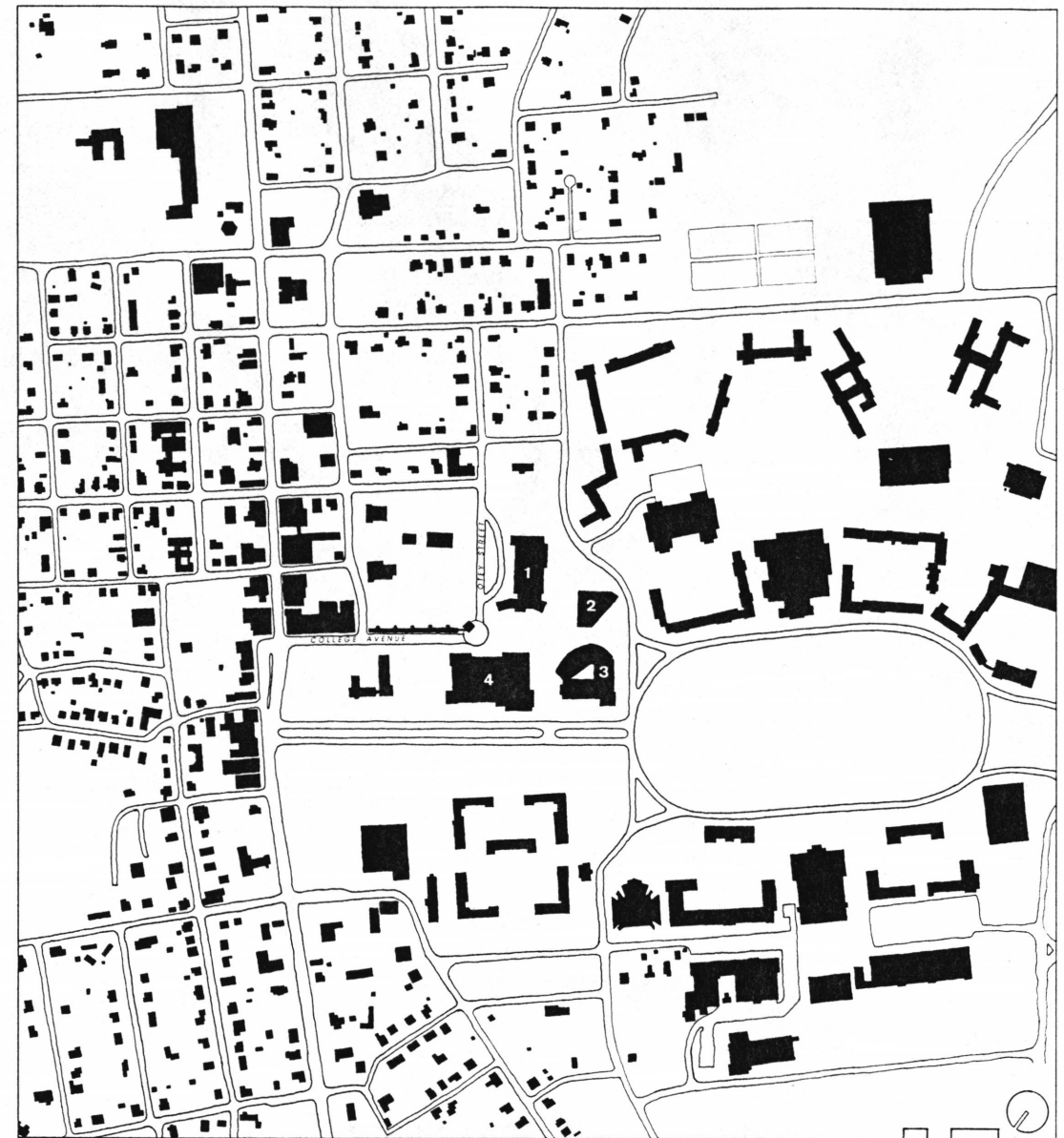
facade of each campus building surrounding the drill field is aligned so that its perpendicular axis connects to the center of the drill field.

These issues of transition between town and campus led to certain architectural ideas. In this sense, the project developed with the site and its context as the starting point. The following quote by Christian Norberg-Schulz reflects this position of an architectural process:

Architecture means to visualize the genius loci (or spirit of place), and the task of the architect is to create meaningful places, whereby he helps man to dwell.



SITE PLAN: BEFORE PLAZA



SITE PLAN: WITH PLAZA AND PROPOSAL

THE MAKING OF AN URBAN ROOM: A PROPOSAL

Prior to 1977, College Avenue extended all the way from Main Street, past the student center (4), the alumni hall (1) and the library (3) to the drill field. With the construction of the bookstore (2) in 1977 and the library addition in 1980, came an attempt to create a plaza space between these four academic buildings. Thus, College Avenue now terminates at Otey Street, allowing only pedestrian traffic to pass through the plaza space.

The site of the project currently provides parking for the adjacent alumni hall and the student center across College Avenue. As a result, the corner of College and Otey lacks definition and leaves the existing plaza spatially incomplete. Robert Venturi's 1980 addition to the library with its curved facade

makes a strong gesture towards the town and plaza on the one side and the campus on the other. Simultaneously, it provides a bottleneck-like gateway between the town and campus by its juxtaposition to the bookstore. The strength of Venturi's addition lies in the issues it addresses and was an inspiration in the project to search for a solution of equal strength.

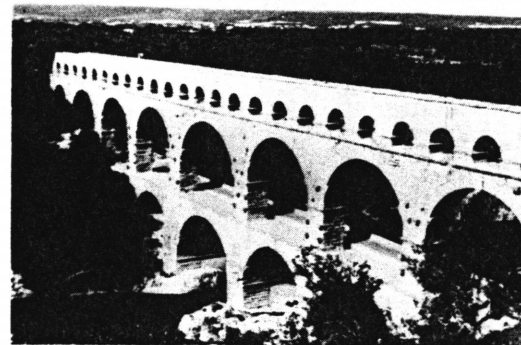
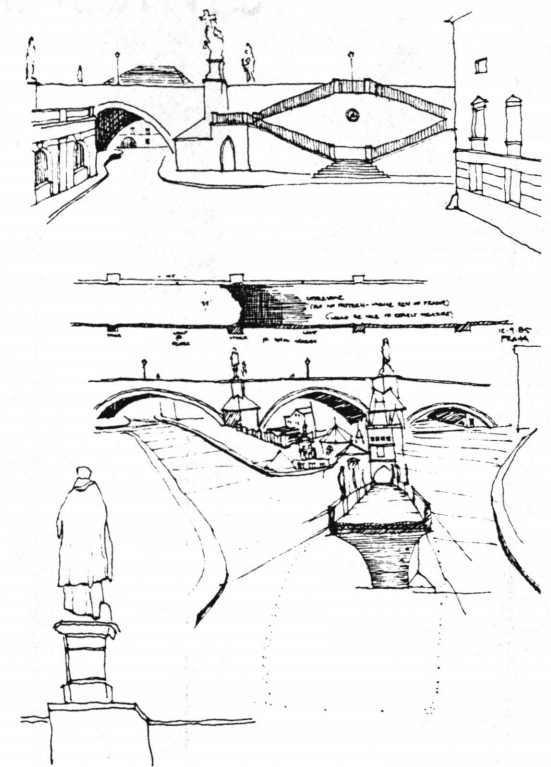
The opportunity to complete the plaza by further enclosing and defining the space was pursued in model studies and sketches. In the process, the plaza became an urban room, shared by and connecting the town and campus. Thus the plaza acts as the antithesis of the formal promenade which connects the drill field to Main Street just north of the site.

From these studies, the idea of a tower on the corner of College and Otey evolved. The vertical mass of a tower at this location feels correct in model as it opposes the curved facade of the library addition. Furthermore, the tower gives a focal point that the plaza currently lacks. This would be especially apparent as one approached from the campus where the tower is framed by the bottleneck-like gateway between the library and bookstore.

The location of the tower on the corner of College and Otey led to the need to redesign the intersection. Presently, as College ends at the plaza, the intersection is an awkward L-type that creates confusion between vehicles and pedestrians. This

proposal gives the right of way to pedestrians by using granite pavers at the intersection, forcing cars to slow. The form of the intersection is also changed to a large circle, with a small circle within as a place for a piece of sculpture that also acts to provide a drop-off area within the turning circle.

Finally, a wall extending from the tower and plaza towards the town is proposed. With reference to historical elements of connections and definition, the wall provides an arcade space at the street level and a roof level walkway above which acts as a transition between the narrow streets of the town and the open spaces of the campus.



HISTORICAL ELEMENTS OF CONNECTION AND DEFINITION

Looking back over the development of this project, five European places had particular influence. In my mind, these places have an architectural quality that deals with either the idea of connection or definition between two places.

