

the Twenty- Sixth lecture

Back to the Beginning.



After this very public rejection of 40 years of Architectural invention, I was ready to abandon my Profession. I was too old and too well-educated to be a happy haptic fooling around with mere textures, colours and materials. I was no longer one of the cheerful architectural sea-anemones cultivated by the late 20C. I was no longer satisfied to merely wave my little pink feelers in the hope of catching the few aesthetic crumbs that might drift down into the depths of conceptual murk now reserved by the 'powers that be' for my great and ancient Profession.

RELIEF FROM PROFESSIONAL EXTINCTION CAME FROM AN UNKNOWN QUARTER
It was entirely unforeseen.....

THE CAVALRY RODE OVER THE HILL

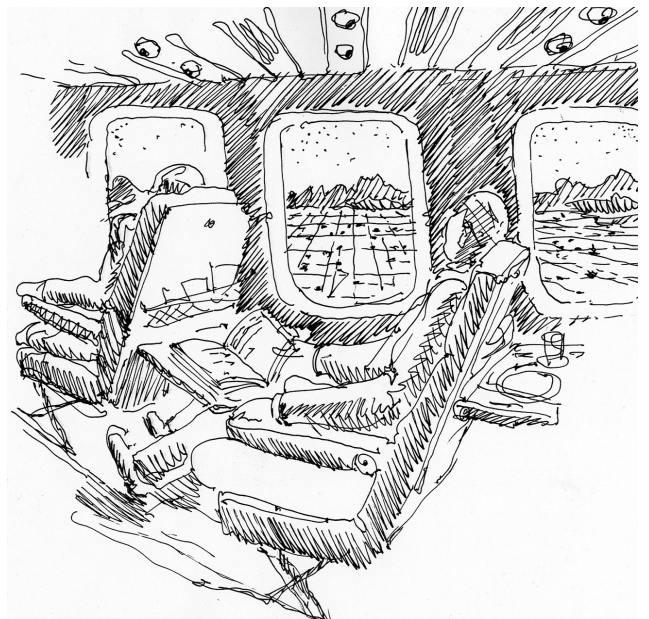
YET, WITH HINDSIGHT, WHAT GREATER SYMMETRY COULD THERE BE TO THIS PLOT THAN THAT A PHONE CALL SHOULD COME FROM THE COUNTRY WHICH HAD FIRST PROMPTED ME TO BECOME AN ARCHITECT?

DEAN CURRIE DIALLED FROM RICE UNIVERSITY.

I was asked if JOA would submit some evidences of our current projects with a view to designing a building on their campus in Houston. JOA were only half-way through constructing The Judge Institute. The 'Fiat Nihil' lay 18 months into the future. JOA had just returned from flying our flag at the Venice Biennale. A competition to rebuild the fire-damaged St. George's Hall, in Windsor Palace, was promised - and much else besides. I had too many projects in my mind for an unknown (to my parochial mind) University in Texas.

What I did not know was that Josephine Abercrombie, Chair of Rice's Building and Grounds Committee, whom the Sunday Times once billed as "the most dangerous woman in the world", had cut the pages from the 'Architectural Digest' which had illustrated Wadhurst. Dean Currie, Rice's V-P of Finance, had faithfully preserved them for her until, six years later, the project appeared that could use JOA's ideas. It turned-out, as well, that the part of Wadhurst which particularly appealed to Josephine was not my chastely 'Minoan' reflections on Louis Kahn, but the more inventively 'incorrect' enlivenments with which I had rescued the corpse of the giant Gothick Orangery from a long-delayed demolition.

Flying over the USA,
it was obvious that
this was a country
whose only hope was
Architecture.



I saw from my little round window that here I would find none of that mind-rotting wonkiness on which the English thrive. Everything was straight lines - all the way to where, as my College maths teacher used to affirm, "parallel lines met in infinity".

IT HAD ALL BEEN QUADRATED INTO REAL-ESTATE PLOTS BY THOMAS HUTCHINS,
PRESIDENT JEFFERSON'S GEOGRAPHER GENERAL. IN 1783, HIS TEAMS HAD WALKED
IN STRAIGHT LINES FROM THE APPALCHIAN TO THE MISSISSIPPI.

Jefferson's project for a "Saxon Democracy" founded on the votes of free-thinking farmers, whose only dependence was on God and the rain-gauge, could only be rescued from the socio-spatial madness it had imposed upon the colonists by an Architectural culture of 'Continental' scope and scale. I thought how strange it was that, in 200 years, no Architect had yet invented it!

But this was not the first time I had flown over this chessboard.



I had looked down onto it as a trainee pilot and the sight of it had made me into an Architect. Yet this was in no sense a 'homecoming'. North America had shown me, in 1953, 40 years earlier, that the world could be re-made.

But it had also shown me what not to make it into.

In 1953 Alberta, neither driving test nor insurance were needed to take the wheel. One could go out and kill someone with a two dollar driving licence. The sun shone and the treeless wheatfields were ideal for crash-landings.

The farm-hand families from around the little town at the gates of the airfield used to drive in every Saturday night and park at 45° to the boardwalks. There was nothing for a whole family to do on such evenings. Some of these vehicles never emptied at all. The family stayed in their seats, as in the stalls and circle of a theatre.

We used to drive up to the snow around Banff, Alberta. This was something that the citizens of Calgary had, as yet, too much sense to do. The way up the beginner's slopes was to hold on to a wire hawser driven over two pulleys by a truck motor. One skied uphill. It was a young-man's sport. The last time I had done this was in Gulmarg, when the British still ruled India, during WWII.

Why do people do Sport?

The trams on the streets of Winnipeg had coal-fired stoves up next to the driver. They provided a slight relief, at least for him, when the thermometer fell to seventy Fahrenheit below freezing.

My enthusiasm for machines declined the more I got to know them first-hand. They can do amazing things but, in the end, what is an aeroplane but a mass of material dragged around by a gas, resting on a gas and with the ambition of turning all it attacks into nothing much more than gas? The world of machines reduces everything to physics. I wanted 'something more'. I wanted the world to be more than 'good flying weather'. I began to spend my time in Winnipeg's French-Canadian sector. Here, across the rickety iron bridge over the Riviere Rouge I found the high stone walk-ups of St. Boniface where people brought their chairs, in the warm evenings, down to the pavement to watch television through the shop-windows. It was more sociable, and saved the trouble and cost of buying a set. I spoke French rather well, all those years ago, and felt more at home there than amongst the privacy-obsessed ranch-houses that had replaced the porch-house of the 19C.

Some students from McGill had come for their flying training summer school. Seeing me constantly doodling they suggested that I become an Architect. So I went along to Winnipeg's Public Library and browsed the shelves marked 'Architecture'.



Aircraft navigation, across the Prairies, was simple. If one found a town, it was the right one. To check one flew down to read the name on the grain elevator. The only dangers were the other pupil pilots and the Rockies. Even so, three of us managed to kill ourselves, or each other, and even two instructors, during the twelve weeks of our preliminary training. Looking back, it seems a high rate of attrition. We were sadly young.

Like many young would-be architects immediately after the '39-45 war, I was inspired by Le Corbusier's book - 'Vers une Architecture' - radically mis-translated into English as 'Towards a new Architecture' . It showed the machines I loved turned into architecture and cities!

What I did not know was that Le Corbusier was a failed interior decorator,

-or 'decorative artist, as they were called in the 1920's. Corbusier's drawings were indifferent and he had no talent for pattern - this during the height of the Moderne period in Paris which was inventing an Architectural technique that would take-over and lead the entire world up to the catastrophes of the 1940's - from which the 'Moderne' never recovered.

Corbusier was commissioned by his Swiss Art School to visit the German Art Schools. He submitted a report recommending that they all be shut down. Then he abandoned his 15 years of training as a decorator and travelled around the near-Orient. On his return he studied advertising. He determined that the entities which excited the public of the 1920's were machines.

Corbusier proposed a cultural coup-d'etat:

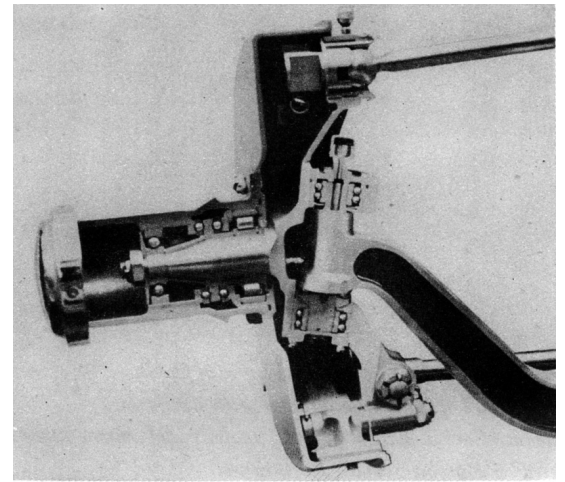
THE 'NEW' ARCHITECTS WOULD BECOME 'ENGINEERS' AND MAKE "Machines for living-in" .

