

FEELING AND KNOWING AT YAD VA SHEM

Jonathan Block Friedman

Passion can create drama out of inert stone.
Towards a New Architecture, Le Corbusier

Architecture is an act of love, not a stage set.
Talks with Students, Le Corbusier

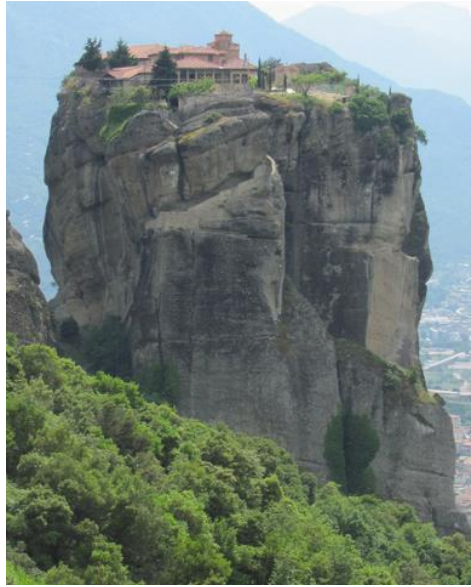


Here is an essential architectural dilemma. Passion and drama are emotional matters. Empathy, literally “feeling in,” understands what others are *feeling* by putting oneself in another’s shoes. Conscience, literally “knowing with” on the other hand, is about truth. Must architecture avoid illusion so that we may *know* its truth? Does architecture set the scenery for theatric effects or is it “a plastic thing, the spirit of order, a unity of intention, the sense of relationships... a pure creation of the mind?”¹

PUT YOURSELF IN MY SHOES...

I’ve had a long slog, exploring architecture in Greece—climbing up the Acropolis, Sounion, Meteora—my heels in pain from plantar fasciitis. And now in Israel, land of serious gradient I am climbing again, from St George’s Monastery in the Valley of the Shadow of Death to high above the Dead Sea at Masada. Everywhere in Jerusalem my body aches!

I mount another hilltop to Yad VaShem, Israel’s living memorial to the Holocaust. At Agia Triada Monastery in Meteora monks laboriously lifted inert stones up 100 meter vertical cliffs to escape marauding bands on the plains below. Yad Vashem’s architect Moshe Safdie cantilevered his concrete museum Prism in dramatic structural and spacial gymnastics to heighten our encounter with tragedy. **Put yourself in these shoes—6 million EMPTY pairs—walk through this harrowing testament to catastrophe and then, if you can, talk of your pain...** Like everyone confronting the Holocaust, I am speechless. Can architecture speak for us here? What of architecture is emotional experience and what is cognitive understanding? Can they ever come together to make us whole?



F1



F2

AN ARCHITECT VISITS YAD VASHEM

On the entry plaza we find an information pavilion, where sunlight casts striped shadows on our clothes, a subliminal hint of what is to come. Its pervasive luminosity sets up by contrast the opaque prism we will enter across a gangplank bridge. We follow the suspended walkway into a slot cut into the Prism. We are injected into the dark and-- another world. A blank wall stops us cold. Above the sky recedes as walls tilt and narrow inward. Disoriented we turn and stumble down a long seductive shaft, no end in sight. Behind us a ghostly palimpsest—grainy images from a dwindling memory of a world lost to catastrophe. A slash in the pavement stops our forward progress and directs us into a side room, a catacomb, how far under? We have no idea. Were we ever outside? The power of this space to swamp our consciousness is that strong and that quick.

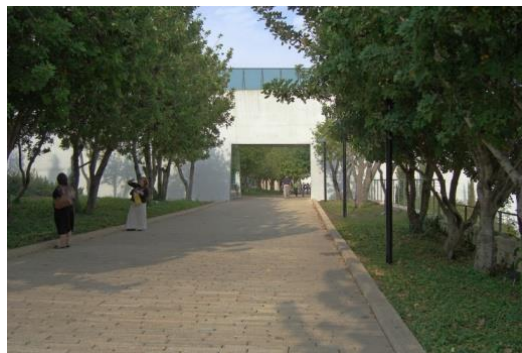
We discover a chronology of caves, visually isolated but acoustically linked. A background rumble grows and echoes, but we can't see beyond our immediate room— until we leave it and the prism void shocks us again. In that long corridor, where length is time, we have lost our origin. Occasional elevated crossings obscure any end view. A deepening dread accompanies the rising horror.

Weaving back and forth across this narrow defile, this pinched street, we see above us— people? They are outdoors but behind glass, hovering in a different world, looking down at us.

Who are those folks, visible but separated, strolling in the light while we are down here in the dark, lost in the ghetto? Are they... guards? Are we trapped? We are indeed enclosed, surrounded, and now watched. Outside all was well, we were so... assimilated, and now the walls press in as the downward sloping floor puts that slot of skylight even further from us. We are buried and see no way out. Beneath the watchers, the orders of the trenches direct us—**move on!**



F3



F4

Deep slots score the floor and obstruct the straight path along this keel of a prison ship. They permit no short cuts. The busy tourist thinks: *How dare they?! I don't have the time. I'll do this on my own agenda!* The Prism answers: **No you won't. Not now.** You're in deep, no escape. Pitched floor and looming walls conspire with gravity to assure an onward trajectory, down and through the narrow passage.

Our march from normalcy to death camps and the ovens is a hurried scuttle across this panoptical line of fire. Increasingly horrific chambers ensnare the unsuspecting. A desk and study of a typical 1930's German-Jewish home is appalling because it is so ordinary. All too soon comes the gas chamber tableau—white plaster bodies, full scale—a George Segal sculpture commissioned by Heironymous Bosch, placed before Michelangelo's *Last Judgment*.

Each chamber takes us deeper into this unspeakable disaster. The internal monologue is almost silent, but still... *all this marching, my knees are throbbing, can't we rest?* The punch line—**you think you hurt—just look around you.** I shut up.

HALL OF NAMES AND BELVEDERE

Unexpectedly the floor gives way. A suspended crossing (transparent railings—watch out!) brings us to a circular platform and the Hall of Names, an intersection of vertical cylinders and cones. Here there is no long view, only up and down. Below, a living water mirror, ten meters

deep into the bedrock, down to the water table. Looking up, we find a coffered dome of portraits of the vanished, like some Baroque painted ceiling. Of course, but not *putti*, not angels. Well yes, actually, the Slaughter of the Innocents, what else could they be?



