Typologie
RECUEIL ET PARALLÈLE
DES ÉDIFICES DE TOUT GENRE, ANCIENS ET MODERNES,
REMARQUABLES PAR LEUR BEAUTÉ, PAR LEUR GRANDEUR OU PAR LEUR SINGULARITÉ, ET DESSINÉS SUR UNE MÊME ÉCHELLE.

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Typical Plan

Typical Plan is an American invention. It is zero-degree architecture, architecture stripped of all traces of uniqueness and specificity. It belongs to the New World.
Typical Plan knows what European architects will never learn: that modular coordination is at most a temporary rollback of the frontiers of chaos.

Typical Plan is gridless, not in the absolute, timeless manner of European Platonics (a modular system to measure misfit and thus treat unhappiness), but on the contrary, through the development of anti-ideological devices, a metaphysics of slack that gives an aura of chaos to even the most severely conflicted geometrical consistencies, bequeathing the appearance of modular conquest on the essentially messy, resolution-orthogonality from the most compromised givens.

Typical Plan is neutral, not anonymous. It is a place of worship. More sacred than a Catholic monastery, it accommodates infinitely greater numbers, a 20th-century church without doctrines. Although the dominant emphasis of Typical Plan is on abstraction, there is plumbing. It doesn’t deny those residual features that make human animals still.

Ingenious architectural arrangements of miniature, very understandable labyrinths organize the traffic between the reached and the impure zones of Typical Plan. These spaces — restrooms, atriums, pantries, service stations, trucking bays — are the sanctuaries for all those primitive aspects upon whose exclusion the correct unfolding of business depends.

Typical Plan is to the office population what graph paper is to a mathematical curve. Its neutrality records performance, event, flow, change, accumulation, deduction, disappearance, mutation, fluctuation, failure, oscillation, deformation. Typical Plan is relentlessly enabling, embedding background.
Typical Plan is an architecture of the rectangle; any other shape makes it atypical—even the square. It is the product of a (new) world where sites are made, not found. At its best, it acquires a Platonic neutrality; it represents the point where pragmatics, through sheer rationality and efficiency, assume an almost mystical status.

Typical Plan is minimalism for the masses: already latent in the first brutally utilitarian explorations; by the end of the era of Typical Plan, i.e., the sixties, the utilitarianism is ratified as a serene science of coordination—column grids, facade modules, ceiling tiles, lighting fixtures, partitions, electrical outlets, flooring, furniture, color schemes, air-conditioning grids—that transcends the practical to emerge in a rarified existential domain of pure objectivity.

You can only be in Typical Plan, not sleep, eat, make love.

Typical Plan is deep. It has evolved beyond the naive humanist assumption that contact with the exterior—so-called reality—is a necessary condition for human happiness, for survival. (If that is true, why build at all? And anyway, aren’t the disadvantages of the exterior—zone-depleted, carbo-charged, globally heated—by now well established?)

Air conditioning, which is the sine qua non of Typical Plan, imposes a regime of sharing (air) that defines invisible communities, homogeneous segments of an airborne collective aligned in more powerful wholes like the iron molecules that form a magnetic field.

Heroically, Typical Plan delivers a world laundered of ego.

Typical Plan is Western. There is no equivalent in any other culture. It is the stamp of modernity itself. In the ever-increasing dimension from skin to core—the hidden potential of depth—it proclaims the superiority of the artificial to the real which remains, whether admitted or not, the true credo of Western civilization, the source of its universal attraction.