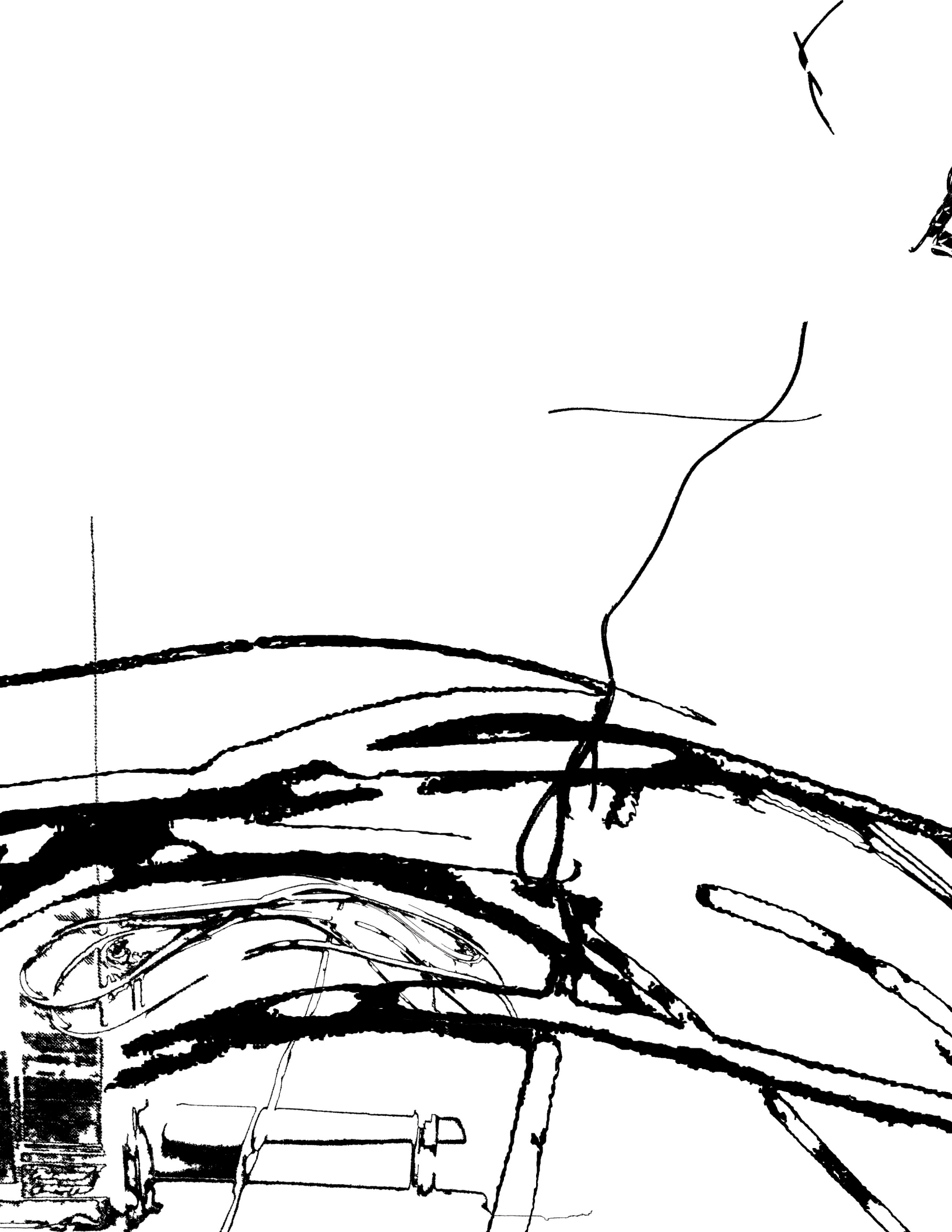




The Depth of Rivers and the Restorative Power of the
Fragment: Architecture as Fluid Filmic Narrative

Christa Galbraith



The Depth of Rivers and the Restorative Power of the Fragment:
Architecture as Fluid Filmic Narrative

A Design Thesis Submitted to the Department of Architecture and Landscape Architecture
of North Dakota State University

by

Christa Galbraith

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Architecture

May 2018
Fargo, North Dakota

Primary Thesis Advisor

Thesis Committee Chair



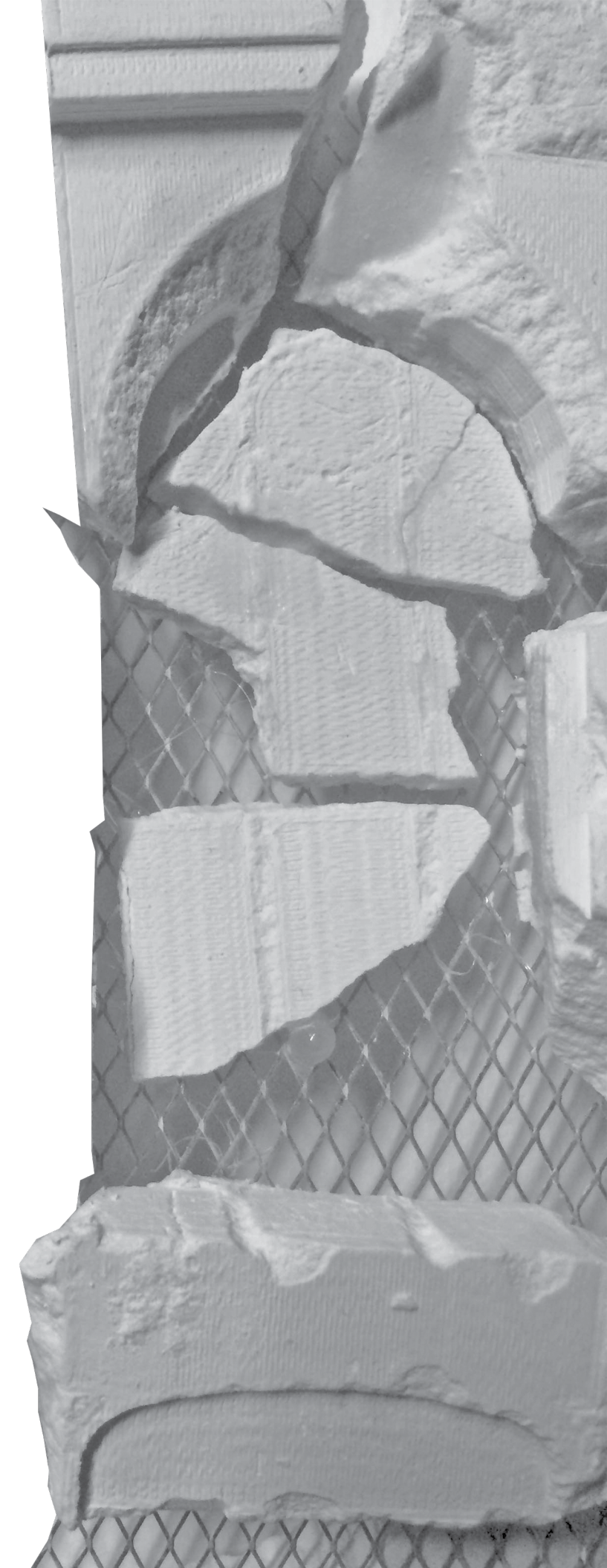
Contents

09	Abstract
10	Narrative
20	Research
26	Precedent Studies
38	Project Justification
40	Site
42	Programmatic Proposal
46	Goals of the Thesis Project
48	Project Emphasis
50	Context Analysis
53	Historical, Social, and Cultural Context
55	Artefact
60	Design Exploration
80	Appendix

A special thank you to my professor and colleagues that shared their insight and time in the development of this project. Particular thanks to Ben Gillis and the Columbia Archive Library for procuring original drawings of the RKO Hamilton Theater and Hannah Langr for her investment and dedicated feedback.

Figures

- | | | | |
|----|--|----|--------------------------|
| 10 | Fg 1 Harlem 1940s | 55 | Fg 23 Artefact |
| 12 | Fg 2 Harlem Renaissance Ballroom 1910s-2010s | 56 | Fg 24 Artefact |
| 12 | Fg 3 Condominium Rendering on Renaissance Ballroom Site | 59 | Fg 25 Artefact |
| 14 | Fg 4 <i>The Man Who Lies</i> , Alain Robbe-Grillet | 60 | Fg 26 Collage |
| 16 | Fg 5 RKO Hamilton Theater Archive Drawings | 63 | Fg 27 Rivers |
| 18 | Fg 6 pc: afterthefinalcurtain.com | 64 | Fg 28 Entry |
| 21 | Fg 7 <i>Guernica</i> , Pablo Picasso, 1937 | 67 | Fg 29 Projection Lobby |
| 23 | Fg 8 <i>Carceri</i> , Giovanni Battista Piranesi 1720-1778 | 68 | Fg 30 Process Model |
| 25 | Fg 9 <i>Endless House</i> , Frederick Kiesler, 1947-1960 | 70 | Fg 31 Circulation |
| 26 | Fg 10 <i>Nostalghia</i> , Andrei Tarkovsky, 1983 | 71 | Fg 32 Gallery |
| 29 | Fg 11 <i>The Man Who Lies</i> , Alain Robbe-Grillet, 1968 | 72 | Fg 33 Translucent |
| 30 | Fg 12 <i>Fly Paper</i> , Khalil Joseph, 2017 | 74 | Fg 34 Theater Passage |
| 32 | Fg 13 <i>Lemonade</i> , Khalil Joseph, 2016 | 75 | Fg 35 Theater |
| 34 | Fg 14 <i>La Ribaute</i> , Anselm Kiefer | 76 | Fg 36 Process Model |
| 37 | Fg 14 <i>La Ribaute</i> , Anselm Kiefer | 78 | Fg 37 Collage |
| 40 | Fg 16 Historical Site Context, RKO Hamilton Theater Exterior | | |
| 43 | Fg 17 Programmatic Proposal | | |
| 49 | Fg 20 Janus | | |
| 50 | Fg 21 RKO Hamilton Theater, December 2017 | | |
| 52 | Fg 22 <i>House of Leaves</i> , Mark Z. Danielewski, 2000 | | |



Abstract

In 1948, Ralph Ellison wrote an article about the experience of living in Harlem and explained a common feeling of placelessness and uncertainty of self. This placelessness persists today as the neighborhood undergoes an architectural loss of culturally relevant stories. This thesis proposes to reinvigorate a celebration of cultural identity through filmic techniques of repetition, fragmented montage, and a disruption of linearity in order to inspire a reflective consciousness and dynamic sense of reality.

An adaptive reuse of the abandoned and deteriorating RKO Hamilton Theater in West Harlem recomposes layers of time and inhabitation, allowing a persisting story of Harlem's identity to shine through- a story of uncertainty, joy, struggle, and community interdependence. Within the design of a film gallery and theater, participants are able to view the stories relevant to their community within the forgotten iconic theater that served as one of the most significant platforms for storytelling in the area. The architectural design seeks to create a multi-perspective experience, turning the process of looking at and through into the same action, as inhabitants view themselves and one another through the stories depicted.



In 1948, Ralph Ellison, an American novelist and literary critic, wrote an article about the experience of living in Harlem and explained a common feeling of placelessness and uncertainty of self. As friends would greet one another on the street, a frequent phrase was exchanged: "Oh man, I'm nowhere." As a community caught in the tension between feudalism and industrialism, between citizenship and alienation, the search for belonging was ever present. After the artistic explosion and cultural expression of the 1910s and 20s, economic hardship and oppression left the community without a voice. "[Here] is the nature of a world so fluid and shifting that often within the mind the real and the unreal merge, and the marvelous beckons from behind the same sordid reality that denies its existence. For this is a world in which the major energy of the imagination goes not into creating works of art but into overcoming the frustrations of social discrimination" (Ellison). This lack persists today as the neighborhood undergoes an architectural loss of culturally relevant stories.

