/ THEATRICALITY AND INHABITATION:
THE TYPICAL APARTMENT BUILDING
AS DOMESTIC THEATRE /

by

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Abstract

This thesis focuses on the theme of theatricality in urban apartment dwelling. With its emphasis on relational issues in design, this thesis distinguishes between theatricality and the spectacle. As dual domain of collective belonging and intimate engagement, the theater strongly alludes to the apartment building. Part 1 of this thesis, which includes historical theater examples and refers to the theories of Yi-Fu Tuan, examines the western theatre as metaphor of social organization. The study of examples of modernist apartment buildings by Moisei Ginzburg, Mies van der Rohe and Le Corbusier, aid in demonstrating that theatrical potential can be housed in “non-spectacular” architectural forms. The design of an apartment complex on an Ottawa site, guided by interviews with six Ottawa apartment dwellers, is conceived as an assembly cast of buildings narrating a play of life. The tenant interviews are tested as a method for accessing intimate knowledge in residential design.

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Prologue.

As a typical middle class Russian child growing up in Moscow in the 1980s, I lived my childhood in apartment buildings. I have witnessed both the positive and the negative aspects of the apartment living very intimately. Apartment living can bring a sense of belonging and connectivity to the act of dwelling, and promote chance encounters that change neighbours into friends. Apartment living can also present a set of challenges for families, relating to the size of living space, rapport to outdoor space, and privacy. I had the experience of residing in two housing complexes in Moscow before immigrating to Canada in 1995. Then, as today, the apartment building was synonymous with the life lived in the city. My first conscious memories of dwelling were formed in Soviet communal housing projects, where my parents occupied a single room. Making the transition to a two-bedroom apartment in a high-rise in 1984 made our previous space shortage evident. The new place allowed not only more privacy and freedom, but also, more ways of inhabiting and feeling at 'home,' for my parents, my sister and myself. The sense of privacy and ownership was the main characteristic that differentiated the two homes our family inhabited in during my childhood. The massive, seventeen-story gray structure with blue stripes set among a grouping of similar buildings in a northwestern part of Moscow stood as a monument to a new and better life.

Soviet apartment buildings of the early 1980s had been constructed to alleviate the shortage of housing in rapidly expanding Russian cities. The typical 17-story buildings (Fig. 1), made from prefabricated concrete panels and erected on site, filled the landscapes of my early years in Russia. These buildings were subdivided into

smaller modules. Most buildings ranged from two to four segments each of which had its own entrance, staircase and two elevator shafts (Fig. 2). I remember forming friendships with the neighbours in a small corridor, separated from the elevator hall by a glass door. This semi-private area was shared only by the families living on the same floor, and thus became the site for forming friendships and establishing a small community.

This little area took on a theatrical character and quickly established itself as a common gathering space. The space allowed us to stage shows, dress in costumes and enact plays by adopting magical characters as our own. I recall spending hours playing with children who lived on the same floor, sharing toys, making up stories, and putting on plays. Upon hearing their neighbours' voices from the inside of the apartments, the children tried to make excuses to go into the hallway. Adults also used the space for casual conversations. A small architectural gesture contributed to the formation of enduring social bonds that developed "beyond the hallway." It was a widespread practice, for example, to celebrate other tenants' birthdays or to invite people for tea or New Year celebrations. This space that extended our living cell beyond its walls gave my family a presence with regards to our neighbors and to the outside world. They were, in this sense, theatrical spaces, and, in my childhood as I recall, they made the difference between a life of isolation and a life with meaning.

Another important element of the Soviet apartment block was the green playground. Playground areas were typically allocated right next to the building so our parents could look out of the window at us without leaving the apartment. The display, and stage-like characteristic, of the courtyard established a "spectator/ performer" or

“actor/ audience” relationship between those who remained in the building and those in the playground. The immediate visual access to the playground provided parents with a sense of security. As children, we viewed the public playground area located immediately next to the building differently, feeling a strong sense of entitlement and often possessiveness of it. These green patches shared among adjacent buildings, were the stages of our make-belief worlds. This example of shared common space may have been an inadvertent act on the part of a designer, initiated by safety requirements, yet, it was precisely that architectural gesture that made it possible to form human bonds and friendships. The residual space between four apartment buildings was transformed through the act of social play, turning into a stage of social theatrics.

The block we lived in also presented us with a set of challenges as well, typical for the buildings of the era: lack of living space, poor soundproofing, lobby lighting that did not always work, and limited finesse of the interior finishes of our dwelling. The building slabs had little relation to the ground and gave the impression of being abruptly inserted onto their lots, alongside a small number of parking spaces. Generally, though, these flaws were not the deciding factors of our experience. Soviet apartment blocks presented, in my own experience, an opportunity for social connection. The inclusion of green areas and playgrounds as cohesive elements between residential buildings were fundamental in bringing the character to the neighbourhood. The building from my childhood with its elevator lobby and inter-apartment foyer, held for me some rich and engaging social experiences, and my first experiences of theatrical architecture.

Whether intentional or not, the apartment building presents a stage for theatrical interaction. The aim of this study is to discover the potential for such theatricality and to

use it in a model for integrated design of residential dwelling spaces. My interest in apartment dwelling stems from personal experience. I offer the work that follows as a meditation on the rental apartment building, stemming from my own optimism about this building type, and from my hopes that it could be improved for contemporary life in Canada.

Fig. 2: Plan of the typical apartment
 Grey shaded area represents that of the
 area shared by four apartment units.

Fig. 1: Soviet apartment building circa 1996

Fig. 2: Plan of the typical apartment “modules”.

Grey shaded area represents that of my own apartment unit. Orange area is the common “semi-private” area shared by four apartment units.

PART 1

Introduction

This thesis on the design of medium density urban residential complexes or “ensembles” intended for renters of modest means advances the hypothesis that the space of the theater is an appropriate model for housing design. Apartment living is here explored through the thematic lens of theatre and theatricality. The thesis rests on the premise that theatricality is an implicit part of everyday urban life. Theatrical and performative gestures between non-intimates allow humans to relate to one another and to fulfill a fundamental dimension of their social identity. Theatricality is examined here because it provides a way of thinking about collective interaction and highly personal and self-reflective processes simultaneously. The stage of an urban environment sets up theatrical moments of interaction between its citizens, namely, the interaction between the strangers or “non-intimates”. City dwellers are brought together by chance encounters in grocery stores, bus stations and parking lots, playgrounds, sidewalks, movie theatres, and coffee houses. For the purpose of this thesis theatricality is defined as an active quality that engages and connects people, yet recognizes the importance of individuality and privacy.

The writings of Chinese American geographer Yi-Fu Tuan on theatricality and on dwelling will provide a useful theoretical support to this thesis.¹ Tuan’s insightful writings on the themes of quality of life in contemporary contexts will be drawn upon in this text. His recurring idea that “the good life” is lived in the city is of great use in a discussion about the design of urban residential neighborhoods.²

¹ I am grateful to my thesis advisor, Janine Debanné, for introducing me to the writings of Yi-Fu Tuan.

² Yi-Fu Tuan, The Good Life (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1986), p. 66

As the recipient of American Geographical Society's highest honor, the Cullum Medal, Tuan has redefined his discipline by exploring human geographies. By focusing on the study of people and places he searched for the way we connect to and find our place in this world. His extensive body of work includes *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes, and Values* (1974), *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (1977), *The Good Life* (1986), and *Segmented Worlds and Self: Group Life and Individual Consciousness* (1982). By investigating different topics such as physical environment, anthropology, literature, and architecture, Tuan was able to build the theoretical bridge between the space of the theatre and the space of dwelling, at all times referencing its relevance to the human as an individual and as a part of a larger society. Tuan used the model of the theatre to illuminate the concepts of social and individual change and searched for the examples of appropriate dwelling.

“The theatre metaphor of life applies primarily to the city, which is the place to see and to be seen, the place for playing social games with different stakes and the place for the dramatization of individual and collective selves. The further removed people are from the primacy business of agriculture and manufacturing the more they depend on social and dramaturgic skills to gain a livelihood, and the more they become actors and see others as actors.”³

The criteria of “potential for theatrical engagement” in the design of an apartment complex here provides a new guideline in apartment design, whereby the enchantment of everyday routines and the underscoring of collective involvement with urban and social geographies become central design aims. This thesis proposes to look at theatricality as a tool that can be used to elevate residential design from a merely pragmatic and mundane plane towards a more engaging and socially integrated one. The theatrical act raises questions about the

³ Ibid., p. 137

human condition and explores the depths of human emotion and psyche. The art of theatre (the writing and performing of plays) also fulfills the fundamental human impulse to share stories. The space of the theater, in turn, is where stories are told and brought to life, observed and experienced collectively. As such, theatricality is about interaction, community, departure from everyday routines, and its relevance to dwelling spaces is contained in this fact. The reenactment of stories happens in a carefully planned environment for a reason. So too, living itself should happen in a thoughtfully staged environment. According to Tuan, the built environment clarifies social roles and relations. "People know better who they are and how they ought to behave when the arena is humanly designed rather than nature's raw stage"⁴ The built environment, as Tuan suggested above, influences the behaviours of people. The environment that a society creates for itself can be read as an architectural narrative, a story that describes how people occupy the spaces, engage with their neighbours, and adjust, appropriate and transform that which surrounds them. Tuan's statement implies that residential environments need to be designed carefully as they possess the power to exert influence over their residents. Architecture is not a mere container but a woven narrative that assists us in living our lives. In this description, the role of theatricality in architectural design is self-explanatory: like in the shared space of the theater, the built environment offers a realm for collective participation and intimate fulfillment at the same time. In this light, it is worth considering the design of the apartment building as a well-written "play" about urban presences and domestic inhabitations.

