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SKETCHES OF A NEW ARCHITECTURE

I finished my architectural training (so-called) in 1958. In that year, I came to the conclusion that what I had learned at school, and the prevailing architectural wisdom, meant almost nothing . . . and that, fundamentally, and quite simply, we in our time just did not know how to build buildings. The art of building, as a serious thing, seemed to me to be entirely lost . . . and the original reasons I had for wanting to be an architect – wanting to make buildings which took their place in the great line of buildings, built over the centuries, . . . was impossible to achieve, without a drastic reorganization – indeed, without a definition from scratch . . . of what the art of building really meant.

For this reason, instead of joining an architects' firm, I simply began to think and write – first in my PhD thesis at Harvard . . . and then for years afterwards, in my teaching capacity at the University of California. With one exception – a small school I built in India in the early 'sixties – I intentionally built nothing for almost fifteen years – because I felt that it could not be done well, and I did not know how to do it.

Only, finally, in the early 'seventies, after years of thinking and preparation, did I feel ready to try some experiments.

But, when I did try to put the results of my thoughts into practice, in a series of buildings built during the early 'seventies (the Modesto clinic, and the houses in Lima, among others), these buildings still had the same dead characteristics, typical of the age in which we have all been building.

At that stage I began a second series of experiments, far more radical, and far more difficult to implement. In these experiments I first assumed that I myself would be the builder – the contractor – and began to make the changes in my life, and the necessary preparations for this kind of task. And then, secondly, I began to search for ways of building which would allow some kind of genuine spirit to show itself. Thus, in these experiments, I had the fundamental attitude that I was not designing buildings – but *making* them. And all my work turned towards this act of making, and its art.

Now, this is very easy to write down; but immensely difficult to do. It has taken almost ten years of work, experiments, and projects, to reach the stage where I

can really undertake this kind of work, on a reasonably large scale. And the various cases where I have been able to carry something out fully, in the way that I believe is right, are necessarily very tiny.

For this reason, my forthcoming book is called *Sketches of a new architecture*. What I have accomplished so far, are just tiny fragments of what I hope one day to achieve, and of what I hope must be achieved, in the coming decades, by all of us concerned with building.

Of course they are three-dimensional sketches – fragments of actual physical reality – not drawings – but they are sketches nevertheless . . . partly because they are so small . . . and also, because they are in many cases, unfinished, hinted at . . . not yet fully matured, not perfected.

It would be easy to dismiss these small sketches as insignificant. They are tiny, indeed, compared with the huge task of building millions of cubic feet of buildings, every year . . . as we are called upon to do . . . and as the order of the world requires.

But, in order to reach the depth of changes which are reflected in these sketches, it would have been impossible – quite impossible – to make them any larger. In many cases, the physical technique, needed to make one of these sketches – was hardly developed – and could only be carried out in miniature, to see if it worked *at all*. So, in part, it would have been physically impossible to carry out these experiments on a larger scale.

But it would also have been socially, and emotionally impossible. In order to make buildings, in this way, it is necessary to change, completely, our conception of the architect. The social arrangements, contracts, assumptions, obligations, definitions of responsibility . . . which define the architect, the planner, and the contractor, in modern society, are so well established, that it requires enormous force, even to make these changes on a small scale. Some of the anecdotes that accompany the individual cases, will make it clear, how quickly, the means required to implement a given work, were at odds with the methods of implementation available to carry them out.

These fragments, these buildings, and other buildings of this kind, cannot be built by making drawings . . .

This article is a summary of a forthcoming book, which will also be called *Sketches of a new architecture*.

and then handing over to the bank and to the general contractor. They require a different order of society to execute them. And this order of society will be hard won.

Nevertheless, all my experiments, now, are aimed at showing how these fragments can be reproduced, in essence, on a much larger scale. We are now building a small university in Tokyo; a ten-storey apartment building in Sapporo; a village in Israel; and we are responsible

BLACK AND WHITE TERRAZZO FLOORS, 1980

In 1980 I spent a few hours in Florence, and was astonished by the intense beauty of the very simple black and white marble floors in the Baptistry, in San Miniato, and in other churches. These floors, laid by *intaglio* work, small chips of black and white marble, achieved a depth and simplicity quite out of proportion with the difficulty involved.

They stayed in my mind, and when I came back to Berkeley, I decided that it must be very simple to find some modern way of producing a similar kind of ornament, and we began a series of experiments in our yard.

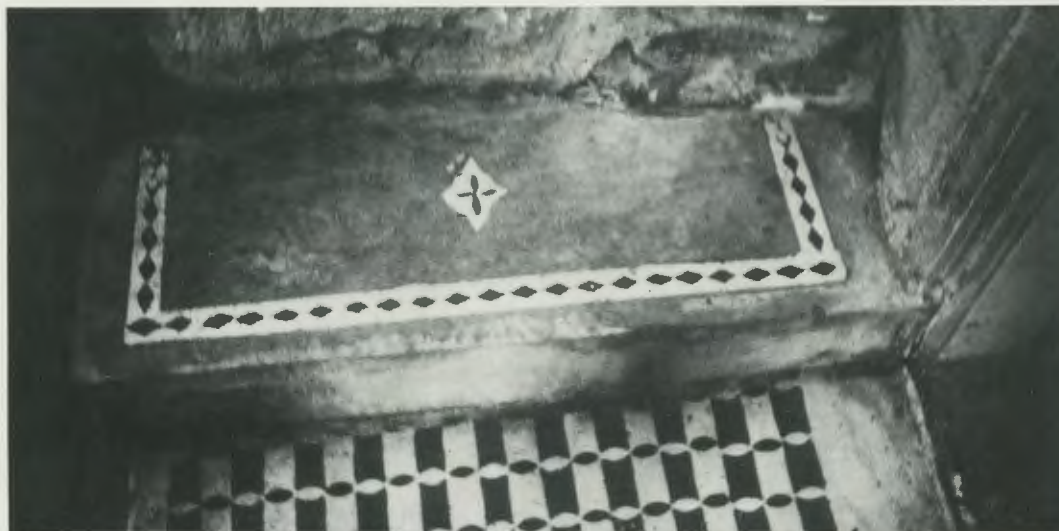
Since we were doing all kinds of experimental concrete work, I decided that some form of coloured concrete would be a suitable way of doing it . . . and we soon found that ordinary terrazzo – a mixture of coloured cement, and marble dust and fine marble chips would give us the material we needed. This material is laid wet, then ground to a first finish about twenty-four to forty-eight hours after it is laid, while still green, and then finally polished with a high-speed sander a few days later.

The question was, how to get the pattern, without creating enormous labour cost. I did not want to produce something which was inherently so expensive that it could only be a luxury. My goal, from the outset, was to produce a kind of floor which would be reasonable in price, so that we could build them easily in different buildings, and yet provide a process which can allow the kind of personal feeling which is inherent in this kind of work.

We began by making a simple brass mould, that would allow us to fill first the black material by using half the cells of the mould, and then, after this had set, twenty-four hours later, to fill the remaining space with white material . . . then grind the two together . . . and polish the result.

The first result was good, but tearing at the edges disturbed the pattern. My fears that the result would be too mechanical were allayed. We then built a larger mould of the same type, with a very complex negative 'spider', that kept the material pressed down, while the mould was lifted up. This mould allowed us to make a larger area of the same design, which you can see on the lower step in the photograph.

for the construction of several thousand houses in a new town in Venezuela. In each of these cases, we have a client, who understands, to some level, what kinds of changes are necessary, in the fabric of procedures, to allow these sketches which are presented here to come to life on a larger scale. If we manage that, then it might truly be said that a new age of architecture has arrived.



