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Beginnings: An Introduction to Form Generation

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Beginnings: An Introduction to Form Generation

Studio 319 Willard

A great building must, in my opinion, begin with the unmeasurable and go through the measurable in the process of design, but must again in the end be unmeasurable.¹

Beginnings

The question of beginning is a profound one in design. I believe we are all victims of our process. The point of departure (i.e. the beginning) predicts one's design. The process, in turn, becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.

How can you know where to start an architectural design? I cannot be certain of a singular answer to this question, but I can propose a possibility, a process. The process begins by seeking the best point of departure. I submit that in this condition of not knowing an approach, a process of many beginnings is a reasonable course of action. One seeks a multitude of beginnings (alternative ideas) which leads collectively to a correctness (instead of waiting for *the idea* to mysteriously materialize). Design treated as an aggressive process of itemized interrogation instead of a patient (but essentially blind) hope for enlightenment. My proposal is one of seeking many beginnings without prejudice. A process which leads to a synthesis of the beginnings, from which you in turn create the point of departure.

This was the approach of this studio. It was propositional. Emphasis was placed on the process of design. We emphasized

the invention of appropriate formal vocabularies, and on the critique of the "Structural Law of Value."² Tectonics were not ignored, but were celebrated as one of the aspects of formal analysis. Tectonics is a critique one can use to create architecture from sculpture.

Our task as architects was to make measurable the unmeasurable.

Form Generation

J.C.: Lets say you are given a commission, a specific project. Do you begin as if you had no client with dream drawings fresh out of desire.

[Louis Kahn]

It must begin there.³

Design is a journey. It is like traveling an unfamiliar road, delving into the unknown with only our wits, courage and sense of adventure to comfort us in times of frustration. Architectural design studio is just such a tour in possibilities. A voyage through the unfamiliar, through the infinity of alternatives.

Our plan was thus: we would make detective work of the most personal nature and take ourself on tour in the unforeseen. Into the mysteries of Kahn's "unmeasurable." We (the designers, the studio) emphasized the process of design and the creation of personal courage. Beginning with an attitude of 'art for art's sake,' we developed formal concepts that were later articulated into architecture.

A brief explanation of our process was this: we began by making a series of 2-D and 3-D compositions of shapes and forms. First we selected a Cubist painting (circa 1907-14). Working with this painting we generated a series of flat, 2-dimensional compositions. These compositions were made in both color and black and white. Next, selecting from our own 2-D designs, we chose one to develop further. Then by referring to this composition as either plan, section, or simply inspiration, we built a series of 3 sculptures. Again selecting from one of our own objects, we made a "use reading"⁴ of this sculpture. The use reading was a written text (generated from the object), which became our critical device and architectural program. This text when combined with the formal vocabulary of the sculpture gave us the working critique of the structural law of value.

Critic's Note

The process of making and remaking these drawings and sculptures provided our hands and minds with feeling/data. By feeling/data I mean information and emotion with respect to one's own creations. This feeling/data (locked away in the mind) was to become the lexicon of our architectural vocabulary. One can destroy this personal creative gain by lacking the courage to follow their own intuition. Instead, if you try to be "safe" by way of some preconception (divorced from both intuition and type) you will languish in conformity.

