GATHERING AS SIGNIFICANCE

by

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Thesis submitted to the faculty of the
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State
University in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree
of
MASTER OF ARCHITECTURE

Jaan Holt, Chairman

Greg Hunt

William Brown

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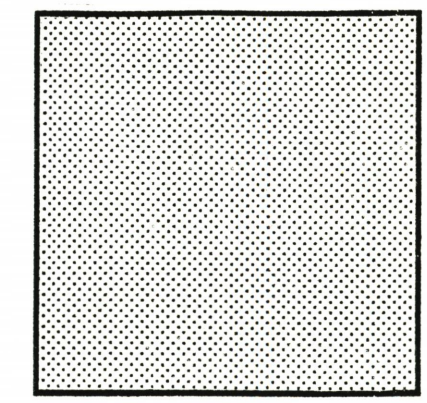
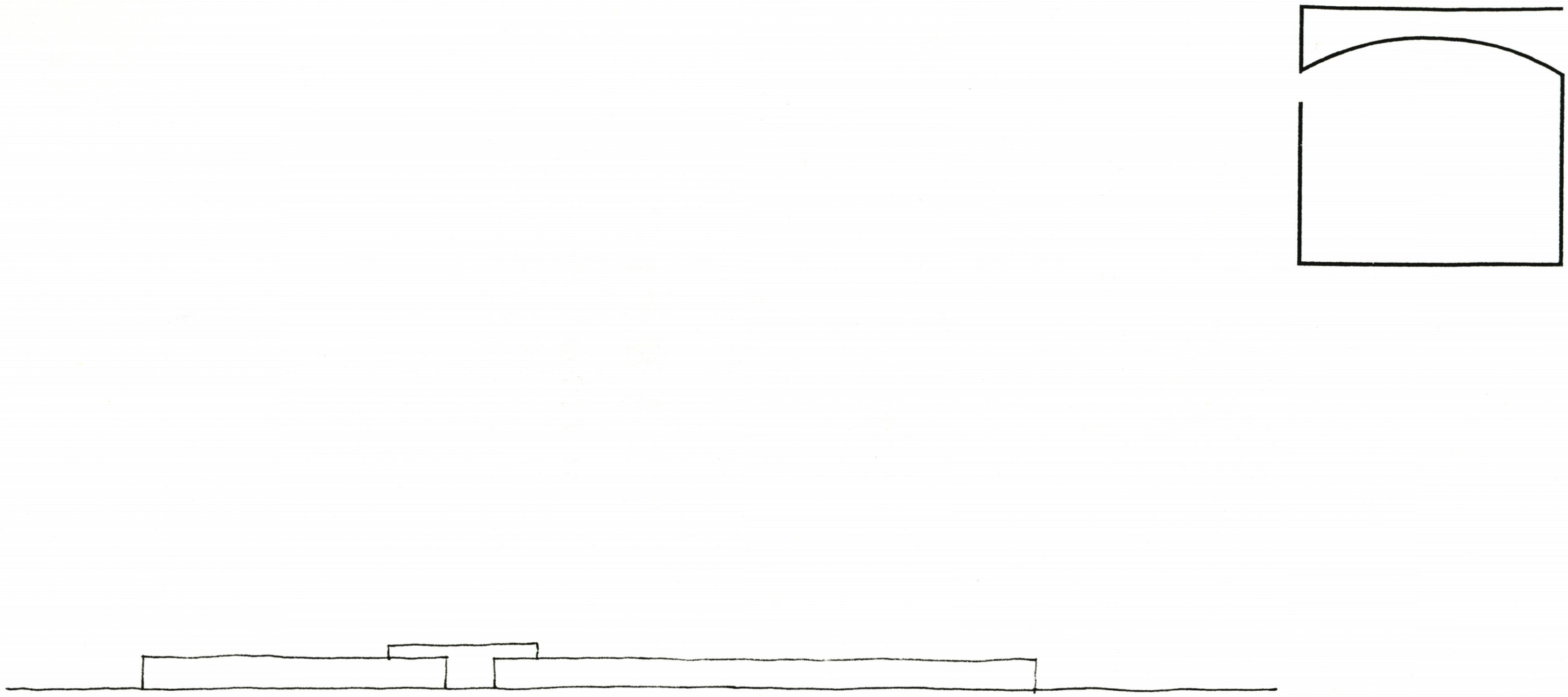




TO MY FATHER

(ABSTRACT)

The architect gathers his knowledge along the wandering path of life. He approaches a threshold and a new journey begins, a process of design into which he is gathered to embark on the task of touching peoples lives in hopé that they may gather together.

"One cannot be together with others in a space if one cannot be alone there in the midst of others."

ALDO VAN EYCK

GATHERING

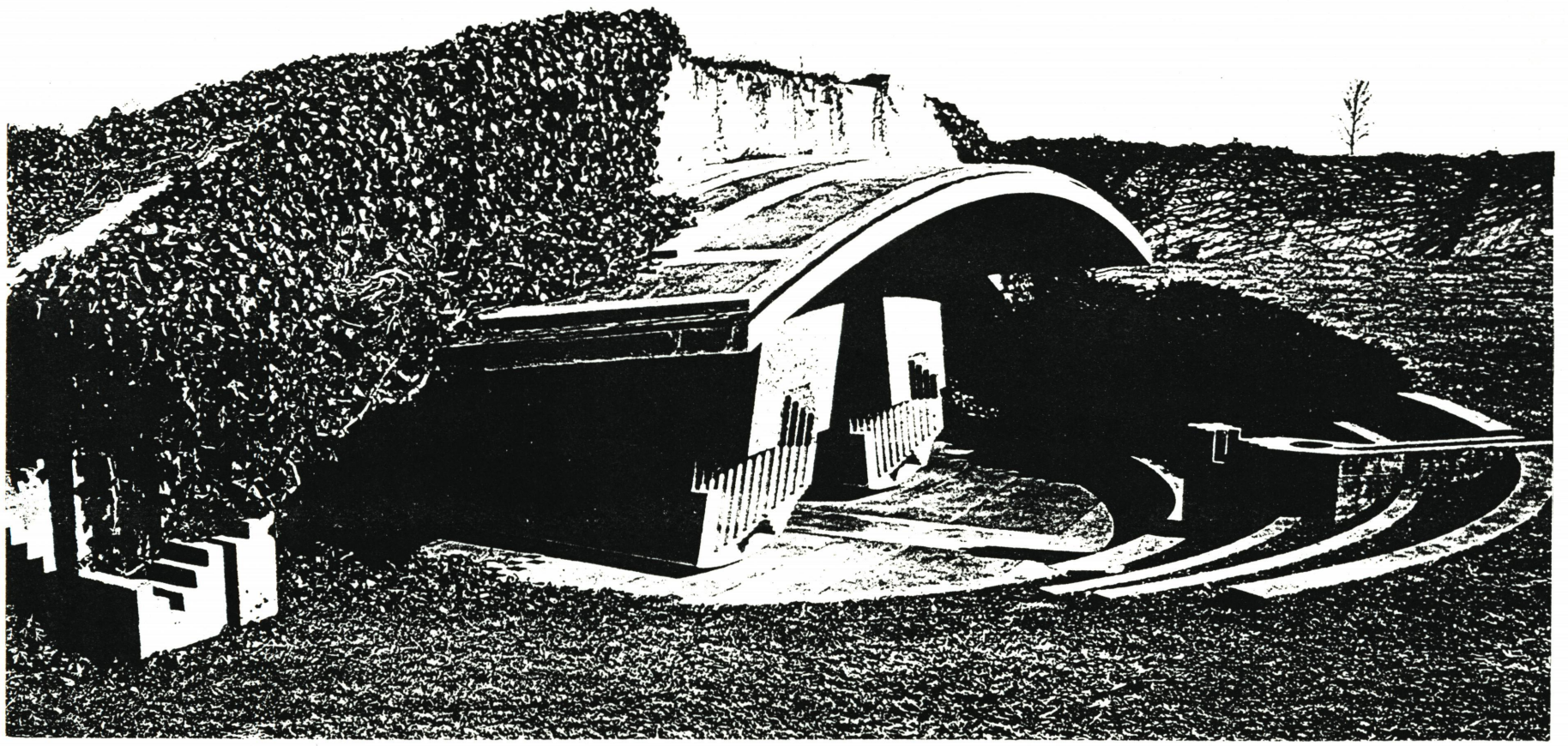
This architectural study concerns itself with an idea about 'gathering', embodying into one earth, sky, divinities and mortals. In Heidedder's essay on language he says; "to discuss language means to bring to it's place of being not so much language as ourselves; our own gathering into appropriation".[1]

I am not interested in discussing architecture as language but, rather to denote expressive forms as gathering; a twofold process in which one assimilates and in which one is assimilated.

