

# Postmodernism in Architecture

The term Postmodernism originated not in the realms of painting or sculpture, but in the world of architecture. During the years of building and rebuilding after World War II, the International Style had an almost total hold on architects and clients. But in 1972, when the city of St. Louis dynamited Pruitt-Igoe (fig. 25.1), a public-housing project built according to the best theories of modern architecture, the rule of Bauhaus took a great fall. All measures to save this monument to rational, utopian, Bauhaus planning had failed. Pruitt-Igoe had become an irredeemable social and economic horror scarcely twenty years after it had been built. Complete with “streets in the air”—safe from road traffic—and access to “sky, space, and greenery,” which Le Corbusier had deemed the “three essential joys of urbanism,” it had been hoped that

Pruitt-Igoe would inspire a sense of virtue in its inhabitants. By the end of the sixties, however, the multimillion-dollar, fourteen-story blocks had become so vandalized, crime-ridden, squalid, and dysfunctional that demolition seemed the best solution.

The demise of Pruitt-Igoe has been used by critics of modernism as proof that International Style architecture and urbanism was indifferent to the small-scale, personal requirements of privacy, individuality, context, and sense of place and was patronizing in its demands that residents adjust their lives to architecture. Pruitt-Igoe’s architect, **Minoru Yamasaki** (1912–86), was blamed for failing to create viable homes for the people whose lives the project was meant to improve. The calamity in St. Louis was the “smoking gun” for critics who, since the mid-sixties,



**25.1** Minoru Yamasaki, Pruitt-Igoe public-housing project, St. Louis, at the moment of its demolition on July 15, 1972. Built 1952–53.

had attempted to indict Bauhaus modernism for alleged bankruptcy of both form and principle. These critics thought that the followers of Mies, Gropius, and Le Corbusier had created a movement far too narrowly ideological and impersonal—and certainly too self-referential in its inflexible insistence on formalism dictated purely by function and technology. Such a stance could not serve a society in which cultural and economic diversity would only increase.

That International Style architecture was ideologically motivated was well understood by the seventies when critics attacked the Pruitt-Igoe project. Like Baron Haussman's Parisian boulevards (see chapter 2), modernist transformations of local spaces into collections of abstract geometric structures tend to overwhelm one with the authority of a single vision. The concern with uniform design extending from city plans to kitchen design (contrary to critiques of Pruitt-Igoe, modernists took great pains to address small-scale issues) demonstrates a desire to regulate human behavior. In fact the unsettling similarity between modernist utopian proposals and fascist ones placed serious doubt on the ability of modernist planning to transcend its immediate political context and maintain its original liberating potential. Society must accompany the modernist or his or her social goals could be appallingly corrupted.

The social context of modernism seems to have been ignored by early critics of Pruitt-Igoe who were too concerned with asserting the importance of new forms of architecture. Yamasaki's original plan had been for a mixed-height development that would correspond more logically to the neighborhoods from which its residents would be relocating. This was deemed too expensive, and the Public Housing Authority decided to erect thirty-three eleven-story structures. The density of the development was not part of the architect's plan. All demographic statistics were arrived at by government authorities and in the end even the materials, including doorknobs that broke and windows that were blown in by the wind, were determined by state-mandated financial limits rather than design choices. The shoddy materials and poor maintenance contributed to the physical degradation of the projects and added to the all-black population's sense of grievance with the racial politics of St. Louis. The modernist style, with its rhetoric of uniform design and aesthetic reduction, became a convenient stylistic vehicle for the socially irresponsible (if not racist) public housing efforts of the city. For critics who were ready to see the style that had defined the pre-World War II years relegated to history, blaming the architect was a useful device that carried its own aesthetic and ideological message. Social dynamics outside the domain of style were, for a moment, dispensable in the pursuit of a new Postmodern architecture.

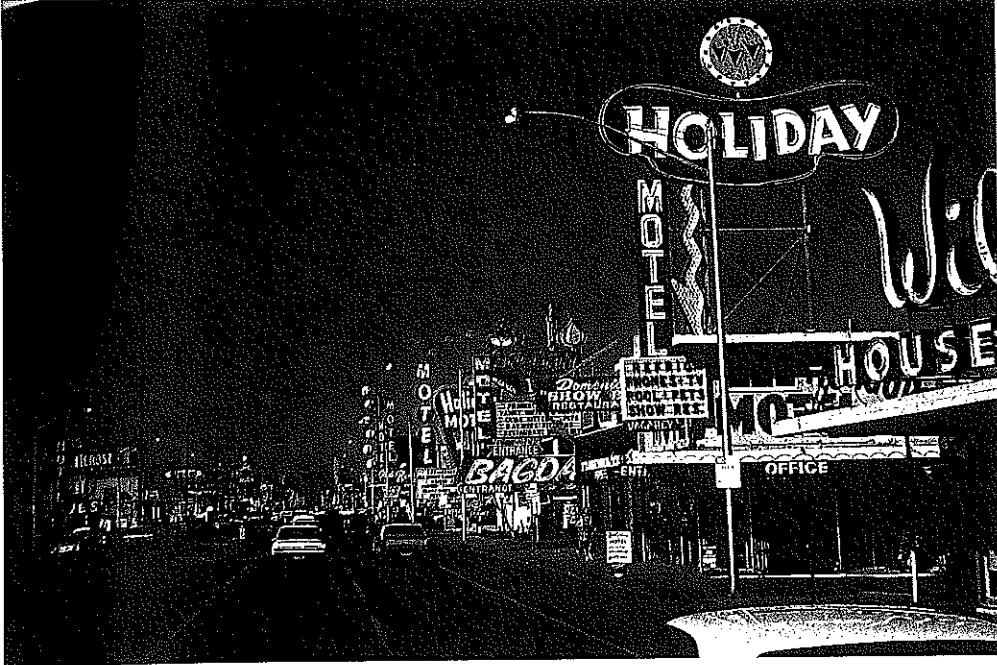
Postmodernists seek to build in relation to everything: the site and its established environment; the client's specific needs, including those of wit and adventure in living; any historical precedent relevant to current circumstance;

and communicable symbols for the whole enterprise. The best Postmodern architects demonstrate that the tools, methods, materials, and traditions that architects, engineers, contractors, and even politicians and advertisers have always worked with are still valid. They are, however, debatable and open to rearrangements, and reexaminations in order to solve architectural problems—especially as new technologies and materials become available. Thus, the work of Postmodernists seems almost unclassifiable except as a movement and style all its own, not merely “post-” something else. In addition to masters such as Le Corbusier and Mies van der Rohe, Postmodernists are influenced by moderns who escaped the monolithic imperatives of modernist dogma, such as Antoni Gaudí (see fig. 5.9) and Sir Edwin Lutyens.

Postmodernist architects resist the unifying aesthetic and corresponding faith in a single vision of architectural or urban design that was the keystone to modernist art and architecture. In contrast, they accept some modernist theories and reject others. Opposing the consistency of Bauhaus aesthetics, Postmodernism has a voracious appetite for an illogical and eclectic mix of history and historical imagery; for a wide variety of vernacular expression; for decoration and ornamentation; and for metaphor, symbolism, and playfulness. Eclecticism in architecture or planning has as many political consequences and is thus as ideological as universalism—a fact that would become a vexing intellectual challenge as Postmodernism came to be associated with both capitalism and cultural institutions such as theaters and museums. The new style would display a fascination with the products of society that resonated with the American Pop artists of the sixties.

## **“Complexity and Contradiction”: The Reaction Against Modernism Sets In**

Among the first to appreciate Gaudí and Lutyens anew, declare affinity with Pop (Ed Ruscha in particular), and to voice and practice the revisionism that is Postmodernism was the Philadelphia architect and theorist **Robert Venturi** (b. 1925). Often called the father of Postmodernism, Venturi did not train at Harvard University, whose School of Design, as noted earlier, had been transformed by Walter Gropius into a powerful Bauhaus-like force for modernism. Instead he went to Princeton University, where he studied under the distinguished Beaux Arts professor Jean Labatu. This grounding gave Venturi historical points of reference for most examples of antimodern architecture. Moreover, it prepared Venturi to see in Rome, while there in 1954–56 as a Fellow at the American Academy in Rome, not just a collection of great monuments but an urban environment characterized by human scale, sociable piazzas, and an intricate weave of the grand and the common. Supplemented by a period in the office of Louis I. Kahn, another admirer of the Roman model and a leading architect then moving



**25.2** Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown, from *Learning From Las Vegas*, 1972.

from the International Style toward more rugged, expressionist, or symbolic buildings (see figs. 23.37), Venturi's Roman experience served as the basis of a new philosophy that would culminate in his seminal book *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* (1966). Here, with scholarship and wit, Venturi worked back through architectural history to Italian Baroque and Mannerist prototypes and argued that the great architecture of the past was not classically simple, but was often ambiguous and complex. He held, moreover, that modern architects' insistence upon a single style of unrelenting reductivism was utterly out of synchrony with the irony and diversity of modern times. To Mies van der Rohe's celebrated dictum, "Less is more," Venturi retorted "Less is a bore."

*Complexity and Contradiction* presented a broadside critique of mainstream modernism, at least as it had evolved in massive, stripped-down, steel-and-glass boxes that rose with assembly-line regularity throughout the postwar world. Even now, many critics consider Venturi's book the first and most significant written statement against the International Style. "Architects can no longer afford to be intimidated by the puritanically moral language of orthodox modern architecture," wrote Venturi.

I like elements which are hybrid rather than "clear," distorted rather than "straightforward," ambiguous rather than "articulated," ... boring as well as "interesting," conventional rather than "designed," accommodating rather than excluding ... inconsistent and equivocal rather than direct and clear. I am for messy vitality over obvious unity. I include the non sequitur and proclaim the duality. I am for richness of meaning rather than clarity of meaning.

Venturi believed that the modern movement had grown stale, and that the successors to the great innovative modern architects had turned the latter's splendid revolution into a new Establishment, which was just as authoritarian

and unresponsive to contemporary needs as the old one had been. Confronted with the pervasive gigantism, unaccommodating aloofness, sameness, and opportunism—giving less and charging more in the name of utopian ideals—of the buildings designed by Bauhaus-inspired architects, Venturi decided that "Main Street is almost all right." In other words, rather than disdaining the ordinary landscape of average towns, we should embrace it, accommodate it, and improve upon it on its own terms.

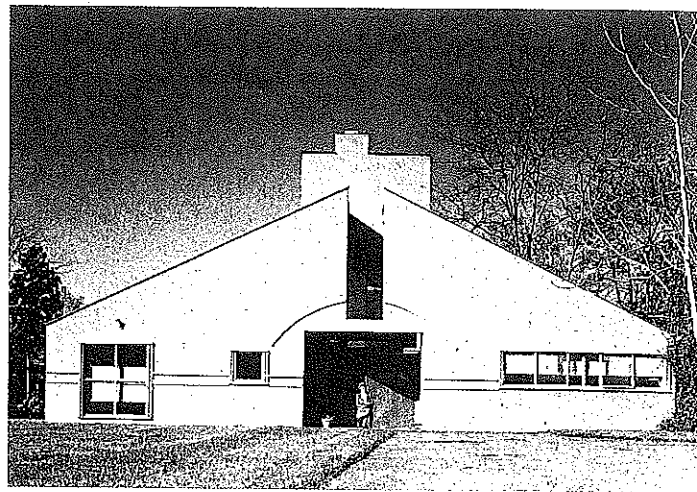
With his wife, **Denise Scott Brown** (b. 1931), an architect and specialist in popular culture and urban planning and a partner in the firm of Venturi, Rauch, and Scott Brown, Venturi wrote an even more provocative book in 1972, *Learning from Las Vegas*. In it they declared that a careful study of contemporary "vernacular architecture," like that along the automobile-dominated commercial "strip" roadways of Las Vegas, may be "as important to architects and urbanists today as were the studies of medieval Europe and ancient Rome and Greece to earlier generations." Venturi and Scott Brown had sought to learn from such a landscape because for them it constituted "a new type of urban form, radically different from that which we have known, one which we have been ill-equipped to deal with and which, from ignorance, we define today as urban sprawl. Our aim [was] ... to understand this new form and to begin to evolve techniques for its handling." The book was illustrated with photographs and film stills of the Strip; maps of the scale, purpose, and type of advertising; and theoretical, historical, and architectural analysis (fig. 25.2). Since urban sprawl has come to stay, Venturi and Scott Brown are persuaded that architects should learn to love it, or at least discover how "to do the strip and urban sprawl well," from supermarket parking lots and hamburger stands to gas stations and gambling casinos. In their opinion, "the seemingly chaotic juxtaposition of honky-tonk elements expresses an intriguing kind of vitality and validity."

## In Praise of "Messy Vitality": Postmodernist Eclecticism

**Venturi, Rauch, Scott Brown, and Moore**

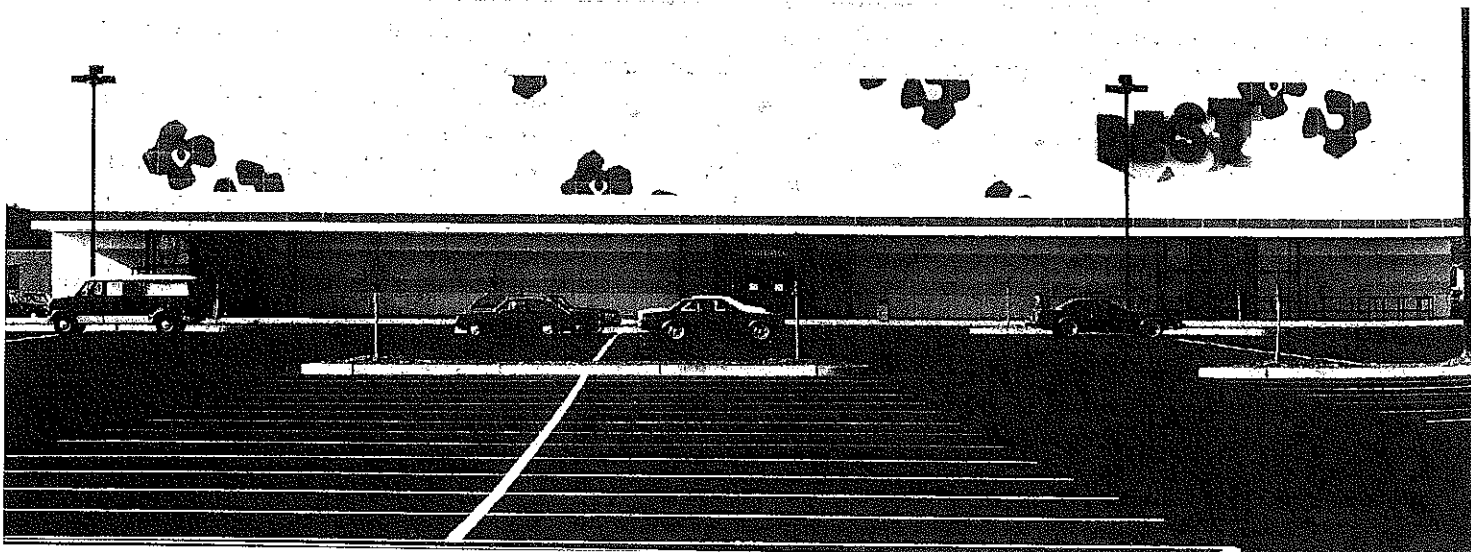
While such Pop taste and maverick views made Venturi the leading theoretician among younger architects, they also earned him the near-universal disdain of the modernist school and of critics such as Ada Louise Huxtable, who dubbed the quietly civilized Venturi the "guru of chaos." Venturi and Scott Brown's bold ideas also proved too much for arbiters of major architectural commissions. Thus, until 1986, when Venturi, Rauch, and Scott Brown won the coveted contract for the design of the extension to London's National Gallery on Trafalgar Square (see fig. 25.5), the firm had to content itself with relatively small projects. Still, the partners made the most of every opportunity, even while insisting that they deliberately designed "dumb" buildings or "decorated sheds." The decorated shed concept may have received its most salient expression in the highway store designed for the Best Products Company (fig. 25.3). Its long, low façade rises above the parking lot like a false front on Main Street in a Western frontier town, while displaying huge, Andy Warhol-style gaily colored flowers. However, the prototypical Venturi building is one the architect built in 1962 for his mother in Chestnut Hill, Pennsylvania (fig. 25.4), a work of exceptional humor, sophistication, and irony whose apparent ordinariness is just enough "off" to tell the alert viewer that something extraordinary has gone into its design.

In Chestnut Hill House, Venturi accepted the conventions of the "ugly and ordinary" American suburban crackerbox—its stucco veneer, wood frame, pitched roof, front porch, central chimney, and so forth—and parodied them so completely as to make the commonplace seem remarkable, enriching it with wit and light-hearted satire. The process of transformation began with the scale of the



**25.4** Robert Venturi, Chestnut Hill House, Philadelphia, 1962.

façade, which the architect expanded until it rose several feet above the roof, thereby creating another false front. He then divided it at the center to reveal the conceit and widened the cleft at the bottom to create a recessed porch. Visually joining the two halves together, yet simultaneously emphasizing their division, are the arch-shaped strip of molding and the stretched lintel above the entrance, both paper-thin like everything else about the façade (or like the crackerbox tradition itself, or even most modern curtain-wall construction). Meanwhile, the split in the front wall echoes the much older and more substantial stone architecture of the Baroque era, which in turn joins with the expanded height of the façade to create a certain illusionistic grandeur. Such complexity and contradiction extend deep into the structure, to the chimney wall, for instance, which spreads wide like a great central mass, only to project above it the chimney. Unity too has been honored with all the intricate ambiguities, as in the same size and number (five) of the asymmetrically disposed window panels on each side of the façade.



**25.3** Venturi, Rauch, and Scott Brown, Best Products Company, Oxford Valley, Pennsylvania, 1977.



25.5 Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown, National Gallery, London, with Sainsbury Wing visible left of the main gallery across Trafalgar Square. 1987–91.

