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HOUSE FOR MR & MRS B. / HYBRID BUILDING / MILAN PROJECT

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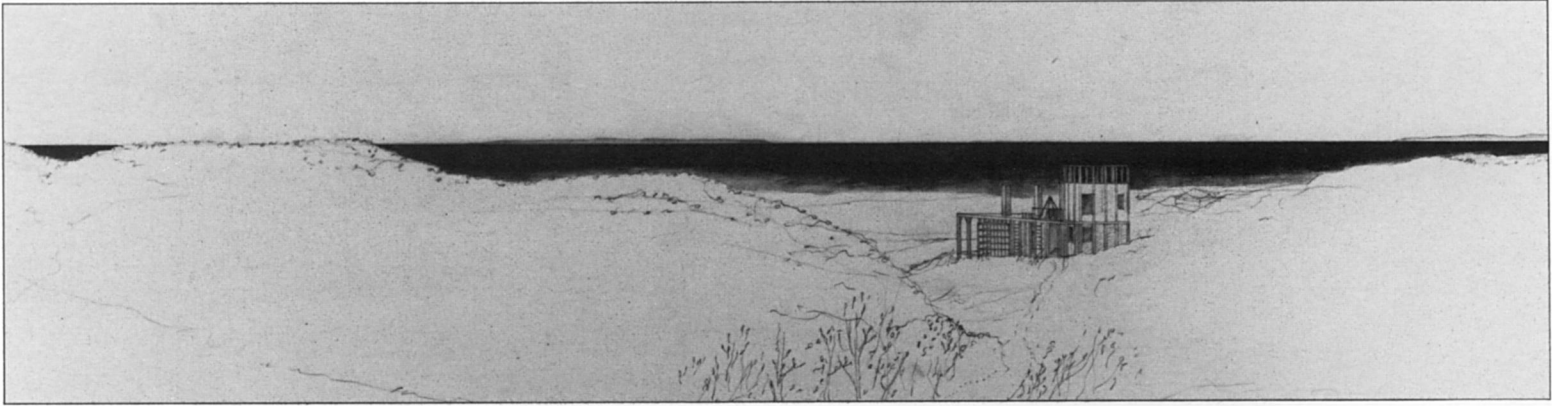
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# Steven Holl



## HOUSE FOR MR & MRS B.

MARTHA'S VINEYARD, MASSACHUSETTS, 1984-5

### Site

The site is a hill overlooking the Atlantic Ocean. The ground, densely overgrown with brush, is cut by a gully which descends to an unobstructed bog. The steep terrain and other building restrictions strictly limited the siting and construction material, as well as the building height.

### Anecdote

The Indian tribe which originally inhabited Martha's Vineyard made a unique dwelling type. Finding a whale skeleton on the beach, they would pull it up to dry land and stretch skins or bark over it, transforming it into a house.

### Concept

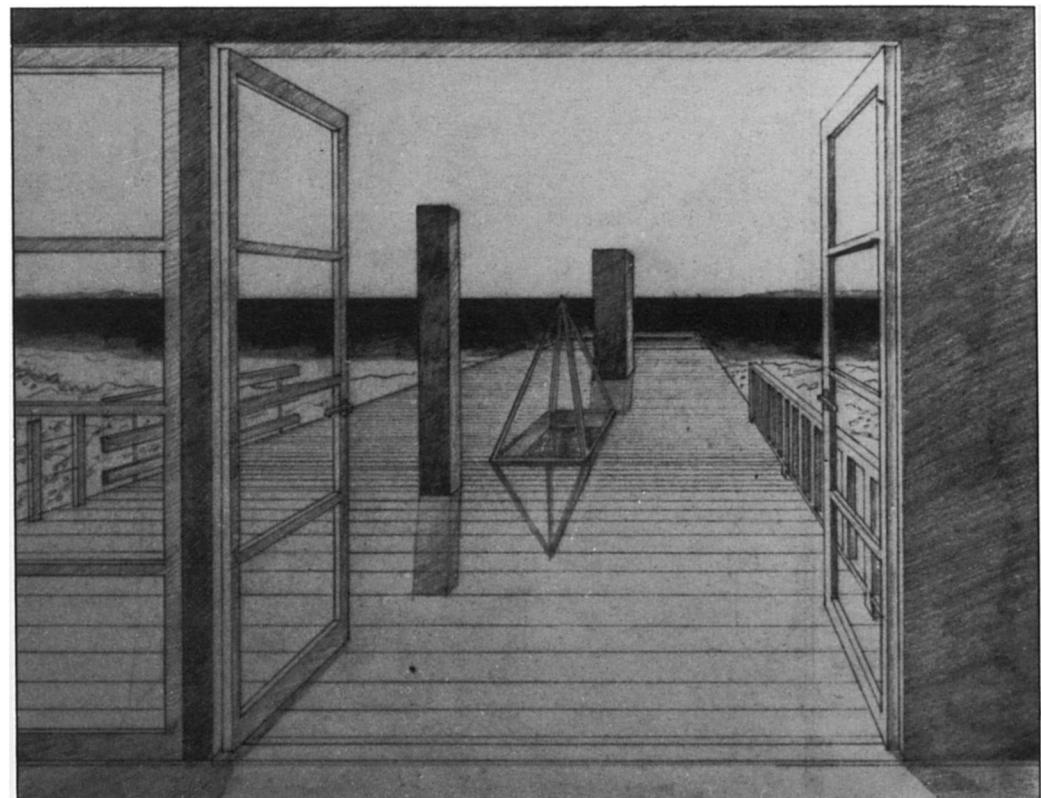
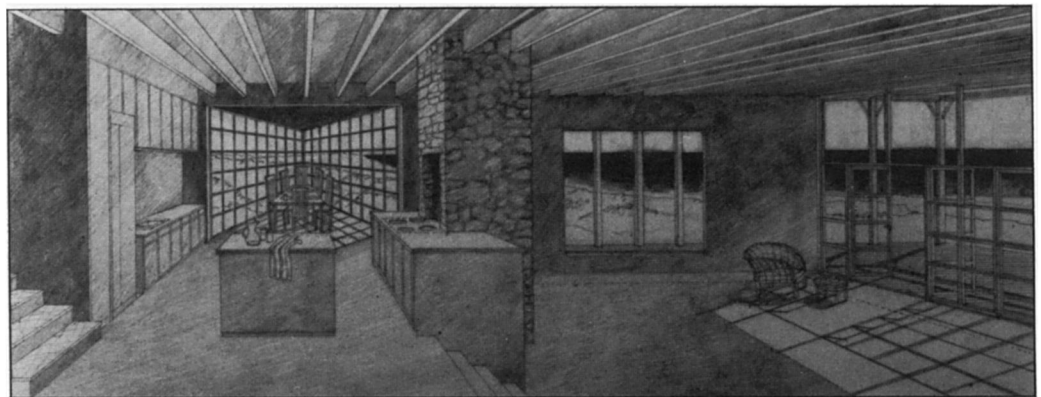
The house is an inside-out balloon-frame of wooden construction, a skeleton whose wooden bones define a continuous veranda. Along it wooden members receive the vines growing on the island, which will transform the linear quality of the architecture.

