

THE USE OF WALL AND FLOOR TILES IN ULTRA-MODERN BRAZILIAN ARCHITECTURE

by Fernando Peixoto (Brazil)

- Degree in Architecture in Salvador (Brazil) in 1969.
- Has designed and planned over 200 houses and more than one million square metres of large buildings.
- His work differs from the normal tendencies, reflecting a unique and personal approach.
- His projects tend to be strongly accented but always with a correct consideration of cost, his architectural language being adapted to each case.
- Has published works in several countries and won various awards.

1. CERAMIC TILE - A TOOL OF ARCHITECTONIAL EXPRESSION

It's a significant proof of the vitality and importance of ceramic that, in spite of being the very first man made material, we are here and today, still discussing new possibilities and ways of using and producing ceramic related products.

The effort and attention given here to improve and renew ceramic production and finish, to update and enlarge its application and efficiency it is a living proof of the ability of ceramic to follow the development pace of human society and its needs.

Industrially wise I would not be able to add much to this symposium where the highest qualified experts are discussing and detailing all aspects of production and finish, exchanging experiences and setting new standards of excellence for the industry.

I will try to contribute by centering my attention on a particular way, among many, in which ceramic can be a privilege tool of image forming and cultural expression.

The modern adequacy of such an old material has very much to do with its ability to express cultural images and catch the imagination of society. Ancient pottery, Roman and Byzantine tile, Arabesques, Chinese decorated ceramic and Islamic decoration were all the high end cultural expression where ceramic material embodied the frontier of art and cultural identity.

To have high tech development and at the same time be the vehicle of cultural expression and aesthetical experimentation is a constant quality of ceramic thru the ages and a fundamental need for the industry. My presence here is above all a strong signal of this awareness. So my contribution can be significant, I have opted to narrow my approach to a specific point where, I believe, I can illustrate the use of ceramic tile and give, maybe, new insights to its architectonic application.

In spite of some examples of floor applications I will concentrate on external cladding, where my point will be clearer and where the result achieves urban importance.

2. TILE TYPES

I would like to, first of all, classify the ceramic tiles by a particular approach, where hardness or thickness are not the criteria, but types are established by finish:

- a. Decorated tiles where patterns are added to the tile surface.
- b. Textured tiles by relief.
- c. Textured tiles by color.
- d. Plain solid color tiles.

The first three types can span different styles, from colonial to modern, from rustic to high gloss but have in common a very important factor: They have the style or image carrying characteristics built in the tile itself. This way each tile has a restricted use depending on the style and intended aesthetical result you are trying to achieve.

From the point of view of a single maker this standard image tile type requires increasingly quantity of options and a constant renewal of designs to keep interest, novelty and market satisfaction.

I agree that those first three types are a legitimate branch of development and modern followers of colonial decorated tiles and other historical types and patterns, but I am personally much more involved and interested in the fourth type.

In my point of view the solid color plain tile, an obvious inheritor of the possibilities of Byzantine panels, carries no aesthetical message but is a neutral and precious instrument of expression by arrangement.

This ability to convey different images, styles and new creative solutions, can make solid color tiles a permanent feature, avoiding the need for constant production line change or addition.

Tiles becomes a simple and basic tool, avoiding fads, by being proper to all fads: being the paint not the painting, the marble not the sculpture. At this point another most valuable aspect of this tile use is the ability to have world wide standards, so needed to qualify control and improvement, without restricting or directioning cultural and personal opportunities of manifestations.

The possibility of up to date architectonic expression with strong local and personal accent is an enriching experience and the very seed of renewal. The ability of ceramic tile to be the tool of these experiences is a must to keep it focused in the future and fully in accordance with its historical importance.

3. THE USE OF SOLID COLOR TILES

The first difficulty of an ample solid color tile use on external finish is color availability and discipline which would require a strong color culture and awareness by the industry.

In spite of color strong impression on everybody, and maybe because of this, color options offered tend to be aleatory and unscientific.

A tile maker would not consider having five or six different sizes unrelated to one another but constantly do the same when dealing with color.

We constantly find on the same catalogue a number of colors entirely unrelated, impossible to be combined and with no rational order or reason of choice. We could bet into all available literature about color as a scientific and measurable 'quantity', but this would be a lecture in itself.