Hidden behind the deceptively simple exterior of Chestnut Hill House is a complicated interior, its rooms as irregularly shaped and small in scale as the façade is grand, in the Pop manner of Claes Oldenburg's giant hamburgers and baseball bats (see fig. 24.59). Yet the plan is tight and rational, not whimsical. For example, the crooked stairway is broad at the base but narrow at the top, reflecting, in Venturi's view, the difference in scale between the "public" spaces downstairs and the "intimate" ones upstairs. By its very irregularity, the interior accommodates the books, family mementos, and overstuffed furniture long owned by the client as well as it expresses her patterns of living. Unlike Corbusier's "machines for living" or Frank Lloyd Wright's Usonian houses, Chestnut Hill House does not suggest or impose a living pattern for its inhabitants. And herein lies the essence of the Venturi concept: Chestnut Hill House makes no attempt to simulate a ship or an airplane, or to become some organic device to commune with nature; instead, Venturi's design proclaims its "houseness" with historically relevant allusions that are not overt symbols. "We don't think people want 'total design' as it is given to them by most modern architects," Scott Brown once said. "They want shelter with symbolism applied to it."

In 1986, Venturi and Scott Brown won the commission to design a new wing for the National Gallery in London. They were to create a permanent exhibition space for the gallery's Early Renaissance collection, a large lecture hall, a computer information room, a video theater, a gift shop, and a restaurant. Located diagonally across from Trafalgar Square, their design for the Sainsbury Wing (fig. 25.5) integrates both modern and classicist impulses. The main entrance is skewed to face Trafalgar Square, and the Classical details of the façade echo those of the adjacent

main building. Although not easy to see from the square, these Classical details have been subjected to subtle Postmodern idiosyncrasies and operations: the windows are blind and almost disappear into the stone façade, and, among the regularly spaced pillars, there is a single round column that imitates the monument to Lord Nelson in Trafalgar Square. The western-facing façade on Whitcomb Street is plain brick. The huge glass wall of the grand staircase at the east side of the wing offers a view of the exterior of the old gallery. The top floor's neutral-toned galleries, which permanently house the Renaissance collection, are respectful of both the old galleries and the artwork in their expertly scaled spaces. Natural and artificial lighting are adjusted every two hours by computer, according to the amount of natural light filtering in through the glass "attics." Venturi and Scott Brown's Sainsbury Wing demonstrates that the Postmodern style is flexible and capable of adapting to its site, its purpose, and other surrounding buildings.

Another student of Louis I. Kahn at the University of Pennsylvania and a close ally, if not an actual partner, of Venturi and Scott Brown was **Charles Moore** (1925–93), who looked not so much to Las Vegas for inspiration as to Disneyland, praising it as an outstanding public space as well as an embodiment of the American Dream. Concerned with the commercial or industrial sameness of the postwar world, and with it the lost "sense of place" that leaves so many American cities looking like Los Angeles, Moore became even more overtly historicist than Venturi and was fully committed to "the making of places." In this, he often favored the "presence of the past" found in a Roman–Mediterranean kind of environment. One of the most remarkable examples of how imaginatively he could develop this theme is the Piazza d'Italia in New

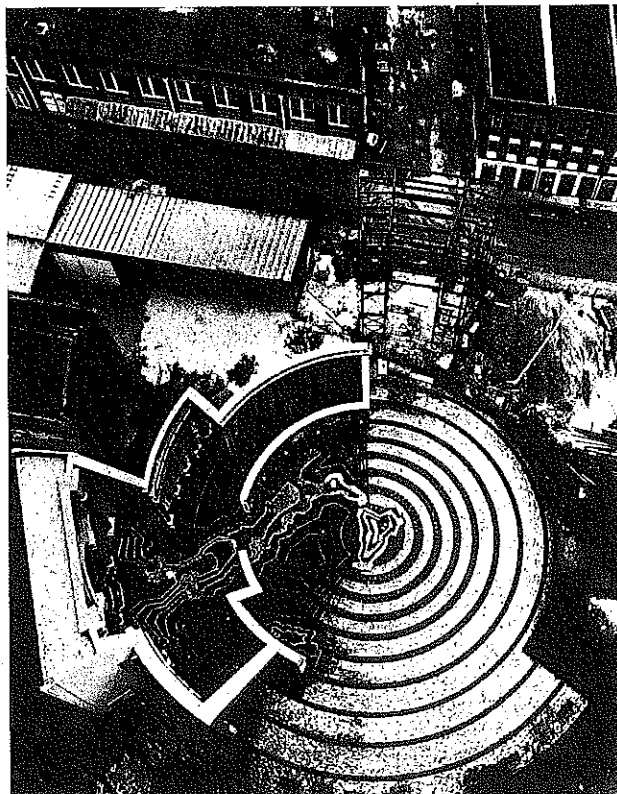
**25.6** Charles Moore with U.I.G. and Perez Associates, Inc., Piazza D'Italia, New Orleans. 1975–80.



Orleans (figs. 25.6, 25.7). Here Moore designed a public space to provide a small Italian-American community with an architectural focus of ethnic identity; a place exuberant enough to serve as the setting of the annual St. Joseph's festival, with its vibrant street life. Piazza d'Italia is an early example of the playful Postmodern use of classical forms. An entirely decorative and symbolic construction, it is architecture that abandons the ambition for permanence. Collaborating with architects well versed in the local culture, Moore took into account not only the taste and habits of the area's inhabitants, but also the different styles of buildings around the new piazza. Thus, while the design incorporated the black-and-white lines of an adjacent modernist skyscraper in a graduated series of concentric rings, the circular form itself—essentially Italian Baroque in character—reflects the local community. Moore found the prototypes for his

circular piazza in, among other places, Paris' Place des Victoires, the Maritime Theater at Hadrian's Villa near Tivoli, and the famed Trevi Fountain in Rome, an open-air scenographic extravaganza combining a Classical façade, allegorical earth sculpture, and water.

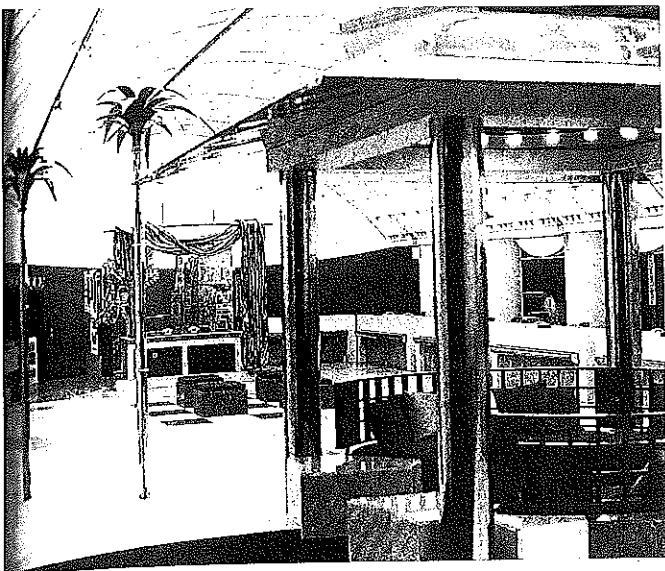
At staggered intervals on either side of a cascading fountain at the Piazza d'Italia are various column screens representing the five Classical orders, the outermost and richest one, Corinthian, crowned by polished stainless-steel capitals supporting an entablature emblazoned with dedicatory Latin inscriptions. Over the waterfall stands a triumphal arch, polychromed in Pompeiian hues and outlined in neon tubing. With its eclectic mixture of historical reference and pure fantasy, such as water coursing down pilasters to suggest fluting, water spouts serving as Corinthian leaves, and stainless-steel Ionic volutes sitting on neon necking, Piazza d'Italia combines archaeology, modernism, commerce, and theater to provide something for everyone—and above all a sense of place unlikely ever to be confused with Cleveland, Los Angeles, Sicily, or even the French Quarter in New Orleans itself.



**25.7** Charles Moore with U.I.G. and Perez Associates, Inc., View from above, Piazza d'Italia.

### Hollein, Stern, and Isozaki

About the same time as Venturi and Scott Brown began to fill commissions, Austria's **Hans Hollein** (b. 1934) was in the American West, learning from Las Vegas and doing so in rebellion against the "Prussian dogma of modernism" at the Illinois Institute of Technology (where he had enrolled in 1958). Seeing all those open spaces and the expressive freedom they seemed to generate, Hollein had an epiphany, after which he designed with a pluralistic abandon worthy of his gaudy American models, but also with an exquisitely crafted, decorative elegance reflecting a subtle appreciation of Vienna's Secessionist tradition (see figs. 12.9, 12.11). Even more than the Americans, European Postmodernists such as Hollein found few opportunities to

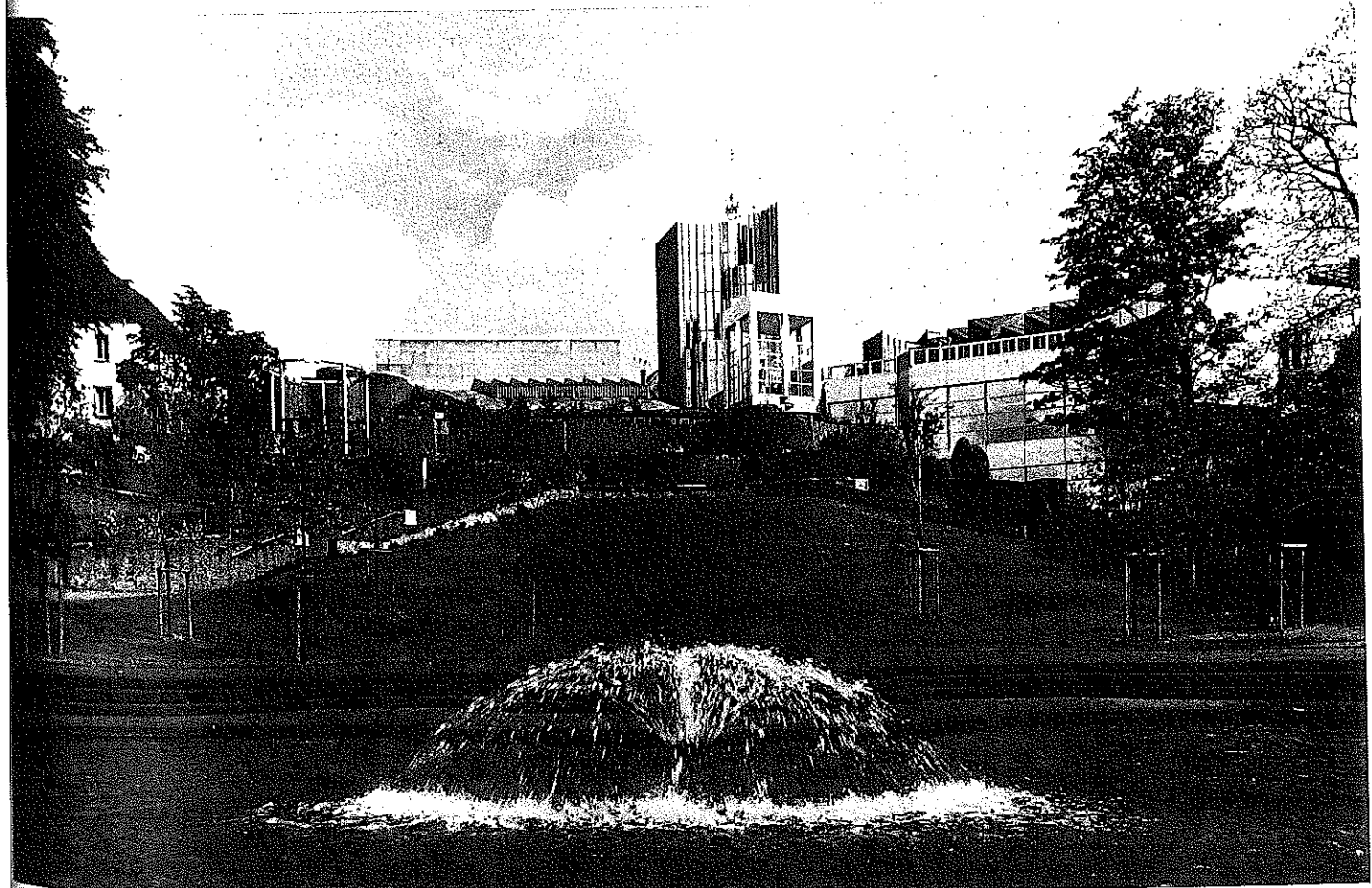


25.8 Hans Hollein, Austrian Travel Bureau, Vienna, 1978.

work on a large scale. The Austrian architect had to contain his drive to invent and surprise within small jewel-box spaces—often old and refurbished interiors like that of the Austrian Travel Bureau in Vienna (fig. 25.8) of 1978. For this project Hollein adopted topographical themes and scenographic methods similar to those of Charles Moore in Piazza d'Italia—and in the same metaphorical spirit—to make a preexisting hall suggest the many places to which

the Travel Bureau could send its clients: in other words, evoking the concept of travel. Thus, the assemblage of allusive forms and images found here includes: a grove of brass palm trees clearly based on those in John Nash's kitchen for the early nineteenth-century Brighton Pavilion (see fig. 4.1); a broken "Grecian" column and pyramids; a model of the Wright brothers' biplane; plus rivers, mountains, and a ship's railing. Lined up along the central axis, like a miniature Las Vegas strip, are such temptations as an Oriental pavilion, a chessboard seating area, and a sales booth for theater tickets furnished with a cash window in the form of a Rolls-Royce radiator grille. Meanwhile, the hall itself has been styled to resemble a reconstruction of Otto Wagner's Post Office Savings Banks (see fig. 12.9), an ironic reference, since the whole purpose of the Travel Bureau is to encourage spending money, not saving it.

In 1972 Hollein was commissioned to design the North German town of Mönchengladbach's Städtisches Museum Abteiberg (fig. 25.9). Taking ten years to complete, the museum is a series of buildings that critic Charles Jencks called "a modern Acropolis." The museum is located on a hill next to a Romanesque church and, as Jencks suggested, it provides a modern-day equivalent to the church's spiritual role. Declaring that he "was never afraid to use materials in new contexts—plaster or aluminum or marble, and all this together," Hollein designed the museum as a tiny



25.9 Hans Hollein, Städtisches Museum Abteiberg, Mönchengladbach, Germany, 1972–82.

town within a town, an agglomeration of distinct but compatible structures. With its undulating red-brick terraces snuggled against the slope, its relaxed and vaguely mock-ancient but nonabrasive Disneyland replicas, and its odd and delightfully particular cutout corner and voluptuous semicircular marble stairs, the Mönchengladbach museum struck Jencks as “a beautifully detailed urban landscape dedicated to a form of collective belief we find valuable. Art may not be a very convincing substitute for religion, but it is certainly a suitable pretext for heroic architecture.”

Another American architect profoundly influenced by Robert Venturi, as well as by Charles Moore (under whom he studied at Yale), is **Robert A. M. Stern** (b. 1939). Like his mentors, Stern had an active practice in Postmodern architecture as well as being a teacher, writer, and editor. Although as witty and sophisticated as Venturi and Moore, Stern is also more literal and fastidious in his use of historical precedents, and he is considerably more given to patrician sumptuousness. Indeed, he developed into a one-person equivalent of McKim, Mead & White (see fig. 4.7): he seems most truly himself when designing the sort of grand shingle-style country house or holiday retreat that the turn-of-the-century New York firm once produced with understated aristocratic bravura. Thus, while reveling in the decorative revival quite as joyously as Venturi and Moore, until his commission to design a building for the Walt Disney Company, Stern had worked less in the Pop spirit that animates Moore’s Piazza d’Italia and Venturi’s Best Products Company’s façade than in the fanciful manner of Hans Hollein’s appropriations of Nash’s Brighton Pavilion. This can be seen to splendid effect in the 1981–82 pool house (fig. 25.10) that is part of an estate in northern New Jersey, where stainless-steel “palm columns” evoke the palm supports in Nash’s Brighton kitchen. The glistening material of these uprights produces

a “wet” effect appropriate to the setting, as do the polychrome wall tiles derived from a kind of decor favored by the Secessionist Viennese (see fig. 5.5). Further enhancing the bathhouse theme are the Art Deco figural quoins and the thick Tuscan columns, the latter reminiscent of Roman *terme*.

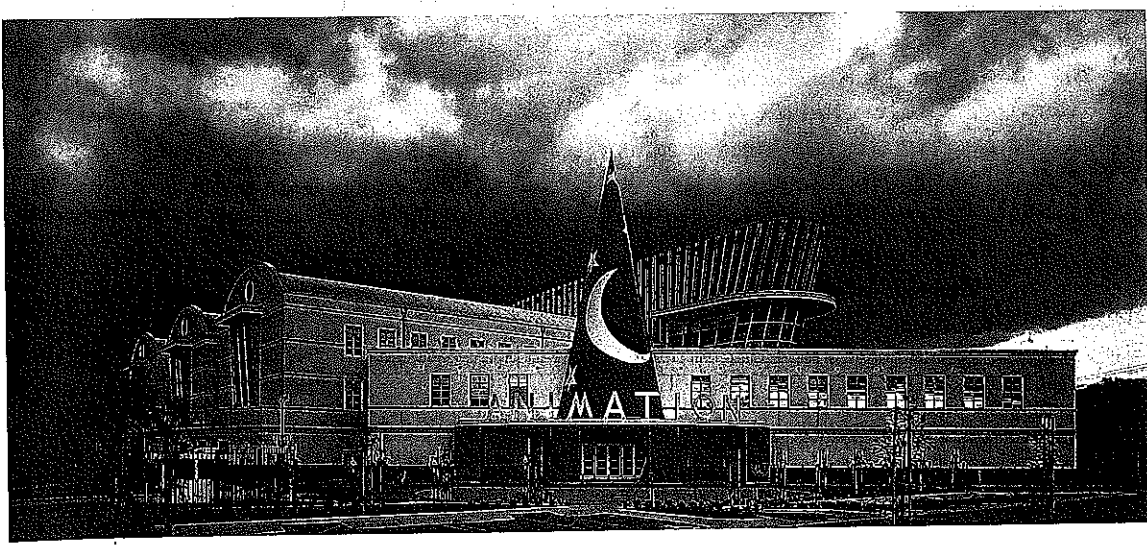
Stern’s 1995 Feature Animation Building (fig. 25.11) in Burbank, California, designed for the Walt Disney Company (which has also commissioned projects from Robert Venturi, Frank O. Gehry, and Arata Isozaki), offers a host of references both to the architecture of Los Angeles and to the fantasy architecture found in Disney animation. It is a highly complex building that in many ways resembles a converted warehouse, which is what Disney chief executive Michael Eisner had in mind when commissioning the project. Stern wanted the building’s lobby—a tall oval space with one curved and tilted glass wall—to evoke the eccentric fast-food joints and doughnut shops of the forties, fifties, and sixties that are still to be found in and around Los Angeles. The building’s profile—the entrance is tucked under a conical spire—is a reference to the cone-shaped hat worn by Mickey Mouse in a segment of the film *Fantasia*. Along the south side of the building is a narrow gallery with a high roof that slopes upward toward the main façade, ending in a form like the prow of a ship. Stern called this “the Mohawk” because it resembles a punk haircut; it also alludes to the Mad Hatter in Disney’s animated version of *Alice in Wonderland*. Visible from a nearby freeway, giant stainless-steel letters above the front entrance spell the word ANIMATION. The work space is accommodated in three vast, connected barrel vaults that form the main bulk of the building. Under the vaults, painted black with stainless-steel studs that twinkle like stars, are girders and air shafts, which have been left exposed and painted white so that their industrial forms stand out against the dark ceiling.

