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Abstracting the Monument: Architectural Representation for a Contemporary Institution

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December 2, 2005

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The political infrastructure of Europe has arrived at a critical moment in history. The creation of a super-national governmental institution such as the European Union is an unprecedented step towards political cooperation, but it also presents a complex set of concerns and challenges. This modern institution is being developed within the rich historical context of Europe; and therefore has the potential to challenge all preconceived notions about the architecture of political buildings. Historically, the architecture of government institutions has rarely emphasized accessibility to the general public. This lack of public interest and involvement has transcended into the institutional structure of the European Union, and threatens the strength of the Union in a skeptical public climate.

The issue at hand is one of representation. A new and controversial institution such as the EU must identify itself not only in a political and social dimension, but through a built image that will communicate the priorities of the institution to its citizens and to the global community. In a context of extreme historical 'baggage,' the idea of *monument* must be carefully defined, and evaluated against the term *monumentality*, which conveys a different notion. Both terms invoke the idea that meaning in monumental architecture is acquired through the establishment of memory. The notion that monuments represent power and prestige in a given historical setting can be reinterpreted in a contemporary context. The challenge is to represent a political entity that does *not* refer to the past, but that does promote institutional prestige and significance by emphasizing communication and accessibility on the world stage.

The method for achieving this image is through abstraction. By decomposing the monument into its constituent parts and principles, analyzing their relationship to the whole, and abstractly reconfiguring the elements according to modern spatial and material techniques, the designer is able to create a new type of monumental expression that maintains the fundamental understanding of programmatic significance, but that does not evoke specific memories by repeating motifs or styles of the past.

This thesis contends that a strategic, meaningful abstraction of the traditional principles of monumentality will create an architecture that is identifiable and communicative, and that can become contextual without the evocation of specific historic references.

Project Topic.

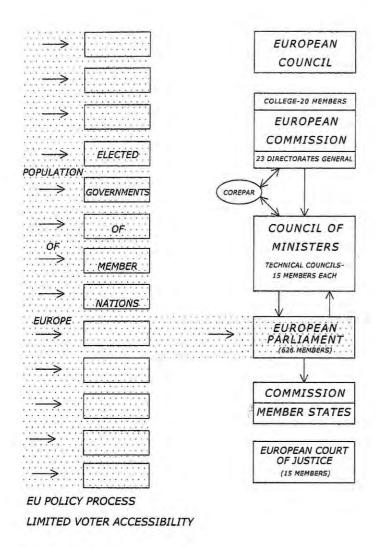
The creation of the European Union is one of the most remarkable political and economic unifications in history. In less than fifty years, Europe has established itself as a cohesive political entity, and has achieved the status of an economic superpower in the global community. Never before have nations of such diverse cultural heritage agreed to laws and treaties that assure peace and unity across national boundaries.

The idea of European integration began with a desire for peace among nations that had historically been at war. As the sovereign states of Europe developed, they were unable to compete in an increasingly global market, and the concept of international cooperation began to take shape. The developments since the Maastricht treaty of 1992 have included the establishment of a free market for the movement of goods and people throughout Europe, an EU citizenship guarantee, a common currency, and more specific policies on EU expansion. The legal and political structure of the European Union is still undefined, and documents such as the Charter of Rights and the Constitution are not yet completed to a standard that will be accepted by the European Union as a whole.

Critics of European integration argue that a supernational government detracts from the strong cultural and national identities of each country in Europe. As nations are forced to surrender their economic systems and their currencies, open their borders to immigration, and expand their communication and business skills to the scale of Europe, the rapid changes have created tension and resistance to European unity. The problem of public support for the EU has been labeled as the 'democratic deficit' (McCormick 141), which refers to the fact that the average European has extremely limited access to the governmental functions. EU voting policies are indirect an insubstantial, which gives citizens little influence over the governing bodies. This lack of accessibility and influence has led to general public confusion and apathy towards the developing European government.



EU member states
ORIGINAL AND RECENT MEMBERS



The European Union is still a malleable entity that is in constant transition and reform. This year a proposed EU Constitution was rejected by several member states, and a reformed budget has yet to be established under the new EU presidency of Tony Blair. Other debates have revolved around the connection between economic reform and the social 'safety net' of employment that the member nations are seeking to maintain. Despite these difficulties, the EU has made tremendous advancements in a relatively short period of history, and is unprecedented in its establishment of a supernational government and inter-national cooperation. For the present, the European Union is a permanent political entity that will gain success by establishing an identity that is recognizable, accessible, and acceptable to the public of Europe and the world.

Representation of a political entity is the agenda, and architecture is the means by which to achieve this goal. The issue, then, is to determine a method by which to convey the ideals of an institution that does not wish to be associated with governments of the past, but rather to project its own image to its citizens and to the world. The representation of the EU will seek to portray influence and power without utilizing representational techniques of the past. This will allow the EU to establish its own architectural identity and image, and to project itself as an accessible and innovative political entity.

Project Site.

Brussels, Belgium, is one of several European sites that have been utilized for official European Union functions until the present time. Several European Union facilities are also located in Strasbourg and Luxembourg, but Brussels retains its significance as a neutral 'buffer' between France and Germany. Recent discussions have revolved around the establishment of a permanent 'seat' for the EU Headquarters, and a recent EU poll determined that seven out of ten members of the European Parliament favored Brussels as the sole base for the Institution. This would alleviate the high costs of maintaining facilities in two locations and would improve the efficiency of the organization by reducing the time and money spent on travel. As the institution continues to expand and develop, the problems of space and building are becoming more apparent, and issues of urban planning and architectural prominence are increasing in importance. In order to establish itself as the most appropriate place for the sole headquarters of the EU, Brussels must create an architectural identity for the institution that is unmistakably associated with the image that the EU is trying to create and maintain.

Project Program.

In order to represent the European Union as an institution that is accessible to the people of Europe, the building program must combine political elements with public spaces. This will facilitate a meaningful interaction of people on various scales, and will connect the population of Europe with the government in both literal and experiential ways.

Representation Language Memory **Image** Individual Literal Collective Communication Public Icon Virtual Monument Site Context Access Program Heirarchy Juxtaposition Dialogue

Project Method and Architectural Issues.

The creation of an architecture for the European Union presents the challenge of representing a contemporary institution within the rich historical context of Europe. The challenge is to rethink the ideas of monument, memory, and abstraction in order to represent the ideals of a political entity that is looking to the future instead of to the past. This contemporary image will be created by the chosen methods of architectural representation.

Monument, Memory, Meaning.

Monument: n. Etymology: Middle English, from Latin monumentum, literally, memorial, from monEre to remind. 1. obsolete: a burial vault: sepulcher. 2. a written legal document or record: treatise. 3. a (1): a lasting evidence, reminder, or example of someone or something notable or great (2): a distinguished person b: a memorial stone or a building erected in remembrance of a person or event 4. archaic: an identifying mark: evidence. 5. obsolete: a carved statue: effigy. 6. a boundary or position marker (as a stone). 7. national monument. 8. a written tribute.

Monumentality: adj. **1.** of or relating to a <u>monument</u> **2**. serving as or resembling a <u>monument</u>: massive; also: highly significant: outstanding. **3.** very great.

The definition of *monument* emphasizes the recollection of events in the past. A monument is typically intended to commemorate, and is inherently linked to the conceptual idea of memory. A monument is identifiable, and has the physical properties of an object. The definition of *monumentality* is directly related to that of monument, and emphasizes significance, massiveness, and greatness on a large scale.

Background.

Political architecture has traditionally been associated with an architecture of monuments.

In Italy, for example, the medieval town hall typology was characterized by a fortress-like structure that usually occupied a prominent position in any city. From the rusticated palazzi of the Italian medieval period to the heavy, massive structures used to represent Fascist and Nazi governments in Europe, political buildings have traditionally existed at a monumental scale and have imposed their influence on the society in which they exist.

Later examples demonstrate how governments attempted to make their monuments more accessible. Terragni's Casa del Fascio in Como, Italy, sought to balance a reading of classical trabeation with a modern frame. The objective of this abstraction was to give a human dimension to the architecture of Fascism, but the overall scale and orientation of the building still create a monumental reading of a structure that has, by virtue of its association with a particular historical period, become a monument.

After the Second World War, remaining political buildings that represented a particular government or reign acquired a monumental status as representations of events in the past. In some cases, these monuments have been rehabilitated and have acquired a new function, which reinforces their role as a significant structure. The Reichstag in Berlin, for example, had an exterior restoration which returned the building to its original state. Within this shell is a modern structure by Norman Foster which introduces the programmatic element of tourism into Berlin's Parliament building. By juxtaposing these programmatic elements, what was once solely a governmental institution becomes both a monument to the past and an accessible public attraction in the present, and it maintains its monumental presence in the city.













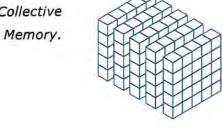
In the United States, political centers are also defined by monumental expression. In Washington, DC, the monuments are understood as more public and accessible elements because of the way they are laid out urbanistically. Each monument, however, conveys a sense of scale and significance that is truly monumental. Each monument also acquires its meaning from the person, event, or time which it commemorates or represents.

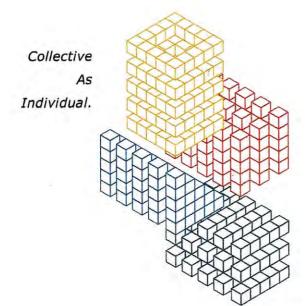
In the mid 1900's, Siegfried Giedion argued for a *New Monumentality* which would restore the impact of major civic buildings. According to Giedion, classical monumentality had begun to take on meaning that was associated with the events, people, and periods of history, and therefore had connotations that were not desirable to architects in the 1900's. Architecture, therefore, began to emphasize the vernacular and the human point of view instead of the impressive quality of public buildings. This movement away from monumentality led to projects such as the League of Nations, which Giedion cites as an example of the 'eclectic' aesthetic that results from a rejection of monumentality. The effect of the League of Nations complex is diluted, and the architecture does not represent the authority and the ideas of the institution. According to Giedion, the 'demand for monumentality' should not be suppressed, but embraced. The monument is a symbol which everyone recognizes and responds to, and it has the ability to invoke a public affinity for the institution.

Memory.

Individual Memory.

Collective





The commemorative function of monuments operates on the scales of individual and collective memories. Collective memories become public icons, and in turn, monumentality becomes a matter of "lasting presence, power, dignity, and gravity" (Curtis 66). Early modern architecture rejected overt references to the past, but abstraction and symbolism have allowed modern architecture to 'imply a novel orientation to tradition' by utilizing past principles instead of motifs. (Curtis 66). If techniques of abstraction will allow society to represent current and future institutions and ideas in a monumental way, then the challenge is to define the ideals and images that will be communicated.

One of the most apparent manifestations of the 'future of memory' is the architectural representation of the ideas of Futurism. The futurist movement of the early 1900's developed from the machine-age ideas that emphasized vitality and change in modern life. The built interpretation of these ideas can be seen in projects such as Terragni's monument to the fallen soldiers in Como, Italy. The monument was designed in 1933, but was based on Antonio Sant' Elia's 1914 proposal for an electric power station. The concept of creating a monument that memorializes an event in the past using the aesthetic of futurism addresses the problem of designing monuments that are referential to the present and the future circumstance rather than commemorating the past.

