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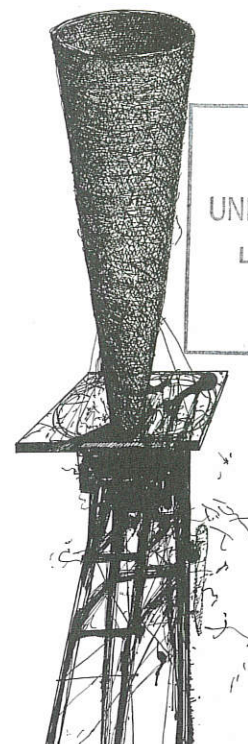
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## Vessels and Fields

Wellington Reiter

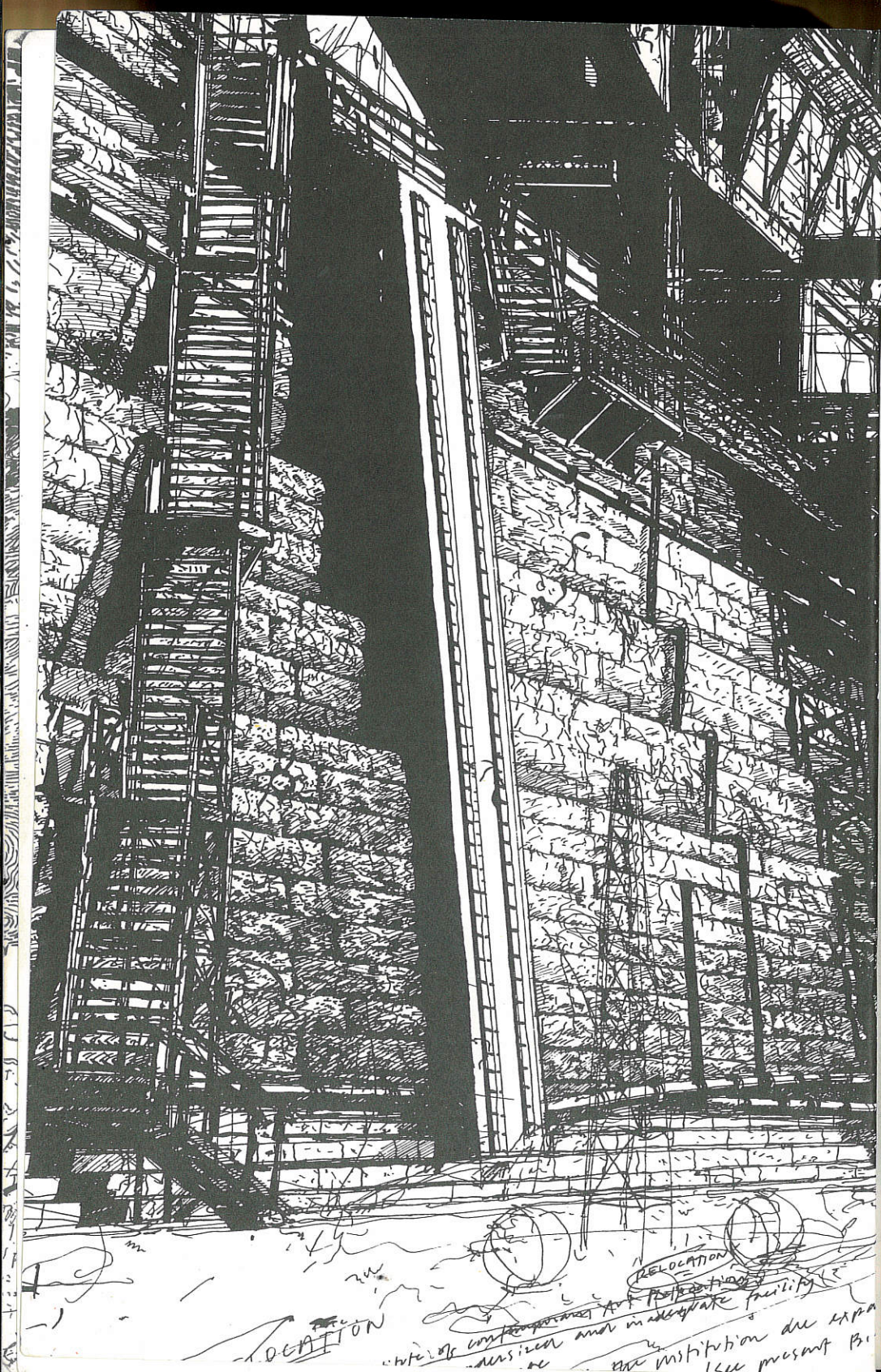


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Foreword by Patricia Phillips

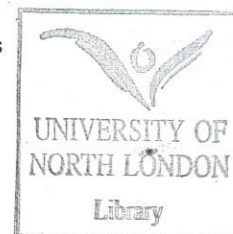
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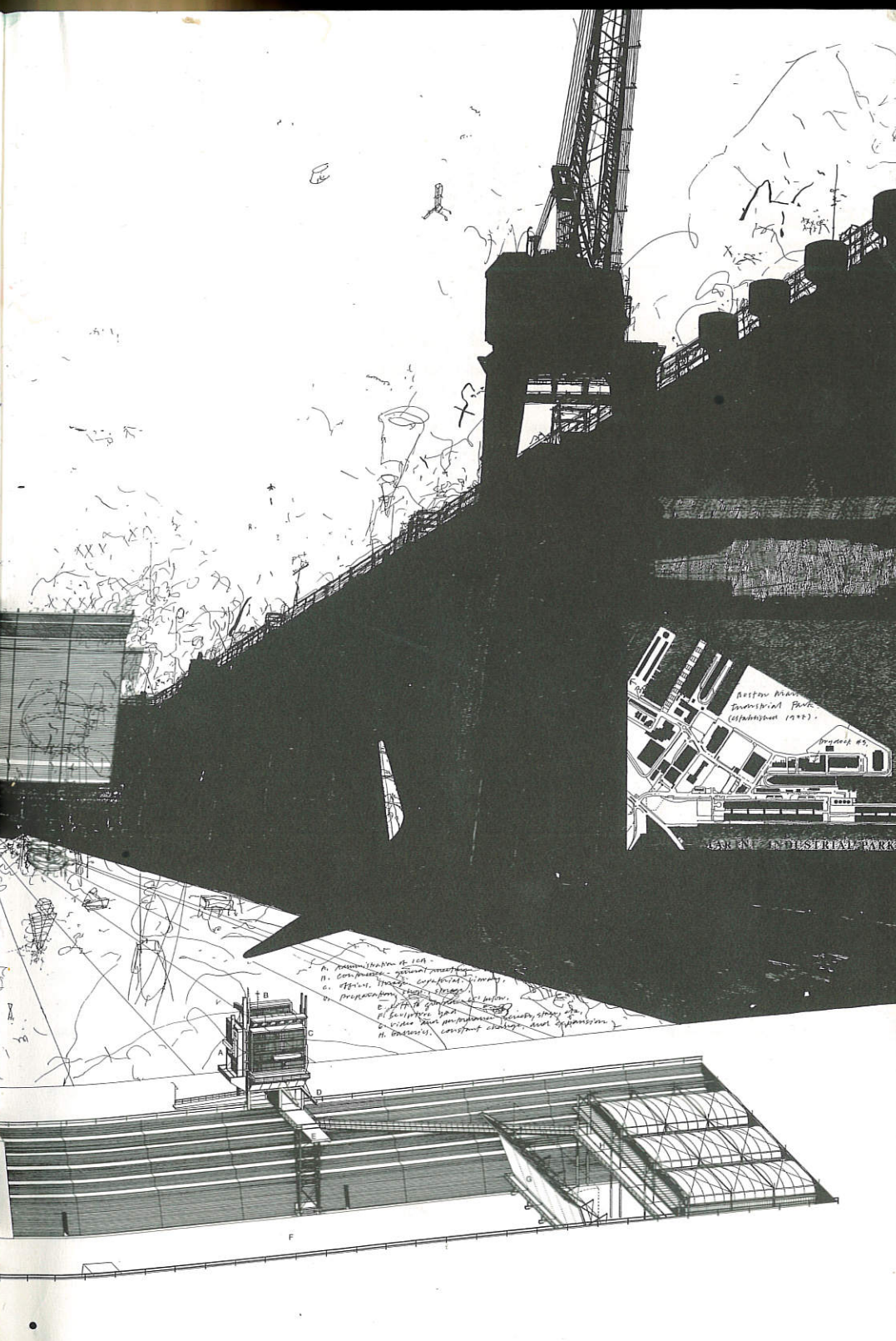
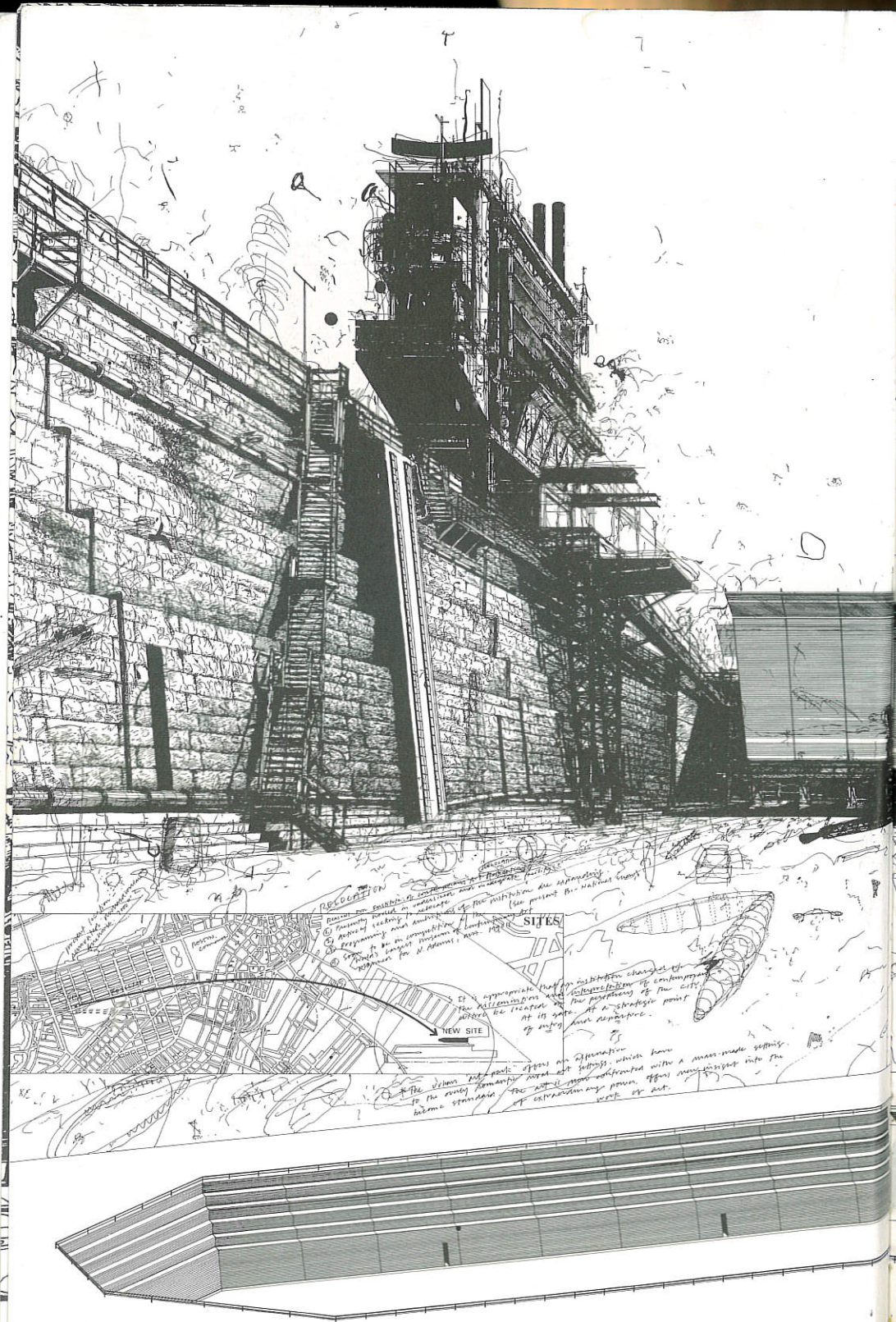


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## Foreword

Patricia Phillips

Architecture accommodates many different ways to negotiate meaning. Unquestionably, a confirmed strategy to organize ideas is by building type. Whether considering theaters, warehouses, monuments, libraries, or prisons, typological dimensions unite history with the future, and with different cultures and geographies. The history of the program and purpose of buildings is a dynamic that drives inquiry and analysis. Changes in function of buildings are vividly projected in plan, form, and site, indicating or exposing the social, economic, technological, and contextual forces that insistently shape the built environment.

For Wellington Reiter, typologies offer connective tissue between imagined or forgotten pasts and a shifting present and future, as well as supply metaphors for the urban condition. Always negotiating fantastic fictional accounts with incisive observations, his propositions disclose the restless, transitive character of all cities. If particular structures and spaces offer metaphors for the city, the painstaking excavation of meaning is always an orchestration of exactitude and exigency. This mediation of intent and fortuity is represented in a body of exquisitely restless drawings that both procure and obscure evidence.

*Vessels and Fields* is an idiosyncratic epic of the modern city. Contexts and conditions are established; characters and stories unfold, intersect, and overlap, creating an atmosphere from which a vivid — if sometimes disturbing — depiction of the city emerges. From imponderables and instabilities a brilliant image of reality congeals. Reiter deploys a

syntax of objects and apparatus to interrogate and animate sites. Vessels, arks, bridges, gates, monuments, and other instruments give presence to the overlooked conditions. Through a process of aggressive visualization, the past and present of sites are invoked.

For many architects, drawing is the genesis of building. Through a succession of spontaneous sketches and developed diagrams, the confounding challenges of design and construction are overcome. In contrast to this graphic progression toward refinement and resolution, Reiter draws to complicate and question. If not entirely estranged from a will to make or build, his drawings beckon us back to more essential questions about why we build, about how cities have come to look and feel the way that they do. Reiter cites Piranesi's drawings of Rome; Hugh Ferriss's and Lebbeus Woods's works also come to mind. In a similar way, Reiter's drawings possess a poignant physicality that often seems more explicit and tangible than the city itself. Texts can also project this viscerality. In spite of ideas of withholding and inaccessibility that its title suggests, Italo Calvino's *Invisible Cities* has become a requisite manual for architects, providing exquisite physical evidence of city experiences.

Even when uncompromisingly spare, Reiter's drawings are never unobtrusive passages. Always concisely composed and intricately constructed, the underlying logic is perpetually threatened by an urgency of notations. The drawings frequently possess a vertiginous sense of movement, a reeling velocity, and an unstable sensation of a world of

wild, unwieldy molecular activity. We are often transported high above or cast startlingly below the sites. Offering inconceivable simultaneous points of view, these multiple trajectories are the lineaments of new provocative perspectives. We are challenged and moved by the intensity and generosity of these sensational, often disquieting spectacles. Several projects, in particular, represent the span of inquiry between the compressed, often intimate containment of the vessel and the open, discursive play of the undifferentiated field. Whether viewed through a microscopic or wide-angle lens, Reiter's architectural projects revel in the rich prospects of associative thinking.

It is through hypothetical propositions that we begin to identify and encounter the inestimable forces and human choices that inscribe the character of contemporary cities. It is difficult to imagine a more claustrophobic or apocalyptic space than the abandoned silo of an Atlas missile. Scattered throughout New York State and other areas, these sunken silos are as deep as 17-story buildings. They are silent, sinister residuals of a cold war of global estrangement and aggressive armament. The chapter *Vessel of Destruction* reveals and refracts these menacing crypts. Reiter's proposal excavates a surrounding volume of earth to expose the entire chamber of the underground structure. A paradox occurs as the deeply embedded, subterranean vault is neutralized and isolated. Rather than the site of aggressive potential, the vessel has become an empty cavity of a suspended program. A stark contradiction of repressed verticality, the silo — the once buried,

inaccessible tomb — becomes a triumphant, if subversive, tower. The extreme characteristics and constricted space of the typology are accentuated by the thickly inscribed surfaces. As if layered in graffiti, the walls of the silo and surrounding cylinder are repositories for the volatile histories of destructive intent and diffident evacuation. Like the nucleus of a cell, the vessel contains and imprints multiple projections of history and imminence. Reiter's other vessels of light, fear, and time also offer darkly poetic, intricate spaces of contemplation.

*Islands of Disregard* embraces an immense field. As in so many of Reiter's projects, there is the perpetual tension of exposure and eclipse. Here, he renders the obvious yet overlooked. Prior to the recent phenomenon of historicizing and publicizing urban harbors and waterfronts (Baltimore's Inner Harbor and New York's South Street Seaport, for example), many cities have had ambivalent relationships with the water. For instance, long seen in the most banal and pragmatic way, the shoreline of New York's East River was once a procession of unpleasant slaughterhouses, unkempt industries, and other misfit operations.

*Islands of Disregard* uses the vast island landscape of Boston Harbor as both subject and metaphor. Islands are complex, contradictory sites. They concurrently function as object and context, figure and ground, always embodying the contrasting conceptual dimensions of vessels and fields. Providing retreats for the wealthy, havens for the outcast, or exile for the unwanted, island cultures mark the extremities of the city, of lives lived opportunistically

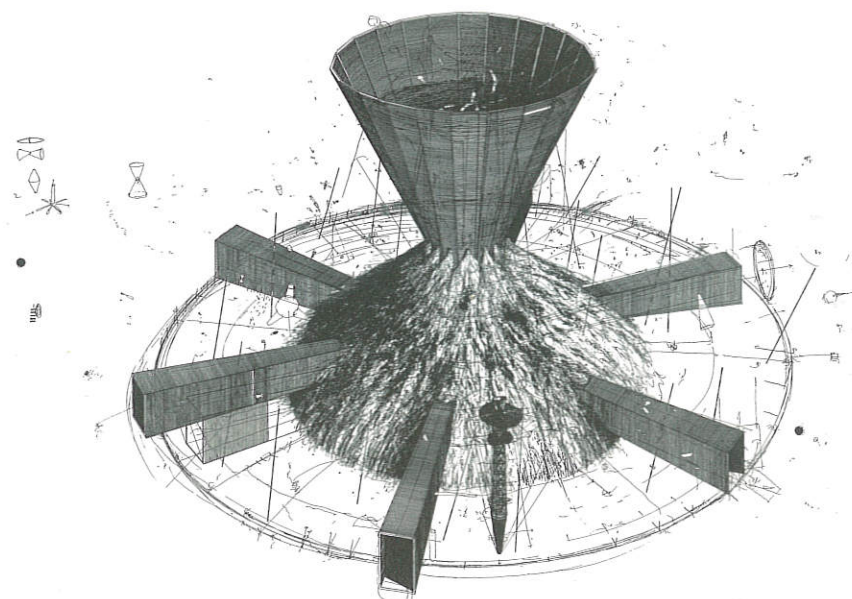


or precariously on the edge. In this project, Reiter looks at the great sprawl of little islands and constructs a skein of associations and impressions. Researching the history of each island, he discovered that nearly all, at one time, had been used for defense or fortification. At other times many of the islands were homes for prisons, pleasure grounds, quarantine hospitals, dumps, and sewage treatment facilities. They were largely repositories for all that the citizens of Boston rejected, loathed, or feared. In another of Reiter's projects, an immense installation at the Massachusetts College of Art, a scale model of the entire bay included every island amended with props and iconic references to past and future uses. Like other waterfronts in the late 20th century, the bay and its islands now promise conspicuous opportunities and privileges. Reiter mixes historical research and inventive speculation to offer new perspectives on mercurial urban dynamics.

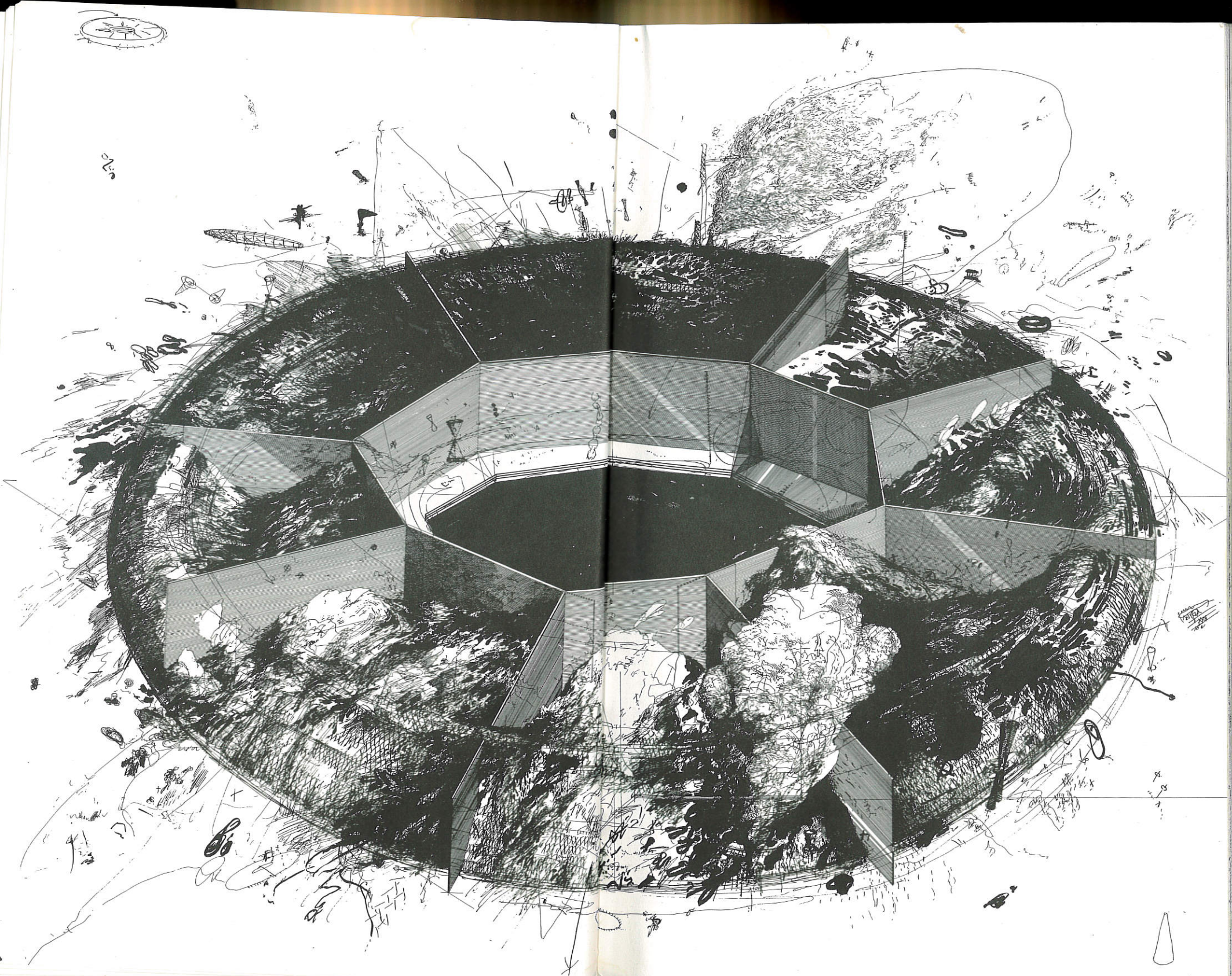
The typologies that Reiter continually renews and revises exploit ideas of access and obstruction. Fascinated by the history of the fortified city, he exposes how modern cities preordain perception and passage. The city as vessel is Reiter's most complex and perplexing metaphor. He explores the ves-

sel as a container with limited capacity. Mapping the transit of desire and development, what occurs when cities run out of space? How do cities invariably manage the thickening and thinning, the flourishing and foundering, of different areas? Citing the island of Manhattan as its case study, *Visible Cities* examines how circumscribed areas restrict and ultimately jettison people, activities, and projects to more marginal sites. Integrating investigative research and resourceful imagination, Reiter speculates on the many ways that New York City's four outer boroughs have become receptacles for Manhattan's unimportant, less desirable, or unwieldy components. Like *Islands of Disregard*, this mythological project exposes the currency and exchange of ideas and desire between cities and their "satellites."

Constructing his own mythology and iconography of the city, Reiter manipulates a lexicon of signs and symbols that encourages active, collaborative readers of urban texts. His synthetic strategies generate a challenging, productive legibility that invites our partnership in the optical, spatial, and intellectual revision of the built environment.









## Introduction

Wellington Reiter

This collection of images was drawn, for the most part, from a lecture titled "The Necessity of Fiction in Architecture" (MIT, 1994). In essence, the talk buttressed the role of speculation within the discipline and the need for an operative mythology for the city. Rather than recount the arguments of that appeal, this visual text offers subplots that link the various works from that lecture in ways that could only be discerned through graphic comparison. The result is neither a chronological record of development nor an explanation of the projects, nor even an accurate portrayal of the works in question. Instead, several formal and metaphoric consistencies are revealed and compounded.

It was never intended that this volume should be bound by a premeditated theme. Instead, it was hoped that the stream of images would produce a logic that was larger than a case-by-case reading. After removing from consideration program-driven commissions and completely abstract works, the remaining projects formed a surprisingly consistent strain with two common threads: 1) the vessel as an ideal, and 2) the depiction of space as an active, abstract field. Many of the examples present both of these options in a stark figure/ground arrangement — in short, the re-presentation of Noah's Ark on a turbulent sea.

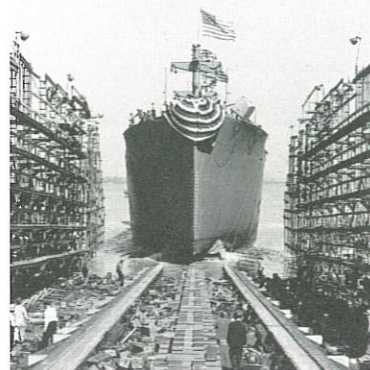
The parable of Noah is an apt comparison in that

it not only demonstrates the importance of myth-making in the creation of architecture, but it also offers the most definitive example of a vessel adrift in an undifferentiated field. The Ark is ship/fortress/island/sarcophagus/building/monument all in one — themes that capture the selected projects in this volume. Of course, others have also made the myth of Noah a touchstone in their work, the best-known example being Hans Hollien's photo montage, *Aircraft Carrier in an Austrian Wheatfield* (1966), now in the collection of the Museum of Modern Art. The juxtaposition of the of the contemporary aircraft carrier — essentially a man-made continent — and the broad expanse of agriculture suggests that man's mastery over this once flooded planet now requires the landscape (God?) as measure. For better or worse, technology now exceeds the imagination of the ancients, particularly when propelled by the force of military desire.

But the second theme of Hollien's collage is more cautionary and hints at the folly, obsolescence, and disintegration of even man's most stalwart constructions. Appropriately, many of the investigations to follow concern themselves with once formidable military installations — disused missile silos, bunker-filled islands, historic battlefields, and even decommissioned aircraft carriers. In most cases, the proposals do not suggest the refurbishment or reprogramming

of these structures but instead promote their steady decay, the Atlas missile project being a prime example. All architecture carries the germ of the defensive and exclusionary, but it is through the fortress that we may observe construction in its most boastful and ultimately most pathetic state.

As J. B. Jackson has said of this process of decline, "there has to be that interval of neglect, there has to be discontinuity; it is religiously and artistically essential . . . ruins provide the incentive for restoration, and for a return to origins" (Jackson, *The Necessity for Ruins and Other Topics* [Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1980], 102). Echoing a sense of the eternal when confronted with an example of architecture's demise, Paul Virilio said, of the abandoned concrete bunkers of



World War II arrayed along the Normandy coast, "A complete series of cultural memories came to mind: the Egyptian mastabas, the Etruscan tombs, the Aztec structures . . . as if this piece of artillery fortification could be identified as a funeral ceremony, as if the [Third Reich] could manage only the organization of a religious space" (Virilio, *Bunker Archaeology* [New

York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1994], 11). Along with the monument, it is the fortress that seeks to push back the advance of history and time. Because the motive of military architecture is so transparent, its eventual disintegration is abundantly available as a measure of human frailty, further linking it to the cult of monuments.

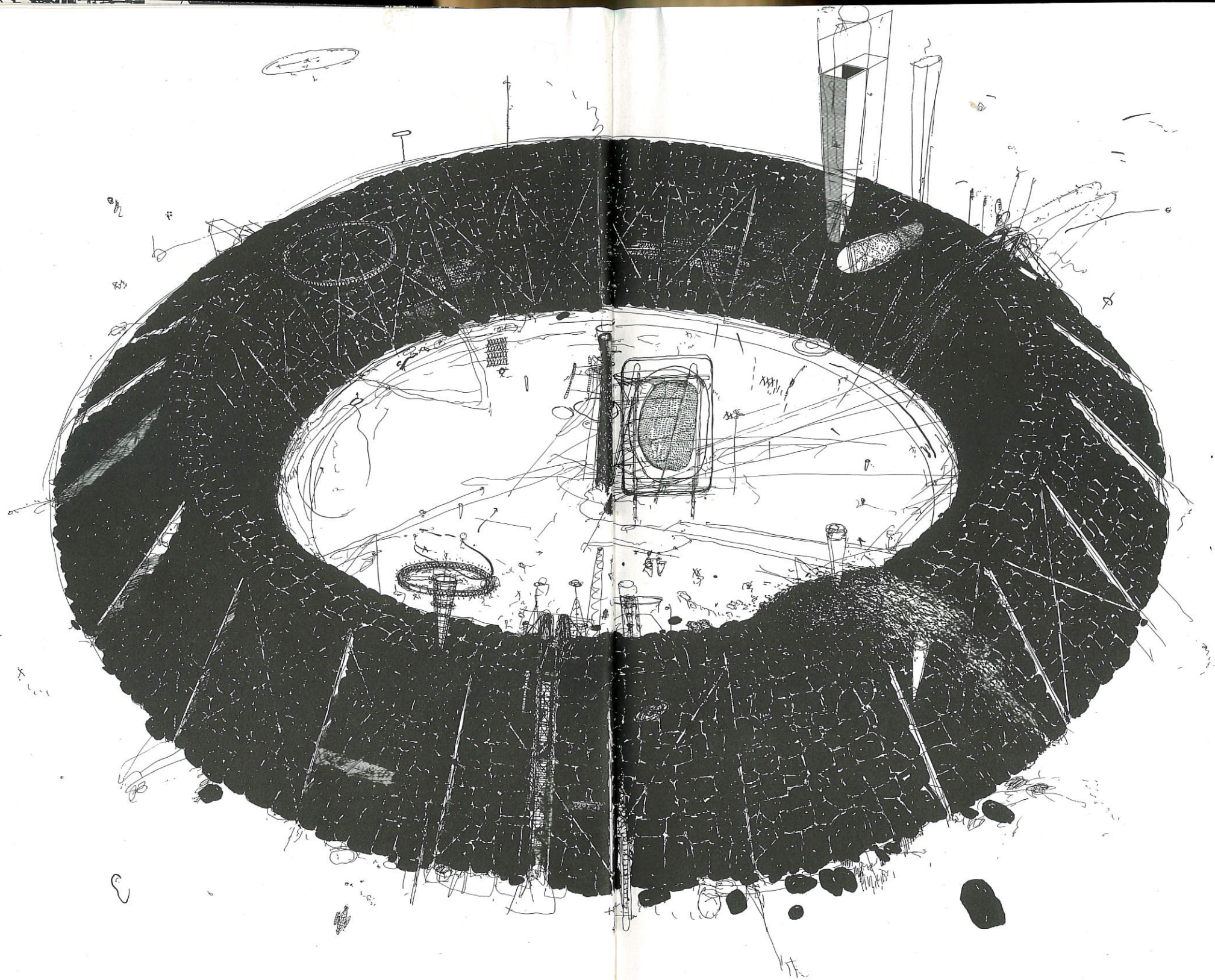
The images that follow support the idea of architecture as a medium for speculation. However, like a

transoceanic tanker (or aircraft carrier) whose movement must be cautiously anticipated miles in advance, buildings seem to be equally awkward as critical vehicles: their turning radius is simply too wide and their material presence makes precarious any attempt to float them alongside swifter graphic media forms. Therefore, believing that much of architecture and urban

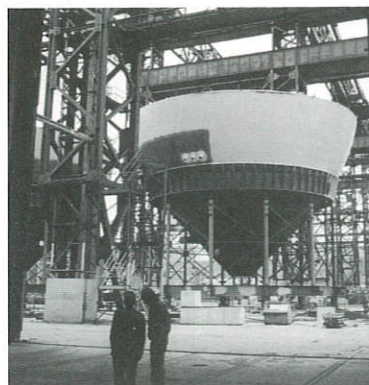
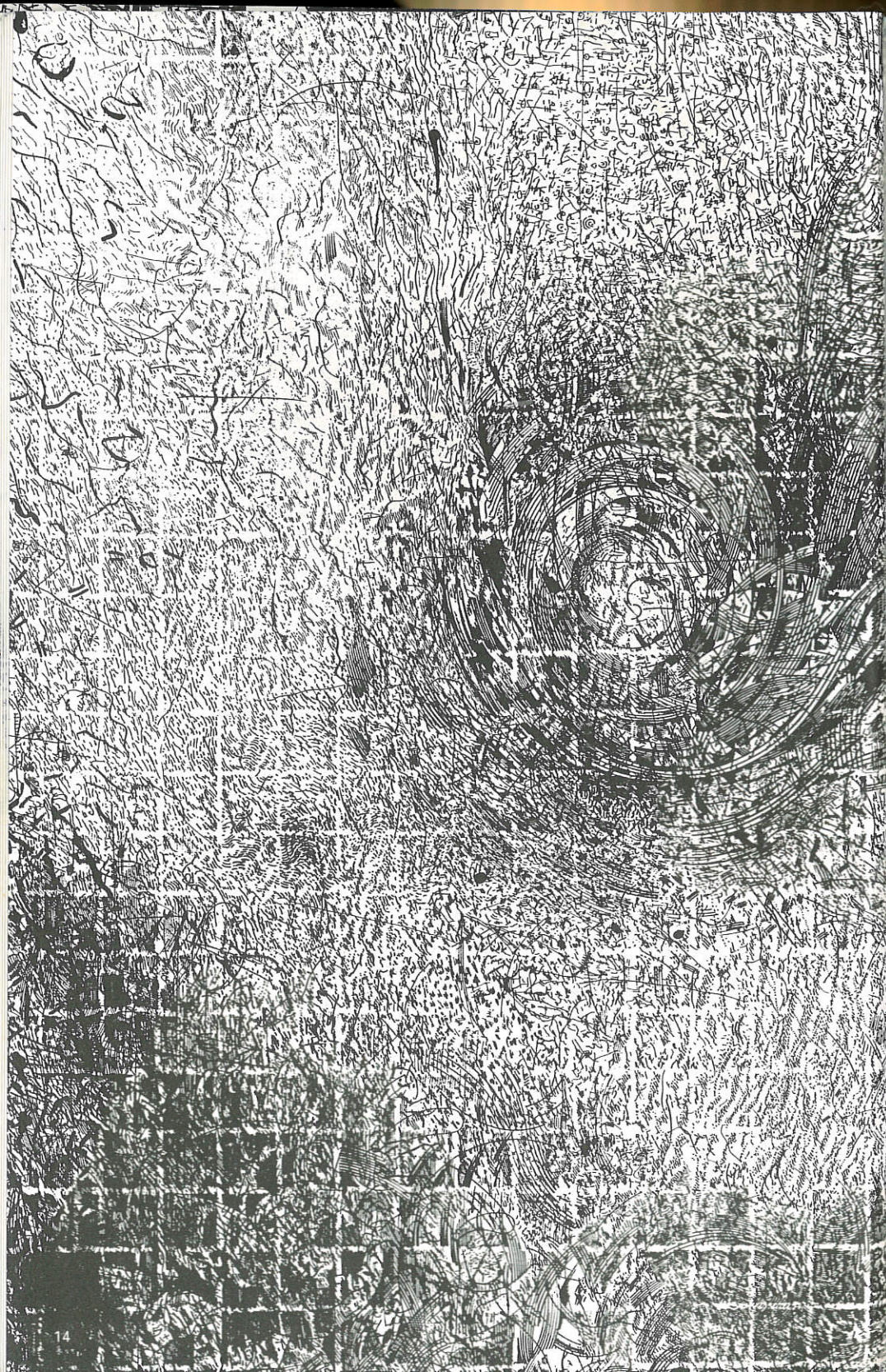
design exceeds construction, this document is part of a tradition of proposing alternative pasts and futures for the discipline and especially for the city. It is my fervent belief that such hypothesizing can influence our reception of real sites and remains an essential component of architectural practice.

Previous page: A proposal to move the Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston to a location at a point of entry to the city. The availability of an abandoned dry dock offers the possibility of presenting the museum as a filter throughout which new images, ideas, and objects are delivered to the city. Dry dock #3 in South Boston is a space of Piranesian scope — 1200 feet in length and 70 feet deep — composed of solid granite blocks. The template of the aircraft carrier is employed in the distribution of the various programmatic elements of the ICA. With the control tower placed on the edge of the void, the director and his curatorial staff oversee the arrival and departure of works to be displayed in the inverted hull.









### Vessels

vessel of destruction

vessel of time

vessel of light

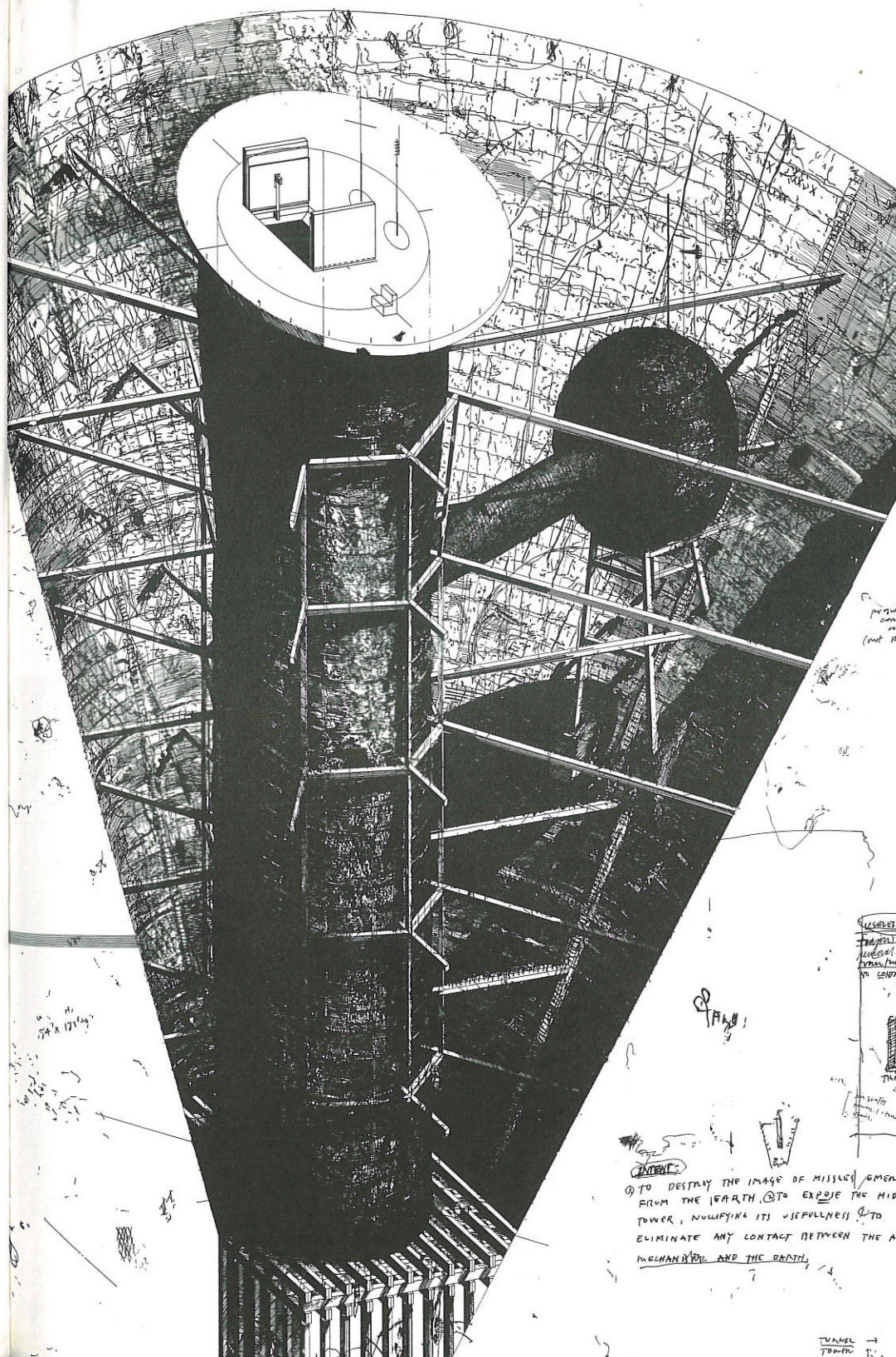
vessel of memory





title: **vessel of destruction**  
location: upstate New York  
dimensions: depth 170', width 56'

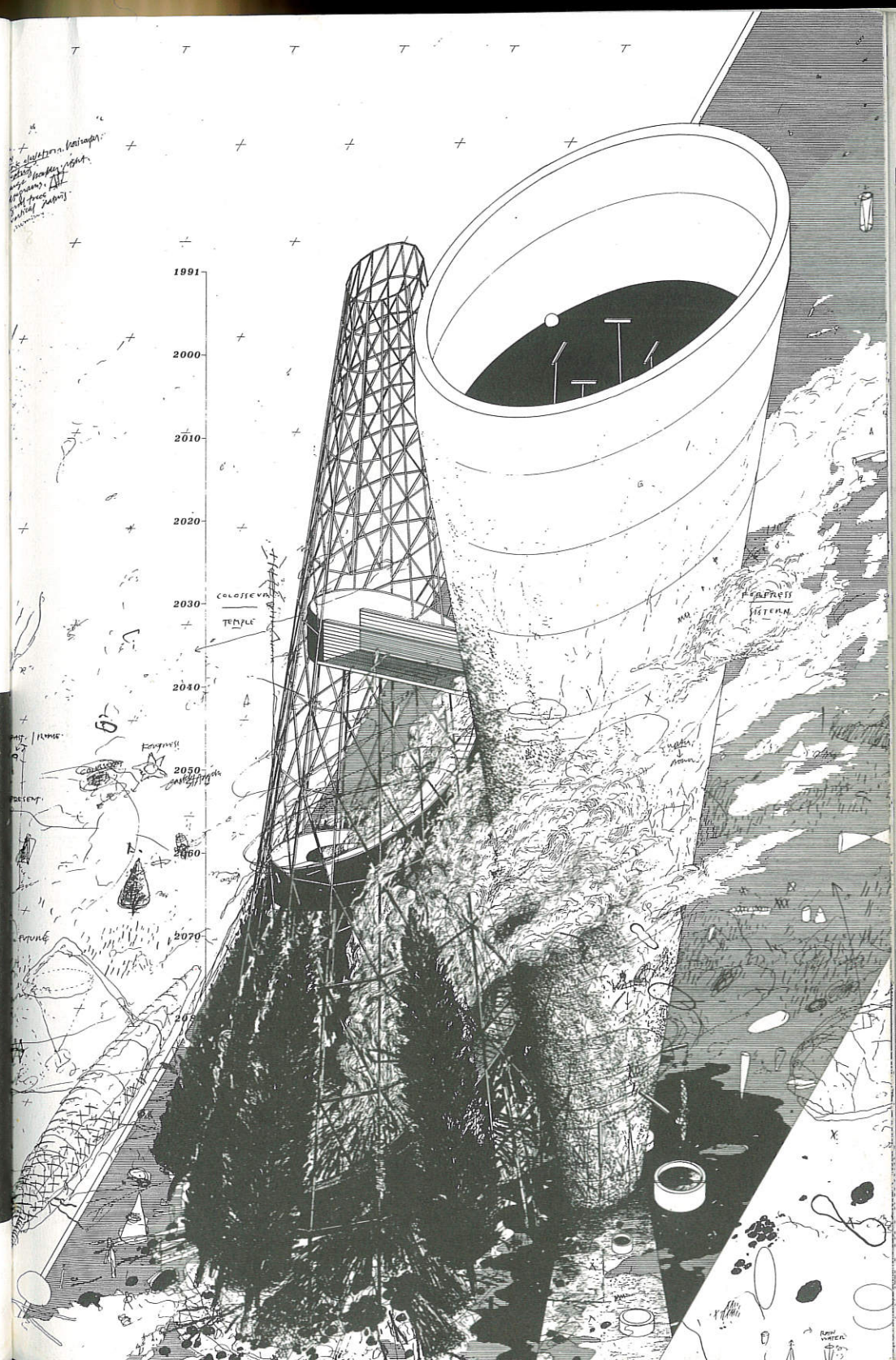
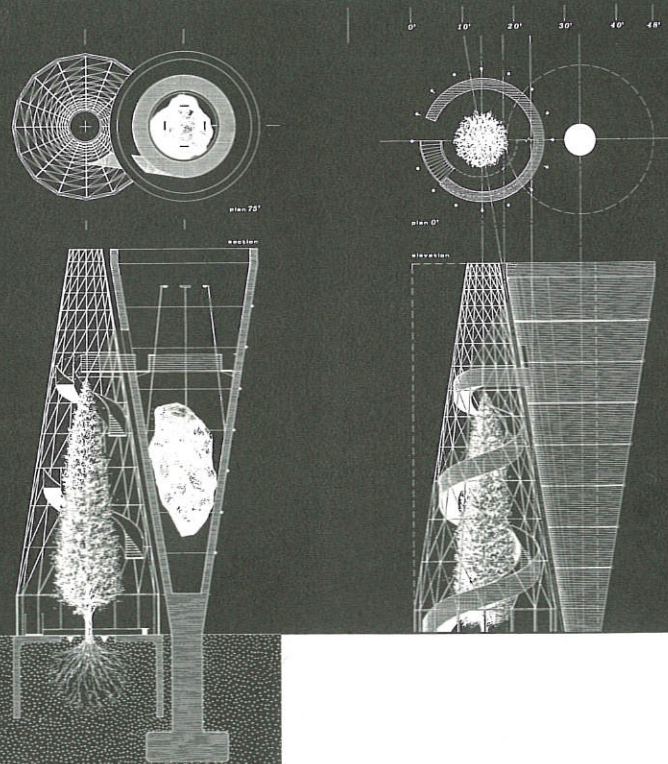
Remnants of the Cold War, dozens of defunct Atlas missile silos remain buried deep below the terrain of the United States. Through careful excavation, it is proposed that they be exposed to view. Direct contact between the earth and these massive cylinders is to be removed, resulting in concrete islands suspended in space. The upward trajectory of missiles and contemporary engineering is supplanted by the steady inertia of global politics, gravity, and material fatigue. The result is an unintentional monument par excellence.



