

AN AMERICAN TRUCK STOP
BY
MILTON BRUCE MOLSBERY

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A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

for

Bachelor of Architecture

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In saying that building without architecture is a negative reaction to the pressure of society, I do not intend to imply that such building is also without purpose or is not of great value to society or not responsive to its needs. Rather, I suggest it is no more than structure which imitates past structures (building which may or may not be architecture) and pays little or no heed to the

INTRODUCTION

I think it is necessary to define the words "building" and "architecture" and to comment on their relationship to and their influence on each other. The first word, "building", I take to mean any structure built by man, for man or his purposes. The second word, "architecture", I use in the context of the fine art of building.

Only that portion of building which displays intentional design and lasting quality can be considered fine art and therefore, architecture. It is in lasting quality and intentional design that the disparity between building and architecture exists. It is that intentional design which allows architecture to move with, or even ahead of the mainstream of social thought in a positive reaction to social pressure. The remaining quantity of building, which is not also architecture, I consider to be a negative reaction to those same social pressures, being carried by, or even lagging behind movement or changes of social value or thought.

In saying that building without architecture is a negative reaction to the pressure of society, I do not intend to imply that such building is also without purpose or is not of great value to society or not responsive to its needs. Rather, I suggest it is no more than structure which imitates past structures (building which may or may not be architecture) and pays little or no heed to the

possibility of further invention or modification to suit changes in physical program or social value.

Architecture, however, also relies upon man's accumulated knowledge, gaining from past lessons and ideas as well as constantly modifying those answers and arranging them to suit new programs of either physical or social needs. In effect, architecture is the emulation or possibly the parody of other building, rather than the blind imitation of the same.

THESIS

Realizing that we are products of our environment, and assuming that architecture is the product of ourselves as architects, I then conclude that architecture is a product of social pressure on specific individuals. From that conclusion I construct my thesis statement:

"Architectural images reflect both the ideas of personal invention and the attitudes of the social environment."

Landscape that is representative of both the mobility and the commercialism of the whole society. It relates specifically to the highway and to that portion of society which makes its living from the highway. These individuals, the truckers, and their related sub-culture provide the student with a relatively autonomous microcosm of the American environment, facilitating the recognition and identification of attitudes, symbols and icons which are specific to that segment of society.

The American truck stop also gains interest to the student through the dynamic and sensory nature of its related activities and through its action as a modifier of the vast space landscape of the highway.

For these reasons I have chosen to analyze the American truck stop as a microcosm of our environment, sustaining my thesis through the application of related symbols and values to the design of a hypothetical American truck stop.

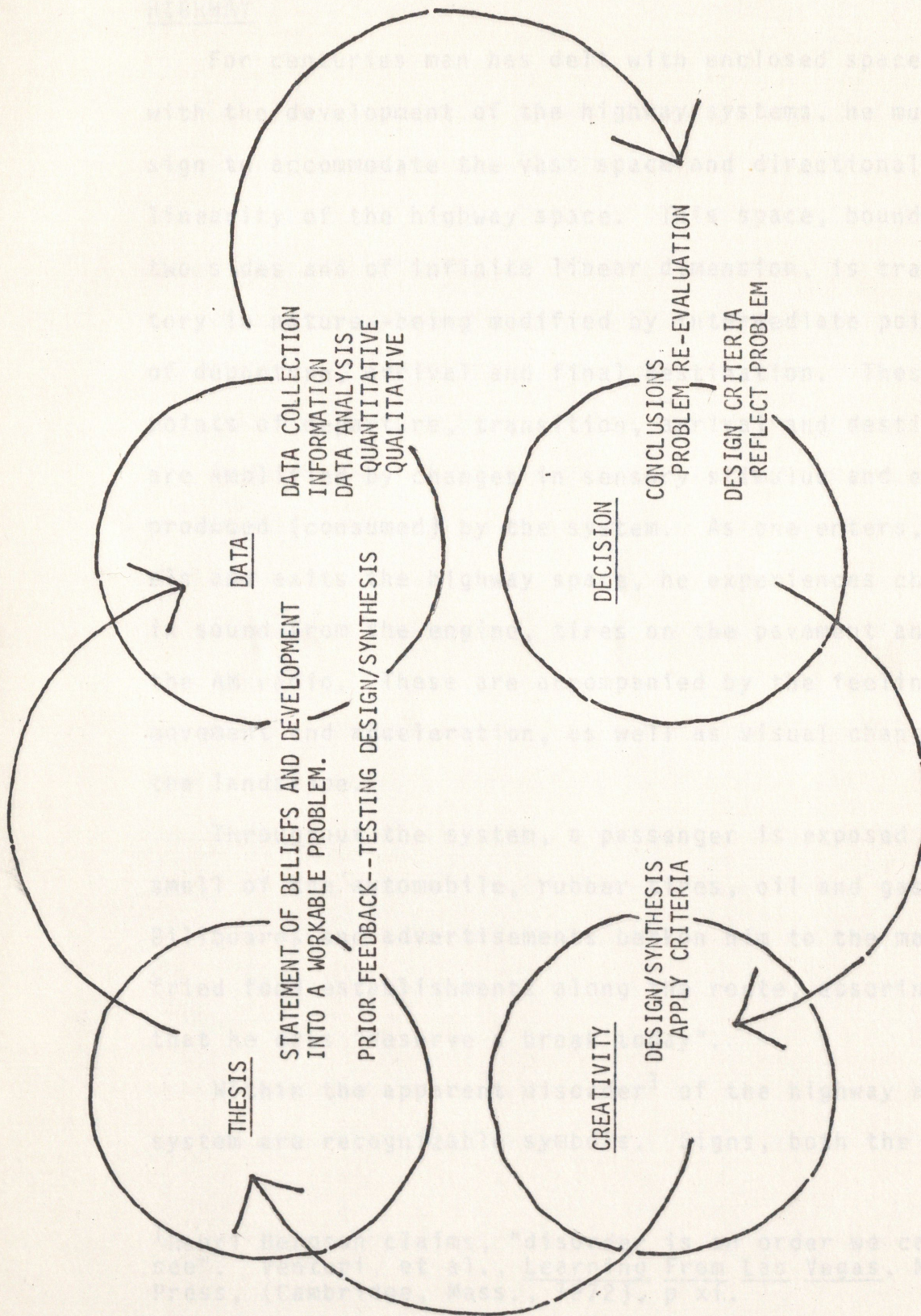
PROJECT

Mobility and commercialism are two widespread values of our American society. These values are physically documented in our vast system of highways and related public architecture, much in the same manner that the great pyramids of Egypt document the power of the Pharaohs, or the cathedrals of Europe show the influence of the Roman Catholic Church.

The American truck stop is an element of that highway landscape that is representative of both the mobility and the commercialism of the whole society. It relates specifically to the highway and to that portion of society which makes its living from the highway. These individuals, the truckers, and their related sub-culture provide the student with a relatively autonomous microcosm of the American environment, facilitating the recognition and identification of attitudes, symbols and icons which are specific to that segment of society.

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PROCESS

HIGHWAY

For centuries man has dealt with enclosed space, now with the development of the highway systems, he must design to accommodate the vast space and directionality--linearity of the highway space. This space, bounded on two sides and of infinite linear dimension, is transitory in nature--being modified by intermediate points of departure, arrival and final destination. These points of departure, transition, arrival and destination are amplified by changes in sensory stimulus and energy produced (consumed) by the system. As one enters, travels and exits the highway space, he experiences changes in sound from the engine, tires on the pavement and from the AM radio. These are accompanied by the feeling of movement and acceleration, as well as visual changes in the landscape.

