

Towards Building the Unbuildable

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A recent English author once remarked that the work of one of his contemporaries reminded him of "farting Annie Lawrie though a keyhole, it is certainly clever, but is it art?"

Much of today's architecture is clever. The chief virtue is crystalline confidence, and it is characterized by dazzle and clarity. These are qualities that relate to a view of human reality which I find unconvincing.

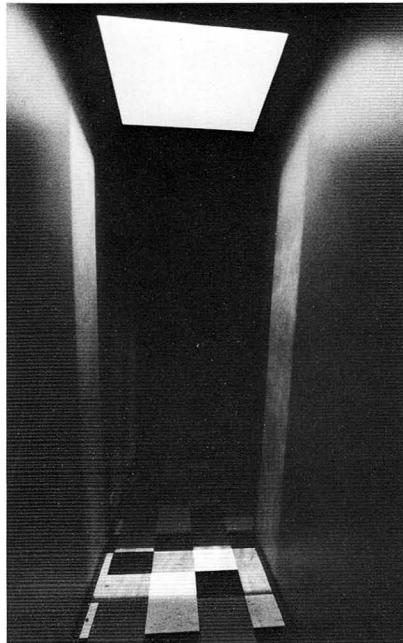
If architecture is to remain faithful to the contingencies and opacity of the world, it should be wary of symmetry and harmony. These attributes represent our yearning for the security of perfection and are an attempt to find consolation in form.

These yearnings are to be expected as we now live amid the latest collapse of certainty. Our malaise has led to the withdrawal of religion and metaphysics in the West from the embrace of art, and has resulted in a poverty of imagery with which to satisfy the mind. Architects may have to become mystics to enable the development of magical structures to respond to this absence of belief. To engage in architecture is to be aware of its profound limitations, but the effort (which is essentially a moral one) must be made to build the unbuildable.

To call on a theatrical simile may be constructive. The actor who performs only from what is the "truth of the moment" will eventually produce a

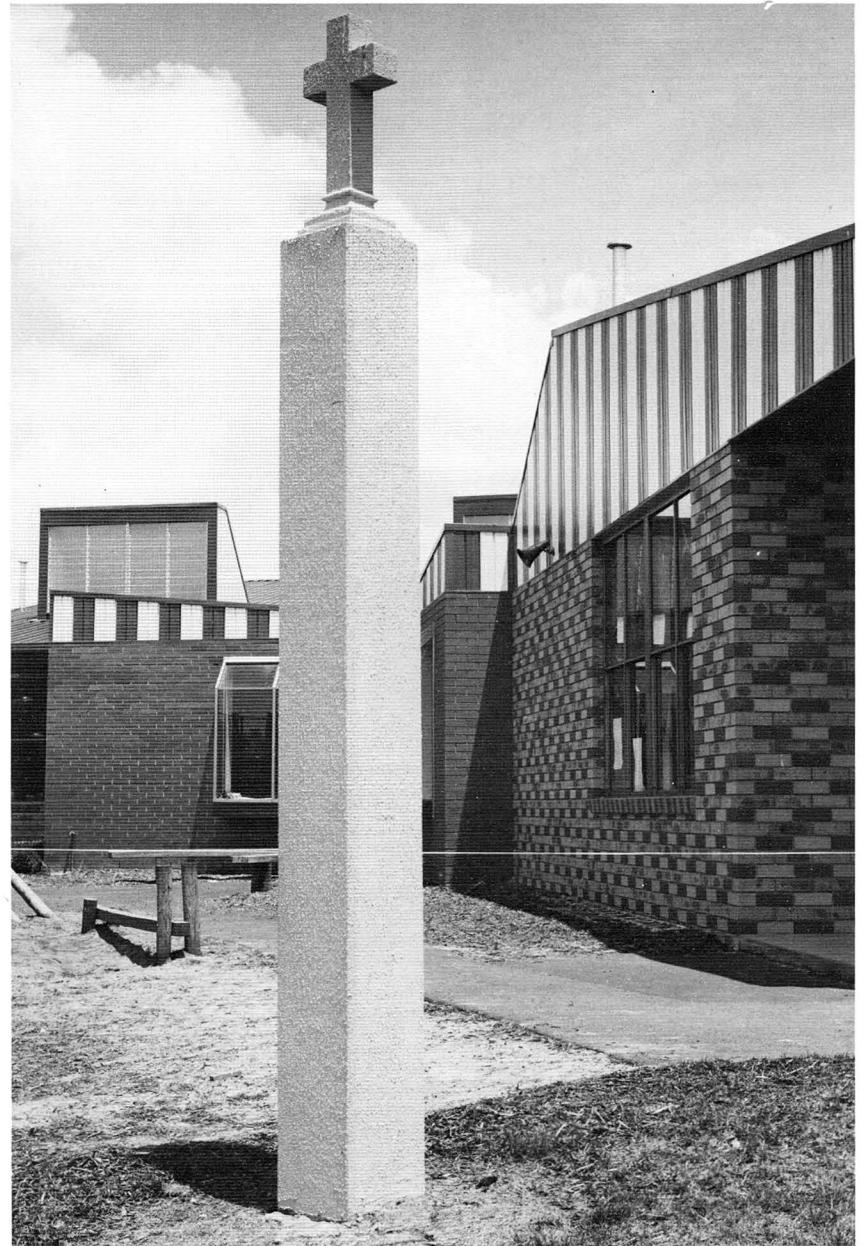
"form," a performance of glittering technique but of narrow conviction. On the other hand, the actor who works from within his own social, ethical and political line will eventually retain the personal control of his product. The performance may be crude but it will have the authority of a vision.