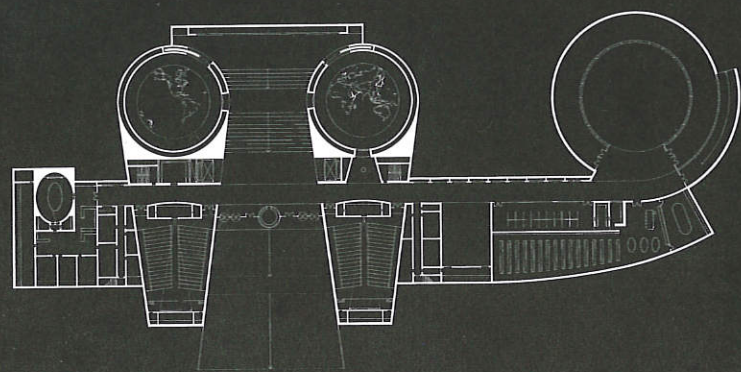


title: **vessel of time**  
 location: Denver, Colorado  
 dimensions: each cone: depth 75', max. width 25'

Two cones, two timepieces. The first supports the upward growth of a single tree to measure time on a generational basis and is visually accessible through a transparent frame. The second marks the passage of time according to the earthward slippage of a large boulder against an opaque concrete urn, as the boulder's edges are slowly eroded. As the project descends into ruin, the monument reverts to a prehistoric mode, the first vessel becoming the site of fire and warmth, and the second becoming a cistern for capturing now precious water.

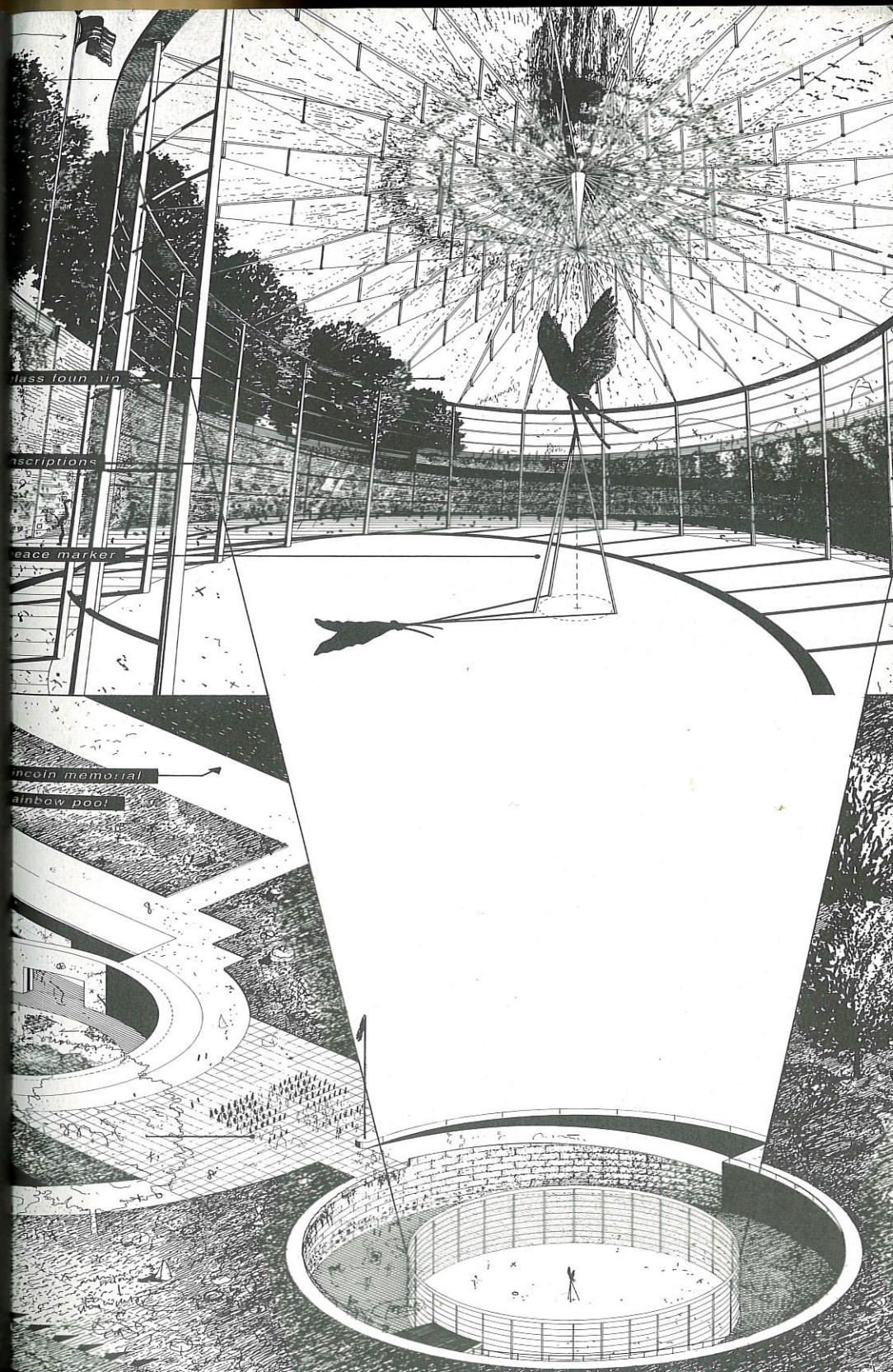




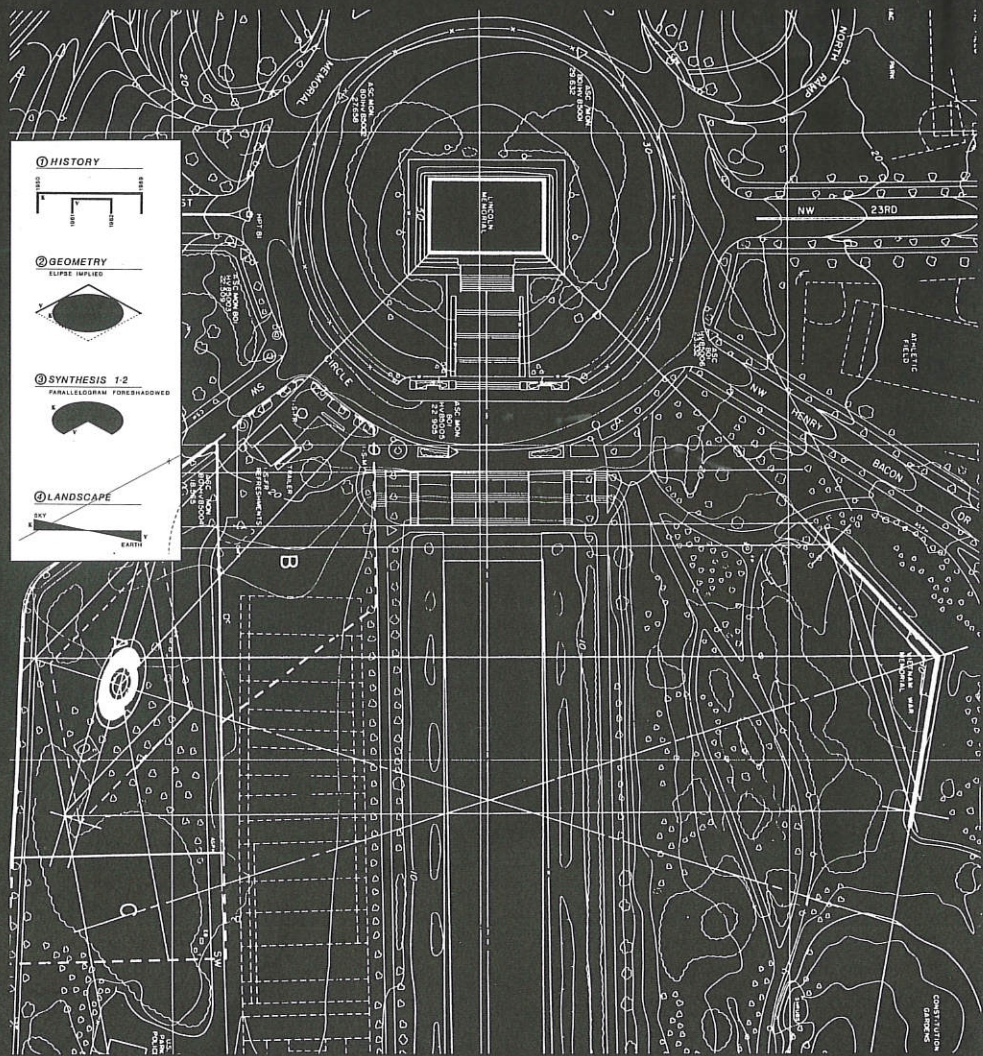


title: **vessel of light**  
 location: the Mall, Washington, D.C.  
 dimensions: depth 25', width 100'

Intended as a World War II memorial to U.S. and Allied forces, a pair of cylindrical map rooms are positioned directly below the Rainbow Pool on the Mall. Access is provided via a ramp sliding under the pool and on axis with the Washington Monument and Lincoln Memorial. A journey through the memorial concludes within a third vessel, a transparent "hall of remembrance," circumscribed by a path of ascent purposely off the primary sight line of the Mall. A veil of water is employed as a visual and acoustical mask.

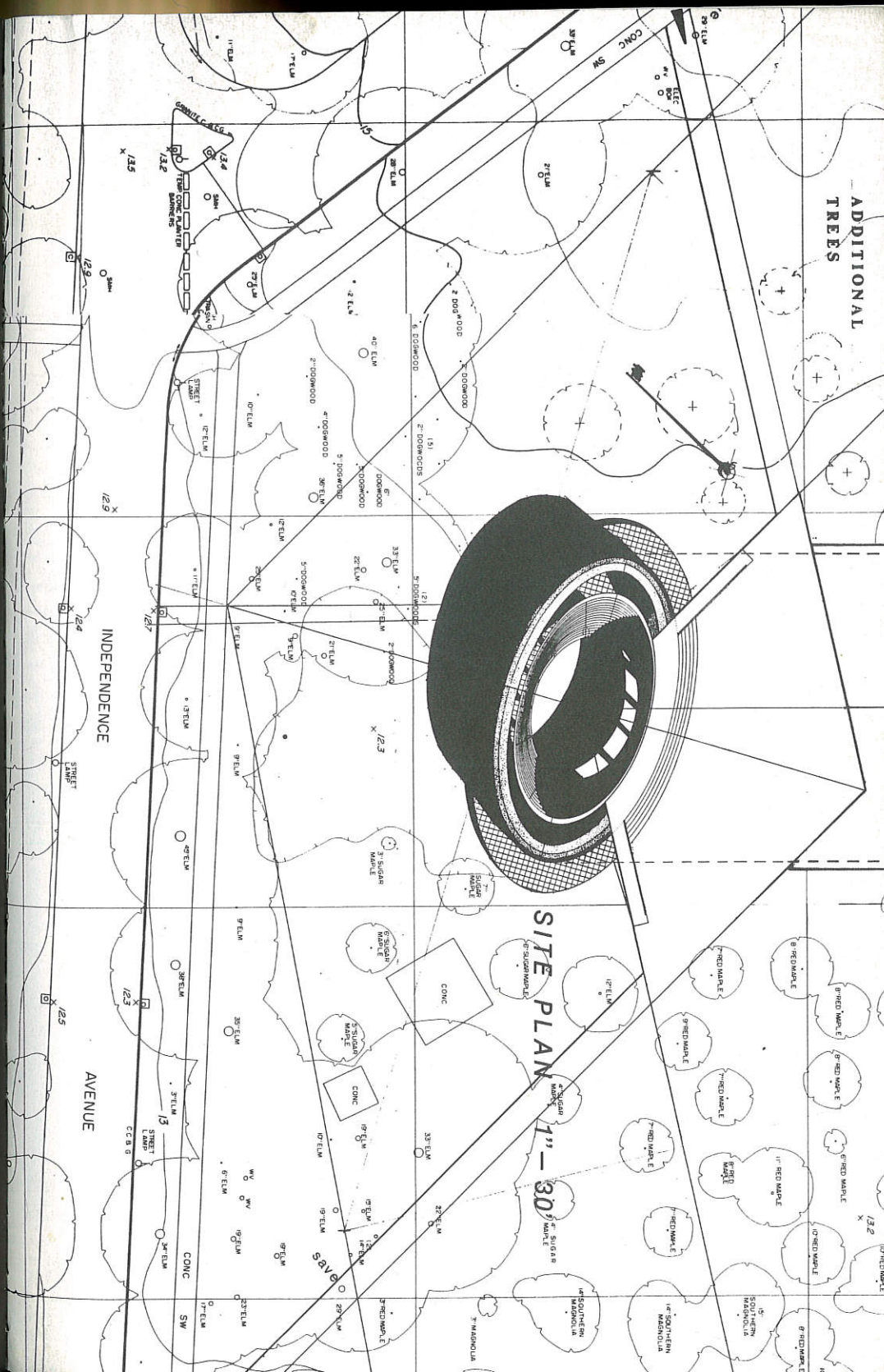




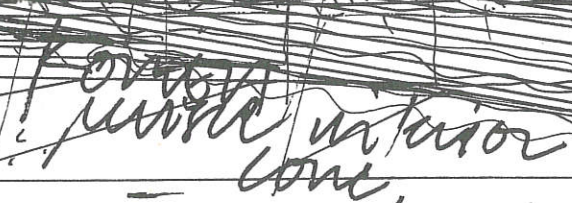
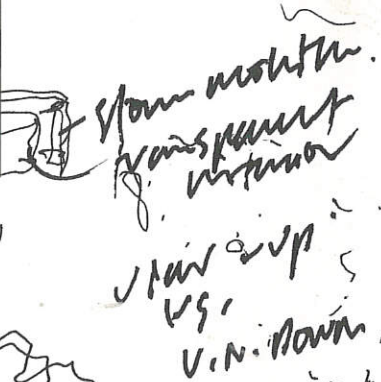


title: **vessel of memory**  
 location: the Mall, Washington, D.C.  
 dimensions: height 40', width 100'

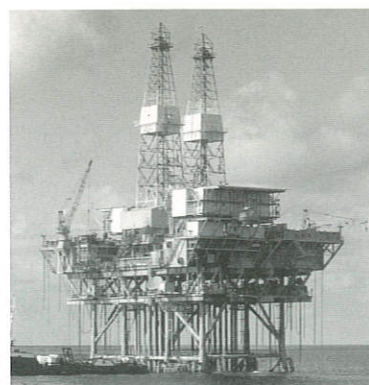
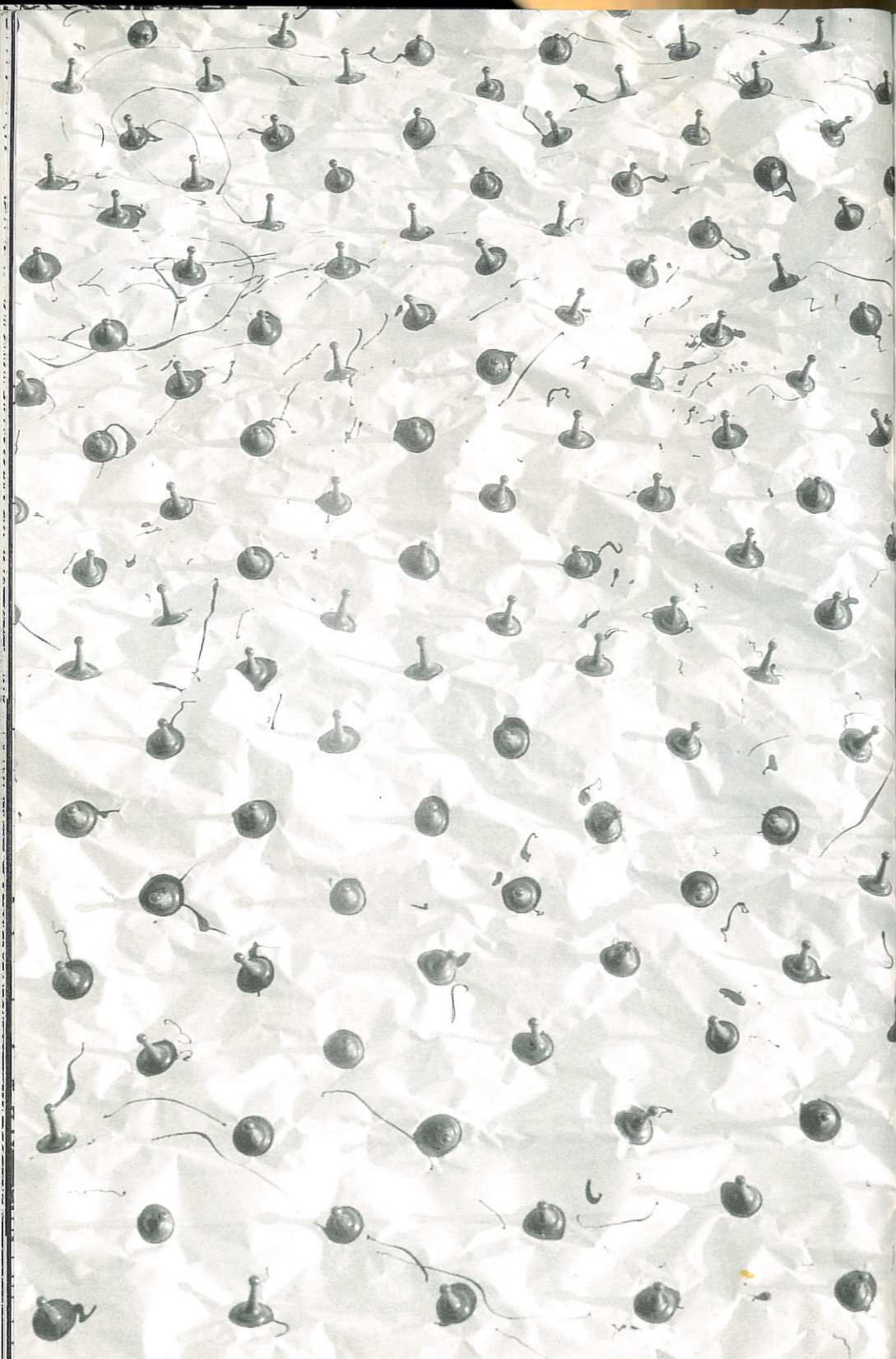
History suggests that the Vietnam War experience was foretold by the Korean conflict a decade earlier. Proposed is a memorial to those who served in the "forgotten war" that contains the "germ" of the well-known Vietnam commemorative marker, particularly its geometry and relationship to grade, thus suggesting the historical connection. The elliptical format of the container, hovering above the ground at a height equivalent to the below-grade depth of the adjacent black wall, allows for the seamless passage of the visitor off the Mall to a position of privilege, deference, and seclusion within the interior.











### Apparatus

paper cylinder

balltower

bridgeboat

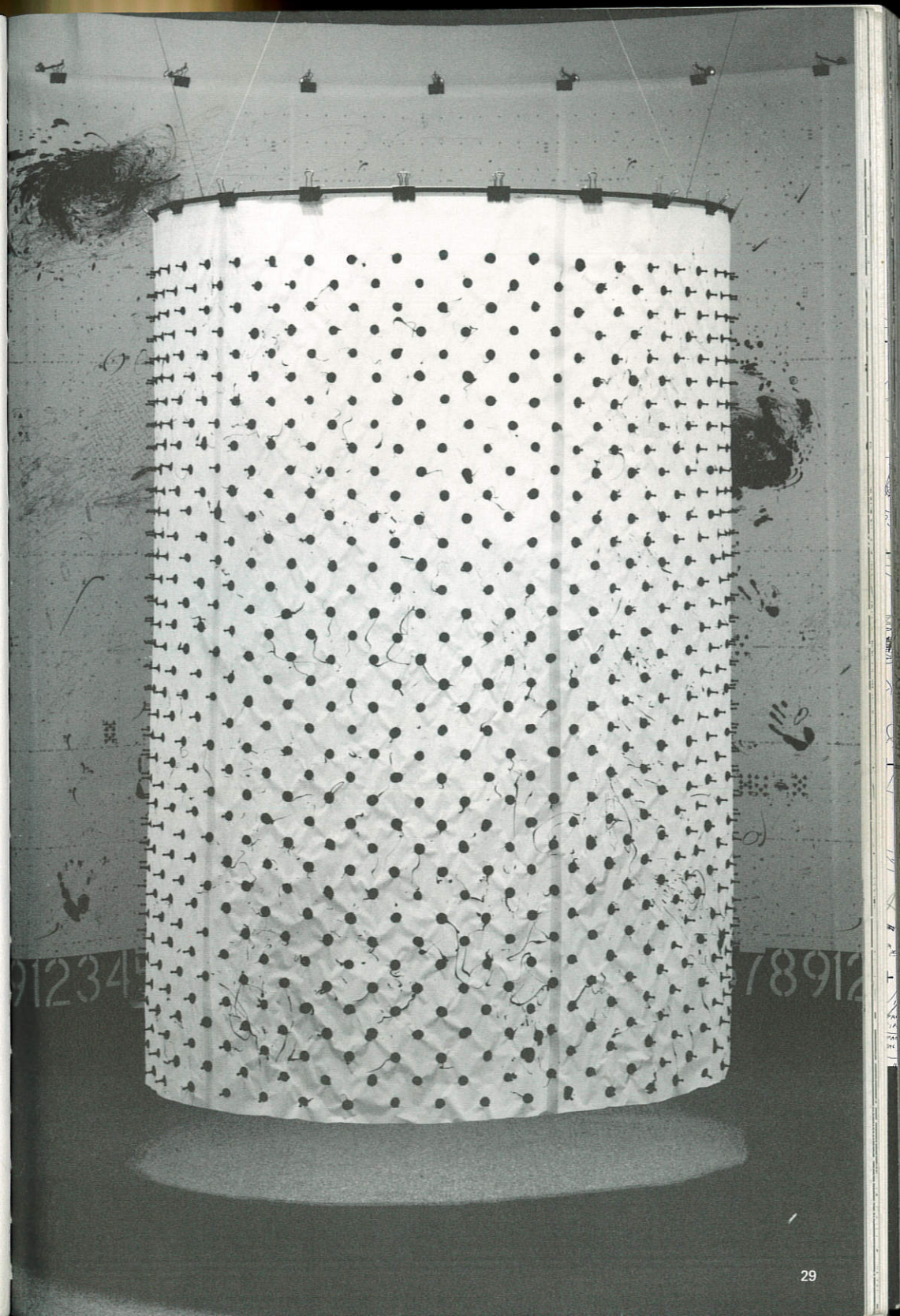
light spheres

tripods

paint machine



title: **paper cylinder**  
location: DeCordova Museum of Art, Lincoln, Massachusetts  
dimensions: cylinder, 54" x 96"  
materials: paper, game pieces, steel frame, drawing



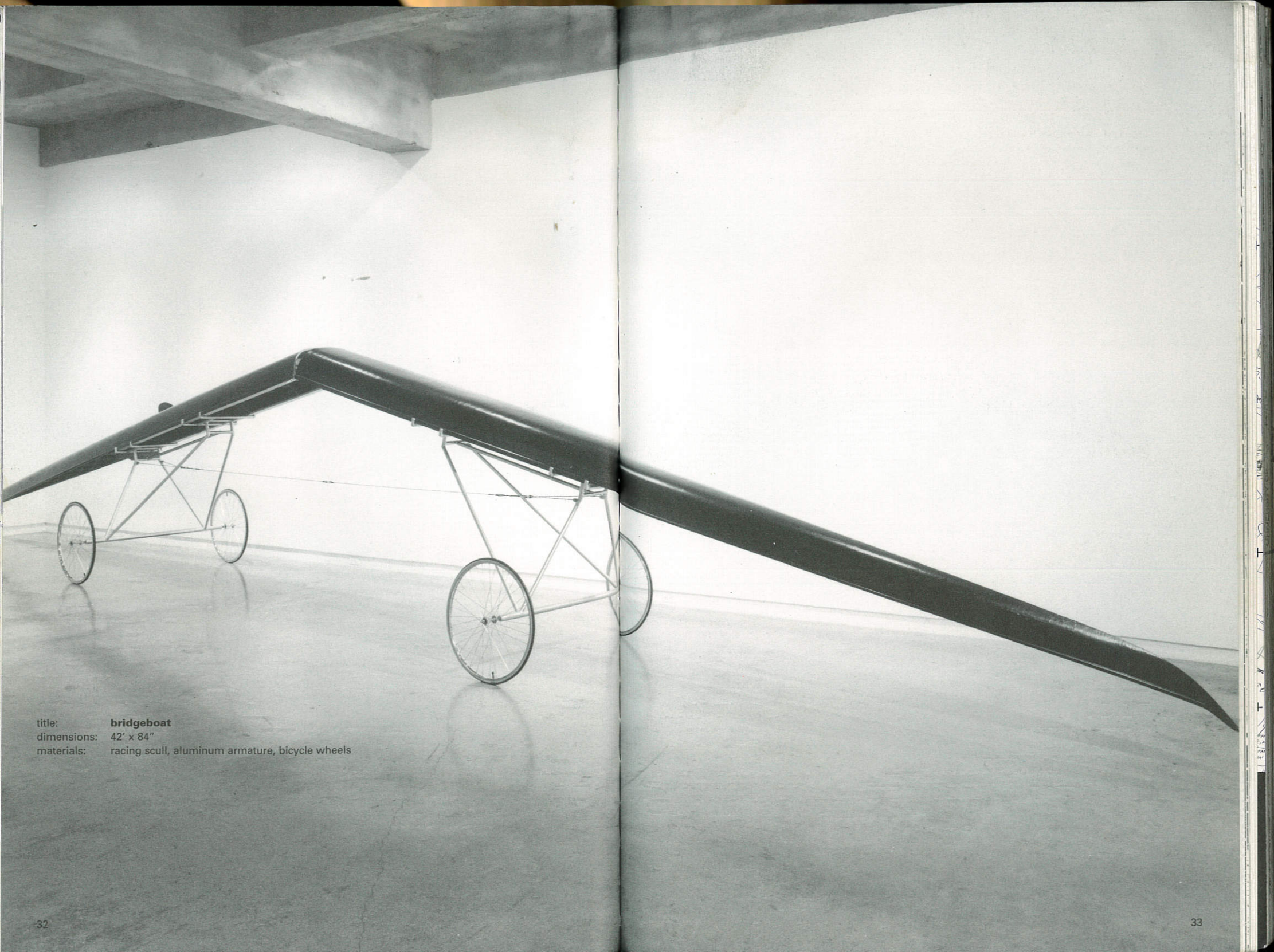




title: **balltower**  
 dimensions: tower, 106" x 15"  
 materials: bowling balls, aluminum armature, rubber gaskets





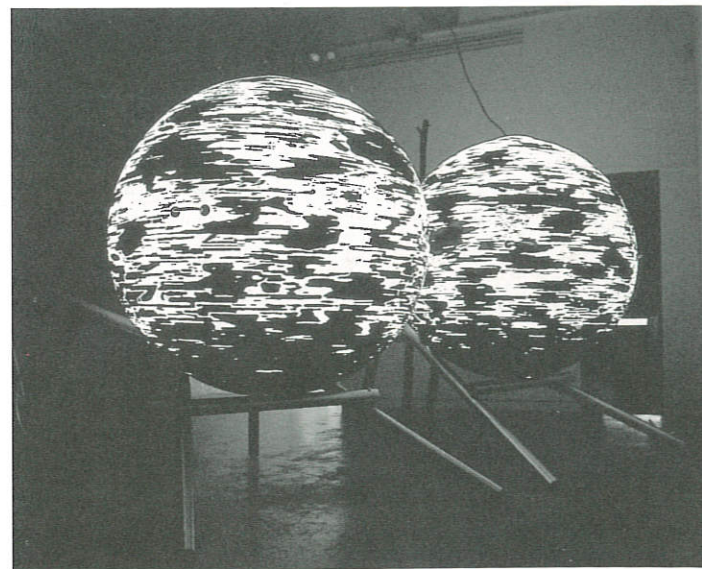
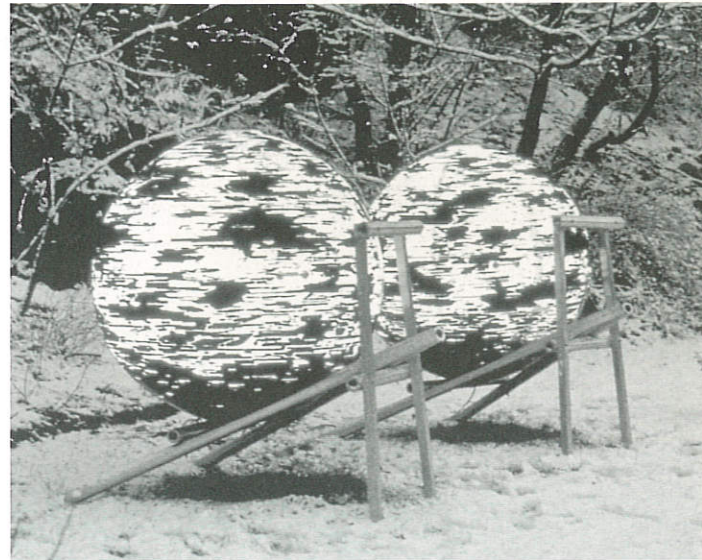


title: **bridgeboat**  
dimensions: 42' x 84"  
materials: racing scull, aluminum armature, bicycle wheels

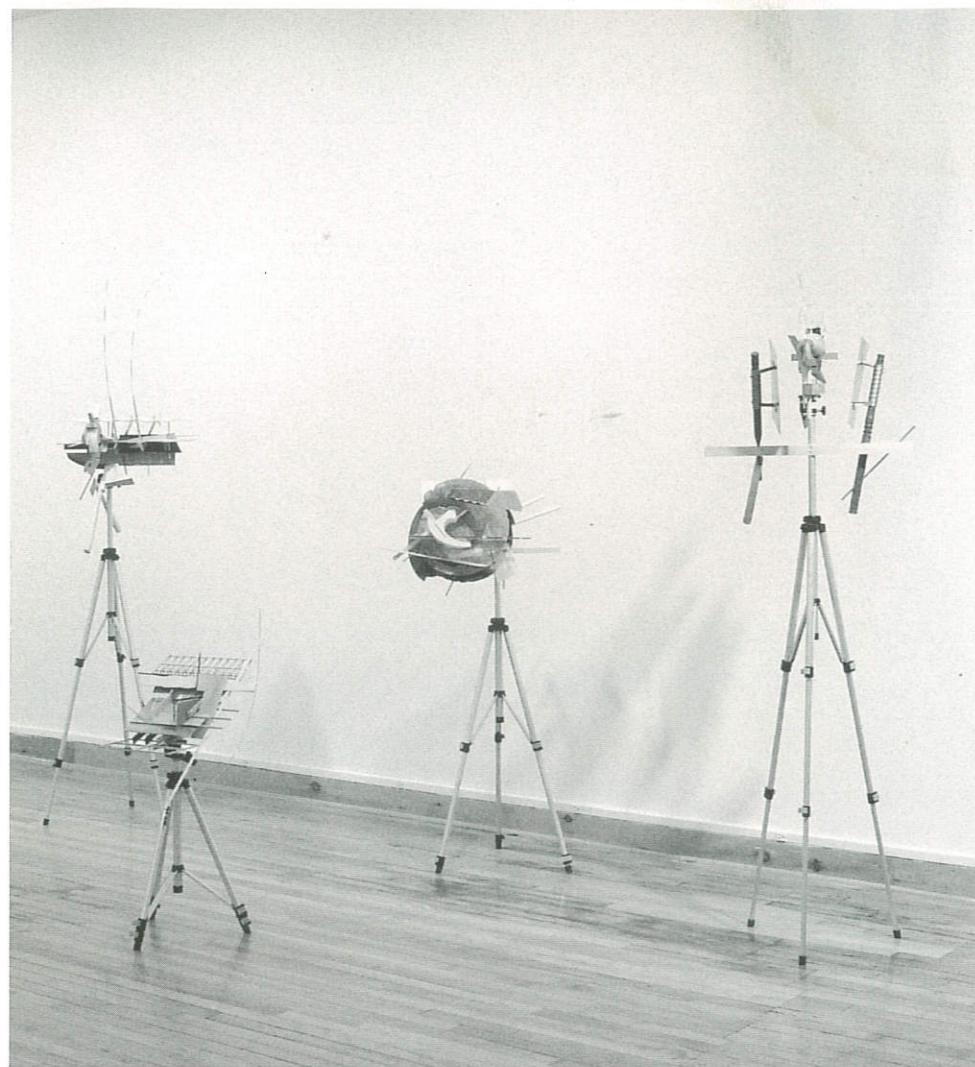




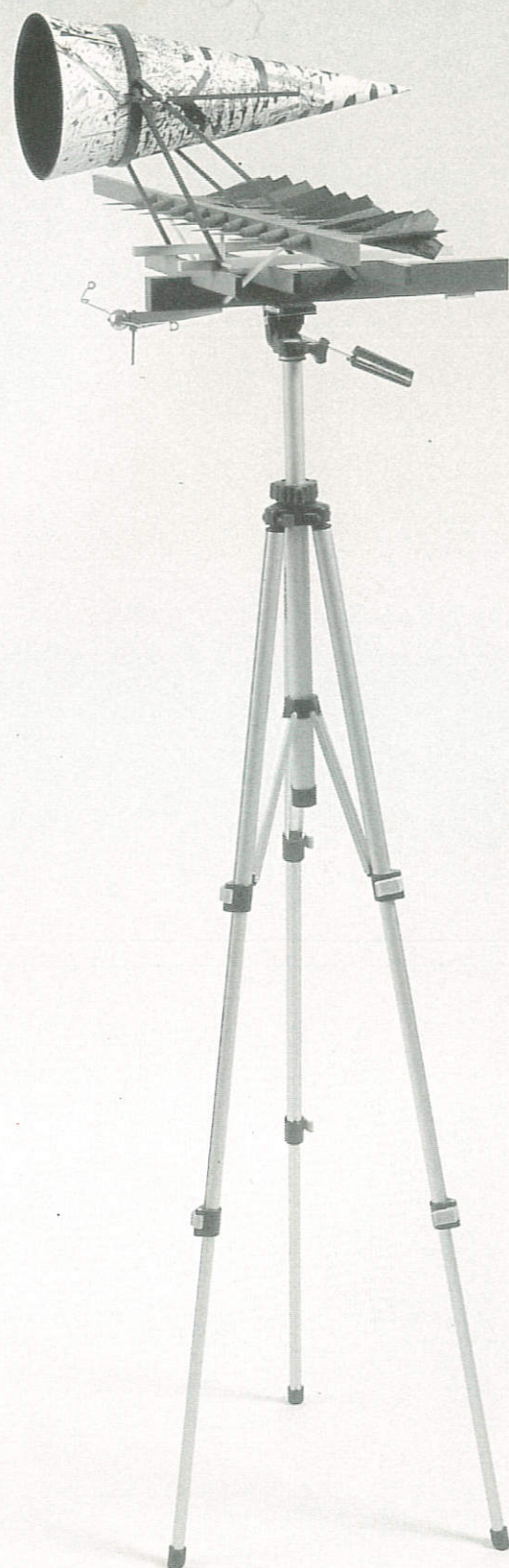
title: **light spheres**  
 dimensions: spheres each 70" in diameter  
 materials: fiberglass spheres, aluminum armature, 300-watt lamps



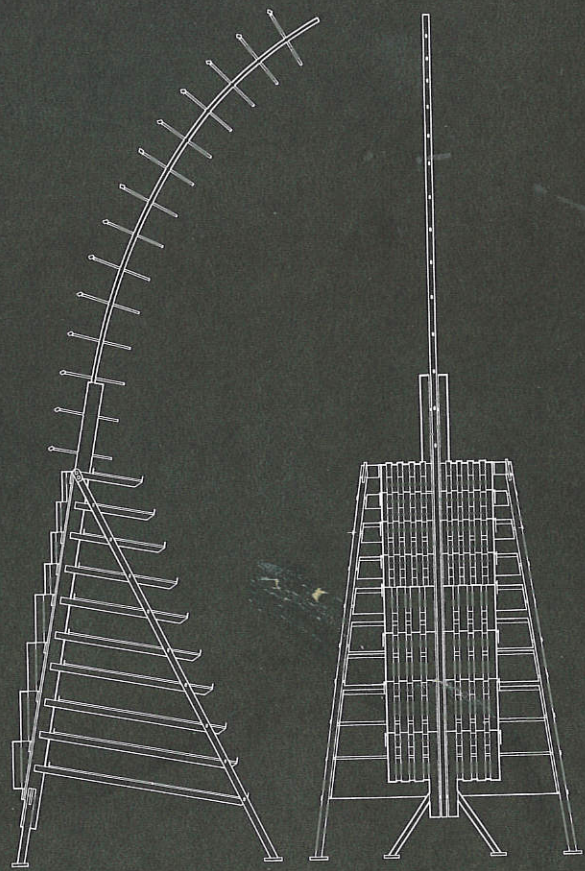




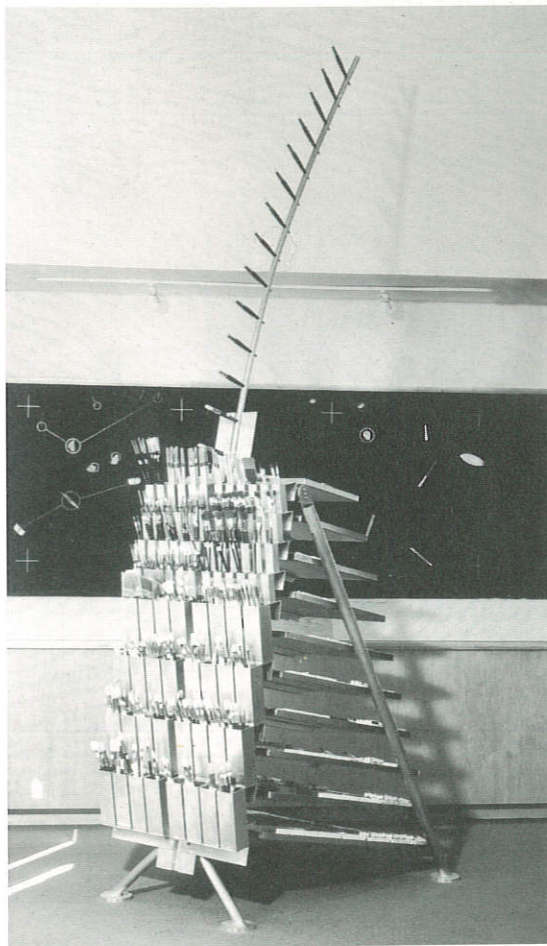
title: **tripods**  
 dimensions: variable to 72" in height  
 materials: commercial camera stands, mixed media



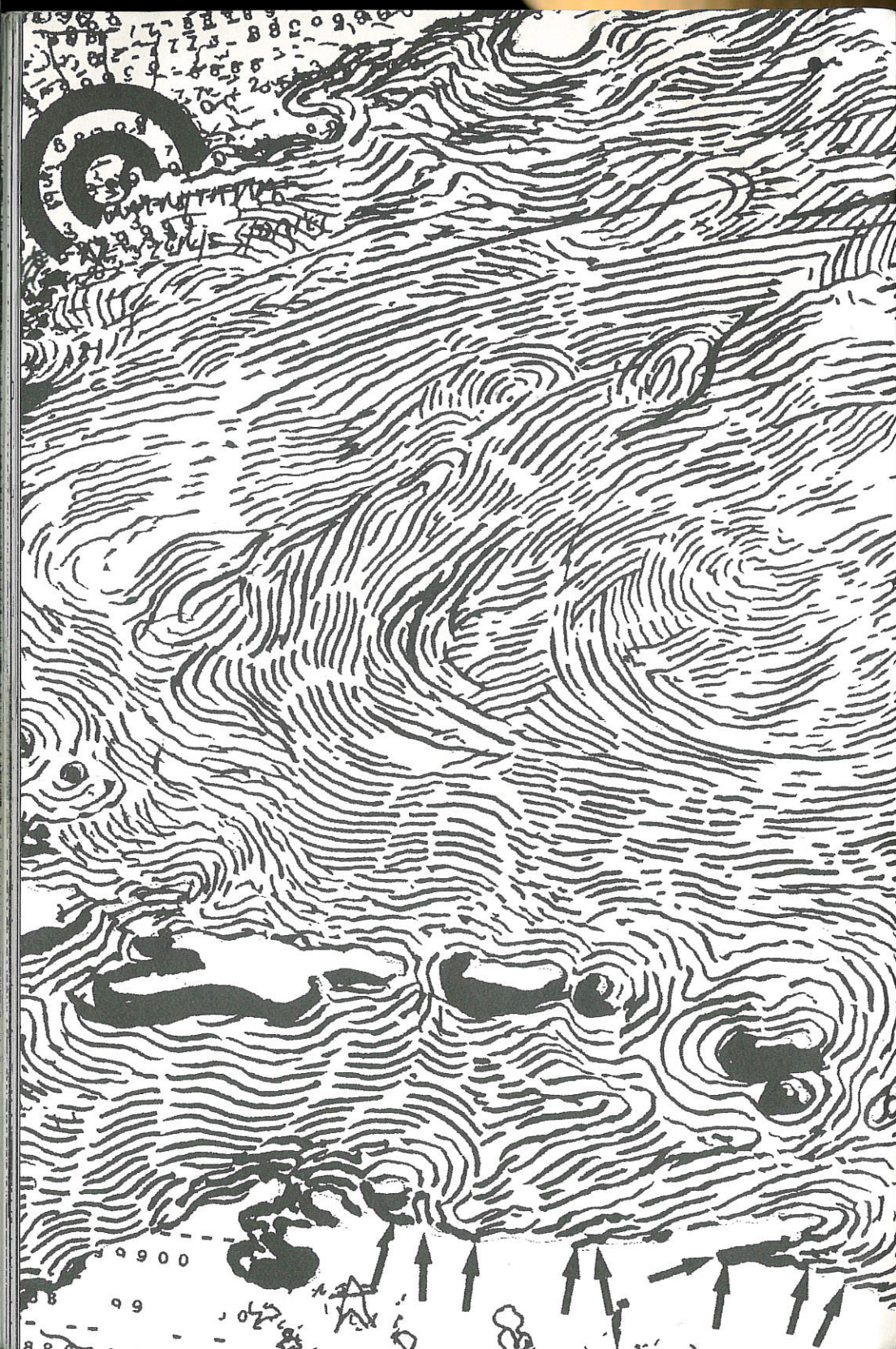




title: **paint machine**  
 dimensions: 48" x 48" x 120"  
 materials: aluminum armature