Corbusier sang the praises of automobiles, ships, aircraft, metal office furniture, fresh air, sunshine, athleticism and everything as muscular as it was mindless.

European sophisticates, like Adolf Loos, brought back monochrome photographs of American buildings that were built for purely mechanical reasons, yet had some powerfully 'architectural' quality.

Corbusier adduced these as arguments for a new, machine-inspired Architecture.

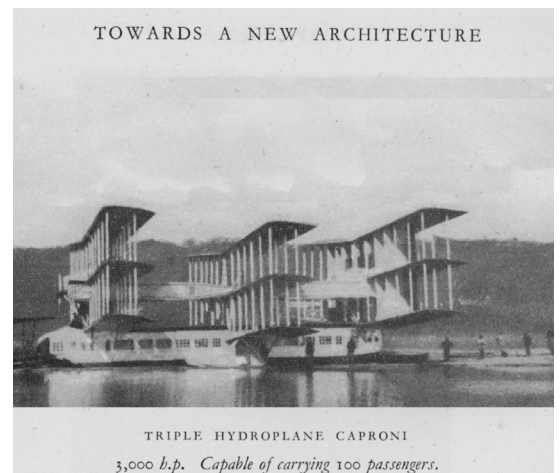
These prairie grain elevators, that I used to fly over as a pilot, were nothing but concrete tubes whose only raison d'être was to resist the even outwards pressure of a solid that acted like a liquid. It is an accident that they look like a fragment from the ultimate 'hypostylar forest of infinity' complete with a rudimentary entablature devoid of intelligible ornament. He gave such things the mystical status of 'objets trouvées' and 'proved' that an Architecture could come into existence 'automatically' if only Designers would enslave themselves to mechanical function and 'objective' (possible pun?), economic forces.



DELAGÉ. FRONT-WHEEL BRAKE

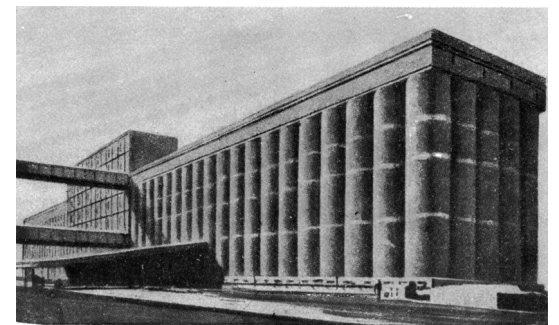
This precision, this cleanness in execution go further back than our re-born mechanical sense. Phidias felt in this way: the entablature of the Parthenon is a witness. So did the Egyptians when they polished the Pyramids. This at a time when Euclid and Pythagoras dictated to their contemporaries.

Corbusier's book was full of things that I knew as an aviator. Entirely ignorant of Architecture, city-planning, building technique, art history and philosophy, I felt at home with his machines. This is the appeal of 'technology' to illiterates.



TOWARDS A NEW ARCHITECTURE
TRIPLE HYDROPLANE CAPRONI
3,000 h.p. Capable of carrying 100 passengers.

Corbusier found an aeroplane like a sailor's convalescent home with petrol-powered breezes blowing across double-decker colonnades. It never actually flew.



CANADIAN GRAIN STORES AND ELEVATORS

Eat your heart out Imhotep. You should have been building wheat-silos.*

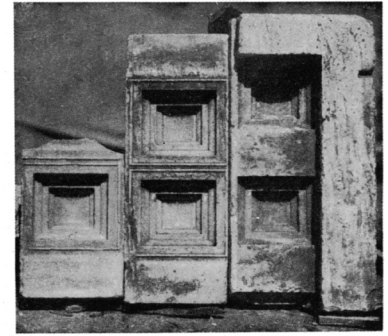
**Architect of the Great Pyramid.*



Corbusier published no *Theory of Architecture*, as such. He communicated 'attitudes' via images, rhetoric and slogans - techniques he had acquired from his long and purposive study of advertising.

The proof of his theoretical inadequacy came when, like every Western enthusiast for Architecture since Octavian Caesar (who decreed for Periclean rectitude when he became the Emperor Augustus), Corbusier addressed the Hellenes of 400 b.c. Corbusier has 23 pages on the Parthenon. This is far more than on any one single object in the book.

He repeats the iconically illiterate old saw that "architecture is construction". He finishes with "All this plastic machinery is realised in marble with the rigour we have learned to apply in the machine".



THE PARTHENON
The audacity of the square mouldings; austerity and nobility.

When Corbusier took this photo, in the 1920's, the red stars, in these ceiling coffers of the Propylaea, were still to be seen on their blue back-grounds.

Corbusier calls the rocky ruins "austere, pure, clarified and most economical", having achieved a state when "every cleansing had been performed". He goes on to argue that: "we are in the inexorable realm of the mechanical" and that "There are no symbols attached to these forms". He finishes with:-

" The impression is of naked, polished, steel".



During the 1930's, the workmen of the munificent Art-dealer Duveen, who paid to house the Elgin marbles in the British Museum, were privily removing, with wire wool, their last, 2,500-year-old, vestiges of colour.

The early 20C's most respected philosopher, Martin Heidegger, wrote, at this same time: "for this attempt let us deliberately select a work that cannot be ranked as representational art. A building, a Greek temple, portrays nothing. It simply stands there in the middle of the rock-cleft valley".

The state of denial of the Western mind during the early 20C, towards Hellenic Architecture, beggars understanding.

THE SCIENTIFIC TRUTHS OF ARCHAEOLOGY WERE REJECTED, ESPECIALLY DURING THAT TIME OF 'ARYAN, WHITE, SUPREMACY', A BARBAROUS LIE WAS ESTABLISHED IN THE BRITISH MUSEUM - WHOSE ACHROMATIC ILLITERACY EXTENDS TO THE 2000 A.D. 'IONIC' PORTICO TO THE 'GREAT COURT',



Benoit Loviot:
'invented' 1878-1880.

Corbusier and Heidegger knew, from publications colour-printed from the 1830's onwards, that the sugary Pentelic marble of the Greek Temple was stained, coloured, patterned and polished so that its surfaces shone in the sun like a hot-waxed automobile. Even the rough limestones of Paestum and Agrigento were smoothed over with a blached stucco of marble-dust that obscured any and every 'constructional truth'.

These chaste white backgrounds, as any painter knows, are ideal for receiving the colour and pattern that would activate the Temple to the point of the 'full enfleshment' of its ideas.

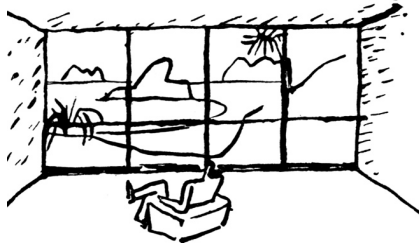
They refused the facts of the colour because their iconic illiteracy disabled them from understanding that-

The Greek Temple rehearses a drama that has never been deciphered by the 'Latin' West. It is a time bomb ticking under its Architecture.

One awaits the detonation with impatience!

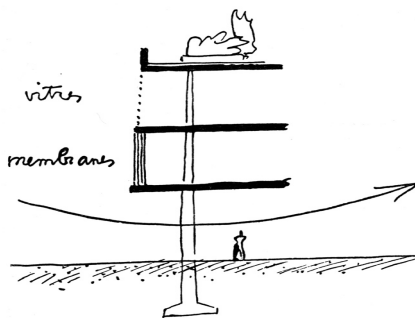


"Palms, banana trees; tropical splendour animates the site. One stops, one installs one's armchair".



"Crack! The four obliques of a perspective. Your room is installed before the site. The whole sea-landscape enters your room". "Nature is entered into the lease".

The sad truth of the 'picture window'. 'Nature', as 'real estate' becomes the 20C substitute for the collapsed 'perspective art' of the West.



Thus in absolute purity, the four functions henceforth express themselves :-

standing
carrying
covering
enveloping

Corbusier draws a gentle breeze. The reality is a micro-climatic dust-storm.