This commitment to ideas is crucial today since, in the enigmatic words of Goethe, we can only look at the sunset for 15 minutes.

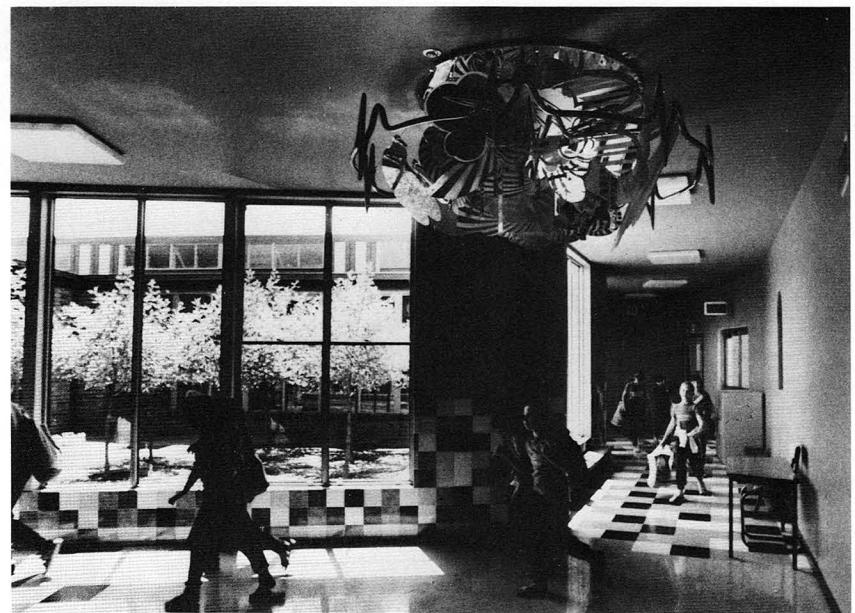
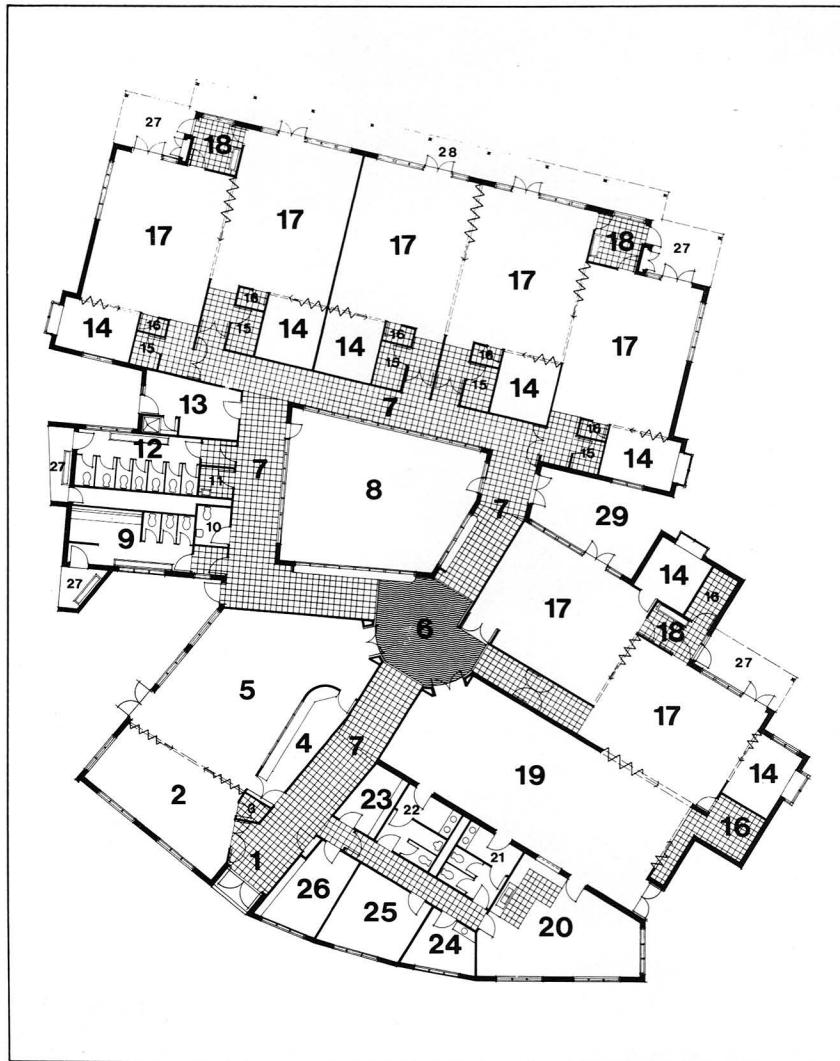