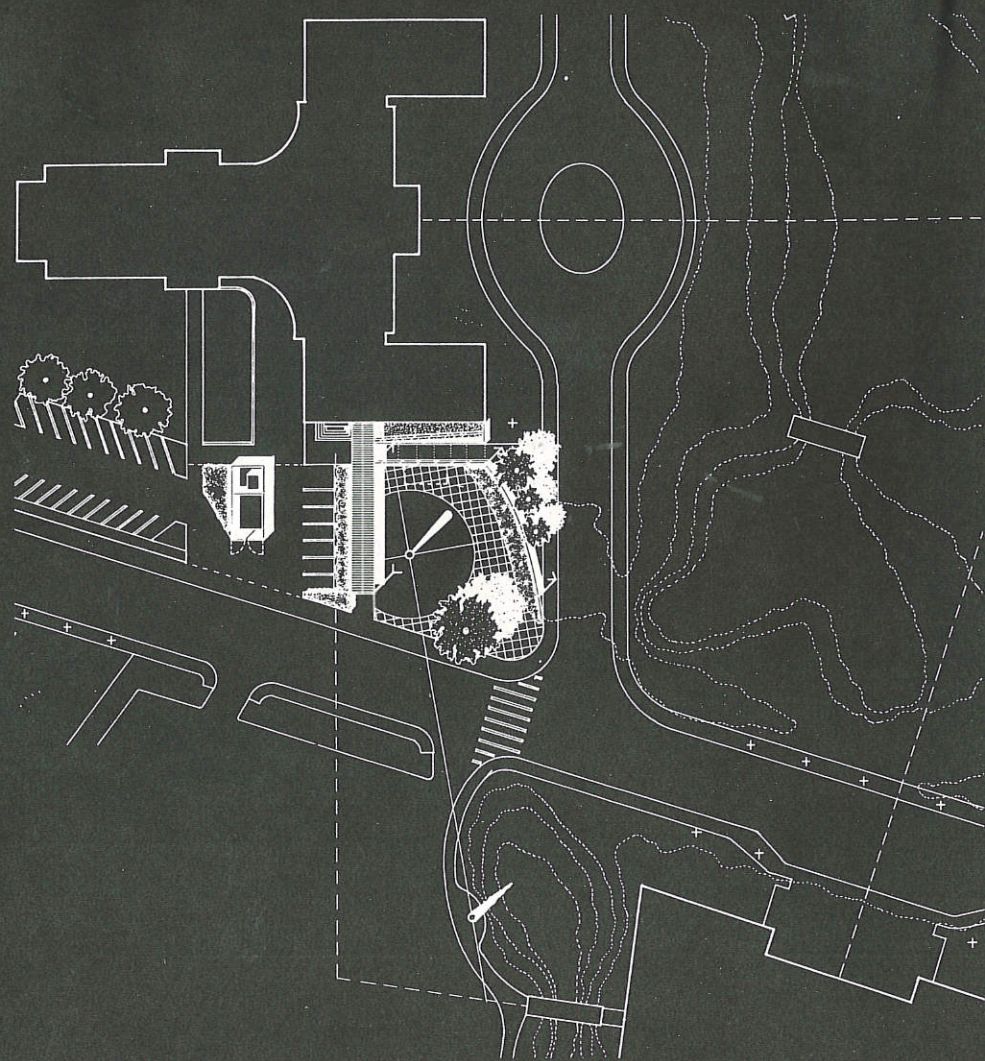
### Clocks

millennial time

flight time

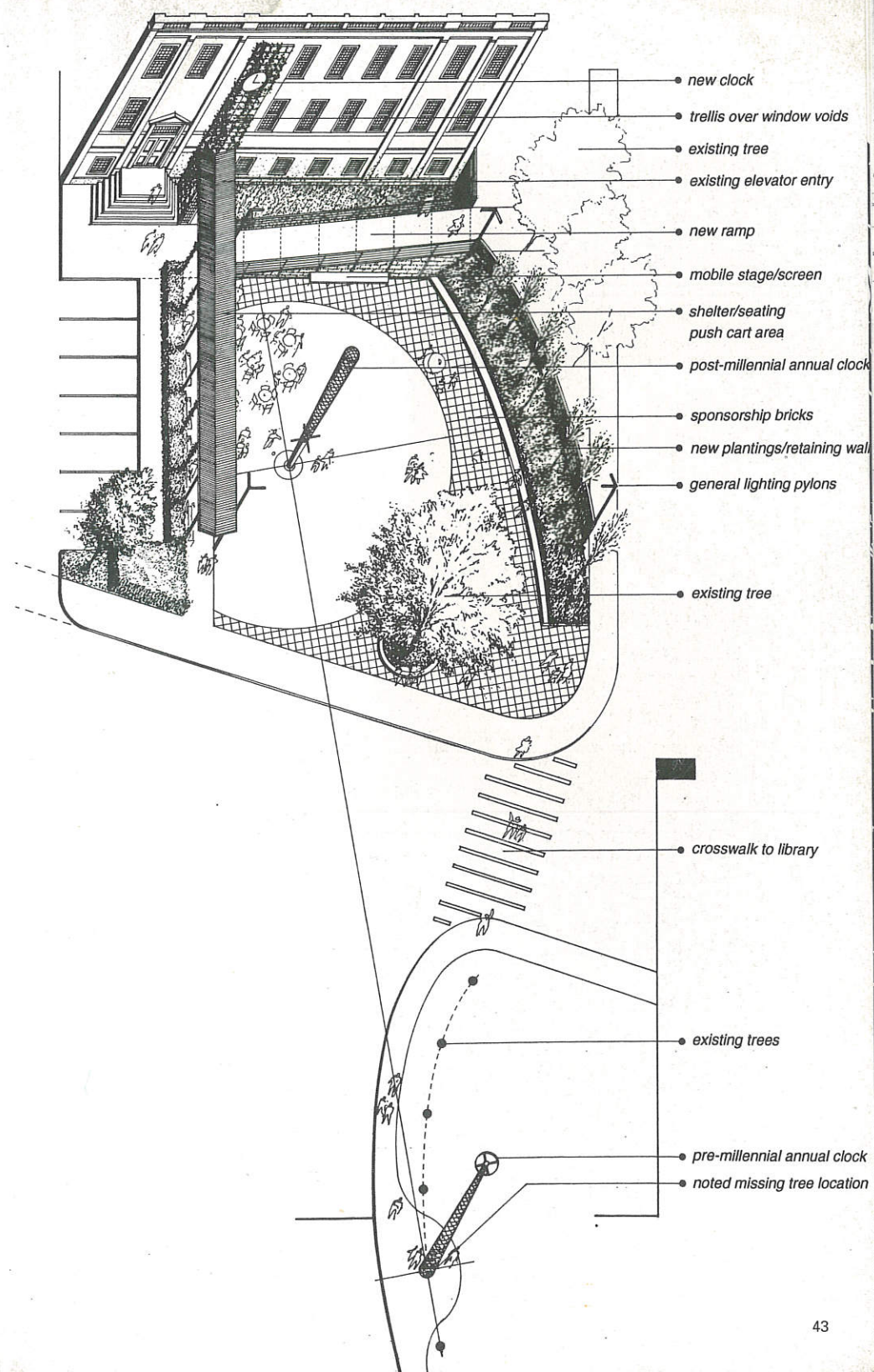
pantheonic time



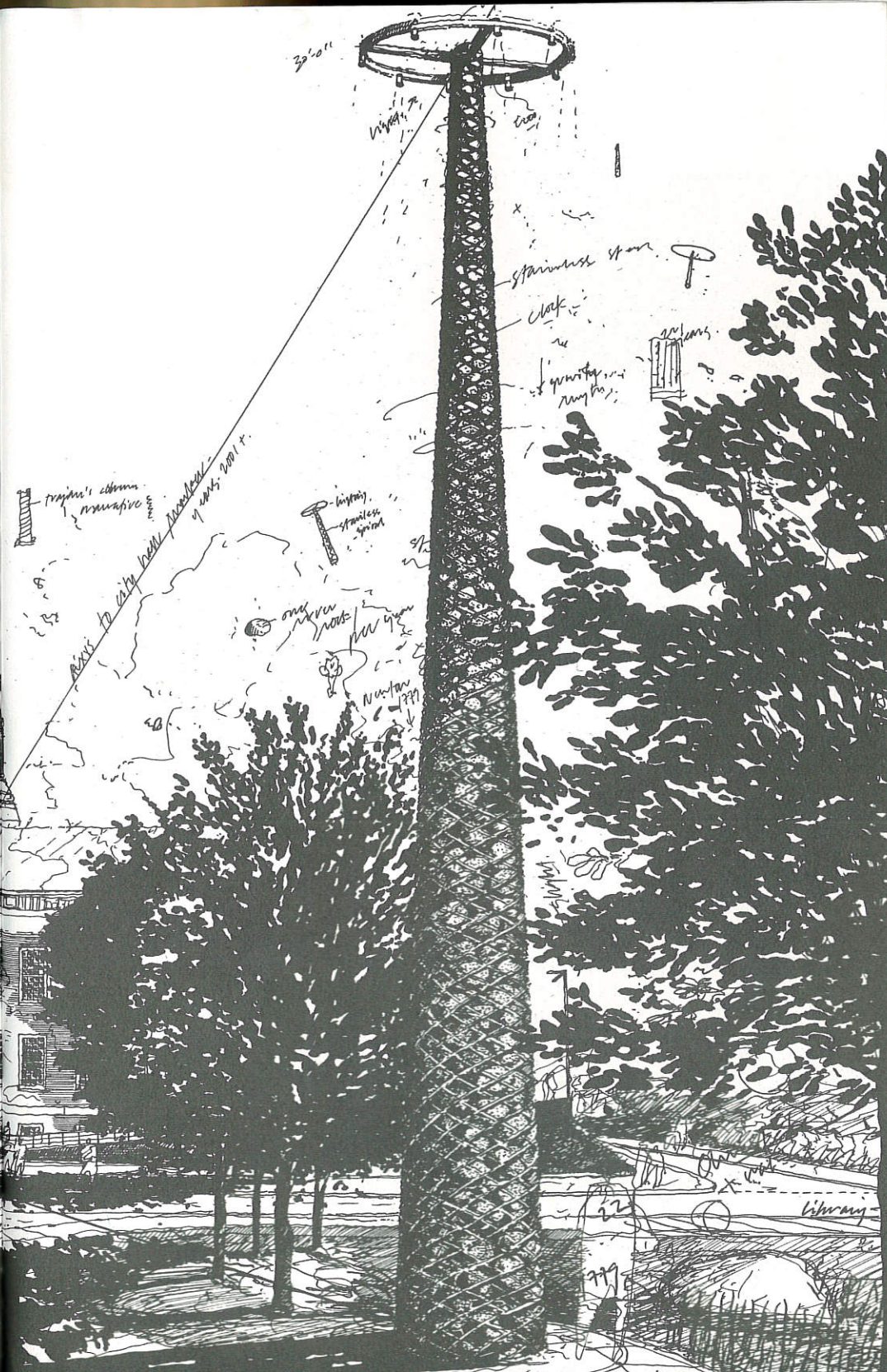


title: **millennial time**  
 location: City Hall and Public Library, Newton, Massachusetts  
 dimensions: millennial measuring cones each 33' x 4.5'

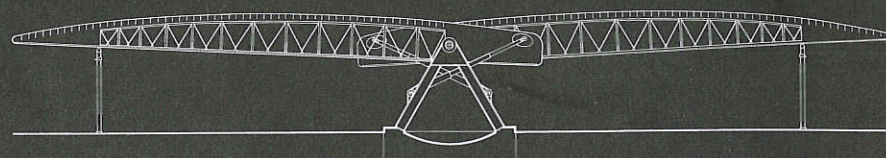
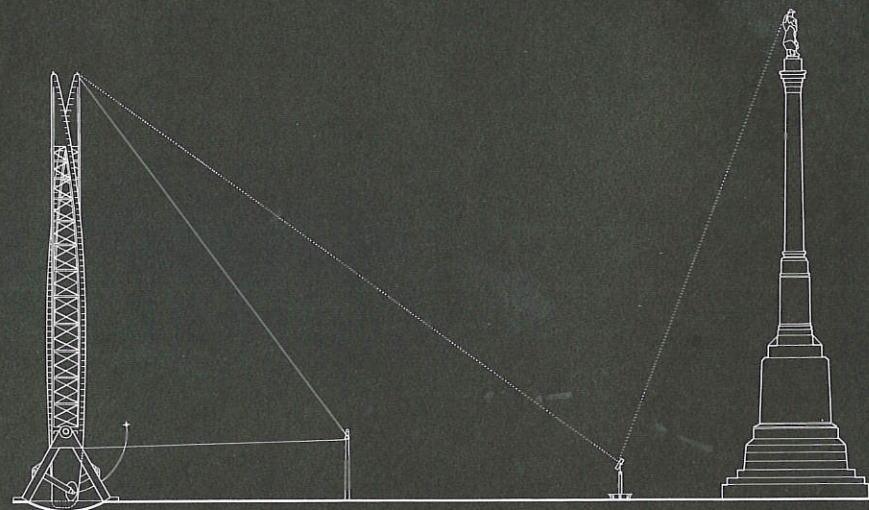
The motive for this project is the desire of the city to mark its place in time relative to the millennium transition forthcoming. As a template for the project, an hour glass has been bisected resulting in two distinct conical "vessels," each being a 33' open weave, stainless steel container. Within the library cone are 221 naturally rounded river stones, the accumulated sum of the years since the official establishment of the city (1779) to the end of the millennium — a monument to time passed. The city hall vessel is open-ended and requires that successive boulders are installed within its frame with the passing of each year beyond the millennium. Through the laborious act of annually placing another token in the millennium vessel, it is intended that time will be slowed, if only momentarily.





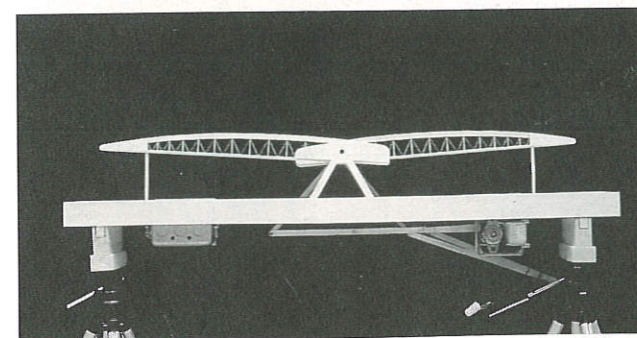
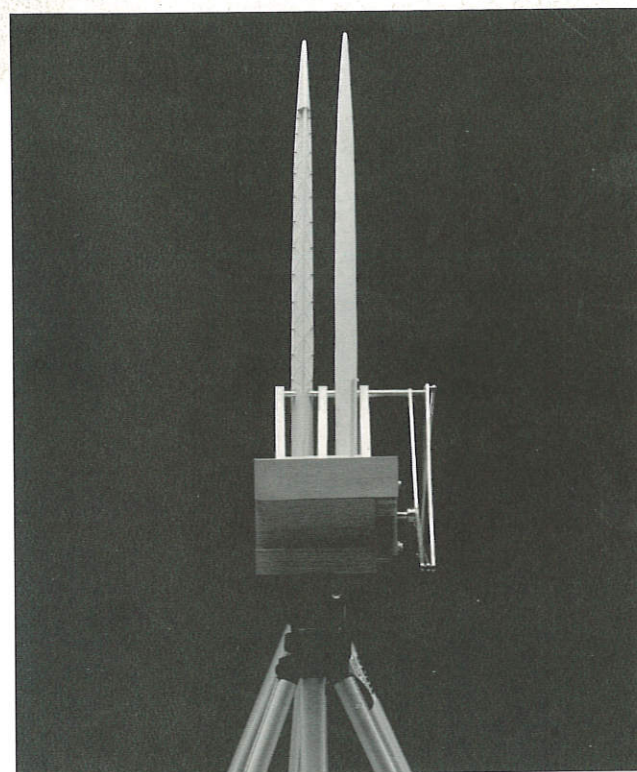






title: **flight time**  
 location: Main Street, Dayton, Ohio  
 dimensions: 120' horizontal position, 70' vertical position

While black-and-white images of the Wrights' historic flight at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, are indelibly etched in our collective memory, it is a lesser-known fact that virtually all of Orville and Wilbur's work took place in Dayton. This project is intended to recapture for the city one of but many technical innovations that are part of its heritage and to suggest that, with the advent of human-powered flight, the importance of geographic distance has been radically reduced.



To celebrate the accomplishments of its two most illustrious native sons, Orville and Wilbur Wright, the city of Dayton commissioned a study for the development of an appropriate monument. Situated in the center of Main Street on a slender traffic island, the project was also to mark the southern gateway into the city, the northern end being anchored by a Civil War memorial dedicated to a private in the Union Army whose likeness sits atop a free-standing column.

At the exact time of the Wrights' historic powered flight, 10:16 A.M., the two arms of the monument would gently swing into a position which, when measured end to end, would match the length of that first successful flight, a mere 120'. One's arrival in the city would be calibrated not by the typical hourly standard but by this urban clock's pre- or post-reenactment of the historic event. The monument would remain in this position until dusk each day at which time it would reset itself in the upright position.



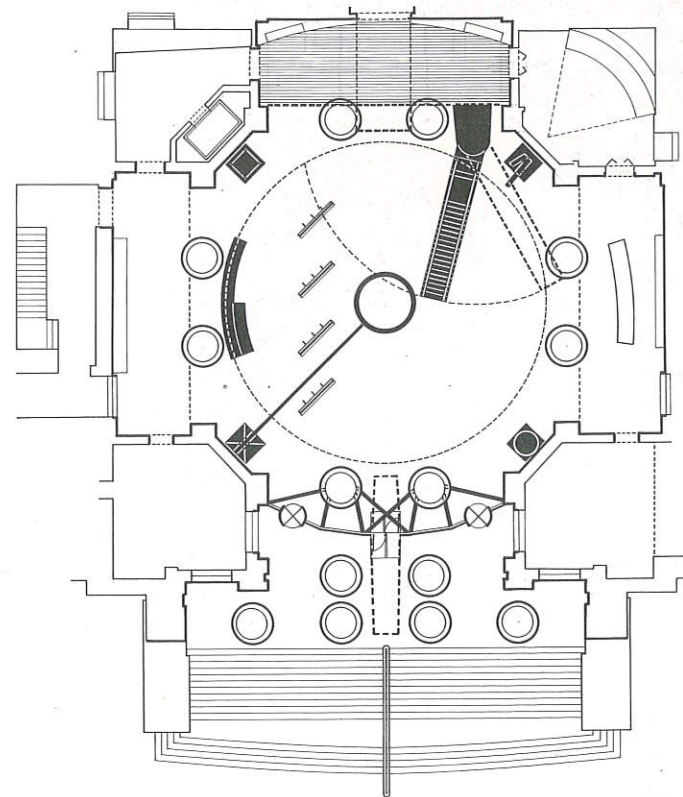






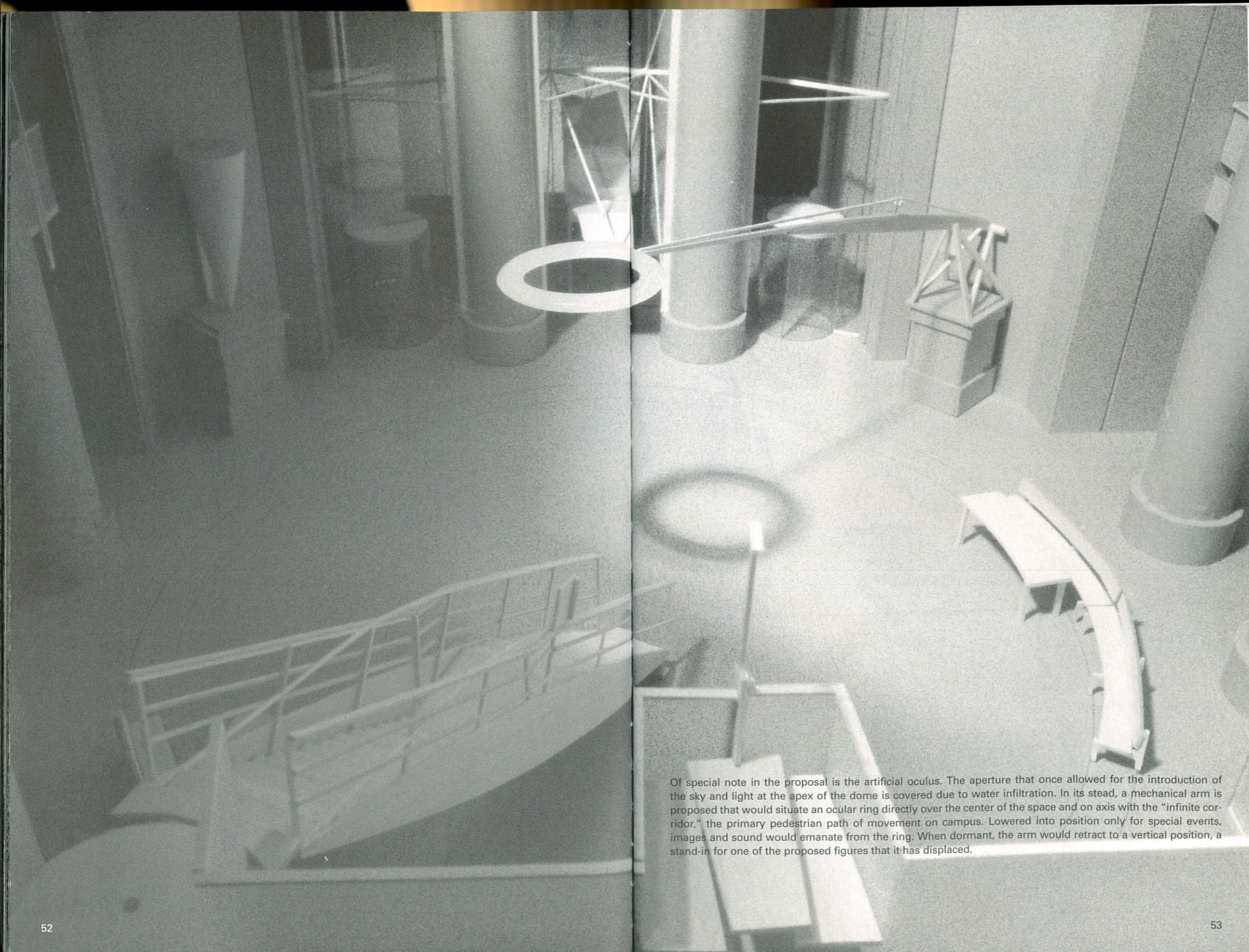
title: **pantheonic time**  
 location: MIT Lobby 7, Cambridge, Massachusetts  
 dimensions: 75' diameter, domed space

The domed space of Lobby 7 represents the symbolic gateway to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and in many ways to the technology of the 20th century. Heavily trafficked by students, faculty, researchers, and visitors on a daily basis, this mausoleum-like interior is arguably the public face around which the reclusive research of the institution revolves. While the architectural precedents upon which it is based suggest a lofty ceremonial role for this grand hall, the details demonstrate something less. Most conspicuous are four empty pedestals that bracket the corners of the room. Intended to serve as platforms for the grotesquely large figures of prominent architects through the ages, they (fortunately) remain vacant.



If the Pantheon in Rome is nothing else, it is a vessel for the measurement of time. The day is registered by the wafer of elliptical sunlight that traverses its interior walls, while millennial time is etched into its exterior skin. Significantly, the subject of time penetrates deeply into most of the disciplines of science and engineering on campus in demonstrable ways. Thus, each of the four pedestals will support a measure of the common denominator of time, which ranges from the most banal ("What time is it?") to the most rarefied and particular to MIT (an atomic clock, celestial mapping, the anniversary of radar, a Nobel Prize, etc.)





Of special note in the proposal is the artificial oculus. The aperture that once allowed for the introduction of the sky and light at the apex of the dome is covered due to water infiltration. In its stead, a mechanical arm is proposed that would situate an ocular ring directly over the center of the space and on axis with the "infinite corridor," the primary pedestrian path of movement on campus. Lowered into position only for special events, images and sound would emanate from the ring. When dormant, the arm would retract to a vertical position, a stand-in for one of the proposed figures that it has displaced.

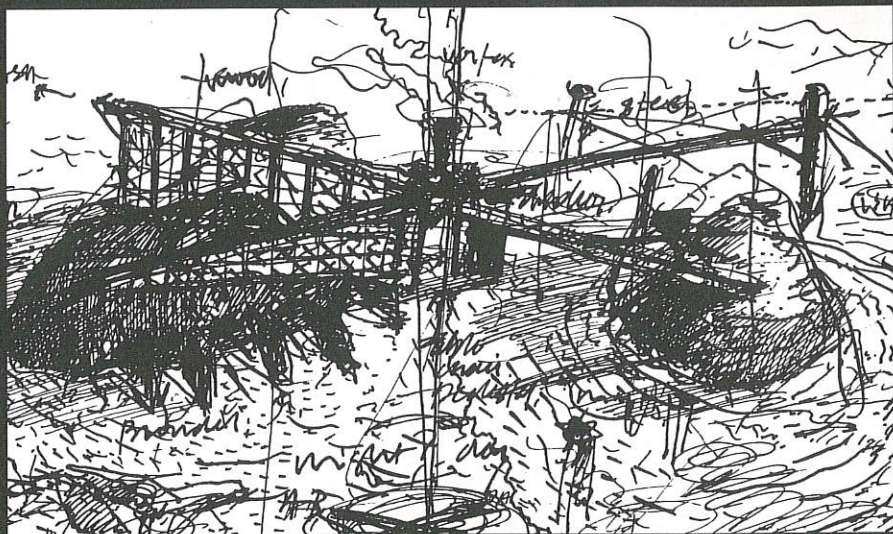




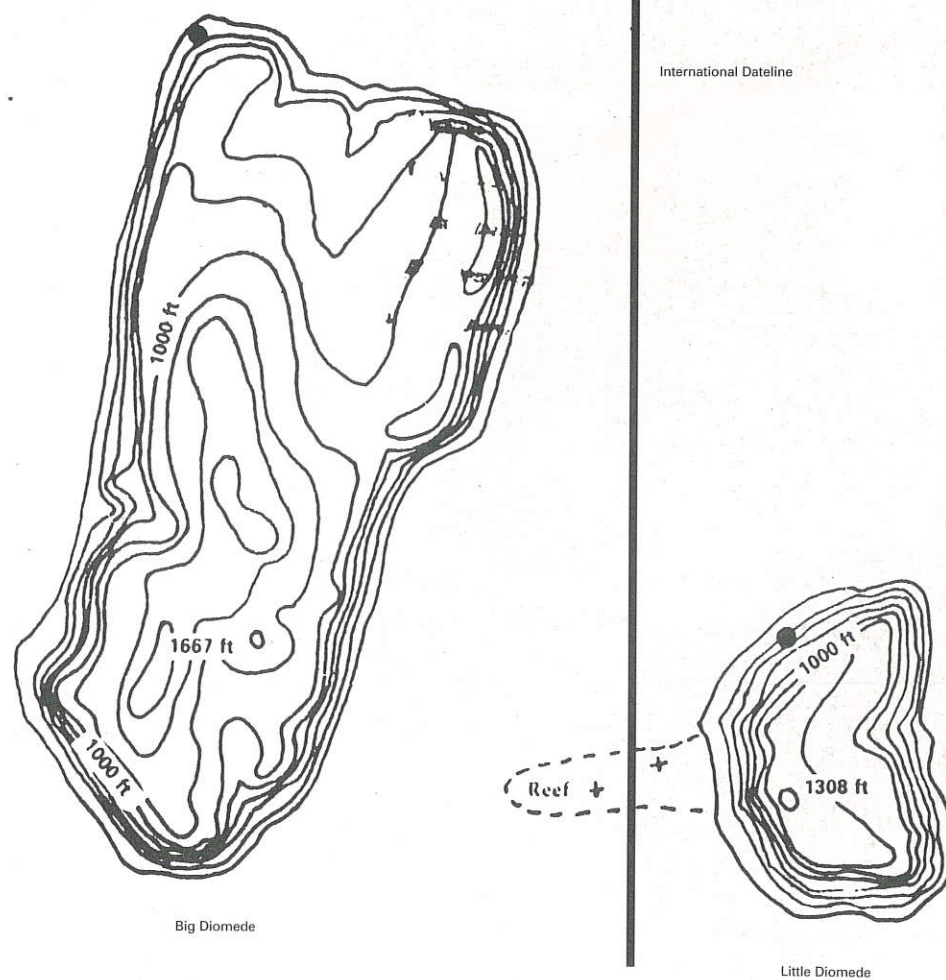




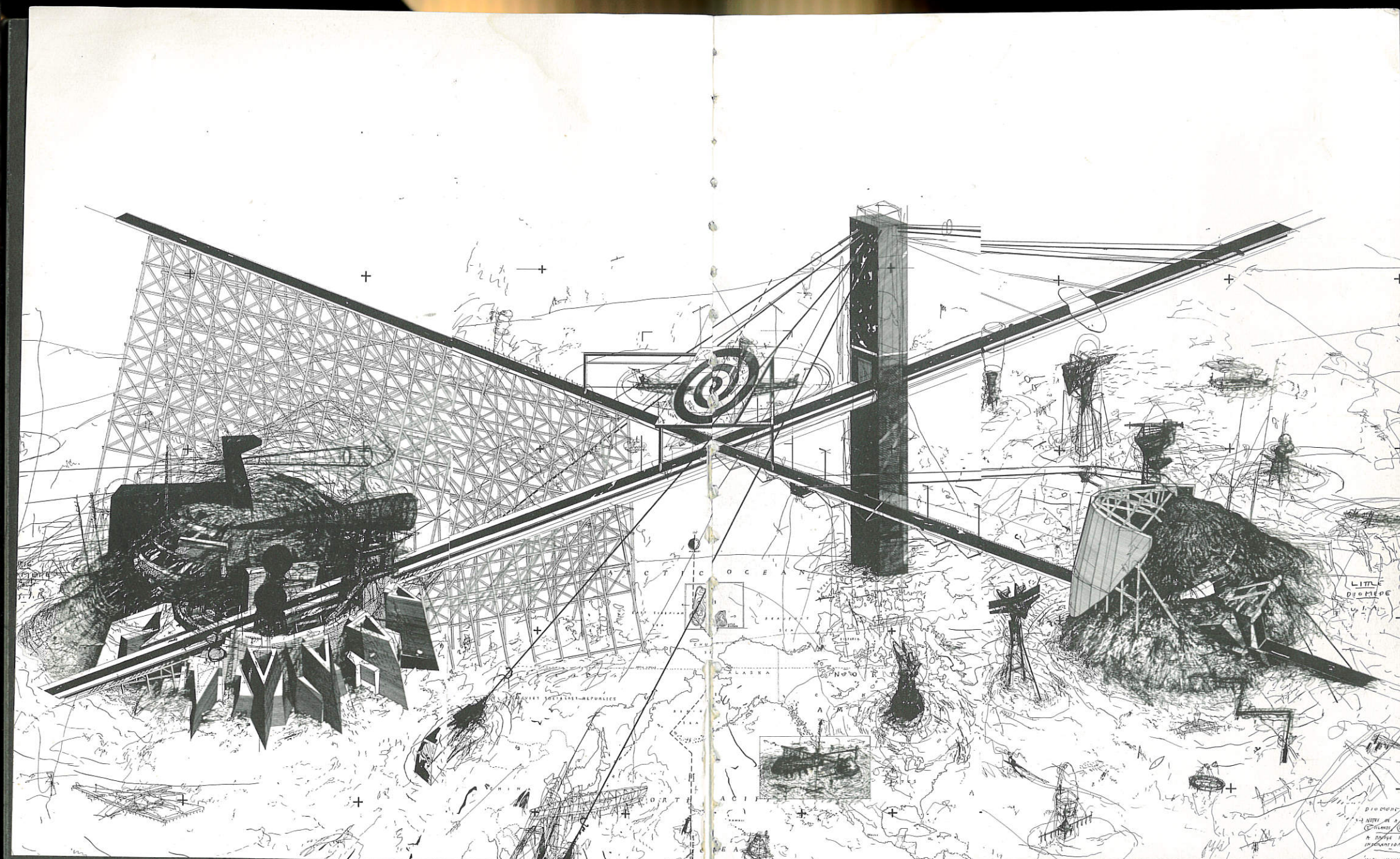




title: **islands of time**  
 location: Big Diomed Island (Russia) and Little Diomed Island (United States), Bering Strait  
 area: 5.5 acres and 1.5 acres, respectively



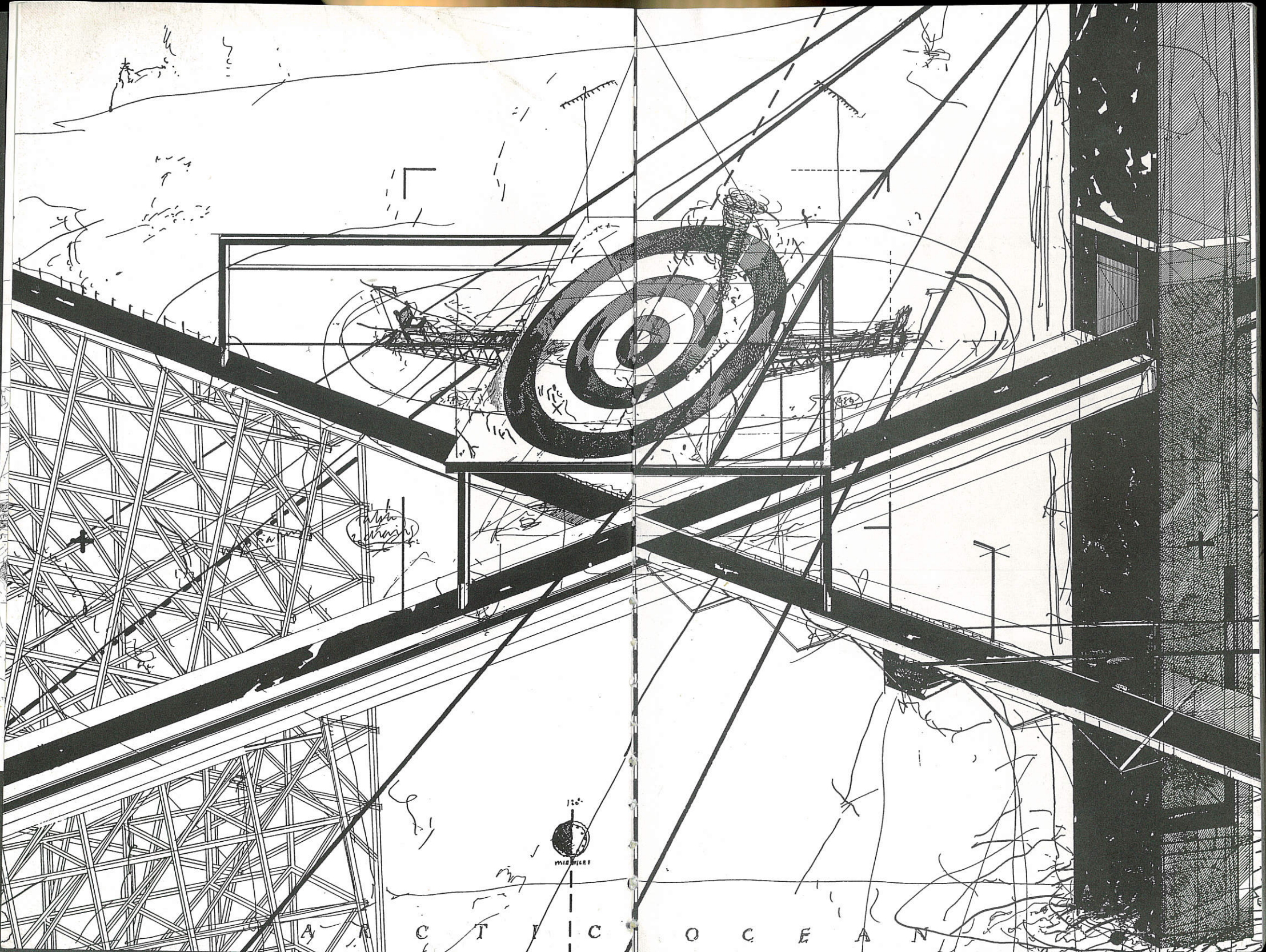




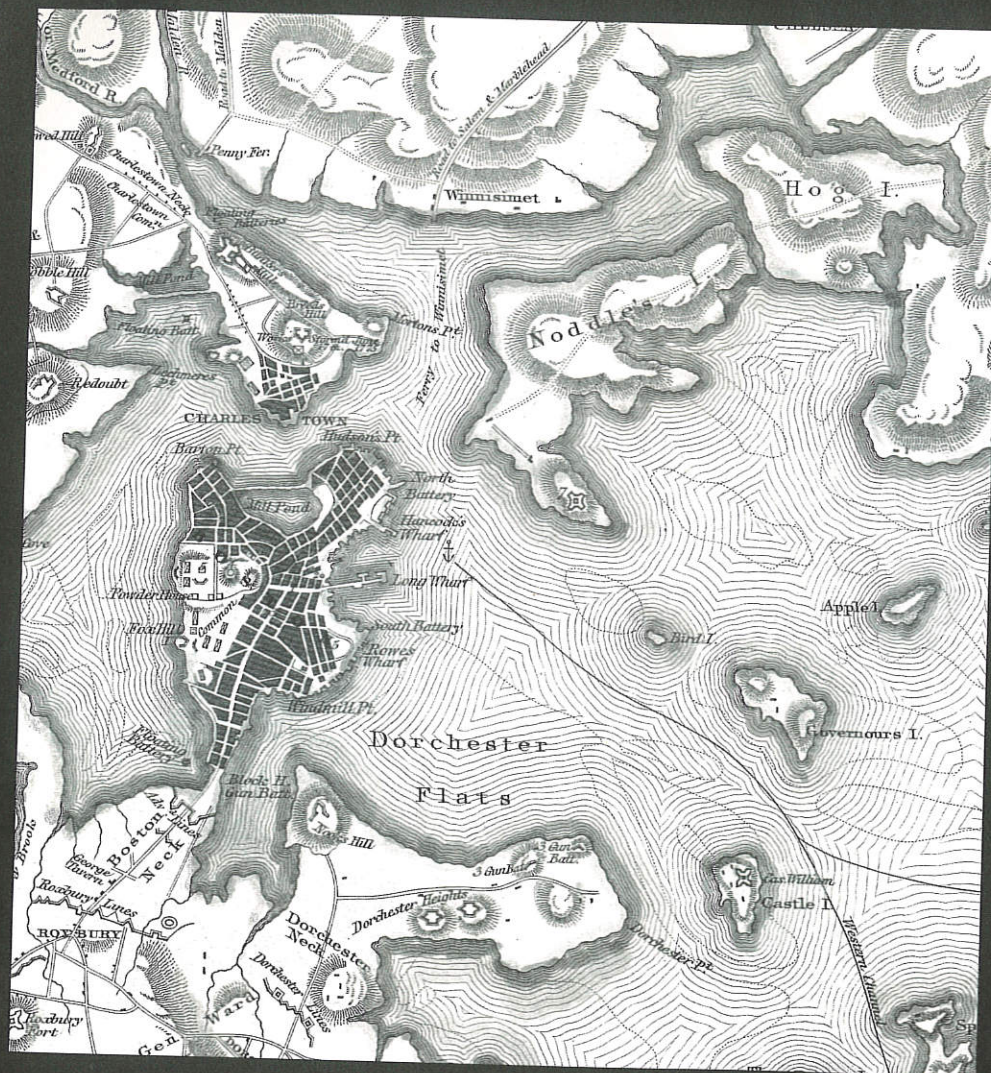
The two islands exist on different days, separated by the International Date Line.  
 The islands are also reflections of opposing political systems.  
 They have become caricatures of suspicion and fear.  
 Defensive apparatus dominate their respective landscapes.  
 The burden of paranoia becomes untenable.  
 A point precisely midway between the two islands is designated for discussion.  
 Each island begins construction of a bridge toward the midpoint.

At the intersection of bridges, a table and two chairs are arranged.  
 Meetings take place. Understandings develop.  
 Similarities begin to dominate differences.  
 Agreements are reached.  
 The two original bridges are extended to reach the mainlands.  
 Lines of demarcation are blurred.  
 Time is collapsed.

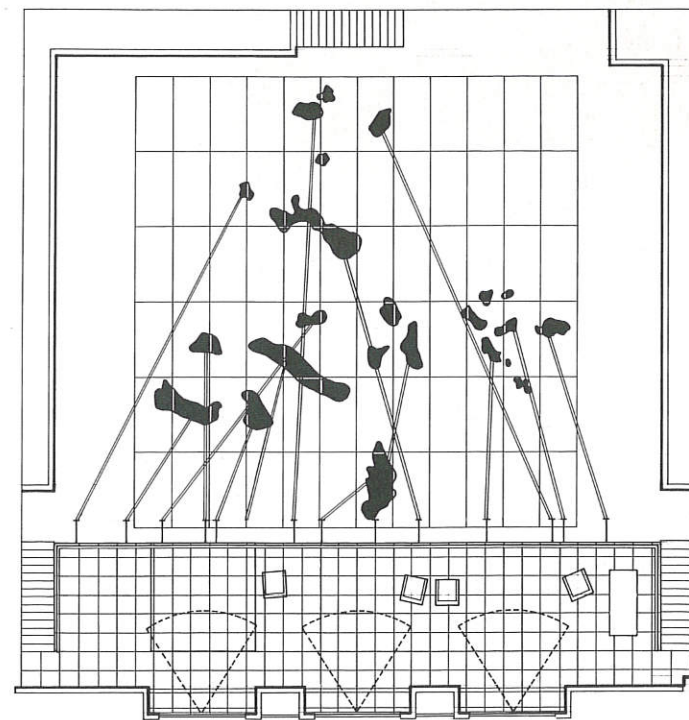








title: **islands of disregard**  
location: Boston Harbor, Massachusetts  
area: islands vary from 210 square acres to less than one

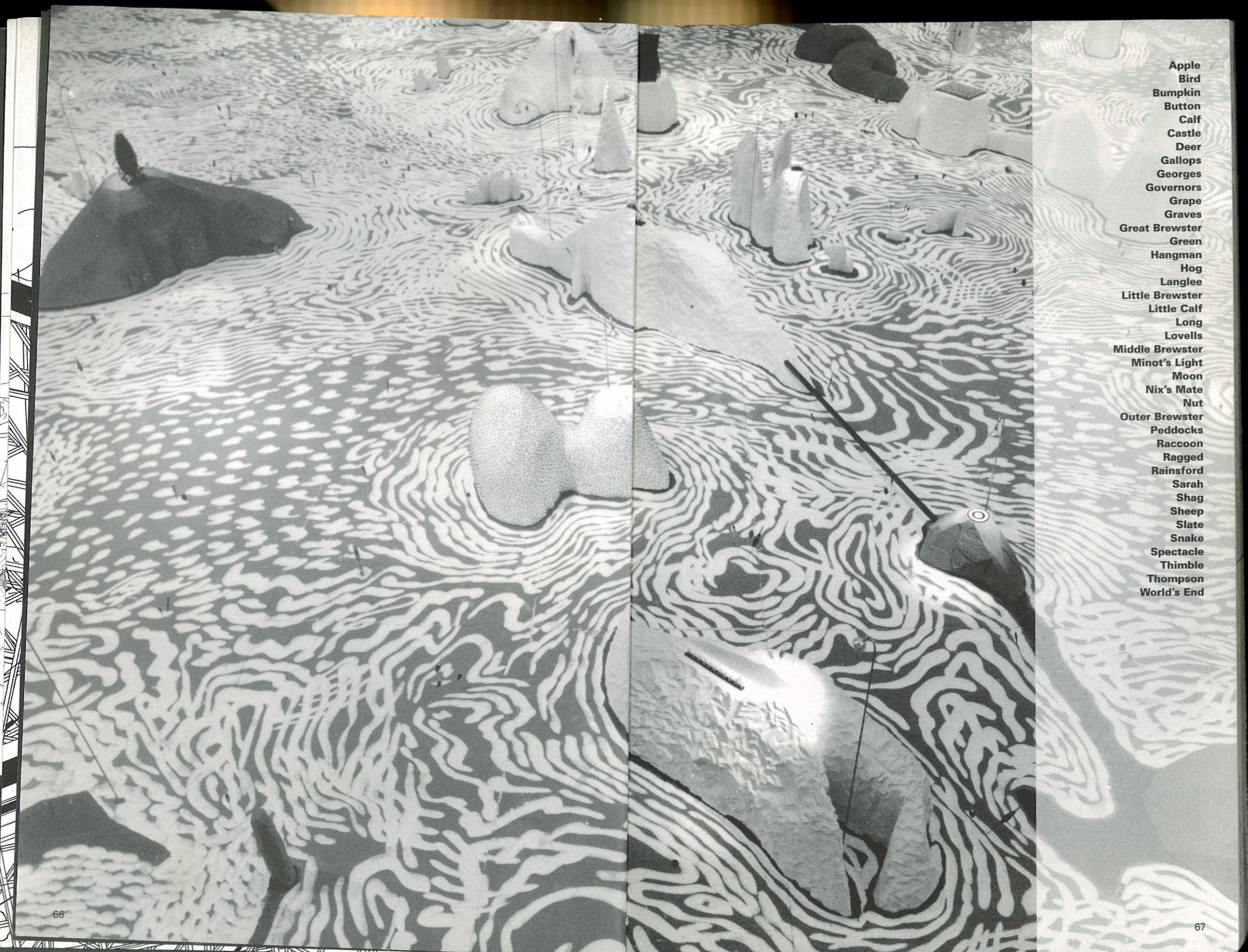


Islands have always been magic — their otherness being a source of intrigue, fantasy, and romance. Frequently the site of events that would not be possible, desirable, or permitted on the mainland, islands possess an autonomy that has provided inspiration for innumerable dreamers and seekers. The Boston Harbor Islands have been characterized by all of the above and, while rarely seen, these satellites have been essential to the development of the city.

Conversely, the uses of these islands and the structures that were built upon them also speak to our society's fears, prejudices, and desire for control. Programs distributed among the islands have included prisons, quarantine stations, homes for indigents, garbage dumps, horse-rendering plants, and sewage treatment facilities — essentially everything that the city required but did not want to be confronted with on a regular basis. In addition, nearly every island in the harbor has been equipped with military fortifications from the time of the Revolution to the Cold War of the 1950s and 1960s.

