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TEXTILES, WEAVE

THE POMPIDOU CENTRE

By

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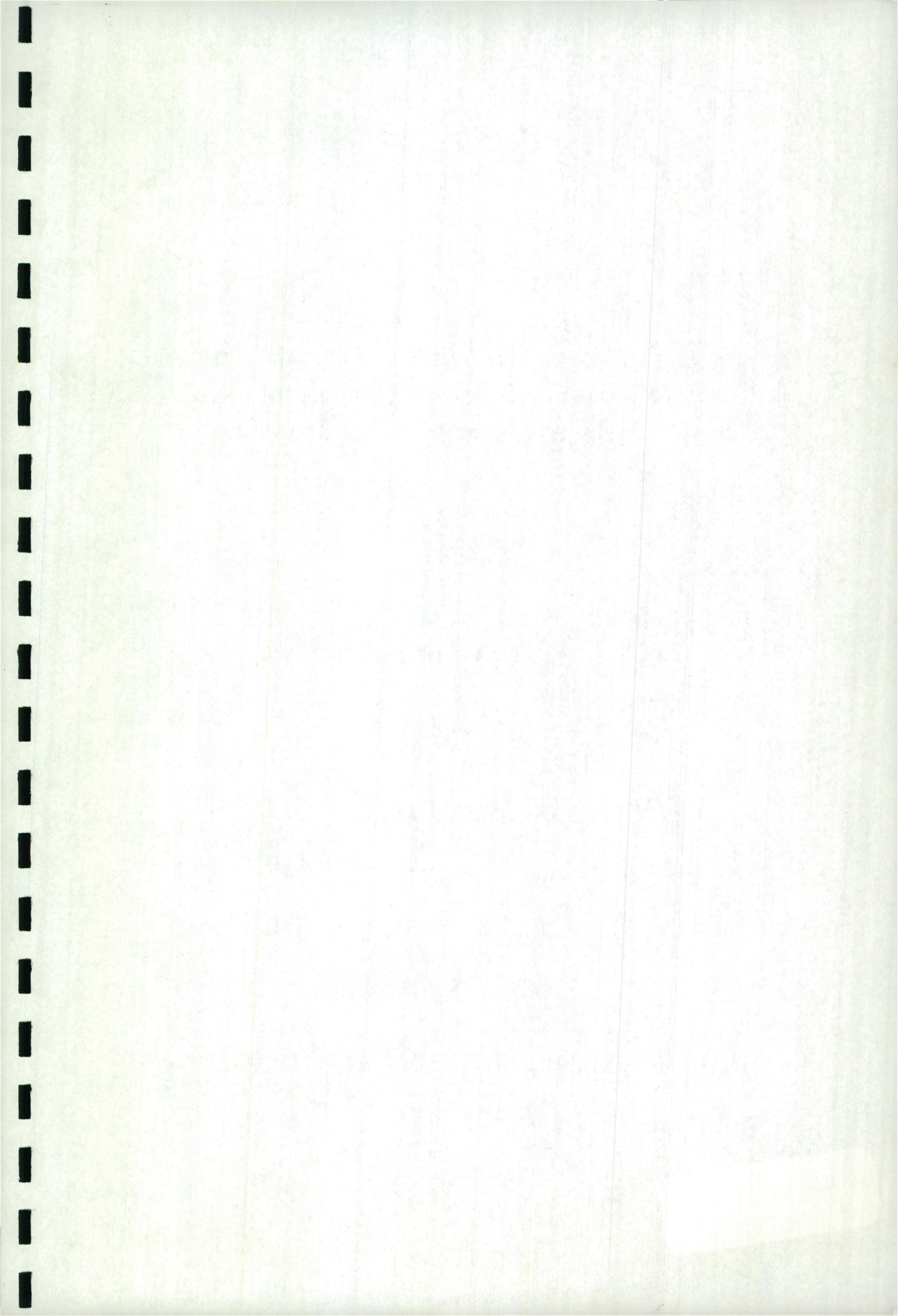


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Plate 1.



INTRODUCTION

As far as controversy and adverse reaction is concerned, few buildings have provoked so much response as has the Centre Georges Pompidou. Situated in Beaubourg, Paris, the centre houses a large range of activities under one roof - National Museum of Modern Art (MNAM), Public Information Library (BPI), Centre for Industrial Creation (CCI) and the Institute for Accoustic and Musical Research and Creation (IRCAM). These departments combine to Create the main services of the centre. As well as these, it also houses a children's Workshop, Meetings, Cinema, Audio-Visual Unit Publications and Periodicals, Contemporary Galleries, News Rooms, a Bookshop and a Restaurant. The centre aims to offer all aspects of art and culture to all members of the public. It acts to democratize culture and to centralize all aspects of art under one roof. The fact that many activities are close to one another - Museum, Library, CCI - is aimed at urging visitors to try and investigate areas they would have ignored if they had not been near.

The centre has become a prime source of interest in Paris and one of the cities most popular landmarks. One of the reasons the centre has become such an attraction is due to its controversial "High Tech" architecture. The centre's architecture is controversial not only because the building is situated in Beaubourg - one of the oldest quarters in Paris - but also because many critics felt that the building itself lowered the tone of what the aims of the centre were. They felt it did not complement what the centre was trying to do in terms of presenting art and culture.

It is a known fact that what is bland and considered the norm will be accepted and often forgotten about, while innovation and originality creates controversy, which in turn creates interest and attracts attention. In the case of the Pompidou Centre, it is evident that its architects were fully aware of this fact and capitalized on it. They exploited the creation of the controversy to its full potential and thus ensured the

success of the centre - at least in tourist terms - and the success of their own future. They were certain to be remembered after the reaction their design had caused.

The Pompidou Centre is a tool - an adapted and adaptable instrument. The techniques of cultural communication did not have to submit to the limitations of the building. The building submits itself to the needs of cultural communication. Anyone can walk into the centre and enjoy the vast array of interdisciplinary events and facilities of the centre, housed in a shell which follows the theme of complexity within the centre.

In this study of the centre, background information : its development and historical background is dealt with in Chapter One. Chapter Two takes on the movement of High Tech architecture and the influence it has had on the design of the Pompidou Centre. In Chapter Three I discuss the exterior of the centre : the architecture, the concept of an 'inside-out' building, and the use of colour which I deal with in greater depth in Chapter Four. Finally, Chapter Five is comprised of the interior design and layout of the centre.

