

The Calligraphy of the Plan

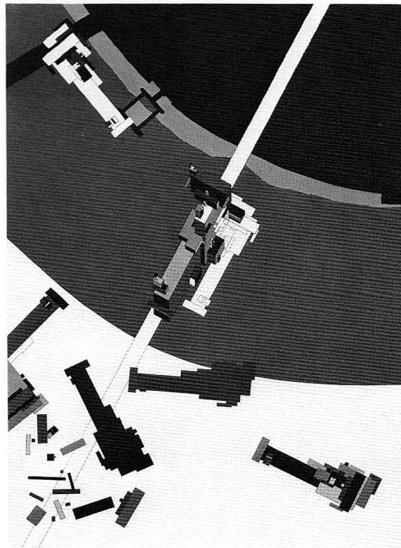
Zaha Hadid

The following is excerpted from a telephone interview with Zaha Hadid.

Work began with a shipwreck. It started with a premise that the modern projects have yet to begin. In the earlier times, the reference to the Russian avant garde was a very important beginning, not because of the Russian exuberance and dynamics, but because of the Russian's implications that architecture should be injected with a program. Suprematism was an art form, it was not an architecture — the implication being that it could become one.

One of the very early projects which we were given was an architectonic of Malevich. It was based on a post card of his architectonic superimposed on the Manhattan skyline. The intention was that it be free sited, given a scale and invaded by a program. The collision of certain forces would become clear as the transformation of the plan (in the modern sense) creates a new calligraphy. This transformation is to be seriously investigated, given that the plan is the ultimate terrain where certain activities take place. Indentations on the so-called new terrain could become the beginnings of a new architecture.

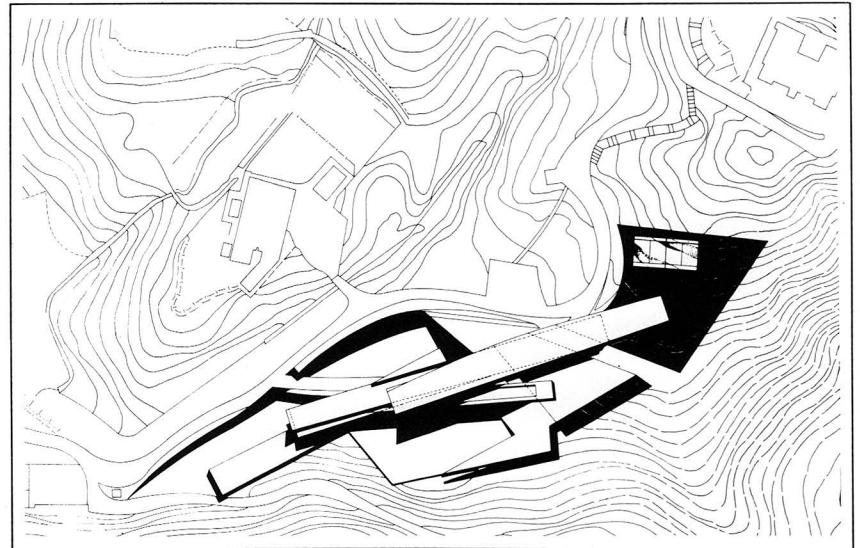
Interest in the Suprematist development of the plan as a program led to a series of my own projects which stood opposite a Malevich architectonic and ended more recently with an office building in Berlin. At the beginning undeliberate, and later on becoming



Horizontal tektonik

much more specific. The primary sense of this investigation, the dynamic of the architecture, stems from early Suprematist exercises, not because of its physical or formal implications but more importantly because of its programmatic implications. The modern project is yet to begin.