However, the needs of the material are much more fluid. It is necessary, in order to follow the centering process, to have extreme liberty in creating new designs, that are just right, for the place they go into . . . To see what we wanted on the step above, we first played with black and white paper, to find the right design . . . and then used an entirely different technique to make the physical thing. We made the white part of the design in thin styrofoam – leaving gaps for the black. Then we filled the black terrazzo around the styrofoam. Then, after twenty-four hours, we burnt out the styrofoam with a torch; and then backfilled with the white terrazzo; twenty-four hours later ground it off, later polished and sealed the surface with a shiny sealer.

The new technique is far more beautiful than the old. Even though the first example has a roughness which is not really mechanical, it is still impersonal and mechanical when we compare it with the second, the smaller design on the step, which does somehow reach a spiritual quality . . . because it is so personal. The styrofoam allows the exact shape which the personal vision of the place has in it, to be produced, to the nearest millimetre, exactly as it is felt to be right . . . and this brings the thing to life.

We shall try some larger floors now, in the styrofoam technique.

RESTAURANT AND CAFES ON THE HUDSON RIVER, 1979

In 1979 Bob Schwartz of Tarrytown, New York, asked us to design a huge restaurant on the Hudson river, a kind of place with hundreds of different rooms, cafés, a place to dance, places to entertain privately, almost a kind of Tivoli in a building.

The project went as far as the building of this model: and then came to a halt. Perhaps it will still be built; one day. In any case, even in model form, it is one of the buildings I like best of all those which are represented among these fragments and sketches.

The long awning along the river, which is a beautiful rich red, is itself almost 300 feet long.





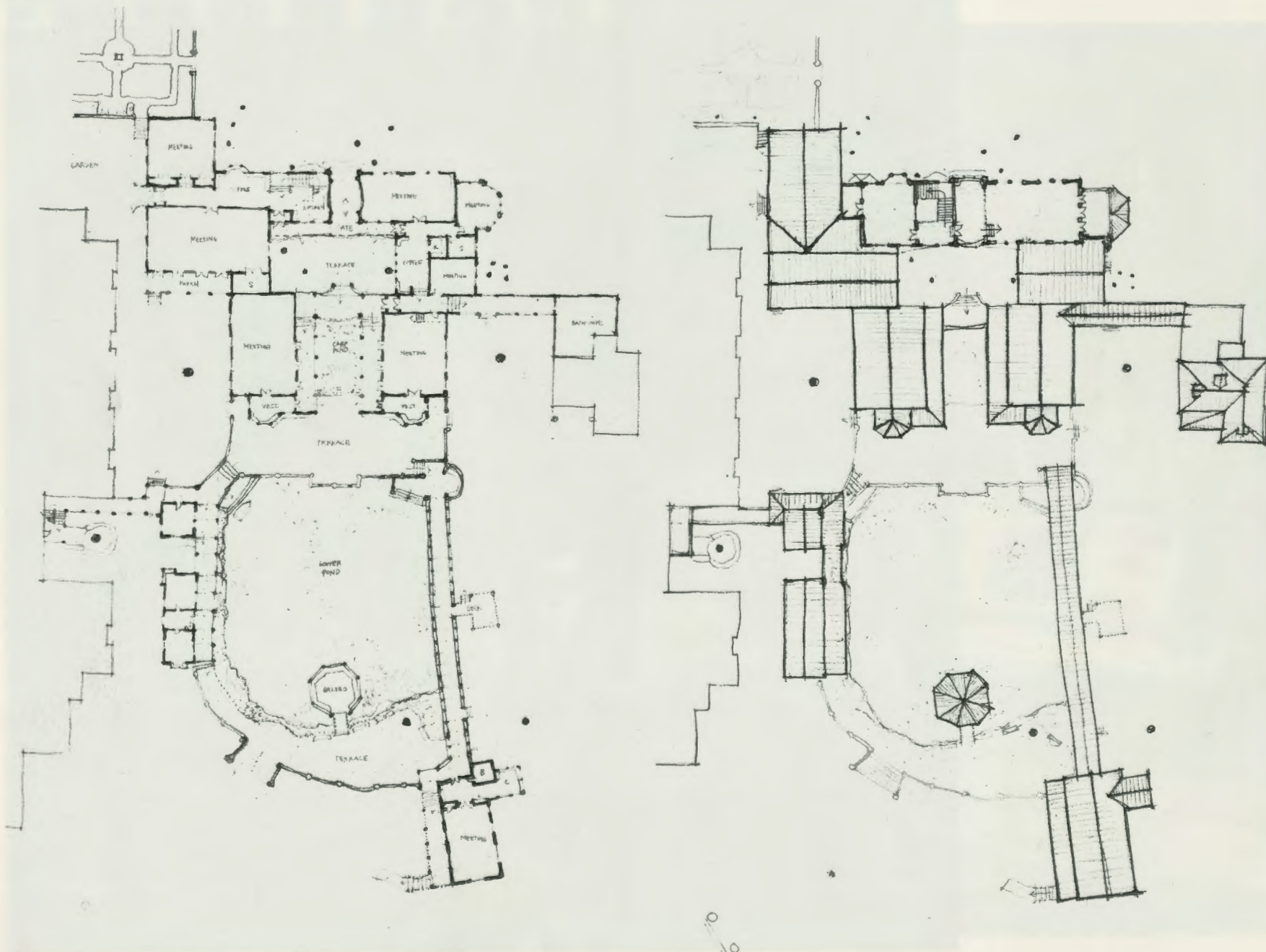
TARRYTOWN CONFERENCE CENTER, 1979

Bob Schwartz also owns a piece of land on the Hudson river, where two of the old New York Estates have been joined to form a conference centre. So far, the two houses are however still quite separate, and the area between them, although potentially beautiful, does not join them in any obvious harmonious way. We spent a week with Bob, to help him lay out a kind of dream world, a nucleus of a conference centre, which would unite the two old houses, and form a place between them, that would encourage reflection, study...

The two existing houses do not appear on the

drawings. One is above, left, and the other is below, left. The land slopes between them . . . and the whole thing is on top of a hill which overlooks the Hudson river valley, with beautiful views in all directions.

The main building we designed stands at the junction of the two old properties. In front of it, is a quiet, water-filled lagoon, surrounded by walkways, with a terrace above it, arcades along the east, and the main building above the terrace, built into the tall trees which are standing there.



ETNA STREET COTTAGE, 1973

This building was built in ten weeks, without a building permit, at the back of our office on Etna Street in Berkeley. I have described the process of its design fully, in the *Timeless Way of Building*, Chapter 22. It was the first time that I tried, explicitly, to build something according to the construction patterns in *Pattern Language* and also the first time that I had myself taken on the construction of a building as a contractor.

As you can see, the building is very naive and innocent. It arose directly from the plan, following only the rule that we placed columns at the corners, and made the ceilings as vaults, over woven baskets. There was never, at any moment, in my construction of this building, a conscious attempt to define what the building would look like.



SKETCH OF A PAINTING ON WOOD, 1980

In the spring of 1980, I gave a seminar on colour, where I studied, with a small group of students, in which we tried to find the rules which govern the formation of 'inner light' in colour – an extension of the ideas on geometry which I had been formulating since 1976, and which will appear in a later volume of mine.

In order to understand these rules, and to put them to the test, we each of us made small paintings, week after week, in order to show both what result the rules we had formulated tended to produce, when, and in order to find examples of inner light, intuitively, as a way of trying to define other, as yet undefined rules, which might contribute to the effect. This sketch, shown here only because there are no colour reproductions, is a first sketch of one of these paintings.

