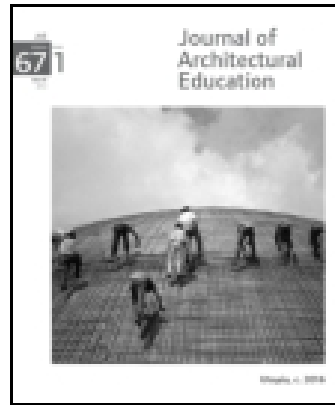


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Richard Meier's Stadthaus Project at Ulm

Urban Context and its abstract interpretation

Stephen Nicolaus Barthelmess. He began studies in the history of art and architecture, archaeology, and philosophy in 1982 at the Ludwig Maximilians Universität, Munich. His research projects have included first and second generation German expressionist artists, American expressionism, art since the 1960s, early Greek sculpture, and the philosophy of Plato, Kant, Schelling, and Nietzsche. Since 1985, he has pursued the doctoral degree at Munich and the Université de Paris, Sorbonne, with a concentration in architecture for cultural buildings. His master's degree culminated in an analysis of museum architecture since 1945, and was published in 1988 as *Das postmoderne Museum als Erscheinungsform von Architektur: Die Bauaufgabe des Museums im Spannungsfeld von Moderne und Postmoderne*. Barthelmess currently holds a predoctoral fellowship at the Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities, and is completing a dissertation on the relation between museum architecture and urbanism, with a focus on the projects of Richard Meier.

Since the late 1960s, architectural practice has increasingly been confronted by urbanistic demands, and architects have been forced to consider that the isolation of architecture from the realm of city planning can no longer be legitimated. The question of representation in architecture arises in this context against the background of the tradition of abstraction, and it is precisely in projects for cultural buildings in the center of the city as an architectural task that this development can be traced. The adoption of historical form plays a crucial role in this development: architectural projects of recent years have shown that construction can embrace the wide spectrum from 'quotation' to 'allusion.' They have also demonstrated that the architect's personal, visual experience can be rendered available and public. The present paper addresses the problem of the architect's attitude toward historical form, how this is related to the abstract tradition in building, and, how it can be ultimately lead from indifference to interest.

"My style is born out of the culture, yet is profoundly connected with personal experience."¹

The architect Josef Illuis Sert, president of the Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne from 1947 to 1956, told the following story at the 8th C.I.A.M. in 1951:

"In 1922, Le Corbusier accepted an invitation issued by the Salon d'Automne, and asked Marcel Temporal about the Salon's definition of urban construction. Temporal replied, 'We are interested in street art, benches, kiosks, street lamps, and billboards.' Temporal also had a commission for him: 'Look, you should design a fountain for me.' But Le Corbusier replied: 'Alright, I'll design a fountain for you, but behind it I shall place a city for three million inhabitants.'"²

The official theme of the congress was 'The Urban Center', and during the course of these proceedings, the inadequacy of the 'Charter of Athens' was finally recognized.³ Architectural concepts of the early twentieth century—Tony Garnier's *Cité industrielle* (1901-1904), Antonio Sant' Elia's *Città nuova* (1913-1914), Mario Chiattoni's *Project for a Modern Metropolis* (1914), Bruno Taut's *Stadtkrone* (1917-1919), Le Corbusier's *Ville contemporaine de 3 millions d'habitant* (1922) the *plan voisin for Paris* (1925), Ludwig Hilbersheimer's *Hochhausstadt* (1924)—were so dominant that the city planning arising from them, prefiguring a terrifying utopian town of the future, provoked endless discussions. It was made very clear that the ahistoric city planning concepts of these architects were not reconcilable with existing town structures which had gradually evolved over the course of history, and which had essentially been 'inherited.'⁴ The urban projects of the early twentieth century demonstrated very clearly that because architecture had attempted to dominate city planning attempts, architects had effectively lost the 'street,' the fundamental artery of metropolitan life. These projects were, on the one hand, a reaction against Camillo Sitte's idea of *city planning according to artistic principles*, but on the other hand, they expressed the utopian concept of an architecture which

could resolve the problems of a modern, industrialized society. The complex social relationships resulting from the impact of industrialization on cities found their answer in the utopian planning concept for the town. Two fundamental modern utopias developed out of this process: the 'plan' and the 'society.' The futurist manifesto, *l'Architettura futurista* of August 1914, already expressed the new thinking when Antonio Sant' Elia wrote:

"*Nous ne sommes plus les hommes des cathédrales mais des ports colossaux, des marchés couverts, des passages brillamment éclairés, des plans de démolition et de reconstruction. Il nous faut inventer la cité futuriste: il faut qu'elle soit un immense chantier tumultueux, vivant, noble, dynamique...*"⁵

It proved to be an irony of history that it was precisely the destruction of the Second World War that created the preconditions necessary for the realization of these concepts. As a result, in the years following 1945 when many European towns were finally levelled as the first stage of the postwar reconstruction process, the methodological problem of whether these towns should be *newly built* or, if the conditions of that particular part of the town in question allowed it, *newly arranged*, was more and more vigorously posed.⁶ Any solution clearly had to take into account both historical and urban dimensions.⁷ The lively discussions about a new arrangement of the Berlin *Kulturforum*—still fresh in the memory even today—pointed to the ambivalence inherent in the conflict between architecture and city planning. Wolf Jobst Siedler aptly characterized this state of affairs when he said:

"Scharoun's Philharmonia would only have had a chance to be the majestic centerpiece of the city if it had been placed in the old Wilhelmina quarter—just as, indeed, the Pompidou Center is surrounded by districts of 17th century buildings. It is the environment of today, not yesterday, that has, in an urban context, ruined it and, as a result, this formless cultural center around the unique constructions of Mies van der Rohe, Gropius, and Scharoun is inescapable proof of the fact the the epoch of ensemble building is no longer competent."⁸



1 Münsterplatz at Ulm prior to 1986 architectural competition for the new Stadthaus

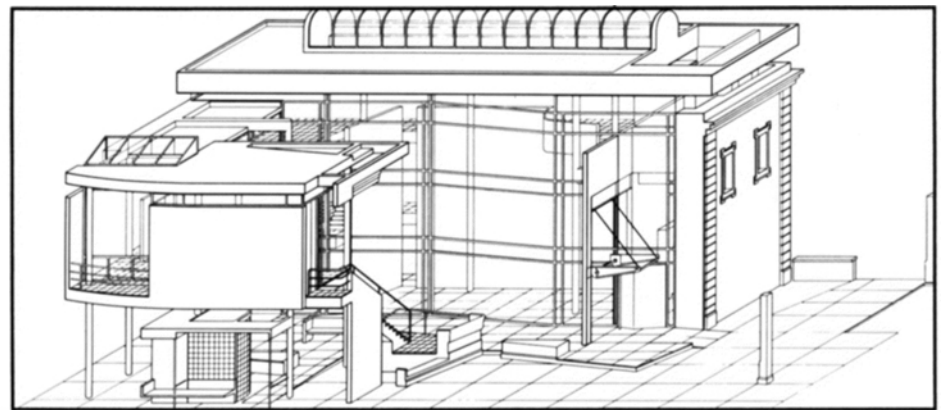
The former *Reichsstadt* of South Württemberg, Ulm, has been wrestling with the problem of reshaping its 'Münsterplatz' for about one hundred years. A look at the present urban situation reveals an image that can be found in many postwar European cities: Where the medieval town center stood before its destruction, both restoration and reconstruction were carried out with the functional plainness that characterized architecture of the 1950s and 1960s. In this spirit, the overscaled, tarmacadamed square in front of the Münster cathedral, where now stands a flat-roofed 'pavilion,' was surrounded on its periphery by buildings with monotonous gabled façades. This situation at once raises questions about the fate of the architecture of the modern movement after 1945. The city of Ulm, location off the former Hochschule für Gestaltung—a successor of the Bauhaus—even today has an uncertain relation to Bauhaus ideas and architecture.⁹ The decision to destroy the present Miesian flat-roofed pavilion and to replace it with a Meier building constitutes a fearless attempt to confront the old avant-garde against all opposition.¹⁰



2 Stadthaus Ulm project of 1986, aerial view of model from west

It was clear that at the end of the 1980s, the unprepossessingly plain outward appearance of the center was no longer the appropriate image for the prosperous town of Ulm, not least because in this square stands a cathedral with the world's tallest spire.¹¹ In 1986, an international competition of invited architects opened the way for a totally new planning concept for the cathedral square, and Richard Meier's concept was ultimately accepted.¹² (Figures 1, 2)

Meier's proposed design for Ulm occupies a special position in his architectural work.



3 Richard Meier, Museum of Modern Art, Villa Strozzi, Florence, 1973

With the Ulm project, the demands of city planning on architecture became public and were realized. Thus, it is not so much its outward appearance that especially distinguishes his concept, but rather its urbanistic significance.¹³ Meier's design for the Ulm Stadthaus—and particularly by comparison with the submissions of other architects—represents a concept that demonstrates the effectiveness of a combination of the new and the traditional where public building is concerned, and turns a new stage in urbanist thinking into reality. It is precisely in projects for cultural buildings in the center of the city as architectural task that this development can be seen since the early 1970s.¹⁴ The basic L-shaped structure of the Ulm project was first used by Meier as a building form in his project for the Museum of Modern Art, Villa Strozzi, Florence (1973). (Figures 3, 4, 5) The structure employed here was developed in connection with an existing nineteenth-century villa and its stables, and was intended to bring together the new and the old in a building ensemble. The L-shaped building takes its shape from the analogous plan of the existing stables, assuming the form and proportions of the older architecture, and causing the open space created between the two parts of the complex to 'melt away' by providing an open ground-floor level. Meier's project thus achieves an enclosed space, one which sets up a harmony among the existing buildings and which results in an ensemble that strives toward intimate interaction with its urban surroundings.

