

**SHIFTING REALITIES:
A NATIVE CULTURAL CENTRE**

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The undersigned certify that they have read,
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Project entitled Shifting Realities; A Native
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ABSTRACT

Shifting Realities; A Native Cultural Centre

As the indian presence within modern urban centres increases, an increased understanding of the native cultural perception is required. Within this urban population, direct links and ties to traditional resources are diminished, making the retention and evolution of cultural values difficult. As a result an urban native cultural centre becomes an essential component for the retention of cultural heritage and subsequently, of cultural and personal identity. This project then is primarily intended to provide a forum for the performance and presentation of activities which promote and celebrate native plains indian culture.

Cultural expression in architecture has been traditionally associated with specific geographic locations and populations. In contrast, modern architecture strives to develop an expression generic to all cultures and places, at the expense of regional character and cultural identity. This results in an architecture expressive not only of a de-personalization but also a de-spiritualization of societies and values.

Design principles developed for this project allow for a physical translation of cultural values appropriate to a native cultural building within an urban context. The building expression and organization are based on culturally significant principles as well as contextual considerations.

Chapter 1 illuminates basic aspects and attributes of the native plains indian culture - characteristics which have some architectural ramifications. Chapter 2 focuses on the relationship and application of cultural traditions to the design project. This is illustrated graphically. Chapter 3 presents the design proposal and synthesis of design ideas. A conclusion is drawn in Chapter 4 taking into account the final design.

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PREFACE

The scope of the project is to design a Plains Indian Cultural Centre. The goal is to express within the design essential cultural aspects.

The project while serving as a means to explore architectural expression, also allows investigation of architecture at a more generic level. This project embodies relationships between people, sacred processes, and physical realities. It departs from the purely functional aspects of building into a realm of revealing the architectural implications of cultural influence.

Specific objectives include:

1. To develop a relationship between the practical and spiritual aspects of the user needs.
2. To maintain a sense of contextual continuity as well as develop a culturally expressive design.

*"We do not advocate architects trying to understand the various cultural peculiarities of peoples in a Freudian or any other analytical sense; this is the job of psychoanalysts, students of culture, medical people. The architect should only observe, respect, and take for granted whatever others have found; he should then design with that in mind. It is too risky to try to do the job of other professionals and to do more than what one has been trained for. ... Issues such as rituals, ceremonies related to building practices, and other customs of broader significance can also be tackled directly and even provide hints for conceptual interpretations of a project. If architecture is indeed a cultural index, as we believe it is, an architect should delve into the foundations of the specific culture, group, or client he is designing for."*¹

¹Antoniades, pg. 90.

In developing a program for this centre, the following functional elements have been identified.

1. Interactive Space: community activities.
2. Mediating Space: public/private (secular/spiritual) interface.
3. Introvertive Space: cultural gallery.
4. Amenity Space: administrative and support elements.
5. Ancillary Space: service elements.

CHAPTER 1

Problem Definition

Cultures tend to express the world as their members see it. In identifying key cultural components of present day plains indians, a review of traditions has led to the assertion that the capacity to transcend worlds of meaning and to populate these worlds, is paramount. Within native culture the world which may be defined as being the most real may be reachable only through spiritual means. This is a world in which people are taught to experience primarily through sacred rituals. This world or other reality is expressed most physically through the traditions of myths and ritualistic ceremonies.

"Many Native American peoples today retain, even though often in fragmented manner, elements of a heritage, or rather of these multiple heritages of an ancient primordial origins. Present within all the dimensions, forms and expressions of this heritage, or rather of these multiple heritages, is a pervasive sense for the sacred. In one manner or another all life is seen to participate in the sacred, all cultural forms express the sacred, so that inevitably within this context the lives of those peoples who live close to their sacred traditions may be called religious, and they are thus beings who are religiously human. Religion pervades all of life and life's activities leading a native person once to remark, 'We do not believe our religion, we dance it!' ²

The life of traditional plains indians focused largely around the buffalo hunt. As the buffalo hunt was a cyclical event, this created periods of intense labor, with considerable length of time between hunts. It has been asserted by Fordes (1956, p.68) that this time was used in the development and elaboration of the ceremonial aspects of their lives.

"In the experience of Plains culture, however, the "accent of reality" was granted so powerfully to transcendent orders of meaning that the everyday world was often subordinated to and shaped by the vision experience. There was such a thing as ordinary experience, to be sure; and persons were not trapped in illusion or fantasy. Rather, individuals granted such a normative role to vision experiences that they came to

²Brown, pg. 123.

*constitute the ground upon which other, more ordinary experiences were interpreted. Persons lived out their vision experiences and sought to enact them in the everyday world of common affairs. "*³

The ceremonies which have persisted over time are representative of the culture's beliefs and convictions. These convictions and beliefs are also recorded in the oral traditions of myths which deal with primordial time. It is not deemed necessary to know the exact source or specific history of a tradition in order to appreciate its depth and symbolic power.

Spaces constructed for, or used for, ceremonial purposes are endowed with meaning from the metaphysical world. The traditional tipi has long been used for ceremonial occasions or for communal gatherings. For these purposes it is representative of a microcosm of the universe. The central fire is symbolic of the Great Mysterious or Great Spirit, which is at the center of all existence. The top opening, which allows for the escape of smoke is understood as the path of liberation.⁴

The domed shaped sweat lodges may also be interpreted in a similar manner where purification rites are required as preparation for sacred ceremonies. The lodge is constructed of poles emphasizing the number four and is aligned with the cardinal directions. The lodge is entered from the east symbolizing new life, and the beginning of understanding. Between an alter built at the east of the lodge and the lodge itself is the fire, symbolizing the sun. This fire is used to heat the stones for the sweat ritual. During the ritual the opening to the lodge is covered, omitting all external light. The hot stones, having absorbed heat from the fire represent the sun and grandfathers. These stones are placed into the central pit, symbolic of the womb of the earth. The hot stones are sprayed with water which is the life giving fluid of the earth. At the end of the ritual, the participants crawl out of the hot, cramped, damp womb of the earth, through the narrow opening being reborn and inspired.⁵

³Harrod, pg. 25.

⁴Brown, Joseph Epes, pg. 16.

⁵McCaskill, Don, pg. 302.

The Sun Dance is an annual springtime ritual of self-renewal, a ceremony of great complexity which Brown (1988, p. 16) asserts "today has been particularly instrumental in the preservation and revitalization of many traditional religious elements". The Sun Dance Lodge is a large open circular frame composed of tree poles constructed specifically for the purpose of performing the Sun Dance. It is constructed in imitation of the world's creation, with the sacred cottonwood tree at the center as the axis linking sky and earth. The space is then used by those who have made a vow, and participate in the sacrificial dance-fast in the lodge for three to four days. They move with the support of large drums and heroic songs, from the circumference to the tree at the center and back again, always addressing and focusing on the central tree, or on one of the sacred objects attached to it - usually an eagle or bison head or skull. Some groups, periodically move about the lodge to enable the dancers to continually face toward the sun, the source of life.⁶

The sacred tobacco pipes of the plains peoples express all that is most sacred to the people. The sacred pipe has been compared to sacrificial vessels of early Chinese civilization, expressing cultural creativity, technological development, and surplus economic productivity. However the sacred pipes of the plains people also have powers of their own. Having been offered to the sacred powers they are then empowered with spiritual powers of their own. The two parts of the pipe, the wooden stem and the stone bowl, have symbolic as well as functional implications. Together they are understood as the joining of, and providing a path between heaven and earth. The long stem allows the pipe to be held and passed from one participant to another with both hands, indicating a sign of respect to the spiritual recipients, while the pipe bowl is symbolic of the cosmos. As each pinch of tobacco is dedicated and placed in the pipe bowl, the bowl acts as the means of bringing all space, time, creation and ultimately the entire cosmos together into one. The pipe stem, symbolic of the trachea and being the passage for breath, leads directly to the bowl, the spiritual center, and directs the smoke offering toward the spiritual recipients. The pipe in the Sacred Pipe ritual is always at the center of the cosmos, which moves about the circle when the pipe is passed.⁷

⁶Brown, Joseph Epes, pg. 16.

⁷Brown Joseph Epes, pg. 17, pg. 44

The centering of the cosmos dominates various native traditions such as the central pole of the Sun Dance, the pit in the Sweat Lodge, and the fire in any tipi or ritual structure. Ritual participants move about the stationary, symbolic cosmos of the structure while in the sacred pipe ceremony the symbolic cosmos (pipe) moves about the course of the sun. Pipes are used on ritual and important occasions with the origin of each pipe being found in mythologies.⁸

These ritual processes are the tools which allowed a common cultural belief system to develop among the plains indians. Through common participation shared memories are developed and preserved. As there are inherent ritualistic differences among the various plains tribes, so too there are great diversities in the mythologies held and believed. Mythologies tend to depict world views, cosmologies, religion and ritual expression. Within this range lies the commonalty of the perspective of time. All myths and enactments of mythic themes and sacred events are expressed in sacred time. The telling of a myth is not experienced in linear time which passes, but in primordial time, an eternal reality between past and future. The recounting of myths through means of oral tradition is set in primordial time, that is the time in which the event first took place. Native languages tend not to have a past or future tense, they speak instead of the perennial reality of the now. The myths express sacred time, they are as real now as they are in any time.

As North American society now becomes fully engaged in an age of globalization, every cultural heritage struggles to maintain its own distinctive identity. An urban cultural centre allows for both the spiritual and profane realities of indian culture to coexist. The programmatic needs for such a centre are developed from a study of the local Native Friendship Centre, discussions with its occupants, and an acquired understanding of cultural requirements.

⁸McCaskill, Don, pg. 300.

CHAPTER 2

Design Concepts And Principles

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The architectural ideas and principles employed in this project support architectural expression in relation to the forces of cultural identity within an urban context, yet are ultimately intended to serve the needs of the user group. This encompasses both pragmatic as well as spiritual needs which are defined as two realities.

The design experience may be interpreted as the unraveling of a mystery or the discovery of a hidden jewel. The building's large interior space provides a sacred oasis within the context of the profane. This has allowed the exterior of the building to adhere to the rules and protocol of its urban neighbors, yet clearly indicate another level of meaning. The roof and four major reveals on the elevations address ideas prevalent in the traditional, spiritual reality of native culture. This balance between culture and context achieves a synthesis with the reality of the everyday world and a level of harmony with the possible east end redevelopment of the area, while embodying cultural significance.

2.2 TWO REALITIES

Traditional hero stories tell of a tension between a static balanced order, characterized by a state of perfect beauty and the necessary disruption of that order and beauty as a part of the life process. This is indicative of the two components or realities which are inherent in indian culture; the profane and

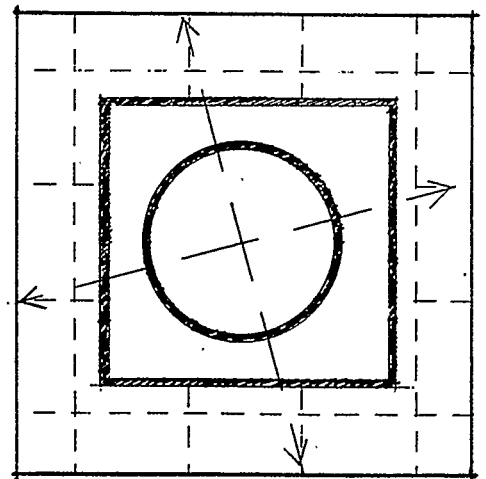


Figure one

the sacred. (fig. 1)

Technological cultures found in occidental society focus thought in a lineal pattern. An emphasis exists on lineal patterning and lineal measurements, grid patterns, and straight lines. In effect, a mathematical or scientific system is imposed on nature found in urban street grids, acreages, houses, measurement of time, and daily lives. Offices are identified as so many doors down the hall, and buildings are in relation to the intersection of straight lines.

