



THEATRIC DEPTH:

THE THEATER AND
THE PUBLIC

BENJAMIN
ATCHISON

THEATRIC DEPTH

A design thesis submitted to the Department of Architecture and
Landscape Architecture of North Dakota

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In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Architecture

Primary Thesis advisor 

Thesis Committee chair 

Date:

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THESIS ABSTRACT

My Thesis explores the way architecture can evoke a more meaningful relationship to the public realm. The project will attempt to reawaken a “space of participation” by challenging the changing understudy of public and private through the design of a theatre in downtown Detroit.

KEYWORDS: Public space, Theater, Depth, Symbolic Exchange, Poetic architecture

PROBLEM STATEMENT

How can architecture evoke a more meaningful relationship to the public realm?





STATEMENT OF INTENT

STATEMENT OF INTENT

PROJECT TYPOLOGY: Theater for Drama

THE CLAIM: Poetic, innovative, and critical architectural design can influence the way we interact within space.

ACTORS: The Public

ACTION: Symbolic, innovative and critical architecture design

OBJECT: The Individual in relation to the other

SUPPORTING PREMISES: Symbolic and critical design can evoke a participation with perception that allows the viewer to engage with larger cultural grounds. This architecture can provide a place for the individual to participate within public. Through the theatre, meaningful connections can be made about the theatrics of the space. Allowing a moment to perceive the other in a new way.

- THE UNIFYING IDEA: Architecture can create connections between people and culture, bringing things together through our perception. Through the theater we can begin to reconcile ourselves with the larger society. By seeing ourselves through the creation of theatre art and architecture we can mitigate the effects of sprawl on social constructs.
- JUSTIFICATION: The Sprawl of large urban cities creates a separation within the city. City centers lose their ability to gather crowds. How can the public interact meaningfully with one another in this current space of separation? Can architecture serve as a center to unite the community as a whole?
- THE SITE: Detroit, Michigan





PROPOSAL

THESIS NARRATIVE

How do we interact within public space? What purpose does it serve? What purpose did it serve? We quickly move from our home to the convenience store. Conversation is an irregularity as we attain the necessary items for our day. We pass each other without much recognition. Public space has become increasingly private. We no longer see the need to engage within public space. A different medium fills this role. The Internet has become a new outlet for our interactions. But isn't it valuable to interact within a physical depth as well?

Throughout history public space has been a place of ritual, a place of being seen and understanding ourselves within the world. More recently cities have turned into mere circulation deviating from its historic root as ritualistic space (Perez-Gomez). Through advancements in technology, and the changing understanding of the city as efficient circulation of people and goods, the public no longer has to interact within the physical world or even each other. In the same way all of our needs can be met through our private lives. It has become inconvenient to leave our comfort zone. With the increasing size and population of the city we have been pushed to the limits of the city. The sprawl of the city has separated the public from one another. Public space has developed into mere circulation, a passing from one place to another. We no longer see the need to linger and experience a place or other people in the same way as was always central to public spaces in the past.

Through one of the original sites of gathering, the theater, can we find cause to linger? Through the theater can we begin to see ourselves through the distance between the actor and the spectator? The theater serves as an event, a place to see and be seen, and a place to reconnect to our entire society. It is the missing city center that we lack. It is the events that draw us near to one another that serve to reconnect us to a greater continuum within our culture. The ritual space of theater can serve as a center to today's "space of appearance" or what we call public space.

USER/CLIENT DESCRIPTION

OWNER:

The Theater will be owned by the city to promote more activity within the downtown region of Detroit.

THE PUBLIC:

The Theater will be primarily used to serve as a performing arts center for the public.

The Theater itself will serve as a event to bring citizens to the downtown area, additionally the outdoor space will frame the events of the public.

The public consists of local residents and guests who arrive to see performances and experience the space, the museum and other people.

WORKERS:

The actors, actresses and stage hands will be responsible for conducting performances within the space, which will be managed by directors. Security and custodial staff will also be required.

MAJOR PROJECT ELEMENTS

PERFORMANCE STAGE

A main stage must be able to house the performances that occur.

- Proscenium stage
- Gathering spaces before performances
- Backstage
- Box office

MUSEUM

A museum of history

- Multiple gallery spaces
- Gallery entry

PUBLIC SPACE

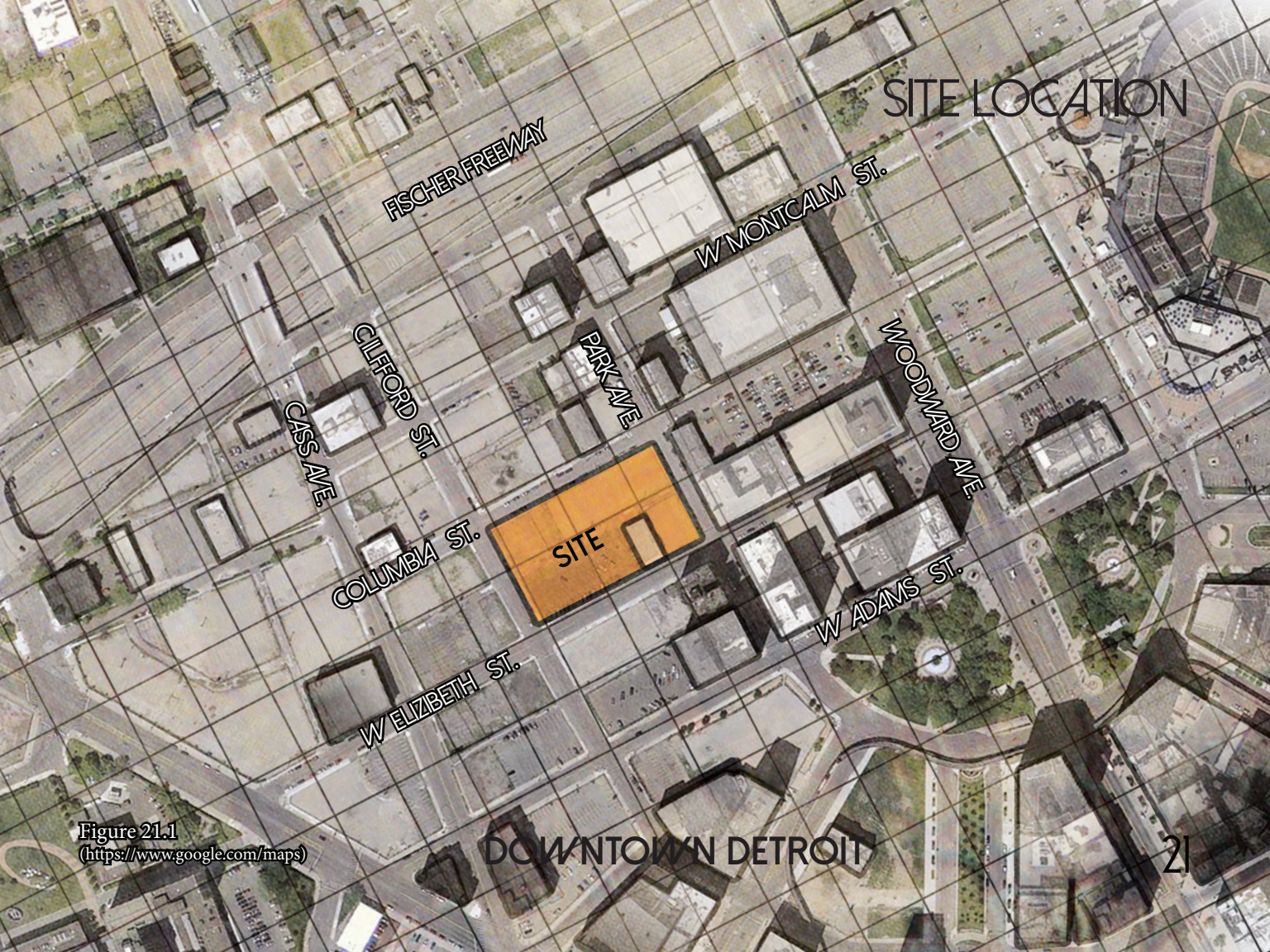
The program should provide places for gathering

- Theater Foyer
- Outdoor public space

SITE INFORMATION



The increasing segregation of sprawl is widespread. With such large-scale separation it has become more difficult for its citizens to interact. In particular, Detroit has suffered from this ailment. My site is set within downtown Detroit. Large plots of empty land only serve to accommodate parking. I have chosen this site in order to increase density and embodied interaction for the city.



SITE LOCATION

FISCHER FREEWAY

W MONTCALM ST.

WOODWARD AVE

W ADAMS ST.

PARK AVE

CALFORD ST.

CASS AVE

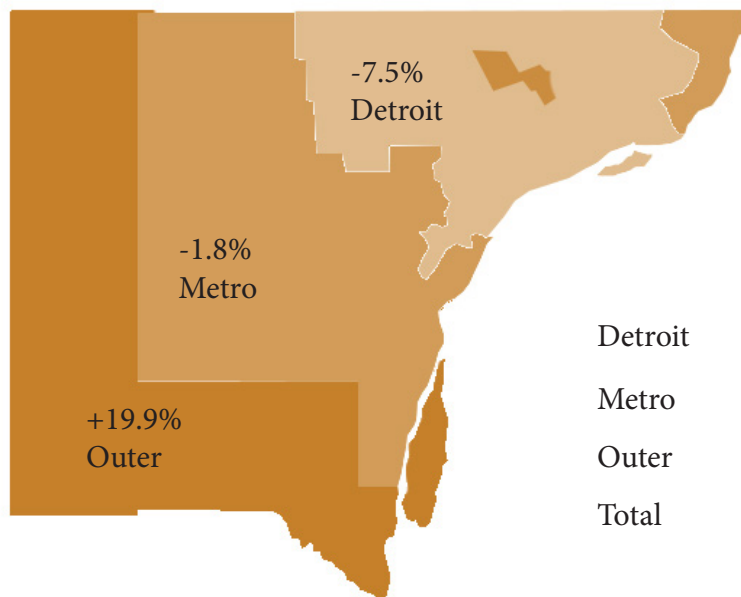
COLUMBIA ST.

W ELIZBETH ST.

SITE

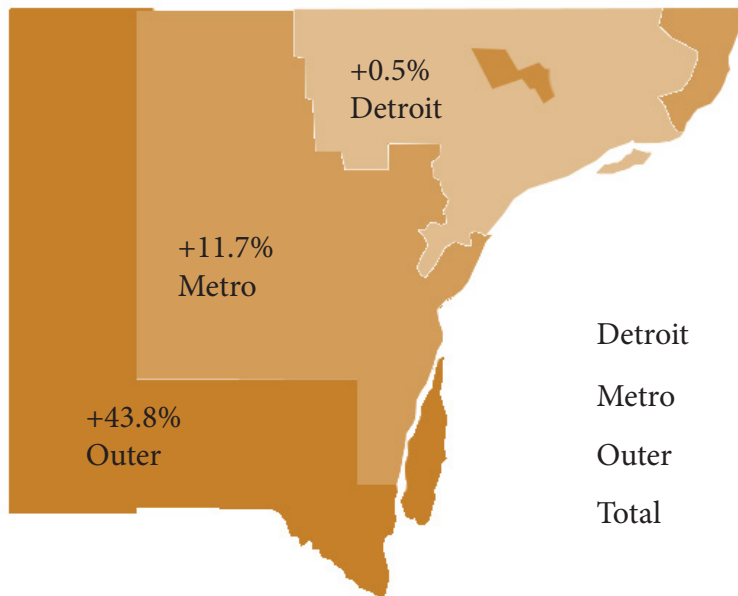
DOWNTOWN DETROIT

Figure 21.1
(<https://www.google.com/maps>)



POPULATION

	1990	2000	Change
Detroit	1,027,957	951,270	-7.5%
Metro	872,590	856,807	-1.8%
Outer	210,993	253,085	+19.9%
Total	2,111,540	2,061,162	-2.4%



URBAN AREA (SQFT)

	1991	2002	Change
Detroit	121.53	122.09	+0.5%
Metro	164.05	183.21	+11.7%
Outer	68.14	97.98	+43.8%
Total	353.72	403.29	+14.0%

Figure 23.1
(<http://mateov.com/msu/geo425/project/results.html>)

Figure 22.1 shows the changing population from 1990 to 2000. This change shows a large amount of growth occurring on the outsides of Detroit. More recently Detroit's population has dropped to 700,000 people (US Census Bureau, 2014).

Figure 23.1 Shows the urban area increase. The largest amount of change also occurs towards the outer area.

It is obvious that sprawl is still occurring in Detroit. Development within the downtown is lacking. On the other hand development on the outskirts of the city is on the rise. I believe that development is crucial within the inner regions of Detroit if we wish to mitigate the rising sprawl.

DOWNTOWN DETROIT FIGURE GROUND



Figure 25.1
(Ben Atchison)

PROJECT EMPHASIS

This thesis will be focused on the question how can architecture can enhance an embodied exchange with cultural grounds in todays public realm. This architecture will challenge the ideas of public and private space through an engagement through the other. The architecture will allow a center for the community to engage theater and public space. This is a place to see and be seen, a way of understanding ourselves within the larger context of society. This project will examine the interaction that architecture can create through the experience of space and the other people. The architecture will blur or exaggerate the depth between dualities in space: private/public, Inside/outside, and actor/audience by itself becoming a stage for interaction.

A PLAN FOR PROCEEDING

RESEARCH:

Research will be conducted throughout the entire thesis. Additional support for each claim will be a priority. Site investigations will be performed to validate the selection.

DESIGN METHODOLOGY:

Both qualitative and quantitative data will be collected to assess the thesis. Readings, digital analysis, graphical analysis, models, and artefacts will provide an integration of qualitative and quantitative analysis supported by theoretical claims.

DOCUMENTATION:

Documentation will be conducted via photographs, video and written assessments. Physical and digital copies will be provided to assess the work.

