DIVERSIONS

Journeying Vancouver's Pacific Railyards

by

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Fig 1.

Diversions

Journeying Vancouver's Pacific Railroads

ABSTRACT

“I dream. Sometimes I think that’s the only right thing to do.”

Sputnik Sweetheart - Haruki Murakami¹

With the rise in the housing market, and profitability in new developments, historical architectures in Vancouver have been lost, erased, and replaced. From small-scale communities to notable landmarks these economically-driven developments are sanctioned by the city’s administration (City of Vancouver). Known as ‘Vancouverism’ this trend creates in the experience of the urban dweller, a sense of loss in tradition, belonging, and identity. This thesis proposes to challenge these rapidly changing urban concerns, exploring how new living experiences might engage with and adapt to Vancouver as an urban playground. How do we insert ourselves into the city’s infrastructural system? To break this cycle of Vancouver’s current urban transformation, we will propose speculative architectural interventions and installations with programs that are conceived through the lens of apertures and ruptures – continuities and playful interruptions. This thesis proposes a recto-verso conversation between fact and fiction to challenge the current condition in Vancouver. It dreams to re-think the urban vernacular in Vancouver by engaging its citizens in a world of livable fantasies.

DEDICATION

To my family, friends, and colleagues for your unconditional support and encouragement.

To my advisors, Yvan Cazabon and Roger Connah for your guidance and thoughtful advice.

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PROLOGUE

With the rising prices in the housing market, is the dream of owning a home still viable? Are we limiting ourselves and our lifestyles by accepting the limitations of small condo dwellings? Are we not denying the true potential of an urban experience? Do I break the cycle of being an unwitting subject, or do I, as a future architect, become an actor or further, a puppet master? I read fiction in order to imagine Vancouver's future. Can this, beyond metaphor, allow me to reimagine the city's identity and potential evolution through fiction? Naïve perhaps, but can I convince those in doubt that anything is possible? A little imagination, more fiction may lead to unanticipated possibilities. The fact and fiction of this thesis began here with these thoughts.

i (left) "*False Creek*," 2020

ii (right) "*Museum of Anthropology*," 2018

iii Matrix of thesis structure

iv Narrative Map of thesis structure

INTRODUCTION

Living Small, Vancouver & Fiction, and 'Dwelling'
in a state of abstract thought

INTRODUCTION

Living Small, Vancouver & Fiction, and ‘Dwelling’ in a state of abstract thought

v City of Vancouver Planning Department, "Zoning Map: City of Vancouver, British Columbia" (1960)

1.

The city of Vancouver on the west coast of Canada is known for its beauty. Since the 1960s, according to Sociology Professor Nathanael Lauster in *The Death and Life of the Single-Family House*, Vancouver has been transforming itself "to be attractive, competitive, and resilient for the future."² Long gone, however, are the days of moving to Vancouver and owning a single-detached home or living a dream cottage lifestyle. Perhaps today's reality is also no longer about fulfilling the dream of house ownership. This option no longer exists for so many of those living in the urban core. Even if some people can come to own a dwelling, it is not a viable option to live under the conditions of a crushing lifelong mortgage. *Living (in the) small* in the urban core has hence become the more viable option; with the central aim to be sustainable, reasonable, and to live within affordable means. This results in downsizing and living in smaller apartment units rather than the usual single detached homes while enjoying the conveniences of a car-less urban lifestyle.

2.

The identity of Vancouver has become wrapped up in building fast and selling fast. High-density residential developments in the “form of skinny towers set on podiums, with well-defined public spaces and preserved mountain views”³ according to Urban Designer and author Brendan Cormier, became the preferred approach to housing developments. This was further refined into a “development model which involved the negotiation of extra height and density for added public amenities in order to market safe and clean downtown living to prospective buyers who were predominantly raised in the suburbs.”⁴

vi City of Vancouver, *Zoning Map: City of Vancouver, British Columbia* (1980)

This emerging trend has become known as “*Vancouverism*”.

Zoning has changed permanently from single-detached housing to high-rise residential condos in the urban core as shown in the figures (vi-ix from the City of Vancouver).

