



Costa Rica



Bruno Stagno

An Architect in the Tropics

Essays by **Alexander Tzonis** **Liane Lefaivre** **Ken Yeang**



Bruno Stagno Architect and Associates was established in 1978 and functions as a small office run by a single architect assisted by experienced draftsmen. The size of the office rarely exceeds eight. 1999 marked a new phase in the practice as Stagno's son, architect Pietro joined the firm.

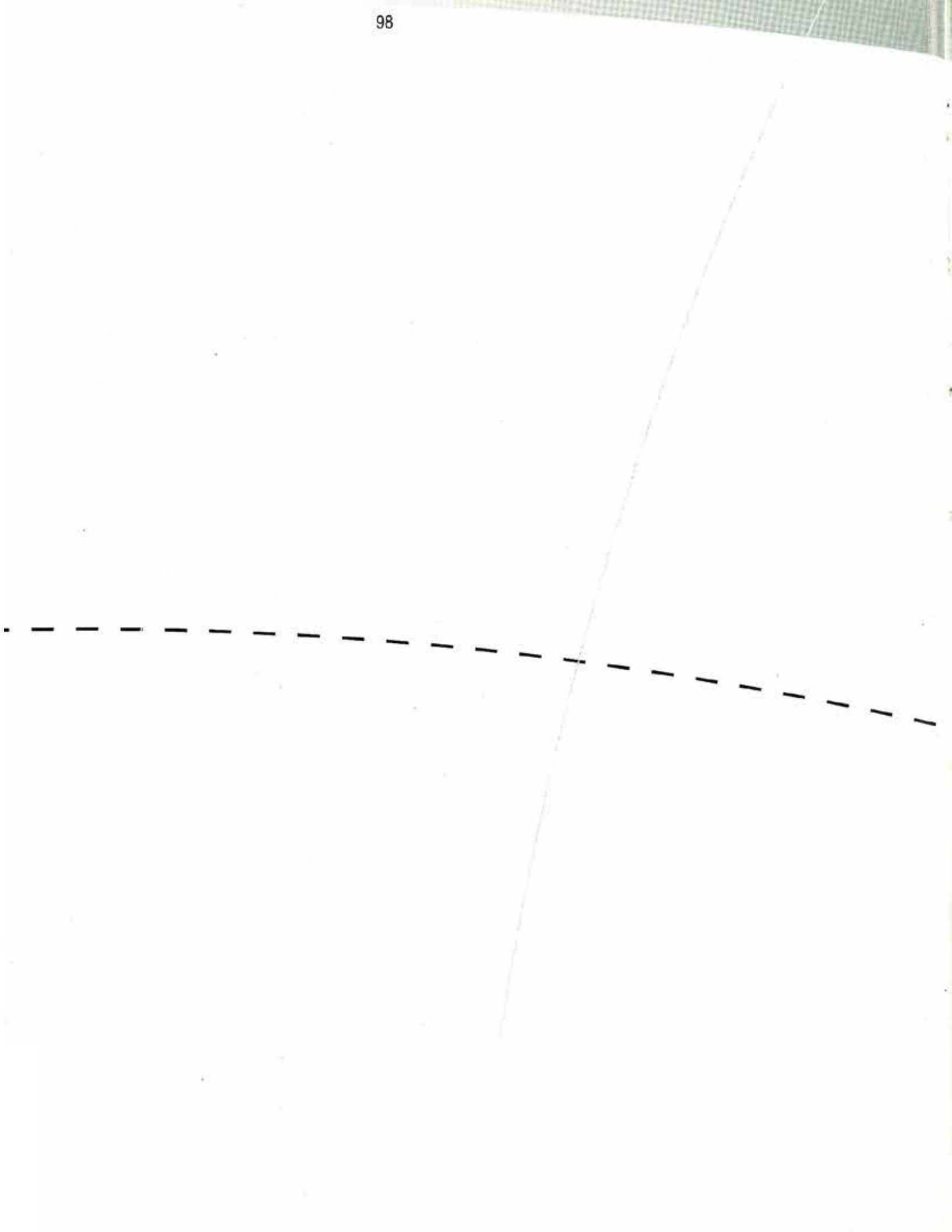
Compelled by his concerns for the environment and evident in his architecture, Stagno established the Institute for Tropical Architecture to complement the practice. Today, both entities support each other in fulfilling their aims.

A number of loyal and repeat clients enabled the firm to develop its architecture and to create buildings with unique corporate images.

Bruno Stagno *An Architect in the Tropics*

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To Jimena, the dream-maker.



Bruno Stagno

An Architect in the Tropics

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| Alexander Tzonis

| Liane Lefaivre

| Ken Yeang

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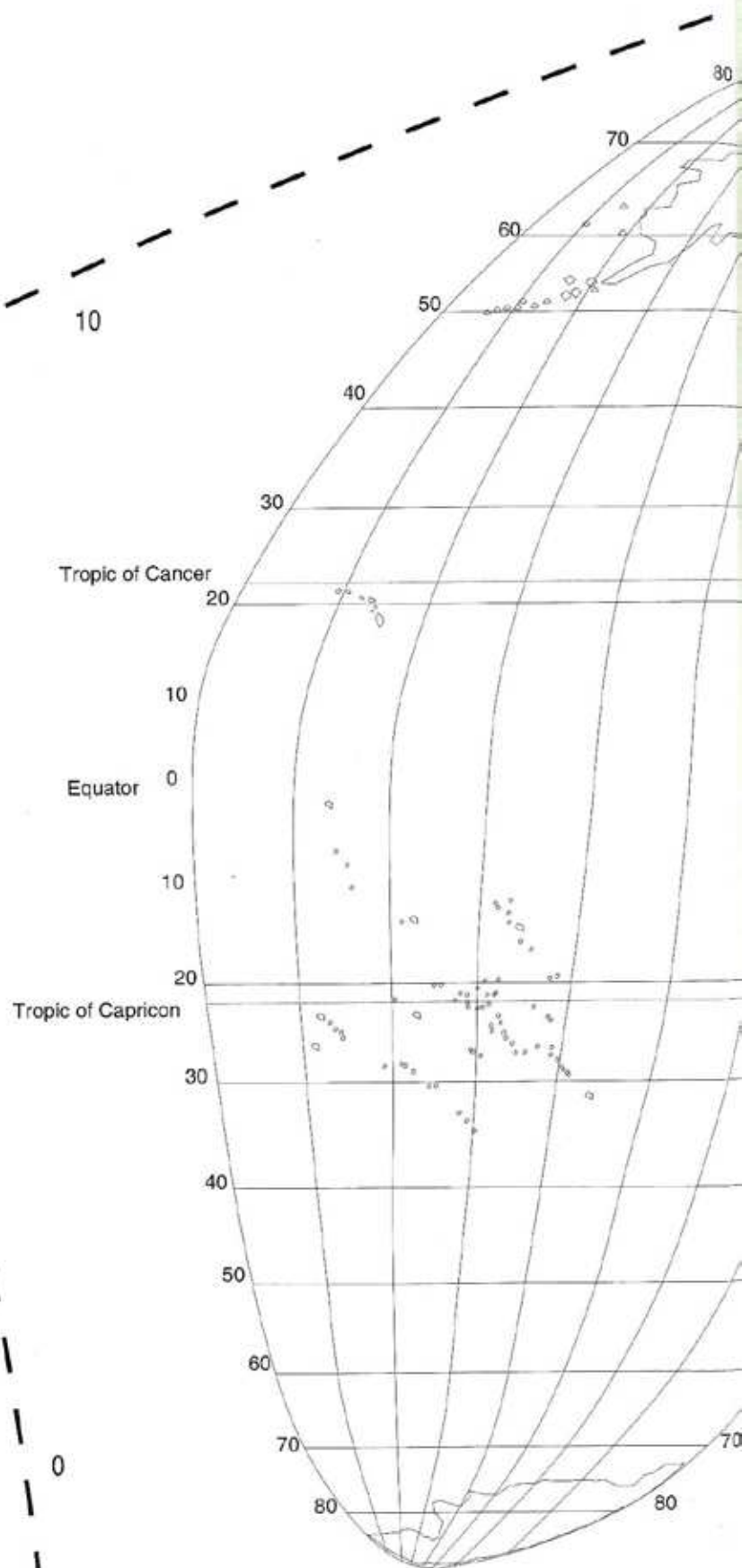
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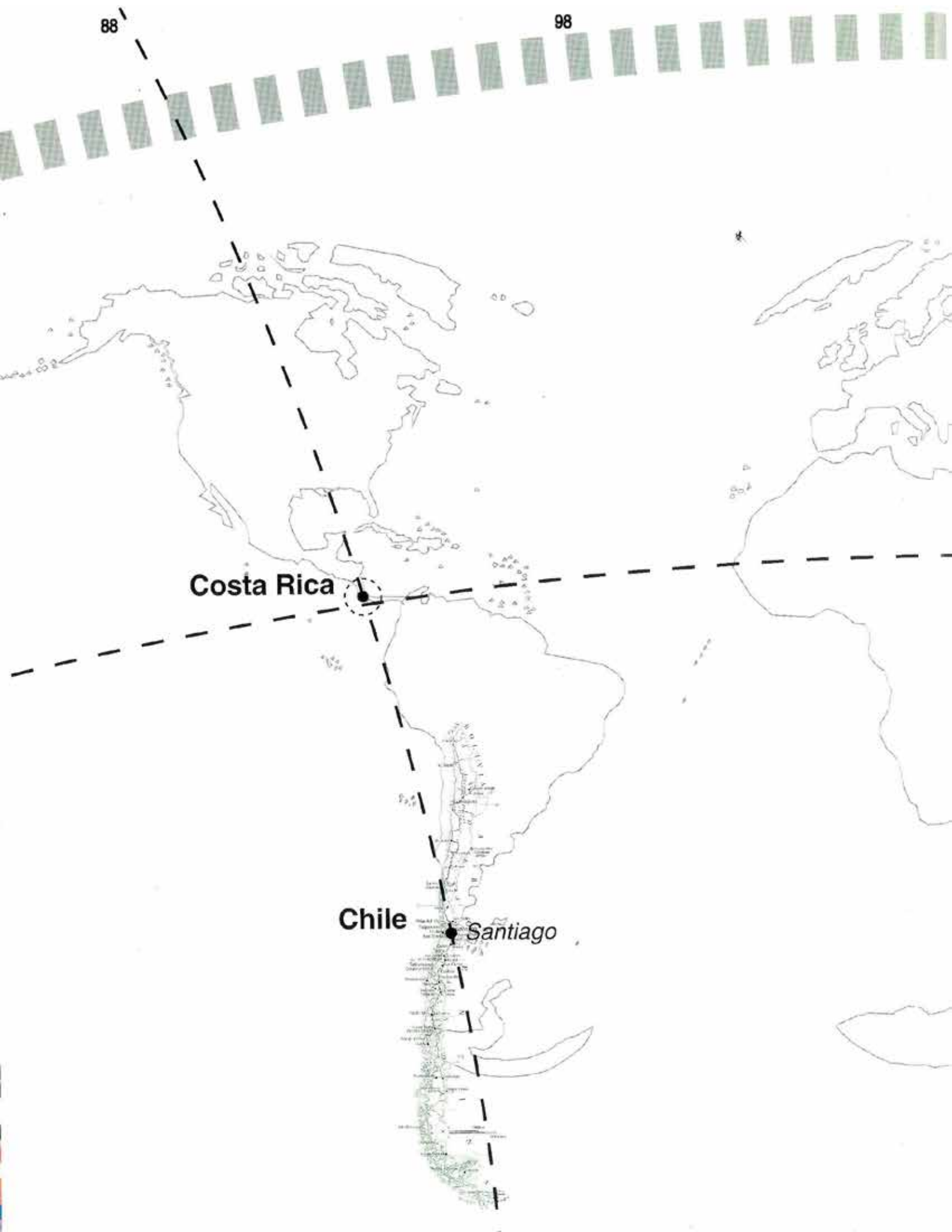
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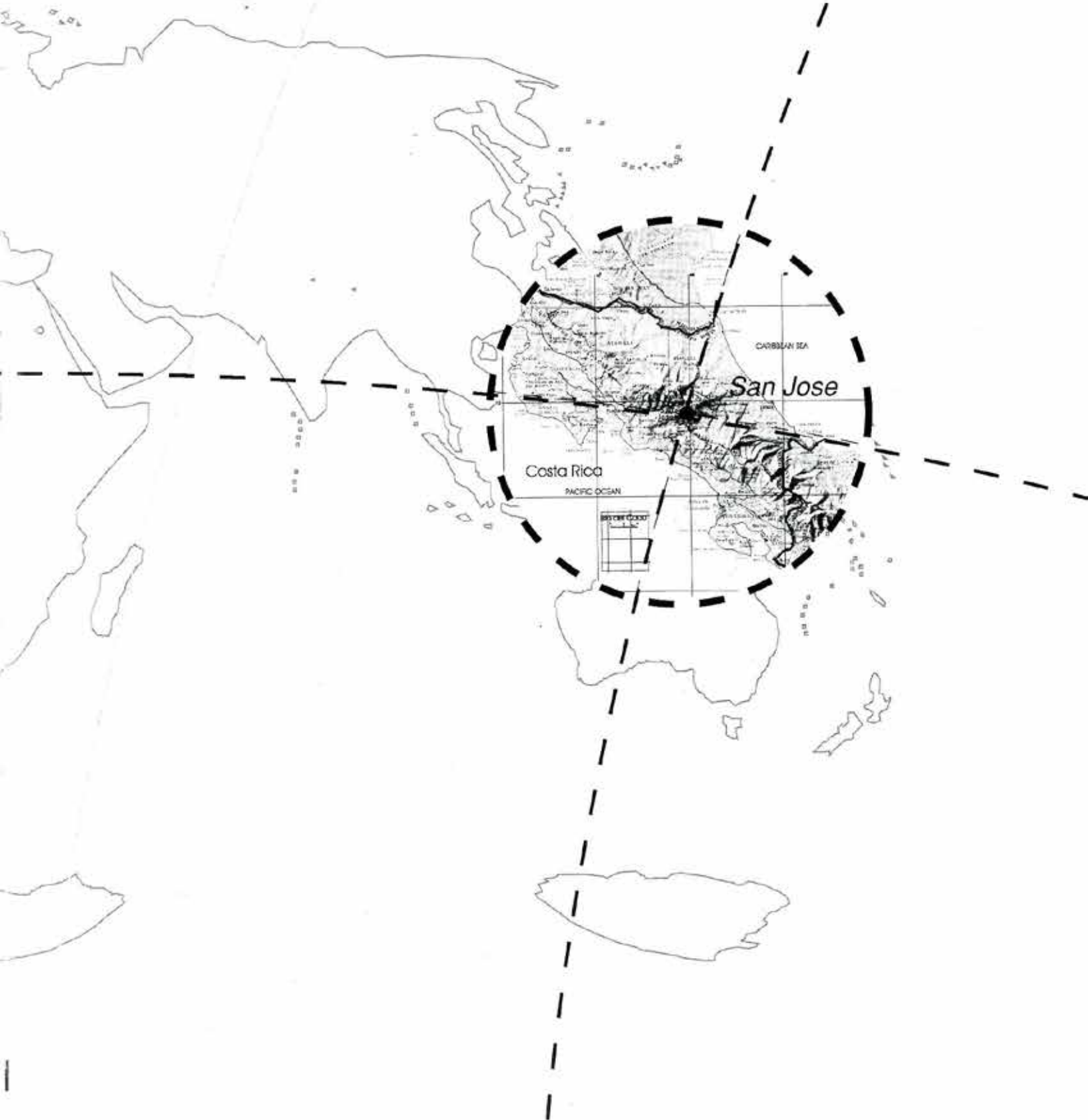
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Costa Rica

Chile

Santiago





Architecture for a Latitude

Bruno Stagno

The Exercise of Liberty

Architecture expresses itself publicly through its realization, but it usually requires an explanation of its concepts to render it as comprehension complete. Often it is there where the keystones reside to delve into its mysteries. Therefore, an explanation is normally required to introduce the reader in confidences that achieve an adequate complicity.

Shortly after an academic discipline of marked European tradition and architectural schooling based on the Modern Movement, which resulted in a predominantly Mediterranean architecture (flat roofs, white walls, controlled openings), I found myself in a tropical country where these forms were not adaptable. I therefore began a search that would gradually lead me to understand my new reality, that is to say, an architecture that would pioneer a new way to design in the tropics.

In order to adequately communicate the changes brought about by this search, I must reveal the most elemental steps that helped me tread the path I have followed for the last 30 years. This pilgrimage commenced from France to Chile, and has continued, for I cannot say it has ended, in Costa Rica.

It might be assumed that I am an immigrant turned around, and if so, I must confess that I am an immigrant, who in search for roots, arrived in Costa Rica with the aim of establishing myself permanently. In this respect, an excerpt from the *Critique de la Modernité* by Alain Touraine, exemplifies the essence of the immigrant and his existential paradox: "...it is the figure of the immigrant that should be chosen today as the emblematic figure of modernity. As a traveler full of memories and projects, he rediscovers and redefines himself every day by linking his past to his future, his cultural inheritance with his professional and social insertion..."

Faithful to this constant rediscovery, I considered it necessary to understand the country that accepted me, and thereby began to make myself a place in architecture. To better understand the specificities of Costa Rica, I considered it necessary to study the Arctic and its interior spaces that shelter, as well as the desert where the tent of the Bedouin offers successful examples of adaptation to extreme temperatures. By opposition, I was able to grasp the depth of the tropical forest where the air saturated with humidity traps the light that penetrates in shafts that traverse the foliage. Visiting these extremes allowed me to better understand how surrounding environments condition life and habitat.

During childhood, I lived near the heat of the stove that united the family in winter. The search for that heat was a necessity in southern Chile. In the tropics, it is the shade that refreshes and unites, and contrary to the stove, it is everywhere. In the tropical latitude the local experience of family cohesion therefore becomes relative and dilutes through the open spaces- some members of the family lie on a hammock under the shade of a tree, others in the corridor seated on a bench under the shade of the eaves.

I have also observed that the architecture being created was neither indicating a way nor structuring a language. Only individual projects existed whose transcendence was self-limiting. I discovered then, that they were multiple gibberish, and that due to their differences they only disoriented. This made the insertion all the more difficult.

Confronted with this situation, "...I considered myself a nobody from nowhere, equal to no one and belonging nowhere. All my ties had disappeared, I had arrived at an Anti-Jerusalem, not a home, but a far gone place..." (1)

I must confess I often felt desperate solitude and faced with despair the certainties of routine.

Soon the necessity arose to find my own way and a manner to develop an architecture that was adaptable to the tropics. I fervently initiated a solitary search that would lead me to find a solution. Therefore, I chose to isolate myself, to read very little of the published architecture and even less of its images, in order to concentrate on a more immediate assimilation of the tropics.

In so doing, I lost touch with the "isms" that characterize and formalize architecture in this century, and by conviction, I could not be tempted to design by imitation.

During this prolonged solitude, that was at times desperate, I managed to find consolation by recalling the following verse: "...In truth, my son, all the stars have parted, but never shall it get darker than when dawn arrives..." (2) Because I had analyzed the local contemporary architecture without finding what I was searching for, I delved into history with the hope of finding anchor in some more inspiring epochs. In all, I studied pre-Columbian, colonial, republican, and Victorian architecture. I ventured throughout the country to observe the exuberant vegetation, became astonished with the transparency of natural light and the abundant tropical rain. Despite its small extension, I discovered that different architectural traditions coexisted in Costa Rica, and that each tradition gave rise to architectural typologies that are appropriate to each one of the microclimates into which the country is divided. Throughout, architecture revealed a sincere concern to respond adequately and appropriately to the climate, through sustainable solutions that arise from every day truths and customs.

Anonymous builders without any formal academic background were mainly responsible for the majority of these architectural solutions. Mere common sense and constant observation and experimentation sufficed to produce an architecture that has transcended time.

Every builder, making an intelligent use of the available resources and technologies proper to each time period, adapted himself to the requirements imposed by the natural context by proposing appropriate designs. These anonymous builders took into consideration at the moment of design such diverse elements as rain, sun, humidity, and topography, without losing sight of the daily living requirements of the population. They gave rise to adaptations that are so evidently successful that they produce pleasure. They are architectures that produce delight.

I concluded that one did not have to confine oneself to one single time period nor limit oneself to the analysis of any one historical period. First, because no period is more important than another and secondly, because all these architectures are manifestly adaptations.



Major wind directions:
Dry season-day breeze from December to May

Soon afterwards, I realized that a correct interpretation of latitude, and more specifically of the tropical latitude, not only gave expression to the architectural language but also assured its coherent adaptation to the environment. What interested me in this language was the syllables, more than any precise words, sentences, or paragraphs, for it is precisely in the syllables where the expression of latitude resides. Even more so, the reiteration or repetition of the same syllables in the course of different periods of Costa Rican history, not only made manifest a certain consideration for the environment, but indicated that adaptation to it constituted a tradition.

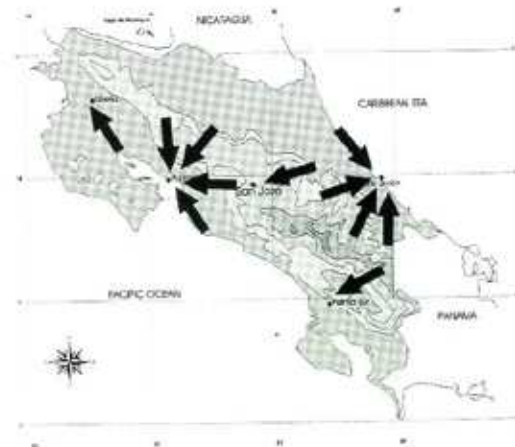
It is precisely these syllables that integrate architecture into the context of its locality. Among these syllables one can mention contained open spaces, high sloped roofs that rapidly discharge the rainwater, extended eaves that award shade, perforated or dematerialized facades which capture the breeze and ventilate the interior, large drainage ditches, interior vegetation, shaded intermediate open spaces, reposed interior half-lights, and the ever-present central vestibule (zaguan), which not only ventilates, illuminates, and organizes the interior, but also assures an adequate and comfortable habitability in the urban houses made of wood.

I paid attention to the popular architecture and in particular to its language, which is largely based on spontaneous and impulsive solutions that respond to necessity. In this language, I discovered the profound significance of the concept of informality in architectural expression, so different from the cosmopolitan images that are nowadays universalized by the mass media. This informality is a distinguishing characteristic of all the architectures of latitude, that through expressive informality and liberty provide resolute solutions that are neither academic nor semantic, but that nevertheless constitute intelligent responses to the environment. By mere trial and error and ingeniousness, popular architecture achieved a convincing expression based on inexpensive materials and inspired by the local climate and lifestyle.

I have tried to incorporate this informality, which managed a distinct respect for the surrounding environment through nothing more than mere common sense and knowledge inherited by tradition, into my architectural expression. Thus, I felt myself inspired to say that "...I understand tropical architecture as an exercise of liberty, and not as a domain of dogmas..."

Tradition and Vanguard

The analysis of these syllables in the course of Costa Rican architectural history made me understand that together they represented a tradition. These tropical architectures superseded history by transcending from the pre-Columbian to the Victorian period through a reiterative presence. From the hut of the Cabecar or Bribri Indians to the colonial and republican house or the architecture of the banana plantations, one finds an unequivocal reply to a climate that is dominated by sun and rain. However, all of them are also in remarkable synchrony with their respective time periods, with the resources and technologies then available and the lifestyles of their inhabitants. From observation alone of these architectures, one can situate them immediately in a latitude.



Major wind directions:
Dry season-night breeze from December to May

I believe it is necessary to clarify that I am not particularly interested in a stereotyped or fixed tradition. I am attracted by a tradition that bestows a sense of belonging to history and confers identity, or in other words, by the tradition that contains the spirit of a certain place and time. I do not pretend to reproduce any tradition of tropical architecture through imitation, but I do pretend to innovate within tradition. That is, I want to make tradition evolve while maintaining the many adapted solutions that have resisted time and become anchored to culture.

I began delving into the past, and I still enjoy doing so, to retake the continuity in architectural culture and mend the break in tradition imposed by the technological approach of the Modern Movement. For with the introduction of architectural banalities, the Modern Movement fell from the mastery of its precursors to the base simplicity of its imitators.

Tradition and vanguard are usually seen as opposites in architecture. We normally relate tradition with stagnation and vanguard with progress. We also tend to reduce traditional architecture to a mere style and vanguard architecture to a new technology.

Thus, tradition frequently appears in contemporary architecture as an aesthetic consideration that privileges the use of a style of the past. At the other extreme, vanguard architecture seeks new expressions that privilege the use of recent technologies. Both expressions are limited and construed by their own limitations, for they believe they are opposites or extremes despite the fact that they share a common purpose. In a merely aesthetic consideration, an architecture that seeks style cannot be vanguard architecture, for it reproduces elements of composition of the past and privileges a retrospective attitude. It can even lead to false copies of the past in a desperate effort to obtain an expression that belongs to the past.

In a merely technological consideration, it is the use of new construction materials and techniques that single-handedly dictates and determines the degree to which a construction is a legitimate expression of vanguard architecture. These two extremes have caused disarray in contemporary architecture, for they appear as the only two parameters or tendencies into which architecture can be catalogued. On the one side retro architecture and on the other high-tech architecture. Architects are thus divided into two separate groups that compete for supremacy, causing a generalized impoverishment of architectural criticism.

On the one side, retro architecture glorifies those expressions that arise from the architectures of the past and that are saturated with direct subjective connotations that evoke a sentiment of belonging. With the repetition of stylistic elements such as cornices, turrets, stuccos, and others, traditional architecture summons a past which, as the word itself clearly conveys, is past. With this purpose, it employs constructive falsehoods to imitate the materials of the past, such as polymer beams that imitate wood and polymer facades that imitate bricks and rocks. In the end, this type of architecture is nothing more than a simulation.

On the other side, high-tech architecture concentrates on the use of vanguard materials that convey an idea of progress. Vanguard construction techniques influence and at times determine the design. This type of architecture is geared towards the ultimate, the newest, the latest and showcases the different applications of vanguard construction materials and techniques. High-tech architecture is only practicable in countries that have high technology and have

the necessary resources to cover for its high costs. For example, it hardly

seems evident to use 3 by 10-meter windowpanes that have

high-resistance stainless steel fixtures in this country or any other

developing country because it just defies the realm of the possible. High-tech

architecture expresses the technological capacity of what humankind is capable of designing and

constructing. It seeks to surprise and to awe, but the irony is that with the fast-paced evolution of construction

techniques in industrialized countries, awe-inspiring designs are rapidly supplanted by ever more recent designs.

Contemporary architecture is thus simultaneously cornered by an architecture of false pretense that revives the glory of the past and an architecture of surprise that concentrates on technological feats. The present thus seems divorced from its past and from its future, and contemporary architecture is thereby impoverished by these manichean expressions that reduce architecture to purely formal and material expressions.

An impoverishment that has reduced architecture to the production of images that are saturated with aesthetic content but entirely divorced from the most essential purpose of architecture-provide shelter. Such applications have apparently forgotten that architecture is in essence, an intellectual proposition that is built to permit life with a coherent poetic content that is suitably adapted to the social and natural environment. All manichean applications necessarily reduce it to mere aesthetics and thereby impoverish social and individual life.

I thereby wonder if it is possible to make tradition evolve or to create a vanguard that is not technological. If tradition is defined as having an origin or roots in the past and the transmission of these origins or roots, it implies a transmission of knowledge from past to present. Tradition then becomes dynamic. It usually has a conservative connotation that excludes any possibility of evolution.

Vanguard has been restricted to the application of the latest technology, thereby rendering impossible a non-technological vanguard. If we consider a broader definition of vanguard, it simply means to be ahead. Therefore, any architecture that generates progress can become vanguard architecture, an example being bioclimatic architecture.

Both tendencies shun the present. One looks back, seeking to simulate and the other looks forward, seeking to surprise. They reveal a stunning distance from the present situation of humankind, from a being that is trapped between a familiar but distant past and an unknown future, which he forecasts. Contemporary architecture is thus left unattended, displaced and disconnected from its present. If we manage to see tradition as a current that evolves by aggregating knowledge that is assimilated to generate progress, we could then reconcile tradition and vanguard and solve the ambiguity of contemporary architecture.

A redefinition of vanguard that arises from tradition which makes it evolve is particularly apt for today's regional architecture that is so easily forgotten because they do not respond to either tendencies. Such an attitude divorces the past and the present and unfortunately shelves architectures which are charged with content and knowledge and that are the end product of a successful marriage between resources, customs, and environment. Moreover, they perpetuate the cultural content of the society that built them. If we study traditional architecture, which communicates a coherent expression of an entire culture, it is very likely that we may formulate a contemporary architecture that is based on adaptation and continuity. It would solve this double negative of the rejection of the present by the past and the future, something which has generated a void in contemporary architecture.

Environmental syncretism

In order to establish my intellectual position, I elaborated the concept of environmental syncretism (3), which synthesizes a sincere compromise with the environment and on the one hand, an attitude of careful selection of influences to enrich our culture that simultaneously rejects those that impoverish it. Environmental syncretism is a demonstration of openness and tolerance that purports to exceed the limitations of context to allow for sustainable proposals that are in tune with the "contemporaneity" in which we participate. It must thereby recognize and overcome these limitations by searching for external values that can be appropriated to strengthen the extraordinary that characterizes local architecture and culture.

It is an attitude of aperture that is not interested in purity. On the contrary, it emphasizes the mixture and the intelligent hybridization or half-breeding, more than the cloning, of different realities. If desired, it is an act of impurity that amplifies the frontiers of a culture that has turned increasingly shallow and at times even asphyxiating. (4)

The moderation and keenness with which one assumes this attitude of selection and assimilation of influences, is of primary importance to the hybridization and appropriation process. One must not lose sight of the fact that the objective end of the process is to enrich the attributes of the local architecture and culture. Nothing is more adverse to environmental syncretism than that planetary uniformity which erases the differences and smoothes the discrepancies between cultures. Unlike this planetary uniformity, it is an antidote to the exhaustion into which some cultures have fallen.

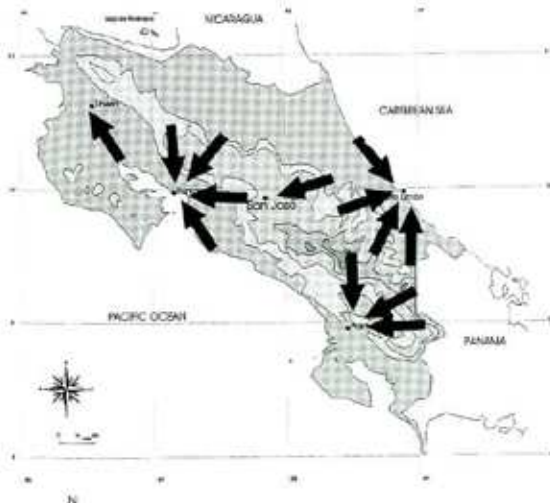
In the wake of the restlessness that economic globalization produces, with its threatening intellectual uniformity, it is necessary to react by rescuing and strengthening the local and what is proper to it. This reaction must privilege what is local while remaining contemporary, for it must not become anachronistic or folklore. My work pretends to be a constant and permanent search that consolidates in time and bases itself on theoretic principles that are specifically formulated for the latitude. I also pretend to overcome the challenge that is posed by the ascension of the local to the universal. This longing can only be achieved if my architecture has the capacity to express latitude with a contemporary language. Therefore, I am deeply interested in giving prominence to expression to facilitate the compromise of the architectural work with the environment.

This desire to reach the universal from the local can be met through an architectural practice that conveys a message of coherent environmental adaptation, that is to say, through an architectural creation that virtually exaggerates expression to praise the latitude.

In this search for expression, I believe it is more useful to look for similarities in the east and the west than in the north or the south. Thus, from Costa Rica, which lies on the 10th parallel north, we can redefine the frontiers of mutual enrichment.



Major wind directions:
Rainy season-right from May to December



Major wind directions:
Rainy season-right from May to December

This solitary search through previously unexplored terrain, has had the virtue of discovering new grounds for architectural creation that, superimposed on the grounds of nostalgia, evoke mixed feelings. When one is an immigrant, which is my case, the establishment of roots is necessary in order to fully assimilate the environment, and in so doing one approaches its sources of identity and quality and can become fully acquainted with them.

Architecture for a Latitude

Architecture designed for a latitude is above all an architecture of adaptation. It must necessarily privilege, or at least recognize the importance of the natural and built environment, the available resources and technologies, and the local lifestyles. In the case of the tropics, it must in addition take into consideration tropical thought and its accompanying magic, the radiant sun, the transparent and ever-changing sky with its pristine light that at times becomes dismal and dramatic, the blue-green hue of the hills, and many other elements that are characteristic of the tropical latitude.

Costa Rica is a small country that is situated in the Central American isthmus that separates the two oceans and that served as crossroads for the Mayan and Incan civilizations. In spite of its position as zone of interchange, it never truly joined both oceans or continents, a particularity that allowed for an isolated decanting of what truly was proper. In this recognition of its identity, the fact that Costa Rica was the least explored and most isolated of Spanish colonies certainly played an important role.

As I mentioned earlier, for many years I have been trying to define the values of Costa Rican architecture through the concept of environmental syncretism. By means of a careful selection of influences, we select only those that enrich and naturally adapt to the evolution of traditional tropical architectures. If this is truly a continuous process, which has existed since the origin of time, it has nevertheless helped me to identify and clarify our tendency at the end of this century. It has given me the certainty that our creations must be sustainable and those universal doctrines must recede.

Globalization has emerged with the homogenous distribution across the globe of the means of communication. This means that our ideas and beliefs now have the possibility of being "accessed" from a distance, a circumstance that puts us on equal terms with colleagues from industrialized countries. For the first time in history, our voices have the chance of being heard. The communications network is universal and of free-access and within it ideas are in constant competition. Therefore, one must responsibly transmit those ideas that may find an audience abroad.

Paraphrasing Gianni Vattimo, who considers that the global development of communications has favored the expression of local cultures and minorities and awarded them the possibility to participate, it also introduces the beginning of the end of the universalism that gave quasi-exclusivity to some more industrialized cultures. This means that no society can impose unanimity and that no one and no discourse can pretend the monopoly of reason.

Concept sketches -
Sensation of openness

As national economies try to globalize, local cultures have made significant efforts to assess their own identity. It may even be desirable to promote a generalized emancipation of local cultures, and in my case I propose a utopia that can coexist with others around the globe. The architecture of this utopia should take into consideration some important elements of the local environment in order to reinforce the expression of the latitude and render it unequivocal. The expression of this architecture, in the case of the tropics, must at least convey the following:

1. Morphological Informality - The informality of tropical architecture is a result of its independence from monolithic systems of thought and dogmatic systems of images. It reveals itself throughout history with varying degrees of liberty. Although not academic, an intellectual process based on mere common sense is more sensible to the immediate context in keeping its distance from images of architecture that pretend to be universal. I interpret the morphological informality of traditional tropical architecture as an exercise in liberty and as a sign of emancipation from globalization that makes common sense and conveys respect for the immediate environment.

2. Sensation of Openness - Open spaces that favor cross-ventilation and integration with the surrounding vegetation through transparency in design, seem especially well adapted to this latitude. High spaces contained below sloping roofs create an immediately recognizable interior in spite of the wide apertures to the exterior.

3. Architecture of Materials - Nowadays, the most common and inexpensive construction material is the cement block, which I leave exposed to reduce maintenance costs and accentuate its unique appearance. I have also combined these blocks with bricks and concrete to rescue an ancestral construction technique. The simple appearance of these very materials contributes enormously to the overall expression of local architecture.

4. Penumbra of Interior Spaces - In contrast to the clear skies and the transparency and brilliancy of natural light, it is necessary to create an interior penumbra that relaxes the eyes. The long overhangs and protruding roofs designed with the common sense of traditional builders, shade the windows and structure and allow for comfortable relaxation.

5. Expressive Synthesis - From an analysis of traditional architecture, I have recovered the elements that most evidently define its expression: the sloping roofs for rapid evacuation of rainwater, the long overhangs that shade and protect from inclement weather, the openings that dehumidify and refresh the interior, and textured walls. All of these elements confer character and have remained constant throughout the different periods of traditional tropical architecture.

In the following synthesis of Costa Rican architectural history, in which I have selected housing as the subject of analysis, I shall try to demonstrate how different constructions were adapted to their natural environments.

Housing and Groupings of Pre-Columbian Populations

10 For the effects of this analysis, I am only interested by those constructions that in seeking adaptation to their natural environment provided answers to questions that made survival possible. In the Arctic and the desert, the igloo and the tent are respectively constructed with ice and fabric, yet resist the inclement weather and yield protection. In equatorial Africa and America, wood branches were tied with vines to create structures that were then covered with leaves and mud, producing comfortable living quarters. Unfortunately, irreverence and indifference towards these traditional architectures became standard simply because it is easier to implant a glass box, that is artificially air-conditioned, than to develop an architecture that respects and works with the environment. This cultural menace also threatens the tropics, where temperature differences are minimal and only the strong rains perturb life.

In Pre-Columbian times, architecture under the thick foliage of the tropical forest predominated, with walls made of branches that allowed for the breeze to pass freely and large vegetated roofs with extended eaves. The mass of interior air, the rapid evacuation of rainwater, and the religious sense of spatial organization, are all highlights of this non-hermetic development of space. The lesson I derived from Pre-Columbian architecture is that there is absolutely no reason to create sealed spaces and artificial climates.

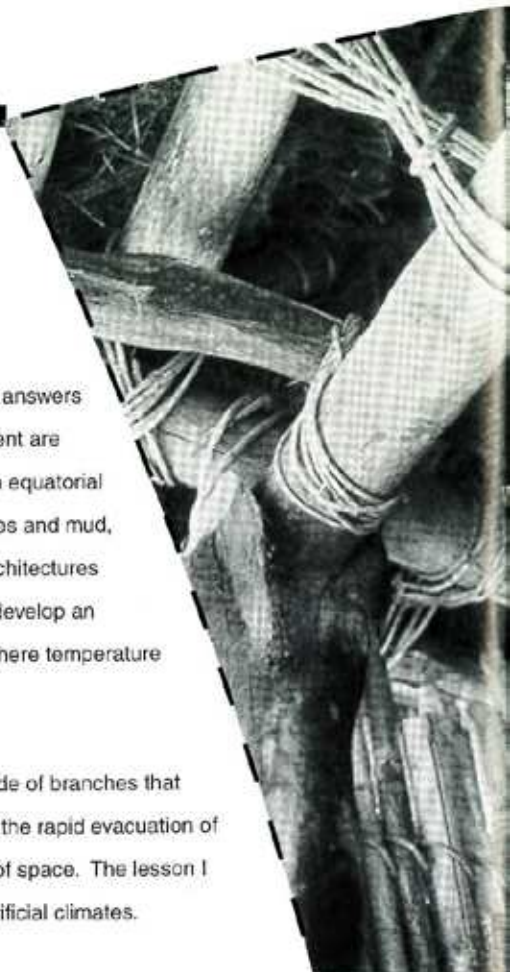
It is quite evident that ever since mankind began constructing habitats, many answers and solutions were found in the natural environment. Whether it be the Eskimo igloo or the Bribri hut, the inspiration is the same, both looked to the environment to find solutions that fulfilled basic survival and social requirements. Neither was trying to express an identity through architecture, yet by constructing they respectively developed construction techniques and styles that are remarkably functional, coherent, and adapted to the environment. Even today, we can learn from these architectures.

Colonial Period

The Spaniards came to this territory with hopes and dreams of a "New World" where they were pledged to a life of compromise and adaptation to the conditions they found. The colonizers established themselves and created a lifestyle that was markedly different from the one they abandoned in Spain, developing certain elements that served to link the two worlds.

In particular, I am interested by the identity the Spaniards managed through developments in housing. Contrary to the Indians, whose houses were made of branches and vegetation, the Spaniards developed adobe as an adequate and innovative solution to housing. Moreover, they introduced urban planning by defining street blocks and positioning the houses in the corner of each block. Interior spaces were clearly enclosed by exterior facades with few openings, and dominated by long corridors full of light and nature. This housing plan was meant to be consistent with the lifestyle of the inhabitants.

Other elements that highlight this architecture are the tiles, the overhangs, the sidewalks, and baseboards (zocalos). These elements, that repeat themselves in all the houses, are an answer to the perpetual problems of the tropics. The urgent need for ventilation and freshness was solved with the use of curved tiles, which protect from the heat without blocking the breeze, with perforated eaves, which accelerate air currents through a venturi effect that compensates for the thick and hermetic adobe walls, and with exuberant interior vegetation.



The Spaniards constructed with the materials they had readily available- wood, mud, and some stone. With these simple materials they built houses of character that are remarkably well adapted. As a result of the application of this one and only typology, the cities had uniformity in style that complemented the checkerboard uniformity in planning that was only broken by churches, palaces, and other important buildings that interrupted the homogeneity of the city quadrants.

Republican Period

With the independence of the Central American colonies from Spain in 1821, the colonial economy was superseded by an incipient capitalist economy. Because of its stable investment climate and its easy access to two oceans, Costa Rica was in excellent condition to take advantage of the possibilities offered by coffee production. By 1856, coffee already constituted almost 90 percent of total exports.(5)

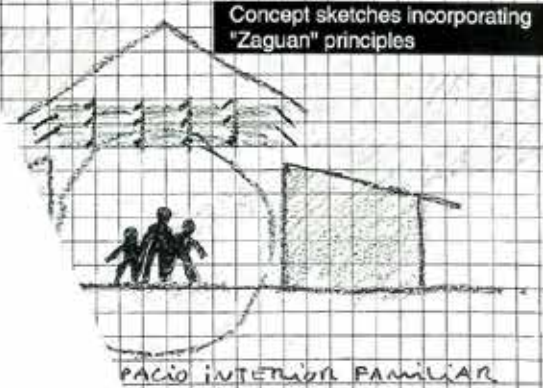
Around 1835, city life started to change dramatically with the arrival of merchants and travellers. With the export of coffee, the existing infrastructure was considerably enhanced and increased. San Jose started to grow at an accelerated pace, the city center changed with the gradual disappearance of colonial houses. Devastating earthquakes destroyed the remaining adobe constructions until 1910, when adobe is prohibited as construction material. New construction techniques employing wood allowed for a more rational use of space and densification. Moreover, with the use of wood new styles appeared, among which the more salient are the Neoclassic and Victorian. These new styles are notable examples of the harmonious integration of design concepts. The house with central vestibule (zaguan), with its characteristic cross-ventilation and natural illumination, became a predominant typology in the cities of the Central Valley. The central vestibule, a kind of shaded and ventilated interior living room replaced the interior corridor that was typical of the adobe house, where life goes on independently of the rain or the sun. It was an excellent solution for urban housing in dense cities.

Another solution that emerged during the republican period was the villa, a house that by definition generally stands in the middle of gardens. This typology is totally independent from the adobe house, being more of a copy of imported designs that were adapted by anonymous builders to the climate and the lifestyle of Costa Rica. Here we encounter a legitimate example of architectural syncretism that modifies international models to adapt to the local environment and even generate tradition.

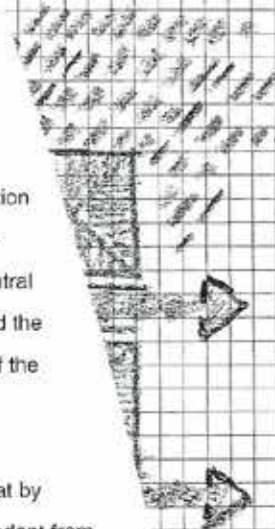
Banana Towns

Banana town housing is one of the more interesting examples of an architecture that is adapted to the humid tropics. The banana plantations were situated in large tracts of flat arable land that were ready for exploitation upon clearing. Because they were located at quite a distance from the cities in the Central Valley, it was necessary to invent production and transportation methods that adequately responded to the economic demands. Moreover, it was indispensable to house thousands of plantation workers, a reason why some banana plantations were independent towns, with houses, schools, hospitals, churches, stores, shipping facilities, and an American zone that comprised golf courses, club houses, and airstrips.

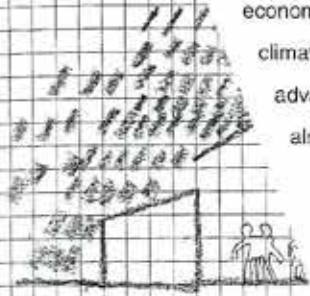
Concept sketches incorporating "Zaguan" principles



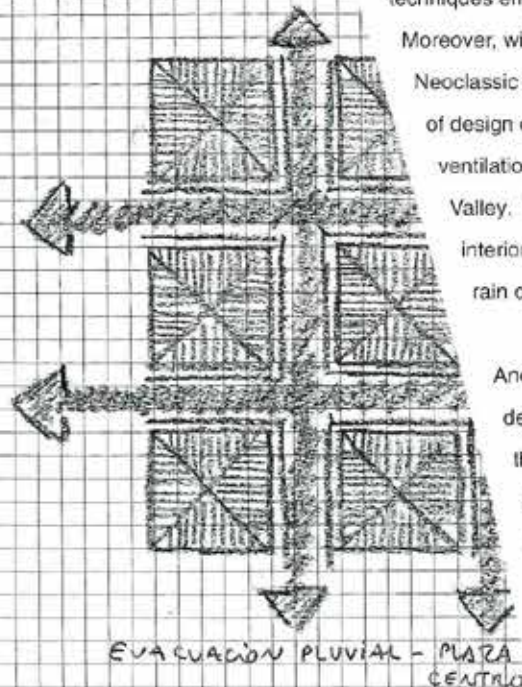
PACIO INTERIOR FAMILIAR



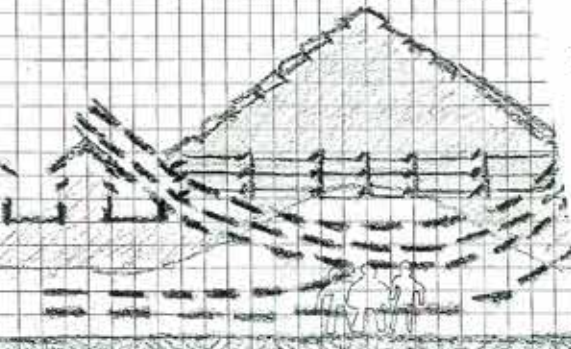
CASA TRADICIONAL DE ZAG



2 CASAS DE ZAGUAN



EVACUACIÓN PLUVIAL - PLAZA CENTRO



UN ESPACIO INTERIOR VENTILADO

Within the plantations, a network of private roads and railways linked the different parts of these agro-industrial cities. The housing units of the employees were organized around rectangular lots that were converted by the inhabitants into football fields. They were constructed using wood for the structure and zinc for the walls and roofs. They empirically adapted to the environment, with the use of protruding eaves that protected the structure from the sun and rain. Because they were located on flat humid land, the floors were raised above the ground using stilts to avoid flooding and animals. The sloping roofs facilitated the evacuation of rainwater and were somewhat detached from the walls to let the hot air escape. All windows and doors were of considerable size to facilitate the airflow and reduce humidity and had screens to protect the inhabitants from the insufferable onslaught of insects.

In considering the housing of these banana towns as architectural patrimony of the tropics, I am not trying to glorify the austerity of the living conditions, nor am I pardoning the little attention given to human necessities by many multinationals. I am simply interested in the response to necessity that generated an architectural solution that proved to be remarkably well adapted.

Modern Architecture

After World War II, the international architecture of the Modern Movement forced its way into the country, generating a considerable degree of disorder in the cities. In 1952 the population reached the million mark and was mostly concentrated in the Central Valley, a demographic growth that could not but affect architecture. A response came from the European concept of modernism that was applied by a majority of engineers and constructors and only some architects.

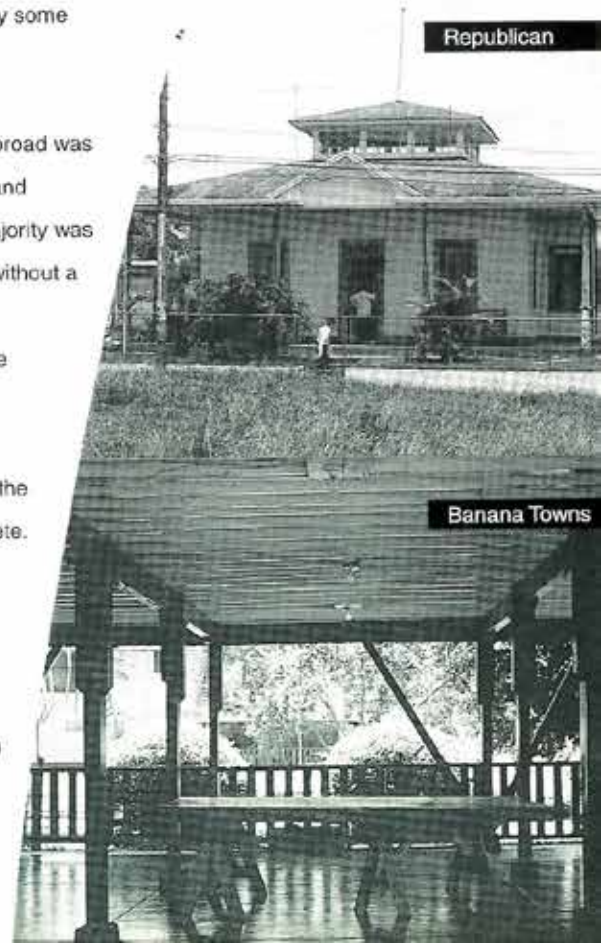
This disorder brought about a deviation from tradition. Everything that came from abroad was considered modern, without even bothering to examine its true nature. Local artists and intellectuals eagerly accepted any aesthetic that seemed modern, even though the majority was totally divorced from the social and cultural reality. "...We built a systemic architecture without a system, and large containers without content. In other words, we tried to talk without understanding the language nor the original intent of the author..."(6) Although we had the illusion of being modern, we learned that a global methodology is negative.

With the arrival of new styles such as Art Deco and new techniques such as the open plan, the blank facade and the domino structure, we also discovered a new material- reinforced concrete. New forms arose, but unfortunately none were coherent with the tropical paradigm and only gave way to brutal aesthetics. These new typologies marked the city, erasing the local architecture and replacing it with a ubiquitous box. Instead of integrating tradition and technology, concrete supplanted wood as the favored construction material. The free-flying overhang was transformed into a thick and heavy cornice, the perforated facade was sealed with cement blocks and fixed windows, thus nature was excluded.