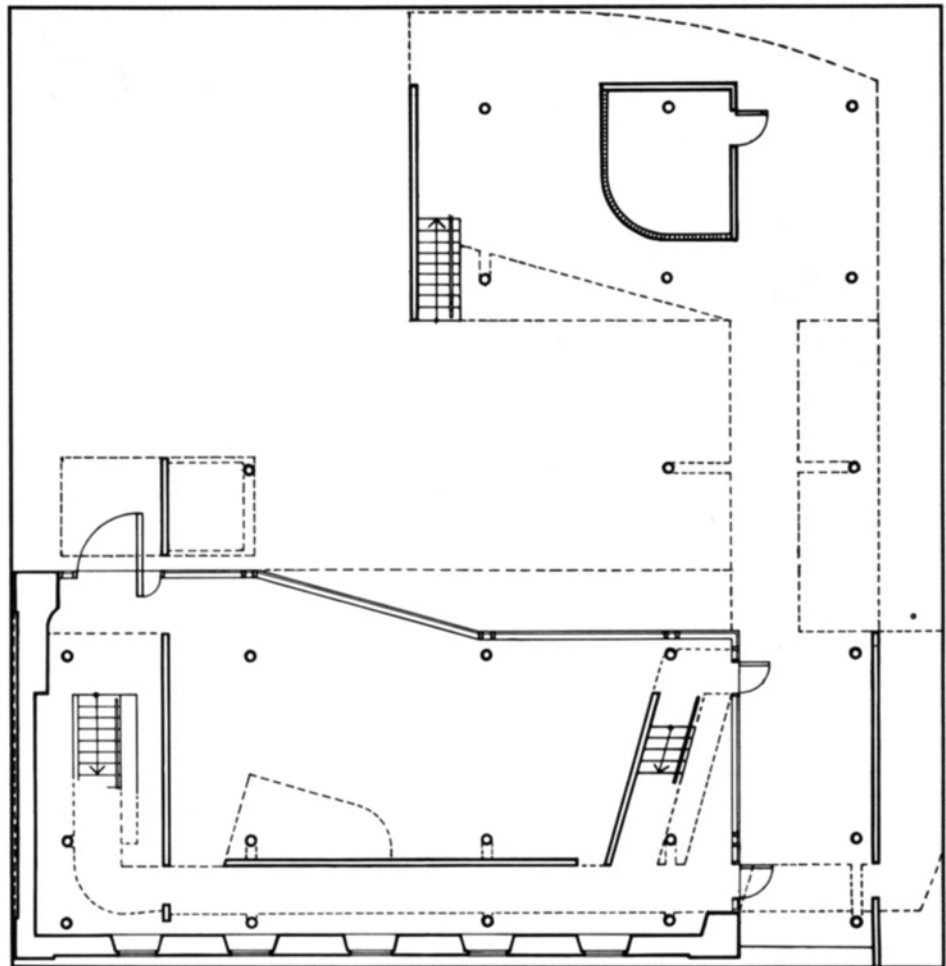
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In building the Museum für Kunsthandwerk at Frankfurt-am-Main (1979-1985) (Figures 6, 7), Meier returned to the L-shaped configuration which had characterized the Florentine design, but here he adapted it to meet quite different basic requirements. Taking the existing neoclassical Villa Metzler as a point of departure, Meier implanted in his Frankfurt museum a design concept formulated in architectural theory from Vitruvius to Alberti and Palladio which proposed a disposition of open urban spaces analogous to the spatial dispositions of the house. Palladio related this to the Greek and Roman fora, and refined the idea in his design for the 'Palazzo Porto-Festa'.¹⁵ (Figures 8, 9) The Frankfurt museum building itself draws on Italian city planning ideas in which the house is conceived as a small city, and the city as a big house—the notion of *casa in città e città in casa*.¹⁶ In Richard Meier's designs, the architectural form of the L-shaped ground plan and a specific urban typology stand over and against each other, and only when they are linked together do they acquire architectural coherence.

In the design for Ulm, Meier does not strive to render the architecture an immanent 'town structure' in itself, as at Frankfurt. Here the cathedral square as an urban form takes on a 'structure' which both newly defines the square and emphasizes its intrinsic urban character. That which in Frankfurt is integral to the architectural program finds its realization at Ulm only in rapport with the existing urban situation: The disproportionately large scale of the Münsterplatz is transformed by Meier's design into an unconstrained *abstract interpretation* of urban density of the kind that we know from Italian squares. The function of the Stadthaus as *symbol* of public life, community, and democratic freedom exceeds the *functional* heritage of architecture; Meier's plan for the building alludes in a subtle way to the significance of the 'square' as the focal point of communal and urban life and in this way gives back to the city center its lost identity. In addition to this, the designation *Stadthaus* makes specific reference to the town halls which are situated in Italian public squares and have a particular urban and civic function. They are themselves integral parts



4 Museum of Modern Art, Villa Strozzi, Florence, view from the stables



5 Museum of Modern Art, Villa Strozzi, plan of ground level

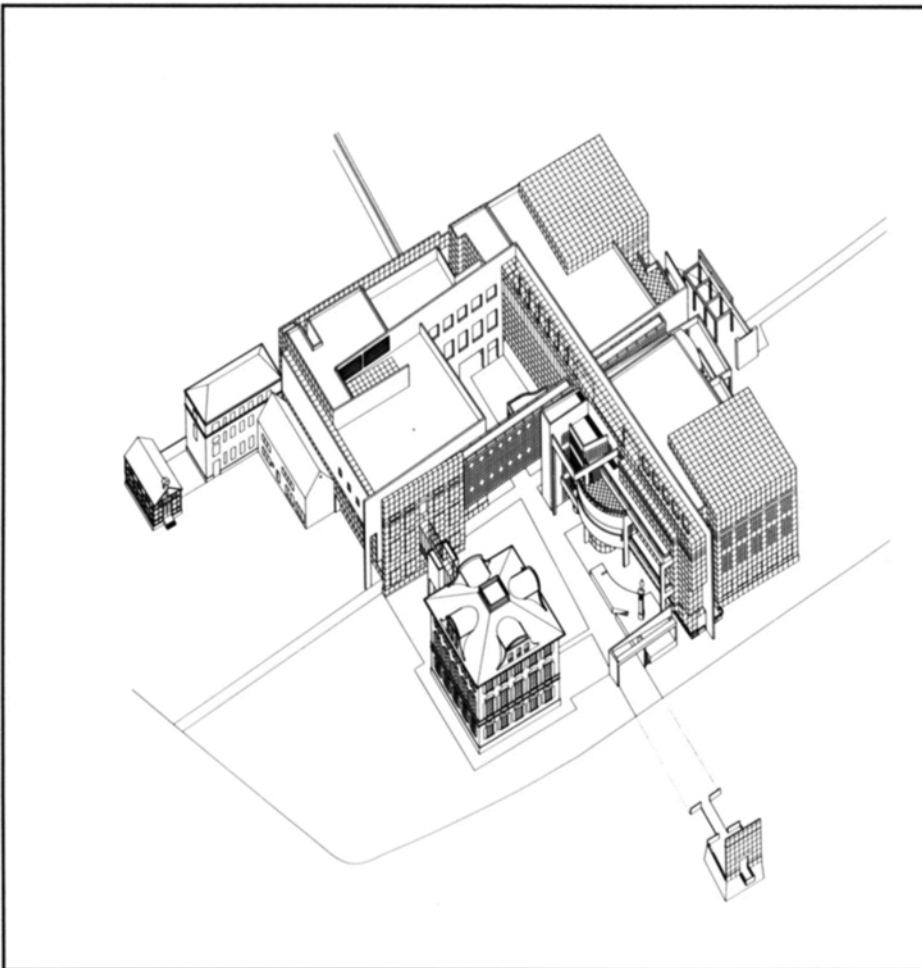
of an urban ensemble which according to Cicero ensured the political and communal identity of the town's inhabitants. They often have an open ground floor with arcades through which one can walk from a large *piazza* to a smaller *piazzetta*, and thereby assume a specific urban role: the demarcation and urbanistic linking of proportionally different open spaces to the city's center.

An analogous urban structure can be found, for example in the northern Italian town of Bergamo.¹⁷ (Figures 10, 11) There, in the upper town of *città alta*, lies the old town center of Bergamo, the spacious Piazza

Vecchia with its beautiful *Fontana del Constarini* reminiscent of Venetian times. It spills over into the smaller Piazzetta del Duomo, which is separated from the grand *piazza* by the Palazzo della Ragione, with its open, arcaded ground floor. The square's accessibility to the public is ensured by a network of streets—some of them quite narrow—and alleyways crossing from east to west and north to south. (figures 12, 13, 14, 15) The larger and more open Piazza Vecchia, surrounded and bordered by buildings of different appearance and function, is open to the important traffic artery of Via Gambito, and facilitates the bustle of town life. The smaller Piazza del

Duomo is much more intimate and enclosed. It takes on the character of an inner courtyard in conjunction with the adjoining Duomo, the Capella Colleoni, the Battistero, the Basilica di Santa Maria Maggiore, and the Palazzo della Ragione, while linkage with and accessibility to the Piazza Vecchia are provided by the open Ground floor of the town hall. Both squares—the *piazza* and the *piazzetta*—arise from the densely woven urban structure, the buildings on their peripheries, and the streets and axes which open into them. The urban density at Bergamo, the similar qualities of the town, and the accessibility of urban open spaces find their analogy, if in an abstract transformation, in Richard Meier's museum project for Frankfurt. This shows, among other things, that the significance of the square and the surrounding buildings can only be realized in an architecturally open and unlimited spatial division.