### Afterthought

'Consider the subtleness of the sea, how its most dreaded creatures glide underwater, unapparent for the most part, and treacherously hidden beneath the loveliest tints of azure. Consider also the devilish brilliance and beauty of many of its most remorseless tribes . . . the universal cannibalism of the sea; all of whose creatures prey upon each other, carrying on eternal war since the world began.

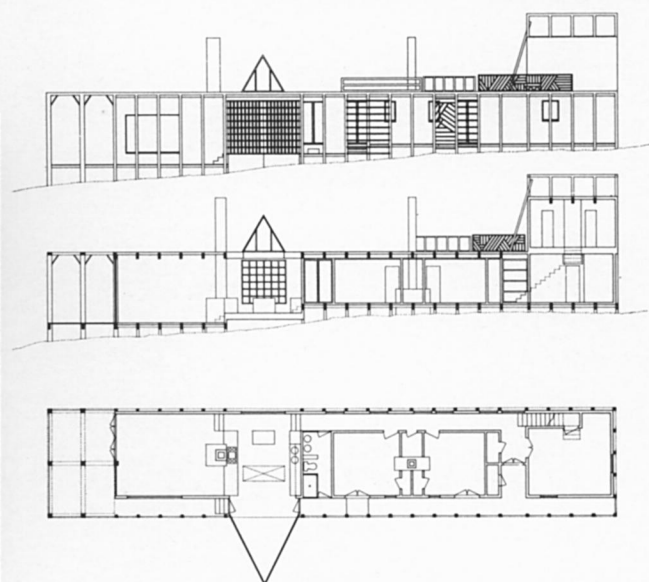
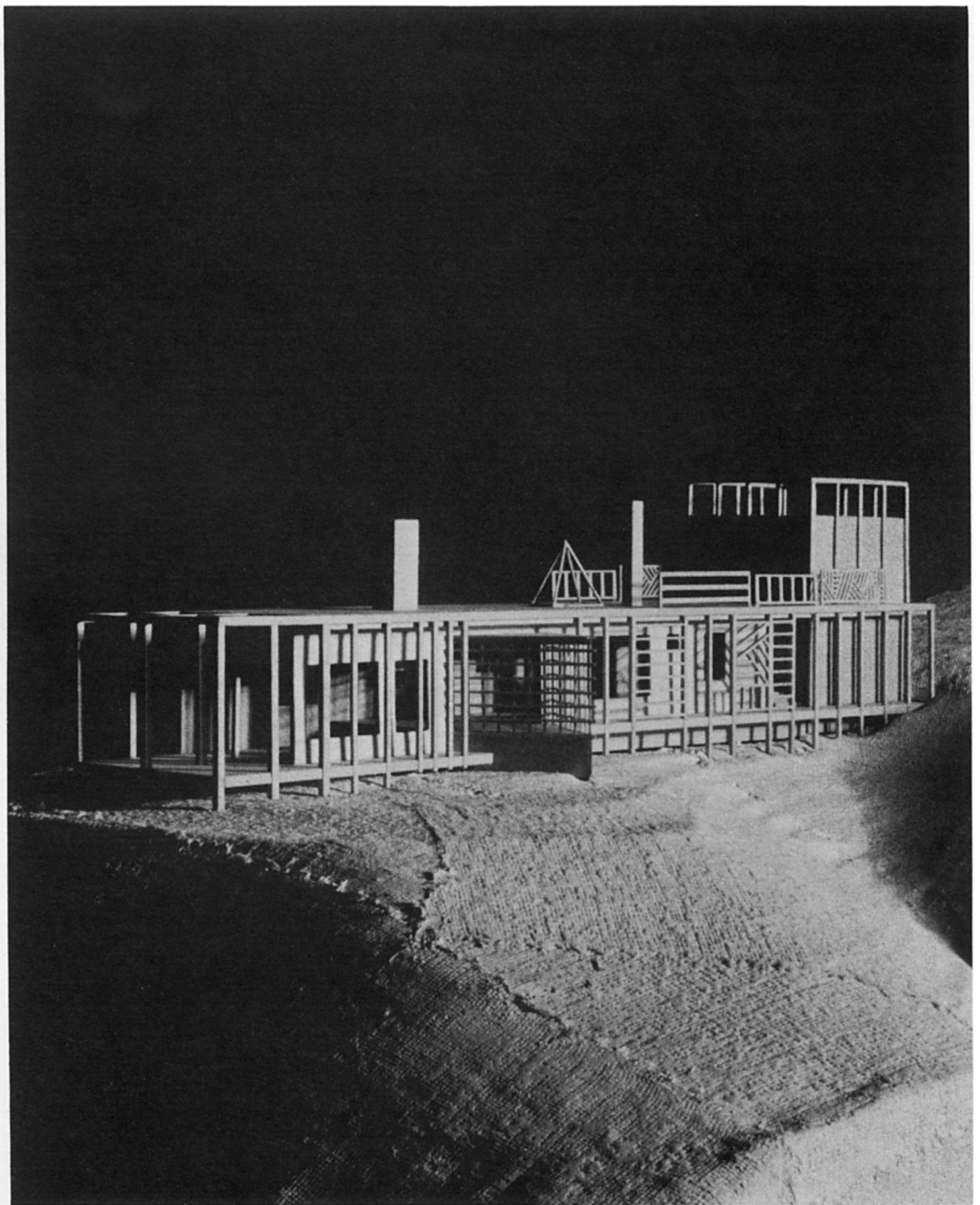
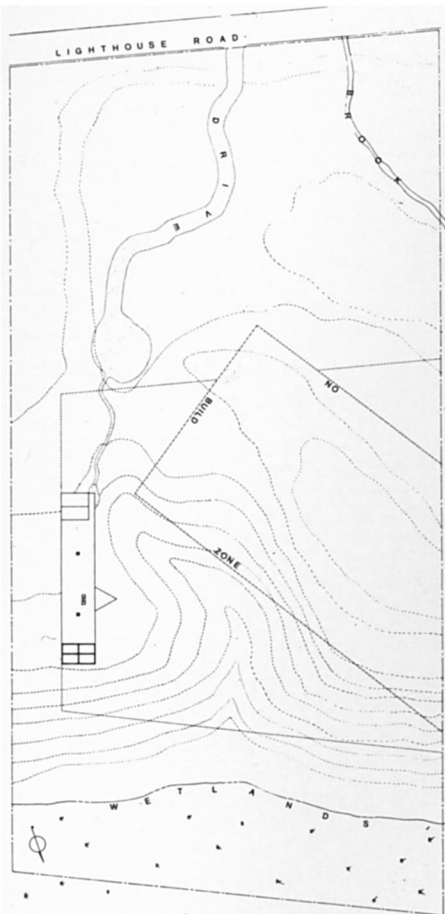
'Consider this; and then turn to this green, gentle, and most docile earth; consider them both, the sea and the land; and do you not find a strange analogy to something in yourself? For as this appalling ocean surrounds the verdant land, so in the soul of man there lies one insular Tahiti, full of peace and joy, but encompassed by all the horrors of the halfknown life. God keep thee! Push not off from that isle, thou canst never return!'