SCHEDULE FOR SPRING

TASK	WORKDAYS	DATES
Project documentation	88 days	1/9-5/10
Context Analysis	5 days	1/9-1/15
Conceptual Analysis	10 days	1/9-1/22
Spatial Analysis	15 days	1/11-1/31
ECS Passive Analysis	5 days	1/18-1/24
ECS Active Analysis	5 days	1/18-1/24
Structural Development	8 days	1/24 - 2/4
Context Redevelopment	5 days	1/18 - 1/24
Floor Plan Development	11 days	2/5 - 2/19
Envelope Development	14 days	1/21 - 2/7
Material Development	11 days	2/14 - 2/28
Section Development	10 days	2/15 - 2/28
Midterm Reviews	4 days	3/5 - 3/9
Project Revisions	12 days	3/7 - 3/22
Energy Modeling	7 days	3/12 - 3/20
Renderings	24 days	3/13 - 4/15
Preparation for Presentation	7 days	4/5 - 4/15
Presentation layout	6 days	4/8 - 4/15
CD of boards	0 days	4/16
Plotting and Model Building	5 days	4/16 - 4/22
Installation on 5th Floor	0 days	4/25
Thesis Exhibit	3 days	4/23 - 4/25
Final Thesis Review	6 days	-
Final Thesis Documentation Due	0 days	5/10
Commencement	0 days	-

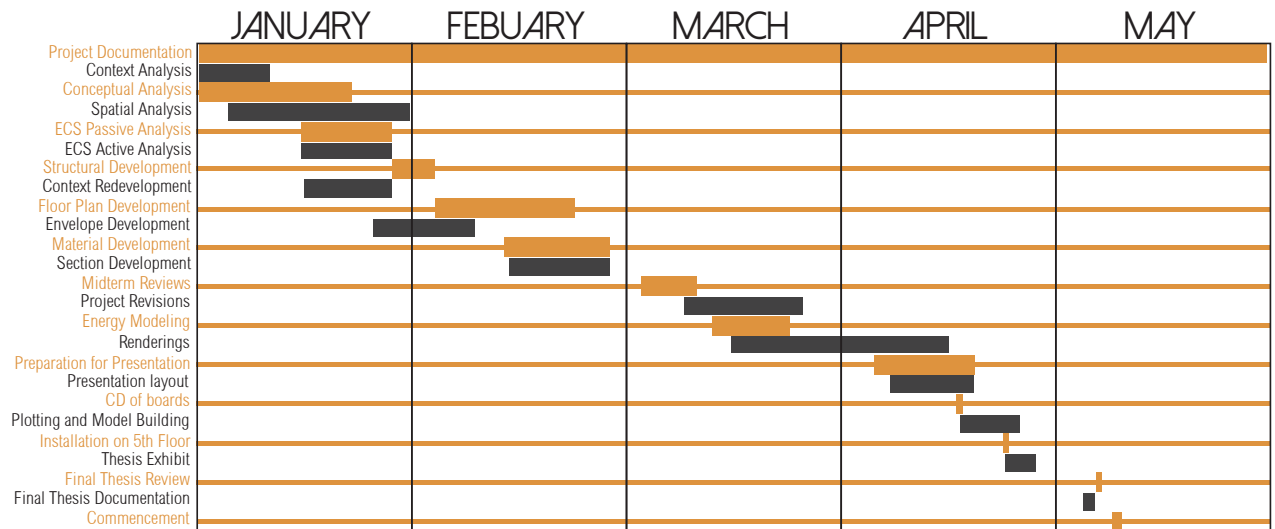


Figure 29.1
(Ben Atchison)

PREVIOUS WORK

Architecture Studio I - 2010 - Joan Vorderbruggen
-Teahouse

Architecture Studio II - 2011 - Darryl Booker
-Boat house, Montessori School, Birdhouse

Architecture Studio III - 2011 - Mike Christenson
-Corbusier Museum Iterations

Architecture Studio IV - 2012 - Rhet Fiskness
-Presidential Library, Art Studio

Architecture Studio V - 2012 - Cindy Urness
-Highrise, DLR Competition

Architecture Studio VI - 2013 - Frank Kratky, Don Faulkner
-Hopes Journey, Marvin Windows Competition

Advanced Architecture Studio - 2013 - Stephen Wischer





PROGRAM

RESEARCH

Within our society we have become more and more separated from one another. Public space has become transparent, gradually becoming a spaces that we merely pass through. Modern society is more concerned about how we can get from point A to point B. Our spaces have changed from articulations of ritual space to idealized spaces of efficient circulation. With an increasing private life we have become less sociable within the physical public realm. Questioning this separation is imperative to understanding our social issues. In order to emphasize this we must define the issue.

As suggested by Richard Sennett western society has moved from an other-directed society to that of an inner-directed society (Sennett, 1974). Because of this there has been confusion between our private and public lives. Today the public is more and more of a place of impersonal codes of behavior. Private is a place of intimate and personal feelings. The value of individual experience has overshadowed our ability to act in a space of culture. “The world of intimate feeling loses any boundaries; it is no longer restrained by a public world in which people make countervailing investment of themselves (Sennett, 1974).”



Figure 34.1
(Garry Knight via Flickr, 2007)

Within large cities sprawl has had a negative effect on the way that we engage one another (Jacobs, 1961). As the city expands it becomes harder for the public to interact since sprawl divides the community into fragments of self-isolation. Neighborhoods that want little to do with one another. These issues are made present in the book, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* by Jane Jacobs. Sprawl causes many issues that have adverse effects on our society's culture. Social, economic and cultural segregation divide our cities. Through a reconnection to the other we as individuals can begin to understand ourselves in relation to our society. As suggested by Jacobs, “..Literal and continuous mingling of people, present because of different purposes, is the only device that keeps streets safe. It is the only device that cultivates secondary diversity (Jacobs, 1961).” How do we interact within our modern society without a “place of appearance”? Many cities lack these centers that have the power to draw us in.

Public space is best defined by Hannah Arendt, as a “place of appearance” it is known as the place where I find myself and recognize my place through the other. “ Furthermore Alberto Pérez-Gómez suggests public space is a space full of embodiment, a space of dialogue, gesture, and erotic exchange (Pérez-Gómez).”

In order to better understand public space we can relate it to theater. The Greeks defined public space as a “different mode of expression that celebrated not clear information but poetic utterance,” which in turn speaks to all of our senses (Pérez-Gómez). This expression opens up a distance of interpretation. Allowing ourselves to see through the creation presented.

The “place of appearance” is known as the place where I find myself and recognize my place through the other. “Public space is a space full of embodiment, a space of dialogue, gesture, and erotic exchange”



The correlation between theater and public was more evident within the banquet years than it is now. This time period in Paris from 1885 to 1918 was a time of art, fashion and the pleasures of life. There was a theatrical aspect of life in which everyone wore costumes to display themselves at their best. Everything from monocles to top hats displayed a very theatric appearance. Society made social encounters meaningful through the bridge between the stage and the street. As the distance between theatre and public widened clothing began to reflect a distancing from the theatre.

“Theater Mundi” is the idea of the world as a stage. Plato viewed this as humans as puppets being staged by the gods. In the banquet years this was viewed as the entire city being a stage. Sennett states that there are three distinct moral purposes of public life similar to theater. The first of which talks about man as a creature of masks, secondly it he states public space as a space of delusion and illusion. And finally public space detaches human nature from social action (Sennett, 1974). Sennett describes man as actor within the public, a man of emotion and expression acting accordingly to each situation.

Theater embodies the intrinsic characteristics of public space. With this idea we can begin to understand an alternative place for these public actions to occur. Through the festival that is brought present within the theater we can begin to engage with one another more profoundly. We begin to see ourselves through the production, and-

question ourselves. “Of all secular institutions, the theater is the only remaining one of any power and universal validity that links our love of festival, our joy in spectacle and laughter, the pleasure that we take in being touched, excited, and profoundly moved to the ancient instincts for festival implanted in the human race from time immemorial (Gadamer, 1986).” The festival of the theater allows us to participate similarly to that of public space. We begin to see ourselves through the creation during each performance.

Plato’s idea of Chora is an essential to understanding the participation evoked by the theater. He described three components of reality: Being, Becoming and Chora (Pérez-Gómez, 1994). He describes Being as “The unchanging form, uncreated and indestructible, imperceptible to sight or the other sense, the object of thought.” Becoming is understood as, “That which bear the same name as the form and resembles it, but is sensible has come into existence, is in constant motion, and is apprehended by opinion with the aid of sensation.” And finally Plato describes Chora. It is nothing less than the space of human creation and participation. It is between being and becoming. In both theater and public we experience catharsis. In theater it is understood as a purification or reconciliation between the darkness of personal destiny and the light of the divine, as expressed in Greek tragedy. The same moral action occurs within the public. We understand ourselves through the presence of the other. It is this space that allows us to transcend ourselves and view ourselves in a new light.

Figure 38.1

(http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Picture_of_a_Crowded_Theater_Hosting_Performance_of_Sugawara_Denju_Tenarai_Kagami_LACMA_M.2006.136.291a-c.jpg)



THE FESTIVAL



曲多因色

Public space, like the theater, creates an event, a place to linger and to be open to desire. It allows us to be aware of an embodied consciousness not reducible to a single sense (Perez-Gomez). This “lingering” is also apparent in theater as festival time, an occurrence that distorts our sense of time and space as we become lost in the moment (Gadamer, 1986). Vitruvius understood architecture as a place that opens up a space for language and culture to emerge similar to that of the fire (Perez-Gomez). Vitruvius describes this clearing as a space that makes language and culture possible, this space is seen as the origin of the polis (Perez-Gomez, 2012). Much like the fire the public and the theatre should be able to captivate our attention and allow us to linger. The Eiffel tower is one such place. It serves as a center for tourists and citizens to gather. Although it serves as a landmark it creates an attraction. The theater is similar to the public space of the Eiffel tower. It becomes a place to become engaged in, a festive gathering space, and an event.

The act of theater creates a space that allows us to reconnect through a distance. It's similarities to public space allow us to partake in the moment, to linger in its festive qualities and allow our senses to be molded by the performance. The experiential qualities of theater can transform our understanding of ourselves in relation to society. By becoming involved within the performance we experience a resonant, meaningful public space.

Figure 40.1
(Yortw via Flickr, 2006)

