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218 Delaware Building: Adaptive Re-use in the Historic River Quay

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218 Delaware Building

Adaptive Re-use in the Historic River Quay

Critic: James Dubois

John Jesik

Matt Kovatovich

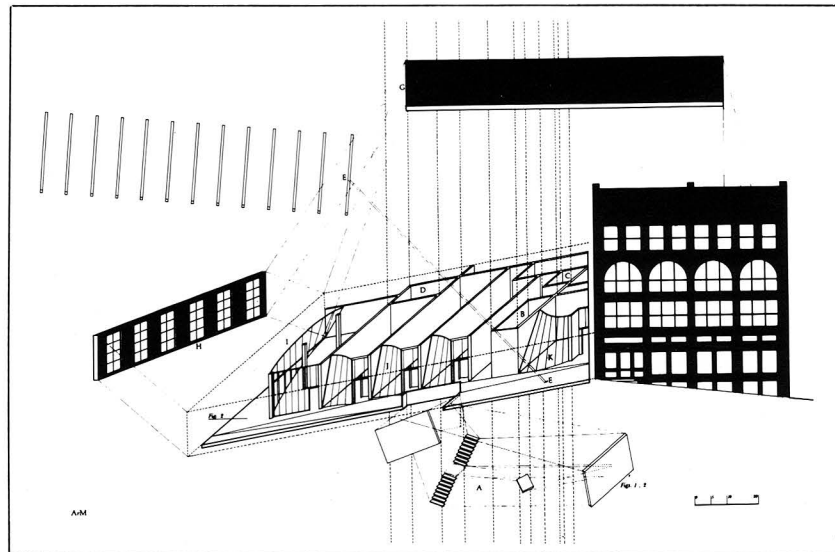
Allan Mellske

“... there should be some spaces which are flexible, but there are also some which should be completely inflexible. They should be just sheer inspiration ... just the place to *be*, the place which does not change, except for the people who go in and out.”

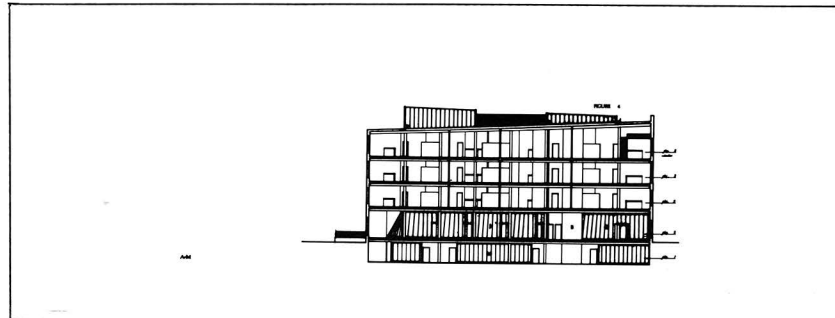
—Louis I. Kahn

Beginning with the industrial revolution, buildings housing light industrial functions were a vital part of the urban fabric. Usually clustered just outside of business centers in the city environs, the buildings were vacated as companies outgrew them, moving to industrial parks in suburban locations. Relics of the industrial age, often left as shells for decades, they served as shelters for indigents and the homeless.

For low-income artists the price of housing within the city combined with the need for a place to work became a particular problem. The abandoned buildings became ideal work/living spaces — their vast open areas allowing for the production of conceptual art installations and larger scale works. The artists took to the buildings, dividing space and expanding it to meet their needs, even though living in the non-residential districts was illegal. Because the occupants were seen by building inspectors and government officials as lawbreakers and a public safety threat, a compromise was often reached between the owner and artist where the occupant made periodic building improvements in exchange for being allowed to live there. Becoming increas-



Elevation

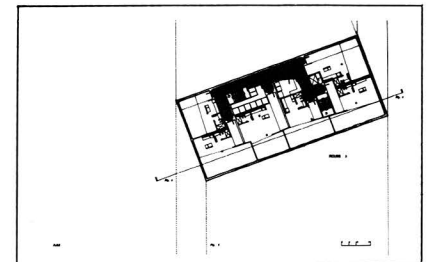


Allan Mellske — Section

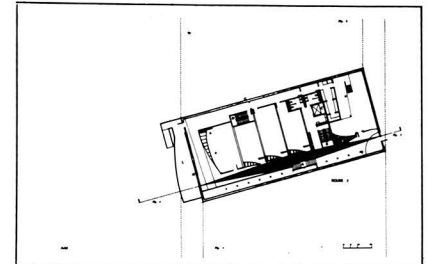
ingly dissatisfied with the situation, city officials finally altered the zoning laws and building codes to accommodate the artists.