Fg 1 | Harlem 1940s



Icons like the Harlem Renaissance Ballroom have been abandoned and demolished to make way for generic condos, contributing to an architectural loss of story and devaluation of history. Because architecture contributes to a sense of place and community identity, when architecture isn't representative of a resonant narrative, we become apathetic of the places we inhabit.

Fg 2 | Harlem Renaissance Ballroom 1910s-2010s

Fg 3 | Condominium Rendering on Renaissance Ballroom Site



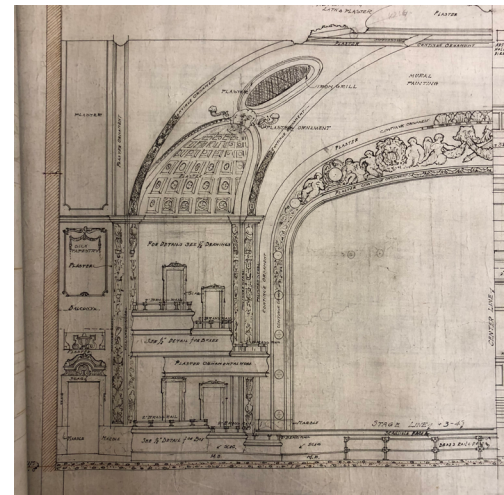
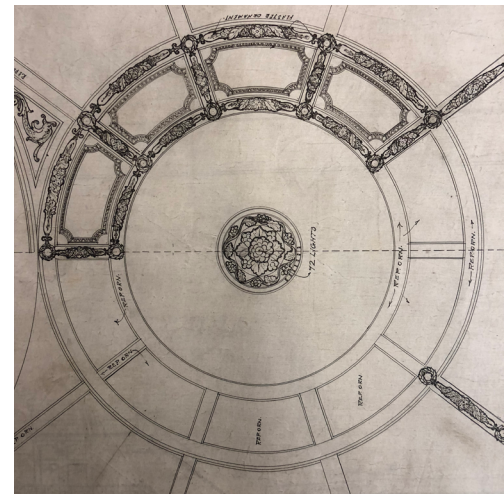
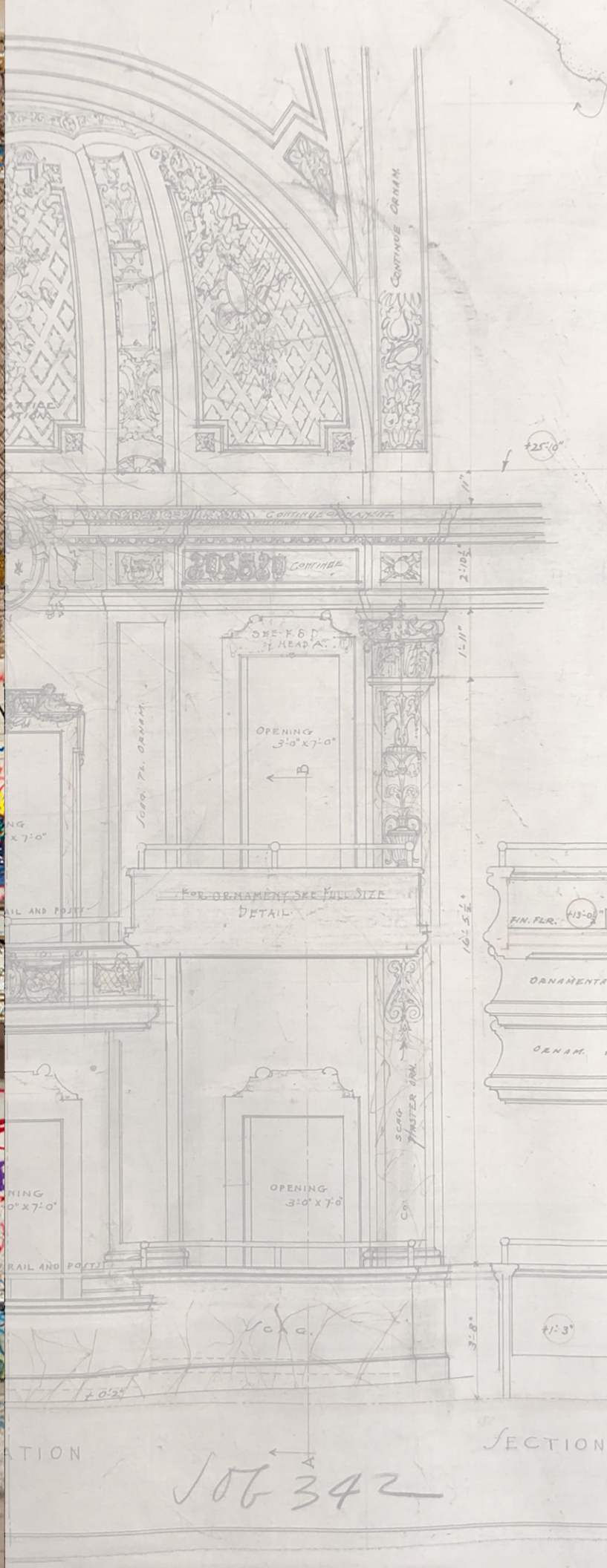


This architectural loss of story can be addressed with narrative techniques like repetition, fragmented montage, and a disruption of linearity present in filmic space in order to inspire a reflective consciousness and dynamic sense of spatial reality.

Film has the power to holistically tell stories and reinstate a value on narrative as it montages fragments of time and space into a communally experienced art form that allows for global catharsis and a temporality of meaning. As an inherently fragmented process, film requires the stitching together of thousands of still images. This montage creates an illusion of continuity that we piece together ourselves, drawing us in to become an integral component of the stitching of story. The cinematic quality of montage and its ability to create fiction has the ability to influence cinematic quality of architectural spaces and the representations of those spaces. Cinematic quality suggests a spatial and temporal progression that lets us feel like we are physically moving through the space, which can inform an architecturally fragmented montage of spaces.

This thesis explores cinematic architecture not only in a formal design context, but more importantly as a fragmented process of artistic representation and discovery. The reader/audience is required to piece together the architectural narrative through the breadth of the collaged work. This cinematic montage seeks to evoke a more true experience of architecture as it presents brief moments across time. Glimpses of space, an awareness of a bodily presence beyond the architectural tectonics, and an incomplete scope of detail provides opportunity for architectural exploration that is lost in more static representations.

Fig 4 | *The Man Who Lies*, Alain Robbe-Grillet



This thesis proposes a design of a film exhibition gallery and theater for the neighborhood of Harlem in the abandoned RKO Hamilton Theater to re-instill a value on story and inspire a dialogue between building and inhabitant.

By studying the origins of filmic montage through historically significant examples I hope to design a space that can articulate the stitching process that all films share. Through recomposing layers of time and inhabitation, an adaptive reuse of the abandoned and deteriorating RKO Hamilton Theater can allow the persisting story of Harlem's identity to shine through - a story of uncertainty, joy, struggle, and community interdependence.

Fig 5 | RKO Hamilton Theater Archive Drawings (Sourced: Columbia University Archives)



Fg 6 | pc.afterthefinalcurtain.com

Cubism, as an early precedent to film, was the beginning of the fragmentation of perspectival space and the use of collage. The exploded fragments of lived reality create an uncertainty, requiring an active contribution from the viewer to synthesize the pieces and create their own harmony and meaning for the work making a redescription of reality. As a viewer is transformed into a participant, connections made between the past and present can bring to light the collective story that resides in the individual. This cyclical relationship between the telling of individual and collective stories restores a sense of wholeness and the beauty in the raw reality of life over the false ideal.

A painting, for example, allows us "to see the world in another way; it augments our vision of the world." Because we have seen paintings we can perceive the world as landscape instead of as components of a horizon line, trees, sky, etc. A painting is a redescription of reality. Cubism is an especially effective example of this because it doesn't give us all the answers. It is a fragmentation of representative space that allows us to insert ourselves into the work and make our own associations and relate our own version of reality. Gadamer says in *The Relevance of the Beautiful*, "We can no longer see a Cubist picture or nonobjective painting at a glance. We must make an active contribution of our own and make an effort to synthesize the outlines of the various planes as they appear on the canvas. Only then, perhaps, can we be seized and uplifted by the profound harmony and rightness of a work, in the same way as readily happened in earlier times on the basis of a pictorial content common to all" (Gadamer 8).



Fig 7 | *Guernica*, Pablo Picasso, 1937

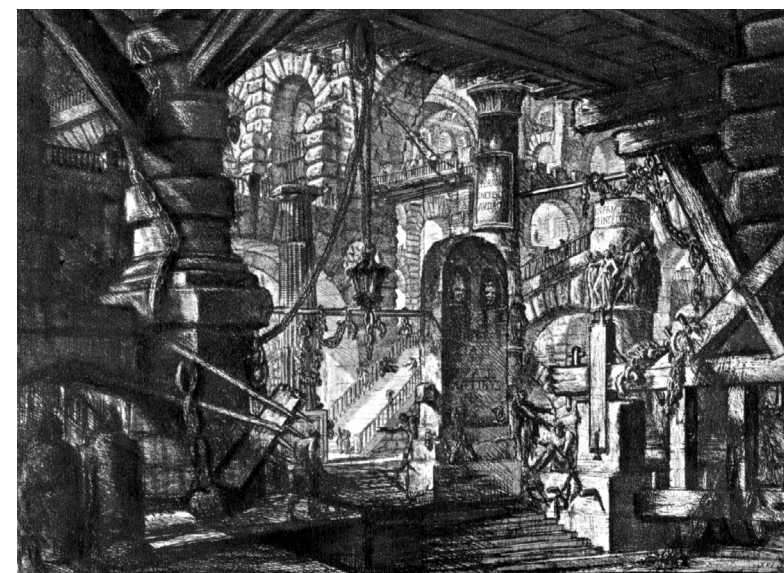
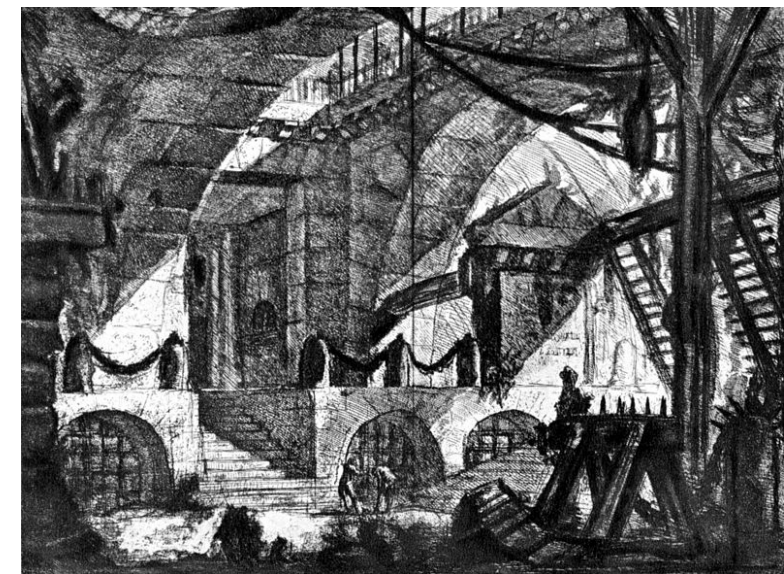
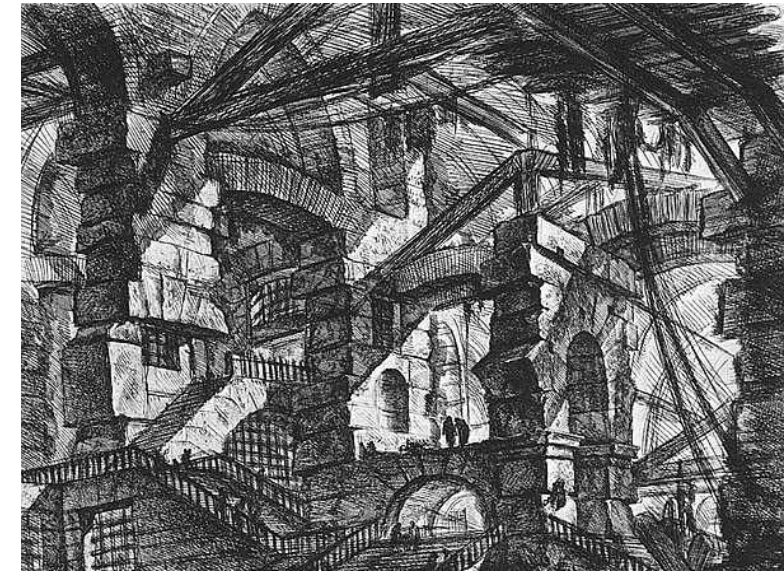
By inspiring imagination, fiction remakes reality. "The more imagination deviates from that which is called reality in ordinary language and vision, the more it approaches the heart of the reality which is no longer the world of manipulable objects, but the world into which we have been thrown by birth and within which we try to orient ourselves by projecting our innermost possibilities upon it, in order that we dwell there." This works against our stereotypical view of reality and our objective culture, but it is through fiction that "new realities become open to us and old worlds are made new." Through the participation of fiction, we orient ourselves and connect with the world more deeply and meaningfully.

