



Far from being obvious and derivative, the clothes testify to the now seemingly pervasive influence of Chandigarh, which prompts various questions. Has Chandigarh come into its own? Can it be thought of and referenced beyond the illustrative? Can it be simply evoked, enacted and embodied? There are direct responses as well as those that are oblique and saturated with emotion and memory. Cultural cartographies and genealogies of experience reveal how generations of artists, Western and Indian, have or have not approached the city. Ideological positions have changed and evolved over time, just as Chandigarh, never the ruin it was projected as, has transformed. While *Chandigarh is in India* is an exercise in traversing Chandigarh and its surroundings, it also hopes to suggest how modernism in work and life can be regarded beyond the limits of circumscribing reasoning. Sensuous, emotive pictures are as necessary as the objective, factual and documentary surveys.<sup>54</sup> Perhaps a space generated for their shared belonging would allow for, if not a full understanding of the modernist, then at least a path towards a better appreciation of its continued magnetism. The ten artists' portfolios for *Chandigarh is in India* that punctuate the book at regular intervals, some drawn from existing works of art and others specially commissioned, are each in their specific, varying ways manifestations of this wager.

Selections from Gavin Hipkins' *Leisure Valley* exhibition (2014) and Manuel Bougot's *Chandigarh: Portrait of a City* (2010–2012) situate the book in Chandigarh, but remove us from Corbusier's Capitol Complex. As discussed earlier in this essay, Bougot's photographs are of the interiors of people's homes in Chandigarh, while Hipkins' *Leisure Valley* panels, which are photo composites rather than single images, bring together individual pictures from the city's different sectors in their final design. Hipkins' and Bougot's portfolios compel us to recognize and consider stories that have been tucked away, withheld or even forgotten in these sectors that are generally overlooked as the decades pass and Chandigarh ages.

Offered in Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster's and Cyprien Gaillard's contributions are personal itineraries and idiosyncratic taxonomies devised when visiting India. Chandigarh occurs three times in Gonzalez-Foerster's *Calendario 2020, 2007* (2010), which presents each month as a year and features images of public spaces and gardens from around the country. Gaillard's Polaroids are detailed shots of palm trees encountered while traversing the country, their leaves or stumps forming his focus, with the images for *Indian Palm Study I* (2011) taken in Delhi, Kolkata, Hampi, Goa, Mumbai and Varanasi, and for *Indian Palm Study II* (2011) solely in Chandigarh. Gonzalez-Foerster and Gaillard both structure their experiences of the Indian landscape around a specificity, and refreshingly draft Chandigarh into a wider set of coordinates that does not focus on its architecture, reminding us that Chandigarh is in India and can be related to above and beyond its urbanity.

The book intentionally moves further afield geographically from Chandigarh: Madan Mahatta's photographs are of modernist buildings in New Delhi, all designed by young architects such as JK Chowdhury, Habib Rahman, Achyut Kanvinde, Shaukat Rai, Joseph Allen Stein and Kuldip Singh, from the 1950s to the 1970s, while Pradeep Dalal's deliberation as already mentioned is on Charles Correa's Bharat Bhavan in Bhopal. With the focus of these contributions being on architectural projects completed elsewhere in India by Indian architects, Chandigarh recedes to the background. Mahatta's and Dalal's portfolios consider, in their different ways, how a generation of architects negotiated the influence of a vocabulary of modernist practice and generated buildings that interacted with Indian material living conditions, becoming emblematic of the ethos and ethics of a mid-20th-century India. Mahatta's images, taken with a Linhof camera on medium format film, are documentary testaments to a moment when architecture embodied the aspirations of a new nation. Dalal, on the other hand, having once been an architect and now an artist, adopts a more ruminative approach.

Chandigarh starts to get abstracted in Seher Shah's *Capitol Complex* (2012), in which the photographs she took in Chandigarh are reinterpreted through collage. Her collages are quite reductive, zeroing in on a particular detail or aspect, isolating elements on a white background, and erasing parts of the original photograph—almost skinning Chandigarh off some of its most iconic details to reveal a disorientating perspective of the city. Yamini Nayar further challenges perspective in her contribution composed of photographs she took in Chandigarh, an elusive personal text, and her own densely crafted abstract images. Up close and then receding, in focus and then out, in colour and in black-and-white, rips, fissures, tears, overlapping planes, Nayar's images are compelling amalgamations of various emotional and physical energies. They are vertiginous, libidinal, oscillating between clarity and complete obfuscation. They are self-knowing and denying, explicit and implicit. Both Shah and Nayar remind us that the loss of perspective when preoccupied with something that inspires, influences and impacts us is not an uncommon phenomenon. With every return to Chandigarh, either physically or in memory, it is affirmed that the thing of inspiration is alive and active, changing and complicating itself. Chandigarh, apparently, is a place that can still be visited as it has not ossified. Instead it forces us to imagine it and even believe in it differently each time.

