

Rapture

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The traditional grid pattern of downtown Topeka enforced stringent restrictions on this city-block project. These restrictions gave rise to the creative challenge of designing an exciting core within a structured block. The ant hill, with its hard, conforming outside shell and inner life, became the analogy that worked in this case.

While current architecture academicians profess that all life is born and nurtured on the street, our inner block identity as a nuclear pith for daily contact has fallen into radical disrepair. Albeit, the live alley is usually the starting point on which to build while the dead alley lacks even mechanical traffic to enjoy. This presentation attempts to not only bring a dead alley to life but also make it a major event.

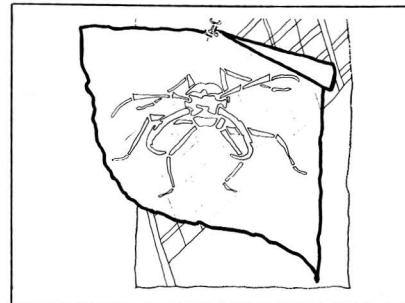
There is no greater intoxicant of one's prolific urges than the innate perversion in refuting a blind establishment. However, complexity in our built surroundings is not ejected out of a polemic whim against learned doctrines, but rather from knowledge that is dissolved in the body and re-used with renewed interest and vitality. Overlapping opposites, seeing something not yet seen or knowing of a view that is over the edge, can all work to enhance our senses. Traditional values, those that fit us comfortably, became much more

esteemed when applied in non-traditional methods. The congruence of backdrop and centerpiece buildings is what attracts the eye to its surroundings. Everyone wants pleasure. Everyone needs excitement.

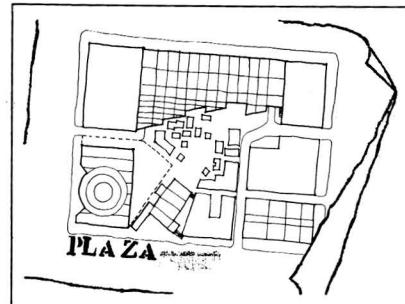
The hard, constant shell is simple in comparison to the complex interior. Entry points are few and select. Activity is intense inside and out. Energy is being spent in a variety of ways from work to play. Life is what is being carried on here. What better parallel to use than one so readily at hand, the common ant hill.

Whether in the highlands of the Rocky Mountains, the tropics of Bolivia or the desert of Sudan, one is sure to run into an ant species and its unique characteristics. Highly organized in assigning responsibilities, relentless in their pursuit of agreed upon goals capable of maneuvering objects 10 times their own body weight, and extremely social in nature, the ants are assumed to be the "supermen" of the insect realm — an assertion Nietzsche might even uphold.

From the dwellings of the ants, several architectonic relationships can be drawn. A hard exterior capable of withstanding Kansas weather must somehow be linked to an interior that is not only livable but enjoyable. Traffic flow should not be completely bound by an unmerciful right-angled system, but rather draw from the instinctive



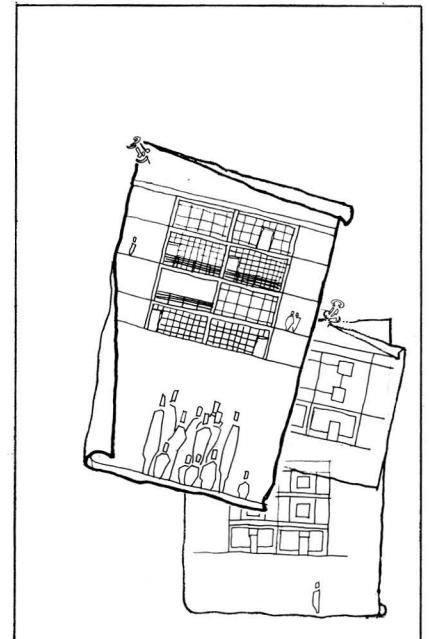
Sketch



Site plan

needs of the participants. Planes, masses and volumes can all be manipulated in a way that encourages people to interact. Attention focused toward one another will provide mutual understanding as a bare minimum.