CHAPTER ONE

Background to the Pompidou Centre : Development and History

In 1962, when Georges Pompidou, a rightwing minister - from whom the centre takes its name - became Prime Minister, he presented his idea for the Plateau Beaubourg to Charles de Gaulle and to Andre Malraux, then Minister of Culture. Their reaction to the project was adverse. At this time, Andre Malraux, himself, created Houses of Culture (Maisons de la Culture) in a handful of provincial towns and ironically the Pompidou Centre might best be thought of as a kind of large scale and typically Parisian descendant of one of these, due to the cultural quality of its objectives and the range of activities it provides. However, when elected President in 1969, Pompidou had decided on the nature of the centre and defined the project in a letter to Edmond Michelet, his Minister of Culture, in December 1969. The government then formed a committee to study the matter which was chaired by Sebastien Loste. In 1976, Robert Bordaz became the first president of the body created to carry out the construction. Acting on the specific instructions of President Pompidou, he formed a jury of architectural specialists, which was chaired by Jean Prouve and included Philip Johnson, to judge the competition. In June 1971, the jury rapidly narrowed down the competition and chose the project of Renzo Piano and Richard Rogers. At the time, these architects were only known in professional circles and their entry created an immediate public outcry. President Pompidou was found to be at first surprised by the project, but supported it fully through the first phases of its construction until his death in 1974.

The Pompidou Centre was not only exceptional in relation to its architecture, it was also given a unique administrative structure in order to allow it to be free of the usual bureaucratic problems. An unusual degree of autonomy was granted to the President of the Centre, who was expected to co-ordinate the interaction of the various departments. In legal terms, in 1976, the centre was created by a decree of the

French government which gave these unusually large powers to the President of the Centre. Because of these wide powers granted to the President, it is necessary to underline the nature of the statutes of the Pompidou Centre. For example, other French Museums are under the control of the Reunion of National Museums (RMN). Certain department heads, within the centre, have a degree of autonomy, but the very concept of the Pompidou Centre depends upon the interaction of the various departments and therefore on the co-ordinating role of the President of the Institution.

Georges Pompidou's fervent admiration of contemporary art and his desire to democratize culture distanced him from the traditional image of his right-wing political companions. The project of building an institution, such as the Pompidou Centre, could as easily have been conceived by the Socialist government and its Minister of Culture, Jack Lang, ten years later. This Socialist government has been seen to pursue a policy which harmonized, or at least aimed to, the imperatives of mass consumption or higher cultural production. It is obvious that Pompidou and his advisors were intent on restoring France's cultural primacy in Europe.

The Beaubourg Plateau had been cleared and between 1940 and 1968, nothing was rebuilt on this piece of land which became derelict. Various projects proposed never came to fruition and Saint - Merri lost a source of income with the destruction of the Halles Market, in 1974. The creation of the Pompidou Centre meant the renovation of the quarter. It marked the first attempt to insert such a building into the historic centre of the city. It's creation coincided with the destruction of the old market complex of Les Halles, which was an ensemble of metal and glass pavillions which at its inception in 1854, had embodied both technical and aesthetic innovation. Les Halles, the cities central food market, with its narrow streets and old buildings, in which about thirty thousand persons worked, could no longer serve the city. In addition, movement to and from Les Halles, tied up Paris traffic. Most marketing operatives were transferred to Rungis, a suburb six miles south of Paris. Like the

Pompidou Centre, Les Halles had stood in marked contrast to its surroundings, yet it had become such a beloved part of the image of Paris, that many urged its preservation as a historic monument.

CHAPTER TWO

"High Tech" Architecture

The Pompidou Centre was one of the first examples of "High Tech" architecture. It embodies all its components in the controversial design. The most obvious basic rule of "High Tech" architecture is exploited in the exterior of the Pompidou Centre - it's 'inside-out' design. In High Tech architecture, the services and structure of the building are almost always exposed on the exterior as a form of ornament or sculpture. This concept was formulated by Louis Kahn in the sixties and has been justified by the Metabolists and Richard Rogers for allowing fast changing technology to be easily modified without having to disrupt the interior of the building. As for the principle in general, critics contend that exposing services and structure is expensive, resulting in dirty pipes and an inversion of symbolism, by allowing technology to dominate the aesthetics of a building.

The second basic rule of High Tech architecture is the celebration of process. With the emphasis on constructed logic, the explanation of the building, its joints, rivets, and ducts, there is an intellectual clarity, which is pleasing for both the child and the scientist in us. Critics point out that where everything is expressed, nothing is hierarchical and confusion reigns. High Tech buildings should both work and look like a perfected mechanism. All buildings deteriorate and suffer continual problems, but those which symbolize technical excellence and innovate on so many levels at once, are particularly prone to censure when things go wrong. There is no conclusive proof that High Tech buildings have more problems than others, but certainly people feel let down when, inevitably, some mechanisms fail. This becomes the heart of a problem: by celebrating and symbolizing process. High Tech promises more than any technology can deliver perfect functioning and long term efficiency.

Another trademark of High Tech architecture is its transparency, layering and

movement. These three aesthetic qualities are dramatized almost without exception. Extensive use of translucent and transparent glass, a layering of ducts, stairs, and structure and the accentuation of moving escalators and elevators characterize the High Tech building. The Pompidou Centre has perhaps the most dramatic example of isotropic space stacked vertically. Services and structure are on the perimeter and the ceiling plane becomes the focus of architectural expression with a zigzag of polished silver pipes held by white "elbows". The spatial quality is more varied than one might think given the repetition from floor to floor. This is caused by the depth of the truss set off against the blue, and the shallowness of the mechanical ducts. A regular bay rhythm is found, an even tempo set at right angles to circulation, which is counterposed by the longitudinal bank of lights. Thus the usual isotropic space is mostly articulated by contrary rhythms. The suitability of such a space for a cultural centre can be criticized, but the iconic way structure is treated as decoration raises the Pompidou Centre above its utilitarian origins. A feeling of freedom and openness is conveyed.

Another very obvious aspect of High Tech architecture, is the use of bright, flat colouring. Rogers and Piano used bright colours in much the same way as engineers do to distinguish between different kinds of structure and services to allow them to be easily understood and effectively used. These distinguish between different kinds of structure and services to allow them to be easily understood and effectively used. These distinctions, which make great sense in an oil refinery or the engine room of a ship, have led virtually everyone to compare the High Tech building to these two industrial types. This use of colour has an associated component, which is as strong as its functional necessity in engineering. Bright yellows, reds and blues are the colours of industrial machinery, sports cars, ships and tractors, and most technical objects of the present. These colours are thus associated with the present and future tense, a world of objects free from the restraints of the past. The canary yellow further displaces the structure from tradition and, by extension, from the conventions

of class and etiquette. Naturally, critics point out other associations such as the bright yellow of car clamps, or the dehumanized repetition of factory work, and claim that flash colours are brash and tiring. Colour in High Tech is highly politicized.