Colonial



Republican



Banana Towns

Reinforced concrete was not the problem, on the contrary, it offered previously unimagined possibilities and forms, but these should have risen from local examples and lineage and not from ambiguous global concepts. We therefore suggest a hybridization of modernity and local identity. Modernity should forcibly interpret local conditions to find adapted solutions that are contemporary and of recognizable identity.

Contemporary Architecture

Nowadays in Costa Rica, within the new generation of students and some recently graduated architects, there exists a favorable attitude towards the importance of latitude and its capacity to generate architecture. I have no doubt that their designs will be exemplary and promote a new relationship between the individual and the environment.

This new attitude arose from research in cultural patrimony and contemporary society, and led to an architecture that is at the crosspoint of traditional tropical architecture and international technological advancements. This crosspoint is really a narrow hinterland in which we suffer the risk of kitsch copied from the past or a third world "high-tech".

In my architectural practice, I propose to find a solution to the contemporary disparity that on the one hand desires and advances the future and on the other values the past and tradition. In 1961, Paul Ricoeur lays down the foundations of a solution in **Universal Civilizations and National Cultures**, when he writes: "... In order to get on to the road toward modernization, is it necessary to jettison the old cultural past which has been the *raison d'être* of a nation?... Whence the paradox: on the one hand the nation has to root itself in the soil of its past, forge a national spirit, and unfurl this spiritual and cultural revendication before the colonialist's personality. But in order to take part in modern civilization, it is necessary at the same time to take part in scientific, technical and political rationality, something which very often requires the pure and simple abandon of a whole cultural past..." (7)

A new conscience has thrived that safeguards expression as a result of respect for the environment and culture. These new buildings communicate with clarity that they were inspired by the formal liberty of traditional tropical architecture, recuperating with sensibility certain elements of the vocabulary that are aptly expressed in contemporary terms. In these buildings one recognizes the architectural syntax that is the result of various constructive elements: protruding eaves, sloping roofs, materials that require little maintenance, glaring light, and others. That is, a series of elements that are intimately linked to the latitude and its lifestyle. This attitude and their modern construction techniques allow developing societies to become a part of contemporary civilization, and at the same time maintain expressions that are easily identified by the inhabitants as their own. This objective is perhaps the only universal ideal in architecture, and it requires the collaboration and cooperation of all cultures to be successful.

When we look at globalization as individual consumers of culture, it would be adequate to interpret foreign influences and conscientiously adapt them to our local environment. If we turn them down we are turning down evolution, if we accept them without question we have succumbed to passive assimilation. Therefore, it is necessary to summon them and intelligently filter those effects that are deemed undesirable. How do we intend then, as architects, to give a physical identity to an environment that is constantly pushing us to the limits of our very identity? That is the true debate.

As a global society we have entered into a new type of internationalism. The internationalism of this time is not based on a style, that is to say a certain physical expression, but on a lifestyle. That of the fax, Internet, and high-speed transportation. With the daily crisscrossing of images and information that influence our regional environments, what defines and identifies a culture remains intangible. Therefore, contemporary architecture should look towards tangible and stable influences that would help differentiate the various cultures of the planet.

The influence of nature is the only element that will remain unchanged with the metamorphosis of traditional cultures. Louis Kahn once said, "...We learn the law of art by seeing a lot, and by being told a lot and by sensing a lot, but other things come out of the very characteristics of the air, and of the light... very simple overlasting presences that should constantly talk to you in architecture..."(8) This attitude will help us maintain cultural identity and rehumanize our architecture.

The question posed by Ricoeur opens a Pandora Box of more questions that are increasingly difficult to answer. For them, there is no correct answer, nor is there a method to navigate through this complicated question. What we do have are certain resources that we can individually use to attempt an answer. The most important resource we have available is memory. Inherent to every person, to every civilization, memory is a memory of senses, customs and traditions. Architect Luis Barragan believed so passionately in memory, that he used it to give form to what is now considered to be a new tradition in Mexican architecture. The following two questions posed by Barragan, help define architectural expression. "Do I feel comfortable in this space?" establishes a relationship between the individual and the built environment. This question tries to associate the experiences of the individual likes and dislikes, desires and wishes with the particularities of the environment. "Does the space feel comfortable in its environment?" is a more ample question that criticizes the physiognomy of the surroundings. Neither question suggests restrictions nor dictates a specific design process, but both demand a high level of self-criticism and analysis. Both shall bring forth a series of personal and social experiences that derive from the collective memory of a society and the individual memories of its inhabitants.

The direction of many of these cultures towards a more interconnected world is evident, but a certain sobriety must be maintained during the course of development. Globalization, as we have learned from the mistakes of our past, "is not a maintenance-free perpetual-motion machine."(9) Of course, technological progress and cultural evolution are inevitable. We should embrace these developments, yet we must be in control of what we accept and how we accept them and we must proceed at our own pace. If we allow the suppliers to dictate the pace, we will end up accepting much more than we need without having the capacity to absorb it.

In an effort to control what we accept, I have proposed to reject the architectural fetishes that are exhibited today by "intelligent" buildings. The electronic mechanisms that control climate, energy consumption and security isolate these buildings from their surroundings. These systems are very expensive and extremely sophisticated for developing societies like our own. Instead of these intelligent buildings however, I prefer a foolish or perhaps ingenuous architecture that at least is adapted and fashioned to its setting. My buildings are ingeniously intelligent because they provide the same levels of comfort and efficiency to their users yet rely heavily on tried and true solutions of the past.

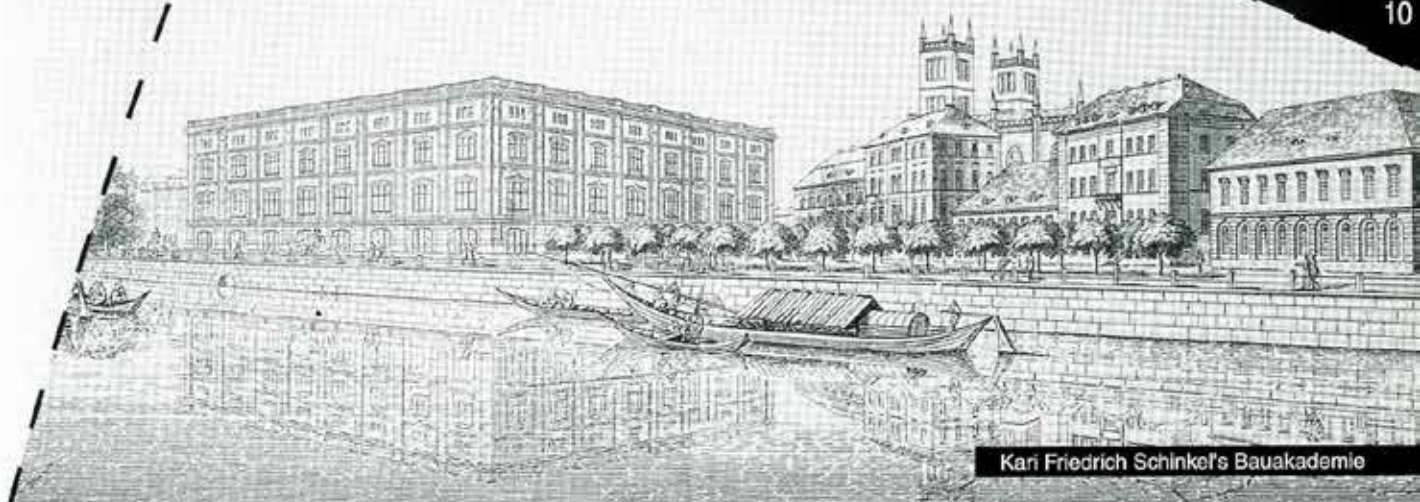
However, when globalizing markets try to flood the planet with vanguard technologies and products, two definite outcomes are a dislocation from cultural tradition and, consequently, a dislocation from architecture. Because of this, I have proposed to develop a more responsible intellectual attitude with the goal of privileging the products of the latitude. Architects and builders throughout history have had to balance conceptual and technological influences with inspiring examples that generate new attitudes. Nevertheless, few have been coherent. I propose to be so and believe that this critical attitude I am applying is applicable to every culture that finds itself on the receiving end of hegemonic thoughts and products.

To my surprise, I have discovered that intellectuals in the industrialized countries can embrace my ideas. In a recent competition for a new building in Berlin, Germany, which would occupy the site where Karl Friedrich Schinkel's Bauakademie once stood, I proposed a mangrove swamp for Berlin with a "potent urban landscape" that impressed the jury and caused the following commentary: "...Aquatic Garden, Bruno Stagno, from San Jose, the distant capital of Costa Rica, inspired by the competition of the Bauakademie designed a surprising architecture. Stagno widens the canal of the Spree River, covering with water the triangular square of Schinkel and thus transforming it into an aquatic garden. In it he creates in a vigorous architectonic order a garden planted with trees protected from the water with flowerpot stands of stone. A building of brick that retakes the measures of the original building of Schinkel, although compositively different, adapts itself to a corner of this pond. Coming down towards the water lead ten large stairs, forming a wide flight of stairs. A more raised stair goes to the lower floor level of the building: a courtyard, a loggia composed of pillars that escalate in three levels, which becomes an urban space. Above, at the top of the roof "clouds or waves", one finds in three level the academy... This ideal space (that) permits the Berliner an scape in order to come into contact with natural elements...".

The project that was selected together with other European ones proposes a new relation with the water and the trees, somewhat like the one of the tropical mangrove swamp. I risked bringing my simple ideas to a complex context, yet, my project represented a solution that could be understood and appreciated outside a tropical context. This is a legitimate example of a "contemporary architecture" that does not imitate, but instead, allows various civilizations to find their own voice.

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Kari Friedrich Schinkel's Bauakademie



Bruno Stagno and Architectural Biodiversity

Alexander Tzonis
Liane Lefaivre

The contest between the idea of a universal architecture, applicable to all situations, and the idea of many, individual kinds of architecture, relative to each situation, is once more dominant in the architectural debate.

We might call it the architectural absolutist/relativist contest. The struggle has come back under many different names in history: romantic versus classical, expressive versus normative, ethnic versus international, populist versus professional, bottom-up versus top-down, regionalism versus globalization. It always opposes two views: that it is possible and desirable to establish a universal culture and that these cultural values are hopelessly incommensurable with the particular, local, specific conditions of the real world.

Periodically one of the two views dominates the architectural scene, sometimes for good reasons, and sometimes for inappropriate ones. As much as the search and application of universal norms in architecture stood and still stands for communication and efficiency, it also stood and stands for oppression and waste. The same is true about dogmas of individualism and independence, for liberation and creativity, and also for sectarianism and isolationism. After the Second World War, architecture benefited from a world movement of technological advancement, giving undreamed of possibilities for construction and environmental control. But it also suffered equally, if not more, from a totalitarian application of solutions, which ignored the particularities of economic and ecological resources and the specific needs and aspirations of people. One might consider this as an effect of colonialism, imperialism or globalization, evidence of which one finds not only in several parts of the colonized world but also at the very heart of the land of the "colonizers."

When twenty-nine year-old Chilean architect Bruno Stagno arrived in Costa Rica in 1973 via Chile from Paris, one of the capitals of universal culture, it was as an internationally recognized young architect. By his mid-twenties, he worked with Jose Oubrierie in the design team of Le Corbusier's Church at Firminy. Le Corbusier, of course, had been an architect who, although committed to universal norms of design such as the standard of the Modulor or the piloti principle, had explicitly tried to integrate his work with the context of the region he was building in. Sometimes he had been successful, sometimes the results were dubious. However, Le Corbusier, like a number of "stars" of pre-war modern architecture, was exclusively involved in a mechanical reproduction of architecture, without consideration for the specifics of a particular site or community of users.

Stagno himself was not inclined to follow the same easy path leading to a one-architecture-fits-all rhetoric of universal, absolute values. This kind of servile imitation legitimized by universalism was already, as he writes, "everywhere" in San Jose, and the effects were clearly disastrous. The use of the technology of concrete in the name of Neo-Brutalism, a technology that had been creatively applied by Le Corbusier at the end of the 1940's in projects such as the Unite d'habitation, had become an exercise in mindlessness. The concrete, brutalist aesthetic did nothing but erase "local architecture, replacing it with the basic ubiquitous box." It ran against tradition, and made no effort to reconcile "tradition with technology." It denied factors of climate, ecology and environment, creating a "hermetic environment isolated from the natural one." The buildings, in other words, were "not coherent with the tropical paradigm." 1

Given this situation, newly immigrated Stagno undertook a task that nothing in his previous experience in Europe or Chile had prepared him for. He began to develop a Costa Rican architecture. This adaptation was worked out on all aspects: technical, environmental and cultural. Stagno's efforts to create such a synthesis in the framework of a regional context are part of a regionalist tendency that marked architecture world-wide. But it is more with the new generation of Tropicalist architects, who are trying to solve micro-climatic and construction complexities together with the problem of identity through a therapeutic approach to a post-colonial trauma, that Stagno is more in harmony with. As Singaporean architect and theoretician Philip Bay points out, "the romantic part of humanity call for a new paradigm to bridge historical memory and memory".² We find this similar concern with the place of traditional culture among architects and urban designers all over the Tropical belt, in the designs of Oscar Niemeyer in Brazil and Ricardo Porro of Cuba in the 1950s and 60s, and, more recently, in the work of Ken Yeang of Kuala Lumpur, Rahul Mehrotra of India, Geoffrey Bawa of Sri Lanka, Eduardo Tejeira-Davis of Panama, Tang Hok Beng of Singapore, and Severiano Porto of Brazil.³

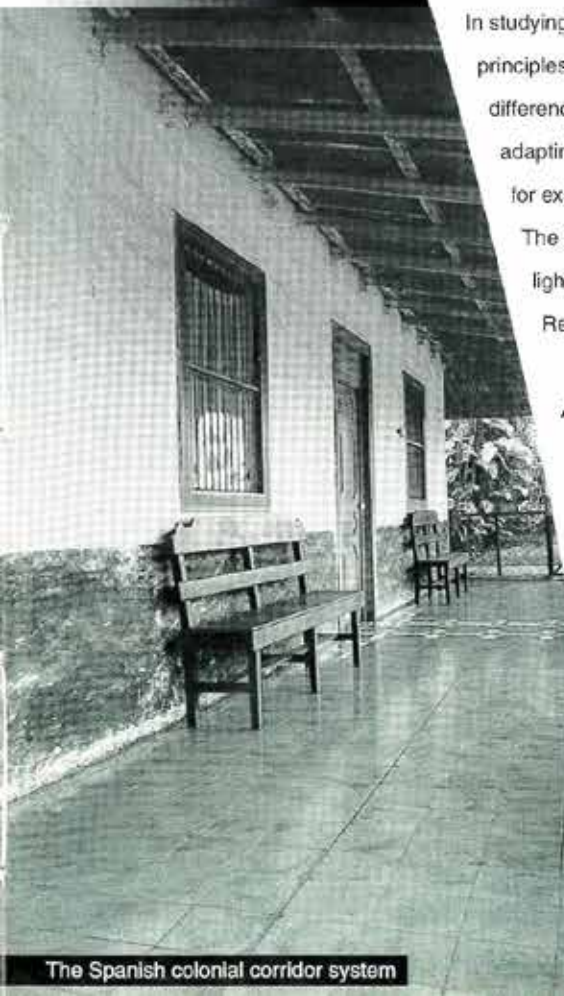
Stagno's work holds a distinctive place within this tendency. A series of early articles chart his early development. Among the historically defined traditional building types, three caught his attention and they are as follows:

- the pre-Columbian period (up until the Spanish colonialization),
- the Spanish Colonial period (1500 - 1821),
- the Republican period (1821- 1950).

In studying the context of regional prototypes, Stagno discovered in them their universal principles and general characteristics. In this manner he was able to depict in them not the difference for its own sake but the ingenious differentiation and instantiation of an abstract type adapting to the specific conditions of a situation. The adobe houses of the Spanish colonialists for example providing through its long corridor ventilation instantiating the Venturi suction effect. The same with the pre-Columbian buildings and their palm leaf and wood column walls, filtering light and air. Going back to an even earlier type, the Persian zaguan, the houses of the Republican period provided optimal conditions of light and ventilation for the household.

Another more recent prototype studied by Stagno was to be found in the domestic architecture of the company towns exploiting Costa Rica's "fincas bananeras", or banana plantations founded by the United Fruit Company commencing from the 1870s. From a certain point of view, this was a natural choice. Designed by European and American engineers, this architecture, like that of the Spanish colonial and Republican periods, adapted an international style architecture -- in this case derived from the bungalow -- to the tropical climate admirably. In fact, finca bananera buildings, thanks to their lightweight and economical frame structures, open walls and multiple, parallel rows of long overhanging eaves made up of sheets of zinc that protect the structure from sun and rain, were even more well adapted than the other traditional building types. Furthermore the internal spaces, according to Stagno's own account, were also the most aesthetically pleasing, maximizing the sensual play of light, shadow and breeze. Tellingly, the banana settlements are the only prototype that Stagno has dwelt on at some length, devoting an essay to it.⁴

Walls open to light and ventilation from the pre Columbian structure



The Spanish colonial corridor system

However, from another perspective, the choice was not so easy. As Stagno writes, it was "controversial" because of the "at times negative socio-economic consequences" of the banana plantation exploitation.⁵ The Banana Towns have been historically synonymous with imperialism in Central America, even in a traditionally democratic country like Costa Rica and they are seen as the site of social struggles according to American social anthropologist, Philippe Bourgeois.⁶ Edward Said's *"Imperialism and Culture"* equates the appropriation of elements from a hegemonic culture as an inevitable acceptance of the exercise of the hegemonic power behind it.⁷ However this is not the case here. The choice was not motivated by servility. Neither was it the result of a beleaguered, defensive and constricting stance of "resistance." Rather, it followed a third path, more difficult to define because it is less trodden. One can compare it to the "cultural cannibalism" of Brazilian intellectuals of the 1920s, creatively appropriating elements from European Modernism as Cuban cultural critic Gerardo Mosquera has mentioned.⁸

Indeed, what one observes in Stagno's design thinking is what cognitive scientists variously call "re-categorization," "re-framing," "re-cognizing." The four traditional building types that could not have been more different from one another in their morphology, social and cultural agendas, and political contexts. To see them as making up a cohesive set of elements, united by their micro-climatic efficiency, Stagno had to stand back and look at them through new eyes, in the new and unfamiliar, one might even say "strangemaking" way typical of critical regionalists. He had to strip these traditional buildings from their conventional meanings and bring to light what remained hidden to what Le Corbusier had once called "les yeux qui ne voient pas" (the eyes that do not see).⁹ The operation was cognitive, but the effect was social, cultural, economical and environmental. Not surprisingly the eyes that do see are often the eyes of the outsider. This is the case not only with Stagno in Costa Rica, but also with Felix Candela in Mexico, Renzo Piano in New Caledonia, and Pancho Guedes in Mozambique and John Utzon in Australia.

We cannot re-create the past, "except in the spirit of a masked ball" wrote Lewis Mumford in *"The South in Architecture"*.¹⁰ This stance is what a distinguished Critical Regionalist, like Mumford would call delusional, xenophobic, blood-and-soil type regionalism.¹¹ He would also describe it as a hallucinatory, kitsch and folkloristic type regionalism, the type which the tourist industry caressed. Stagno, like Mumford, is not interested in mimicking past architectural forms. He extracts from them only what is necessary to help solve the problems of the present. In other words, he reapplies them as, what cognitive scientists would call "precedent knowledge." The syncretic recombination of precedent knowledge that is everywhere evident in Stagno's work, is a heuristic approach that, arguably, is at the basis of all creative activity.¹²

"Hybrid" architecture. "Mestiza" architecture. These are different metaphors that Stagno has used to describe the combinatoric, syncretic design thinking that informs his designs. His designs which meshes and fuses into a harmonious whole the previously distinct and even mutually exclusive four phases of Costa Rican architecture.

Bruno Stagno and Architectural Biodiversity

Perhaps another metaphor that is also appropriate for an architecture of the tropics is "biodiversity."

Look closely at any building of Stagno's -- his Casa Friedlander (1978), Office Building of the 6th avenue (1993), Dinca Warehouse (1991-93), Bank of San Jose-Escazu (1996), Colegio Panamericano (1996) and especially his Ford Showroom/Bank of San Jose (1995) and his project for the Interactive Center for Peace for the Arias Foundation for Peace and Human Progress (1996) -- and you will discover a special sub-species evolved from a combination of the pre-existing architectural ancestors:

- 1) Walls open to light and ventilation from the pre-Columbian structures,
- 2) The Spanish colonial corridor system with Venturi effect,
- 3) The Zaguan from the Republican style house,
- 4) The long overhanging eaves and lightweight construction typical of the banana plantations.

If bio-diversity can serve as a metaphor for the architectural mind, perhaps architectural design can, in turn, serve as a metaphor for a constructive attitude toward nature, an attitude of biodiversity and sustainability. Since Darwin traveled throughout the tropics on The Beagle,¹³ the exuberant bio-diversity of the tropical regions of the earth have been of fascination to nature scientists. Princeton researcher John Terborch in his **"Diversity and the Tropical Rain Forest"** writes that "...the logic of life that infuses the tropics is still a mystery and we are only just beginning to understand how crucial it is to the well being of human life on the entire globe..."¹⁴

It is getting more and more difficult to disassociate architecture from the issues of ecology, sustainability, and biodiversity. They are of essence to our continuing quality of life. Perhaps the mind of a designer is like a tropical rain forest in which ideas cross-fertilize one another, creating countless sub-species, triggering evolutionary processes that shape complex inter-relationships, resulting in a rich profusion of architectural life. The tropics can be an optimal environment in which not only natural but also cultural biodiversity can unfold. This seems to be Bruno Stagno's message. What is certain is that he is one of the architects who is helping to keep the architectural ecosystem of ideas thriving.



The "Zaguan" from the Republican style house



Long overhanging eaves typical of the banana plantations

Bruno Stagno and Architectural Biodiversity

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Friedlander house 1976



Pan American School 1997



Dinca Warehouse 1993



Ford Showroom & Bank of San Jose - Curridabat branch 1995



Bruno Stagno

Ken Yeang

The immediate impression by a neophyte architect or graduating student critically looking at the large body of work of Bruno Stagno, is to presume that it must be absolutely and incredibly easy to be successful as an architect practicing in Costa Rica. They would however be grossly mistaken to believe that all one has to do is to graduate from architectural school, quickly get

professionally registered as an architect, hang up one's business shingles over the doorway, and then huge business will come flocking in so that one can get on with doing good architecture. Well, it is unfortunately not that easy, and it certainly has not been easy at all for Stagno, especially when he first started out in Costa Rica as a non-native of this small and fairly inaccessible country.

A collective volume of works of an architect such as this, often does not truly reveal those dreary mundane tribulations of running a practice such as coping with the usual hazards of marketing and getting clients, retaining paying clients and keeping good staff, balancing the dreaded elusive cash-flow, and other prosaic but crucially important aspects of managing projects under construction. Besides doing all these, Stagno is working within the economy and work environment of an emergent and developing economy where the support of a sophisticated construction industry is generally non-existent and the assistance of competent and inventive engineering consultants are few and far in-between. It is then doubly amazing to find that Stagno has produced a consistent, discursive and fine body of design and built works.

For in a small community, it is just dead easy for the architect to cave in to the undiscerning provincial client who wants something totally architecturally objectionable or phillistine. But to remain steady in his aspirations and beliefs, and to work within a credible agenda that is consistent with his own 'syncretic' and hybrid approach to tropical architecture while fighting simultaneous professional fires at a number of fronts (as with any professional practice) is certainly a major achievement for Stagno.

Stagno's agenda is both for a tropical contemporary critical-regionalist aesthetic as well as for a tropical systemic architecture. By this we mean that his designs must not only evolve from a vibrant hot-humid tropical climate in an emergent country without resorting to historical pastiche, but that the architecture must also function well as tropical structures in their response to the climate of the place.

Like the man himself, this is a cheery, breezy and unpretentious architecture. It is an architecture of layered roof planes, sometimes angled and laid out like sun-light-responsive leaves from a luxuriant and occasionally flowering tropical plant. The web-laced steel structures are light, stem-like and optimises economically on both local and imported materials. The thin-plane roofs like leaves, are appropriately deep pitched to efficiently discharge the heavy rainfall. The walls are light-weight skins to facilitate good cross ventilation when needed, and to allow clear natural light in to reduce the need for artificial lighting.

Simply stated, bioclimatic design is the design of buildings that optimises on all passive modes (such as through appropriate builtform configuration, appropriate building orientation, adequate facade design, effective sun-shading, use of vegetation and landscaping, appropriate building colour and the use of wind and natural ventilation). All these passive means need to be optimised in relation to the ambient climate of that latitude to achieve improvements in comfort levels better than the ambient conditions of the place. This must first be achieved through the use of non-active and hence non electro-mechanical means. Then following this, other modes of environmental servicing, such as the use of mixed mode systems and full modes where the inevitable, might be integrated. In all the projects presented, Stagno's architecture manifest evidence of all these, some to a greater and others to a lesser extent.

What next then for Stagno? In today's architectural discourse, it is no longer sufficient for such an architecture that depends in part on it's ability to operate systemically in response to the local climate to be simply designed intuitively and by general rules of thumb alone. Today's architectural and engineering communities would voraciously demand that the architecture's building performances need to be interrogated at the pre-design stage, quantified and demonstrated, and even it's post occupancy aspects evaluated and verified. One might then hazard a guess that Stagno has perhaps reached a saturation point here, as the zenith of his current set of investigative tropical and regionalist explorations.

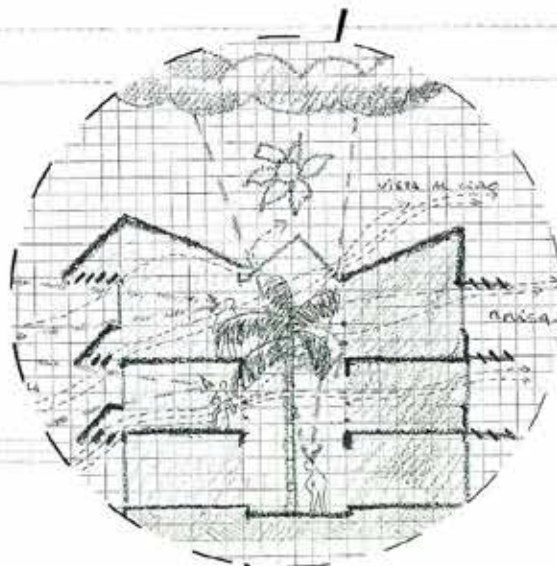
Interestingly, some pop sociologists contend that a person's life (and by analogy here, an architect's personal discourse) evolves in a series of cycles (of around ten years or so per cycle), and that after every cycle, the person goes through a form of crisis condition where he or she advances or regresses depending on the decisions taken. This change, for the better or for worse, depends on the situation and the responses. It is perhaps timely then to suggest that this body of work by Stagno signals for him a crisis point (and not meaning here a derogatory stage) in his architecture.

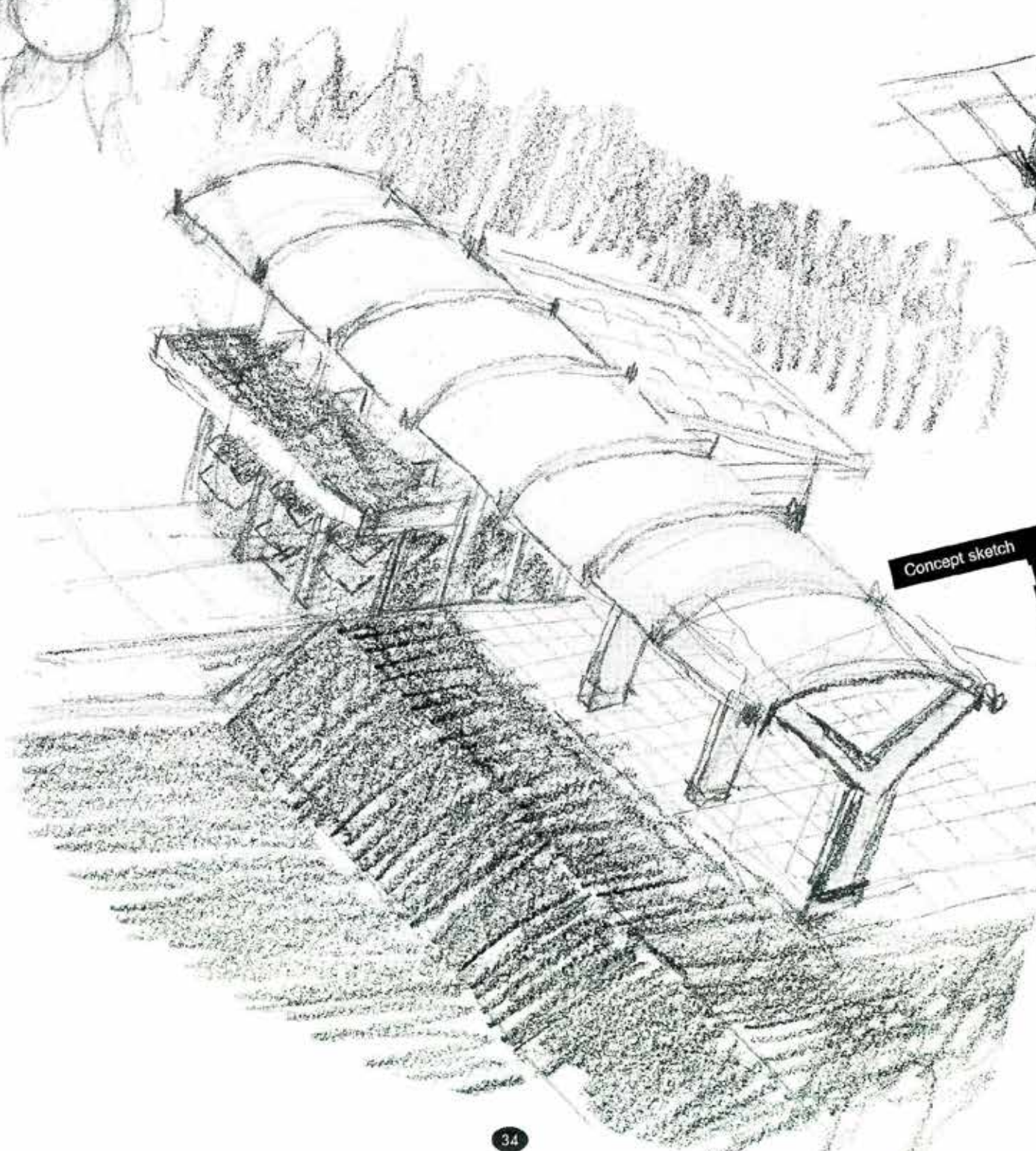
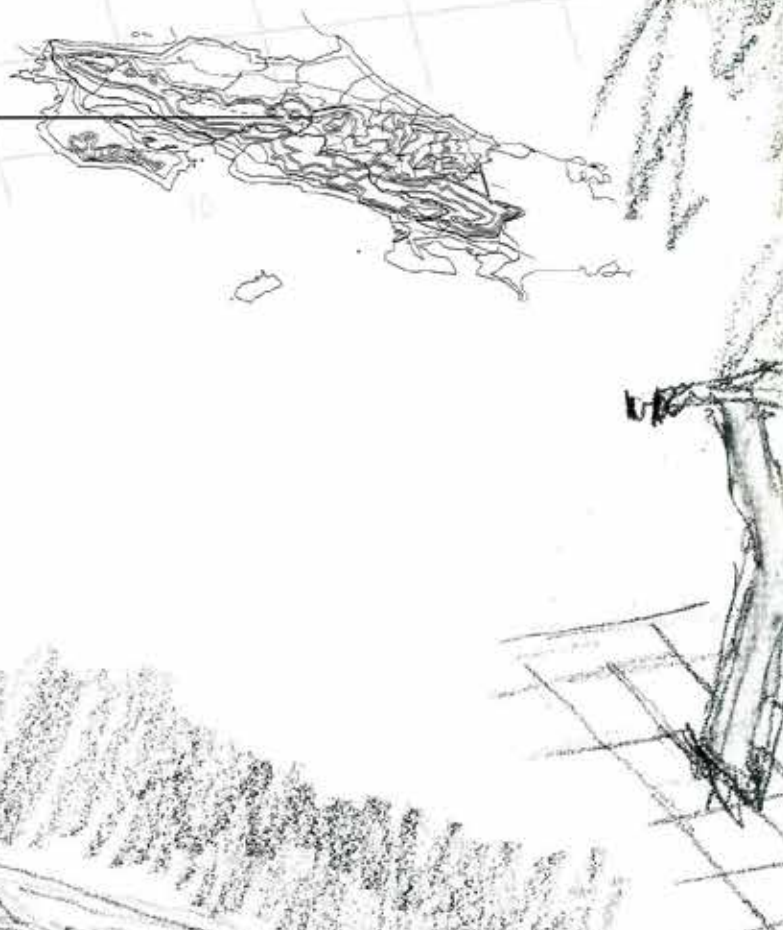
Now, in addition to Stagno seeking for more challenging projects that are of greater scale and complexity, and in different climatic zones, perhaps the next stage in Stagno's architecture and it's development might be for him to advance his builtforms into a more individual architectonic aesthetic, or even alternatively, to inventively advance the operational bioclimatic responses of his architecture.

Possibly these are the new challenges facing Stagno. Following from this encouraging series of his work, we wait anxiously for what is to come.

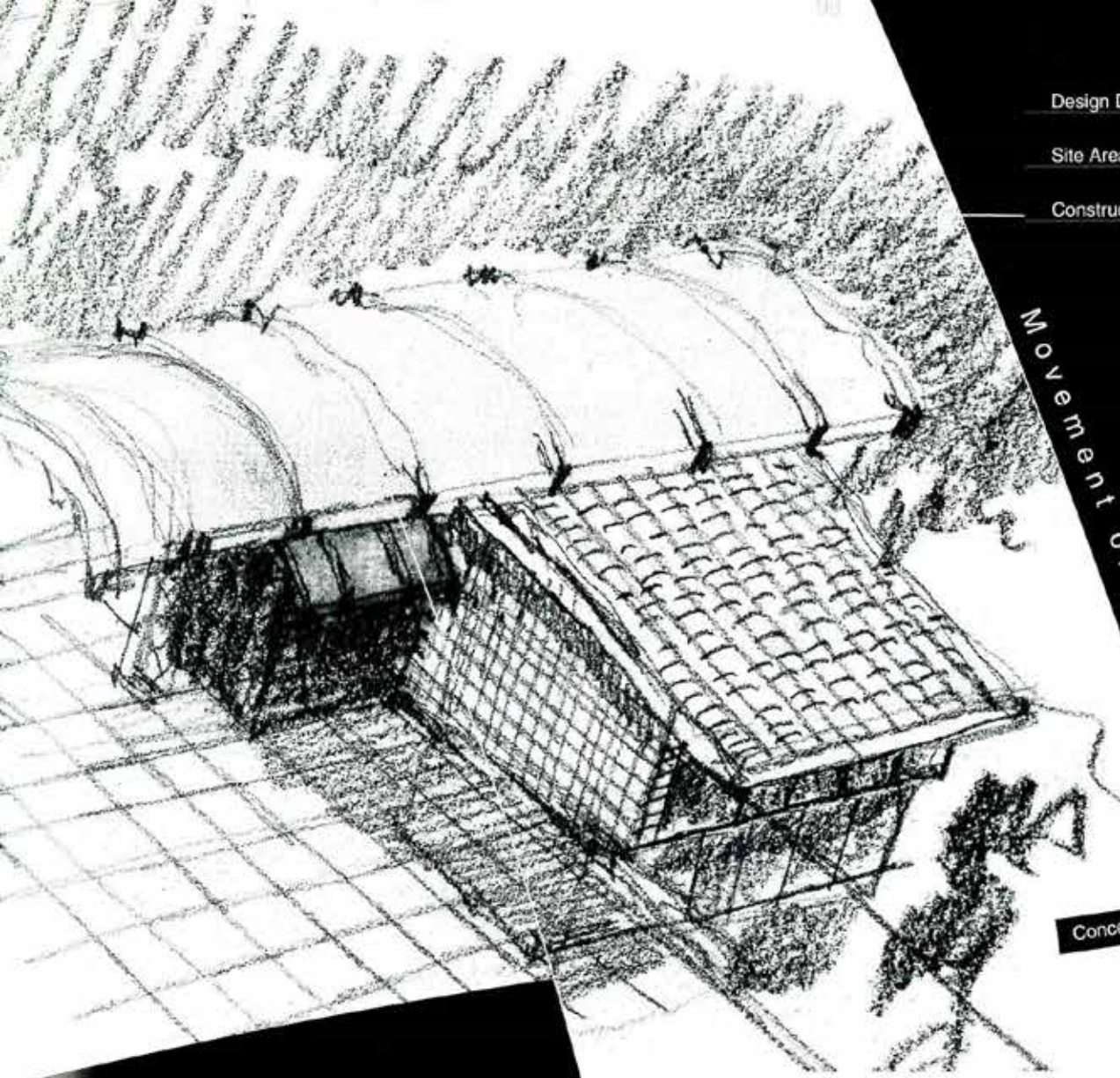
© Ken Yeang (1999)

Buildings and Projects





Concept sketch



Design Date : 1997

Site Area : 800 m²

Constructed Area : 240 m²

Movement of waves on the inner ceiling of a vault

Concept sketch

"...A couple of artists asked me for a project for their Studio.

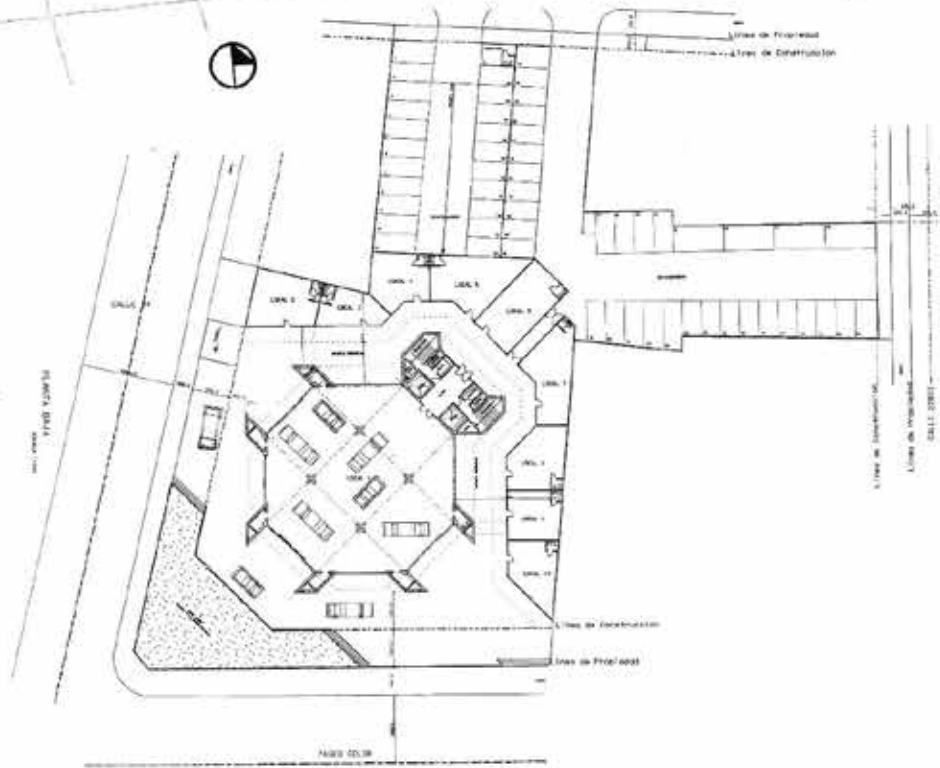
The conception was a composition of roof predominating a vault and a concrete basin with water, which reflects the movement of the waves on the inner ceiling of the vault.

The project proposes a workshop level above and another one for living quarters below these ceilings, with all the flexibility that the program requires..."

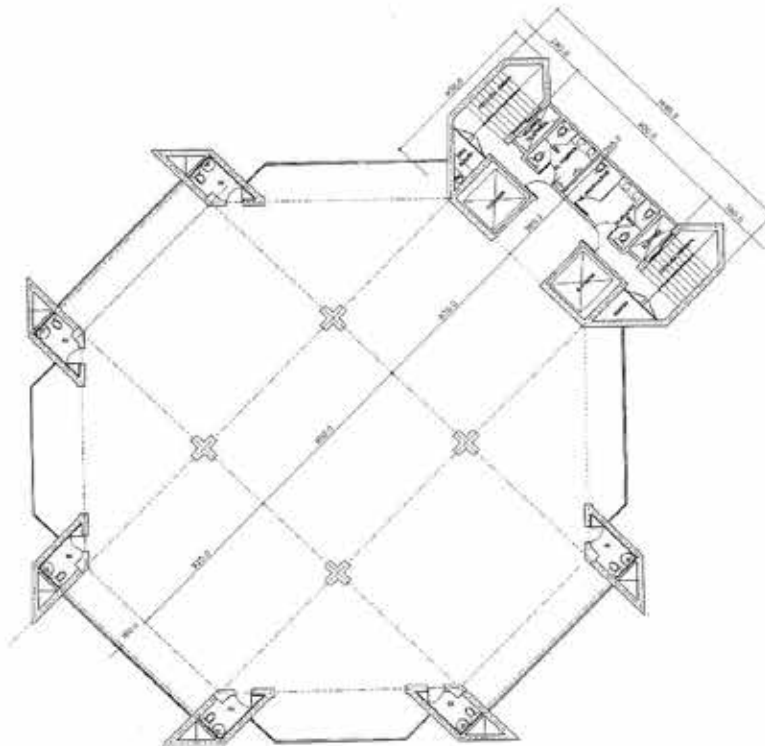
Mercedes Benz Building

San Jose, Costa Rica

Site Plan



Typical Floor Plan

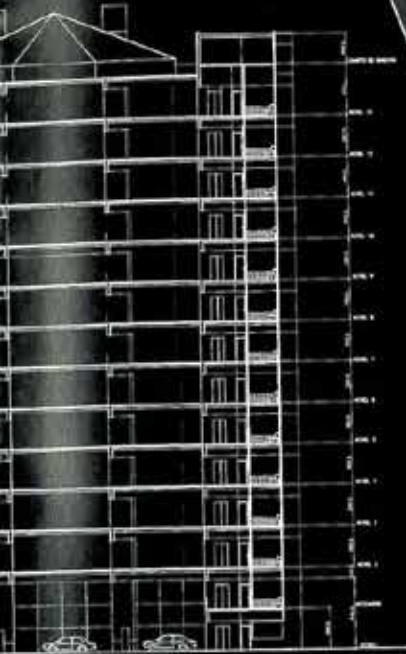


Free plan with 86% usable space
 Structural brick
 Horizontal brise soleil
 Natural lighting

Design Date : 1994

Site Area : 4,249 m²

Constructed Area : 22,400 m²



Corte Transversal

"...This building is located in a corner lot with two additional narrow entrances in San Jose's main avenue.

The design is determined more by the spatial and functional conditions than by environmental ones.

In Costa Rica there are few tall buildings hence, any construction of more than 4 floors becomes a landmark for the people. In this country of strong teluric activity, structure must be symmetrical to avoid torsion and excentricity, becoming a determinant factor for the architecture.

The load-bearing walls are in the perimeter to achieve a free-plan with 86% of usable space.

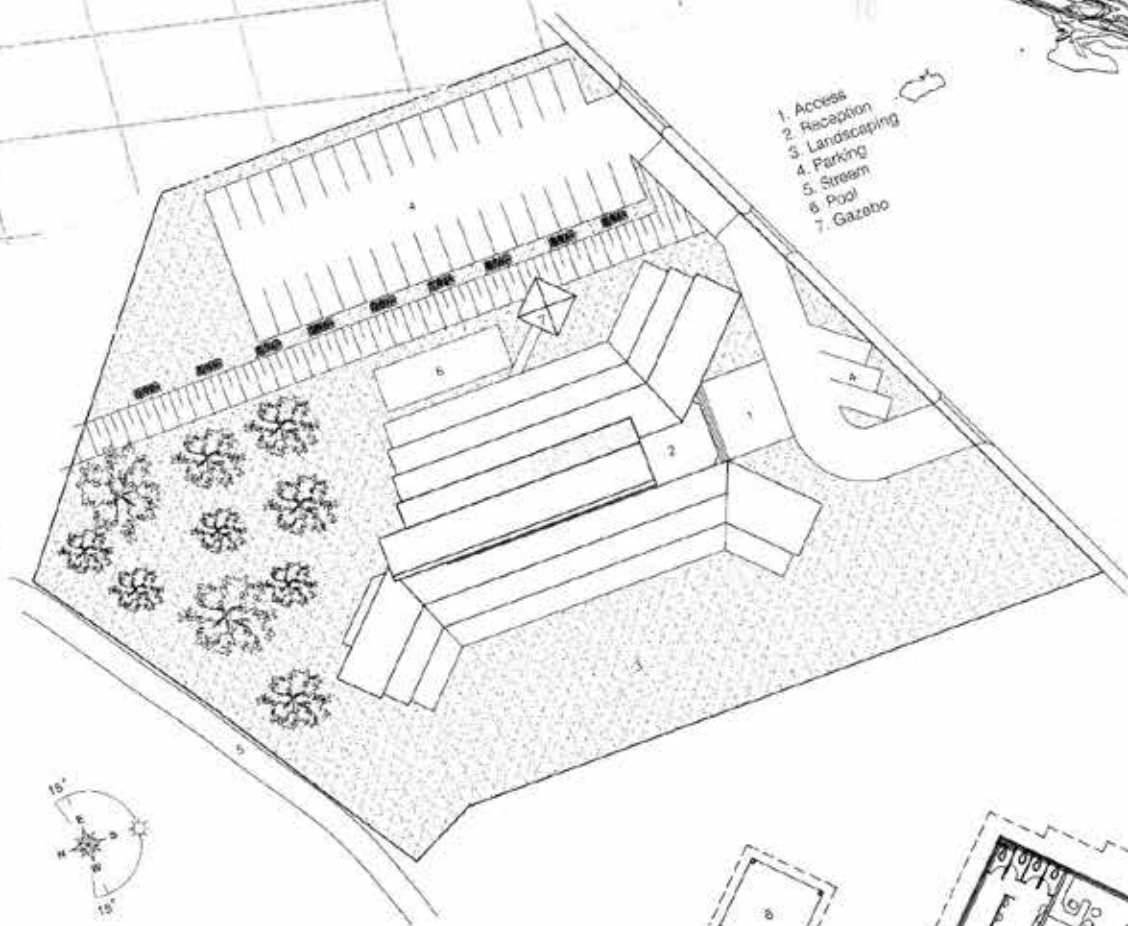
In the facade the columns are clad with structural brick to reduce maintenance and take advantage of the local craftsmanship. The curtain wall offsets in the vertical sense in three steps and through horizontal brise-soleil. Hence direct natural lighting is achieved..."