The remaining two contributions further release Chandigarh into new networks of association. Shezad Dawood's *Cities of the Future* (2010) offers us full images as well as details of a series of his fabric-based works that used acrylic on vintage textiles, connecting symbols from Corbusier's modernist designs with forms such as the spiral and atomic structures developed in Tantra, and thereby propelling Chandigarh and Corbusier into an unexpected journey of associations that sees Indian mystical geometry pervading and informing European modernism. Having met in Chandigarh in 1997, the artist duo Thukral and Tagra were inspired by the modernist principles exercised by Corbusier in the city's architecture when planning and designing their own studio. However, by their own admission, little of Chandigarh remained when the studio was finally complete, though the city occupies so special a place for them. Their four spreads, titled '(3227)', are dense, interspersing and layering conceptual drawings for the studio with images of its actual, physical, built space, leading us from inception to execution. The number 3227 refers to the number of the house in which they have set up their studio, and the mathematical symbols tip a hat to Chandigarh as the underlying entity from which the significance of 3227 is derived.

Two scholarly essays, organized around a particular medium, complement all these contributions. Erika Balsom provides an incisive overview of the differing ways in which Chandigarh has, since its inception, been filmed and projected on screen, while Devika Singh evaluates how the city was photographed by Western and Indian photographers in the mid-20th century. Balsom and Singh also pressingly consider India's partition and its traumatic after-effects while referencing specific films and photograph series, identifying and discussing persistent tendencies and propensities in the way Chandigarh is represented on film and in photographs.

In a short film that he named *Dear Adviser* (2009), Vincent Meessen presented a suit-clad man wandering about Chandigarh's Capitol Complex while a disembodied voiceover related an "antique" fable, believed to have been a favourite of Corbusier, regarding a raven striving to imitate an eagle. The film inclines to deconstruct the mythology that Chandigarh was built by a single man. In an elliptical, meandering way, it queries the sole authority of a man, who aspires to play the multiple roles of urbanist, architect, painter, sculptor and essayist, to be addressed as "adviser". *Dear Adviser* prompts speculation about the identity of the man in the suit. Is he the ghost of one of the mostly underrated Indian architects who worked on Chandigarh? It sparks curiosity about what and who lingers in the city. The voiceover intones:

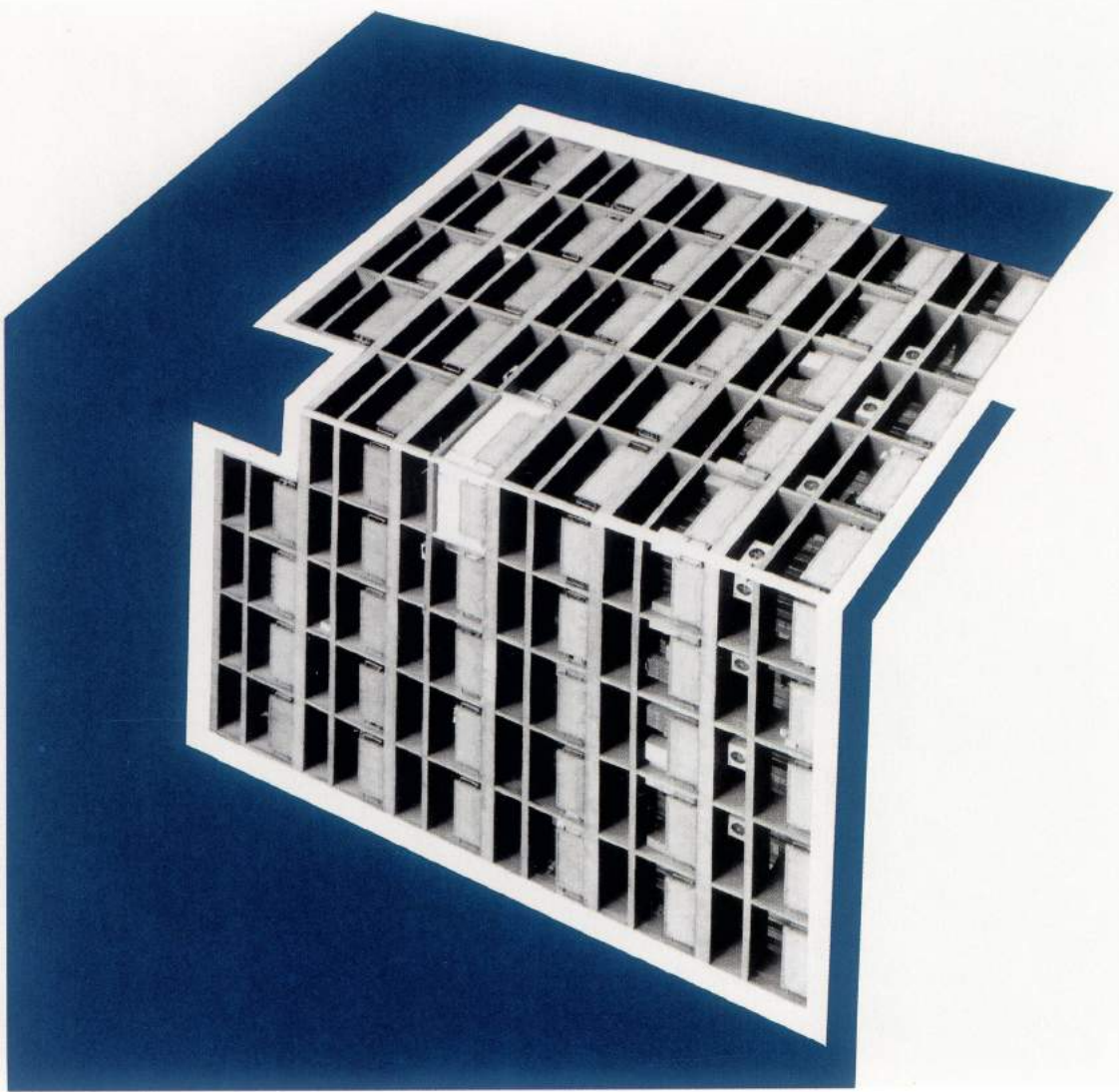
The Capitol shall be in the sun, the Capitol shall be haunted ... the living shall call, the dead shall call.