In the Ulm Stadthaus project, the proportional starting point for the design is the quadratic modular unit—central square—of the cathedral. Its geometric form as a proportional entity—*l'unité qui ne bouge pas*—constitutes the basis for the gridded segmentation of the cathedral square to which the ground plan of the Stadthaus is disjunctively positioned.¹⁸ (Figures 16, 17) The 'tension' which thus arises between the square and the plan for the Stadthaus binds one to the other. The quadratic form is repeated many times within the L-shaped building complex, which is divided into two functionally different parts linked by a wall aligned with the axis of Ulm's main shopping street, Hirschstrasse, and encloses a small inner courtyard. (Figures 18, 19) This wall, which both joins and divides, allows views through an open ground floor. It has its parallel in Frankfurt in that it is integrated into an autonomous urbanistic structure, appearing here as an abstract interpretation of the *palazzo della ragione* described at Bergamo, and also in the way it separates the courtyard with the garden from the forecourt. (Figures 20, 21, 22) Therefore, approaching the spacious square—which one must think of as being fused with the building complex by the repetition of quadratic divisions—and walking through the open ground floor of



6 Richard Meier, Museum for the Decorative Arts, Frankfurt, axonometric view, 1979-1985

6

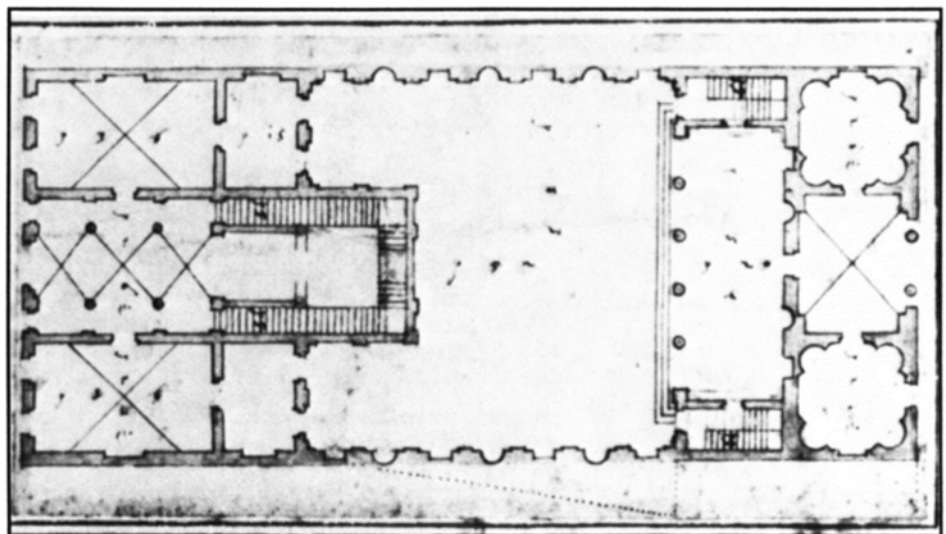
the dividing 'wall,' one arrives at the proportionally smaller peripheral buildings of the square. Through the architecture of the Stadthaus, the square acquires a structure that provokes a dialogue between the large open space in front of the cathedral, the *piazza*, and the smaller open space to the southwest of the ensemble, the *piaz-zetta*.

The greatest 'tension' exists in the small inner courtyard enclosed by the two proportionally and functionally different building units, and in the middle of which a tree will be planted. The shift in balance which occurs here in terms of the spatial relationships of cathedral to square, and Stadthaus to square and to cathedral, has the effect of diffusing the competitive relation between the monumental breadth of the square and the cathedral which 'demands' a town structure on a much smaller scale, in that the focal point of the square is relocated to the open space created by the Stadthaus. In this way, the cathedral regains its autonomy vis-à-vis the square and the peripheral buildings, and recedes into the background, reemphasizing the sense of a loose urban ensemble. Here Meier's ideas about architecture, opposed as they are to a purely functionalist approach to building, are made explicit: The effectiveness of the execution of architectural tasks in conjunction with city planning measures depend upon their integration into the intended urban framework. With this approach, Meier averts the danger of isolating the buildings from the site, joining them together instead into the urban ensemble of Münster, Stadthaus, and peripheral buildings.

It becomes clear in light of these observations that the competition for a new arrangement of the central square in Ulm and especially the project for a cultural building in the central part of the city as an architectural task represented in essence a *city planning challenge*. Since the beginning of the 1970s, related projects by architects like James Stirling, Oswald Mathias Ungers, Rob Krier, Hans Hollein, and others have addressed similar demands, and it was precisely this aspect which engaged Meier's keen interest in this competition.¹⁹ As his designs of the



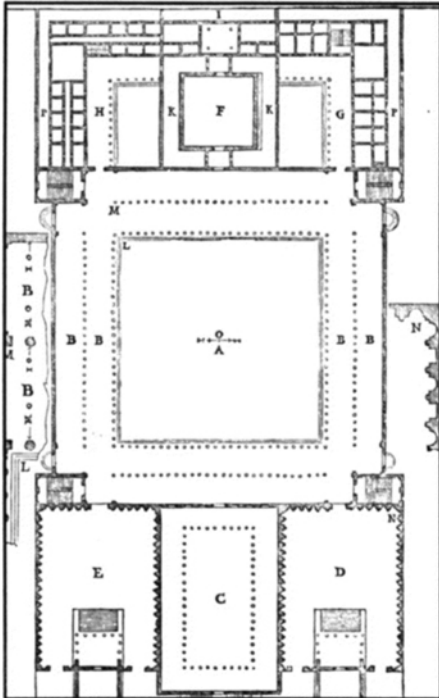
7 Museum for the Decorative Arts, Frankfurt, plan of the ground level



8 Andrea Palladio, second plan for the Palazzo Portofesta [RIBA, XVII, 9]

last few years so forcefully document, Meier's thoughts concerning architecture are increasingly dominated by urban considerations, which for him mean, as in Ulm, concentrating on open space as the heart of communal life. The 'square' comes to be the significant focus of both public architecture and urban planning. Seen in this way, the architectural significance of Meier's design lies in its dialogue with the dimensions of the square, and not in the terms of a functionally independent and inwardly oriented structure like, for example, Ricardo Bofill's monumental design for the Marne de la Vallée near Paris. The architectural arrangement therefore becomes synonymous with urban planning. Precisely because of its urbanistic genesis, Meier's design could not have been realized anywhere other than in the square at Ulm, and the proposed building will acquire its formal identity only there.²⁰ Meier gave expression to this nexus of ideas when he wrote in his 'thoughts about the task':

'The function of architecture—most of all, architecture in a historical context—is to

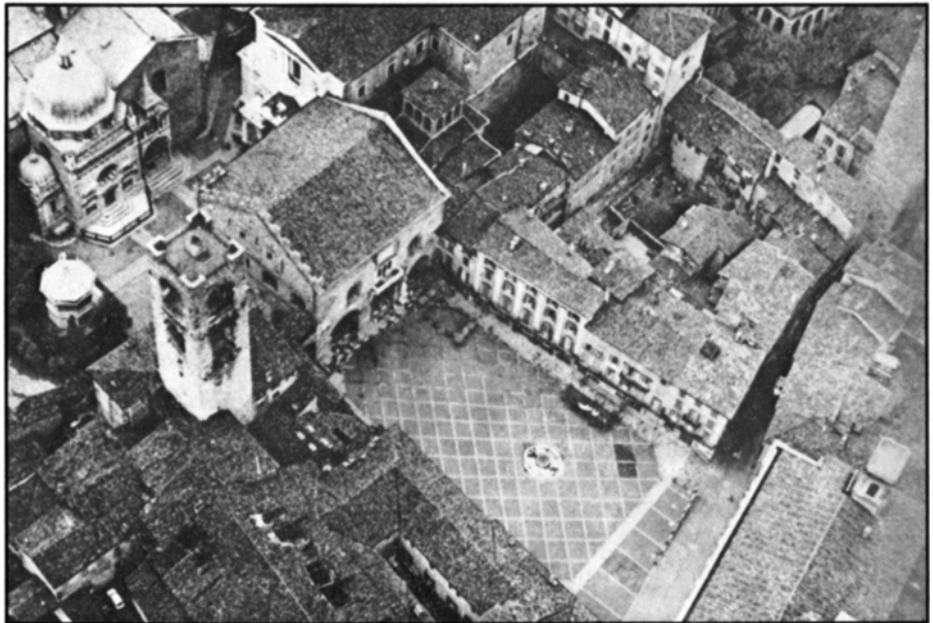


9 Andrea Palladio, plan of a Greek forum from *I Quattro Libri dell'Architettura*, Venice, 1570, Book III

seek and extend associations and relationships—not only functionally and formally but also historically and typologically—associations with the existing buildings and with the town as an entity.²¹

Meier's projects demonstrate the strong influence of city planning principles on architecture, such that architecture itself becomes—as in Frankfurt and Ulm—an illustration of the aesthetic and formal appearance of the city. The result of the development of such practice leads finally to an *urbanization of architecture*.

The architecture of the modern movement sought to resolve problems of urban building architecturally, which led to the loss of the open and variegated structure of the city of the past. Contemporary architecture tackles architectural problems from the standpoint of the requirements of urban planning, and this can lead to a regaining of urban openness and density as well as to an enrichment of urban experience. In this process there is danger in the tendency toward an architecture that is merely quoting old city planning ideas in the tradition of Camillo Sitte. It is important that city planning demands be considered on the basis of concepts inherent in the tendency to-



10 Città alta, Bergamo

ward abstraction, motivated by an abstract interest in 'historical models of the masterpieces of town culture.'²² Meier's cultural buildings demonstrate above all that the architect's personal, visual experience of this town culture can be rendered available and public.

