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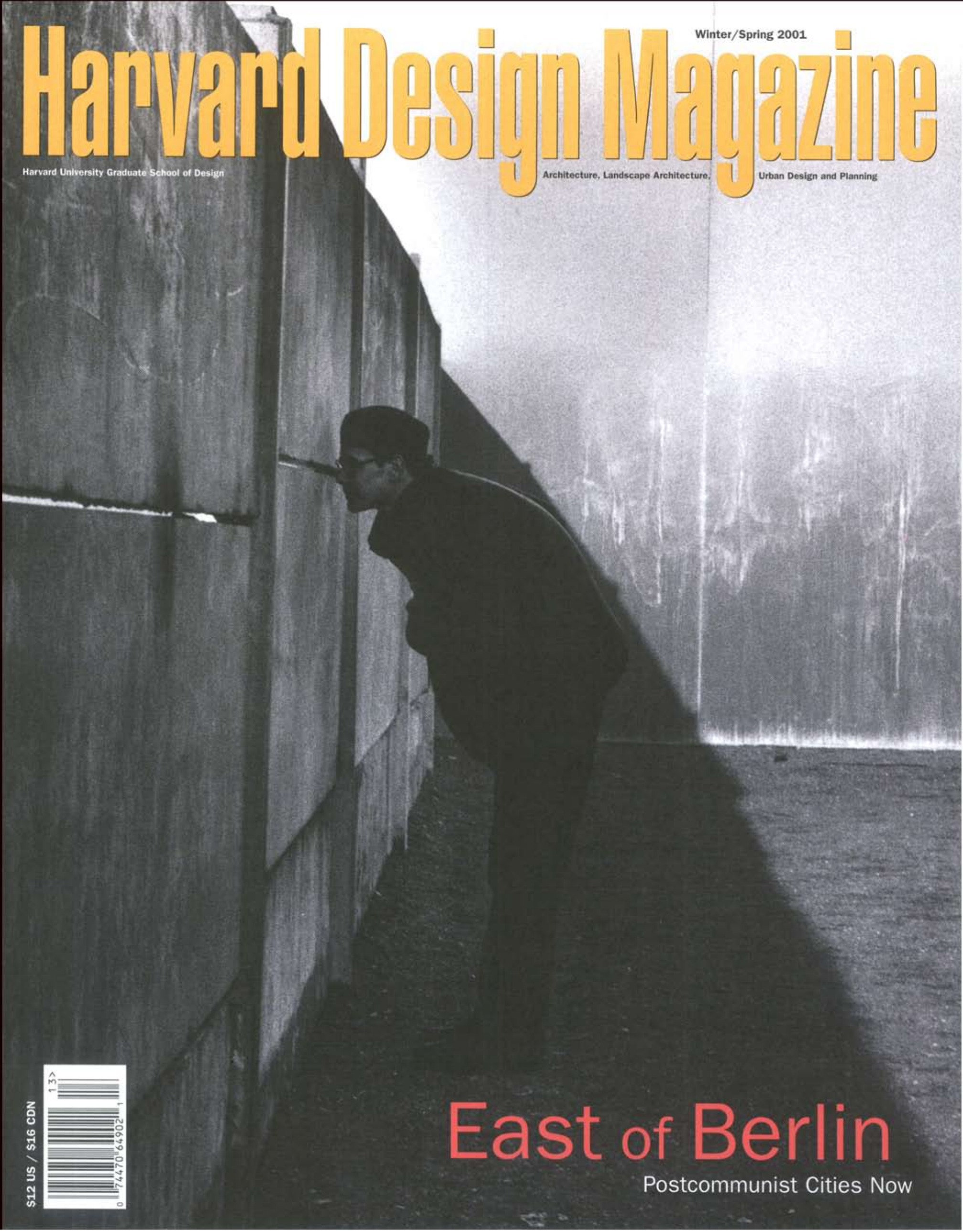
Architecture, Landscape Architecture, Urban Design and Planning



East of Berlin

Postcommunist Cities Now

$12 US / $16 CDN

that architects could significantly improve modern life by adapting their practices to the needs of industrial technology. For them, technology became as much part of the problem as it was a possible solution. This increased ambivalence toward the machine was, no doubt, a response to the technology-saturated war in which some members of the younger generation had fought, and to the ongoing, nightmarish prospect of nuclear global destruction. It was also a reaction to industrial technology's failure to live up to its early profound promise of better architecture for the many, not just the few, as well as to its contemporary, less noble successes: the mass production of an unending stream of consumer products or the numbing repetitiveness of the International Style. Situated modernist practitioners and theorists, both in the interwar years of early modernism and in the postwar years, neither renounced nor particularly celebrated industrial technology. Without fanfare, they employed the technologies that they found useful. . . .