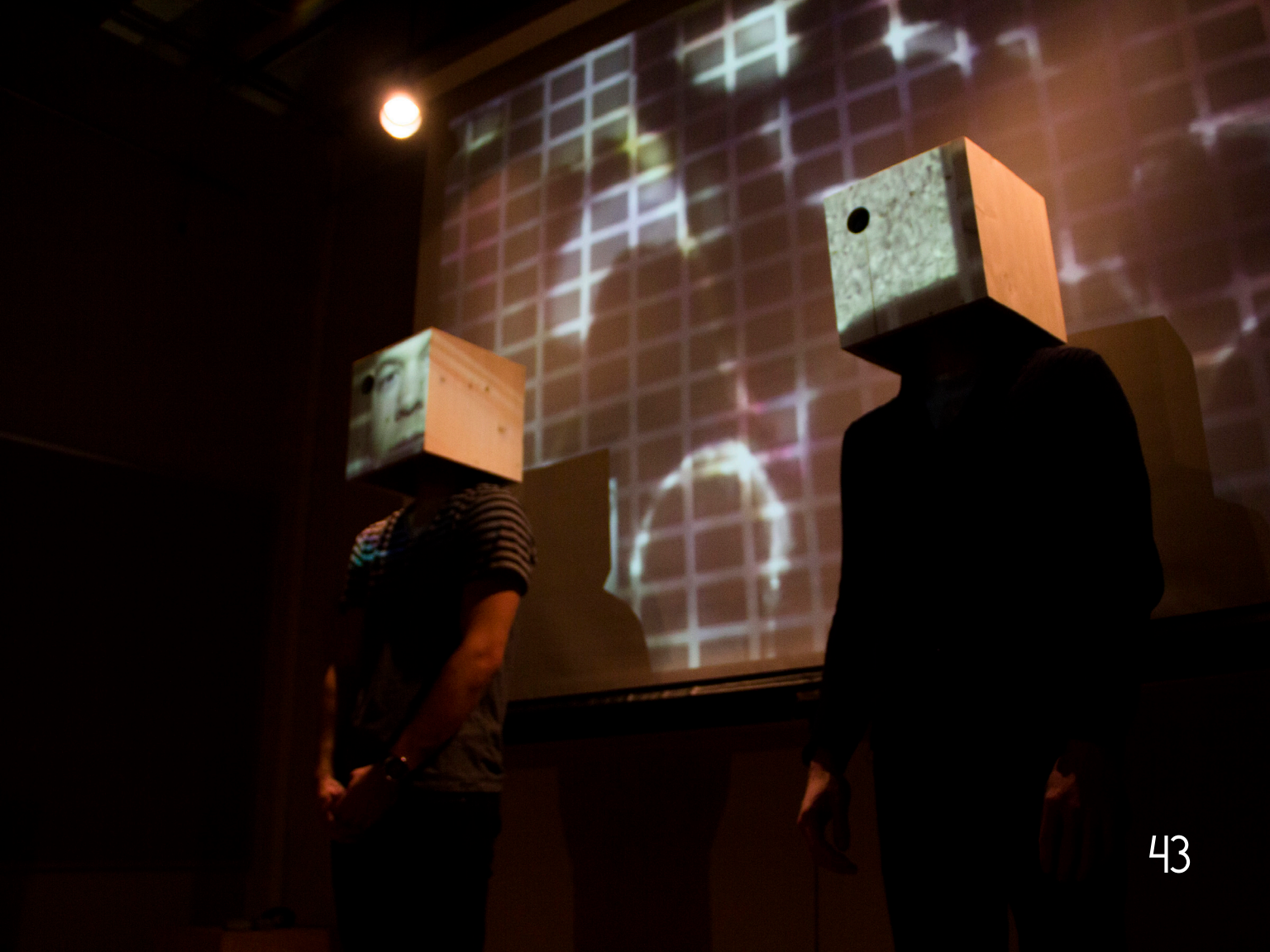


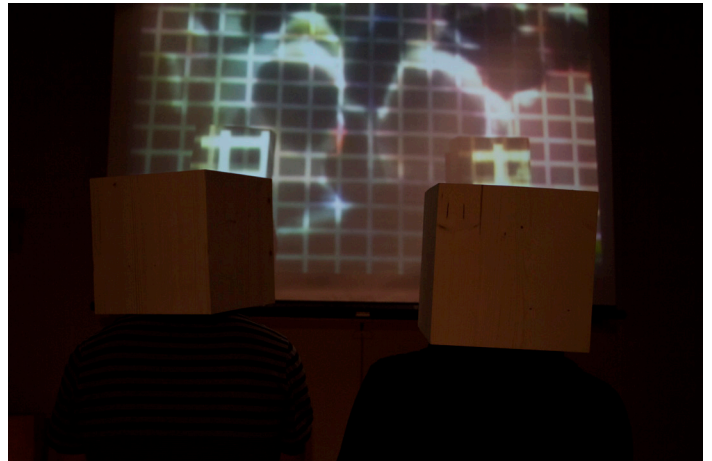
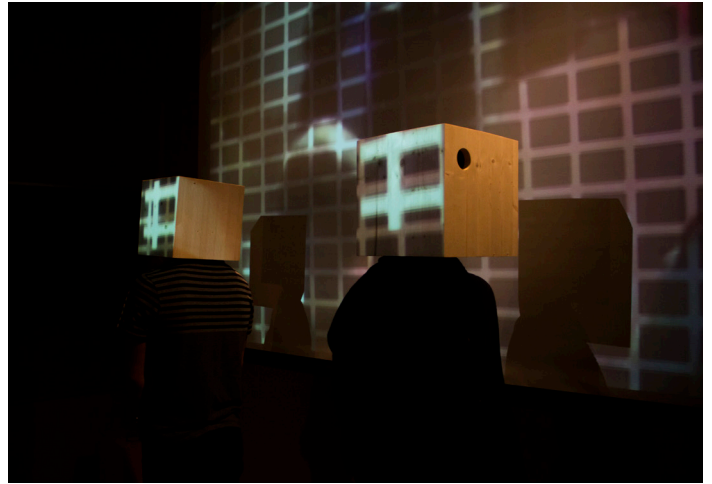
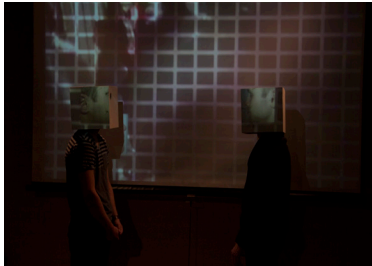
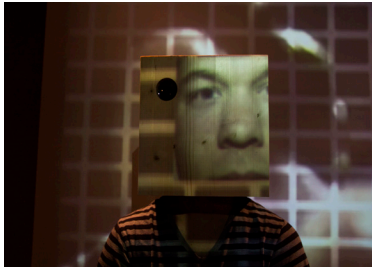
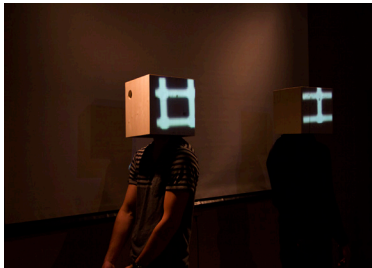
PUBLIC IN PARIS

ARTEFACT

In order to further develop my thesis I created a theatrical performance to inspire a participation in real depth, much like art, poetry, or architecture can do. My artefact is a critique on our current public life. The performance attempt to represent the city as means of circulation and the performers act within this setting. The performance tries to reawaken a theatrical setting.

Two performers place boxes onto their heads, isolating themselves from the audience while standing in front of the projector. The projector casts faces onto the masks, reflecting a distorted personality separate from their own. The images surrounding the performers illustrate an illusion of public space set onto a minimalist grid. This illustrates the city as means of efficient circulation.





The two performers interact within the space of the projector within physical depth. The actors end by sitting amongst the audience making them aware of the distance between themselves and the act of performance. I believe that this performance can anticipate the architecture. The performance plays with the depth of the space, in particular the projector, actors, and audience. In similar ways my architecture will play with the depth of the inside/outside, audience/stage, private/public; blurring depth or exaggerating it. This depth effects us through a participation with the work. The performance space opens up a depth that cannot be understood as a homogeneous dimension. As Stephen Wischer would say we are always dreaming, perceiving and imaging through the work, this depth reverses the idea of space as homogeneous. The theatrics of the performance are linked to that of the architecture to come.

Figure 45.1, 45.2, 45.3, 45.4, 45.5
(Jake Reimers)

RESEARCH SUMMARY

Public space has become more and more transparent, a place to merely pass through. We are now more concerned about how we can get from point A to point B. With an increasing private life we have become less engaged with the physical public realm. Because our society is moving from an other-directed society to that of an inner-directed society we have become more and more self-absorbed. With this personal focus private life has become the predominate force within our society.

Within larger cities it has become harder for us to interact. Without a space for engagement it becomes difficult for citizens to understand themselves in relation to the other. As sprawl separates us from one another we begin to see the negative effects of this separation. Where can we as the public be on display and encounter one another? Has Facebook become our new alternative?

Through theater we can begin to reconcile and recreate an alternative mode of public space. Similarities between the two have been drawn since the ancient times. The world as stage is the most theatrical idea. Each person is considered an actor, a creature of masks. With this idea we can begin to understand an alternative place for these public actions to occur. Through the theater we can begin to reconcile ourselves through ancient questions that have always been important to human social interaction.

For example the idea of Chora; a place of human creation and participation that occurs during the performance allows us to participate in an event and experience catharsis, which is a purification or reconciliation between the darkness of personal destiny and the light of the divine. We can begin understand ourselves in the larger scheme of society. We can begin to see ourselves through the production and question ourselves. It is this dramatic distance that allows us to see a correlation between the performance and our own lives and is what still allows for meaningful exchange to occur.

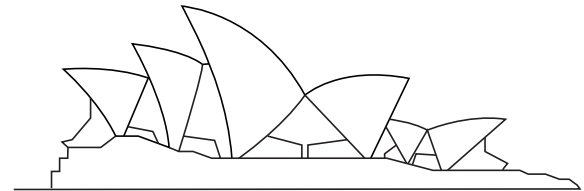
The act of the theater creates a space that allows us to reconnect through a poetic distance an event and a inter-subjective experience. It's similarities to public space allow us to partake in the moment, to linger in its festive qualities and allow our senses to be molded by the performance. The experiential qualities of theater can transform our understanding of ourselves in relation to society. By becoming involved within the performance we can experience qualities similar to that of public space.

CASE STUDIES

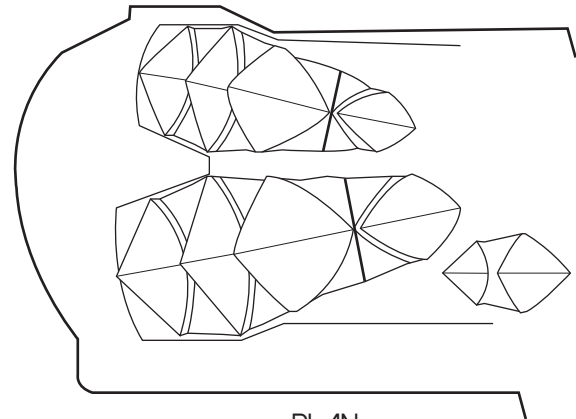
SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE

The Sydney opera house is a multi-venue performing arts center located in Sydney, Australia. The theater hosts about 1,500 performances per year, making it one of the busiest performing art centers in the world. The opera house takes up about 4.5 acres. Opera Australia, The Australian Ballet, the Sydney Theatre Company and the Sydney Symphony Orchestra occupy the majority of the spaces (Sydney Opera House, 2013). Jørn Utzon, a Danish architect won the completion for its design. Utzon later received a Pritzker prize in 2003. The building was finished in 1973. The opera house is striking from each angle. The main features of the design are the pre-cast concrete shells that make its distinguished form. Large glass curtain walls are housed within the shells separating outside from inside. Interior surfaces are made up of concrete and birch plywood. The exterior spaces are separated into planes at alternating heights. Exterior stairs lead from one performance hall to the next. Three distinct forms seem to separate each performance center. The program spaces include a concert hall, drama theatre, playhouse, studio, utzon room, proscenium theatre forecourt amphitheater, and recording studio.

Like many theatres this opera house shares a similar program to that of the other studies. The proscenium stage is a vital piece of any performance center. The striking expressionist form sets this building apart from the other case studies. It also is the largest of the studies. It includes much more performance centers and includes an outdoor theatre. Its structural elements challenge our thoughts on what architecture can be. At the time the engineering behind the construction was years ahead of its time. The building fits wonderfully into the waterfront site. It has become one of Australia's most famous visitor attractions with over 300,000 visiting each year. It has become a landmark for the city and is recognized world over.



SECTION



PLAN

Figure 49.1, 49.2

(http://2.bp.blogspot.com/-nH_xuK-HB-c/T8JRF6EtKnI/AAAAAAAAAjc/WRgluz6KwWU/s1600/Imagen+2.png)



Left

Figure 50.1

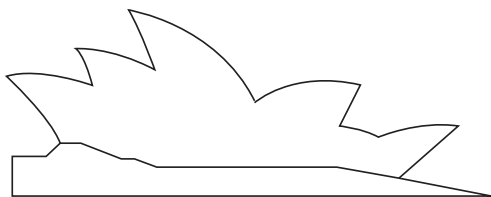
(Pierre Lesage via Flickr, 2007)

Right

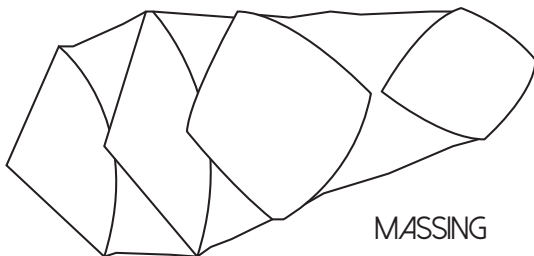
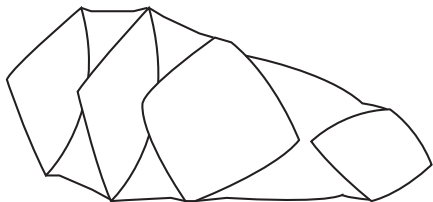
Figure 50.2

(Jimmy Harris via Flickr, 2006)

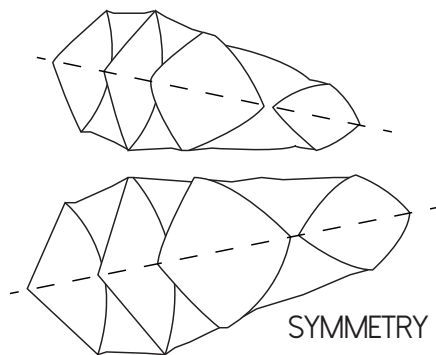




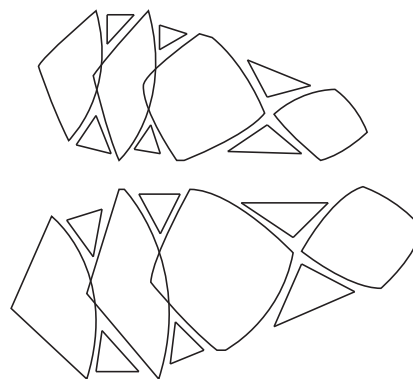
MASSING



MASSING



SYMMETRY



ADDITIVE/SUBTRACTIVE

Figure 51.1, 51.2, 51.3, 51.4
(http://2.bp.blogspot.com/-nH_xuK-HB-c/T8JRF6EtKnI/AAAAAAAAAjc/WRgluz6KwWU/s1600/Imagen+2.png)

THEATER BESANCON

Located in Besancon, France the Theater Besancon was designed in 1775 by Claude Nicholas Ledoux. It was built by architect Claude Joseph Alexander Bertrand. The architecture was influenced by a gallery supported by columns. The roof is shaped by the triangular trusses that span its distance. The inside stage consists of a singular proscenium stage. Seating was provided for commoners, this was rare at the time, commoners usually stood during performances of the time. Box seating surrounds the open plan seating. The aristocracy sat in the first tier of boxes while the middle class sat in the second tier boxes. The theatre was a statement to the idea of theater as a social communion between all. Even though segregation occurred it was open to all classes. This was one of the first designs that included an open pit orchestra. In 1958 the hall was destroyed by fire and was rebuilt.

This building is a great example of classical theater. The proscenium stage has changed very little from this original design. The start of the pit orchestra takes shape through this design and has carried through in time. This building differs from the others in its original purpose. Even though it segregated class it was a start to providing seating for all classes during that time.

