

PLAYGROUND OF MY MIND

Julia Jacquette





AT A NEWLY, AND ABUNDANTLY, DECORATED CHRISTMAS

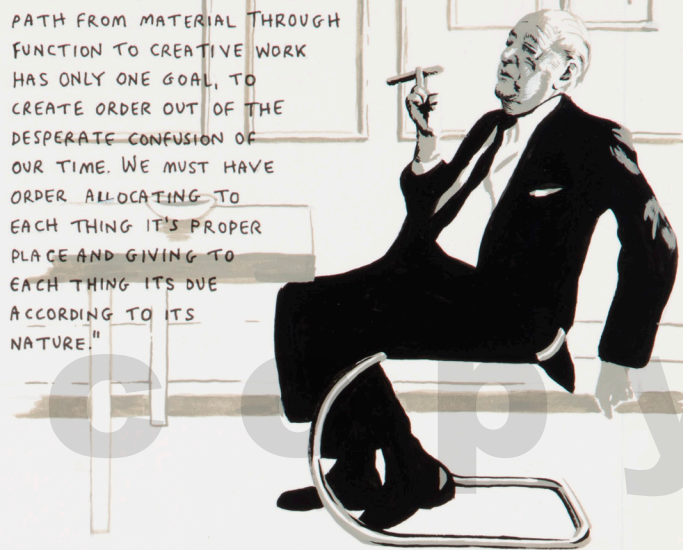
A NEIGHBOR ONCE RECOUNTED SEEING MY MOM GLARING...



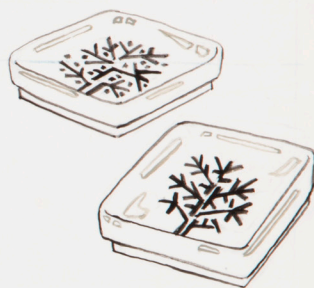
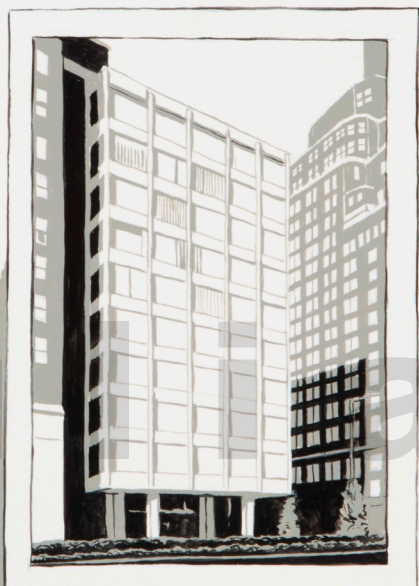
My mom remarked, "I believe less is more."

TREE IN THE LOBBY OF OUR APARTMENT BUILDING...

MY MOM OF COURSE WAS QUOTING THE RENOWNED 20TH-CENTURY MODERNIST ARCHITECT LUDWIG MIES VAN DER ROHE. HE WAS SOMEONE WHO WAS MENTIONED QUITE FREQUENTLY IN OUR HOUSEHOLD "THE LONG PATH FROM MATERIAL THROUGH FUNCTION TO CREATIVE WORK HAS ONLY ONE GOAL, TO CREATE ORDER OUT OF THE DESPERATE CONFUSION OF OUR TIME. WE MUST HAVE ORDER ALLOCATING TO EACH THING ITS PROPER PLACE AND GIVING TO EACH THING ITS DUE ACCORDING TO ITS NATURE."

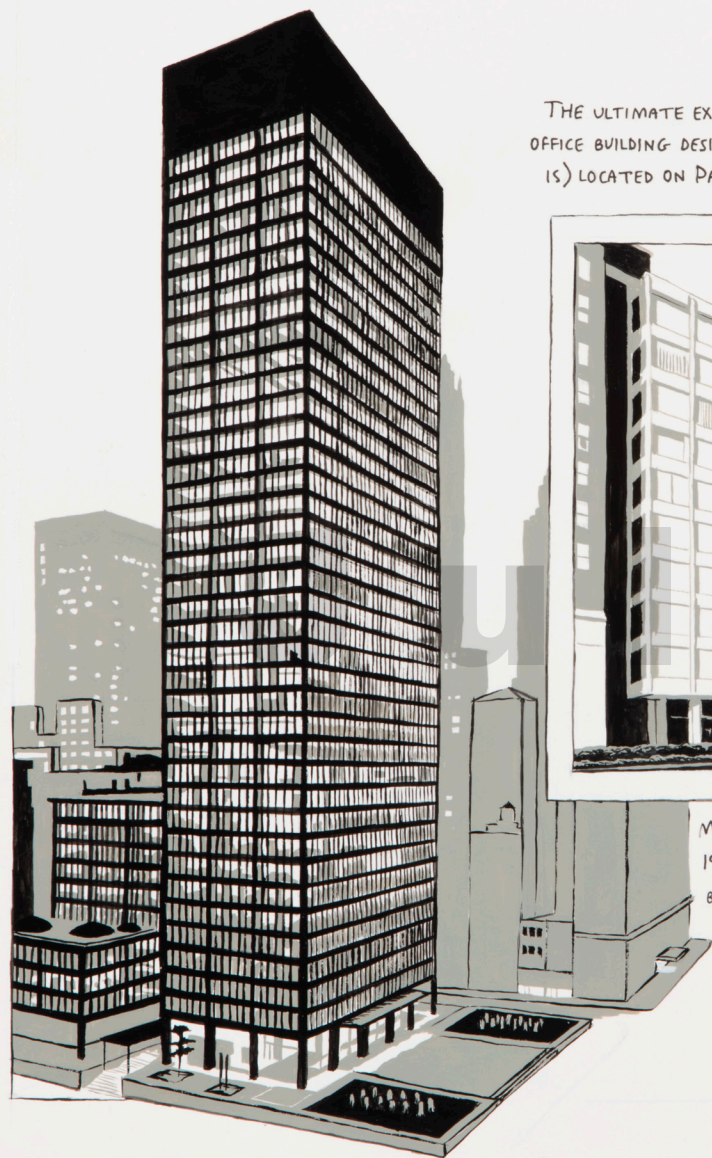


THE ULTIMATE EXAMPLE OF ORDER WAS MIES'S ELEGANT INFLUENTIAL, MINIMALIST OFFICE BUILDING DESIGNED FOR THE SEAGRAM CORPORATION WHICH WAS (AND STILL IS) LOCATED ON PARK AVENUE JUST A COUPLE OF MILES SOUTH OF THE BUILDING I GREW UP IN.



THE SEAGRAM BUILDING HAD ITS OWN MYTHICAL PRESENCE IN OUR HOUSEHOLD. MY DAD OFTEN REFERRED TO IT IN CONVERSATION, AND WE ALSO HAD TWO SMALL ASHTRAYS FROM THE FAMOUS RESTAURANT ON THE GROUND FLOOR, THE FOUR SEASONS.

MOM AND DAD HAD SWIPED THEM WHILE THERE ON A DATE IN THE 1960s. ABOVE: ANOTHER FAVORITE, THE OLIVETTI/PEPSI-CO BUILDING BY SKIDMORE, OWINGS AND MERRILL, PARK AVENUE.



"ARCHITECTURE IS THE WILL OF AN EPOCH TRANSLATED INTO SPACE"

LUDWIG MIES VAN DER ROHE

OUR BUILDING WAS LOCATED AT 94TH STREET AND COLUMBUS AVENUE. THAT STRETCH OF COLUMBUS RESEMBLES A RIVER RUNNING THROUGH A CANYON. WITH ITS MANY SAME-HEIGHT APARTMENT BUILDINGS LINING THE AVENUE AND ITS ONSTANT TRAFFIC FLOWING DOWNTOWN. THESE BUILDINGS HAD POPPED UP AT THE SAME TIME, MANY OF THEM SUBSIDIZED HOUSING LIKE OUR BUILDING. OUR BUILDING HAD JUST BEEN COMPLETED WHEN MY FAMILY MOVED IN DURING 1966.

AND THE NEW YORK CITY NEIGHBORHOOD WHERE MY BROTHER AND I GREW UP WAS CERTAINLY INDICATIVE OF AN EPOCH: IT CAME OUT OF A TIME OF PROGRESSIVE SOCIAL PHILOSOPHIES MADE CONCRETE (BOTH LITERALLY AND FIGURATIVELY). UPPER COLUMBUS AVENUE HAD BEEN TORN DOWN AND REBUILT IN THE MID 1960s, WITH VAN DER ROHE'S AESTHETIC DEEPLY EMBEDDED IN THE DESIGN OF THE NEW APARTMENT BUILDINGS BEING BUILT THERE.



MUCH OF COLUMBUS AVENUE JUST SOUTH OF US REMAINED RUBLE-STREWN LOTS UNTIL THE CITY'S BOOM TIME OF THE 1980s.



DURING MY CHILDHOOD NEW YORK WAS FULL OF BURNED-OUT AND BRICKED-UP BUILDINGS, AND OUR NEIGHBORHOOD HAD ITS SHARE OF THEM. ALTHOUGH MANY FAMILIES LEFT THE CITY IN THE 50S AND 60S IT NEVER OCCURRED TO MY PARENTS TO EXIT NEW YORK CITY AND RELOCATE TO THE SUBURBS.



OUR LOCAL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PARTNERED WITH A TEACHERS' COLLEGE AND IMPLEMENTED AN "OPEN CLASSROOM" SYSTEM WHERE KIDS OF DIFFERENT AGES LEARNED IN TEAM-LIKE GROUPS.

THE CITY WAS SAID TO BE IN DECLINE, BUT THAT CHAOTIC

ATMOSPHERE ALSO FOSTERED



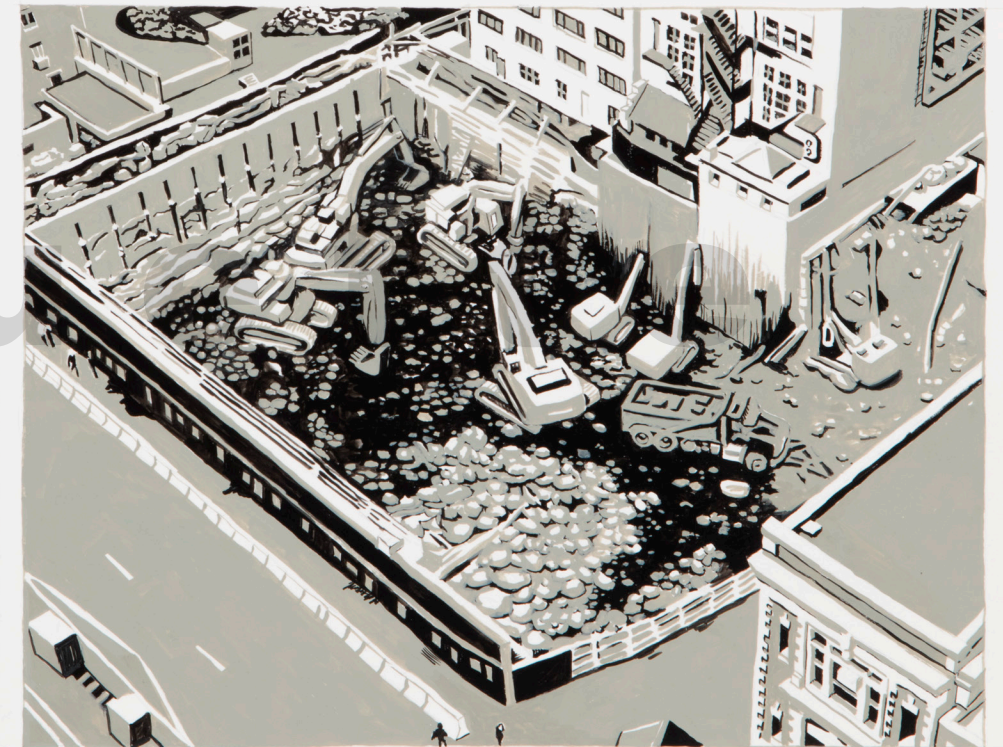
NEW IDEAS ABOUT WHAT A CITY, AND A SOCIETY, COULD BE.

PARENTS FROM THE NEIGHBORHOOD WORKED TOGETHER TO RENOVATE AN ABANDONED BUILDING AND TURN IT INTO A SCHOOL FOR KIDS TOO YOUNG FOR KINDERGARTEN IN THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL. IN GOOD WEATHER THE BACKYARD WAS USED FOR ART CLASSES. MY BROTHER LAWRENCE IS ON THE LEFT.



MY MOM CONTINUALLY EMPHASIZED TO MY BROTHER, MYSELF, AND MY FRIENDS, THAT GIRLS WERE JUST AS CAPABLE AND INTELLIGENT AS BOYS. SHE POINTED OUT HOW THE MEDIA OFTEN PORTRAYED WOMEN AS DITZY SEX OBJECTS. SHE ALSO WALKED IN THE FAMOUS WOMEN'S STRIKE FOR EQUALITY MARCH DOWN FIFTH AVENUE IN AUGUST OF 1970.

AMONG ALL THIS BREAKING APART AND CHANGE IN THE SOCIAL CONSCIOUSNESS - NOT TO MENTION CHANGES IN THE ACTUAL FABRIC OF THE CULTURE - THERE WAS MUCH NEW BUILDING: INNOVATIVE STRUCTURES THAT ATTEMPTED TO MAKE THE CITY BETTER.





THE BUILDING WE MOVED INTO IN 1966 WAS CALLED COLUMBUS PARK TOWERS.

MANY OF THE APARTMENT BUILDINGS IN OUR NEIGHBORHOOD, INCLUDING OURS WERE PART OF THE MITCHELL-LAMA PROGRAM DEVELOPED BY TWO NY STATE SENATORS, IT CREATED AFFORDABLE HOUSING FOR THOUSANDS OF FAMILIES AND INDIVIDUALS.

copy



OUR BUILDING HAD SOME INTERESTING FEATURES:

EACH APARTMENT HAD ITS OWN PRIVATE BALCONY. HERE'S MY AUNT GERMAINE ON OUR BALCONY, 1967.



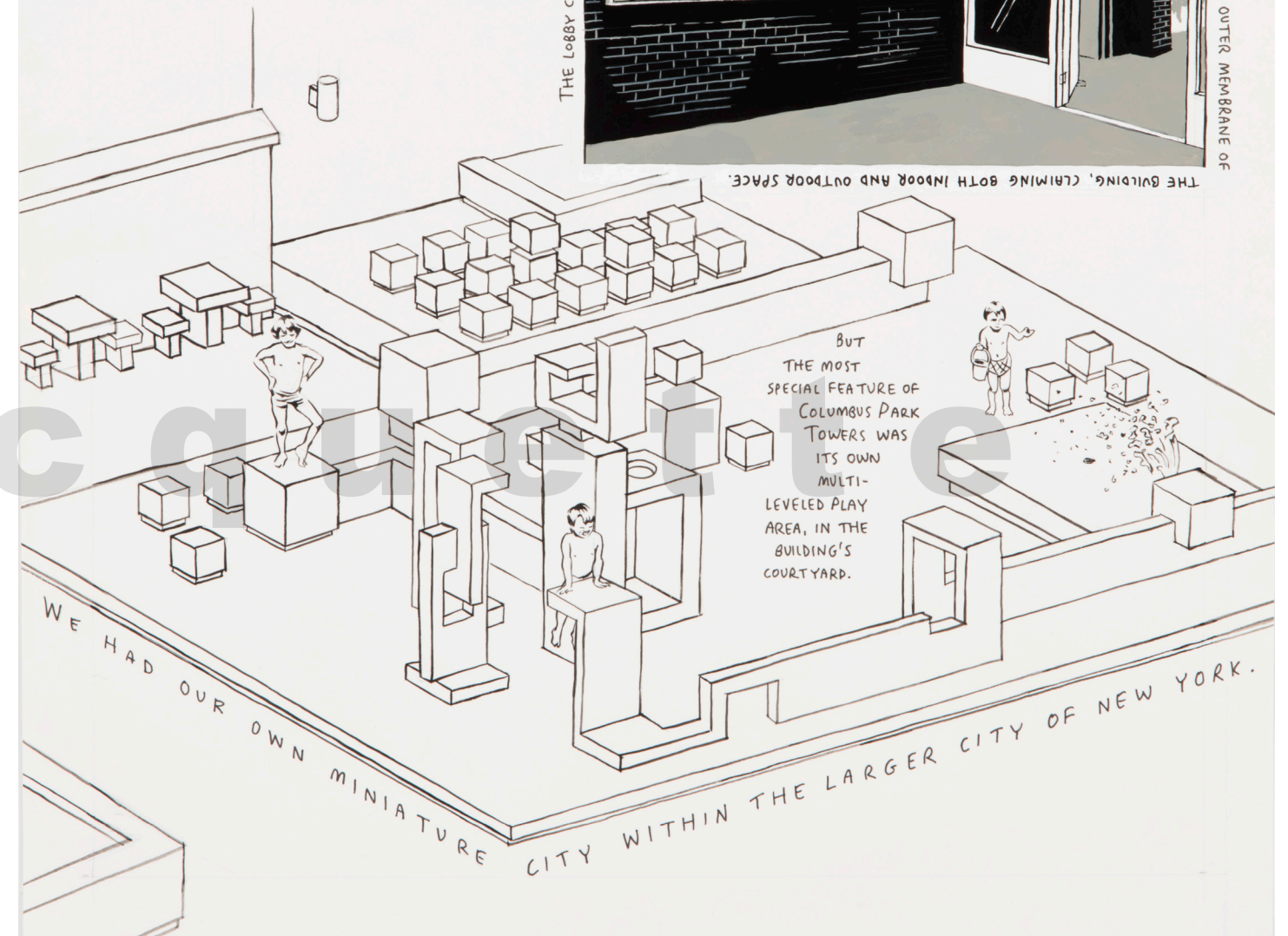
THE LOBBY CONTAINED A GIANT ENAMEL-ON-METAL MURAL BY PAUL HAMMER-HULTBERG. IT EXTENDED ONTO AN OUT-DOOR WALL, "BREAKING" THE OUTER MEMBRANE OF



THE LOBBY CONTAINED A GIANT ENAMEL-

DOOR WALL, "BREAKING" THE OUTER MEMBRANE OF

THE BUILDING, CLAIMING BOTH INDOOR AND OUTDOOR SPACE.



BUT THE MOST SPECIAL FEATURE OF COLUMBUS PARK TOWERS WAS ITS OWN MULTI-LEVELLED PLAY AREA, IN THE BUILDING'S COURTYARD.

WE HAD OUR OWN MINIATURE CITY WITHIN THE LARGER CITY OF NEW YORK.



THE ORIGINAL DESIGN CALLED FOR TWO TOWERS BUT ONLY ONE TOWER FIT.

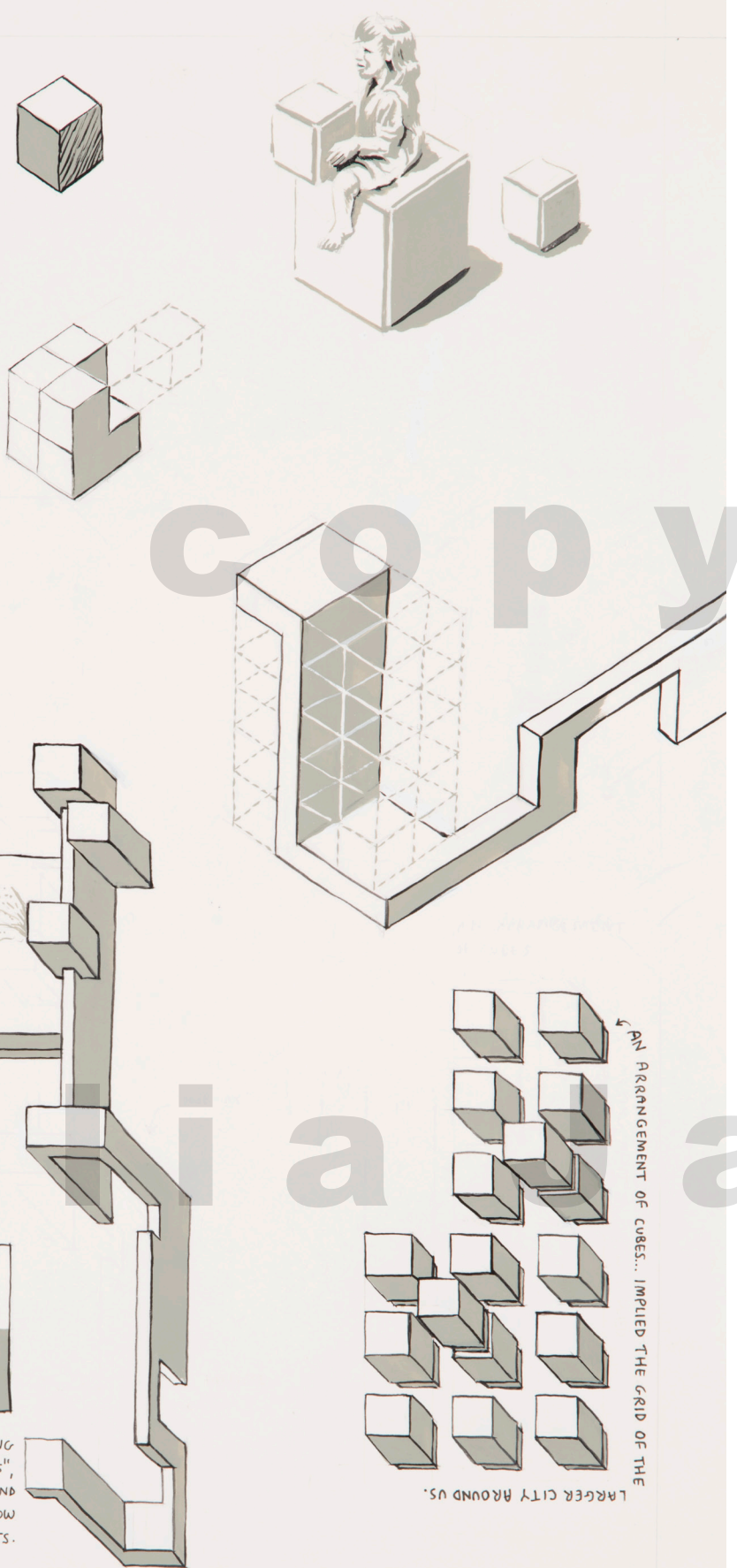


THE NAME STAYED THE SAME.

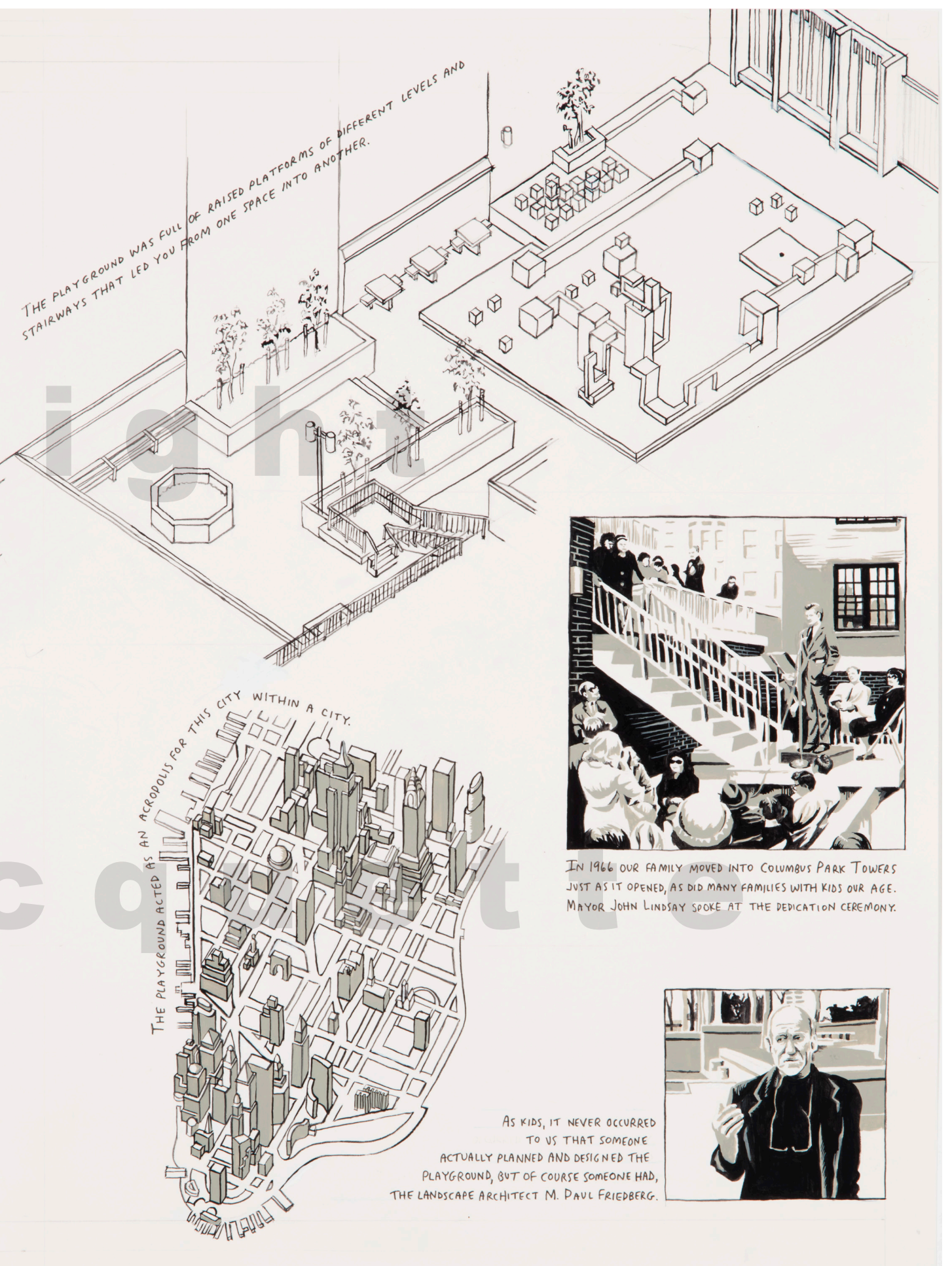


Julia Jacobs

THINKING BACK ON IT, THE PLAYGROUND WAS THE PERFECT ANSWER TO EVERY DESIGN PROBLEM I WAS EVER GIVEN IN ART SCHOOL. IT EXPRESSED VARIATIONS ON A THEME, ITERATION OF FORM, CONTAINED IMPLIED SUBJECT MATTER, YET WAS NEVER OVERLY LITERAL. EVERYTHING WAS CLEARLY AND SIMPLY VISUALLY STATED. REPEATED PATTERNS IN THE FORMS WOULD CONTAIN SUBTLE VARIATIONS.