Native culture brings all things together in a unified understanding. Patterns of behavior are intended to welcome or include people. Family groups sit in circles, and meeting are held in circles. Inclusive within this gathering together of all things into a oneness is the most powerful entity; the spiritual realm of the four directions. (fig. 2)

These two realities are expressed in the building design by adhering to an existing urban street grid, and a shifting axis in relation to the cardinal directions. The energy of the spatial experience through a floor plate shifting in relation to the folding roof plane serves to further sustain this notion. (fig. 3) This establishes a dialogue between the sacred and profane; particular and universal; and the natural and man-made. Through the center these two realities come together in oneness. (fig. 4)

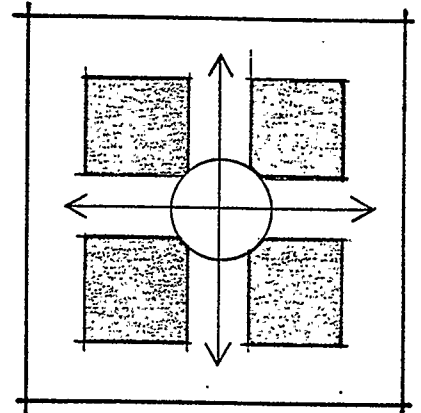


Figure two

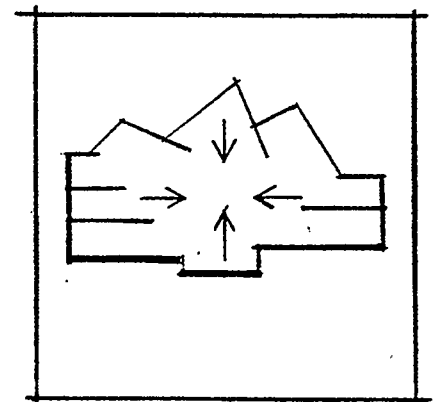


Figure three

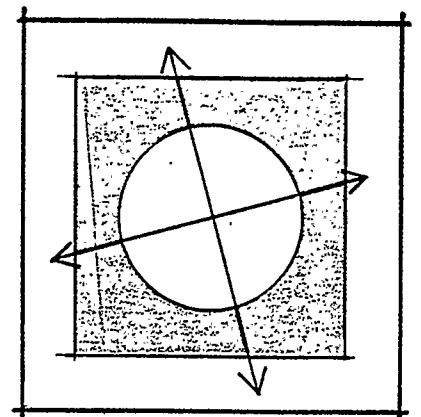


Figure four

2.3 SPIRITUAL ENERGY

The circle which is found in many rituals and ceremonies of the plains indians is expressive of the spiritual energy of the powers of the world which operate in circles. (fig.5)

*"Everything the Power of the World does is done in a circle. The sky is round, and I have heard that the earth is round like a ball, and so are all the stars. The wind, in its greatest power, whirls. Birds make their nests in circles, for theirs is the same religion as ours. The sun comes forth and goes down again in a circle. The moon does the same, and both are round. Even the seasons form a great circle in their changing, and always come back again to where they were. The life of man is a circle from childhood to childhood, and so it is in everything where power moves."*⁹

The power of the world or spiritual energy is often explained depicting three wheels with four radiating spokes from each, interlocked about their centers. At the center of the circle is humanity. It is this center which unites the four directions of the cross and other quaternaries of the universe. The rhythm of the world is understood to be circular, as is the life of humans or any living form.¹⁰(fig. 6)

In addition to the four cardinal directions, the vertical axis links both sky and earth. With these six directions, the implied center (seventh dimension) provides the point where all directions meet. (fig. 7)

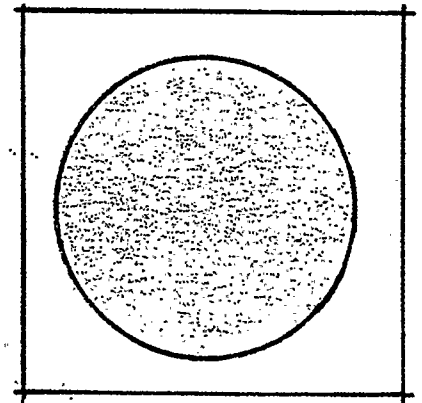


Figure five

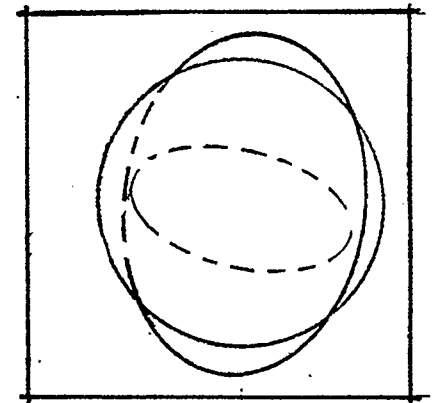


Figure six

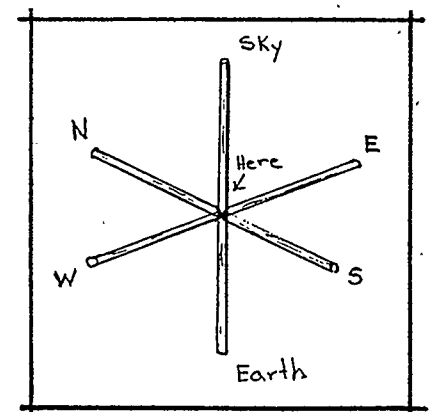


Figure seven

⁹O'Brien, pg. 23.

¹⁰Harrod, Howard L., 52.

A powerful example of this expression of spiritual powers is found in what is known as the medicine wheel. Although a variety of theories exist with respect to the meaning or use of the medicine wheel, many have been understood to acknowledge four directions. Some medicine wheels also align with seasonal indicators such as the solstices and equinoxes indicating a significance attached to cyclical time. Amongst the theories for these radiating spokes of the wheel, lies that of an astronomical alignment indicating the spiritual deities of the four directions. ¹¹(fig. 8)

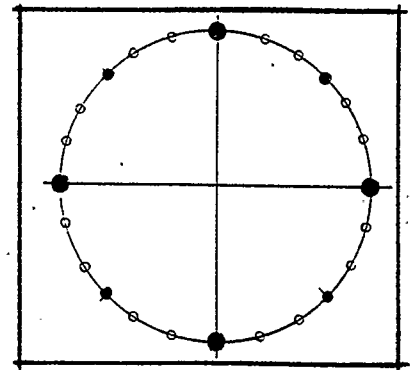


Figure eight .

The effigies, the stone alignments, and the medicine wheels have long puzzled archaeologists, there being little additional cultural material nearby and no local lore to shed light on their function or meaning. A few years ago, however, astronomer John Eddy took an interest in the medicine wheels, and because of his careful investigations, we can now say with considerable assurance that at least some of the medicine wheels were built for calendric purposes. ¹²

Spiritual energies are believed to be evoked from the skies to the earth following the course of the sun's path. The resultant spiral is symbolic of the path the spiritual entities travel. ¹³

Within the design these ideas are expressed through configuration of the circulation system. The building programme is arranged to loosely follow a

¹¹Williamson, Ray A., pg. 199.

¹²Williamson, pg. 201.

¹³Kirby, Robert M., conversation.

path from profane to sacred spaces. This enables spiritual knowledge to be accumulated while moving through the building to the ceremonial space. Four areas have been hollowed out from the building fabric, acknowledging the four cardinal directions and allowing a sense of connection with the greater cosmos. These directional slots as well as the circulation experience allow for the spiritual world to be evoked not only within the central space, but also within the more profane spaces. (fig. 9)

2.4 THREE REALMS

Traditional native theory understands the greater order of the world to consist of three realms; sky, ground, and underground (inclusive of the seas). Humans, being of the ground level provide the link between sky and earth. This is experienced in the greater order of the world with our feet on the ground and our heads or intellect in the sky or at the center of the firmament. The middle level is neither pure spirit nor gross matter, but a synthesis of both. The three spheres may also be understood to represent the three "worlds" that constitute human beings: body, soul, and spirit, or rather: gross, subtle, and pure. ¹⁴

Traditional native architecture employed these same principles. The central cottonwood pole of the sun dance is seen to both figurally as well as literally serve as the axis linking both sky and earth. ¹⁵(fig. 10) Differing tribes have over time had specific means of expressing many of the same ideas. For instance the Lakota expressed a similar notion by placing a young child in a spider-web like hammock

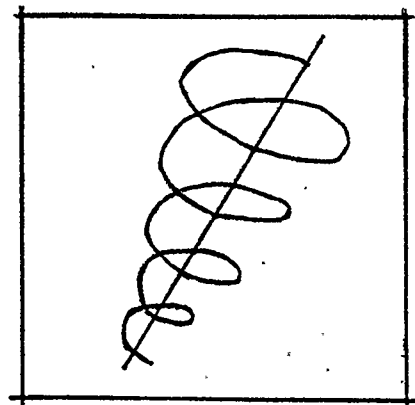


Figure nine

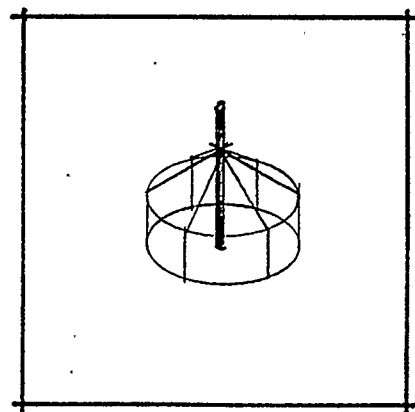


Figure ten

¹⁴Nabokor, Easton, pg. 124.

