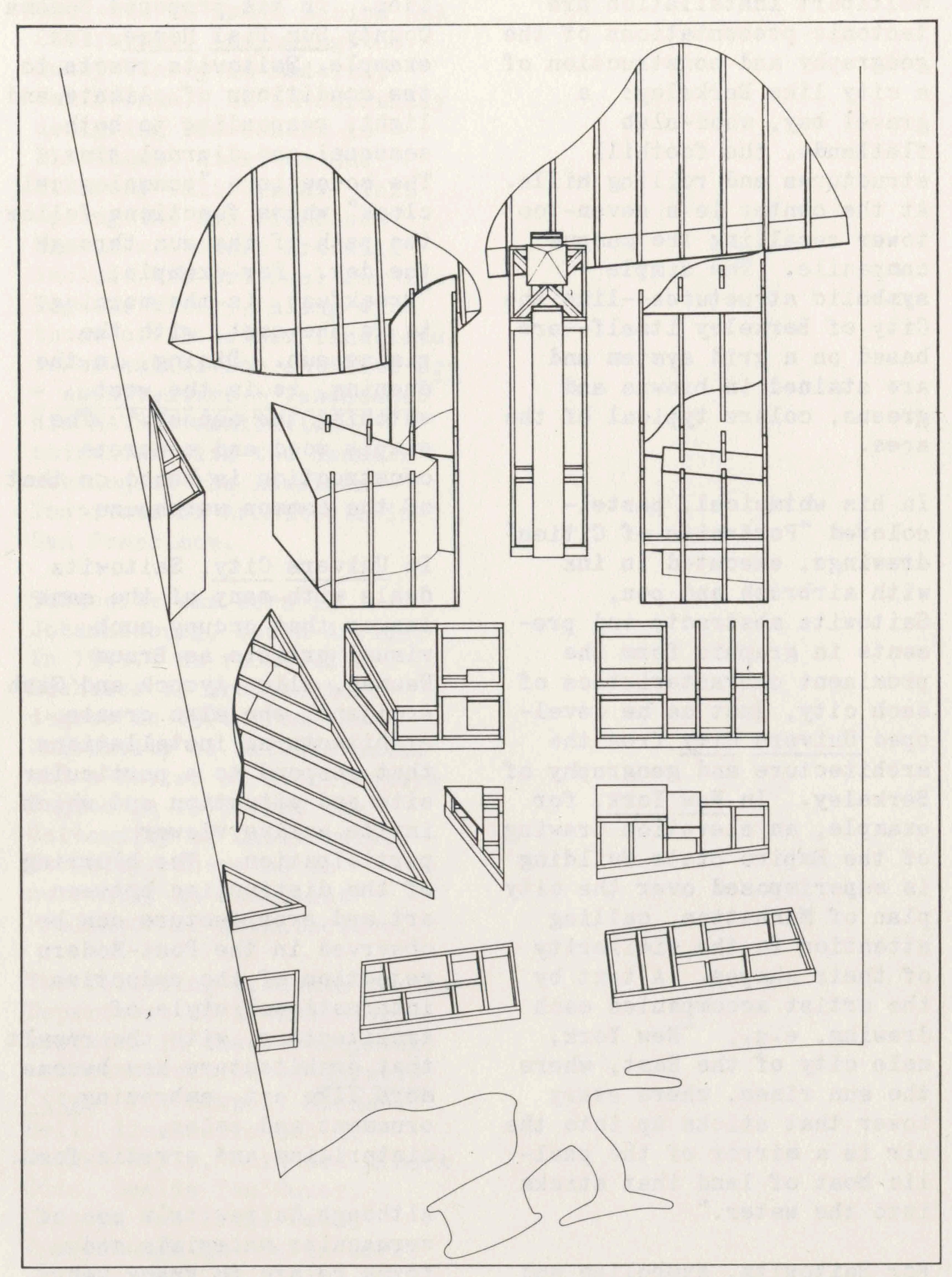
Axonometric View, Univers City, 1985.
Drawing by Michael Bell.



Univers City is a unique installation designed by architect Stanley Saitowitz especially for the MATRIX program. Saitowitz sees the architectural installation as a "habitable painting," the first three-dimensional component of his "Portraits of Cities" drawings; several of the drawings are also included in this exhibition.

The wood components of the multipart installation are tectonic presentations of the geography and construction of a city like Berkeley: a gravel bay, wood-slab flatlands, the foothill structures and rolling hills. At the center is a seven-foot tower recalling the campus campanile. The simple symbolic structures--like the City of Berkeley itself--are based on a grid system and are stained in browns and greens, colors typical of the area.