Herman Melville, *Moby Dick*



View from driveway entrance; living-room and kitchen; and view from master bedroom.

Steven Holl with Peter Lynch and Peter Shinoda



*Site plan; model; and elevation, section and plan.*

# HYBRID BUILDING

SEASIDE, FLORIDA, 1985-7

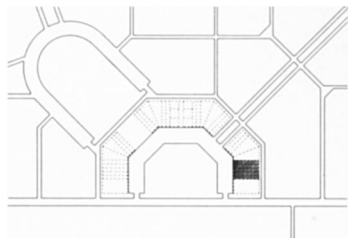
Seaside is a new town currently under construction on the Gulf of Mexico. The 75' x 100'-site of the 'hybrid building' faces a central square laid out by the planners, Duany and Plater-Zyberk. The planners' code, which has established height restrictions, design guidelines and easements, requires that the buildings on the square form a continuous public arcade around it. Beyond the square is a residential area so far containing only detached single-family houses organized along radial streets and secondary squares.

As the first urban building in Seaside, the 'hybrid building' — combining retail, office and residential accommodation — could become a prototype for subsequent development. The concentration of the disjointed programmes forms an incidental urbanism. Along with the intensification of an urban condition, we propose a formation of 'a society of strangers'.

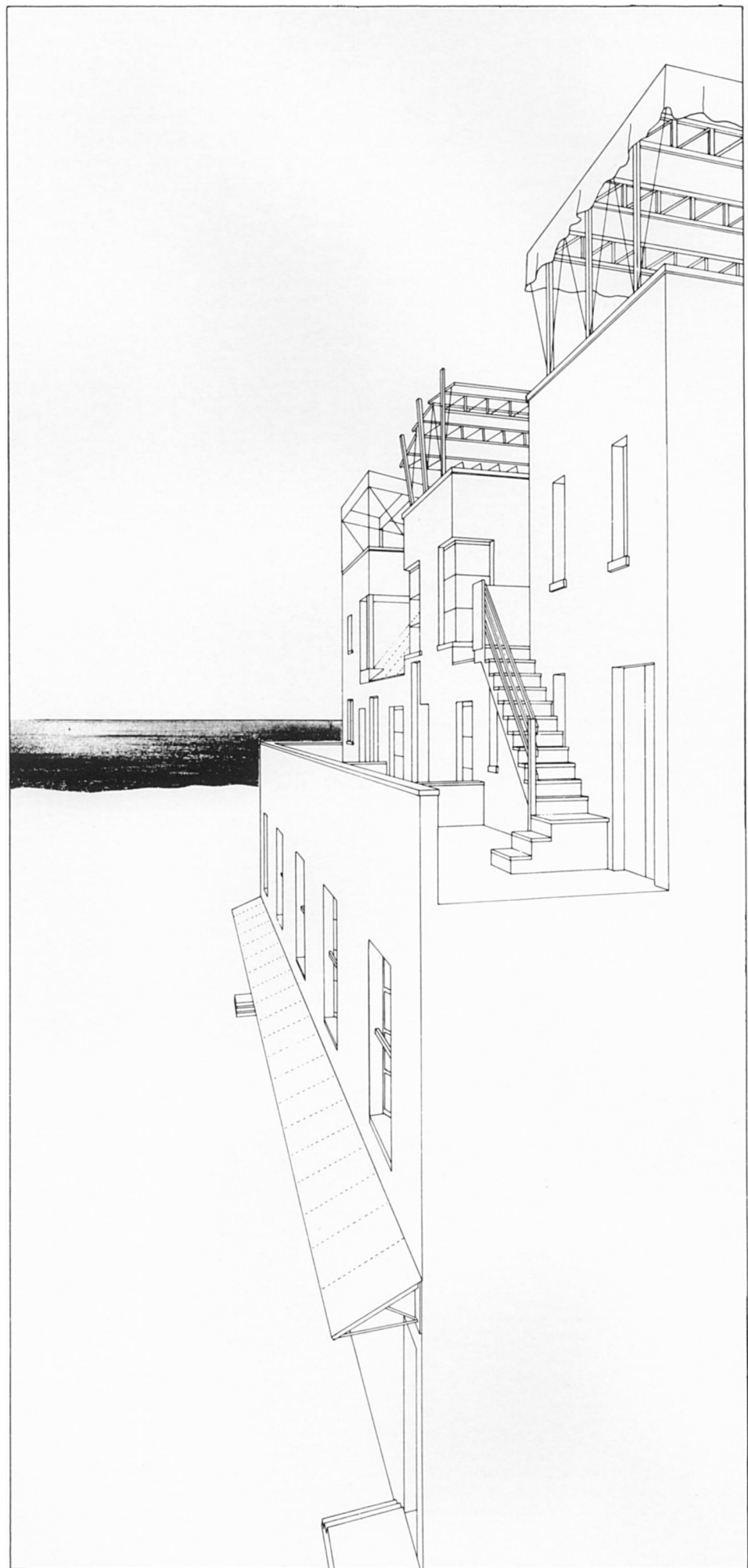
The residences are split into two types, those facing the setting sun and the central square, and those facing the rising sun. The former are intended for boisterous types — late risers who enjoy watching the action, drinking toasts to the sunset, etc. All of these flats are identical. Facing the morning sun are the rooms for melancholic types — early risers inclined to silence and solitude. These were imagined as a tragic poet, a musician and a mathematician, and the plans and sections were characterized accordingly. The house of the tragic poet is dimly lit; all the windows have the same tall and narrow proportions. In the musician's house, light is cast downwards from the corner-windows of the upper level. A black plaster wall slips from the lower to the upper floor, enhancing the flowing nature of the space. In the house of the mathematician everything is slightly warped. The staircase leading to the upper level warps over the bathroom. The warp of the ceiling-joists forms a doubly-curved surface. On the upper level is a calculating-table with a skull-shelf (a reference to the skull that Johannes Kepler always kept on his desk).

