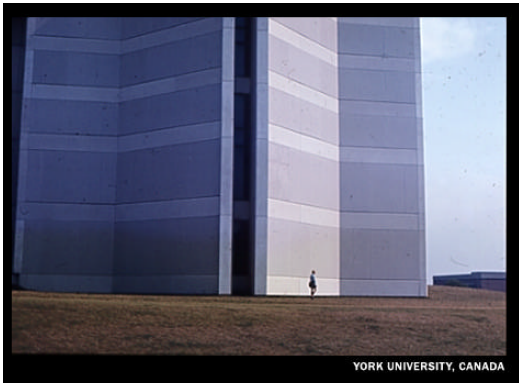


Mantra of Human Scale



Recent encounters with the University of Rome (upper photo) and York University (lower), Canada, brought to mind a desired goal for college and university buildings: facilities should be human in scale, occasionally heroic in concept, but never monumental. What gives cause, then, for such ponderous, elephantine, appalling solutions? Can such be avoided? The massing of the Roman facility reflects the consequences of limited acreage. A compressed site led the designers to pile-up functions in forms that seem contradictory to idealism of an open university. The vertical density of the York residential tower was intended to mark the University's presence on the skyline, and perhaps help reduce walking distance from the housing to central campus by avoiding a horizontal spread-out site configuration. Accepting these goals and constraints, the intimidating designs could have been mediated and made more attractive if the facades were articulated, made human in scale, to avoid the image of a mausoleum or a storage shed for an obsolete space ship.

Richard P. Dober

© DOBER, LIDSKY, CRAIG AND ASSOCIATES, INC, 2002.

385 Concord Avenue
Belmont, Massachusetts
02478-3096

tel 617-489-1162
fax 617-484-1595

www.dlca.com