GATHERING

So,what is gathering?We gather stones. We gather knowledge. We gather words. We gather together. We gather alone. Out of what is gathered, we make order. Order is gathered out of disorder. Over time new orders are gathered. Therefore, gathering evolves giving birth to new orders and new forms. The architect gathers as a process for creating as he is simultaneously created, or rather he evolves. The reduction of the evolution of order is perhaps best isolated in Louis Kahn's "order is". Within the limitations of old are existing forms, this quote offers to 'gathering' an openess; to be

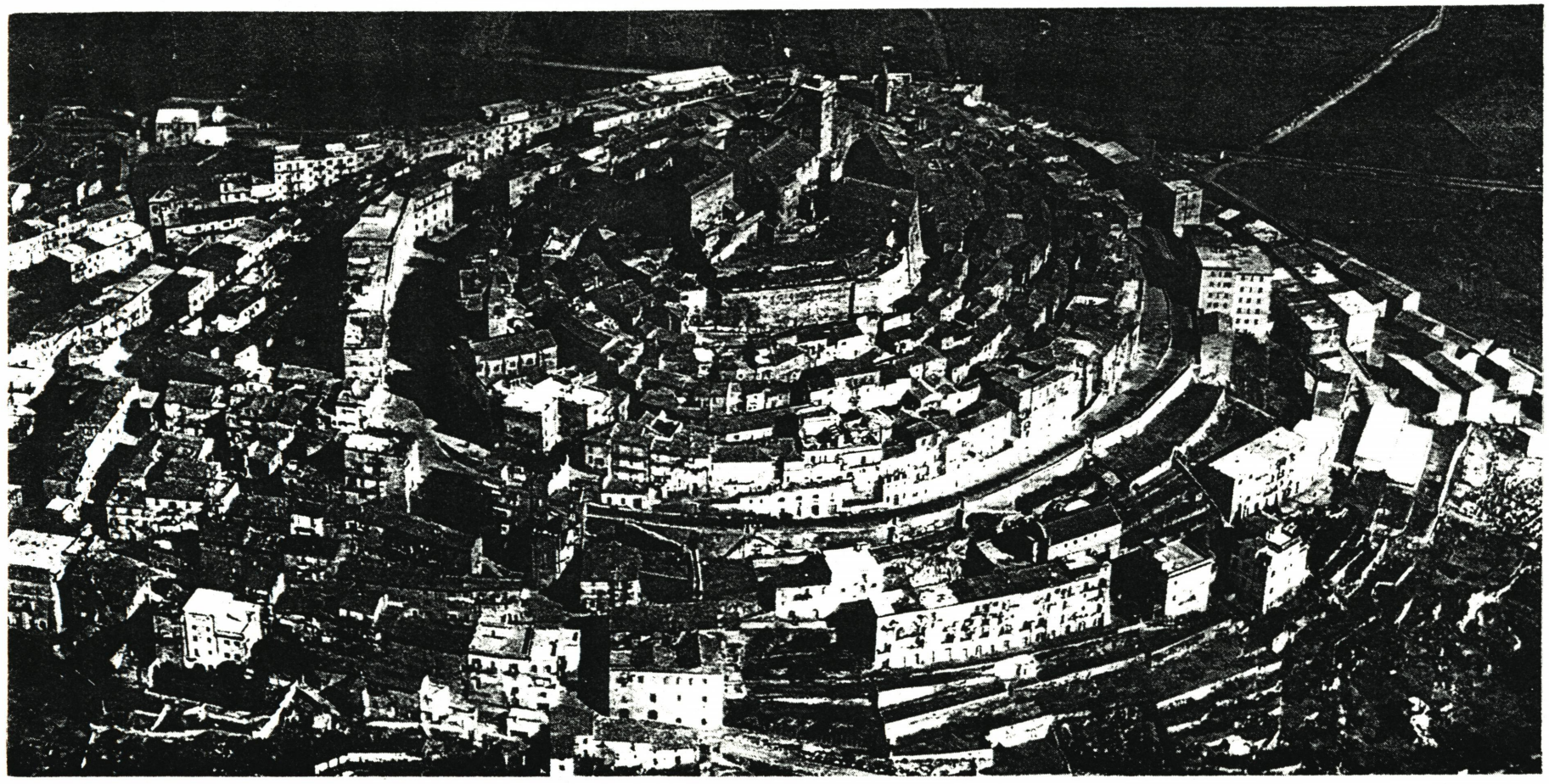
GATHERING



used as a vital impulse for transformations.

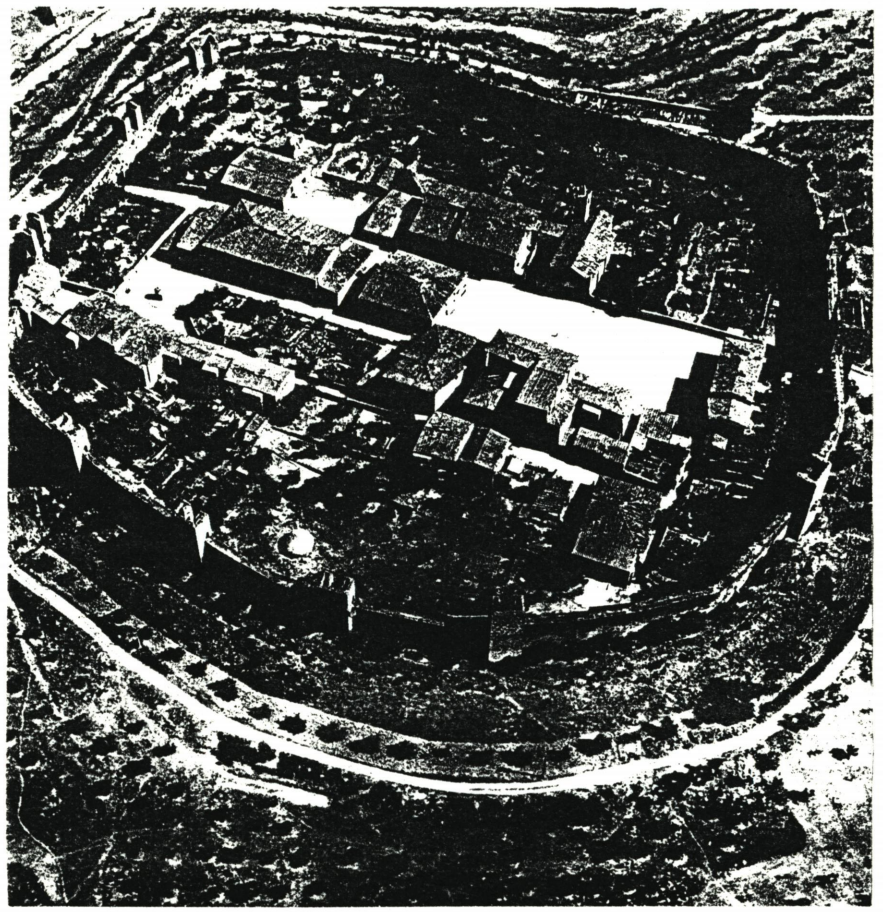
An architecture of gathering brings a complex multiplicity of forces that are expressed as for, a minaturization of the universe and its' contradictive forces. "A single wall severs interrupts, opposes and violently alters the scene in which it is placed. The wall is both the supreme entity and the inhabitant of a larger metaphysical landscape."[2] Gathering brings the part and the whole together, which is part of a larger whole, and it is for this reason that design begins at the boundaries; earth, sky, and horizon.