⁴ Yi-Fu Tuan, Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977) p. 102

Critique of the apartment building as the dwelling for families

Until recently the North American model of apartment housing was conceived mostly as an answer to the question and challenge of lower income dwelling. Many higher density twentieth century apartment buildings display negative characteristics briefly evoked in the discussion of the Soviet blocks described in the prologue of this thesis. These include neglected landscaping and lack of parking areas, overcrowding of dwellers, inadequate number of services, insufficient storage space, and constrained dimensions of living areas. One might even say that these buildings lacked spaces for spiritual and emotional growth. The twentieth century story of the typical apartment building reiterates that of societal segmentation in the same time period. The following section will outline the limitations of the apartment building as a habitat for families. The primary goal of this study is to uncover ways in which the apartment can become more “*human*” for people. Theatricality is used as a starting point that can suggest the direction for the answer.

As was stated in the introduction, in contradistinction to the country or the suburb, the city concentrates issues of dwelling and habitation, and brings architecture’s role into sharper focus. The diversity and the multiplicity of experiences found in the city carry the potential to enrich people’s lives. Yet it seems that the building type that most favourably fits into the fabric of the urban environment, namely the apartment building, is not the preferred habitat of citizens. Apartment buildings in North American culture have traditionally been looked upon as less desirable living habitats. The rise of market-rate condominium construction has begun to change public perception regarding apartment living. Yet, typical apartment buildings have undergone little formal change

as they continue to attract a less wealthy demographic. The suburban housing that sprawls in every major metropolis in North America continues to dominate the market. While gaining popularity in recent years in its condominium incarnation, the apartment model caters mostly to single professionals and couples without children. It is fair to say that apartment living in the city does not equip families with children with the necessary tools to attain what Tuan would call a “good life.”

In *The Good Life*, Tuan writes about the qualities that allow us to lead a fulfilling life. Stability, continuity, hope, and awareness of culture and human connectivity, all feature prominently in Tuan’s vision. He focuses on “growth” as the central themes of the book. He describes growth as the accumulation of experiences in a culturally stimulating environment and recognition of past achievements.⁵ Growth is the defining characteristic of life. Different stages of life marked by physical, professional, mental and emotional growth. The continuous progression of human character and its potential for change or “a cumulative and forward thrust”⁶ is, according to Tuan, an essential component of life. The anticipation and reflection of human character in relation to growth so limited in many apartment spaces must be kept in mind during the design process of residential buildings. The dwelling, at its best, should reflect a potential for growth and progression of life’s stages, be it of the family or of the individual. The reflection of growth in built environment can also be taken beyond the realm of personal living space to larger scale of building complexes, neighbourhoods and districts. Apartments conceived as ensembles of different types of buildings appropriated for

⁵ Idem, *The Good Life*, pp. 97, 159, 165,

⁶ Ibid., p. 98

different stages of life hold the promise of welcoming the growth over time and generations.

The sense of community belonging, hope and engagement, celebrated by Yi-Fu Tuan as necessary conditions of the "good life" are rarely present in descriptions of apartment buildings. More often, one hears of their isolation and compartmentalization. The corridors, often narrow, discourage interaction and spontaneous conversations with other tenants. Some of the design problems include insufficient room dimensions, lack of bedrooms, lack of privacy, windowless kitchens, as well as limited or no space allocated for gardens, green areas and children's playgrounds. Apartment units rarely offer the potential for spatial transformation or acute consideration for occupants' personal needs. Perhaps more importantly, the dwellers' personal narratives and rituals of life are not considered in the design process, due to the fact that "an apartment does not know whom it is for."⁷ Equally homogenized treatment of living units within an apartment building insinuates generalized treatment of its tenants. One of the difficulties of apartment design is the fact that the architect often does not come in contact with people who would inhabit the building. Apartment design revolves around the question of non-specific dwellers where spaces are conceived without their direct input. The residents are not only unknown to the architect, but also change with each newly signed lease. The main difference between apartment design and that of a custom-house lies in individual approach and attention through which private residence and client are celebrated. The question of this thesis is how to overcome the anonymity of the general dwellers in the design process. Without yet answering this question, one can assert that

⁷ In reference to the statement "a room does not know for whom it is for," in Janine Debanné, "Luxury and Fate: the Section 8 Presence in Mies van der Rohe's Lafayette Towers," ACSA Proceedings,(1999).

in today's market, it is necessary and pressing to examine the question of the apartment building for the urban dweller, and more specifically, for the renter of modest income. The job of an architect is to respond to the list of general requirements of future dwellers, if possible, with equal attention that is granted to private clients. The dwellers of the apartment building, including among others, larger families, artists, and the elderly, will form this thesis's topic of interest.

The lack of dweller specificity in residential apartment design poses a problem sometimes resulting in generic and vague environments. If one accepts that apartment design is hindered by the designer's lack of knowledge of the dwellers' rituals of life, then the architect must find a way to access the personal rituals and stories of dweller's lives. The architect needs to search for ways to extract the future occupants' personal stories to help generate the design of the building. This thesis offers "theatricality" as an access point to these rituals, an access point to more meaningful designs for apartment complexes. Theatre and theatrical space, as described in following chapters, narrate a story of social growth and change. Theatre and theatricality pertain to collective sharing of human stories and human relations. This thesis proposes theatricality as a vehicle to bridge the architect with the potential dwellers, and proposes to use the principles of the world of theater, such as communication, connectivity and reflection, in the design process.

The way to access "the specific" in the design is to accumulate the stories of the future potential dwellers. The idea of storytelling and narrative is fundamental in a discussion on theatre and theatricality. In theatre the narratives are extracted through the presence of characters. A parallel can be drawn between the dwellers who animate

the “stage” of the residential building and the characters of the play being performed on the theatre’s stage. On one hand, the space is brought to life by everyday action of the dwellers and on the other by commanding actions of actors interacting with the audience. The story of the former is suggested by an architect, while the story of the latter is scripted by an author. Yet, the architect is unable to control how the building will be used after it is built. By translating human stories of into architectural language the architect can attempt to guide, suggest and “write” the way spaces will be used.

Apartment buildings informed by experiences and careful examination of daily activities, in other words, those that are inscribed with narrative content, would be better places to live. The architect of apartment buildings, in light of this, should approach the design process as a storytelling experience. To do so, the designer must look toward the future dwellers for inspiration.

The method of gaining access to narratives when dealing with non-specific dwellers does not always need to be done through extensive surveying. Understanding of general needs of future apartment dweller can be done through a series of specific and personal surveys. Certain commonalities can be found among most families with children living in an apartment building. Similar parallels can be drawn between groups of young artists or senior citizens. The method used to engage the specifics, within the field of unidentified future occupants, is a dialogue with individual representatives of each of the social groups for whom the building is intended. The design portion of this thesis builds on discussions with six specific individuals who agreed to share their experiences of apartment living in Ottawa, with the author, between January and March 2007. These interviews are detailed in the second part of this thesis. The hypothesis of

this study is that specific individual stories may be used in charting the model for the general future apartment dweller, because such stories contain the seeds of universal, relatable narratives. Apartment living deals with generalized dwelling as a design concern. The use of theatricality may be one method that can bring play, engagement and integration through use of narratives and personal stories.

Fig. 3: Examples of typical apartment corridors in a residential building

Fig. 4

Fig. 5: Examples of the theatrical potential found in an apartment dwelling

Routine to the routine

Why do negative perceptions about apartment living persist so strongly in our Canadian context? What is it, precisely, that the higher density apartment complexes so often lack? Could it simply be that typical apartment buildings rarely include the spaces that engage their dwellers beyond basic functions of shelter? Have these buildings omitted the more subtle spaces that support dwelling's public, and, more specifically, "theatrical" aspects? My thesis, by including the notion of everyday theatricality, attempts to discover a way of designing based on the character and the occupation of the dwellers. The argument of this thesis is that design of the living units should embrace and anticipate the potential for theatricality and play in the initial design of the building.

The stories that the buildings narrate are ones of everyday life. The dwelling is the setting for complex daily routines and events, including sleeping, washing, eating, recreating, and activities of an existential order. However, there is great contrast between the routines of the different types of inhabitants. The daily routine of a family with children does not resemble that of a bachelor. Rarely do apartment buildings differentiate between or cater to specific clientele. As a result of repetitive design strategies and lack of specificity, there are few apartments that are well adapted to familial rituals. American inner city "projects," super-block housing in the Soviet Union, or suburban Paris's "*barres*," are only some of many examples of repetitive environments lacking in specificity, and where a loss of richness in the urban fabric can be seen. The design of the dwelling spaces can benefit by addressing the occupant in a more personal way.

Despite the restrictions of the housing design, apartment living is rich with domestic theatricality. Children possess an ability to transform any unused awkward space into their playground, if there is a potential even for slightest transformation. The parking lots are not designed to engage a child at play; yet it is often the place that is appropriate for play. In *The Good Life* Tuan mentions that “imaginatively appropriated can seem more real than the one with which our senses are directly engaged.”⁸

Children often possess the ability to translate the ordinary setting into an imaginary and exciting world. This very activity is also the proper of theatre. Theatre not only draws in the audience with its stories, but also creates the place where stories dwell. The magic of theatre empowers people to believe in stories. The residential housing is also the place of sharing stories. Such stories are not staged for an audience and do not require scripts. However, the purpose of the residential dwelling should not be reduced merely to shelter, but integrate a place into a stage where the drama of the domestic nature can be enacted. The creation of integrated engaging housing environments may be one of the steps toward better apartment design.