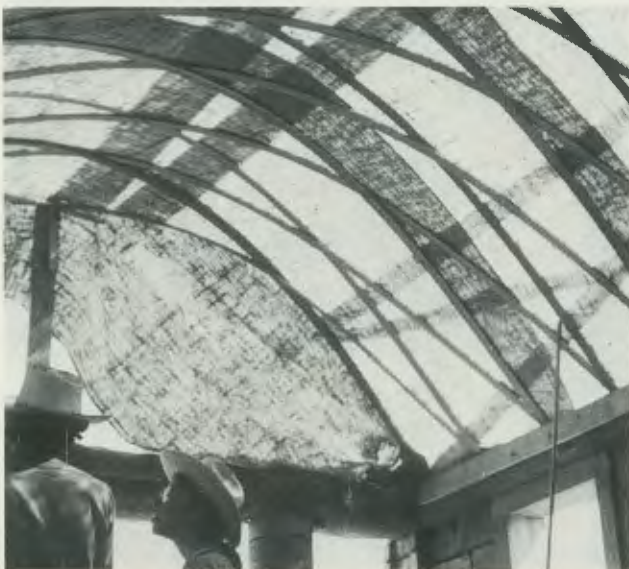
I include it here, because it sheds light on a general feature of making and building, which lies consistently

HOUSES IN MEXICALI, 1976

These buildings, part of our project in Mexicali in the north of Mexico, are completely described, with colour pictures, in the book *The Production of Houses*, Oxford University Press, 1983.

This was the first large project where I myself was not only architect, but also contractor. We built the houses, with the help of the families, who also laid out houses for themselves, using the pattern language. Our production process covered everything. We even produced our own special earth cement concrete blocks, in a factory, that was right next to the building site. The roofs of the buildings are all thin concrete shells, hand applied over lightweight baskets woven from wood strips, and then covered with burlap and chicken wire.

In 1976, the houses, of about 70 square metres in area, cost about \$3,500 each.



through these pages. Even this painting has some quality in it, which seems 'not quite of our time'. It is something that goes beyond the sterile, fashionable, and conceptual art of the twentieth century, and reaches forward, or backward, into something much closer to a more childish human heart.

It seems almost ridiculous to say this, in such a 'sweet' fashion . . . and yet there is a quality of some kind, even here which expresses very clearly what I am trying to show through this piece . . . and which is very, very hard to put into words.

The phrase which comes closest, is that, in some way I am not at all, trying to be clever. These paintings are perhaps the least clever, of any paintings that one can find in the twentieth century – even less clever than the so-called primitive paintings. They have the heart of a simpleton in them; at least the kind of simpleton that sees through to the truth now and then.



COURTYARDS FOR THE CANARY ISLANDS, 1973

This is a sketch, made during a project in which Ingrid and Halim and I undertook the preliminary design of a tourist development in the Canary Islands. The project itself would have been beautiful: people coming to the place, themselves helping to build it, as part of their vacation, great gardens full of flowers, the black rocks of the islands, the yellow sand dunes, a tourist resort where one came to experience a new vision of life, food under the desert night sky, sleeping on the roofs of houses, under the night sky, eating from vendors in the narrow streets, working with the other visitors to tend the gardens, and to build the buildings...

During this project, I made this drawing to show the members of our team, how it might be possible for a pattern of courtyards to grow gradually, and what sort of geometric character they would have, if they grew naturally. I made the drawing, mainly, to contrast this naturalness with the artificial, mechanical character, that courtyards made in our time, typically have.

This naturalness comes from five things:

First, the courtyards grow: the process of drawing makes one courtyard at a time, just as they might be made in the actual building process.

Second, as a result, each courtyard is unique, because it sits in a slightly different relation to its neighbours, it plays a different role in the whole, and this shapes it and makes it unique.

Third, all the courtyards follow the same basic rules (the same range of sizes, for the interior, the same range of thicknesses or depths for the buildings, the same passage which goes into each one...)

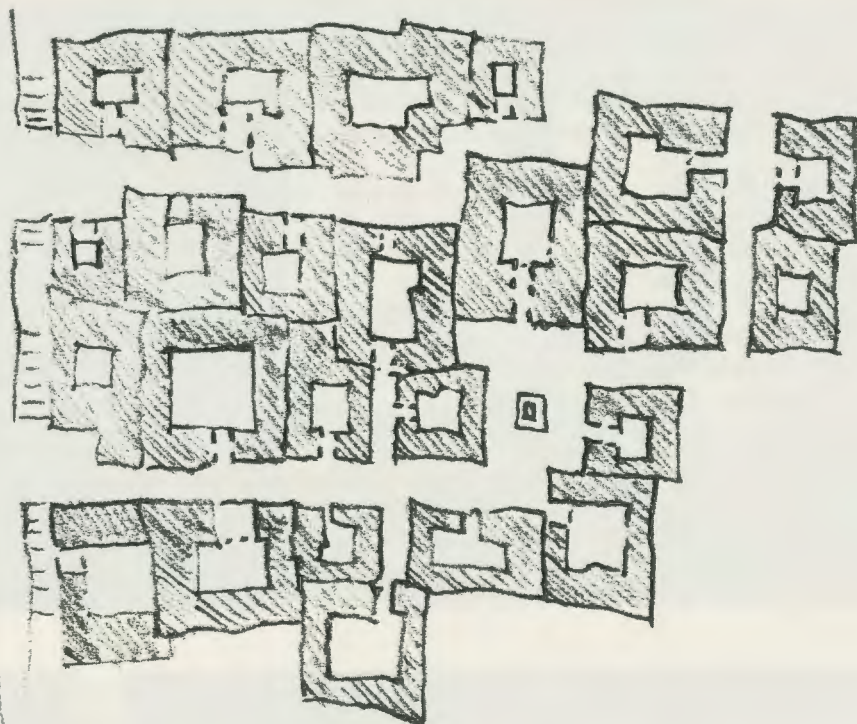
Fourth, each one delights in some peculiarity, and makes something of it, so that whatever difference it has, is turned to advantage, made into something.

BRICK FLOOR IN AN ARCADE, 1976

Just bricks. But compare them with the bricks of a mid-twentieth century building made within the architectural establishment. There they would be perfectly regular. Here they are placed in the sand, and you can feel the hands that put them there. There they would be placed with perfection, in their collinearity, each one lining up perfectly with the ones next to it. Here they are placed with perfection in the eye, they are placed so as to make the edge nice, and the bricks at the edge are also cut to make it nice, so that the whole feels right.

There are no bizarre and funky patterns in the bricks. There is no attempt to make this more than it is, no hint of a hunger so great that it has to feed itself by making designs everywhere, with brick designs, brick squares, alternating brick zigzags, brick medallions, brick edges, bricks on their sides, bricks on their ends.

Here there are just hundreds of bricks, all laid in the same way exactly, like the scales of fish, but happy in their regularity, because it comes from ordinary affection.



Fifth, each one is made with great care, care based on its own peculiarities, so that each part of it, every corner, is made whole, while the array is growing, and there are no left-over corners, no dead bits, every part is made whole, and made to come to life.

Even though this is only a pencil sketch, you can see all this, in the drawing, and can imagine how this would happen in the real building process, provided that the real process had the same five rules to follow, as the drawing does.