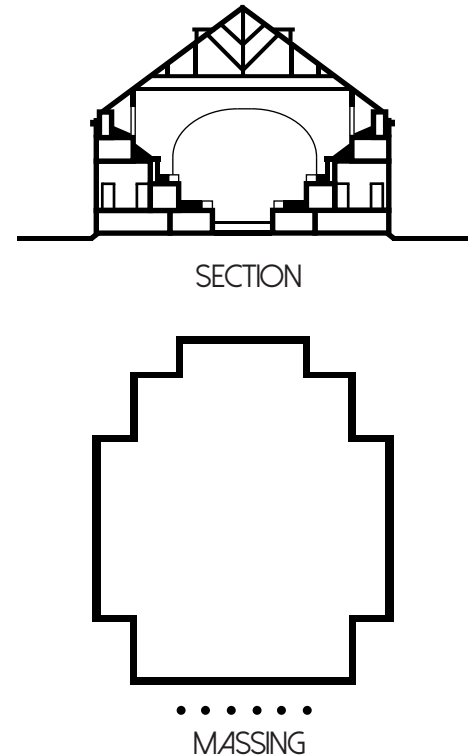


Figure 53.1, 53.2
(http://www.greatbuildings.com/buildings/Theater_at_Besancon.html)



54

Poster text:
Musée d'Art
Historique de
Bordeaux
Musée d'Art
Historique de
Bordeaux

54

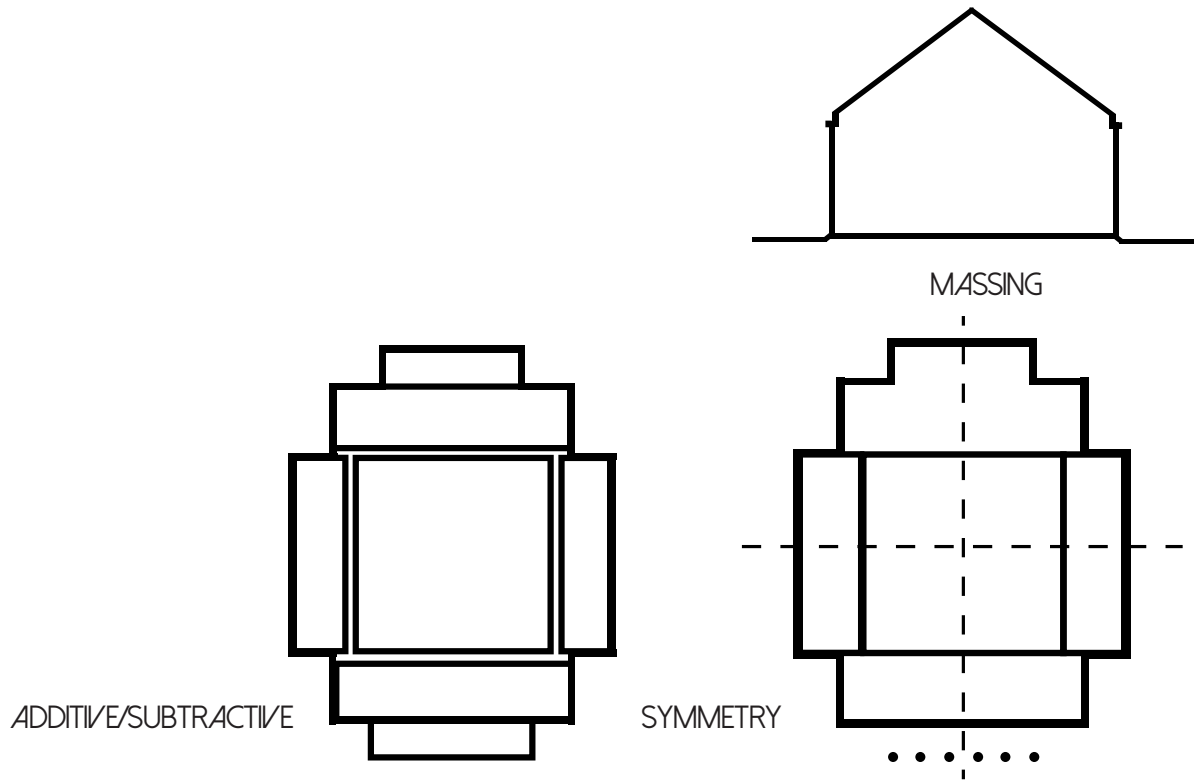


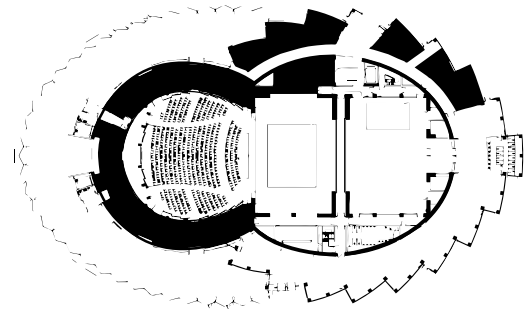
Figure 55.1
(Rich Pompetti via Flickr, 2006)

Figure 55.2, 55.3, 55.4
(http://www.greatbuildings.com/buildings/Theater_at_Besancon.html)

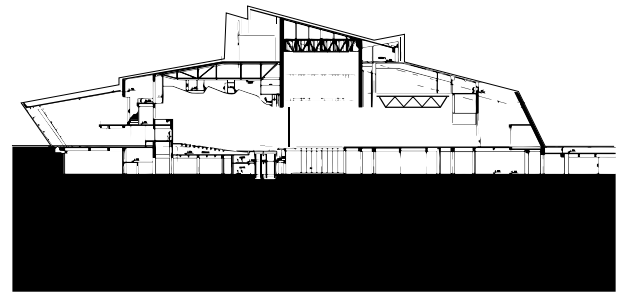
WUZHEN THEATER

Designed by Kris Yao the Wuzhen Theater sits beautifully on the water. It was constructed in Zhejiang, China and finished in 2010. Its area is 234,115 square feet. This building was constructed in a Chinese water town. The building overlooks the wonderful water feature. The theater contains two back to back theaters. The first allows for 1200 people while the second accommodates 600. Two interlocking ovals shape the theaters. The driving metaphor behind the building is the twin lotus. This culturally significant metaphor drives the two theaters having only one stage. This interesting design feature is a nice integration of the combination of spaces. This diversity in shape allows for a wide variety of functions. Different functions allow for more or less seating. Visitors can travel by wooden boat or by foot over the bridge to the theater.

This study shares a basic proscenium stage with the other studies. It becomes much different when we consider the interlocking theaters. The idea of backstage is totally different when we consider the possibilities of the theater. It is interesting to think of what would occur if both theaters were filled at the same time. Where would the backstage be? The ability for this theater to become much more diverse is a wonderful concept. The metaphor is very strong within the culture. It is important to integrate their culture into the design.



PLAN



SECTION

Figure 57.1, 57.2
(<http://www.archdaily.com/375609/wu-zhen-theater-kris-yao-architect/>, 2013)



Figure 58.1
(Fei-Chung Ying via Archdaily 2013)



Figure 58.3
(David Chen via Archdaily, 2013)

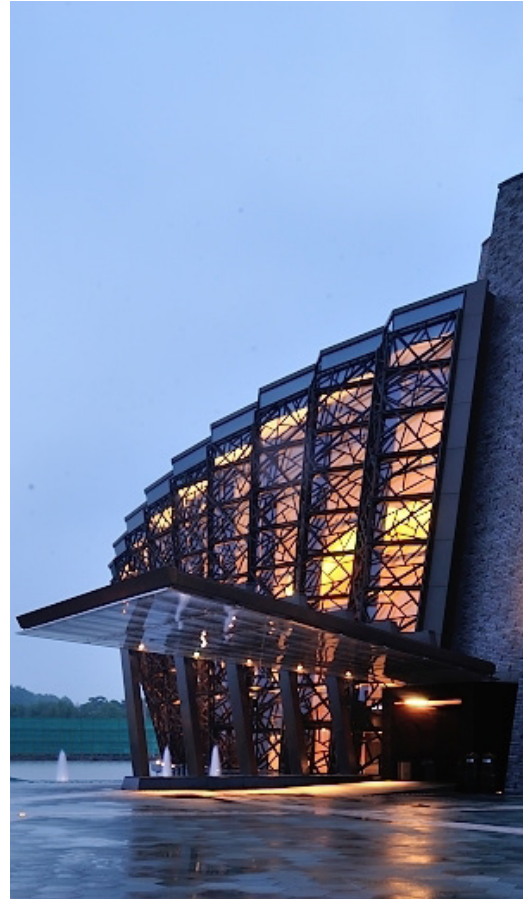


Figure 58.2
(Fei-Chung Ying via Archdaily, 2013)

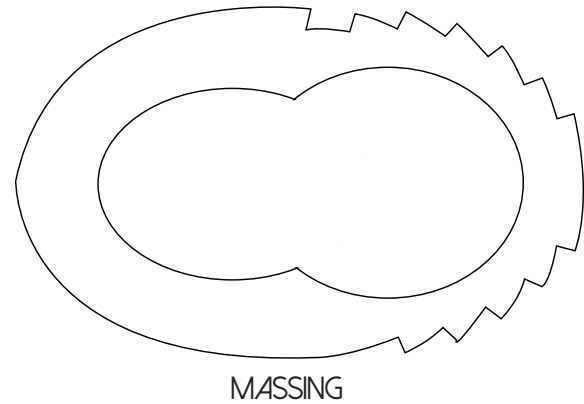
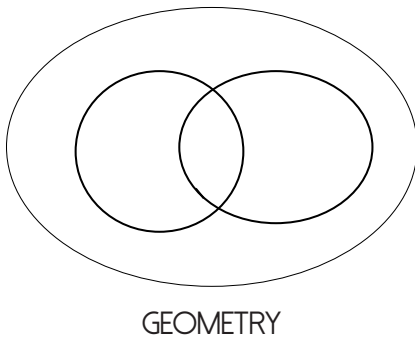
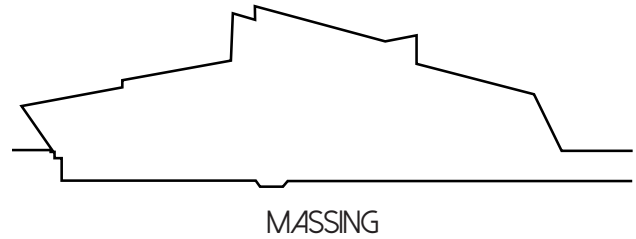


Figure 59.1, 59.2, 59.3
(<http://www.archdaily.com/375609/wuzhen-theater-kris-yao-architect/>)

SUMMARY

In understanding the program of these theaters I believe that I have allowed myself to see what can be. It is important to try and take something from each of these case studies. Being able to play with a depth of the front stage and backstage is a vital to my design approach. I believe that the Wuzhen Theater had an interesting arrangement of an atypical theater. This is almost in direct contrast to that of the very traditional Theater Besancon.

Many of the studies shared a similar type of theater. The most commonly shared theater was the Proscenium Theater. The newer buildings allowed for additional type of theaters, the Sydney opera house being the most diverse. I think that it is interesting to see the evolution of the theater as we have moved into new types of performance.

Being able to bridge the gap between the audience and stage will be a strong factor in my design. Playing with the depth between each space is important to me. If this depth is breached we experience a self-awareness that was not present before. I am interested especially in the Wuzhen Theaters dual purpose stage.

Ideas of culture had great effect on these buildings. Most of these buildings challenged their predecessors by doing something completely new or unheard of at the time. It is incredibly important to challenge our notions of what theater is and what it can be.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

THEATER AND PUBLIC

Public life has always had a relation to that of theatre. The very origins of public space are linked to theatre. Making evident these relationships will open up an understanding of the connection of the two in relation to space. It is important to understand the two as similar if we are to approach this relationship from an architectural standpoint. The two are comparable on many levels.

One of the oldest ideas of western society is Theatre Mundi; which is to see society as the theatre itself. Plato viewed this as humans as puppets being staged by the gods. In the banquet years this was viewed as the entire city being a stage. Richard Sennett discusses three moral purposes of the theatre similar to that of public. The first is to introduce illusion and delusion into questions of social life. The second is to detach human nature from social action. Finally to understand people play roles within society; man as

Figure 62.1

(http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ex-voto_a_sainte-genevieve_-Detail-Largilliere.jpg)



THEATRIC ATTIRE

the actor and man as a creature of masks. The mask both conceals the wearer from public and allows them to behave differently within that setting. We can understand this as the roles we play in society.

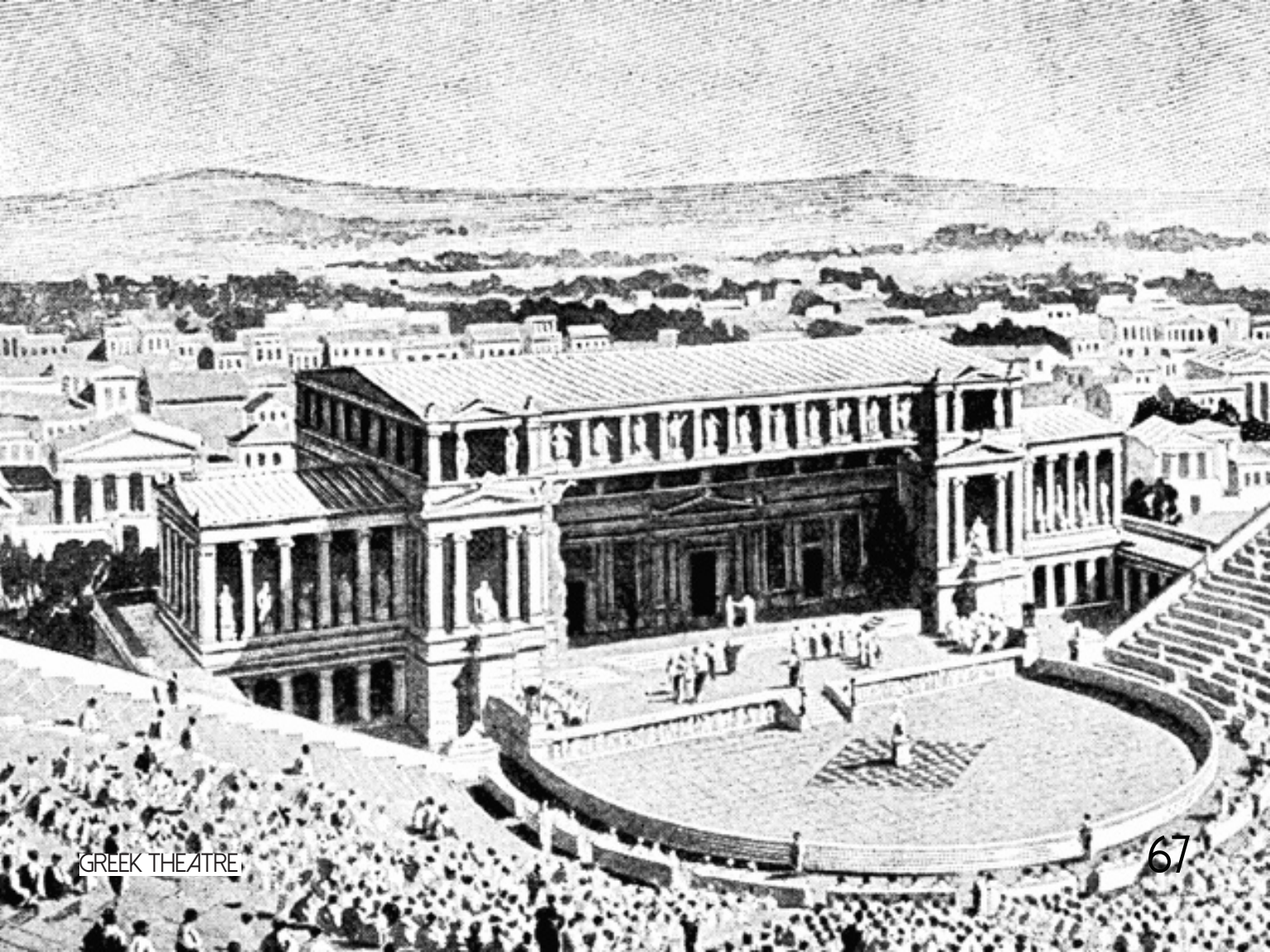
FESTIVE THEATER

It is the act of the “spectacle” that was important. Even in recent times we can attest to the power of the modern sport. Thousands gather to watch their team compete. Theater can draw these same crowds. It’s festive character allows it to draw the populous together. In theater a different process occurs within us. Although its communion draws us together it performs a different action on our psyche. “Schiller saw the function of the theater as a moral institution in that it anticipated in the stage play the transition to a genuinely ethical form of social life (Gadamer, 1986).” It calls for a moral transcendence.



