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PERCIVAL GOODMAN'S HERODIUM DRAWINGS

Raymond Lifchez

New York architect Percival Goodman, who died in 1989 at age 85, will be remembered as a critic and essayist whose books, lectures, articles and letters argued that well designed environments — buildings as well as cities — must be grounded in practicality, beauty and social good.

His legacy includes two books — *Communitas, A Blueprint for Ideal Communities* (1947), co-authored with his brother, philosopher Paul Goodman, and *The Double E* (1977), a treatise on the relationship of ecology to city planning. He also designed many buildings, including synagogues and schools in the New York area, and taught architectural design at Columbia University from 1946 to 1971.

Goodman's vision — as architect, writer and artist — was informed by his ability to draw and by his abiding interest in utopian literature. In his final years he produced a magisterial work, *Illustrated Guide to Utopia: An Architect's Travel Diary* (not yet published), in which he joined his love of illustration to his fascination with utopian communities. This series of annotated drawings of utopias throughout history took several years to produce. However, Percy also took time away from that task to amuse himself or to examine seri-

ously various ideas through paintings, drawings and sculptures. He would use a provocative text to flesh out the image of a lost building; he would lampoon the politics of unusual personalities by cartooning their portraits or palaces; or he would comment on current debates that concerned him. Among these works are the drawings published here of his reconstruction of a mausoleum-palace built by Herod, King of Judea, during his reign (B.C. 34-4).

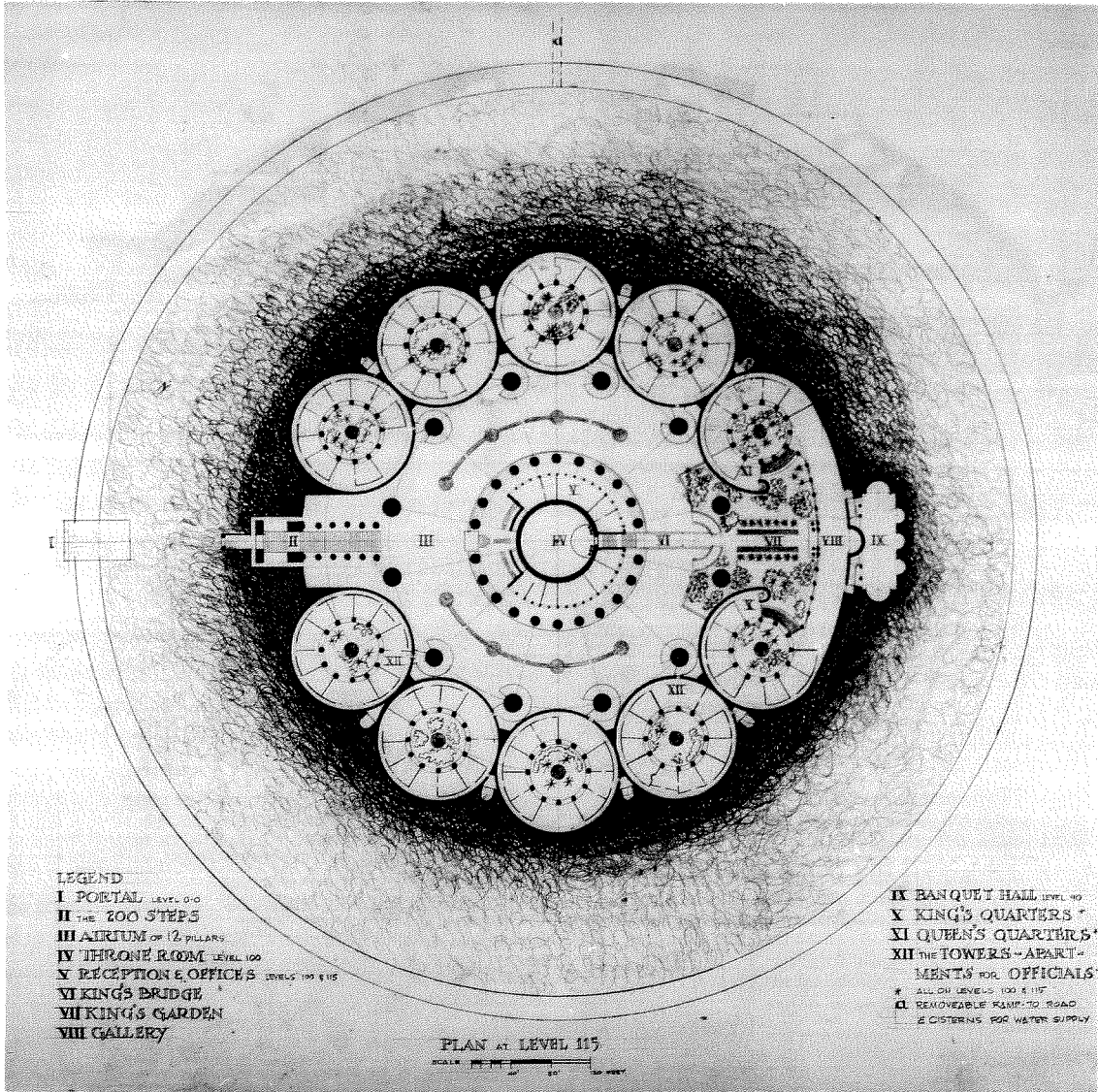
The Herodian, as it was called, stood 12 kilometers south of Jerusalem and five kilometers east of Bethlehem. Though the structure was demolished in antiquity, the site has been well excavated, measured drawings have been made, and the ruins have been photographed. But Percy would not have had access to this information; in making his drawings, he relied mostly on the account of the building by Flavius Josephus (ca. 38 - 100 A.D.) in his history *The Jewish War Against Rome*. Percy did not intend his drawings to be archaeologically correct; rather, he transformed written descriptions into masterful drawings.