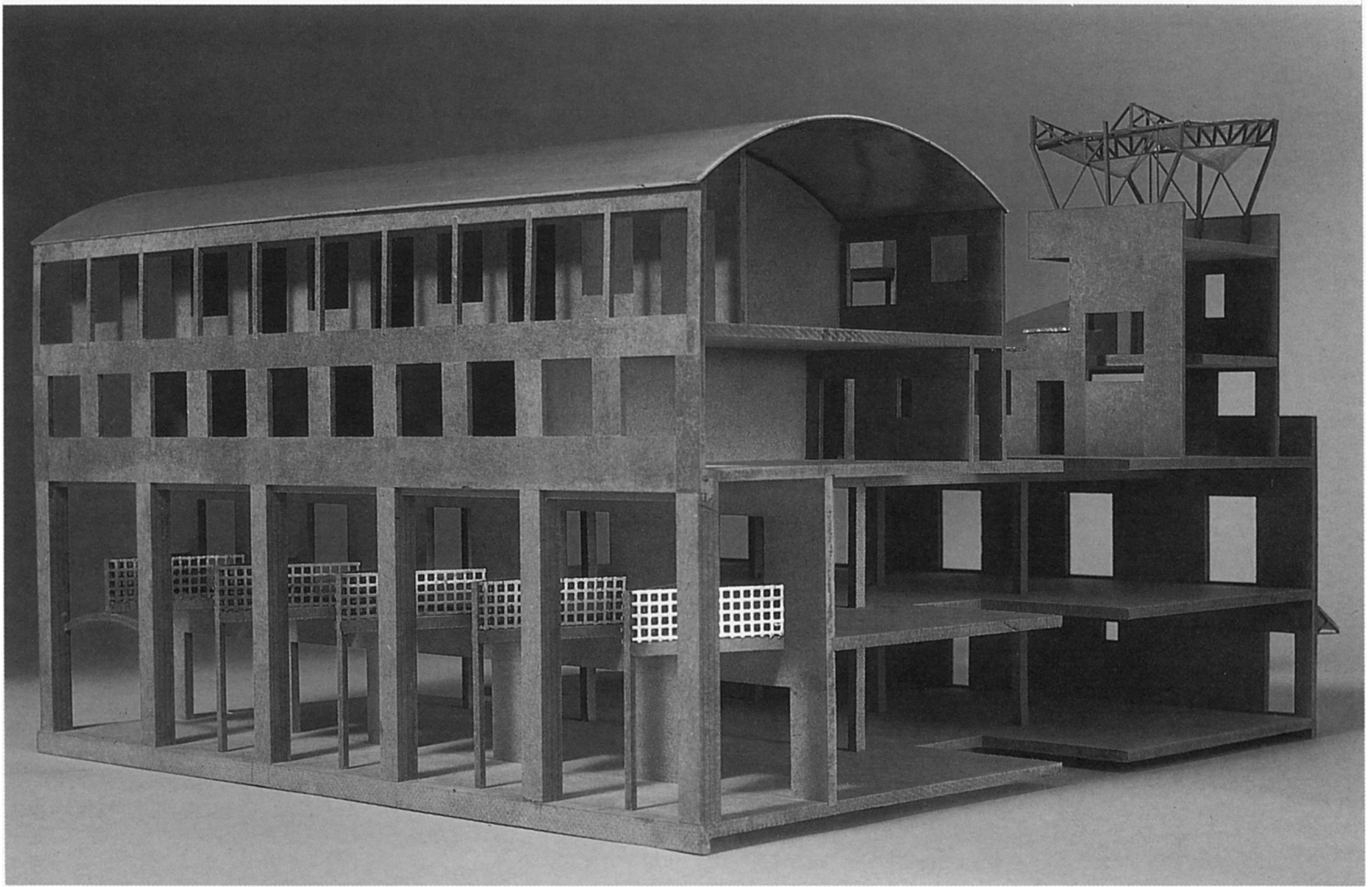
The construction is of precast concrete columns, beams and hollow-core planks. The walls are of integral-colour stucco on concrete block. The roofs are of galvanized metal. The rear awnings are of metal cloth. Construction will begin in September 1987.

