



Peas and Carrots

Tod Williams and Billie Tsien

The need for shelter is as essential as the need for food.

As architects we are committed to provide, and then transcend, the essential need for shelter; and we believe it is equally essential that we do so with thought, compassion and love.

Architecture is the *search* for an answer, a search which can only be culminated with the work itself. The search does not emerge in a clear or defined form, and so thoughts gradually become ideas which in turn must be carefully nurtured in order for us to transform them into form and, through the habitation of the form, into experience.

When we are students at the beginning of our architectural journey, the need for clarity is most often the way we can break free from the heated and muddled confusion of adolescence. Feelings and great waves of knowledge arrive undiluted. A polemical stance is often taken to avoid being overwhelmed.

Later, when we have experienced layers of life, we realize that our position can become modulated and less polemical. But having modulated our position does not mean we have compromised our integrity. To use a metaphor, the food on our plate, (which we so carefully separated when we were young), may now be combined with other ingredients to deliver extraordinary tastes and possibilities. With experience, the meals we create may be multi-layered, addressing many differ-

ent palates. Our ideas about, and our feelings for, food have changed. With maturity our integrity necessarily assumes a different form from when we were young. And as we mature, a sense of self confidence allows us to become more inclusive and at the same time, more discerning. It is even possible for us to realize the value of hunger, or the necessity to eat ordinary food in order to appreciate the thoughtfully prepared meal.

All about us, we experience cities built of an architecture without hope. All too many of those who have taken a strong stance have had their ideals diluted or find them unrealized. Why are we taught to believe that architecture can be quantified, or that there should be rules or ideas or theoretical positions to which we must aspire? These classifications are more often necessary when we are students. We separate food on our plate to understand its undiluted taste, to visualize it and to know it well. Architecture, like food, is something we encounter several times each day of our lives. And like food, most of those encounters are not memorable. But some of them are, and more of them should be. In order to cook well, we must know the ingredients; we must develop our sense of intuition through experience and experimentation; we must anticipate the blending of taste and we must be capable of tasting the results. Yet these efforts will not necessarily create special meals, meals suited to the occasion, to those served, to the place, the season and the feelings and memories we wish to evoke.