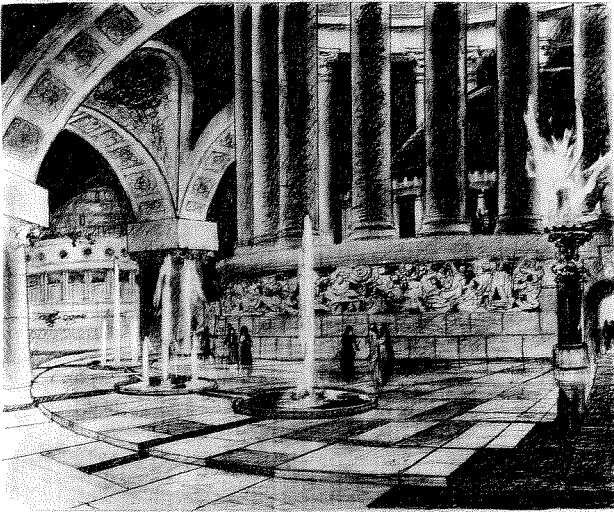
A striking aspect of Percy's perspective views is his depiction of human figures. These are an essential

element in all of his drawings, conveying through gesture, action and interaction not only architectural scale and purpose but also the architect's preoccupation with the intended human experience of the environment envisioned — the intent to create spirited, humane buildings in which, in the words of Aldo van Eyck, "space in the image of man is place and time is occasion."

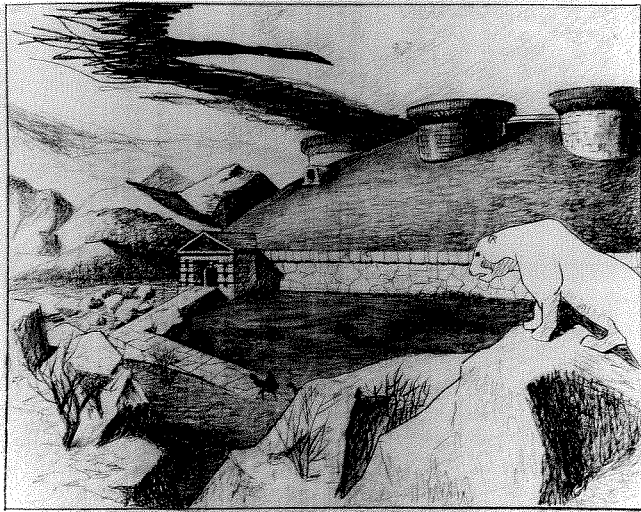
For architects, drawing has always had a dual function — to project what is envisioned and to encourage and nourish that vision. Architectural drawing was formalized as a particular art form in the nineteenth century, created in the French system of architectural education at the École des Beaux Arts and generally adopted internationally. The drawings produced under the French regime are admired for the clarity with which the architect's vision is projected. Goodman studied at the École des Beaux Arts after winning the Paris Prize in 1925 (its \$5,000 purse allowed him to study and work in Europe for four years).

The Beaux Arts regime of architectural education prescribed a rigorous course of study: atelier and lecture courses on the theory and history of architecture, construction, perspective, mathematics,





IN THE ATRIUM OF THE TWELVE PILLARS



"IN THE SHAPE OF A WOMAN'S BREAST"

strength of materials and ornament. Students' knowledge and integration of these subjects were tested in design problems that included making measured drawings of existing buildings and creating historic restorations — the latter surely appealing to Goodman's imagination.

The design drawings of Beaux Arts-trained architects were elaborate compositions in which plans, sections, elevations, construction details and vignettes depicted a building within its context and in use. The drawings were brilliantly rendered: Line and color, shades and shadows, and perspective illusion all combined to create a compelling image of the building's formal and material qualities.

Percy was no antiquarian, but a thoroughgoing Modern architect who benefited from the professional traditions current in his formative years. His remarkable ability to draw his ideas served him well and gave him enormous pleasure throughout his life. The Herodian drawings, his last, were made shortly before he died.