For the record I would like to emphasize the need of a technical approach when choosing and establishing a color range. A graded and proper choice is essential to permit creative combinations and to allow for a durable production palette, where colors can be added progressively without need of constant changes each season.

In most of my works I have used different makes of tiles so to achieve color compatibility, because the scale of shades and tones were not organized in the color 'system' available from a single industry.

As in tile sizes, a larger number of variations is desirable but not essential if relations of reference are to be respected.

On the other hand, isolated plain colored tiles are no eye catching pieces as decorated or textured tile might be, thus posing a marketing problem: you have to highlight the numerous possibilities of **result by creative use** above the instrument of this result, the tile itself.

Maybe for this purpose the tile industry should do as the wood or concrete industries where designs in wood or concrete are often prized so to illustrate and enhance these materials' use. On this tile type, as throughout my work, **designs with tile** are the key, not design on tile.

As we progress in this lecture we have to narrow the subject and, if up to now I was stating opinions and positions, from now on I will try to be increasingly specific by exemplifying those options thru my personal architectural work. I hope that my work will be stimulating and pleasing, but above all an example of the many possibilities, not a path to be followed.

The intended message is not what is being done, but that it can be done, independently from fashionable styles which so often have suffocated personal and cultural identity.

4. DESIGN DISCIPLINE AND IMAGE

To fully understand my work through the slides I will show it is necessary to forget for a while ceramic as the reference of this lecture so we can highlight some basic principles and particular related aspects.

First of all they are common everyday buildings, and not government, large companies headquarters or institutional projects, which make costs an important factor.

It seems to me that if we are to make creativeness and originality a widely available possibility, architecture has to learn to deal with cost and production rationality in a way very close to industrial design.

My practice is based on a distinct separation of production factors discipline and final product image.

Structure, windows and perimeter are the result of the best rational solution and not means to achieve an aesthetical result.

Basically I have searched for a conceptual system where structure is just support, windows are only for light and air, and perimeter should be minimum for a given floor space, without incurring in expressionless box housing as we so often have seen all over.

This discipline of rationality for the functional elements instead of becoming a restriction to creativeness becomes, given the proper solution, an expanded universe of application, bringing architecture as industrial design to everyday use.

Before we start the slides projection you will visualize better these aspects and where I will detail how these design principles were achieved I would like to raise one more important point for understanding the relation between the individual buildings and the urban environment thru image perception. It is a common complaint the lack of emotion, the dull and soulless image of modern big cities.

In my point of view this fact has a profound relation with the historical trait of architectural practice to value too much the designs related to the elites' power and so, paying small attention to excellence on everyday tasks.

At the same time architecture has not been able to deal with speed and distance of perception, as graphics and visual arts have so well done. The open space of an avenue and an observer in a speeding car requires a completely different image projection from the traditional slow paced walker.

Minute detailing will not be perceived in this new context and buildings will tend to lose personality and impact as urban references.

Unless you are dealing once again with exceptions, the common buildings become unable to communicate efficiently at a first and fast glance, failing to a notable feature and to escape from sameness.

I know that all the aspects are complex and would need more depth to be well assimilated and thoroughly discussed but we do not have this time.

It is a common fault in modern architecture to have better theories than buildings, or projects requiring sophisticated explanations to be appreciated. What I have done up to now was to raise questions and topics so the following slides can illustrate and provoke further debate.

The questions raised will be valuable for me to judge the points of interest where we can be less general and more specific.

5. SLIDE PROJECTION

6. CONCLUSION

After these slides I hope that many of the points I made before are well illustrated and understood.

I would like to add just one more consideration about cost/benefit of ceramic cladding as shown.

Only ceramic tile can provide the solid colors and stability as needed, and, at the same time, have the lowest cost for a material of such durability. Some of the buildings shown here are up to 8 years old without losing contrast and definition: paint would not be able to guarantee this performance. Marble, granite, glass curtain or aluminum are well more expensive than ceramic and unable to provide the alternatives and variations to achieve these compositions.

Once again I would like to remind you that those buildings are cost conscious, regular volumes, so execution and structure have to be simpler, corners and perimeter be minimum.

I can see no other façade material able to provide the right colors, and durability to make them outstanding urban references within the intended cost.