The Acquisition of Meaning.

The ways in which buildings acquire meaning and connote memory are related to certain design principles and techniques. In his article "How Buildings Mean," Nelson Goodman outlines four such principles. These strategies range from the very literal to the very abstract, and are ways of identifying formal moves that create a certain sense of 'meaning.' The four principles outlined by Goodman are denotation, exemplification, expression, and mediated reference, the last of which is most pertinent to the issues of monument and memory. By making specific historical references, architecture can acquire a sense of the past. The abstraction of these references is the means by which contemporary architecture can convey a sense of modern monumentality without invoking specific memories of the past.

Case Study: Chandigarh Plan, Chandigarh, India. Le Corbusier.

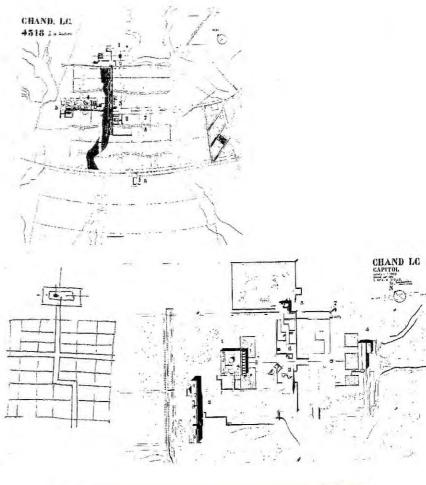
At Chandigarh, modern architecture was used to create an image of national identity and progress after the Second World War. Despite political and religious disunity in India, the period of political transition provided the opportunity to implement contemporary urban planning strategies in a developing city.

The government complex at Chandigarh is removed from the city, which is in sharp contrast to traditional Indian urban organization. Though the various parts of the city were considered allegorically according to the traditions of Indian caste structure, the metaphor is not immediately apparent, and the complex conveys a strong sense of hierarchy and separation from the city. The main streets of the city are oriented to provide axial views of the complex. Attention is directed not only at the monumental buildings, but at the Indian landscape into which they are set.

The plan for the capitol complex included the Assembly Building, the Secretariat, a proposed Governor's Palace, the High Court Building, a plaza and a monument.

The intended formal and symbolic prominence of the Governor's Palace is debatable, but its absence from the complex changes the perception of public accessibility. The large open plaza that was intended as a gathering space among the buildings is expansive and uninviting without the definition of the Governor's Palace. Each building is individually successful in the attempt to combine a new modern aesthetic for government with the traditions of Indian culture.

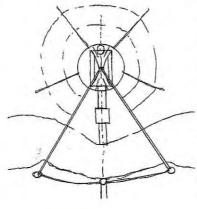
In this project, a sense of monumental expression is achieved by breaking down certain forms and elements to the source of their fundamental meaning without using classical language and articulation.













Case Study: Australian Parliament Building, Canberra, Australia. Mitchell/Giurgola & Thorp Architects, 1988.

The form of the building is intended to convey a sense of "fellowship and dignity," by creating a monument which is simple and directly connected to the landscape of the site. Rather than imposing a grandiose sense of monumentality that is commonly associated with political buildings, this project communicates the government's commitment to accessible and democratic leadership. This project successfully responds to the dilemma of the modern and the traditional, which requires a simultaneous restatement of historic principles and response to the contemporary world.

The form of the complex was generated by the circular hill on which it is located. The main axis of the complex was established by the Griffin Plan of Canberra in 1912, and initiated the radial development of other areas of the city. The site is located at the convergence point of several major avenues, each leading to different neighborhoods of the city. The hill determined much of the spatial configuration of the complex, and the overall impression is a sense of balance and geometry that corresponds to the natural elements of the site. The encompassing response to the site has led some to criticize this project, saying that it is "insufficiently monumental, that it is lacking in a certain sculptural weight and intensity" (Curtis 81), but it is that same abstracted quality of monumentality that makes the project seem contextual and accessible to the people that it represents.

The building contains the offices and meeting facilities for the Senate and the House of Representatives, as well as a central 'forum' area and an Executive Government area. The meeting rooms are arranged in a linear sequence, while two curvilinear walls frame the spaces used for offices. The exterior is landscaped with gardens and contains recreational and parking facilities.

The most public and ceremonial elements of the program are located along a central axis. This is consistent with the notion of a simple organizational strategy that can be easily understood. There is a symbolic sequence of monumental spaces, but the division of some areas into smaller bays creates a greater sense of intimacy within a large space. The major meeting facilities utilize natural light to emphasize the detailed woodwork and lofty spaces inside. The public galleries look directly onto some of the government meeting spaces, and are separated by soundproof glass.

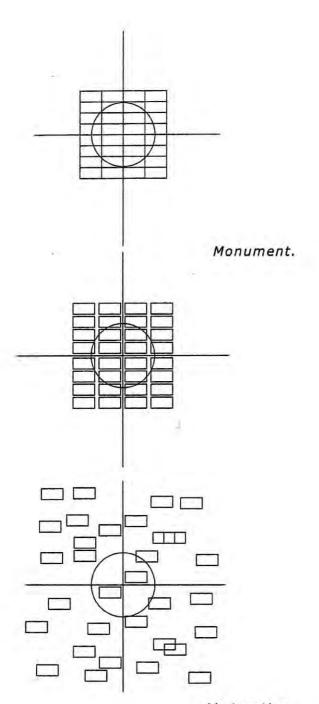
Representation by Abstraction.

In modern architectural terms, there exists a clearer distinction between *monument* and *monumentality*. In order to create an architecture that is identifiable as the built representation of a significant political institution but that does not connote specific periods, styles, or governments of the past, the building must have monumental qualities without acting as a monument to an existing condition. The method by which to achieve this is by abstracting the fundamental principles of monumental architecture and reconfiguring the elements in a way that promotes recognition instead of remembrance.

In his article "The Mathematics of the Ideal Villa," Colin Rowe demonstrates how several distinctly modern buildings have drawn from the principles of classical architecture in an abstract manner. The article also discusses the difference between 'natural' beauty in architecture and 'customary' beauty. Rowe refers to natural beauty as a mathematical understanding of a composition, if even in an abstract way, that results from geometry, uniformity, and proportion. Customary beauty, by contrast, is acquired by the use of the building, and is closely related to connotation and familiarity.

In a comparison between Palladio's Villa Malcontenta and Le Corbusier's Villa Stein, Rowe uses mathematical principles describe the relationship between the two buildings. Both projects, for example, are derived from a system of regular bay divisions. Where Palladio maintains a central emphasis, Corb alternates the rhythm of articulation in a way that shifts the emphasis from a centralized, symmetrical composition to more localized elements.

Both projects utilize mathematical methods to achieve an overall composition, but Le Corbusier's tendency to disintegrate the reading of the building as a whole in favor of individual focal points detracts from the understanding of hierarchy that is evident in the composition of the Villa Stein. For this building typology, the abstraction of parts without a hierarchical relationship to each other may achieve the desired aesthetic result. For a building that seeks to maintain some reading of monumentality, however, the methods of abstraction discussed in the article must be modified to preserve the perception of hierarchy and importance. As the traditional design principles for government buildings are reduced, abstracted, and reconfigured, the conceptual idea of the monument must remain evident in the overall composition.



Abstraction.

Abstraction in Art.

The strategy of abstraction in modern architecture can be compared to the tendencies towards abstraction in twentieth century art. In the early 1900's, art movements began to emphasize the volumetric quality of the objects that were represented, and an abstraction of surface and volume was often articulated with changes in tone and un-traditional organization of elements. In architecture, these strategies begin to accentuate the significance of one element's relationship to another, rather than the value of an element alone. The functionalist aesthetic of modernist architecture is in direct contrast to the formal emphasis on volume and object that is derived from an analysis of art movements and their relationship to architecture. The reduction of elements to their component parts and the abstract relationship among these elements is a modern architectural idea that was derived from investigations in art and sculpture, and that applies directly to the reinterpretation of the traditional definition of monumentality.

Cubism began as a representational technique that allowed three dimensional objects to read on a two dimensional surface. The juxtaposition of colors with objects rendered in chiaroscuro, and the use of light to define spaces and objects were just some of the methods of representation utilized by Cubist artists. While early Cubist experiments can be regarded as a technique of distortion, rather than abstraction, 'synthetic' Cubism later introduced a more architectonic composition of elements (Hitchcock 22). The construction of lines and planes began to resemble three dimensional objects which conveyed depth and projection without the use of conventional perspectival techniques.



Braque, 1927.



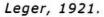
Klee, 1931.



Le Corbusier, 1923.



Picasso, 1911.





Cubism accentuates the difference between representation and comprehension (Kahnweiler 209), as it decomposes objects into a series of forms which are then reconciled by the eye of the observer to the reading of the 'whole'. Rather than imitating the specific form of objects, Cubist art abstracts the object according to its position in space and its geometric components. The perception of these distorted forms relies on the human tendency to reconfigure recognizable forms in the mind, thus using memory and association to understand the object despite its abstract representation.

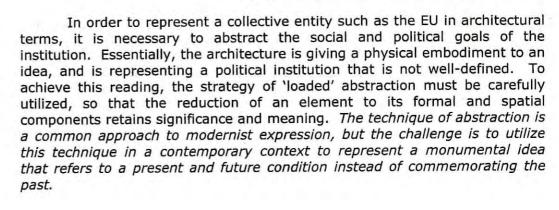
The adaptation of Cubism to a machine-age aesthetic resulted in the Purist works of artists such as Le Corbusier and Ozenfant. Purism arose as a reaction against Cubism's lack of public interest. These artists experimented with tone and coloring, and attempted to convey a finished look that was consistent with the 'machine age' architecture of the time (Hitchcock 26).

From the application of Mondrian's paintings in the work of Oud and Rietveld, to the synthesis of the work of Kandinsky and Klee with the methodology of the Bauhaus school, to the abstract surrealism of Arp and Miro, a parallel relationship between art and architecture developed throughout the 1900's. This dialogue relies on the principles of abstraction and the meaningful translation and reinterpretation of elements and forms.

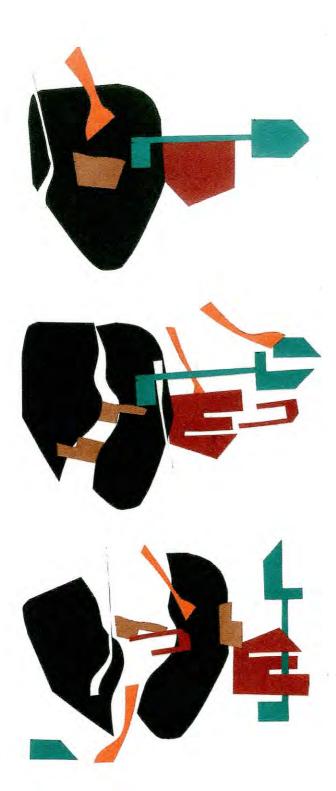
Abstraction in architecture operates similarly to abstraction in art, but accentuates the three-dimensional understanding of the elements. People recognize and understand monuments and monumental expression based on organizational principles as well as specific architectural language. If the forms and spaces of monumental architecture are abstractly broken down and reconfigured, the human mind will understand these forms, but will not perceive them as a specific, historically referential object.