Corbusier writes:

"And this revolutionary new cross-section relates the building to the ground by free space, by a void, allowing penetration by walkers; light and sunlight beneath the house; the cylinders of reinforced concrete have become "stilts" (which Corbusier named his "Pilotis"), a key to the present problem of the organisation of towns".

"Towns henceforth without barriers".

"The glued joint between building and ground is broken".

"Salubrity".

Corbusier's was the most influential voice to be heard after the ruin of the 'Moderne' aspect of 'Modernity' by the terrors of the '39-'45 war.

Corbusier, along with Mies van der Rohe, and the later High-Tech and Deconstructive styles of design, wanted to invent a way of building that disguised the 'political' reality of BUILDING - which is to 'colonise', conquer and take possession of the site for its owners. These Lectures have already proposed that the 'new owner': the Enfranchised Generality, was to be denied a celebration of their arrival on the 'Stage of (historic) Time'.

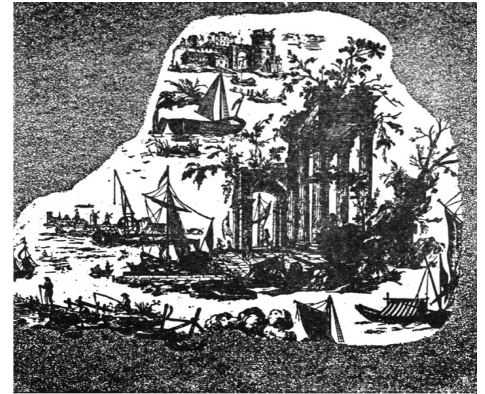
Corbusier's version of the "I'm building but not really BUILDING" was the strangest of them all. It was to invoke the rustic paradise of the Golden Age, while building a high-tech, concrete, steel and glass, city five metres above it, floating in the sky!

This fantastic sleight-of-hand suited the anti-urban, anti-social, pro-suburban, drive of the 1950's. Corbusier offered a way of erasing the old cities, already half-ruined by blitzing and fire-bombing, and filled with 'workers' who had proved so prone to socialism.

From the 'Corbu City' one looked out on nothing except trees...



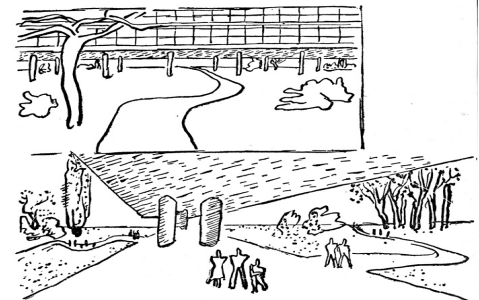
Like the lens of some final fire-bombing holocaust the 1950's Corbusian 'picture window' burns away the old cities and plants trees over the cemetery of 9,000 years of knowing how to build an urbane human lifespaces.



By an odd chance we discovered in a linen print which decorated the modest office where this book was written, this lusty evocation of a golden age. An age in which chaos was banished, before the birth of present covetousness (after J. B. Huet, a painter of the 18th Century).

After trashing the best painters in Rome, who would think that Corb would praise this kitsch 'Boucheresque' pulp? During his period of unwilling unemployment in Vichy France he writes:

"And by an odd chance we discovered, in a linen print which decorated the modest office where this book was written, this lusty evocation of a golden age. An age in which chaos was banished, before the birth of present covetousness (after J.B.Huet, a painter of the 18th century)."



And this revolutionary new cross-section relates the building to the ground by free space, by a void, allowing penetration by walkers; light and sunlight beneath the house; the cylinders of reinforced concrete have become "stilts," a key to the present problem of the organisation of towns.
Towns henceforth without barriers.
The glued joint between building and ground is broken.
Salubrity.
Crumbling spirits declare that the dwelling, no longer squatting on the ground, will be deprived of cosmic influences.
Cosmic? What see know is this: the crust of the earth normally shelters us from lethal subterranean processes. If geological beds in some violent convulsion are broken and set standing on end, certain influences (cosmic perhaps) springing from the earth's interior cause plants and men to perish.

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Corbusier writes:-

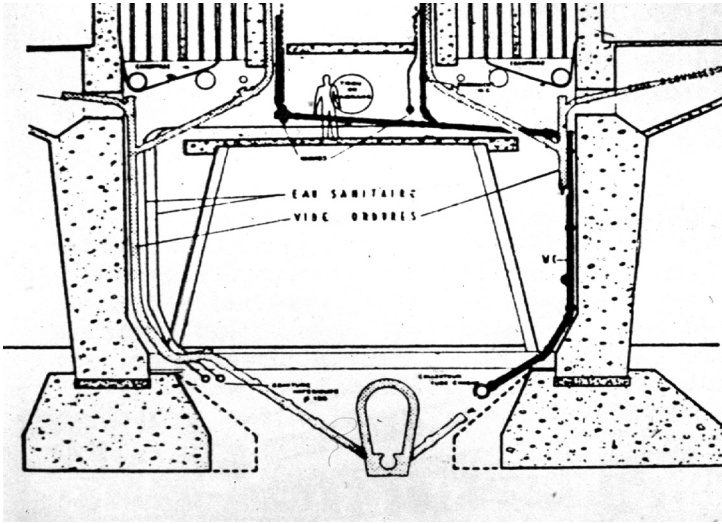
"Nature lived before the town arose; the town chased her away, filling her place with stones, with bricks and with asphalt.

"In nature were present rolling perspectives, moving horizons, hills, mountains, the sea, streams and rivers. The town has set up, in 60-foot ranks, one before another, the obscuring screens of its houses..

"Trees stood and meadows spread here; they have been built underfoot.

"The horizons must be rediscovered".

"Trees must be planted afresh".



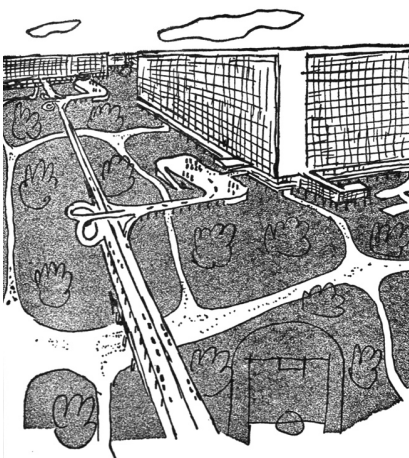
Lifting a city off the ground on extended foundation piles revealed the intestinal part of human habitation.. But Corbusier was undaunted. He just coined a new slogan - calling the elevated living-level the 'artificial earth' or 'sol artificiel'.



But this was the reality of the 'sol artificiel in Marseilles. a dirty concrete undercroft of parked cars and dustbins through which the downdraughts howled at wind-tunnel velocities, whipping up dust and garbage (Note the 'coffered' ceiling under the services floor).

LIKE MANY OF THE UTOPIAN IDEAS PROMISED BY MODERNISM, THE REALITY WAS DIFFERENT.

Corbusier lived on such an elevated plane of ambition that he overlooked the fact that only very unusual people want to leave the ground behind - for ever - and build a complete 'artificial earth five metres above it and live in a concrete tree-canopy.

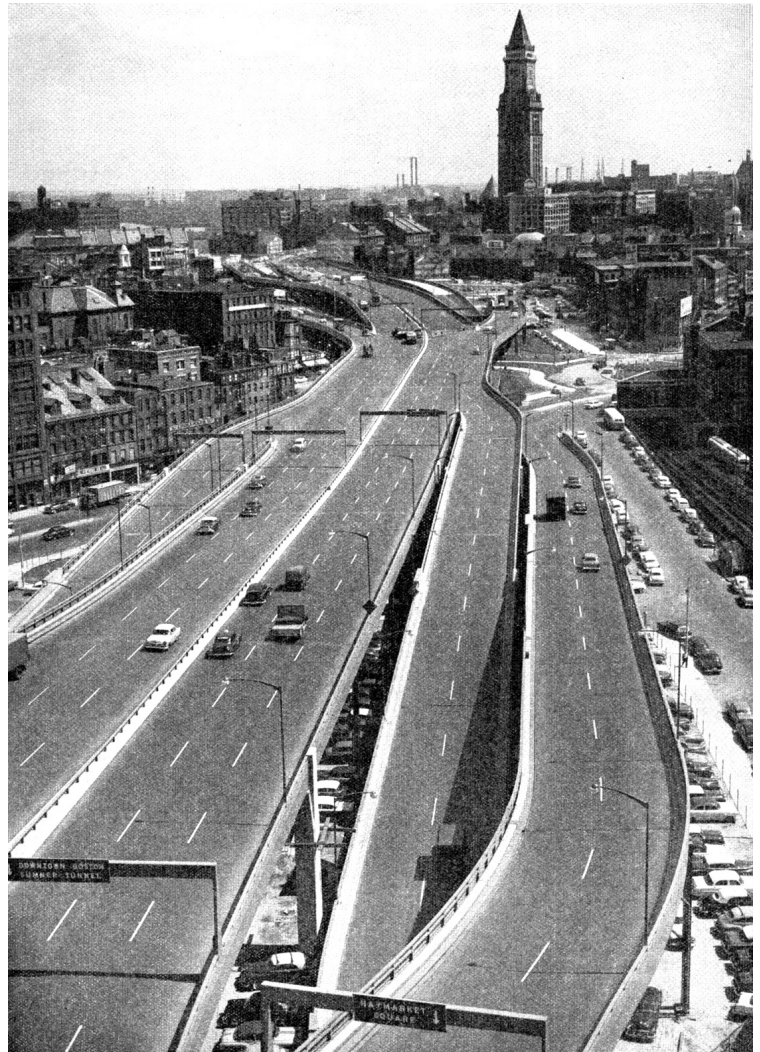


This is the most urbanistically illiterate vision of a human livespace ever designed.