There is no shortage of opportunities for daily, if not “routine” theatricality, in the apartment building. Dancing in the living room transforms space into a stage. The rituals of sharing candy on Halloween or mere exchanging of greetings at the time of Christmas bring people together. The laundry room is another important place for communal gathering and social interaction. The process of preparing food is highly theatrical. Alchemy is present everyday where homemade meals are being prepared. The act of sharing food is highly ritualistic in every culture, and spaces need to begin to address the little “performances” or “celebrations” around meal preparation that happen

⁸ Tuan, *The Good Life*, p. 160

on an everyday basis. The actions of people transform the dwelling environment into the place charged with meaningful interactions.

The theatrical spaces are not only concealed inside the individual units of the dwelling. The place that the building occupies within the larger urban context is also replete with theatrical potential. The city, according to Yi-Fu Tuan is a “material environment” that does more than offer protection from the elements by providing “comfort and delight in its shops, plazas and fountains, tree-lined streets and parks.”⁹ He also writes: “Beyond even these amenities the great city offers excitement and glamour the root meaning of which is magic.”¹⁰ The diversity and the concept of “urban” theatricality are present on the streets of major cities, including those of Ottawa. The writings of Jane Jacobs advocate the city as an appropriate setting for residential living. Her early criticism of the city brought awareness to the issues of segregation of leisure, living, working and playing environments within urban environment. The progressive withdrawal of residents from the urban core changed city’s character in regard to social space, function, inhabitation and transportation.

Jane Jacobs focused her attention on the neighbourhood as an important component of desirable living spaces. Jacobs openly criticized modernist planning strategies for their belief that “segmentation and cleanliness is the key to successful urban renewal, that functions should be kept apart, and all residences should be protected from the traffic and bustle of the streets.”¹¹ According to Jacobs four conditions are necessary for successful urban spaces:

⁹ Ibid., p. 71

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Idem, Segmented Worlds and Self: Group Life and Individual Consciousness (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982) p. 194

1. *The district, and as many of its internal parts must serve more than one primary function. This would insure the presence of people throughout different times of the day for different purposes.*
2. *Most blocks must be short; that is, streets and opportunities to turn corners must be frequent.*
3. *The district must mingle buildings that vary in age and condition, so that they vary in the economic yield they must produce.*
4. *There must be a sufficiently dense concentration of people including those who are there for the purpose of residences.¹²*

The multiplicities of the nature, age, and functions of the buildings within a district, advocated by Jacobs in the above covenants, broaden the demographic range and social character of a given neighborhood. The neighbourhood that contains both the residential, as well as, commercial enterprises is witness to the complex changing character of urban space. As day changes into night, the temporary inhabitants of the neighbourhood, the people coming from work, are replaced with the permanent residents who return to their homes. The diversity of uses not only discourages segmentation and isolation, but also supports the continuity of use and inhabitation. The points advocating the need for diversity of architectural character, as well as, that of the inhabitants as outlined by Jane Jacobs can be used in an argument that the inner city core containing various amenities and cultural influences is an appropriate stage for the urban residential complex. All of these conditions are necessary ingredients for the creation of an integrated neighbourhood suitable for inhabitation.

¹² Jane Jacobs, The Death and Life of Great American Cities (New York: Random House Inc, 1961) pp. 150-151

The Everyday versus the Spectacular

As stated earlier, living spaces are comprised of the spaces where one puts the furniture, where the dinner is made, where one wakes up in the morning, where the shoes and laundry are put away, where the phone conversations happen and where the mail is picked up, among many others. These are the events of the everyday that are seamlessly woven through more celebratory occasions such as graduations, weddings, and other rites of passage. The dissimilarity between everyday routine and eventful occasions is not limited to the nature of the events, but also to the space where the events take place. Routine events are symbolized by repetition and familiarity. Yi-Fu Tuan identifies stability and continuity as two of the key factors of the good life.¹³ The routine of daily events symbolizes both of these conditions as it forms the course of one's life. In contrast to the permanency of the familiar events, the spectacle, festival and celebrations are memorable and stand apart from more ordinary events. The spaces of the everyday and the routine are those of common zones, the "in-between" areas such as elevator waiting areas and laundry rooms, spaces driven by function and personal inhabitation. Those areas are about action and participation as they connect to one another in sequential relational manner. The relationship is not only about connectivity between entrances, pathways, corridors and rooms, but also about the continuity of the character within a neighbourhood.

In the case of special occasions, the need for spatial separation points towards the singularity and self-containment of those events. The architectural equivalent of events would be buildings, such as the Jewish Museum by Daniel Liebeskind and Frank Gehry's Bilbao Museum. These notable contemporary "spectacle" buildings announce

¹³ Tuan, The Good Life, p. 79

their presence and position themselves apart from the rest of architectural design and urban fabrics. Such buildings can be described as “non-relational” architectural events. Focused on impact and on seizing attention or shocking the immediate surroundings with non-conformist tectonics, these buildings might be termed uni-directional, or spectacles “in” and “of” themselves.

By contrast, the buildings of the everyday and the routine -- office towers, houses and apartment buildings – not only disappear into, but also weave, the fabric of cities. These are important buildings that generate and strengthen the character of neighbourhoods and are fundamental in shaping the perception of the city. It is important not to neglect the everyday and, perhaps, even mundane, in architecture, as these realms are deeply engaging. It is the spaces generated by those buildings that are in need of theatrical intervention. In this sense, the spectacular and the theatrical are very different. In one case, the intent is not to create a relationship, but rather to provoke awe; in the other, the goal is to give meaning to the everyday spaces through a gesture of mutual inclusion, in other words, of relationship. This thesis is especially interested in “relational” events and spaces.

Fig. 6: Examples of “everyday” non-spectacular building graphics that unveil theatrical potential

Theatre and the Domestic Life

History of Theatrical Space

In order to explore theatricality in residential design, a closer look at theater models is useful. The historical discussion of theatre is conducted to illustrate the change in society's perception of public performance space. The author accepts Yi-Fu Tuan's premise that theatre organizations have been reiterated in societal order, exhibiting progressive segmentation and isolation of the public. If theatre can be used as an indicator of social changes, then it also can be related to the changes of dwelling space, in that it, too, became increasingly segmented and compartmentalized.

This section will examine a series of historical urban theaters, in particular the Greek theater, the beginning of secular drama in Medieval Europe, the 15th century English playhouse, the French Renaissance period theatre, Victorian stage, and contemporary theatre. These will be examined in order to derive principles of design applicable to housing ensembles. These models bring into focus three types of performer-audience relationships: orthodox (with its clear division between lit stage area of actors and performers suspended in the darkness), confrontation (where some degree of participation between audience and performers is encouraged), and finally, environmental (where spaces of the audience and actors are interconnected so they can form a collaborative relationship with minimal distinction of space).¹⁴ This thesis argues that the latter model, environmental theater, offers the most fruitful analogy to dwelling's shared nature in the contemporary context. Indeed, environmental theater is

¹⁴ Idem, Segmented Worlds and Self, p. 191

not about the spectacle but rather, about participation. The ordinary is celebrated while maintaining its focus on the real emotional exchange between audience and performers. It alludes to the idea that everyday life is also worthy of celebration as we all participate in it. The desire for participation and connectivity in the realm of the theatre also speaks of the desire for connectivity in ordinary daily lives.

In tracing the history of Western notions of dwelling, the trend for segmentation and progressive isolation emerges. In his work *Segmented Worlds and Self*, Yi-Fu Tuan compares the development of the European house and theatrical space in relation to the changes in society and its gradual division into classes. He argues that both private life, cultivated through centuries of self-reflection, as well as communal involvement and integration, are two necessary components of daily life.¹⁵ The following paragraphs suggest how both of the contrasting ideas could be found in realm of theatre and theatrical space.

“Theatre has its roots in religious celebrations and festivals. It was very much a communal affair.”¹⁶ Festival, much like theatre itself, rests entirely on the participation and attendance of people. The festival assumes a non-discriminatory role as it allowed different social groups ranging from noblemen to beggars to be a part of the event. The communal aspect is implemented in theatres of ancient Greece and Rome. The Greek and Roman theaters were spaces of communal gathering staged in outdoor amphitheaters. The public character of the Ancient theatre was reinforced by its physical location. Open outdoor auditorium and acting areas were positioned in front of temples, palaces, public squares and streets. The seating was located in a circular

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 13

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 188

setting providing the audience with a democratic opportunity to view the stage. The performances were free, thus allowing anyone with an interest to participate. The state-supported funding ensured that entertainment and art were accessible by many social groups, where audience acted as a unified body. The communal aspect shared by theatregoers, and the democratic access to spectacle is one area that will be investigated further in relation to dwelling space and the formation of the urban apartment complex, especially of public zones, such as courtyards and playgrounds.

The emergence of the modern play is linked to the religious services of Christian church. Popular religious festivals were taking place all over Europe as early as twelfth century. Interestingly, these yield applicable insights for contemporary planning of urban residential quarters, especially in their relationship to residual urban space. In contrast to the Classical theatre the performance of the religious plays began to occupy the space outside of the church's walls. The religious processions and Biblical enactments staged in countries such as England, France and Italy saw the division of an original unified body of worshippers into two distinct groups of performers and spectators.¹⁷ The religious festivals such as *Corpus Christi* were large-scale productions that included elaborate sets, special constructions and extensive casts. The events transformed the space for an extended number of days¹⁸. This shows that despite separation into spectators and performers, the communal aspect of participation was highly emphasized. The festival was an event where everyone, not only the performers, was celebrated. The segmentation of a unified body started to happen but the sense of communal celebration and belonging remained intact. The separation of society into

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 90

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 93

different groups – spectator and actors, wealthy and poor - was possible while maintaining a cohesive and integrated character.