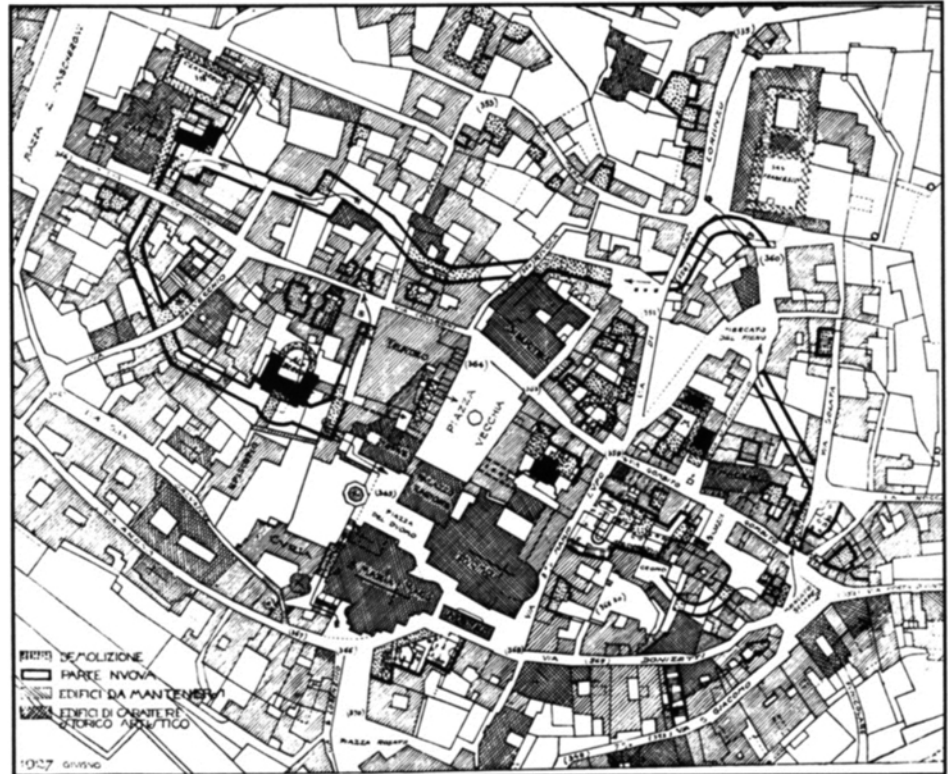
The *urban open space* in the center of the city and its new arrangement manifests itself as abstract interpretation—synonymous with the postmodern—of historical models of the past and the visual experience of them.

Tradition and Innovation

In his Ulm plan, Richard Meier variously hints at historical models and architectural traditions which he does not, however, slavishly copy. Rather, in his borrowing from history, he returns to a basic abstract idea. His use of historical forms is thus motivated by an abstract interest in them. A first link with history exists in the conjunction of the site with the neighboring late gothic cathedral. Interest in the terms of gothic architecture is already reflected, to a certain degree, in Meier's projects prior to Ulm. By allusion to flying buttresses in the atrium of the High Museum of Art,

Atlanta (1979-1984), for example, Meier adopts a significant formal element of gothic architecture and reminds us of the idealistic nineteenth-century view of the museum as 'cathedral of education' or as 'aesthetic church.'²³ (figures 23, 24) In the Ulm design, the quadratic central square of the cathedral plays a fundamental role in the calibration of proportions for the entire project. And, the view to the cathedral offered from the inner exhibition area of the Stadthaus—designated as a gallery for medieval art—makes clear the building's relationship with the neighboring gothic structure.²⁴ To the proportional analogy is added a visual congruence. A third rapport with the cathedral is found in Meier's formal adoption of the open arrangement of the west portal of the cathedral in his design. With its staggered depths and planes, the Stadthaus alludes to the perspectival penetration of space achieved in the west façade of the cathedral. (figures 25, 26) Meier, then, attempts with his design to establish proportional (central square), visual (reflexive prospects), and formal-architectural (perspective penetration of the façade) relationships between Stadthaus and cathedral. The three gabled roofs at the southwestern end of the Stadthaus perform a comparable function in relation to the buildings on the periphery of the Münsterplatz, which in both cases amount to the adoption of medieval roof forms.

A further element Meier draws from the historical language of form, particularly in his recent museum designs, are *architectural installations*, isolated architectural features which appear to stand alone or to mark particular points in the area surrounding a building, but which also emphasize the visitor's access point to park-like sites, making formal connections between architecture and landscape. These independent architectural *installations*, which in Ulm are effectively free-standing walls attached to the building complex, their surfaces pierced by fenestration, contribute to a perspectival differentiation of the structure of the façade. They also represent the adoption of an architectural form known from English country gardens since the middle of the eighteenth century. These so-



11 Plan of Città alta, Bergamo



12 Piazza vecchia of Città alta, Bergamo (photo: Alinari)



13 View through open arcaded ground level of the Palazzo della Ragione and toward the Piazzetta del Duomo, Città alta, Bergamo (photo: Alinari)

called *fabriques* are a newly-established genus of architecture: small-scale structures intended for parks. Taking up the same theme, J. M. Morel, in his *Théorie de jardins* (1776), characterized *fabriques* as buildings that had particular effect in a park-like environment, buildings which were added by man to nature to beautify the garden. They are buildings, as Johannes Langner worked out in his article about the conditions of the architecture of the French Revolution in landscape gardens, which grew out of the archaic form of the garden hut, and developed—mainly through the architecture of Ledoux—an architectural simplicity.²⁵ In employing a particularized type of architecture developed in the middle of the eighteenth century, as an abstract interpretation of these *architectural installations*, Meier harks back to a tradition which played a decisive part in the development of the formal language of modern architecture. Here, however, continuity is manifested in a link between the historical form and a language of form which lead to the architecture of the early twentieth

century, but which also underlines the abstract interest in historical form initiated by the modern movement. One finds other historical 'allusions' in Meier's projects which seem only to have importance in terms of his 'attitude' toward them. Emil Kaufmann, in his description of Ledoux's attitude toward historical forms, aptly expressed what is seen in Meier's projects as a relation between his own architecture and that of the past:

"It is of secondary importance that Ledoux, for example in his 'Barrières,' used old motifs. Even the violent way in which he altered their shape has relatively little significance. Nor can questions regarding their individual origins help to reveal the artistic intentions behind them. The important thing is that Ledoux tried, from the ground up, to build something new. When one recognizes that this was his real aim, then one knows that the decisive, clarifying question is not *where does it come from*, but *in what direction is it going?*"²⁶

The newly awakened interest in the outward appearance of architecture since the end of the 1960s, proof of which lies in the public controversy raised over the Ulm project for the new disposition of the Münsterplatz, is accompanied by the inherent danger that it can lead to a narrowing of view, a blinkered perspective on historical form, both from the standpoint of the proposed architecture as well as its historical surroundings. This approach to interpretation, which claims to recognize historical styles where none exist, hinders a clear view of what is innovative and new in contemporary architecture, and this leads finally to the fact that anyone who talks about *modernism*—in relation to the early twentieth century—is considered 'conservative.' Richard Meier drew his language of form mainly from the early avant-garde, which reveals that his guiding design principle is rooted in abstraction. Meier was concerned with making *visual* the language of form of the modern movement, exactly as he once formulated it in connection with the Frankfurt museum project: "...to say something about what might have been if the nation's greatest talents had not been forced into exile."²⁷ With



14 Piazzetta del Duomo, Città alta, Bergamo (photo: Alinari)

this as a starting point, making historical continuity visual and the abstract interest in historical forms both come to show that historical form is the decisive factor where the survival of modernism is concerned: *Modernism survives in the continuity of historical form.* In this sense, Meier's architecture intends to establish architecture's autonomy, and to replace indifference with interest. Thus, the innovativeness of Meier's architecture is legitimized through the awareness of tradition, a decisive characteristic of his architecture. The Stadthaus project is, therefore, not only a convincing counter to all those polytheisms with which critics of contemporary architecture seek to legitimate their confusion, but it also shows that far from historical form being lost as a result of abstraction, it can be the very source of inspiration for the new.

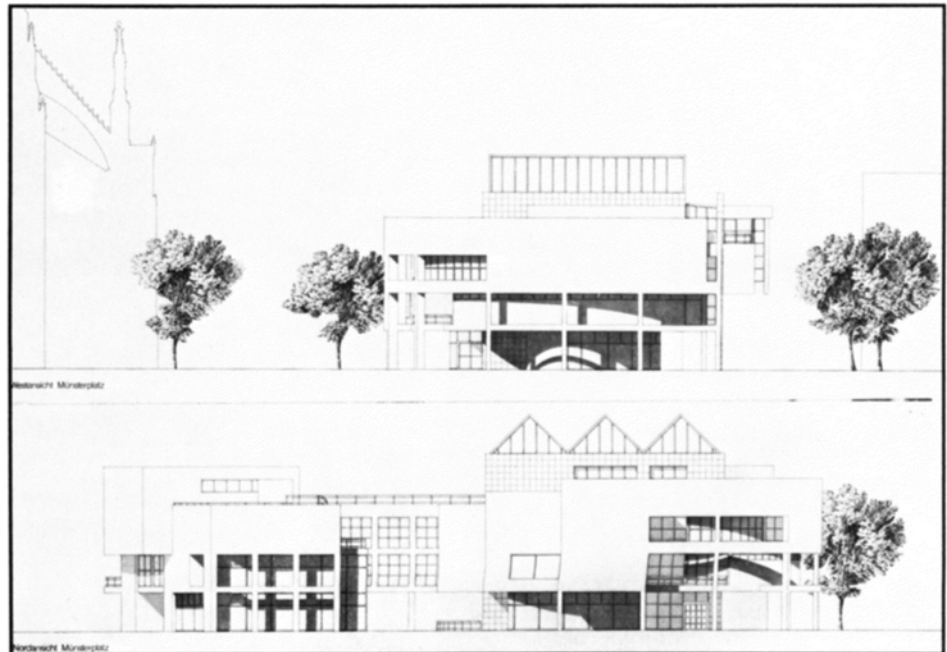
The Quotation as Architecture: The End of Architecture?