Another figure linked to Postmodern eclecticism is the Japanese architect **Arata Isozaki** (b. 1931). He began his career working for Kenzo Tange (see figs. 23.26, 23.27) but soon dispensed with any Corbusian influences he might have absorbed. A self-confessed “mannerist,” Isozaki draws on a huge variety of sources—Eastern and Western, traditional and modernist—honestly quoting from and transposing them.



**25.10** Robert A. M. Stern, Pool House, Llewellyn, New Jersey, 1981–82.

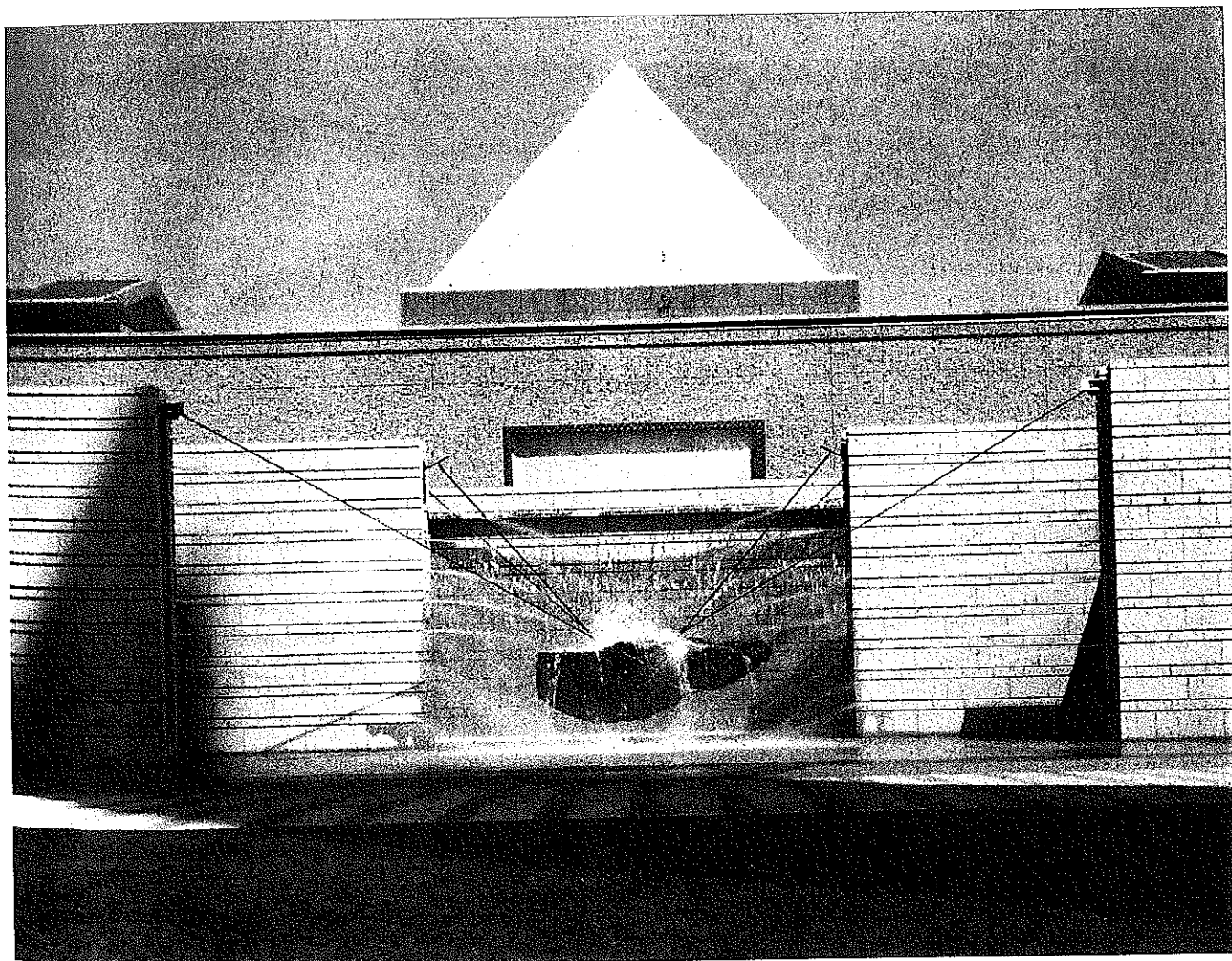




**25.11** Robert A. M. Stern, Feature Animation Building, Walt Disney Company, Burbank, California, 1995.

Situated in the old part of Mito, Japan, Isozaki's 1990 Art Tower is the cultural core of that city. The building accommodates four major features: a gallery of contemporary art, a concert hall, a theater, and the Mito centennial tower. The various parts are connected by a large

square that occupies more than half the site. There is also a two-story conference hall and a museum shop, café, and restaurant. The museum space has three glass roofs (fig. 25.12). A pyramid is set symmetrically at the center. The façades are set with porcelain tiles to give the plaza the feel



**25.12** Arata Isozaki, Gallery building, Art Tower. View of north end. Mito, Japan, 1990.

of a European town. At the north end, a huge stone placed on the center axis of the square is suspended by thin cables. At the northwestern corner, sandwiched between the concert hall and the theater, is an entrance hall that serves as a connecting chamber for the building's functions. This vertical space links the plaza to the street. A 328-foot-high (100 m) tower to the east of the plaza commemorates the centenary of Mito. This Brancusian "endless" column is made of titanium-paneled tetrahedrons; stacked together, their edges create a DNA-like double helix.

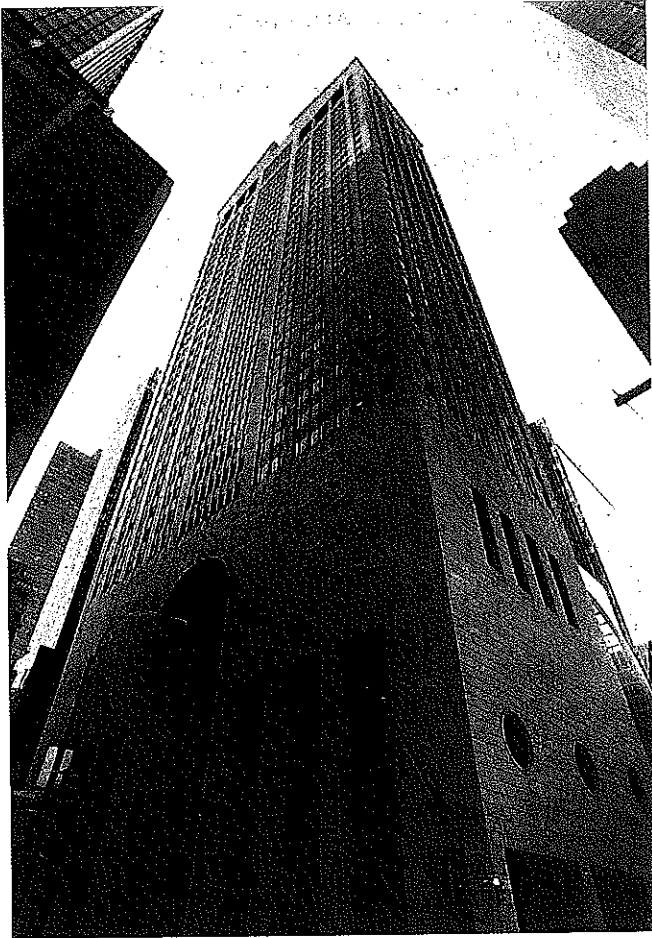
## Ironic Grandeur: Postmodernism and History

### Johnson

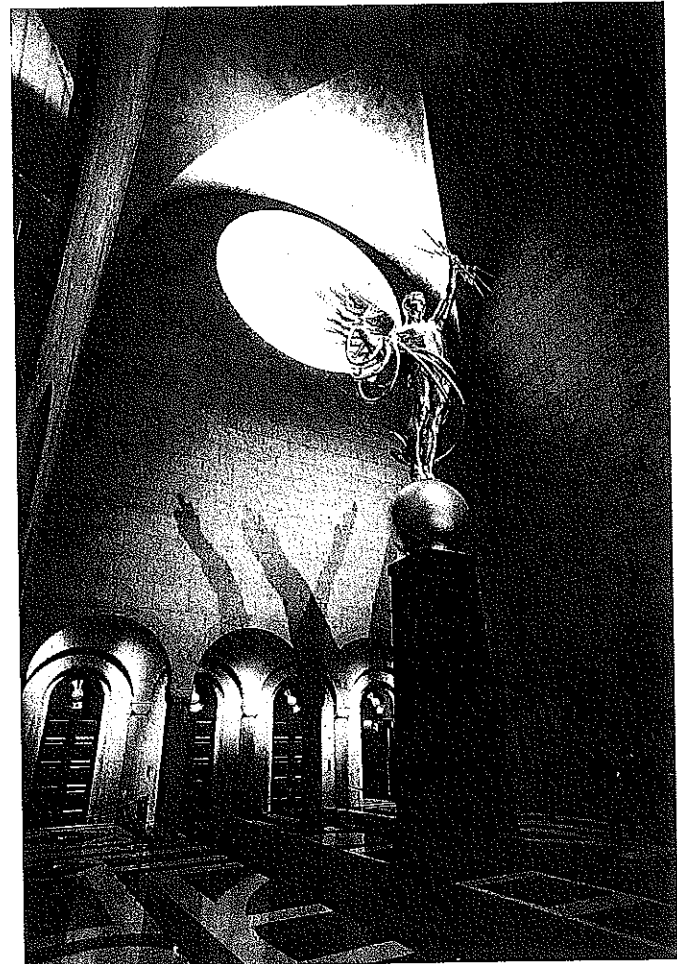
In looking for the early signs of the Postmodern aesthetic, one finds an apparent scorn for a refined, stylistic consistency. This shift can be seen in the career of **Philip Johnson** (b. 1906), who was an associate partner with Mies van der Rohe on the Seagram Building (see fig. 23.12). By the mid-fifties, Johnson was turning against the order and rationalism of Miesian design. His efforts to overturn the Modernist movement found their greatest early success in association with John Burgee, when he

designed the New York headquarters for American Telephone and Telegraph (see figs. 25.13, 25.14, 25.15). Heightening the shock value of this famously revisionist skyscraper, built between 1978 and 1983, is the fact that Johnson, together with architectural historian Henry-Russell Hitchcock, in 1932 had written a book that introduced the International Style to the English-speaking world and thus made it a true architectural *lingua franca*. By the late seventies, Johnson was the virtual dean of American architects, and his immense prestige was very persuasive to the stolid AT&T officers when they committed more than \$200 million to a Postmodern design of almost perverse irony and elegance.

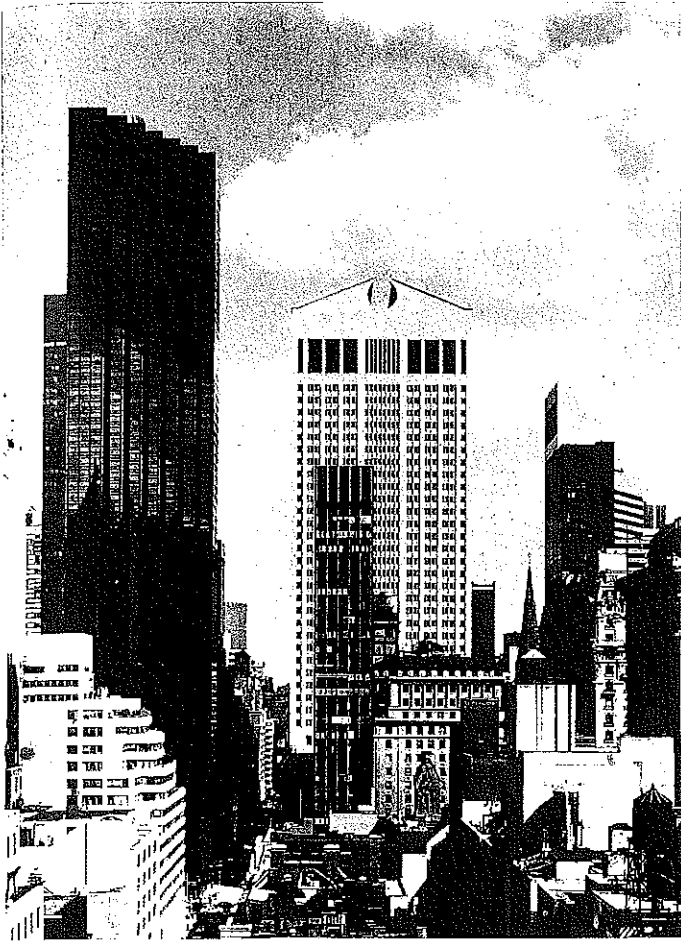
The skyscraper was nicknamed the "Chippendale building" for the broken pediment at its top; its resemblance to a highboy chest in the Chippendale style was irresistible. With hindsight, it is not so surprising that Johnson's witty mind, stocked with a vast and erudite range of aesthetic references, perceived in the skyscraper an analogy to the highboy, a colossal stack of "drawers" set in a chest supported by tall legs and topped by a scroll bonnet. Rising 647 feet (197 m) without setback, it is divided into base, shaft, and granite-clad cornice. The shaft provides "drawers," or stories; owing to their double height, there are



25.13 Philip Johnson and John Burgee, AT&T Headquarters Building, New York, 1978–83.



25.14 Philip Johnson and John Burgee, Lobby, AT&T Headquarters Building, New York, 1978–83.



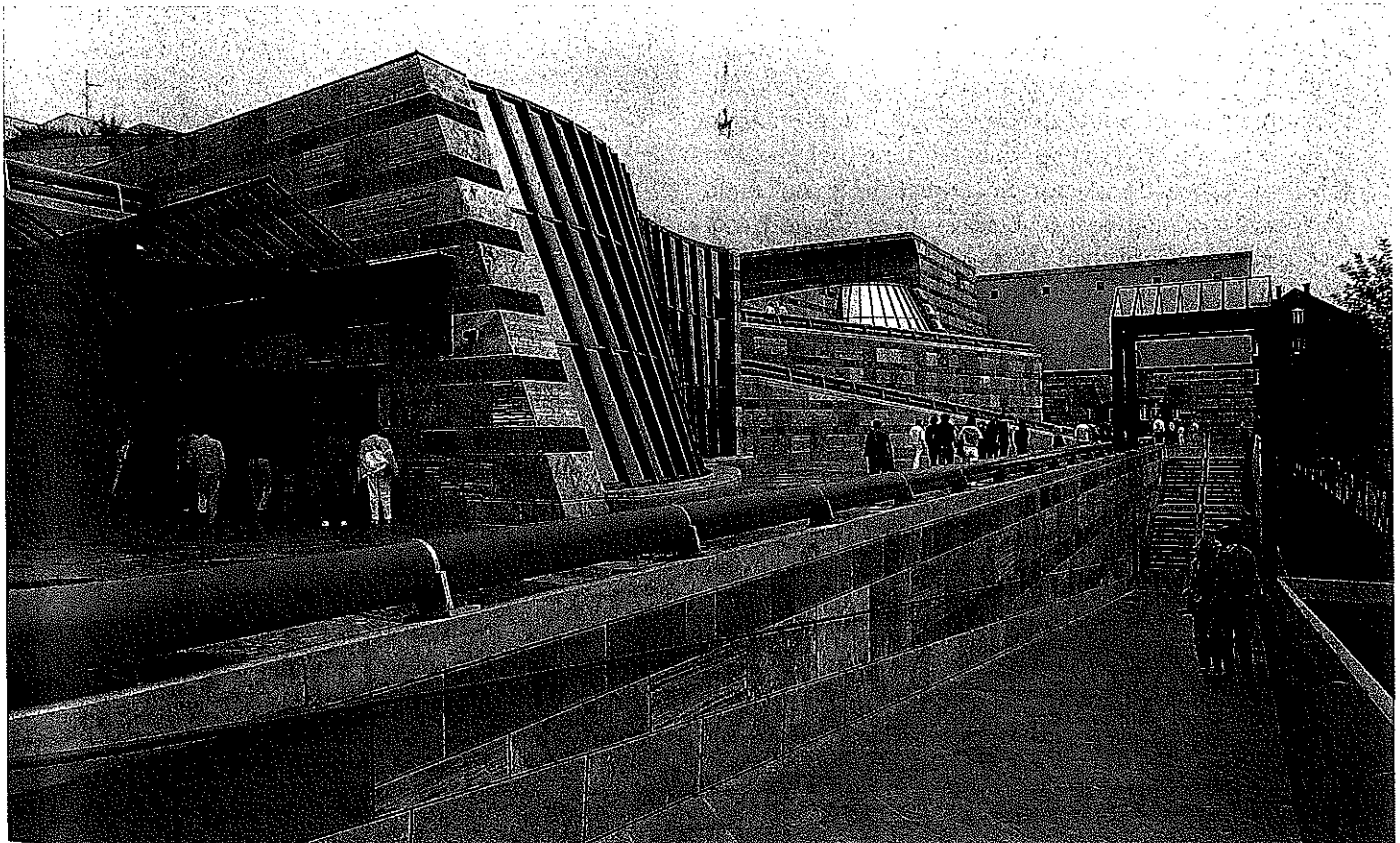
**25.15** Philip Johnson and John Burgee, AT&T Headquarters Building, New York, 1978–83.

only thirty-six “drawers” in what is a sixty-story tower. With the AT&T building, Johnson reintroduced “history” into the vocabulary of modern high-rise architecture, a history rendered compatible with the commercial world of the sixties and seventies by reference not to palace or ecclesiastical structures, but to furniture. Herein may lie the essence of Postmodernism: the longing for symbolism and the grandeur of the past disembodied from the faith that inspired the original forms. Such design results in ingenious historical puns and self-mockery.

