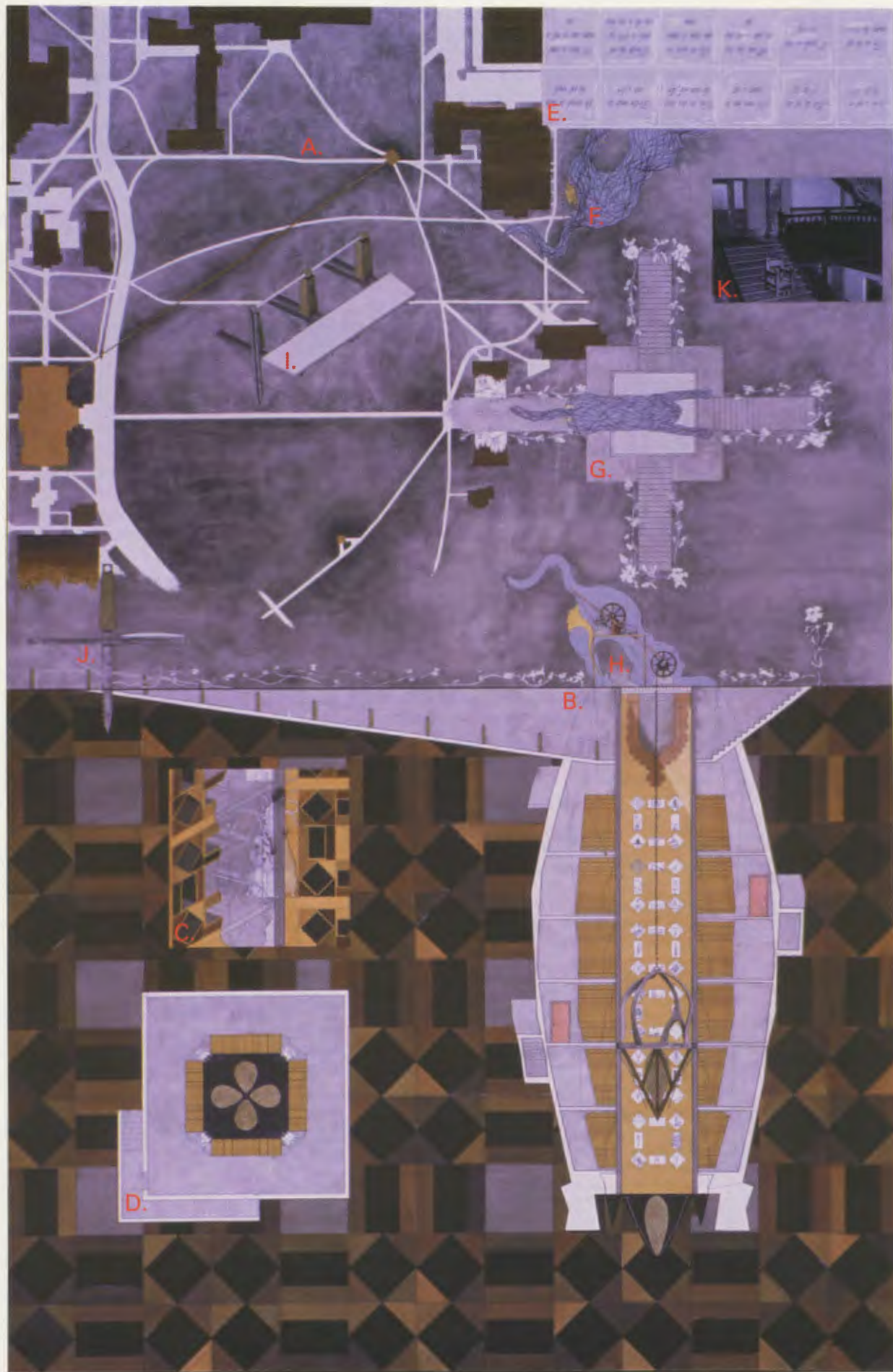


# Continuing Creativity...

By Daryn Edwards



This was a proposal for an advanced graduate architectural studio concerned with the design of a building which would investigate the relationship between a word and its image, specifically in relation to the controversy surrounding Catt Hall. The studio utilized the heuristic CATTt (Contrast, Analogy, Target, Theory, tale), from the proposals of Gregory Ulmer on anti-method, to design a building for the site of Catt Hall.

The September 29th Movement has requested the naming process of Catt Hall to be reopened to recognize the multiple voices which were excluded in the original naming process of this building. The hall was named in remembrance of an Iowa State alumna, Carrie Chapman Catt. Catt was a leader of the women's suffrage movement which affected the passing of the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. The September 29th Movement, which consists of students, faculty and staff, does not oppose the importance of this amendment but questions the political expediency of Carrie Chapman Catt's political methods, which included statements of racism, classism and xenophobia.

Catt Hall is seen by the members of the September 29th Movement as a symbol of the university's hypocritical attitude in its "commitment toward diversity." The origin of this project is manifested in the recognition of the importance of such symbols.