The performance space of most Corpus Christi festivals did not represent any specific locality as it was erected and disassembled for each occasion separately. The relationship between the space of the performance and the background buildings, often insignificant, structures with the exception of the church, obtained meaning and took on added value only in relation to the play. The play allowed the space to be illuminated and brought in focus. The idea of meaningful residual space that becomes significant during a theatrical performance may also illuminate the potential of urban spaces to be transformed. The improvisational play that occurs in the interstices of anonymous fabric buildings brings to these buildings added meaning. It is precisely this kind of phenomena that can transform residential complexes into vital places to live.

Social heterogeneity, a characteristic so essential to social housing, yet also so difficult to create, can also be examined in early urban theater models. By the sixteenth century the Morality plays were performed in public outdoor theatres that were specifically designed for the staging of the performances.¹⁹ Theatrical events gained a permanent space and the division of the play into spectators and actors continued to increase. Despite this, the social space in the medieval city was not clearly defined. The boundary separating rich and poor was neither strongly demarcated in the stands of the theatre nor on the streets of the town.²⁰ Social space was accessible to all. This idea of division into different groups but all-inclusiveness of participants in the theatre can be transposed to housing development. The outdoor theatres blurred the line between the

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 95

²⁰ Ibid., p. 96

rich and the poor, temporarily suspending the social gap. The architecture of an apartment building situated in a diverse neighbourhood can begin to play down class distinctions allowing people of different financial means to co-exist in the same neighbourhood. The acknowledgement of differences, but inclusiveness of various social groups, would be a desirable goal in the design of a dwelling complex.

Both the medieval theatre and the theatres of Elizabethan and Jacobean periods were based on the model of the “*theatrum mundi*” or “Theatre of the World.” By denying a particular locality the stage of the *theatrum mundi* “aspired to represent the whole of God’s creation, including Heaven and Hell.”²¹ In this model the theatre is much like a large house, a heterotopia of dwelling, to use Michel Foucault’s term. The shape of such *theatrum mundi* was usually round or hexagonal, the most famous example being the Shakespearean’s Globe theatre. The round shape of the theatres constituted a diverse world by allowing various social levels of patrons to enter and share the public space with the exception of the very poor. The attendants could no longer enjoy the performance for free, and resultant spatial hierarchies were organized through three different types of seating arrangements... The standing room-only space in the central yard was the least costly and despite crowded conditions allowed the closest proximity and better view of the stage. The seats in the gallery followed by the private boxes intended for the wealthiest patrons were available to anyone willing to pay the fare. Despite the separation of audience by means of charged fees the spectacle was social and personal.²² The space of the actor and the audience was yet to be clearly divided into separate spheres. The audience composed of various social layers of society

²¹ Ibid., p. 97

²² Ibid., pp. 98-100

sharing the same entrances and they interacted with the performers and with each other. By making the spectacle visually accessible to the audience from virtually any location, the theatre, despite dividing its audience into three groups, attempted to preserve the sense of visual democracy. There was a building, a unifying architectural form, where different social categories were present inside its envelope. The interior of its form choreographed and gave structure to the social stratifications in such a way as to be non-exclusionary. The metaphor of an architectural form that embraces diverse content within its frame is relevant to the topic of apartment buildings as it suggests that different types of people can co-exist and inhabit the same space, and partake of strong shared experiences.

Successful residential ensembles rely on the careful calibration of public, semi public, semi private, and private realms. This art of calibration is also central to the organization of theaters. The French theatres of the 1600s, notably, were elongated in shape and changed the way spectacles were observed. By locating the stage at one end of the building, all the members of the audience were invited to observe the performance from the same vantage point.²³ The physical separation between the stage and the auditorium pronounced these spaces as two unique separate rooms, one of an audience and another of performers. The similarity between theatre and a house lies in treating both models as places with rooms where different experiences of the same kind can occur. In theatre those experiences include performance, rehearsal and observation, while in the realm of housing they would take on a character of events of life (a fancy dinner, for example, is not routine). The distance that was virtually non-existent in street entertainment and festivals, where active involvement between the two

²³ Ibid., pp. 104-105

groups was at the heart of the performance, began to increase. The emergence of paid public theatres, differentiation of seating, and change in the nature of the plays performed before a fixed audience all have reflected the trend in societal segmentation. The theatre structure exemplified the trend towards privacy and self-reflection. The creation of the private viewing box suggests not only a withdrawal and separation from society but also the need for personal private space. Privacy is one of the fundamental needs in modern apartment living and the acknowledgement of its necessity in dwelling environment is crucial in any attempt to create functional dwelling spaces. The way to achieve privacy is through physical distance and partitioning. Both of these are present in metaphorical sense in the realm of theatre. The idea of threshold in residential environment can be used to announce, emphasize and set up boundaries between different occupants to ensure the feeling of safety and privacy.

Since the late 1400s the theatre saw a progressive development in stage design. In the Renaissance period theatres distinguished themselves through implementation of elaborate stage perspective sceneries. Tuan writes, “a scene based on perspectival illusion can be appreciated, ideally, from only one place in the auditorium, and that is where the ruler sits.”²⁴ In addition to the division between the actors and spectators, the audience itself became split into two. As the frame of “proscenium arch” became permanent and standard feature of the court theatres, the scenery enhanced the view of one particular person at a particular location, usually the ruler or a monarch. On one side Monarchs were watching the performance from the fixed point in the auditorium that composed the most comprehensive picture of the stage. On the other side the rest

²⁴ Ibid., p. 106

of the audiences were watching the monarchs.²⁵ The theatrics of human behaviour within the audience is what makes this theatre model worthy of investigation. In apartment ensembles, there are necessarily close adjacencies of buildings. When two buildings face against each other the condition of reciprocal surveillance is noted. Both buildings simultaneously take on the roles of an observer and a performer, while being watched and displayed. The proscenium defines two separate realms on each side of its frame, as if to give each side “existence.” In the proscenium model of theatre the relationship between actors and performance exists within the frame. The view is limited but also choreographed with respect to the edge of the border. In case of an apartment building the introduction of a proscenium, such as a threshold framed to display the activities in the lobby. Framing of the semi-public space of the apartment lobby can emphasize, delineate and establish the boundary between a public face and a private life of the dwellers.

In the eighteenth century, Tuan writes, the “division between the reality of the play and the reality of the actors and spectators remained fuzzy.”²⁶ The actors and audiences remained interactive, as exchanges between the two groups were common during the performances, if not encouraged. In the nineteenth century theatre narrated further segregation, both social and spatial. Lighting techniques, such as the use of limelight and introduction of gaslight that could be controlled inside the building allowed for the illumination of the stage but not the audiences, thus suspending all but the actors in darkness. The small theatres were frequented by privileged levels of society where the spectator was turned into a voyeur in the intimacy of a private box or in the darkness

²⁵ Ibid., pp. 104-106

²⁶ Ibid., p. 111

of the orchestra seating. The Victorian playhouse exemplifies the high point of segmentation between the audience and the stage. The gradual retreat from the direct social and spatial connectivity of earlier theatre models signified society's inclination to search for "self."²⁷ The architectural arrangement of theatrical space was a telling sign societal isolation. While a certain degree of privacy is a necessity in residential living, extreme isolation signifies social withdrawal. The balance between the private and public life is at the core of the discussion and the need to mediate this is the job of an architect.

"The very existence of a building, with its different kinds of demarcated spaces, suggests a felt need for segmentating peoples and activities, and an awareness that not only the dress but the larger environmental setting defines the self"²⁸ wrote Yi-Fu Tuan. If theatre can be used as a signifier of change in social and physical space, then the transformation of the French seventeenth century theater suggested that its corresponding society was longing for connectivity, but for a connectivity with the potential for individual, private, and, perhaps, even, spiritual life. Herein, indeed, are the seeds of very modern sensibilities.

In the period closest to our own, the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the movement towards involvement and integration began to change the physical space of the theater. The emergence of avant-garde theatres, Theatre of the Machine, and Theatre of the Absurd, has shaken traditional foundations of the theatre. New types of physical spaces within the theatre have challenged and redefined the audience and performer relationship. The invention of the "Black Box" theatre destroyed the spatial

²⁷ Ibid., p. 113

²⁸ Ibid., p. 101

hierarchy and superiority of the stage by denying a single fixed point of view of the stage. The idea that goes back to the ancient amphitheatres of Greece and Rome was taken further by surrounding the stage completely from all sides, thus making the experience of observing the performance fully democratic. Thrust stage theatres were used to reestablish the relationships and connectivity between two groups, rather than isolate and reinforce hierarchical separation. In modern theater, the actors were brought closer to the audiences as they themselves took on a role of collaborators. The modern theatre returned to the custom of bridging the gap between the audience and the performers. The fixed proscenium-frame was abandoned along with the defined separation of spectator and performers' space. If theatrical space of the past described in earlier section could be viewed as an indicator of the social segmentation, it can also be suggested that trends in contemporary theatre aimed at returning to the relational aspect of performance indicate social need for connectivity and yearning for collective participation.