The ant hill is realized in a variety of scales in the presentation. In order to prevent chaos in the downtown area, this particular block had to remain conservative and let itself be bound by the grid, streetline and local materials. This requirement is easily met but has been considered only skin deep. Once the public gains entry through narrow transition lanes, the interior of the block assumes a face unmatched anywhere in the city. Colors have changed from that

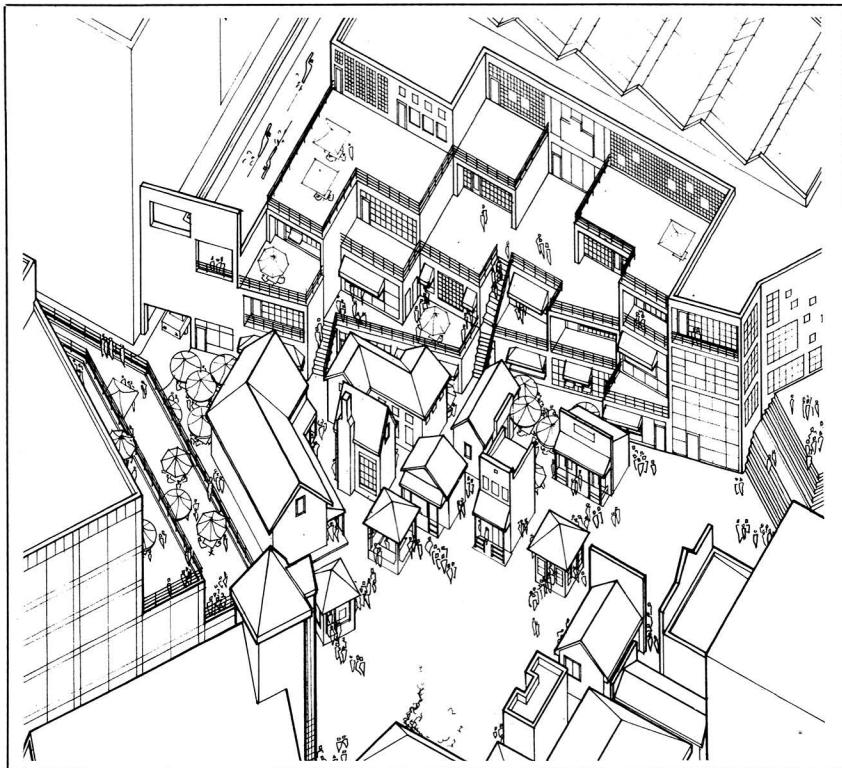


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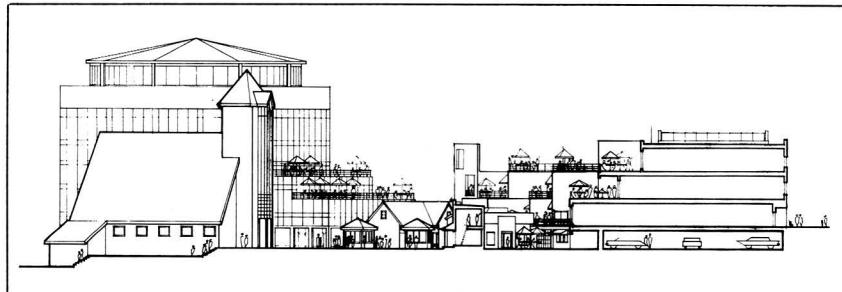
of local limestone or concrete to a variety of tinted glasses and brightly colored canvas awnings. Irregular angles comply with easy traffic flow through the spaces and an abundance of choices is offered to the users.

The Christian church on its historic piazza is also used as a public reference and has been augmented by respectful shops and pavilions. People can be seen shopping, dining, exercising, relaxing, delivering, viewing art and attending church. A seven-day urban space is something every major city should strive for in order to use its core city blocks most effectively and efficiently.

Downtown Topeka, Kan., or any



Axonometric



Sectional elevation

Midwestern capital city for that matter, has a duty to itself, its citizens and its state. A construct of what Kansas is to the world, and what its seat of government represents, is expressed in its pseudo-classical downtown buildings. City blocks are what comprise the downtown. Any influence to shape one of these blocks should concentrate energy toward reducing the numerical insignificance of the average cog, you and me.

The notion of an urban city block/ant hill is further unfolded to be the ant hill/cell.

various small compartments forming a part of the whole
 3. small unit within a larger organization
 4. structure containing nuclear material and enclosed by a membrane
 5. the structural unit of plant and animal life.

The cell thereby becomes the building block from which to construct an ant hill.

Working with analogies such as the ant hill and the cell is simply a desperate attempt to materialize man's evolutionary state as it indeed evolves.

cell (sel), n. 1. a small room as in a convent or prison. 2. any of

