

Architectural Pedagogy in the Age of Simulation

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I often like to tell my students that architects do not build buildings, but rather, they make drawings and models from which buildings are built. This subtle distinction is important. It is this inevitable gap or distance between the architect and his or her product which must be understood if we are to make authentic and grounded work. I believe that this "distance" is in part created by our over-reliance on mimicking the process of professional practice as a means of teaching architecture in our schools. In this context, the student's actual product is considered secondary and the anticipated or deferred reality (the projected commission/building) becomes the reference and criteria for design decisions and evaluating the success of the project.

I have tended, in my pedagogy, to emphasize a more phenomenological, un-mediated and empirical approach. A pedagogy which

ultimately believes that architecture is "situational" and composed of social, cultural, political, economic and material constituents. This approach also stresses process, materiality and construction.

"Truck Excavation," was executed on the occasion of the 1992 ACSA/AIA Teachers' Conference at Cranbrook Academy of Art. The conference was dedicated to discussions about design studio pedagogy and this project was one of eight experimental studios conducted at the conference.

After a single parking space in this parking lot was excavated 8 feet deep, an inverted van was carefully lowered into the hole. Concrete was then poured around and under the van and allowed to set. All of this occurred prior to the conference. During the two days of the conference, our group worked to disassemble and remove the van to reveal the concrete cast.

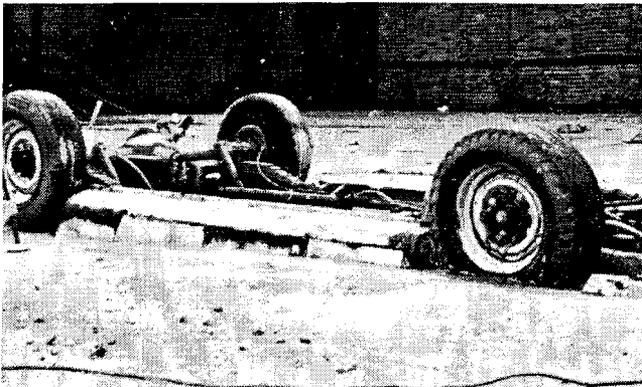


Fig. 1. Truck lowered into excavated parking space.

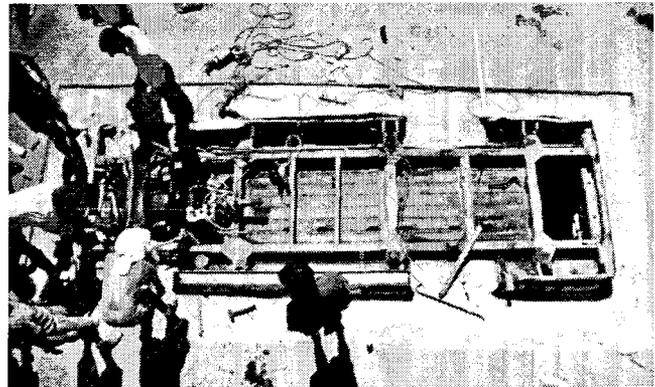


Fig. 3. Truck disassembled and removed.

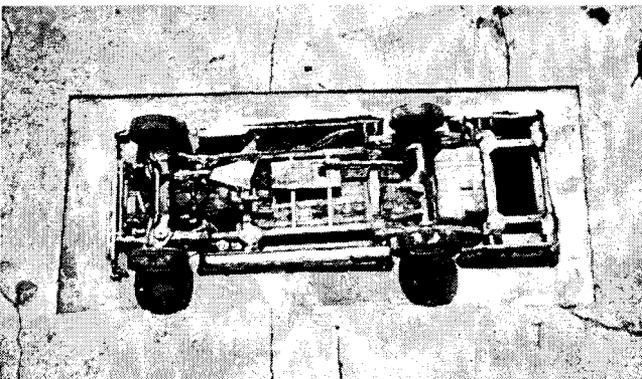


Fig. 2. Concrete poured around and under truck

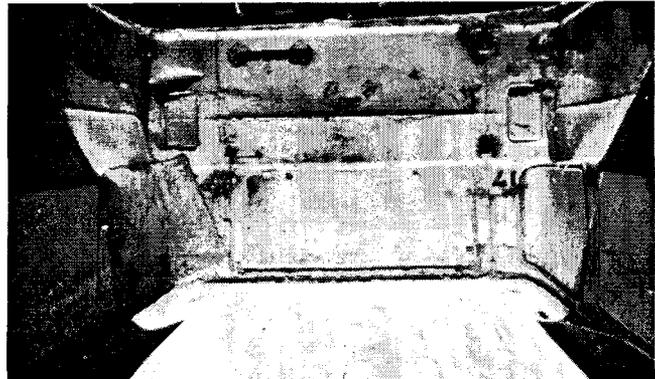


Fig. 4. Concrete cast



Fig. 5. Truck Excavation, Bloomfield Hills, 1992