F5



F6

An eternal moment, then back to the Prism.

And suddenly, an end comes into view. We're on a flying cantilevered belvedere, a moment of insistent transcendent liberation. Perhaps it is the ONLY spacial solution to this emotional demand. Out to the edge—hanging in space, flying out above the valley, in the sky. Liberation! Across the valley we see new settlements in the barren Judean hills. They are the future, vitally alive. We face northwest toward sunset, a Jewish day's beginning.



F7



F8

Reluctantly we leave this triumphant moment and only then, after this catharsis, does Yad Vashem engage the hillside landscape.

From bridge through tunnel we find the Square of Hope, inversion of the *mevoah*, below grade, roofless and without horizon. But this sunken plaza offers both length and breadth. Breathing

room! Up from Hope, we come to a plaza of Art and Remembrance, our next stations on this journey of healing. Escape at last. Finally section modulates plan. We have regained all three dimensions of space.

HALL OF REMEMBRANCE

The Hall of Remembrance is Yad Vashem's premier site for memorial ceremonies. This room's floor is not to walk on. Engraved on it are the names of 22 of the hundreds of killing sites in Europe. Below its tent-like roof The Eternal Flame bears witness to a stone crypt containing ashes of Holocaust victims brought from the extermination camps. Inaugurated in 1961, this earliest part of Yad Vashem was not designed by Safdie.

Safdie's master plan is a noble effort to integrate site and this pre-existing square building into a comprehensive whole. But at what sacrifice to spacial integrity? In plan, the Prism is the incident, while the Hall of Remembrance generates all the rest of the configuration. From this paved plaza we may wander off to many pathways. Another bridge cuts outdoors through the skylight peak, as if we're in the clouds, and leads us into a blooming desert landscape toward more than twelve stations on this pilgrimage.



Perhaps first we yield to the pull of the Warsaw Ghetto Square below. It too has a bridge, that one we first encountered above our ghetto inside the prism. But now we are the guards. There is no let-up in this place.

A SORT OF SUKKAH

Eventually all roads lead back to the *mevoah*, the information pavilion, what Safdie called “reminiscent of a Sukkah,”² recalling the roofless booths the Israelites constructed during their Exodus desert wanderings. *It is good to sit down*. What compassion there is in a *public* bench! It is the very antithesis of genocide. We catch our breath and rest a moment in this temporary home. What a rush of powerful emotions come to us. How can we understand our feelings? What can possibly be comparable?

THE HIGH PLACE

The architect Moshe Safdie didn’t want to build on “this fragile lovely landscape”³ so he sunk the 200 meter-long museum into it. Perhaps there are other reasons.

James Carroll’s insightful book, *Jerusalem, Jerusalem* suggests that once domestication and agriculture became our primary food sources, we needed something else to replace that sacred moment of the collective ecstasy of the hunt and kill.⁴ On the Temple Mount in this very city Abraham climbed to sacrifice his son Isaac before Divine command stayed his hand. Here are the first recorded religious sacrifices, attempts to come to grips with this central contradiction in the human psyche—we kill to eat, but we know enough to suffer pain and death. Generals sacrifice their children in fighting wars. Sacrifice of the Son is Christianity’s central story.

The Temple Mount reminds us how very close we humans still are to the carnivorous murderous beast within that requires sublimation via ritual sacrifice if we are to aspire to the divine also within us. Who does not love the beauty of a jet fighter or a gun, does not find reptilian thrill in the lust for power, domination of the subjugated, and torture of the weak? How can we ever, as the old spiritual sings, “learn war no more?”

At the Temple Mount’s summit lies The Holy of Holies, an altar in a cave, a dark place in the sky. The Holy of Holies is the site of the primordial transformation of humanity’s passion to kill into the compassion to love. Can we imagine Yad Vashem down in a valley? Yet the Museum itself is cut into the mountain—we enter and duck down, bend the knee, inter our bodies back into the

earth—a kind of pre-burial for the living who visit this hallowed ground. The Prism is our era's not-quite secular Holy of Holies, a new hollow, a moment of humility below the apex. Yad Vashem is all about sacrifice. Not just the Biblical fatted calf or scapegoat but *all the people*--that was the murderous intention. Only the Wailing Wall, Temple remnant and most sacred place to Jews, is more visited in Israel than Yad Vashem.

At that other High City, the Acropolis in Athens, the pathway zigzags across and up the slope through the Propylaea before encountering the sacred precinct. At Yad Vashem, meander is withheld until we are inside the Museum Prism itself, where we must migrate back and forth across the ever-present void. No tortuous forbidding approach as in the Acropolis, here we are hurried into the place where tragedy transforms us. Only then do we linger, moving in a circumspect and indirect manner. The entire Prism is Propylaea to the healing spaces beyond it.

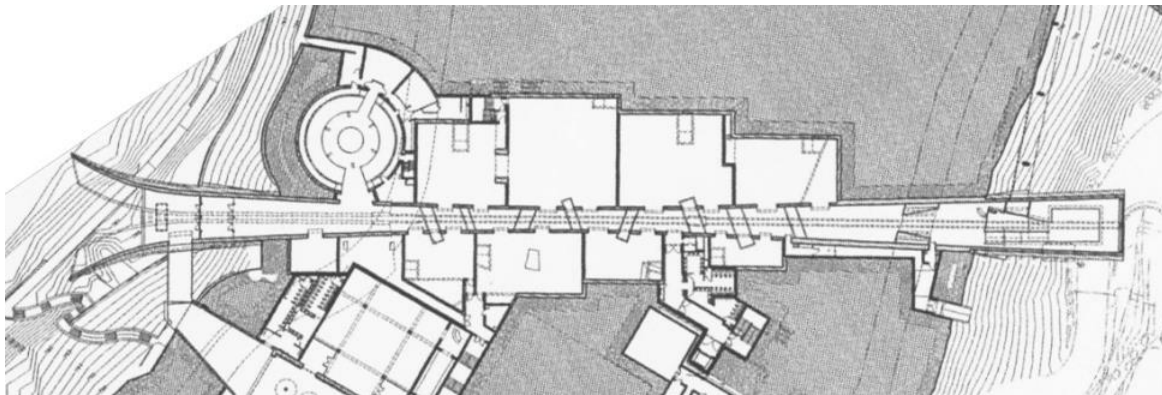
BONE AND TRUMPET

And I will put my breath into you, and you shall live again, and I will set you upon your own soil.
Ezekiel 37:14

These words are carved above the entry to Yad Vashem. Who cannot feel a chill to read these ancient words in this place? The prophet Ezekiel had a vision of a valley of dry bones, and found comfort in a Holy promise of rebirth and return.