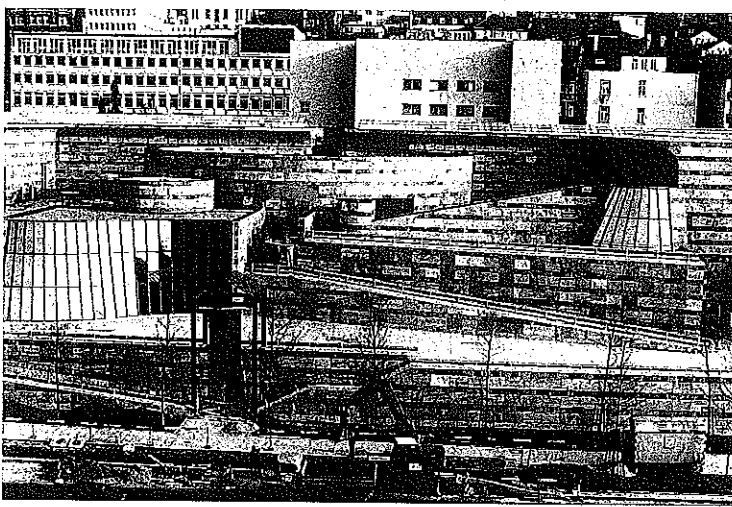
The AT&T building originally had a forest of “legs” at the street level, which sheltered a capacious, open loggia some five or six stories high; it was dedicated as a public space until 1990, when the building was sold to the Sony Corporation. Within three years, Sony converted the loggia space to shops and renamed it Sony Plaza. In the original building, the historicism of the design produced a dizzying mix of themes. The façade (fig. 25.13), a central oculus-over-arch flanked by trabeated loggias, recalled the front face of the Pazzi Chapel, a Florentine Renaissance building known to every student of architecture and art history. Johnson and Burgee’s interior, however, was a groin-vaulted Romanesque space (fig. 25.14). The broken pediment that capped the building still endows it with its renowned and idiosyncratic profile (fig. 25.15).

#### **Stirling, Jahn, Armajani, and Foster**

Already one of Britain’s most important architects in the sixties, when he worked in a somewhat Brutalist vein (see



**25.16** James Stirling, Neue Staatsgalerie, Stuttgart, Germany, 1977–84.



**25.17** James Stirling, Neue Staatsgalerie, Stuttgart, Germany, 1977–84.

fig. 23.19), Sir **James Stirling** (1926–94) seems to have been liberated by Postmodernism into full possession of his own expansive genius. This is best exemplified in the exciting addition to the Neue Staatsgalerie, or museum, in Stuttgart, built in 1977–84 (figs. 25.16, 25.17). Here, in association with Michael Wilford (b. 1938), Stirling took advantage of the freedom allowed by revisionist aesthetics to solve the manifold problems presented by a difficult hillside site, hemmed in below by an eight-lane highway, above by a terraced street, and on one side by the original Renaissance Revival museum building. With so many practical considerations to satisfy, Stirling decided to work in “a collage of old and new elements ... to evoke an association with a museum.” And so, while the three main exhibition wings repeat the U-shaped plan of the nineteenth-century structure next door, the external impression is that of a massive Egyptian structure, ramped from level to level like the funerary temple of the Old Kingdom Queen Hatshepsut at Deir el-Bahri, but faced with sandstone and travertine strips more suggestive of medieval Italy. Visually, the ramps and the masonry unify a jumble of disparate forms clustered within the courtyard framed by the embracing U. Among these are an open rotunda surrounding a sculpture court; the glazed and undulating walls of an entrance shaped rather like a grand piano; and a blue-columned, red-linteled, and glass-roofed high-tech taxi stand. Despite so many historical references and such diverse configurations, a sense of unity and distinctive place are real and even moving. The ramps convey the pedestrian along a zigzag path leading from the lower highway into and steeply halfway round the inner circumference of the rotunda, and finally through a tunnel in the cleft walls to the upper terraced street behind the museum. Adding to this heady mix of sophisticated, urbanistic pluralism is the keenly British sensibility of Stirling himself, who brought to the design the grace of the eighteenth-century Royal Crescent in Bath.

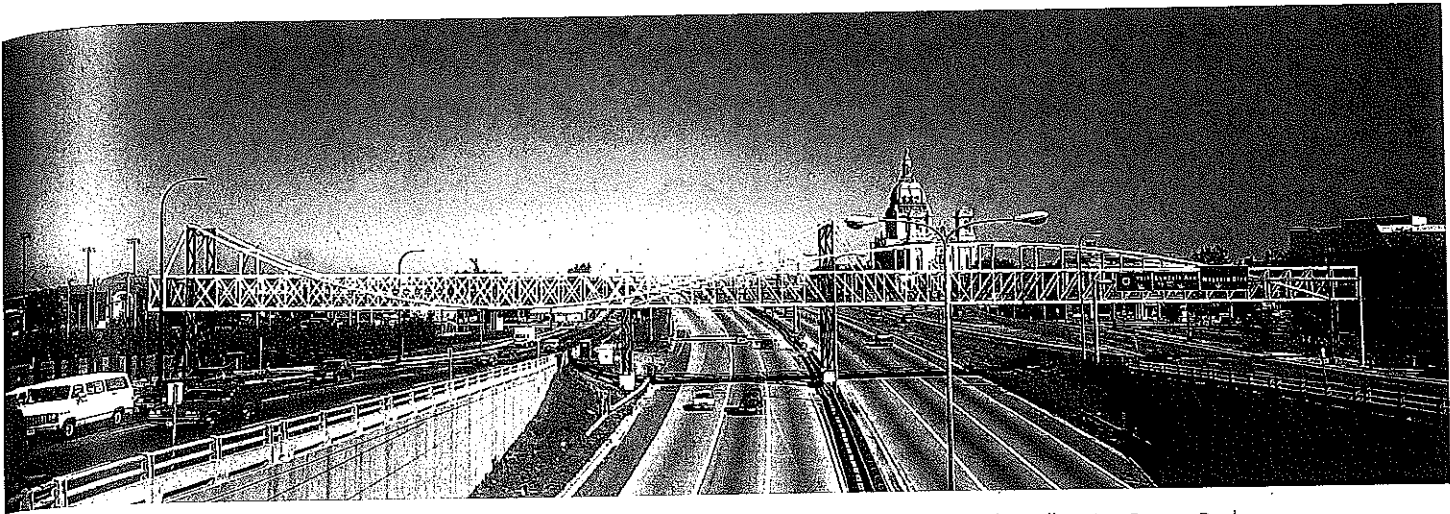
In the work of **Helmut Jahn** (b. 1940), Postmodernism’s serious playfulness is articulated in large-scale



**25.18** Helmut Jahn, United Airlines Terminal of Tomorrow, O’Hare International Airport, Chicago, 1987–88.

projects. Jahn emigrated from Germany to Chicago in 1966, a staunch admirer of Mies van der Rohe. In 1967 he joined a leading Chicago architectural firm, C. F. Murphy, and by 1981 was principal architect in the renamed firm Murphy/Jahn. The \$500-million United Airlines Terminal of Tomorrow at Chicago’s O’Hare International Airport (fig. 25.18) is an example of Jahn’s success in creating enormous public places that are interesting to experience, technically brilliant, yet not overwhelmingly futuristic. Awarded the A.I.A. Design Award of 1988, the building is an architectural echo of the past, reminiscent of the iron-and-glass structures of Victorian railway stations. One speeds through physically on people movers while being mentally transported to a previous era. As in Joseph Paxton’s Crystal Palace of 1851 (see fig. 4.3), we see prefabricated metal and glass construction elevated to the scale of civic architecture. The corridors and departure/arrival gates are metal-framed, glass-paneled, and topped with soaring barrel vaults drenched with natural light. Yet Jahn’s high-tech update on nineteenth-century engineering is a far cry from explicitly historicist buildings.

**Siah Armajani** (b. 1939) a self-described “architect/sculptor” born in Teheran but long since resettled in Minnesota, creates sculptures and installations that suggest the history of architecture, engineering, and society and at times have even become works of architecture themselves. Since the late sixties, Armajani has been interested in the functional and metaphoric in the architectural engineering of bridges. Among the works he has created is the Irene Hixon Whitney pedestrian bridge, which links the sculpture garden at the Walker Art Center with Loring Park in the downtown part of Minneapolis (fig. 25.19). Stretching over sixteen lanes of traffic, the bridge reconnects two parts of the city that were divided twenty years earlier by the construction of a superhighway. The bridge’s design itself



**25.19** Siah Armajani, Irene Hixon Whitney pedestrian bridge. Bridge between Loring Park and Walker Art Center Sculpture Garden, Minneapolis. 1988. Length 375' (114.3 m).

suggests a kind of symbolic unity: the two arches of the bridge, one convex and the other concave, unite to form a single sine curve. Armajani enlists architectural design and engineering technology to articulate and, in a small way, compensate for the divisive, if expedient, effects of urban planning and civil engineering.

Less cerebral and more celebratorily high-tech is the Telecommunications Tower in Barcelona, Spain (fig. 25.20), the work of English architect Sir Norman Foster (b. 1935). The design of the tower follows the philosophy of Foster and Partners—that is, achieving maximum effect with minimal structural means, as well as achieving clarity and precision in the fitting together of components. The tower's precast concrete shaft is supported by three vertical steel trusses, and the whole structure is tethered to guy wires anchored in the mountainside. Modular floors and platforms are suspended from this structural skeleton in such a way as to accommodate future changes. Yet for all its functionality, the design of the Tower references an era of spaceship futurism with an innocent, almost playful, “World of Tomorrow” effect.

### Pei and Freed

Historicism directed away from the futures imagined in the recent past and toward the ancient world was well developed when Chinese-American architect I. M. Pei (b. 1917) executed the commission for modernizing certain parts of the Louvre Museum in Paris. Pei is popularly known for the controversy surrounding his Grand Louvre Pyramid (1988), constructed in the courtyard of

**25.20** Norman Foster, Telecommunications Tower, Barcelona, Spain, 1992.

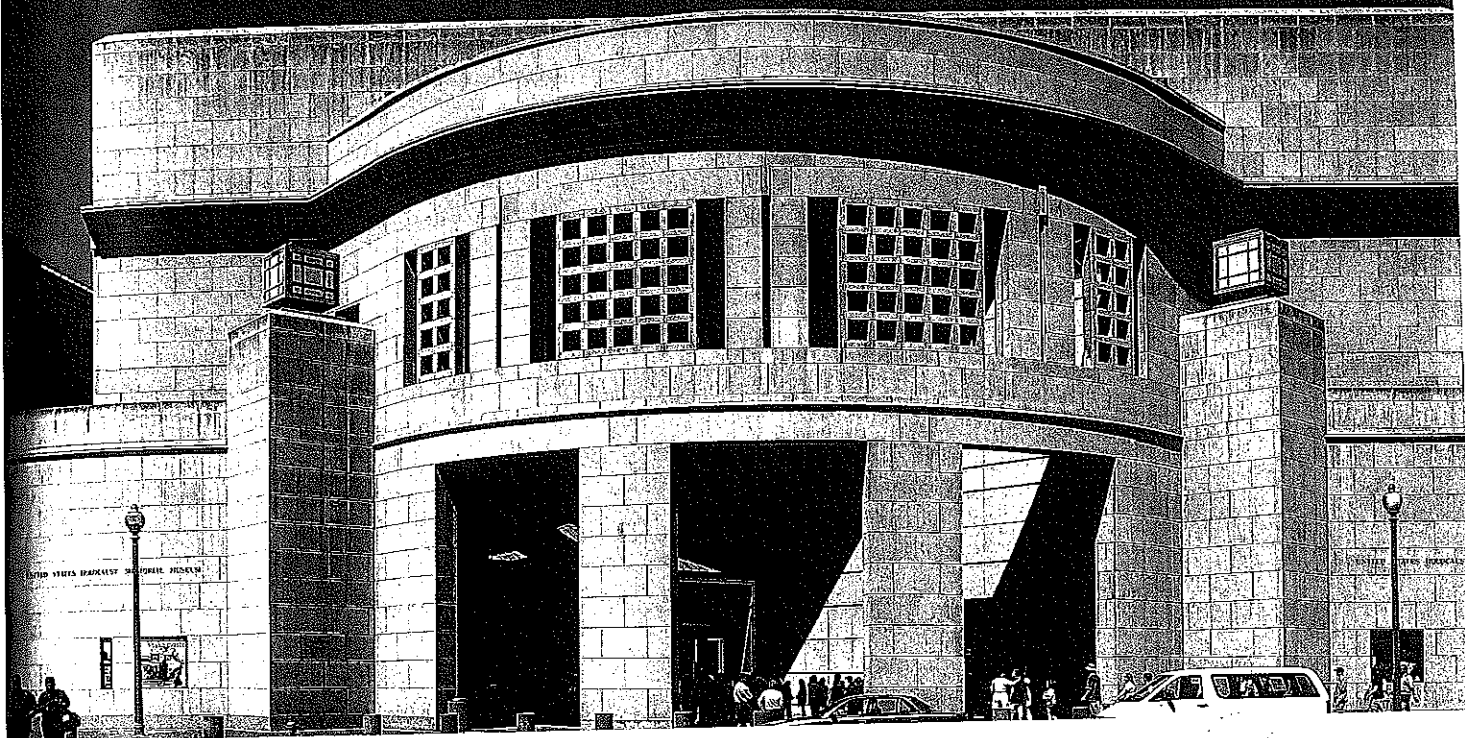


25.21 I. M. Pei, Grand Louvre Pyramid, Paris, 1988.

the Louvre (fig. 25.21). The Pyramid deliberately turns the tradition and concept of pyramid inside out. A pyramid is supposed to be solid, dark, and solitary—a mesmerizing symbol of the exotic world beyond the streets and cultures of Europe. Here, the pyramid is clear glass, almost immaterial, a vast skylight hovering over streams of museum visitors as they are channeled into the Louvre galleries through the below-ground entrance corridors. Besides its associations of timelessness and its brilliant ingenuity in lighting an underground space, the ensemble is a superb example of how new buildings in old settings do not always

have to accommodate themselves to the style of their “found” surroundings.

The expansion of existing museums and the proliferation of new museums since the early eighties have generated some of the most exciting architecture of recent times. Architect and curator attempt to bring the past into the present in flexible yet assertive form. Creating a museum to document one of the most atrocious crimes in history was an exceptional architectural challenge. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum was chartered by a unanimous act of Congress in 1980 and opened in 1993.



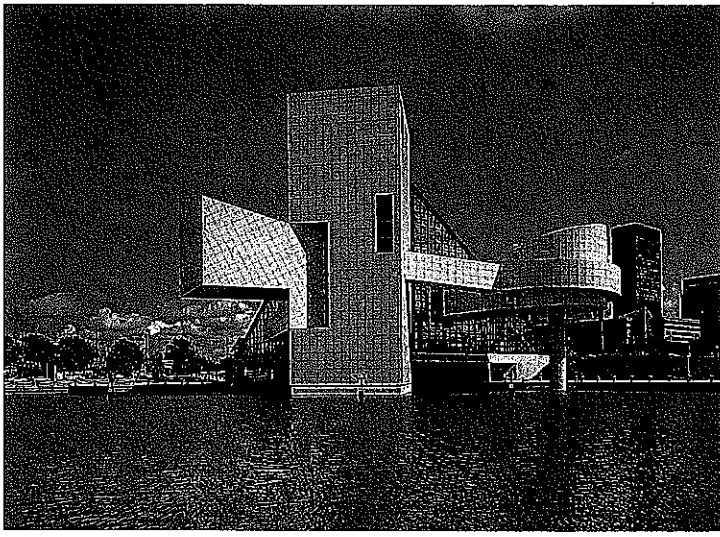
25.22 Pei Cobb Freed & Partners, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington, D.C., 1993.

Architect **James Ingo Freed** (b. 1930), of Pei Cobb Freed & Partners, fashioned a relationship between the architecture of the building and the exhibitions within, creating in effect a work of art. Freed visited a number of Holocaust sites, including camps and ghettos, to examine structures and materials. While architectural allusions to the Holocaust are not specific, the building contains subtle metaphors and symbolic reminiscences of history. In Freed's words, "There are no literal references to particular places or occurrences from the historic event. Instead, the architectural form is open-ended." The building thus serves as a "resonator of memory."

At first glance, the exterior seems benign, which is part of the building's metaphoric message (fig. 25.22). Yet throughout, Freed has incorporated physical elements of concealment, deception, disengagement, and duality. The curved portico of the 14th Street entrance—with its squared arches, window grating, and cubed lights—is a mere front, a fake screen that actually opens to the sky, deliberately hiding the disturbing architecture of skewed lines and hard surfaces of the real entrance that lies behind it. This strategy of contrasting and juxtaposing appearance and reality is repeated throughout. Along the north brick walls, a different perspective reveals a roofline profile of camp guard towers, a procession of sentry boxes. Above

the western entrance, a limestone mantle holds a solitary window containing sixteen solid "panes," framed by clear glass, reversing the normal order and obscuring the ability to look in or out. Inside, the physical layout ushers visitors through the exhibits in a sequence of experiences. The central, skylit, brick-and-steel Hall of Witness sets the stage of deadly efficiency that is echoed throughout this museum. The expansive use of exposed steel trusswork is an ever-present reminder of the death chambers. Vertically piercing the entire structure is the Tower of Faces, a chimney-like shaft lined with photographs of the people of a village that was essentially annihilated in the Holocaust. One passes through the Tower of Faces on a bridge, surrounded above and below by the faces of men, women, and children for whom the chimney was the ultimate symbol of fear. The personal detail of the faces is contrasted by the painting and sculptures commissioned for the museum from abstract artists—Elsworth Kelly, Sol LeWitt, Joel Shapiro, and Richard Serra (see figs. 22.16, 22.52, 24.104, 22.57). From the main floor and on the way out, visitors climb an angled staircase to the second floor, which is highlighted by the hexagonal, light-filled Hall of Remembrance.