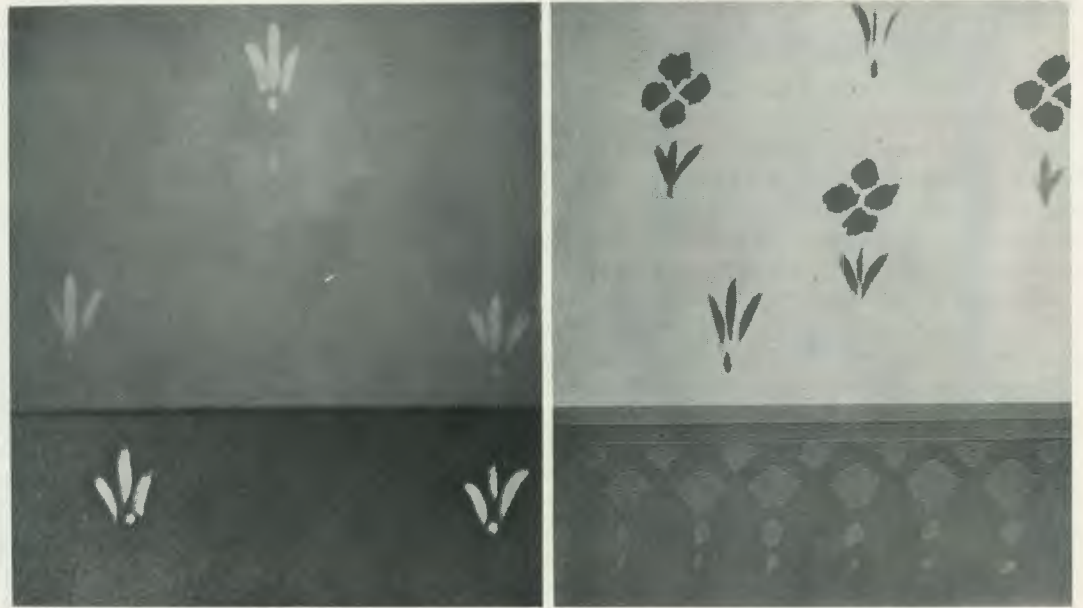


THE LINZ CAFE, 1980

This small building, built in 1980 on the banks of the Danube, in Linz, Austria is fully described in a book of the same name, *The Linz Café*, Oxford University Press, 1981.

In this building, for the first time, I began to find a way of reaching the kind of informal simplicity, which is indicated in the pattern language, but coupled with a simple coherence of structure, a very formal, but simple layout and design. In this sense, the building is not funky, and moves much further in the direction of pure form than was ever suggested by the work which went into the pattern language.

Perhaps the most important thing about the building (unfortunately impossible to reproduce here) are the glowing colours, and paintings on the walls, apricot yellow, very pale green, deeper green, a more orange version of the apricot yellow, small touches of a deep crimson red . . . all mixed by hand, and painted by hand, in the last two weeks before the building opened.



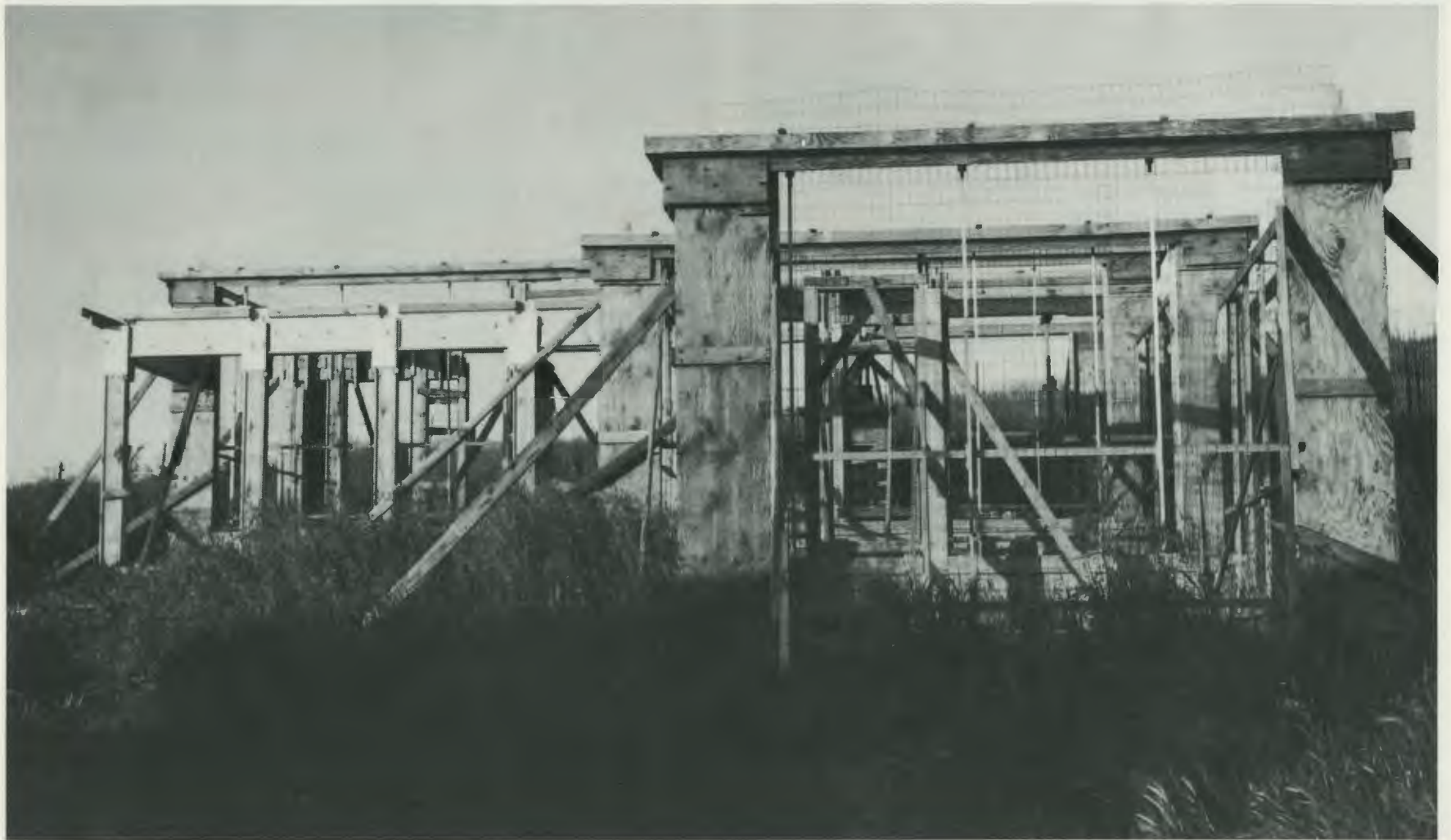
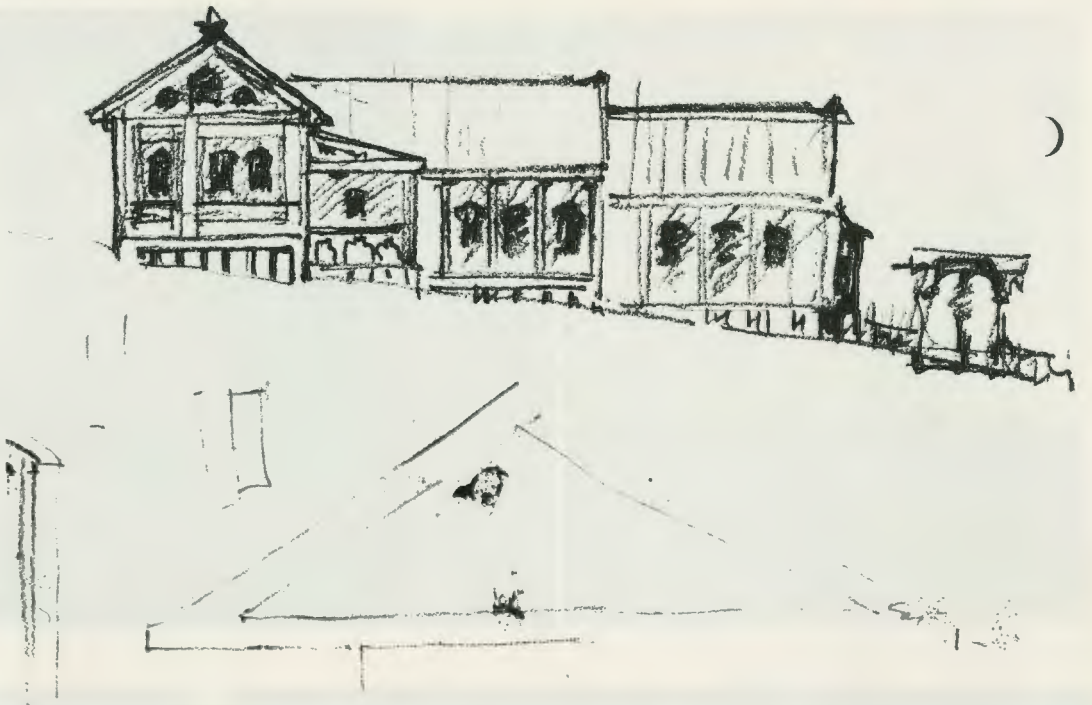


FIRST SKETCH OF THE MARTINEZ HOUSE, 1977

I made this drawing the day we came home from the site in Martinez, immediately after we had laid the building out.

