

#### FAITH AND COMMERCE

Herald Square and Greeley Square (34th Street & Broadway)

Alex Leung, thesis student, School of Architecture, Carleton University, 1988

Herald Square and Greeley Square were once the forum of the newspaper industry, serving as a battleground between newspaper magnates James Gordon Bennett and Horace Greeley and their empires; now they are a wasteland, victims of the traffic grid, and their proximity to Macy's department store is probably the only reason they have survived at all.

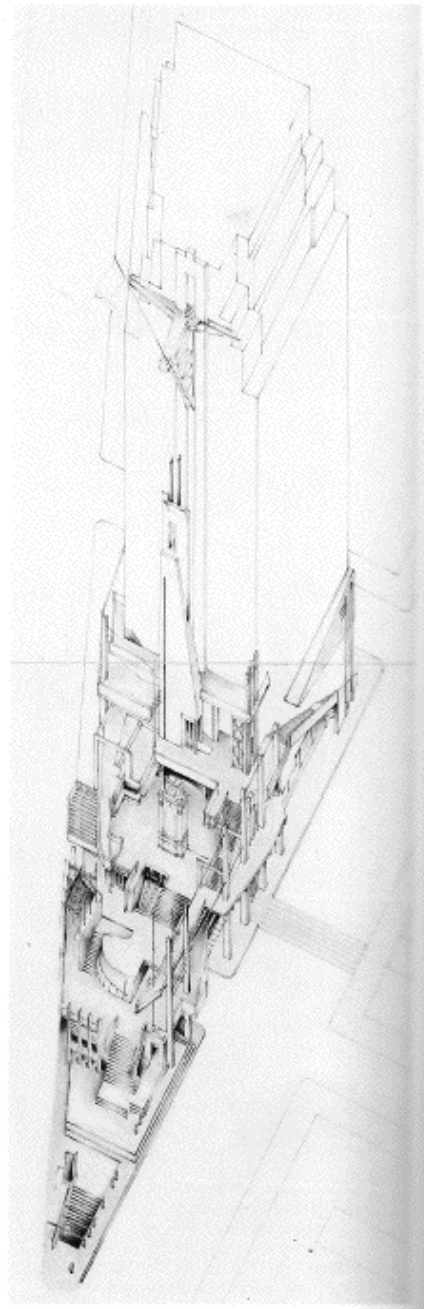
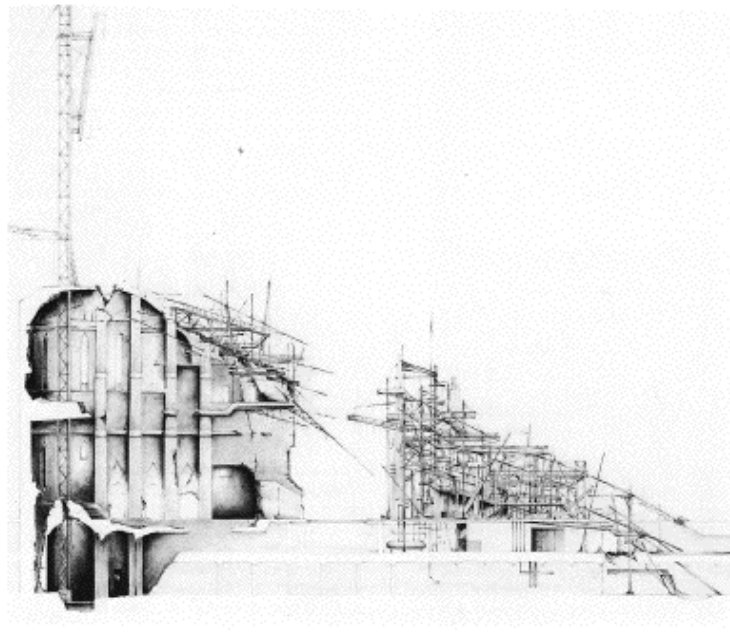
A space in the city cannot be conceived of as an idealized space for idealized activities. Just as important to the formal organization of the space is its ability to adapt to the needs of contemporary life, whether ritualistic or sensational. It must be able to respond to rapidly changing fashions and social behaviour, perhaps be as transient as its occupants. The juxtaposition of the two squares sets up an actor-audience relationship, the theatricality of which is equally essential to both the experience and the architecture.