The top, gray proposal board represents what would be built above ground and the lower, brown and black board what is to be built below ground.

**A.** Site plan of the central campus with the proposed site of the CATTt House, Beardshear Hall and the Campanile emphasized in maize. A French peasant legend holds if you tie a black cat to a spot where five roads meet and then let it loose, it will lead you to buried treasure. The proposed CATTt House is at such an intersection.

**B.** The design proposal of this CATTt House began by inverting the Campanile so the solid mass of the structure became a void—an elevator shaft—to produce a catacomb. The elevator itself is an enlarged bradle—a medieval device for the discipline of women who chatter, which is the occupiable space of the elevator supported by a catafalque constructed of leopard wood. Attached to the bottom of this catafalque are cymbals which refer to the inverted symbol that is the Campanile: the CATTt House.

The elevator operates within the walls of a purdah. The purdah is a quilt-like wall that uses one of techniques of quilting—narrative construction—to

suggest new relations between objects. The objects that occupy these spaces are related to cats in some manner, e.g. Sylvester the Cat on a television, which utilizes a cathode tube, next to a caged catbird which is above a bottle of cat-sup. The pattern of the quilt is a nine square pattern called kitty corner.

There are passageways through these pattern pieces on each floor which lead to a more traditional catalog space behind the purdah. Here, significant documents of the university and its alumni, such as Catt's speeches, can be accessed by the public. The walls of these catalog rooms are constructed of tabby concrete, a concrete which utilizes oyster shells as an aggregate.

**C.** Carrie-atid—A caryatid, in classical Greek architecture, is a column representing a bound woman supporting an entablature. The Greeks symbolically punished the women of Caryae for exchanging their bodies for their lives when their enemies, the Persians, took control of the city. The Carrie-atid acts as a column to support the weight of the floor above as well as to hold the beams which support the elevator. The Carrie-atid is also a pole cat. The wire cage poles of the pole cat extends through the dress of Catt to help support the purdah, doubling the bustle as a much-needed polling station where students can cast votes.

**D.** Typical Floor Plan—At the kitty corners of the elevator shaft are the Carrie-atids.

**E.** The Feline Plaza—A glass block floor/ceiling in which are carved aphorisms concerning cats, such as: It's enough to make the cat speak, to live under the cat's foot, the cat shuts its eyes when it steals cream....

**F.** Elevation of the Triumphal Cat Arch—The "furry" black lines represent the reinforcing steel bars emerging from the catacomb's concrete structure. Instead of being cut off just below the surface, the rebar is allowed to break this datum line and create the framework of the triumphal cat arch. Inside this frame are anodized aluminum scales fashioned after the scales of a catfish.

**G.** The four entrances to the catacombs are marked by cast iron railings in the shapes of cat briers, cathedral bells, catmint, etc.

**H.** Section of the Triumphal Cat Arch—The interior of the cat is the Room for the Machinist Jerk, anagrammatically correct, of course. This room contains a treadmill which powers the elevator to move between floors in the catacombs. It is the task of the Machinist Jerk to operate the tread-

mill, a Sysiphean act. Within the cathead is a Catherine Wheel which rolls the catfall.

On the exterior of the Triumphal Cat Arch at the base of its paw is a podium that has two parts, a mouthpiece and a letter box. Both are vehicles for students to voice their concerns to the administration in Beardshear Hall, a metaphorical catapult if you will. The mouthpiece is connected to an anal trumpet (both, scat—a style of jazz singing which the voice mimics an instrument; and scatology—the study of feces or obscenity or obsession with the obscene, esp. with excrement or excretion, in literature), directed toward Beardshear Hall. The letter box is the entry point of a catheter (pneumatic tube) which delivers correspondence to Beardshear Hall.

**I.** Orthographic section of the Catwalk—This elevated walkway connects the CATTt House to Beardshear Hall. It is important that such a walkway be elevated to lift the participant above university ground, if only metaphorically, as a place of free speech. The round handrail is the catheter which connects the letter box from the CATTt House to the litter box in Beardshear. The brass-colored hull of the catwalk is a bell, as in to bell a cat. These bells are struck as the elevator in the catacomb traverses the space marking a different kind of time than that marked by the Campanile.

**J.** Section of the Catwalk—The form of the catwalk is derived from the section of a catnip stem, which is square with a round hole in it. The catwalk is cantilevered and supported by a cat's cradle. The walking surface of the catwalk is fashioned after the cat's paw and the foundation mimics a cat's barbed penis.

**K.** The Litter Box—Beardshear Hall becomes a litter box, a depository for students' letters sent from the CATTt House. The letters, transported via the catheter, enter the stairwell in Beardshear Hall through the lion's head. The letters are then collected in a litter box, understood both as a chair which is carried by two rails as well as a box to collect what some would consider excrement. The chair is a cucking stool—a medieval disciplinary device used to reprimand men who chattered. The litter box marks the spot where the speakers of the September 29th Movement's "unauthorized" town hall meeting spoke from—incidentally, in front of the Office of the President. ■