A Museum for the Indianapolis Motor Speedway

Speedway, Indiana

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Professor Robert A. Fisher, studio critic

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I would like to express my gratitude to those people who, even if in some small way, contributed to the project over the past year.

A great deal of thanks go to Professor Robert Fisher, for the use of his talents and experience, as well as for his encouragement and patience throughout the process. Thanks Bob!

Thanks also go to Professor Alvin (Sonny) Palmer for his aid in developing the program, and to Professor Paul Laseau for his advice and encouragement.

Despite the hypothetical nature of the project, the Indianapolis Motor Speedway was extremely helpful in providing invaluable programmatic information; the time and assistance of Mr. Albert W. Bloemker, vice-president, Mr. Charles Thompson, superintendent of grounds, and Mr. Jack Martin, museum curator, is greatly appreciated. Mr. Robert Lawson of the engineering firm of Pink, Roberts and Petrie, Inc., Indianapolis, was equally helpful in supplying site information and drawings.

I would also like to thank my studio colleagues who lent me their support, advice, encouragement, humor, coffee, and most importantly, their friendship: Dave Cole, Kevin Thompson, Bill Payne, Sherry Petersen, Cindy Nichols, Joe Rebber, Heather Faulding, Doug Hales, Dave Bernethy, Jim Jelliffe, Dan Phillips, Miguel Ensuidanos, and many others.

Finally, I would like to thank my parents, without whose love and guidance none of this would have been possible.
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A Museum
for the Indianapolis Motor Speedway
Abstract

The Indianapolis Motor Speedway is one of the most famous racecourses in the world and is the site for the premier event in motorsport -- the Indianapolis 500. Attended by 400,000 spectators, with a global radio audience of many millions, the race is a powerful event whose visual, auditory and emotional sensations create one of the most captivating single-day experiences in the world.

Accordingly, the museum attempts to transcend merely displaying cars by incorporating the racing activity, the character of the race as an event and the powerful imagery of the Speedway itself. By becoming an extension of the racing environment, the museum seeks to enhance the racing experience of its visitors. Additionally, by associating with the main straightaway's presence and activity, the museum's displays are seen, not isolated and enclosed, but still very much a part of the racing environment of Indianapolis.

The facility is designed to display and store the Indianapolis Motor Speedway Foundation's collection of 165 classic automobiles and racing machines, many of which gained their fame at the Speedway. As many as 70 cars can be displayed at one time, with the remainder in storage or undergoing restoration within the museum. Additional displays include racing memorabilia, trophies, driving equipment, photography, artwork, films, and various experiential, participatory displays. An archives library maintains a collection of articles, publications, photographs, films and tapes that document the history of the race and the Speedway. The facility also houses the offices of the Indianapolis Motor Speedway Corporation, which acts as the administrative body of the Speedway, organizing the race and all accompanying events.
History

The Indianapolis Motor Speedway was built in 1909 when four prominent Indianapolis businessmen—Carl G. Fisher, James A. Allison, Arthur C. Newby and Frank H. Wheeler brought their resources together to create a "great outdoor laboratory" for the fledgling automobile industry. The inaugural program of auto races was held August 19, 1909 on a racing surface of crushed stone and tar. But by the end of three days of races, the track surface had deteriorated badly, causing Fisher and his associates to make plans to have the course resurfaced with 3,200,000 paving bricks grouted in concrete.

After holding several racing events over the ensuing two year period with diminishing attendance, it was decided to concentrate on a single racing event to be held annually. The distance was to be five-hundred miles since, the owners reasoned, that would give the spectators a nearly equal amount of action as the multi-race program held in 1910. The first 500-mile race at Indianapolis was run on May 30, 1911. The winning driver, Ray Harroun, completed the distance in six hours, forty-two minutes, averaging 74.6 miles per hour.