According to Larry Beasley, a notable Urban Planner and Vancouverite, *Vancouverism* “originated in a struggle for urban rebirth.” The most important factor affecting the phenomenon and potential of *Vancouverism* is the geography of the city itself. In his book “*Vancouverism is Everywhere*”, Cormier reminds us that the city was “settled on a narrow peninsula, a strategic point at the mouth of the Fraser River and on the waterways of the Strait of Georgia, Howe Sound, Burrard Inlet, and their tributaries...from the outset, this created a vertical urban expansion as opposed to horizontal.”⁷⁵ As a way of understanding vertical growth, geography plays a decisive role in expanding vertically. For every person who wants a water view, vertical development is the ideal answer to Vancouver’s expansion, while giving the city a mixture of parks, beach areas adjacent to expansive condo areas.

vii City of Vancouver, *Zoning Map: City of Vancouver, British Columbia* (1993)

viii City of Vancouver, *Zoning Map: City of Vancouver, British Columbia* (2001)

By the late 1960s, Vancouver's near downtown West End neighbourhood already had the highest residential density in all of Canada. In 1955, renowned Canadian architect Arthur Erickson introduced his concept sketch for Project 56, a “high-density development showing a civic skyline of high-rises designed to complement the contours of the snow-capped mountains across the water.” Following Urban Designer Brendan Cormier’s study, in 1956 the city of Vancouver passed “plan 56”, a zoning by-law allowing the first development of high-density development in the City.⁶

By the 1980s, as a result of concerns about the handover of Hong Kong to China, residential tower development in downtown Vancouver found Hong Kong investment promoting a new and strong property market. The already strong Chinese and Asian community in Vancouver, inspired by tall skinny residential towers, typical of Hong Kong’s skyline, led developers to build tall and build often.”⁷ Hence, Vancouver became a destination for wealthy immigrant investors.”⁸

A 1991 Plan by Busby and Associates Architects was implemented in order to manage the high-density growth and was incorporated into the planning department’s ‘Vancouver View Study’. “The result was twenty-seven view corridors, which would help guide the development of tall buildings within the City.”⁹

ix City of Vancouver, View Protection Location Map: Adopted by City Council (1989) Amended (2011)

x City of Vancouver, View Cones and Building Height Restrictions: City of Vancouver, British Columbia (1996)

While going through this rapid transformation while attempting to be attractive and contemporary, the city is, unfortunately, slowly but clearly losing its traditional landmarks and original formal qualities propelled by a money-driven housing development machine. Hence, Vancouver's landscape and traditional architecture have lost their social and humanistic purposes at the hands of an economically driven market. The city, as Beasley notes, "struggles for environmental reconciliation and better human fulfillment."¹⁰ This presents contradictions to the future vision of the city as a place that is attractive, competitive, and resilient while sidetracking the issue of unaffordability within the city.

To "champion the virtues of downtown living, and vibrant street life, towards an even grid, podiums of traditional row houses, and tall skinny glass-condominiums,"¹¹ Beasley suggests that *Vancouverism* needs to be ever-changing—a flexible, changeable, and an adaptable model.

The intensity of downtown residential development in Vancouver's urban core has been affected by its rapid growth creating issues of oversaturation: "90% of the nine million square feet of new towers developed in the downtown over the last decade has been residential."¹² Due to this residential policy, people are forced to find work in the suburbs due to a lack of office space. This relationship, with its necessary commuting, becomes the opposite of sustainable living in the urban core.

xi Vancouver Zoning Map, building data (2009) and zoning data (2018): City of Vancouver, British Columbia (2018)

xii Vancouver Building Heights Map, *building footprints* (2009): *City of Vancouver, British Columbia* (2018)

3.

The majority of people in Vancouver now live in low-rise and high-rise urban condominium alternatives, spreading increasingly across the metropolitan area.¹³ For those living in these conditions, a single-detached home lies beyond the realm of possibility. To fulfill this dream, a small family would have to move outside the city's core, with approximately an hour commute or alternatively, to a different city altogether. The increase of low-rise and high-rise apartments and condos in the urban core see "most residents of Vancouver attempt to make themselves at home without a house."¹⁴ Aspirations for a detached family house are slowly fading away, while the acceleration of *living small* alternatives in the urban core become the prominent structures of a modern everyday existence.

xiii Larry Beasley, "Vancouverism," (2019): 45, Figure 1.6

xiv Nathanael Lauster, "The Death and Life of the Single-Family Home," (2016): 105, Figure 4.3

Suburban buyers who are fortunate enough to obtain a condo in Vancouver are being marketed the promise of suburban elements and domestic stability. This creates a lack of architectural variety in the growing city. Those who wish to stay in the urban core, without a need to leave the city and their families, must pay a huge portion of their income for an apartment purchase or rental. The sense of a nuclear family thus becomes disconnected when extended family members are unable to settle within proximity of each other within the city's core. While succumbing to *living small* in the urban core, the city then begins to advertise contemporary urban units as a convenience with all amenities, easy to maintain, and offering a sense of community. These claims are rarely accurate in their final realization.