ABOVE: A 1980S PETER HALLEY PAINTING, CONTAINING THE VISUAL STRATEGY HE CALLED "CONDUITS", FAMILIAR TO ME SINCE THE PLAYGROUND USED THIS SAME IDEA OF HOW TO CONNECT ELEMENTS.



THE PLAYGROUND WAS FULL OF RAISED PLATFORMS OF DIFFERENT LEVELS AND STAIRWAYS THAT LED YOU FROM ONE SPACE INTO ANOTHER.

THE PLAYGROUND ACTED AS AN ACROPOLIS FOR THIS CITY WITHIN A CITY.

IN 1966 OUR FAMILY MOVED INTO COLUMBUS PARK TOWERS JUST AS IT OPENED, AS DID MANY FAMILIES WITH KIDS OUR AGE. MAYOR JOHN LINDSAY SPOKE AT THE DEDICATION CEREMONY.

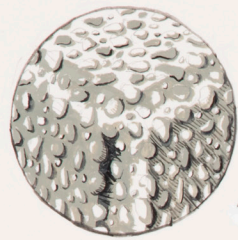
AS KIDS, IT NEVER OCCURRED TO US THAT SOMEONE ACTUALLY PLANNED AND DESIGNED THE PLAYGROUND, BUT OF COURSE SOMEONE HAD, THE LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT M. PAUL FRIEDBERG.



ALTHOUGH THE COLUMBUS PARK TOWERS PLAYGROUND WAS SITUATED WITHIN THE GROUNDS OF THE BUILDING, IT WAS VISIBLE FROM THE STREET THROUGH A GRILLE-LIKE FENCE NEXT TO A BRICK WALL THAT ALSO HAD PEEP HOLES. THE MEMBRANE BETWEEN (STREET) OUTSIDE AND (COURTYARD) INSIDE WAS VISUALLY PERMEABLE.

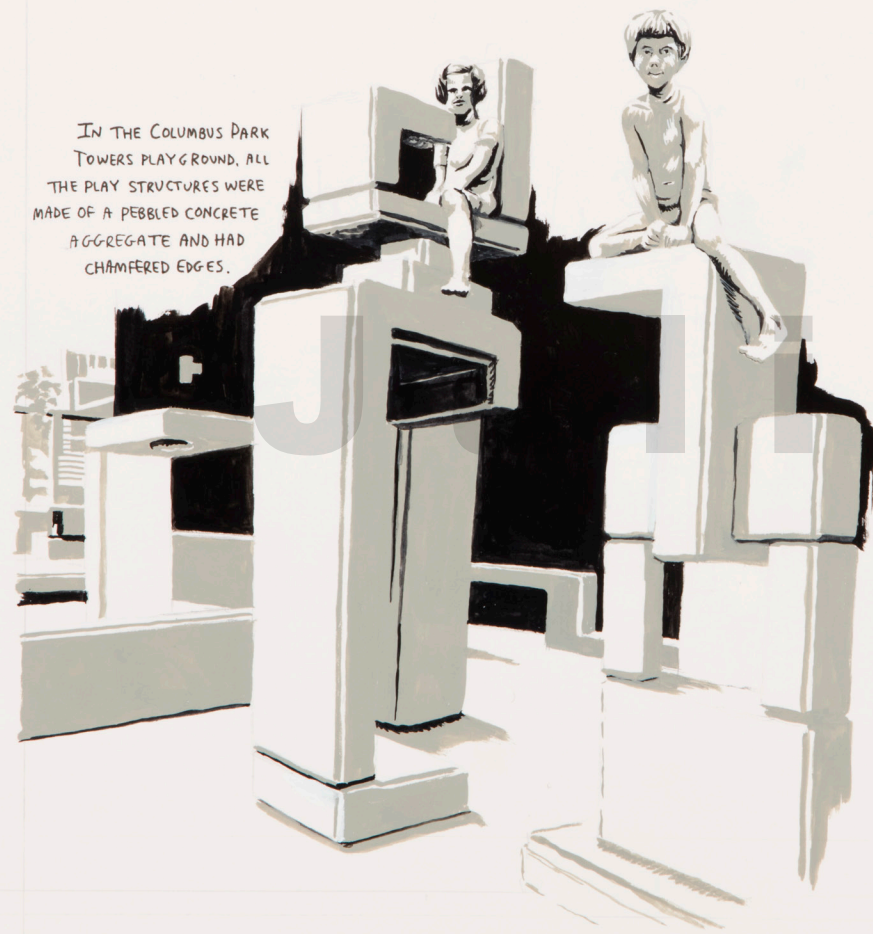


SPRINKLER

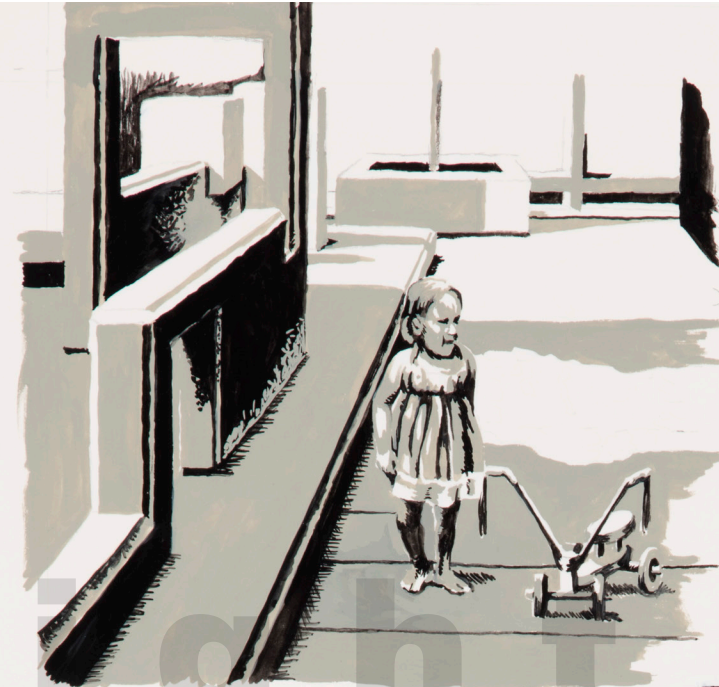


DETAIL OF CORNER OF CONCRETE CUBE

IN THE COLUMBUS PARK TOWERS PLAYGROUND, ALL THE PLAY STRUCTURES WERE MADE OF A PEBBLED CONCRETE AGGREGATE AND HAD CHAMFERED EDGES.

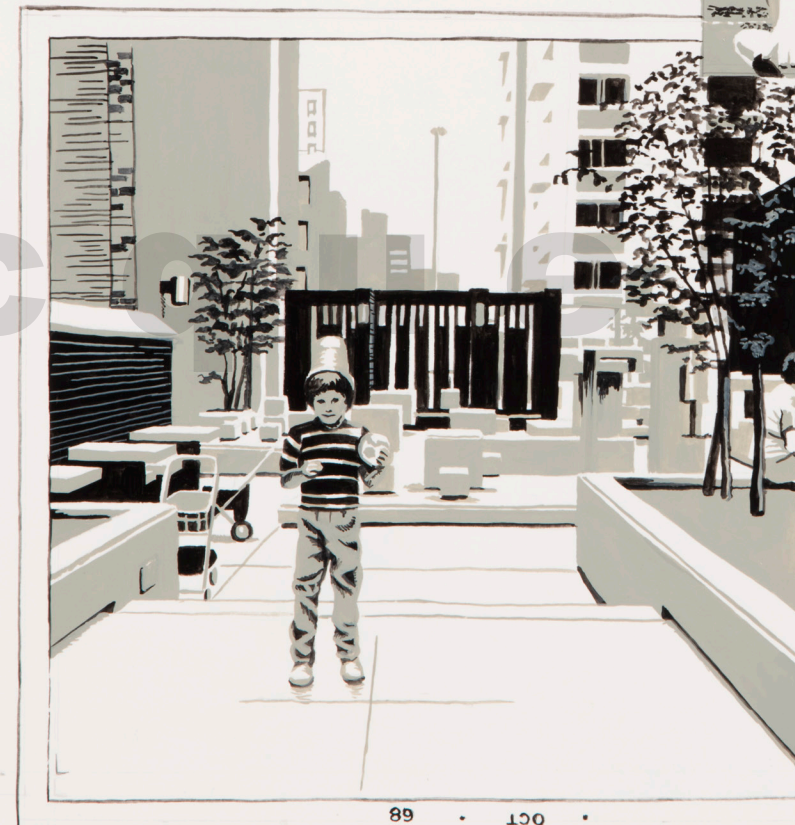


COLUMBUS PARK TOWERS AND ITS PLAYGROUND WERE COMPLETED AROUND THE SAME TIME FRIEDBERG CREATED HIS SEMINAL WORK OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE JACOB RIIS PLAZA LOCATED IN A PUBLIC HOUSING COMPLEX ON THE LOWER EAST SIDE.



"COLUMBUS PARK TOWERS WAS A KIND OF LIBERAL, SOCIAL ENGINEERING IN PHYSICAL FORM, WHICH PROMULGATED IDEAS OF DIVERSITY AND COMMUNITY." ARTIST NAYLAND BLAKE, WHO ALSO GREW UP IN COLUMBUS PARK TOWERS.

"I REALIZE NOW HOW THE DESIGN OF THE PLAYGROUND INFLUENCED ME. EVERYTHING I DRAW IS BASED ON A GRID OF SQUARES ORTHOGONAL, AND WITH LOTS OF RIGHT ANGLES." MY BROTHER LAWRENCE, NOW AN ARCHITECT.



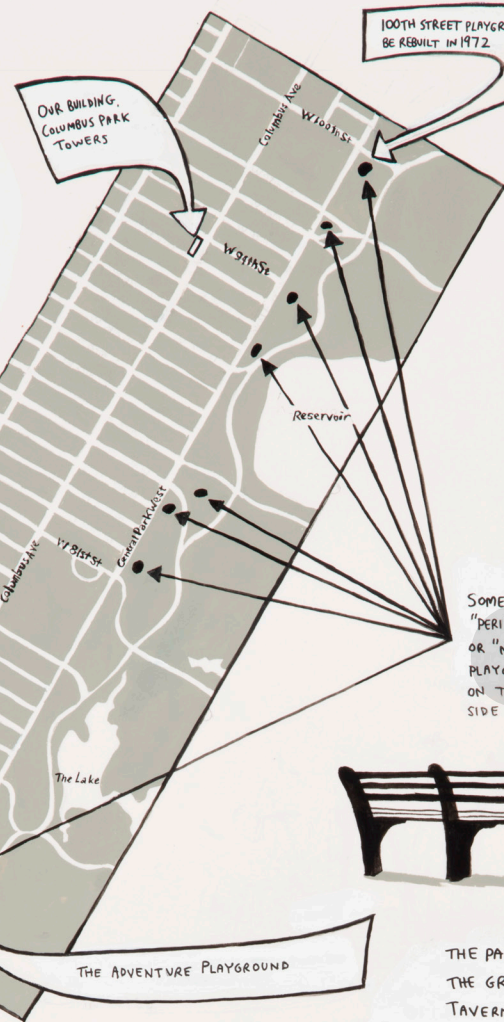
te

THE FACT THAT THE PLAYGROUND WAS MADE OF THIS TEXTURED CONCRETE WAS PUZZLING TO SOME OF THE RESIDENTS.

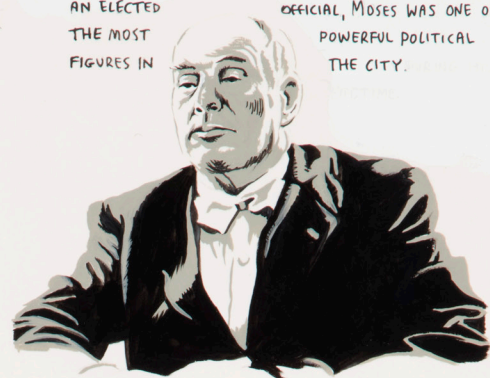
"THE AGGREGATE WOULD SCRATCH YOUR KNEES, BUT WE WERE IN THE PLAYGROUND ALL THE TIME." SUSAN HOROWITZ, WHO GREW UP WITH US IN CPT.



VERY CLOSE BY TO COLUMBUS PARK TOWERS WAS CENTRAL PARK - JUST ONE BLOCK AWAY.



UNTIL THE MID 1960S, THE DESIGN OF NYC PARKS COMMISSIONER FROM 1934 TO 1965. NEVER AN ELECTED OFFICIAL, MOSES WAS ONE OF THE MOST POWERFUL POLITICAL FIGURES IN THE CITY.

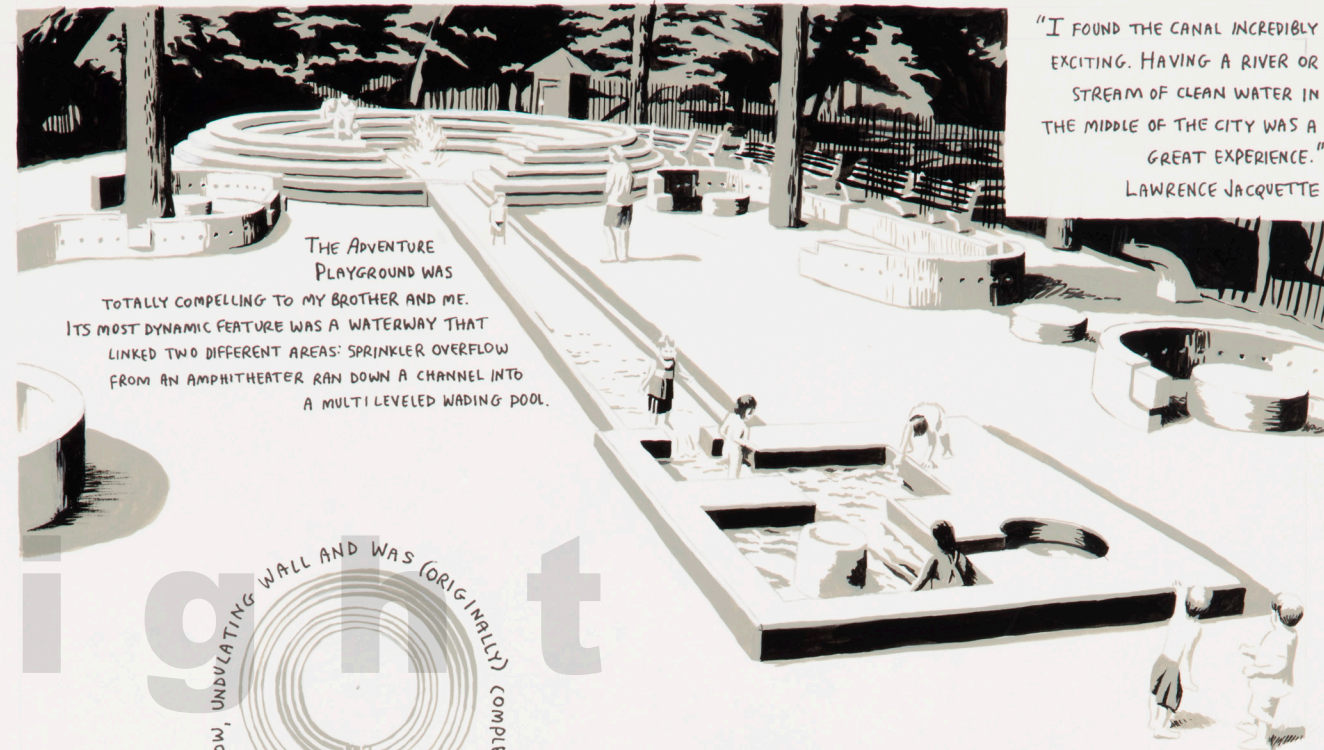


SOME OF THE "PERIMETER" OR "NECKLACE" PLAYGROUNDS ON THE WEST SIDE OF CENTRAL PARK



HIS STANDARD-ISSUE PLAYGROUNDS CONSISTED OF THE SAME FEW ISOLATED ELEMENTS (SWINGS, SLIDES, SEESAWS) ENCLOSED BY A TALL FENCE. ONE OF THESE TWENTY "PERIMETER" PLAYGROUNDS JUST INSIDE

THE PARK WAS SLATED TO BE TORN DOWN. MOSES PLANNED TO USE THE GROUND AS ADDITIONAL PARKING FOR THE NEARBY RESTAURANT, TAVERN ON THE GREEN. A GROUP OF NYC MOTHERS PREVENTED THE DESTRUCTION OF THE PLAYGROUND. IN 1966 IT WAS REBUILT AS THE "ADVENTURE PLAYGROUND," DESIGNED BY ARCHITECT RICHARD DATNER WITH THE SUPPORT OF THE NEW PARKS COMMISSIONER, THOMAS HOVING.

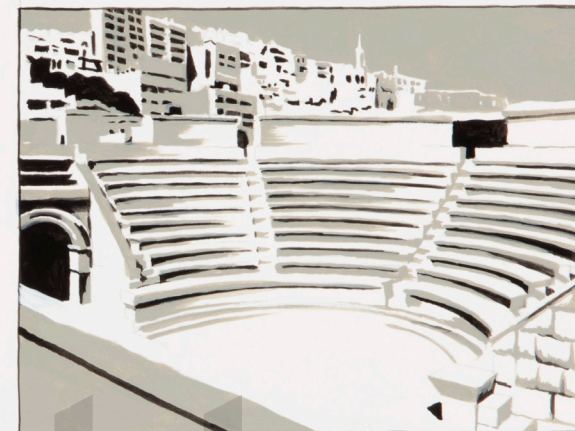


THE ADVENTURE PLAYGROUND WAS TOTALLY COMPELLING TO MY BROTHER AND ME. ITS MOST DYNAMIC FEATURE WAS A WATERWAY THAT LINKED TWO DIFFERENT AREAS: SPRINKLER OVERFLOW FROM AN AMPHITHEATER RAN DOWN A CHANNEL INTO A MULTI LEVELLED WADING POOL.

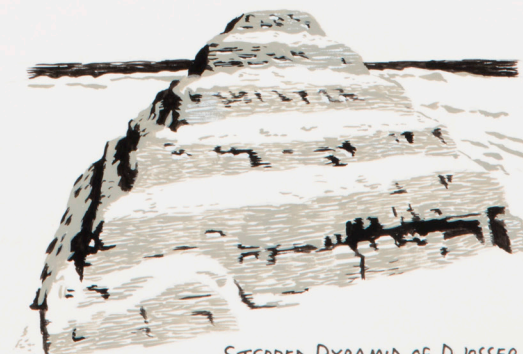
"I FOUND THE CANAL INCREDIBLY EXCITING. HAVING A RIVER OR STREAM OF CLEAN WATER IN THE MIDDLE OF THE CITY WAS A GREAT EXPERIENCE."
LAWRENCE JACQUETTE



THE ELEMENTS OF THE PLAYGROUND REFERRED TO ANCIENT ARCHITECTURE FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD.

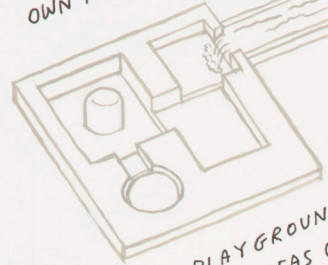


ROMAN AMPHITHEATER



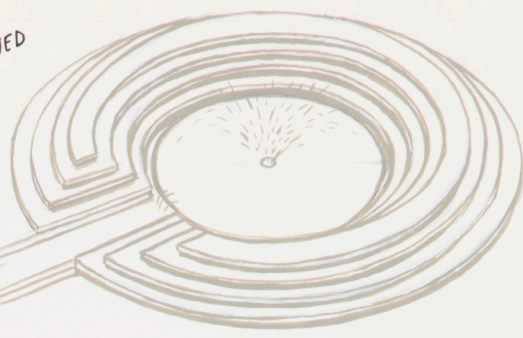
STEPPED PYRAMID OF DJOSER SAQQARA, EGYPT

"THE NEXT BEST THING TO A PLAYGROUND THAT CHILDREN DESIGNED THEMSELVES IS A PLAYGROUND THAT AN ADULT DESIGNED, BUT INCORPORATING THE POSSIBILITY FOR CHILDREN TO CREATE THEIR OWN PLACES WITHIN IT." RICHARD DATNER

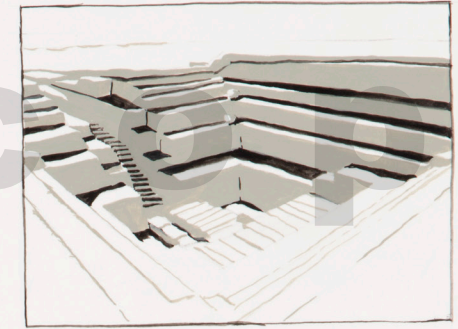


THE PLAYGROUND SUGGESTED IDEAS OF...

CONNECTIVITY, FLOW, AND MOVEMENT THROUGH SPACE.



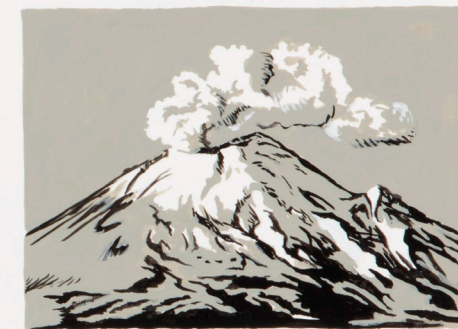
THE STRUCTURES IN THE PLAYGROUND REMINDED ONE OF...



BALAT MASTABA, EGYPT



WE WERE FREE TO USE THESE STRUCTURES TO CREATE OUR OWN STORIES. THIS IS A MOUNTAIN, A VOLCANO, A STREAM, A RIVER...



POPOCATÉPETL VOLCANO, MEXICO



STONE HUT, GREECE.

ALL THE ELEMENTS OF THE ADVENTURE PLAYGROUND LINKED TOGETHER IN SOME WAY



"THE TWO MAIN ELEMENTS ARE SAND AND WATER. THE REST IS EXTRA" RICHARD DATNER

MUCH OF THE ADVENTURE PLAYGROUND WAS MADE WITH Poured CONCRETE AGGREGATE:



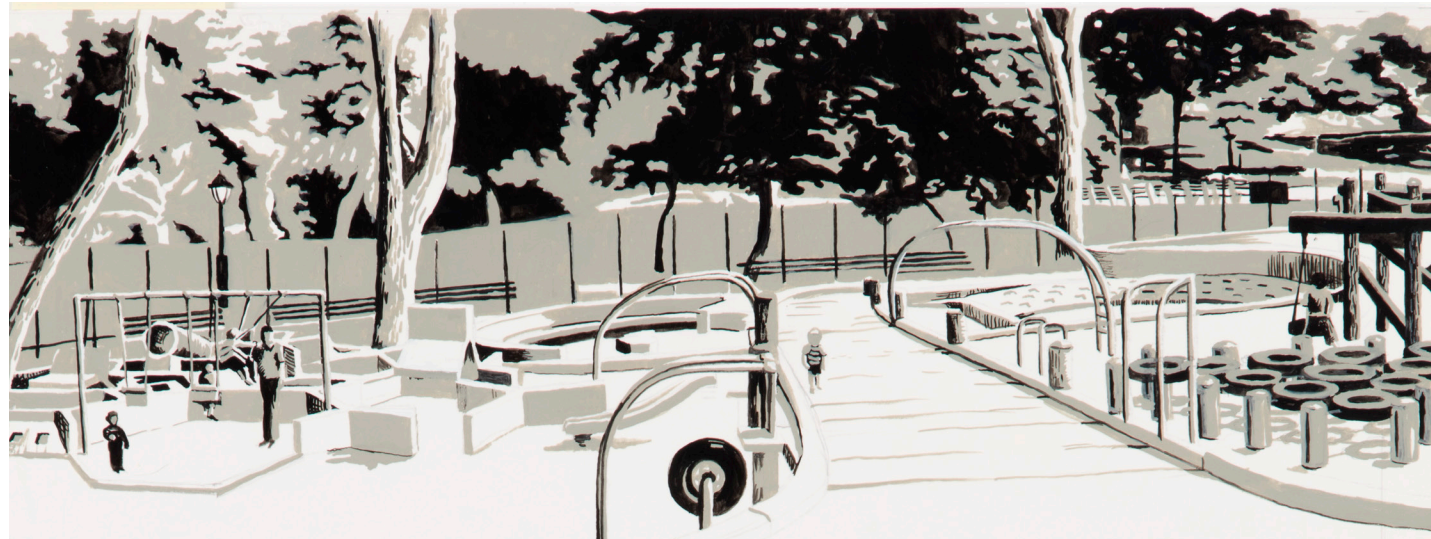
CONCRETE WITH

PEBBLES IN IT.

