



PAUL RUDOLPH: STATE SERVICE CENTER, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

RICHARD MEIER: PRIVATE SPACES AND PUBLIC SPACES

WARREN PLATNER'S OWN HOUSE IN GUILFORD, CONNECTICUT

BUILDING TYPES STUDY: FLEXIBLE SPACE IN RELIGIOUS BUILDINGS

FULL CONTENTS ON PAGES 4 AND 5

ARCHITECTURAL RECORD

JULY 1973

7

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Mental Health building,
looking south into central plaza (O)



A VISION OF HUMAN SPACE

BY CARL JOHN BLACK

PAUL RUDOLPH: BOSTON STATE SERVICE CENTER

Paul Rudolph once said, "Psychological demands are met primarily through the manipulation of space and the use of symbols." Most of today's architectural critics write about space as total abstraction. They have little to say about its symbolic values, about space as a felt experience. When architectural writers talk about form and space, they speak in terms of solids and voids, vertical thrusts, intersecting planes, juxtapositions of scale, symmetry and other formal concerns. Interpretation for human meaning is ignored. Unacknowledged are the philosophical, esthetic and psychological considerations which truly inform the work. Carl John Black, a young humanist, critic and teacher, formerly faculty member in the School for Humanities and Social Research at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and in the Division of Languages and Literature at Bard College, has never had formal training in architecture or the history of architecture. Nevertheless, he sees Rudolph's work as especially rich in symbolic content and feels that the conceptual drawings provide a key to the architect's spatial symbolism. Black has collected and assembled Rudolph's drawings over the last several years for his forthcoming book *Human Space: Conceptions and Constructions of Paul Rudolph*, copyright 1973 by Carl John Black, to be published by Harper & Row, and for a traveling exhibition sponsored by the Cooper-Hewitt National Museum of Design, a private branch of the Smithsonian Institution. Because Black's insights deepen one's comprehension of Rudolph's work and his interpretations seem so very fresh to us, we have decided to publish an excerpt. All that follows is in the author's words from a chapter, "The Space of Human Government."—*Mildred F. Schmetz.*

O: original, pre-construction conceptual sketch done by Rudolph
S: Studio drawing done by an assistant sometimes reworked by Rudolph
P: Post-construction sketch or drawing done by Rudolph
R: Redrawn by Rudolph from an unreproducible print of a lost conceptual sketch

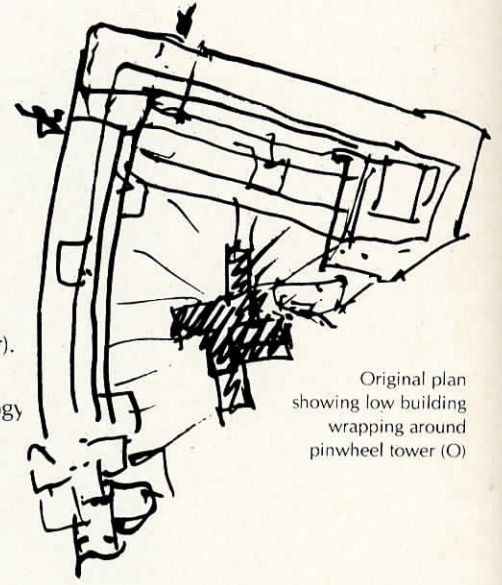
"I wanted to hollow out a concavity at the bottom of Beacon Hill, a spiraling space like a

CONCH



Aerial perspective photo of the State Service Center, tower unbuilt

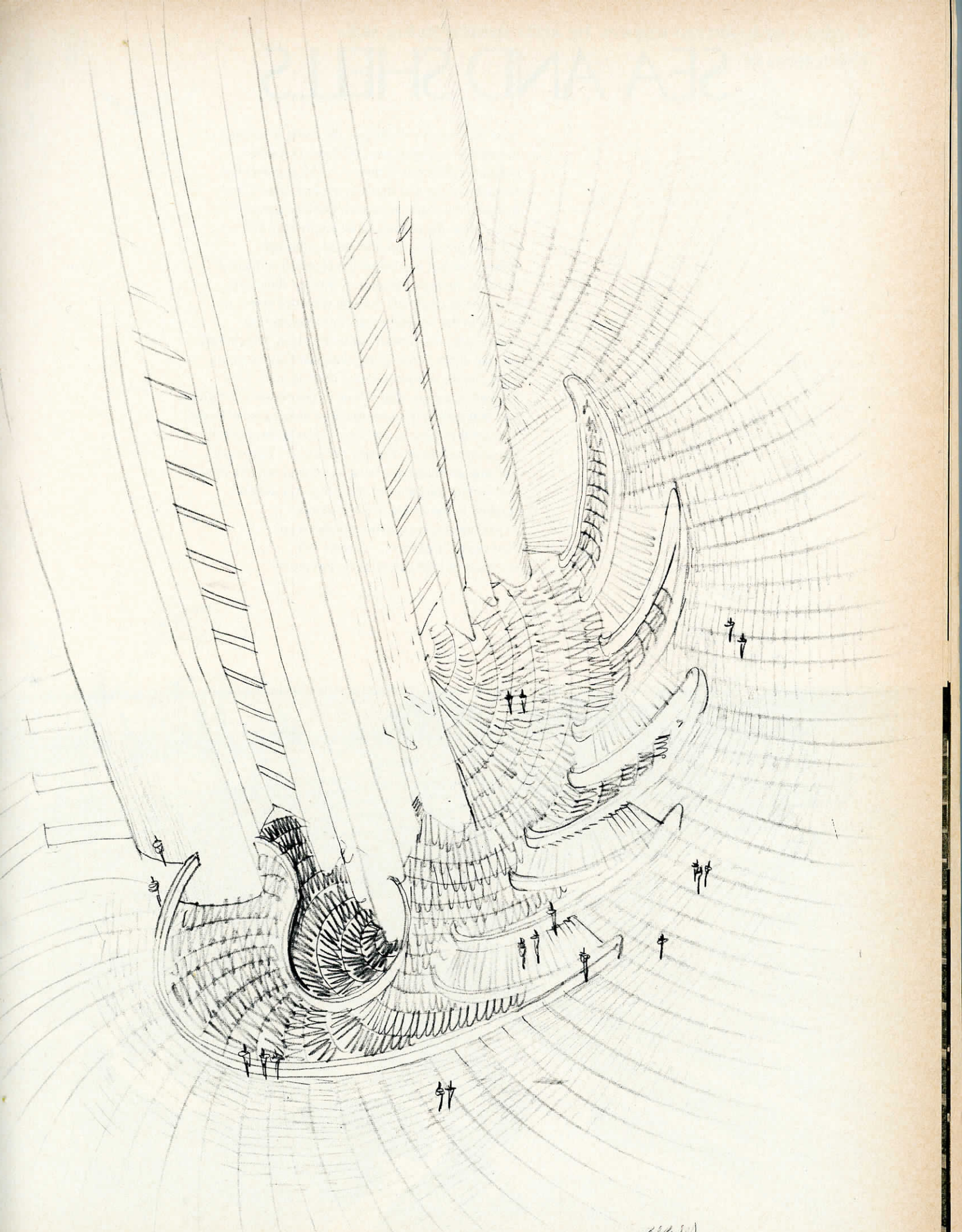
in negative relation to the convex dome of the State Capitol on top of the Hill. I wanted it to wrap around a tower which turned and was not only visible in its upward thrust but penetrating visibly below the ground." Rudolph hints at the symbolic content of the Service Center. The image-cluster: Water-Serpent-Cave-Shell, is a constant in the symbolism of "primitive" cultures and corresponds to a deep structure of human consciousness. Rudolph improvised his spaces with astonishing consistency around these symbols. A key image is the staircase of the Mental Health Clinic (see cover). It recalls the form of the "wentletrap" shell, meaning "winding staircase" in Dutch. In mythology the conch, spiral and coiled serpent emerged as images of earth rhythms and life cycles which ruled birth, death, regeneration, health, agriculture, the social order and the dispensation of justice. Aphrodite—Goddess of Desire—was born in a conch, and the association of shells with the female embryos and Venus cults is beyond dispute in the history of symbolism. In Rudolph's design, these symbolic allusions to the female are strongly balanced by the thrust of the unbuilt tower around which the "shell space" spirals. This towering spine-wheels in on itself, but this movement is resolved by the strength of the axis, symbol of endurance and return. By contrast to the rationalist space of Bulfinch's domed symmetry, Rudolph's building is a vision of deep-earth symbolism, the life-meanings of which lie at the heart of government's humane service to its people.