"There is much emphasis made these days on labels: Post-Modernism, Late-Modernism, Neo-Modernism, Deconstructivism. I prefer to stay away from labels of any kind as I feel that they tend to shift the focus of the debates, in the universities, forums and publications, from the real, relevant issues in architecture today. There is no question that any architect practicing today has been influenced by the work of the Modernists, Corbusier, Aalto, Mies, and Gropius. And I, obviously, am no exception, but I have equally found much to examine in the work of Bramante, Borromini and Neumann. For my primary concerns have been with making space, manipulating volume, surface, forms and light into a place."²⁸

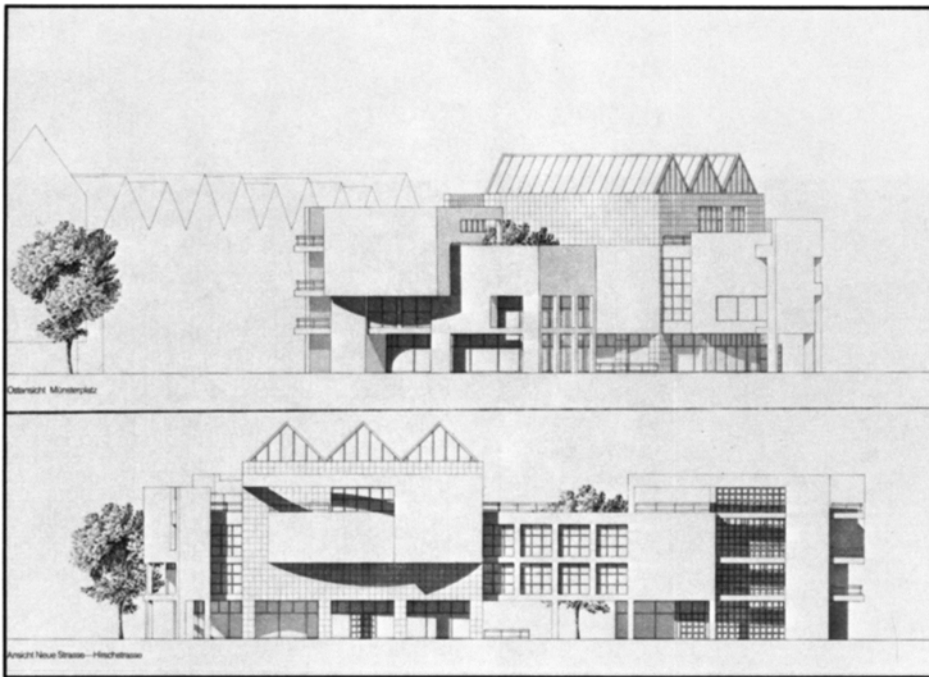
Contemporary architecture is characterized by a multitude of tendencies, schools, and interpretations. The appearance seems to depend exclusively upon how the architect formulates the engagement with a conception of architecture, something which often results in extremely individual 'physiognomic manifestations.'²⁹ As a necessary precondition for this, the architect of course had first to gain autonomy from the uniformity of functional construction. In a parallel development, the architecture has



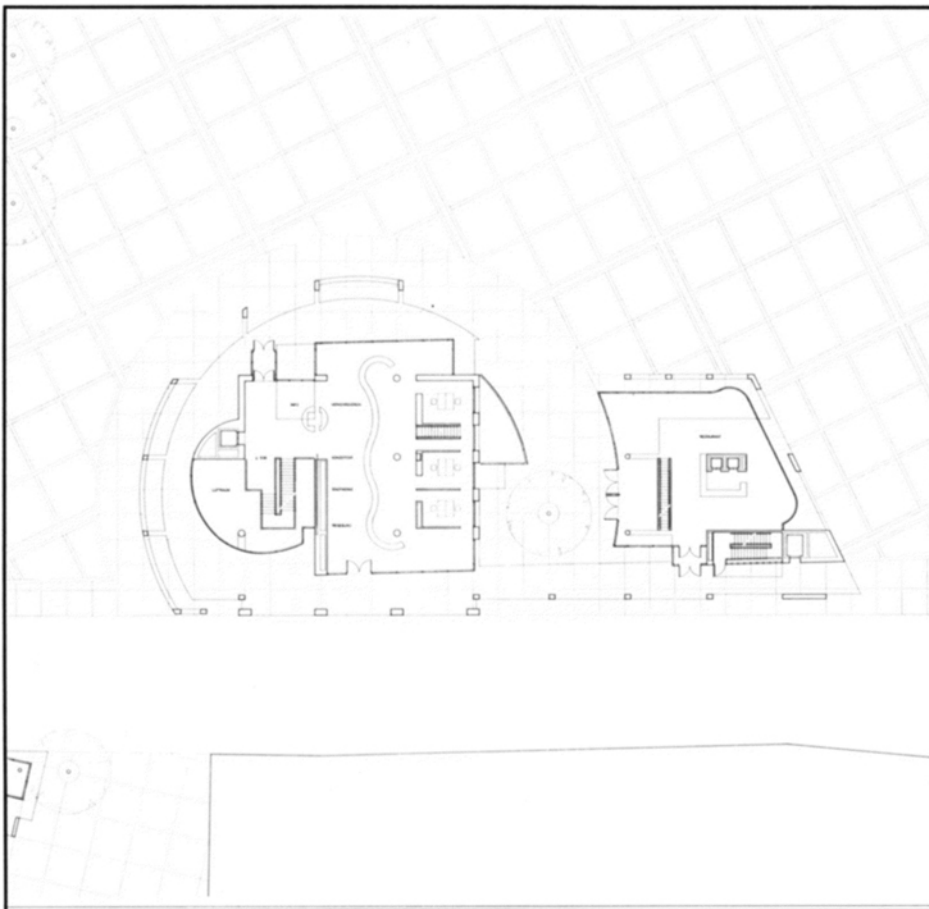
1.5a Stadthaus Ulm project of 1986 (courtesy Richard Meier, Architect)



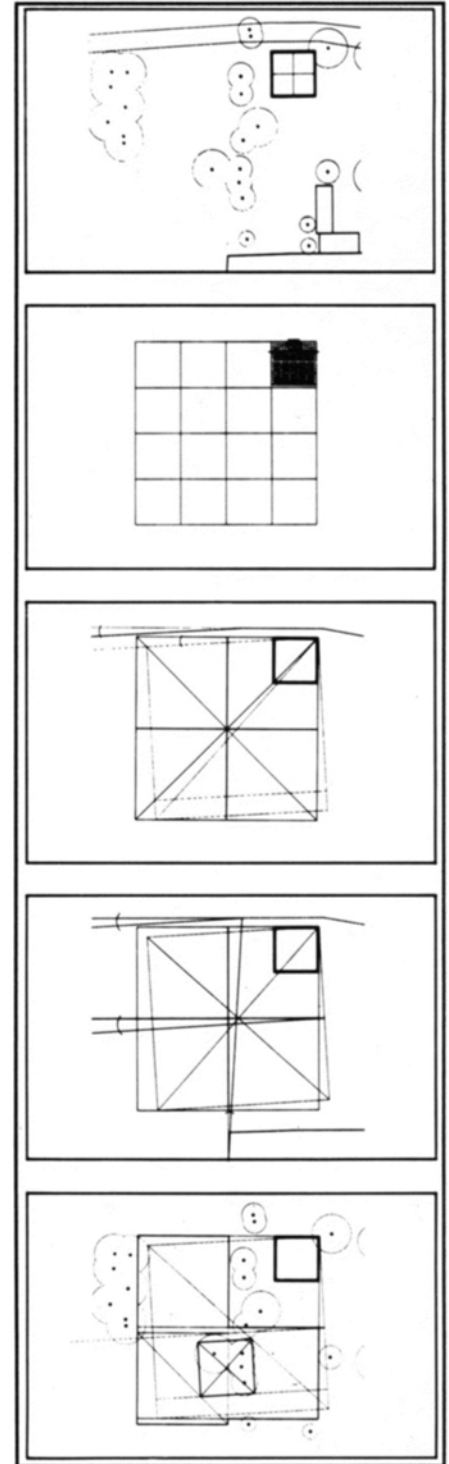
1.5b Stadthaus Ulm project of 1986 (courtesy Richard Meier, Architect)



15c Stadhous Ulm project of 1986 [courtesy Richard Meier, Architect]



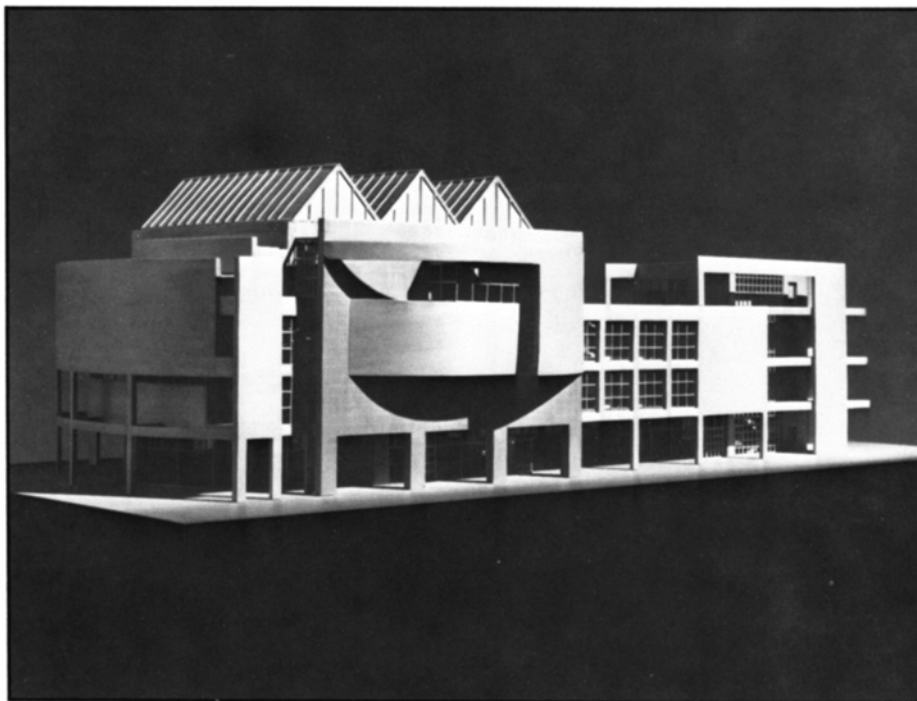
17 Stadhous Ulm project of 1986, ground plan with 'dividing wall' [courtesy Richard Meier, Architect]



16 Museum for the Decorative Arts, Frankfurt, analytical diagrams of site and overlaid grids



18 Münsterplatz-Hirschstrasse of Ulm/Donau in its present state



19 Stadthaus Ulm project of 1990 (photo: Richard Meier, Architect)

tended to represent himself as an artist in order to emphasize newly gained independence. Along with many other architects, Richard Meier published his monograph in the familiar Renaissance tradition of the artist presenting his *oeuvre*, titling it *Richard Meier Architect*. In this volume, he published a photograph of himself in the same pose as is represented in a self-portrait by the mannerist painter Francesco Mazzola, called 'Il Parmigianino' (1523).³⁰ (Figures 27, 28) Once liberated from the historic compulsion of the functionalist tradition, the architect became master of an inexhaustible pluralism of forms. Delving with uninhibited desire into the box of 'building blocks' left over from the history of architecture, he was at last free to 'play' with those forms so long denied. Stuttgart of Paris, New York or London, it doesn't matter where: temples, columns, gable, picturesque forms of all kinds became the popular requisites of the language of architecture and were used with a facile virtuosity.