The one thing I would like to say is that the implication of this new calligraphy (this indentation of the new ideas on the plan and the observations of the city fabric) implied not only a change in the physical conditions of the building, but in what it actually has within it. It implied a new kind of space, one which was liberated from certain forces, which had imposed certain things on it. This liberation led to a new kind of plan, but also it led to the fact that we had to really represent this work in a new way. The



The Peak

calligraphy does not only apply to the way that the plan is organized, but to the way we perceived drawings which were the composite of all these ideas put together. It was like a text ... I mean, the drawings actually became a test for all this calligraphy.

I think that the observation of the modern — of the European — city was that what was left to be done in terms of a new urbanism was a series of fragments which were scattered on a cityscape. This new urbanism is unlike early modernism, where one would eradicate or wipe out that existing condition and replace it with a new one. At this moment in time new urbanism must recognize that the cultural richness of these conditions relies on the fact that architecture is a process and that it is layered historically. Therefore, what is

left to be dealt with is fragments.

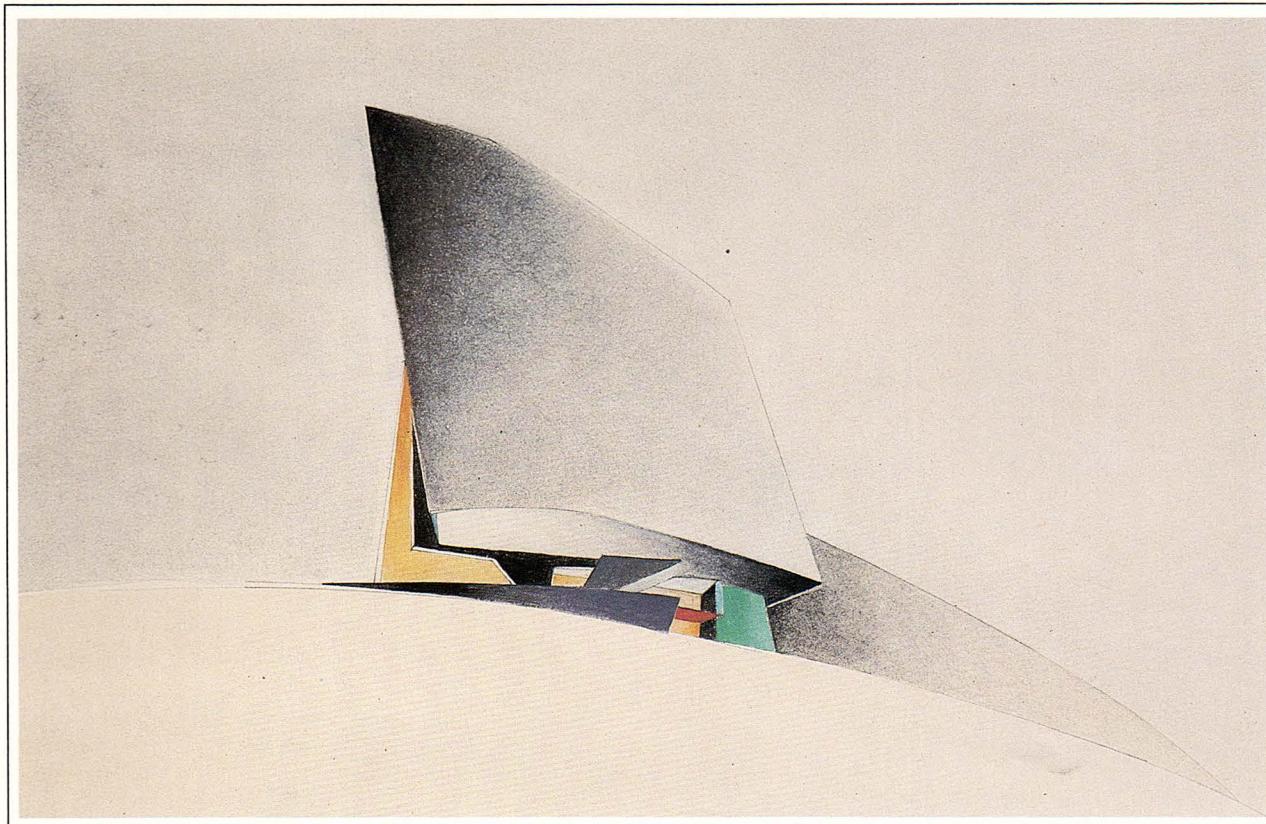
So as the plan began to move in the direction that originally looked more like an imposition on the city, a catastrophe, an explosion, it eventually led to this notion of a very specific condition: a controlled dynamic in architecture. This occurred in the Irish prime minister's house which was located in the landscape outside Dublin. This dynamic was injected into a very specific, walled, existing garden. Later the notion of house was converted into a place where certain interiors were very calm and others were much more violent.