Original plan showing low building wrapping around pinwheel tower (O)



Health Welfare Education Tower with Mental Health Bldg. on right and Employment Security Bldg. in center (S)



HWE Tower showing three descending levels of plaza (O)

H. H. H.

A mysterious, almost totemic tie knits Boston to the sea.

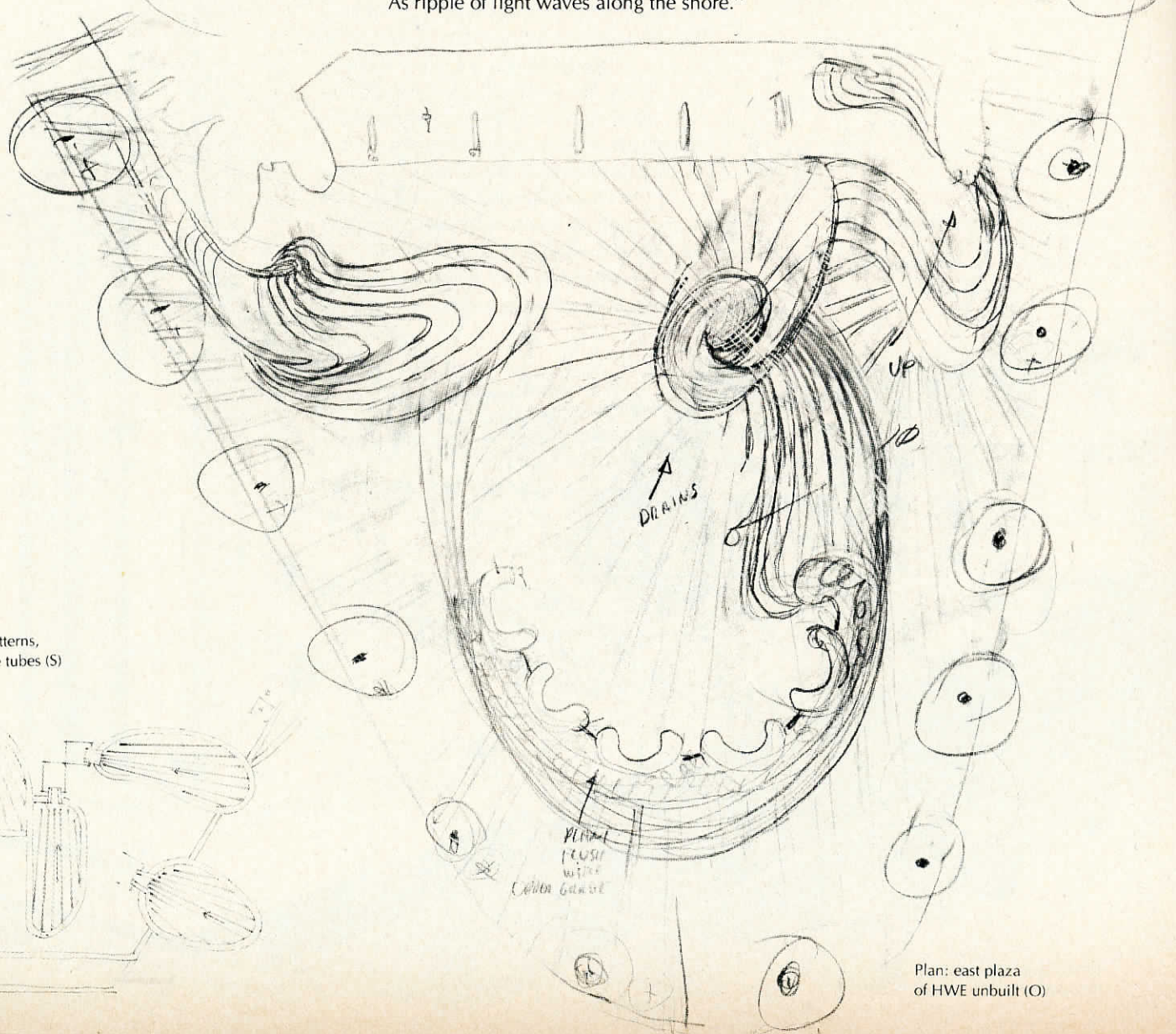
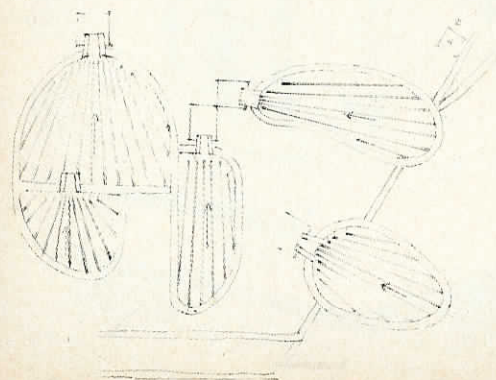
The totems of SEA AND SHELLS

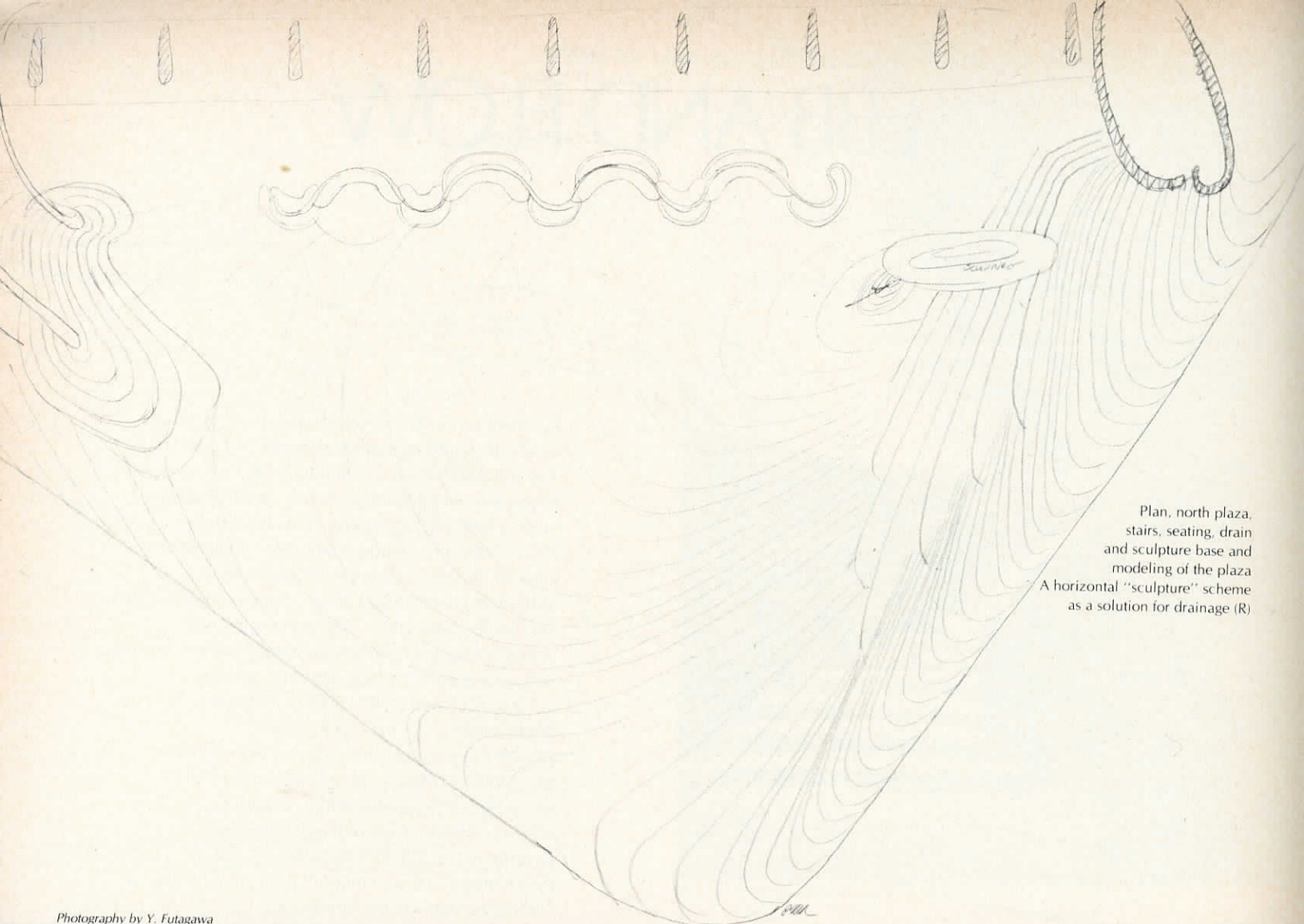
lie in the memory of things—the rising of Venus, the endless curl of waves, the fixity of fossils ticking off the crust of time. . . . The architect has twisted, curved and smeared the line, erased and mangled the paper to wrench from the gyrations of a scallop the serenity of an empty cup. He calls it a plaza for rest and passing through. A bus stop. But just below the practical surface of things at the invisible edge of activity, the most forgotten of us all will ride the waves of time and sit in the broader depths of remembering. The receptionist looked out to the plaza. "It reminds me like either you're going down and you're going right into the ocean or you're coming up. . . . It's situated in a place that's close to the ocean and it gives you that feeling. You could figure it was a water snake. You get that there as the waves. You know, the way the waves come in, the tide comes in?" Tide marks become an image of a wing. A winged serpent. Pindar tells us that the father of All Things is a winged serpent. In the image of these spaces "I trod the shelly pavement of the deep, And swam its current . . . voices soft As ripple of light waves along the shore."