Another dominating theme of High Tech architecture which is used in the design of the Pompidou Centre, is a lightweight filigree of tensile members. The thin steel crossbrace is the Doric column of High Tech - its visual sign and ordering device. This is extensively exploited in the exterior facades of the Pompidou Centre. Optimistic confidence in a scientific culture is a trait found among the architects of High Tech buildings. Underlying High Tech building, is the futuristic promise of an unknown world, waiting to be discovered. This results more in a method of working - an attitude towards materials, colours and invention - rather than a compositional principle. However, this often leads to open, indeterminate space and picturesque fragmentation or at worst, which in part applies to the interior of the Pompidou Centre, a chaotic meeting and confusion of cues.

Successful styles have more enemies than friends. This ironic situation increases with growing stylistic choice, the consequence of a contentious pluralism which is to be welcomed until it results in reactionary compromise, or the safe, bland building which appeals to planning committees and no one else. If values and tastes do radically differ, then democratic politics must allow them expression and realization. The urban results will not be harmonious as a whole, except in small communities, but then few people want to live in a city of one style, age and dimension.

CHAPTER THREE

Exterior of the Pompidou Centre

AT the time it was chosen, after the international competition, organized in 1971, the project of Richard Rogers and Renzo Piano was poorly received in France. Apart from a few intellectuals and museum curators, public opinion was extremely hostile. This represented a conflict between architectural perceptions and public response. However, after this initial response, it is believed that the Pompidou Centre has achieved one of its most important goals, which was to render museums less intimidating in the mind of the public. The feeling of intimidation was to be replaced with an arousal of curiosity. It is in these terms that the architects undertook their elaborate design. They felt it was necessary to provoke reactions, even hostile ones, in order to get people to think about culture and the whole concept of a museum. Since the time of the construction of the Centre, Piano, like his former partner, Richard Rogers, has become one of the best known architects in the world. The building rejects the conventional image of a museum and is an attempt to lessen the great mistrust there is between the public and institutionalized structures of culture. The image of a factory alludes, in a polemic and humouristic way, more to the idea of a productive process, than to an object of cultural consumption.

In the Pompidou Centre, the megastructure consists of thirteen bays made from trusses. The structure is placed on the outside and interrelated through a series of cantilevers so that it acts like an exoskeleton : the perimeter space is like a gigantic truss and allows circulation on one side and mechanical equipment of the other. The main circulation up to each floor is by a tube of cantilevered escalators, painted red underneath, which gives a significant diagonal to the rectilinear exoskeleton (see plate 2). This forms a figure in two important ways : firstly, it can be related to the other tubes - horizontal caterpillars - which run along this side of the building, and secondly, it becomes the main focus of the exterior piazza or square and the major architectural

context of the building. Attached to the outside of the building, this 'snake-like' glass tube allows the discovery, during a very slow and gentle climb of the activities of the centre on one side, and the architecture of the houses bordering the piazza on the other.

It is a metallic building, a parallelepiped shape, widely given an openwork design by its terraces. The metal structure is made of fourteen porticos, each including two pillars, on which, at every level a moulded steel element is hinged. This element has been called a "gerberette", after the name of its inventor : the German Gerber (see plate 3). The large pillars which held the metal structure are hollow and filled with water and anti-freeze. It is a way of giving the building better foundations and also of fighting against fire. A pump sets the water column in movement and as a result the pillar - whatever the magnitude of any fire - keeps its rigidity for at least two hours which would give sufficient time to evacuate the whole building. The gerberettes support, on one side, the end of a fifty metre long internal beam weighing seven tons. The effects applied to the gerberette are counterbalanced on the other side by a solid steel tie beam, anchored into the same block of concrete that supports the pillar.

As a result of this, the supporting structure is entirely pushed out towards the outside. The areas inside are left completely free and the five levels of the building appear, as vast platforms (7,500m²), free from all constraint and allowing for any possible internal layout. It is the top floor - the roof of the centre - which is reserved for technical installations. These giant white painted boxes, which are in fact cooling pipes, always act to intrigue. They resemble four yoghurt pots. In summer, the water of the air cooling circuit must be cooled down, and so it is stirred in a tank into which it falls back in a fine rain. As the noise was a nuisance for nearby residents, it was suggested to deaden it by installing a mattress of twenty thousand plastic balls, the size of table tennis balls, which increase the efficiency of the cooling process.

Plate 2.