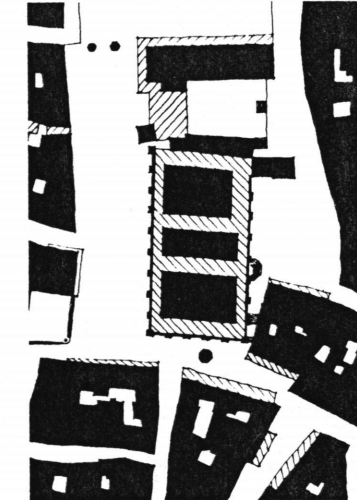
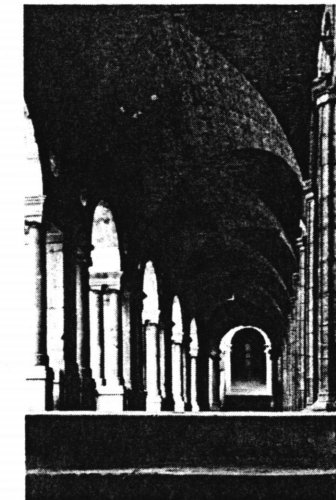
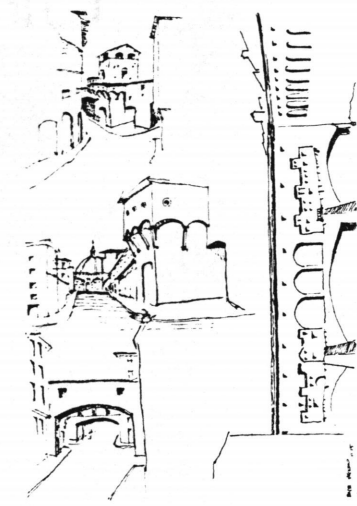
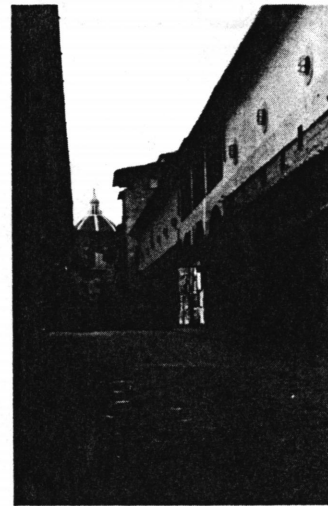
Roman aqueduct structures and the bridges of Florence and Prague, for instance, are elements that connect places. The strength and beauty of the aqueduct, for me, lies in the way the magnificent structure proclaims its simple function by marching across the landscape in great spans, connecting a city to a valuable resource. The image of an aqueduct played a metaphorical role in the project, and also led to the idea of a walkway at the top of the proposed wall.

This idea was reinforced by memories of the Charles Bridge of Prague and the Ponte Vecchio of Florence.

The Charles Bridge is an element of connection between the Old Town on the flat land of Prague and the Small Town with the castle hill on the other side. Furthermore, as it is lined with statues and framed at either end by gateway towers, the bridge not only acts as an element of connection, but becomes a strong central place between the two parts of the city in its own right.

TOP: Charles Bridge, Prague, Czechoslovakia
 1. Old Town Gateway Tower of Bridge.
 2. Bridge from afar.
 3. Bridge walkway.
 4. Powder Tower of Small Town.
 5. Sketch.

BOTTOM: Roman Aqueducts
 6. Segovia, Spain.
 7. Pont du Gard, Nimes, France.
 8. Segovia, Spain.



The Ponte Vecchio of Florence is another element of connection between two parts of a city. In this case, the bridge is in effect a narrow street lined with shops. Above the shops, however, exists a narrow corridor space that stretches over half a mile between the Pitti Palace and the Uffizi Palace. This connection provided royalty the means of crossing the river without having to enter the streets of the city.

Palladio's addition of a loggia to an existing palace to create the Basilica of Vicenza is an element of definition. The introduction of this strong element of repetitive bays gives a strong definition to the plaza space of the Basilica where weaving streets and alleys come together. In other words, the strength

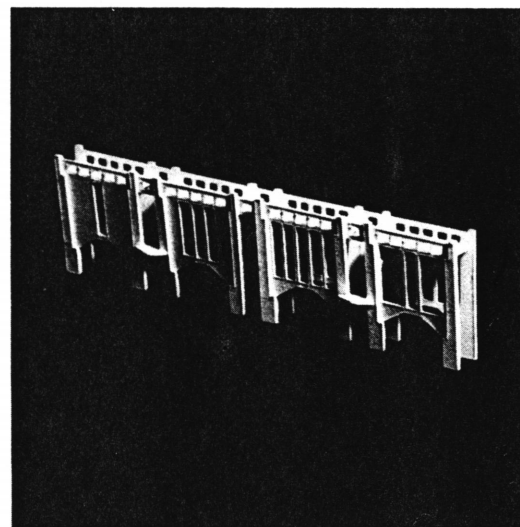
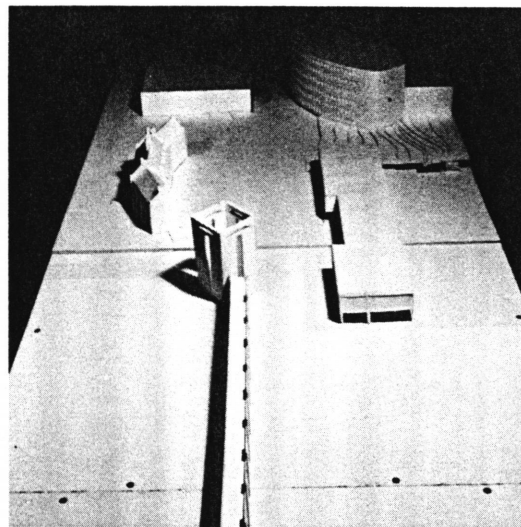
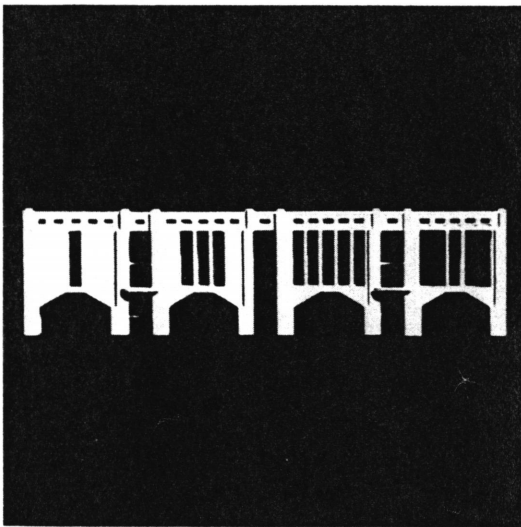
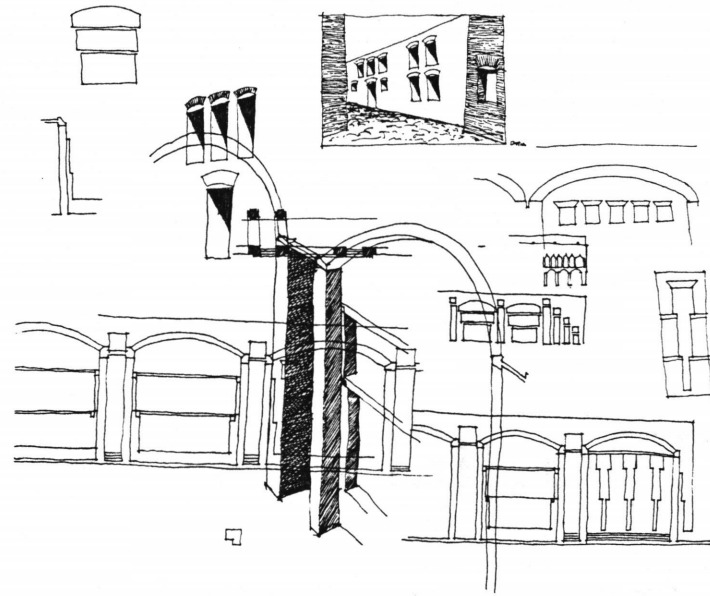
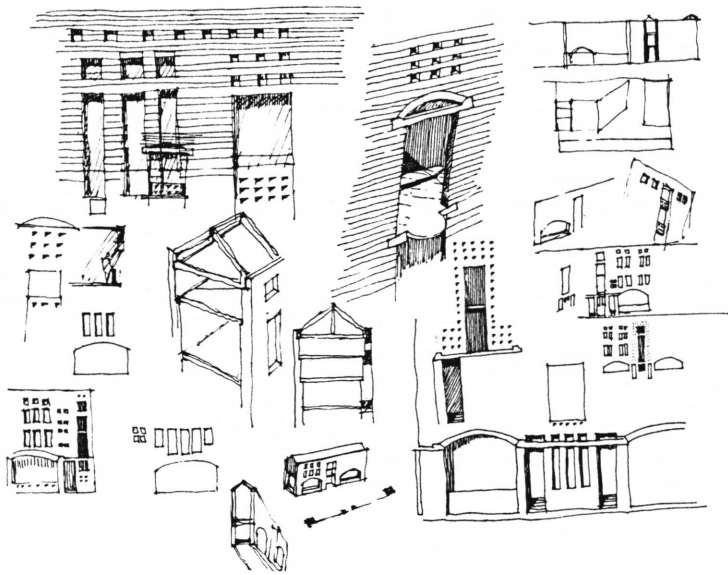
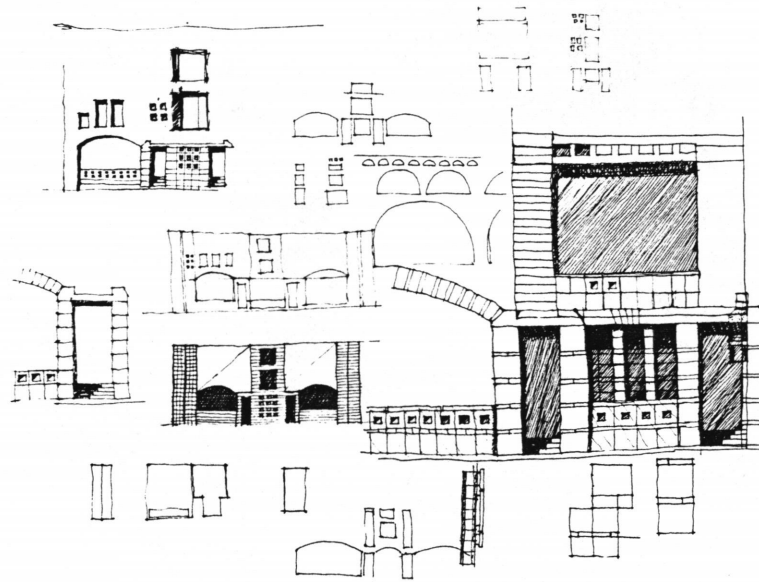
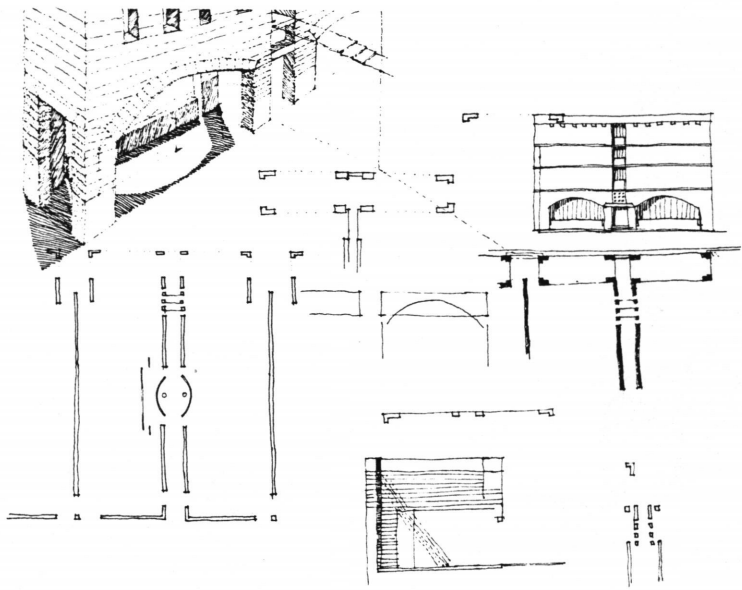
of Palladio's addition lies in the order and unity it brings to an area of many separate elements, better defining the spaces between the buildings.