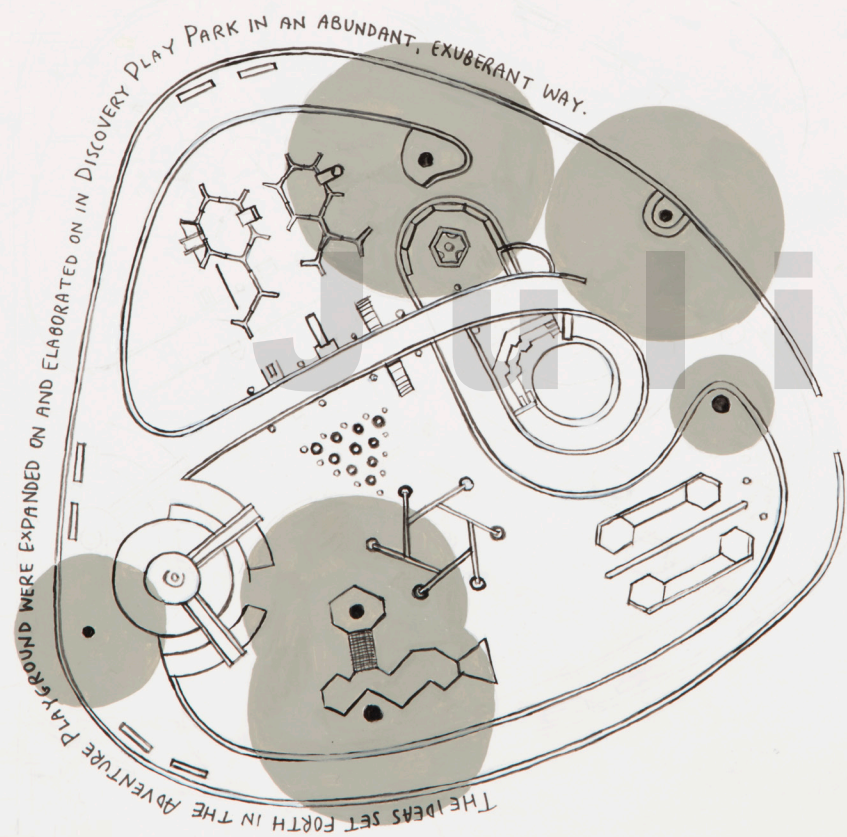
THE TEXTURE OF THE WOODEN MOLDS THE CONCRETE WAS Poured IN BECAME PART OF THE SURFACE.

IN 1973 MY FATHER, WILLIAM JACQUETTE, JOINED WITH TWO OTHER ARCHITECTS TO DESIGN A PLAYGROUND IN CENTRAL PARK. ROSS RYAN JACQUETTE CALLED THEIR DESIGN "DISCOVERY PLAY PARK." THIS IS A PHOTO OF THE PARTNERS ROSS RYAN JACQUETTE ON THE DAY THEIR PLAYGROUND OPENED.

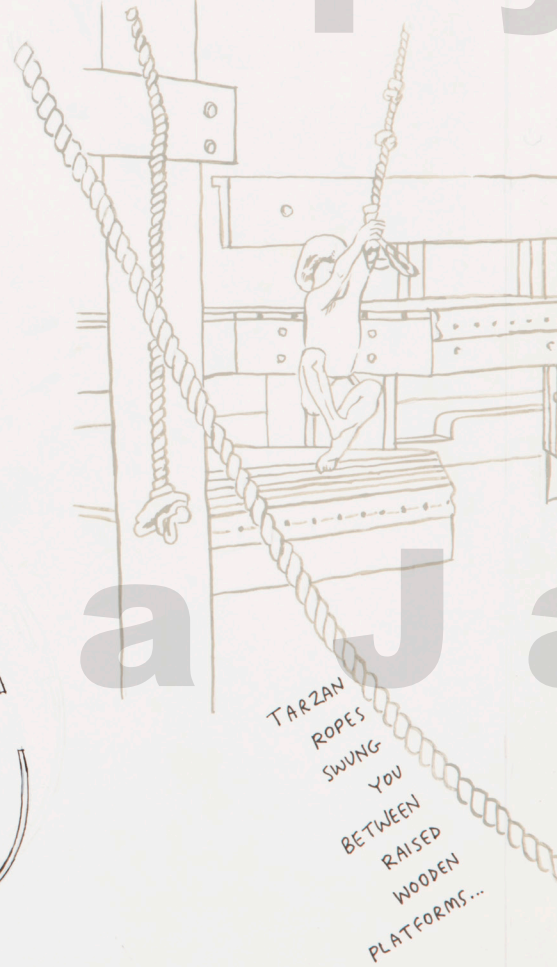




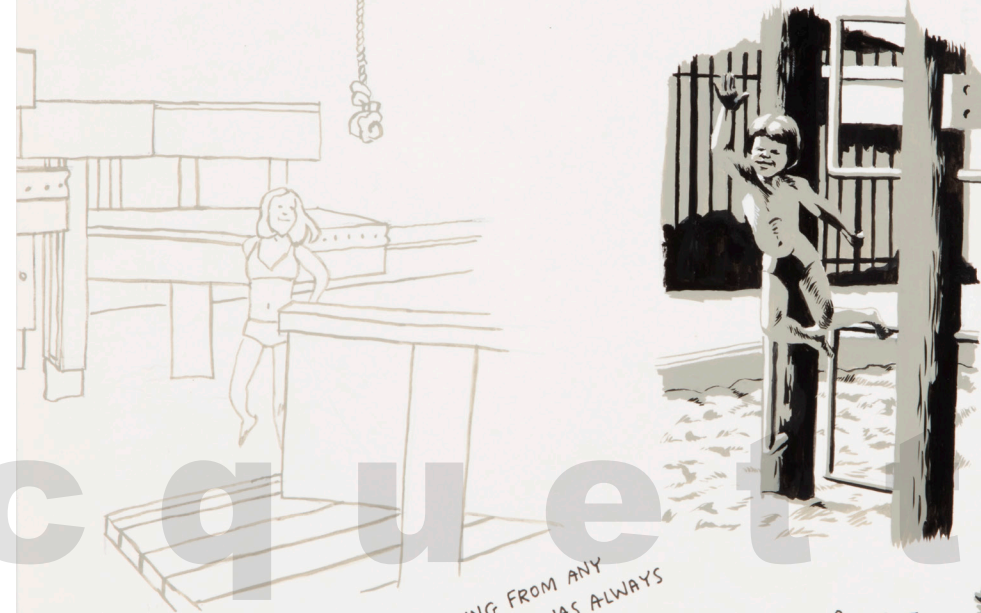
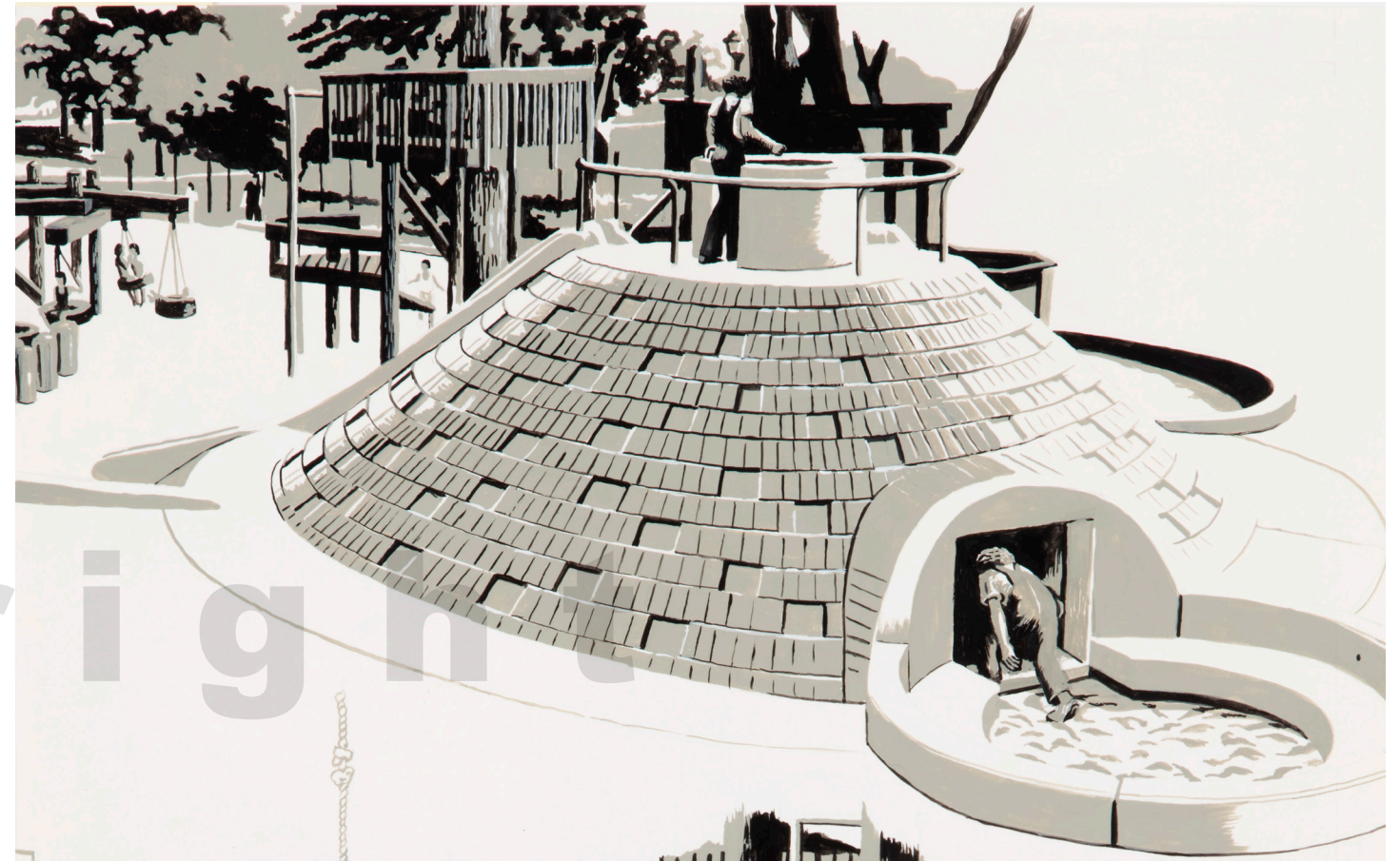
LIKE THE ADVENTURE PLAYGROUND, DISCOVERY PLAY PARK FEATURED A PAVED PERIMETER AROUND A FIELD OF SAND - IN THIS CASE AN EVEN MORE VAST EXPANSE OF SAND. OVER THIS GIANT PLAY AREA WAS A WIDE BRIDGE THAT BIASECTED THE PLAYGROUND INTO A LITTLE KIDS' SECTION AND A BIG KIDS' SECTION, COMPLETELY ACCESSIBLE TO ONE ANOTHER BY SIMPLY WALKING UNDER THE BRIDGE.



THE IDEAS SET FORTH IN THE ADVENTURE PLAYGROUND WERE EXPANDED ON AND ELABORATED ON IN DISCOVERY PLAY PARK IN AN ABUNDANT, EXUBERANT WAY.



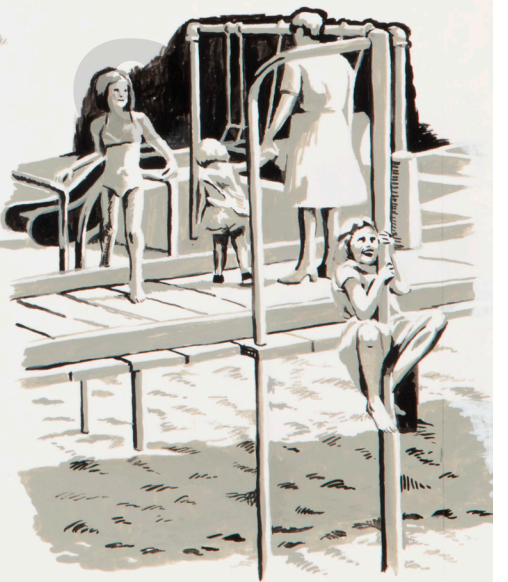
TARZAN
ROPE
SWUNG
YOU
BETWEEN
RAISED
WOODEN
PLATFORMS...



THERE
WERE FREE-
STANDING
WOODEN
POLES
THAT
WERE ALSO
CLIMBABLE.

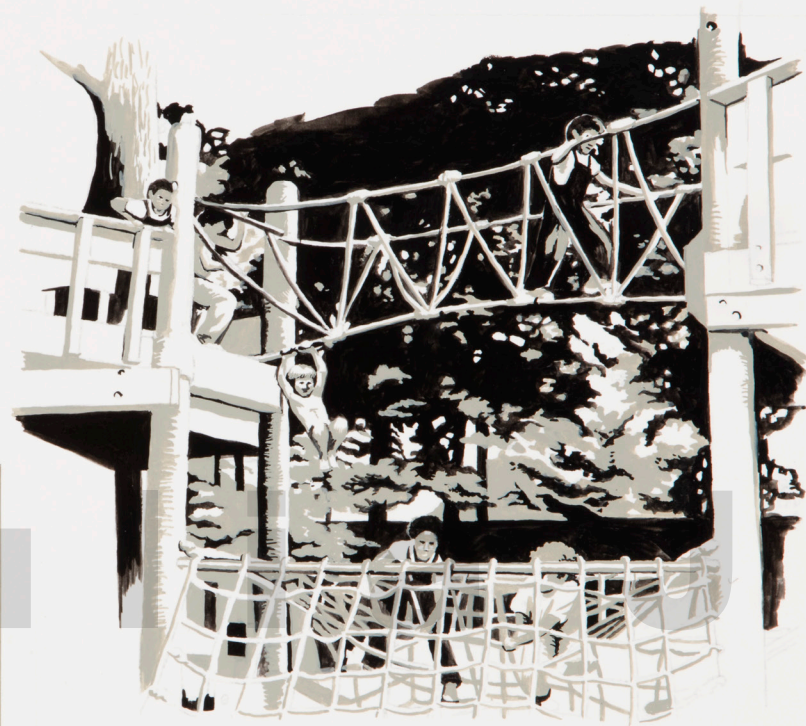
YOU FELT SAFE JUMPING FROM ANY
STRUCTURE BECAUSE SAND WAS ALWAYS
THERE TO CUSHION YOUR FALL.

ALONG THE
EDGE OF THE
BRIDGE WERE
LADDERS,
SLIDES, AND
ALSO A
FIREMAN'S
POLE TO SLIDE
DOWN.

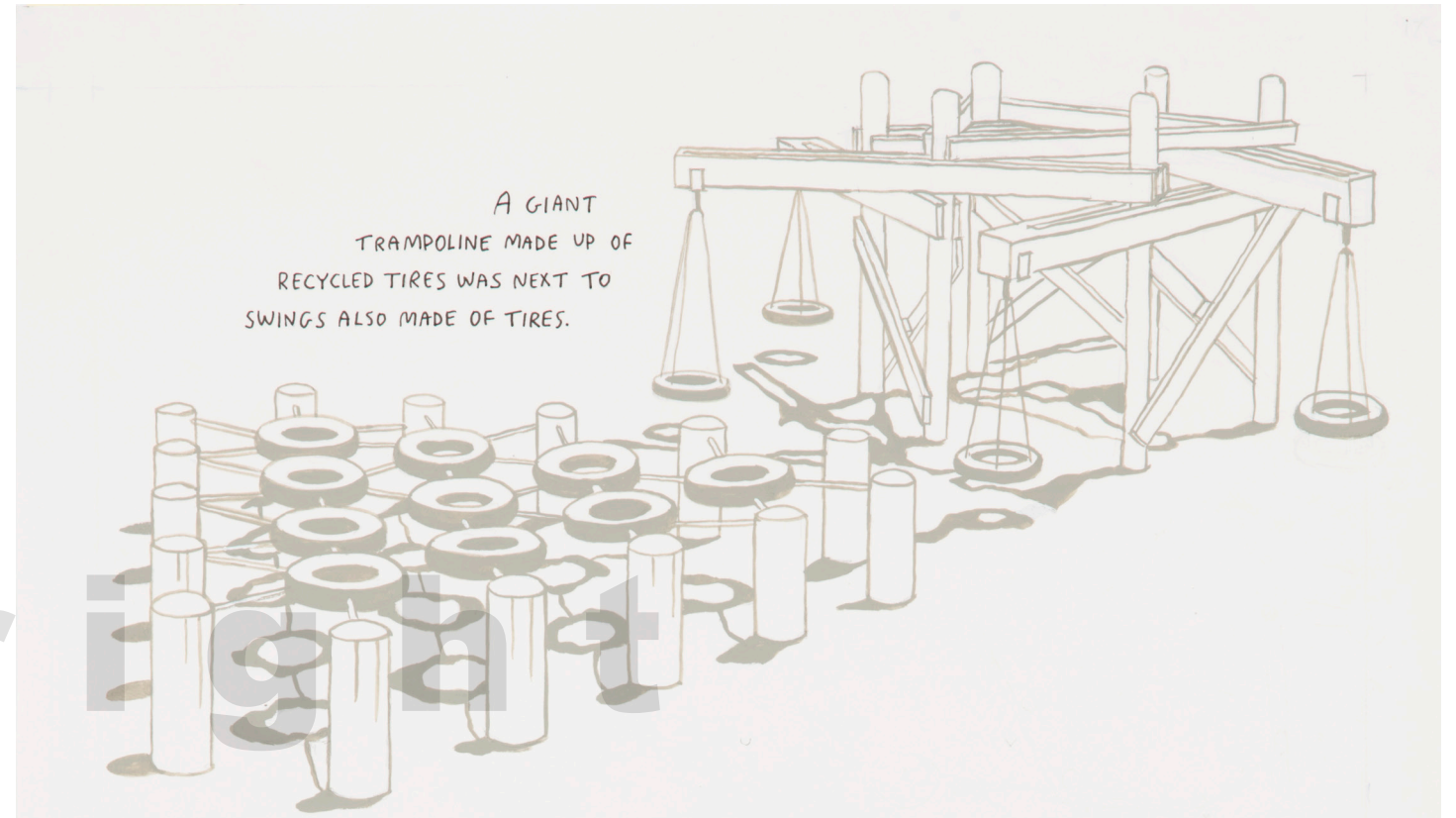




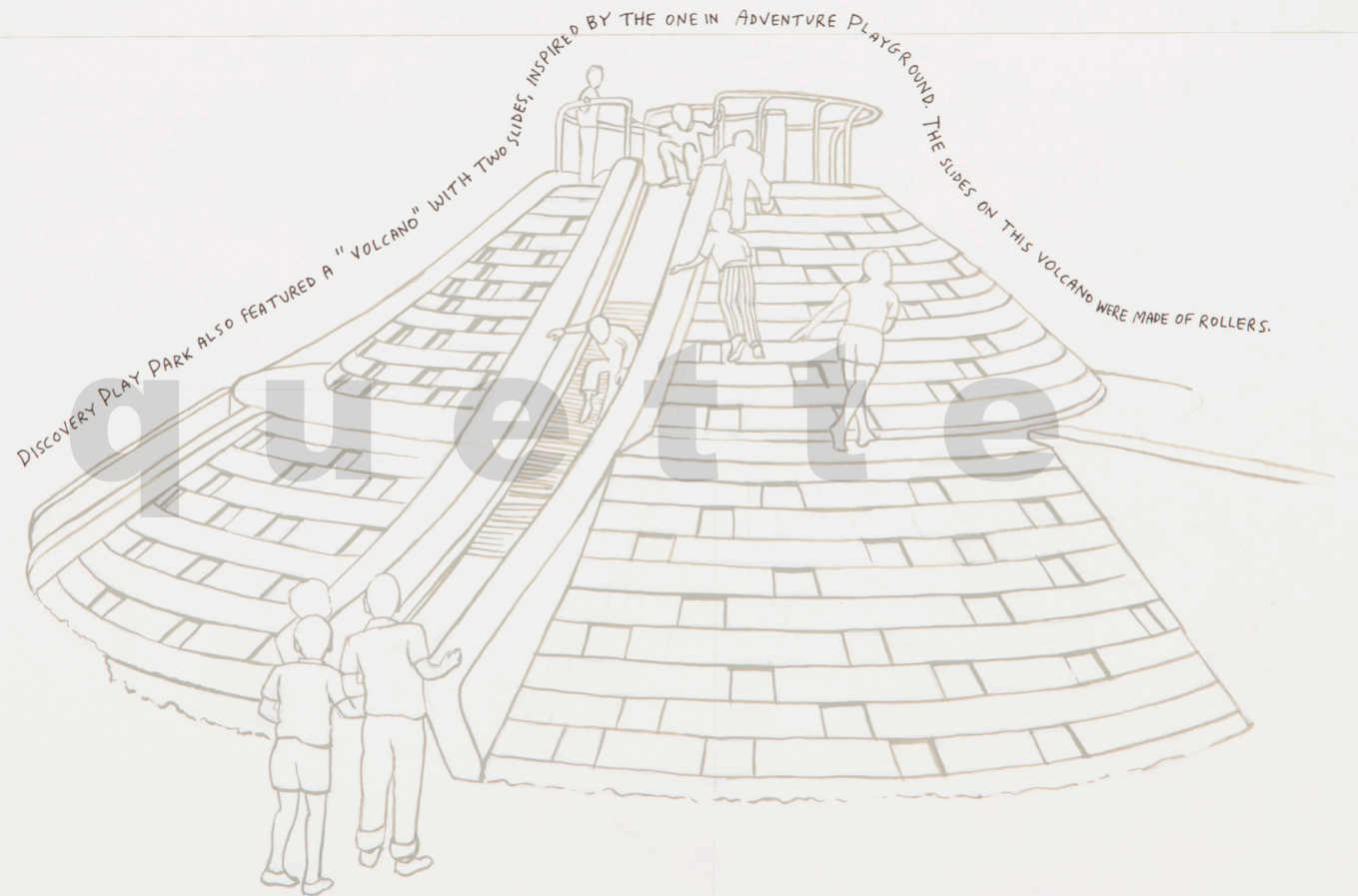
THE BIG KIDS' SECTION FEATURED A MULTI-LEVELLED TREE HOUSE...



...WITH A ROPE BRIDGE, AND A NET UNDERNEATH IT.



A GIANT TRAMPOLINE MADE UP OF RECYCLED TIRES WAS NEXT TO SWINGS ALSO MADE OF TIRES.



DISCOVERY PLAY PARK ALSO FEATURED A "VOLCANO" WITH TWO SLIDES, INSPIRED BY THE ONE IN ADVENTURE PLAYGROUND. THE SLIDES ON THIS VOLCANO WERE MADE OF ROLLERS.