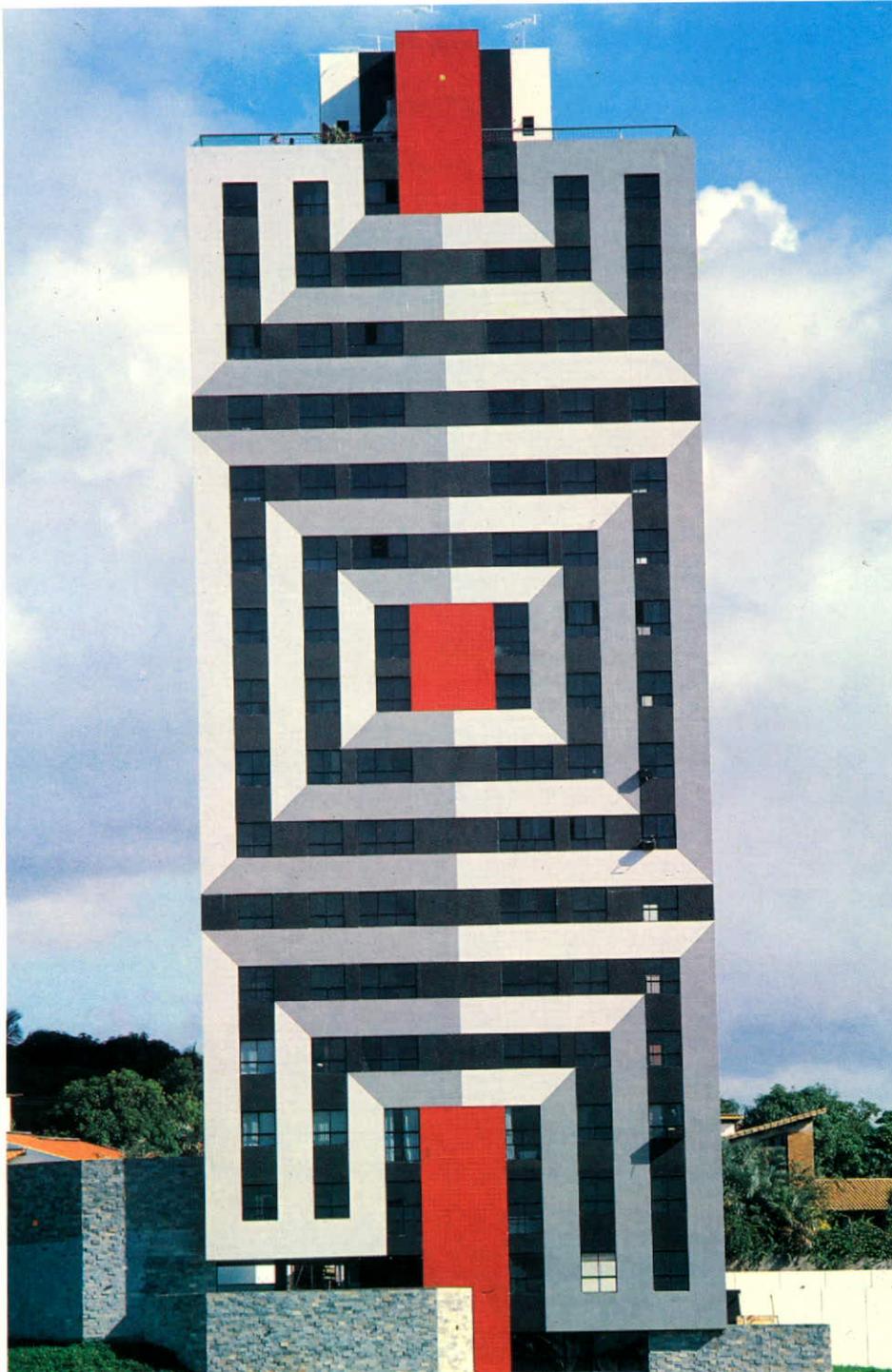
I can see no better tool than ceramic to achieve these particular results in my search of unique architectonic expression.