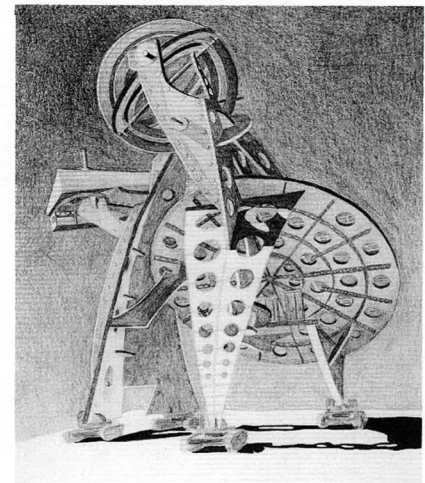
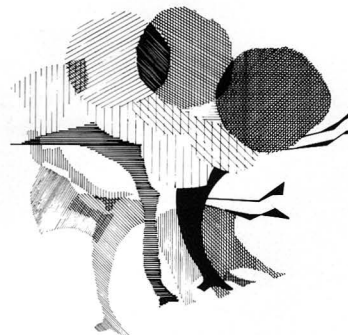
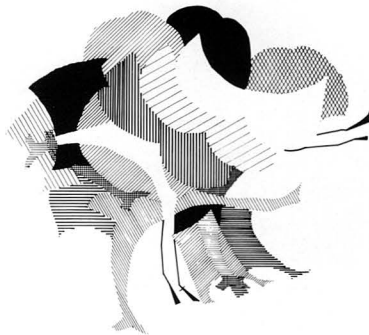
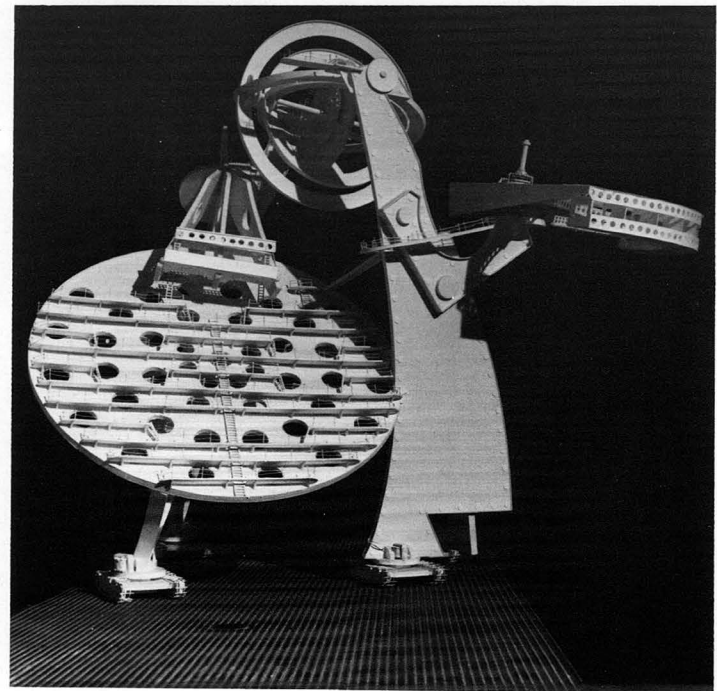
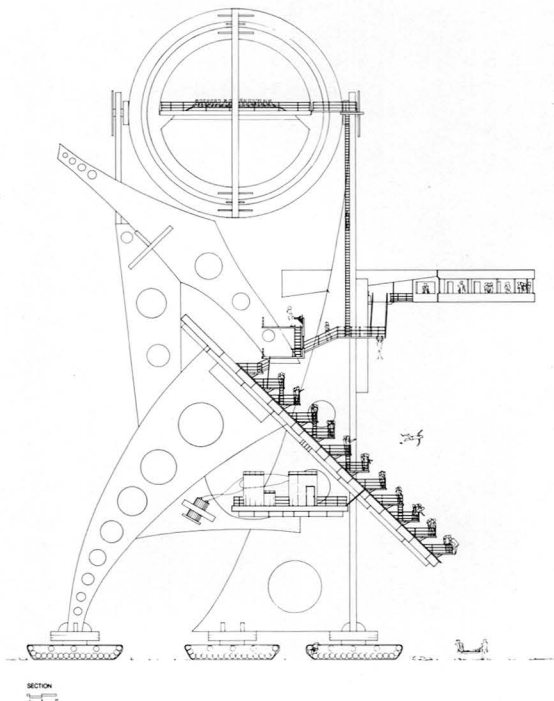
Belief in your own intuition and creativity is essential. In our studio, I have endeavored to provide a place to practice courage. A haven of support against those who will deny your freedom of process. We were working together in a "mastermind"⁵ condition defending against the destructive discouragement of ignorance.