Plan for steps and drain, north plaza (O)

Roof plan: copper seam patterns, stair and service tubes (S)

Plan: east plaza of HWE unbuilt (O)





Plan, north plaza,
stairs, seating, drain
and sculpture base and
modeling of the plaza
A horizontal "sculpture" scheme
as a solution for drainage (R)

Photography by Y. Futagawa



"The Sea, in celebration on its steps, like an ode of stone."

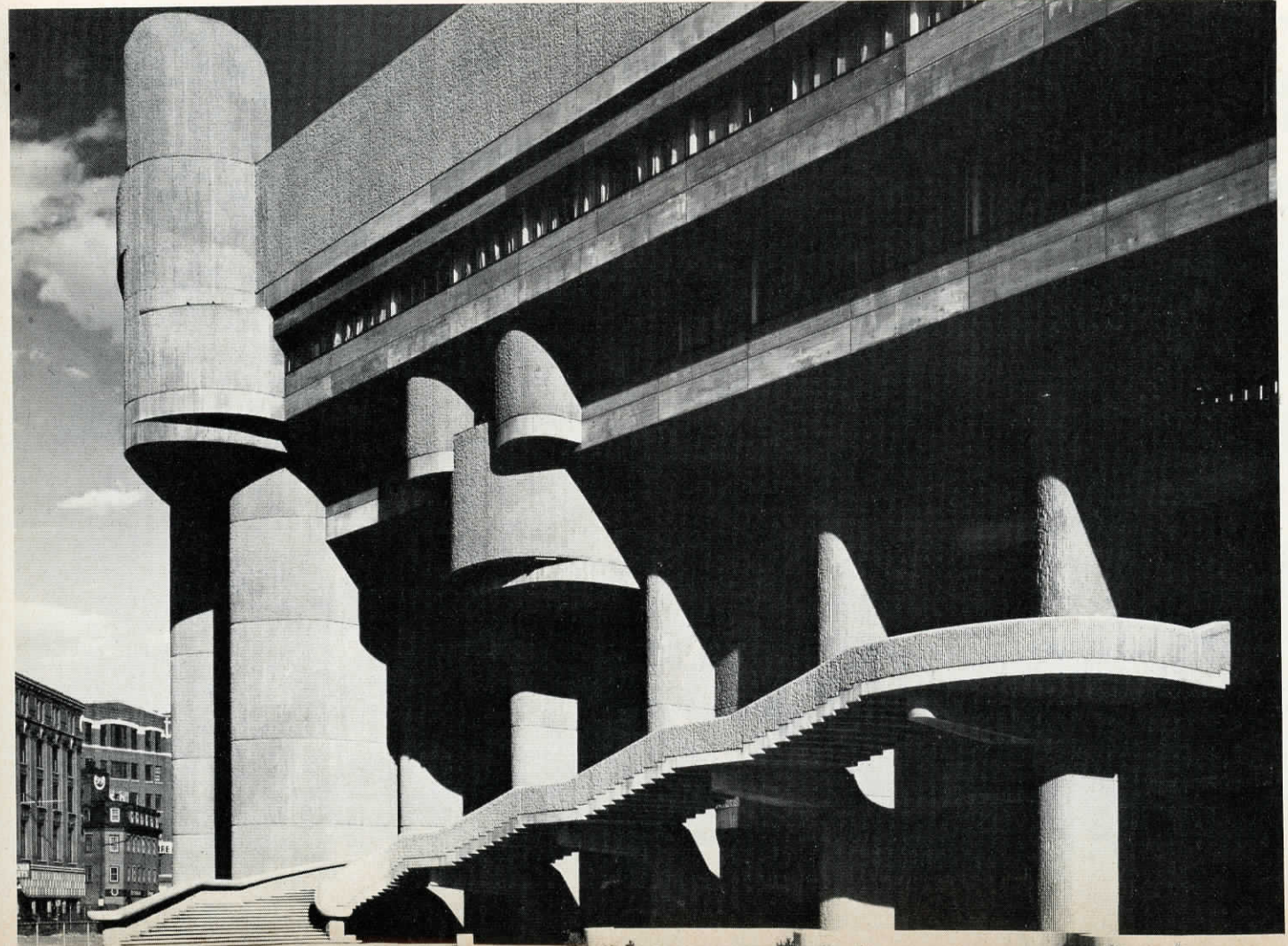
(Seamarks, St.-John Perse)

