



CITY EDGE COMPETITION, BERLIN

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Daniel Libeskind

CITY EDGE COMPETITION, BERLIN

FIRST PRIZE

In February 1987 a group of architects were invited to submit planning proposals for a large site in the Tiergarten district of Berlin, along the former Potsdamer railway line. The brief was based on the assumption that proposals would aim to reconstitute the traditional block structure of the city. The scheme, part of the final stage of the IBA building programme, is to incorporate housing, a kindergarten, offices, commercial and light-industrial premises, and some public spaces. The competitors included AA Unit Masters Chris

Macdonald and Peter Salter. Daniel Libeskind was unanimously awarded first prize.

Ancient vistas of cities and buildings, like memorable places and names, can be found on maps — the books of the world. Each appears in a different colour on a different background, though any colour can be exchanged for another by a traveller whose destination is not found on the map.

A voyage into the substance of a city and its architecture entails a realignment of arbitrary points, disconnected lines and names out of place along the axis of Universal Hope. Very thin paper — like that of architectural drawings, Bibles, maps, telephone books, money — can be easily cut, crumpled or folded around this indestructible kernel. Then the entire unwieldy construction can be floated on water, like the tattered paper making its odyssey on the Liffey. Finally, the water itself

can be adhered to the mind, provided that one does not rely on the glue. In this way Reality, as the substance of things hoped for, becomes a proof of invisible joys — Berlin of open skies.

In exploring the shape of this sky which continually refuses to come into identity or equivalence, one discovers that what has been marked, fixed and measured nevertheless lapses in the dimension of both the indeterminate and the spherical. This space of non-equilibrium — from which freedom eternally departs and towards which it moves without homecoming — constitutes a place in which architecture comes upon itself as beginning at the end.

Assistants: Donald L. Bates, Meton Gadelha, Thomas Han, Dean Hoffman, Juha Ilonen, Esbjorn Jonsson, Brian Nicholson, Berit Restad-Jonsson, Lars Henrik Stahl