Chandigarh has a complicated history and an uncertain future, but what of its present? Is *Chandigarh is in India* and all the art surveyed in it doing anything for the city? How is it doing this? What does this book mean in the life cycle of Chandigarh as it continues to change? Will it communicate and transmit any knowledge of the city that bypasses or contradicts the mainstream narratives?

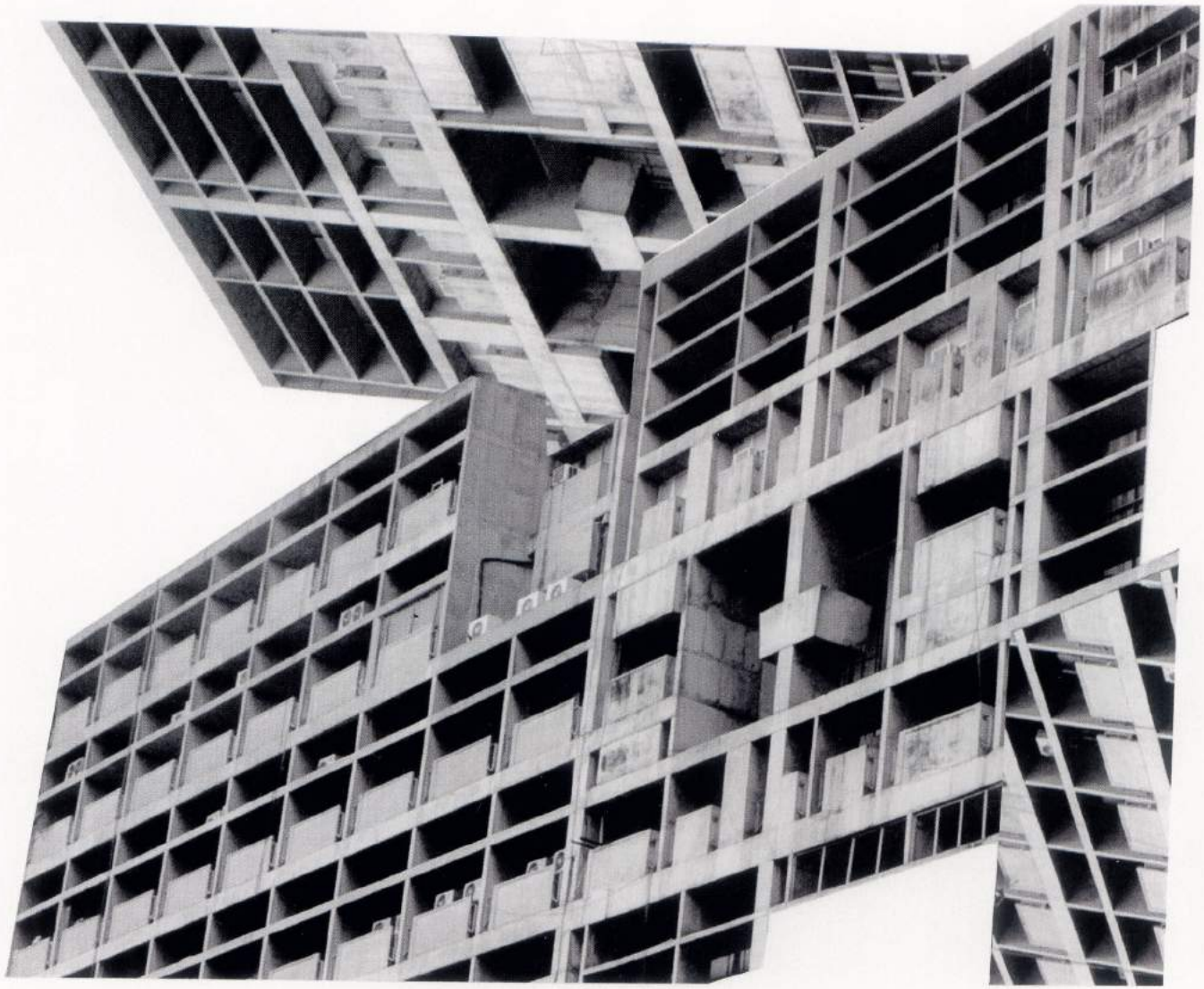
While we pause to consider an answer let us also continue to wonder and imagine what else stalks Chandigarh.

