



Between the Lines: Extension to the Berlin Museum, with the Jewish Museum

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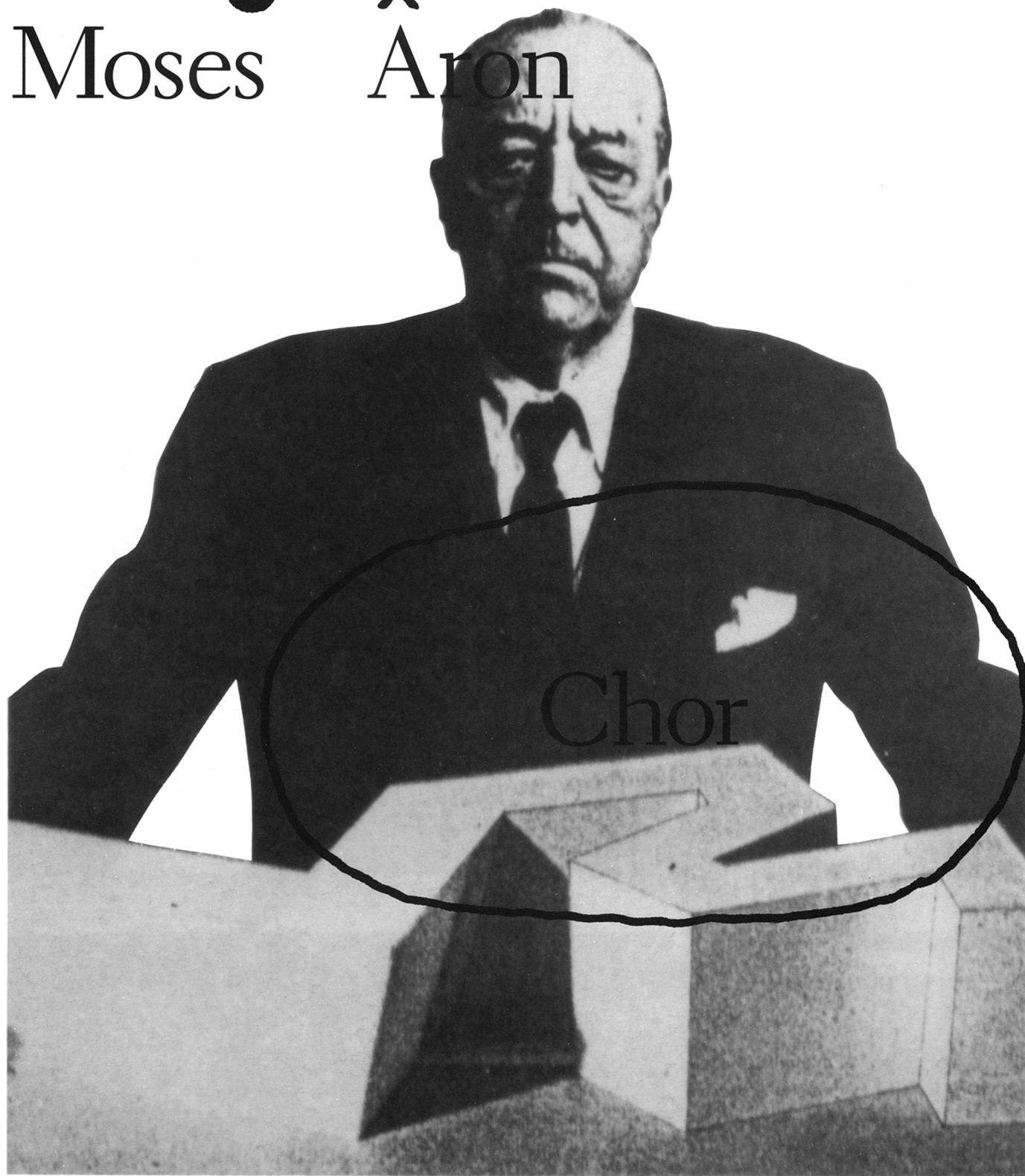


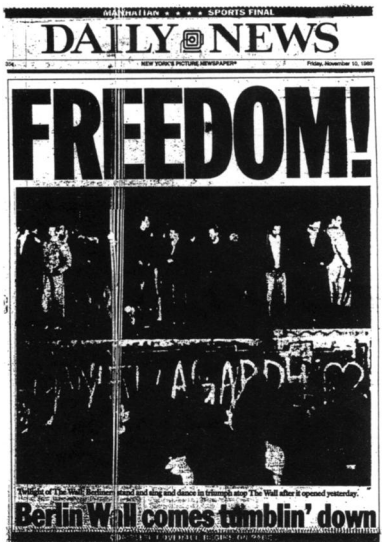
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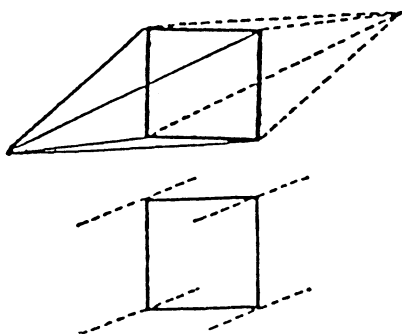
Daniel Libeskind
Between the Lines:
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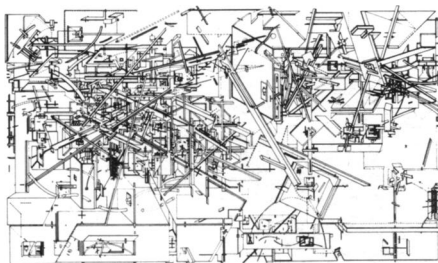




1. *Daily News* (New York), 10 November 1989, front page



2. El Lissitzky, schema from "K. und pangeometrie," 1925



3. Daniel Libeskind, *Micromega* 3, *Leakage*, 1978

Libeskind's Practice of Laughter: An Introduction by Stanley Allen

Every practice which produces something new (a new device) is a practice of laughter: it obeys laughter's logic and provides the subject with laughter's advantages.

Julia Kristeva, "Maldoror and Poems:
Laughter as Practice"

In the Zone

Various newspaper headlines of 10 November 1989 announced the event in similarly apocalyptic language: the Berlin Wall had fallen; freedom had come at last. Beyond the very real questions about the ability of the news media to distort or even create an event (and to manipulate the complex emotions of those involved), an interesting (architectural and semiotic) contradiction emerges: illustrations and their captions are often at odds. One headline reads "Berlin Wall comes tumblin' down," yet in the accompanying photograph the wall stands intact, with the Berliners dancing on top. What has changed is not the architecture of the wall, but the performance of the architecture — program and event. Soldiers no longer shoot at those who scale the wall or dash across no-man's-land. Moreover, the swiftness of the change corresponds to power invested from above: despite all the rhetoric, this was not a change initiated by the people but one mandated by the bureaucracies of East and West. The radical change to the political map is characterized by architectural stability. The physical structure to which architects and citizens alike have given such enormous symbolic weight remains unchanged. Present plans call for the erection of a chain-link barrier to separate administrative areas, while the respective governments concern them-

selves with the more substantial questions of currency exchange or weapons deployment. Architecture, in this scenario, exists as a "silent witness" to a spectacular performance played out on the ruins of the metropolitan arena.

Given the astonishing speed with which the news media, the advertising industry, and the political apparatuses of East and West have scrambled to turn recent events to (disparate) advantage, it is worth noting that the wall itself would never have fallen had its value as a physical barrier not been outweighed by the value of its fall as *spectacle*. Thus, as the logic of consumption and simulation is given wider compass, and the East enters the marketplace, what prevails is the event as spectacle — which, as Guy Debord has pointed out in *The Society of the Spectacle*, always "presents itself as something enormously positive, indisputable, and inaccessible." The exaggerated representation of small differences effectively preempts the possibility of real change and the operation of significant difference. To again quote Debord, "Under the shimmering diversions of the spectacle, *banalization* dominates modern society." Architecture, even when caught up in social situations, has resisted the implications of the Situationist analysis. Therefore great import continues to be invested in symbolic boundaries such as the Berlin Wall, not only as a mark on the map or a symbol of irreconcilable fragmentation and separation, but also as a physical artifact and material, projective sign.

Daniel Libeskind, too, finds himself caught in this web of actual physicality

and programmed spectacle. He has announced that his project for the Jewish Museum anticipates a unified Berlin. Yet this is not entirely correct. It anticipates a city no longer divided but always scarred. It sets out neither to close the wound nor to maintain it, but rather to live out of it. The project erupts out of the fissured condition of the city. Libeskind in this way has resisted the temptation of the obvious options: the comforting amnesia that would deny the wound or the aestheticizing logic that would monumentalize the physical gap in a futile attempt to come to terms with that which is unspeakably other. Libeskind's cardinal points — "Tragic premonition (Kleist), sublimated assimilation (Varnhagen), inadequate ideology (Benjamin), . . ." — situate this project simultaneously in a Berlin of the mind (and here the continuity with his early work is evident) and in the real territory of the present as both event and site.

Drawings, Buildings

What is the meaning of the shift from drawing to building in Libeskind's work? How can we situate the apparent break in the trajectory of his inquiry (ignoring for a moment the intervening episodes of the machines and constructions)? When Libeskind's work first appeared a dozen years ago, its critical power seemed to lie in its exemplary denunciation. Beyond the rigor of its abstraction, beyond the range of poetic allusion, hermetic referentiality, and its self-evident beauty, there was a consistent refusal to compromise or to leave the apparatus of convention unexamined. In his article "In Front of Lines That Leave Nothing Behind," Robin Evans has described this early work as follows: "The architect can travel light. His work does not now involve him in the tedious entropy of getting something built, nor in the dubious politics of

improving social conditions, nor in the appalling sycophancy of client-sucking, nor in reconstructing his personality to fit his job. Libeskind, when asked to explain his work, will talk instead about architecture in general." It is this ability to talk about architecture in general (so often lost to the mindless rehearsal of convention) that characterized Libeskind's early work. Libeskind and his followers claimed as their own the territory of radical search and the rediscovery of the phenomenological basis of architecture. Next to this work, most everything else seemed full of compromise and equivocation. Self-consciously emulating avant-garde practice, Libeskind marked out for himself a territory at the margin, but in so doing, inscribed his practice deeply and insistently in fundamental questions of the discipline and its boundaries. He suggested that a disciplinary framework that would marginalize his own production was itself corrupt and arbitrary.

A metaphysics of the infinite — as proposed by Kasimir Malevitch and El Lissitzky — pervaded this early work. Libeskind seemed to trace perfectly the route mapped by José Ortega y Gasset: "A world of hallucination would not be real, but neither would it fail to be a world, an objective universe, full of sense and perfection." The *Micromegas* of 1978 explored a spatial universe basically cubo-futurist in conception, characterized by fragmentation and explosion, yet presupposing objects and continuity. The same was true of the collages of this period and the drawings following from 1979. These works could always be located both historically and spatially. The *Micromegas* recall El Lissitzky and synthetic cubism, while the collages reveal a certain debt to Max Ernst and the series *The Secret Life of Vegetables* to Archimboldi. Moreover, as Evans has pointed out, the preoccupation with fragmentation actually assumes



4. Libeskind, *Splint-Normal (The Essence of Reason)*, collage, 1978



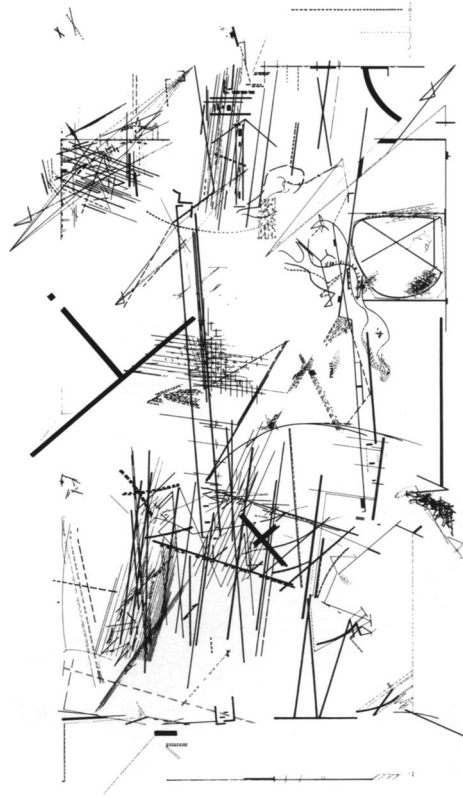
5. Libeskind, *Micromega 9, Vertical Horizon*, 1978



6. Libeskind, *Anatomy's Melancholy*, drawing, 1984

the theoretical possibility of reconstruction — of reassembling the fragments into some kind of whole. Yet even in this work the phenomenon of “leakage” is always present as an uncontrollable shadow operating to subvert such localization. With the *Chamber Works* of 1983, the oppositions between fragmentation and reconstruction, localized and deferred meaning dissolve: “The *Chamber Works* do not move towards unity, nor are they subject to fragmentation. . . . [There is] nothing to be broken, no virtual space, no subject matter, no substructure, no geometry. Lines that do not make bodies cannot be broken” (Evans).

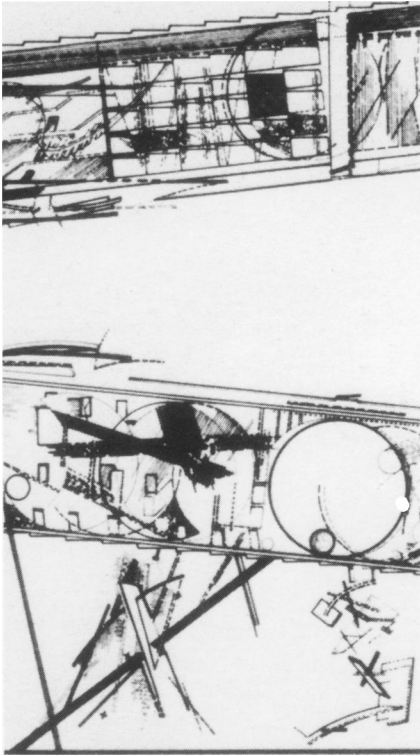
In the *Chamber Works* meaning is relentlessly evacuated. But there is another, perhaps more important, consequence. In this work and *through* it, Libeskind makes thematic the spectral presence of the horizon as a vertical and horizontal construction. In Renaissance treatises on perspective, an interesting sleight of hand occurs. The construction of the vanishing point implies an infinite point, yet infinity cannot be represented. The rational construction and the theological taboo come into conflict. The vanishing point is therefore defined as *quasi per sino in infinito*. On the other hand, John White-man, following Jacques Lacan’s studies on optics, has spoken of the vanishing point as the place where the subject draws itself out of the picture, literally and figuratively. In the *Chamber Works*, the infinite point takes the form of a line. And along this line, as the horizon collapses, Libeskind draws himself out of the picture. Like the vanishing point in Renaissance perspective, Libeskind’s line represents the site where rationality leaks out of the system. With this series, Libeskind has effectively exhausted the inquiry that sustained his early work and the rigorous investigation of drawing comes to a close. The Venice machines follow and then the *Berlin Cloud-prop*. (This, of



course, oversimplifies and compresses the chronology of Libeskind's work. What I want to emphasize is the careful and deliberate way in which he has arrived at the point where he can confront the problem of building with the same rigor and depth that characterized his earlier work. Building thus becomes not an end in itself but one more step in an ongoing investigation.)

