

Plan of Manhattan showing the five 'squares' along Broadway.
Painting by Lorna McNeur and Kimberly Ackert, 1986.

this question. A more realistic approach might be to reinstate Broadway as the Grand Promenade of New York City.

Five triangular plots of land are created by the intersections between Broadway, the avenues and the major crosstown streets. With rare exceptions such as the Flatiron Building at Madison Square, they have not been regarded as desirable sites on which to build, and have therefore been allowed to fall into disrepair, becoming a haven for the homeless.

During the past twelve years these 'squares' have been the subject of design investigations carried out by myself and interested colleagues and students. A selection of these projects is illustrated on the following pages. In addition to exploring the potential of such spaces to enliven journeys through the City, they reflect the conviction that an awareness of the historical inhabitation of each place is essential to the creation of an appropriate design. As Richard Sennett has written, 'rather than copying the forms of the past, we need to understand the principles of their inventiveness.'²³

Notes

1. Richard Sennett, *The Conscience of the Eye* (London, 1990), p. 60.
2. Joseph Rykwert, *The Necessity of Artifice* (New York, 1982), p. 133.
3. *The Papers of Frederick Law Olmsted. Vol. III: Creating Central Park, 1857-1861*, edited by Charles Capen McLaughlin (Baltimore, Maryland, 1983), pp. 212-13.
4. For more information on this subject, see William A. McClung, *The Architecture of Paradise* (Berkeley, California, 1983).
5. Olmsted described the design of the Park in the 'Greensward' document of 1858, from which many of the quotations in this article were taken. See *Creating Central Park*, op. cit.

6. *Creating Central Park*, op. cit. pp. 121-2.
7. *Forty Years of Landscape Architecture: Central Park*, Frederick Law Olmsted Sr., edited by Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. and Theodora Kimbell (Cambridge, Mass., 1973), p. 378. In the section of the Greensward document entitled 'The System of Walks and Rides', Olmsted explains that 'it must be necessary to lay out all the principal drives, rides, and walks of the Park in lines having a continuous northerly and southerly course, nearly parallel with each other and with the avenues of the city.'
8. *Creating Central Park*, op. cit. p. 121.
9. *Ibid.*
10. For a description of these various landscapes, see *Creating Central Park* pp. 119-51, and also pp. 204-19 in the section 'Description of Central Park'.
11. *Creating Central Park*, op. cit. p. 125.
12. The metaphorical relationships between the house, the city and the garden are discussed by Plato, Vitruvius, and Alberti, among others. Plato draws an analogy between the city and the house: 'If men are to have a city wall at all, the private houses should be constructed right from the foundation so that the whole city forms in effect a single wall: . . . a whole city looking like a single house will be quite a pretty sight.' (*The Laws*, VI, 779, translated by Trevor J. Saunders (Harmondsworth, 1970), p. 260.) Alberti's conception of the city as a great house, and of the villa as a miniature city, may have been influenced by this analogy. He not only draws an analogy between the city and the house, but extends it to include outdoor spaces which are extensions of the interior organization of the house: 'for if a City, according to the Opinion of Philosophers, be no more than a great House and, on the other Hand, a House be a little City; why may it not be said, that the Members of that House are so many little Houses; such as the Court-yard, the Hall, the Parlour, the Portico, and the like?'. (*On the Art of Building in Ten Books*, edited by Joseph Rykwert, Neil Leach, Robert Tavenor (Cambridge, Mass., 1988).
13. *Creating Central Park*, op. cit. p. 126.
14. The 72nd Street transverse is the only one that was not lowered, in order to allow it to engage with the 'mansion' design, as a carriage entrance.
15. A description of a seventeenth-century English country house in Ralph Dutton's *The English Garden* (London, 1937) corresponds quite closely with Olmsted's conception: 'In these shady paths, arbors would be formed containing wooden seats, since the pleasure of walking and resting in the garden was fully appreciated at this period. To one side of the mansion would be the bowling green, the turf kept as smooth and close as the roller and scythe could make it, while out of the immediate site of the main windows of the house, beyond the alleys, would be the kitchen garden, probably surrounded by a wall.'
16. For more information on this subject, see S. B. Johnson, *The Roof Gardens of Broadway Theatres 1883-1942* (1985); F. Sheppard, *Broadway, from the Battery to the Bronx* (1988); Bayrd Still, *Mirror for Gotham* (1978).
17. Charles Lockwood, *Manhattan Moves Uptown* (Boston, 1976), p. 125.
18. *Forty Years of Landscape Architecture*, op. cit. p. 188. This desire to counteract the effects of city life by visiting the country is discussed by David Coffin (with reference to Pliny) in *The Villa in the Life of Renaissance Rome* (Princeton, N. J., 1979), chapter 1.
19. This passage describing the Katsura Imperial Palace in Kyoto precisely describes the scale of Central Park (my italics). See Susan and Geoffrey Jellicoe, *The Landscape of Man* (New York, 1975), p. 92.
20. The church is perceived as the heavenly city because within its walls are contained the shrines (the adiculae, or 'little buildings') of the multitude of prophets, saints, martyrs, etc.; the members of the heavenly family who are the populace of the church as the heavenly city on earth. See John Summerson's essay 'Heavenly Mansions' in his *Heavenly Mansions and Other Essays* (London, 1949).
21. Umberto Eco, *Travels in Hyper-Reality* (London, 1986), p. 79.
22. *The Conscience of the Eye*, op. cit. p. 56.
23. *Ibid.* p. 176.