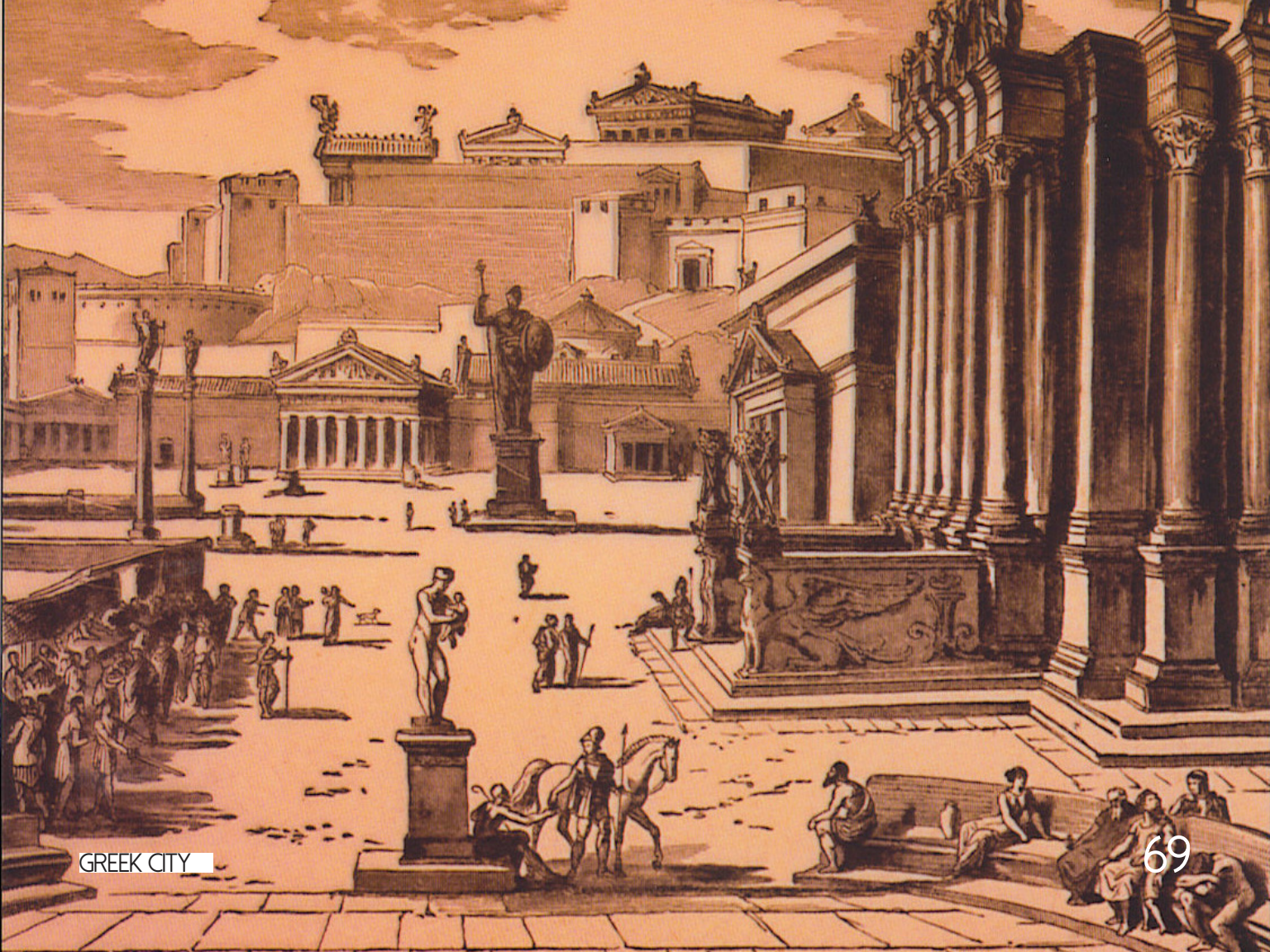
THE PERFORMANCE

Plato understood the action that occurred as Chora. He described three components of reality: Being, Becoming and Chora. He describes Being as “The unchanging form, uncreated and indestructible, imperceptible to sight or the other sense, the object of thought.” Becoming is understood as, “That which bear the same name as the form and resembles it, but is sensible has come into existence, is in constant motion, and is apprehended by opinion with the aid of sensation.” And finally Plato describes Chora. It is nothing less than the space of human creation and participation. Chora occurs within theater as catharsis in which we understand ourselves in relation to culture and society. Before Plato’s understanding these terms were understood in relation the Gods. Hestia and Hermes were characterized as a pair that characterized the union of space and movement, center and path. They represented the space of desire shown within theater.



GREEK THEATRE

The space of the Dionysian ritual opened up space between the actors and the spectators. This distance opened up a moment of catharsis in Greek theatre. This catharsis takes hold of the spectators and allows them to see the purpose of the tragic destiny, shaping them within the spirit and allowing them to find a bearing in everyday life (Pérez-Gómez,2006). Through the theatre we experience the same cathartic effect as participation in the primitive ritual. Vitruvius writes “When plays are given, the spectators, with their wives and children, sit through them spellbound, and their bodies, motionless from enjoyment, have their pores open, into which blowing winds find their way.” It is over this distance that we participate with the work and see ourselves in terms of the larger society.



GREEK CITY

GOALS

ACADEMIC

As the gap between theory and practice seems to be ever increasing, I wish to change our thoughts about the two. Through the act of creation we can begin to reconcile the theoretical with that of the tangible. The act of the metaphor can strengthen architectural theory as an experience. Through the creation of artefacts I hope to explore the possibilities of what my architecture could be. Too simply with drawings and renderings we are distanced from the experience. We cannot simply reduce space into a top-down understanding. Architecture is not simply a formula we apply.

THE PROFESSIONAL

Where architecture has become standardized and impersonal we must change the way in which we design. It is our greatest fault to ignore this. A greater ethical purpose in architecture needs to be addressed. It is the tragedy of architects that we lose sight of the meaning within our work. Too often we forget our senses. A stronger purpose always waits to be seen within the built environment. Architecture can speak to us in poetic or oblique manners that stir up emotions. Too simply we ignore the tangible experience of the space to come. Architecture like the theater must create a participatory effect on its user.

THE PERSONAL

To challenge the way we interact with one another within space is important to me. Through this exploration I hope to create an atmosphere that changes the way we perceive the other. I have always felt a personal disconnect with public space. I personally wish to challenge my beliefs on what public space and theater can be. Architecture that has the power to move the individual, no matter how small a movement, is something of value to me.

SITE ANALYSIS

Empty lots comprise the area of West Montcalm Street and Park Avenue. The edge of the downtown and the vacant plots are separated by this expanse of concrete. Passing by on an off day, it may seem as if the site was abandoned. Chain link fences separate each paved lot from the street. The site defines the edge of the downtown. It remains vacant during much of the year when sporting events are not occurring. When it becomes active it remains a point of mere circulation as the public simply leaves their vehicles as they move to the nearby Tiger stadium. This area of parking extends to about 8 plots. The site lacks the character of the surrounding area. The local businesses look out onto this large plot of empty land wondering if it will be developed. Within the south east corner of the site lays Grand Circus Park. Local pubs and eateries also surround the area. Is this the most efficient use of this downtown area? I think not. With problems of sprawl within Detroit it seems straight forward to try and create a point of reconnection within the downtown. It is the strength of particular events that draw crowds.

Pedestrian traffic is almost always flowing away from the sight as the site is primarily used for parking. The surrounding area provides some activities as users move from the site. Traffic usually moves to park within the surrounding the area. Fisher Freeway in the north separates the downtown from the residential.



Figure 73.1
(Ben Atchison)



SITE FLYOVER

74

Figure 74.1
(<http://i.imgur.com/Rh2Dt0j.jpg>)



Figure 75.1
(<http://i.imgur.com/bGs2yiO.jpg>)

Currently on the site there is an out of business hotel. Two abandoned buildings surround the property, one to the north and one to the south. The site remains mostly vacant until it fills up when sporting events occur. The site has a strange duality, vacancy when games are not occurring followed by busy streets when a game occurs. These people should be invited into the architecture. Attempting to allow the mixing and mingling of people. I hope to create a call for development. The nearby theatres are the Fox theatre and the Detroit opera house. I aim to create a theatre for drama. By creating a theatre and public space I hope to establish the downtown as a place for theatre, and reestablishing a center for the arts in the downtown.



Figure 77.1, 77.2
 (www.google.com/maps/place/Detroit)
 (Ben Atchison)



Figure 78.1, 78.2, 78.3
(Ben Atchison)



Figure 79.1, 79.2
(Ben Atchison)

QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

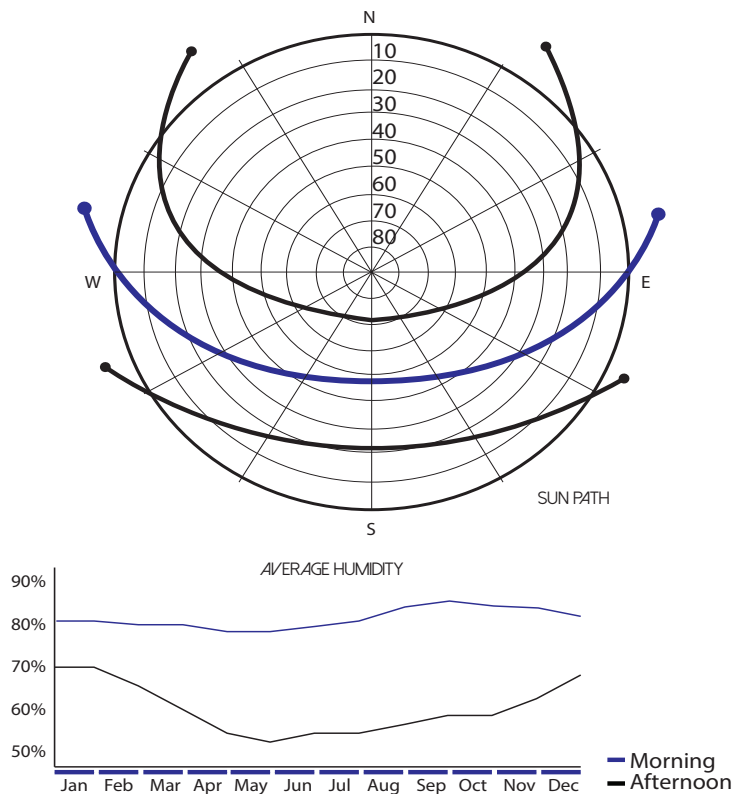
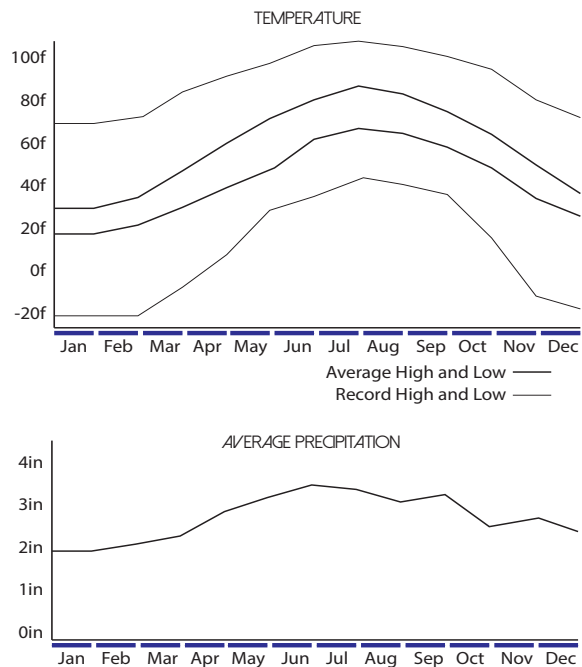


Figure 80.1, 80.3, 80.4,
(<http://www.cityrating.com/cityhumidity.asp?City=Detroit>)