If Libeskind has drawn himself as subject out of the picture along the attenuated line of this collapsing horizon, he has also opened the possibility of other inquiries and other uses of drawing. The only drawings made of the Venice machines were those necessary for the calculation of the construction. Though they look similar and use many of the same graphic or projective devices, the drawings of the Berlin projects play an entirely different role. Libeskind uses them instrumentally. His investigation lies elsewhere, and the drawings are secondary, always transparent to the larger idea of the project and the possibility of construction. The special capacity of drawing to shuttle between the visible and the invisible, between presence and void becomes crucial here. This is perhaps also the key to Libeskind's almost literal borrowings and appropriations, most obvious in the case of the *chiasmage* collage technique borrowed from its inventor, the Czech poet and artist Jiří Kolář. If drawings and models, like Wittgenstein's ladder, are simply tools to be thrown away in the realization of the project, their legitimacy or authenticity is unimportant.

But here unfolds the complexity of Libeskind's allusion to Arnold Schönberg's opera *Moses und Aron*. More than a literary reference to legitimize the Jewish Museum project, it functions, at many levels, to engage the problematic of abstraction and representation, of pres-



8. Libeskind, *Berlin Cloud-prop*, 1987, sectional details



9. *Berlin Cloud-prop*, detail of model

ence and absence, that overshadows the project. Beyond the obvious parallels — Libeskind’s iconoclastic reluctance to build and the evident historical connections between abstraction and iconoclasm — this dialectic is embraced as a contradictory structure upon which the museum will be erected. In *The Power of Images*, David Freedberg has pinpointed the central paradox of iconoclasm: the prohibition of the image implicitly acknowledges its power. Libeskind here makes this paradox thematic. The unrepresentable absence, the void, structures his project and produces its concrete image: “The new extension is conceived as an emblem wherein the invisible, the void, has made itself apparent as such. Void/invisible: these structural features have been gathered in the space of the city and laid bare in an architecture where the unnamed remains in the name that keeps still.” Libeskind’s statement echoes Moses’s lines in Schönberg’s unfinished opera: “Then I have fashioned an image, too, false as an image must be. / Thus I am defeated! Thus all was but madness that I believed before, / and can and must not be given voice.” Schönberg would also struggle, over the very ground of this question of the representation of the unnameable, to confront the impossible subject that haunts the twentieth century: the Holocaust.

Laughter

Grammar does not possess a *final* tense.

Italo Svevo, *Further Confessions of Zeno*

Adorno has written that after the Holocaust lyric poetry is impossible. The subject matter seems to demand a seriousness inconsistent with the spirit of play or pleasure. Libeskind has understood this, but he has also refused its pessimism. For Libeskind, the one thing that must be rigorously resisted — or resited — is the rationality of instrumental

logic. The work must erupt in hysterical laughter at the absurdity of reason itself. Take as an example the notion of process. In recent practice process is understood as the site of rationality, as the place where the irrational subject is held in check. Yet in the case of the project for the Jewish Museum, the operations of the process — the mapping of significant locations, the tracing out of those points as a six-pointed star, and the collapse of this construction onto a broken line — should not be taken as an attempt to rescue meaning from absurdity or as a way to make sense of the physical and moral chaos that marks this territory. Neither is it to be assumed that the process might be reconstructed from a close examination of the object, nor that the moments of the process (the star, the collapse) have any particular symbolic meaning. Rather, the process has the character of a demonstration, like Duchamp’s *Three Standard Stoppages*, in which rigor of process is simply stated as a fact of the making. Like Samuel Beckett’s obsessive linguistic combinations, this is a logic that serves only to call logic into question and uses instrumental logic in relentless pursuit of its other. The object is, then, always more and less than the record of its making, and the process should not take on too much importance; it must be unfinished and undecidable, because in the unfinished there is always hope.

Libeskind’s project suggests that the themes underlying the very program of the museum — absence and horror — can only be confronted by embracing the contradictory structure of laughter. Here as well, irony surfaces in Libeskind’s choice of the most conservative form of the museum from recent practice, the “culture bunker,” to house a radical critique of the institution. This is a building that must disturb: out of disaster, laughter and “convulsive beauty.” Lautréamont

has written, “My reasoning will sometimes jingle the bells of madness and the serious appearance of what is, after all, merely grotesque (although according to some philosophers, it is quite difficult to tell the difference between the clown and the melancholic man, life itself being but a comic tragedy or a tragic comedy).” Despite everything, there is a kind of optimism in this project, a poetry made out of loss, without apology and without despair. Not to be misinterpreted, I will clarify this statement. I do not believe that Libeskind exhibits any optimism that humanity will improve itself or that architecture might assist in the process. Nor does he show much hope that the stupidity of the political institutions and the social forms that, however distantly, have sanctioned the Holocaust will be mitigated, or that the mediocrity of what passes for cultural production will ever ease the pain. Instead, what I understand as optimism resides in two precise convictions. First is Libeskind’s faith that architecture, if interrogated with sufficient radicality, if reinterpreted with sufficient creativity, might continue to sustain this kind of poetic endeavor and maintain its capacity for addressing the most profound and tragic events of this century. Second is Libeskind’s faith that an individual author can conduct this interrogation without implicating himself in a suspect metaphysics of the heroic creator. With the Jewish Museum, in contrast to his earlier work, Libeskind refuses to accept the premise that to work in the late twentieth century is to work with reduced means.

In “Deus ex Machina / Machina ex Deo,” Libeskind wrote that Rossi’s Theater of the World had “dared to probe the fundamental question: whether the ‘no longer’ of modern architecture actually belongs to its very own ‘not yet’”; it is difficult not to extend Libeskind’s anticipatory claim to his own work. Libeskind,

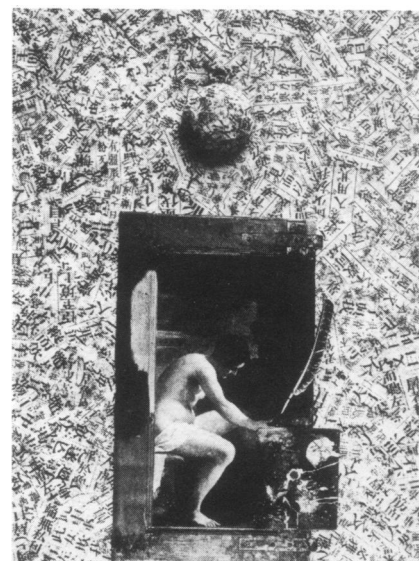
like Rossi, refuses the cynical resignation of the “no longer,” preferring the more difficult, but still hopeful “not yet.” (Here the distance between Libeskind and the postmodernity of, for example, Baudrillard or Lyotard becomes clear.) But lest this hope be mistaken for complacency, it must be noted how deep a paradox this involves. The loss represented by the “no longer” cannot simply be refused; it can only be escaped by sounding its depths. The refusal implied is therefore a complex one. For Libeskind, the apparent exhaustion of the language of architecture must be answered by the construction of a poetic — not as though nothing had happened, but despite all that has.

It is at this moment that Libeskind is most vulnerable, specifically to the charge that he has situated his project uncritically in the territory of high art and has endorsed an unexamined metaphysics of the power of the individual in front of history. (Libeskind may be the only architect today who has the temerity to write Architecture with a capital A.) But in refusing the quietism of the postmodern, has Libeskind simply reinscribed himself in an (unexamined) high modernist project, one in which the negative moment that once animated that project has been neutralized? We might point to Libeskind’s insistent, even desperate, attempt to keep at arm’s length what Mark Wigley has called the “slippery horror of the banal.” But inasmuch as it aspires to construction and therefore to escape at some point the control of the author and the protection of the institution, we will be forced to pay attention not to the broad outlines of its theoretical ambition but to its microscopic moments of resistance.

Stanley Allen is Assistant Professor of Architecture at Columbia University and an architect in New York. He is a Project Editor for *Assemblage*.