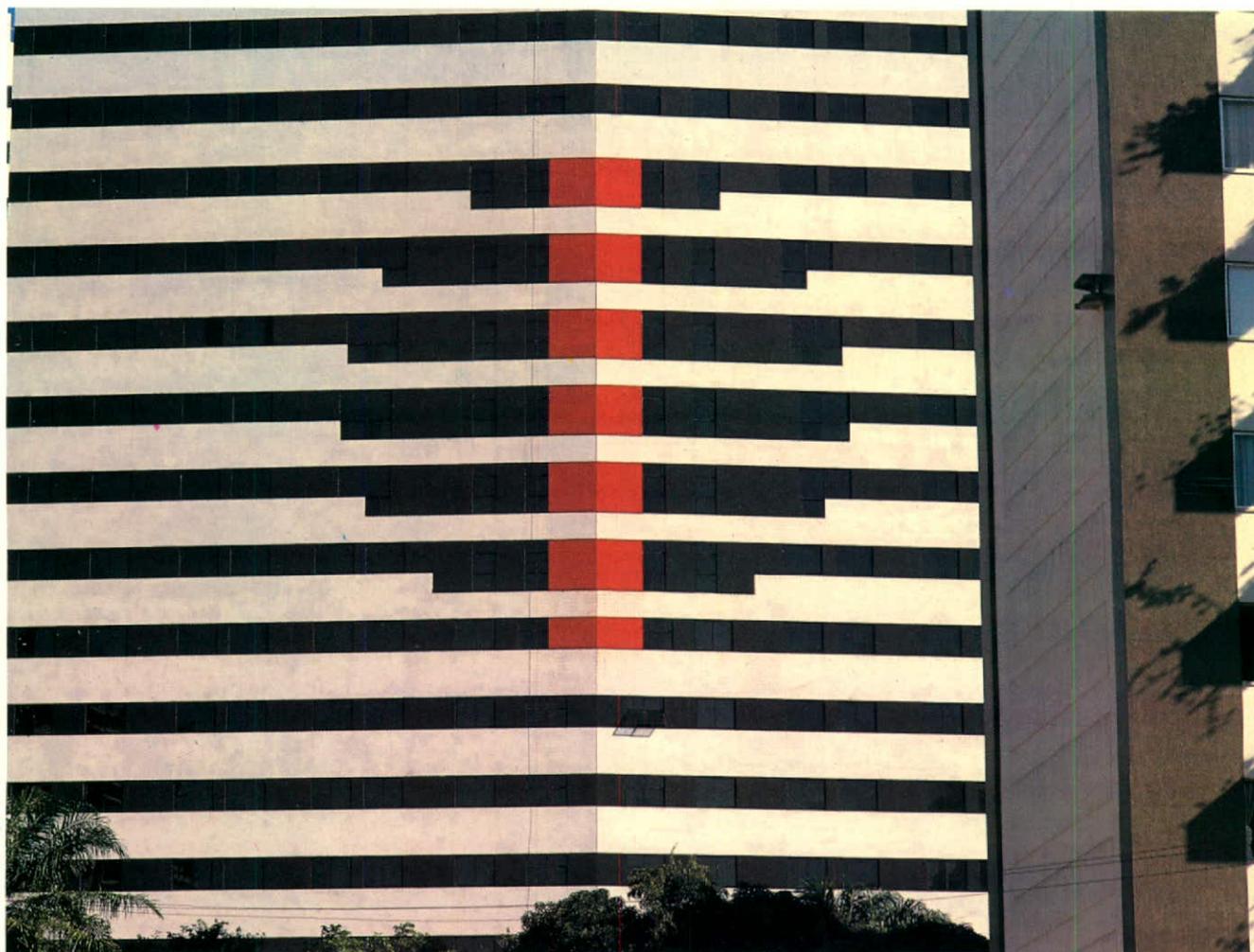
Uso de revestimientos
cerámicos en arquitectura
cerámica de vanguardia.