Signature style – *Vancouverism* - has no room for an architectural debate or counterpoint. “Placing glass and steel modern towers on podiums designed to look like neo-traditional row houses” is, according to Sociology Professor Nathanael Lauster, the symbol of *Vancouverism*.¹⁵ The connections within the city, the connection to the landscape, the peninsula are lost in a race between competitors who seek the highest tower.

xv Gregory Henriquez. "Citizen City," (2014): 260

4.

From the viewpoint of architectural speculation, a first step requires a reflection and critique of ‘living small’ to imagine an alternative for Vancouver. One can start by placing oneself in a memorable context, imagining walking towards the entry door of a familiar house, imagining walking into a space that endures in vivid memory in order to experience it once again. This is akin to Architect and theorist Nigel Coates’ introduction to mental maps in his book *Narrative Architecture*, whereby “mental maps situate fragments in a time-space continuum”, like an old house where you once lived, holding the memory of “instinct and knowledge, rational understanding and the imagination.”¹⁶

xvi Eleanor Gibson. “El Sindicato builds tiny Casa Parásito on a rooftop in Ecuador” *Dezeen*. July 29, 2019

The image above (xvi) demonstrates how a singular figure stands out from its context. It is a symbol of choice, a symbol of simplicity apart from what’s given. A contrast between the figure and its ground.

To take action is to make use of the richness of one’s memory of the city and to “combine instinct and knowledge, rational understanding and the imagination.”¹⁷ Action must aim to reconcile the possible values of living small with your own sense of place.

The goal does not aim to the ownership of a single-detached house, but rather to rediscover what held value in the past to bring value to the present. This suggests that any living situation has the potential to be an individualized *living small* condition in myriad contexts. For example, the homeless in Vancouver are taking over the parks in the city creating dwelling ownership that is flexible as the images below demonstrate.

xvii Mike Lloyd. "Police are moving on a tent city on Vancouver's waterfront." *Twitter*. June 16, 2020

xviii Eleanor Zimmer. "One arrested as VPD move in on Crab Park homeless camp." *Dailyhive*. June 16, 2020

These parks once designed to support a community within its surrounding neighborhood are now occupied by numerous personal spaces each with a prime water view – ownership of a front and backyard for those living with just a tent and backpack filled with essentials. This is the inevitable overlapping of imagination and fiction and as Coates suggests, "can fulfill not only a psychological need but a functional need."¹⁸

xix Jessica Mairs. "Fernando Abellanas hangs secret studio under a bridge in Valencia" *Dezeen*. August 18, 2017

5.

If we continue with Architect and theorist Nigel Coates' argument, "most architecture today deliberately avoids emotional engagement with its user."¹⁹ How then can we use this *living small* as part of an imaginary fiction leading to different architectural possibilities? Is it a snapshot that is visually ephemeral, or a glimpse of a new reality? Here we propose using 'mental maps' as a framework, merging the nuance of a fiction writer like Haruki Murakami and the city of Vancouver. Using the voyeurism of a detached observer, snapping away frame by frame, how is it possible to disrupt normality with a 'lasting' ephemeral rupture?

Inspired by the novels of Haruki Murakami for the balance that they achieve between imaginary worlds and familiar lived conditions.

xx Map of Murakami's fiction and thesis

According to Deborah Treisman for the New Yorker, Haruki Murakami's "narratives are almost always inquisitive, exploratory."²⁰ The main characters in his stories are endlessly on a mission of discovery leading to strange familiarity. The way Murakami uses his words has a great hidden underlying message "beneath the evocative, often dreamlike imagery, his work is most often a study of missed connections, of both the comedy and the tragedy triggered by our failures to understand one another."²¹

In particular, in his novel 1Q84, the meaning of the question of love, of stories, becomes connections through discovery and the choices that sustain us. *“Principles and logic didn’t give birth to reality,”* Ushikawa says in Murakami’s 1Q84. *“Reality came first, and the principles and logic followed.”*²²

xxi Mapping of Vancouver Developments 1950s-2020s

Murakami draws parallels between our everyday mundane life and our subconscious world of dreamlike imagery. Often a discovery or a path leads towards something anticlimactic. His writing is an example of seeking, finding, and improvising through stories where there are no boundaries between the real and the unreal (or beyond real) worlds.

