

YOU HAVE TO PAY FOR THE PUBLIC LIFE *Charles W. Moore*

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This issue of *Perspecta* considers monumental architecture as part of the urban scene. I was asked to ferret out some on the West Coast, especially in California. *Perspecta's* editors suspected, I presume, that I would discover that in California there is no contemporary monumental architecture, or that there is no urban scene (except in a sector of San Francisco), or more probably, that both monumental architecture and the urban scene are missing. Their suspicions were well founded; any discussion from California in 1964 about monumental urban architecture (as it is coming to exist, for instance, in New Haven) is bound to be less about what we have than about what we have instead.

Any discussion of monumental architecture in its urban setting should proceed from a definition of (or, if you prefer, an airing of prejudice about) what constitutes "monumental," and what "urban" means to us. The two adjectives are closely related: both of them involve the individual's giving up something, space or money or prominence or concern, to the public realm.

Monumentality, I take it, has to do with monuments. And a monument is an object whose function is to mark a *place*, either at that place's boundary or at its heart. There are, of course, private monuments, over such places as the graves of the obscure, but to merit our attention here, and to be of any interest to most of the people who view it, a monument must mark a place of more than private importance or interest. The act of marking is then a public act, and the act of recognition an expectable public act among the members of the society which possesses the place. Monumentality,

considered this way, is not a product of compositional techniques (such as symmetry about several axes), of flamboyance of form, or even of conspicuous consumption of space, time, or money. It is, rather, a function of the society's taking possession of or agreeing upon extraordinarily important places on the earth's surface, and of the society's celebrating their pre-eminence.

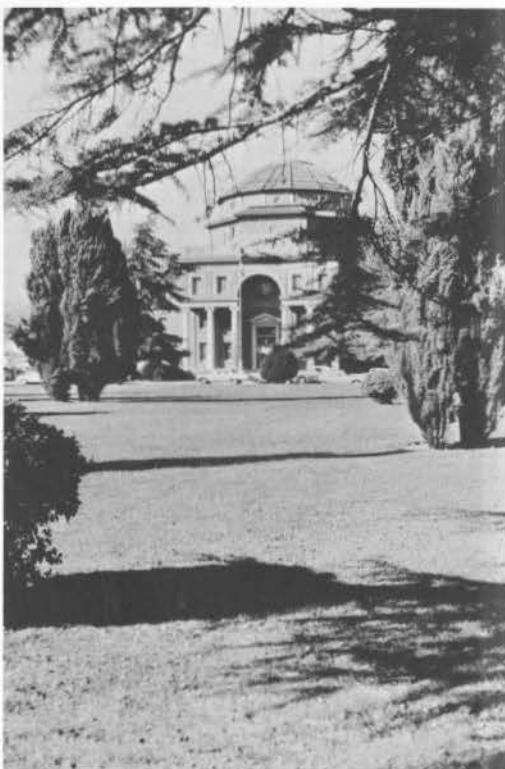
A version of this agreement and this celebration was developed by José Ortega y Gasset, in *The Revolt of the Masses*, into a definition of urbanity itself. "The *urbs* or *polis*," he says, "starts by being an empty space, the *forum*, the *agora*, and all the rest is just a means of fixing that empty space, of limiting its outlines. . . . The square, thanks to the walls which enclose it, is a portion of the countryside which turns its back on the rest, eliminates the rest, and sets up in opposition to it."

Ortega y Gasset's product is the city, the urban unit based upon the Mediterranean open square, a politically as well as physically comprehensible unit that people used to be willing to die for. The process of achieving an urban focus is the same as that of achieving monumentality: it starts with the selection, by some inhabitants, of a place which is to be of particular importance, and continues when they invest that place with attributes of importance, such as edges or some kind of marker. This process, the establishing of cities and the marking of important places, constitutes most of the physical part of establishing civilization. Charles Eames has made the point that the crux of this civilizing process is the giving up by individuals of something in order that the

public realm may be enhanced. In the city, that is to say, urban and monumental places, indeed urbanity and monumentality themselves, can occur only when something is given over by people to the public.

Planners have a way of starting every speech by articulating their (private) discovery that the public body's chief concern is *people*. The speech then says unrelatedly that it's too bad the sprawling metropolis is so formless. It might well be that if the shibboleth about people were turned inside out, if planning efforts went toward enlarging people's concerns – and sacrifices – for the *public realm*, that the urban scene would more closely approach the planners' vision, and that the pleasures of the people would be better served.

The most evident thing about Los Angeles, especially, and the other new cities of the West is that in the terms of any of the traditions we have inherited, hardly anybody gives anything to the public realm. Instead, it is not at all clear what the public realm consists of, or even, for the time being, who needs it. What is clear is that civic amenities of the sort architects think of as "monumental," which were highly regarded earlier in the century, are of much less concern today. A frivolous but pointed example is the small city of Atascadero (1a, b), which lies in a particularly handsome coastal valley between Los Angeles and San Francisco. It was first developed in the '20s as a real-estate venture with heavy cultural overtones and extensive architectural amplification. Extraordinarily ambitious "monumental" architecture popped up all over the townsite. Buildings of a vague Italian Romanesque persuasion with a classic revival



1a,b



touch, symmetrical about several axes, faced onto wide malls punctuated or terminated by Canovese sculpture groups. The effect was undeniably grand, if a bit surreal, exploiting wide grassy vistas among the dense California oaks. But there wasn't much of a town until the '40s. Then, on the major mall, an elaborately sunken panel of irrigated green, there cropped up a peninsula of fill surmounted by a gas station (2). Later, there came another, and more recently an elevated freeway has continued the destruction of the grand design. All this has happened during the very period in which Philadelphians, with staggering energy and expense, have been achieving in their Center City long malls north from Independence Hall and west from a point just off their City Hall, grand vistas at every scale, an architectural expression overwhelmingly serene, all urban desiderata which the Atascaderans did not especially want or need, and have been blithely liquidating. Doesn't this liquidation constitute some sort of crime against the public? Before we start proceedings, we should consider what the public realm is, or rather, what it might be in California now and during the decades ahead, so that the "monumentality" and the "urbanity" that we seek may be appropriate as functions of our own society and not of some other one.

In California cities, as in new cities all over the country (and in California just about all cities are new cities), the pattern of buildings on the land is as standard as it is explosive. Everywhere near population centers, new little houses surrounded by incipient lawns appear. They could be said to be at the edge of the city, except that there is no real edge, thanks to the speed of growth, the leapfrogging of rural areas, and the long

commercial fingers that follow the highways out farther than the houses have yet reached. Meanwhile, in areas not much older, houses are pulled down as soon as zoning regulations allow, to be replaced with apartments whose only amenity is a location handily near a garage in the basement (3).

The new houses are separate and private, it has been pointed out: islands, alongside which are moored the automobiles that take the inhabitants off to other places. It might be more useful and more accurate to note that the houses and the automobiles are very much alike, and that each is very like the mobile homes which share both their characteristics. All are fairly new, and their future is short; all are quite standard, but have allowed their buyers the agonies of choice, demonstrating enough differences so that they can readily be identified during the period of ownership, and so that the sense of privacy is complete, in the car as well as in the house. This is privacy with at least psychic mobility. The houses are not tied down to any place much more than the trailer homes are, or the automobiles. They are adrift in the suburban sea, not so mobile as the cars, but just as unattached. They are less islands alongside which the cars are moored than little yachts, dwarfed by the great chrome-trimmed dinghys that seek their lee (4).

This is, after all, a floating world in which a floating population can island-hop with impunity; one need almost never go ashore (5). There are the drive-in banks, the drive-in movies, the drive-in shoe repair. There is even, in Marin County, Frank Lloyd Wright's drive-in Civic Center, a structure of major biographical and perhaps

historical importance, (6), about whose forms a great deal of surprisingly respectful comment has already appeared in the press. Here, for a county filling up with adjacent and increasingly indistinguishable suburban communities, quite without a major center, was going to be the center for civic activities, the public realm, one would have supposed, for which a number of public-spirited leaders in the community had fought long and hard. It might have been, to continue our figure, a sort of dock to which our floating populace might come, monumental in that it marked a special place which was somewhere and which, for its importance, was civic if not urban. But instead of a dock for floating suburbanites, it is just another ship, much larger than most, to be sure, and presently beached (wedged, in fact) between two hills. It demands little of the people who float by, and gives them little back. It allows them to penetrate its interior from a point on its underside next to the delivery entrance, but further relations are discouraged, and lingering is most often the result of inability to find the exit.

A monster of equivalent rootlessness hoves into view from the freeway entrance to California's one established anchored city, San Francisco. The immense new Federal Building (7, 8) just being completed by John Carl Warnecke and a host of associated architects, stands aloof from the city's skyline, out of scale with it, unrelated to anything in the topography, no part even of the grandiose civic center nearby. Slick details, giant fountains, and all, it draws back from the street and just stands there. It is one of the West's largest filing cabinets, and it is unfair, of course, to expect from it any attributes of the public realm. Indeed, if



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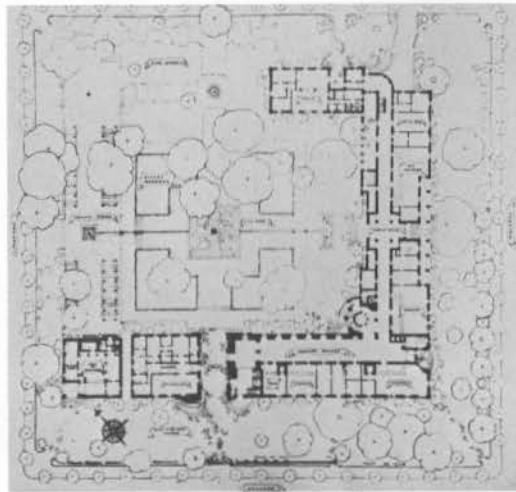
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San Francisco, one gathers, had not grudgingly stepped aside for it, some distant bureaucrats would spitefully have removed it to Oakland. So much for the Federal Heart of the city.

Even in the few years of Yankee California's existence, this kind of placelessness has not always been characteristic. During the '20s and into the '30s, with what was doubtless an enormous assist from the Hollywood vision in the days of its greatest splendor, an architectural image of California developed which was exotic but specific, derivative but exhilaratingly free. It had something to do with Helen Hunt Jackson's *Ramona*, with the benign climate, with the splendor of the sites and their floral luxuriance, with the general availability of wood and stucco, and with the assurance supplied by Hollywood that appearances *did* matter, along with the assumption (for which Hollywood was not necessary but to which it gave a boost) that we, the inheritors of a hundred traditions, had our pick. What came of this was an architecture that owed something to Spain, very little to the people who were introducing the International Style, and a great deal to the movie camera's moving eye. It seemed perfectly appropriate to the energetic citizens of Santa Barbara, for instance, that after their city had been devastated by an earthquake, it should rise again Spanish. The railroad round house appeared to become a bull ring, the movie house a castle. Everywhere in the town, the act of recalling another quite imaginary civilization created a new and powerful public realm.

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Out of this public act came one of the most extraordinary buildings in the United States, probably the most richly complex and extensively rewarding stew of spatial and sculptural excitements west of Le Corbusier's Carpenter Visual Arts Center: the Santa Barbara County Court House (9-12). It was completed in 1929. William Mooser was the architect, and the inspiration, say the guidebooks, was Spanish. But nothing in Spain was ever like this. Instead of setting itself off against the landscape, in Mediterranean fashion, this assemblage of huge white forms opens itself up to it. The landscape is a big and dramatic one in Santa Barbara, where the coastal plain is narrow, the ocean close at hand, and the mountains behind unusually high and startlingly near. The Court House takes it all in: it piles around one end of a large open park, whose major forms are sunk into the ground, thus allowing the giant arch, the main feature among the dozens of features visible from the street side, to lead not into the building but through it and immediately out the other side, so that the building minimizes its enclosure function and asserts itself as backdrop — a stage set, if you will — with the power to transform the giant landscape. It is almost too easy to make a comparison with Le Corbusier's new Harvard building, similarly pierced (in Cambridge, in 1963, by a make-believe freeway ramp) and similarly composed of an immensely rich but strongly ordered concatenation of sculptural forms. At Harvard they are twisted enough and powerful enough to dislocate all the polite false Georgian



9,10a



10a,b



11-12



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buildings around, to wrench them loose and set them whirling. Fewer structures are set whirling by the Court House, but a full complement of phantoms is raised up out of the lush landscape.

The Santa Barbara County Court House did so much about sweeping the whole landscape up and in that one might expect the really large-scale projects of the '60s to catch even more of the grandeur of the place. Whole new college campuses, for instance, which are springing magically out of fields across the state, surely present unparalleled chances to order a public realm, to invest a place of public importance with the physical attributes of that importance. Yet, by any standards, the clearest and strongest campus to be found in the state is still the old campus at Stanford (13-16), designed in Boston by Shepley, Rutan, and Coolidge, and built in the years just after 1887. The buildings in the old campus are H. H. Richardson warmed over (and cooled off again in the long passage from the architects' Boston kitchens); the gaudy mosaic façade of the chapel, the centerpiece of the composition, is an affront to the soft yellow stone surfaces around. But the play of the fabled local sunshine with the long arcades, the endlessly surprising development of interior spaces from big to small to big again, the excitement of a sensible framework that is strong and supple enough to include the most disparate academic activities – all combine to make this a complete and memorable place. Even though the surrounding countryside is not swept into the picture, as at Santa Barbara, at least there



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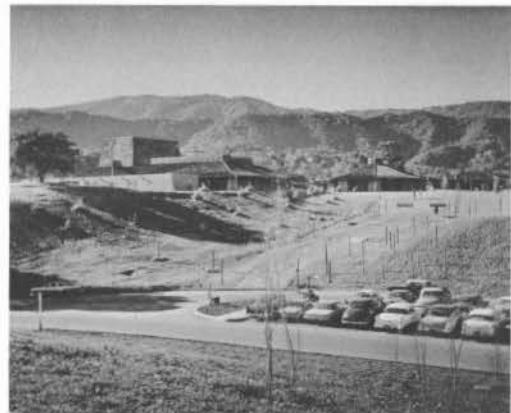


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is an orchestration of spaces varied and complete enough to evoke a complex public use. It is a place, however, that dates from the previous century, and this is a survey of our own times, times that have multiplied opportunities for spatial and functional orchestrations like the ones at Stanford and Santa Barbara. What, then, do we have?

Foothill College in Los Altos (17, 18), by Ernest J. Kump and Masten and Hurd, comes first to mind, because it has won every prize in sight, and because it is a beguiling place. It sits strong on a pleasant rolling site, on which prodigies of bulldozing have created earthworks worthy of a Vauban, though a bit dulled by a foreground of parking lot. Its nicely detailed buildings share the charm of the best Bay Region domestic architecture, topped by memorable shingle roofs, which have added the glories of old Newport and older Japan to the idiom of the Bay, without ever losing control. Yet I am bound to report that this sensitive and disciplined complex is simply not in the same league as the older campus or the Court House. There is no heightening of importance, no beginnings, even, of the establishment of a *place* singled out for special public importance and illuminated by that recognition – a place, for instance, important enough for an academic procession to occur. The old Stanford campus may not culminate in anything of special beauty or worth, but it works at culminating. Foothill, rather, with great charm, dissipates itself and loses its powers. Sasaki and Walker's landscaping senses well this urge to dissipate, and devotes itself to



17-18



filling with impenetrable bosques the places where the spaces might have been. Equalitarian, it is: every tree and every building is as important as the next.

And so the public realm is made scarcely distinguishable from the private; the college's fortress base of earth does not anchor it, and it floats, as free as the houses in the suburban seas around.

The same firm's newer campus, for Cabrillo College near Santa Cruz (19), is far less beguiling and floats even more free. The buildings, carefully and sophisticatedly detailed, stick close to the idiom established when California was young and places were *Places*, but the idiom does not stretch to cover the requirements, and the act of multiplying varying sizes of hipped-roof buildings surrounded by porches only serves to confirm the rigidity of a whole campus made of a single verandaed form. A window is a simple thing, and not new. In the cool climate of coastal northern California, the sunshine it can admit is pleasant if there is not a wide veranda in front to reduce north, east, south, and west to shady equality. The citizens of old Monterey built porches like these in the cool fog, lived behind them, and died like flies from tuberculosis; presumably medical science and the mechanical engineer will save us this time.

Meanwhile, the attempt to stuff the functions of a whole college into this rigid domestic idiom puts Cabrillo in strong contrast with the old Stanford campus, where the spaces evoke a wide variety of uses; here everything is not only equalitarian but equal. Impeccable details and all, it makes nothing special, it adds nothing to the public realm.