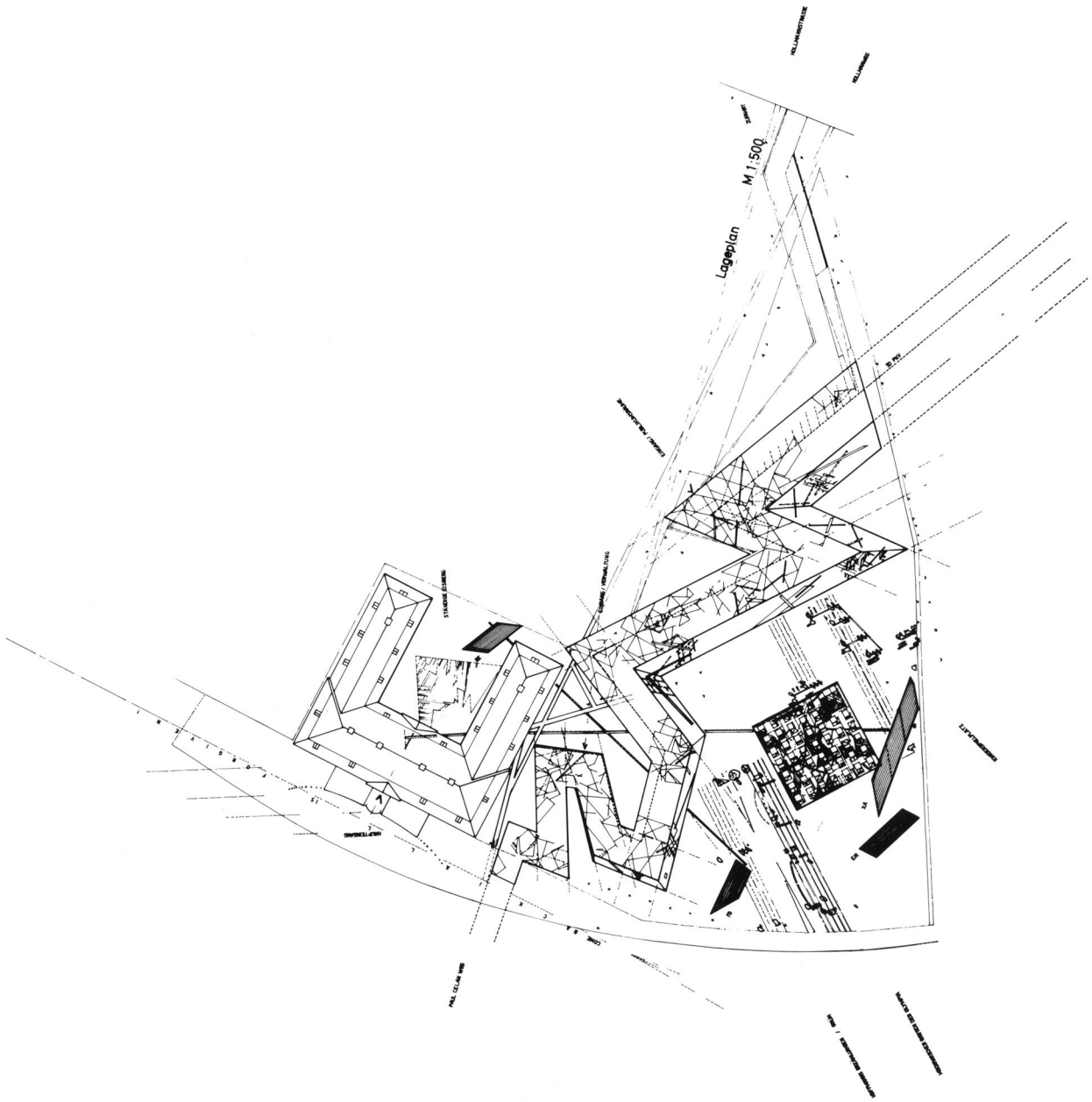
10. Berlin Cloud-prop, detail of model



11. Jiří Kolář, *Mirò in Osaka*, 1971

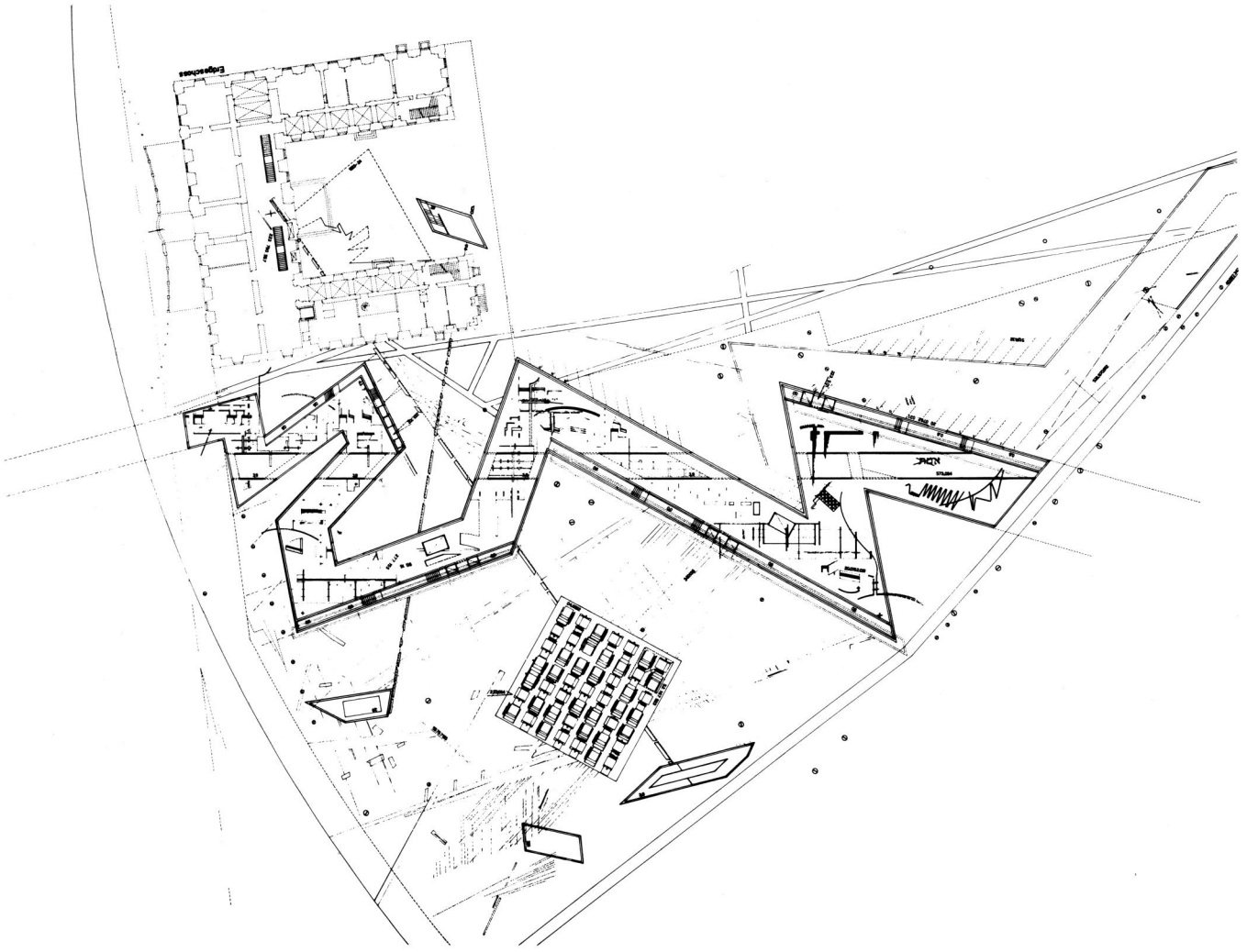


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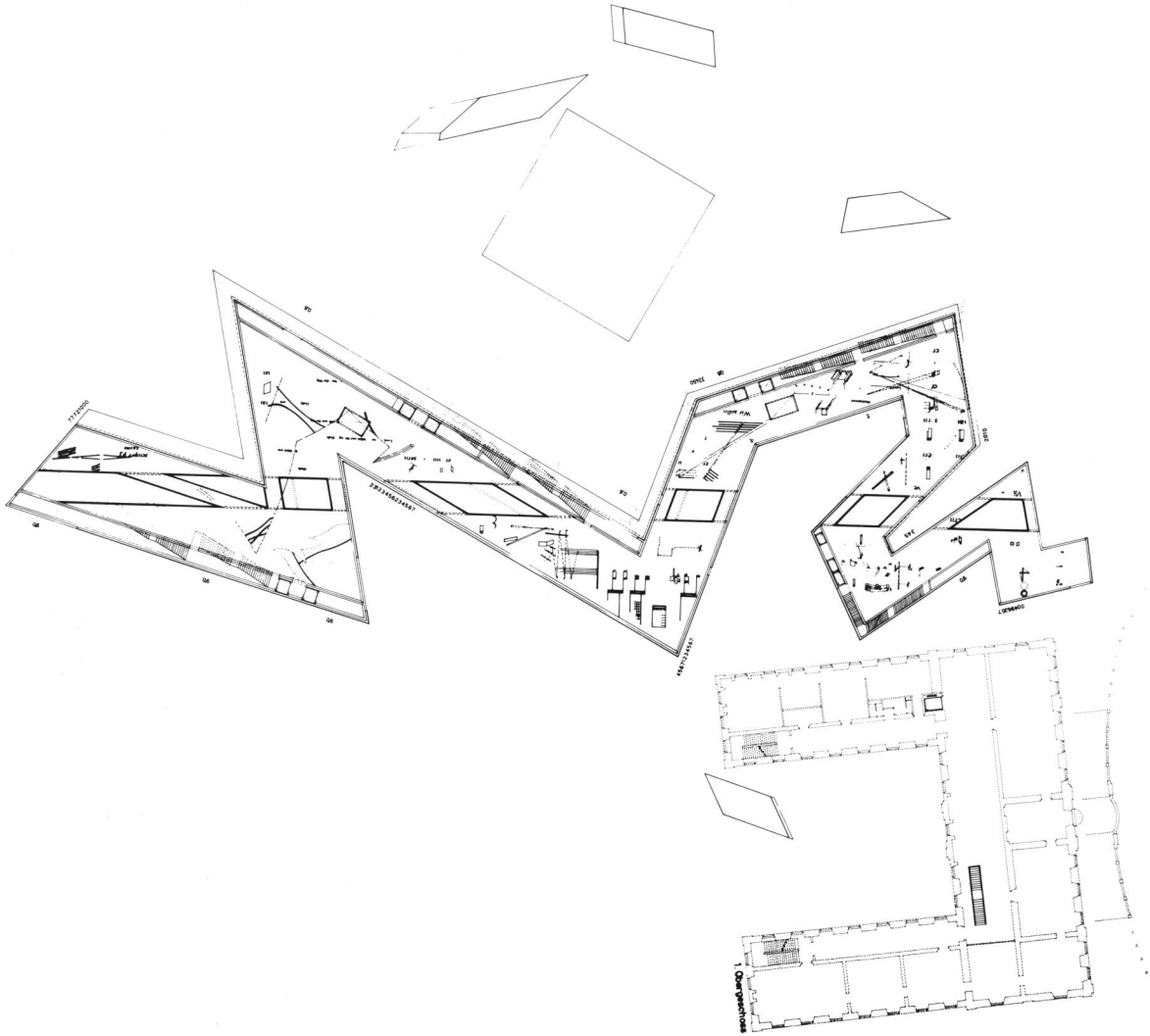
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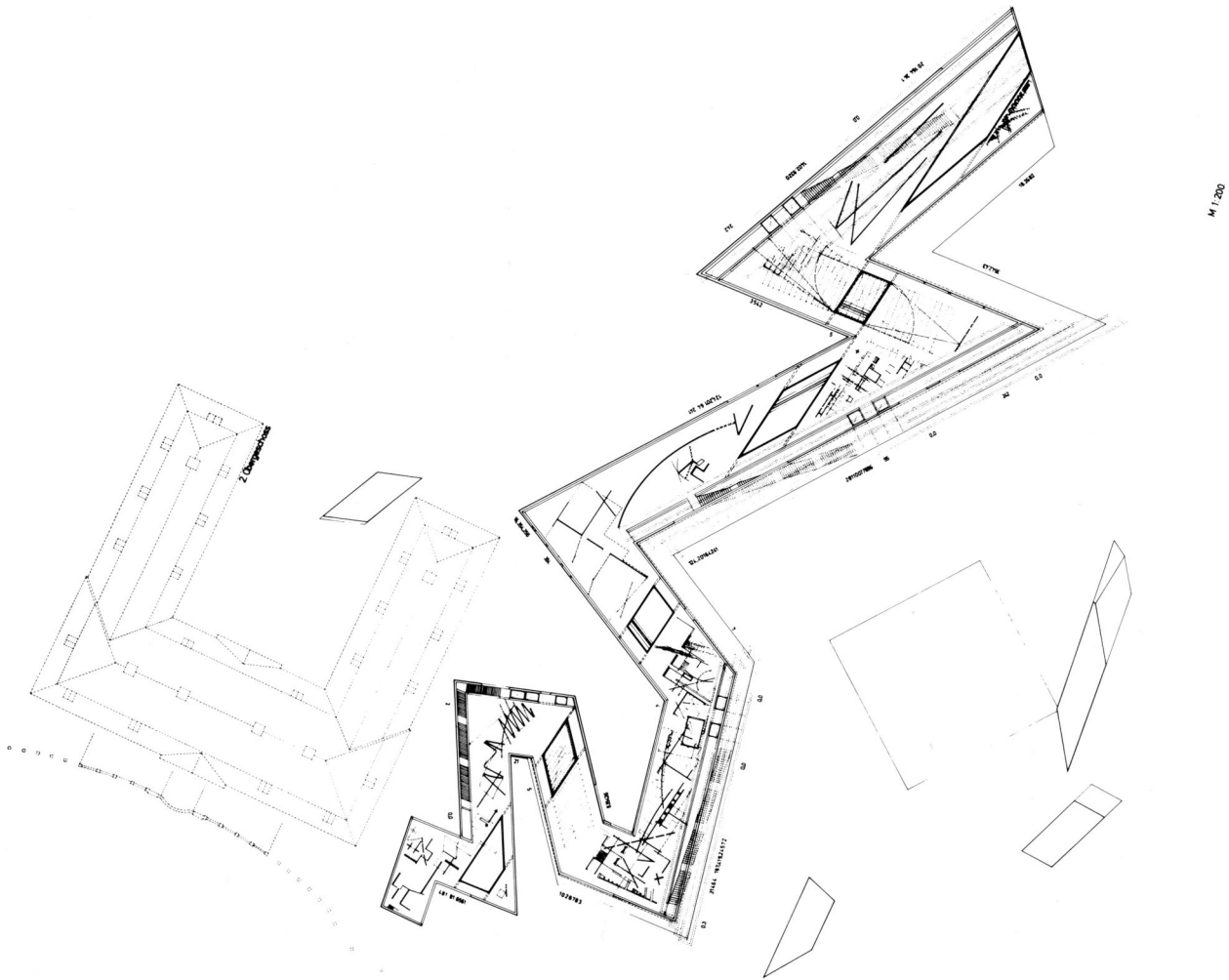
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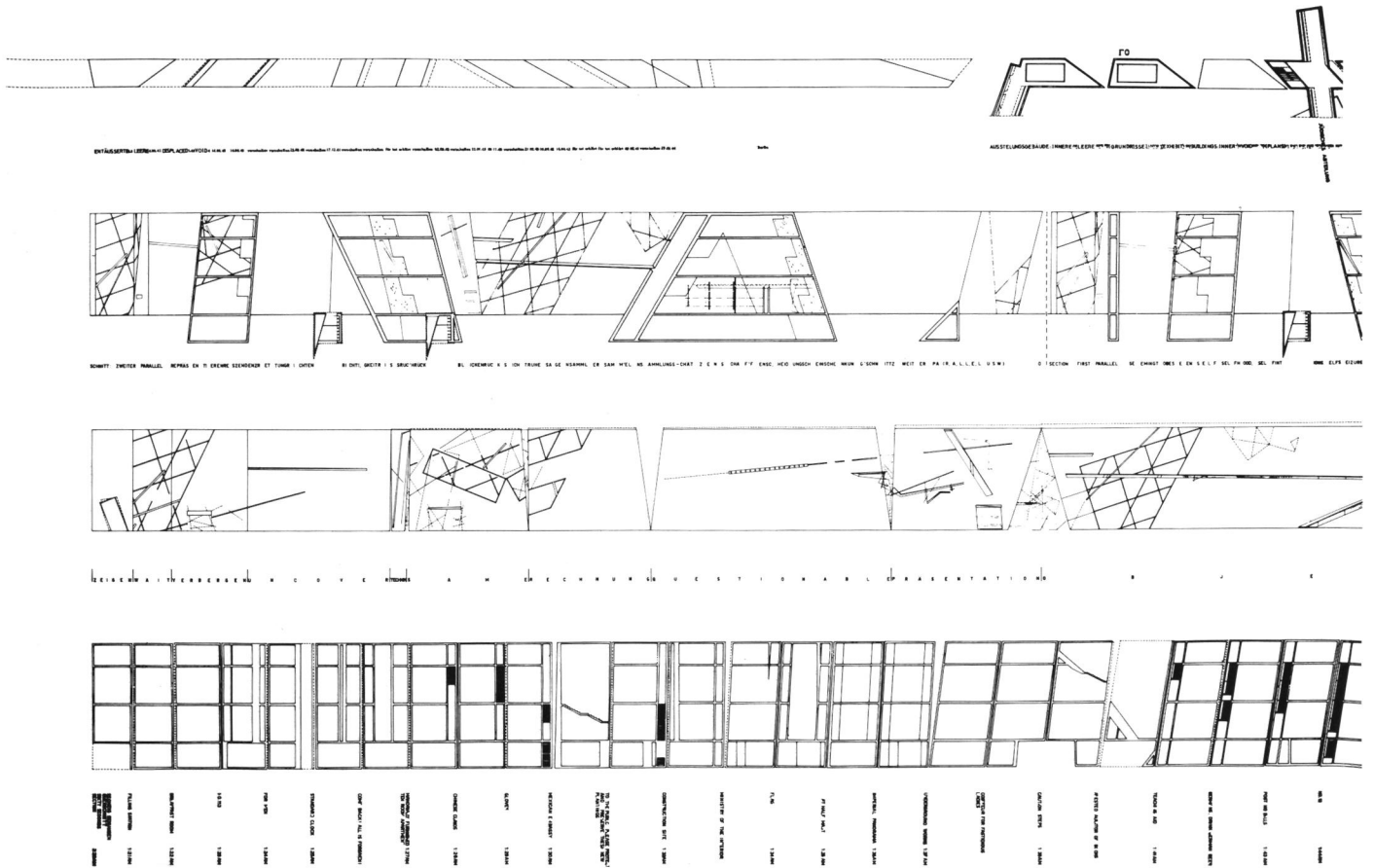
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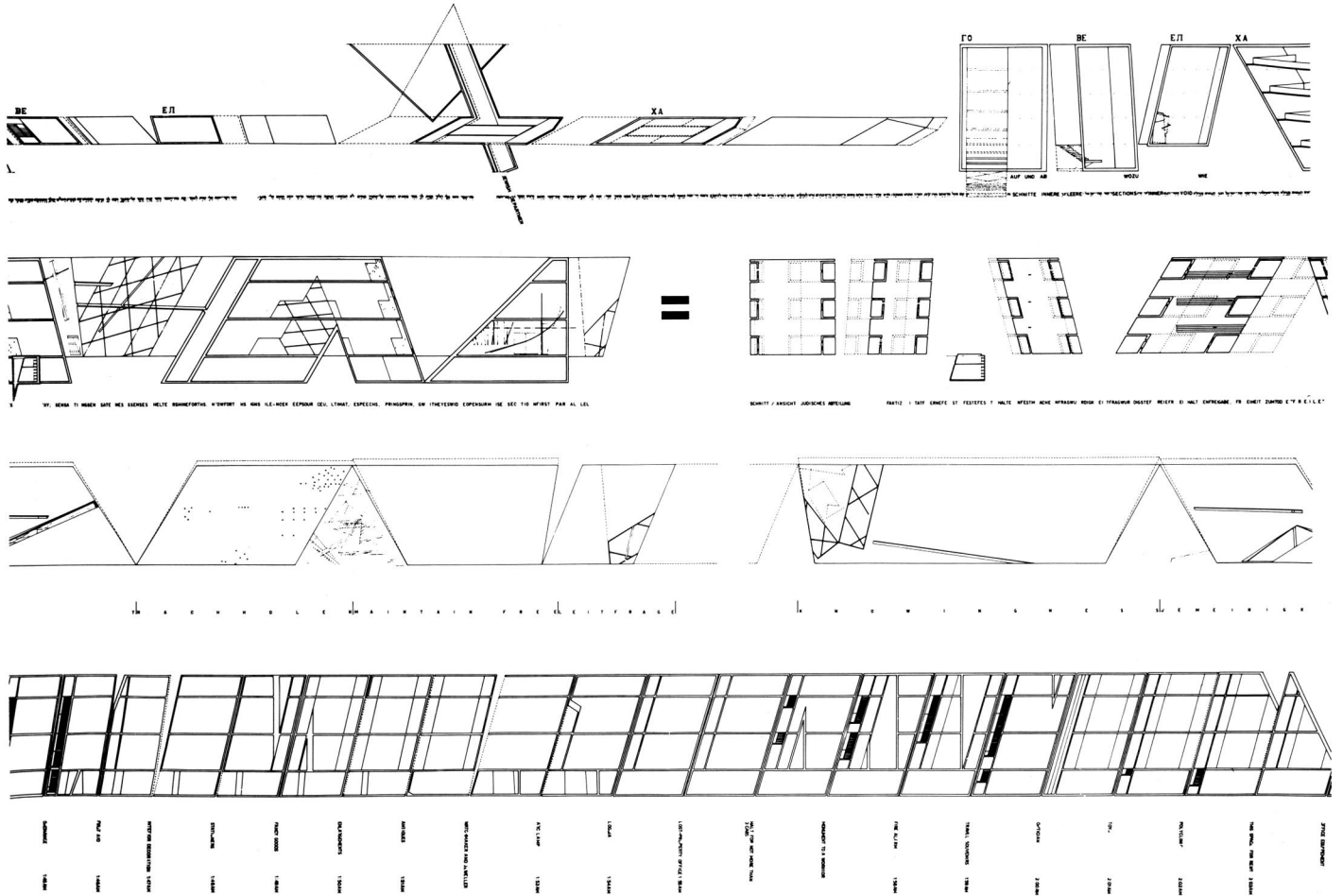
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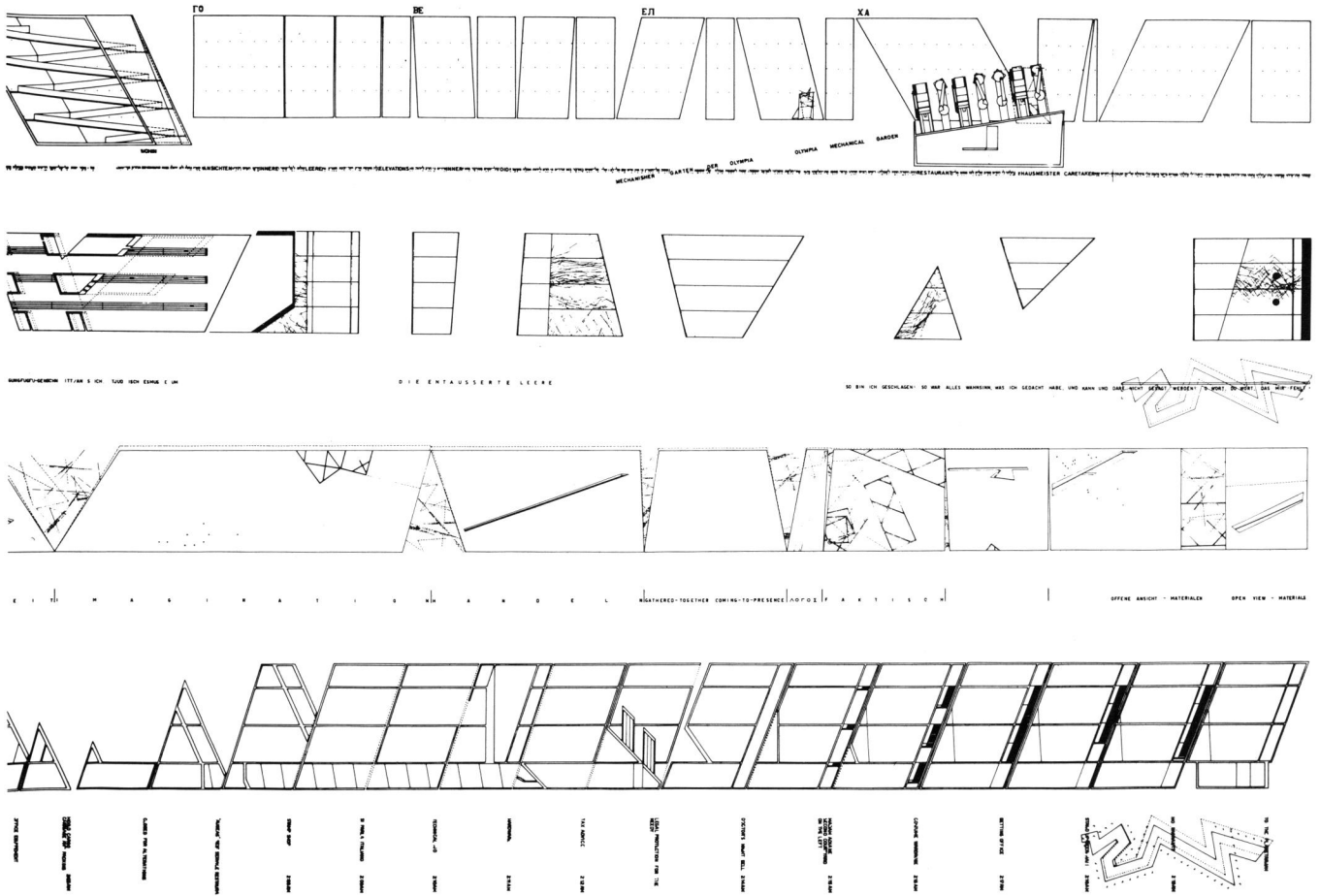
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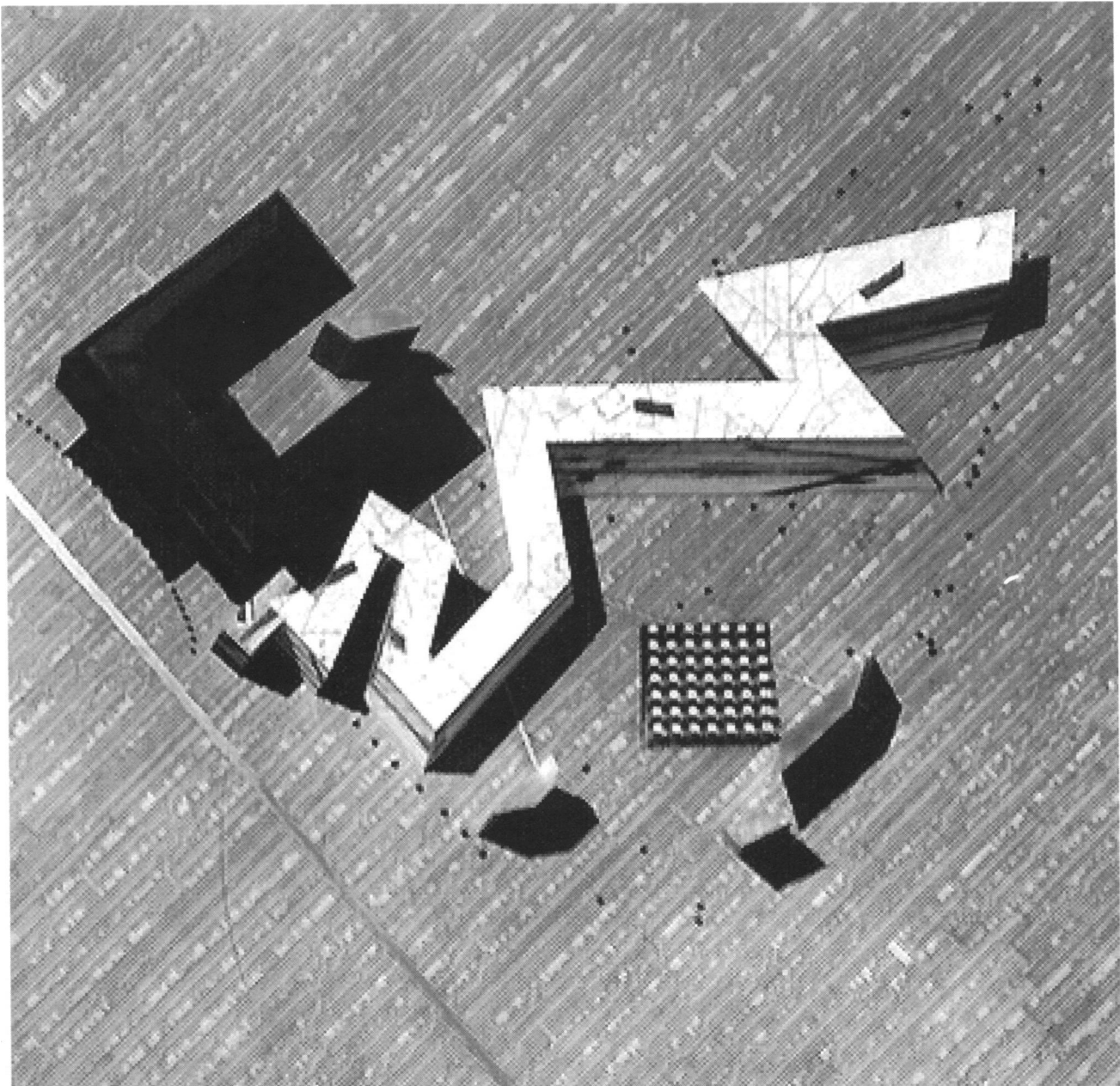
