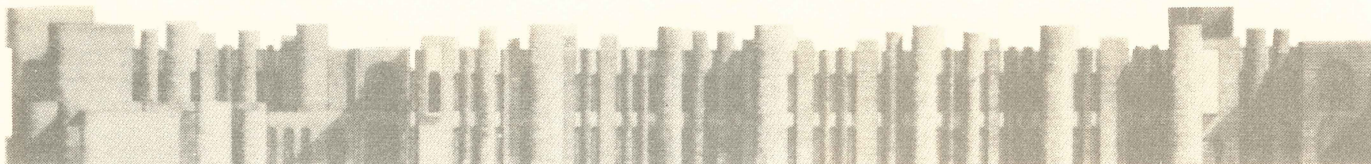
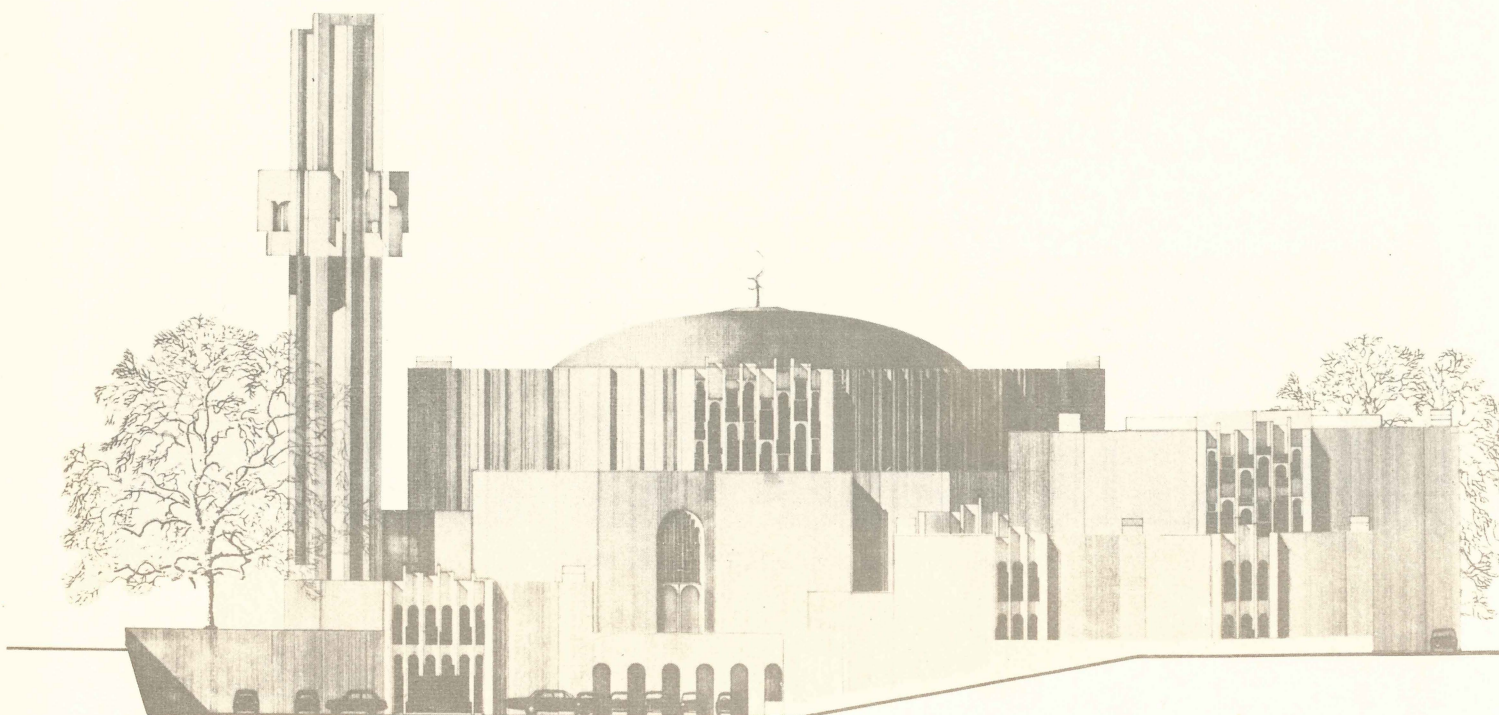


Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs, Baghdad, 1965.

**REGIONAL
MODERNISM
RIFAT CHADIRJI'S
PORTFOLIO
OF ETCHINGS**



Medical Auxiliary Training Centre, Baghdad, 1966.



Central Mosque, London, 1969.

