

DESIGN WEEKEND

1980

A HEALTH SPA ON ISOLA BELLA LAKE MAGGIORE, ITALY

Design Weekend was conceived as an opportunity for professional designers and students to work together in an intense, three day charette situation. It is intended to be a learning experience and an opportunity for participants to explore current issues and ideas in architecture.

Since this event is not a competition, there are no restrictions on preparation before the weekend or on how the individual teams function. It is generally expected that guest professionals will act as team leaders and as such they are likely to organize design activity.

THE DESIGN SITUATION

The location of this project is on one of the Borromean Islands, *Isola Bella*, in Lago Maggiore in the lake district of northern Italy. This island has been purchased by a consortium of luxury hotels located nearby on the shore of the lake and it will be used as a private bathing establishment.

At present the island has a small village with restaurants and small shops, and the remains of magnificent formal gardens built in the seventeenth century by Count Vitaliano Borromeo. The palace which the Count built for himself immediately to the north of the gardens was recently completely destroyed by fire. The entire island is to be developed as a luxurious health spa for the exclusive use of the clientele of the associated hotels. They will arrive by motor launch from the nearby town of Stresa (a fifteen minute trip) to the *port* shown on the plan of the island. The visitors would then spend the day partaking of the healthful waters of the natural mineral springs, the steam baths and swimming pool. They would dine and be entertained in the village and have complete access to the formal gardens for relaxation, exploration, and contemplation, etc.

CONTEXT

Originally *Isola Bella* was an arid large rock of schist rising from the depths of Lago Maggiore, a lake in the northernmost part of Italy surrounded by the mountains of the Italian Alps. About 1630 Count Carlo Borromeo began having it leveled to develop a palace and garden retreat. It was named for his wife, Isabella. Before the work was very far advanced Carlo died and the effort was carried on by his son Vitaliano, who hired Francesco Castelli, Carlo Fontana and an entourage of other architects, artists and sculptors to complete it. The palace which was under construction for almost 300 years (the gardens were laid out and completed by about 1670) recently, mysteriously and tragically burned to the ground leaving only the

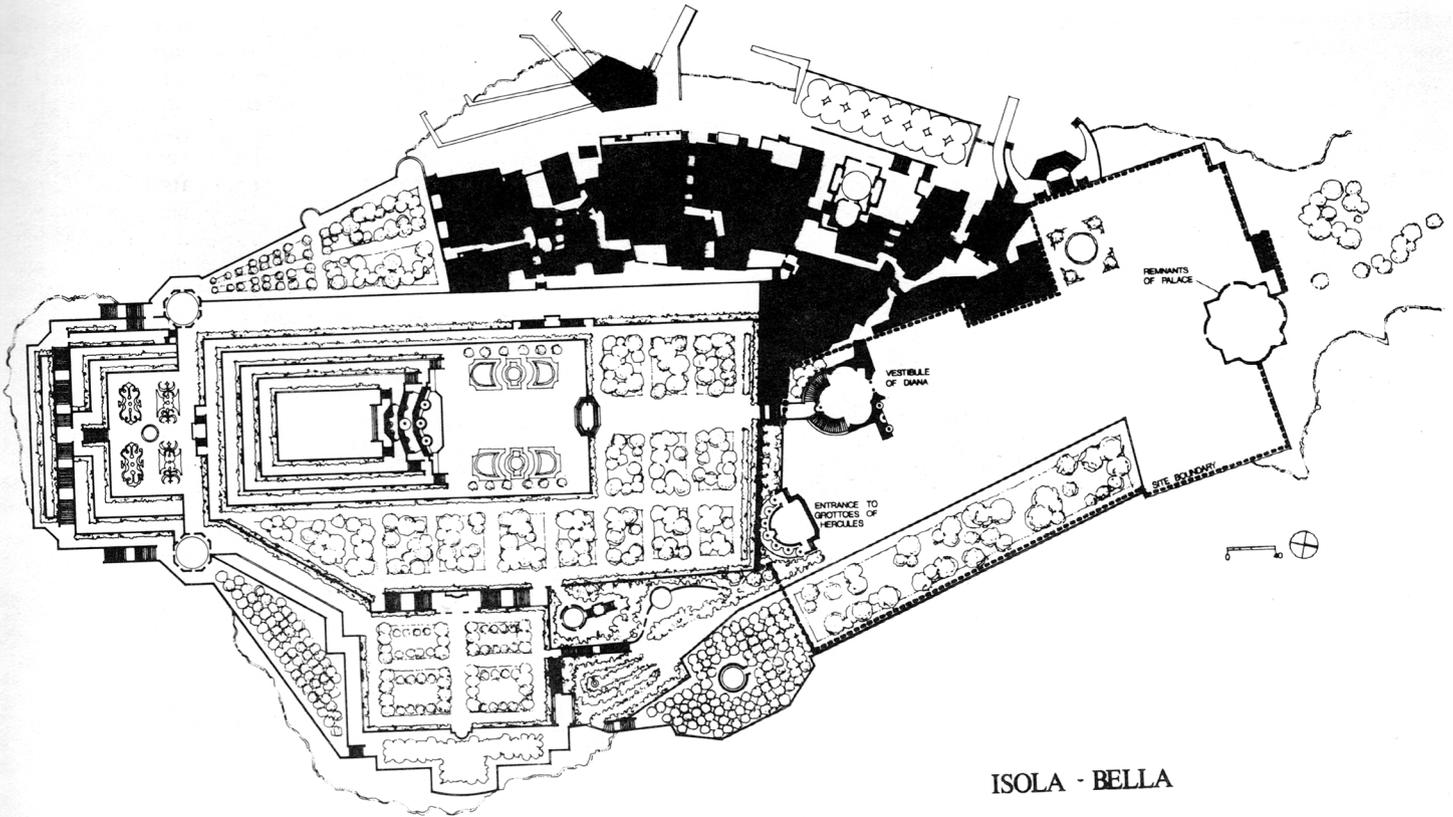
ruin of the apsidal space to the extreme north of the plan.