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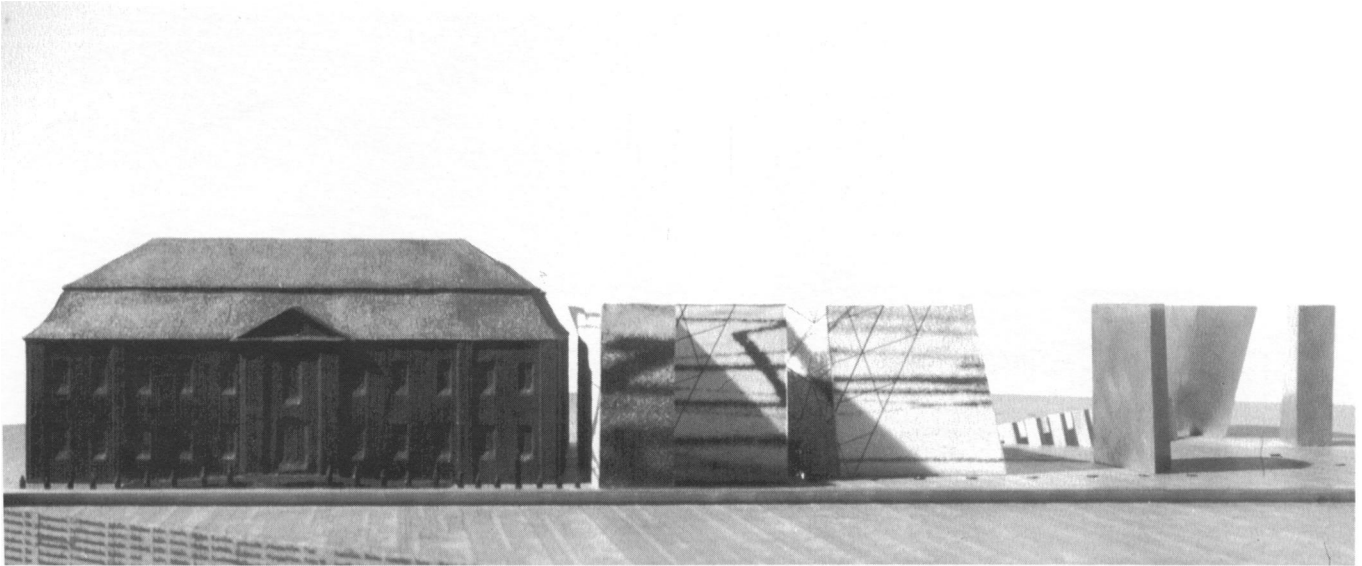
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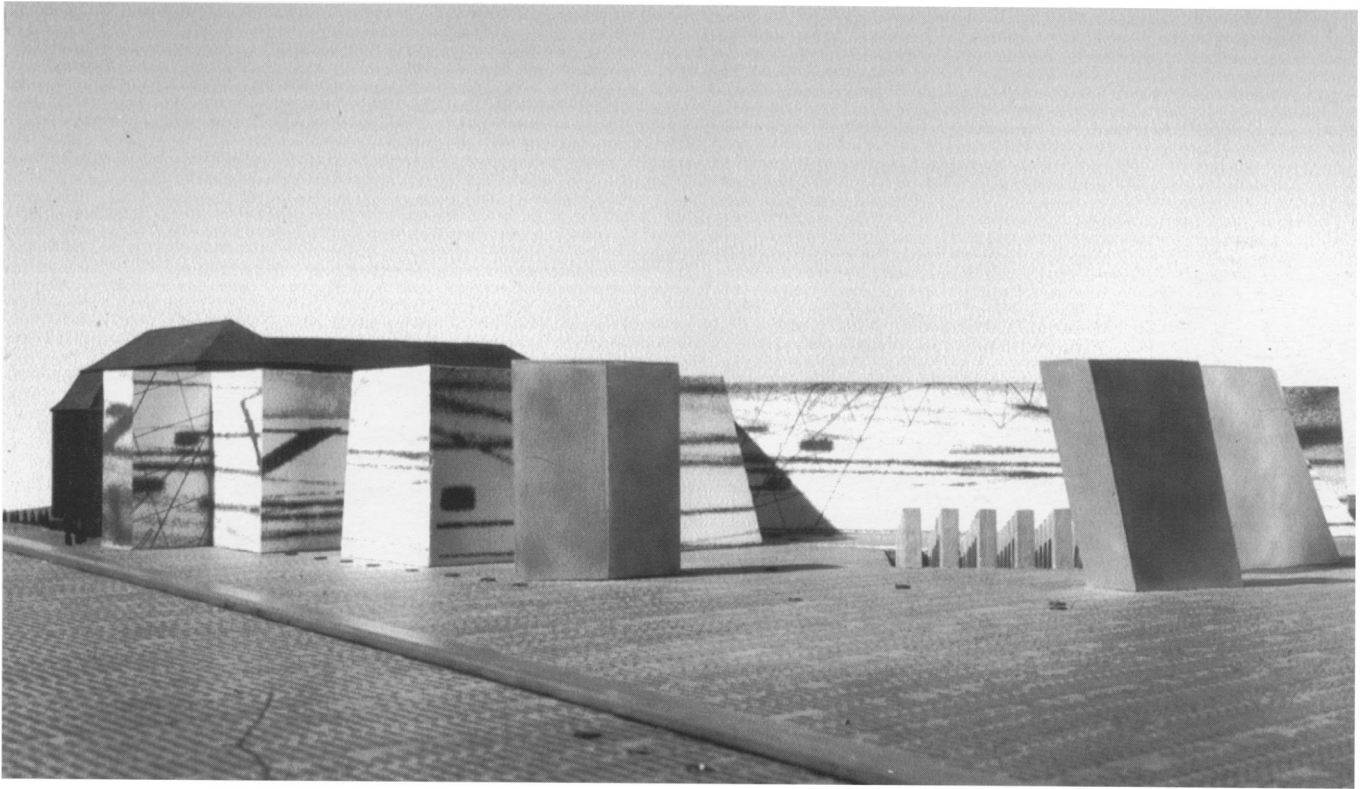
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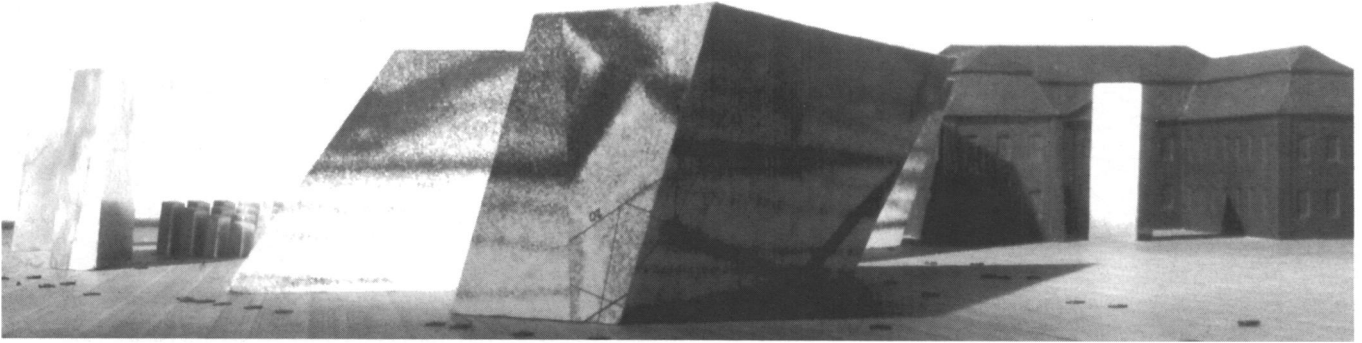
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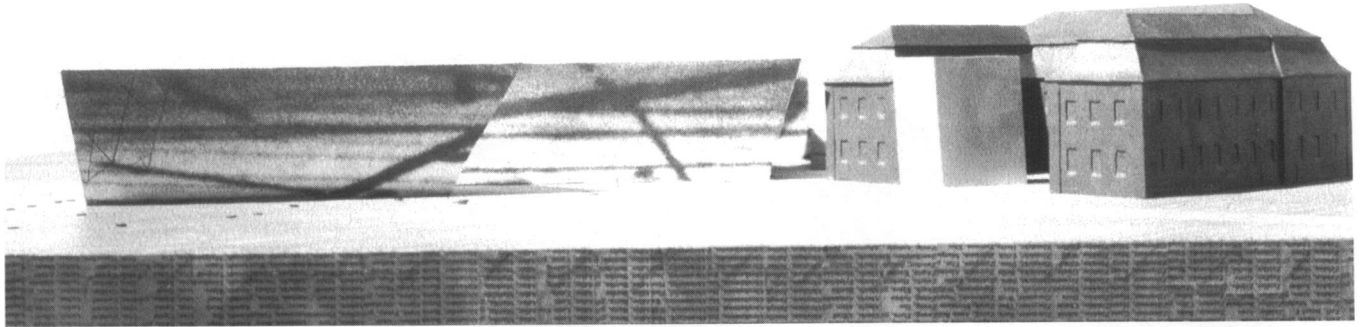
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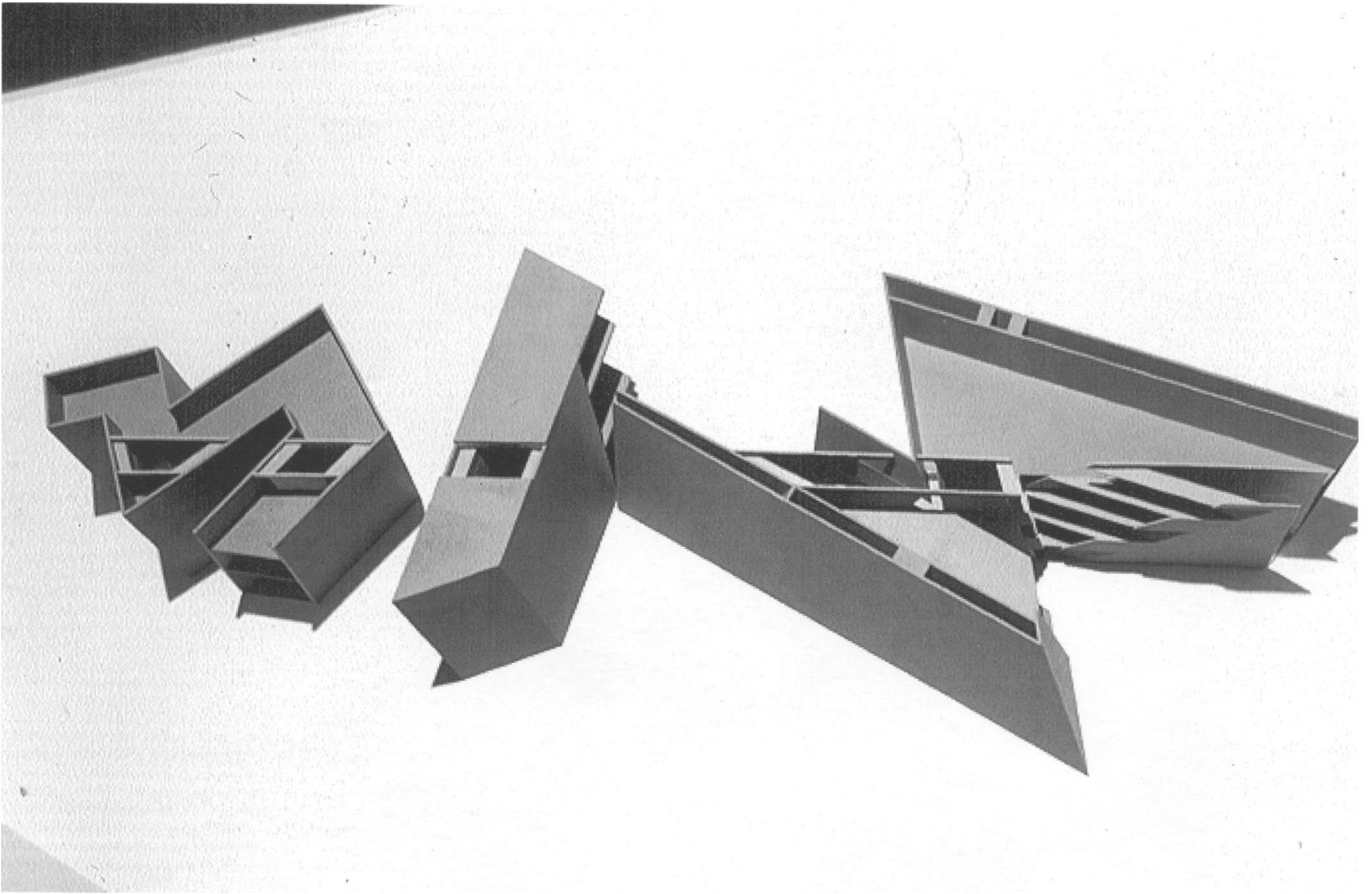
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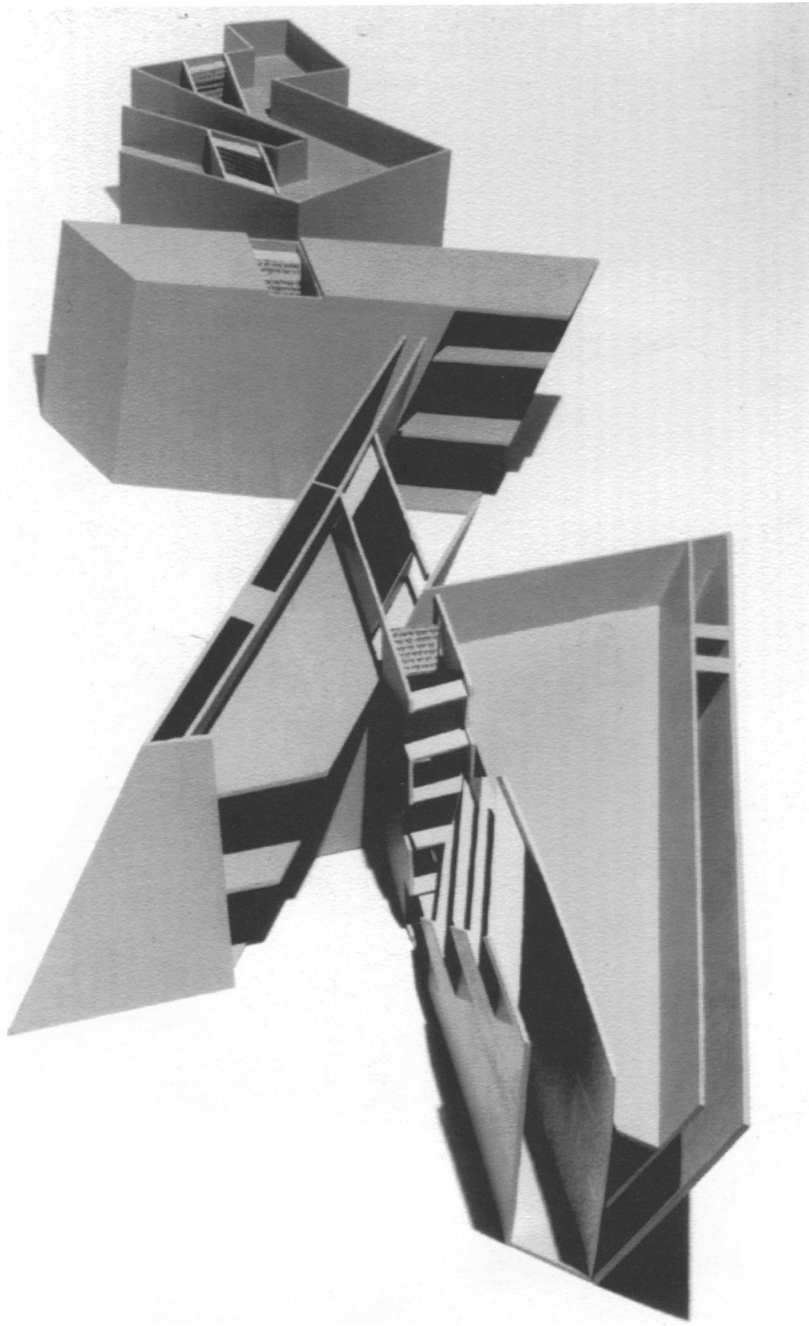
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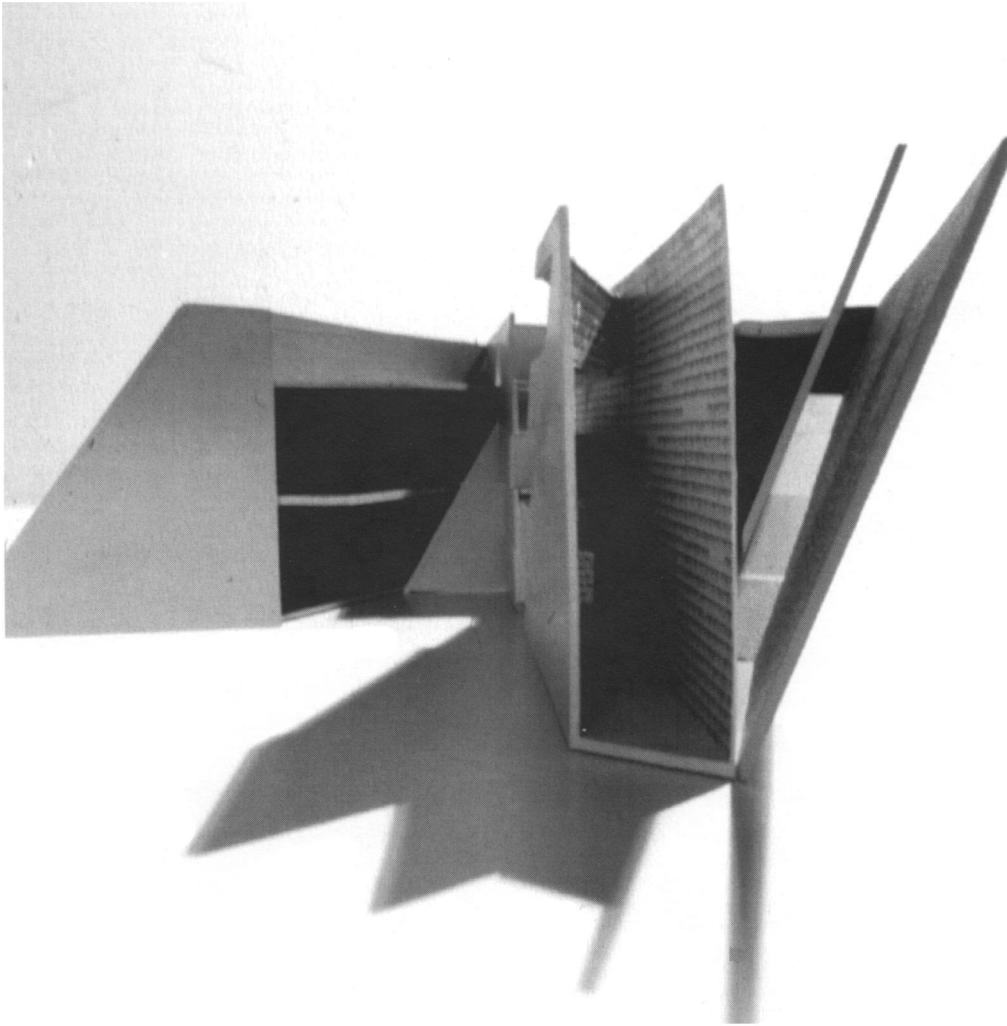