Throughout the system, a passenger is exposed to the smell of the automobile, rubber tires, oil and gasoline. Billboards and advertisements beckon him to the many fried food establishments along the route, assuring him that he does "deserve a break today".

Within the apparent disorder¹ of the highway and its system are recognizable symbols. Signs, both the

¹Henri Bergson claims, "disorder is an order we cannot see". Venturi, et al., Learning From Las Vegas, MIT Press, (Cambridge, Mass., 1972), p xi.

big green signs and other civic (highway) signs are symbolic instructions to the motorist. The STOP sign and possibly yield or route marker signs show up outside highway use, and can be considered icons of the highway. There is no question in the mind of this student that the white line has already become an icon too.

If one is to consider the definition of Marc Trieb, who claims, "an icon is a unit which denotes the salient features of a product or service which can be retained in the mind,"² then such advertisements (symbols and imagery) as Coca-Cola, Holiday Inn and Burma Shave must be considered icons also.

Outside the highway site, billboards, fast architecture and the truck driver are identified for their pictographic literary style, scale and detail, and for their macho. No matter where one parks a diesel semi, it still remains a part of the highway and its imagery, becoming the most recognizable truck stop icon of all.

For this system and its specific sub-culture there is an accompanying set of values, many are general values held by society, however some are especially recognizable or somewhat specific to the truck stop society. Profit motive communication, speed (on the highway, in the ad-

²Marc Trieb, "Eye-Konism", (Part I), Print, (March/April, 1973), p 70.

vertising and service provided) and the probability of human encounter are among the most important values of this sub-culture and are recognized through and documented by the symbols and imagery of the microcosm. Without refueling, they become the truck drivers' home on wheels for days on end. Kenworth, Peterbilt, Mack White Freightliner, International and Chevrolet all build diesel tractors with everything ranging from 300 cubic inch engines, six speed transmissions and plain cabs to 600 cubic inch engines with eighteen to twenty-four gears and nine foot wide cabover sleepers (complete with stereo, television, refrigerator and double bed).

Truckers frequently customize their "rigs" with special paint jobs, extra mirrors and lights, custom grill-work and most recently with fins and deflectors that increase their aerodynamics. Today almost no truck is without a citizen's band radio. The trucks represent a sizeable investment to the owner-operator, who has spent \$18,000 and more on tractor and trailer, depending upon their age, custom features and trailer type (flatbed, reefer, lowboy, tanker or box).

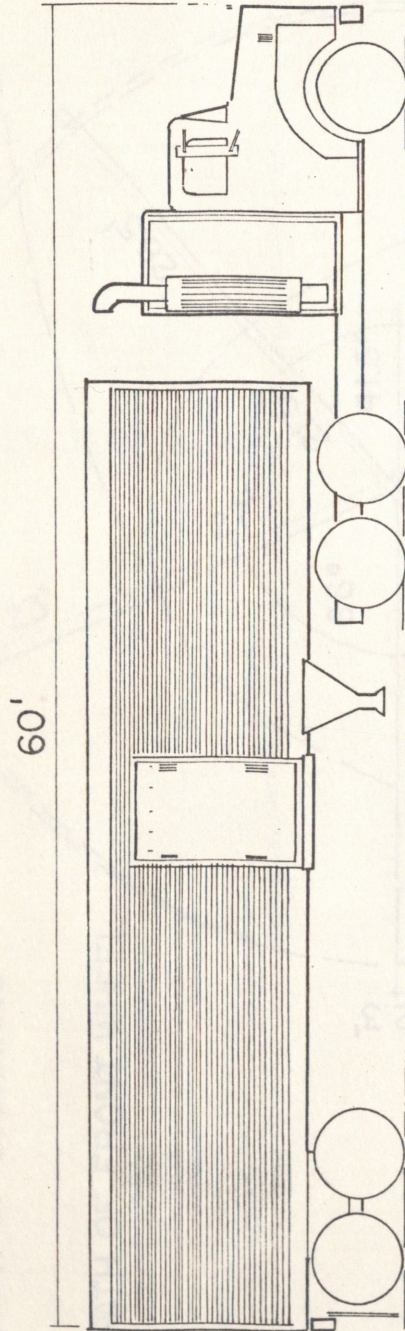
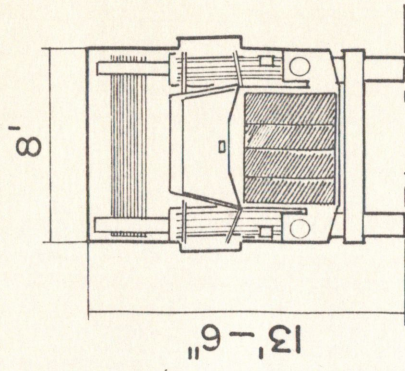
"Eighteen wheelers", while built for speed, volume and durability, are modified for the owner's comfort and to display that individual's independence and individuality.

TRUCKS

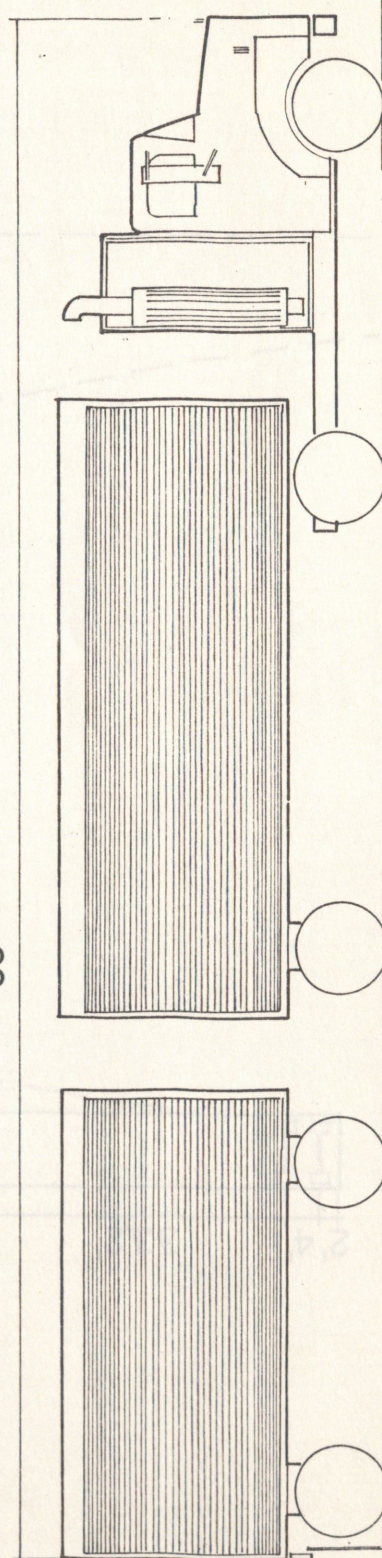
The diesel truck is the most recognizable icon of the trucking industry. Capable of hauling in excess of 30,000 pounds of freight and traveling over 1,000 miles without refueling, they become the truck drivers' home on wheels for days on end. Kenworth, Peterbuilt, Mack White Freightliner, International and Chevrolet all build diesel tractors with everything ranging from 300 cubic inch engines, six speed transmissions and plain cabs to 800 cubic inch engines with eighteen to twenty-four gears and nine foot wide cabover sleepers (complete with stereo, television, refrigerator and double bed).