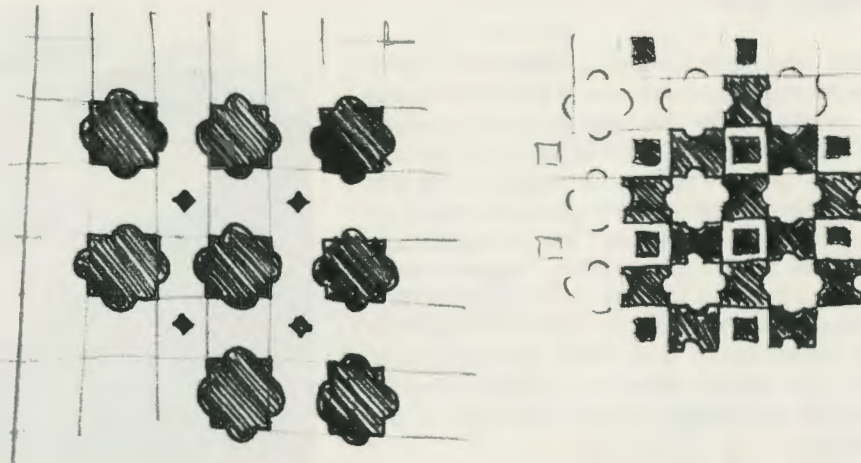
The plan was still vivid in my mind. I tried to sketch, in a flash, what the building seemed to be like in its outward character.

Below you can see part of the finished building, and the way it looked when we began to build it . . . but here, there is a substance, more fleeting, harder to catch, but something very simple and ordinary. Especially, the end wall on the left has something. It is so ordinary, it almost begins to be strange . . .



SALA HOUSE, KITCHEN FLOOR, 1982

The Sala House, another house now under construction, has a large farmhouse kitchen, with high ceiling, fire-place alcove, and a forest of tall columns, with wooden corbels holding the beams. We are just about to put in the floor and are going to try our black and white terrazzo technique, for the first time on a large scale. Perhaps it will be dark blue and white in this particular case. These are early sketches of the way the pattern might be made.

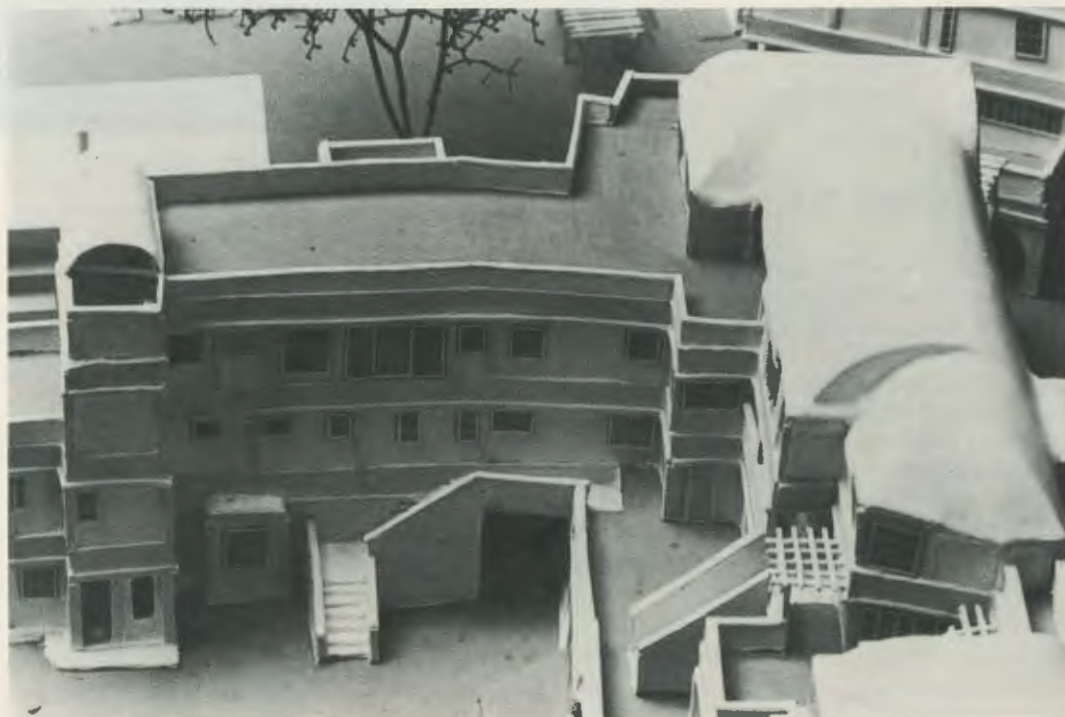


FOUR-STOREY APARTMENTS DESIGNED BY TWENTY-SEVEN FAMILIES, 1974

One of the reasons why the *Timeless Way of Building*, requires that people design their own buildings for themselves, is simply that they know more about their lives, have the capacity to make things just right, need the touch of a personal world around them...

But there is another reason too, which I have never mentioned explicitly in any of my other books. At a time in the twentieth century, when architects are obsessed with images, with their own creative power, with the uniqueness of their designs, families are never concerned with these things... they are concerned, simply, to make sure that things work.

As a result, when people use the pattern language, to lay out buildings for themselves, there is, inevitably, an informality, an egolessness, similar to that achieved in traditional cultures – just because no one is trying to 'prove' anything, just going about their business to try to get things right.



BEDSIDE TABLE, 1971

This little table was made for love. I made it for Ingrid, one Saturday morning between nine in the morning and lunchtime – and gave it her that afternoon as a surprise.

I made a drawing of it on a piece of old wood, went to buy the planks – ordinary pine – came back home and started to cut them at once. It is only glued and nailed, so I put it together almost as fast as I am writing this.

It was made as a gift, a private thing – for her to have beside her bed – and she still has it there to this day.

One of the things I like about this table is its extreme simplicity of construction. It is made entirely out of three-quarter inch planks, nailed and glued to form a box-like structure which becomes rigid because of the three dimensions.

In this case, more than almost anything else in these sketches, I made the table without any idea in my mind that anyone would ever look at it except Ingrid – so I had literally no fear, no idea of what people would think, no desire at all, to impress anyone. I only wanted her to like it.



AN INTERIOR VAULT, 1976

This is one end of a small room which I built myself in part of our Mexicali project. It is not the most beautiful room, and not the most beautiful vault . . . but I include it because it is completely ordinary. It is simple.

There is nothing but the full-bellied curve of the vault, the white wall, the brown beam . . . the simple window, the crossed lattice strips of the ceiling.

I feel confident that if someone saw this picture, they would not know that it was built by an architect, but would assume that it was an ordinary cottage, in one of the thousands of forgotten villages, in Greece, or Mexico, or North Africa . . . and to have achieved that is very lucky, a beautiful accident . . . the fruit of twenty years of work.