The danger in abstraction, however, is that it leaves open the possibility for individual reconstruction of the image that the architect is attempting to convey. This concept could work in favor of individual expression within the collective environment (each observer understands the same space in a different way) or it could work against the idea of breaking from history (each observer reconfigures the abstracted object in a way that is familiar to them based on memories). The challenge for the designer, then, is to carefully consider the various readings of volumes and spaces in terms of their abstract connotations, and to decide which elements to leave open to interpretation, and which elements require more specific definition.

Empty Abstraction vs. Loaded Abstraction.



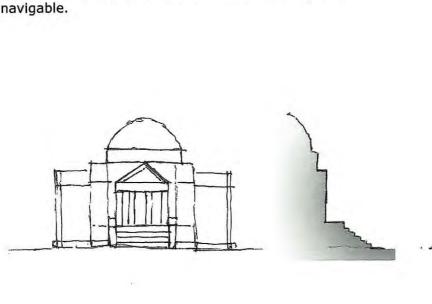
The image at left represents an exercise in the applications of abstraction at the scale of the site. The first image uses a series of colors and forms to represent certain important elements in the city of Brussels, Belgium, including the historic city center, the major transportation routes into the city, the canal, and the European Union district. In the second iteration, the forms have been decomposed according to certain organizational principles that are set up by the city's infrastructure. The third version reconfigures these elements according to various explorations and arguments about the ideal relationship of certain urban elements to others. While the form and orientation of each original piece has changed, the colors and distinguishing features of each piece allow the observer to reconstitute each element in the mind, or to reinterpret the new composition based on the new properties of the pieces.

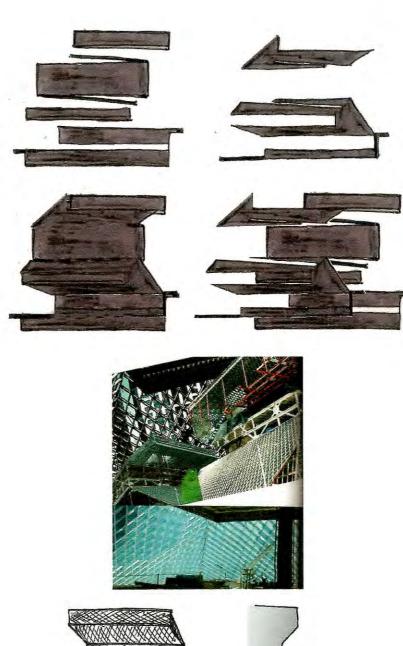


Case Study: Seattle Public Library, Seattle, Washington. Rem Koolhaas, 2003.

This library is an example of a project that uses the technique of abstraction. The project refers to the traditional presence of a library within a city, which includes a sense of monumentality and objectivity. It is not a fabric building, but rather a figure that stands in a prominent position in the city. The idea that the most avant-garde architectural expression should be used to represent a significant public building is an idea that is consistent with history. The materials and building techniques contribute to a modern aesthetic which establishes this building as a contemporary monument in Seattle.

At other scales of reference, however, Koolhaas' abstract method of monumental expression is 'empty,' that is, void of meaning. In Content, Koolhaas uses metaphors to explain the significance of the library as an institution in modern society. At the level of architectural expression, however, certain principles and elements contribute to the understanding of the building as a consequential public institution. An example of this is the approach to the entry sequence. The building touches the ground in a fairly uniform manner around the site, and the entrance is hidden under a cantilevered structure. The pedestrian must circle around the building in order to identify the main point of entry. This notion is contradictory to the idea that certain principles and organizational strategies should set up the framework for abstraction, so that forms and spaces can exist in a context that is easy navigable.





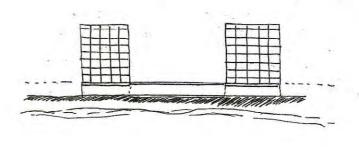


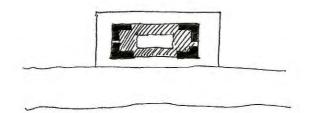




Case Study: Bibliotheque Nationale, Paris, France. Jean Nouvel, 1990.

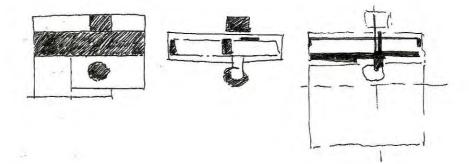
Another library project that utilizes abstraction but that is 'empty' of meaning is the Bibliotheque Nationale. The building is located on a large site outside of Paris, and consists of four towers at the corners of a large platform. The center of the site is an enclosed courtyard which is accessible from inside the library. The building has a similar attitude towards the interface with the ground plane as the Seattle Public Library, which is to say that it uniformly meets the ground with a vertical surface that is the same material, scale, and treatment as the rest of the façade. The architect uses the idea of a platform and a monumental expression of the major volumes to abstractly infer the programmatic significance of the library, but again, the problem of defined entry and articulation of the vertical surface detract from the meaningful reading of the abstracted forms.

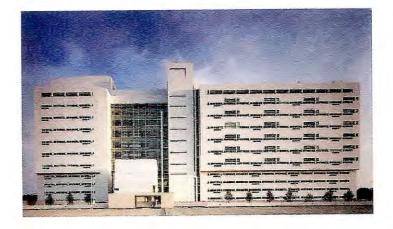




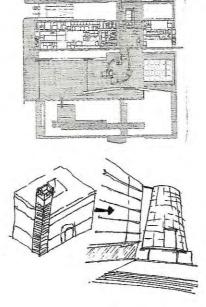
Case Study: United States Courthouse and Federal Building, Central Islip, New York. Richard Meier, 2000.

This project successfully 'loads' abstracted forms and volumes with meaning and significance. The building is intended to convey a stately and formal quality that is consistent with civic buildings of the past, but emphasis is placed on the open, public spaces and the entry sequence that articulate a sense of accessibility and openness to the people. Spatial volumes and geometric forms are conceptually related to historic political building precedents, but the aesthetic and material properties of the project are modern. Programmatic spaces are ordered with a sense of hierarchy that is created by materiality and by a modern interpretation of articulation and detailing. Vertical surfaces represent variances in spatial configurations and program. The careful consideration of each of these design elements allows the architect to relate to principles of the past and to abstract them in a meaningful way, thus creating a modern but monumental image for an important government building.







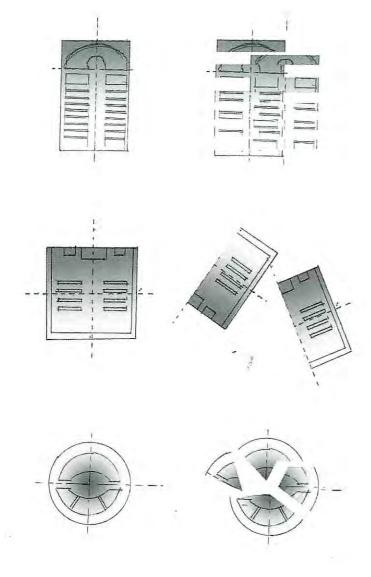


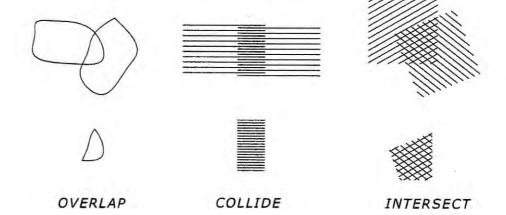


Abstraction vs. Figuration.

The technique of abstraction involves a careful analysis of the component parts and elements of a building or an object and their relationship to one another. If the principles and strategies of organization are defined and maintained, the components of an object may be rearranged and reconfigured in many different ways. Some of the techniques for analyzing and reinterpreting an element that is to be abstracted include the study of figure/ground relationships, layering techniques, and readings of transparency.

When an object or a building type is distilled down its basic component parts, the reconfiguration of elements must happen on a very abstract level in order to avoid the development of figuration. Figuration and abstraction differ from each other in that figuration implies a direct *translation* of objects or volumes into a spatial context where they read independently. Abstraction implies these objects or volumes in a less literal manner, and relies on a perceptual reconfiguration of the overall composition.

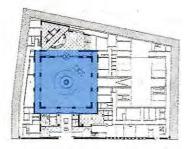




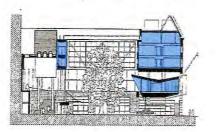
Case Study: British Embassy, Berlin, Germany. Michael Wilford & Partners, 1996.

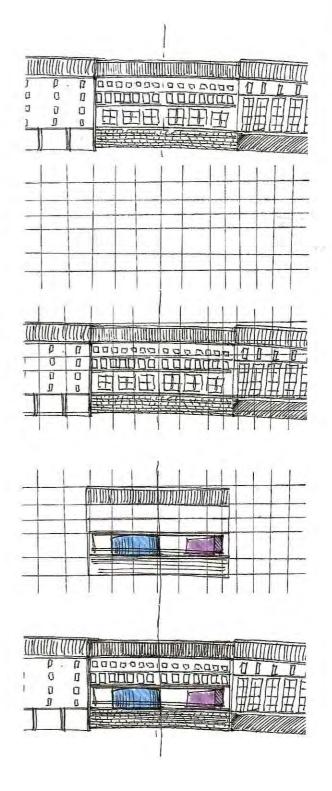
This embassy employs figurative volumes to express specific programmatic spaces. The building takes up a city block in reconstructed Berlin. The primary exterior surface is delineated by bands of stone and the implication of rustication and a cornice, all elements that refer to historical precedent. The most distinctive features of the façade, however, are the additive volumes that protrude from a large opening in the vertical surface. These objects are further emphasized by the use of color and different cladding materials. Although this design strategy attempts to convey a tension between the historical implications of building in post-war Berlin and the possibilities for modern expression, it does it on a very literal level which leaves little room for further interpretation. The figural elements that are visible on the façade are not understood as abstract references, but as literal volumes and voids.









