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Trajan's Markets

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"Excavations in the Roman Forum" became for us perhaps building translations from the Forum with a focus on the buildings surrounding the imperial forums. Through a process that we called "translation" from Roman building forms to expressions of twentieth-century technology, the project attempts to unify two divergent goals: the concern for cultural memory and the concern for a logic of construction.

The underlying notion about cultural memory was not to represent a particular kind of cultural institution but to evoke a memory or a reading of the idea that institutions represent notions of cultural order and that this order is recognizable within the fabric of a city. The choice of Roman buildings as the basis of the study springs from our belief that Roman architecture represents the earliest development of interior spaces in Western architecture. The site of Trajan's Markets was chosen specifically because of its applicability to modern building types such as market places, mixed-use office places, and urban space development and its characteristic development of Roman vaulting forms.

The second concern—that construction informs formal gesture—springs from ideas of the modern movement, although it is informed by structures built throughout history, from Greek temples

to Gothic cathedrals. The intention is not the development of a universal constructional language but of a necessary understanding specific to the discipline of architecture. Constructional logic increases the possibilities, impact, and longevity of architectural form.

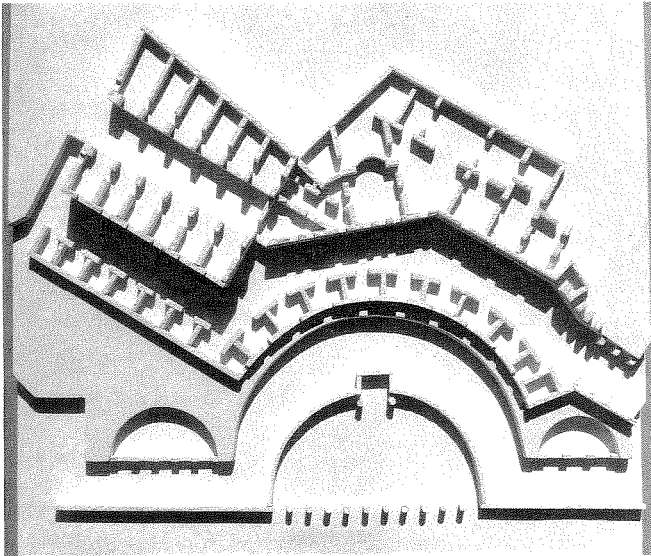
The ideas that emerged from the project form three general categories: urban considerations, structural considerations, and considerations for the development of light. The urban context of the markets demonstrates lessons on both the development of urban spaces and the tools for implementing them. The market site is a complex of streets that comprises shop fronts that rise from the level of the Forum of Trajan to the level of the main basilica, which was the focus of most of the investigation.

When looking at the overall site, it is important to note the repetition of a single spatial and structural unit in the Roman plan (see Model A). This ingenious idea makes the rich patterning of streets both possible and economical. The idea is carried into the translated building by the use of a repeating two-bay unit that has the same capacity to form urban spaces. This is an interesting contrast to many contemporary notions of economy, which tend toward building as continuous grid of space.

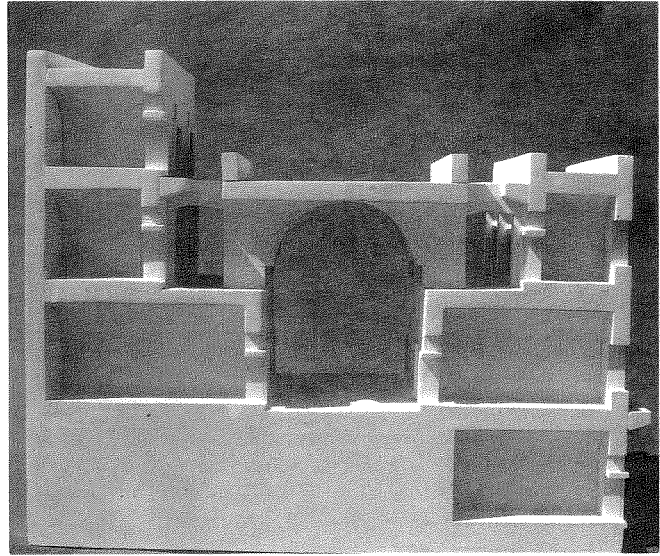
This two-bay unit forms the basis of the structural considerations as well. A comparison of these two site models reflects the increased capacity as well as the separation of the structural components, which form the imprint here, from the space-defining infill systems characteristic of contemporary technology. The development of the double unit with a central support and double cantilevers allows greatest economy in repetition. The line of the curve, which results from the decreasing need for support at the ends of the "tee" recalls the curve of the ceilings of the Roman vaults in a structurally rational manner. The central vault is supported by piers that occur at the midpoints of the structural "tee" system, maintaining the six-bay reading of the original basilica.