Consulting Engineer: Peter Rice, Arup and Partners

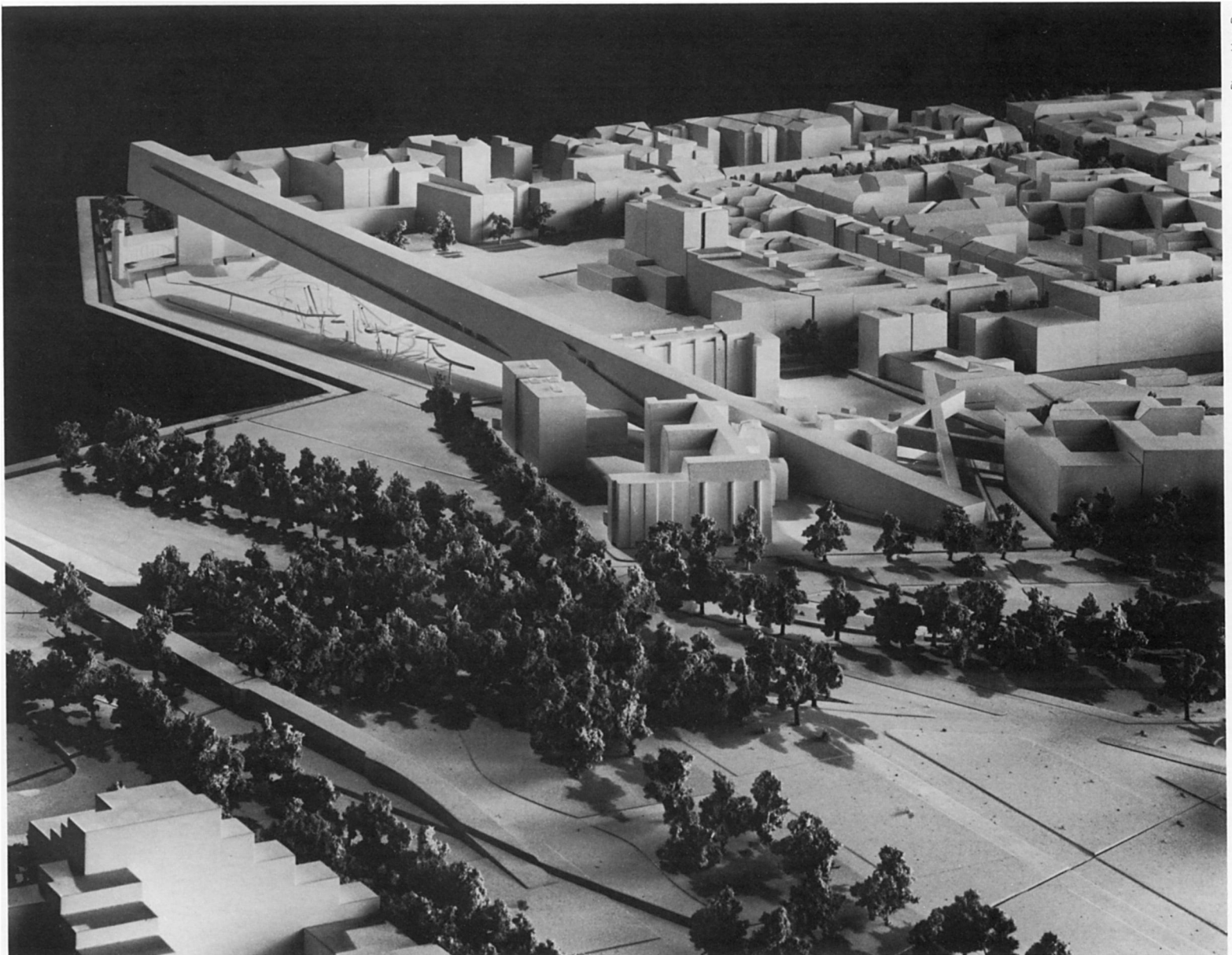