Even with this victory it became clear that, although the zoning changes were essential, another economic problem was being created. The neighborhood upgrading, primarily the work of the artists, had attracted a chic following. As

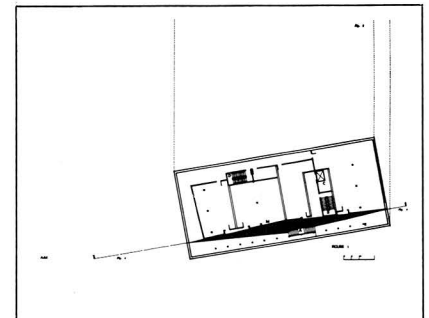
more and more spaces were converted, support facilities soon followed. Boutiques and galleries, while creating the needed exposure, served to make the community a fashionable district. This along with romanticism associated with the pioneer artists attracted the attention of upscale non-artists. Consequently, as rents escalated, the small means artists were pushed from their newly found homes.



Plan

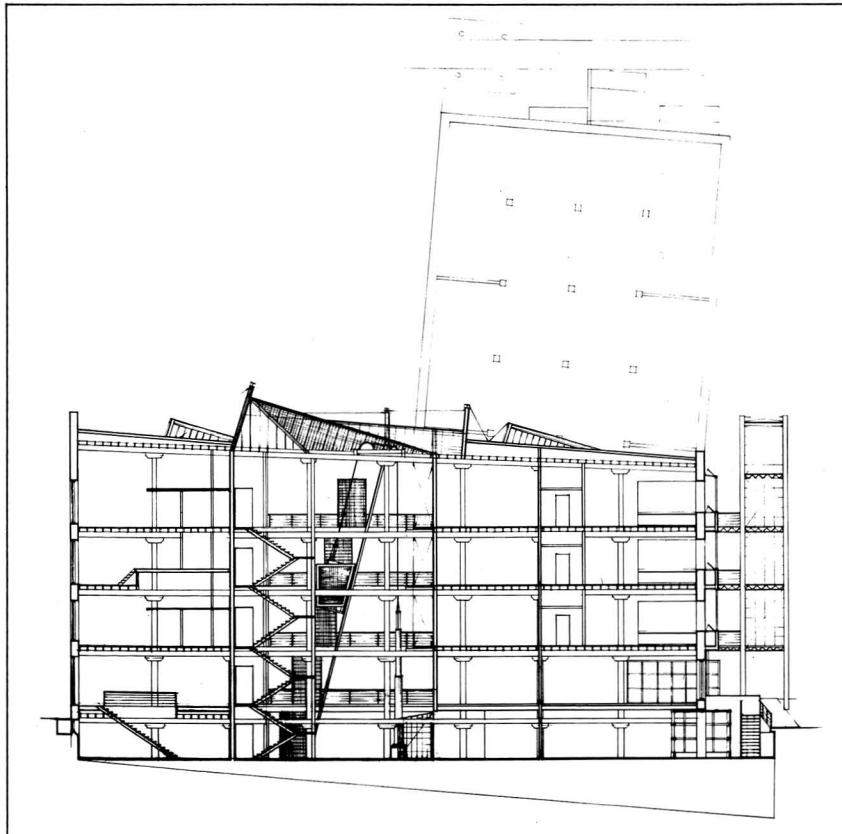


Plan

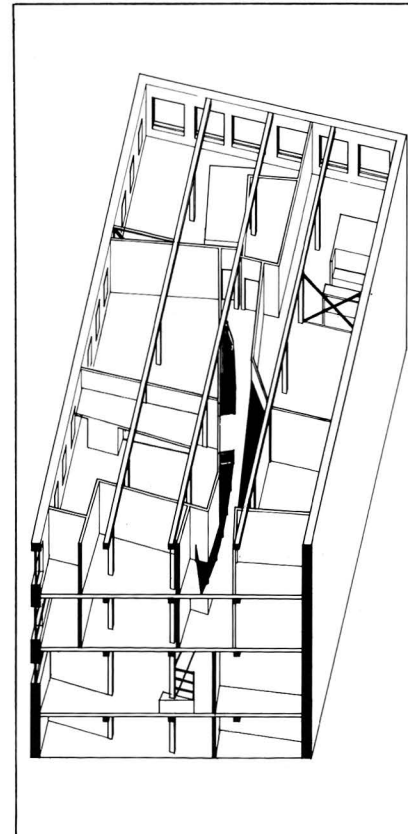


Plan

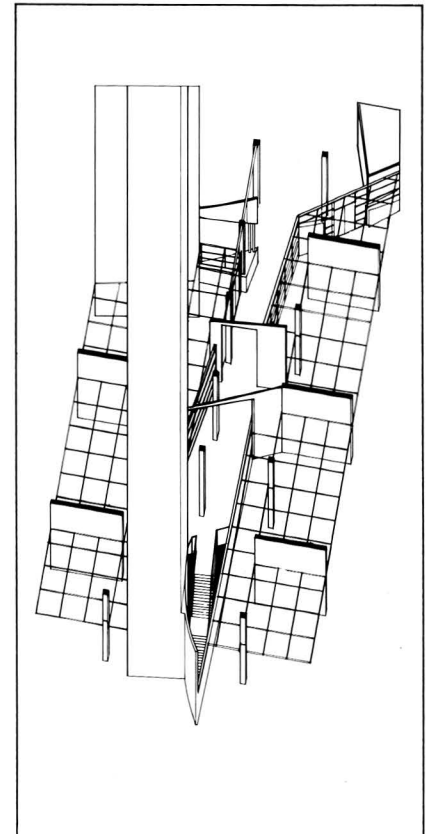
Attempting to remedy this phenomenon, a Kansas City developer found the River Quay historical district ideal for the start of a new art community. Armed with the restriction that only people in the arts can gain residence, his first adaptive re-use project achieved great success. His next effort, 218 Delaware, is located on a site adjacent to his first building. Constructed in the Romanesque revival style c.1891, it is con-



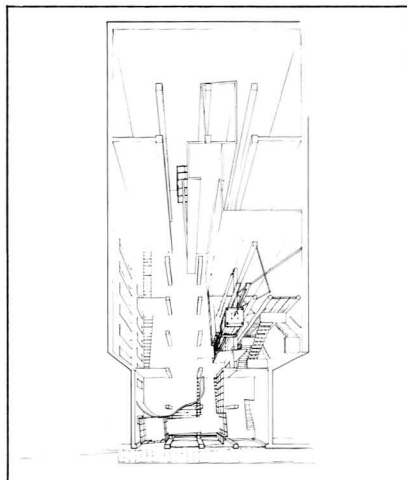
Section



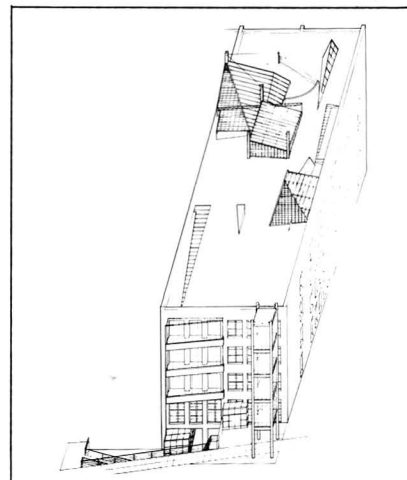
Residential Axonometric



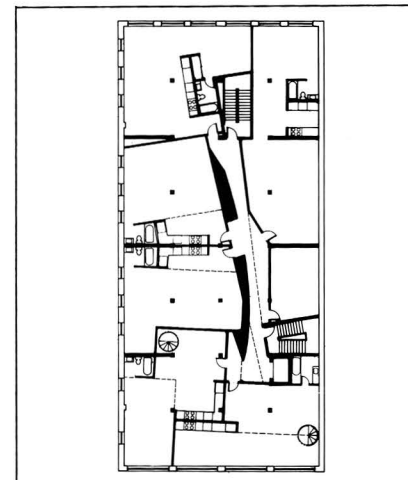
Retail Axonometric



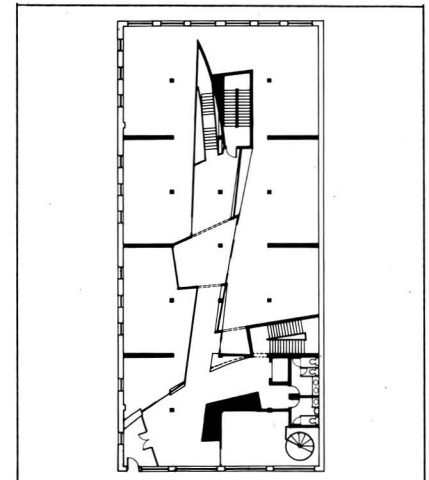
Matt Kovatovich — Interior Perspective



Axonometric



John Jesik — Residential Plan



Retail Plan

sidered a local landmark, containing four stories and a basement, each approximately 6,000 square feet in floor area.

Problematic design issues arose, stemming from the break in industrial functions and the new ones to be employed. While most industrial buildings remain very solid structurally, some settlement has occurred in this

instance. In order to withstand the required loads and support the new construction, the use of shear walls was mandated. The shear walls would be oriented transversely in the building and would serve to determine the circulation, centralized or along the interior perimeter. This formed the basis for developing a suitable parti, accompanied by vertical circulation and functional requirements.

Externally, the building's relation to context became another concern. The building is only casually related to the street, with no prominent public entrance, and demands were high with regard to improved performance. South side windows had been replaced entirely with brick, and would again be opened to receive daylight. Exterior ornamentation could be made to match that of the original, or materials could contrast

to distinguish the new from old. An exception here would be the east facade, which would have to be brought up to preservation standards for the client to receive tax breaks.

Flexibility of lofts, in contrast to the retail and commercial requirements was the remaining design concern meriting attention, and served to present a formidable architectural challenge.