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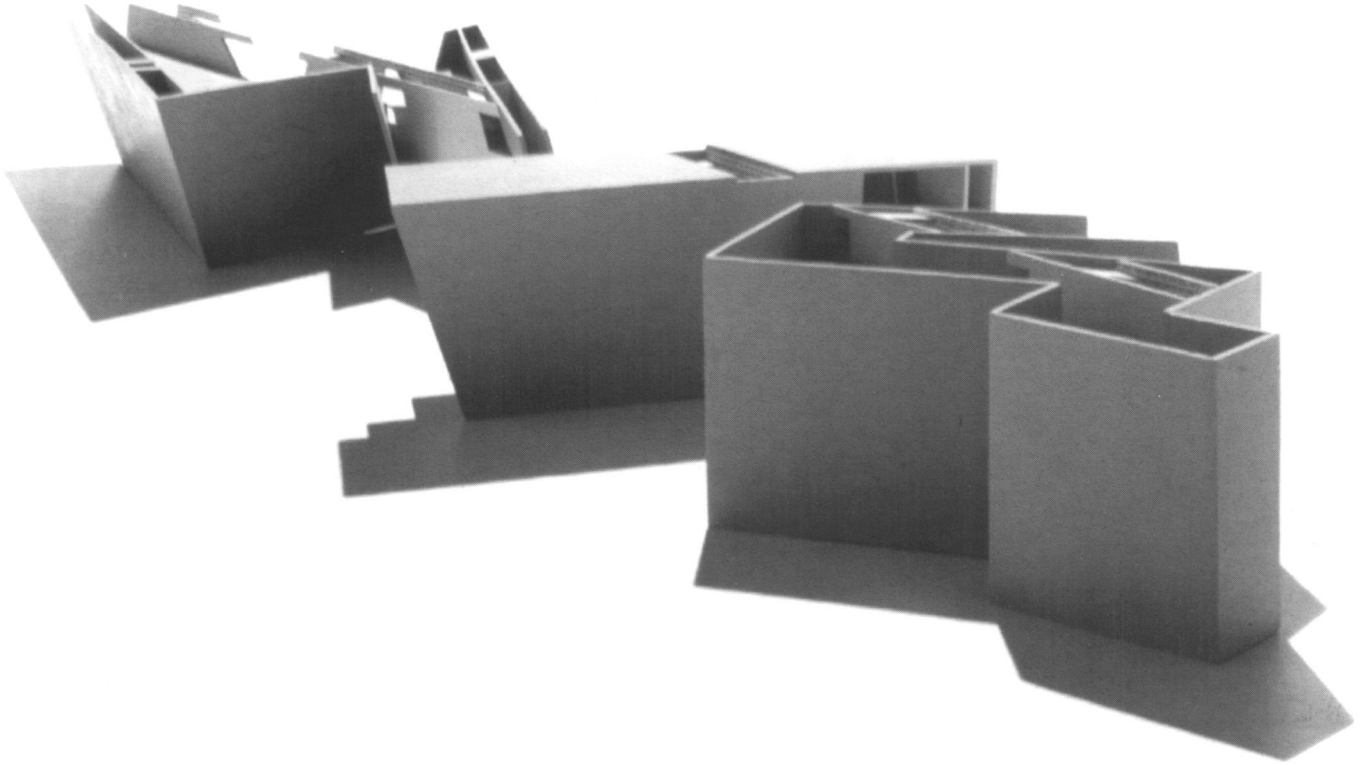