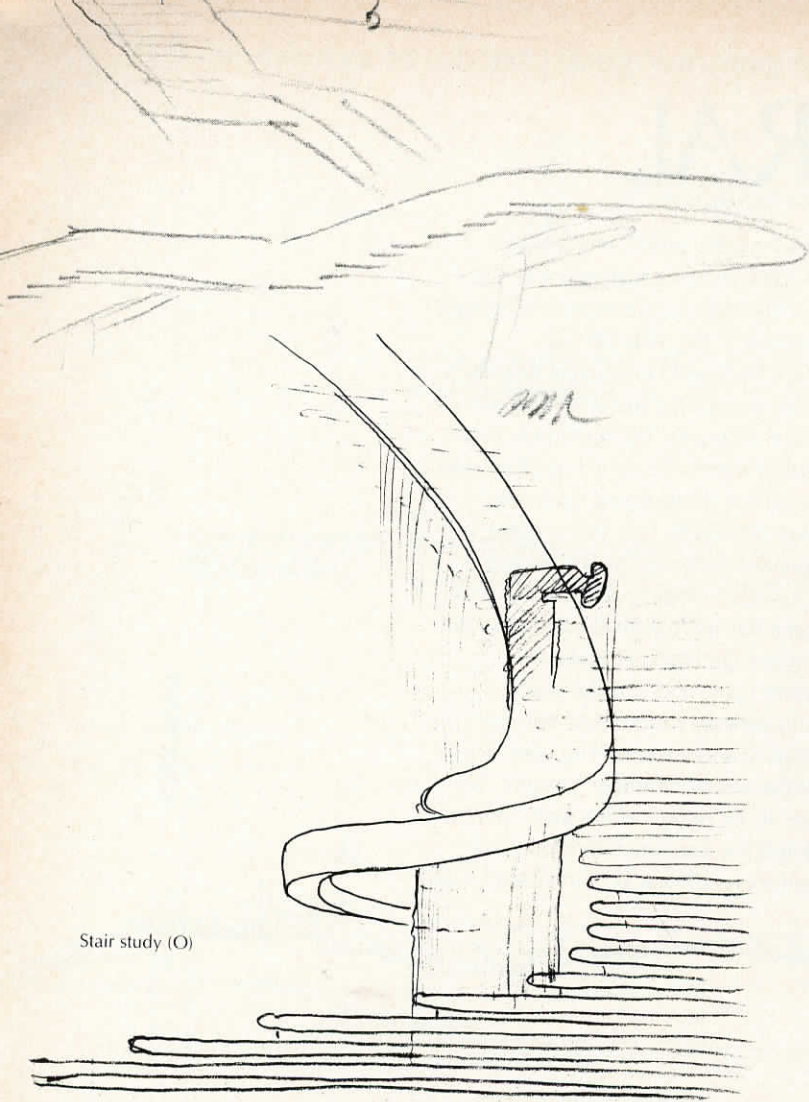
EBB AND FLOW

is the pulse of time, the rhythm of furling and unfurling of surfaces and space. Rudolph's building is full of the hard permanence of ruins. Not an image of decay, but an exuberant vision of being-there. The State Service Center is a hymn to enclosure: the freedom of protection, the sweeping spaces of a defined openness, and the reassurance of massive pylons. All elements are expressive of

Stairs from north plaza through Mental Health Bldg. snaking through porch towards south. (photo same) (R)

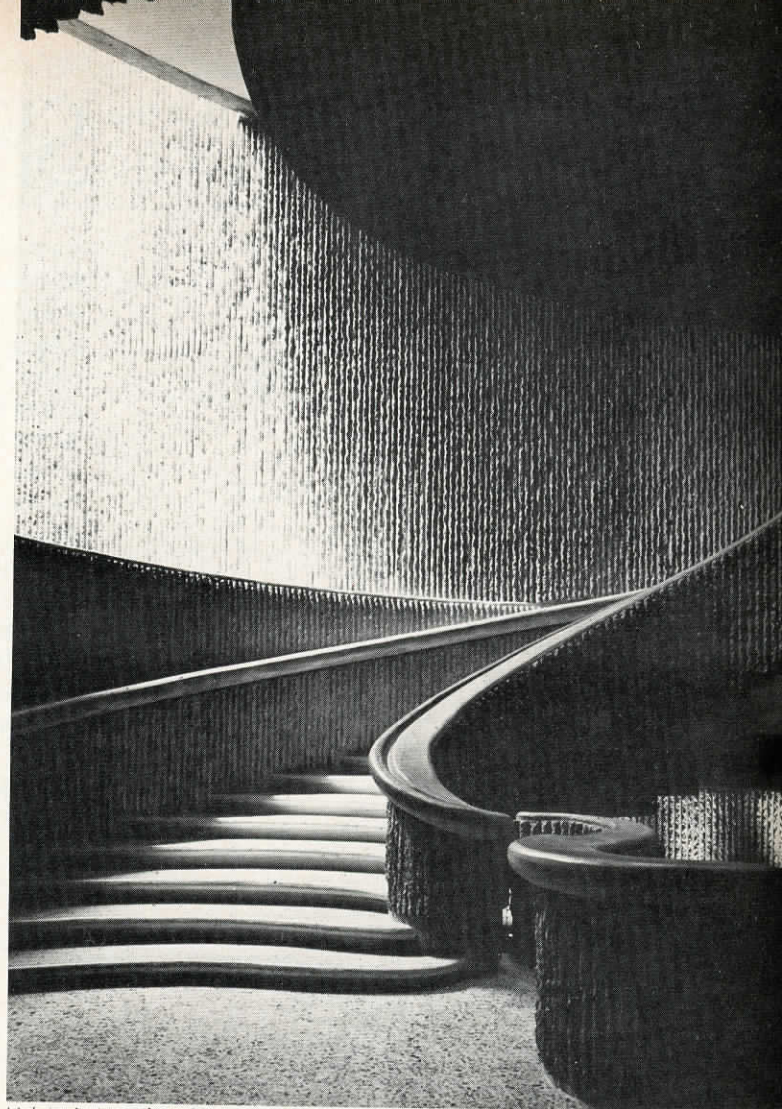
the sheer power of enclosed nothingness, but they celebrate a nothingness turned to the full uses of life. The architect's vision is monolithic, but the monolith moves into life, flowing outward, spiraling upward in the wheel of change. The monolith dissolves into movement as baroque staircases break against gigantic columns and impenetrable walls. It is as though matter had by magic metamorphosis melted into liquid arabesques. "Abhorrent is the rest/
In undulating rooms/Whose amplitude no end invades,
Whose axis never comes." Rudolph seems to have discerned Emily Dickinson's fears of fluid chambers, for his design gives a towering axis to ceaseless movement and change and captures not only the nature of government to evolve but its will to endure. Image of material power, image of the sea, image of government: Rudolph's building contains the changing discontinuities of human moments and the permanence of timelessness.





Stair study (O)

Entrance foyer to Mental Health Building



Main stair, Mental Health Building



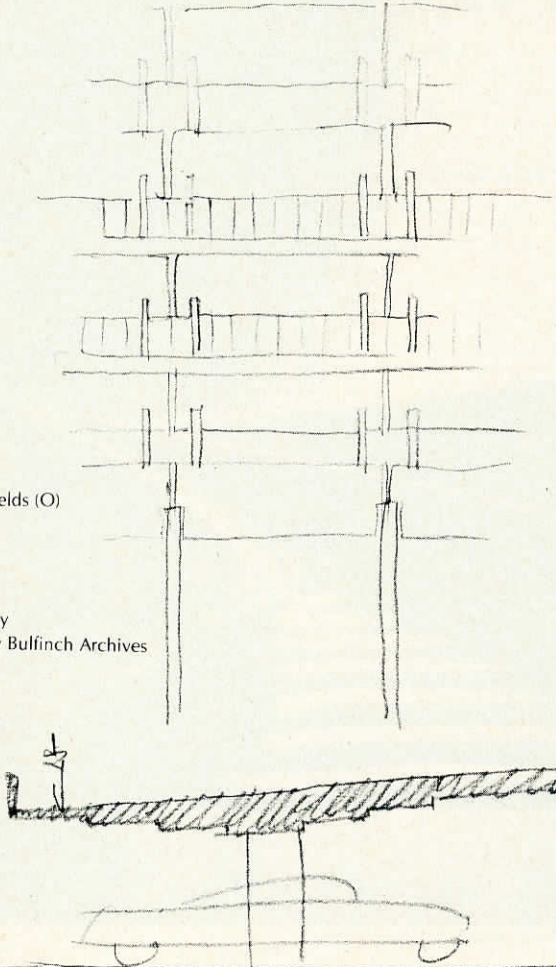
Carl Jung's studies of the psychological process of individuation reveal that the

SPIRAL

is an archetypal symbol which incorporates the notion of *fixity* and of *transformation*. On several levels, Rudolph has attempted to integrate these two qualities in the State Service Center. "Where I've used curves, that denotes a *fixed* element as opposed to something which in time could be changed. The rectilinear room is more *flexible*." While the cube has taken over, the curve has all but disappeared from our daily enclosures. Nevertheless, our deepest memory of space—the womb and the cave—is circular. Our psychological sense of the fixity of curved space has to do with strong ties to the earth. The earliest circular buildings were devoted to earth cults, and circular space corresponds to persistent notions of human origins, divination and the power to cure. The derivation of the word "chamber" means "bent" or vaulted space. In his design of the State Service Center, Rudolph has attempted to synthesize twentieth-century rectilinear or "universal" space

Study, sun shields (O)

