Pastoralism and the West : Re-use of the Mill Warehouse

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Abstract

. .   This project explores the myth of the pastoral and its influence on the landscape of the Frontier. These influences are brought into an architectural discourse which serves to frame the design project. The design project involves the re-use of a Mill Warehouse located on the edge of downtown Calgary. The project compares this historic, image-based expression in relation to a more abstract, inclusive definition for architecture.

This Master's Degree Project demonstrates a proficiency in architectural analysis and design through the schematic design of a community center. The program includes spaces for exhibition, administration, and education, in addition to outdoor public space for the greater site.

Key Words: Community Centre, Mill Warehouse, Pastoralism

Acknowledgements

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Introduction

This Master's Degree Project began with the site of a vacant warehouse located in a romantically still, dramatic piece of Calgary parkland. A significant incongruency existed between the settled building and the idealized 'green landscape' surrounding it. Exemplifying a building type integral to Calgary's urban morphology, the building retained an anchored presence. In contrast, the ideal sward, dotted with youthful evergreens, appeared as a lush surface consumed by its own symbolic references.

Out of this tension came an exploration into the myth of the pastoral, a landscape-based fictional construct projected onto the North American Frontier during its settlement. As a guiding image for a place without a cultivated history, the pastoral ideal gave significance to the territory. It also represented the collective, more accurately, dominant social, political, and economic framework which defined the West.

The ensuing analysis traces the conceptual origins of the pastoral ideal and its manifestation in the West. The values which support pastoralism are addressed to understand their impact and relevance on the architecture of the West. Formally, pastoralism rests within a predetermined imported symbolism resulting in an image-based architecture. In this sense, it challenges a contemporary inclusive expression to emerge from the West.

The analysis is supported by a review of specific landscape paintings created in both Canada and Britain. Created alongside the emergence of modernism in painting, this process allows issues of abstraction and representation, and their reference points to be discussed in relation to the place and period from which they emerged. Understood as an analogue, the resulting opinions and values influence the architecture of the design project.

The lack of complexity inherent to pastoralism can also be understood in spatial terms through Richard Sennett's analysis of the North American grid. The grid, in part, can be seen to signify land as commodity. This commodification reflected the distancing between personal belief and manifest action, between individual and place, and between inside and outside. Scaled down to the individual experience, Sennett suggests the absolute separation between subjective experience and worldly experience, between self and city, reflects a social ethic based on the fear of *exposure*. In contrast to the social

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engagement provided through transparency, pastoralism led to the separation of the private realm from the public realm. It is the overlap of these two realms, however, that is imperative for individual growth and the development of community.

The initial discussion operates as a critical history which underlies the design project. It provides an understanding of our origins as a framework to evaluate the given and develop a strategy for its reuse. The design project engages the existing fabric as something not to be isolated and contained, but something to be experienced and expanded upon. The design program is a community centre with outdoor public space.

Discussion

Entering Nature: The Myth of the Pastoral

In *The Machine in the Garden*, Leo Marx explores the myth of the pastoral, a fictional construct which overlays the North American identity, in particular, the identity of the West. Dating back to the *Roman Odyssey Landscapes*, the pastoral ideal refers to the idealized withdrawal from civilization to begin fresh within a pristine green landscape.[1] Without an accumulation of history or culture, North America offered the opportune site to model this ideal. This utopian construct and its associated values continue into the twentieth century to influence our perception and expression of time and place.

Marx identified pastoralism on two levels: sentimental and complex. Sentimental pastoralism, which is the focus of this discussion, describes the expressions of soft nostalgia and sense of 'eternal youth' found within the West. By playing on illusion and fantasy, pastoralism presents the landscape and 'nature' as a vehicle of contradictory meaning. The inherent diversity of the Canadian identity is challenged by this self-referential historicism which tends for the removal of complex expression in favor of surface appearance. Complex pastoralism, on the other hand, acknowledges the reality of change, the reality of life in an urbanized post-industrial world. It exposes the presence of myth and illusion in relation to the culture which they serve.

Nostalgia for the past is seen in the mid-nineteenth century Romantic landscape images representing Canada's Frontier, historically referred to as the North West. Symbolizing one of the last untamed domains of the world, these images of the landscape served as vehicles to escape the shifting social, political, and economic confines defining European life in the age of Industrialism. Douglas Francis explained:

> "Romantics reacted against the formality, neo-classicism, and rationalism of the Enlightenment, and instead emphasized sentiment, imagination, and emotion. Man's emotions were in the purest form ... when he existed in his "natural state", before he had been corrupted and his senses dulled, by civilization. Man lost his innocence and purity when he became a member of society. To regain his freedom, he needed to return to his natural state .... The belief was interpreted literally as

[1] Leo Marx, *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964) 3

Top: Paul Kane. *Medicine Man Dance*. c. 1860

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meaning the need to return to the natural world - to the wilderness - where he could live in harmony with Nature and with God, as man had lived before the Fall in the Garden of Eden."[2]

Francis continued to outline the spiritual values projected on to the Canadian wilderness. "A wilderness for a Romantic was not a frightening and gloomy wasteland: rather, it was a place of serenity, a source of inspiration, a sanctuary - a primeval cathedral - where man could truly commune with God."[3]

Romanticism's rendition masked the social, political, and geographical tensions of a territory whose boundaries were still uncharted. The artist C.W. Jeffreys commented on these deficits in the work of Paul Kane, the leading Romantic painter in Canada. "We see in his pictures of the North-West not the brilliant sunlight of the high prairie country and the foothills, not the pure intense color of the north; we see instead the dull, brown tones of the studio and gallery picture of the Middle Europe of his day. The topography may be North American, but the atmosphere both physical and mental, which bathes the scene is essentially European."[4] Both the wilderness and the native, renamed the 'Noble Savage', were adopted by and adapted to European painting traditions and techniques of the eighteenth century.

In contrast, visions of the American West were influenced through transcendentalism. Sublime imagery located God within nature itself. Considered the site of the 'New Beginning', the West provided a route to nationhood and the divine, reinforced by scenes of 'Creation' and 'Birth.'

Entering Nature: Expedition

With an increasing focus on the colonies, the British initiated the first scientific expedition of the North West in 1857. The intention was to survey the agricultural potential of the region and locate possible routes for an East-West trans-continental railway. In terms of cultural mythology, the expedition stands as a counterpoint within a developing world relative to the ideal 'return'. It reflected the ahistorical and nonreligious structure of a modern world moving towards a scientific reductivist framework. As Francis explains, "the North West offered a wonderful natural laboratory. It contained new varieties of region, a natural world still waiting to be understood."(Francis 3) John Palliser
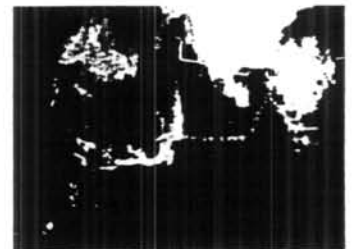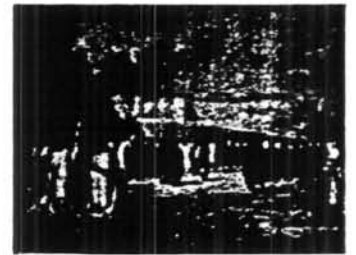
[2] Douglas R. Francis, *Images of the West: Responses to the Canadian Prairies* (Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1989) 39.

[3] *Images of the West: Responses to the Canadian Prairies*, 39.

[4] Ronald Rees, *Land of Earth and Sky* (Saskatooon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1987) 13.

Top: Paul Kane. *Sioux Scalp Dance (Fort Snelling)*. c. 1845
Bottom: Thomas Cole. *Expulsion from the Garden of Eden*. c. 1827-28

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plants, exotic animals, and primitive human beings. Here was an unexplored region still waiting to be understood."[5] John Palliser led the team of scientists, composed of a botanical collector, a magnetical observer, a geologist-naturalist-medical man, and an astronomical observer. Sir George Simpson, the Hudson's Bay Company's North American governor, also joined the expedition.

The results of the Palliser expedition granted a marginal approval to the possibility of 'civilized' life in the West. These results corresponded with the Canadian expedition of 1858, led by Henry Youle Hind, a professor of geology at the University of Toronto. Neither individual believed settlement could occur in the grasslands of southwest Saskatchewan and southern Alberta, a region that became known as the 'Palliser Triangle'. Hind assigned the name 'the Great American Desert' to the southern plains. Dry and according to Hind, "without a shrub or bush thicker than a willow twig, they were deemed unfit for permanent habitation by civilized humanity."[6] To the area immediately north, however, both men indicated a 'Fertile Belt'. It stretched in an arc from the Lake of the Woods to the Rocky Mountains, passing through the Red and Saskatchewan River countries, and extending into the foothills at the 49th parallel. This suggestion of a 'Fertile Belt' provided the necessary support for the development of the North West.

Landing: Pastoralism and the Canadian Experience

The weakness of pastoralism, in part, lies in its negation of difference. As Northrop Frye has noted, Canada's critical identity, rests within its difference. Its difference between peoples and places. Historically, America recreated its origins as a new beginning, whereas in Canada, settlement patterns revealed a resistance to singularity. The identity of the nation, in other words, was created by different peoples as opposed to a supposed 'collective' identity created by the nation. Ronald Rees elaborates:

"Unlike the United States, Canada had no constitutional ideals of happiness and individual liberty to sustain immigrant morale. A Loyalist country that had remained faithful to the Crown was less a land of beginning again than a northern fringe from debilitating forces in other places. Canada could offer political safety and shelter, but not

[5] *Images of the West: Responses to the Canadian Prairies*, 3.

[6] Ronald Rees, *New and Naked Land: Making the Prairies Home* (Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1987) 6.

transcendent ideals. People came here not, as de Tocqueville said of immigrants to America, to be 'born free', but to escape oppression, to preserve traditions and ways of life threatened at home and, like immigrants the world over, to improve their material lives. They arrived as quiet recipients of a land already won, not as potential conquerors: the Indians had been subdued, the land surveyed and subdivided, and lawlessness brought under control. Psychologically, it was better suited to the transplanting of old worlds than to the making of new ones."[7]

As an undeveloped territory, Canada's West was open to a wholistic vision. It helped retain the imagination and dream of the settler. The harsh reality of the existing landscape denied any recognizable elements that could relate to past experience. "This utter negation of life, this complete absence of history ... One saw here the world as it had taken shape from the hands of the Creator."[8]

The Prairie grasslands were aptly compared to an ocean.