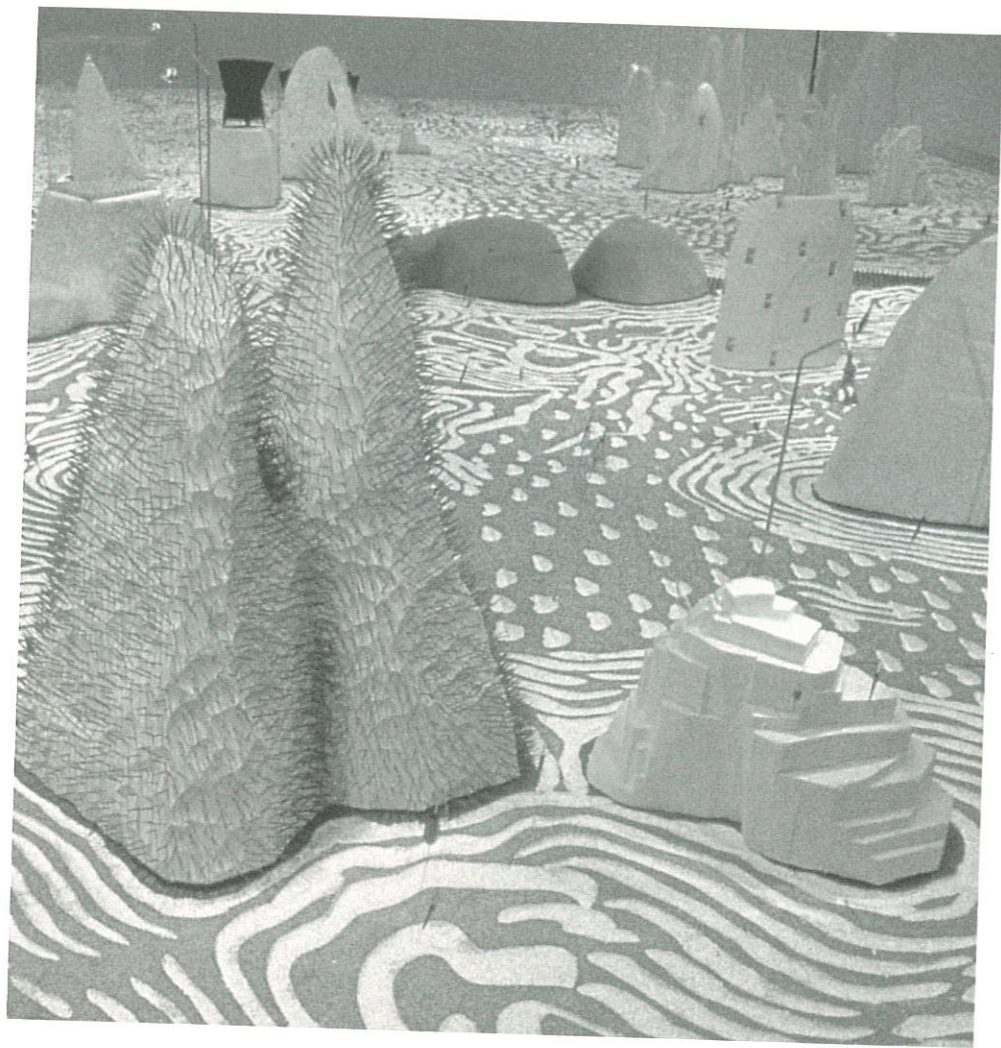
In an abrupt reversal, the situation has been turned inside out: the center of the city has become the home of the most needy while the islands are slated to become a national park dedicated to leisure and recreation. This project seeks to recall the urban history of the islands before it is supplanted by an Arcadian mask.



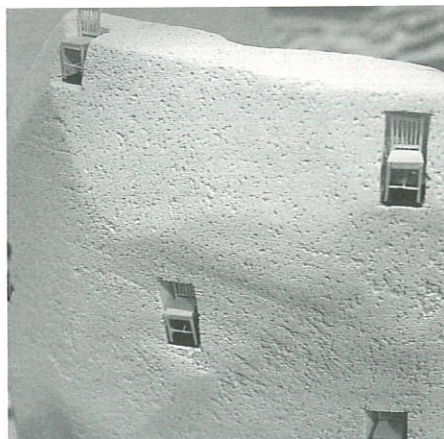


Apple  
Bird  
Bumpkin  
Button  
Calf  
Castle  
Deer  
Gallops  
Georges  
Governors  
Grape  
Graves  
Great Brewster  
Green  
Hangman  
Hog  
Langlee  
Little Brewster  
Little Calf  
Long  
Lovells  
Middle Brewster  
Minot's Light  
Moon  
Nix's Mate  
Nut  
Outer Brewster  
Peddocks  
Raccoon  
Ragged  
Rainsford  
Sarah  
Shag  
Sheep  
Slate  
Snake  
Spectacle  
Thimble  
Thompson  
World's End



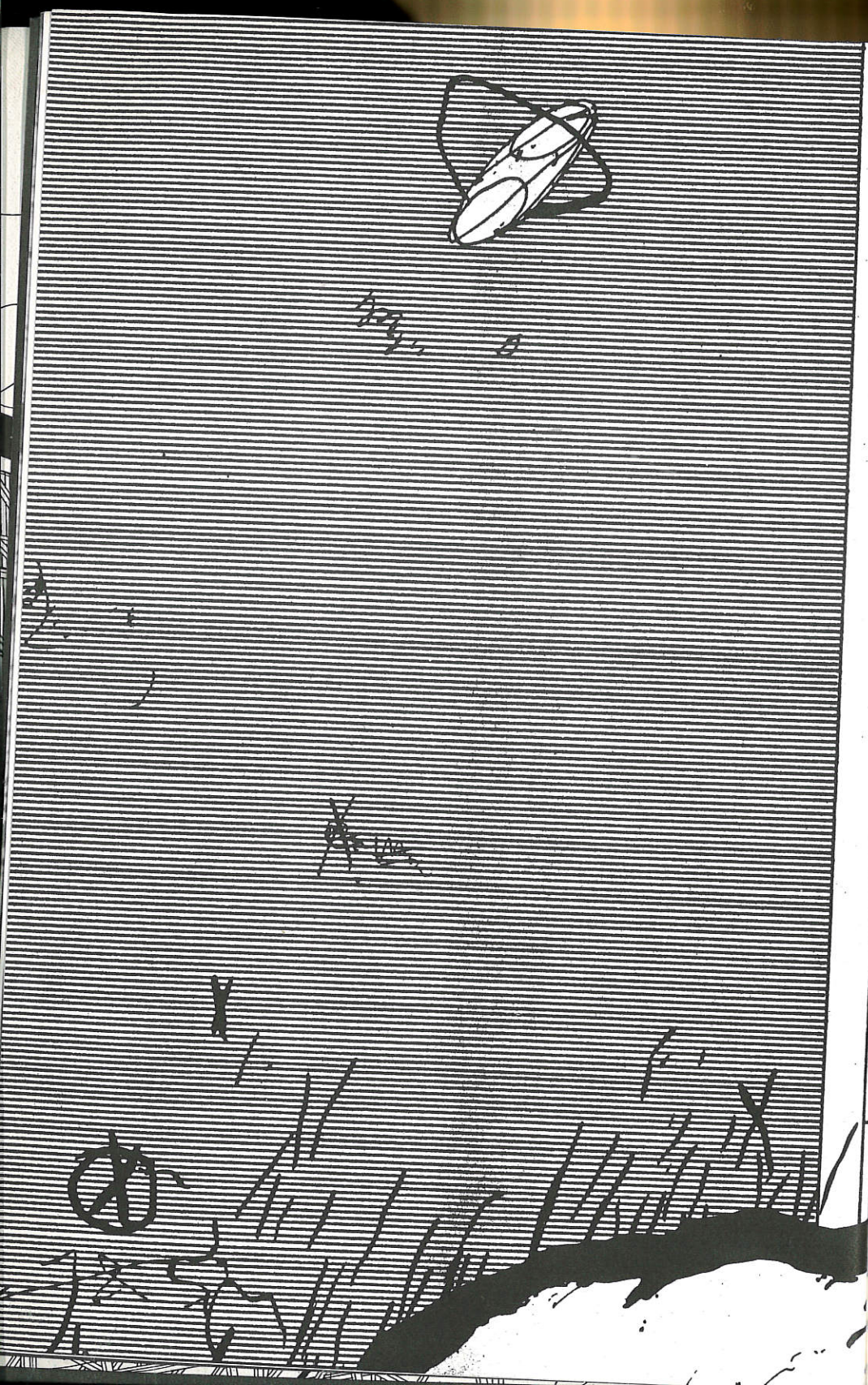


In the foreground is Grape Island, and to the right is Slate Island, which was extensively quarried in order to construct the foundations for the original buildings of Boston. Beyond is Hog Island, renamed Spinnaker Island after luxury condominiums were installed upon the majority of its surface.



Top: Spinnaker Island is the only island featuring residential habitation. Bottom: Rainsford Island has supported a quarantine station, a poorhouse, a veteran's hospital, and a home for delinquent boys. Rock outcroppings on Rainsford Island are covered with inscriptions — personal, historical, and poetic.

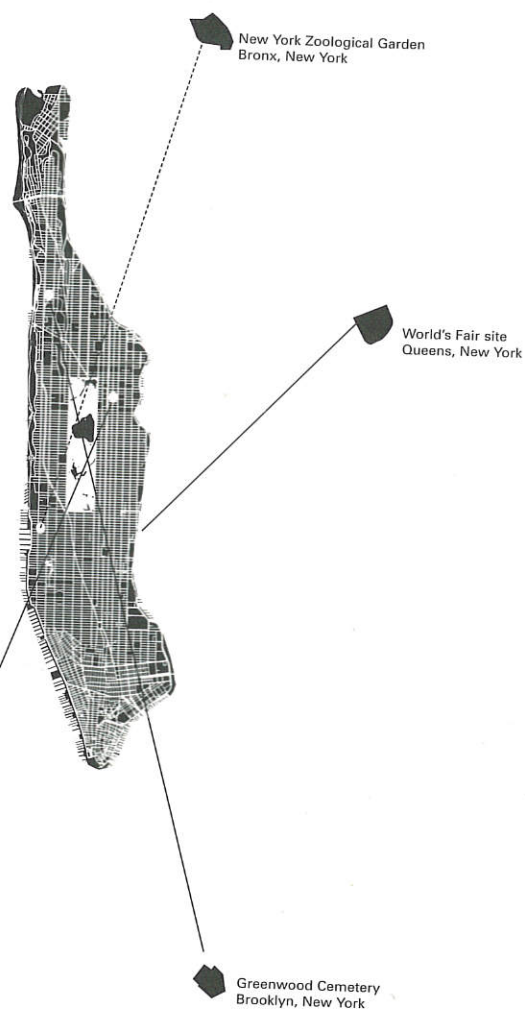




### Noah's Ark

visible cities  
vessel of animals and birds  
vessel of the world  
vessel of man-made objects  
vessel of memory





title: **visible cities—the city as vessel**  
 location: four outer boroughs of New York City  
 installation: Queens Museum of Art, New York City

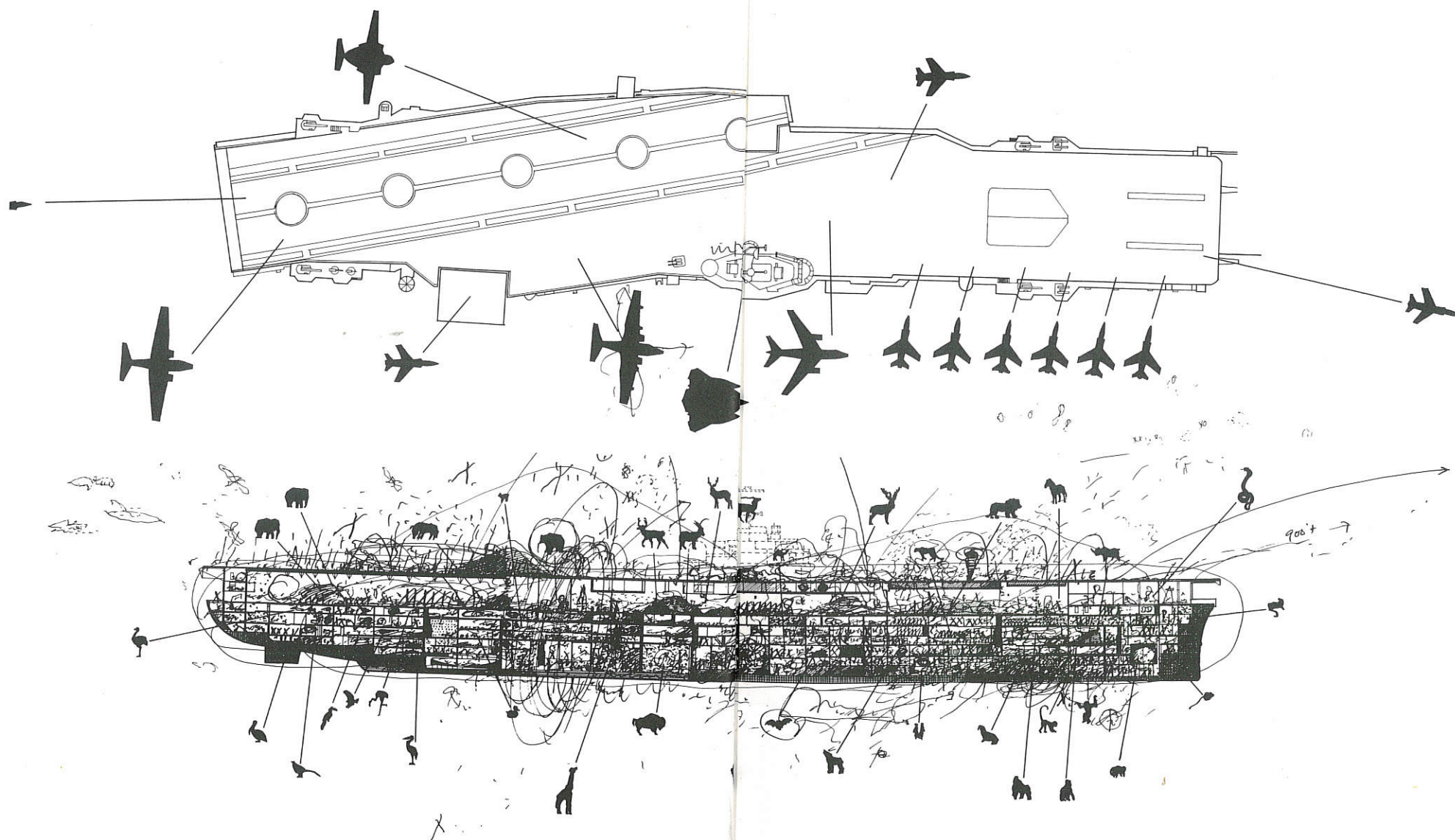


If Manhattan is a vessel, it is like all vessels of limited capacity. As such, the island has been forced to decide what it will keep for itself and what it must jettison. Inevitably, it has been the fate of the four "outer" boroughs to serve as overflow space and, as a result, they are frequently repositories for that which either cannot fit on the island or is deemed undesirable.

This process of exportation has spawned a collection of idiosyncratic sites, each dedicated to the purpose of housing that which cannot remain on Manhattan — wild animals, garbage, giant globes, and the graves of Civil War generals (with one notable exception). These locations have assumed powerful identities, becoming "cities" in their own right and exhibiting some of the same artifice, density, and encyclopedic variety that characterize Manhattan itself.

This project is about joining parallel events that occur both on and off island in an effort to reveal the satellite cities that orbit Manhattan and allow it to masquerade as a self-sufficient whole.





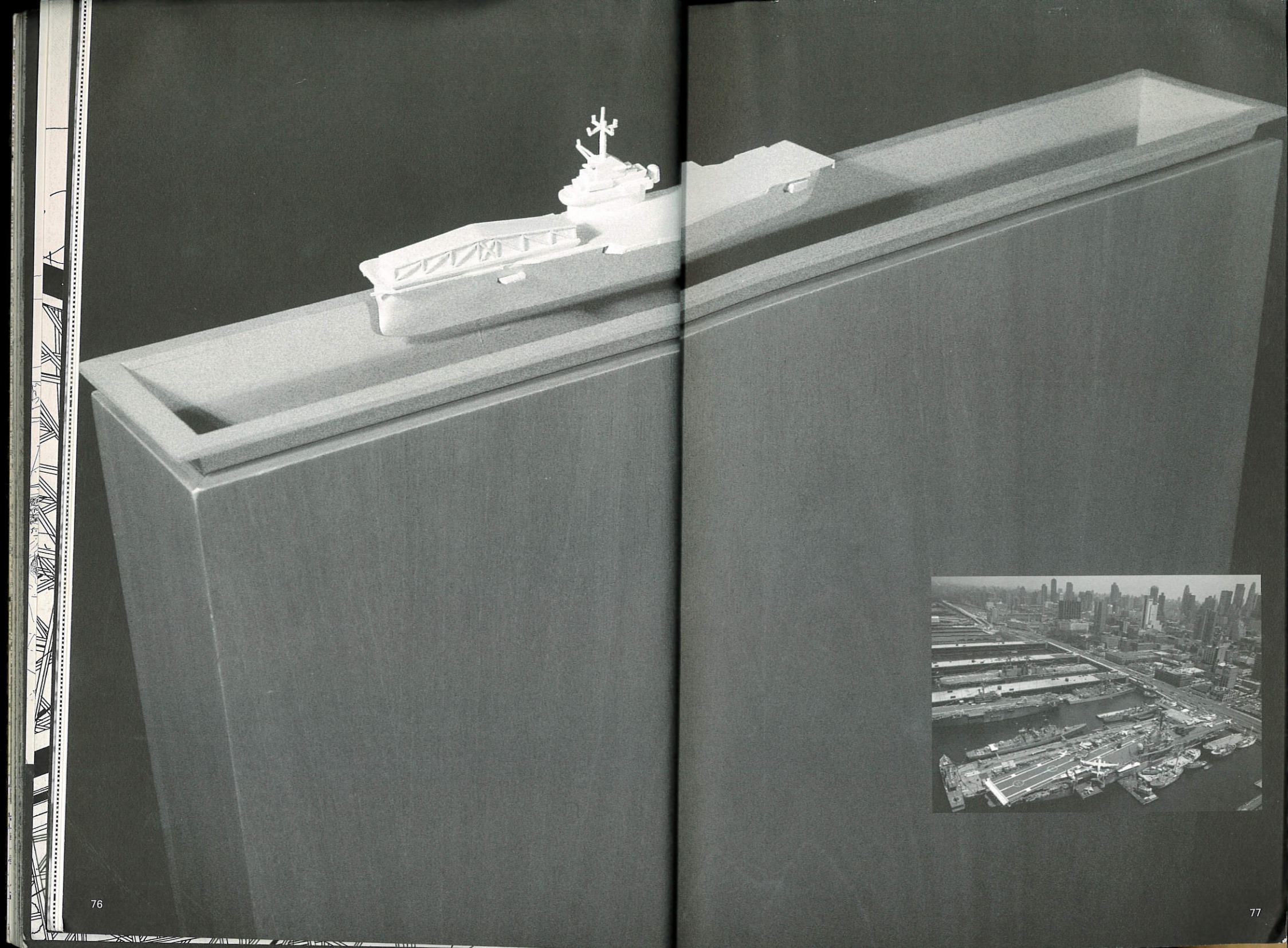
#### vessel of animals and birds

Obsolescence is inevitable for technology but less obviously so for ideas. Retirement was foretold for the aircraft carrier Intrepid, now docked on the west side of Manhattan, and also for the aircraft that have taken refuge on her deck. Proud but inert, the ship sits awkwardly against the island, avoiding the endangered species list by virtue of its new designation as a museum.

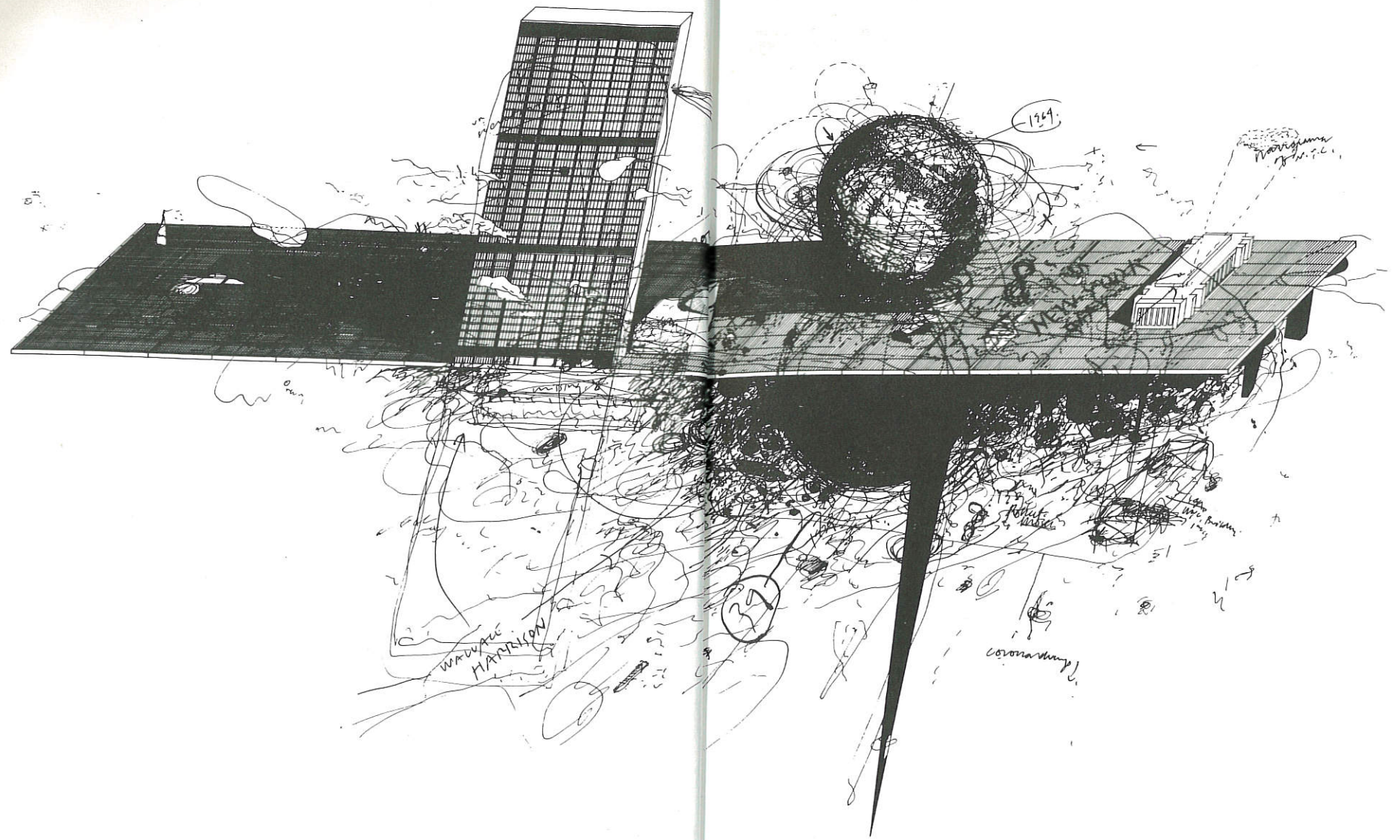
For Noah's Ark at the Zoo in Central Park, the end came gradually and unannounced. The Ark itself was intact but the culture that created it had moved on: "There is no place for Noah's Ark in the new Central Park Children's Zoo design, which avoids fairy tales and religious messages" ("Restoring the Children's Zoo, Seriously," *New York Times*, 28 September 1995, B2). With the realization that the preservation of animals can no longer be considered merely as entertainment, the entire concept of the zoo had changed.

Noah's Ark, and the cleansing myth of which it is a part, engages the idea of the world compressed into a single vessel along with a desire for renewal. In our own time, no ship has offered such a compelling vision of a floating world as the aircraft carrier, its absolutely flat plane being the literal extension of the political landscape. The Vessel of Animals and Birds proposes that the two great ships, the Intrepid and the Ark, move inland as participants in a mythology that links both past and present, destruction and rebirth. The carrier will be inhabited by animals and birds; the Ark will house the human staff.









#### vessel of the world

On what was once the Corona dump in Queens, Robert Moses imagined and built the 1939 World's Fair. Remarkably, he duplicated this feat in 1964 by using an identical layout. Accordingly, the Unisphere of 1964 that remains today was built on the foundation created for the Perisphere twenty-five years earlier. In the period between the fairs Moses sought to bring even greater glory to the site and to himself by making it the permanent home of the United Nations. His vision of a suburban site for the UN was indirectly supported by Le Corbusier and Lewis Mumford, the latter of whom imagined nothing less "than the building of a complete city" (Mumford, "A World Center for the United Nations," *Progressive Architecture* 27 [August 1946]: 70-72).

In fact, the UN met as a body for two months in the only structure to be included in both fairs — the New York City Building — which now houses the great model of the city (another Moses project). Ultimately, the gravitational pull of Manhattan proved to be too great and Mumford's "city" would be compressed into a sculp-

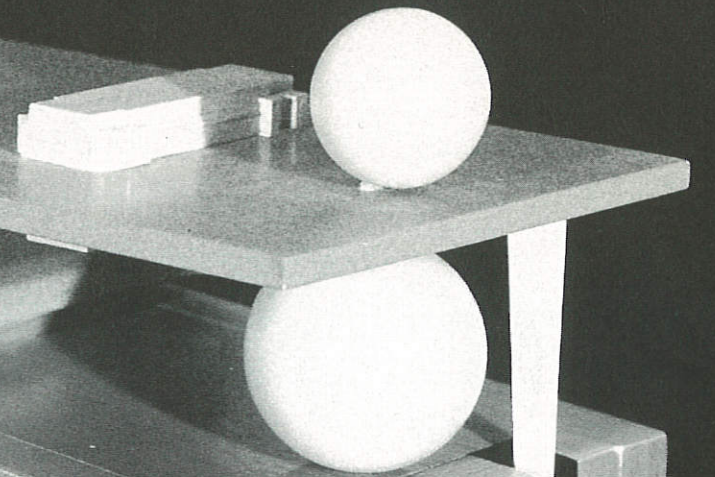
tural wafer, a procedure which is pure Manhattan. The thin slab of the UN Secretariat was eventually placed on a wide plinth and seems to be a monument to the reduction of Mumford's utopia into a digestible unit for consumption by Manhattan.

Both World's Fairs and even the United Nations are politically artificial constructions. Each is reliant on the idea of shared concerns by the nations of the world such that they would want to demonstrate this commitment in built form. Each has also been made redundant by information technologies that link the corners of the globe in ways unimaginable in 1939 or 1964. The Vessel of the World reunites the UN with its intended site and sets both objects adrift.



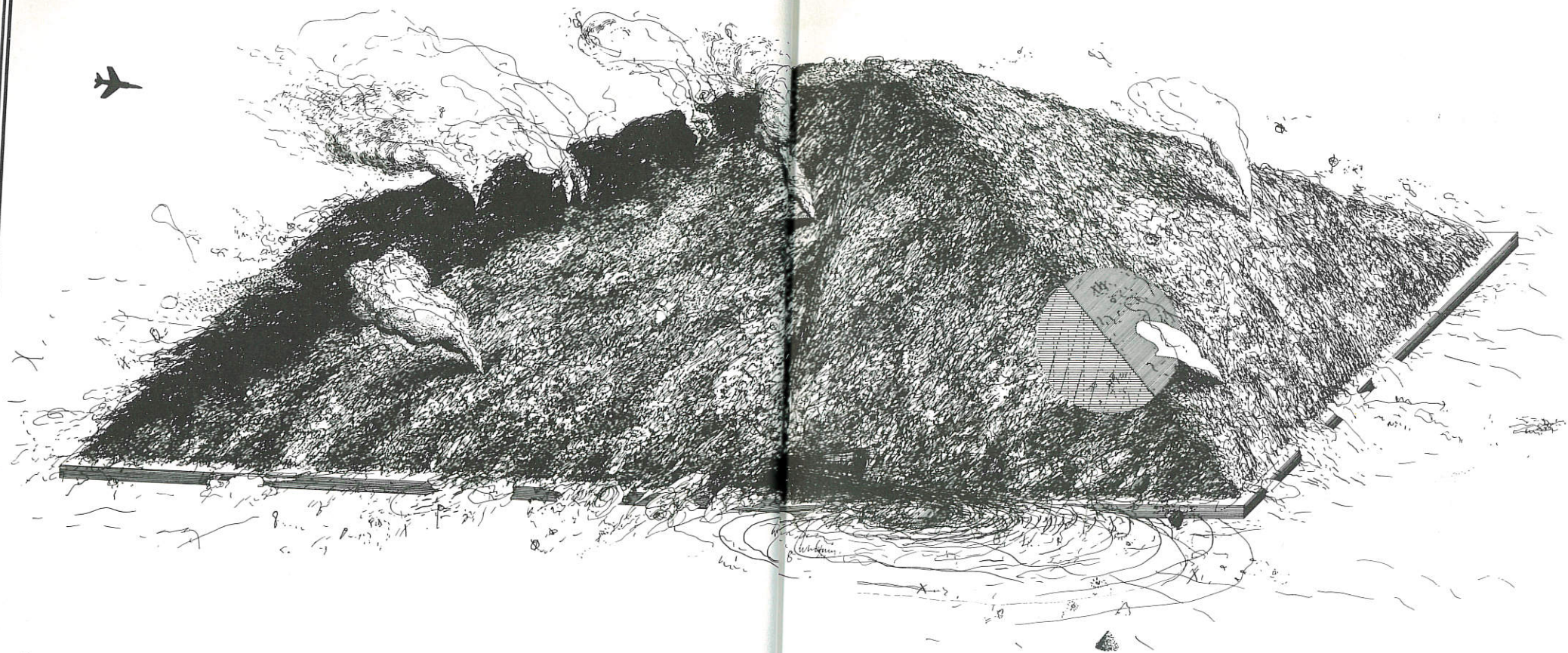


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81





#### vessel of man-made objects

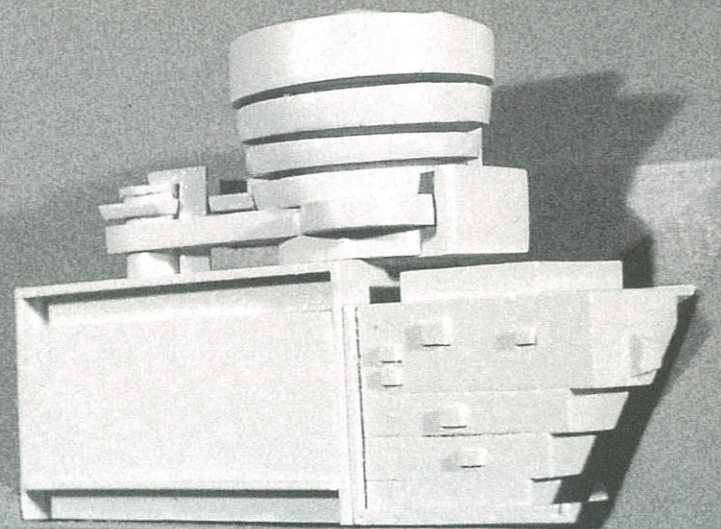
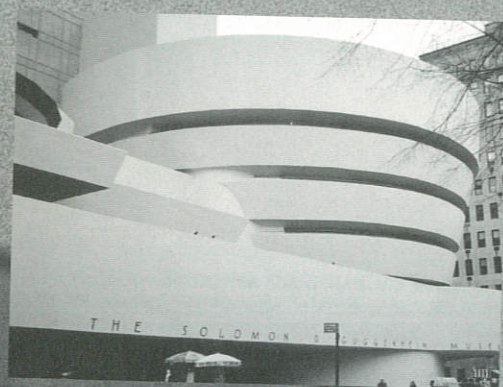
Museums act as filters, removing from circulation those objects deemed important enough to be representative of our highest cultural aspirations. Few artifacts are entitled to museum protection; the number is insignificant relative to the volume of man-made production that is determined to be refuse. And yet, these rejected objects are also collected and saved, and serve as an important cultural record. Due to its limited capacity, the island of Manhattan is dependent upon the exportation of its waste to off-island locations, the largest of which is the Fresh Kills landfill on Staten Island. So valuable has Fresh Kills become as a historical resource that, like a museum, it also has "archivists" on site.

As with the Corona landfill project of 1939, Robert Moses believed that Fresh Kills would also be miraculously converted into some other amenity for the city, in this case a park and municipal airport. Ironically, Frank Lloyd Wright, who had imagined a pastoral site for the Guggenheim Museum, described the ideal setting in terms that

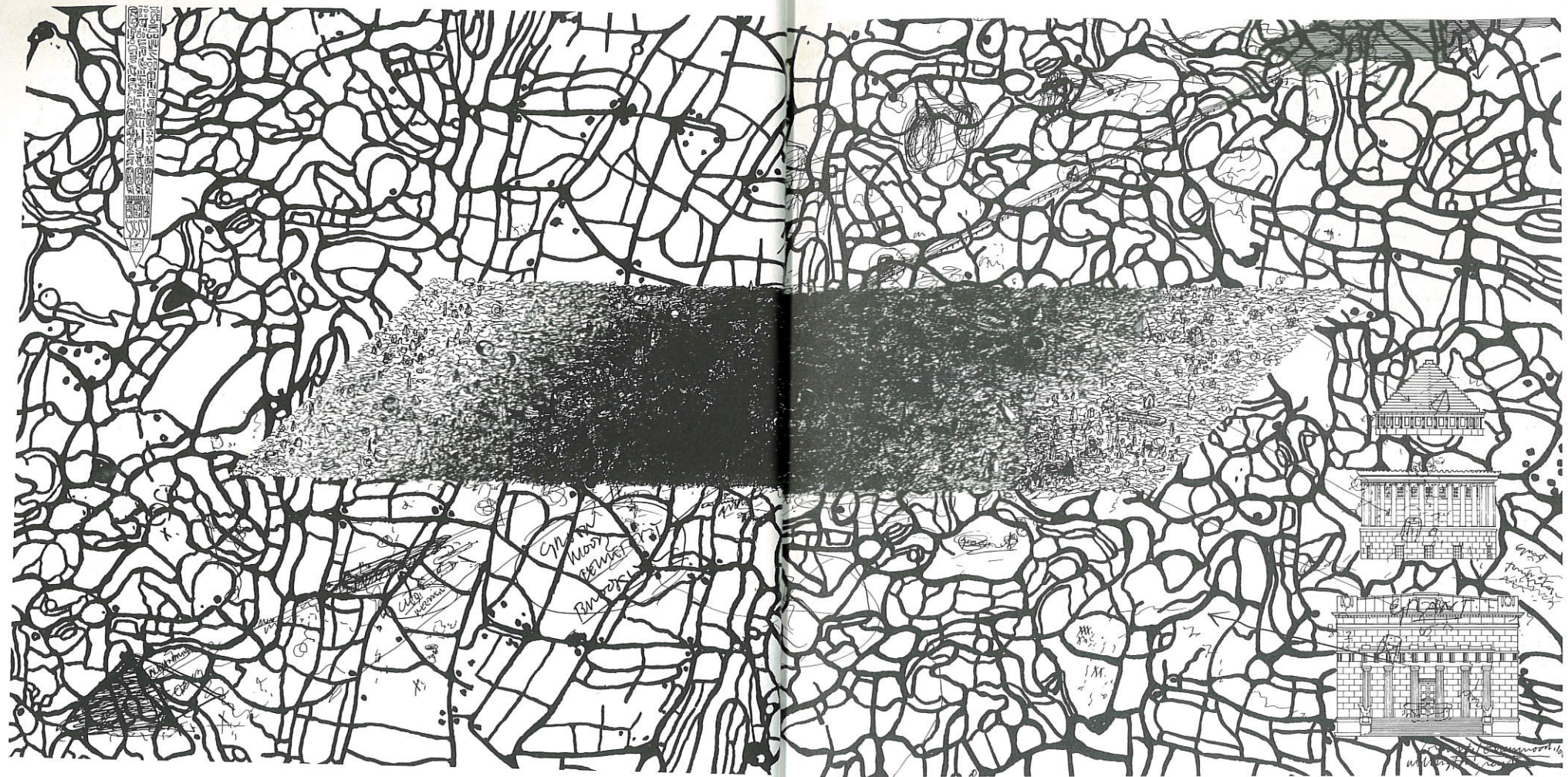
parallel the mountain that the landfill was slowly becoming: "[The museum] would form an individual hill crown, rising up from within and above the new municipal park areas which within a decade will be to Greater New York what Central Park is now to little old New York" (Wright, letter to Solomon R. Guggenheim, 14 July 1943, in Bruce Brooks Pfeiffer, ed., *Frank Lloyd Wright: The Guggenheim Correspondence* [Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press], 9-12).

Wright ultimately settled for a site in Manhattan (with the guidance of Moses) but his prediction about the vastness of the outlying municipal park may yet prove true. Fresh Kills is over 3,000 acres in area and is now the tallest land mass on the eastern seaboard (505' in height). In Egyptian terms, a culture noted for the preservation of its relics, the waste heap now equals "twenty-five times the volume of the Great Pyramid at Giza" (William L. Rathje, *National Geographic* [May 1991]: 126).









#### vessel of memory

When deciding what should remain on the island of Manhattan and what should be located elsewhere, nothing was more easily decided than the issue of the cemetery. For reasons of health, space, economics, and psychology, it was determined that the cemeteries were a pastoral matter, not an urban one, and as a result they were purposefully located in areas closer to "nature." The most elegant and architectural of all is the Greenwood Cemetery, the "Garden City of the Dead," in Brooklyn. Unlike the refuse sites of Queens and Staten Island, which would be transformed by force of will into park land, the cemetery was expected to assume that role effortlessly: As stated in the cemetery's own promotional literature, "The Green-Wood is destined to become a popular and elegant place of resort where some of the wild and lovely features of nature may be retained near the city." Thus, not only was the cemetery removed from the city geographically, it was also thought to be of a different mind-set altogether.

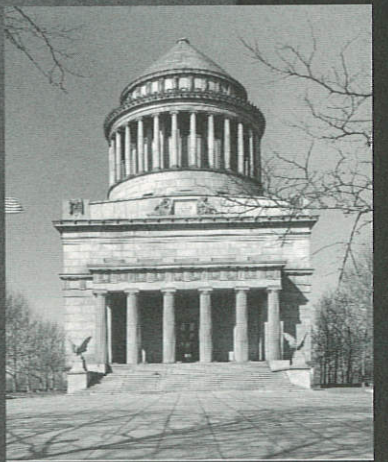
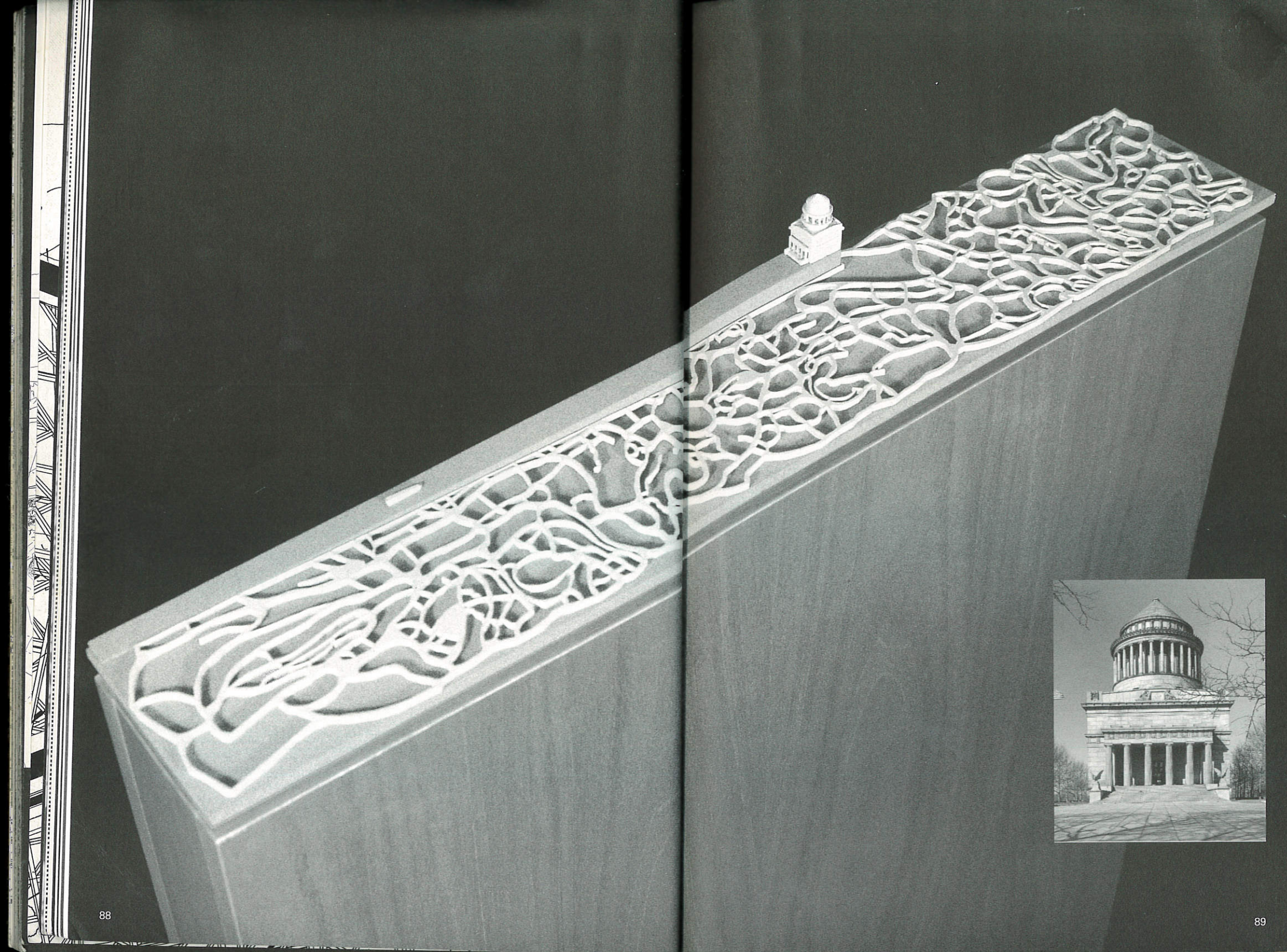
Manhattan has never felt completely comfortable with its most significant corpse in residence, General Ulysses S. Grant. His west-side tomb, modeled on the tomb of Mausolus, one of the Seven Wonders of the

Ancient World, is in a sad state of neglect and there are those who would clearly like to rid the island of this anomaly: "We have to remove Grant. [He] has never really belonged in New York" ("Grant Us Peace," *New York Times*, 7 May 1995). Emboldened by the thought of a homeless Grant, Senator Judy Bear Topinka of Illinois, said, "[W]e are coming for him. We are. We're going to come take him home."

Cleopatra's Needle in Central Park set an extraordinary precedent for the careful and calculated transfer of a monument from one point to another, in this case from Alexandria, Egypt, to Manhattan. Now installed as part of the museum culture of Manhattan, the obelisk seems comfortable on the island. The idea of relocating monuments as memory of their origin fades has been borrowed to create the Vessel of Memory.

Greenwood Cemetery is the home of thirty-two Civil War generals and one in particular, Major General Henry Wagner Halleck (d. 1872). It was Grant who replaced Halleck as the head of the Union Army. The Vessel of Memory allows history to repeat itself, and restores Grant to his rightful place within it.







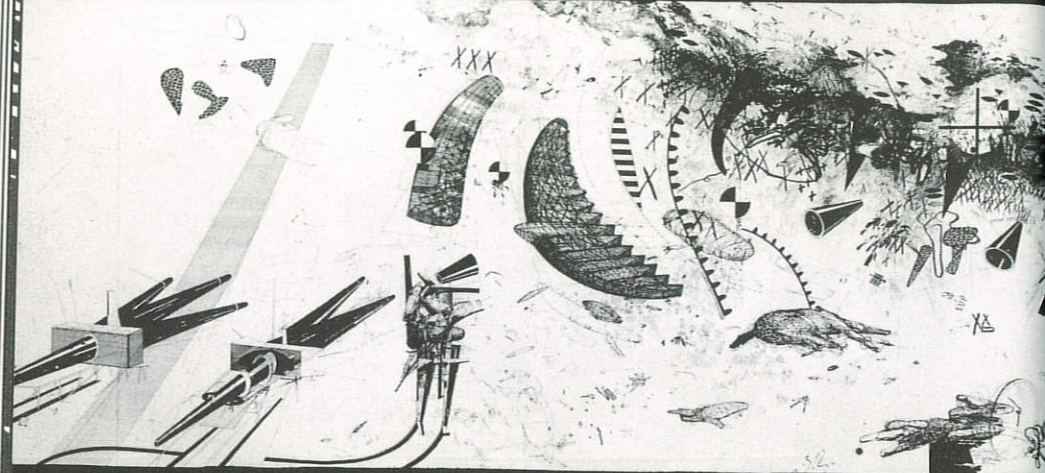


**Fields**

Gettysburg  
Mississippi



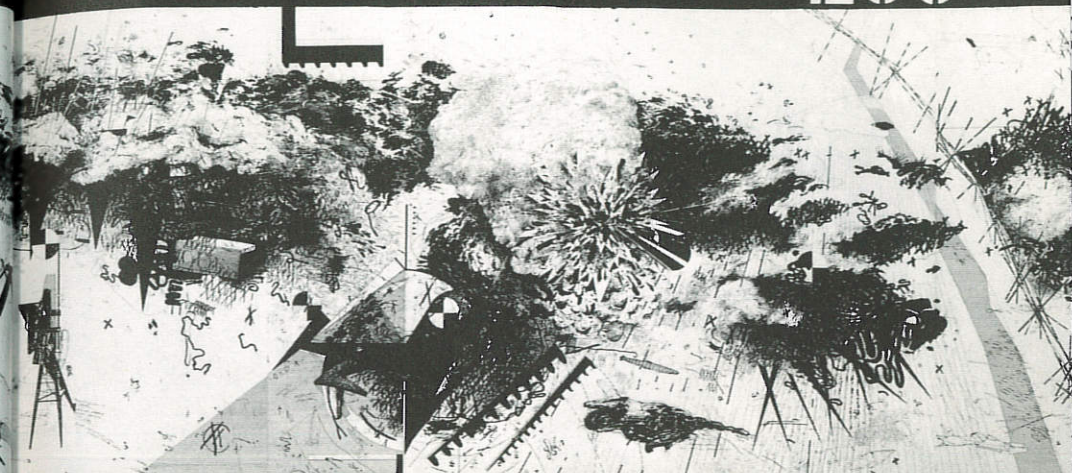
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In the 19th century, the cyclorama was the cultural equivalent to the cinema on today's entertainment landscape. The viewer of a cyclorama entered the exhibition space from below, arriving at a central elevated vantage point. In the foreground, three-dimensional objects were carefully scaled and positioned so that they would merge with an artificial horizon established by a two-dimensional painting attached to a drum-like interior. The effect was a limitless extension of space. The themes of these constructions were frequently military campaigns that took full advantage of the potential optical fabrications and positioned the viewer in the maelstrom of battle.