Aalto's tiny Town Hall and library at Säynätsalo of 1948–52 exemplified . . . [an] ambitious and multifaceted postwar situated modernism. The program called for a multi-use civic building accommodating retail space, offices for municipal administration, the local courtroom, and a public library. Aalto's sectional solution was designed to reinforce communal identity at every turn. Retail spaces are on the ground floor, facing the street. The complex's public and civic functions are oriented toward the internal courtyard set one story above ground level atop excavated land. This courtyard is enclosed by the U-shaped block of municipal offices. Above one section of the office block on the third level, standing on its own as kind of a beacon for the complex and symbolizing democratic aspirations, is the single-pitched tower of the courtroom.

Aalto, revealing an ambivalence toward commercialism that was common to other postwar reformers of the situated modernist strain, explained that a vertical solution for even so small a complex set the administrative building "free . . . of the vulgar influence of the business premises." The courtyard, a single common space surrounded by a glazed corridor, symbolized the commonality of interests that municipal officials shared with the citizens they represented, and the necessity for local government to operate in a manner that was transparent to its community and that reinforces its collective identity.

The complex at Säynätsalo is also carefully knit into its site and the regional culture from which its idiom partly derives. Materials are commonly available brick and local wood, the latter the source of the town's economic livelihood. In symbolically important places such as the courtroom, wood is joined with techniques drawn from the Finnish vernacular. Nature is invited into the complex at every turn, as the user ascends grass-covered stairs, enters the light-filled courtyard, or sits down in the public library that looks out into the surrounding trees. The complex at Säynätsalo engages its users at the level of program, plan, section, detail, and materials. At the same time, it announces its modernist affiliations in multiple ways. It upholds the modernist attitude toward using tradition only in the interest of rationally conceived aims, alluding to architectural precedents such as the agora or the piazza not nostalgically, but in a language, and to accomplish ends, that are entirely contemporary. And it proposes a reformist political agenda, by accepting the basic contours of modern society while opposing the homogenizing steamroller of commercialism, and by celebrating local identity and the public space of democracy. . . .

As a strain of modernism, however, let alone a coherent and powerful one, [situated modernism] has gone virtually unrecognized owing to its stylistic heterogeneity in an interpretive architectural culture that continues to reify style. Major postwar practitioners of situated modernism, principally Aalto and Kahn, have been inaccurately cast as proto-postmodernists because, in their demonstrated sensitivity to, and use of, architectural precedents, they could be exploited by the discourse of postmodernism to solidify its claims. In Aalto's and Kahn's political aspirations for their work, in their commitment to an architecture that responded to the Zeitgeist, in their rejection of the authority of tradition, and in their technique of abstracting the historical sources, they and the other misappropriated situated modernist architects practiced an idiom that is profoundly modern.

—**Sarah Williams Goldhagen**

Goldhagen also contributed the chapter "Authenticity's Domiciles," an examination of the work and ideas of Alison and Peter Smithson. Other essays in the book are: "Introduction: Critical Themes of Postwar Modernism," Sarah Williams Goldhagen and Rèjean Legault; "Neorealism in Italian Architecture," Maristella Casciato; "An Alternative to Functionalist Universalism: Ecochard, Candilis, and ATBAT-Afrique," Monique Eleb; "Richard Neutra and the Psychology of Architectural Consumption," Sandy Isenstadt; "Cybernetic Theory and the Architecture of Performance: Cedric Price's Fun Palace," Mary Louise Lobsinger; "Computer Architectures: Saarinen's Patterns, IBM's Brains," Reinhold Martin; "The Monumentality of Rhetoric: The Will to Rebuild in Postwar Berlin," Francesca Rogier; "The Dangers of Eclecticism: Paul Rudolph's Jewett Arts Center at Wellesley," Timothy M. Rohan; "Bernard Rudofsky: Allegories of Nomadism and Dwelling," Felicity Scott; "A Critique of Architecture: The Bitter Victory of the Situationist International," Jean-Louis Violeau; "Jaap Bakema and the Fight for Freedom," Cornelis Wagenaar; "Putting Metabolism Back in Place: The Making of a Radically Decontextualized Architecture in Japan," Cherie Wendelken.