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SEMITRAILER & TRAILER / TRACTOR



SEMITRAILER, TRAILER & TRACTOR

1" = 8'

TRUCKS

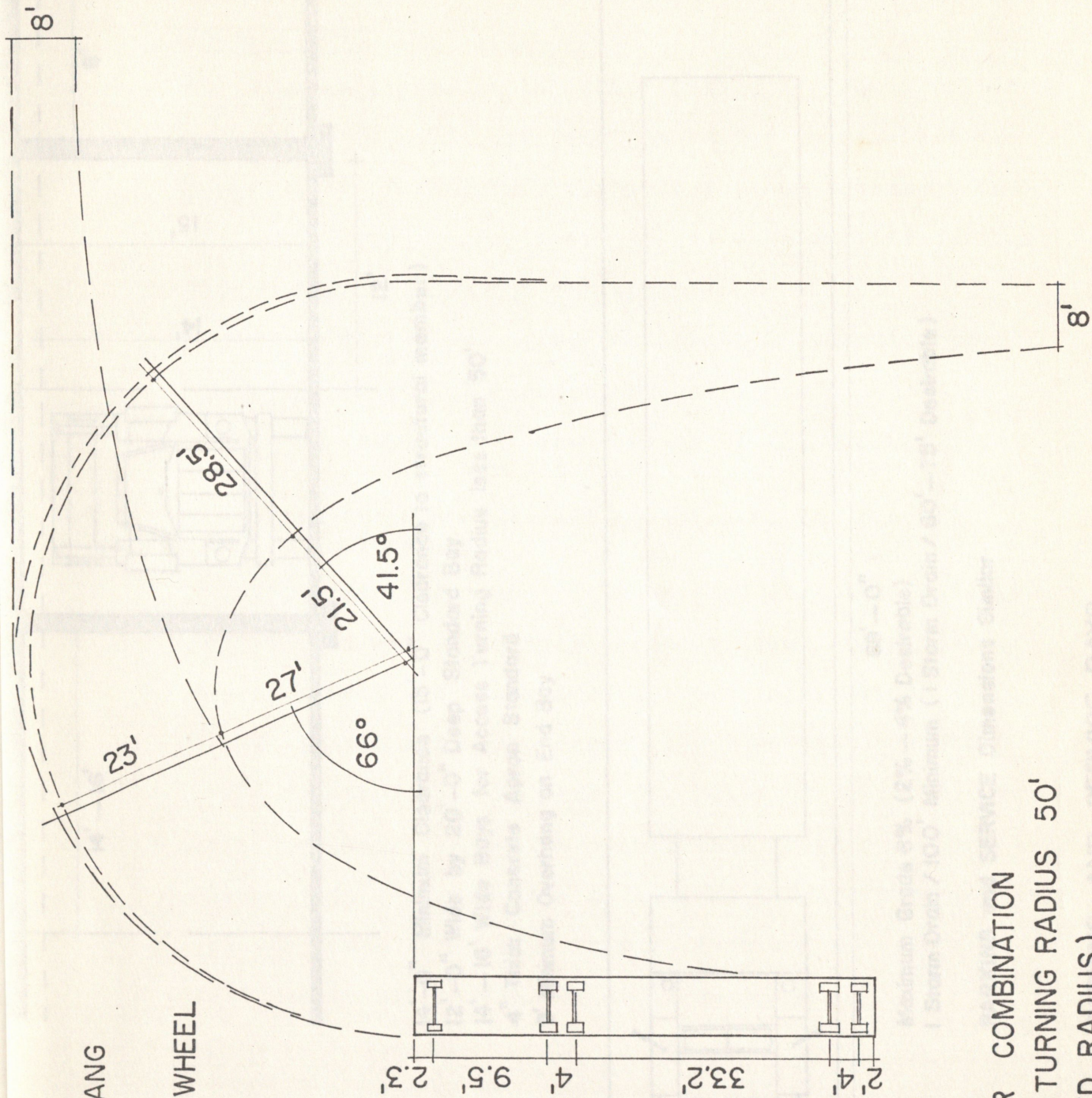
50' SEMITRAILER COMBINATION

MIN. PRACTICAL TURNING RADIUS 50'

MONTANA LEGAL MAX.

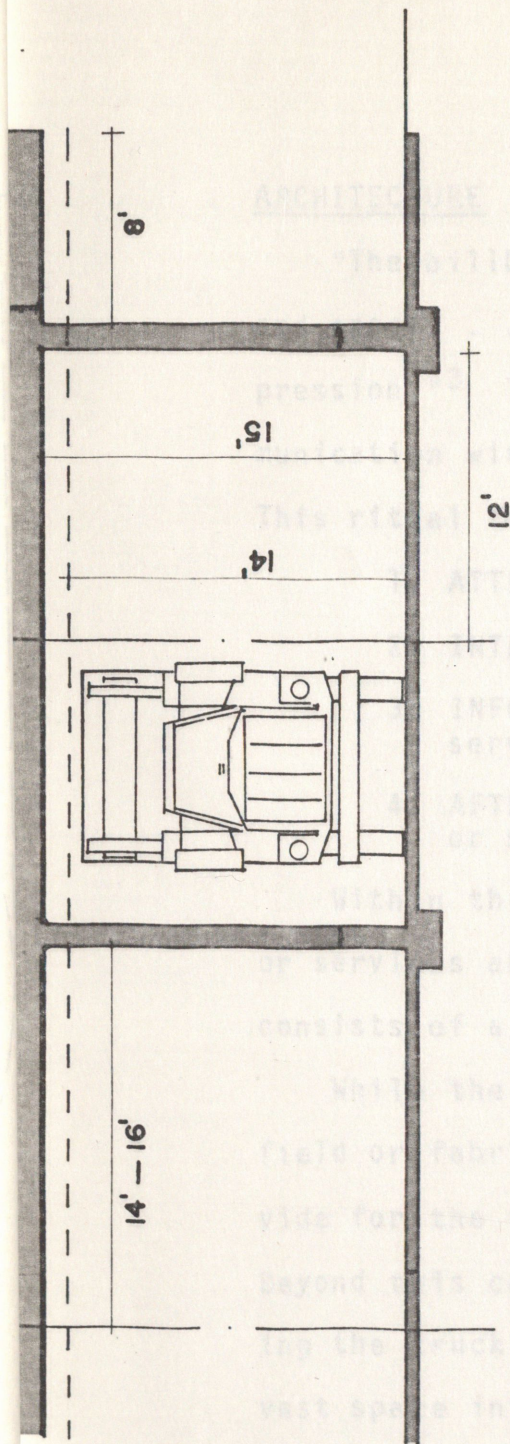
PATH OF OVERHANG

PATH OF FRONT WHEEL

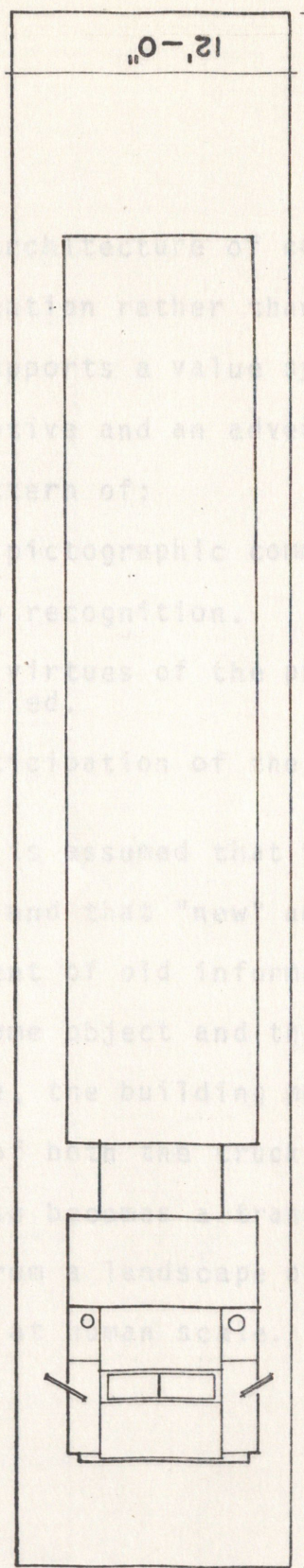


50' SEMITRAILER COMBINATION
MIN. PRACTICAL TURNING RADIUS 50'
(63' PREFERRED RADIUS)