Consumer Excepcional Nazca Saatchi & Saatchi

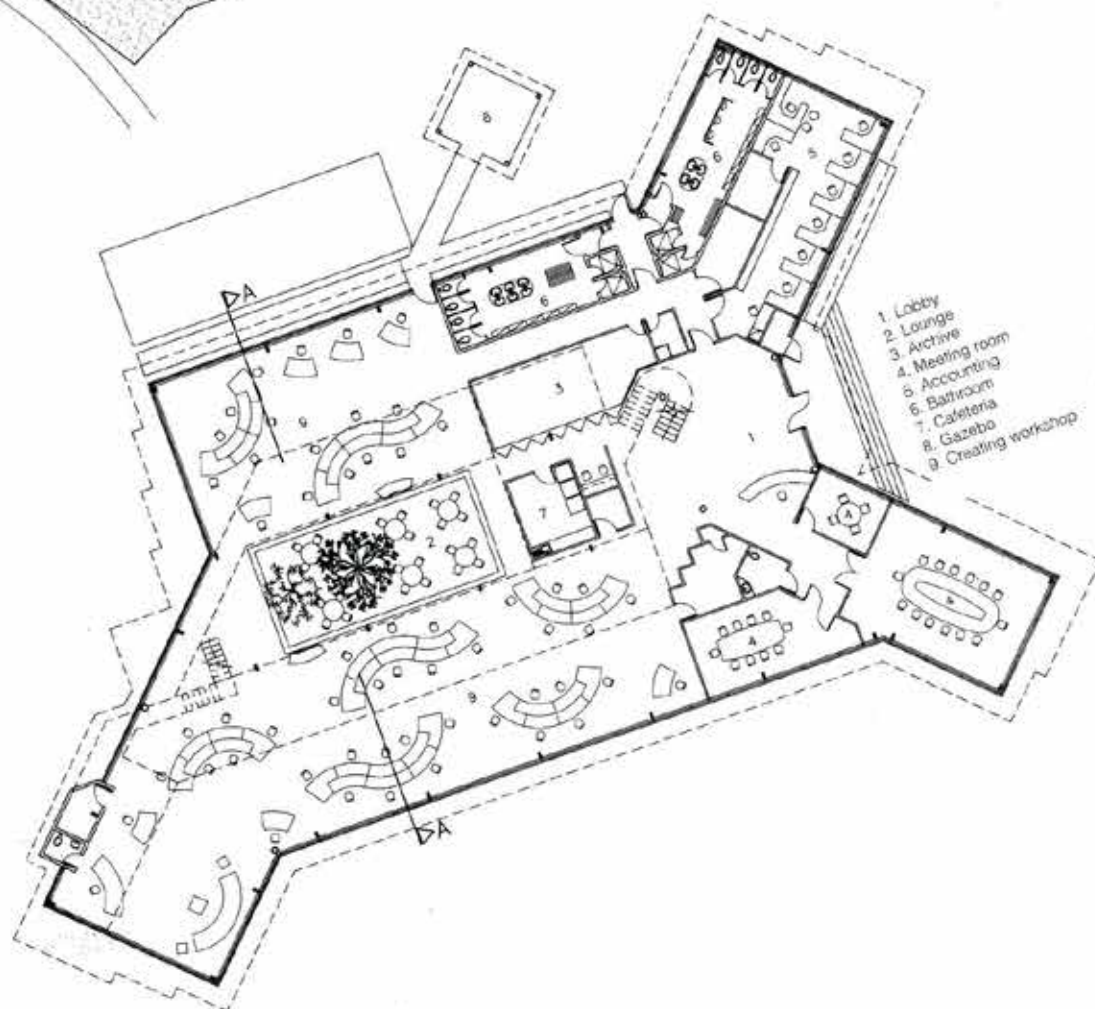
On-going

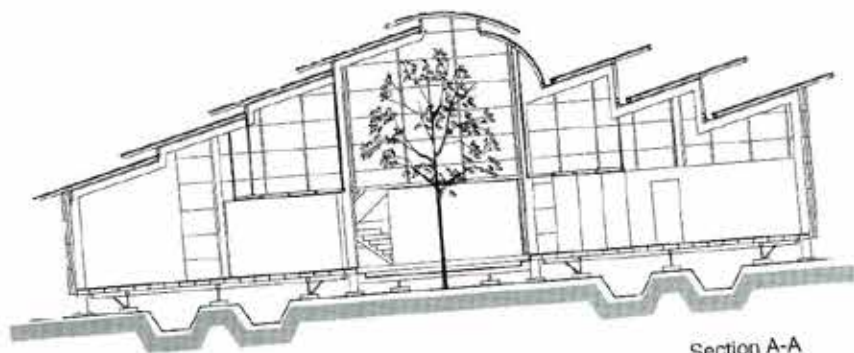
Belen, Heredia, Costa Rica

Site Plan

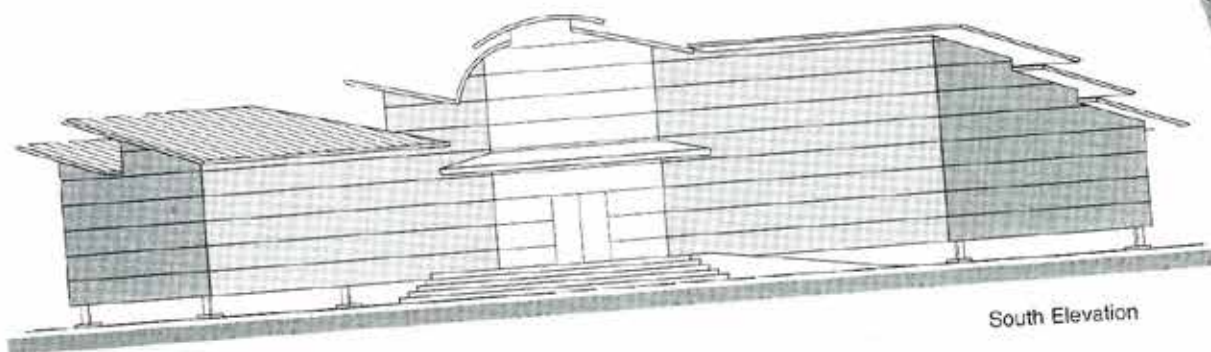


First Floor Plan

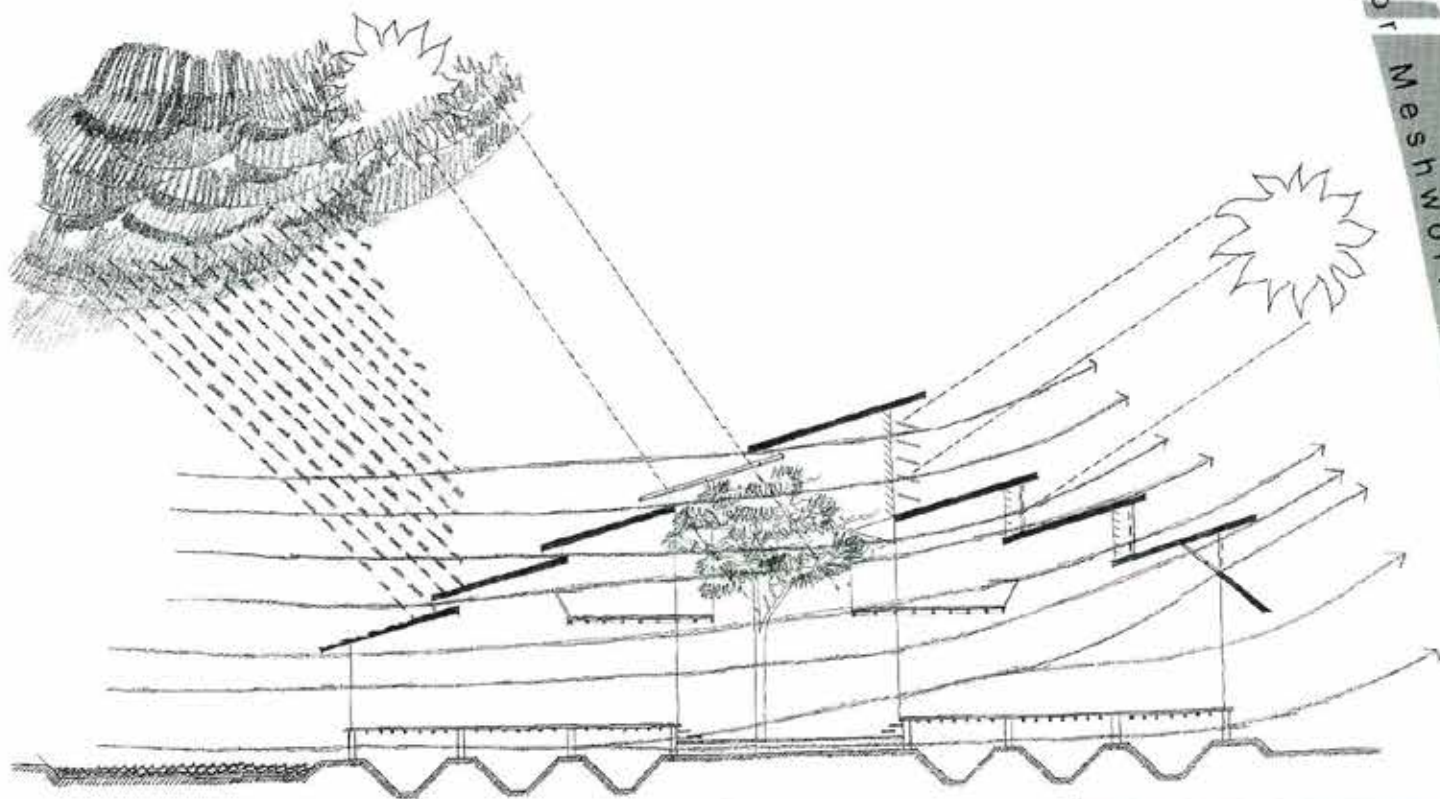




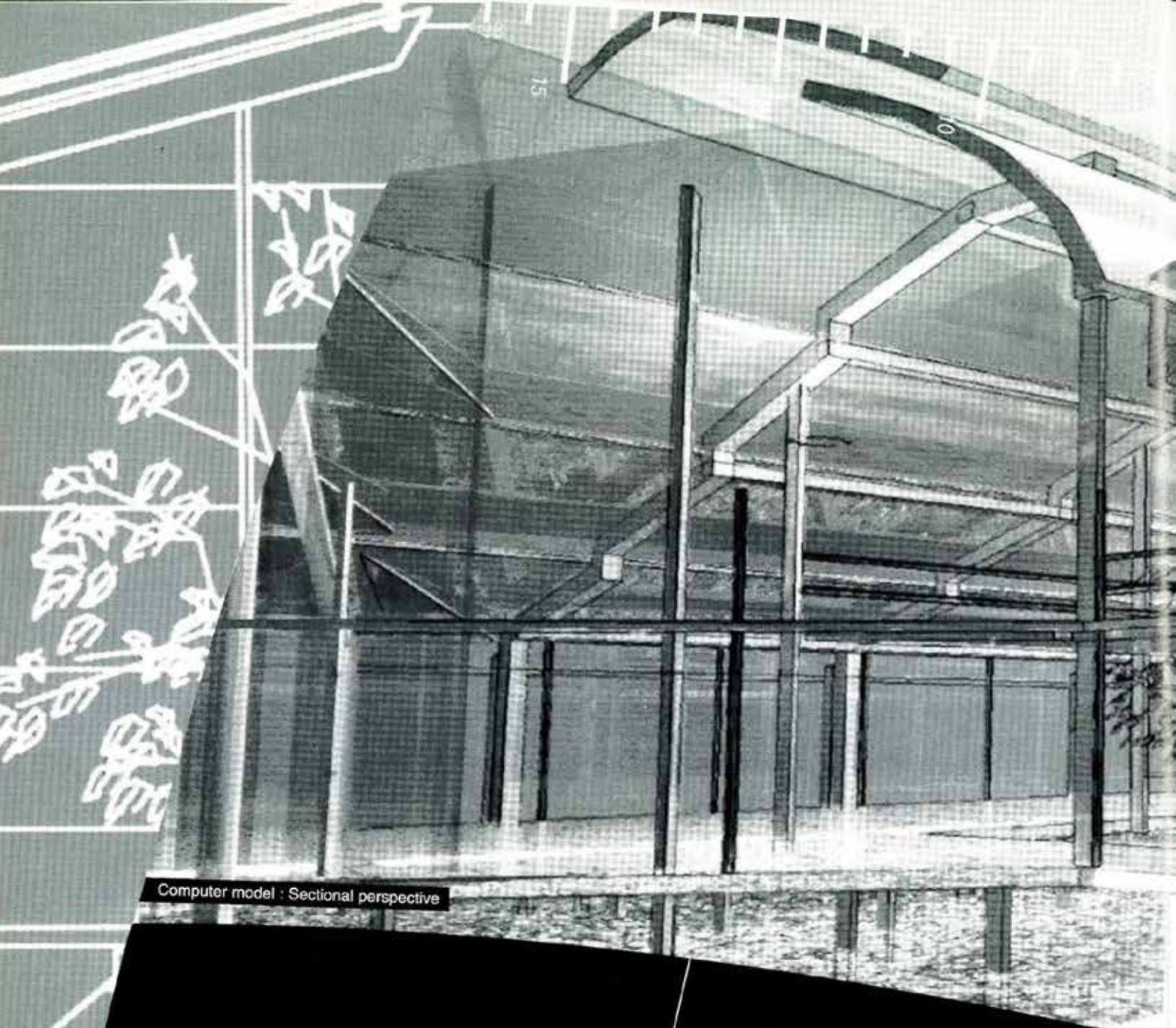
Section A-A



South Elevation



Open space
Cross ventilation
Roof
Raised floor
Meshwork floors



Computer model : Sectional perspective

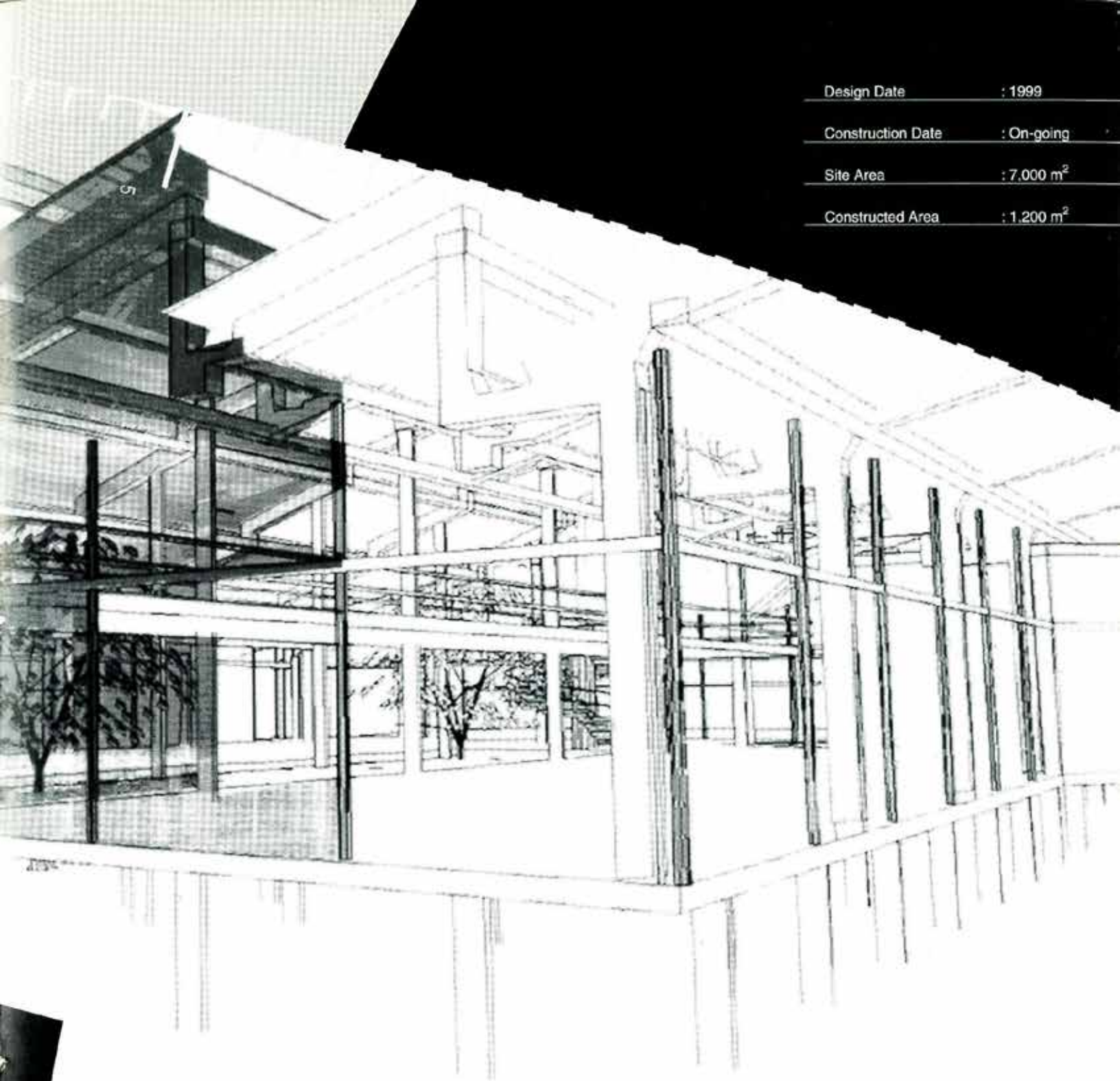
"...This prestigious advertising agency has introduced the idea of working in an open space, sharing everything, as a stimulus for collective creativity. It is known that creativity is under certain conditions contagious. This building offers a space with the characteristics of liberty, transparency, and flexibility that are necessary to reach that aim.

A building rising from the floor and facing the dominant breeze from the east has been suggested for this even lot. A specific study of cross ventilation roof systems defined this roof design which avoids air conditioning. The raised floor also contributes to the ventilation.

The swimming pool, as a part of the liberty to the creative stimulus, is at the east side, in order to cool and humidify the hot air that is sometimes very dry in the summer.

Mezzanines and footbridges with floors of meshwork help in the perception of open space and the passing of the breeze.

The vegetation of the central bar adds an element of naturalness and liberty and, at the same time, filters the light..."



Design Date : 1999

Construction Date : On-going

Site Area : 7,000 m²

Constructed Area : 1,200 m²

Seagrams Office Building

1997 San Jose, Costa Rica



Site Plan

- 1. Entrance
- 2. Car entrance
- 3. Parking
- 4. Office building
- 5. Cafeteria
- 6. Liquor shop
- 7. Landscaping
- 8. Guard house
- 9. Water mirror



First Floor Plan

- 1. Reception
- 2. Atrium
- 3. Marketing
- 4. Accounting
- 5. Bathrooms
- 6. Cafeteria
- 7. Liquor shop
- 8. Landscaping
- 9. Visitor parking

Design Date : 1997

Site Area : 3,800 m²

Constructed Area : 1,000 m²

Central atrium Large internal gutters

"...The Liquor Company SEAGRAMS asked us to design its new headquarters in a spacious lot of 3.800 m².

It was possible to conceive the building with a central atrium on two floors and with four facades.

As expressly requested, an air conditioning system was included. To reduce the cost of this equipment and its operation, the thermic load caused by the sun was diminished by means of sunshades and eaves in such a way that the windows are shaded.

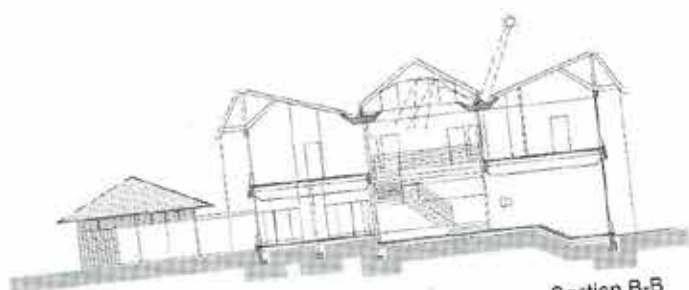
The special design of the roofs, by means of large, internal gutters for the rainwater, introduced a reflex of the water in motion on the curved ceiling of the atrium. This is a symbolic homage to the *raison d'être* of the company.

An exhibition and sales room completes the design. This room extends toward the street in order to bring nearer the exhibition of the products.

The expression of this architecture stresses the roof and the necessary climatic protections, in order to avoid the incidence of the sun as well as to obtain an adequate illumination comfort by eliminating the dazzle due to the excessive exterior luminosity..."



East Elevation



Section B-B



June 21st
7:00 am



June 21st
8:00 am



June 21st
10:00 am



June 21st
11:00 am



June 21st
1:00 pm



June 21st
2:00 pm



June 21st
(summer solstice)
4:00 pm

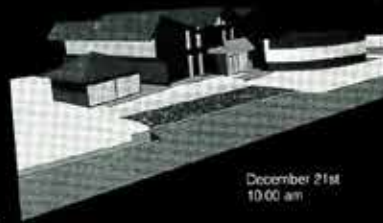


June 21st
(summer solstice)
5:00 pm

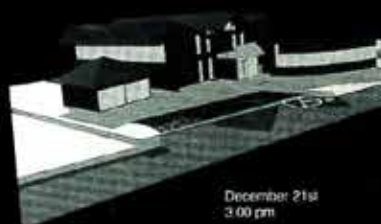
Summer Solstice
Shadows Studies



December 21st
8:00 am



December 21st
10:00 am



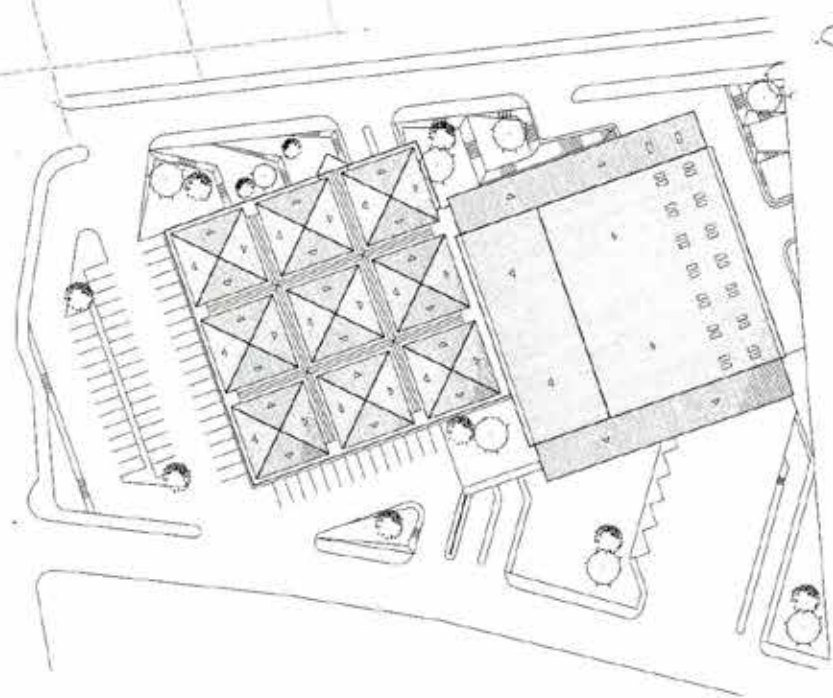
December 21st
3:00 pm

Winter Solstice
Shadows Studies

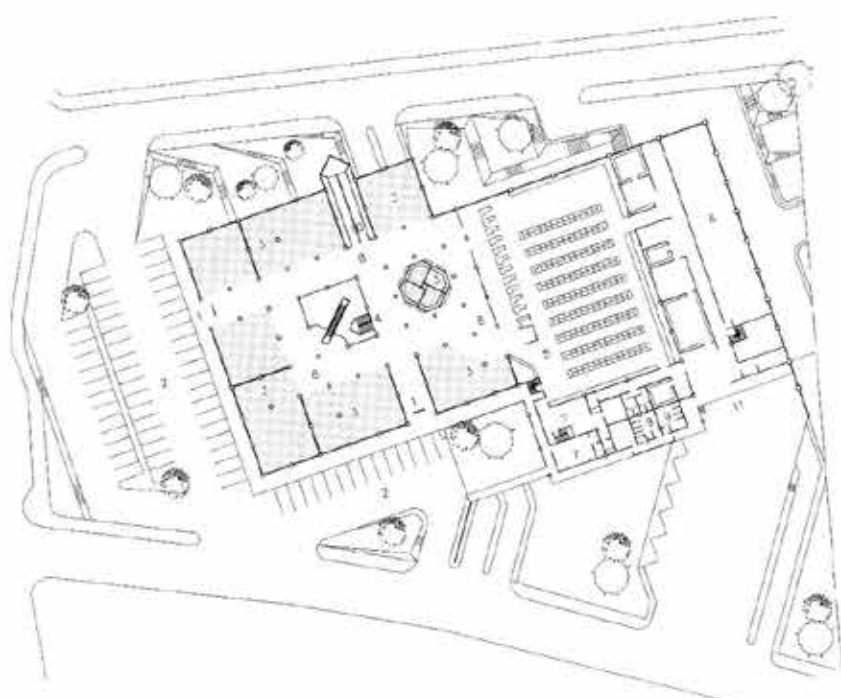
Plaza Mayor Shopping Center (1st Phase)

1990 San Jose, Costa Rica

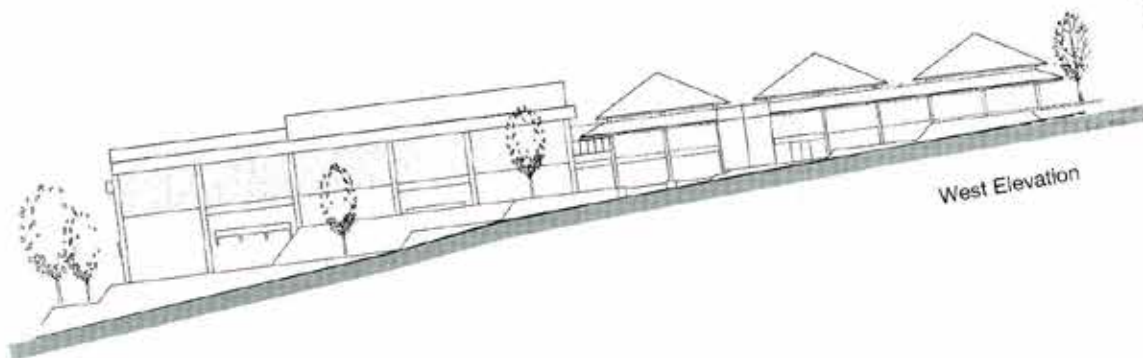
Roof Plan



Site Plan



1. Entrance
2. Parking
3. Shopping area
4. Stairs
5. Super market
6. Warehouse and facilities
7. Administration
8. Circulation area
9. Rest room
10. Ramp
11. Dock



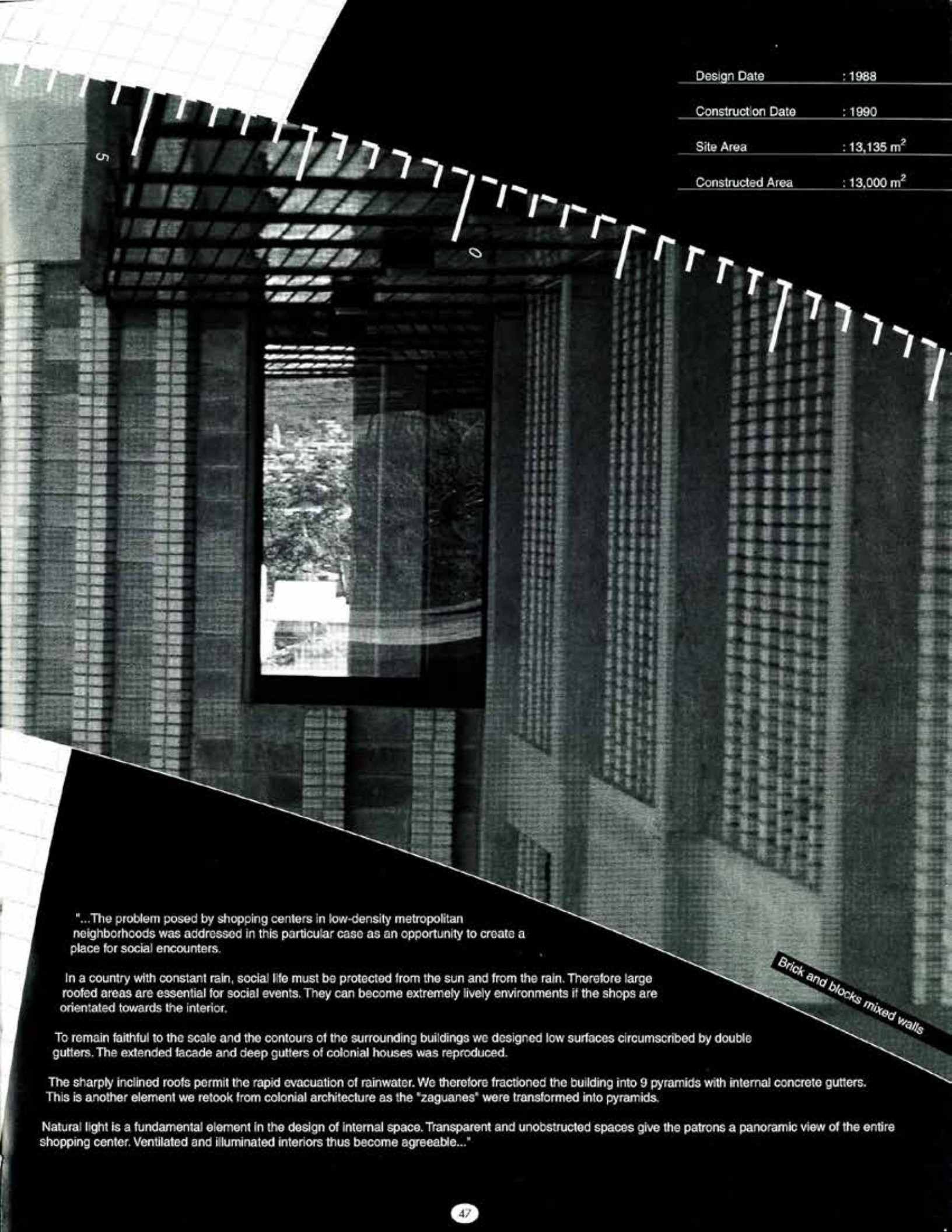
Surfaces Double gutters Sharp inclined roofs



Access ramp

Illuminated and ventilated "Zaguan"

Shopping area



Design Date : 1988

Construction Date : 1990

Site Area : 13,135 m²

Constructed Area : 13,000 m²

"...The problem posed by shopping centers in low-density metropolitan neighborhoods was addressed in this particular case as an opportunity to create a place for social encounters.

In a country with constant rain, social life must be protected from the sun and from the rain. Therefore large roofed areas are essential for social events. They can become extremely lively environments if the shops are orientated towards the interior.

To remain faithful to the scale and the contours of the surrounding buildings we designed low surfaces circumscribed by double gutters. The extended facade and deep gutters of colonial houses was reproduced.

The sharply inclined roofs permit the rapid evacuation of rainwater. We therefore fractioned the building into 9 pyramids with internal concrete gutters. This is another element we retook from colonial architecture as the "zaguanes" were transformed into pyramids.

Natural light is a fundamental element in the design of internal space. Transparent and unobstructed spaces give the patrons a panoramic view of the entire shopping center. Ventilated and illuminated interiors thus become agreeable..."

Brick and blocks mixed walls

Plaza Mayor Shopping Center (2nd Phase)

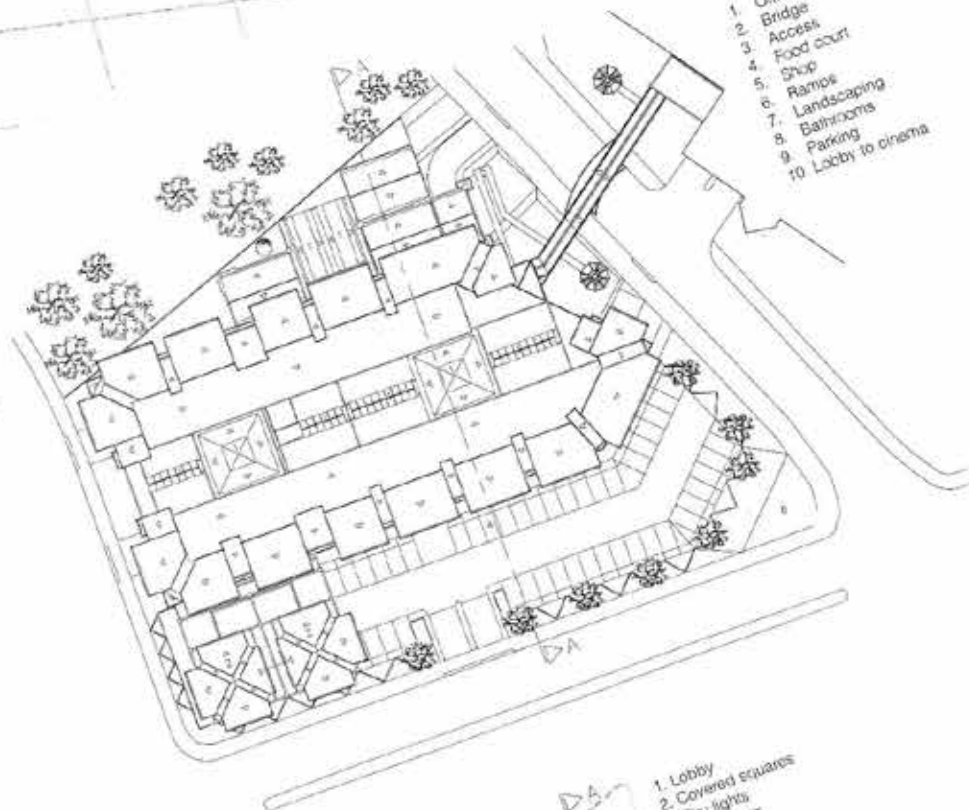
1998

San Jose, Costa Rica



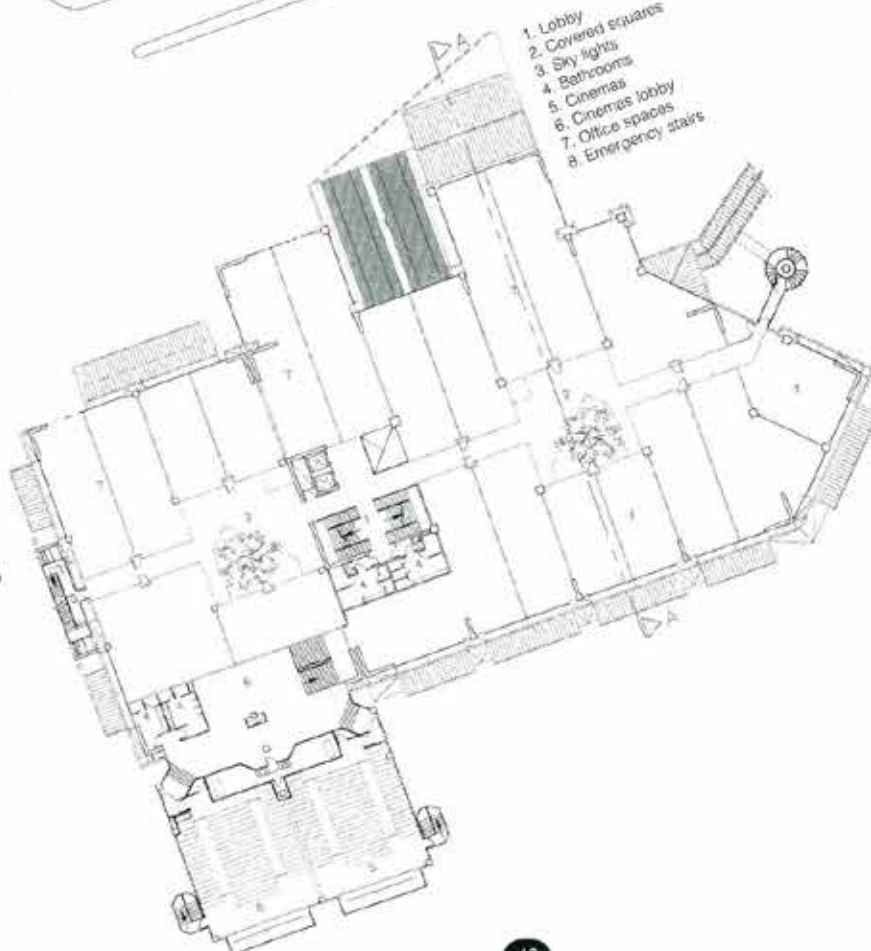
1. Office lobby
2. Bridge
3. Access
4. Food court
5. Shop
6. Ramps
7. Landscaping
8. Bathrooms
9. Parking
10. Lobby to cinema

Site Plan



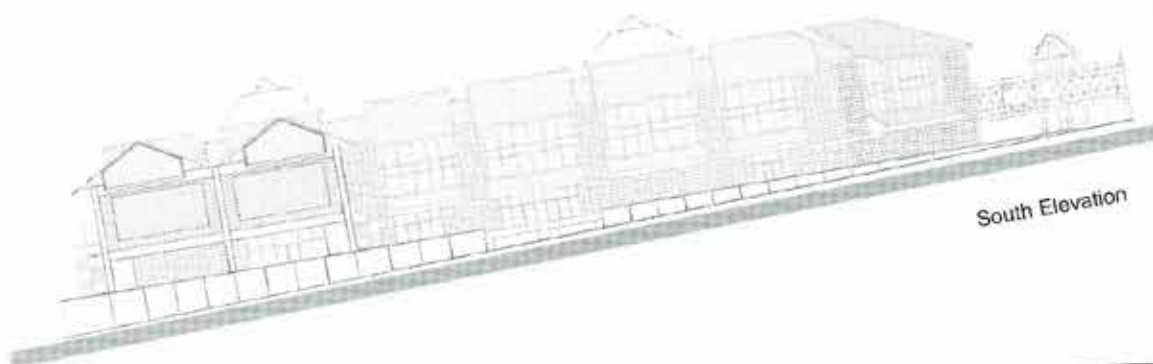
1. Lobby
2. Covered squares
3. Sky lights
4. Bathrooms
5. Cinemas
6. Cinemas lobby
7. Office spaces
8. Emergency stairs

Typical Floor Plan (offices)





Section A-A



South Elevation

Continuity of materials formally related



roofs Naturally illuminated

Design Date	: 1996
Construction Date	: 1998
Site Area	: 6,950 m ²
Constructed Area	: 19,000 m ²

Southern view

Northern view of link between both buildings



External view of cinema

DATA RECORDING

3rd floor, main patio
(under plexiglass roof)

A Sun (indoor)
temperature 28.4 C
humidity 56%
light >5000 Lux

B Sun under metallic shades
temperature 26.0 C
humidity 61%
light >5000 Lux

C Into the shade (indoor)
temperature 26.6 C
humidity 59%
light 800 Lux

D Outdoor sun (no protection)
temperature 33.4 C
humidity 44%
light >5000 Lux

"...Ten years after the Plaza Mayor Shopping Center was finished, the facing lot was bought to construct the new phase.

I decided to design a project that was a continuation of the First but showing an evolution. Something like considering the first one as the tradition of the second.

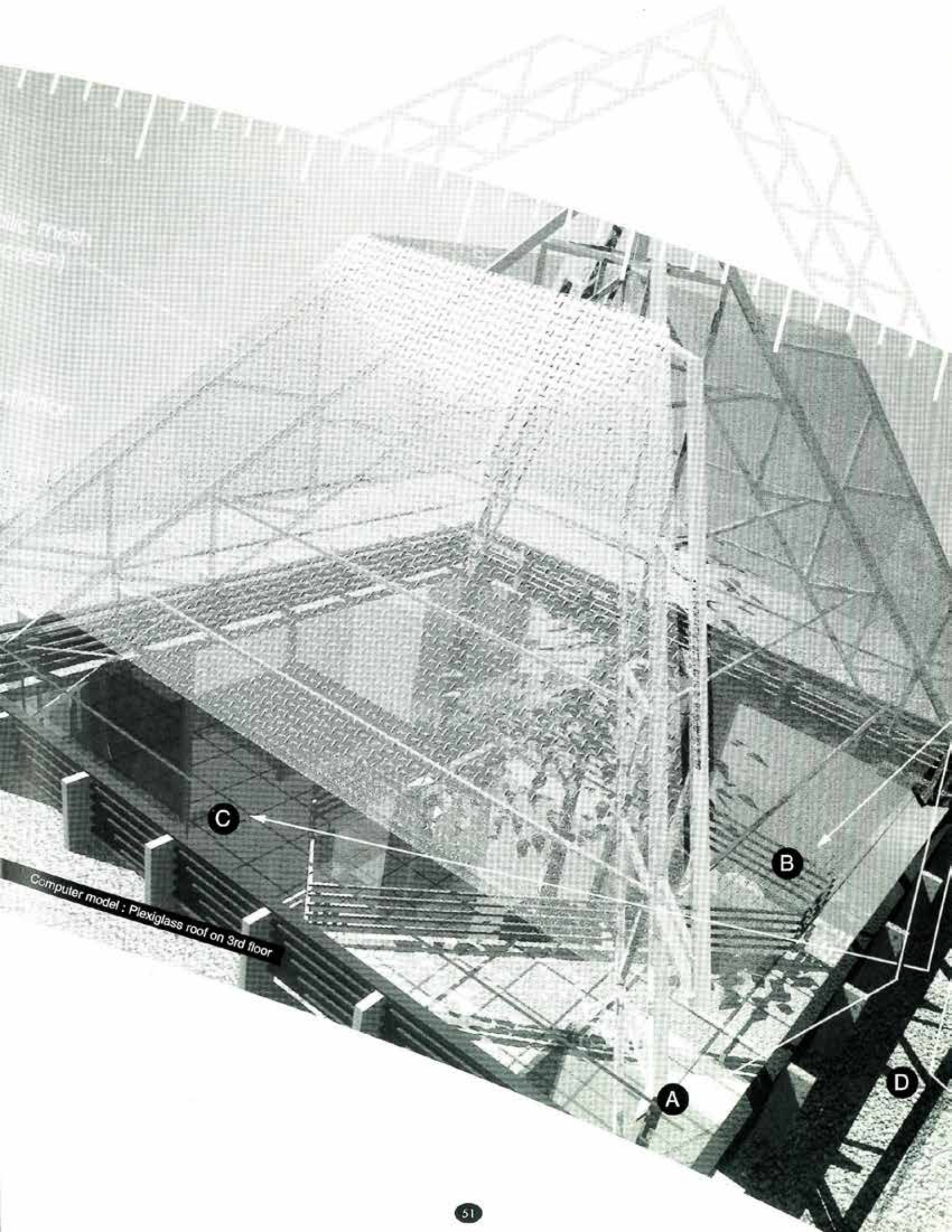
This program was more complex because it had to include two stories for offices.

I used the materials and colors and on the urban level I was seeking a spatial integration of both Centers. Functionally, a pedestrian bridge assured the link between both buildings. With the Park towards the North, the view was taken advantage of as well as being employed as a light source for both the offices and commercial spaces.

The two levels of office spaces have internal plazas with skylights and trees that provide meeting points and spaces. The offices have a naturally illuminated facade.

These two buildings have a continuity of materials besides the strong character of the roofs that are formally related. I used the most common and inexpensive materials in their natural appearance.

The big eaves cover the facades and protect them from the sun..."



C

B

A

D

Computer model : Plexiglass roof on 3rd floor

Plaza Mayor Shopping Center (2nd Phase)

1998 San Jose, Costa Rica





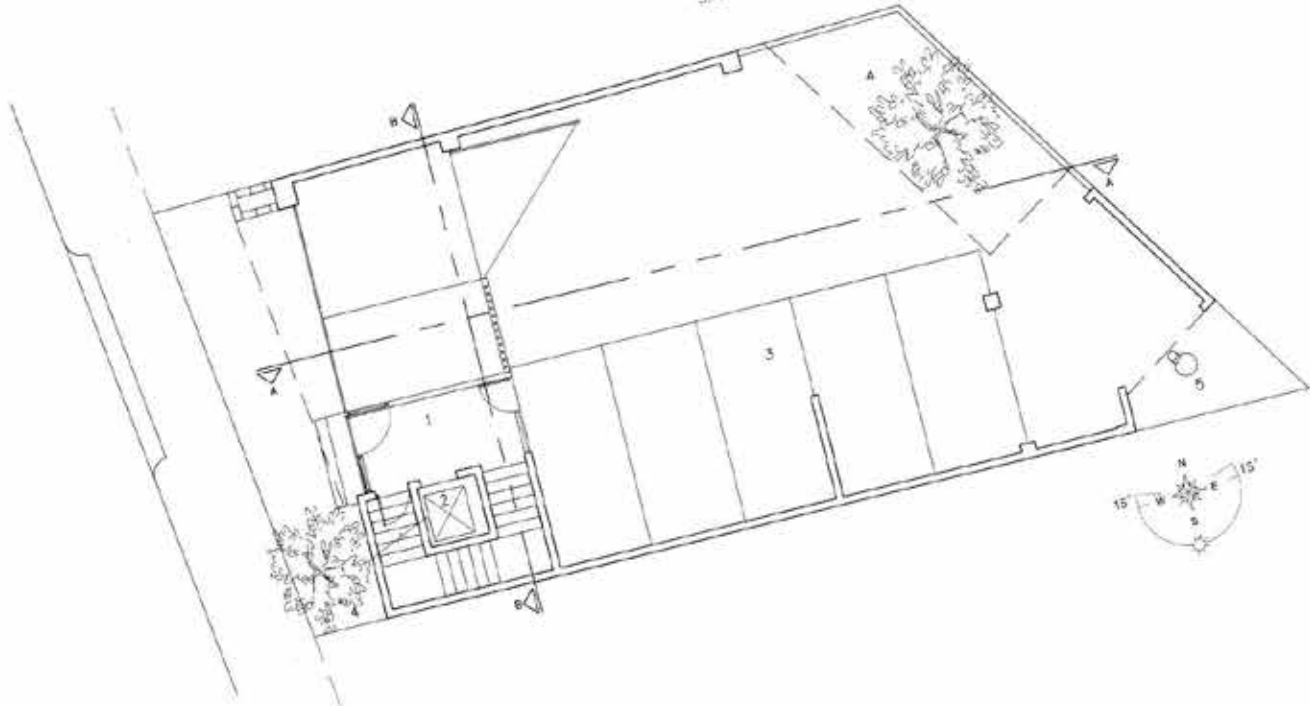
Malinche Office Building

1997

San Jose, Costa Rica

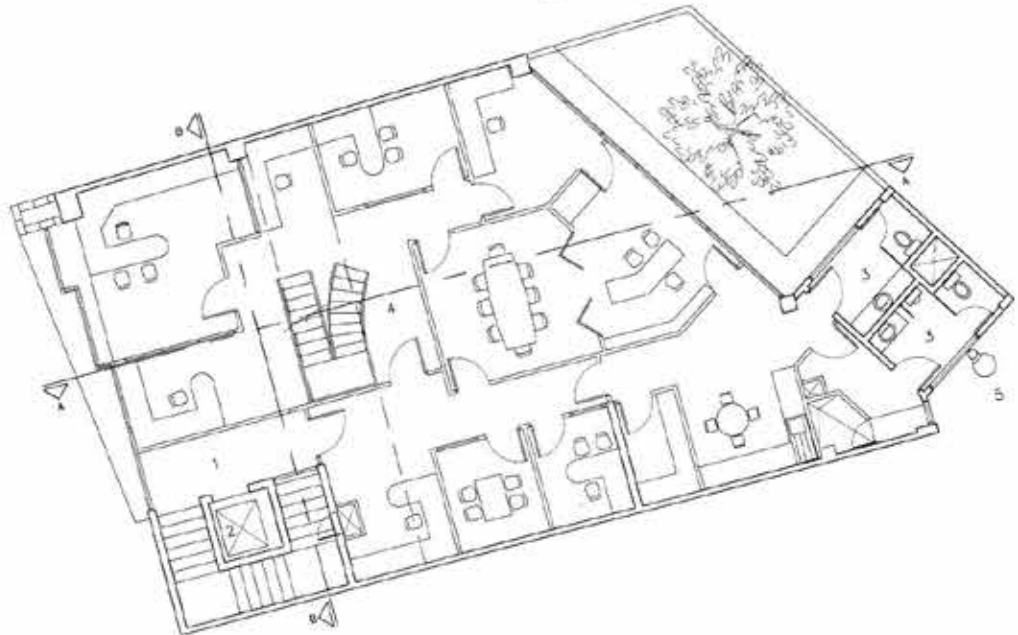


1. Lobby
2. Elevator
3. Parking
4. Garden
5. Garbage shuttle

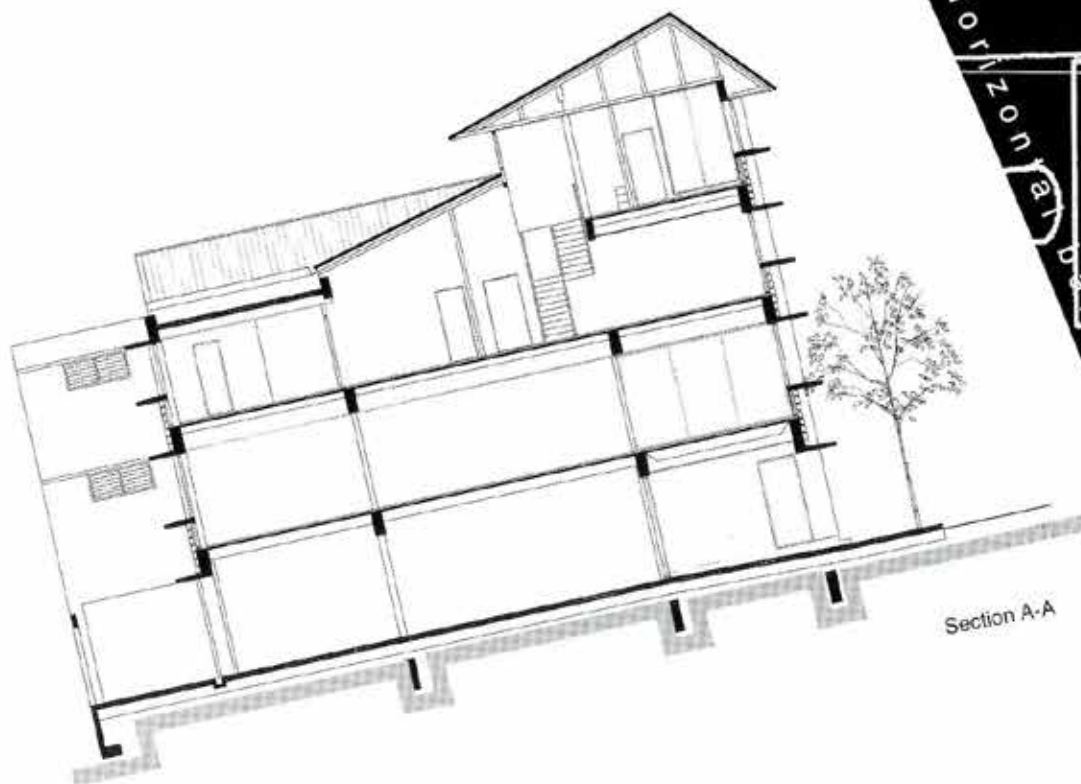


Ground Floor Plan

1. Lobby
2. Elevator
3. Bathrooms
4. Office space
5. Garbage shuttle



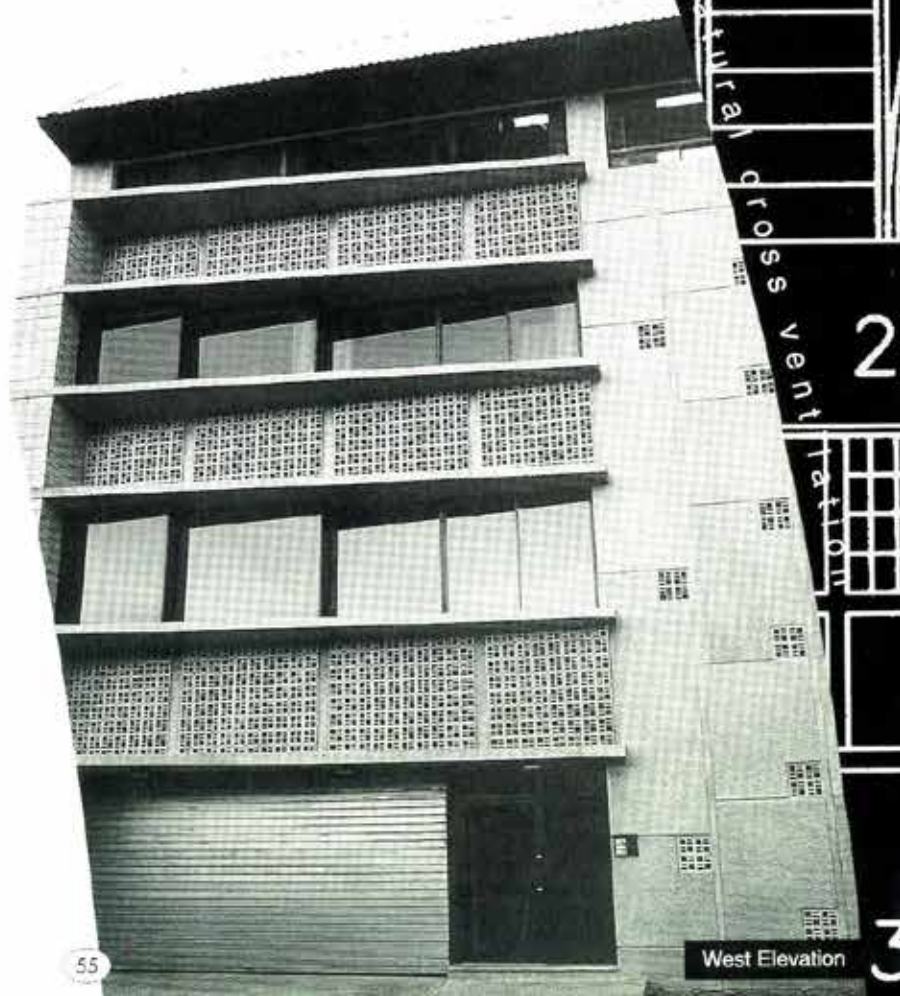
Typical Floor Plan



Section A-A



Section B-B



West Elevation

Horizontal bands of perforated brick

Natural cross ventilation

3

2

3

"...This office building is located in a residential neighborhood that starts its transformation to a mixed use.