During the war years of 1917-1918, racing activity was suspended and the Speedway was used as an aviation repair depot for military aircraft flying between bases in Dayton, Ohio and Kankakee, Illinois. Many acres of the grounds were planted in hay and grain to aid in meeting taxes and maintenance costs. With the war's end, though, preparations for the resumption of racing in 1919 began immediately.

During the late 1920's, when Carl Fisher's business interests began to take his attention elsewhere, the founders of the Speedway decided to sell the property. Captain Eddie Rickenbacker, a former Indianapolis driver and a World War I ace, purchased the Speedway in 1927. However, the Depression years required all of Rickenbacker's insenuity in an effort to keep the Speedway in operation. Just as the financial outlook brightened and competition reached new levels, World War II caused the suspension of racing activity from 1942-1945, due to the strict rationing of petroleum and rubber products.

When Wilbur Shaw, a three-time winner at Indianapolis, returned to the track in 1946, he found that the property had suffered greatly due to its four years of idleness and neglect. Upon visiting Rickenbacker, he learned that the owner had neither the funds nor the desire required to re-
store the facilities for resumption of racing at the end of the war. However, Rickenbacker offered to sell the track at his cost.

Shaw's ensuing search for a buyer found Anton Hulman, Jr. of Terre Haute, Indiana. Hulman's assessment of the situation was that "the Speedway always has been as much a part of Indiana as the Derby is part of Kentucky and the 500-Mile Race definitely should be resumed." The transfer of ownership took place in November 1945 and preparations for the 1946 race began immediately.

Tony Hulman's ownership of the Indianapolis Motor Speedway was marked by expansion and growth. New grandstands, gates, tunnels and interior roads were completed in his first decade at the track. An office-museum facility for a growing collection of racing machines and memorabilia was built in 1956; an enlarged pit area and control tower were completed the following year. The Golden Anniversary 500 in 1961 saw the paving of the last segments of the brick racing surface except for one yard of brick at the start-finish line. Construction of huge grandstands in the four turns have brought the reserved seating to approximately 235,000.

During its early years, the Indianapolis Motor Speedway gained recognition as a proving ground for experiments in automotive design and innovations in areas such as high-compression engines, four-wheel brakes, experimental fuels and lubricants and hydraulic shock absorbers. The current experiments in aerodynamics, tire design and turbocharging have seen and will continue to see borrowing of these technologies by the automobile industry.

The nearly thirty-two years of Tony Hulman's ownership, ending with his death in October 1977, established the Indianapolis 500-Mile Race as the premier sporting event in the world, the drama of which is witnessed by nearly 400,000 spectators each year, with a worldwide audience of many, many millions linked to the event by radio and television.

(taken and condensed from the 1979 Indianapolis Motor Speedway brochure.)

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**INDIANAPOLIS MOTOR SPEEDWAY**

**Constructed in 1909, the Speedway has contributed significantly to the advancement of automotive technology and development of safety devices.**

It is unchallenged as the world's oldest continuously operated race course and the site of the largest one-day sports event anywhere.

**Listed on the National Register of Historic Places and dedicated on the occasion of the 59th running of the "500," May 25, 1975.**
The program for the museum was prepared with information obtained through interviews with Mr. Albert W. Bloemker, vice-president of the Indianapolis Motor Speedway Corporation. These interviews concentrated primarily on the Speedway's administration's organizational breakdown, and the functional and spatial requirements of both the administration and the museum itself. We also discussed the scope of the Foundation's collection, further establishing the types of exhibits that the museum houses. In fact, the major subjective idea behind the preparation of the program came from this discussion.

Mr. Bloemker allowed me to tour the display storage area, where approximately 100 of the 165 cars in the collection were housed. The ability to walk directly up to a famous car and examine it, without any ropes or chains to prevent me from doing so, impressed me as a far more exciting, meaningful experience than to be kept at a specified distance away. Thus, the notion of a participatory museum, where people can more closely interact with the displays, became the program's major goal. This concept, combined with the museum's proposed proximity to the active racing environment, would enhance the experience of a true racing fan and indoctrinate those who are less familiar with racing to the magnetic excitement of it.