The fictionalization, combining, and reshaping of the past roots us in collective cultural memory, allowing us to claim a place in this cultural continuum and broaden our view of the world and our place in it.

The cubist movement later led to surrealism and eventually film. The surrealists believed the "restorative power of fragment [to be] closely related with the notion of poetic analogy [which] transgresses the deductive laws in order to make the mind apprehend the interdependence of two objects of thought situated on different planes, between which the logical functioning of the mind is unlikely to throw a bridge" (Vesely 341). While surrealism can often be viewed as subjective and arbitrary, it seeks to "bring the latent world of our common existence into our awareness" (Vesely 343).

Piranesi's theoretical *Carceri* etchings of prison spaces were an early influence of surrealism and was a response to the fragmented limitations of isotropic space. These etchings were an exercise in experimental research through design and follow a dynamic transformation from Cartesian representation to an exploded version of lived reality. The first stage of the drawing was to construct a space according to the rules of a perspective drawing and to then layer it with an emotionally charged space that could never really be built, but that reemphasized the value of depth and embodied experience. His spaces are meant to seduce the viewer and create uncertainty. Perez-Gomez describes the power of these etchings by saying, "the *carceri* invite existential orientation by confronting darkness, the very darkness that humans ultimately cannot escape, at a time when Western culture had opted for the exclusive light of reason" (Perez-Gomez 122).

Fig 8 | *Carceri*, Giovanni Battista Piranesi 1720-1778

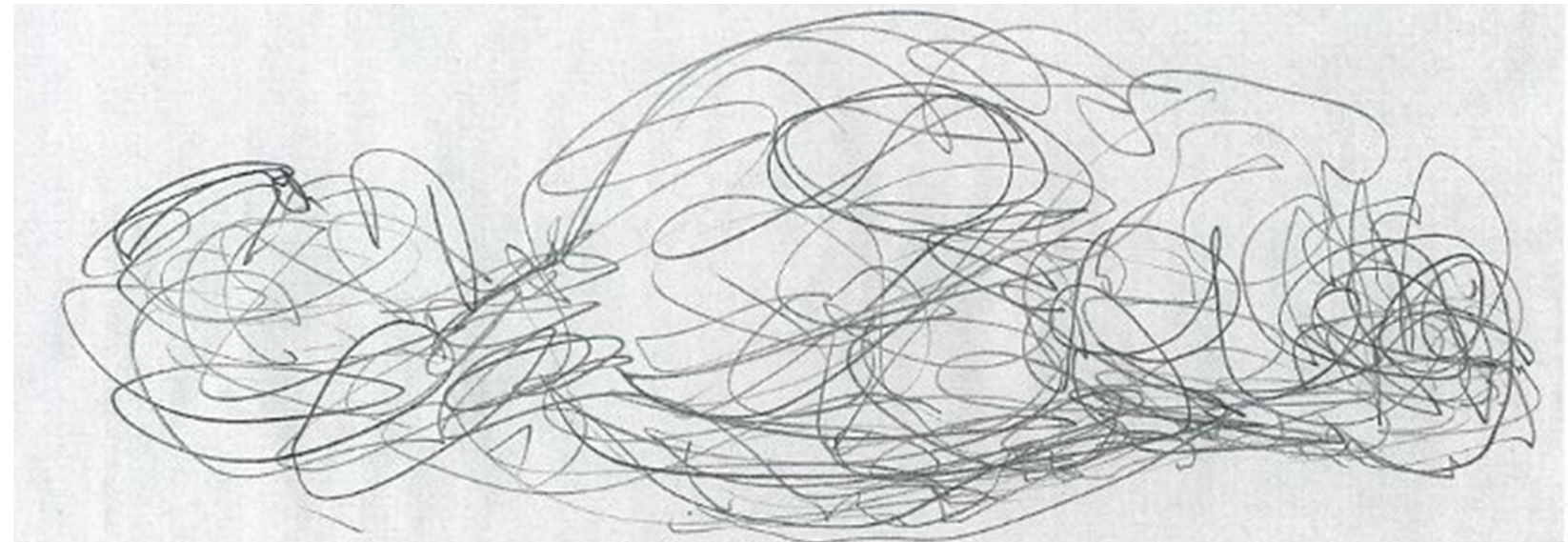




This was similarly done in the work of Frederick Kiesler, a twentieth-century architect whose work resonates with surrealism. He was a critic of functionalism and thought it “disregarded lived life; it merely standardized and constrained habits. It enabled a foot to walk but not to dance; an eye to see but not to envision; a hand to grasp but not to create” (Perez-Gomez 103). His Endless House project was a response to the problems of functionalism. The Endless House was designed with egg-shaped walls that blurred into ceilings and floors, which created uninterrupted flowing spaces. While this project is frequently categorized as early parametric architecture, it is more a focus on atmospheric architecture and its response to the dreams of the inhabitant. The spaces, colors, and dimensions were meant to spark a conversation with the inhabitant’s psyche and to call attention to each present moment and ritual. The sloped floors call attention to the act of walking and light would change with the moods of the day.

While cubism and surrealism spark a conversation with the viewer’s psyche, film and specifically filmic montage can similarly create a space for dialogue and conversation. The films researched use methods of disorientation and ambiguity to create room for interpretation that can then be translated into architectural space.

Fg 9 | *Endless House*, Frederick Kiesler, 1947-1960





Non-traditional film uses methods of disorientation and ambiguity to create room for interpretation that can then be translated into architectural space.

In Andrei Tarkovsky's *Nostalghia*, as the main character travels through Italy, he has flashbacks to his own home and family, disrupting the continuity of time and the present moment. He, and the audience, are distracted and preoccupied with the nagging melancholia of homesickness and displacement. These emotional miniatures disorient the viewer into uncertain moments of what is real and what isn't, and where we are situated in the plotline. These flashback moments are reminiscent of our own distractions from our current reality and the fictive memories and moods we sometimes occupy.

Fg 10 | *Nostalghia*, Andrei Tarkovsky, 1983



Alain Robbe-Grillet, a novelist and filmmaker whose work is described as an equivalent of a cubist painting, fractures timelines and uses repetitive montage to describe a particular spatial and emotional experience. In *The Man Who Lies*, the story follows a character from his death in the opening scenes to his supposed resurrection and exploration of a war-torn town. Scenes depict objective reality, reflective memory, and complete fiction, never specifying which is which. The narrative planes, lacking explanation and continuity, open up a wide range of interpretations and challenge perception of reality. As the character moves through a montage of architectural fragments, the disoriented viewer slowly discovers the entirety of the building. This labyrinthine space loses the character and pauses to frame him- turning him into a pictorial element superimposed with the architecture.

Fig 11 | *The Man Who Lies*, Alain Robbe-Grillet, 1968





The uncertainty in spatial discovery aligns with the uncertainty of self-discovery in Khalil Joseph's *Fly Paper*. As scenes across Harlem throughout time are cut together, subjects are framed within their architectural environments in moments of stillness before cutting to a parallel narrative. His work focuses on depicting faces and bodies as narrative. The nested narratives open up an exploration throughout a community, framing the literal and metaphorical experiences of the characters. The experiential struggle for identity is often expressed through the work of Harlem artists through the symbolic significance of water and the river as a temporal and ambiguous experience. The river spatially impacts the body and becomes architectural as it evokes emotional experience and links seemingly disconnected narratives.

These disruptions to linear time and present reality can similarly allow architectural spaces to inspire participants to connect more deeply to their own experiences and associations, opening up a dialogue between building and occupant.





Fg 13 | *Lemonade*, Khalil Joseph, 2016

"How are you?"
"Oh man, I'm nowhere."
She stood until something fell off the shelf inside her.
Who am I, what am I, and where?
Anything like flowers had long ago been drowned in the salty
stream that had been pressed from her heart.

"Oh man, I'm nowhere."
My soul has grown deep like the rivers.
It turns off and on.
So she sat on the porch and watched the moon rise. Soon its amber
fluid was drenching the earth, and quenching the thirst of the day.

"Oh man, I'm nowhere."
There are years that ask questions and years that answer.
Ancient, dusky rivers.

"Oh man, I'm nowhere."
Ships at a distance have every man's wish on board.
When it rains in here, it's storming on the sea.

Sourced: Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, Billie Holiday, Ralph Ellison



Because history is a form of story, there is a relationship between history, us, and how we view the world. We situate ourselves in the world and in culture through the reuse and recontextualization of history. In Stephen Wischer's essay about Anselm Kiefer's work, he paraphrases Nietzsche by saying "parts of history need to be salvaged and others broken up and forgotten so that a critical involvement with history may be used in the service of life" (Wischer 255). Kiefer's work at La Ribaute uses fragments of history in order to inspire connection, bridge the gaps between metaphors, and reawaken forgotten cultural memories. This sculpture at La Ribaute is composed of concrete towers that are reminiscent of the post war German neighborhoods that Kiefer grew up in, modern industrial cities, and ruined post-apocalyptic towns. This sculpture and other works at La Ribaute do not only tell only one story, nor do they need to. Because it is open to imagination and participation, we are able to project our own associations, fears, and dreams onto the work. We can experience the history of the post war German neighborhood in the work, recombine the fragments of history and atmosphere, and apply a continually changing meaning to the work. This draws history into the present time and roots us in collective cultural memory, allowing us to claim a place in this cultural continuum and broaden our view of the world and our place in it.

Fg 14 | *La Ribaute*, Anselm Kiefer

Le Corbusier's La Tourette is an example of fragmentation and temporality embodied in architecture. Because of its labyrinthine plan and program, it demands the time devoted to participation and disorients the users. Alberto Perez-Gomez says of La Tourette, "The building is emphatically not an aesthetic object; it must be used. Formal and programmatic decisions were never dissociated. The work's intentions are fulfilled only in time. Time here is no longer linear; our participation with the building adds up into layers that both reveal and conceal, never resulting in a final clarification of the "idea" of the building." Some example of this are shown in the small strip windows that close out sunlight and makes the users feel closed in and confined and in the "musical walls," or the large openings designed by the golden section that transform daylight into twilight. Corbusier's desire to use darkness and shadow as a means of mystery and disorientation creates a sense of depth in the work in the dimension of time. Perez-Gomez says, "This is architecture as a verb (ritual making)" (Perez-Gomez 368). Depth of time is communicated in the interior spaces as poetry and musical harmony. La Tourette engages the senses and allows participation so that users can develop meaning for the work- creating a wholeness.