Count Vitaliano Borromeo's intention was to transform this island into his private fantasy-land. The palace combined with the gardens was to give the appearance of a mighty galleon floating on the surface of the lake, i.e., the entire island was crafted in the image of a technological artifact. The Count's desire to geometrize the whole island, to shape nature in accordance with man's will, represents (prior to the destruction of the palace) perhaps the greatest single surviving achievement of the Baroque art of establishing a romantic affinity to environment.

Of the Count's efforts the features which survive are, of course, the gardens, The Vestibule of Diane, the entrance to the Grottoes of Hercules and the apsidal space of the palace to the extreme north.

The principal formal characteristics of the garden consists of ten stepped terraces, the five upper ones are reminiscent of the Babylonian hanging gardens. The gardens are no longer a single entity but nonetheless the entire complex of the garden is so developed as to be impossible to view simultaneously except in views from across the lake. At the top (the uppermost five levels) the gardens are pyramided into a series of flower-laden level terraces filled with soil; they contain also a variety of waterworks, sculptures, obelisks, statuary as well as an orangery. Even though the island is located in the lower Alps, the deep lake valley creates a micro-climate which makes possible semi-tropic gardens which (along with other plantings) includes the orangery.

In the original scheme trees were located between the palace and the gardens to camouflage the asymmetrical position of the villa *vis-a-vis* the gardens. Architecturally this is reinforced by the small court (Vestibule of Diane) placed in the area intervening between the southern wing of the palace and the main garden terraces. The slight rotation and formal staircase of this open air space are designed to deceive the moving observer into thinking that a complete axial relationship between the two major events exists. The thick growth of trees obscures the fact that the steps leading out of the court take a sharp turn to the south. The entrance to the Grottoes of Hercules is to the east of the Vestibule of Diane and is marked by an open air architectural structure. The Grottoes are a series of man-made caverns with water features which extend partially beneath the gardens. As has been mentioned previously the only remains of the palace are the ragged ruin of the apsidal space to the extreme north. This ruin is particularly significant because its floor is inlaid with a colorful and complex geometrical tile pattern.

