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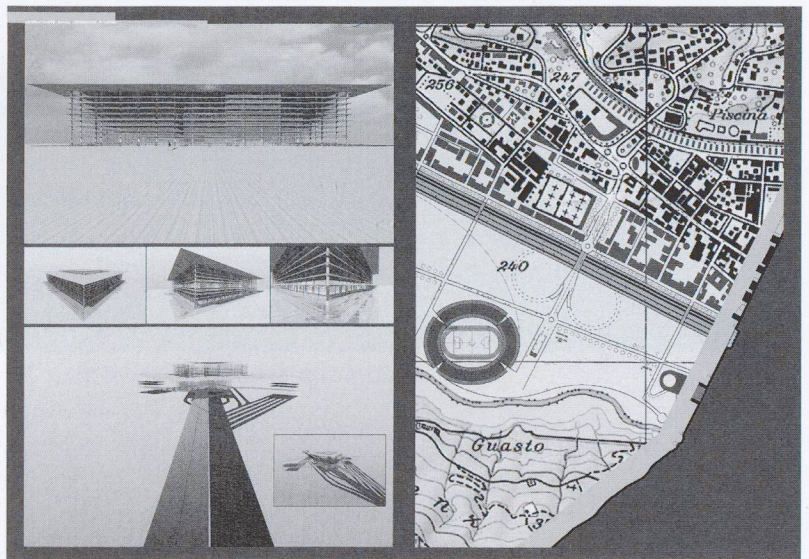
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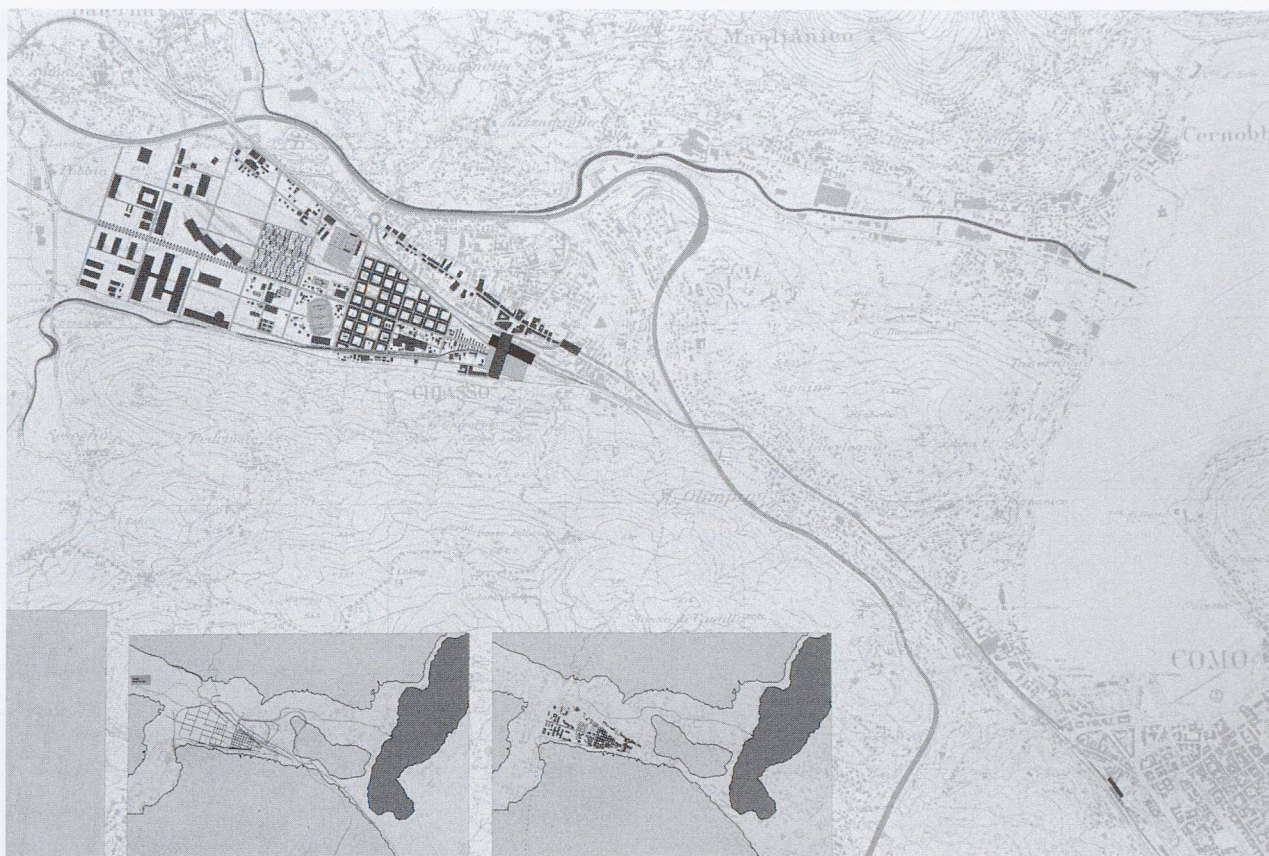
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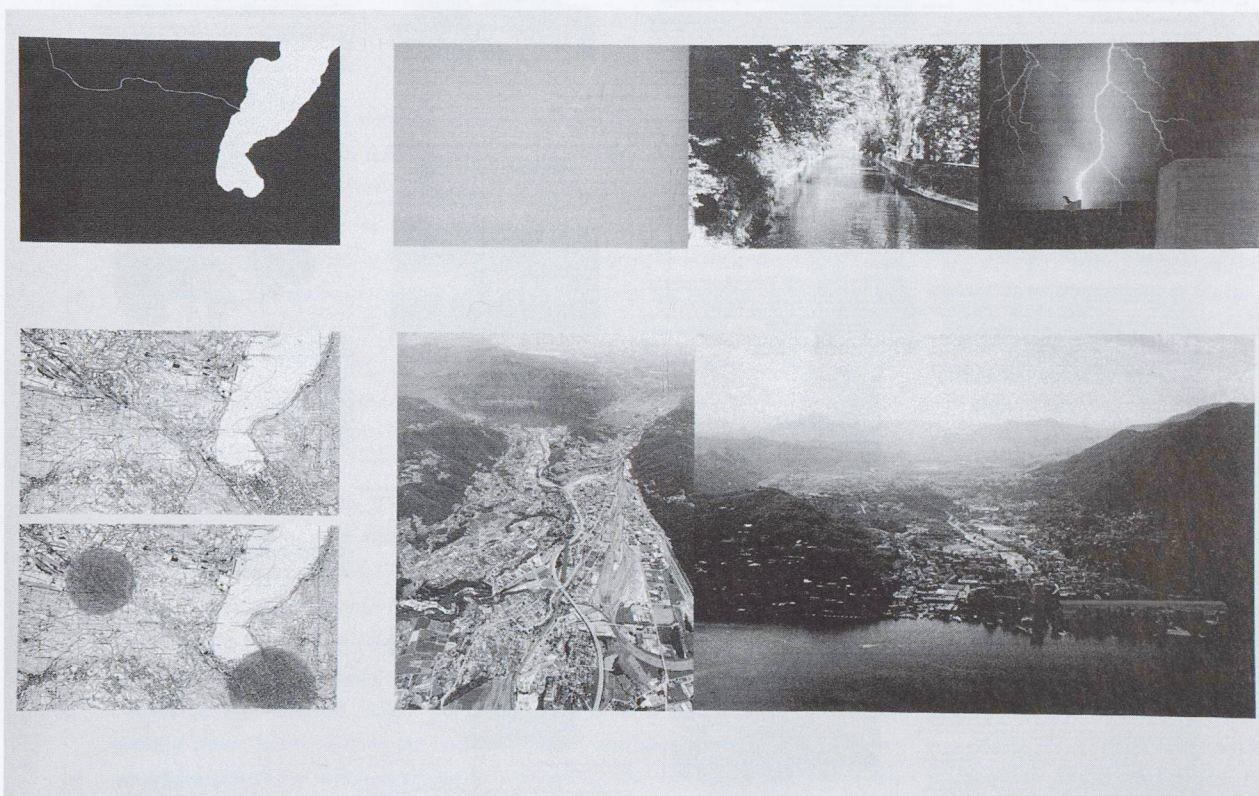
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Summary

