The new State Assembly, in the capital city of Bhopal, for the Government of Madhya Pradesh was commissioned in 1980 but did not begin construction until 1983. Many factors determined its form: its site on the crest of a hill; the historic Muslim monuments nearby; and the famous Stupa of the Buddha at Sanchi, some fifty kilometres from the city. But perhaps the greatest determinant of form was the mandala — the cosmic organisation of functions, sequences and spaces within the ancient Hindu conception of the Universe.

The plan consists of a series of spaces within spaces, divided into a pattern of nine compartments (common in mandalas) which focus around a centre which represents nothingness. On two perpendicular axis, emanating from a central courtyard, are the administrative offices. The remaining four corners are occupied by the specialised functions: the Vidhan Parishad (Upper House), the Vidhan Sabha (Lower House), the Combined Hall, and the Library.

The administrative offices constitute the bulk of the floor area and form a decisive part of the architectural experience. The offices are placed between open spaces in the manner of buildings built in India during the nineteenth century which provided circulation along verandahs from which there is a view of surrounding gardens. Hence the path to the offices and their waiting areas becomes an important and pleasant experience.

In this Vidhan Bhavan, the movement pattern within the building have been carefully studied. For the bureaucrat and the politician the circulation is always along the edge of the courtyards. For security reasons the public is separated from Assembly Members and other VIPs. Visitors enter through the main Public Entrance court to the west, and after passing through a checkpoint, climb ramps to reach viewing galleries overlooking the three main Halls. On the way to the galleries and offices people walk along bridges and ramps winding around the subbhas like the ritual circumambulatory paths around the Sanchi Stupa. This movement pattern — the path within the puzzle-box — is common to many of the architect’s projects and is similar in nature to Louis Kahn’s National Assembly, Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, in Dhaka, Bangladesh. The progressions through space allow the complex building to be experienced in all its dimensions.

This building can perhaps be best explained as a series of energies connecting the inside to the outside and the outside to the inside, setting of vibrations between the building’s forms and the building’s users — a yin-yang relationship. The use of an intellectual construct of space marks a new direction in Correa’s work — a more conceptual architecture rather than one determined by site, materials, climate and economics alone — and as such it becomes one of his most powerful architectural statements.
Northwest elevation.

Southeast elevation.
Model: Public entrance view.
Partial model view of the public entrance, the central court and the Vidhan Sabha.