The reality of the post-'45 war sub-urbanisation was what I found when I visited my relations in Boston and discovered it being destroyed by the Fitzgerald urban expressway - one of the first in the USA to wreck a sooty old 19C city like London.

Between 1880 and 1940 the USA had a general architectural production that could stand comparison anywhere.

In 1954 I saw her beautiful brick and stone cities, filled with wonderful architecture, being smashed down for the sake of tacky glass blocks, car parks and giant roads. I became an Architect from the shock. I was determined to invent another way.



The road was 'off the ground', like those promised by Corbusier, but there was no 'park of primordial afforestation and no glass gazey-boos - just the ruination of a comfortable and beautiful part of a once-civilised city. When I returned, 45 years later, in 1998, I found Boston undergrounding this devastating road for a cost of twelve billion dollars. In the 21C it 'disappeared'.



The 'Garden of Ballistics' - life-space of the slaves to freedom.

So what was new in '92?

Houston was the mother of all American disurbanities. The city spoke getting on for 100 languages - only very slightly fewer than cosmopolitan London.

It covered more than 500 square miles and had only a single railway line entering it taking one passenger train a day for a population of four million.



'Pumping-up the Dollars' - the city 'stadt-krone' as an economic barograph. Higher is healthier.

The human leg had lost its use of locomotion.

The leg had become something with which one pressed the machine controls as Houston went by like a video game, vacant of either smell, sound, or touch on a glass screen fronted by a steering wheel. For the Festschrift of the admirable patroness who had called me over to Rice University, I suggested that Houston, a city she benefacted, but openly mourned, had two founding spirits: Isaac Newton and Niccolo Machiavelli - everything moved and everything paid taxes. The city rolled like a well oiled machine on the smooth rubber tyres that carried one, effortlessly, over its Newtonian parabolas.

Yet the USA no longer 'shocked' me. Returning 40 years later, I felt secure that I had 'done my work'. I had the tools with which to forge its antidote. JOA's giant columns, our 'iconic engineering' and our huge graphical dissertations could surely help mark out this 'big' landscape so that a human being could once again occupy it in an urbane modality which could be adapted to his physical smallness yet limitless mentality.



The old and the new Texas Commerce Bank towers. 1930's- Moderne elegance swamped by late-20C iconic sub-literacy. The USA, after WWII gave-up trying to create a 'collective' self image. It vanished into 'consumerist suburbia'.

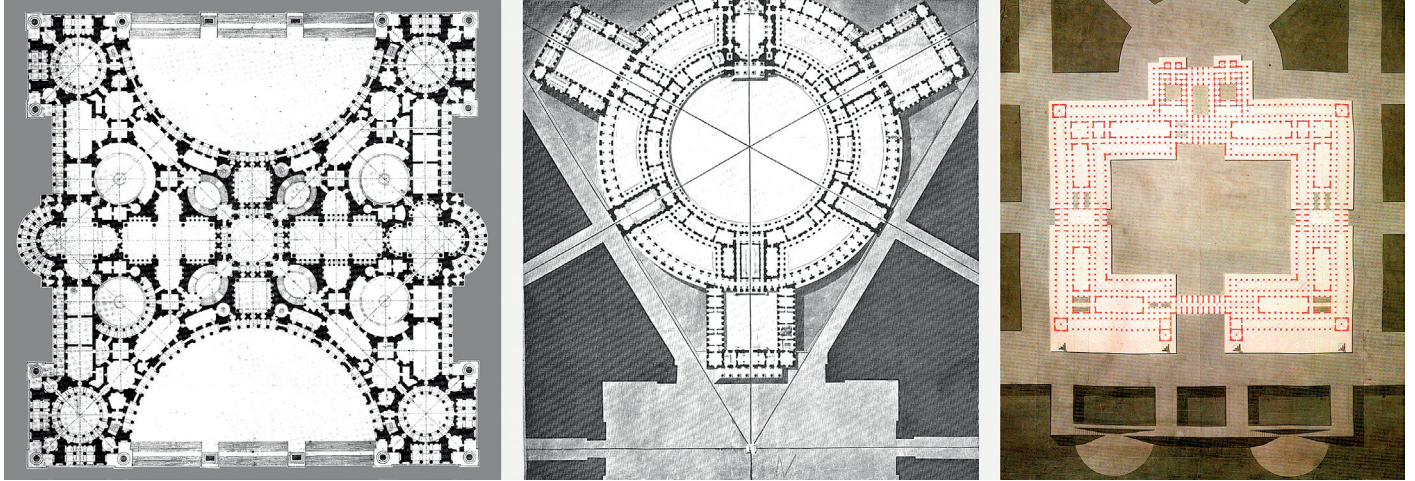
For what is 'Commoditas', the central and most important mystery of the Vitruvian triad, if it is not descended from the Latin 'modus', the measure, by which the musical and poetical modes may bring 'harmony'. Commodity was 'space-planning', but not only as a making of comfort and convenience. It was also the measuring-out, 'marking' and harmonisation of that 'place' which Hannah Arendt proposes as the 'space of appearances' which is the 'ground' of the Polis, the republic of equals that was the foundation of Hellenic democracy.

With the biggest columns so far invented by Modernism, surely one could modalise and harmonise this gross terrain?



The bridge over the bayou carries Houston's single railtrack. The newest, tallest, Texas Commerce Bank tower has 15,000 windows, all the same. Who cares any more? American urbanity, so brilliant from 1875-1935, was over. Its cities, which we copied in Britain, just became 'Centres' ringed by Parking-Lots.

It was at this point that I discovered the great thing which America had once enjoyed, and then lost,



My own generation of British students of Architecture had been reinforced, by being children during the '39 war, in the congenial national opinion that continental Europeans were given to a fanatical intellectuality which clouded their good sense and led them into every sort of excess and depravity. Patent evidence of this lack of sanity had always been provided, in the restricted sphere of architecture, by French Beaux Arts Planning. The French architectural student, ever since the revolutionary foundation of the Écoles, had seemed to spend his days devising the choreographies of steroid-enhanced spiders dancing on ink-stained ballet-pumps. These convoluted patterns of column-footprints were laughingly entitled 'plans' of city markets, custom houses and sundry other municipal institutions!

It was something which my own little island had never (ever) had:-
19C French town planning.

So I was intrigued to not only find this undeniably French foundation to the still-perfect 100-year-old campus plan of Rice University but to note that this seemingly futile pattern-making became alarmingly utilitarian if it was carried-on by the use of JOA's novel 'Sixth Order'.

MOST FASCINATING OF ALL, HOWEVER, WAS THE DISCOVERY THAT THIS DERIDED BEAUX ARTS PLANNING COULD BE 'ICONICALLY DECIPHERED' BY JOA'S OWN RESEARCHES.



This sort of 'site-planning', and certainly that of the Rice University Campus, could be read as the inscription of the 'Valley of the Republic' within the 'Empire of the Forest'.

My decipherment of the 'Valley' began with an exhibition of Claude Gelée's landscapes in 1968 London. Yet I was no addict of landscape painters. I carefully avoid Salvator Rosa's rearing horses and levitating trees, Caspar D. Friedrich's coniferous vacancies, and all of the Netherlandish bucolics.

Or, to put it in terms of Time, the inscription of the 'time of living' within the 'time of eternity'.