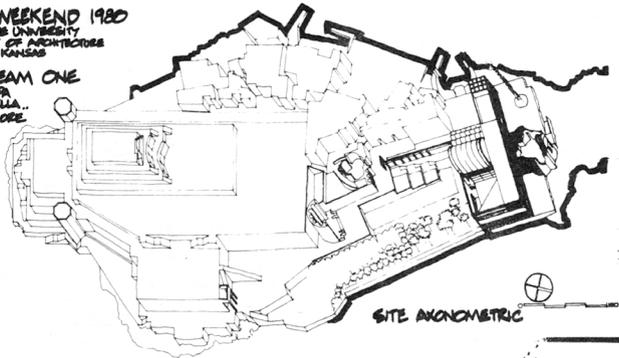


ISOLA - BELLA

DESIGN WEEKEND 1980
 KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
 DEPARTMENT OF ARCHITECTURE
 MANHATTAN, KANSAS

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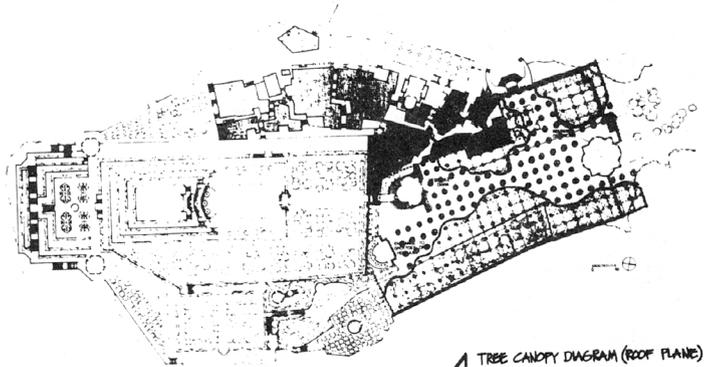
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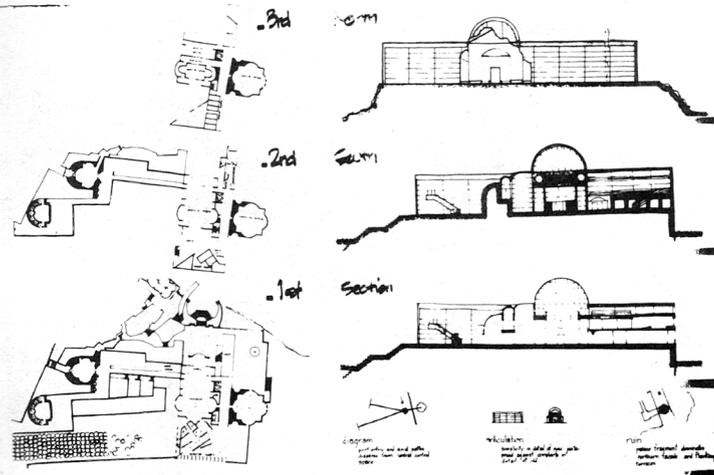
SITE AXONOMETRIC



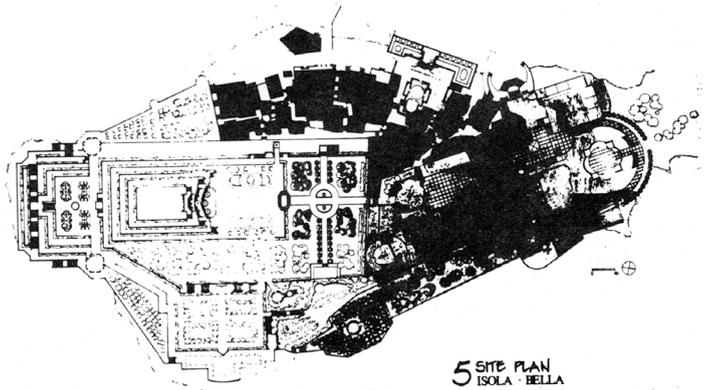
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4 TREE CANOPY DIAGRAM (ROOF PLANE)
 ISOLA - BELLA



Kent Turner group.

