

The Draughtsman and the Delineator: Drawing the duties and freedoms of the United Nations in New York

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I. Koolhaas, R. (1994). *Delirious New York*.
New York: Monacelli Press, 281.

The Draughtsman and the Delineator investigates the semantic relationships between drawn renderings through a critical glance towards the United Nations building in New York. These drawings provide an argument for semantic association through a series of drawn journeys, each echoing Hugh Ferriss' original illustrations of the United Nations building as a body of skyscraper islands hidden within the "gloom of his perpetual American night".¹ The drawings presented here are, on the one hand, propositional pieces (skyscraper, monument or insertion into a desk (Fig. 2)), but they also constitute a process of mapping. This mapping seeks to reveal the ideological context of a bureaucratic institution, a drawn process revealing dialogue, debate and *resolution*, just as Ferriss' renderings reflected the grand visions of the developers who commissioned them.

This begins by using diminutive sketches to examine and develop a conceptual framework for the production of larger, detailed drawings. It is a process of thinking through drawing whereby the sketchbook becomes a palimpsest of prototypes and key moments for later resolution. The process of allowing the solvent-based ink to bleed through the page and onto the next leaf starts to create new contexts on which to anchor the next drawing. Patches of tone become part of a new drawing linked materially to that which came before it, allowing my architectural thinking to be serialised through the pages of the sketchbook (Fig. 1).

The first drawings were constructed using base tones of 10-30% neutral gray marker pen to create a tonal composition. This was then built up through ink work using Pilot Hi-Tec 0.25 gel pens and further tonal work added using darker shades of neutral gray. Using either Safmat film or printed paper collage I introduced context views or pictorial materiality of the United Nations into the drawings and continued to work over this. Representing the context of legislation and bureaucracy, one may interrogate the drawn matter through its minutiae or as an opaque block of "material" (Figs. 2 and 3).

