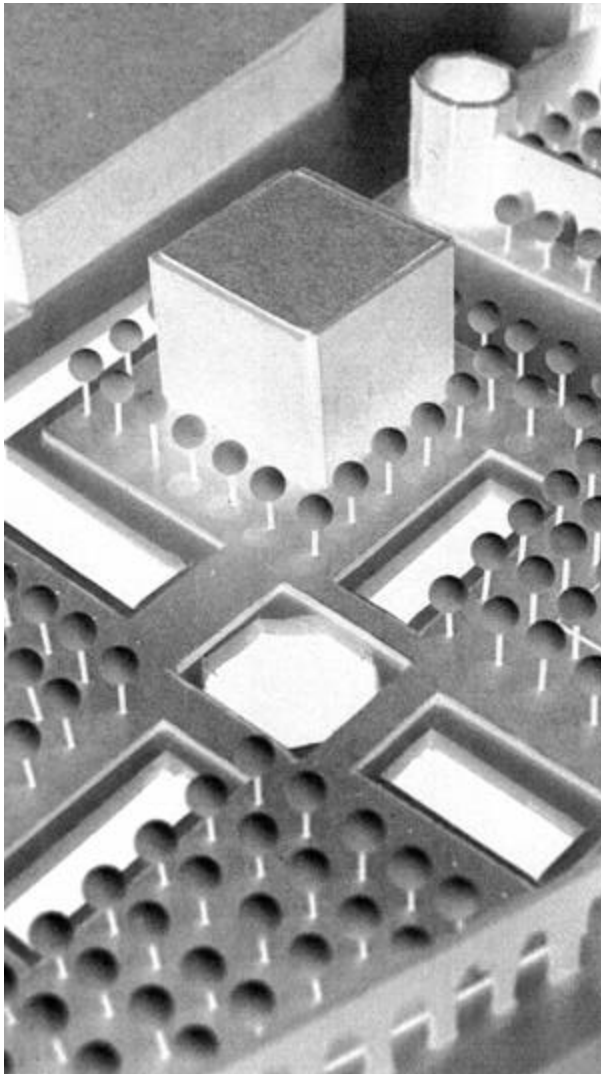


## PIAZZA DELLA SIGNORIA - FLORENCE



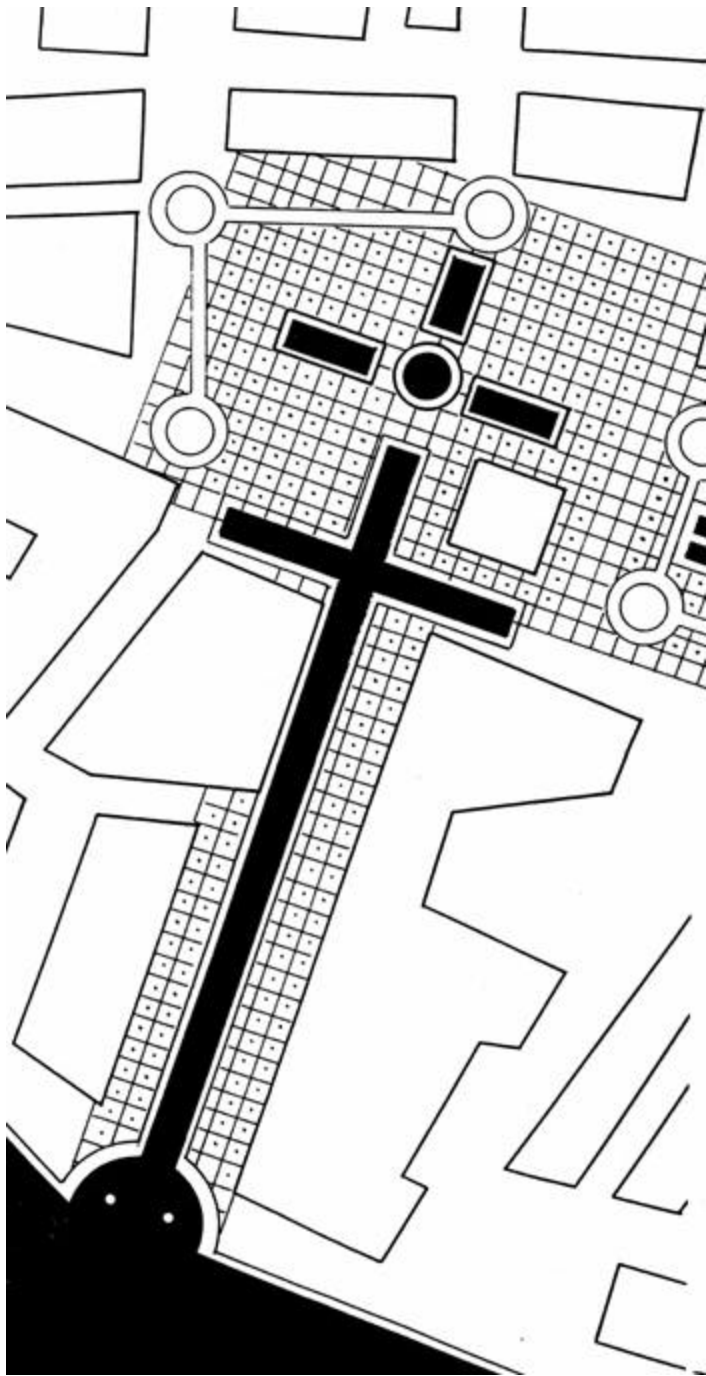
### PRECIS

Piazza della Signoria in Florence, Italy was the site/locus of Medici hegemony - a mixed and troubled legacy. The famous loggia, the Palazzo Vecchio, the Uffizi Galleries and the piazza itself were the scene (mise en scène) for a wide range of activities, including the execution of enemies of church and state, the promulgation of official edicts, and the presentation (representation) of power and privilege.