During the years of California's growth, as its cities have appeared, the extravagances of the landscape and of the settlers upon it have suggested to many that straight opulence might create centers of the public realm. Three city halls, especially, clamor for our attention: The San Francisco City Hall (20) probably heads the list for sheer expensive grandeur. The expensiveness was, one gathers, as much a political as a physical phenomenon, but the grandeur is a manifestation of the highly developed Beaux-Arts compositional skills of architects Bakewell and Brown. These great skills, though, have been curiously ineffectual in commanding themselves to public concern. It is a curious experience, for instance, to stand in the towering space under the aggressively magnificent dome and to notice that hardly anyone looks up. And the development of the extensive and very formal civic center outside has had remarkably little effect on the growth of the downtown area, which has remained resolutely separate from all

this architectural assertion. Surely a part of the failure to achieve an important public place here rests with the entirely abstract nature of the Beaux-Arts' earlier International Style. It takes a major master, like Sir Edwin Lutyens at New Delhi, to lift this idiom out of the abstract and to give some point to its being somewhere. The San Francisco City Hall demonstrates skill but no such mastery, so the city is not specifically enriched by this building's being here; it could be anywhere.

Or almost anywhere. It could not easily be in Gilroy. A small garlic farming community north of Salinas, Gilroy relied on a similar, if more relaxed, show of opulence in the building of its own City Hall in 1905 (21,22). An elaborateness of vaguely Flemish antecedent served the town's desires; a truly remarkable array of whirls and volutes was concentrated here to signal the center of the public realm. But, alas, this concentration has not kept its hold on the public mind much more effectively than San Francisco's City Hall has, and now this fancy pile is leading a precarious life as temporary headquarters for the town's Chamber of Commerce and police station.

The citizens of Los Angeles adopted a slightly different route to achieve importance for their City Hall (23-25). In their wide horizontal sprawl of a



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21-22



city, they went *up* as far as seemed practical, and organized their statutes so no other buildings could go higher. But economic pressure has mounted, and now commercial structures bulk larger on the skyline than the City Hall. The Angelenos' vertical gesture should get some credit, in any case, for being a gesture, an attempt to make a center for a city which otherwise had none. As a formal gesture, it has even had some little hold on the public mind, although its popular image now involves a familiar tower rising in the smoggy background, while a freeway interchange fills the sharp foreground. Investing it with life, and relating the life behind its windows to the life of the city, may never have been possible; such investment, of course, has never happened.

It is interesting, if not useful, to consider where one would go in Los Angeles to have an effective revolution of the Latin American sort: presumably, that place would be the heart of the city. If one took over some public square, some urban open space in Los Angeles, who would know? A march on City Hall would be equally inconclusive. The heart of the city would have to be sought elsewhere. The only hope would seem to be to take over the freeways, or to emplane for New York to organize sedition on Madison Avenue; word would quickly enough get back.



23-24



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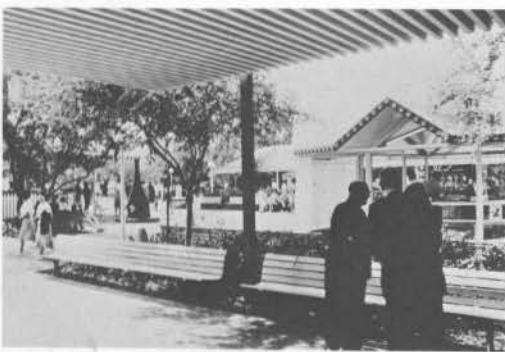
Thus the opulence and the effort involved in the San Francisco, Gilroy, and Los Angeles City Halls all seem to come to very little in the public mind, lacking as they all do any activity which elicits public participation or is somewhat related to public participation. Whatever the nature of the welfare state, these public buildings seem to offer far less to the passer-by than such typical – and remarkable – California institutions as the Nut Tree (26, 27), a roadside restaurant on the highway from Sacramento to San Francisco, which offers in the middle of a bucolic area such comforts as a miniature railroad, an airport, an extensive toy shop, highly sophisticated gifts and notions, a small bar serving imported beers and cheeses, a heartily elegant – and expensive – restaurant, exhibitions of paintings and crafts, and even an aviary – all of them surrounded and presented with graphic design of consummate sophistication and great flair. This is entirely a commercial venture, but judging from the crowds, it offers the traveler a gift of great importance. It is an offering of urbanity, of sophistication and chic, a kind of foretaste, for those bound west, of the urban joys of San Francisco.

In the days before television, moving picture theaters afforded one of the clearest and easiest ways for people to participate in the National Dream. In California, especially southern California, where movies came from and where the climate allowed forecourts for theaters to be largely out of doors, some of the most image-filled places for the public to congregate, some of the most important parts of what at least seemed to be the public realm, were

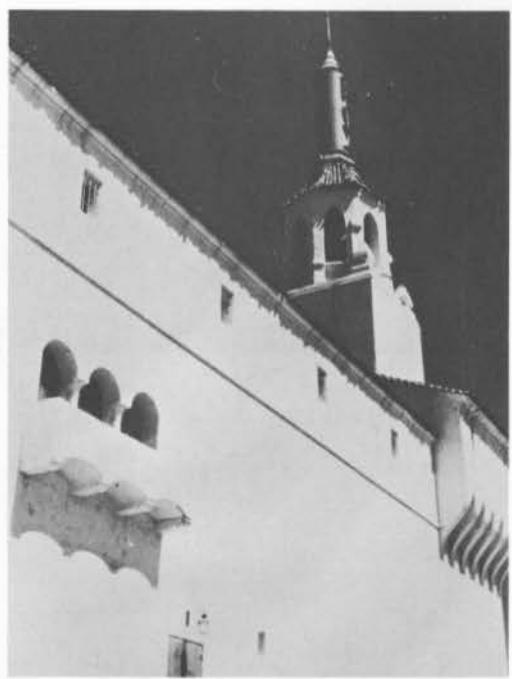
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these theaters. The Fox in Santa Barbara (28, 29) invites our inspection on many of the same grounds as the Santa Barbara County Court House. The idiom is a movieland Spanish (again, like nothing in Spain), the architectural opportunity a double one: First, to make of the immense auditorium, set a block back from the theater's entrance on the main street, one of the city's noblest bastions, with high white walls sprouting turrets and balconies and follies. Only the grandest of the princes of the other hemisphere could have afforded walls this size to stick their balconies onto; second, and more importantly for the city, to make partly roofed and partly open the block-long passageway from the box office to the ticket taker, thus providing the opportunity to extend the sidewalks of the city, still outdoors, past gardens and along a tiled esplanade, where soft lights play at night, and where by day the sun filters down among the leaves. Santa Barbara's sidewalks are ordinary enough, but in the mind's eye they merge with the passage to the Fox Theater and other commercial arcades and patios off State Street (30, 31) to form a public realm filled with architectural nuance and, even more importantly, filled with the public.

Another such public monument, which should not soon be forgotten, although it has been left isolated by Los Angeles' swiftly changing patterns, is Grauman's Chinese Theater, on Hollywood Boulevard, which seems more astonishingly grand today than it did in the days when millions in their neighborhood theaters watched movie stars immortalizing bits of its wet concrete with their hands and feet.



26-27



28-29



30-31



More recent years have their monuments as well. Indeed, by almost any conceivable method of evaluation that does not exclude the public, Disneyland (32-57) must be regarded as the most important single piece of construction in the West in the past several decades. The assumption inevitably made by people who have not yet been there – that it is some sort of physical extension of Mickey Mouse – is wildly inaccurate. Instead, singlehanded, it is engaged in replacing many of those elements of the public realm which have vanished in the featureless private floating world of southern California, whose only edge is the ocean, and whose center is otherwise undiscoverable (unless by our revolution test it turns out to be on Manhattan Island). Curiously, for a public place, Disneyland is not free. You buy tickets at the gate. But then, Versailles cost someone a great deal of money, too. Now, as then, you have to pay for the public life.

Disneyland, it appears, is enormously important and successful just because it recreates all the chances to respond to a *public* environment, which Los Angeles particularly does not any longer have. It allows play-acting, both to be watched and to be participated in, in a public sphere. In as unlikely a place as could be conceived, just off the Santa Ana Freeway, a little over an hour from the Los Angeles City Hall, in an uncharted sea of suburbia, Disney has created a place, indeed a whole public world, full of sequential occurrences, of big and little drama, of hierarchies of importance and excitement, with opportunities to respond at the speed of rocketing



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bobsleds (or rocketing rockets, for all that) or of horse-drawn street cars. An American Main Street of about 1910 is the principal theme, against which play fairy-tale fantasies, frontier adventure situations, jungles, and the world of tomorrow. And all this diversity, with unerring sensitivity, is keyed to the kind of participation without embarrassment which apparently at this point in our history we crave. (This is not the point, nor am I the appropriate critic, to analyze our society's notions of entertainment, but certainly a civilization whose clearest recent image of feminine desirability involves scantily dressed and extravagantly formed young ladies – occasionally with fur ears – who disport themselves with wildest abandon in gaudily make-believe bordellos, while they perforce maintain the deportment of vestal virgins – certainly a civilization which seeks this sort of image in need of pretty special entertainment.) No raw edges spoil the picture at Disneyland; everything is as immaculate as in the musical comedy villages that Hollywood has provided for our viewing pleasure for the last three generations. Nice-looking, handsomely costumed young people sweep away the gum wrappers almost before they fall to the spotless pavement. Everything works, the way it doesn't seem to any more in the world outside. As I write this, Berkeley, which was the proud recipient not long ago of a set of fountains in the middle of its main street, where interurbans once had run and cars since had parked, has announced that the fountains are soon being turned off for good, since the chief public use developed for them so far as been to put detergent in them, and the city cannot afford constantly to clean the

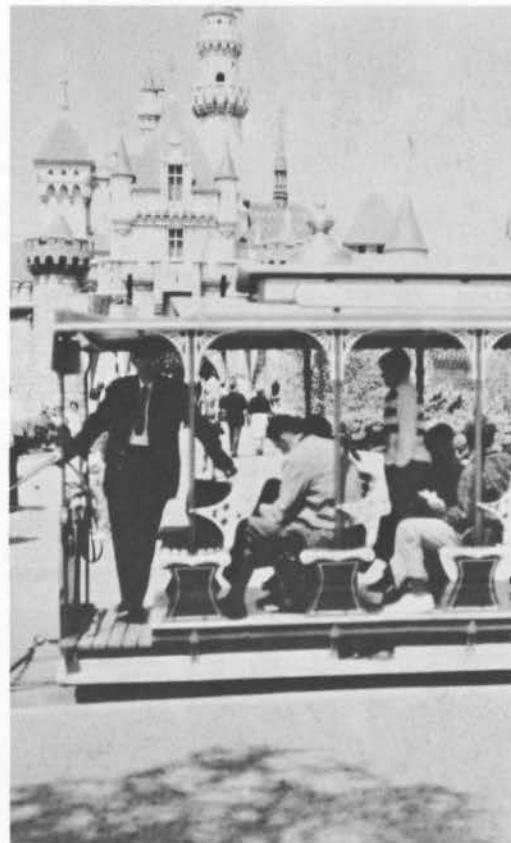


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pipes. Life is not like that in Disneyland; it is much more real: fountains play, waterfalls splash, tiny bulbs light the trees at night, and everything is clean.

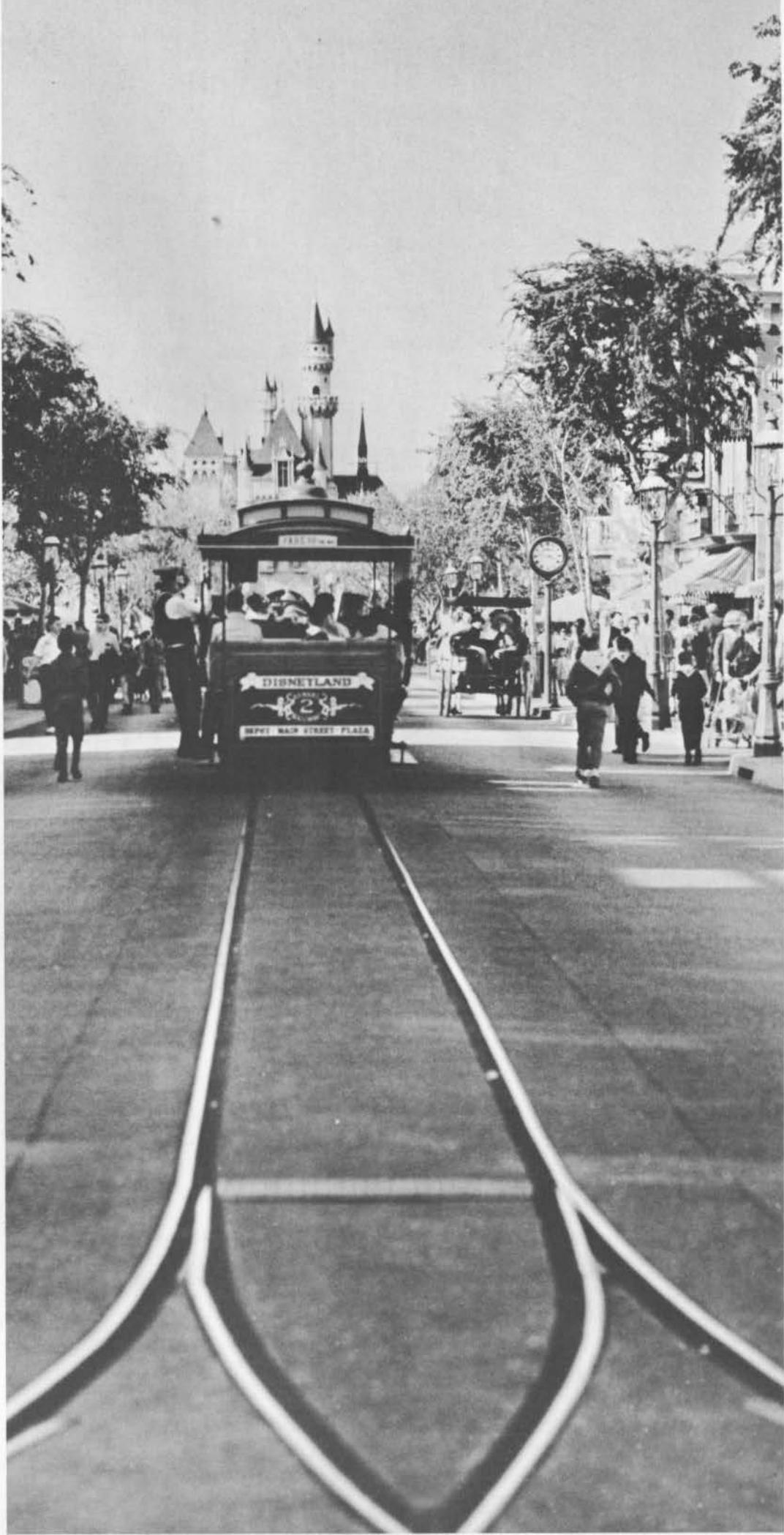
The skill demonstrated here in recalling with thrilling accuracy all sorts of other times and places is of course one which has been developing in Hollywood through this century. Disney's experts are breathtakingly precise when they recall the gingerbread of a turn-of-the-century Main Street or a side-wheeler Mississippi River steamboat, even while they remove the grime and mess, and reduce the scale to the tricky zone between delicacy and make-believe. Curiously, the Mickey Mouse-Snow White sort of thing, which is most memorably Disney's and which figures heavily in an area called Fantasyland, is not nearly so successful as the rest, since it perforce drops all the way over into the world of make-believe. Other occurrences stretch credulity, but somehow avoid snapping it. The single most exciting experience in the place, surely, is that which involves taking a cable car (as above a ski slope) in Fantasyland, soaring above its make-believe castles, then ducking through a large papier-mâché mountain called the Matterhorn, which turns out to be hollow and full of bobsleds darting about in astonishingly vertical directions. Thence one swings out above Tomorrowland. Now nobody thinks that that mountain is the Matterhorn or even a mountain, or that those bobsleds are loose upon its slopes – slopes being on the outsides of mountains. Yet the experience of being in that space is a real one, and an immensely exciting one, like looking at a Piranesi prison or escalating in the London Underground.