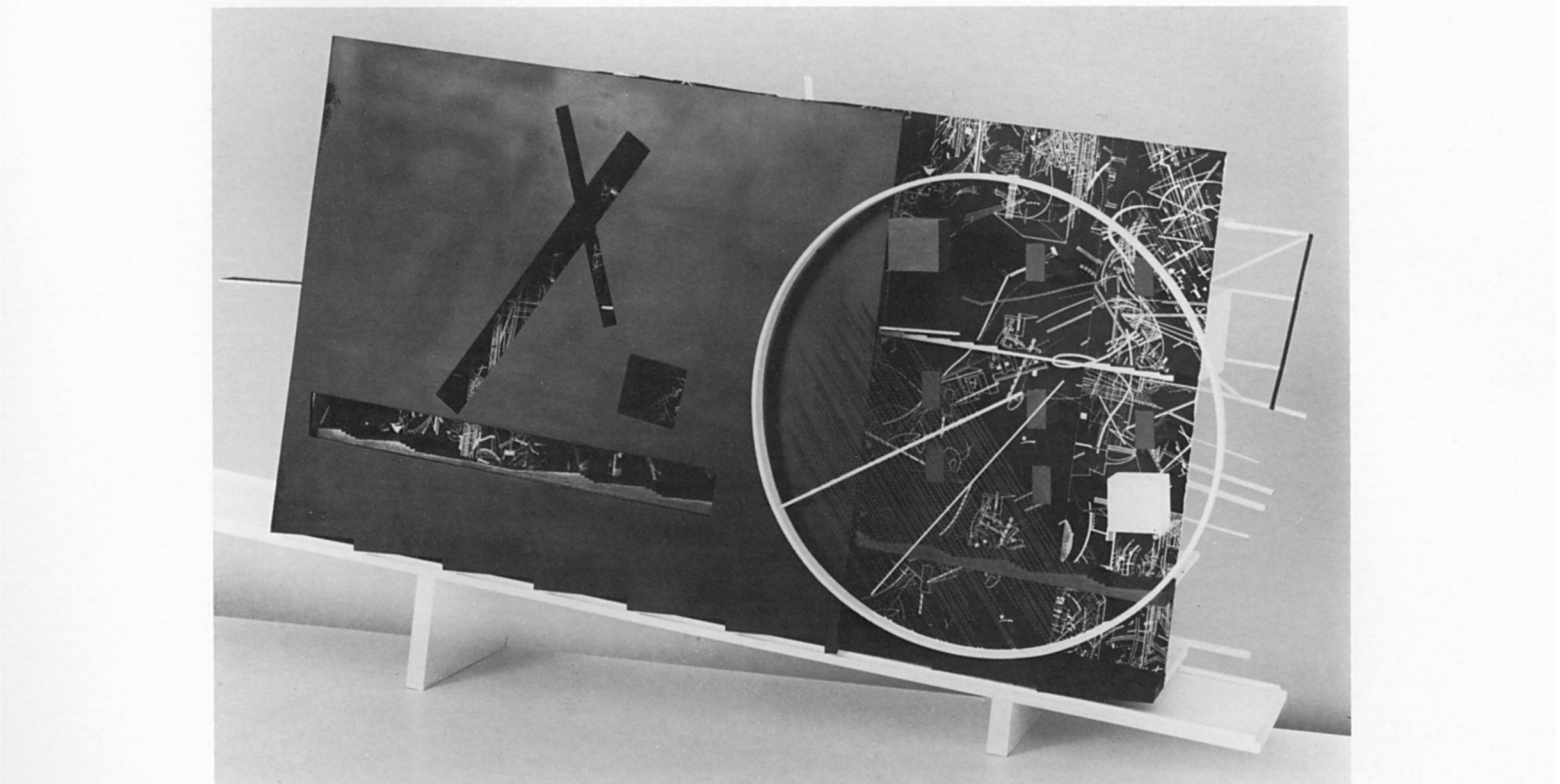
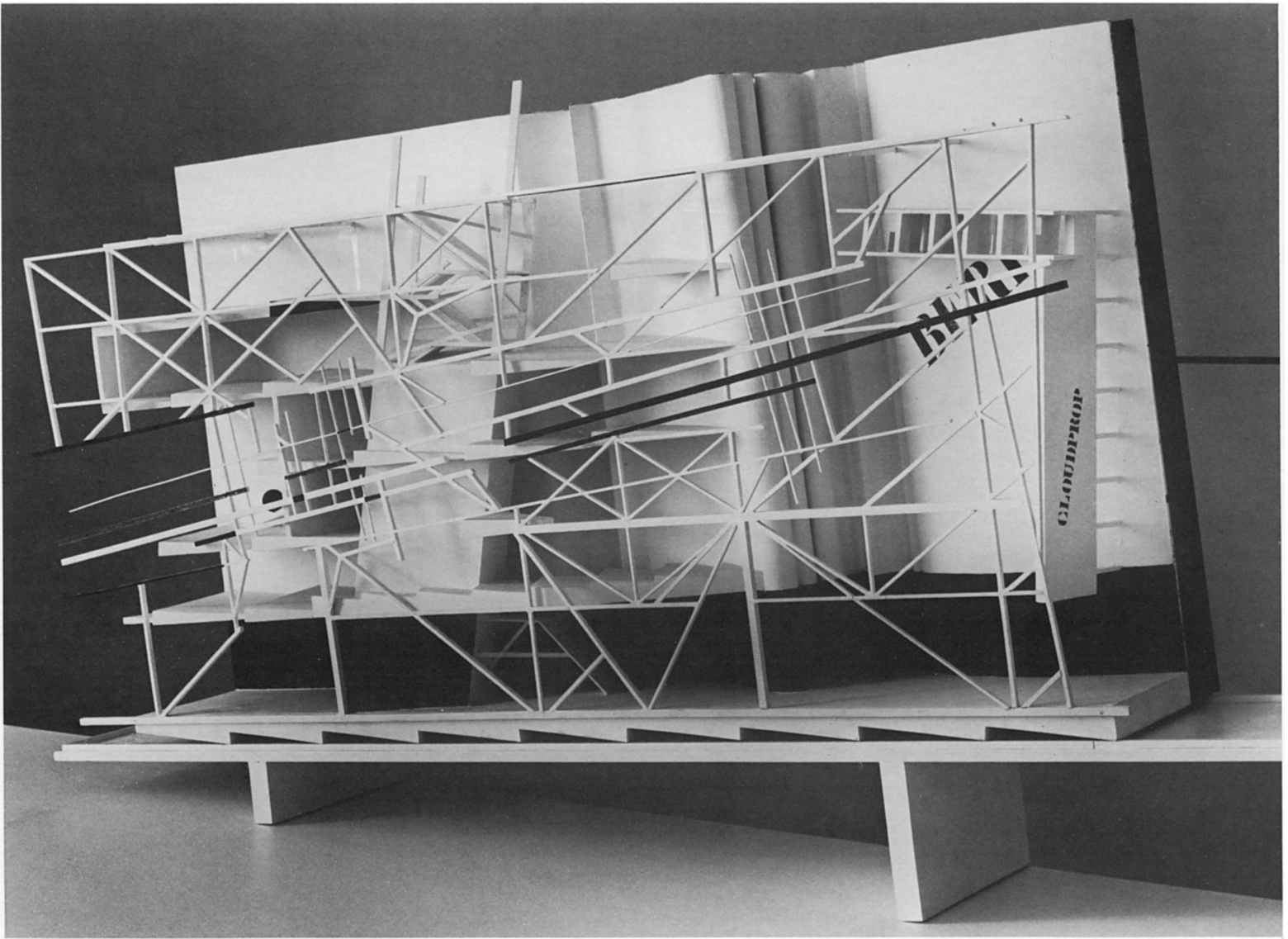
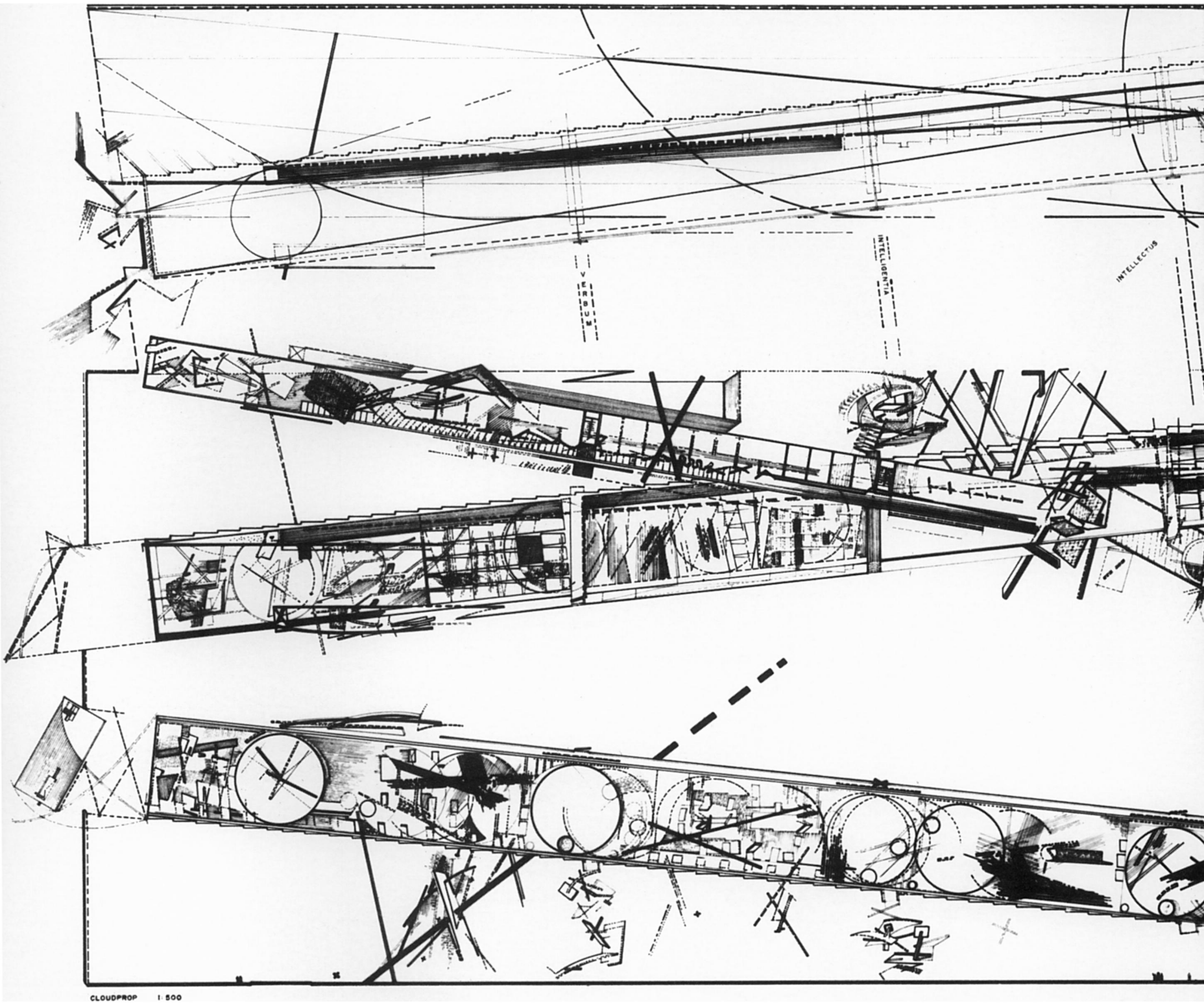