**CAPITOL  
COMPLEX  
— SEHER  
SHAH**

*Capitol Complex (Blue Object), 2012.*  
Collage on paper. 27.94 × 35.56 cm.

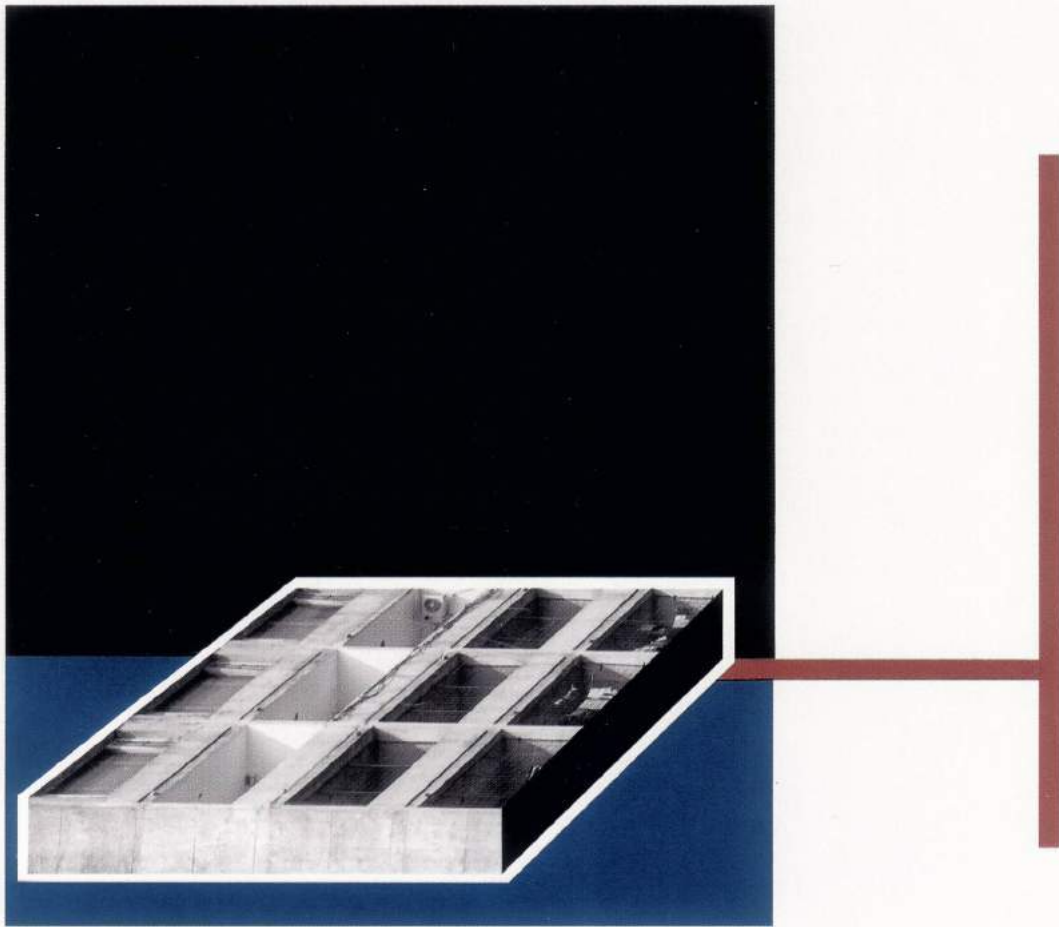


*Capitol Complex (X-Block), 2012.*  
Collage on paper. 27.94 × 35.56 cm.