The Quotation

Is it irony, musealization, memory, expression for the absence of the architect's inspiration, fashion, liberation from the functionalist dogma, or merely expression of indifference to the categories of stylistic conception? While the phenomenon of the return of the 'quotation' in contemporary architecture raises a number of questions, in particular those of meaning and intention, above all it indicates a decisive turn away from international functionalism. And, the problem of the fate of architecture *after* abstract functionalism became a public concern precisely because of this return to the historical quotation. One of the first architects to engage the problem of transplanting forms from the past for nonfunctional, merely representational—purely aesthetic—purposes was James Stirling in his project for the reorganization of the town center of Derby (1970), the prototype for Charles Moore's Piazza d'Italia in New Orleans (1976-1979). (Figures 29, 30) The international museum competitions for the Wallraf-Richartz-Museum and Sammlung Ludwig in Cologne (1975), and for the Kunstsammlung Nordrheinwestfalen in Düsseldorf (1975) provided the impetus for discussions about a new architectural language. These projects apparently repre-

sented the beginnings of a fundamental shift in architectural discourse which would culminate in the international competition for the extension of the Staatsgalerie Stuttgart (1974-1977).³¹ They demonstrate a shift in emphasis resulting in the increased influence of urban design problems on architectural conception. The necessity for urban space to be *functional space* has declined and given way to the expectation that urban space could be *representational space* which offers new and unfamiliar experiences. The influence of urban design on architecture, the new autonomy of the architect, the new relation between art, architect, and architecture, and a corresponding increase in projects for new museum buildings defined the terms for this new language of architecture. The quotation—often utterly superficial—became the very *medium* of architectural conception; in particular, the following four typical 'quotations' come into play in contemporary architectural projects:

1. the formal stylistic quotation: architectural form detached from its historical context;

2. the abstract interpretation of urban forms and patterns: traditional urban patterns adopted under the auspices of the 'construction' or 'reorganization' of urban space;

3. the interpretation and transposition of historical models based on an abstract-functional language of forms in connection with new materials: high-tech architectural design;

4. intellectual rationales for projects based on historical, architectural, and philosophical theory: architecture as project.

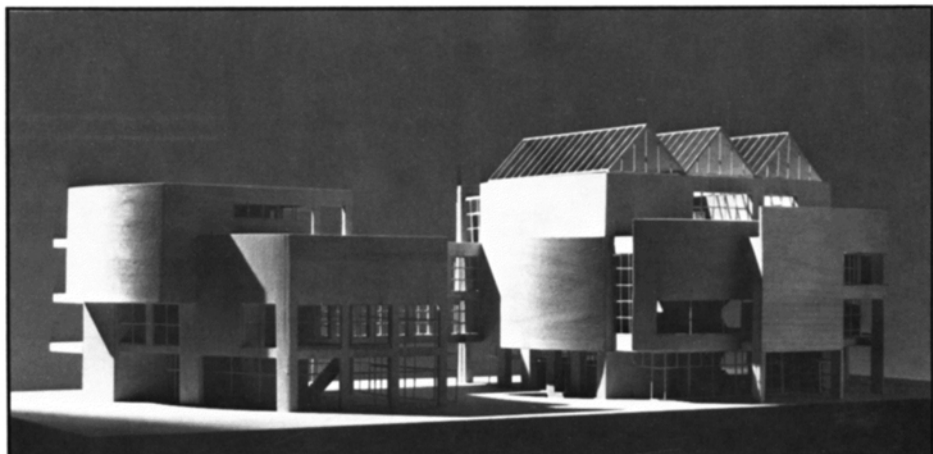
James Stirling's design for Stuttgart provided an initial testing ground for the project of quotation from the history of architecture: The unmistakable classicism of his plan recalls the great nineteenth-century tradition of the museum. Egyptian, Greek, Roman, medieval, baroque, surrealist, constructivist, Pop, and so on: the pluralistic archaeological time-work could be read with great ease even by the most casual observer. The visitor is confronted



20 Palazzo della Ragione between piazza and piazzetta, Città alta, Bergamo (photo: Alinari)



21 Museum for the Decorative Arts, Frankfurt, north elevation



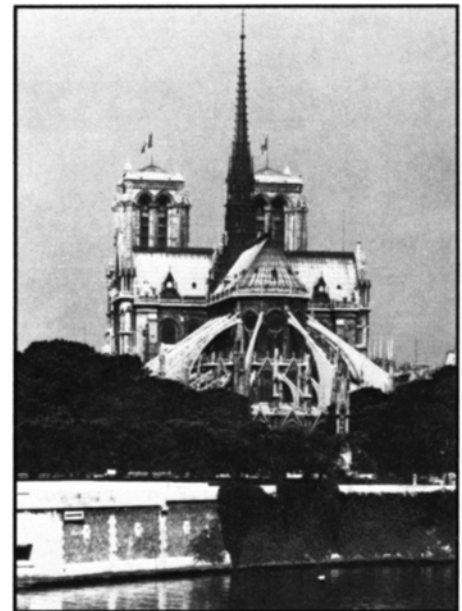
22 Stadthaus Ulm project of 1990 with small inner courtyard (photo: Richard Meier, Architect)



23 Richard Meier, High Museum of Art, Atlanta, view from entrance ramp toward atrium, 1983

with a plethora of architectural quotations whose seamless integration cleverly sets the stage for a public pedestrian way, a kind of Le Corbusian 'architectural promenade.'³² (Figures 31,32) In the compression of passageways and axes connecting the open spaces of the complex, Richard Meier realized with his Museum für Kunsthandwerk in Frankfurt-am-Main something he further developed with his Stadthaus project for Ulm—an urban program which proposed a disposition of open spaces analogous to spatial dispositions in the house based on the *casa in città e città in casa* formula, with a formal architectural appearance related to early twentieth-century architecture.³³ Norman Foster's Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank building in Hong Kong (1982-1985) ushered in a new era for skyscrapers. The abstract interpretation of Chinese *lampignons* and temple architecture in conjunction with a constructivist futuristic language of forms related to the work of Tatlin, El Lissitzky, Leonidow, Sant' Elia, and the architecture of the Russian Revolution from about 1927 now all manifested with updated materials and processes of construction, brings to architecture a completely new appearance: high-tech and representation, inno-

vation and tradition come together in the purest alliance.³⁴ (Figure 33) Adapting old philosophical theories to the conception of architecture, Oswald Mathias Ungers developed a system of building theories. The 'coincidence of opposites,' (Nicolaus von Cues's Beryll, for example) suggests the architectural principle of architecture 'explaining itself.'³⁵ Based upon investigations into the subject of space, Hans Dieter Schaal proposed a variety of 'architectural situations' for creating space in architecture. *Vis-à-vis* architectural tradition and practice, such a theoretical approach is not conceived or intended for realization, but rather is condemned to the status of 'project' or 'idea.'³⁶ (Figure 34) In connection with Stirling's direction, an intensification of architecture by its *objectification* through the use of historical quotation, Ungers's and Schaal's intellectual direction seems to be the opposite pole one which defeats itself by virtue of the threat of an architectural utopia. This, by the way, is a characteristic already known from the architecture of the French Revolution and from Piranesi's architectural fantasies. These examples make it clear that the point of reference for the re-use of historical forms is fundamentally an *abstract* intention, and that these forms are quoted



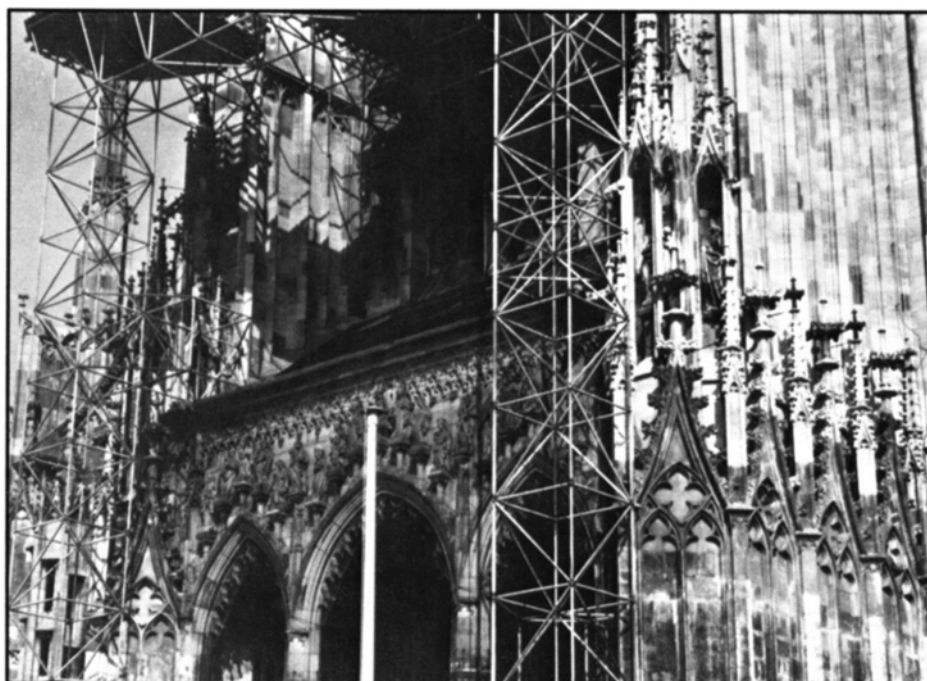
24 Notre-Dame de Paris, view of flying buttresses from east (photo: James Austin)

because of an *abstract* interest in them. It is interesting to note in this regard that the architecture of the modern movement is now quoted under the same conditions, for example, as that of the nineteenth century, and in many instances, the two are quoted side by side. As such, the modern movement itself is already understood as a *historical fact*, which seems to be the only precondition for its use as a 'quotation.'

