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A Firehouse for Lexington, Missouri

Ken Swihart

Critic: Richard Pohlman

Background

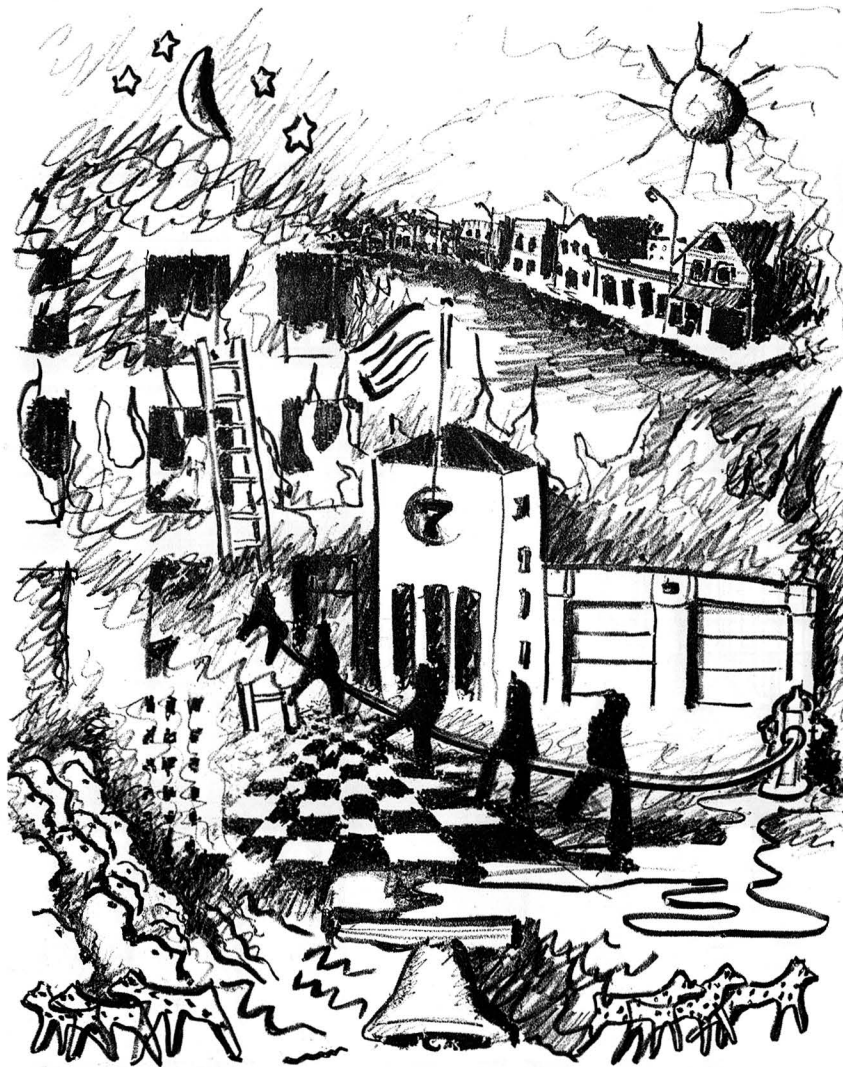
Located along a main road into Lexington, this scheme for a volunteer firehouse is designed as a visual landmark and a symbol of community pride. Programmatic requirements included office space, lounge, apparatus room, and housing for ten men.

During the initial stage of design, attention was focused on ideas of what a firehouse means, both to its users and the community as a whole. A series of sketches exploring these concerns was developed and arranged in collage form on a lithograph stone. These images helped establish a basis from which to work.

Solution

The building's main entrance is on the south elevation and makes a monumental gesture to the corner. The symmetrical window placement recalls an ordering once prevalent in municipal buildings. The portal reinforces this order, celebrates entry, and conveys a sense of grandness. The facade is pulled away from the enclosed spaces to act as an independent element fronting varied interior spaces. The resulting void serves as a transition between inside and out- as a mediator between the contained spaces and wall enclosure.

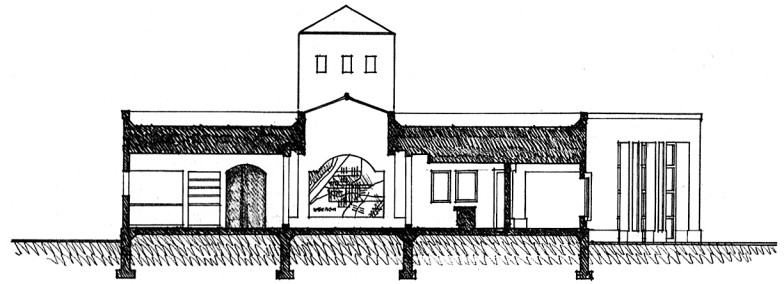
Access for the three fire fighting vehicles is off of 13th Street, away from heavy traffic flow. This elevation, skewed to accommodate different vehicle lengths, inflects toward the oblique street intersec-