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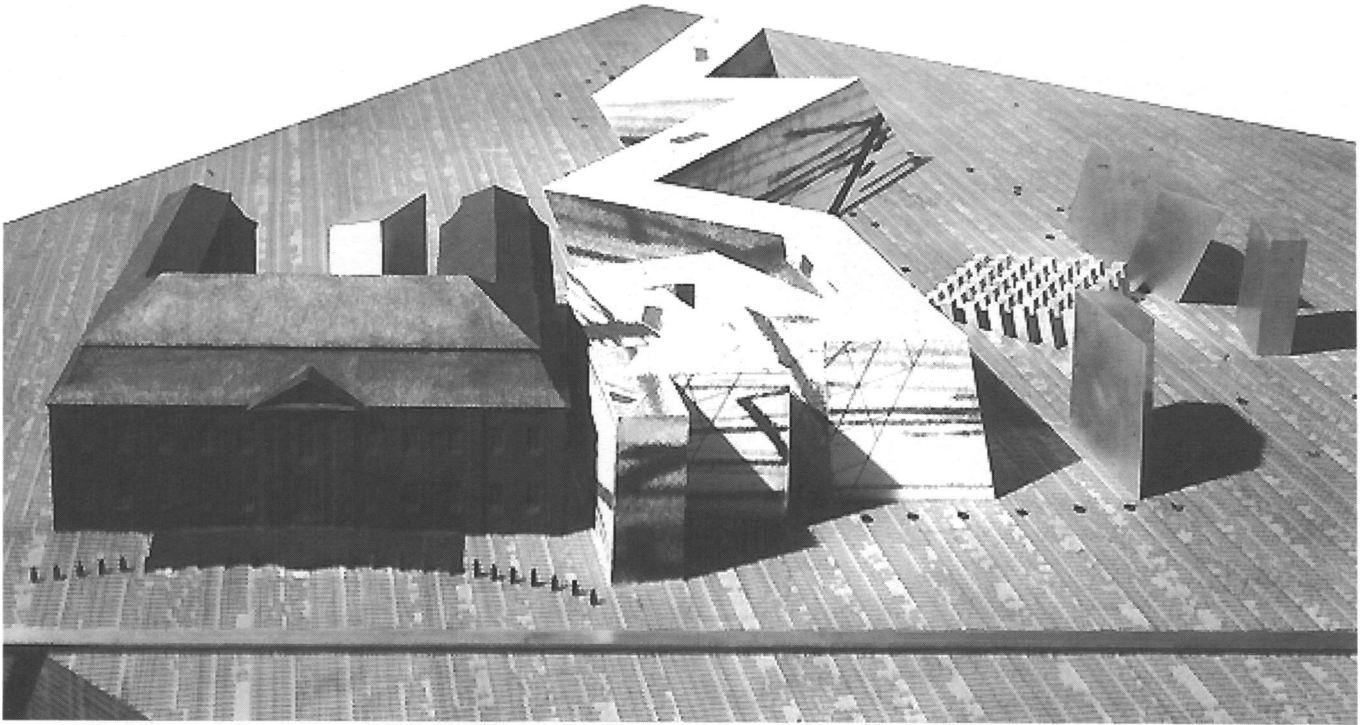
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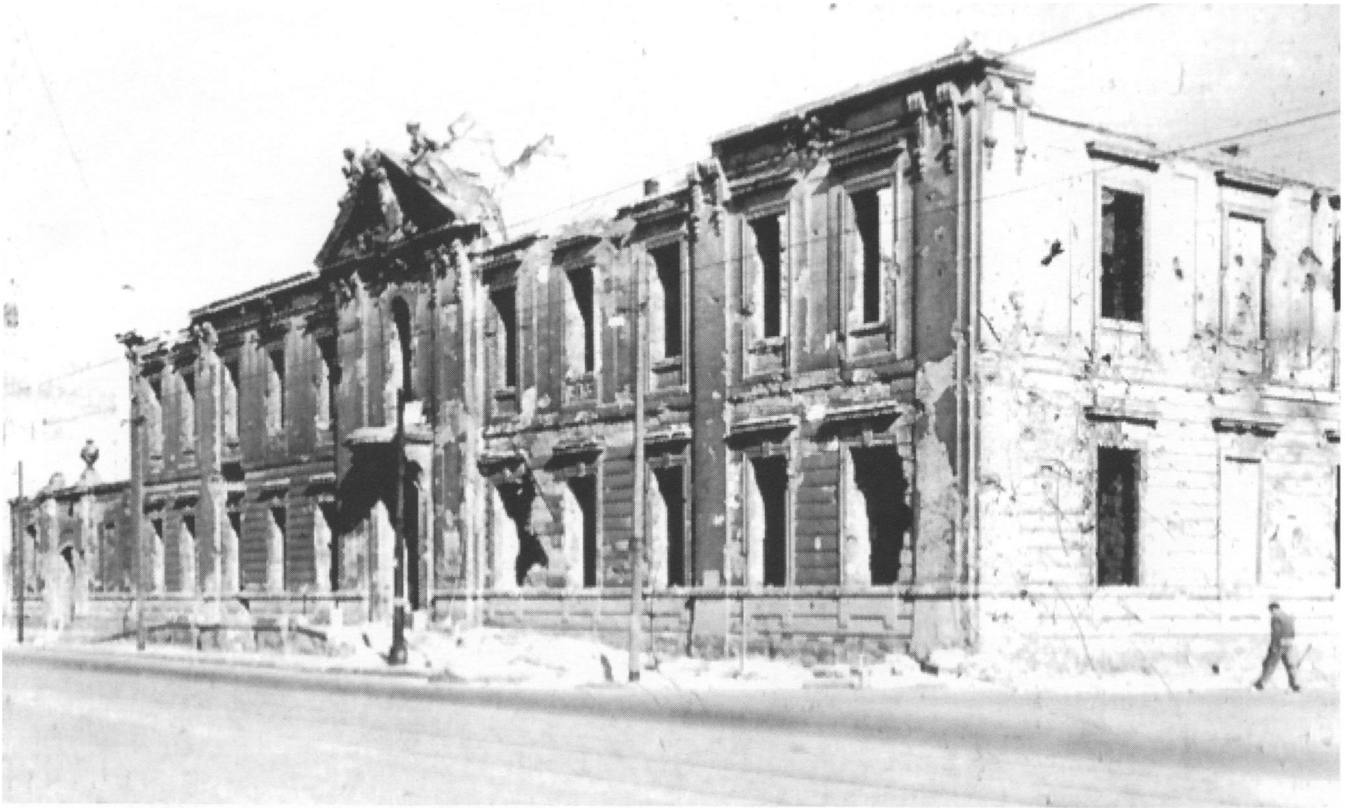
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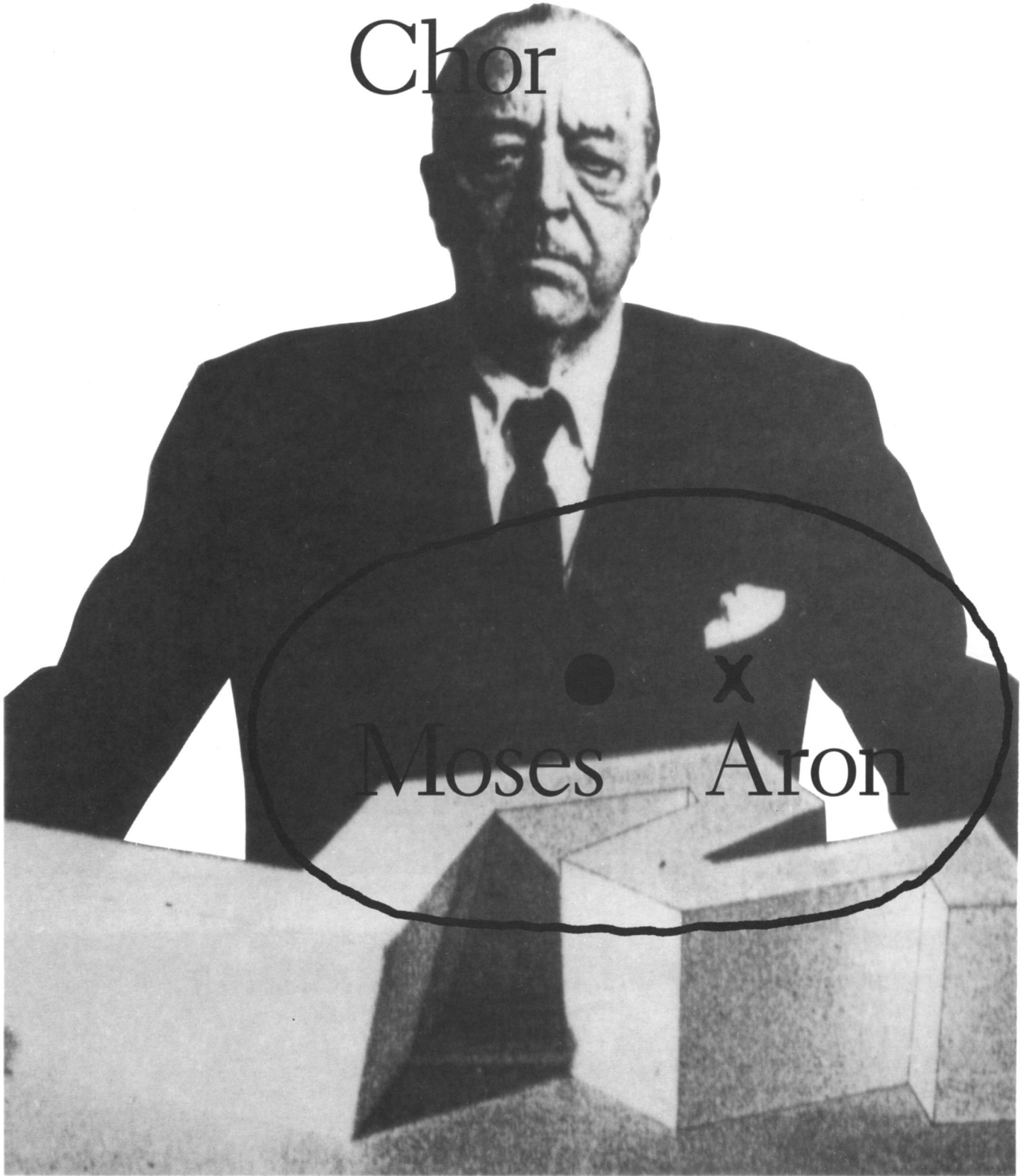
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A museum for the city of Berlin must be a place where all citizens, those of the past, of the present, and of the future, discover their common heritage and individual hope. To this end, the museum form itself must be rethought to transcend the passive involvement of the viewer: it must actively confront change.

The extension of the Berlin Museum, with especial emphasis on housing the Jewish Museum, attempts to give voice to a common fate: common to both what is *being* and what is *other* than being. The museum must not only inspire poetry, music, drama, etc., but also give home to the contradictions of the ordered/disordered, the chosen/unchosen, the welcome/unwelcome, the vocal/silent. In this sense, the particular urban condition becomes the spiritual site wherein the nexus of Berlin's destiny is at once mirrored, fractured, and transformed.



The past fatality of the German-Jewish cultural relation to Berlin is enacted now in the realm of the invisible. It is this invisibility that must be made visible. This project seeks to reconnect Berlin to its own history, which must never be forgotten. Great figures in the drama of Berlin who have acted as bearers of an immense hope and anguish are traced into the lineaments of this museum: Heinrich Kleist, Rahel Varnhagen, Walter Benjamin, E. T. A. Hoffmann, Friedrich Schleiermacher, Arnold Schönberg, Paul Celan. They spiritually affirm the permanent human tension polarized between the impossibility of the system and the impossibility of giving up the search for a higher order. Tragic premonition (Kleist), sublimated assimilation (Varnhagen), inadequate ideology (Benjamin), mad science (Hoffmann), displaced understanding (Schleiermacher), inaudible music (Schönberg), last words (Celan): these constitute the critical dimensions that this work as discourse seeks to transgress.

The new extension is conceived as an emblem wherein the invisible, the void, has made itself apparent as such. Void/invisible: these structural features have been gathered in the space of the city and laid bare in an architecture where the unnamed remains in the name that keeps still.


The existing building is tied to the extension underground, preserving the contradictory autonomy of each on the surface, while binding them together below. Like Berlin and its Jews, the common burden — this insupportable, immeasurable, unshareable burden — is outlined in the






exchanges between two architectures and forms that are not reciprocal, that cannot be exchanged for each other.



The urban, architectural, and functional paradox of closed/open, stable/added, classical/modern, museum/muse can no longer be reconciled through some theoretical utopia or presuppose the fictitious stability of state or power or organization. By contrast, the paradox presupposes the unchanging, that is, change proceeding directly out of what would exclude changing attitudes and unchanging opinions alike.




All this amounts to two broken lines: one straight but fragmented; the other tortuous but continuing into infinity. As the lines develop themselves through this limited-infinite “dialectic,” they also fall apart — become disengaged — and reveal themselves as separate, so that the void that runs centrally through what is continuous materializes outside as something that has been ruined, or rather, as the solid residue of an independent structure, as a voided void.

Fragmentation and splintering mark the coherence of the ensemble, for it has come undone in order to become accessible, functionally and intellectually. The torn shards inside and out never existed as some prior whole (either in the ideal Berlin or in the real one) nor can they be reassembled in some hypothetical future. The fragmentation is the spacing, the separation brought about by the history of Berlin, which can only be experienced as the absence of time and as the fulfillment in time of what is no longer there.






The *absolute* event of history, the Holocaust, with its concentration camps and annihilation — the incineration of meaningful development for Berlin and for humanity — shatters this place while bestowing a gift of that which cannot be given by architecture: the preservation of the sacrifice and the offering: guardian or night watch over absent and future meaning.



And out of the disaster of the too late there rises what is early; out of the too far, the near.

Concept of the Urban Design

This project gives new value to the historical context by transforming the urban field into an open, future-oriented urban matrix. The extension is characterized by a number of real and implied transformations that go beyond the existing forms of the site. The compactness of the traditional street pattern is gradually dissolved from its baroque

origins and related diagonally to both the housing developments of the 1960s and the projects of the IBA.

The new structure reasserts the urban importance of the Collegienhaus and, through a series of contrasts, engages the existing housing and public structures in a new dialogue. Thus the project creates an intense field whose boundaries withdraw to reveal the vitality and multidimensionality of Berlin.

Organization of the Building and Required Functions

The extension furnishes the Berlin Museum with a set of flexible spaces that act architecturally as a series of “open narratives” through which the visitor may gain greater insight into the collection and, more particularly, the significance of the Jewish Department in relation to the museum as a whole. The Jewish Museum is closely interwoven with the rest of the collection, yet, entirely independent, can be experienced from without and within as an integrated body.

Standard exhibition rooms and traditional public spaces have been broken up and disseminated along a myriad of complex trajectories in and above the ground. These trajectories are gradually and systematically transformed in form, function, and significance. The interaction of linear structures creates an irregular and decisively accentuated set of displacements that both establish an active path and distance the viewer in the investigation of the exhibits. These may be arranged horizontally (in plan), vertically (in section), or in combinations of the two.