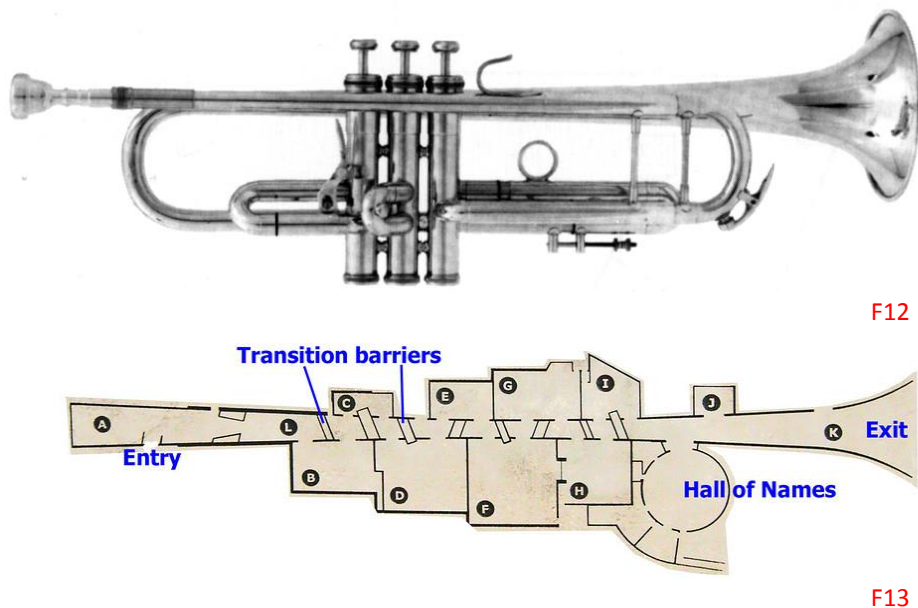
F10



F11

Partially revealed like a fossil bone, the Prism is not yet dead. We, the people-- all of us! -- are the breath and marrow that bring this bone to life. Like a camel through a needle, injected visitors become healing white-cell phagocytes, immunizing against hatred's re-infection (inverting the fascist stereotype.) Zigzag trenches in the Prism floor read as sutures in plan. The prism narrows and widens to virtually the same curve as the lateral and medial ridges of the popliteal surface of the femur, the strongest bone in the human body. The parallelism in between Prism and femur is remarkable.

The compression we feel moving through this fossil bone sets up by contrast the explosive exuberance we may feel at the Prism's "end." That belvedere is a bell. Let Freedom ring! Spirit, life's essence. Respire, perspire, inspire, expire, a mortal journey. *Shema Yisroel, Hear O Israel...* God is One, Unity. We are all in this together. That's the central prayer of Judaism. Let us speak publicly and make joyful noise in concert. "Joshua fit the Battle of Jericho, and the walls came tumbling down." The *shofar*, Gabriel's Horn, any megaphone magnifies the voice. Walking the whole Prism we dared not breathe. But now at last—inhale, omigosh... burst out at the bell. Expel explosion. Blow out. Lissenup all you out there. This is for you!! In this house our name is not cut off. It is spoken, it is shouted, it is sung. Yad Vashem: a memorial and a name.



The trumpet shouts its clarion call. From Louis to Miles to Clifford to Wynton, the trumpet sings the blues and drives the blues simultaneously. A song builds up as we walk this line. "Free at last! Free at last! Thank God Almighty, we are free at last!" ⁵

WAR AND PEACE: ZIGZAG AND BAZOOKA

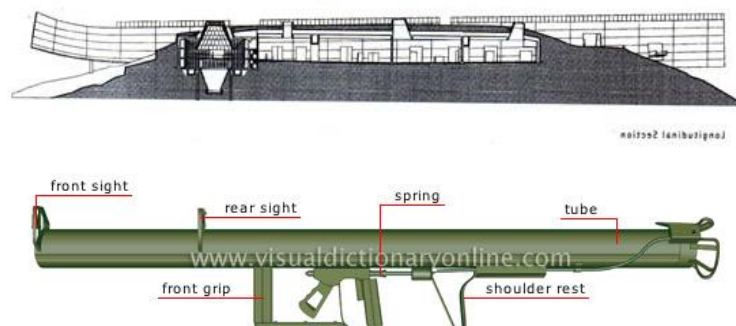
When aggression comes, people can run, hide, or stand their ground and fight. We see all of these at Yad Vashem. **ZIGZAG** is action, indirection and dispersion. To evade, one must

“serpentine” as Peter Falk tells Alan Arkin in the *In-laws*. Meander takes many paths between two points, but only one straight line connects them. Looking down on the oxbows of the Ganges, Le Corbusier waxed poetic about the beneficent meander, which inevitably, if slowly, cuts a straight line back to the noble axis of intention.

Consider in contrast the millennia of the Jewish Diaspora, where all roads led *away* from Rome (and Jerusalem.) Driven from one temporary home to the next, the Jews hid in ghettos and fled the Cossacks, and knew the virtues of the detour. The Talmud is the commentary on the Mishna, which is the commentary on the Torah. Commentary upon commentary, all alternative interpretations duly noted. At Yad Vashem the zigzag and meander reappear in many modes. We serpentine across the prism. Once we reach the belvedere we can escape to other routes. We have choices during this more expansive promenade. Into the synagogue, or skip it? Tarry at the Hall of Remembrance? Save the Gallery show for another day?