*Steven Holl, Principal; Lorcan O'Herlihy, Project Architect; Peter Lynch, Peter Shinoda, Tom Van Den Bout, Darius Sollohub, Stephen Cassell, Laurie Beckerman, Assistants; Robert Lawson, Engineer.*

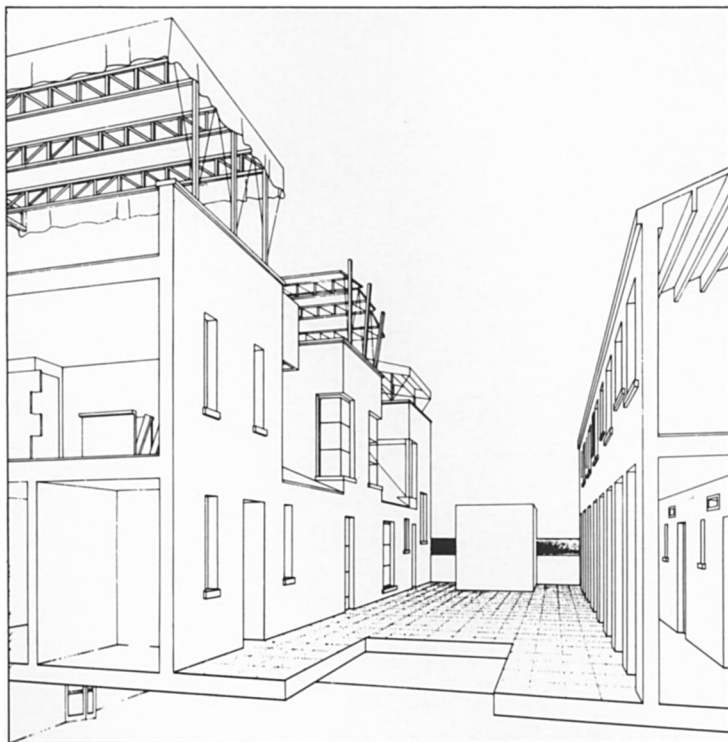


Site plan.

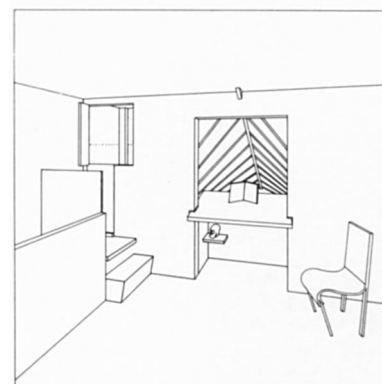
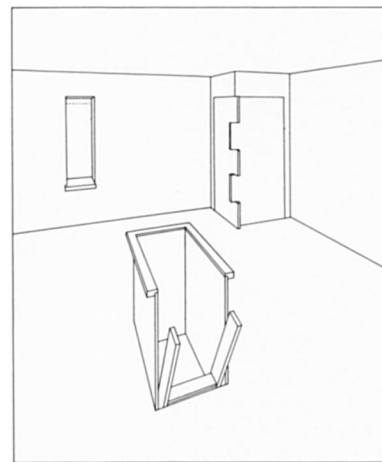




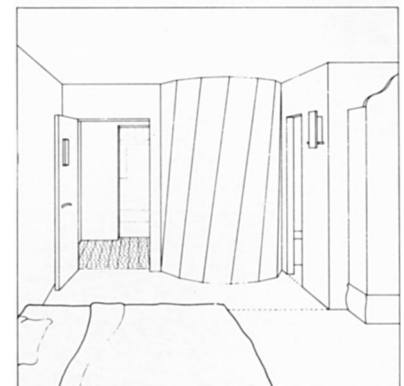
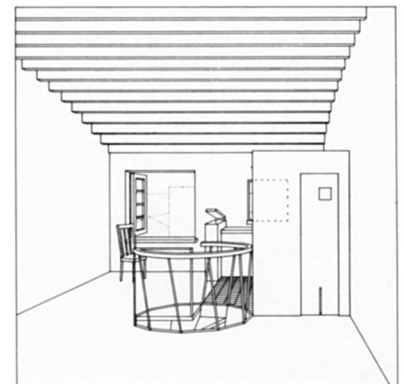
*Model.*



*View of upper deck, between 'melancholic' and 'boisterous' units.*



*House of the Tragic Poet (ABOVE) and House of the Mathematician (BELOW).*



*'Boisterous' unit.*

*LEFT: View of 'melancholic' units, with the Gulf of Mexico in the distance.*

# MILAN PROJECT

*As part of the urban section of the eighteenth Milan Triennale — Nine Projects for Nine Cities — Steven Holl Architects were invited to make a plan for the Porta Vittoria site in Milan, a disused railway-yard on the periphery of the city.*

An open work — an open future — is a source of freedom. To investigate the uncertain, to bring out unexpected properties, to compress psychological space, to allow the soul to emerge, to make proposals in the face of (and fully accepting) major social and programmatic uncertainties: this is our intention for the continuation of a 'theoretical Milan'.

Ideas, not architectural styles, are the strongest contribution of twentieth-century architecture. A new city-sector within the disused railway-yard of Porta Vittoria should be based on a strategy that allows the *ideas* of each architecture to fix, establish

identify an overall plan.