GATHERING



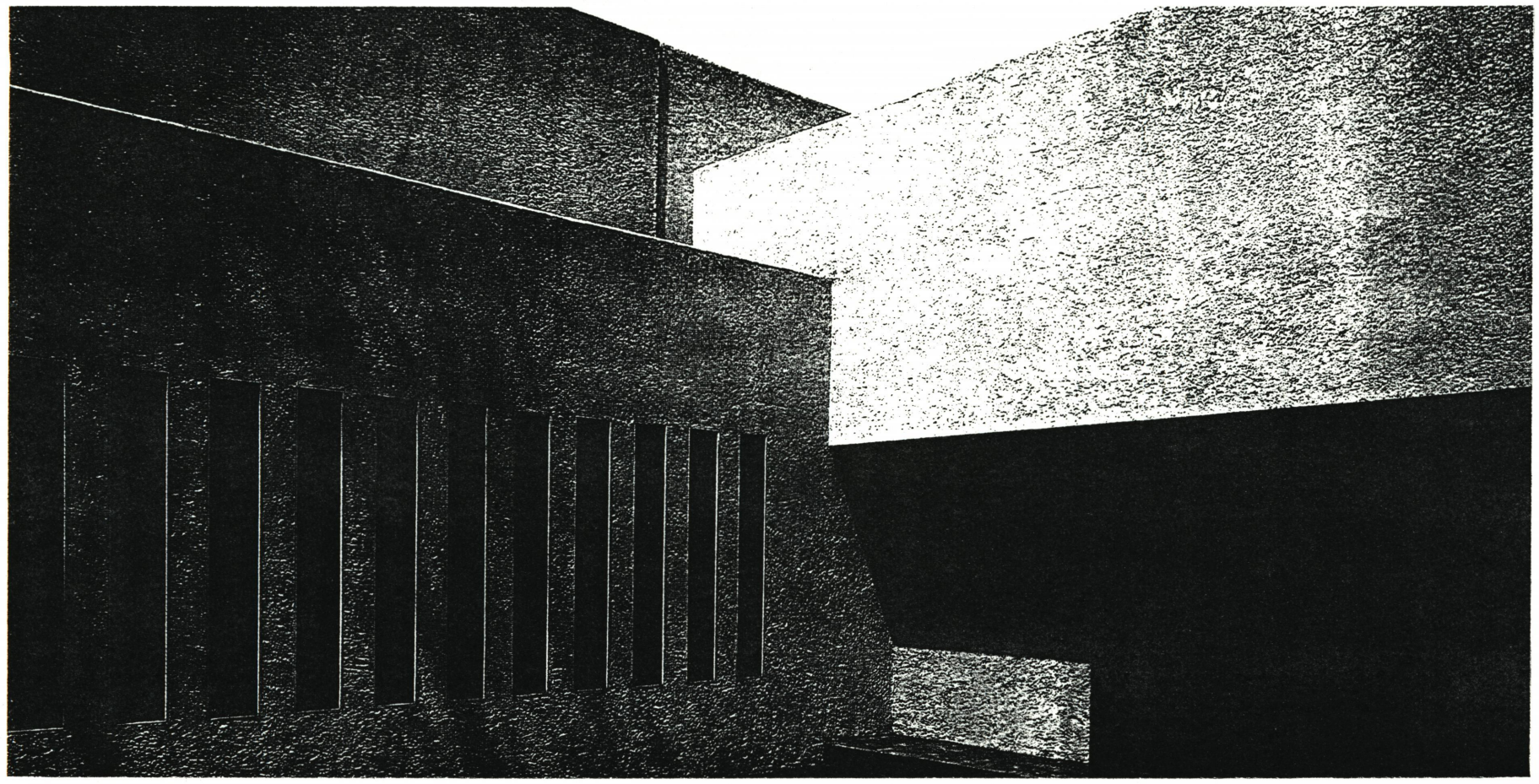
Gathering makes a center by creating a place. "The man made place visualizes, complements and symbolizes mans understanding of his environment. In addition it may also gather a number of meanings. Any true settlement is founded on gathering,and the basic forms are the farm, the agricultural village, the urban dwelling, and the town or city. All these places are essentially 'man made' or 'artifical' but, these fall into two distinctive categories. The first two are directly related to the land, that is, they form part of a particular environment and their structure is determined by this

GATHERING



environment. In the urban dwelling and the town as a whole,instead; the direct relation to the natural environment is weakened or lost and gathering becomes a bringing together of forms which have their roots in other localities."[3]

Therefore, the gathering function today that concerns itself with local environment comprises a multitude of meanings gathered from the global environment; thus an increasing complexity ensures. In gathering we now bring to a place a 'presence' that is both surface and symbols, rather significance as an aspiration.



Moreover, architects should be concerned with the significance that Michael Benedikt alludes to in,For an Architecture of Reality. Benedikt says; "significance is not achieved by the display of icons, signs, and symbols, but by how buildings actually come to be and how they continue to be part of the lives of the people who dream them, draw them, build them, own them and use them"[4]

If in gathering we bring to a place a presence that is significant, then perhaps more is brought to a place than can be designed for; that aspiration of gathering earth and sky,

GATHERING

divinities and mortals.

"The bridge gathers, as a passage that crosses, before the divinities...

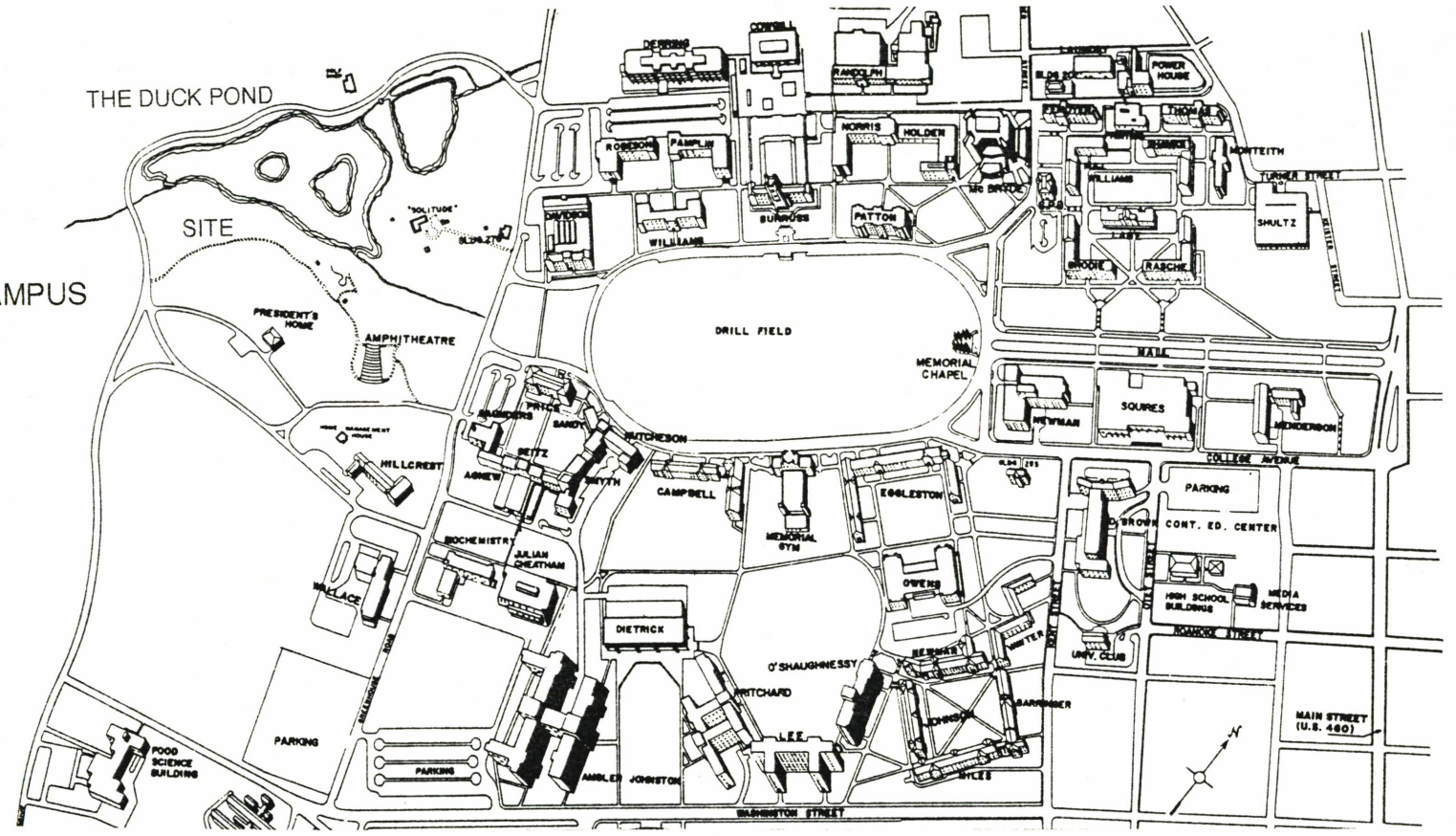
Whether we explicitly think of and give thanks for their presence,or whether that devine presence is obstructed or even pushed wholly aside.The bridge gathers to itself in its own way earth and sky, divinities and mortals.

...a single of the four."[5]

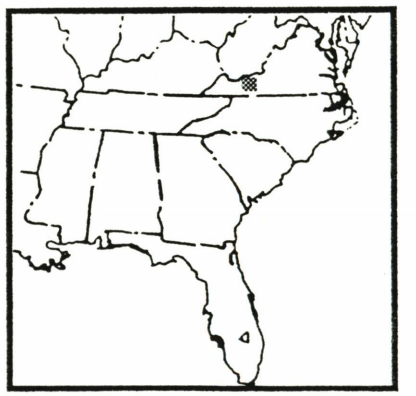
[1] Heidegger, Martin; Poetry Language Thought.
[2] Ando, Tadao; "The Wall'; Progressive Architecture.
[3] Norberg-Schulz, Christian; Genius Loci, Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture.
[4] Benedikt, Michael; For an Architecture of Reality.
[5] Heidegger, Martin; Poetry Language Thought.