"A long, low line of sweeping hills was a 'coteau', or coast, and short leaps across open prairies were 'traverses', the voyageurs term for a short trip across a wind-swept lake. To be in a landscape in which there were no hills and trees was to be 'out of sight of land'. As if to anticipate the ocean metaphor, the Indians had referred to open prairie as the 'bare land', and from their sheltered campsites in wooded hills and valleys on the edges of the prairie they spoke of distant buffalo herds as 'passing far out', like ships at sea."[9]

Another factor which supported pastoralism was individual memory. Memory in the case of a recent immigrant, however, was as much a product of European culture as anything formed in isolation. Landscape features dating back to childhood often became the deciding factor in the location of home. Rees notes this attraction, "We are all marked by the first world that meets our eyes, and we carry that imprint as a permanent image of the way the world should be. Memories of the homeland, or idealized versions of them, become templates for the future."[10]

[7] *New and Naked Land: Making the Prairies Home*, 87.

[8] *New and Naked Land: Making the Prairies Home*, 35.

[9] *New and Naked Land: Making the Prairies Home*, 36.

[10] *New and Naked Land: Making the Prairies Home*, 46.

To ease settlement, the idealized 'return' also surfaced through the process of naming. Names symbolically gave value to places previously unknown. As such, geographical elements, towns, and villages adopted names of people and places in the homeland.[11] The scale and similarity of these places to the original were a matter for the imagination. European centers, for example, were located across the countryside. Both London and Paris can be found in Ontario. Moving into the city, street names scaled this symbolism down to the neighbourhood. Before numbers were assigned to the Calgary grid, street names held religious significance, such as Aaron, Jacob, Joshua, Sarah, Moses and Jeremiah to name only a few. In America, where the idea of a new beginning overwhelmed the imagination, one locates Arcadia in over ten states. Grady Clay confirms the presence of people in the definition of place as "a creation, a byproduct, a resultant of human occupancy and presence ... a cliff is not a 'Place' until it becomes a destination like *Lover's Leap*."[12]

Landing: The Preference for Representation

Until now, pastoralism has been discussed mainly as a mental construct influencing the framework for a regional identity. The pastoral ideal as a particular image, however, can be understood as a model which helped establish a landscape typology.

In seventeenth century Europe, landscape became understood as an art establishing the groundwork for the Picturesque. Developments in naturalistic painting led by Claude Lorrain, also known as Claude, re-presented and overlaid existing landscapes with the pastoral ideal. Classical texts such as Virgil's *Ecologues* which described Arcadia, provided the thematic base for nature's scenographic recomposition. Historical conventions were appropriated to compose the scenes: woods opened by pastures, coulisse for achieving atmospheric distances, topographic relief, and the presence of water.[13] The illusions were heightened with a new ability to depict both space and distance realistically. For example, the emphasis on the horizon was created through the use of horizontal bands. Figures were symbolically located at ease in the foreground providing a means of identification and entry for the spectator.

Robert Harbison states, "we replace the world with our ideas of it" and these ideas, according to Gina Crandell are based on a culturally-ingrained two-

[11] *New and Naked Land: Making the Prairies Home*, 88.

[12] Michael Hough, *Out of Place: Restoring Identity to the Regional Landscape* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990) 18.
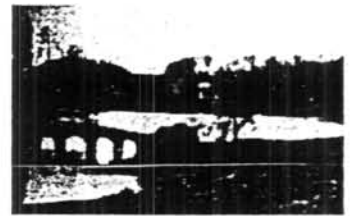
[13] Gina Crandell, *Nature Pictorialized: "The View" in Landscape History* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1993) 13.

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dimensional perception of nature. The post-settlement landscape of the Frontier found its view of nature through the Picturesque. Facilitated by a national system of experimental tree farms, new landscape definitions fundamentally altered the formal and spatial presence of the region. With assistance coming from the 'Glass Houses' overseas, facilities such as Kew Gardens in London, the Imperial Botanic Garden at St. Petersberg, and the Imperial College of Japan were consulted. In this condition, the emerging sciences developed new levels of control over the environment. The central experimental farm was located in Ottawa while satellite farms were established in Nova Scotia, Manitoba, British Columbia, and the North-West territories. Two more were located in Alberta at Lacombe and Lethbridge. Regional patterns of texture, color, and scale were transformed with the settlement of the region. The place was no longer related to native landscape, but was redefined by the histories of its occupants.

With industrialism and its transformation of the city, the concept of the city park as a place to escape emerged. In the Frontier, the park's definition often based itself on utopian visions of a healthy and plentiful land. The irony of this vision was, however, as Gina Crandell points out, that even though the pastoral ideal reflects a deeply anti-urban sentiment, it was established and has remained primarily an urban phenomenon.[14] The historic masking of native ground is evident proximate to the site for the accompanying design project. In Calgary, St.Patrick's, St. Andrew's, and St. George's islands were originally designated as places for leisure and recreation in the city. In 1890, the federal government leased them to the city with the understanding 'improvements' would be made. These 'improvements' called for the reconfiguration through European formal garden designs superimposed upon 'the wilds'. Soonafter, the land was donated to the city on condition the city continue native vegetation removal in favor of formal landscaping.

The Survey

The social framework implicit to pastoralism within the Frontier can be explored through the grid as a construct for settlement. With the intention to prepare for a democratic settlement of the Frontier, the survey allowed for the destruction of any definitive geographical elements in order to gain a unified

[14] *Nature Pictorialized: "The View" in Landscape History.* 155.

Top: Stourhead, Wiltshire
Bottom: Claude Lorrain, *Coast View of Delos with Aeneas.*

rhythm for the grid. It was an absolute rhythm applied to a wide-spanning, if not differentiated, geography.

The survey overlaid a grid of one mile square units. Each unit was called a section. A strip in between each section provided road allowance. Broken down in scale, each 640 acre section was divided into four basic single farming units of 160 acres. Each section was marked by an iron stake driven into the ground; each quarter section was marked by the digging of square holes called *monuments*.[15] Only correction lines revealed the limitations of this system. They were inserted to compensate for the curvature of the earth and exposed the grid's two-dimensional conception of space.

The Frontier town was systematically laid out at the same time as, and in direct relation to, the railway. It was specifically located at equal points within the Prairie flats, helping transform the region into a continuous marketplace. Calgary served as a commercial hub, a stopover before the Rocky Mountains, and in this sense, can be considered a 'Gateway City'.[16]

The efficient transformation of the land into equal units redefined the land as commodity. The commodification was furthered by the absence of limits in relation to the city. According to Richard Sennett, this lack of boundaries 'neutralized' the territory. He clearly states that for places of settlement to have relative value, people cannot be allowed to expand infinitely.

In *Conscience of the Eye*, Sennett described the North American grid as a Protestant sign for the neutral city. He connects the values that guided the development of North America to the particular disjunction between the inner and the outer within Protestantism, the dominant religious framework guiding the development of the *New World*. Interpreted more generally, it is a divide between subjective experience and worldly experience, self and city.[17] The pastoral ideal facilitated this separation in its denial of the urban realm. It became a symbolic self-referential definition that denied its context in the sense of how and where it was created.

Grounded in the social and political histories of North America, Sennett's concerns also address the nature of public space. The separation of public life and private life echoes the Protestant call for the absolute separation, i.e. privacy, of the spiritual realm from the outside public world. He explains this withdrawal as a result of the fear of 'exposure', referencing a condition that will hurt more than stimulate.

[15] *New and Naked Land: Making the Prairies Home*, 62.
[16] Leonard K. Eaton, *Gateway Cities & Other Essays* (Ames, Iowa: Iowa State University Press, 1989) xiii.
[17] Richard Sennett, *The Conscience of the Eye: The Design and Social Life of Cities* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1990) xiii.

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Sennett continues "unity can be gained only at the value of complexity."[17] This does not imply the complete exposure of one part to the other, of inside to outside. It is in fact the difference and diversity gained through an exposure to the world that is necessary. "Through exposure to others, we might learn how to weigh what is important and what is not. We need to see differences on the streets or in other people neither as threats nor as sentimental invitations, rather as necessary visions. They are necessary for us to learn how to navigate life with balance, both individually and collectively."[18]

Taken into a larger scale, 'exposure' provides the necessary overlap between inside and outside to support the development of community. The self cannot attain happiness alone. In this view, public space has a specific role to create inclusive environments that embrace communication and community. Public space also needs to embrace heterogeneity in order to progress and develop.

The Park as Place of Fantasy

> "What is attractive in pastoralism is the felicity represented by an image of a natural landscape either unspoiled or, if cultivated, rural. Movement toward such a symbolic landscape also may be understood as movement away from an 'artificial' world, a world identified with 'art', using that word in its broadest sense to mean the disciplined habits of mind or arts developed by organized communities. In other words, this impulse gives rise to a symbolic motion away from centers of civilization toward their opposite, nature, away from sophistication toward simplicity, or ... away from the city toward the country. When this wish is unchecked the result is a simple-minded wishfulness, a romantic perversion of thought and feeling."[19]

The pastoral ideal as a model for urban parkland can be understood in terms of Freud's writings on fantasy-making within *Civilization and Its Discontents*. Fantasies allow the individual to balance the repression of instincts and desires which occur due to societal order. Parks and reservations, in particular, represent islands in which nature can grow or travel uncontrolled. They

[18] *The Conscience of the Eye: The Design and Social Life of Cities*, xiii.

[19] *The Machine in the Garden*, 9.

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become metaphors for individual release. They represent sites where mental and physical constructs are unconstrained by imposed utilitarian boundaries.

The problem remains that the pastoral ideal, as an expression of release, does not have the social and political relevance, nor the significant difference that it had in Britain when it emerged, i.e. in the seventeenth century when the countryside was literally being transformed into a place of production with the *Enclosures Act*. The pastoral ideal as a landscape type has now become a neutralized expression for leisure space, negating our culture's potential ability to express the particular conditions found within our own constructed geographies.

Beyond Pastoralism: Redefining Landscape

During North America's settlement, scientific and technological developments began the demystification of nature and helped usher in a non-biblical conception of the natural world. Darwin's publication of *On the Origin of Species* supported a new level of confidence through the intellectual mastery over nature's origins and processes. Based on direct observation and analysis, science established a hierarchy between subject and object, between individual and nature. The desire to both control and explain nature has continued into the twentieth century through technological advancements redefining nature as environment which we objectively view and control.[20]

British landscape painting expressed this new conception of the world. In Britain, the artist was redefined as scientist and expressed 'truths' through the accuracy of observation. The subject became self-referential with the artist redefined as scientist. Reduced to their basic form, all previous notions of symbolism were stripped. Nature became defined by fundamental matter as this reductivist approach polarized views of the world into microscopic studies of plant and cloud formations. Compositionally, the subject floated in the frame, presenting an objectified and detached view of the world. The dislocation of the individual could symbolically be seen by the apparent erasure of the Claudian figure. In this vein, the absence also expressed a sense of isolation, deeming the individual a stranger in a strange land.

