

rooms can be given life later on by choosing the material of walls, windows, door, carpets and furnishing. Then the rooms will be complete. Is that the right approach?

It is not. The centers which bring life to a room are larger features which lie beyond the boundary of the room. Rooms are given their life, first of all, by their position in the flow of people's movement through the building, the light in the room, and their connection with the outer world beyond the windows — those are the three most salient. By the nature of these things, they can only be settled early on, not later — before rooms have their position — before even the building has its overall ground plan fixed.

It is, above all, the light and relation to movement and relation to the whole which give quality and character to a room. So, if the fundamental process is being used, each room must

be chosen to be a strong center in itself — and that will require that it occupies a definite position with respect to movement and a definite kind of light. And that — once applied to all the rooms — has profound effect on the building envelope — its perimeter. These relationships to the world beyond, which extend far from the fabric of the room itself, are settled at the outset and are dominant in determining the success or failure of the room.

Once a room is in position, with its size and location fixed, it is too late to give that room real feeling or true meaning if it does not already have it because of its position in the whole. Thus the life of the important rooms in a building must be decided at the very outset — much earlier than we imagine — very early in the design process when major rooms and building volume and perimeter are being fixed.



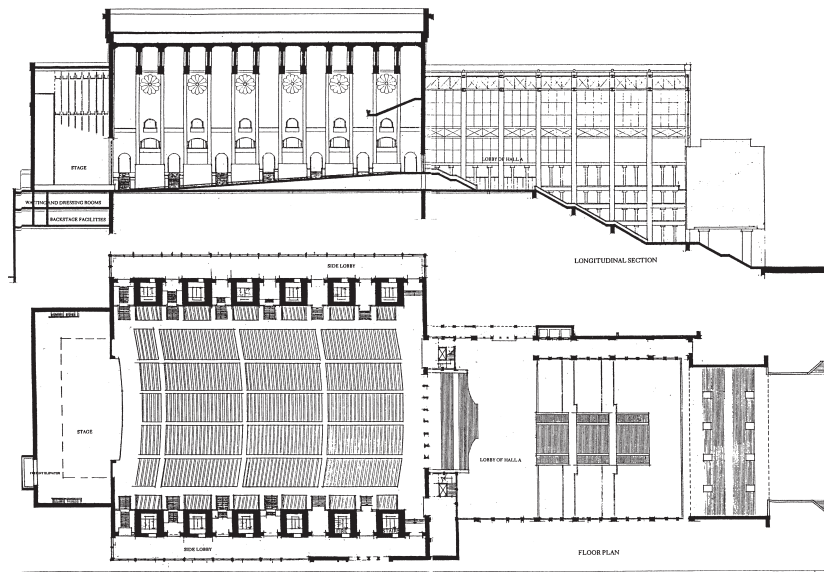
### 3 / POSITION: STARTING WITH THE MOST IMPORTANT ROOM

Start with the most important room (often the biggest, but not always). It seems almost silly to state this so naively, but it really is true: Most buildings have a “most important” room. It might be a hall or a living room of a house, or the main room of a museum, or the meeting room of a conference center, the lobby of an office. The ultimate feeling of the building as a whole will depend greatly on the effect and beauty of this main and largest room. It is this which you remember.

In the town hall of Viterbo in Italy, for example, there is a simply magnificent room. All this room has is a beautiful shape, beautiful wall-paintings on all four walls, and a row of wonderfully large windows. But the room is unforgettable. It affects your feeling for the town. Speaking for myself, when I am in that room, I can feel it modifying my sense of the whole town of Viterbo.

In any building, one may say as a general rule that the main room of the building — in size, position, light, volume, character, and structure — *must be unforgettable*. You must not constrain it with other thoughts; you can let everything else go. If you try to make this main room “fit in” or be part of some system, you will almost certainly make it less than it could be. What you have to do is concentrate, concentrate, concentrate on just this *one* room. Make sure that you place it where you want it, that it has the most profound character you can get hold of, and let everything else go to hell — for the moment.

The main room of the Tokyo Forum (page 417) is huge, nearly half the size of a football field. It completely governs the way that building works. Once that room was clear in my mind, like a pinnacle, high on the artificial mountain, the next most important room was the great seven-story high lobby which reaches to it with



*The main hall of the Tokyo International Forum design, an enormous room, whose position defines the organization of entire design. An interior view of the main hall is shown on pages 442–43.*

its enormous grand staircase. The sequence of these two rooms defined almost the whole building in its essence.

Something similar can happen equally in the smallest house, even in a tiny apartment. In every building — whether museum or church or cottage — what matters first, and before you

do anything else, is to get one really beautiful room in the place you want it, with beautiful light — a main center which will bring the building to life.

It all hinges on being able to make a main room which is really beautiful. Everything else should come as secondary.



#### 4 / POSITION: THE LIVING ROOM OF THE MEDLOCK HOUSE

Next, perhaps most crucial in trying to understand what is to become of a given building volume — as it has manifested on the site — is to form a vision of the inside of the building, a vision of moving through it — where the open places are, where the stopped, quiet, places are, where it is light, where it is dark, where you stay in, where you go out.

This vision can be had, usually, only by closing your eyes, allowing yourself to walk, in your mind's eye, through the building. To do it effectively, I recommend something like this: Go into your mind's eye pretending to walk through the

building, as if it existed already, but you are seeing it for the first time and are stunned by its beauty. You are genuinely surprised. You find yourself stunned by the beauty of the rooms. And you ask yourself, then, Which features of what I am seeing, are making it so beautiful?

That is what you are trying to find out. Usually, in my experience, when you do it like this, you do see things you had not thought of, or were not aware of. Thus you find out, for the first time, by examining what has autonomously presented itself to your own mind's eye, what it takes to make the rooms as beautiful as you want them to be.