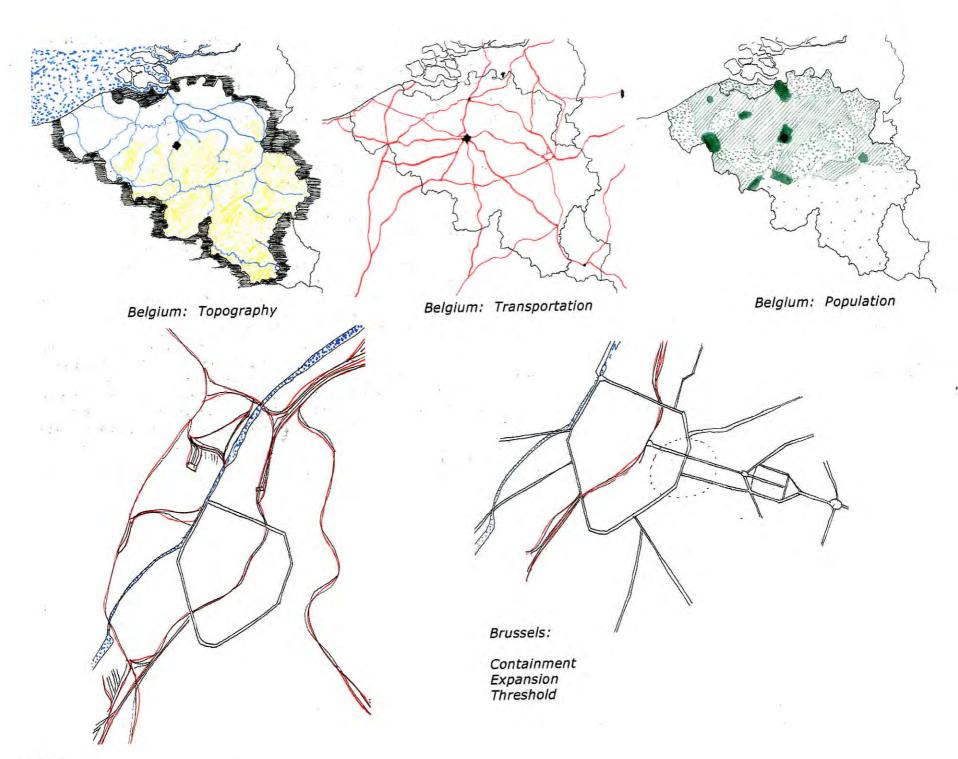


FACADE STUDIES DOCUMENTATION **ANALYSIS** INTERPRETATION DESIGN AND IN THE STREET III III EEE

A less figural approach to abstraction is described in the article "The Facades of KPF: Abstraction and the Limits of Figuration," by Thomas Schumacher. The work of KPF, specifically as it relates to the treatment of vertical surfaces on tall buildings, has become known for its adherence to classical principles and compositional techniques. Strategies such as tripartitioning, overlapping, and the repetition of the bay are used to intensify the articulation of a building type that is typically streamlined and repetitive. KPF utilizes abstraction as a way of transforming literal forms into more generic, decorative, and nonspecific element. This classical reinterpretation of vertical surfaces is often juxtaposed against the massing strategies that are typical of modernism, which include asymmetry and interlocking spatial relationships. The overall effect is that "a scaffold of figurative pieces gives way to a more abstract holistic composition," and a dynamic tension is created among elements.

In all cases where abstraction is used as a representational technique, the reiterative question must always be one of *meaning*. The principles and strategies of the past may be decomposed, analyzed, and reconfigured according to abstract ideas, but in order to avoid 'empty' abstraction or the tendency towards mere figuration, the resultant abstract form must always express the monumental quality of the institution that it represents. A *meaningful abstraction* of historic architectural principles will result in an architecture that conveys the importance of the institution that it represents, and that responds to modern interpretations of monumentality and representation.

The façade studies at left represent the transformation of a classical façade into a modern composition using the techniques of abstraction and reconfiguration. The façade of the Palazzo Canossa was documented and analyzed, then decomposed according to the principles of proportion, layering, and transparency, and reduced to the elements that comprise the façade as a whole. These elements were then translated through the lens of the architecture firm of Koetter and Kim, based on an analysis of their work. The result is a modern façade that is derived from traditional principles of organization and constitution. This technique can be applied at the scale of a site strategy or a programmatic arrangement, and demonstrates the direct application of abstraction in architecture.

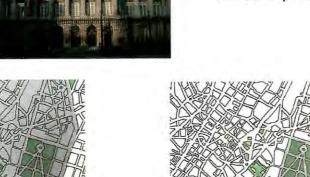


Site History and Analysis.

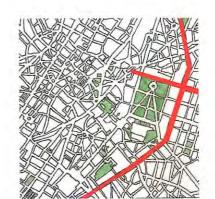


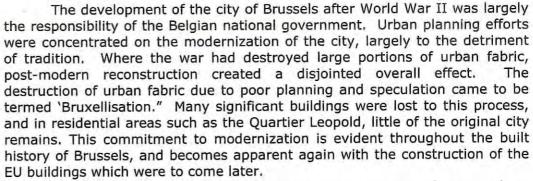












The international event of Expo '58 was an opportunity for Brussels to improve its infrastructure and to modernize its image. Improvements such as a high-speed ring at the historical edge of the city and an extensive highway network were put in place so that Brussels could become an appropriate site for an important international event.

In 1958, Brussels also became the third 'capital' city of Europe, which spurred further development. As early as 1948, the Quartier Leopold had been identified, by the planning firm of Group Alpha, as an area that was a suitable location and size for the new EU quarter. It was both close to the city center, and easily accessible to traffic from outside the city. Placing new EU buildings in the Leopold Quarter quickly transformed the area from an upscale residential neighborhood to a business district. This transformation was met with much opposition from those who inhabited the area, but the establishment of a European Union district within the city was a point of pride for the city and for the Belgian government.

In 1963, construction was begun on a new building which would provide a permanent location for the ECSC, the EEC and Euratom. The Berlaymont Building was a major building project along the Rue de la Loi. This extension to the East led to the construction of a new subway system in Brussels. The Berlaymont Building was designed as a unique, recognizable figure in the new EU District. It is cross-shaped in plan and has an operable façade of louvers and panels. The building is criticized, however, for its monolithic appearance that does not appear to account for the context at all. The façade of the building that faces Schuman Circle, for example, is windowless, and is understood as the 'end' condition of the composition. The development of the Rue de la Loi and the construction of these new buildings also negated the natural landscape of the area. The Maelbeek Valley, which intersects the Rue de la Loi, became the subject of much controversy because of the 'back-end' conditions that resulted from building designs that neglected to respond to the topography of the city.

By the time the building was completed in 1968, each of the organizations for which the building was intended had exceeded the capacity of the building itself. With each entity requiring its own space, the legitimacy of this large EU building project fell into question. It came to light that the entire planning and building of the Berlaymont had been more of an effort of the national government, and that the specific needs of the EU were not reflected in the building design.

More recent building projects in Brussels have involved the planning input of the European Union itself, so that the buildings can more directly respond to the needs of the institution. The Justius Lipsius Building, completed in 1995, is located directly across the Rue de la Loi from the Berlaymont building, and houses the Council Headquarters. Although the building is planned around a series of courtyards, it appears from the exterior as a massive volume of reflective glass. The building was purposely separated from the surrounding buildings for reasons of security, and materiality was intended to make the building stand out. The use of stone and the response to the site near Schuman Circle do not convey an idea of urban strategy, but rather one of an imposing structure with little regard for the context.





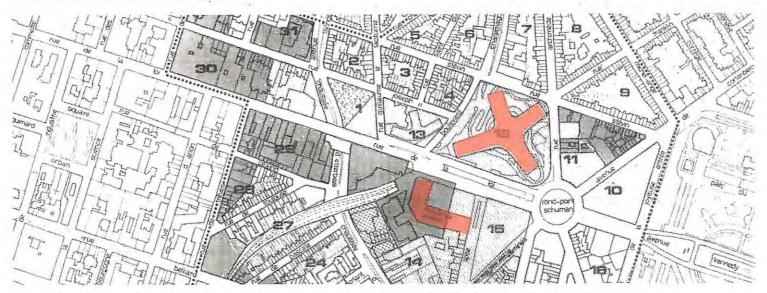






Simultaneous with the construction of Justius Lipsius was the establishment of a new complex for the European Parliament in Brussels. This large project was located in the Quartier Leopold, between the historic Luxembourg Station and the Parc Leopold. The project faced criticism from France and Luxembourg, which felt that Brussels was becoming too influential as the center for the European Union, but the federal government of Belgium and the communes of Brussels all argued for the continued presence of the EU in the city. The Parliament building was built amidst harsh criticism for its scale and disregard for the context of the Quartier Leopold. Despite its grand presence, the building complex is essentially an internally focused proposition, and it is minimally responsive to the neighborhood in which it is located.

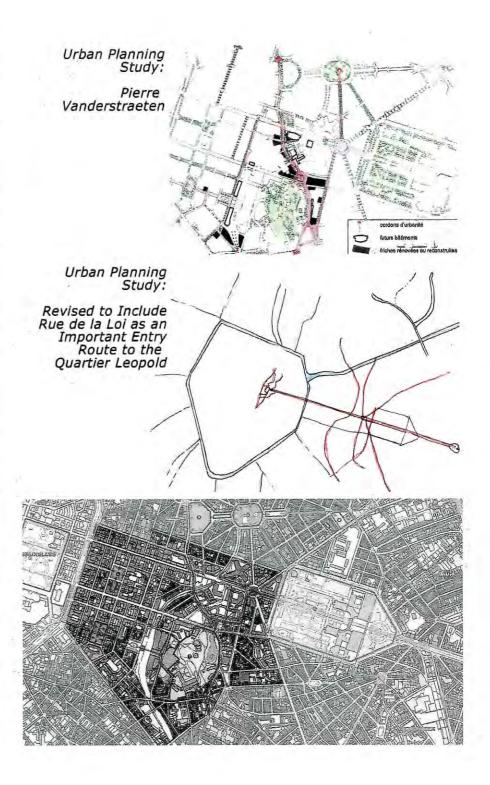
In the 1970's the European Commission was moved to the Berlaymont building, after some discussion about the possibility of moving the EU center away from the Quartier Leopold. Continued planning discussions debated whether or not the EU should have a continued presence in the Quartier Leopold, or if it should be moved to a more neutral 'campus' location outside of the center of the city. The stronger argument, however, has always come from the Belgian government, which prefers to maintain the EU presence in the city center. The existence of the EU buildings within the context of the city is a point of pride for Brussels, and the close relationship to the historic environment has spurred the development of the city.



The Quartier Leopold district of the city was traditionally a high-class residential neighborhood. With the improvement of the transportation infrastructure of the city, the wealthiest citizens of Brussels began to move out of the city center towards the surrounding areas. Today, about one million people live in the thirteen communes of the city of Brussels. The population of the entire city, including the suburbs, is closer to two million, which indicates a large number of commuters into and out of the city each day.

As the character of the Quartier Leopold began to change, properties were available for development. Speculative building practices and the presence of the EU drastically changed the area of the city into a business district with a very small permanent population. This has presented a problem for the city, because very little tax money is being collected from a large portion of the city. According to urban planner Pierre Vanderstraeten, the future of the development of the Leopold District relies on the investment in mixed-use facilities which will attract a more stable population. The current arrangement of the existing EU buildings presents problems of both accessibility and representation. Most people commute into the district each day, but the location of the buildings within the district is undefined, and there are no distinguishing features or edge conditions that indicate the importance of such an institution in the city. Vanderstraeten argues that a feasible location for a new EU building would be at any of the access points to the district, that is, any site that would provide a point of entry and definition to the area. This strategy is a primarily suburban proposition, since it emphasizes the roads that lead into and out of the city. The Rue de la Loi, however, may itself be interpreted as one of the primary routes into the Leopold District, in which case the point of 'entry' into the district would become a distinctly urban proposition that would be simultaneously identified with the city of Brussels as well as the EU as an institution.

This project will attempt to represent an institution that is monumental in character but not imposing in scale or objectivity, and will provide an identifiable point of entry into the district where future European Union development will take place. The ideal location for this to take place is at a point of intersection and connection between the historic city center and the Leopold District.