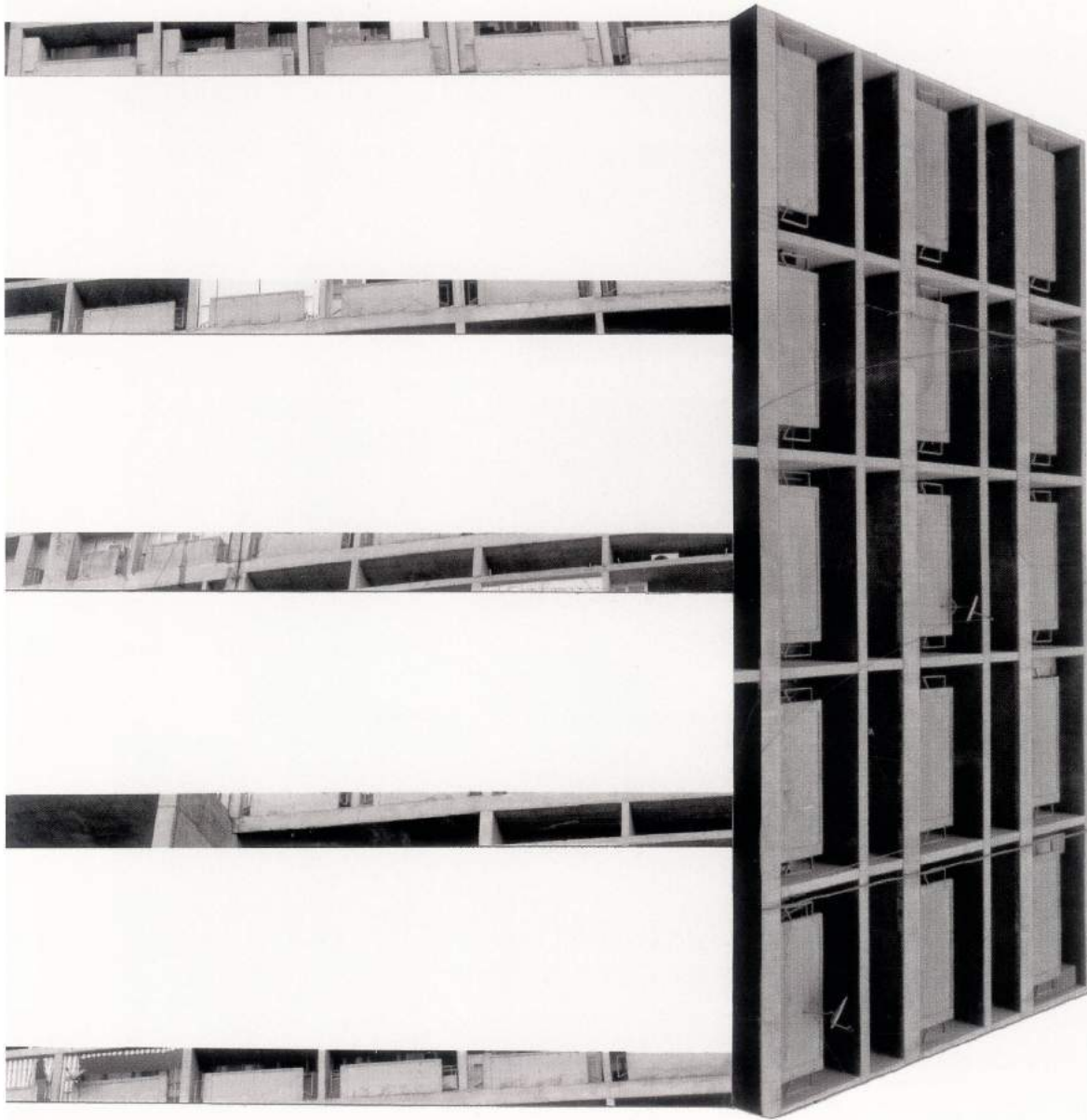




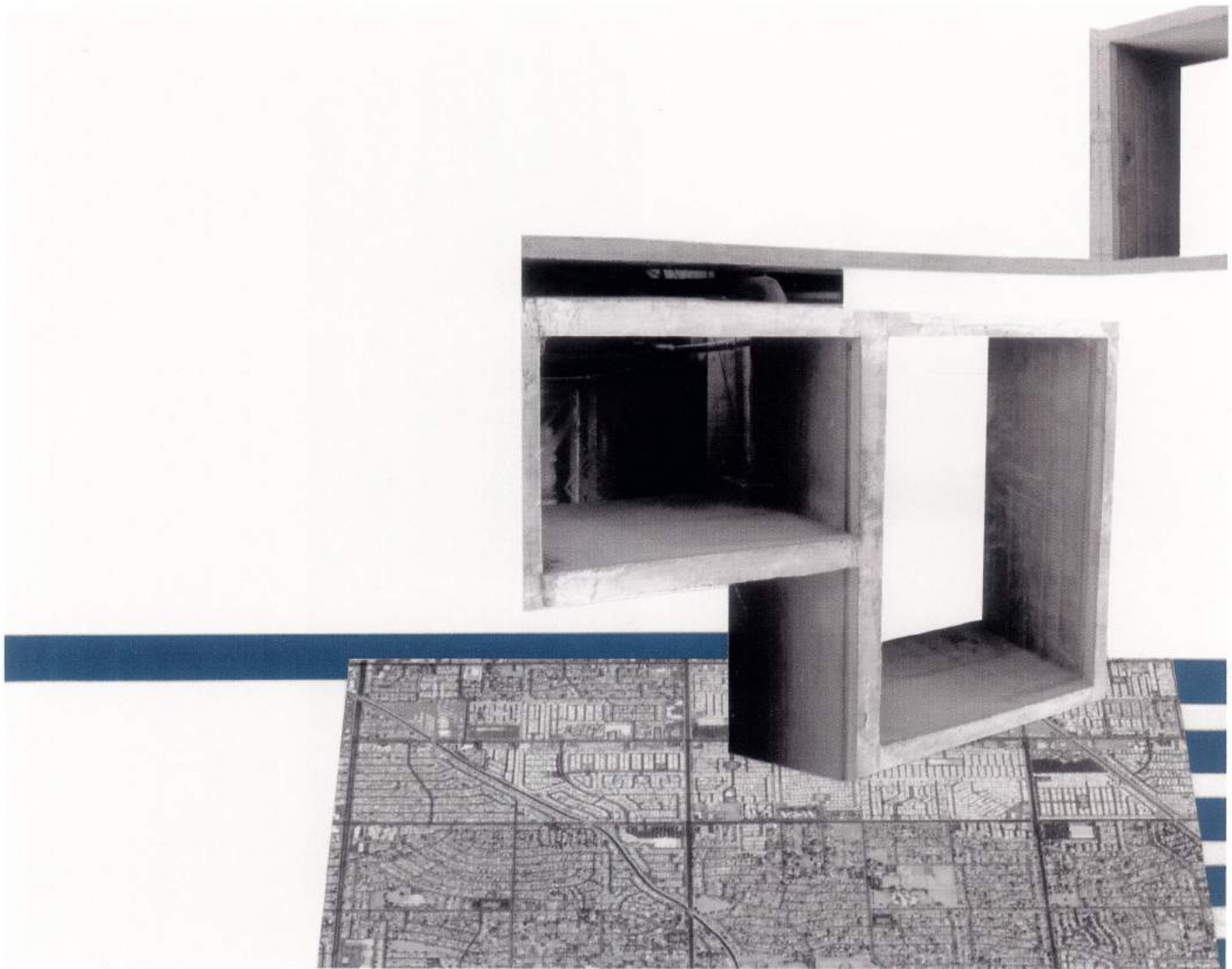
*Capitol Complex (Repetitive Blue)*, 2012.  
Collage on paper. 27.94 × 35.56 cm.