¹⁵Brown, Joseph Epes, pg. 52.

strung between four trees, in order for the child to receive the qualitatively differentiated powers of the four directions of space.¹⁶

The tipi has strong metaphysical associations as well. The central fire is believed to be symbolic of the Great Mysterious, which is at the center of all existence. The top opening, which allows for the smoke to escape is understood as the path of liberation. The circular configuration of the tipi further sustains the notion of central energy with all focus directed toward the center.¹⁷

Structures such as the pit house or the pit in the sweat lodge are expressive in nature of the earth. The idea of sinking a space into the soil has long been associated with a direct connection with the powers of the earth. (fig. 11) Just as touching the sacred pipe to the earth during a pipe smoking ritual is understood as an offering to the powers of the earth, so too are spaces carved into the earth believed to contain within them a greater connection with the spiritual entities.¹⁸

Within the design these three realms achieve a dialogue between the three world levels; underground, ground, and sky. (fig. 12) The main central space is sunken within the ground level and may therefore be more receptive to spiritual powers of the earth. Central within this area lies a circular pit filled with earth. This circular space has a retractable cover to allow the space to be used for

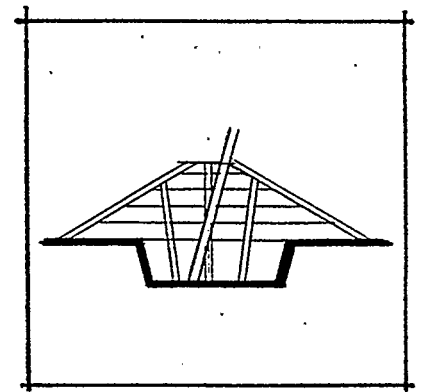


Figure eleven

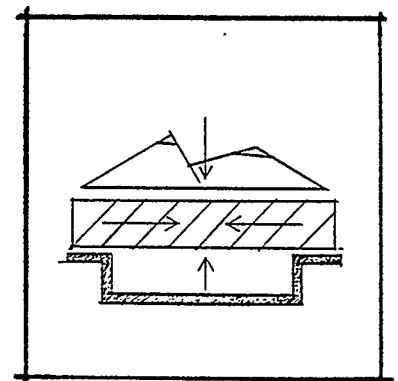


Figure twelve

¹⁶McCaskill, Don, pg. 167.

¹⁷Brown, Joseph Epes, pg. 16.

¹⁸Nabokor, Easton, pg. 126.

both ceremonial as well as social events.

This pit is contained under the large canopy of roof. The roof is formed of an irregular pattern with physical openings to the sky. A direct vertical association between sky and earth is possible from within this space when these roof areas are opened. This is reminiscent of the tipi structure which allows for a direct path between the skies and earth.

The central realm indicates the sphere of the human, the place for the secular. The outer shell of the building, containing the programmatically more profane spaces is offset by one quarter of the floor height at each quadrant. This results in a circulation system, stepping continuously linking both the sky and earth through a horizontal means.

2.5 RESPONSE TO SITE

This site is located on an edge of an ecotone. To the north across the Bow River lies a high natural bluff dropping sharply to the edge of the river. To the south and west lie the dense high scale man-made urban fabric. The eastern direction from the site is occupied by a lower scale warehouse district of nondescript character. The site was chosen in part for this existing dialogue between two dichotomies of its own; natural and man-made. (fig. 13)

The building design acknowledges and registers with the geomorphology of the site. The northern edge of the site shifts from the established urban grid system to an angle parallel with the Bow River. This area is then taken over and occupied by the building programme. This is typical of traditional

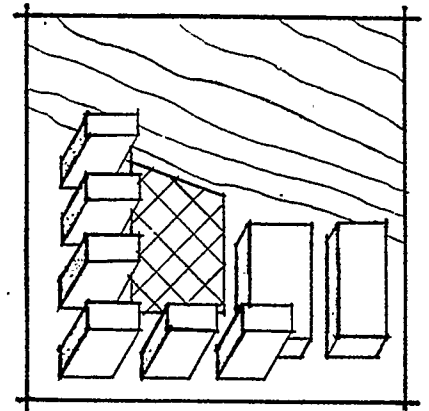


Figure thirteen

encampments whereby all available area was acquired either physically or spiritually. (fig. 14)

Environmental elements, no matter how commonplace or simple, are grasped by Native Americans with an imagination that transforms mere surface appearances into vehicles for expressing and guiding their conceptions of the nature of reality and human existence. The commonplace is given huge significance, often of cosmic proportion. ¹⁹

The most desirable view from the site is that of the Bow River on the northern edge. The river is screened with a row of deciduous trees making this view available from the lower levels only in the cooler months. Spaces in the building on the upper level are afforded this view throughout the seasonal cycle. (fig. 15)

The eastern edge of the site is occupied by a neighboring building of rather nondescript character. The southern edge of the site may potentially be developed with a structure of similar scale and massing. As a result, some control over the outer edges of this project is achieved by creating an exterior plaza on these two sides. This area is treated with natural landscaping within the confines of a garden wall. This approach softens the effect of the exterior environment from the building interior. This serves conceptually as another layer of skin controlling the light quality in much the same manner as the inner layer of a tipi. (fig. 16)

¹⁹Gill, pg. 115.

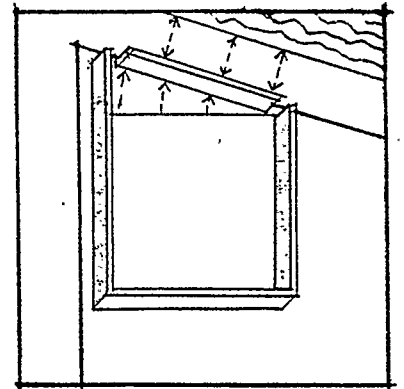


Figure fourteen

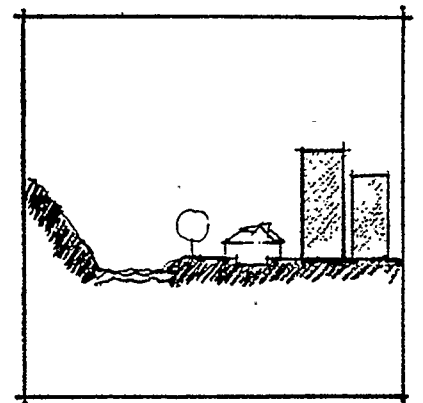


Figure fifteen

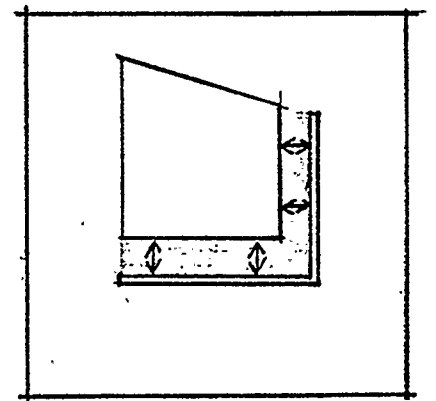


Figure sixteen

The forces of the natural environment acting upon the building have been considered. As the sun moves around the building from east to west, the programme intended for each space follows a similar sequence. This degree of natural daylighting lessens the need for artificial lighting. The building mass also indents to allow for a deeper penetration of daylight into the four reveals and ultimately the central building space. This serves to emphasize the temporal quality of the space as well as functioning as an indicator of daily time. (fig. 17)

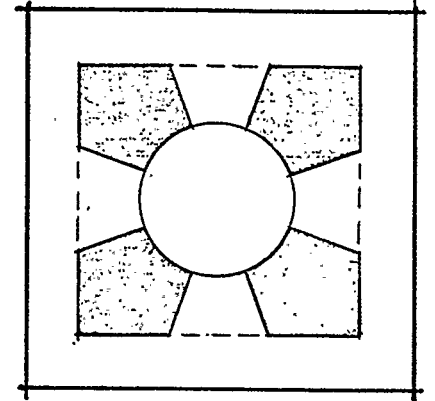


Figure seventeen

The roof on the southern edge of the building rises dramatically to allow a greater concentration of daylight to enter. Likewise, the northern roof line declines and the windows narrow preventing loss of heat and act as a buffer against the harsh northwestern winds. (fig. 18)

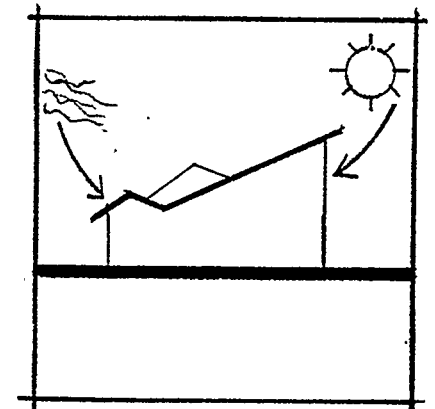


Figure eighteen

Natural ventilation is made a possibility with operable window panels on the roof in connection with the central earth pit. This system serves as an alternative to mechanical means of cooling. As well natural cross ventilation is made possible through operable panels in the exterior walls of the reveals. (fig. 19)

The building rises and meets at an opaque, acute angle at the northwestern edge. This serves as a buffer to both the vehicular traffic as well as the natural wind forces.

2.6 TIME, RHYTHMS AND CYCLES

The programme is arranged within the project according to meanings associated with the cardinal

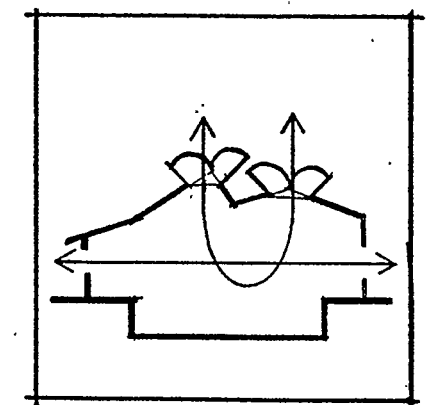


Figure nineteen

directions. As ritualistic events occur in paths which follow the course of the sun, so too do daily events within the building. Circulation throughout the design occurs upward in a sunwise direction. This follows the example established in dance or ceremonial patterns as well as the patterns of objects such as the passing of the pipe.²⁰(fig. 20)

The more publicly oriented functions are located on the periphery of the project, in direct relationship to the larger urban context. Further toward the building center lies the space for community driven activities.

The east in traditional indian philosophy is associated with beginnings. As the east is the direction of the rising sun it indicates beginning in terms of all of life's cycles such as morning, spring, and infancy (childhood).²¹ The main central building space is entered primarily from the east side. Other functions dealing with newness in the programme such as the kitchen, children's area, and cloak room are all located along this edge indicative of beginning.

The south is associated with adulthood, daytime, working, and summer.²² Located on the southern side of the design are offices and classrooms, or the primarily daytime activities.

The west is associated with old age (maturity), autumn, evening, and retirement.²³ The western edge of the design is occupied primarily by the archives.

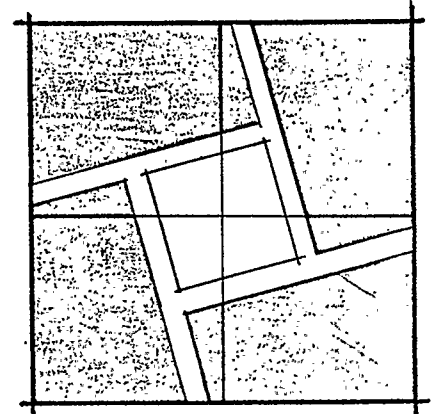


Figure twenty

²⁰Harrod, Howard L., pg. 53.

²¹Brown, Joseph Epes, pg. 102.

²²Brown, Joseph Epes, pg. 102.

²³Brown, Joseph Epes, pg. 102.

The archives is consistent with the native idea of respect for sacred objects which are often kept in sacred bundles. Objects kept in the archives are in a sense retired yet retained in esteem. The lower level of the archives may also be used as a performance area during ceremonies. In this situation, it is the people or performers who become the objects of respect.

The northern sphere and area adjacent to the river edge is associated with purification, cleansing, ablution, and consistency.²⁴ This area is primarily occupied by the theater which serves to educate and illustrate all that is pure and has been consistent through time.