The Gettysburg Cyclorama, which was first exhibited in Boston in 1884, is now housed in a facility designed

200

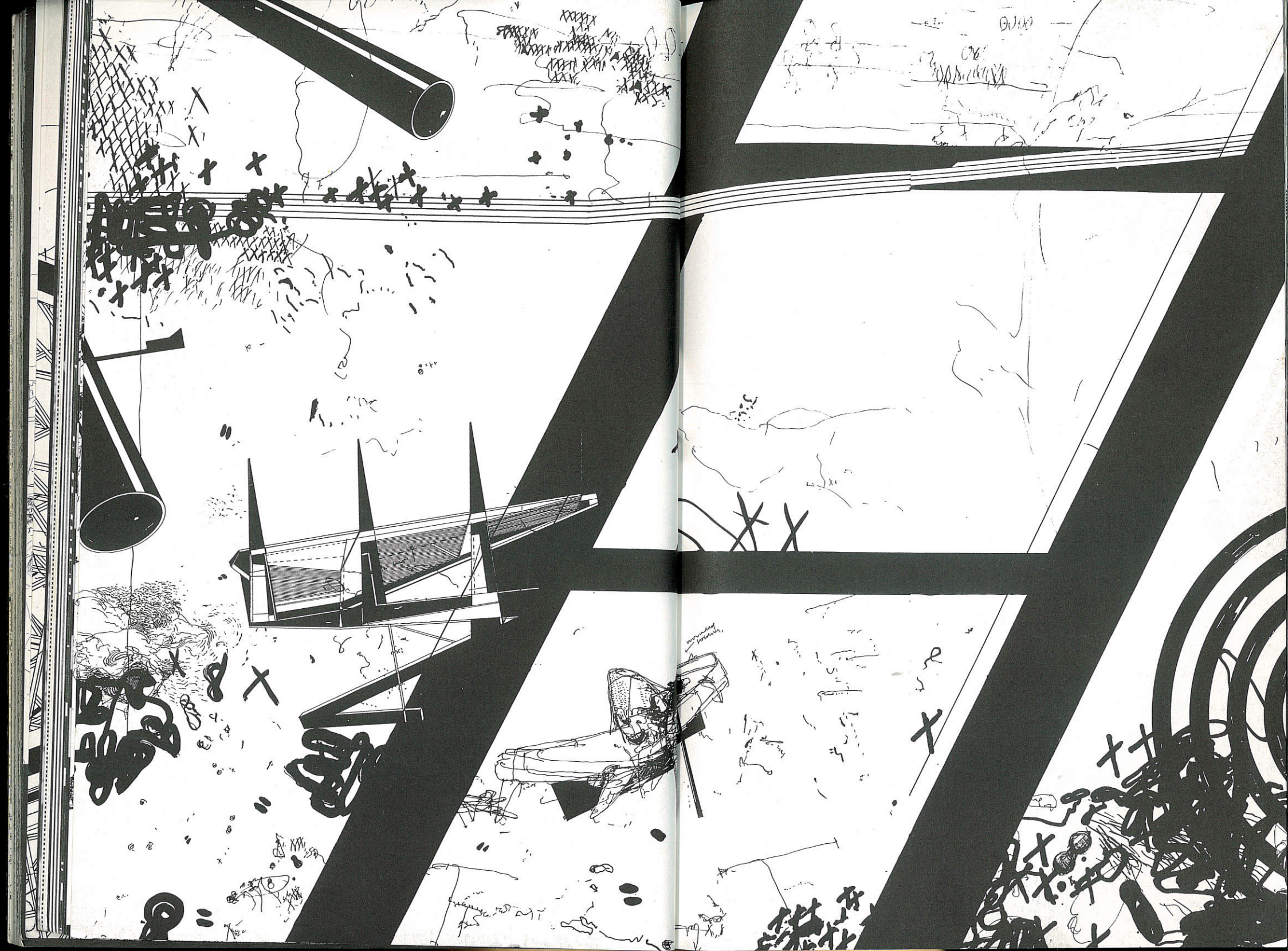


by Richard Neutra in 1962 and positioned directly on the battlefield. This project revisits the original 400' painting of the Battle of Gettysburg by Paul Dominique Philippoteaux and the notion of war as spectacle. The resultant installation and drawing were created specifically for the original Cyclorama Building in Boston and was first exhibited there. As the Civil War introduced mechanization on a ghastly scale, particular attention was paid to the equestrian events within the painting as the horse represented the bridge between man and machine. Connections between leisure-time diversions and the dark side of mechanization are also suggested by the manipulation of previously familiar sporting equipment such as boat motors and bowling balls.





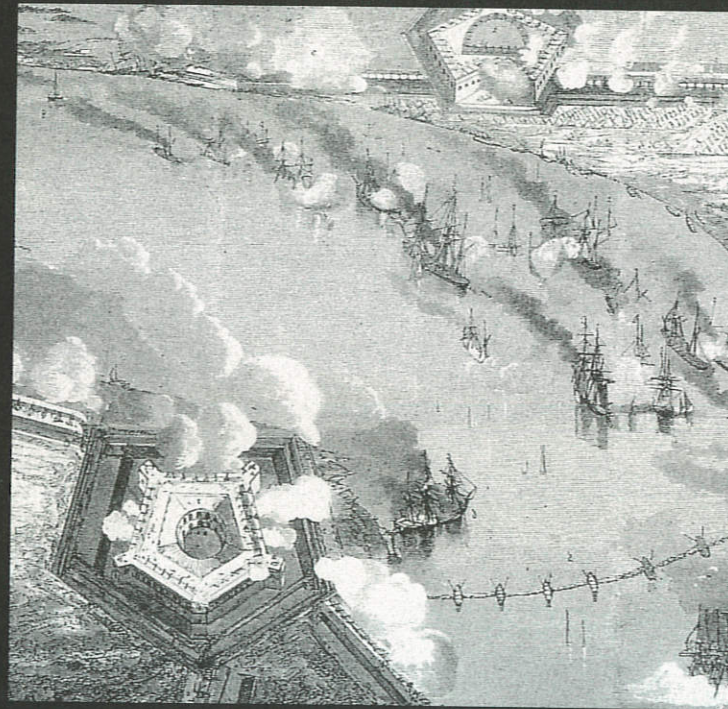






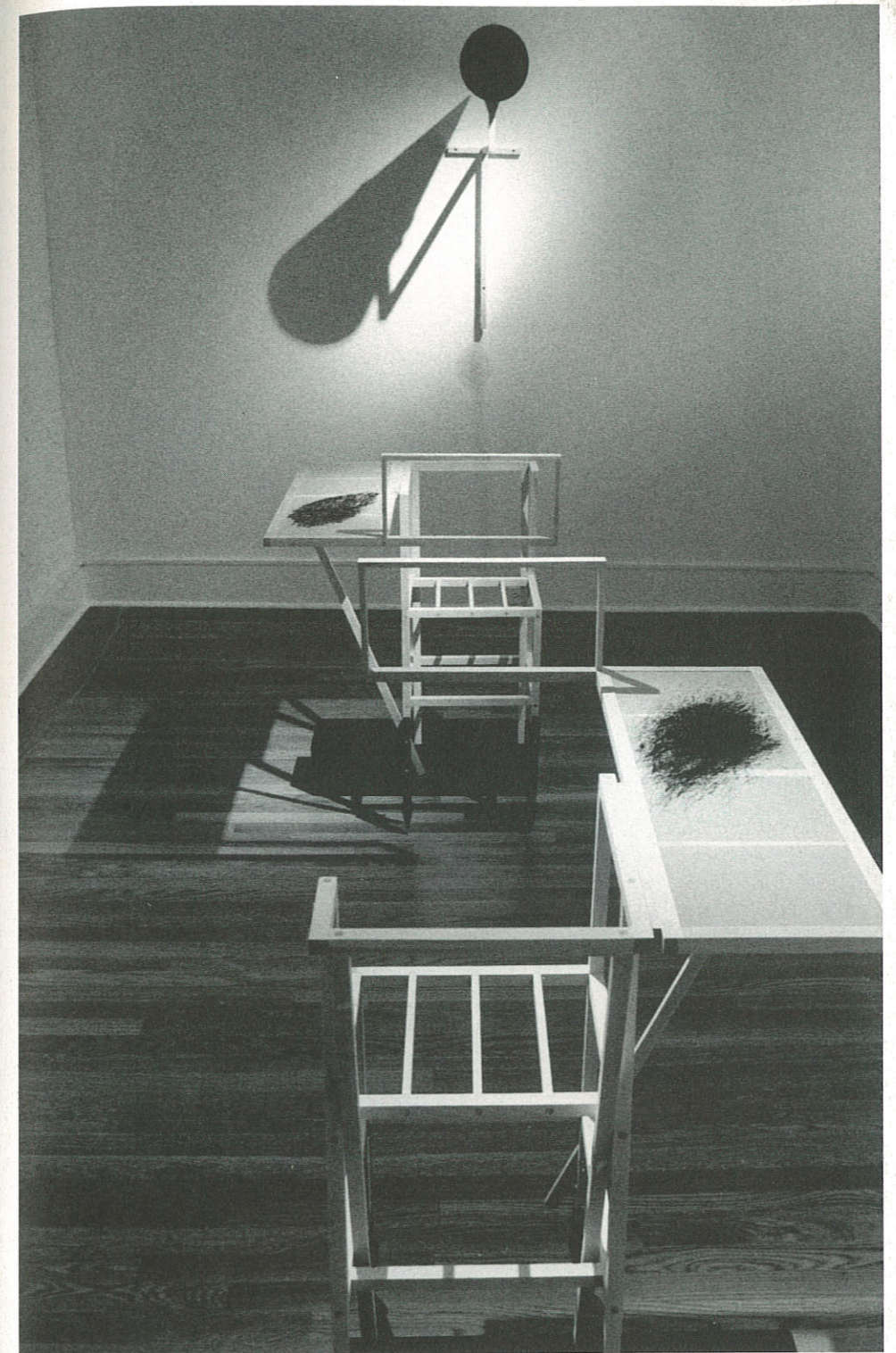






title: **Mississippi**  
location: Mississippi River, New Orleans, Louisiana

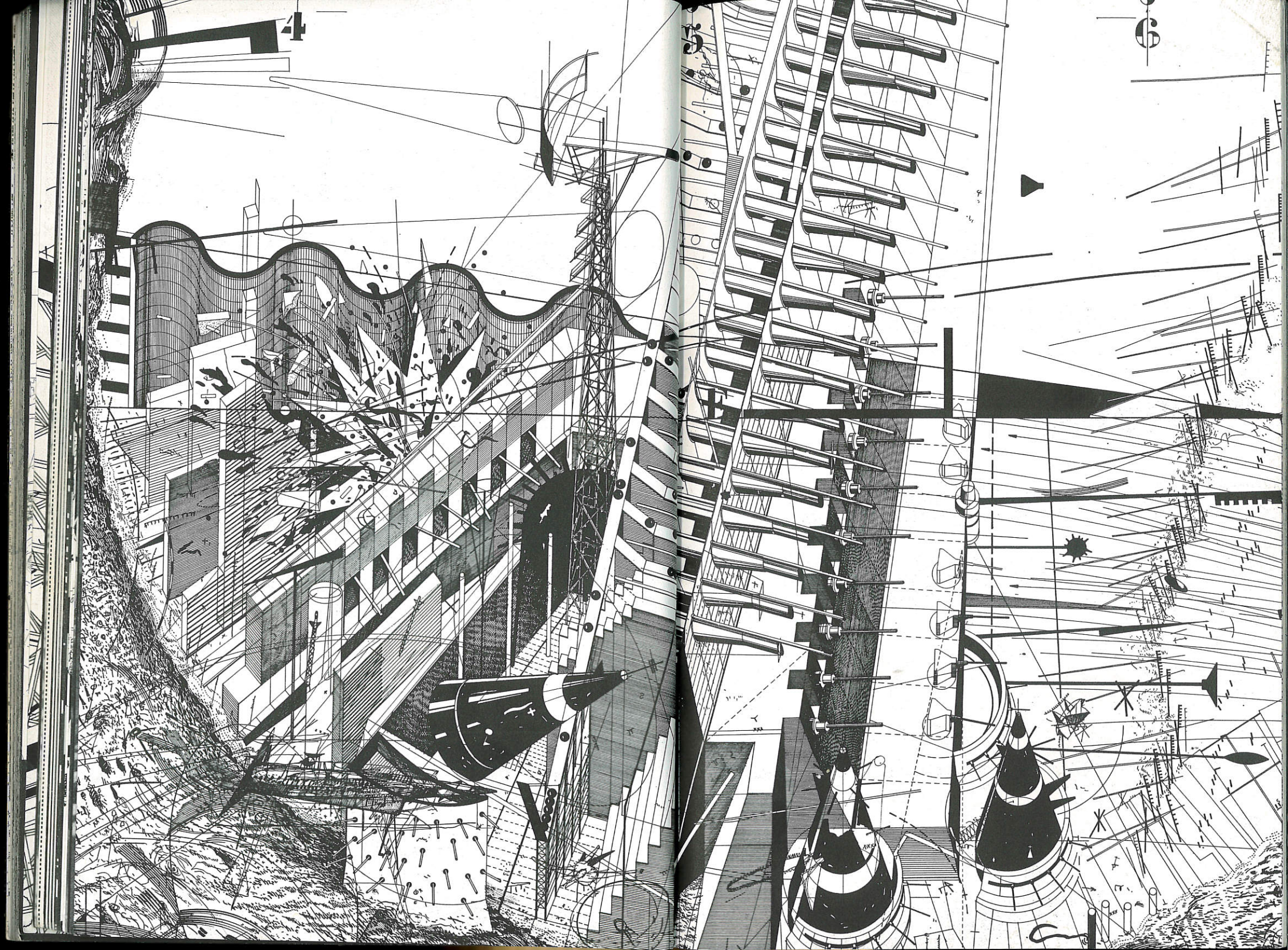
The city of New Orleans was positioned and fortified from its inception to withstand onslaughts from both hostile armies and natural disasters. From its initial buttressed fortress system to the contemporary flood protection walls and levees, the city has enjoyed a unique relationship with its landscape. This composite drawing collects together twelve of the most significant encounters between city and river in preparation for the "Bridging History" project (see pages 142-47).



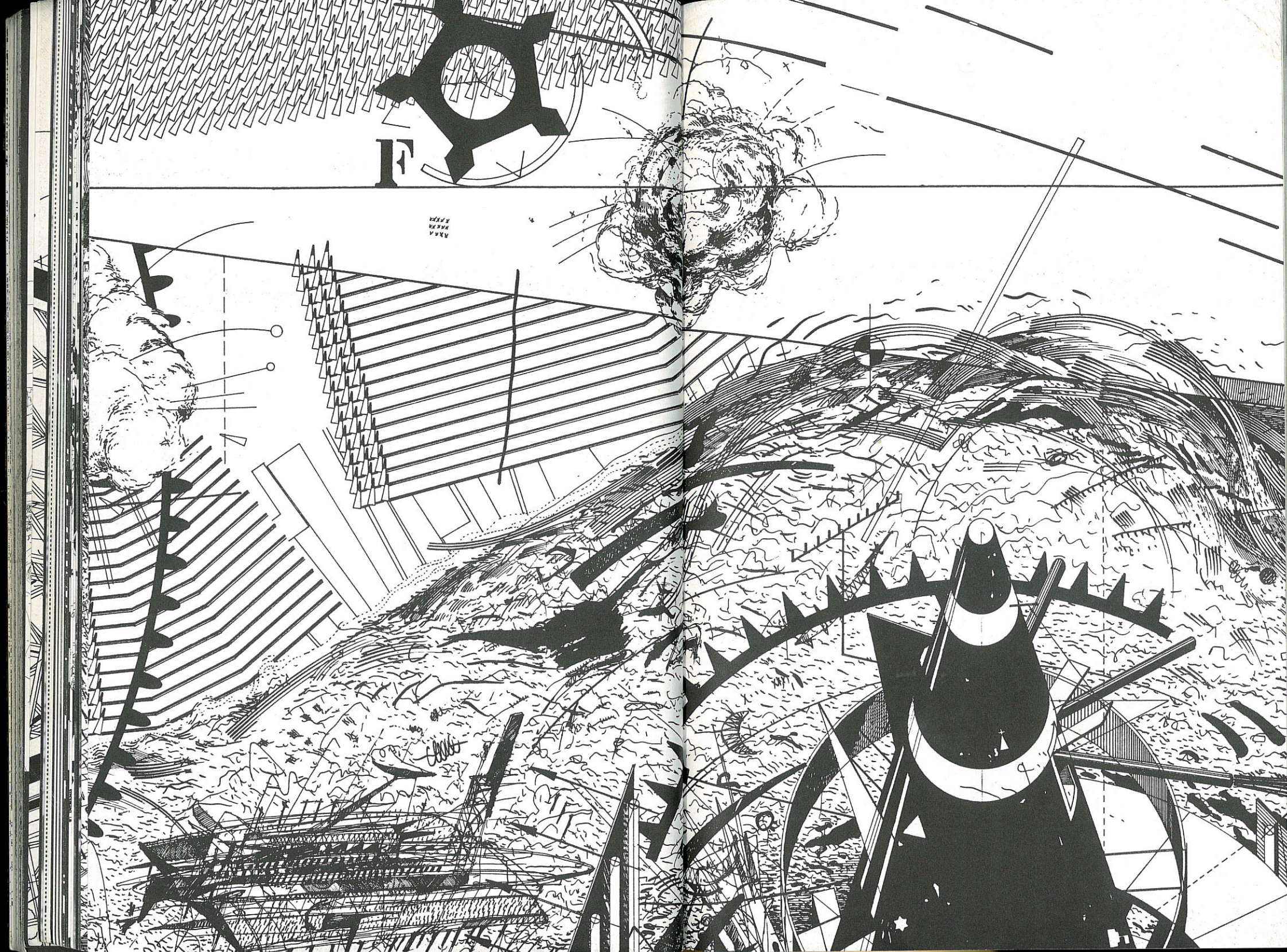




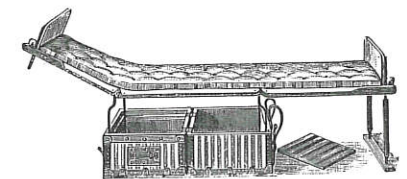
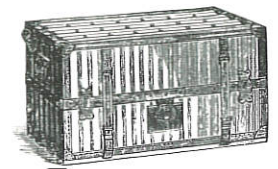
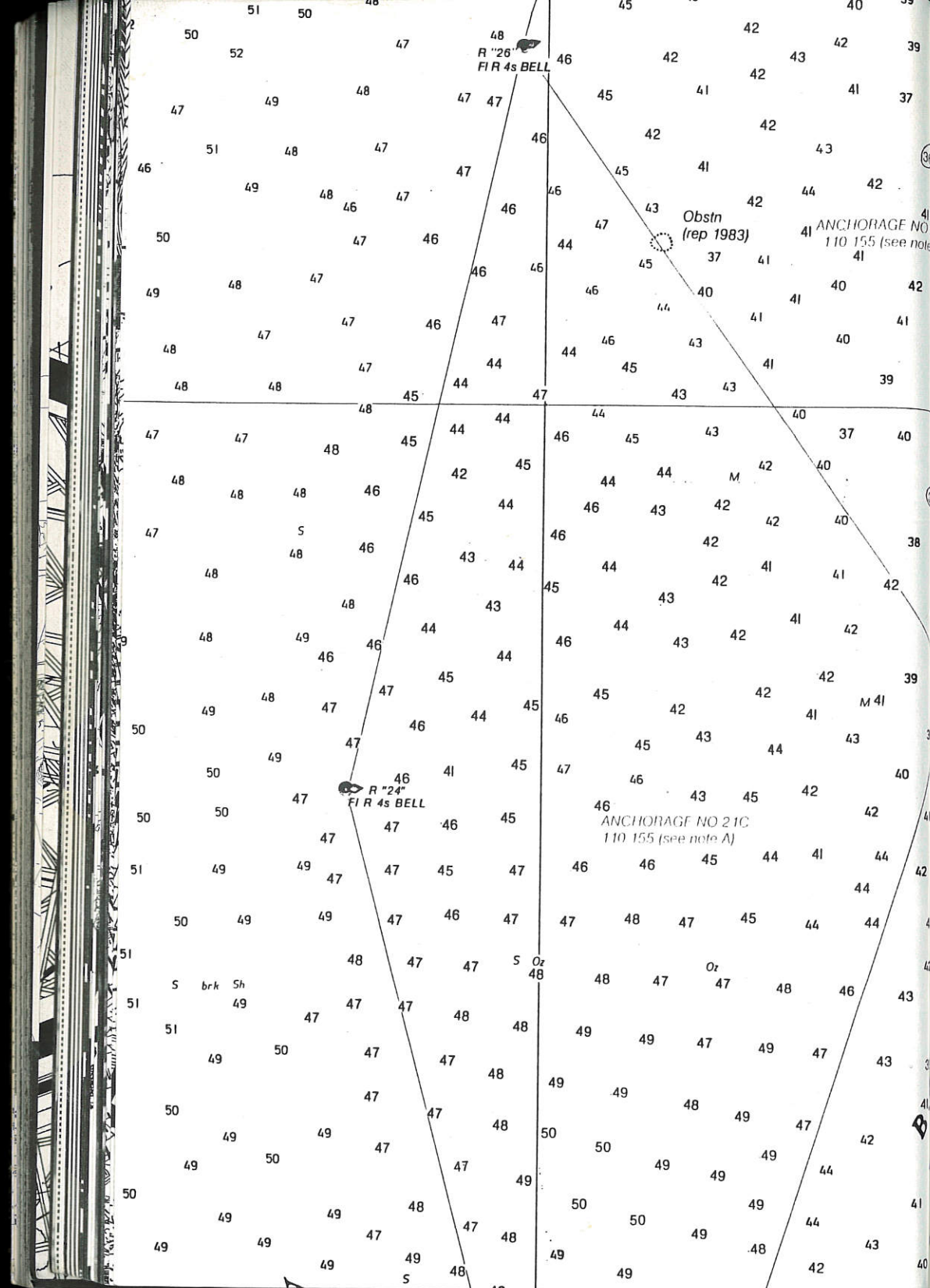












# **Habitable Vessels**

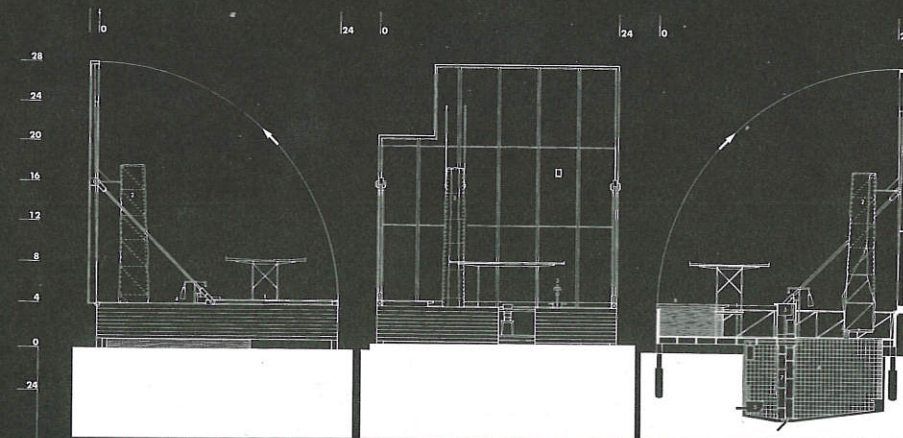
Maison Vuitton (2)

thin house

house within a house

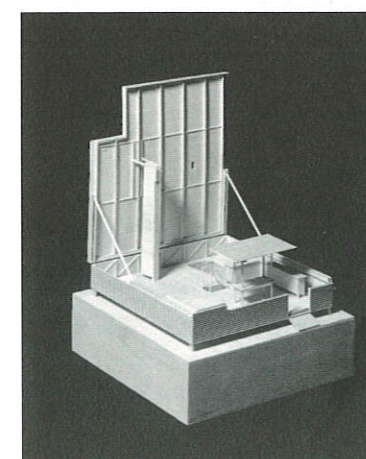
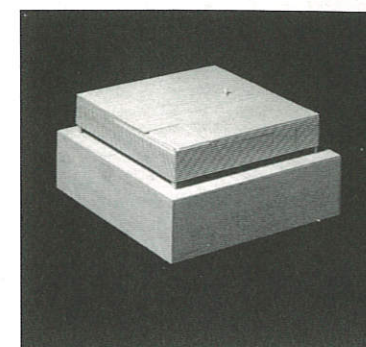
subdivision of surveillance



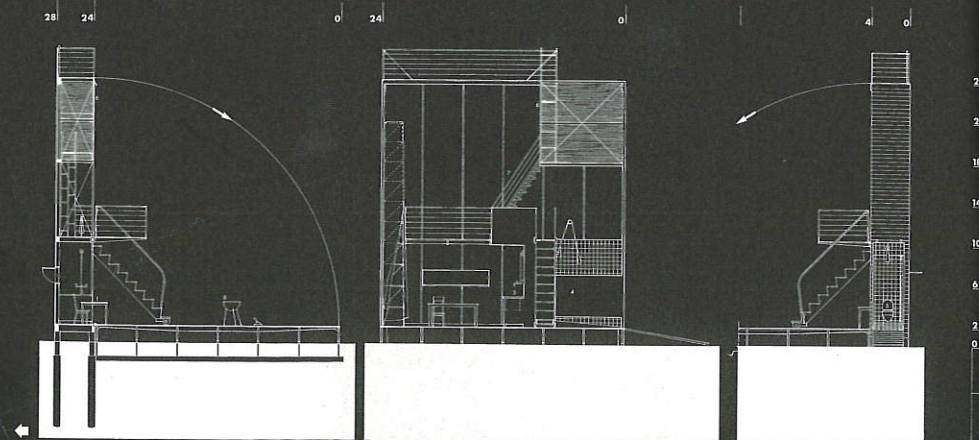


title: **Maison Vuitton (horizontal prototype)**  
 location: variable  
 dimensions: 24' x 24' x 4'

This project represents a challenge: when one "retreats" from daily life in the city or suburb to a remote location, one should also leave behind the dulling comforts of the contemporary house. The objective is to reduce the number of "filters" that exist between ourselves and the natural environment (i.e., air-conditioning, the automobile, television, the Internet, etc.) and to reestablish a connection with more enduring frames of reference (sunrise and sunset, for example). However, the suggested prototypes do not imply a complete restructuring of daily life. In fact, they are derived from the programmatic armature of the contemporary dwelling, exposing and objectifying each of the events that would characterize a typical day — bathing, dressing, eating, sleeping, etc.

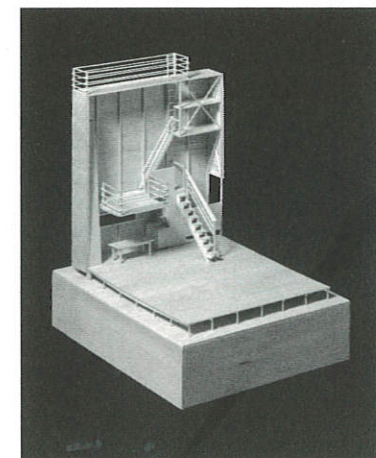
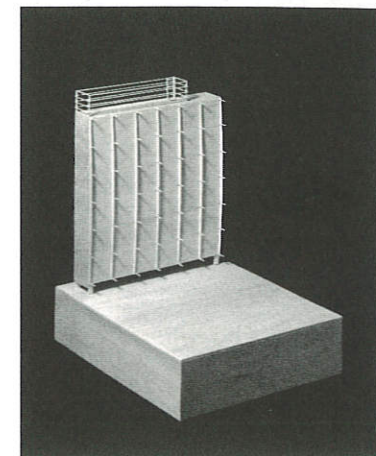




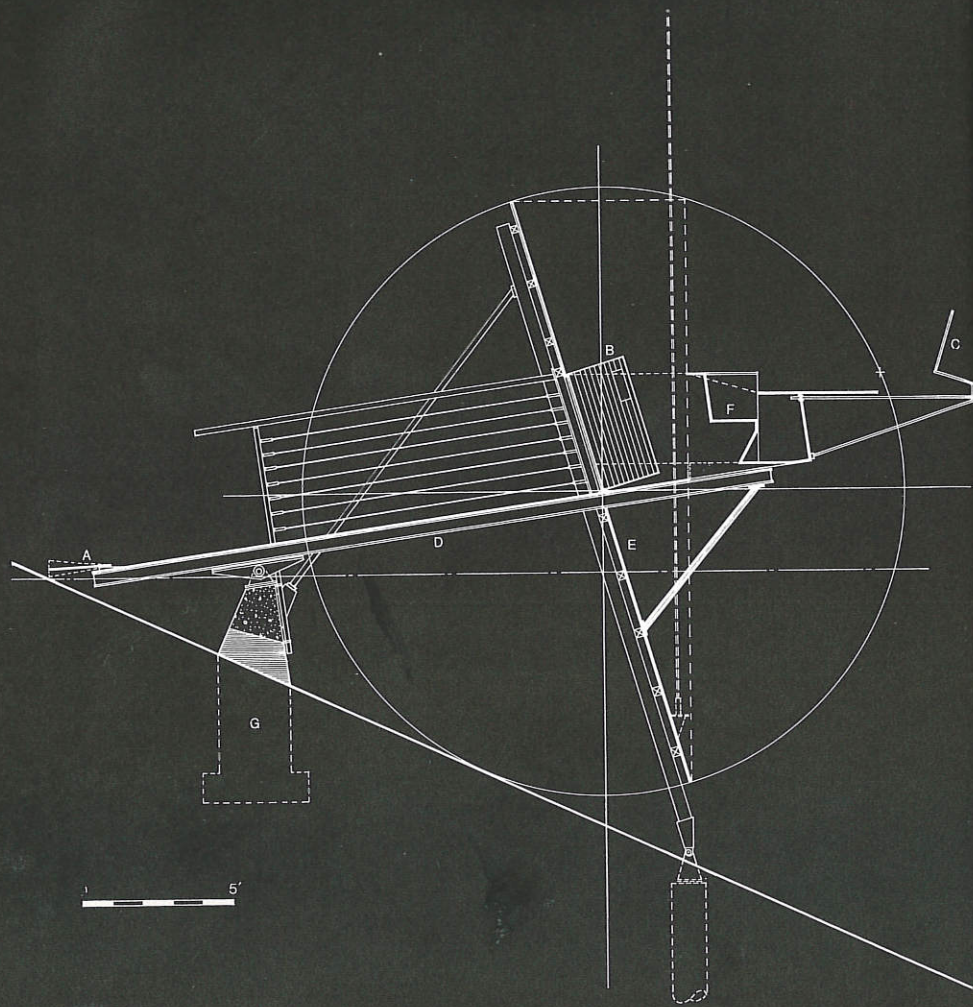


title: **Maison Vuitton (vertical prototype)**  
 location: variable  
 dimensions: 24' x 24' x 4'

All travel requires the employment of luggage to transport familiar and necessary items from the "home" to alternative sites, thus smoothing the transition from the known to the strange. Using the suitcase as an analog for the two "Vuitton" houses, the beginning and termination of a "retreat" is marked by the actual opening and closing of the house. While in their dormant state, the houses are essentially locked trunks. Once opened, they provide a site — horizontally and vertically arranged — for daily life that is essentially out-of-doors.

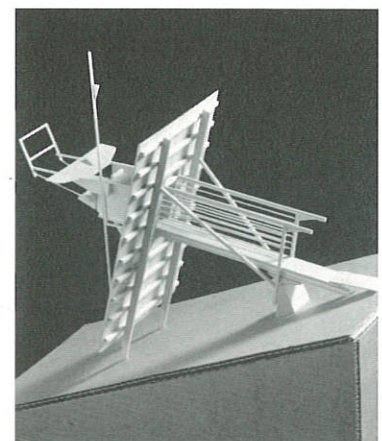
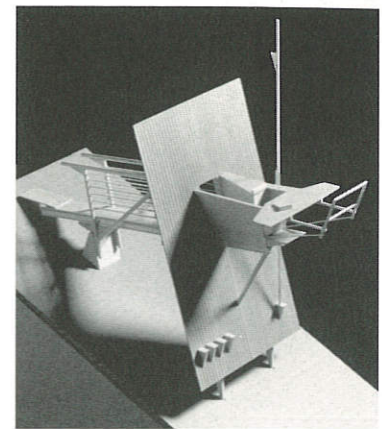




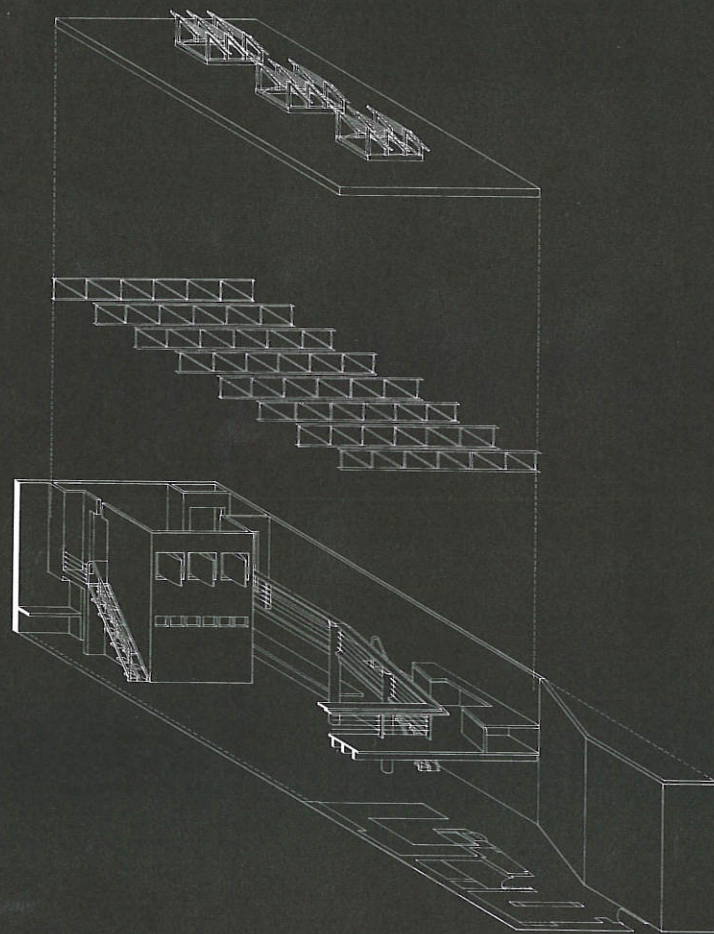


title: **thin house**  
 location: DeCordova Museum and Sculpture Park grounds, Lincoln, Massachusetts  
 dimensions: 16' x 24' x 24'

Like the Maison Vuitton prototypes, this project is about the reduction of the house to its most elemental components. The thin house explores the rationale for the siting of a mansion that later became a museum facility. Now an inward-looking repository for inert objects, the motivation for positioning the house high on a hill with a commanding view of a reservoir is obscured. The thin house repositions the idea of a house in the garden and offers a compressed entry sequence, wall, door, writing desk, and window.

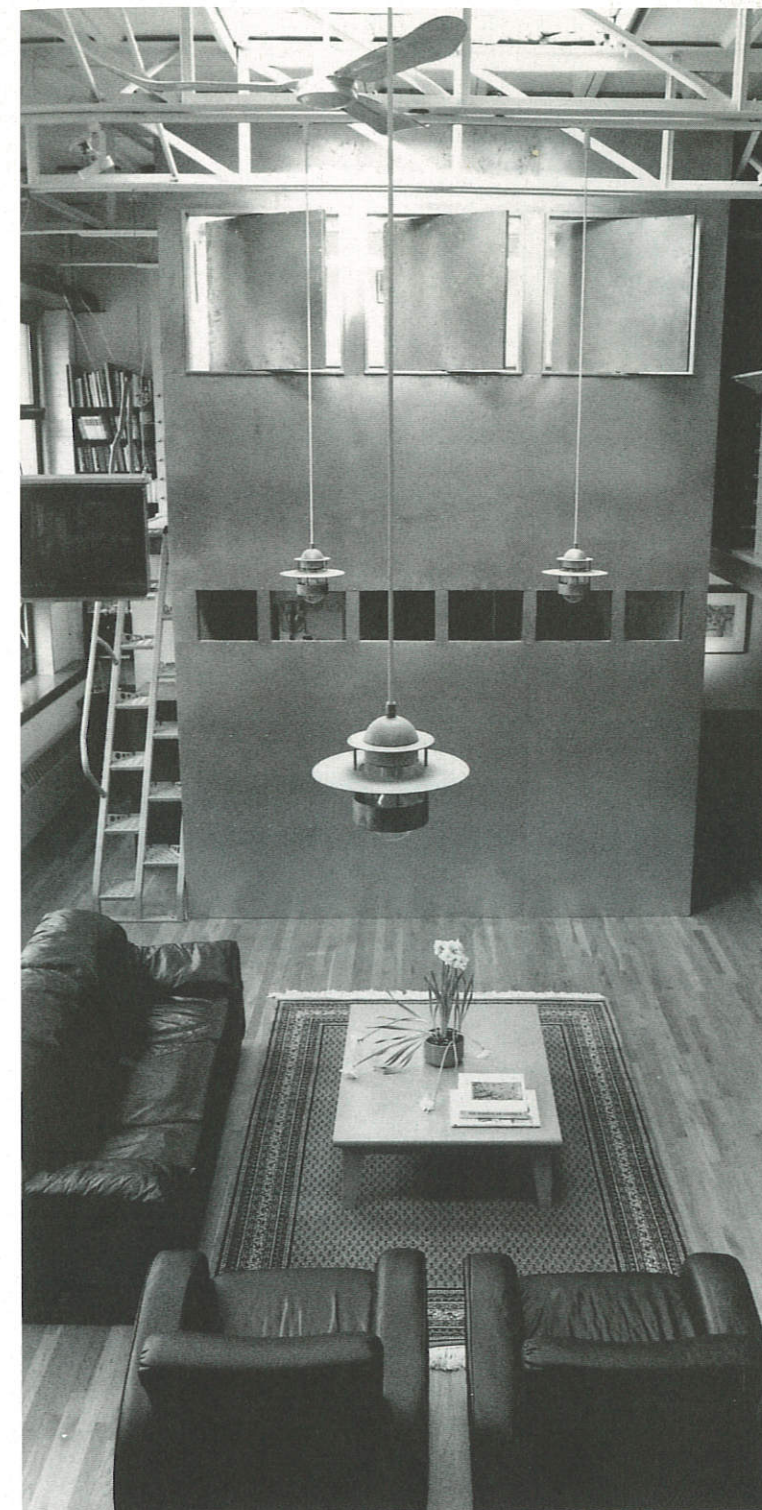




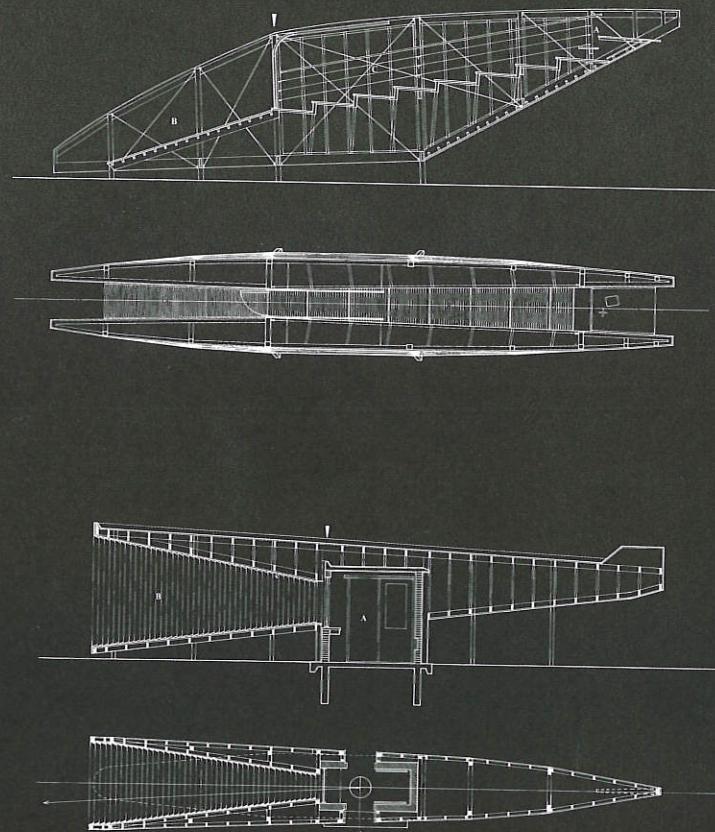


title: **house within a house**  
 location: artist housing complex, Newton, Massachusetts  
 dimensions: box only — 12' x 12' x 17.5'

A residence is to be situated in a former gymnasium space. A simple box is proposed within the pre-existing shell to house the private aspects of the program. The skin of the container is sheet steel with solid pivoting panels in the openings. Access to the second level is provided by a Lapayre stair.

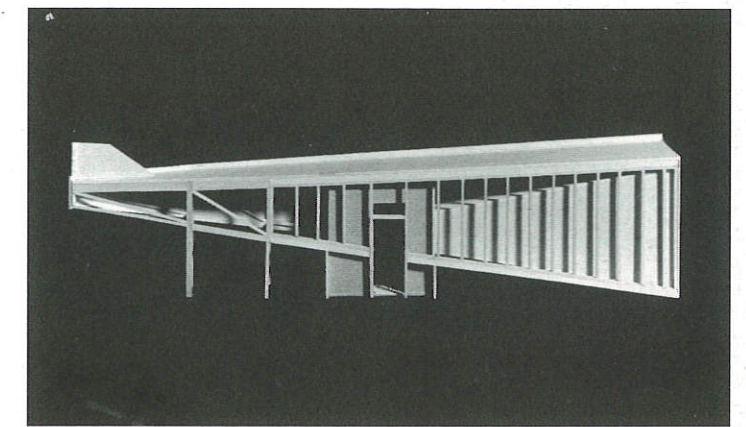
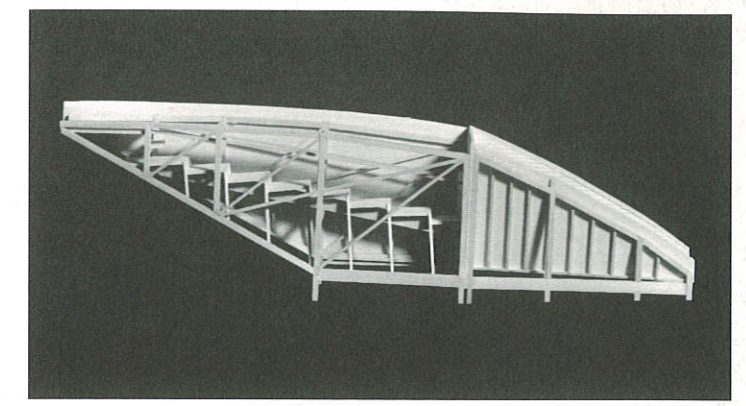






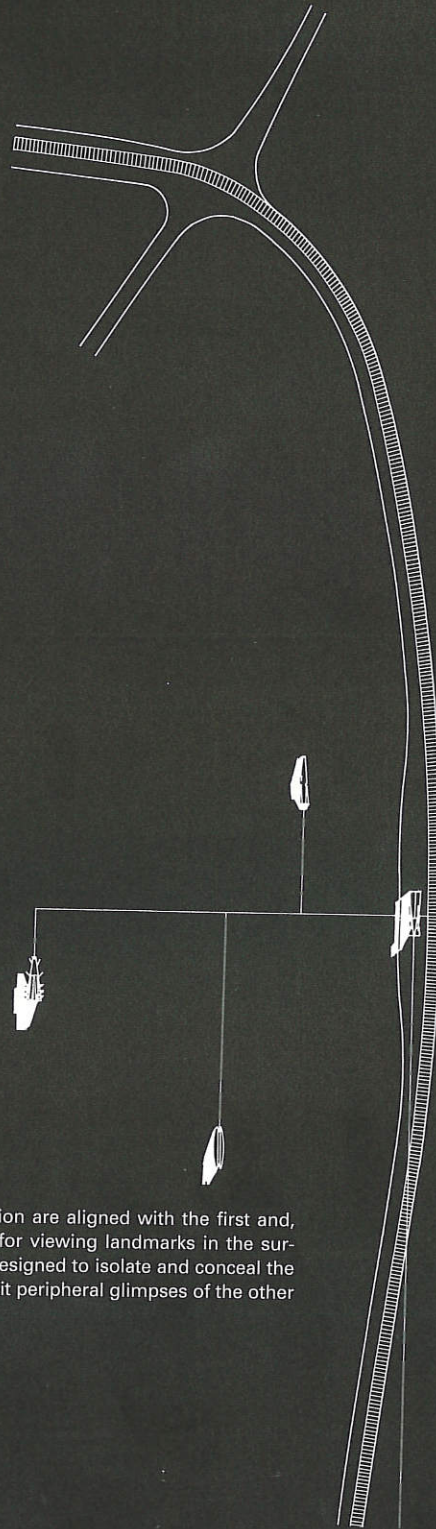
title: **subdivision of surveillance**  
 location: ARTPARK, Lewiston, New York  
 dimensions: each vessel approximately 56' x 6' x 15'

Purposefully situated at the point of entry into a state park dedicated to the arts, a series of structures were developed to act as a transition between the normative architecture of the town of Lewiston and the varied objects and performances to be found within the park. The project begins with an analysis of the existing guard-house that was the only built affirmation of the boundary between these two realms. Generic in the extreme, the structure neither clearly indicated the public nature of the park nor presented a formidable presence as a checkpoint.