The lot is narrow and small, as the majority of them in this quarter, what makes us foresee in the future the urban transformation, with a similar covering, height and alignment with the street. The lot has an orientation towards the West and a significant misalignment with the street. We make use of marquees to resolve this and achieve the alignment with the street. The West windows were also aligned but in a different way.

The horizontal bands of perforated brick assure the natural cross ventilation to obtain a comfortable interior.

The roof needs a strong slope due to the abundant rainfall. This inclination provides interesting and additional ample spaces.

To obtain a homogeneous and natural illumination, a central skylight was designed that also permits the exit of the air, that penetrates through the facades..."

Street view of main facade

Design Date : 1995

Construction Date : 1997

Site Area : 290 m²

Constructed Area : 720 m²

Horizontal bands of perforated brick and glass panels in main facade

Dole Fresh Fruit Co. Board of Directors

1995

San Jose, Costa Rica

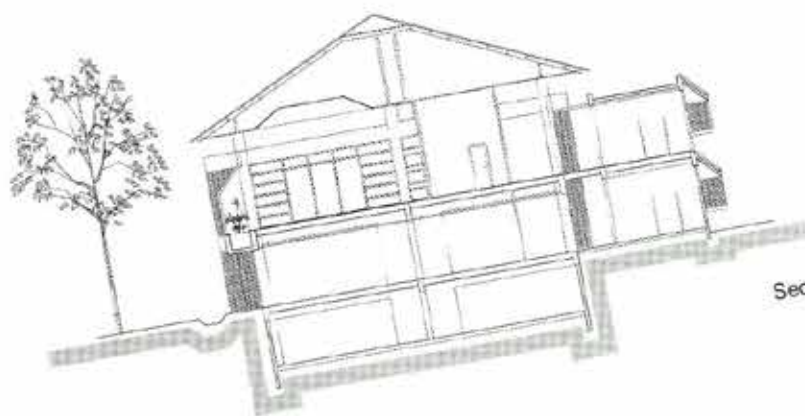
1. Board of directors building
2. Bridge
3. Existing building
4. Coffee plantation



Site Plan

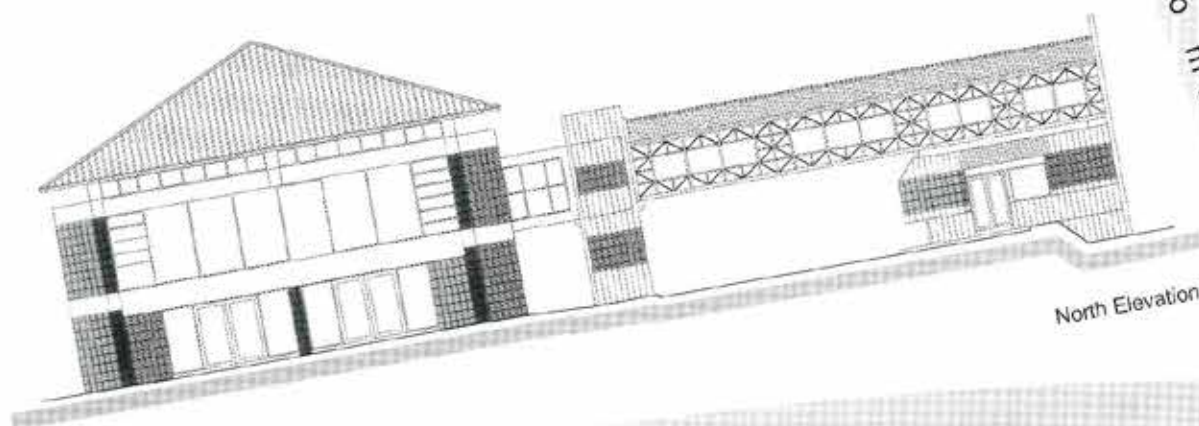
1. Board of Directors
2. Landscaping
3. Stairs
4. Phone
5. Control
6. Office
7. Hall
8. Bridge
9. Bathrooms

Second Floor Plan

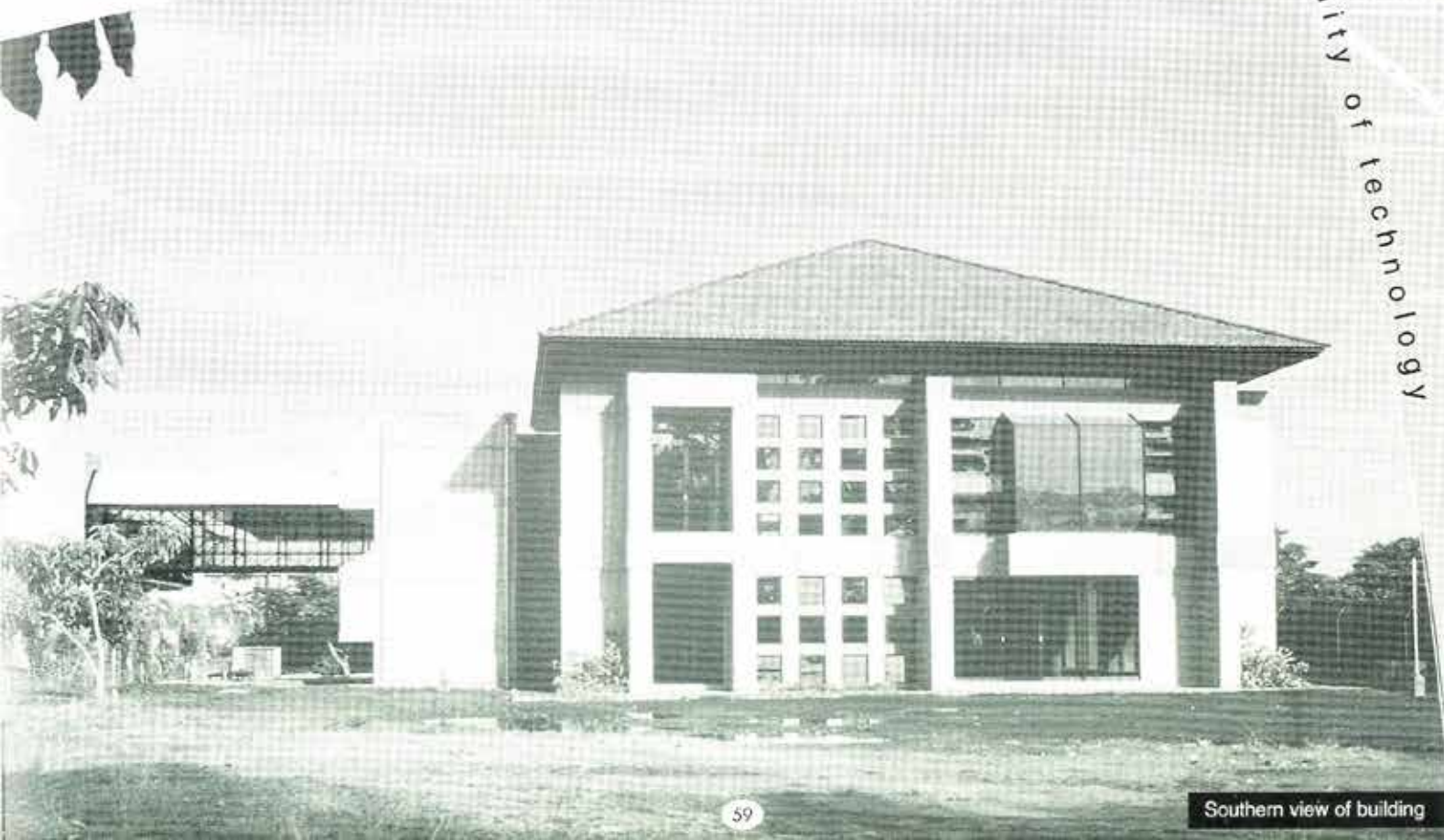


Section A-A

Internal vegetation to moderate the sterility of technology



North Elevation



Southern view of building



View from south

Link between building and bridge

Entrance of the bridge

Metal structure of bridge



Board of Directors Conference Room



Design Date : 1994

Construction Date : 1995

Site Area : 12,100 m²

Constructed Area : 850 m²

Bridge link between the old and new wings

"...This building that I designed for the Xerox Co. was sold to a new owner who commissioned me to transform the warehouse into offices. Later, they asked for the addition of the Board of Directors Building.

To add to an existing structure is always a difficult task for an architect. Antecedents exist and building codes are already established. The latest addition, unless it may pretend to be the protagonist, it should be in congruence with the former. Nevertheless when both parts have been designed by the same architect this relationship produce a mutual support and respect instead of causing tension.

In the meeting room there is a high-tech video system and sophisticated lighting devices that varies the luminary condition in five types of illumination and color and is able to project images via satellite worldwide. In spite of this impressionable exposition of equipment, it is the natural invasion hinted at the other side of the glass, which impresses and gives character and charm to the dwelling. By introducing vegetation to this conference space of high technology, we tried to moderate the sterility of technology. The combination of the elements soften the state of the inhabitants and at the same time calm the austerity of the program.

It is probable that in the coming years I may have to design a third building on the remaining lot that shall be united to the former, presenting another challenge for an architecture which is in constant evolution..."

Dinca Warehouse

1993 Heredia, Costa Rica

Site Plan



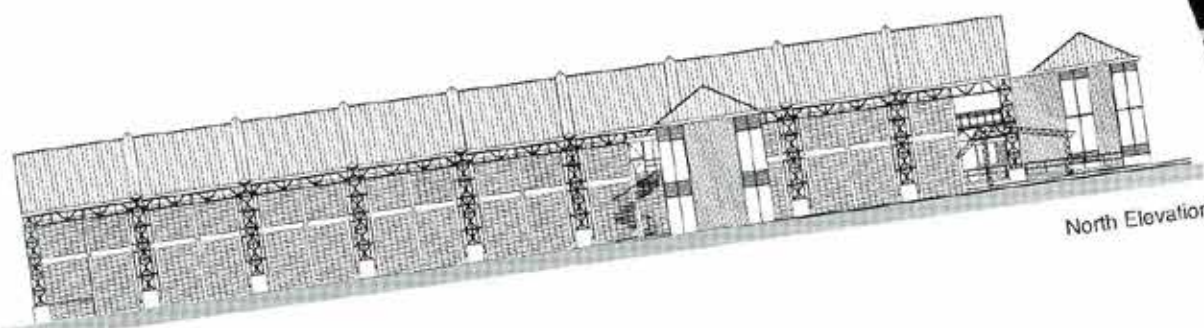
First Floor Plan

1. Entrance
2. Landscaping
3. Reception
4. Warehouse
5. Bathrooms
6. Parking
7. Cafeteria



3 volumes Metal frames

Self-supporting walls Built Yellow Green



North Elevation



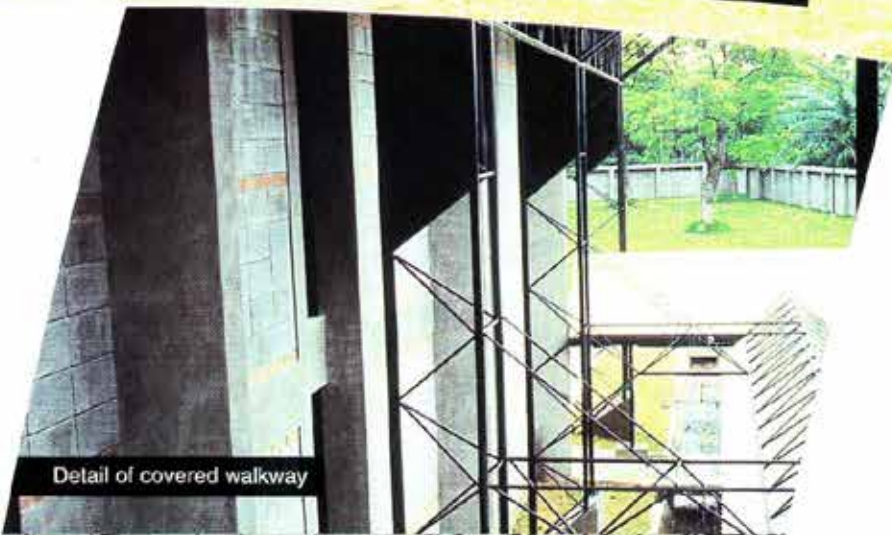
Western view



Connection between reception building and warehouse



South west view of reception building



Detail of covered walkway



Interior office space

Design Date	: 1991
Construction Date	: 1993
Site Area	: 16,500 m ²
Constructed Area	: 2,500 m ²



Southern view

Northern view of warehouse

"...The theme of warehouse or industrial nave was enhanced by the illumination of the structure and enclosures. The materials, the colors and volumes would confer character to the architecture. Untied from the nave are two volumes with singular expression where the reception and the sanitary services abide. A third volume in the other extreme harbors the cafeteria whose expression manifests, is the transparency.

The nave expresses itself in a different language. In it all the tectonic components stand out. The metallic structural frames exhibit each element with its own characteristics. The pedestals of columns surge from the floor isolating the iron from humidity. When it rains, a vertical curtain of fine threads of water fall from the roof to the drainage ditch of stone, where the water where the water disappears and is drained, thus avoiding humidity and mud.

A covered pass from the columns runs along the entire flank of the nave giving a sense of scale to the pedestrian. The self-supporting walls of concrete block is expressed in relief, columns and girders. Every span is separated by a window of full height. The skylights stand out in the roof and in the interior. The lightness of the girders of the frame is emphasized by clarity that passes through the skylights, exposing the thin tubes.

The illumination by means of the skylights and windows is homogeneous to the interior, as is required for this type of work. The opaline surface of the skylights filters the solar rays and allows a self-clarity to pass, which suffuses the workspaces. Although there is much clarity, there is no glare.

The untied volumes covered with metallic sheets are expressed by the color and its form in honest contrast with the nave. In them the colored steel panels alternate with the windows, and the principal edges of the volume define their geometry. The colors were selected in accordance with the blue of cornflower and the yellow of the "lantana", contrasting with the gray of the graphite. The green of the horizontal plane anchors with the serenity of the earth."

Bolcafe - BMW Showroom & Finance Co. Building

1997

San Jose, Costa Rica



Roof Plan

1. Access
2. Parking
3. Offices
4. Meeting Room
5. Secretary
6. Janitor
7. Bathrooms
8. Reception
9. Cafeteria
10. Corridors
11. Car Entrance
12. Car Dealership
13. Accessories
14. Green Zone

Site Plan





15
10
"...Costa Rica is a small mountainous country, the size of Vermont and New Hampshire, with less than three million inhabitants.

My architectural designs are characterized by the application of local resources mixed and strengthened by external elements. The aim is an integrative synthesis of regional characteristics such as way of life, climate, materials, and paysage with imported technological contributions adapted to the local conditions. This synthesis claims to reinforce a regional architecture that self-expresses its characteristics. For example, the glass and aluminum technology has permitted us to accommodate the rain and the tropical light with creativity.

The local resources are employed to attain their maximum expression. For example, using the unskilled labor force and mingling certain construction modalities of the past, the treatment of walls and columns attempts to emphasize the materials through creative applications, although the materials are essentially inexpensive and common.

Furthermore, architectural design incorporates the sky. In Costa Rica, the sky is an important element of the paysage. The clean atmosphere suffers erratic changes with the incessant movement of the white clouds. The ever-changing sky is captured and becomes part of a building by being reflected on the facades and trapped in windows to the sky.

Natural light is another example of a local resource that becomes an integral part of the architectural design. The diaphane light that encircles the building is introduced in it, aiming to create suggestive spaces.

The internal vegetation colors these luminous spots.

The BOLCAFE/BMW building represents this architectural approach.

The availability of a corner property in a low-density residential area in front of a highway, allowed for the development of the project. The sharp gradient of the lot was reduced with the formation of terraces.

The program demanded the proper integration of a BMW sales store with the offices of a financial consulting firm within a single building. Both shared a common administration.

It was decided that the lot would be leveled into three terraces: one in the corner in front of the highway for the automobile exhibition store, another at the far end of the property for the consulting firm, and in between the two terraces, a third for access and for the parts of the building shared in common (reception, cafeteria, and bathrooms).

The BMW sales store was conceived as a light tube structure covered by high glass walls providing excellent transparency. Two mezzanines for the exhibition of automotive accessories are raised about five feet above the level of the store. Thereby allowing for the full appreciation of the automobiles which can also be exhibited outside. The open doors of the porticos provide the necessary circulation.

The wing occupied by the financial consulting firm is low and horizontal with the various offices organized around a central space covered by a translucent pyramid. The conditions necessary for the proper natural lighting and drainage of rainwater (100 inches of rain in 8 months) from this fine interior space, was resolved by two concentric rings of concrete rain gutters separated by a common ring of light. Below these rings are several plants, which filter and color the tropical light.

Between these two wings an access was designed which is formally accentuated by a triangular portico constructed at street level. The two axes of circulation meet at the reception and incorporate the separate wings of the building.

To unify the ensemble, long yet simple tile roofs without gutters are used to accentuate the sharp edges and the falling threads of rainwater. Furthermore, the formal repetition of the triangular porticos contributes to the unity of the building.

Design Date : 1986

Construction Date : 1987

Site Area : 4,000 m²

Constructed Area : 1,500 m²



Entrance

Gray block and red brick entrance motif against the metal and glass structure

Concept sketch: Natural ventilation & lighting



Internal vegetation and diaphane lighting



Triangular portico reception

Car sales and dealership

The materials used, although frequently employed and inexpensive, were applied creatively to enhance their characteristics. Both the gray block and the red brick are brusque and opaque, but in joint application with the smoothness and brilliance of metal and glass, an interesting contrast arises which awards dignity and reinforces the appearance of the mentioned materials.

The building section portrays a solution for proper and sufficient ventilation and for the efficient drainage of rain water. Within the BMW sales store, the cross-ventilation is natural and permanent. On the other hand, the consulting firm's offices are air-conditioned, with the exception of the central lobby which is ventilated through the base of the multi-purpose pyramid and through the ring of light. The section portrays a volumetric organization in which the structural columns were designed behind block and brick columns in order to balance the visual weight of the roof and create an agreeable proportion of spatial emptiness and fullness.

The result of the architectural design is a building that fulfills various functions and ion of various materials with a clear sense of unity and harmony while fully satisfying the functional and climatic exigencies of the country...

1. Parking
2. Lobby
3. Reception
4. Cafeteria
5. Bathroom
6. Garden
7. Office
8. Archive
9. Patio
10. Storage

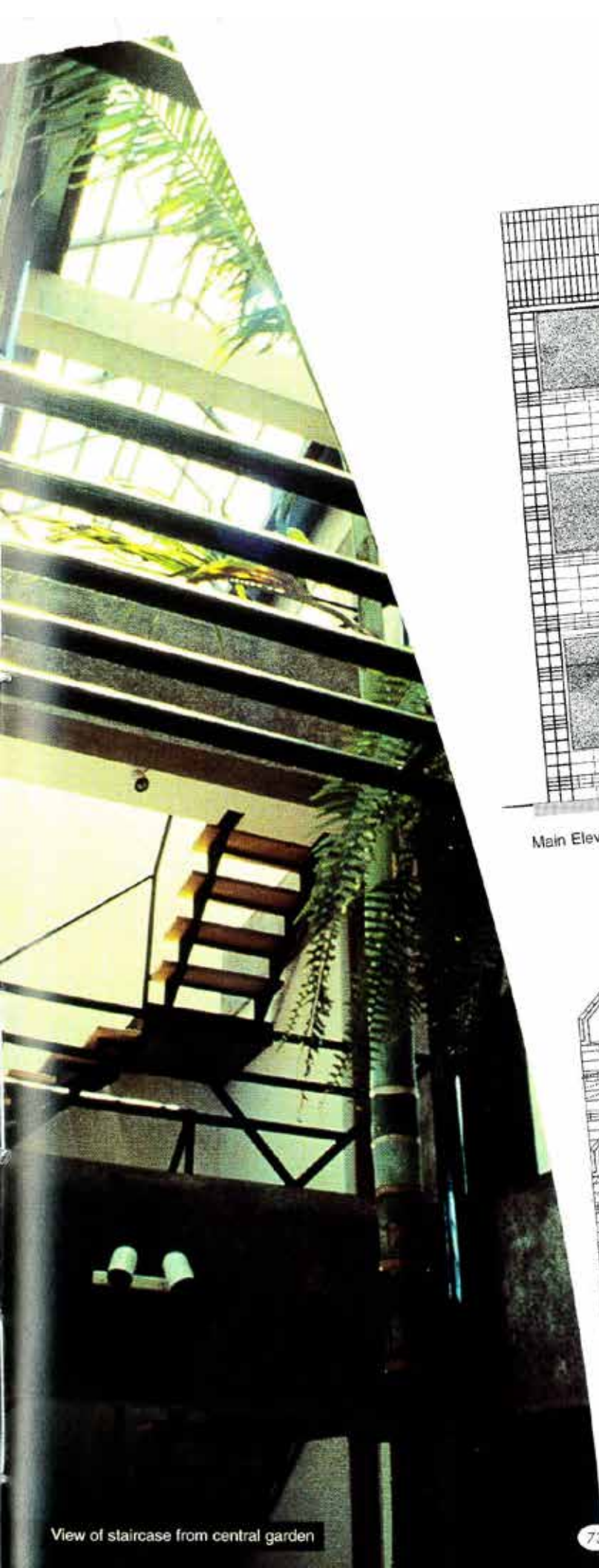


Ground Floor Plan

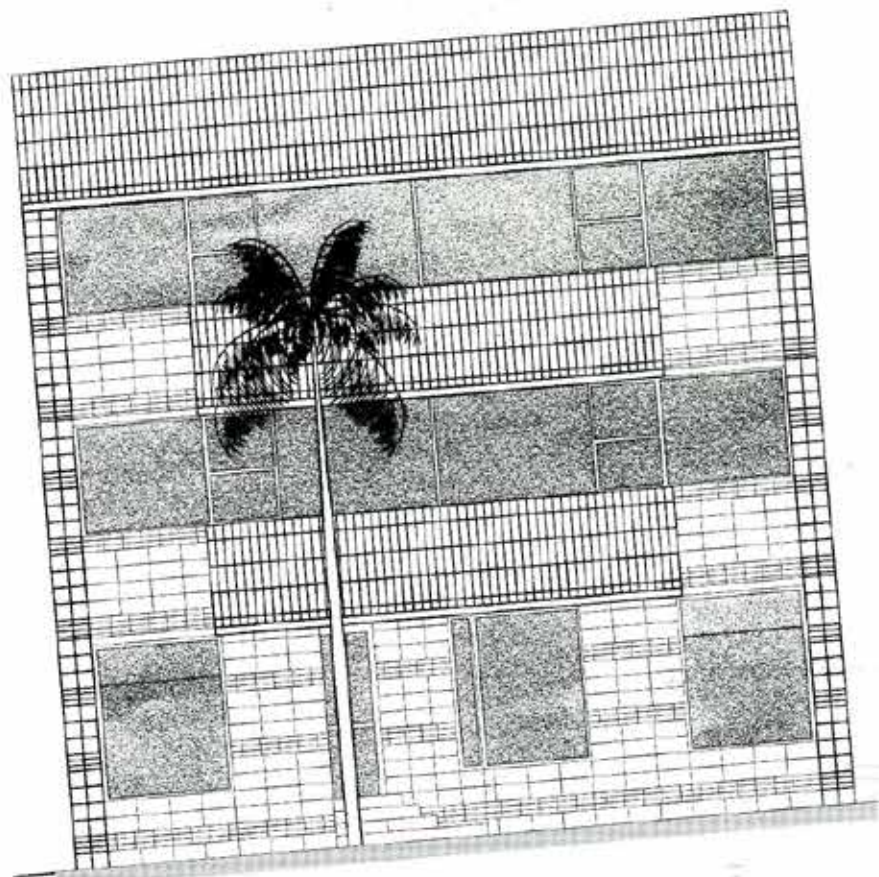
1. Office
2. Meeting Room
3. Library
4. Bathroom

Typical Floor Plan

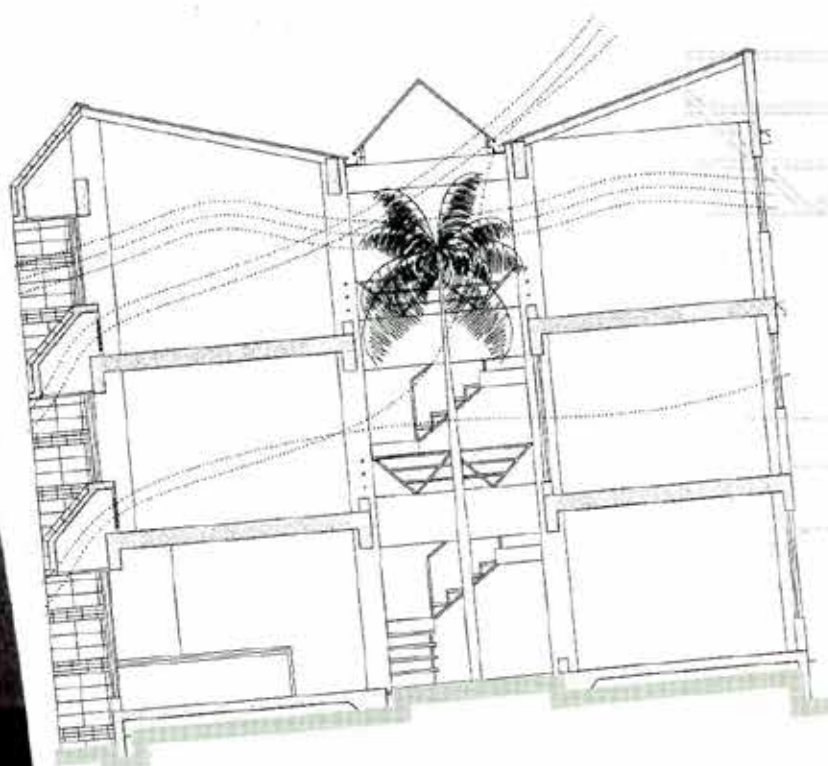
Three open rings encircling central garden Translucent glass roof



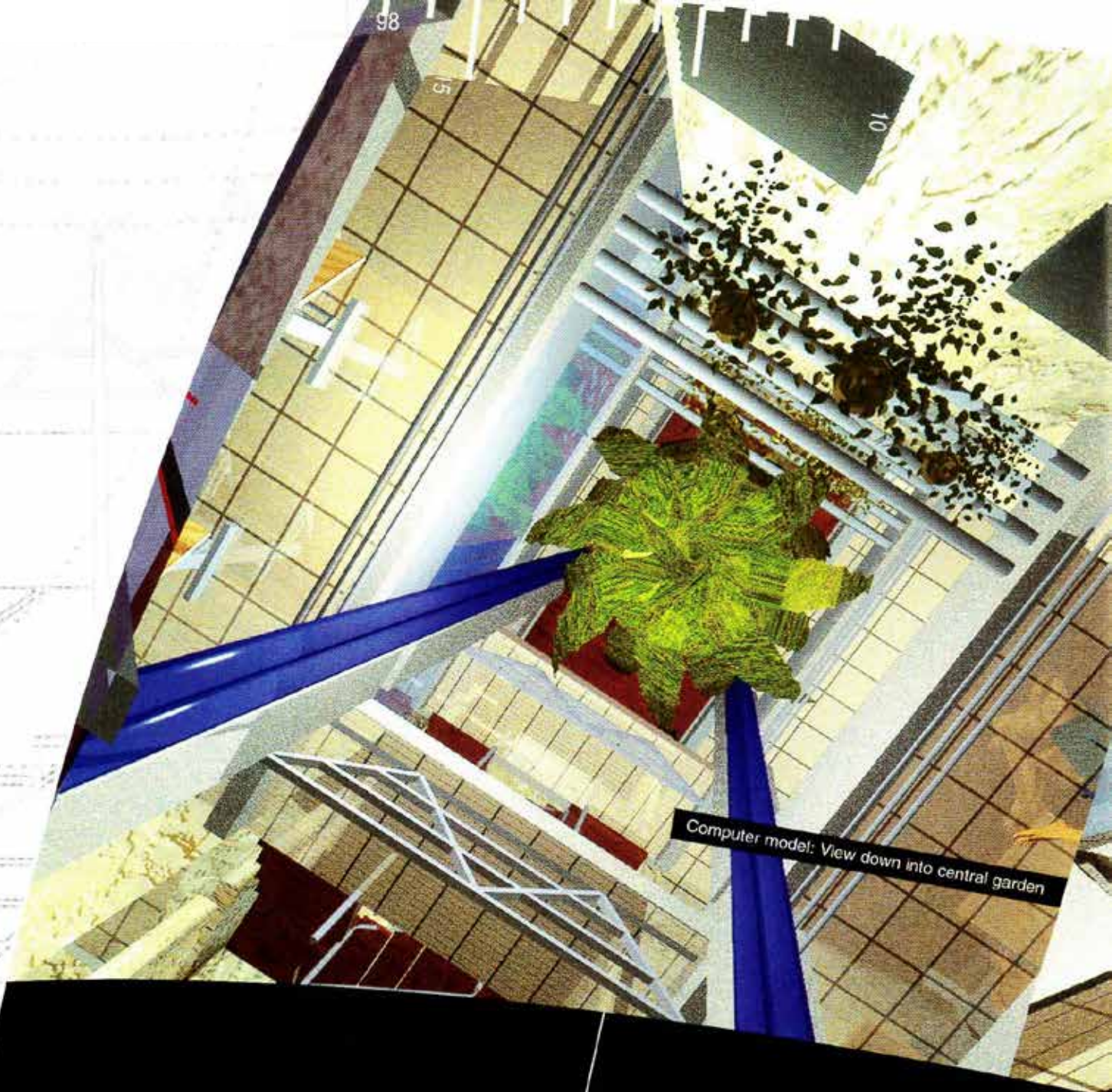
View of staircase from central garden



Main Elevation



Section



Computer model: View down into central garden

"...Within the confines of a lot measuring 9.50 by 15 meters, I planned an architect's office in three open rings (three levels) which encircled a central garden. The central garden would be dominated by a 27-foot palm tree vertically cutting through the office and surrounded by ferns at its base.

Constructed with simple domestic materials, the exterior accentuates the simplicity and purity of the materials through a colorful linear alternation of the elements. This horizontal juxtaposition of the gray block and the red brick enlivens the facade.

In the interior, the cold painted metal is attenuated by the warm presence of concrete, creating an interesting contrast in harmony with the spatial organization of the office.

A translucent glass structure mounted over the central garden illuminates the entire office with the subtle light that punctures the incessant cover of white clouds that envelopes San Jose.

The glass structure allows the permanent entrance of a breeze, which ventilates and freshens the office. The breeze sways the leaves of the palm tree.

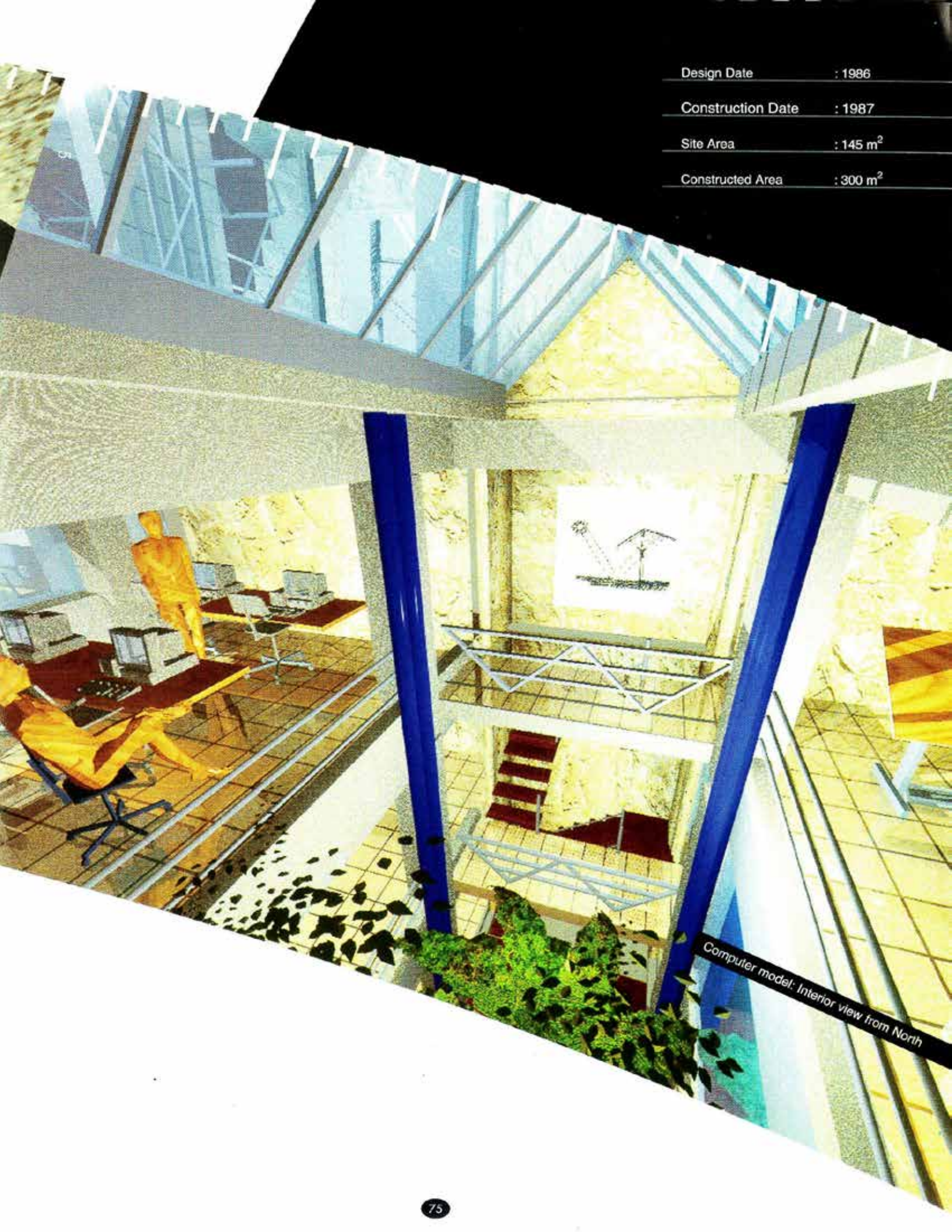
Access and circulation to the upper levels is possible through a staircase located at one end of the ring; the bathrooms are located in the opposite end..."

Design Date : 1986

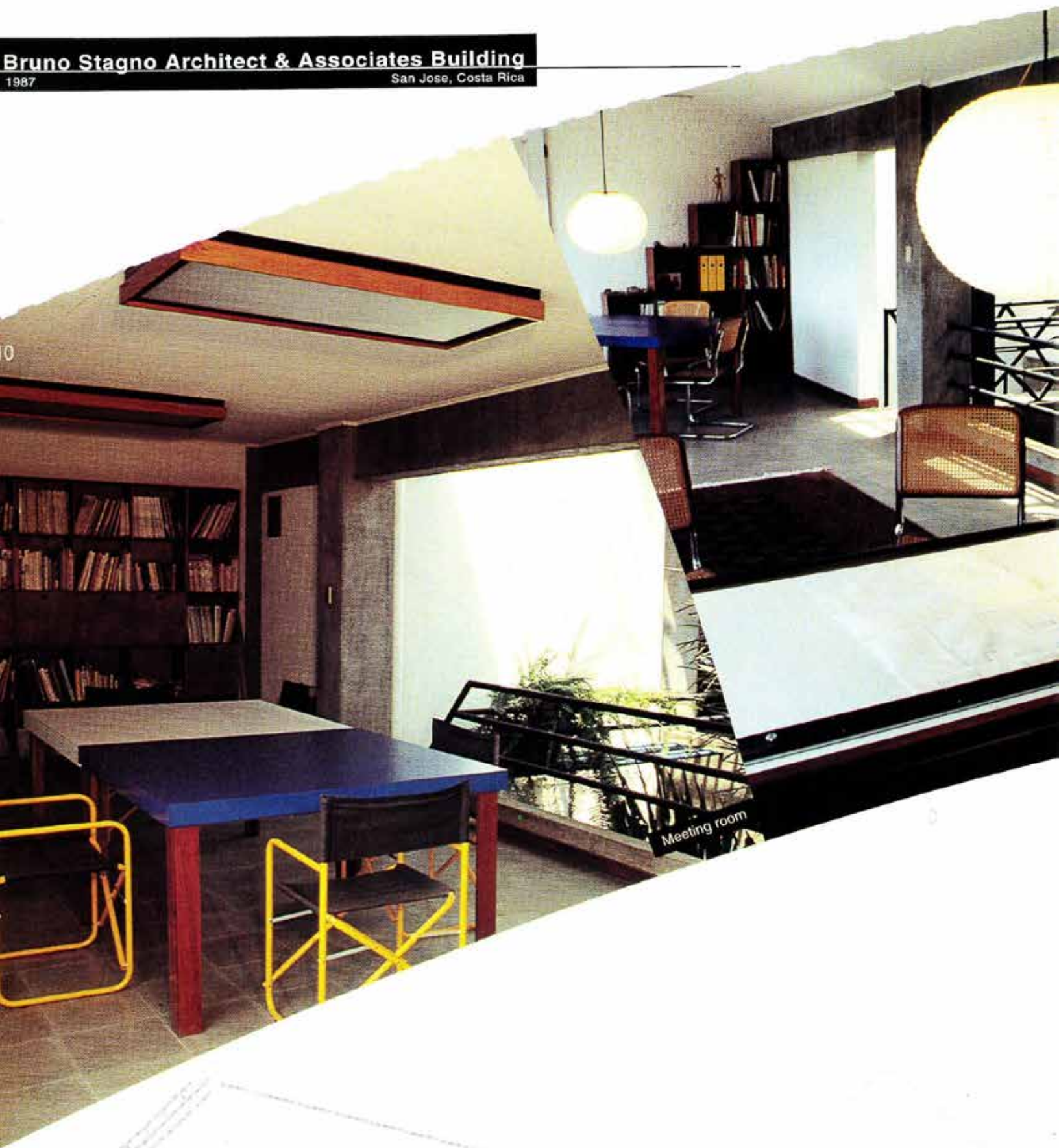
Construction Date : 1987

Site Area : 145 m²

Constructed Area : 300 m²



Computer model: Interior view from North



Meeting room



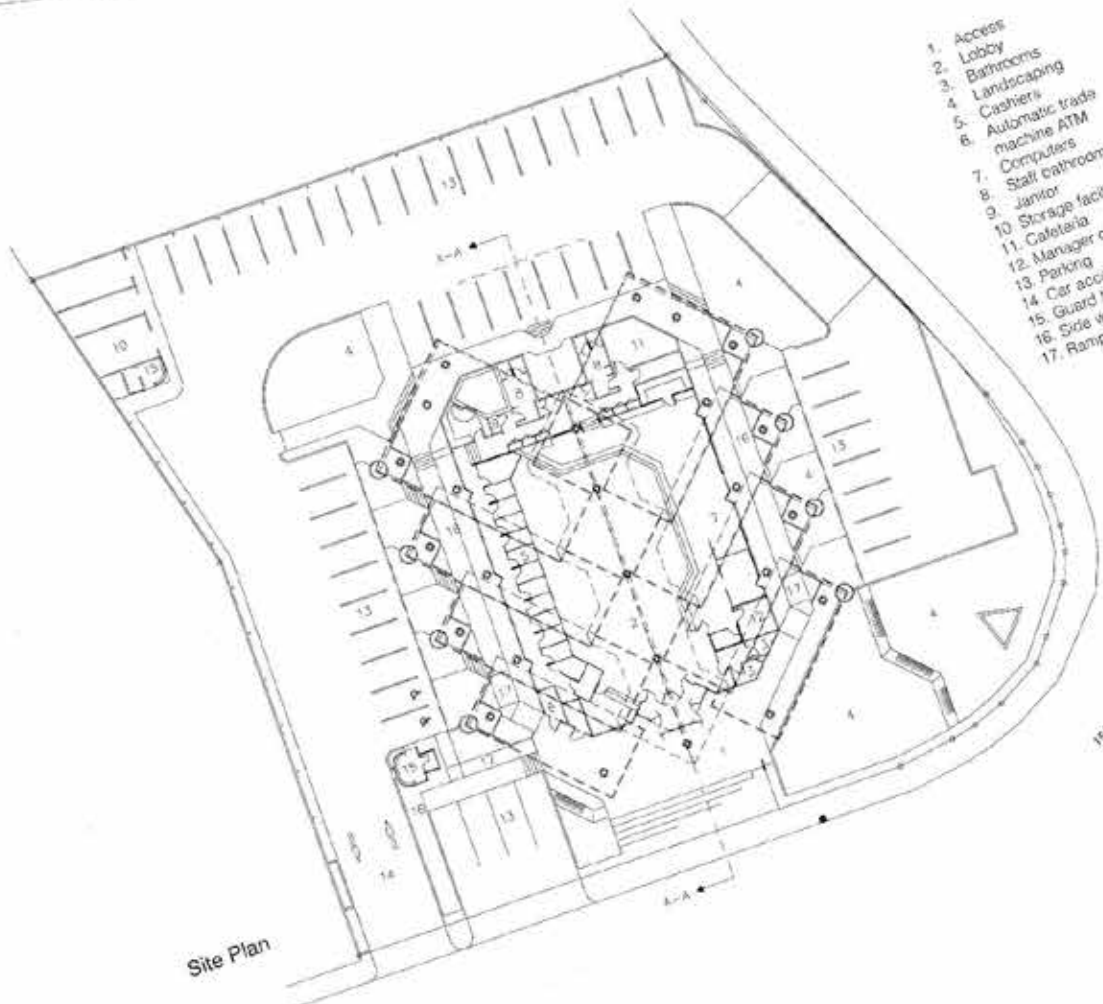
Drawing room & architect's office

Office space on 3rd floor

Bank Of San Jose - Rohrmoser Branch

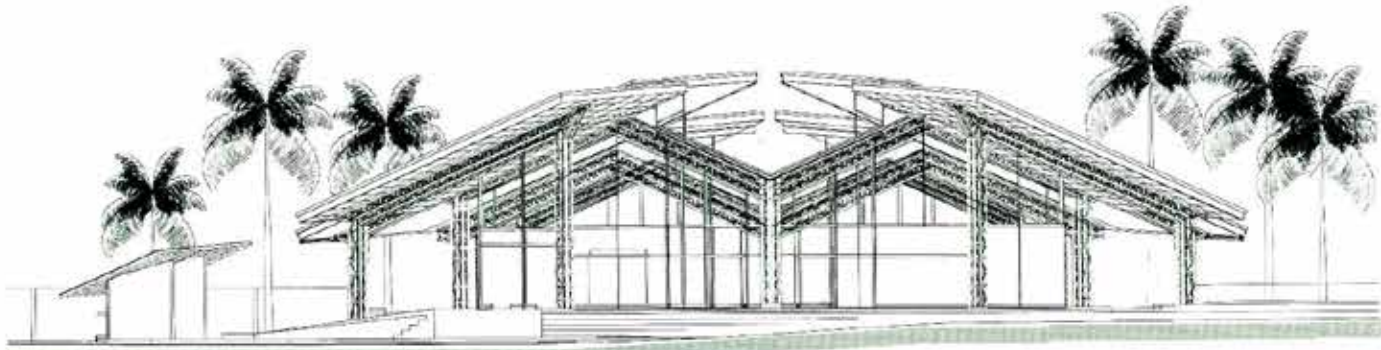
1998

San Jose, Costa Rica



1. Access
2. Lobby
3. Bathrooms
4. Landscaping
5. Cashiers
6. Automatic trade machine ATM
7. Computers
8. Stall bathrooms
9. Janitor
10. Storage facility
11. Cafeteria
12. Manager office
13. Parking
14. Car access
15. Guard house
16. Side walk
17. Ramp

Site Plan



South Elevation

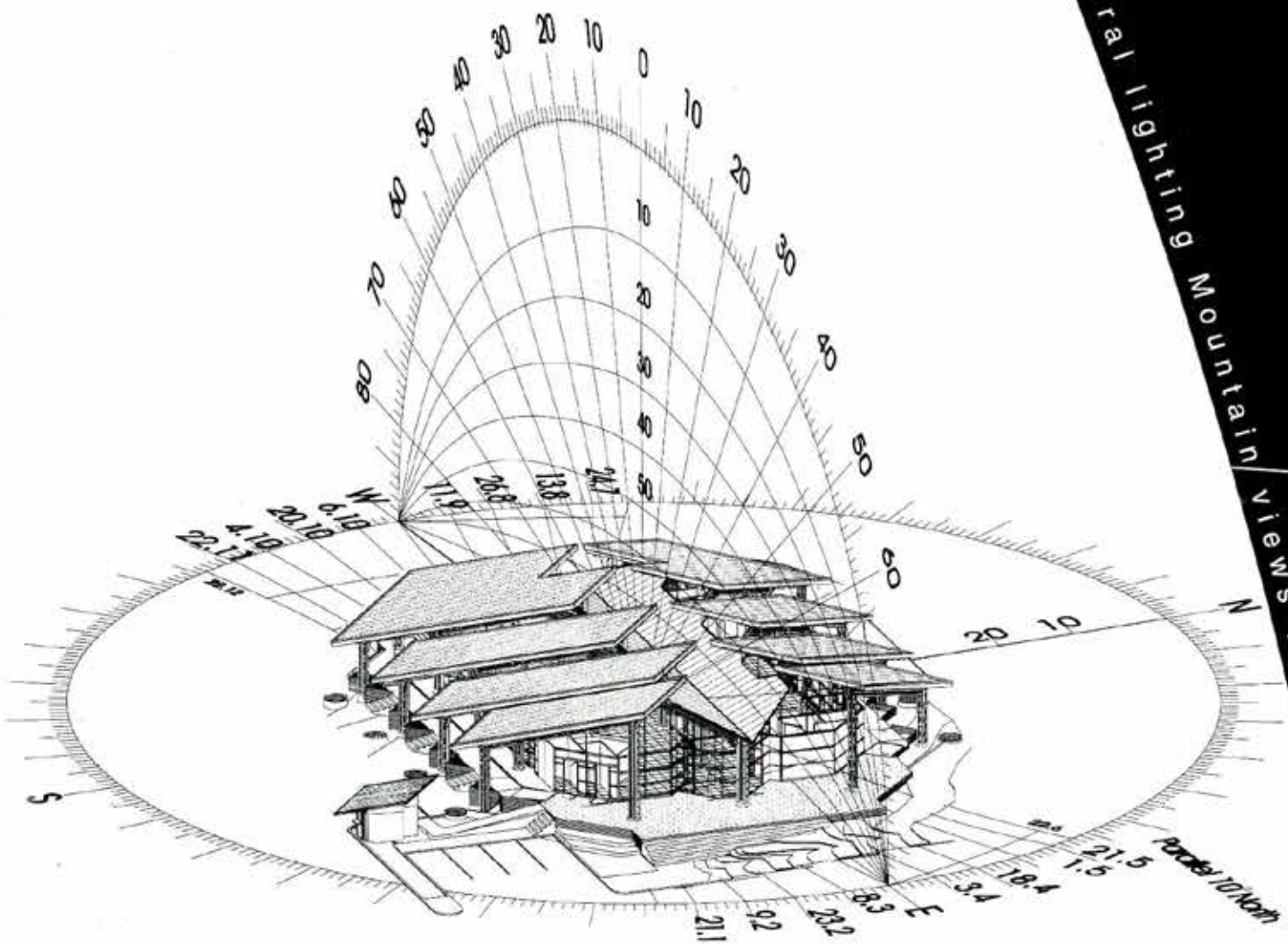
Design Date : 1988

Construction Date : 1998

Site Area : 4,750 m²

Constructed Area : 1,000 m²

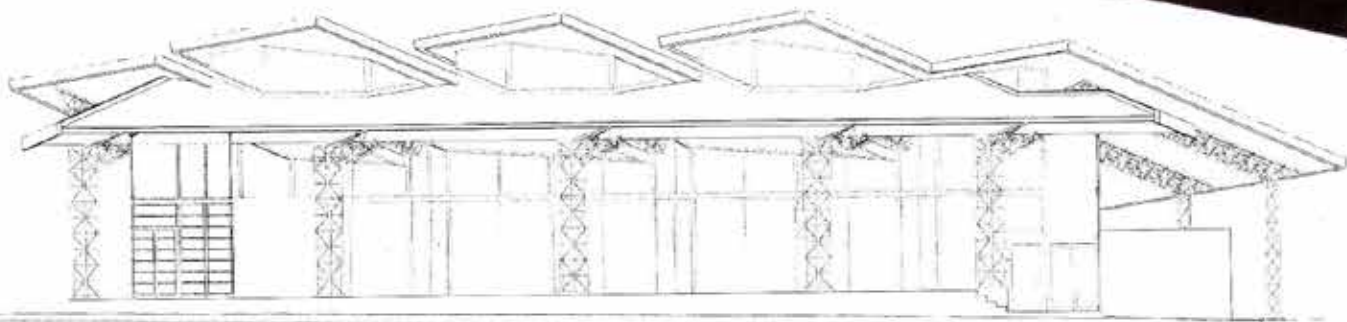
Floating roofs Natural lighting Mountain views Diagonal 3-D frames



Axonometric View (East)



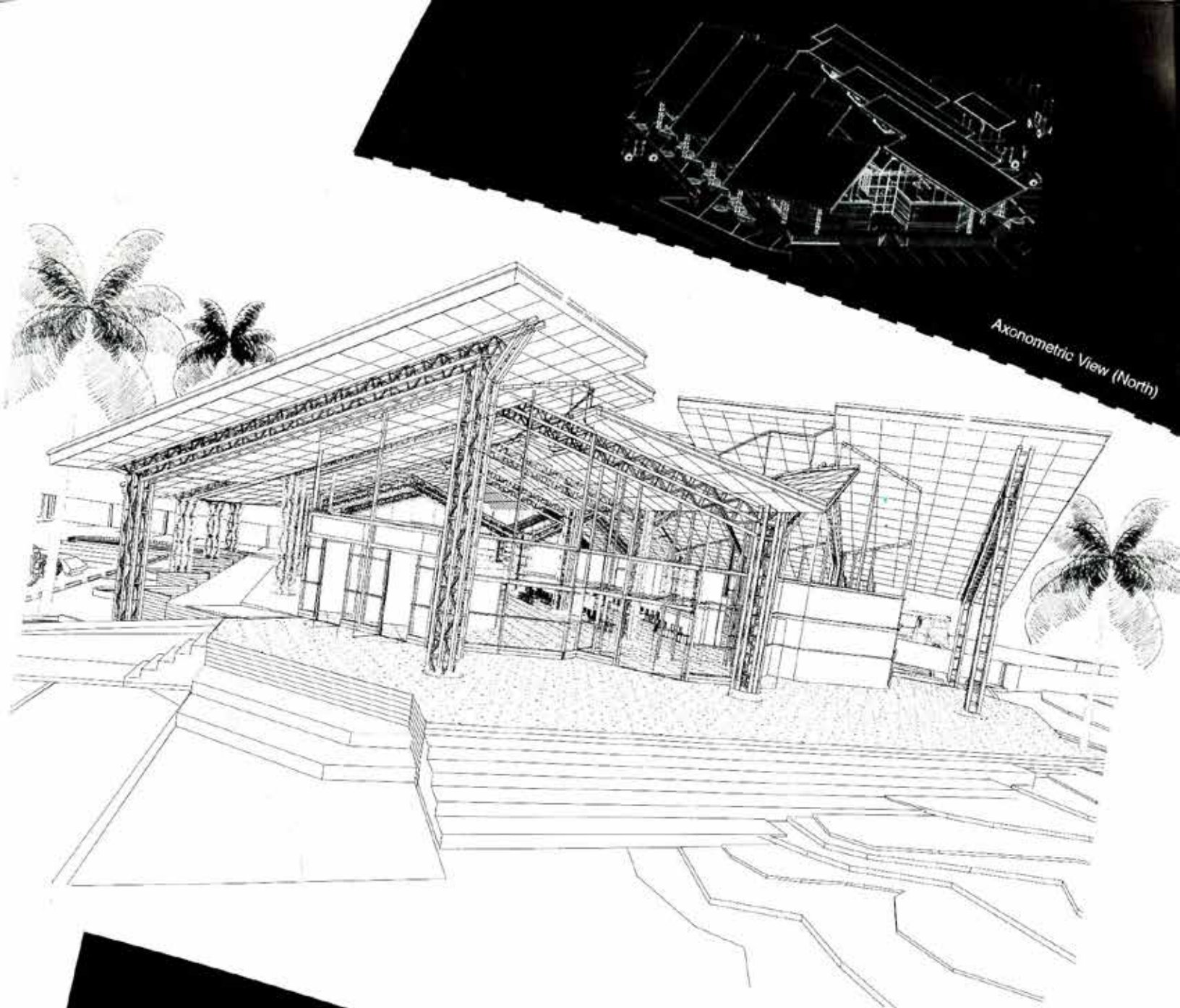
Computer model: Interior



Section A-A



West Elevation



Axonometric View (North)

Perspective view: South

"...This is the fourth branch of the Bank of San Jose and a corner lot between the beltway of San Jose and an avenue of high traffic has been chosen for it.

