

THE WARP AND WEFT OF FRIES, VIRGINIA


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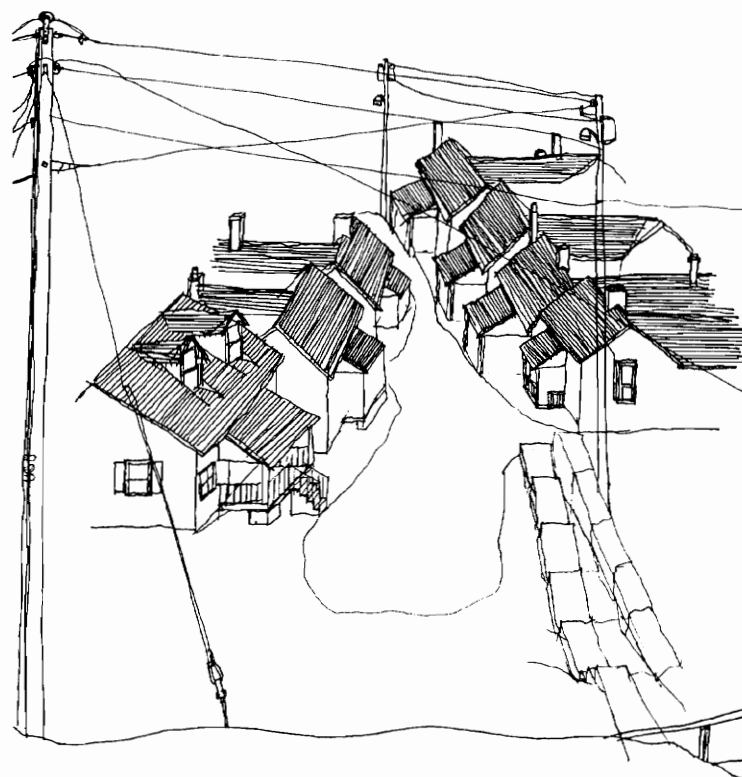
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THE WARP AND WEFT OF FRIES, VIRGINIA



Thank you Mom and Dad for your support and patience.
Rob, this is for you, and it is just the beginning. Alan, this is a
challenge to you.

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“The human task of architecture is not to beautify or to humanize the world of everyday facts, but to open up a view into the second dimension of our consciousness, the reality of images, memories and dreams.”

Juhani Pallasmaa



INTRODUCTION

"You could say that the warp establishes the basic ordering of the fabric, and in doing so creates the opportunity to achieve the greatest possible variety and colorfulness with the weft.

The warp must first and foremost be strong and of the correct tension, but as regards color it needs merely to serve as a base. It is the weft that gives color, pattern and texture to the fabric, depending on the imagination of the weaver. Warp and weft make up an indivisible whole, the one cannot exist without the other, they give each other their purpose."

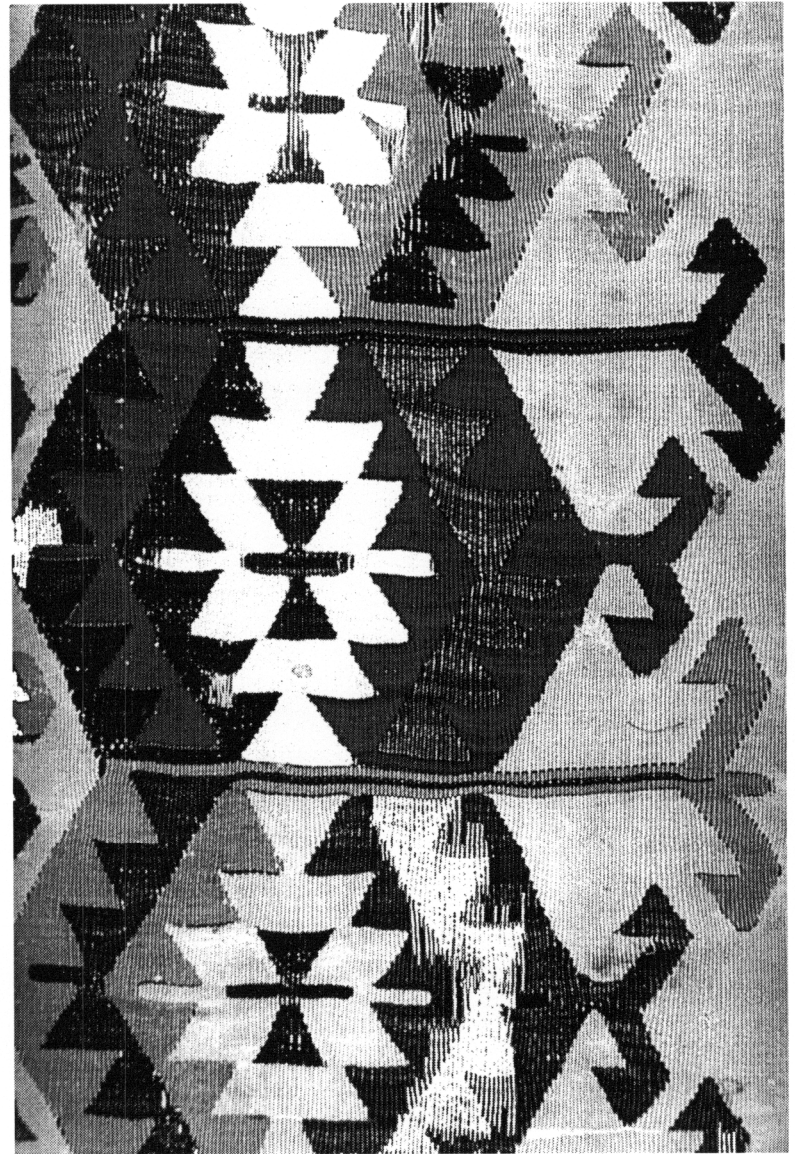
Herman Hertzberger

Weaving is the process of making cloth by interlacing strands of thread. The series of yarns that extends lengthwise in the loom is called the warp. The warp is the foundation of the textile and is crossed by the weft. The weft is the filling thread, or yarn, which gives the fabric its pattern and texture.

Studying the art of weaving can lead to an understanding of the art of architecture. Both weaving and architecture are a construction of parts. Regardless of the style, texture, or color of the completed entity, there needs to be an underlying structure which will unify the pieces. It is this structure which holds all the threads together to form a cloth. It is this structure which organizes all the materials to form a building. In both weaving and architecture, the structure gives life to the construction.

This is also true for the art of writing. A story is a construction of words, a string of ideas woven together. The language the writer uses is the warp, and his imagination is the weft. History is a tangled connection of events where time serves as the structure, and stories are woven around it.

The story of the mill in Fries is a story of the connection between a town and a building. A town is, after all, a tapestry of buildings, roads, and people woven into the landscape. This is the continuing story of the Fries textile mill, from the past and into the future.



This is a detailed topographic map of the Fries area. The map features numerous contour lines indicating elevation, with labels such as 2200, 2300, 2400, and 2500. Key landmarks and features include:

- Water Features:** A large reservoir is located on the left side, with a substation nearby. A river or stream flows through the center of the map.
- Infrastructure:** A road network is shown, including a road labeled "644" and another labeled "1001". A "Wall" is marked near the center.
- Buildings and Structures:** A cluster of buildings is labeled "Fries". Other structures include a "Filtration Plant", a "Water Tank", and a "High Sch" (High School).
- Topography:** The terrain is rugged, with steep slopes and deep valleys. Contour lines are closely spaced in some areas, indicating steeper terrain.
- Other Labels:** "Rolling Bayson" is written vertically on the right side. "Cem Beulah Ch" (Cemetery) is located at the bottom. "BM 2180" (Benchmark) is marked near the center.
- Map Elements:** A north arrow is located in the bottom right corner. A scale bar is also present.

A PLACE

"Architecture is to make us know and remember who we are."

Juhani Pallasmaa

Our memories are full of places. We remember the open meadow we came upon as we stepped out of the woods. We can clearly picture a small town clustered on a distant hillside. We still feel the sun as it came through the window and warmed that spot in the living room where it was so comfortable to curl up and read. These places continue to exist in our minds. Some are smaller than the corner of a room, while others span the countryside. As different as these places are, one defining similarity exists. Whether travelling across miles of highway or wandering from room to room, we arrived at these places. It is this point of arrival which defines a place.

For a town to be seen as a place, it needs to have a perceivable edge. It needs to appear in the distance as a group, like an Italian hill town clustered on the side of a mountain. A town needs to be set apart in the landscape, separated from the background you move through on your way there. When you arrive in a town, you need to realize that you have passed beyond approaching it.

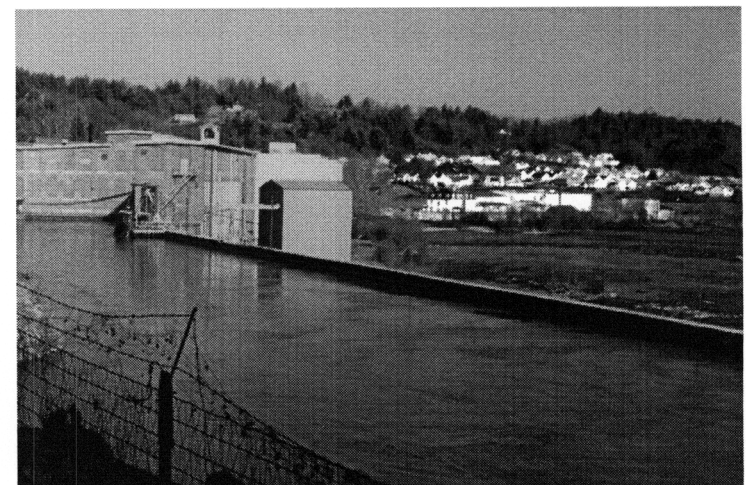
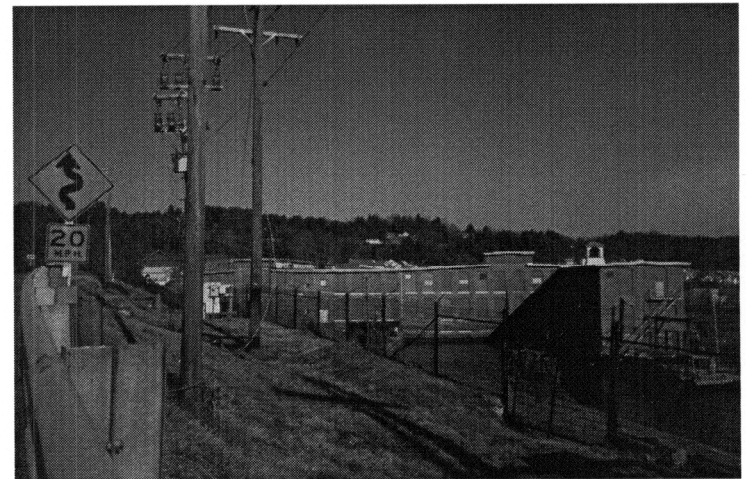
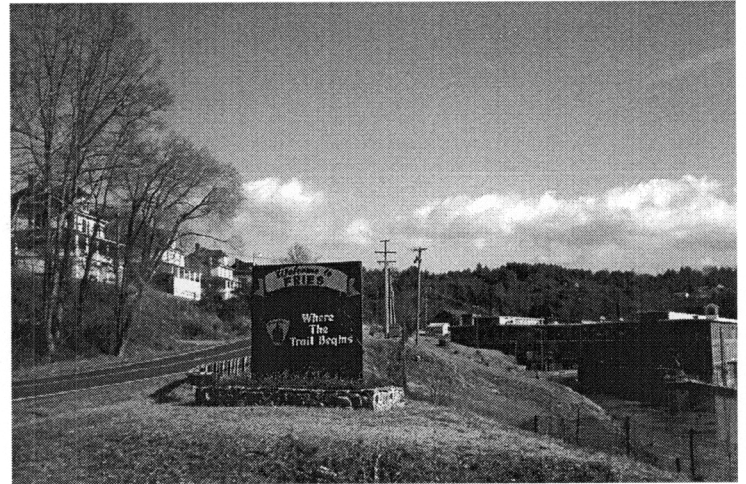
The recognition of a place is an acknowledgment of its boundaries. To understand that you are inside a room, you must be aware of the outside. The boundary between here and there may not be as clearly defined as a doorway or a city wall. As Heidegger explains: "A boundary is not that at which something stops but, as the Greeks recognized, the boundary is that from which something begins its presencing."¹ We move beyond a boundary to arrive at a place, and it is the place that we remember.



THE ARRIVAL IN TOWN

To reach the town of Fries, Virginia from Interstate 77, you exit at Route 58 and head west. The road passes through the sprawling development which surrounds the town of Galax. Strip mall after strip mall line the highway. The boundaries of Galax have been so fragmented that you are not aware that you have reached the center of town until you see a sign directing you to a "historic Virginia Main Street." It is a situation typical of many American towns where the unchecked growth has blurred the distinction between countryside and town.² The scattered buildings do not offer any sense of arrival, and the town has become a "nowhere," which, because of its diluted built fabric, destroys the landscape rather than bringing it close.³

You pass through the clutter that is Galax. The interval between buildings starts to widen, and you find yourself out in the countryside again. You turn off Route 58 onto Highway 94 and follow the New River north to Fries. Winding up into the hills, the highway follows the direction of the river. The very first element of the town that you encounter is a sign. "Welcome to Fries, Where the Trail Begins." Immediately behind the sign is a large brick textile mill, and beyond it, where the river bends, is the rest of the town clustered on the hillside. You know that you have arrived at the town of Fries.



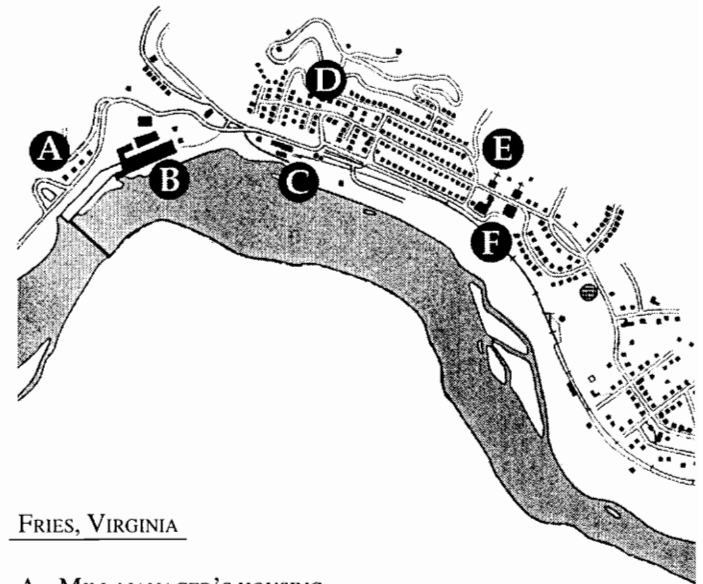
THE HISTORY OF A MILL TOWN

In 1903 Colonel F. H. Fries commissioned the construction of a dam and cotton mill along the New River in southwestern Virginia and founded the town of Fries.⁴ Around that time, a booming textile industry fostered the construction of large numbers of new mills in southern Virginia and the North Carolina Piedmont. Between 1900 and 1902, thirty-four new mills were built in North Carolina alone.⁵ Fries was typical of the many small mill towns that sprung up at this time, along rivers and streams, across the south.