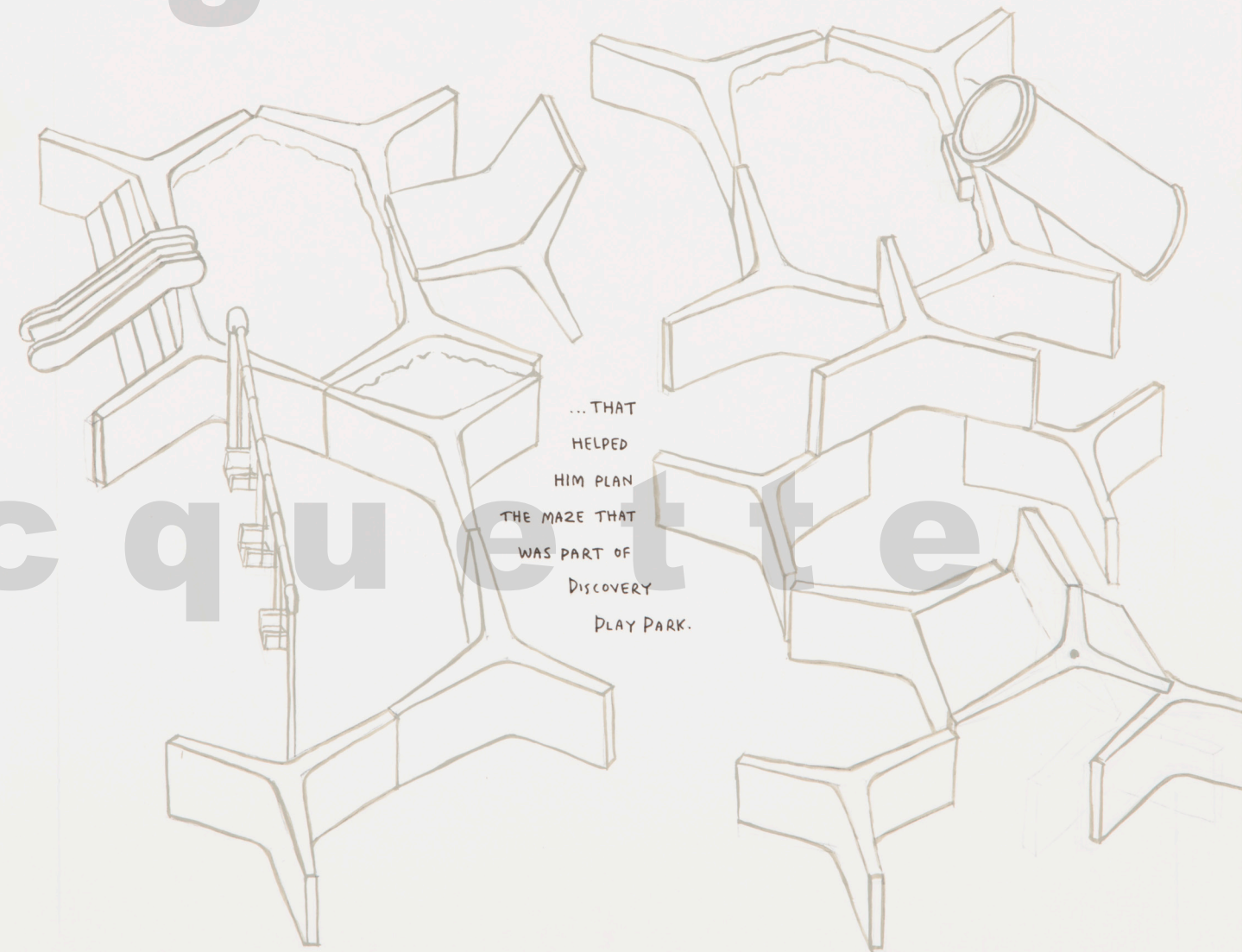


THE LITTLE KIDS' SIDE OF THE PLAYGROUND INCLUDED SWINGS, A MAZE OF THREE-WALLED CONCRETE ELEMENTS, A TUBULAR SLIDE, AND AN HEXAGONAL SANDBOX WITH A MUSHROOM-LIKE STRUCTURE TO POUR SAND THROUGH.

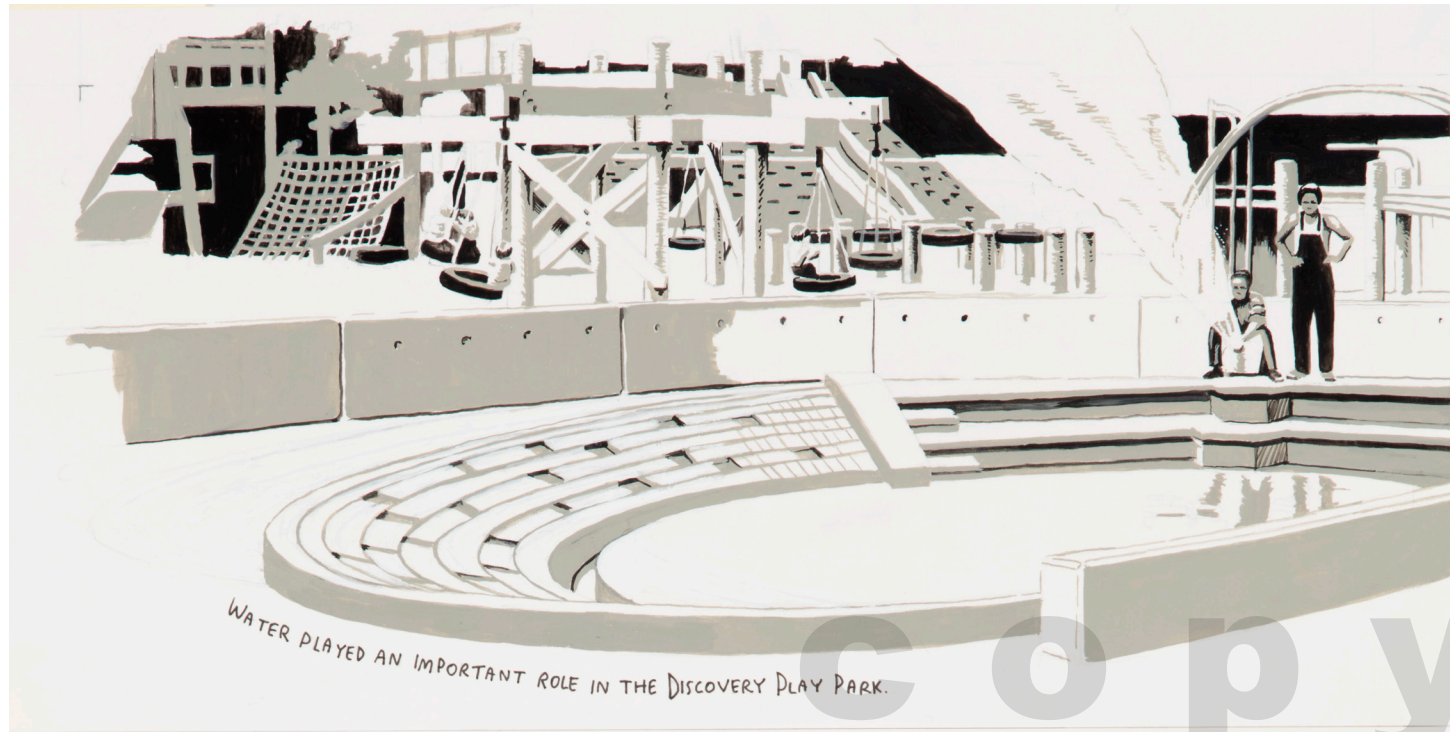


THIS WAS ALL WITHIN THE GIANT SANDBOX THAT WAS THE PLAYGROUND ITSELF.

MY FATHER LET ME PLAY WITH THE MINIATURE WOODEN MODELS...



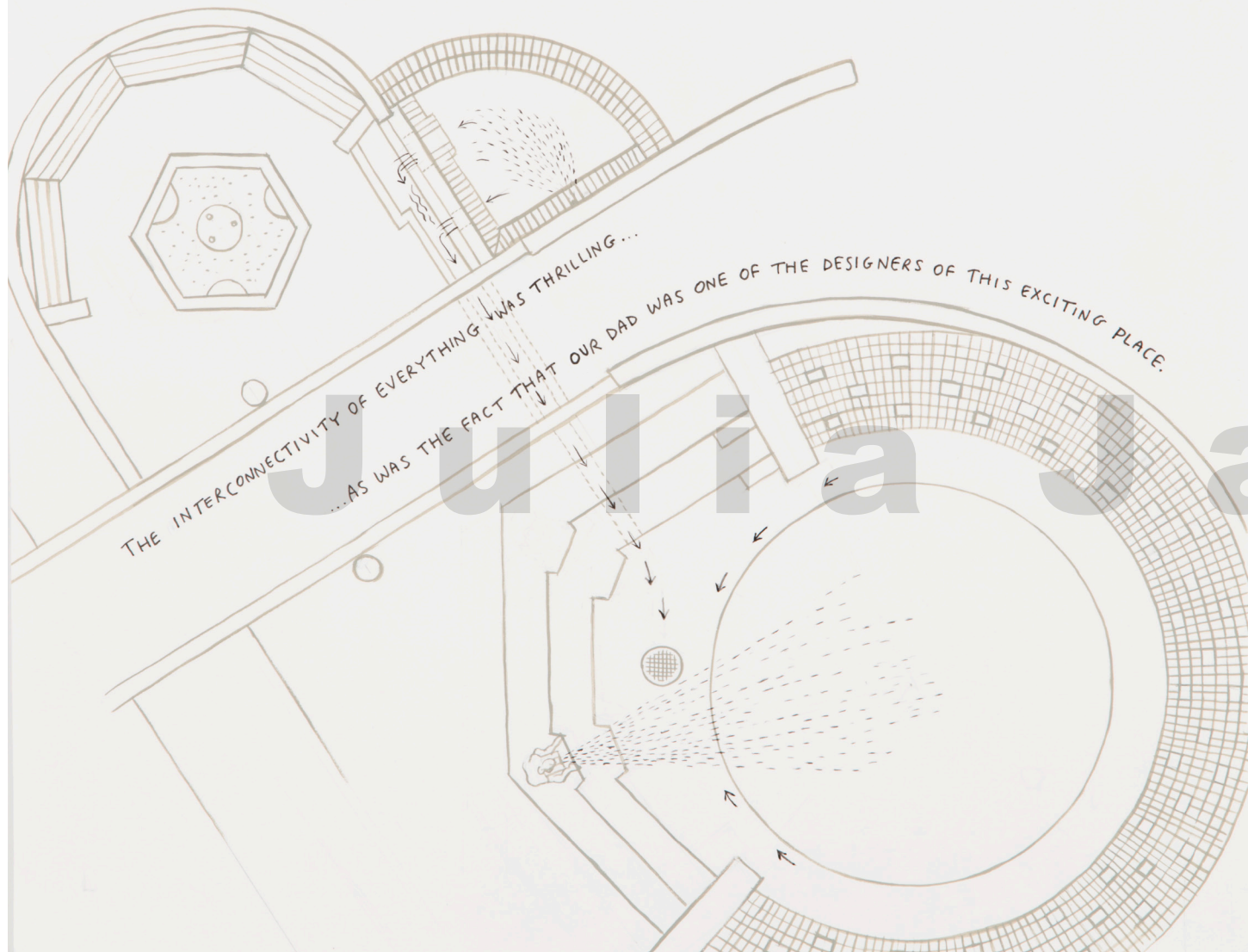
... THAT HELPED HIM PLAN THE MAZE THAT WAS PART OF DISCOVERY PLAY PARK.



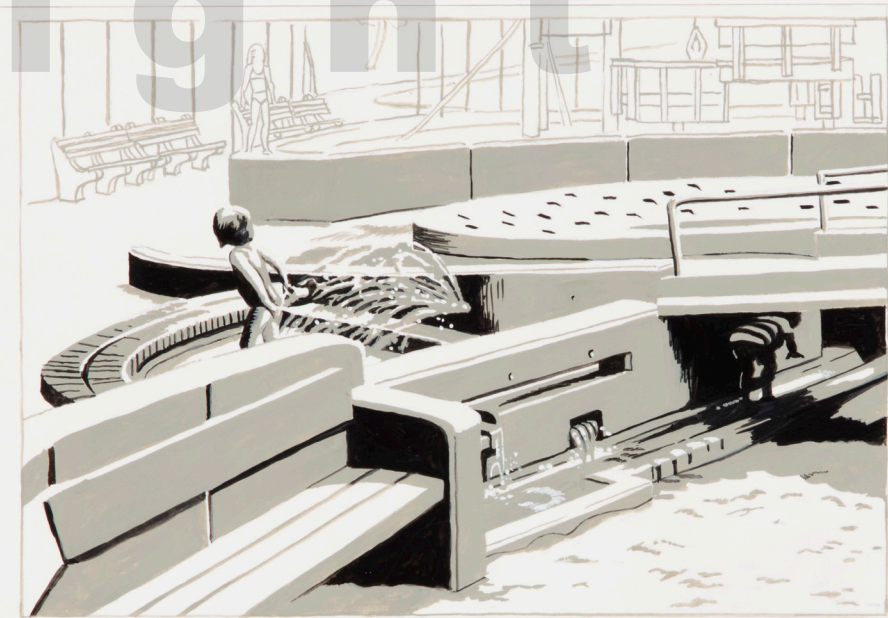
WATER PLAYED AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN THE DISCOVERY PLAY PARK.



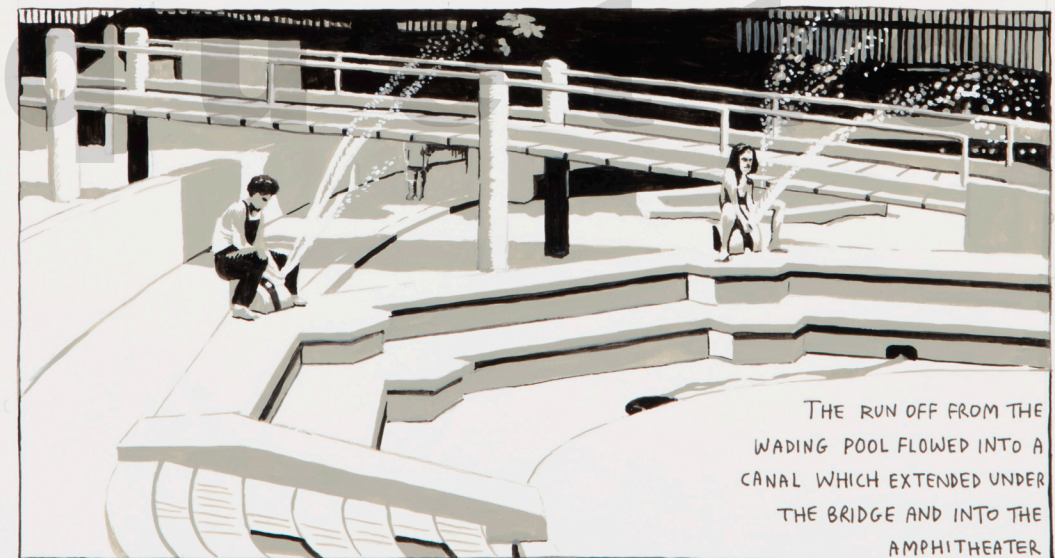
KIDS
COULD TURN
ON AND OFF
AND ADJUST THE
SPRAY OF WATER COMING
OUT OF FIREHOSE NOZZLES ONTO A
LARGE AMPHITHEATER.



THE INTERCONNECTIVITY OF EVERYTHING WAS THRILLING...
...AS WAS THE FACT THAT OUR DAD WAS ONE OF THE DESIGNERS OF THIS EXCITING PLACE.



THE SMALLER
KIDS PLAYED IN
THE SPRAY OF A
SPRINKLER IN A
SMALL WADING
POOL.

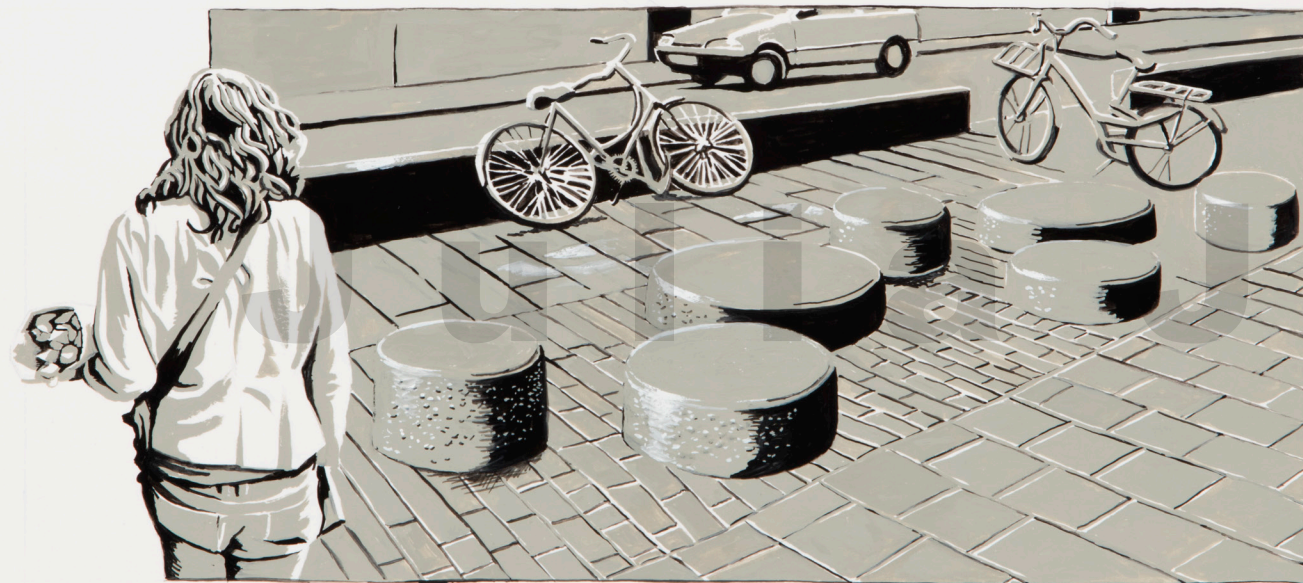


THE RUN OFF FROM THE
WADING POOL FLOWED INTO A
CANAL WHICH EXTENDED UNDER
THE BRIDGE AND INTO THE
AMPHITHEATER.

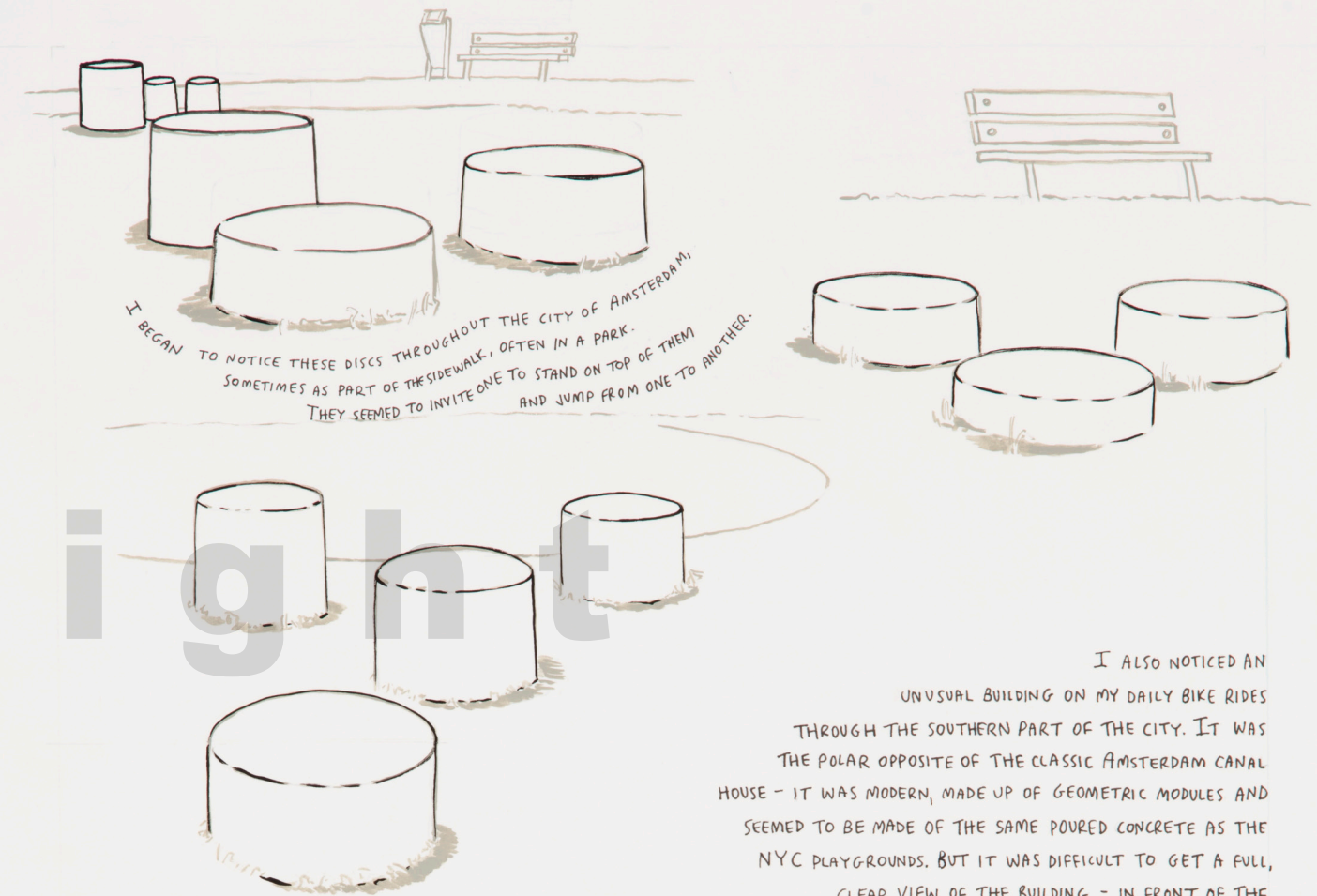
ONE SUMMER AFTERNOON,
WHILE WALKING THROUGH
AMSTERDAM...



...I NOTICED SOME CONCRETE DISCS OF
VARIED SIZES AND HEIGHTS, CLUSTERED
TOGETHER ON THE AREA OF THE
SIDEWALK WHERE IT WIDENED OUT INTO
THE STREET.



WALKING PAST THESE SAME DISCS ANOTHER DAY,
I NOTICED NEIGHBORHOOD KIDS HAD COVERED THEM
WITH COLORED CHALK DRAWINGS. THE DISCS SEEMED
UTTERLY FAMILIAR, AS IF THEY HAD ORIGINATED
OUT OF MY CHILDHOOD PLAYGROUNDS IN NYC.



I BEGAN TO NOTICE THESE DISCS THROUGHOUT THE CITY OF AMSTERDAM,
SOMETIMES AS PART OF THE SIDEWALK, OFTEN IN A PARK.
THEY SEEMED TO INVITE ONE TO STAND ON TOP OF THEM
AND JUMP FROM ONE TO ANOTHER.

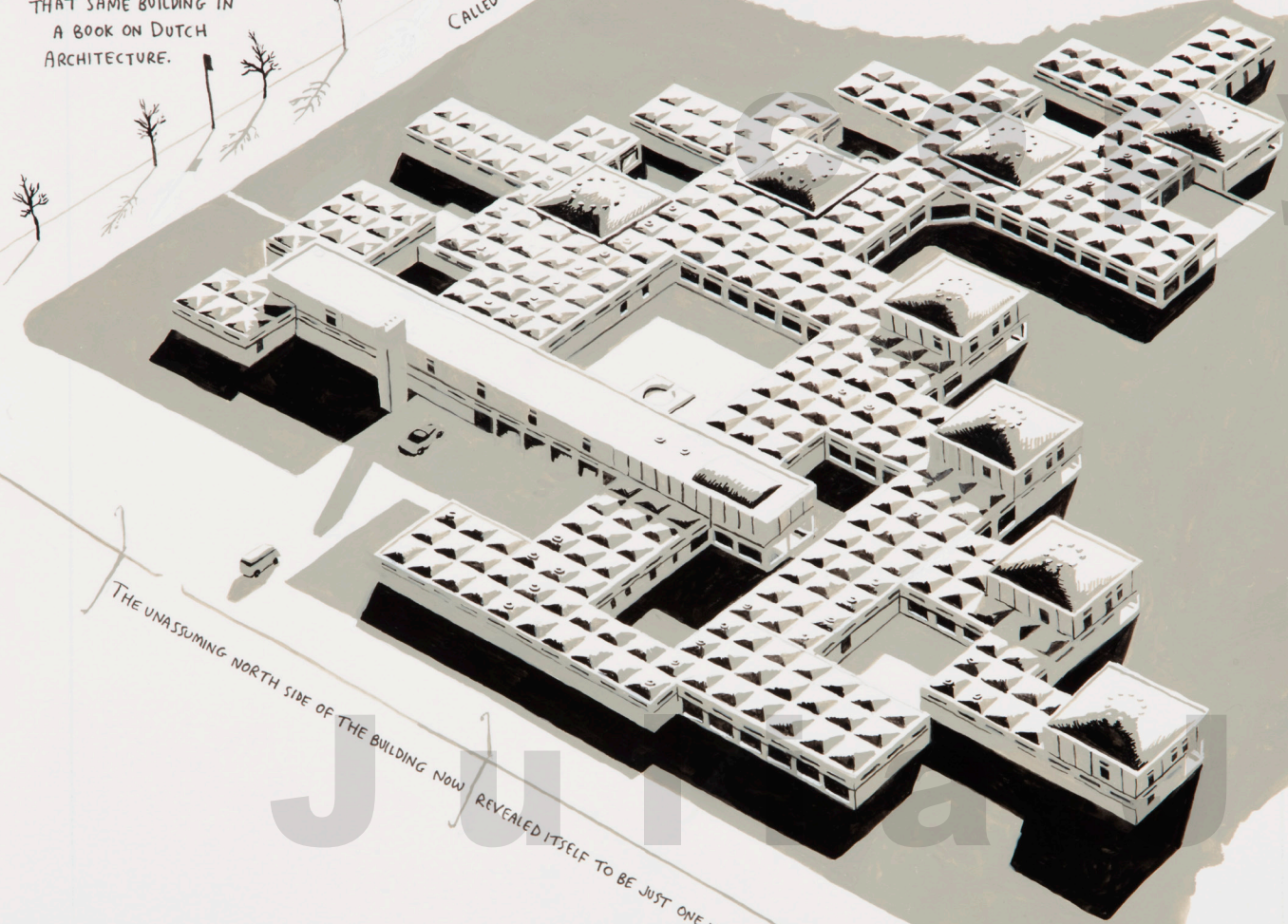
I ALSO NOTICED AN
UNUSUAL BUILDING ON MY DAILY BIKE RIDES
THROUGH THE SOUTHERN PART OF THE CITY. IT WAS
THE POLAR OPPOSITE OF THE CLASSIC AMSTERDAM CANAL
HOUSE - IT WAS MODERN, MADE UP OF GEOMETRIC MODULES AND
SEEMED TO BE MADE OF THE SAME Poured CONCRETE AS THE
NYC PLAYGROUNDS. BUT IT WAS DIFFICULT TO GET A FULL,
CLEAR VIEW OF THE BUILDING - IN FRONT OF THE
FAÇADE WAS A SCRAMBLE OF PARKED CARS,
BIKES, AND TREES IN NEED OF
PRUNING.