Figure 80.2
(<http://www.weather.com/weather/wxclimatology/monthly/graph/48242T>)

WIND ROSE DIAGRAM

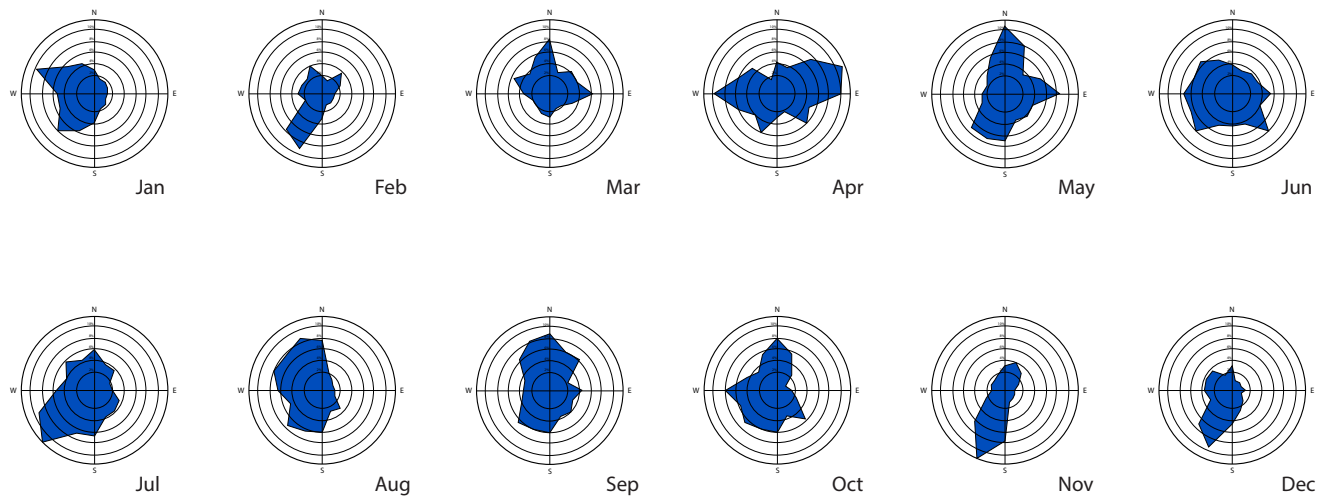
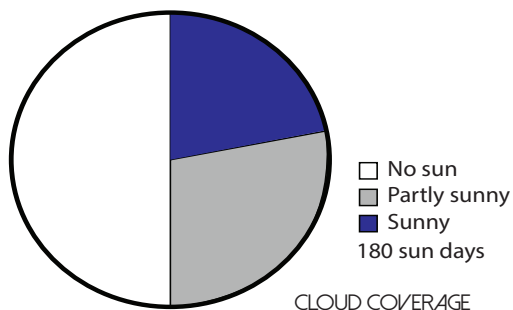


Figure 81.1

(http://www.wrcc.dri.edu/cgi-bin/wea_windrose.pl?laKDE)

Figure 81.2

(<http://www.currentresults.com/Weather/Michigan/annual-days-of-sunshine.php>)



PROGRAMMATIC REQUIREMENTS

Outdoor public space – 10000 sqft

Entrance – 500 sqft

Theater Lobby – 750 sqft

Restrooms – 300 sqft x3

Storage – 800 sqft

Janitor's closet – 200 sqft

Mechanical – 600 sqft

Proscenium Theatre – 1,800 sqft

Backstage Restrooms – 300 sqft

Dressing Rooms – 800 sqft

Galleries - 1000 sqft

Offices - 800 sqft

PROGRAMMATIC DIAGRAMS

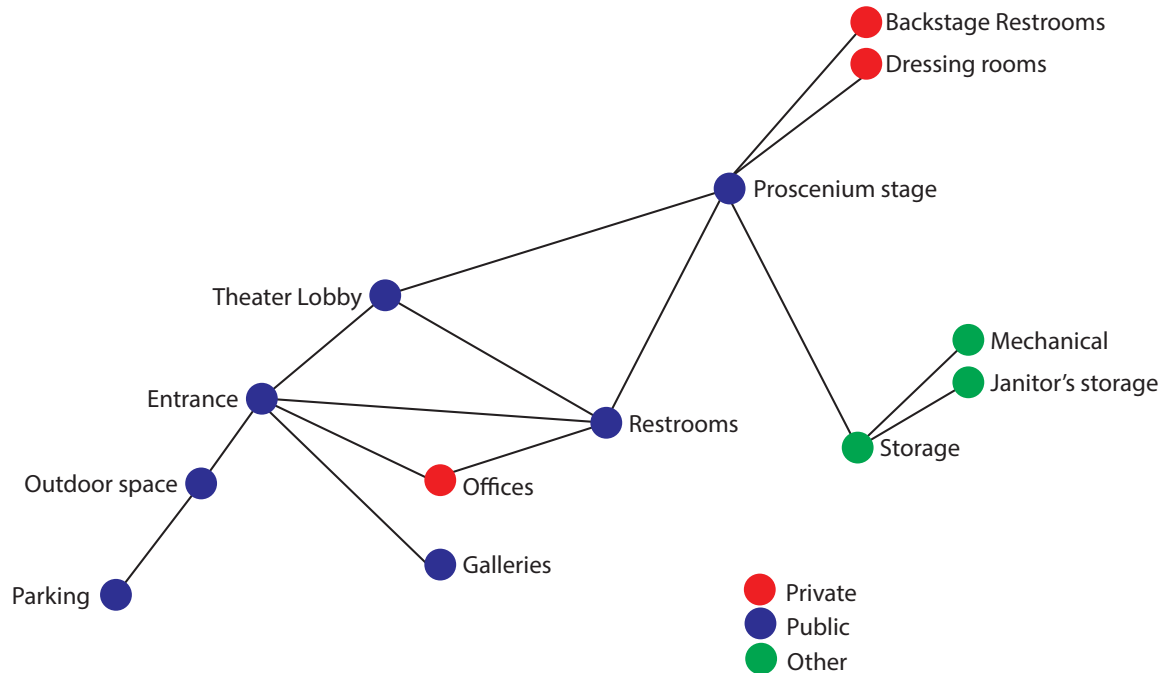


Figure 84.1
(Ben Atchison)

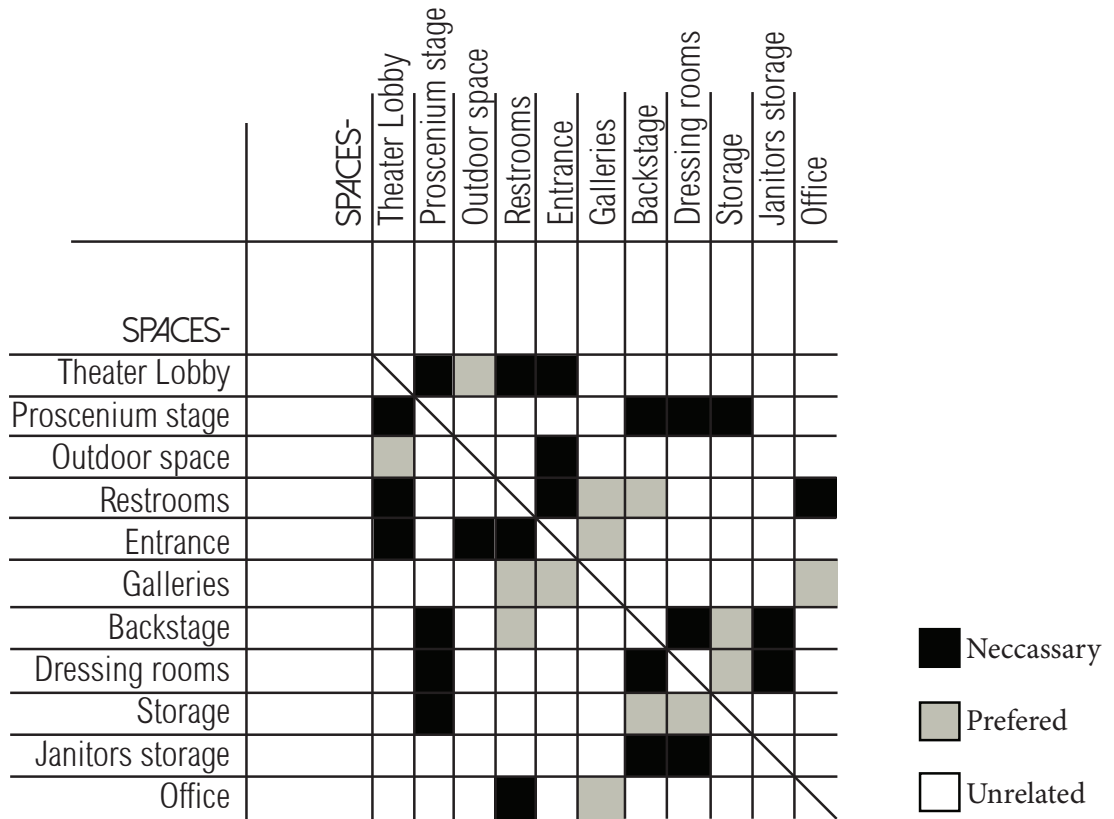
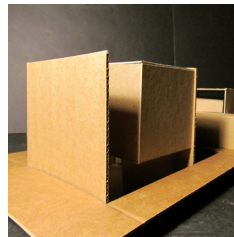
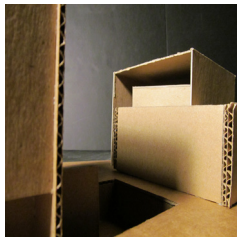
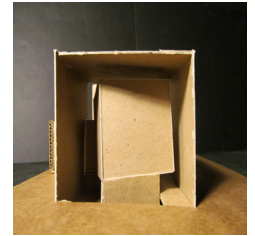
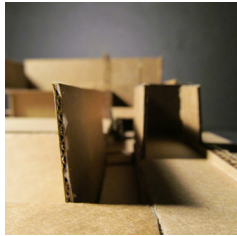
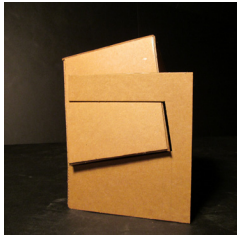


Figure 85.1
(Ben Atchison)

PROCESS



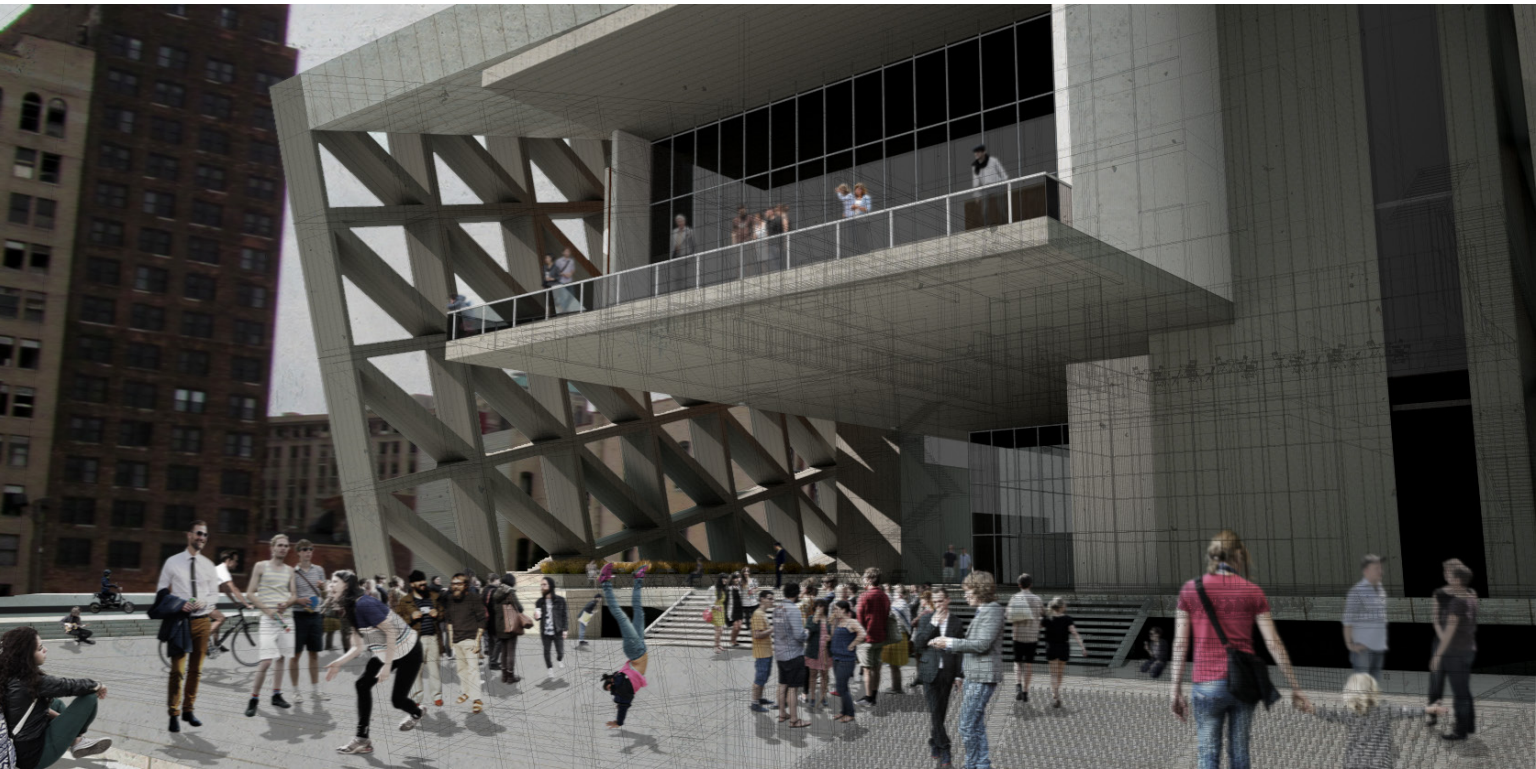
Through the artefact I was able to better understand my work in order to communicate my ideas. The most important became clear and are represented within these models. Through my process I attempted to create models that could predict the experiential quality of the architecture. The city as a grid of efficiency is a strong element within my design. This idea drives the cubist geometry. The artefact speaks to a distortion within time and space. The smallest deviation within the grid becomes amplified by the geometry of the architecture similar to the artefact. Working towards framing this view in its experience was one of the most difficult parts of the process.

