

Superstudio on Mindscapes

Author(s): Superstudio, Cristiano Toraldo di Francia, Alessandro Magris, Roberto Magris, Piero Frassinelli and Adolfo Natalini

Source: *Design Quarterly*, No. 89, Sottsass, Superstudio: Mindscapes (1973), pp. 17-31

Published by: Walker Art Center

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4090788>

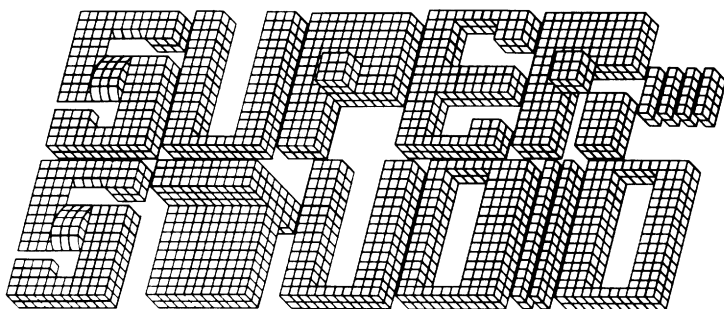
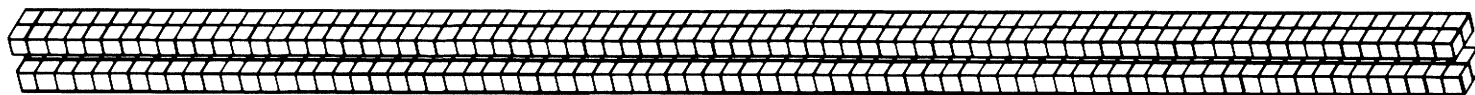
Accessed: 21-04-2017 03:37 UTC

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <http://about.jstor.org/terms>



Walker Art Center is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Design Quarterly*



Superstudio on Mindscales

30 April 1973

The drawings, lithographs and photomontages in this exhibition are fragments of projects executed from 1966 to 1973 for the modification of the natural and artificial landscape which surrounds us and for the modification of ourselves through ideas.

Having continued for years to dream up, on paper, testaments, lovers' promises, immobile colloquies with fellow-guests of stone, having confided to paper bottle-messages, love poetry, invisible whispers . . . and again: having built, on paper, castles and cities, and inviolate oases amid the sands, and empty houses, or warehouses full of useless objects, or funereal possessions . . .

And having for years interrogated the stars on the itinerary to follow, the navigator drew the constellations in the night . . .

Having for centuries interrogated the earth, the farmer drew geometric patterns on hills and valleys, transforming them into mosaics . . .

Finally, after examining the omens, the founder of the city drew a geometric perimeter on the ground and thereon he built the city . . .

Innumerable cartographers delineated the terraqueous globe, marking invisible boundaries which later turned into paths of blood on the earth and seas. Others drew flags in blood or gold. In this fashion they also made vestments for kings and other dignitaries.

The marks we left on the paper, or the pieces of photos glued together, and the blueprints of perspectives and axonometrics, and the sheets from the copier, the drawings done with colored pencils or shaded ones done with the airbrush, were ways and maps for ancient or future journeys. They were paths running through the territory of will and hope. They were plans for journeys, activities, magic calendars, lists of gifts. They were always projects.

In the beginning, we designed objects for production, designs to be turned into wood and steel, glass and brick, or plastic . . .

Then we produced neutral and usable designs, then, finally, negative utopias, forewarning images of the horrors which architecture was laying in store for us, with its scientific methods for the perpetuation of existing models . . .

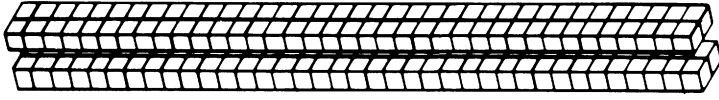
Then the images slowly disappeared, as if in a mirror: now there remain only fables and parables, descriptions and speeches. No longer figures, but traces of a mode of behavior directed towards involving others in the common search, directed towards suggesting the magnificent possibilities of rediscovering and of governing ourselves.

The only project is thus the project for our lives and our relationships with others.



New New York. cat no 29





Fragments from a Personal Museum

Our work has always taken the form of inventories and catalogues. Perhaps the only form of work possible today is an autobiography as a project for one's life.

- 1966-68 We worked with the conviction that architecture was a means of changing the world. Designs were a hypothesis of physical transformation, they were ways to suggest diverse qualities and quantities. These projects have been collected in our first catalogue: *A Journey into the Realm of Reason*.
- 1968-69 We began to be interested in transpositions and metamorphoses: architecture stopped being a "specific," it lost its "scale" connotations to become an abstract planning of neutral and available entities. This work has been collected in a second catalogue: *Architectural Histogram*.
- 1969-70 We elaborated an extreme line of thought on the possibilities of architecture as the instrument for attaining knowledge and action through an architectural model of total urbanization. This work collected in a third catalogue is called: *The Continuous Monument*.
- 1970-71 We produced didactic projects, architectural critiques; we used architecture as self-criticism, endeavoring to inquire into its promotional mechanisms and its ways of working. The didactic projects are: *Reflected Architecture*, *Interplanetary Architecture*, *The Twelve Ideal Cities*.
- 1971-73 We worked on a series of films about fundamental acts, centered on the relationships between architecture (as the conscious formalization of the planet) and human life. Those films constitute propaganda for ideas outside the typical channels of architectural discipline. The five films are: *Life, Education, Ceremony, Love, Death*.

Architecture never touches the great themes, the fundamental themes of our lives. Architecture remains at the edge of our life, and intervenes only at a certain point in the process, usually when behavior has already been codified, furnishing answers to rigidly stated problems. Even if its answers are aberrant, the logic of their production and consumption avoids any real upheaval. Architecture allows no alternative proposal since it uses those instruments which are accurately predisposed to avoid any deviation.

Thus, the working class home resembles the stately villa in the same way that the work of a radical

architect resembles that of the academic or reactionary architect: the only difference lies in the quantities in play, the decisions on the quality of living have already been made.

In accepting his role, the architect becomes accomplice to the machinations of the system. The avant-garde architect fills a rigidly fixed role, rather like that of the "young lover" in a play. At this point, the architect, recognizing in himself and in his work connotations of the cosmetic, environmental pollution and consolatix afflictorum, comes to an abrupt halt on his well-paved path. It then becomes an act of coherence, or a last try at salvation, to concentrate on a redefinition of the primary acts, and to examine the relationships between architecture and these acts.

A Moral Tale about the Disappearance of Design

Design, having become perfect and rational, proceeds to synthesize different realities and finally transforms itself, withdrawing into itself, into its final essence of natural philosophy. Thus designing coincides more and more with existence: existence no longer under the protection of designed objects, but existence as design. The times are over when utensils generated ideas and when ideas generated utensils: now ideas are utensils. It is with these new tools that life forms itself freely into cosmic consciousness.

If the instruments of design have become as sharp as lancets and as sensitive as sounding lines, we can use them for a delicate lobotomy. Thus, beyond the convulsions of over-production, a state of calm can be born, in which a world without products and refuse takes shape, a zone in which the mind is energy and raw material, and also the final product, the only intangible object of consumption.

The designing of a region free from the pollution of design is very similar to a design for a terrestrial paradise . . . This is the definitive product . . . This is only one of the projects for a marvelous metamorphosis . . .