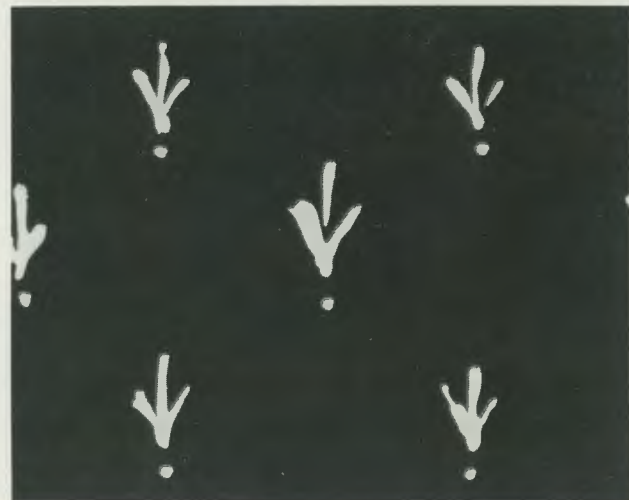


BLACK AND WHITE TILE

This is one of a series of about fifty tiles which I have made: each one different in colours, glazes, and design. Some are more exciting, some are more vivid in colour, some much more bold in their shapes. However, of all of them, this is the one which perhaps comes closest to the innocent mirror of the self quality which, I hope for, but which is so hard to find.

I believe some aspects of the human soul, in its more peaceful moments, look something like this.

Of course, no thought went into it at all. It took very much concentration, but about five minutes work.



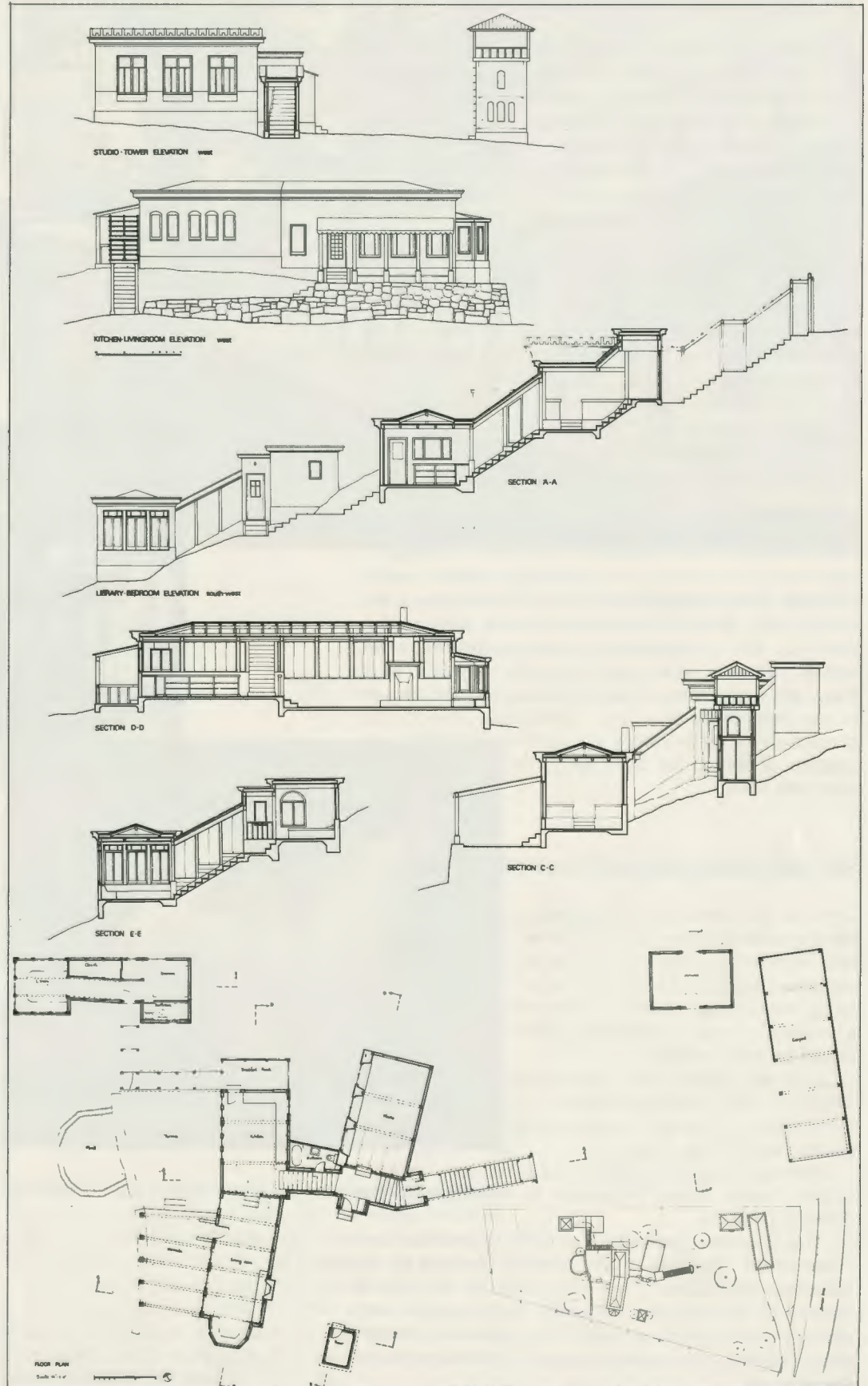
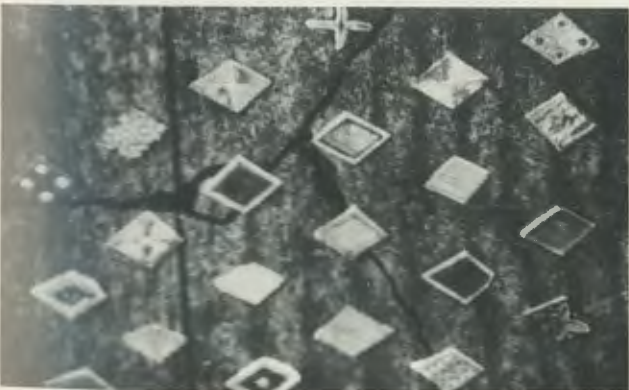
THE BERRYESSA HOUSE, 1982

This house is under construction as I write. We put the foundations in a few months ago. The client has now found the money to go ahead with the main structure itself, and at this moment, columns and beams and ceilings and stairs are all standing.

The building is almost like a miniature palace ... seven small buildings, dotted on a steep hillside, among white oak trees, each one with enough space, outdoor terraces, stairs, and connections to make the whole complex almost magnificent in feeling. The buildings include a tiny library, with a high coffered ceiling, a three-storey tower, with a meditation chamber on the top floor in a room surrounded by window seats.

All the buildings, except the out-buildings, are built in the combination timber-concrete construction which we have recently developed. The vertical loads are taken by the post and beam system, where columns and beams are simply pinned together by invisible steel pins. All shear forces in the building are taken by a one and a half inch concrete shell outer wall, which acts as a shell, ties the whole building together, and provides the buildings with a solidity that is rarely found in pure wood construction.

The foundation contains dozens of tiny hand-painted blue diamond-shaped tiles, which were glued to the formboards before the foundations were poured, and now glow and spark and give a touch of colour that brings the long grey foundation walls to life.



BAYS OF A TWO-STOREY BUILDING, 1970

This is another sketch I made, years ago, at about the same time that I first began to catch a glimpse of what I called 'the quality without a name'.

I made this sketch one afternoon, in the Centre, at a session where I asked everyone to draw, in a single simple image, the essence of what they thought we were trying to build: what a building made perfectly in the *Timeless Way of Building*, and *Pattern Language* could look like.

It was done years before we made any detailed studies of building systems: and it is certainly crude. But even now, years after, it does, in its very roughness, catch some of that fire in the grass, of the evening sun, the building made at a time of perfect unconsciousness...



CONSTRUCTION YARD, 1977

This picture shows one of our construction yards, during the summer of 1977, when we undertook a number of experiments to see how we could adapt modern uses of concrete, to be compatible with the kind of easiness, and relaxedness, which is described in these sketches... what you see, are samples of columns, beams; walls, arches, parapets, vaults, ceilings, roofs... and in all of them, we were trying to understand how to turn the use of concrete away from the high-industry, mechanical character which it has today, into a human and joyful use, capable of letting us build with the character these sketches have...