In a similar way, the vernacular barn structure of Bosco Gurin provides a strong wall as a boundary between a small, rambling mountain village and its outlying landscape. Through the repetition of a unit, it also defines and creates a transition between two distinct places.

- TOP: Ponte Vecchio, Florence, Italy
9. Bridge and arcade structure to the right share a hallway connecting the Uffizi Gallery to the Pitti Palace.
 10. Rooms cantilever from bridge.
 11. View from the bridge with the dome of Santa Maria de Fiore in background.
 12. Arcade space approaching bridge.
 13. Sketch, Ponte Vecchio.

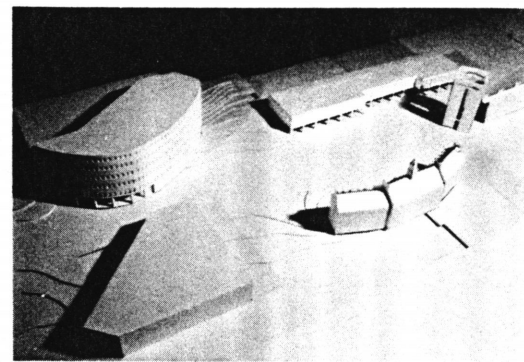
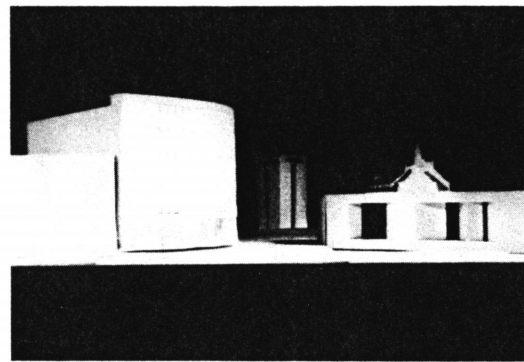
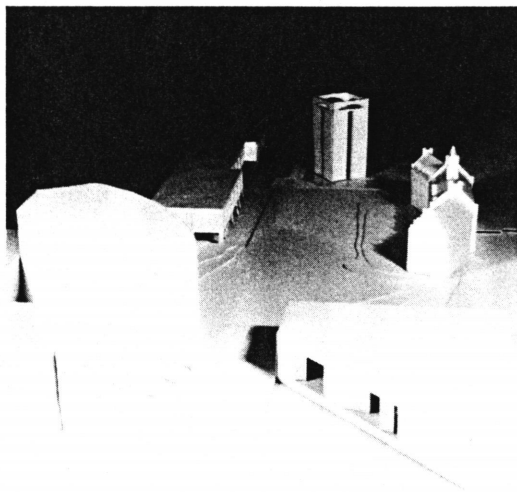
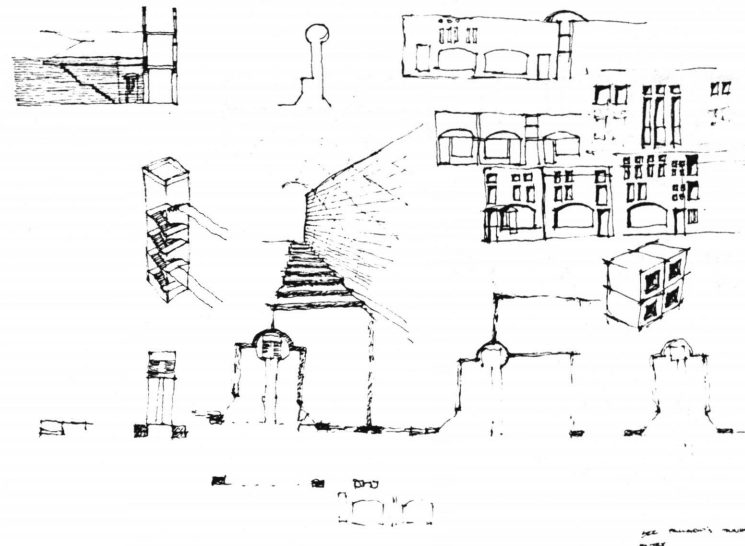
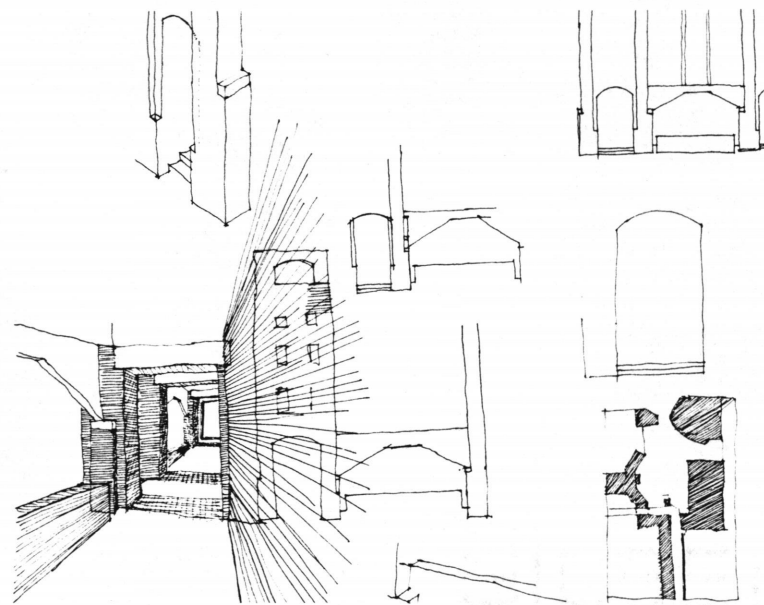
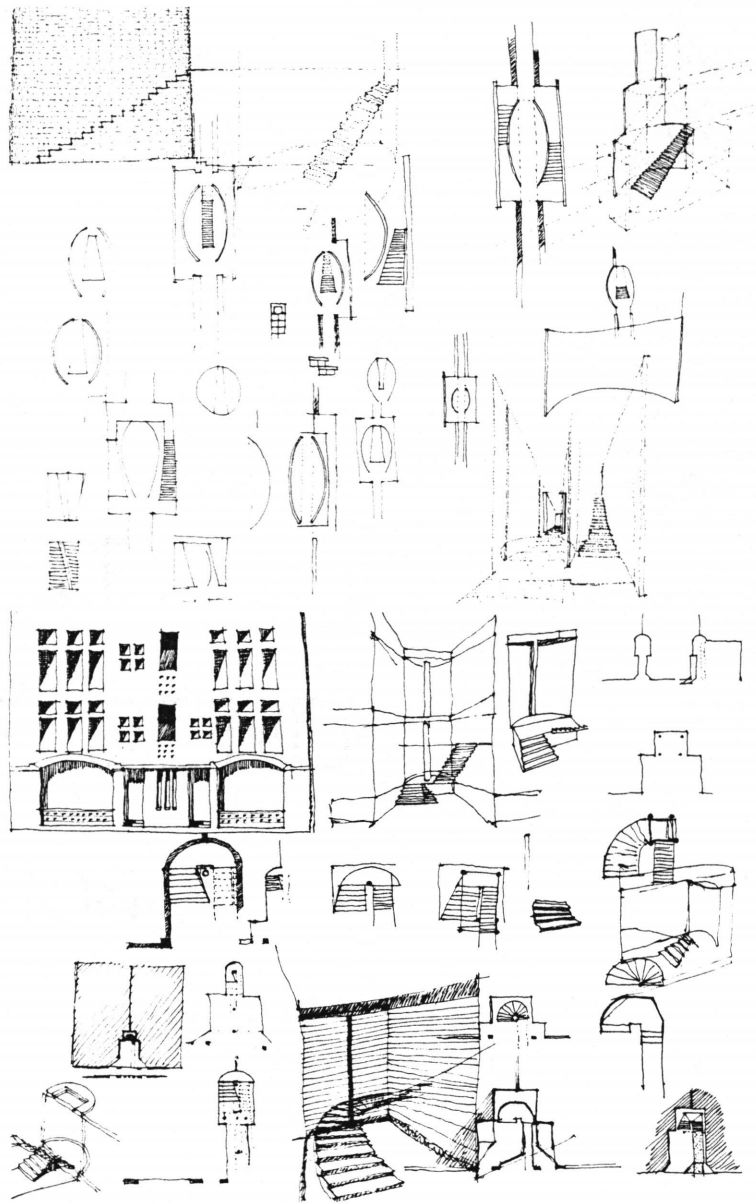
- MIDDLE: Vernacular Barn Structure, Bosco Gurin, Switzerland
14. View of barn that provides a village boundary.
 15. Barn with mountains beyond.