Instead of being modeled after existing company towns, such as mill towns in New England, the southern mill towns evolved from local conditions. The first southern mill towns were determined by existing economic and environmental constraints and relied on local building traditions and materials. As the number of mill towns multiplied, patterns developed as the expanding group of manufacturers shared their experiences and traded information about mill construction. In 1899, Daniel Tompkins, the first theorist of the southern textile industry, published *Cotton Mill: Commercial Features* in which he assembled all the accumulated wisdom of mill building and operation in the Piedmont.⁶ From that point on, the form of the southern mill town became increasingly standardized.

Mill towns had a very distinctive morphology. Since mills depended on water to power the textile machinery, mill villages were located along streams which could be easily dammed. The smallness of the streams tended to keep the mills small and scattered over a wide area. Isolated from each other, the mill villages generally remained small and rural. The most intrusive elements were the mill buildings, which had been copied from Northern prototypes. Lined up along the river, the long narrow buildings, usually three and four stories tall, dominated the landscape. The rest of the village was laid out in accordance with the surrounding topography. The "mill hill," where the company housing was constructed, was generally located on a cleared site sloping up from the riverside mill. To save money, the houses were all built at the same time with virtually identical plans and were laid out in rows along roads leading from the mill. The housing was primarily single-family homes and was patterned after basic rural dwellings. These single-story frame structures, raised on brick or concrete piers to avoid damp ground, contained three or four rooms, a front porch, and often a rear kitchen extension. A small group of larger, better-built houses was built apart and reserved for mill managers or the town minister. Often these houses were located higher on the hillside enabling residents to keep the rest of the village under close observation.

To attract workers, mill owners had to build complete communities. In addition to housing, mill towns normally included a company store, at least two churches (generally Methodist and Baptist), and an elementary school. Both the preachers and teachers were hired by the mill. The mill would also furnish



FRIES, VIRGINIA

- A. MILL MANAGER'S HOUSING
- B. TEXTILE MILL
- C. COMMERCIAL AREA (THE OLD COMPANY STORE)
- D. MILL WORKER'S HOUSING
- E. BAPTIST AND METHODIST CHURCHES
- F. ELEMENTARY AND HIGH SCHOOLS

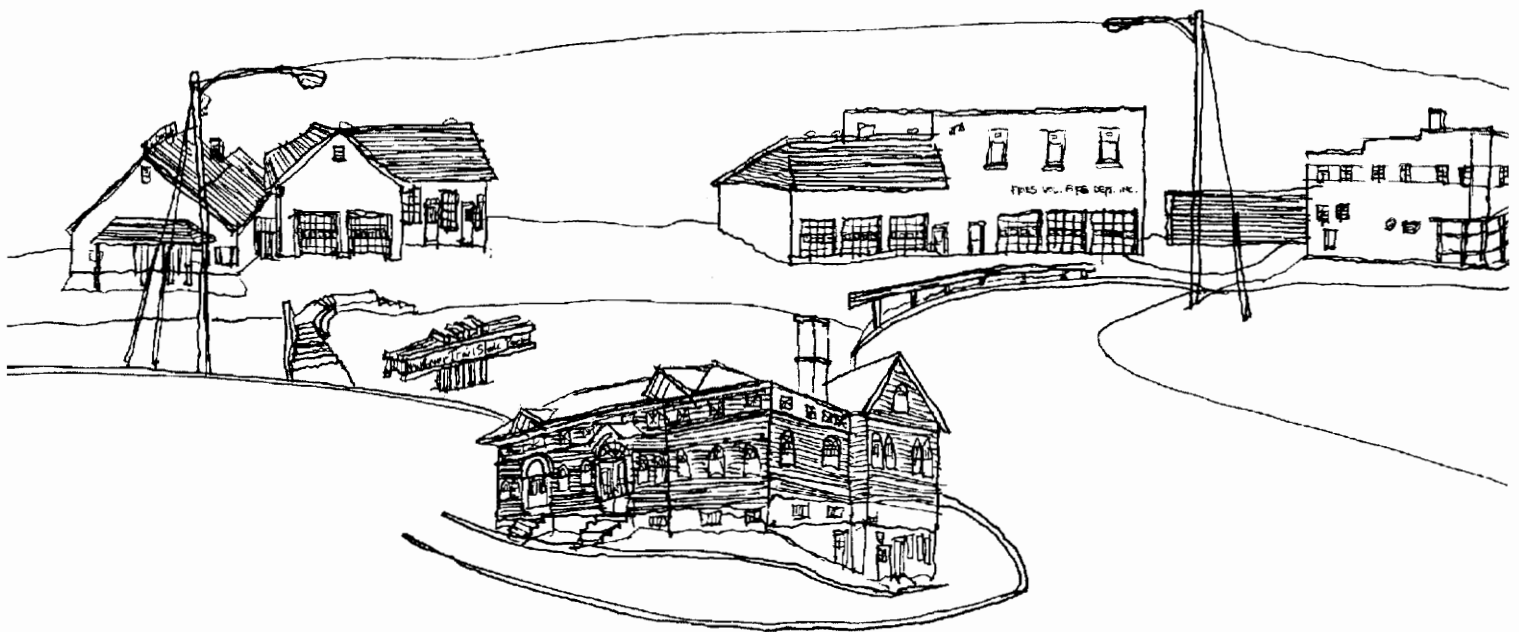
low cost recreational facilities such as baseball fields and community gardens, and occasionally, they would build a meeting hall or lodge. A mill village was designed to provide for all the basic needs of the workers and their families. Mill workers were never beyond the influence of the mill. They worked, slept, shopped, studied, played, and worshipped in facilities belonging to the mill owners.

Colonel Fries closely followed the formula for a southern mill town in developing Fries. He began by selecting a site on the New River near the train station at Fries Junction. When he was done, the cotton mill and the new town of Fries were stereotypical of the southern mill town of that period. The town was not a creation of Colonel Fries nor did it reflect any innovation. It was as if Daniel Tompkins' book had been consulted chapter by chapter.

THE TOWN OF FRIES

Today the modern town of Fries looks very similar to the mill town built in the early 1900s. The brick mill building remains the largest structure on the horizon, and until recently, it was the town's primary employer. Just down the river from the mill, rows of small houses, which were constructed for the mill workers, still line the hillside. The few public buildings in town include the two churches and the schools. There is also a large YMCA building that contains the town hall. The company store had been conveniently located across the street from the train station, and at its busiest, it had expanded to become the primary shopping area for Fries and for all of the neighboring towns. Now the train station is gone, and the small commercial area, which had grown out of the company store, is not much more than a bank, beauty parlor, and post office.

In 1988 the textile mill stopped production, and the empty building was sold to the town. For over eighty years it had employed the town. People had come into the town on business with the mill. The town had been developed to attract people to work at the mill. Now the houses built for the mill employees are homes to retirees and commuters. The commuters tend to be temporary residents who must go to other towns to earn a living. They are not rooted in the town where they live, and as a result, they are likely to be very transient. They have no reason to stay in Fries. As the town loses its employers, it loses its population. Fries is a town on course to fade into history.

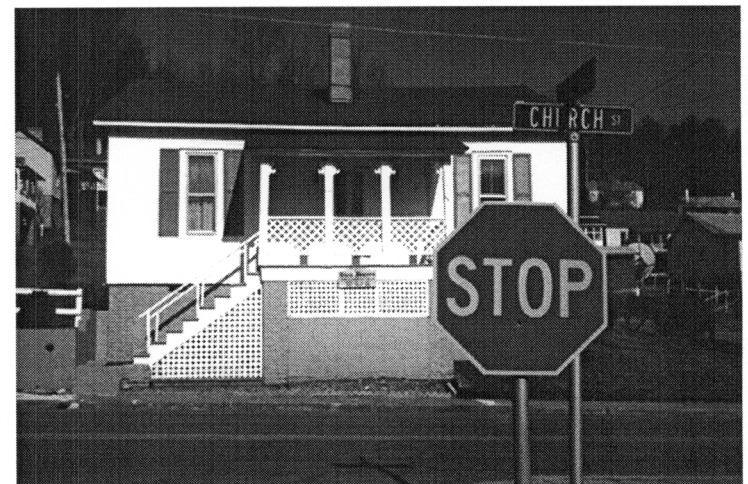
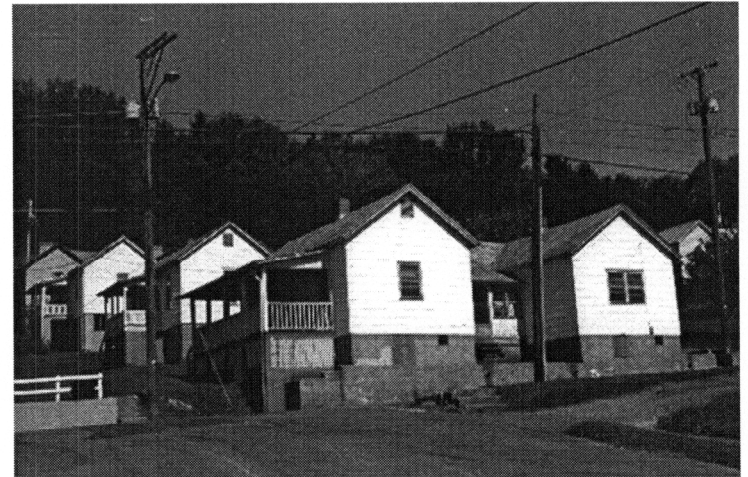


THE HOUSES

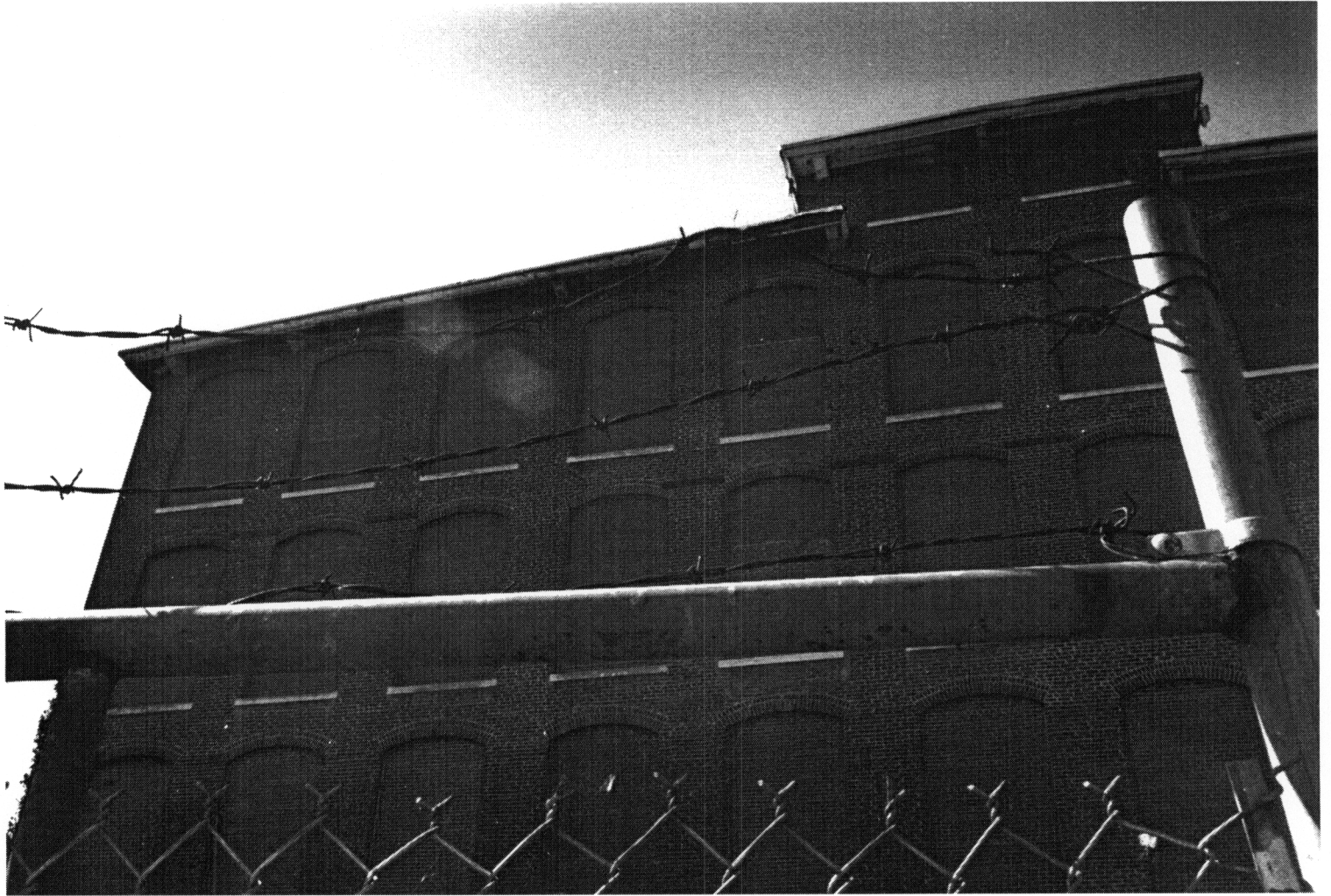
Fries is still a town of small white houses, climbing, in rows, up the side of a hill. The houses are typical factory houses, of light stick construction, secured to the ground by a heavy concrete foundation. The same simple house is repeated again and again. Forming white lines, the houses trace the contours of the hill. They echo the natural features of the landscape and provide a dramatic contrast to the dark winding line of the river in the valley below.

The roads and paths lined with houses form a fabric which has been overlaid on the land. In the construction of this fabric, the streets of the town and the rows of houses are the warp of the town of Fries. The only differentiation in this very ordered town comes from the variation of the front porches on all the houses.