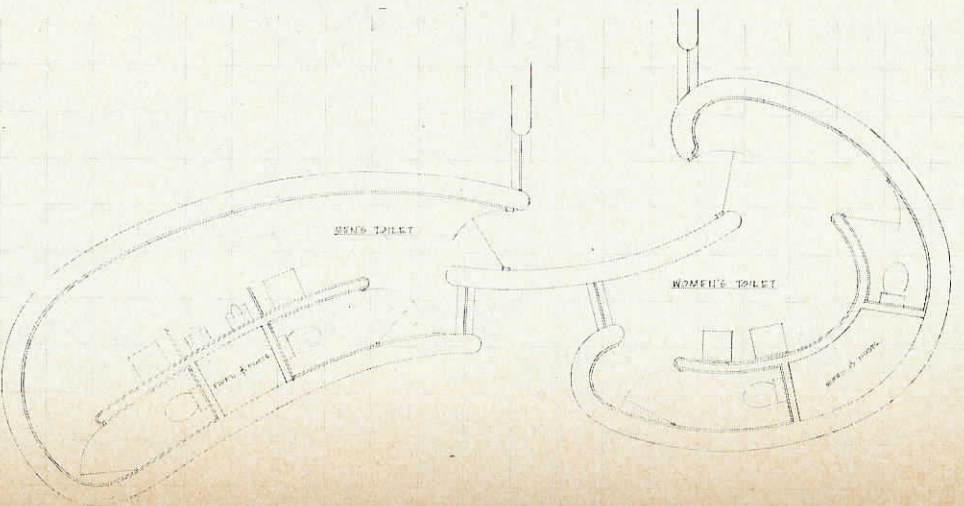
Courtesy Shepley Bulfinch Archives



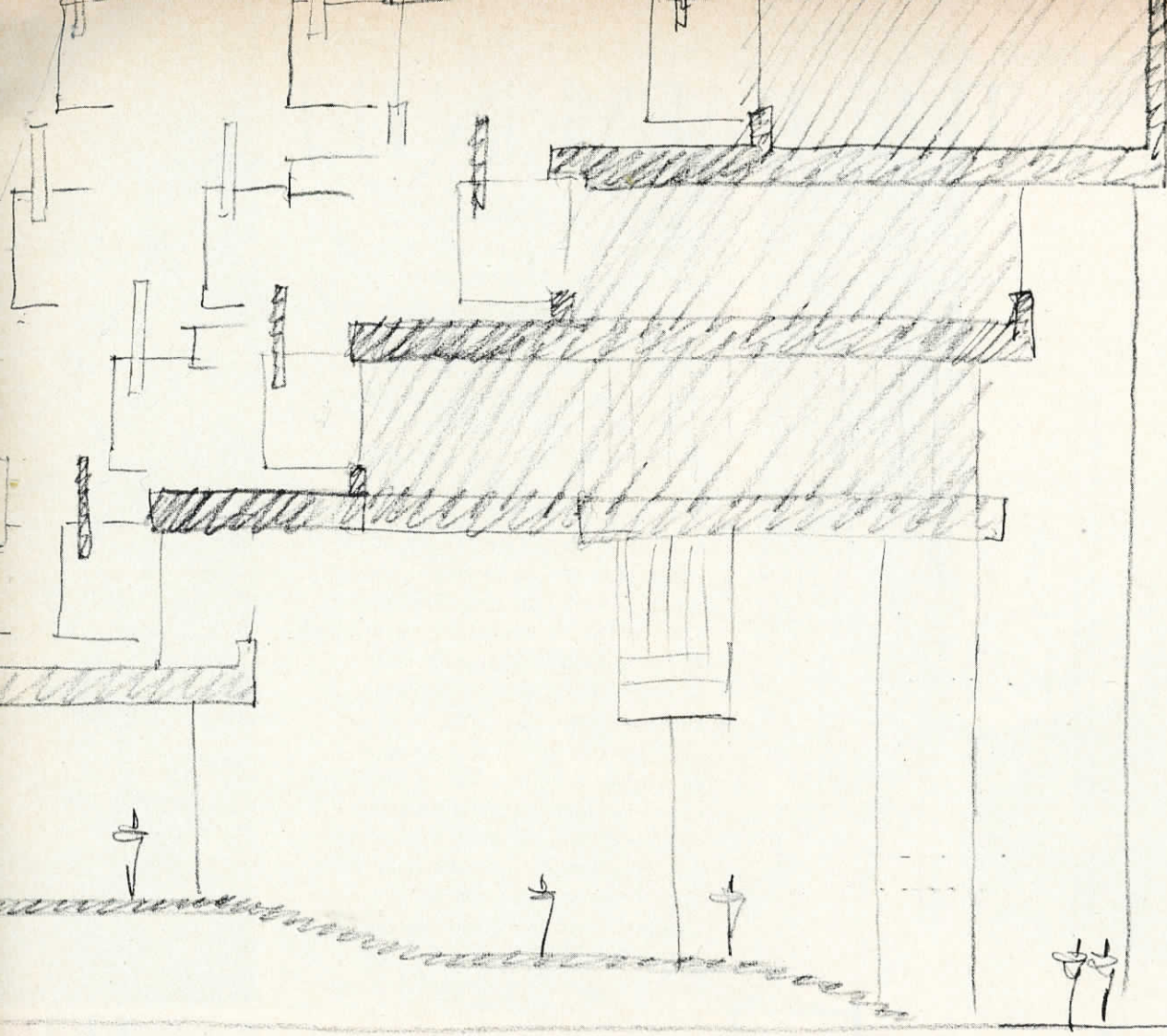
and "primordial" curved space with its deeper psychological appeals. Part of the solution to this synthesis lies in the spiral. The spiral has a diagonal thrust which, in the case of a rectangular space, allows for it to be "stepped back." This stepping back or slanting of the facade allows for "swinging" a rectilinear structure into curved formation (see photo, page 106). It permits one, in the face of many rectangles, to get the natural "feel" of the curve. Rudolph has carried the synthesis of rectangle and circle over to his concept of the tower. His original sketch (page 106) shows the tower in the form of a pinwheel or swastika, an ancient mandala symbol which incorporates straight lines at right angles rotating in a circle. In its eternal return to the same point while moving ever higher, the spiral is an eloquent symbol of a search for spatial "origins" while moving on to create new architectural modes.

Plan, porch with bent wall of Employment Security Bldg. Outdoor stairs from main plaza going down into garage (O). Courtesy Shepley Bulfinch Archives

Toilet plan. Unbuilt for Health, Welfare Education. Fixed element, curved space



Plaza, showing sloping facade,
spiral, curving walls
creating a bowl of space (P)