Like my artefact elements of the mask are also articulated. Shifting facades tease the eye and lead to views which challenge the changing understudy of the public and private.

Figure 87.1-10
(Ben Atchison)

DESIGN

My program provides a theatre, public space, and museum of theatre within the downtown of Detroit. It serves to bring the public to the downtown and allows them to linger in the theatrical qualities of the space. The architecture like the artifact attempts to play with depth, depth between the inside/outside, front stage/backstage, and public space/private space. The architecture seeks to evoke theatricality between these spaces. It attempts to reverse our understanding of ourselves within space. Are we the actor? Or are we the audience? By playing with the depth users question their position within space.



PUBLIC SPACE AND OUTDOOR THEATRE

Figure 89.1
(Ben Atchison)

The outdoor theatre puts the public on display as people overlook the spectacle. Effectively making the public the actor.



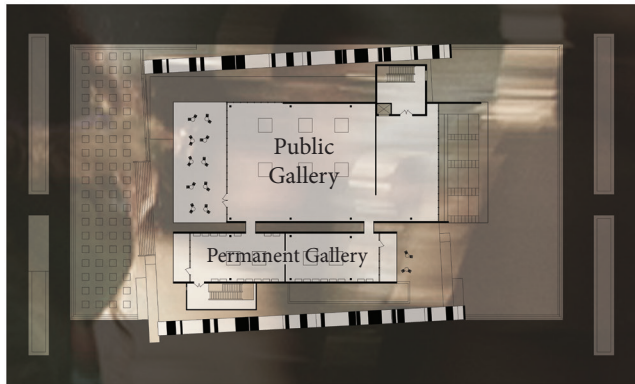


MAIN LEVEL

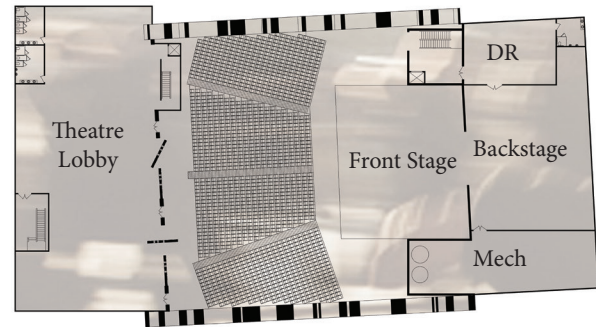


2ND LEVEL

Figure 90.1, 90.2
(Ben Atchison)

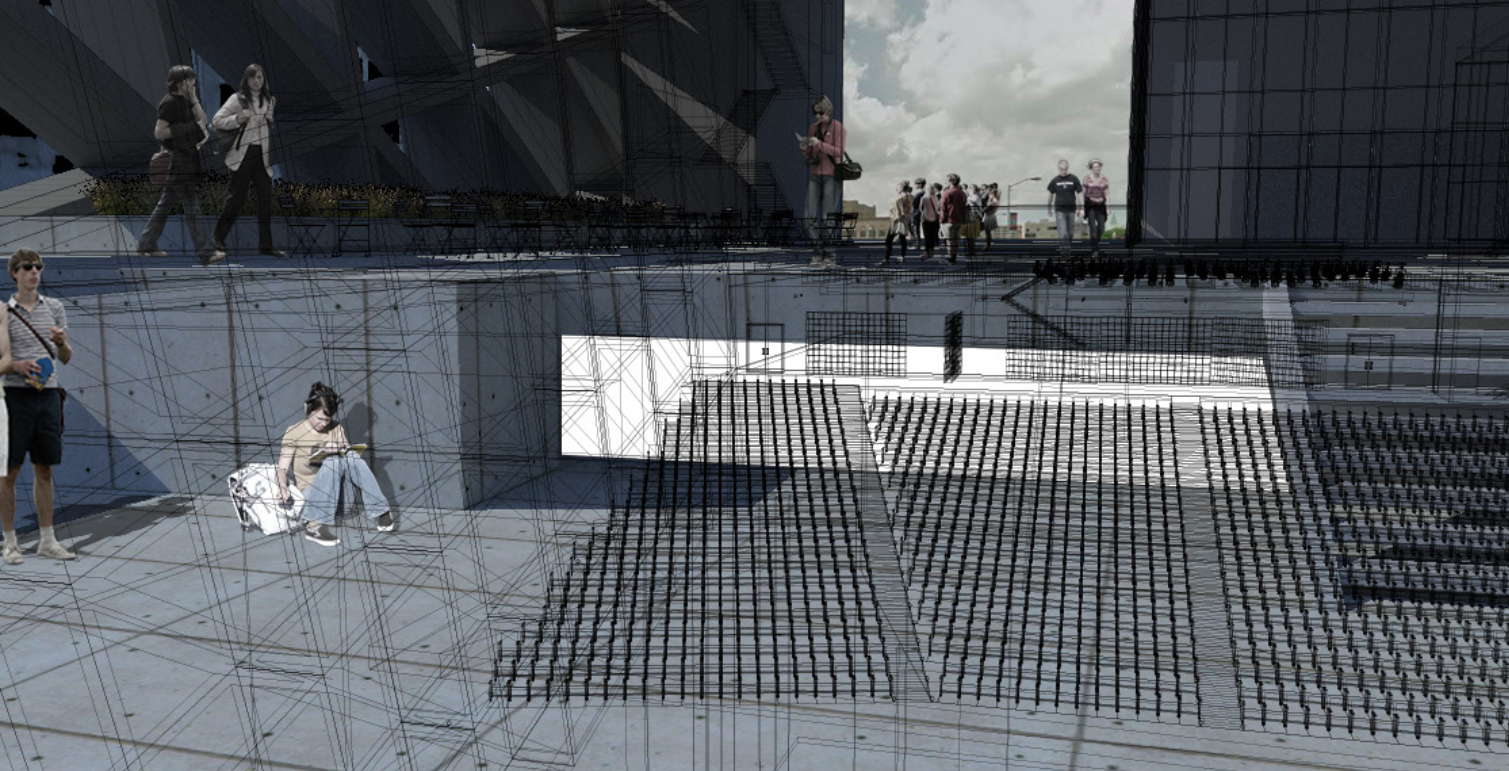


3RD LEVEL



LOWER LEVEL

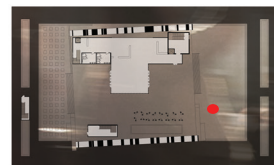
Figure 91.1, 91.2
(Ben Atchison)

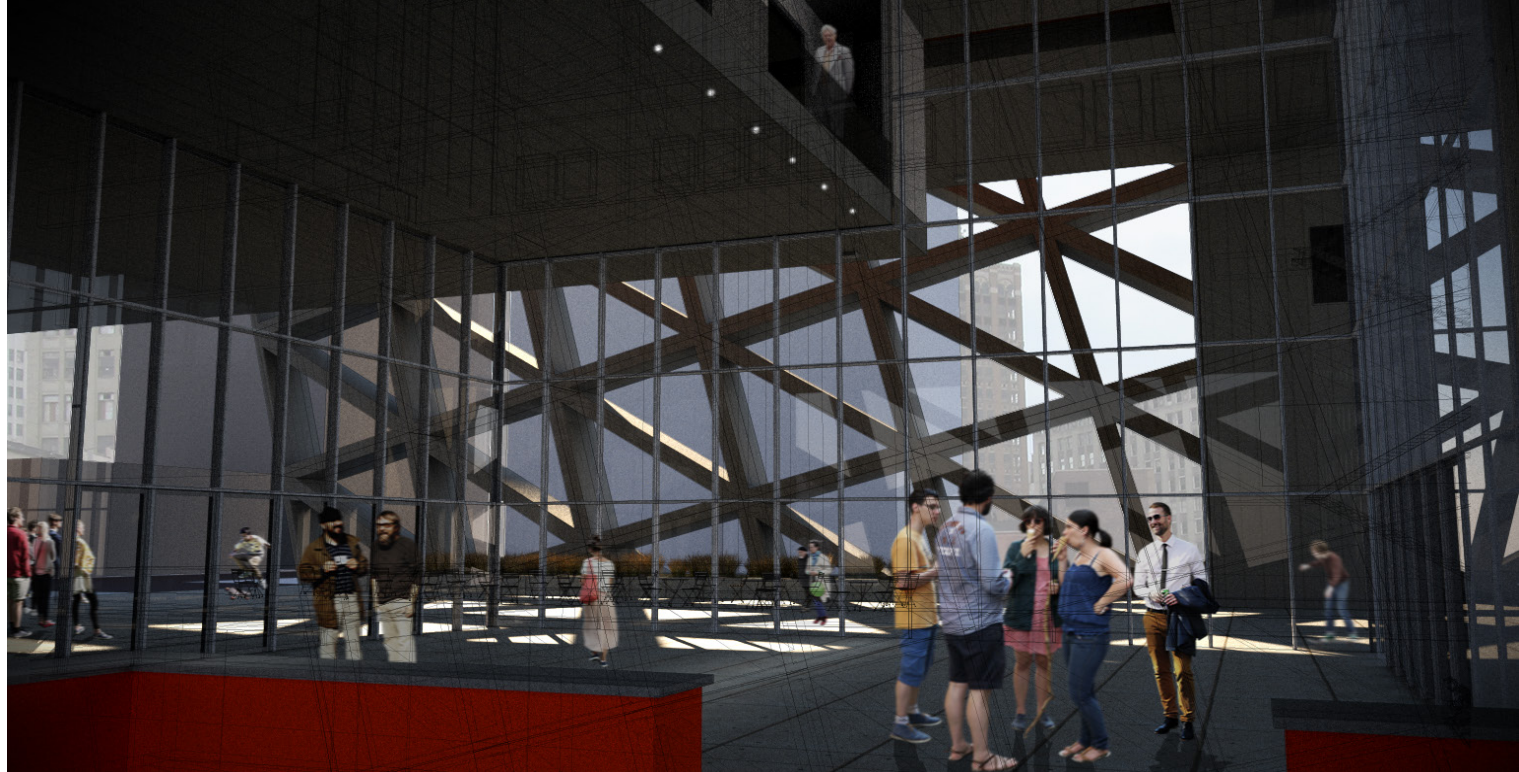


THEATRE REVEAL

Figure 92.1
(Ben Atchison)

Reveals into the theatre allow us to question our position in space. As we view the audience from the outside who becomes the actor?

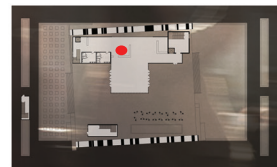


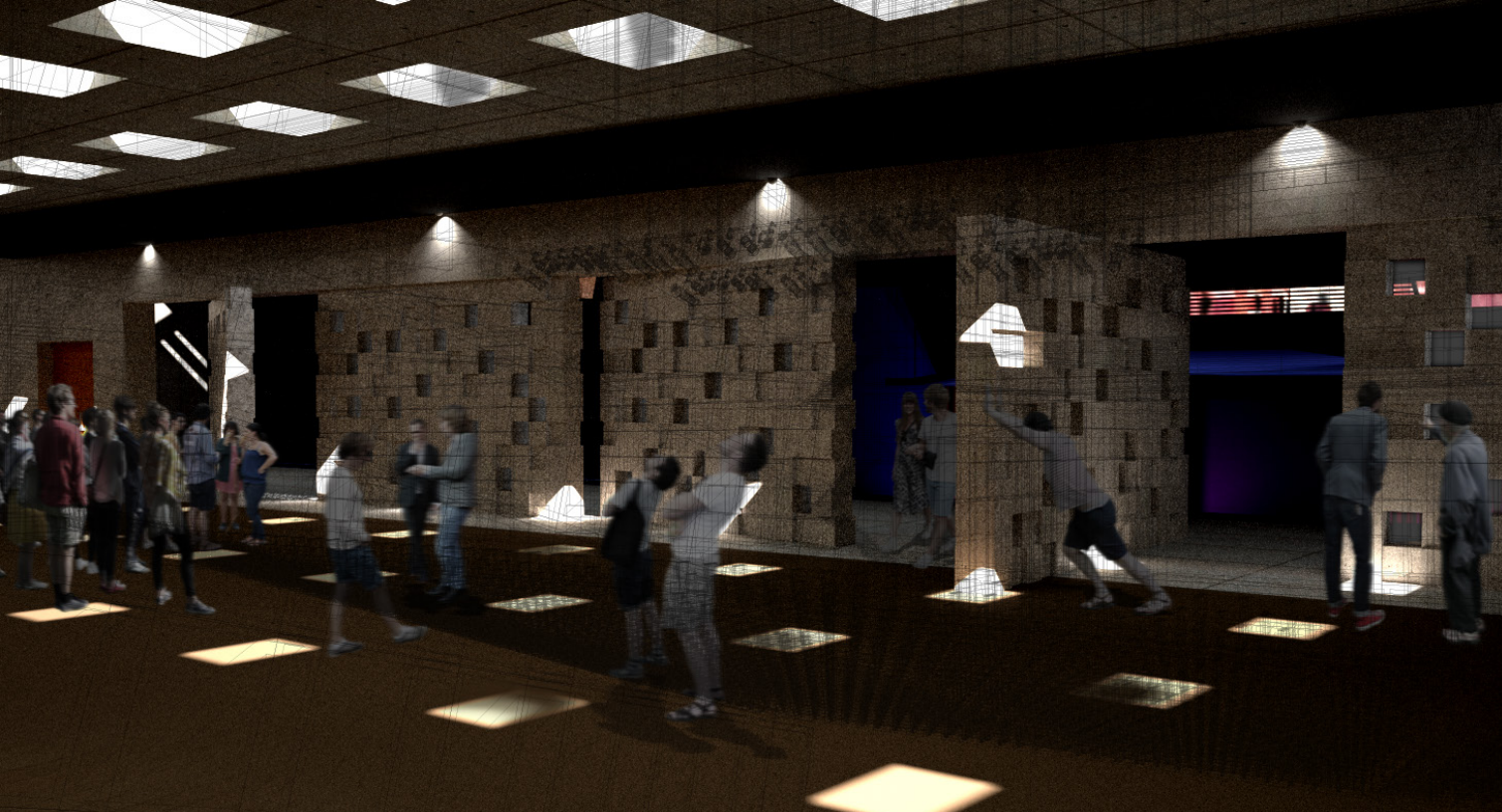


ENTRY

Figure 93.1
(Ben Atchison)

Shadows are cast from the grided structure during moments of the day.
This projection speaks to the idea of the city as a grid.

