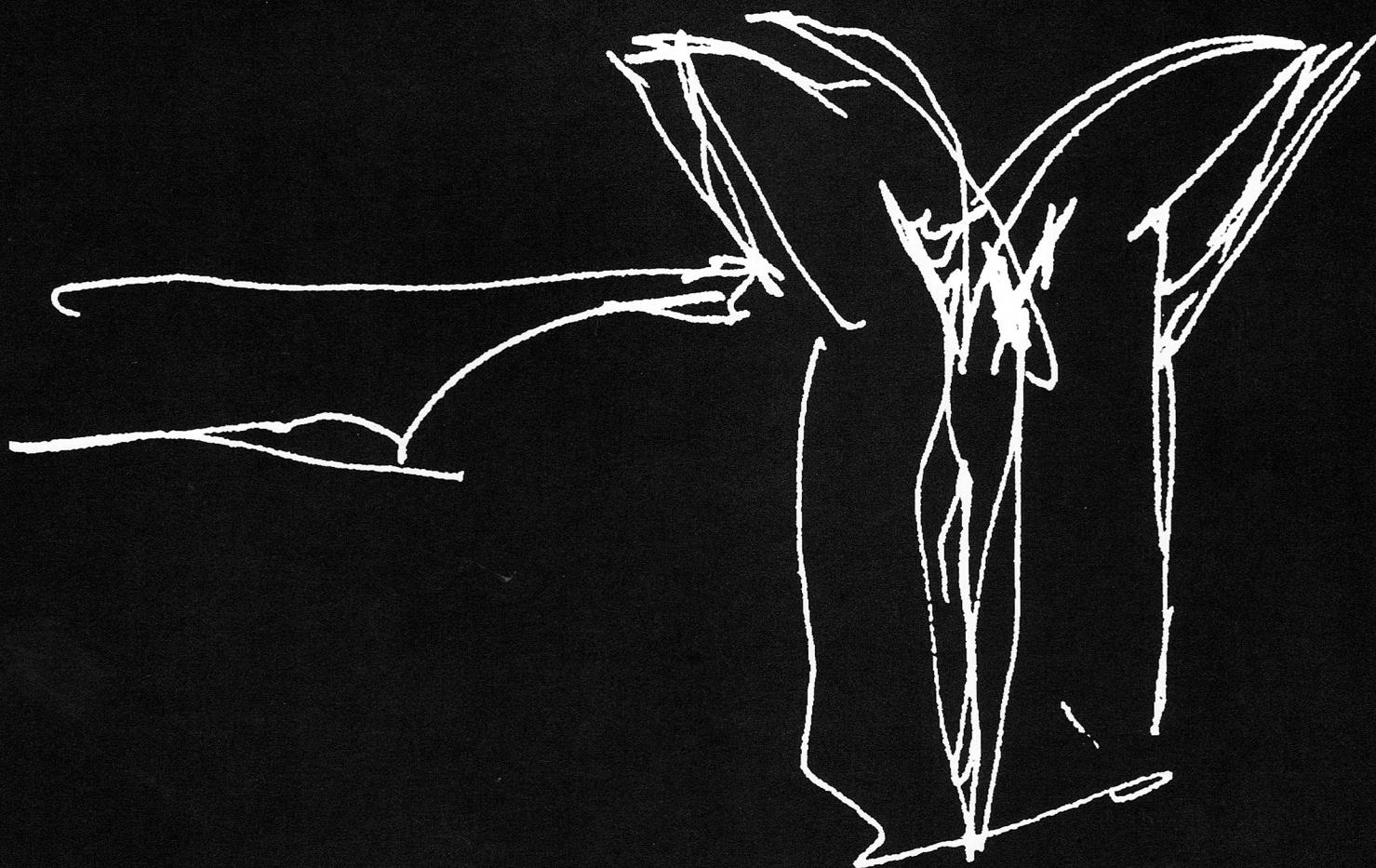
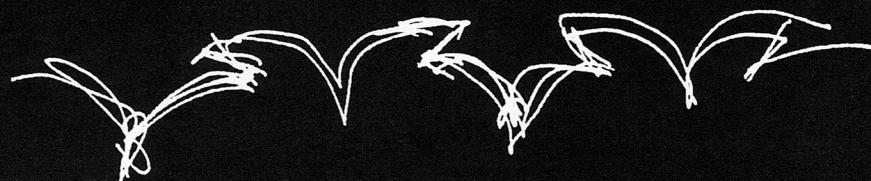


Royal Theater: Copenhagen

Sverre Fehn



In the beginning the cave and the earth itself were the dimensions of the cave. The floor had its own thickness of earth and the dimension of the walls of the cave stopped at the beginning of the sea.