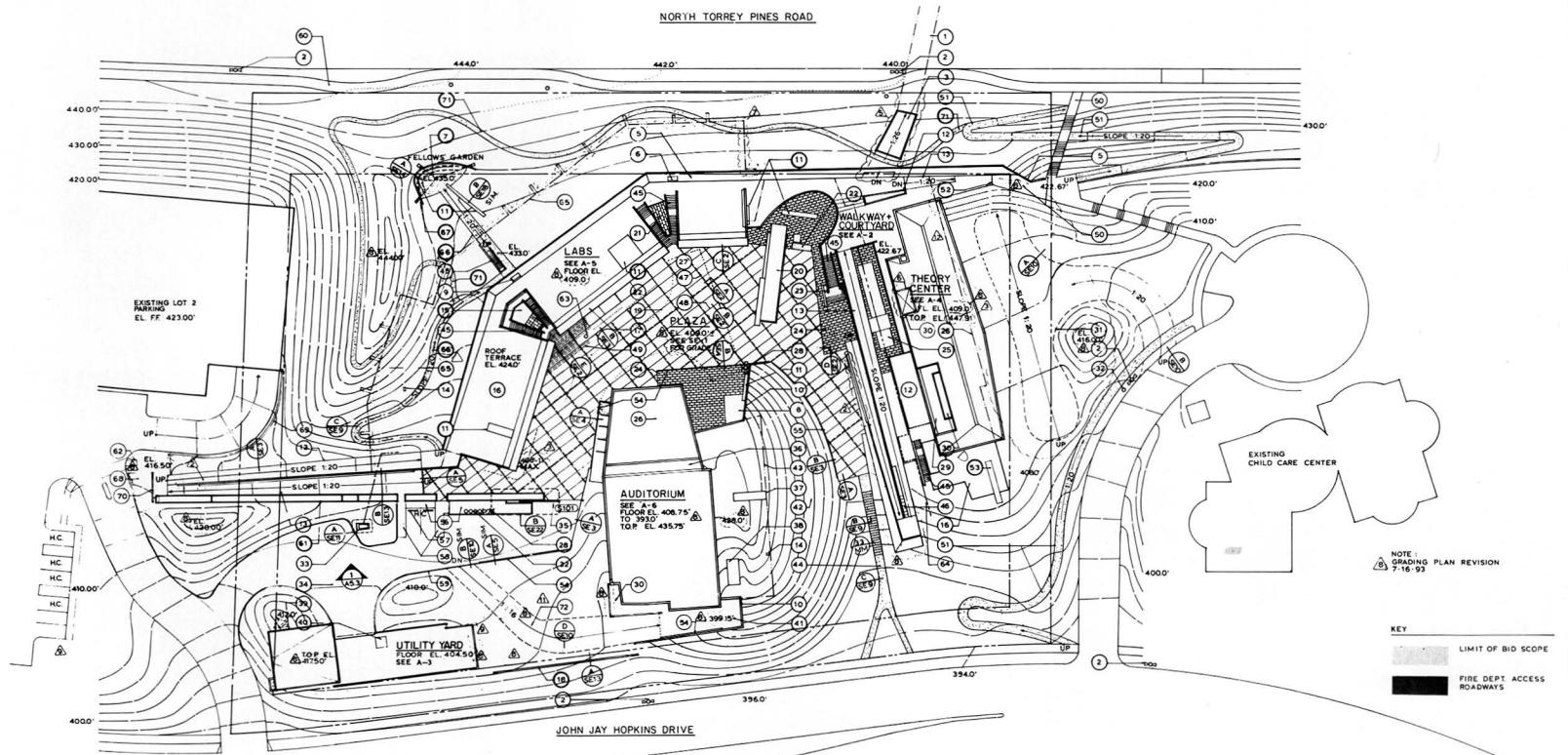
So in our work today, it is as if we are cooks who have known good and bad food and are thoughtfully preparing meals for others. We are not conceptual artists formulating ideas about food. And our "meals" produce real and tangible results in the form of habitable structures. We are not preparing meals where the presentation or the timing or the cost or the quantity is the driving force, even as we recognize the value of such concerns. We are attempting to prepare food which is nourishing, which satisfies our essential needs and which we know tastes good. It is food which is created by us for an audience we care for and to whom we are sensitive. On occasion, because our lives are centered around this activity, we discover something which we feel is new or perhaps *is* new because of the circumstances. We want to make the most of what we have been given and what we can find. And because we are experimenting, we sometimes make mistakes. In time we accumulate experience; we "cook" from our hearts and not our heads and our capabilities and knowledge increase. Our understanding of what architecture might mean to individuals and to society as a whole continues to grow and evolve.

In a recent symposium, Billie and Thom Mayne gave presentations of their work. In the discussions which followed, Thom asserted his belief that architecture requires a strategy, a central idea upon which the architect builds and develops the work. Billie's presentation of our work outlined a different way of

proceeding, one much more tentative, in which the idea emerges through the process of making the work. It is a process which brings to the work our own life's history including ideas, feelings, preconceptions and uncertainty. This mixture has added to it the diagrams of program, characteristics of the site, research into local building techniques and issues of cost and schedule. When these many ingredients combine, the potential for an unexpected and pertinent result is vastly enhanced.

Thom was taken aback by Billie's assertion that in our approach to the work we do not begin by strategizing our position and that we do not begin with a "big idea." It is true, our way of working may induce more anxiety because we proceed with less certainty. Perhaps, as another friend suggests, our approach to work is more one of tactic...than strategy. That is, it is more local than global in nature; it is a response to a particular situation. We do not feel the work should be developed within the framework of an idea, but we do not feel the "idea" should exist independently of the specifics of a project, nor do we feel the need for the idea to be momentous: the value of the work and idea will emerge from the work itself. In proceeding, we move forward by adjustments to the particulars of a situation.