Fg 15| *La Tourette*, Le Corbusier, 1956



The commoditizing and fragmentation of culture has contributed to the gentrification of Harlem and neighborhoods like it and the dilution of their culture. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, culture was reduced to something one could accumulate to raise social standing in the court of royalty. Creative works became the possession of the upper class in their pursuit for false self-perfection, instead of as something that could viscerally move us and change our view of the world. This has led to the devaluation of myth and the loss of story. Story is seen more as entertainment than an integral approach to understanding the world and what it means to be human. Without collective story to bind us, we become disconnected and rootless.

Hannah Arendt explains this as our “Crisis in Culture.” Instead of experiencing creative works and culture, mass society would rather absorb expedient fragments of information and entertainment to reach an immediate answer instead of participating in a process of continual discover. When we distance ourselves from a work, we distance ourselves both from the larger cultural story that the work is rooted in, but also from our own stories and understanding of self. We ignore our own lived experience and perspective in favor of being fed the answer. We value fragmented objective fact over the holistic inter-subjective space of weaving together the influences of science, technology, art, poetry, and emotion. We have moved from cultural interdependence to self-sufficiency and “in this transition the unity of representation, sustained by the communicative space of culture, was replaced by fragmentary individual achievements appearing to represent the world in its wholeness. The deep contradiction between the partiality and universality of representation is the main characteristic of the modern fragment” (Vesely 329).

While fiction, and film by extension, can be viewed as an antithesis of reality, Gadamer says, “The essence of the beautiful (and I would argue of story) does not lie in some realm simply opposed to reality. On the contrary, we learn that however unexpected our encounter with beauty may be, it gives us an assurance that the truth does not lie far off and inaccessible to us, but can be encountered in the disorder of reality with all its imperfections, evils, errors, extremes, and fateful confusions. The ontological function of the beautiful is to bridge the chasm between the ideal and the real” (Gadamer 15).

Storytelling and fiction provides an alternative method of engaging with reality by inviting us to participate in a work and use our imaginations to relate more closely to history, culture, and ourselves. Paul Ricoeur discusses how fiction changes reality as it pieces together components from the past and reshapes them into something new and creates a new world in the process. This doesn't make the fictitious world less real than objective reality; it makes it more real through the engagement of imagination.

In *The Function of Fiction in Shaping Reality*, Paul Ricoeur discusses how “fiction changes reality, in the sense that it both ‘invents’ and ‘discovers’ it” (Ricoeur 127). Fiction, drawn from previous experiences and perceptions, creates space for people to use their imaginations to connect metaphors, interpret linguistic meaning, and connect over universal experiences. Fiction requires active participation to shape the narrative and shape reality. True reality hinges on the combination of the external world and our internal world in order to give us our most true form of being.

Harlem, as a hub for artistic work and the celebration of the community's stories in the 1920s and 30s, has been slowly transformed into a neighborhood more comfortable for its new wealthier residents in pursuit of a fragmented view of progress and current reality, contributing to a loss of identity and loss of story that was once the backbone of the community.

While this fragmentation of culture has impacted our approach to reality and what it means to be human, it has also impacted the quality of our architecture, particularly in Harlem. The community's new architecture rarely tells the story of place, community, or inhabitant. When we occupy spaces that don't resonate with our stories it creates an apathy. Architecture becomes “unsituated and empty of any particular meaning” (Vesely 322) when it is not situated within the intersubjective culturally contextual myth we are connected to.

While fragmentation has some negative aspects, when fragment is approached as the conglomeration of parts of the whole and as an intentionally unfinished space for uncertainty and participation it allows for a knowledge that can only be gained through interpretation. This interpretation has the “ability to discover a new relation and new insight into a personal world that may eventually become a common world” (Vesely 325). The individual story starts to tell the collective. This project seeks to use the restorative power of the fragment to create a work that can be continually discovered.

While we live in a culture of fragments, we can use the premise of fragmentation to tell stories in meaningful ways through architecture. Fragmentation can be both the problem and the solution. I am exploring why story is such a critical component of architecture and how it can be made relevant again in our current culture through modern forms of storytelling. Through research of filmic montage and ruin as fragmented processes, the project reinstates a value on fiction and dialogue between the self and the world. Architectural space can be informed by this synthesis of filmic space and ruin in order to produce a space of imagination and participation.



The RKO Hamilton Theater, nestled between the Hudson and Harlem Rivers, was built in 1912 as a vaudeville house and designed by Thomas Lamb. Vaudeville shows featured short theatrical acts in a variety of mediums including comedy, music, and dance. As vaudeville went out of style, the theater was converted into one of the first theaters to show talking pictures in New York. The theater closed in 1958 and has since been a sports arena, a club, and a church and now is in danger of being completely gutted to make room for new construction condos.

Fig 16 | Historical Site Context, RKO Hamilton Theater Exterior



EXPLAN

The proposed design space will be reserved for contemporary short film referring to work that is culturally diverse and globally influenced, using a dynamic combination of materials, methods, concepts, and subjects that address larger contextual frameworks. Contemporary short films span from visual albums to dance films to experimental art films. The converging mediums and methods used in the creation of these films, plays with a vaudeville-like concept making this exhibition space a new voice of the city.

This thesis proposes a design of a film gallery and theater to create a platform for local filmmakers to screen their work and for the community to gather, restoring the festival of theater.

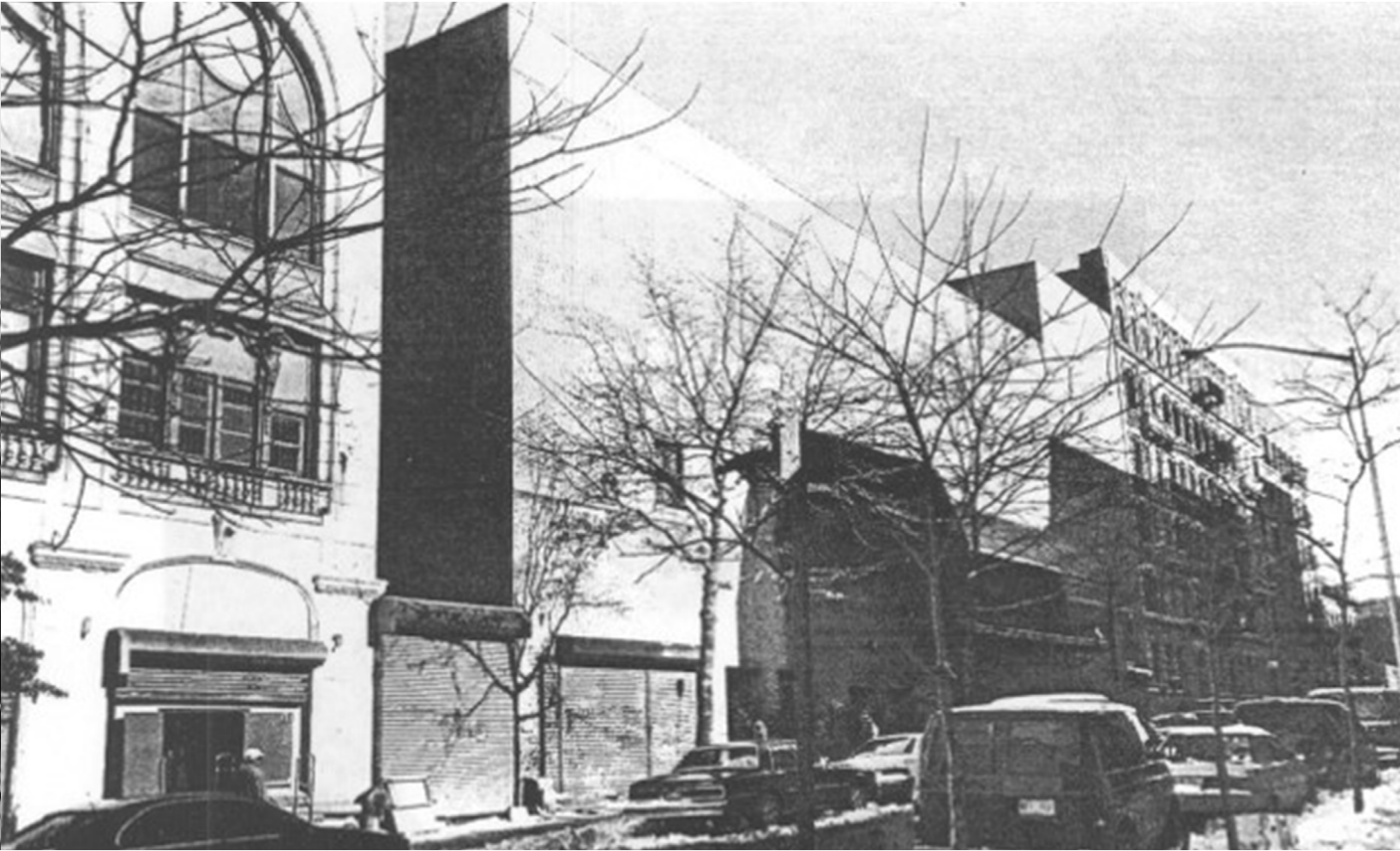
Gadamer defines festival as an experience of community and that represents community. The act of going to the movies or going to the theater is an event of going out and participating in the community and celebrating a story that expresses our shared humanity. He goes on to describe, "It is not simply the fact that we are all in the same place, but rather the intentional act of participation that unites us and prevents us as individuals from falling into private conversations and private subjective experiences" (Gadamer 40). Because the act of viewing film is so often communal, it is an act of unity and participation in the ritual of storytelling. Meaningful film uses an individual and particular story to inspire and connect with larger collective stories. Because of this collective root, we never just have a private conversation with a film. It intrinsically unites us with the larger global culture we come from.

However, we have begun to lose this act of festival as well. Abandoned theaters in various forms from the Greek theater to the drive-in can be found in huge numbers all over the world. The design of a theater and exhibition space that extends the nature of storytelling into built form attempts to revive the participation in the festival of story and myth as the cultural context and story of the community it is situated in.

Two rivers, one meandering and one direct, will allow for visitors to experience story in different ways. Museum exhibit space, allowing for the temporal display of short film, will create a roaming experience through installations embodying the vaudeville experience. A large theater for the display of longer works and festivals offers an immediate experience of story. A reception space, allowing for the festival of theater, can allow artist and community to discuss the work and its context it resides in. An outdoor theater allows for the projection of story to literally inhabit the city's exterior and reclaim its architecture.

Fg 17 | Programmatic Proposal





The designed architectural narrative emphasizes the layers of inhabitation over time within the abandoned RKO Hamilton Theater. Built in 1912, the two structures are composed of a ballroom and social gathering building that anchors the corner of Broadway and 146th St and a hidden and windowless theater building to the East. The ornamental detailing so popular in the vaudeville era provides a base that is now layered in peeling paint, graffiti, a severed passageway between the structures, and traces of adaptation for subsequent uses. The new architectural adaptation and reuse seeks to frame these layers of inhabitation both in a historical sense and in its current use.