Faculty Project

Austin E. Knowlton School of Architecture

Ohio State University
Columbus, Ohio

Mack Scogin Merrill Elam Architects
Atlanta, Georgia

Design: Mack Scogin, Merrill Elam, David Yocum, Brian Bell
Models: Barnum Tiller, Hillary Ingram, Justin Park
Computer Models: Cecilia Tham
Associate Architect: Wandel & Schnell Architects (Robert Wandel, Cissy Wong, Ivan Amy)
Landscape Architect: Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates (Michael Van Valkenburgh, Matthew Urbanski, Gullivar Shepard)
Structural Engineer: Lantz Jones and Nebraska
Mechanical Engineer: H. A. Williams Associates
Civil Engineering: Bird & Bull
Lighting Designer: Ramon Luminance Design
Client: Austin E. Knowlton School of Architecture (Robert Livesey, Director); The Ohio State University, Office of Facility Planning and Development (Jill Morelli, Assistant Vice President and University Architect, Barbara Koelbl, Job Captain); and The State of Ohio (Howard Geisler, State Architect)

Site: Woody Hayes Drive and Tuttle Park Place, facing Ohio Stadium

Program: School for 500 architecture, landscape architecture, and city planning students; fifty-eight faculty members, lecturers, instructors, and PhD candidates. Facilities include forty-two studios, jury space, center space, classrooms, exhibition galleries, computer laboratories, a wood and metal shop, auditorium, cafe, and a 30,000-volume library.

Moving from the Wow!-Huh? to the Huh?-Wow!
A couple of years ago, my partners and I were working with the art critic Dave Hickey on a competition for the design of a dance school outside London. We were discussing how to make an architecture of dance, movement, and weightlessness. We told him that our first instinct was to make a building that felt profoundly heavy. In responding, Dave described a major paradigm shift he thought was occurring in art and architecture. From the 1970s to the early '90s, iconography in painting asserts that the artist is smart, but the making of the art object reveals that he or she is basically ignorant. Dave believes that more recent figurative and abstract painters create art

Site plan, with old campus to the southeast and stadium and river to the west

that is not to be "read" as a clever statement but is to be experienced as a highly sophisticated performance with the medium. He believes that, when applied to architecture, this shift turns the whole premise of postmodernism on its head. The postmodern architect has a "knowing" iconography and an ignorant embodiment—producing "crummy buildings that say that the architect has seen something in France." But the opposite is now sought: iconography can be as simple as that of a bungalow, but it must be embodied in an authoritative and complex way.

What Dave believes this means is that art and architecture have to embody their own contradictions, their own immaterial aspects. Because they can no longer depend upon a shared external context of referents, art and architecture must work "within." The knowing is in the physical thing. So for a building of dance and movement and lightness, we decided . . . the heavier the better, to increase the experience of the lightness of dance.

In thinking about making an architecture with a complex iconography of light, space, form, experience, procession, technology, etc., our firm has investigated architecture that at once suppresses knowing through signs in favor of knowledge in building. Our strategy starts with a generative analytic system—rigorously rational, almost banal. This analysis overlays the broader relationships of the campus, the site, the building's major organizing components, and its tectonic details. Simultaneously, we develop—as an internal contradiction—our response to the program, a response that particularizes the project through the expression of our aspirations, beliefs, and intentions.

This building is meant to participate in the pedagogy of the school of architecture. We want it to convey to the community beyond the school something about the nature and potential of architecture, landscape architecture, and planning. The building is intentionally diverse and comprehensive in its handling of space, spatial relationships, light, and methods of construction. More important, its exterior is designed so that from any one viewpoint it cannot be known as one clear thing, and its interior is designed so that from any one spot the limits of the building beyond the viewer's vision seem uncertain. Through this ambiguity and the resulting suggestion that there is no one way to design architecture, we hope to encourage students' personal speculations and discoveries. Our goal is to lodge the architecture inextricably between the phenomenal/emotional and the abstract/rational, to move it beyond Cartesian precision toward intuitive rightness.