I NOTICED IMAGES OF THAT SAME BUILDING IN A BOOK ON DUTCH ARCHITECTURE.

CALLED THE "BURGERWEESTHUIS," IT WAS DESIGNED AS AN ORPHANAGE BY THE ARCHITECT ADDO VAN EYCK.



THE UNASSUMING NORTH SIDE OF THE BUILDING NOW REVEALED ITSELF TO BE JUST ONE VIEW OF A COMPLEX BUILDING. AERIAL PHOTOS SHOWED ITS GEOMETRIC STRUCTURE.



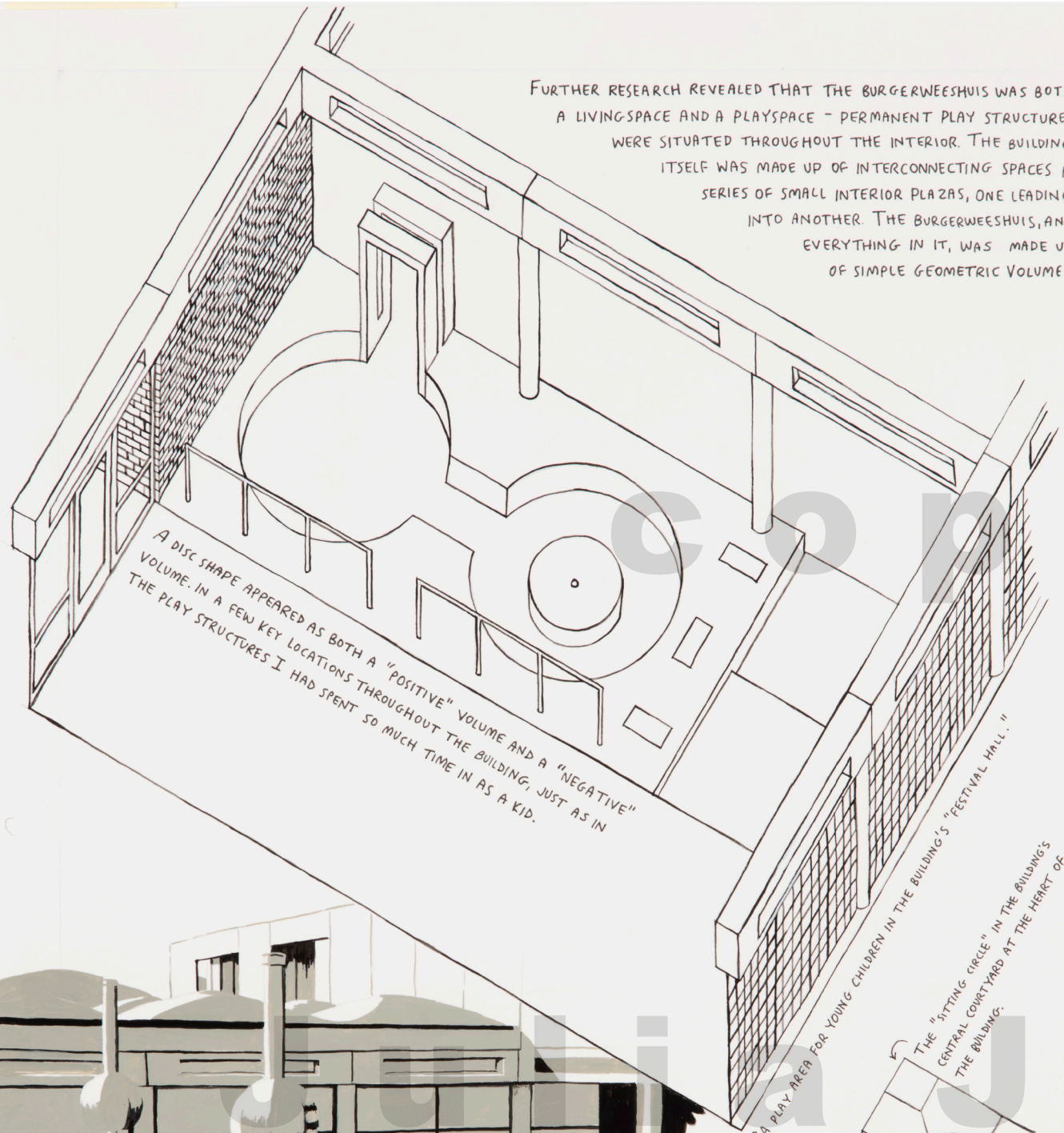
WALKING AROUND THE BUILDING AND PEERING THROUGH ITS WINDOWS. IT APPEARED TO BE MADE UP OF A COLLECTION OF MODULES LIGHT-FILLED, SQUARE ROOMS WITH NUMEROUS COURTYARDS OF THE SAME SIZE BETWEEN THEM.



THE BUILDING EXPANDED OUT ONTO A GRASSY AREA, WITH COURTYARD-LIKE AREAS BETWEEN GLASS-ED-IN ROOMS OF THE SAME SIZE.

LOOKING IN THE WINDOWS I SAW... THE BUILDING WAS MOSTLY EMPTY.

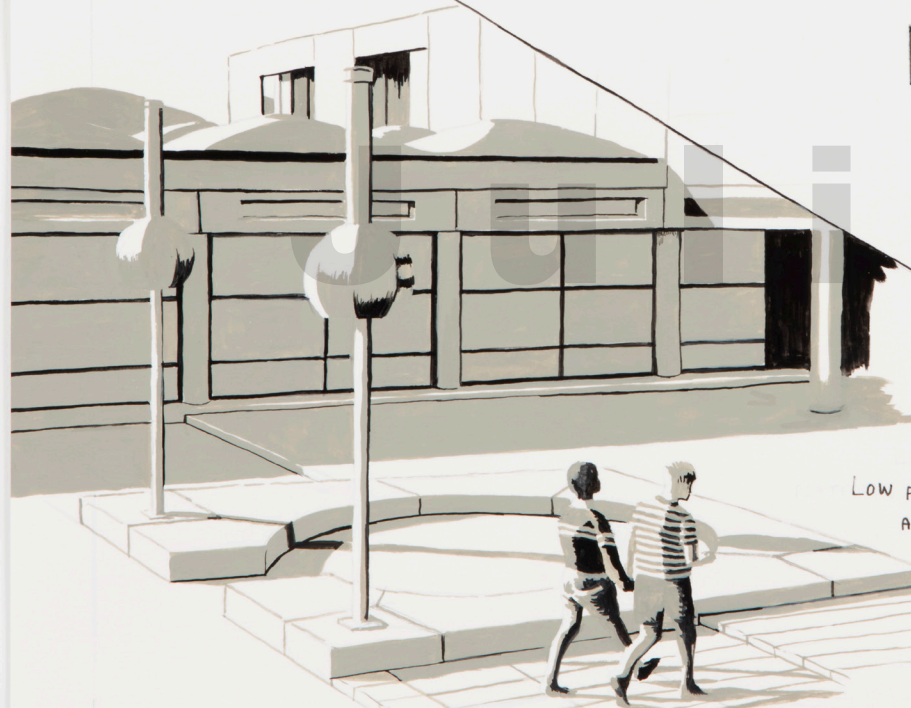
FURTHER RESEARCH REVEALED THAT THE BURGERWEESHUIS WAS BOTH A LIVINGSPACE AND A PLAYSACE - PERMANENT PLAY STRUCTURES WERE SITUATED THROUGHOUT THE INTERIOR. THE BUILDING ITSELF WAS MADE UP OF INTERCONNECTING SPACES A SERIES OF SMALL INTERIOR PLAZAS, ONE LEADING INTO ANOTHER. THE BURGERWEESHUIS, AND EVERYTHING IN IT, WAS MADE UP OF SIMPLE GEOMETRIC VOLUMES.



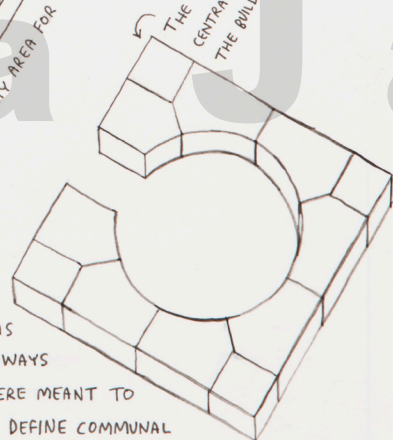
A DISC SHAPE APPEARED AS BOTH A "POSITIVE" VOLUME AND A "NEGATIVE" VOLUME. IN A FEW KEY LOCATIONS THROUGHOUT THE BUILDING, JUST AS IN THE PLAY STRUCTURES I HAD SPENT SO MUCH TIME IN AS A KID.

A PLAY AREA FOR YOUNG CHILDREN IN THE BUILDING'S "FESTIVAL HALL."

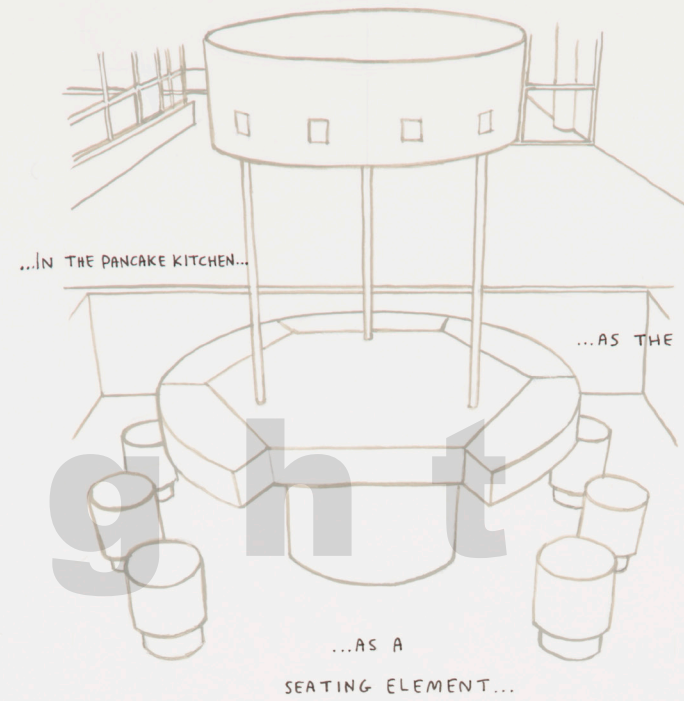
THE "SITTING CIRCLE" IN THE BUILDING'S CENTRAL COURTYARD AT THE HEART OF THE BUILDING.



LOW PLATFORMS AND CUTAWAYS WERE MEANT TO DEFINE COMMUNAL AREAS, AND ALSO SERVED AS SEATING FOR KIDS.



THE DISC SHAPE APPEARED AGAIN AND AGAIN, IN BOTH POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE FORM...



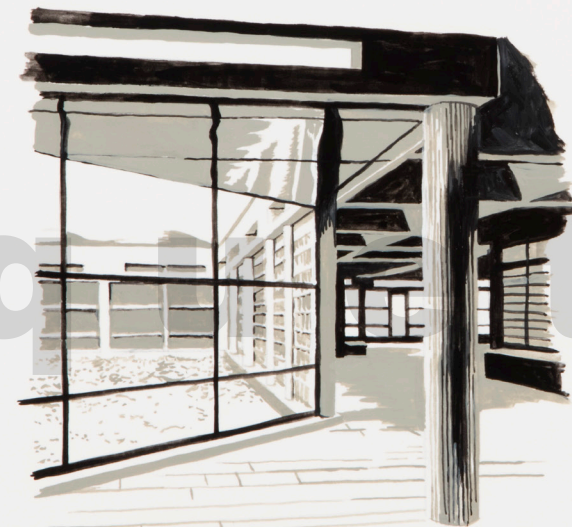
...IN THE PANCAKE KITCHEN...

...AS THE TABLE TOP...

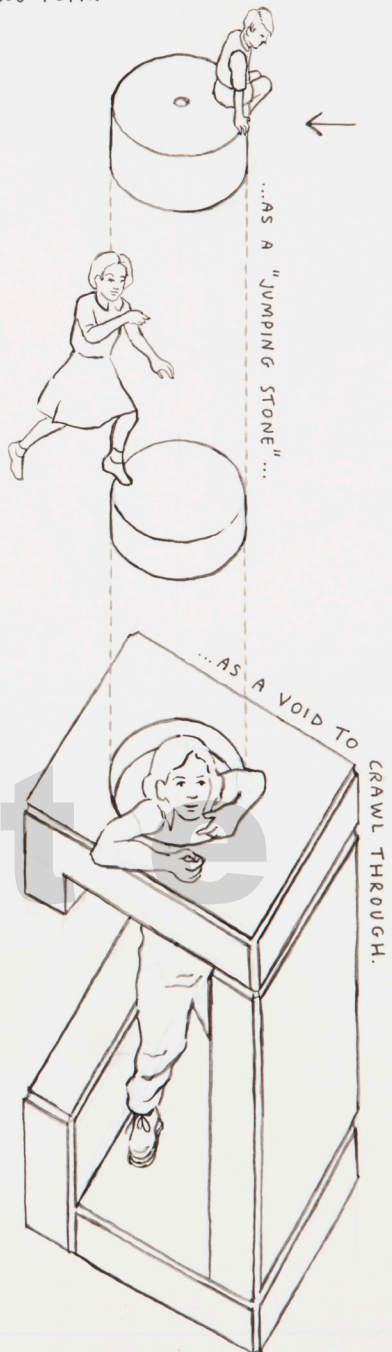
...AS A SEATING ELEMENT...



...AS A "JUMPING STONE"...



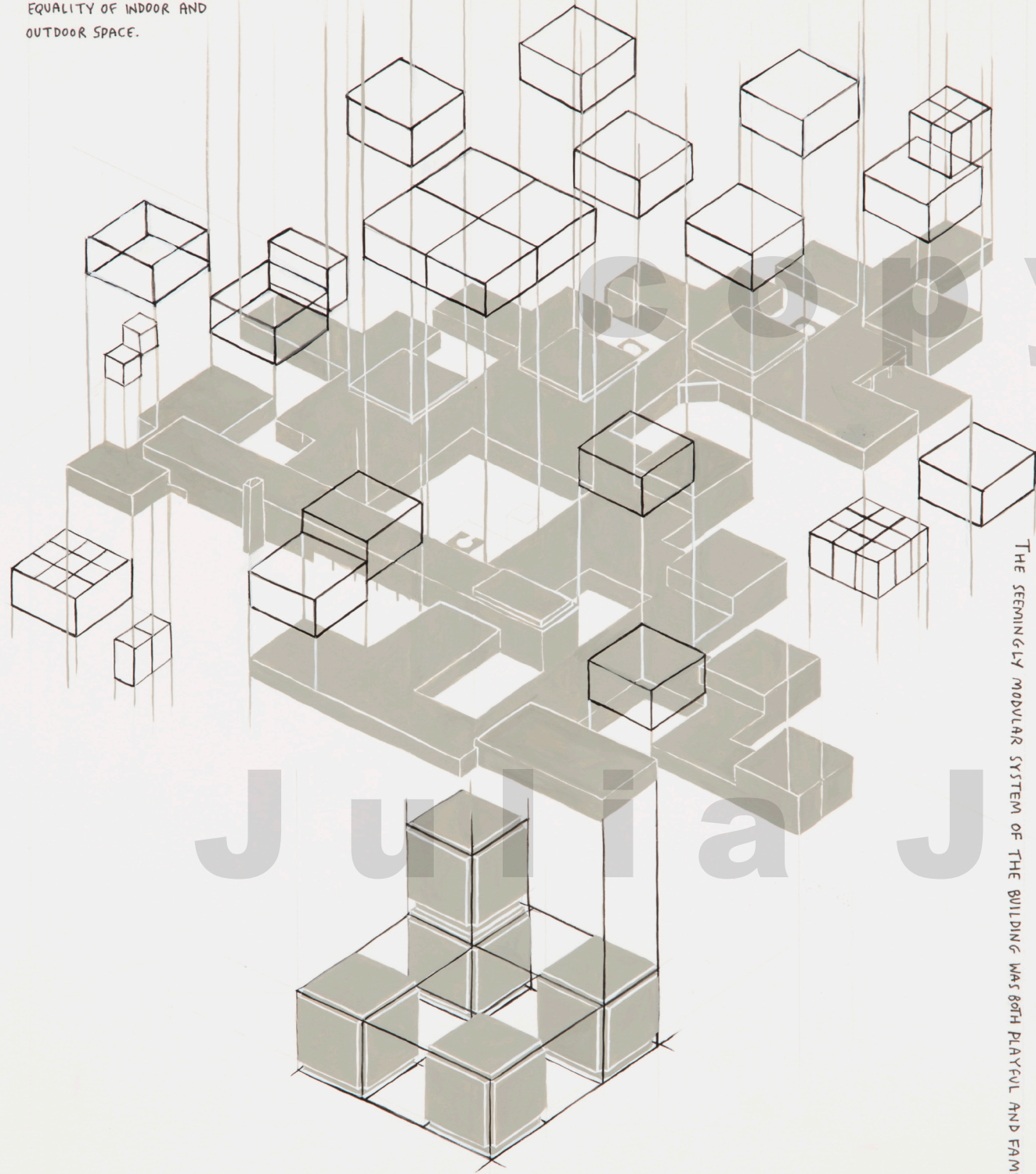
JUST AS THE DISC FORM EXISTED AS BOTH A SOLID AND SPACE, THE BURGERWEESHUIS SEEMED TO BE MADE UP OF BOTH INDOOR AND OUTDOOR ROOMS, A HOPSCOTCH GAME OF SOLIDS AND VOIDS. IT SUGGESTED THE GRID OF A CITY.



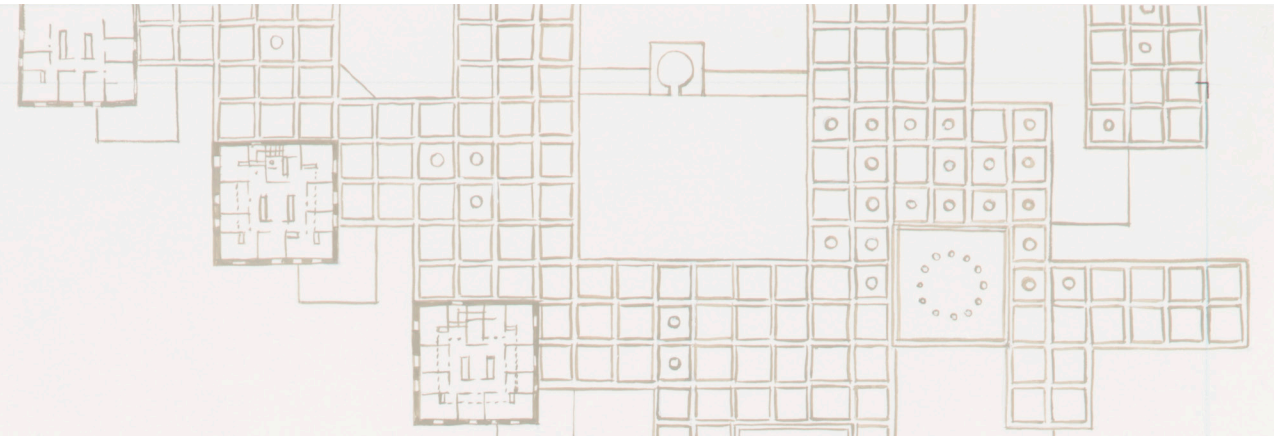
...AS A VOID TO CRAWL THROUGH.

SEEING THE EQUAL USE OF POSITIVE/NEGATIVE SHAPES MADE ME REALIZE HOW THAT SAME IDEA WAS USED BY FRIEDBERG IN THE COLUMBUS PARK TOWERS PLAYGROUND.

THE PLAN OF THE BURGERWEESHUIS ITSELF WAS LIKE A GEOMETRIC, ABSTRACT PAINTING. "CUBES" OF OUTDOOR SPACE ALTERNATED WITH THE SAME SIZE CUBES OF INDOOR SPACE. THE BUILDING SEEMED TO BE A MEDITATION ON THE EQUALITY OF INDOOR AND OUTDOOR SPACE.



THE SEEMINGLY MODULAR SYSTEM OF THE BUILDING WAS BOTH PLAYFUL AND FAMILIAR.

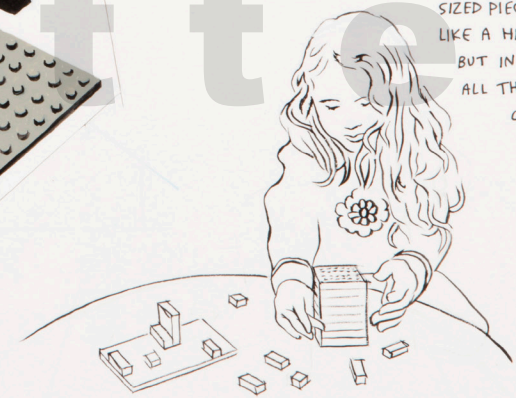


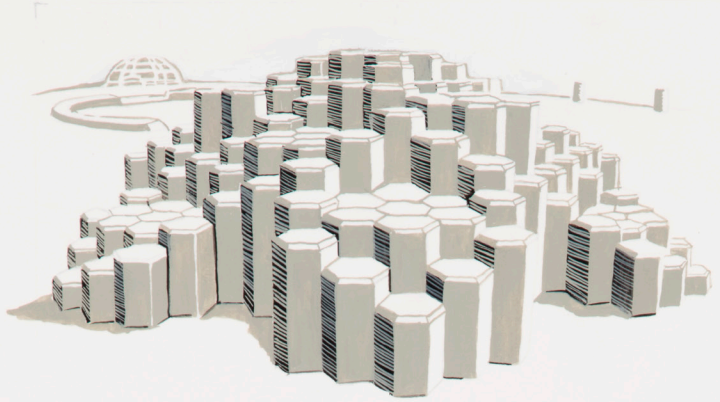
THE FLOOR PLANS OF THE BURGERWEESHUIS ITSELF WERE COMPELLING IMAGES, THEY LOOKED LIKE GEOMETRIC, ABSTRACT ARTWORK AND/OR BOARD GAMES.

IT SEEMED LIKE THE BUILDING WAS PLANNED USING THE IDEA OF KIDS' BUILDING BLOCKS...



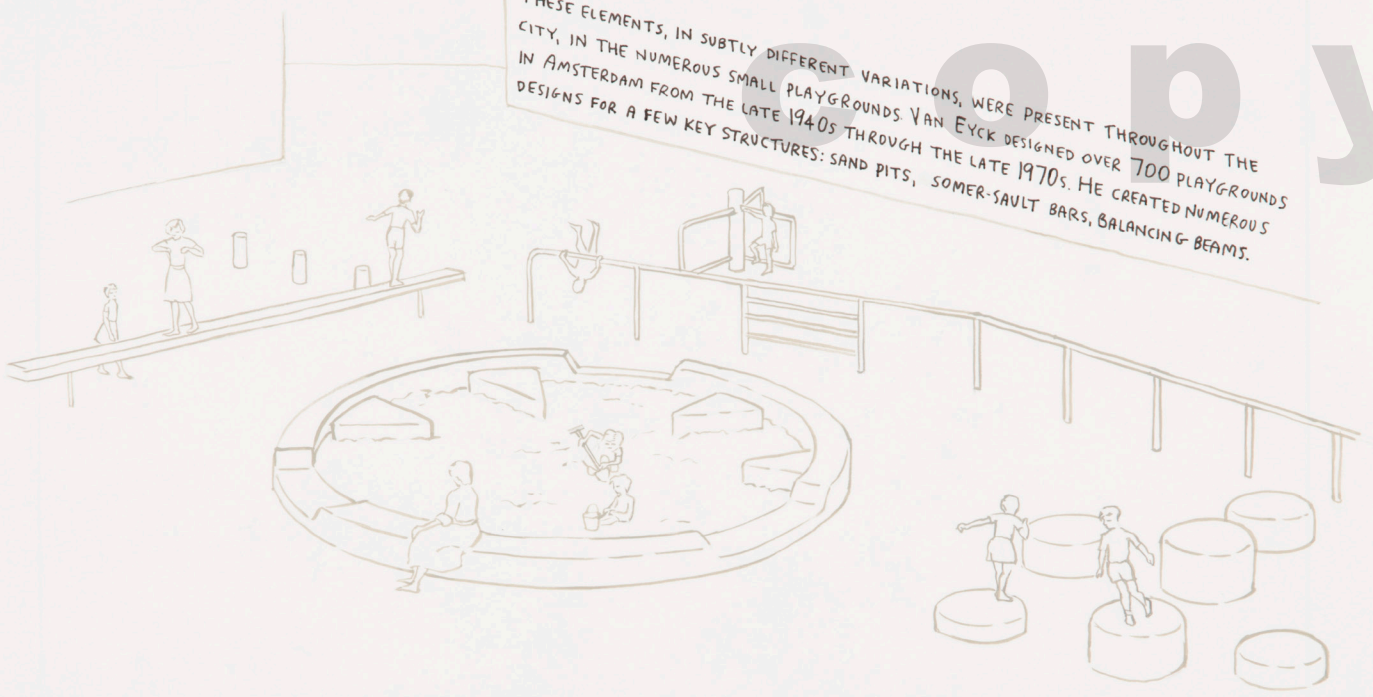
...AND BROUGHT BACK FOR ME THE EXPERIENCE OF MAKING BUILDINGS WITH LEGO, WHOSE LIMITED NUMBER OF DIFFERENT SIZED PIECES DIDN'T SEEM LIKE A HINDRANCE AT ALL, BUT IN FACT MADE IT ALL THE MORE FUN AND CHALLENGING.