Photo: Uwe Rau

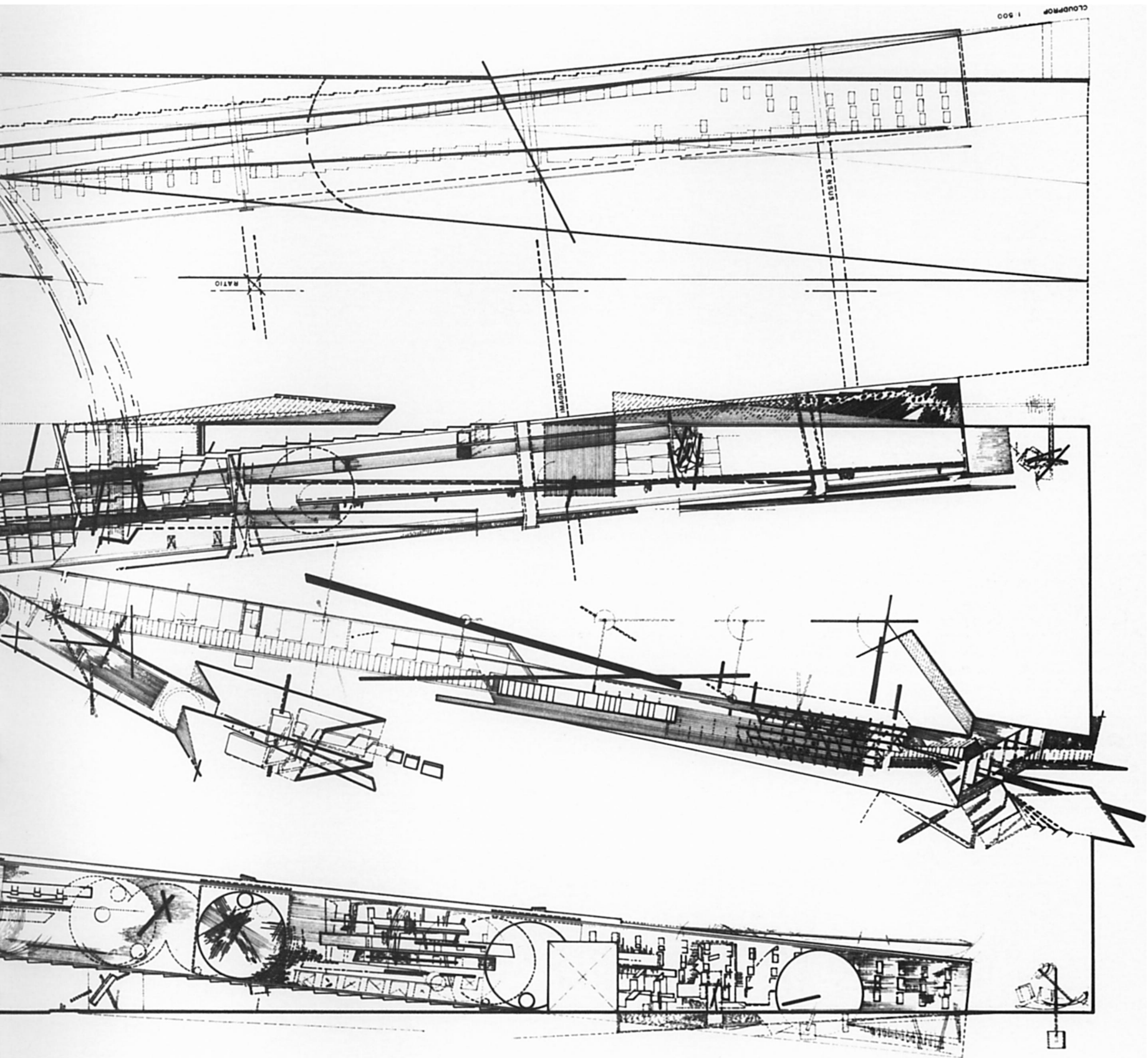
Model Δ: Urban model.