Many thanks to John Hejduk, Dalibor Vesely and Peter Carl for their invaluable support through the years.

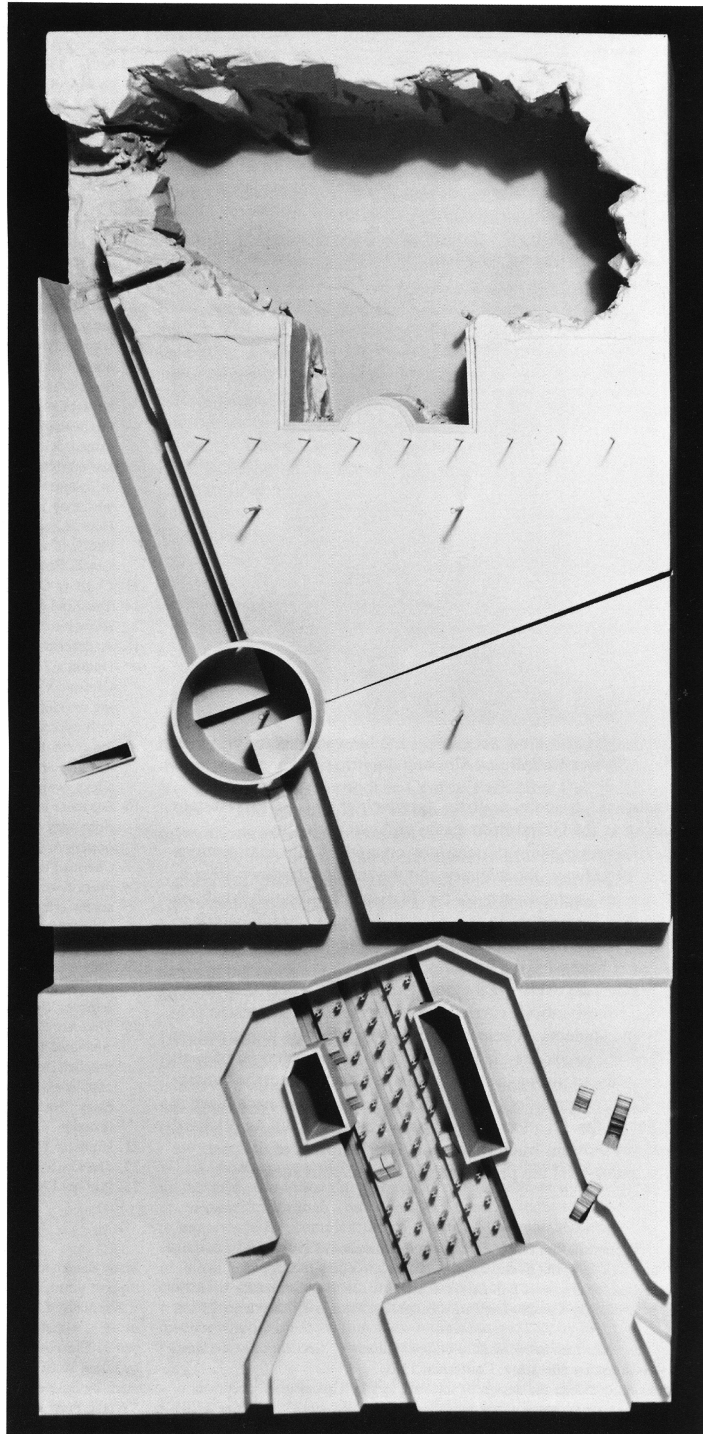
The plans of Manhattan and Central Park on p. 67 were drawn by Lorna McNeur in 1983, with the assistance of Claude Charron, Christina Viviani and Peter Klambauer. The model of Central Park City (two and a half feet long) on p. 67 was made by Lorna McNeur in 1979/80. The model of Manhattan (five feet long) on p. 68 was made by Lorna McNeur in 1983, with the assistance of Claude Charron, Christina Viviani, Peter Klambauer and Torben Burns, and photographed by Ray Chalmers. The plan-painting of Manhattan on this page was photographed by Stephen Hillyer.