First City: 2000 Ton City cat no 30

The Twelve Ideal Cities

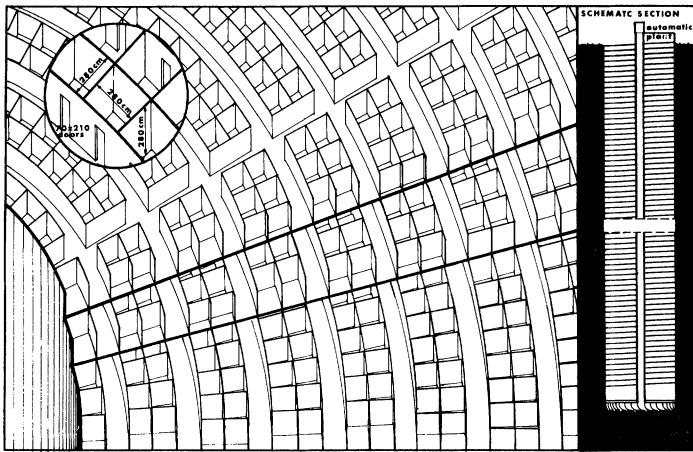
Premonitions of the Mystical Rebirth of Urbanism

These are visions of Twelve Ideal Cities, the supreme attainment of twenty thousand years of humanity's blood, sweat and tears; the definitive haven of Man in the possession of truth, finally free from contradictions, doubts, equivocations, indecision; definitively, totally, immovably full of his own *perfection*.

First City: 2,000 Ton City

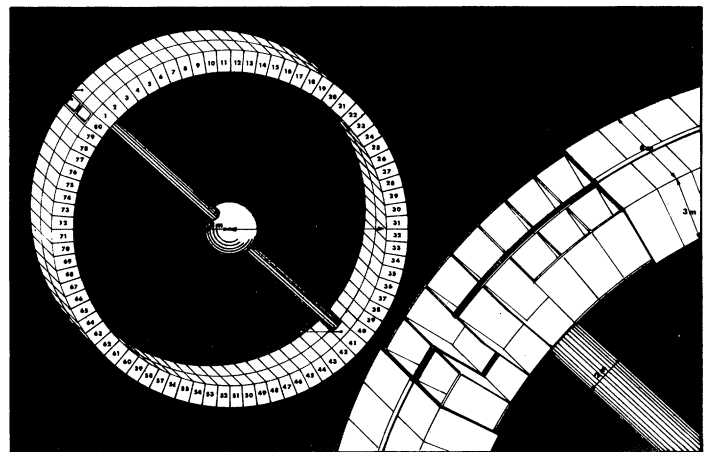
Even and perfect, the city lies amid green lawns, sunny hills and wooded mountains; slim tall sheets of continuous buildings intersect in a rigorous square mesh, one league apart; the buildings, or rather the single uninterrupted building, consists of cubic cells five cubits each way. These cells are placed one on top of another in a single vertical stack, reaching a height of one third league above sea-level, so that the relative height of the building varies in relation to the level of the ground on which it rises. Each cell has two external walls. Cell walls are of opaque material, porous to air, rigid, but light. The wall facing north (or if this is an external wall, the wall facing west) is capable of emitting three-dimensional images, sounds and smells. Against the opposite wall is a seat capable of molding perfectly to the human body, even of enclosing it completely. Incorporated in this seat is an apparatus for satisfying all physiological needs. When not in use, this membrane and all apparatus withdraw and the wall reforms. The floor is a simulator and can evoke all sensations of living things. The ceiling is a brain-impulse receiver. In each cell is an individual whose brain impulses are continually transmitted to an electronic analyzer set at the top of the building beneath a continuous semi-cylindrical vault. The analyzer selects, compares and interprets the desires of each individual, programming the life of the entire city moment by moment. All citizens are in a

state of perfect equality. Death no longer exists. Sometimes someone indulges in absurd thoughts of rebellion against the perfect and eternal life granted to him; at first, the analyzer ignores the crime, but if it is repeated, the man who has shown himself to be unworthy is rejected. The ceiling descends with a force of two thousand tons until it reaches the floor. At this point in this marvelous economy, another life is begun. The panel returns to its original height, and all the individuals living in cells within a distance of a quarter of a league from the empty cell donate an ovum or a group of spermatozoa, which are transported in channels created for this purpose in a mad race to the now empty seat. Here, an ovum is fertilized, and the seat is transformed into a uterus, protecting the new son of the city for nine months, until his happy dawn.



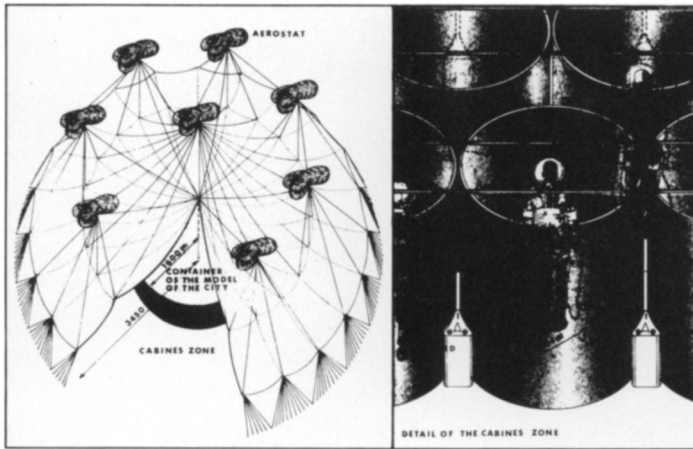
Second City: Temporal Cochlea City

A cylinder composed of living cells that revolves around the earth once each year.



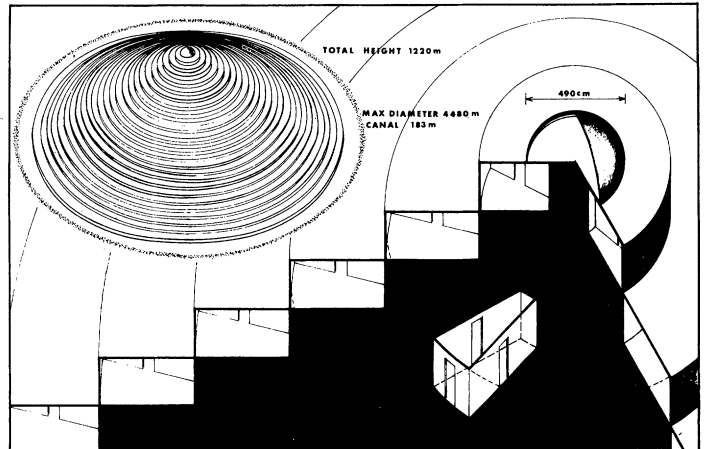
Fourth City: Spaceship City

A ring of sleeping inhabitants moving towards a planet thousands of light years away where descendants of the sleeping crew will wake and found a new land.



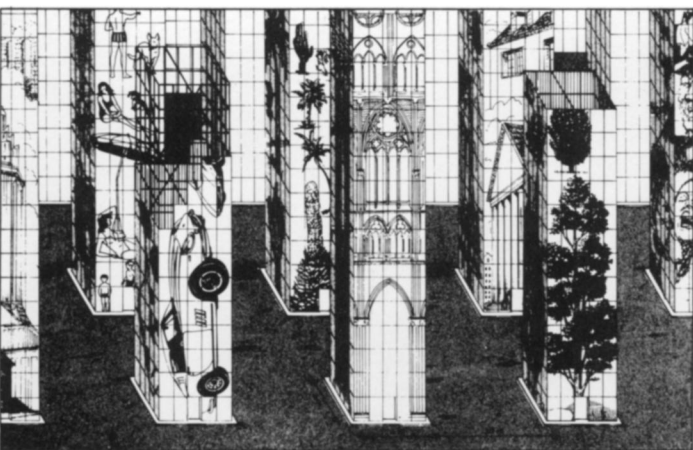
Sixth City: Barnum Jr.'s Magnificent and Fabulous City

A tent suspended by cables from the earth where your every wish will be fulfilled.



