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## Port of L.A.

Herbert Muschamp

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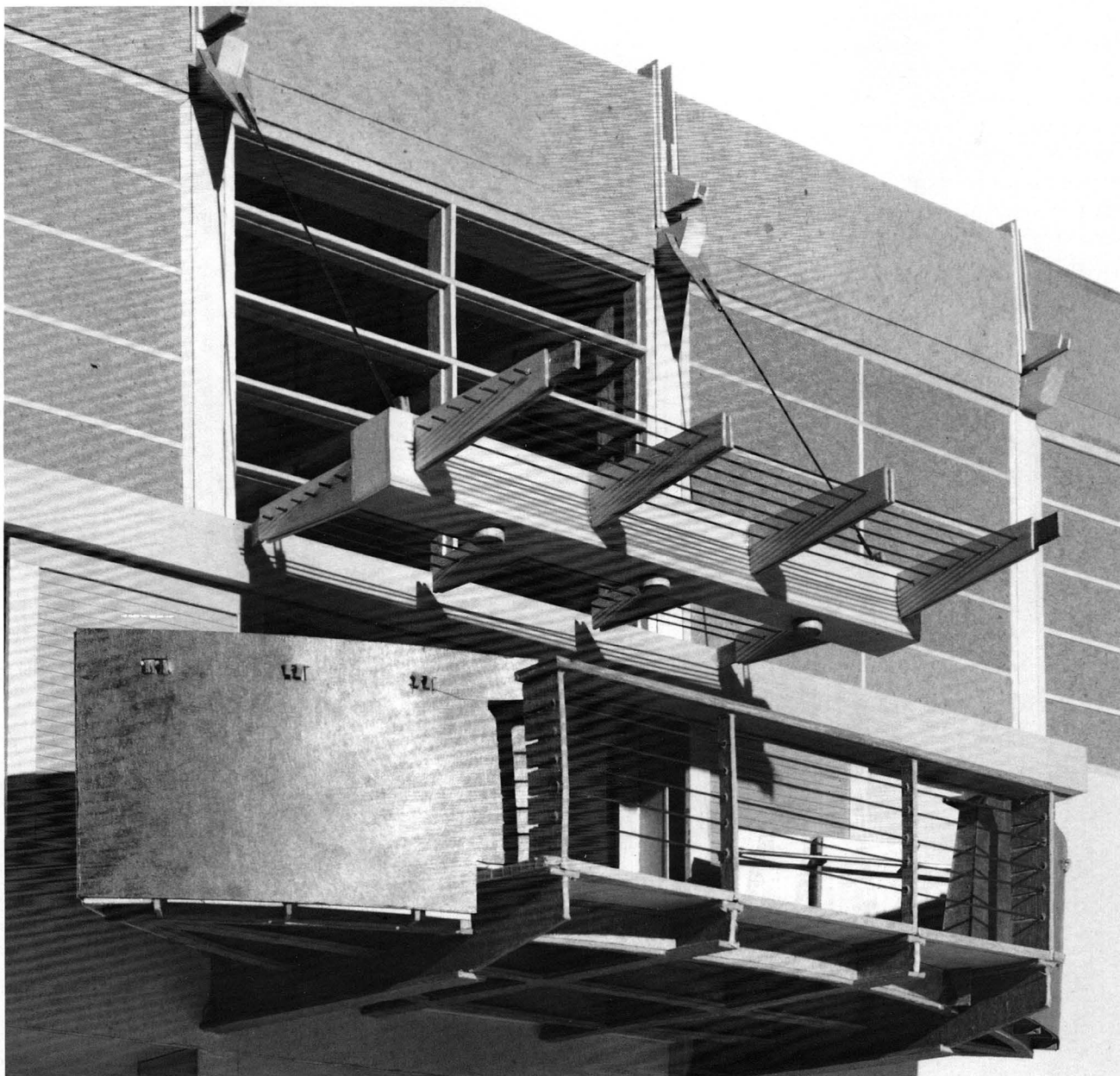
## Port of L. A.