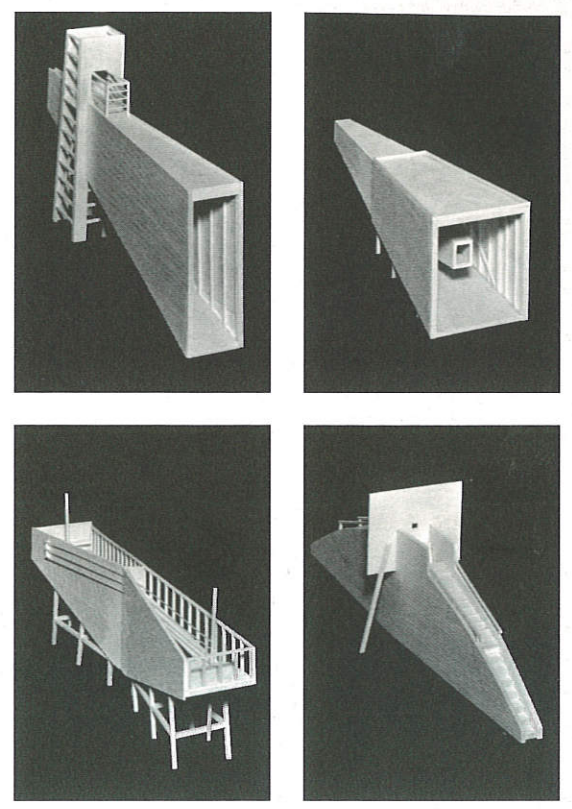


To make the reading of this threshold more vivid, a shell was installed over the existing structure, completely swallowing it visually while at the same time leaving it fully functional as a regulator of entry. Employing the conventional white clapboard siding associated with the vernacular architecture of the town, an exaggerated cone of vision is directed at incoming traffic; the "eyelid" garage door is activated as a car crosses the actual property line of the park and begins its approach.

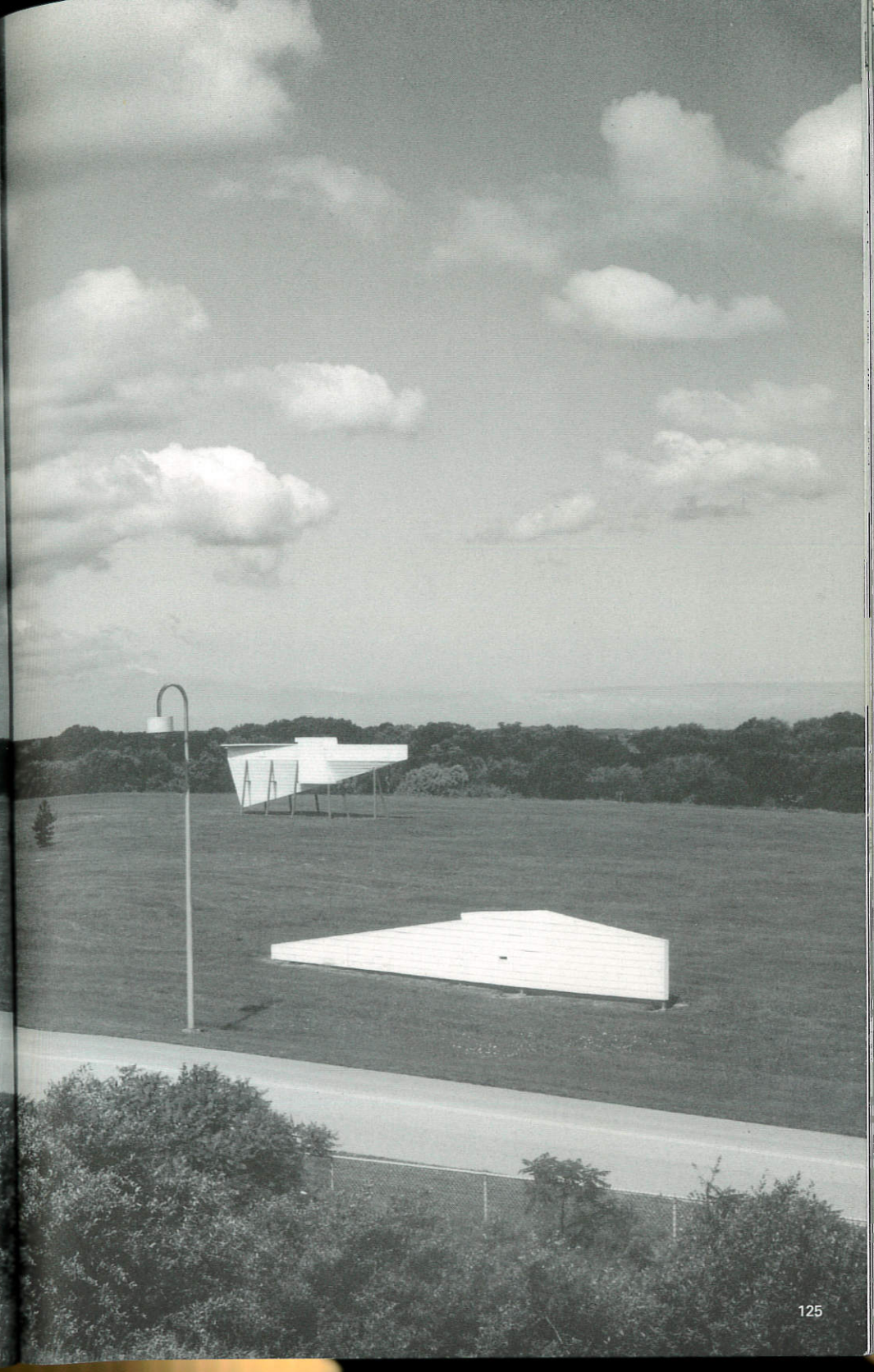




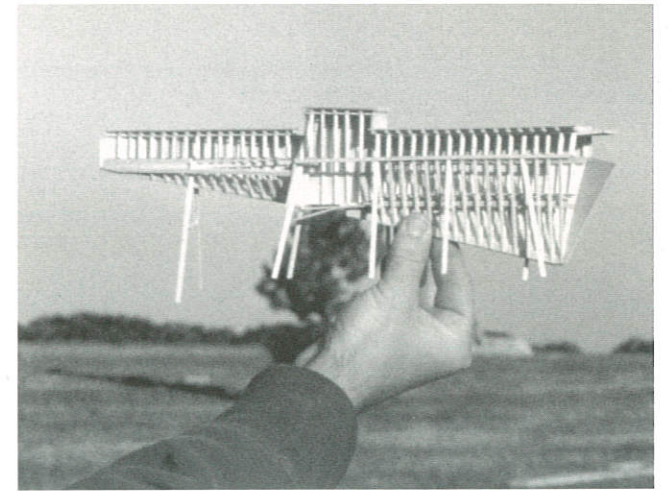
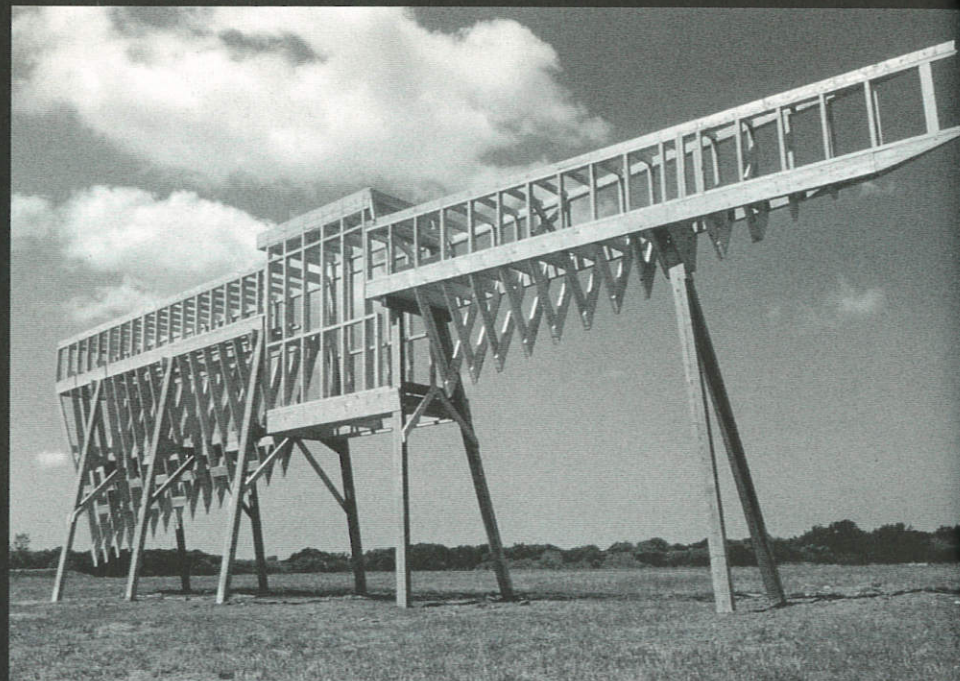
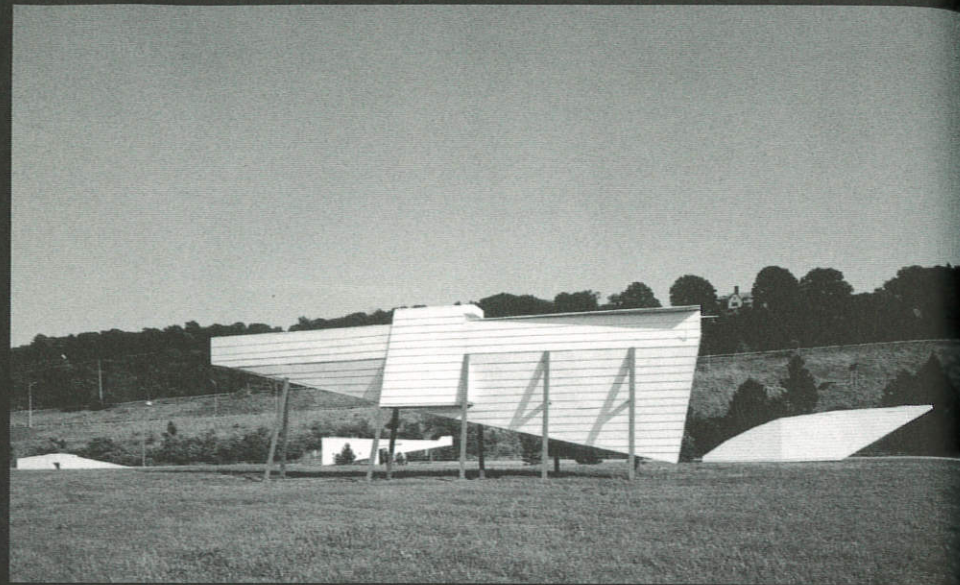
Three adjacent structures of similar dimension are aligned with the first and, like the guardhouse, are designed as outposts for viewing landmarks in the surrounding environment and each other. Each is designed to isolate and conceal the observer while in the act of viewing and to permit peripheral glimpses of the other structures through a system of convex mirrors.



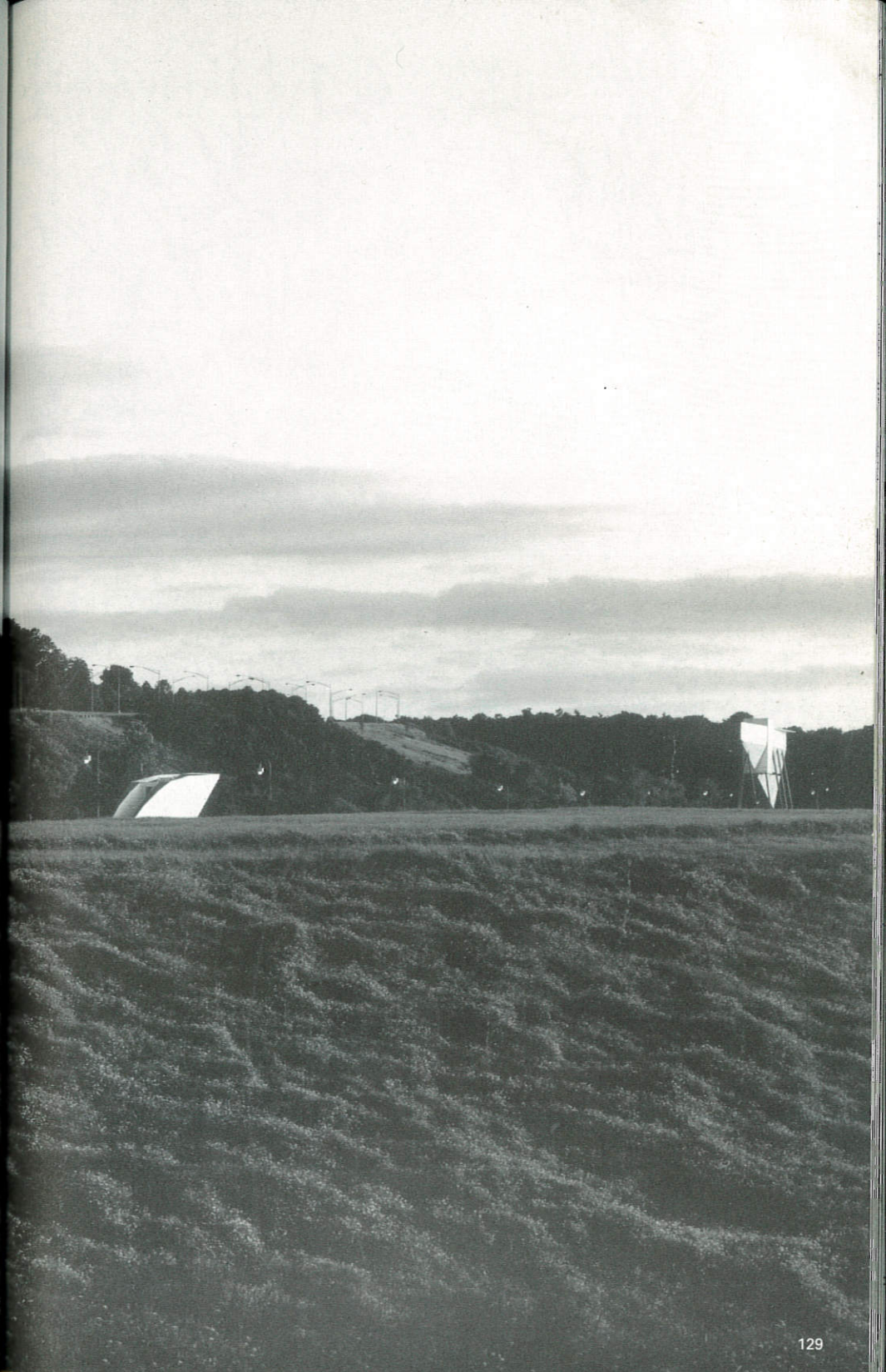
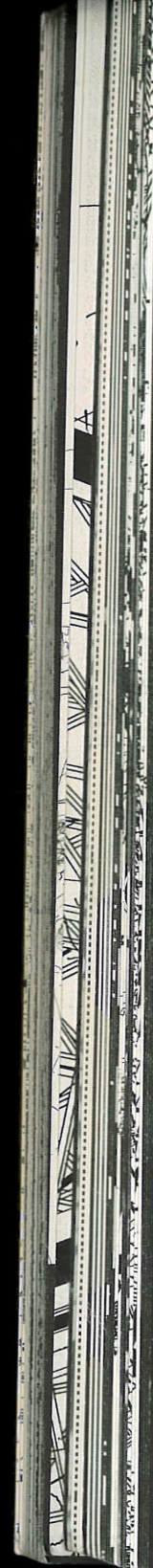




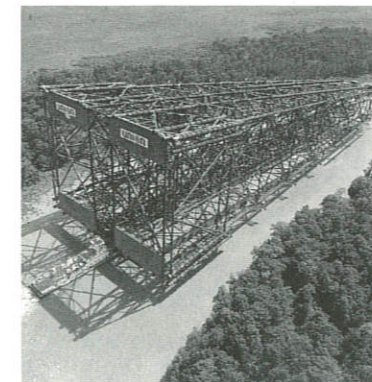












## Bridges

bridge pool

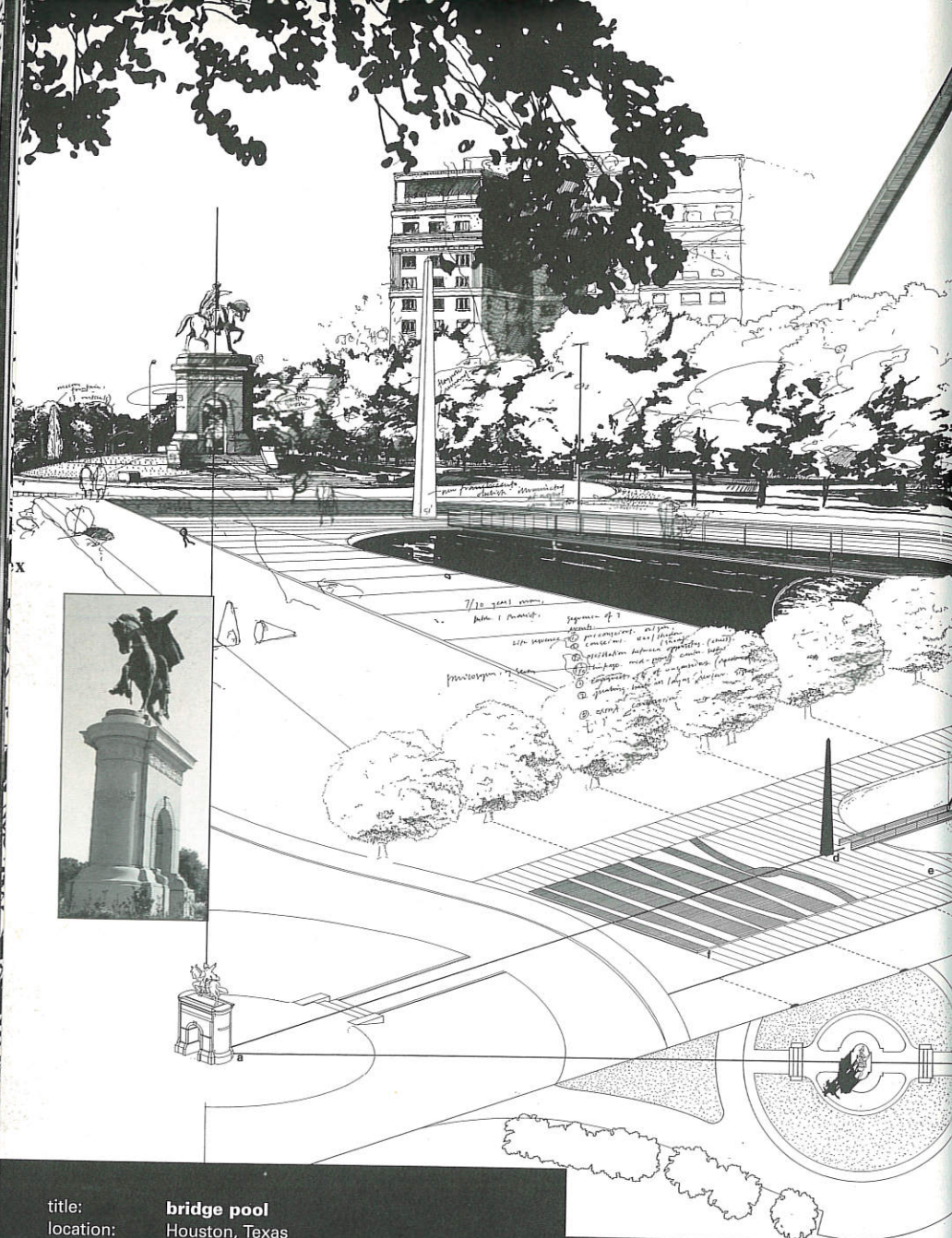
Northern Avenue footbridge and millennial monument

Northern Avenue boat bridge

bridging history

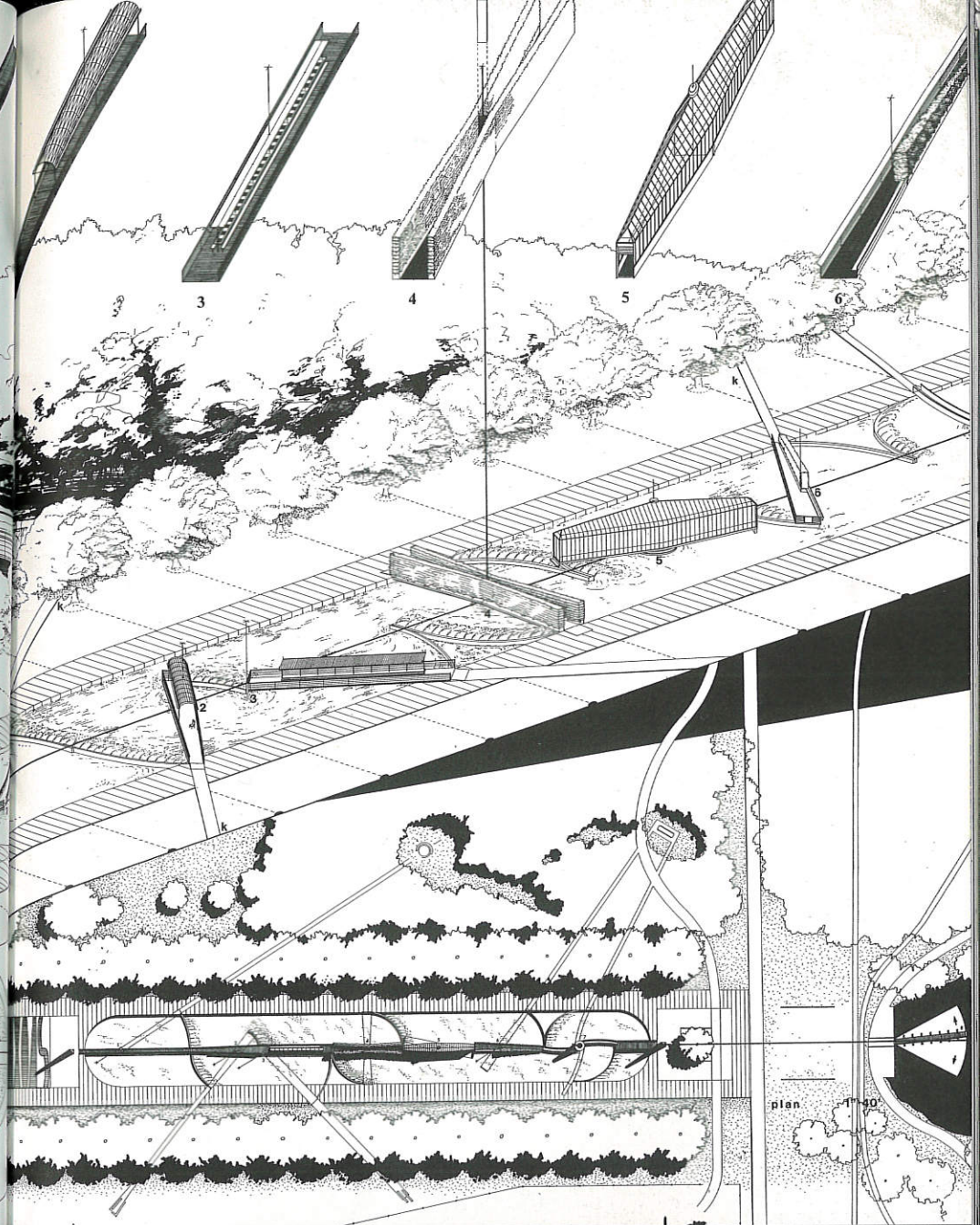
bridge house





title: **bridge pool**  
 location: Houston, Texas  
 dimensions: 80' x 640'

A public park featuring an equestrian statue of Sam Houston, an obelisk, and a large reflecting pool is to be equipped with facilities for active and passive recreation. A sequence of seven bridges is proposed which would provide discrete locations for specific activities.

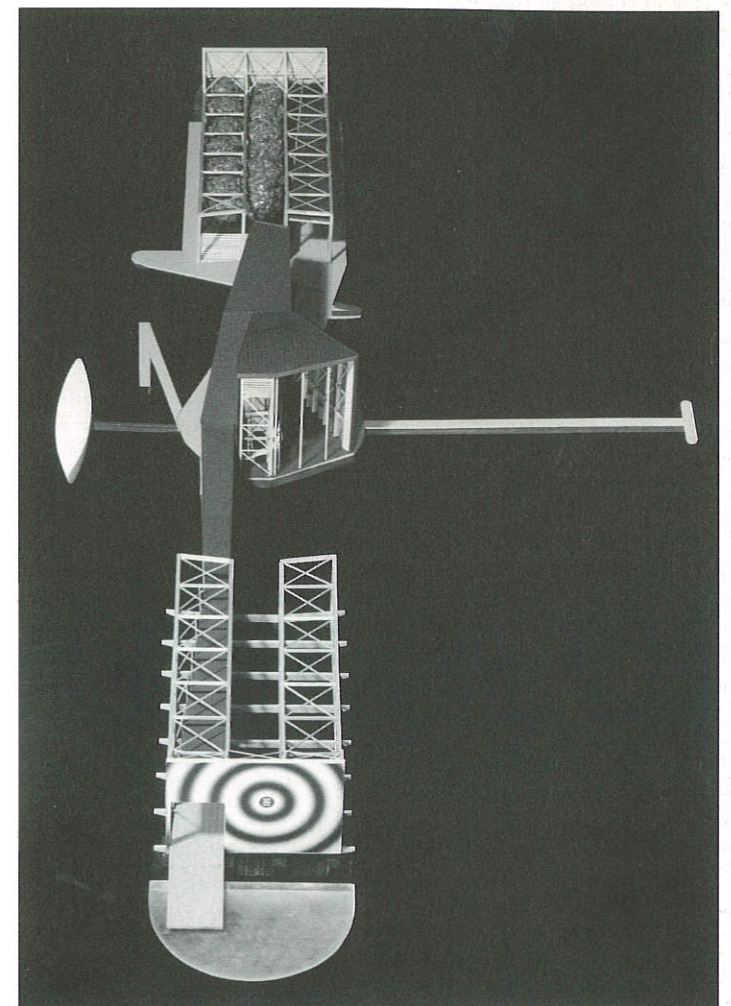
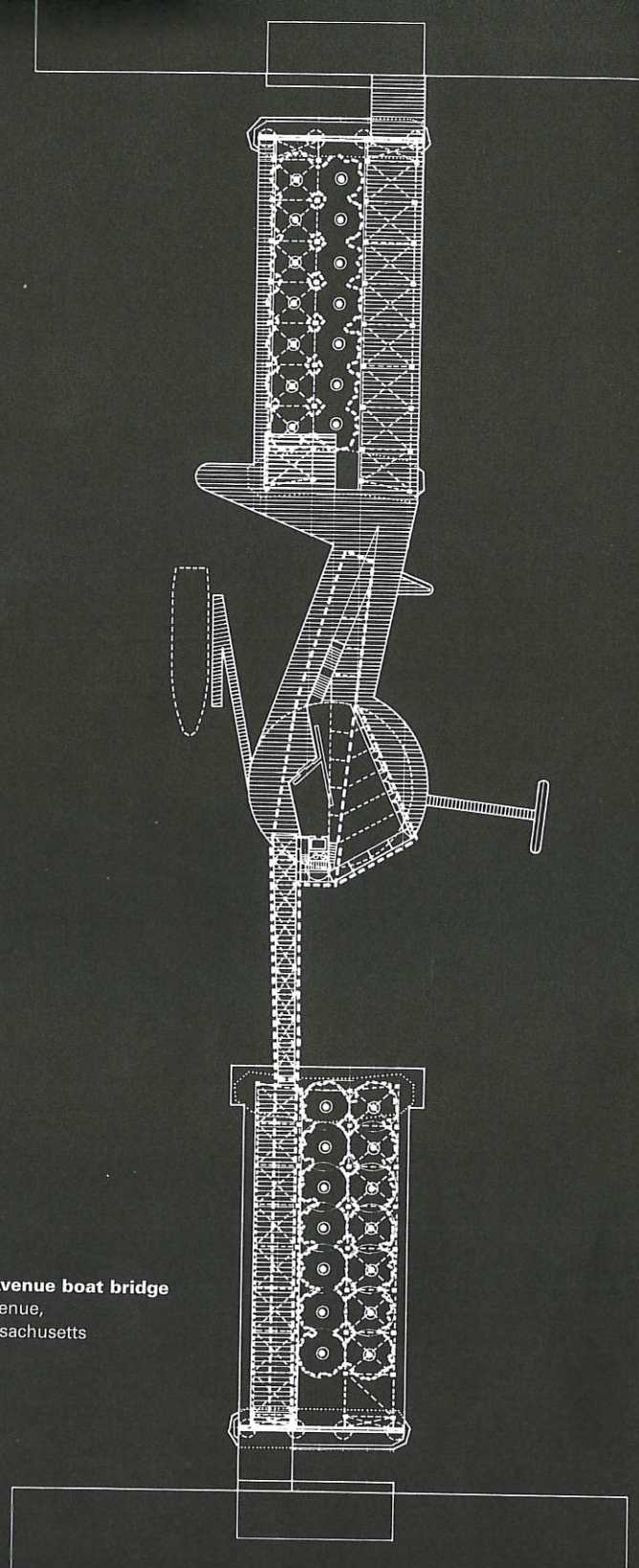


The bridges are able to pivot at their centers thus allowing for two configurations: 1) an axial arrangement on line with the statue and obelisk resulting in a continuous bridge with seven sequential events or 2) seven autonomous bridges which provide either perpendicular access across the reflecting pool or programmatic islands floating in the water.



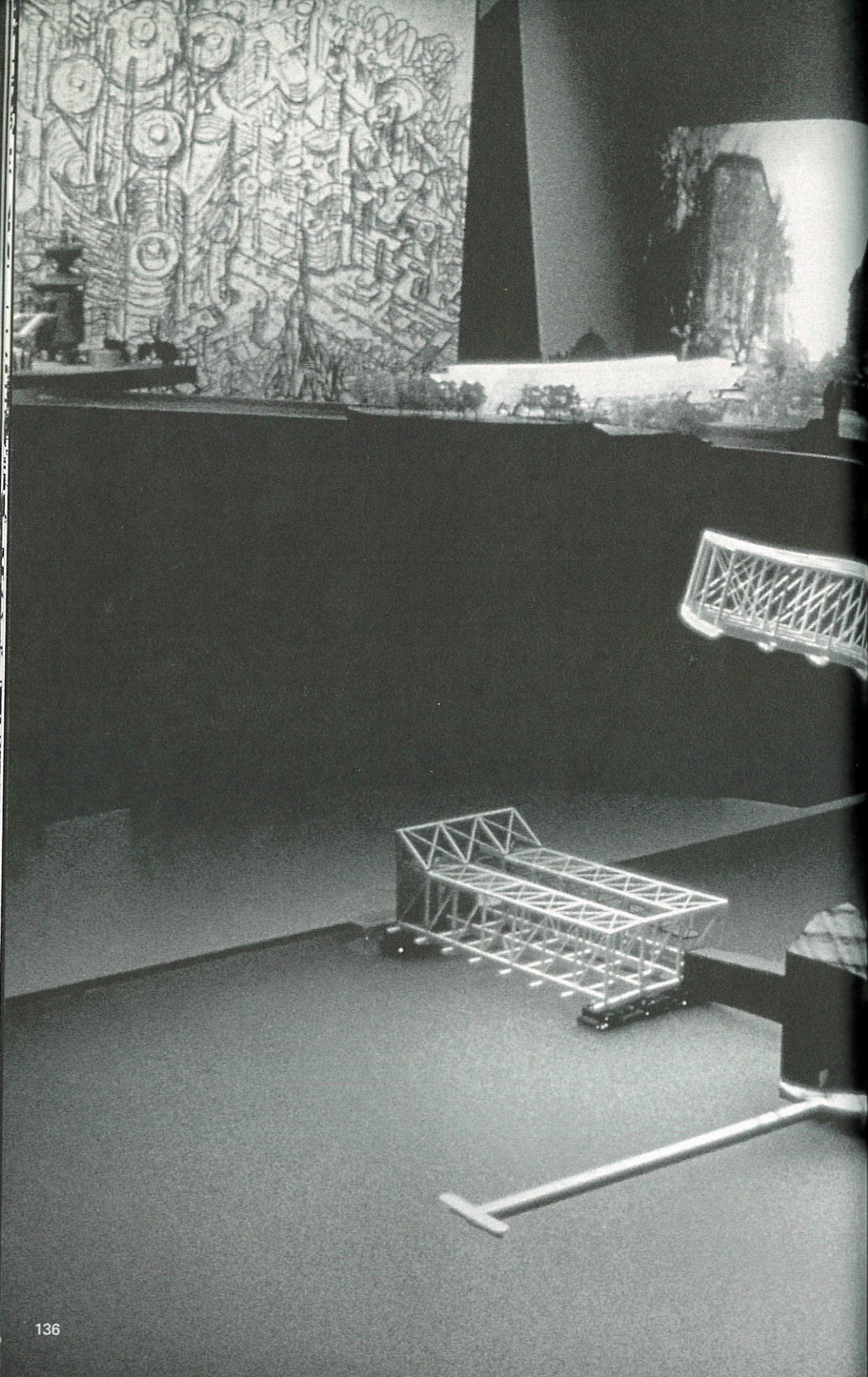


title: **Northern Avenue boat bridge**  
 location: Northern Avenue,  
 Boston, Massachusetts  
 dimensions: 70' x 560'

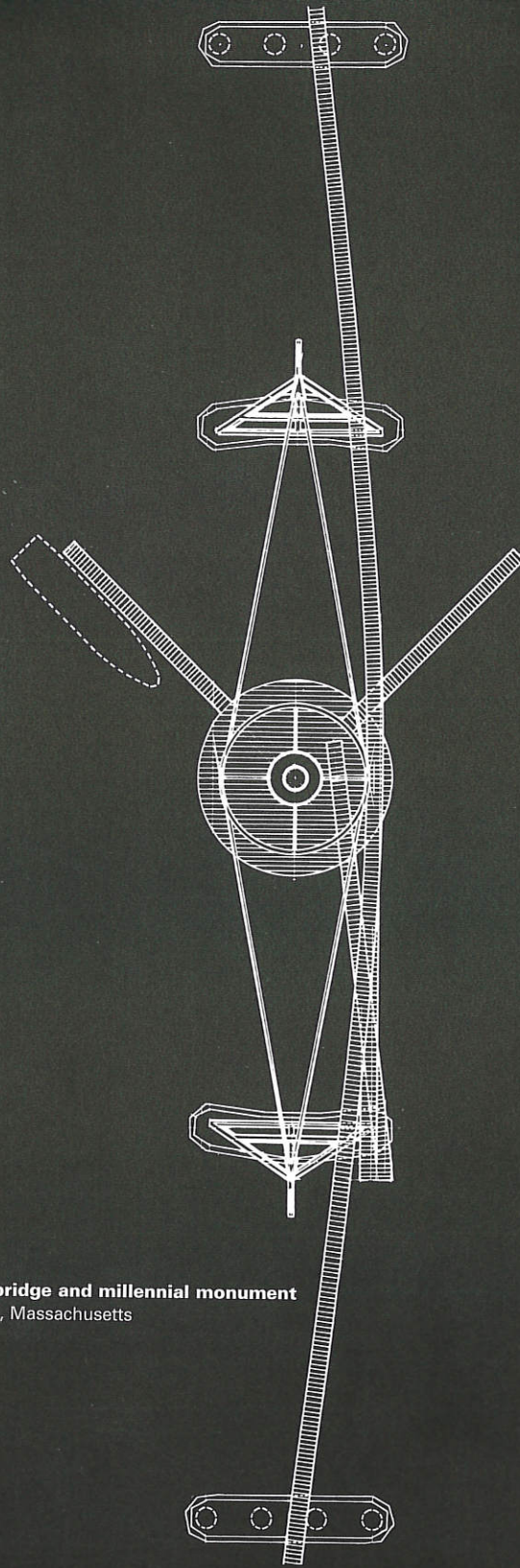


This industrial-era bridge suddenly finds itself surrounded by service economy and governmental buildings of considerable stature. Its trademark feature is a pivoting center span, which, when rotated, truly releases the bridge from the city. Seizing upon the flexibility of the center, the existing ends of the original span are kept in place while a new connector is installed between them. Housing water taxi services, a waiting area, and a restaurant, the focus of the conical interior would be the harbor islands beyond, newly designated as a national park (see pages 64–69). A drawbridge provides the required access to the navigable shipping channel.

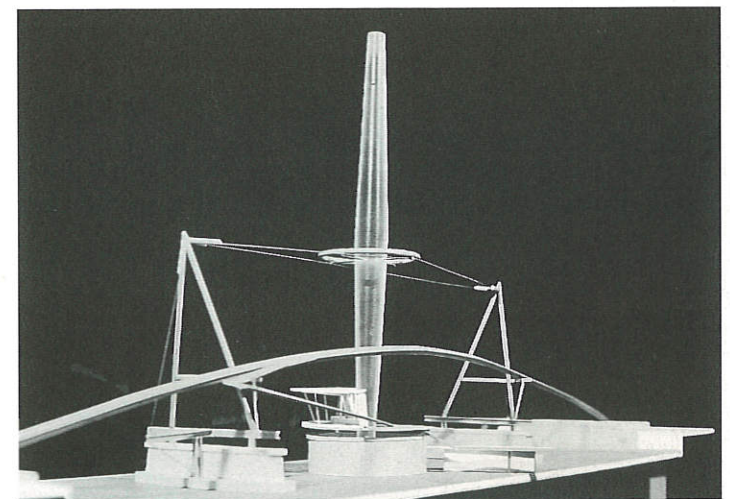
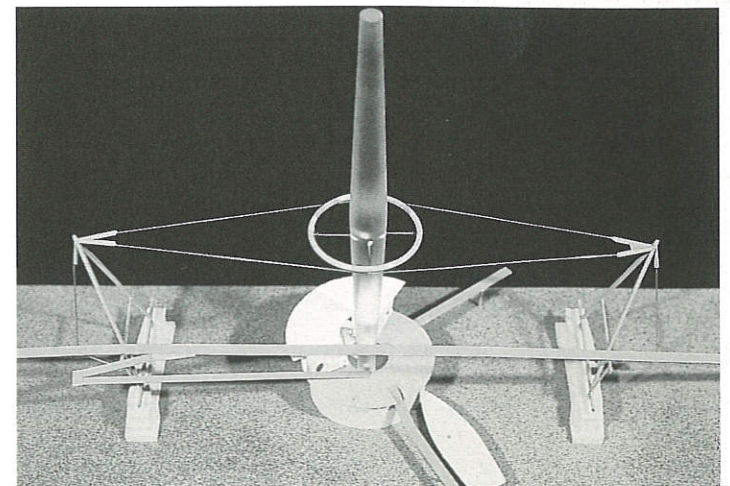






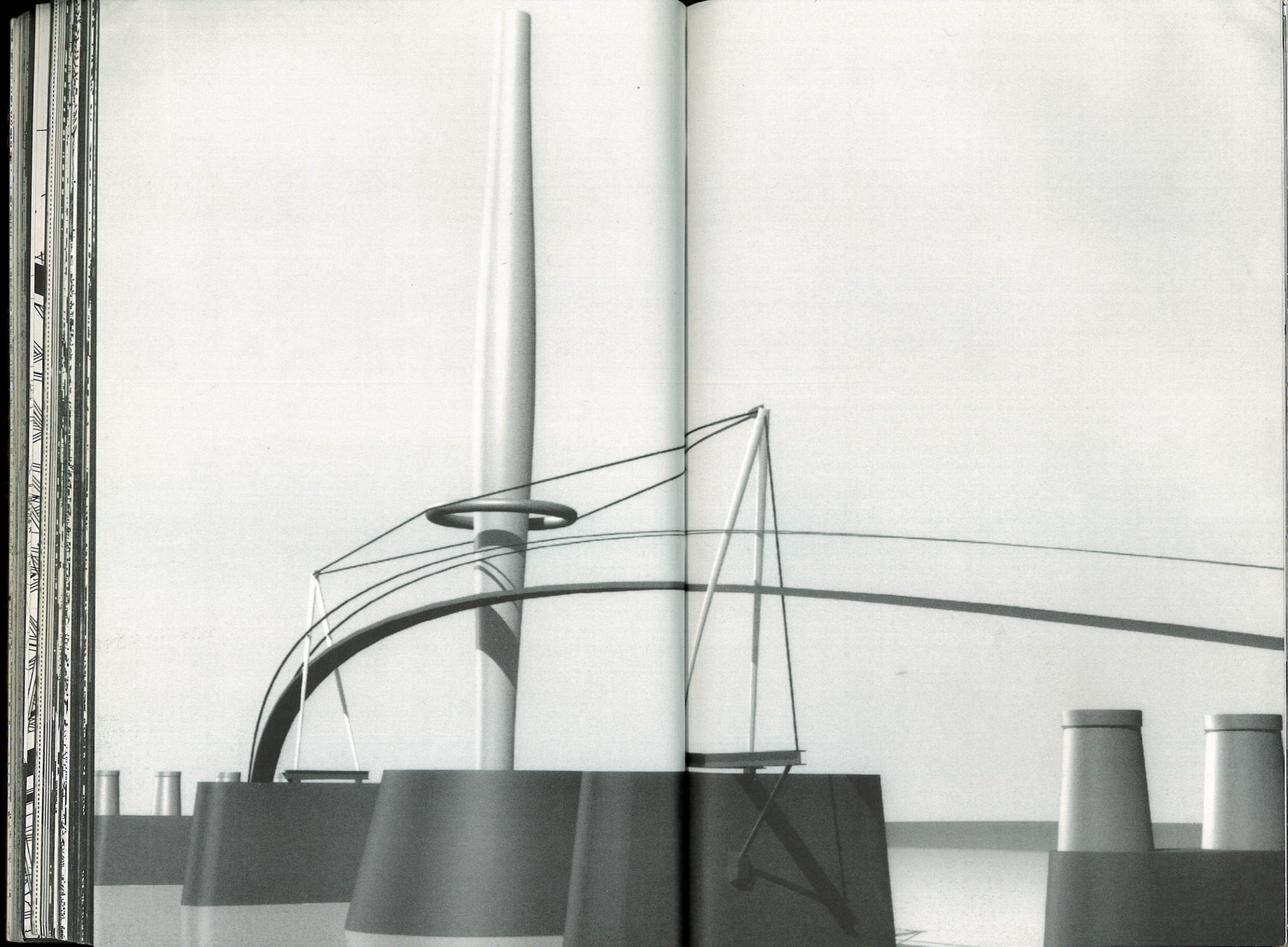


title: **Northern Avenue footbridge and millennial monument**  
 location: Northern Avenue, Boston, Massachusetts  
 dimensions: 70' x 560'

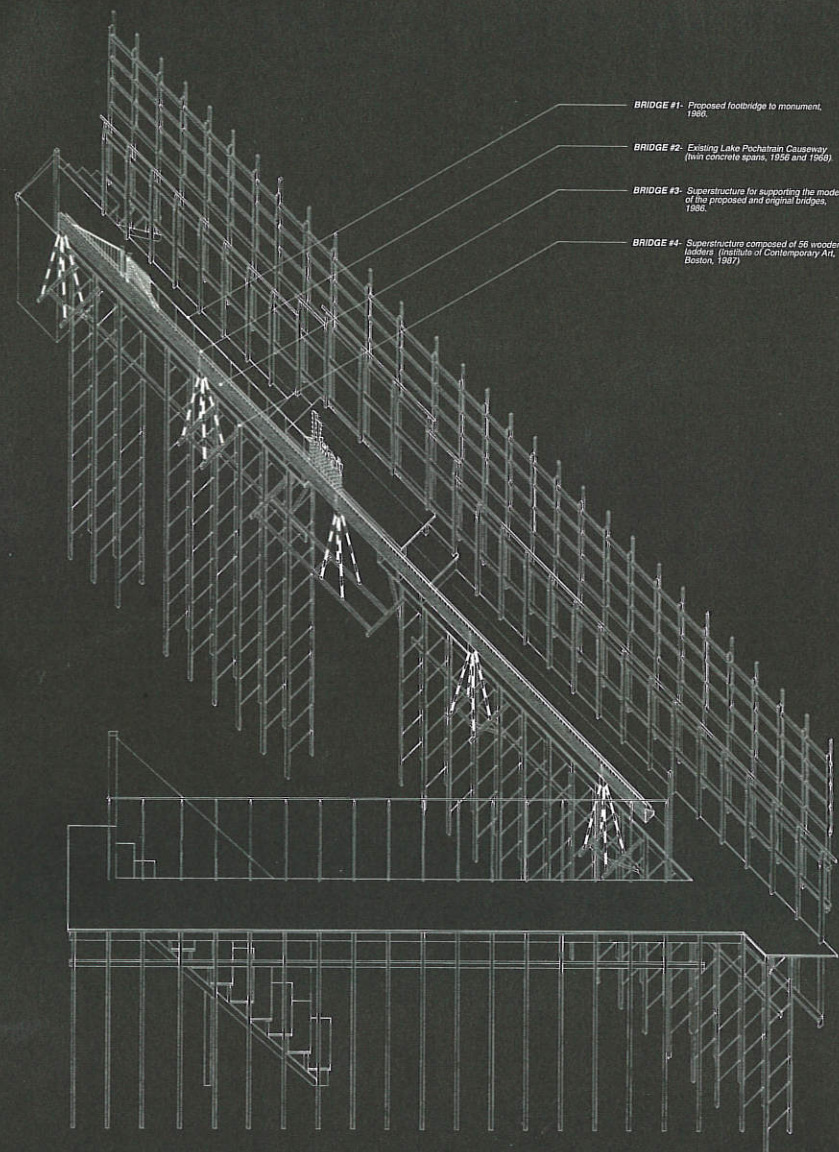


This more radical scheme for the same site proposes the reuse of only the foundations from the original structure. Made of massive granite blocks, these piers would serve as the supports for a sliver of walkway mounted on steel supports. A cable system would stabilize both the span and the crystalline tower situated on the former pivot point of the rotating bridge. Access to the base of the tower, the water's edge, and ferry service is provided by a tributary off the primary path of movement. "Memos to the next millennium" would be inserted into the glass vessel by visitors to the city and residents alike and would be suspended like fluttering birds within the illuminated interior.