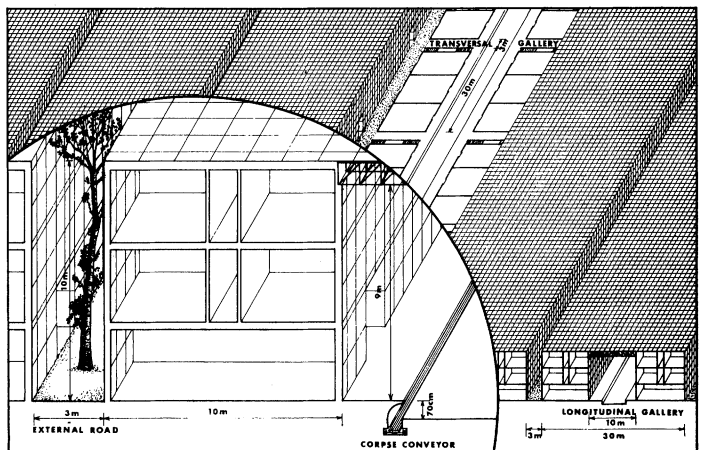
Eighth City: Conical Terraced City

A city of 500 levels whose inhabitants receive brain impulses, a program of dreams, from the highest level.



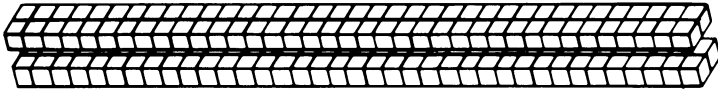
Eleventh City: City of the Splendid Houses

Every inhabitant has but one goal, the possession of the city's most beautiful home. All citizens work in factories producing components for embellishment of the houses.



Twelfth City: City of the Book

All citizens wear a book hung from a chain around their necks. The book contains the moral and practical norms for behavior and is the spirit of the city.



Life or the Public Image of Truly Modern Architecture: Supersurface (an alternative model of life on earth)

Architecture is no longer mediation between man and environment translated into a complexity of needs, creating an artificial panorama and a "second poverty," but becomes a cross-science.

Through the collation and extrapolation of data and the tendencies of different disciplines (from body control techniques to philosophy, from disciplines of logic, to medicine, to geography . . .), a guiding image is visualized, a life no longer based on work (and the power and violence connected with it), but on unalienated human relationships.

It is the last chance for architecture to act as "planner" . . .

By setting off a series of reductive processes, we can pass from induced needs to primary needs; technology, if concentrated on these alone, can satisfy them without work.

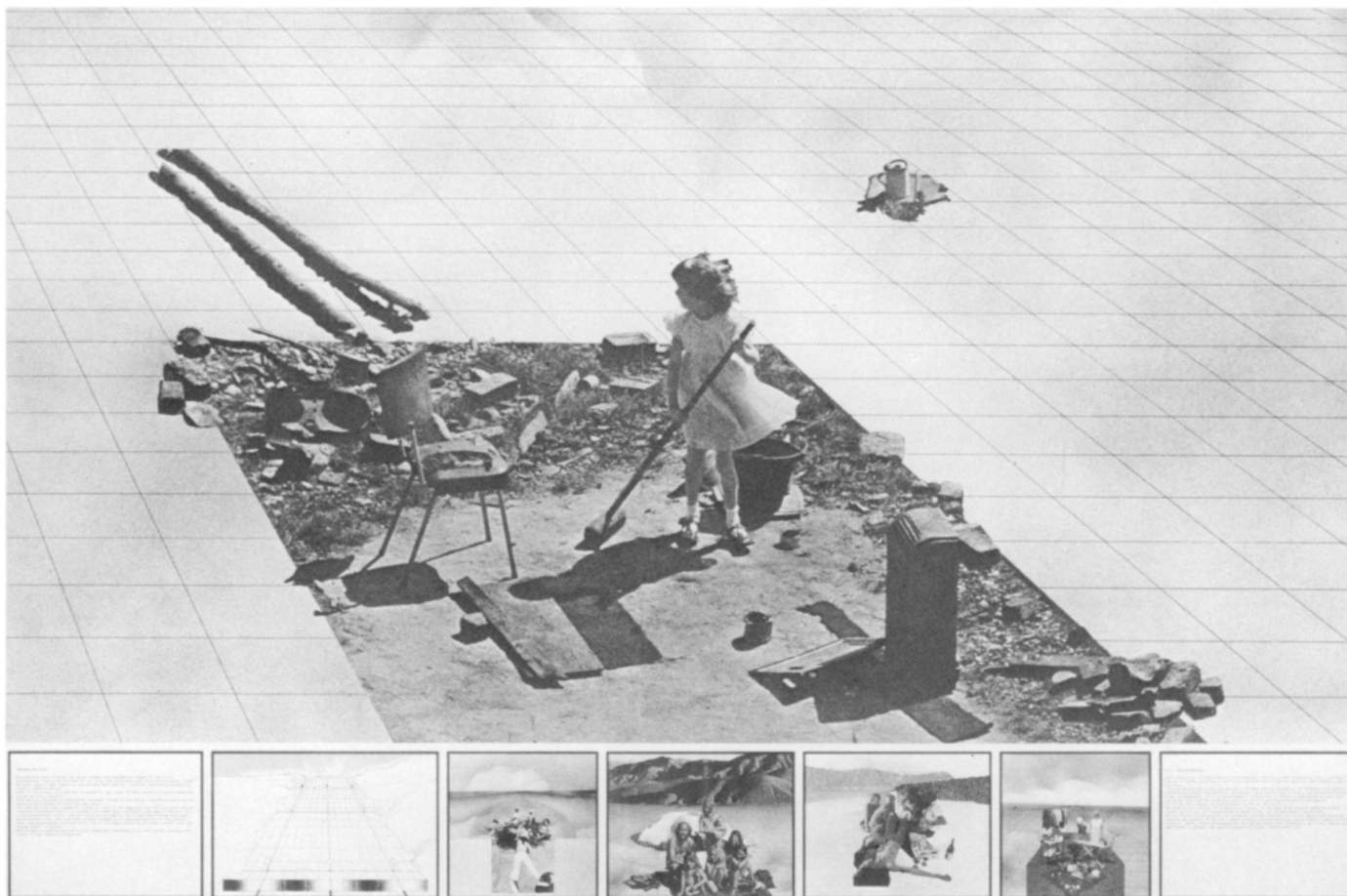
We can foresee two directions for research: towards a better use of the human body and mind; towards the control of the environment without three-dimensional means (again, reductive processes). Earth, rendered homogeneous through an energy and information grid (see "Education" and "Death"), becomes the natural support of a new, potentiated life.