Franklin D. Israel  
Design Associates, Inc.

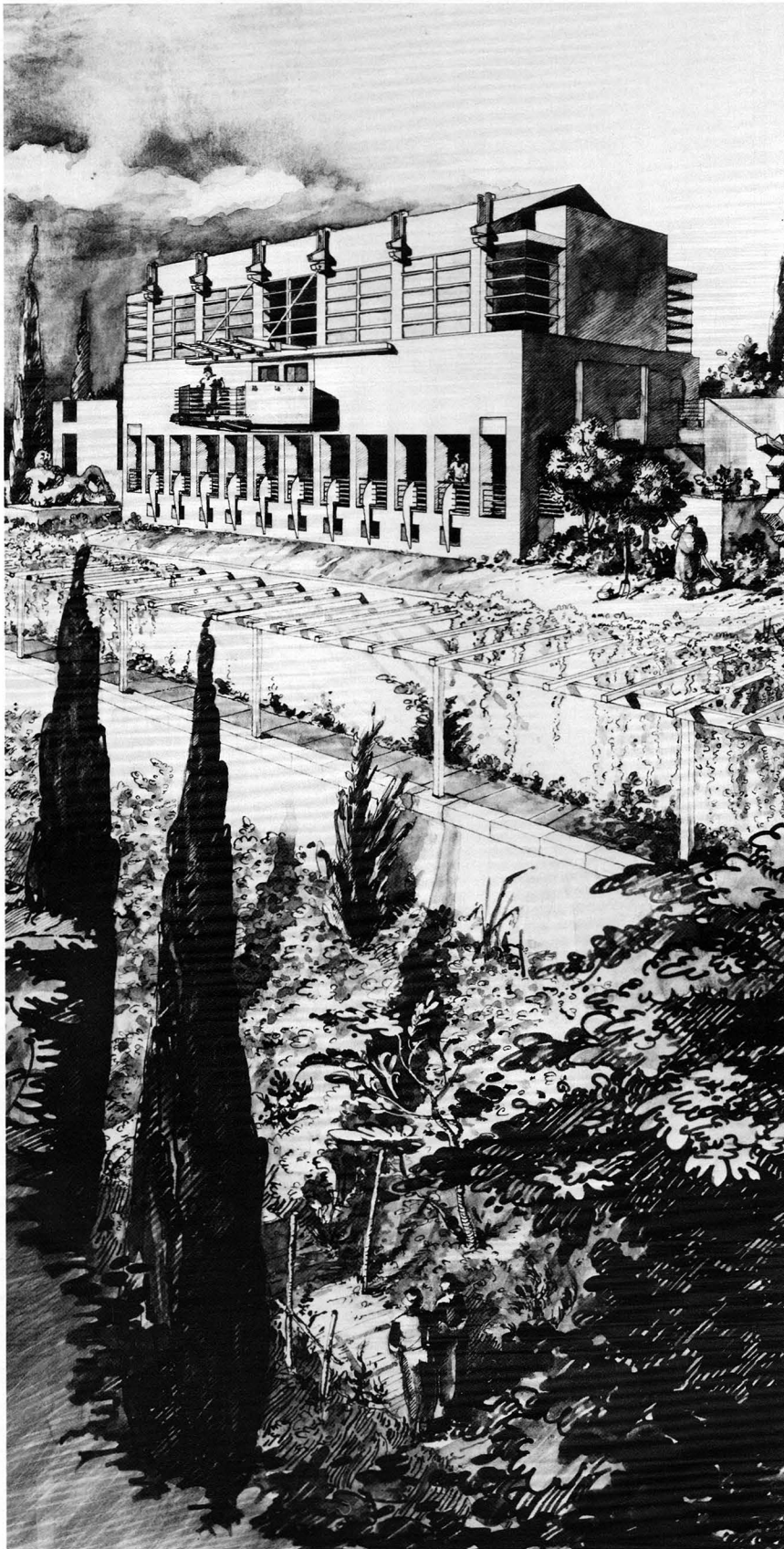
Herbert Muschamp

When Frank Israel was a child in New York, you could drive along the West Side Highway on any weekend and pass seven or eight luxury liners tied up at the Hudson piers. Of course, jet travel had already made the liners obsolete by then, but nobody wanted to tell them that, because these ships were among the most beautiful, heart-lifting sights to behold in New York. Handsome as objects in themselves, they were also memorable urbanistically—signs of the city's connection to the rest of the world. And how pleasant it was to be reminded of that connection in the years when New York had a giddy sense of itself as the world's center.

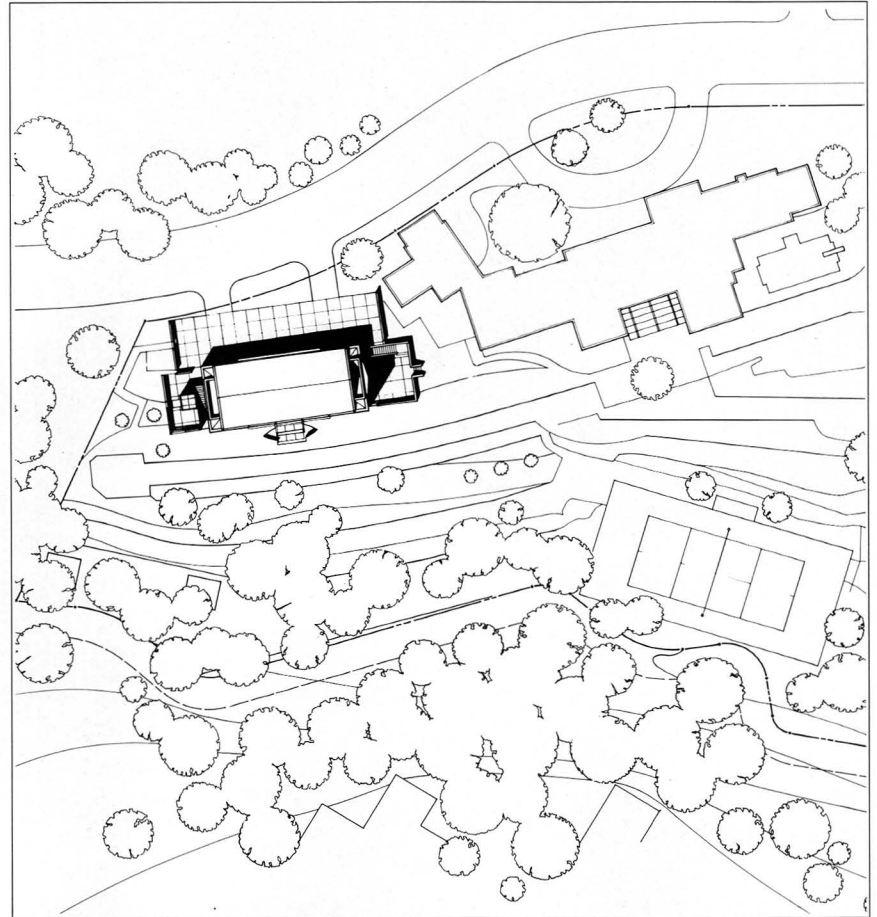
Now there's one lone queen plying the Atlantic part-time, and to see her steaming up the Hudson is a sad spectacle. Her wake in the water is truly a wake, a sign of mourning not only because the age of the liners is gone, or because the age of New York is over, but also because the time when a voyage could stand for something unknown over the horizon is vanished. We no longer live in a world in which physical distance can offer an open-ended analogy for psychic distance. Spatially, we're landlocked, grid-locked on a global scale. Even outer space is a tarnished metaphor for freedom; look up, and you see an atmosphere damaged by our collective failure to admit that we've run out of infinite horizons. Not that travel is no longer possible, or discovery has gone out of style, but it's an inner passage that must now be taken toward the unknown. A city built on the furthest edge of the West's history of spatial discovery, Los