I think it really became highly manifested when I did the Peak, because I think the Peak occurred at a very critical moment of my education. These dynamics became clear as the project

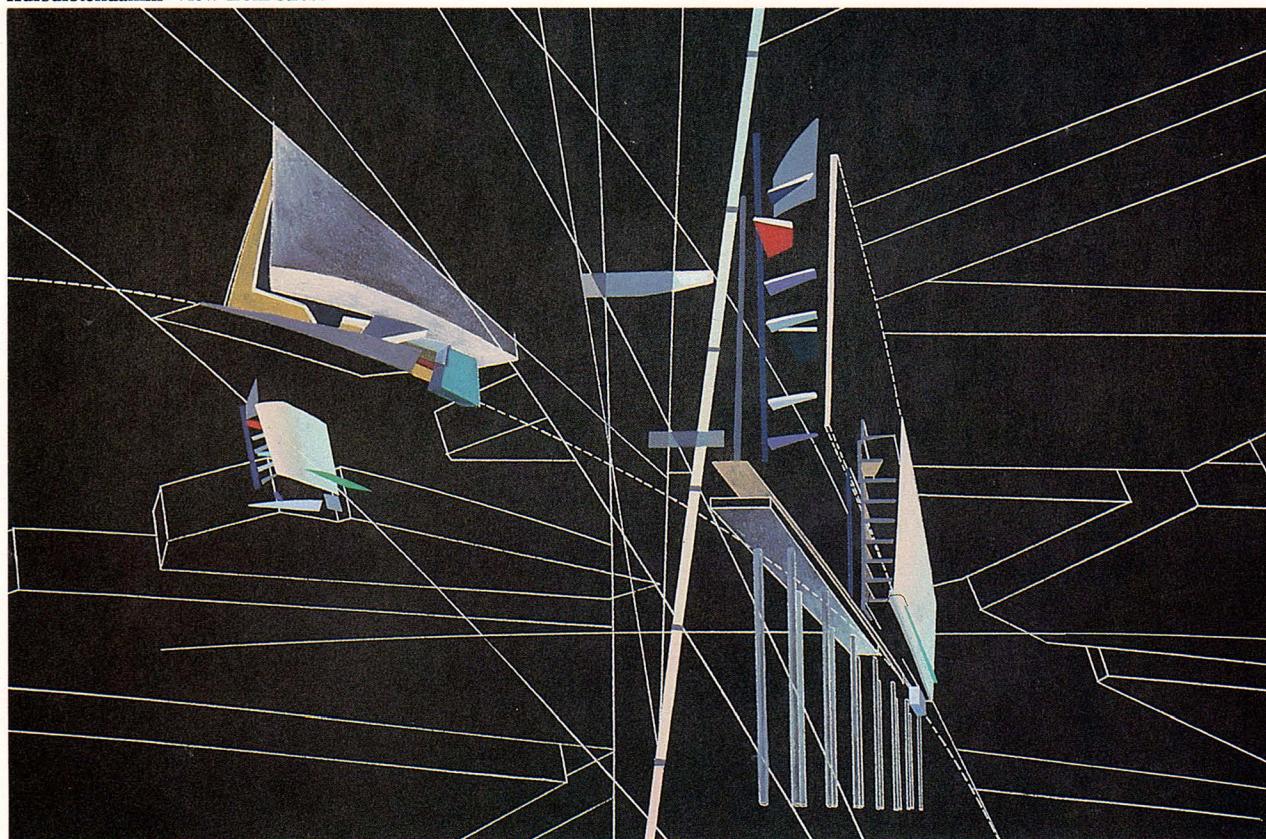
was much more linear and had this public injection. I think the implications are that there are specific areas, and perhaps, more importantly, flexible areas which don't have to be "programmed." I think if you program everything it becomes much more authoritarian and, hence, tends to lead itself to various tendencies which are not necessarily very exciting.