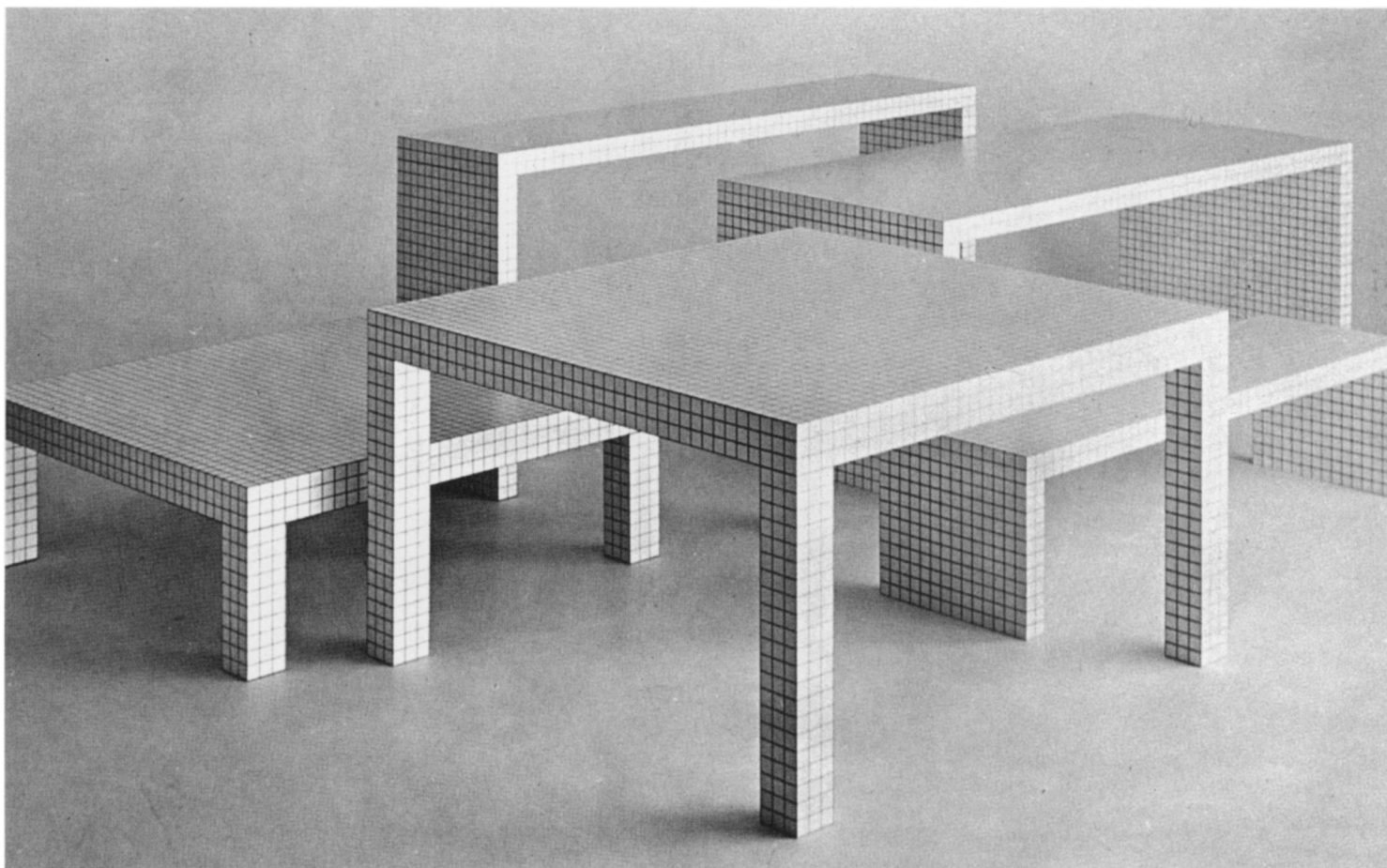
10% Covered and 100% Covered.
cat no 43



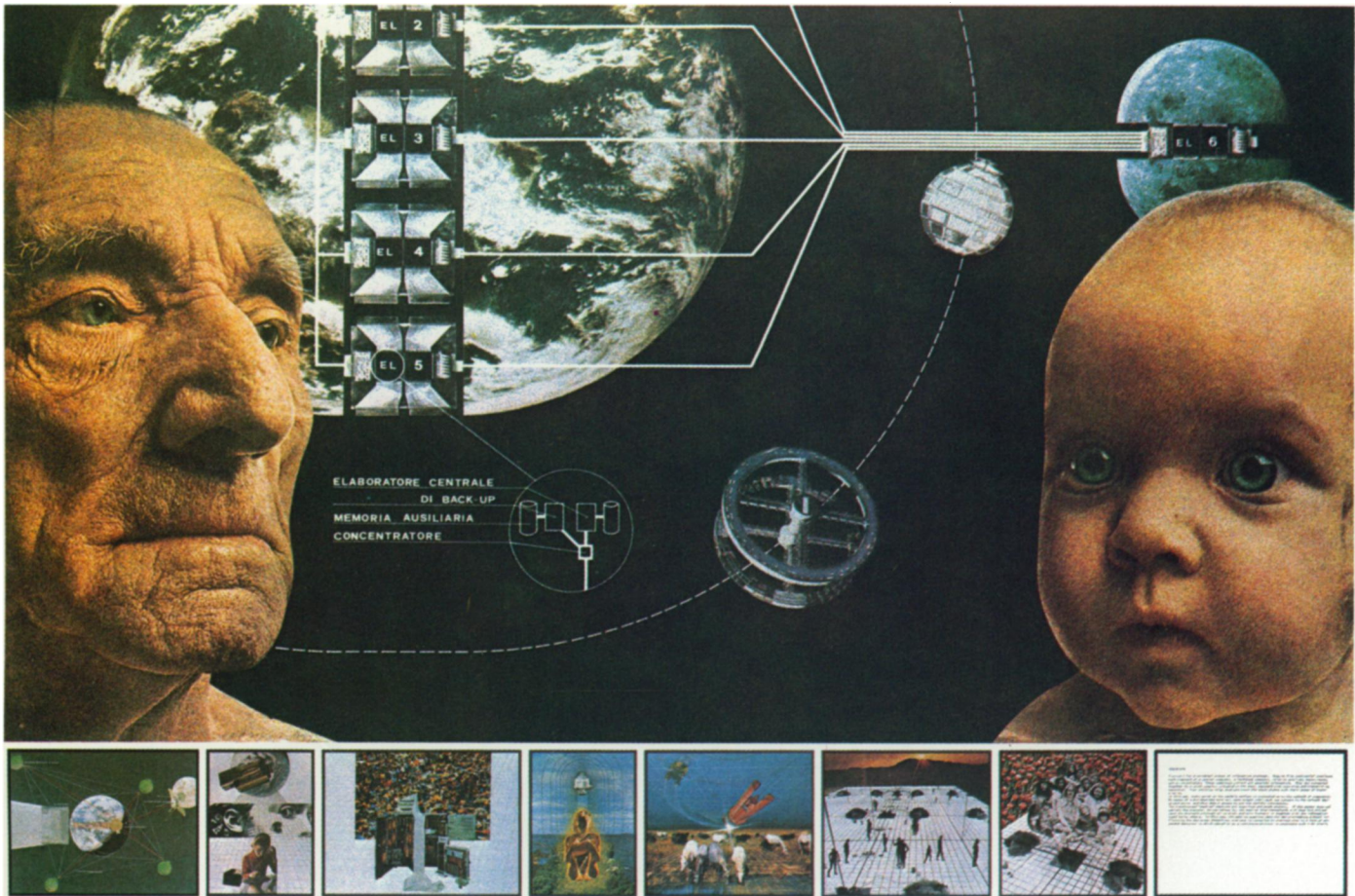
Sandro Poli Discovers a Plug. cat no 45



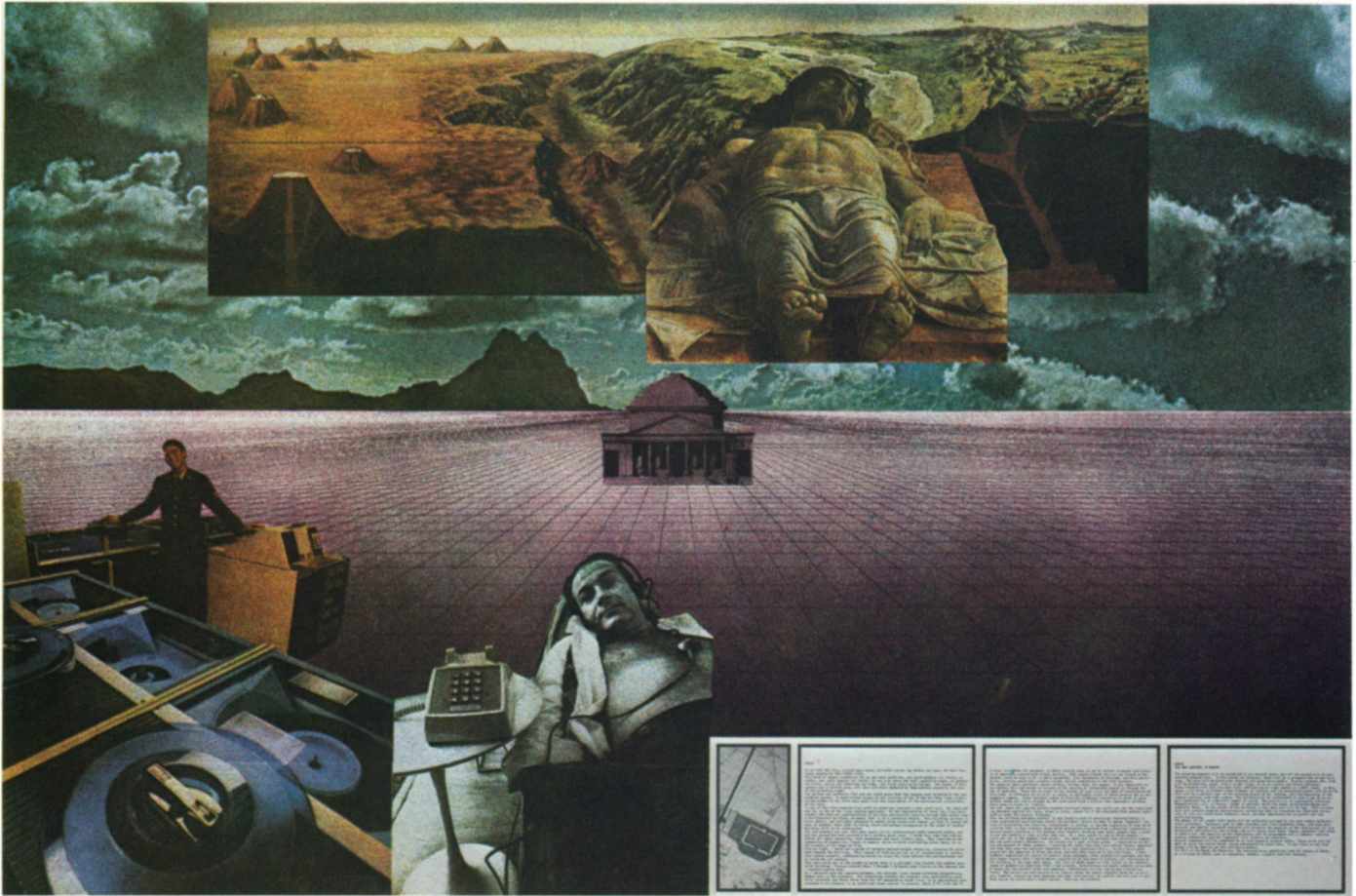
Supersurface. cat no 31



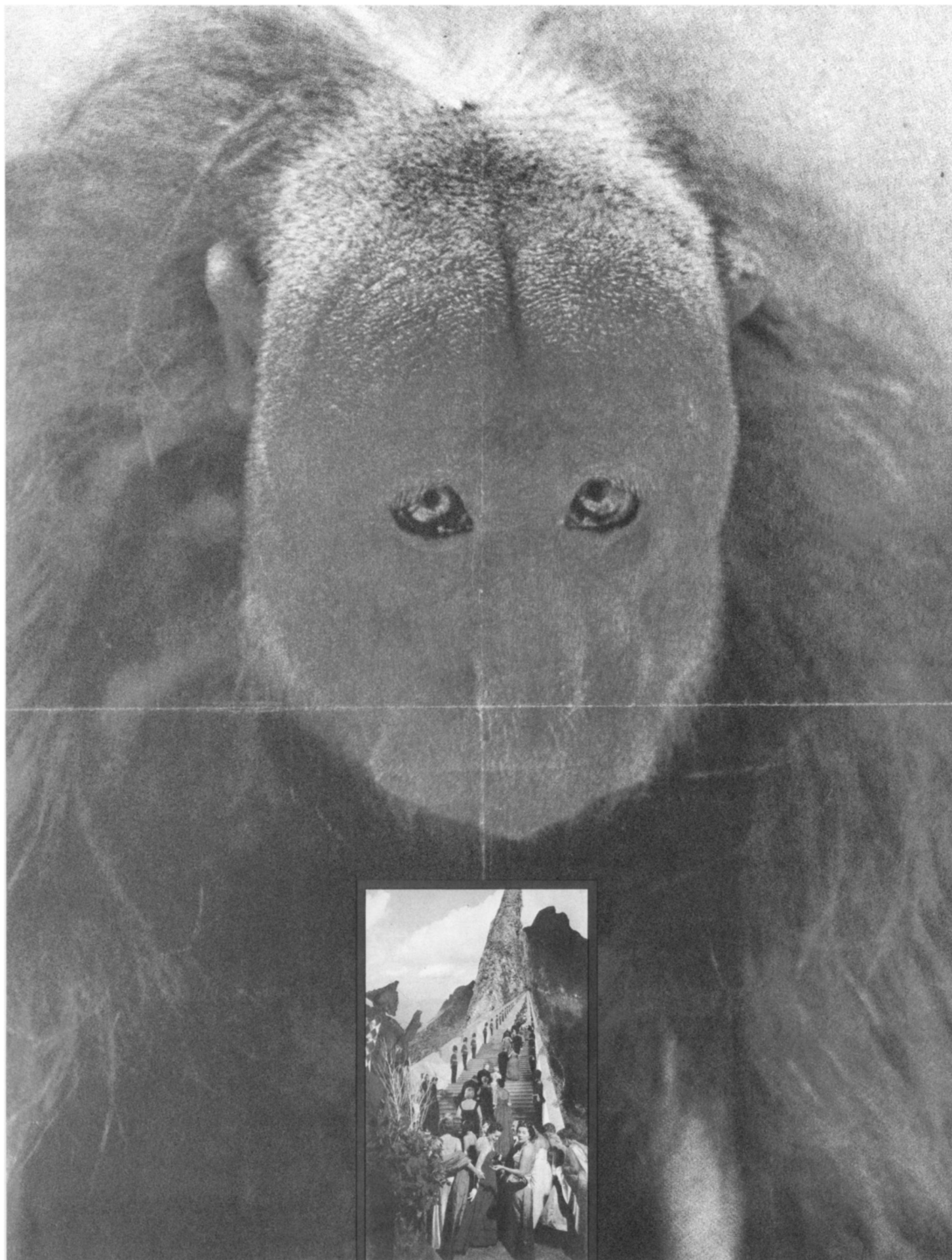
Series of tables manufactured by Zanotta with plastic laminate "supersurface."



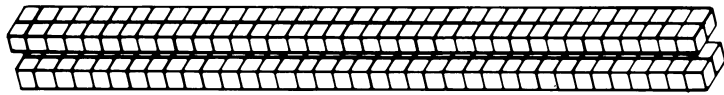
Education: Project I. cat no 32



Death: Modena. cat no 36



Ceremony: The Great Pilgrimage. cat no 34



The Continuous Monument

An Architectural Model for Total Urbanization

For those who, like ourselves, are convinced that architecture is one of the few ways to realize cosmic order on earth, to put things to order and above all to affirm humanity's capacity for acting according to reason, it is a "moderate utopia" to imagine a near future in which all architecture will be created with a single act, from a single design capable of clarifying once and for all the motives which have induced man to build dolmens, menhirs, pyramids, and lastly to trace (ultima ratio) a white line in the desert.

The Great Wall of China, Hadrian's Wall, motorways, like parallels and meridians, are the tangible signs of our understanding of the earth.