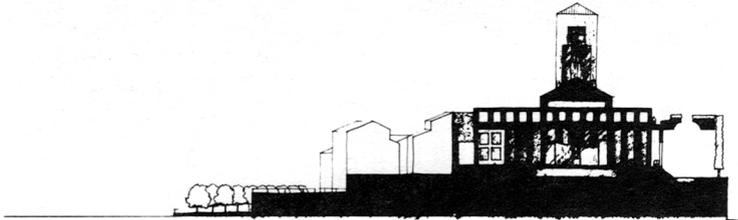


Craig Eppes group.

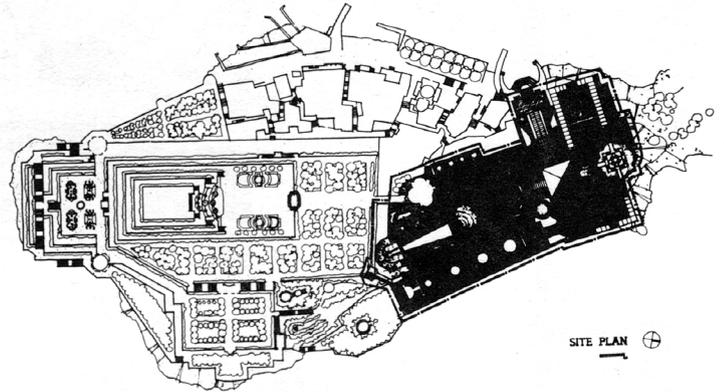
5 SITE PLAN
 ISOLA - BELLA

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LAKE MAGGIORE ITALY

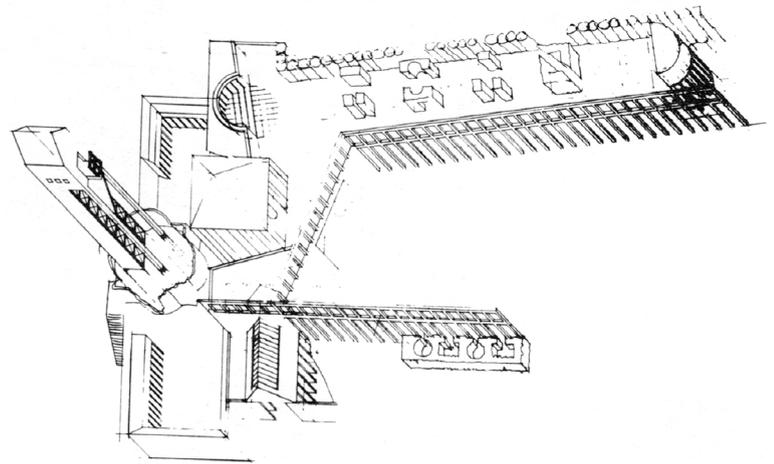
DESIGN WEEKEND 1980
GARY BOWEN TL
TODD RHOADES
ROB JUNK
STEVE JOHNSON
KATHERINE BOZOIAN
JAMES DULLEA



CROSS SECTION



SITE PLAN



Gary Bowen group.

DESIGN WEEKEND PARTICIPANTS:

Charles Almack
Wichita, Kansas

Mike Grandy
Kelly Kerns
Dan Miller
Bob Frye
Michael Flynn

Bob Berkebile
Patty, Berkebile
and Nelson, Associates
Kansas City, Missouri

John Wilhelm
Helen Maib
James O'Shea
Mark Szumowski
Emily Braht

Gary Bowen
Bahr, Vermeer and Haecker
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Katherine Bozoian
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and Viets
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Karl Amsler
Ken Graham

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Susan Treadway

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Mark Ingram
Jay Friesen
John Limp
Julia Thompson

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Abend & Singleton
Kansas City, Missouri