Each house has a front porch, and each porch is different. The varying colors, materials, and sizes pronounce the individuality of each building and provide a rich texture across the town. These individual interpretations are part of the weft which gives the fabric of Fries its character.



FRIES TEXTILE COMPANY



THE LANDMARK

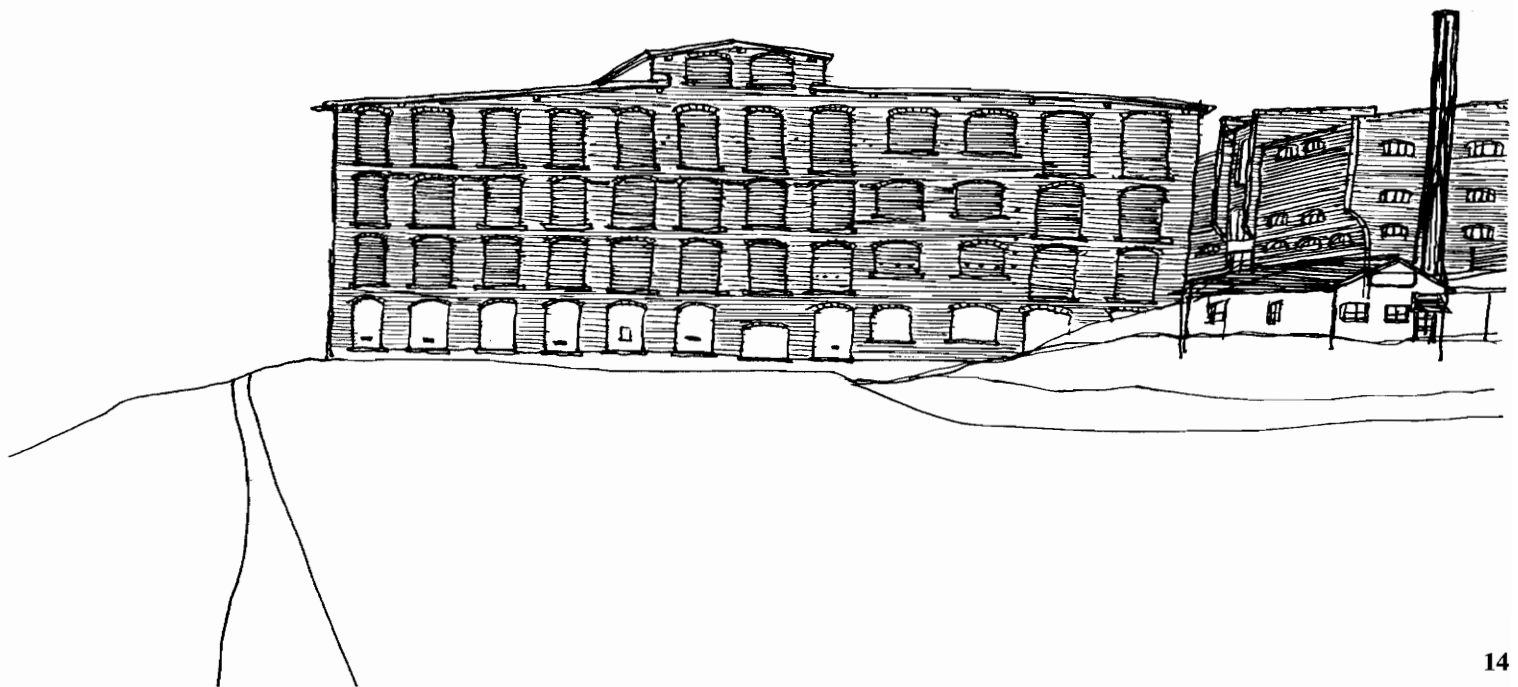
"Every town once had its story to tell the sky. The silhouette of its buildings told stories about religion, power, money, and energy."

Sverre Fehn

While the collection of houses creates the fabric of Fries, the town is better defined by a single image. It is that of the abandoned textile mill which is located on the southern edge of town between Highway 94 and the New River. Whether you approach Fries from the north or the south, you see the silhouette of the mill complex on the horizon. The massive brick structure, with its smoke stack rising toward the sky, gives the town of Fries its identity.

The silhouette of a building in the distance lets us know where we are. Cities have always been understood, recognized, and remembered by their skylines. As we approach a town, the outline of the town appears before us, and the dominant vertical element begins to take shape. The silhouette before us reveals the character of the place. In Istanbul, the slender minarets that pierce its sky have become a symbol of the city. New York City is recognized by the skyscrapers of lower Manhattan. In Fries, it is the mill which represents the town.

Historically, the textile mill was fundamental in the development of the town of Fries. Economically, the mill sustained the life of the town. Today, although the textile business is gone, the image of the mill remains central to Fries. The prominent position of the brick building on the skyline has made it the landmark which gives the town its identity.



IMAGINATION

"Places we remember and places we anticipate are mingled in present time. Memory and anticipation, in fact, constitute the real perspective of space, giving it depth."

Aldo Van Eyck

Work at the mill has been shut down for several years, and the absence of people and activity seems unusual for a building of such magnitude. The parking lots surrounding the mill are empty. Weeds and wildflowers are growing over the sidewalks. Yet, even as the silence of the abandoned building is unsettling, the emptiness is also inviting to the imagination.

The buildings at the textile mill appear to be waiting. It is as if the workers had just gone home to dinner and might return any minute. Curtains still hang in the office window. The sign out front still proclaims it to be the "Fries Textile Co., a zero defect company."

Like an abandoned house disappearing into the vines or a dilapidated farm building crumbling in a field, the mill buildings spark the imagination. The empty buildings provide a framework in which to construct stories, to wonder about the past and to speculate about the future. Who lived in that house? Why was this farm deserted? Through the remains of these buildings, there exists a connection with the past and an, often romantic, remembrance of how things used to be. The opportunity to again bring life to these buildings provides a bridge to the future.

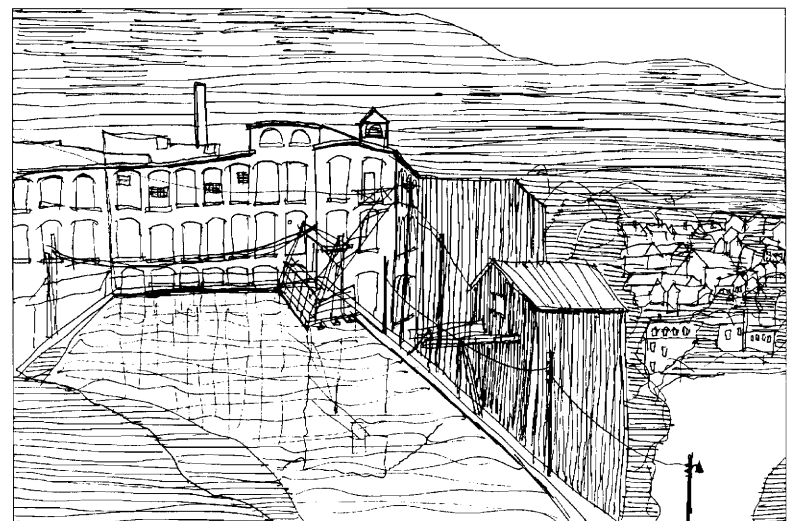
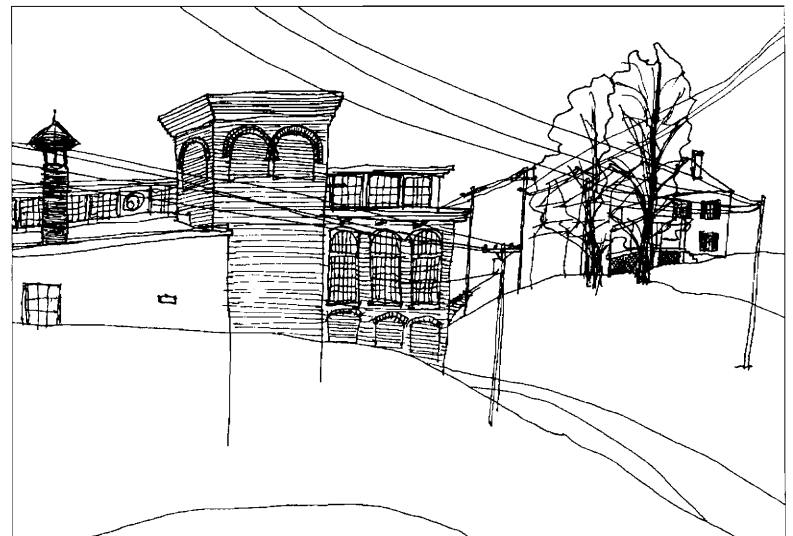
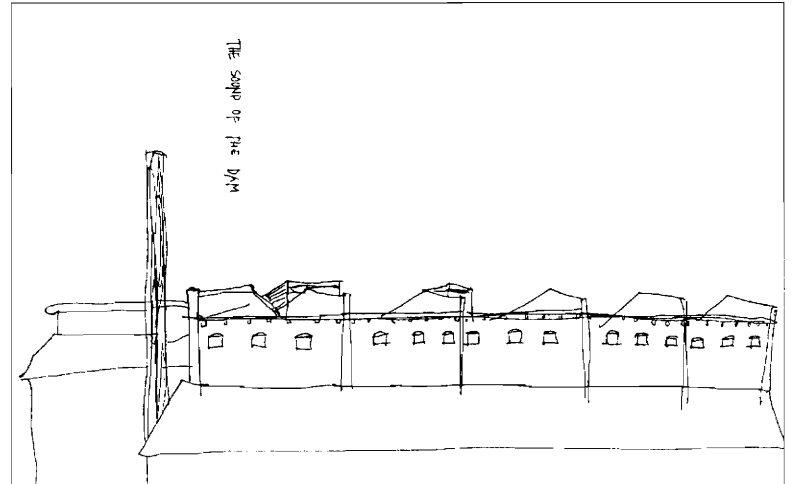
The brick mill building had been designed for a specific function. For years it housed the machinery used to transform raw materials into textiles. As an operating factory, it was most likely an eyesore, producing excessive noise and spewing waste. Now, as an empty shell, the mill building has become an inviting ruin.

Architecturally, there is the opportunity to take this remainder, and – just as the storyteller would use it to spin a story – rearrange it, reconsider it, and recreate the life of the building. The history of a town is the story of its successive layers. If the mill were to be demolished, it would be another chapter in the story of Fries. But the story would jump, and the beginning would be easy to lose. For the story to have some continuity, it seems important to build upon the existing conditions instead of destroying the reminders of the past.

In Cologne, Germany there is a church that has been rebuilt on top of itself five different times over the course of several centuries. On the floor of the church there is a drawing which shows the series of plans superimposed on one another. Today, elements from the four preceding churches can still be recognized in the church of Saint Severnus. The building in its present form provides an opportunity to visualize the layers of history.



IMAGES OF THE MILL



THE COMPOSITION

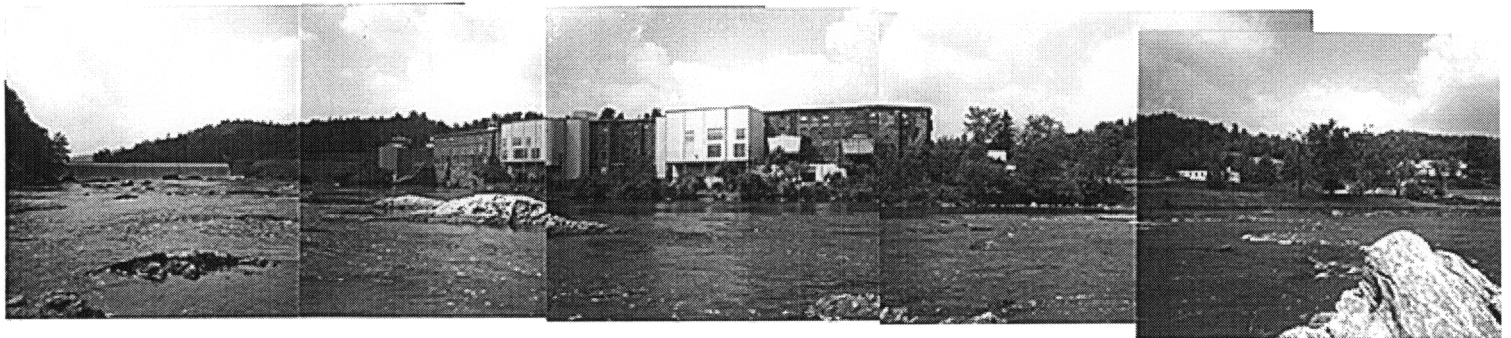
"I have an idea... and I think it tells a lot about this country... The greatest man-made beauties in America are industrial accidents! Most everything else they try to make beautiful is awful. But now and then something wonderful comes out of factories, or streetlamps, or railroads, or grain elevators, and that is some kind of art. I don't know what kind. But it does the same thing as art. And nobody means it to!"