The concept of integrated theatre can be used in forging the relationship of the residential ensemble and its urban context. The environmental theater model may inform society about connectivity, interaction and integration. Not only residential complexes, but the larger contexts of neighbourhoods and districts, can be viewed as sites of urban residential theatre. Environmental theatre teaches that a collective environment acts as a site of shared celebration. Urban theatre too, can be a stage waiting for the performance of life to be enacted.

Due to its improvisational character, the Environmental Theatre recalls urban celebrations and festivals with all of their unpredictable moments. Environmental theatre

advances that we should never stand aside from life and be merely spectators.²⁹ It is here that one can draw a clear and resonant bridge to the design of urban residential neighbourhoods. In Space and Place, Tuan writes:

*“It hardly needs saying that the visibility of a modern city suffers from the lack of public occasions to which the people are drawn and for which the halls and streets function as supportive stage. Of course the city was and is an elaborate conglomeration of innumerable stages for the performance of private and semi-private dramas – birthdays, high school graduations, basketball tournaments – but these are at most local pageantries often held at some distance from the city’s core.”*³⁰

The city, starting from the apartment building, then, needs to engage its inhabitants by providing both a stage and an auditorium where dwellers can simultaneously engage and reciprocate the roles of spectators and actors in a larger play of life all at the same time.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 192

³⁰ Idem, Space and Place, pp. 173-174

Fig. 7: Change of theatrical space through time

Dwelling and Theater

The above section examined how the spatial principles found in theatre can be related to the domestic content of the dwelling space. The general terms discussed above will now be considered more concretely through a series of studies of 20th century housing developments. Modernist housing prototypes designed by Moisei Ginzburg, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe and Le Corbusier will be used as examples to display different degrees of theatricality in apartment building design. The following examples were selected because their “unspectacular” architectural language offers insights into relational design. The concept of theatricality is expressed in different ways, but all generate spaces for the enactment of everyday social drama. Insights from these studies will culminate in the design of an urban residential development in Ottawa, the details of which will be discussed in the following chapters of the thesis.

Case Study 1: The Narkomfin *Dom Kommuny* by Ginzburg

Narkomfin Communal House or *Dom Kommuny* completed in 1930 in Moscow, USSR is a primary landmark of architectural innovation of the Soviet regime. Soviet architect, Moisei Ginzburg, designed the Communal House as a complex of four separate buildings. The significance of this project was the implementation of new architectural forms, the acknowledgement of two different social groups within the same apartment complex and the re-evaluation of daily tasks reflected in programmatic. It was an experiment that combined two different social groups under the same apartment complex. The Narkomfin Communal House is discussed because it displays different types of architectural theatrical potential, namely, programmatic and social theatricality.

In its arrangement of four separate buildings as a cast of characters, the Narkomfin program was imbued with theatricality. The first structure - the main long living block (B) housed all of the living units. The communal block (A), much smaller in size, was connected to the living quarters through the corridor. The purpose of the communal block was to emphasize the shared aspects of everyday life and it included communal kitchen, dining room, gymnasium, and the library. The third building (D) was the laundry building for the complex and the fourth (C) was designed as a children's daycare, but was never built.³¹ The structure (E) was added later and designed by a different architect. This programmatic distribution in separate but inter-related volumes can appropriately be called "theatrical."

The Narkomfin's social theatricality is related to the building's communal character. It was designed for a collective of people, not for individuals. The living block of The Narkomfin Housing provided three types of apartment units intended for different social and economic groups of tenants: the petit-bourgeois and the communist worker. The division between family units with kids and those without was also reflected in architectural expressions of the domestic environment. The living patterns of petit-bourgeois were allocated type K and 2-F units, while full communal living happened in units F.

The differentiation of the apartment units into three distinct types was an innovative concept skillfully implemented for the needs of different categories of dwellers. Twenty-four F-units located along the second corridor were designed for individual tenants or couples without children. F-unit facilitated the spaces for only basic functions by providing sleeping niches, shower cabins, and 5-meter tall "common"

³¹ Victor Buchli, An archaeology of Socialism (Oxford: Berg, 1999), pp. 68-69

(living) room for private intellectual work, but no kitchens.³² The nature of the spaces within the unit was open, with only shower and toilet being enclosed. The movable curtain served as a partition between the common room and the sleeping area. The theme of visual and physical connectivity was also projected to the outside as the use of large windows allowed the outside to enter individual apartment units.³³ By examining the visual relationship between the separate buildings in *Dom Kommuna* to the outdoor common playground, a strong parallel is uncovered to the theatrical relationship of an audience to the actors on stage.

The second apartment type or K-unit was intended as transitional dwelling space for pre-existing bourgeois social class. The acknowledgement of separate needs for petit-bourgeois class provided K-unit with a separate kitchen, and allowed it to be self-sufficient and independent of “communal spaces of the complex for the maintenance of daily life” Nine K-units, similar to F-units, were also two-level apartment and included a large common room for work and socializing.³⁴ The addition of full kitchen freed K-unit tenants from collective participation in food preparation process. Along with the bathroom and toilet, the kitchen was concealed from the view. The two bedrooms were located on the second level of the unit. The bedroom intended for parents opened towards the double-height common room, while the children’s room was enclosed. The common room was observed from the upper level corridors and parent’s bedroom. The spatial hierarchy was established through the domestic tasks that took place in the common room, as opposed to those that were concealed, such as cooking. The spaces were set up within the apartment in a manner that allowed one room to be observed by

³² Ibid., p. 71

³³ Ibid., p. 72

³⁴ Ibid.

another, thus bringing the theatrical notion of exterior visual connectivity to interior dwelling space. The spatial hierarchy was created when private functions, such as bathing, were concealed from the view while social interactions were celebrated in a room with public character.

The inclusion of separate types of apartment models for families in transition to a different type of lifestyle, in this case, petit-bourgeois to the socialist society, raises an interesting point. As immigrants attempt to settle in new Canadian environment many rent apartment units in the beginning stages of their lives. “Transitional” dwelling for families is a concept that is rarely, if ever, available. From this case study my thesis is borrowing the idea of multiple types of units within the same apartment complex that may act as “transitional” rental dwellings. The living block also included variations on the F- and K-units that were fully independent self-sufficient apartments. The larger version of the K-units with an extra room, services and a balcony was not described in guidelines or in any of the publications. The existence of “hidden” units is reminiscent of theatricality in a way that some spaces of the theatre, such as dressing rooms are concealed from the public view.

Another architectural element that offers the potential for theatrical discussion is the roof of the living block. The roof provided the platform for dormitory units, a glazed semi-circular space and an additional apartment. The dormitory employed a variety of innovative design solutions such as collapsible wall-beds and shared showers between units.³⁵ The glazed communal space served a variety of purposes ranging from dining room, kitchen, bath and an apartment.³⁶ The idea of multi-purpose rooms references

³⁵ Ibid., p. 74

³⁶ Ibid.

flexibility of thrust stage and will be appropriated during the design stage of this thesis. The building complex references early-modernist typology with its use of pilotis and simple geometric tectonics. It is also very deeply embedded in the modern movement in its attempt to re-define modern life. The project's emphasis on the differentiation between types of tenants and the reflection of differences in living spaces will inform the design strategies of this study for three different types of clients, namely, families with children, performing artists and the elderly. Theatricality was revealed through the playful arrangement of separate functions on site and brought together by the idea of social connectivity.

Fig. 8: Site plan of Narkomfin Communal House

Fig. 9: Plan of K-unit apartment

Case Study 2: Lafayette Park by Mies van der Rohe

The next case study here included is the Lafayette Park Housing Project by Mies van der Rohe located in the city of Detroit, Michigan. This project was an example of a successful urban renewal program that spanned from 1955-1963. As a prototype for the future development of the urban renewal projects, the Lafayette Park residential development proposed an integrated design consisting of three different model types of housing, namely 1-story court-house, 2-story row houses, and 22 story high-rise apartment slabs. The focus of this discussion is 22-story residential structures known as the Lafayette Towers that were completed in 1963. The concept of theatricality in this building rests on visual dialogue between two buildings, which are sited as mirror reflections one of the other, about a parking structure surmounted by a swimming pool.³⁷

In the case of the East and West Lafayette Towers, Mies van der Rohe's glass curtain walls behave as screens, as argued by Janine Debanné in her article "This Much Apart: Lafayette Park, a Matrix of Urban Relationships."³⁸ The architectural screen formed by the curtain walls is all the more charged on the inner, or pool facing, facades. Here, dwellers are afforded views of apartments situated directly across from their own, and identical in measurement and material. As Debanné describes, the towers

³⁷ Associate Professor Janine Debanné has captured vivid images of the theatrical architectural space that unfolds between the two Towers, in a documentary film titled *UR Mich 1-1*. A rough cut of this ongoing documentary film project by Janine Debanné and Nadia Ross was screened at Carleton University School of Architecture on November 13th, 2006. The documentary provides private look into lives of tenants some of whom received the units under the Federal assistance program titled Section 8. The program provided sponsoring for low-income families and individuals by renting units in existing mixed income apartments. The documentary uncovered private worlds as personal stories of dwellers were narrated. Writings by Janine Debanné in which the theme of architectural theatricality and apartment dwelling are also found in "Claiming Lafayette Park as Public Housing," *CASE*, No. 7, Prestel Publishing, Harvard University Graduate School of Design (2004) pp. 67-80 and in "La vie dans le vide," in *Annales de Géographie*, Vol. 620, July – August 2001.