- BOTTOM: Palladio's Basilica, Vicenza, Italy
16. Basilica with surrounding piazza.
 17. Basilica and Vicenza from above.
 18. View from the piazza.
 19. Loggia of Basilica at piazza level.
 20. Site plan of Basilica.



A building is like a human, an architect has the opportunity of creating life. The way the knuckles and joints come together make each hand interesting and beautiful. In a building these details should not be hidden. Space is architectural when the evidence of how it is made is seen and comprehended.

Louis I. Kahn

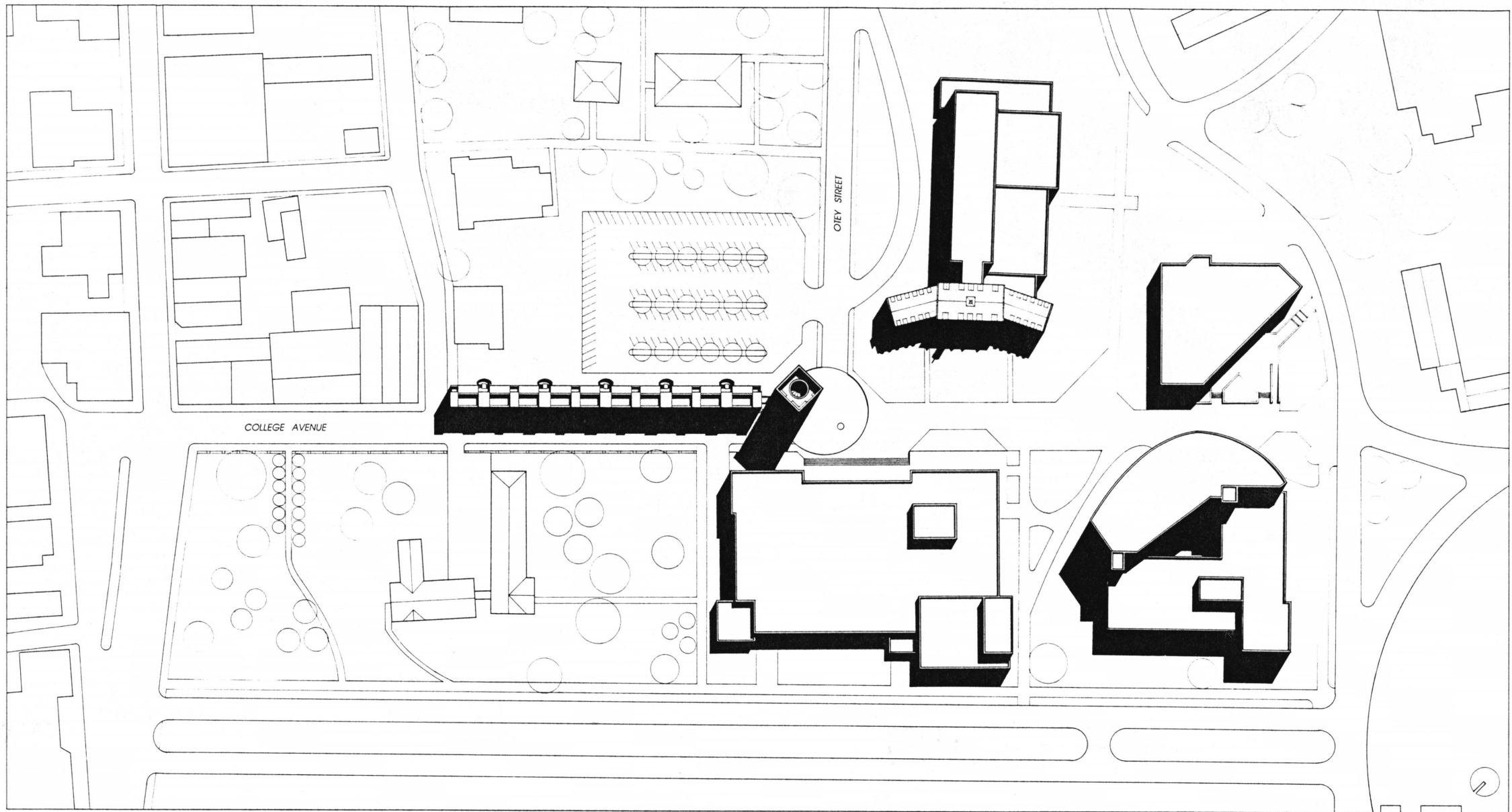


Whatever space and time mean, place and occasion mean more. For space in the image of man is place, and time in the image of man is occasion.

Today, space and what it should coincide with in order to become "space" -- man at home with himself -- are lost. Both search for the same place, but cannot find it...

Provide that place... articulate the in-between... Make of each a place; a bunch of places of each house and each city (a house is a tiny city, a city a huge house).

Aldo Van Eyck



SITE PLAN

A WALL

Functionally, the wall provides an arcade space at the street level with a load-bearing brick wall facing the parking lot and a series of brick piers connected by segmented concrete arches that form openings to the street. The subtle distinction between the brick piers along the street facade reflect their alternating functions. Behind the wider piers are the concrete stair towers providing access to the apartment units on the first and second level above the arcade space. These alternating one level efficiency and two-story, two-bedroom apartments are in response to the need for visiting faculty housing. The brick piers contain the service spaces of the apartments: the wide piers containing kitchen areas and the narrow piers the bathrooms. Finally, the roof level of the

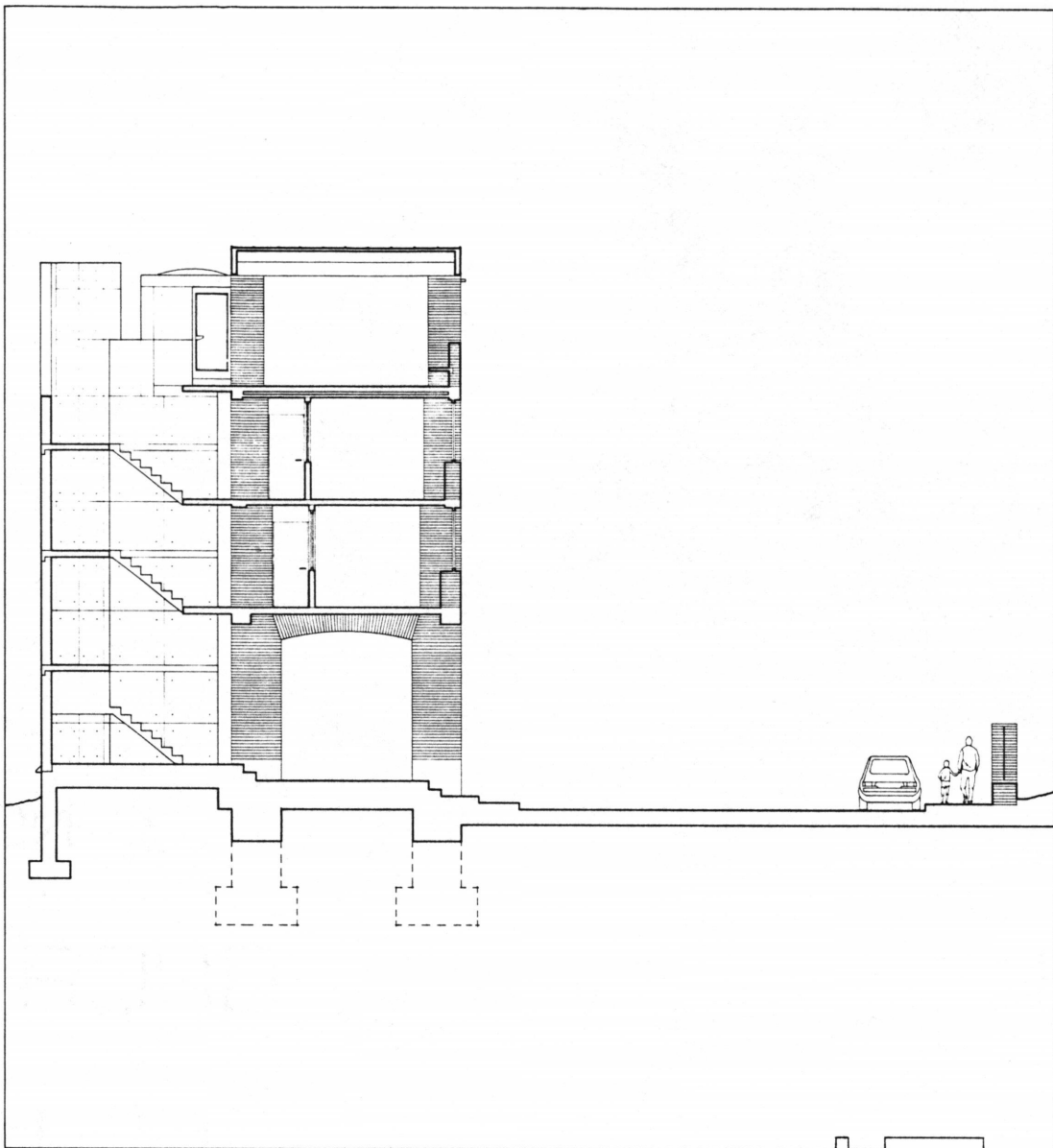
wall, which is accessible by either the stair towers of the wall or from the bridge connecting the wall and tower, provides a walkway that is lined by a series of long narrow study rooms. Each room contains four study carrels, as a place to study more private than the large library across the plaza. The roof level walkway is proposed simply as a unique place between the town and campus.

The two sides of the wall evolved so that they are characteristically different. This was intentional as one side faces a heavily traveled street of the town, while the other faces a parking lot that might soon become the location of a park deck structure. As the town and campus continue to consider the

construction of a parking deck structure to solve the parking problem of the area, some thought should be given to the unique features of the site. Placement of a parking deck structure immediately along the edge of College Avenue would give little to the town or campus other than a partial solution to parking problems of the area. This proposal, on the other hand, focuses on providing a unique element of connection and definition between the town and campus. In this way, while using only the first forty feet from the street edge and allowing for addition of a parking deck structure, this proposal gives to both the town and campus.