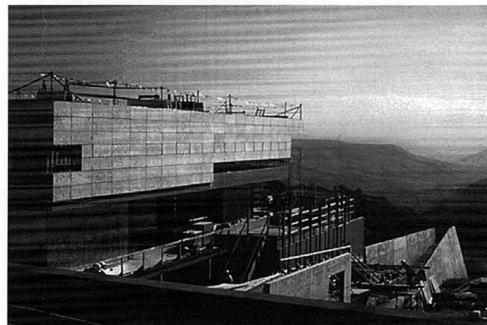
Actually, Thom's feeling of anxiety is exactly our own feeling when we start a project. We wish we had the answers but we realize we do not.



Site Plan: The Neurosciences Institute, La Jolla, California



(Courtesy David Van Handel)



(Courtesy David Van Handel)



Plaza View Looking towards the Theory Center (Courtesy Bill Timmerman)

Certain ingredients which led to decisions at the Neurosciences Institute:

The thought of setting the building into the ground came by visiting the site. The far view of *Los Penasquitos*, a state park, was remarkable. The immediate surroundings, a scientific research “park,” were banal.

Dr. Edelman described his desire for a “scientific monastery” and so we took the program given for a single building, separated it into several structures, and turned them inward in an attempt to create an enriched sense of place that felt apart from the rest of the site. We were thinking about a modern cloister.

The scientific auditorium, which was also made to hold chamber music concerts, was not part of the initial program but was an “intention.” By conceptualizing this building as a separate element, we enabled it to develop at its own pace and, by placing it in the center of the courtyard, attempted to underscore its importance as the social and physical core of the project and, as well, to insure its inevitability.

The decision to divide the program into several structures required us to understand and develop the ways in which the user would move through and between the buildings. We tried to understand how the buildings were connected by

physical movement and also by thought, i.e., strolling meditatively, shortcuts when you’re late, pathways to see people. What do you see as you move from the dining room to the laboratory? Where do you stop to sit? What do you hear? What do you want to feel? It was only after these experiential sequences were developed and understood that the elevations and imagery evolved. This is not a project about considered static forms, it is a project about considered dynamic states, which can only be fully understood through the first hand experience of being there.

Construction methods (cast-in-place concrete) emerged from a growing under-

standing of the material and its history (architectural as well as local construction). A number of ideas were developed as the building was constructed and as we better understood the material through the abilities and limitations of the contractor.

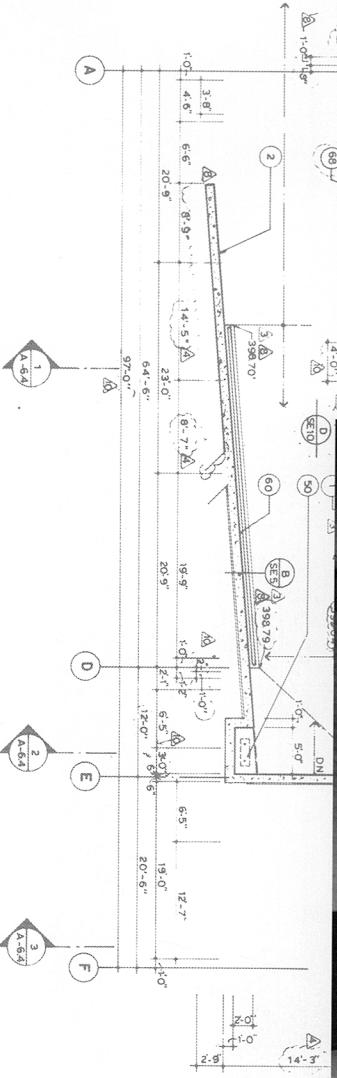
An idea of “outreach” developed as Scripps interpreted the project as a center for the extension of the existing campus. This led us to introduce paths to and through the site, strengthening the pedestrian experience as an intrinsic part of the program and enabling the idea of the modern cloister to be fully realized.