8.

The reverie we will speak of here will be made up of mental maps, a collaged adventure, a process journey that transports us into quite another space in the city of Vancouver. Reveries are mobile and adaptive; fiction altering the realities that are suggested. Fiction can also provoke a new vernacular “to stimulate the imagination” as Coates says, “by immersing in an otherwise inaccessible world.”²³ Instead of engaging with the perceived program of an object, we attempt to think of the possibilities that go beyond the existing built environment. The potential of the built environment can be developed through fiction, where “buildings can be invested with narrative content by the architect in ways that are only possible through the medium of space. Having both substance and void, content and relations, space is a medium ready to soak up associative meaning.”²⁴

PART I

ENDLESS TO

a romantic notion turns to a realist notion

Endless To
a romantic notion
turns to a realist notion

1.0.1 Micah Lidberg. "Drawing Inspiration: Murakami" Nowness. September 27, 2011

As we move on with our Vancouver projections and reveries, architectural fiction will present a new story for the city. New events and experiences connected by a humanistic journey will push the conventions of architectural space-making, formal concepts, and construction. When we see something new and unconventional in a film, the word 'science fiction (sci-fi)' has often been used. Perhaps our word here is not sci-fi; it is the *fantastic*. Can we make a case that fiction is just the first step of possibility in architectural speculation – a combination of the transformational and the necessary to become something fantastic yet believable? Here we will use Murakami's stories and set them within the context of Vancouver's missing narratives. We will speak of narratives as 'lived' stories, speculating through apertures and ruptures found in the urban fabric. Hence, the thesis project suggests how a fictional world helps one engage, and rediscover one's sense of being, and dwelling within the urban spaces of Vancouver. In this way, Vancouverites can engage with the city's apertures and ruptures to reclaim forgotten dreams that were once traditions and take them into a new future.

1.0.2 Skyline, 2021

Vancouver, British Columbia

PROVINCE OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

1.0.3 Map of Province of British Columbia

CITY OF VANCOUVER

1.0.4 Map of City of Vancouver

City as the Living Room

1.1 LIVING SMALL: MORE THAN JUST WORK TO LIVE

Many a typical day in Vancouver consists of rain and grey skies. All the while, urban dwellers anticipate the sunny days that prevail for three months of the year. Waterproof garments are typical uniforms worn during the nine months of the city's wet season. Regardless of the weather, it is necessary to go out and play, otherwise, it's a long ride ahead till the next warm sunny day.

Living Small – Where's my living room?

The unaffordability of housing in Vancouver has turned away many young families and forced Vancouverites to move elsewhere. The average income has created a lifestyle that doesn't match the city's apparent wealth. Of course, the city is still enticing because of the beautiful landscape and the mild weather – as it compares to other regions of Canada. But that playfulness, going outdoors is what the city needs to reclaim; to celebrate what the city has to offer it must be turned into the urban dweller's living room. What happens when enjoyment is limited by the living spaces of micro-units and small expensive rentals? *What if the city provided extended spaces of leisure and play?*

1.1.1 Map of Dwelling Density in 2016

Expands outward from cramped quarters and into the city's infrastructural systems; to counteract the cycle of Vancouver's current urban transformation and engage with alternative urban programming.

1.2 MOMENTS IN THE CITY

What if the city becomes the living room with playful moments and instances of socializing within the city? How do these moments engage and connect?

The railway of Vancouver might offer a few clues as it was once a connection throughout greater Vancouver, first for railroad and later for electric rail. What if we could add quality experiential moments within the life of the city along the existing rail spur and its adjacent neighbourhoods? The city is then invested with a living room for leisure activities and a public ‘backyard’ as a public playground.

1.2.1 Railyard, 2021

1.2.2 Gastown, 2021

Urban dwellers living in Vancouver can take control of their living standards, and contribute to building up the city’s character while bringing fun & diverse leisurely activities into their west coast lifestyle.

1.2.3 City of Vancouver, *Railroad Map of Greater Vancouver* (1971)

1.2.4 City of Vancouver, *British Columbia Electric Railway Company Limited: Vancouver and New Westminster city and suburban lines and Alouette-Stave development, present and projected* (1923)

The city of Vancouver was once connected by railroad, and then by electric rail – now by light rail.