AN INTRIGUING FORM IN AMSTERDAM'S VONDEL PARK
 - WAS IT A SCULPTURE? A STRUCTURE TO PLAY ON?
 IT TURNED OUT TO BE A VAN EYCK DESIGN,
 A "CLIMBING MOUNTAIN."

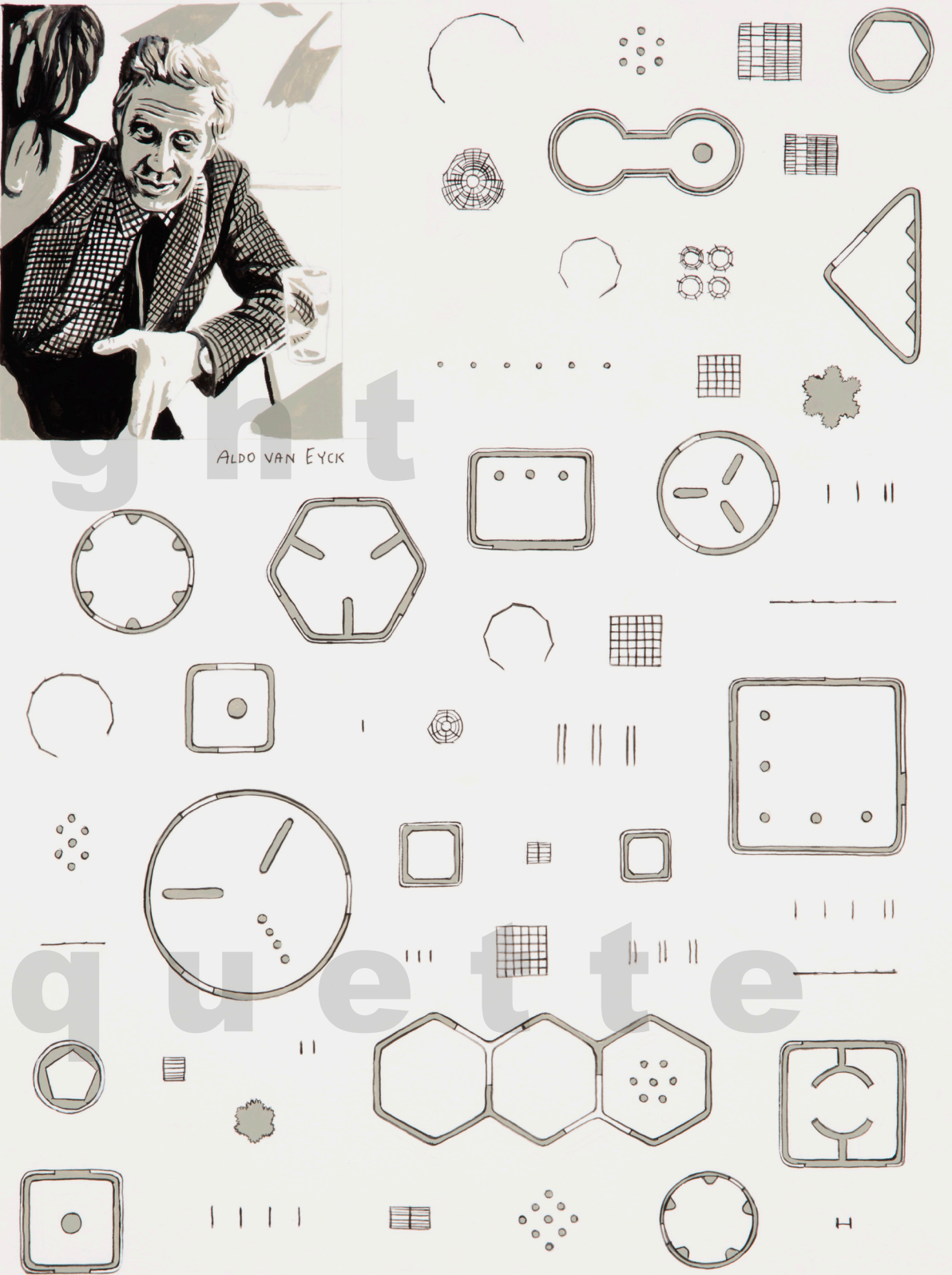
THESE ELEMENTS, IN SUBTLY DIFFERENT VARIATIONS, WERE PRESENT THROUGHOUT THE CITY, IN THE NUMEROUS SMALL PLAYGROUNDS VAN EYCK DESIGNED OVER 700 PLAYGROUNDS IN AMSTERDAM FROM THE LATE 1940S THROUGH THE LATE 1970S. HE CREATED NUMEROUS DESIGNS FOR A FEW KEY STRUCTURES: SAND PITS, SOMER-SAVLT BARS, BALANCING BEAMS.



THUS, THE PLAYGROUNDS WERE MEDITATIONS ON A THEME RATHER THAN SIMPLY COPIES OF ONE ANOTHER.

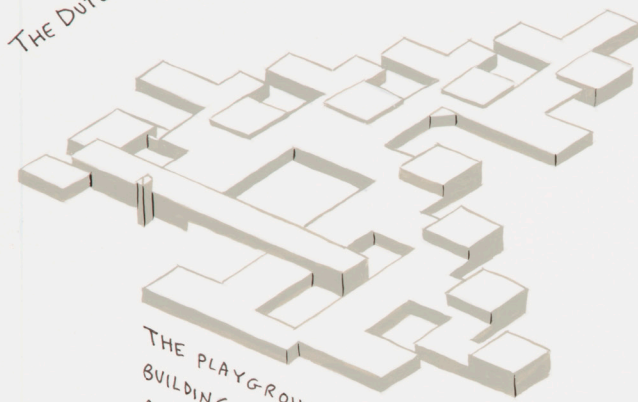
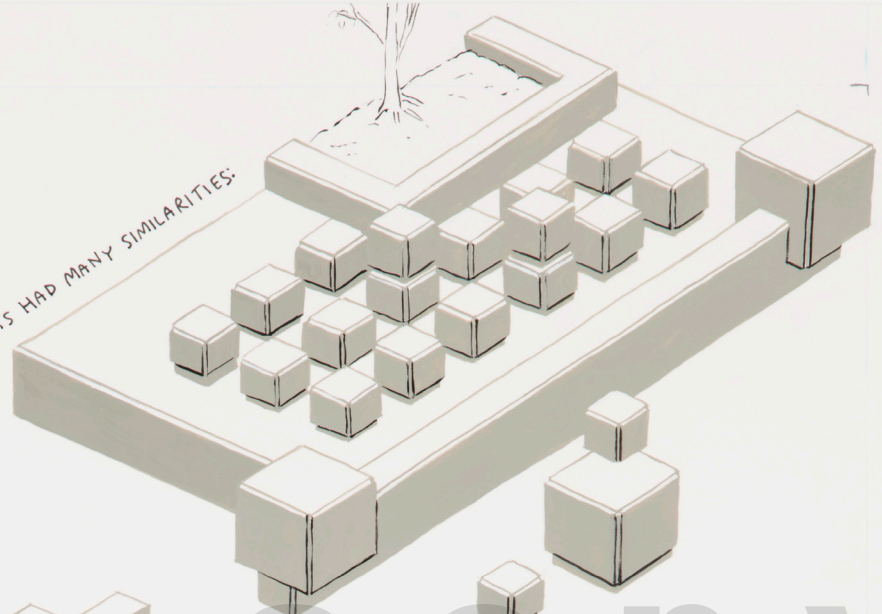


ALDO VAN EYCK

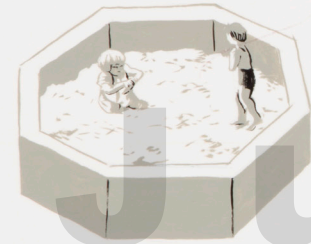


ABOVE: VAN EYCK'S PLANS FOR SANDPITS AND CLIMBING STRUCTURES.

THE DUTCH AND NEW YORK CITY PLAY ENVIRONMENTS HAD MANY SIMILARITIES:



THE PLAYGROUNDS AND BUILDINGS THEMSELVES MIMICKED THE CITY AROUND THEM,

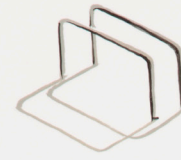
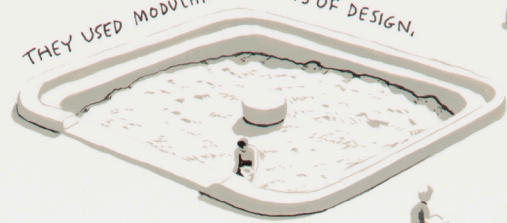


ALWAYS A SAND ELEMENT, AND ALMOST ALWAYS A WATER ELEMENT,

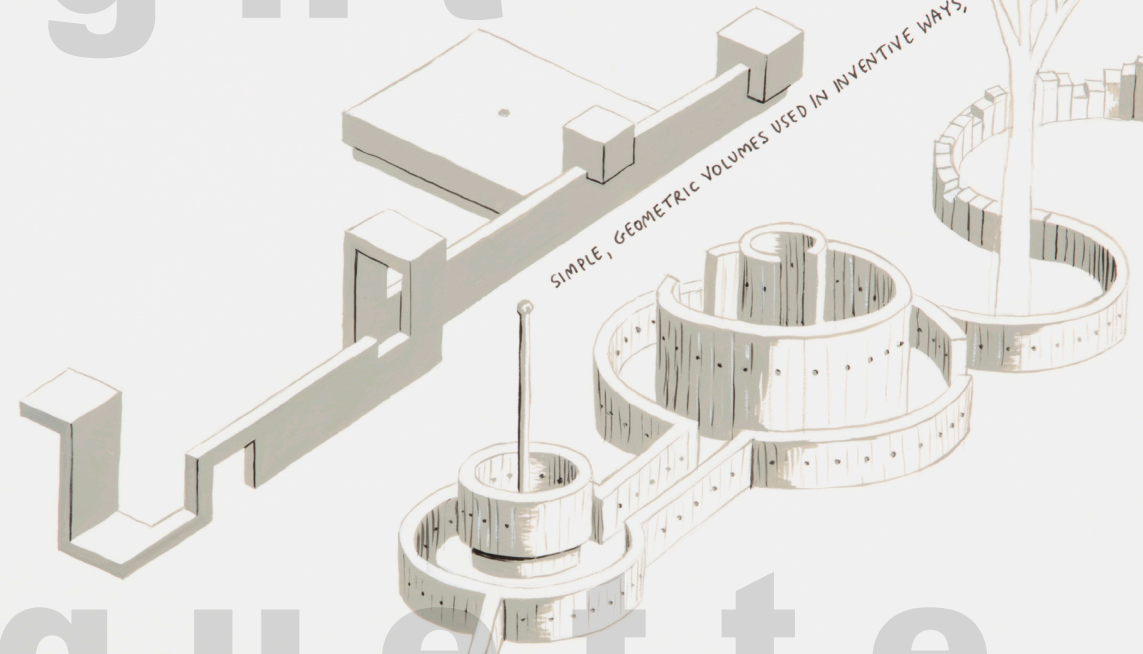
NEGATIVE VOLUME AS IMPORTANT AS POSITIVE VOLUME,



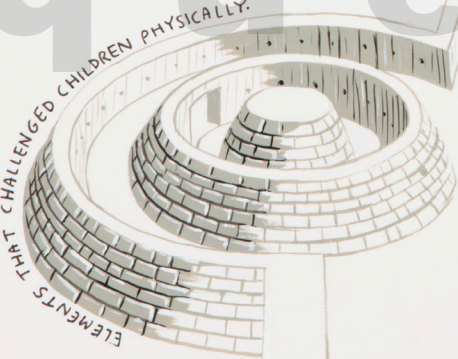
THEY USED MODULAR SYSTEMS OF DESIGN,



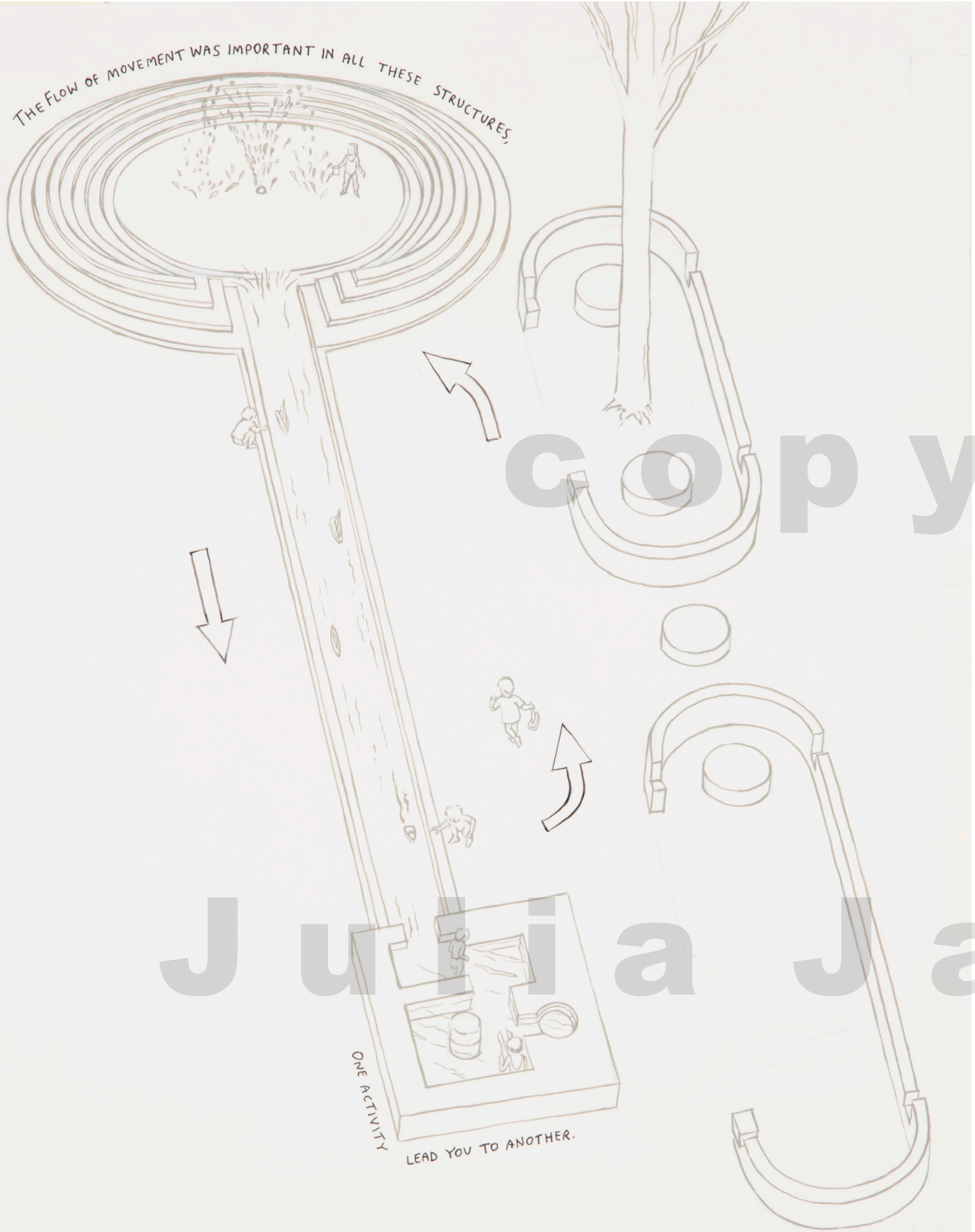
SIMPLE, GEOMETRIC VOLUMES USED IN INVENTIVE WAYS,



ELEMENTS THAT CHALLENGED CHILDREN PHYSICALLY,



THE FLOW OF MOVEMENT WAS IMPORTANT IN ALL THESE STRUCTURES,



ONE ACTIVITY
LEAD YOU TO ANOTHER.

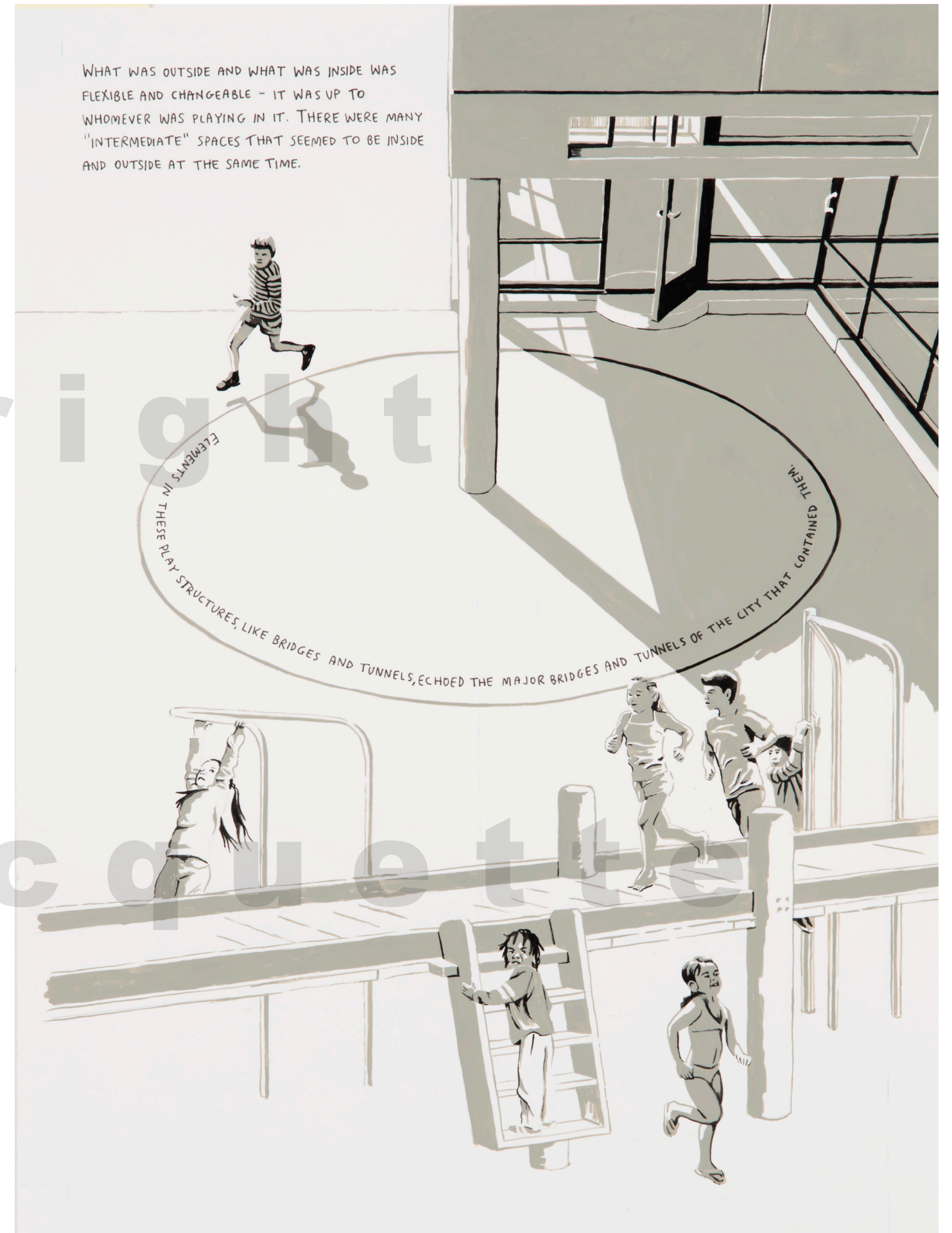
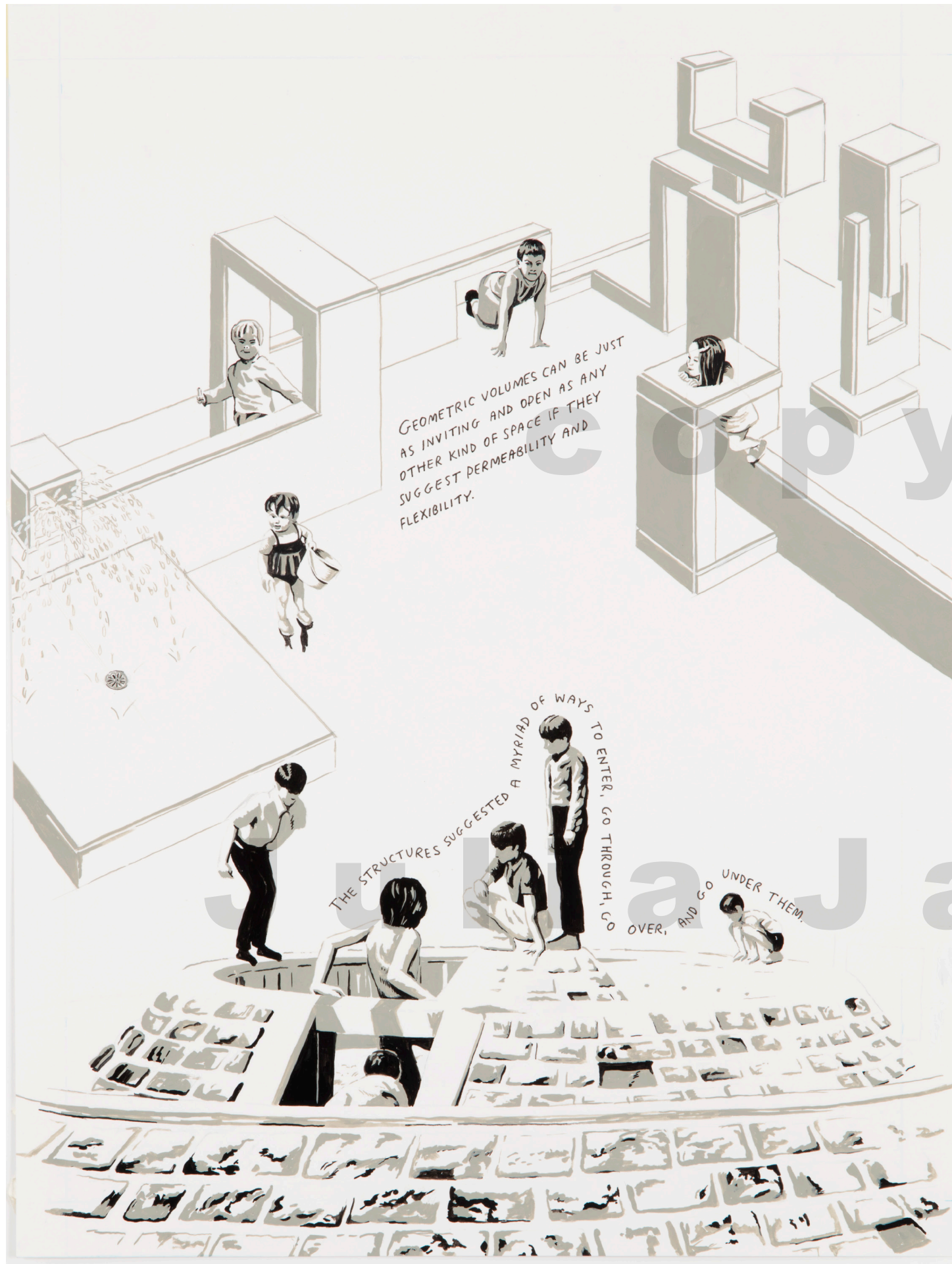


copyright

Jurija Jacquette



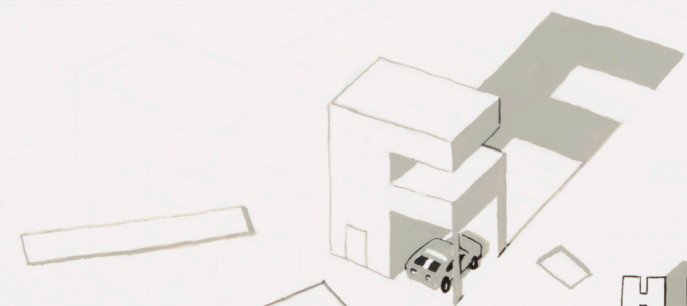
ENERGY FLOWED THROUGH THEM AS IF THROUGH CIRCUITRY.