The outer route is a grand weave. A wanderer’s journey unfolds into a whole new population of commemorative sites. East to the Pillar of Heroism, Avenue of the Righteous Among Nations, Children’s Memorial, Janusz Korczak Square, and back across the Prism to the Warsaw Ghetto Square and Wall of Remembrance. Down the hill to the Monument to Jewish Soldiers and Partisans Who Fought Against Nazi Germany and the Partisans’ Panorama, onward to the Garden of the Righteous among the Nation, and beyond the Valley of Communities. We return and climb back passing the Cattle Car Memorial to the Deportees. We wander like Israelites in the desert. Will we find our home in less than 40 years?

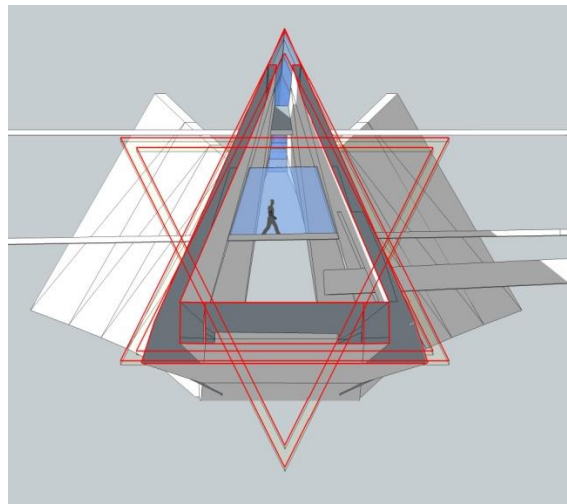
Besides tearful reflection resides another emotion. **NEVER AGAIN** is the other side of Yad Vashem. Israel is militant, but whether it is belligerent is open to question. After centuries of pogroms, *autos-da-fe*, crucifixions, and now this **HOLOCAUST**, can anyone doubt the need for vigilant defense? When everyone is your enemy, you are not paranoid to worry. Yad Vashem remembers perpetrators as well as victims, the criminals and thugs who are always with us, alas, everywhere.



One man can destroy a tank with a **BAZOOKA**. The self propelled howitzer, modern cannon, is mobile, alert, and quiet, until called into deadly and decisive action—an apt metaphor for Israel’s military posture. A hideous phone fraud can threaten “we have your son, give us money now, or we put a bullet through his head...” A parent’s instinct is retaliatory: *get a gun and kill these bastards*. Multiply by 6 million parents. There’s a Bazooka in this Prism, a warning to would-be future Nazis. **NEVER AGAIN.**

MISSING!

The prism shaft, an insistent slash cutting through the hillside, is architecturally incomplete. Is this construction merely an A Frame!? That most hackneyed of architectural clichés? Until we realize that inverting and superimposing the section yields a *magen david*, Shield and Star of David. But that other half is missing, no wonder the architecture is incomplete! Six Million—gone yet present, ever incomplete. Is it accidental that intersections of this ghostly star mark the elevations of the bridges through the Prism?



F14

PLASTIC ART: FEELING UNDERSTANDING

“The more art is controlled, limited, worked over, the more it is free.”
Igor Stravinsky *The Poetics of music*

Eventually we awake from our speculative reverie. Questions arise. Have we been manipulated by the architecture? Certainly the subject is horrific, but was this *promenade dramatique* rather

than *architecturale*, designed to heighten our senses in a pre-ordained direction like a theatrical stage set or Disneyland ride? Both use illusion and thrill to heighten emotions like fear and exhilaration.

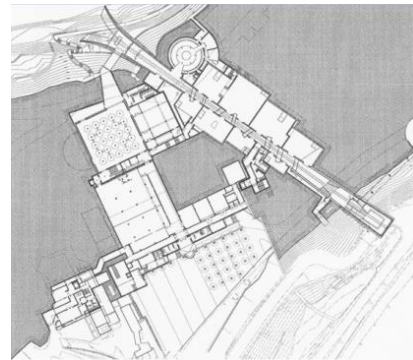
Our highly suggestive visual associations do not explain the plans—and the plans of Yad Vashem are not self-explanatory. Do we care whether an amusement park roller coaster entry is on axis with the carousel or that the interval between them is twice the diameter of the Ferris wheel? Yet these kinds of plan relationships are crucial in architecture.



F15



F16



F17

Simultaneously interpenetrating spaces can be translational or rotational to yield *phenomenal transparency* as for example Richard Meier's Getty Center in Los Angeles, where local landscape and solar (N-S) orientations coexist.⁶ Juan Gris's 1916 *Portrait de Madame Josette Gris*, is a highly activated field that yields multiple transparencies. Compare these with the mere collision of plan elements at Yad Vashem.

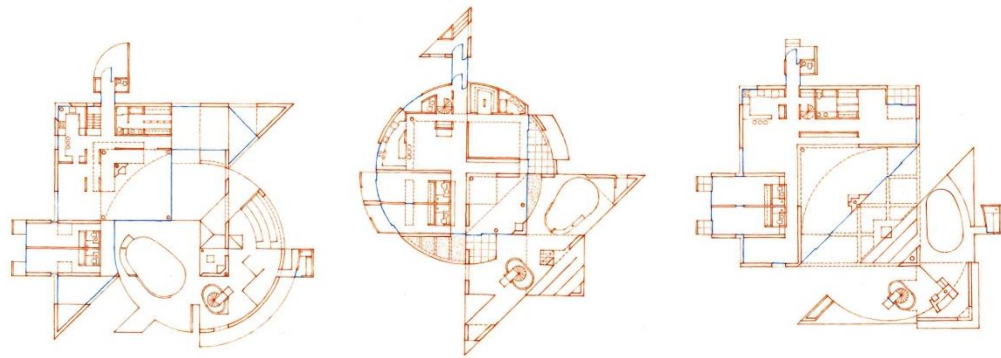
Gris activates his canvas in two major ways. First is the play between the central rotated light rectangle against the counter-rotated wainscoting of the wall behind and the *contrapposto* generated in the torso, where implicit shoulders move one way, the head seems to be turning another, and the frontal hands resolve and anchor the figure in the picture plane. The second is the almost musical notation of the three organic rounded dark zones that serve not only to puncture the surface to the shadow layer behind the picture plane, but also to liberate the whole composition from the strictly orthogonal bounds of the rectangular canvas.

