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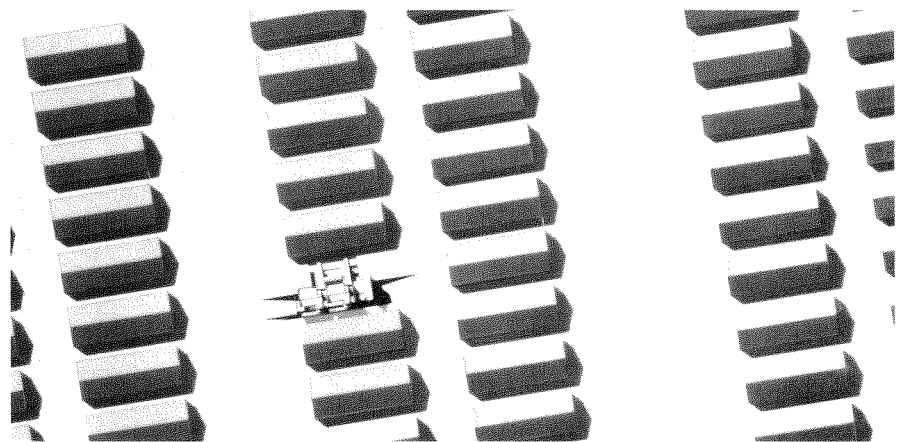
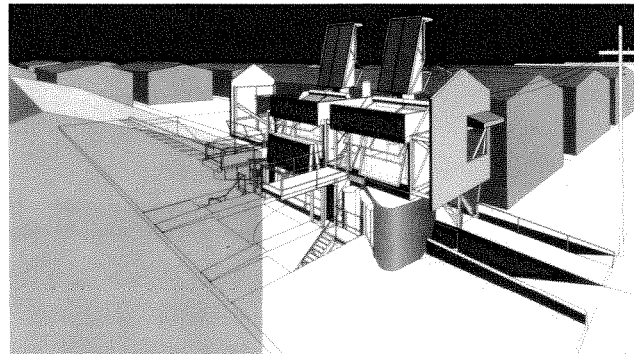
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An architecture-of-the-future is as impossible as the future itself. But an architecture for a present that extends into the future is both possible and, today, uniquely desirable. Even in an age of extreme self-awareness, it remains the unquestioned role of architecture, by critique or by affirmation, to provide its society with an expression of that society's "highest" understanding of itself and its situation in the cosmos. An implicit—sometimes explicit—component of this expression is a sense of the temporal continuance of that society: architecture is the most visible evidence, and thus the greatest possible expression, of survival. An oft-remarked characteristic of our present society, however, is its lack of conviction about such issues of continuance. This is because the business of self-awareness is criticism. In pursuing this business, we have, it seems, given up (or lost) a felt connection to our future. This condition has found an expression in an exciting and vital critical architecture, but it is understandably incapable yet of supporting a mainstream or vernacular architecture. Like a critical society, a critical architecture is, by definition, tied to the object of its criticism. As the status quo, such an object can exist only in the present tense, and a critical architecture can find existence only in the problems it uncovers/expresses in its critique.

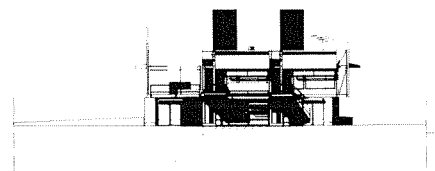
Yet there is an inescapable component of futurity in all constructions that persevere in time. Even when glancing backward, the classic architectures