So, on the Peak, the interest was almost an attempt at developing a new plan with a linear zone. The focus was on certain areas, because the project was originally three different sites and had three different buildings. We amalgamated all the buildings into one and this has to be seen in a different way. The ultimate idea for the Peak is that calligraphy becomes the new geology. As you move the existing land away, you replace it by new architectural beams which are like plates — geological plates. These beams replace the old rock that has been taken away, but the indentation of the plan within this linear zone becomes very clear. As you go from the bottom, where this collision is much more cellular, to the open air at the top, the interiors, because of structure, become much more fluid. This implies that whether it is a public facility or a private one, the use of the space becomes totally liberated.

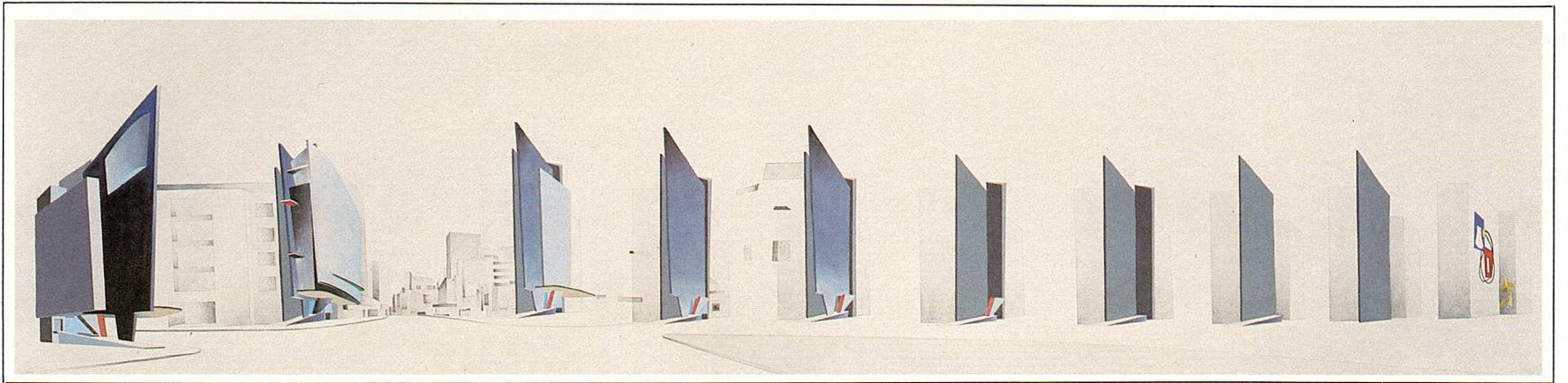
At the beginning, some people felt that this could not be built, because it was always drawn as if it was free from gravity. But the ideas for these drawings also had to do with the notion of liberation — a complete liberation from forces which, actually, do not break architectural boundaries. It was with this premise that this much more deliberate exercise (into the plan as a new calligraphy) really became a project on its own. I think it is clear in Malevich, and also in recent work (such as the office building in Berlin) that this new calligraphy, whether on a large urban scale or on a very small condensed scale, at the end, implies a new way of working and a new way of living.