The later paintings of J.M.W. Turner can be seen both as a product of his time and a forerunner to modern painting of the twentieth century. Turner

[20] Louise Dompierre, *Digital Gardens: A World in Mutation* (Toronto: The Power Plant, 1996)

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focused on the violence of the storm as a primal theme. John Berger attributes this violence as something born within his own imagination and cultivated in his youth.[20] This violence, Berger claims "would have become confirmed, not only by nature, but by human enterprise. Turner lived through the first apocalyptic phase of the British Industrial Revolution ... The light which he thought of as devouring the whole visible world was very similar to the new productive energy which was challenging and destroying all previous ideas about wealth, distance, human labor, the city, nature, the will of God, children, time."[22]

In addition to Berger's narrative, Turner's abstractions prepare us for the fundamental changes and redefinitions born during this period. Advancing beyond pure observation and visual effect, 'Turner's imagination' was heralded in relation to 'Constable's eye' by John Ruskin. In contrast, Turner's visions were born from experience. They portrayed the experience of being *within* the world absent of representable definition. If the figure presented itself, it was a 'blot' being swallowed by a storm.[23]

Turner did not provide an ideal nor an alternative, he expressed a condition. One cannot conclusively say where it is better, that is chronologically, before or after the shifts of the 19th century. Berger asks, "Do we take more account of the impossibly black sails or the impossibly radiant city beyond? The questions raised by the painting are moral ... but the answers given are all ambivalent."[24]

While responding to the complexity of his own time, Turner can be formally understood as a forerunner to modern abstraction. In his abandonment of classical technique and composition, Turner turned to the medium itself as a means of expression. "He had isolated an intrinsic quality of painting and revealed that it could be self-sufficient, an independent imaginative function." In conclusion, Turner's canon confirms the importance of medium, accessibility, and non-prescriptive reference to create an abstraction of value. His paintings remain captivating as they helped express a human condition.
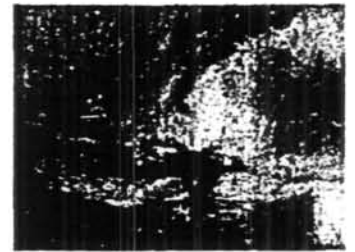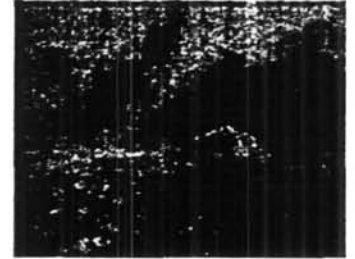
[21] John Berger, *About Looking* (New York: Vintage Books, 1991) 149.

[22] *About Looking*, 151.

[23] Lawrence Gowing, *Turner: Imagination and Reality* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1966) 9.

Top: J.M.W. Turner. *Rough Sea with Wreckage*, c. 1830.
Bottom: J.M.W. Turner. *Snow Storm: Steamboat off a Harbour's Mouth*, c. 1842.

The Architecture in Response

Taken into an architectural discourse, pastoralism is approached on a three levels. 1. Pastoralism leads to a condition in which land is understood as commodity. Within this condition, the existing fabric has its value negated. 2. Pastoralism reveals a tendency towards scenographic representation over abstraction as created through architecture as a tectonic expression. 3. In terms of spatial definition, pastoralism tends towards the exclusive and separated over the inclusive and overlaid. The architecture in this project proposes an alternative to pastoralism.

The previous discussion underlines the necessity of accesibile references within the environments we design and habitiate. Thus, the existing fabric was addressed valuing a sense of continuity between past and present. The intention was to articulate a design strategy which helps foster a sense of identity and progress within an existing urban condition. On the scale of the city, it addresses a concern with creating a more cohesive fabric, acknowledging continual change as positive. This project interprets the existing fabric as part of the city's geneology, not history, attempting to integrate as opposed to segregate past and present.

Reuse forces the question between past and present. The expression between new and old, between existing and addition offers the opportunity to reinvest meaning in history through its adoption and layering. Reuse, as an abstracted reinterpretation of existing fabrics, allows access to a place undergoing continual change. Change is driven by necessity. Not focusing on the building as a historical image, this project looks to existing patterns and systems within the constructed assemblies of building and site as a point of departure. Within this approach, it is the belief that a controlled austerity liberates places in opposition to a 'consumerist clutter'[24].

In terms of space, the modernist notion of transparency is recalled in an effort to encourage and express the heterogenous nature of community. The complexity of overlapping space all ws for social development and interaction in which people can learn gradually as spaces and places reveal themselves. Architecture, in other words, operates as a vehicle for social interaction and development.

[24] Peter Buchanan. "Steps up the Ladder to a Sustainable Architecture" in *Architecture and Urbanism* 320.(Tokyo: A & U Publishing Co., Ltd., 1997) 8.
This strategy is sympathetic to Peter Buchanan's argument in that a diminished consumption will help bring about a sense of connection and engagement within our deeper selves and the communities we are a part of.

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Architecture and Historicism

In an attempt to confront the effects of pastoralism, a clarification of the project's postion relative to historic fabrics is briefly articulated.

Arbitrary erasure of existing urban fabrics leads to a sense of dislocation by removing reference points for the individual. The resulting urban voids echo the transitive origin of the Frontier as a lone hinterland. Aretha Van Herk spans centuries as she described this literally unsettled territory. "Transient: the nomadic legacy of the ranchers, east of the north/south route of prehistoric man, balloons drift overhead. Denizen: to live here you must move, although the stones command stillness, and the grass demands its own growing. Home is a movement, a quick tug at itself and it packs up ..."[25] It is important to recognize inherent value in what exists to operate on the basis of needs. This does not call for limitations, but for strategies grounded in context.

On the opposite end of the scale, preservation expresses a fixation on the past. History is objectified, with its complexity reduced to an isolated point in time. The realities of modern materials and labour practices are stretched in a recreation of the past. These projects risk their own exclusion from the city by reemerging as monuments. Recalling Rossi's concept of a 'pathological permanence', preserved buildings can often 'retard' surrounding development, locking the territory into an overwhelming sense of the past. Rossi states, "In the city whose analogue is the skeleton, such a museum piece is like an embalmed body, it gives only the appearance of being alive."[26]

As a reaction to the exteme reduction inherent to Modernism, Post-Modernism directed itself architecturally with a belief in the return of accessiblity and reference. It often failed, however, in the overlay of past and present, tending towards a hightly artifical 'return' to classical form and motif. In this vein, Kenneth Frampton located Post-Modernism as the next step in the development of kitsch Populism as presented in the writings of Robert Venturi. In terms of a critical approach to built form, Frampton points out Post Modernism often operated on the level of the scenographic as opposed to the tectonic. "In Post-Modern architecture, classical and vernacular 'quotations' tend to interpenetrate each other disconcertingly. Invariably rendered as unfocused images, they easily disintegrate and mix with other more abstract, cubistic forms

[25] Aretha van Herk, *Places Far From Ellesmere* (Red Deer, Alberta: Red Deer College Press, 1990) 69.

[26] Aldo Rossi, *The Architecture of the City* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1982) 6.

for which the architect has no more respect than for his extremely arbitrary historical allusions."[27]

The Design Project

The challenge was to evaluate the given condition and generate a program for its reuse. The previous discussion served to inform the approach towards the given as well as the design strategy for making public space.

The Design Project: Site Evaluation

The design project began with the site of a vacant warehouse building. On the scale of the city, the Mill Warehouse contributed a distinct texture significant to the urban core. The typical Mill Warehouse operates as both an 'edge' and an 'in between' within the gridded Frontier City. The typical site screens geographical elements, thus operating as a filter between two distinct contexts.

The particular site for this project is 610 5 Avenue S.E. It defines a peripheral strip of land severed by the city grid. It operates as an elongated triangular pocket of parkland alongside the Bow River Path System. It is fundamentally a public space and is designated as such by Calgary's Area Redevelopment Plan for East Village (1996). The site serves as a transition between Princes Island Park to the west and the natural reserve of Fort Calgary and St. Patrick's Island to the east. Within the site, the building is neither perpendicular nor parallel with the path, thus demanding individual attention. One encounters the warehouse as a volume which exists in tension, distinct from the ideal green of the park. The site is dramatic by virtue of its public exposure and unmodulated ground plane. This flatness provides significant contrast to the highly differentiated hard landscape of the city.

The site is bordered on all sides by distinct edges. To the west, the scale of infrastructure demands attention as two concrete overpasses hover across the site and subsequently the Bow River. The bridges provide a series of balconies offering distant overhead views onto the site below. From ground level, shards of light and shadow characterize the path's western entry. Dwarfed by concrete piers, the individual travels between scaleless islands of gravel before emerging

[27] Kenneth Frampton, *Modern Architecture: A Critical History* (London: Thames and Hudson Ltd, 1992) 307.

onto the site. Once beyond, the isolation and stillness become overlaid by the faint stream of cars and the hypnotic glide of the C-train traveling overhead.

As the river continues in its southeast direction, the site leads into the fields of prairie shortgrass lying dormant on the eastern edge. The division between these two landscape types, specifically the pastoral landscape and the natural reserve, is denoted by a nondescript strip of asphalt connecting the river to the city grid.

The river's edge, the north edge, is the most picturesque by definition. Wooded openings provide random breaks along the path, allowing views to the river and the north side of the city.

5 Avenue SE defines the southern edge and provides vehicular entry to the site. This route provides an edge to East Village, a district woven into the history of the city. Originating in direct response to the arrival of the train, the railway depot was located on 9 Avenue SE, East Village's southern boundary. The final selection of the train station to the west, however, created a new focal point for the city and began the community's gradual disintegration.

By 1945, the area's residents and industry began to migrate out to the suburbs. The area became increasingly fragmented through demolition, the C-train's divisive path, and the clustered raising of bridges on its western edge. East Village became a remnant, cut off from the downtown core of the city. Over the years, this fragmentation has extended into the social fabric. The sense of community is lost as people have either vacated or barricaded themselves in. The remaining undefined spaces have become transient in nature with parking lots claiming much of the ground. One of the fundamental intentions of this project was to provide a new focus for the development of community, both physically and socially.

The Mill Warehouse: Urban Presence

Since their emergence at the turn of the century, Mill Warehouses have created distinctive fabrics in the core of many North American cities. Evoking a sense of mass and solidity, they were intended to be company or family symbols and experienced as part of the townscape. "Honor and social position required that the exterior of the building convey a message of stability and enduring strength, which was very much in keeping with the heavy structural

system which was employed. The buildings had to signify the status of the owners in the community and the financial status of the firms."[28]

The Mill Warehouse: Constructed Landscape

Just prior to the widespread application of steel and concrete framing systems, the early Mill Warehouse was constructed from a post-and beam, heavy timber structure with load-bearing masonry walls. Its functionally driven form, simple rhythms, lack of ornament, and origins in the industrial vernacular make it sympathetic to Modern architectural sensibilities.