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D I S N E Y L A N D

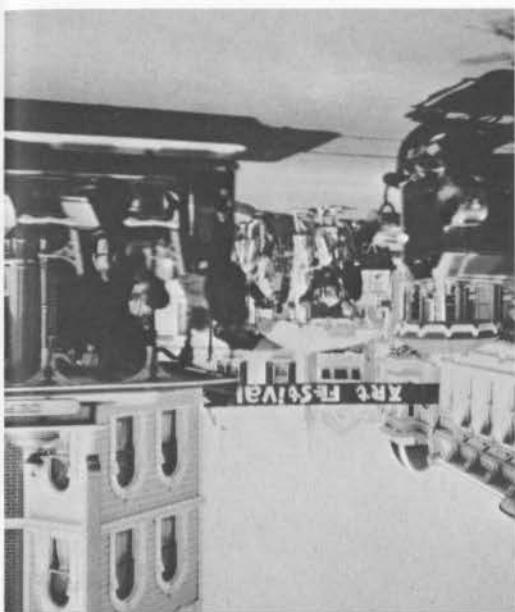
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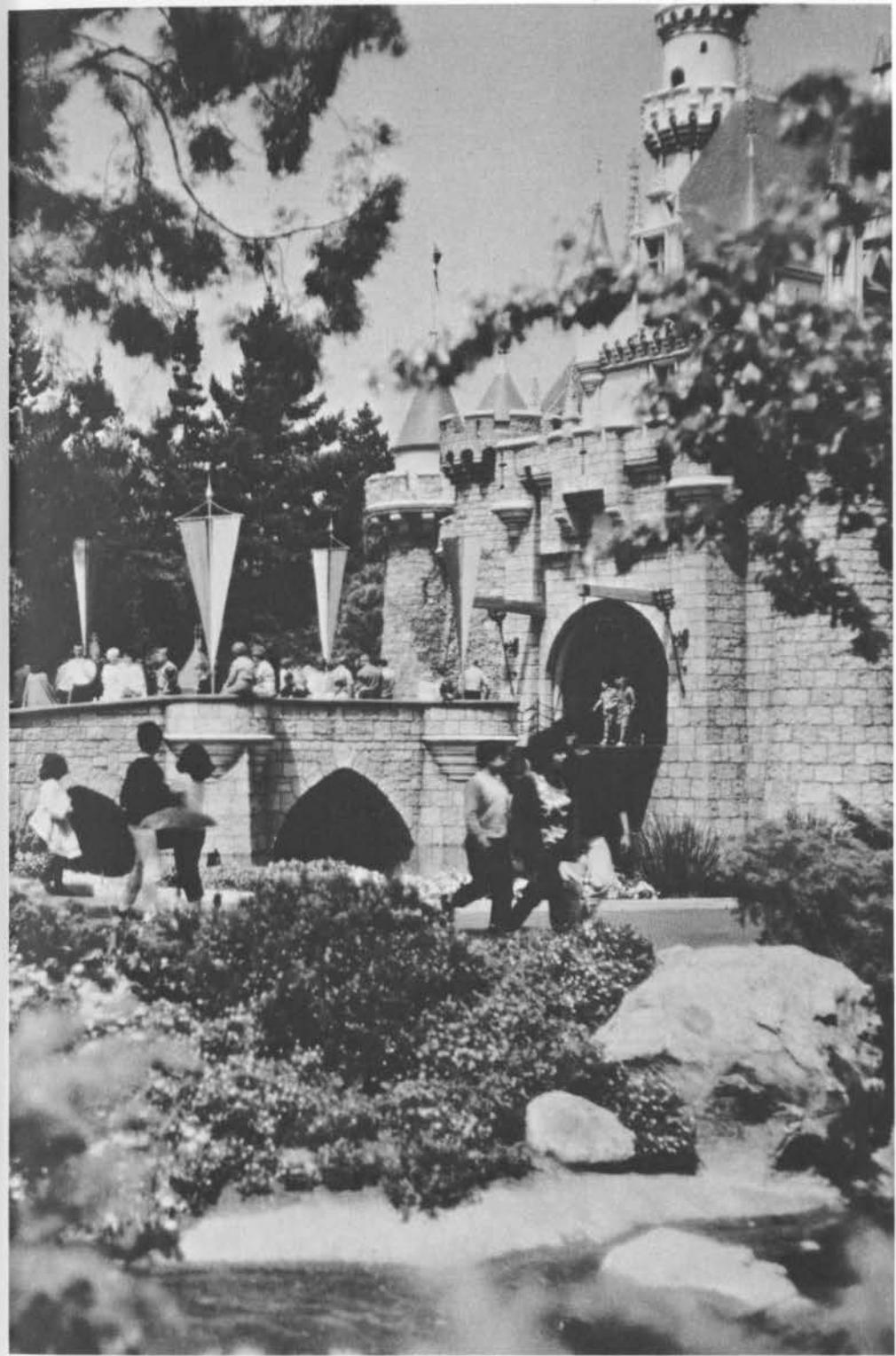
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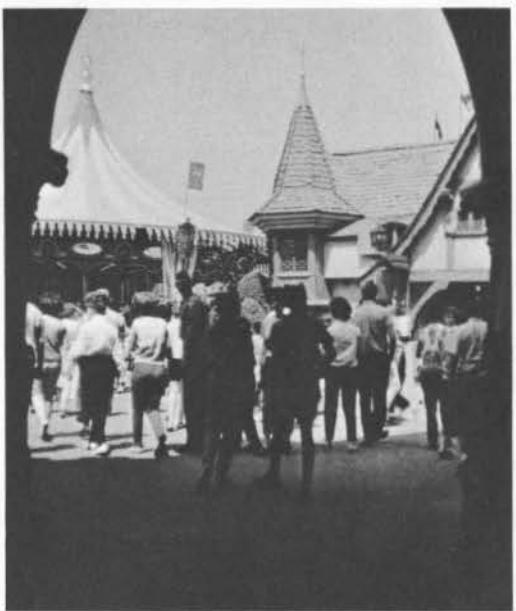
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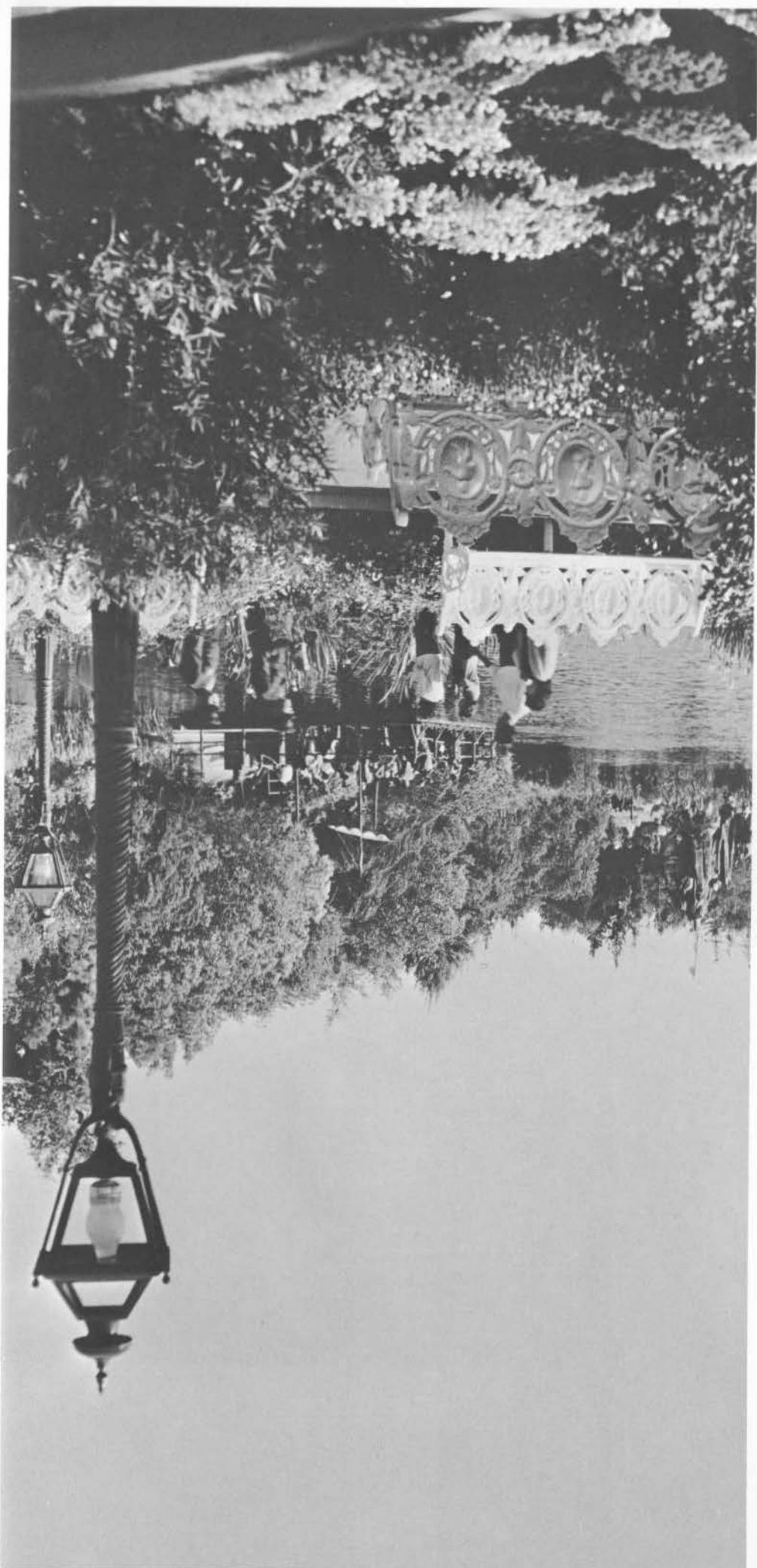
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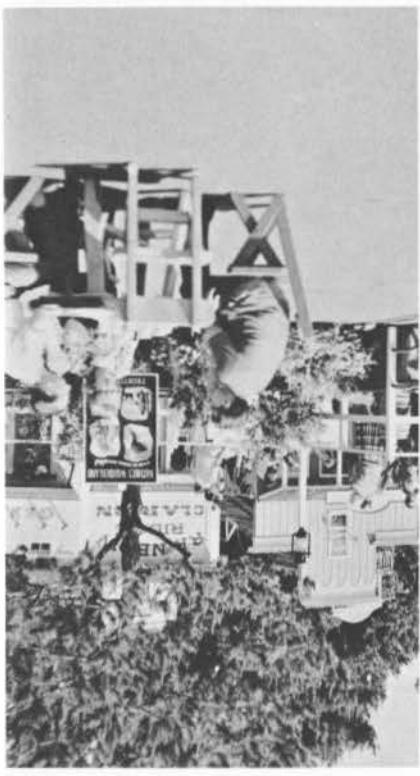
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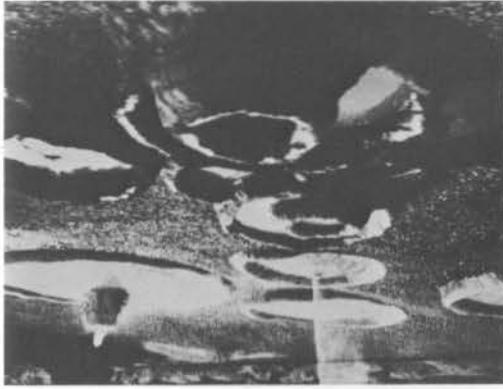


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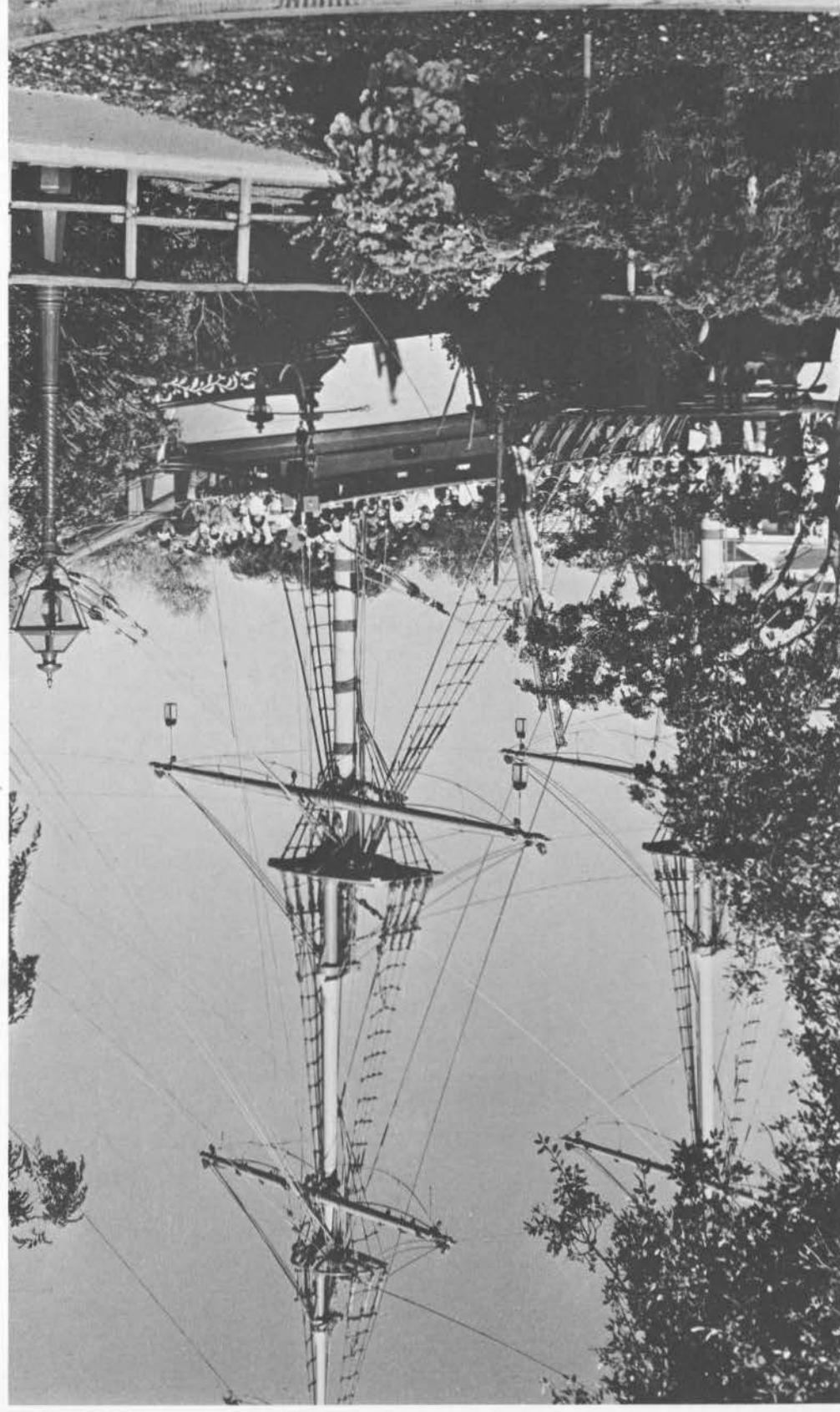


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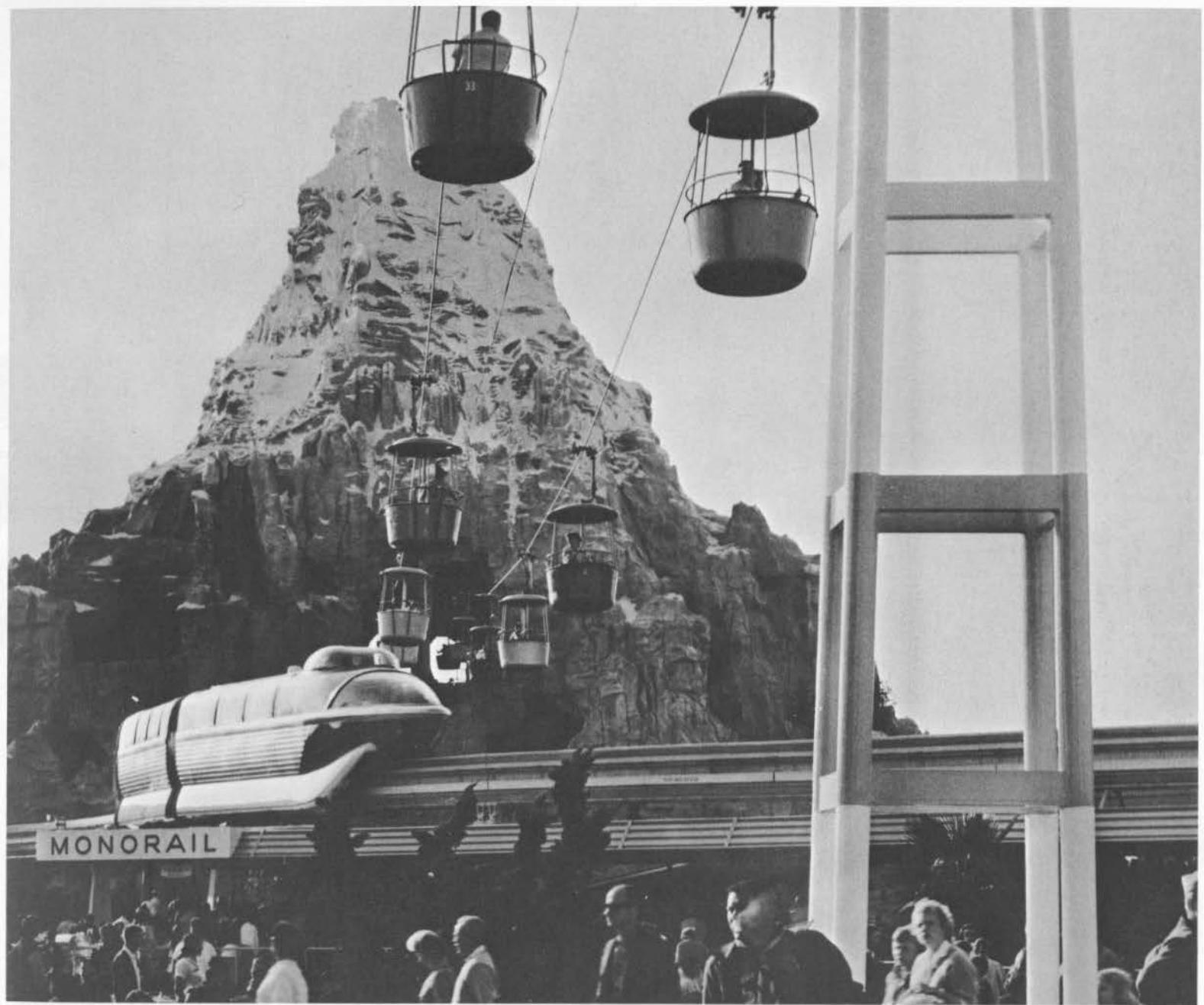




