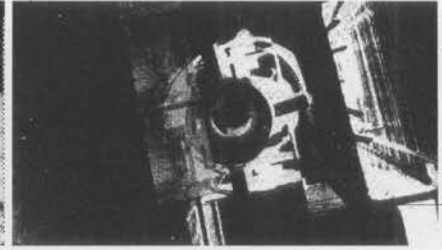


# The Urban Observ (i) tory

# Chris Brett

surveillance (-va'l-) n. Supervision, close observation, invigilation, esp. of suspected person. [F.f. sur(veiller f.L. vigilare Keep Watch)]  
 sur'vey (-va) n. General view, casting eyes or mind over something; inspection or investigation of the condition, amount.  
 survey' (-va') v.t. Let the eyes pass over, take a general view of, form general idea of the arrangement.



To what extent is surveillance active in the urban, social, and architectural fabric of the metropolis, and how does the language and character of surveillance disguise itself in the architectural fabric?

Surveillance, the casting of the gaze and the mind over someone or something, begins to silently reconnoitre the limits[?] of the threshold. It seeps through cracks of resistance, and renders the private realm suspect and available. While the power of surveillance is realized primarily by technological means, the theatre within which this activity takes place constitutes the urban fabric. But the walls are no longer impermeable. The shelter's walls are breached.

Ultimately, surveillance addresses the privileged point of view. This is the means through which we envisage, create, and realize architecture.

Using surveillance as a parable for architectural realization, the privileged point of view and what is selectively revealed and concealed manifests itself in the very language the architectural discipline chooses to describe itself with.

## Cast of Characters

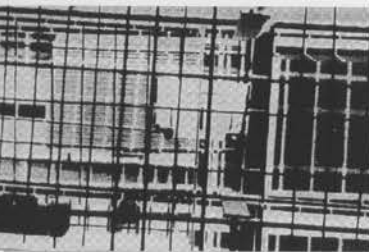
**The Vagrant.** An interesting visual circumstance revealed itself yesterday. There was a Rauschenberg painting on 10th Avenue, standing with a man who saw less than his share of daylight. The painting disappeared through a door, and the man leaned into the doorway to see where it was going. By then, however, there was nothing but a fluttering piece of news print stuck between a guard rail and the wall. He would never forget the Rauschenberg. He would have to please himself with his favourite activity each day. A woman would appear each morning exiting the ACE tracks on the right side of the street. He took the time to imagine a conversation with her. He had by now become quite familiar with the speed at which she walked and when she would adjust her heel. She always had a tendency to stop and look at a suit in Pablo's window. In the evening, she would exit 119 5th Avenue, and make her way back down the street to the ACE station. Billy goes home and writes.

**The Map-maker.** He enjoys his perspective on life. He chose not to rationalize the construct with which he gazed. It was the power of immutable line revealing. The world in which the map-maker lives is a coded one. The physical reality, and the testament of presence is described. The line defines the boundary, but does not, in his eyes, define inside and outside. Thresholds are defined. This is the map-maker's vocabulary. His privileged point of view enjoys perspectives, orthogonal, and establishes limits. Pablo's window is a series of lines.