The framework of this particular example is organized with a grid module measuring 11'- 0" x 14' - 0". Except for the masonry pillasters and the floor decking, no members span more than one bay. The compact dimension of the bays unveils the interior as a dense forest. In this condition, one's perception of the space dramatically changes according to circulation path. For example, diagonal versus orthogonal lines of movement create a different reading of the building's edge.

Originally used to prevent fire, the existing building has a strong material presence with all assemblies monolithic and unfinished. Defined by an evocative mixture of colours and textures, the temperature and moisture levels have weathered the existing interiors over time.

Systematic punctures through the building's shell transform the interior into a light pocket during the day and a lantern at night. During the day, the side lighting transforms the wood decking into a pool of light.

The significant discontinuities of this building type arise in the front (east) skin of the building. It is here where irregular punctures and adhoc additions neglect its otherwise regulated language and rhythm. By contrast, the back (west) of the building is the most systematic, providing a consistent rhythm and pattern of punctures.

The Design Project: The Program

"Gardens always mean something else, man absolutely uses one thing to say another. Vegetation in gardens is symbolic ... Here the outside is arranged to suit the inside, in mocking imitation, in imaginary threat, in
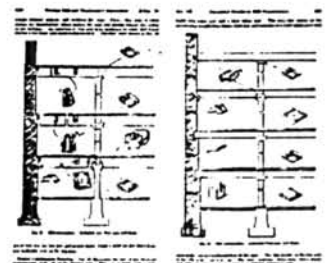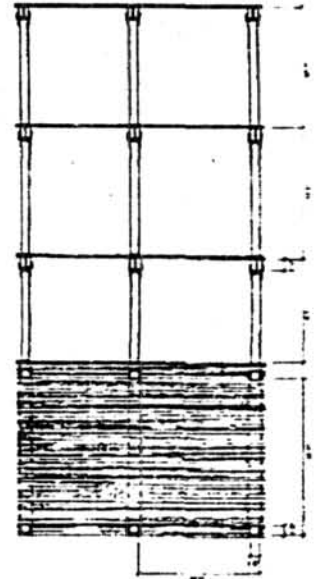
[28] *Gateway Cities & Other Essays.* 9.

Top: Existing Grid Module
Bottom: Timber Frame - Masonry shell connection details

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soothing reminiscence, as it leads the soul through all the old situations, portraying comforts and dangers enlarged or diminished in neutral inhuman green. Trees, bushes, and slopes show us closeness, separation, dependence, arrest, depression, exultation, until rarely even in dreams can a person get such a sense of traversing years in a jump, surmounting obstacles with a few sloping steps, looking back on the past with a turn of the head. In gardens everyone is free to go where he pleases, to follow a number of avenues, to make contradictory choices."[29]

The program was developed out of the social pressures of the particular site and its adjacent community. It was also influenced by the limitations and potential found in the existing structure. As part of the park path system and, more generally, public space for the city, the program's intention is to provide a place to educate and foster human interaction and discovery.

The design program is a community center with outdoor public space. It is intended for the residents of East Village, community interest groups and general users of the park. The facility contains spaces for exhibition, education, and administration. The main floor operates as an exhibition/general assembly space. It is designed with electrical and plumbing outlets at specific columns to help facilitate a diversity of informal uses. On the second floor, three offices provide seasonal spaces for community organizations. From this location, administration and pubic relations are carried out. These offices share a seminar space allowing for larger meetings, lectures, public addresses. On the third floor, a public reference library houses a collection of books and maps while providing space for reading and writing. On its western edge, the third floor provides an observation deck for socializing and viewing the city.

The main outdoor public space is sited on the west side of the existing building. It is intended for temporal events, operating as both theater and marketplace. Lighting and power receptacles are embedded within its ground plane to facilitate its use.

In the development of the program, it was not critical to name specific community groups. However, it was a priority to develop an appropriate level of complexity and variation which could be used not only by one possible user group, but by many. A basic spatial hierarchy was therefore established to suggest their use.

[29] *Eccentric Spaces*, 20 .

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The Design Project: Design Strategy

Working with the grain of the site, the design is organized via a spatial layering in the east-west direction. The intervention as a whole operates as a 'filter' through which the individual engages the site. The boundaries to the project can be considered not only by its physical limitations but also its perceptual extensions into the city and Fort Calgary.

The intervention begins on the east side with a series of compressive edges. The extraneous masses affixed to the original face of the building are removed and replaced a distance from the existing building. The space in between creates an outdoor circulation layer connecting the river path with the urban grid. In the pursuit of creating a more engaging sequence for the site, the prairie grass reserve of Fort Calgary was extended right up to the edge of this layer. From the entry platform, expansive views to Fort Calgary are framed. With the pastoral evergreen and the prairie reserve helping define the edge condition, the community is given a greater awareness and value to the difference.

Functionally, the new masses in this bar element contain the infrastructure for the building. The largest mass shelters the boiler room and the disposal space. It serves to both screen the service entry and register views with the public entry. Closer to the park path, bicycle parking is provided adjacent to the air intake which stands as an iconic element within the greater park path system. This tall mass functions at night as a light torch.

Two new entries were punctured into the existing shell. Located diagonally across from each other on the east and west elevations, their relationship serves to accentuate the dynamic experience of the existing structural grid.

The replacement and reconfiguration of fenestration and hot water radiators was completed throughout the building and will be discussed relative to particular conditions. On the first floor, radiators near the entry were pulled away from the wall to act as objects helping define entry.

The main change on the ground floor occurs on the eastern edge in which vertical circulation, vestibules (public and private), and mobile trollies are inserted. The stairs and expanded landing are further accentuated by the addition of a lightwell lining the eastern edge. Placed relative to the existing grid, electrical and plumbing outlets are inserted to allow for a range of events to

occur in the space. The exposure of the structural, electrical, and mechanical systems initiate the finishing strategy for the project in which the degree of finish suggests the type of activities appropriate to the space.

The second floor can be understood as a layering of spaces east to west, with a service hub located at one end. With the lightwell revealing the intervention on the east side, the west side of the offices are set back one bay creating an overlap between users of the gallery below and the office occupants. This setback allows the existing shell to be perceived as a screen through which to view the site and city beyond.

Sun louvers mediate the exposure of the western edge of the offices. As a complete edge of louvers, the space between the existing and the new is made ambiguous. In contrast, translucent glass is used on the north and south walls of the existing shell to retain visual focus in the east-west direction while still providing light.

On both the second and third floors, difference between new and old also occurs in terms of material finish and systems integration. A new reflective skin layering the eastern edge of the stairwell is the first indication of change and allows the wall to be read as a large scale element. The other surface materials are intended to contrast in texture moving from the brick and wood structure of the existing to a more introverted smooth assembly. This approach to the insertion is also completed on the outside of the building using zinc panels for cladding.

The third floor spaces are also organized in the east-west direction. On the west side, the intervention is set back one bay creating a new line of enclosure. Natural lighting strategies reinforce this condition.

On the eastern edge, the lightwell functions in co-operation with a lightshelf bringing indirect natural light into the space. The reading area is provided with ample daylight via a glass edge revealing views to the city beyond. On the observation deck, the roof begins to break down allowing light and shadow to characterize the surfaces of the space. This gradual breakdown is intended as an introduction to the language of the pavillion just west of the existing building. From the observation deck, one is exposed to the events of the site below as well as expansive views to both the city and mountains beyond. Punctures are made through the new skin on the north and south ends of the

deck providing framed views to the community of East Village and the Bow River.

The new pavillion exists on the scale of the building and the adjacent urban infrastructure. The strong hoizontal lines of the brick are reinterpreted through the language of wood decking. With the spacing of individual members, light , shadow and screened views help characterize the interim space between the open field and the existing building. At night, the screen is lit from its bottom edge upwards, giving the screen an ephemeral presence in the city. A band of operable spots are also located in its bottom edge providing illumination for theatrical performances below. Electrical power is provided in capped receptacles flush with the hard surface.

The extension and integration of existing patterns of movement and vegetation lock the intervention in place. Lining the path, a double row of evergreens create a sense of enclosure while providing angled views into the site. At the end of 5 Avenue SE, a gridded cluster of evergreens is composed to provide a sense of enclosure to this edge. Together, these interventions help make each entry procession distinct.

The Design Project: Systems Integration

The reuse of this building is designed to continue operating with a permeable skin, keeping the same moisture and temperature conditions as the original. The new wall assemblies have air gaps separating them from the existing skin. The permeable shell avoids condensation by remaining unsealed, allowing moisture to travel freely. The new windows are compatible with the R-value of the masonry shell to prevent cold spots and possible condensation.

Hydronic heating is used to avoid an increase in humidity. The program of this building, a public space with short duration occupancies, also supports the flexibility and minimal maintenance requirements of the system.[30] Forced removal of humidity could also be undertaken if necessary, however it is recommended that relative humidity remain above 20-30% for occupant comfort.[31] Insulated pipes run below grade from the detached mechanical room to deliver the hot water for circulation. On the second and third floors, heaters are relocated within the ceiling assembly, reducing their presence as independent architectural elements.

[30] Edward Allen, *Fundamentals of Building Construction: Materials and Methods. 2nd ed.* (Toronto: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1990) 194.