(The complete program is enclosed in the appendix of this book.)

Space Summary

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<th>Administration</th>
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<td>Restaurant</td>
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TOTAL NET AREA: 70,394 sq. ft.
TOTAL GROSS AREA: 108,299 sq. ft.
Organizational Format

INDIANAPOLIS MOTOR SPEEDWAY FOUNDATION

CURATOR

IMS CORPORATION

PUBLICITY OFFICE

GROUND OFFICE

AUDITING OFFICE

PRESIDENT

ARCHIVES LIBRARY

OFFICIAL PHOTOGRAPHER

DISPLAY RESTORATION

EXHIBITS

PUBLIC

TICKET OFFICE
Space Relationships

- Conference
- Auditing
- Grounds
- President
- Publicity
- Employee Lounge
- Secretary
- Photo.
- Curator
- Archives Library
- Theater
- Display Restoration
- Museum Display
- Tickets
- Gifts
- Restaurant
- Public Toilets
- Display Storage
The site, located just east of the Tower Terrace seats along the main straightaway, was selected for its ease of accessibility by spectators and for its close proximity to the full spectrum of racing activity. The site analysis was prepared with emphasis on the existing, traditional elements of the site.
Major Vehicular Entries, Tunnels, and Parking

- **Tunnels**

- **Entry to Grounds**: (Month of May shown; only Southwest gate open daily during remainder of year.)

- **Maximum Infield Parking for Spectators**: (Parking is on grass; only roads are paved.)

  (Infield parking capacity approx. 90,000 cars)

- **Golf Course**

- **Crew Parking**

- **Press**

- **Georgetown Road**
Pedestrian Paths and Tunnels

The paths illustrated are the major zones of direct access to seating and the infield. Countless other more ambiguous routes are created in the infield each year depending on parking density and crowd size.
Site Dimensions and Scale

[Diagram showing site dimensions and scale with labeled distances]
Site Context: Main Straightaway
Site Context: Main Straightaway
Site Context: Tower Terrace

EAST ELEVATION

GASOLINE ALLEY
GOODYEAR GARAGE
CATERING (FOR DRIVERS AND CREWS, OFFICIALS, AND RACING PERSONNEL ONLY)
ACCESS TO SEATS
RESTROOM
RESTROOM
OFFICE
RESTROOM
RESTROOM
ACCESS TO SEATS, VICTORY LANE
RESTROOM
RESTROOM
OFFICE
OFFICE
PEDESTRIAN, VEHICULAR TUNNEL NO. 6
Site Context: Control Tower
THE CONTROL TOWER ACTS AS A COMMUNICATIONS BASE AND OBSERVATION POINT FOR UNITED STATES AUTO CLUB (USAC) OFFICIALS AND RACE STEWARDS FROM WHICH THE ENTIRE TRACK CAN BE SEEN. THE TIMING AND SCORING OF THE RACE AND QUALIFICATION ATTEMPTS TAKES PLACE HERE, AS WELL AS THE WORLDWIDE RADIO BROADCAST OF THE RACE.
Site Context: Tower Terrace

Timers' Floor

Control Tower

Elevation

Doors provide access to Tower Terrace, Victor, and Pit area. The seats also be reached through 96'-2\frac{1}{4}'
Site Context: Section thru Tower Terrace
Site Enclosure

Open view to grassy fields and golf course. Field adjacent to site used for parking during May.

Unobstructed view to north parking/concessions.

View of front straight and pits from tower terrace.

Hard edge 20'-10" high

Some garage activity can be seen through chain-link fence.
Sights and Sounds


EVEN WHEN SEEN TOTALLY DESERTED, THE MAIN STRAIGHT IS EXPERIENCED AS A POWERFUL PRESENCE; THE PLACE HAS A CHARACTER ALL ITS OWN.