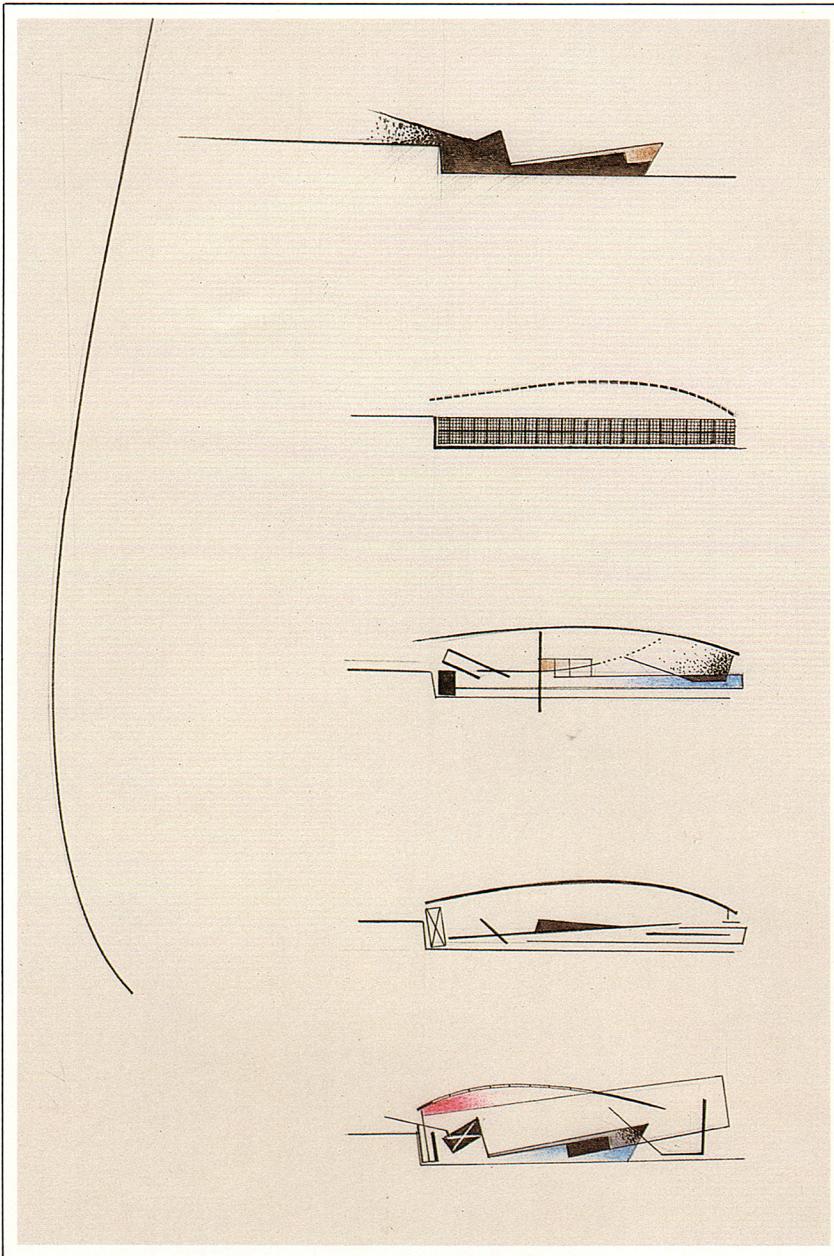
Kursurstendamm View from street



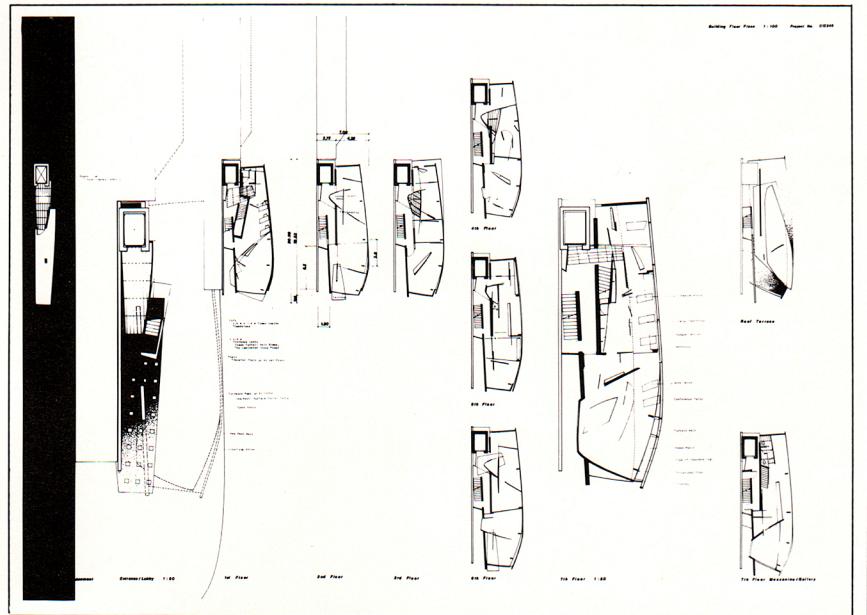