Central plaza with two of proposed three underground levels visible

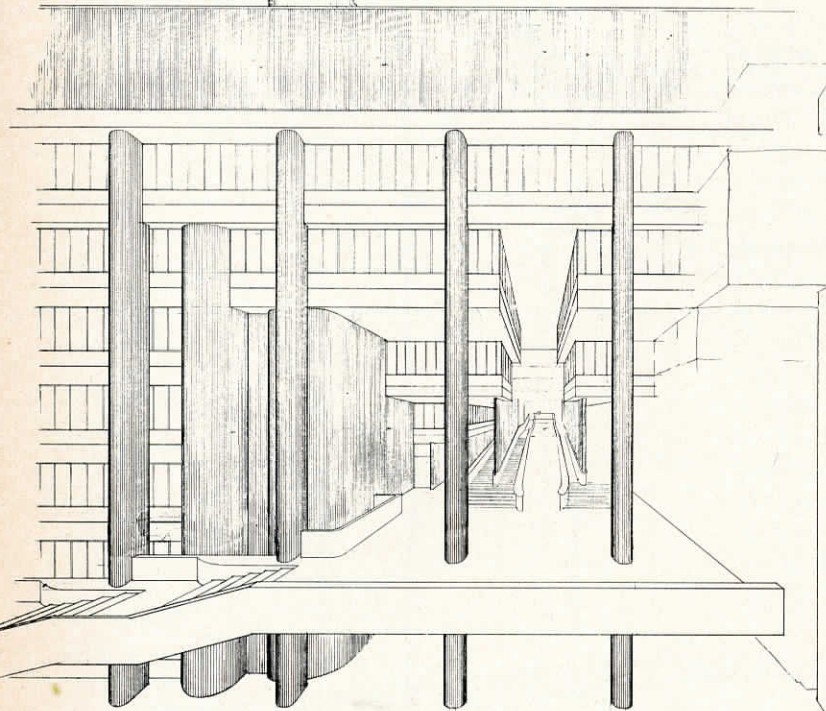
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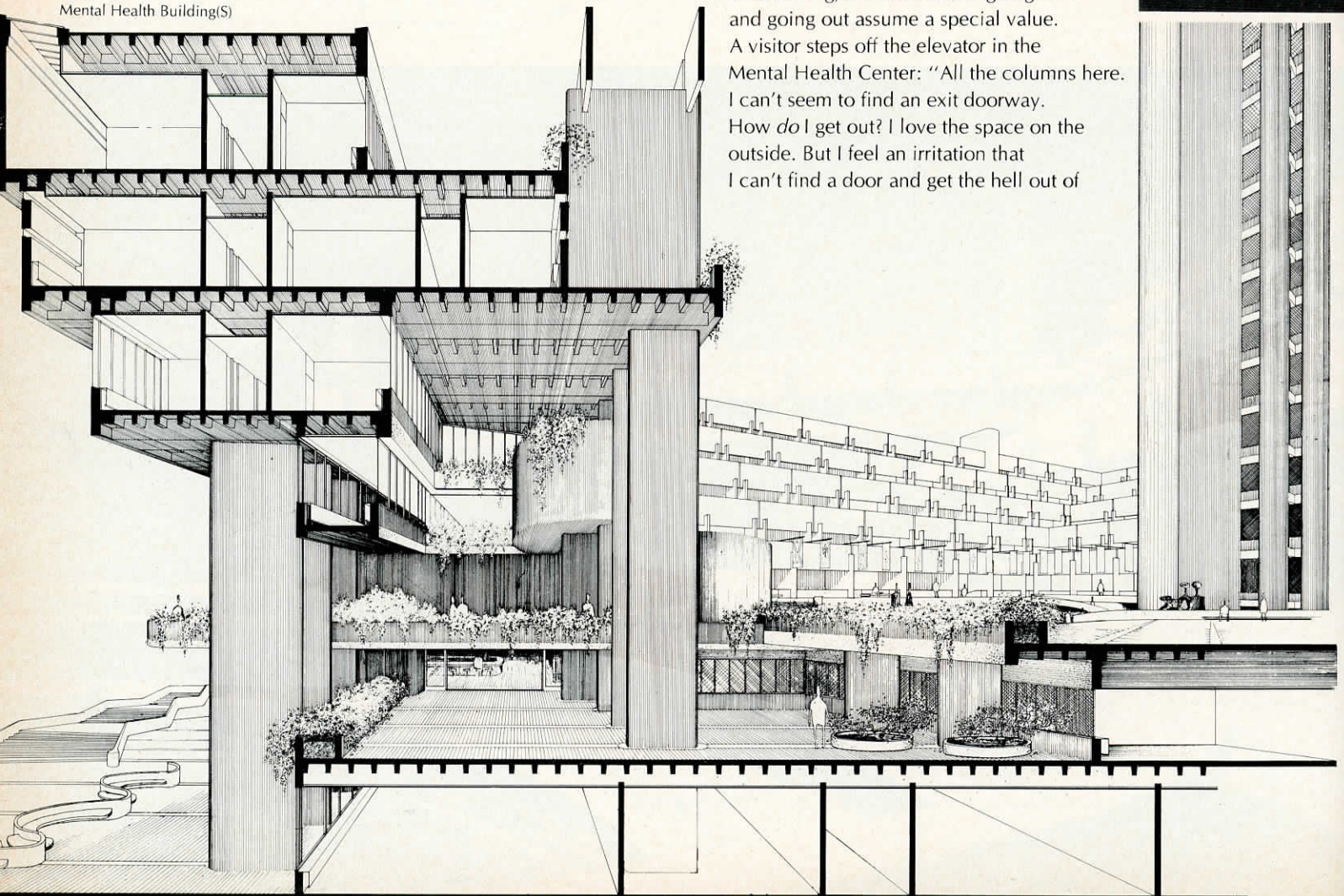
By following Ariadne's umbilical thread, Theseus found a one-way exit to the world.

THE LABYRINTH

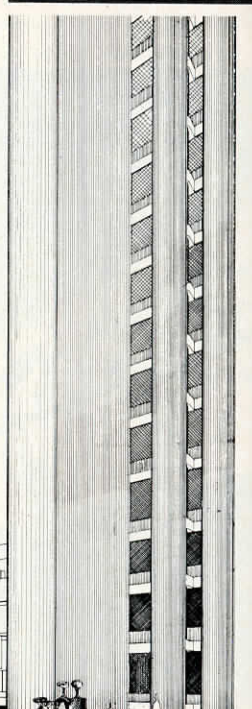
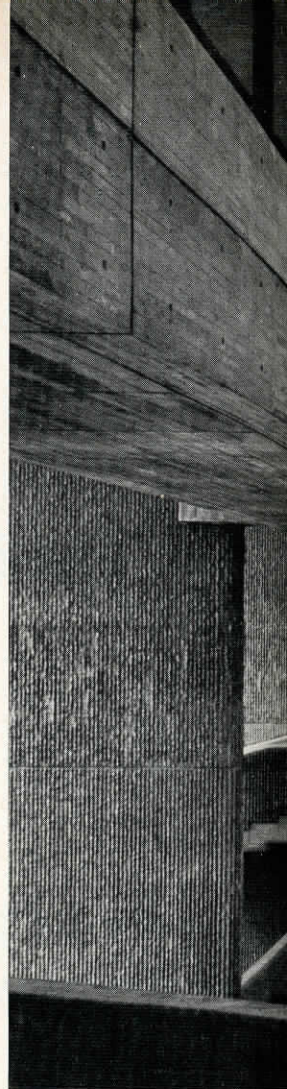
Unbuilt connector between Mental Health (right) and Health, Welfare Education (left). Also entrance to underground garages (S)