LOCATION

VIRGINIA TECH CAMPUS

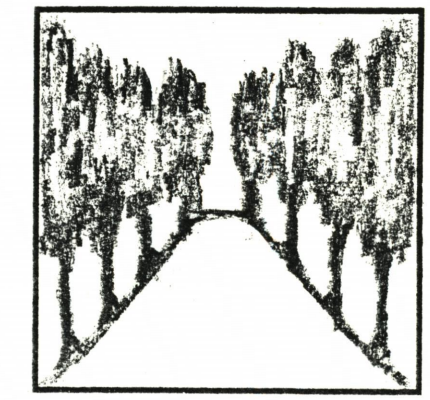


The site chosen for my thesis project is located in Blacksburg, in scenic southwestern Virginia, on the campus of Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. The college of Virginia Tech was established in 1872. The campus lies on a plain between the Blue Ridge and the Allegheny Mountains. This area is known for its natural beauty and outdoor recreational opportunities. The university has 100 campus buildings that surround the Drill Field. Located west of the Drill Field is the Duck Pond. This is where my thesis project is located.

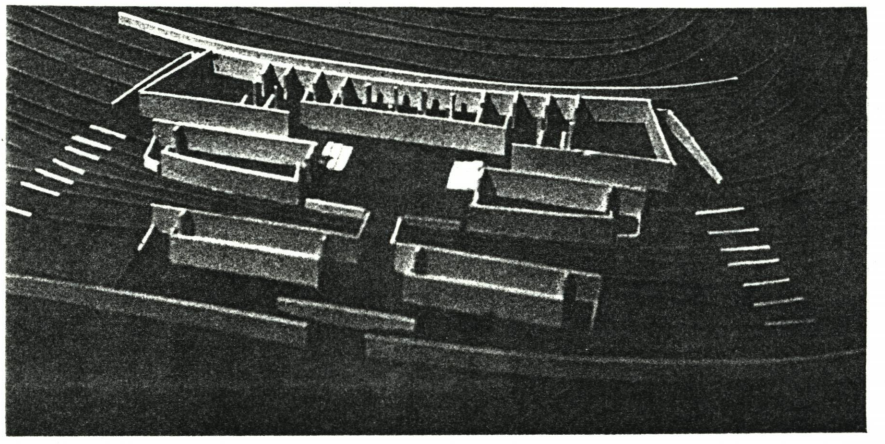


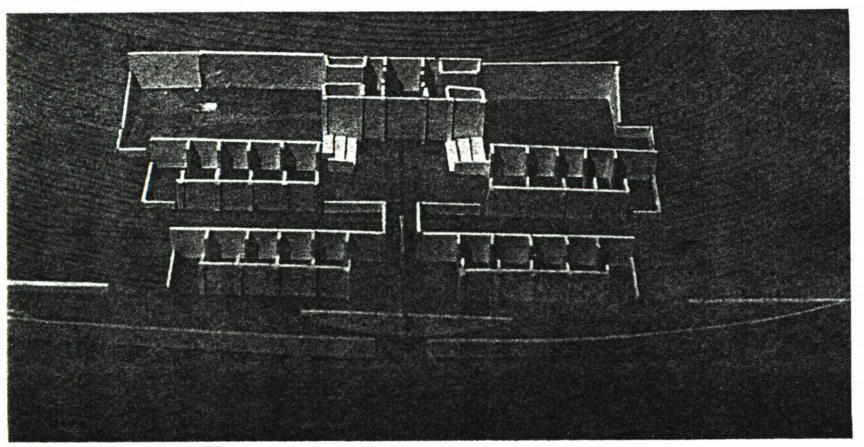
THE DUCK POND

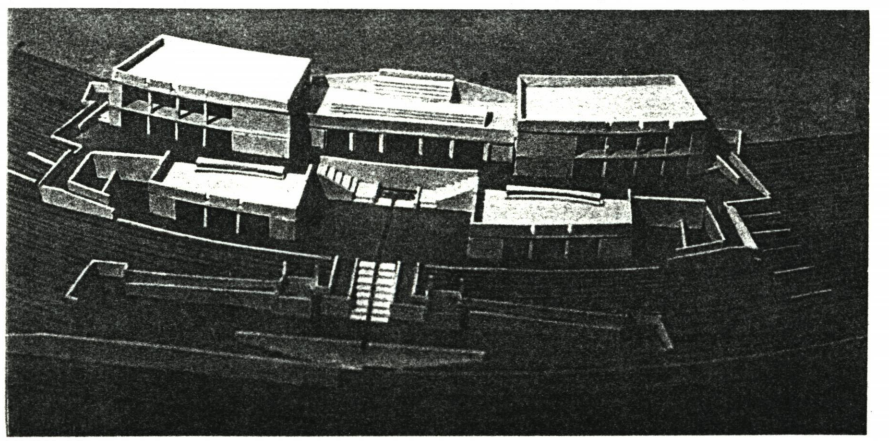
For years the duck pond, located at the far west end of the campus, has been a gathering place. A central path leading from campus intersects the pond from the hillside. The path is lined with trees that become the threshold to the site. One follows the reflections of the trees in the water.The path leads one from the academic world to a world where one can focus on inward activity.



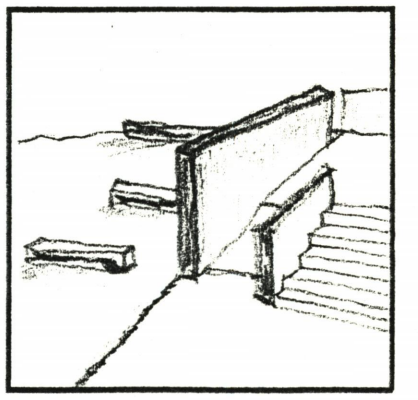
BEGINNINGS



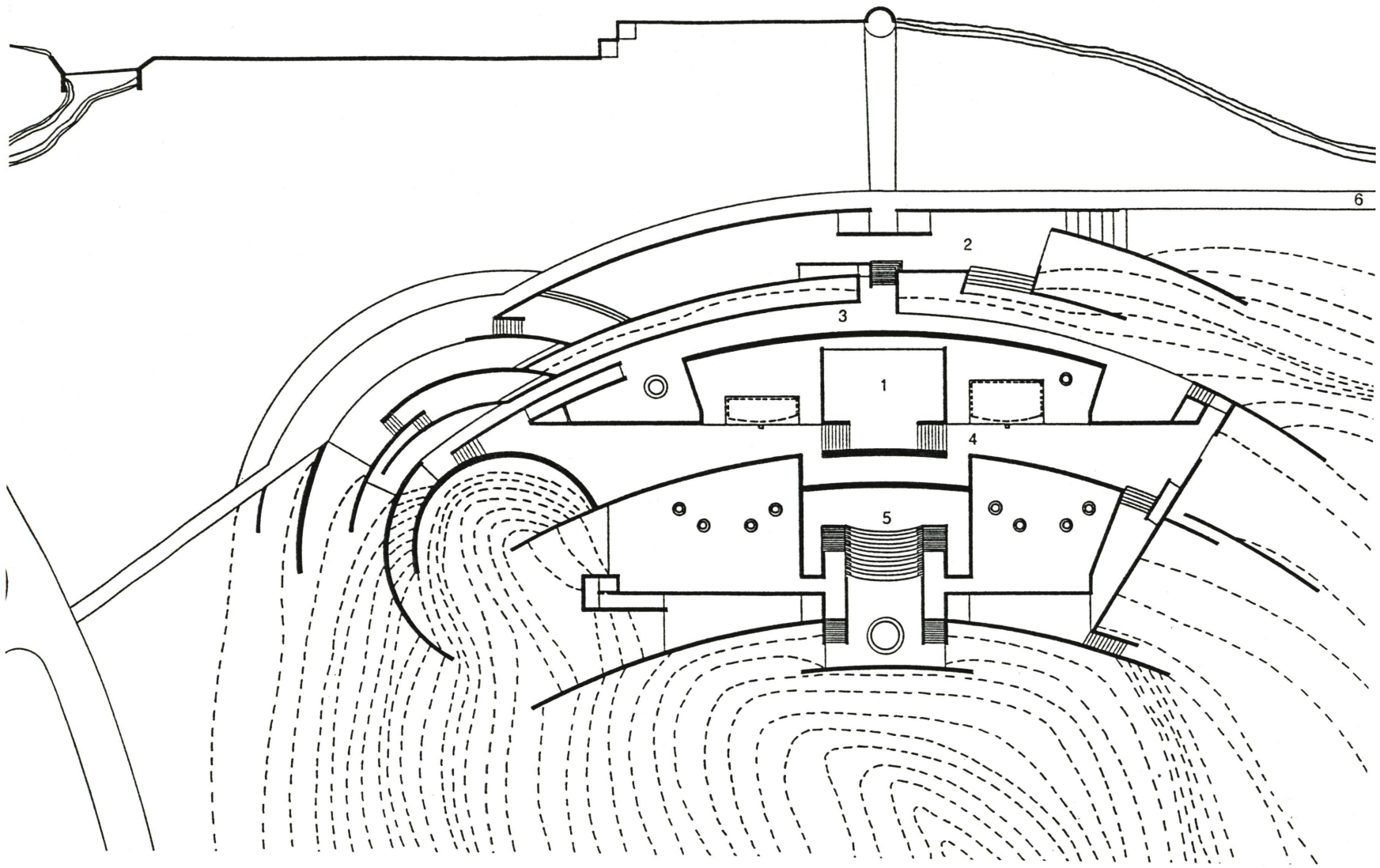




The linear lines of the path follow the earths' contours until concrete retaining walls are formed. The sitecast concrete walls conform with the lands contours, allowing the walls to alter the landscape. The walls are used to distinguish between function and privacy. Each wall parallels the earths contours upward to the top of the hillside. Allowing the project to be built into the hillside maintains the integrity of the pond and the surronding landscape.