1.3 CITY AS THE BACKYARD: PLAYGROUND

Instances and moments for ‘play’ within the city can resemble the carnival rides and concession stands seen at fairs or city Expositions – such as Expo ‘86. The revival of the railroad might then become the vessel containing the heartbeat of the city – a journey in the city that becomes the Pacific Railyard Exhibition. From earlier development, we now go on to demonstrate how the intervention of a sequence of exhibition-like moments can become an architectural interpretation of permanent and impermanent installations. We achieve this by turning the city of Vancouver into a playground extending from the limiting ‘living small’ conditions.

Looking back at Expo ‘86 and the Pacific National Exhibition, these events of industrial-scale showcased the city’s agriculture and economy, and the developing west coast lifestyle. There were moments in this exhibition that reflect back to the city today. Some remaining moments are defined and fixed, while other moments are ephemeral and disappearing.

A revival of the rail track but with new events and activities along its length.

Installations and constructions become vessels for new activities to become the social heartbeat of the city, while connections between events provide a circuit – a JOURNEY IN THE CITY.

1.3.1 City of Vancouver, Main entrance gates to Exhibition Park (1971)

1.3.2 City of Vancouver, 1970 P.N.E. Opening Day Parade, (1971)

The railyard of Vancouver connects the city through motion and connected moments. The idea of motion, speed, time, and multiplicity can be re-implemented as physical interventions within the railyards of central Vancouver. Interpreting surrounding conditions, these interventions begin in the railyards of Gastown, where Vancouver was born, as the main station of the Canadian Pacific Railway.

The extended city becomes a new urban playground with instances and moments adjacent to the city's existing neighbourhoods.

1.3.3 Rail Spurs, 2021

PART II

THE PACIFIC RAILYARD EXHIBITION

P.R.E.

The Pacific Railyard Exhibition

Connecting instances in the city, the rail starts from the waterfront and wraps around False Creek and back. These moments will be inhabited by machines and devices that accentuate the uniqueness of each site. Some machines and installations are fixed and permanent, while others are mobile allowing for their relocation and deployment in different sites. By taking fragments and memories from the past, the ordinary is animated by imaginative machines that accentuate key moments in the city.

This offers a reinstatement and celebration of technology, thereby adding value and experience to the city and its inhabitants. The sequence also creates a framework for human engagement where fiction becomes the real vision of the changing city. Herein lies the idea of urban nodes as machines – generators of new interactive experiences. As machines, they reinterpret the obvious, probing the question of the current city while adding a little fantasy in the conventions – translating the found condition into something else. The city as a ‘living space’ can offer new venues supporting the public life of the city. Starting along the rail spur and adjacent neighbourhoods or zones, these machines offer a journey, an enriched experience, and a circuit in the once connected site.

To find opportunities to Explore new living experiences that might engage, transform, and adapt to the city of Vancouver.

2.0.1 Map of Vancouver Railroad & Electric Railway

The design proposes that the city becomes the urban family's LIVING ROOM with moments, instances, and activities within the city's diverse neighbourhoods.

2.0.2 Map of Disposal and Scrap Recycling

To propose new urban Components that range from the more permanent, defined and fixed, to conditions that are more ephemeral, seasonal, and less defined and less fixed.

2.0.3 Map of Exhibitions

Urban zones for Expo 86 and Pacific National Exhibition reveal past moments of public activity adjacent to the city's railyards. These reflections of moments turned into...

2.0.4 Installations of the PRE 1.0 (Pacific Railyard Exhibition)

Programs through the lens of aperture, rupture-continuities,
and playful interruptions...

2.0.7 Granville and Water Street, 2021

Even if living gets smaller and smaller, the city is yours, the city is our urban playground

The Pacific Railyard Exhibition (PRE)

The Pacific Railyard Exhibition sees a hopeful and utopic future. It is similar to a world fair with the exposition of ideas, technologies, and products – it presents newness and future aspirations for the city.

A Response to the Dwellers

Bringing communities together through group events where newness engages with the site's history including the adaptive re-use of structures and infrastructures. The designs contrast with living small by providing open programming in shared spaces, moments of slowness and contemplation, along with moments of action and exertion. The resulting installations are fantastical, radical, and playful.

2.0.8 Average Monthly Rainy Days in Vancouver, *Weather and Climate: City of Vancouver, British Columbia* (2020)

2.0.9 Average Monthly Snow and Rainfall in Vancouver, *Weather and Climate: City of Vancouver, British Columbia* (2020)

The PRE Installations

The PRE installations emerge from concepts of Motion, Speed, and Time. Their programs are Social, Playful, and Fantastical while also practical, offering solutions that take on the challenge of enjoying the outside in the rainy months.