The oral tradition in native culture is of great importance. Written texts such as the Bible describing a culture's beliefs do not exist. Traditions then are passed on through speech and retained in one's memory. This necessitates a chain of interlocking conversations in order for a continuation of cultural values. Things that are not essential or relevant may be forgotten or omitted over time. Likewise stories may adapt and change through the course of time while the essential information remains true.²⁵

Time is experienced in traditional native culture as cyclical and rhythmic as opposed to the progress oriented lineal notion of time in occidental society. Life cycles of humans or the life of any manifested form is seen as a cyclical period within

²⁴Brown, Joseph Epes, pg. 102.

²⁵Brown, Joseph Epes, pg. 50.
Harrod, Howard L., pg. 40.

larger cycles.²⁶

Primordial time is a dominant notion in the plains indian oral tradition. Myths recounted are set in primordial time. This ensures that the listener becomes an active participant in the story line as opposed to an observer. Native languages generally lack both a past as well as a future tense. The language tense refers instead to the perennial now. As a result the myths express sacred time, they are as real at the moment they are being told as they were at any other time.

These same messages are also often expressed through dances or ceremonies. It is often said that the north american indians "dance out" their religion.²⁷ Religious or cultural convictions are expressed through dances, songs, and repetitive movements. Many beats and rhythms are expressed in this manner such as beating drums, singing, crying, dancing and chanting.²⁸ Movement inside a structure particularly during ceremonies, occurs in a pattern that prevents enclosed circles. These patterns are a continuous chain of interlocking spheres.²⁹ (fig. 21)

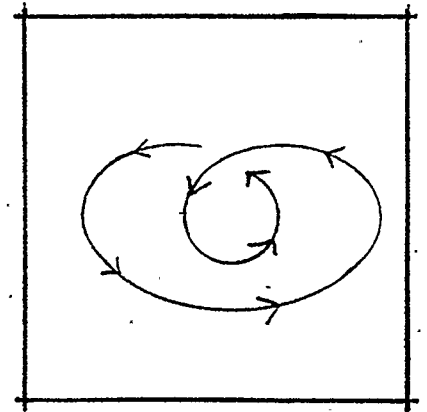


Figure twenty one

The rhythm of the cycles of the cosmos, the sun, and the seasons, imitates the cycle of human life as it moves from birth to death. But where this cyclical process, inherent in all nature, is understood in traditional cyclical, not linear manner, death inevitably returns to or joins life so that the cycle

²⁶ Thomas, Darlene Kay, pg. 53.

²⁷ Brown, Joseph Epes, pg. 123.

²⁸ Gill, Sam, pg. 52.

²⁹ Gill, Sam, pg. 47.

continues.³⁰

Native views of reality are not static structures in which reality is divided, but tend to incorporate the many dynamic and conflicting elements that are inseparable from the nature of human life.³¹

The Centre's circulation system is a spiral. Vertical and horizontal circulation have been resolved together through the spiraling configuration. This avoids the dead end corridors typical of many urban structures. The spiral is conceptually consistent with the flow of spiritual powers. The spacing of functions along the spiral encourages movement and provides ample opportunities for either informal or formal social interaction. (fig. 22)

This spiraling path also provides a constant point of orientation from the central space through a direct visual connection. The direct access to sources of daylight further enhance the temporal qualities of the space. (fig. 23)

As the four major quadrants step upward moving in a sunwise direction a circulation system ramps upward through the central space. These contrasting means of circulation serve conceptually to interlock the movement and power of spiritual entities acting between the two differing realities. The notion of the ramp juxtaposed against the stair reemphasizes the shift in the experience of time between the quick, regular beat of the stair and the slow rhythmic pace of the ramp. The ramp itself

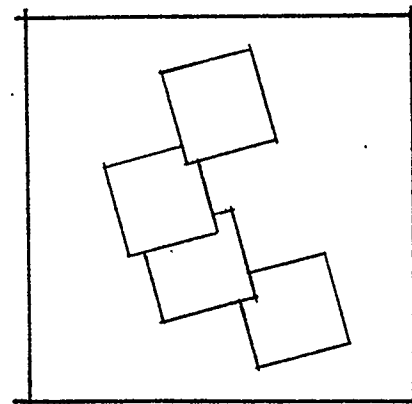


Figure twenty two

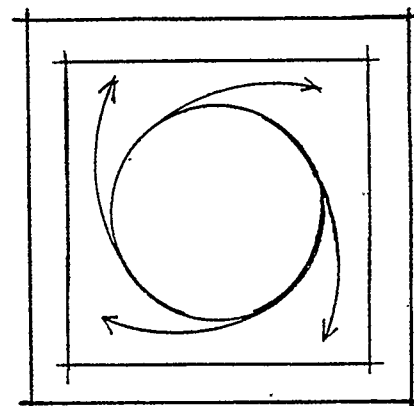


Figure twenty three

³⁰Williamson, Ray A., pg. 307.

³¹Gill, Sam, pg. 26.

serves to link the pragmatic spaces to the central sacred space through the element of the seating balcony. This connection occurs both conceptually as the viewer is drawn into the myth as a participant, as well as experientially, where the viewer has moved through the sequence of spaces from chronological time to primordial time.

Within the design, these notions of time and rhythms are expressed through the interior structural supports surrounding the central space. The spacing and sizing of these supports progress from a solid wall, to evenly spaced columns, to evenly spaced columns of increasing dimension, to increasingly spaced columns of constant dimension. This establishes a progression in experience from chronological to primordial time or the reverse. As one moves past these supports one is made fully aware of a change in beat aiding in a shift of realities. (fig. 24)

2.7 ENVIRONMENTS

Four reveals are delineated in the design, separating the building programme into quadrants. These reveals serve functionally as smaller meeting places, story telling areas or as backdrops to the central area during times of performances. Each of these areas differs from the others creating a variety of environments. As each has a different degree and time of natural daylighting throughout the seasons, the areas have been delineated to recall various natural environments known traditionally to the indians of the plains. Many of the myths contain abstracted notions of various environmental qualities of the plains. These areas serving as the settings for

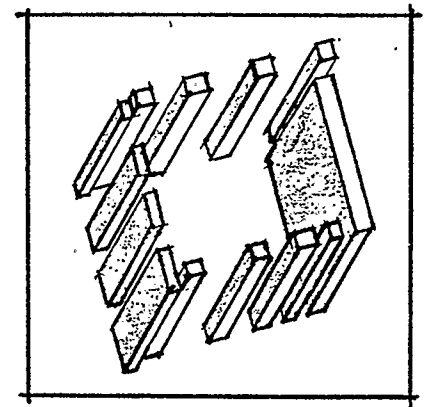


Figure twenty four

these stories, act to enhance that atmosphere. (fig. 25)

These reveals punctuate the circulation system separating the various uses of the programme. They also serve to announce a different zone within the building and also act as a connection through the building exterior with the greater cosmos.

The areas serve to distinguish the four main settings of the plains: the eastern prairie, the southern riverine, the western mountains, and the northern boreal forest. The lighting quality and seating profile enhance this relationship and conceptually serve as enhancing knowledge of another sphere of the cosmos.

2.8 COMMUNITY

Within the cosmos of social relationships are the four spheres containing "all my relations" or the oneness of all things. The sacred pipe ritual exemplifies this condition. At the center is the self, that is, the person holding the pipe is at the center of the cosmos at that time. Surrounding the self in a circular form are the family, tribe, and nation. Beyond this is the sphere of animal relations. Finally there is the sphere of the most powerful entities; the four directions (winds), the sky, and the earth (sea). The gathering together of these spheres completes the oneness of the cosmos.³²

The plains people also generally declare "we are all related" at the end of any rite involving communal smoking of the pipe.³³ The wedding basket is another

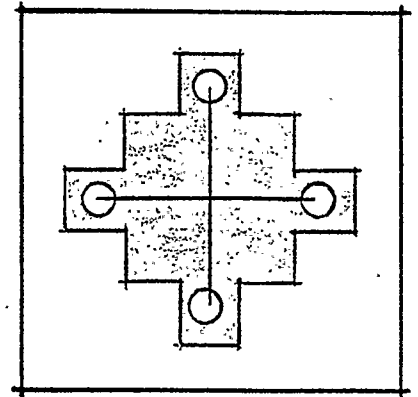


Figure twenty five

³²McCaskill, Don, pg. 301.

³³Brown, Joseph Epes, pg. xiii.

image of the strength of community within the native culture. Into this basket are placed all the components which one might possibly require in one's lifetime.³⁴(fig. 26)

This project embraces this notion of community as it is cradled between the dense urban fabric and the natural northern bluff. The large central space acts as a container for all the activities and thoughts which the occupants bring to the Centre. This same space is the major focus from all quaternaries. A visual connection to and across the central space is possible from all areas emphasizing importance on the center. This also further sustains the idea of community or oneness. (fig. 27)

Four sets of columns, acting as point line elements vertically link the three realms and serve as points of acknowledgment of the four cardinal directions. As sentries in a camp formation they ensure a sense of protection. (fig. 28)

The idea of communal participation in native culture has remained strong. The ritual of preparation required for any ceremony or gathering in a traditional setting is a central component in the idea of oneness. The setting up of a camp or the erection of a tipi has long been a communal effort necessary at many gatherings. This also encompasses the notion of generosity or giving. The idea of giving to the spiritual entities finds itself expressed culturally through the exchange of gifts between people. As gifts are given to participants at a ceremony so too does one give of ones time and