Paul Horgan

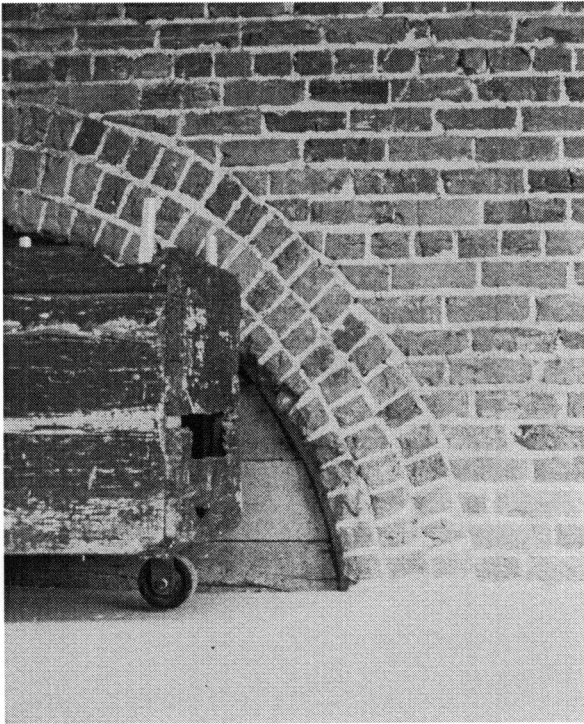
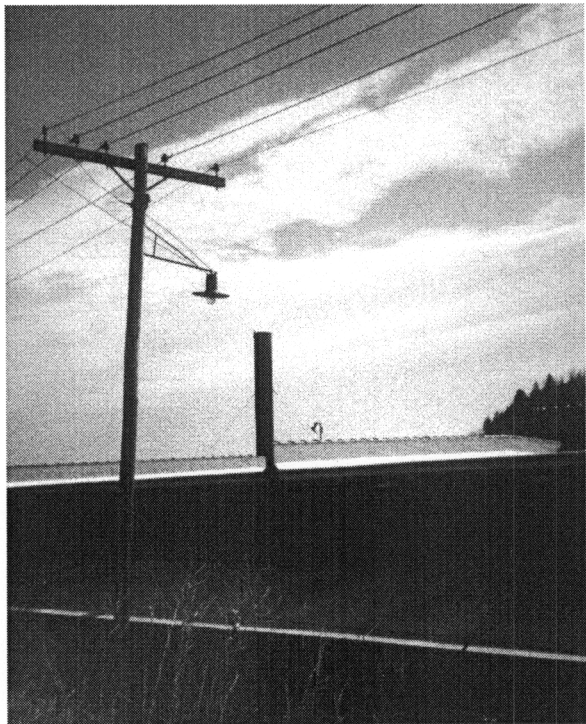
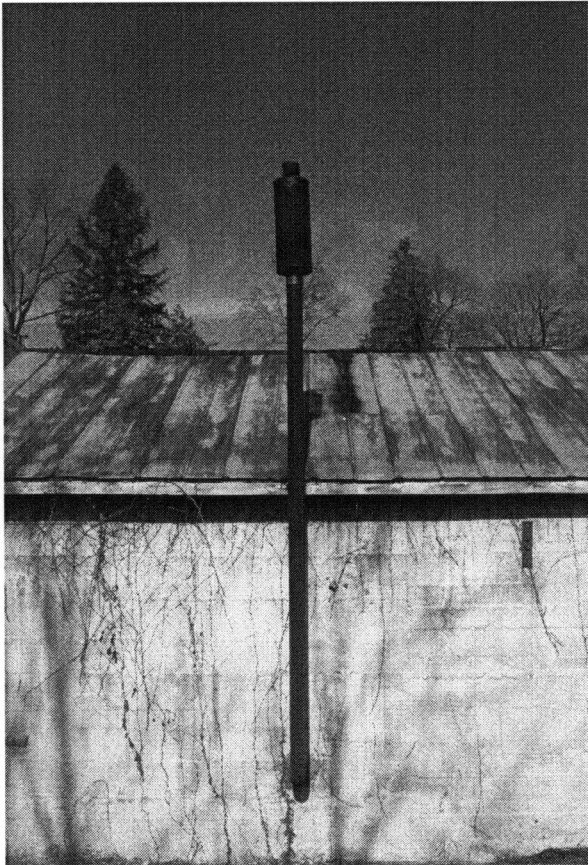
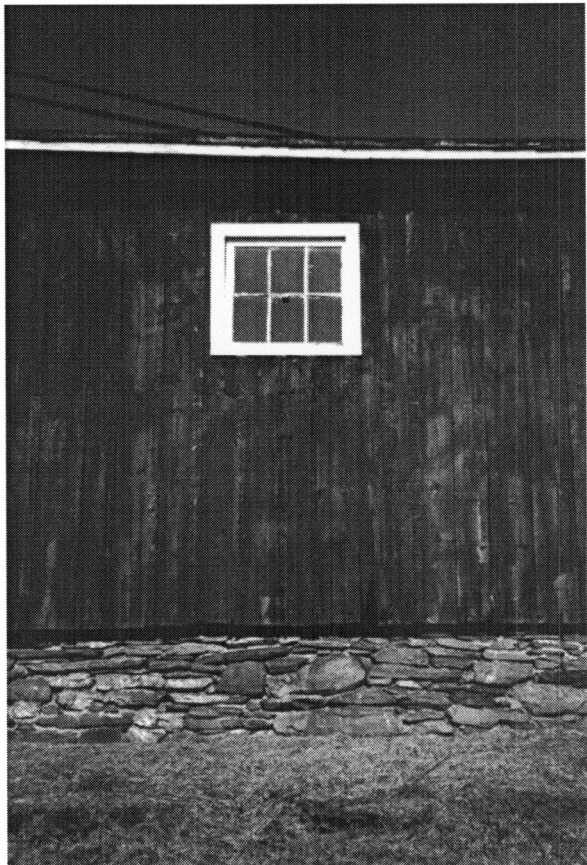
From a distance the form of the mill sets it apart in the landscape. The brick mass of the mill stands out between the hills. The river flows beside it, and the highway stretches past. The mill stands solid with its strong form anchoring it in the landscape.

Moving in closer to the mill, the building's surface comes into focus. In the area surrounding the mill, there is a richness of materials, a composition of colors and textures. The red brick mill is a coarse, rugged building, and it commands attention. Its horizontal lines are given definition by the white lines of mortar. The auxiliary buildings on the mill complex are composed of a variety of materials: wood, stone, concrete, and metal. Their surfaces are smooth and weathered, deep red and pale blue, etched with vertical lines, and random patterns of stone. As the materials meet, they enrich the structure they are a part of. It is these parts which determine the whole and give the building its character and identity.

The character of the surface is the weft of the building.



TEXTURES



THE EXISTING STRUCTURE

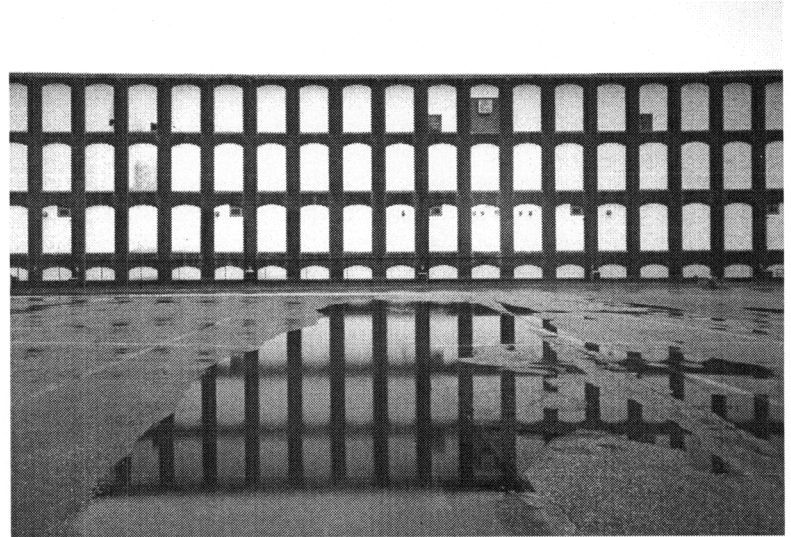
"The more constraints one imposes, the more one frees one's self of the chains that shackle the spirit."

Igor Stravinsky

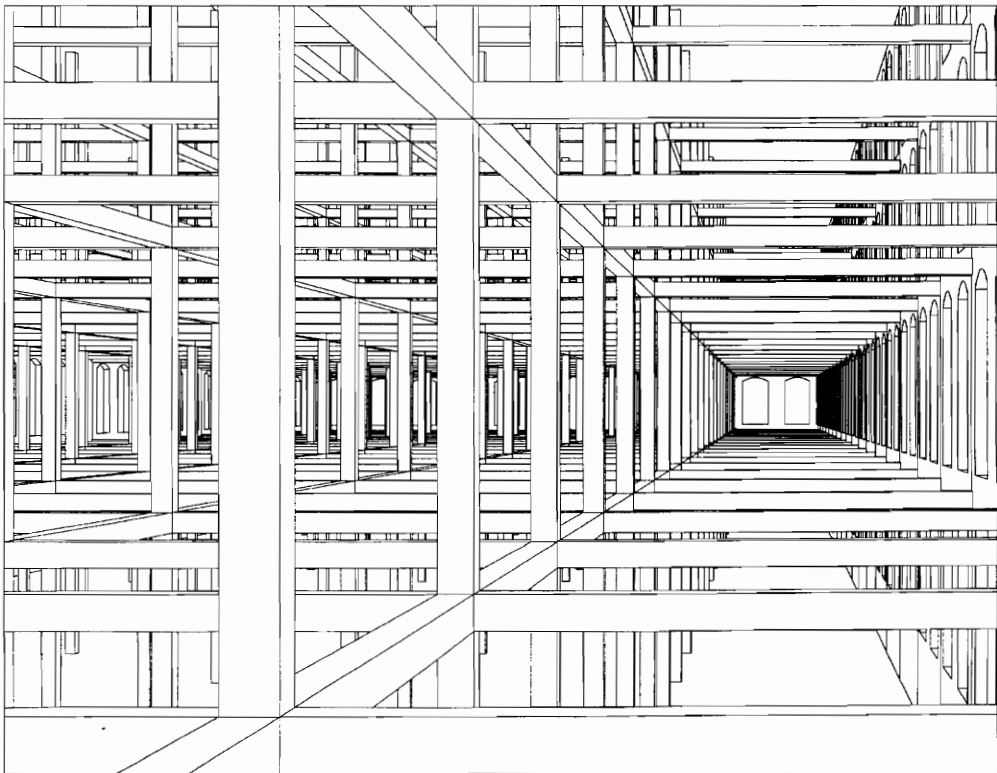
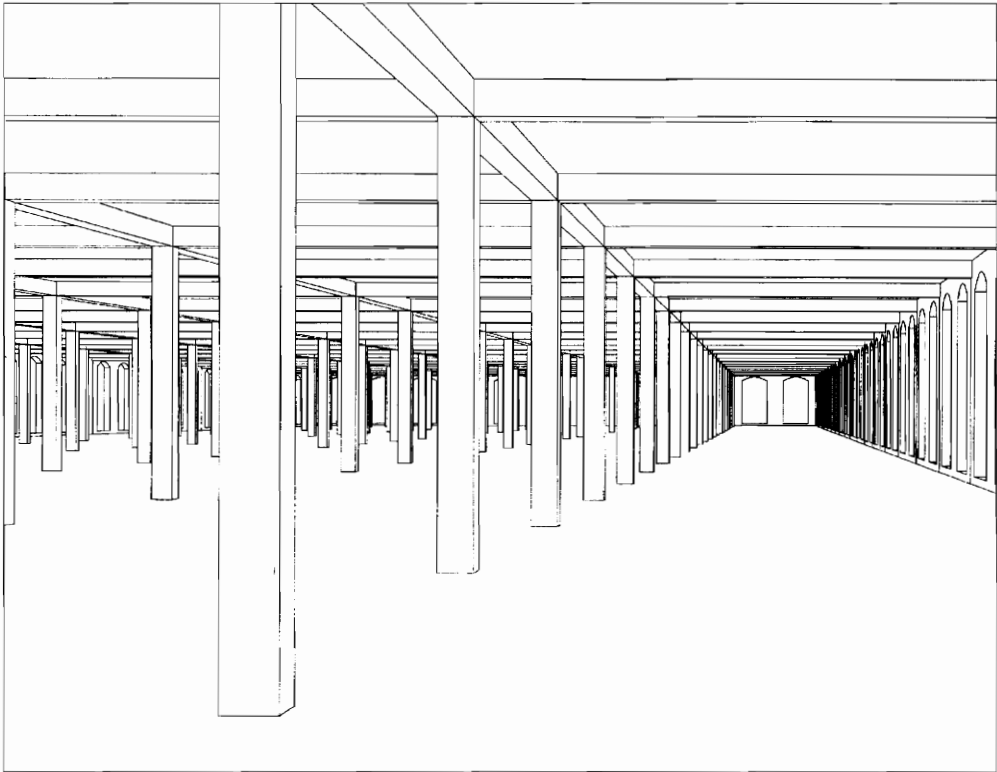
Typical of mill construction from the early 1900s, the Fries textile mill is a heavy timbered structure with a brick exterior wall. To allow light into the building, the brick wall had been perforated with rows and rows of windows. These windows have since been filled in with concrete and brick, but their images remain, forming a grid on the side of the building. The repetition of the same simple element over and over, endlessly, disguises the size of the mill building. Even when standing beside the mill, it is difficult to determine its length. There is nothing opposing the uniformity which goes on and on, and there is nothing to signal an end as it follows the river.

The exterior lines on the building allude to the structure on the interior. The mill is a four story building with a field of columns spreading out across each floor. The ground floor is constructed of concrete, and the three upper stories are heavy timber with maple flooring. If the maple flooring is removed, the timber frame becomes visible, and the four separate stories can be seen as a large matrix – a three dimensional grid, reaching over 60 feet up into the air, and stretching out for 500 feet.

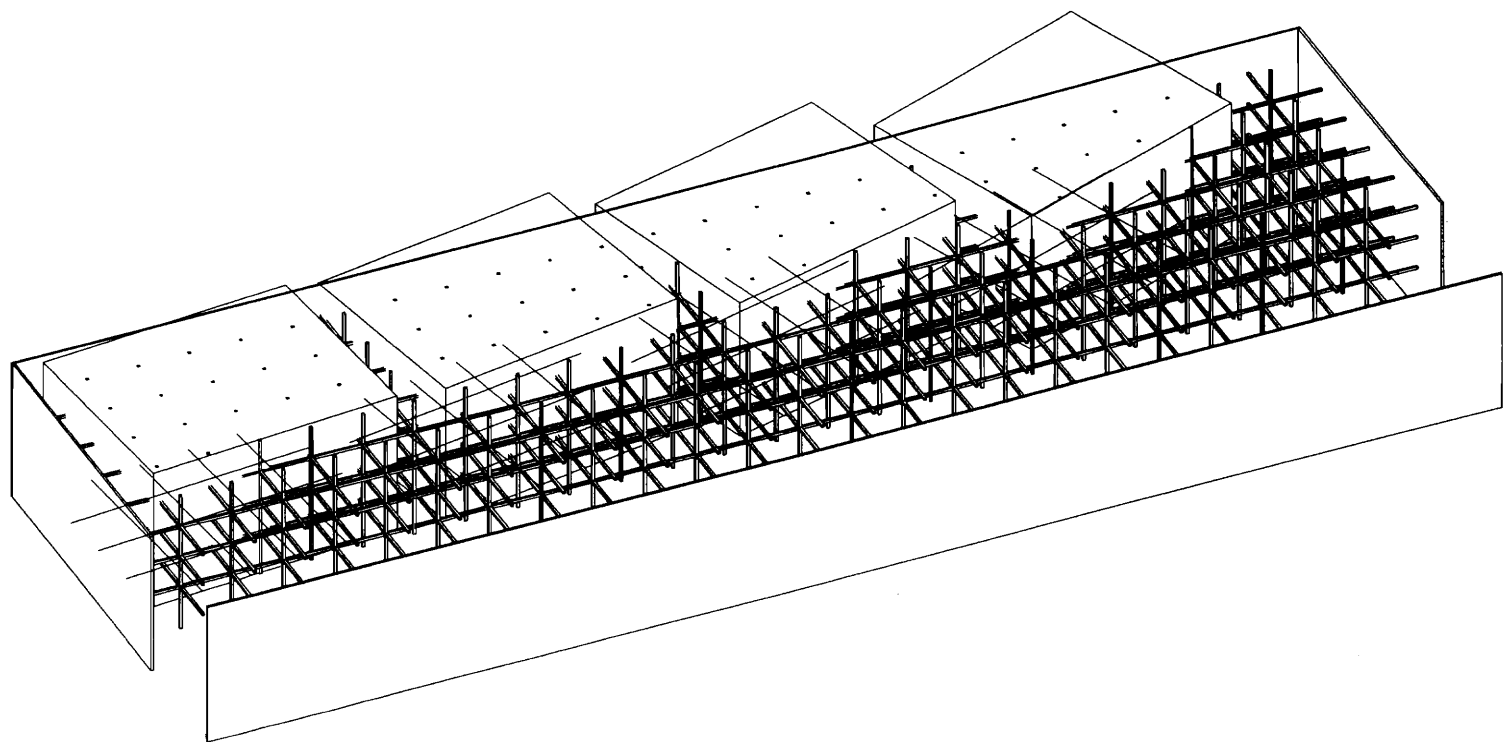
There is an opportunity to take this existing structure as the warp, or the foundation, and to begin to imagine, and design, and add a new weft. The brick perimeter wall defines the boundaries in which to work. The large grid of the frame provides the order and the structure and gives endless possibilities to the buildings which are going to be woven into it.