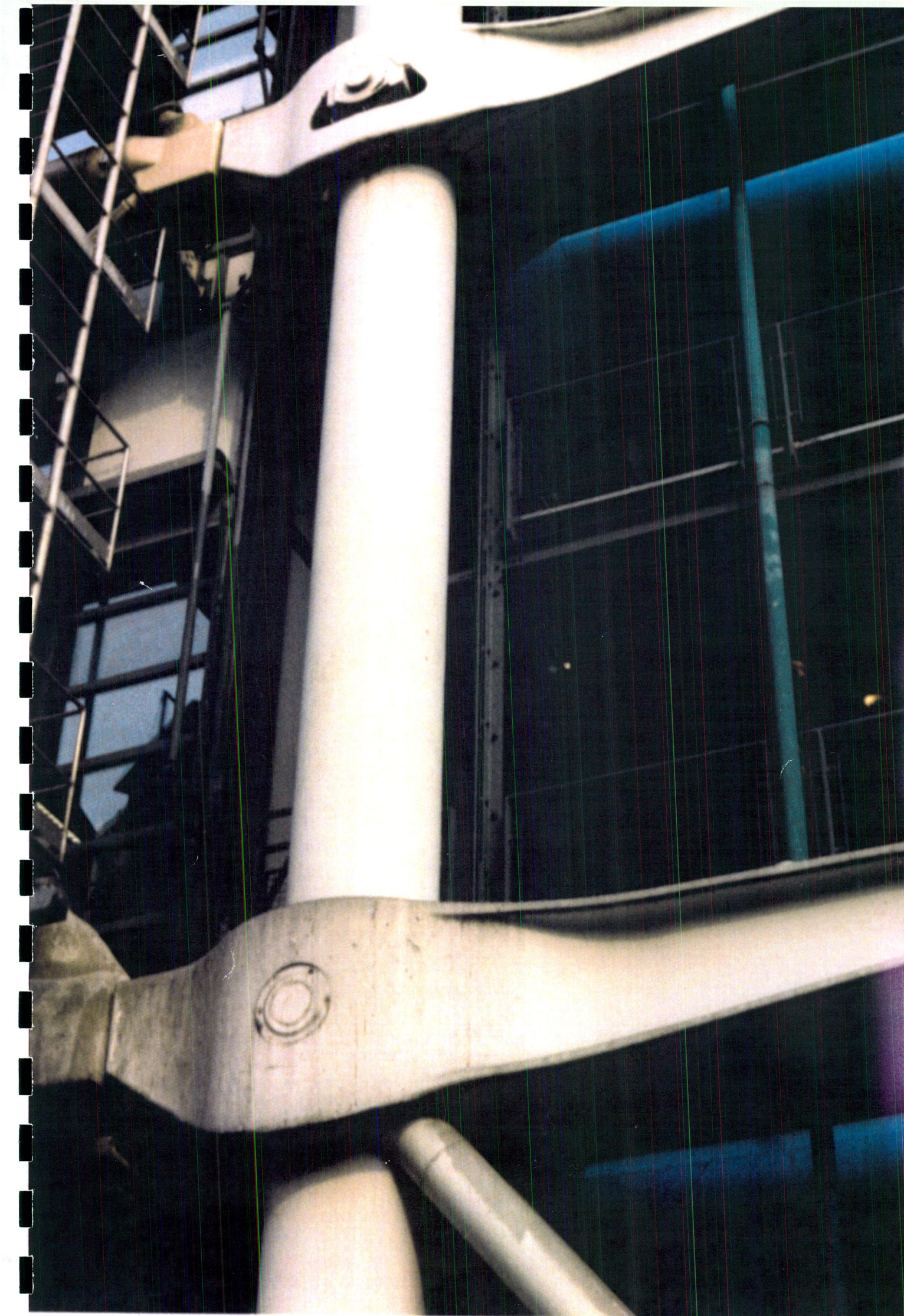


Plate 3.

Such an ammendment would have proved much more difficult if the cooling pipes had been housed inside the framework of the centre, and thus outlines one of the advantages of having the functions and services of the building exposed on the exterior. Also situated on the roof are the big, curved pipes, which take in and discharge the air, as well as the blue technical installations for treating the air - these act as air-conditioning for the centre.

By its shape, and by the materials used in its construction and by the movement of its open spaces, the Pompidou Centre identifies itself with architecture at the end of the nineteenth century, for example, the Eiffel Tower and Less Halles - its predecessor in Beaubourg - and an even greater correspondence with the Notre Dame, which is one of the monuments which have characterized the many ages of grandeur in Paris. The technological image is carried through with conviction, especially on the services, which are painted in strong primary colours. By sinking the building and breaking up its facade, the scale is sympathetic with the traditional Paris street patterns.

Some critics feel that the entire structure of the Pompidou Centre maybe ageing faster than it was intended to. A radically new design obviously entails certain shortcomings and it should be noted that, when the architects were called to build the centre, the individual estimates indicated that some five thousand visitors a day were to be expected. The Pompidou Centre has taken in five times more people than it was meant to. If the centre has aged rapidly, this must be due, in large part to the tremendous number of visitors and to certain difficulties in the maintenance procedures.

From the piazza outside, one can discover the whole centre. Going slightly downwards with its small granite cobblestones, the piazza (8,525m) is bordered on the Western side, along the Rue Saint - Martin, with plane trees. They alternate with great white painted shafts, which resemble exclamation marks, and act as the lungs of the underground car park of the centre. By a bold and judicious choice, the

architects reserved one hectare of the two hectare site, for the square devoted to entertainment and which also allows one to realize the full size of the centre at a sufficient distance. It also has a more subtle part of play : thanks to its slope, it creates the desire to go forwards. The architects wanted the facade of the centre to be the extension of the piazza, to reflect its activity as a mirror and to invite the visitor to come inside in a natural movement. It acts to combine interior and exterior space, as does the 'snake-like' escalator on the facade of the centre. This escalator comes out on a landing taking the shape of a promontary. It is from this escalator and from the balcony, which runs the length of the fifth floor, that a spectacular view of Paris can be seen.

Recently, Renzo Piano has designed an annex for the centre, near the Tinguely Fountain in La Place Stravinsky (See Plate 4). This small brick structure serves as an extension to the underground sector of the centre. It discreetly harmonizes with the Jules Ferry School next to it. It is much more classical in style than the centre. This building may have been interpreted in terms of a certain maturity in Piano's work but the new building was to be congruent with its environment and not to be a smaller version of the Pompidou Centre. In architectural terms, the Pompidou Centre certainly had an influence and it can be said to have been successful in drawing a new type of visitor into the cultural context. The popularity of the centre, in specifically tourist terms, is due to the attraction of the building itself, on account of its architecture and also the view of Paris that it affords (See Plate 6).

The immense futuristic building, covered with its tangle of brightly coloured pipes and ducts, was criticized by many as an act of vandalism against one of the oldest quarters of Paris (See Plate 7). The derelict land of Beaubourg served to supply a site for the building which was both to the advantage of the public and to Paris through the redevelopment of Beaubourg. The architecture of the Pompidou Centre is undeniably original but is assailed by some and is often accused of disfiguring the area or of

bringing a dignified cultural establishment down to the level of a vulgar factory or oil-refinery, due to its pipes and chimneys, which are integrated in its 'inside-out' design. The architecture of the centre attempts to reflect the complexity of the activities inside the centre.







Plate 7.



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CHAPTER FOUR

Use of Colour

On the street side of the centre (See Plate 8), the technology has become even more obsessive. A wall of service proclaims its responsive technique in several different colours : the layer of circulation is a black cage, above which are red elevator engines, to either side green pipes and in the back are silver cross-braces, heavy blue ducts, orange metallic cabinets, and finally a grey wall. Colour clearly accentuates the notion of structure and construction as decoration; in fact the cononic elements of modernism have been turned into ornament. Hung to the exterior of the building on the eastern facade, and used as a decoration for the structure, technical shafts stand out in four colours. These are coded : blue for air-conditioning, green for fluids or water circuits, yellow for electrical shafts and red identifying communication, for example, lifts, escalators and so on.