*Wiesman Pavilion, Balcony*



*Weisman Pavilion*

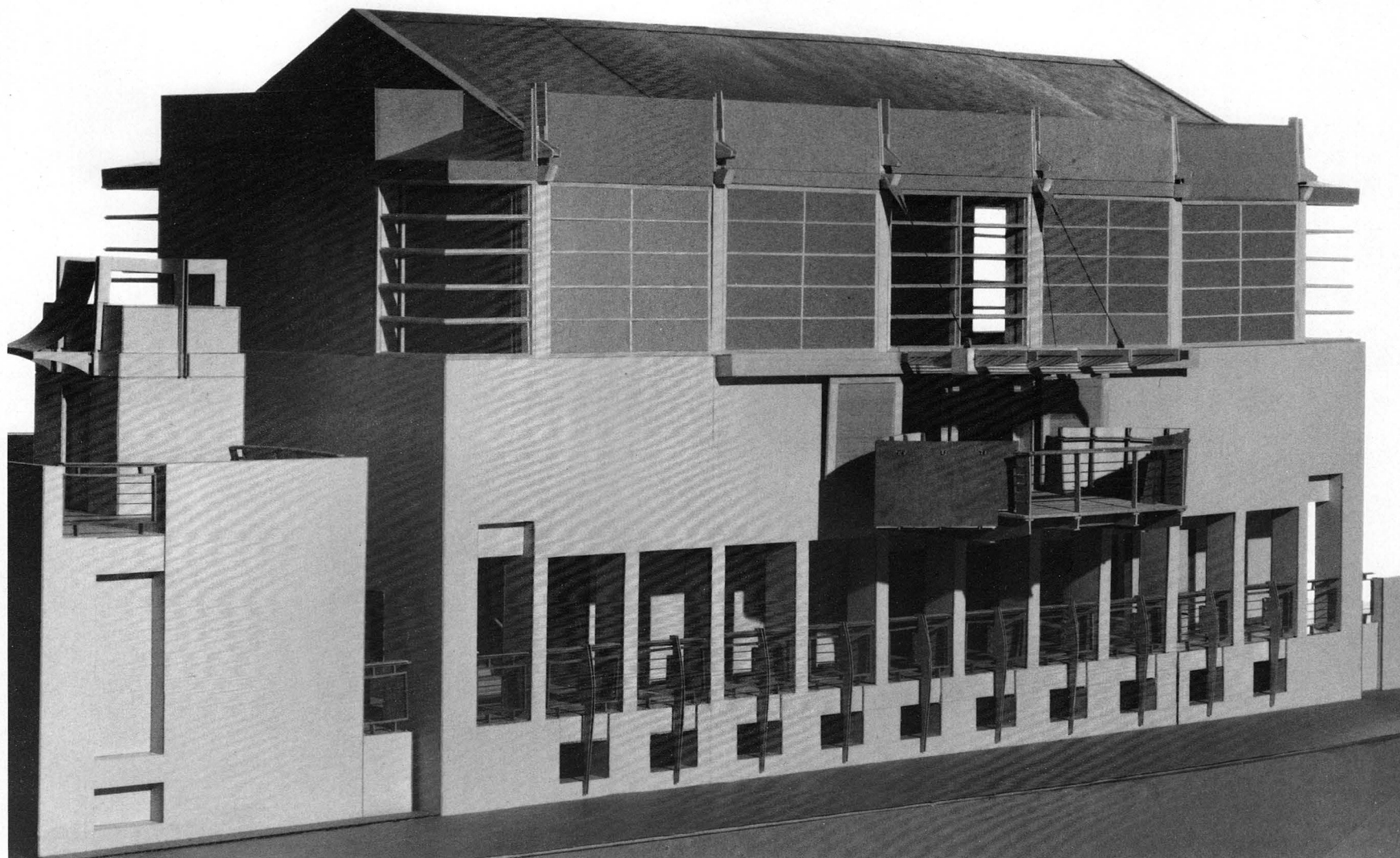
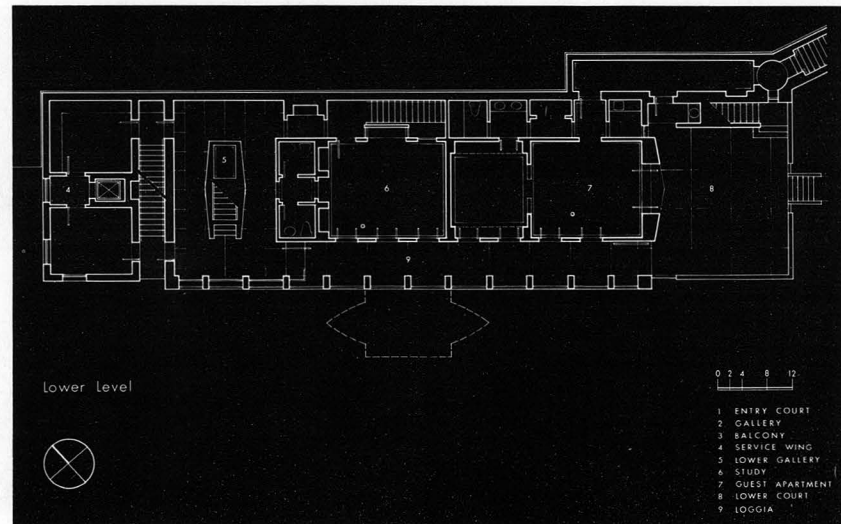
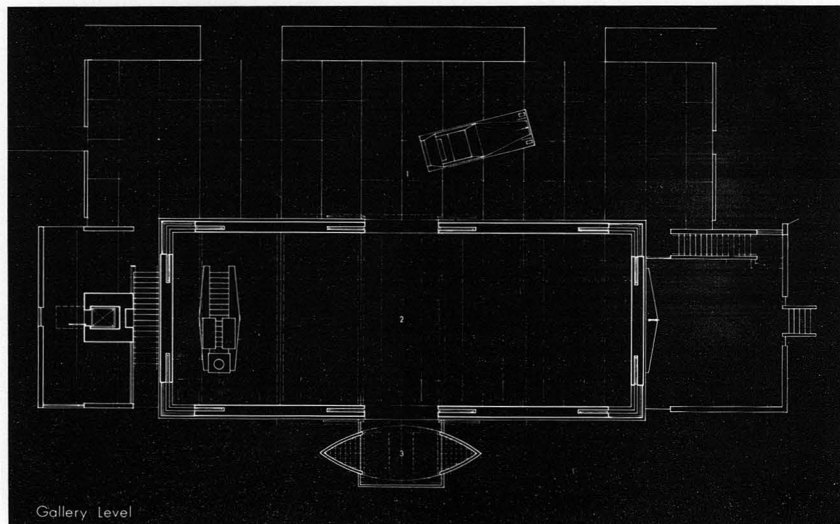