INSIDE THE MILL BUILDING



THE NEW CONSTRUCTION



REDESIGNING THE MILL

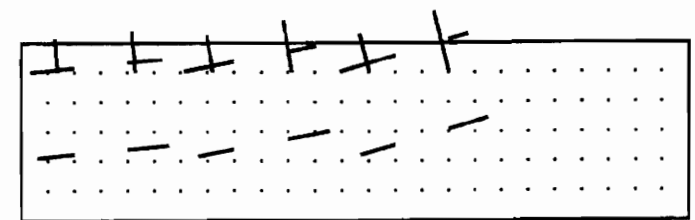
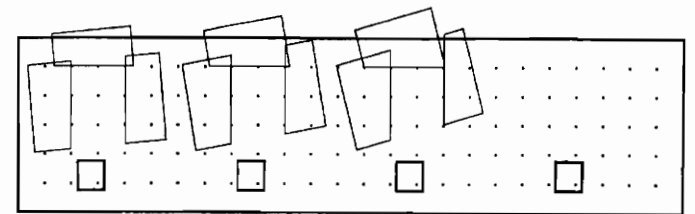
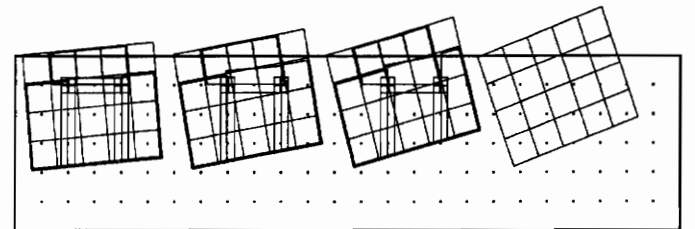
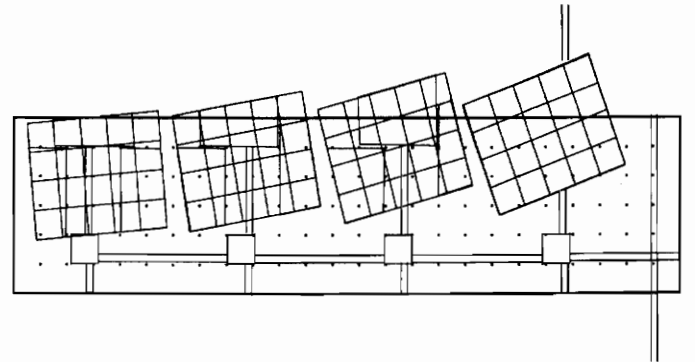
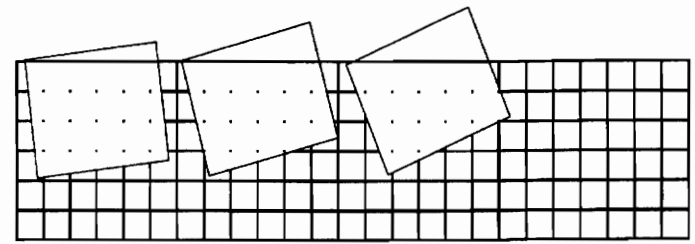
By 1980 the textile industry was in serious retreat throughout the rural piedmont. Although some larger mills modernized and survived, most were not able to do so. The Fries mill was one that could not, and it has been abandoned for several years. The challenge in redesigning the mill was to turn the old structure into something that would attract new, smaller industries or craftsmen who would enjoy a competitive advantage because of the availability of raw materials such as fine hardwoods or of a competent and plentiful labor force.

The building which had housed the Fries Textile Mill was much too big for any identifiable prospective tenant. It was therefore decided to redesign it so that it might become the home of several smaller craft industries. Prospective tenants might include a furniture designer, or an artisan blacksmith, perhaps a small boat builder. None of these could utilize anything close to the space contained in the 500 foot long building, even during periods of peak production. The practical solution was to divide up the old building so that it could accommodate several enterprises at the same time.

The aesthetic challenge was to divide the building in a manner that was not destructive to the existing structure. The most powerful quality of the old brick mill was its immense size. Therefore, even though revitalization of the building required its division into smaller units, it was important to maintain a sense of its grand scale. This meant the building could not simply be partitioned into a few 100 foot long sections. The vastness would be lost, and the old mill would be reduced to several smaller buildings with shared walls.

Instead of subdividing the mill, three new structures were introduced into the existing structure, redefining the interior space without violating its grand unity. The sense of space was also enhanced by setting aside several thousand square feet of common space around the individual buildings. The new construction was not intended to be an autonomous insertion into the old building but a synthesis between old and new elements. It is architecture based on the principle of assimilation, or of adaptation to the existing situation. It is a theme which Oswald Mathias Ungers has discussed in relation to his project for a residential building on Schillerstrasse in Berlin. His building was an attempt to create an architecture that grew out of an existing situation. The old and new were not seen as antagonistic elements, but as mutually interdependent ones, conditioning each other like exhalation and inhalation.⁷

In the Fries textile mill, the new construction is woven into the existing structure. The old structure provides the basis for the new, and the new construction revitalizes the old. Like threads in a cloth which are woven together to form a whole, the old and new elements of the mill become one. The new construction has integrated new spaces and functions into the old structure by adjusting but not violating the basic structures and textures of the old building.



THE SITE



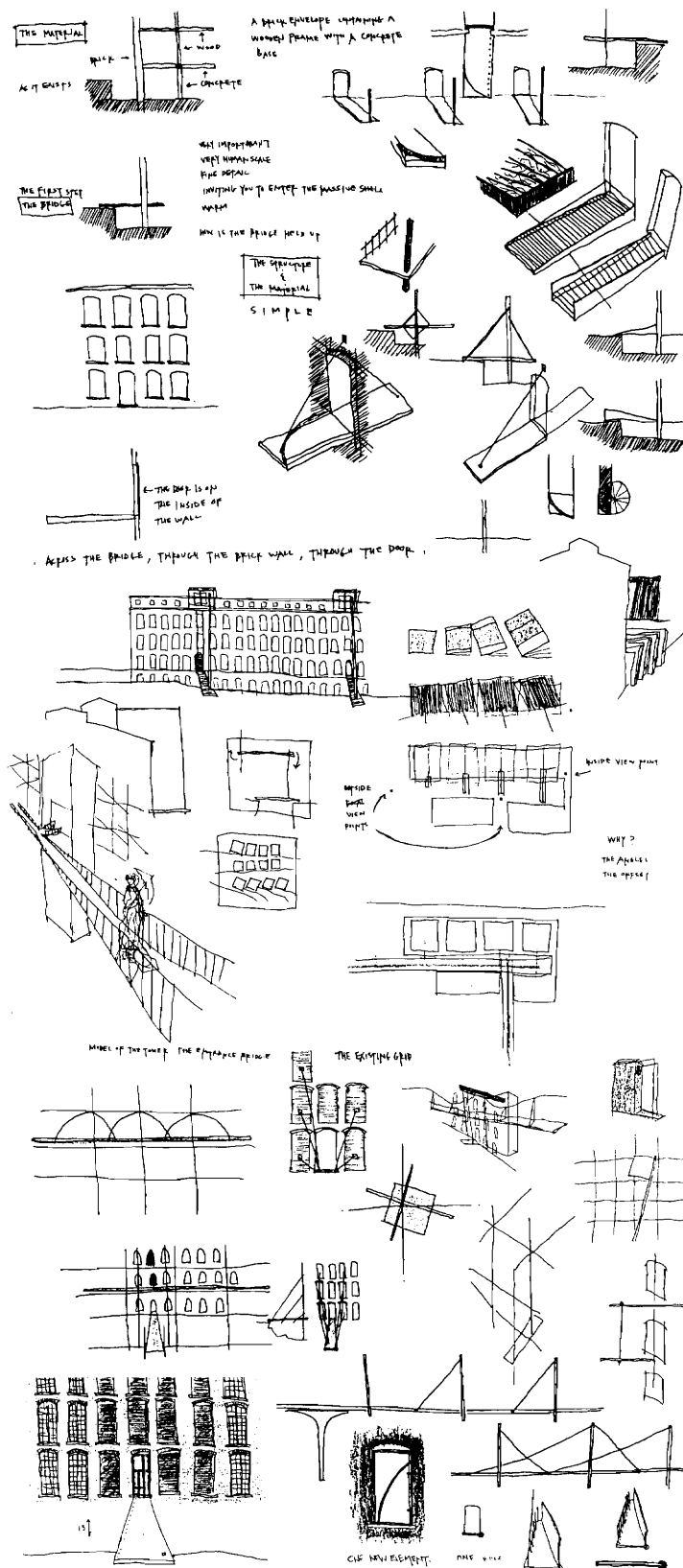
THE BRIDGES

The old brick mill is built into the side of a hill. The hill rises sharply from the river. The highway is cut into the hillside above the mill, parallel to the river. To exit the mill on the river side, you must be on the lowest level. From there you can walk directly out to the bank of the New River. The north side of the mill faces the highway, and it is existed from the second floor.

The mill is where it is because of the river. The need for the power provided by the river determined the location and orientation of the building. The revitalized mill will be less dependent on the river and more oriented to the highway and town.

On the highway side of the mill the hillside has been cut away from the building, creating a gap which must be spanned by a bridge. Each of the new buildings inside the mill has its own bridge, and each bridge is different. The bridges vary in both design and materials, but each is visible and inviting. Like the front porches on the houses in town, these bridges announce the individual qualities of the new buildings that have been introduced into the existing mill. The bridges provide the first indication that the massive brick structure is no longer simply one building, but a complex of buildings.

The bridges thus reorient the building towards its new source of vitality, the people of Fries. The bridges are designed to invite exploration of the new structures that humanize and revitalize the old mill.

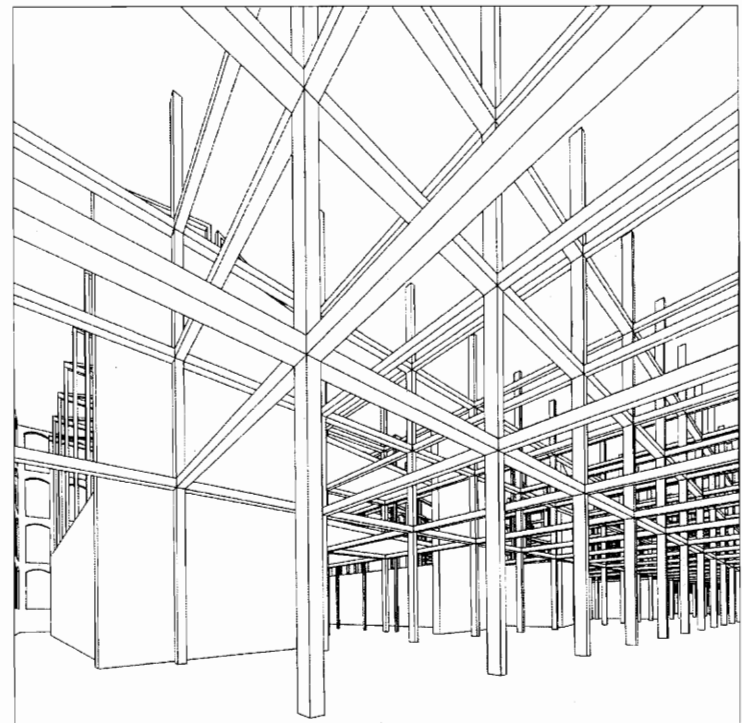
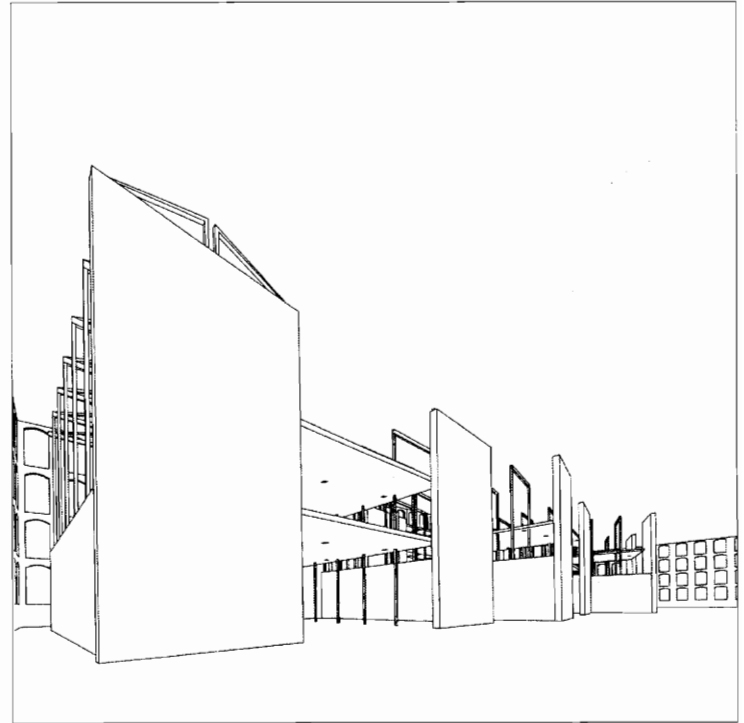


INSIDE THE BRICK WALL

The boundary between the inside and the outside of the existing building had been the external brick wall. Now, once you cross one of the bridges and step inside that wall, you find that you are outside of three new buildings. This inversion of inside and outside causes you to pause and look around. The phenomenon of inversions of inside and outside was described by Oswald Mathias Ungers in writing about his museum of architecture in Frankfurt. "The movement from interior to exterior in the opposite direction, that is to say entering one space and finding oneself outside the next, opens up the possibility of the conscious perception of space."⁸

The old mill building and the three new buildings reveal a complex system of layers. The external brick wall still defines what is outside, but it is not as definitive as it was before. It has become like a garden wall, defining space rather than enclosing it. Connecting the new buildings with the old is a system of walkways and bridge which rely on the existing heavy timber frame for support. The timber frame gives the visual impression of a forest in which the new buildings have been built. Although inside the mill and connected to it, the three new buildings exist as individual entities within the old. Each building is a "house within a house."

