

# Design Notebook: All three artists are preoccupied with images drawn from a memory of home.

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## Design Notebook

Ada Louise Huxtable

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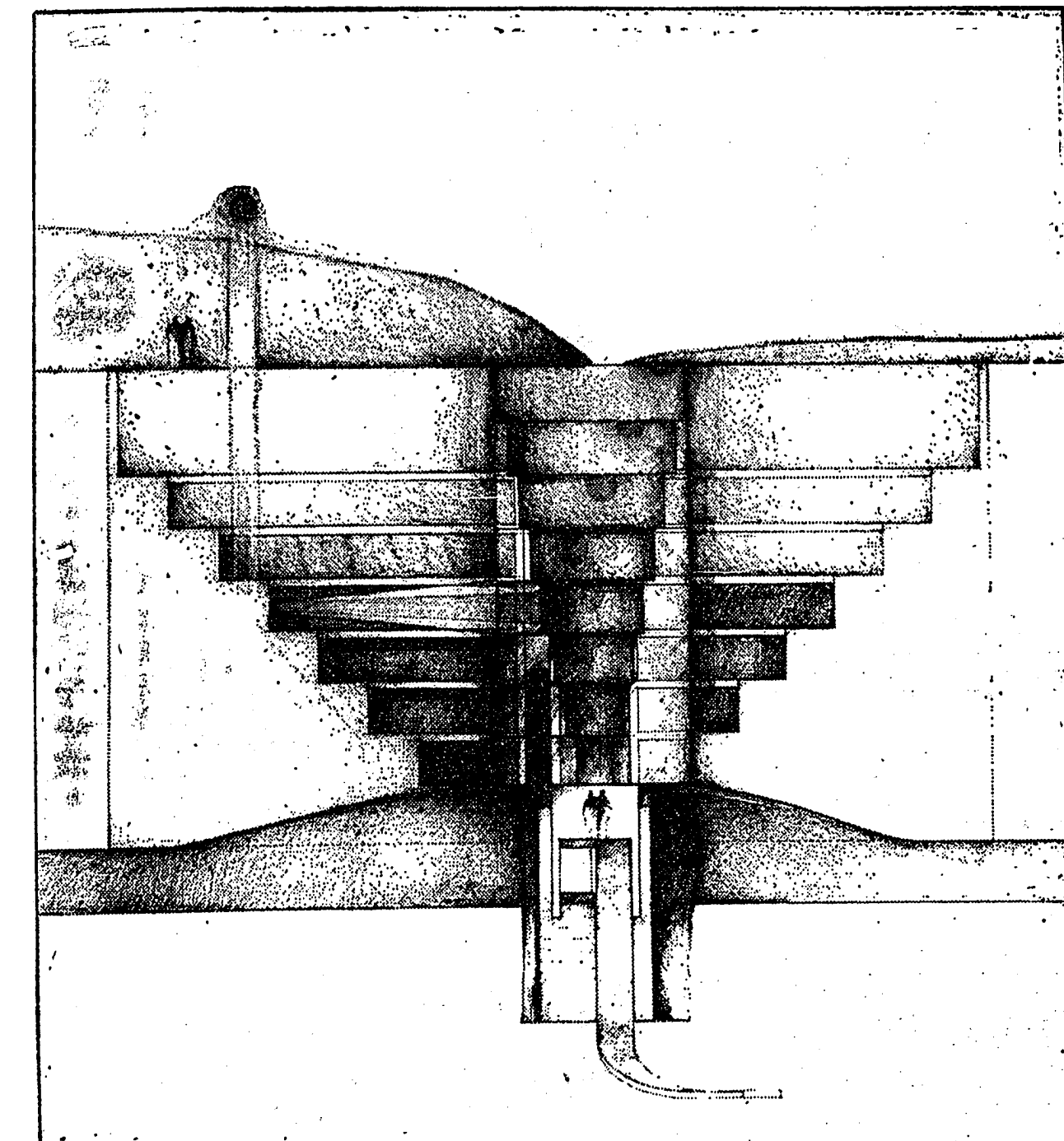
**H**OME was never like this. Anyone who goes to see "Image of the Home" at the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies (8 West 40th Street, through March 16) expecting anything resembling fashions in furnishing will be confused and disappointed. This exhibition of drawings by Giuliano Fiorenzoli, Nancy Goldring and Michael Webb, mounted with the aid of a grant from the New York State Council on the Arts, deals with the furnishing of the mind. Its sources are Freud, Surrealism, Space-Time, the technology of the future and remembrance of things past—not the domestic styles that turn shelter into status and profit.