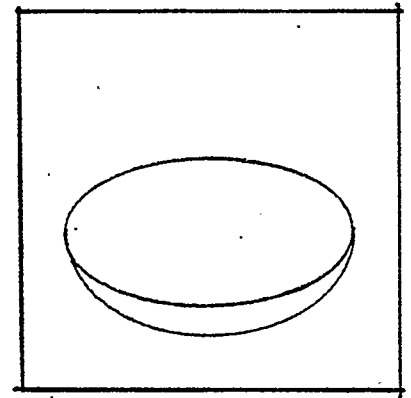


Figure twenty six

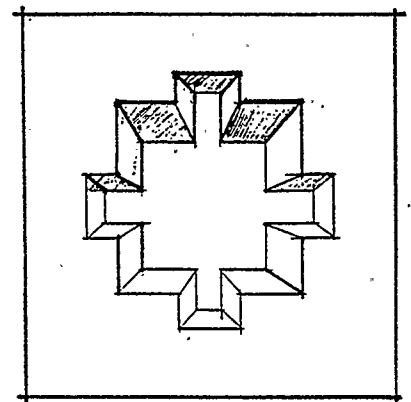


Figure twenty seven

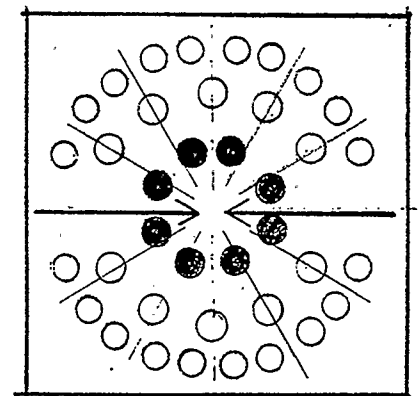


Figure twenty eight

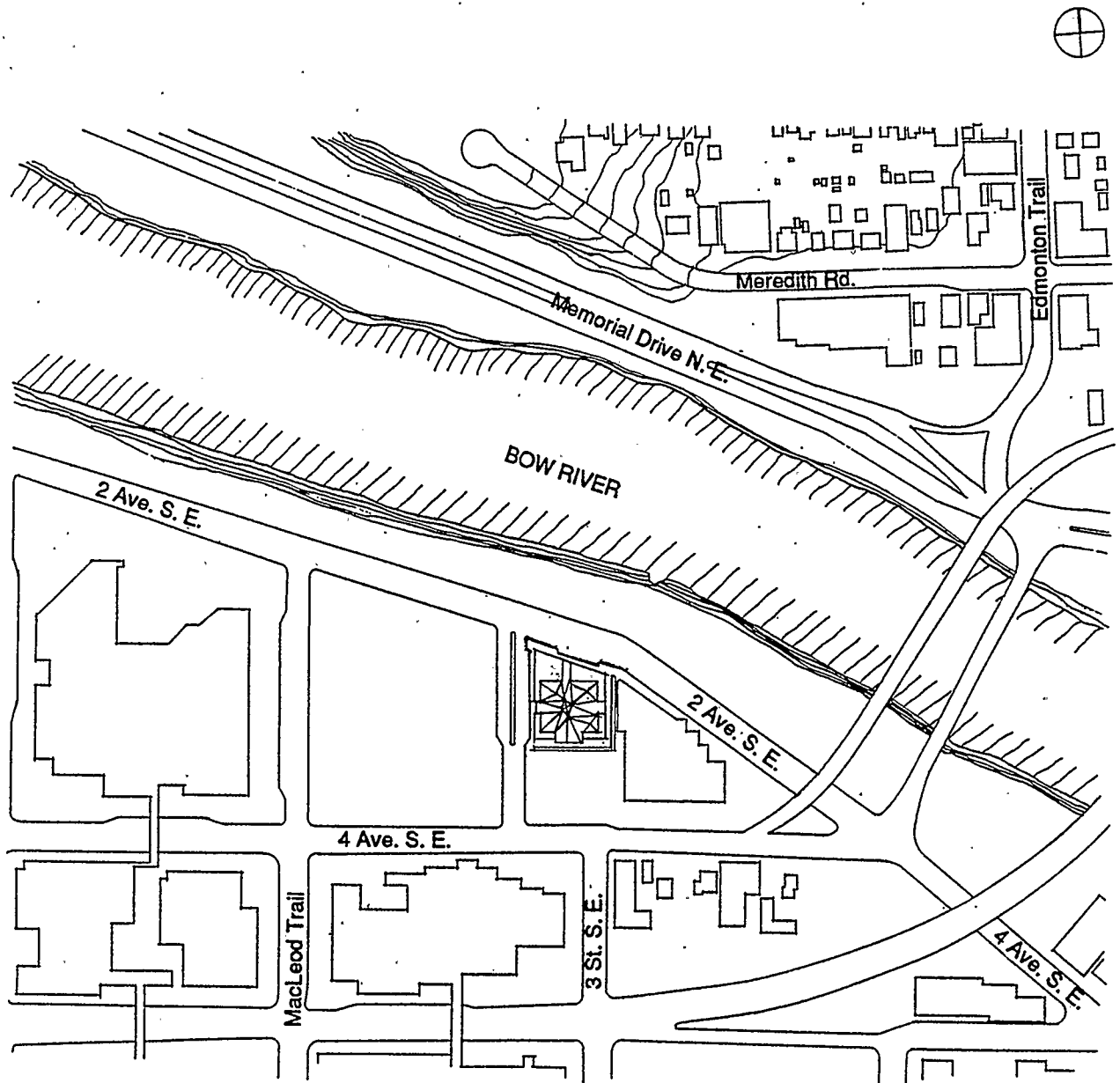
³⁴Gill, Sam, pg. 32

abilities.

The ideas of communal participation and giving are expressed in the project with the roof openings being operated manually, requiring the cooperative effort of a group of people. The central space as well must be prepared for any ceremony or performance. This would involve the opening of the pit cover and preparation of the ground base. The entire central space gives the building a constant level of animation through performance and circulation. The building responds in a sense and changes character in response to what is happening within it. The main central space gives the building the ability to transform or shift between two realities.

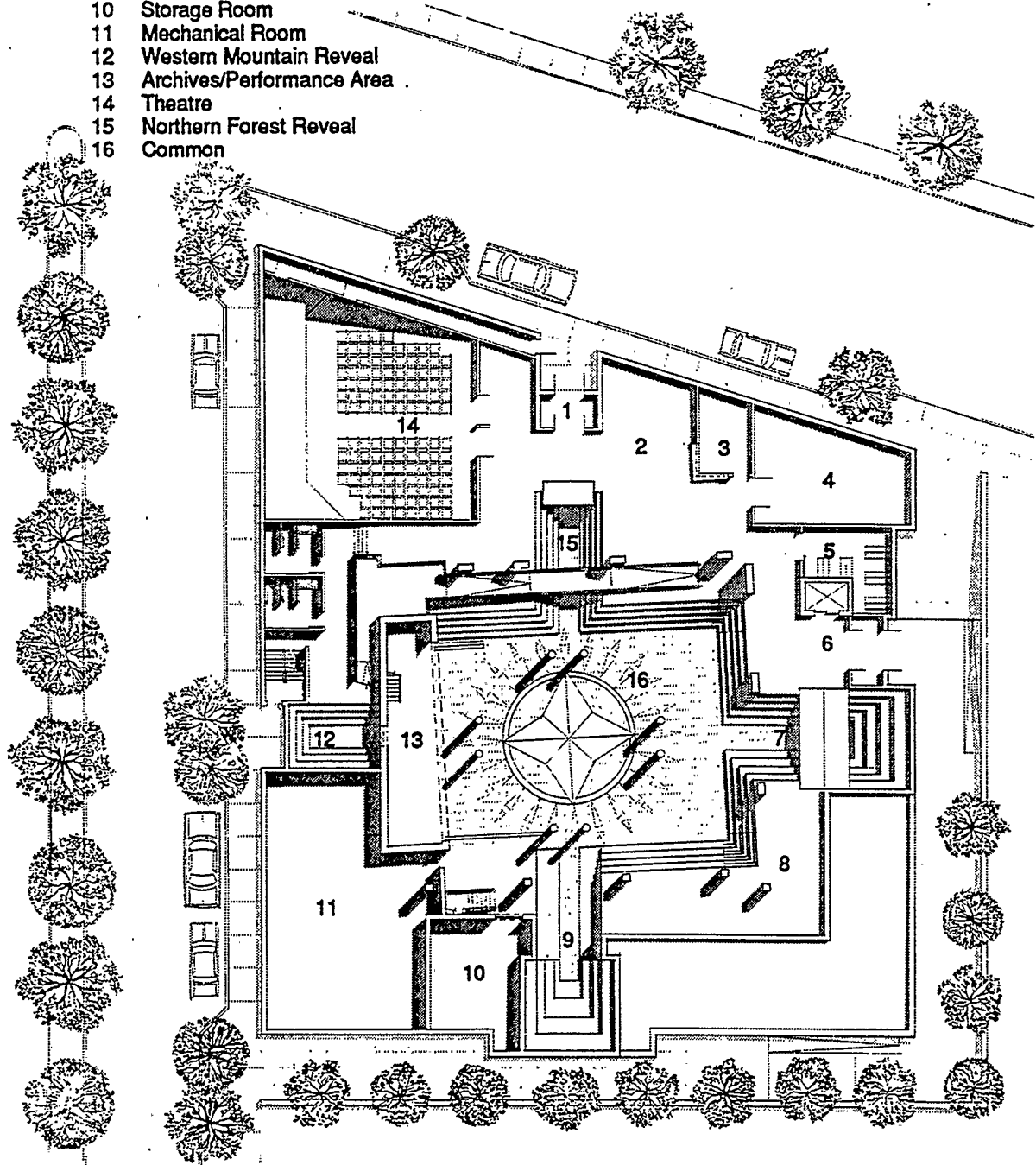
CHAPTER 3

Design Proposal



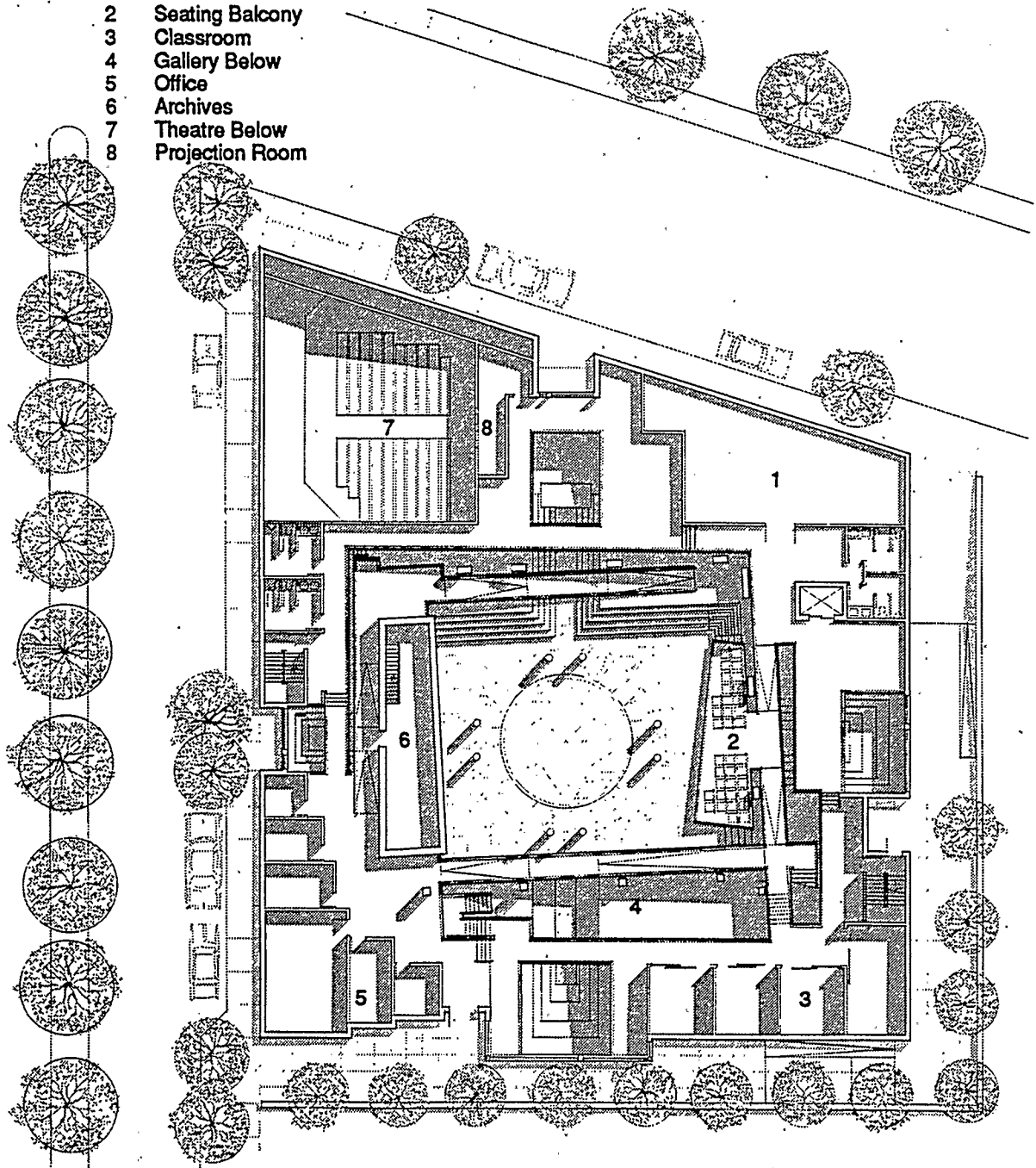
SITE PLAN

- 1 Main entrance
- 2 Lounge
- 3 Reception
- 4 Kitchen
- 5 Cloak Room
- 6 Receiving
- 7 Eastern Prairie Reveal
- 8 Gallery Area
- 9 Southern Riverine Reveal
- 10 Storage Room
- 11 Mechanical Room
- 12 Western Mountain Reveal
- 13 Archives/Performance Area
- 14 Theatre
- 15 Northern Forest Reveal
- 16 Common