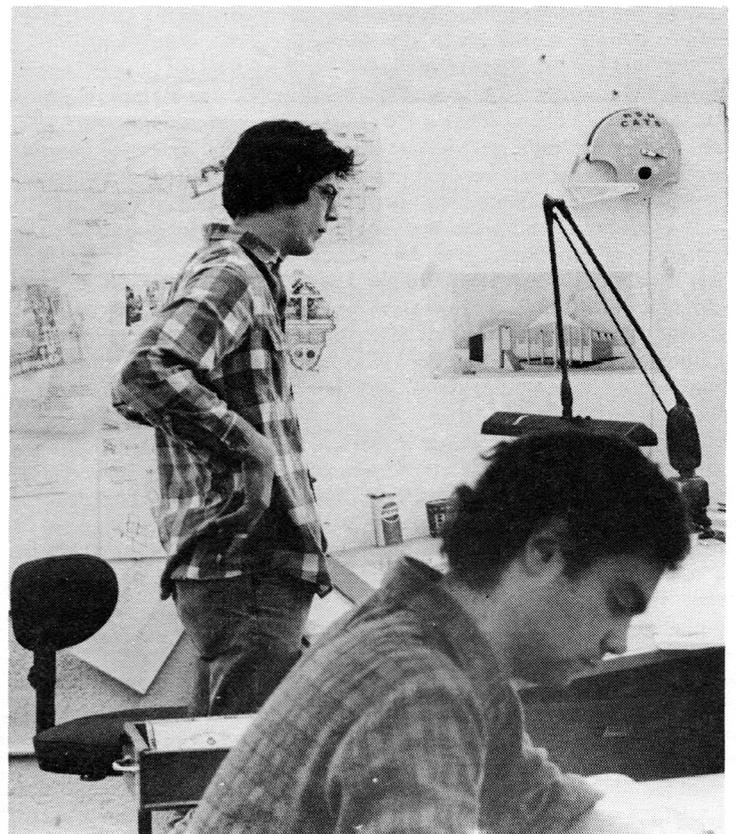
Marsha Hale
Corvin Alstot
Jon Ruder
Tim Connor
Grant Wencel

Kent Turner
Pearce Corporation
St. Louis, Missouri

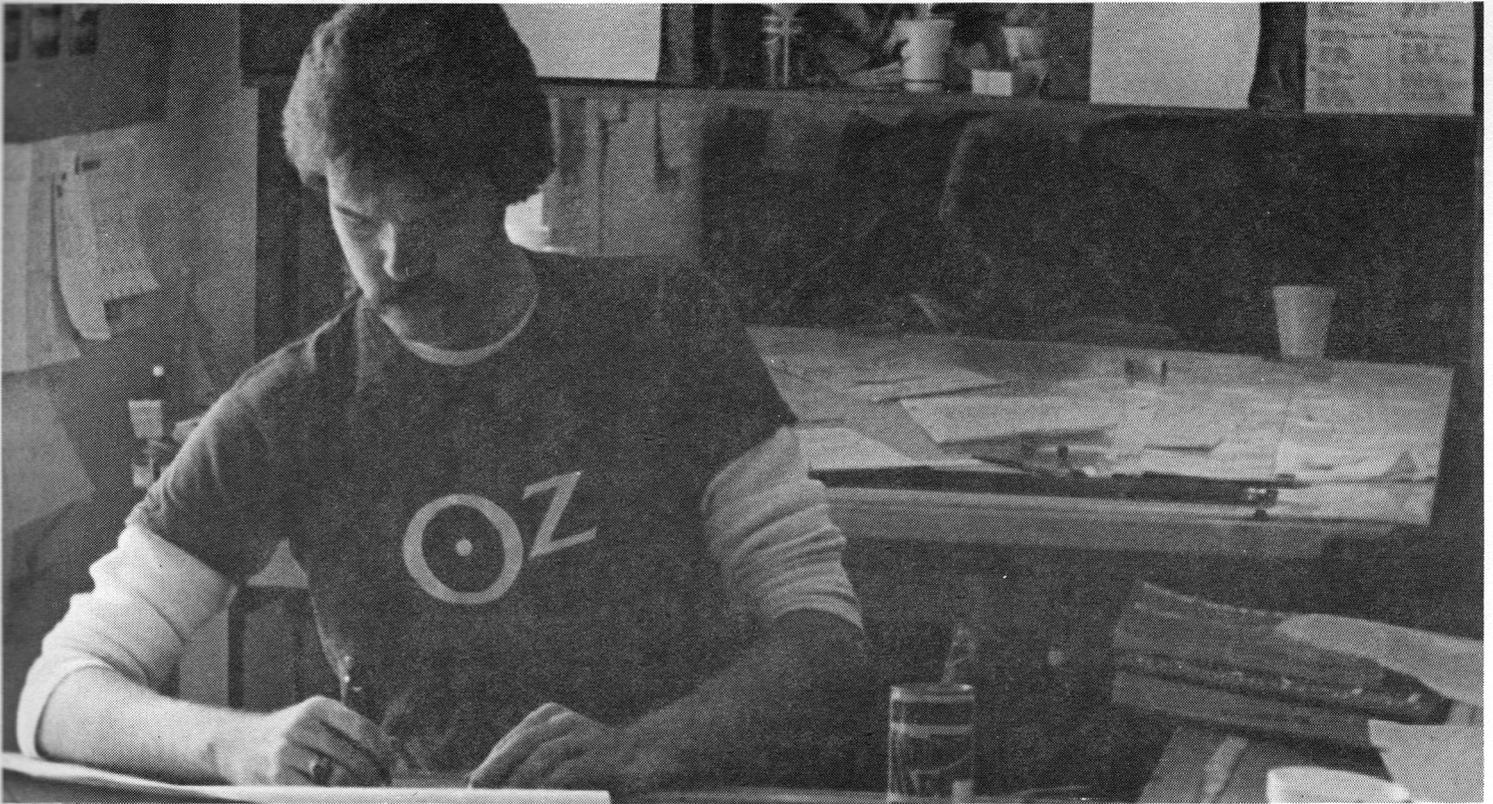
David Altenhofen
Chris Meinhardt
Matt Connolly
Bill Giles