A very different monument and museum is a Pei project of 1995, the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum



**25.23** I.M. Pei, Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum, Cleveland, Ohio, 1995.

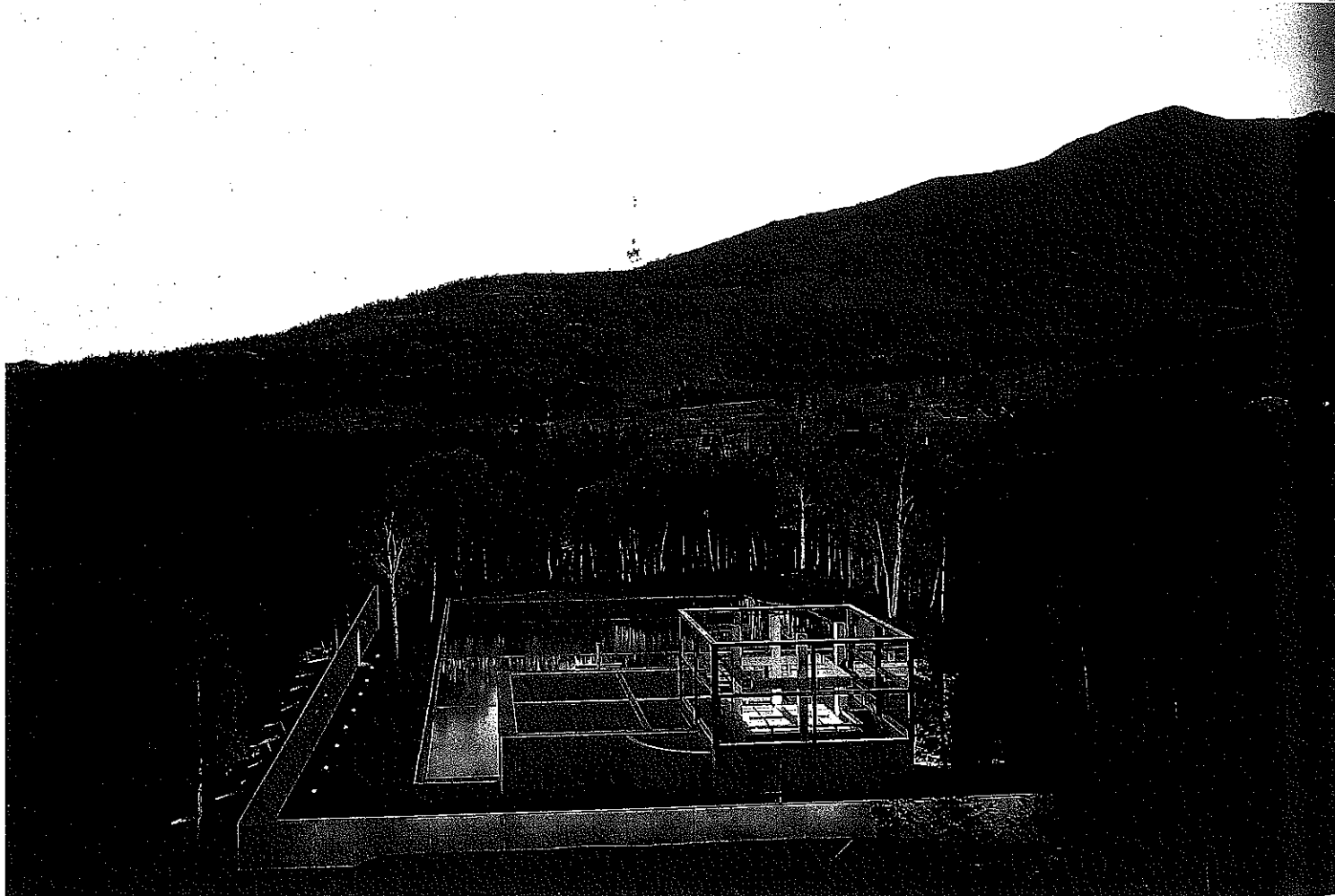
in Cleveland, Ohio (fig. 25.23). It is an elegant monument to the world's most subversive art form. All of Pei's work, from the East Building of the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. (see fig. 23.39) to his Louvre Grand Pyramid in Paris (see fig. 25.21), reflects an obsession with

Euclidean geometry, a system that analyzes the physical world in terms of the cube, the sphere, and the pyramid. Pei's fascination with the pyramid, which he explored in the Louvre project, carried over into the Rock and Roll Museum. A 117-foot-high (35.6 m) glass-and-steel tent leans at a forty-five-degree angle against a tower with cantilevered wings. The building is an architectural interpretation of the explosiveness of rock music. Pei himself has said that he took the explosion metaphor from rock's rebelliousness and energy.

The building has three major elements: the glass tent; the tower containing exhibition spaces; and a plaza with administrative offices, archives, storage, and more exhibition spaces. One wing houses a forty-four-foot-diameter (13.4 m) cylindrical space for viewing films supported by a single column that plunges into the lake. The other wing comprises a 125-seat, cube-shaped auditorium that juts above the water without any visible means of support.

### Ando and Pelli

In any age, designing a house of worship requires crafting spaces that encourage and direct emotional and intellectual experience. In our time, Japanese architect **Tadao Ando** (b. 1941) has designed some of the most effective places



**25.24** Tadao Ando, Chapel on the Water, Hokkaido, Japan, 1988.



of worship in the modern idiom, using precision-cast reinforced concrete—partly to make his buildings earthquake safe—and siting the buildings and their precincts with extraordinary sensitivity to the surrounding topography. One such project is his 1988 Chapel-on-the-Water (fig. 25.24). Located on a small plain in the mountains on the northern island of Hokkaido, this church is part of a year-round resort. The structure consists—in plan—of two overlapping squares. The larger, partly projecting out into an artificial pond, houses the chapel, and the smaller contains the entry and changing and waiting rooms. A freestanding L-shaped wall wraps around the back of the building and one side of the pond. The chapel is approached from the back, and entry involves a circuitous route: a counterclockwise ascent to the top of the smaller volume through a glass-enclosed space open to the sky, with views of the pond and mountains. In this space are four large concrete crosses. The wall behind the altar is constructed entirely of glass, providing a dramatic panorama of the pond with a large cross set into the water. The glass wall can slide like a giant shoji screen (the paper screens used to partition rooms in Japanese interior design), opening the interior of the chapel to nature. A 6,000-seat, semicircular theater, northwest of the chapel, is designed to accommodate open-air concerts and other events. Set on a fan-shaped artificial pond, the amphitheater is intersected by a long, bridgelike stage and a freestanding colonnade. A site wall points toward the church complex and turns at a sharp angle into the axis of the stage, tying the two projects together.

Internationally influential architect Cesar Pelli (b. 1926), dean of the Yale University School of Architecture from 1977 to 1984, expressed the importance of context in his assessment of the priorities of the architect: “A building is responsible to the place it occupies and takes in a city . . . the obligation is to the city. The city is more important than the building; the building is more important than the architect.” Raised in Argentina, Pelli came to the United States in 1952 to study for a master’s degree in architecture at the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana. Pelli’s most visible buildings reference their locales in style and with motifs, and Pelli is able to invest commercial buildings with a public and sometimes even spiritual presence by means of forms and open spaces, especially when designing public-space interiors.

No building is more characteristic of Pelli’s commitment to responding to local desires than the Petronas Towers in Kuala Lumpur (fig. 25.25), which at the time of completion was the world’s tallest building. The towers,

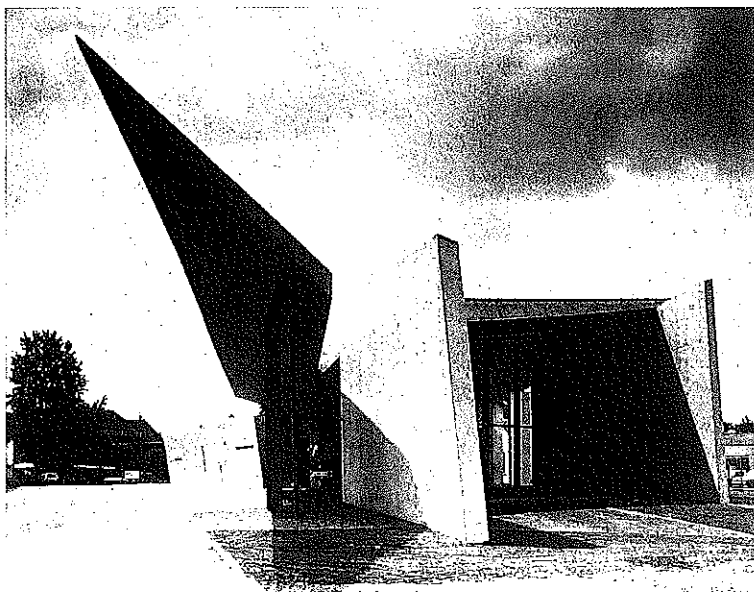


which are 1,483 feet (452 m) tall, respond in their design and detailing to the local Malaysian culture as well as declaring through their great height confidence in the strength of the Asian economy. The ground plan for the two towers is based on an Islamic design of overlaid squares and inset circles. The result is a sixteen-sided façade that alternates between curved and flat walls. As the towers ascend they are set back six times and tilt inward to accent the grace of the exterior lines. Sheathed in stainless steel and reflecting bands of fenestration, the massive towers appear to be decorated with the blue sky above Kuala Lumpur. The windows were designed for the climate: a system of panes and shades decrease the amount of light and heat that enters the rooms. Culturally as well as climatically sensitive, Pelli decorated the interior spaces with traditional Malaysian arts. The centerpiece of the ground floor, set in between the towers, is a concert hall. The plan for the towers includes open space to accommodate future urban development. Pelli’s concern with creating architecture that interacts with the city can also be seen in projects such as the World Financial Center in New York, which houses the commercial development for the Battery Park neighborhood in Lower Manhattan, and in the Abandoibarra Master Plan for the Waterfront along the Nervion River in Bilbao, Spain.

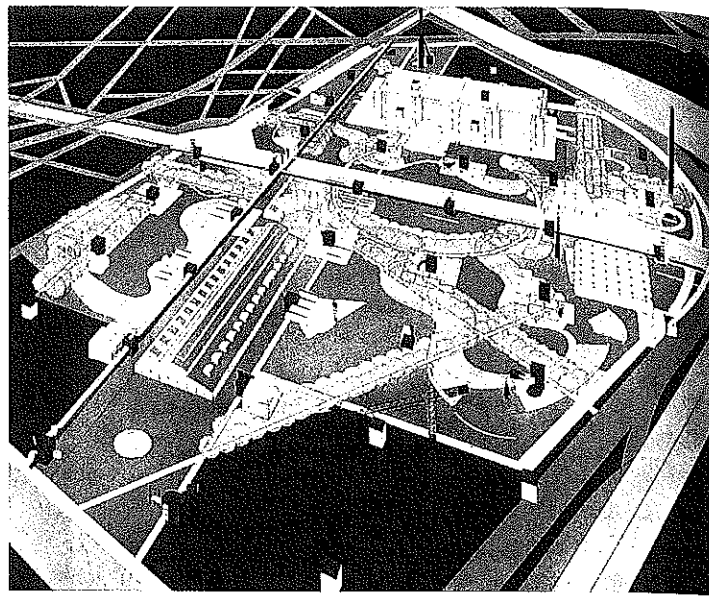
## What Is a Building?: Deconstruction

The work of the Iraqi architect **Zaha Hadid** (b. 1950) points in a very different direction from that of Stirling, Isozaki, Pelli, and Ando. Her buildings exploit the possibilities of deconstructionist theory, which challenges the standard functions, uses, and perceptions of a building, much in the way it has in the fields of literary criticism and art history. Deconstructionism and deconstructivist architects are a Postmodern phenomenon, although usually not regarded as mainstream Postmodernist. Born in Baghdad, Hadid studied mathematics in Beirut, was trained in architecture at the Architectural Association in London (1972–77), and established her own practice in 1979. She was one of the first experimental female architects to make a substantial reputation and impact in the second half of the twentieth century. Her Vitra Fire Station in Weil am Rhein (fig. 25.26), from 1993, is a prime example of deconstructivist architecture. The work of painter Kazimir Malevich (see figs. 11.18, 11.19) has served as a basis for Hadid's design work, and she says that her inspiration derives from the principles of Suprematism—a concept developed by Malevich and expressed by the reduction of the picture to Euclidean geometric arrangements of forms in pure colors, designed to represent the supremacy of pure emotion. Thus many of her projects exist as unbuilt, utopian investigations.

The Vitra Fire Station shows a high sense of individual personality in its vigorous use of space. The architectural concept has been developed into a layered series of walls that alternate between void and volume, giving the impression of speed and escape. Constructed of exposed reinforced concrete—a very appropriate medium for Hadid to realize her sculptural expressiveness and ambitiously long spans and cantilevers—the whole building is movement suspended in time and space, expressing the firefighter's



**25.26** Zaha Hadid, Vitra Fire Station, Weil am Rhein, Germany, 1993.



**25.27** Bernard Tschumi, Plan, Parc de la Villette, Paris, 1982–91.

tension between being on the alert and the possibility of exploding into action at any moment. Special attention was given to the sharpness of all edges, and any attachments, such as roof edges or claddings, were avoided lest they detract from the simplicity of the prismatic form and abstract quality of the architectural concept. This same absence of detail informed the frameless glazing, the large sliding panes enclosing the garage, and the treatment of the interior spaces. The surrounding landscape seems to stream into the building, testimony to Hadid's reputation as an assertive sculptural architect and to her unique ability to transcend building mass with pure antigravitational energy. Yet the question inevitably arises whether such bold, sculptural antifunctionalism is suitable to the actual purpose of the building, or for that matter to anything else.

Also deconstructivist and neither a park nor a building in the traditional sense, Parc de la Villette (1982–91)—an open space in a working-class district of Paris that more closely resembles a large architectural and environmental sculpture—is the first built work of deconstructionist theorist and teacher **Bernard Tschumi** (b. 1944). His design for the master plan and structural elements of Parc de la Villette (which means “little city”) (fig. 25.27) was selected from more than 470 entries in an international competition. The 125-acre (50.5 hectares) park includes walkways, gardens, and a canal, and thirty bright-colored, geometrical “*folies*,” small structures containing cultural and recreational facilities including a cinema, a video workshop, information and day-care centers, and a health club.

The organizing principle of the park's design is the superimposition of three independent ordering systems, each of which uses a separate vocabulary of either lines, points, or surfaces, so that there is no single or true master plan. In combination, the logic of each system loses its coherence, and accident and chance become determining factors in the resulting design. The most prominently

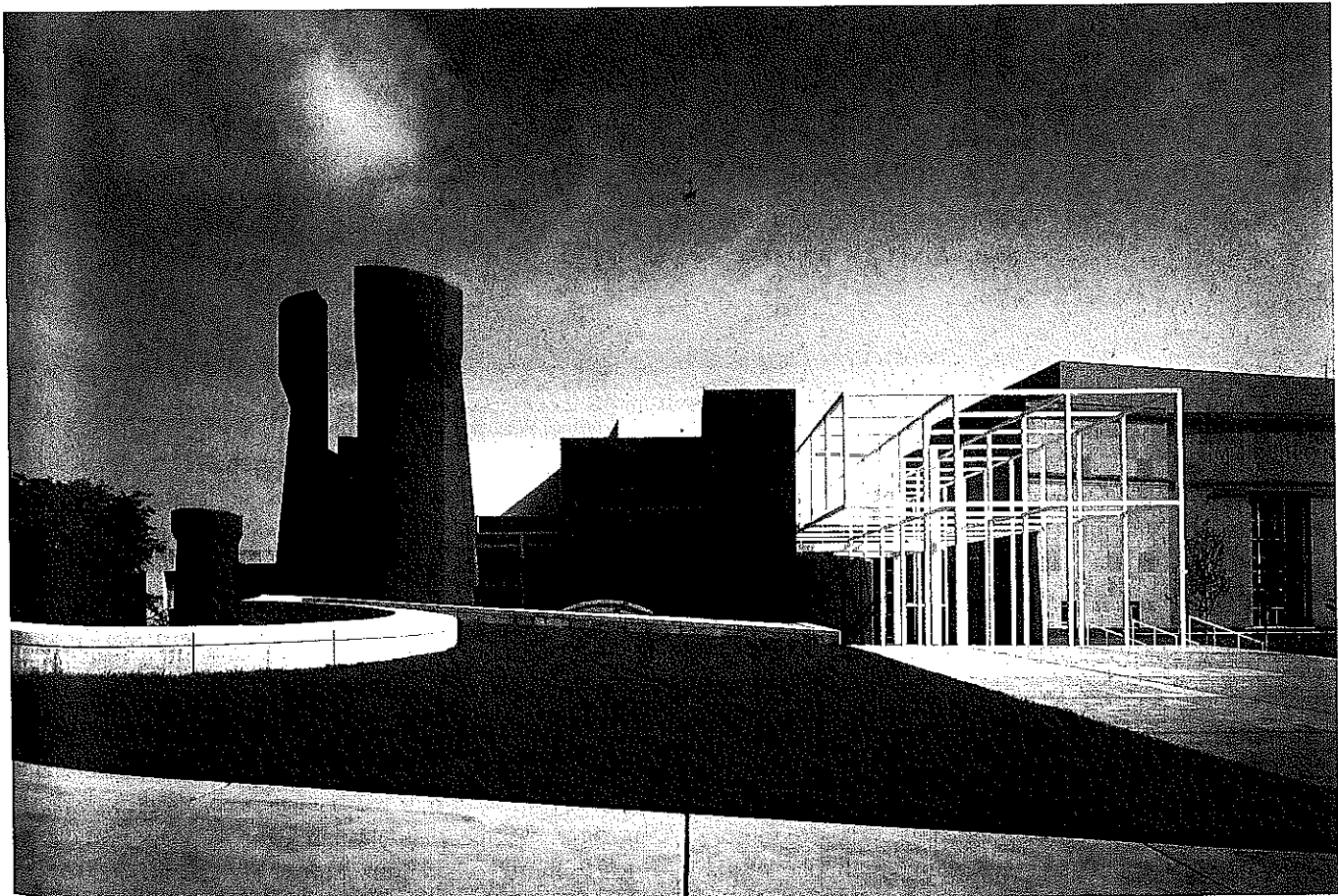
ordered system, the 400-square-foot (37 m<sup>2</sup>) grid of points, is marked by the evenly spaced locations of the *folie* structures. Each of the *folies* is based on the form of the cube, which is then “cut away,” or reconfigured, transforming pure geometry into dissonance.

Tschumi, who was dean of the Graduate School of Architecture, Planning, and Preservation at Columbia University from 1988 to 2003, uses the tools of architecture to question the validity of its own rules. Employing multiple organizing principles, he sets them up to collide with one another, each one serving to cancel, interrupt, and undermine the others—asserting that there is no pure space, that activity necessarily and unapologetically violates architectural purity. The three ordering systems of the park allow for almost infinite variations on this theme.