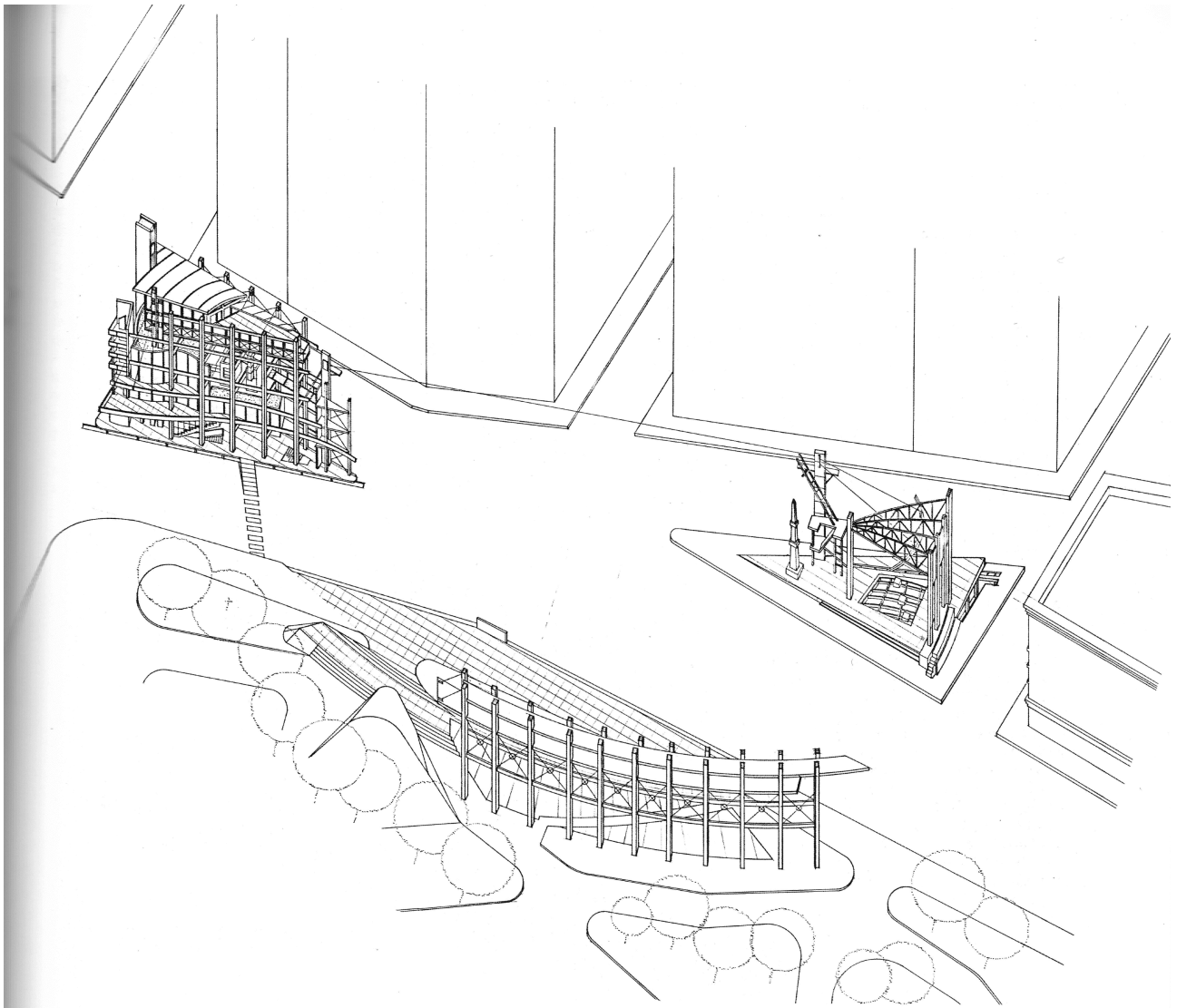
HOME FOR THE WANDERER
Union Square (14th Street & Broadway)
Lorna McNair