SITE PLAN



The central path that runs along the retaining wall throughout the site follows along each entrance allowing for one to enter at any one of the locations. The path crosses the center axis of the project where one may ascend through the walls to the first terrace. Throughout the project one may take many paths to reach the top of the hillside. The concrete forms terrace floors, ramps, and stairs to create a path which elavates one to each level.

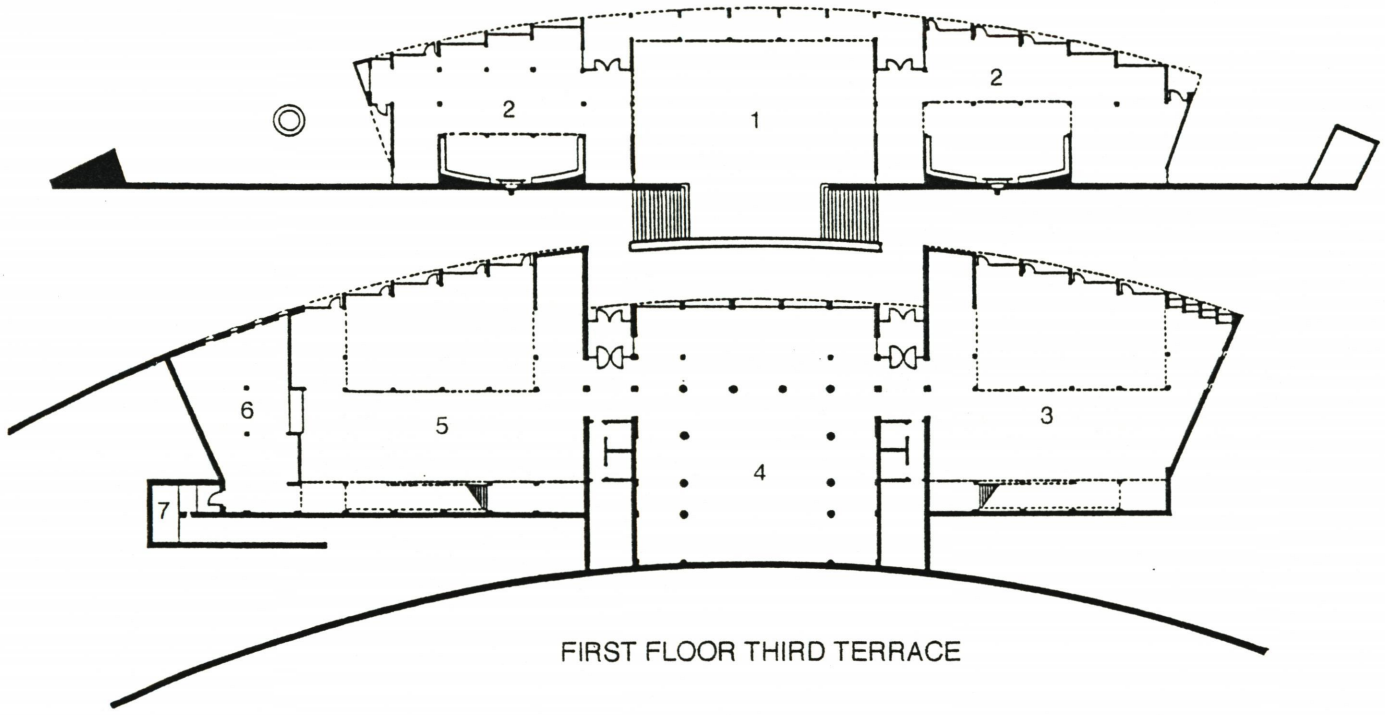
0 12 24 72

SCALE FEET

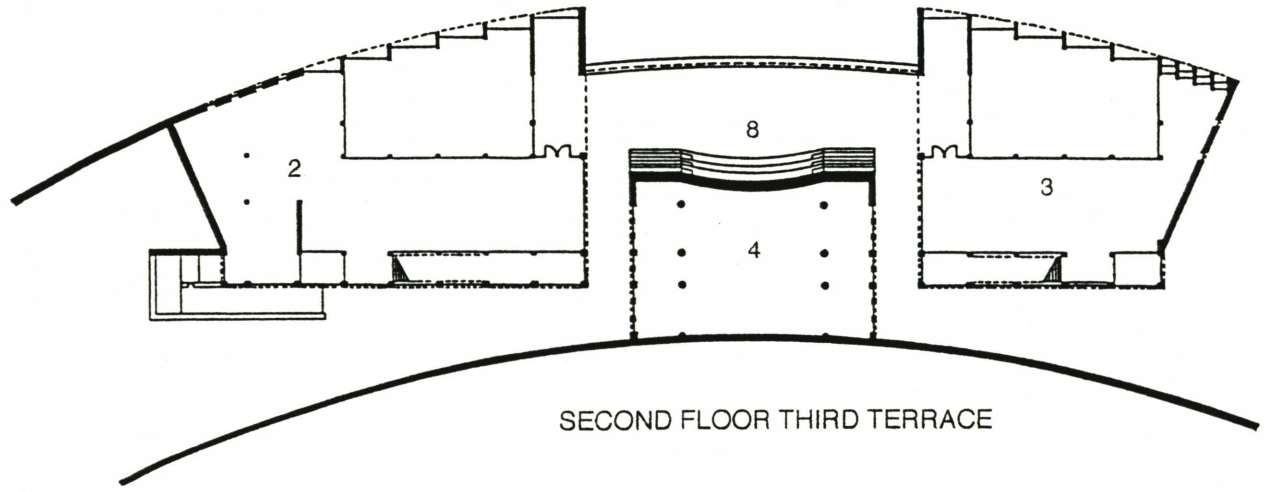
1 COURT YARD
2 FIRST TERRACE
3 SECOND TERRACE
4 THIRD TERRACE
5 AMPHITHEATER
6 PATH FROM CAMPUS