Corridor

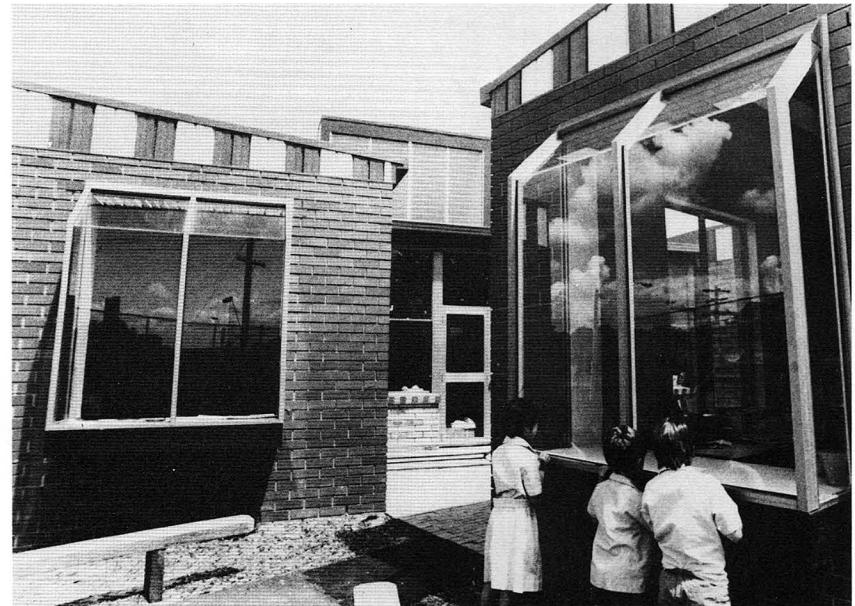
1. *This suburban, Roman Catholic primary school has been recently constructed. The school was envisaged as a teaching tool in its own right, made up of individual streets, units, special places and a multitude of corners. Within this format the courtyard is a model for order.*



Approach view

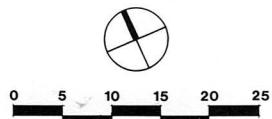


Sculpture Intersection.