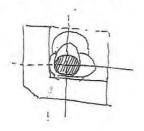




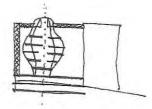
Residence Palace, Rue de la Loi

Council Headquarters, Samyn and Partners

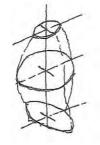












The selection of a site brings up the reiterative question of monumentality. The existing EU buildings indicate that the European Union has traditionally conveyed the idea of importance through imposing buildings that are large in scale and that stand alone as objectified volumes along a long, straight trajectory that leads out of the city. The site selection process may lead to a location that is open to more readings and interpretations, which would rely on other architectural strategies to relate the perception of monumentality. A site, for example, may be approached from several significant positions in the city, and would therefore acquire different readings of object or fabric depending on the perspective. The relative location of the site to other important elements of the existing city would create a hierarchical understanding of the site, and would therefore insist that the building acquire a sense of monumentality without using scale and autonomy to do so. The challenge, then, is to represent a significant institution in a historically loaded context by seeking a site which forces a reinterpretation of the definition of monumentality.

One recent project which addresses the relationship of site to the perception of monumentality is the winning competition entry for the Headquarters of the Council of the European Union, by Phillipe Samyn and Partners. This project is an addition to the Residence Palace, a historic building in the Quartier Leopold. The site is along the Rue de la Loi, right next to the Justius Lipsius building. In Samyn's design, the interpretation of monumentality without the imposing quality of a free-standing building manifests itself in the relationship between 'masculine' and 'feminine' spaces and building techniques. The result is a glass cube (which completes the Lshape of the existing Residence Palace), within which is an irregular, curved volume that houses most of the program. The structure of the building is rational, but the form inside appears as an asymmetrical piece of sculpture that contrasts with the 'standard' form that was generated from the site conditions. In this case, monumentality is achieved not from the significance of the location, but by the carefully articulated elements in the building. The façade, for example, uses wood and other natural materials to detract from the imposition of a large-scale building. The patchwork of glass panels that articulate the vertical surfaces are an energy efficient method of representing the cultural diversity of the EU by utilizing recycled material from projects throughout Europe. The building also carefully responds to the view corridor between the city center and the Parc de Cinquanterre by remaining low and continuing the street wall as it was created by the neighboring buildings. This project is an example of a monumental form of representation that is derived from a specific response to the site and an attention to the significance of program and constituency, rather than depending on scale and site conditions.

Site Proposal 1 – Historic City Center, Cathedral.

This site is located within the historic center of the city, and marks the point where the Rue de la Loi ends and breaks down in scale to a series of smaller streets. This conceptual intersection point connects the old part of the city and the 'new' district of existing EU buildings. The location of the site within the urban city center contributes to the image of the European Union as an integrated, contextual entity that is able to interact with the city of Brussels. This relationship also holds metaphorical significance, as the site represents the placement of the EU within ANY European city and the effort to create a successful dialogue between the European Union and the historical context of Europe as a whole.

The selection of a site within the city reacts against any arguments for moving the European Union facilities to the outskirts of the city. Instead, this position promotes the EU as an integrated, accessible entity that is directly related to the existing condition rather than standing alone as an autonomous entity. The urban site also forces the issue of monumentality, and requires that the building acquire a monumental reading from methods other than scale, traditional organization, and objectivity. In order for the project to convey a sense of weight and significance, it must interpret and abstract the traditional qualities of monumental buildings and apply them to the specific urban setting.

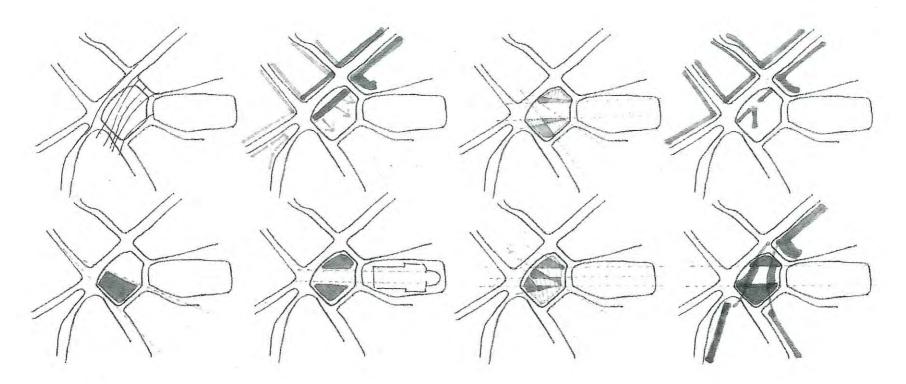
The site is located directly in front of St. Michael's church. This is the national church of Belgium, and became the Cathedral of the city of Brussels in the 1960's. The reference to both the city and the nation on the site is particularly significant because is consistent with the project method of simultaneously operating on several scales of reference. Aside from the cathedral, the site is set into an urban context that lacks significant architectural identity. On one side of the Cathedral is a parish building which uses very traditional 'religious' motifs in the modern materials of brick and glass to create a literal reference to the Cathedral. The other side of the Cathedral is faced by the monolithic end of the National Bank of Belgium, a large but unremarkable building.



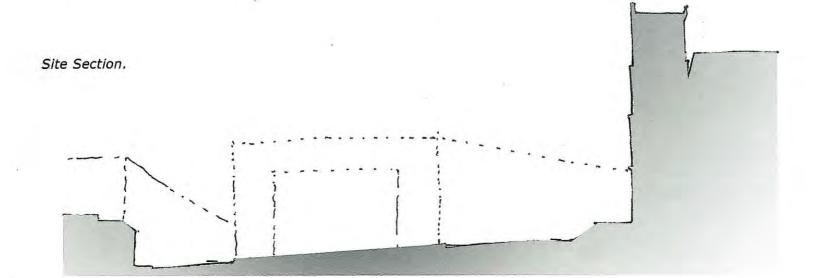


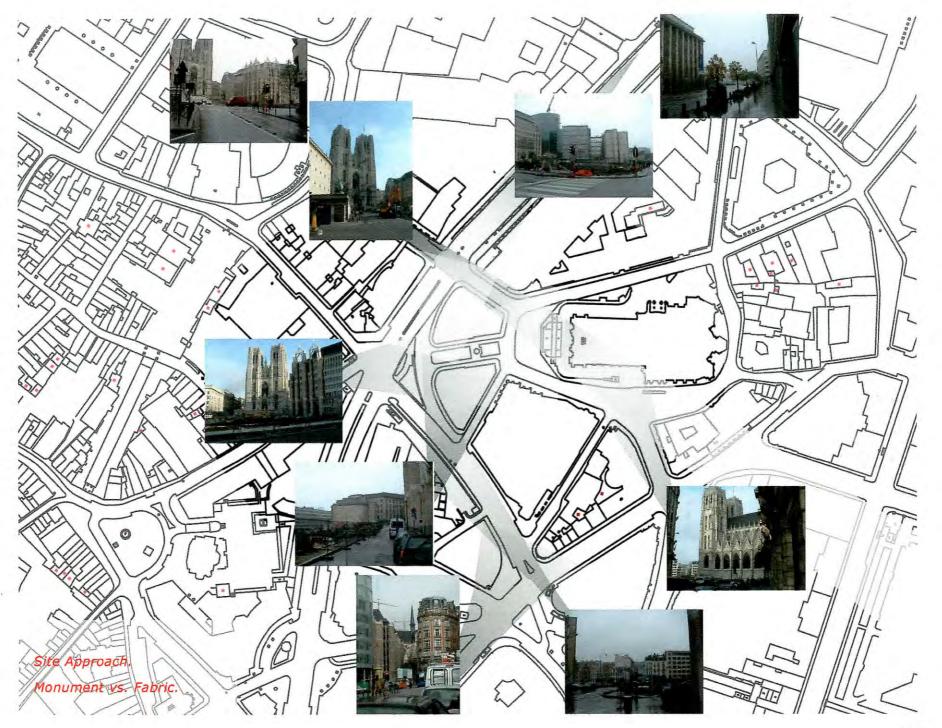






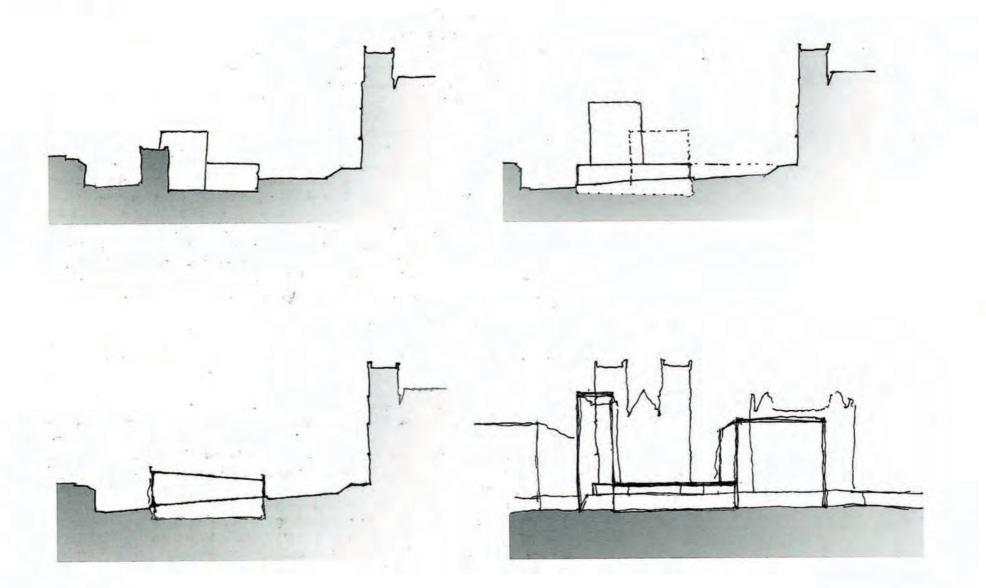
Site Strategies.





Site Sections.

Massing.





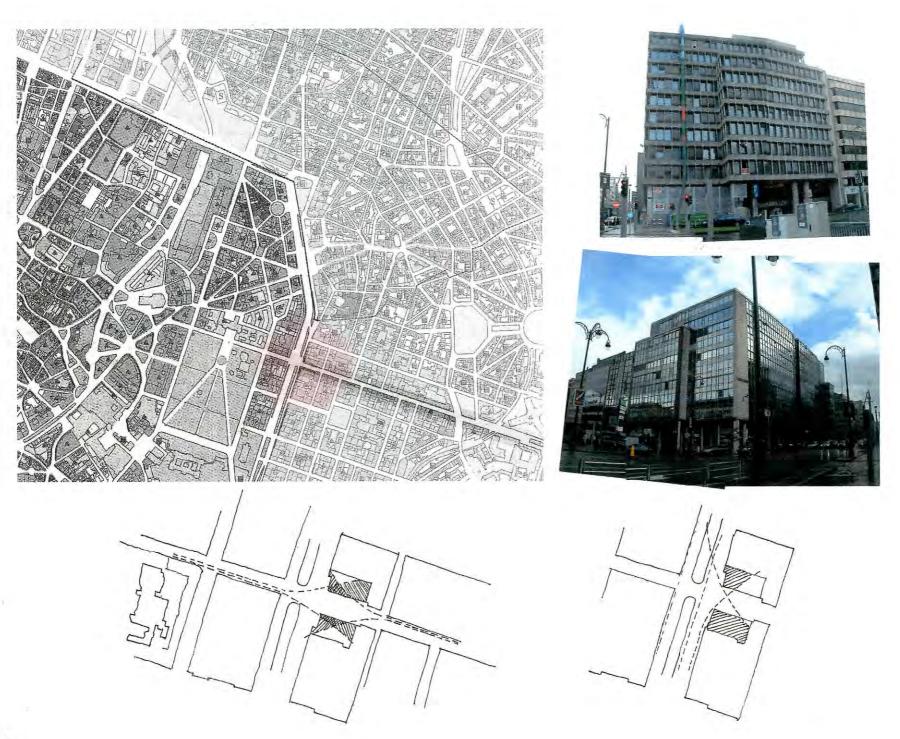


The buildings directly facing the site are offices with repetitive, concrete facades. Towards the southeast end of the site, the surrounding buildings begin to break down in scale and more closely resemble the traditional fabric of the old city. The view in this direction includes the towers of Grand Place, the identifiable center of historic Brussels. The building must mediate between the two most significant elements of the context; the Cathedral and the old city center.