In order to demonstrate the independent nature of the new buildings within the original structure it was necessary to create some sort of tension between them and the orthogonal grid of the wooden columns and beams of the old building. This was done by shifting the orientation of the buildings to draw them out of the matrix, mimicking the way the mill is oriented differently from the grid of the town. The buildings are shifted in varying degrees in order to maintain their individuality. The progression of the rotation pulls the buildings out of the back of the mill, permitting them to look out over the river and toward the town.



THE NEW STRUCTURE

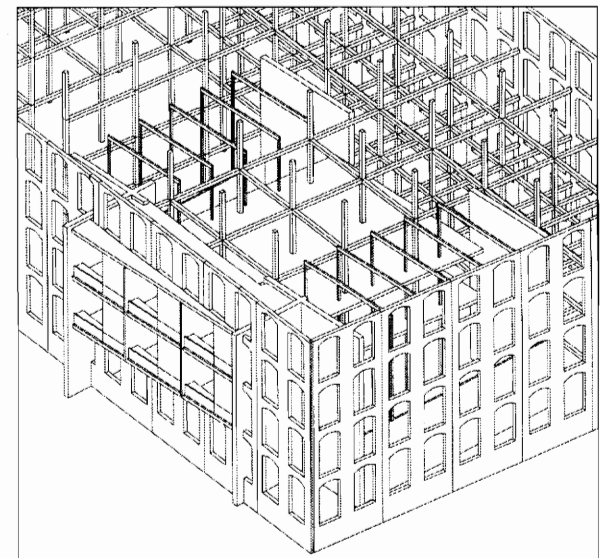
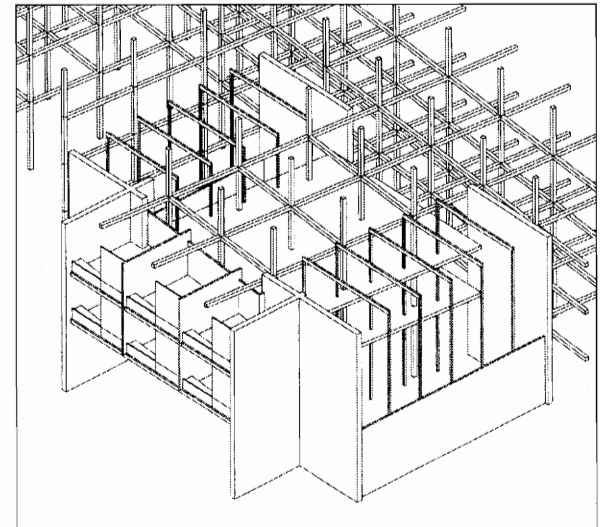
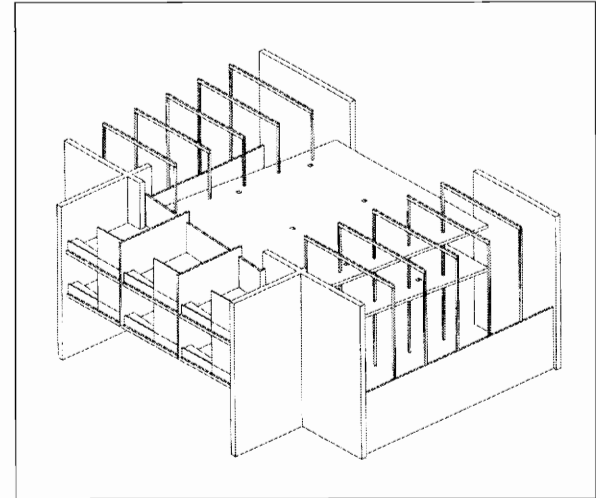
The three new buildings inside the brick walls of the mill are uniform in structure. Each is bounded by load bearing concrete walls that contain a system of steel columns and beams. Just as the brick wall of the mill separated the inside from the outside, the concrete walls establish the boundaries of the new buildings. The original wooden structure is incorporated into the central part of each new building, and it shares in carrying the floor loads with the new steel structure.

The rotation of the new buildings with respect to the orthogonal grid of columns and beams sets them apart from the existing structure and from each other. It also provides the order for the interior spaces in the new buildings, which developed from the intersections of the existing and new structures.

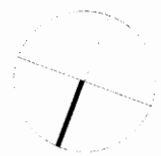
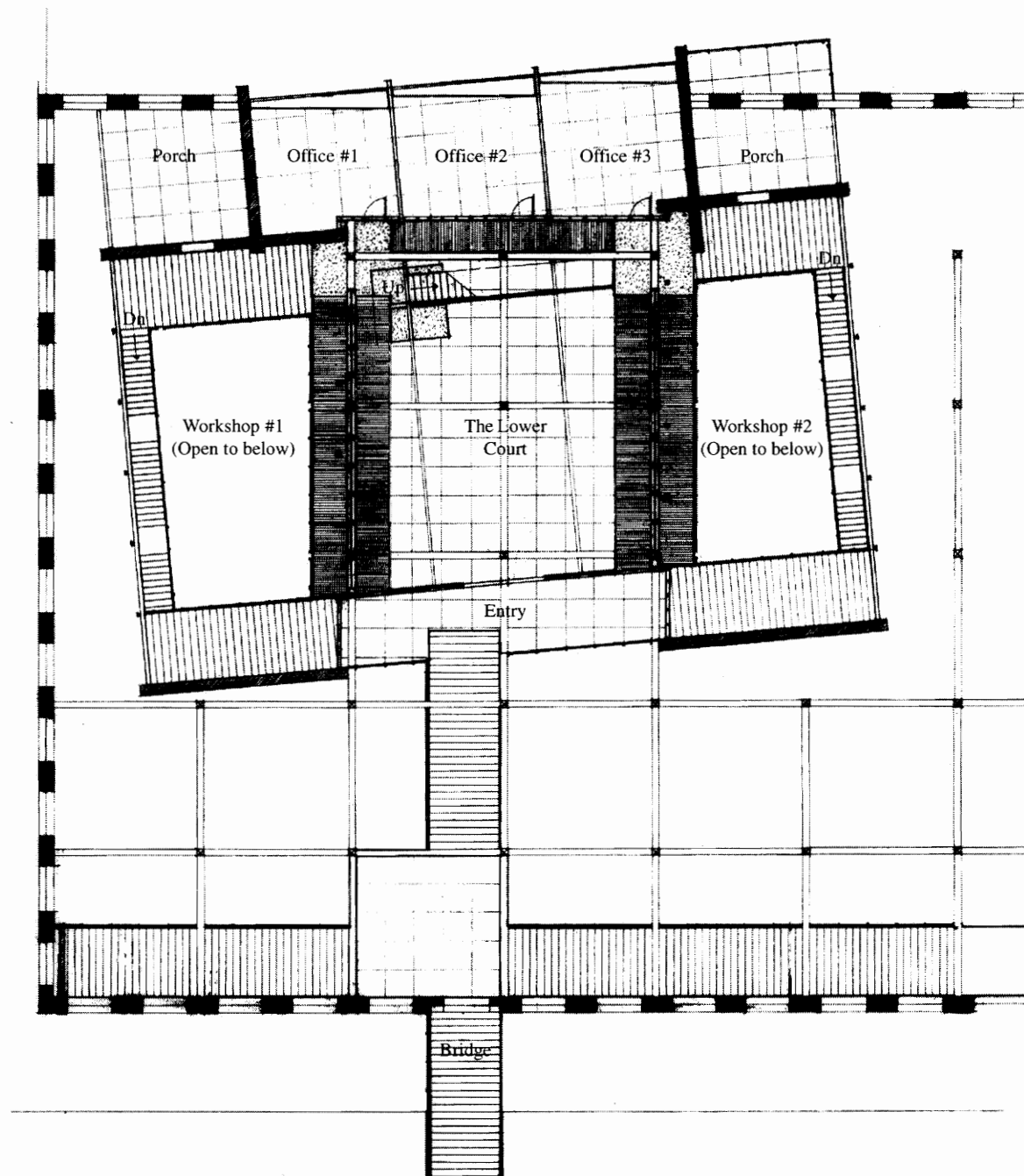
Each of the three new buildings in the mill contains the same three basic elements: a central core (the court), workshops, and offices. These areas are both structured differently and function differently from one another. The entrance of the building leads into the court, which provides access to and communication among the various elements. It is a transparent space in the middle of the building in the middle of the mill. The court of each new building is aligned with the grid of the existing wooden structure. The wooden structure remains intact in the court, displaying the connection and continuity between the new and old buildings.

The workshops are located on the left and right sides of the court. These vertical spaces rise from the original ground floor to the top of the building. The wooden framing of the old building has been removed from these areas, accentuating their newness and difference. While the original structure of the mill is still visible from the workshops, the concrete walls that enclose them on three sides direct the focus of the rooms inward.

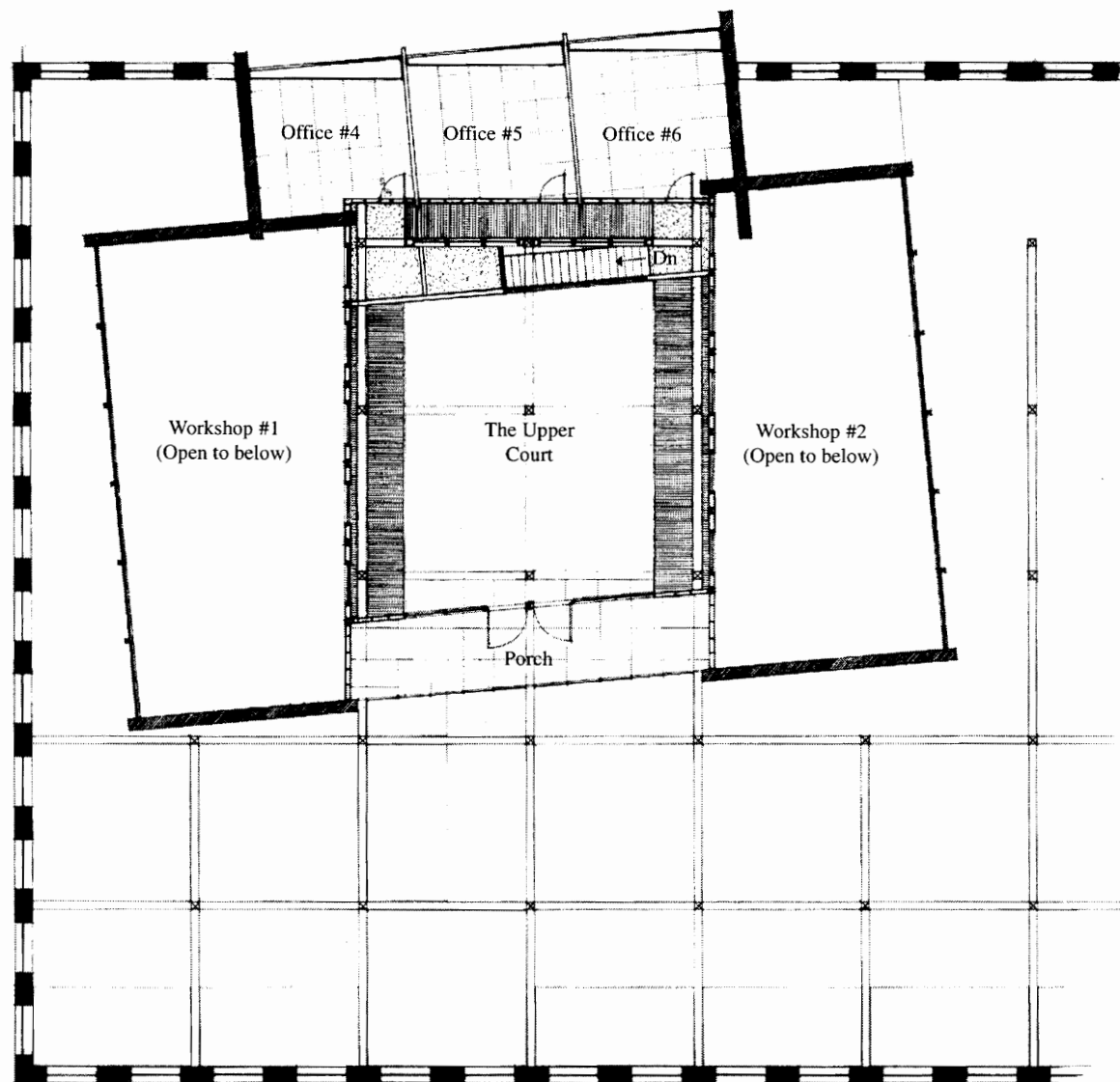
The offices are located at the back of the court, stacked on the second and third levels of the old building on the rear wall. These rooms penetrate the brick wall of the mill and open up to the river. They provide a view outward, out of the mill and toward the river and town.