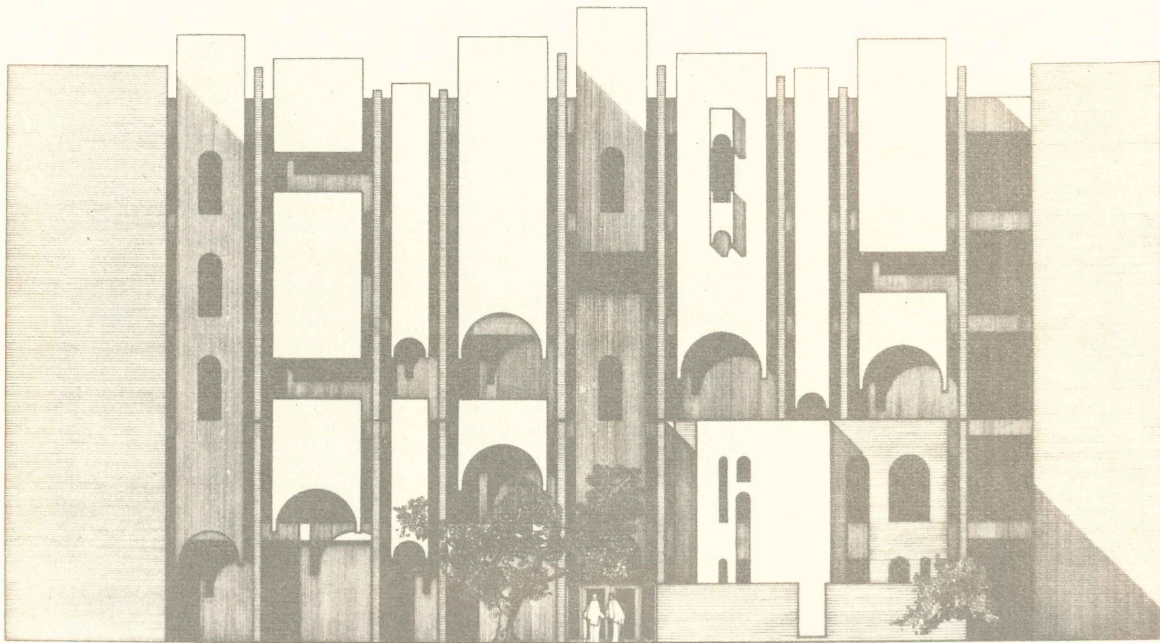
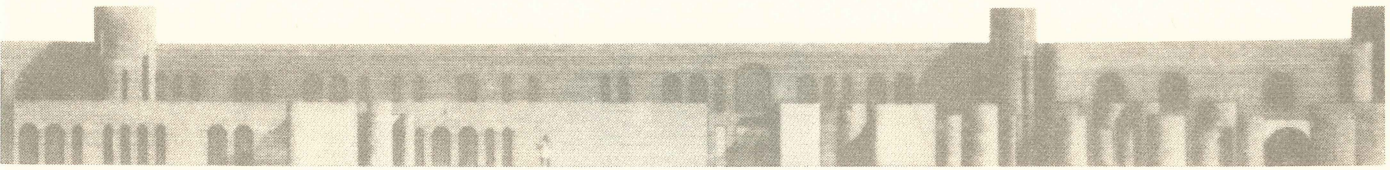
The driving force behind Rifat Chadirji's architecture has been his attempt to reconcile contemporary social needs with new technology.

This crystallisation of "the two determinant poles in this dialectical interaction" began, when in 1952 as a student, Iraqi architect Chadirji found no models or even a paradigm that he could turn to for inspiration in his designs. So during that time he formulated a proposition which has guided his work. The proposition is this: trade and international development have the tendency of creating a common base for today's architecture which serves as *a priori* knowledge for a universal architecture which shuns local, regional or national architectural styles. On the other hand new building technologies are essential to the socio-economic and cultural evolution of developing countries. To ignore modern building tech-

nology is to delay development. But every advance has a negative side. In construction this means the introduction of unfamiliar materials and methods of production which are often incompatible with the traditional indigenous technology or local styles.

As Chadirji puts it, "since each era has its own constituents, each must beget its own forms. In time, some of these forms are established and their totality manifests itself as the epochal style". However, he differentiates the situation after the Industrial Revolution as being new in the history of civilisation; "our era ... should not be judged as being no more than another link in the chain of historical developments of styles, for it breaks with the past definitively".

And it is this break that has largely contributed to an identity crisis in architecture — especially in the rapidly-



Rafidain Bank, Baghdad, 1971.