FLOOR PLANS

FIRST FLOOR SECOND TERRACE



FIRST FLOOR THIRD TERRACE



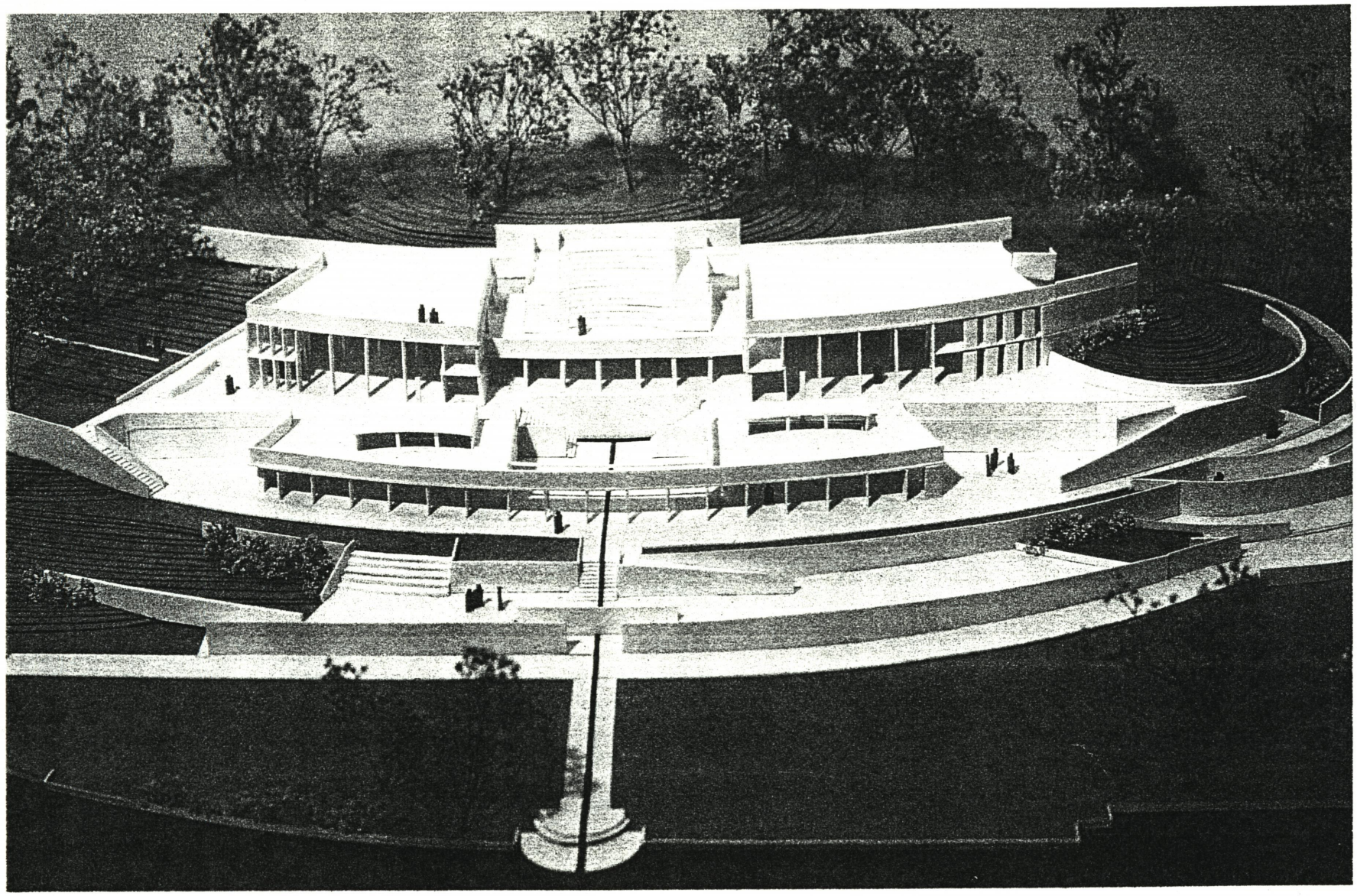
SECOND FLOOR THIRD TERRACE

0 12 24 72

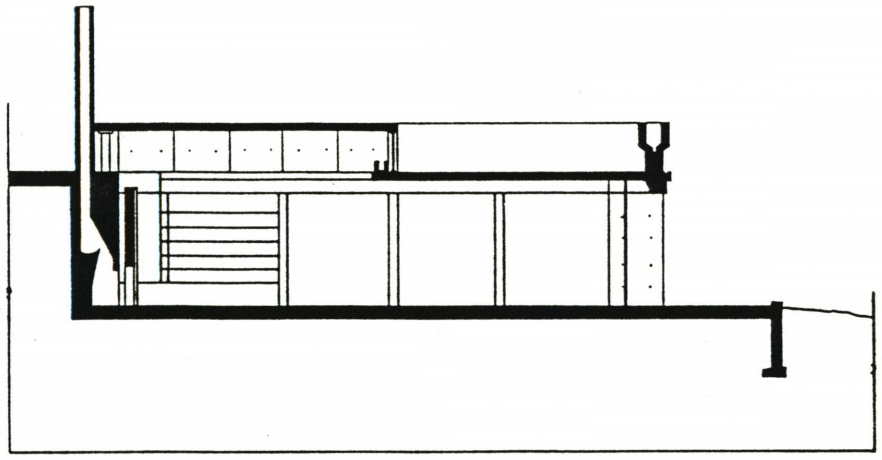
SCALE FEET

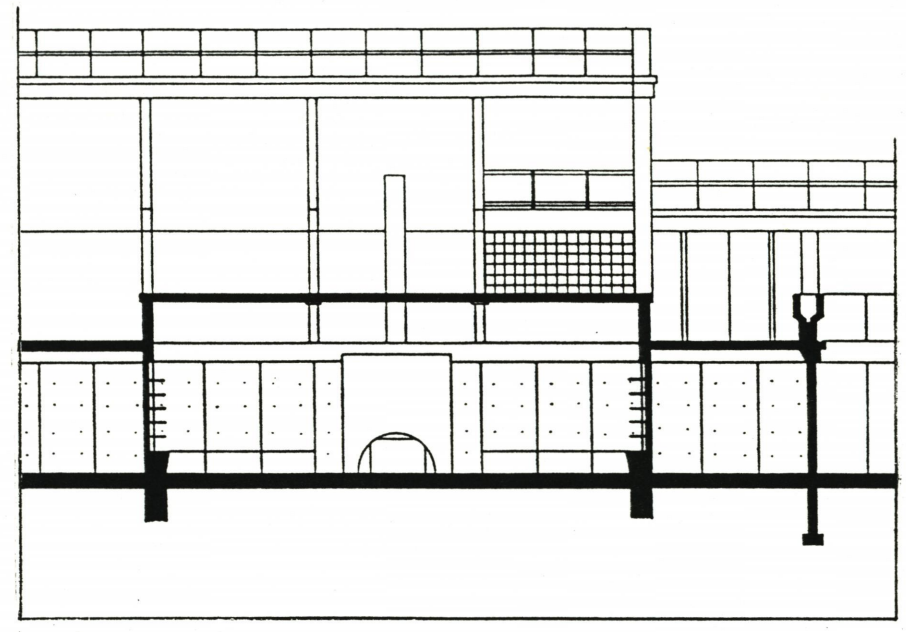
1 COURT YARD
2 STUDY AREAS
3 ACTIVITY AREA
4 SOCIAL HALL
5 RESTUARANT
6 KITCHEN
7 SERVICE ENTRANCE
8 AMPHITHEATER

