

LIVING LIBRARY

How stories told through architecture can strengthen communities and the people within them.

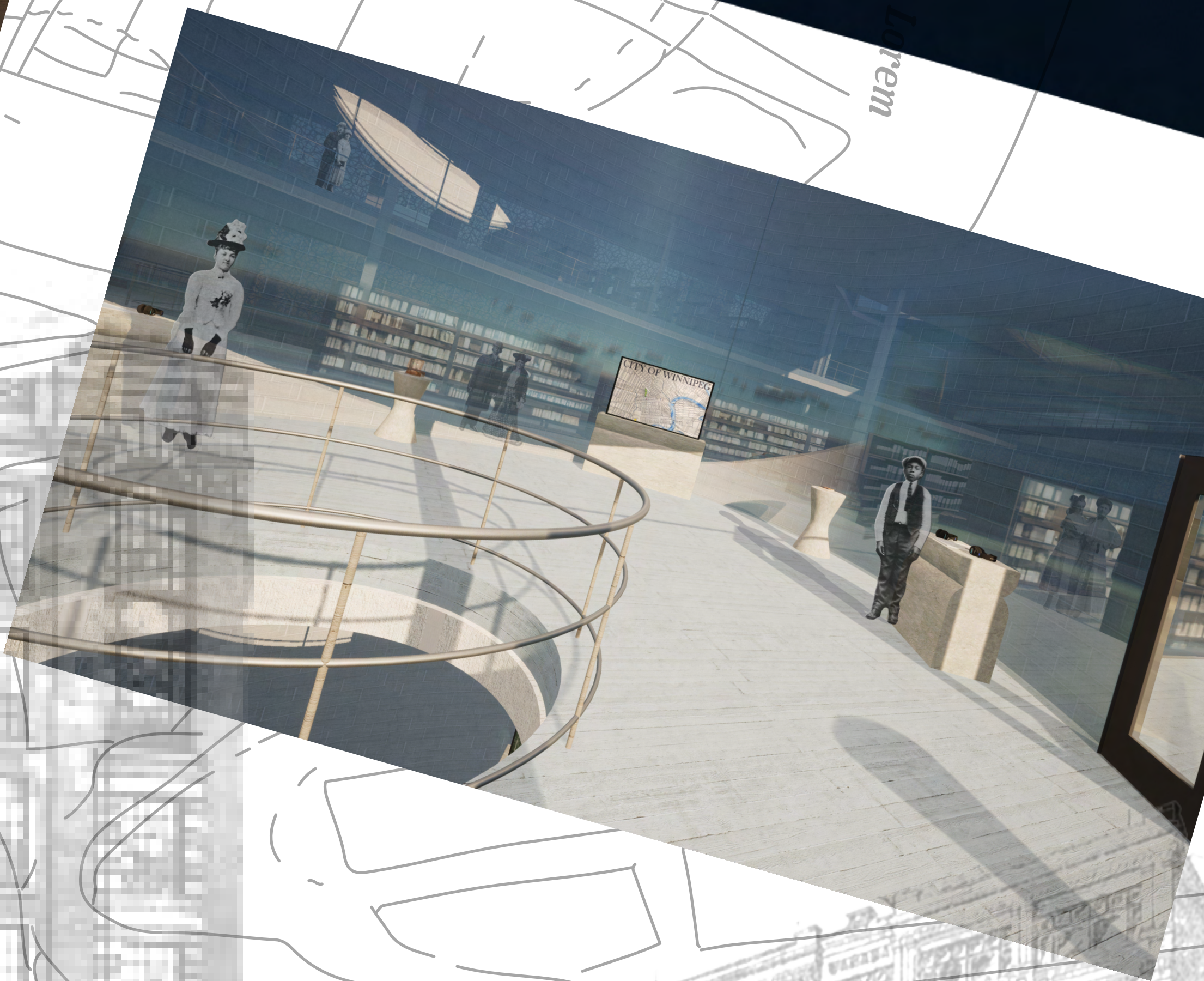
The Industrial Revolution brought the downfall of the public square, forever altering how cities operate. As cities like London and Paris began to be rebuilt and reorganize in the 17th and 18th century there was a shift in focus of public spaces. Inspiration was taken from the Palace of Versi and Bernini's Piazza in front of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome, squares and streets themselves became a part of the event of moving through the space and no longer held the same purpose they once did. Public spaces lost their primary use of communication and interaction between strangers, and instead shifted to accommodate and prioritize the movement and circulation of goods and services. This separation of these activities that had taken place in the public squares for hundreds of years caused a drastic change in how people interacted in public spaces. The disuse of public squares caused communities that had been built around them to splinter off, losing the diversity of the place and crucial opportunities for human interaction and the exchange of information. The implementation of new public places like parks no longer hold the original uses of the public square, and with their downfall, society lost its central space for sharing and coming together as a community.