³⁸ Please see Janine Debanné, *Dichotomy* - University of Detroit Mercy School of Architecture Journal, Vol. 13, May 2000.

constitute “heterotopia of dwelling,” in which a multitude of diverse private lives are suspended in the equalizing grid of the strict Miesian towers. Debanné describes the theatrical activities of a single mother with a child, who used the space of their living room as a practice area for dance and play. The action of dance that is theatrical in its nature is further heightened by the architectural language, construction and materiality that allowed the act inside to be displayed and observed as if a theatrical performance on the outside. The taut and balcony-less aluminum and glass curtain-wall made it possible for the residents of the facing tower to clearly watch backlit silhouettes of the two figures dancing and enjoying each other’s company. The East Tower, where this mother and daughter lived, became a screen for the facing building, which in turn became an auditorium from the point of view of the dancers. This example clearly illustrates how theatricality finds its place into residential buildings. Architecture supports and shares the idea of human connectivity by visually bridging residents from different towers through thoughtful placement of structures and careful consideration of building envelope. “The skin became a place which passed in front of the structure without interruption or further articulation. The structural element was enclosed in a light and transparent skin.”³⁹ The concept of visual theatricality and the dialogue between the two apartment buildings is an effective idea that will be revisited in the design of the residential buildings. More than that, the use of personal stories and narrative and the giving of a voice to the dwellers of architecture in Janine Debanné’s scholarship on Lafayette Park served as the main inspiration for including personal and human stories of six characters in this thesis. These characters will be described in the following chapters.

³⁹ David Spaeth, Mies van der Rohe (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, 1985), p. 133

Another strategy that is examined and appropriated from this case study is the treatment of interior residential spaces. The seemingly “unspectacular” plans of Mies van der Rohe’s apartment units display thoughtful configuration and play of interior elements in relation to their domestic uses. Careful dimensioning of rooms and open plans were studied during in the design stage of this thesis. All apartment units, including the efficiency apartments, contain 22-foot wide living rooms. The strategy of including spacious, naturally lit living room is at the core of the unit layout design. The positioning of columns within for the proposed residences is conducted according to Miesian column grid. The case study underscored not only a poetic analogy of performer-audience correlation, but also the implicit theatrical potential contained in architectural dimensions and arrangements. Mies’s dimensions are all the more fascinating in that their theatricality does not contradict functionality.

Fig. 10: View of Lafayette Towers and two story apartment residence

Fig. 11: Typical apartment layout by Mies van der Rohe

Case Study 3: Unité d'Habitation by Le Corbusier

Unité d'Habitation at Marseille, France constructed from 1947 to 1952 is one of, if not, the most famous example of the modernist housing. It is the first of five of *Unité d'Habitation a Grandeur Conforme*. Kenneth Frampton, a broadly recognized architect, historian and a critic wrote in regards to the building:

*"Its influence on the form of subsequent housing has been profound, and variations of its can be seen in almost every country, built under widely varying conditions. It may be a monument disguised as housing, but modern housing and the Unité d'Habitation are synonymous."*⁴⁰

The 17-story structure consists of 337 apartments of 23 different types ranging from smaller units for bachelors and childless couples to large apartments for families with 3 to 8 children.⁴¹ The architectural language of the building epitomizes the height of the modernist period. The massive concrete block slab is supported on giant pilotis, freeing the ground underneath. The multi-coloured movable panels that are drawn to shield the balconies animate the façade and give it changing quality set within otherwise gray concrete frame. The theme of colour is also repeated inside the building where play of natural and artificial light illuminates the interior. The tectonic theatricality is staged through the constant juxtaposition of mass and porosity and light and shadow.

The inclusion of five superimposed internal streets and the proposal for shops uncovers the potential for programmatic theatricality. Le Corbusier has included commercial programs in order to extract the full potential and richness of the apartment living. Located in the middle of the structure on the levels 7 and 8

⁴⁰ Roger Sherwood, *Modern Housing Prototypes* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978), p. 125

⁴¹ Alexander Tzionis, *Le Corbusier: The Poetics of Machine and Metaphor* (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, 2001) p. 157

spatial arrangements were made to accommodate the shopping streets for provisions, laundry service, pharmacy, barbershop and a post office.⁴² The top 17th level was intended as a nursery and a kindergarden, from where ramp leads directly to a roof garden. The roof terrace, which is both a hanging garden and a belvedere meant to provide a gymnasium, an open-air space for training and gymnastics, a solarium, a 300-metre [985 ft] running track, and a buffet-bar.

Le Corbusier's interest in theatricality is reflected in his unit designs. The apartments that are arranged in pairs are interlocked along the "internal street" corridors, and run the length of the building. The interlocking arrangement creates two unit types. The up-going units (A) featured an entrance at the lower level to kitchen, dining and living room. The master bedrooms positioned on one side of the block, services and bathrooms, as well as children's bedrooms on the opposite side are located at the mezzanine level. In the down-going units (B) the entrance leads to the kitchen and dining area on the mezzanine level and from there descends to the service core and the children's bedrooms beyond. The double height living room is featured in every apartment and all units except those on south-facing side have double exposure. The children's bedrooms are treated as transformable volumes, by virtue of a central sliding wall, which not only encourages child play and allows for multiple functions to take place within the same space, but alludes to the theatrical concept of a curtain. The space changes as it is drawn. While highly influential, the building was criticized for narrow apartment dimensions, the compromise of the internal privacy, the darkness of the internal corridors, and the unusable space under the pilotis. Yet, the building was a

⁴² Ibid., p.153

metaphor for living, which went beyond function in an attempt to bring life and festivity to post-war society.

Le Corbusier appropriated the metaphor of an ocean-liner to guide the architectural narrative. In thinking of the ocean-liner decks, Le Corbusier envisioned how “passengers can enjoy distant sights reaching as far as the horizon while taking pleasure from outdoor games and sports, while all the time breathing magnificently pure air.”⁴³ Unité d’Habitation at Marseille also can be considered as an example of a building that embraces the idea of theatricality. But unlike two earlier examples of the Narkomfin Communal House and Lafayette Towers that extracted theatricality through arrangement of several buildings on site, Le Corbusier used a singular building that combined diverse programs under the same roof, such as daycare, grocery store, pool, and barber shops. The isolation that so often happens in the apartment buildings is prevented precisely because the inclusion of other programs brings the communal and familial character to the space. The end result is connectivity of people, but through different means. Theatricality in architecture can be expressed through various ways, the end result of which is creation of spaces for social games.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 159

136. Unité d'Habitation, Marseilles,
1946-52: cross section.

- 1 portico
- 2 entry
- 3 service duct
- 4 internal street
- 5 shops
- 6 nursery school
- 7 roof deck

137. Unité d'Habitation, Marseilles:
perspectival section.

The up-going duplex A looks over
the down-going duplex B. The
central corridor or 'internal street'
affords access to both.

Fig. 12: Section through Unité d'Habitation and sectional perspective through two apartment units

Theatricality in apartment Design: The Architectural Narrative

The above case studies show how the opportunity for architectural spatial theatricality exists within the realm of an apartment building. A consideration of theatricality in the design of apartment buildings raises the important question of architectural narrative. What rituals of performance does the architecture set up? Which acts of inhabitation does the building anticipate through its forms, dimensions and arrangements? The architecture of dwelling is indeed deeply tied to human narratives. And yet, in the case of apartment design, not all of these narratives are known to their architects.

As stated earlier, architects cannot know precisely how the dwellers will inhabit their design. The uses can be allocated for living and sleeping, and potential practices of habitation suggested, but the response varies from each dweller as they bring personal touches and customs. The dilemma of not knowing what narratives will happen in the buildings makes the design process challenging. Yet, architectural form has a direct influence on the behaviour of the inhabitants. Dimensions, room sizes and arrangement all influence daily everyday rituals as dwellers are compelled to respond to the environment built around them. Architects don't know what will be happening inside the space, but the power to anticipate and project how the building will be used after its completion, that is, to understand the needs of future dwellers, is fundamental in the design process.

The understanding of future dwellers can be accessed by turning to architectural narrative. Architectural narrative in residential buildings is derived from personal stories of how tenants occupy and use living space. Identifying the types of tenants and

drawing inspiration from their stories is a way to begin the discussion about inhabitation. Architects need to gain awareness and sensitivity that may aid in creation of livable space. One way of doing so is to introduce real stories of people who reside in residential buildings. Seeking the input of those who presently live in apartment units will generate specific and personal narratives, which in turn can inspire architecture. The method of using a random selection of personal narratives as oppose to extensive surveying of residential dwellers can reveal more personal and engaging stories than statistical data. This method relies on storytelling as a means to collect data. In this case, the role of the architect can be compared to the role of a storyteller who seeks out and narrates stories. Applying the metaphor of theatre to the residential design, it is possible to view an architect as an author that gives meaning to architectural plays. The architect anticipates the rituals and events and narrates the stories of those who inhabit them. But of course, the opportunity to engage in everyday stories on exists when people are willing to share them.

Pirandello's Play

Italian author Luigi Pirandello inspired the introduction of the narrative in uncovering the theatrical potential of apartment living. The play titled, *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, by Luigi Pirandello sets up a useful parallel between the writing of the play and residential design. The play offers a series of fragments and vignettes, which in the words of translator Eric Bentley was “arranged in a certain order, not by the brains of a craftsman-calculator, ... but by intuition, imagination, fancy.”⁴⁴ The play imitates the rehearsal and explores the realms of real versus performed. The story begins when six characters interrupt the rehearsal of the theatre troupe. The characters insist that they are real and that they ask those who are on stage to help them search for an author, as if to validate their existence. The characters possess their own well-developed story lines and engage with each other, as well as, members of the cast on stage. What Pirandello created is the concept of theatre of the theatre. The mirroring of the actors and audience happens when actors are playing double of the audience and each other. The characters exist only in reality of theatre, independently from an interference of an author. In Pirandello's own words in reference to Six Characters who search for their missing author: “these six were already living a life which was their own and not mine any more, a life which it was not in my power any more to deny them.” The search for an author is what lies at the heart of the characters' drama.