The Offering

These two projects are submitted to represent our studio, our experiment, and our voyage. With pride we offer them for your study. You, the reader, become the critic and the participant in their proposition. It is for you we have fixed these architectures to these pages of OZ.

Michael Deane's mobile sports complex (for us) was prophetic. The near future represented itself here in the manifestation of the Fan (attic). The Fan becomes the participant, the official, and also the game. A world view devoted to sports as the essence of life. The games participants will be running, dodging, and ground beneath the stadium's tractor treads. Mike will tell you more.

Scott Arford's fiction is the poetic proposal of a chemical reaction. The synthesis of opposing beings into a symbiotic existence from the flash caused by a desperate act. The two entities enter into a new steady state as one. A poetic condition that mimes the laws of physics.



Sportsview

Michael Deane

The citizens of Sportsview gather on the playing field sensing the upcoming events. The excitement begins to grow as the sounds of machinery get louder. The stadium moves toward the center of the field and the anticipation of *what* is to commence is overwhelming. The spectators form a line based on their rank in society. The stadium comes to a stop and the spectators begin to climb their way to

their seats. The governing team of Sportsview take their places in the Gyro-Sphere while past governors take their places on the Panoramic Deck. The remaining citizens gather on the lower balconies.

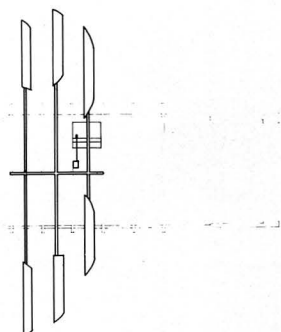
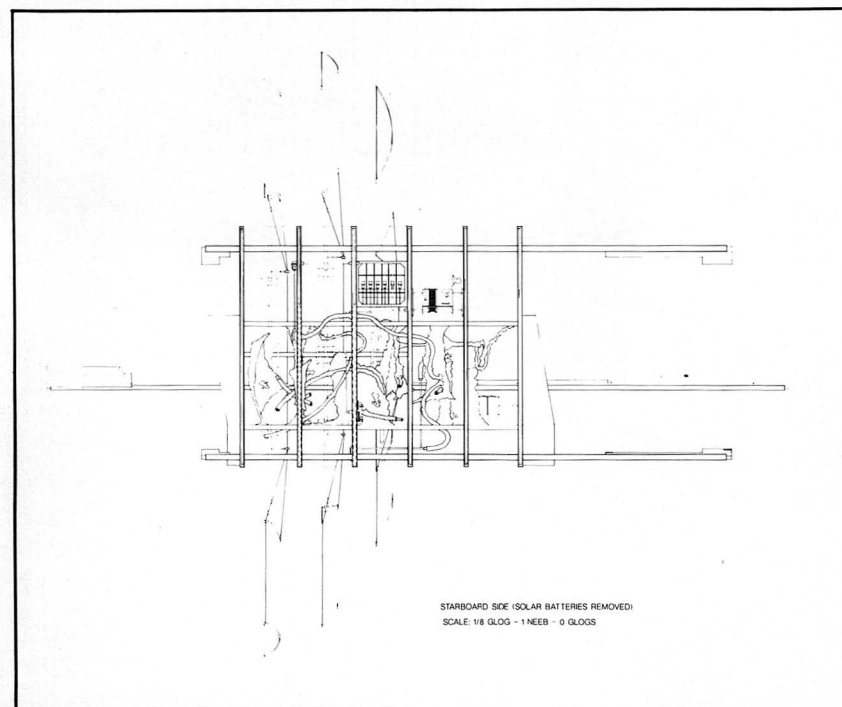
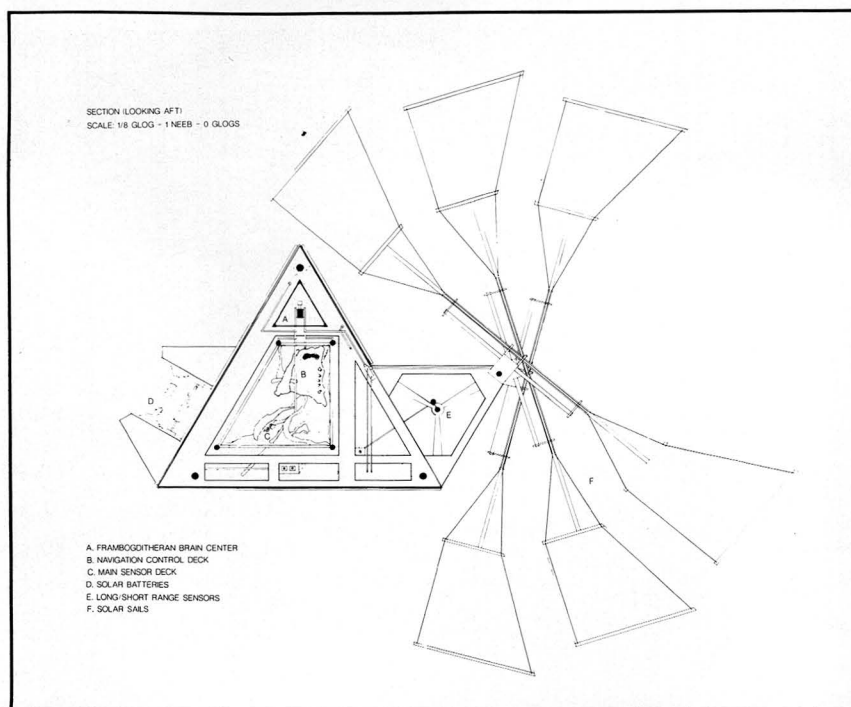
The game is now ready to begin. A large electrically charged sphere is dropped onto the field. Three players must touch the sphere simultaneously to negate the charge. If one should lose contact or an additional player touches the sphere, all of those in contact with the sphere at that time are instantly electrocuted. The ob-