THE TOWER TERRACE ALSO PROVIDES THE FULLEST AUDITORY EXPERIENCE THE TRACK HAS TO OFFER. THE SOUND OF THE CARS ADDS TO THE SENSATION OF SPEED, AND THE ROAR AT THE START IS AWESOME AND MOVING.
The soil composition of the Indianapolis Motor Speedway is listed by the Soil Conservation Service as:

Westland Soil (Urban Complex)
- poorly drained
- over sand, gravel material
- permeability: slow
- water capacity: high
- water table: surface or 1' below

(The topography of the infield is minimal, ranging from 725' in the south end to 735' in the north.)
Temperature

Precipitation

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<tr>
<td>YEAR</td>
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(Temperature and precipitation values are record means averaged from the period 1871-1978.)
**INDIANAPOLIS LATITUDE:** 39°44' NORTH

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<th>10.00 AM</th>
<th>12.00 NOON</th>
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**Solar Altitudes**

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<th>PARTLY CLDY.</th>
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**Sunshine**
In this, the initial phase of the thesis design process, the designer explores potential solutions to the programmatic criteria and conceptual issues that give greatest priority. He then establishes the one solution that best responds to those criteria and issues. The schematic design is simplified in form and detail, representing the direction that latter design development will take.

The critical issues stated in the abstract can be broken into three distinct ideas:

1. The museum should enhance the visitor's experience by becoming an extension of the racing context, closely associating itself with the racing environment and points of spectator interest.

2. The museum should, in some way, capture and enhance the spirit of the displayed cars and maintain their relationship with the track and its activity.

3. The museum should respect and relate to the character of the Indianapolis Motor Speedway's traditional forms and its historic spirit.

In relating these ideas to the site and its existing context, four main concepts for the building's organization evolved. The first of these dealt with the building section as a series of receding trays, playing its form off the stair-stepped shape of the Tower Terrace seats. The major advantage of the trays lay in their ability to receive direct sunlight. The desire for this arises as a response to the issue of "capturing and enhancing the spirit of the displayed vehicles." By allowing sunlight to strike the cars, they are presented more as they truly appeared as active automobiles and racing machines. Additionally, the beauty of the painted finishes and polished surfaces is more fully revealed in sunlight.

The second concept merely
realizes the need for the existing spectator circulation along the back of the seats to continue unimpeded, as it provides access to a pedestrian tunnel beneath the track, to Victory Lane, and to thousands of seats in the Tower Terrace. The concept for the building section readily permitted this, allowing people to move beneath the trays.

Thirdly, a tower at the start/finish line is a traditional element in the history of the Speedway, with its famous Pagoda and now, the Control Tower. Accordingly, the museum's form and location should not intrude on or detract from the tower's prominence.

Finally, the concept behind the plan organization identifies the tower (marking the start/finish line and Victory Lane) and Gasoline Alley (the entrance to the track from the garage area) as the two major points of spectator interest on the site, and possibly on the entire straightforward. The Control Tower is a natural focal element for the Speedway, while Gasoline Alley attracts large crowds at its entrance, where the paths of car, driver, and mechanic cross with that of the spectators. This brief, open meeting of the two groups creates opportunities for a close look at the cars or an autograph from a driver. With this in mind, the concept of the museum then is to connect these two points, allowing them to physically and symbolically "define" the museum. By spanning across Gasoline Alley, racing activity penetrates the museum, acting as a kinetic display and further establishing the relationship between the exhibit vehicles and the racing environment.