This is not really the right place to publish the exercises of the students enrolled in the university course, The Culture of the City, which was given during the 1998-1999 academic year at the School of Architecture in Mendrisio. The reason is that this magazine is primarily concerned with the development of architecture in Italian Switzerland, and it is therefore not necessarily closely concerned with educating architects.

For Arbasino, in the thirties of the last century, Chiasso was the name of a little Swiss border town that was so small that it had only two buildings: the border station and the imaginary bookshop. All that was needed was an excursion to Chiasso, and this member of the backward Italian intelligenzia would have found in the imaginary bookshop a lot of books concerning the European avant-garde which he could have bought, read and studied. In other

words, he would have been able to make up for lost time, culturally speaking.

Fortunately, Chiasso is now in the favourable, perhaps even very favourable, position of being potentially in the centre of a vast area on and near the borders of countries that make up a new European region ideologically inspired by Cattaneo: the Insubrian region or the lake region. But the town of Chiasso seems to need or even seems to want to have a far-reaching urban reform.

This is just the theme that was assigned to the students for their exercises, namely, an urban renewal project that would insert into the territory of Chiasso the basic ingredients of a city. It was not important whether it was a particular city or a city in general. What counted was that the project contained structural factors that were relatively strong enough to support the weight of the functions to be performed, would be aesthetically pleasing, fit into the urban context

and, finally, satisfy the demands imposed by social services. These structural factors were supposed to be sufficient for the production of a new organization of the territory and for the revaluation of the landscape. They were not supposed to be factors that would determine superficial, immaterial, ephemeral and feather-light phenomena like, for example, the highfaluting pretensions of urban landscaping, which at the moment are very fashionable in this era of computer triumphalism.

The projects presented are all worthwhile and deserve mention if my comments are worth very much, but I do not want to conclude without admitting that some have discovered the fear that haunts me: the territory has been broken up and cannot be mended even in the light of a good theoretical exercise; the territory has gone lost and cannot be found even if one holds the thread of an academic exercise in one's hand.