ject of the game is to generate a "Cosmic Mandala" by rolling the sphere in the pattern of a mandala while the opposing team tries to generate a mandala in the opposite direction. The first team to complete the sign is the winner.

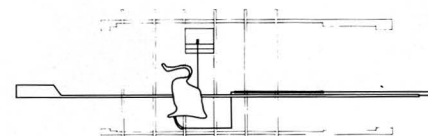
While the game is in session, the fans are intimate with the action. Fans are apparently possessed by the excitement and begin to move around the stadium with complete disregard for their proper place (in the cult society of sports). They are searching, fighting, scratching for a bet-

ter view of the action. Fans risk their very lives for the best view. The contest concludes with the losing team being exiled from Sportsview (the cosmos of sports). The winning team makes the procession through the lower balconies, past the Panoramic Deck to the center of the Gyro-Sphere having earned their place at the pinnacle of society, and also acquired the right to control (drive) the stadium.

The winners become the fans and vice versa.



PROPULSION



ENVIRONMENTAL INFORMATION GATHERING

Keebthog and Frambogdither

Scott Arford

In a distant galaxy, ingeniously named by our astronomers, M-124A97, there is a star. Orbiting this star are 12 planets. Two of them are important to this story: the one closest to the star, Frambogdither, and the one furthest from it, Keebthog.

The Frambogditherans, a mechanically precise race of cybernetic creatures, do not like the formless plasmoid ameoba-like Keebthogs. The Keebthogs likewise do not like the "precisobastulant" Frambogditherans. So, naturally, they are

at war and have been for countless generations. War is such a way of life for them that great philosophers and scholars from both planets have reached the undeniable conclusion that, should peace befall them, their planet economies would collapse within hours. Since 93% of the Frambogditheran population is employed by Rapid-Kill Corp., the planet's sole weapons manufacturer (and main governmental branch), no Frambogditheran can deny the simple logic. The great philosophers and scholars have thus gone on to reason that if their economies collapse, both planets would fall into a primitive state of turmoil. Looting, loathing, pillaging, burning, and other

nasty habits would run rampant.