[31] John E. Flynn ...[et al.], *Architectural Interior Systems: Lighting. Acoustics. Air Conditioning. 3rd ed.* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1992) 102.
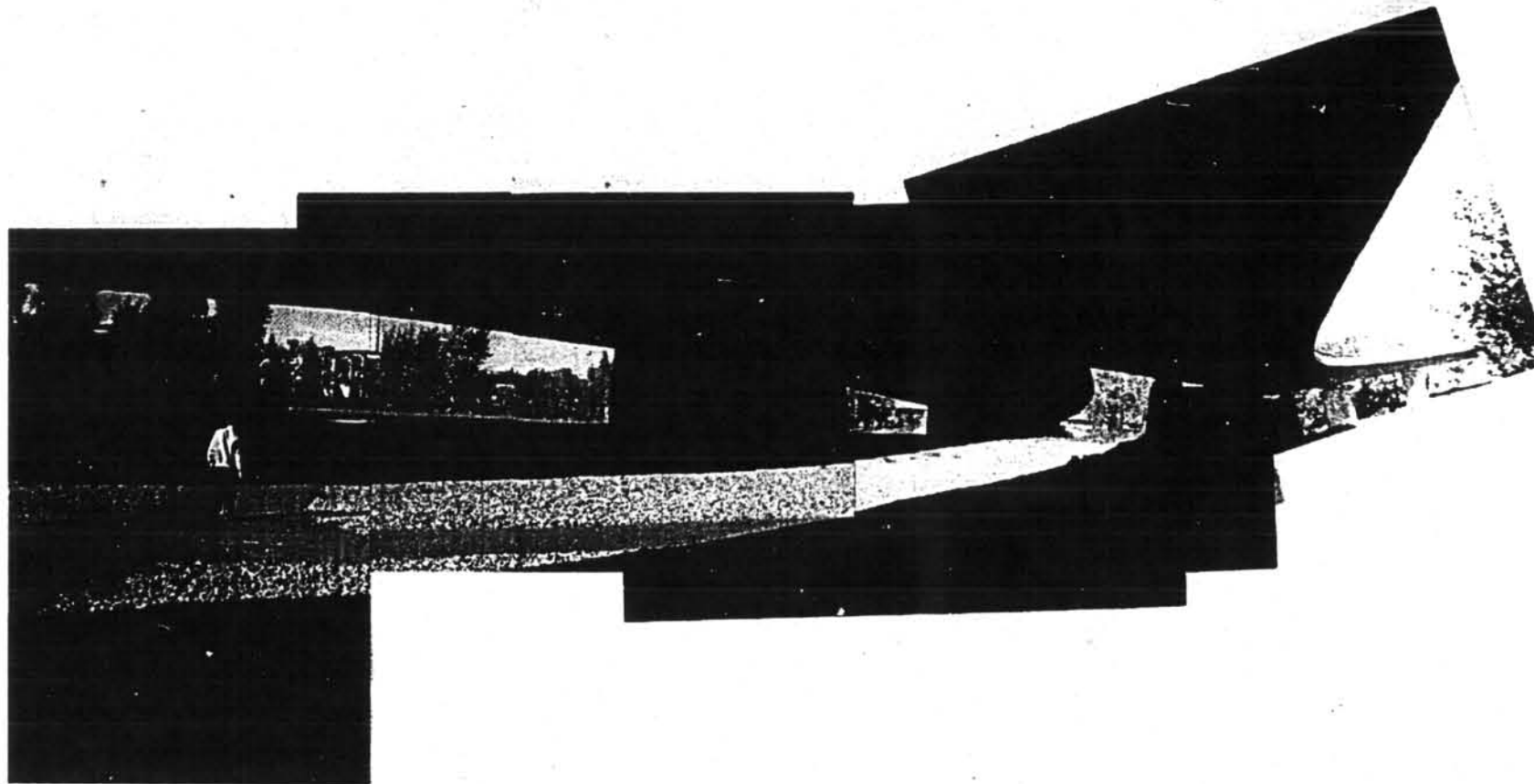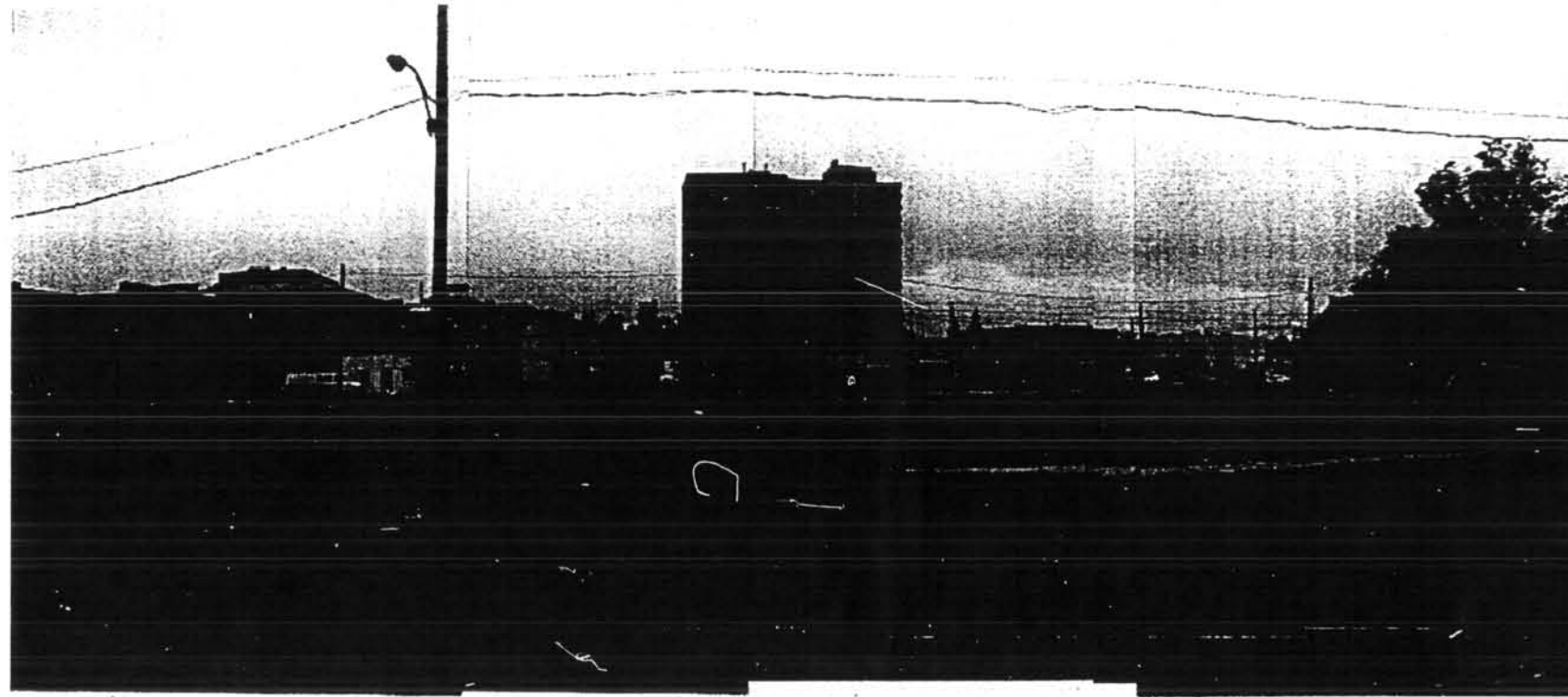
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Fresh air is provided through the air intake located at the edge of the park path. From this tower, the duct travels underground (at least four feet) to naturally cool the air supply on its route to the building. Fresh air is drawn into the building via a circulating fan located in the basement, and then further circulated via a series of floor registers installed at peripheral edges of the main floor. From these registers, air will naturally circulate through offices before exiting the building. In the winter months, a reheat coil located within the fan would begin to warm the fresh air.

Air exchange is provided in a number of ways. Firstly, air exchange is created and controlled through the use of operable windows. Secondly, natural infiltration will occur, i.e. through the accidental air flow that enters the building via existing cracks and leaks, etc. The porousity of the masonry walls also helps to provide air exchange. Exhaust fans are integrated in the roof assembly to withdraw both stale air and internal heat gains. Internal heat gains would be created by bodily heat, electric lighting, and electronic equipment. The exhaust vents also alleviate the hot air pressure (stack effect) within the upper level of the building.