In the Getty plan, orthogonal elements alone generate the rotational dynamic. The nine-square extends the geometry and axis of the "donut", while the sixteen-square sets and anchors the angled terrace steps and their extension throughout the cranked plaza up into the landscape. The circular lower garden and theater terraces create the hinge that integrates this set of overlapping rotations. In Yad VaShem's plan the lone circle, the Hall of Names, performs a different function, serving to isolate that experience from all the other spaces. The only pivot

between the 2 main geometries of the museum shaft and the other squares and plazas is the bridge-and-tunnel that leads away from the belvedere and into the Square of Hope, awkwardly cranking like a rusty gatepost. The longer one looks at its plan in comparison to the Gris painting and Getty model, the flatter the spacial conception of Yad VaShem appears.

John Hejduk's cleverly ambiguous definition of architecture as a "fabrication" both as falsehood (stage set) and as fabric (weave of interlocking relationships) suggests that order is as central to architecture as image. His work supports the argument that the act of love in architectural design lies in creating the plan as thought form, a continuum of plastic and volumetric order. Design is *knowing*. How else can a plan give instructions to build?

Yad Vashem keeps the Holocaust emotionally vivid, amplifying our anger, grief, despair. We can understand these feelings. But to feel our understandings, we must enter the realm of art, not the paintings or decorations on the wall, but the way architecture speaks to us on its own terms, without any need for external reference.



F18

SQUARE CIRCLE TRIANGLE HOUSES, PAUL AMATUZZO, 2012

While Safdie's Prism springs its darkness on us in dramatic surprise (like Bernini's St. Theresa), Paul Amato's projects reveal another kind of "drama" in its more musical and cerebral resonance of carefully and intelligently modulated solids and voids that create a continuity of space.

These basic figures generate a subtle dance. The circle remains constant in size but migrates in position, while The square in each plan holds its own position but varies in perimeter articulation. The triangle not only travels and changes size, but also flips in orientation. Such pictorial adventures might remain superficial until the subtle alterations in the architecture they generate begin to emerge. While entry from the north establishes and maintains its axis throughout all the schemes and the fireplaces always mark the diagonal, the ovoid pool rotates clocklike around the garden zone. In each house, it is the lofted double-height living room

where the forms intersect, where one would stand simultaneously in all three plan figures of square circle and triangle. In each plan transparency remains shimmeringly balanced: is it a square in a circle in a triangle, or circle in triangle in square?

Here plan is a unified consistent solution, a strategy of clearly organized ideas about program, climate control, structure, materials, life safety, and all the rest via geometry and light-- the true architectural "act of love." We can be inside architecture. Perhaps this is how architecture can be inside us, and become liberator rather than manipulator.

SCHOOL FOR HOLOCAUST STUDIES

We can experience this other way to understand architecture when we explore the *whole* plan of Yad Vashem. We head north from the *mevoah* thru a rich entry sequence of trellis, tunnel and hypostyle hall. We emerge into the Family Plaza and another view of Judean hills. To our left is another blank pylon, recalling the Museum Prism. But this wall subtly peels away its layers to initiate a flow of space into the School for Holocaust Studies, by Jerusalem architects David Guggenheim and Daniel Mintz.

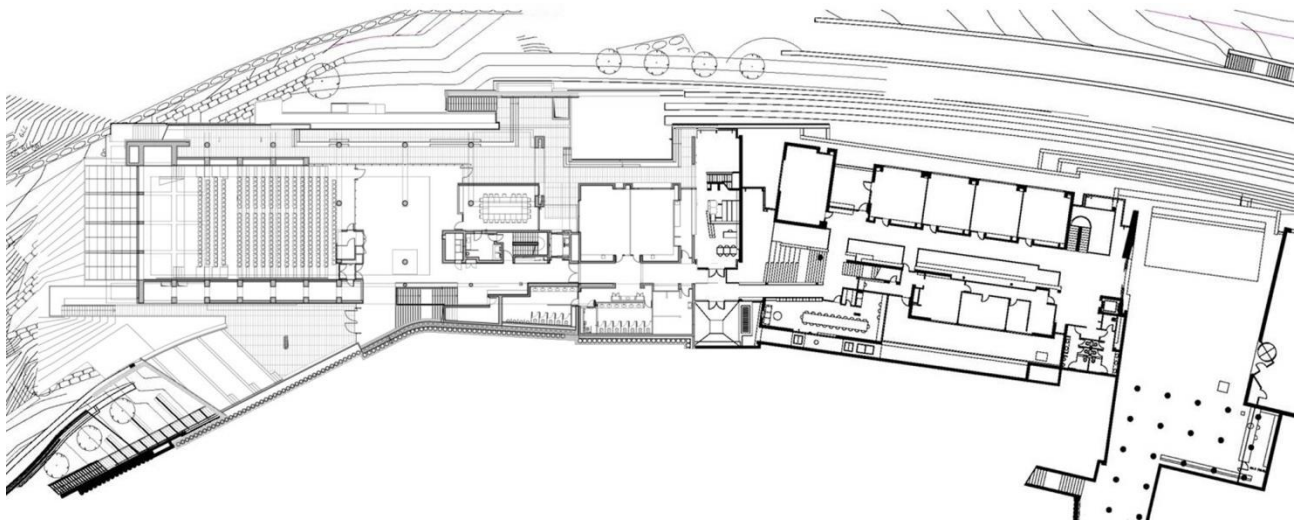


F19

Inside the door the ground falls away in vertiginous erosion that reveals the valley below. We proceed along a sky lit interior street. Floor slots open to a lower level. We are already levitated, walking on a platform, no longer ground,—a quiet modulation of our meditation rather than the high drama of the soul's launch pad at the Prism belvedere. At streets' end an angled stair returns us into upper level galleries. We continue under the elevated library to the new wing of added classrooms, work spaces, and finally an auditorium where a glass wall backs

the speaker's platform, revealing the very same valley and new settlements we saw at the Prism belvedere.