SKETCH FOR A CONSTRUCTION SYSTEM, 1977

Done at the time of a long series of experiments in concrete construction, this is another sketch, made in a few moments, to try and define, intuitively, the most important aspects of a building system. Rough as it is, it has a smoothness which I like very much. If I could build a building, in concrete materials, which had this quality, I would be very satisfied.

It is very orderly: not much funkiness, no strange shapes. It has immense windows, full of light; texture in the windows, in the roof surface, small ornaments at key places: yet all very rough.

Perhaps the great and beautiful Lansdown Crescent at Bath comes closest in practice to realizing what this drawing contains.

The boundary between the floors is marked, and ornamented. The door is very pleasant, marked by the half-circle light above. Even the ridge of the roof is marked by punctuating ornaments. The building is very strongly ornamented: and yet it is simple and smooth, almost severe – the ornament has not become ornate or heavy at all.



MODESTO CLINIC, 1972

The process of laying out this building is described, rather fully, in the *Timeless Way of Building*, Chapter 23. As I explained there, the actual process of construction was not in our hands, and indeed, it was the result of this building which finally convinced me that it was necessary for us to take over the task of building itself – since there was no way of finding a harmonious way of building, so long as architect and builder were separated from one another.

The arcade is crudely made, and lacks many of the qualities I now know it ought to have. The columns are not thick enough; there is no cornice on the roof. The columns have no bases. They have no capitals. The brickwork of the floor is machine-like and impersonal.

In a nutshell, the whole thing is crude and machine-like. However, I include it, in spite of all that, just because, at least in its scale, it has the fact of trying to build an ordinary arcade, comparable to the arcades of traditional times. But I include it mainly as a failure, to show, by contrast with some of the other sketches in this book, an example of something I have made which clearly lacks the qualities which I am after.



BRACKET, 1978

This is the formwork for a concrete bracket made to support a bay window. Since the shape of the bracket is complex, I made this cheap form by gluing styrofoam together with rubber cement – and so I could adjust the styrofoam until the proportions were just right.

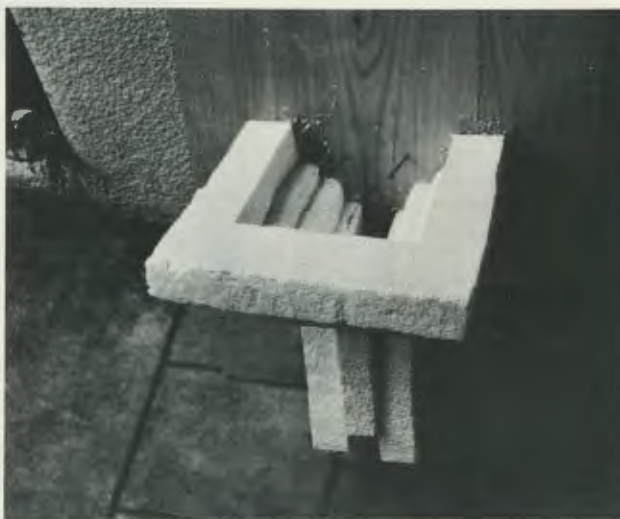
I include this example, to make clear something that is true in most of the cases described in this piece: the incredible effect which an inch or two can have on the success of a shape.

All my pencil studies show different possible combinations of the thickness of the different layers, different angles of flare, and so on. One – the one I finally chose – works better than any of the others. Why?

The answer lies in the shape of the space next to the bracket. If you look carefully at the space created next to the bracket, you see that it is only in the case I finally chose, that this space *also* has feeling; and a beautiful smoothness . . . while in the other examples, the shape next to the bracket either does not have any character of its own at all, or it is too jagged, too rough.

In almost every case, when we pay attention to the shape of the space next to what we are doing, as well as to the thing itself, success depends on an inch, even a quarter inch.

It is for this reason that pre-cast elements just will not work. The exact shape of the space next to something



depends on the interaction of all the elements present. To be successful, each thing must be made, exactly, according to the place where it is in the finished building and there is no way that pre-cast elements can succeed.

Only control over the last inch, the last quarter inch, in every particular case, and immense care, comparison of all the possibilities, intense study, looking at it, looking at it again, and looking at it again, only that will bring success at the last inch.

DOOR FRAME FOR A COTTAGE, 1973

This is the front door of the experimental cottage I built in Berkeley, and described in the *Timeless Way of Building*.

Of everything in the building, this door is perhaps at the same time, most rich, and also most lost to itself, most unconscious.

I made the decoration one Sunday afternoon when no one was there. I drew the 'S's on two boards in pencil, in five minutes . . . cut them with the jig-saw and nailed them up. I was a little afraid . . . it was so marked, I wondered if it would look too strange. . . . I filled the 'S's with plaster a few days later: and then built the door itself at the same time. The door is made simply by nailing and gluing one-inch planks together: it is the simplest construction imaginable.



DOMES IN THE SCHOOL AT BAVRA, GUJARAT, 1962

I spent seven months in the tiny village of Bavra, in Gujarat, India, trying to understand the village way of life, and its relation to the buildings. While I was there, I helped the village people build a school, because I did not want to be there without helping in some way.

There was almost no money, so I asked the village potter to make several thousand cone-shaped tiles each one about a foot long and four to five inches in diameter, with a slight taper. These tiles could be set into each other, nose to tail, and a long line of them, could then be 'riffled' like a pack of cards, to form a curve. I used these curves to form arches, out of which the domes were made – and then plastered the outer surface. The lowest tiles in the arch were filled with mud, to give them greater compressive strength.

At least forty or fifty people from the village helped me build this building.



BALUSTRADE AND SEAT AT THE MARTINEZ HOUSE, 1978

This balustrade and seat, outside a small workshop on the Martinez site, are entirely made of gunnite – sprayed concrete. The balustrade was formed with styrofoam cut-outs, made in the form of arches and flowers, set against a backing of sheetrock – and then shot with concrete, and screeded off to a smooth surface. The seat was built over an armature of plywood boxes – now 'lost' in the concrete, with all the key elements, shapes of the seat, back, railing, etc., also formed by guides, and cut off after the concrete was shot.

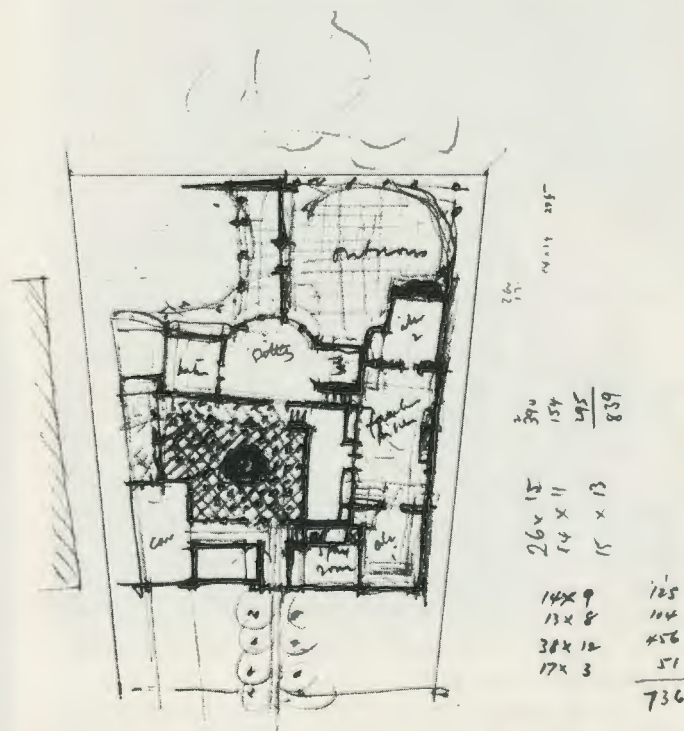
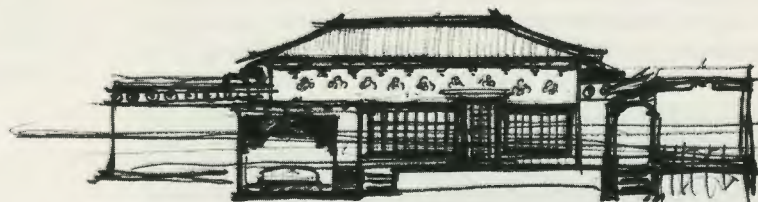
The whole thing is painted pale blue and white, and is now a meeting place for all the local teenagers in the area.