The 44 drawings, photographs and collages on display are as beautiful as they are obscure. And although there seems to be a working communication among the three artists (Fiorenzoli and Webb are architects), the approach and style of each is markedly his own.

What ties this work together is philosophical and conceptual—all three artists are preoccupied with images that are drawn from a memory or a vision of home, its artifacts or spaces, reworked abstractly in terms of intimate, sensuous and emotional references. The connecting factor is that these images are not bound to the moment of observation in which they are committed to paper—they attempt to imply a lapse, or continuity of time within the static representation. To a degree, they succeed—some more than others. This intriguing factor, plus consistently elegant draftsmanship, makes these pictures both provocative and appealing. Abstract, elusive and alluring, they are neither easy to understand nor easy to dismiss. But once seen, they stay in the mind.

Because this is haunting work, in the way that memories of the home are often haunting on an unconscious level. It is also dreamlike work, sometimes evoking those quiet nightmares of menacingly unfamiliar and indecipherable places that trigger anxiety or withdrawal.

The most seductive examples are Nancy Goldring's drawings, partly because her material is the easiest to grasp, dealing as it does with overtly romantic images of direct visual ap-



Giuliano Fiorenzoli's 'Geometry for a House at Sunset,' above, and 'Indoor Space'

peal. She starts with a view from a window, including the interior reflections on the glass. Such views identify and color the places where we have lived as much as anything in the rooms themselves. A row of buildings or a roovescape may be drawn with a refined appreciation of their forms and details. Ghostlike, suggestive, framed in an abstract pattern by shutters or a shade, they evoke a million buried impressions of moments caught in time and the mind's eye, fixed by a shade pull or a fold of cloth. The near and the

distant, the immediately tactile and the remotely perceived, are played off against each other in a poetry of tones and planes. Delicately executed in pencil, ink, crayon and gesso, these pictures have evocative names like "A Clear Day and No Memories," or "The Ocular Proof."

But that is not the end of the process. The artist next photographs the drawing and projects it on the original window and scene, and then rephotographs the combination. The resulting photographic image, exhibited with the

drawing, is extraordinary in the way it composes art, reality and time.

Michael Webb, who was a member of a British architectural group called Archigram, is now pursuing a more solitary and lyrical path. In the 1960's, Archigram invented Plug-In City, a computerized megastructure that ambled from place to place. A cartoon-book style of Pop collage celebrated this "process" urbanism and "Star Wars" technology.