Walls contain functional and circulatory elements (stairs, services, funicular platforms) as well as “walled-in” meditation spaces for the presentation of audio-visual materials. Library books are disposed along the walls to become, whenever necessary, part of the exhibits themselves. The movement of a single platform turns the lecture room into a dynamic “mechanical theater.” This allows for truly spatial-kinetic exhibitions and establishes a new rapport between audience and performance. The restaurant, placed in relation to the underground museum connection, is independently accessible and works in juxtaposition to the Bierstude of the Collegienhaus.

The museum ensemble is thus always on the verge of *becoming* — no longer suggestive of a final solution.

Link to the Existing Building

The Collegienhaus and the new extension are linked through the central spine of the old building, restoring the staircase to its original baroque position. Thus the Collegienhaus is preserved in its autonomy and, at the same time, more fully tied to the new building. And in this way, the underground Jewish-Berlin collection serves as the “interchange station” between the different levels of the museum and the collection itself. Fragments of the museum — in the form of indeterminate closed/open voids — lodge themselves in every part of the territory: dispersed traces suggestive of past and future public use. Therefore the link itself becomes — as connection — the structural key to the full integration of underground galleries, restaurant, external fragments, extension, and disrupted interior.

Structure, Materials, Façade

Precast and cast-in-place concrete elements form a tubelike structure with a variable inclination. The project makes use of various cladding materials, including metal, glass and mosaics; the quality and control of illumination are especially emphasized. The façade is a richly textured, visually denatured, luminous surface designed to create tension between the experience of the hand and that of the eye.

Open Spaces and Parking

In the E. T. A. Hoffmann plaza, whose focus is the Mechanical Garden of Olympia, moving images are projected onto four planes, forty-nine cubes, one hundred ninety-six surfaces, and ninety-eight hidden facets. The spectacle, though oriented for the museum-goer, can be observed by the public outside the museum and in the restaurant. The rotation of images includes: Atrani (a baroque staircase gently rising to the church); Navy (a children’s playground in the form of tall sailing ships); Versailles façade (closely cropped planting and topiary); Heidelberg Castle (ruins jutting into the sky); Alcazar, Seville (a wooden dance platform); Marseilles Cathedral (a sleeping car to eternity); Freiburg Munster; St. Basil’s, Moscow (life-size wooden dolls); Boscotrecase (stone-pine forest); Museo Nazionale, Naples (a child holding out a bunch of freshly picked flowers); Florence Baptistery (an arm stretching for a fruit that remains beyond reach); Sky (a line, a maiden, a scale); Polar Sea.

The existing children’s playground and pedestrian paths and an anticipated bicycle path constitute a “fresh-air” corridor. Above-ground parking for fifty-three automobiles is situated on a reinforced grass field.

“I Made It on the Verge”:

A Letter from David Farrell Krell

My dear Daniel!

Things have recently changed for me twice, both times between the baroque and the contemporary. We first met in Como, between the Casa Terragni and the Villa Olmo. The second time the Atlantic got in between: you were already in Berlin and I was in Don Bates’s office in Florida held spellbound by your plans for the expansion of the Berlin Museum by the addition of a Jewish Museum, project title “Between the Lines.” Spellbound between each word of the German title: *Erweiterung*. Would you simply be expanding the Berlin Museum, widening or broadening its capacity to contain and exhibit? *Des Berlin Museums*. Was the genitive subjective or objective? Who in our century would either own or own up to the responsibilities of a “Berlin” Museum, much less a “Jewish” Museum? *Um*. Such a petite preposition! Who would or could imagine the horrific juxtaposition of “Berlin” and “Jewish” negotiated by that miniscule grammatical mite, that slippery little syntactical rascal — the expansion of the Berlin Museum *by* or *about* or *through* or *across* or *beneath* or *n-plus-one* or *to this extent only* and *by no means approximately*. (Daniel, you must read for your delectation and edification the five tightly printed columns on the preposition *um* in Hermann Paul’s *Deutsches Wörterbuch*. You won’t understand a word of it, I promise you, certainly not the preposition *um*, though see especially meaning 1c, but you’ll be riveted, no, sent flying through end space, I swear! Do be careful, however: *umbringen* doesn’t mean to bring around and *umkommen* doesn’t mean to come around.) *Um die Abteilung*. Will the Jewish Museum merely be a “division” of the Berlin Museum; do Berliners and

Jews partake of the identical culture and history; do they share a destiny; do they ride the same fateful train? Each of these questions must have torn at your heart and head, between the lines, and so I want to write my own lines here more carefully than I am doing now.

Standing there in Don’s office, gazing at the plans, I made him promise to teach me how to read architectural drawings. I made him pledge to give me at least some first pointers. For truly I cannot read them. You will have to build this one, no, even that is hopeless, I still won’t be able to read it. All my life I have passed through portals of edifices, paying them no mind, gathering nothing; a building will have to fall on me before I can dwell on it. To read is *lesen*, to “glean” the grapes that yield the vintage that will hide in cool dark cellars. On one of your drawings, in tiny letters, I see but do not yet read: / GATHERED-TOGETHER COMING-TO-PRESENCE / ΛΟΓΟΣ /. We will have to talk about Heidegger in a moment. Who in 1933 refused to go to Berlin. Who elected to stay at home in provincial Freiburg and wreck his own university, so terribly, so mindlessly. Who both before and after 1933–34 gave us so much to think about, so generously, so brilliantly. (Life does appear to be fairly complicated, doesn’t it? A book of matches just won’t solve all the problems.) The very next word on your drawing, the next bar of inaudible unreadable music between the lines, is / FAKTISCH /. I am at the moment writing a book on the word “factual” in Heidegger’s philosophy; indeed, my manuscript (shoved aside the instant your letter arrived) is interrupted after the words “. . . the more elaborate account of factual life.” No ac-

cidents in life, Daniel, when all is daimonic chance. My book will be called (publisher permitting) *Daimon Life*. Factual life is its theme, the facts of life, the history of factional-fictional life, the finitude and ruination (better *ruinance*) of life. While all the world lights a book of matches and prepares to burn whatever is left of Heidegger, you and I shall have to talk about him.

Spacings. Separations. An extension and expansion like no other, beyond all decidable, decipherable relationship no matter how complex and overdetermined, no matter how baroque. You speak of “a museum that can no longer be reconciled through some theoretical utopia or presuppose the fictitious stability of state or power or organization.” A museum for neither time nor eternity, neither “changing attitudes” nor “unchanging opinions.” The critics stand in awe of its conception, its “expressionistic” and even “omnipotent” form, but they worry whether it can be built. I shall one day stand in awe of the shimmering buildings; right now I wonder what it means to conceive of such a project.

On the same drawing entitled “Section and Façade” I make out spacings and inner voids, the between not of lines or words but of letters: GUNGFUGFUGENSCHN ITT / AN S ICH TJÜD ISCH ESMUS E UM. The voided void, excreted material of meaning, emptied out and overdetermined at once. A Chinese martial art combined with FDP warheeler Genscher, a sign of political suppleness and lubricity. Gungfugfu engages in a bit of rough and tumble (*Unfug!* the Germans would exclaim), with what Heidegger calls *Fug* and *Fügung*, the enjoining order and the articu-

lation of beings. In 1933 he heard it as *die ferne Verfügung*, the remote injunction according to which the destiny of the German people lay in Hitler's hands, the hands ("Just look at his hands!") of National Socialism; in 1936 he heard it as the *dikh* of Anaximander, the jointure of beings that are abandoned by being, forsaken by God and all gods. In a time forever out of joint, beings are joined awhile in presence between a twofold absence.

Between the double absence of *whence?* and *whither?* beings meet in the jointure of (dis)order, in an atonal and even aphonic fugue, (*Un-*)*Fug*. ITT. International Telephone & Telegraph. The age of the worldview and of the bird's-eye view (like a speckled bird of prey?) of history and culture, the age of the apparent reduction of space and time to the sheer simultaneity of "news." ("Many shepherds have destroyed my vineyard, they have trampled down my portion, they have made my pleasant portion a desolate wilderness. / They have made it a desolation; desolate, it mourns to me. The whole land is desolate, but no man lays it to heart.") A reduction enjoined by the essential unfolding of technology, to which no political system, whether democratic or totalitarian, is equal; a reduction also of the human beings (us) who occupy space and time for the time being. AN S ICH. It is a reduction that goes to the quick of each of us, *es geht*, I would say in German, *an's Ich*. What sort of reduction of the ego? Recall Lacan, who alters Descartes's famous formula in a harrowing Heideggerian way: *Je pense où je ne suis pas, donc je suis où je ne pense pas*, and, with *suis* now suggesting not only "I am" but also "I follow" (from *suivre*), *je ne suis pas, là où je suis le jouet de ma pensée; je pense à ce que je suis, là où je ne pense pas penser* (*Ecrits*, p. 517). I am not, and I do not follow, there where I am and follow the plaything shuttlecock spinningtop gewgaw

the mere child's toy of my thought (objective and subjective genitive); I think of what I am (try to follow, please!), there where I do not even think of thinking. Yet I am thinking now, Daniel, of another sort of reduction. Not the psychoanalytic, not even the ontological, but, how shall I put it, it's hard but you'd . . . I must . . . TJÜD ISCH ESMUS . . . say it. I mean, of course, the Extermination or Holocaust, about which Heidegger never said a public word. Notice that place in the technology essay (*Basic Writings*, pp. 299–301) concerning the historic unfolding of technology, which threatens to reduce human beings to stockpiled raw materials. That would be devastating enough. Yet Heidegger doesn't say that human beings can be so reduced. In fact, he assures us of the very opposite: "Yet precisely because man is challenged more originally than are the energies of nature, that is, challenged into the process of ordering, he is never transformed into mere standing-reserve." It is almost as though Heidegger here resurrects a remnant of the thought (in *Being and Time*, §47) that even when Dasein becomes the Cartesian fresh cadaver — that is the way Descartes preferred them, fresh, but cadaverous — it is not inverted into some mere thing at hand, like a stone or a knife or a table.

Just as the corpse points back to the life it once had and was, so, too, does the human being who is reduced to substitutable reserves in the epoch of technology point back to a possibility of revealing and concealing beings. Human beings are the sites of *a-lêtheia*, they remember being; being claims and uses human beings for the coming-to-presence of beings as such and in general. "Wherever man opens his eyes and ears, unlocks his heart, and gives himself over to meditating and striving, shaping and working, entreating and thanking, he finds himself everywhere brought into the uncon-

cealed." Together with the Heideggerian muse E UM (that horribly presumptuous preposition again, *um* — Heidegger says that human existence factually revolves about or is involved in its own being [*es geht um das Sein*], insisting that Dasein exists for its own sake, as Aristotle said and Kant reiterated [*um-willen seiner*] — that wretched, ecstatic, preposterous preposition!), I want to think (where *Isch* does not follow, does not even think of thinking) about another reduction, a reduction not to standing-reserve or stockpile or energy pool but to smoke and ash. Not the stockpiling but the squandering of human beings. Poison and pyrifaction, a wastage beyond human imagination. Does not that chemical reduction call on us to think? Does it not alter forever what we might call thinking? Does it not singe the unlocked heart, blast the opened ear, slit the disbelieving eye? Does it not ruin the discourses of both humanism and ontology, entreaty and thanksgiving alike? Does it not devastate any pretension to an ethics, even an ethics of ethics? If being abandons beings to that jointure of (dis)order which we know all too well, if being is not so much to be greeted with thanks as acknowledged as the real bastard of the piece, then what are philosophers and architects left with today? ("I have forsaken my house, I have abandoned my heritage; I have given my beloved soul into the hands of her enemies. / My heritage has become to me like a lion in the forest, she has lifted up her voice against me; therefore I hate her.")

As for me, I know my place: plant me at the FUGENSCHNITT, the FUGEN SCHNITTANSICHT of the JÜDISCHES MUSEUM, at the most acute angle of the zigzag line to a voided eternity. Plant me facing that interior angle, quite close to the building, my back to the baroque structure. I look up to see the declinated walls leaning over my

head threatening to crush and annihilate me. I understand everything better here, Daniel. Squeezed in by that angle where the outside walls bend farthest back on themselves and the top of the building leans perilously over my bowed head, I have found my own end space. Plant me as ivy. Call it David's ground cover. They say my name in Hebrew means Gift of God. *Gift* is a wondrous word. Ivy covering the abyss of *Ab-Grund*, the end of space. The end of the Jahwist space in which architectural models are almost always photographed, the view from the top of the crystalline sky, the overview of the panoptiphotocon, the space that seems to require no transaction between seeing eye and writing hand. The end of the space favored by the keen eye and deft hand of architects since time immemorial. Your building will be underground and outside, anything but within, and those are the spaces I will frequent. They will be my haunts because already they are haunting me my eyes are burning Daniel my mind is hazy I'm not thinking very clearly my pen careens crazily I must try to do better.

To the cellar. Two vast tunnels lead from the (restored) baroque staircase and from a point somewhere outside the U of the Berlin Museum. They cross to form a chiasma that extends one of its legs well beyond the Olympia Mechanical Garden to a voided and truncated parallelogram near some Hebrew letters I do not understand and cannot read (honestly, I cannot, it's the ~~תורה~~, I swear it!), letters that a second X crosses through; the chiasma extends its other leg to the foremost shard of voided space, the trapezoid (trap a *zōion*?) that will be difficult to enter, accessible only from this tunnel where I now find myself. The cellar of intersections and subterranean connections, the *Baukunst* of Kafka's *Der Bau*, "The Burrow." The voided space of his spectral writing. Do you know, Daniel — you

won't believe this, you'll know I'm completely mad — but I searched the list of names that forms the abyssal ground of your model, searched every photograph I could find of that groundless ground, with a Bausch & Lomb reading glass, seeking amidst the family names Auerbach Brand Pelz Philipp Polak Reinhardt and the forenames Adolf David Maria Martha the name of a particular person: Milena Jesenská, who was killed in 1944 (a year I will never forget) in the camp at Ravensbrück. We made love like animals in the forest (look for a photograph of her in any biography of Kafka; she translated him into Czech, he wrote incredible letters to her); there was no one like her in tenderness and cleverness and passion. Long after my lungs hollowed out and my eyes were left to shine like ghosts in my head, in a word, long after I died, twenty years later, they took her to Ravensbrück, and you would think it didn't wouldn't couldn't matter to me, being already dead, but it mattered a great deal death always matters a great deal oh and love. I couldn't find her name. It was foolish of me to try. I don't know what I was thinking I have trouble following I am suffering some confusion. Many other names I did find in that list, however, many other names and other end spaces.