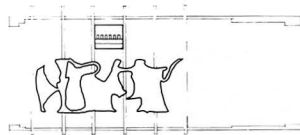
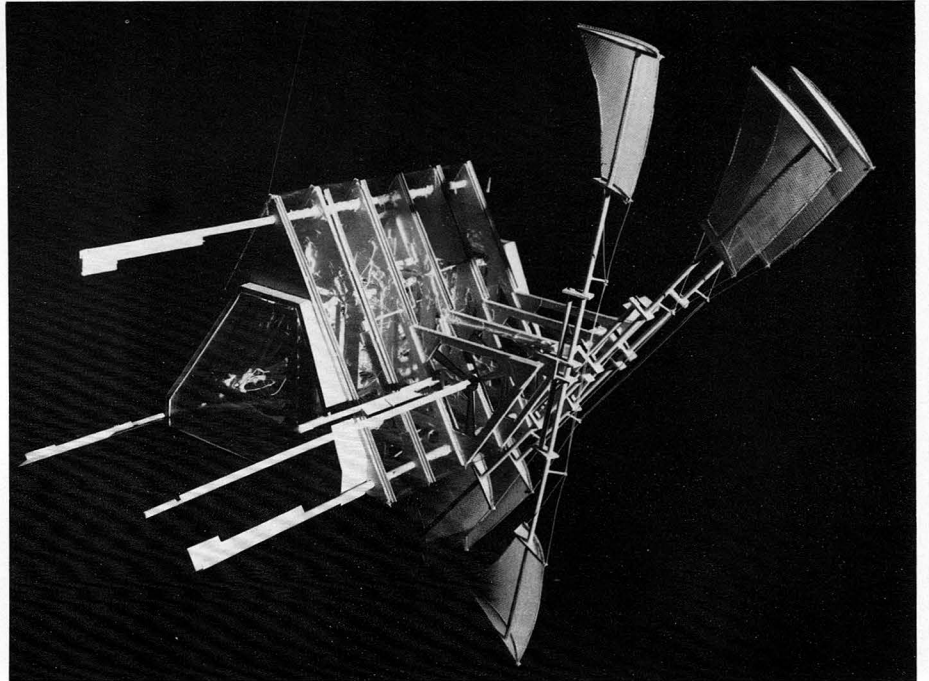
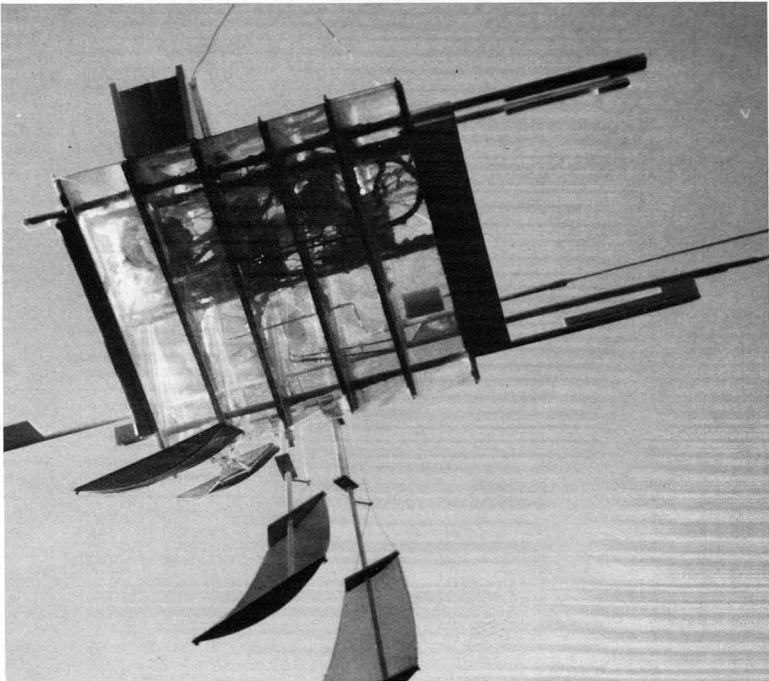
"Filth and disease would cover the land like Gombian syrup," a great Keebthog philosopher once said.