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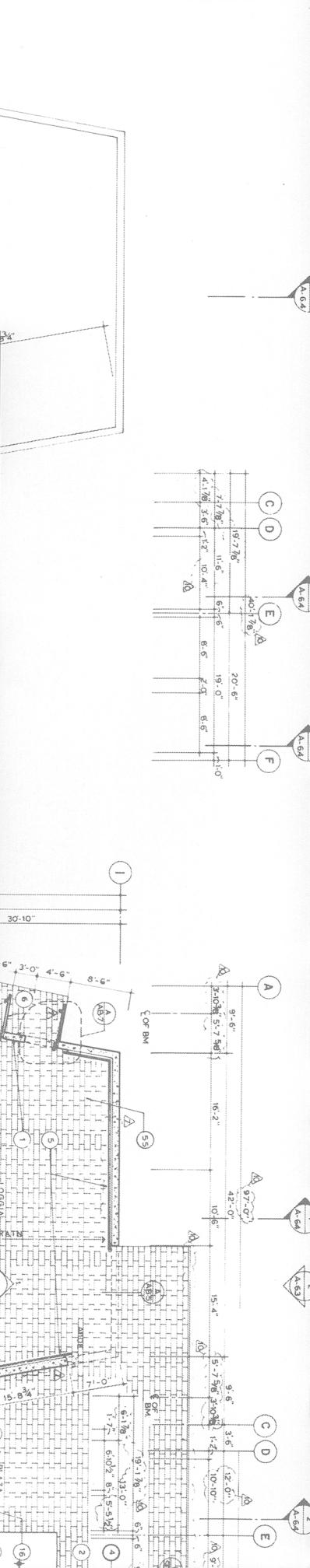
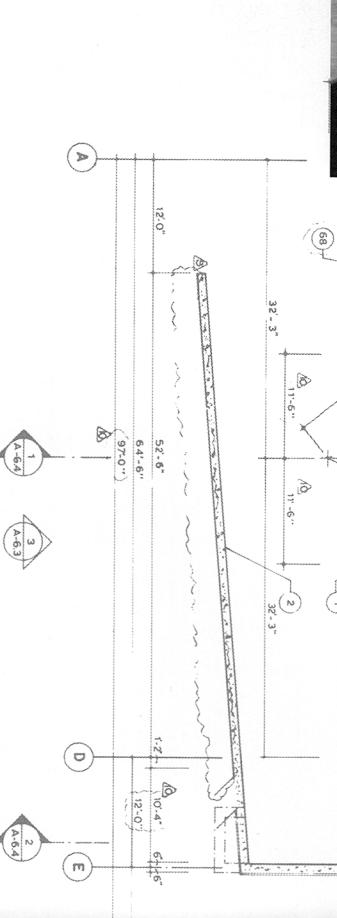
Page 4. Photo courtesy Bill Timmerman.