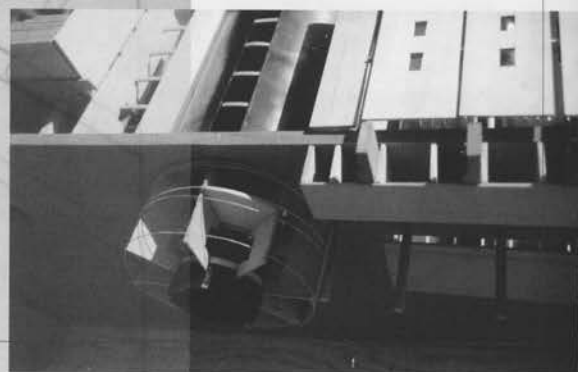
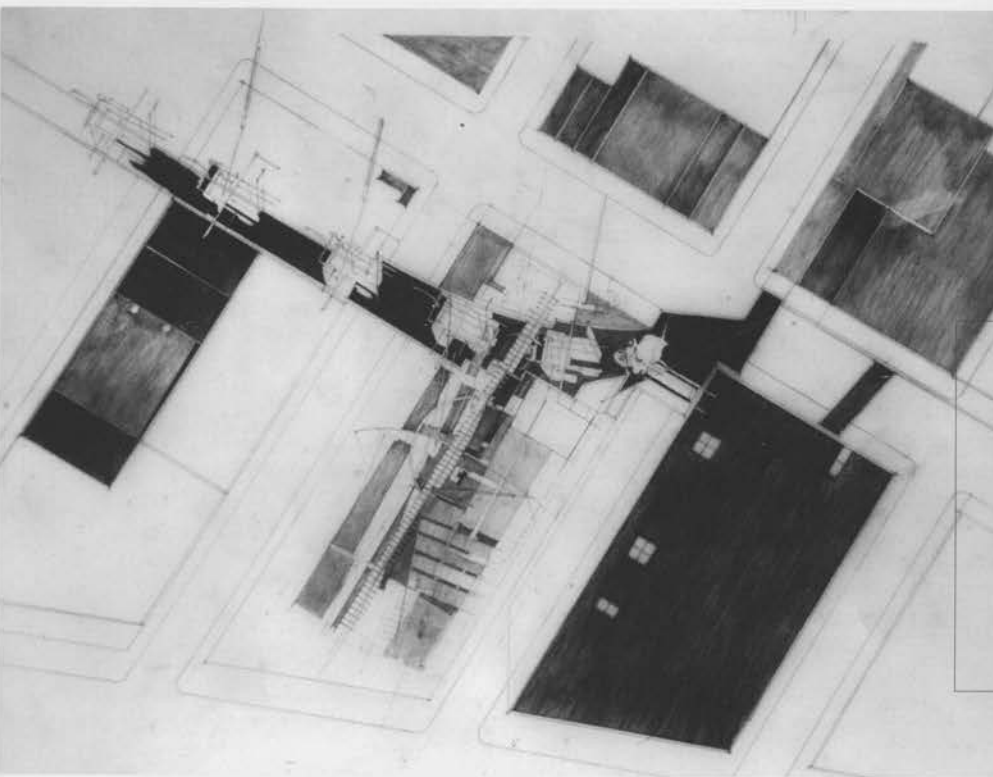
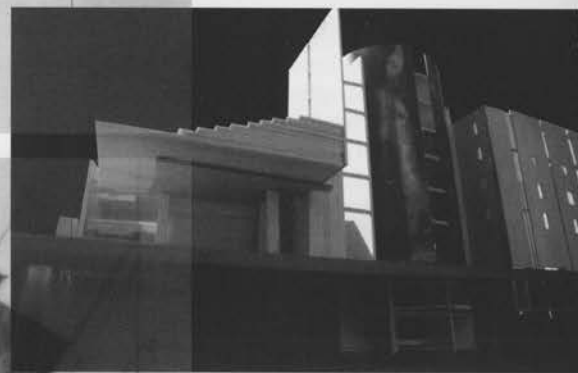
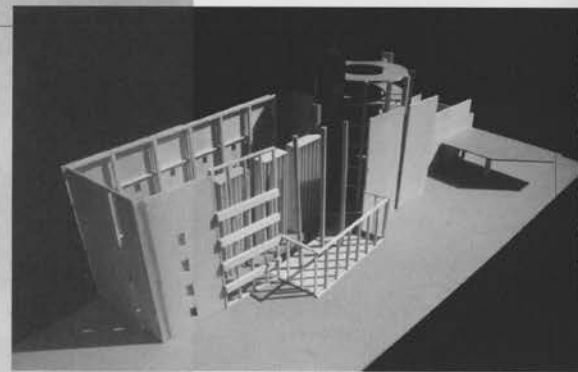
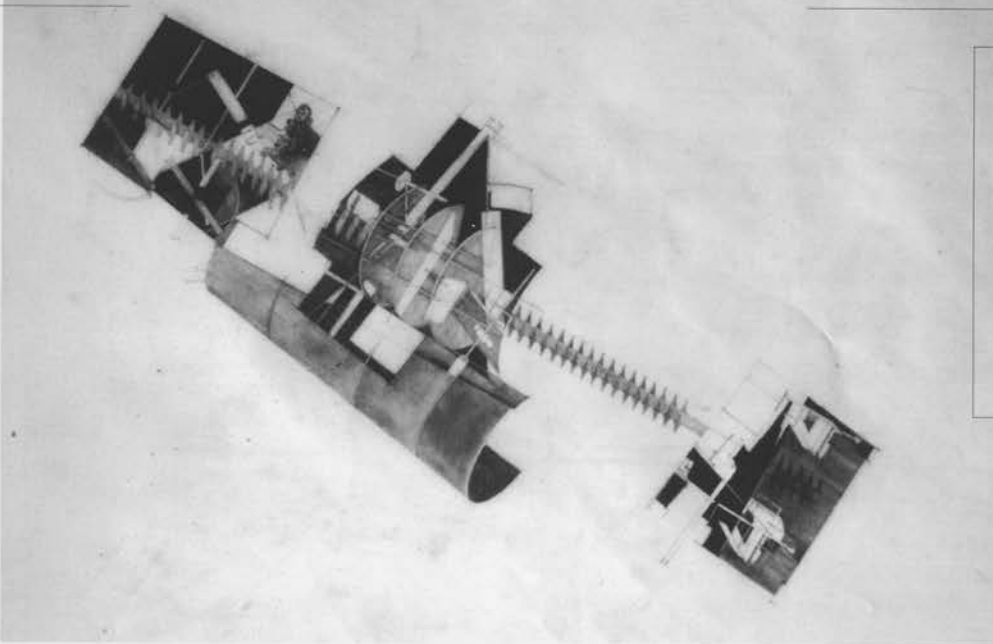
**The Mask-maker.** He said 'it is not illusion, but a physical construct where one reality is momentarily concealed, but later revealed.' Revealing, concealing, but always watching. The nature of discussion is monologue, in which foreground and background are clearly set in context. At one point the subject will find the secrets concealed, and the world the mask-maker inhabits. It happens when he turns the corner.