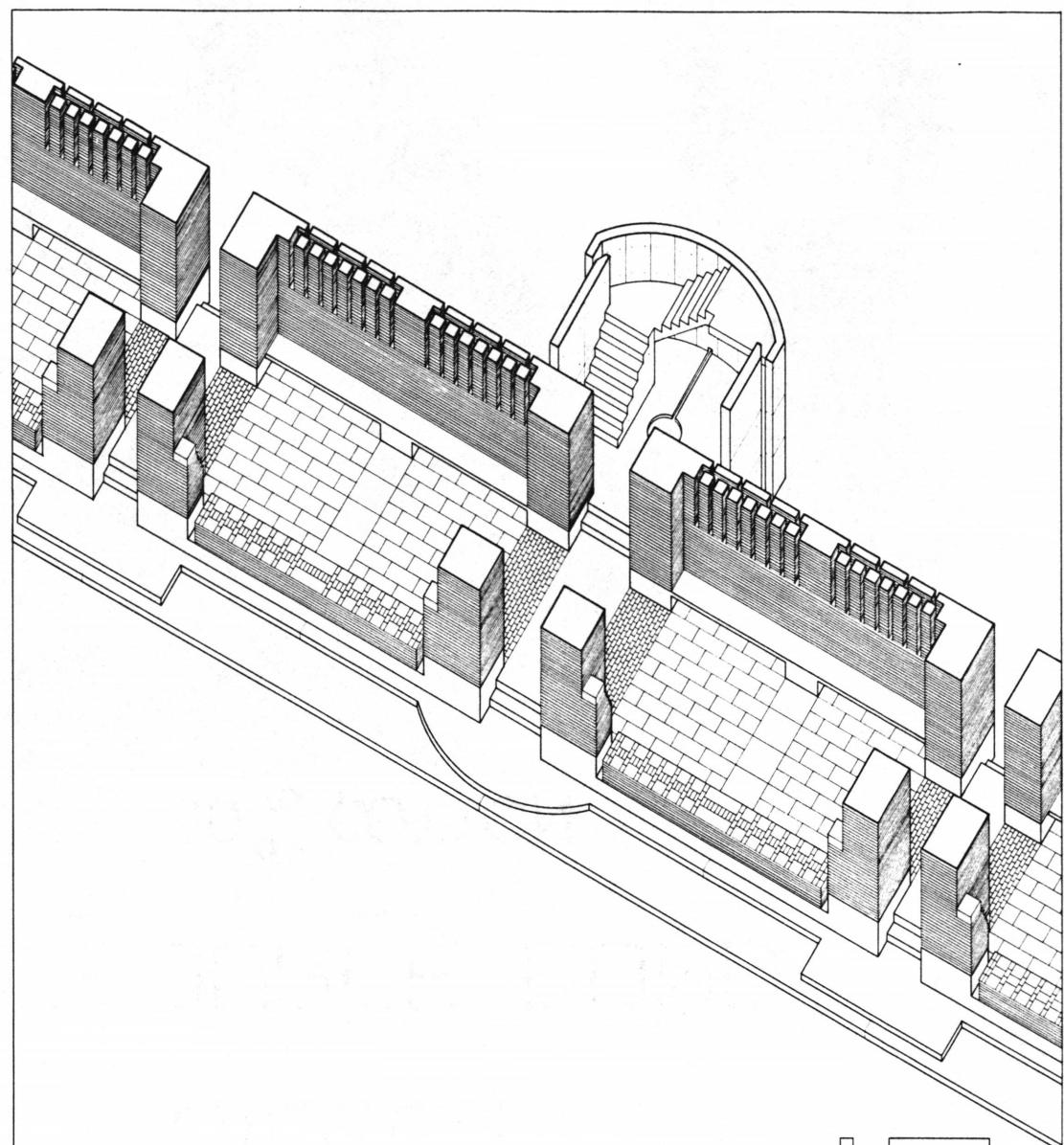
A TOWER

The idea of a tower evolved to the formal investigation of a cylindrical stair tower of concrete encased by a brick wall. The vertical slit in the center of the tower emphasizes its verticality and divides the tower into four units. This led to the idea of small study spaces being thought of more as landings off the stair than as rooms. In this way each study room containing four carrels is four steps above the previous room. This idea determined the elevation which communicates that the rooms do not share common levels, as is best illustrated by the unfolding of the tower. Finally, the four parts of the tower are reunited by large arched openings of brick at the observation level at the top, framing views towards the town and campus, as well as the mountains beyond.



SECTION A-A

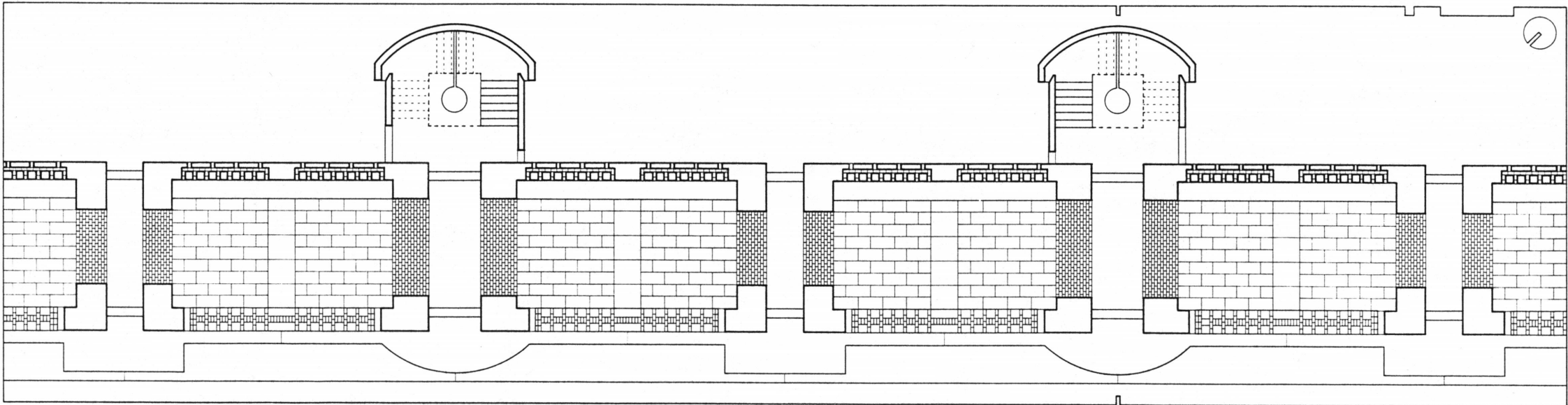
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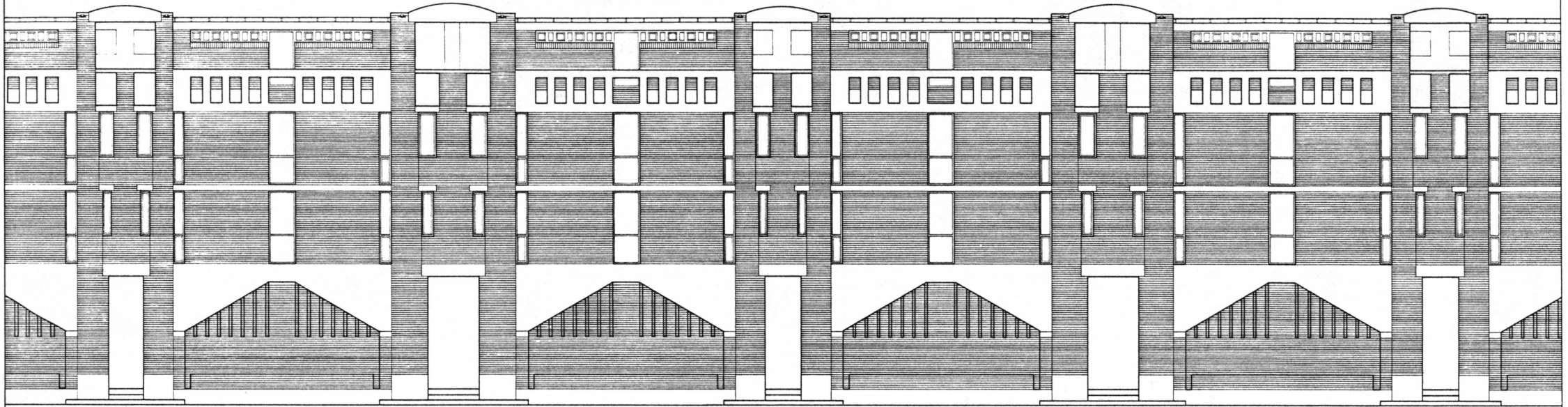
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STREET LEVEL PLAN



A-A

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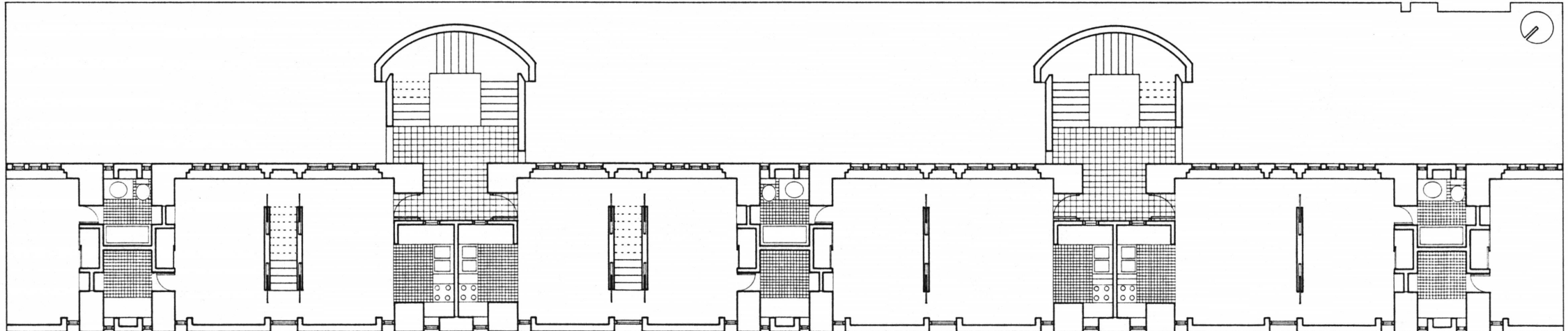