Image (left) - Model (materials, as above / inverted image)

This project takes all of this into account and proposes the conversion of the site to a forest of oak trees with a series of pools and canals linking the piazza back to the Arno.

The Palazzo Vecchio has been ceremoniously demolished, along



with the Uffizi Galleries and the loggia, to liberate a large measure of space and re-situate the piazza in a larger, a-political hyper-geography. The redemption of the site is prefigured in the cruciform canal and pools (though this is not meant as a strictly religious but, instead, symbolic, formal gesture).

The composition is based on, or rigorously derived from, the extrapolation of the Renaissance nine-square motif, a motif that came to Italy via Spain from the Near East and Islamic sources.

The former courtyard of the Palazzo Vecchio, a negative form, has been

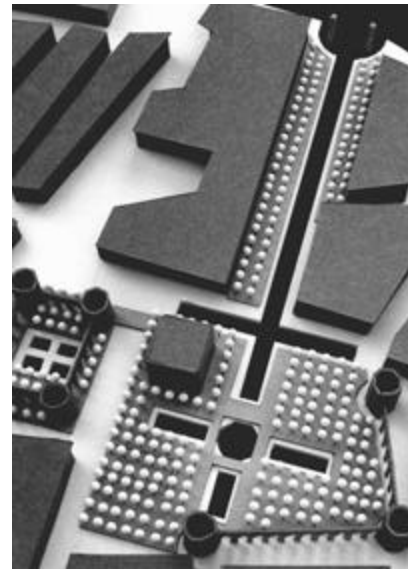
converted to a positive form to commemorate the unfortunate souls led there for summary execution.

The Medieval / Renaissance piazza and surrounding fabric has

been reconfigured to represent and 'picture' an entirely different order of things, inclusive of the natural world and a non-penurious capitulation to pure form.

Image (above) - Plan (ink on vellum / xeroxed)

The piazza includes a number of apparent 'historicizing' forms that are red herrings. These include: turreted, tower-like structures with a linking arcade (blocking sight lines from streets leading into the site); an enclosed water garden, as a reflective space with the larger (now) 'forested' piazza; and the cubic nature of the memorial (which recalls, in a slippery fashion, Mecca and the Kaaba - an 'enshrined' black meteorite - at its proverbial heart).



The Arno, to the lower left, is drawn into the piazza by way of the canal, and the pools are cut into the stone floor as a gesture toward the underground, sub-liminal resources of the site.

Image (above) - Model (chipboard, push pins, museum board, balsa wood / 3200-ASA print)

The figures of speech and thought incorporated are meant to summons 'associative magic' and undermine the heavy, historical dimension of the entire ensemble.

## POST-SCRIPT - RENAISSANCE / MEDIEVAL TO IM-MODERN PIAZZA

"Architecture and History" - "The history of architecture is composed of two qualities of form. On the one hand, there are forms which strictly belong to a particular time, which are tied to an age. On the other, there are forms which seem to avoid the passage of time, which speak of eternal values. These two qualities depend on the relationship between abstraction and decoration which exists within every piece of architecture. When abstraction dominates, architecture is freed from history. When decoration prevails, architecture is tied to an historical moment. The ideas that should be expressed in architecture have the same qualities: some are concerned with a given time and situation, others with an eternal and absolute truth. Quotation is the other technique which introduces elements of history into the architecture of today. It is useful when an architectural expression has already been said with such precision that it cannot be improved. However, quotations in architecture should be used as thoughtfully and deliberately as they are in prose. A quotation is not clever just because it's in Latin.

Each form, volume and architecture has its own characteristics. Each contains an *idea*, a spirit. In architecture, figuration is the translation of a thought or idea into architectural language. Each idea or group of ideas can be expressed with architectural forms or spaces in the same way that it can be expressed with words, musical notes or pictures. Architecture should generate feelings and sensations. The idea contained in the architectural form should show itself and speak. It is a spiritual expression. It takes a position on its surroundings, on life. It is a response, an affirmation, a negation, an exultation.

When an architectural statement is constructed around one or more ideas, the building becomes the visible statement of these ideas. When the generating idea is absent, all that is formed is an empty statement, a casual result, a mask with nothing behind it. An architecture designed without regard for formal expression will have a poor, vague, sad and confused spirit.

The effects and tensions of forms and spaces can be measured by examples from the history of architecture. We can use history as a collection of formal expressions, but history helps us above all to examine and compare: it provides us with analogies for our problems. In the history of architecture, there is no form that has not already been devised, just as there is no architectural expression, situation or problem today that has not already been resolved in the past. For this reason, we cannot pretend that history does not exist, we cannot ignore the way in which it has developed, and we cannot begin again from an imaginary starting point."

--Oswald Zoeggeler, The School of Venice, *Architectural Design Profile 59* (1985)