In reality there was no defined dimension when your comprehension of the world carried infinity within it. The only ultimate was the killed animal outside the cavemouth, the only thing that kept you firmly in the universe. And that animal corpse was resurrected on the walls of the cave. An abode was sought in the nature of animal.

I have no idea how many years went by before “the autonomous” dimension was born in front of the cavemouth...the stone, hacked in one rectangular volume. Height. Length. Width. How incomprehensible the work of creation in a limited malleable quantity must have been.

The greatest poetic manifestation in limited form. The first security, the first written sign in the landscape resting secretively in the hewn stone.

The story of you and I again standing on the plain. Time was given a dimension.

I remember a visit to Aldo van Eyck. I was living in his house and in the evening we were looking at photographs of a journey he had made in Peru. He kept circling round the theme of the stones in the ancient Peruvian walls. Why those rounded shapes, that precise masonry with its projecting joints, this love of stone in this vast desolate landscape...

The child's constructive meeting with the earth is when it makes its first mudcake with its hands. The easily handled earth is mixed with water and takes its form in a series of units. When these dry the firm shapes and the child's fingerprints are left on the grey surface. The child does not know that at that moment they have laid the beginnings

of the element which has created great mural architecture...the brick. To wall his house with brick is to have spoken to Moses daily.

The great old brickworks were magnificent buildings consisting of a series of furnaces built like large cruciform vaulted constructions in brick. Above these were light wooden constructions with shelves on which the bricks were dried and stored. These were vast extended buildings, their horizontality contrasting with their slim high chimneys.

On my first stay with Jørn Utzon, the Danish architect, we stopped to visit these brickworks along Strandveien near Helsingør. It was the amazing light falling through the open wooden constructions that was so fascinating, as well as the heavy “mysterious” furnaces being fed with fine sawdust to keep an even temperature in the kilns full of bricks.

How do you express your creative temperament in brick? What is your vocabulary?

Naturally the choice of material quality and color of the actual brick...a calm evenly fired one or one with an uneven, nervous surface?

But it is the joint, the “space between” which is your weapon.

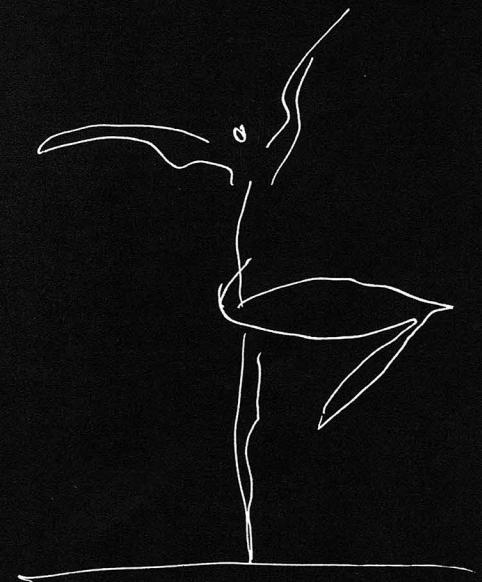
Is the mortar to lie flush with the sides of the brick? No relief? Or with deep joints which catch the world of shadows of the light? Or do you tell the joint to spill out in a convex form where the surface of the bricks is framed? Whether you build your wall with dry joints (narrow joints) or open them up so joint and brick almost play the same part? I have described all this world. Its theme within a few centimeters, and the mortar's quality lying in the composition of the grains of sand. Sigurd Lewerentz, the Swedish architect, built his church in a birch grove in one of the suburbs of

Stockholm. The white spotted birch trunks gave impulse to the architecture of the walls. The bricks of the high walls were given large coarse joints in which the mortar took possession of the precise form of the brick. And in this bold unbroken play between brick and mortar, the wall found its dialogue with the trunks of the trees. And passers-by stop and say: “What an amazingly lovely birch wood. I never noticed it until the church was built.”

Is the brick the architect's letter of the alphabet?...

Imagine one of the great novels in the history of architecture...Rome. It is handwritten with a neat little brick (10x5x22 cm).