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Of course Disneyland, in spite of the skill and variety of its enchantments, does not offer the full range of public experience. The political experience, for instance, is not manifested here, and the place would not pass our revolution test. Yet there is a variety of forms and activities great enough to ensure an excellent chance that the individual visitor will find something to identify with. A strong contrast is the poverty or absurdity of single images offered up by architects, presumably as part of an elaborate (and expensive) in-group professional joke. The brown-derby-shaped Brown Derbies of an earlier generation, which at least were recognizable by the general public, have given way to such phenomena as the new Coachella Valley Savings and Loan in Palm Springs (58, 59) which rises out of vacant lots to repeat Niemeyer's Palace of the Dawn, in Brasilia. Across the street from this, a similar institution pays similar in-group tribute to Ronchamp (60-62). The most conspicuous entry in this category of searches after monumentality, though, is architect Edward Durrell Stone's revisit of Mussolini's Third Rome in Beverly Hills (63). This one has plants growing out of each aerial arch. Apparently there was a plethora of these arches, for they crop up again along Wilshire Boulevard, as far away as Westwood Village (64, 65), without, however, contributing much continuity to that thoroughfare.

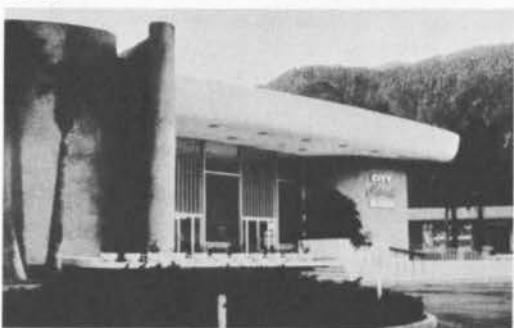
Methods of seeking "character" for buildings in northern California are mostly much less theatrical, and adhere more strictly to a single pattern, an outgrowth of the redwood Bay Region Style in the direction of the standard universal



58-59



60-61



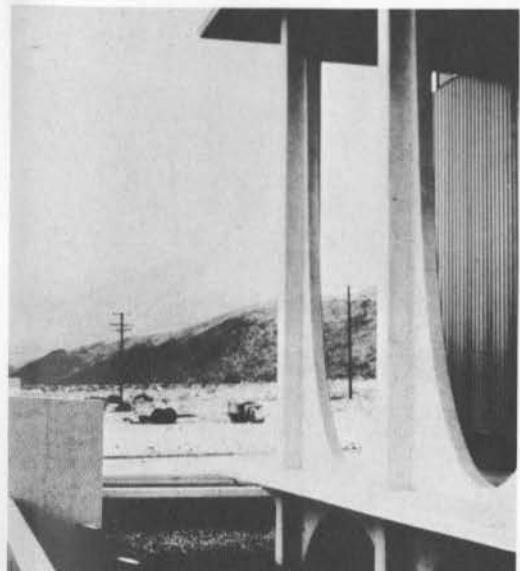
61-62



63-64



64-65



American motel, employing stucco walls, aluminum windows, wooden shingles, and casual, if not cavalier, attitudes toward form. A case in point is a recent competition conducted by Los Gatos, a small and pleasant residential city near San Jose, for its city hall and civic center, to be located on a block near the center of the town, which backs onto a wooded hill and boasts some magnificent trees. Most of the entries were less concerned with responding to the site than with attempting to create a local character from long blocks roofed with widely overhung gables, and roofs covered with thick wood shingles, usually verandaed, and smothered in shrubbery — where there were no parking lots. It really isn't fair to describe this newer shagginess by invoking the Bay Region Style, an appellation devised to describe wooden houses of chaste simplicity, clarity, and economy of means. It is better, perhaps, to cast the blame across the seas and christen the idiom, as an Arizonan of my acquaintance has, "Califiji." The winner of the Los Gatos competition (66), I hasten to point out, was not at all of this persuasion. The scheme, by Stickney and Hall, is a completely simple and smoothly functioning set of flat-roofed blocks placed around a central space built on the top of the council chamber. The group of buildings fronts on the main street — the buildings relating to each other and to parking — and opens up, thanks to the plaza above the council chamber, to the wooded hill behind.

New monumental buildings in northern California, which sometimes bear firm recollection of the residential Bay Region Style, have achieved varying degrees of architectural and critical success. John Carl Warnecke's post office and book store (67,

68) adjoining the old campus at Stanford University (69) uses its materials, masonry walls, and Mediterranean red tile roofs as a point of departure to make, with two large, steep overhanging roofs, a form almost strong enough to take its place beside the old campus. A finely detailed colonnade roofed with hyperbolic paraboloids (presumably the approved late twentieth-century successor to the arcuated colonnade) tucks rather redundantly under the great tile overhang, and fails to measure up to the rest. The care taken in framing its concrete members is, however, heartening assurance that the arts of construction have not yet died out.

At the University of California Student Union, in Berkeley (70a, b), Vernon De Mars has sought to induce an active public response by devising (in a manner that closely parallels Disney's) astonishing juxtapositions of fragments which, individually, are often exquisitely designed but are left to fend for themselves in a hubbub meant to recall, within a planned environment, the chaos of the city. The forms, like Disney's, sometimes unabashedly recall another time or place: a steel trellis surmounting the major block of the building is said to owe allegiance to Bernard Maybeck's wooden ones of an earlier generation, which generally bore vines; the spaces around the building are by way of appreciation of the Piazza di San Marco; and the carefully developed street furnishings recall Scandinavia. But the scope offered for this collection of occurrences is by no means Disney's, so that the chance to recreate the moods of the city is severely restricted, and Student Union has just one mood: it is cheerful, unremittingly cheerful. Mostly, this is fine, but on the occasions when a soberer tone is



66-67



68-69



70a,b



wanted, something is missing: from the Student Union there is no aerial tramway direct to Tomorrowland, no Disneyland chance to create still another world.

Whatever is missing, however, this collector's approach to enlivening the public realm demonstrates certain advantages over the single-mindedness of, say, the San Francisco City Hall or some of the soberer classroom blocks that stand about on the Berkeley campus. The simplicity and the anonymity of these high blocks, mostly tile-roofed, set on knolls in groves of oaks and giant eucalypti, are in the spirit of the Bay area, are praiseworthy, and have often been praised. But success eludes most of them, probably because they set out to recall the area's last two lively idioms, but seldom with enough conviction to rise above the perfunctory. The two local idioms they seek to recall were lively ones, and look lively still.

The first, a high-spirited explosion of classical or other borrowed forms, which break apart to leave voids in astonishing places, so as to create lofty spaces and dark shadows, has left a major monument on the campus, the Hearst Mining Building of 1907 (71). John Galen Howard was its architect, but in it the magnificent mad hand of Bernard Maybeck, the local culture hero, is evident. The second local idiom, in whose development William W. Wurster has been the central figure, usually comes out best at small scale, since the carefully understated, spare, almost anonymous efficiency of a well-understood carpenters' constructional system is most clearly in evidence there. "No matter how much it costs," Mrs. Wurster points out about her husband's work — and the best

of the rest of the vernacular — "it will never show." The new large buildings on the Berkeley campus of the University of California (72-77), where they succeed, succeed because they share either in the exuberance of the first local idiom or in the naturalness of the second. When they fail, they fail from dispiritedly attempting continuity with the first local idiom (their great tile roofs lifted up and out of sight) or from seeking to cash in on the apparent casualness of the second local idiom, without noting that that is a casualness born of an intimate understanding of a constructional system and a way of life.

Not only the University but all of California and the West now face an architectural crisis different in many ways from the problems of the rest of the country. The Boston architects of the nineteenth-century railroad tycoon Leland Stanford had their own clear notions, social and architectural, of the nature of hierarchy, and they manifested them with great success in the old Stanford campus. But twentieth-century California has been equalitarian. As its population grows phenomenally, the people who comprise it, rich and poor, come from all sorts of places and owe no allegiance to any establishment of the sort that exercises at least some control of money and taste in areas less burgeoning. While California was largely rural, this equalitarianism lent special delights to living here. In southern California, from a combination of white-walled story-book Spanish and white-walled International Style, there developed, through Gill and Schindler and Neutra and *Arts and Architecture* magazine, and thanks to the climate and the landscape, a way of building large numbers of private houses of a charm and comfort never



71



72-73



73-74



75-76



76-77



before possible anywhere on such a scale. This development was surpassed only in northern California, where, if the climate was a bit moodier, the views of bays and forests were better, and there were architects, first of the generation of Bernard Maybeck, then of the generation of William Wurster (78), Gardner Dailey (79), and Hervey Parke Clark (80), who were willing and eminently able to make the most of the opportunities, to develop a domestic architecture not only esteemed by architects but almost universally accepted and enjoyed by the people for whom it was made. This is the domestic architecture we can call (though the architects who made it don't much like the appellation) the Bay Region Style.

When California was rural, a golden never-never land with plenty of room, with open fields for the public realm, with magnificent scenery for a sharable image, and with Hollywood's grandiose offerings for a publicly sharable experience, nothing could have been more natural than this emphasis on provision for domestic life, nothing more understandable than the gradual atrophying of concern for a public realm that people go to and use. The public weal was being extensively considered in projects built hundreds of miles from Los Angeles and San Francisco to provide those cities with water and electric power; but the kind of monumentality that occurs when the Establishment requires buildings more important than other buildings, in places of special importance, when skilled architects give physical

86



78-79



80

form to this requirement, and when human use and the public imagination confirm this importance, never occurred. It never occurred because the Establishment didn't exist, and because there was no need for it. California during the first four decades of the twentieth century was being developed mostly at a domestic scale, and very well, too; it seemed quite proper that man's impact on the land should be of this cozy, equalitarian, and very pleasant sort.

The process, however, is continuing in 1964, and by now it brings worry. The domestic arrangements of the earlier decades are being reproduced endlessly, no longer in the places that laid some claim to public attention – places like Bel Air, Berkeley, and Sausalito for the view; San Francisco and San Diego for the bay; Hollywood for a very special activity; and Santa Barbara for high mountains coming close to the sea – but in the no-places in between, such as Hayward (81, 82), Daly City, Inglewood, Manchester, and other municipal fictions even less memorable. The character and the sense of special place that came to the first communities for free, from the oak trees around them and the yellow hills and the mountains and the sea, do not similarly serve the later comers, or anyone: the oak trees go and the yellow hills vanish, the smaller mountains are flattened and even portions of the sea are filled in, all to be covered in a most equalitarian way with endless houses. Even the movie studios are being covered up.



81-82



It occurs to some, as the gray domestic waves of this suburban sea fill in the valleys and the bays, and lap at and erode the hills, that something should be done, and that the something should be urban and monumental. The Bay Region Style, for all its domestic triumphs, offers no architectural framework for making a special celebration; the characteristic Wurster reticence, which has served so well in helping to create the continuous domestic fabric of the Bay cities, is too deeply ingrained to allow that. In southern California a latterday straightforwardness born mostly of a habit of commercial expediency militates against architectural celebration of a particular place. But even more basic than the absence of a viable architectural idiom for making public centers is the absence of any Establishment ready to shoulder the responsibility for, to take a proprietary interest in, the public realm. So what, as we started out by asking, might we have instead, for an architectural framework and for an opportunity?

The hope exists that the first best chance for differentiation in these floating gray suburbs will come from our developing an interest in and techniques for a much more accurate definition than we seek presently of what the problems really are. If all places and problems are similar (as we might suspect from our endlessly repetitive new cities), then the whole act of marking something special is spurious and futile. If, on the other hand, there are valid bases for differentiating one place from another and one building from another, and if the

differentiation is not now made because our techniques for defining a problem are too crude, then the use by architects of other tools already available, among them the tools of mathematics and of operations research, might offer help. We should be able to expect that our developing industrial plant, controlled by electronic devices of incredible sensitivity and complexity, should be able to give us a much wider, rather than a more restricted, range of products. Just so we might expect, as architects, that by using the techniques available to us, from computer and operations research methods to our own underused analytical capacities, in order to discover more accurately and completely than we do now the particularities, even the peculiarities, of the problems we are assigned, we might achieve a much wider, fuller, more differentiated and specific range of solutions than we do now. We would, then, at least have a method. Given the chance, we might rescue the dreary suburban sea from the sameness forced upon it as much by the blindness of our analytical tools and our tendency as architects to generalize on an insufficient base, as by the social and economic restrictions thrust upon us.

A few houses (since it is California, inevitably they are houses) by a few architects, mostly under the immediate influence of Joseph Esherick, are especially concerned with the specific analysis of and response to problems of site, its outlooks and climate, the client and his needs. This is not a revolution, really, away from the attitudes of the

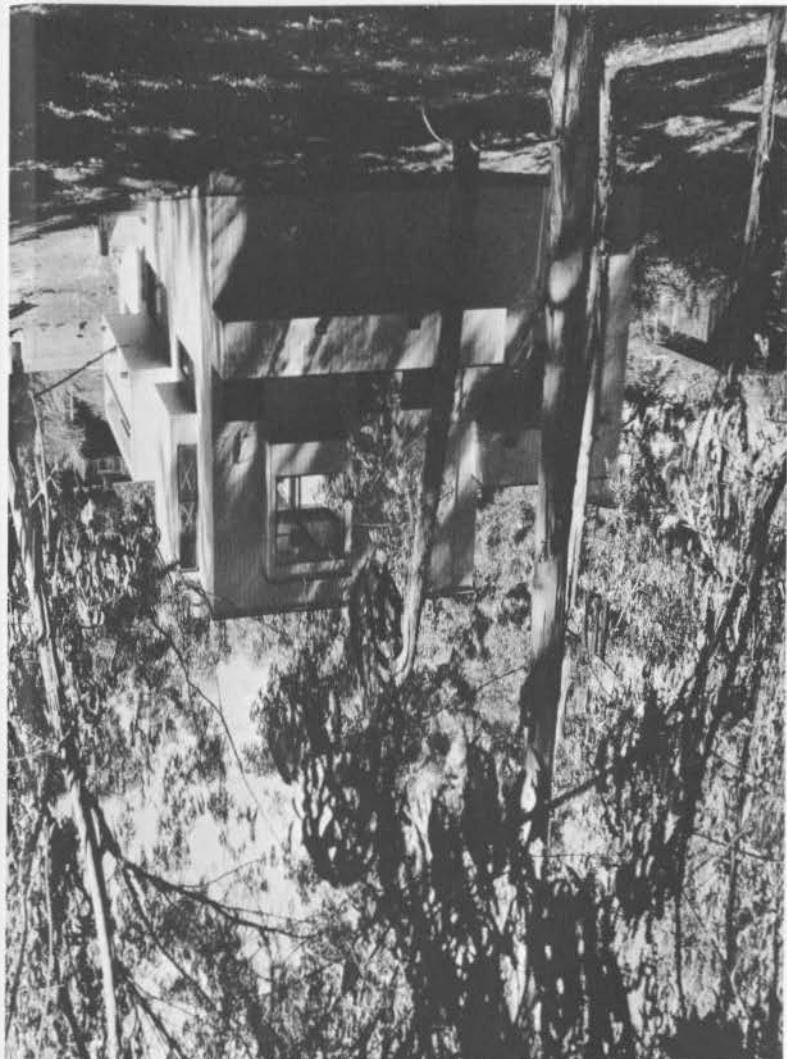
second Bay Region idiom; it embodies many of the same methods of direct response to the problem; but it seeks to clarify and extend these methods to cope with the aggravated situation.