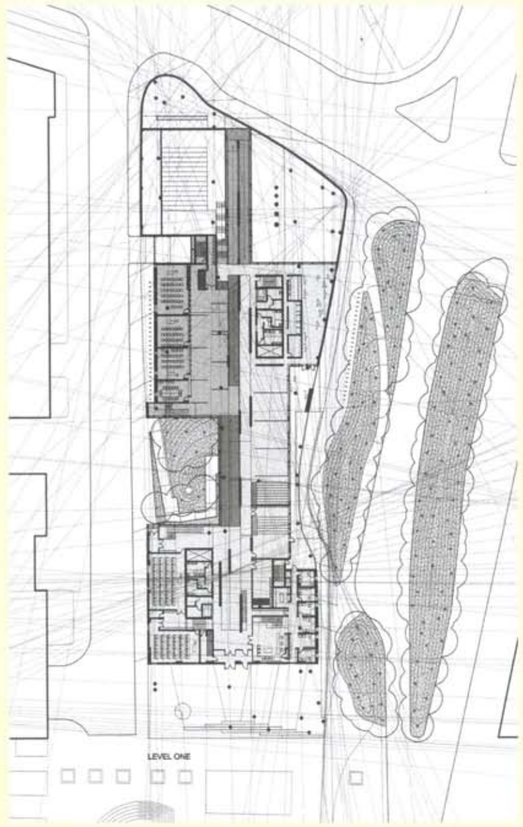
The western edge of the old campus, near the river and the football stadium at the happily congested corner of West Woodruff Avenue and Tuttle Park Place, is the site for this new school of architecture. Bounded by concrete parking garages to the south and the staid red brick of the business school to the north, by laboratory buildings to the east and the jumbo emptiness of stadium parking to the west, edged and crossed by major campus pedestrian thoroughfares, the site is a dynamic zone, rich with the potential for connective architecture, landscape, and urban form.

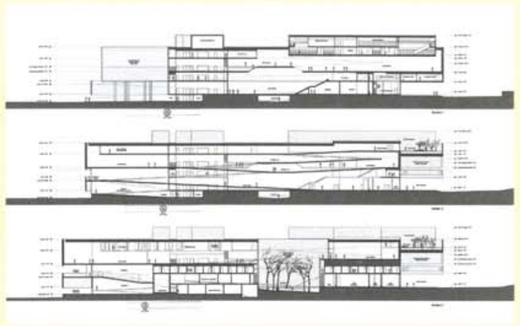
At the main entrance, the vertical circulation path begins. A system of inclined planes moves slowly up and diagonally through the building's orthogonal section, passing studios and review spaces. Faculty offices are placed along circulation routes, visually accessible from the studio and thus intimately linked with the daily work of the students. The final stop along the vertical path through the school is the library, whose roof garden extends out and over the entry below and brings the ramp to its end above its beginning.

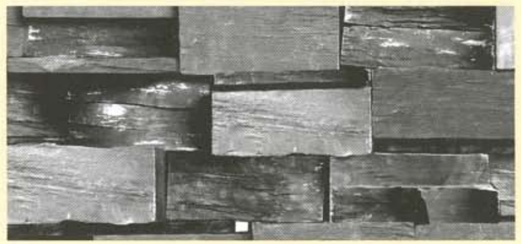
In addition to forty-five studios, sixty-five offices, an auditorium and library, the school includes a woodshop, café, digital imaging facilities, computer laboratories, classrooms, an archive, and an exhibition gallery. We have tried to embrace and magnify this multiplicity in our design.

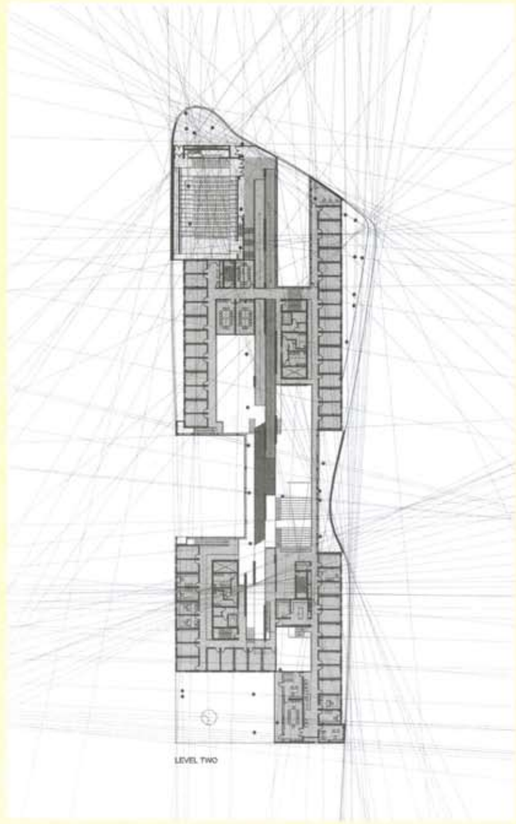
The discourse around an architecture without transparent references, an architecture that embodies its own contradictions, whose knowing comes from within, which we started with Dave Hickey a few years ago, continues to clarify and direct our firm's efforts in architecture. We have found that this effort has opened up, enriched, and substantiated our on-going search for an architecture of instinctive rightness. We believe it is moving into the realm of the Huh? . . . Wow!

