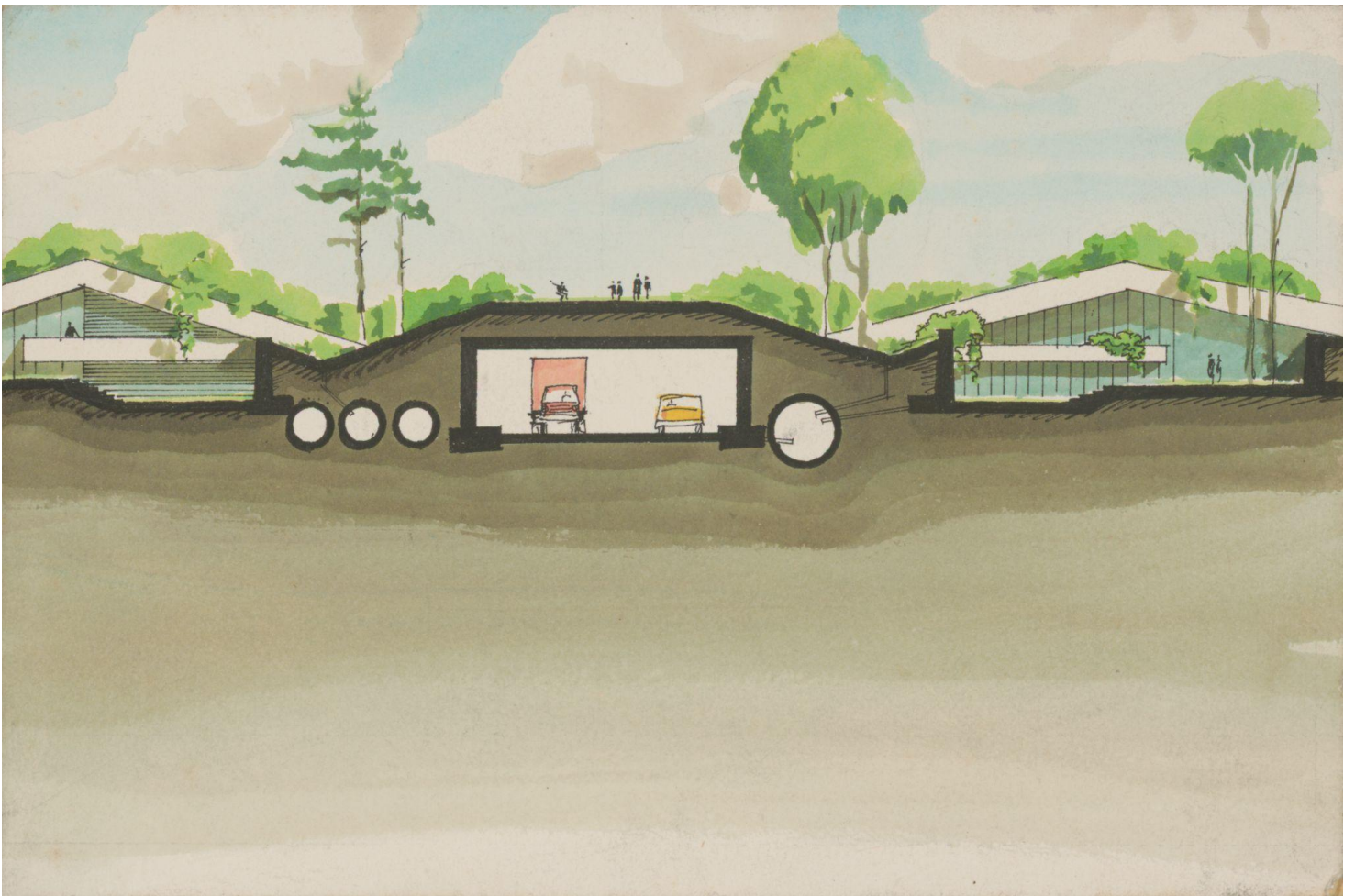


Learn with MoMA



MoMA



Step 1 Look closely

1. What do you notice about the structures?
2. What do you think these structures might be used for?
3. What questions do you have about the structures?

Step 2 Learn

Malcolm Wells started his career working on conventional building projects, primarily for the electronics firm RCA on offices, factories, and its pavilion at the New York World's Fair in 1964. However, after seeing that the vast majority of the Fair's pavilions were thrown away after the exhibition ended, Wells underwent a "conversion." The wastefulness of the building industry went to the forefront of his vision, and Wells told his employees and clients that he would henceforth work only on designs that ceded territory back to nature through berming (building up of earth around or on top of a structure) and building underground.

Wells's underground designs were celebrated for their energy-saving attributes. However, Wells hoped that his subterranean architecture would do more than conserve energy, giving control of the land back to "wilderness," which, he believed, having had the advantage of "millions of years of trial and error," was better suited than humans to design landscapes.



Volkswagen of America is proud to be MoMA's lead partner of learning and engagement.

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Step 3 Activity: Design an underground building

Suggested materials: paper and pencil or pen.

1. Either individually or as a group make a list of all the reasons having a building underground might be useful.
2. Choose one idea from the list and design a new underground building focused around the idea. Be sure to consider:
 - a. What will the building be used for?
 - b. What will it look like?
 - c. Who is the building for?
 - d. How will people be able to access fresh air, perform daily tasks, or enter/exit the structure?
 - e. How will the building affect the ecology and surroundings?
3. Create a detailed drawing of your building. You can draw a cross-section showing what the inside of the building will look like, a floor plan, or what the outside will look like.

Step 4 Share!

Share your underground building with a friend or classmate. Or you can email the images to us at MoMA: schoolprograms@moma.org.

Step 5 Learn more

Learn more about architecture that is integrated with the natural environment: [James Wines: Building with Nature](#).

Image: Malcolm Wells (American, 1926–2009). Sectional drawing of an earth-sheltered suburb. c. 1965. Ink and watercolor on paper. 5 x 8" (12.7 x 15.2 cm). Collection Sam H. Wells; Malcolm Wells (American, 1926–2009). Perspectival drawing of an earth-sheltered suburb. c. 1965. Watercolor on paper. 6 x 9" (15.2 x 22.9 cm). Collection Sam H. Wells