Esherick's Cary House in Marin County (100-111)<sup>1</sup>, for instance, given a wooded view, does not rely on a wall of glass pointed generally in that direction, but has instead a wall with glass openings, each carefully placed to perform a specific function of admitting light, lighting a surface, or exposing a carefully selected portion of the view. The Rubin House in Albany (92-99)<sup>2</sup>, by George Homsey, though on a less dramatic site, reacts even more specifically to such local delights as the dappled light coming between eucalyptus leaves, and the usually hazy sun of the bay shore sliding through skylights and along white walls. The exterior of the Graham House (83-91)<sup>3</sup>, by Richard Peters and Peter Dodge, on a steep Berkeley hillside, also demonstrates forms that grow not from a generalized formal impulse but from specific search for light, air, space, and outlooks. All this extends the simpler idiom of the earlier un-formal Bay Region work, toward what promises to be a much fuller vocabulary, generated like its precursor not by restrictive formal systems but by specific response to specific problems. So far these are restricted domestic problems; but there is no reason visible yet why the elusive problems of the public realm should not respond, in an area with hardly a public realm, to sophisticated extensions of the same efforts.

1. The Cary House, by Joseph Esherick, Marin County, pages 92-94.

2. The Rubin House, by George Homsey, Albany, pages 90, 91.

3. The Graham House, by Richard Peters and Peter Dodge, Berkely, pages 88, 89.

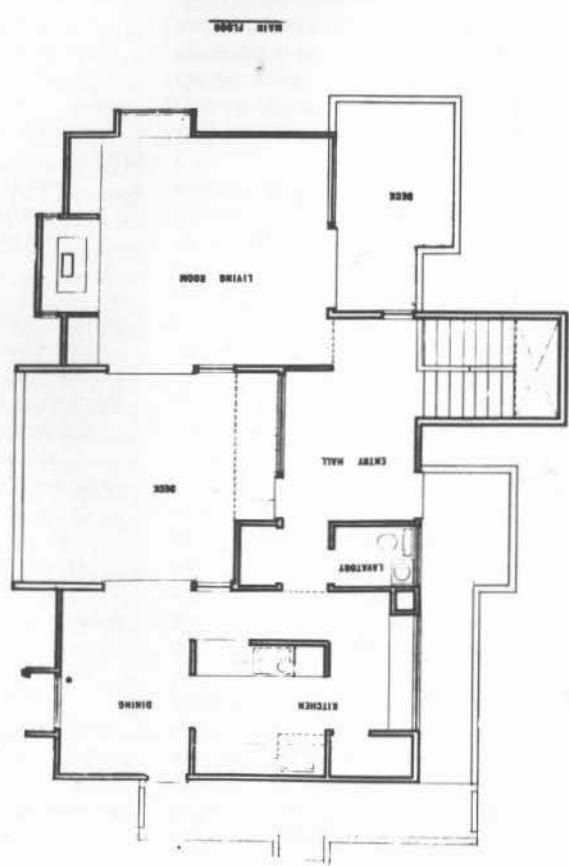


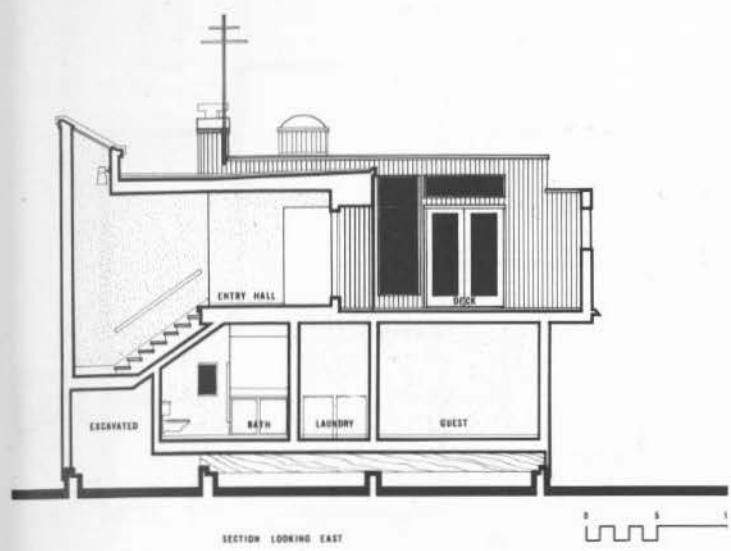
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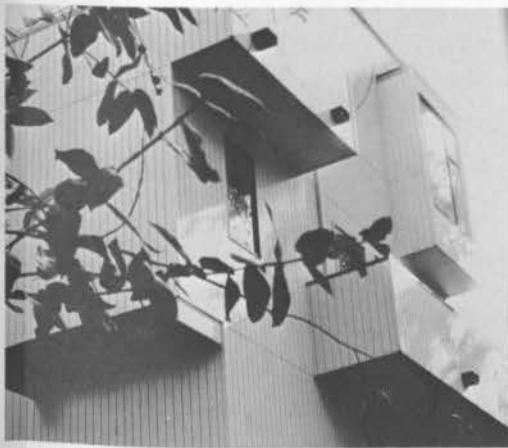
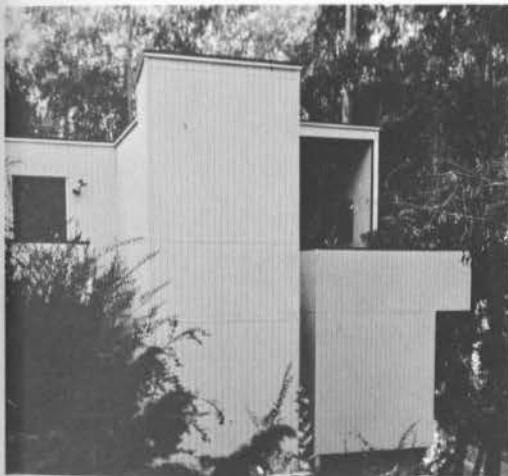
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87-88,89

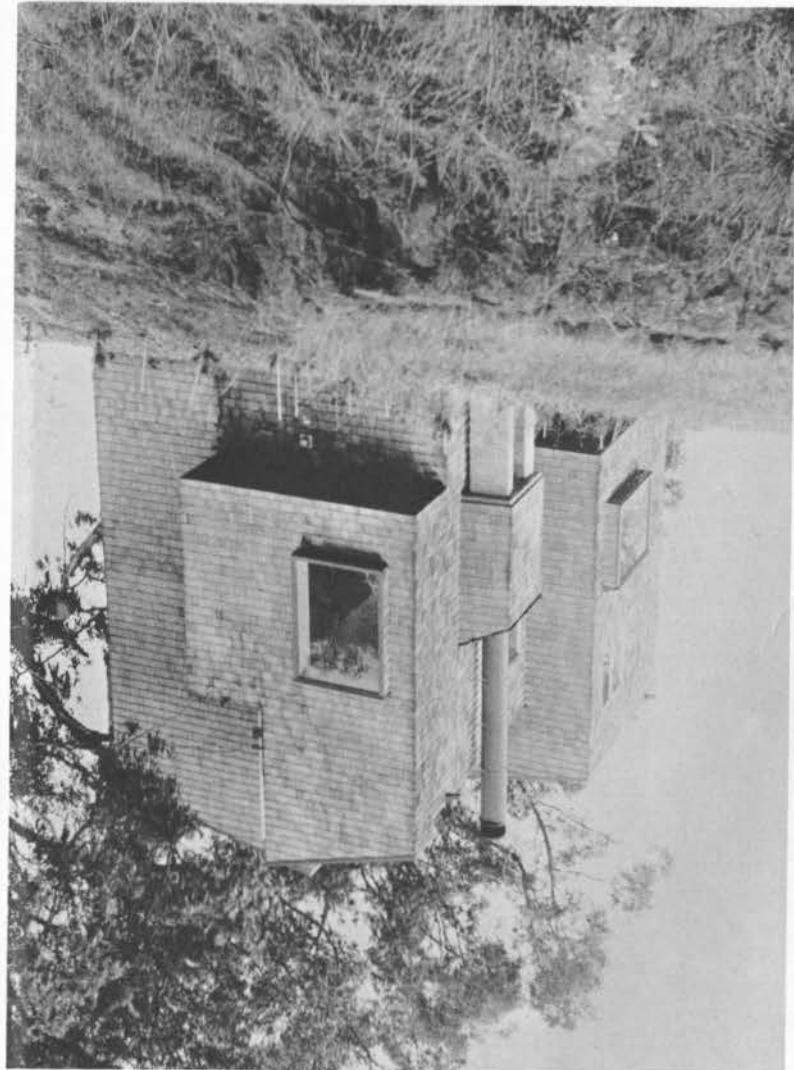


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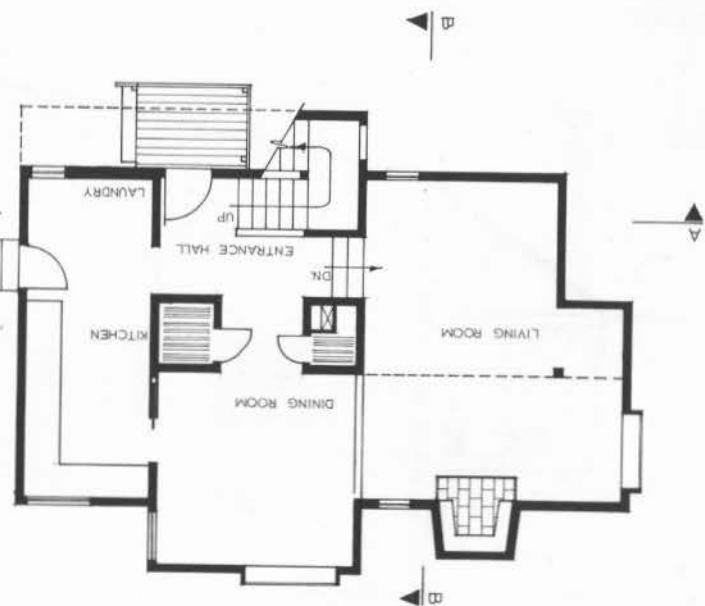
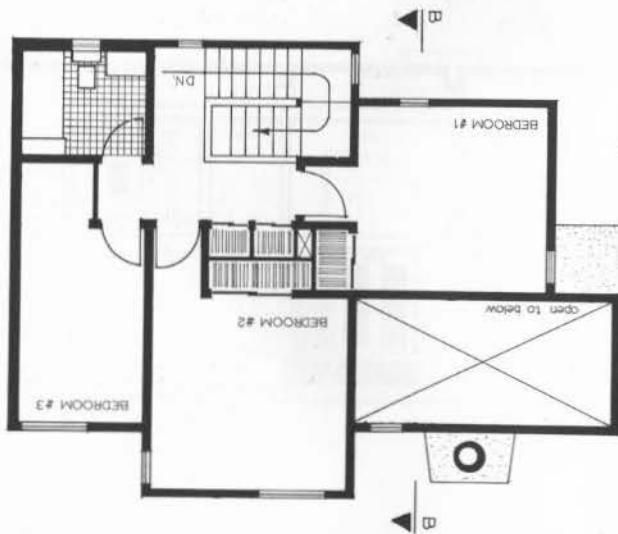


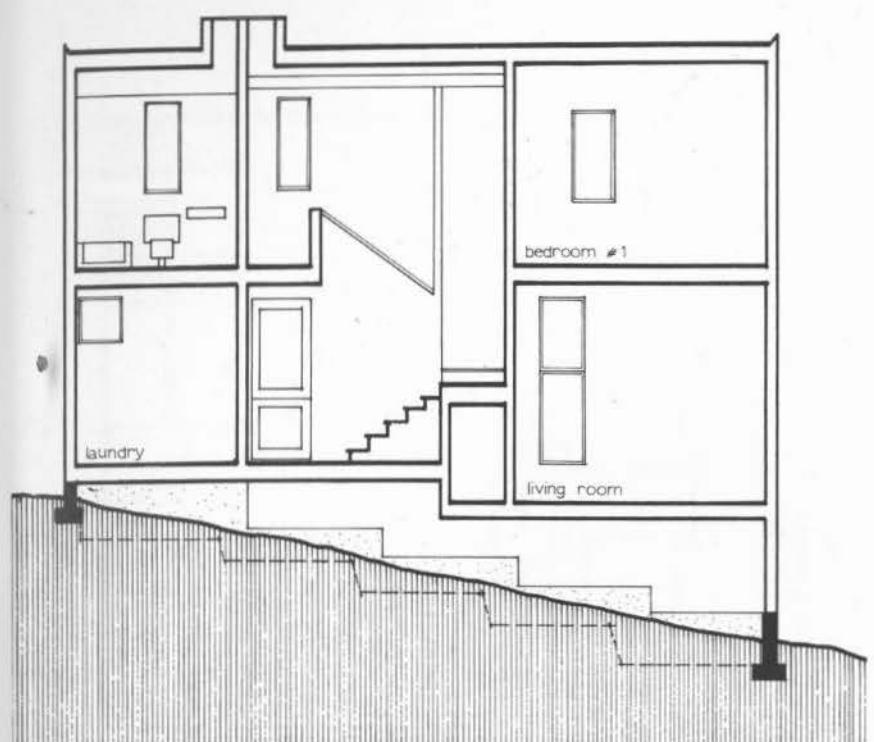
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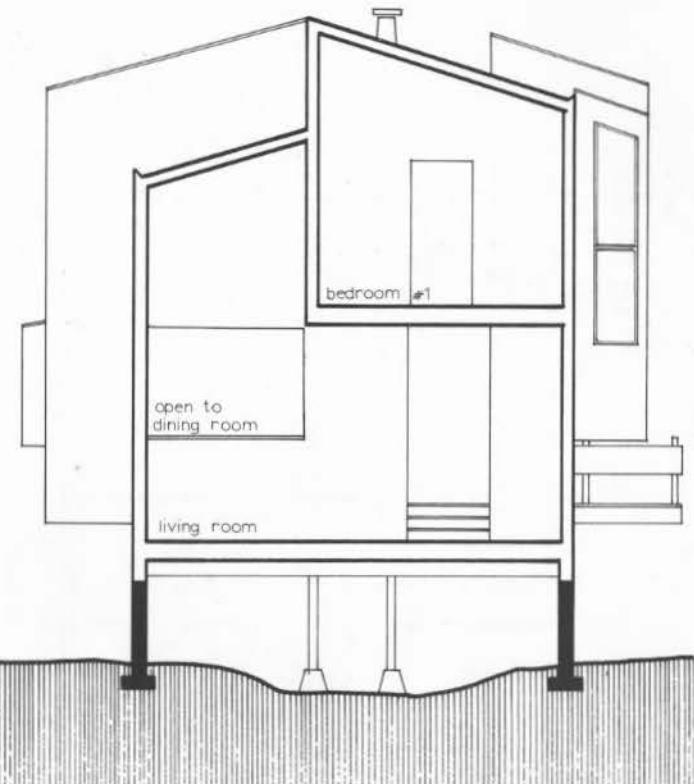
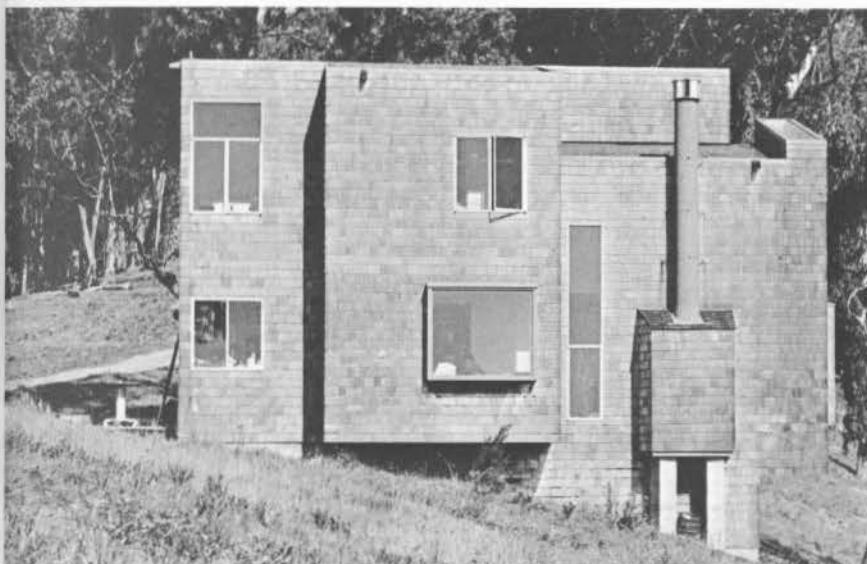
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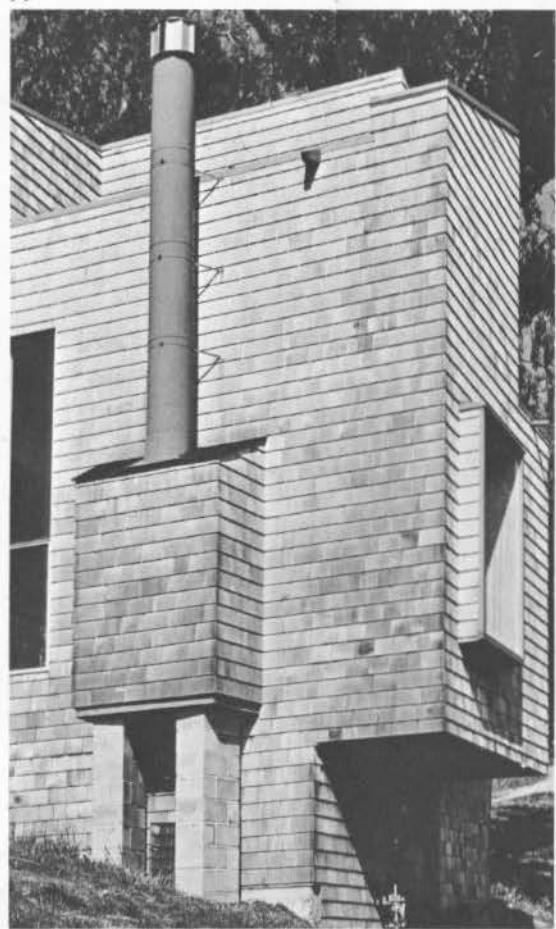