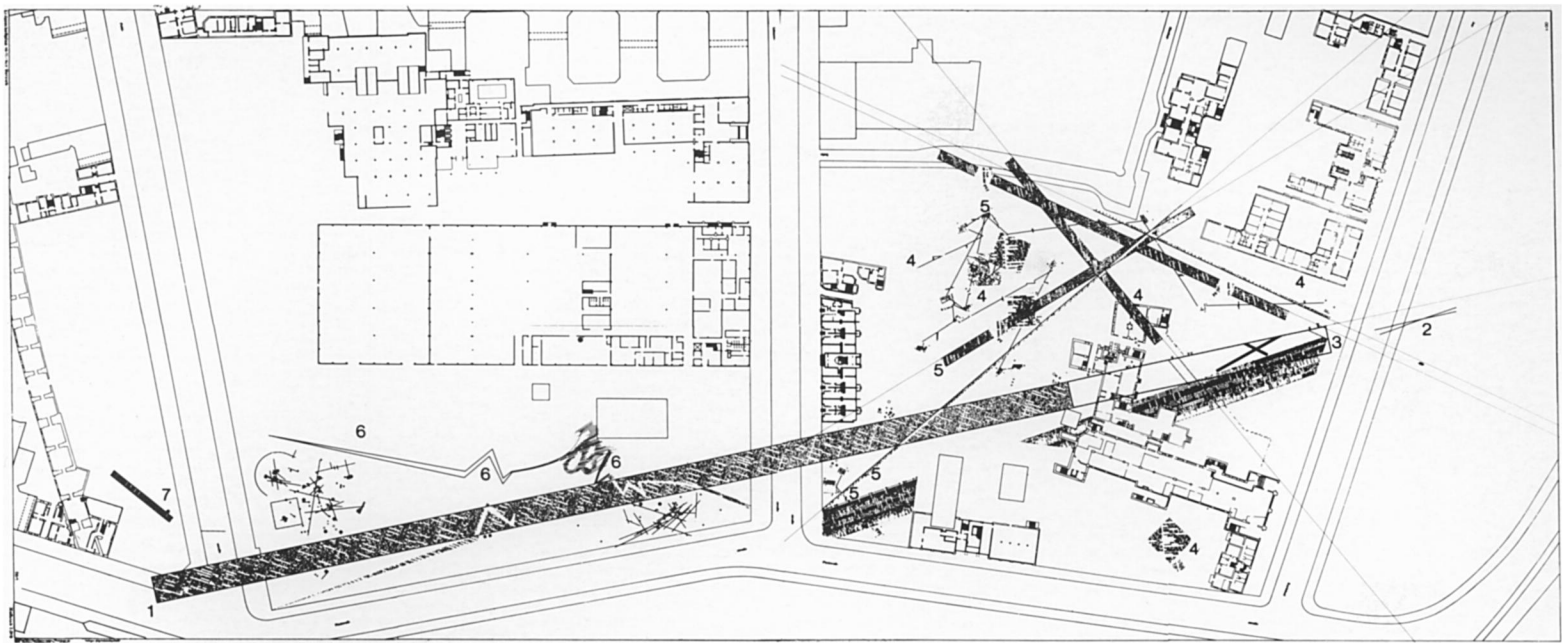


Model E : Cloud-prop. Model of one segment, showing one of the horizontal elevators.