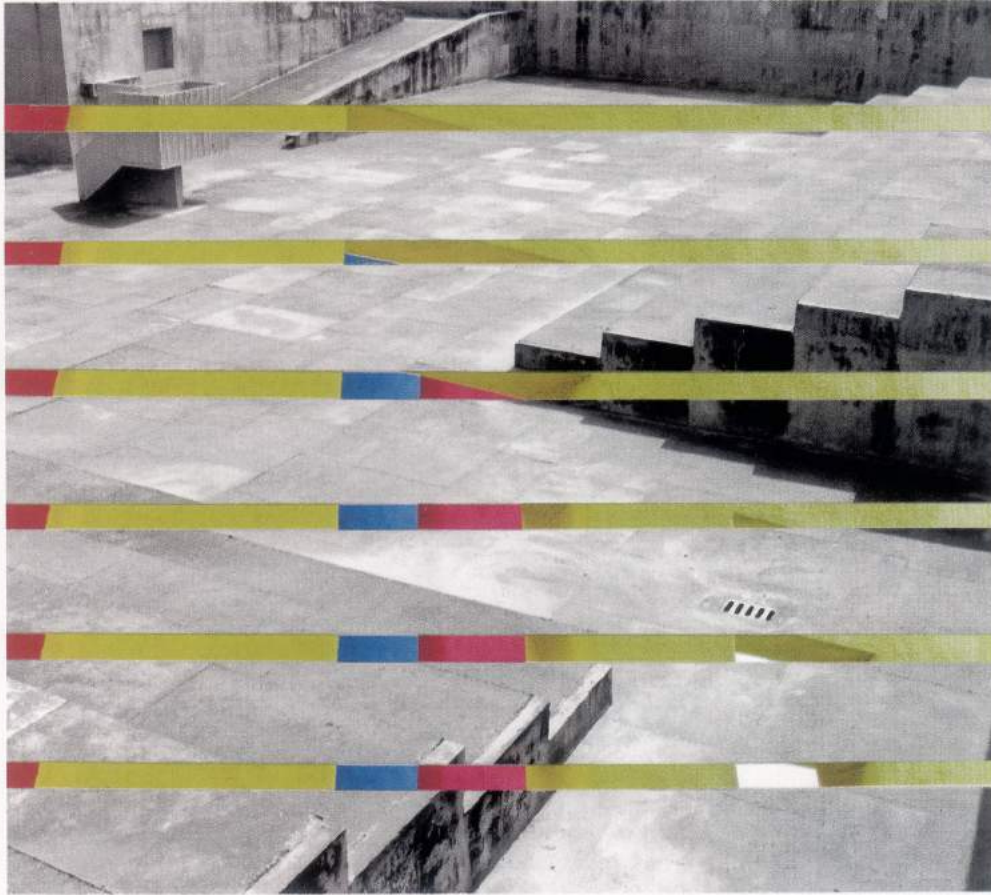
*Capitol Complex (Concrete View)*, 2012.  
Collage on paper. 27.94 × 35.56 cm.



*Capitol Complex (Concrete)*, 2012.  
Collage on paper. 27.94 × 35.56 cm.



*Capitol Complex (Yellow Courtyard), 2012.*  
Collage on paper. 27.94 × 35.56 cm.



*Capitol Complex (Secretariat), 2012.*  
Collage on paper. 27.94 × 35.56 cm.

