junction between the building and sky, it dominates the field of vision, from a distant perspective.

The decoration of the tall building or skyscraper can therefore be regarded as analogous to a classical column where both the base and the capitol have degrees of complexity, while the shaft is elegant and unadorned, its decorative quality relying solely on its graceful proportions. Among the architects who built the first American skyscrapers the man who really grasped the poetics of the steel frame was Louis Sullivan. It was his Guaranty Building in Buffalo, stating the lyric theme of soaring vertically, which became a feature of all later skyscrapers (Hughes, 1980). The top of tall buildings is a prime location for decoration. It becomes a means of bestowing distinction.

Of the two leading American cities of the twentieth century, Chicago and New York, it is New York which has always had the most individually decorative skyscrapers. As Girouard (1985) notes: 'It has become the convention to compare the stripped elegance of the Chicago skyscrapers with the columns, domes and spires of the New York ones, to the detriment of the latter. The difference in style in fact reflects the different situations in the two cities. New York was a head-office city and Chicago a branch-office one.' The New York and other East Coast investors who financed the Chicago skyscrapers wanted the maximum return on their investment, and thus required of their buildings a simple and 'stripped elegance'. However, when an impression was required the 'Chicago style' was rejected: 'All the early New York high buildings were designed to make a splash rather than to give the maximum commercial return. They were the headquarters of insurance companies, or newspapers, and of cable or telegraph companies which were often in competition with each other, and knew the value of height, splendour and a memorable silhouette in establishing their image or increasing their sales' (Girouard, 1985). Such buildings were in effect 70 storey billboards, a civic decoration but directed towards private rather than public ends.

The skyscraper as a dominant concept in city development may soon become history. If, as seems possible, this planet and its people seek a *rapprochement* with nature then sustainable development will become an overriding imperative for the city of the future. The aftermath of the Rio Conference and Agenda 21 has introduced a new realism into attitudes towards energy consumption, resource depletion, conservation, pollution and recycling. Certainly there will be no sudden revolution, no immediate cessation of the building of tall wasteful structures, and no overnight conversion to public transport. However, as finite resources near depletion, as the environmental costs of pollution and congestion are added to traditional development costs both excessively high buildings and low density urban sprawl will become less economic. The formulation of urban policies, under way in a number of European countries, that aim to reduce dependency on the car, encourage four storey high density mixed use development, organized in self-sufficient quarters, may have a profound effect upon the city skyline early in the next century. The model silhouette for such a sustainable or more sustainable city would have a form similar to the flat profile of the pre-industrial city; the high points of contrast being the preserved towers, domes and skyscrapers of former generations. Even in a more sustainable city, the skyscraper will probably remain as an anachronism of the past and perhaps as great a delight to the eye as Wren's spires and the minarets of Istanbul.

ROOFSCAPE

High buildings permit the city to be seen in quite different ways and from an altogether different perspective. Parisians were at first quite amazed by the view from the Eiffel Tower; that sense of joy and wonder is still experienced by visitors to the Tower. In a sense, each first time visitor to the upper stages of the Eiffel Tower experiences the

city in a completely new and exciting way. The artist Robert Delaunay was so captivated with the view that he made a whole series of paintings of Paris exploiting this great vantage point (Hughes, 1980). The 'bird's eye' perspective or axonometric has become a common method of representing urban design proposals, but how many developments actually exploit the possibilities of roofscape decoration? Aronson's technique of the exploded aerial perspective with multi vanishing points is a most useful tool for recording and analysing public space (see Bacon, 1978) (Figure 4.16). Its emphasis on roofscape promotes the idea that this element of a city's public realm can be seen from high vantage points and therefore has great potential as a design feature. The delightful roofscapes of German medieval towns such as Rothenborg illustrate the obvious possibilities that roofs have as important decorative elements in the city scene. Nothing, however, is as depressing as the sight of serried ranks of flat grey roofs on a wet November morning. It should be remembered that the flat roof in the design philosophy of the architects of the Modern Movement was meant to be a delightful garden. The hanging roof garden may be an idea to which it is worth returning in an effort to green and decorate the city.

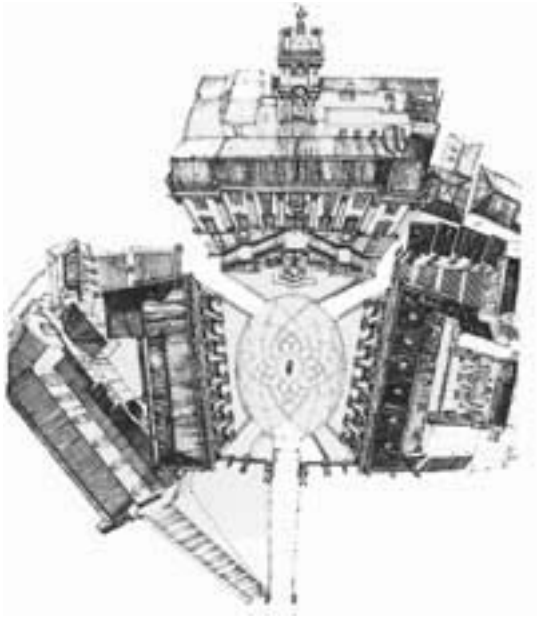

Figure 4.16 Aronson's aerial perspective of the Piazza Campidoglio, Rome

ROOFLINE

The roofline is that part of the skyline which is seen from the urban spaces within the city. Unlike the skyline which is a silhouette seen from a distance, the roofline, although also a silhouette, is seen from relatively short distances. The roofline is the profile or the topmost boundary of the wall of a street or public place; it is the meeting place of sky and building. As the edge of a main building element, it is a position where decoration has been traditionally placed. Since it is seen from close quarters, visual richness is important. This is far removed from the ideas of the Functionalist and Modernist schools of design; moral rectitude would impel the Modernist architect to finish the building façade in a crisp unadorned edge. A narrow plain coping stone covering a damp proof membrane would have been the sole recognition of this important design element. The unadorned curtain walled office block, unfinished at its edges, dating probably from the 1950s or 1960s, can be found adorning most city centres in Europe. Placing, on the roofline, ornamentation of sufficient interest and complexity, is one way of bringing interest to the modern city; it is a natural way to terminate a building and to celebrate the junction of sky and city.

Broadly speaking, there are four types of roofline. The first, which has already been discussed, is the plain crisp edge found in many modernist buildings. The second is the product of the natural growth of