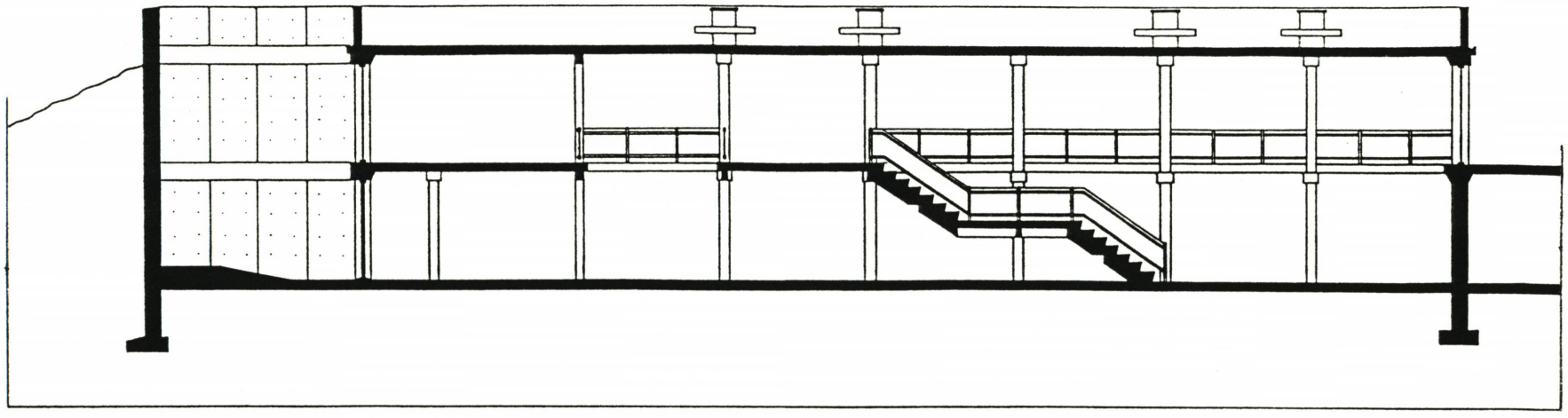
SITE MODEL



SECTIONS

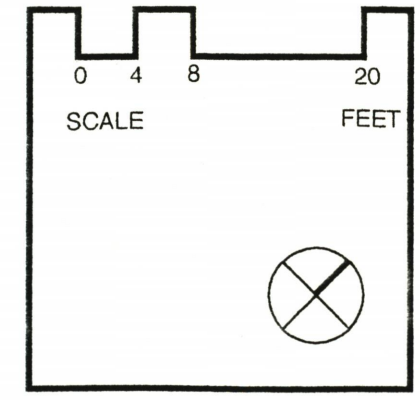




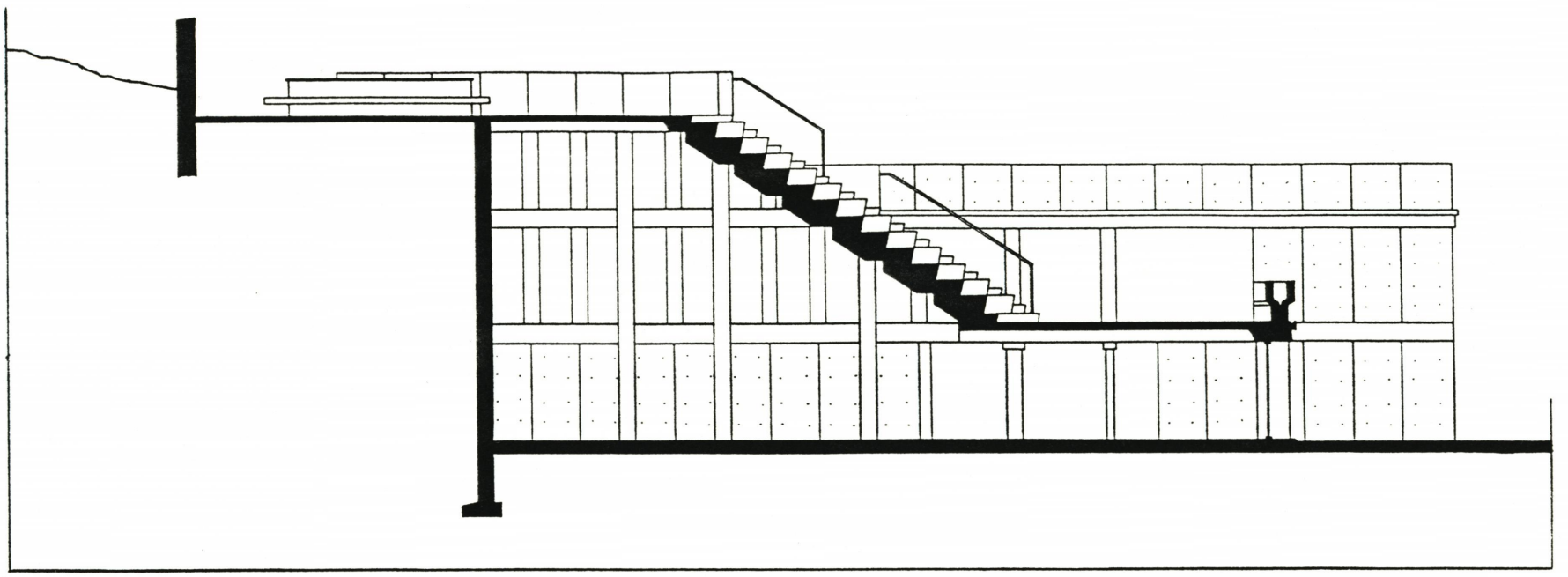


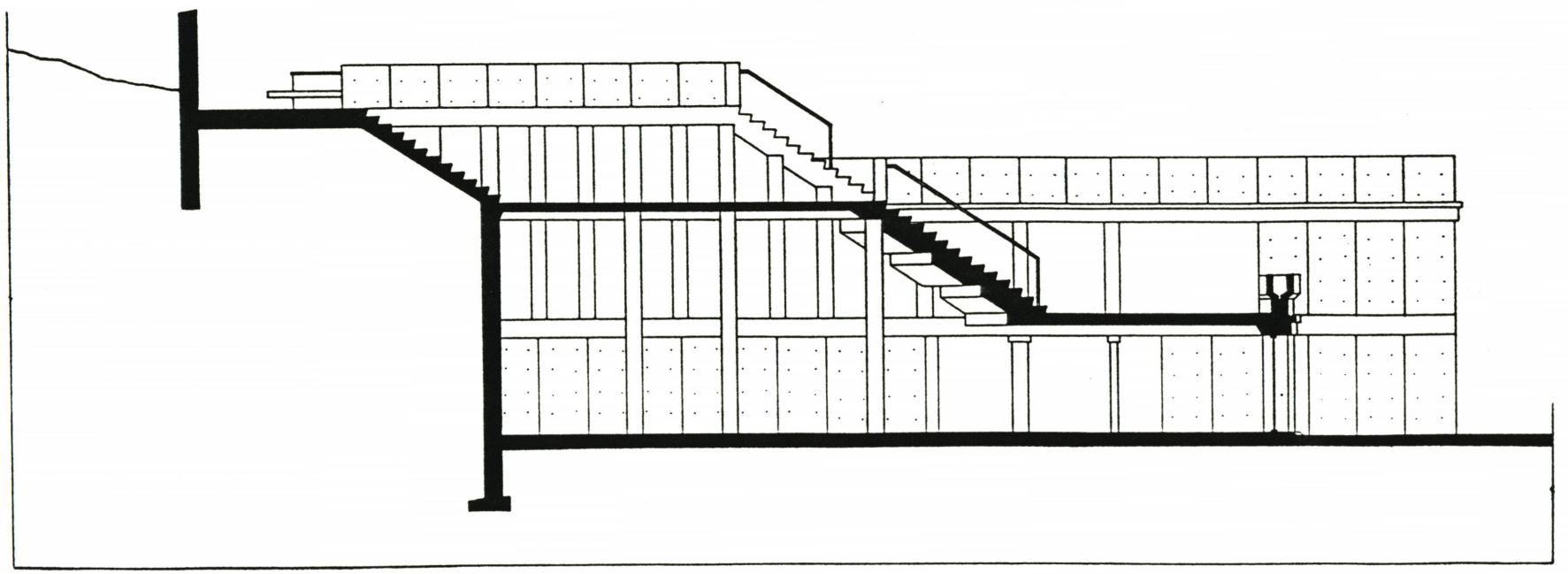
There are two buildings located on the second terrace that contain private study areas where one can contemplate, relax, or focus on studies. Each building has a large fireplace, where the hearth becomes the main focal point, where one may gahter. Both buildings are connected by a bridge that links the two roof terraces together. This connection allows for a courtyard to be formed between the two buildings.

Ones final destination is the central gathering space located on top of the hill. This building houses the main gathering areas, such as the study areas, restaurant and food preparation areas, and the social hall. One