A strong influence on the work of the Pompidou Centre architects, is the way in which colour is used as a safety factor in the coding of industrial environments and machinery, for example, steel plants, tractors, cranes and refineries, which the centre is often compared to. In the centre, the building totally exposes its works like an 'inside-out' mechanism. According to Tom Porter and Byren Mikellides, as the service systems are visible and play a major part of the building, the architects adopted the British standards code for industrial colours as a basic direction to follow; the significance being that they were seeking rules so that their colour decisions did not stem purely from arbitrary preferences. (Colour for Architecture). Therefore, they began their selection of colours with a process of elimination through colour coding.

A third system of elimination comes down to what the building is about; its functions, its scale, rhythm, and so on. One of the major problems of modern materials is a lack of scale. For architects, colour becomes an important element in tackling this

Plate 8.



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problem.

Buildings reflected the colour of natural materials, or were covered in applied art, during the Renaissance. Now the applied skins can be produced. They come from the factory by the role. As a result, a colour choice has to be made, and in turn a colour statement. There is no need to do this with bricks and concrete because being naturally coloured whtye weather well. Stronger environmental colours are emerging from the fact that raw materials work just as well, if not better, with pigment added to them. Architects are no longer limited to using black, brown or grey, when plasticated steel offers such a wide rang eof colour. A lot of the colour selection is down to personalization. Piano and Rogers have always consciously designed with colour because of their interest in what they call "happy buildings" - these which people react to. They feel that to use Walter Gropiois' statement that all colours are beautiful is a pretty good concept, but they know that they have to employ some process of elimination or control and this is partly subjective. Rogers finds that a good way of getting away from elegant detail, is by using colour to underline what is important, to define elements and to express their approach to archietcture.

It is the existenc eof brilliant colours on the columns of ducting on the east elevation which has traceable connections with the colours of antiquity. In citing the brilliance of paintwork found on agricultural machinery as having a direct influence on the architects colour choice, Rogers and Piano indirectly needs the high victorian call to the colours by Owen Jones, and reinstates the ancient hues in an architecture of High Technology. It is interesting to note that Piano and Rogers' coded colours on the Rue de Renard elevation of their High Tech "mechanism" may not be too dissimilar from the original colours of the nearby situated, Notre Dame Cathedral - together with green, orange and ochre, red trusses of pigment have been detected on the cathedrals facades. (See Plates 9 and 10).

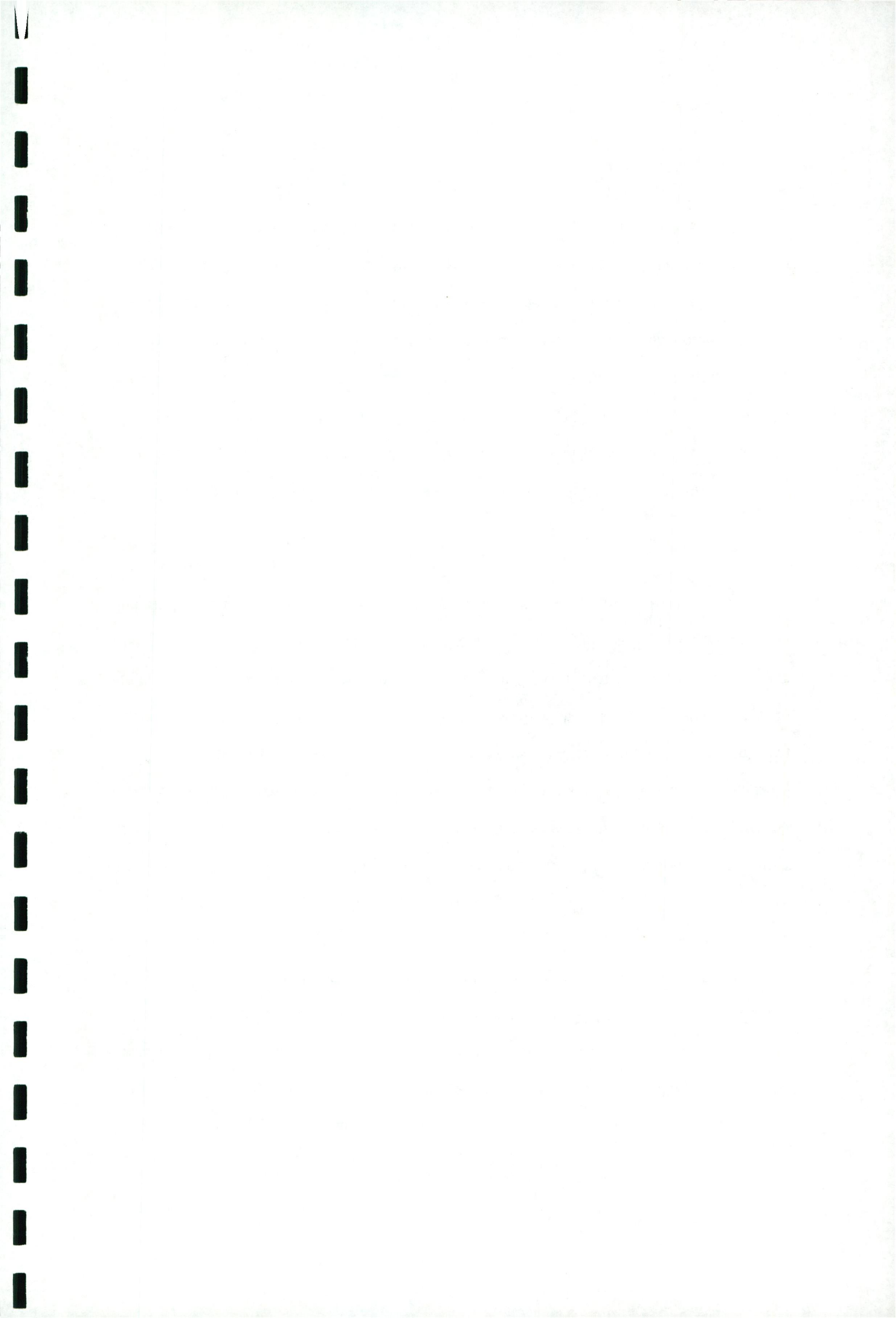


Plate 9.





CHAPTER FIVE

Interior of the Pompidou Centre

At the end of 1972, Georges Pompidou conceived;

"a cultural centre which would be both a museum and a centre of creative activity in which visual arts would be closely involved with music, cinema, books, and audiovisual research".