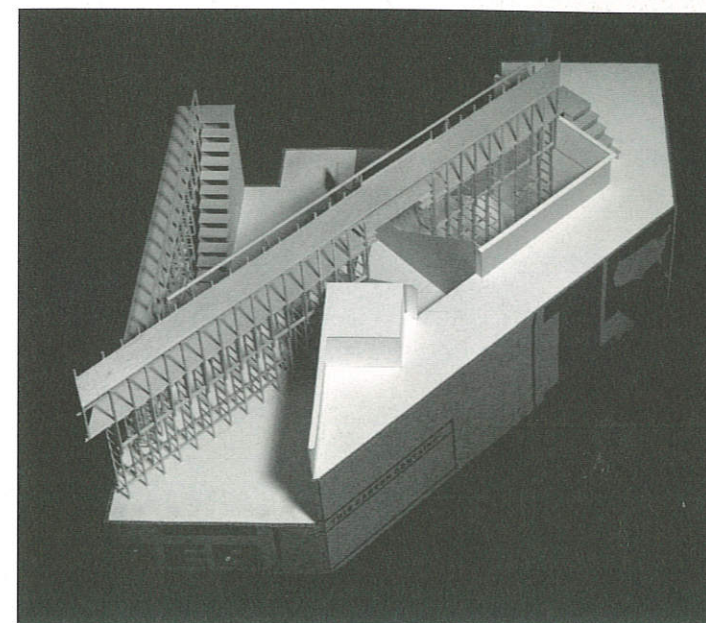






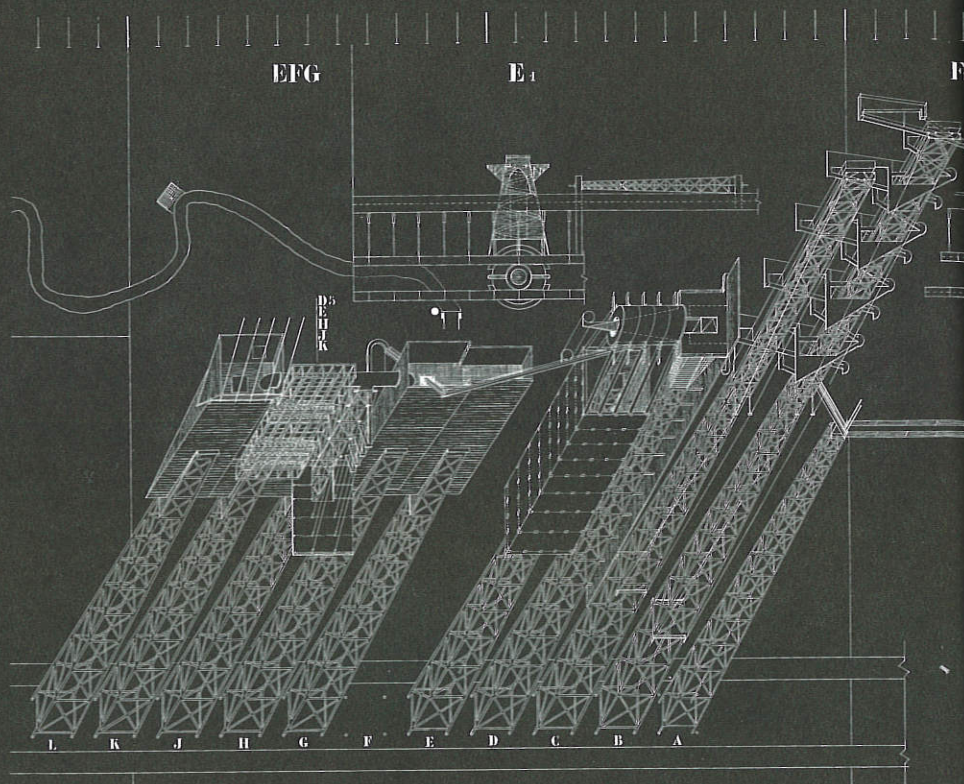
title: **bridging history**  
 location: Lake Ponchartrain Causeway, New Orleans, Louisiana  
 installation: Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston

This investigation begins with a well-defined site — “the world’s longest bridge,” properly known as the Lake Ponchartrain Causeway, a 24-mile elevated highway that connects the city of New Orleans to the mainland of the United States. The site is of interest for two reasons: first, for the sheer audacity of its man-made gesture in relation to the delicacy of the surrounding geography; and second, because of the precarious situation in which the city finds itself.



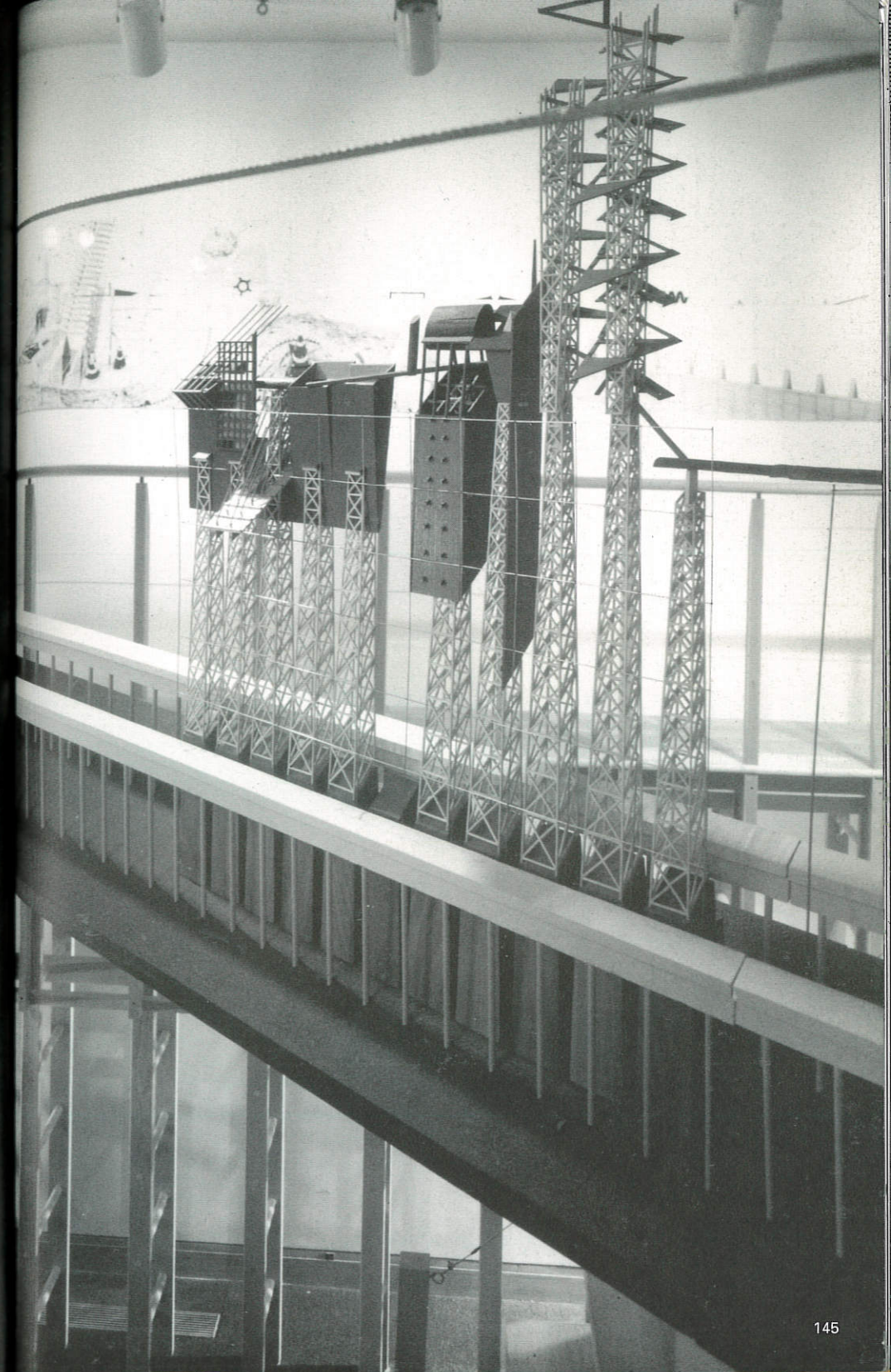
The history of New Orleans is the story of a city determined to maintain itself where it strategically must be — but environmentally cannot be — below sea level. According to some engineers, the Mississippi River is threatening to break the straining grasp of the city and chart a more direct route to the sea, thus “leaving the nation’s largest port on a stagnant stream,” possibly by the end of this century (Joan B. Garvey and Mary Lou Widmer, *Beautiful Crescent* [New Orleans: Garmer Press, 1982]).



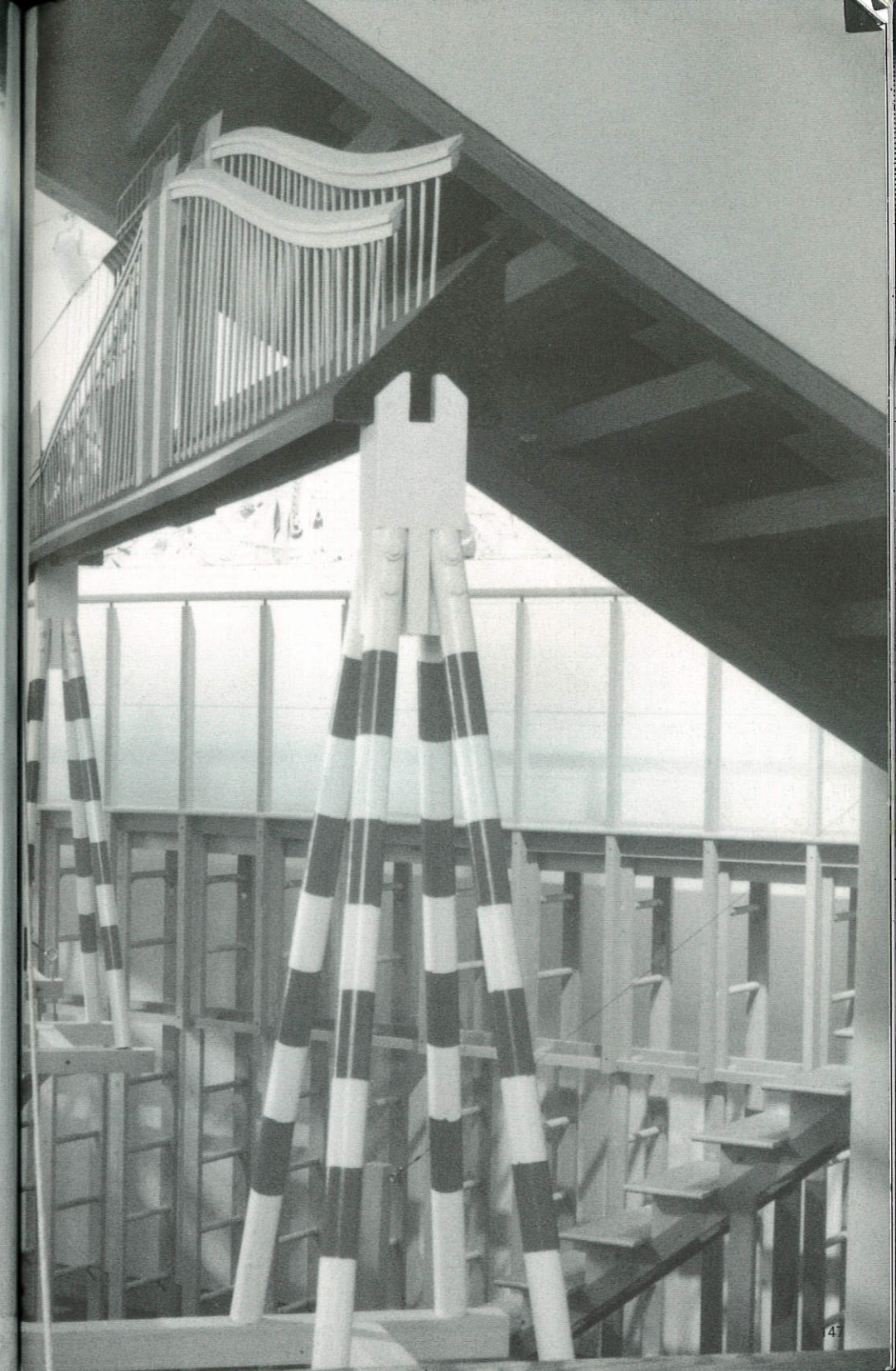


A monument is proposed for New Orleans, a city contemplating its own demise as it is about to be abandoned by the very resource to which it owes its origin. Using the journey across the bridge as an analog of the river's 2,000-mile and 200-year pilgrimage to the city, a series of towers, each representing a specific event in the defense of the city, is strategically placed on the bridge. The placement of these and other decoy elements converts a once linear trip into one featuring interruption, overlap, and displacement — precisely New Orleans's relationship to a future city yet to be founded on the banks of a relocated Mississippi River.

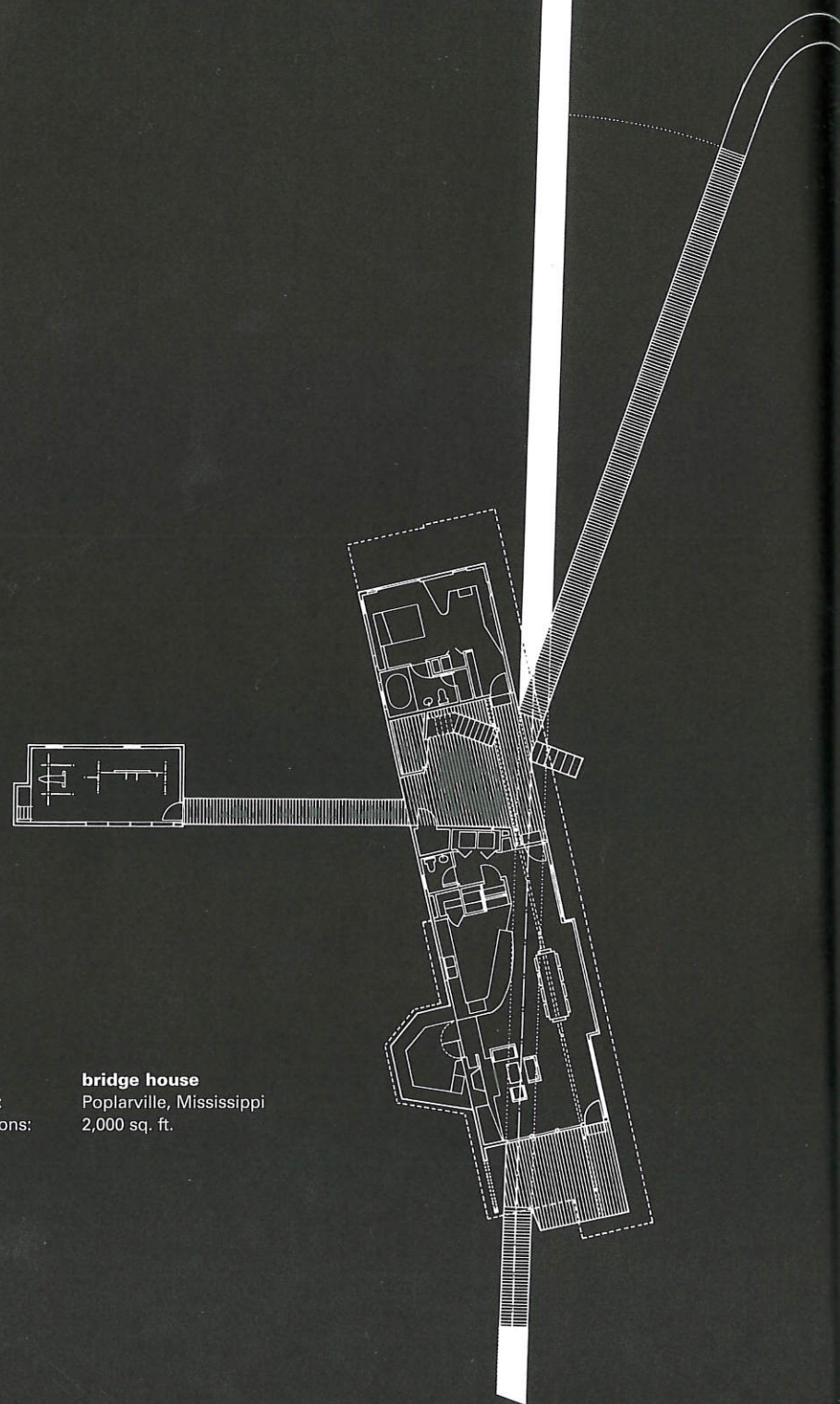
The presentation of this project was installed upon yet another bridge. The space of the sponsoring museum was measured and analyzed in much the same way that the Pontchartrain Causeway was researched. A site within the building was selected that would not only accommodate the 40' model and drawings but which would also allow a linear viewing arrangement. The model is constructed in an isometric format that reinforces the aerial view established by the elevated viewing platform.



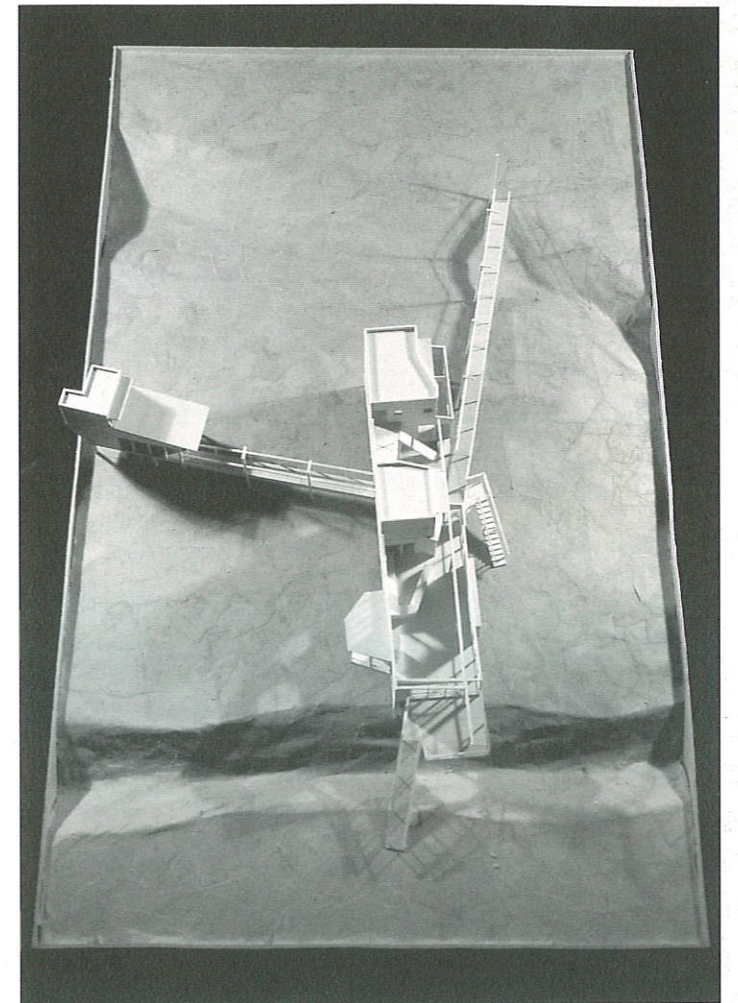








title: **bridge house**  
 location: Poplarville, Mississippi  
 dimensions: 2,000 sq. ft.

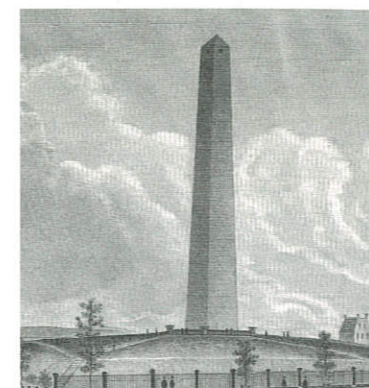
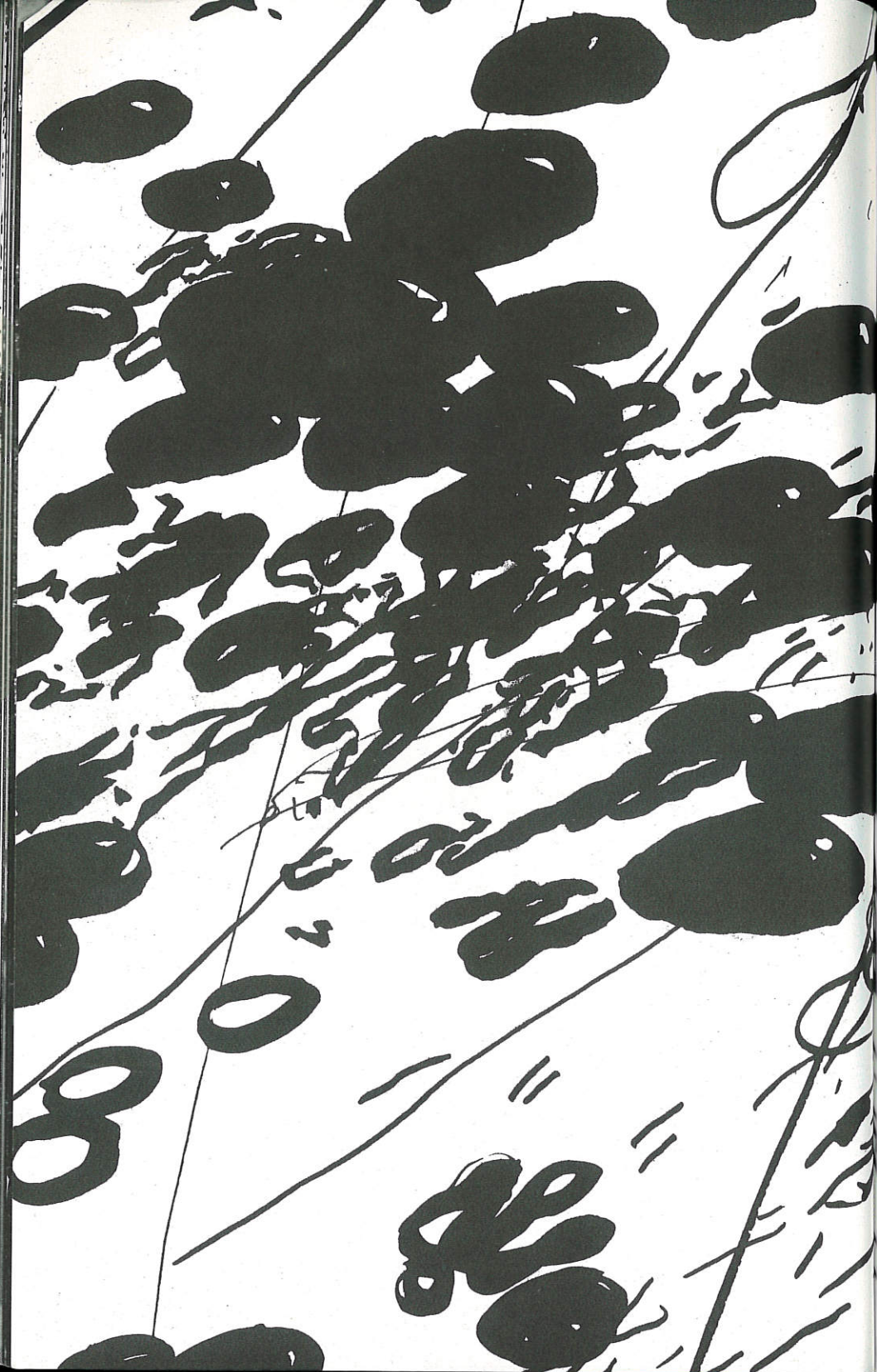


A site that is prone to extreme flooding and accessible only by foot is selected for a house. For obvious reasons, the house is perched on legs that, along with the surrounding water, force the construction of a bridge that cuts diagonally across the site, slices through the interior, and reaches down to the river's edge.





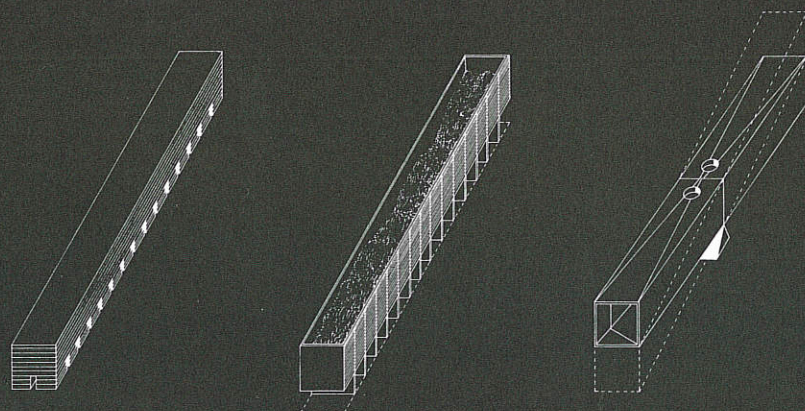




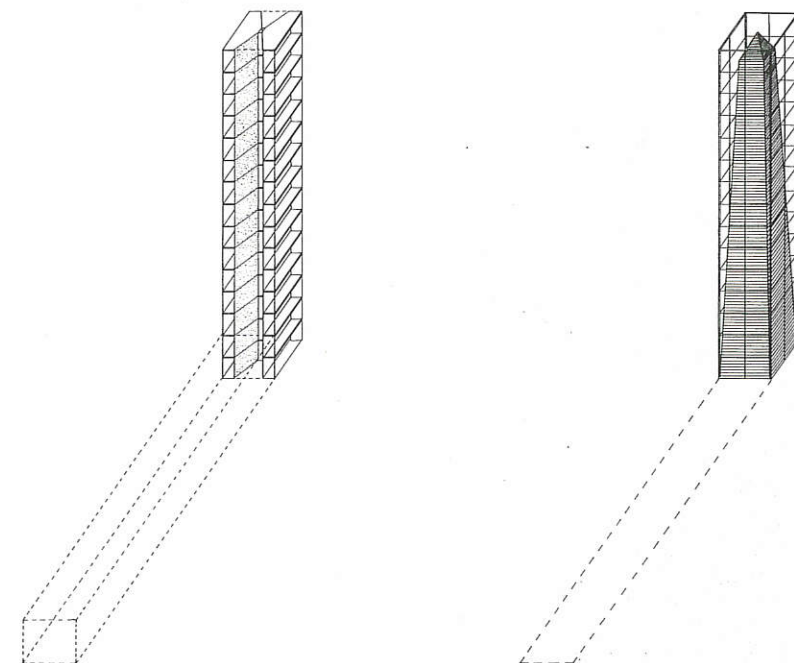
#### Urban Instruments 1

wall  
gate  
bridge  
tower  
monument





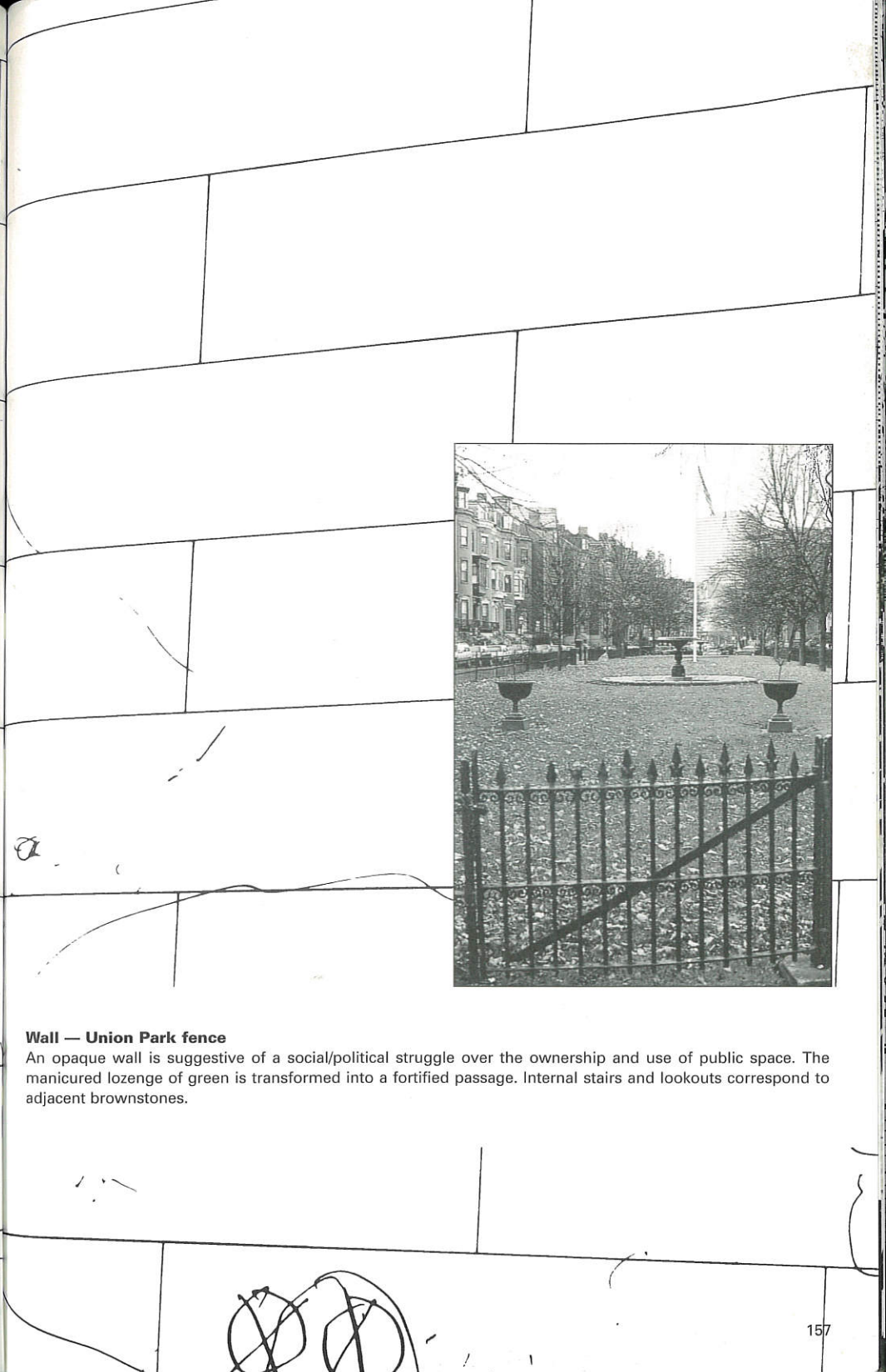
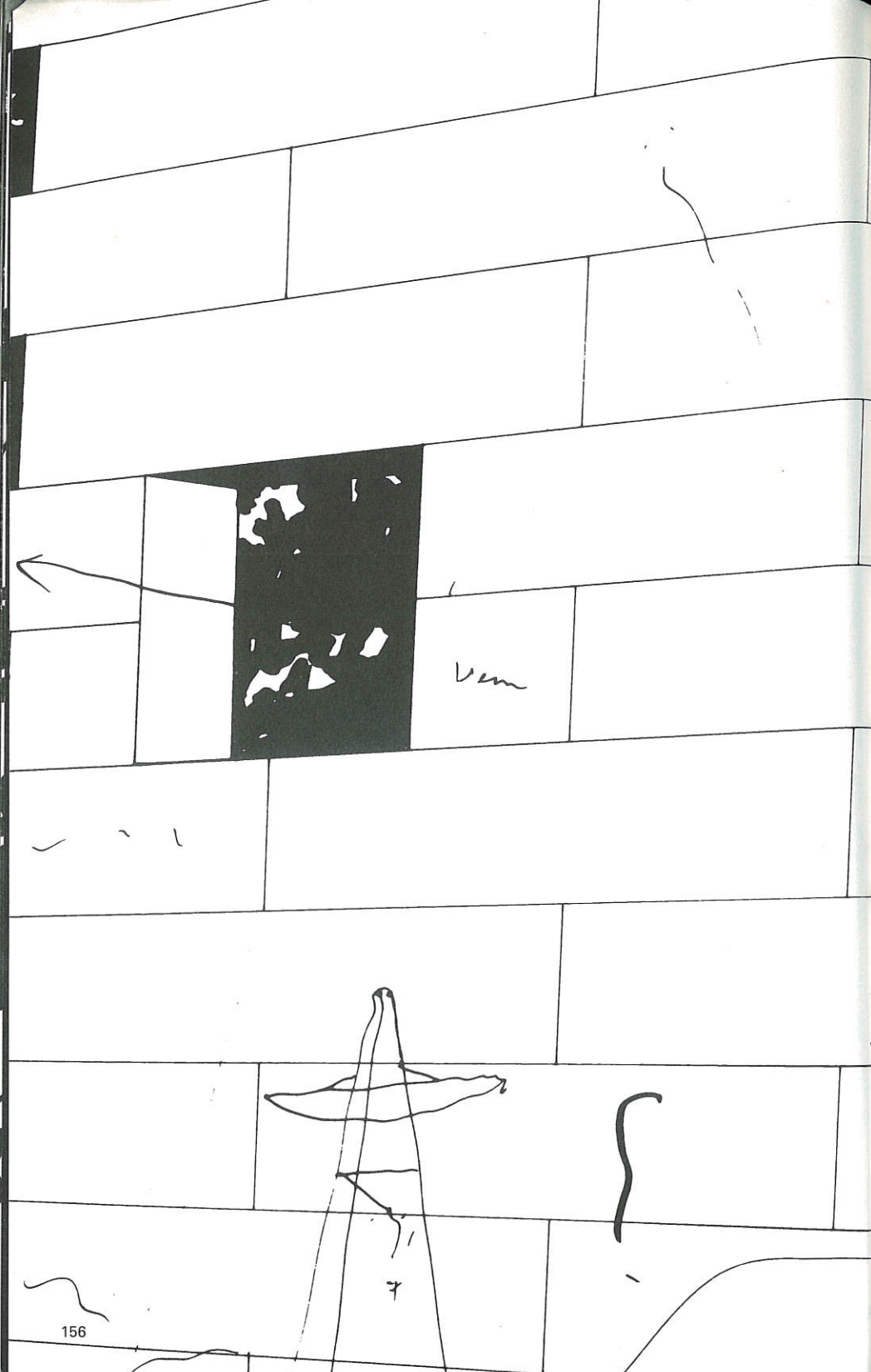
title: **urban instruments**  
 location: 5 Boston sites:  
 wall — Union Park fence  
 gate — Massachusetts Turnpike tolls  
 bridge — Week's Memorial  
 tower — City Hall Plaza ghost  
 monument — Bunker Hill  
 dimensions: each vessel — 24' x 24' x 224'



Released from the need for a strict and fortified perimeter, the contemporary city has expanded without restraint. The process has been accelerated by the automobile to the point where the basic definition (and location) of the city is in question. No longer a vessel, the city has become a field.

Five events — a wall, gate, bridge, tower, and monument — have been selected. When taken in succession, these events map a journey from outside the city to a privileged site at its center. An example of each of the five conditions found in the city of Boston has been encased within a tube of space that becomes successively more transparent at each location. The operation is addition by subtraction — the intensification of phenomena by way of limited availability. Using a common length of measure in the form of a rectangular extrusion, isolated landmarks are converted into devices for understanding spatial and political relationships within the city.





**Wall — Union Park fence**  
 An opaque wall is suggestive of a social/political struggle over the ownership and use of public space. The manicured lozenge of green is transformed into a fortified passage. Internal stairs and lookouts correspond to adjacent brownstones.





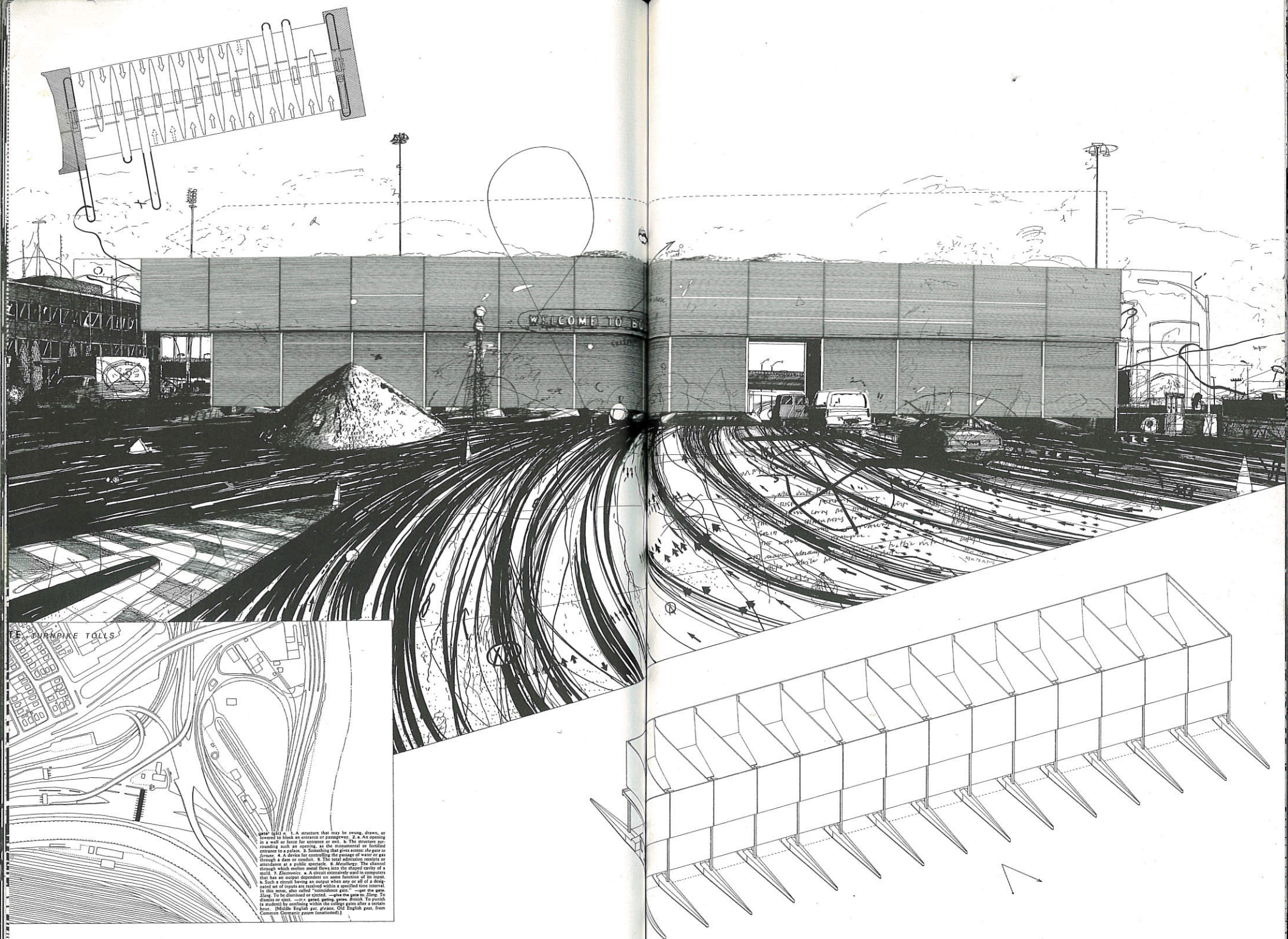


**Gate — Massachusetts Turnpike tolls**

Tens of thousands of empty seats pass daily through this gateway into the city; commuters burn vast amounts of fuel for the privilege of traveling in splendid isolation. The actual cost of such activity is made manifest by a set of gates that establish a more rarefied entry sequence.







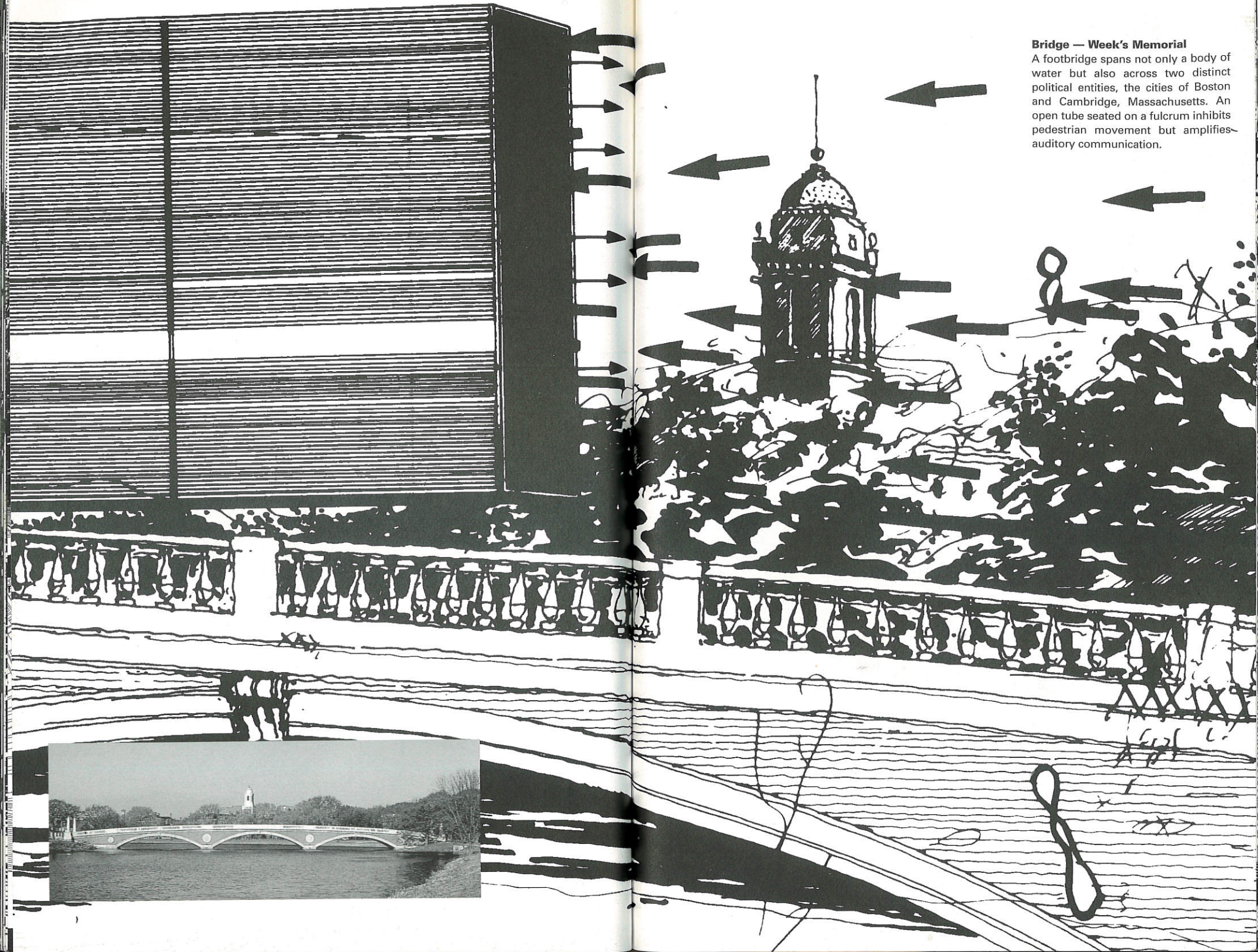
THE TURNPIKE TOLLS

gate 1. A structure that may be swung, drawn, or lowered to block an entrance or passageway. 2. A. An opening in a wall or fence for entrance or exit. B. The structure surrounding such an opening, as the monumental or fortified entrance to a palace. 3. Something that gives access (the gate to heaven). 4. A device for controlling the passage of water or gas through a dam or channel. 5. The wall between sectors or divisions at a public spectacle. 6. Metallurgy. The channel through which molten metal flows into the shaped cavity of a mold. 7. Electronics. A. A circuit element used in computers that has an output dependent on some function of its input. B. Such a circuit having an output when any or all of a designated set of inputs are received within a specified time interval. In this sense, also called "comparator gate" — see the gate. 8. Long. To be dismissed or ejected — now the gate to Rome. To drive or steer. — 9. A gate, giving game drink. To push (a student) by overlying within the college gate after a certain hour. [Middle English *gate*, *gate*, Old English *geat*, from Common Germanic *gatum* (unattested).]