The site is set on a slope which allows for a minimum of one story difference from one side of the site to the other. The slope is away from the Cathedral, and this change in grade will act as a catalyst for the design, and will be an advantage in massing experiments that attempt to avoid volumetric competition with the Cathedral on the site. It will also allow for the building to read differently from various perspectives, which contributes to the various perceptions of monumentality that depend on the approach to the site. From the lower end of the site, for example, the building may read as a more integrated element in the city, but from the Cathedral it may have a more figural quality. Various strategies for dividing the site and determining the massing of the program can be derived from the existing conditions, and can determine the hierarchical perception of the significant buildings in the area.

The selection of a site directly in front of the Cathedral requires an analysis of the social and urban implications. As it exists, the space is a refurbished park with undefined edge conditions. This lack of significant architecture to mark the boundaries of the space detracts from the reading of an important urban location. Instead of the repetitive, post-war facades that are currently facing the Cathedral, this project could be the opportunity to create a more remarkable 'face' for the city and for the EU right in the center of the city. This reading of the site also lends itself to the insertion of a public component of the program. The site and the building will emphasize accessibility by clearly accentuating the public program on a site where public space 'should' be, but in a building where public program may not otherwise be expected.

Beyond these planning components, the act of building on such a prominent location carries meaning beyond the formal analysis of the site. A building in front of the Cathedral acquires meaning, and will convey the intentions of the institution. The site is inherently hierarchical, and the project has the capacity to compete or to subordinate itself to the presence of the Cathedral. The third, and best option, is for the project to enter into a meaningful dialogue with the existing Cathedral and the old city. The idea that the Cathedral and a new EU building can operate in the same space requires a reinterpretation of monumentality so that the new building will convey its own significance and presence without detracting from or overwhelming the Cathedral.









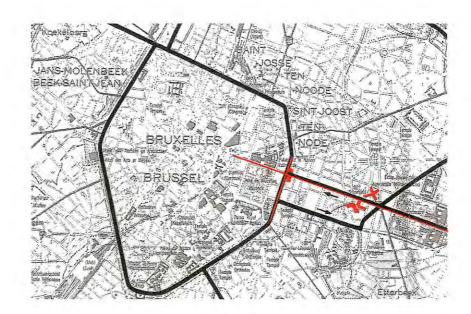


Site Proposal 2 - Rue de la Loi, near Parc de Bruxelles.

This is the location where the ring meets the Rue de la Loi. Two large scale office buildings frame the view down La Loi and do not allow any indication of the important presence of the EU buildings further down the street. In the distance the monument in the Parc de la Cinquenterre is visible. Looking from the site back towards the city, one immediately sees a more historical context, including the Parc de Bruxelles and the Palace of the Nation. This point of the city marks an interesting transition between the government of Belgium and the government of Europe, and serves to link the two in a more recognizable way.

One of the primary disadvantages to this site is that it is located right on the ring in a heavily trafficked area, and would most often be viewed obliquely, thus negating the intended reading of the site as a threshold. This site also de-emphasizes the importance of public accessibility because there is a lack of pedestrian activity in the area and the commercial program in the surrounding buildings is limited to the street level.

This site is situated among many other office buildings that are not architecturally remarkable, and therefore would act only as a minor solution to the larger problem of representation in the immediate area. This condition can be compared to the first site proposal, where the site is not adjacent to any of the surrounding buildings, allowing for various, independent readings of the building.



Site Proposal 3 - Josephat Station.

This area was the proposed site for a large complex of EU buildings during a competition that took place in 1980. The former Josaphat station is located near a large park, in an area that is mostly residential.

The site is far removed from the center of the city, and is suburban in scale and context. The triangular site is located at the end of Boulevard Leopold III, and is surrounded by two high-rise apartment buildings that look to be part of the postwar development of Brussels. The scale of the context breaks down across the street, where a series of smaller homes line the street. Some of these buildings bear flags outside, indicating that they may have some political affiliation.

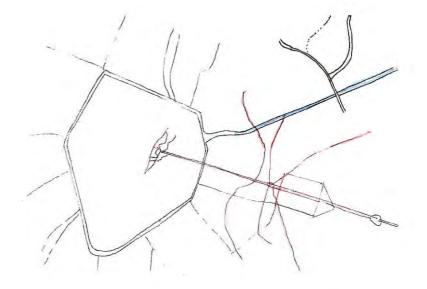
The benefit to this site is that it is removed from the dense urban context of the city, and would allow the EU to expand as an independent complex. It would be more easily accessible to those who work in the buildings, and would not require the redevelopment of a large portion of the center of the city.

The arguments against this site, however, are strong. The Belgian government is in favor of keeping the EU buildings as integrated with the city of Brussels as possible. The idea of a separate 'campus' has been rejected in the past, and the challenge of allowing the traditional context of the city to coexist with the development of the new institution is a design issue as much as a political issue.

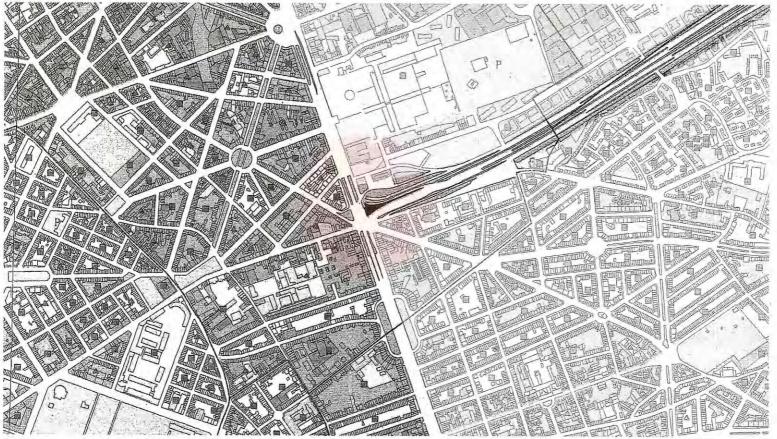
This proposition operates on a suburban scale and requires significant master planning, which is counter to the argument that the EU should be integrated with the urban context of the city and with Europe as a whole. It also denies many of the opportunities for representation and reinterpretation that occur within an urban setting because it maintains the preconceived notions about the construction of monumental structures as inaccessible objects that are removed from their context.











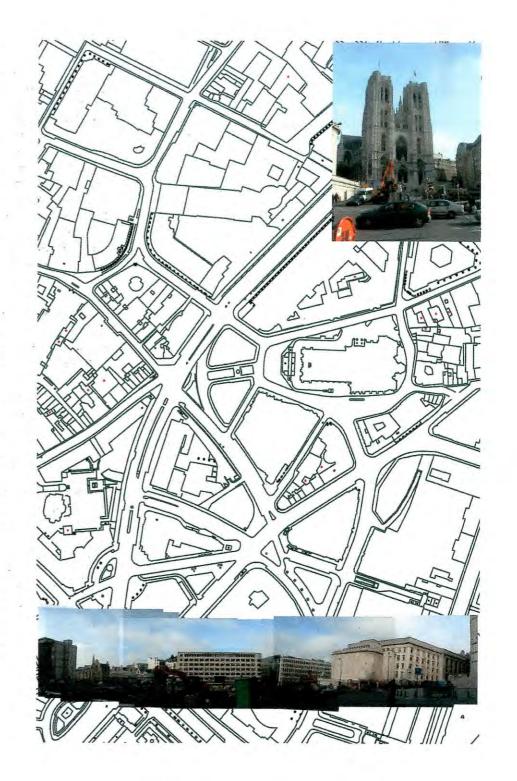
Site Selection.

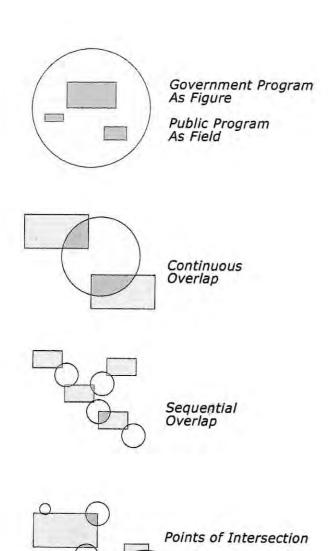
The best site proposal for this project is the urban site in the city center, near the Cathedral. This site is loaded with significant elements and requires a deliberate position on the meaning of building in front of the Cathedral. The site strategy must respond to the hierarchical condition of the site while attempting to maintain its own identity and significance.

The problem of representation for the EU is best resolved on this site. It is an urban proposition which accepts the desire of the Belgian government to develop the presence of Europe within the city rather than relocating it to a more remote location. It also responds to the European Union's intention to become an accessible and well-understood entity within a historical context. The site is accessible to pedestrians and the scale of vehicular traffic is more controlled than other locations such as those along the ring. The space also offers the potential for various readings and interpretations depending upon the approach. It is located in a place which is recognizable and significant, but which lacks definition and a modern architectural presence. The conversation between the historic center of the city, National institutions such as the Bank and the Cathedral, and the presence of Europe at the scale of a new EU building will charge the site with a contemporary architectural and urban significance that has not previously existed in historic city centers.

During a recent interview, Bruno Allardin, an architectural thesis student at the Institut Superieur d'Architecture Saint-Luc in Brussels, questioned the image of his city as seen by American students of Architecture. This discussion led to the realization that the city of Brussels lacks an identifiable architectural presence that puts it 'on the map.' While the historic city is interesting, the significant National and European buildings are monumental, and the fabric has unique moments, it is still in need of a contemporary architectural 'monument' that will convey the character of the city, the country, and the European Union as they exist today.

This site requires that modern architecture respond to its historical context. The project will act as a mediator of circumstances, and will conceptually link the built consequences of history with a built projection of the future of Brussels and of Europe.



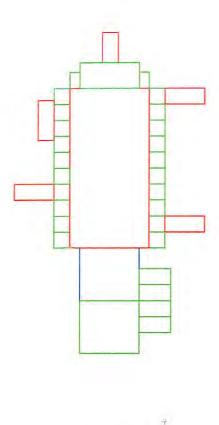


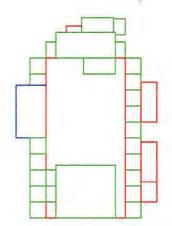
The programmatic goal of the project is to initiate a dialogue between a specific institution of the EU and the people of Europe on a very small scale, in order to explore the architectural solutions for future European Union building projects and urban studies. The building program will combine political and public elements to create literal, virtual, and perceived connections between the government and the people of Europe.