The floor-ceiling space is used to run the sprinkler system and the electrical requirments. It is concealed yet remains accessable through a system of suspended wooden panels.
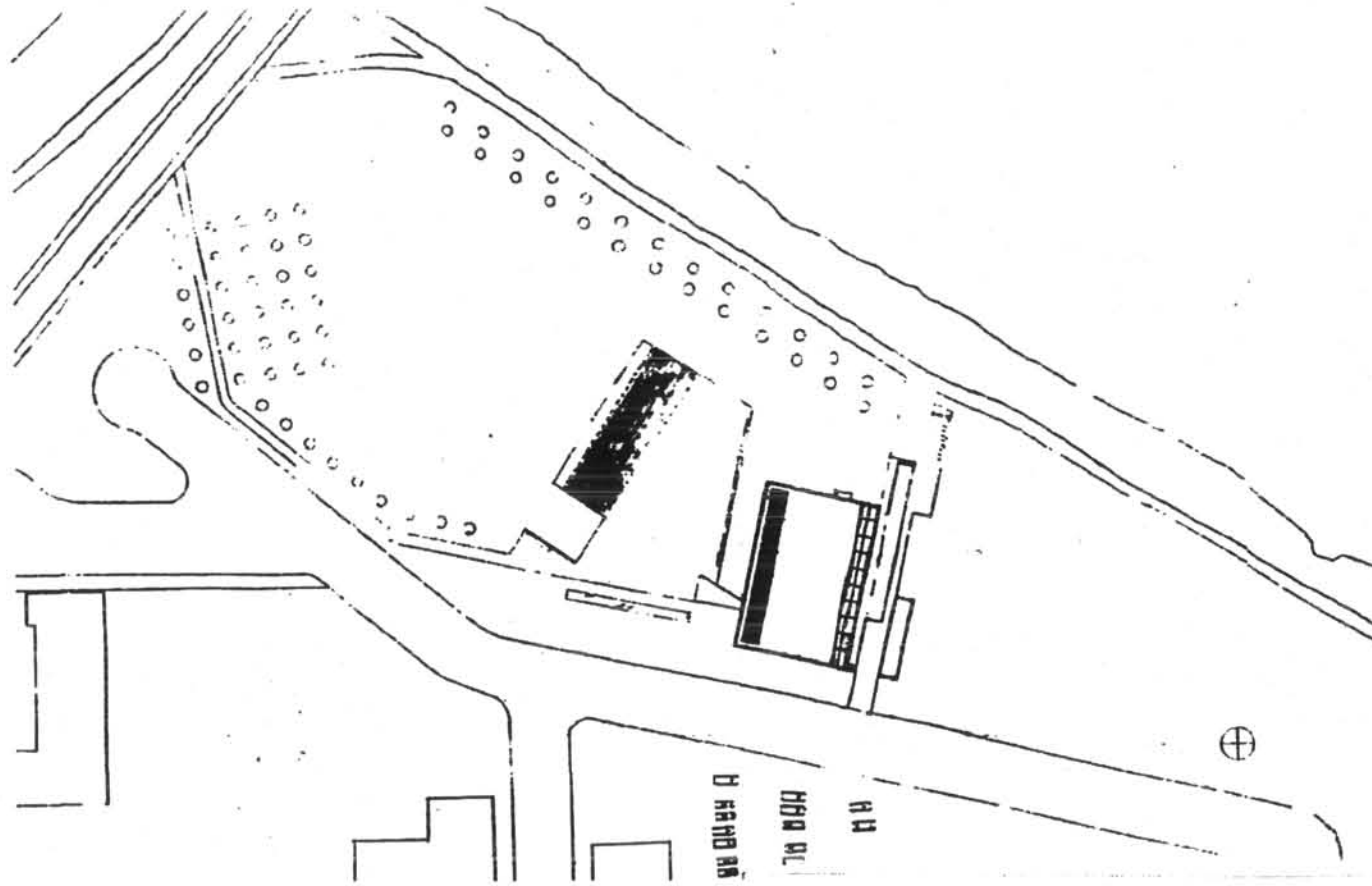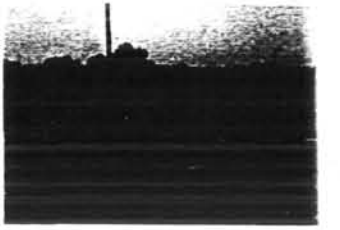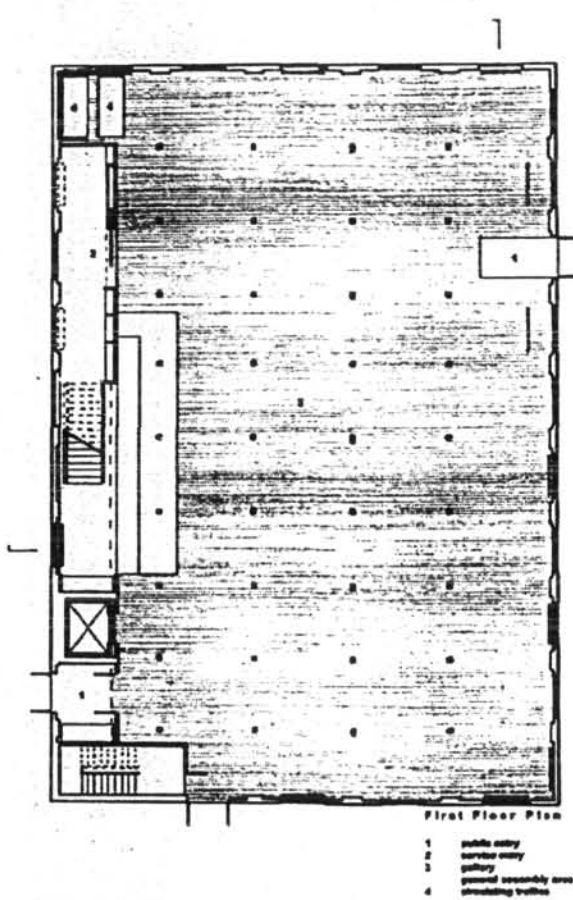
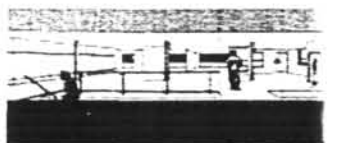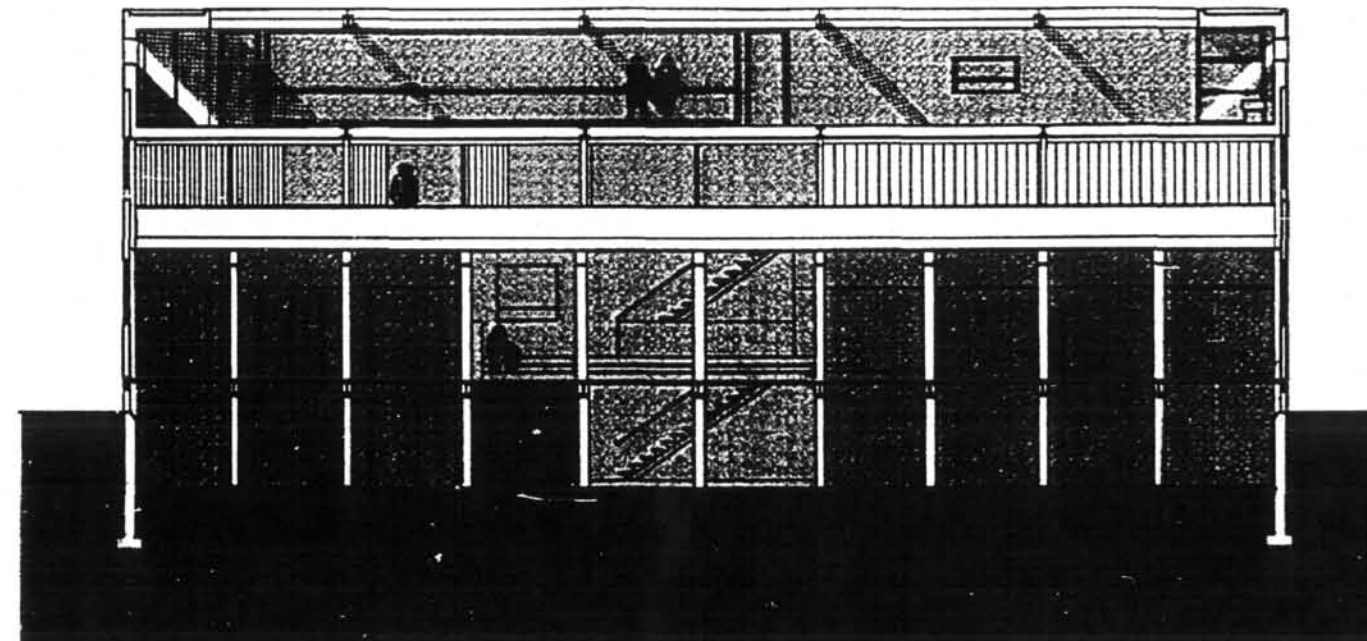Above: View from Langevin Bridge
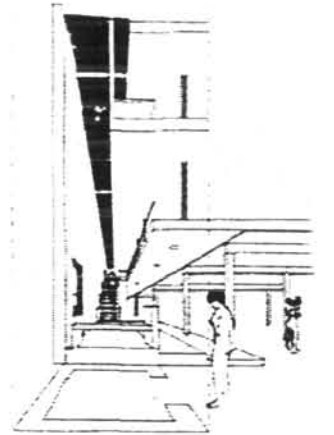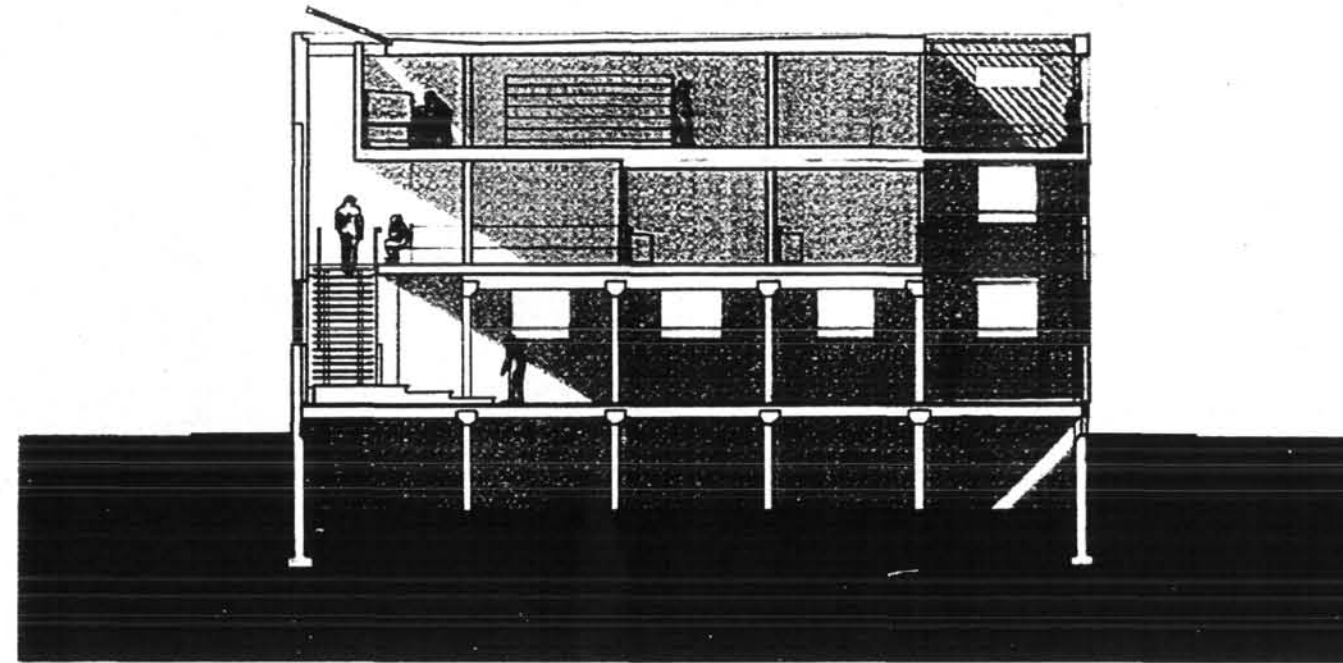Inside: Left: Site Plan
Right: Aerial Photo

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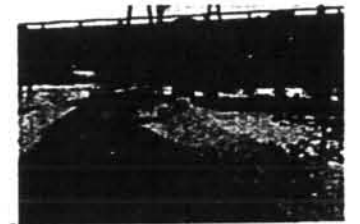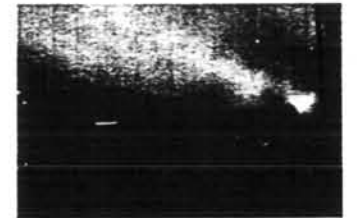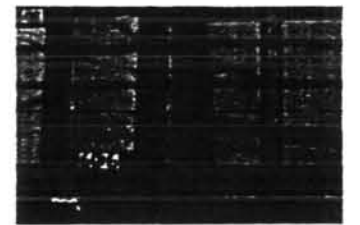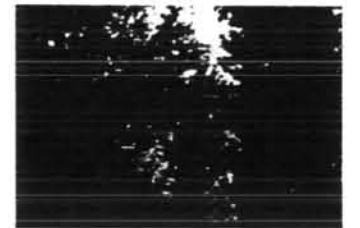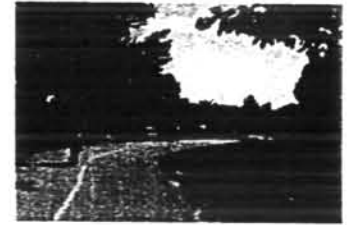
Top: Edge Conditions
Inside: Edge Conditions