Sectional perspective



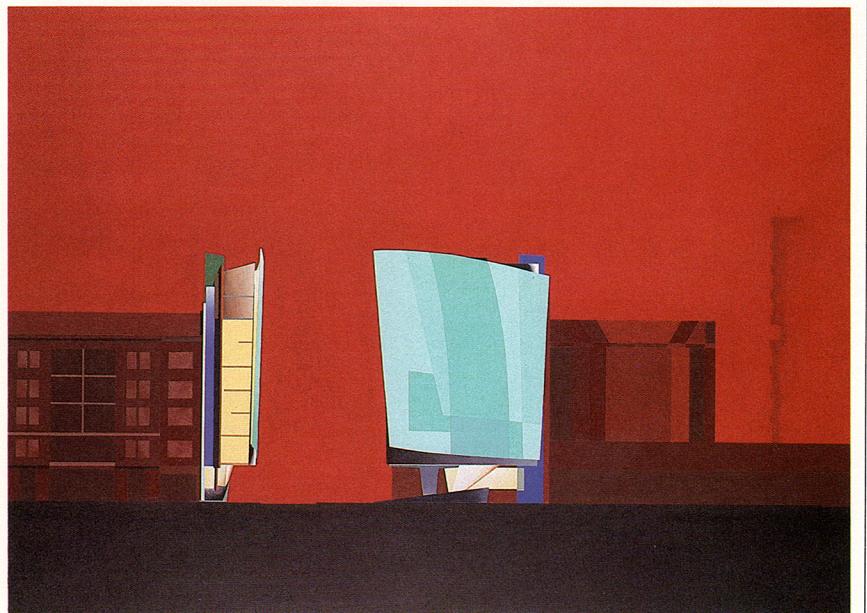
Sequence



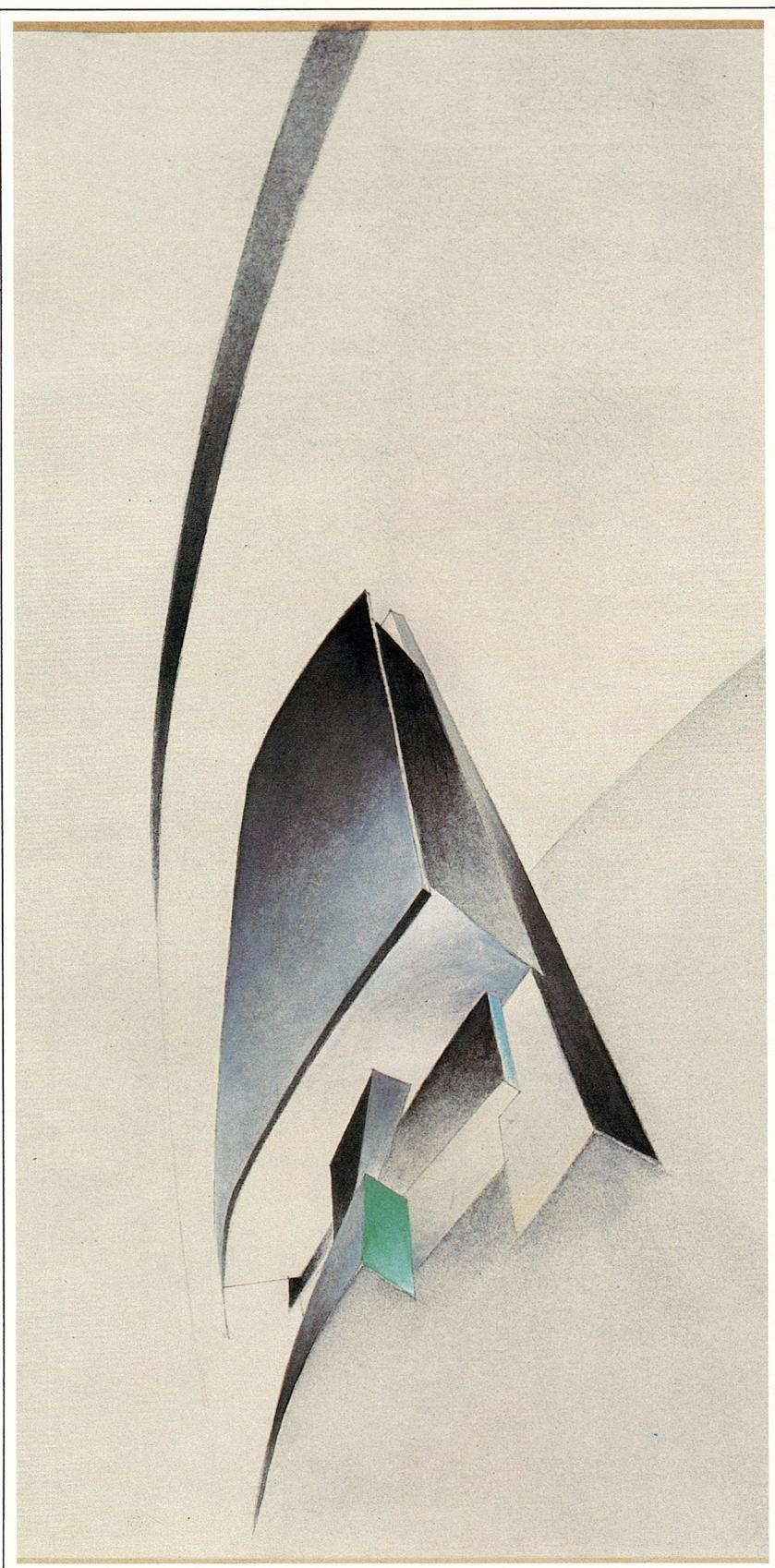