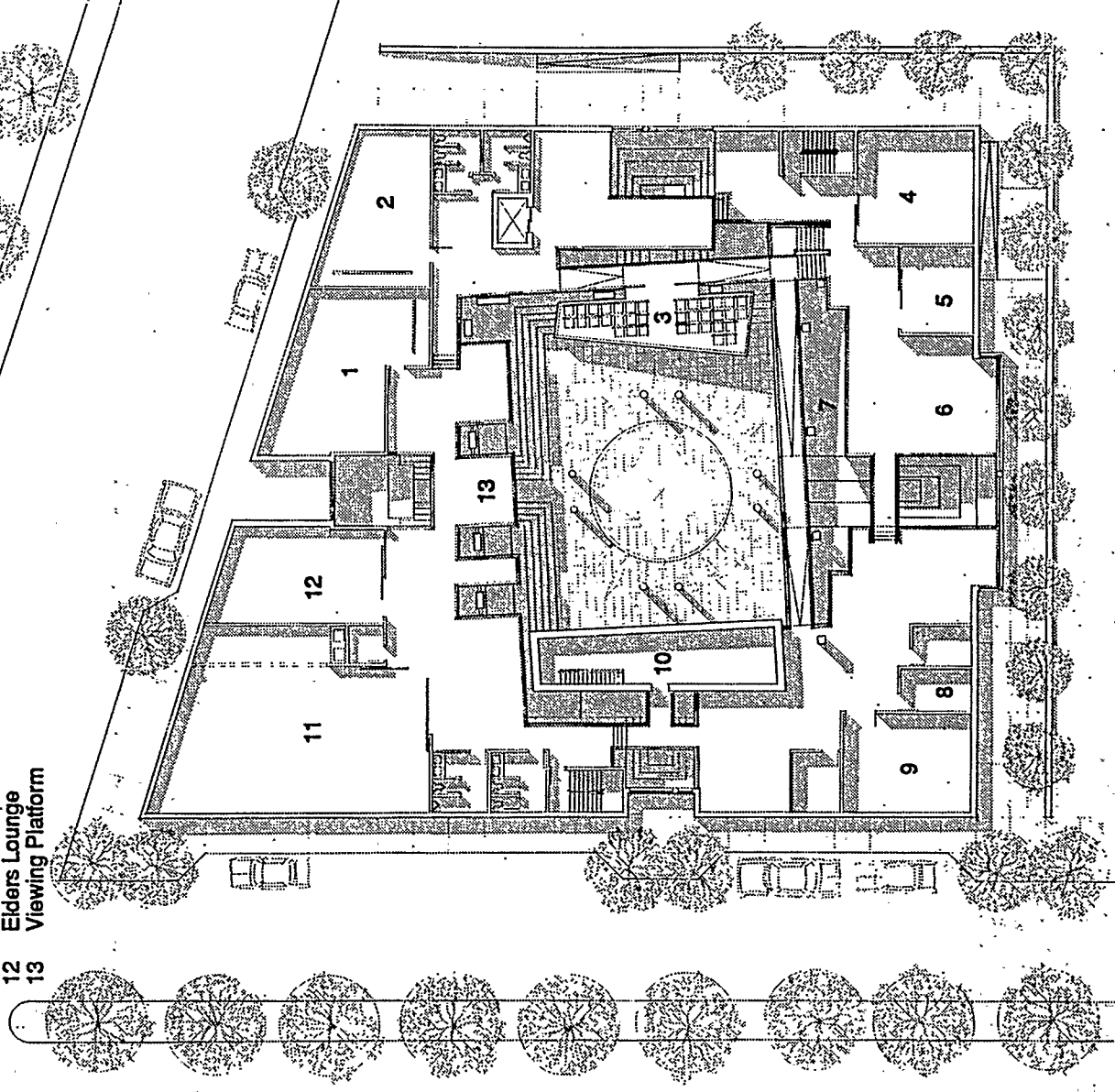
LOWER LEVEL PLAN

- 1 Resource Centre
- 2 Seating Balcony
- 3 Classroom
- 4 Gallery Below
- 5 Office
- 6 Archives
- 7 Theatre Below
- 8 Projection Room

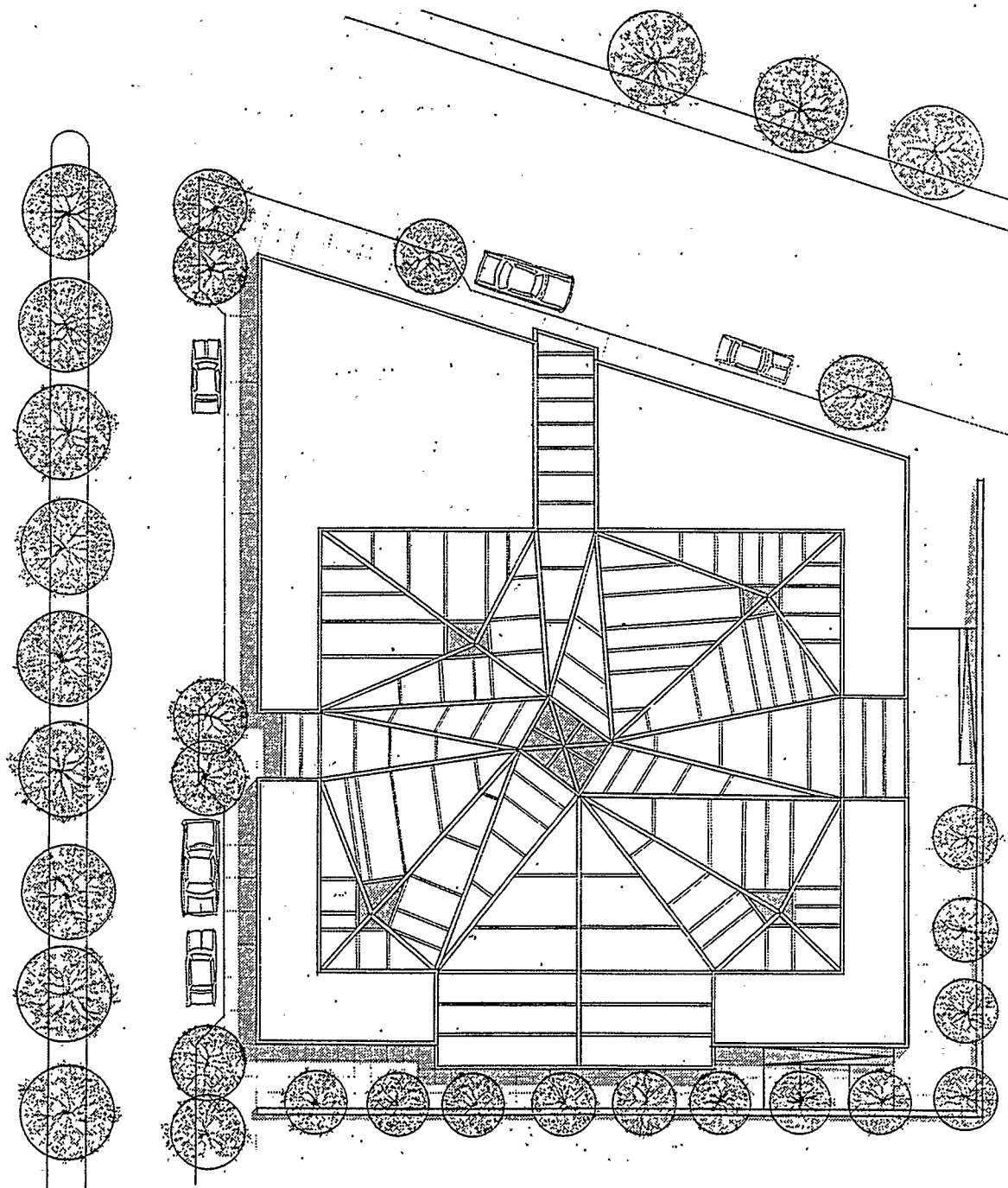


SECOND-LEVEL PLAN

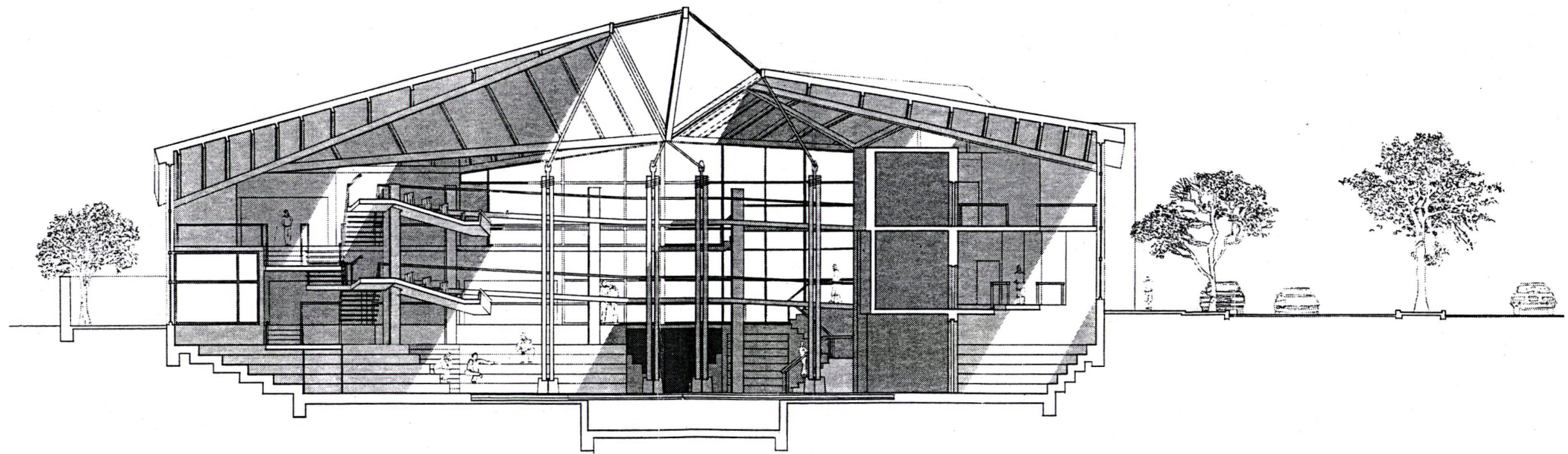
- 1 Youth Activity Area
- 2 Children's Activity Area
- 3 Seating Balcony
- 4 Meeting Room
- 5 Classroom
- 6 General Office Area
- 7 Gallery Below
- 8 Office
- 9 Conference Room
- 10 Archives
- 11 Craft Studio
- 12 Elders Lounge
- 13 Viewing Platform