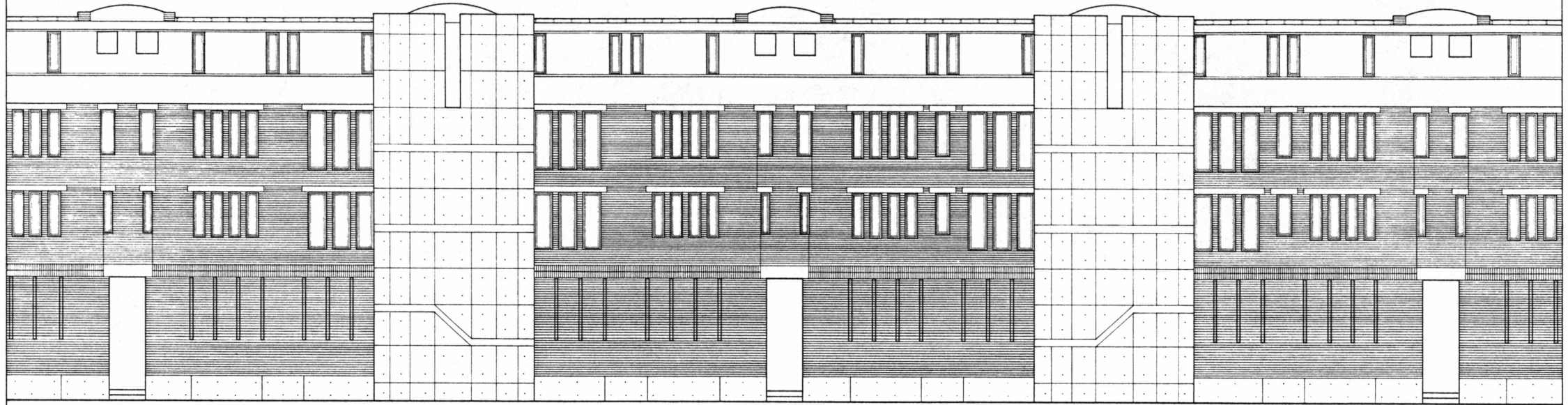
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FIRST LEVEL PLAN

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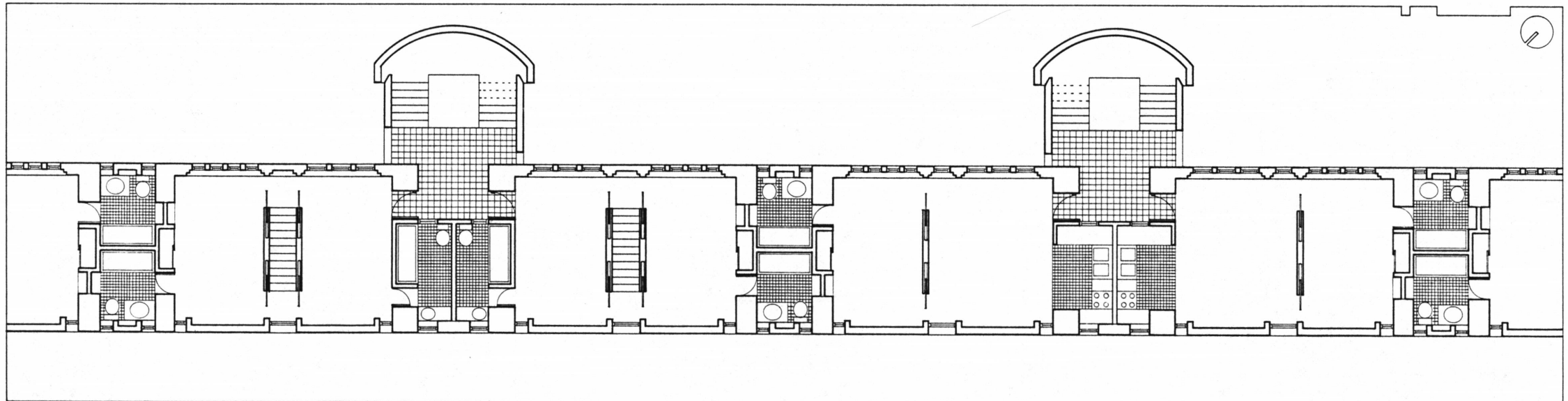