(Jorge Glusberg, P.49)

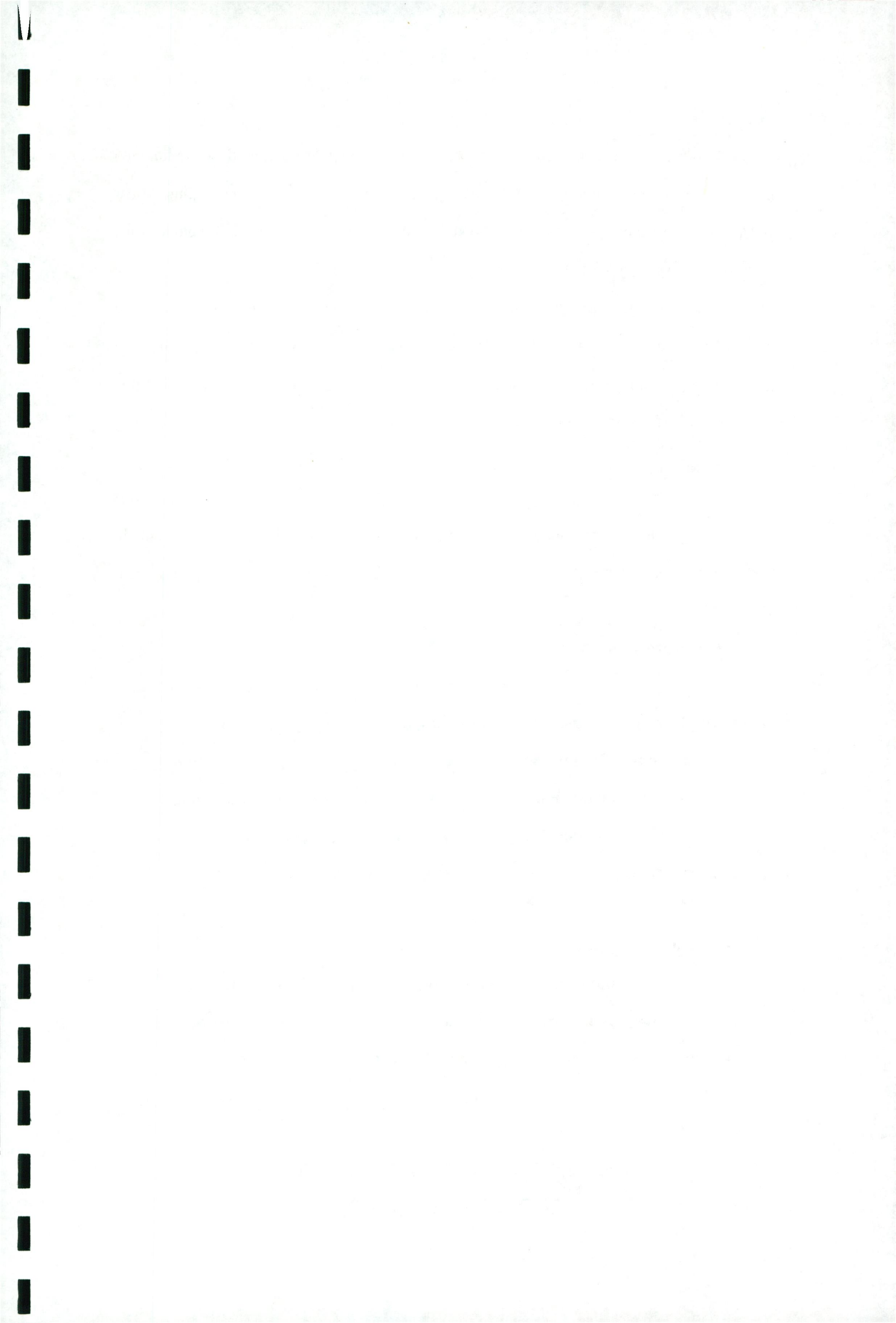
In 1974, Jacques Chirac, then Prime Minister, informed the National assembly that;

"it was necessary to create a space which would be unlike that traditional museum. Beaubourg will not contain dumb collection's of objects petrified in death, in viewing situations quite devoid of life. Beaubourg will be a living place, a place of creative research and confrontation".

(Jorge Glusberg, P.49)

The Pompidou Centre does remain a "living space" due to the fact that it changes appearance every day. Few sectors of the centre remain permanent. There are few restrictions.

Since the 1970's museum programmes have been transformed and have become more complex. The conception of a museum, which consists solely of exhibition spaces has been rejected. A series of new needs have appeared. The museum, opening up to the public, is becoming less a place for the contemplation of works of art, and more a cultural focus providing space for work, learning and study. Closely related to this shift, which converts the museum from a permanent exhibition space into a place of work, study and research, is the need for temporary exhibition spaces - such as the contemporary galleries in the Pompidou Centre - on one hand and on the other,



large spaces for the storage and conservation of objects so that they can be studied even if they are not on permanent show. From 1970 onwards, the culture and technology of communications became part of the programme for museums and exhibitions. A whole new series of spaces and equipment became essential, such as cinema, video rooms, audio-visual rooms and so on, which are embodied in the Pompidou Centre. Areas devoted to the sale of catalogues, cafeterias, restaurants, and other services have also become indispensable in buildings that have taken on retail functions. Partly owing to the contemporary phenomenon of mass tourism, visitors have become more abundant, museum programmes have diversified, and there is a demand for a clear spatial structure to enable the public to choose which rooms they want to see or which services they want to use, and this creates the need for a large entrance hall to fill this role - in the case of the Pompidou Centre, this role is filled by the forum. Inside the building on the ground floor, the forum - a vast platform - is a direct extension of the piazza. The people who conceived it wished it to be a place of information and exchange, for the visitor to be aware from the very entrance, that interdisciplinarity is the key word of the Pompidou Centre. A wide, deep space occupies its centre, bordered by a handrail around three-quarters of its perimeter. As Charlette Mosley writes, in the Saturday / Sunday 14th and 15th of February issue of the International Herald Tribune,

"the vast entrance hall resembles a railway station where noisy crowds are channeled off in different directions".

On the mezzanine of the ground floor is the "Breves" Gallery. In an area of 200m², it offers smaller and frequently changing exhibitions on subjects such as design and interior decoration. Hanging over the ground floor is a giant portrait of Georges Pompidou by Vasarely. This portrait is made up of thin strips covered by aluminium, cut out in such a way that the face is defined by the contrast of light and shade. This work, created in 1976-77, takes its place among the artist's research into light and the illusion of movement created by optical processes. This original work of

great quality often becomes a meeting place. This is a fine tribute paid to the creator of the centre that now bears his name.