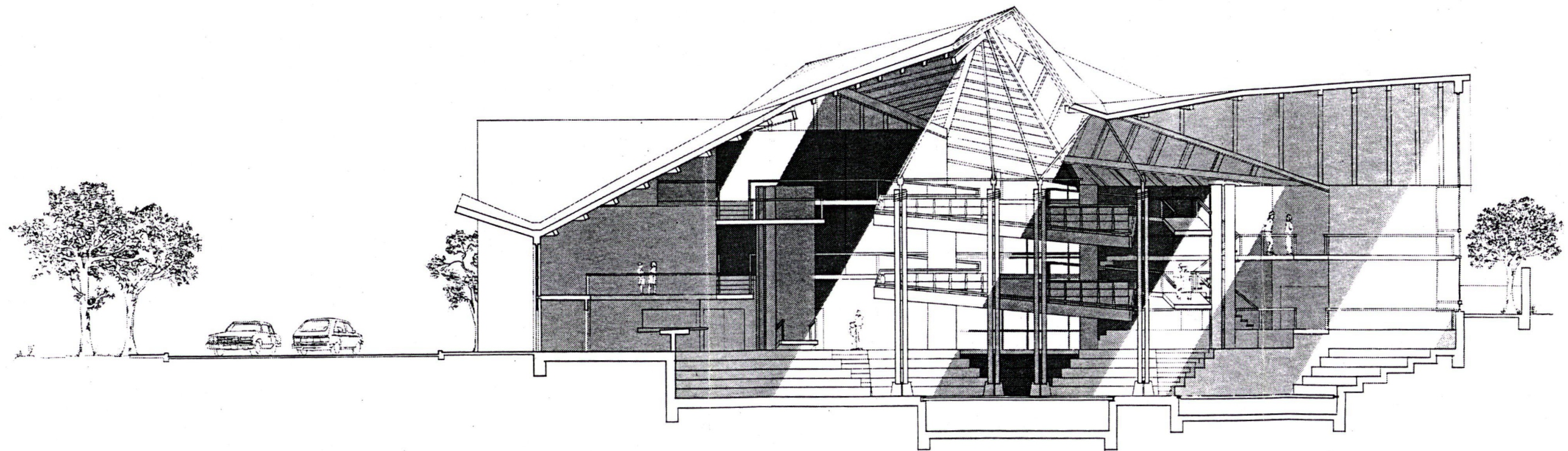
THIRD LEVEL PLAN



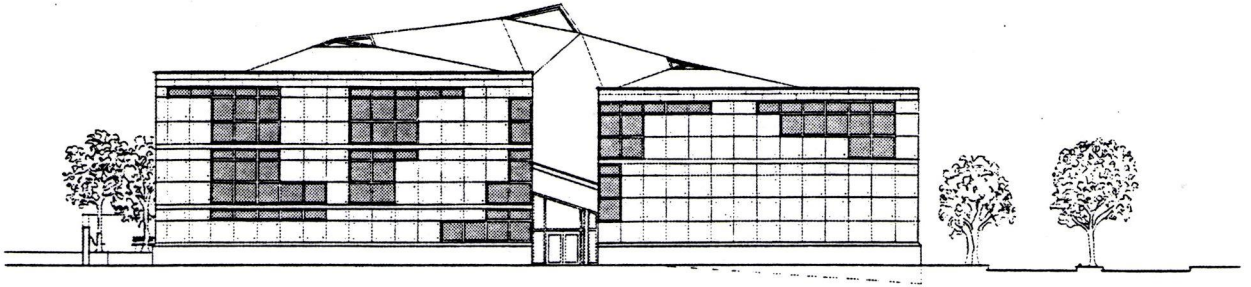
ROOF FRAMING PLAN



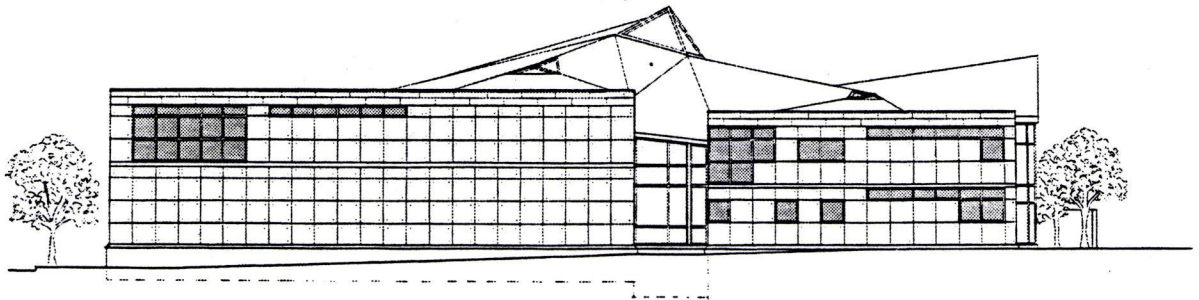
EASTWEST SECTION



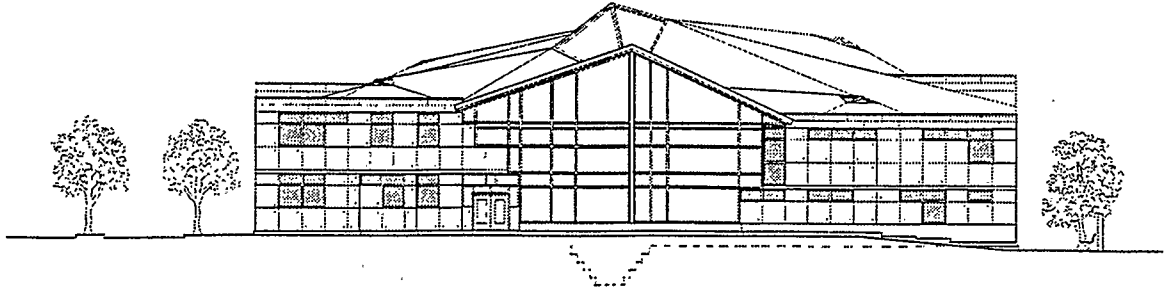
NORTH/SOUTH SECTION



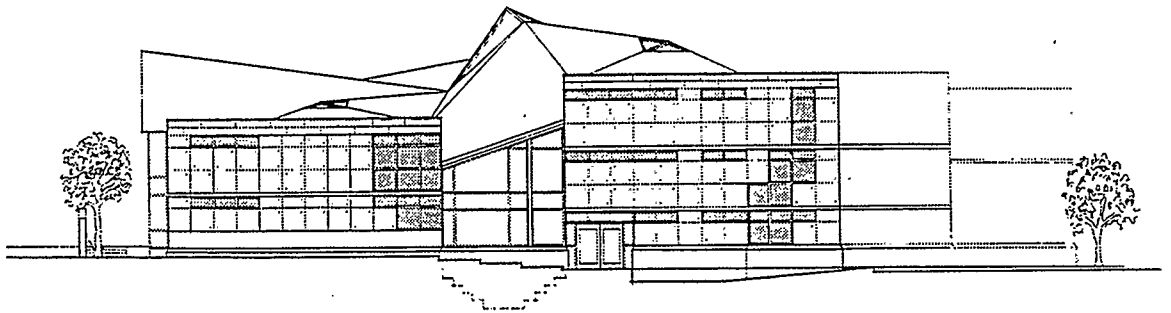
NORTH ELEVATION



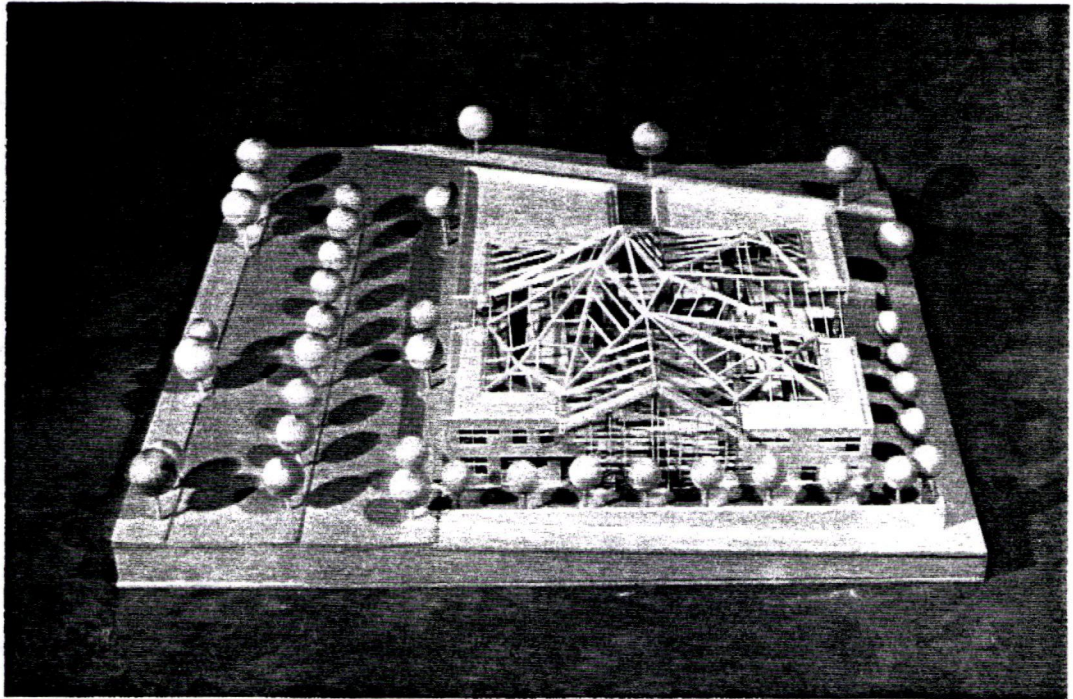
WEST ELEVATION



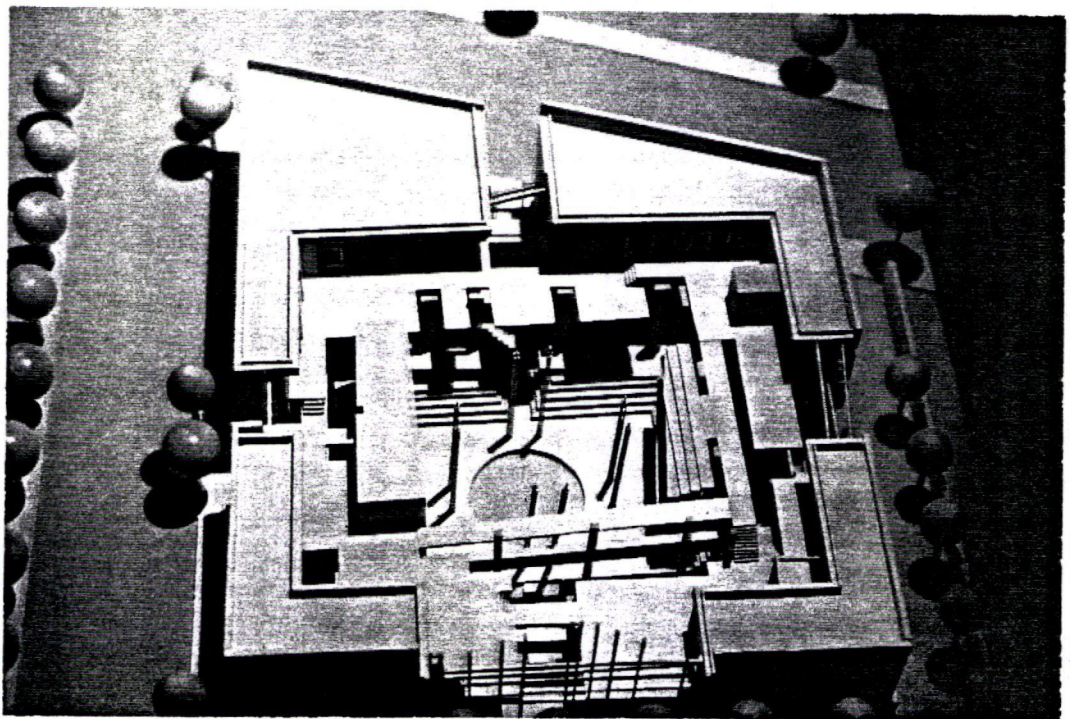
SOUTH ELEVATION



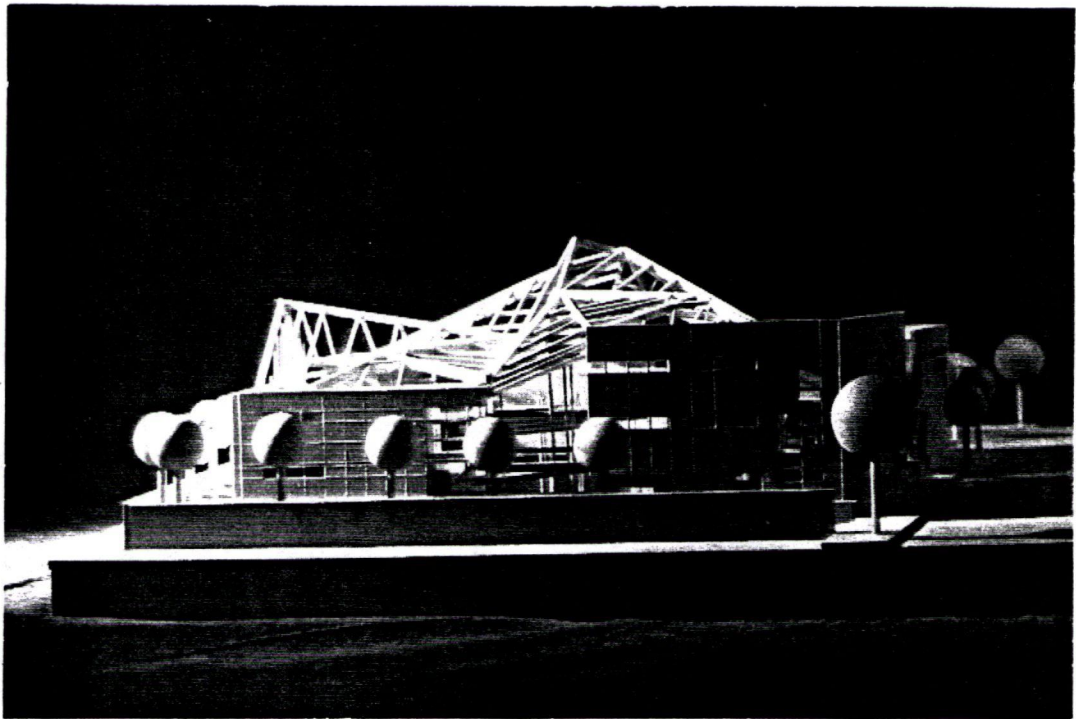
EAST ELEVATION



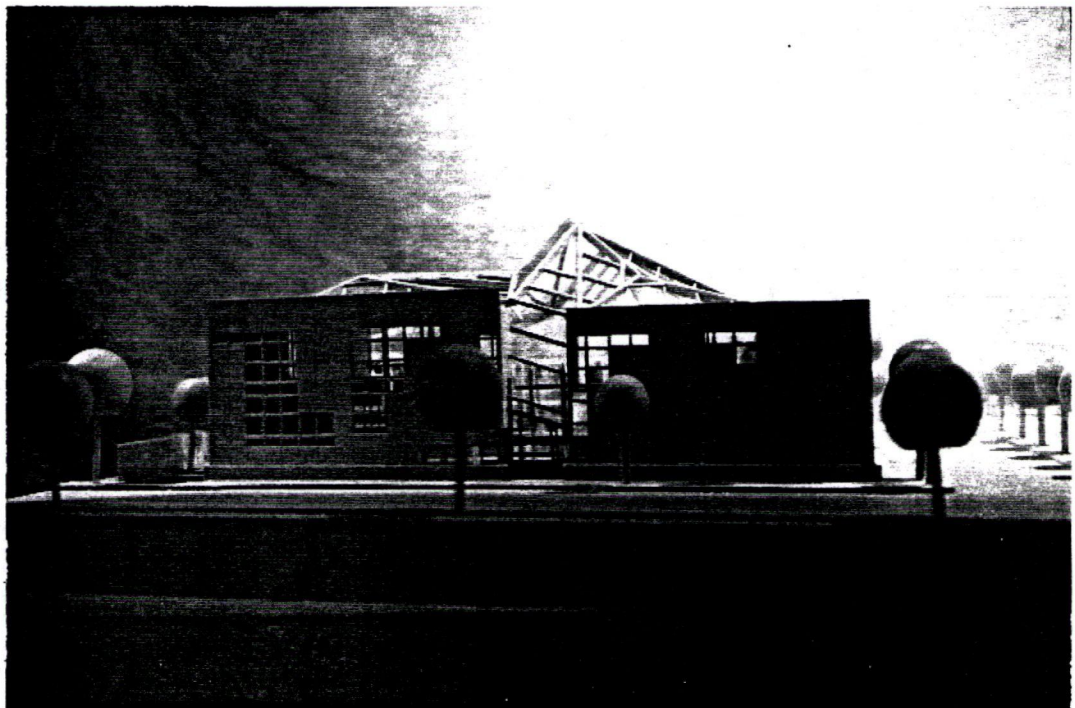
MODEL PHOTO



MODEL PHOTO



MODEL PHOTO



MODEL PHOTO

CHAPTER 4

Conclusion

The design for a native indian cultural centre is a complex proposition. The basic philosophy of the indian culture emphasizes the *oneness* of all beings. While many cultures have found and expressed particular relationships with the universe, such relationships and their emphasis on cohesion form the very crux of native culture. This unity is expressed in such manifestations as medicine wheels, and the physical realities of specific rites and customs.

As Canada now recognizes itself as a multi cultural society, a new national attitude is developing featuring reciprocal co-existence of all cultures. A cultural centre dedicated to the retention of the natives' traditions enhances the lives and understanding of a multi-cultural society. The emphasis on oneness in the indian culture inclusive of man, nature and the universe, is enhanced with the mutual acceptance of differing existential frameworks.

"Canadians, with their roots in several different cultures, now are evolving a new culture. Their cultures are merging and a greater understanding and appreciation of diverse peoples are becoming part of Canada's national character." ³⁵

The architectural challenge of a native cultural centre lies in the creation of an appropriate built form which responds to the unique existential meanings of the user group.

"Allowing that one needs to experience meaningfulness in one's life-situations, architecture serves as a holder and transmitter of meaning. As a 'poetic' medium possessed with a spiritual dimension, architecture involves the translation of thoughts, images and concepts into a meaningful reality." ³⁶

³⁵Cardinal, pg. 126.

³⁶Nagata, pg. 40.

This particular design has sought to give meaning to the design through the adaptation and abstraction of underlying cultural values. The design ultimately serves to embody these ideas and in so doing has become a physical expression of indian cultural values. Given the building's urban context, a synthesis or balance was achieved between culture and context. This harmony is again interpreted as a cultural expression within a multi cultural context.

APPENDIX

Building Programme

The architectural programme for this centre is largely derived from the programme for the existing Native Friendship Centre. A number of adaptations were made as a result of discussions with people affiliated with the centre. The mandate for this project differs from that of the Friendship Centre in that the Friendship Centre primarily serves the transition of native people moving to an urban context. The major objective of the current project is to provide the setting for programs intended to retain and promote cultural values and traditions while living in an urban setting.

In general, over the years the number of people using the Friendship Centre has risen dramatically, as have programs implemented to accommodate user needs. Some programs have been developed and relocated elsewhere. The population base of native indians making use of the Friendship Centre are primarily from the Alberta or Plains area with other areas represented less significantly.