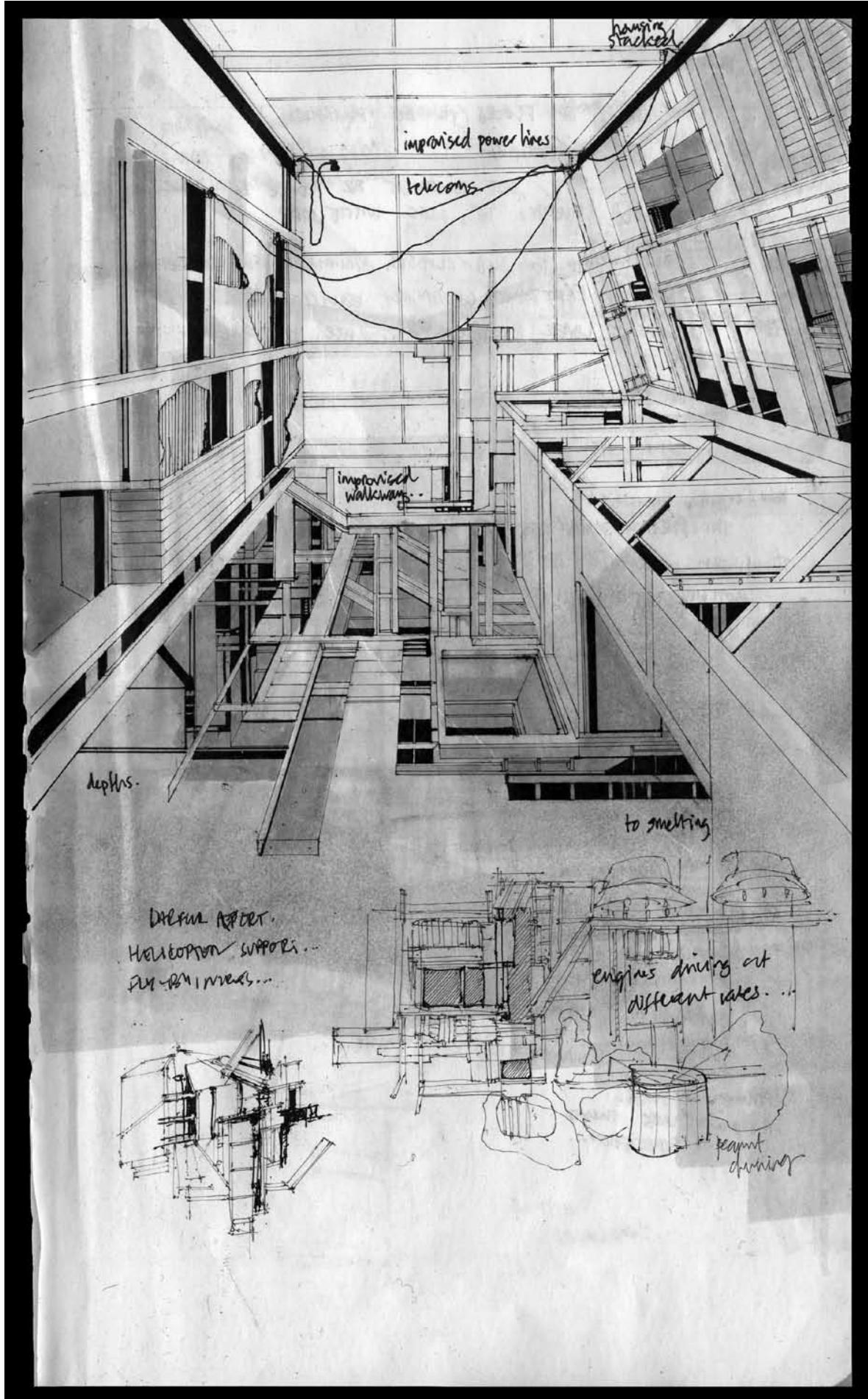


Fig. 1 Sketchbook study for a United Nations Freeport. Pen and marker on paper.

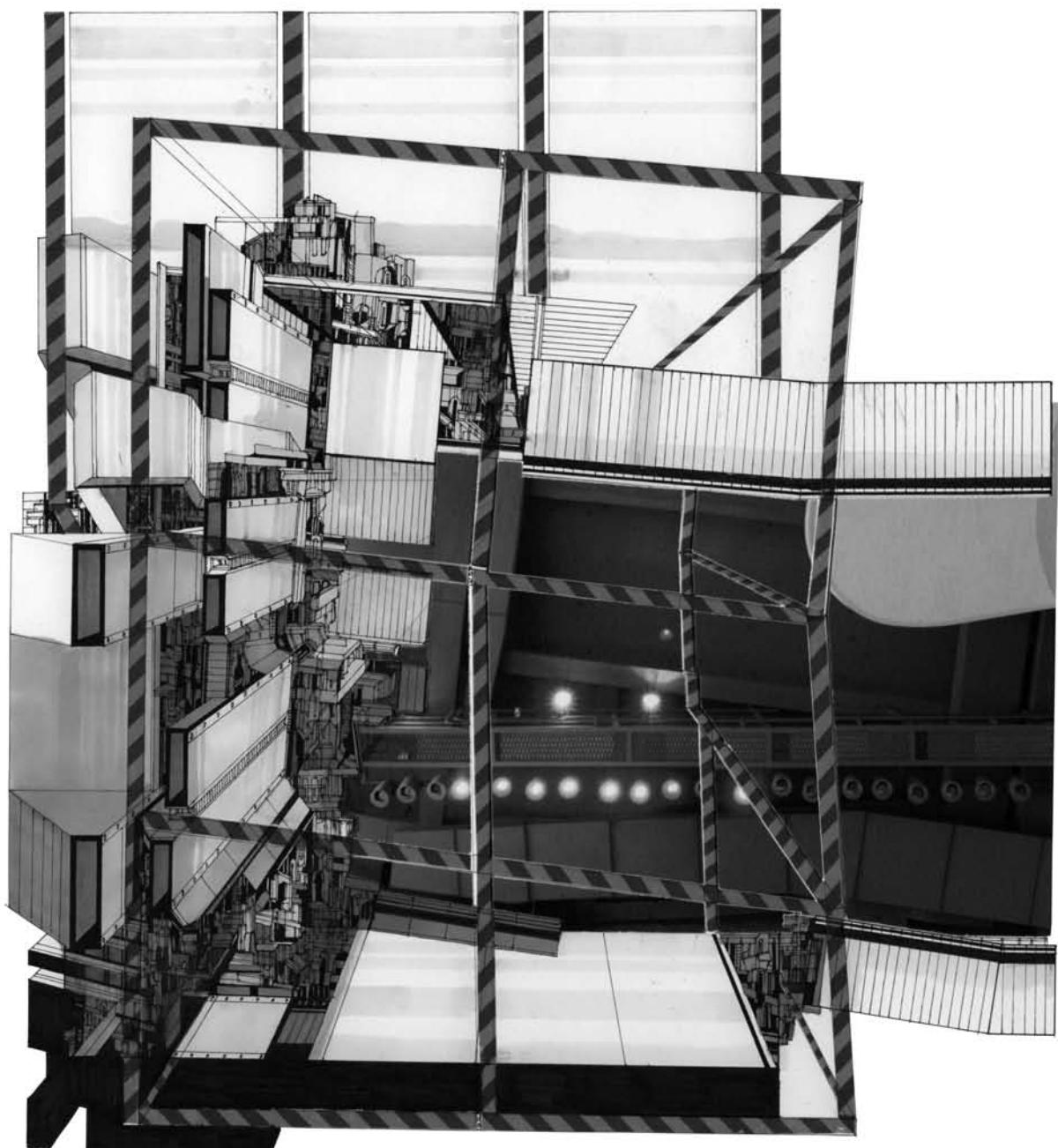


Fig. 2 Monument to Asbestos Removal (under the United Nations Capital Masterplan) for the U. N. Building visitors lobby. Pen, marker and collage on paper.