We believe in a future of "rediscovered architecture," in a future in which architecture will regain its full power, abandoning all ambiguity of design and appearing as the only alternative to nature.

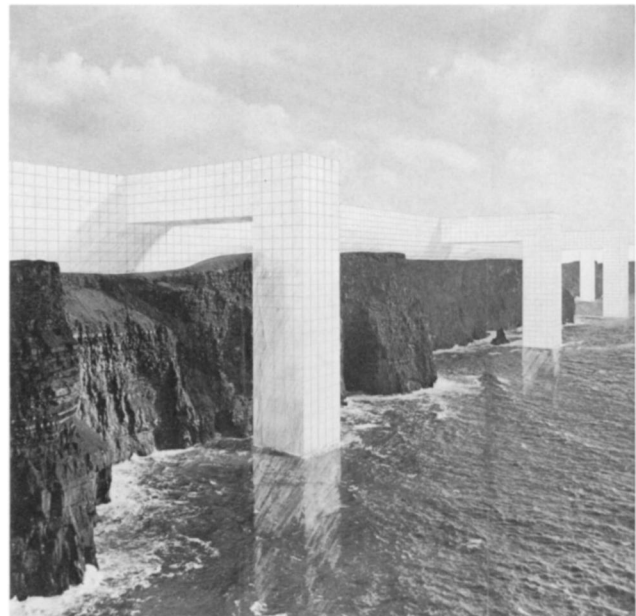
Eliminating mirages and will-o'-the-wisps such as spontaneous architecture, sensitive architecture, architecture without architects, biological architecture and fantastic architecture, we move towards the "continuous monument"—a form of architecture all equally emerging from a single continuous environment—the world rendered uniform by technology, culture and all the other inevitable forms of imperialism.

We belong to a long history of black stones, rocks fallen from the sky or erected in the earth: meteorites, dolmens, obelisks. Cosmic axis, vital elements, elements reproducing the relationships of sky and earth, witnesses to marriages celebrated, the tablets of the law, final acts of dramas of various lengths.

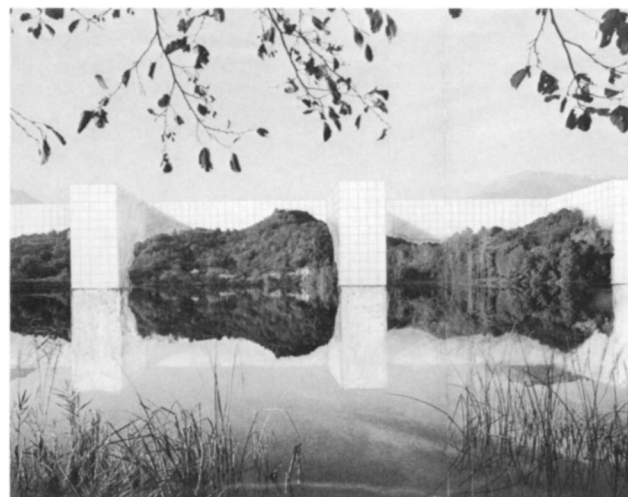
A square block of stone placed on the earth is a primary act, it is a testimonial that architecture is the center of the relationships of technology, sacredness, utilitarianism.

It implies man, machines, rational structures and history.

The square block is the first and ultimate act in the history of ideas in architecture. Architecture becomes a closed, immobile object that leads nowhere but to itself and to the use of reason.