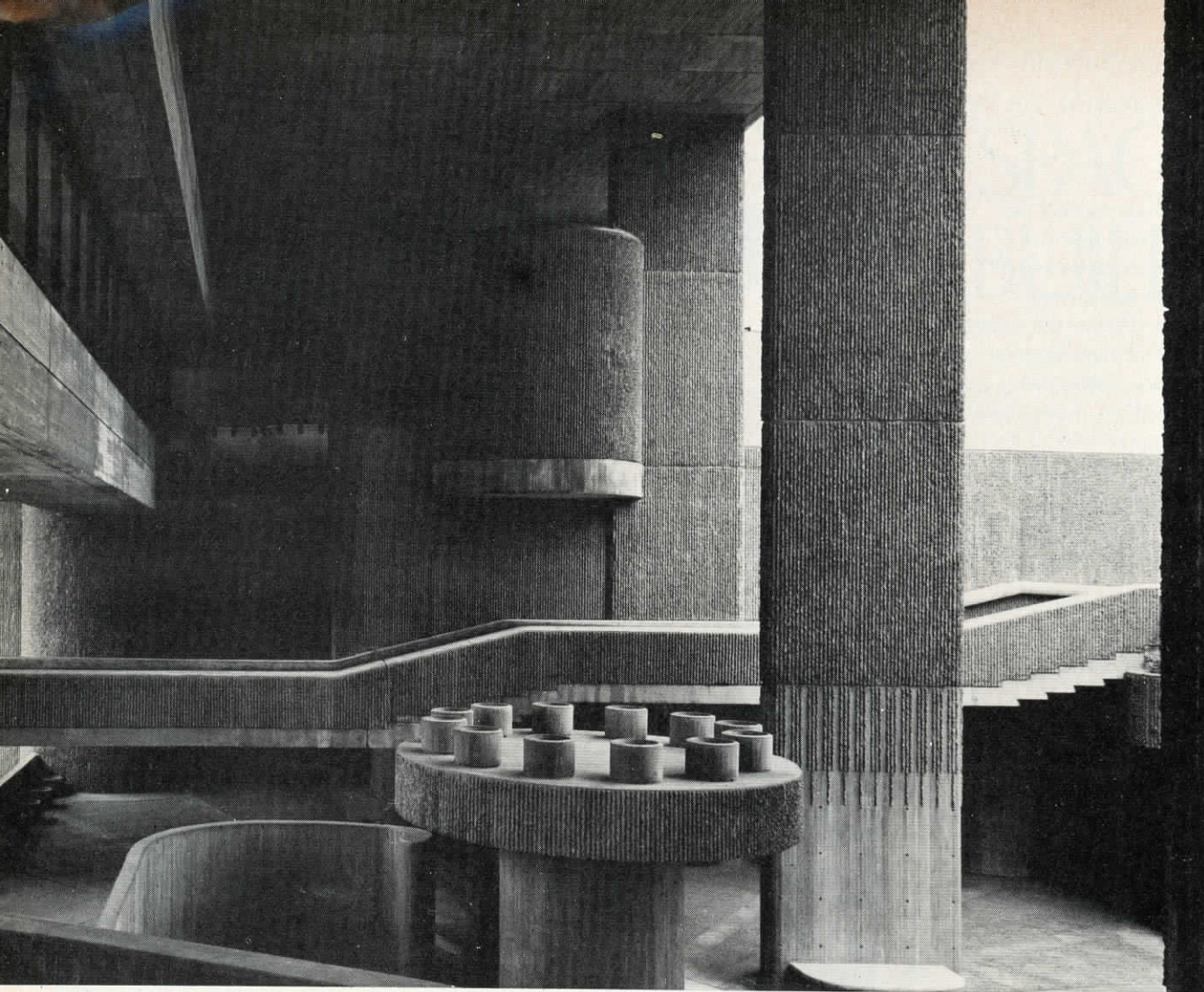


Cross-section of Mental Health Building(S)



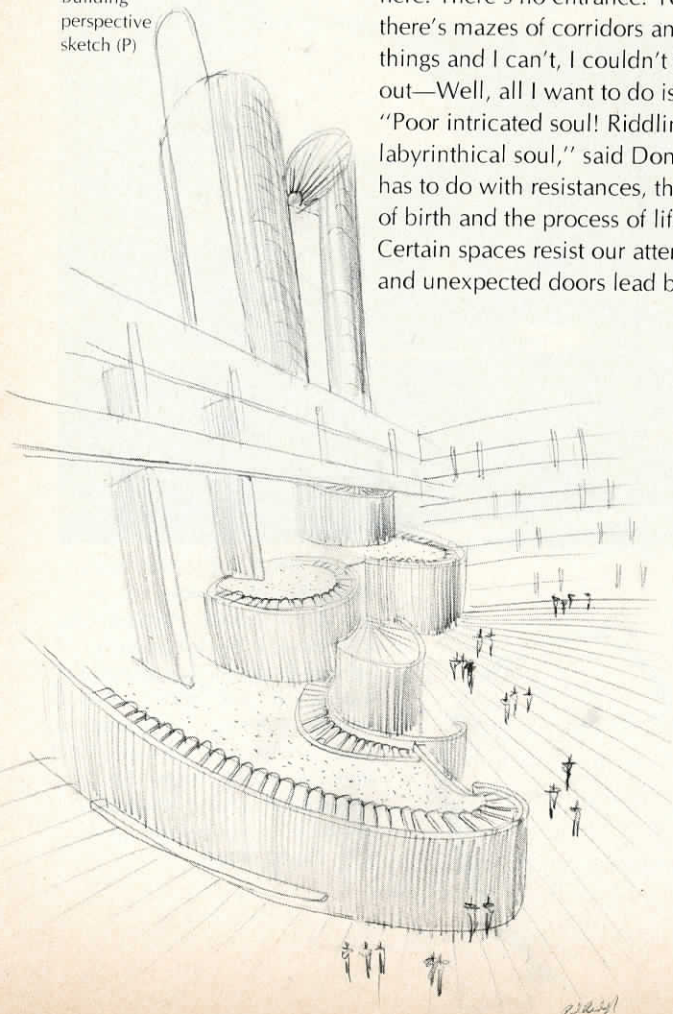
is the other side of interiority. From the moment man is born into the world, he carries his interiority with him and is condemned forever to walk on the outside of things. But the mind remembers when its interiority was at one with Being, and in remembrance of this, performs the sacred rite of going-on. To enter an enclosure is to perform this rite. Thus the paramount importance of the door: point of ritual penetration into the mass of the world. Doors celebrate the victory of space (consciousness) over density (unconsciousness). This victory is a form of psychic redemption, overcoming the split between inside and outside. Rudolph's design invites us to participate in the full rites of space: the rite of going-in, but also that of going-out, of being on *this* side as well as the other side of interiority. He mystifies us by playing on our credulity that buildings open to a purpose and exit to a place to go. His entrances and exits are rarely clearly *there*. He beckons us to search for space. It is never given. In searching, the functions of going in and going out assume a special value. A visitor steps off the elevator in the Mental Health Center: "All the columns here. I can't seem to find an exit doorway. How *do* I get out? I love the space on the outside. But I feel an irritation that I can't find a door and get the hell out of





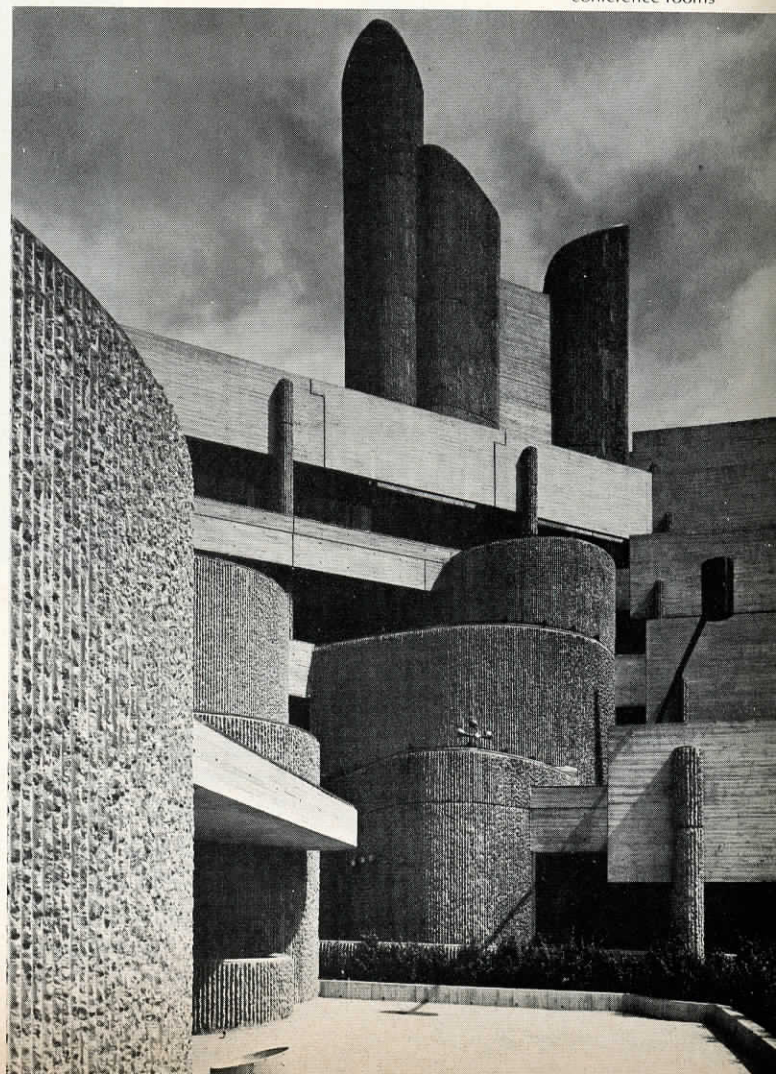
Mental Health Building:
exposed bridgeway,
walkway, stair
and covered corridor

