

Progressive Architecture

J A N U A R Y 1 9 8 9

36TH ANNUAL P/A AWARDS



Astronauts Memorial

AWARD

Holt Hinshaw Pfau Jones
Architecture

Project: Astronauts Memorial, Kennedy Space Center, Merritt Island, Florida.

Site: Part of the six-acre "Spaceport USA" visitors' center at the space complex.

Program: The brief for the national, open Astronauts Memorial Competition (P/A, March 1988, p. 45) called for a structure that would be an "inspirational tribute" to the 14 astronauts who have lost their lives in space efforts. The brief also said that the memorial should "symbolize the astronauts' quest for a better understanding of the universe and their desire to improve life on earth by expanding space frontiers."

Solution: The competition-winning design consists of an exposed steel framework that supports a large plane of highly polished granite slabs. Cut through that polished surface are the names of the 14 deceased astronauts. The entire structure rotates and tilts to track the sun; the polished surface always faces away from the sun to reflect the sky without glare, while small mirrors hung off the back of the steel framework reflect the sunlight through the cutout names in the granite. Self-focusing glass inserts diffuse the sunlight so that it fills the letters. When the sun is insufficient to light the names, artificial lighting incorporated into each mirror will ensure their proper illumination. The memorial overlooks the Kennedy Space Center, on an artificial mound that conceals the operating mechanism.



PARTIAL ELEVATION

Jury Comments

Farrell: I think that this is quite an exceptional idea: to link a memorial to people who are involved in an activity that is related to the way the object itself is made. To connect it to space and to space technology is a profound and very beautiful thing to do.

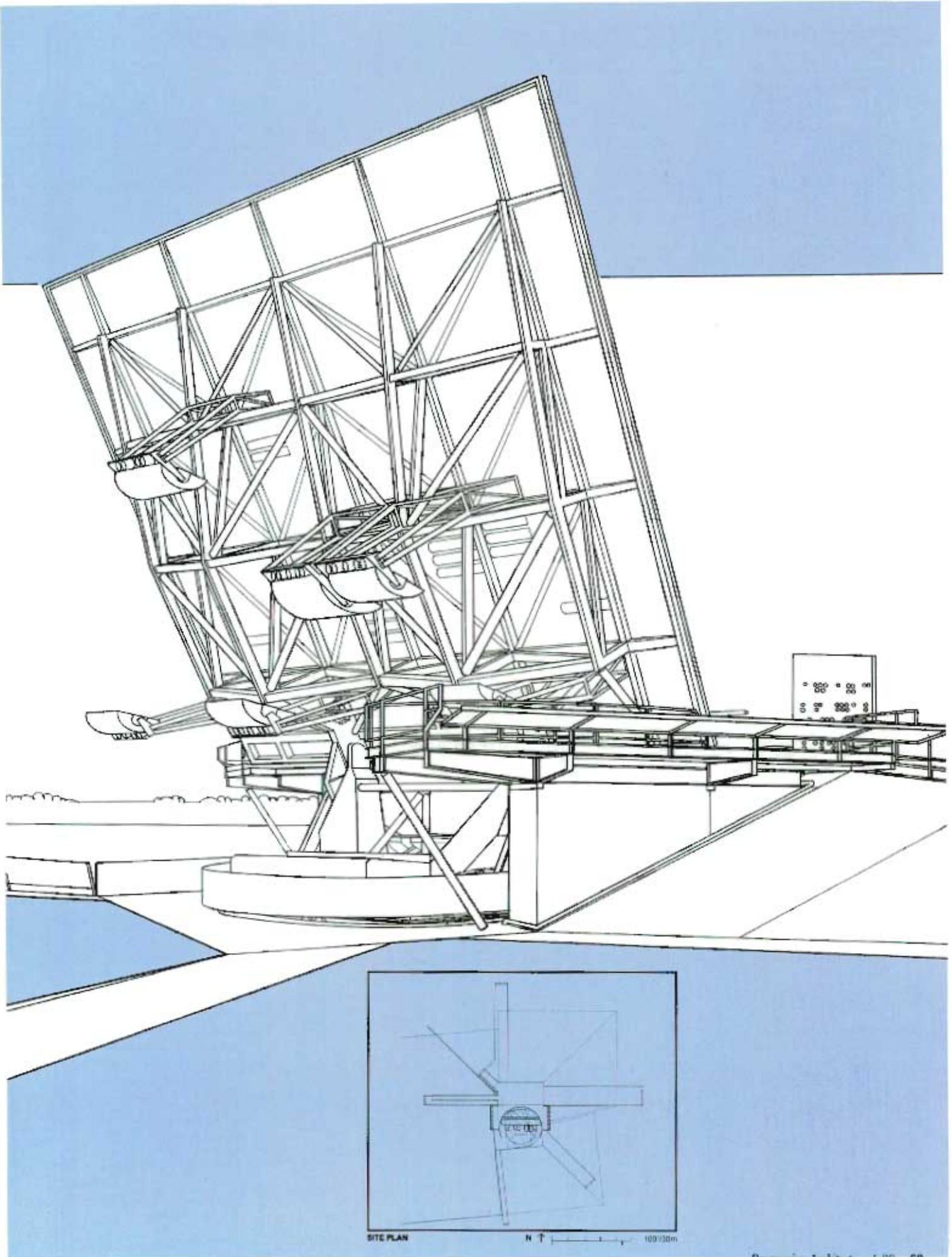
Ames: I think the aesthetic is very appropriate for such a memorial. Rather than just being an object like the Washington Monument, it is being made into something that has a function, that actually works.