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Edificio de viviendas de 17 alturas, con dos unidades de tres dormitorios por planta
Apartment building 17 store high, with two three bedroom units per floor



Edificio de viviendas de 15 alturas, con cuatro unidades de tres dormitorios por planta
Apartment building 15 store high, with four three bedroom units per floor



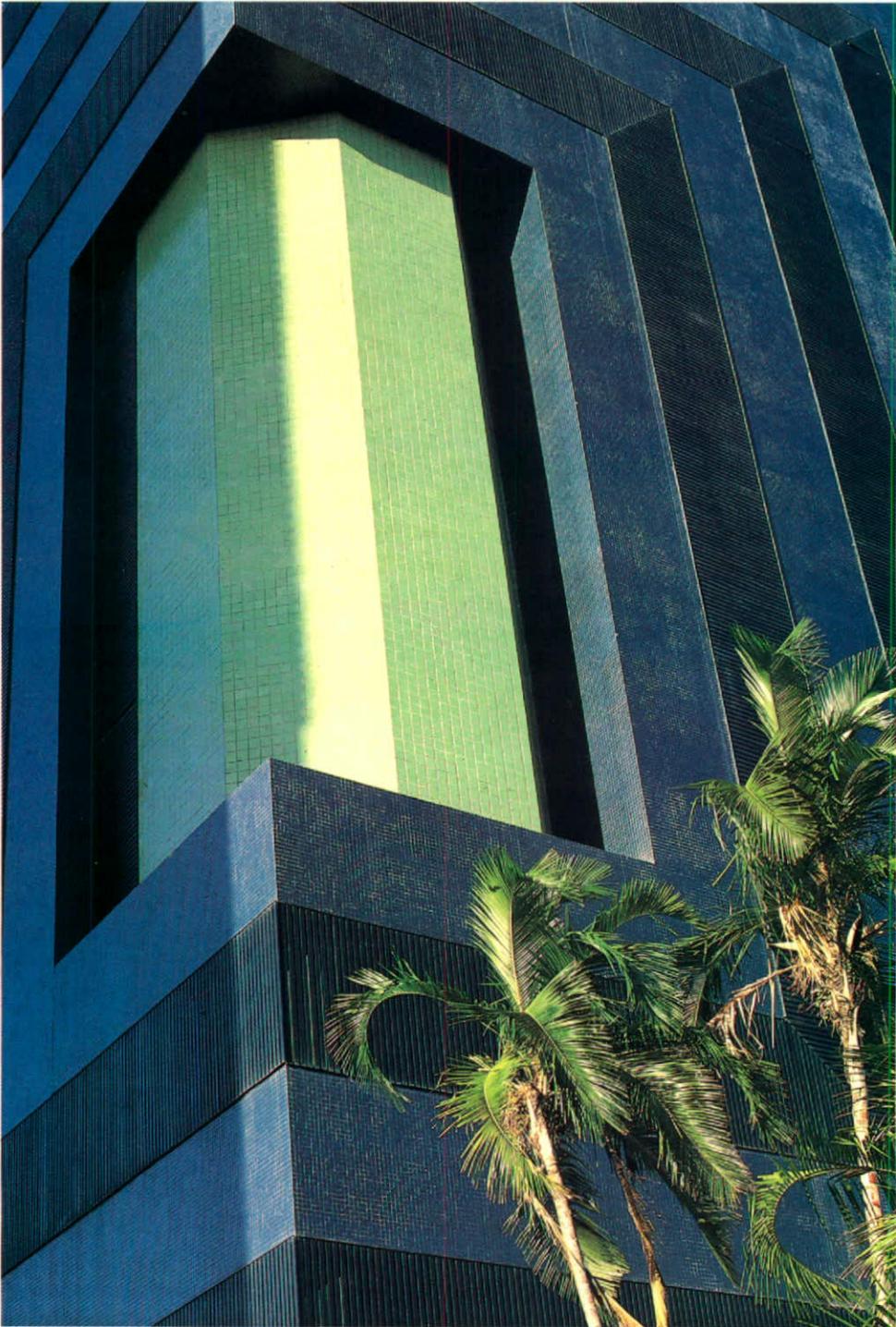
Edificio de viviendas de 15 alturas, con cuatro unidades de tres dormitorios por planta
Apartment building 15 store high, with four three bedroom units per floor