I see few bricks in Rome, for they are visible only in the naked ruins. The route into the story has the same beauty as the route to completion. When the last course is laid, Rome will mask its constructive reality behind the glossy facades...the make-up is put on. And total theater is put on stage.



The design of the foyer that provides a link between all the theaters emerged from listening to the old buildings... I believe Pierre Boulez will recognize motifs from St. Mark's Church in Venice, where Palestrina created his orchestral works by placing his musicians on the bridges between the domes so that the sound would fill the room from many directions... I believe Danish composer Per Norgard will find a home for his compositions here, or Norwegian Arne Nordeim... and the spacious wooden floor could provide a setting for Grotovsky's productions of medieval drama—in fact for the entire modern movement, which really came to a halt because of a lack of spatial challenge.

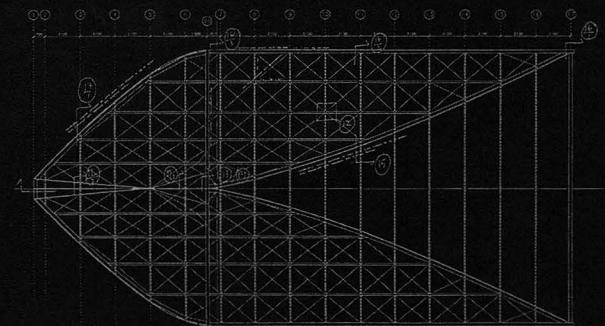
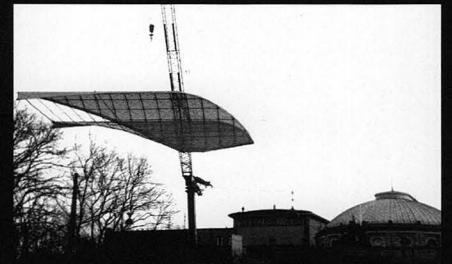
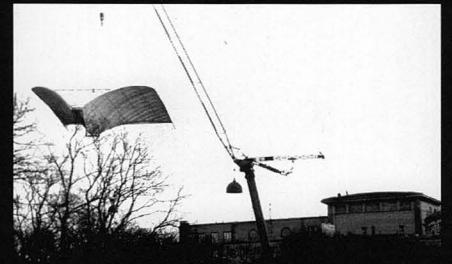
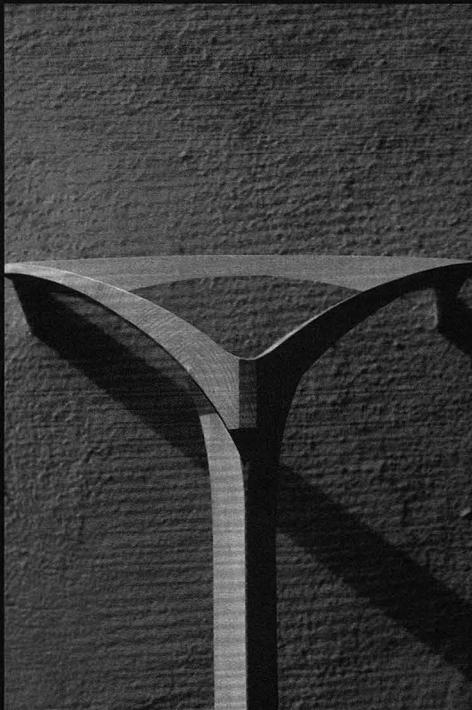
Kongens Nytorv is a fantastic geographical location in Copenhagen. On one side is the outward journey, represented by the great liners in the dock, and on the other side the inward journey, to the pulsating life of the city.