On the first floor, two mezzanine floors stand on both sides of the forum - to the south the contemporary galleries of the museum, and the north, the gallery of the CCI. In front of them move an enormous virtual volume by the Venezuelan sculptor, Raphael Soto, both powerful and fragile, full of light and impalpable. This work was commissioned to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the centre. This egg-shaped work, which covers 200m and is suspended from the ceiling, was created in accordance to the dimensions of the forum. It can be seen differently according to the position of the spectator in relation to the thousands of yellow and white rods. The gallery of the CCI is, in fact, a large area of nearly 1,000m , which is entirely flexible and is able to welcome all types of displays. The galleries' architecture, which reflects the current taste for monumental spaces, is particularly fitting for the variety of works which are displayed there and also for their sometimes massive size. The interior structure, which is extremely simple, is laid out along a north-south axis which accommodates both small exhibition rooms and great spaces. An aspect of High Tech is embodied in the galleries, inside which are hoists which can lift lorries. These mechanical cranes make very large installations possible and allow them to be moved easily.

The first, second and third floors of the centre are devoted to the Public Information Library (BPI). The library includes fifteen thousand square metres of stacks and reading rooms, six hundred square metres of periodical rooms, and has seating accommodation for one thousand, eight hundred readers. The space in the library opens up to communication and lends itself to dialogue, especially since the user can roam about at will, can choose to sit at a table or at the base of shelves, or can remain standing. Escalators carry the users from one floor to another inside the vast areas of space devoted to learning and to the acquiring of knowledge.

The Museum of Modern Art (MNAM) is situated above the library. The permanent collections are displayed on the third and fourth floor, over an area of 6,200m . The main gallery (See Plate 11), which crosses the museum from one end to the other, opens into all the rooms. Planned by the architect Gae Aulenti, the suite of rooms, classically chronological, remains very flexible and depending on the presentations, is linked to the stronghdds - like the big rooms devoted to an artist or movement, such as Cubism or Surrealism. When asked to undertake the task of completely revamping the museum in 1985, Aulenti designed tiny corridors joining theme exhibit halls. These corridors are used for exhibiting additional or small works, or works which require less light, or even various documents. Structured around a few strong points which are stationary, the presentation of the museums permanent rooms is rather frequently rearranged. The MNAM is not a frozen museum which one can visit once and for all.

The glass outer walls of the museum create a sense of airness and light so that the exhibition space seems to float above the city. Some sculptures exhibits are displayed outside on the museums terrace on the western side. The unconscious programme of the Pompidou Centre's designers, if the idea is accepted, is that there is a link between the architectural structuring of activities and the social structure of their respective audience. The higher up you go in the building, you encounter visitors of a higher status, according to Robert Lumky. (The Museum Time-Machine). The architecture of a museum must control the environment to enable both display and conservation. To a great extent, the museum is a space for the circulation of the public, so that the relationship of entrances, corridors, vertical and horizontal connections, ramps and so on, to the exhibited works constitutes a fundamental element of the building. Physical guidance is supplied by architectural skills creating a natural pathway leading the visitor through the exhibits in proper order.

Unfortunately, the third level exhibits, although frequently changed, convey but a



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Plate 11.

fragmentary idea of a complete museum collection. The greatest problem of the MNAM is lack of space. The fifth level can be used for accommodating the major exhibitions that are the most public aspect of its dynamism, including "Paris - New York", "Paris - Moscou", and "Paris - Berlin". This is a highly media-g geared part of the museum but less is heard about the permanent collections which are inadequately displayed due to lack of space. These collections should enjoy the space of at least two floors. This will eventually be possible, through a planned internal extension within the building, not to the detriment of other departments, but through the removal of a major part of the administrative offices to recently acquired neighbouring facilities. The lack of space for the MNAM has been a major problem and in 1986, Dominique Bozo, then curator of the permanent collection, felt forced to resign as a result.

The IRCAM is undoubtedly the department of the Pompidou Centre, that is least known to the public, despite its huge international influence. In over nearly 4,200 square yards there are seven studios, one sound chamber, a calculation centre, three laboratories, and an experimental room called a projection space whose changeable acoustics are computerized. It is meant for public concerts and recordings but particularly for research in acoustics. The IRCAM found its rightful place in being underground in the centre's architecture. A specific place, noiseless, and with few people coming through it was needed and underground was considered ideal. The idea was due to Piano and Rogers and was realized on time and according to the decided budget.

In the Pompidou Centre, another problem that is found, apart from the lack of space, is the lack of reference points available to the user. It would be very easy to wander through the centre and to remain unaware of the names of the parts you had visited, and to find it difficult to develop any form of orientation to benefit you on a subsequent visit. For example, when using the main escalator on the facade of the centre, each floor appears exactly the same - there are no indications or markers to

distinguish different floors or activities. A problem is often found with the topography of the centre. It is difficult to determine how many floors the building has. This is due to all of the mezzanines, basements and sunken-areas that are in the centre.