I soon understood that I loved Claude because he was not a pre-Rousseauistic Salon-savage but was the Archimboldo of Urbanity. Archimboldo painted compotes of fruit in the form of human faces. Claude was using trees, rivers, seas, and mountains to 'clothe' an entirely 'architectural' narrative. Having registered this decipherment I was able to enjoy the registration of the 'Natural' in all great 'Architectures' - and vice versa. Who could say, after this, that Metaphor could have no practical, physical employment?

Two 'ignorances' uphold 'picturesque' landscaping



Claude Lorraine bewitched Alexander Pope, William Kent, Burlington and the Palladians into inventing the picturesque, informal, 'natural', English Landscape a century before the Romantic Movement and two centuries before the 'Garden City' and 20C 'landscape-gardening'. Did these Nordics know that Claude was raising the ghost of the lost ideal of the Hellenic Polis which the Machiavellian Rational State hoped to reanimate in Italy?



Hellas is a land of drowned river-valleys bringing the sea deep inland between folds of mountains that define small areas of valley-land.



'Vertumnus' by Giuseppe Arcimboldo, 1591. Claude's 'transformations' were harder to de-code.

The first ignorance was of the fact that the city-state, from Mesopotamia to the Mediterranean, had been a mountain-bounded valley, fronting onto the sea.

The river-valley was, especially to the Greeks, the 'natural', and so the real, physical, 'body' of a political entity.



The Hellenic 'Polis' translates into English only as 'city-state'. According to Gustave Glotze what 'polis' means is the 'concrete' community of a valley separated from its neighbours by mountains. The political map of Classical Hellas bears him out.



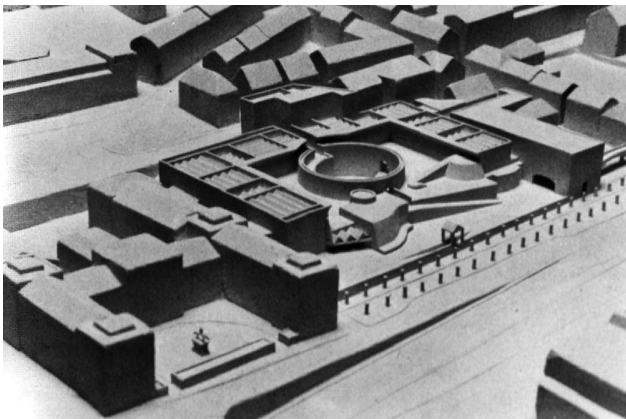
1026 a.d. Hindu temple at Modhera. The ruined stump of the sikara-mountain projects above the roof of the mandapa-portico.

But Claude was not merely 'Classic'. Every one of the major cultures had built this 'fluvial narrative' into the event-horizons of a monumental architecture so as to establish a 'polis', or political community.

This was not done to en flesh, or promote the cult of, a savage and unbounded Nature, but to establish Culture and Community where Nature had neglected to shape the earth into a properly 'polis-tical' topology! These were Phenomenologies of Sociation upon which could be 'emplotted' the symbols of a Culture.

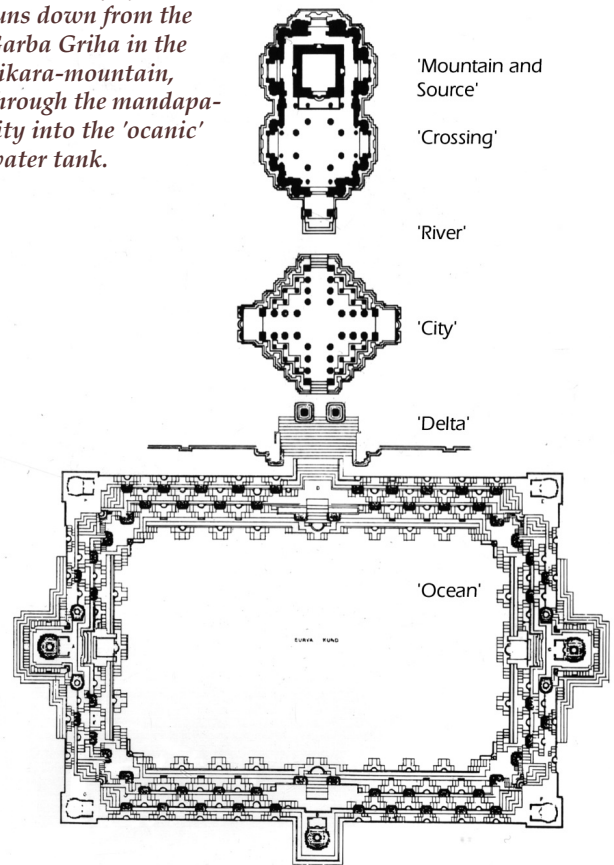


JO's 'event horizons' of the Valley-story as drawn in 1971.

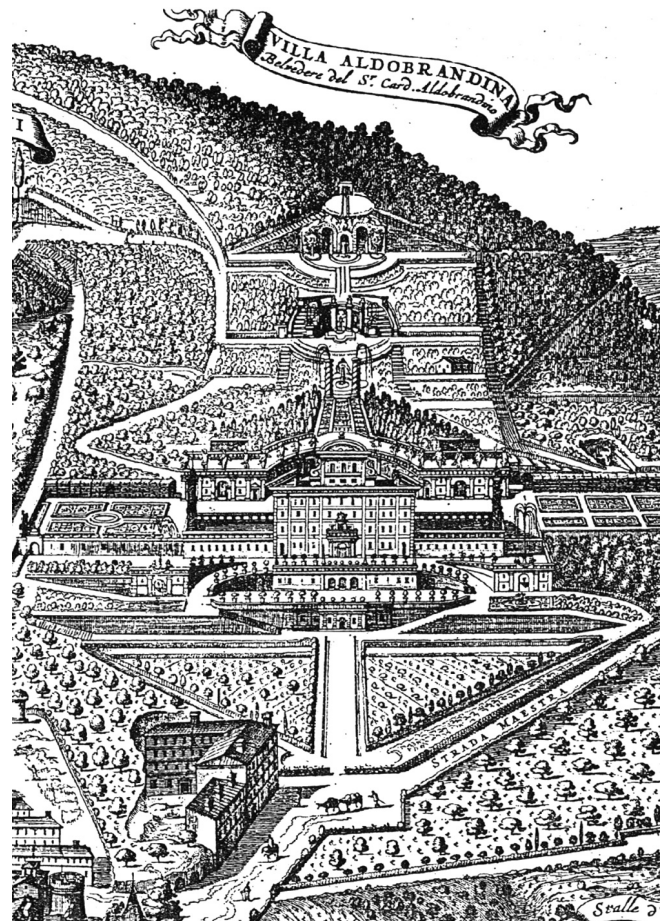


Stirling & Wilford's Staatsgalerie in Stuttgart. A river of space flows between mountain flanks, through a 'ruined' crossing', open to the sky, to debouch into a triangular delta. This 'ancient' Architectural topology literally buries, as in an 'older' stratum, a Modern, 'free-form', Cubistical, interior. Stirling reifies that 'early 20C Modernism' has been succeeded, or rendered 'archaeological', by a so-called 'Post-Modernism'.

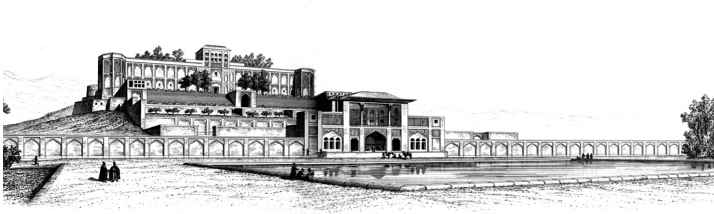
The 'river of space' runs down from the Garba Griha in the Sikara-mountain, through the mandapa-city into the 'oceanic' water tank.



Plan of the Modhera Temple showing the event-horizons of the 'Fluvial Narrative' - from mountain to sea..



The Villa Aldobrandini in Frascati is composed along the story-line of the River from a semicircular Nymphaeum, down to a triangular 'delta' (named after the Greek letter 'D', which is called 'delta' and written: Δ).