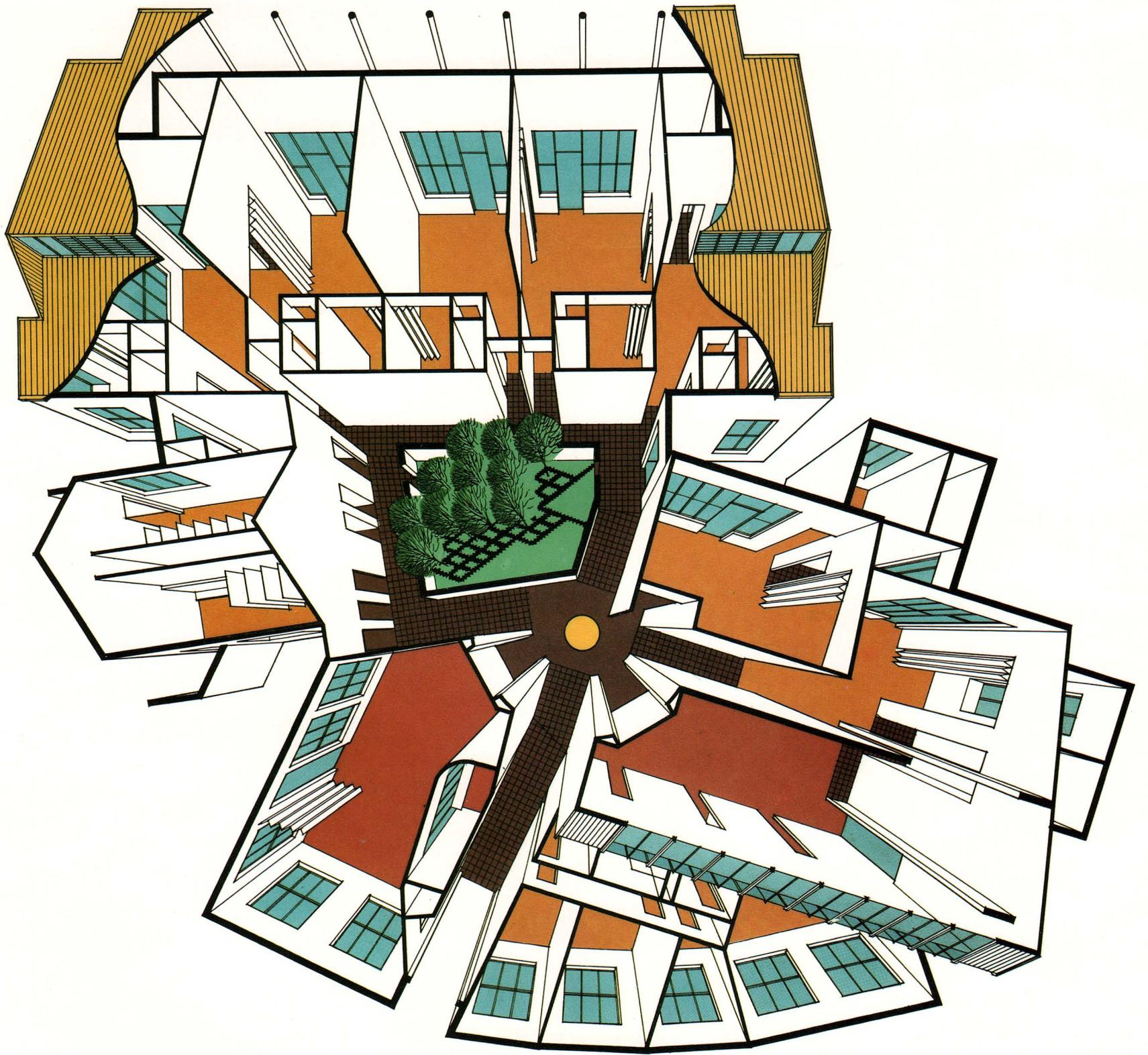


Entry to Outdoor Classroom.

- 1 Entry
- 2 Religious Resource
- 3 Liturgical Store
- 4 Work Room
- 5 Library
- 6 Sculpture Intersection
- 7 Corridor
- 8 Theme Courtyard
- 9 Boy's Toilets
- 10 Disabled Toilet
- 11 Cleaner's Store
- 12 Girl's Toilets
- 13 General Store
- 14 Withdrawal Room
- 15 Bag Room
- 16 Classroom Store
- 17 Classroom
- 18 Wet Area
- 19 Multi-Purpose Hall
- 20 Staff Room & Preparation
- 21 Female Staff Toilets
- 22 Male Staff Toilets
- 23 Communications Centre
- 24 Sick Room
- 25 Principal's Office
- 26 Secretary
- 27 Side Porch
- 28 Front Verandah
- 29 Outdoor Classroom



St. Francis Xavier School, main entry.



2. This country house is being completed. It is situated 250km to the southwest of Melbourne in a harsh, barren country areas called Korumburra (This is Aboriginal for migraine headaches). It stands on the brow of the hill and faces into the winds that blow up from Antarctica.

3. A country house under construction in a pastoral, Anglo-Saxon setting called Sommers. It is 100 miles south of Melbourne. The owner is a craftsman from Tuscany. This is a picturesque Australian version of a Mediterranean lifestyle.