The philosophical and theoretical critique of the postmodern in architecture posits a negative estimation of the phenomenon of the quotation. No solution to the problem of postmodernism's indifference to the categories of stylistic conception is proposed, and this critique ultimately negates itself with the pronouncement that architecture will be the cause of its own disappearance. In fact, the postmodern quotation of historical form underscores the importance of historical *distance* which can lead to an aesthetic contemplation of architectural appearance without incurring the reproach of conservatism. In this sense, the postmodern becomes an aesthetic phenomenon of modernism, contrary to the general conviction that the language of forms belonging to the modern movement can support no



25 West portal of the Münster cathedral, Ulm/Donau



26 West portal of the Münster cathedral, seen from southwest, Ulm/Donau

further development.³⁷ As such, the historical form becomes the vehicle for the survival of the imagery generated by the modern movement. It is not the destruction of traditional form which makes possible the genesis of new forms; instead, the historic form is the *site* where new ideas and concepts emerge. The abstract functionalist construction—form follows function (Sullivan/Adler)—was the last step in the abstraction of historical form from the architecture of the nineteenth century. The liberation of architecture through postmodernism vis-à-vis this tradition occurred precisely because the radical turn away from the functional dogma did not necessitate sacrificing its basis in abstraction. At the beginning of this moment—in the late 1960s—architectural language had two possible directions: one went the way of the further abstraction of the abstract functionalist construction, with new materials and new processes of construction—the high-tech in architecture succeeded in achieving a synthesis of abstraction and representation without collapsing into a new monumentalism; the other direction extracted from historical forms an abstract

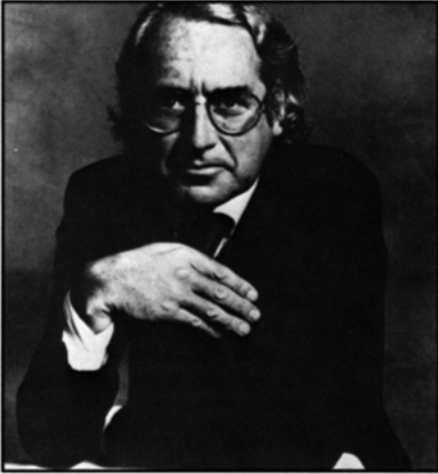
essence, demonstrating an exclusive interest in the 'abstract aura' and the 'abstract secret' of the forms.³⁸ Both of these approaches guaranteed the continuity not only of the formal language of modernism, but also of the modern tradition of abstraction. Aside from these two directions, the architecture of Richard Meier—particularly in his projects for cultural buildings—combines functionalism with a concern for aesthetic form, one which defines architecture as a new art of urban building.

Architecture as conceptual project (Ungers/Schaal), architecture as the vehicle for ensuring the continuity of modernist abstraction (Meier), the high-tech (Foster), and the 'objectification of the abstract'³⁹ (Stirling) are decisive aspects which—along with the often ridiculed historical quotation—have given architecture a hopeful direction, transforming indifference into interest.

NOTES

1. From "Richard Meier Architect's Statement," in *Museum für Kunsthandwerk Frankfurt-am-Main*, ed. Dezernat Bau Hochbauamt (Frankfurt-am-Main, August, 1985), 63
2. From Ernst Hübeli, "Das Abenteuer um die Ecke: oder die Wiederentdeckung der Stadt," *Werk, Bauen & Wohnen* 10 (October 1985): 19
3. *The Heart of the City: Towards the Humanization of Urban Life*, Eighth CIAM, ed. J. Tyrwhitt, J. L. Seri, E. N. Rogers (London: Lund Humphries Publishers, Ltd., 1952; reprint, Lichtenstein: Kraus, Nendeln, 1979)
4. W. J. Siedler, "Sie wurden zu Mördern der Stadt, Die Bauhausmeister, ihre Thäume und ihre Folgen," *Die Welt*, No. 69, 22 March 1986.
"Bedrückt aber stehen die Nachgeborenen vor den Betonburgen, mit denen nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg die schiffiligen Ufer von Liebermanns geliebtem Flusslauf und Leslikows melancholischer Föhrenlandschaft zugebaut wurden. Was hier geschehen ist, war nicht Verfall an der Moderne; es war deren Vollstreckung. Wo immer die grossen alten Männer dazu kamen, Hand an ihre Utopien zu legen, gerieten die gleissenden Siätten der Zukunft zu traurigen Orten des Banalen. . . ;"
see also W. J. Siedler, E. Niggemeyer, *Die gemordete Stadt. Abgesang auf Putte und Strasse, Platz und Baum* (Berlin: Quadriga Verlag, 1964); and W. J. Siedler, E. Niggemeyer *Die verordnete Gemütlichkeit, Abgesang auf Spielstrasse, Verkehrsberuhigung und Stadtbildpflege* (Berlin: Quadriga Verlag, 1985)
5. Jocelyn de Noblet, *Design, introduction à l'histoire des formes industrielles de 1820 à aujourd'hui* (1987); see also *Influence du Bauhaus sur l'architecture contemporaine*, travaux XVI, Université de Saint-Étienne (St. Etienne:

- Hénaff, 1979), 86
6. Concerning Ulm, see Robert Scholl, *Zusammenbruch und Wiedergeburt einer Stadt, Bericht über den Wiederaufbau in Ulm* (Ulm: Aegis Verlag, 1948).
 7. See Rob Krier, *Urban Space* (New York: Rizzoli, 1979)
 8. W. J. Siedler, *Weder Maas nach Memel, Ansichten vom beschädigten Deutschland* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1982), 66; translation by author
 9. See Max Graf, *vor und nach Ulm. Werkstattbericht eines HfG-Architekten von 1952 bis heute* (Zürich: Waser Verlag, 1989); cf. *l'école d'Ulm. textes et manifestes, exhibition catalogue* (Paris: Centre Pompidou, 1988) and *Hochschule für Gestaltung. Die Moral der Gegenstände*, ed. H. Lindinger (Berlin: Ernst & Sohn, 1987)
 10. See discussions in the local newspaper *Südwest Presse* from 19 December 1985; 17 November 1986; 18 November 1986; 16 June 1987; 20 June 1987; 30 July 1987; 7 August 1987; 9 September through 7 October 1987; cf. P. M. Bode, "Ein Architekt entzweit die Stadt: Heftige Bürgerproteste gegen Neubau am Ulmer Münster, *Abendzeitung*, 18 September 1987, 8; and Manfred Sack, "Bleibt Ulm Ulm? Die Bürger stimmen über ein Werk der Baukunst ab," *Die Zeit*, No. 39, 18 September 1987; and Monika Zimmerman, "Höhenflug, Bauchlandung. Ulmer Münsterplatz eine hundertjährige Leidensgeschichte," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, No. 122, 27 May 1987, 29
 11. The spire of the Münster Cathedral (1377) measures 161 meters in height.
 12. Protokollbericht über die Sitzung des Preisgerichts Neugestaltung Münsterplatz Ulm/Competition 1986, 15 November 1986. Gottfried Boehm, Alexander von Branca, Kammerer-Belz-Kucher, Heinz Mohl, Muehlich-Harr, Schaaf-Borchard, Joachim Schürmann, Unterföhner-Salzer-Lütz, along with Richard Meier, participated in the competition; Hans Hollein did not participate.
 13. See the decision of 9 November 1989, from Tübinger Regierungspräsidium.
 14. See *Museumsbauten Entwürfe und Projekte seit 1945*, exhibition catalogue, *Dortmunder Architekturausstellung 1979*, *Dortmunder Architekturheft* No. 15 (Dortmund, 1979)
 15. L. B. Alberti, *L'Architettura* [1485] 19; and, for example, the following statement by Palladio: "la città non sia altro che una certa casa grande, e per lo contrario la casa una città piccola," from *I Quattro Libri dell'Architettura* (Venice, 1570), II, 12.
 16. Erik Forssman, *Palladios Lehrgebäude, Studien über den Zusammenhang von Architektur und Architekturtheorie bei Andrea Palladio* (Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell, 1965), 86, 106
 17. See Bergamo, in the series *Le città nella storia d'Italia*, ed. M. L. Scalvini et al. (Bari: Edizioni Laterza, 1987); cf. *Bergamo dalle origini all'altomedioevo: Documenti per un'archeologia urbana*, ed. Raffaella Poggiani Keller (Modena: Edizioni Panini, 1986)
 18. From a note on a paper dated 9 December 1945 by Le Corbusier; see also *Le Corbusier, Synthèse des Arts. Aspekte des Spätwerks 1945-1965* (Berlin: Ernst & Sohn, 1986), 23.
 19. See n. 14.
 20. A first attempt to regain and to define the site for the architecture can be seen in Meier's designs for houses, and especially in his *Athenaeum* in New Harmony, Indiana (1975-1979); see also *Die Wiederkehr des Genius loci. Die Kirche im Stadtraum-die Stadt im Kirchenraum*, ed. M. C. Neddens, W. Wucher (Wiesbaden and Berlin: Bouvierlag, 1987); and Christian Norberg-Schulz, *Genius loci: Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture* (New York: Rizzoli, 1979).
 21. Quoted from Richard Meier Architect's Statement; see n. 1, translation by author:
"In diesem Entwurf ist es ausserdem Aufgabe und Ziel von Architektur-abstract und wörtlich-zu leuchten, sowohl Licht zu empfangen als auch auszustrahlen und auf diese Weise ein Symbol zu sein nicht nur für den eigentlichen Zweck als Gebäude sondern darüber hinaus auch ein Symbol für das kulturelle und wirtschaftliche Leben unserer Zeit-ein Spiegelbild der formalen und organisatorischen Struktur der Stadt selbst. Somit ist das Grundscheema nicht nur eine Antwort auf die direkte Umgebung; vielmehr intensiviert, vergrössert und verstärkt es den Zusammenhang mit ihr und mit dem Gewebe der Stadt."
 22. See Camillo Sitte, *Der Städtebau nach seinen künstlerischen Grundsätzen* (Braunschweig and Wiesbaden: Vieweg, 1983; reprint of work about urban space to Camillo Sitte, first published in Germany in 1889; see Zrinka Rudez, *Stadtraum, Prinzipien städtebaulicher Raumbildung. Eine Untersuchung über die im Zeitraum von 1880-1930 angewandten Entwurfsprinzipien* (Cologne: Kohlhammer, 1988).
 23. For example:
... Die Bestandteile des Ideals überhaupt und ihre Verhältnisse philosophisch darstellen, würde schon schwer genug sein, und die philosophische Darstellung des Ideals aller menschlichen Gesellschaft, der ästhetischen Kirche, dürfte vielleicht in der ganzen Ausführung noch schwerer sein. . . .
in Friedrich Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. Hellingrath-Pigenot (Munich and Leipzig: G. Mueller, 1913-1923), Vol. III, 403: "Brief an den Bruder" dated 1791; see also Volker Plagemann, *Das deutsche Kunstmuseum 1790-1870* (Munich: Prestel Verlag, 1967), 25-27
 24. The same visual situation is realized for the interior structure of the new Wallraf-Richartz-Museum and Sammlung Ludwig in Cologne (Busmann & Haberer, 1975/76-1987).
 25. Johannes Langner, "Ledoux und die "Fabriques" Voraussetzungen der Revolutionsarchitektur im Landschaftsgarten," *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 26 (1963): 1-35.
 26. Emil Kaufmann, *Von Ledoux bis Le Corbusier. Ursprung und Entwicklung der autonomen Architektur* (Stuttgart: Verlag Gerd Hatje, 1985), 42; author's translation
 27. David Galloway, "The New German Museums," *Art in America* (July 1985): 74-88; see in particular 79.
 28. Quoted from "Richard Meier: On Defining Architecture," *Richard Meier: Building for Art/Bauen für die Kunst*, ed. Werner Blaser (Basel and Boston: Birkhäuser Verlag, 1990), 30.
 29. Josef Paul Kleihues, from preface to *Dortmunder Architekturheft* No. 15 (Dortmund, 1979).
 30. *Richard Meier Architect 1964/1984* (New York: Rizzoli, 1984), 380.
 31. Vittorio Magnago Lampugnani, "Rückkehr der Monumentalisten? Die Debatte über den Neubau der Stuttgarter Städtgalerie," in *Architektur als Kultur. Die Ideen und die Formen* (Cologne: DuMont Buchverlag, 1986), 171-182
 32. *Neue Städtgalerie Stuttgart*, ed. Ministry of Finance Baden-Württemberg (Stuttgart 3/1984); see also *James Stirling. Die Neue Städtgalerie Stuttgart*, text by Thorsten Rodiek (Stuttgart: Verlag Gerd Hatje, 1984); and, Stephan Barthelmess, *Das postmoderne Museum als Erscheinungsform von Architektur. Die Bauaufgabe des Museums im Spannungsfeld von Moderne und Postmoderne* (Munich: Tuduv, 1988), 62-122
 33. Stephan Barthelmess, *ibid.*, 124-168.
 34. "The Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation, New Headquarters," ERCO, *Lichtbericht* 24 (April 1986); and see *Norman Foster*, exhibition catalogue EFA (Paris and Milan: Electra, 1986)
 35. Oswald Mathias Ungers, "Über das Recht der Architektur auf eine autonome Sprache," *Architektur der Zukunft, Zukunft der Architektur*, ed. Joedicke and Schirmbach (Stuttgart, 1982).
 36. See Hans Dieter Schoof, *Architektonische Situationen. Zeichnungen und Überlegungen*. (Berlin: Ernst & Sohn, 1986).
 37. See, for example, James Stirling, "Regionalism and Modern Architecture," *Architect's Yearbook* No. 8: 65.
- 38 / 39.
These descriptions have first been expressed by the German painter Markus Lüpertz in an interview with Walter Grasskamp on the occasion of the exhibition *Ursprung und Vision. Neue Deutsche Malerei*, ed. Ministerio de Cultura Direccion General de Bellas Artes y Archivos (Madrid and Berlin: Frölich and Kaufmann, 1984), 43:
"Diese Bilder verbinden das Gestische mit dem Gewollten. Das Schriftzeichen ist zuerst gesetzt und bestimmt dann die Form des Hauses. Das ist die Vergegenständlichung des Abstrakten, die ja mein ganzes Werk bestimmt; in dem Moment, wo sie aus einem Fussabdruck eine Säule machen, ist diese Fussform plötzlich Architektur, damit habe ich immer gespielt. Durch diese Vergegenständlichung des Abstrakten ergibt sich dann eben eine neue Bedeutung für so einen Fussabdruck; solche Häuser hat es eben noch nicht gegeben in der Malerei, sie erinnern zwar an alle Häuser, die es gibt, aber der Weg zu diesen Häusern war ein anderer, und das ist das Neue an meiner Kunst, der Weg ist ja entscheidend. Wenn ich heute einen Gegenstand benutze, dann nur um seiner abstrakten Aura willen, um sein abstraktes Geheimnis zu erfahren."



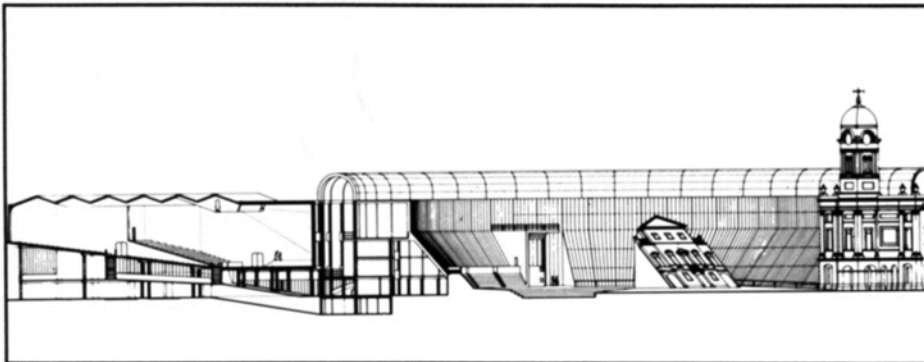
27 Portrait of the architect from Richard Meier Architect 1964-1984, New York, 1984



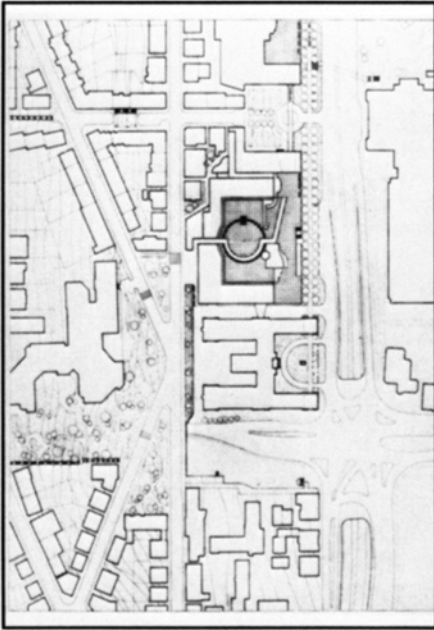
28 Francesco Mazzola, 'Il Parmigianino', self-portrait in a convex mirror, 1523, Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum



30 Charles Moore, Piazza d'Italia, New Orleans, 1976-1979



29 James Stirling, project for a new arrangement of Derby Towne Center, section through auditorium, arcade, and Market Square, 1970



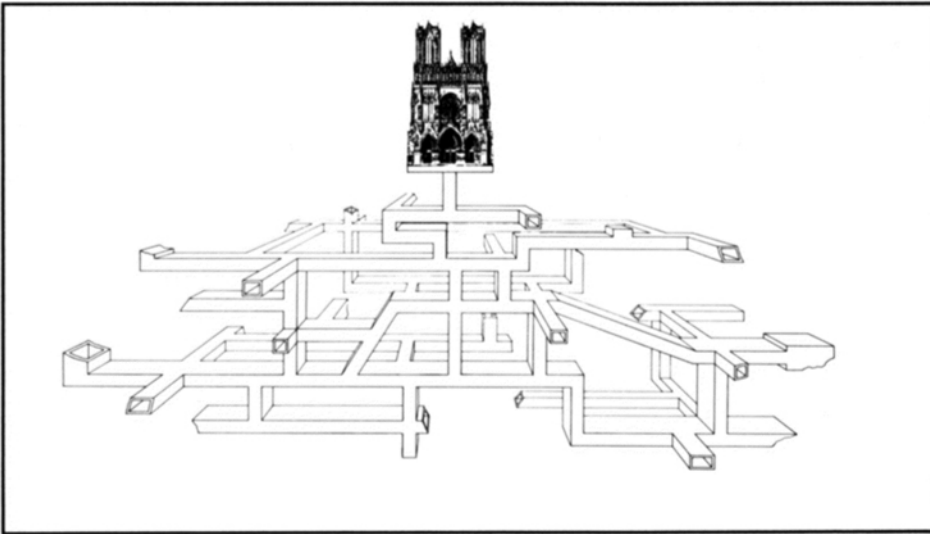
31 James Stirling, plan of the Neue Staatsgalerie Stuttgart, 1977-1982



32 Neue Staatsgalerie Stuttgart, view from south



33 Norman Foster & Associates, Hong Kong & Shanghai Bank, Hong Kong, 1986



34 Hans Dieter School, Denkgebäude, 1982