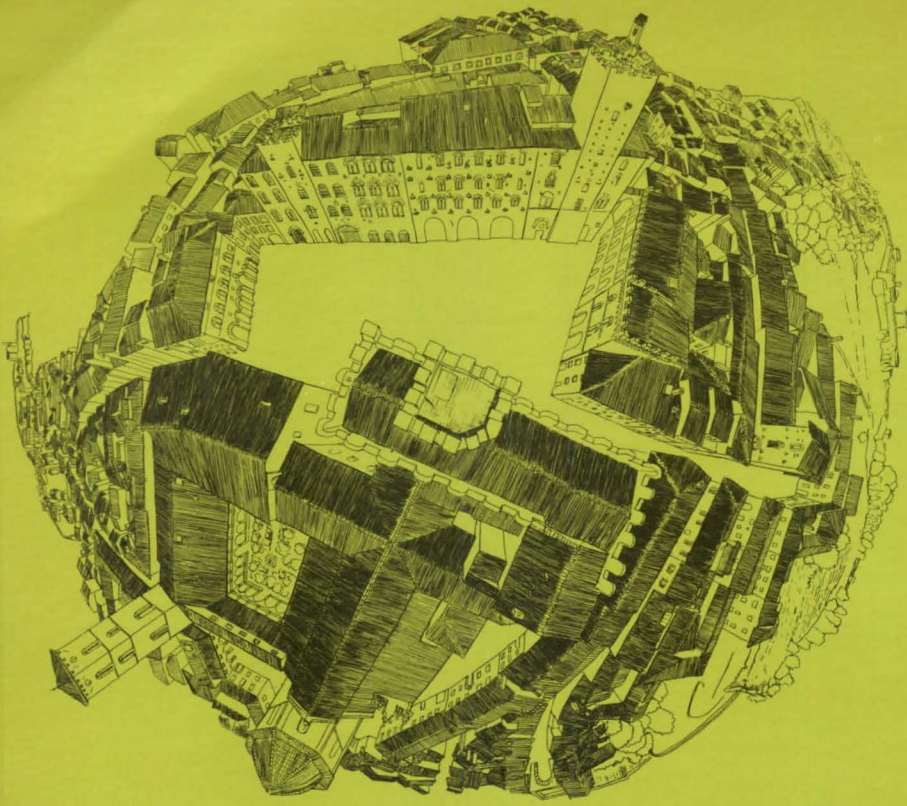
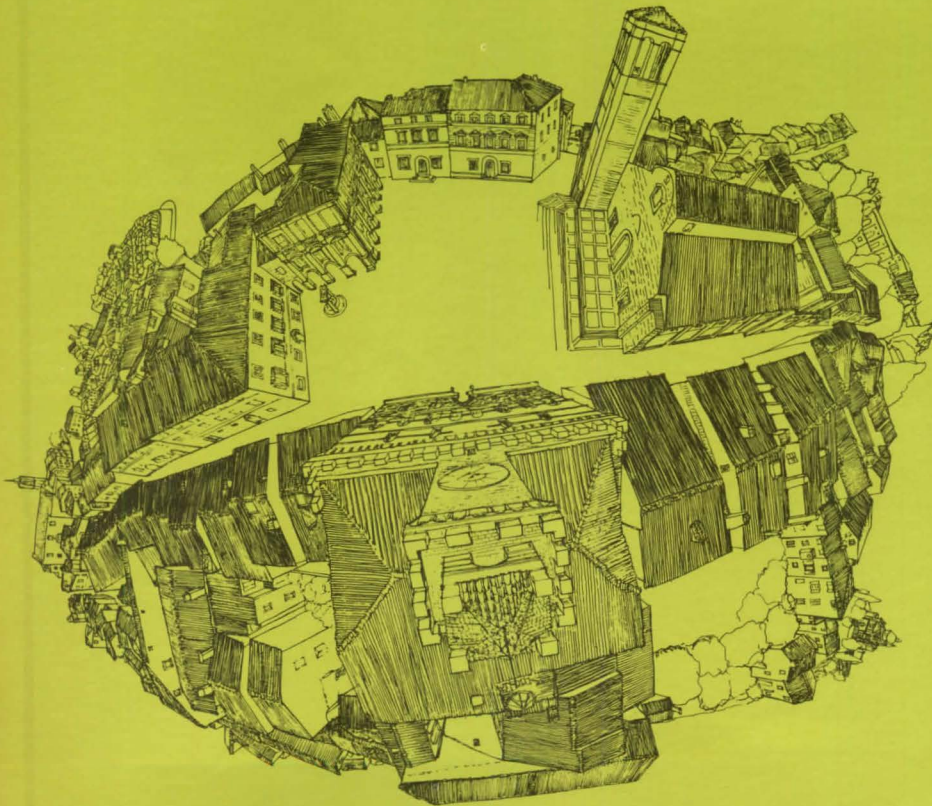


# VIEW FROM THE CAMPANILE



VOLTERRA's medieval boundaries stand inside larger, older, Etruscan walls. The town was once the bitter rival of San Gimignano until the Medici tyranny forced all of Tuscany under the hegemony of nearby Florence.



MONTEPULCIANO, one of the highest towns of Tuscany, was the home of the Renaissance architect family of San Gallo, and the scene of much of the work of the Florentine architect Michelozzo. The Ciesa di San Biagio, just outside the wall, was one of the sources of Michelangelo's plan for St. Peter's.

Although bird's-eye views have been popular for centuries—and more popular today with the fish-eye lens—the origin of the drawings on these pages was an inspiring view from the top of San Gimignano's highest tower. Graphic artist Joseph Aronson (who also studied architecture) stood one day at the summit and noticed two architectural phenomena: one, from this vantage point, the organic pattern of the medieval town was clearly marked; and two, there was a striking demarcation between town and farmland that made the city an island in the middle of a sea of olive groves, vineyards, and wheatfields. Aronson first tried recording the impression with a series of photographic assemblages (right), but found these unsatisfactory and began to use the camera as documentary tool for drawings. The final drawings, which are quite accurate representations of the towns, were printed on his own press in Florence. "One curious factor about this type of presentation," notes Aronson, "is that it is a complete composition in itself, devoid of top, bottom, or sides. It can and should be viewed from every angle. This graphic device also appears in Japanese maps of the 16th Century and onward, and these helped loosen my preconceived methods of visual presentation—to see what I saw from the top of San Gimignano." Aronson, who has an interesting collection of antique maps, plans to publish a portfolio of his own—a book of bird's-eye views of Italian cities.





*SAN GIMIGNANO'S 13 towers are all that remain of the 72 built by Tuscany's feudal nobles. With the rise of the free communes in the 12th and 13th Centuries, the towers became a conspicuous symbol of an unpopular nobility and many were destroyed.*