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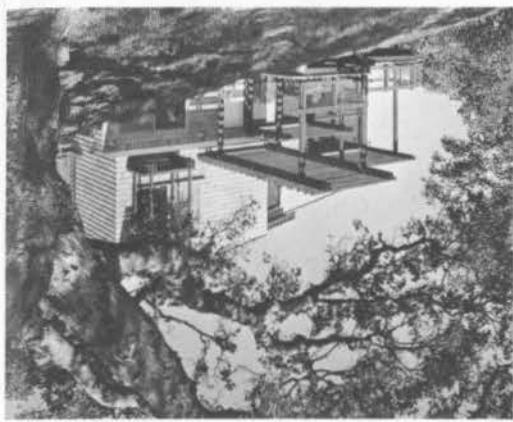


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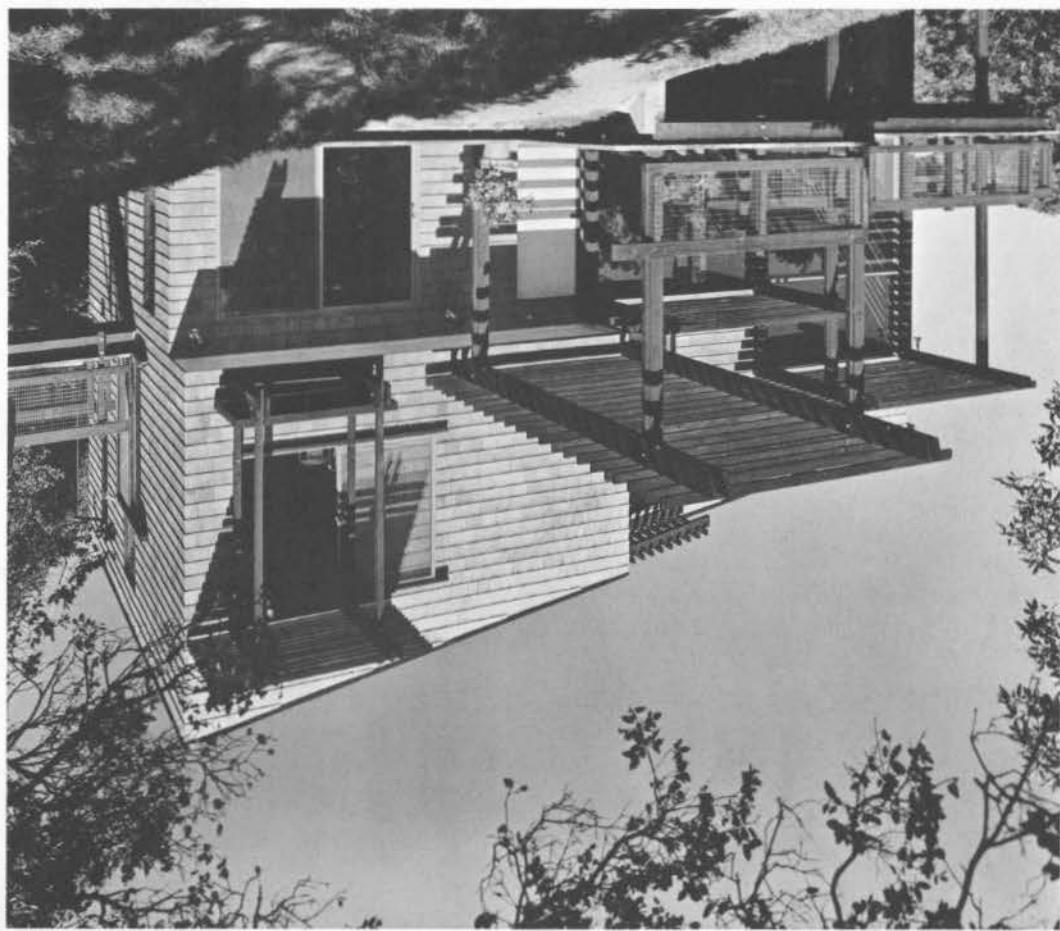
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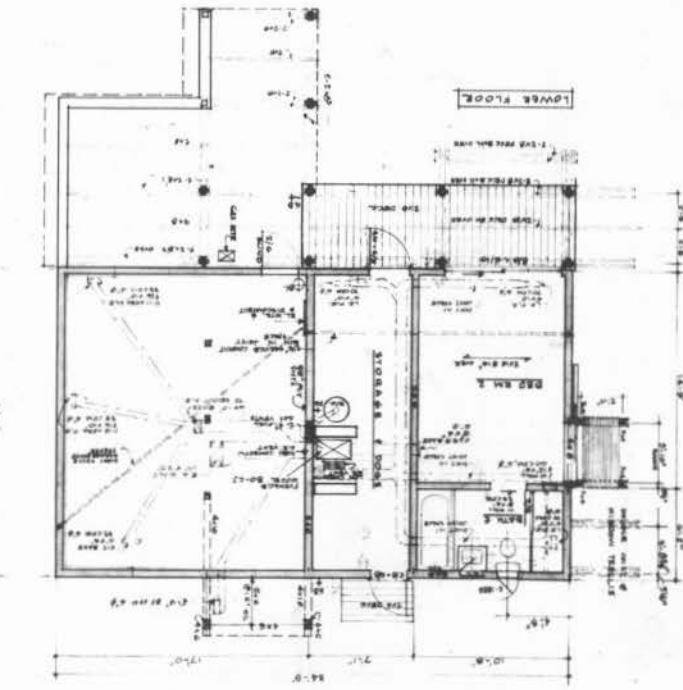
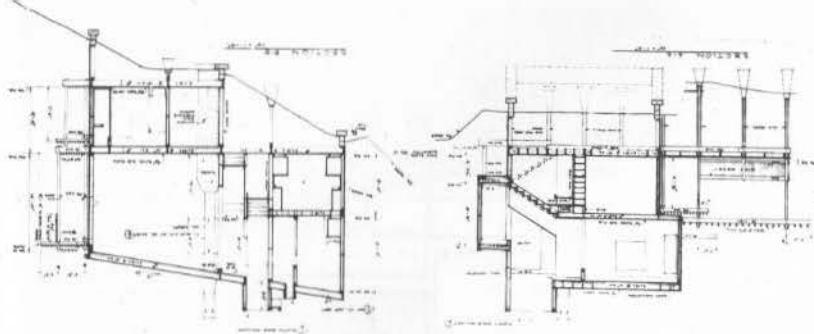
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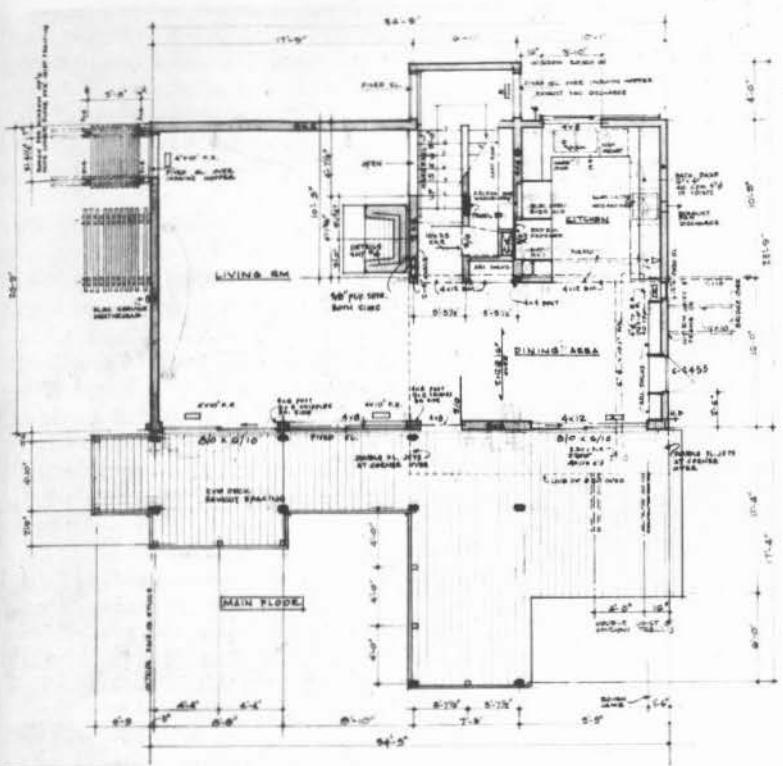


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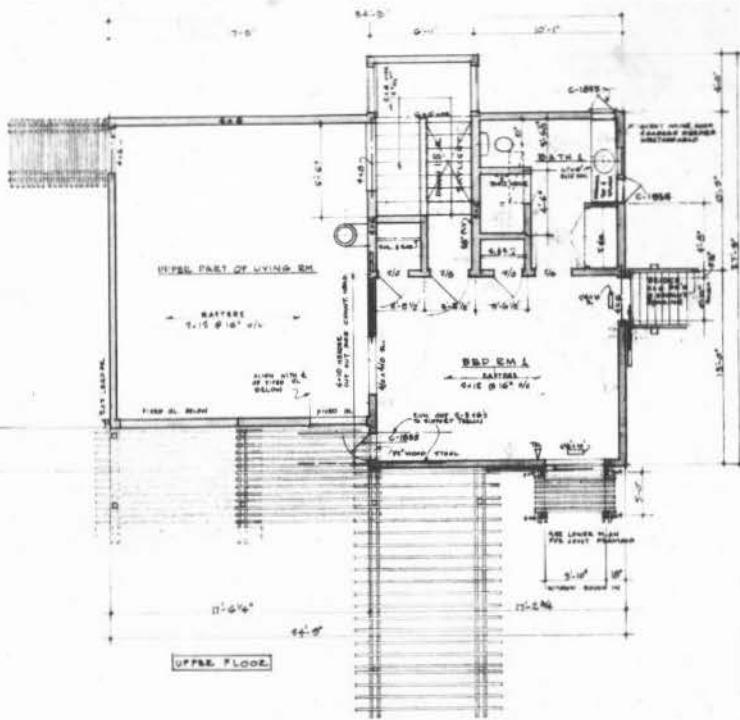
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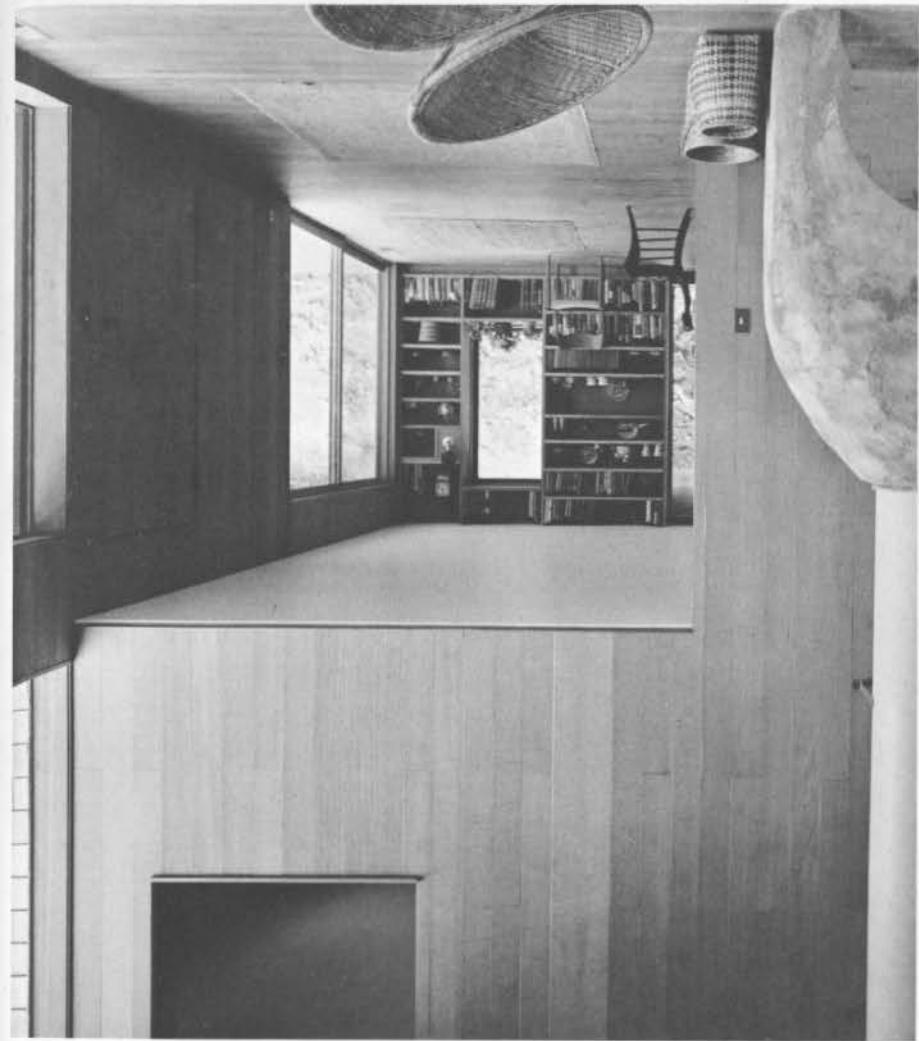


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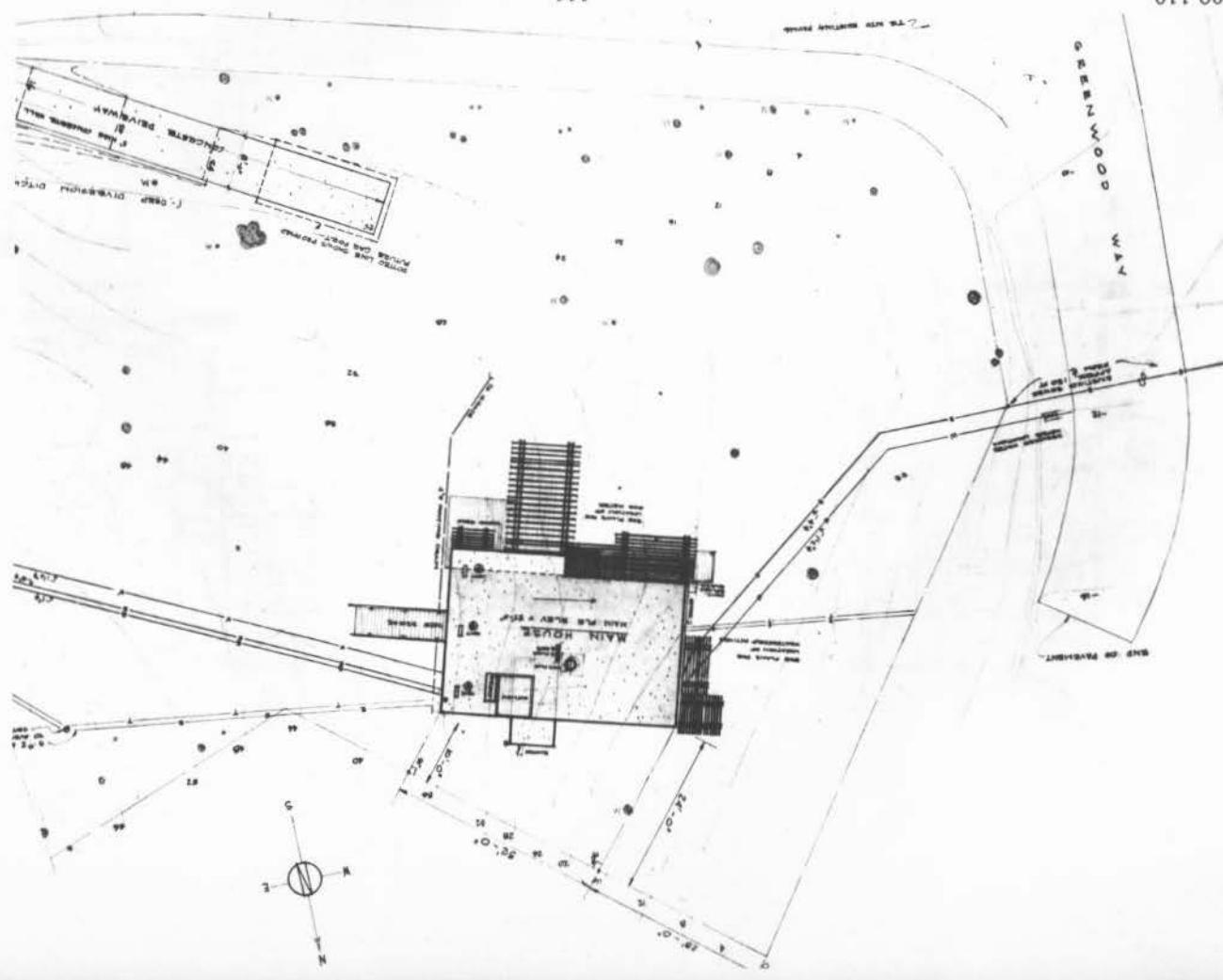




III

109-110

94



For the opportunity, the actual commission to create a public realm, we must look to other sources than the Establishment of other times or other places, to people or institutions interested at once in public activity and in place. We depend, in part, on more Disneys, on men willing to submerge their own Mickey Mouse visions in a broader vision of greater public interest, and who are nonetheless willing and able to focus their attention on a particular problem and a particular place. Disneyland, however arbitrary its location, is unique, even as Los Angeles is, and much of its power over the imagination comes from the fact.