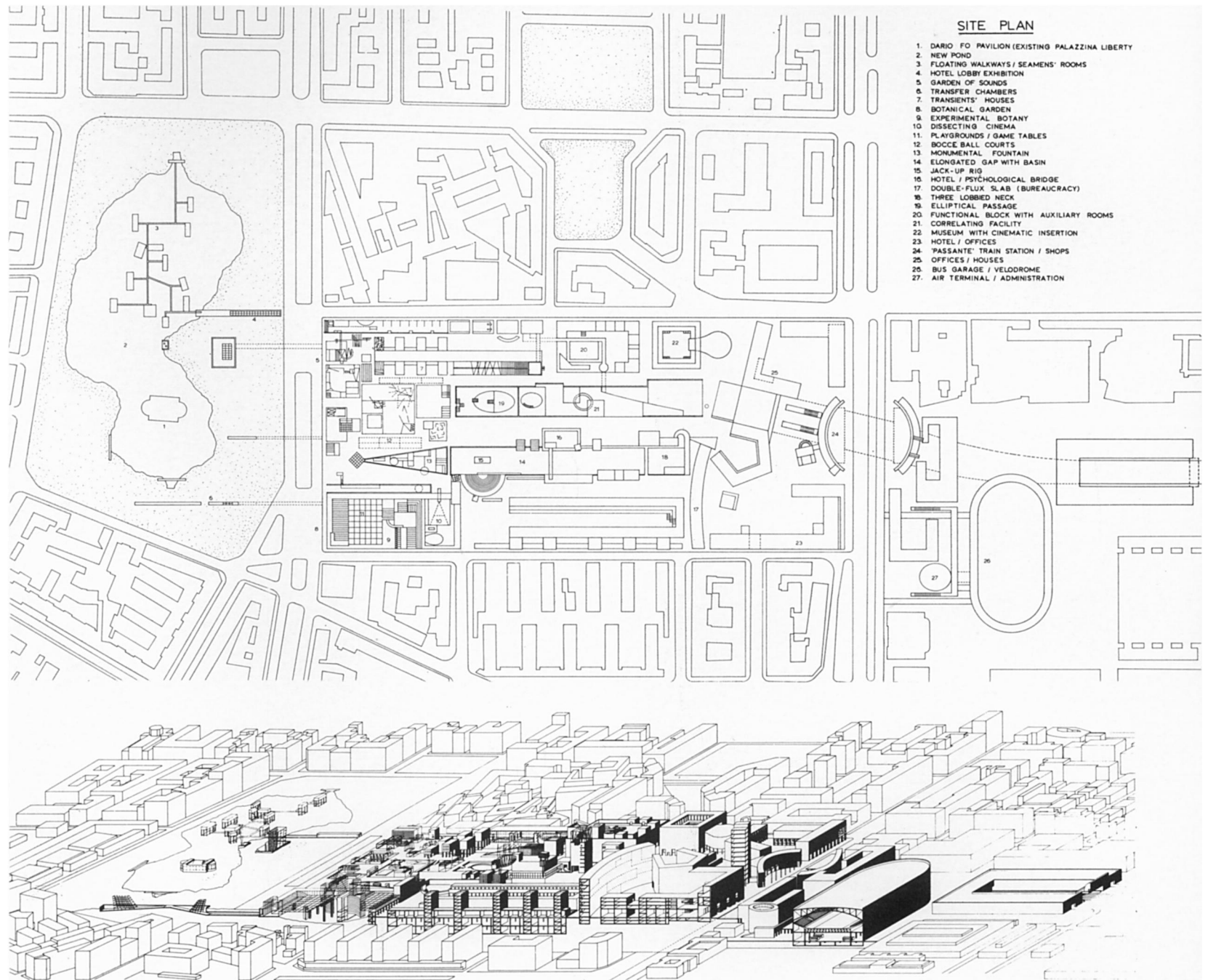
Three traditional urban strategies have been rejected: the planning device of the grid, because of its tendency to render everything as a measure of block-by-block infill; secondly, the method which organizes building types according to historical models and the existing morphology of the city; and, finally, the whole method of drawing an urban plan, followed by a detailed working-out.

Our strategy reverses the usual method of design in architecture (from plan to section, elevation, perspectival space). Instead, perspective sketches of spatial conditions are cast backwards into plan fragments, which are then reconciled in an overall layout. The openings, distortions and obstructions revealed on close inspection of any landscape are here raised by the dictates of perspective and the appetite of the field of view. Perspective implies associations between elements. We have taken these spatial configurations as evidence of a particular activity, as clues for reconstructing a programme.

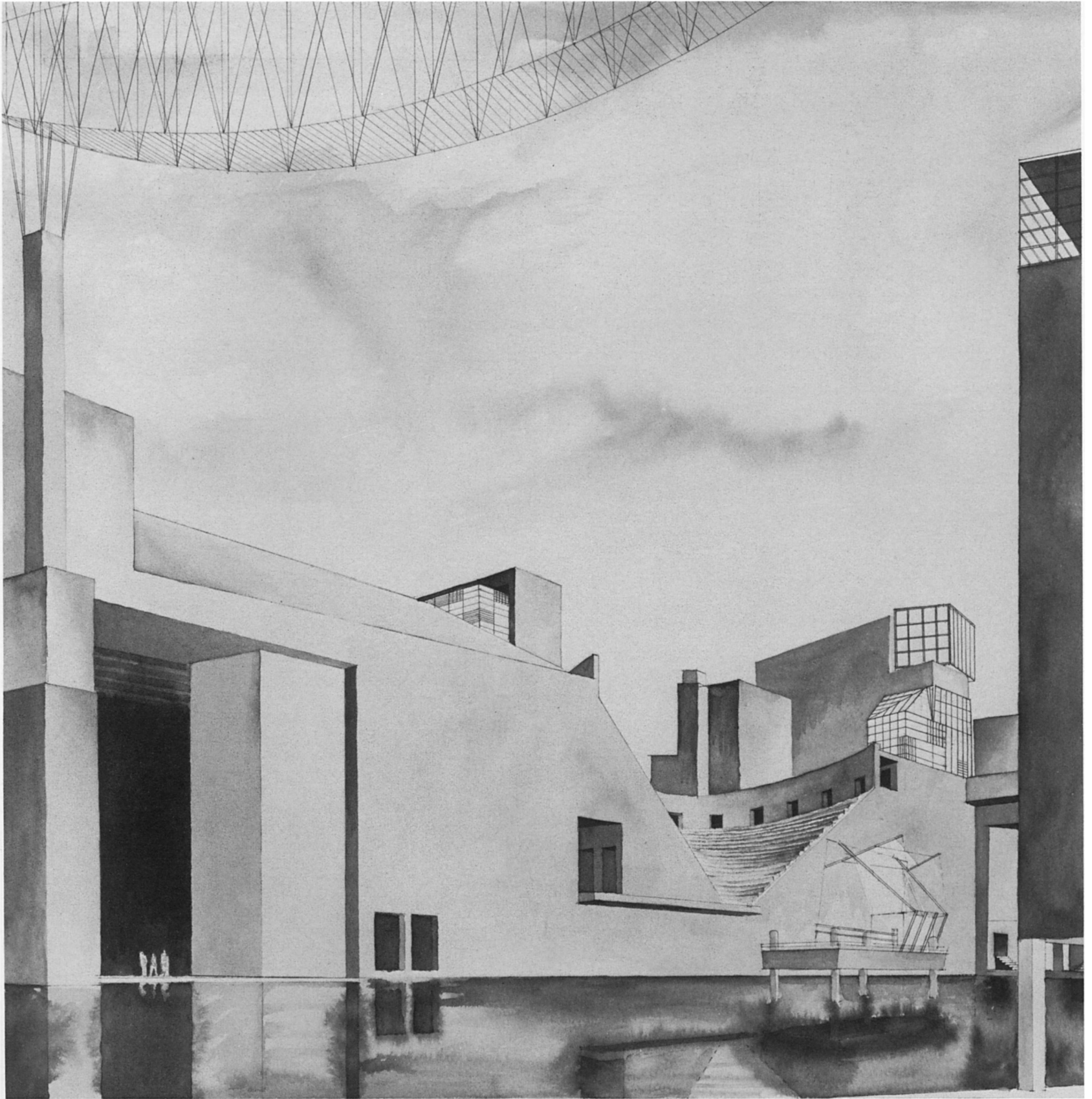
Programmatic revitalization is as intertwined with morphological revitalization as human activity is