Greg Young
Kansas State University

Stan Parks
Jim Locashio
Mike Kern
Paul Wilhelms
Steve Hefta



Todd Rhoades, Design 6, Steve Johnson, Design 2



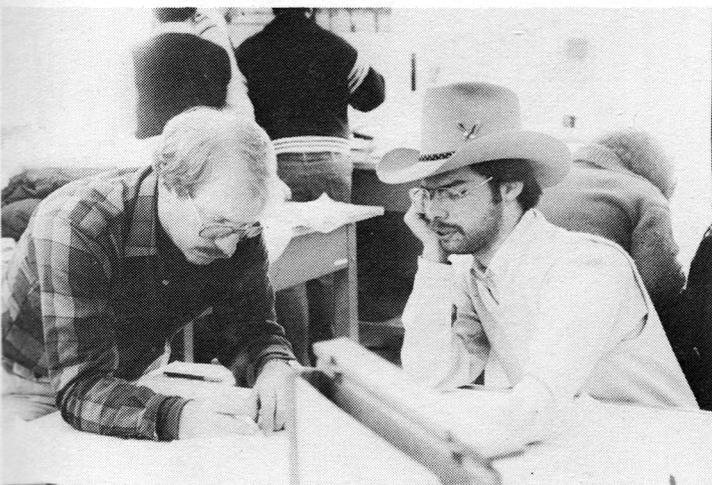
Stanley Parks, Design 6, Jim Locashio, Design Weekend