The Importance of Story in Architecture

Story has had a deep and crucial role throughout our history. Story was passed down through generations, carrying with it the history and teachings of different groups of people. As Humans evolved, how stories were told changed with them, incorporating music, image, theater, and many other art forms and story began to be documented in all its forms. Architecture was once a tool utilized to tell story, providing a place for story to be expressed. Many changes in the 18th century caused the shift of architecture's focus away from storytelling and towards the movement through spaces. This shift away from large gathering places to tell stories caused people to begin to become more private within the public realm. In today's society these lost connections create a mistrust between us and the stranger, further causing our lack of understanding of our own place in today's world. The connections and spaces that once brought people from all walks of life together don't exist as they once did.

The Living Library is a place to rekindle and foster the connections missing today. By providing a place where stories can be told and shared with others, we can begin to create stronger connections with others around us. The living library provides spaces for stories to be told, kept, found, and made.



The Purpose of the Living Library

The Living Library is a place for story to live in all points of time; past, present, and future. The Living Library is located in a historically rich and ethnically diverse area of Winnipeg, adjacent to downtown and next to Central Park. This location is an ideal spot for rejuvenation and community building, replacing a deteriorated parking lot. The location would directly appeal to those moving into and around the city, and provide a safe place to listen, learn, and be heard.

The library would serve several purposes for the community. Its primary focus would be on storytelling and creating an environment to tell stories and create more in and for the future. It will provide a place for people to come and tell their story, whether they wish to simply record it and allow others to view on their own or in a group setting to share their experiences in real time.

The library will also provide learning and teaching opportunities for people to share their culture, traditions, and practices. Providing such spaces allows for more people to be immersed into the story of others. The third purpose is to operate as a library and to be a vessel that holds stories for safekeeping and for others to enjoy. The library would also be a way for artists to share their culture's arts and have them displayed. Finally, the library will provide the communities with space for gatherings and events, providing the opportunity for more stories to be written.

The Living Library would allow for people to share in a diverse and receptive space and help people to broaden their understanding of those that live around them. An improving of understanding will help to encourage interactions between strangers, something we have lost in our cities, rekindling interactions once had in the public squares of cities past. The library will act as public squares once did, where people can come into public places and participate in the exchange of thoughts and ideas.

Seeing a City Through it's Stories

Viewing a city begins independent of its stories; history alone can not provide a full and comprehensive understanding of the place. One way to view stories and history is through the creation of a literary map introduced by Angeliki Sioli in the essay "Uncharted Tides". By telling stories of a place throughout history, one can begin to build up a better understanding of a place. Her essay builds a map of Saint Petersburg by layering several narratives over a period of time ranging from 1824 to 1916. This map shows the "lived experience" of Saint Petersburg. The layering of stories tells of landmarks in the city and events happening that have helped make the city as it is today. By viewing a place through it's many different stories we can begin to gain a fuller understanding of the space and those who have moved through it. Stories of people's experiences of a place can also help to build layers of the view of cities. By learning about these stories people can begin to not only more fully experience a city, but also understand those who also call that city home.

Architecture Shaped by Story

Stories are pinned together in the understanding of a city due to them all being about the same place. As the city is the idea that pins stories of Winnipeg together, the Vertical archives pin together the Living Library. The Vertical Archives intersects all floors of the building, housing interactive stories for users to view. The archives are closed off from the rest of the building, creating an audible separation when entering the space. Visually the viewer can still see hints of what is happening in both spaces with the use of translucent concrete, allowing for light and shadows to remind viewers of others both inside and outside of the archive.

The building's facade is reminiscent of books and how stories can "unfold." As the saying goes "don't judge a book by its cover" the building's double skin helps to intrigue people moving around the site but still allows for people within the building to view out. Throughout the facade there are framed views, pointing to historic places and giving viewers an opportunity to learn more about what they are seeing in the city.

1st Floor: Public Square

2nd Floor: Archives & public Work Spaces

3rd Floor: Archives & Private Work Spaces

4th Floor: Gallery

Site Map