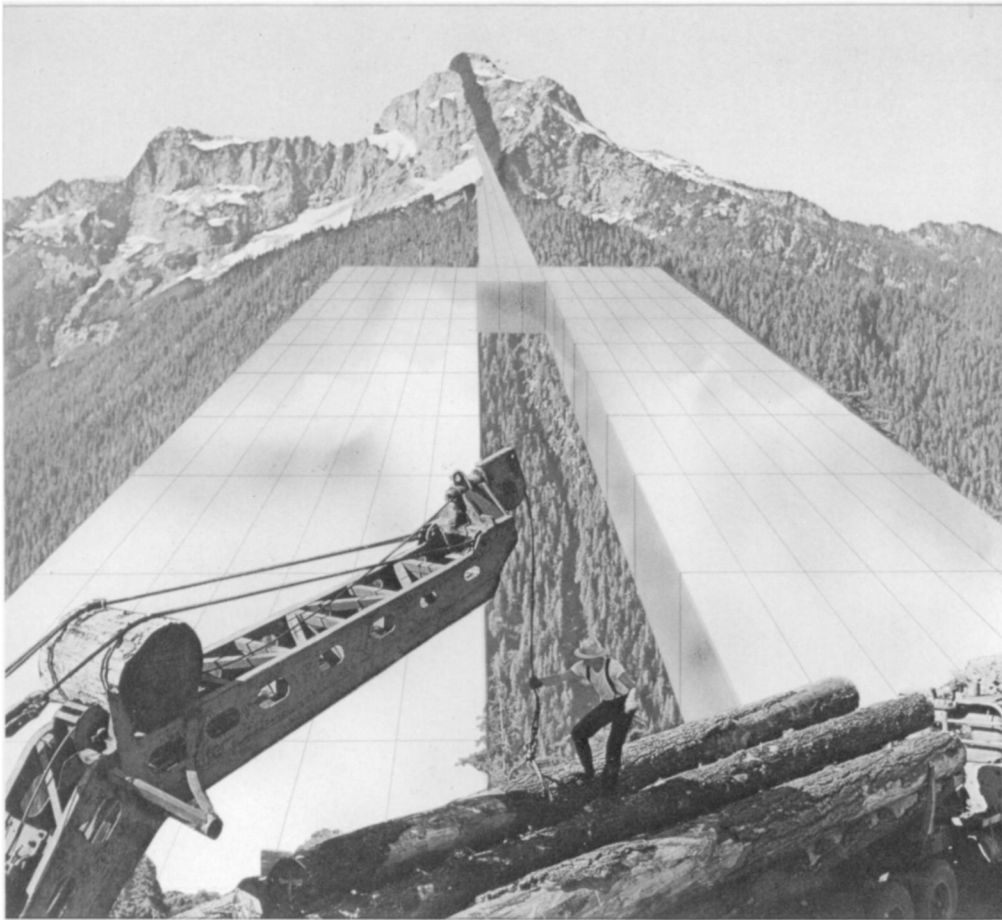


On the Rocky Coast and Alpine Lakes Connection.
cat no 37

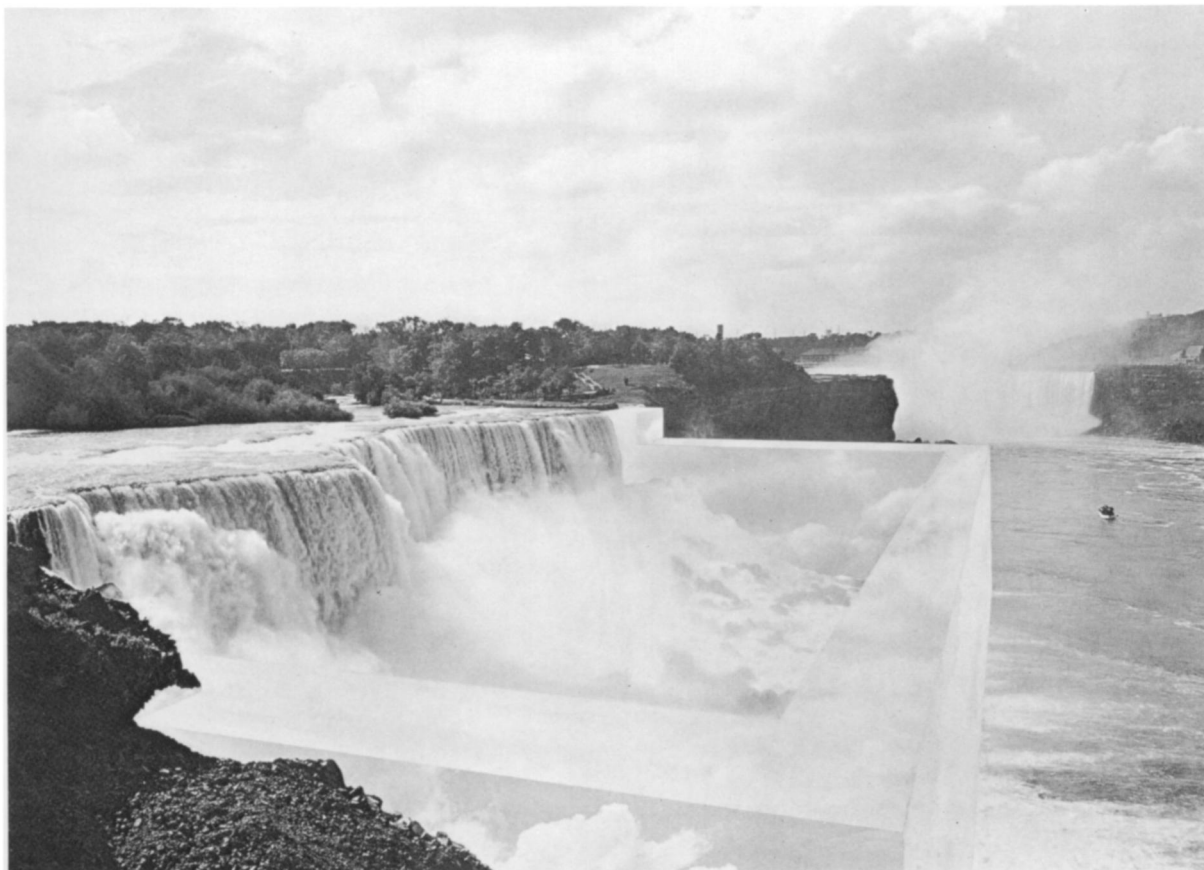


On the River and St. Moritz Revisited. cat no 38

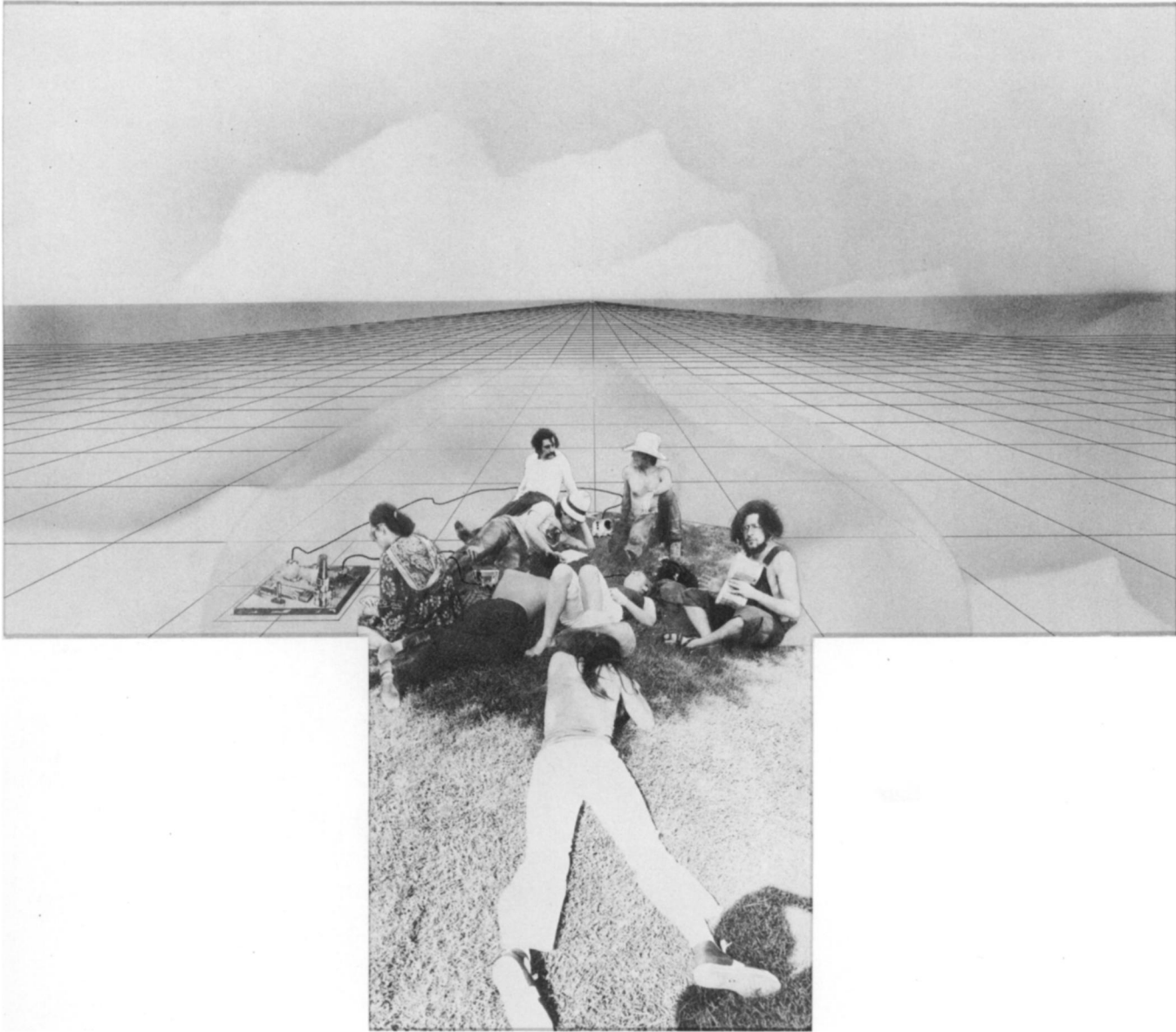




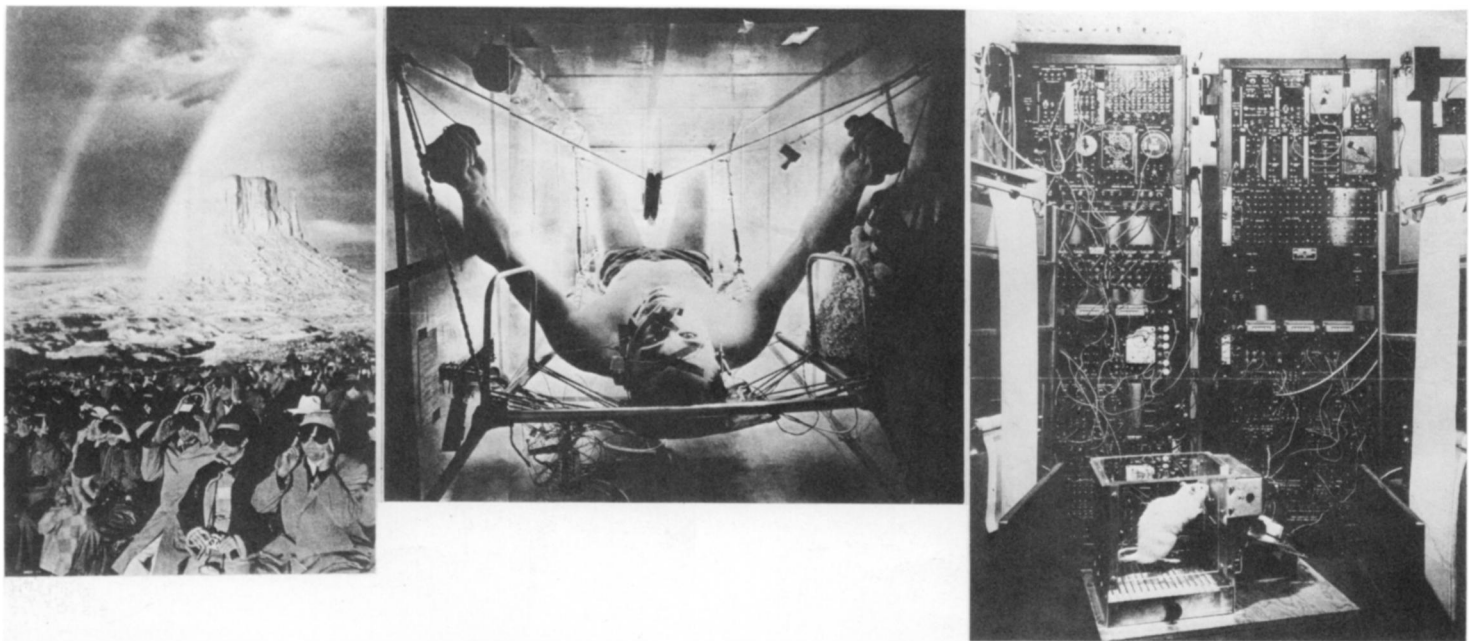
Logging Operation. cat no 41



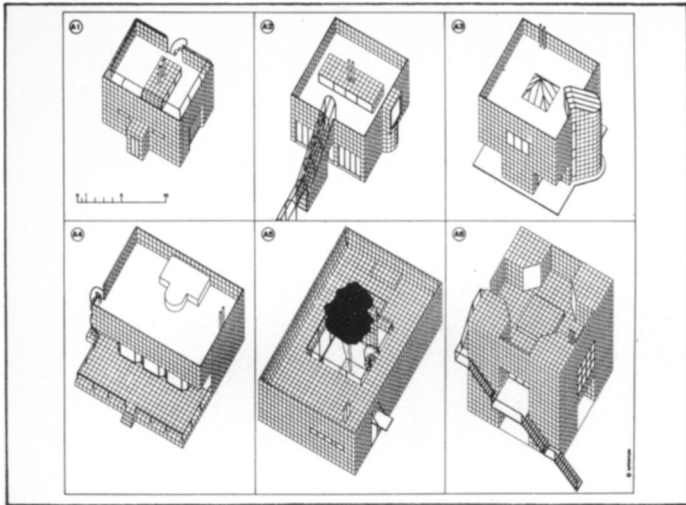
Niagara: The Reflected Architecture. cat no 42



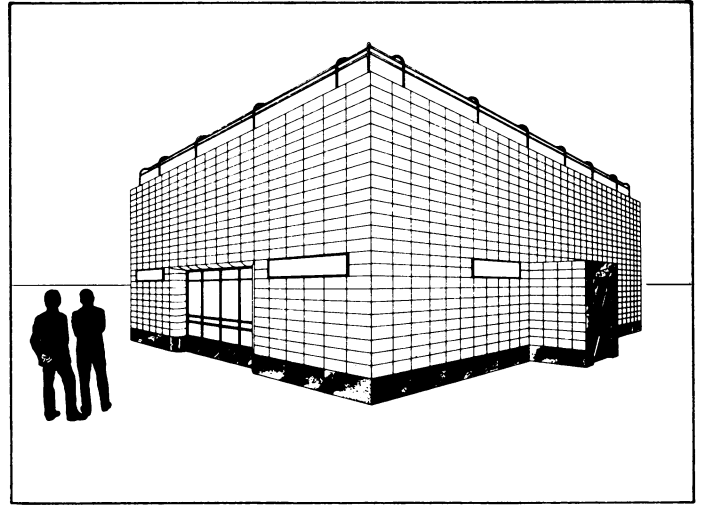
St. Martin from Palma. cat no 46