CLOUDPROP 1:500





1. Erased Line: Historical axis. A public space. Edge, limit, delusion. Speer's ordered disorder. Underneath the ground the city traces its own schizoid memory and protects it by insulating and covering the site. What is unforgotten cannot be eradicated, concealed. Opening unbuildable realms which stretch directly into the foundations, the block discloses a public space. By cutting off the presence of fragments, both the street and the area of building is reconsecrated. Reconstructing that which cannot be filled up, the site abruptly turns its own emptiness into an Archimedean point.

2. The Fulcrum: No. 24 Am Karlsbad. A monument in the park. A turning-point. Crisis towards which possibilities return in order to revolve an invisible lever. Proposal for the Fulcrum of Universal Ideals. Chiasm of direction whereby an X grounds itself in the sky. Mies van der Rohe hanging pieces of glass outside his window in order to study their reflections.

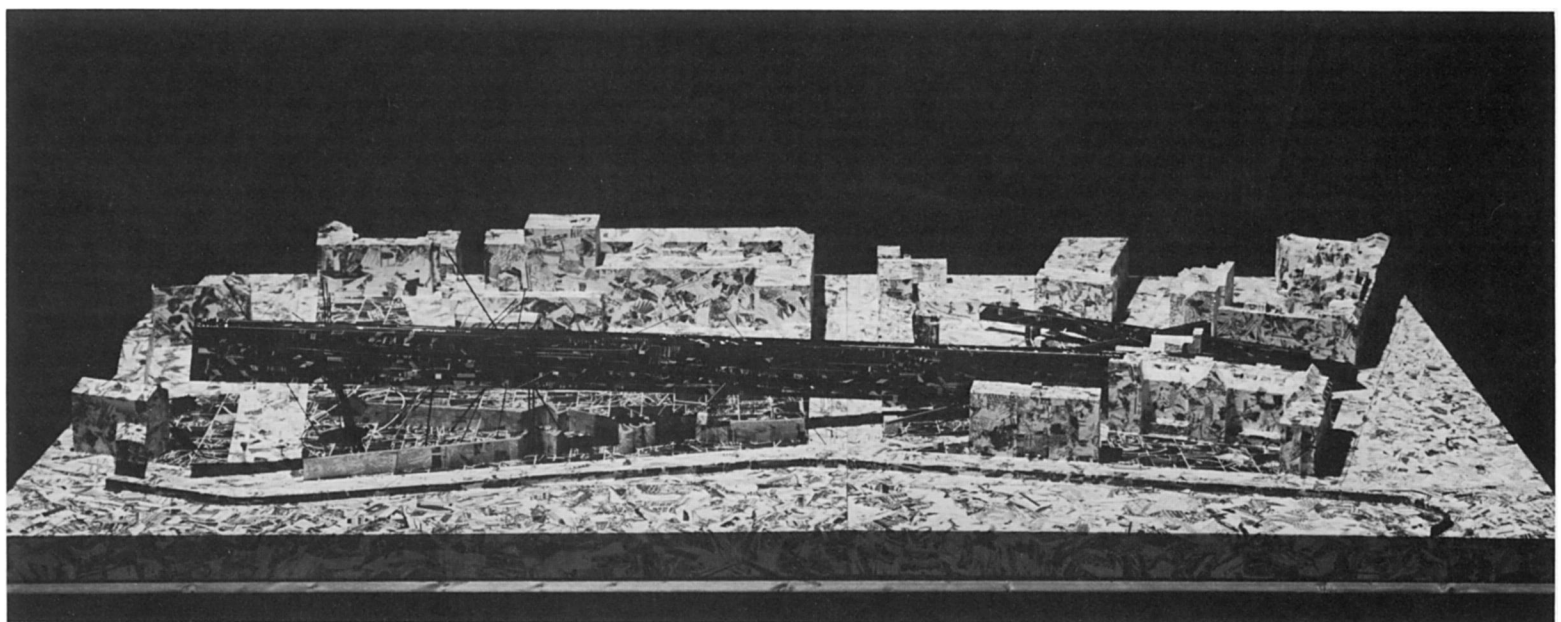
3. Solid Line: Dwelling in its totality. Housing, offices, public administration. Building as crossing the site, blocking the historical (always ready to leap again . . .), cutting the remaining fragments, unhinging the horizon. Re-establishment of a City without Illusion, an architecture without limits. To realign the sky against diagonal intersections: the ground-prop instead of a sky-hook. By opening the space between the fulcrum and its virtual arc, the solid line grounds itself in the sky. Now the unsupportable supports the support: new techniques at ground level. Intermingling of life and work by retrieving Utopia from the pit.

4. The Field: Intersecting nature. A garden in the city. The spared preserves what is to come. Four quarters of the ancient sky reflected upon the Earth establish common points: necessity in contingency, chance in axioms. The framing of variety cinematically suspended in an acrobat's leap.