Preliminary plan study



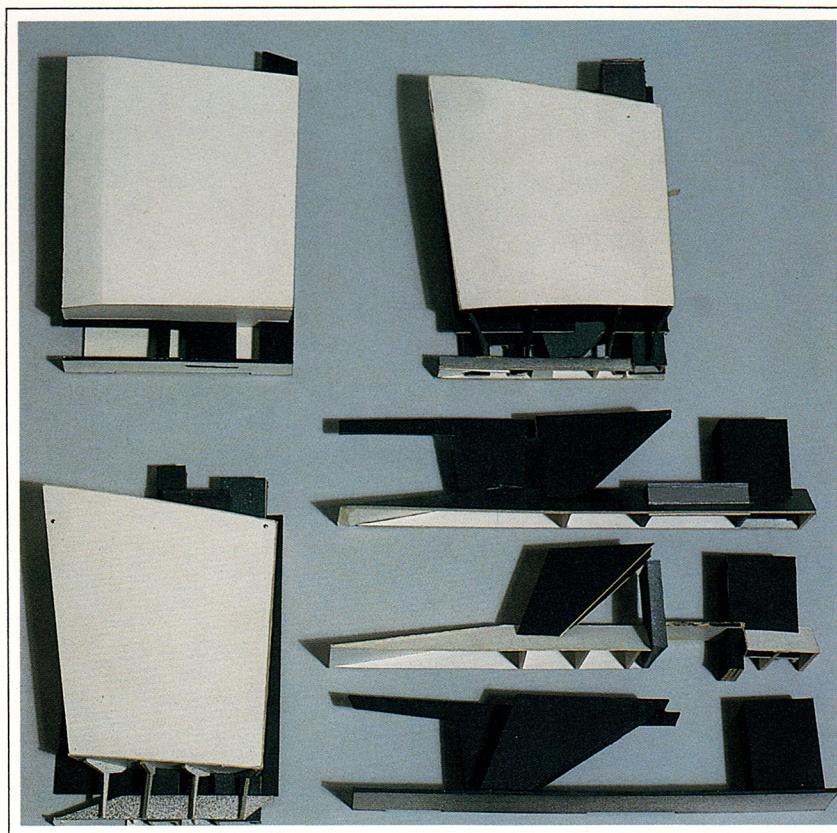
Plans