The building will be erected in the center of the lot, where it will be surrounded by gardens and parking spaces.

This follows the expressive tradition of the three preceding agencies, which has brought an excellent result as a corporate image.

The project has been conceived with only one floor and a roof floating on metallic frames. The frontal view accentuates the floating roofs.

The volumes of the blocks and bricks of the background have been designed at a lower level for maintaining the view from the interior to the mountains of the north.

The scales of the roof permit the entrance of light through controlled opening, in order to obtain sufficient illumination inside and to avoid artificial lighting.

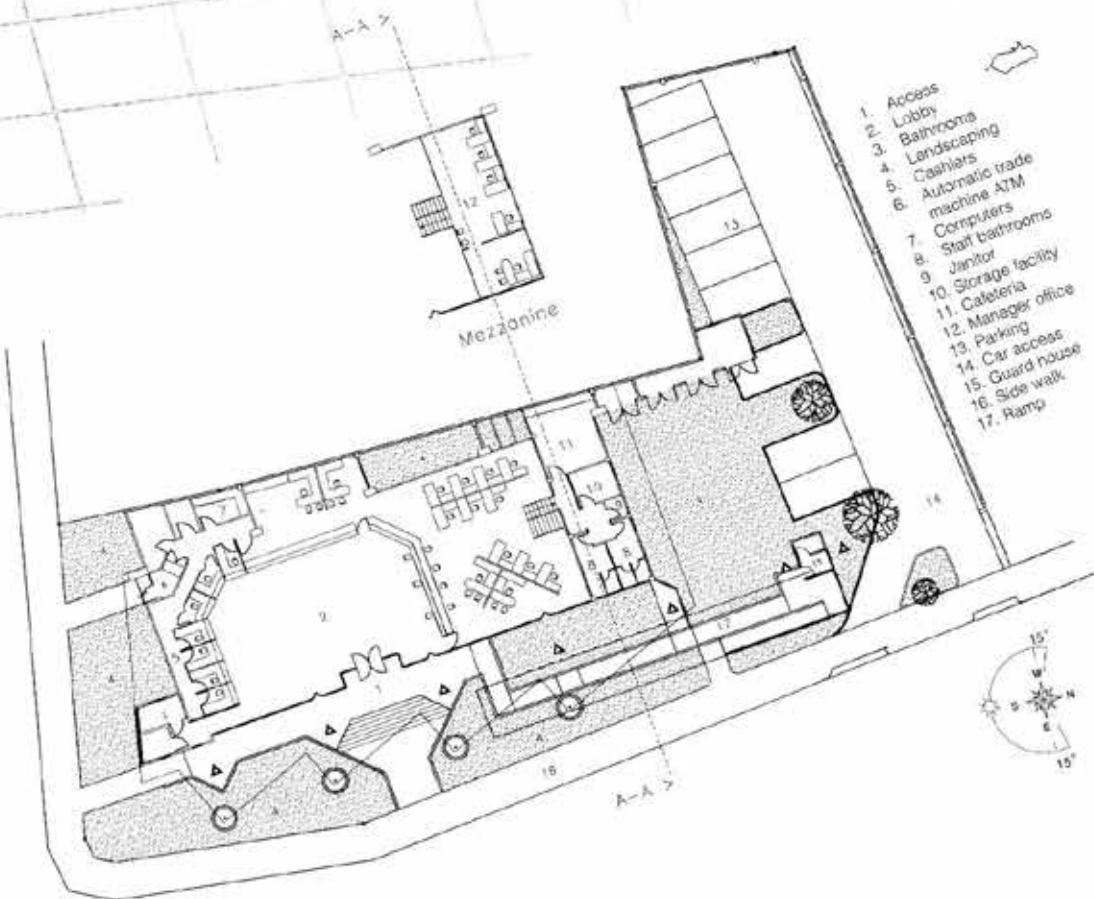
The structure consists of three-dimensional frames that are diagonally joined to obtain a reliable stability.

The scales of the roof and the diagonally joined frames are arranged according to a spatial north-south axis that is stressed by the big central gutter that divides the space into two aisles..."

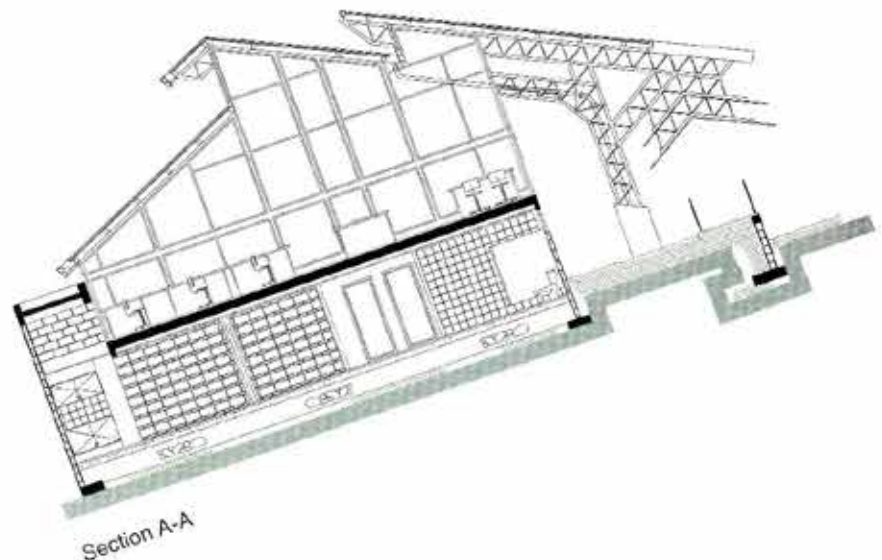
Bank Of San Jose - Escazu Branch

1997

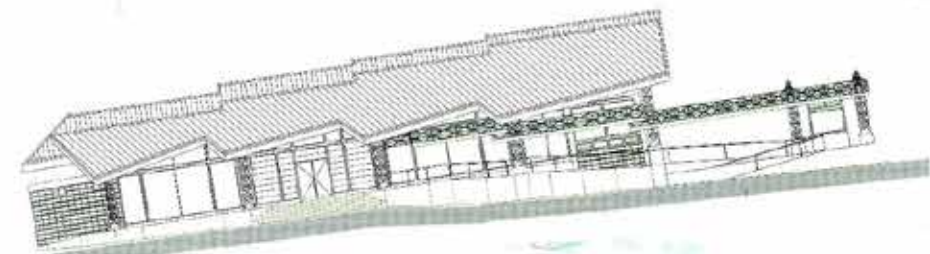
San Jose, Costa Rica



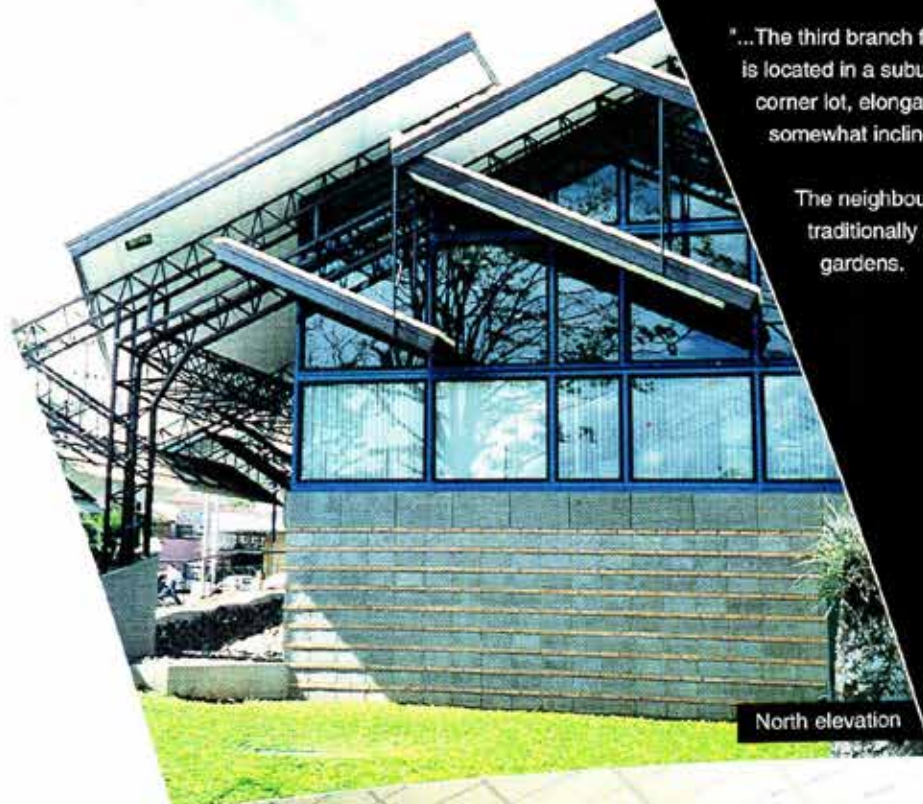
First Floor Plan



Section A-A



East Elevation



North elevation

"...The third branch for Bank of San Jose is located in a suburb of the Capital, in a corner lot, elongated and on a somewhat inclined terrain.

The neighbourhood has been traditionally surrounded by gardens.



Computer model: View from lobby

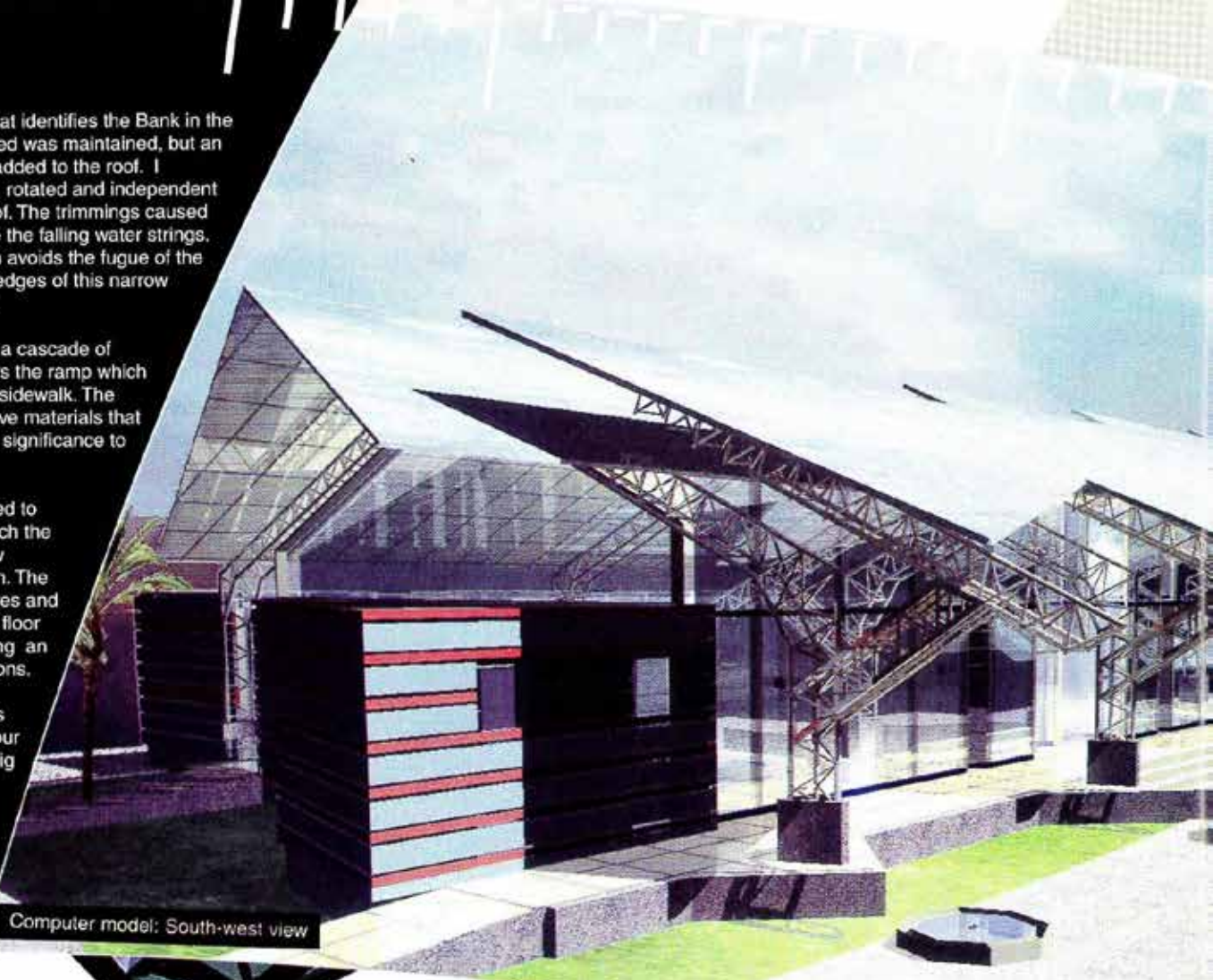
The corporate image that identifies the Bank in the prior branches I designed was maintained, but an innovative accent was added to the roof. I overlapped a detached, rotated and independent roof above the main roof. The trimmings caused by the rotation enhance the falling water strings. The roof's peculiar form avoids the fugue of the horizontal towards the edges of this narrow and elongated building.

Under this roof there is a cascade of smaller roofs that covers the ramp which ascends parallel to the sidewalk. The common and inexpensive materials that are used give a special significance to these buildings.

I was specially interested to propose a space in which the reflections create a new dimension of perception. The lights cross the structures and reflect on the windows, floor and ceiling, thus creating an interesting play of illusions.

In the morning, which is the busiest business hour of most business, the big eave that covers the east facade causes a natural and agreeable internal penumbra by means of controlled and cool lighting..."

Computer model: South-west view



Falling water strings



View from street



South west view



Roof over entry



Design Date : 1996

Construction Date : 1997

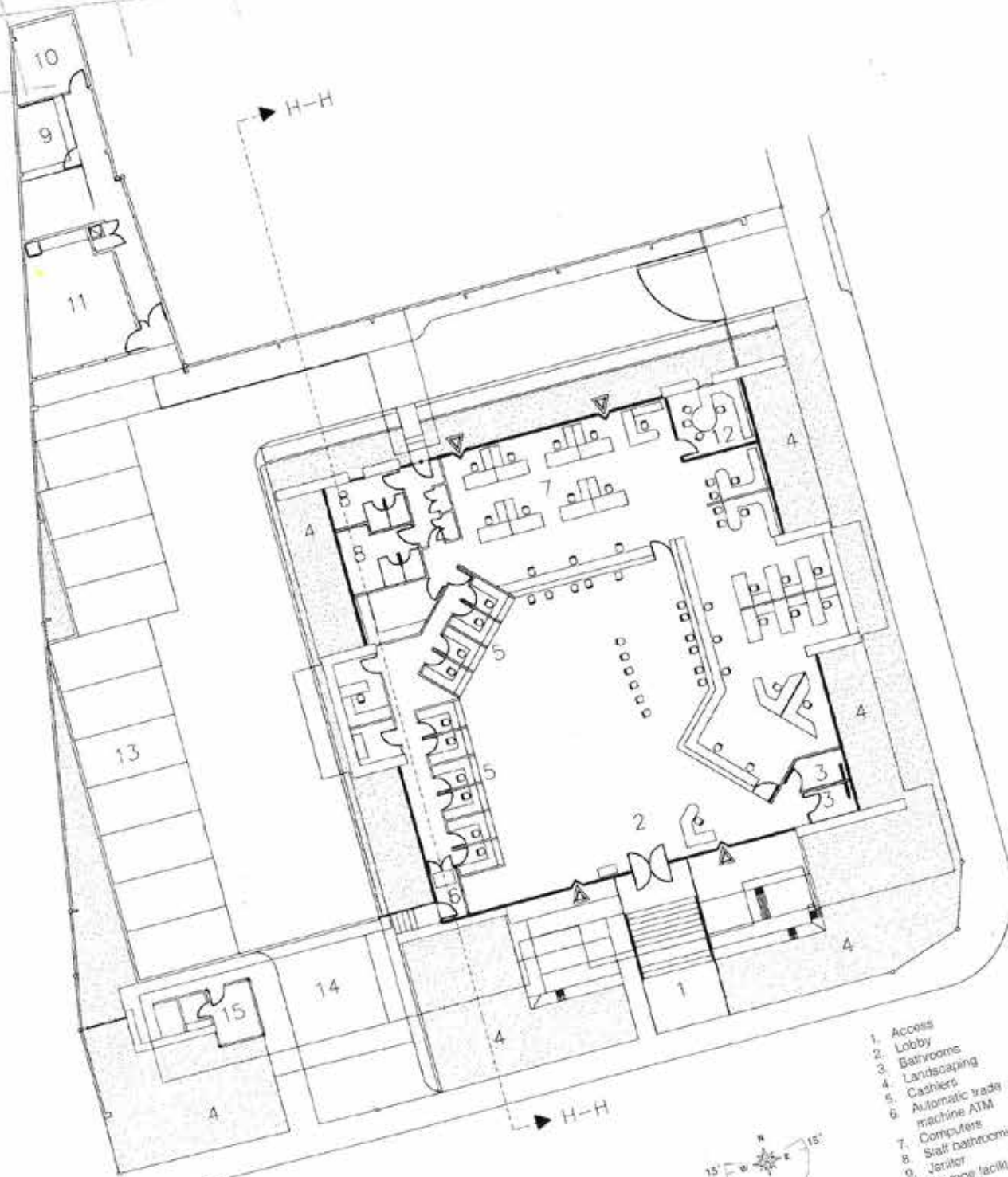
Site Area : 1,600 m²

Constructed Area : 650 m²

Computer model: View looking towards lobby

Bank Of San Jose - Moravia Branch

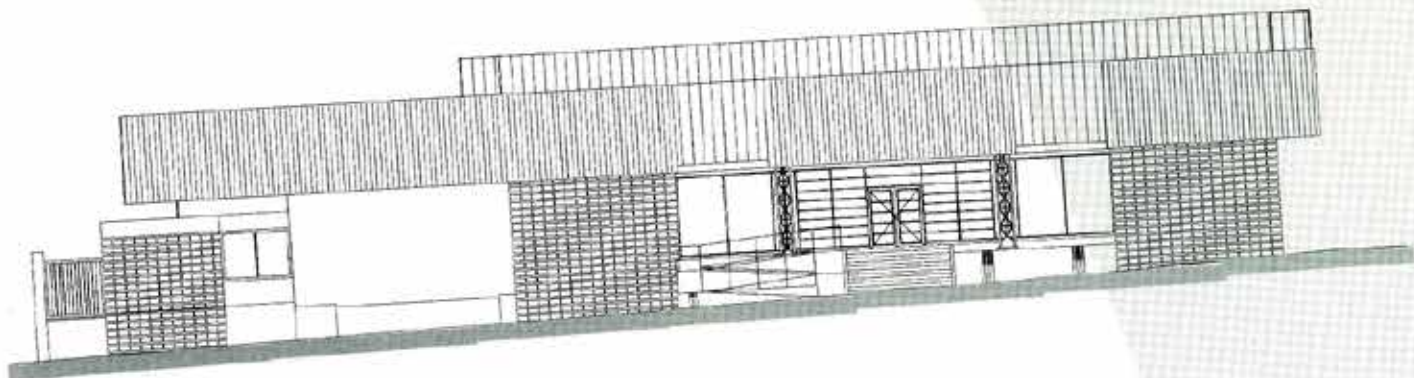
1997 San Jose, Costa Rica



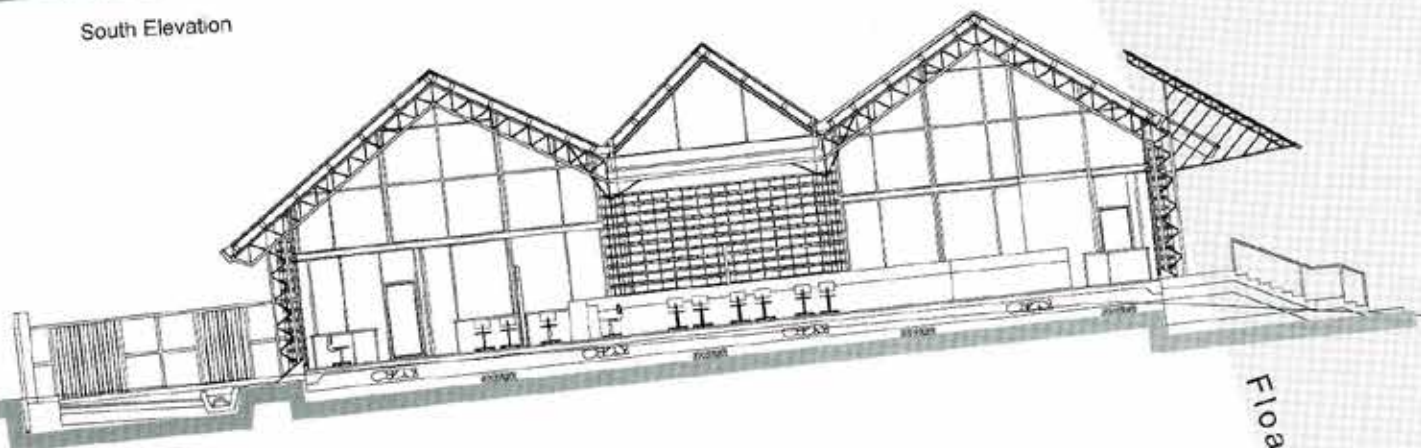
First Floor Plan



1. Access
2. Lobby
3. Bathrooms
4. Landscaping
5. Cashiers
6. Automatic trade machine ATM
7. Computers
8. Staff bathrooms
9. Janitor
10. Storage facility
11. Cafeteria
12. Manager office
13. Parking
14. Car access
15. Guard house



South Elevation



Section H-H

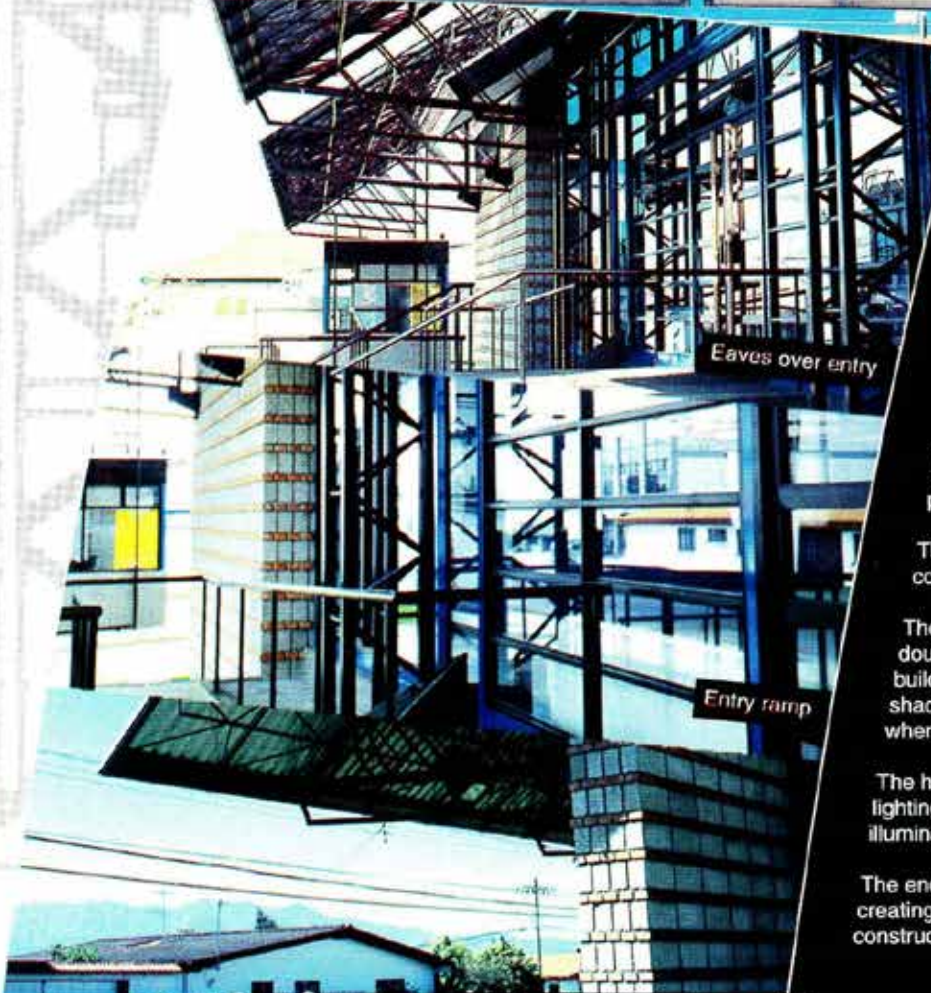
Floating roofs Entry of light through controlled opening



Computer model: Exterior view



Hanging eaves of roofs allow natural illumination



Eaves over entry

Entry ramp

"...This 2nd branch for San Jose Bank in Moravia (a suburb of San Jose) is located in a square corner lot.

The entire area is occupied by single-storey houses in a row facing the street. Being an area of slow development, the car is the most important urban perturbation factor.

The structural design was conceived as one-space with a roof supported by two long open web beams that rest on walls of block and bricks in a C shape and are crossed by two perpendicular metallic frames.

The load-carrying walls have a solid expression thus creating a contrast in the roof which expresses lightness.

The roof structure is composed of hanging eaves, visors and double-sloped roofs. Apart from fundamentally protecting the building from the elements, the roof was designed to create shadow and lightness by keeping the interior naturally illuminated where necessary.

The homogeneous light is necessary to avoid the use of electric lighting during the day and, of course, to obtain sufficient natural illumination.

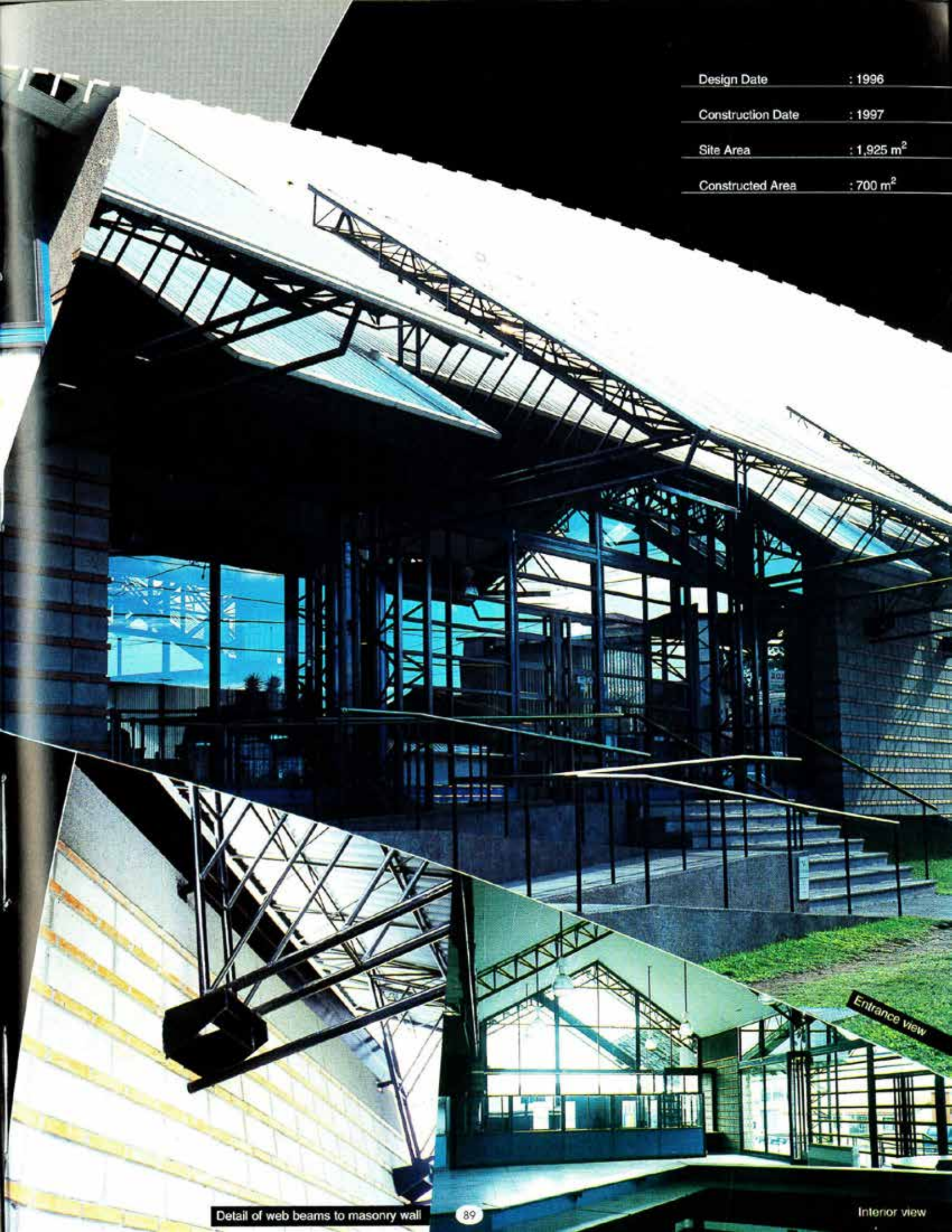
The ends of the front visor is supported by the guardhouse, thus creating a horizontality that harmonizes with the surrounding traditional constructions..."

Design Date : 1996

Construction Date : 1997

Site Area : 1,925 m²

Constructed Area : 700 m²



Detail of web beams to masonry wall



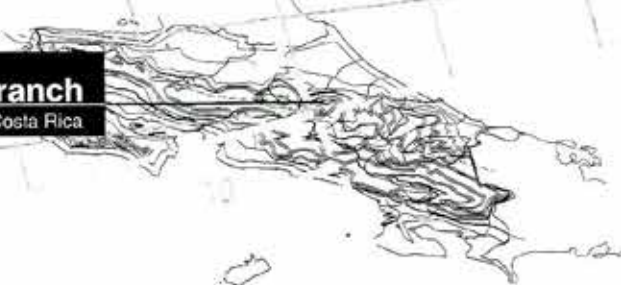
Entrance view

Interior view

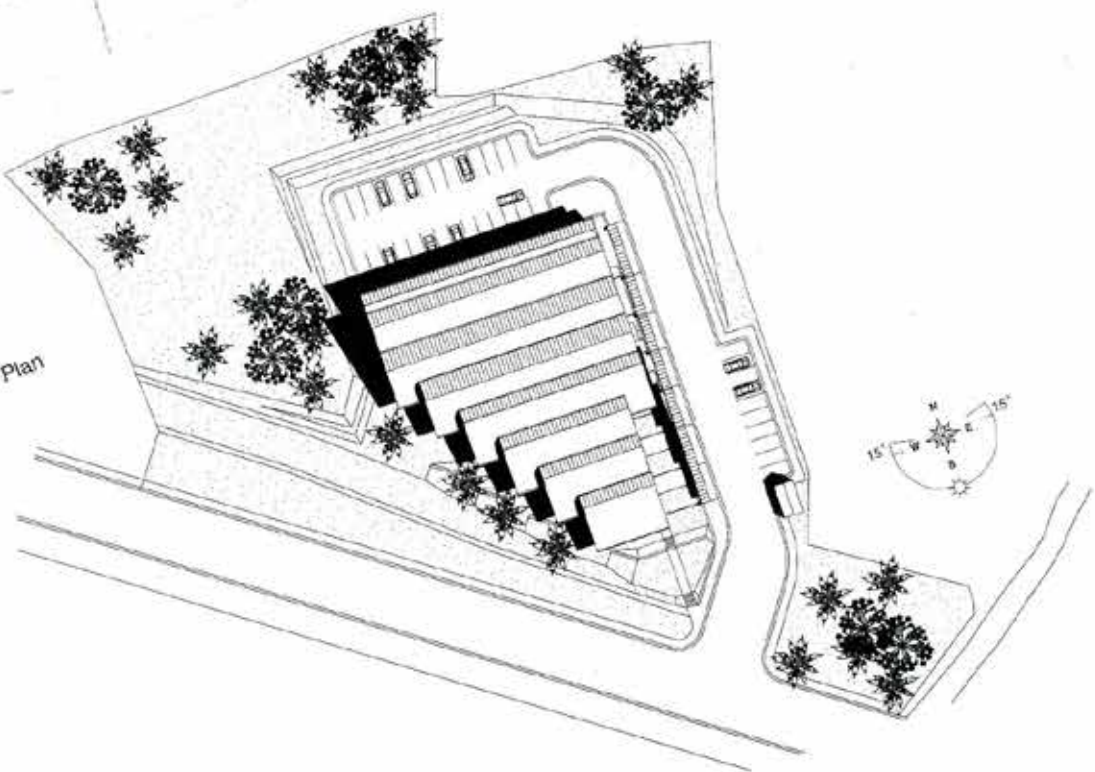
Ford Showroom & Bank of San Jose - Curridabat Branch

1995

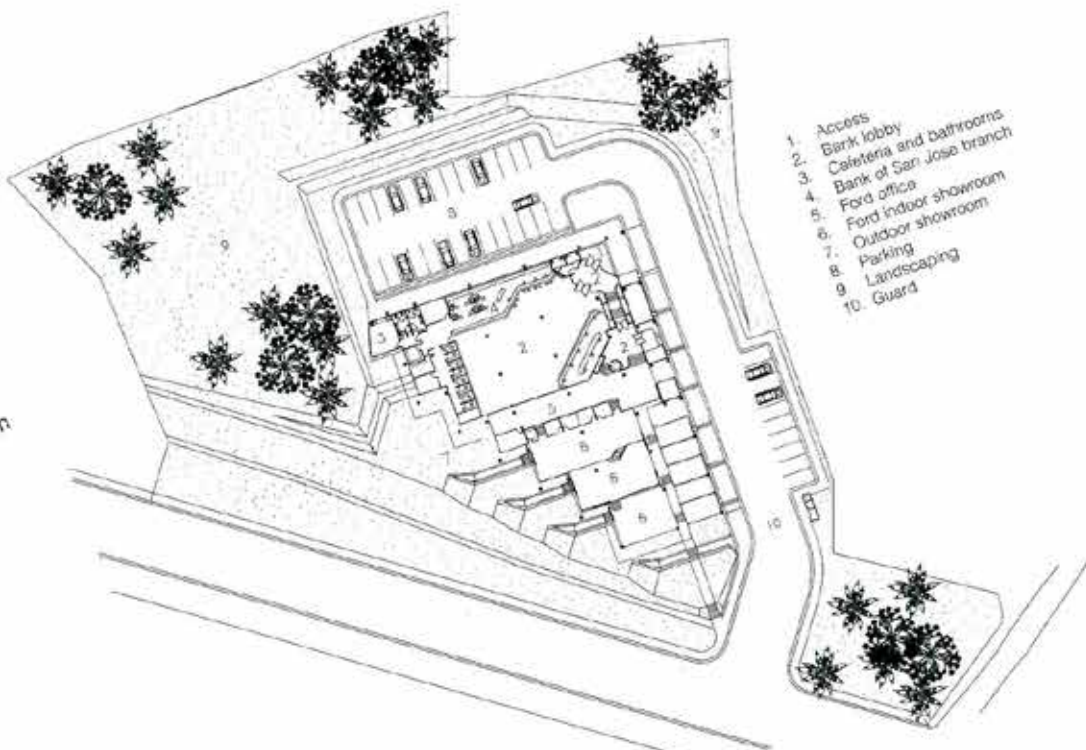
San Jose, Costa Rica



Site Plan

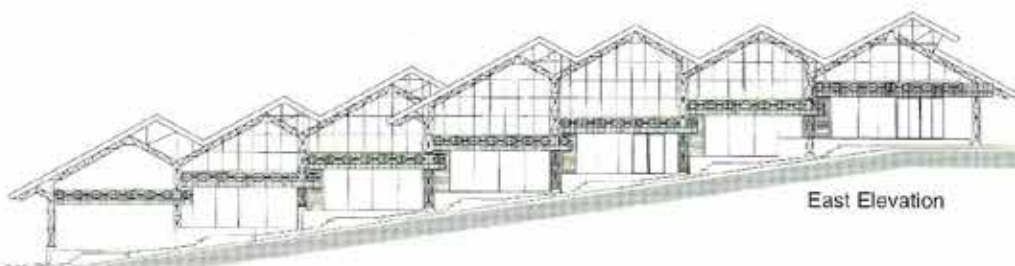


First Floor Plan



- 1. Access
- 2. Bank lobby
- 3. Cafeteria and bathrooms
- 4. Bank of San Jose branch
- 5. Ford office
- 6. Ford indoor showroom
- 7. Outdoor showroom
- 8. Parking
- 9. Landscaping
- 10. Guard

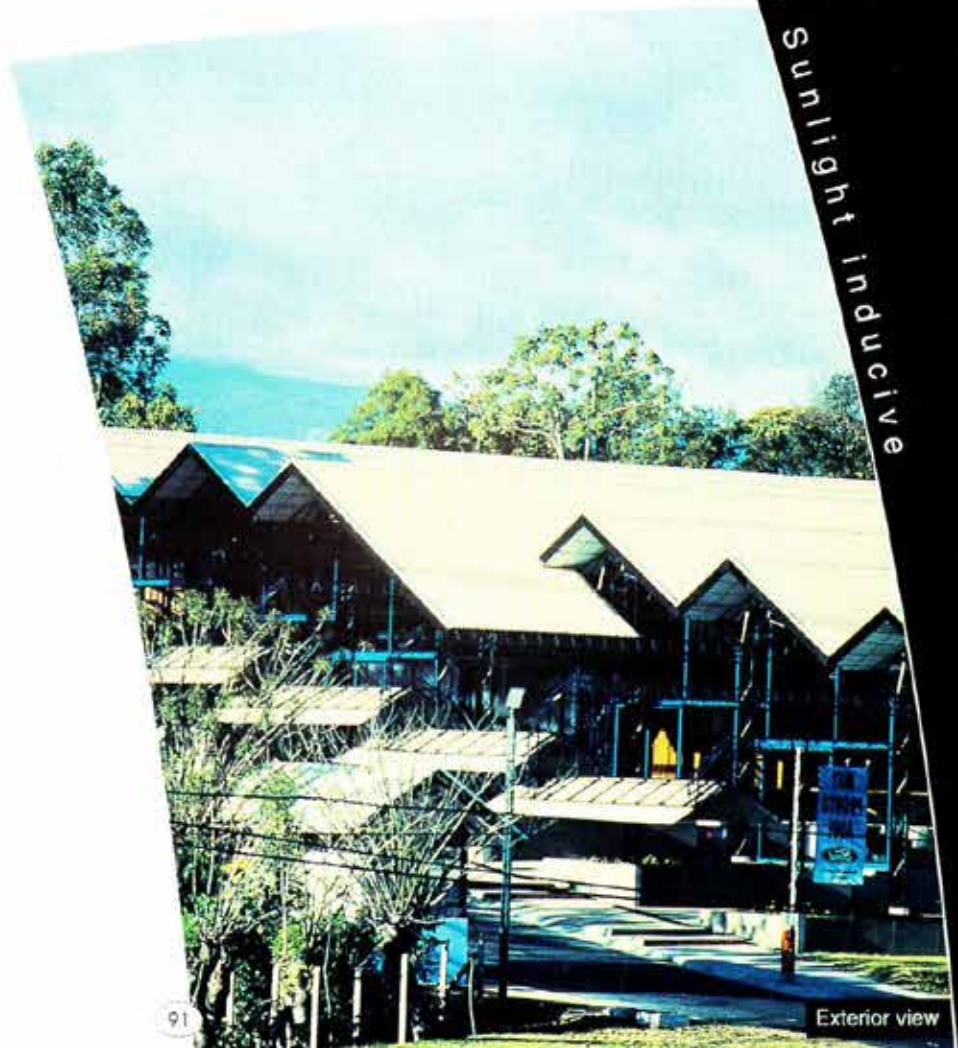
Double programme Climate responsive Sunlight inductive



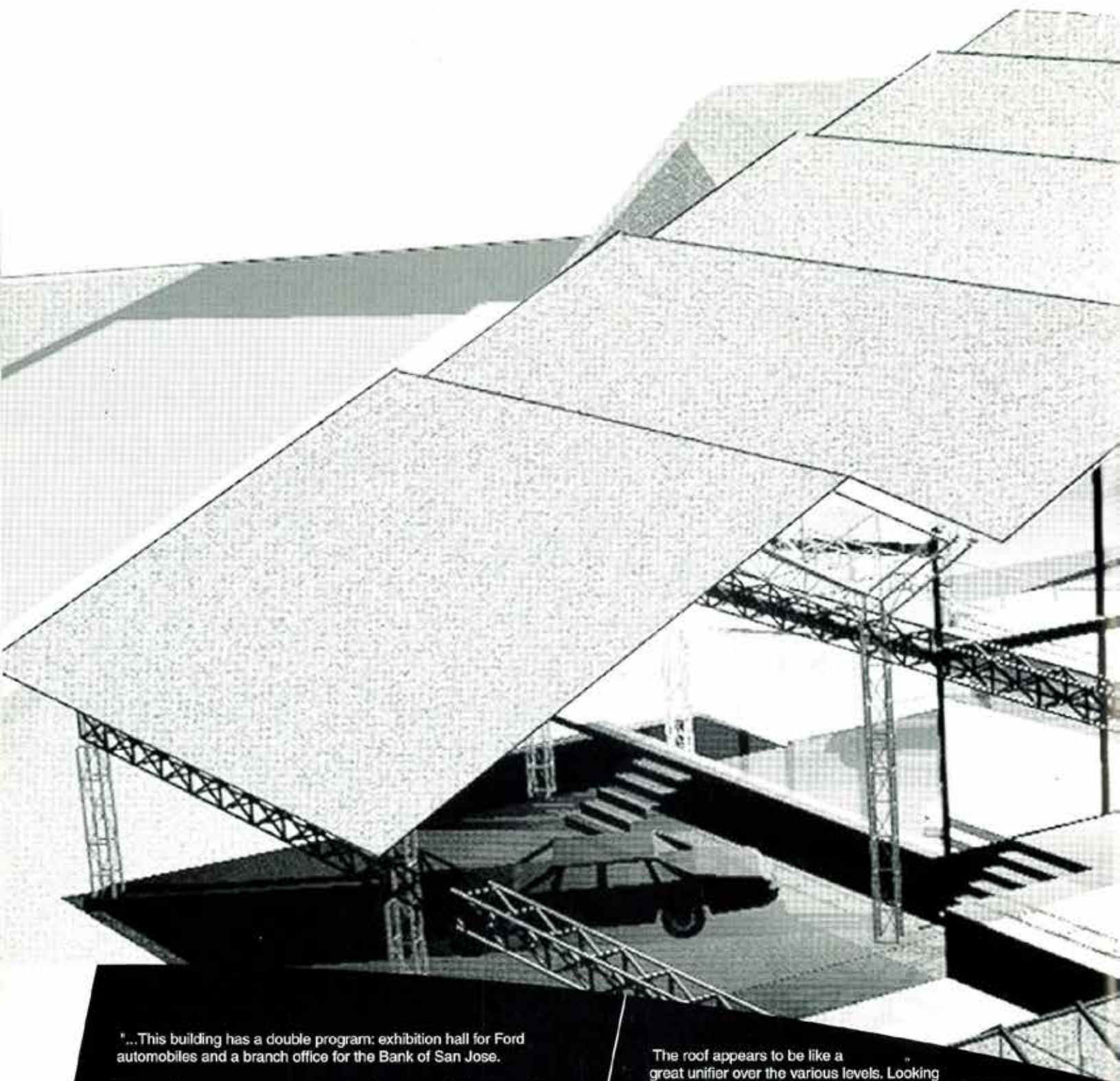
East Elevation



Transversal Section



Exterior view



"...This building has a double program: exhibition hall for Ford automobiles and a branch office for the Bank of San Jose.

The terrain has a strong gradient and a frontage of 140 meters. The architectonic solution was to have a building of three successive terraces serviced by a lateral street. From the street parallel to the site, one can simultaneously view the cars on the different terraces.

The building expresses by cascading forms of the roof which goes out of phase to the right and left as a form of adaption to the site.

In this manner the horizontal and vertical dimensions are specially articulated.

The roof is a great protector from the rain and sun. The borders of the eaves and roof shading were widened to respond better to the climate. On the North side, abundant natural light assists in the production of homogeneous and controlled lighting in the exhibition hall.

The roof appears to be like a great unifier over the various levels. Looking upward and well as downwards one can understand the spatial continuity between the vestibule of the bank and the exhibition hall.

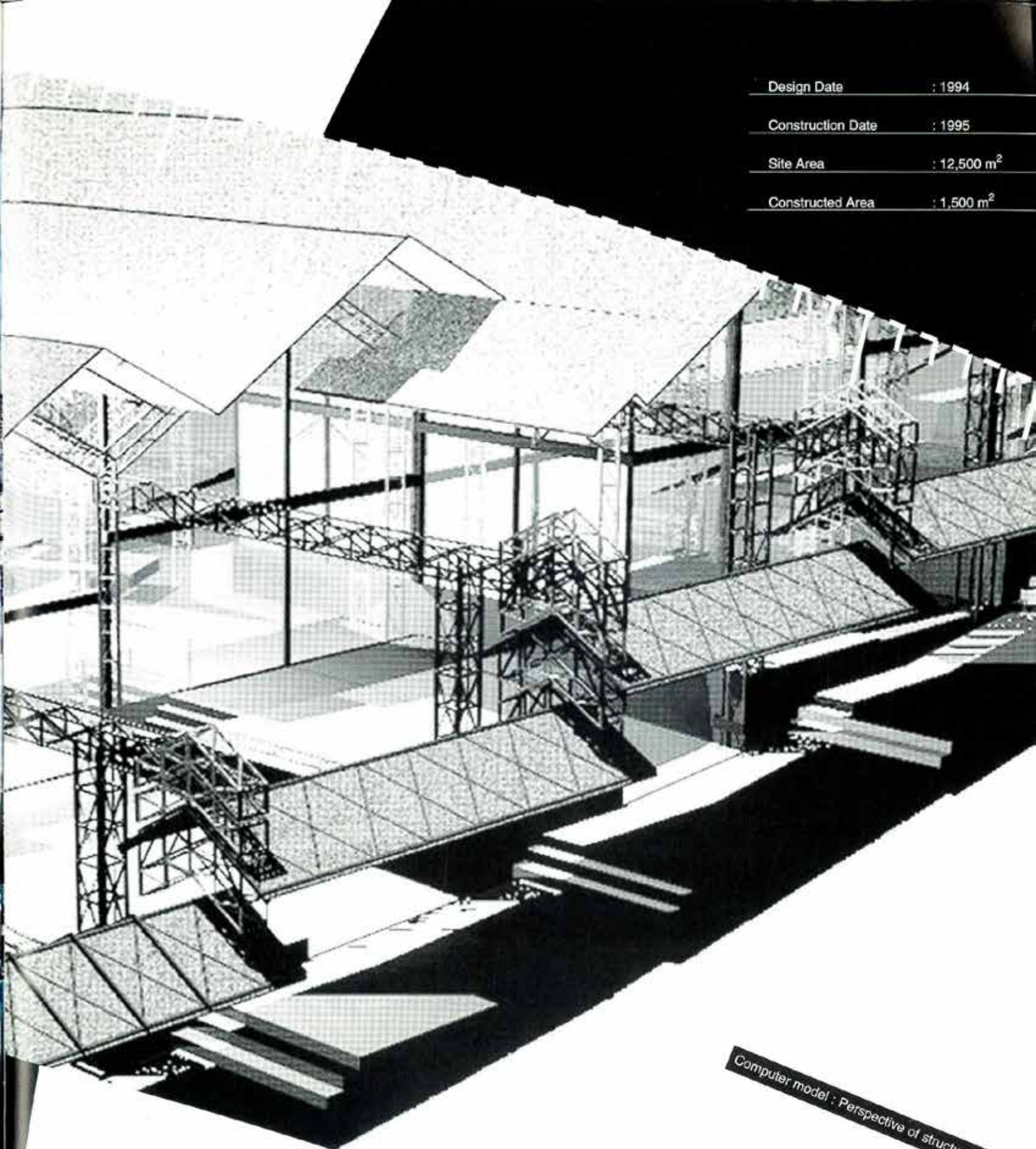
The structure of the building was conceived as thin metallic elements with the purpose of expressing lightness. Surrounded by trees and coffee plantations, the building relates itself easily with the architecture of the coffee roasting factories, which were traditionally constructed in the zone as these factories were employed as a source of inspiration to the design of this building..."