The following drawings illustrate the schematic design concept derived from these ideas.
Jury Critique

Jury criticisms of the scheme at this stage of development centered largely on the form of the building. One comment was that the form felt "packed" up against the Tower Terrace, suggesting that the building might be pulled away from the seats in some manner. Another comment was in regard to the awkward relationship of the administration to the remainder of the form, a point I had realized but been unable to resolve prior to the jury. Overall though, the scheme was seen as holding great potential for accomplishing the goals I had established for the project.
The initial effort at this stage centered on strengthening the functional and formal response of the section concept. Almost immediately, the notion of the three trays expanded in volume and floor area to accommodate functions supportive of the display space, such as the theatre, restoration facility, archives library, storage and service cores. Simultaneously, the sectional form of the enclosure, rather timid in its original form, became a more definite slope, accentuating the play of triangular forms between the seats and the museum while becoming an appropriately dynamic shape.

In order to resolve certain functional problems and in response to the jury comment that the building felt "packed" against the Tower Terrace, the sloped surface was pulled away from the seats by introducing a service/ circulation core as a transitional element. This move created a "reveal" between the sloped form and the Control Tower, allowing the Tower to be a more independant, singular element again. Also introduced was a long observation level from which race officials and the press can overlook the front straightaway (this space replaces that lost in removing the small arm-like elements from the Tower, which were creating many formal, functional and structural problems).

In studying the exact nature of the sloping enclosure, the concept of admitting direct sunlight was expanded, allowing for an open view of the sky overhead. This minimizing of the sense of enclosure is an effort toward analogy with the outdoor, open-sky nature of the race and of the automobile in general. Accordingly, the slope became a great glass enclosure; in final form, it contains a sealed air space that acts as a thermal chimney, venting off heat gain in the summer and collecting that gain
in the winter for distribution through the building.

The awkward relationship of the administrative functions to the display area, first noted prior to the schematic design jury, proved difficult to resolve, and I went through a number of alternative schemes with little improvement. It was soon pointed out to me, though, that an axial entry, suggested by the symbolic relationship of the tower with Victory Lane and the start/finish line, could bisect the display and administrative functions. This move would allow the tower, being crowded in previous schemes, to breathe more freely. It also became obvious that the administration's massing had to be more compatible with the sloped form of the display than had previously been the case. So while playing with a similarly sloped form for the administration, the overall building shape began to take on a horizontal "shift," implying the direction that the cars move on the adjacent straightaway. This discovery gave the entire project an appropriately dynamic expression, while giving the scheme a linearity in keeping with its context.

Continuing the development of the museum's image, the use of blue reflective glass over the entire length of the sloped surface, stainless-steel panels on the remaining exterior surfaces, pipe trusses and railings and sharp, clean edges create a building whose forms and materials are analogous to those of the racing machines themselves.

The following drawings, while not a complete set, are representative of the design at this stage of development.
Design Presentation
Jury Critique

The jury suggested more study of the structural grid and detailing of the sloped enclosure in order to refine the "cleanliness" of the form. It was also suggested that a high-tech, hardware approach might be an appropriate expression for the mechanical functions (HVAC), furthering the analogy to the materials and forms of the racing machines themselves. The site plan was also in need of more development, as it lacked the boldness that the building possesses.

In judging the design as a total scheme, the jury felt that the museum responded to its concepts and site in an extremely positive manner and was an "outstanding project."
Final Design
Conclusion

Looking back on the past year's work, I think the quality of the project lay in the strength of its response to the conceptual issues and in its integration into the relationships and forms of the site. My personal design tendency is to be very straightforward in my architecture and I feel that has served me well on this project; the large scale simplicity of the building makes for a stronger, more dynamic statement.

One of the major lessons of the project is the development of a consistent image and expression. In that light, the design owes much to Cesar Pelli and Richard Meier, whose work I took as inspiration throughout the process. It remains to be seen how much of their modernist vocabulary remains to influence my future work.

Finally, living in Indianapolis all my life, I have always looked forward, with great anticipation, to the coming of the month of May. Accordingly, it has given me a great deal of satisfaction to work on this particular project. I would like to think that the project reflects my love of auto racing and especially, of the Indianapolis 500.
Appendix I: Facility Program