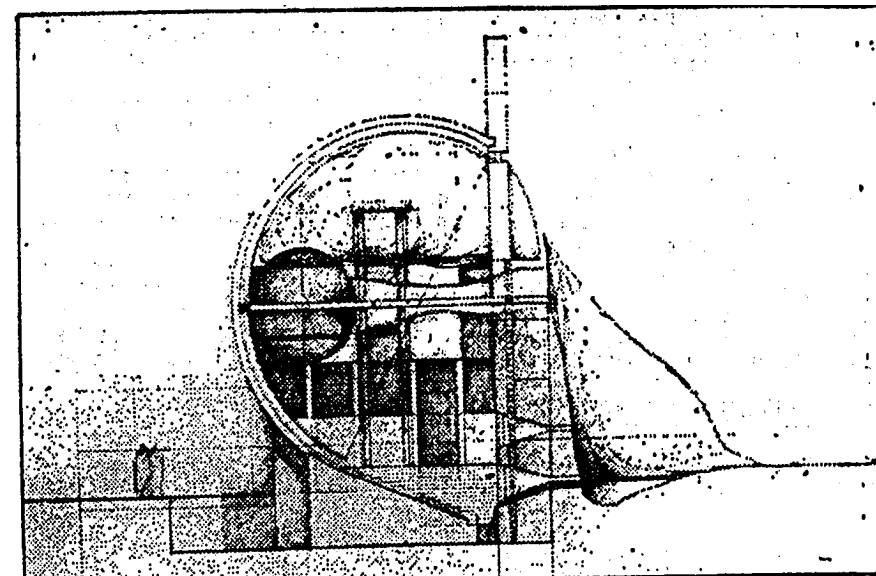
Mr. Webb now celebrates an intensely private vision. Some of the techno-

logical hardware survives, in half an automobile, or the peephole of a door. But he "chooses" both the artifact that he emphasizes, and the way that he wants the observer to see it.

There is a drawing of a submarine that has supposedly transported the viewer to Henley on Thames in England, the source of the artist's childhood memories. Views are "controlled" through the submarine's periscope. In other drawings we are given bits and pieces of places and things. We approach a bedroom on an island in the river. A series reveals a "sleeping" place; one view focuses on the pattern on a pillow to be made by the visitor-

the senses in a much more directly architectural way. The base of his drawings is usually a large, abstract building form. Carried out in colored pencils with measured care and subtle chromatic nuance, these drawings struggle to convey the most theoretical relationships of space, structure and human response.

Everything is ambiguous, in spite of the precision and order of the technique and imagery. The scale is large and the functions are mysterious. The architectural forms can be read as both plan and elevation. Nature penetrates buildings. A huge cranium shape may be superimposed on a stylized composi-



sleeper-to-be; in this case, the artist's license or subliminal desires provide the face of Linda Ronstadt. In an eerie, sci-fi finish, the final drawings suggest the frozen images of all those viewer-visitor-sleepers-to-be who have observed, arrived and slept.

Another subject is a forest with airy foliage, embracing a glass block containing the "memories" of a house and furniture that once existed on the site. Everything remembered is represented upside down and inside out—fragments of a table, a classical statue, a lamp that gives black, rather than bright light. New elements, or things-to-be, interlace with the old. For such pictures Mr. Webb draws on his recollections of World War II bombings, when blown-open Victorian houses revealed fragments of once-comfortable and pedestrian furniture in unreal arrangements, frozen in memory.

This inordinately complex and private weaving of objects and time does not really work pictorially without elaborate explanations. But Mr. Webb's drawings, in pencil, ink and watercolor, using graphics and photomontage, are beautifully done. They are evolving toward a still-uncertain esthetic and intellectual resolution.

Mr. Fiorenzoli approaches space and

tion of building walls, cut away to reveal interiors that are rich organizations of planes and geometry. Closed facades are cool and remote in grays and blues; more "open" spaces become suggestively "organic" in reds and oranges. They imply the identification of human and building interiors, but in a coolly architectural, rather than a visceral way. There are intimations of spatial perceptions by touch, taste and vision.

"Geometry for a House at Sunset" tries to create multiple aspects of space and time. Two shadowed figures at the top of the picture stand at a high ground level near the setting sun's path; the same sun is projected into a concave building form as a series of setting suns on descending, stepped levels leading down to an underground chamber, where the two figures appear again. Mr. Fiorenzoli is the Boullée of a sophisticated modern psyche.

All of these "homes" are habitations of the mind. The ideas of Mr. Fiorenzoli and Mr. Webb are too personal and special to share easily; only Nancy Goldring offers a kind of evocative vision that is part of the universal experience. "Image of the Home" probes deeply into the inner places where we dwell.