Fg 19 | Layered Inhabitation



This thesis seeks to frame inhabitation and provide an adaptive re-use as opposed to a typical restoration. One challenge with restoration and conservation projects is our typical view of “preservation as is” or “restoration as was.” We either preserve a building exactly as it stands, preventing further change, or we restore a building to the exact way it originally looked. Federica Goffi states in *Time Matter(s): Invention and Re-Imagination in Built Conservation*, “when a mnemonic building is concerned, entailing conservation of memory within changes, is it always necessary to restore a body image? Can such a building be significantly altered, and yet remain the same building?” A building can undergo extensive change and still tell the same story. A good example that favorably supports her question is the 9/11 memorial in New York. It is precisely because the buildings were not restored “as was” that the memory of the buildings will live on and not be forgotten. If the buildings had been reconstructed and as time moved on, future generations wouldn’t even necessarily know that they weren’t the original buildings upon glancing at them. Change has to be perceivable to be felt. When change is visible, memory is created and contributes to a sense of place.

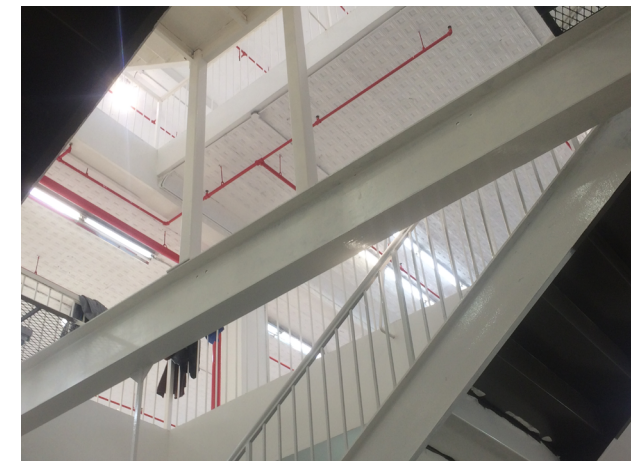
“Place is constructed over-time through the merging of multiple unfinished stories” over time. “Currently conservation exhibits prodigious photographic memory. A present understanding of the past as comprehensive inventory is gradually turning cities into museums, congealing our imagination of conservation, and limiting our understanding of the past to a read-only experience, where real interpretation is negated by looking in one direction, retrospectively.” Architecture and conservation should be “recollecting memories of the past while simultaneously looking into the future, allowing for meaningful change, rather than simply denying it.”

In Roman myth, Janus is the god of beginnings, time, duality, transitions, passages, and endings. He is depicted with two faces because he looks to both the future and the past. While this relates to architecture and conservation, it also circles back to the space of the chora- as Janus presides over the space of war, peace, and chaos. Memory and story are both retrospective and prospective. They straddle the line between where we have been and where we are going.

This thesis explores the dualities between past and present, ruin and conservation, beauty and ugliness, and fiction and reality. It is exactly these dualities and the tension of these gaps that allow for participation and the formation of story and meaning to grow.

Fg 20 | Janus





The RKO Hamilton Theater has been affected both directly by human hands and indirectly by the neglect of such. The building has, in some ways, been allowed to deteriorate and attempt to return to its natural state. This neglect and ruin will be integral to making the loss of story visible within the adaptive reuse of this building.

The interior of the theater feels uncomfortably empty and eerie to walk through. Part of the original flooring is intact bearing the “Hamilton” name, while the rest has been covered over in concrete. Metal stairs that feel out of place lead to the second and third floors that hold columned terraces looming over the floors below. Stairs leading to the basement reveal forgotten rooms with crumbling brick, spray painted phrases, and aged mechanical equipment. People walking by on the street barely look at the structure that has been forgotten for decades. Revitalized apartments and small businesses are the new destinations for this block. The last historically landmarked building in West Harlem is now a “blight on the neighborhood.”

Perhaps¹⁶⁵

is as good a place as any to consider some of the ghosts haunting *The Navidson Record*. And since more than a

Ironically, the very technology that instructs us to mistrust the image also creates the means by which to accredit it.

As author Mr. Gruner once remarks: "Just as is the viewer is won over because the film is worn, and therefore ever present has days nothing does faith less than and expensive. how video and nology comes to plied or slick."

"Rumpled Te—capital M low—hails from Guys, Radio S Fry's Electronics cheap, available

handful of people have pointed out similarities between Navidson's film and various commercial productions, it seems worthwhile to at least briefly examine what distinguishes documentaries from Hollywood releases.¹⁶⁶

In his essay "Critical Condition" published in *Simple Themes* (University of Washington Press, 1995) Brendan Beinhorn declared that Navidson's house, when the explorers were within it, was in a state of "severe shock." "However without them, it is completely dead. Humanity serves as its life blood. Humanity's end would mark the house's end." A statement which provoked sociologist Sondra Staff to claim "Critical Condition" was "just another sheaf of Beinhorn bullshit." (A lecture delivered at Our Lady of the Lake University of San Antonio on June 26, 1996.)

Mr. Truant refused to reveal whether the following bizarre textual layout is Zamparino's or his own. — Ed.

dangerous. On only to contain *George Holliday King Video* to the power of an end technology. more, as the time for tapes and disks increases, a life is extended. camera size is the larger the war grow for capturing as they occur.

"Slick Technology capital S for Shock opposite: expensive, bersome, and presuming. But it is very powerful. manipulation of the creation of anything the can come up with the safe confinement editing suite, with 24 hour on an on site mass

Nested and layered stories are integral to hypertext in labyrinthine architecture. *House of Leaves* by Mark Z. Danielewski heightens and dramatizes this concept through the plot of this horror novel. The story follows Johnny Truant as he attempts to piece together the feverish and fragmented analytical writings of a deceased neighbor. The neighbor dedicated his life and profession to writing about the autobiographical documentary of a family living in a paradoxical house. The house grows and changes according to the inhabitants' perception and exploration. The interior dimensions expand endlessly beyond the objective dimensions of the exterior. However, the house reveals itself in a sinister nature as it manifests the characteristics of a hidden beast. The house groans, consumes objects, and gradually drives its inhabitants insane as it reveals their deepest nightmares. The house, as a response to the family's dark inner thoughts, "seems to only influence its inhabitants to the extent that they can perceive its changes" (Jones 4). The children in the family are unaffected as they are not tied to the rational structure of the house and don't fight their new reality as adults do. As the parents grapple with the shifting nature of the house, it continues to respond to their fears and intensifies as their relationship and dialogue with the structure continues. The house embodies the "notion that perception inevitably decides one's reality" (Jones 7). Just as the house is paradoxical, so are the layers of characters. Our narrator, Truant, tells us from the beginning that the documentary film doesn't actually exist, nor does the family. However, just as the house drives the family insane, the nonexistent film torments the neighbor until his death, leaving Truant to mentally unravel as well as he compiles the leftover notes into "The House of Leaves" that we must now piece together in its reading while questioning our own reality.

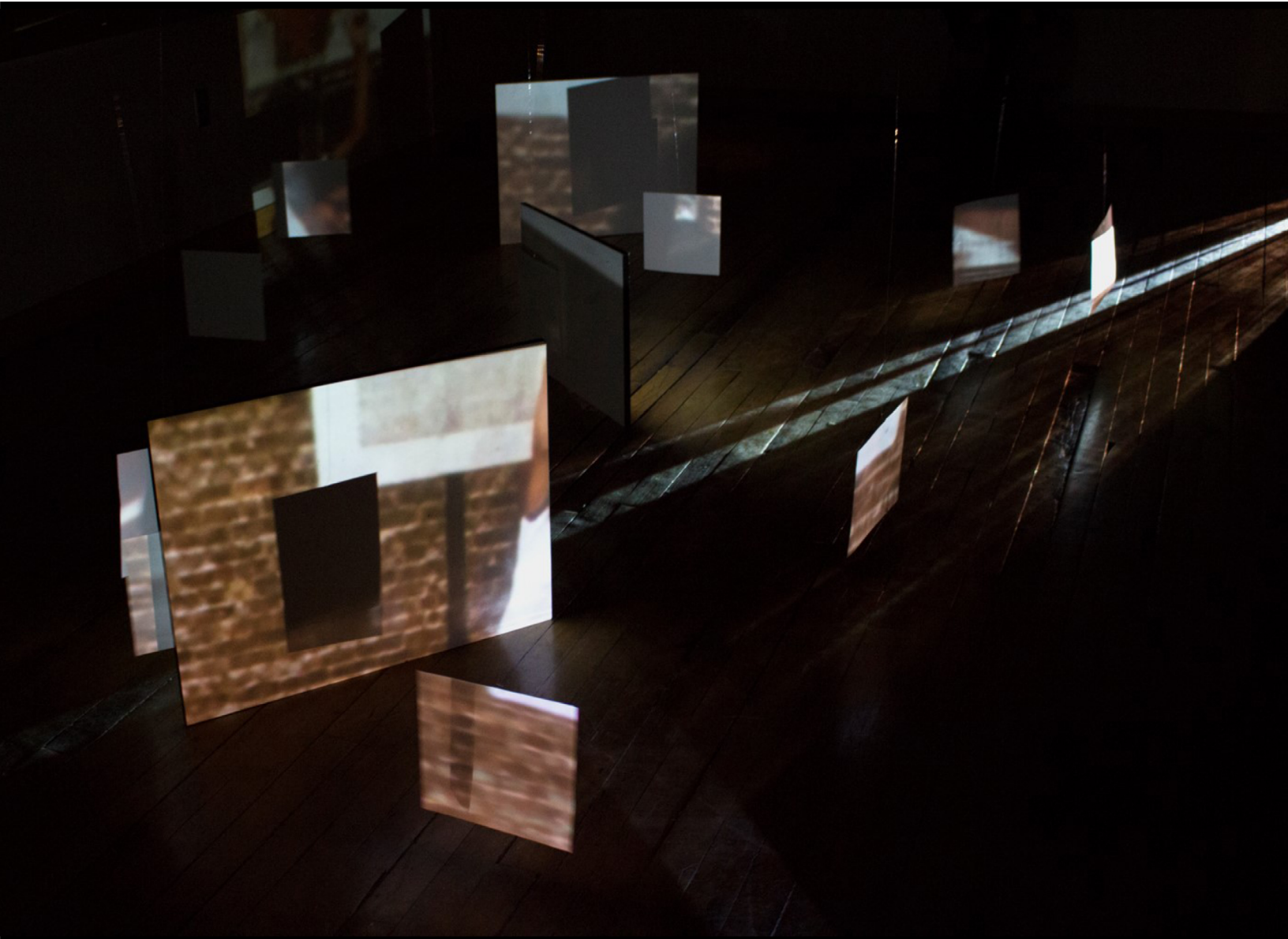
Danielewski develops this choreographed chaos through labyrinthine architecture- both in the house's structure and in the narrative structure of the novel. The novel's form, characteristic of hypertext, is "defined as a rhetorical form having multiple reading paths, chunked text, and linking mechanisms connecting the chunks" (Hayles 295). Pages include text running in all directions, giving the voices of multiple characters all speaking at once. As the characters are alone in their experiences of the house, they each recount what is happening at the same precise moment, each description different from the next. Traditional novels, breaking to allow a new character to speak in turn, imply a "temporal sequence indicated by spatial continuity." *House of Leaves* flips that by using "spatial discontinuity to indicate temporal simultaneity." The house creates a "build your own adventure" story of sorts, providing the inhabitants with an endless labyrinth to be discovered. Links are formed in the directional path of each character's thoughts, allowing us to follow each path one at a time if we wish. Appendices provide background information from yet more narrators, as do footnotes (sometimes leading to more footnotes). We are given choices as to how much we are willing to indulge a character's narration and to the extent that we believe them and their paranoid minds as we piece the accounts together.