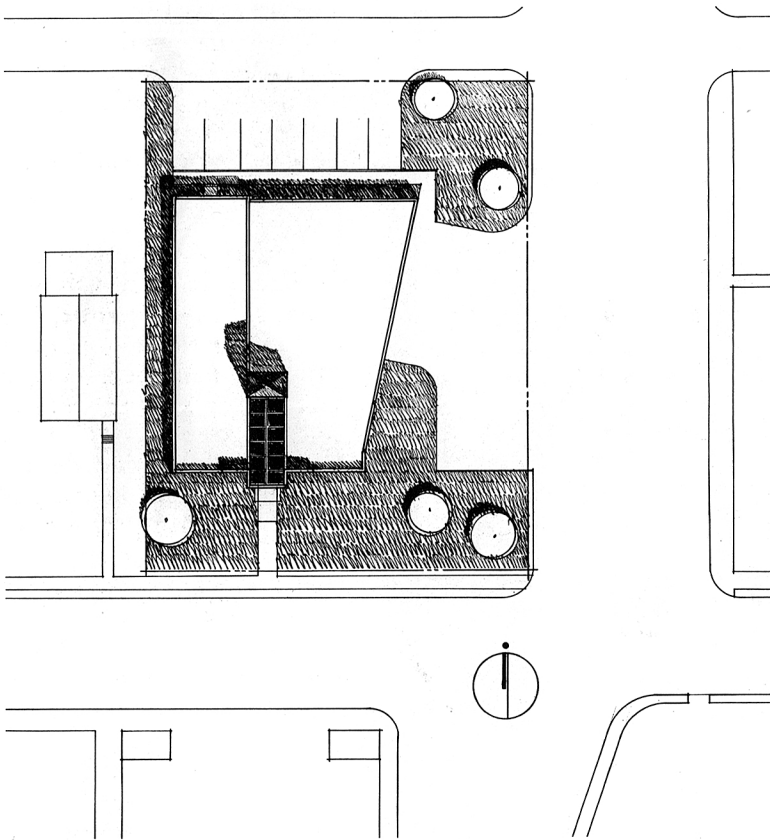
tion. The north and west elevations receive minimal fenestration due to solar concerns and the private nature of their enclosed spaces. A hose drying/siren tower makes this modest building seem monumental and gives it a readily identifiable importance within the community.

A continuity between the exterior and interior is achieved through consistent details and texture. The symmetrical exterior expresses the bilateral arrangement of spaces in both plan and section. A seven-foot module serves as a three-dimensional ordering device, and becomes apparent in the grid pattern on the south elevation. The red brick of the firehouse recalls the common building material of the community. Thus, the new firehouse acknowledges the town's image while introducing its own.

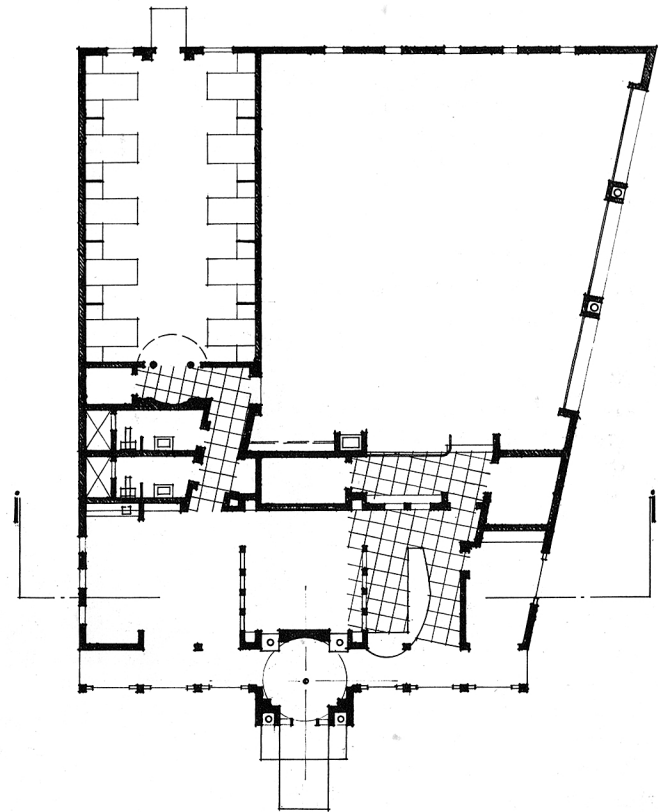
collage of images representing
a firehouse
lithograph
12 x 16 inches



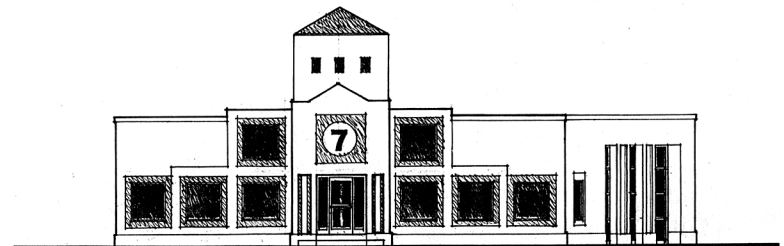
Section



Site plan



Floor plan



South elevation