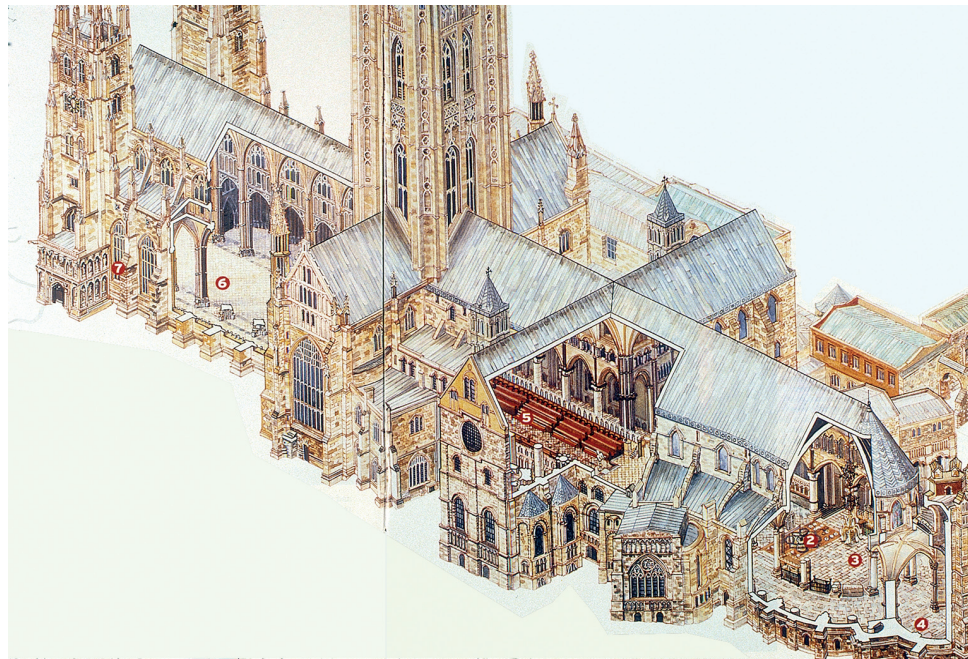


The Castle of the Quajars. From Coste.
There were many cultures, in the world, which had used the Architecture of the Valley, for going on 8,000 years, to house their political institutions within an urbane matrix.

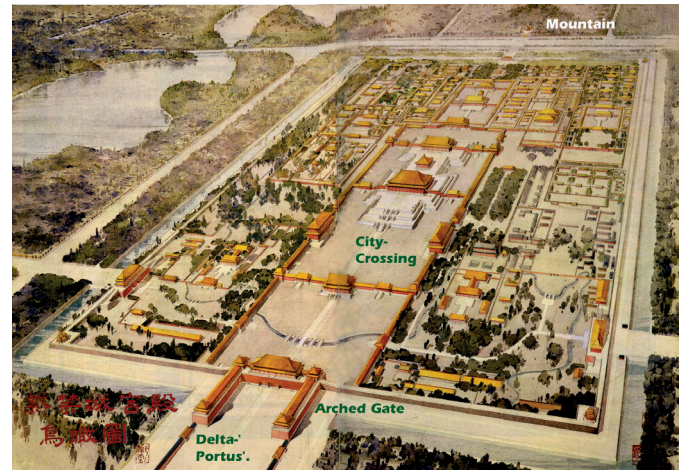
What could have possessed the 18C English, educated in Greek and Latin, to construct an equally artificial landscape, filled with grottoes, statues and elaborate literary conceits, so as to empty them of human beings and give them over to 'wild' animals?

Why could not the 18C Neo-Classicians have extracted the key to Claude's poetic from their own Cathedrals? Was it because Gothic had been introduced into England by French Architects?

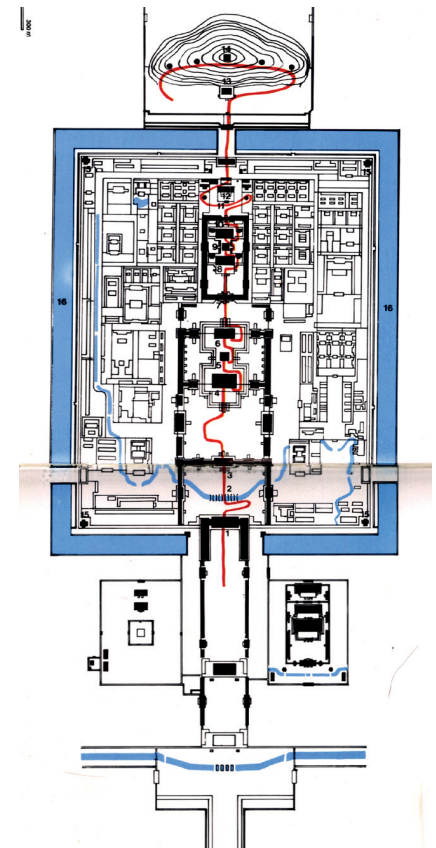
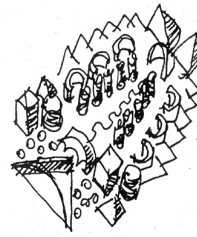
For the Christian Basilica is, as we might expect, strung-out along the Fluvial story-line.



The Cathedrals were Navis-Arks that carried the Fluvial phenomenology of the 'Valley-republic of the Ecclesia' out of the Classical Mediterranean into the Christianised Nordic West. The space of the interior flowed out of the apsidial Source-cave in the East, under the Crossing, between the Caves and Mountains of the side-chapels and the Forest-columns of the nave. The 'sacred' upper-valley' space then flowed out into the 'Infinite Net of Streets of the city, via the Arched and Towered 'West-werk-bridge-gateway with its Imperial 'Balcony of Appearances'.



The 'Forbidden City, Beijing.
Finding, as Corbusier also had noted, that urbanity erased everything 'natural', certain civilised cultures built artificial, or 'architectural', valleys so as to provide their polis-tical life with its properly 'Natural' theatre.



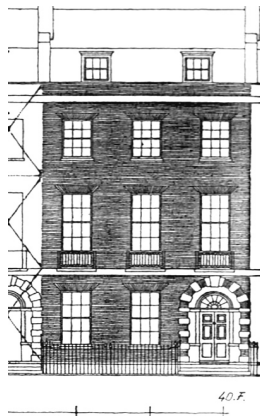
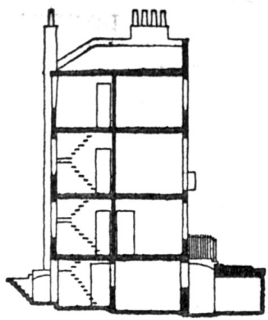
The plan of the Forbidden City, Beijing. China monu-mentalised its most 'established' institutions by self-consciously placing them within a space that had been architecturally inscribed so as to en flesh the idea of a 'Community of the Valley'.



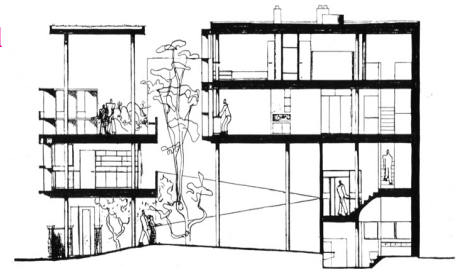
CLAUDE'S GLORIOUS PAINTINGS WERE REVERIES UPON THE RELATION BETWEEN CULTURE AND NATURE AND THE MYTH OF THE GOLDEN AGE THAT 'CLOTHED', THAT IS TO SAY 'HUMANISED', THE RAW POLITICAL AND FISCAL RATIONALISM OF THE RENAISSANCE STATE.

Claude's iconography often included a circular building which had no obvious door, and/or a cubic one whose doors were walled-up and blocked. Both refer to the tomb, an enclosure housing a power capable of mediating between the 'above and the below'. The 'Monument' (to the 'absent'), invoked the 'Golden Age' of the Giants, Heroes and Deities when political virtue was congruent with truth.

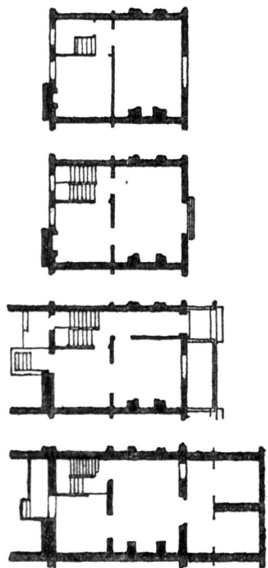
To turn them into 'landscape gardening' was the act of iconic illiterates who invented, by this sublime incoherence, a whole new lifespaces of designed-in Kitsch.



The English, empowered by the well-oiled mercantilism of London, may have known something of these urbane cultural imperatives. Yet they appear very 'rusticated' in Thomas More's insular Utopia.



Corbusier's villa for Dr. Curruchet. B.A. Argentina. The Valley-narrative doubles back to end in an 'entabled' roof garden.