1" = 20'



- 14'-0" Minimum Clearance (15'-0" Clearance to structural member)
- 12'-0" Wide by 20'-0" Deep Standard Bay
- 14'-16' Wide Bays for Access Turning Radius less than 50'
- 4" Thick Concrete Apron Standard
- 8' Minimum Overhang on End Bay



69'-0"

Maximum Grade 6% (2% - 4% Desirable)
 1 Storm Drain / 100' Minimum (1 Storm Drain / 60' - 75' Desirable)

PARKING and SERVICE Dimensions Similar

1" = 8'

PARKING AND SERVICE BAYS

ARCHITECTURE

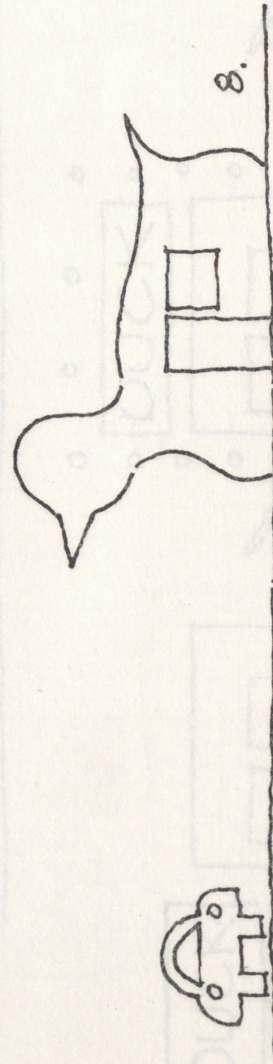
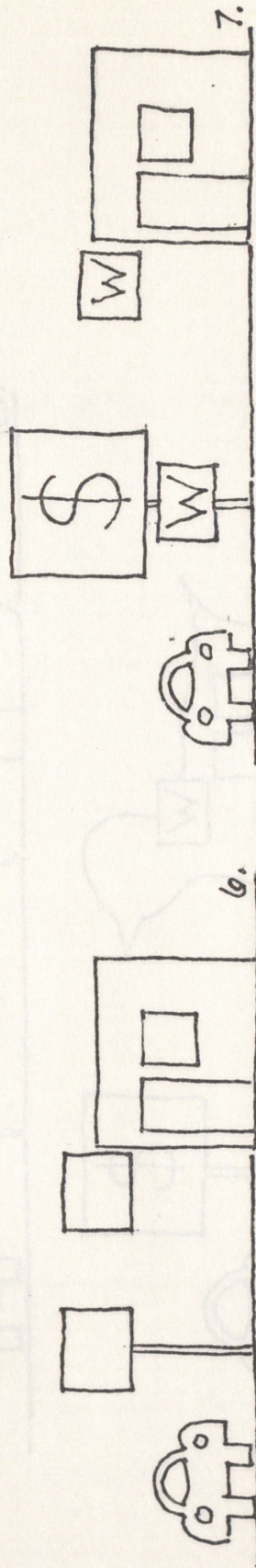
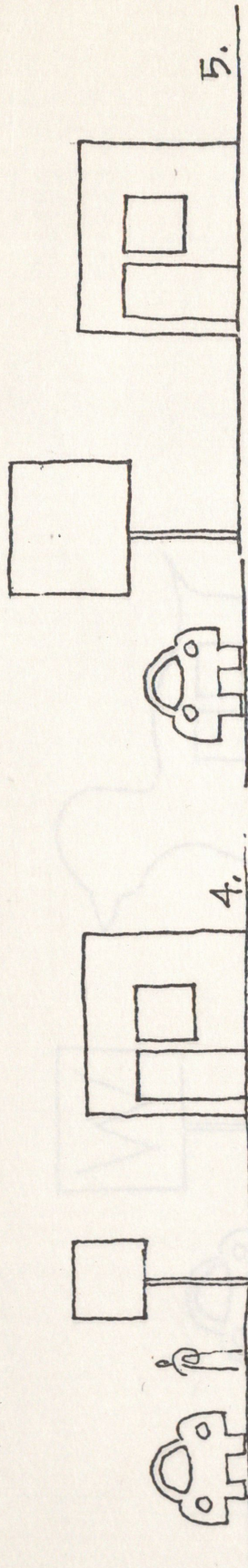
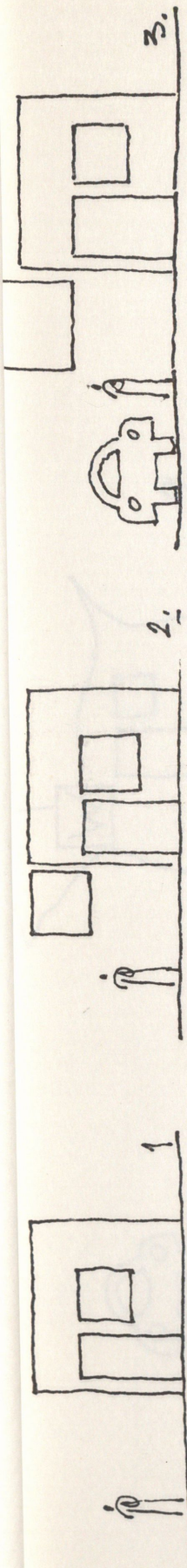
"The billboard is the architecture of communication and space. . .bold communication rather than subtle expression."³ The highway supports a value system of communication with a profit motive and an advertising ritual. This ritual follows the pattern of:

1. ATTENTION--using pictographic communication.
2. INTEREST--through recognition.
3. INFORMATION--the virtues of the product or service are extolled.
4. AFTERTHOUGHT--anticipation of the product or service.

Within this pattern it is assumed that the products or services are of quality and that "new" advertisement consists of a new arrangement of old information.

While the sign has become object and the building field or fabric of the site, the building must still provide for the rejuvenation of both the truck and its driver. Beyond this capacity it also becomes a transformer, bringing the truck and driver from a landscape of speed and vast space into relaxation at human scale.