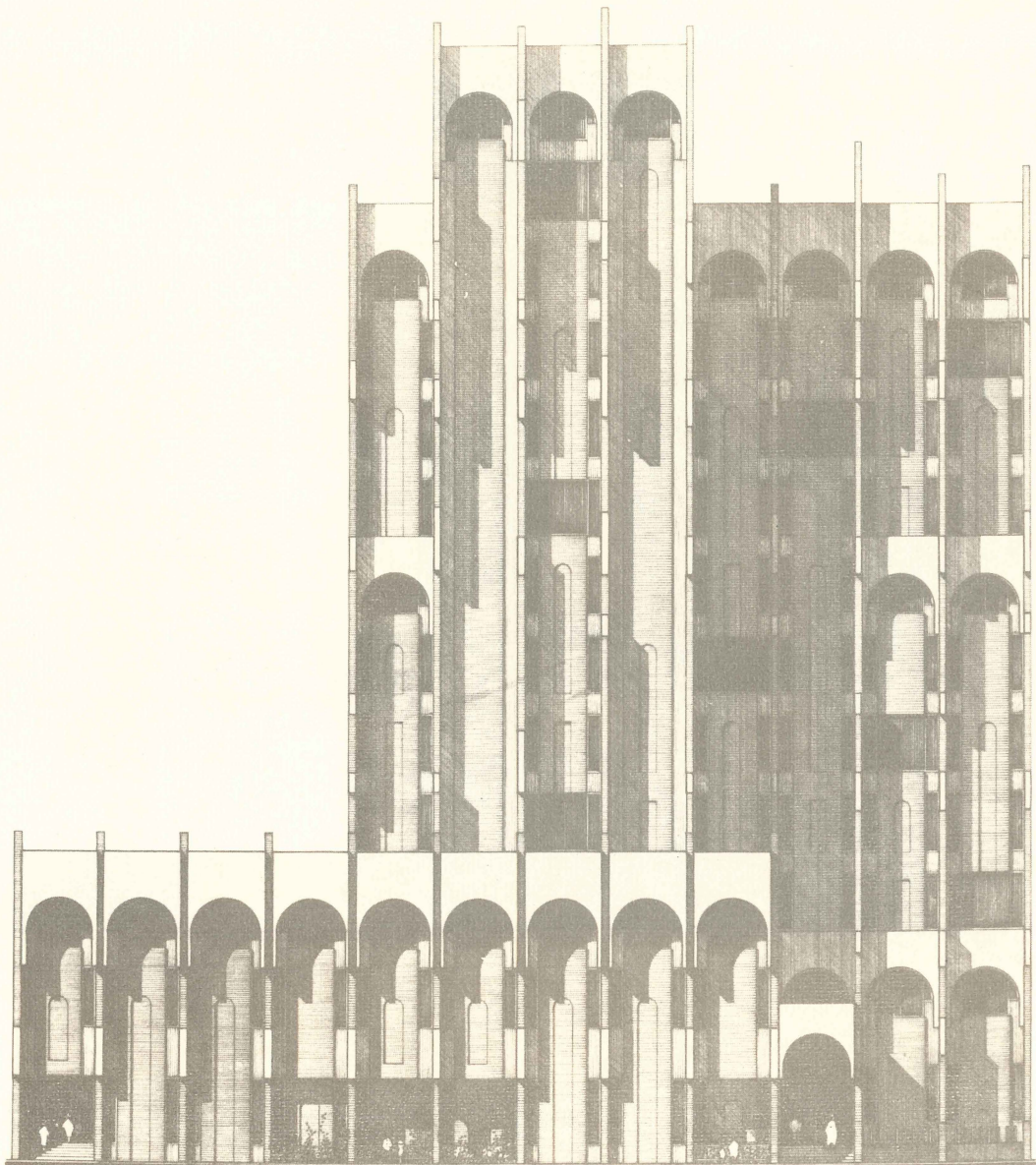
developing and newly-independent countries of the world. Chadirji perceived the need to control and discipline the development of technology in such a way to ensure particular cultural and environmental solutions for specific locations: What he has called "regional modernism". He formed his ideas both through research and his buildings of the late 1950's and early 1960's. His specific concern was with his own country where he "was convinced that Iraq must have a regional modern style ... and that (this) would require the work of many decades and the creative effort of many generations of architects. Therefore, one must experiment, for to reach a cultural goal is in itself a process that must be preceded by a gamut of events."

His architectural experiments broadened their scope in the 1960's and early 1970's, developing his own design

vocabulary in which he combats the forces of revivalism and nostalgia.

A beautifully executed portfolio of twelve etchings has been published in 1984 illustrating some of Chadirji's projects, some built, others not, of his most prolific years as a designer. The etchings illustrate works ranging in scale and type from a single family house to large complexes. Each reveals a link in a progression of ideas and style in the architect's approach to design. The portfolio, in a limited edition of 100, signed and numbered with 10 artists' proofs is printed on a 300 gsm paper and makes a handsome addition to any library, not only as a work of art but as a record of work by one of the important architects of the Arab world today.

Hasan-Uddin Khan



Central Post Telephone and Telegraph Building, Baghdad, 1971.

“The Architecture of Rifat Chadirji: A collection of twelve etchings” is printed at The Print Centre Ltd, Covent Garden, London. (Information on how to order may be obtained through Marika Pappa c/o ARC Design Consultants, 1 Cambridge Gate, Regent’s Park, London NW1.)

The etchings and quotations by Chadirji are reprinted from the portfolio with his permission.