Then, one day, in a desolate asteroid belt, two prowling warships met. One was a slimy, outdated, Keebthog battleship. The other, a sleek, new, triangularly stabilized, Frambogditheran Planet Smasher, the pride of the fleet. The Keebthog battleship spotted the Frambogditheran Planet Smasher first and knew it was no match for the multi-vented, multi-gunned war machine. The Keebthog captain thought hard for several klicknogs (one klicknog

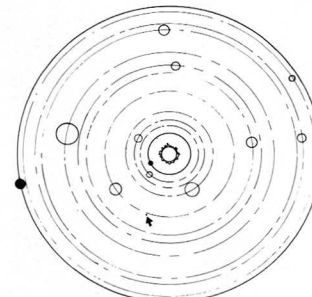
is roughly 1:24:69 seconds). His wise and wonderful masters at the War Academy had foretold this situation. He acted without hesitation.

"Full speed ahead!" he glorted. "We're going to ram those Frambogditheran fobnodules!"

With the characteristic lurch of the old style mitochondrian drive, the Keebthog battleship sped toward the Planet Smasher and rammed into it before the Frambogditherans even had a chance to warm up their Exo-damage Planet Smasher gun.



KEEBTHOG/FRAMBOGDITHERAN SPACES



SOLAR SYSTEM

There was a huge explosion, so bright that it was even reported to have been seen by various shepherds, kings, and wise men here on Earth. When the electromagnetic energy cleared, something profoundly strange had happened. The ships did not destroy each other but instead became one, linked in some weird symbiotic relationship. Computer circuits merged, guidance systems mixed, weapon systems vanished. Through a synergetic reaction, two different technologies became one, each complimenting the other — the new whole was much greater than the sum of its parts. The crews of both ships were similarly affected. The cybernetic Frambogditherans achieved a

new height in cybernetic technology as they became directly linked into this new ship. The Keebthogs could now easily manipulate the physical controls of this living craft.

These faces began to see themselves (and each other) differently, through a symbiotic being. Even the strong-willed could not resist. They realized that maybe the great philosophers and scholars were full of wachunk, that their War Academy instructors were just war-bogers. For the first time in hundreds of centuries, a small group of Frambogditherans and Keebthogs actually looked beyond planetary prejudice and understood each other.

This is the new spacecraft and its new crew linked to their new ideals, new values, and new beliefs, who left behind their old solar system and all of the “crudulent, close-minded, freebs” that inhabited it to seek a new being. Adjusting their solar wings, they sailed off into more sunsets than John Wayne could have ever dreamed.

FOOTNOTES

1. Louis I. Kahn from *What Will Be Has Always Been*, by Richard Saul Wurman. New York: Rizzoli and Access Press Ltd., 1986, p. 154.
2. The “Structural Law of Value” concept I am referring to is a self-referential, autonomous, idiosyncratic notion forwarded by Dr. Christian Bergum in Andy Warhol, Woody Allen, Kenny Scharf and Architecture,” see *Texture: Journal of Architecture 1986*. College Station: Texas A&M University, 1987, p. 8.
3. Kahn, op. cit., p. 262.
4. Use reading infers a conceptual, interpretive observation of the object. See also Christian Bergum, *Simulations*. Bozeman: Montana State University, 1984, p. 8.
5. I refer to the concept proposed by Napoleon Hill in *Think and Grow Rich*. New York: Fawcett Crest, 1963, pp. 167-73.