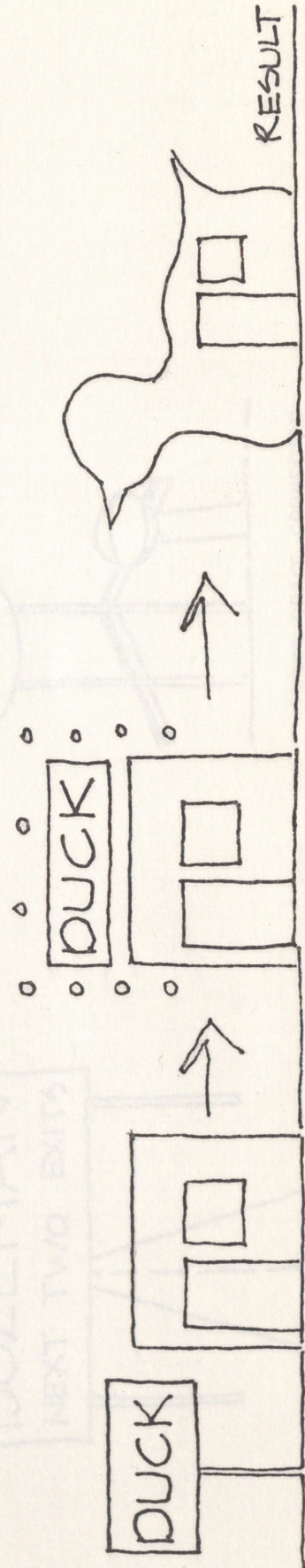
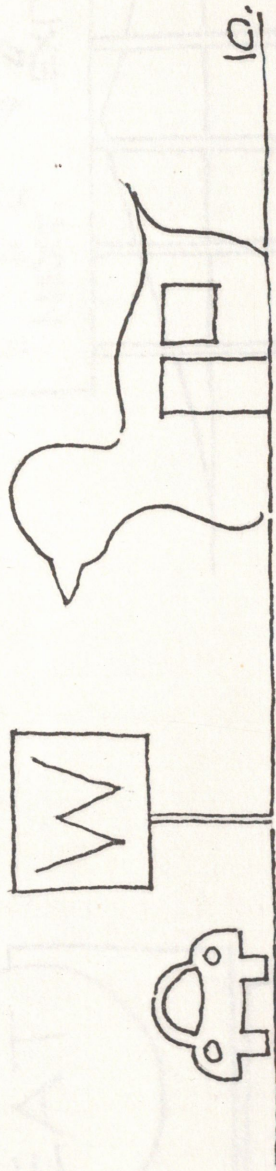
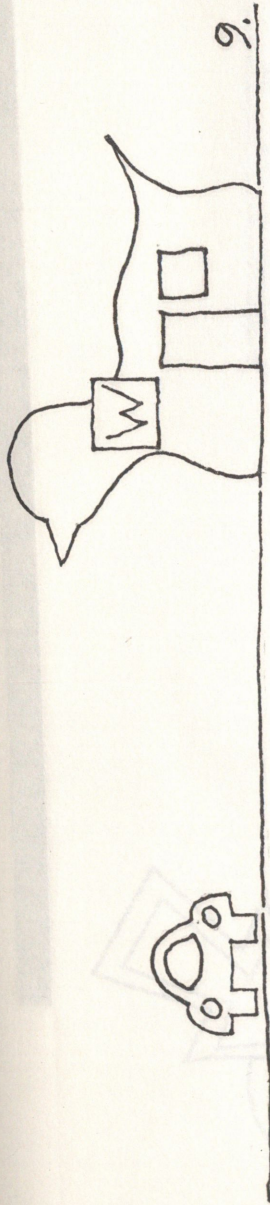
³Venturi, et al., Learning From Las Vegas, MIT Press, (Cambridge, Mass., 1972), p 40.



\$ \rightarrow\$ PICTOGRAPH (SYMBOL)
W \$\rightarrow\$ WORD (LITERATURE)

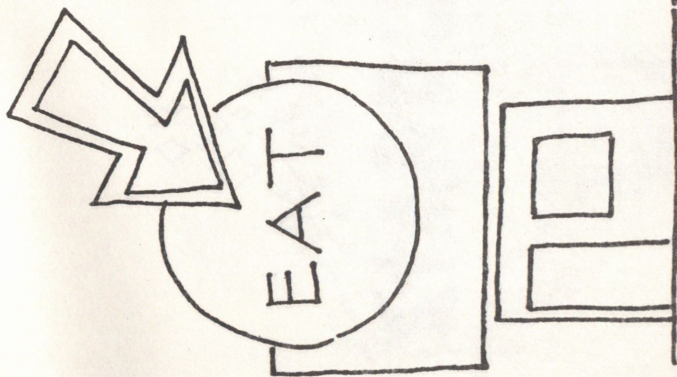
BUILDING/SIGN

(FROM VENTURI, ET. AL.)

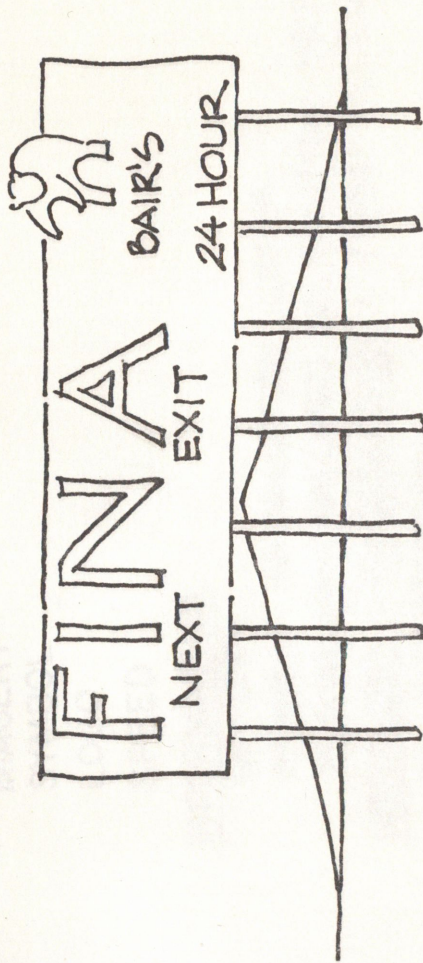


BUILDING/SIGN

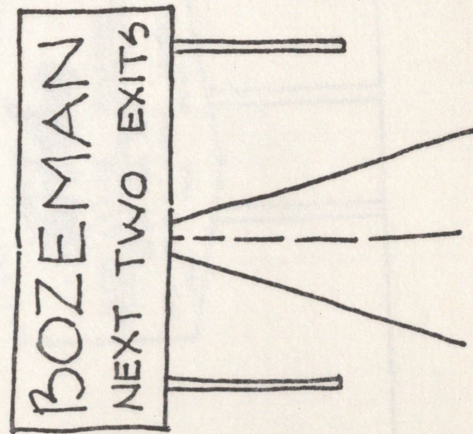
(FROM VENTURI, ET. AL.)



