

# National Diet Library and Archive Kansai Science City, Japan

*1997 ACSA Design Award*

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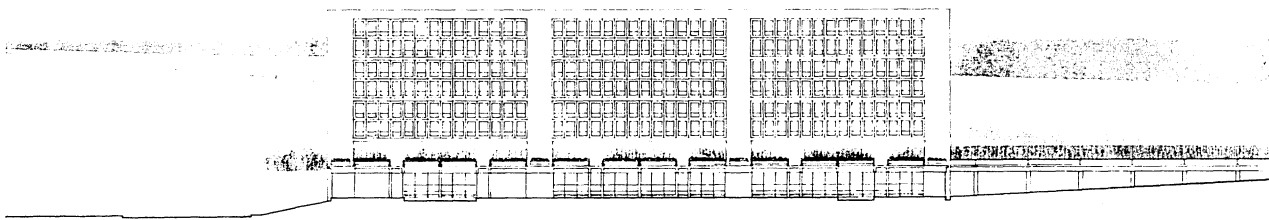
The brief for the National Diet Library Archive asked for a new archival and research facility to be located in a newly-laid out suburban research park. The half-a-million square foot program included closed-stack storage space, offices for library workers, an enormous electronic reading and reference area for researchers, a significant amount of parking, and a public park. Essentially, a vast storage facility and data-retrieval center located in an anonymous office park masquerading as a city; a prime example of the purgatories produced by contemporary development.

Our response to the brief — to the phenomenon of indeterminate terrains and undifferentiated “non-places” — incorporated both siting and spatial strategies: how to find anchorage upon anonymous and effaced contours; how to give texture to the uniform and excessive spaces of supermodernity, to use Marc Auge’s term.

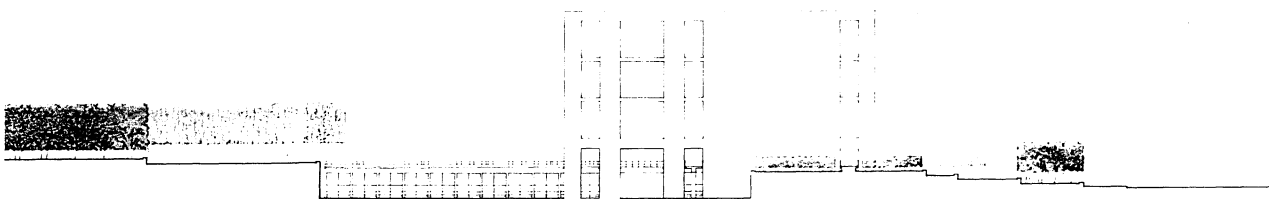
The project re-excavates the remade and regraded site,

following soil borings, flora charts, and contour maps as guides, to restore a geological, ecological, and geographical specificity to it. Both the site and the program are reimagined in these terms to simultaneously construct a site and an architecture, a reconstituted landscape that exposes the industry expensed in the making of place.

A series of retaining walls terrace the site, from the street to the forest beyond. A wash cuts through, displacing the fill to expose a new datum. The ground line is open to everyone: from the street terraces to the parking, the mechanical nursery, the meadows, fields, and clumps of forest. The private areas float off the ground, while the areas for visitors are part of the ground. A series of gardens float above, are suspended within, or are folded into the built and land forms. A formation of flower boxes, for example, occupy the roof of the reading room, moving on rails to follow changes in the light, the seasons, and the rhythms of the work day.



South Elevation



East Elevation