The governmental component of the program will be the headquarters for GUIDE, a newly developed program that is funded by the European Commission. GUIDE (Government User Identity for Europe) is an information technology initiative that was established to create a system of online identification verification that will allow for the secure development of an E-government in Europe. The goal of the project is to "enable Europe to become the global leader of e-government services" by providing systems and solutions that will facilitate virtual interaction among governments, and between the government and the citizens of Europe. This entity provides an interesting component to this project because it emphasizes the EU's commitment to the development of new policies on accessible technology and communication. It is, therefore, consistent with the image that this building will seek to create for the European Union. Programmatically, this facility will require multi-disciplinary technology work stations and some collective spaces for procedural and policy development.

The public component of the program will be a small language institute that will equip educated citizens of the EU with valuable language and translation skills. In contrast to the high-tech governmental program, the language institute will maintain an emphasis on the fundamentals of verbal communication and will exemplify the EU's continued commitment to the recognition of the culturally diverse context of Europe. Instead of traditional classrooms, this institute will require small spaces that are experientially connected to the government functions, allowing language skills to be acquired by immersion and practice. Other facilities would include small scale presentation halls and a library, which may also be utilized by the GUIDE employees. The tensions and balances between the two types of program will create the opportunities for spatial, virtual, and literal interactions between the government and its people.

GUIDE Prog		- 4.4.22 (5.5.2.)	
	Large Scale Meeting Hall	6,000 sq. ft.	
	Multi-Disciplinary Technology Work Stations		_
	5 @ 5,000 sq. ft.	25,000 sq. ft.	
	Offices		
	1 @ 400 sq. ft.	18	
¥.	4 @ 150 sq. ft.		
		550 sq. ft.	
	Conference Room	1,000 sq. ft.	
	Support Spaces (10 %)	3,255 sq. ft.	
	Subtotal	35, 805 sq. ft.	
- # E			
Language Ir	stitute Program:	g (4)	
	Small Scale Meeting Spaces	T. 7	
E	4 @ 800 sq. ft.	3, 200 sq. ft.	
	Class/Translation Rooms with Direct Visual/Aud		
	Connection to GUIDE Meeting Halls	,	
	25 @ 500 sq. ft.	12,500 sq. ft.	
	Offices	12,500 sq. 10.	
	10 @ 200 sq. ft.	2,000 sq. ft.	
	Small Scale Presentation Facility	2,400 sq. ft.	
	Reference Library and Lounge / Cafe	3,000 sq. ft.	
	Support Spaces (15 %)	3,465 sq. ft.	
4 1 2	Subtotal	26, 565 sq. ft.	
Shared Space			
	Lobby	5,000 sq. ft.	
	Café and Outdoor Spaces	as required	
ž.	Subtotal	+/- 5000 sq. ft.	
	2 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1	÷	
.4	Subtotal	67, 370 sq. ft.	
	Circulation (30 %)	20, 211 sq. ft.	
	Circulation (30 %)	20, 211 34. 16.	
	TOTAL PROGRAM	87, 581 SQ. FT.	
	SITE	51, 826 SQ. FT.	
	F.A.R.	1.69	





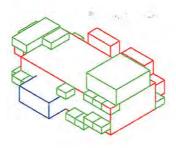
The program is intrinsically hierarchical; the government program includes large scale meeting halls and technological facilities, and the public program includes a series of slightly smaller communal spaces.

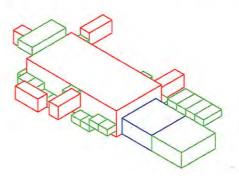
The GUIDE program would have approximately one hundred workers which would utilize the collective work spaces and would meet in the large hall. The meeting space, however, would also be large enough to accommodate additional members of the other EU institutions that may be involved in major policy initiatives. Space for visitors or temporary guests would also be accommodated in this presentation facility.

Although most of the program is identified as 'government program,' the intent is that the spaces will be arranged in a way that blurs the distinction between civic and public program. While some elements, such as the large meeting hall, may maintain an autonomous quality that defines it as the primary space for the governmental program, other spaces such as the library and the lounge may be understood as shared space that can be occupied by either the public or the private constituency of the building. This abstract delineation of programmatic boundaries will contribute to the understanding of the institution as an accessible entity, but will also reinforce the importance of certain, clearly defined spaces.

Since the site is has a slope and occupies a prominent urban position directly in front of the Cathedral, it is important to maintain a relatively low F.A.R. This option to leave large portions of the site low or entirely open responds to the prominence of the Cathedral in the city and the relationship between the church and the historic city center which is visible from the site. The program may also be strategically 'loaded' to certain areas of the site to deny views of existing built conditions that are not enriching to the context. The low F.A.R. also allows for more sectional variations which will correlate to the hierarchical definition of the program.

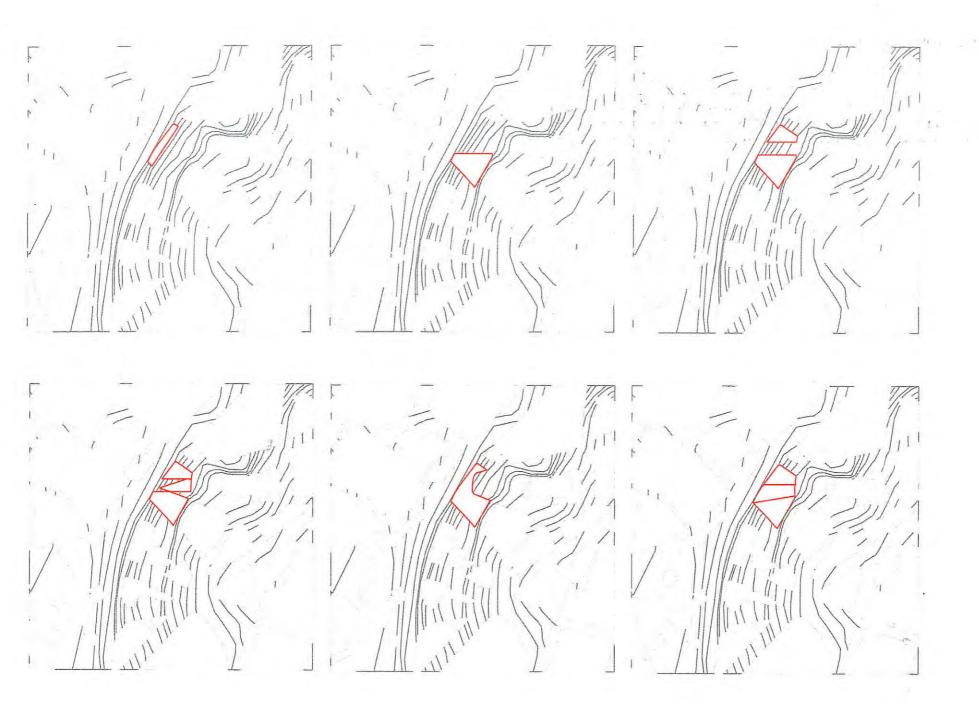
The intent is to create a building that will be recognized as a 'monument' because of its significant architectural contribution to the city and to the European Union, rather than because it is imposing in scale or objectified in the context. The relationship of the program to the site, both in terms of individual spaces and on the scale of the building as a whole, will generate this reading of accessible monumentality.





Site / Program Fit.

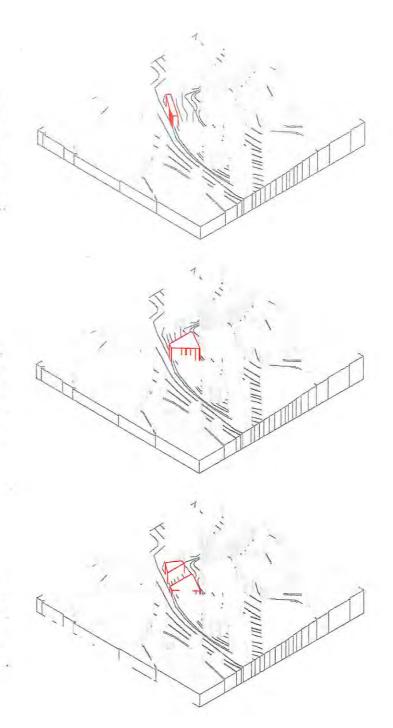
The following images begin to investigate the relationship between the chosen site and the programmatic development of the project. Each proposal has urban implications that respond to the existing conditions while attempting to contribute to the site in a notable way.

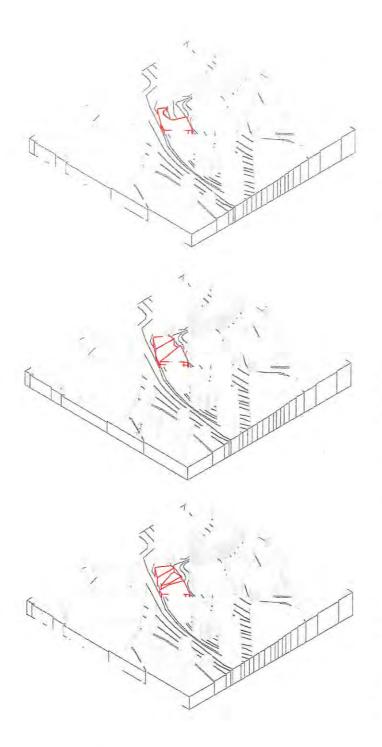


Strategy 1: The building acts as a mediator between the Cathedral and the unsightly office buildings directly across from it. The building moves the 'edge' of the urban space onto the site, which reinforces its significance. At the same time, it leaves the majority of the site open to the Cathedral. In this scenario, the building could be tall, relying on the slope of the site to avoid competition with the façade of the church.

Strategy 2: This option occupies only half of the site. The program would be concentrated in front of the parish building, rather than the Cathedral. In this case, the building accepts the significance of the Cathedral on the site, and allows the visual connection between the church and the historic city center to remain unchanged. Instead, the program is loaded on one side of the site, and would require that the program occupy a greater amount of vertical space.

Strategy 3: The site is divided by the conceptual lines extending from the aisles of the Cathedral. The building occupies the two extremes of the site, but leaves the center of the site open. This proposal maintains the visual connection between the Cathedral and the city center, blocks some of the less desirable views on the site, and creates an accessible public space between the major programmatic volumes.





Strategy 4: In this scenario the building is subservient to the imposition of the Cathedral on the site. This approach creates a sense of hierarchy and objectifies the Cathedral by denying engagement with the city center. The church and the EU building are in direct dialogue, and the building creates a public space on the East side of the site. On the west side the building holds the line of the street wall.

Strategy 5: This approach extends the horizontal surface of the main stairs of the Cathedral across the site, creating an elevated plane that accentuates the relationship between the Church and the old city. On the two sides of this plane, the programmatic volumes are built up to disguise the presence of the office buildings which do not contribute to the space. From the opposite side of the site, the view of the Cathedral is not obstructed, and yet the building reads as a significant, independent element in the urban realm.