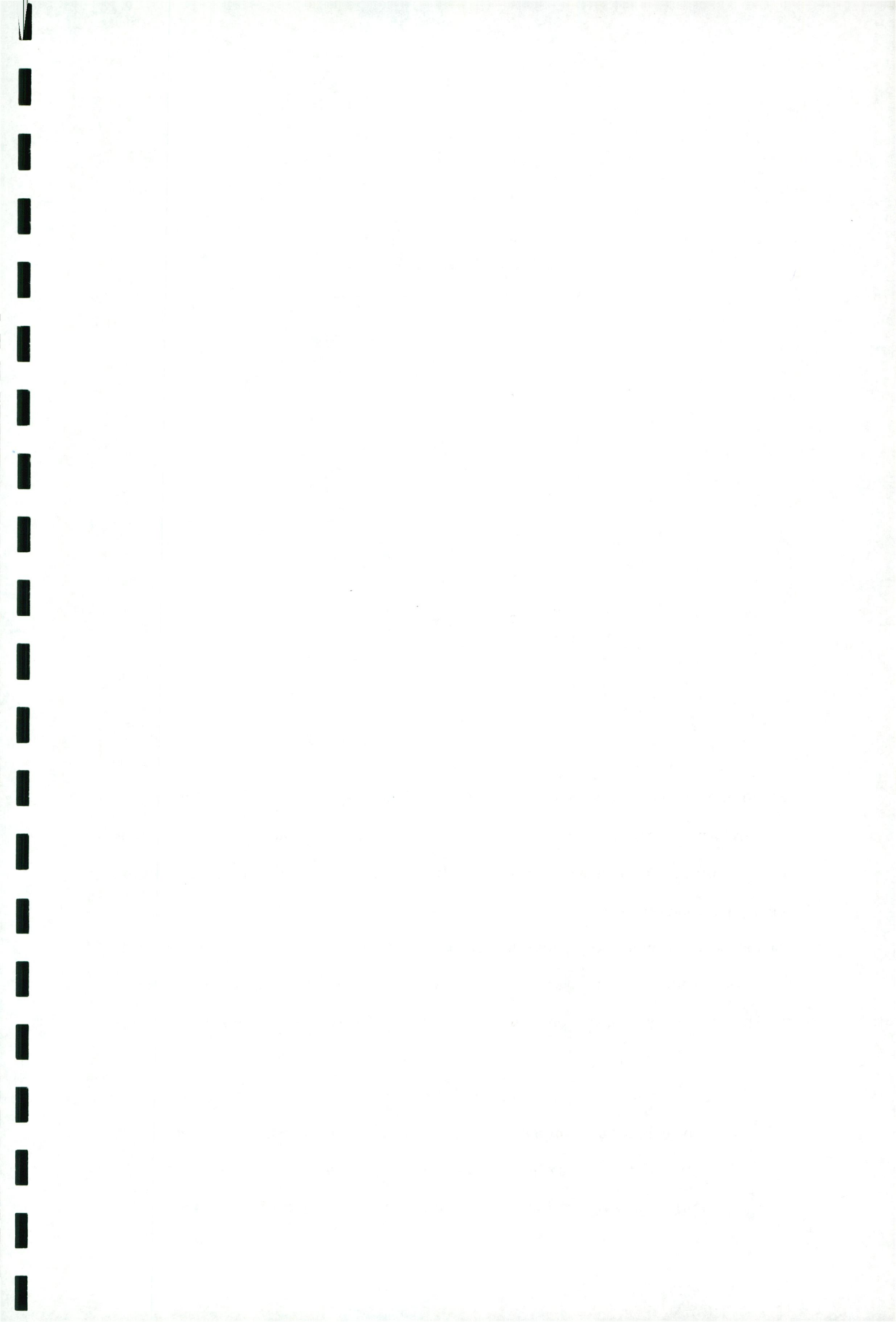
This problem leads to others when it comes to naming and signposting the different parts of the building. It has been necessary to give names to around fifty areas in the building and to do so in such a way that the name does not obscure the nature of the place for the user. Difficulties arose when doing so and name changes have had to be made since its opening. For example, what was originally called the fifth floor temporary exhibition area has been renamed the Great Gallery. Strange initials such as BPI, CCI, IRCAM and MNAM can lead to further confusion among visitors and are only known to those who work in the centre. Such confusion, added to the confusion of having so many activities in one building, lead to the possibility of the visitor finding him / herself lost in the centre - lost in this sense meaning both physically and mentally. This is due to the lack of reference points and the ambiguities of the various names of parts of the centre. There are also ambiguities relating to the function of different activities, in particular, as regards to whether they are temporary or permanent. The centre becomes a place in which you feel both forced to circulate but are yet deprived of orientation. It is a public space which is divided up into individual units, which you are free to wander through without really being able to master its organization since there are no markets to enable you to orientate yourself. The outward appearance of freedom in the centre is less likely to give rise to aimless wandering, which itself maybe transformed into anxiety. We live in a society which needs direction and organization, in such establishments, to feel entirely comfortable and at ease.

According to Jorge Guisberg, (Cool Museums and Hot Museums), in the case of the Pompidou Centre:

"Which is a paradigm of the most up-to-date in buildings

concerned with communication and information. We find that there is no differentiation of functions. Instead, the museum has been designed on the basis that the cultural approach of the spectator does not recognize water-tight compartments".

Museums of this kind provoke a schizophrenic reaction in the public who try to emphasize at a sensitive level everything which can be touched in an attitude bordering on amusement. This museum, housed in a building, almost one million cubic metres, is presented as a potential museum, and not as a piece of consumer architecture executed solely for passive audience reception. The conception of a museum as a large piece of machinery implies that it is viewed as a process - the user is "processed" as they visit each activity and are then mechanically churned out of the centre.



CONCLUSION

In my opinion, the architecture of the centre only serves to reinforce the aims of the centre. Its appearance, with its ducts, pipes and tubes, along with the use of bright, flat colouring, enforces the idea that it is a machine - a cultural machine and an integral mechanism in the communication of art and culture in the city of Paris. As for the controversy concerning its architecture and the element of its being incongruous with the area of Beaubourg, I feel that, like the market of Les Halles, which too was originally rejected because of its appearance, the Pompidou Centre will come to be accepted and appreciated for the cultural and tourist attraction which it has become.

I think that the exterior design of the centre has proved much more successful than its interior design, due to the lack of reference points available and the inability of the centre to allow its users to orientate themselves. Although this is a major problem, I feel that the architecture acts to attract an audience and once inside the building, if even at least one of the activities are availed of, then the centre has, at worst, introduced the user to the concepts of the centre or, at best, aroused an interest in art and culture which is strong enough to encourage the user to return to the centre. The housing of so many activities under one roof acts both to confuse and intrigue. It is confusing for the unfamiliar and intriguing for those who desire to become more aware of all aspects of art and culture.

It is a shame that the MNAM's collection should suffer due to the lack of space, especially when one of the practical reasons that the services and functions of the building were placed on the outside, was to leave the interior of the centre free from all constraints thus providing large areas of free space in which all of the departments would evolve. Although this is a problem, it does result in the advantage of the museum having an everchanging exhibition which one can visit again and again, and be presented with different masterpieces each time - this is because a large proportion

of the collection is kept in storage for some time and then displayed in different hangings. This acts to keep the museum's audience interested and returning to the displays. However, this problem of a lack of space has been recognized and is being dealt with. The fact that the fifth floor gallery is the most media-g geared part of the centre, which houses major popular exhibitions, is situated on the top floor of the centre, is advantageous, as to reach this popular exhibition area, the user is carried through the whole building thus being exposed to the other activities it offers.

Although the architecture is often criticized and wasn't widely accepted in Paris, I feel that the design does render cultural centres and museums less intimidating than if it were housed in a classical, more congruent building - as a result of its High Tech influences, the centre appeals to a wider audience and would therefore attract a more diversified public. Controversy, in this case, as in many others, may not be a bad thing as any publicity is better than none.

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