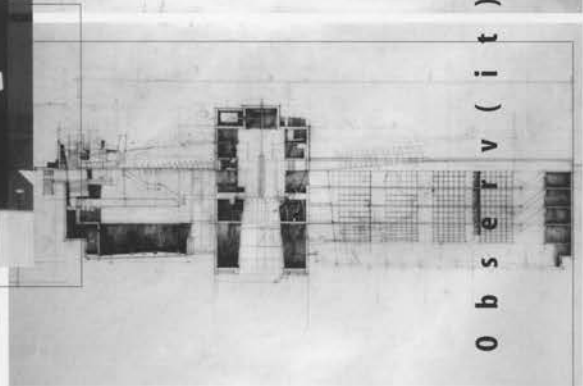
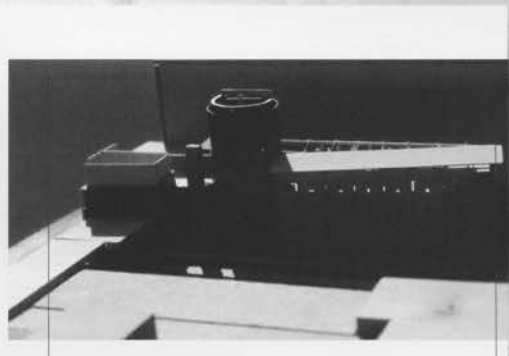
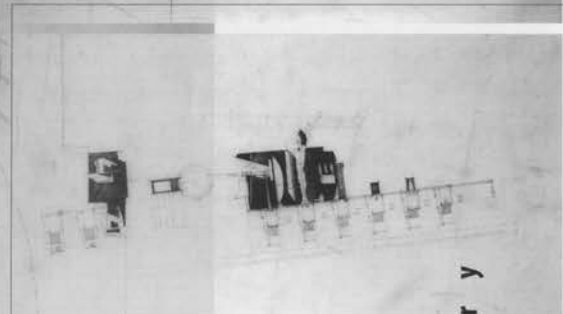
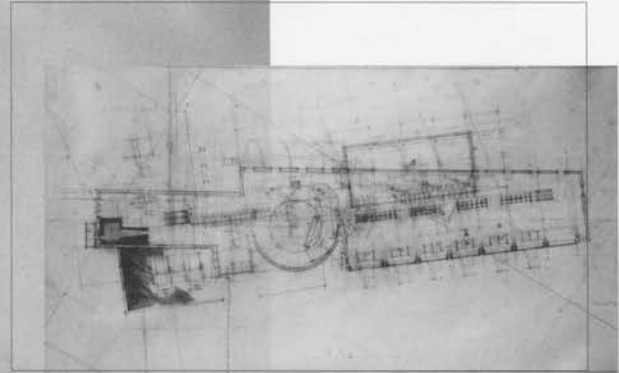
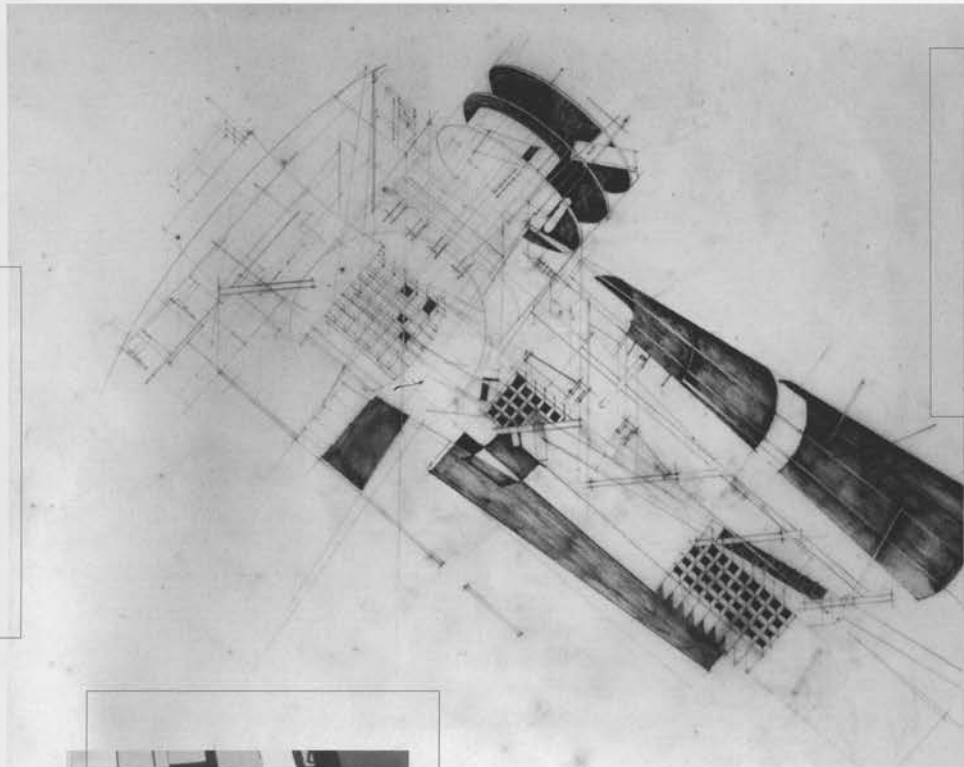
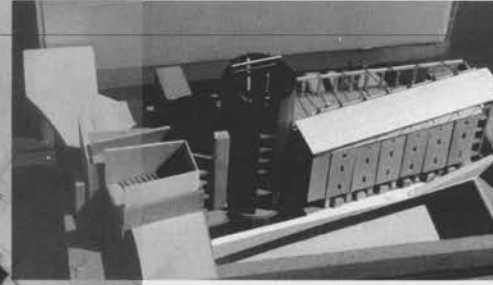
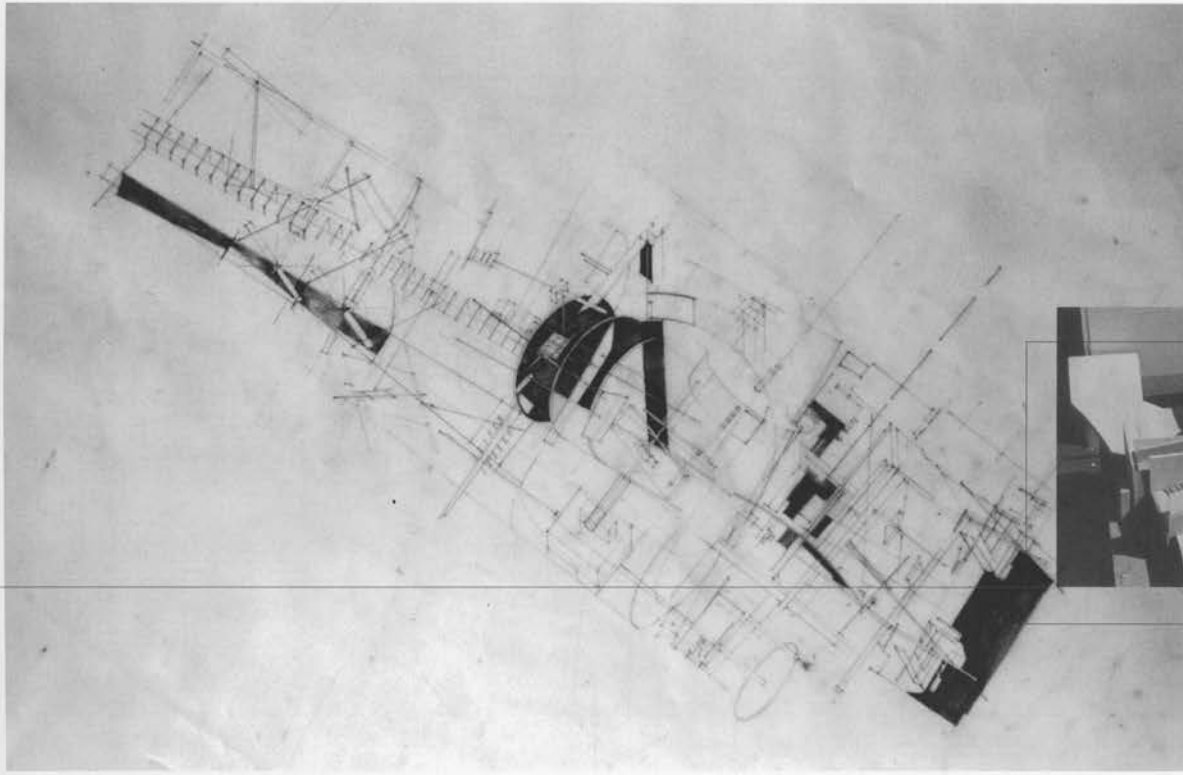
**The Doorman.** The doorman crosses the threshold. He concerns himself with the inside and the outside. The doorman knows the world within and without. He surveys the world outside and its inhabitants, and knows the secrets and maps of the world within. He is the doppelganger.





The character outlines serve to distinguish manners of representation. The nature of representation implies a locus from which various conditions are delineated, revealed and simultaneously hidden. In this respect, the situational characters, and their applied qualities and positioning attempt to test the notion of the architectural threshold: what is visible, what is revealed and simultaneously concealed. A world of parallax unfolds, as one vagrant hides behind the column, watching the mask-maker perpetually hide his face, unknowingly allowing the map-maker to define place, while the doorman stands inbetween. The specificity of positioning, as implied by the constituents of the 'surveillant' world, carries with it qualities of representation which establish context and proposition as real and immanent.





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