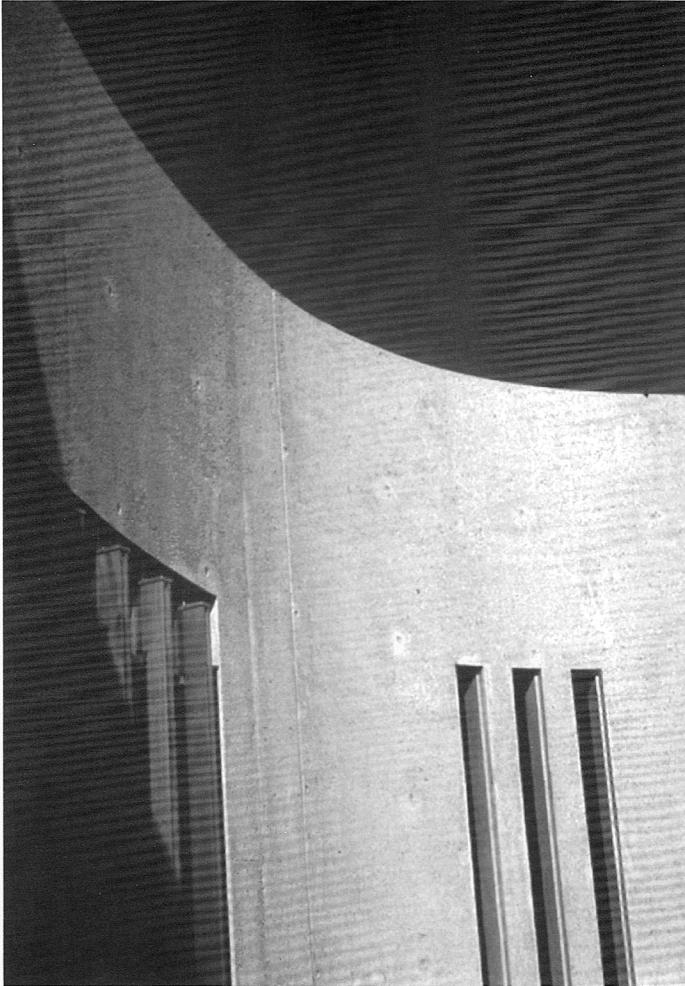
Page 8. Photo courtesy Owen McGoldrick.

1 PLAN - LOWER LEVEL

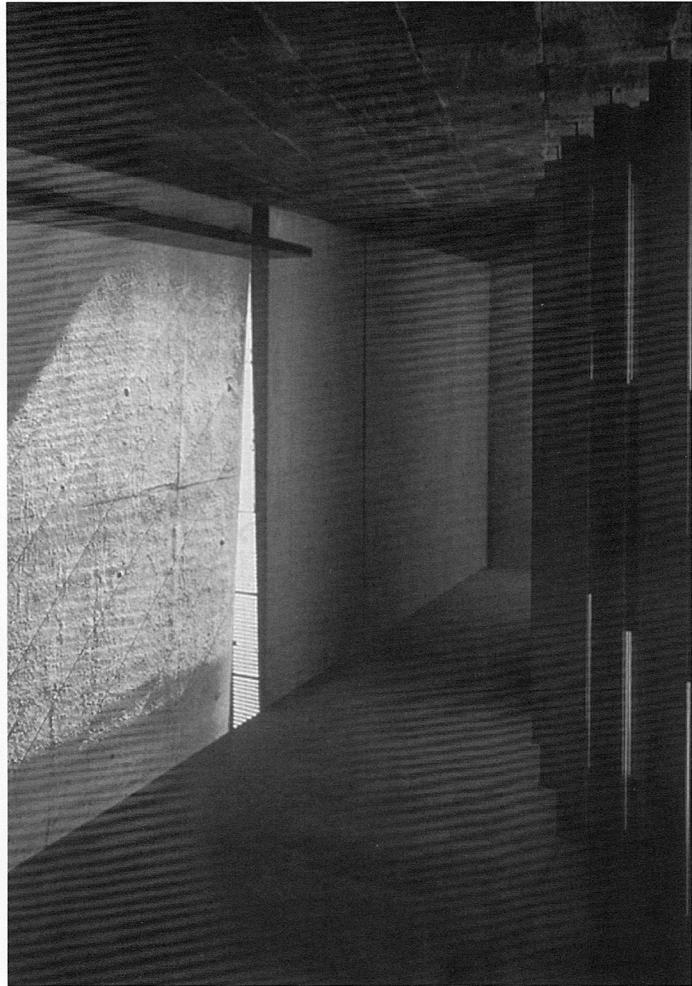


2 PLAN - PLAZA LEVEL





(Courtesy Michael Moran)



(Courtesy Michael Moran)