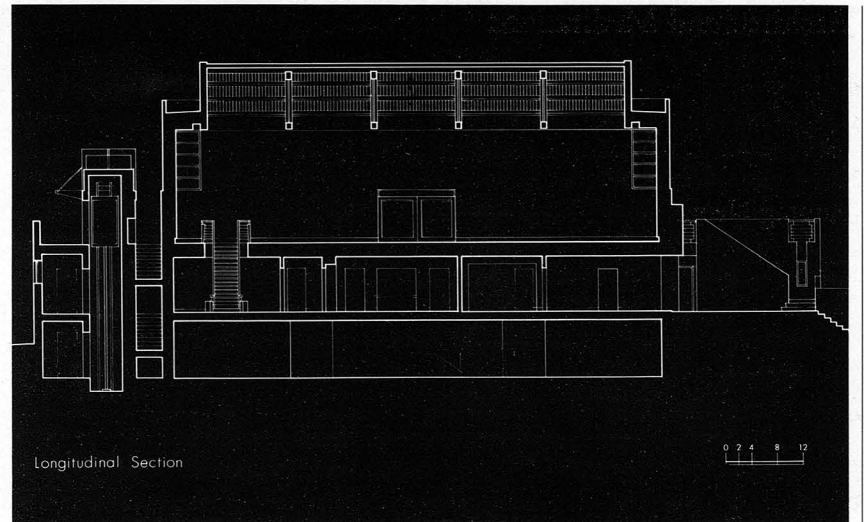
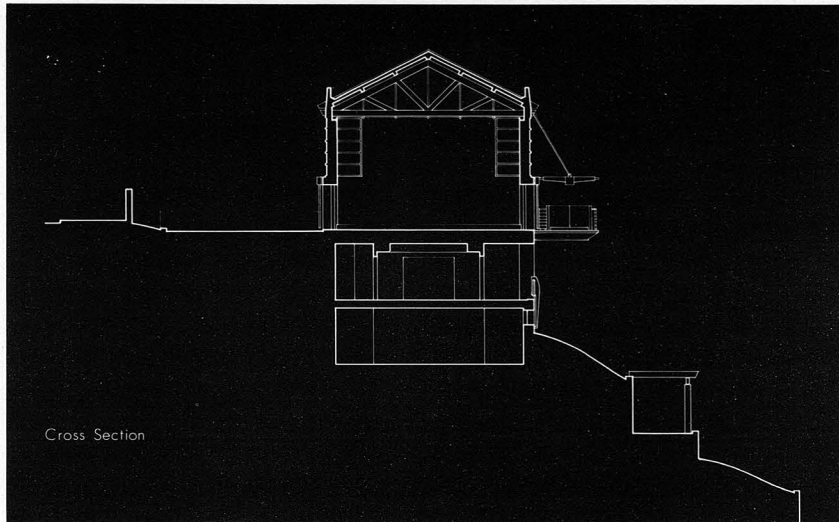
*Site Plan*