The steps in Herald Square provide seating for planned or spontaneous events. A contemporary version of the Spanish Steps in Rome, they acknowledge the variety and universality of human interaction, ranging from the everyday needs of the worker to those

of the transient shopper. At various stages along the steps there are boutiques and food stalls. A 'speakers' corner' reflects the history of the square. The headquarters of an existing bank corporation — a symbol of capitalistic New York — serves as a backdrop to the steps.

In Greeley Square there is a chaotic steel structure which is a water garden composed of elements that are typical of New York — a fire escape, a balcony, a cat-walk, demolition rubble, etc. This celebrates the ageing of the city's 'body', a phenomenon that is unwelcome in a technologically oriented society. The staircase and platform lead nowhere, denying any pragmatic function yet remaining inhabitable. The water fountains and hanging vines are conceived of as a folly, a place for memory and contemplation.

In this square — a stage for ritual and ceremony — are a video screen and, as a backdrop, the ruins of a church. The latter, which also acts as a shelter for the homeless, was salvaged from a commercial development. Stripped of all objects with a religious association, it stands as an artefact, its carcass a monument to a time when church buildings were more like anchors, both physically and spiritually. Now commercialism is the generator and master of public space, and thus the combination of church and video screen remind us of the absurdity and perversity of our way of life.



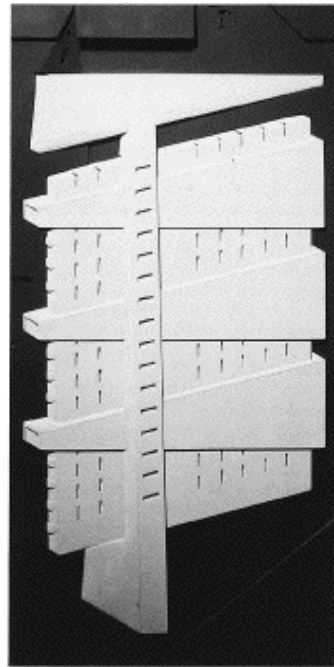
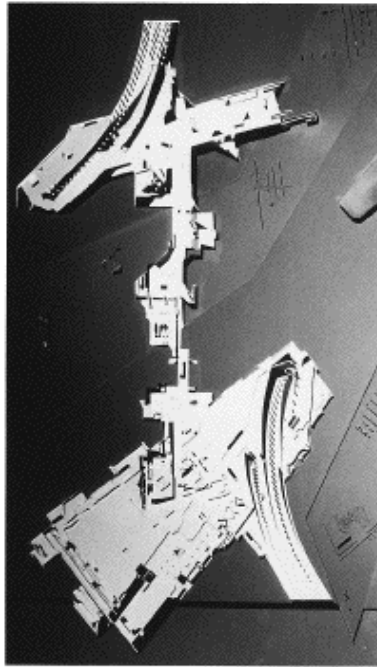
#### THE SQUARE OF TIME

Times Square (42nd Street & Broadway)  
Lorna McNear with Cheryl Giraudy,  
graduate of the School of Architecture,  
Carleton University, 1985

The Times Square project attempts to express a sense of the place as the embodiment of time: the past, the present and the future of New York. On the triangular plots at each end of the hourglass-shaped site are two buildings which face each other, engaging, as actor and audience, in a 'dialogue'. These are, respectively, the Tower of Time (left) and the Watchtower (right).

Times Square, as the centre of the theatre district, is a place in which to watch and to be seen. The Tower of Time, a monument embodying the history of New York, is the protagonist. The occupants of the Watchtower, visitors to the city, are the audience, witnessing the drama of its past, present and future.

The Square of Time  
The Theatre of Time  
The Tower of Time — The Watchtower  
The Actor — The Audience  
Visionary Monologue — The Silent Dialogue  
Plan of Past, Elevation of Present, Section of Future  
— Visitor and Inhabitant  
*The Third Dimension watches the Fourth emerge  
from its space in time.*