A very simple technique, makes a permanent and well-built thing, of a quality and level of detail almost akin to ancient stonework – although much cruder, and of course cheaper.



HOUSE FOR BODEGA BAY, 1981

These two sketches are the rough pencil drawings I made after laying out this house in Bodega Bay, north of San Francisco, for the first time. The final design was modified, but the spirit of the house, the feeling of it, was already quite clear in this earliest drawing.



TEN-STOREY APARTMENT BUILDING FOR SAPPORO, JAPAN, 1982

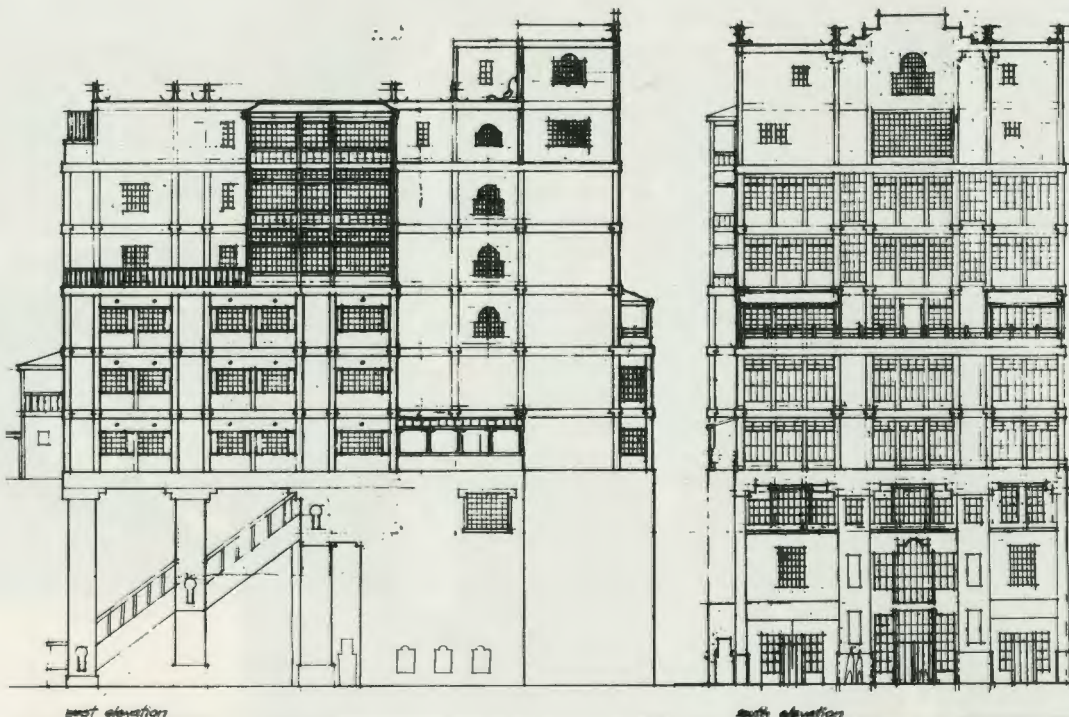
This building, commissioned by Mrs Keiko Inoue, of Sapporo, is a simple apartment building, with shops on the two ground floors. Mrs Inoue and her family will occupy two houses on the ninth and tenth floors.

This building created an enormous challenge. As I have explained in *Pattern Language*, I have serious doubts about the wisdom of building any buildings – especially residential ones, which are more than four storeys high.

On the other hand, almost everywhere in the world, the development process and the high price of land are causing people to build apartment buildings which are six, eight, ten and twelve storeys high. It is happening on such a vast scale, that it seems absurd to turn one's back on it. I asked myself the question: if we have to build a high apartment building, can it be done in such a way that the apartments somehow feel personal?

In this building, each floor has an entirely different character. There is a morphological gradient, inside the building, caused by distance from the ground, closeness to light, and the decreasing floor area, which form a progression of different plans, on each of the ten floors. Also, no two apartments are alike. Each one has its own character, according to its position in the building. The internal structure of the apartments is very traditional, with a gradient of privacy, a light gallery towards the light, traditional mat rooms, and alcoves on the inside. The coherent concrete structure of the larger building co-exists with a second, entirely separate, and coherent wood structure for each apartment, within its space.

The legs are there, because the back part of the building is built over an existing hospital ... and it was only this which made it possible to place enough volume on the site, within the existing regulations and local height restrictions.



TILE FOR A FRIEZE, 1975

In the twentieth century, tiles and ornaments have become either casual (blotches of colour, glaze and clay), or far out (supergraphics, bold colours, op art). Simple classical designs – drawings which keep simplicity of shape and colour, but also come from a complexity that originates within the shape itself – are almost unknown.

This is a tile, with a version of a fleur-de-lis. The design arises simply from the impulse to make each part of the design positive – and yet to do it in a child's way, without exaggerated boldness, simply allowing the shape to become whatever it becomes, as one follows the dictates of the eye.

This tile, one of the first I ever made, I imagined as one of a series of similar ones, along the top of a wall, over a window ...



EPILOGUE

Slowly, painfully, for the last few years I have been trying to make buildings, in which a little pure love, a little nature itself shines through, and which have none of that brooding, ego-filled artificiality which is almost all that we have learned in our own time.

In one way or another, the buildings of our time are works of prison architecture. Harsh or soft, large or small, concrete or wood, done by developers or done by architects, they do, with one voice, express the captured soul.

Even those made carefully as works of art, done with great care, photographed, and hung in museums, are still essentially at heart all works of oppression and imprisonment.

This has come about because the processes of building in our time – the system of production by which buildings are made – is a mechanism, a set of procedures which pass a building from person to person, which allow only rigid and mechanical things to pass through . . . because there is no way a person can produce a building that is innocently sung direct from his own soul. I do not say that architects no longer try to do this . . . but the process they are part of makes it quite impossible, for the most earnest and serious, as much as for the false and artificial.

In this sense, then, the works shown here, sketches, fragments . . . are works of liberation, in which the process itself is altered, to permit the flight of the uncaptured soul.

In the *Timeless Way of Building* I have described that quality which lies at the heart of all things, the quality which has no name, but comes about when something is so pure, that it is free, like a whisper in the grass.

Of course, I have hardly been able to create this quality in its deepest sense at all so far. A few times, perhaps, by luck . . . or concentration . . . there are a few dozen things that I have drawn, or made, which have a little of this quality. And yet of course, I have made many more things, designed buildings, built buildings, which fall short of this quality entirely.

It is for this reason, that the few drawings and photographs which appear in this piece are fragments. I have rarely shown a building, in its entirety, even if I am pleased with it, but more often some corner which has a whisper of this quality in it . . .

One day I hope I shall be given grace to make a whole building or small world which has this quality in its entirety. But until that day comes, there is no point in pretending, and it is far better to show the few things which truly have this character, modest as they are, and therefore to be clear, than to exalt things which do not merit it, and confuse the issue.



Christopher Alexander and Jan Johnson at the School at Bavra