Smith: Also, the drawings are absolutely exquisite.

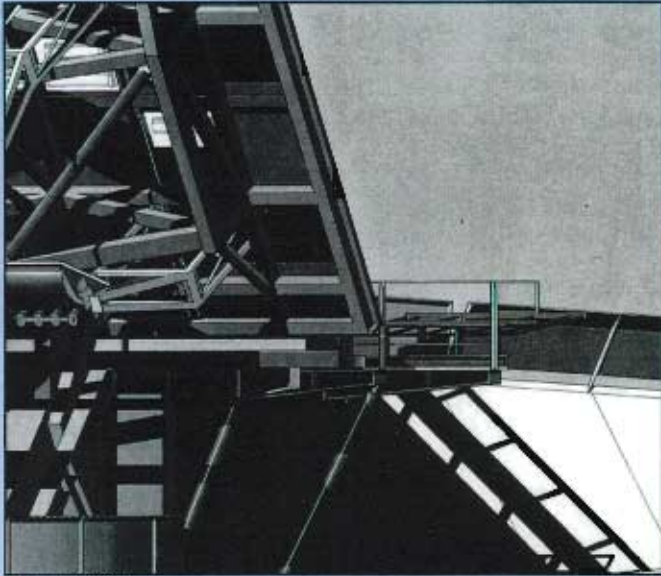
Farrell: Making the memorial a mirror of the sky and shining

light through the astronauts' names as if engraving them onto nature are wonderful ideas.