5. The Throw: Child's play. Children's day-care facility. Reorienting the site towards its own play of place. A child's hope as a way of knowing and ordering the site across lines which cut themselves off from the web. Paths across and out of the block. Buildings whose vectors emerge, criss-cross and roll on the ground.

6. Compressing curves into straight lines. Commerce, industry. The space production. Imploding a curve into an angle — horizontally.

7. A Final Point: The beginning of a new diagonal. Moving out of dark crevices and corners. Walter Benjamin's unexpected encounter with the locomotive in the clouds.



Model A: Site model.



Details of Model A.

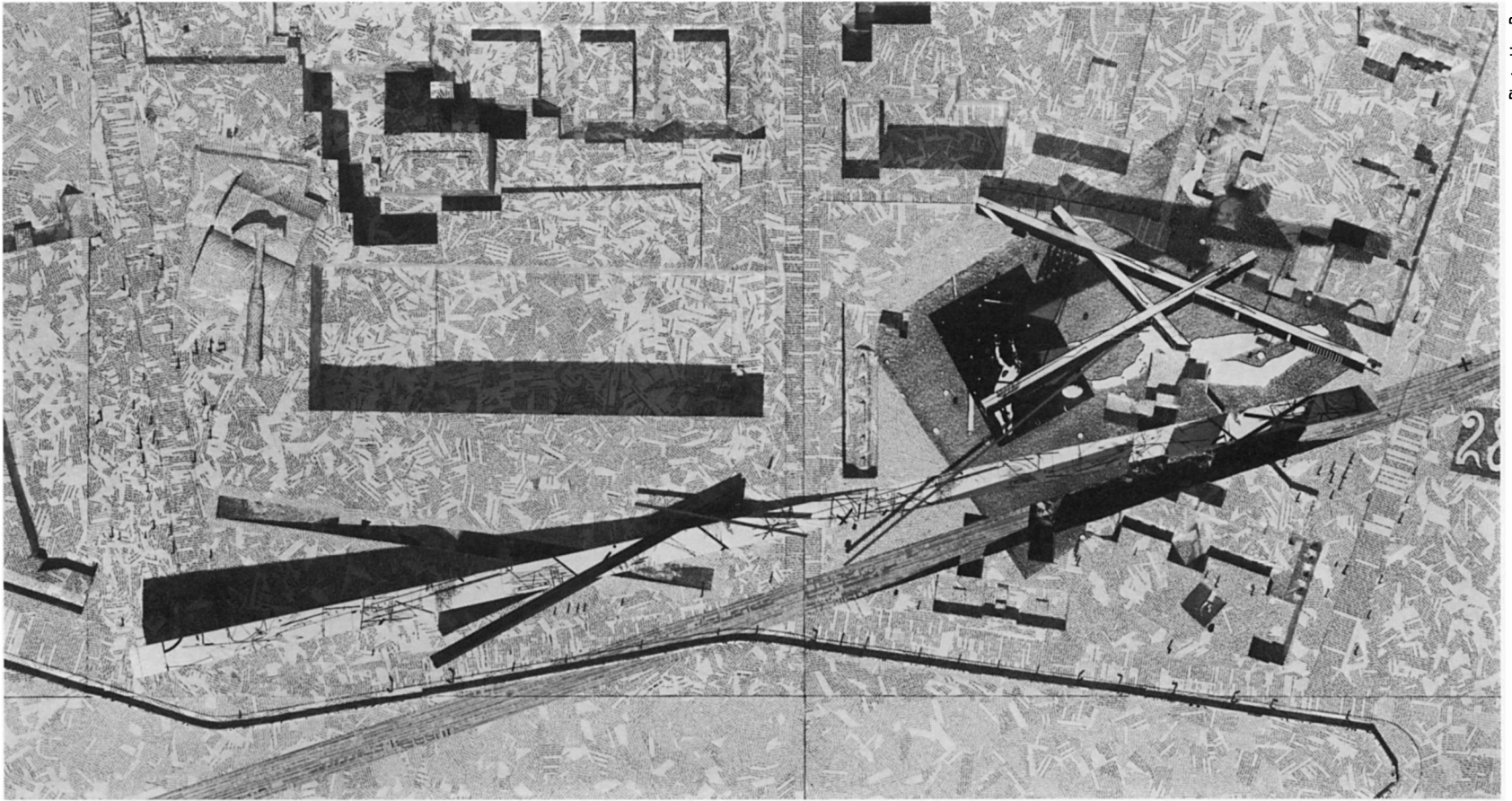
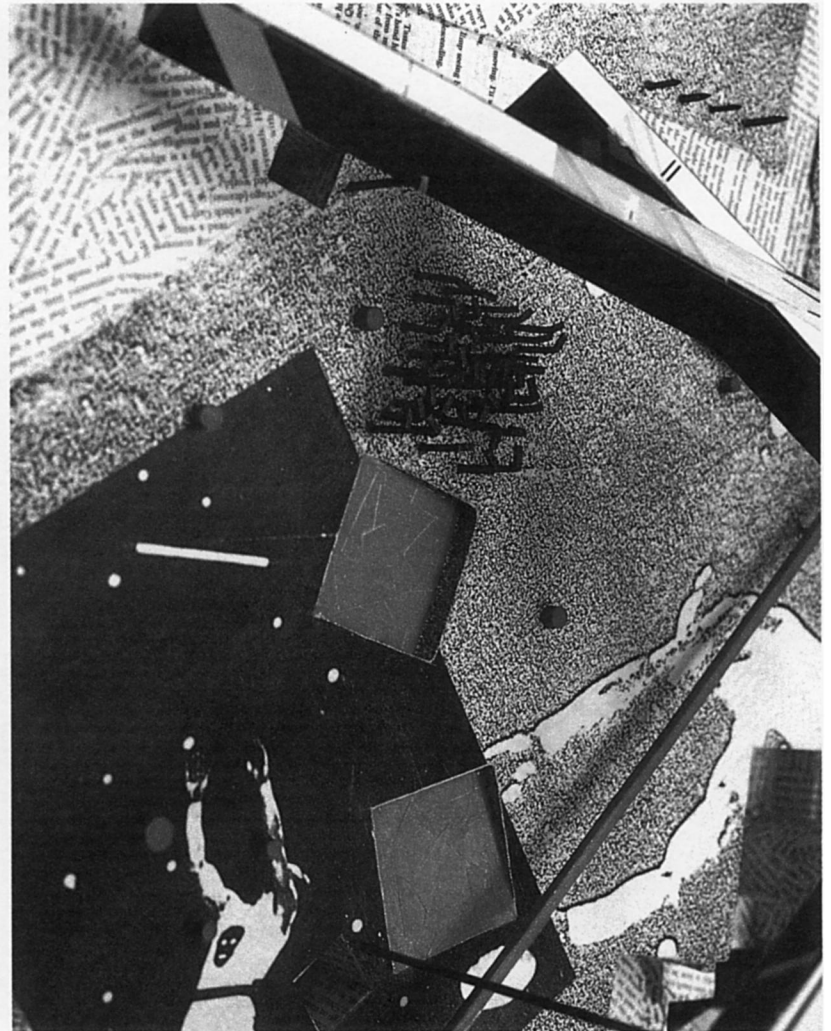