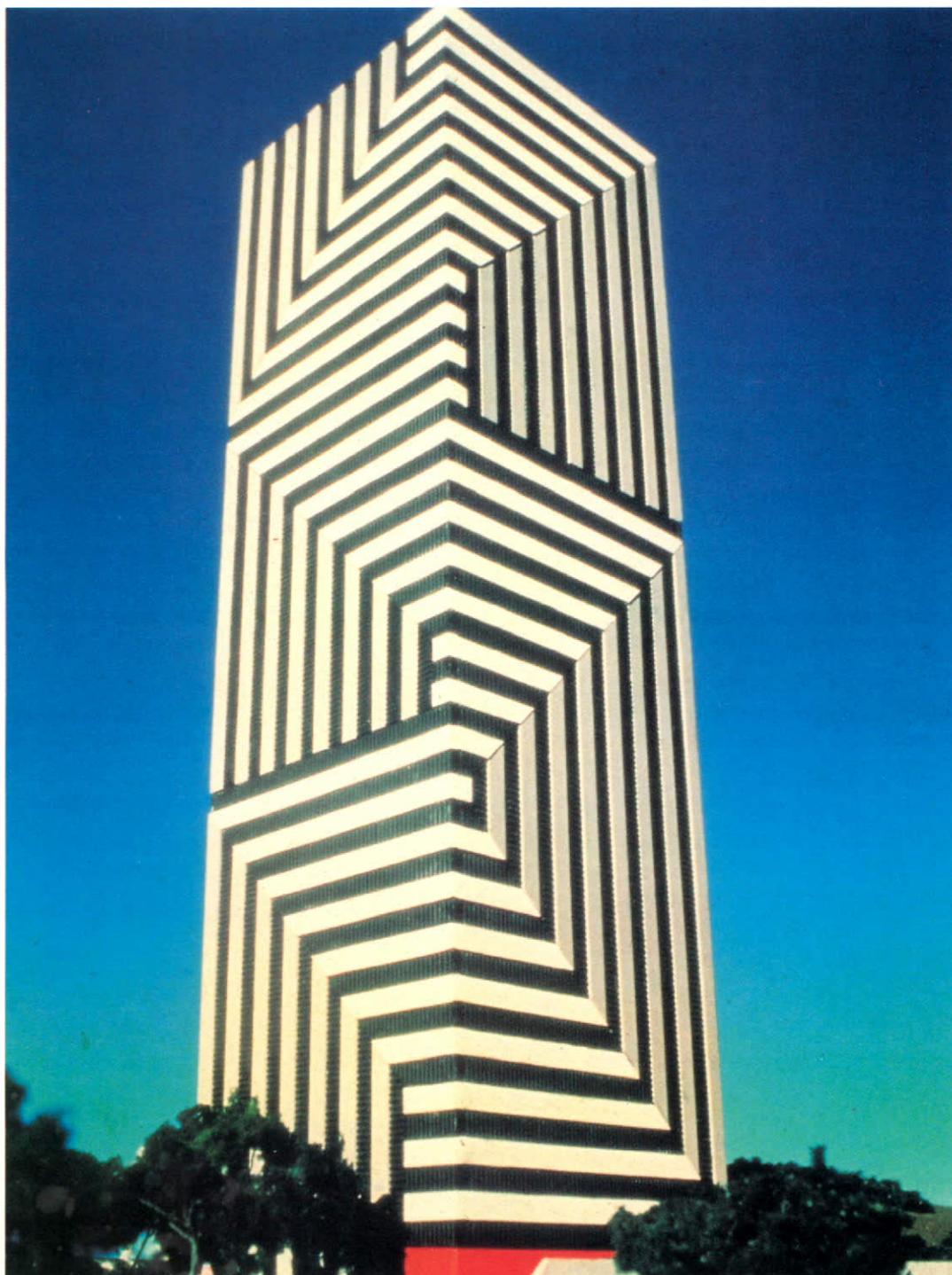


Edificio de oficinas
Office tower



Edificio de viviendas de 15 alturas, con dos unidades de cuatro dormitorios por planta
Apartment building 15 store high, with two four bedroom units per floor







Edificio de viviendas de 15 alturas, con cuatro unidades de tres dormitorios por planta
Apartment building 15 store high, with four three bedroom units per floor



Cidadella: Grupo de edificios - *Group of buildings*

- 1 Edificio de viviendas de 15 alturas
Apartment building 15 store high
- 2 Edificio de oficinas
Office tower
- 3 Edificio de oficinas
Office tower
- 4 Edificio de oficinas
Office tower