A chain of Disneylands would have a disquieting effect not unlike that of the new transcontinental chains of identical motels that weigh the tired traveler with the hopelessness of driving all day to arrive at a place just like the one he started from. One can hope, too, for the day when the gradual loss of differentiated place, the gradual merging of the gray no-places and the inundation of the places of special significance, will cause the slumbering citizenry to awaken, to demand to spend its money to have a public life. But it seems unwise to wait for that.

Right now the largest single patron available to be pressed into the service of the public realm is the State Highway Department. Freeways until now have been one of the most serious generalizers of place in the state, ruthlessly and thoughtlessly severing some communities, congesting others, and obliterating still others, marring, gouging, and wiping out whole landscapes. Yet, for all that, they loom large in the public eye as one of the biggest,

strongest, most exciting, and most characteristic elements of the new California. If one had to name the center of southern California, it would surely be the place not far from the Los Angeles City Hall where the area's major freeways wrap together in a graceful, strong, and much photographed three-level interchange (in the photographs, the tower of the City Hall rises through the distant smog). Much of the public excitement about San Francisco's small dramatic skyline is a function of the capacity to see it, a capacity which is greatly enhanced by the bridges (themselves major California monuments), by the freeways that lead to them, and now by the freeway that comes up from the south and breaks through the hills in the nick of time for a magnificent view of San Francisco (112). Indeed, in San Francisco as in few places, the view which gives a sense of the whole city is one of the most valuable parts of the public realm, one of the parts that is most frequently attacked and must be most zealously defended. One of the public views' most effective defenders could be the freeway builders, though admittedly, they have more often acted as saboteurs, as when they tried and partly succeeded, in San Francisco, in building a freeway wall between the city and the bay (113, 114).

I am writing this in Guanajuato, a middle-sized town in the middle of Mexico, crammed into a narrow canyon, with just two narrow streets (one up and one down) in the bottom of the canyon, and with a maze of stepped pedestrian ways climbing up the canyon's slopes through the most remorselessly picturesque townscape this side of Greece. Under this runs a



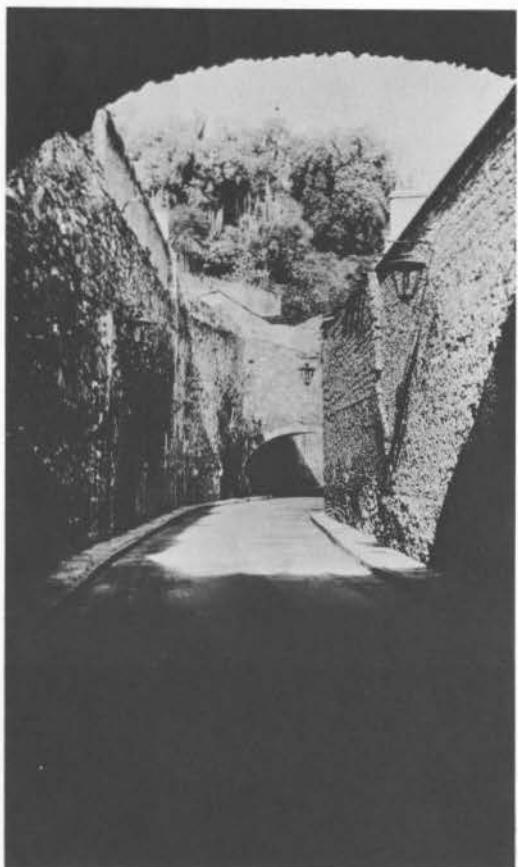
112-113



114

river, which used to inundate the city from time to time. Ten years ago a suburban portion of the river was still further depressed, and its former bed was lined with a handsome pink stone to serve as a canyon for cars, moving downhill above the river. Now, in a bold project happily called "the urbanization of the river," this development is being continued through the center of the town to let the river run with cars as well as water, sometimes behind buildings, sometimes under the ancient vaults over which the buildings of the town center spanned the river bed. None of the picturesque eighteenth-century delights is being threatened; a whole new twentieth-century layer of visual delights, at the scale of the automobile, is being added instead. The urbanity that results from this enlargement of the public realm is even more striking than the visual charm. The pedestrian spaces remain undefiled, even unattacked, while cars grind below, as in a miniature of a Hugh Ferris City of the Future that loses, miraculously, none of the delights of the past (115-118).

Guanajuato should offer us some lessons. The cities of California are much bigger, broader, and grayer, but then their budgets are larger, too (especially the items for freeway construction). They urgently need attention, before the characteristics that distinguish them at all are obliterated. There is no need and no time to wait for a not-yet-existent Establishment to build us the traditional kind of monuments or for a disaster



115



116-117



118

gripping enough to wake the public conscience to the vanishing Places of the public realm we got for free. Most effectively, we might, as architects, first seek to develop a vocabulary of forms responsive to the marvelously complex and varied functions of our society, instead of continuing to impose the vague generalizations with which we presently add to the grayness of the suburban sea. Then, we might start sorting out for our special attention those things for which the public has to pay, from which might derive the public life. These things would not be the city halls and equestrian statues of another place and time, but had better be something far bigger and better, and of far more public use. They might, for instance, be freeways: freeways (119, 120) are not for individual people, like living rooms are and like confused planners would have you believe the whole city ought to be; they are for the public use, a part of the public realm; and if the fidgety structures beside them and the deserts for parking – or for nothing – under them don't yet make sense, it is surely because there has so far been too little provision for and contribution to and understanding of the public realm, not too much. The freeways could be the real monuments of the future, the places set aside for special celebration by people able to experience space and light and motion and relationships to other people and things at a speed that so far only this century has allowed. Here are structures big enough and strong enough, once they are regarded as a part of the city, to re-excite the public imagination about

the city. This is no shame to be covered by suburban bushes or quarantined behind cyclone fences. It is the marker for a place set in motion, transforming itself to another place. The exciting prospects, not surprisingly, show up best at Disneyland. There, on the inside of the Matterhorn from the aerial tramway over the bobsled run on the inside of the plastic mountain, is a vision of a place marked out for the public life, of a kind of rocketing monumentality, more dynamic, bigger, and, who knows? even more useful to people and the public than any the world has seen yet.

*Following is a selection of work by the office of Moore, Lyndon, Turnbull and Whitaker*

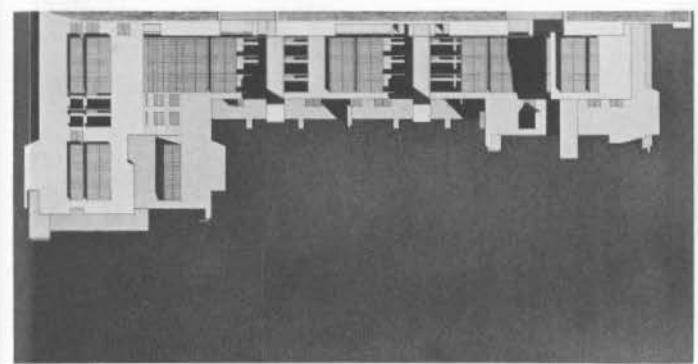
- 1-4      *West Plaza Condominium Coronado, California 1962*
- 5-9      *Monte Vista Apartments Monterey, California, 1963*
- 10-16    *Cyril B. Jobson House Palo Colorado Canyon, Monterey County, California, 1961*
- 17-22    *Bonham House Boulder Creek, California, 1962*
- 23-29    *Charles W. Moore House Orinda, California, 1961*
- 30-35    *J. Wilkie Talbert House Oakland, California, 1964*
- 36-39    *Jenkins House St. Helena, Napa Valley, California, First submission, 1961*
- 40-45    *Otus House Berkeley, California, 1961*



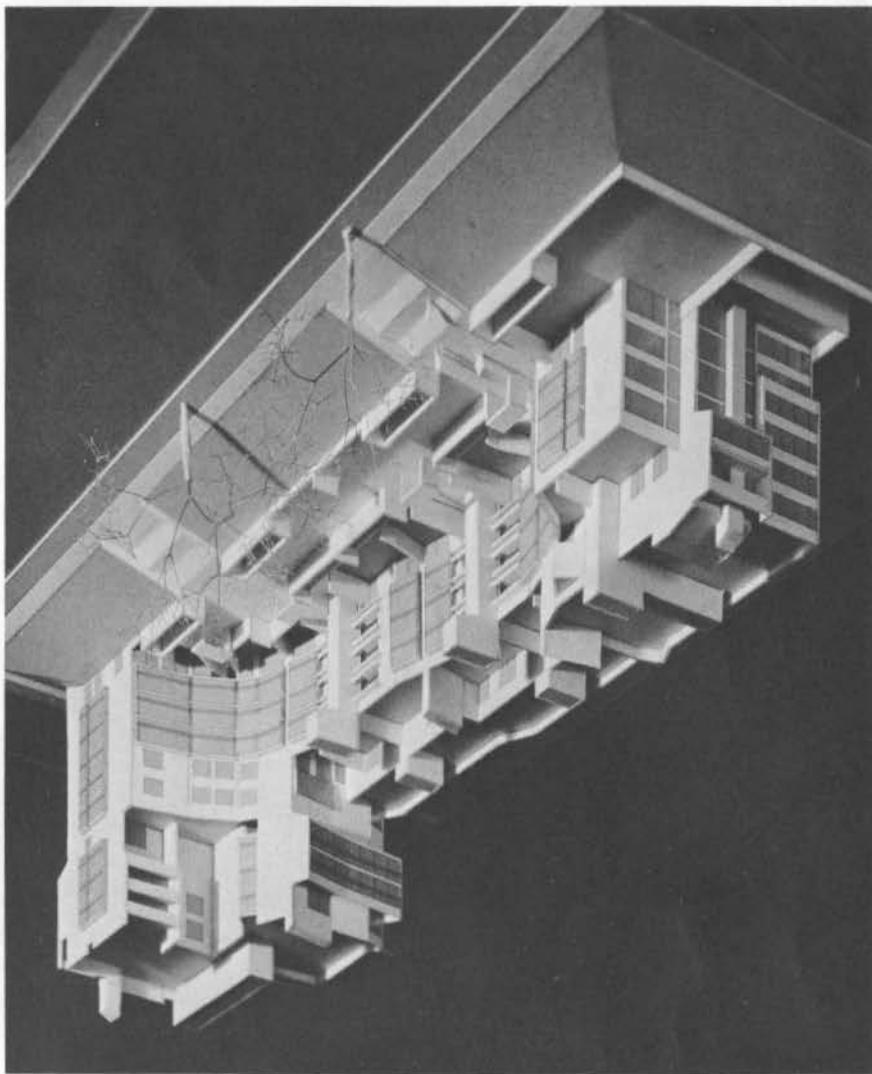
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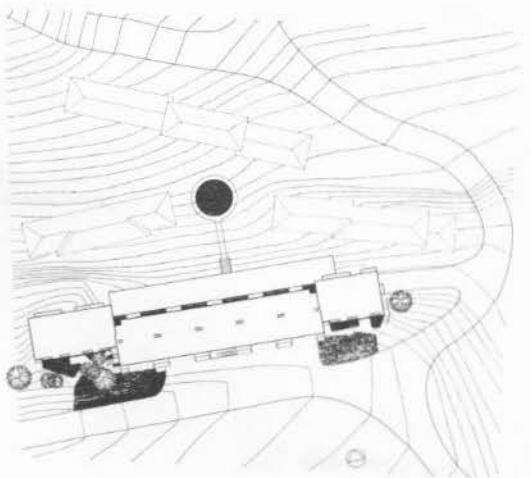
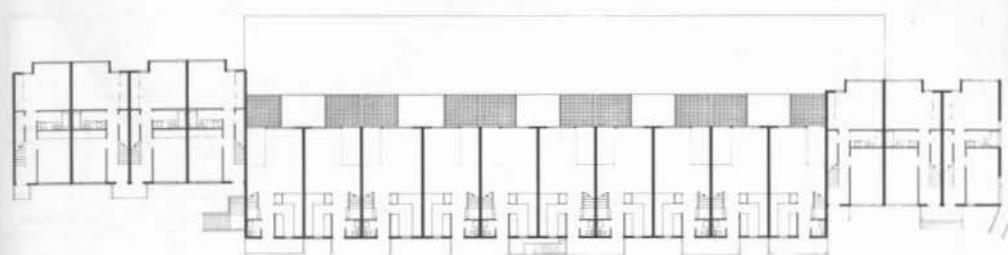
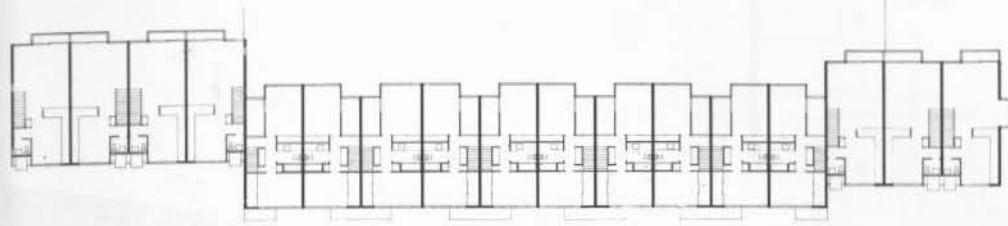
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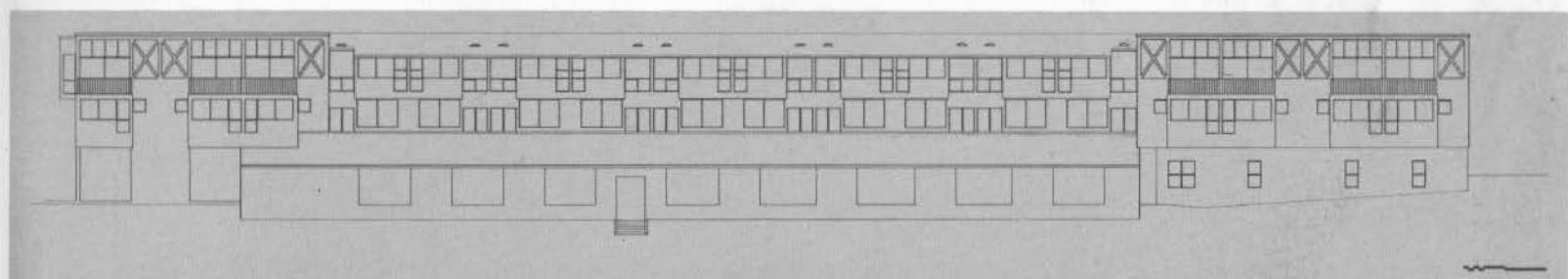