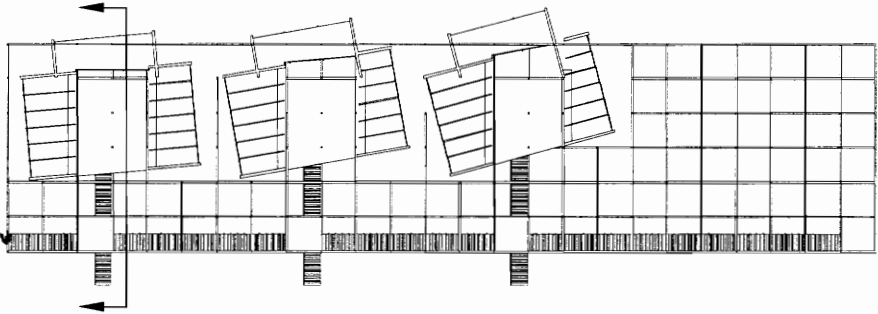
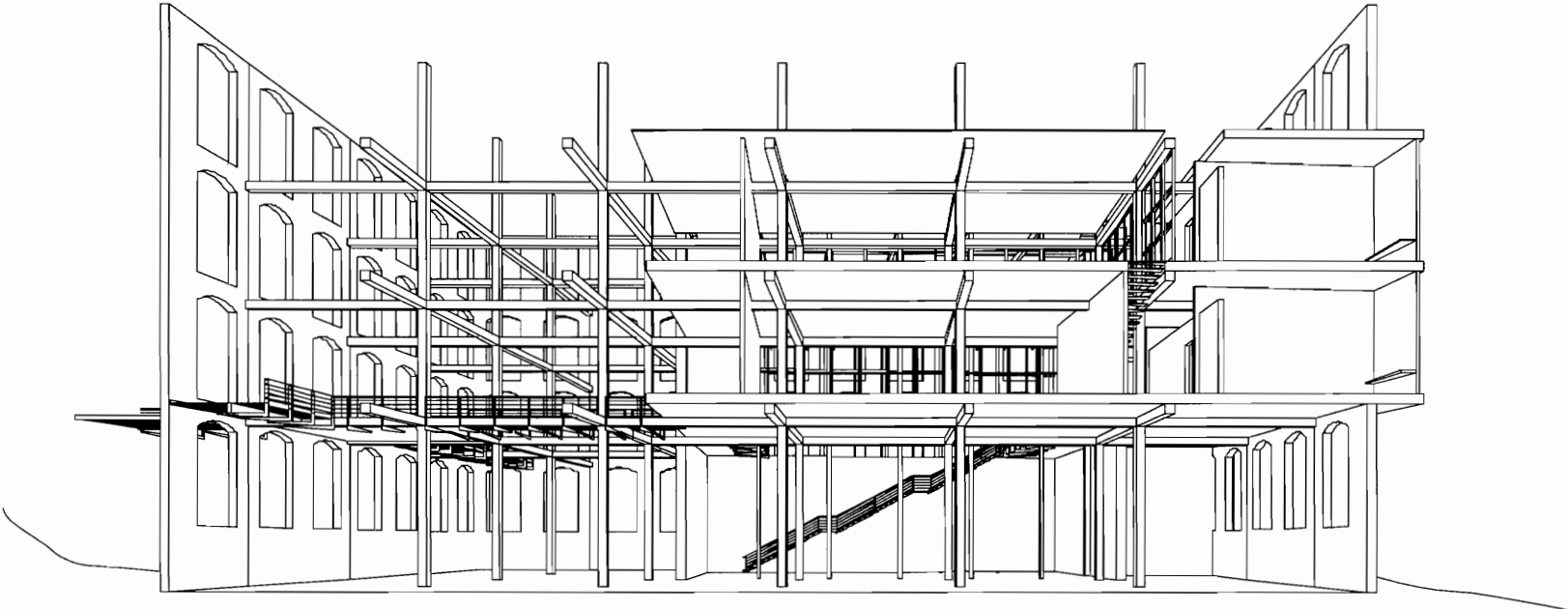
SECOND FLOOR PLAN



THIRD FLOOR PLAN



SECTION



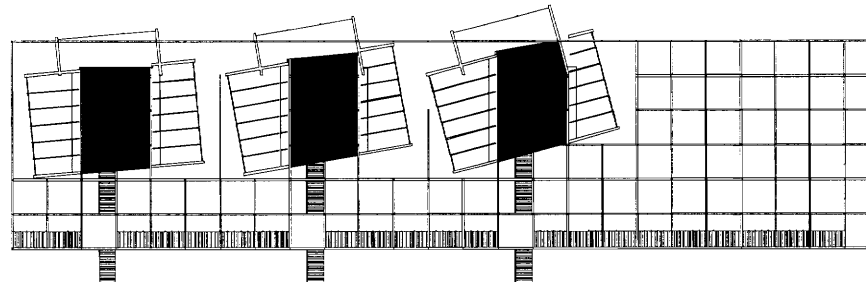
THE COURT

The court is the hub of the new building. It is the most public space in the building, containing the reception areas and providing access to the other elements. The walls of the central core, including the front wall through which you enter the building, are made of glass.

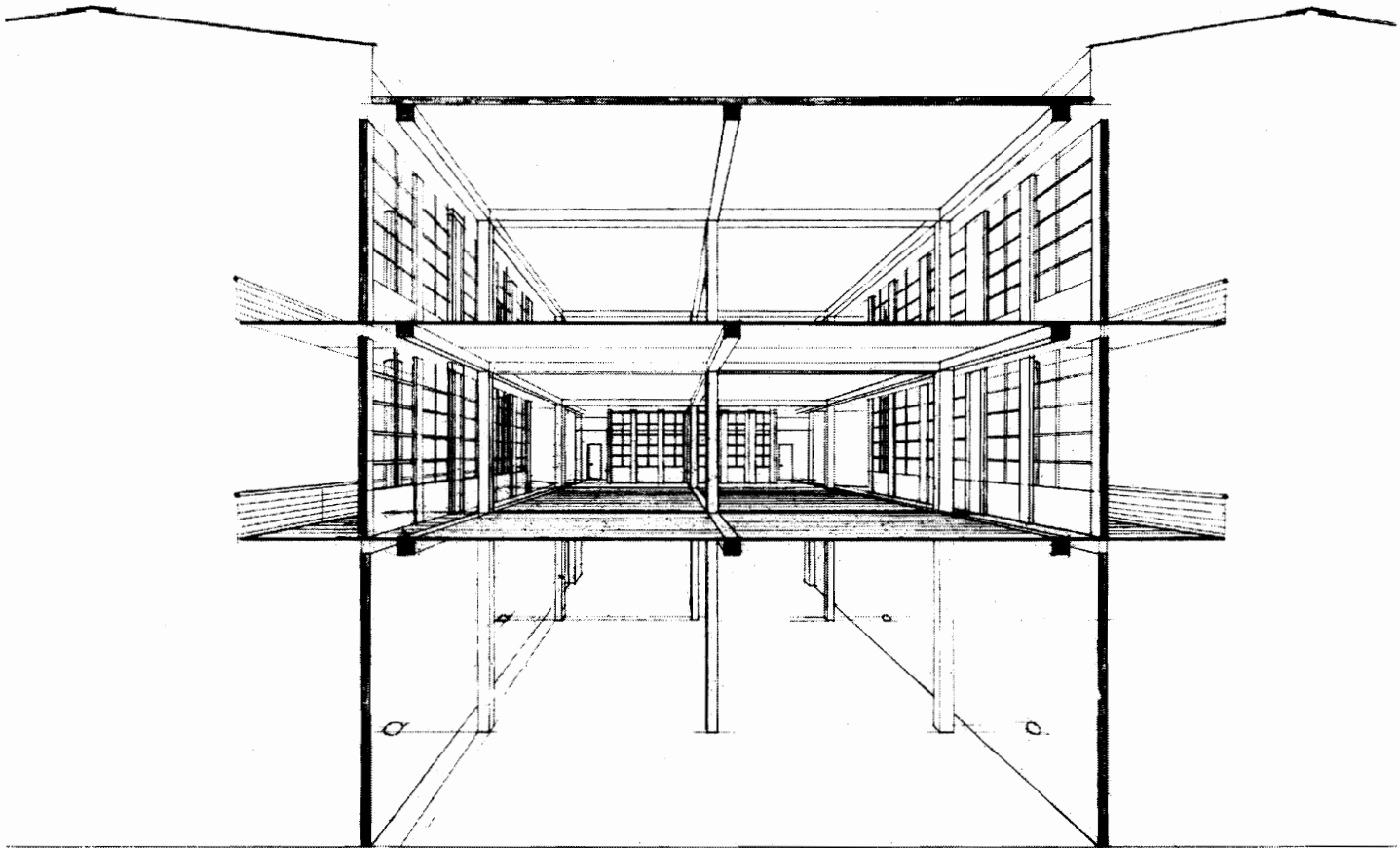
You enter the building from the system of walkways that traverse the common area of the old mill building. The glass walls make the central core seem transparent. Therefore, even though you have entered a new building, you continue to be aware of your location within the old mill. Moreover, since the orthogonal grid of the old building has been preserved and incorporated into this part of the building you have a strong visual sense of continuity. This sensation is reinforced by utilizing the roof of the old building to cover the court.

At this point you again experience the inside-outside inversion that you earlier sensed when you entered the old building on one of the three new bridges and saw the new buildings inside. In this case the inside structures which you stand outside of are the offices and the workshops that are visible through the glass walls ahead and to the sides.

Upon entering the central core you feel you are in the middle of things. Directly ahead there is a glass wall through which you can see the doors of the offices that are stacked on the two levels at the back of the building. To each side you see shafts of light rising from the workshops. If you walk toward one of the workshops, you can look down into the workspaces.



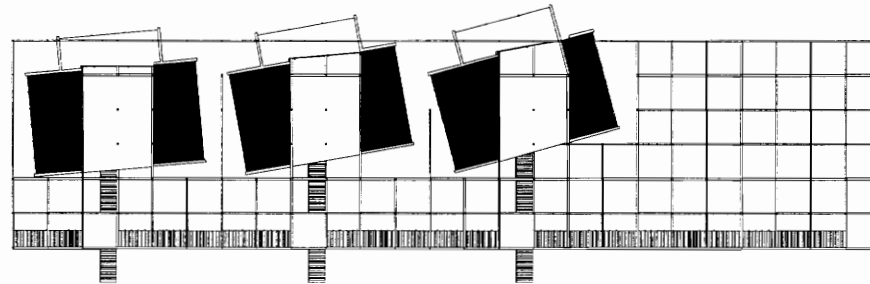
SECTION PERSPECTIVE OF THE COURT



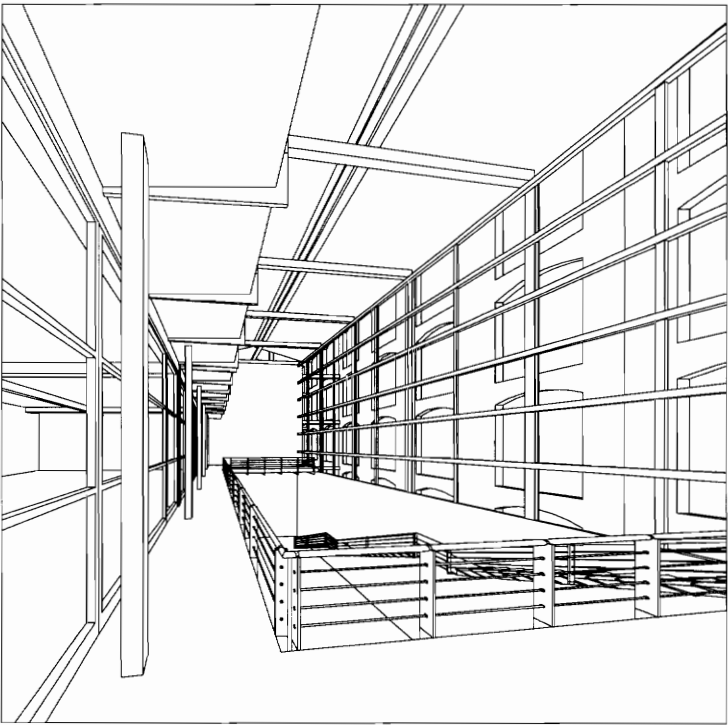
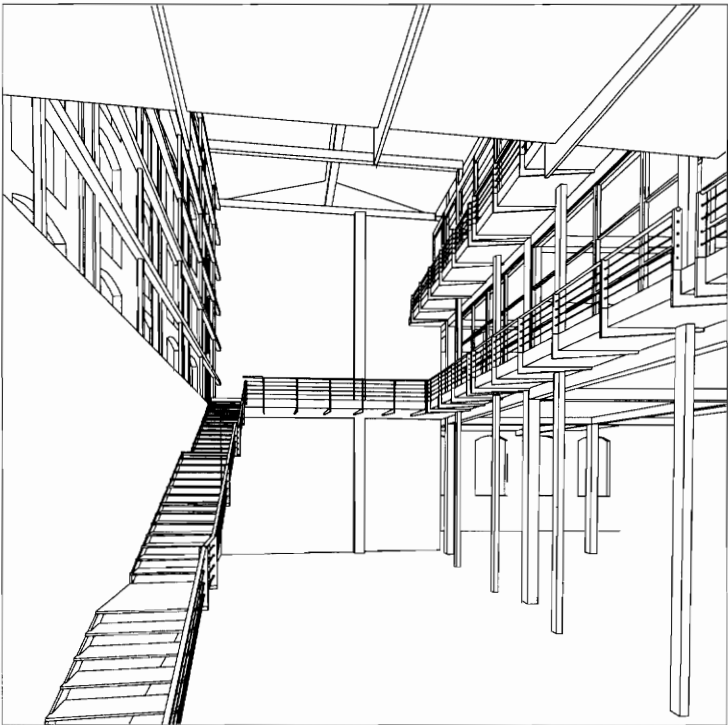
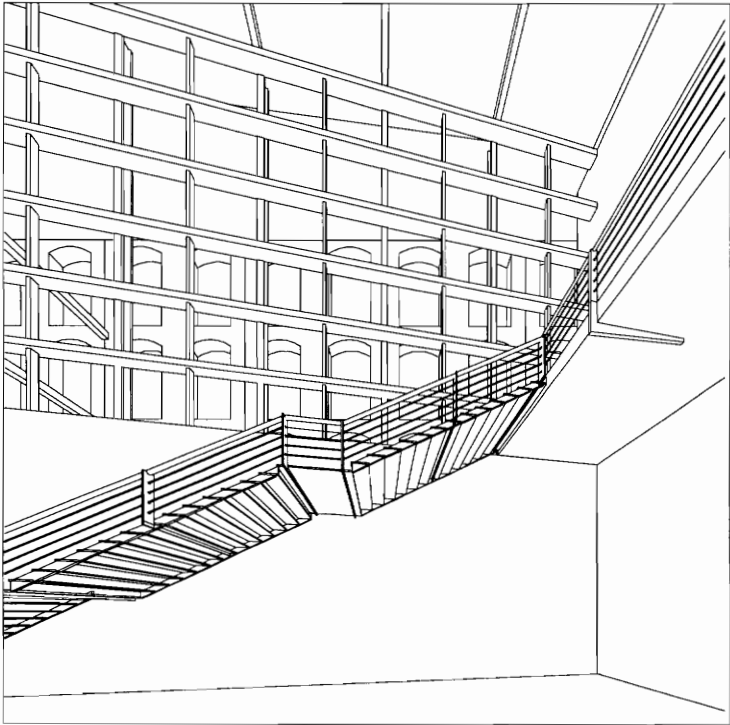
THE WORKSHOPS

The workshops are located on the original ground floor, one level below where you enter the court. They are not divide horizontally, and the wooden structure of the old building has been removed from these areas. Unlike the court which remains aligned with the orthoganal grid of the original mill structure, the workshops are organized around the rotated grid of the new building. They rise for several stories and have their own roof structures.