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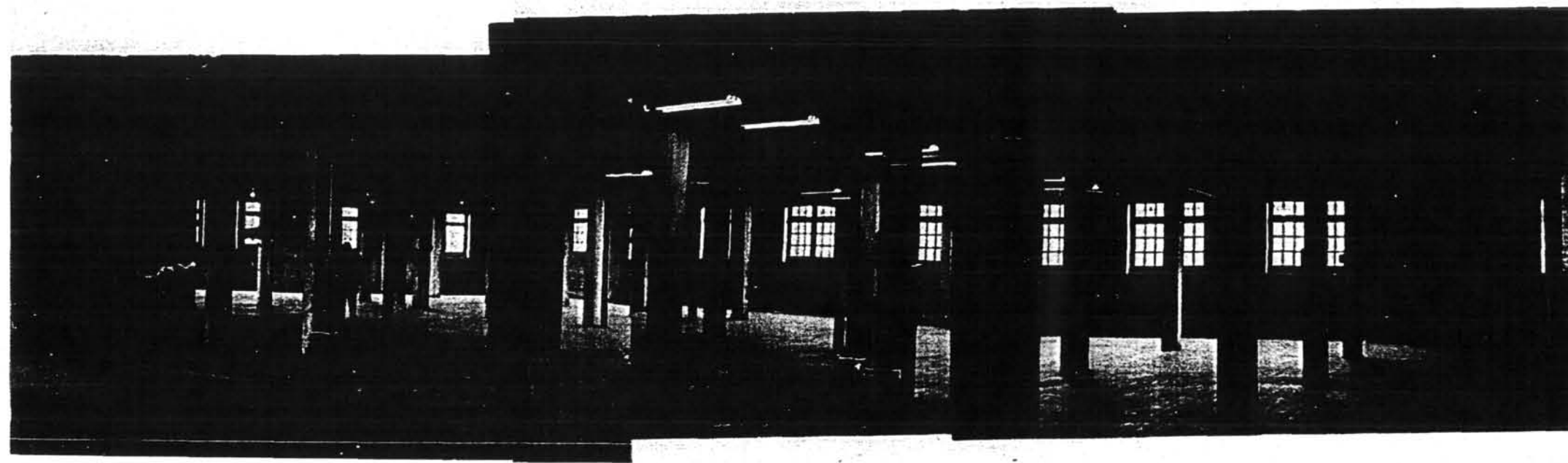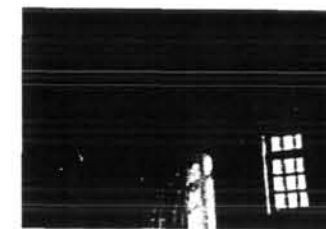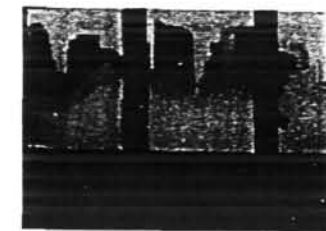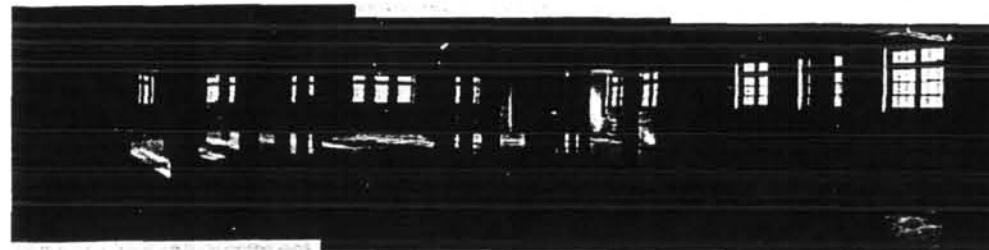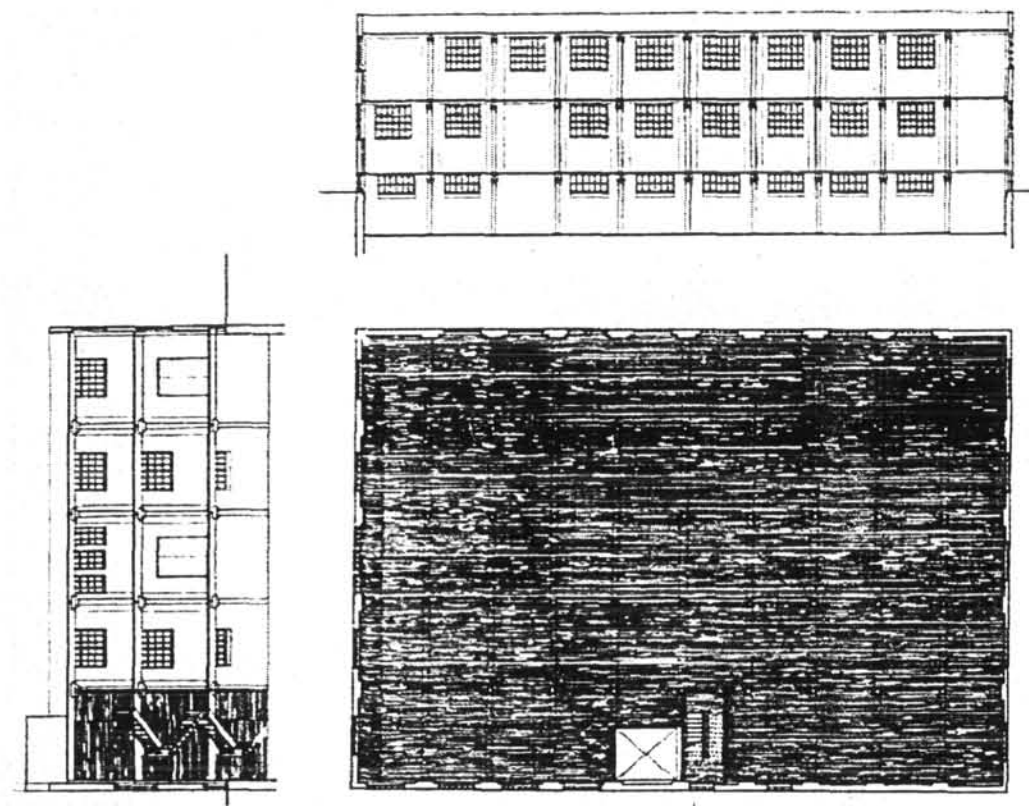
Top: Interiors
Inside: Interiors, As-Built Drawings

First Floor Plan

1 public entry
2 service entry
3 gallery
4 general assembly area
5 circulating trellis

Second Floor Plan

1 break-out space
2 office
3 seminar room

Third Floor Plan

1 atrium
2 reading area
3 director's office
4 observation deck
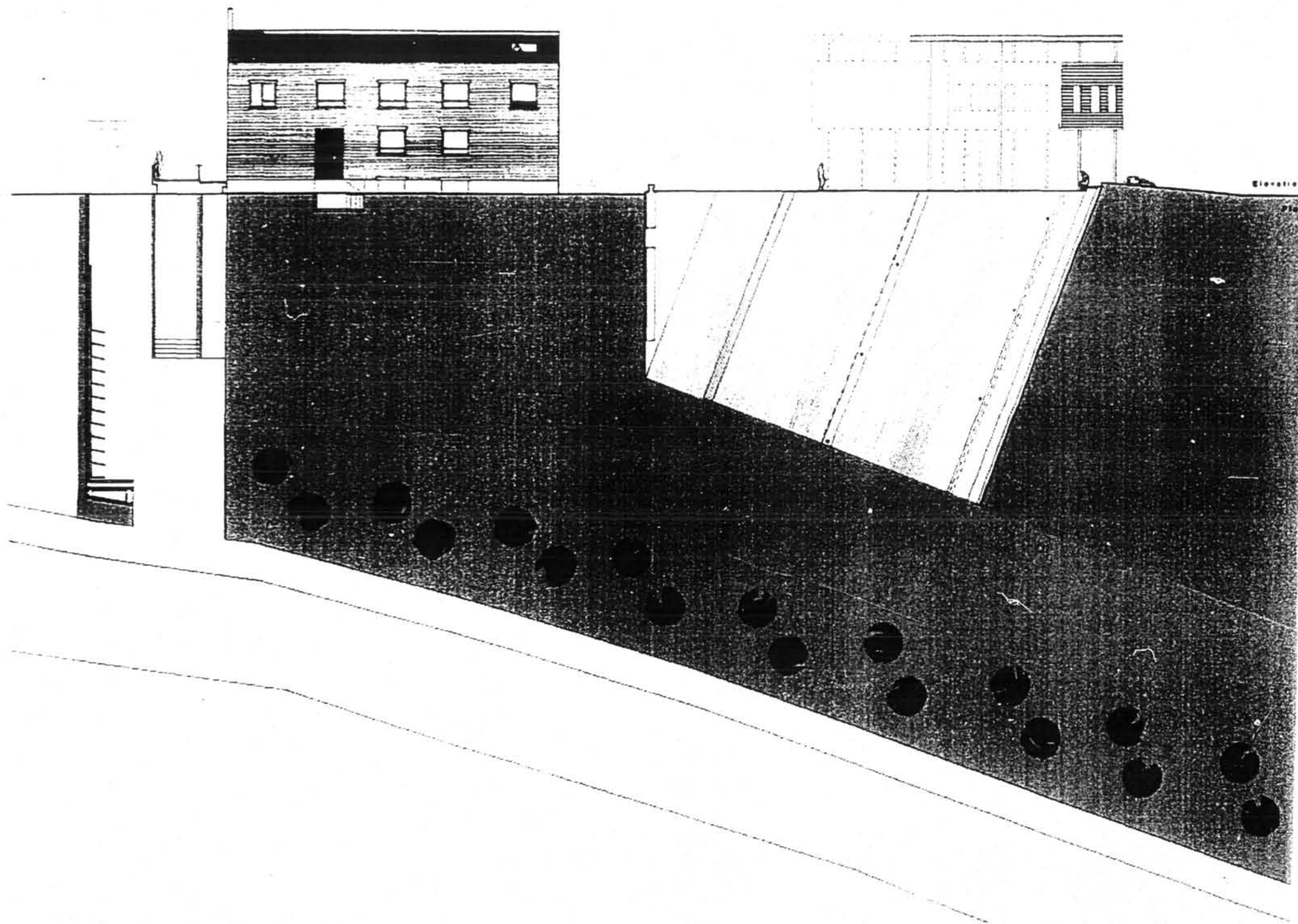5 rooftop garden
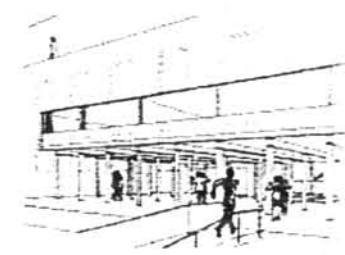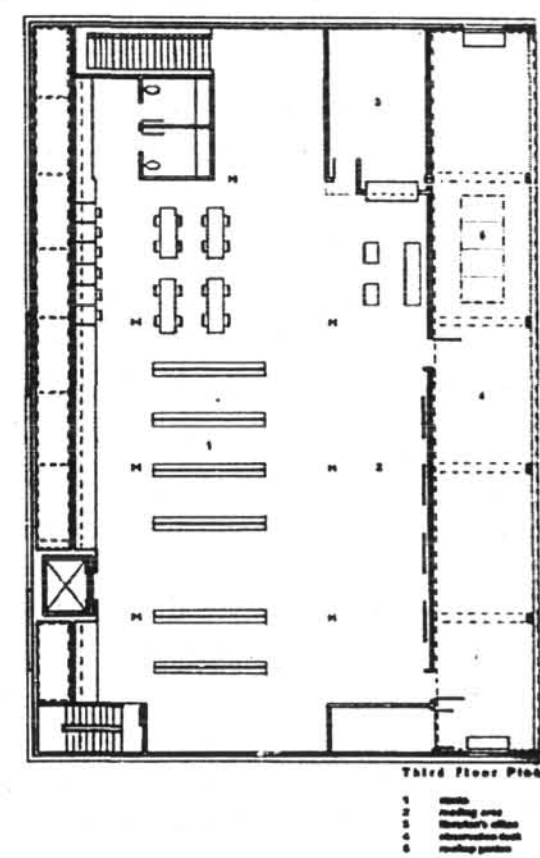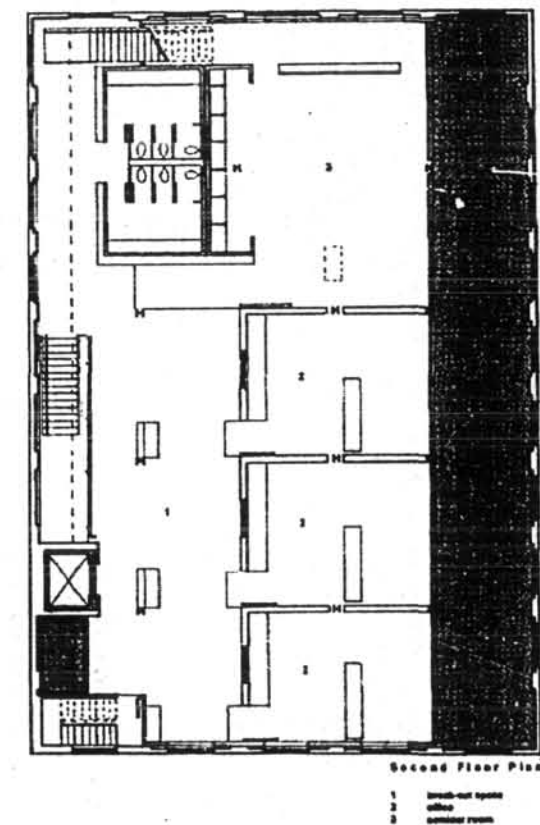
Top: Main Floor Entry - West Side
Inside: Floor Plans