Design Date : 1994

Construction Date : 1995

Site Area : 12,500 m²

Constructed Area : 1,500 m²

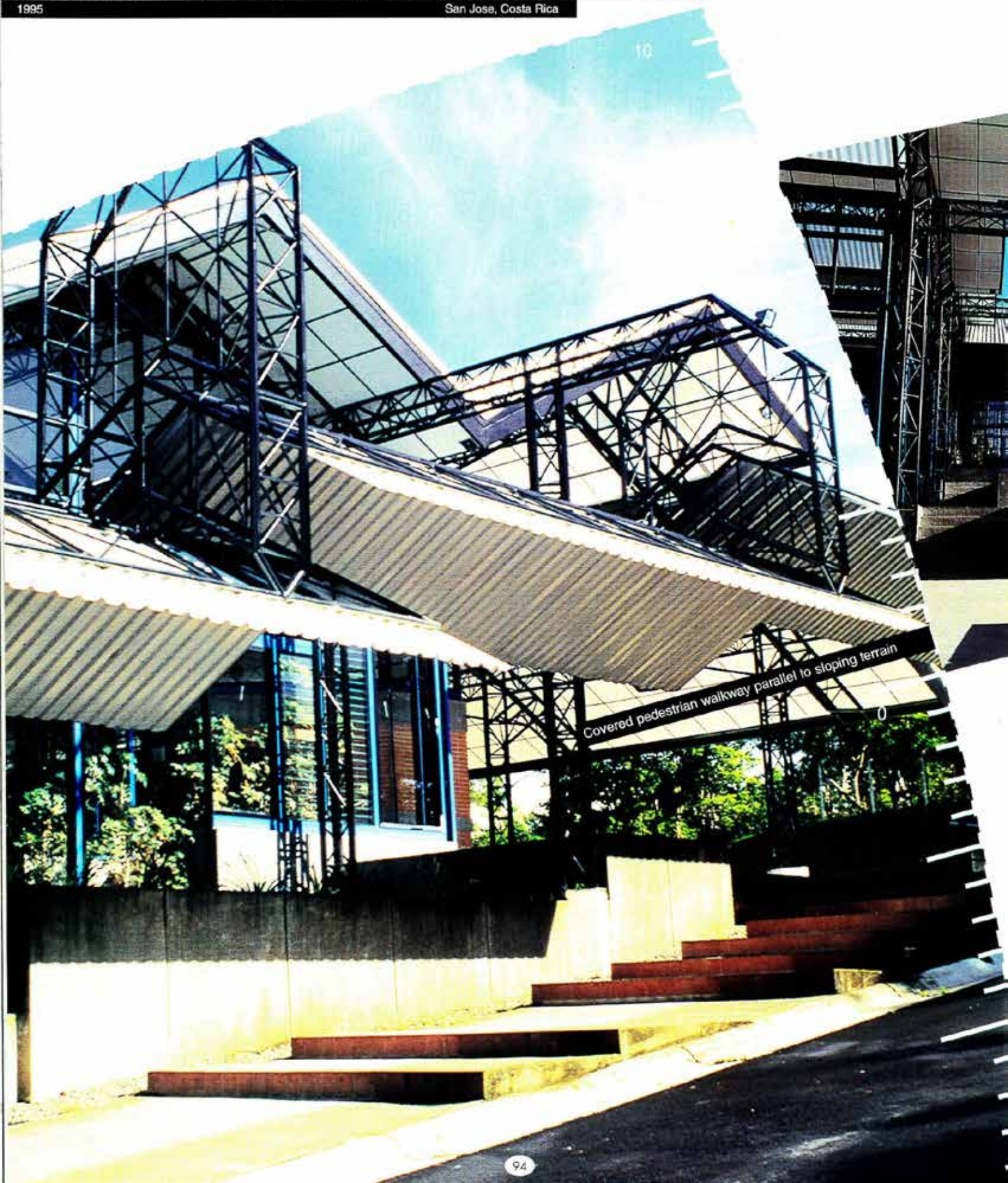


Computer model : Perspective of structural frame

Ford Showroom & Bank of San Jose - Curridabat Branch

1995

San Jose, Costa Rica



Covered pedestrian walkway parallel to sloping terrain



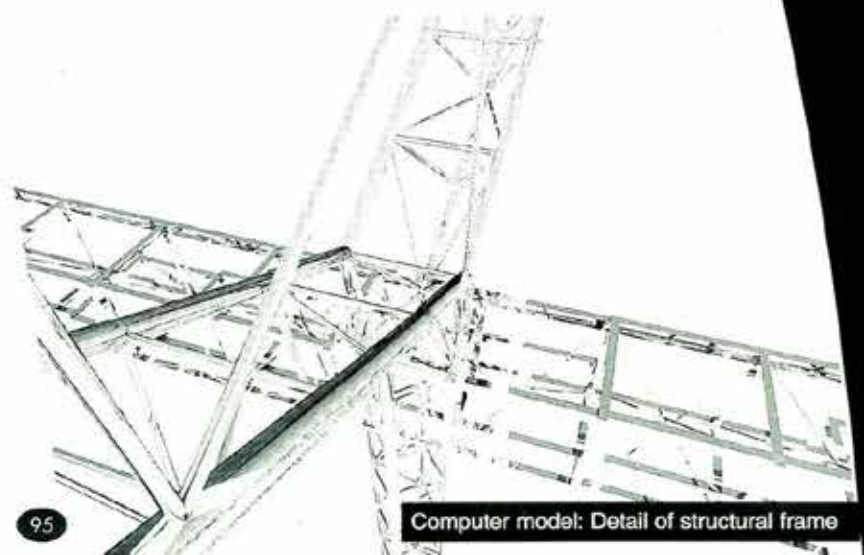
Sources of inspiration as a backdrop



Entrance



Ford Showroom



Computer model: Detail of structural frame



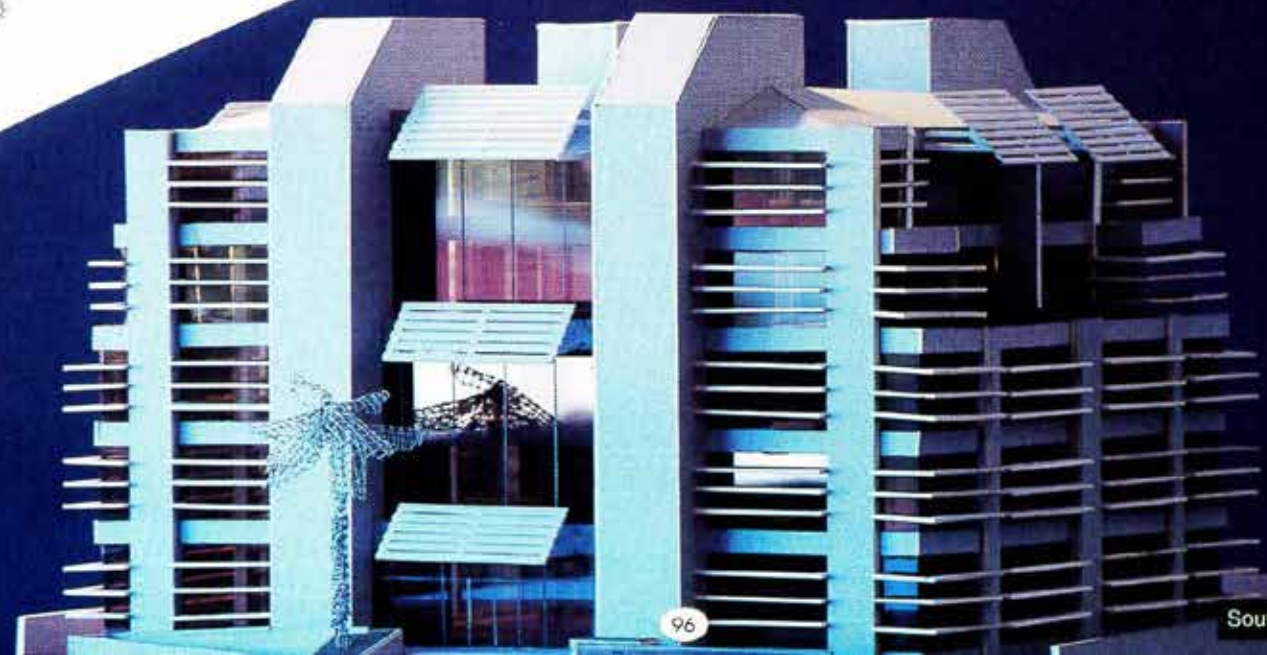
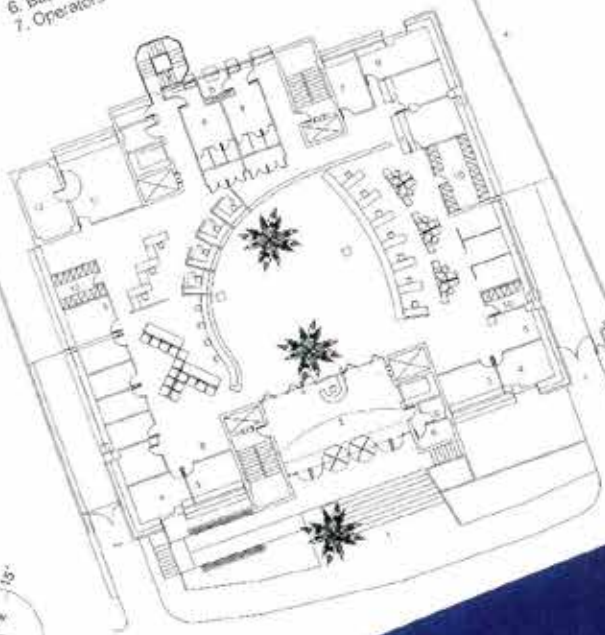
Third Floor Plan

- 1. Computers
- 2. Lightwell
- 3. Meeting room
- 4. Manager
- 5. Taxis
- 6. Bathrooms
- 7. Credit
- 8. Secretariat
- 9. Consultant
- 10. Archive
- 11. Assistant
- 12. Cafeteria



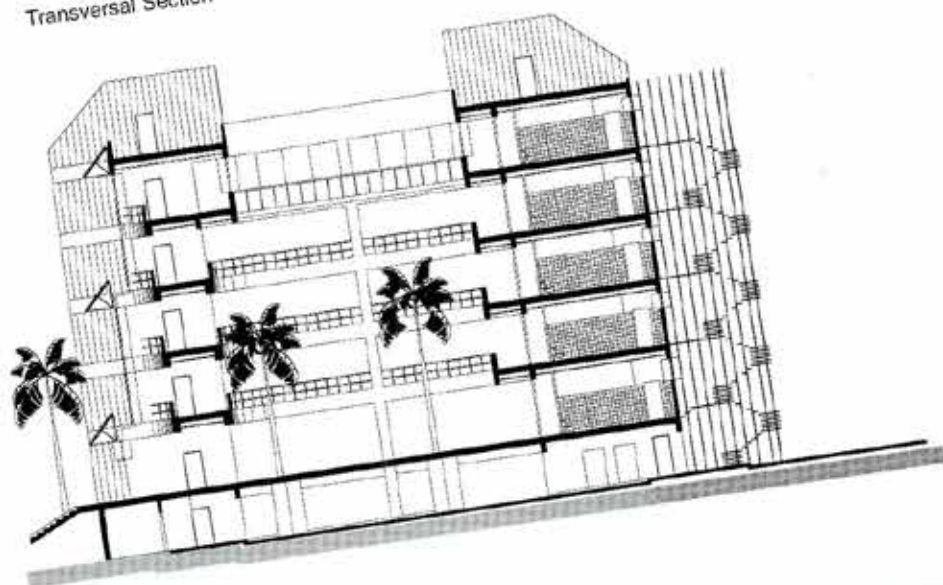
First Floor Plan

- 1. Entrance
- 2. Lobby
- 3. Meeting room
- 4. Manager
- 5. Cashier
- 6. Bathrooms
- 7. Operators
- 8. Secretariat
- 9. Correspondence
- 10. Archive
- 11. Assistant
- 12. Safe
- 13. Guard



Southern view of model

Transversal Section



Design Date : 1994

Site Area : 2,000 m²

Constructed Area : 5,000 m²

Vegetal atrium
Various sunshades
Stepped upper floors

"...This bank of recent foundation needs a building to project its identity. The chosen site is in front of a prestigious and much frequented avenue.

The lot has its boundaries 45° rotated with respect to its cardinal axes, and the avenue is at its south side.

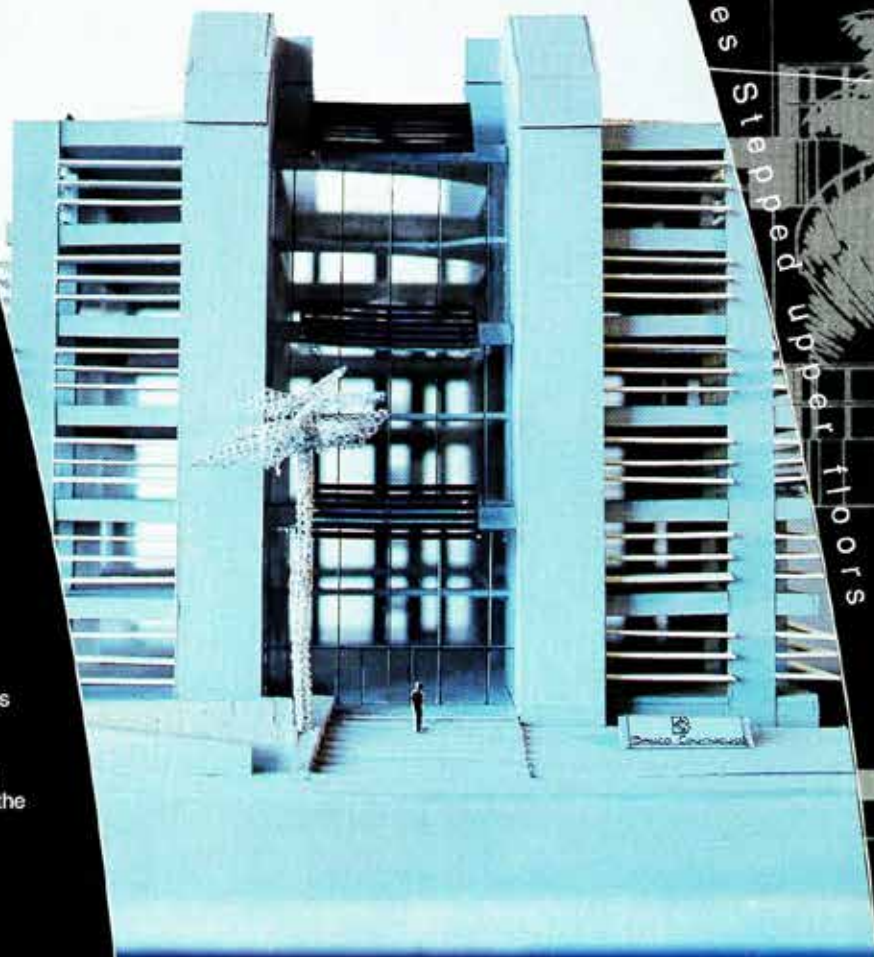
We decided to arrange the building around an atrium of four floors, with zenithal illumination and high trees to filter the light and cool the ambient temperature.

This vegetal atrium allows the clients to walk among the trees and to enjoy a natural surrounding.

In a country with a diaphanous atmosphere and brilliant light, a vegetal atrium is of architectonic interest, because it creates an attractive ambience for an urban building.

The facades of the building are adapted to the differing conditions of sunshine by means of various sunshades.

In order to obtain optimal conditions of illumination and views on each floor the lateral retreat has been stepped as in the case of the upper floors..."



Model view of entrance facade

Taboga House

1998 Guacacaste, Costa Rica

Site Plan

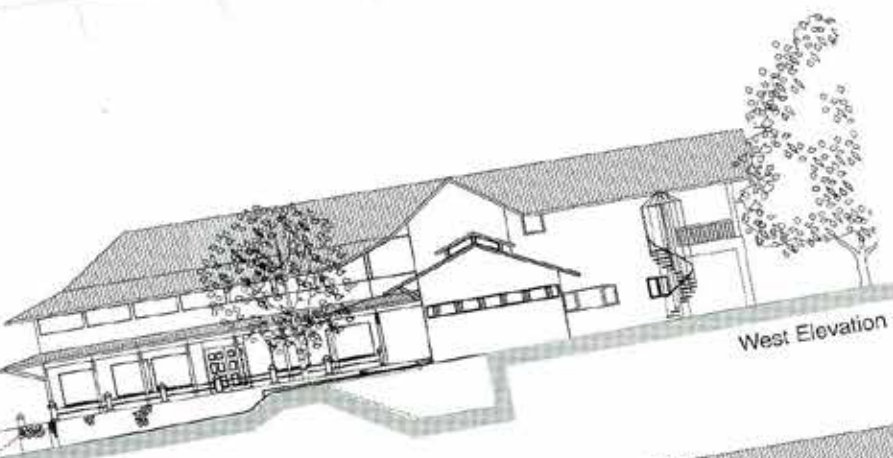
1. Entrance
2. Parking
3. Pool
4. Landscaping
5. Housekeeper houses
6. Cattle farm yard
7. Cattle scale
8. Natural reserve
9. Well

First Floor Plan

1. Entrance
2. Parking
3. Pool And Cascades
4. Landscaping
5. Living room
6. Dining room
7. Corridors
8. Kitchen
9. Guest room
10. Deck

Second Floor Plan

1. Bedrooms
2. TV room
3. Upper corridors
4. Balcony
5. Roof



West Elevation



Section A-A



East Elevation



South west view



Eastern corridors

*...The Sanchez family built a house in their cattle farm in Cañas, Guanacaste, in 1916. After several years of abandon, I was asked to decide whether the house should be restored, demolished or to completely build a new one. My advise was to retain and refurbish the old house with a new extension that was necessary.

Due to the new requirements of the family (7 bedrooms, 8 bathrooms, a swimming pool, a living room, a kitchen, a dining room) the interior distribution was completely modified. We only kept and reinforced the original structure of wood and the corridors of the first and second floor.

The volume for the swimming pool was added. The new extension incorporated bedroom for guests, the kitchen, the TV room, the main bedroom and balcony. Finally, the amplification as usual, resulted to be more ambitious than originally thought.

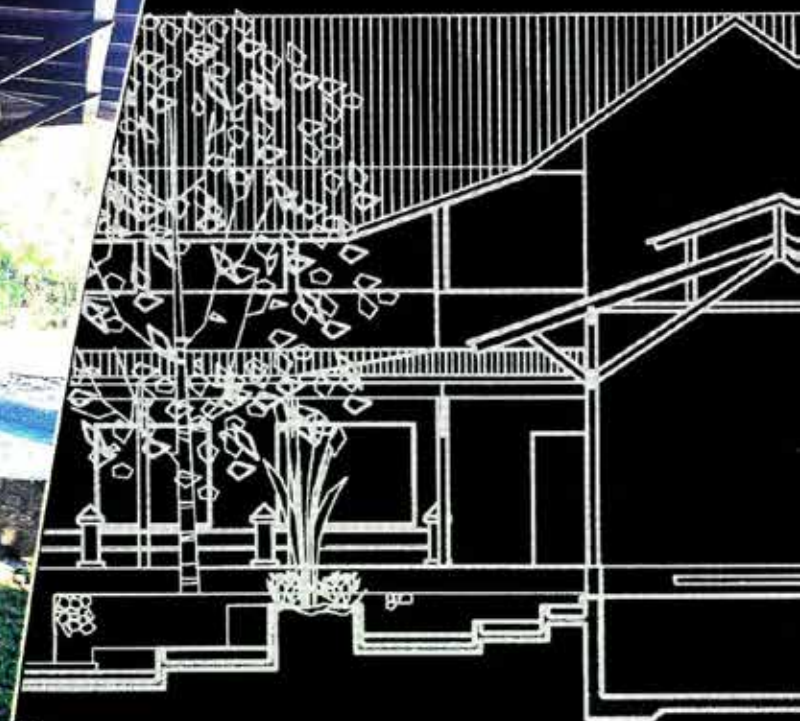
We used local cedar wood for the structure and for the external lining. We ordered an identical mosaic for the floor.

The comfort of the shaded and large corridors was repeated as an essential characteristic of the amplification.

The landscaping and the waterfalls in the swimming pool contribute to create a fresher microclimate in a region of high temperatures..."



View of pool from southern corridors

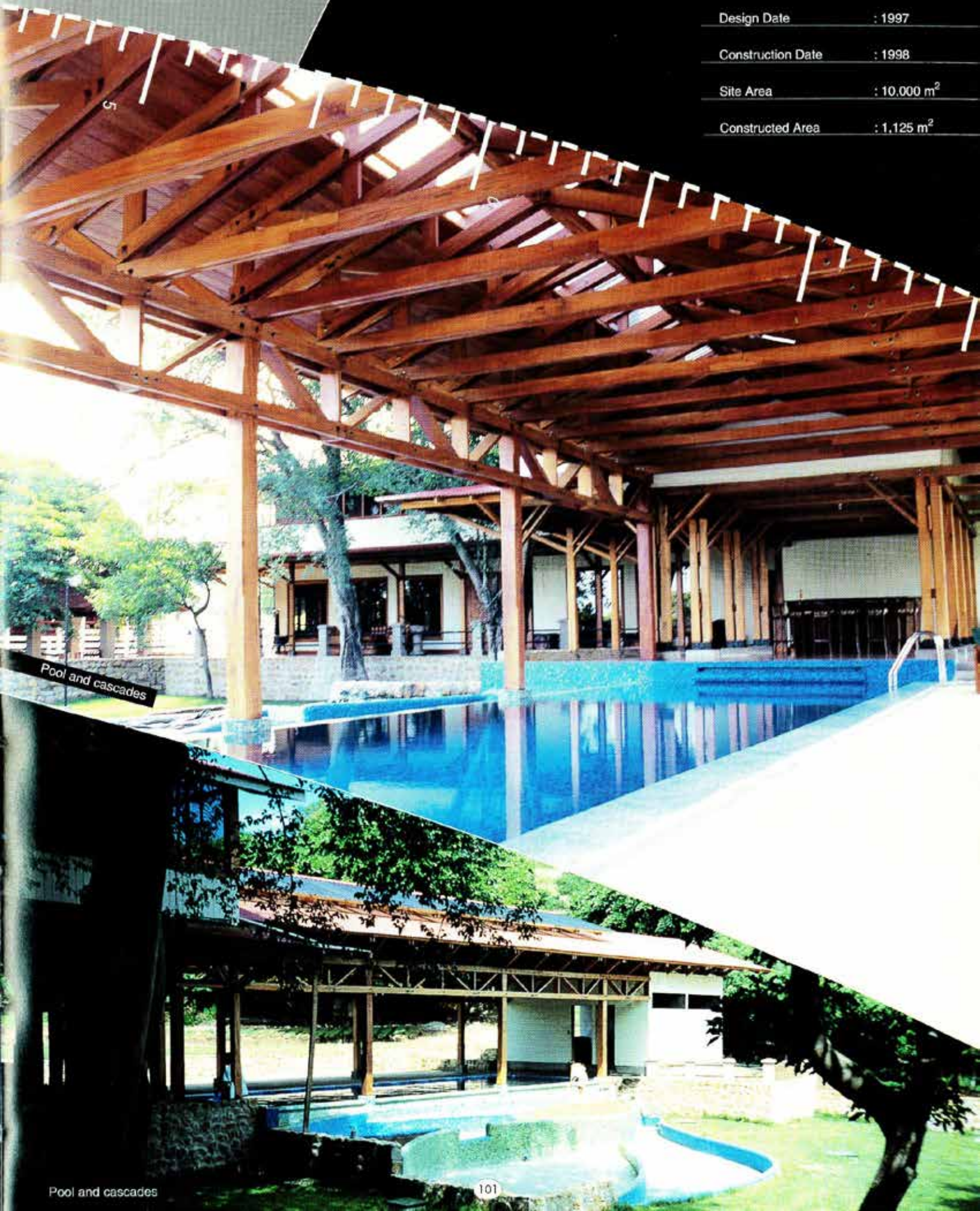


Design Date : 1997

Construction Date : 1998

Site Area : 10,000 m²

Constructed Area : 1,125 m²



Pool and cascades

Pool and cascades



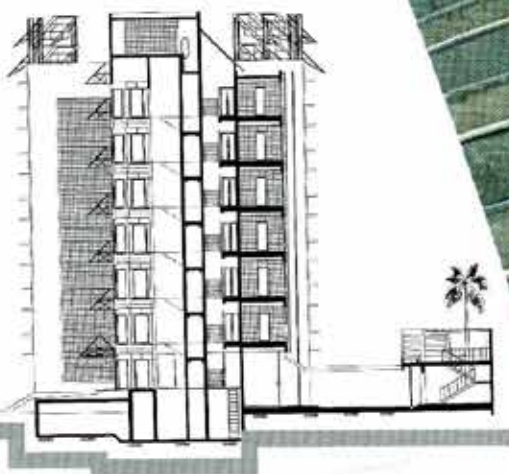
Site Plan

- 1. Entrance
- 2. Lobby
- 3. Apartment
- 4. Parking
- 5. Landscaping

Typical Floor Plan

- 1. Entrance
- 2. Lobby
- 3. Apartment

Section B-B



View from south 103

Segmented volume Horizontal marquees Perforated bricks Wind deflectors

Horizontal marquees and ventilated brick bands



Horizontal Marquees

"...This apartment building was designed for a rectangular lot, surrounded by expensive houses and beautiful remote panoramas.

The definition of the volume and the height were a determinant for the architecture.

The volume was divided into segments to avoid massiveness.

The horizontal marquees and the ventilated brick bands help also in the segmentation of the vertical volumes.

Applying bioclimatic principles, the marquees produce shadow, the perforated bricks ventilate, and the wind deflectors in the roof accelerate the wind and produce shadow on the roof.

The structure consists of a central nucleus with curved peripheral walls, in order to have open spaces on each floor.

Behind the ventilated bricks there are mechanical louvers to control the entering air. This saves energy as air-conditioning is not required..."

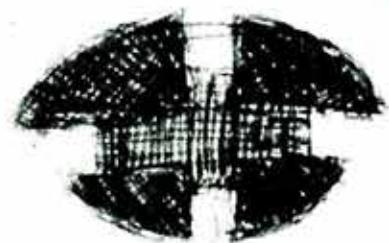
Design Date : 1996

Construction Date : 1998

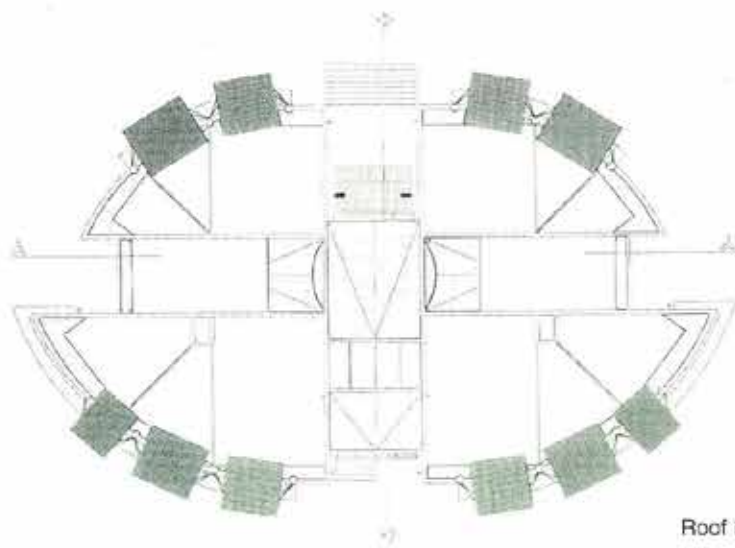
Site Area : 1,885 m²

Constructed Area : 3,400 m²

Wind deflectors on roof top

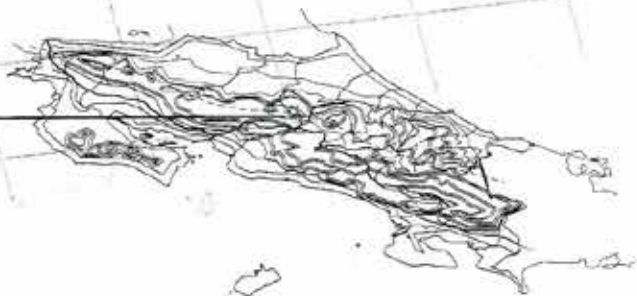






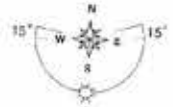
Bellavista Apartments

1990 San Jose, Costa Rica



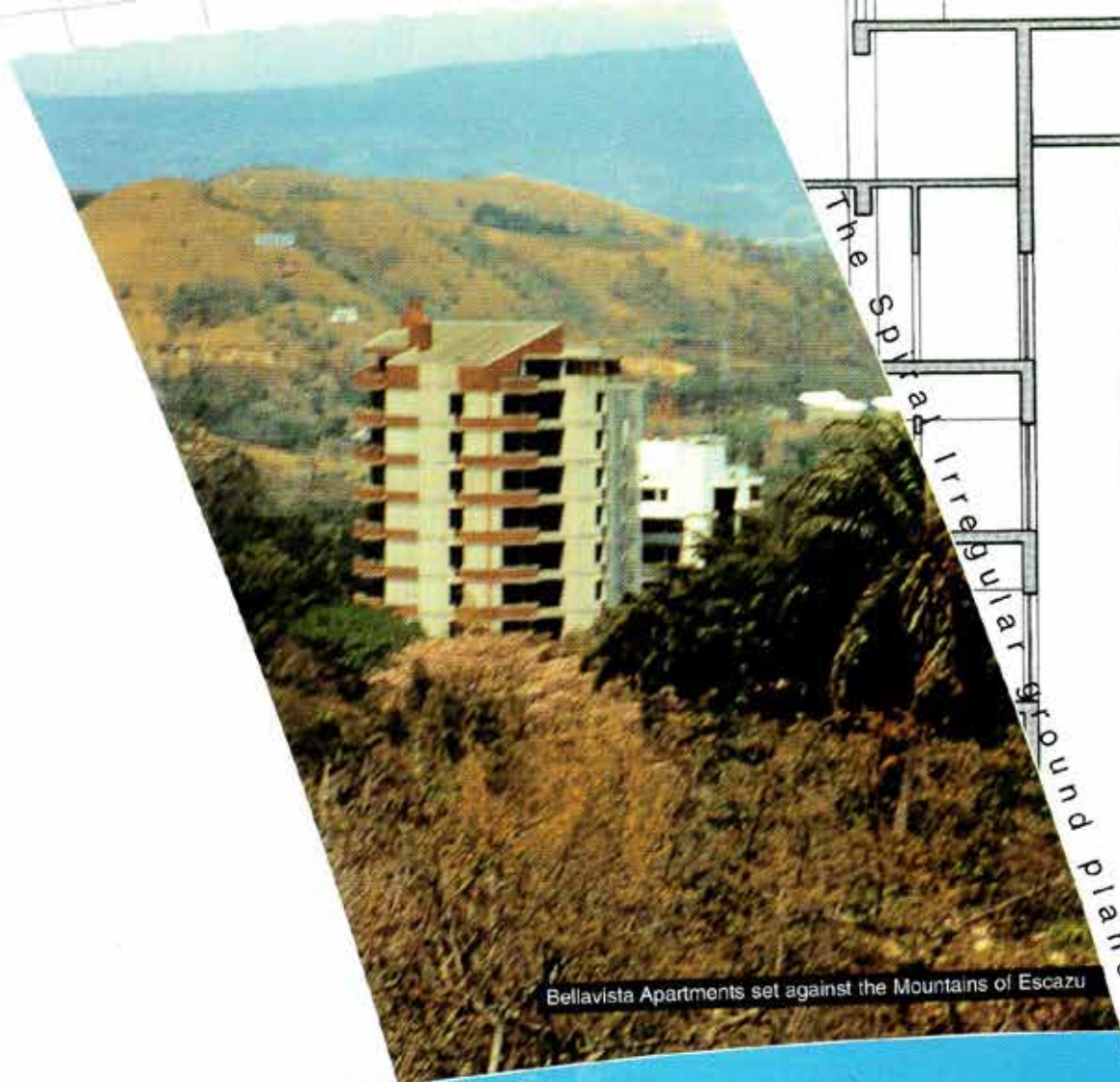
Site Plan

1. Entrance
2. Lobby
3. Landscaping
4. Pool
5. BBQ
6. Storage
7. Dresser
8. Emergency stair
9. Parking
10. Security
11. Tennis field



Typical Floor Plan 2 - 9

1. Entrance
2. Lobby
3. Elevator
4. Main stair
5. Bathroom
6. Storage
7. Closet
8. Emergency stair
9. Parking
10. Lounge



Bellavista Apartments set against the Mountains of Escazu

The Spatial Irregular ground plane floating eaves High windows



Corner articulation



"...The task was to design a building of big apartments, one on each floor, in an exclusive residential quarter. For this project, a suitable site was obtained in front of the country club with its beautiful green areas.

After the analysis of the configuration of the lot and in order to favor the best views, I designed an irregular ground plan. Its more ample development toward the southeast permits an appreciation of the sight of the mountains of Escazu and to avoid the obstruction of views from the neighbouring building.

The mountains change their tonality and thus become a motif of fascination. The spectacle is the light, sometimes it is cold and at others times brilliant and that brings out the whites. It may also turn gray before a rain and then soon becomes diaphanous. In December, the clouds cover the upper floors and veil the lights of the city, so that the landscape becomes the actor and the building the spectator.

The spiral helped me to clarify this assignment. The center would coincide with the vertical circulation. The curve, as it progresses, increases the area and thus the possible view. In these areas the structure was reduced to columns, in order to avoid any obstacles.

The high structural walls of striated concrete are interrupted by horizontal bands of bricks on each floor, thus it was possible to smooth the height.

Facing the west, the balconies intercalate with floating eaves that protect the large and high windows from the setting sun. Small glass windows below the eaves ensure the ventilation and the downward view. These eaves also provide shading bands due to their depth.

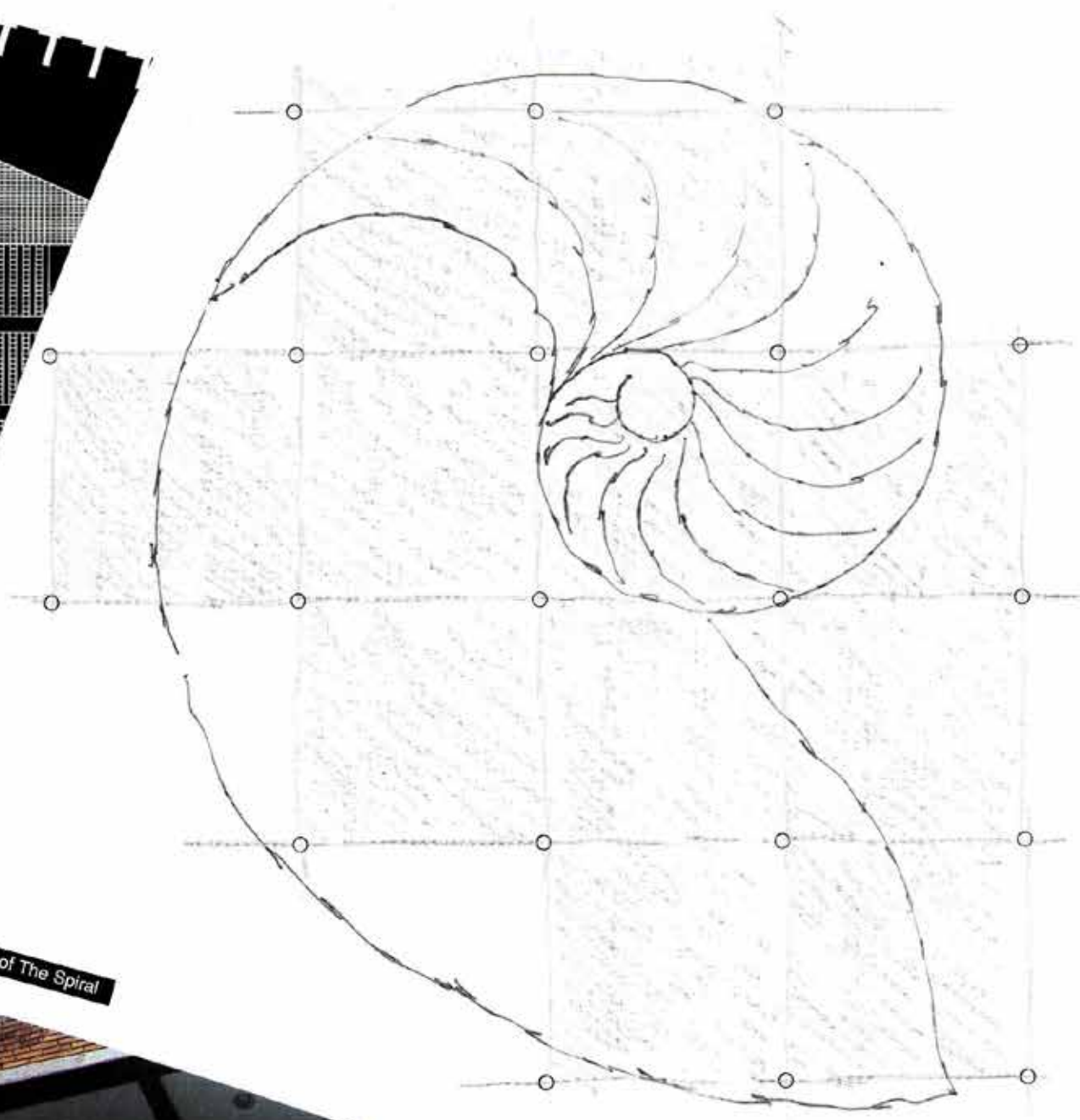
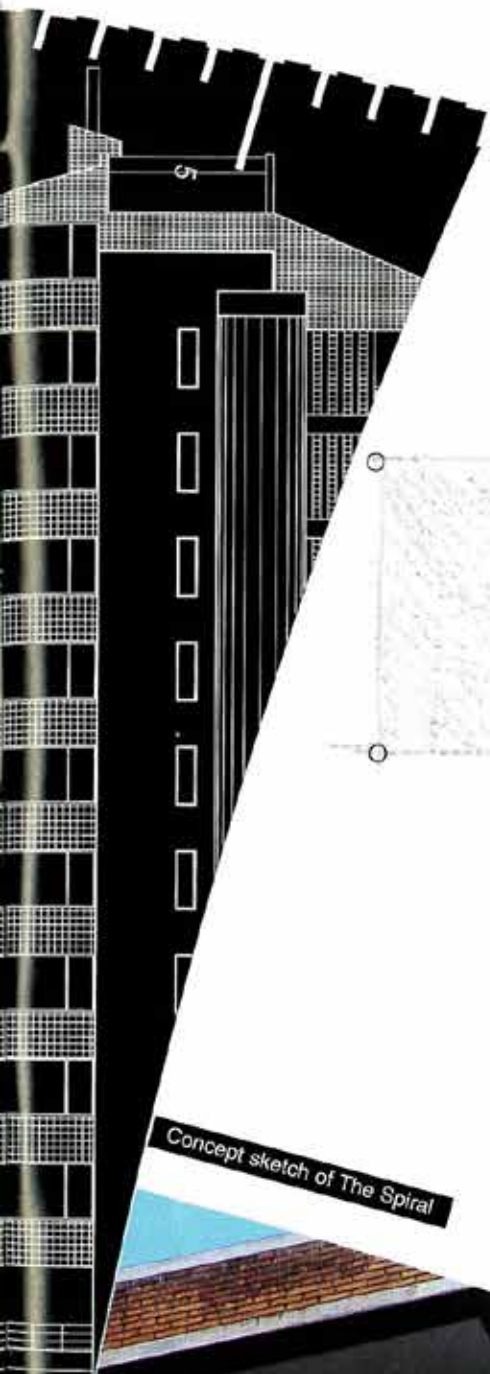
In this project I also used materials of little maintenance, like bricks and exposed concrete, taking advantage of their natural aspect while contrasting with the big, window contrasting with the big windows which introduced controlled glare. This contrast of opposing values plays opacity against brilliance..."

Design Date : 1988

Construction Date : 1990

Site Area : 5,300 m²

Constructed Area : 5,000 m²



Concept sketch of The Spiral

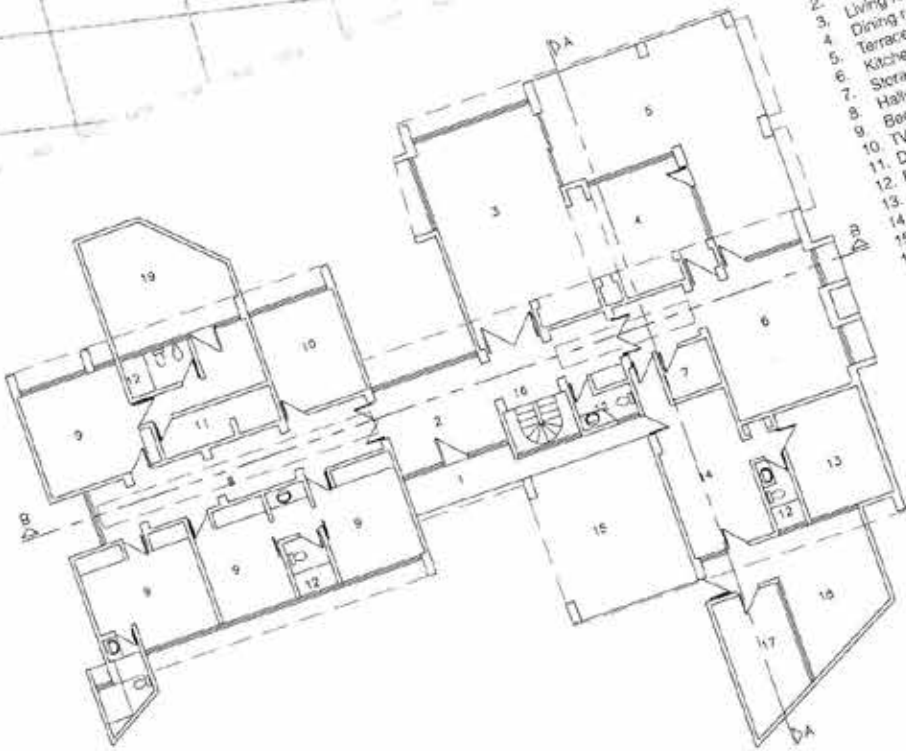


Balcony detail

Michel House
 1989 San Jose, Costa Rica

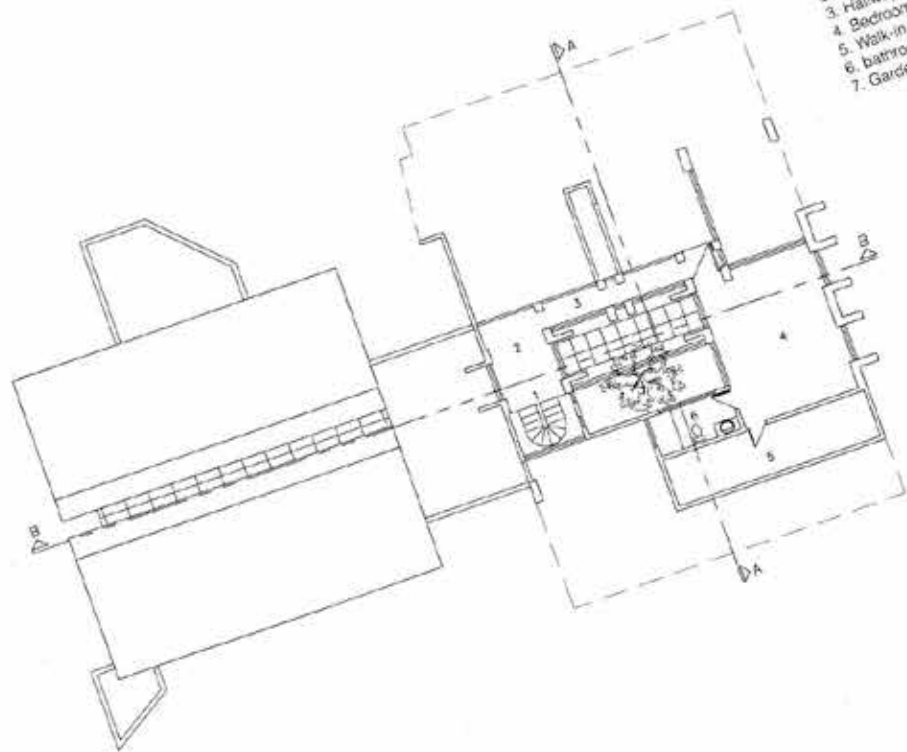


- 1. Entrance
- 2. Vestibule
- 3. Living room
- 4. Dining room
- 5. Terrace
- 6. Kitchen
- 7. Storage
- 8. Hallway
- 9. Bedroom
- 10. TV room
- 11. Dressing room
- 12. Bathroom
- 13. Employee room
- 14. Laundry
- 15. Garage
- 16. Stairs
- 17. Storage
- 18. Clothes drying
- 19. Solarium

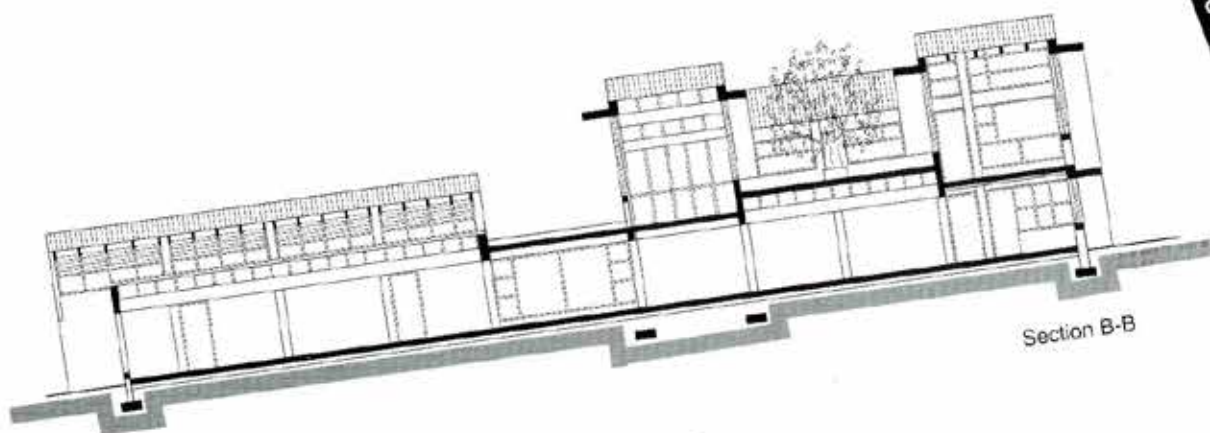
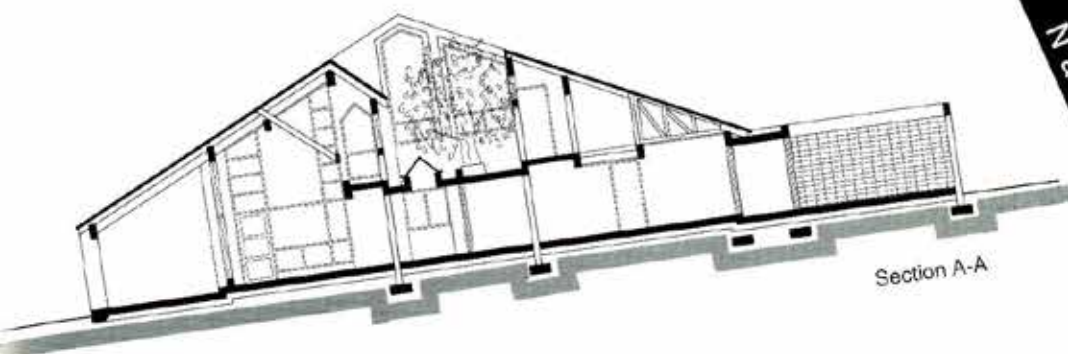


First Floor Plan

- 1. Stairs
- 2. Vestibule
- 3. Hallway
- 4. Bedroom
- 5. Walk-in closet
- 6. Bathroom
- 7. Garden



Second Floor Plan



Naturally illuminated spine Independent bedroom area Single level





2nd floor hallway

Living room



View of terrace

"...Constructed on relatively even terrain on a lot boasting a variety of trees, this house required an entirely independent bedroom area and a single level.

A linear hall that dissects the house from side to side served as the internal union between the bedroom area and the remaining areas of the house. From the second floor, this naturally illuminated spine is perceived as the single unit that integrates the house.

The materials utilized-teca for the frames, doors, windows, and floors; flat red roof tiles; and bricks for the solarium and the laundry area. These materials were left in their natural state to provide colours to the house. The walls are white and are covered with textured plaster.

The roofs are either one-sided or two-sided diagonals with free-falling eaves. The roofs appease and contrast drastically with the aggressive contours of the brick walls. Some corners have no eaves but are protected and shaded by extensions of the roof.

The uninterrupted height of the dining room area is enriched by the curved hall that leads to the studio. From the studio, the roof-supporting brackets can be distinguished and appreciated against the open vacuum below..."