**Bridge — Week's Memorial**

A footbridge spans not only a body of water but also across two distinct political entities, the cities of Boston and Cambridge, Massachusetts. An open tube seated on a fulcrum inhibits pedestrian movement but amplifies auditory communication.





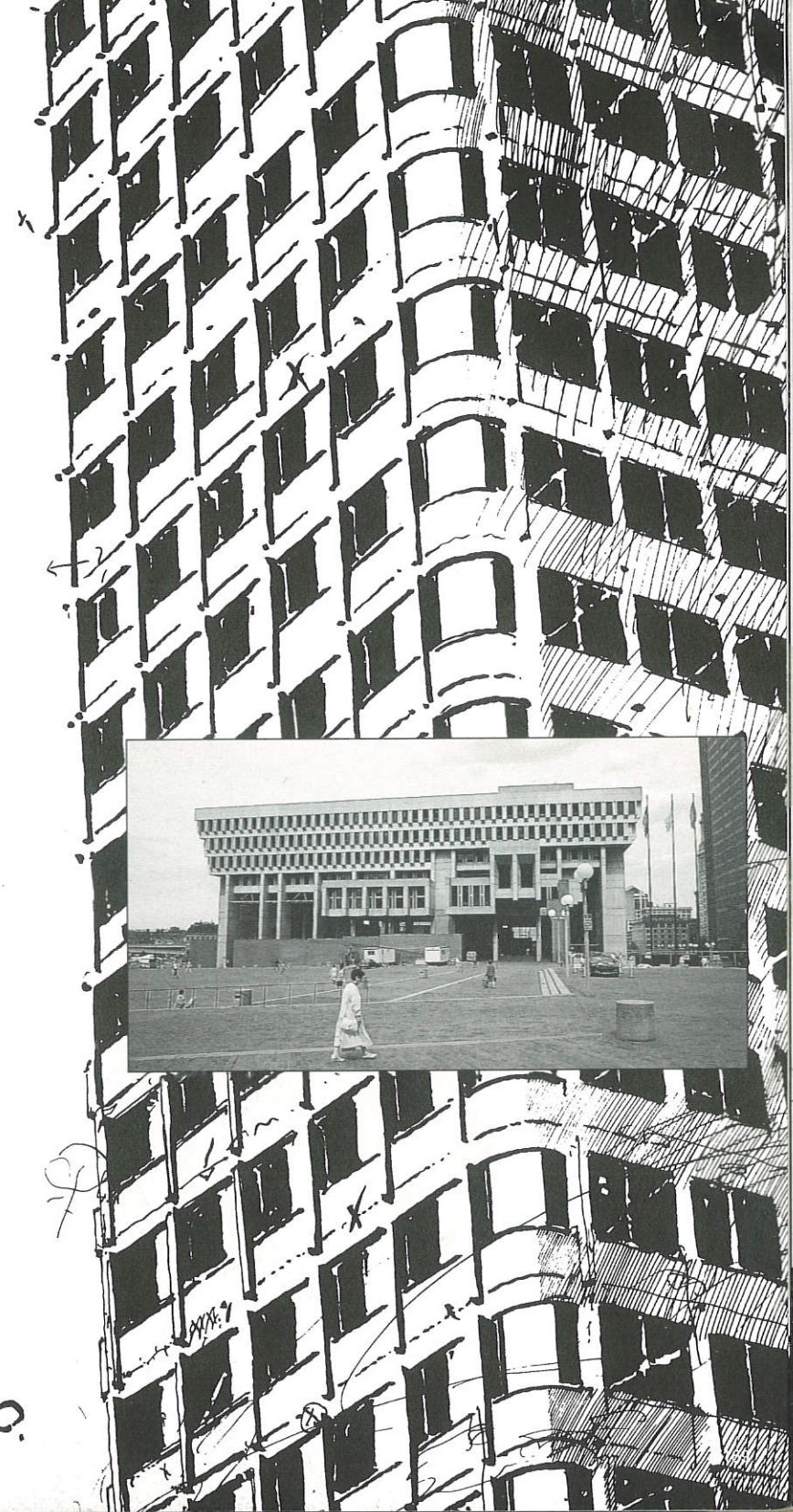
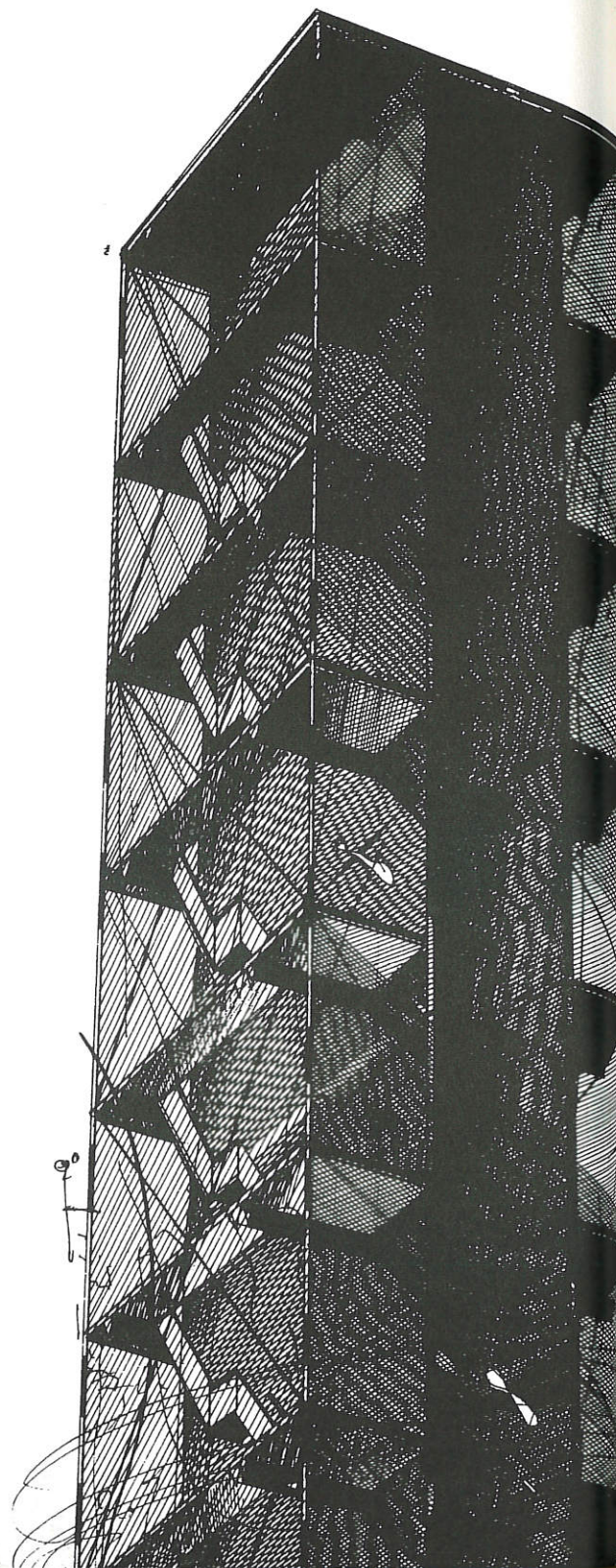




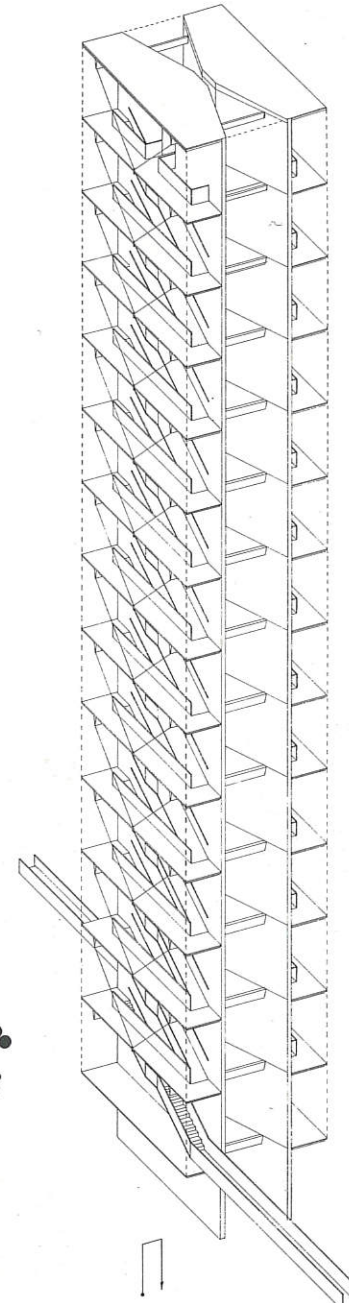
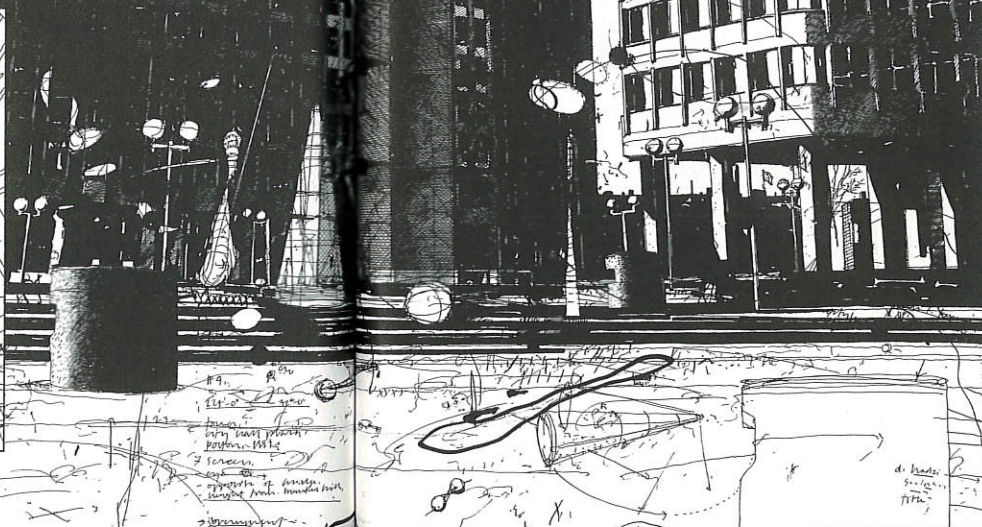
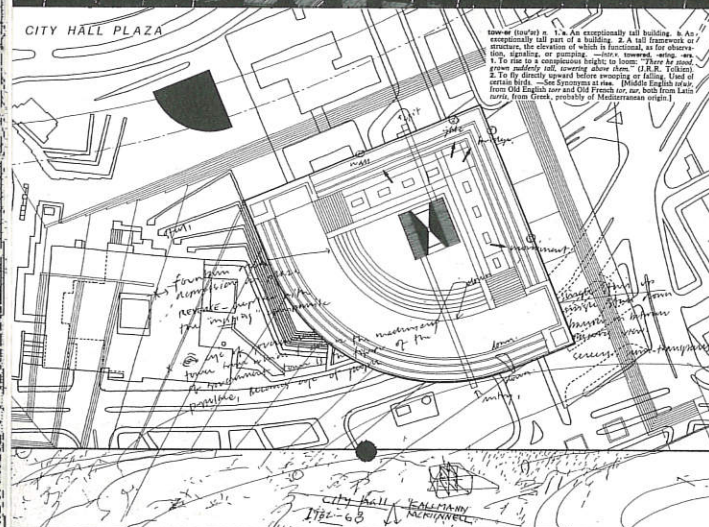
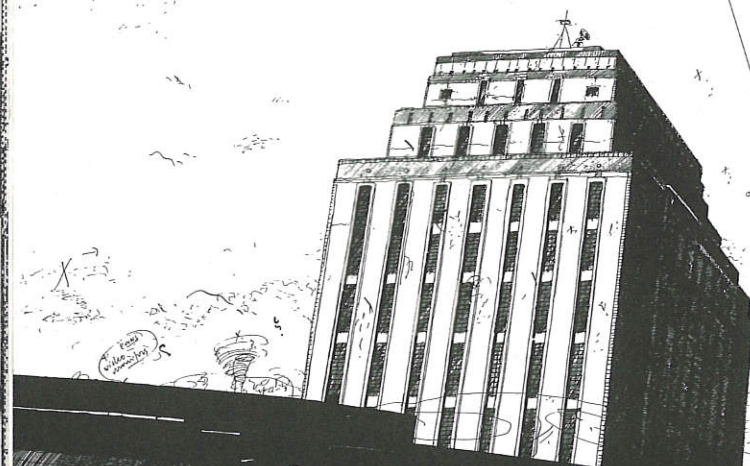


**Tower — City Hall Plaza ghost**

If this center of government and public plaza was indeed modeled on Italian precedents, then lurking unseen is the campanile, the slender compliment to the bulk of surrounding buildings. A net is cast over this ghost to reveal its location in the northwest corner of the site.





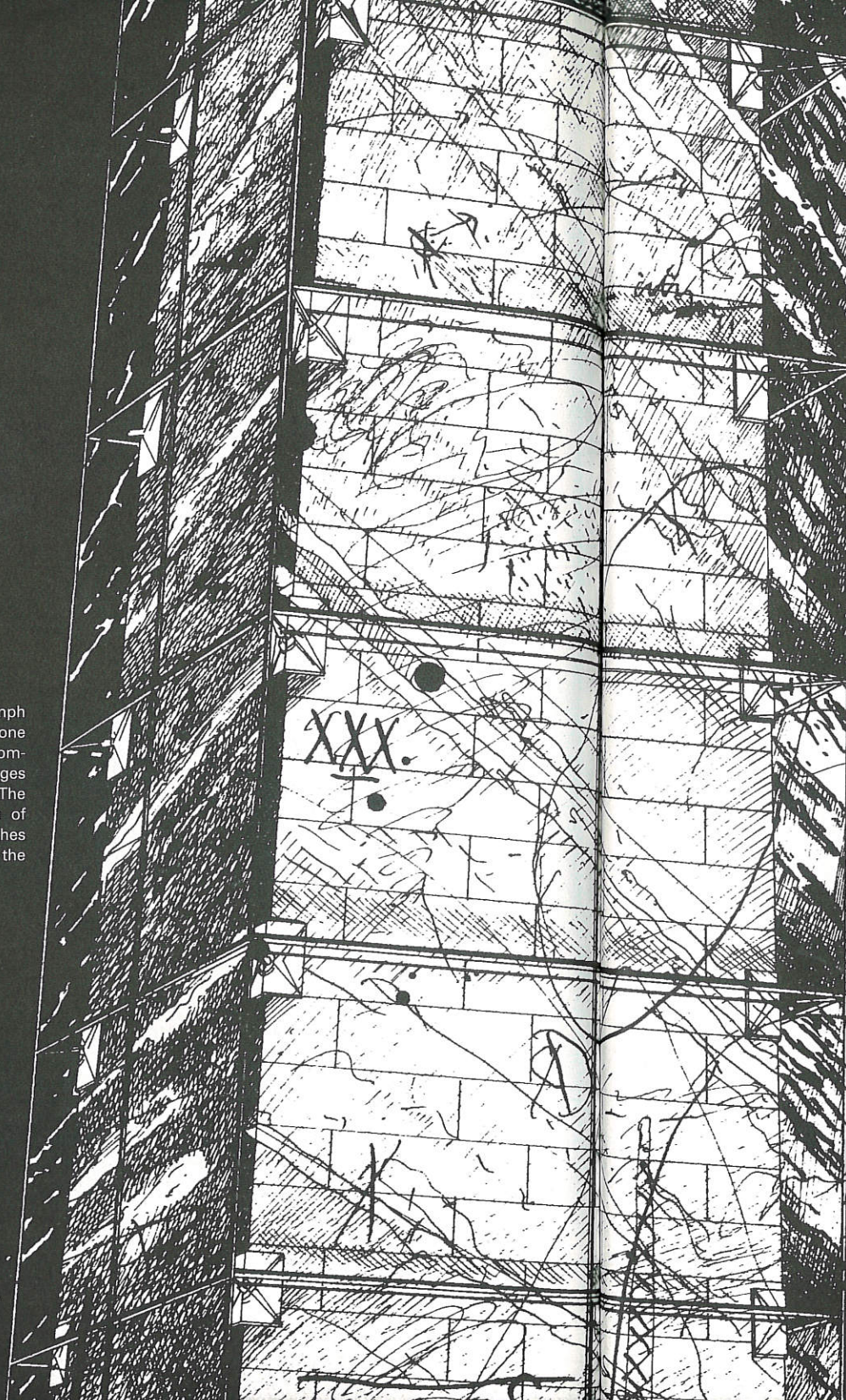




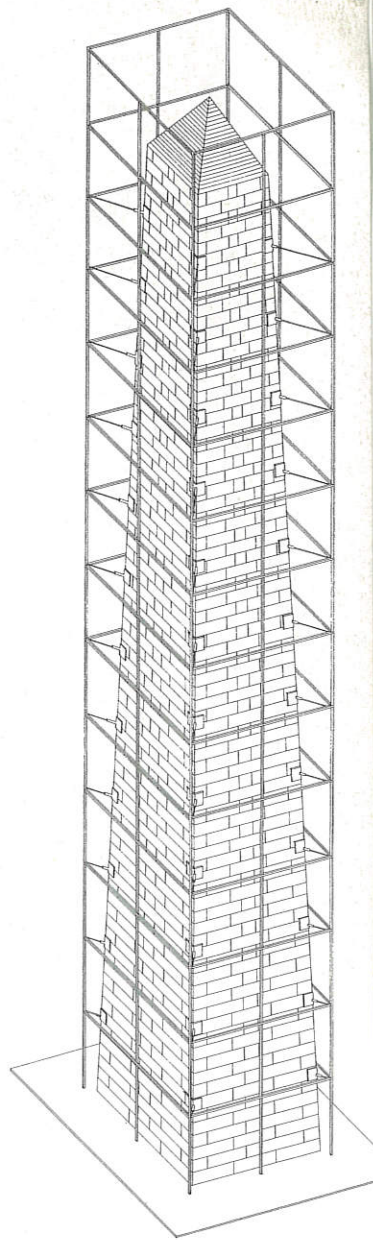
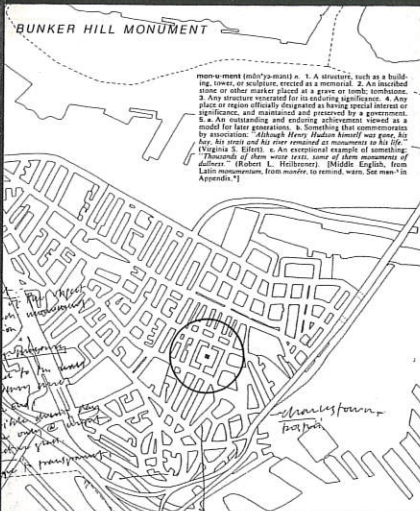


**Monument — Bunker Hill**

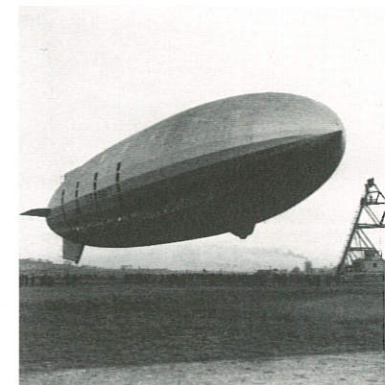
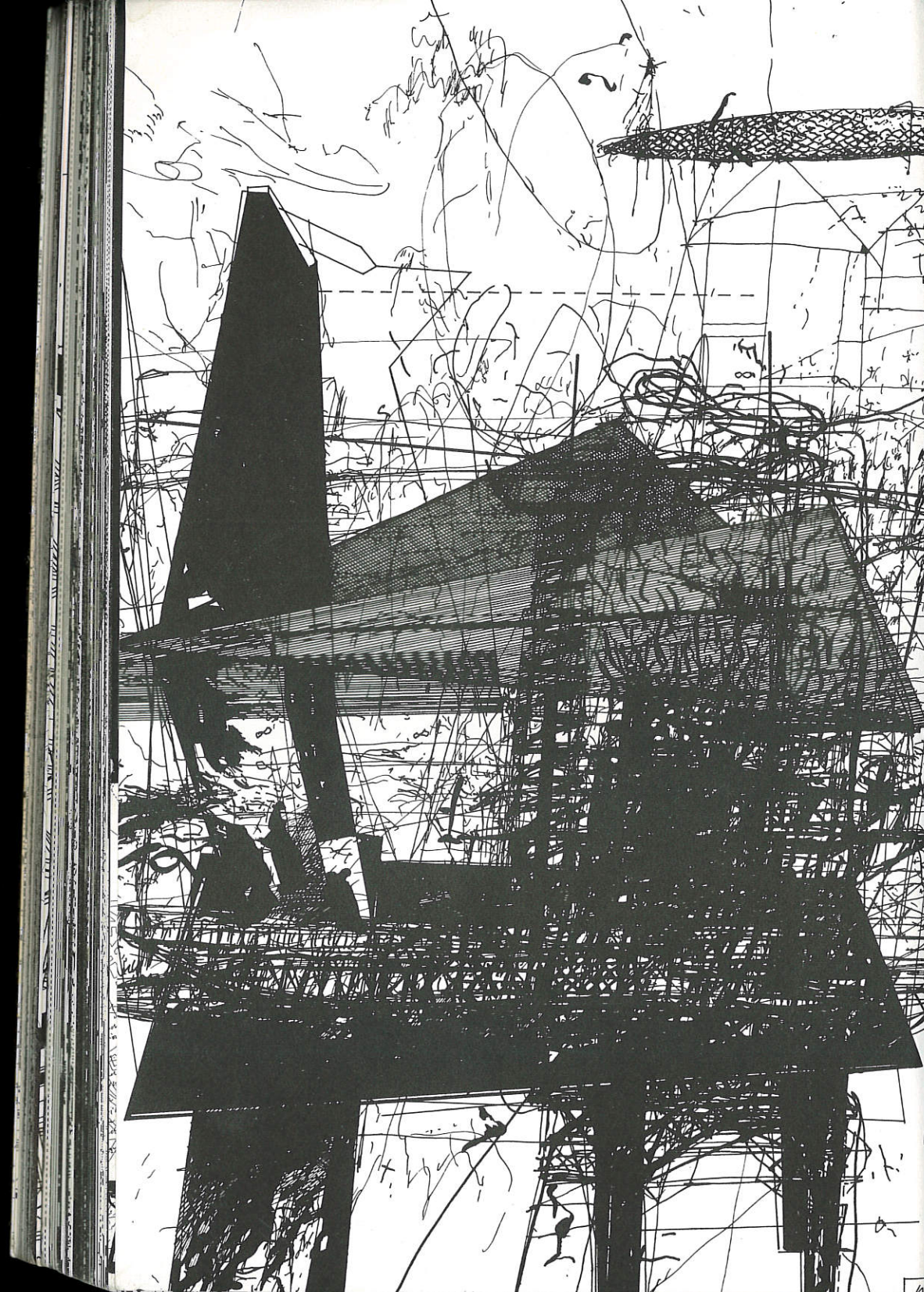
Erected to celebrate a military triumph and the birth of a nation, this stone monolith became an inadvertent communicator of very different messages during the bussing era in Boston. The monument undergoes a process of cleansing and rebirth as it vanishes beneath a sheath of glass during the day only to reappear after dark.











## Urban Instruments 2

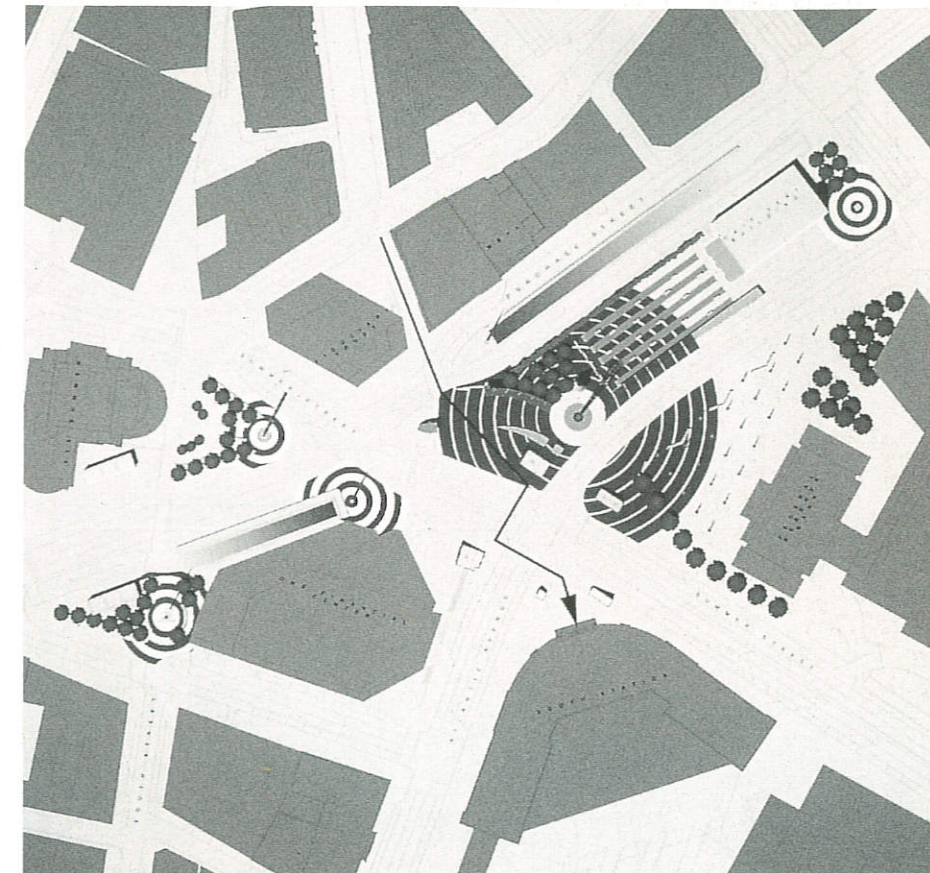
urban acupuncture





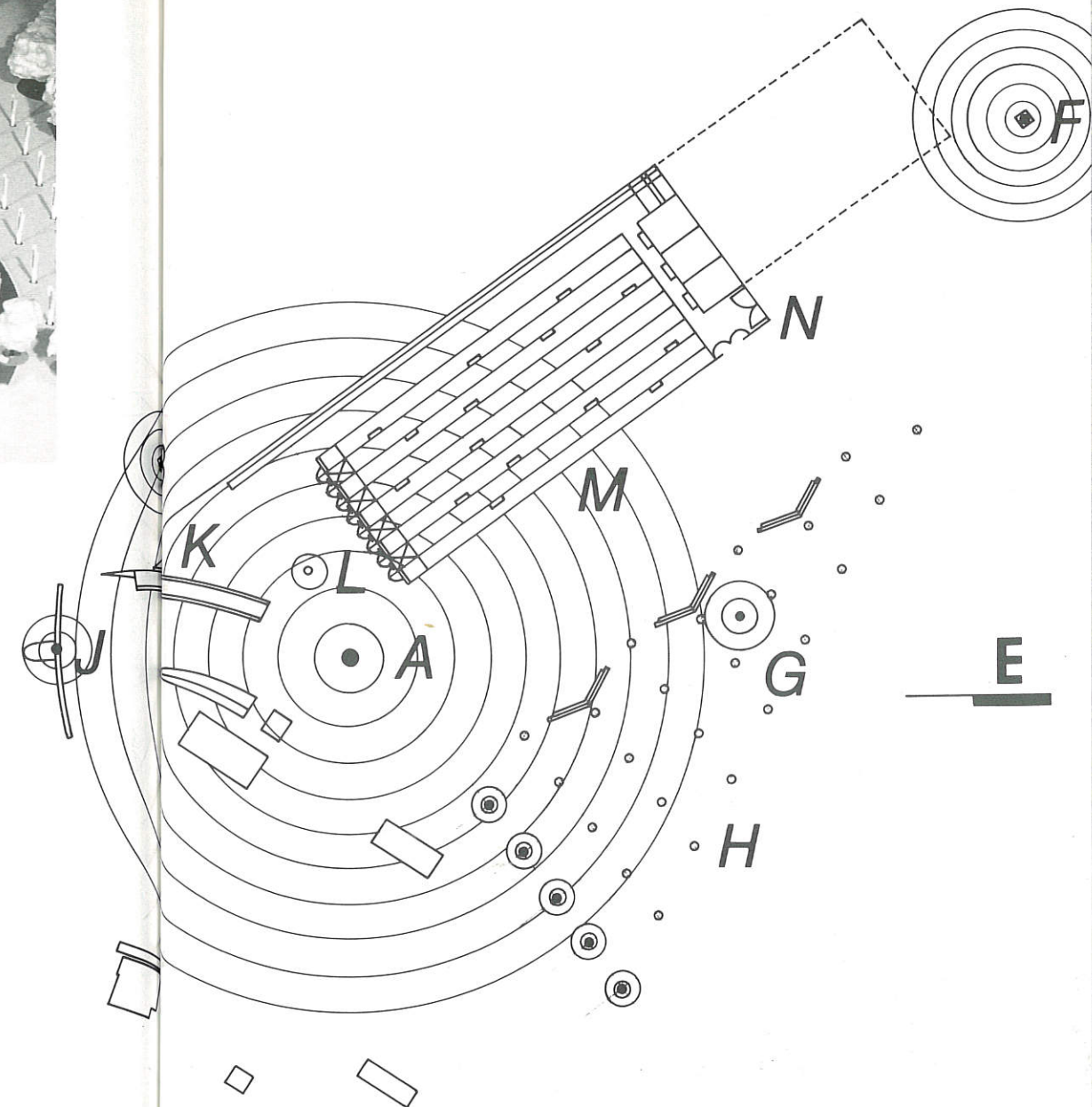
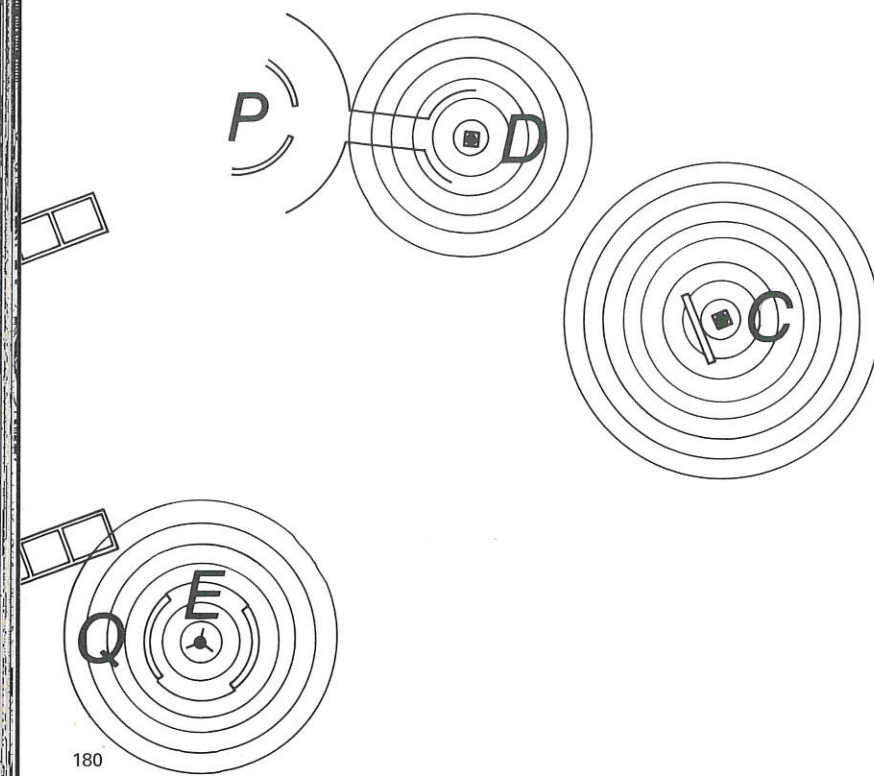
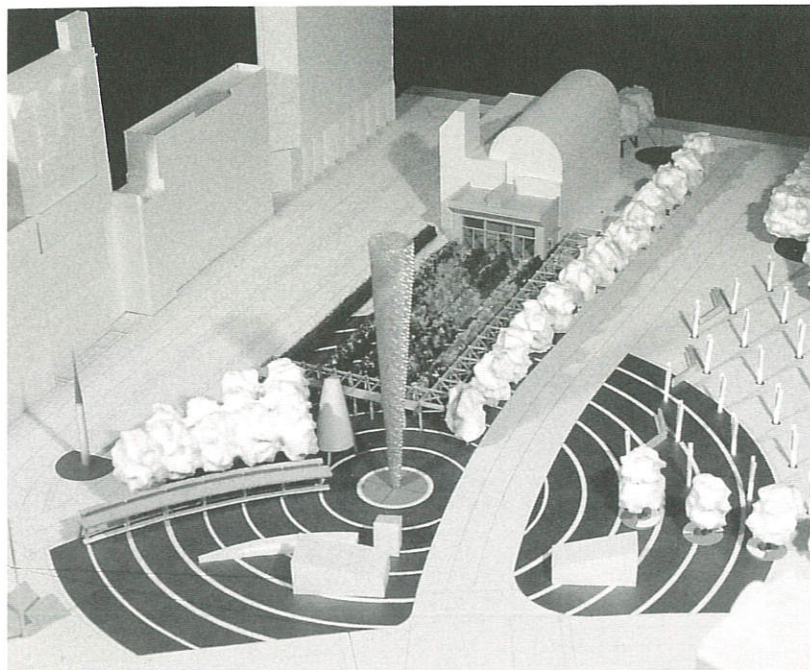
title: **urban acupuncture**  
 location: Dewey Square, Boston, Massachusetts  
 dimensions: area — approx. 6 acres; tower — 16' x 120' cone

Within the historically constrained city of Boston, Dewey Square is its most overt expression of 20th-century commerce, architecture, and vehicular traffic. It is also a square in name only, having been sliced apart by six intersecting roadways. Currently being reconstructed as part of the nation's largest infrastructure project — the depression of an eight-lane arterial highway directly through the center of the city — Dewey Square has the opportunity to be recast.

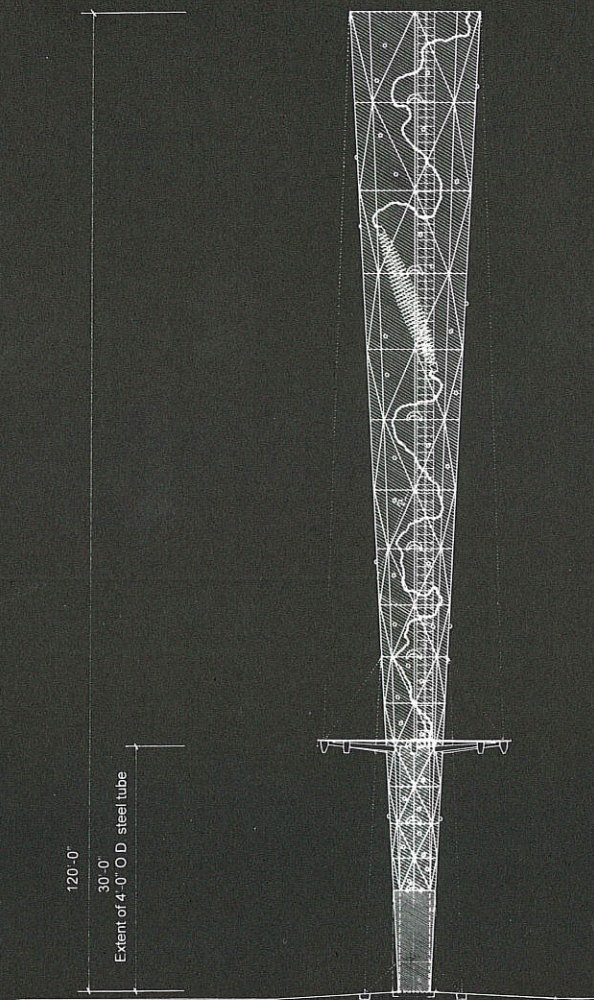


A constellation of underutilized corners and edges within the vicinity are marked, including the centerpoint, which is equidistant from the surrounding tall buildings. A collection of vertical elements is then developed corresponding to the unique features of each point on the figure. Supporting roles in the overall urban design strategy are played by more conventional items such as a newsstand, subway head houses, and weather shelters. As adjoining stretches of pedestrian or plaza areas are impossible to assemble, prominent surface graphics are made to span across the formidable street grid, suggesting continuity where there is in fact little.

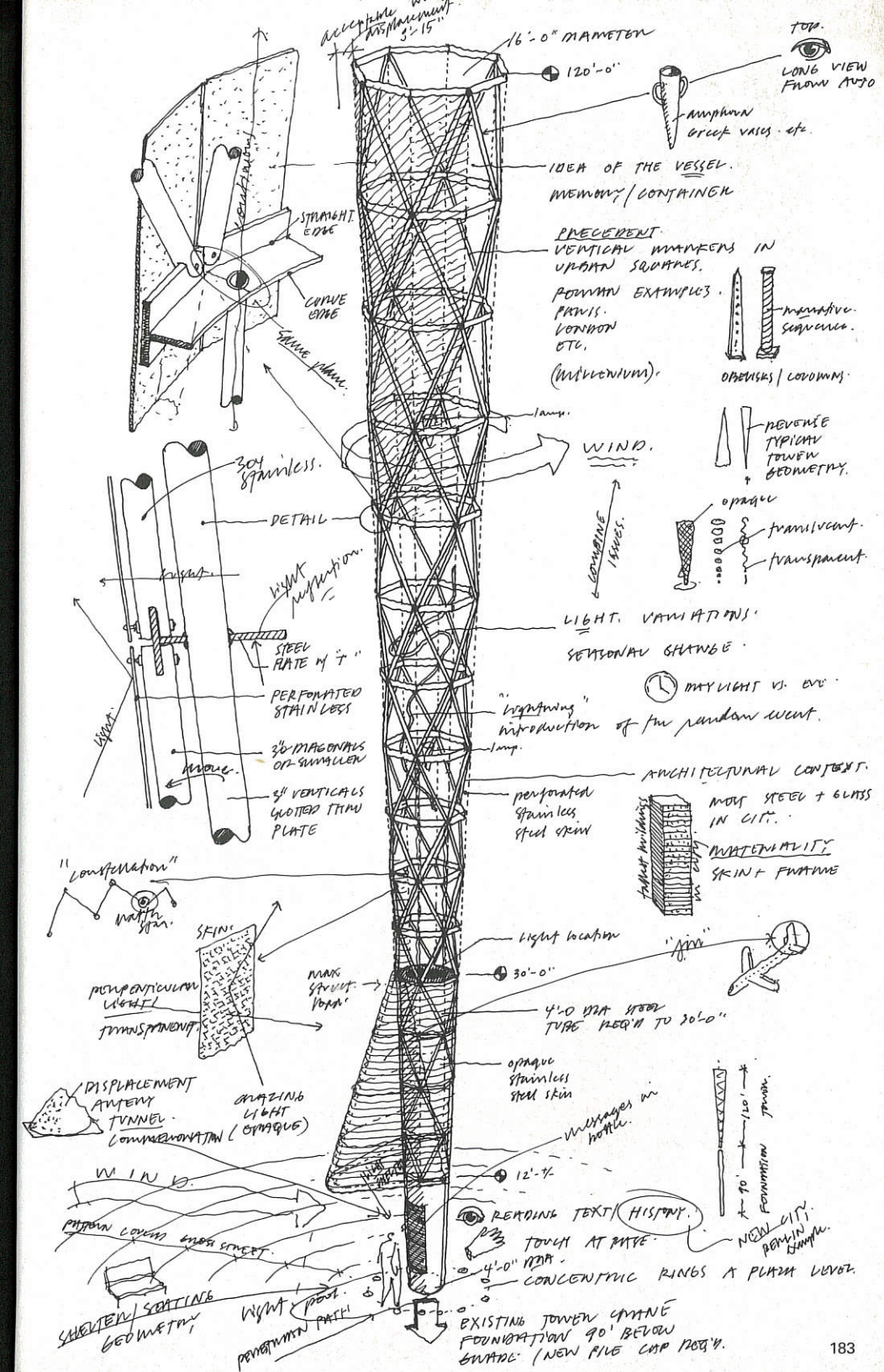




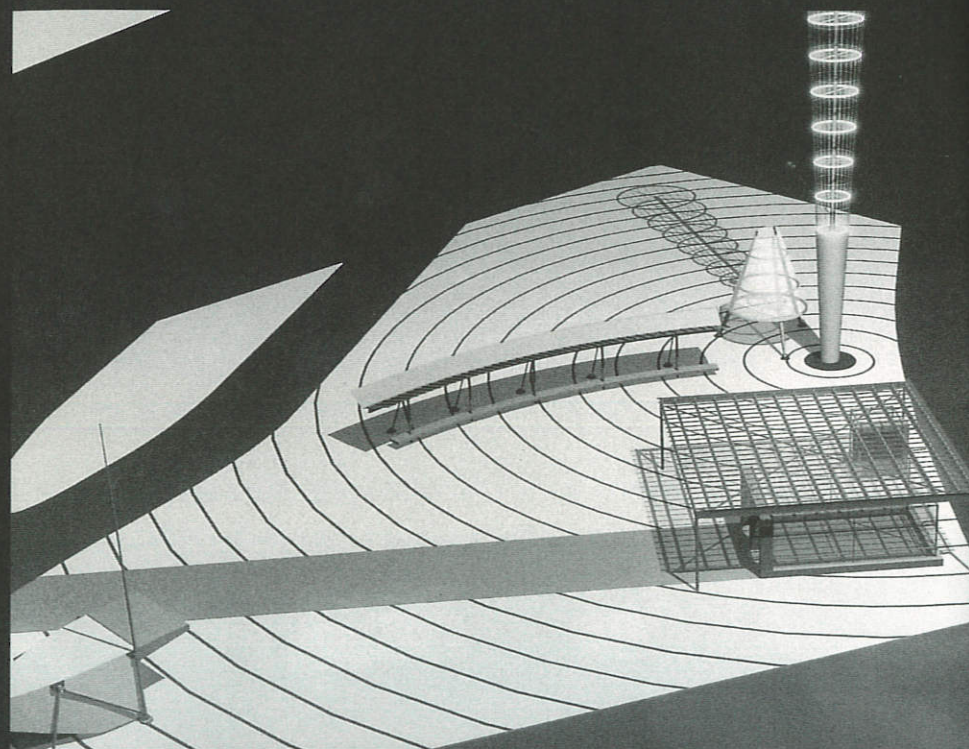




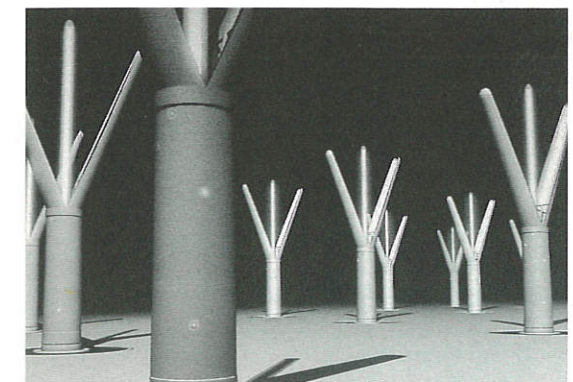
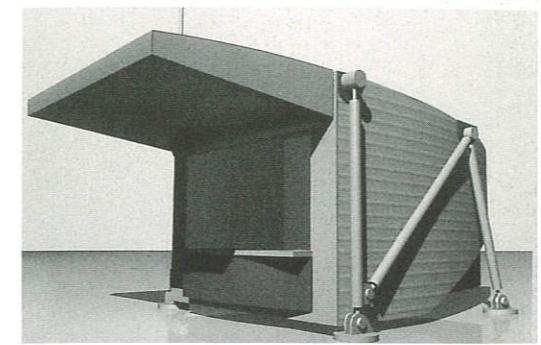
The form of the tower is an inverted cone reflecting the fact that the ground plane is completely artificial and the opportunity for point loads is negligible. The foundation is in fact that of a preexisting tower crane.







A strong axial arrangement between the newsstand and the tower is reinforced by their materiality and day/night activity. The entire front of the newsstand opens during business hours, but when closed forms an opaque monolith. Conversely, the tower, which is porous and translucent, becomes actively illuminated at night, and can appear to be a solid mass under certain lighting conditions.



Above, the news stand in the open position. Below, a grove of mechanical trees adjacent to the tower which open to reveal a stalk of light after dusk.



## Photo credits

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66-69, 91-101, 113, 115, 117, 135

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p. 150-151

Sung Ho Kim  
pp. 50, 52, 53, 139,

Paul Warchol  
p. 73

Brian Van der Brink  
p. 119

courtesy ARTPARK, Lewiston, NY  
pp. 124, 125, 127, 128, 129

courtesy Royal Academy of Art, London  
pp. 136, 137

Charles Mayer  
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