with architectural form. Spatial configurations can be activated by 'minor links' in a programme, or bonds between images, activities, objects and buildings. The nature of the minor link varies according to the variety, size and juxtaposition of potential activities. Across the site, connections by programmatic lines of force form a correspondence between spatial configurations. These minor situations interrelate, in turn, to form the whole sector. At a minor scale, the focus is on actions, emotions, thoughts, properties, meanings, objects and the spaces between.

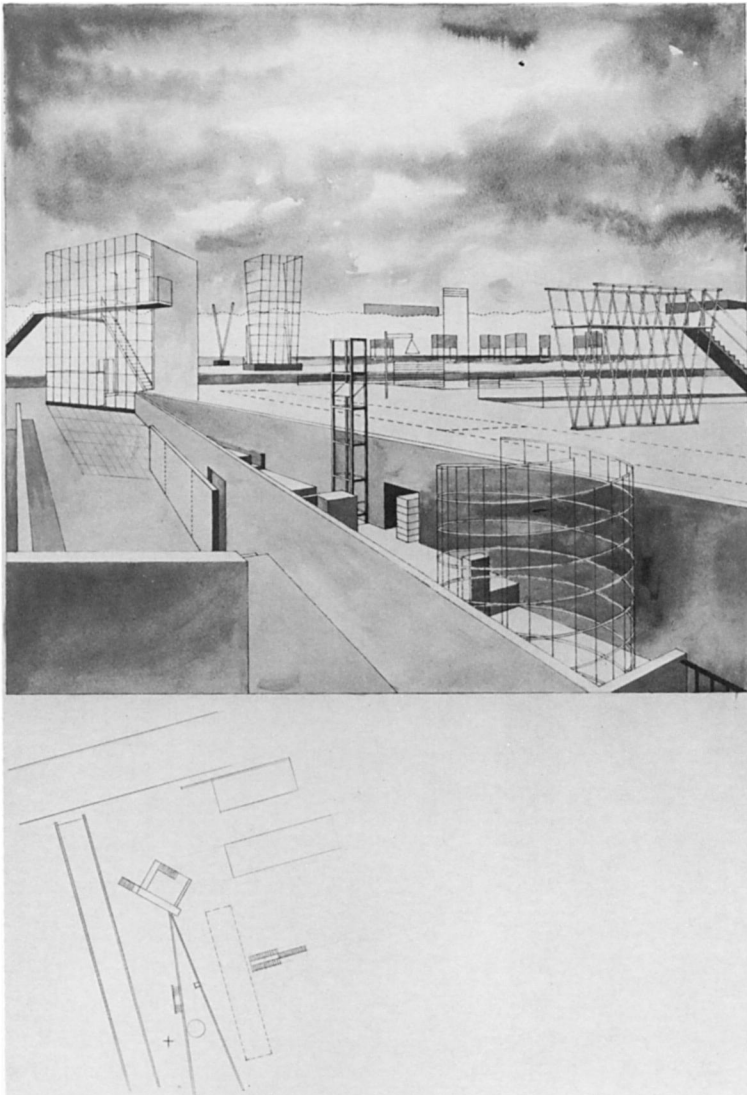
Programmes and spatial conditions are established within an overall order of fine to coarse. This allows the maximum degree of change, and reflects upon the form of the surrounding city. From a dense centre, Milan unfolds in circles, is ringed by a patchwork grid, and finally sprawls raggedly into the landscape. Against the centrifugal urban sprawl (from a 'heavy' core to the 'light' periphery), we propose a reversal: light and fine grained towards the centre, heavy and volumetric towards the periphery. This creates a new outer ring of density



Site plan and axonometric.



*View of elongated gap with water-basin.*



*View towards Garden of Sounds.*

and intensity, adjoining the rolling green of a reconstituted landscape.