The English terraced house has its balcony of appearances above its 'arched door'. But the balcony is exclusively iconic. Its windows are 'fenêtres a guillotine', not 'doors' - out onto the physical space of the city, as they are in France. Living in London's streets was being 'written-into' an archaeologist's day-book, engraved in a black-on-white text of Antique Roman Architecture. It was not for the Citizen to perform physically on his Urbane Stage.

The Best of English urban culture were the 'Garden Squares' praised by Steen Eiler Rasmussen in "London the unique City".

'Serious' Architecture, for the English Enlightenment, was never more than a leisured Gentleman's rural pastime. It had no political dimension. It was best situated, therefore, in a space cleared of humanity and given over to 'Nature'.

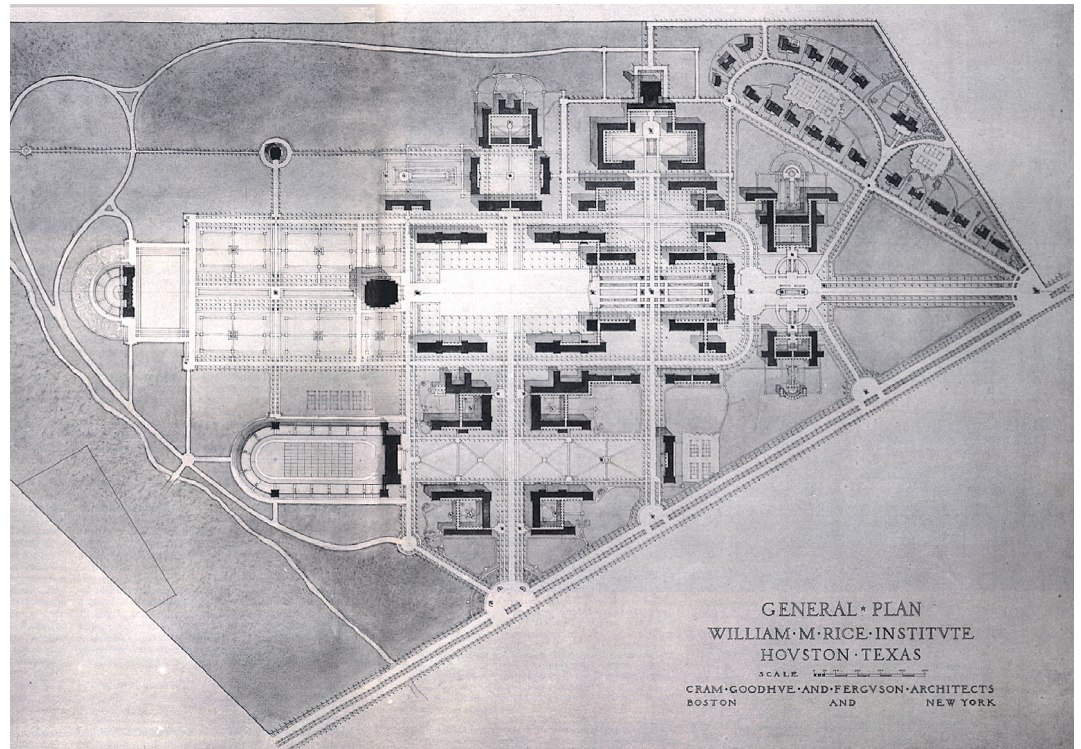


Corbusier has the iconic 'traces' of the 'arched gateway', the 'balcony of appearances' and the 'entablature' rendered as concrete 'planes': Proscenia for the physical presence of the Citizen.

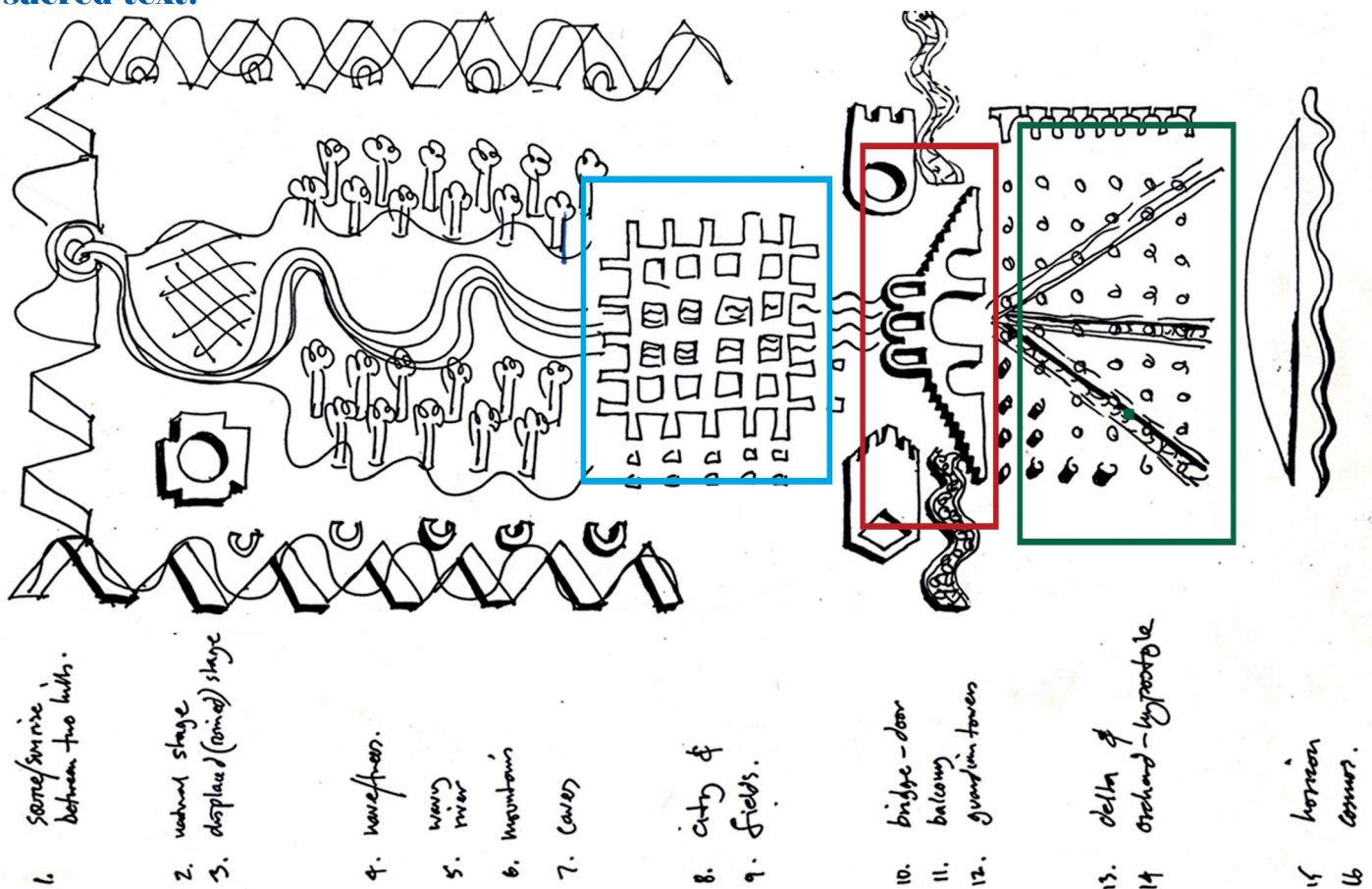
The 'river' flows down from the 'attica-nursery', past the 'piano-nobile' down to the 'Delta-portus'. It hops over the area-bridge to be lost in the 'city-ocean'.

JOA came to Houston from the cosmopolitan architectural culture of London, situated in the midst of a national cult of a carefully contrived 'natural landscape'.

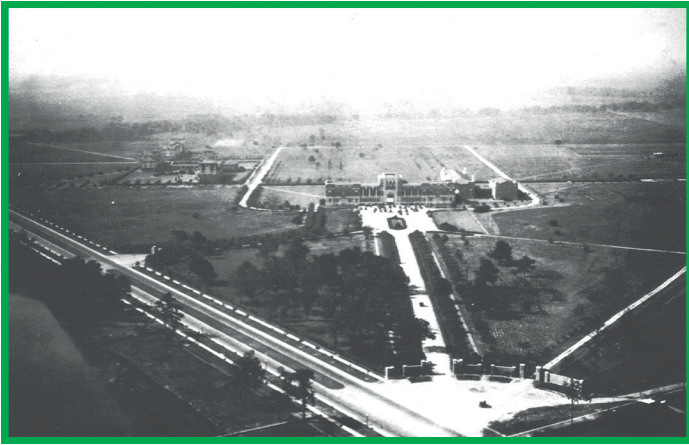
We were intrigued to work in the context of a Beaux-Arts campus plan that, far from being regarded with proper English derision, was as hallowed, by its owners, as a sacred text.