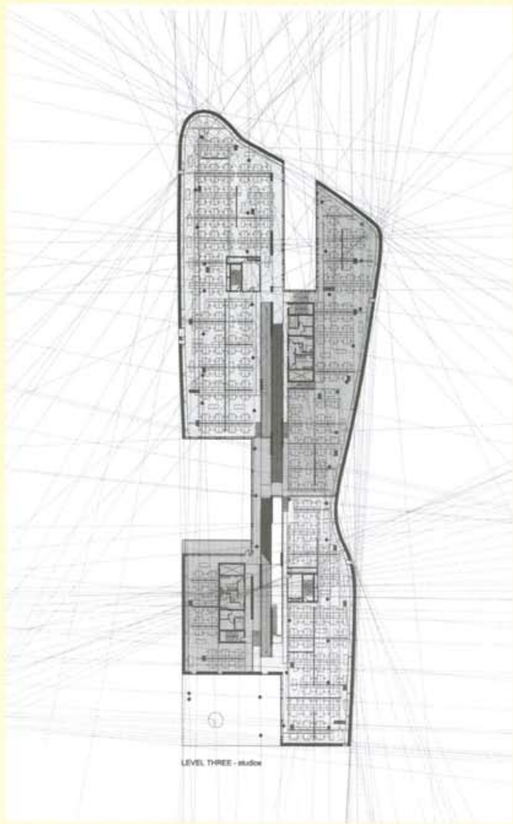
—Mack Scogin, Kajima Adjunct Professor of Architecture

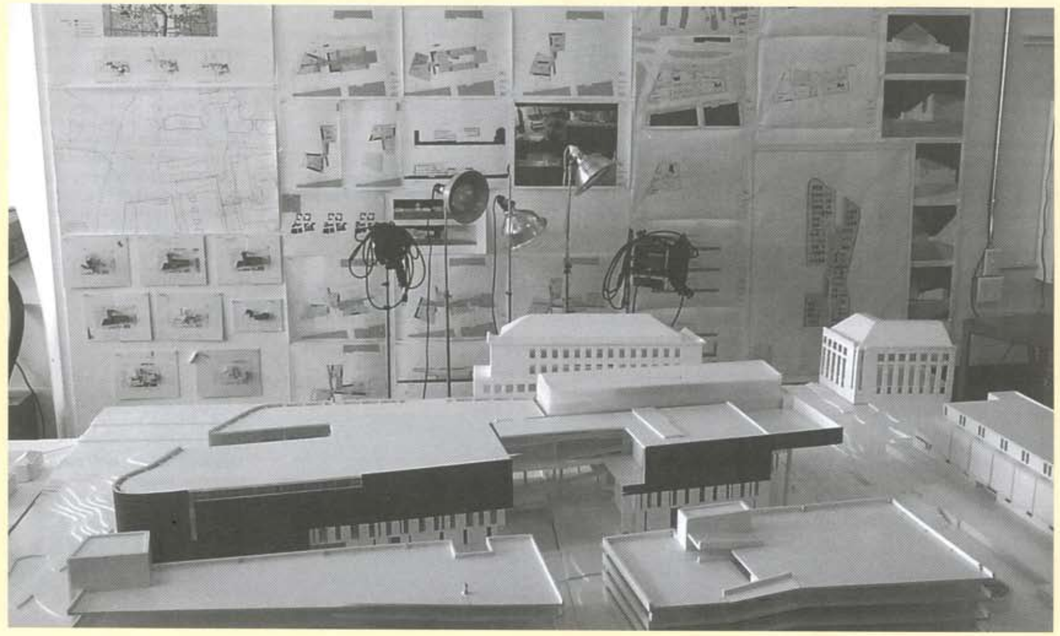












Clockwise from top left: plan 1/level 1, with immediate site and landscape plan; plan 2/level 2, administration, offices, and auditorium; plan 3/level 3: studios; project development, working model and drawings; material study (not to scale), rubble slate; longitudinal sections through library (top), ramps (center), offices and auditorium (bottom).