Pirandello's Model is acknowledging the existence of characters before an author is introduced. Pirandello's characters are well drawn. The characters of the play have identities, emotions and stories. What they lack is the narrator who would ground their stories by setting up the relational framework between them and the rest of the world.

⁴⁴ Introduction by Eric Bentley to *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, p. x

The play offers a strong metaphor for the state of today's housing design, in that there is a vast demand for living spaces required by the people who already know what their needs are. The inhabitants of the apartment buildings already exist, yet the question of an architect in residential housing design is still pending. Personal stories of apartment dwellers are already present, searching for an architect to reveal them in design. The problem of residential design is bridging the future dwellers and the architect.

Translating Pirandello's model into architecture it may suggest that the architect of the residential structure would envision the act of dwelling as if knowing the characters who will one day inhabit the design. Approaching the characters as if they are already known, and charting their stories, the architect comes closer to establishing the link between the two. The limitation of not knowing the characters poses a creative challenge for an architect, the challenge that, in turn, requires an architect to search for the dwellers. One potential solution is to seek out representatives living in apartment buildings to uncover their stories as the potential model to be used in design. The selection of six residential dwellers will be used to provide specific insights into the needs of contemporary apartment dwellers.

PART 2

Introduction:

This thesis suggests that the theatre as metaphor of life, which Tuan applies to the city, can also be extended to the idea of the urban residential complex. An apartment building, too, can turn into a stage for human plays. The historical accounts of theatrical spaces described in the Chapter 8 illustrate how architecture gave physical form to progressive segmentation, self-awareness and isolation of society. However, trends that emerged in twentieth century modern theatre imply the return to highly participatory and communal nature of theatrical space and plays, perhaps reflecting society's desire for connectivity in other spheres of existence. The metaphor of the theatre in the residential building complex is introduced to uncover the potential for play and integration in the apartment building, while addressing its future inhabitants as characters. By looking at the apartment complex from a theatrical perspective, I attempt to engage and accentuate the daily routine events of a rental dweller of modest income living in an urban context, and belonging to one of three social groups: families with children, performance artists and the elderly.

The historical context is introduced not only to illustrate the changes of physical and social space, but also to guide and suggest what can be appropriated in residential designs. The reference to the theatrical past, such as openness of circular Ancient Greek amphitheatres, the transformation of ordinary urban fabric into the stage for Medieval religious festivals, the respect for personal privacy in Victorian playhouses and connection between audience and performers of modern theatres, inspire the design of

the residential buildings because they are telling of different stages of human relationships. These concepts are borrowed and appropriated in the design of residential apartment complex on a site in the Byward market, in Ottawa, Canada.

My proposed design consists of a three building residential complex on a site located in the York and George Street block. The proposal addresses the need for integrated urban housing, the importance of street life, and the participation of dwellers and those who temporarily inhabit the public courtyard area. The drama, performance, and participation happen inside the boundaries of the theatre, or, in this instant, the inside of the apartment complex. By using theatre as a metaphor, I test the concept of apartment complex as a theatre of life. The thesis focuses on structuring three different types of dwellers - families with children, performing artists and the elderly- within the same framework that references the concept of theatrical connectivity. The buildings are arranged to observe and interact with one another, acting as architectural characters.

The Site: Stage for Urban Residential Theatricality

The site chosen for the project is situated in the middle of Ottawa's downtown, the Byward market. The urban fabric of the Byward market neighbourhood is composed of diverse buildings and programs, making the site suitable place for a residential complex. It is a historic site, a popular tourist attraction, home to small businesses, commercial enterprises, mid- and high-rise apartments, landmarks, market rate condos, hotels, shelters, churches, music halls, nightlife establishments and social gatherings. In *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* Jane Jacobs suggested that the presence of engaging and diverse buildings is one step of a successful neighbourhood. The

presence of residential buildings catering to different social classes is also one of the points that strengthen the character of a successful district. The area chosen for the site is known for its socially and economically hybrid character. The blocks are short, making it easy for pedestrians to circulate. The age and condition of the buildings, as well as the size, allows for a mix of commercial and residential variability of the buildings.

During the summer, the street vendors set up kiosks and lay out produce and crafts to lure passing pedestrians. The market customs are theatrical in the way that they set up eventful acts much different from typical grocery shopping. It is an exhibit of produce where the vendors engage with the public in a relationship similar to that between the performer and the audience. The simple act of selling fruits and vegetables becomes an occasion where the seller becomes personified. As the night approaches the space transforms into a different kind of public theatre. The pedestrian traffic increases bringing different crowds to the downtown core after sunset. The streets welcome the parade of pedestrians, turning sidewalks into meeting places. The downtown core of the city thus becomes the site of urban theatricality.

The proposed housing complex will partially occupy the block located north of intersection of George and Dalhousie Streets. At present, the block is occupied by a one-story bar. The character of residential housing around the area ranges from market-rate condominiums, to the Salvation Army men's shelter and Co-Operative Housing for low-income individuals. The non-heterogeneous character of the building around the Byward Market area was the reason why this particular location was selected for the housing complex.

Fig. 13: Aerial photo, Ottawa, Canada (Google Earth)

Fig. 14: Aerial photo of Byward Market Area, Ottawa, Canada.

Fig. 15: View of Byward Market approaching the site from George Street

Fig. 15: Panoramic view of the site from York Street

Fig. 16: Panoramic view of the site from George Street

Fig. 17: Site analysis of Byward Market area

1. Diagram of built versus un-built space
2. Diagram of buildings six stories or higher
3. Diagram of residential apartment buildings eight to eleven stories
4. Diagram of highrise residential buildings
5. Diagram of ground and above ground vehicular parking
6. Diagram of hotel placements
7. Diagram of Churches, Co-Operative housing and shelters
8. Location of the site of the proposed apartment complex

“Theatre of Life” through Architectural Program

The examination of the theatrical space narrates stories of people's relationship to each other and to the built environment. The goal of the project is to redefine the apartment building for the people whose needs are rarely addressed in the design and layout of apartments, such as performing artists, families with children, and the elderly. The metaphor of the theatre is used to engender three proposed buildings for these client groups. The first stage in the design of residential complex is to determine the number of buildings and the general type of the potential dwellers. The second stage is trying to uncover specific requirements of the individual dwellers.

The design of an apartment complex is composed of three buildings, and interior courtyards intended for three different groups of people. The building housing the families with children plays with a metaphor of a “rehearsal hall.” The seven-story structure, located on the South West portion of the site, contains apartments designed for families, and includes a daycare for children. The units occupy floors two through seven, while the daycare is located on the main floor. The eighth floor is designated as a roof playground, inspired by *Narkomfin* Communal House and *Unité d'Habitation* described earlier. The front façade of the building faces George Street and acts as a physical barrier between the circular courtyard and street life. The use of glass, double height ceilings and interior garden in the main lobby is an attempt to bring theatricality into design by emphasizing visual connectivity from the outside. Typical residential floor will provide four single story apartments and two units located on two levels. The apartments contain two, three, and four bedrooms to accommodate the needs of families with children. Each unit includes 6-meter wide living room for communal play and leisure, taken from Mies van der Rohe's layout of residential units. The building

serves as a space where daily events and rituals are practiced, often concealed from the eyes of strangers. The rehearsal hall analogy was chosen to represent the building because the characters of both children and parents cultivate and develop within it. The children, not ready to face the world on their own, still require the physical proximity of their families. While growing physically, emotionally and mentally, they are also rehearsing for their futures. In turn, the parents also rehearse daily habits and parenting skills, anticipating and adjusting to all of the changes brought about by the birth of a child, or by growing children.

The second building, which will be called “the stage,” is intended for another group with typically limited economic means: performance artists. The idea of designing a residential building for performing artists also supports this exploration of theatricality in architectural program and design. The seven-story building contains efficiency and one-bedroom residential units facing York Street to the north and practice rooms facing southeast into the interior courtyard. The feature element of the practice room is 4.25-meter high ceiling. The practice rooms are accessible from second, fourth, fifth and seven floors. Each floor accommodates four 6x7 and one 12x7 meter rooms intended for dance and music rehearsals. The main floor locates large rented dance studio available for rent or bookings. The residential units are also designed around 6-meter wide living room.

Typical apartment buildings rarely provide spaces large enough for activities such as dance rehearsals. The building’s purpose is to provide not only accommodations, but also the spaces where art can be practiced and observed through the curtain wall glazing. Of the three buildings in this proposal, this one metaphorically

acts as the “stage.” In this “stage” burgeoning artists who have defined their place in society as performers, here reveal, demonstrate, and display themselves to the world around them. The building acts as a stage where the viewers from the courtyard or the facing residential building observe the silhouettes of dancers and performing artists through the window. In daylight the surface of the glass façade turns into a screen that reflects the activities happening in the outside courtyard.

