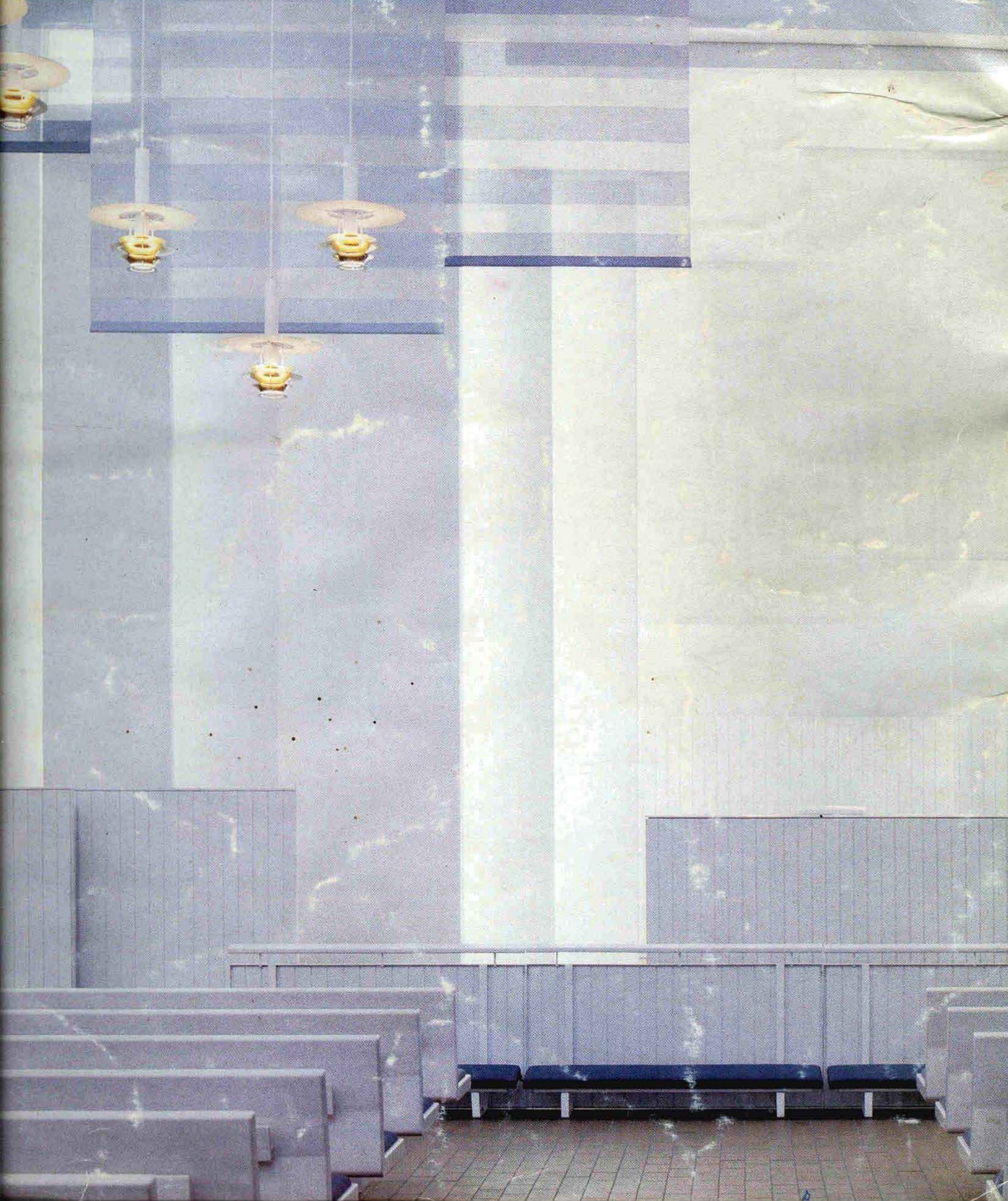