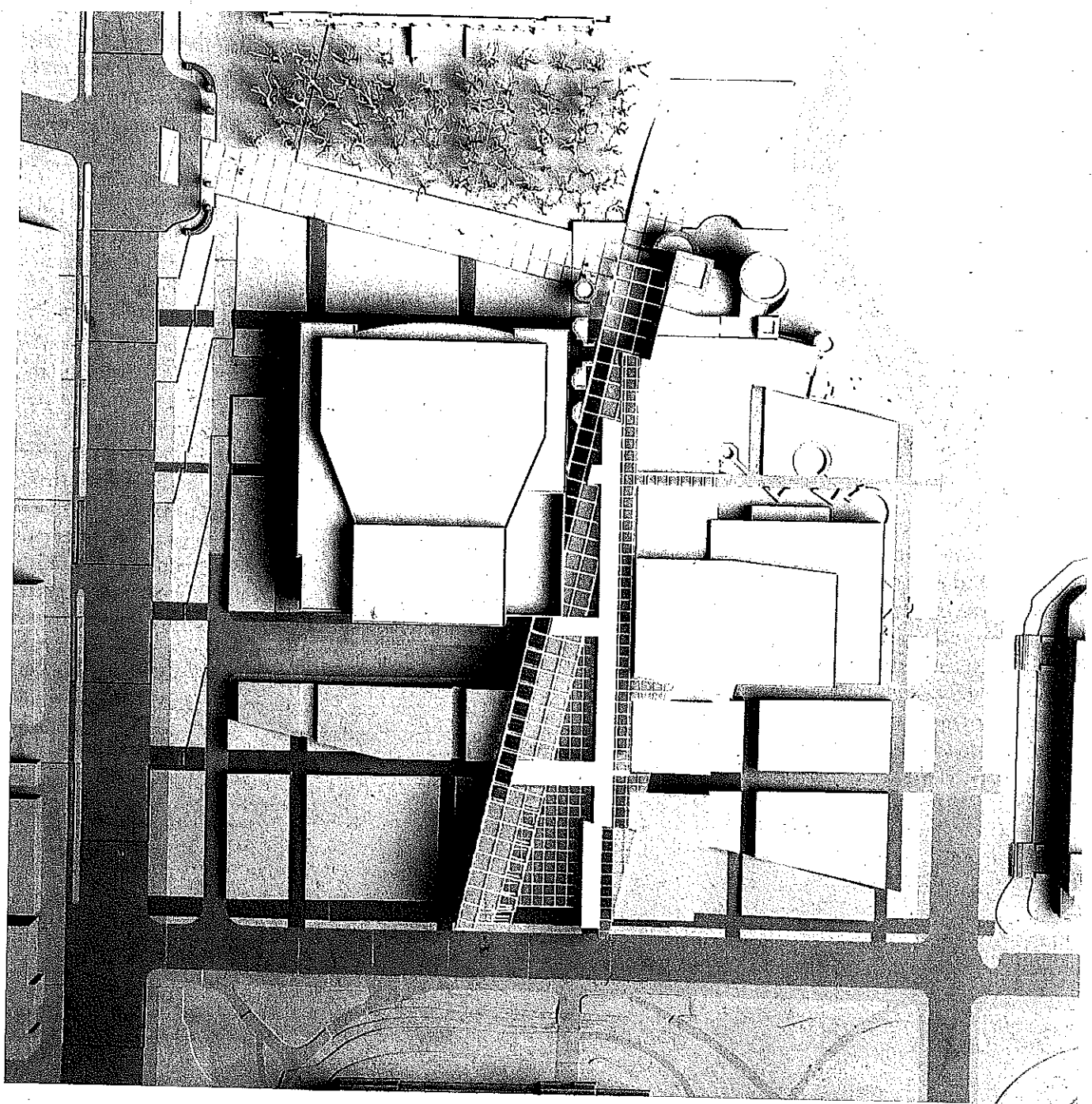
During much of the twentieth century, the machine served as one of the most ubiquitous cultural metaphors, especially in regard to architectural form and theory. Designers have tried not only to emulate the machine’s aesthetic qualities but to envision an architecture whose relationship to its function corresponds as directly as that of a machine to its purpose. The spare beauty of Le Corbusier’s Villa Savoye (see fig. 16.6), for example, is due to his resoluteness in applying the machine metaphor. Tschumi, on the other hand, proposes that architecture is continually transformed by the quotidian events that take place in and around it, events too varied and complex to

be described by any one architectural program, such as the International Style. Rather than imposing a structure on the disorderliness of urban life, Tschumi’s Parc de la Villette is emblematic of the metropolis and its inherent intricacies. It becomes a stage set for an infinite number of human activities, both planned and spontaneous, authorized and illicit, which momentarily form part of the metropolis. Parc de la Villette thus affirms the random disorderliness and vibrancy of the city. With its keen awareness of the importance of events that surround it, Tschumi’s architecture aspires to an inclusivity that reflects the haphazard complexity of the modern metropolis.

The intellectual strain in the architecture of the eighties and nineties achieves extreme form in the work of the American deconstructivist theoretician and architect **Peter Eisenman** (b. 1932). As a deconstructionist, Eisenman puts buildings together out of parts and elements that are not inherently unified or related, so that the realized structure may not serve the usual function or expectations for a building. Eisenman’s first building to gain wide attention was the Wexner Center for the Visual and Performing Arts, a contemporary art museum at Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio (fig. 25.28). The center, built between 1983 and 1989, strikingly exemplifies Eisenman’s commitment to architecture as an intellectual as well as a material art. The project is an intricate complex of construction and landscape, an “archaeological earthwork” as Eisenman



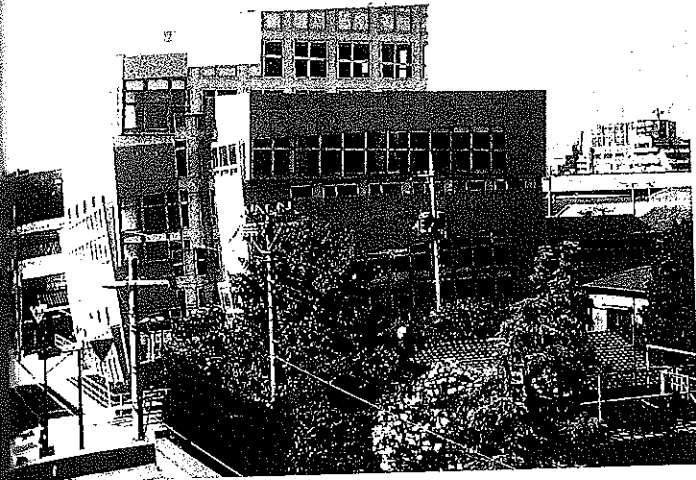
25.28 Peter Eisenman, Wexner Center for the Visual and Performing Arts, Ohio State University, Columbus, 1983–1989.



**25.29** Peter Eisenman, Competition model for the Wexner Centre for the Visual Arts and Fine Arts Library, Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio (plan view), 1983. Frank Dick Studio.

termed it, that radically breaks with the predictable order of the traditional bucolic American academic campus. Conceptually and physically, the design connects the academic community with the Columbus civic community by mediating the historic plan of the campus which set it at a 12.25-degree angle from the grid of the city (fig. 25.29). By locating a center at this point of intersection between the civic and academic life of the city, Eisenman suggests that the metaphor of meeting place rather than repository best suits the contemporary museum. Symbolic of the act of collision and exchange is what the architect calls a “scaffolding” of square white steel pipes whose formation

is a “metaphoric microcosm of the urban grid.” The 140,000-square-foot (13,006 m<sup>2</sup>) building houses the experimental arts of computers, lasers, performance, and video as well as exhibition galleries, a café, a bookstore, and administrative offices. The most memorable image resulting from Eisenman’s preoccupation with geometry and iconography is the rigorous coupling of architecture and landscape in a manner that revives, or at least harks back to, the formal geometric integration of garden and building of seventeenth-century European palaces. The Wexner Center marks a turning point in Eisenman’s career that, as he has commented “has conditioned everything that



**25.30** Peter Eisenman, Nunotani Building, Tokyo, Japan, 1990–92.

followed, because you begin to think, how do you build ideas, and not just project them?”

The façade of Eisenman’s Nunotani Building in Tokyo (fig. 25.30) illustrates the construction of a set of ideas about national identity, commercial power, and architectural symbolism. In response to the client’s demand for an iconic structure and his own commitment to rethinking the conventionally anthropomorphic and phallic symbolism of the skyscraper, the architect turned to geology and geometry. The overlapping planes that form the façade are generated through a simulation of colliding cubes that push into each other like the tectonic plates that lie under Japan. Power, as well as corporate strength, are thus symbolized by the flexibility and resilience of the building, which is animated by its potential energy and its appeal to the mind, rather than being assertive through an upright form and gravity-defying show of strength.

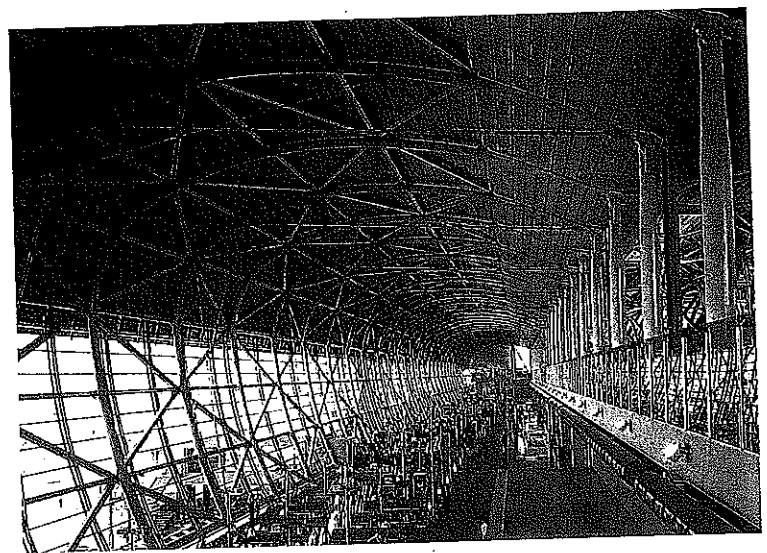
## Structure as Metaphor: Architectural Abstractions

Italian architect **Renzo Piano** (b. 1937) has been reimagining architectural metaphors for cultural and institutional power since his collaboration in the seventies with English architect Richard Rogers in the design of the Centre Georges Pompidou, the controversial “inside-out” home of modern and contemporary art in Paris that showed his fascination and respect for the infrastructure of buildings (see fig. 23.21). More recently, Piano won the commission to design an all-new major airport, Kansai International Airport in Osaka, Japan, which opened in 1994. Over the years, Piano’s work has become more refined and restrained without a loss of interest in technology and materials. The soaring waiting halls at the Kansai International Airport (fig. 25.31) are examples of Piano’s easy relationship with industrial-strength materials and his elegant use of them on a very grand scale.

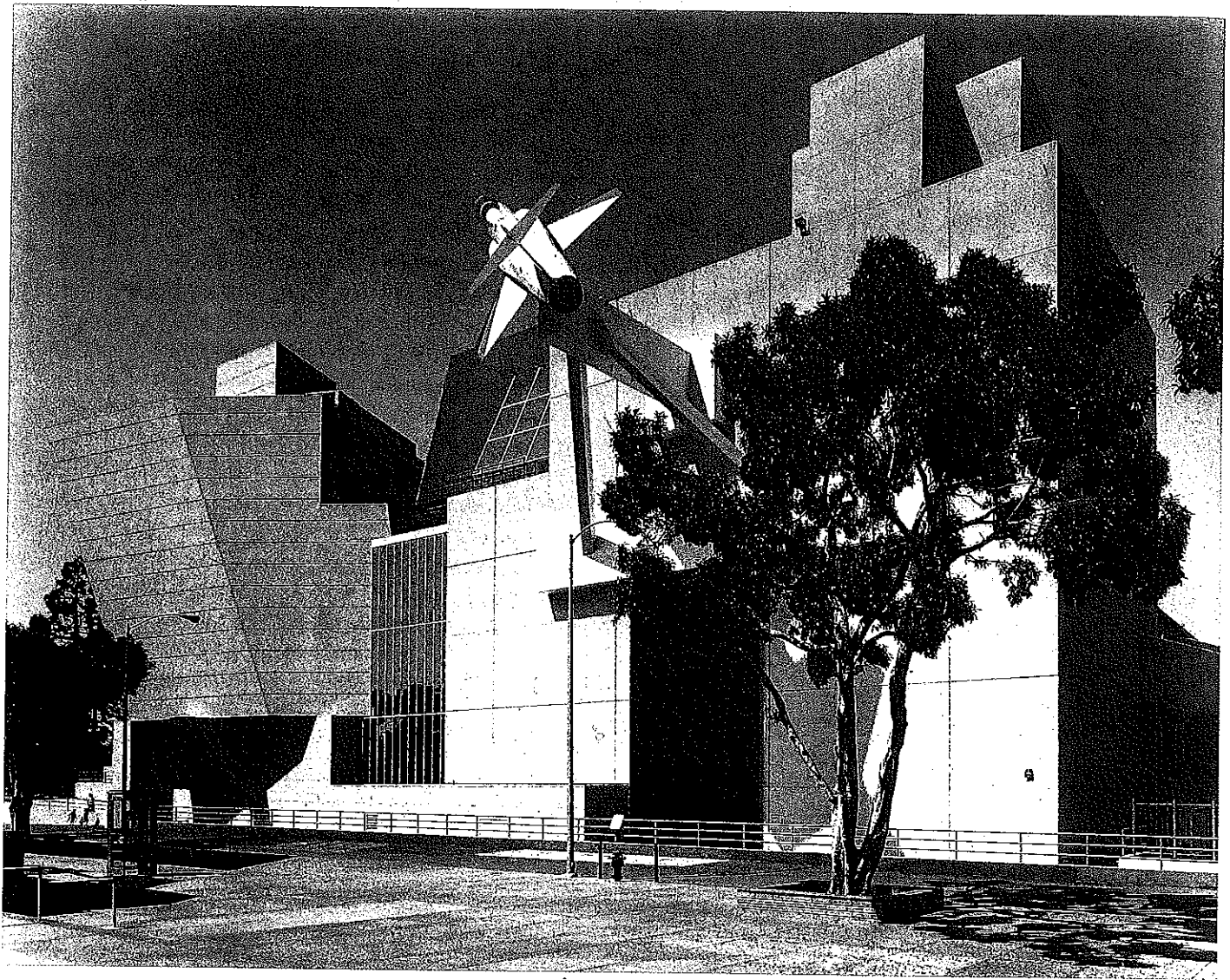
Canadian-born American **Frank O. Gehry** (b. 1929) is another major figure whose approaches identify him with Postmodern design. His work, invariably witty, has generated variations on themes as refined as the modernist cube and as ordinary as a fish. His California Aerospace Museum (fig. 25.32), completed in 1984, is a showcase for jet-age technology. Through its good-natured combination of disparate forms, materials, and scale, the structure clearly evokes the spirit of flight. Impaled on a cruciform strut above the forty-foot (12 m) “hangar” door is the most sensational aspect of the building’s design: a Lockheed F-104 Starfighter plane. The gigantic, thematically appropriate, aircraft does not upstage the museum—no small feat considering the drama of the spectacle. It is simply a bold ornament applied to a bold building.

Of a similarly allusive style is Gehry’s good-humored Chiat/Day Building of 1991 on Main Street in Venice, California (fig. 25.33). The headquarters for an advertising firm that has developed some of America’s cleverest and most successful ad campaigns, as well as pioneering off-site creative work, the Chiat/Day Building is a collaboration between Gehry and sculptors Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen (see fig. 24.59). Oldenburg and Van Bruggen’s mega-sized *Binoculars* forms the portal to an interior that is essentially open yet accommodating to impromptu meetings and plug-in work sites for its drop-in, drop-off employees.