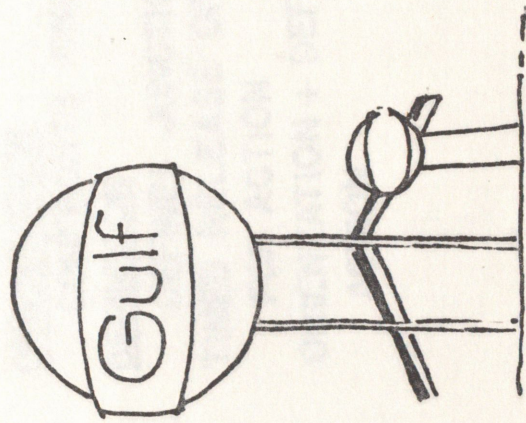
PERSUADER TO ENCLOSED SPACE



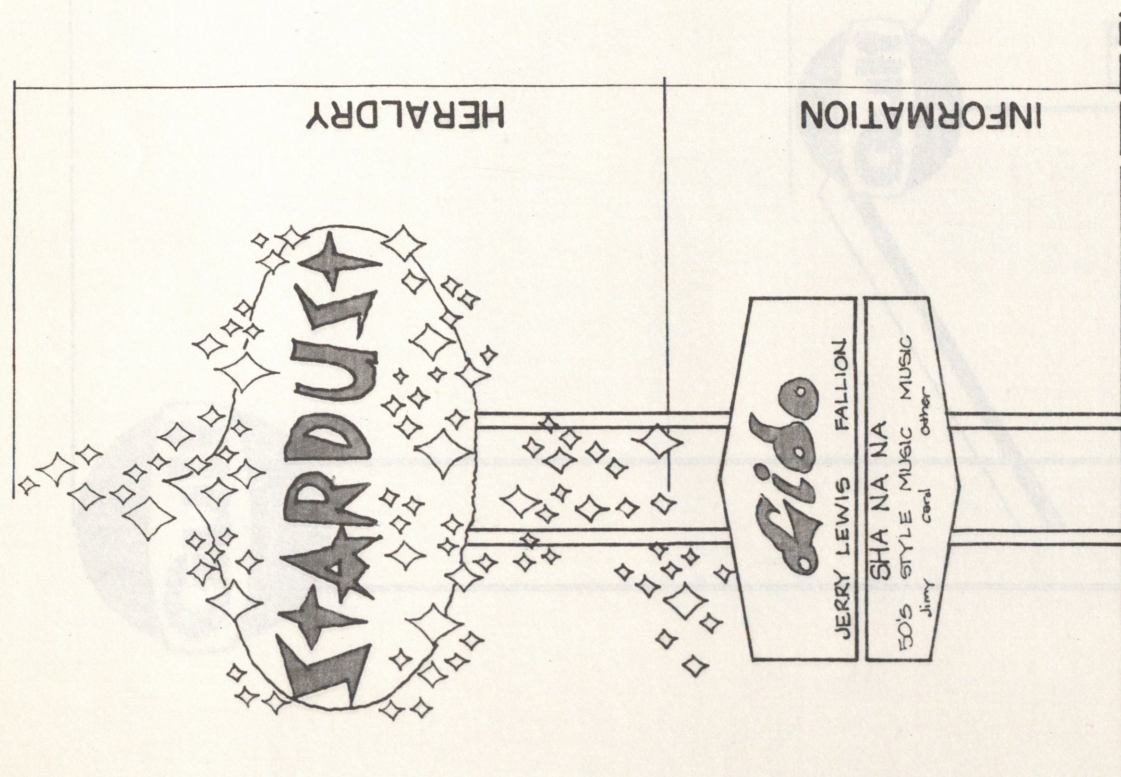
VAST SPACE PERSUADER



VAST SPACE DIVIDER (WITH CIVIC INFORMATION)



VAST SPACE CONNECTOR



HERALDRY

IMAGERY

SYMBOL

LOGO

SPEED

INFORMATION

BREVITY

PRIMARY INFORMATION LARGE

SECONDARY (SPECIFIC) INFORMATION SMALL

HERALDRY + INFORMATION = TIMED RELEASE

OF INFORMATION

ORIENTATION

CONFRONTS ONCOMING TRAFFIC

DEFINITION

DEFINES JUNCTION OF SITE AND STREET

TIMED RELEASE OF INFORMATION = SUGGESTION

FOR ACTION

ORIENTATION + DEFINITION = DIRECTION FOR

ACTION



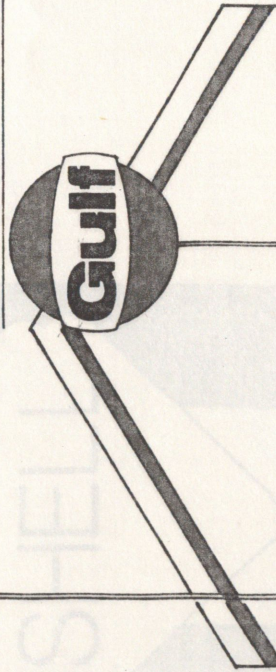
HERALDRY

(SPECIFIC)
HERALDRY

SANS SERIF
MAJOR OIL COMPANY LOGO
"GAS"
HOT COLORS (RED, ORANGE, YELLOW)

INFORMATION

SMALL HERALDRY
CANOPY DESIGN
PRICE DISPLAY

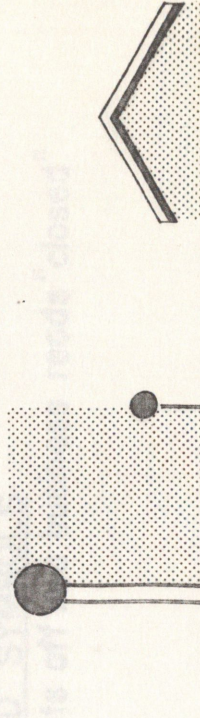


INFORMATION

¹⁸
ORIENTATION

CONFRONTS MAJOR TRAFFIC FLOW
DEFINITION

SIGNS DEFINE SPACES OF ACTIVE,
PASSIVE AND TRANSITION



Street

Active

Transition

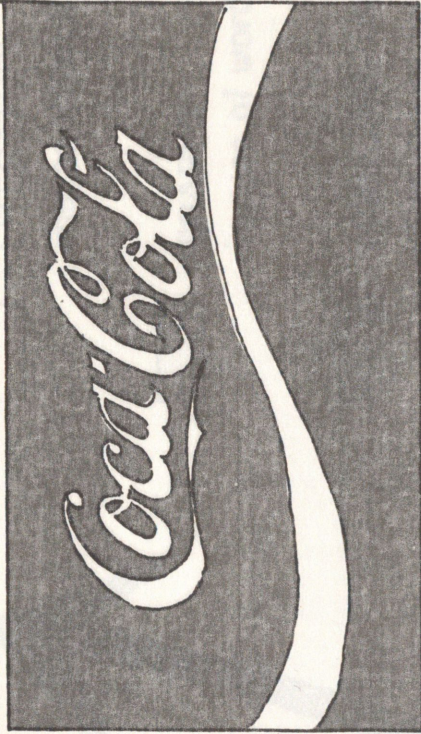
Passive

PHYSIOGNOMY OF A (Gasoline) SIGN



INTENDED SYMBOLS

DEPENDANT upon words
to read "Sand H Green Stamps"



OBLIQUE SYMBOLS

"Coca-Cola" also reads "food"