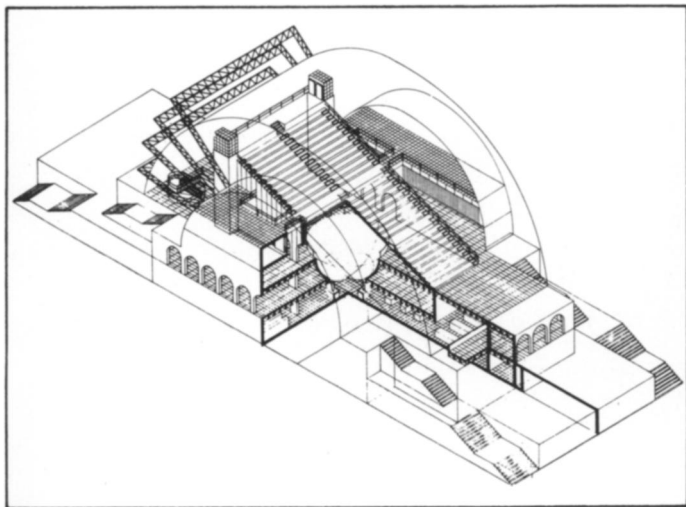
A Building for an Unknown Ceremony. cat no 52



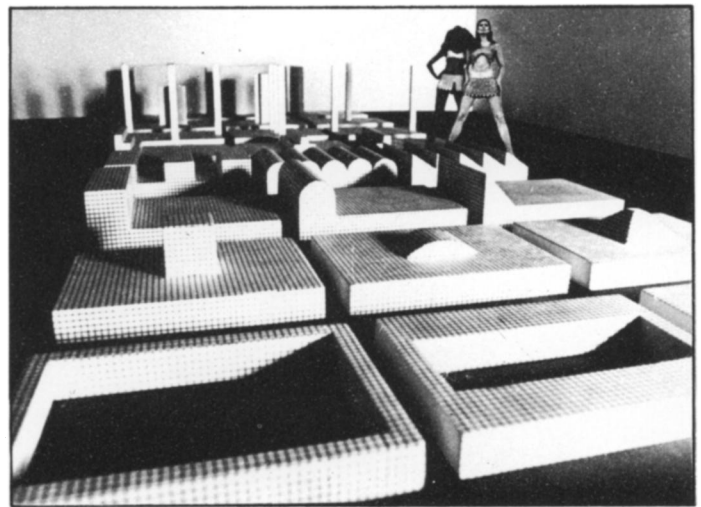
Suburban villas from a catalogue of villas. 1968-70



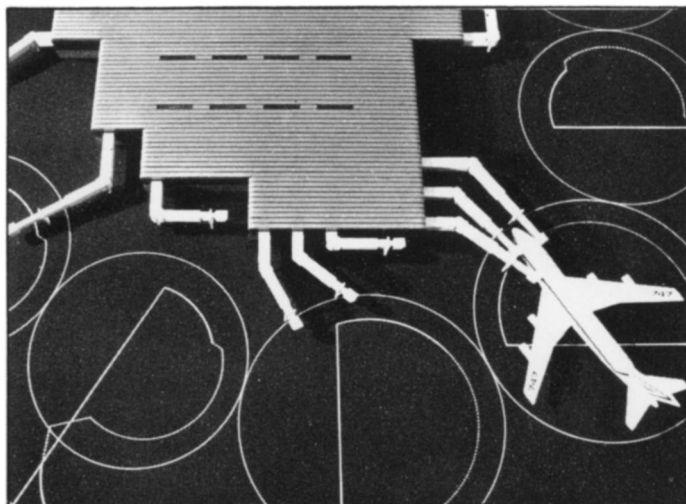
Suburban villa in white ceramic tile. 1968



Memorial Park Competition, Modena. 1970



Exhibition: The Invention of the Neutral Surface. 1970



Passenger Terminal Competition, Genoa Airport. 1970



Electric Train for the Breda-Pistoia Railway. 1971