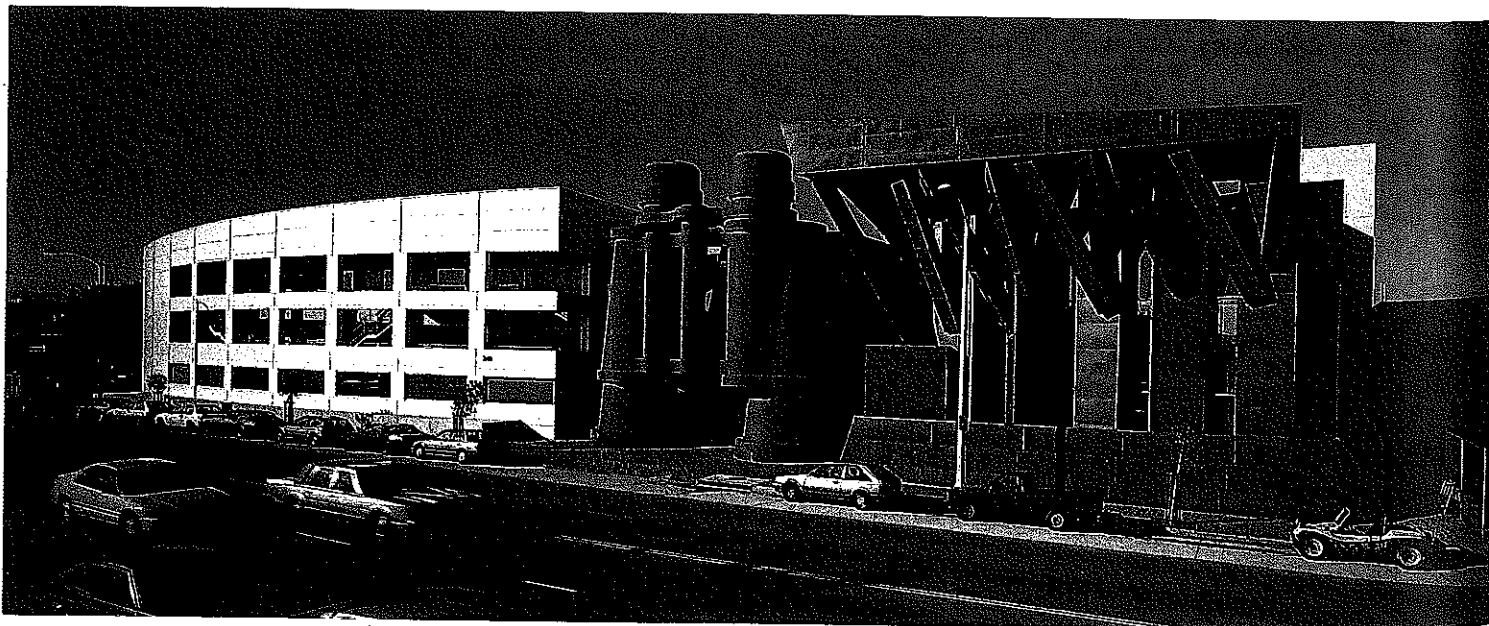
By the nineties, Gehry had modified his expressive language from the geometry and decoration of the Aerospace Museum and the Chiat/Day to a more organic architecture that evokes the breeze more than it does a fighter plane. Still working in a manner that he shares with Oldenburg and Van Bruggen, Gehry’s late-style buildings start with blocks covered in gauze and crumpled paper. Using computer renderings, these architectural sculptures provide the source for one of the most ethereal and recognizable



**25.31** Renzo Piano, Waiting room, Kansai International Airport, Osaka, Japan, 1994.



**25.32** Frank O. Gehry, State of California Aerospace Museum, Santa Monica, 1982–86.



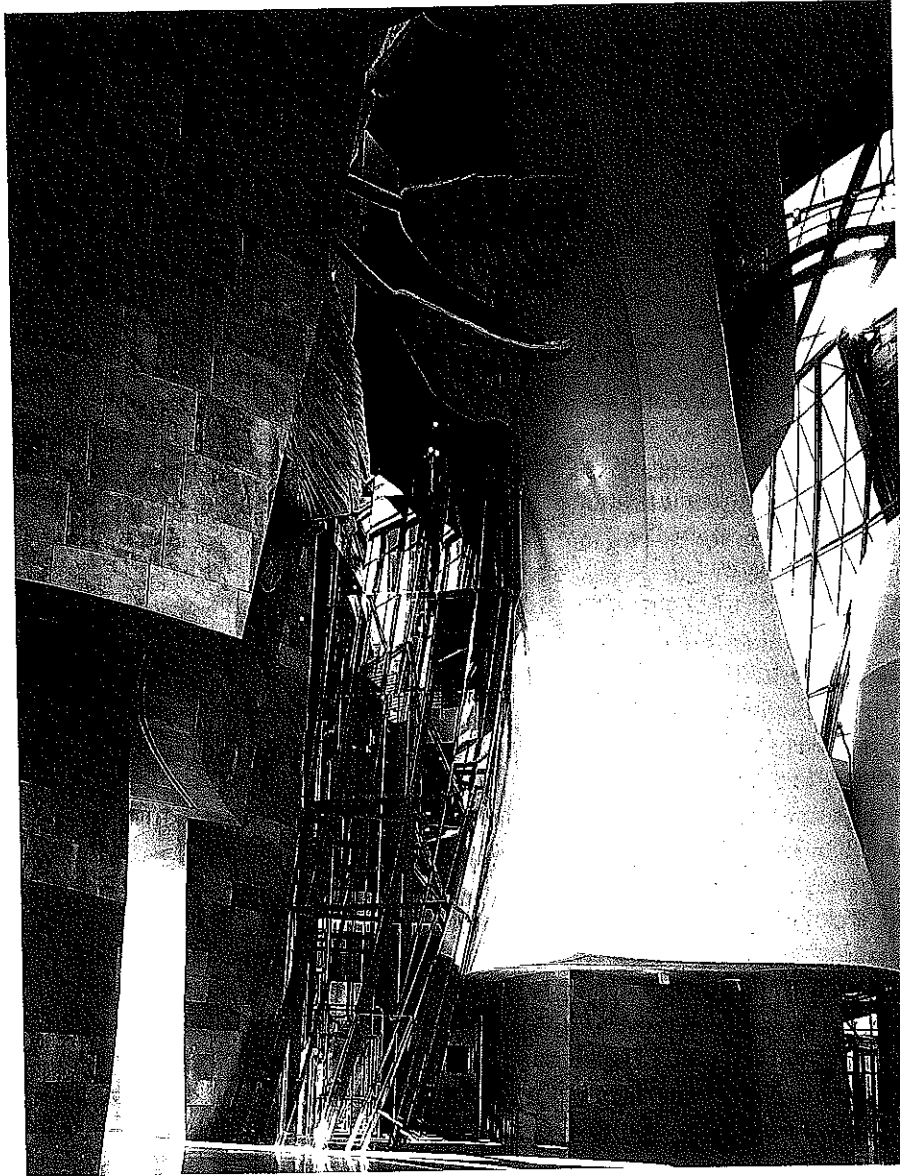
**25.33** Frank O. Gehry, Chiat/Day Building and Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen, *Binoculars*, Steel frame, concrete, and cement plaster painted with elastomeric paint, 45 × 44 × 18' (13.7 × 13.4 × 5.5 m). Venice, California. 1991.

architectural styles of the century. Structures like the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao (see fig. 25.34) provide another chapter in the history of expressive architecture begun with the theorized, though rarely built, work of Erich Mendelsohn and Antonio Sant'Elia.

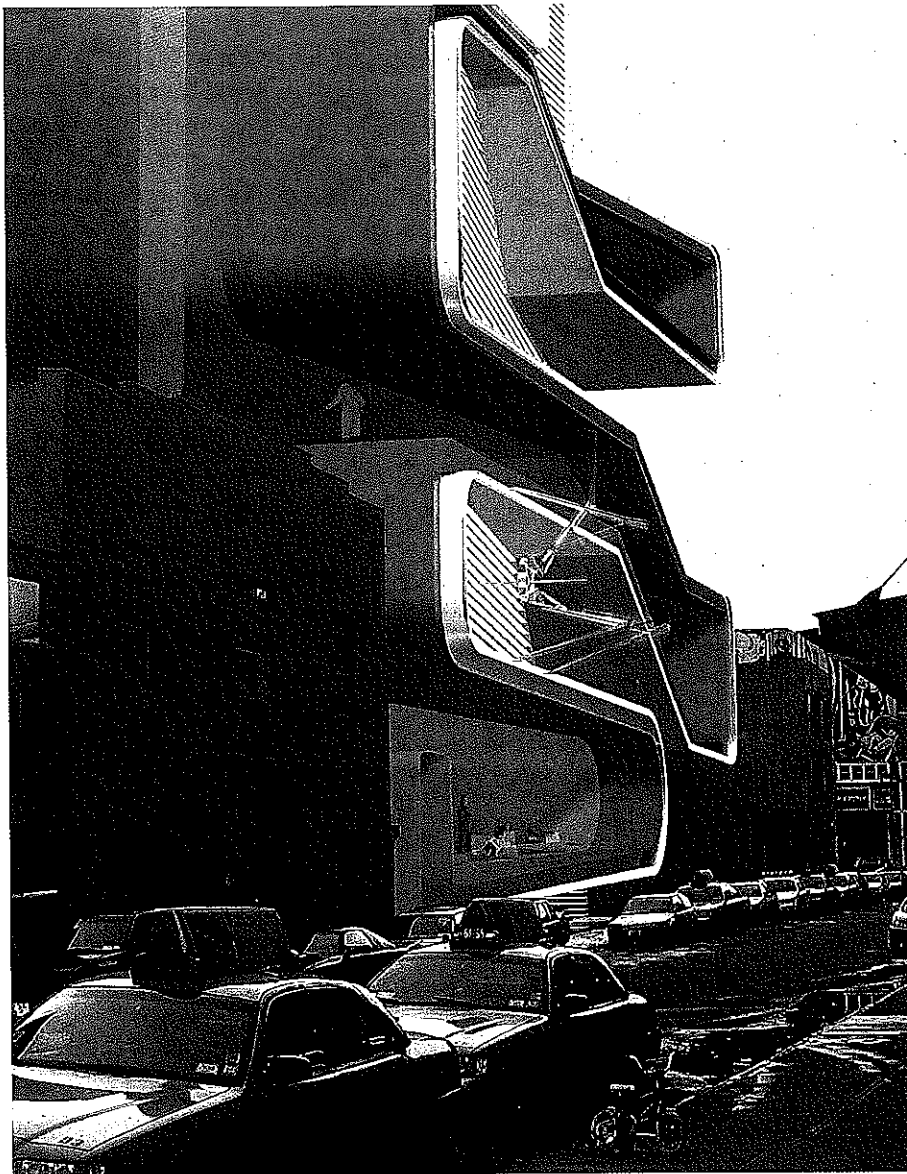
The Bilbao museum (fig. 25.34) is a monumental abstraction built in the capital of the Basque Country. Gehry's design was inspired by Bilbao's industrial history and the curving Nervion River, which once supported thriving mills and shipyards. The building combines the geometry of classical modernism with the organic whimsy of Expressionism. Gehry designed the museum to resemble a metal flower rising up from the riverfront. Designed with the aid of CATIA, a computer program created by the French aerospace industry to translate sculptural models into specifications for manufacture, the museum rises to a towering point of reinforced concrete at the north end that appears to hover impossibly in the sky. Undulating walls and ceilings sheathed in titanium open out from this peak like giant petals blown in the wind or floating on the river. To the east of the building is a huge exhibition space,

450 × 80 feet (137 × 24 m), for the display of large-scale sculpture. The organic and expressive design elements of the building are anchored by six Spanish limestone cubes that recall the severe geometry of the International Style. These elements house more traditional-style white box galleries, a library, auditorium, restaurant, and retail spaces. The cubes are arranged in two flanks that extend from the flower to the west and south. From the west, hints of the metallic flowers peek out from behind the stone walls, creating a sense of drama as one circles the building.

The design of the blossoming flower can be read as a metaphor for the political and economic ambitions of the Basque government to assert itself on an international stage. Intent on doing more than symbolizing the growth and stability of the region, Gehry responded to the needs of the city as well as the art collection, with the building combining the function of a museum with facilities for Bilbao's citizens. The restaurant, auditorium, and retail spaces are all accessible from the street independently from the operation of the museum. Likewise, a significant part of the collection will represent local art history. Gehry's



**25.34** Frank O. Gehry,  
Guggenheim Bilbao,  
Interior, 1991–97.



Guggenheim has proven to be one of the signature works of the late twentieth century, not only because it is the pinnacle of a great architect's career, but also for its elegant summation of the collaborations possible in the increasingly international world of culture.

As late-twentieth-century cultural politics provided the impetus for the Guggenheim Bilbao, new technologies have inspired what may be one of the most surprising new museums of the twenty-first century. The architect team of Diller + Scofidio (Elizabeth Diller, b. 1954 and Ricardo Scofidio, b. 1935) have designed a multiuse building (fig. 25.35) to house the production, exhibition, and education programs of Eyebeam, a foundation that sponsors digital art. The museum of digital art is designed to rise from a standard rectilinear ground plan in Chelsea, New York, in the form of a ribbon looping across the plot, up to the next floor, and back over to divide the stories in an S-shaped curve to the top of the building. In addition to forming the floors, walls, and ceiling of the museum, the ribbon, a two-ply construction, will house the substantial electronic infrastructure required to power a collection of computer-based

art. While providing the technological support absent from most museums, Diller + Scofidio's design creates an image for Eyebeam that looks like that of no other museum. Like the duo's projected exhibition hall Blur, a museum enveloped in an artificial cloud above lake Neuchatel, Switzerland, the Eyebeam building and the best of the art that it will house announce a new kind of aesthetic journey.

### Flexible Spaces: Architecture and Urbanism

Modern art began at the intersection of cultural and urban change. Whether one discerns its origins in the nineteenth century, as we have, or in the eighteenth or seventeenth, as others have, modernism is rooted in the effects of industrialism, revolution, and economic transitions on the urban environment. Dutch Naturalism was generated in relation to the economic transformation of public and private life in the Netherlands during the second half of the seventeenth century; French Romanticism and Neoclassicism developed hand in hand with the configuring of Paris as an





**25.36** Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk and Andres Duany, Seaside, Florida. Aerial plan view. 1980s.

imperial center, revolutionary capital, and Napoleonic showcase; and realism, Impressionism, and photography were intimately related to demographic changes in Europe and the United States. In the Postmodern era, urbanism has also been central to cultural production. Venturi and Scott Brown's lesson in *Learning from Las Vegas* that "the order of the Strip includes" is an anthem for Postmodern artists and architects. Inclusion took on significance as it came to provide metaphors for the increasingly urban character of contemporary global society. In the west, two urban planning strategies developed to reckon with the chaotic heterogeneity that was coming to dominate daily experience. One, first described as neotraditional planning when it arose in the early eighties and then dubbed New Urbanism, attempted to recast early twentieth-century small towns to contain urban growth. The other strategy, practiced most spectacularly by Rem Koolhaas and his Office of Metropolitan Architecture (OMA) (see figs. 25.38, 25.39), embraced the density, variety, and flux of existing late twentieth-century cities by building large-scale structures that, like much Postmodern art and architecture, sought to facilitate change within stable yet flexible architectural space.

### Plater-Zyberk and Duany

Miami-based architects and planners Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk (b. 1950) and Andres Duany (b. 1949) are acknowledged leaders of the New Urbanists. They are contemporary architects who seek to reform America's communities. Their remedy is as much moral as it is aesthetic. They believe that traditional town planning—a grid of streets lined with trees and front porches, studded with shops and parks—can heal the nation's fragmented sense of community. In their 1991 book, *Towns and Town-Making Principles*, the authors champion a concern for the small-scale design decisions that make streets, blocks, and neighborhoods aesthetically pleasing. Since then, their

firm, DPZ, has become much more heavily involved in urban planning.

Seaside, DPZ's eighty-acre (32 hectares) resort town on the Florida Panhandle, took ten years to build its hundred different houses and buildings, including a fire station, restaurant pavilion, and town hall (fig. 25.36). It is one of the new "old" towns created as part of the New Urbanist movement. The tenets of the movement include creating pedestrian-oriented places organized around public open spaces—the antithesis of the postwar auto-oriented suburb. Residents are only a few minutes' walk to any part of the development. Ultimately, New Urbanists aim to design cohesive, environmentally sensitive places that look very much like traditional towns or big-city neighborhoods.

DPZ's experience in laying out Seaside, a prime example of a New Urbanist development, offers an idea of the opportunities that New Urbanism provides architects. Each element of the development is seen as a part of the whole, and architects are able to participate in town planning at large. They design not only the houses, but the streets, the blocks, the park—the whole community. In the most famous of the New Urbanist towns, The Walt Disney Company's Celebration, Florida (fig. 25.37), regulations specified window size, curtain color, and placement of trees in the front yard. Celebration was opened to residents in 1996 and contains some of the most sought-after residential property in central Florida. Its residents are the most affluent and educated of the region. Forgoing the cul-de-sacs of many suburban developments, Celebration, like Seaside, brings back the grids that organize prototypical small towns as well as major urban centers. Located next to Walt Disney World Resort, Celebration provides a case study of the role of New Urbanism in relation not only to city planning, but also corporate relations. Faced with an excess of land, The Walt Disney Company created Celebration as a planning experiment. The city featured



25.37 Celebration, Florida, 1996.

attractive homes; a good school, and a retail district within walking distance. The city was eligible for public money to make major improvements to the infrastructure of the region, which helped traffic flow in and around Disney's amusement parks.

Despite the attractiveness of Celebration to corporate and private interests in Florida, the New Urbanists' claims that the form of the gridded small town fosters cohesive communities have been contested. Several studies of Celebration showed that, while porches and well-traveled sidewalks foster a degree of community spirit, relationships tended to be formed over affiliations; that is, involvement in groups such as schools or other organizations based on shared interests or identity. These affiliations tended to exist independently of geographic proximity. Likewise, the presence of a downtown was not enough to create a centrally focused city. In Celebration, the high cost of buying property often meant that residents had less disposable income than they needed to be able to shop in the downtown boutiques and restaurants. Researchers found that residents felt that the city's commercial services were more directed to visitors than to local people. Nonetheless, the city's residents have formed a civic bond as participants in a collective experiment. This bond may differ from old-fashioned town pride but has a similar effect.

The role of Disney as a corporate sponsor, designer, and majority owner of the town has introduced problems in the New Urbanist agenda, particularly the contradictory demographic influences exerted by Disney in the region as a whole. While sponsoring the socially oriented Celebration, Disney was recruiting workers from Mexico

and Puerto Rico who were not paid enough to live in the city. The influx of a low-paid and underemployed community aggravated the sort of urban problems New Urbanism sought to avoid. As seen in the case of Pruitt-Igoe (see fig. 25.1), form alone is not enough to transform urban life. Another tendency of New Urbanism that disturbs its critics is that many of its projects do not provide for existing buildings in their "new neighborhoods." Old buildings found on the sites of the new "community of neighborhoods" are tagged to be removed or razed. The objection to this is not that the new neighborhoods—with their planned roads, parks, and houses—are not attractive, but that they do not have a true history or an urban vibrancy, and that their lack of roots is disguised by a thin simulation of nostalgia and history. Though plans to fabricate a fictional history for Celebration were never executed, critics have claimed that New Urbanist planning often includes a troubling lack of physical or even intellectual mechanisms to allow for the kind of unexpected change that creates deep and individual urban histories.

### Koolhaas and the OMA

An architect, urbanist, and theorist who has made the unexpected a central tenet of his practice on any scale (his most recent catalogue raisonné is called SMLXL) is **Rem Koolhaas** (b. 1944). Working in the deconstructionist tradition of Postmodernism, Koolhaas collaborated with Zaha Hadid (see fig. 25.26) in 1978 on the design of the Dutch parliament building, The Hague, in his native Holland. The Netherlands Dance Theater (fig. 25.38) is an example of Koolhaas's Postmodern vocabulary, from the huge,

semiabstract mural topping the main structure, to the mix of reinforced concrete, glass, metal, and masonry for the walls of its variously formed parts. The interior of the concert hall is constructed and detailed with aluminum, stucco, marble, and gold foil. The heterogeneous and often industrial materials serve as a metaphor for Koolhaas's conception that architecture is multipurpose. The theater caters to the multiple needs of urban life: municipal, cultural, economic, and architectural. In addition to the auditorium, the structure houses studios, offices, a sauna, a swimming pool, massage rooms, showers, and a restaurant. The entire building establishes relationships with an existing concert hall, parking garage, civic buildings, and a church square.