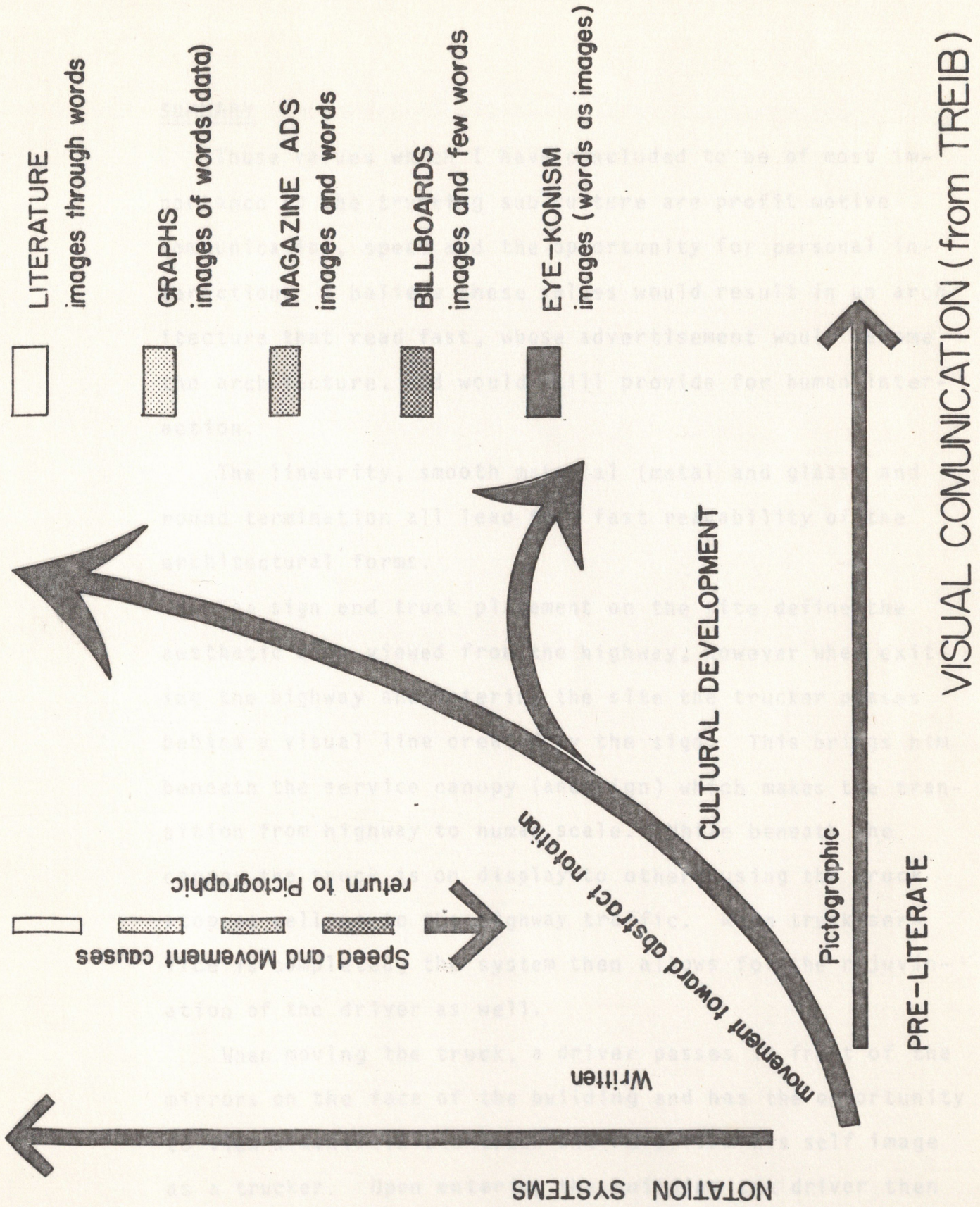
INTENDED SYMBOLS

INDEPENDANT of words
to read as a "Shell"

IMPLIED SYMBOLS

Lights off in a business reads "closed"

SYMBOLIC FUNCTION



SUMMARY

Those values which I have concluded to be of most importance to the trucking sub-culture are profit motive, communication, speed and the opportunity for personal interaction. I believe these values would result in an architecture that read fast, whose advertisement would become the architecture, and would still provide for human interaction.

The linearity, smooth material (metal and glass) and round termination all lead to a fast readability of the architectural forms.

The sign and truck placement on the site define the aesthetic when viewed from the highway, however when exiting the highway and entering the site the trucker passes behind a visual line created by the sign. This brings him beneath the service canopy (and sign) which makes the transition from highway to human scale. While beneath the canopy the truck is on display to others using the truck stop as well as to the highway traffic. When truck service is completed, the system then allows for the rejuvenation of the driver as well.

When moving the truck, a driver passes in front of the mirrors on the face of the building and has the opportunity to view himself in the truck and re-affirm his self image as a trucker. Upon entering the building the driver then has the choice of intimate rest and relaxation in the

trucker's lounge and showers, or social interaction in the diner.

Cars and their occupants exist on the site solely as spectators to the trucks, drivers and their sequence of events.

J. B. Jackson, Landscapes, University of Massachusetts Press, (1973).

John S. Margolies, "Now Once And For All, Know Why I Did It", Progressive Architecture, (September, 1970), pp. 118-120.