Fig 22 | *House of Leaves*, Mark Z. Danielewski, 2000

The stories are nested in one another, always interconnected and referential. The text speaks not only of each character's experiences, but also depicts the mapping of the house's spaces. The blue boxes, for example, frame text from the opposite side of the page. They act as a window displaying signage viewed from the interior, causing the text to appear in reverse. This box sets us spatially within an architectural context, while blurring the boundaries between one page and the next. The page becomes a "leaky container" instead of an opaque, sequential narration. The window-like property of the blue box starkly contrasts the windowless interior of the house, closing us in to the horror unfolding between our mind and the evolving structure. The framed text becomes a window into what isn't there. The play between the text, its physical structure, and the archetypal elements it alludes to allow the page to become a mirror of the house "inverting its characteristics even as it foregrounds its own role as a container for the fictional universe in which such an impossible object could exist" (Hayles 793). As we become aware of the transparency of the page and peer into other moments in the narrative, the story "collapses two perspectives into one, so that looking through and looking at become the same action" (Hayles 794).

Fg 23 | Artefact





The artefact, as a driver for both experiential program and the architectural design, similarly becomes a fluid container for a filmic narrative. The screen breaks from a linear and continuous structure into a fragmented and transitory one. While the organization of the screens is reminiscent of walls, or even of entire buildings in a cityscape, the film being projected is depicting what the cityscape now lacks- a culturally relevant story. The screens become a skyline of what isn't there. As participants roam around and through the artefact and choose whether to sit or stand, they are able to decide how much time they wish to participate in a certain vantage point. Each perspective offers new views and pieces of the film, providing opportunities for connection and construction of the overall storyline.

Much like the story developed in the book, which spans hundreds of pages in ever changing fonts, directions, and styles, the artefact is composed of pages- a span that reaches across the room in ever changing positions. The pages, acting as dancing characters, pull the projected images around the room as they float on the air currents in the space. The image is never complete on one surface alone, but is pulled forward and pushed back requiring a visual stitching of each component. The dancing pages create voids in the image on other surfaces as they disrupt the continuity of the projectors, forcing the viewer to search for the missing pieces and mentally connect them as they disappear and reappear.

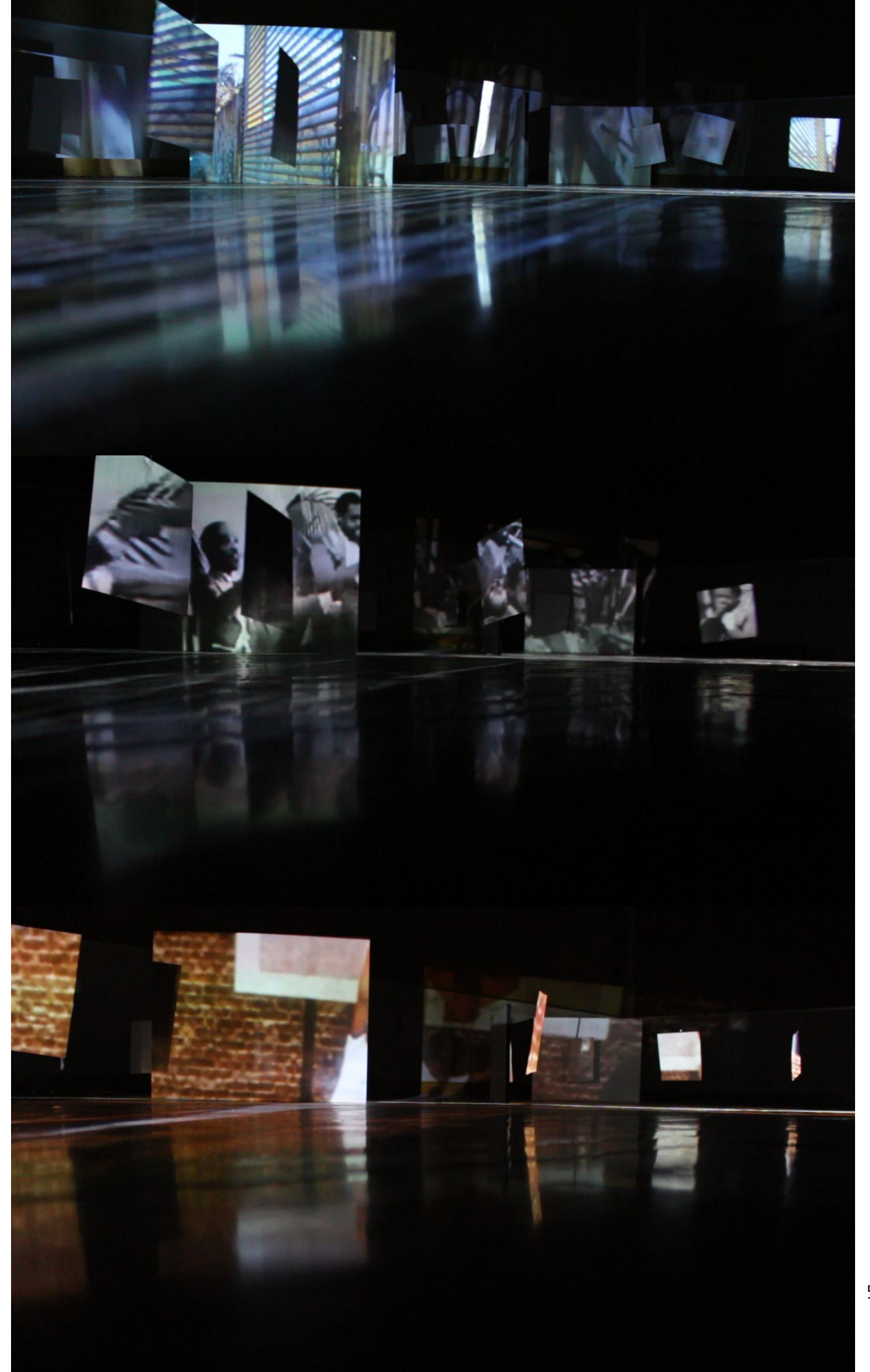
The film itself is a montage of footage from Harlem past and present taken from multiple narrators in multiple time periods. The clips are short and flit back and forth, implying a simultaneous narration of both shared and separate experiences. The film condenses time, showing the affect Harlem's history has on the present moment. The compression of time allows the persisting story of Harlem's identity to shine through- a story of uncertainty, joy, struggle, and community interdependence. Footage across the neighborhood is gathered into a single architectural space, continually evolving and revealing itself to the participants viewing the installation.

Fg 24 | Artefact

Both in the act of reading *House of Leaves* and the narrative plot of the characters reveals a starkly self-reflective construction of reality. The book, “challenging the relevance of objective reality to the human experience” (Scarano, Krause 1), follows Truant’s gnawing desire to find reality and meaning in his existence and his inability to do so. *House of Leaves* purposely doesn’t attempt to answer the nature of “Truth,” but confronts the subject with honesty and a call for participatory construction of self through a work. It is only through the recording of the house that it exists at all. The title “House of Leaves,” where the word leaf is never mentioned at all, implies that the house exists in the leaves, or pages, of the book itself. The book is the house. We are similarly made of the reflective consciousness and mediations of our environments and the fictions we create, moving past the false stability of objective reality and offering us a dynamic reality that continually responds to what lives inside us.

While less sinister in nature, the artefact and architectural design similarly aims to create a reflective experience through architecture and create a full architectural space through the physical representation itself. Within the artefact, a question of self-identity is repeatedly posed in the asking of, “How are you?” and the cultural response, “Oh man, I’m nowhere.” The work is also based on a poem by Langston Hughes that uses the river as a metaphor for this murky and ambiguous search for self. Through the montage of Harlem’s search for identity, the viewer may also call into question their own sense of identity in relation to the larger cultural question posed. This search for the identity of Harlem and of the self builds the foundation for the program of my architectural design. Within the design of a film museum and theater, visitors are able to view the stories relevant to their community within the historic and abandoned theater that served as one of the most significant platforms for storytelling in the area. The architectural design similarly creates a multi-perspective experience, turning the process of looking at and through into the same action, as inhabitants view themselves through the stories depicted.

Fg 25 | Artefact



H U D S O N

In 1948, Ralph Ellison wrote an article about the experience of living in Harlem and explained a common feeling of placelessness and uncertainty of self. This placelessness persists today as the neighborhood undergoes an architectural loss of culturally relevant stories. This thesis proposes to reinvigorate a celebration of cultural identity through filmic techniques of repetition, fragmented montage, and a disruption of linearity in order to inspire a reflective consciousness and dynamic sense of reality.



Ancient, dusky rivers

My soul has grown deep like the river. It turns off and on.

There are years that ask questions and years that answer.

Ships at a distance have every man's wish on board. When it rains in here, it's storming on the sea.

"How are you?" "Oh man, I'm nowhere." She stood with something fell off the shelf inside her. Who am I, what am I, and where? Anything like flowers had long ago been drowned in the salty stream that had been pressed from her heart.

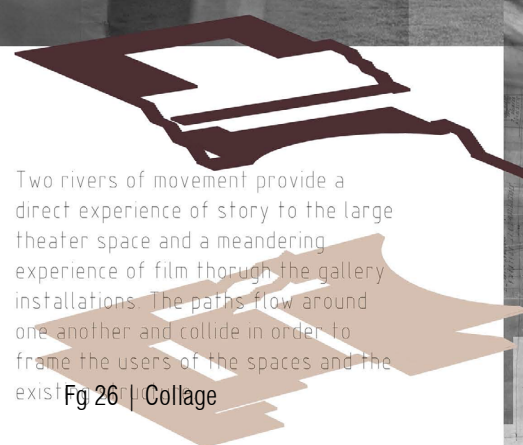
"Oh man, I'm nowhere." My soul has grown deep like the rivers. It turns off and on. So she sat on the porch and watched the moon rise. Soon it's amber fluid was drenching the earth, and quenching the thirst of the day.

"Oh man, I'm nowhere." There are years that ask questions and years that answer. Ancient, dusky rivers.

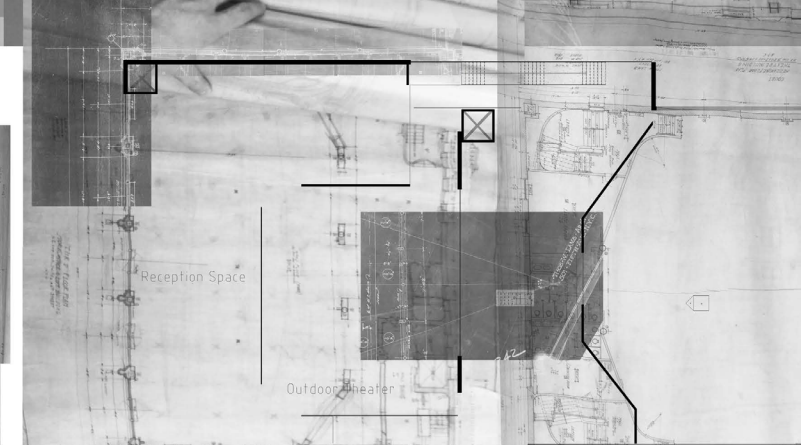
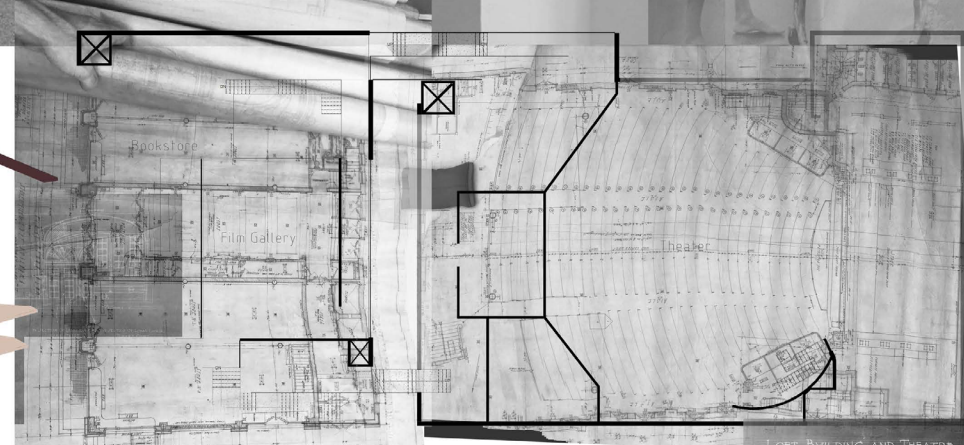
"Oh man, I'm nowhere." Ships at a distance have every man's wish on board. When it rains in here, it's storming on the sea.