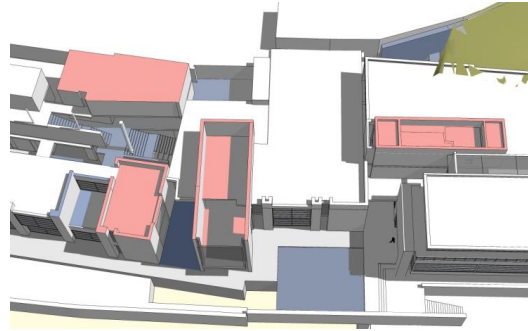
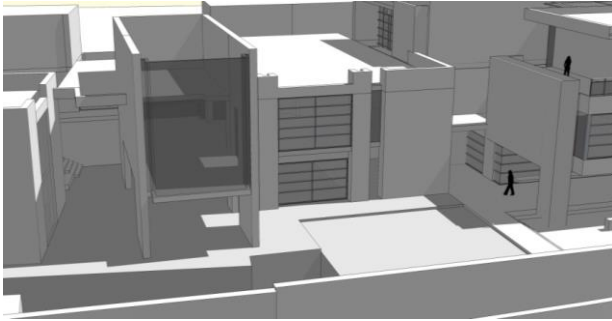
That's it. There ain't much more to this place. Service, vehicular access, the usual support is deftly placed away from walking visitors. It's a fairly simple program of modest spaces, yet what a dynamic symphony of plastic space and light we encounter.



F20

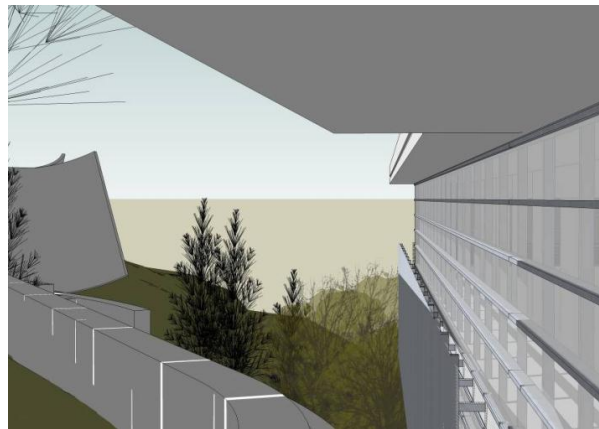
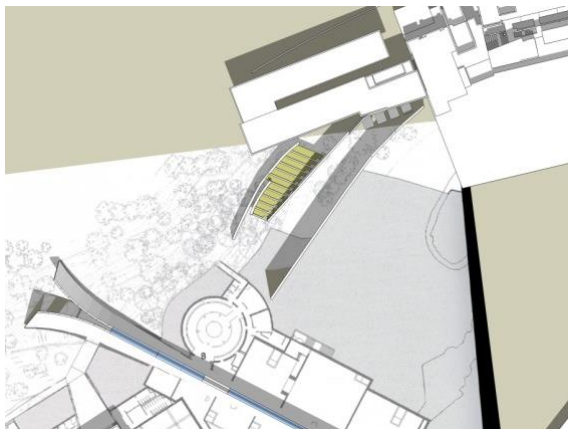
This is a beautiful plan, glorious in its interplay of solid and void, rotating overlapping grids, *poché* space and articulated object, with multiple frames of reference integrated into a unified whole. (Shown here is a composite which emphasizes the flow through both phases of the ensemble, with entry plaza and floor 1 to the right, and the lower auditorium level to the left.) For example consider the controlled chaos where mass and void slide in and out at the juncture between old and new wings. This hinge of lubricating space sustains the bend in the hill's topography while opening up our view as we move through it. The angled staircase cascades down into this unfolding and sets the crank that determines the new wing's axis. This clever interlock is already present in the first phase of construction, a visitor from the plan that follows.

The elevated library is gateway to this pivot's plaza and new wing beyond. Next, a pair of rooms identical but for their inflection: one facing outward to the valley, the other hiding behind an opaque wall. In-and-out in plan cadence is set against the sectional meter where above is closed-open-closed and below is open-open-closed. How gracefully this collision of *poché* solids (red) and interstitial voids (blue) converge to activate the hinge and negotiate the complex 3D turns of this steep and curving hillside site.



F21

Note the perfect linkage between School and Museum. While the auditorium itself is aimed away from the Museum, stairs beside the auditorium lead back directly to the Hall of Names. How appropriate, since the School provides for study to keep the names alive. Remembrance is mental *work*. No doubt this connection was considered in the master plan, but how stylishly it is accomplished by the architects of the School. This last little gesture, as lines converge and gently drift away to rejoin and gracefully embrace those dramatic giants of the Prism and the (Hall of Names) Cylinder is a mere bagatelle. But what a plan-maker's *tour de force*. It is the move that makes this place whole, because it brings the two main missions of Yad Vashem, remembrance and study, into a complete circle and unified whole. How modestly it is accomplished. Just tossed off, no big deal. It's just the beauty of a plan and plastic game. These are architects who understand the game... and play it well.



F22

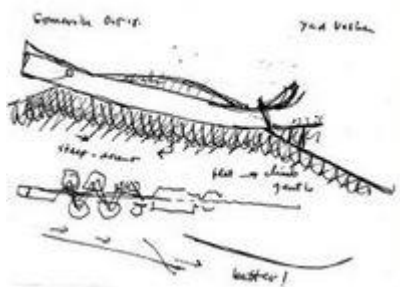
DELICATE DILEMMA

The School for Holocaust Studies is a fabric of volumetric continuities liberates a user from functional claustrophobia. The Museum shapes space to manipulate and dramatize a visitor's experience. Which is more appropriate to the purposes of Yad Vashem? What faces both architects is a delicate dilemma. Too dry, no soul; too flamboyant, hideously foolish. Let's compare how they choose to negotiate that intellectual and physical straight and narrow.

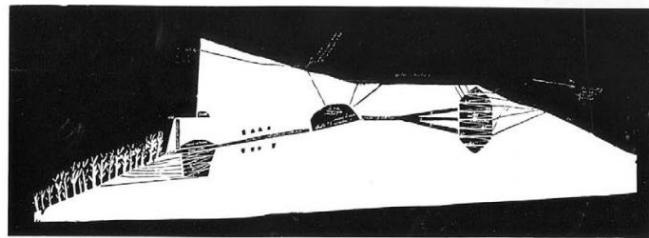
Moshe Safdie's early sketch for the Museum recalls Le Corbusier's 1948 design of a Subterranean Basilica for Saint Baume, a chapel in a mountain. Both engage their setting by excavating to dramatize contrasts of in and out, light and dark, sky and cave. Le Corbusier's description of the project reads like a direct brief for Safdie's Museum.⁷

"The building was entirely within the rock; partly artificially and partly naturally lit, it ran from one side of the rock at the entrance of the cave of Mary Magdalene to the other, opening suddenly in the blinding light and the distant sea... the object of this enterprise was to touch the very foundations of the human soul."