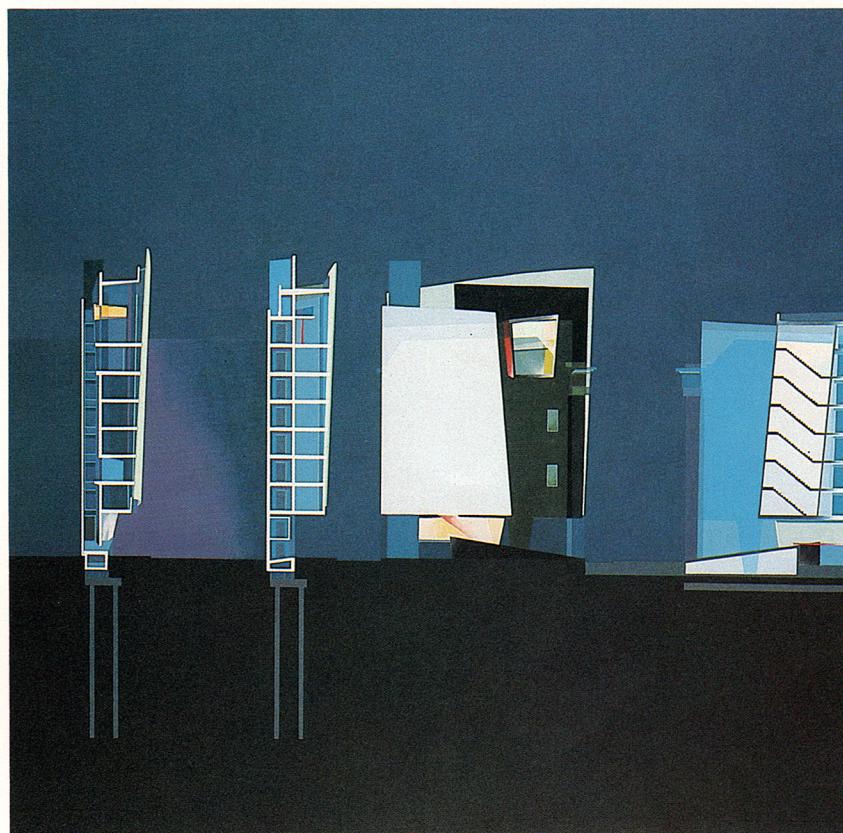
Elevations



Worm's eyeview



Model studies



Sections and firewall elevation