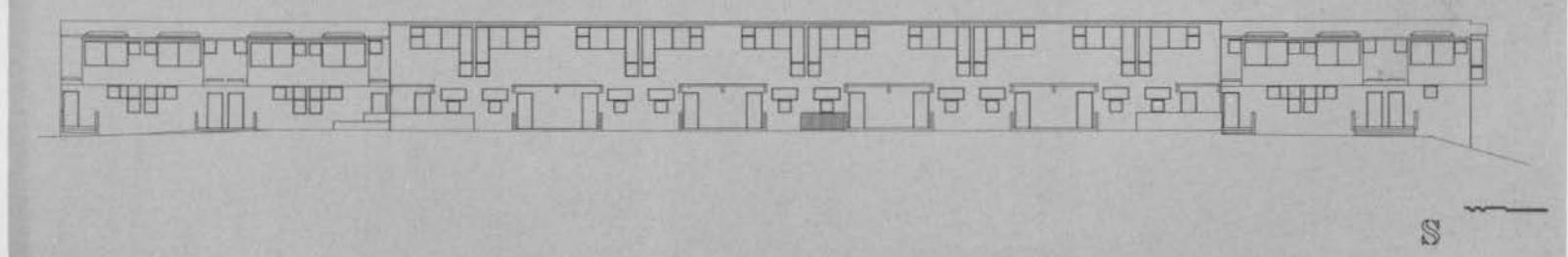
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7a,b,8-9a,b

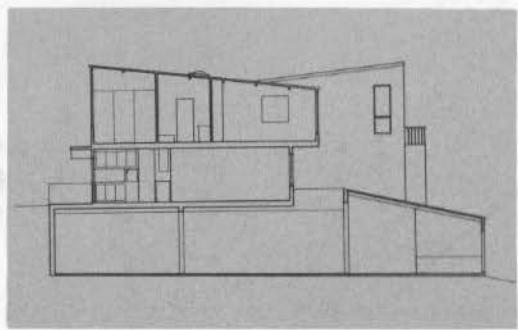
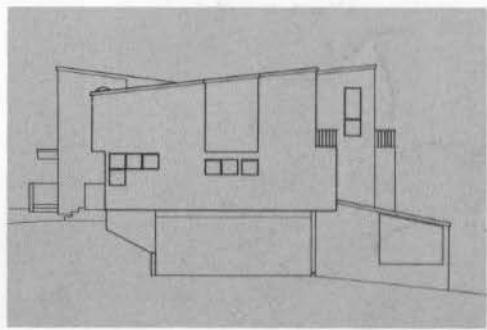
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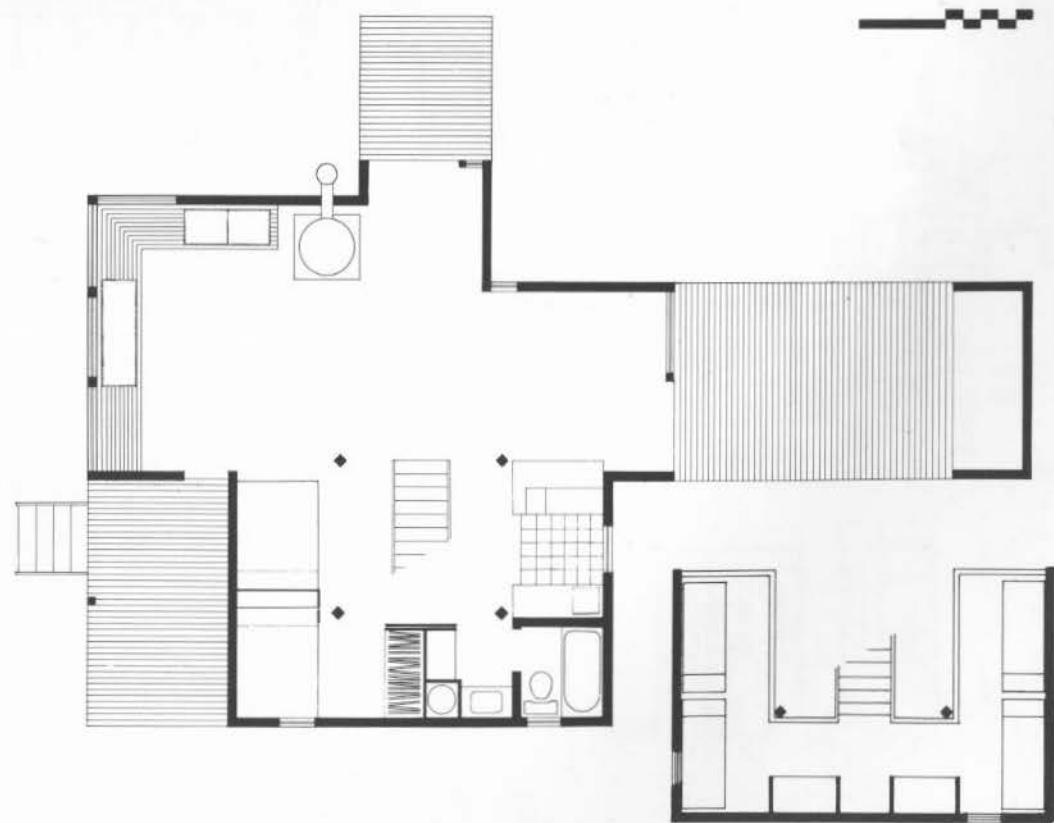
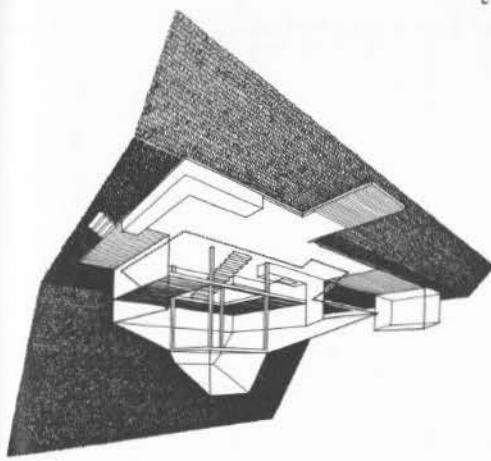
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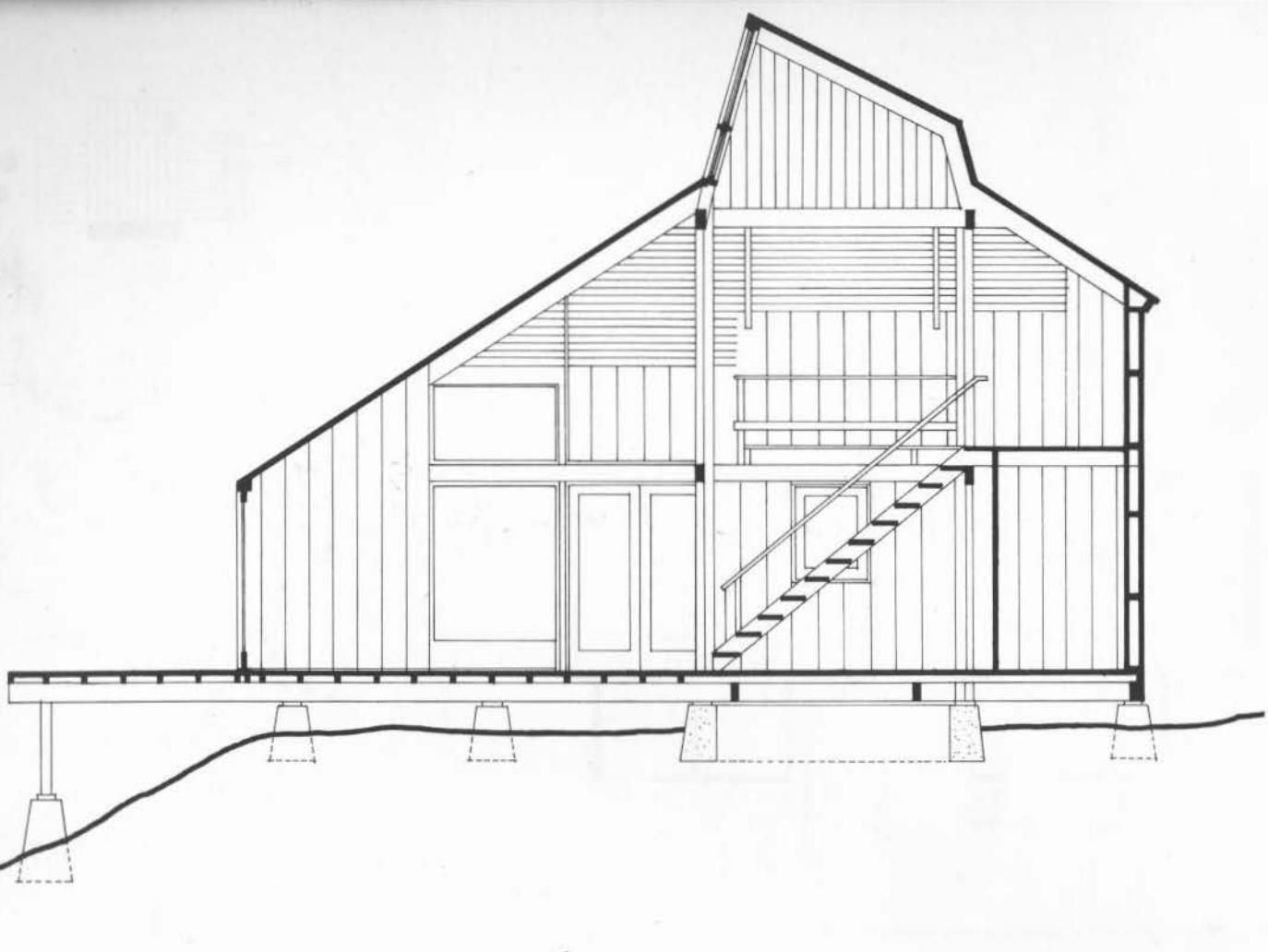
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14-15



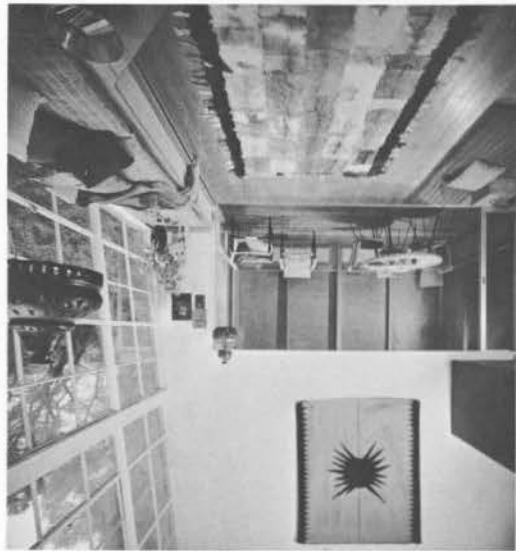
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101



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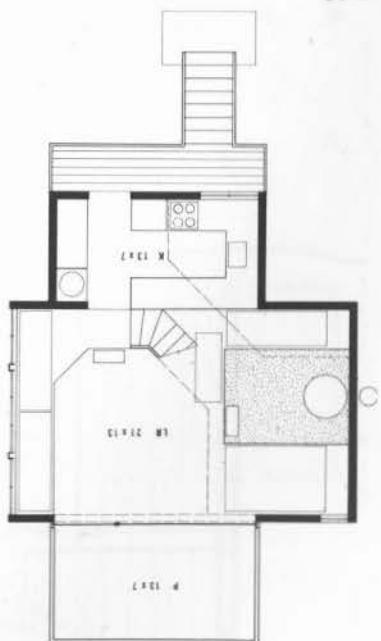
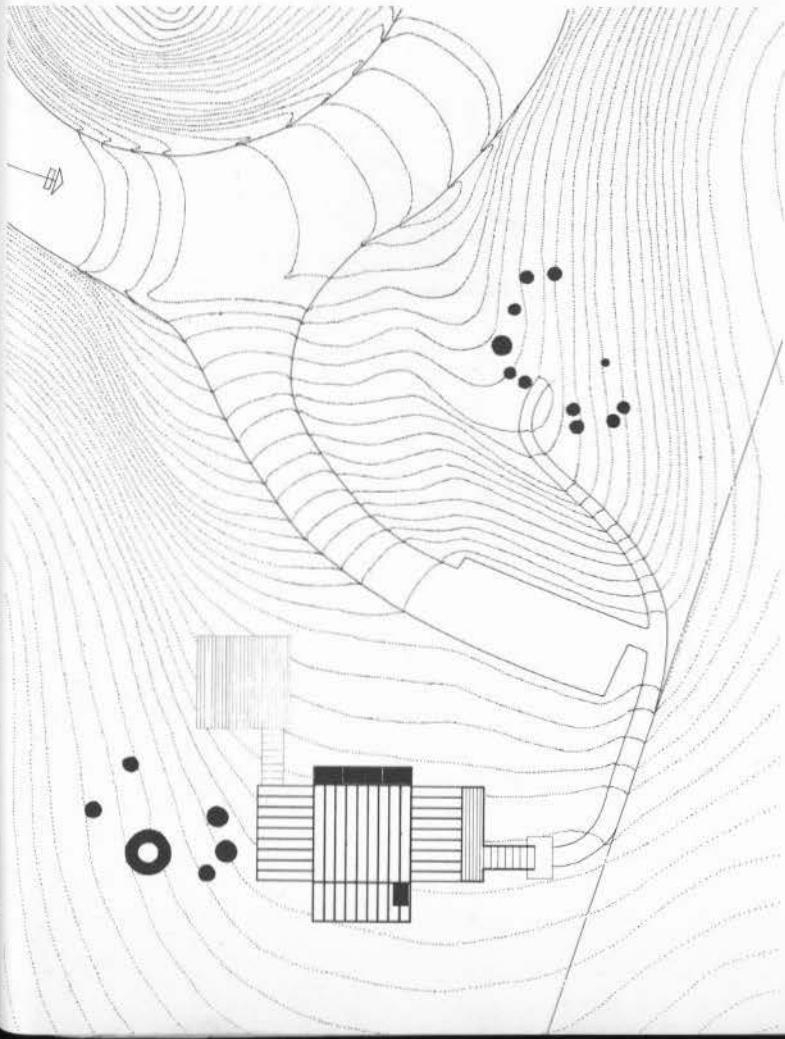
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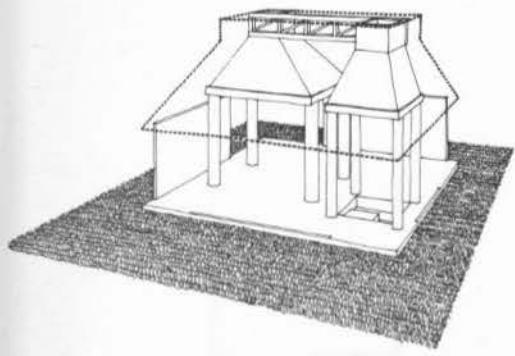


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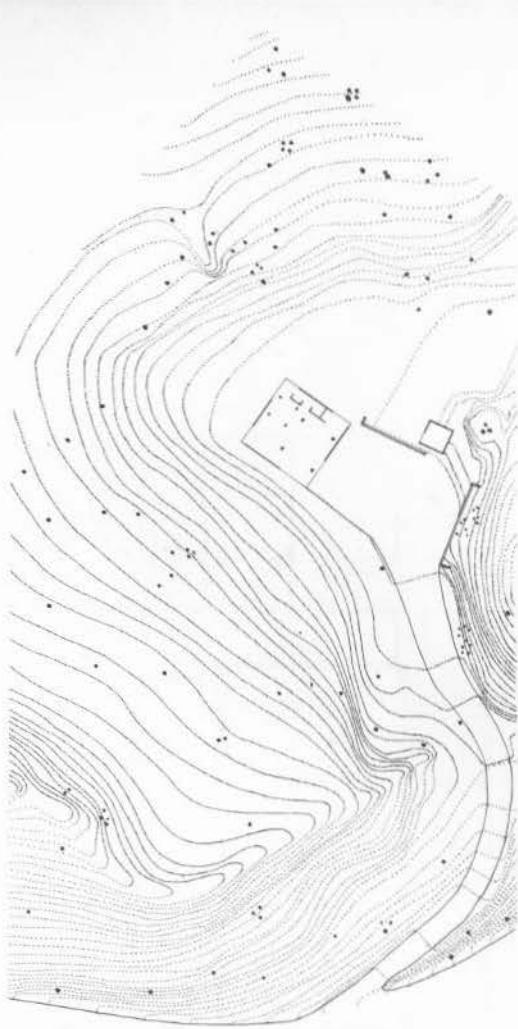
17-18

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23-24



25-26



27-28,29