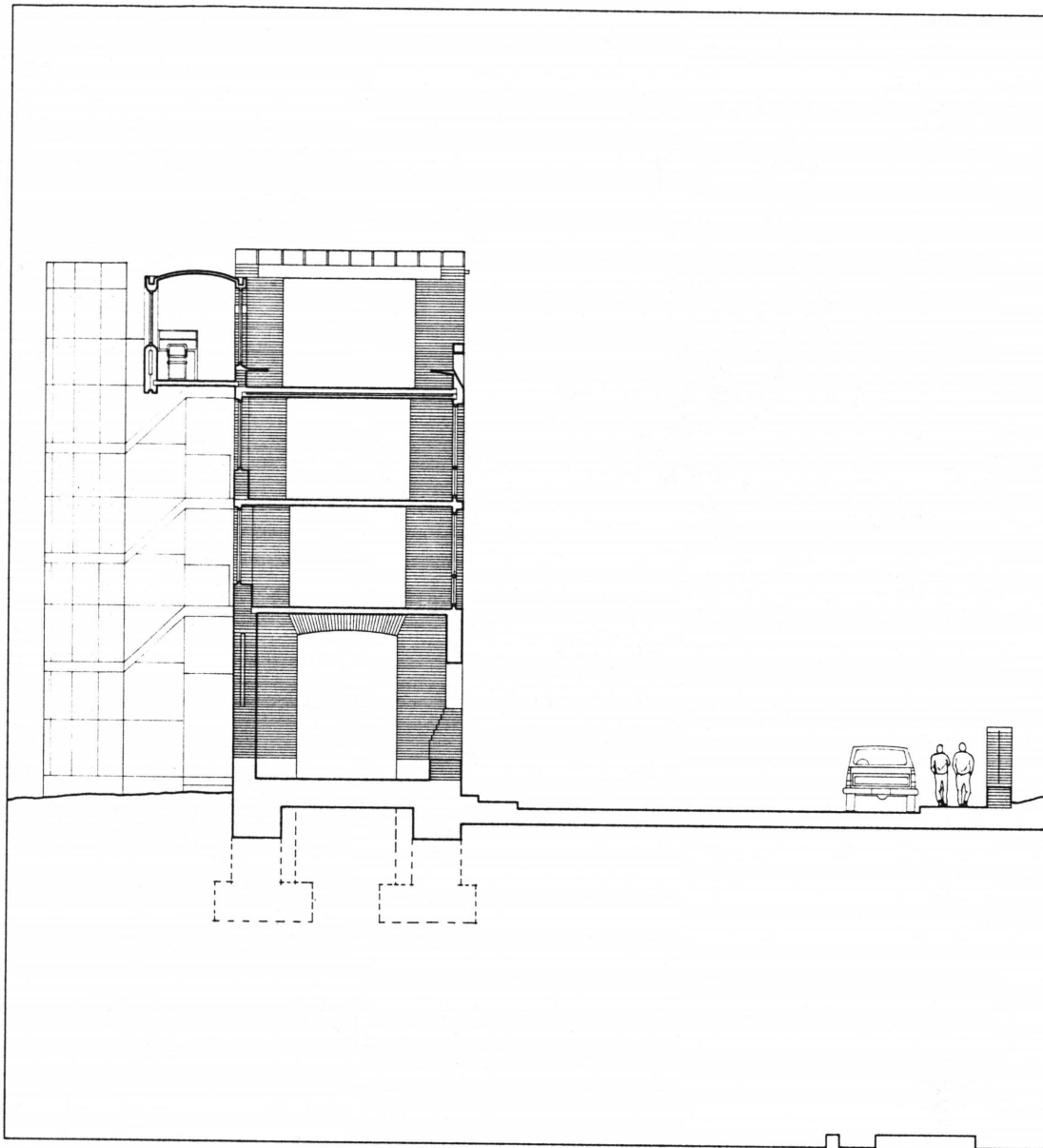
REAR ELEVATION

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SECOND LEVEL PLAN

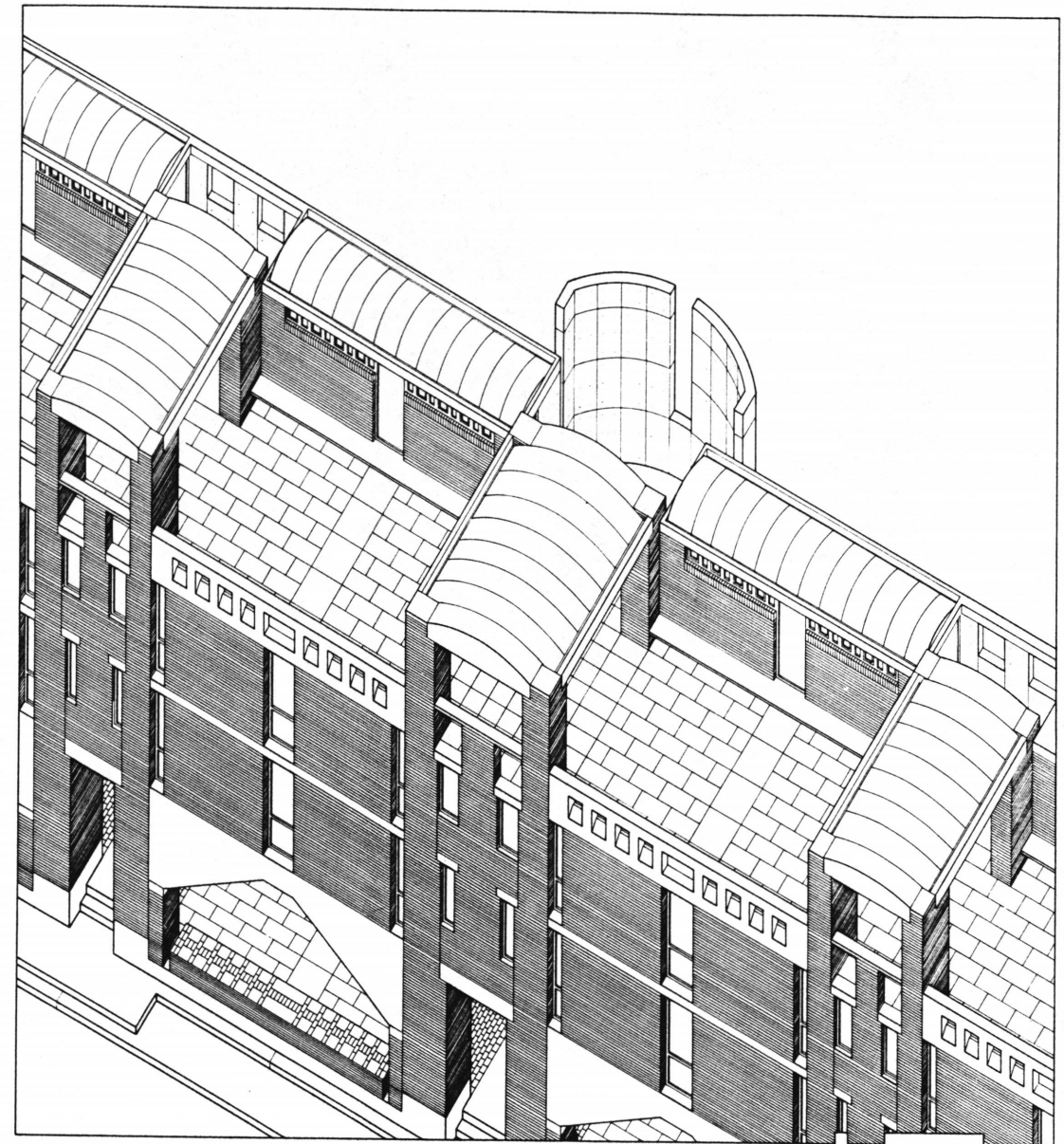
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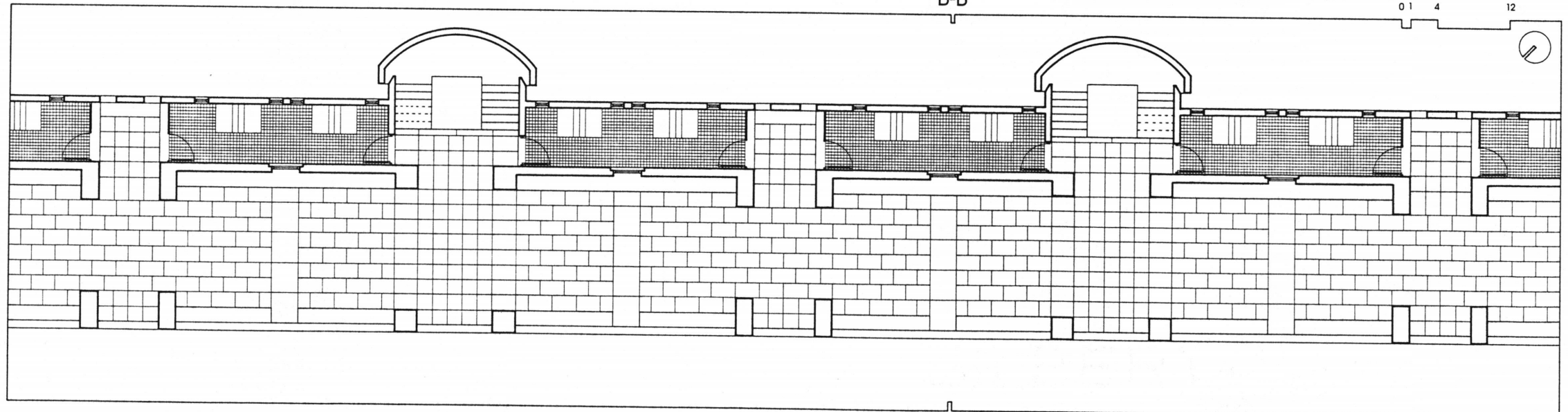
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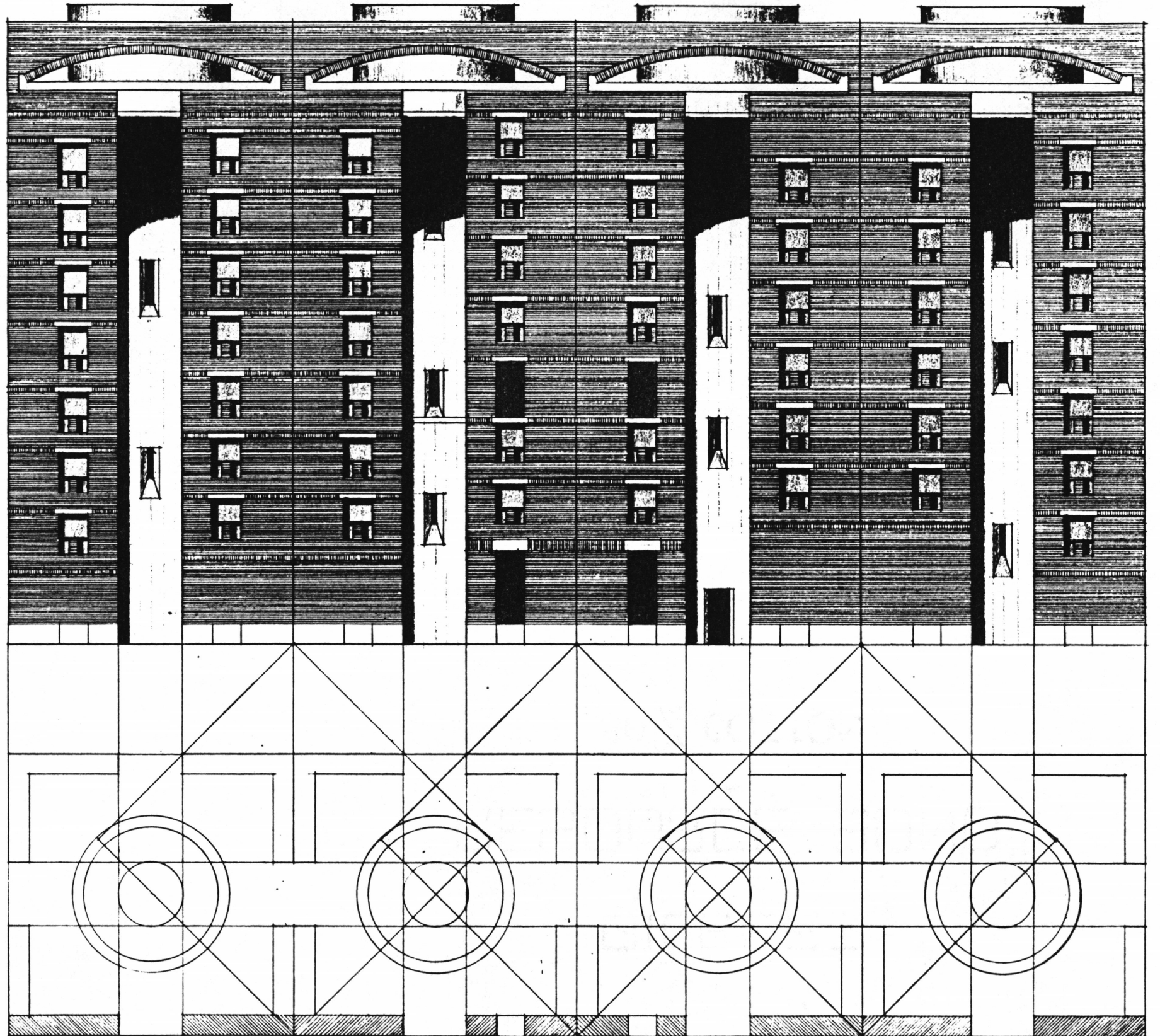
ROOF LEVEL PLAN