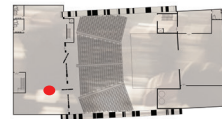




THEATRE LOBBY

Figure 94.1
(Ben Atchison)

Reveals to the lobby from the outside blur the depth between the spaces. Large doors swing open to reveal the theatre below.

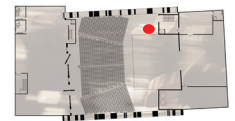




THEATRE

Figure 95.1
(Ben Atchison)

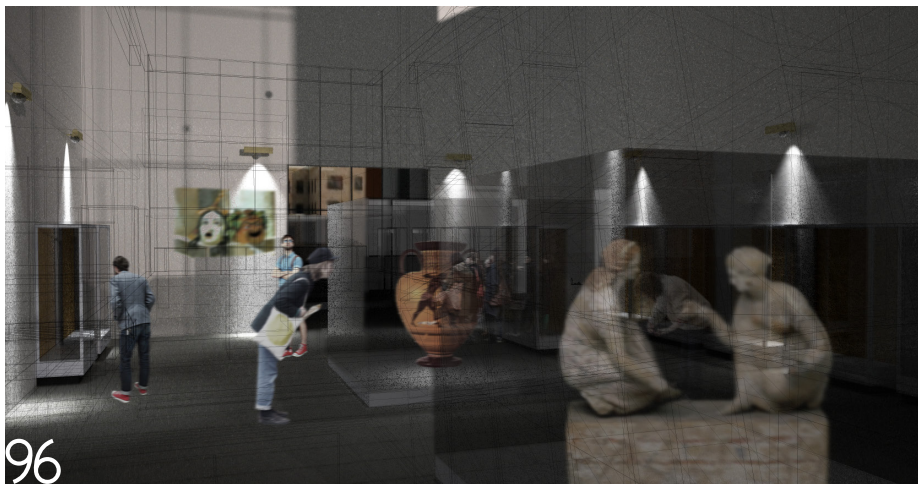
As blurred figures pass by through reveals to the outside the audience experiences a new understanding of depth. This architecture attempts to reawaken the similarities between the theatre and the public by making this depth apparent.





OUTDOOR THEATRE

Figure 96.1
(Ben Atchison)



PERMANENT GALLERY

Figure 96.2
(Ben Atchison)

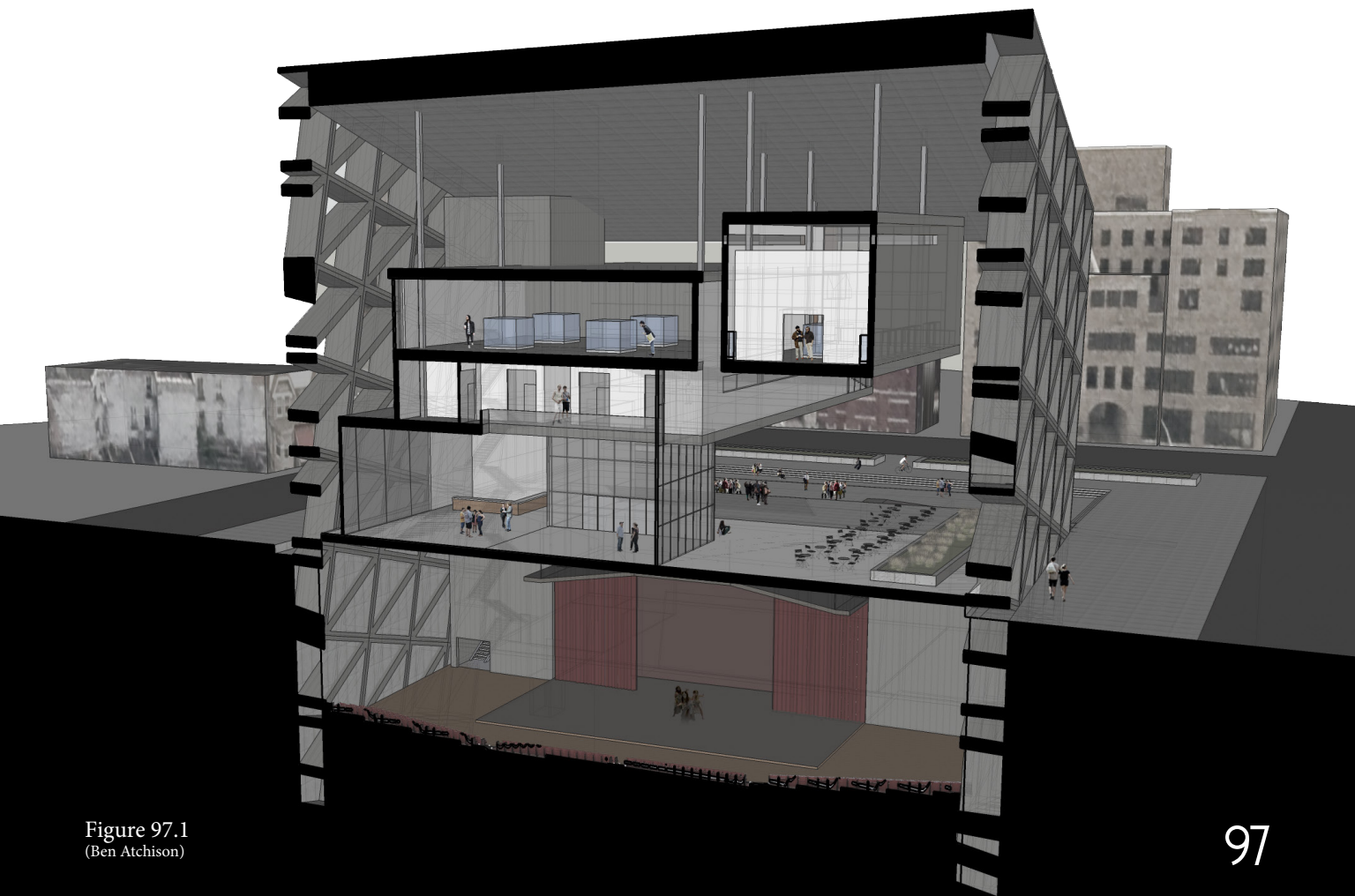


Figure 97.1
(Ben Atchison)



Figure 98.1, 98.2
(Ben Atchison)

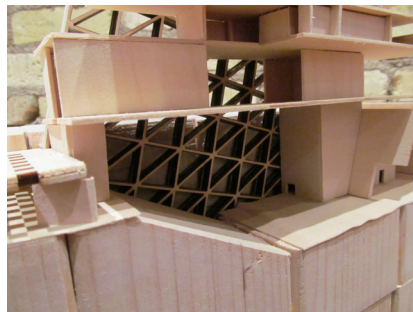
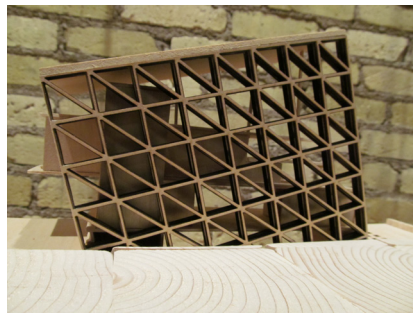
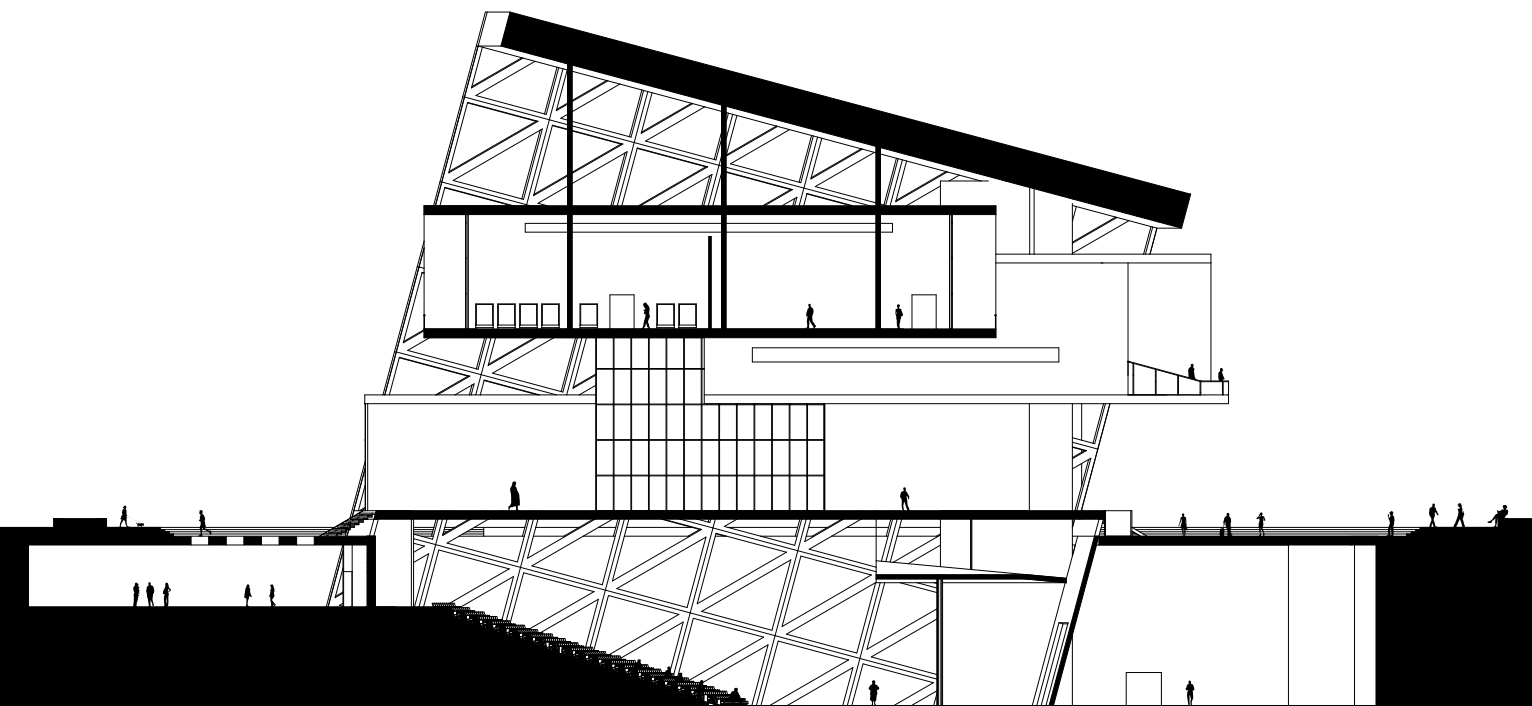


Figure 99.1, 99.2, 99.3
(Ben Atchison)



The theatre rests upon the base of the tilted geometry. Spaces within the structure move with the grid to extenuate the tilt of the superstructure.

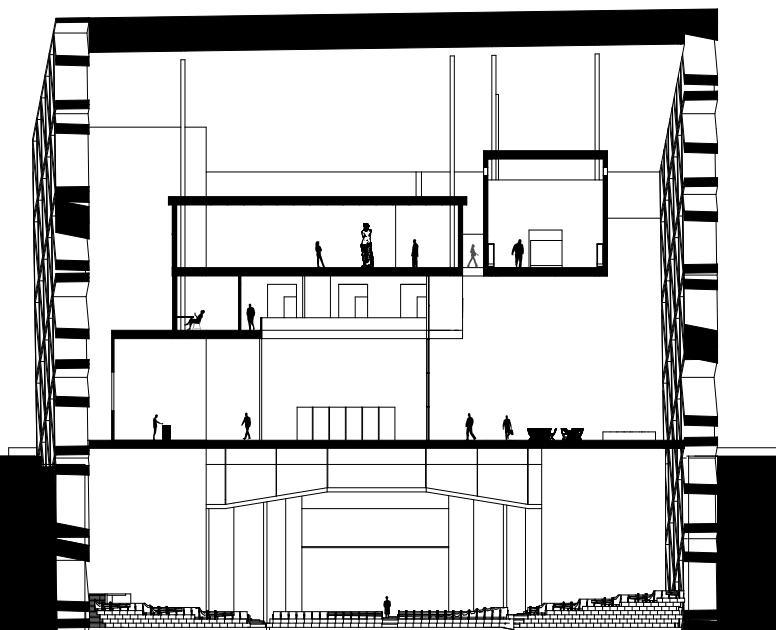


Figure 101.1
(Ben Atchison)

PRESENTATION BOARDS





Figure 103.1
(Ben Atchison)

APPENDIX

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PERSONAL IDENTIFICATION



Figure 108.1
(Calvin Morey)

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“Our greatest weakness lies in giving up. The most certain way to succeed is always to try just one more time.”

- Thomas A. Edison