My soul has grown deep like the river

An adaptive reuse of the abandoned and deteriorating RKO Hamilton Theater in West Harlem recomposes and frames layers of time and inhabitation, allowing the persisting story of Harlem's identity to shine through - a story of uncertainty, joy, struggle, and community interdependence. Within the design of a film gallery and theater, visitors are able to view the stories relevant to their community within the forgotten iconic theater that served as one of the most significant platforms for storytelling in the area. The architectural design seeks to create a multi-perspective experience, turning the process of looking at and through into the same action, as inhabitants view themselves and one another through the stories depicted.



Two rivers of movement provide a direct experience of story to the large theater space and a meandering experience of film through the gallery installations. The paths flow around one another and collide in order to frame the users of the spaces and the axis. | Fig 26 | Collage



Ground Level

Second Level

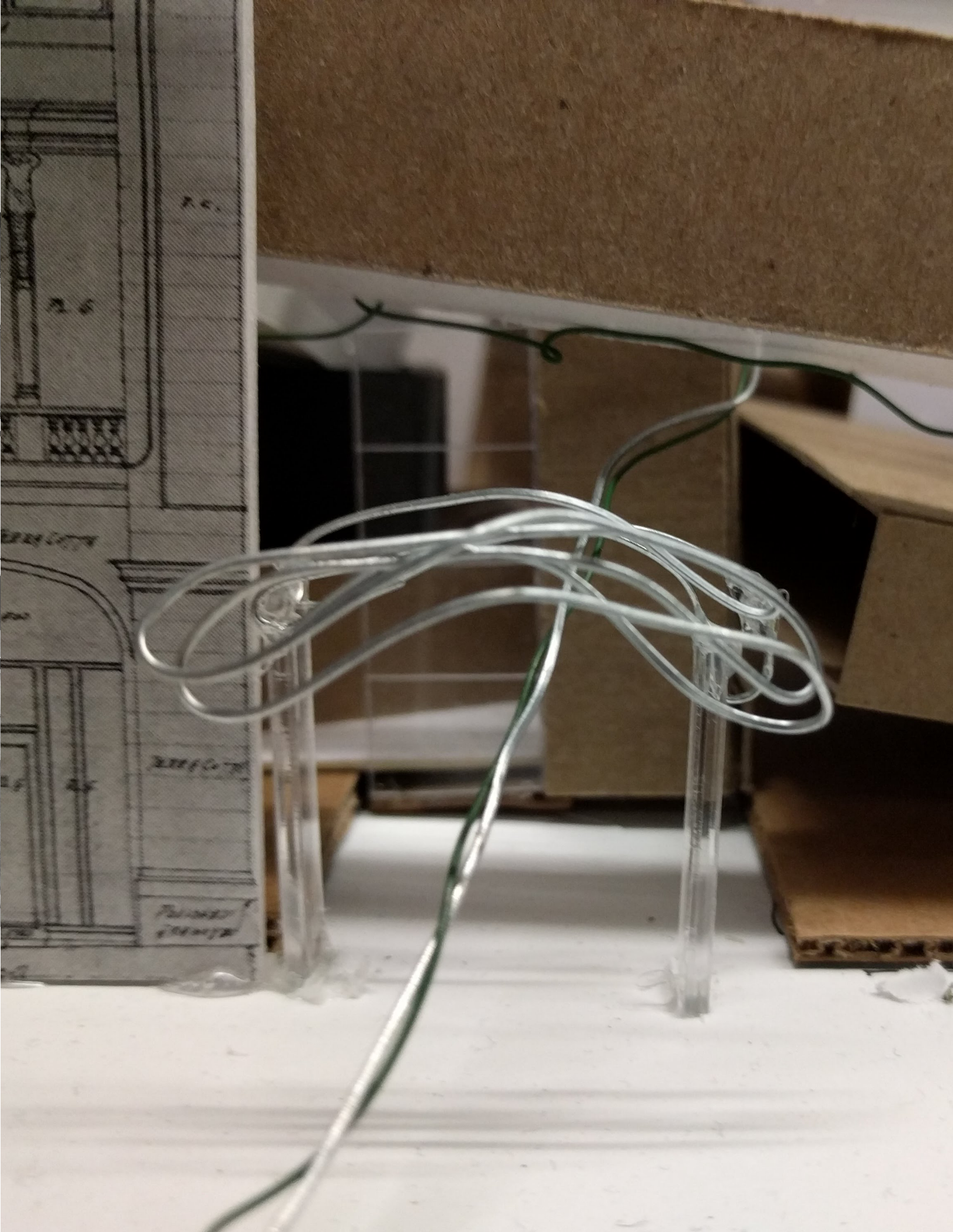
Third Level

LOFT BUILDING AND THEATRE
BROADWAY AND 146th NEW YORK
THOMAS LEHR ARCHITECTURE 2017-2018

Two rivers of movement, one meandering and one direct, allows for visitors to experience story in different ways. Gallery exhibit space, allowing for the temporal display of short film, will create a roaming experience through installations embodying the vaudeville experience, while larger theaters for the display of longer works and festivals offer an immediate experience of story. These two rivers weave throughout the two buildings, reestablishing a lost bridge between uses and reinstating a connection between theater as an act of viewing and as an act of community gathering.

Fg 27 | Rivers





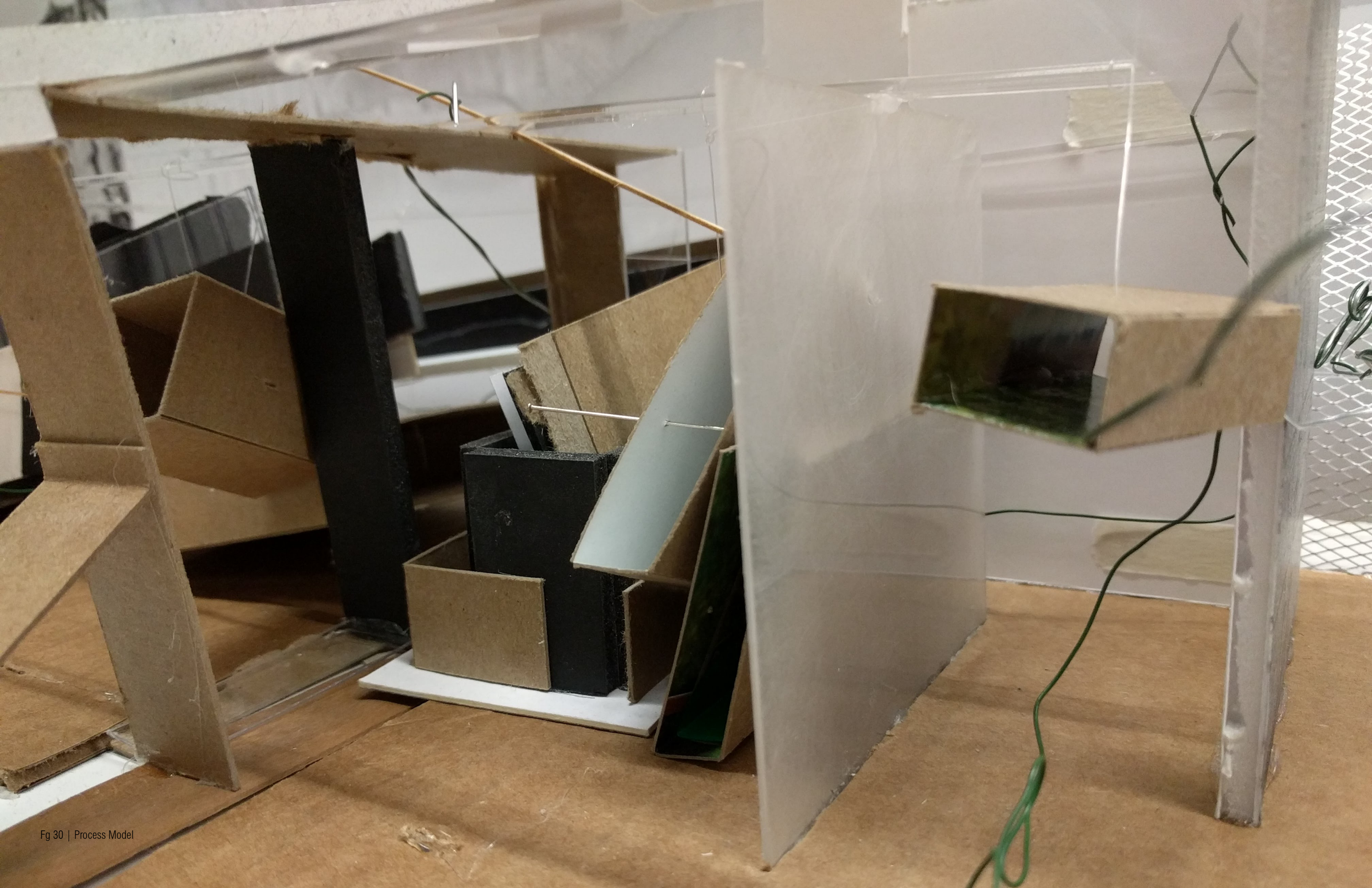
Upon entry through this previously severed connection, visitors will be able to experience the physical and spatial weight of memory, the decay of story, and the tension between past and present. By straddling the line between the two structures, visitors are able to catch glimpses of ornate balconies, peeling ceilings, and new projection screens from the exterior before delving into the interior of the building. The entry experience serves as a preface to the framed layers of inhabitation to come.

Fg 28 | Entry



Rising up to the projection room on the second floor, users are able to peer into the large theater space to the left through the projection equipment above them and down into a small installation space to the right as they collect their tickets, meet up with friends, and anticipate the experiences to come. As fragments of separated uses and clientele converge, people are able to participate in both aspects of the program regardless of which path they are on.