In his whimsical, pastelcolored "Portraits of Cities" drawings, executed in ink with airbrush and pen, Saitowitz abstracts and presents in graphic form the prominent characteristics of each city, just as he developed Univers City from the architecture and geography of Berkeley. In New York, for example, an elevation drawing of the Empire State Building is superimposed over the city plan of Manhattan, calling attention to the similarity of their shapes. A text by the artist accompanies each drawing, e.g., "New York, male city of the East, where the sun rises, where every tower that sticks up into the air is a mirror of the phallic boat of land that sticks into the water."

For Saitowitz, symbolism and poetry are fundamental

architectural issues. Metaphor, social interaction and revelation of process are as important in generating final form in Saitowitz's building designs as they were in his development of Univers City. Saitowitz derives the original concept for a project from the particular circumstance--functional, social, geographic; the building itself is a "material construct" of that idea. In his proposed Sonoma County Sun Dial House, for example, Saitowitz reacts to the conditions of climate and light, responding to both seasonal and diurnal time. The house is a "cosmological clock" whose functions follow the path of the sun through the day. For example, "Breakfast, in the morning, is in the east, with the rising sun. Dining, in the evening, is in the west, watching the sunset." The simple wood and concrete construction is based on that of the common warehouse.

In Univers City, Saitowitz deals with many of the same issues that occupy such visual artists as Bruce Nauman, Alice Aycock and Siah Armijani, who also create architectural installations that respond to a particular site and situation and which invite active viewer participation. The blurring of the distinction between art and architecture can be observed in the Post-Modern rejection of the reductive international style of architecture, with the result that architecture has become more like art, embracing ornament and color, historicism and erratic form.

Although Saitowitz's use of vernacular materials and forms relate to Frank Gehry, and his conceptual approach to his colleague Lars Lerup (MATRIX 76), his architectural work cannot be neatly placed within an established style such as Late- or Post-Modern. In his own words, Saitowitz is interested in an "architecture free of the weight of habit and the arbitrariness of taste."

Saitowitz practices architecture in San Francisco and has completed many projects in South Africa and California, including the Quady Winery in Madeira, California. He is currently designing residences in Blackhawk, Atherton and Tiburon, California. This spring the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art will include his proposal for the Pegasus Winery, along with those of the other finalists, in an exhibition entitled art + architecture + landscape. His MATRIX exhibition coincides with the annual meeting of the American Institute of Architects in San Francisco.

Saitowitz was born in
Johannesburg, South Africa,
in 1949. He received a
Bachelor of Architecture
degree in 1974 from the
University of Witwatersrand
and a Master of Architecture
degree in 1977 from the
University of California,
Berkeley, where he is
currently an Assistant
Professor of Architecture.

The following students in the Department of Architecture assisted in the development and construction of Univers

City: Tim Rempel, Michael

Bell, Alessandro Belli,

George Boyle, Kain Bon Albert
Chan, Leslie Van Duzer,
Carolyn Van Lang, David

Vanderburgh and David Work.

We are grateful to Mr. and Mrs. David C. Robinson and an anonymous donor, whose generous gifts have made this exhibition possible.

Constance Lewallen

Note: All quotations are from writings by Stanley Saitowitz.

Works in MATRIX:

- 1. Univers City, 1985, 16part installation, 2 x 4's,
 plywood, gravel, wood stain,
 65' x 27' overall floor
 dimensions, and related
 drawings. Lent by the
 artist.
- 2. Restoration: Peoples
 Park, Berkeley, California,
 1978.
- 3. Family of Cities: New York, 1980.
- 4. Family of Cities: San Francisco, 1980.
- 5. Family of Cities: Washington, 1981.
- 6. Family of Cities: Los Angeles, 1981.
- 7. Family of Cities: Chicago, 1984.

All drawings are ink on paper, 30" x 40", lent by the artist.

Selected group exhibitions:

Space Gallery, L.A.,

Conceptual Architecture, '77;

Blueprint Gallery, Seattle,

WA, '79, '80; Rizzoli Gallery,

N.Y., The Edge of

Architecture, '80; Philippe

Bonnafont Gallery, S.F., '80,

'82; National Academy of

Design, N.Y., California

Counterpoint, '83 (traveled

to San Francisco Museum of

Modern Art; catalogue).

Selected bibliograpy (see also catalogues under exhibitions):

"Calculated Uncertainty,"
Progressive Architecture,
March 1982.

Treib, Marc. "Stanley Saitowitz: Evocation and Transformation," Studio International (London), vol. 195, no. 995, 1982.

"New Waves in American-Architecture," G. A. Houses 10, Tokyo, 1982.

The Architecture of Cities (1984 calendar) (South San Francisco: Maximillian Company Portfolio, 1983).

Adams, Gerald. "In Search of Architectural Superstars," San Francisco Examiner, Nov. 16, 1983.

Giovannini, Joseph.

"Bold Imaginings: 10

California Architects," New
York Times, July 14, 1983.

Filip, Janice.

"California Architecture,"
City Arts (S.F.), Dec.-Jan.,

1984.

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