The basilica section of the existing building reflects the concern for the development of light through structural mass and curved surface. The thin shell vaults of the translated section recall the original curve, while their slipped section retains the idea of depth. It is again the consideration of layered planes that develops the exterior skin, allowing the windows to maintain their capacity to be occupied. This idea is further developed by the light monitors that spring from the roof and penetrate through building between

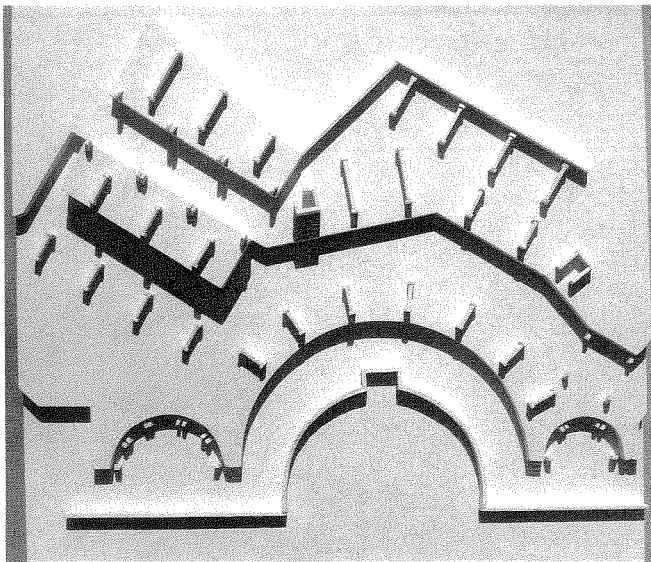
the structural "tees," admitting light and defining space by void that replaces the original mass. The theme of light is one that unites and animates all the considerations of the project: light as the symbol of memory, light as consistent with constructional logic, and light as the animation of architectural form.



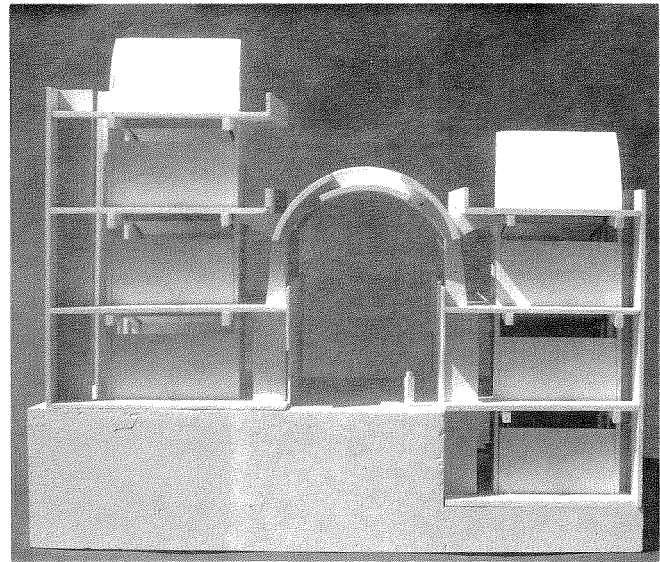
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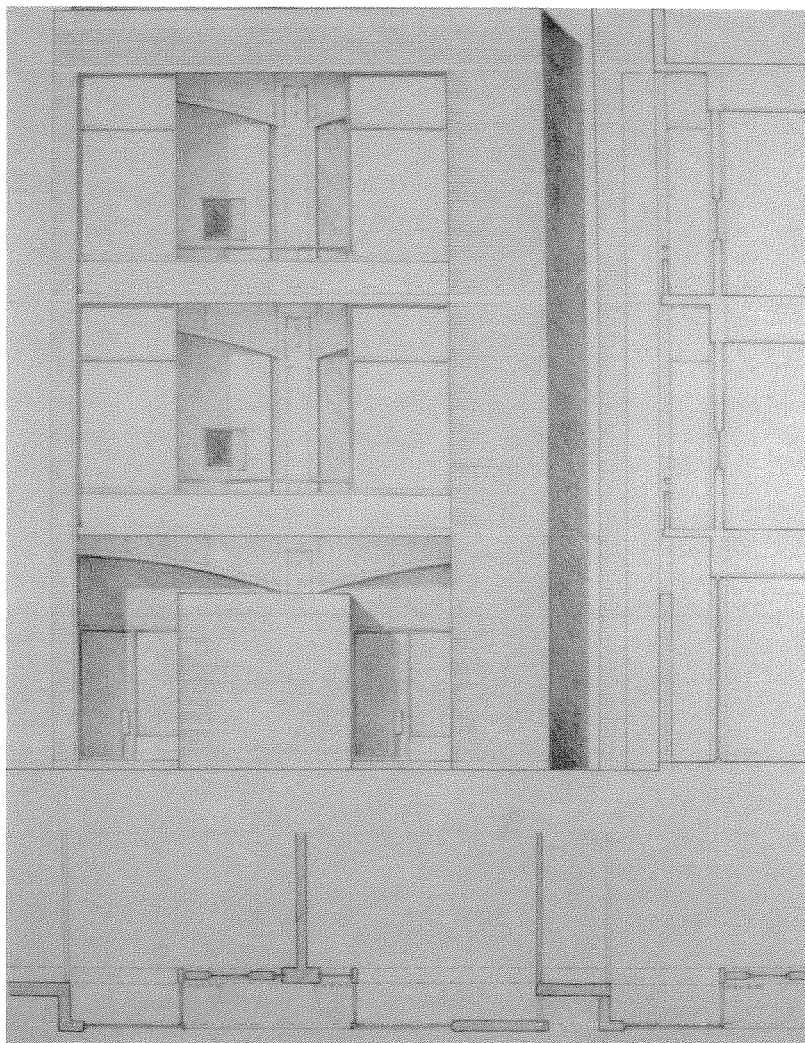