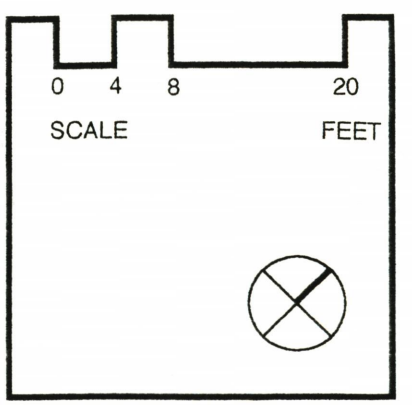
SECTIONS



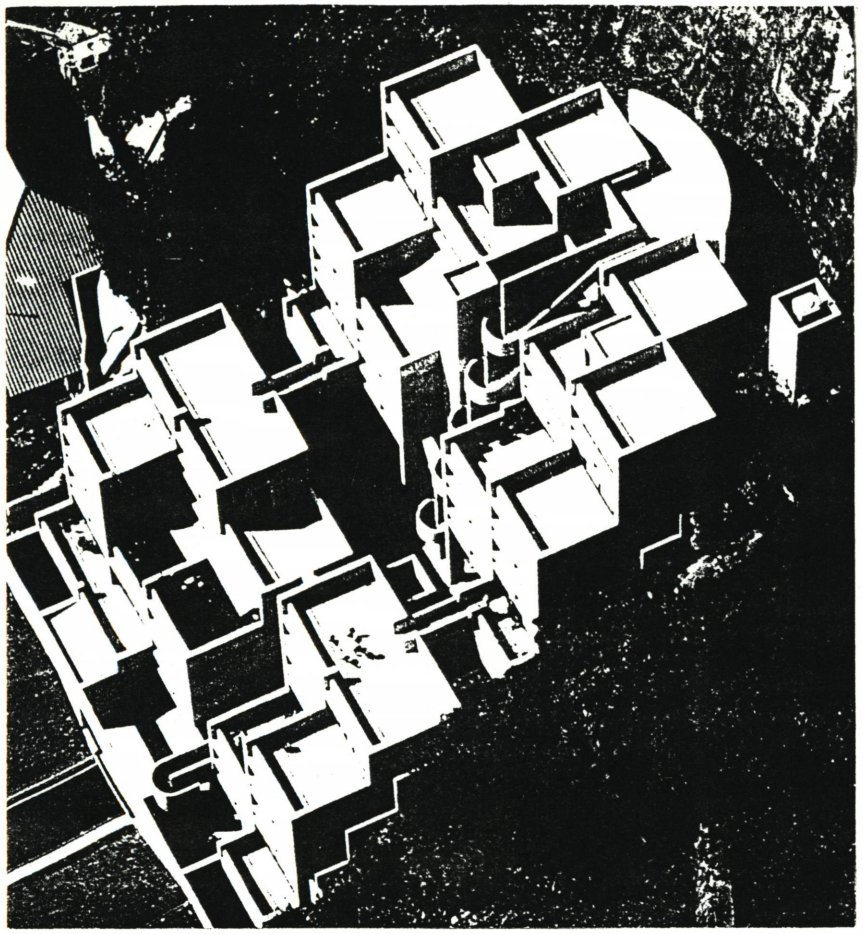


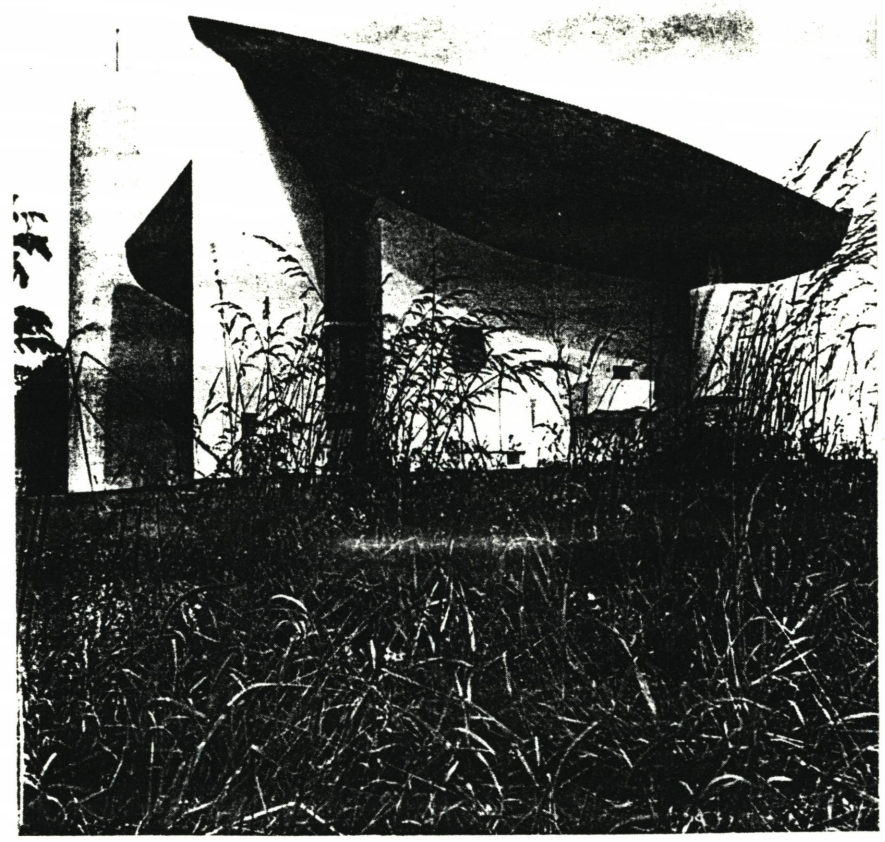
enters the social hall on the first floor of the thrid terrace. The social hall is three stories high and is supported by the concrete retaining walls and concrete columns. The roof is formed from precast concrete that defines the seating for the outdoor amphitheater.

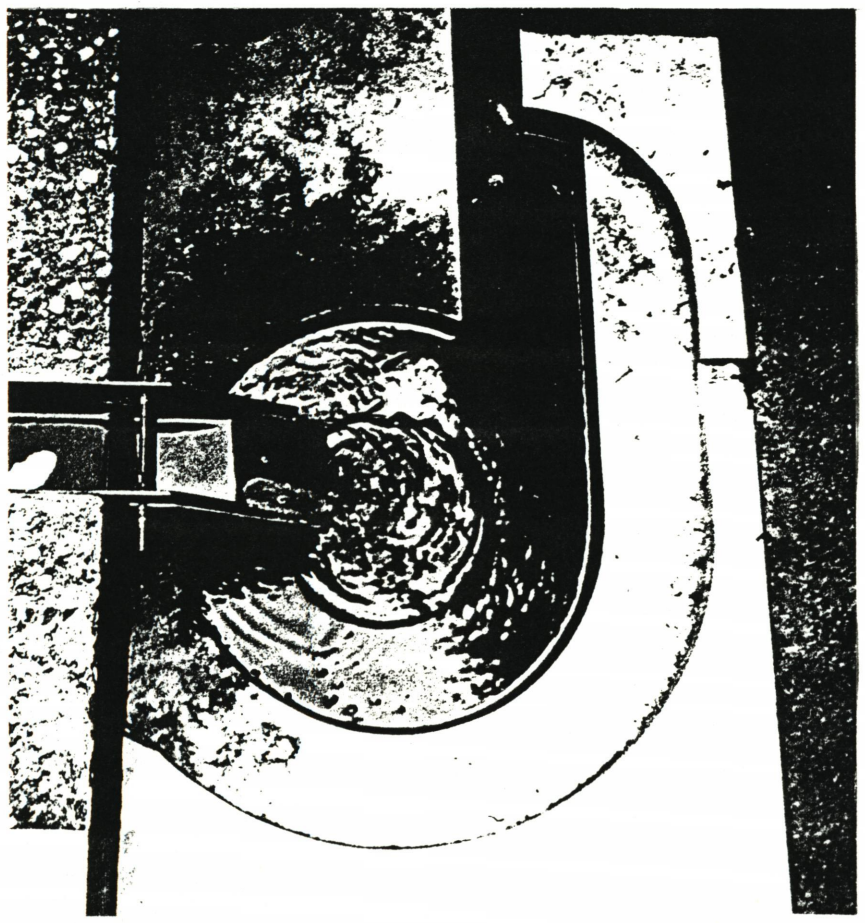
As each wall retains the earth vertically, horizontally concrete terraces are formed. These terraces become outdoor spaces that are defined to gather in. The concrete slab roofs of each building become terraces as well. The concrete walls and support columns form precast planters for vegetation.

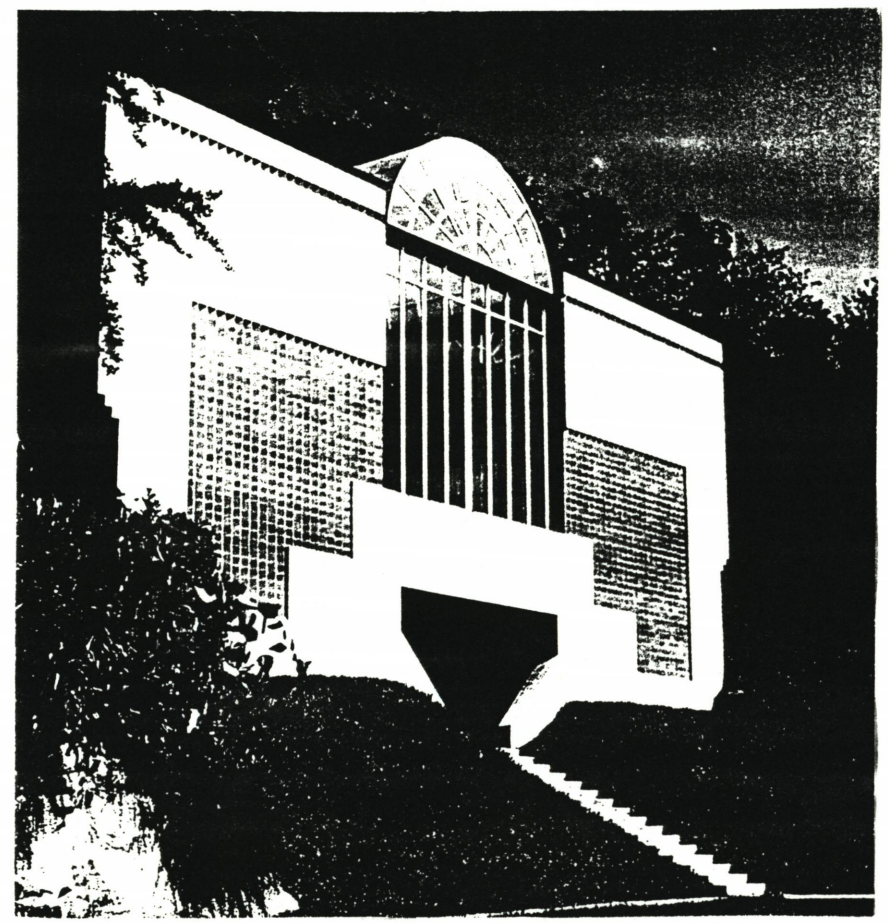


INSPIRATIONS









1 TADAO ANDO
2 LE CORBUSIER
3 CARLO SCARPA
4 MARIO BOTTA

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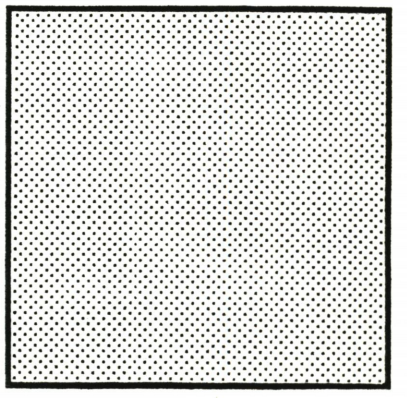
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