During my final year at Cooper Union I planned to complete the year with the design of a home for a wanderer. I had no idea what form it would take, but I was intrigued by the inherent contradiction of the theme: how could it be possible to design a home for a person who wanders?

My work on Central Park had taught me that one definition of a garden is a home for the imagination to wander. When I discovered the presence of the city in Central Park, it became quite clear where this home should be: within the void in the Park which represents a mansion, the Mall. However, I found the idea of building within a sacred space such as Central Park distasteful, so I turned to its analogue on Broadway (New York's Grand Promenade), which is Union Square. There I designed a garden intended as a home for the wanderer.

The site is a rectangular space with two crosstown streets meeting at its edges, therefore its situation can also be seen as similar to that of Central Park. Broadway passes through the site underground, as a subway. To acknowledge this the earth is peeled away and exposed as an abandoned train station in which to wander. The ordered nature of this part of the garden is analogous with what Olmsted called the 'lower formal' end of Central Park, including the Grand Promenade and the elements of an English mansion. At the northern end of the Union Square design there is a water reservoir contained in a basin blasted out of the granite base of Manhattan. This parallels the rugged 'upper natural' northern end of Central Park. A microcosm of Central Park, this Union Square design offers a multiplicity of layers for the New Yorker to appreciate peacefully, as a complement to the rugged life of the urban jungle.





COMEDY AND TRAGEDY

Madison Square (23rd Street & Broadway)
Stanley E. Kiernicki, thesis student, School of Architecture, Carleton University, 1988

Madison Square has always been a gathering place. During the last century numerous entertainment establishments such as the Hippodrome, the Barnum & Bailey Circus and Madison Square Garden flanked Madison Square Park, which was used for parades. At the turn of the century it was a place where the social elite met in cafés, bars and private clubs. Today, all that remains of that former vitality are two traffic islands, an endless stream of vehicles, and the occasional parade gathering on the side streets of the Park.

Here Madison Square is perceived as a

theatre of the city, with the existing park as the space for the audience, the building façades as the proscenium, and the stage as the square. The actors emerge from the central street, which divides the buildings and creates an urban perspective, similar to that which is found as a backdrop in Renaissance theatres and public spaces.

The idea of the circus is used to establish a framework which would restore a sense of purpose to the space. Building would take place on the existing two traffic islands and on a strip of Madison Square Park. The south island becomes the Circus Café and Bar, the north island the 'Flying Club', a clubhouse and practice space for trapeze artists. The two face each other and are connected by a highwire. Together they act as a proscenium facing a

landscaped amphitheatre in Madison Square Park. The overall composition forms a space that could be closed off to traffic periodically, for outdoor theatre or parade gatherings.

The opposing parts represent the two clown types depicted in Fellini's film *I Clowns*. The Café takes the part of the White Clown — elegant, dignified, and more or less in charge, a symbol of authority both religious and secular. His foil, the Auguste, with his baggy pants and oversized shoes is clumsy but invariably good-natured. The White Clown demands perfection, but his irritating self-righteousness provokes the Auguste to rebel.

At this scale the circus reinforces the space, with the two clowns as the main characters, or primary elements; on a broader scale it reflects the bittersweet realities of life in New York.