Strategy 6: The most fragmented approach, this responds to various horizontal and vertical datum lines from the surrounding buildings. The composition is the least hierarchical and places emphasis on all of the surrounding elements, rather than the Cathedral alone. Despite the influence of the context, however, this approach would result in a building with an objectified aesthetic.

Case Study: City Hall of Murcia, Murcia, Spain. Rafael Moneo, 2000.

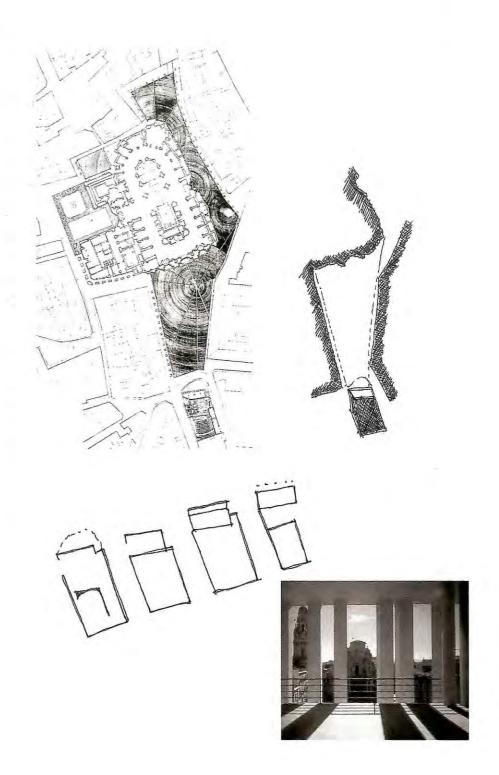
This civic building is an important precedent for the relationship between governmental and religious institutions in a dense, urban site. The city hall is located on the Cardinal Belluga Plaza. This plaza is also the city of the Cathedral of the city and is one of the most important urban spaces in Murcia.

Moneo's approach to the presence of the Cathedral on the site was to create a building that would convey the importance of the civic institution and allow for participation in the urban realm, but that would not compete in language or urban strategy to the existing church. The building is a 'spectator' rather than an active participant in the activities in the Plaza. The main entry, therefore, is located on a side street instead of on the main plaza. The building is allowed to contribute to the urban space, but is accessible only from the direction of the historic city center.

The façade of the City Hall is consistent with some of the datum lines that are set up by the other buildings in the Plaza and is oriented towards the Cathedral. The building resists classical language and organization, and instead creates an asymmetrical series of balcony spaces. In this way, the façade abstracts many of the traditional ideas of organization and articulation that are evident across the Plaza.

The site strategy in this project's relates directly to the proposed site in the historic center of Brussels. The other important similarity is the deliberate use of modern, abstract architecture in dialogue with the Cathedral of the city. Although Moneo is operating at the scale of the city government, similar strategies may be adopted to the scale of a European Institution in dialogue with the Cathedral of Brussels.



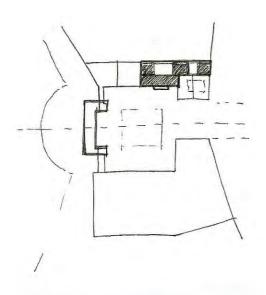


Case Study: French Embassy, Berlin, Germany. Christian de Portzamparc, 2000.

Located on Pariser Platz, near the historic Brandenburg Gate, this embassy project contends with a historically 'loaded' site condition. The site itself was once a Baroque palace with a garden, which was heavily destroyed by the war. The challenge of representation in this project included the political implications of identifying the French delegation within Berlin. The architect's challenge, then, was to create the presence of the French government without imposing upon an important and recognized site.

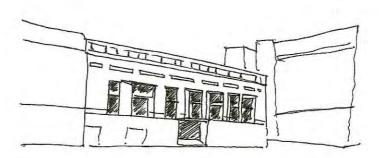
The façade on Pariser Platz is defined by tall windows which are angled towards the Brandenburg gate, making reference to the significance of this monument as the primary element in the urban space. The windows are set on a plinth, which relates to the datum set up by some of the surrounding buildings. The entrance that faces Pariser Platz is ceremonial, and the main functional entrance is located on a side street.

Compared to many of the other embassies in Berlin, this project is subservient to the existing monuments in its space, and accepts its role as fabric rather than monument. It does, however, use a reduced but clear type of surface treatment to be an articulate but unimposing element in the urban space.







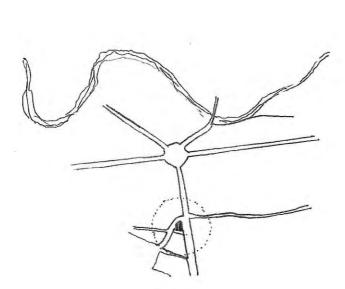


Case Study: Nordic Embassies, Berlin, Germany. Berger + Parkkinen.

This project is unique among embassy designs in that it represents six northern European nations on one site. The intention of the project was to bring together these countries in a complex that would maintain a sense of individual identities and that would seem transparent and accessible to the public. The importance of the buildings' function is communicated through materiality and articulate building systems rather than by scale and imposition on the urban context.

The architects' explanation of the project makes reference to the work of Alvar Aalto and his approach to the relationship of architecture to the natural landscape. This influence is evident in the material proposition of the embassies as well as in the blurred distinctions between public and private spaces.

This project, however, attempts to de-emphasize the monumental qualities of traditional political buildings. Instead it accentuates 'democratic' spaces and their balanced relationships to one another. It is successful, however, in its attempt to counteract the imposing effect of many of the other modern embassies in Berlin





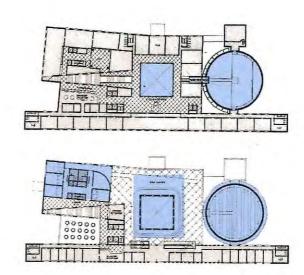




Case Study: Mississauga City Hall, Mississauga, Canada. Jones & Kirkland Architect, 1983.

The Mississauga City Hall is located near Toronto, Canada. It is set within the context of the City Center of Mississauga, and the intent is to investigate urban issues within a small scale setting. While the city hall has a largely governmental program, the objective was to create a space that would integrate itself into the life of the community, and that would become an accessible entity to the citizens of Mississauga. The assembly facilities in the building are intended for public as well as private use.

The design responded to the presence of Lake Ontario, and to the condition of the city as an urban proposition within the 'suburban' regions outside of Toronto. The architects employed a series of abstract volumes, juxtaposed against a grid, to convey the significance of certain programmatic elements and to anticipate future trends in urban development. By doing so, the building reads as a civic landmark, or 'monument,' and contends with issues of memory and association in a forward-looking environment.





In Europe, the United States, and other parts of the world, governments have become committed to sustainable building technologies and practices for new design projects. Issues of energy efficiency and environmentally conscious material choices have been at the forefront of the discussion for many recent EU projects. The image that the EU will project through its new architecture will convey the attitude of the institution towards contemporary issues and concerns. The aesthetic of modernity and public awareness may be achieved through sustainable building technologies, particularly as they relate to enclosure systems and elements that will contribute to the public 'face' of the building. The image of the new institution may also be represented through flexible, adaptable spaces and material elements that consider the conditions of light and air. Capitalizing on these dynamic elements of the building will allow for an architecture that is continually transformed and translated, much like the developing state of the European Union.

Another major concern in the design of government buildings today is the issue of security. Particularly in the case of a building that combines civic program with a public component, the circulation in and around the building must be carefully monitored. An added condition for consideration is the location of the site in an area that sustains heavy pedestrian traffic. The design challenge in this scenario is to present a well-engineered, safe building that meets the security requirements without forfeiting the image of accessibility and relationship to the context.







Expectation of Final Result.

The result of this investigation will be a modern architectural element that exists within the historic urban center of Brussels. This project will respond to the existing conditions but will also assert its own presence in the space. The design method will utilize traditional principles of monumentality, but will apply them to the unique institution of the European Union by abstracting tradition and projecting the image of importance in an accessible, communicative way.

Evaluation Criteria.

The success of this project will be evaluated both on an urban scale and on the scale of programmatic interaction. The siting of the building and the response to the existing built conditions will greatly affect the representation of accessibility. Entry, sequence, and the projection of the vertical surface are all important components in the initial experience of the building. At the level of program, the interaction of spaces and people, whether on a literal or experiential level, will determine the success of the spatial configurations within the building. This project, which argues for the use of architectural abstraction to represent the ideals of the European Union, will be evaluated based on the successful juxtaposition of a modern entity within the historic context of the city, and the experiential perception of an abstracted monumentality that is accessible and communicative.

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An architecture thesis student, Bruno is currently researching the issue of housing in the Quartier Leopold of Brussels. His research includes interesting statistics and background information about the city, as well as extensive documentation of the EU district.

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From a lecture given by Rafael Moneo in 2001, this book presents the text and images related to the Town Hall in Murcia, Spain. The text is useful because it presents the project from the architect's point of view, and it contains analytical sketches and drawings.

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This issue of A+ includes short editorials from several notable architects and urban planners who have worked or researched Brussels. The discussion is about the approach to urban design and EU planning that Brussels should be working towards in the future.

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This contemporary publication addresses issues of pop culture and architecture. The section on the European Union challenges the entire idea of the institution, but proposes architecture as a catalyst for development.

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This book documents the projects of Mitchell/Giurgola Architects, and includes a comprehensive explanation of the Parliament House in Canberra, Australia. The text outlines the basic issues of site, program, and design, and is accompanied by images and drawings.

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This book is about the project for the Nordic Embassies in Berlin. The building complex is an interesting precedent because it emphasizes unity and individuality, form and disjunction, technology and materiality. The book includes text, images, and drawings and is a comprehensive explanation of the project.

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This book is a theoretical analysis of the ways in which buildings have acquired meaning throughout history. Using case studies from various significant architectural periods, the author describes how architecture is understood in terms of meaningful, symbolic forms.

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This book, though slightly dated, is a good overview of the architectural climate in Brussels. It outlines the architectural history of Belgium in general terms, and includes many photographs and drawings. It is useful in gaining an understanding of the context into which new construction will be inserted.

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Mr. Samyn discussed his winning competition project for the European Council Headquarters, adjacent to the Residence Palace in Brussels. The project addressed issues of site, monumentality, sustainability, security, and representation. The interview provided some valuable insight into the design issues facing a contemporary project for the EU in Brussels.

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This book documents the project by Richard Meier. The architect uses contemporary methods of expression for a modern courthouse, and the book outlines the design strategies. It includes images, drawings, and technical information about the project.

Vale, Lawrence J. Architecture, Power, and National Identity. Yale University Press, 1992.

This book focuses on both architecture and urban planning throughout history. It provides many case-study examples of architecture in the political realm, and it explores the connection between government buildings and the political and cultural contexts in which they exist.

VanAssche, Pierre. Personal Interview. November 16, 2005.

Mr. VanAssche is a practicing architect and professor in Brussels. At his studio, he talked candidly about his recent project for the National Theater, and about the issues surrounding modern architecture in Brussels. He also provided important background information about the city, including CAD plans and other images.

Vanderstraeten, Pierre. Personal Interview. November 16, 2005.

Mr. Vanderstraeten is an urban planner and professor in Brussels. He discussed some of the contemporary issues facing design professionals in Brussels today. He also shared an urban planning study which he conducted recently, and presented some background information about the history of urban planning in Brussels.