Mental Health
Building
perspective
sketch (P)



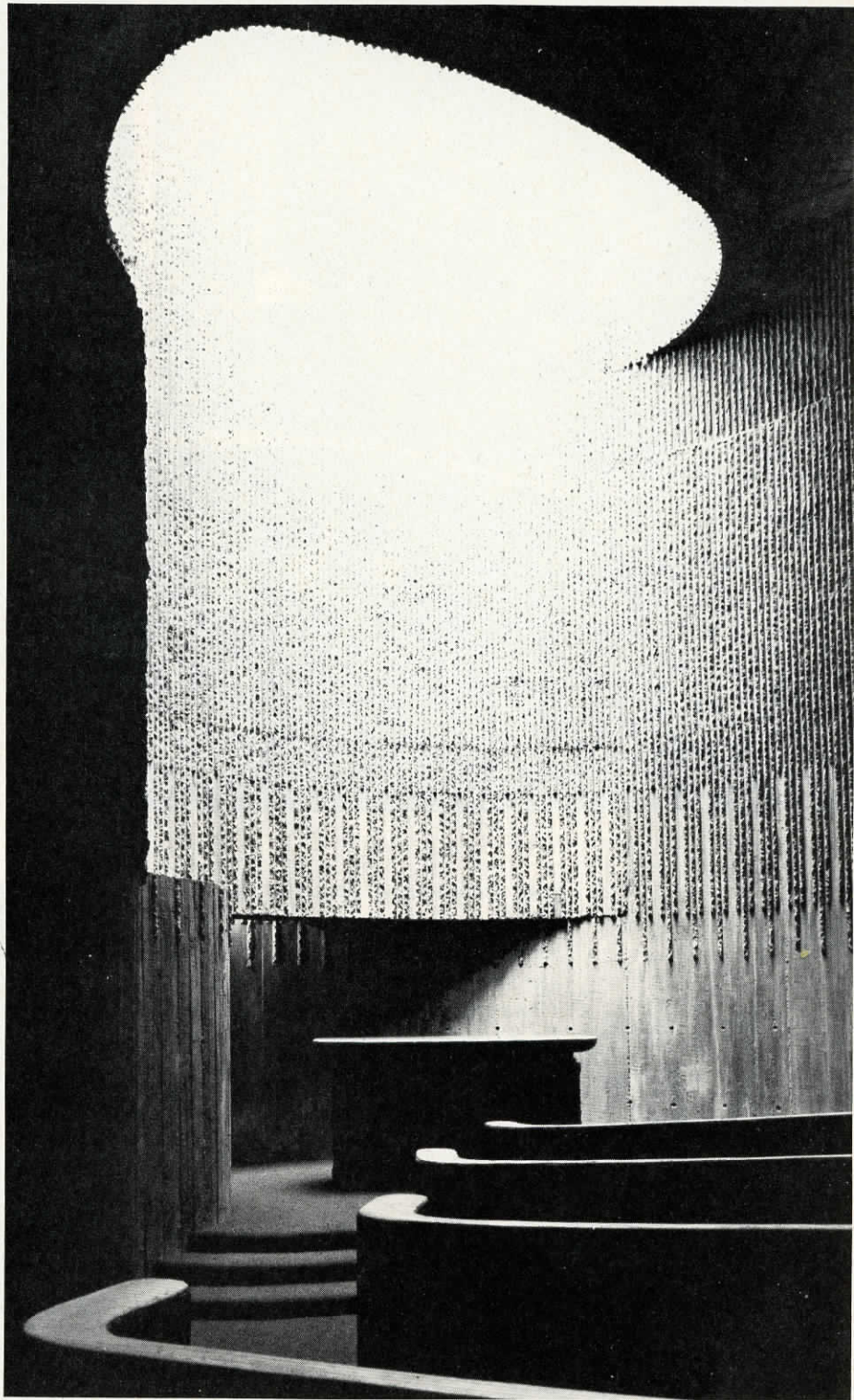
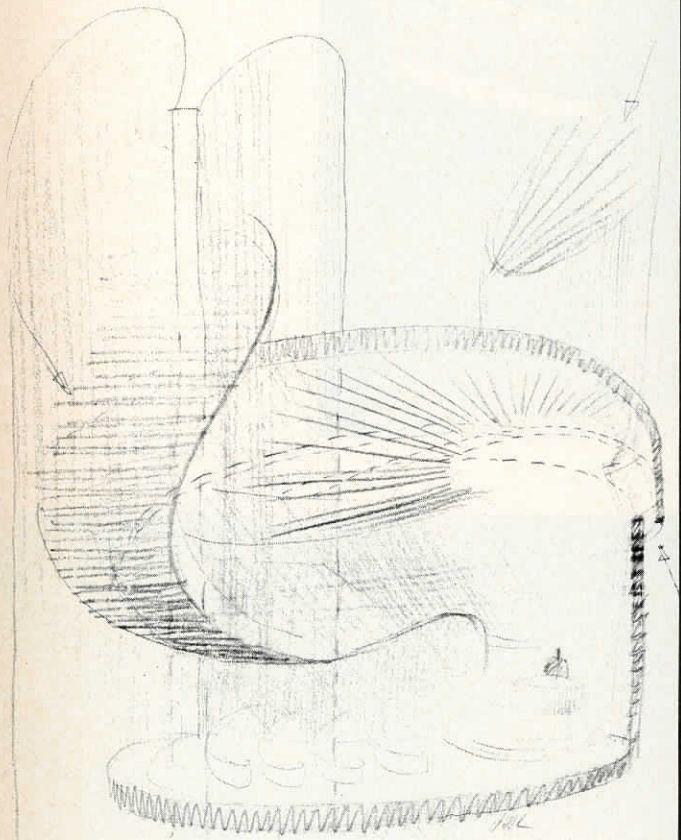
here. There's no entrance. You look, and there's mazes of corridors and circles and things and I can't, I couldn't find my way out—Well, all I want to do is get out now!" "Poor intricated soul! Riddling, perplexed, labyrinthical soul," said Donne. The labyrinth has to do with resistances, the resistance of birth and the process of life until death. Certain spaces resist our attempts, and unexpected doors lead back out.

Mental Health
entrance and
conference rooms



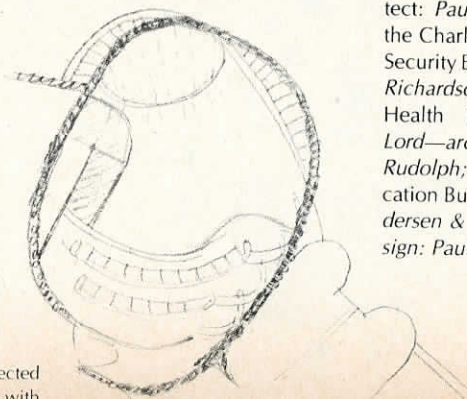
But with each resistance overcome, we find the journey has taken us farther inward until we reach **THE CAVE**

of mind, innermost space, throne room of the heart. Do the walls weep for some unknown suffering? Or do they weep with the beneficent moisture which attracted souls and divinities to caves and made them sacred before the creation of temples? The Chapel is full of the primordial emptiness and secretness of space buried in the earth. Yet it is spinning high up, its overlapping forms ripping off from the confinement of matter. This is the Center of the coil, "a sunless crypt unsealed," where light traces a faint memory of a shell and becomes the New Entrance, the nimbus of space turned into holiness.



Chapel, Mental Health Building, ground level

Cutaway view of Mental Health Chapel, showing stair and service towers (P)



Reflected ceiling plan with

STATE SERVICE CENTER, Boston, Massachusetts. Coordinating architect: *Paul Rudolph*. Architects for the Charles F. Hurley Employment Security Building: *Shepley Bullfinch Richardson and Abbott*; Mental Health Building: *Desmond & Lord*—architectural design: *Paul Rudolph*; Health, Welfare & Education Building: *M.A. Dyer and Pedersen & Tilney*—architectural design: *Paul Rudolph*.