The third building, named “narrator,” is meant for the elderly and retired citizens. The metaphor of “the narrator” is chosen to reference the character who is slightly removed from the spotlight, contemplating life already lived, and observing the one that continues to happen around them. The metaphor is fitting in representing the elderly who possess living experiences and more often than not become the observers of the daily theatre that unfolds before them. This third residential tower is located so that it simultaneously can observe both of the family and artists’ residences, as well as the courtyard, on the North East corner of the site. Typical floor plans of this eleven-story tower include two 10x12 meter two-bedroom apartments, one 12x9 meter unit and another elongated apartment. The building acts as an observer, but is endowed with a significant architectural presence due to its pencil tower form. The metaphor of “theatre of life” is applicable to the complex with the inclusion of the senior’s dwelling.

The first stage of the process yields a site plan imbued with storytelling potential. The three different characters -- “the rehearsal,” “the stage,” and “the narrator.” -- are arranged around circular courtyard or “amphitheatre,” forming an ensemble cast of buildings. The goal was for the site plan to create a narrative relationship between the buildings and to emphasize their relational arrangement and the common outdoor area

they co-create. The common outdoor playground is a stage for public interaction and potential festivities. The “residual” space between the buildings is the meeting point not only of architectural elements, but those who inhabit them.

Fig. 18: Conceptual composition referencing historical theatrical space, modernist plans and the site plan

Fig. 19: Study of the main floor plan of the buildings on site

Fig. 20: Study of the second floor plan

Six Characters in Search of an Architect

In the second stage of the design my aim was to address the needs of potential future inhabitants with as great a degree of specificity as possible. To this end, I searched for existing real stories as a starting point, with the hope of bringing a valuable human element to the design process. With reference to Pirandello's model of a play about characters who pre-exist their author, I approached six Ottawa residents of apartment buildings, whose personal narratives were already drawn. As in Pirandello's play, the six characters showed up on stage already armed with their personal narratives. I chose to contact six people previously encountered in a certain point in my life. By asking them to be a part of my thesis I attempted to make the design part of my thesis more personal and reflective of everyday dweller's needs. The people whom I approached agreed to participate in an interview. The participants' opinions and expectations about apartment dwelling were formed well before my first question was ever asked.

The series of discussion were held with six people in January and February of 2007. The purpose of selecting six random people was not only to gain broader understanding of the nature of contemporary apartment dwellers but to compare similarities and differences of those who might potentially inhabit the same building. It was an attempt to get closer to the specific stories of the type of a client, as opposed to a broad survey. The interviewees' answers are non-homogenized and highly specific.

The characters included in this architectural play are two dancers, a married couple with two young children, and a single mother with a teenage daughter. The characters possess diverse backgrounds, and range in age, gender, ethnicity, and

professional occupation. The series of interviews uncovered not only specific challenges of the domestic living, but also the commonalities between the inhabitants.

The first character is Bboy⁴⁵, a 26-year old male, a professional dancer, educator, and a promoter of hip hop culture. During the discussion about living space many insightful comments were shared. As a dancer who routinely practices at home, Bboy suggested that living spaces should possess a designated area for dance practice comfortable enough for 5 people, and that this space should have mirrored walls, a large closet space and higher ceilings. One of the most striking comments he made was that he desired a small private room for reflection and contemplation, where one can “get inspired” before the practice. The desire for a meditation space as an area for personal reflection is one specific theatrical element that was illuminated in the process of extracting the personal story of Bboy.

Another person with a performance arts background is Lindy, a 23-year old female professional swing dancer. Her living space requirements were very similar to those of hip hop dancer. Hardwood flooring is one aspect that she found to be of great importance. Another aspect is the emphasis place on the visual connectivity between the kitchen and the living room area. Swing dancing is a social culture that is open and inclusive of people who practice it. The layout of an apartment unit, ideally, would reflect the inclusiveness and social interactions of people who might inhabit them. Both of the characters described above would dwell in the performance arts residence, or “the Stage” building.

Located directly across the site from the “Stage” building, is the “Rehearsal Hall” building intended for families with children. One interview was conducted with a family

⁴⁵ Full names have been replaced by nicknames for purposes of privacy.

of four: Anita and Rishi who are parents to two small children age five and eight. Another interview happened between a single mother and her fifteen-year old daughter. The single mother, Lana, and her daughter, Kate, were highly involved in the world of performance. Kate attends an art high school in the city of Ottawa and hopes to pursue a career in theatre arts. During the conversations, all the interviewees mentioned that their current apartments provided no spaces for either dance or music practice, and all expressed a strong desire to have larger apartments and a space for play or rehearsal. Indeed, the idea of a “theatrical” room in residential family building where dwellers would be able to practice the music, dance, singing or play, came up in several interviews. Such space for performing arts would play an important role in children’s artistic growth. The parents of small children talked about the importance of arts education and the play areas for children. One suggestion that was brought to my attention by the parents is to include an interior playground. The insinuation of an internal playground is theatrical in nature as it extends communal child play into the winter months.

The third building in the apartment complex was proposed after the interviews took place, but the inclusion of this particular structure concludes the continuity of the narrative of domestic “theatre of life.” The “narrator,” a building intended to house elderly persons, is positioned on the east corner of the site, rising with a slim profile, as a pencil tower, with elevator accessible units all on one floor. The elderly represent a third stage in cycle of life narrative put forth in this residential complex. As this is a rental apartment building, the tenants are likely to be of modest means – perhaps retired artists, or simply persons who did not amass important savings during their active

working years. In any case, the tenants of the structure are given a privileged view of the other buildings on the site and of the city, due to their open plans and windowed southwest facing facades. Their defining feature is a corner living room with an unobstructed view of the other two buildings.

Fig. 21: Preliminary study model

Fig. 22: Ground floor plan

Fig. 23: Typical apartment level floor plan

Fig. 24: Preliminary study of the section through two residential buildings

Fig. 25: Section through residence for performance artists, courtyard and dwelling for families with children

Fig. 26: Sectional Perspective through two-story residential apartment units located in residence for families with children

Fig. 27: Sectional Perspective residential apartment unit and practice room located in residence for performing artists

Fig. 28: Furniture layout in typical single-room and one-bedroom apartment

Fig. 29: Seniors lounge located on the rooftop of the seniors' residence.

Conclusion

The idea of sharing stories is theatrical in nature because it alludes to the relationship of mutual dependency between an actor and an audience. This relationship is both public and collective and at the same time, personal and private. Considering theatricality and apartment design together here represents an attempt to celebrate the human element in architecture, so often set aside in the design of residential apartment complexes. The writing on social geography and theatre by Yi-Fu Tuan, historical theater models, early examples of theatrical spaces from my childhood apartment complex, and canonic architectural precedents, all played a role in studying the connection between theatricality and everyday apartment living. In this thesis, the impulse toward theatricality is understood as a fundamental human urge, to be connected to others and to inscribe oneself in a social world. Acting as an ensemble cast in a play of life, with each person understood as a part of a larger context, people use the stage of the city to gain greater understanding of who they are. Theatricality acknowledges and honours the need to relate to one another.

The search for personal stories in apartment design, pursued here through the method of the semi-formal interview of residents of existing Ottawa apartment buildings, informed the design stage of this thesis, and offered a way of exploring theatricality in daily life. The discussion with current apartment tenants was an attempt to outline specific problems of apartment living. The interviews allowed access to the “intimate” dimension of apartment dwelling. During the interviews, the questions were presented as guidelines to generate the discussion of living space. In all cases the conversations went beyond mere criticism of living conditions; more than anything, they provided the

dwellers with a chance to tell their stories to an audience of one person. The commonality between the people interviewed in my thesis was their openness to share personal thoughts, aspirations and goals in life, and their concerns, troubles and plans for the future. What I personally gained from this experience is the understanding that people welcome an opportunity to express their opinions and embrace the chance to share their stories with others.

One of the challenges during the course of this study was the definition of theatricality. Other forms of theatricality play themselves out in cities, including street theater proper and spontaneous interactions between strangers, as well as the more alienating forms, such as voyeurism and surveillance. This thesis focused on the kind of theatricality that bridges the collective and personal realms, in fulfillment of the basic human need for connectivity. Apartment living is both a collective and private endeavour. The concept of theatricality implies the potential for play, involvement and human contact. The premise of this thesis, that theatricality in apartment design introduces a personal and individual dimension into dwelling spaces, provided a way of reconsidering urban rental apartment design. Theatricality, which must not be confused with spectacularity, can potentially anticipate humble everyday customs by translating them into integrated and engaging environments. The arrangement of buildings on their site attempted to reference the theatrical cycle itself: the rehearsal, performance and time of reflection, three fundamental stages of the theatrical arc, are integral parts of theatrical experience. Through the scripting of the architectural program, the narrative of the buildings' tenancy (families, performing artist, and the elderly), and the design of the

apartment units, this study attempted to express and activate theatricality in “non-spectacular” architectural form.

The search for playful and personal resolution of common architectural problems, such as mediation of private and public spaces and inclusions of different types of occupants is the focus of this thesis. Theatricality makes it possible to include the potential for architectural narrative that anticipates growth and wealth of experiences for its inhabitants. The attempt of this thesis was to discover the role that theatricality can play as the motor for design. Theatricality in the beginning stages of the design can be used as organizational principle that structures the way buildings relate to the site and the surrounding structures. It may also be used to inform and influence the design of individual apartment units. Finally, in its focused attention on specific moments, in the way it pulls each moment out of a continuum of events, theatricality offers to architectural thinking a way of bringing the moments of habitation of a building into sharp focus. What theatricality can bring to residential architecture, with its intricate narratives of simple acts of everyday dwelling, is therefore of tremendous importance.

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