Jonathan Ruder, Design 2, Marsha Hale, Design 6, Grant Wencel, Design 4



James O'Shea, Design 2, Mark Szumowski, Design 2, John Wilhelm, Design 6



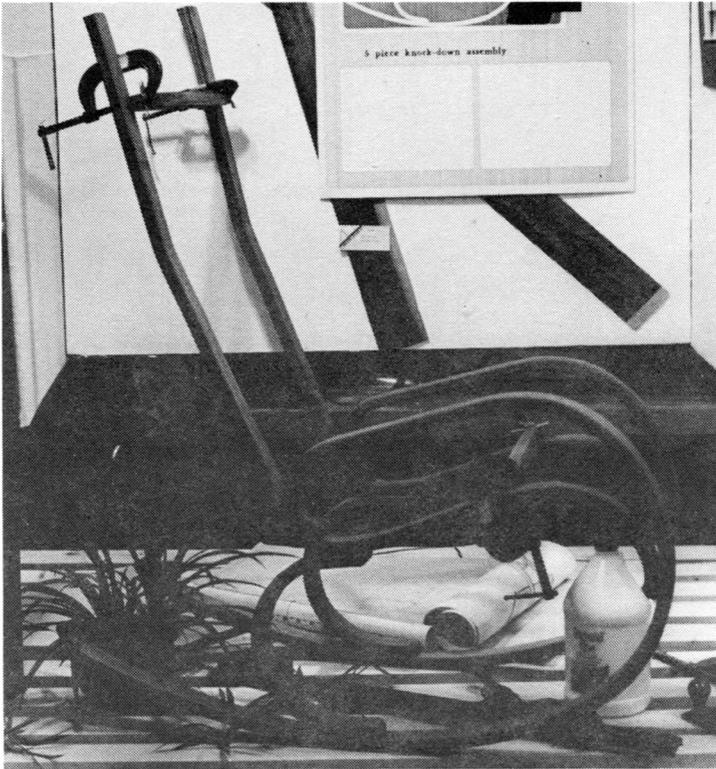
Sam Frye, team leader, Greg Stock, Design 6



Bob Berkebile, team leader, Helen Maib, Design 4

Open House (March 28, 29)

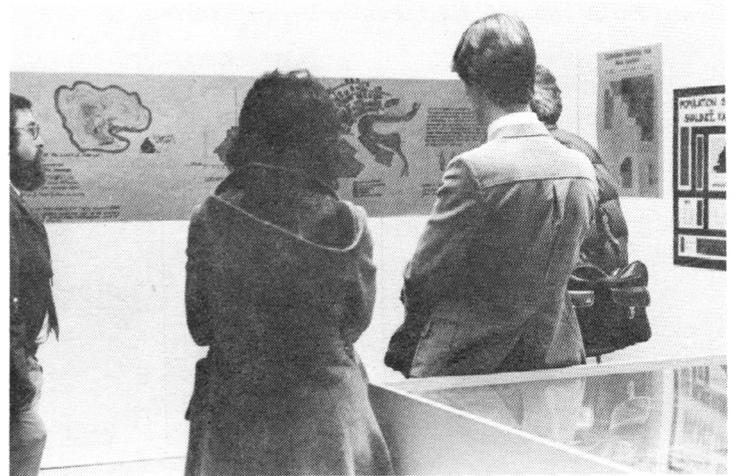
Open House is an all-university activity designed for the purpose of allowing the various colleges an opportunity to display student work from their respective departments.



Department of Interior Architecture.



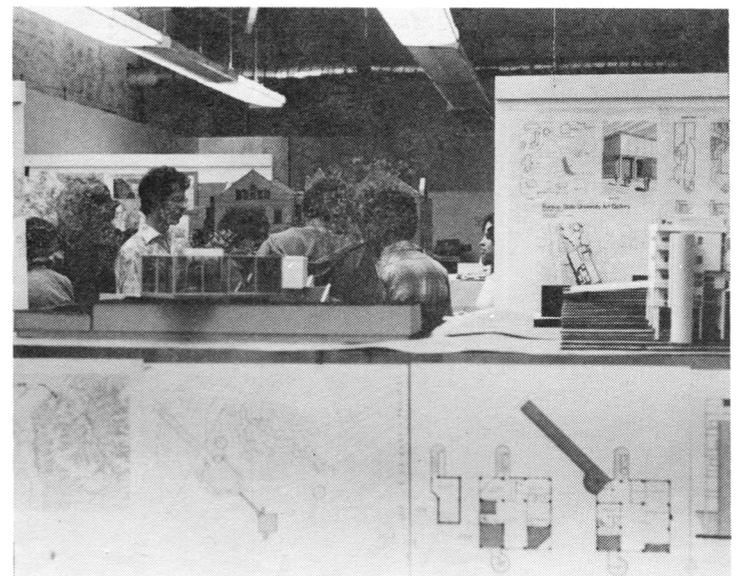
Department of Landscape Architecture.



Department of Regional and Community Planning.



Department of Pre-Design Professions.



Department of Architecture.