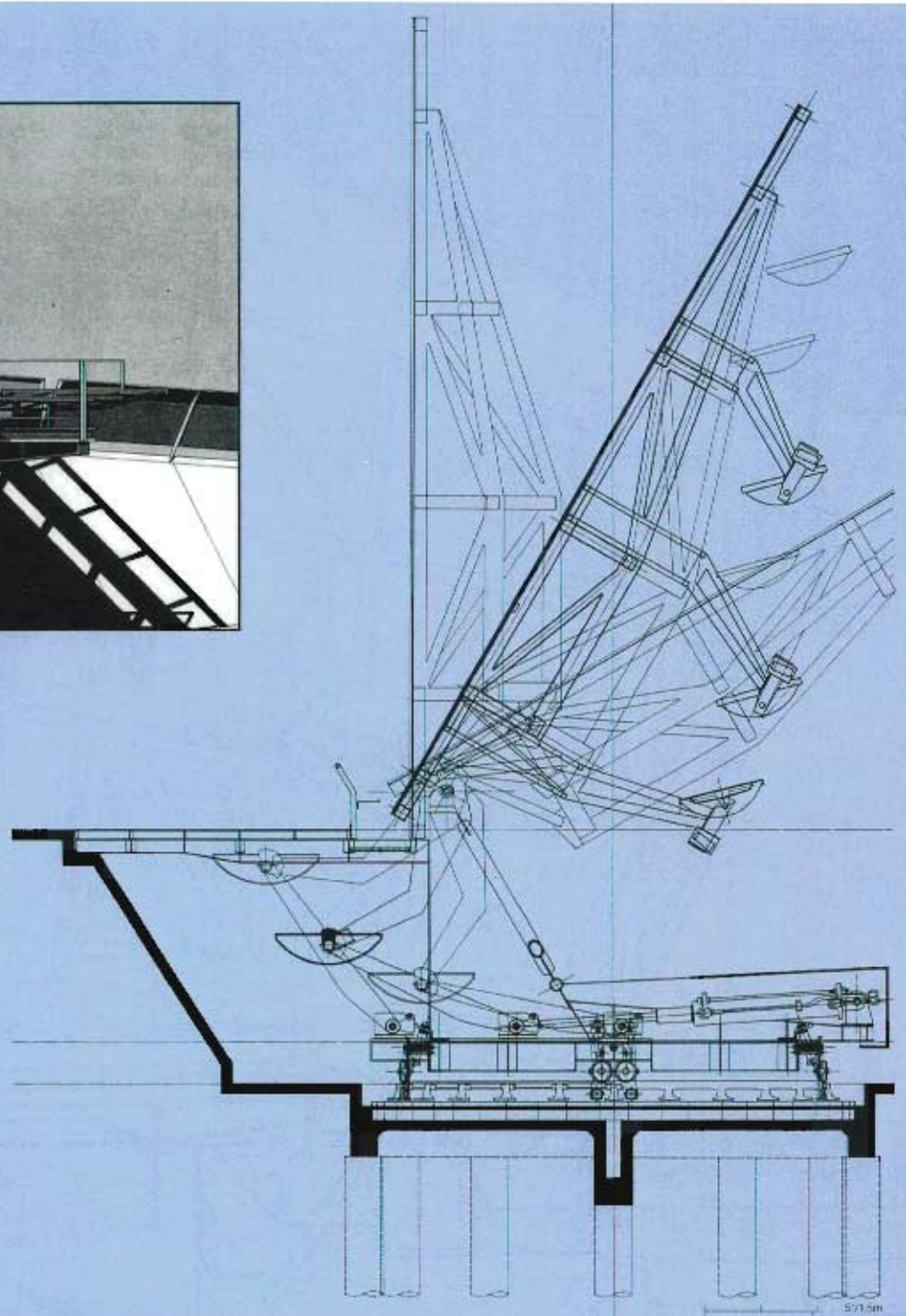
Tschumi: The way it is done is quite extraordinary. It is a sophisticated concept that has ties to some of the issues pursued by conceptual artists of 10 or 15 years ago, with things appearing and disappearing. I think that this has more significance for the state of the art of architecture than anything else we have seen here.



Astronauts Memorial



PARTIAL ELEVATION



SECTION THROUGH MECHANISM

Architects: Holt Hinshaw Pfau Jones Architecture, San Francisco (Tim Contreras, Marc Hinshaw, Paul Holt, Wes Jones, Jim Park, Peter Pfau, David Ramer, project team; Dana Barbera, Rich Curl, David Gadarian, Lourdes Garcia, Jeff Logan, Doug Mar, Michael Roberts, Barret Schumacher, Jean Young, Robert Yue, Maureen Gregg, presentation team).

Consultants: V.S.L. Corporation, structural, mechanical, electrical; Stottler-Stagg & Associates, civil; Lambertus Hesselink, optical.

Renderer: Wes Jones.

Client: Astronauts Memorial Foundation; Alan C. Helman, chairman.