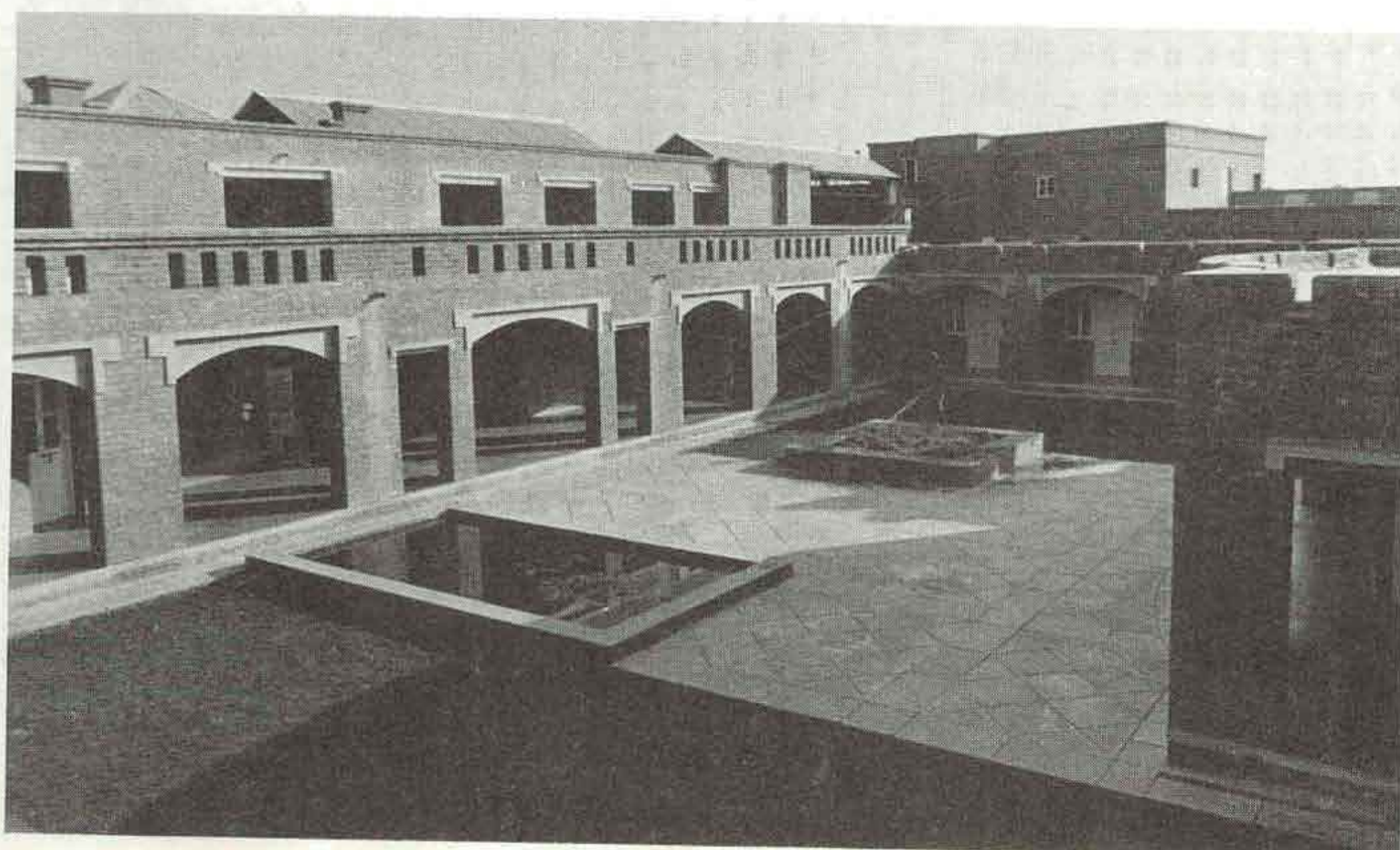