*Fig. 3 United Nations Headquarters Delineated.
Pen, marker and collage on paper.*



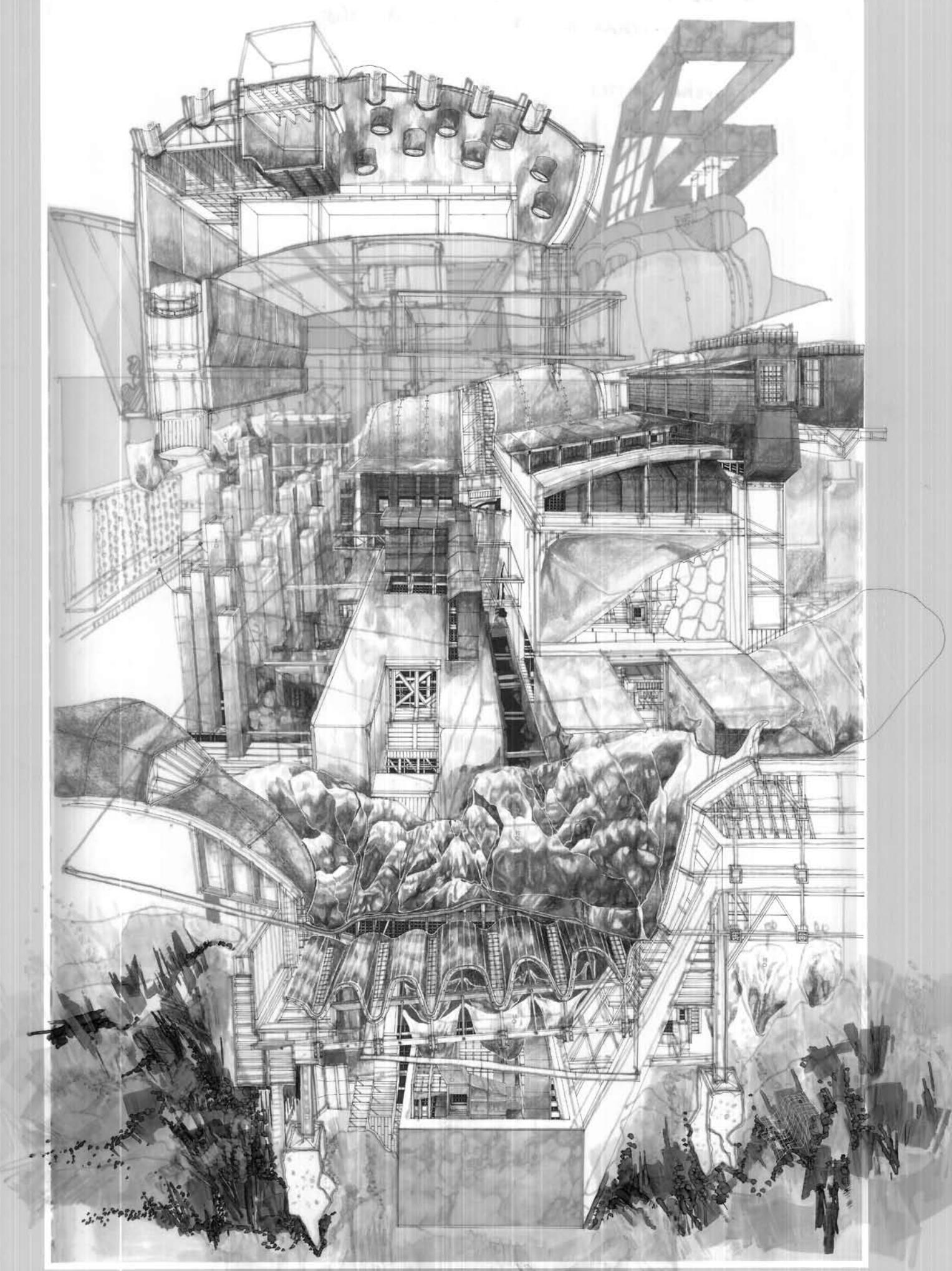


Fig. 4: United Nations Freeport. Pen, coloured pencil, and marker on polyester film mounted over enlargement of sketchbook drawing.

The second series of drawings for the U. N. “Freeport” were produced through enlargements of sketchbook drawings. These were overlaid with drafting film and rendered using colouring pencils and ink. Further textural investigations of these drawings included the use of Copic Wide markers on polyester film to develop a watercolour-like surface effect which was then manipulated for some minutes before drying. Working onto these enlargements signifies a process of *resolution* through a drawn conversation (Fig. 4).

In its ‘final’ iteration the U. N. building emerges as an attempt at an *authentic* expression of an institution struggling to emerge from the violent history that created it (Fig. 3). The last stage of imagery infuses the renderings with the collective *mural space* and with economic grading systems (by which nations are comparatively judged) – directing the U. N. complex toward a counterpoint “Freeport” where nations gain an economic foothold and tap into New York’s *voltage at the crossroads*² (Fig. 4).

2. Le Corbusier in G. A. Dudley (1994). *A Workshop for Peace. Designing the United Nations Headquarters*. Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 21.