The local Friendship Centre serves its most basic function as a means of belonging. It is from this perspective that some adaptations have been made to the previously existing programme for the current project. Only those functions deemed appropriate to enhance the traditional concept of oneness were added. A strong link is maintained with traditional values through the qualitative nature of the space and the traditional ceremonies performed.

QUALITATIVE DESCRIPTION

1. Interactive Space: Community activities

Structured programs run by the cultural centre involve both participants from the community at large as well as the local native population, who form the majority. Services include basic life skills courses, adult education programs, traditional language and dance, crafts, ceremonial gatherings, and children's

parties. This space is also intended for less formal and perhaps revenue generating functions such as bingo and casinos.

2. Mediating Space: public/private (secular/spiritual) interface

These spaces are intended to serve as the threshold between the public and more private worlds within the centre. In functional terms these spaces serve general curiosity about the centre, and family, tribe, or more native research. In more spiritual terms, these spaces serve as the transitional point of existential frameworks, between a secular society and the spiritual component of native peoples.

3. Introvertive Space: culture gallery.

The introvertive space is intended to address the need for a link with the native culture while living within the greater urban context. It is a place for the retention of indian values and the evolution of the culture over time. It is a place for active involvement by the native population as well as a place in which to gain a deeper appreciation of cultural traditions and their relevance in today's society.

4. Amenity Space: administrative and support elements.

The amenity space of the program services the general daily functioning of the Facility. It refers to the administration requirements for the operation of the programmes. This involves both the organization and execution of various programmes. This space facilitates a link to other agencies and facilities. These spaces are most expressive of the secular, urban influence .

5. Ancillary Space: service elements

The ancillary spaces are those areas which serve the occupants of the facility. These functions are crucial in that they allow the more significant areas to function freely.

<u>SPACE FUNCTION</u>	<u>NET AREA(m²)</u>
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Interactive Space

Lounge	35
Children's Area	50
Central Hall	225
Youth Activity Area	70
Crafts Studio	150
Classrooms 5@ 30	120
Theater	150

Mediating Space

Reception	15
Gallery	70

Introvertive Space

Elder's Lounge	50
Resource Lounge	100
Archives	120

Amenity Space

Executive Director's Office	12
Program Director's Office	12
Business Manager's Office	10
Office	10
Office	10
Secretary's Office	10
Counselor's Office	8
Meeting Room	35
Conference Room	40
General Office Area	65

Ancillary Space

Kitchen	45
Public Washrooms	80

<u>SPACE FUNCTION</u>	<u>NET AREA(m²)</u>
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Studio Storage	20
General Storage	40
Custodian	5
Cloak Room	25
Receiving	20
Mechanical	125

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