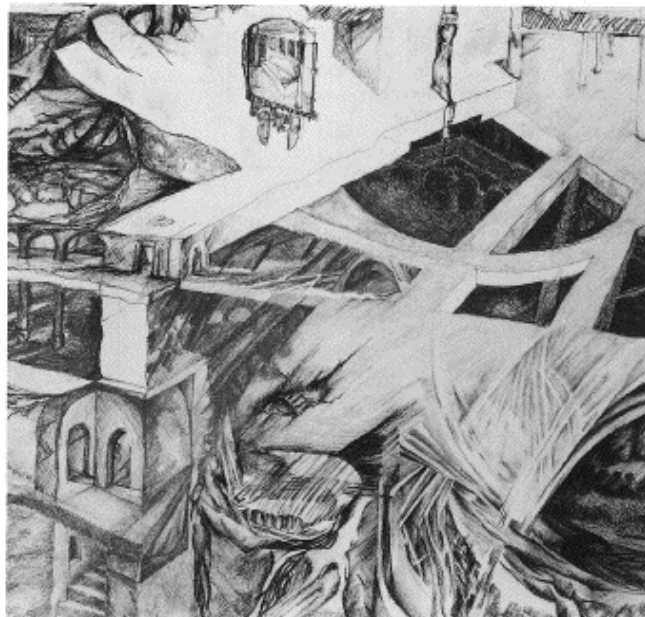
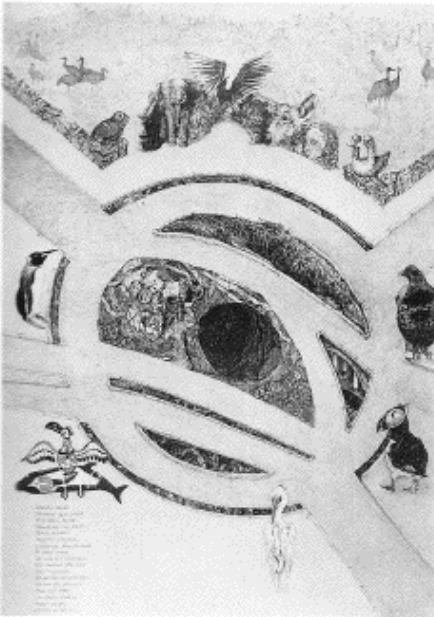


#### CHAOTIC REVERIE

Columbus Circle (59th Street & Broadway) —  
Analytical Drawing  
Lorna McNear with Rebecca Uss, student at  
Cooper Union School of Architecture, 1986

Columbus Circle has become a glorified traffic circle. These drawings portray it as a microcosm of contemporary society, which neglects and abuses the plant and animal life on which we rely for sustenance, both physical

and spiritual. New York can be seen as the embodiment of such attitudes, and the site of Columbus Circle as a physical manifestation of the notion of cosmos and of the 'new world' that was discovered by Christopher Columbus.



NEW YORK CITY AND BABEL  
Columbus Circle  
*Anne Lorenz, thesis student, School of  
Architecture, Carleton University, 1986*

This design explores the relationship of Columbus Circle to Central Park, revealing the paradoxical role of public space in New York, and the lack of a vertical connection between the underground and the ground above. At present frenzied traffic fragments the Circle and denies its existence. Yet this same condition could be used to revitalize it by creating a column or spiral that would channel the movement upwards.

Such an image recalls representations of the Tower of Babel, especially Breugel's famous painting. According to the legend, the inhabitants of the world tried to build a tower 'with its top reaching heaven. Let us make a name for ourselves, so that we may not be scattered about the whole earth.' God responded by making them all speak different languages, creating a condition which is hauntingly similar to the experience of life in New York, with its emphasis on survival, its self-centredness, and its myriad of languages.

In the Bible the tower is condemned as an expression of pride. A more contemporary interpretation might be that it represents a hand reaching out for help. In the design this paradox is manifested by a building carved out of rock, which occupies the core of the circle (representing stability and knowledge), and a chaotic, peripheral condition which is being buried as a result of its own actions (representing a synthetic force). At the centre is a rare books library that contains a room devoted to each of the Seven Deadly Sins: Pride, Covetousness, Gluttony, Lust, Envy, Anger and Sloth. The book repository, a continuous, labyrinthine space, reflects the intertwined and overlapping character of these sins.

The project is composed of three elements: the centre is a garden, the periphery a passage for vehicles, and the gate the entrance to Central Park. The public space of the central garden is conceived as an extension of the Park, resting on top of a granite mountain carved out of the very matter of Manhattan itself. This is a restorative place. A path spiralling from the subway leads pedestrians through first the labyrinth of reading rooms and then the garden. The noise of the traffic spinning beneath is always audible in the background, as a reminder of the dangers of placing too much faith in technology.