Yad Vashem's entry bridge, outward burst into light, horizontal and vertical illumination, even the provision for a vertical cylindrical space as counterpoint to the long horizontal shaft, all suggest at the very least visits by a similar Muse.



F23



F24

Of course Safdie's Yad Vashem is an act of love but it is also a stage set, a manipulator of emotions to enable us to empathize and somehow feel the abstraction of Six Million deaths. On the other hand, the architecture of The School IS the drama, an *apollonian* passion of logic and order, executed through beautiful plastic relationships.

RAUMPLAN OR FREE PLAN AT YAD VA SHEM

The Museum at Yad Vashem is a *Raumplan*, a collection of explicitly discrete volumes.⁸ The most isolated *raum* is the Hall of Names, a horizon-less sky-lit cylinder independent of any other space. We cross a bridge intentionally suspended, and are cut off even from the ground. The water below us mirrors the sky. We are neither up nor down. There is no continuity in plan or section here.

In contrast at the School for Holocaust Studies, the whole field is a structure of discrete *but related* elements, like Cézanne brush strokes, local volumes that build a unified spacial continuum. The auditorium level plan is all about continuity, how the *poché* solids of stair tower, booth, and ventilation ducts play against the voids of corridors, loggias, terraces, and seating. The column grid is revealed even as it is hidden, yet always present as a free plan structure independent of program.

In the Museum's Prism there is no pretext of space-making independent of structure. The A-Frame, that most primitive of huts, is the sole support. This long triangular extrusion stretches and compresses dimension as we walk along. Perhaps this is merely engineering, but it seems more the dramatic intention evident in Safdie's earliest sketches. Is this "artistic" urgency toward expressive gesture appropriate for this space? How could such emotional turbulence create anything less than an angry slash into the hillside?

At the School the architects devised "structured situations"⁹ (their term) including benches bridges, and stairs as casual meeting zones between specified program volumes, much as Lou Kahn did at Bryn Mawr's Erdman Hall. Here space is unobtrusively in service to the user. Of course, the Museum is not really a place for camaraderie—one is very much alone with thoughts and feelings, even in the midst of others, whereas the School is all about collaboration and communication.

The two major parts of the institution, the Holocaust History Museum and the Holocaust Study Center, are like the Torah and the Talmud, a dialectic of essential story and its commentary. Contrast the Museum's collection of complicated shapes with the Study Center's set of simple parts that weave a complex fabric. The plastic event is at its core a concrete abstraction.

HOME FREE ALL!

The old childhood game of Hide and Go Seek included the triumphant cry "Home free all!" as the last undiscovered child sprinted out of hiding to free the other captives. Is this not a microcosmic parable for the Allies as liberators of the Camps at the end of World War Two?

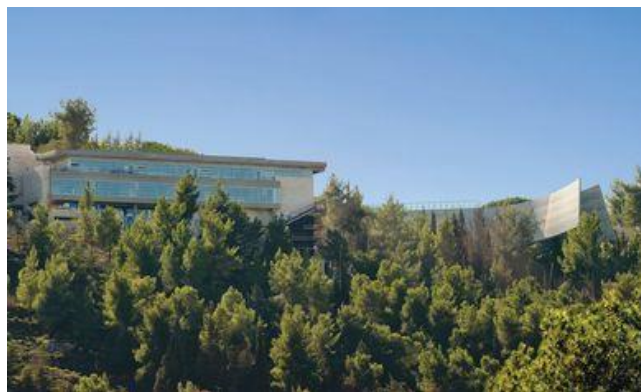
Does not such an act transform space from countless islands of lonely and frightened victims into a unity of continuously open and accessible places, without walls or fences? Even in the face of all-too-common backsliding into atavistic isolationist impulses—*good fences make good neighbors, not in my backyard*-- is this not the triumph of shared freedom, feeling-with and knowing-with, both empathy and conscience?

In one way Yad Vashem is hard to penetrate but easy to escape. The climb up is difficult, but there are no barbed wire fences. We can just walk out. It is NOT Auschwitz. Yet more profoundly, Yad Vashem may be easy to enter and impossible to leave. The question of the Holocaust remains unanswerable. What would "I" have done? What about now? Darfur, poverty, global warming—do we just stand by?

The fundamental incomprehensibility of The Six Million is unavoidable. How can people be so mean? How can we do this to each other? Over and over again: genocide, ethnic cleansing, wars of annihilation? Why is there so much inhumanity in humanity?

What form must an institution that confronts these profound questions take? How to frame and reveal the horror for all visitors and workers alike? What is function in this context? Does architecture require a Dionysian setting for high emotion, or is an apollonian clarity more appropriate? If architecture emerges from relationships a work establishes internally, then perhaps a *feeling of knowing* can emerge in a synthesis of Dionysian passion and apollonian truth.

If all the architecture of Yad Vashem had been like the Holocaust Museum Prism, it might have been dismissed as flamboyant bombast. Had it been only in the manner of the School for Holocaust Studies and its related structures, it might have been too dry. Correct, perhaps but without the passion the task demands. But together they are an indissoluble binomial—animal and angel, devil and divine, and they create a living and dynamic equilibrium.



F25



F26

AT HOME ON EARTH

Later, home at last, I stare in shock at x-rays of arthritic aching knees. *But aren't I still 19 years old? Is the end so close?* Of course it is, yet somehow we keep mortality at bay. Empathy and conscience ameliorate the concrete reality of my aging body and the fantasy of my youthful mind. All of us need such consolation. We have so little time here, on this mortal coil. The least we can do is to comfort each other through shared knowledge and compassion.