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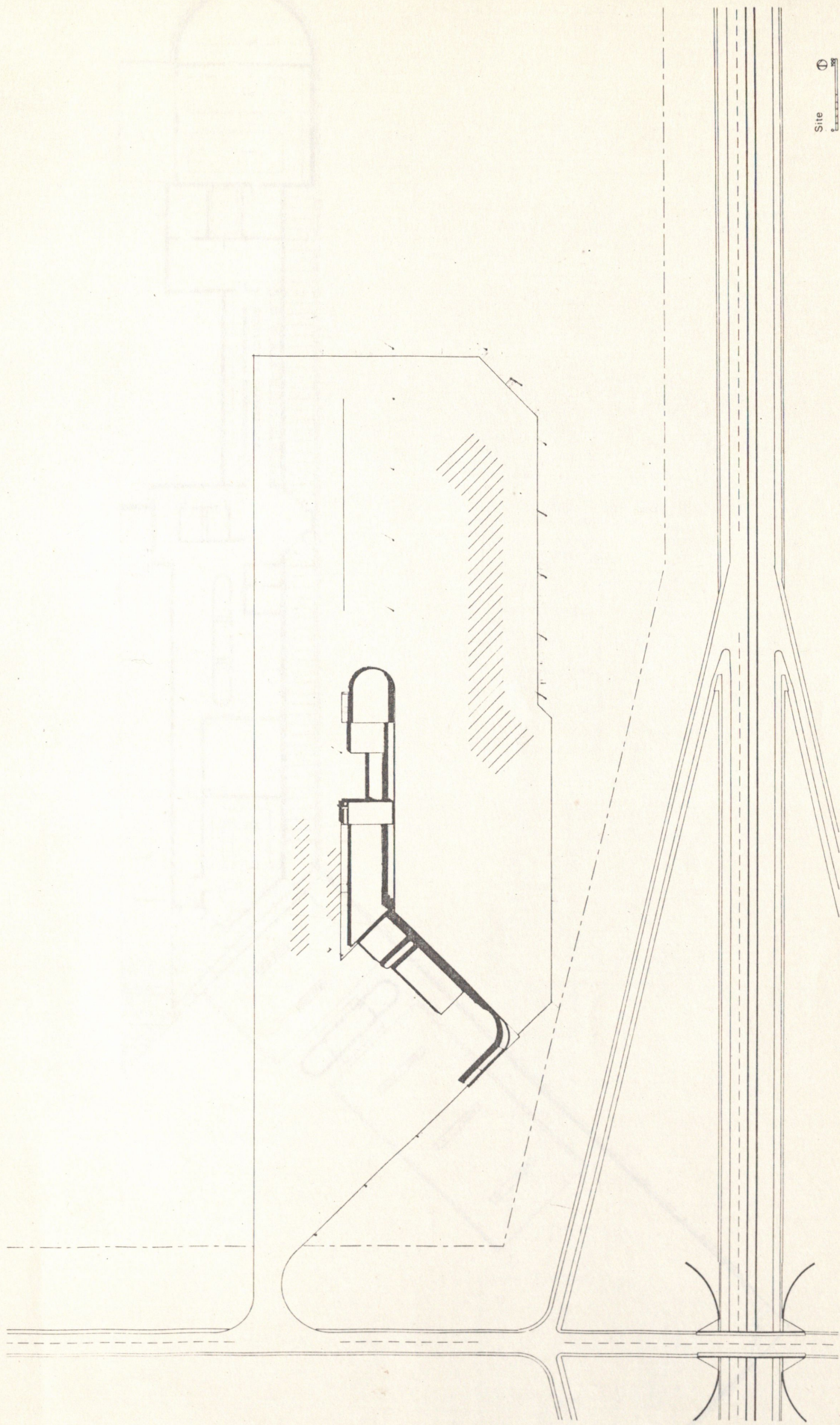
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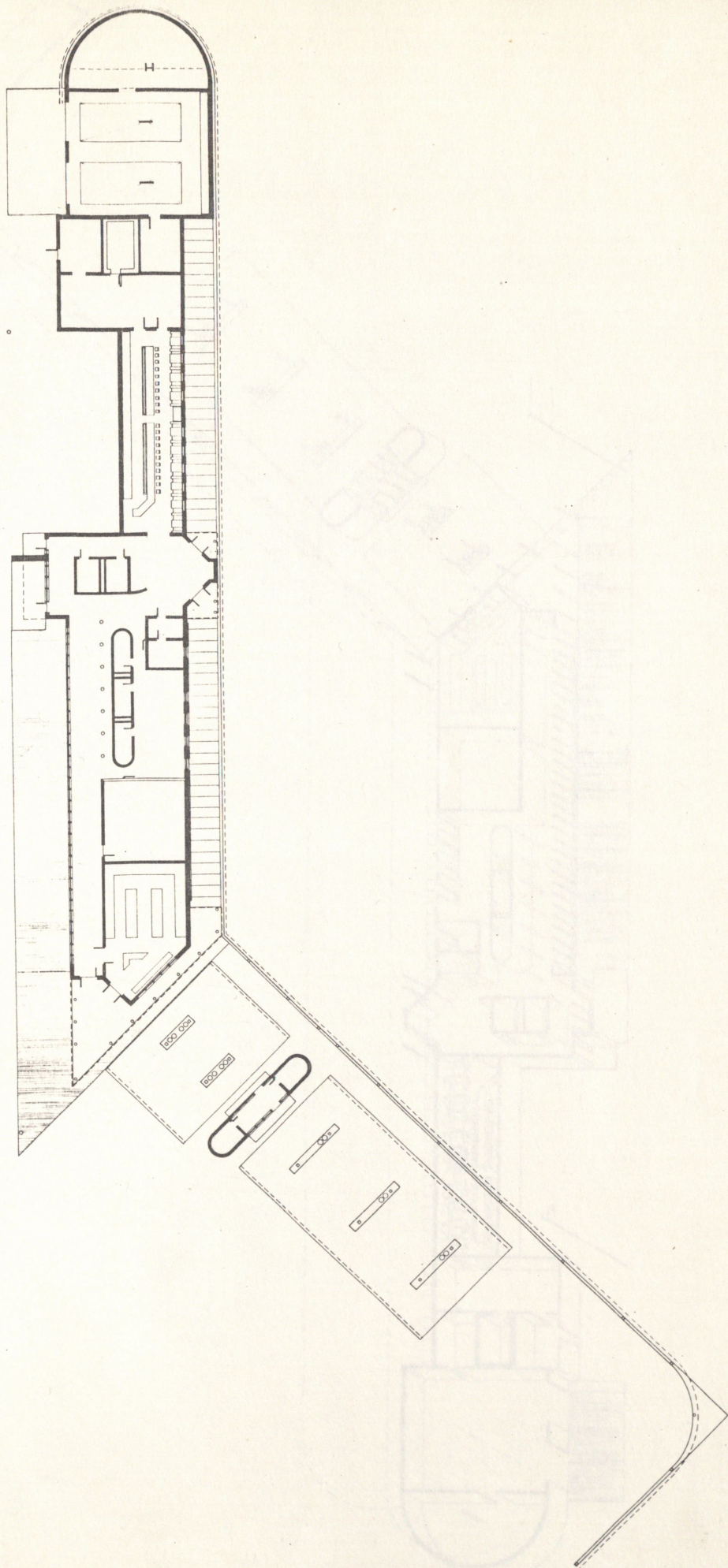
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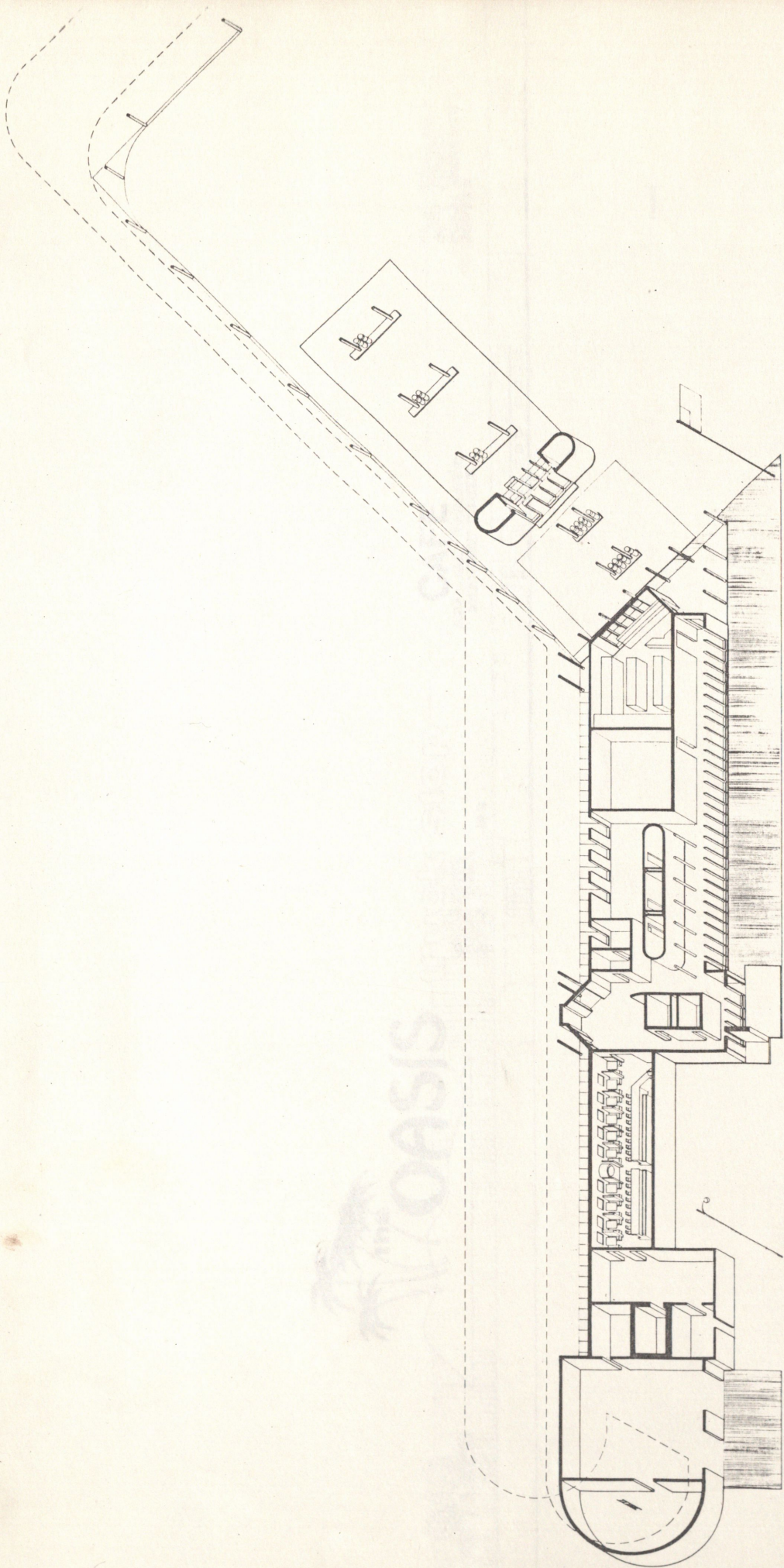
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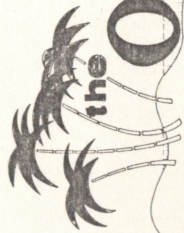
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Site 0







OASIS

GAS
FOR LESS

truck stop

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COLD BEER
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ICE

CAFE

ASPHALT NOMAD'S
HIGHWAY DINER

24 Hour

FULL SERVICE
REPAIR

Facade

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An American truck stop /



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