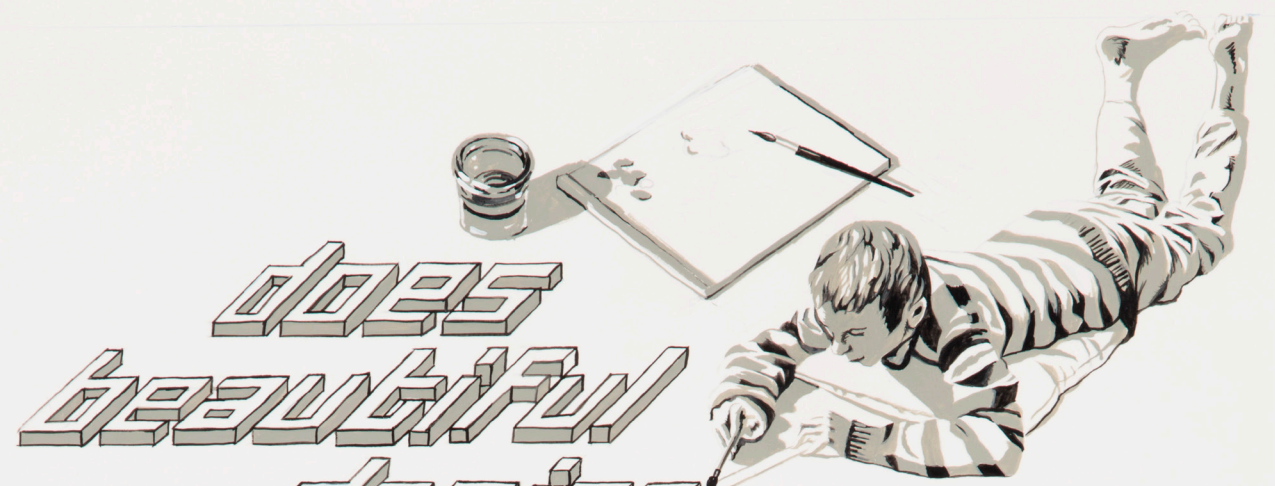
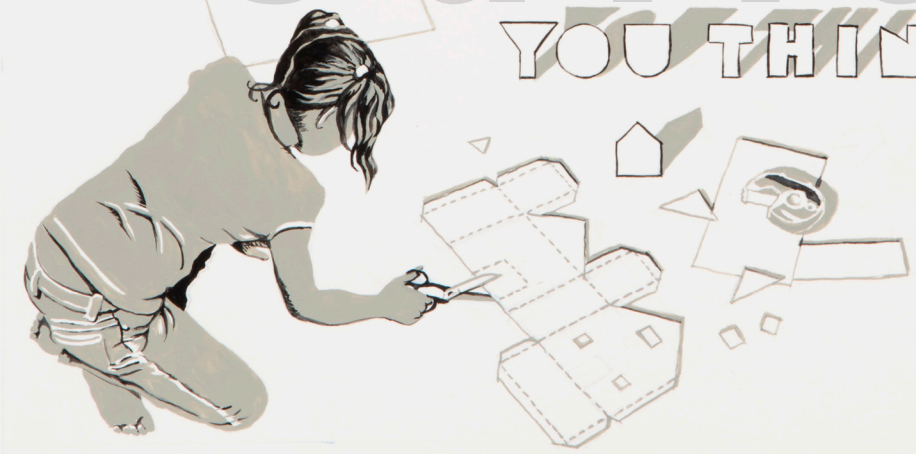




How does the design
of your childhood
environment
affect
you?



DOES IT
HELP TO
SHAPE HOW
YOU THINK?

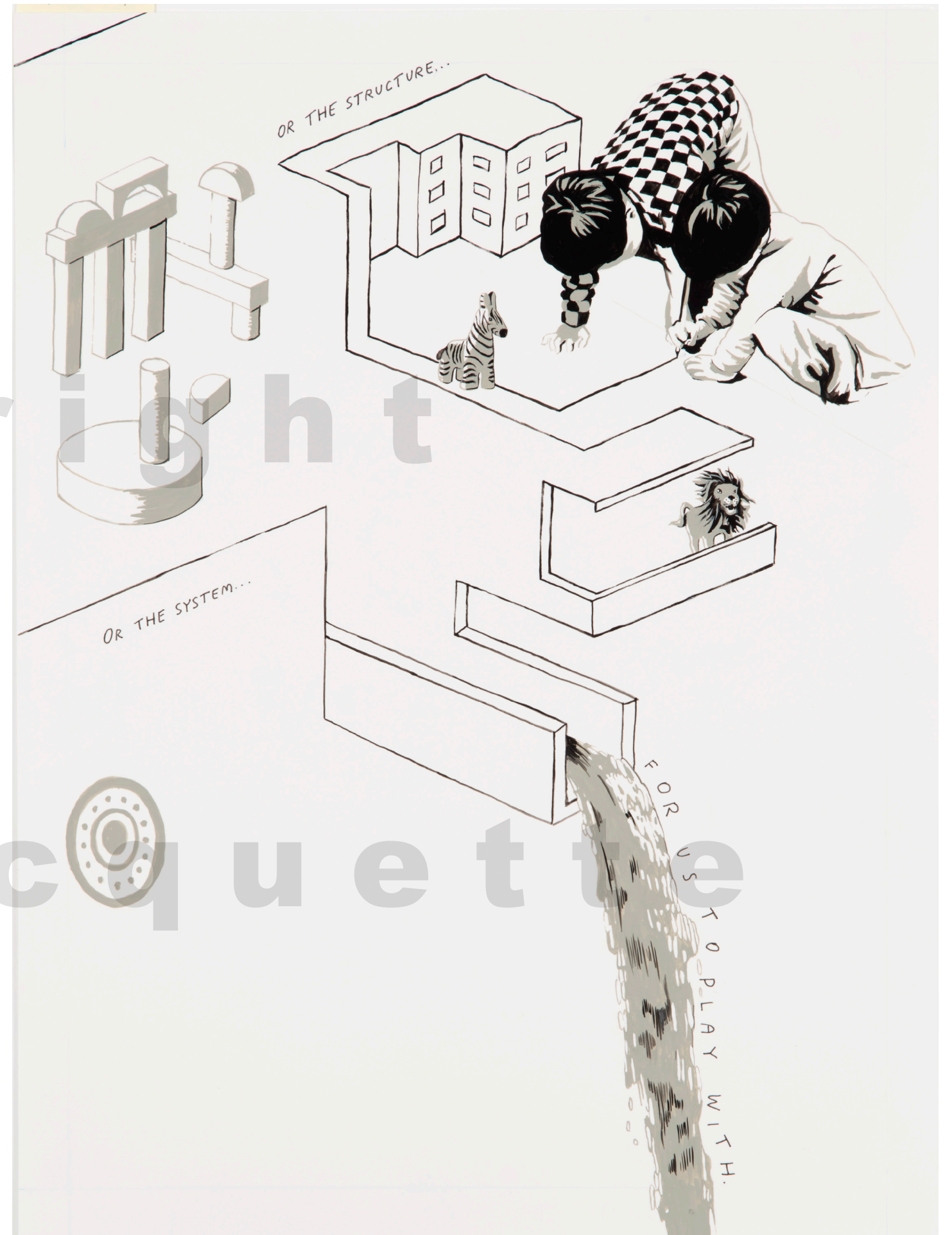
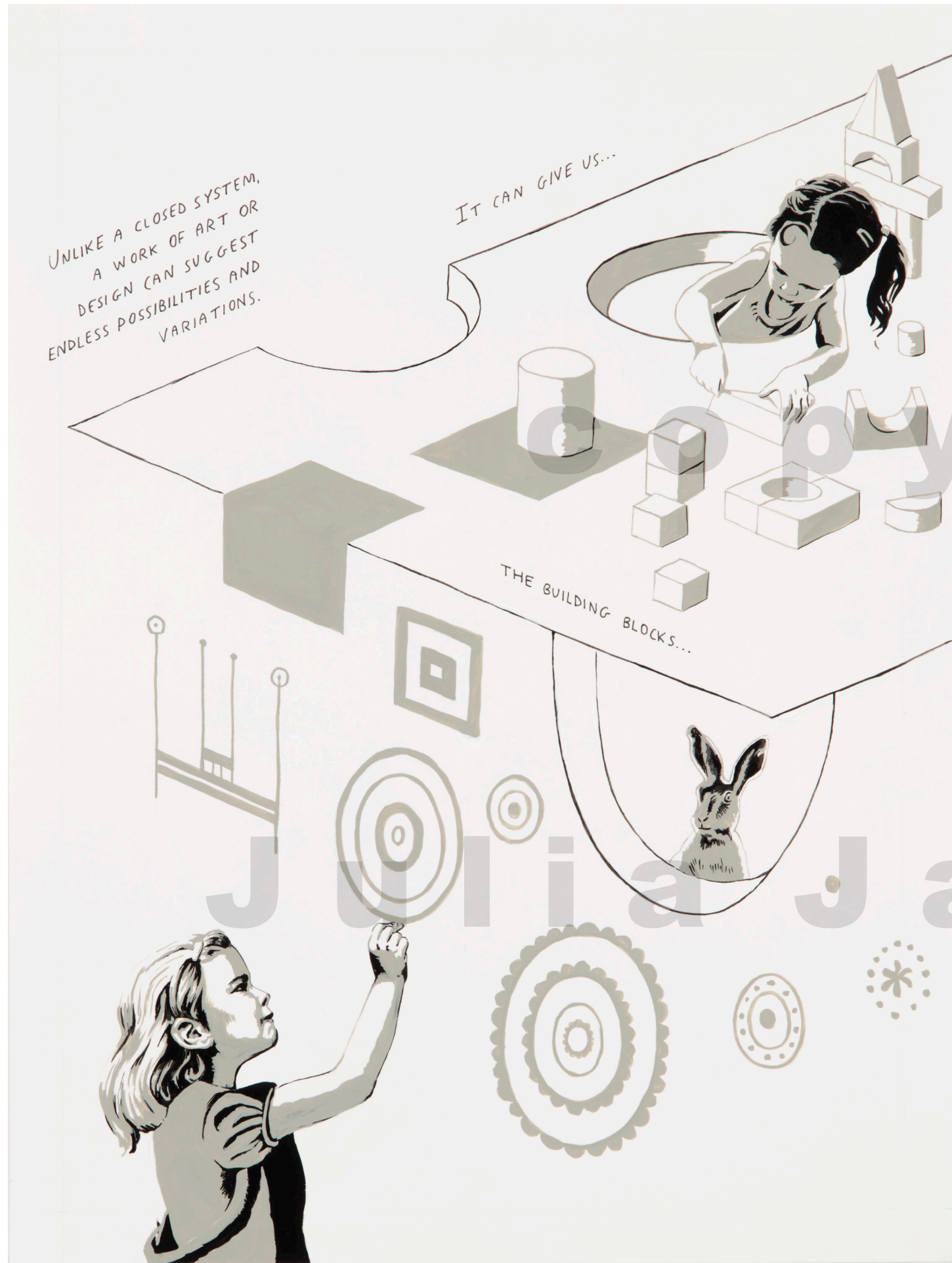


does
beautiful
design
teach
us?

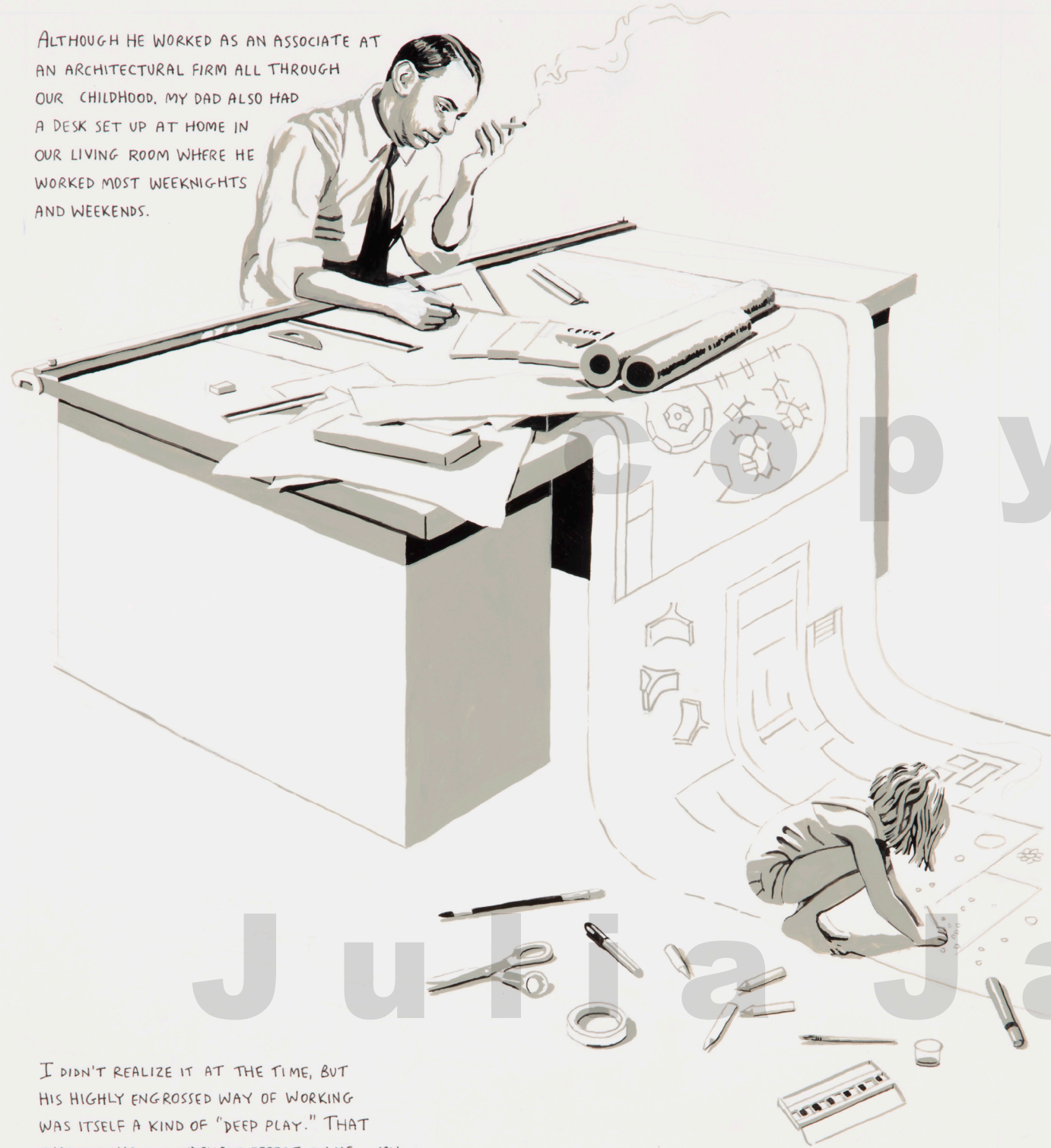


Can it embody ideas
that extend
beyond
aesthetics?



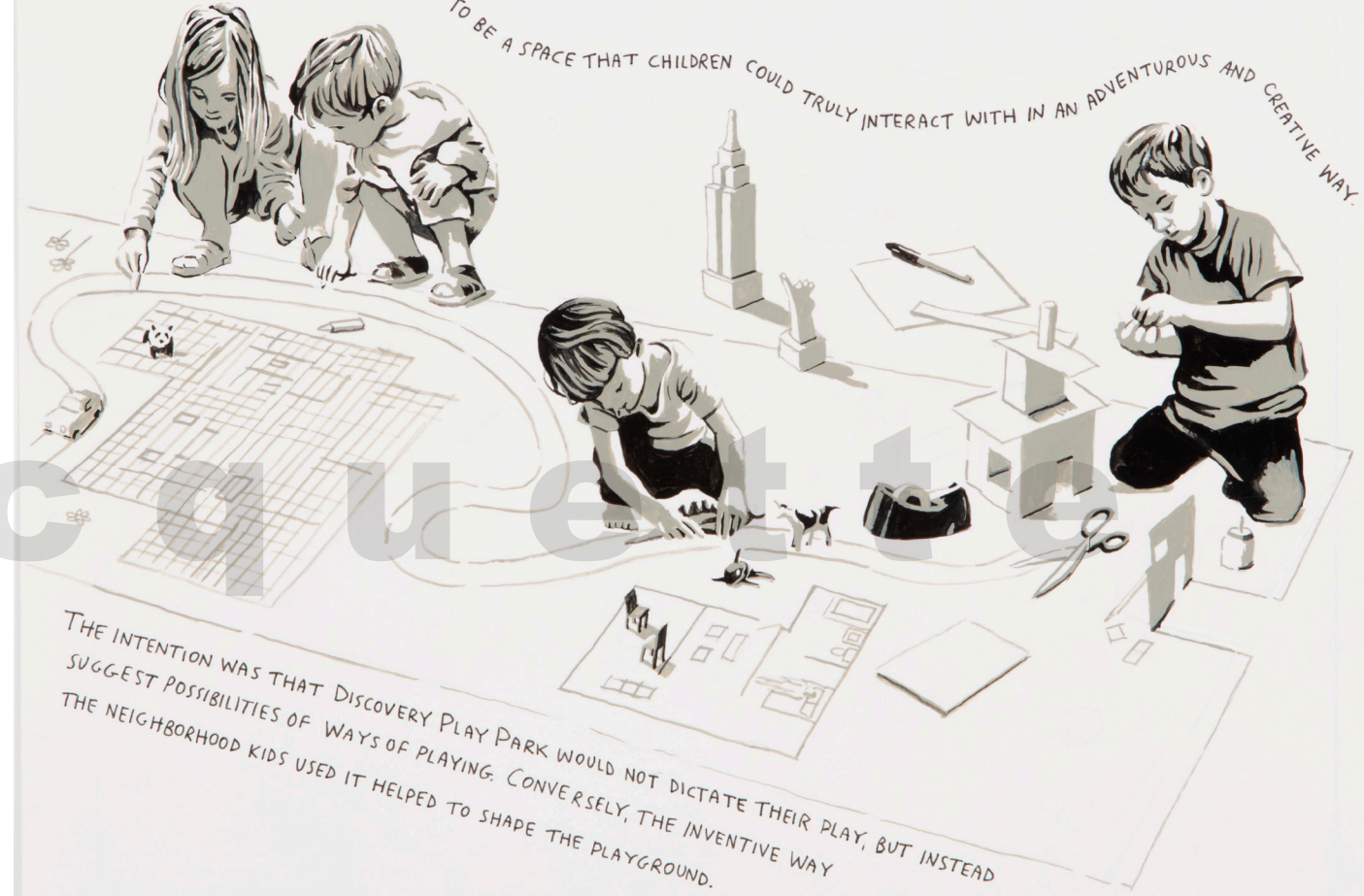


ALTHOUGH HE WORKED AS AN ASSOCIATE AT AN ARCHITECTURAL FIRM ALL THROUGH OUR CHILDHOOD, MY DAD ALSO HAD A DESK SET UP AT HOME IN OUR LIVING ROOM WHERE HE WORKED MOST WEEKNIGHTS AND WEEKENDS.



I DIDN'T REALIZE IT AT THE TIME, BUT HIS HIGHLY ENGROSSED WAY OF WORKING WAS ITSELF A KIND OF "DEEP PLAY." THAT EXAMPLE HAD AN INDELIBLE EFFECT ON US - MY BROTHER AND I WORK THIS SAME WAY (AS AN ARCHITECT AND ARTIST RESPECTIVELY) TO THIS DAY: INTENTLY DRAWING AT A DESK, ASPIRING TO DEPICT THREE DIMENSIONAL FORMS AS INVENTIVELY AS POSSIBLE IN TWO DIMENSIONS.

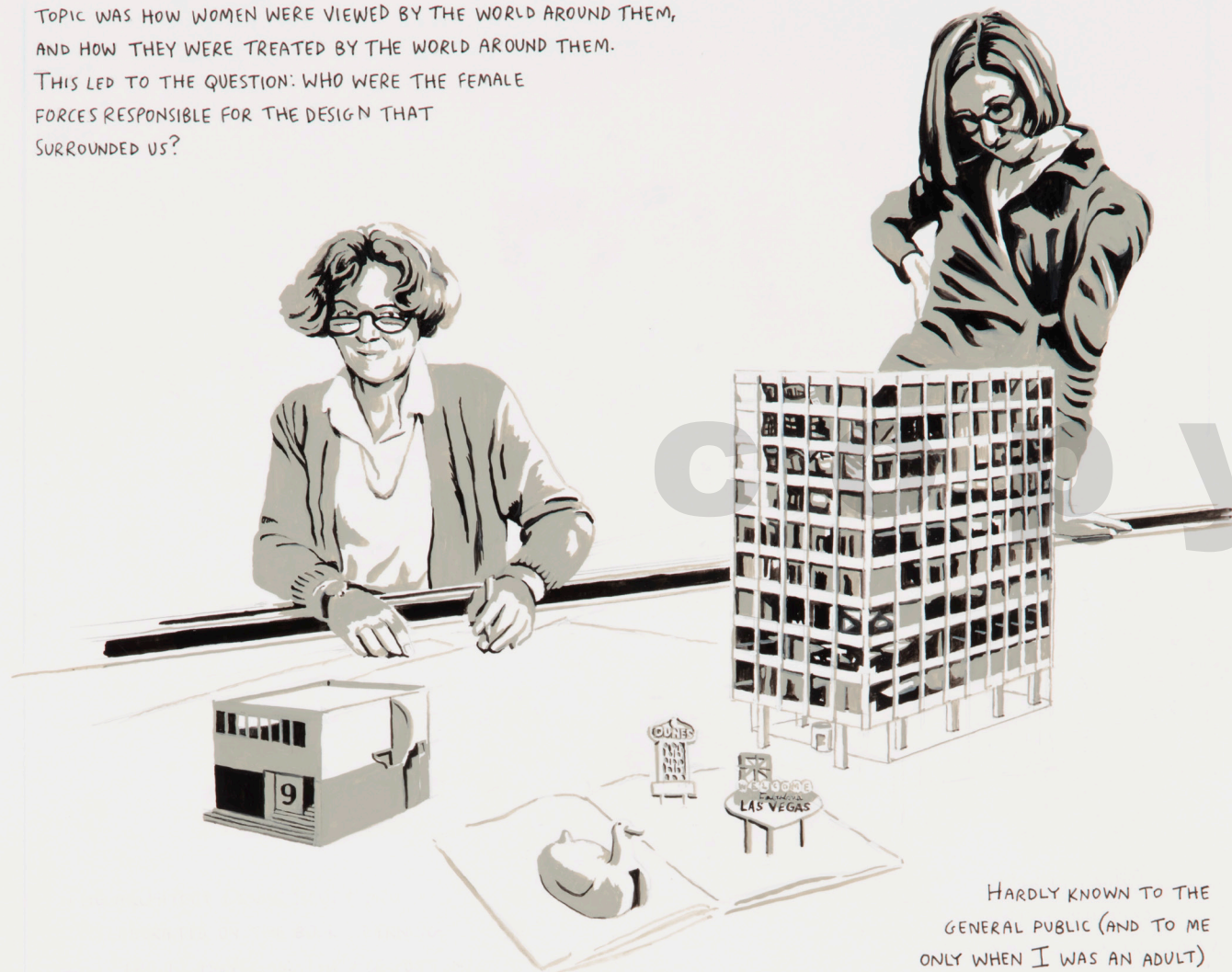
THE PLAYGROUND MY DAD DESIGNED WITH KEN ROSS AND JIM RYAN,



DISCOVERY PLAY PARK, WAS MEANT TO BE A SPACE THAT CHILDREN COULD TRULY INTERACT WITH IN AN ADVENTUROUS AND CREATIVE WAY.

THE INTENTION WAS THAT DISCOVERY PLAY PARK WOULD NOT DICTATE THEIR PLAY, BUT INSTEAD SUGGEST POSSIBILITIES OF WAYS OF PLAYING. CONVERSELY, THE INVENTIVE WAY THE NEIGHBORHOOD KIDS USED IT HELPED TO SHAPE THE PLAYGROUND.

WHAT WAS WELL DESIGNED AND AESTHETICALLY COMPELLING WAS SOMETHING MY MOM ALWAYS PAID ATTENTION TO (AND COMMENTED ON). ANOTHER FREQUENT TOPIC WAS HOW WOMEN WERE VIEWED BY THE WORLD AROUND THEM, AND HOW THEY WERE TREATED BY THE WORLD AROUND THEM. THIS LED TO THE QUESTION: WHO WERE THE FEMALE FORCES RESPONSIBLE FOR THE DESIGN THAT SURROUNDED US?



THE ARCHITECT DENISE SCOTT BROWN COLLABORATED ON THE BOOK, *LEARNING FROM LAS VEGAS: THE FORGOTTEN SYMBOLISM OF ARCHITECTURAL FORM*, WITH HER HUSBAND ROBERT VENTURI AND COLLEAGUE STEVEN IZENOUR. UPON MY VERY FIRST READING OF THE BOOK AS A COLLEGE STUDENT IT PERMANENTLY INGRAINED ITS INFLUENCE ON ME. WITH SUBTLE HUMOR IT POSITED IDEAS THAT BECAME HUGELY IMPORTANT IN THE DISCUSSION OF MODERNIST VERSUS POST-MODERNIST DESIGN, AND TO THIS DAY IS ONE OF THE TEXTS I ASSIGN MOST OFTEN TO MY STUDENTS.