Before last century distance was fierce, implacable. Marco Polo walked years to cross his continent. Columbus sailed an ocean and the journey took weeks. Lindbergh broke the spell, forged a link of little more than a day, but still.... Now we take for granted we can talk to anyone, anywhere, *instantly*. Humanity is one family living under one roof right now, perhaps for the only time in our history. Once we colonize other worlds humanity will once again huddle lonely in separate spacetime islands. To lose *touch* with a child who ships out is the pain our great-grandparents felt in Great Migrations between our teeming shores. To no longer *feel* a loved one who lifts beyond the reach of instant communication will be pain no less.

Agia Triada monks no doubt ached in their passion for lifting inert stones. Theirs was a lifelong physical enactment of *abstraction*. Today our discomfort with proximity has created a world of *raumplan*, where gated communities and security guards keep us from getting too close. These armed islands are voluntary luxury concentration camps. They disrupt any continuity of space, of *shared* experience of the fabric that we all weave together.

Must we really fight so much? Soon enough we again will be so lonely, as loved ones venture further, as humans have always done. The Holocaust—such dismal and unnecessary pain. Can we really comprehend the loss of *everyone*? All the children. All the grandparents. All the villages. All the history. All the treasures—letters, photos, keepsakes, carvings, gifts, kisses. All of it. That is YAD VA SHEM. That is sacred sorrow. We can do this to each other. To pretend anything else is to desecrate this implacable reality. To try to live in the face of it and still love-- *is almost all we can do*. We must also cultivate empathy and awake the sleep of reason if we are to vanquish the monsters of war.

Yad Vashem the place confronts this honorably. There is room for ways to respond. That the Museum and the School can coexist bodes well for its integrity. That we can appreciate how and when each mode is appropriate enables us to grasp the whole—which is essentially ungraspable. That is all we can do.

NOTES:

- 1 Le Corbusier, *Towards A New Architecture*, Lessons of Rome.
- 2 <http://www.msafdie.com/#/projects/yadvashemholocausthistorymuseum>
- 3 July 2005 Architectural Record
- 4 James Carroll. *Jerusalem, Jerusalem: How The Ancient City Ignited Our Modern World*. 2011. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, Boston NY
- 5 Martin Luther King, Jr., at the *March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom*, August 28, 1963
- 6 Colin Rowe and Robert Slutzky, "Transparency: Literal and Phenomenal," *Perspecta*, Vol. 8, (1963), pp. 45-54, Yale, MIT Press
- 7 Le Corbusier. *Oeuvre Complet*, Volume 5 1946-52, p. 27
- 8 Colamina et.al. *Raumplan versus Plan Libre : Adolf Loos and Le Corbusier, 1919 – 1930*. *Risselada*, Rizzoli, 1993.)
- 9 *School for Holocaust Studies, the New Wing*, undated.
Power Point presentation by David Guggenheim and Daniel Mintz, Architects, Jerusalem

FIGURES AND CREDITS:

- F0 Medusa sun, Le Corbusier © 1997 ARS New York/SPADEM Paris
- F1 Agia Triada, Meteora, Greece, photo by author
- F2 Museum Prism, Yad Vashem, Israel Tzachi Ostrovsky.com
- F3 Mid bridge through Prism, from inside. <http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/visiting/photogallery.asp>
- F4 same place, mid bridge through Prism, from outside, <http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/visiting/photogallery.asp>
- F5 <http://www1.yadvashem.org/yv/en/visiting/photos/09.jpg>
- F6 http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/6/69/Yad_Vashem_Hall_of_Names_by_David_Shankbone.jpg/220px-Yad_Vashem_Hall_of_Names_by_David_Shankbone.jpg
- F7 Photo: Timothy Hursley <http://www.arcspace.com/CropUp/380x299/media/93779/1yadvashem.jpg>
- F8 <http://www.s-aronson.co.il/wp-content/gallery/yad-vashem/06.jpg>
- F9 air view, School for Holocaust Studies Phase 2, not yet built
<http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/visiting/photogallery.asp>
- F10 bone femur photo <http://lucidminds.files.wordpress.com/2010/06/femur.jpg>
- F11 YAD PRISM plan <http://www.msafdie.com/#/projects/yadvashemholocausthistorymuseum>
- F12 trumpet photo from King Musical Instruments, Eastlake Ohio
- F13 YAD PRISM plan http://naphthali.smugmug.com/Travel/Architecture/ISRAEL-9-Yad-Vashem/10561352_DFZHgn#li=733551598&k=G3khrx9&lb=1&s=XL
- F14 section through Museum Prism at YAD, Sketchup model by author
- F15 plan view of model Getty Center, Richard Meier Architect
http://ecx.images-amazon.com/images/I/51PCVGNSE9L_S300.jpg
- F16 *Portrait of Josette Gris*, 1916, by Juan Gris <http://www.juangris.org/Portrait-Of-Josette-Gris-1916.html>
- F17 YAD plan. <http://www.msafdie.com/#/projects/yadvashemholocausthistorymuseum>
- F18 SQUARE CIRCLE TRIANGLE HOUSES, 2012, courtesy Paul Amatuzzo Architect
- F19 School for Holocaust Studies courtesy David Guggenheim and Daniel Mintz, Architects, Jerusalem
- F20 This is a beautiful plan, glorious in its interplay of solid and void, overlapping grids, *poché* space and articulated object, with multiple frames of reference integrated into a unified whole.
- F21 Collision of *poché* solids (red) and interstitial voids (blue) converge to activate the hinge.
Sketchup model courtesy Guggenheim and Mintz, Architects. Color Modification by author
- F22 Link of School and Museum Prism: plan composite Sketchup model by author. View from School new wing, from Sketchup model courtesy David Guggenheim and Daniel Mintz, Architects, Jerusalem
- F23 early sketch YAD, by Moshe Safdie
<http://ideasgn.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/Yad-Vashem-Holocaust-History-Museum-Moshe-Safdie-plan3.jpg>
- F24 St Baume section diagram, L Le Corbusier. *Oeuvre Complet*, Volume 5 1946-52, p. 29
- F25 To the left, the School, to the right the Prism, Yad Vashem Photo: Courtesy of Yad Vashem
<http://www.ipost.com/HttpHandlers/ShowImage.ashx?ID=185136>
- F26 Medusa sun, Le Corbusier © 1997 ARS New York/SPADEM Paris . Mirror image by author