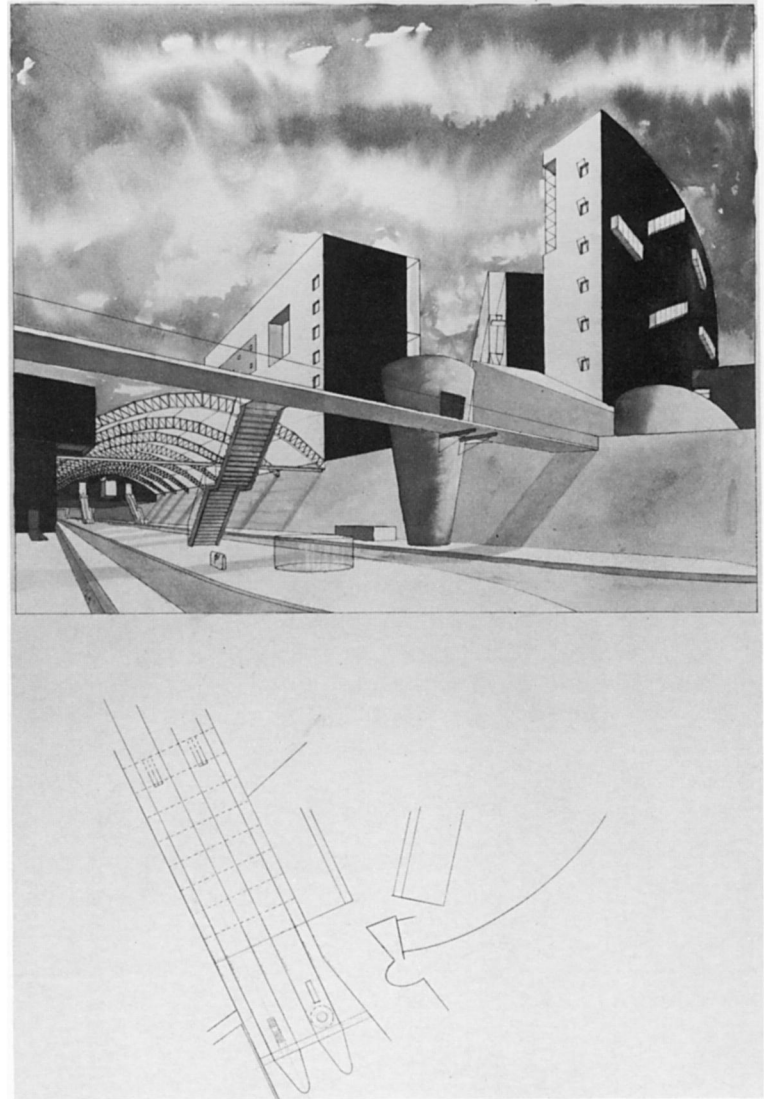
#### **Porta Vittoria site: Ideas for parts**

For the existing park, Largo Marinai d'Italia, a giant pond is proposed to reconcile the park with its name. The Palazzina Liberty is restored as the Dario Fo Pavilion and is accessible by rowing-boat only. A series of floating walkways connect a seamen's exhibition: residential apartments hover over tiny exhibits (an oar, a horn, a carving). The old sailors discuss the artefacts with passing visitors.

At the edge of the pond is a large metronome-like Monument to Toil, in memory of the loading and unloading which once occupied this site. As the slow movement of each pipe-beam reaches the end of a beat, water is emitted. Nearby, an aviary housing two white doves juts out of the park, bringing light to an underground assemblage.

Across Viale Umbria, in the Garden of Sounds, the park infiltrates the urban area. Within the garden is a seasonal children's zoo. Other little programmes are implied by the titles of the different parts: See-saw, Fishing, Water-chute, Sleigh, La Commedia Italiana, Octopus, Fireworks.

To the south of the site is a large public botanical garden with glass roof-forms that parallel the vegetation within. Over the sloping earthen floor of the interior, scattered throughout the dense vegetation, are areas for experimental botany, draughts and chess tables, and meeting tables. On the ground of the eastern portion is a hall containing



*Train platform.*

a dissecting cinema. The public is exposed to back-projection on constructed objects, multiple separation and other cinematic experiments.

Bounding the botanical garden is a large public fountain which is negotiated via stone steps and passages interspersed with cascades of water. The fountain opens on to a long basin for aquatic activities and barge-borne theatrical events. At the edge of this opening is a hotel for unhappy lovers. Its plan has no interior corridors; rather, all the rooms are set back-to-back. A large glass corridor belts the building. At the top is a crooked café/lounge and a wiry truss containing a foot-bridge leading to a suspended chapel.

On the northeast portion of the site a water channel is flanked by rudimentary houses for homeless transients. Nearby, a public gymnasium is organized in a strip interspersed with spectator areas. To the west is a school of humanities. Its central block of lecture rooms is banded by study-room towers; visiting professors live in the upper portions. From the main building is a walkway leading to two wedge-shaped workshop-studios. To the west, a ramp cycles through a two-part correlating facility, leading upwards to more and more remote spaces, arriving at a mechanical roof-top simulating teleological suspension.

Near Via F. Rezzanico is a sanctuary of muses filled with ancient stone fragments. A modern cinema is inserted from the east. The public can move back and forth from celluloid simulation to stone materiality.

The new underground station opens to the west on to an elongated gap. Here the visitor passes through several activities, ascending through an elliptical passage to the Garden of Sounds. Bureaucratic and administrative activities (formless and always in flux) are given specific urban characters in a thin tower, a four-sided pentagon, a double-flux slab (whose section can be altered) and large galleries along the water-basin. The lobbies of these work-areas are connected by a central neck-shaped space. Across Via Muguello to the east, larger programmes fit into the existing city fabric, including the airport connection station and, adjacent, the bus garage, housed below a public arena and velodrome.

Of these ideas for particular parts, several might be realized, yet the overall strategy and intention depends on none of them. They serve only as a sample for the figure in the landscape of this city, for whom the unknown is a source of optimism. To affirm the joy of the present, to find lines of escape, to subvert an overall urban plan from within, by means of architecture, is part of projecting an open future.

#### *Steven Holl Architects*

*Team members: Peter Lynch, Paola Iacucci, Laurie Beckerman, Ron Peterson, Jacob Allderdice, Meta Brunzema, Ralph Nelson, Darius Sollohub, Lynnette Widder, Gisue Harriri, Mojgan Harriri, James Leet, Lorcan O'Herlihy, Stephen Cassell*