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Top: East Edge Circulation
Bottom: Second-floor Break-out Spac[e]
Inside: Top: Cross Section
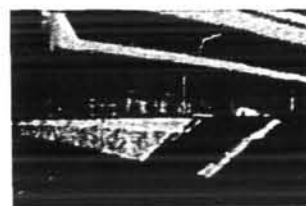Bottom: Longitudinal Section

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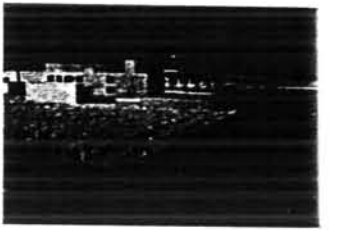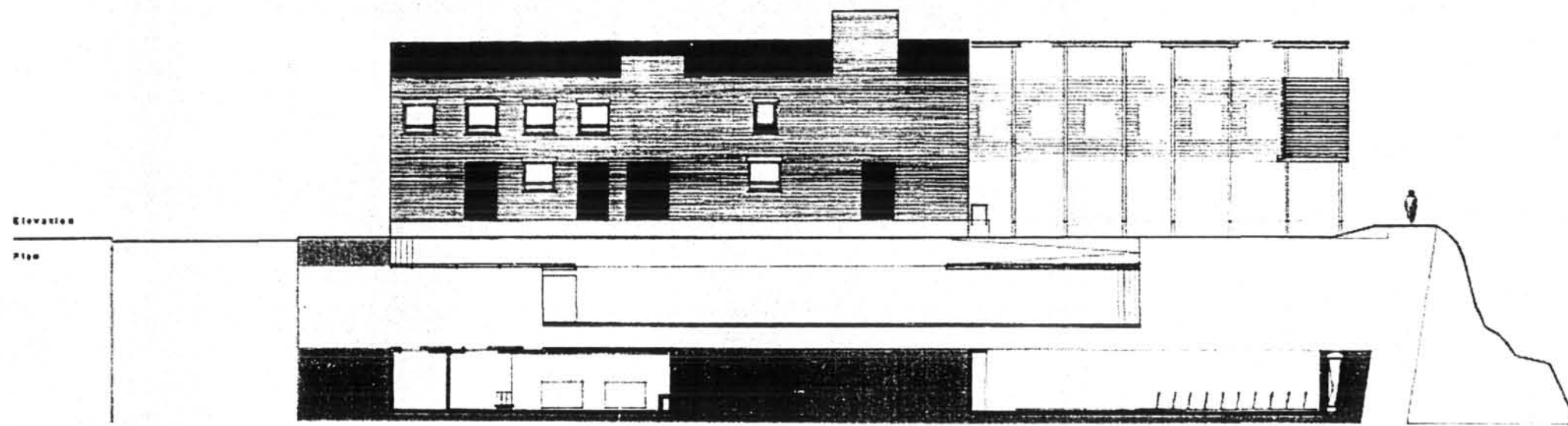
Elevation

Plan

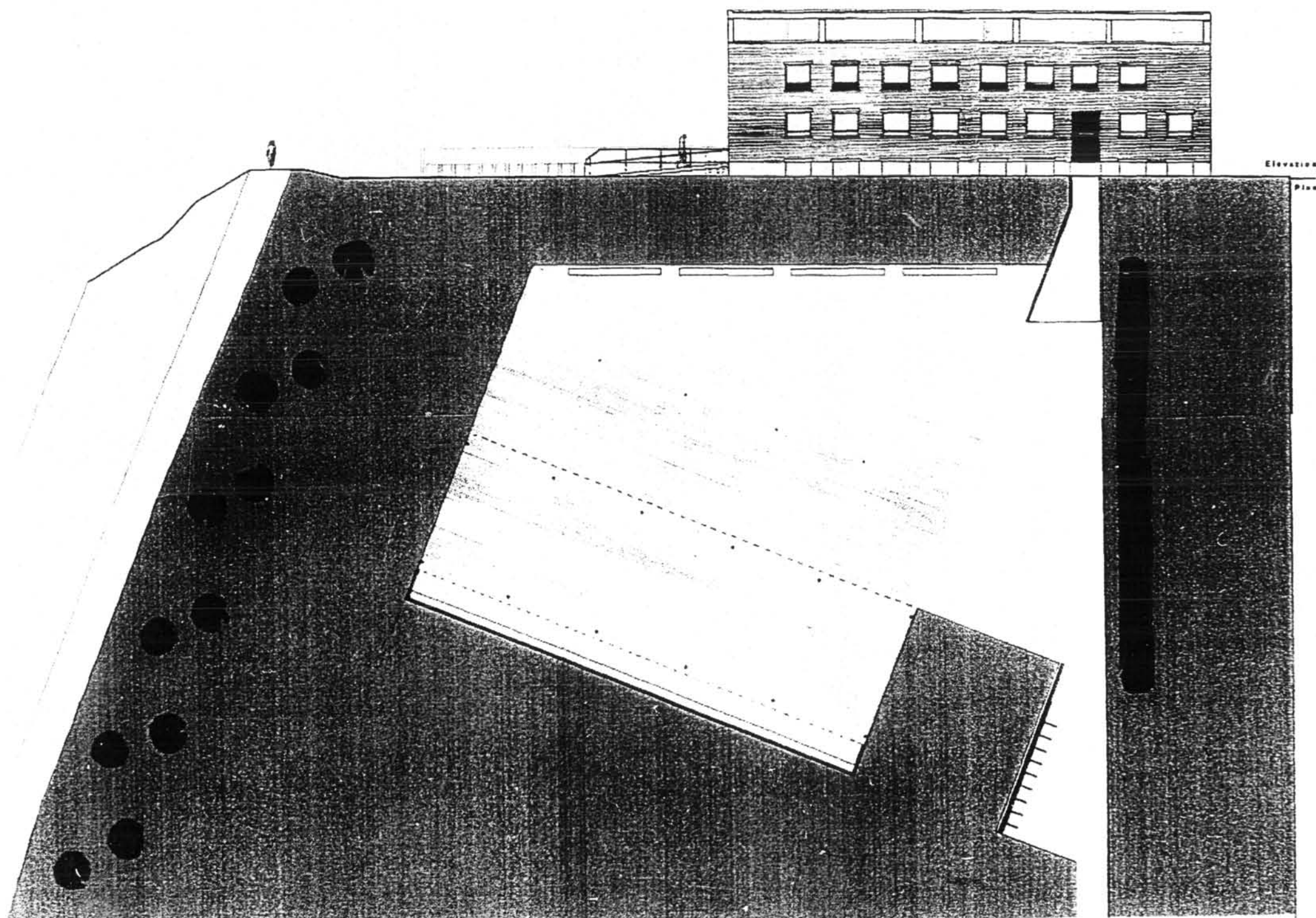Top: Approach from the East
Inside: East Elevation - Plan
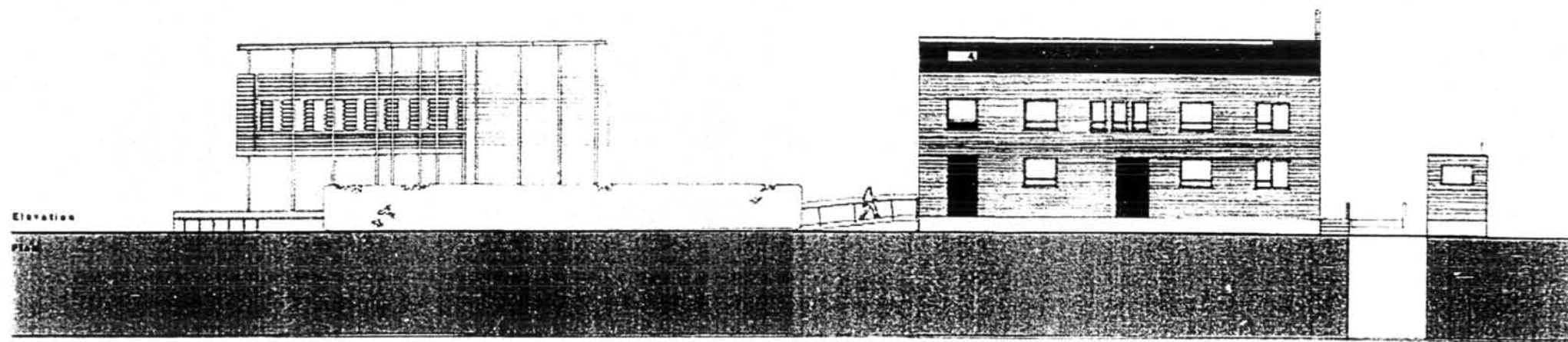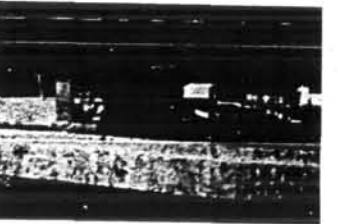
Elevation

Top: View from Bow River
Inside: North Elevation - Plan

Elevation
Plan

Top: Entry from West Edge
Inside: West Elevation - Plan

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