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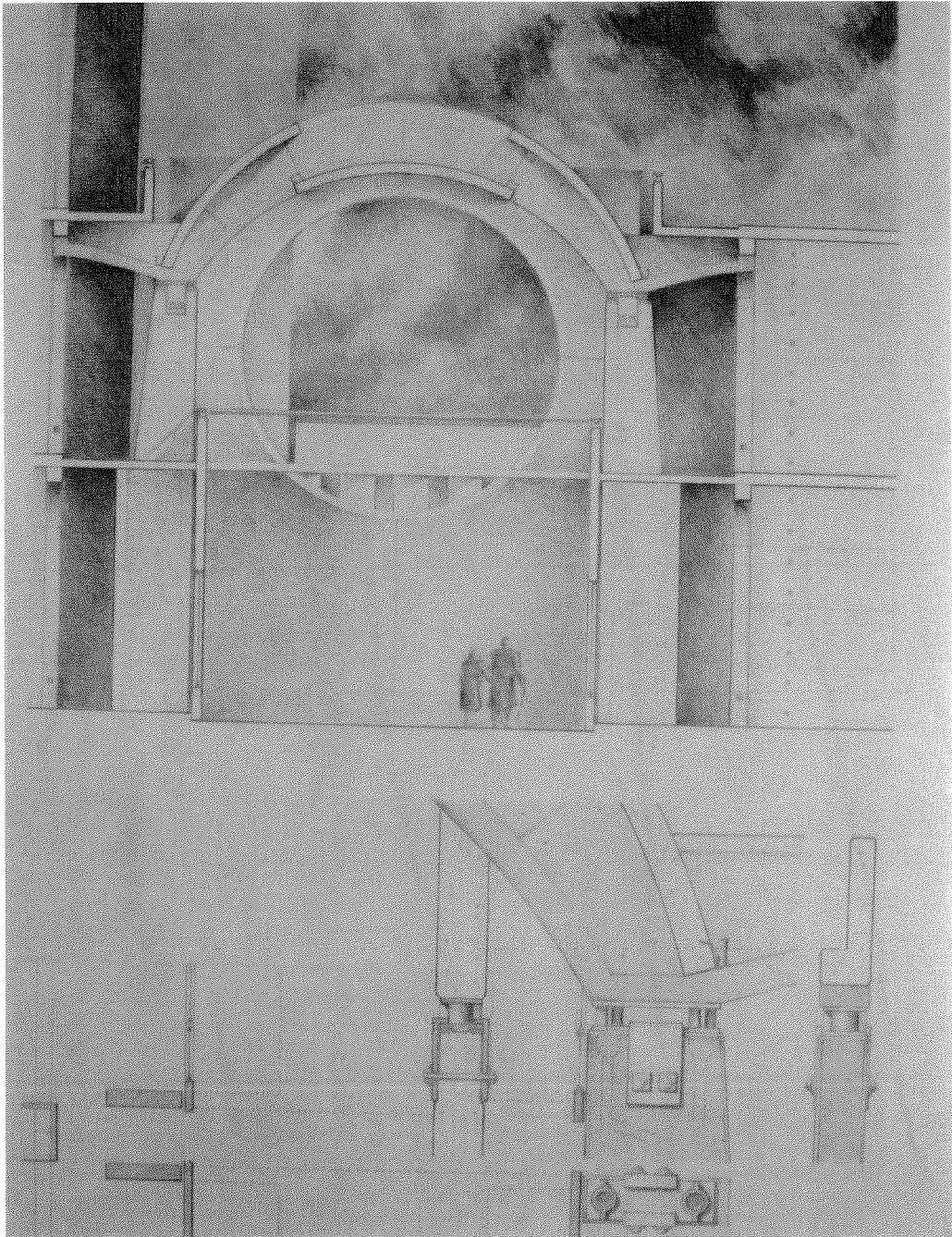


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- 1 Model A
- 2 Model B
- 3 Model C
- 4 Model D



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6 Drawing 2

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