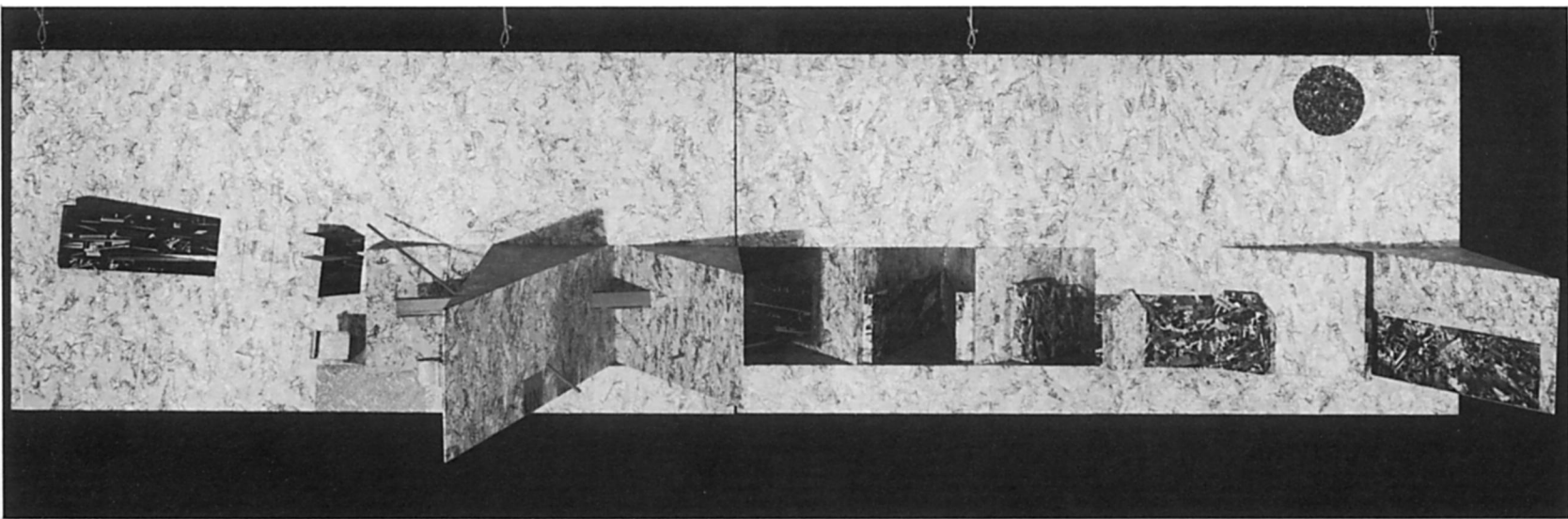
Photo: Uwe Rau



Photo: Uwe Rau



Model B: Berlin at/in 28.



Model Γ: House-Street-City.