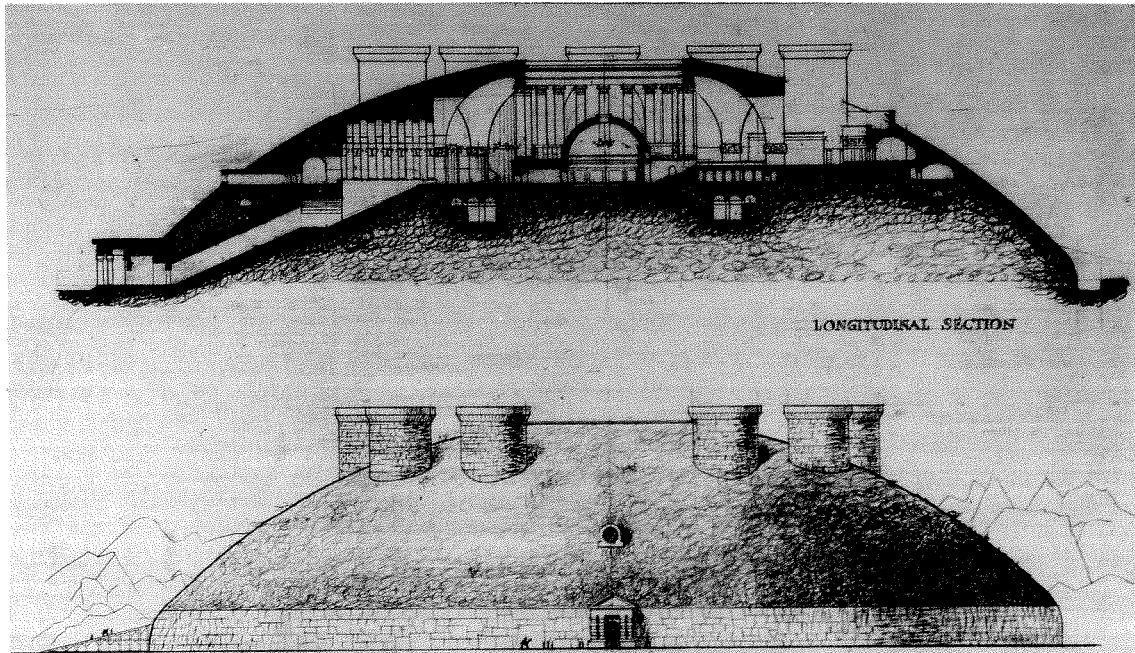
Architecture is singular among the arts in requiring, as its basic function, a program. A work of art is a work of art because it is an entity in itself and needs no other reason for being. But

shelter must meet certain demands so that humans can live on a planet that was not designed for them. To protect against heat and cold and to provide for a variety of other needs, different forms of shelter must obviously take different shapes. A hospital will be different from a courthouse, a crematorium, or anything else.

Thus architecture becomes art only when these functions are no longer needed. For instance, the Parthenon became a work of art, in all its purity, when it no longer functioned as a shelter for Athena's priests and for the ritual worship of her. It is the rare architect who will build a shelter and see it ultimately refined into a work of art.

I selected the Herodium as a subject for development because I had read a description by Flavius Josephus, the Jewish historian noted for his accuracy, who describes this palace of Herod in a few clear paragraphs. Here was a program on which an architect could start dreaming and developing. However, I am not an archaeologist, nor am I interested in ruins. So what I have drawn, though true to the period in style, may have only the most minor resemblance to what Herod actually built. But it does answer the program for the palace built for this historic despot.

— Percival Goodman



LONGITUDINAL SECTION

ENTRANCE ELEVATION

THE HERODIUM II AFTER THE DESCRIPTION OF JOSEPHUS (CE 31-95 ?)

HEROD "DID NOT FAIL TO MAKE HIS MEMORY (24 BCE) SECURE. HE BUILT A FORTRESS IN THE HILLS FACING ARABIA & CALLED IT HERODIUM AFTER HIMSELF & 7 MILES FROM JERUSALEM HE GAVE THE SAME NAME TO AN ARTIFICIAL HILL, THE SHAPE OF A WOMAN'S BREAST, ADORNING IT MOST ELABORATELY. HE ENCIRCLED THE TOP WITH ROUND TOWERS, FILLING THE ENCLOSED SPACE WITH A PALACE SO MAGNIFICENT THAT IN ADDITION TO THE SPENDID APPEARANCE OF THE INTERIOR APARTMENTS

THE OUTER WALLS HAD WEALTH LAVISHED ON THEM WITHOUT STINT. AT VERY HEAVY COST HE BROUGHT IN AN UNLIMITED SUPPLY OF WATER & FURNISHED THE ASCENT WITH 200 STEPS OF WHITEST MARBLE. IN ITS COMPLETENESS THE STRONGHOLD WAS A TOWN, IN ITS COMPACTNESS A PALACE."

RECONSTRUCTION
by
PETERLIN GOODMAN
PAIA
NEW YORK CITY, N.Y.
JANUARY
1989