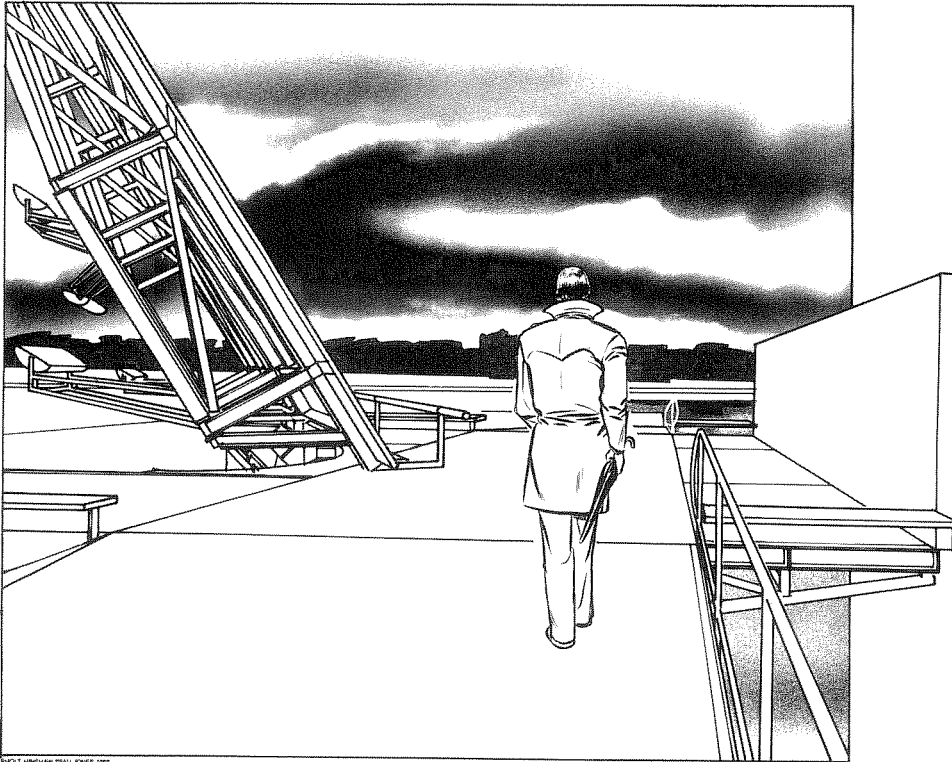
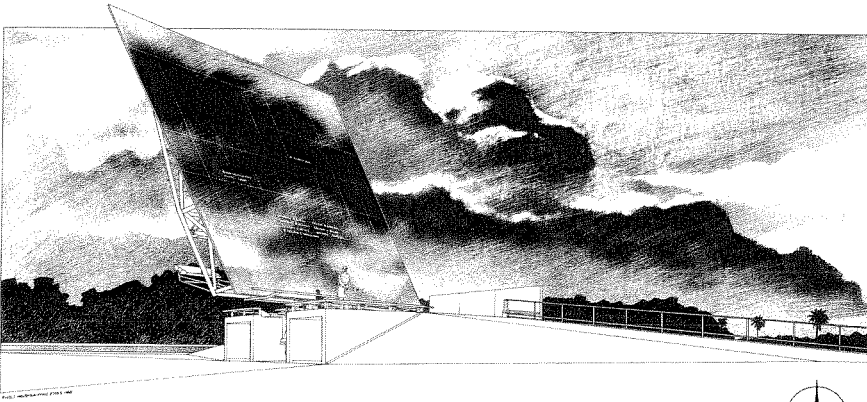
House Tract

This critical project for a house in the suburbs of Southern California (Manhattan Beach) is intended to serve as a flexible prototype for replication in these characteristically undifferentiated tracts: a parallel tract, inhabiting and criticizing the original. As the land values in these postwar housing tracts skyrocket, the modest original bungalows are being systematically torn down and replaced by speculative contractor-designed houses which max out the available envelope in the service of maximum marketability, blighting the neighborhoods with their consumerist mentality.

A young developer has approached the architects with the task of designing a "house for a young family" in this area that would be a critique of this unfortunate trend by demonstrating: (1) that maximum value does not equal maximum volume, (2) that dwelling can be an active pursuit rather than a passive condition, (3) that the fission of the structure of



the suburban nuclear family can be a source of growth and architectural excitement rather than of fear (it is this fear that is usually buried under the excessive square footage and inane amenities.)



of the past found their programs in the promise of immortality to their patrons (whether individuals or society). This desire for survival and continuity has disappeared from the cosmology, but not the epistheme. Jaded by critique into despair, or vaulted by fanaticism into silliness, the futurity of the object, and a conviction about the future it might impart, is deferred.

Instead of these extreme attitudes, we can imagine dealing with

futureness more constructively. Indeed, we would propose an architecture based upon a “reasonable present vision” of the future: an architecture for a present that will become the future. This formulation is nothing new—it is implicit in the hoary *Commoditas* (reasonable) *Firmitas* (present) *Venustas* (visions)—but it is unusual: in an “age” marked by extremes of conformity and revolution, a well-considered, *reasonable vision* is radical indeed.

Astronauts’ Memorial

To be located at the Kennedy Space Center, this vast reflective plane—a 40’-by-50’ sheet of polished black granite—will be tilted and rotated by a computer-controlled tracking system, keeping the sun behind the slab. Mirrors on the back will direct the Florida sunlight through the inscriptions cut into the granite monolith. The whole technological apparatus sits on elevated position so that it will interact with the ever-changing stratosphere. This winning entry to a national competition will be built.

Photos courtesy of Holt Hinshaw Pfau Jones Architecture