Design Date : 1988

Construction Date : 1989

Site Area : 6,450 m²

Constructed Area : 550 m²

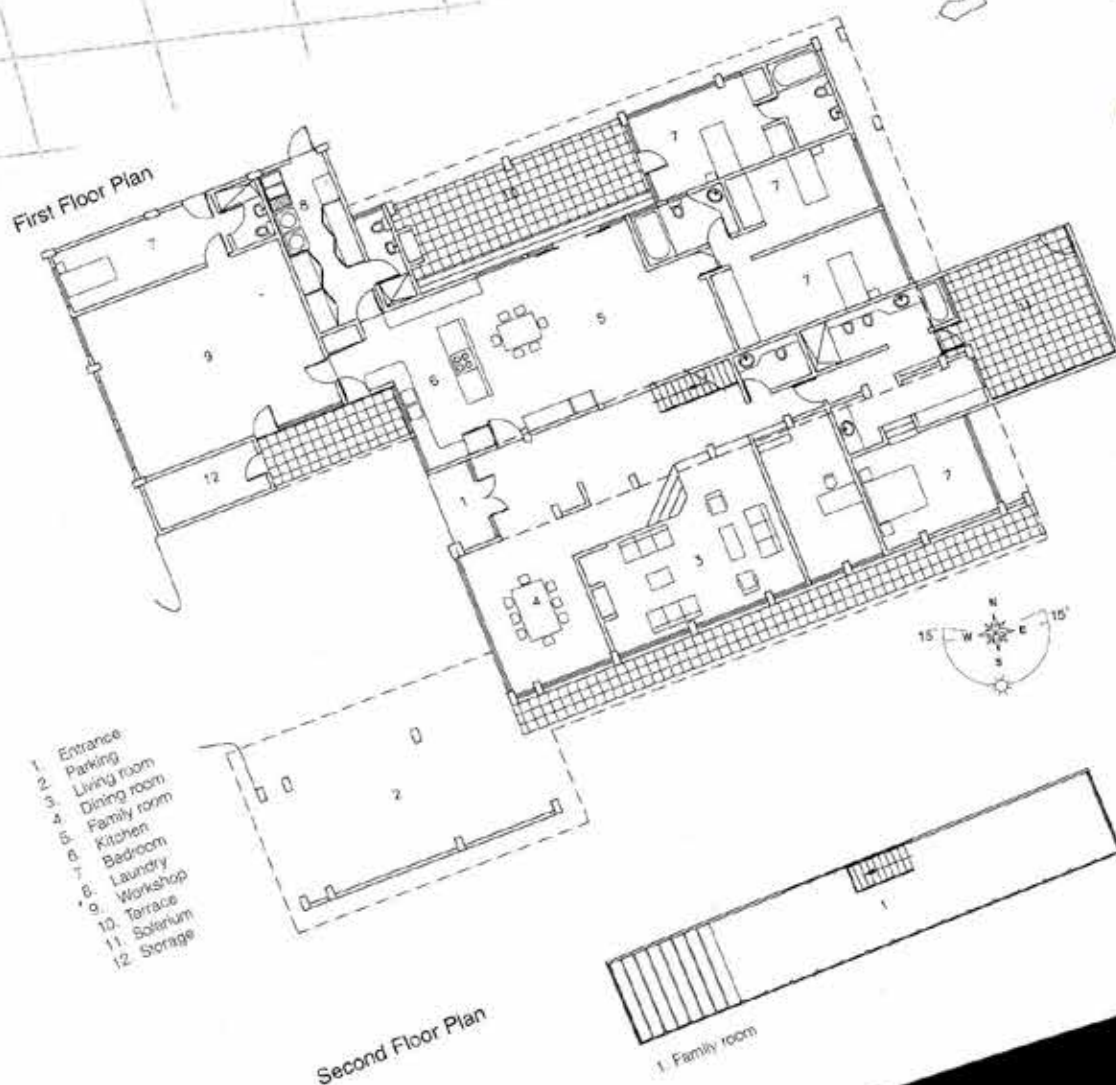


View from vestibule into kitchen

View from east

Friedlander House

San Jose, Costa Rica



"...In 1997 the Friedlander House was sold to the Gilmore Family, who asked us for a partial remodeling.

This house was built in stages, commencing as an old rural dwelling of 1979 to a remodeled extension in 1998.

The objective was to reuse the original design to obtain the size of the interior spaces. With this in mind, some walls were demolished and the kitchen and the living room were redesigned.

This intervention was an opportunity to reaffirm the original design of 1979 and to complete some architectonic aspects that have favored the house and ameliorated its use.

In this second stage there is a continuity of materials as well as an architectonic one of the first stage. The tile floor, the roofing and beams of almond wood, the walls and columns in structural bricks, give this house an atmosphere of tranquility. The faint and cool interior, enhanced with the illumination of natural light is inviting and peaceful..."

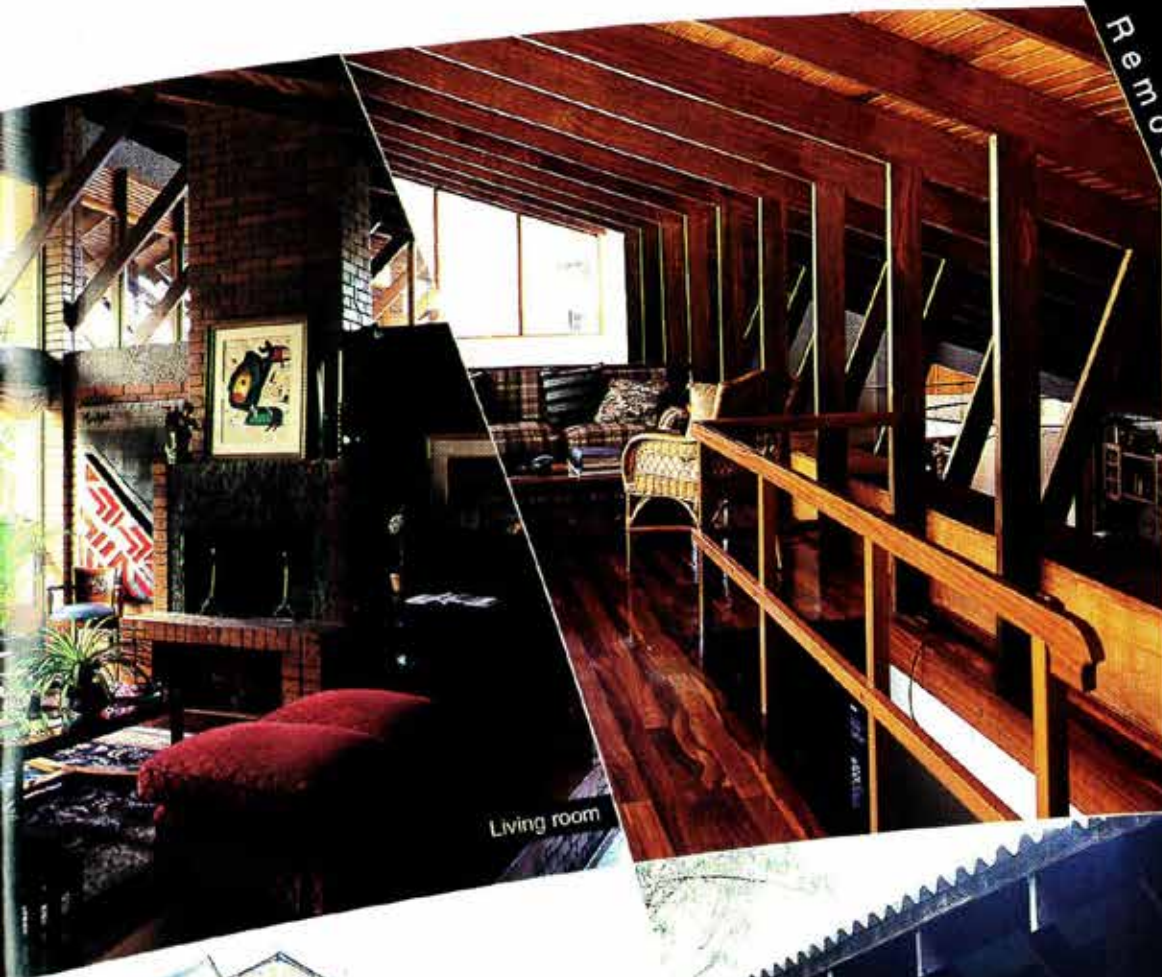
Design Date : 1979 - 1997

Construction Date : 1979 - 1997

Site Area : 2,700 m²

Constructed Area : 755 m²

Remodelation and extension Reaffirmation of original design



Living room

Family room

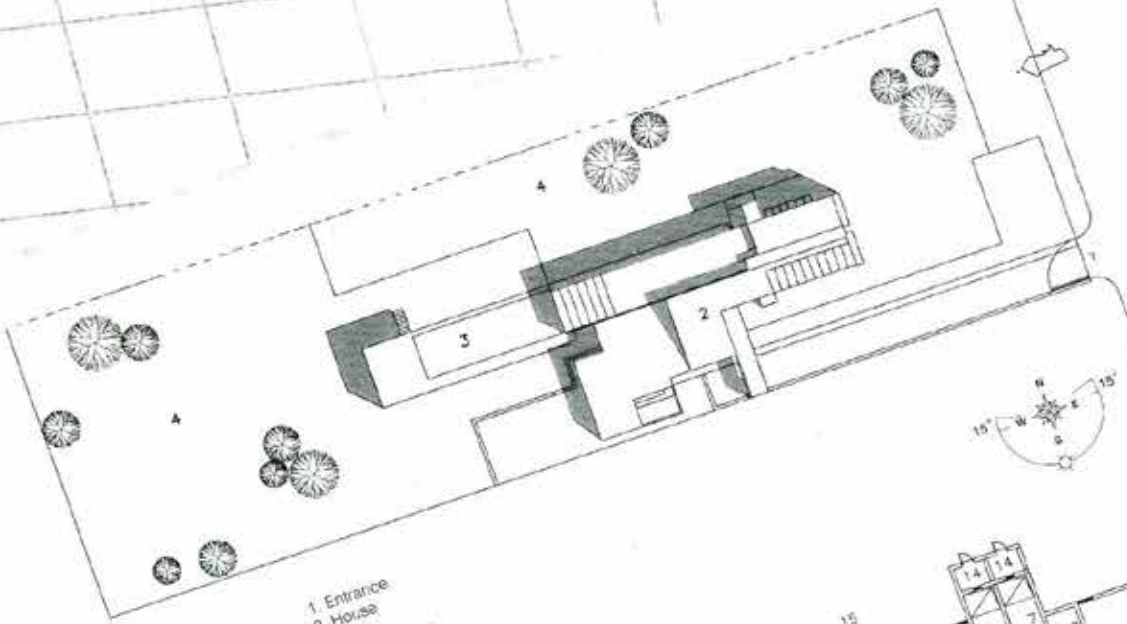


Juxtaposition of various materials

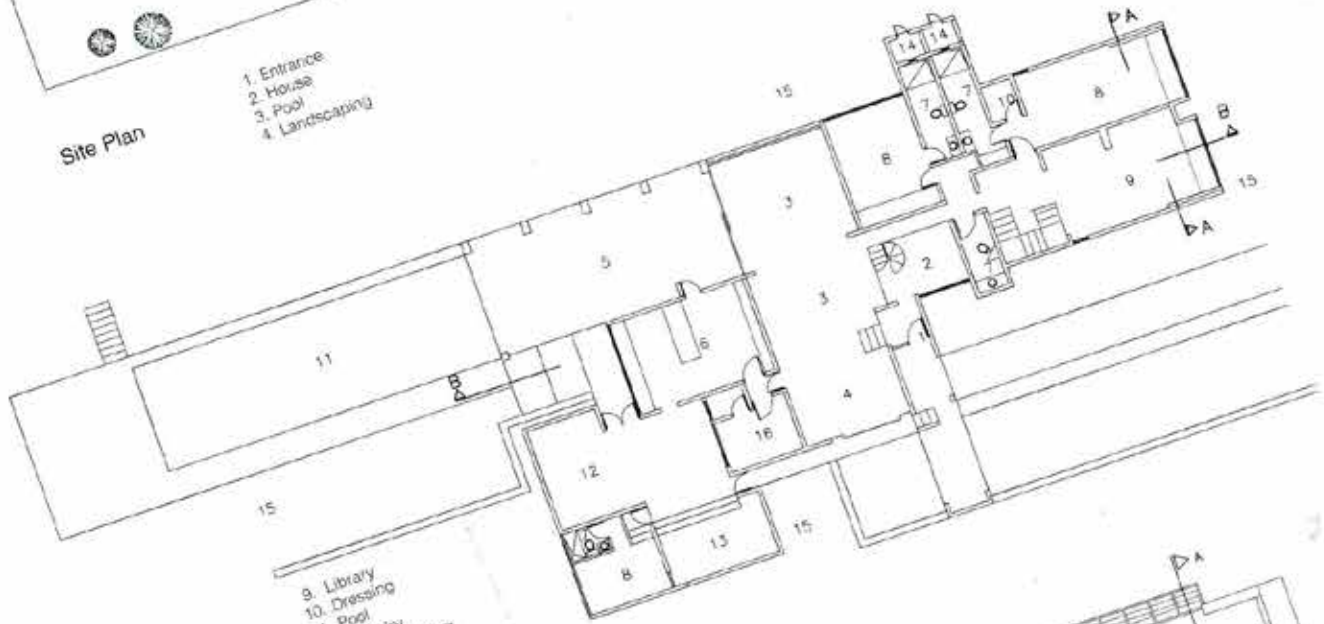
External facade of living room

Stagno House

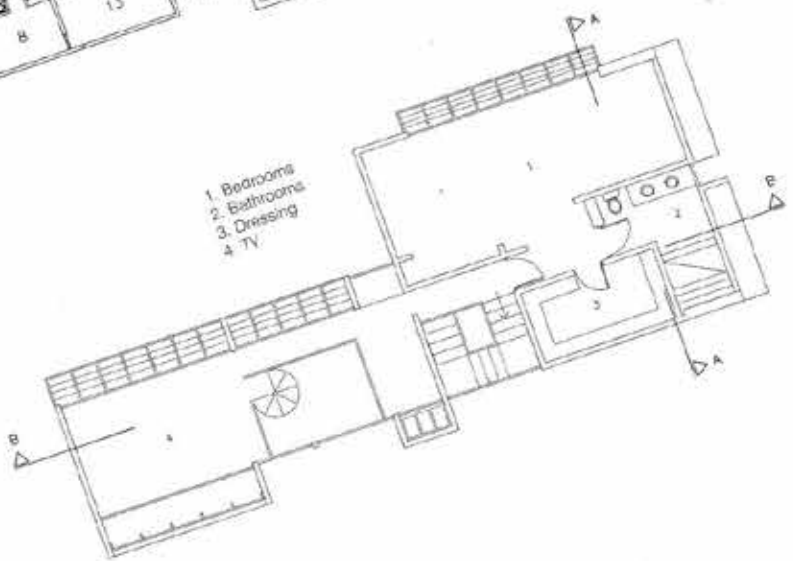
San Jose, Costa Rica



Site Plan

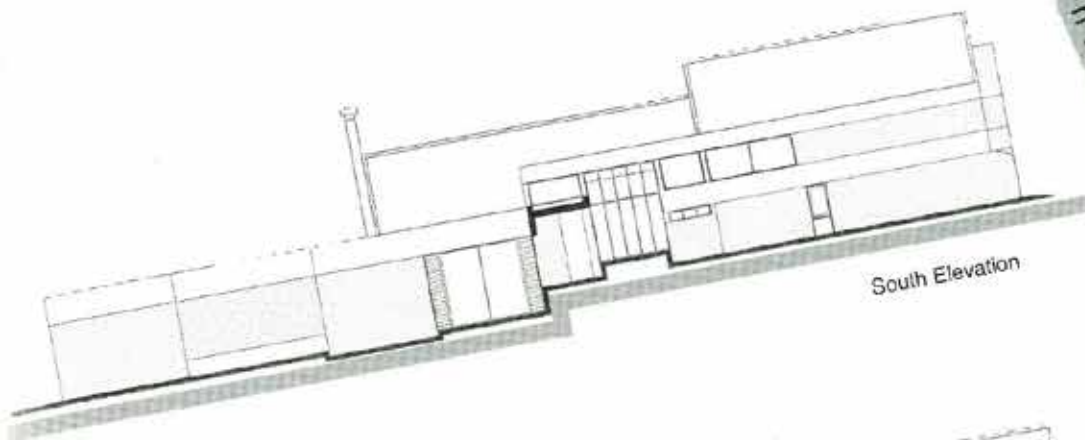


First Floor Plan

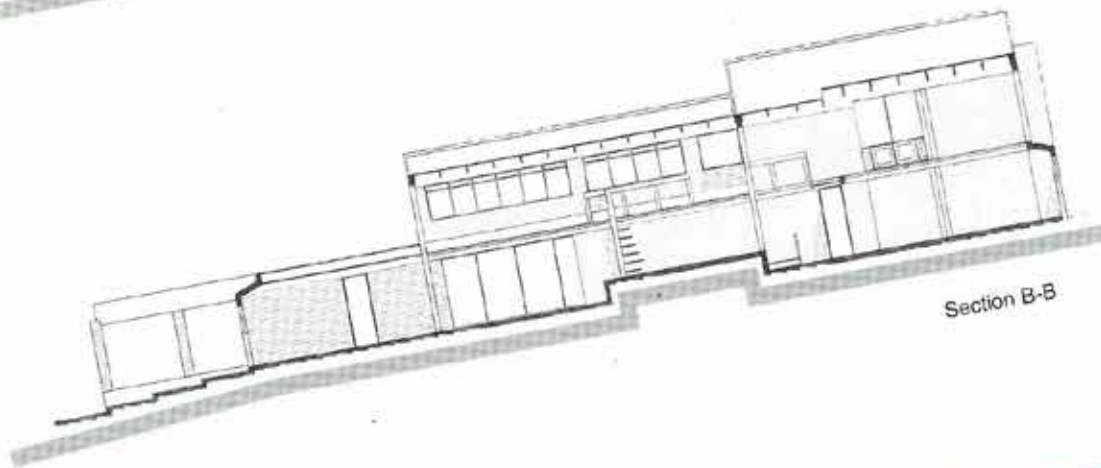


Second Floor Plan





South Elevation



Section B-B

Central community areas
Individual isolation
Bitfunctional bedrooms



North West view



One of the bifunctional bedrooms

TV area on 2nd floor

"...A distanced property with rural characteristics proved essential for the isolation of a family on a daily basis. San Jose is one of the few capital cities in Latin America where residing in a rural environment of wild yet hospitable nature demands a short 15-minute ride to the downtown area. The creek at the end of the property, dry throughout the summer yet torrentuous during winter, can be heard from the house along with the hammering of the woodpeckers that nest in the old trees and the nocturnal hooting of the owls. The property is surrounded by coffee and banana plantations and located on the slopes of the mountains that flank San Jose to the south, thus allowing an expansive view of the Central Valley.

The design appears to be an articulate unitary conception within which each inhabitant could with ease affirm and develop their personality. These units permit individual independence and isolation, yet opening into the surrounding nature. The bedrooms are comfortably bifunctional, designed as sleeping quarters and work areas. The beds are frequently repositioned according to will and necessity. The bedrooms share a central community area that displays different heights, materials, views, and functions. The community area unites the family as the presence of any family member in this area is perceptible either visually or audibly by the other members and is functionally versatile. This area also enjoys a commanding view of the mountains that rise beyond the property and of the valley that harbors the city of San Jose.

In the design I employed a schematic order based on two squares that encompass the areas for individual isolation - the bedrooms, the kitchen, and the bathrooms -, which communicate through the central community areas by means of halls liberally delineated by the arrangement of furniture.

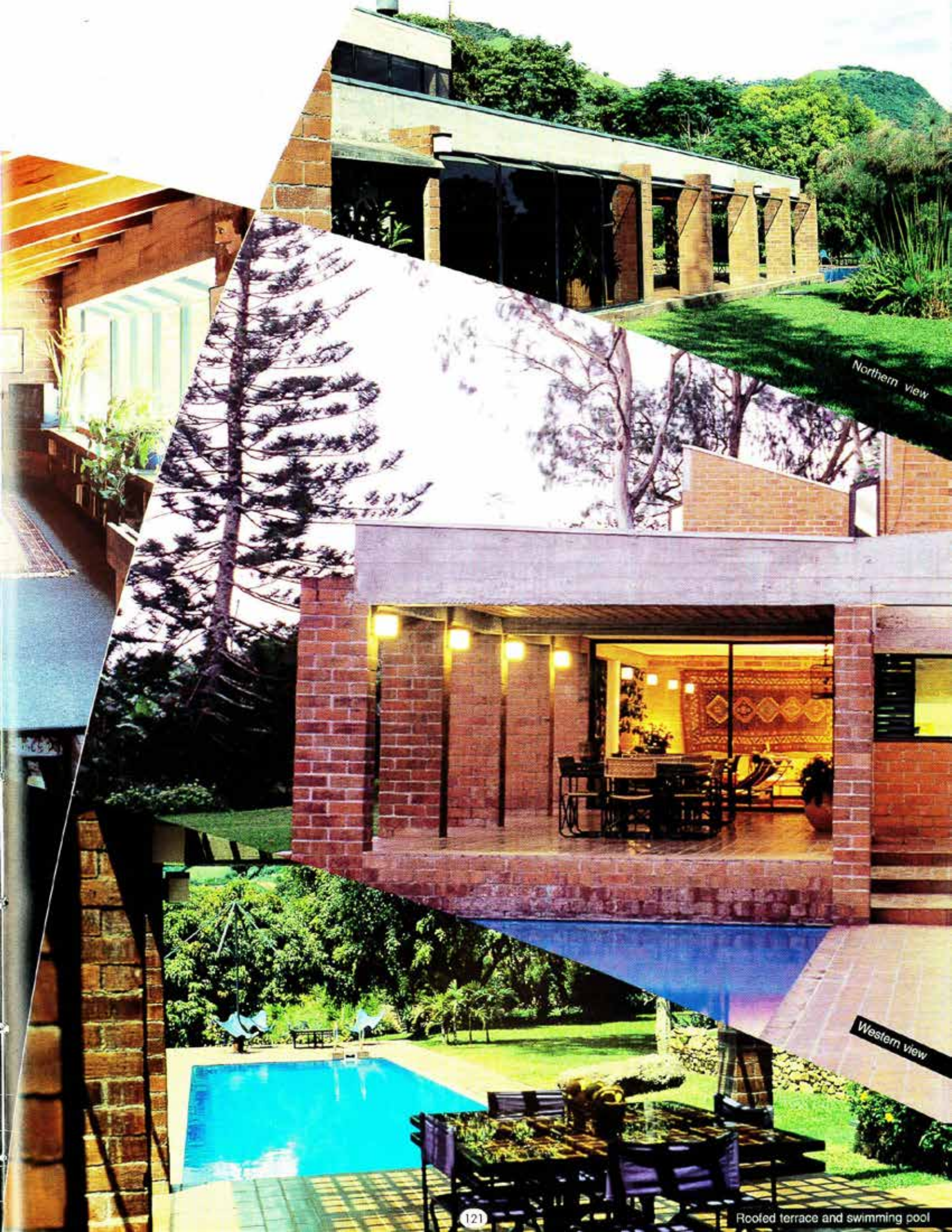
Intending not to alter or affect the perception and the function of the architectural design of the project, I utilized simple materials exposing their bare yet harmonious colors and surfaces, attaining a pleasurable space treated without any decorations that becomes the central protagonist of the aesthetic experience of architecture..."

Design Date : 1976 - 1990

Construction Date : 1976 - 1990

Site Area : 3,000 m²

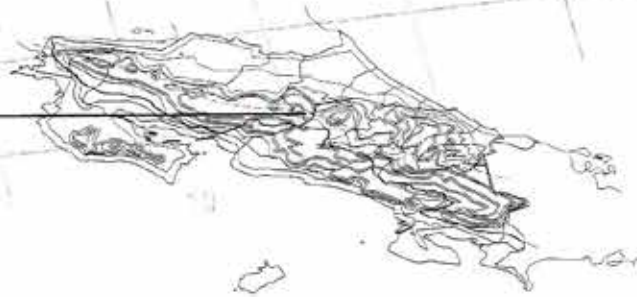
Constructed Area : 580 m²



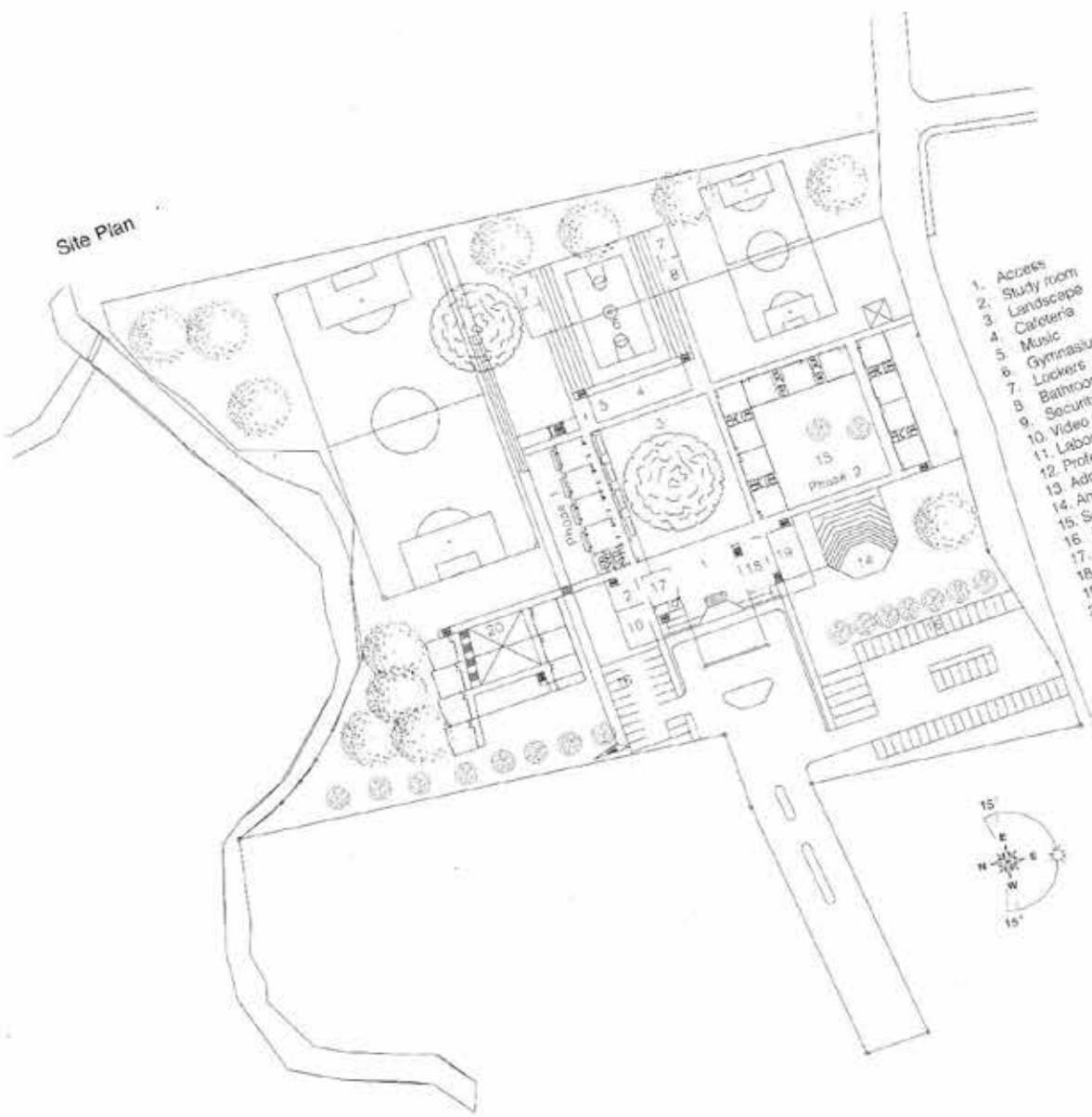
Northern view

Western view

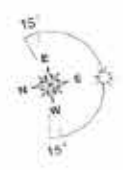
Roofed terrace and swimming pool



Site Plan

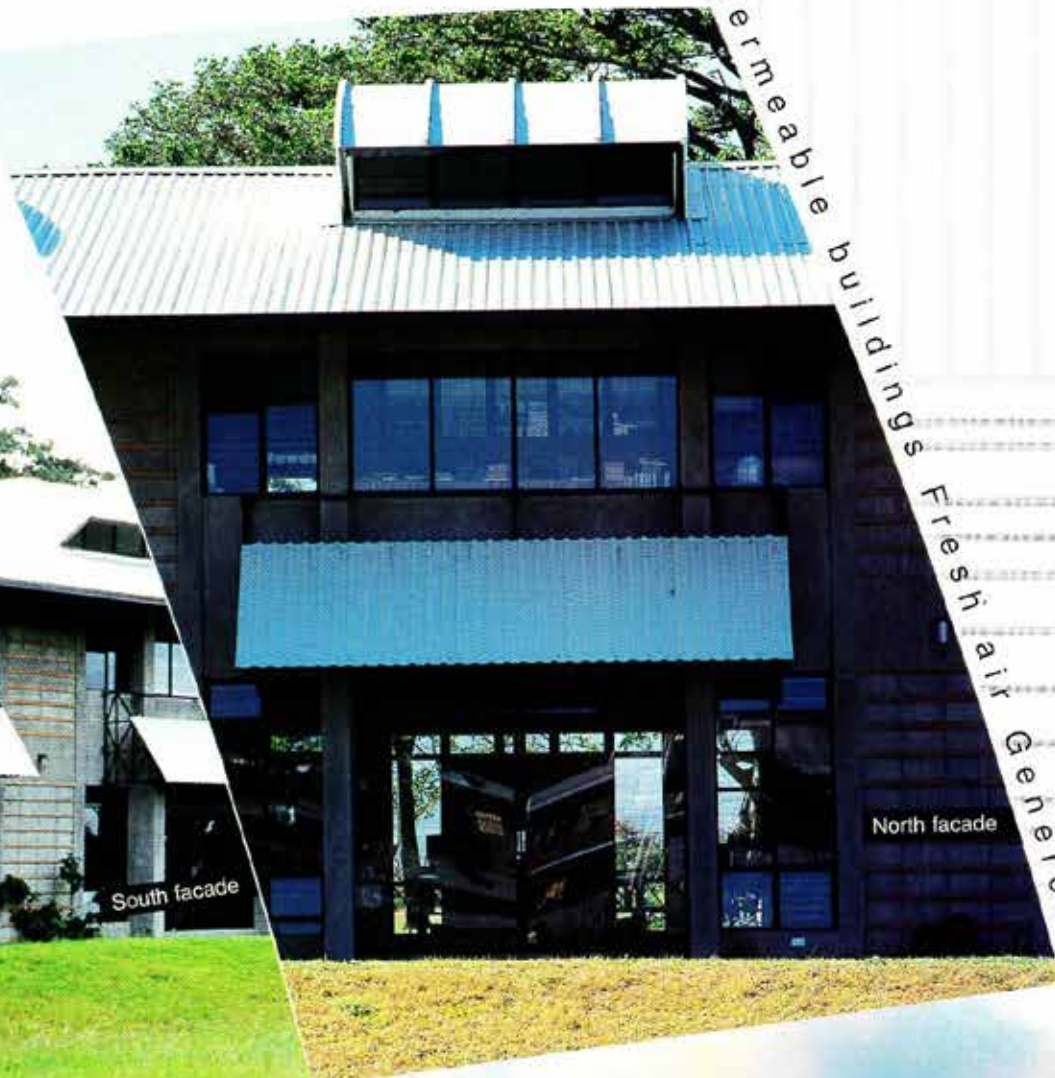


1. Access
2. Study room
3. Landscape
4. Cafeteria
5. Music
6. Gymnasium
7. Lockers
8. Bathrooms
9. Security
10. Video facility
11. Laboratories
12. Professor
13. Administration
14. Amphitheater
15. School
16. Parking
17. Cafeteria
18. Reception
19. Library
20. College

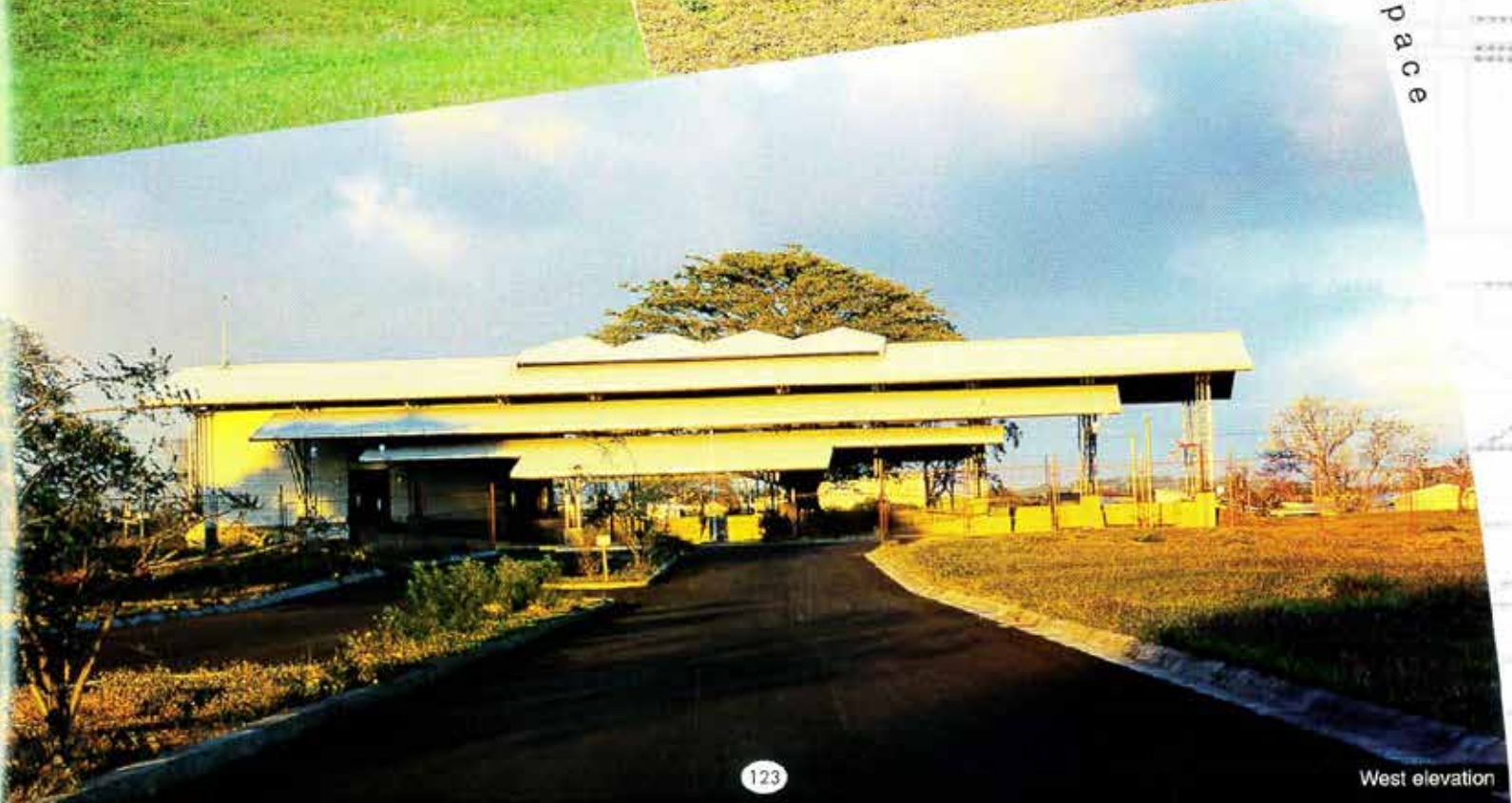




South facade

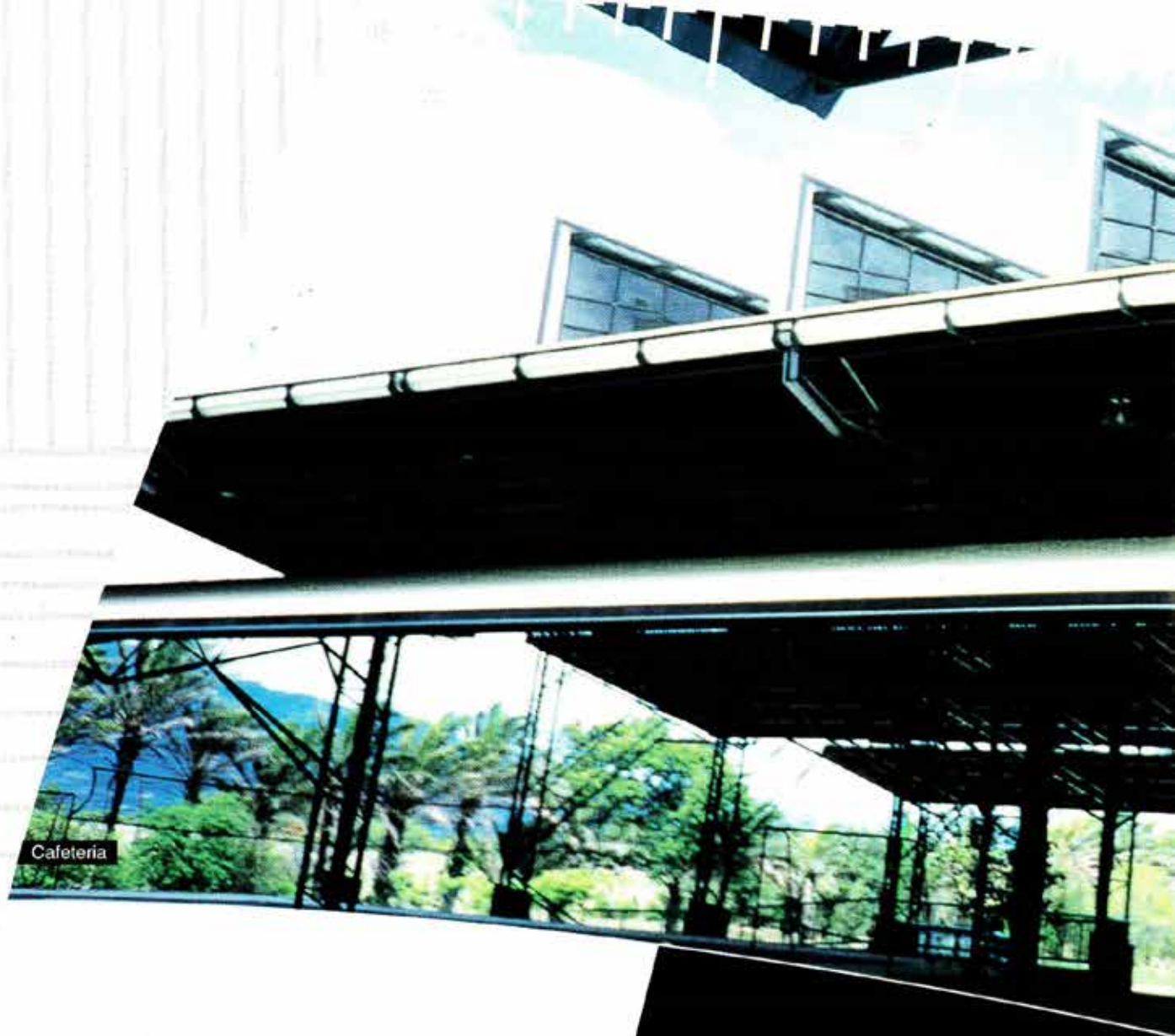


North facade



West elevation

permeable buildings
Fresh air
Generous space



Cafeteria

"...We approach again the subject of education, this time on a bigger lot, in a hotter area, where a breeze is necessary.

A tree contributes shadow and age.

The buildings are made permeable and located in a way to take advantage of the fresh air.

The administration building has a roof of great height and successive eaves, which lower the shadow and cause an agreeable penumbra.

The contained, ample and generous space can be crossed without any restrictions and obstructions due to the transparency.

The corridors and the staircases insulate the classrooms from the heat. The wide eaves provide protection from the rain and sun.

From above ventilation monitors trap the breeze by means of slits and helps to move the hot air out of the classrooms.

Below, a breeze sweeps across the classrooms toward the outside..."



North Elevation

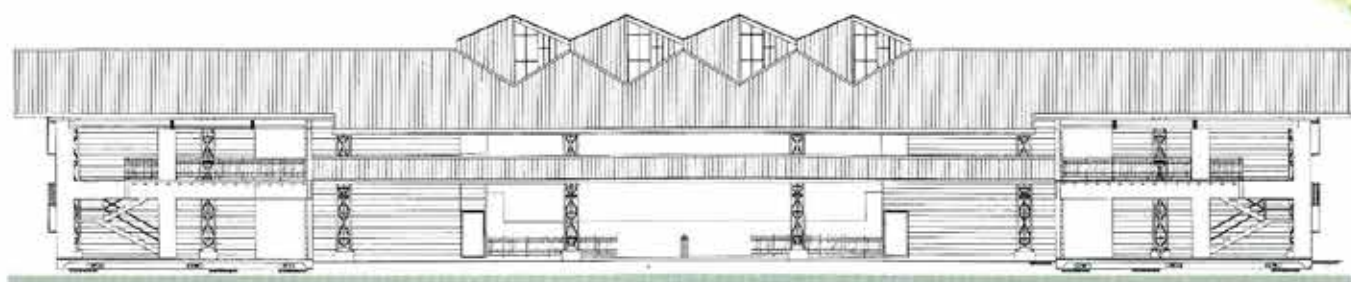
Design Date : 1996

Construction Date : 1997

Site Area : 29,000 m²

Constructed Area : 2,650 m²

Central landscape area





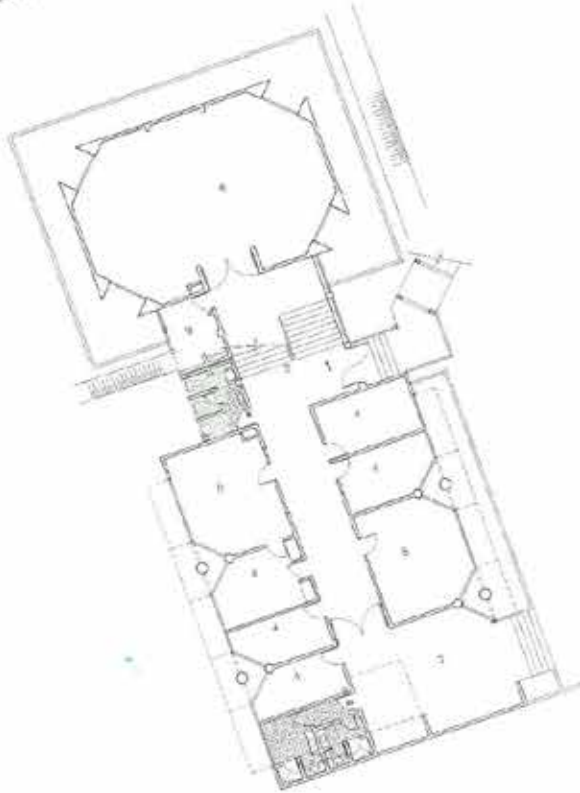
Site Plan

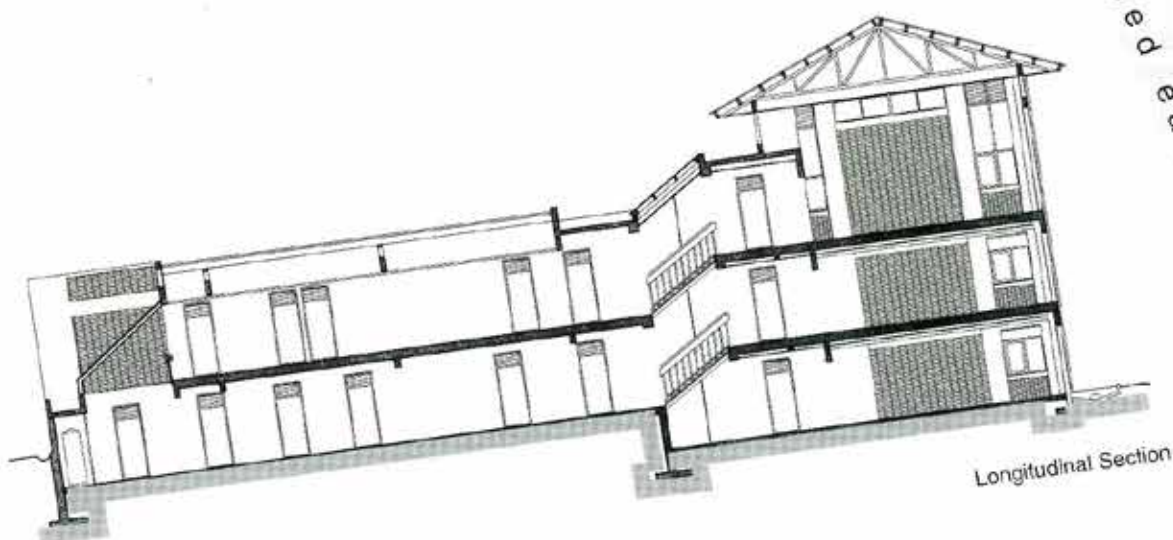
- 1 Entrance
- 2 Pool
- 3 Parking
- 4 Soccer field
- 5 Basketball court
- 6 Classrooms
- 7 Cafeteria
- 8 Track and field
- 9 Gymnasium
- 10 Kindergarten
- 11 Tropical forest
- 12 US Embassy



First Floor Plan

- 1 Entrance
- 2 Stair
- 3 Cafeteria
- 4 Administration
- 5 Classrooms
- 6 Seminar
- 7 Library
- 8 Bathrooms
- 9 Storage





Longitudinal Section

Detached eaves
columns and beams
Separated from walls



"... In these historic years of globalization I consider it necessary to stress the validity of regional values as the expression of a culture facing the dilemma to succumb to the banality of international fashions or, on the contrary, assert itself by valuing the manifestations more according to its environment.

Traditional architecture transmitted us solutions, which give character to the work. Nowadays we try to understand the spirit that prompted those solutions and, echoing their lesson, to create contemporary solutions.

This building, which is for the training of the teachers of the various countries of Central America and Mexico, is located on the lot of the Humboldt College, surrounded by buildings without any architectonic character.

Detail of detached column & beams

Columns separated from brick-filled walls

Column to ground detail

Library with the illuminated floating ceiling



Design Date : 1989

Construction Date : 1993

Site Area : 32,000 m²

Constructed Area : 1,000 m²

View from north

With a basic program, taking into consideration some standards of the German government, a building was designed that consists of a part for lectures and the cafeteria and another, higher one, for the training-college and the library. Both parts are united by the staircases.

The structure of the three level volume consists of eight triangular concrete columns, which make the building rigid, and of brick-filled walls. The triangular columns enclose the windows between their parallel fronts, serving thus as sunshades at the same time. The walls of hollow bricks, with a vertical and horizontal reinforcement, are not structural and, therefore, have a bond without overlap.

The triangular columns are exterior ones to free the interior space from secondary columns, permitting activities with a numerous audience.

The lower volume has a structure of circular concrete columns at the outside combined with load-bearing walls of concrete at the inside.

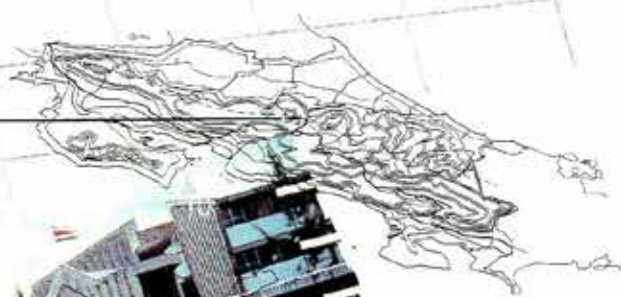
Inspired by the popular houses of Limon on the Atlantic coast, in which the facades detach into their components, I have dematerialized the fronts, proposing a lecture in that each element is expressed with autonomy: the detached eaves, the columns and beams separated from the walls, the face of the brick walls stands out as horizontal bands, and the windows protected from the sun rays open and ventilate.

The library on the third floor, has an indirect illumination, coming from the horizontal light band, which causes the ceiling to float...