Fg 29 | Projection Lobby

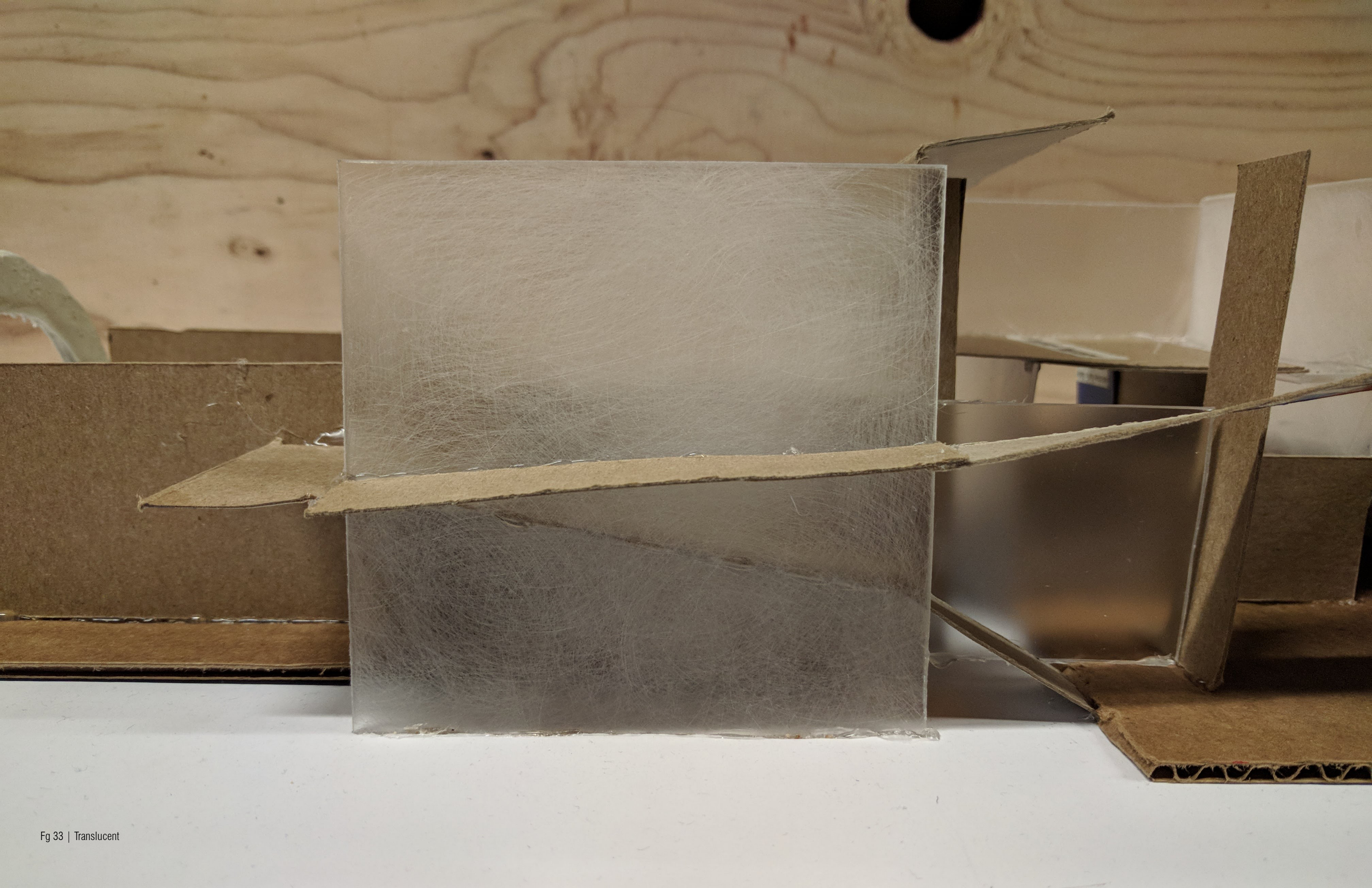


Fg 30 | Process Model



As the two rivers now diverge, the participants are set on opposite pathways, but are always able to look back on one another through the transparent circulation established on either side of the building. A meandering pathway around a translucent carve into the west building injects areas of darkness into a previously lit space, providing new gallery exhibition spaces that bleed into one another. The pathways established by this carve leave open ambiguous and connected spaces that would be prohibited with more isolated hallways. As inhabitants occupy spaces that blur the line between passage and "room," building fragments and other occupants are revealed.

Inhabitants are framed through this translucency, allowing a partial and incomplete view of those moving through the building that may have been encountered earlier, or will be seen later.



Fg 33 | Translucent



In a parallel narrative, visitors are directed from the projection room toward the large theater space, a fragment preserved and allowed to continue to age. Visitors are propelled from the interior to the exterior as a former fire escape becomes an enclosed passage. As visitors are pressed back into Harlem, the city envelops them, while also providing an opportunity to look back at where they have come from and where people are circulating through the adjacent building.

Fg 34 | Theater Passage

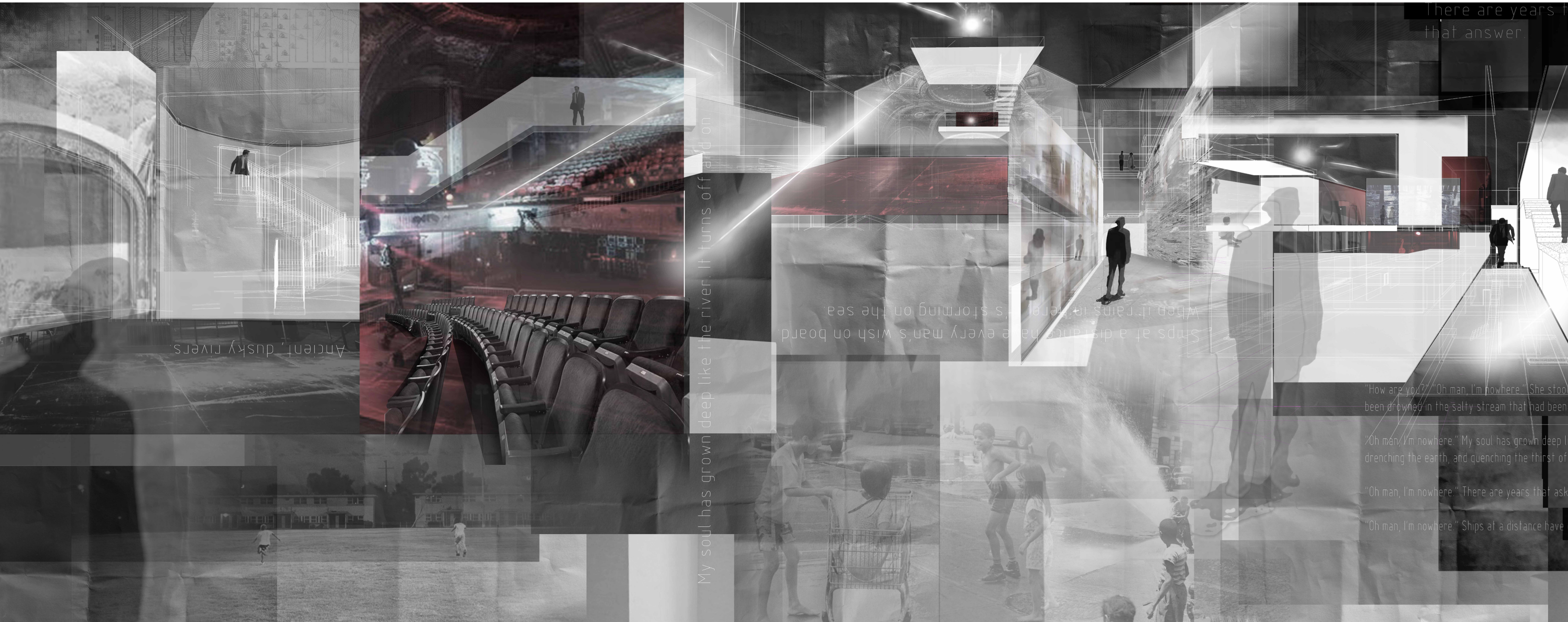
Transitioning from exterior to interior, from transparent to opaque, re-establishes the connection between city and filmic story. Former balcony seating space becomes a pathway to descend into the theater, juxtaposing occupants with layers of time and community intervention.

Fg 35 | Theater



The main theater space and reception space, which encircles the outdoor rooftop theater, instills reciprocity between viewing as singular and communal experiences. As the community flows from the theater space into the gathering space, their movements are framed through the screen of the outdoor theater space. These predominant gestures and acts of framing serve as platforms for projection and the traces of occupants to inhabit. Architectural elements, as stationary narrative anchors, allow the mesmerizing movement of the building's characters to become a new focal point much like the dancing characters in the artefact. As the movement of the occupancy is showcased, the story begins to move from the historical inhabitation to the current inhabitation and allows the building's occupants to become a prevalent component of the overall story. Community then becomes a requirement to complete the architecture they inhabit, showcasing their individual and collective stories and establishing the self as narrative.

Fg 36 | Process Model



Ancient, dusky rivers

My soul has grown deep like the river. It turns off and on

Ships at a distance have every man's wish on board
When it rains in here, it's storming on the sea

There are years that ask
that answer

"How are you?" "Oh man, I'm nowhere." She stood
been drowned in the salty stream that had been

"Oh man, I'm nowhere." My soul has grown deep
drenching the earth, and quenching the thirst of

"Oh man, I'm nowhere." There are years that ask

"Oh man, I'm nowhere." Ships at a distance have

References

- Arendt, H. (n.d.). *Crisis in Culture*.
Arendt explains the devaluation of culture as a means of approaching and understanding life as creative work has been degraded into a luxury for social standing.
- Fascari, M. (1991). *Monsters of architecture: anthropomorphism in architectural theory*. Savage, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
Fascari describes architecture as an entity relating to the body and myth through the points of view of archaism, cultural relativism, and limited rationality.
- Gadamer, H., & Bernasconi, R. (1986). *The relevance of the beautiful and other essays*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Gadamer outlines play, symbol, and festival as it relates to beauty and art.
- Goffi, F. (n.d.). *Time Matters(s): Invention and Reimagination in Built Conservation*.
Time Matter(s) focuses on the traditional approach to restoration and conservation and approaches an alternative option for telling the same story by making change visible.
- Hayles, N.K. (n.d.). *Saving the Subject: Remediation in House of Leaves*
- Jones, R. (n.d.). *Labyrinthine Literature: Reality versus Perception in Mark Z. Danielewski's House of Leaves*.
- Joseph, K. (Director). (2017). *Fly Paper*.
- Pallasmaa, J. (n.d.). *In Praise of Vagueness*.
Pallasmaa discusses the value in uncertainty and ambiguity in the process of creativity and reception of creative work.
- Pérez-Gómez, A. (2016). *Attunement: architectural meaning after the crisis of modern science*. Cambridge (Mass.): The MIT Press.
Attunement outlines architecture's current struggle in creating harmonious spaces as we focus on a Cartesian approach to space as opposed to an atmospheric and qualitative experience.
- Ricoeur, P. (n.d.). *The Function of Fiction in Shaping Reality*.
Ricoeur discusses how fiction augments reality and can give us a more holistic view of what is real by engaging our participation and interpretation of meaning.
- Robbe-Grillet, A. (Director). (1968). *The Man Who Lies*.
- Scarano, M., & Krause, J. (n.d.). *Reality and Existentialism in Mark Z. Danielewski's House of Leaves*
- Simmel, G. (n.d.). *The Ruin*.
The Ruin describes abandonment and ruin as a collaboration with nature that allows for the beauty of unpredictability and imperfection.
- Tarkovsky, A. (Director). (1983). *Nostalghia* [Motion picture on DVD].
Tarkovsky uses ruin and atmospheric effects to communicate feelings of nostalgia and homesickness that we all feel when we're lost and drifting.
- Vesely, D. (2006). *Architecture in the age of divided representation: the question of creativity in the shadow of production*. Cambridge, Mass: The MIT Press.
Vesely describes our current culture's fragmented view of the world and its prohibition of our quest for wholeness. He counters with how fragment can be used in a positive way to achieve open-ended work that leaves space for the viewer's participation.

Previous Studio Experience

SECOND YEAR | 2014-2015

FALL Instructor Cindy Urness | Tea House
SPRING Instructor Joan Vorderbruggen | Montessori School, Boathouse

THIRD YEAR | 2015-2016

FALL Instructor Ronald Ramsey | Shaker Barn, Hindu Temple
SPRING Instructor David Crutchfield | Steel Structure, Miami Hotel

FOURTH YEAR | 2016-2017

FALL Instructor Bakr Aly Ahmed | Senior Capstone: Integrated Design
SPRING Instructor Paul Gleye | Study Abroad Urban Renewal

FIFTH YEAR | 2017-2018

FALL Instructor Stephen Wischer | Thesis
SPRING Instructor Stephen Wischer | Thesis

Personal Information

Christa Galbraith

www.christagalbraith.wix.com/portfolio

christa.galbraith@ndsu.edu

763.202.5250