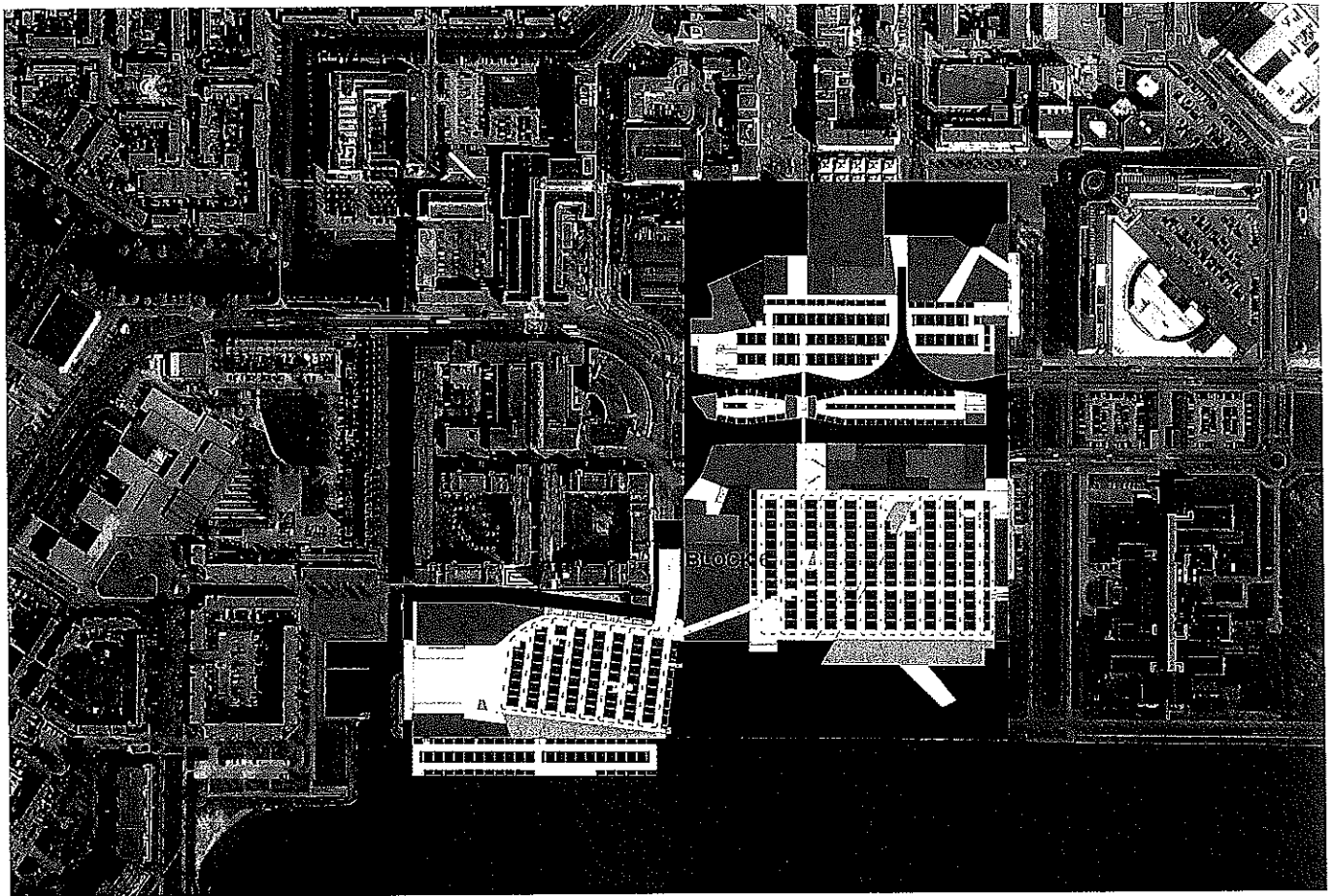
Koolhaas's concern with the context of architecture, demonstrated in the theater, lies at the center of his expansive studies of urban development. These studies have taken the form of several volumes, beginning with 1978's *Delirious New York*. This took Manhattan as "the twentieth century's Rosetta Stone" and included analyses of major developing centers such as Lagos, Nigeria and the Pearly River Delta, China. Like Venturi and Scott Brown, Koolhaas includes within the realm of architecture all manner of architectural, visual, urban, and popular culture. His studies give great weight to subjects as apparently different as Roman city planning and twenty-first-century shopping. Also like Venturi and Scott Brown, Koolhaas rejects the tabula rasa planning of either Le Corbusier or the New

Urbanists. The solutions provided by Koolhaas's Office of Metropolitan Architecture (OMA) often revolve around "Megastructures"—centralized collections of multiuse spaces that concentrate all manner of civic activity within a single structure. Though similar in scale to the monumental projects of modernist city planning, these megastructures are constructed to respond to local metropolitan issues. The 1993 Euralille project in Lille, France, typifies the urbanistic flexibility that OMA practices. Lille is a hub for the high-speed train (TGV) as well as the site for the entrance to the Channel Tunnel connecting Great Britain to the continent. The location experiences one of the greatest volumes of traffic in Europe. OMA faced the challenge of creating an interface between the influx of visitors and the existing city. Their solution consists of a network of several huge structures that serve as monumental signposts and shelter for points of personal, geographical, economic, and artistic exchange, called "nodes" in OMA's terminology, that exist in Lille. The railway station features sheet glass walls that display the TGV, highlighting technology and transportation as the source of Lille's current character. This is an architecture that strives to be responsive to a society in flux.

Koolhaas's understanding of urbanism as "the staging of uncertainty" lies at the heart of OMA's design for the city center of Almere in the Netherlands. Almere, an enclave along the main artery from Amsterdam to its major airport, is the fastest-growing Dutch city. It has a number of



25.38 Rem Koolhaas, The Netherlands Dance Theater, the Hague, the Netherlands, 1987.



25.39 Rem Koolhaas, Dutchtown, City center plan for Almere, the Netherlands.

significant buildings, but overall has little character. With considerable foresight, Almere had been developed in four equal sections, with a fifth of the same size left relatively undeveloped. In this zone, OMA was asked to create a city center that would serve as a public destination and “logo” for the metropolis. Though conceived in commercial terms and with the requirement that it be attractive to investors, the downtown was also designed to give Almere an identity distinct from that of being a residential community for people who work in Amsterdam.

OMA’s strategy of urban design has been to create a center that contains a dense population and offers a diversity of functions and activities. The center joins municipal, commercial, and entertainment facilities with large-scale residences, all of which are readily accessible by automobile. In addition, the firm believes that the “position of the center must be visible and palpable throughout the city.” In many ways, these strategies are the lessons learned in New York. The result, however, looks nothing like Manhattan. The plans (fig. 25.39) detail a multilevel megastructure that contains veins for housing, retail areas, municipal purposes, offices, and parking spaces. There are levels and passages above and below ground. In addition to concentrating a variety of activities into several locations, OMA has left a considerable portion of the fifth zone open for future development.

### Wodiczko and New York’s “Tribute in Light”

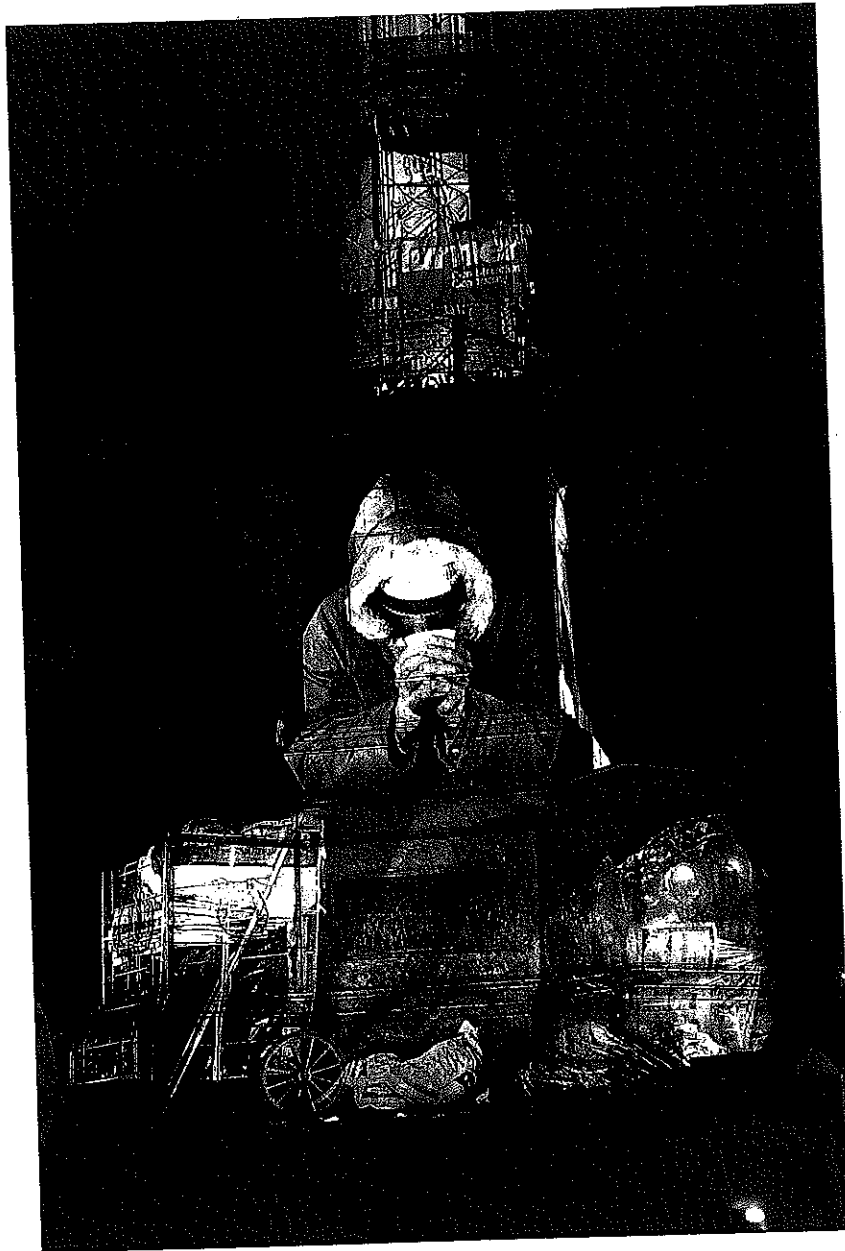
Koolhaas was awarded the prestigious Pritzger Prize for architecture in 2000. He was praised for redefining the terms by which architects consider their discipline. In his acceptance speech, Koolhaas recommended Peter Eisenman for the prize on the same grounds. Bringing more of the context of building into the understanding of architecture has also been the project of visual artist **Krzysztof Wodiczko** (b. 1943). Wodiczko creates art that intrudes upon the network of elements that he has determined make up architecture, of which physical buildings are but one. Architecture has often been as much about displacing resources as placing structures. Wodiczko’s *Homeless Projection* of 1987 (fig. 25.40) consists of photographs of people displaced by the processes of urban development—in this case in Boston—which he projects onto prominent buildings. The socially invisible become all but inescapable. Wodiczko forces people into the discourse of architecture by figuratively making buildings with them. Rather than presuming homelessness to be a problem in society that can be solved within the existing system, Wodiczko’s projections posit it is a fundamental part of society, as necessary to the shape of urban life as the investors and institutions that finance skyscrapers. In *Poliscar* (1991), the artist interviewed people living on the streets and created vehicles designed to meet their needs for shelter,

storage, protection, and comfort. The vehicles were meant to function within the existing system, again making the invisible visible. Wodiczko was not seeking to change the behavior or even location of those people living on the streets, but rather to change the way homelessness is perceived and discussed by society.

Wodiczko's architectural intrusions are pragmatic at the micro level while aiming at conceptual impact on a macro level. Like the element of utopian thinking that runs through Postmodern architecture from Venturi to Koolhaas, *Homeless Projection* and *Poliscar* presume that close investigation of the city, coupled with a willingness to engage with what one finds there, will provide answers for improving urban life. Whether this means applying the lessons of advertising to homebuilding or transferring New York's urban planning strategies to the Netherlands, the Postmodern sense of progress aims at a responsiveness and flexibility that contrast with modernist appeals to transcendent universals.

At its most challenging, beautiful, and even efficient, Postmodern architecture has never escaped the criticism that it often fails to cohere. In many cases this is its strength. To many, however, architecture is an arena in which the uncertainties of the present should be set aside in favor of stability. In September 2001, the emotional force with which global society clung to universal forms was made tragically clear. The attack on the World Trade Center in New York City demonstrated the continued ideological force of the International Style as an icon of Western power. America had created a logo that was recognizable worldwide. What became clear after the destruction of the towers was the resonance that the simple forms, designed by Minoru Yamasaki in 1972, had in the national and international psyche. As modern art from David to Maya Lin has shown, geometry and, of course, absence are profound signifiers.

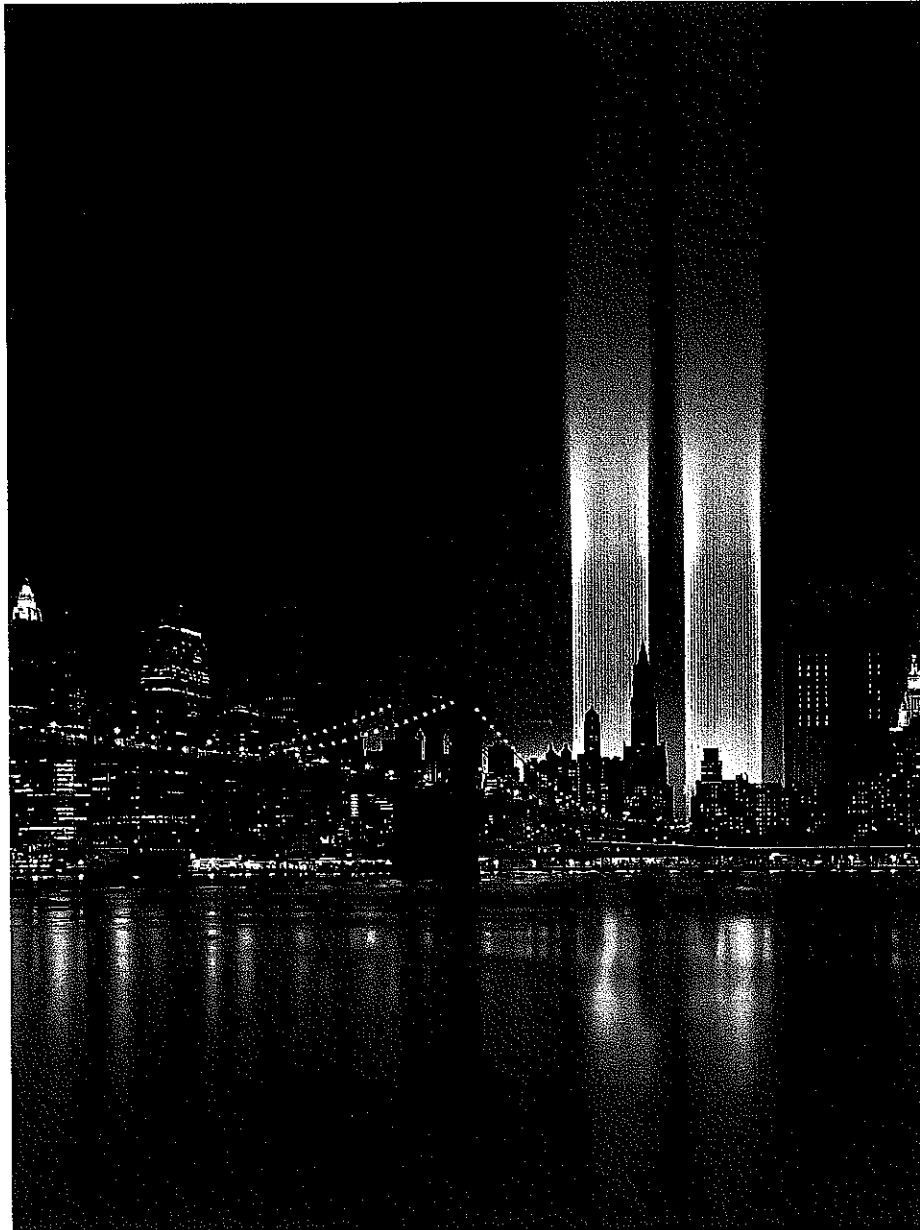
For thirty-four nights, from March 11 to April 13, 2002, an architecture of light rose up from the site of



**25.40** Krzysztof Wodiczko, *Homeless Projection: The Soldiers and Sailors Civil War Memorial*, December 1987. Public projection. The Common, Boston.

the World Trade Center, replicating the geometry of the two modernist towers in one of the most effective monuments since Lin's Vietnam Memorial (see fig. 24.62). Several artists, architects, and engineers came up with the idea for the towers of light as they witnessed the tragedy of September 11. Julian LaVerdiere, Paul Myoda, John Bennett, Gustavo Bonevardi, Paul Marantz, and Richard Nash Gould were brought together to realize the project, titled *Tribute in Light*. The aim of the project was direct attention away from the form of the buildings to the lives of those lost in them. The structure consisted of forty-four 7000-watt xenon light bulbs installed on a fifty-square-foot (4.64 m<sup>2</sup>) base adjacent to the excavation site. The lights projected almost a mile into the sky, creating the effect of a monumental memorial candle. The result could be seen by people over the entire metropolitan area, thus bringing together the region in a communal experience to mourn and gain strength through remembrance. As one of the architects explained, the lights by

their visual presence and material absence “reconstruct[ed] the void as opposed to ... the buildings.” Rising above the chaotic expressions of grief that sprang up throughout the city—walls of photographs, letters, testimonies, mementos, gifts, and flowers laid on street corners, parks, and firehouses—the *Tribute in Light* (fig. 25.41) focused the emotional response of the city into two centralized iconic forms. The work drew strength by combining the general symbolic iconography of the skyscraper with the specific meaning of the World Trade Center. As Myoda remarked, “It is an irony, a kind of painful irony, that we looked at the towers the same way the terrorists apparently looked at them: as a symbol of communication, strength, and power.” Such clarity and force is a testimony to the lasting quality of modernist monuments and their responsiveness, if not to the diversity among the global population, then to a certain sense that, just as we confront flux and change, we also share some common ground that is stable and unchanging.



**25.41** Julian LaVerdiere and Paul Myoda, *Tribute in Light* over the Brooklyn Bridge, from the portfolio *Tribute in Light: Artists' Renderings*, 2001–02. Portfolio of twelve c-prints, matted in an archival box, 24" × 20", edition of 500 on behalf of the Tribute in Light Initiative produced by Creative Time.