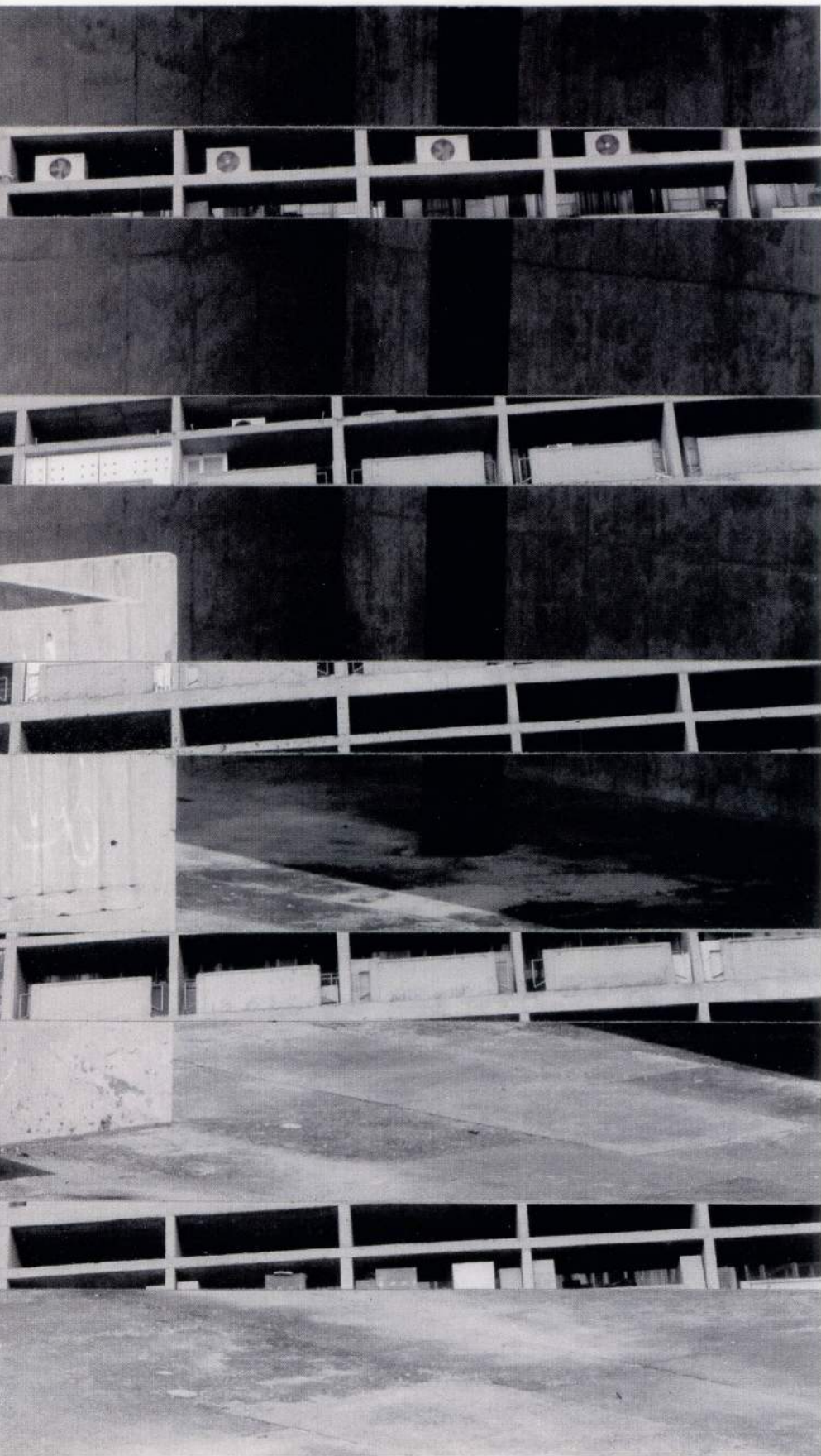


Following spread:

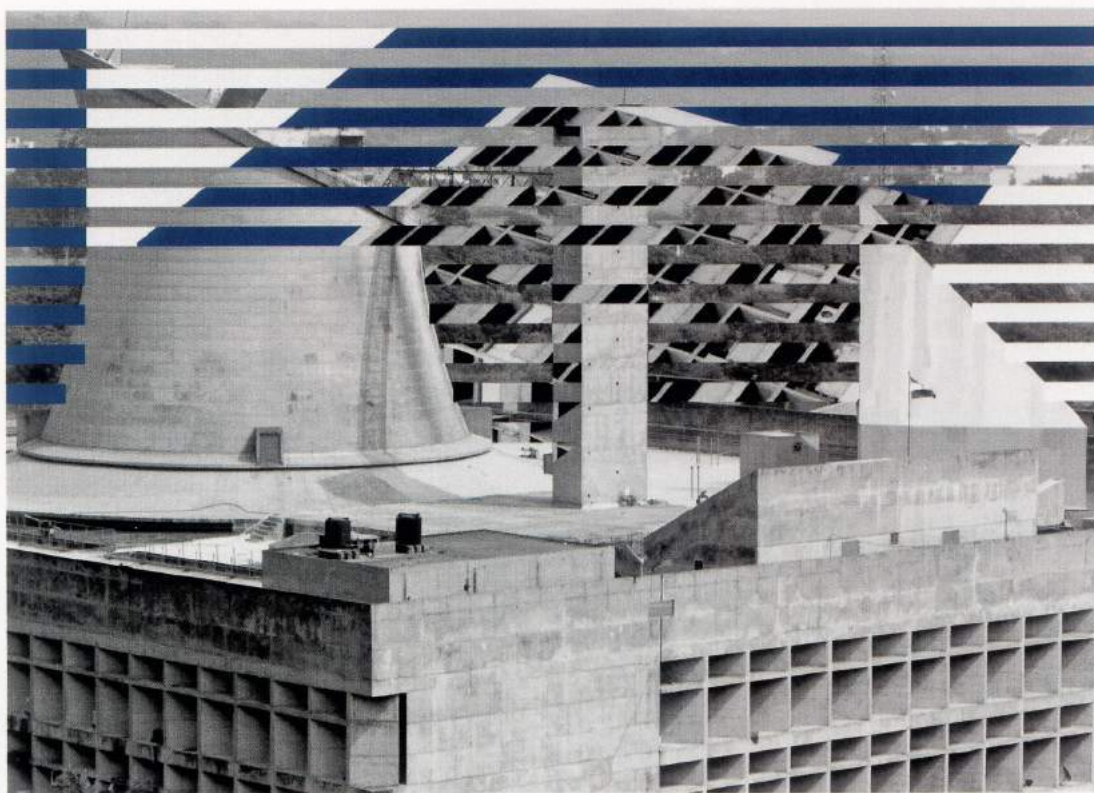
*Capitol Complex (Split Line Courtyard)*, 2012.  
Collage on paper. 27.94 × 35.56 cm.







*Capitol Complex (Blue Assembly), 2012.*  
Collage on paper. 27.94 × 35.56 cm.



*Capitol Complex (Blue Courtyard), 2012.*  
Collage on paper. 27.94 × 35.56 cm.



EDITED

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