The rooms are bounded by tall concrete walls which block out the surroundings and focus attention inward toward the work at hand. The walls change to grids of windows above, allowing light to filter in and giving people in the cout a view of the activity on the floor of the workshops. Those in the workshops may be aware that they are in a building within a building, but the structure of the workshops connects them with the inside rather than the outside.



MOVING THROUGH THE WORKSHOP

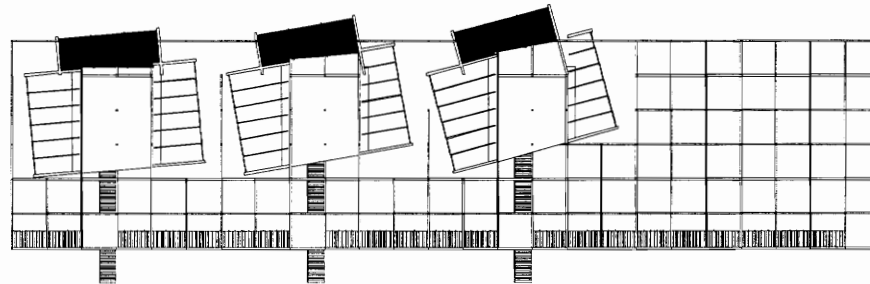


THE OFFICES

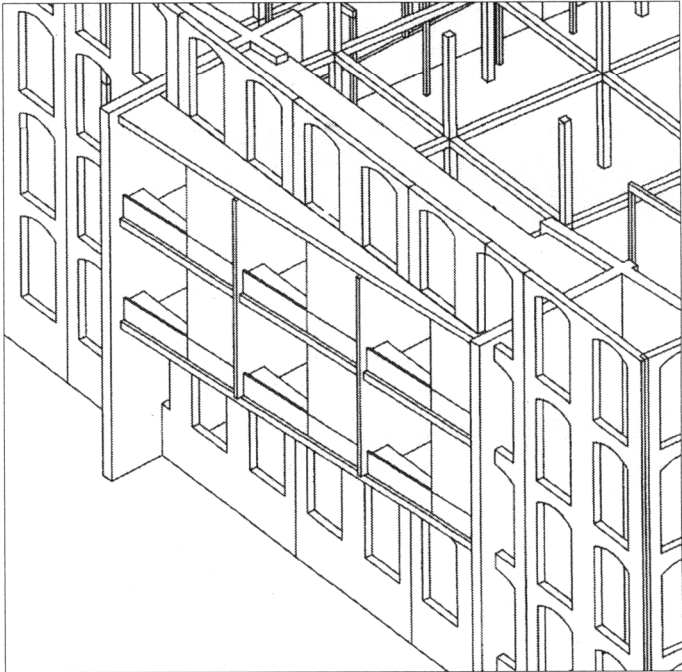
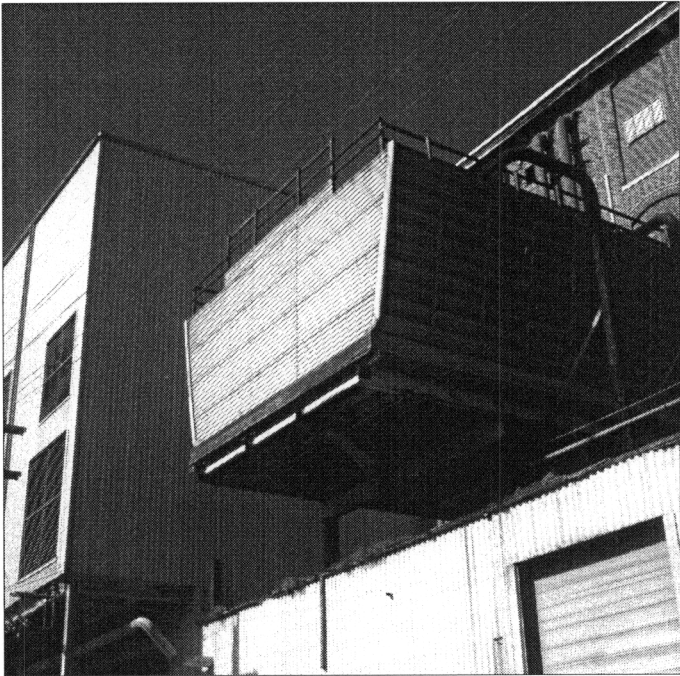
Each building has six offices stacked on two levels along the back wall. Access to the offices is through a system of stairs and walkways that lead from the court of the building. A glass curtain wall at the rear of the court makes the access system and the doors to the offices visible from the court.

The offices are the most private and smallest scale elements within the buildings. Their size and separation from the workplace give them a sense of intimacy. However, the outer walls of the offices penetrate the brick wall of the old building and project slightly beyond that wall. This projection is suggestive of the large mechanical units which had been suspended from riverside wall of the mill.

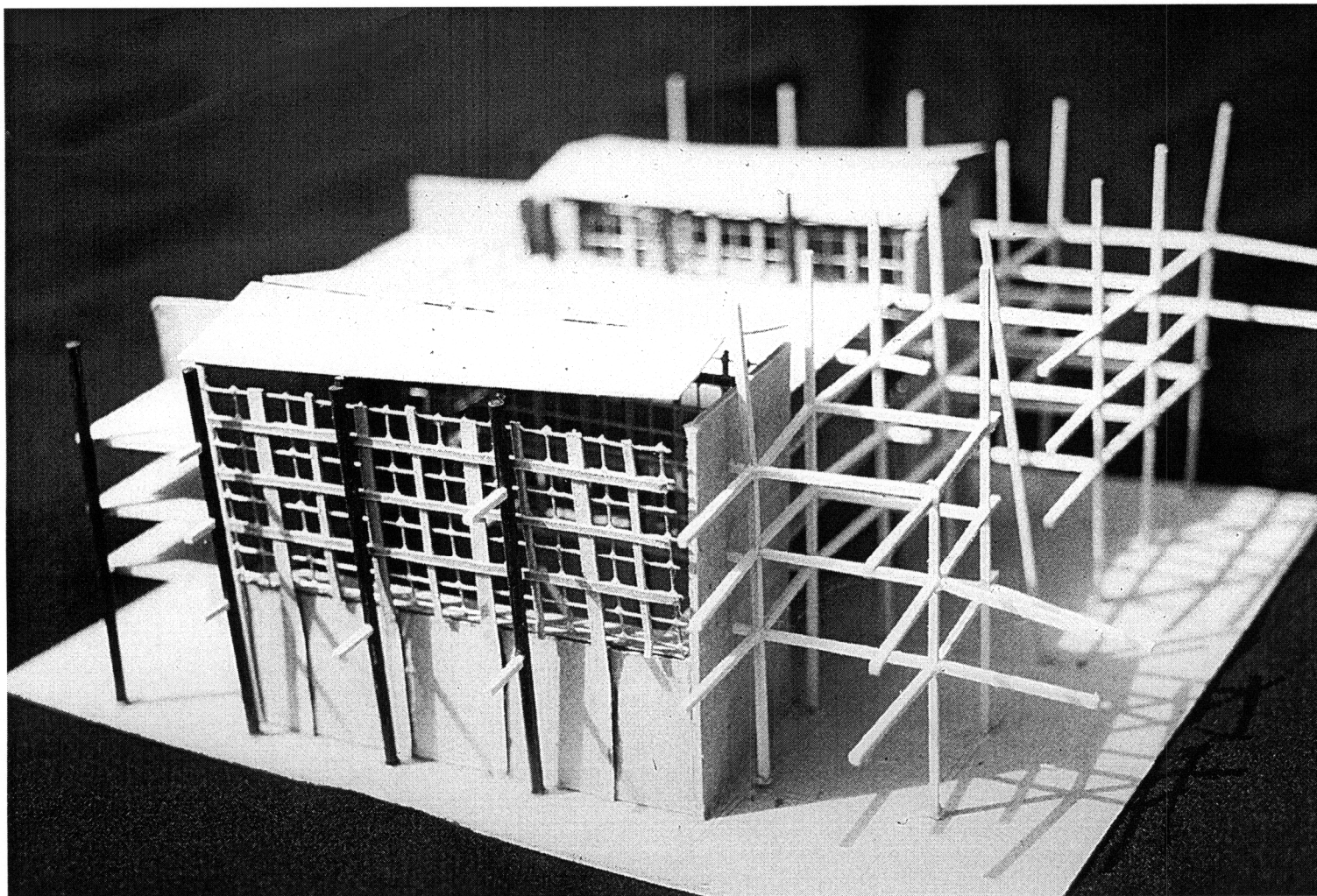
The rear wall of the offices, which lies entirely outside the brick envelope of the original mill, is mostly glass. These oversized windows provide sweeping views of the river and the town. Once inside an office, with the door closed, the connection to the mill is lessened. The focus in the office shifts outward, beyond the brick boundaries of the mill, toward the river and the town.



THE RIVERSIDE OF THE MILL



THE BUILDING



AFTERTHOUGHTS

"Architecture does not so much intrude on a landscape as it serves to explain it."

Steven Holl

Fries, Virginia exists because of the Fries Textile Mill. The closing of the mill calls into question the future of the community of Fries. The decline of the town can be tied to the closing of the mill. Conversely, the revitalization of the mill should help to reshape the town. Even as it stands empty, the mill continues to be a massive presence on the hillside overlooking the New River. It is possible to turn this symbol of the past into a hope for the future.

About a century ago an imposing brick building intruded on the serenity of that hillside above the New River. That building was an intrusion then, but it is an integral part of the landscape now. The mill is the landmark that defines the town. It is also functionally obsolete. New construction at the mill is necessary to turn it into something that can be productive in today's economy.

The new construction at the mill is designed to reveal and emphasize the qualities of the building and the town which already exist. The existing mill structure has become the warp, and a new structure is to be woven into it. It is designed to enhance the old structure and to do it in a way that is less intrusive than the original construction. Three new buildings have been sculpted out of the existing mill, through carefully adding new structure and subtracting from the existing building. The mill has been modified so that it might fit in today's world, and the town of Fries is about to begin its next chapter.

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Page introductions

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- ^{p 6} HERMAN HERTZBERGER, *Lessons for Students in Architecture* (Rotterdam: Uitgeverij 010 Publishers, 1991) 108.
- ^{p 8} PALLASMAA, 28.
- ^{p 14} SVERRE FEHN, *The Poetry of the Straight Line* (Helsinki: Museum of Finnish Architecture, 1992) 51.
- ^{p 15} ALDO VAN EYCK cited in PHILIPPE ROBERT, *Adaptations: New Uses for Old Buildings* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1991) 6.
- ^{p 17} PAUL HORGAN cited in MICHAEL BENEDIKT, *For an Architecture of Reality* (New York: Lumen Books, 1987) 74.
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- ¹ MARTIN HEIDEGGER, *Poetry, Language, Thought* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1971) 154.
- ² DANIEL SOLOMON, *ReBuilding* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1992) 7.
- ³ CHRISTIAN NORBERG-SCHULZ, *The Concept of Dwelling* (New York: Rizzoli, 1985) 48.
- ⁴ AVERY BOND AND MARTHA NICHOLS, EDS., *A History of the Town of Fries, Virginia* (Collinsville, VA: Collinsville Printing Co., [1977?]).
- ⁵ JOHN S. GARNER, *The Company Town: Architecture and Society in the Early Industrial Age* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992) 152.
- ⁶ GARNER, 150.
- ⁷ OSWALD MATHIAS UNGERS, *Architettura come Tema* (Milano: Electa, 1982).
- ⁸ UNGERS.

IMAGES

All photographs and drawings by Katherine Flanigan except:

PAGE 6

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PAGE 7

GALAX QUADRANGLE, map, (United States Geological Survey, 1984).

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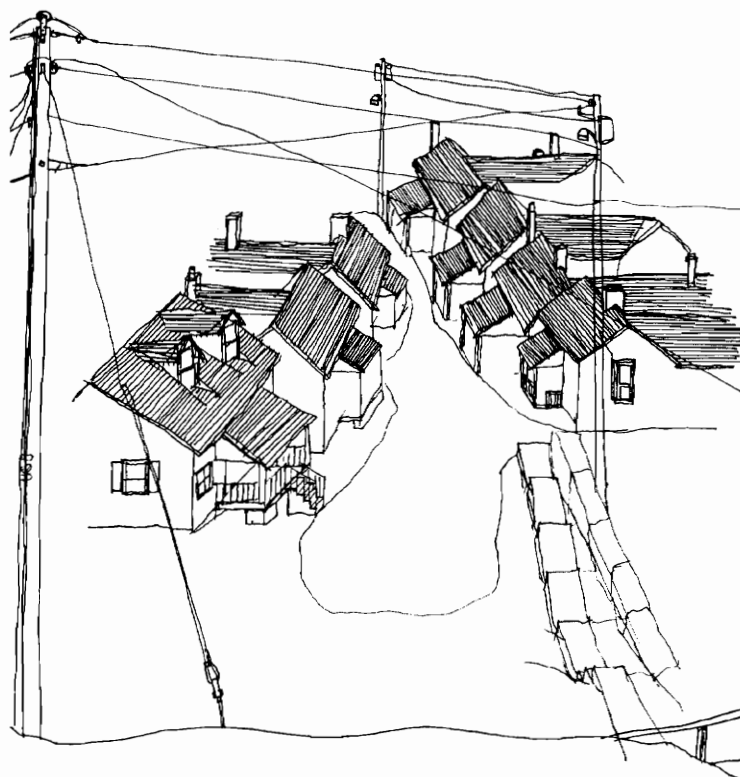
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"My grandparents had to live their way out of one world and into another, or into several others, making new out of old the way corals live their reef upward. I am on my grandparents' side. I believe in Time, as they did, and in the life chronological rather than in the life existential. We live in time and through it, we build our huts in its ruins, or used to, and we cannot afford all these abandonings."

Wallace Stegner
Angle of Repose