HARDLY KNOWN TO THE GENERAL PUBLIC (AND TO ME ONLY WHEN I WAS AN ADULT) WAS THE ARCHITECT NATALIE DE BLOIS. AN ASSOCIATE PARTNER IN THE RENOWNED ARCHITECTURE FIRM SKIDMORE OWINGS & MERRILL, SHE PLAYED AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN THE DESIGN OF SUCH SOM BUILDINGS AS THE PEPSI-COLA BUILDING ON PARK AVENUE. HIGHLY BELOVED BY MY FAMILY, IT IS NOW A DESIGNATED NEW YORK CITY LANDMARK. ONE OF THE FIRM'S FOUNDERS SAID IN HIS AUTOBIOGRAPHY THAT DE BLOIS DESERVED CREDIT FOR PROJECTS THAT TYPICALLY WENT TO SENIOR MALE PARTNERS.

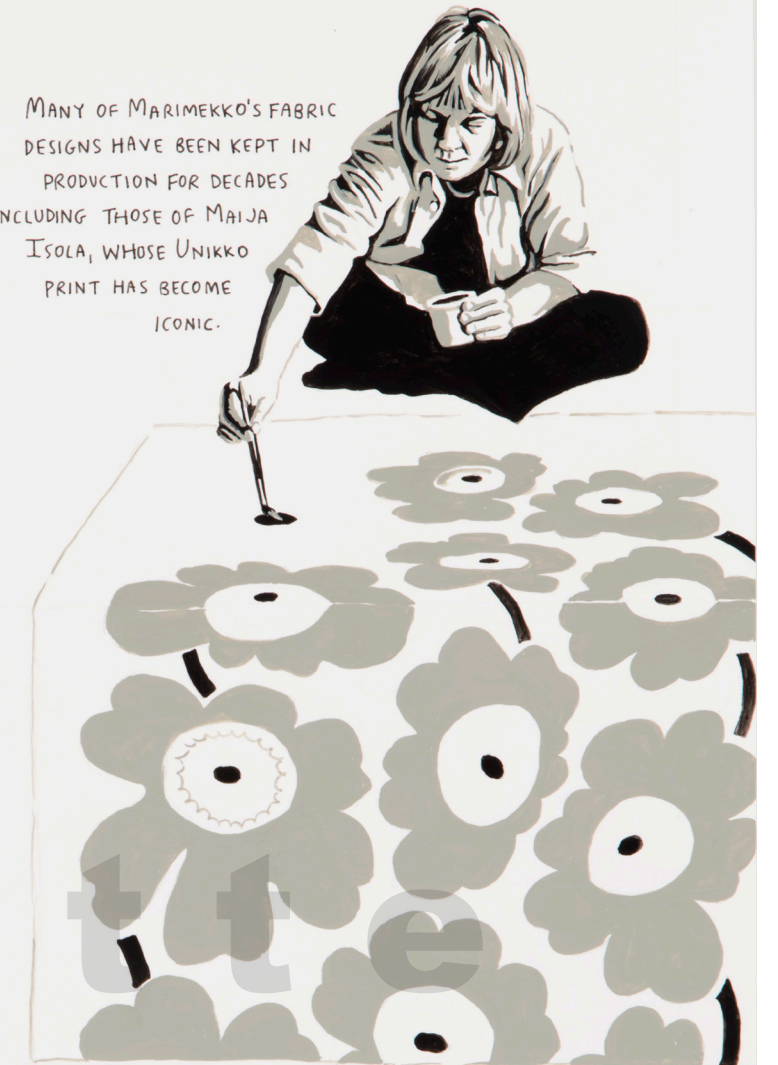


MUCH OF THE CLOTHING MY MOTHER WORE WAS CREATED BY THE FINNISH COMPANY MARIMEKKO WHOSE FABRICS FEATURED BRIGHT SIMPLE DESIGNS. ITS STRONG-MINDED AND VISIONARY FOUNDER ARMI RATIA NOT ONLY HELD IDEAS ABOUT HOW DESIGN SHOULD LOOK TOWARD THE FUTURE, BUT HOW A COMPANY COULD BETTER CONSIDER THE LIVES OF ITS EMPLOYEES.

MANY OF MARIMEKKO'S FABRIC DESIGNS HAVE BEEN KEPT IN PRODUCTION FOR DECADES INCLUDING THOSE OF MAIJA ISOLA, WHOSE UNIKKO PRINT HAS BECOME ICONIC.



THE MARIMEKKO COAT-DRESS MY MOTHER WORE THROUGHOUT MY CHILDHOOD WAS FOR ME A PIECE OF ARCHITECTURE IN ITSELF (THE PATTERN WAS BY DESIGNER PENTTI RINTA). IT WAS LIKE SHE WAS WEARING A BUILDING.

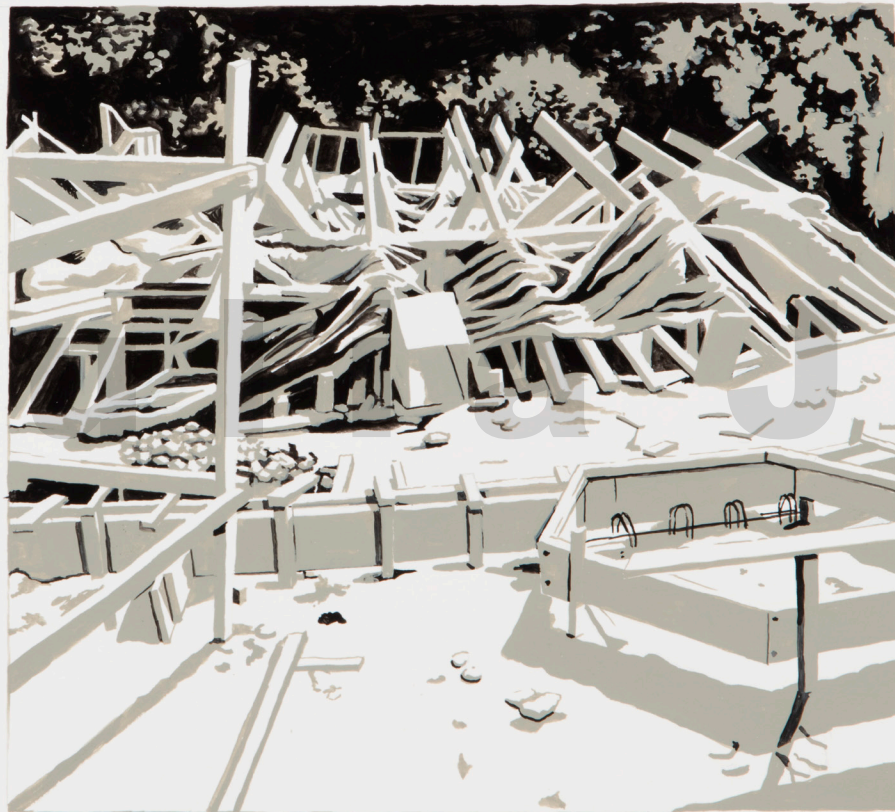


THE PLAY SPACES THAT ARE SO IMPORTANT TO ME AND THOSE WHO GREW UP PLAYING IN THEM

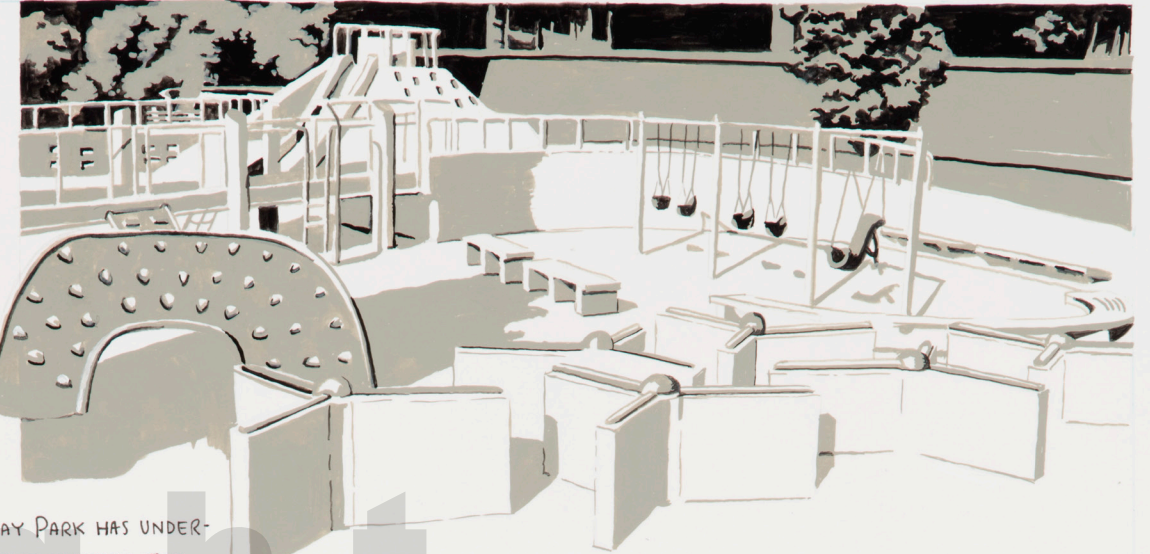
HAVE ALL BEEN GREATLY CHANGED SINCE THEIR CREATION.



THE PLAYGROUND IN COLUMBUS PARK TOWERS WAS DEMOLISHED WHEN BADLY NEEDED REPAIRS PROVED TO BE TOO EXPENSIVE FOR THE COOPERATIVELY RUN BUILDING.



THE ADVENTURE PLAYGROUND IS CURRENTLY BEING ALTERED, MANY OF ITS PLAY STRUCTURES HAVING ALREADY BEEN CHANGED (SOME TUNNELS CLOSED OFF, SAND AREAS REDUCED IN SIZE) IN ITS FIRST RENOVATION.



DISCOVERY PLAY PARK HAS UNDERGONE EXTENSIVE CHANGES. THE SEA OF SAND THAT CARPETED IT IS GONE, AS ARE MANY OF THE PLAY STRUCTURES' RAILINGS AND BARS HAVE BEEN ADDED TO THE BRIDGE AND ALL THE LOW WALLS, INCLUDING THE STRUCTURES THAT MAKE UP THE MAZE IN THE LITTLE KIDS' SECTION. A MINI ARCHED CLIMBING WALL HAS BEEN ADDED.

MANY OF THE HUNDREDS OF AMSTERDAM PLAYGROUNDS ARE GONE. THE PLAYGROUNDS THAT DO REMAIN USUALLY HAVE HAD NEWER PLAY STRUCTURES PLOPPED INTO THEM RIGHT NEXT TO - OFTEN STRADDLING - THE SAND PITS AND CLIMBING BARS (AS IN THIS VAN EYCK PLAYGROUND IN THE VONDELPARK WHICH HAS HAD A HUGE WOODEN STRUCTURE WITH TUBULAR SLIDES ADDED).



THE BURGERWEESHUIS IS NO LONGER AN ORPHANAGE, AND HAS SPENT MANY YEARS VACANT, IN NEED OF A TENANT WHO WOULD CREATIVELY UTILIZE THE SPACE.

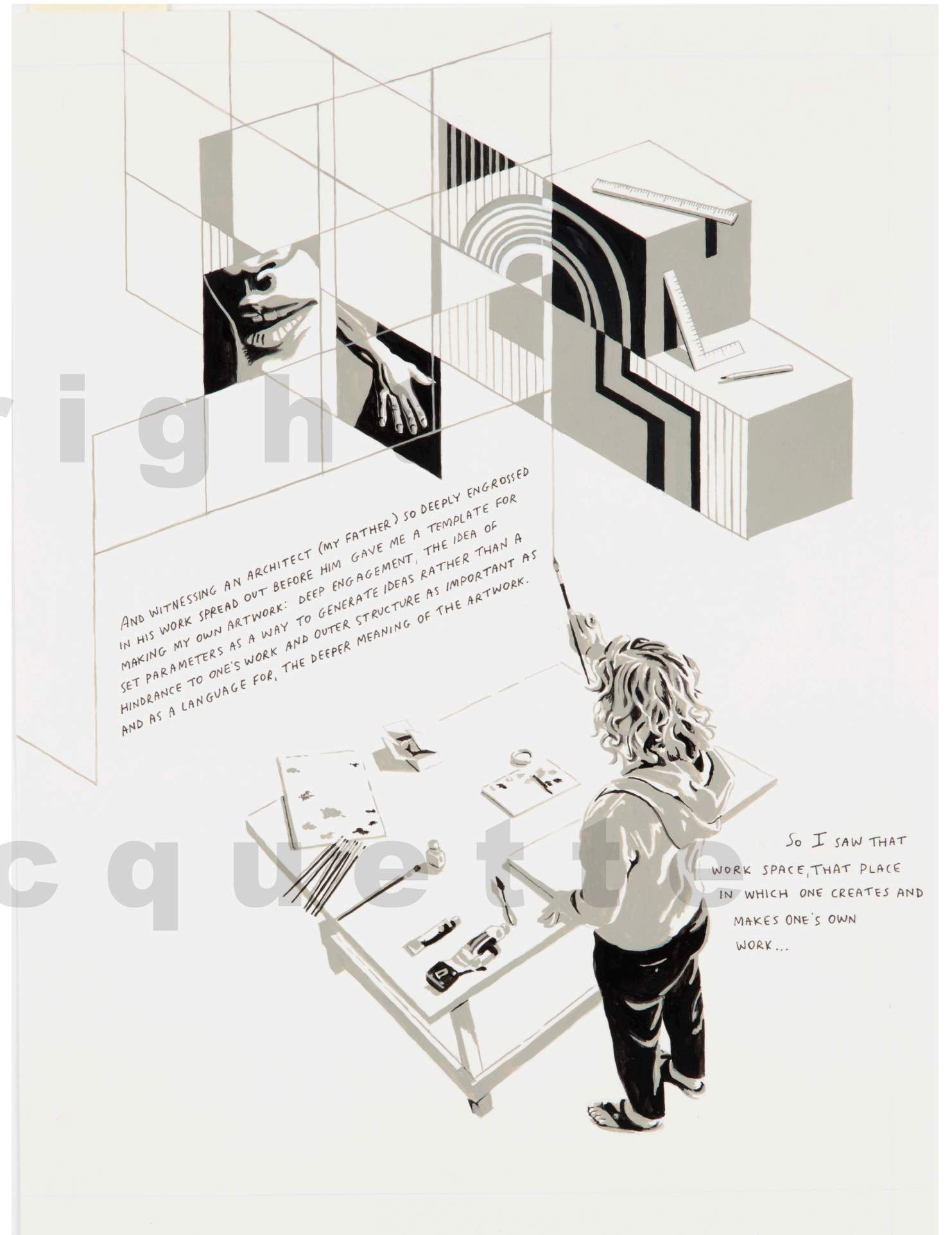
ALL THE PLAYGROUNDS STILL EXIST IN THEIR ORIGINAL FORMS, IN MY MIND. NOT ONLY HOW THEY LOOKED, BUT WHAT IT FELT LIKE TO PLAY WITHIN THEM.

THE PLAYGROUNDS PROVIDED ME WITH A TEMPLATE, A KIND OF STRUCTURE WITHIN WHICH YOU COULD THEN UTILIZE A MENU OF SHAPE AND FORM.

THUS, THEY SHOWED ME HOW ONE CAN MAKE MANY ITERATIONS OF A VISUAL IDEA WITH A VERY SPECIFIC VOCABULARY, AND THAT THE MOST BASIC VOCABULARY CAN CONTAIN VISUAL METAPHOR, ALLUDE TO HISTORY, AND BE DEEPLY MEANINGFUL.

AND WITNESSING AN ARCHITECT (MY FATHER) SO DEEPLY ENGROSSED IN HIS WORK SPREAD OUT BEFORE HIM GAVE ME A TEMPLATE FOR MAKING MY OWN ARTWORK: DEEP ENGAGEMENT, THE IDEA OF SET PARAMETERS AS A WAY TO GENERATE IDEAS RATHER THAN A HINDRANCE TO ONE'S WORK AND OUTER STRUCTURE AS IMPORTANT AS AND AS A LANGUAGE FOR, THE DEEPER MEANING OF THE ARTWORK.

SO I SAW THAT WORK SPACE, THAT PLACE IN WHICH ONE CREATES AND MAKES ONE'S OWN WORK...





right

Jacquette

copyright

Back Cover

lia Jacqueline



STRETCHING FABRIC ON A WOODEN FRAME (OR SIMPLY HANGING IT DIRECTLY ON THE WALL) WAS A POPULAR KIND OF WALL DECORATION IN THE 1970S. ESPECIALLY POPULAR WAS THE FABRIC BY THE FINNISH COMPANY MARIMEKKO - IT DECORATED MY BROTHER'S AND MY BEDROOM, AS WELL AS OUR LIVING ROOM.



THESE SIMPLE, STRIPPED-DOWN DESIGNS SHARED A VOCABULARY AND SYSTEM OF ORGANIZATION WITH THE PLAYGROUNDS WE PLAYED IN. THE MOST OFTEN USED ELEMENTS OF THAT VOCABULARY BEING THE CIRCLE (ITS THREE DIMENSIONAL INCARNATION BEING A KIND OF DISC), AND THE GRID.

← MY MOM IN A MARIMEKKO DRESS. JUL 68

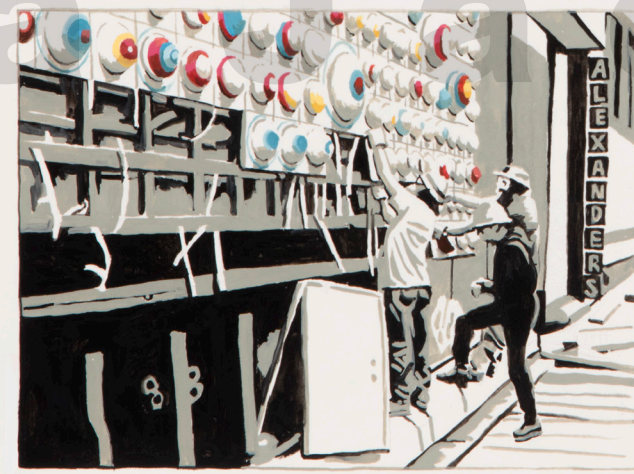


SOMETIMES THE GRID WAS AN INVISIBLE, UNDERLYING ORGANIZER OF THESE WORKS OF DESIGN, AND SOMETIMES IT ACTED AS THE DECORATIVE SURFACE ITSELF.

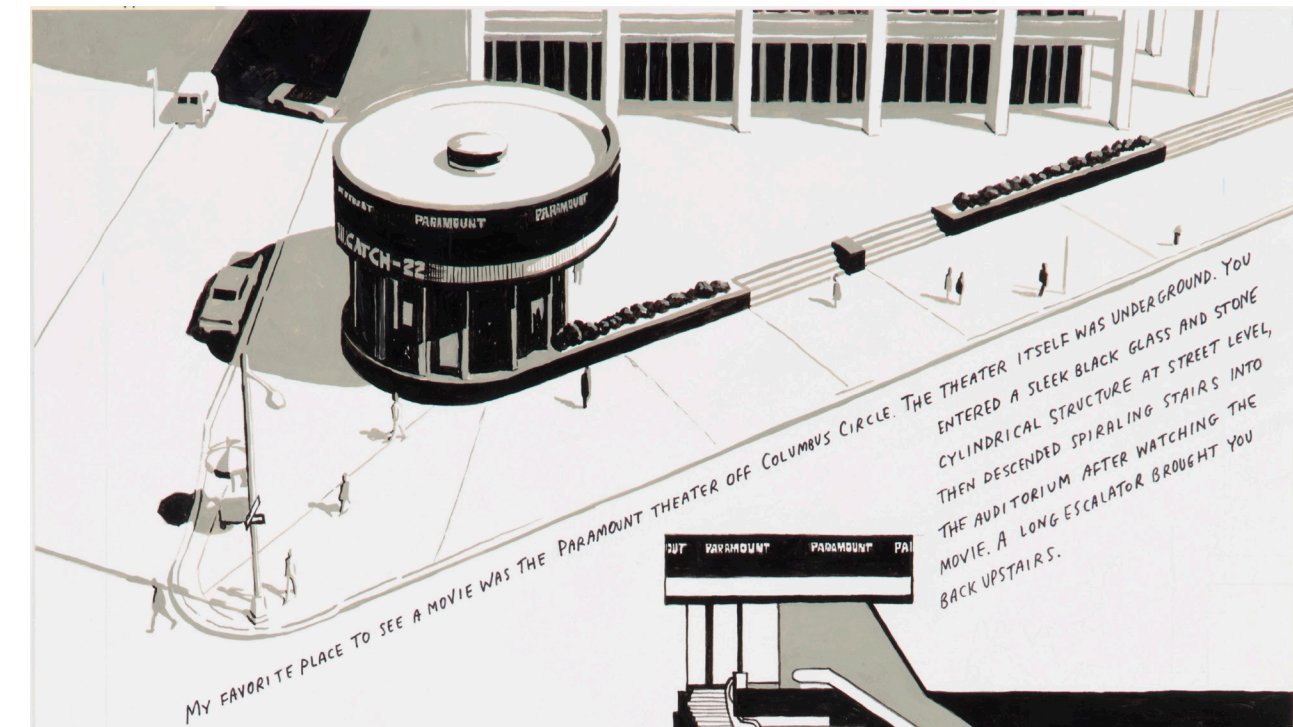


THROUGHOUT NEW YORK CITY THERE WERE BUILDINGS THAT HAD SOME ELEMENT THAT GAVE THEM A FEELING OF PLAY, AND IN MY MIND WERE INEXTRICABLY LINKED TO THE PLAYGROUNDS I PLAYED IN WHILE TRAVERSING THE CITY AS A KID. I ALWAYS MADE CERTAIN MY PATH WENT BY THESE ESPECIALLY INTERESTING BUILDINGS. ABOVE THE ENTRANCE TO THE ALEXANDER'S DEPARTMENT STORE ON 58TH STREET AND 3RD AVENUE WAS A RELIEF SCULPTURE CONSISTING OF MULTICOLORED, ENAMEL-ON-METAL DOMED TILES.

THE "BUBBLE TILES" WERE CREATED BY THE ARTIST STEFAN KNAPP, WHO DEVELOPED A TECHNIQUE OF BAKING ENAMEL ONTO STEEL. FOR HIS EVEN LARGER OUTDOOR ARTWORK FOR THE ALEXANDER'S STORE IN PARAMUS, NEW JERSEY, HE PAINTED THE ABSTRACT IMAGERY ON LARGE STEEL PANELS WHILE WEARING SKIS - THUS HE COULD WALK ON THE ACTUAL MURAL AS HE WAS CREATING IT.



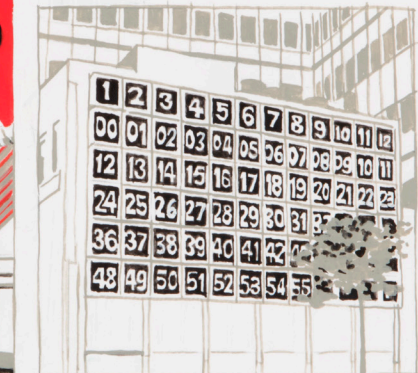
WORKMEN TAKING DOWN THE TILES DURING THE DEMOLITION OF THE ALEXANDER'S STORE IN THE EARLY 90S.



MY FAVORITE PLACE TO SEE A MOVIE WAS THE PARAMOUNT THEATER OFF COLUMBUS CIRCLE. THE THEATER ITSELF WAS UNDERGROUND. YOU ENTERED A SLEEK BLACK GLASS AND STONE CYLINDRICAL STRUCTURE AT STREET LEVEL, THEN DESCENDED SPIRALING STAIRS INTO THE AUDITORIUM AFTER WATCHING THE MOVIE. A LONG ESCALATOR BROUGHT YOU BACK UPSTAIRS.



IN LOWER MANHATTAN, AN IMPORTANT STOP WAS 127 JOHN STREET, BUILT IN 1971. THE PRIVATELY OWNED BUILDING FEATURED STRUCTURES, ARTWORK AND SEATING THAT THE PUBLIC COULD INTERACT WITH, INCLUDING MULTI LEVEL PLATFORMS SHADED BY COLORFUL BANNERS WHICH LINED THE SIDEWALK ON THE NORTH SIDE OF THE BUILDING. ENAMEL-ON-METAL "LOVE SEATS" PROVIDED SEATING.



← A GIANT DIGITAL CLOCK ON A WALL AT THE CORNER OF WATER AND JOHN STREETS.



AN OUTSIDE WALL FEATURING A MURAL BY ARCHITECT/ILLUSTRATOR FORREST WILSON



MANY OF THESE STRUCTURES AND ARTWORKS STILL REMAIN AT 127 JOHN STREET (NOW 200 WATER STREET), AND THE ONES THAT HAVE BEEN REMOVED LIVE ON IN MY MIND. THESE MEMORIES HAVE PROMPTED ME TO CONSIDER THE QUESTION...

CAN A BUILDING BE GENEROUS?