ARCHITECTURE

Incorporating Architectural Technology September 1989 Twelve Dollars





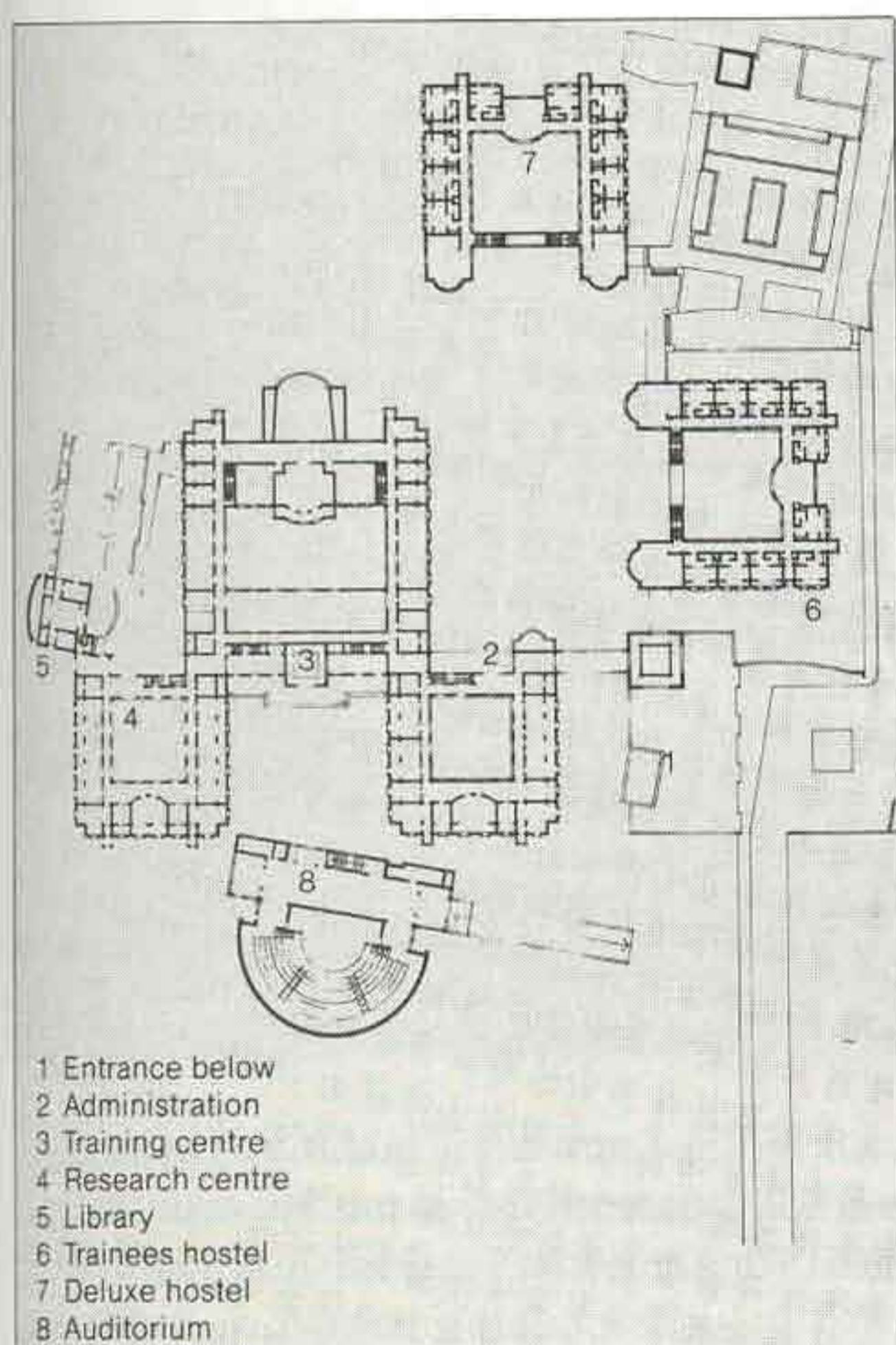
'Significant for Its Vernacular Sensitivity And Its Simplicity'

Bimal Patel's Entrepreneurship Development Institute at Ahmedabad is a campus significant for its vernacular sensitivity and its simplicity. The buildings use unadorned brick walls, flat concrete roofs, and corrugated galvanized steel roofs, materials associated with low-cost squatter settlements or simple vernacular houses. But the architect handled his materials with panache. Flush pointed, exposed brickwork has corbeled bands; corrugated, galvanized iron sheet roofs of varied heights have decorative wooden eave trimmings; simple doors and windows are painted white; interior floors are polished kotah stone; exterior open areas are a combination of kotah stone, plain cement flooring, and grass.

Starting with a featureless site, Patel created a sequence of spaces linked by courtyards and corridors. The complex consists of five veranda-type buildings—three for academic facilities, two for dormitories—whose rooms edge an open courtyard. In addition there are separate buildings housing the library, dining hall, and a still-unbuilt cafeteria. All the buildings are tied together by two axial spines that are at right angles to each other and converge on the entry pavilion, which is across an open forecourt from the car park.

In its symmetry and its use of brick, concrete, and bright green, pyramidal, corrugated iron roofing, the entry pavilion summarizes the design elements shaping the complex as a whole. From this entry