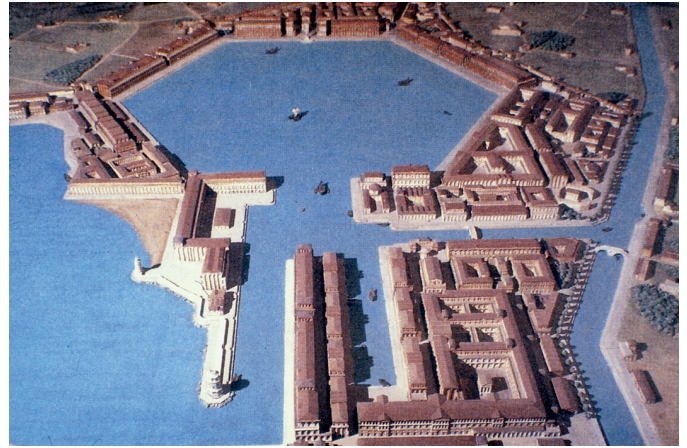
The founding 1912 Cram-Goodhue plan of Rice Campus.. In 1992, JOA found that it still guided the masterplanning of the University. It was a 'proof' of the continuing vitality of the ideas which JOA had been independently creating since 1961.



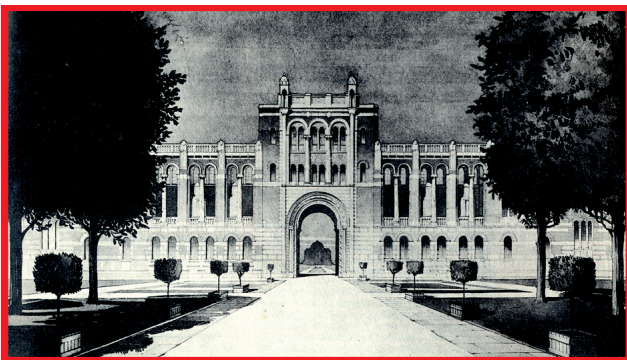
One of the many rehearsals of the Fluvial story-line. This one was sketched, in 1987, to guide the JOA Design Team during the competition for a rural Opera House at Compton Verney - situated in the middle of Middle-England. There was an 18C park with decayed axial allées, a 19C park voyeuristically focussed on a 'naturalistically savage' stretch of water (our lady of Shallott). For the 20C we entered the Opera House at roof level, over a bridge of 'dining pavilions' from an extensive structure of CAR PARKING laid out according to the Fluvial Narrative.



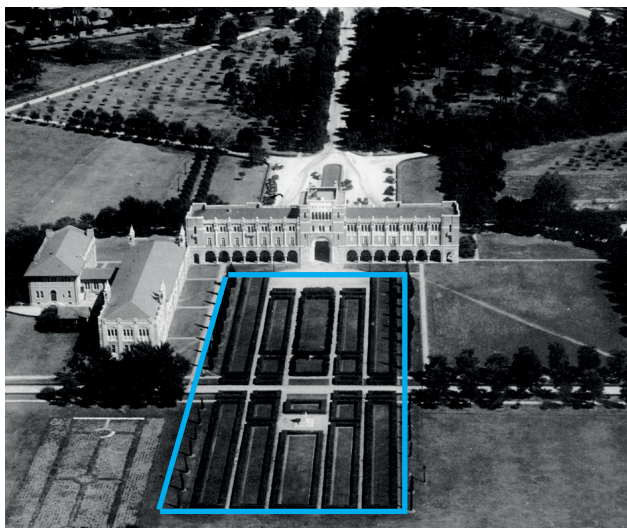
The campus as it stood in 1920. The tridentine geometry of the **Delta** was already 'forested' with its iconically proper trees, which have since spread, as an hypostylar 'field of reeds'. Beyond it lay the vehicular 'harbour' or 'port' which was in front of the 'porta', the great door.



A model of the Porto Traiano, of Rome. Porta-door can be (1) the act of 'portare', the making of a door-place by lifting the plough which cut the tabooed furrow around the city, constituting its 'sacred' wall prior to its physical construction or (2) portus-harbour.



Lovett Hall, completed in 1912, presents itself as the 'arched bridge' with the gate to the 'upper valley' below and the 'honorific chambers' - of the President - above. Above him, in turn, were a floor of Philosophers, and then of Theologists - a striking display of a 'Sumptuary Commoditas'. The square, domed, 'crossing-building' appears in the doorway.



Early 1930's. Academic Quad was parcelled by paths into rectangular panels of grass like fields or city-block plots. The iconography of Beaux Arts composition, seemingly pointless and arbitrary to the iconically illiterate, is revealed as en fleshing the 'nine-fold city' - one of the 'event-horizons' of what Paul Ricoeur terms 'Somatic Time', the Time of Living.

Houston is built on the floor of a departed ocean. It is connected to the sea by a 50-mile canal, dug by private capital. The level ground, vacant of hills and drained by small bayous, is made of clay which swells-up to rupture concrete pavements. **Houston** is 50'0" above sea level and has sunk 9'0" in 90 years from pumping aquifers. These are replenished by storms whose precisely circular anticyclonic spirals are thousands of miles in diameter. One in 2000 dropped 20" of rain in 12 hours, hugely flooding the city.

The citizens of Houston voted three times, in the 20C, to reject zoning, let alone any more positive planning control system.

Yet nothing is more closely controlled, by its Building and Grounds Committee, than the development of Rice University Campus. At Rice, over 100 years, the whole has become greater than its parts - a rarity anywhere in the 20C.

Notwithstanding this achievement the coherence of the campus will always remain fragile and subject to the swings of Architectural fashion motivated by the pressures of novelty encouraged by commerce and by new generations seeking easy ways to discomfit and displace their predecessors.

The Rice Campus, for all the books written about it by local historians, lacks the rock-solid theoretical foundation that would enable its unique unity to survive the buffetings which rocked it in the furiously a-historical 1950's and are now, in the 21C, attacking it again.

**AFTERWORD for the TWENTY-SIXTH LECTURE:
"BACK TO THE BEGINNING".**

North America was where I had finally decided' back in 1954, to become an Architect. Now I was back there some forty years later. Fate plays a strange game. But, looking back, it made a certain sense. My Architectural inventions had been proved to be more than Britain had need for. Britain had a great past but, by the admission of her own Establishment, nothing so brilliant as a future. This was what Thatcher hated in the Civil Service and her own High-Tory Establishment. Texas had almost no past at all. Even my house, new by English standards at 1821, was older than the 'Alamo'. Perhaps there would be a use for JOA's inventions here.

So it was that after JOA's English architectural career was effectively brought to its 'public' closure it rose again on that greatest of anathemas to the English lifespace, a rigorously disciplined Greco-Gothic Beaux-Arts plan that appeared to ignore anything which pre-dated its coming into being. I found my spirit enormously at home on the campus designed by Ralph Adams Cram for the William Marsh Rice University. I loved the clever formal footwork engendered by its rigorous artificiality. I loved its gently inventive Byzantine-Moresque style. I loved the plethora of figurative ornament - all beautifully carved by a German sculptor who made sure his wife always gave birth in the Teutonic Homeland. His sons could never have been U.S. Presidents. I loved the sun, the heat, the Mesopotamian Latitudes and the live-oak evergreens. Maybe it was being brought-up in Lutyens' New Delhi.

Houston itself, outside the hedges (as the local epithet described the City itself), was an alien planet where automobiles could pass by the tenth floor window (which would be sealed shut to suit the air-conditioning). Yet this city, which had no more use for 'shanks pony', was filled with extraordinarily gracious, polite and amiable (south-ern) natives. To speak the local English it was only necessary to say as many words in half as possible and then hyphenate. "Cerm-in y-all", etc. But this alienation from the normally human mode of locomotion was a very recent catastrophe. Pre-WWII Houston had had street-facades, sidewalks and even (Ou)trams.

JOA were made warmly welcome. But as they said to me: "John, no one fouls-up in Texas". Contrary to this estimate, or perhaps because there were no 'legal accidents' in this litigious country, was the extreme difficulty we found in extending JOA's unblemished Professional Indemnity Insurance. It seemed to me that my Texan Clients liked the idea that JOA had "been in trouble somewhere else." JOA had learned at someone else's expense. Little did we know then, in 1992, that, at the Judge Institute, Cambridge, England, it was to be, when summed-up in 1995, at £250,000 of JOA's own.