Out of the cellar at long last and up beyond the (abyssal) ground floor to the first floor above ground. Fugitive notes everywhere in this musical space, fragments of lyric, libretto in diaspora. *Moses und Aron*? I don't know. *Wir solln*. Yes, we should. But what? *Er unsern*. He, ours. Yes, but who? *Land von Milch und Honig*. I can taste it dripping already. Keep on singing, *sempre canto*, SI PARLA ITALIANO 2:09 AM, but I am losing my way, *den Weg*, in tiny words not even Bausch & Lomb can plumb they vanish micromegally into the *Hintergrund*. Up here on the first floor I hear

wordless music and it reminds me of something I failed to hear a moment ago in the cellar, someone's word, it could have been Celan's *O Wort, Du Wort, das mir fehlt!* ("O word! you word! the word that is missing!") or Moses's *So bin ich geschlagen! So war Alles Wahnsinn, was ich gedacht habe, und kann und darf nicht gesagt werden!* ("Thus I am struck down! Thus everything I thought proved to be delusion; it cannot and dare not be said!"). I am afraid, Daniel. NO VAGRANTS 2:19 AM. I remember that the straight but voided line of eternity begins precisely at the place where the words *darf nicht* ("dare not") are inscribed in the "Sectional View [*Schnittansicht*] and Façade." I dare not go on. TAX ADVICE 2:12 AM. I haven't the competence, you know that, I cannot glean the meaning of all this, can't let it lie-together-before, can't protect λόγος as λέγειν by saying the same, ὁμολογεῖν can't comprehend its import, neither the whole nor the minutiae. TECHNICAL AID 2:10 AM. I don't feel very well I am feverish everyone in Evanston has the flu may I be excused. DOCTOR'S NIGHT BELL 2:14 AM. I can't go on like this. No, assemblage is impossible. They'll never take this. BETTING OFFICE 2:17 AM. All lies in the crypt of concealment. The vintage. Back to the cellar. My vineyard. They have made it a desolation. Why do you suppose Jacques Derrida in a recent letter to Peter Eisenman asks him to examine Libeskind's plans for the Jewish Museum in Berlin, project title "Between the Lines"? That is none of my business. None of yours, either. LEGAL PROTECTION FOR THE NEEDY (no time listed). Your business, dear Daniel, is to meet Derrida and to ὁμολογεῖν with him. Alone, the two of you. I'll go out and buy an ice cream at the "AUGEAS" Self-Service Restaurant, it's very clean, every night they flood it spotless, then I'll pass the night somewhere somehow invis-

ible MADAME ADIANE Second Courtyard on the Left 2:15 AM that was quick, so that you and Jacques will have a chance. Don't tell him I told you this, but he is a real bastard, he is as wicked as Heidegger's being. I love him and so will you, so do as I say and get together with him soon. Incidentally, he is a thinker.

In his "Point de folie: Maintenant l'architecture," Derrida addresses a number of remarks to Bernard Tschumi that I want to remember. Among them, that Tschumi and the rest of "us" can come-to-presence only within "an experience of space that is already marked by architecture," that is, already engaged by an architecture of which we are *never* the masters. In answer to his own question as to whether an architecture of *events* is possible, Derrida points to Tschumi's *folies* as *maintenance* of madness. I suspect that the reference to you in the letter to Eisenman (there I go, minding other people's business, but I intercepted the letter, it was really a postcard) is about the impossible possibility of maintaining *mourning*. Not only because Derrida's letter passes through churches and synagogues, poverty and homelessness, outsiders and street people, but also because so much of the violence of our time cannot be captured in the "hieratic presence of the 'memorable' monument" (70a). Tschumi's architectural madnests make us think about what takes place in architecture precisely by leaving opportunities "for chance, formal invention, combinatory transformation, wandering" (70b). The same is true of your own plans, except that a Jewish Museum careening off on around through across about beneath the Berlin Museum raises the stakes to a point of extreme hazard: it takes chances that soar beyond all powers of invention, it acknowledges the ultimate impotence of places and the unlimited vulnerability of those who wander end spaces. What

Derrida says of Tschumi in Paris certainly applies to Libeskind in Berlin: "Deconstructions would be feeble if they were negative, if they did not construct, and above all if they did not first measure themselves against institutions in their solidity, *at the place of their greatest resistance*: political structures, levers of economic decision, the material and phantasmatic apparatuses which connect state, civil society, capital, bureaucracy, cultural power and architectural education — a remarkably sensitive relay; but in addition, those which join the arts, from the fine arts to martial arts, science and technology, the old and the new. All these are so many forces which quickly harden or cement into a large-scale architectural operation, particularly when it approaches the body of a metropolis and involves transactions with the State. This is the case here" (70c).

Derrida notes the prevalence of *dis-* and *de-* words in Tschumi's plans for "La Case vide: La Villette, 1985," words that are central to the discourse of both deconstruction and dissemination. Yet the latter promises something other than disjunction; it affirms and performs something other than dismantling. What it promises is neither the destruction nor the maintenance of metaphysics; what it exacts is neither subservience to the techno-industrial order nor subjection to political manipulation. What it promises is "the hand outstretched [*la main tendue*] above the abyss" (75a). I myself like to relate the Greek $\delta\iota\alpha$ -, Latin *dis-* (which is not negation but motion through ecstatic space), to the $\zeta\alpha$ - of $\zeta\omega\eta$, "life." $\zeta\alpha$ - is the emphatic prefix in Greek, designating "very much, doubly so, utterly the case." Your work on the Berlin Museum, verging on impossible memories of the deaths of millions, is very much about life — about their lives and ours. Neither complacent nor impoverished, these lives, lives of mourn-

ing, lives of exuberance. Daimonic lives. Daimonic their architecture, between sky and earth, between the lines, on the verge.

It is easier to say what an architecture that verges on remembrance is *not* than what it *is*. If architecture is "the last fortress of metaphysics," as Derrida claims (69b), then your building(s) will help to undo and redo architecture. That is why Derrida draws attention to "Between the Lines" and that is why you and he should be drawn to one another. (Some day, Daniel, let us do a seminar on Aristotle, *Physics* IV, 10–14; Hegel, *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, §§254–61; Heidegger, *Being and Time*, §§65, 69; and Derrida, "Ousia and Grammé," in *Margins of Philosophy*. At which point my obsession with ecstatic spatiality will, I think, blossom into luxuriant perversion.) Architecture undone and redone will *not* be about the following: (1) "dwelling" in an age of regrettable homelessness: Heidegger's nostalgic grumble about *Heimatlosigkeit* is uttered on the verge (over the abyss) of our being-not-at-home, our *Unheimlichkeit*, and no one gave us a finer sponge to wipe nostalgia from our mind's eye than he, the thinker of uncanniness, of being ill-at-ease, and of wandering far from the source; (2) erecting a centered, hierarchized, hieratic organization in anamnestic pursuit of origins and foundations; (3) putting architecture "in service" to a teleology of ethico-political ends; (4) submitting ourselves to the values of beauty, harmony, and totality — to the finesse of the fine arts (69a). Your impenetrable façade of metal glass mosaic will finesse the fine arts, Daniel, of that I am certain, but not in the direction of harmony and totality, and your beauty will shine on the oblique. Your museum, dedicated to an avant-garde of humanity, a humanity "incinerated in its own history," will not be in service to any ethico-political teleology

or kingdom of ends. “Organized around a void,” neither collage nor collision nor dialectical synthesis, its lines will be jagged and truncated, resisting for ages to come the amnesia of commemoration. Precisely because it is all about not forgetting, your museum eschews anamnesis and spurns the allure of hieratic origins. No one will dwell in these “fragments or shards that have no access from the public level, but are accessible only underground and in very special ways.” Gerhard Ullmann says it will take a special kind of curator to arrange whatever is to be exhibited within your building(s). He is right. No one will feel at home, whether on the inside or the outside.

Up there on the first floor, in the walls that are hollowed out or doubled up not only for stairways and elevators but also for meditation rooms and audio-visual centers, would you do something else for me? Would you arrange somewhere up there a recorded musical program consisting of three pieces, with a sixty-second pause between each: Glenn Gould’s 1955 recording of the *Goldberg Variations*, followed by his 1981 recording of the same, taped in New York shortly before his death; then a performance (Claude Helffer’s is good, but choose your own) of Schönberg’s 1925 Suite for Piano, opus 25. I know that elsewhere you’ll have fragments of *Moses und Aron*, but I’d like this moment of baroque and Schönbergian B-A-C-H to be there as well, as yet another underground connection, another tunnel from the cellar direct to the first floor. If you do as I say (the crust, the unmitigated gall of philosophers, if that is what I am: who else would interfere so boldly in matters they understand so little?), I shall hear the music from my acute angle down below, outside the walls, and flourish.

By now, dear Daniel, you are in despair of me, and rightly so. You won’t believe

how diligently I’ve been studying you, finding in your past work so many anticipations of “Between the Lines,” such as this remark from “End Space” of 1979–80: “An architectural drawing is as much a prospective unfolding of future possibilities as it is a recovery of a particular history to whose intentions it testifies and whose limits it always challenges.” And this one, ten years earlier, when you were a tyke: “We believe that nothing is ever fully figurative, because a certain density clings to all our symbolic encounters, be they expressed in words or figures, ciphers or codes.” Even with those warnings in place, I poured over many of your own past figurings, your drawings, collages, and models, trying to get clearer about what began to happen to me in Como and what hit me with full force in Florida (“*So bin ich geschlagen!*”). I have no words for these densities and challenges, but I am looking at *lines* and *layerings*, *obliques* and *overlays* in your work. For example, in this bare list of pieces from *Between Zero and Infinity* (you are a man of between: Heidegger says that Dasein is the “between” of birth and death, *das Zwischen*, a spanned, self-spanning stretch of time, an ecstasis of whatever used to be called the in-itself-for-itself): 4.2, *Collage Section*, 4.6a, *House with Detached Profiles*, 4.7, *Collage Plan*, all from New York in 1970. Then, shifting more toward the layerings and overlays: 7, *Collage Rebus 2 Model*, and 9, *Collage Rebus 4 Model*, both dated Cranbrook 1980. Finally, these pieces beyond my wildest dream calculations: 10, *Exemplary Reduction of a “House with a Front Lawn,” under the Sign of Time*, dated New York 1971 and London 1977, along with 12, *Micro-megas*, and 12.13, *Dream Calculus*, both dated Cranbrook 1979. From your recent “Architecture Intermundium” and Jeff Kipnis’s response, “Though to My Knowledge . . .,” and from a bedazzled

look at your three very late medieval machines, especially the *Memory Machine*, I gleaned something about the extension to the Berlin Museum, namely, that it is beyond commemoration, beyond sacrifice, and beyond rite. Here you invoke being, “what there is” as follows: “So what there is is the shape of space of the world which on a permanent basis produces a destabilized, let’s say eternal, movement of imperfection and difference. And it is this shape of space about which I would like to speak to you and explore in a very tentative manner because no language exists for it today. No language has been agreed upon in which to discuss such a phenomenon” (*Threshold*, p. 115).

How to prevent a world of permanent destabilization, imperfection, and difference from becoming a world of perfect oblivion? If things have happened that dare not be forgotten, can architecture remember them outside the rhetoric of commemoration and sacrifice — which are themselves impacted in the oblivion they would surmount? Here your emphasis on the imperfect and imperfection (Nietzsche called it the “*It was*” of time) is telling: if philosophies of commemoration and the ethics of sacrifice rely on an aggrandizing and hegemonic spirit, a spirit that clings to what *was* in order to transmogrify it into what-has-been (*das Ge-wesene*, the essential, the perfect, the *present* perfect of pure presence), then you are engaged in a project that celebrates the end space of philosophy. Philosophers write about this a great deal nowadays in order to assure themselves and others that the matter is so complicated that, surely, when all is said and done, the end cannot have taken place. Meanwhile, you are on the verge of something else, something other. You celebrate that verge, with all its attendant ambiguities and anxieties. You embrace it as the possibility that announces itself

as “our own,” even as the “our” and “own” slip away into the ecstasies of disownment and the throes of suspicion. It is a little like a point of madness, this verging, this holding out on the verge. City planners and builders of assemblages will not be able to welcome this possibility — until and unless they acknowledge that they spend every minute of the working day precisely there. (There? Gertrude Stein writes that when you finally get there there isn’t any there there.) On the verge. Another way of saying what you have said incomparably well: the powerlessness of places and the groundless position of the architect constitute the possibility of architecture in our time.

And so I look again to your plans, models, and words. This time on the (impossible) ground floor. On the verge of remembering. No flesh has peace. Two lines of thinking, two lines of organization and relationship, one of them straight but fragmented and voided, the other a zigzag, leaping in ever-longer and wider measures, slanting both toward and away from what used to be called eternity. Not a bolt of lightning, either in the sky of knowledge or on the lapels of the uniform of power, not Zeus nor Jahweh nor any fortress plenipotentiary. Rather, a jagged career, first toward the baroque, then recoiling from it, approaching once again more determinedly the midpoint of one leg of the V, recoiling once again, thrust back almost to the point of inception, achieving a decisive distance, spacing, and separation from the baroque structure (undergoing what Schelling, before he went to Berlin, called *κρίσις*, *Scheidung*, divorce or scission), racing then with longer and broader strides and strokes toward some indefinite and undefinable verge. On the outside. No one will be there to help. No one there to execute vengeance. No one to remain eternally vigilant. No one to enforce justice. No one to bevel the edges. (“I made

it on the bevel,” explains Cash, planing away at his mother’s coffin in *As I Lay Dying*.) No one there to bless and commemorate, if commemoration means erecting monuments that gather-to-presence and hold forever the perfection of the past.

What, then? Lines that fall apart and disengage, lines that expose a continuous void running through the building. Lines of time no longer punctual and successive, no longer the time of Augustine, Kant, and Husserl. Lines of interruption, frustrated convergence, postponed intersection, guaranteed contamination. The void materializing in the outside world “as something that has been ruined, or rather as the solid residue of an independent structure, as voided void.” Ruins of time and history, history as spacing and separation. Heidegger’s first word for the “lapsing” or “falling” of time is not *Verfallen* but *Ruinanz*, not so much the ruination (as an outcome) but the very process of ruination. Ruination of totality, ruination of the bounded whole of space, ruination of eternity and all sky dwellers, ruination of all pious commemoration and calculative ritual. (“Is my heritage to me like a speckled bird of prey? Are the birds of prey against her round about? / Go, assemble all the wild beasts; bring them to devour.”) Nevertheless, a kind of preservation and gift, “a gift of that which cannot be given by architecture: the preservation of the sacrifice and the offering: guardian or night watch over absent and future meaning.” During the past several months Derrida has been lecturing in Paris on the theme of sacrifice, especially the allophagic sacrifice in which the victim is ingested. As though in mimicry of unsuccessful mourning. The sacrifice and offering to which you refer are something like that: nothing to incorporate, nothing to yield nourishment, nothing to foster presence, nothing even to encyst — your conception is “absolutely opposed to re-

ducing the museum to a detached memorial.” That does not prevent you from invoking what never ceased to astonish Heidegger, what he called from about 1928 onward *Ferne und Nähe*, remoteness and proximity, and, somewhat later, in an odd feminine gender, *die Frühe*, the early, the dawn. You write that “out of this disaster of the too late rises what is early; out of the too far, the near.”

That said, yours is not an eschatology of being. Rather than speculating on the outermost point, on which future and past somehow converge, perhaps at the gateway of midday called “flash of an eye,” *Augenblick*, your lines *seem* to carry on to infinity. They are all on the oblique, on the slant, as Emily Dickinson insisted they must be, “diagonal,” as you say, with regard to the objects that surround their “intense field.” And they are all broken, voided, gone a-voiding. They gather in fractured arms the *giftige* gift that can never come to perfect presence. That gift is like a past that has never been present — the ultimate refutation of “revisionism.” Extermination never took place once and for all because it is ongoing in the revisionisms, decisionisms, and obfuscations of our time. Like a careening career on the slant, more baroque than any baroque could ever have been, like Rembrandt’s *Night Watch* soaring beyond its age, your plans for the extension of the Berlin Museum by on in through across beneath about a Jewish Museum say *Remember to remember me but remember to forget whatever you thought remembering was. Remember that you will always be on the very verge of remembering events that never dare can will be forgotten.*

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