Country Day School

1984

San Jose, Costa Rica



Entrance building

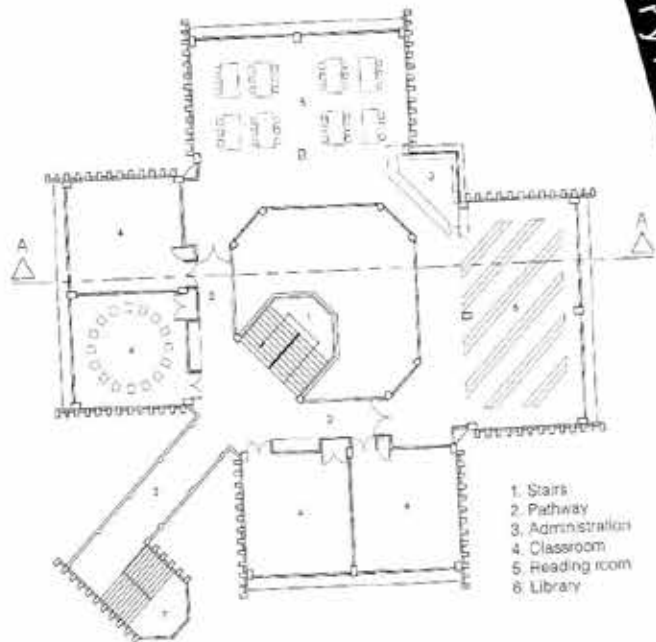
High school building

Octagonal Forum with pyramid skylight

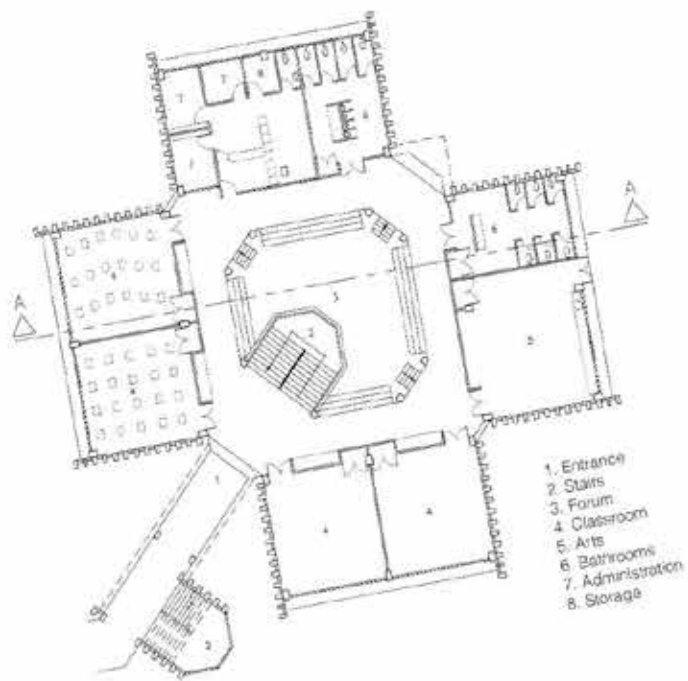
Site Plan



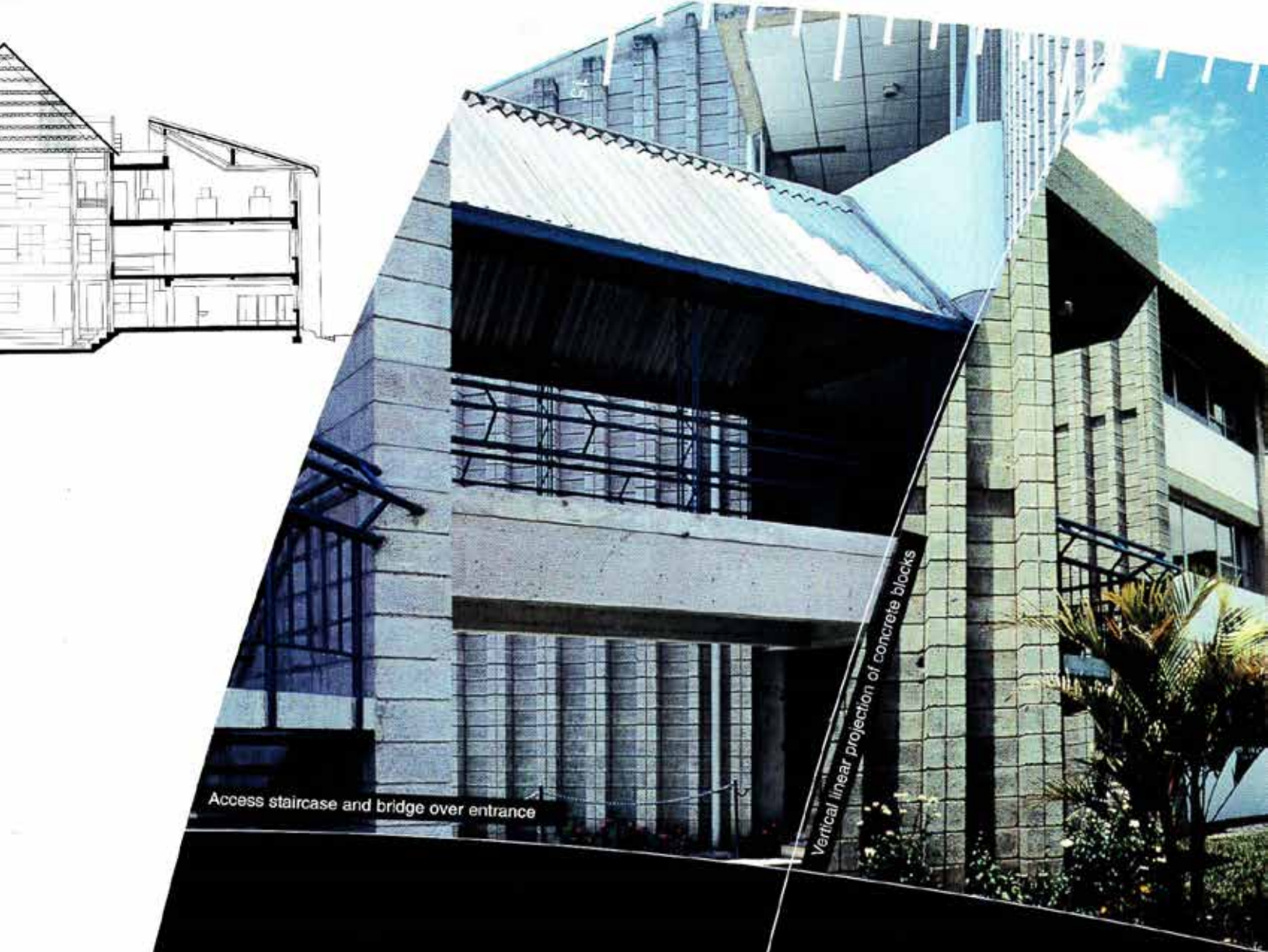
Second Floor Plan



Ground Floor Plan



Four modular units
Octagonal forum
Acrylic pyramid skylight



Access staircase and bridge over entrance

Vertical linear projection of concrete blocks

"...Four modular units for the classrooms, library, and laboratory define the interior organization and the lower level forum of the school. The modular units are composed of a prefabricated frame concealed by self-supporting walls of concrete blocks. The vertical linear projections of concrete blocks enlivens the otherwise simple composition.

The interior is tied to the access staircase through a diagonal bridge that produces tension in the uniform design of the building. The forum is located in the center of the lower level and is flanked by an octagonal organization of red tile bleachers.

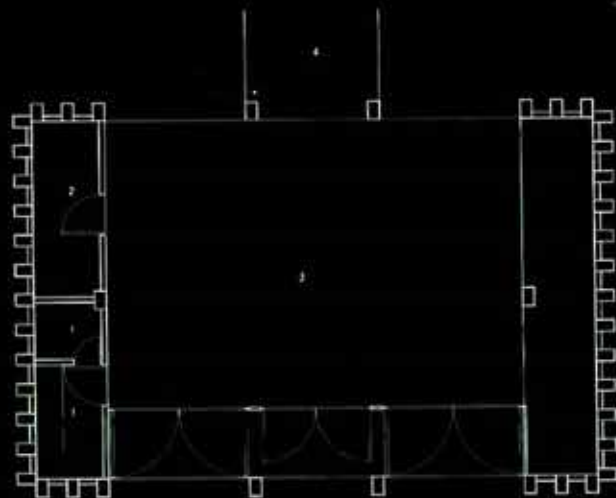
The robust and elevated walls create a massive architectural composition that lack any external ostentation as practiced by the aborigines and in colonial times by the peninsulares and criollos. This austere creation contrasts with the lively and lighted interior covered by an acrylic pyramid supported by an imperceptible steel structure. Openings strategically located between the four modular units provide visual escape to the surrounding environment.

With time, other buildings were constructed united by a covered exterior hall that circumscribes the Central Courtyard and unifies the complex.

The entrance building is dominated by three triangular roofs that puncture the sky and allow a transparent view of the Courtyard.

The green valleys and hills and the permanently blue unpolluted sky can be appreciated without any material constraint from all the classrooms. The relationship between man and environment in Costa Rica is very important as temperatures oscillate between 15 and 25 C° throughout the year.

The utilization of brusque materials with bare and worked concrete along with painted steel produces a mutual enhancement in this contrasting cohabitation..."



Reception building



Design Date : 1983

Construction Date : 1984

Site Area : 30,000 m²

Constructed Area : 1,500 m²

Forum stairs

Lively and lighted interior from pyramid skylight

Diagonal access bridge

Paniamor Youth Alternative Educational Center
On-going San Jose, Costa Rica



North Perspective



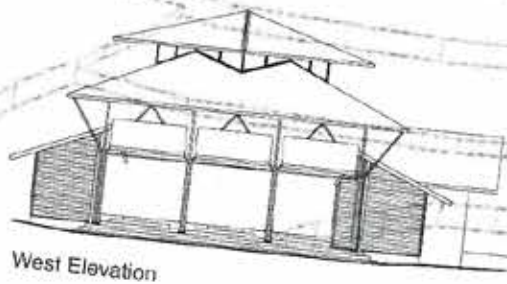
Covered central space
Workshop wing
Administrative wing

Site Plan

1. Hall
2. Entrance
3. Cafeteria
4. Administration
5. Library
6. Dance room
7. Music room
8. Fine Arts
9. Workshops
10. Video
11. Health Counseling
12. Academic Counseling
13. Bathrooms
14. Director
15. Parking
16. Garden
17. Maria Aguilar River
18. Volleyball
19. Basketball
20. Amphitheatre



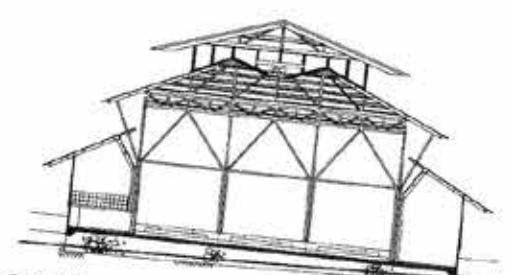
West Perspective



West Elevation



East Elevation



Section



Section

"...The PANIAMOR Foundation has decided to construct a Center for Youth Alternatives to offer adolescents a place for activities complementary to home and school.

This center is not a school, but a place in which adolescents can go in search of psychological help, orientation, and healthy group distraction.

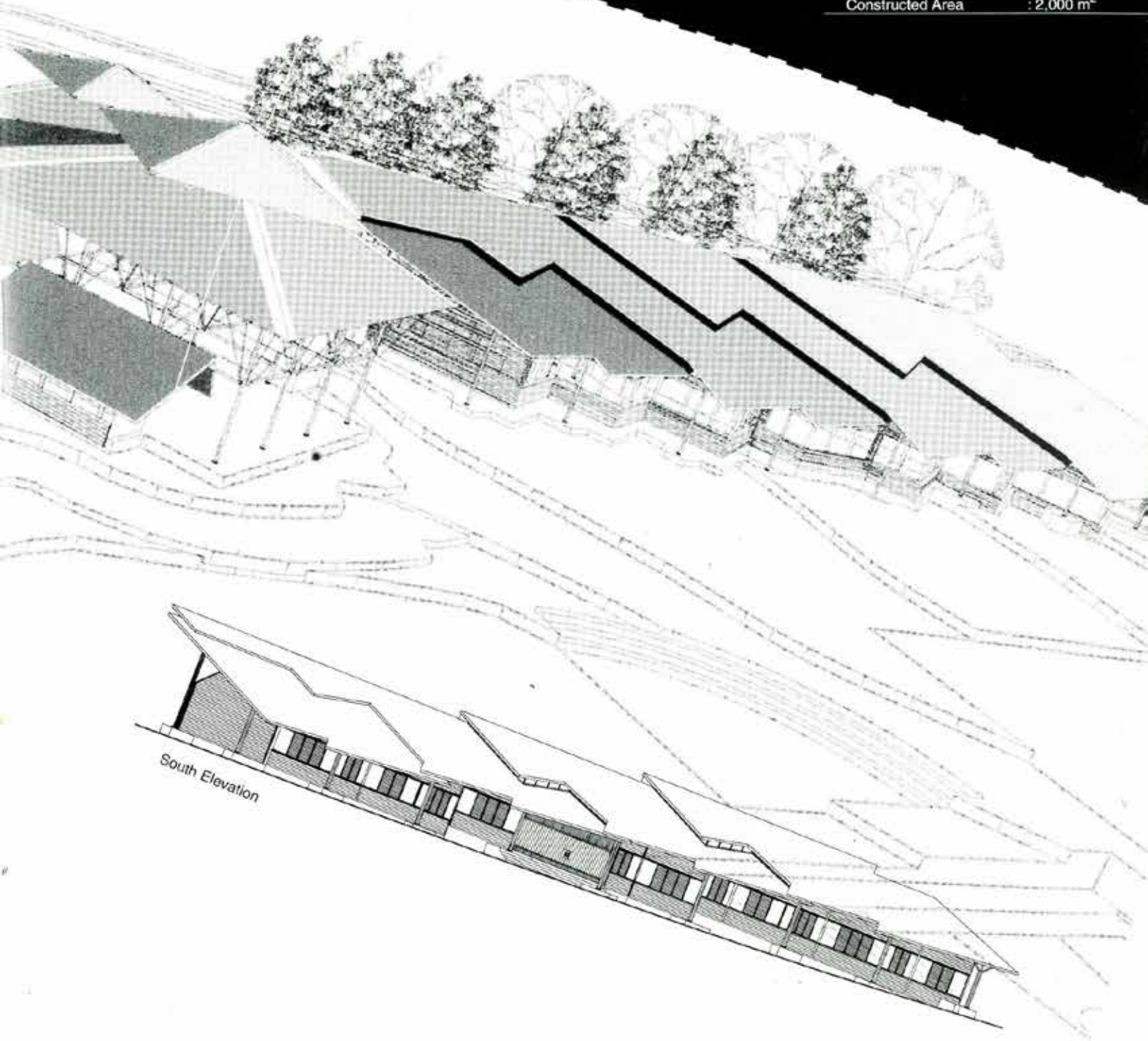
The center was designed in a lot of 8.300 m2 located in a poor neighborhood with the possibility of having vast green zones.

Due to the characteristics of this center, I designed a building with much liberty and formal attraction for a young and relaxed user.

An architecture of easy identification, happy expression and full of light was searched for.

A covered central space which functions as reception and meeting place distributes the other functions into a wing of workshops and activities and another administrative one.

Design Date	: 1997
Construction Date	: On-going
Site Area	: 8,300 m ²
Constructed Area	: 2,000 m ²



South Elevation

The green areas necessary for recreational activities were located in the lower part of the site. It is towards them that the building is oriented..."

Interactive Center For Peace (Design Stage)

On-going

San Jose, Costa Rica

Site Plan

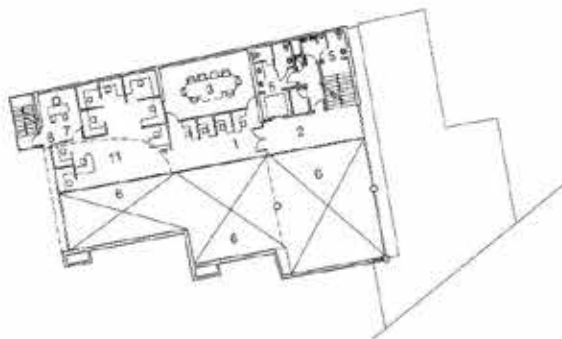
1. Congress
2. National Museum
3. Democracy Square
4. Interactive center for peace
5. Central avenue
6. 2nd avenue
7. 15th street



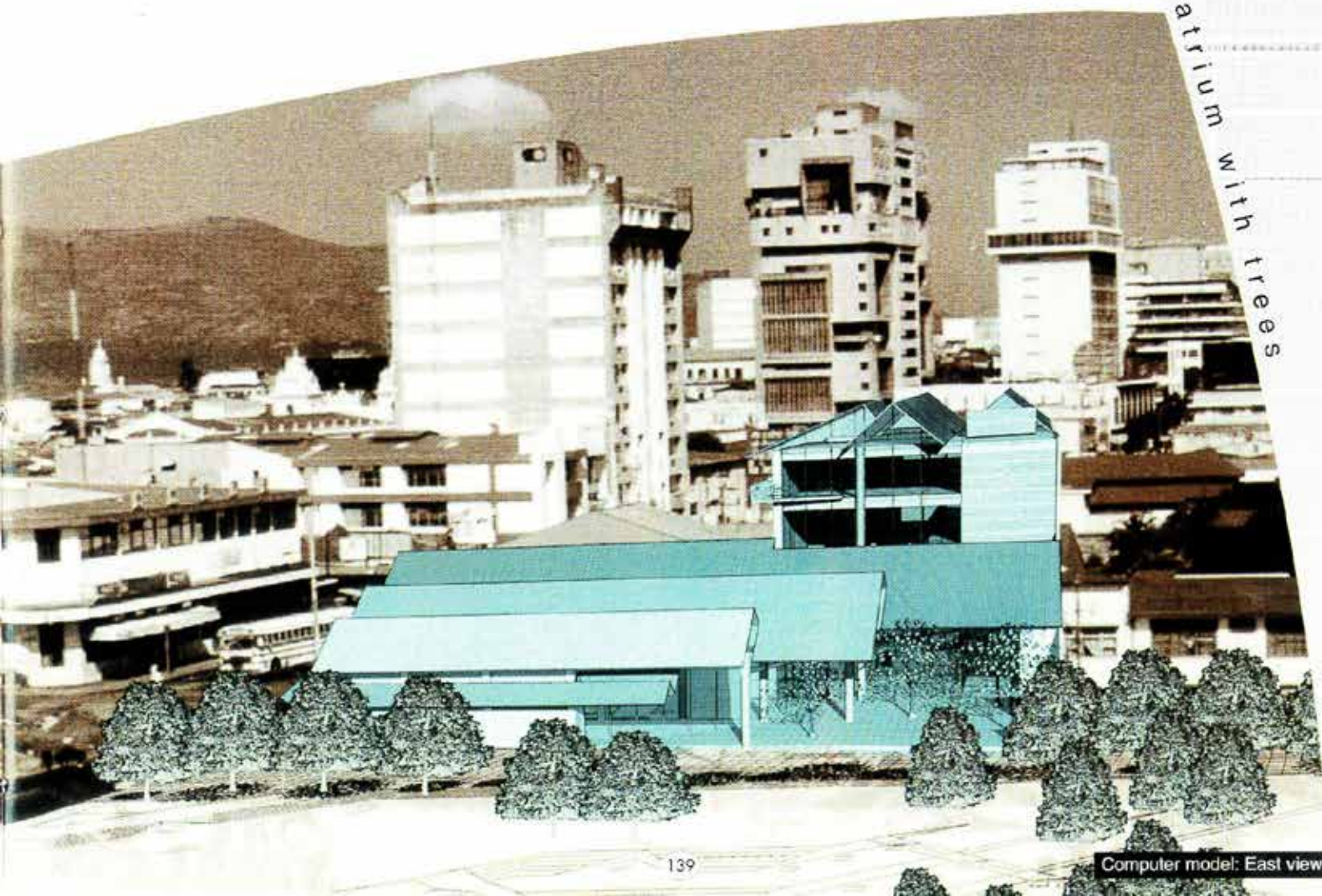
First Floor Plan

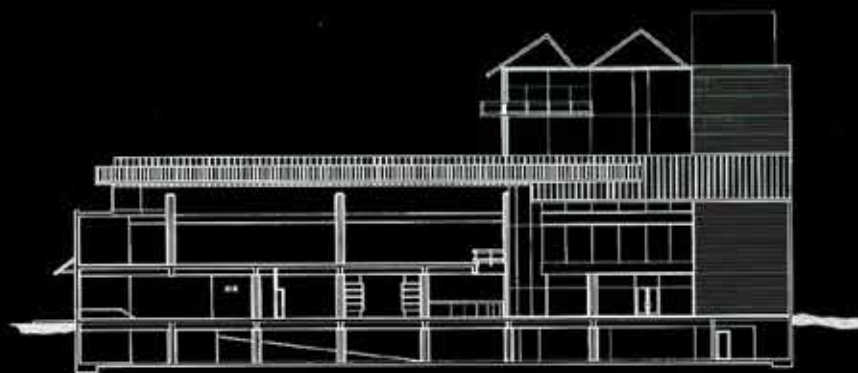
1. Entrance
2. Lobby
3. Exhibition hall
4. Ramp
5. Bathroom
6. Reception
7. Administration
8. Auditorium
9. Warehouse
10. Emergency exit
11. Democracy Square
12. Fountain
13. Security
14. 15th street
15. 2nd avenue

Fourth Floor Plan



Symbolism Pedestrian street and atrium with trees





Section B-B

Model: South West view



Model: East view



Design Date	: 1996
Construction Date	: On-going
Site Area	: 1,500 m ²
Constructed Area	: 4,800 m ²

"...One of the aims of the Arias Foundation for Peace and Human Development is to participate in the resolution of conflicts through dialog and concertation. This objective together with the process of demilitarization in Central America, Haiti and Africa, is what former Costarrican President, Nobel Peace Prize 1987, Oscar Arias Sanchez has been promoting.

Costa Rica is a country that abolished her army in 1949 and has become the international standard-bearer for peace and democracy. It is not in vain that it has been already democratic for more than a 100 years.

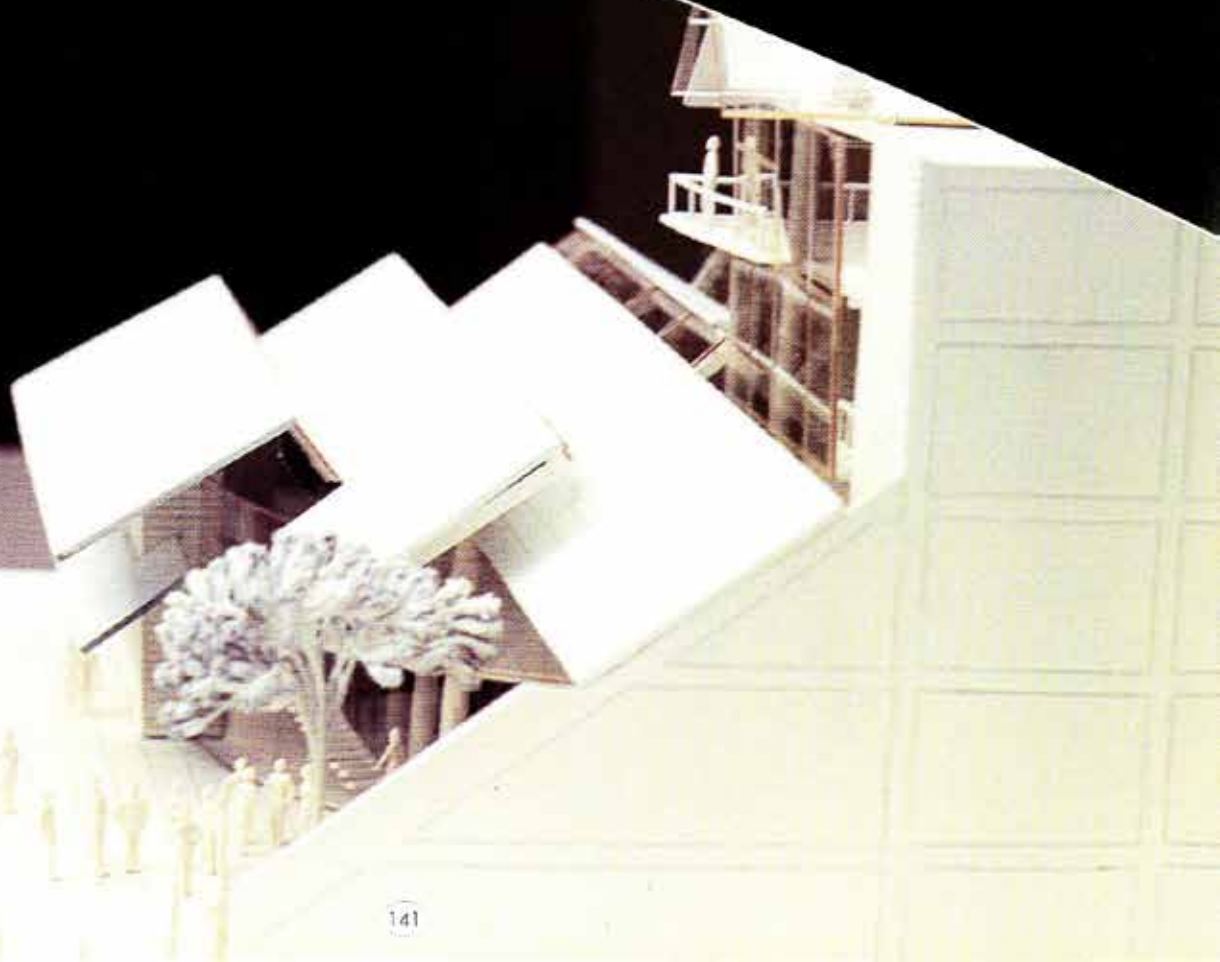
With this antecedents, and responding to the direct wishes, I designed this project in a lot with plenty of symbolism, in the center of San Jose, in front of the Park of Democracy and the National Museum, the former headquarters of the army.

The building will host the offices for the Arias Foundation and the entire program of the International Peace Center, hall for dialog and reconciliation, hall for negotiations and halls for exhibition, expositions about Peace and War.

Between the Park and the site I proposed a pedestrian street and an atrium with trees that unifies the Park with the street behind it.

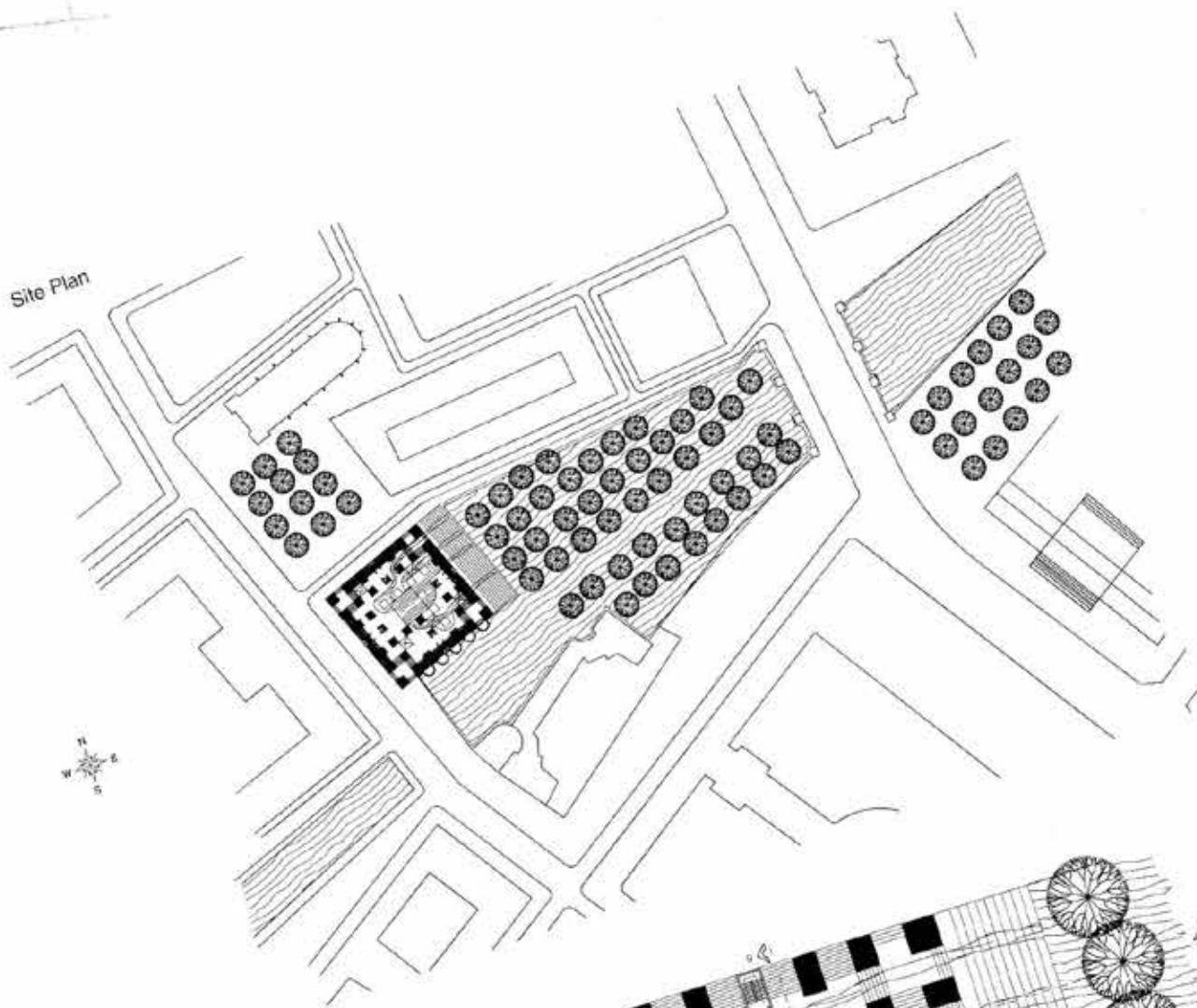
An atmosphere of light and transparency characterizes the space of this building and its roof of large, overlapping eaves..."

Model: North view

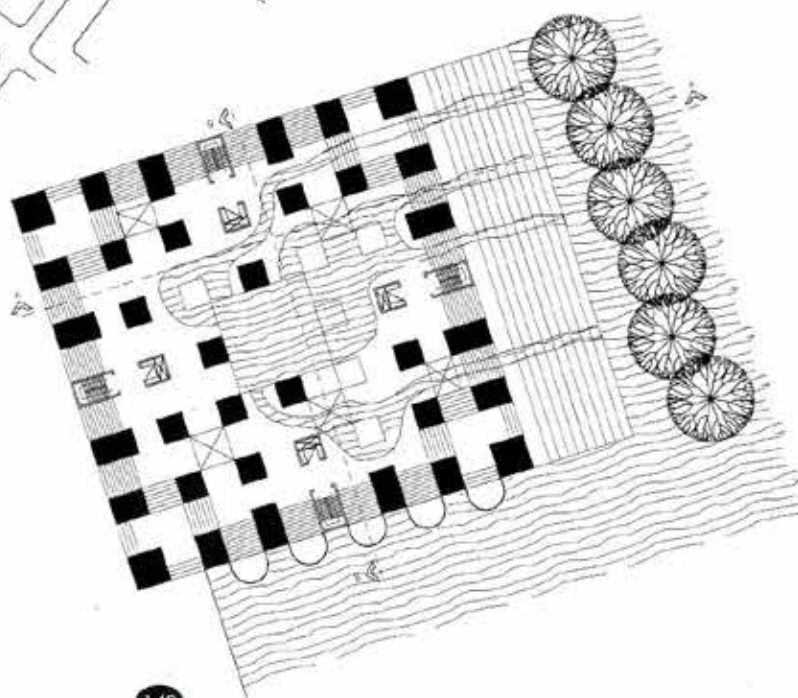




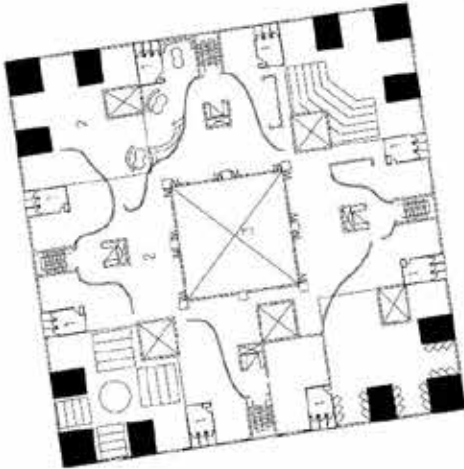
Site Plan



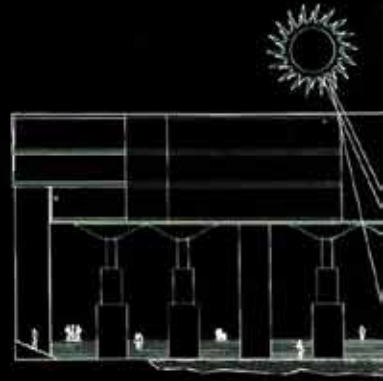
First Floor Plan



Third Floor Plan



1. Bathroom
2. Cafeteria
3. Lightwell

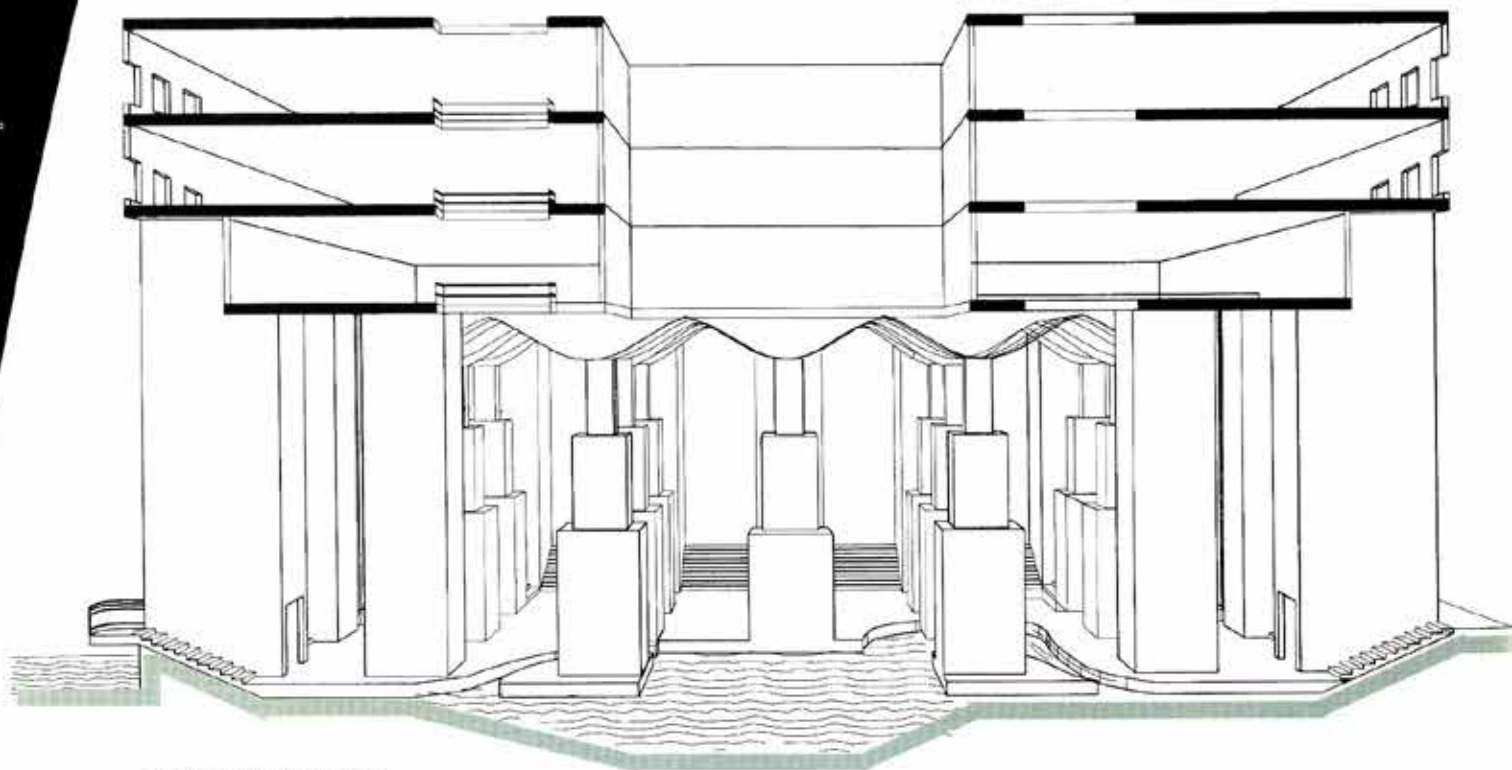
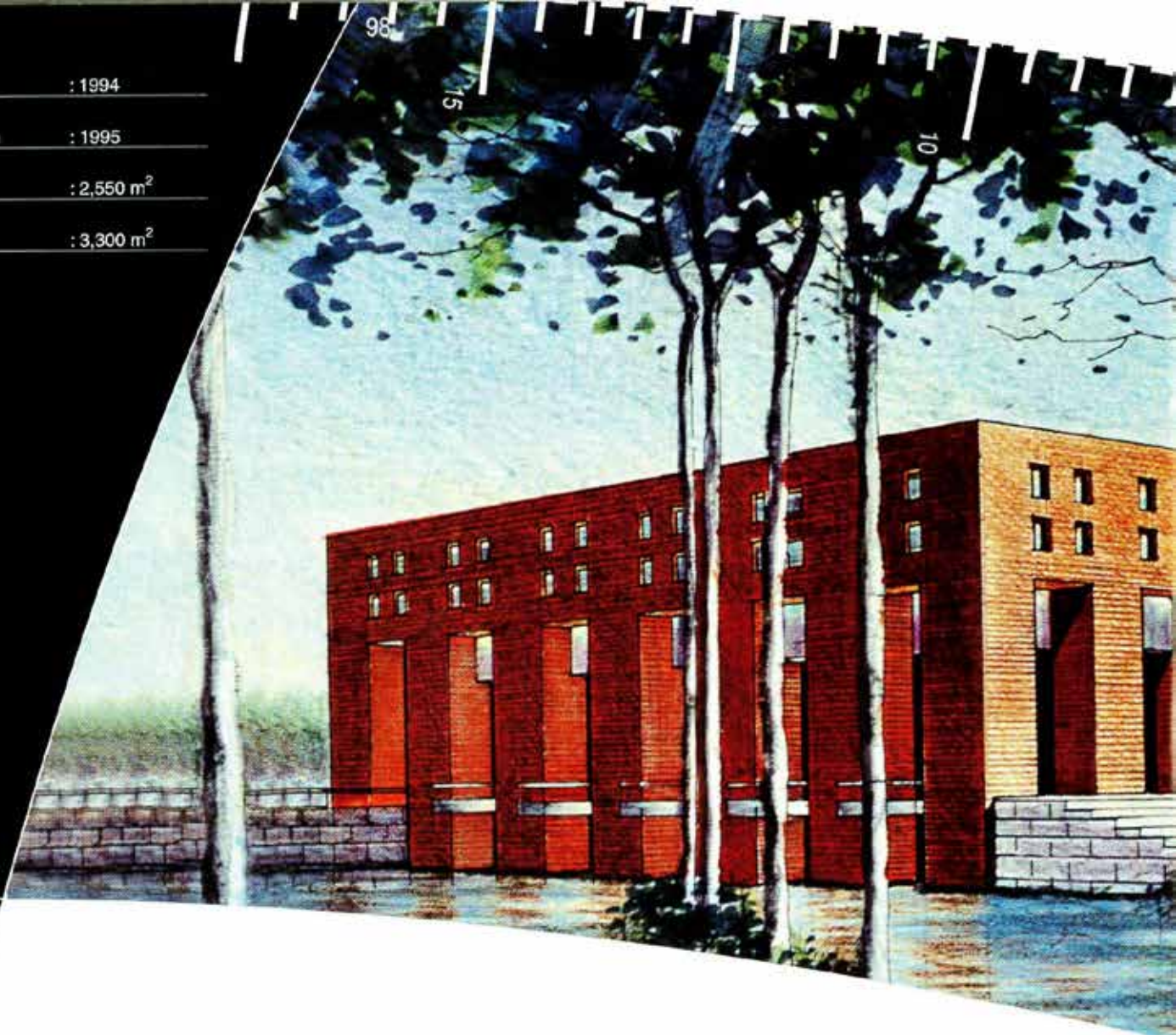


Design Date : 1994

Construction Date : 1995

Site Area : 2,550 m²

Constructed Area : 3,300 m²



Perspective Section B-B

*...This proposal of an idea has been submitted to the Senate in Germany in order to avoid the reconstruction of the former building of the Bauakademie by F. Schinkel of 1836.

Our project was selected by the jury together with another 12, due to the strong cityscape, that impressed the jury chaired by the architect Gunther Benish. It caused a highly lyrical tone in the commentary for its selection:



***Aquatic Garden,**

Bruno Stagno, from San Jose, the distant capital of Costa Rica, inspired by the competition of the

Bauakademie designed a surprising architecture.

Stagno widens the canal of the Spree River, covering with water the triangular square of Schinkel and thus transforming it into an aquatic garden. In it he creates in a vigorous architectonic order a garden planted with trees protected from the water with flowerpot stands of stone. A building of brick that retakes the measures of the original building of Schinkel, although compositively different, adapts itself to a corner of this pond.

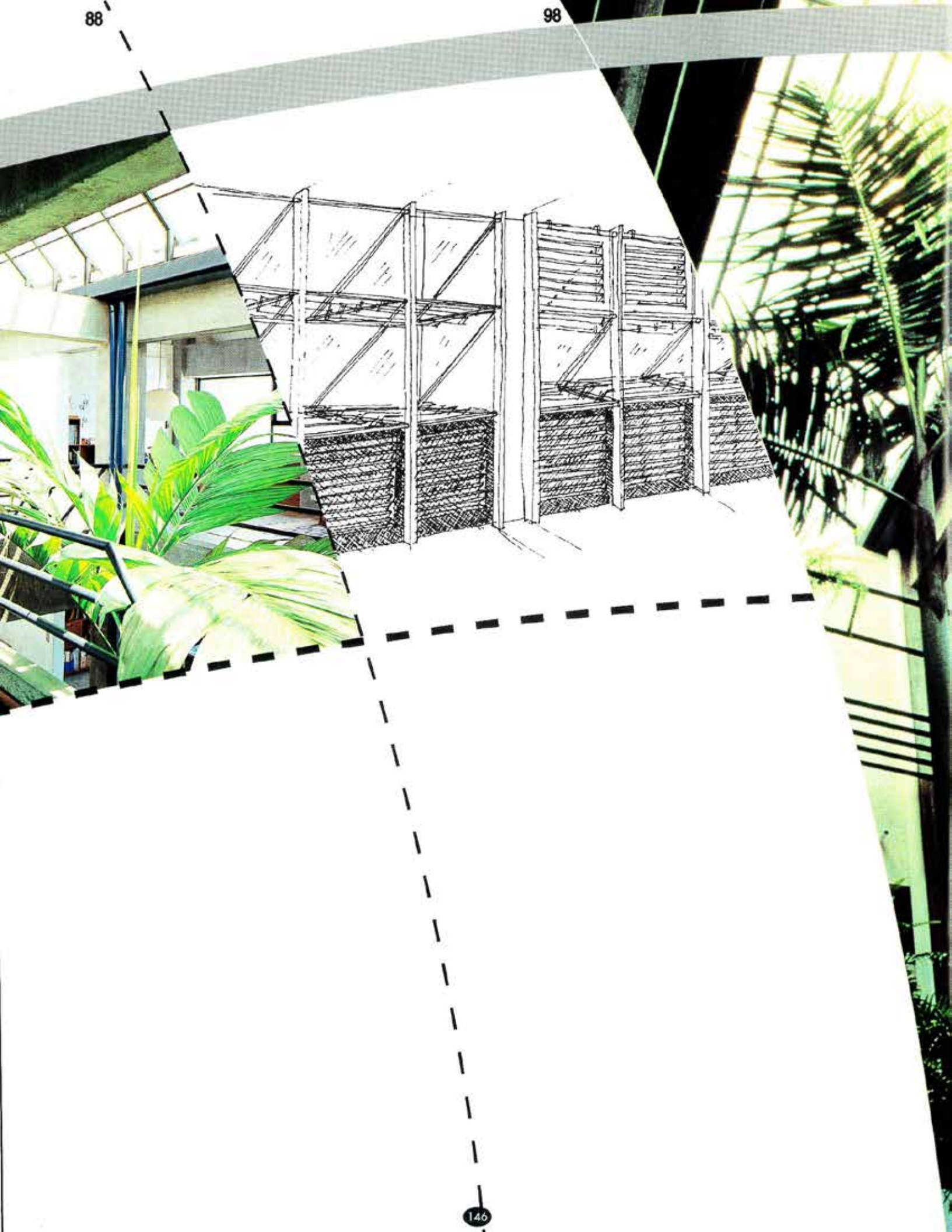
Coming down towards the water lead ten large stairs, forming a wide flight of stairs. A more raised stair goes to the lower floor level of the building: a courtyard, a loggia composed of pillars that escalate in three levels, which becomes an urban space. Above, at the top of the roof "clouds or waves", one finds in three levels the academy..."

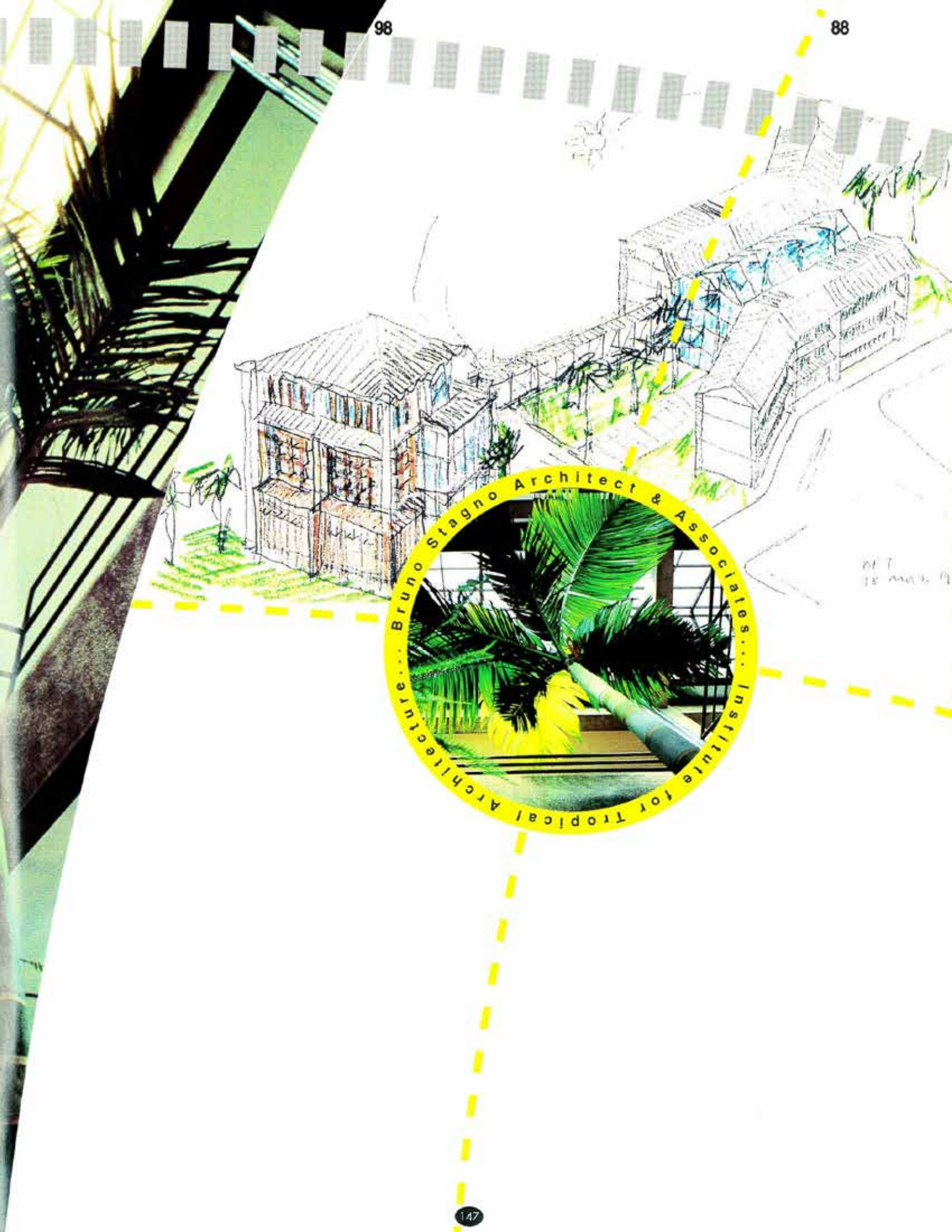
By introducing the spaciousness of a mangrove swamp in the heart of Berlin we are bringing a new dimension of nature and the perception of vegetation from Central America to Europe.

This project was like a change of direction of the vector of influence.

In this respect doctor Susanne Dussel, wrote:

"I think that this will have to be thought over, being a reflection from Costa Rica it becomes a genuine feast for the eyes, this means that the structures of the place and the time are nowadays more complex..."





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Prize III **Biannual Conference on Architecture** Dominican Republic 1990

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Mention for **Michel House** in Costa Rica 1992

Honorary member of the **Mexican Institute of Architects (Jalisco Chapter)**, Jalisco, Mexico 1992

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Founding Director, **Institute for Tropical Architecture**, San Jose, Costa Rica 1994

Shortlisted project in competition for the reconstruction of **K. F. Schinkel Bauakademie**, Berlin, Germany 1995

Prize, **Best National Project in Architecture**, III Biannual on Architecture, Costa Rica 1996

Nominated for the **Richard Neutra Award**, U.S.A.

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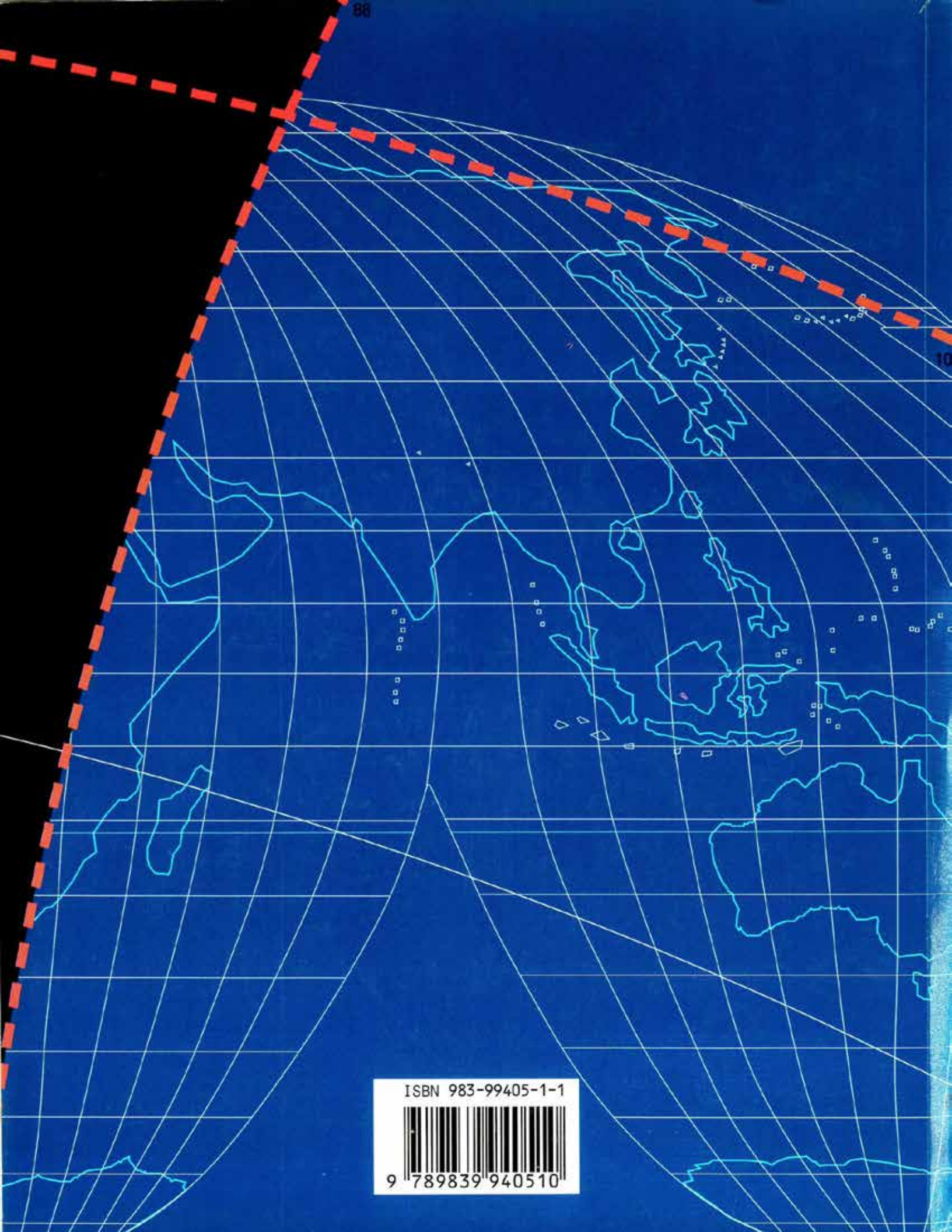
Include in **Enciclopedia de Arquitectura Latinoamericana del siglo XX**, Milan, Italy 1996

Official Preceptor, Rice University, Houston, Texas, USA 1997-1999

Prize, **Prince Claus Fund for Culture and Development**, the Netherlands 1997

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