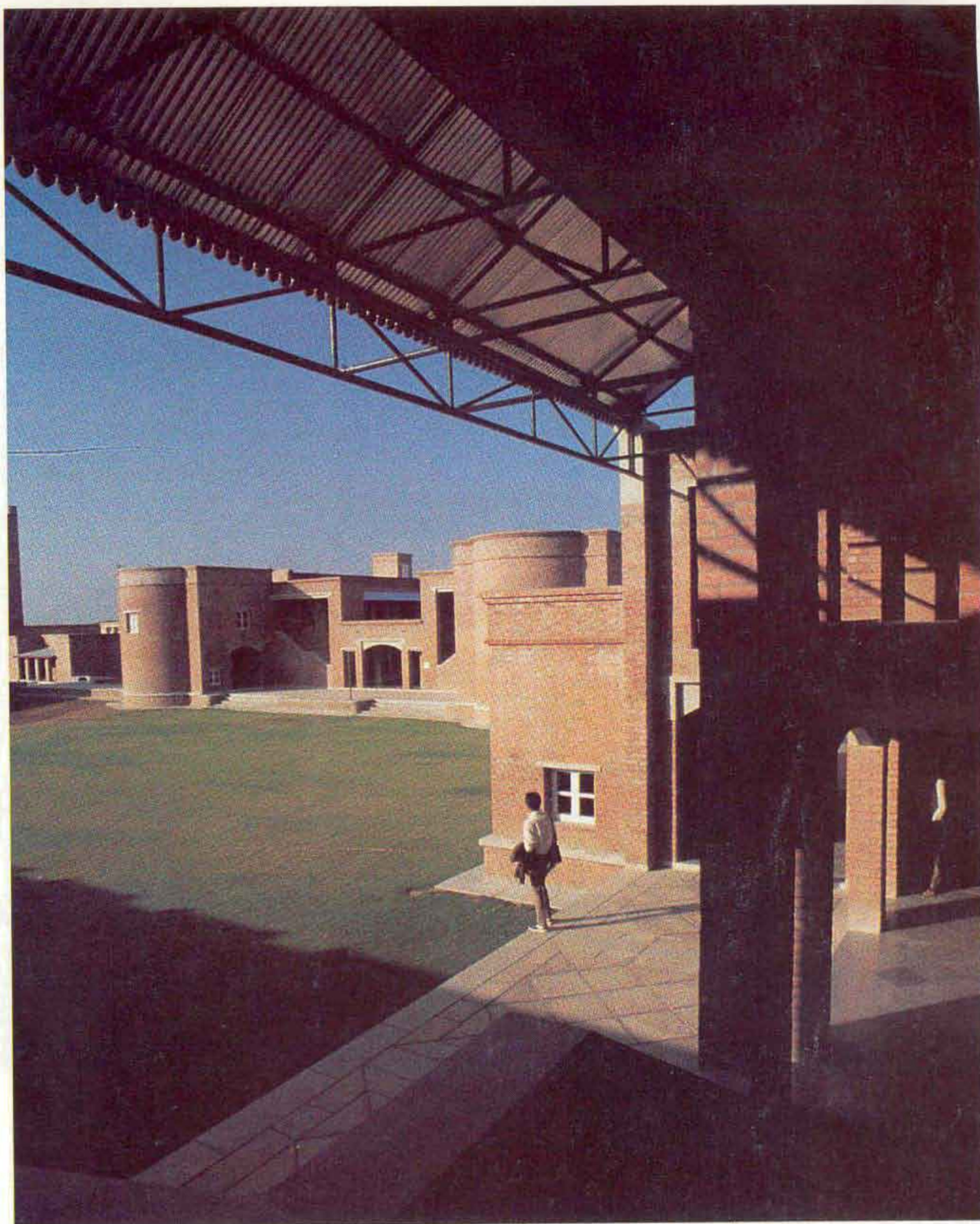
Facing page: top, the entry pavilion, upon which converge two axial spines connecting all the buildings; center, covered axial corridor leading from entry pavilion to academic complex; and bottom, the veranda-type buildings open onto arcaded courtyards. At right, roofs of covered passages are trimmed with decorative wooden fringes on eaves.



a covered, axial corridor leads to the academic complex, whose cellular spaces are divided into a large area and a small one—the larger for meeting or teaching space, the smaller for study or contemplation. The spaces also are articulated by careful modulation of natural light to exclude harsh sunlight and to make a graduated transition from exterior to interior.

The connecting corridor itself is an exciting space, expanding both sideways and upward. There are at intervals wide staircases leading to an upper level where more academic facilities will be built. Endowing the corridor with visual interest and variety are natural light from above and below, alternating flat and arched lintels spanning openings to adjoining courtyards, and a combination of flat and steel-framed sloping roofs of varied heights.

Although the complex is unfinished—the



auditorium is not yet built and many of the administration, research, and training spaces remain to be added at second-floor level—it has a look of completion about it, mostly because the main corridor, with its staircases and double-story spaces, is finished.

From the entry pavilion, a partly covered corridor leads, at right angles to the central academic spine, to the dormitories and dining hall. The two-story dormitories are on axis with the pathway while the dining hall leans away, its asymmetry emphasized by the brick water tower at the end of the pathway. Curved corner elements define the entrance to the dormitory courtyard while a similar curved wall delineates a lounge projecting into the courtyard space. Lean-to roofs, sheltering the upper-level corridors on two sides of the court, are trimmed with dec-

orative wooden fringes along the eaves—an element found in many local buildings in Ahmedabad.

The one flaw in the scheme is that the somewhat disjointed and random disposition of the various blocks excluded the library, dining hall, dormitories, and unbuilt auditorium from being aligned along the covered corridor. Access, therefore, necessitates crossing unsheltered, open space, often in inclement weather. The passage between the dining hall and dormitories also is uncovered. In the main, however, there is a strong sense of harmony and unity in this complex of buildings, a significant achievement considering this was the architect's first major building commission. —RANJIT SABIKHI

Mr. Sabikhi is a New Delhi architect and critic.