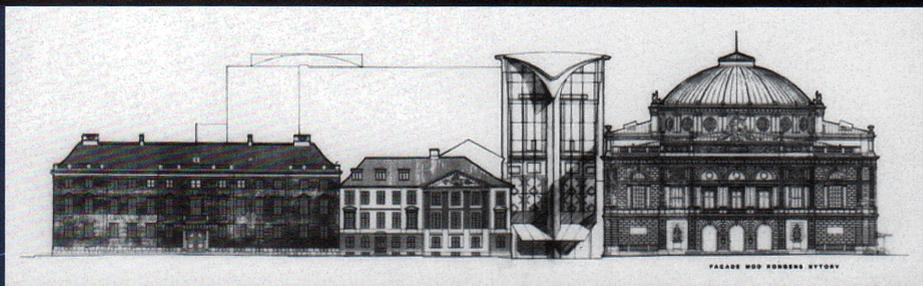
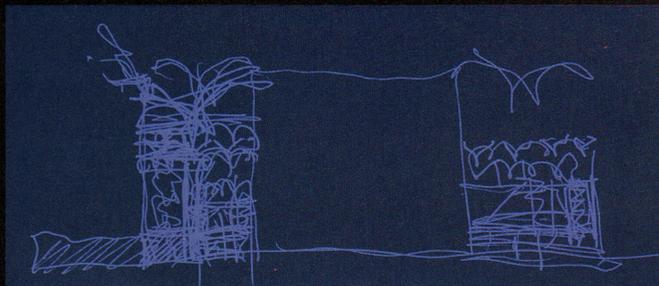
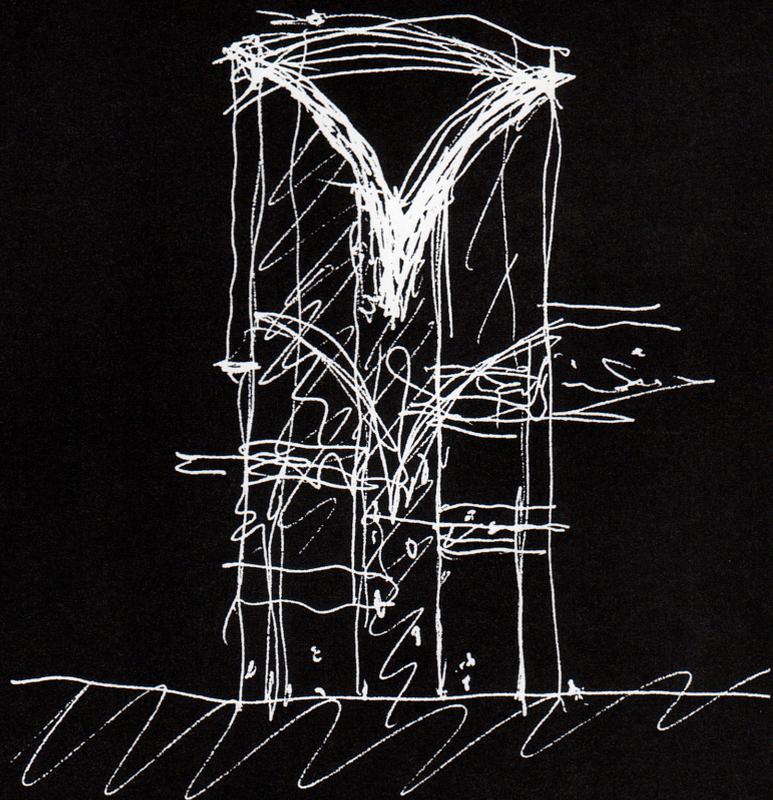
The new theater will be built between Peder Skrams gate and Tordenskiolds gate, fitting fairly anonymously into the block in the shadow of the building commonly known as Staerekassen (The Starling Box). The important point about this project is that the entire new complex, and all five theaters, must be able to communicate with the great square, and also—since we now have the opportunity—with the dockside.

Due to the monumental nature of Staerekassen, the entrance will be of a size and design that make it seem unbelievably airy under its white shell structure, in contrast with the more enclosed facades that surround it. It will float like a kind of bird's wing over some of the old buildings.

Inside the foyer, Staerekassen lies like an illuminated jewel, providing the scale for the large, airy foyer behind.

A theater is an enclosed room where you sit still in your numbered seat for several





hours, and it is therefore delightful to be able to emerge into a large, open space.

In this space you become part of the real theater of life, and movement is created by stairs and bridges linking the various levels.

The foyer has sufficient capacity to function as a lively venue for various types of cultural activity.

The bridges, for example, will be the actors' link between the old dressing rooms and the new theaters. The actors will therefore also have the possibility of participating in the busy life of the foyer.

We have chosen to locate the large restaurant at the top of the building, with views across the familiar domes and towers of Copenhagen's beautiful skyline. It provides a perspective very different from the floor of the foyer and the urban situation beyond.

When you emerge from the theater, you will step into an atmosphere which hopefully provides a lively contrast with the world of illusion you have just left.

With this project, Kongens Nytorv will gain a building which opens up and wishes you welcome. It will also be a poetic event—a supplement to the diversity of architectural expression that already exists in the square.