Angeles is also a city that in recent years has diverted that exploratory impulse toward the inner horizons traditionally navigated by art. Frank Israel's Weisman Pavilion is a vessel built to carry us on a passage into these uncharted waters. The pavilion's loggia is a promenade deck made for gala launchings, confetti and streamers in the air: a send-off for journeys—each one a maiden voyage—art promises those willing to push away from safe harbors. Within, its public rooms are made to handle the glamorous entrances of public life, but once we have entered we are invited to step into the subjective realms visualized by Johns, Duchamp, Magritte, Rauschonberg, Warhol, and the other top brass of modern art.

Israel uses a recognizably modern vocabulary, forms which recall the significance ships held for the pioneers of the Modern Movement, but he has turned this significance inside-out. For the Moderns, naval

architecture symbolized the efficiency of science, the rational shape of the machine. For Israel, it is the romance of ship-board life that keeps this imagery afloat. Yet, we have only to drive for a few minutes on the freeway to see what a Romantic idea it was to think that technology would bring a rational order to urban life. Israel gives a clean, light, open space, but he also gives us an understanding that it is art, not objectivity, that can carve out such order in a world chewed up by machines into random little bits of hit and miss. He gives us views over a city transformed by a poet's ability to frame our vision, by the consciousness that the reality we see is inevitably conditioned by private perceptions. And he even gives a lifeboat in the form of a balcony, should we look too long inside ourselves and risk drowning in our dreams.





*View of Model*