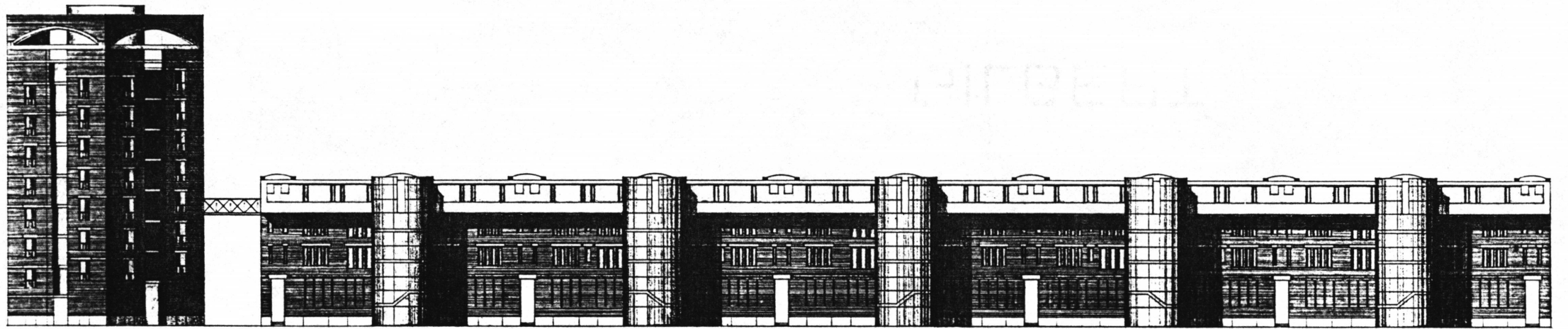


B-B

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TOWER
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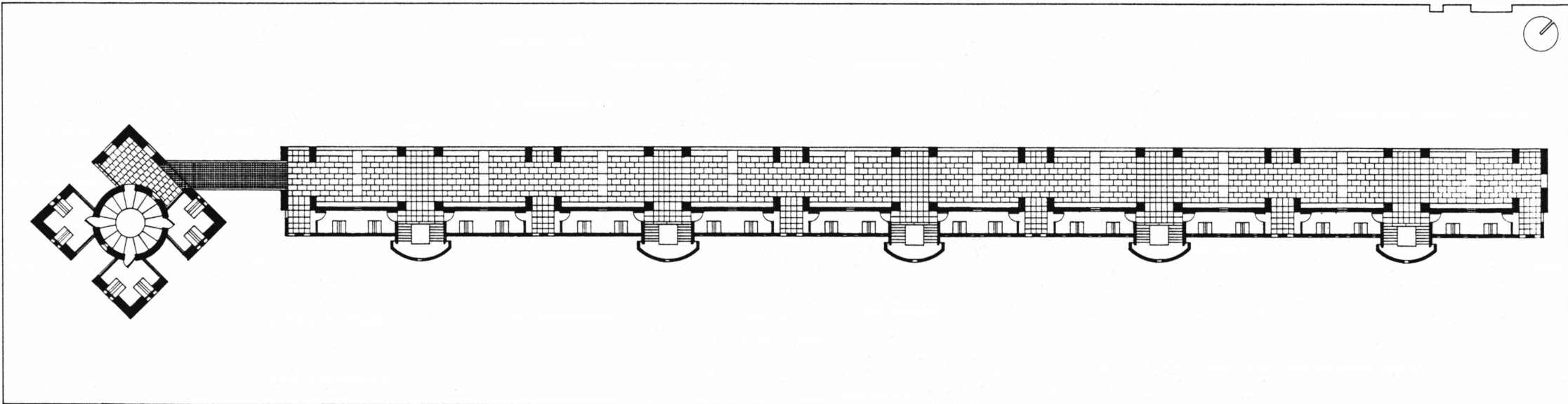


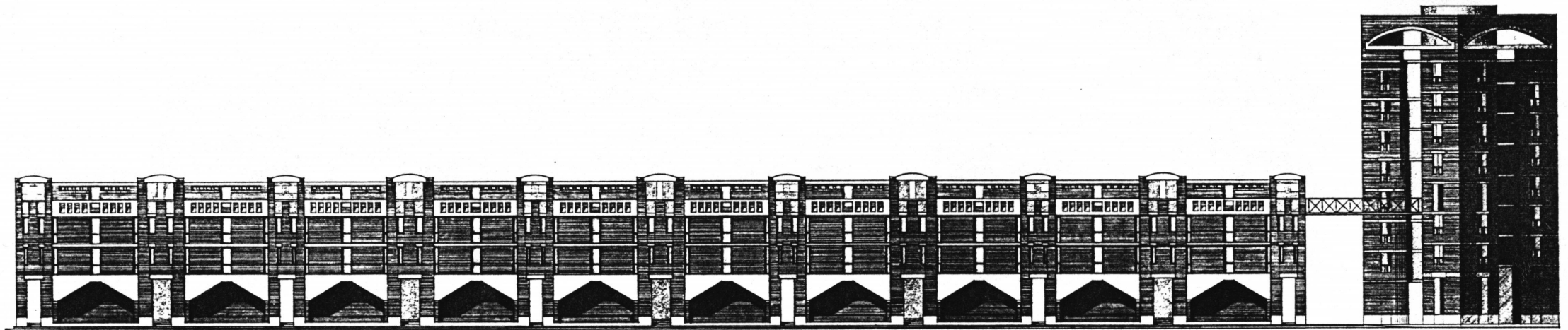


REAR ELEVATION

ROOF LEVEL PLAN

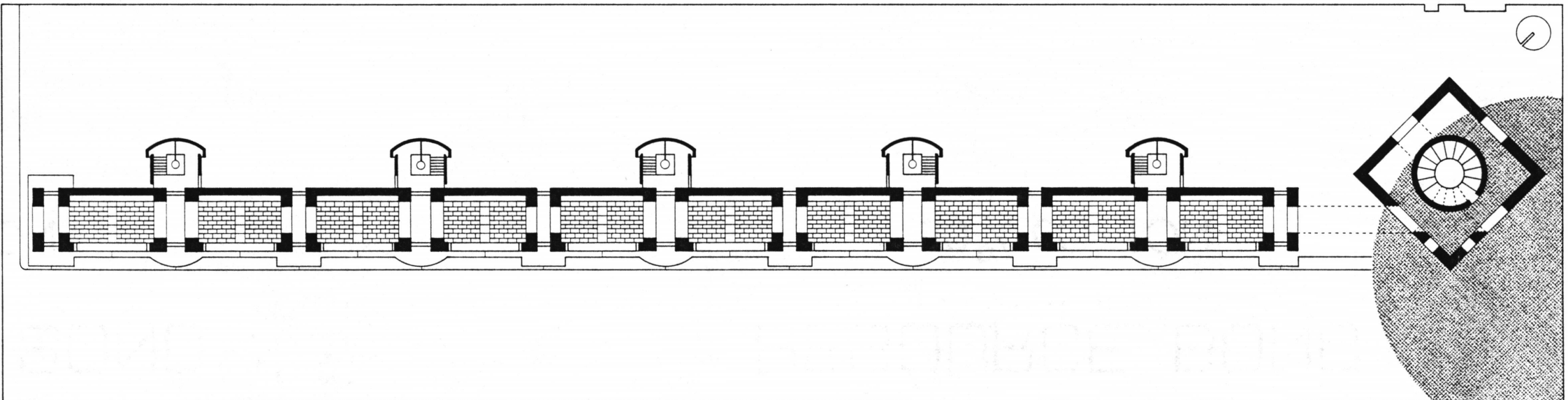
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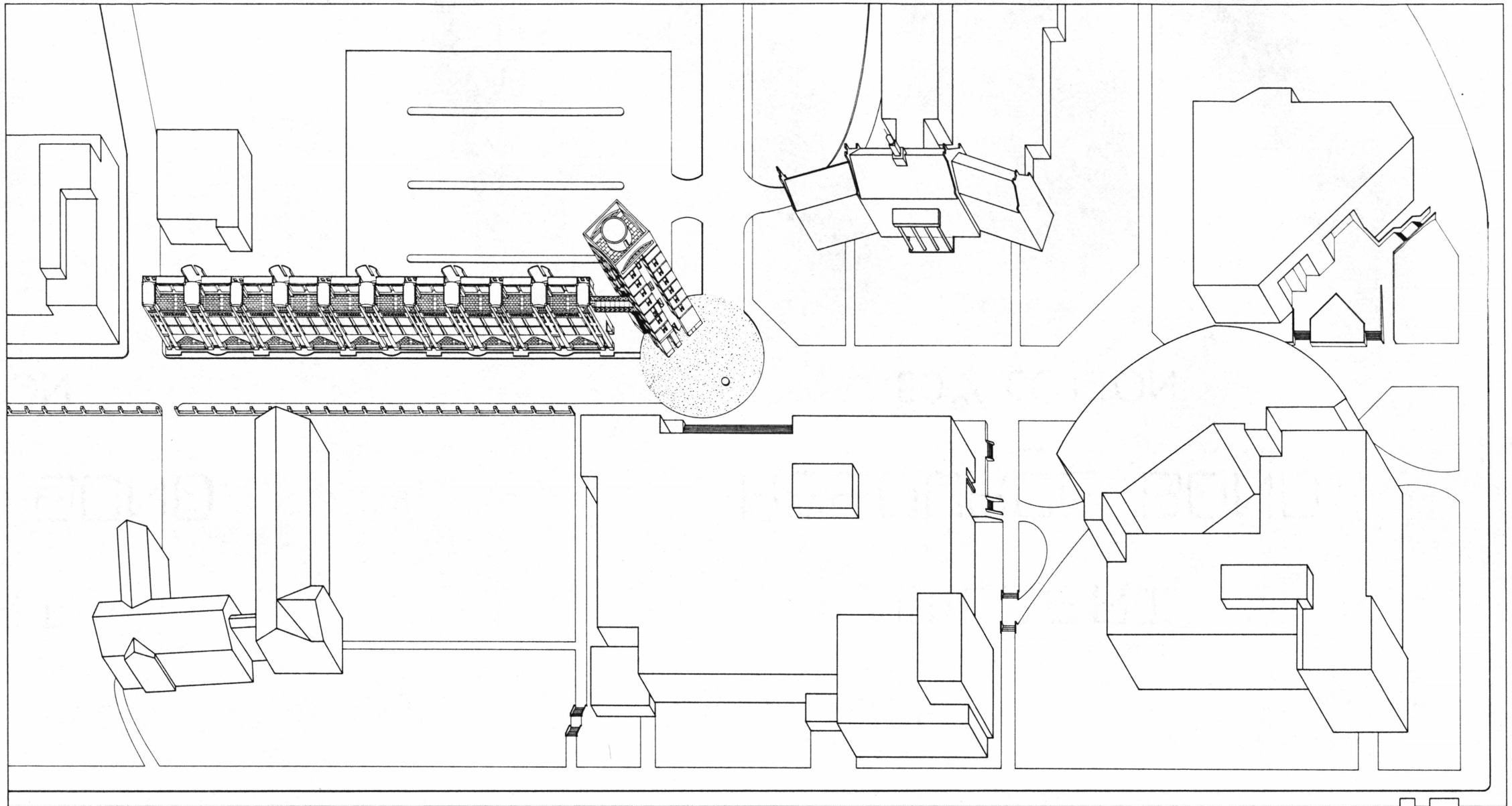




STREET ELEVATION

STREET LEVEL PLAN





AXONOMETRIC

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Note: All other photographs and sketches by author.

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