Expressing themes of relating and revealing the foundational history of Vancouver along with proposals that engage current and future needs, the PRE installations are forward looking with a respect for historical conditions. They serve to curate events, offer a choreography of the city, and complement or supplement the city's existing events and qualities. As counterpoints, they challenge the urban dweller to re-imagine the changing urban fabric of Vancouver by engaging in a world of livable fantasies.

SIX RESPONSES

SIX STORIES

The Main Hub

The Urban Ceremony

The Theatrical

The Slow Life

Modular and Multipurpose

Quick Bite Slow Food

THE MAIN HUB

2.1

Located near the waterfront of Gastown, the location of the main hub is a reminder of the railyard's original station. This is the starting point of the Pacific Railyard Exhibition (PRE) journey, connecting with adjacent neighbourhoods and instances adjacent to the rail track. The waterfront Hub is based on an existing station, the first place to meet up with friends, the first stop before embarking on a group or solo adventure. This is where memorable moments begin to unfold, reveal and connect.

2.1.1 Visual Journal Railyard

*Dreaming of
reconnecting with something
that's not there anymore*

The figure above illustrates the Thesis design process which employed a visual journal to extract memories of the railyard, using a collage, and with an excerpt of Haruki Murakami 1Q84, capturing layered moments, illustrations, and potential spatial narratives.

2.1.9 Box Car Hub Sketch

The text reads: “Call it a premonition, or just a funny feeling, but there is something strange going on here. Something out of the ordinary. I feel it less with my mind than my whole body...You just have to keep your eye on them for the route to reveal itself. That’s all it takes.” (1Q84)

These quotes from Murakami frame the question: Is *living small* limiting the experience of the city? While small units are efficient and self-sustaining in the private realm, do they deny the importance of an extended living experience, a journey going somewhere allowing one to move, see, and engage with people and things? Perhaps a moving machine, a device, or an instrument to reconnect the urban dweller with social situations and bring out what’s lies unseen in Vancouver. To reveal what was – the historical layers of Vancouver – to discover and invent the new!

Then and Now -

*An assembly of the past and present objects,
forming a new perspective.*

2.1.10 Ephemeral Pioneering Experience Sketch

2.1.11 "Inside Rail Spurs," 2021
2.1.12 "Outside Rail Spurs," 2021

THE MAIN HUB: Gastown, Railyard

2.1.13 Rail Hub

The Rail Hub is a grounding spot for downtown visitors and an after-work hangout for downtown locals. It is proposed as a permanent installation in downtown Gastown adjacent to the waterfront station. It is an extension that aims to generate a permanent hub for cyclists, visitors, Handcar users, and everyday adventurers.

Hand Car

2.1.14 Hand Car

The Hand-Car serves thrill-seekers who cherish the old and curious relics from the history of Vancouver. This analog mode of transportation runs along the rail track of the Pacific Railway Exhibition. Varying in numbers, they can be stationed all around the city along the revived rail tracks and potential new extensions.

Rail Hub

This is the main hub for those living or visiting the city of Vancouver. It is a meeting spot similar to the Rail Station where people can come and go. It is a place to connect to other parts of the city – a hub to reconnect with the city. An integrated urban walkway overlooking the rail spurs of the Pacific Railyard also provides a public indoor/outdoor facility, with small food and beverage shops. Located near the waterfront area of Gastown, the *Rail Hub* is a point of destination connecting the visitor with public transport and a new rail line connecting to the greater Vancouver area.

Hand Car

The *Hand Car* is another way to take advantage of the new rail track. It brings back a ‘retro’ form of transportation; a fun way to commute while promoting the joy of playing and exploring the city. Connecting to other instances of the Pacific Railyard, the *Hand Car* gives a glimpse of the city that’s different in perspective than biking or driving an automobile. Its movement is dependent on the manual force applied to its simple gear mechanisms. There’s no hurry. There’s no one behind you to pressure you to go on. The car presents a way to appreciate the city – a chance to take in the city without any purpose – purely for leisure and touring around.

2.1.15 Railyard Illustration

2.1.16 Railyard Gastown

An urban walkway overseeing the rail spurs of the Pacific Railyard.

THE URBAN CEREMONY

2.2

Vancouver's urban core is exciting, with lively energy driven by the people of the city throughout the warm summer days. When the fall season begins, the cold weather, the rain, the excitement in the downtown area is non-existent. By introducing a response that complements the existing context of the urban core, the narrative of waiting for summer is changed, giving an alternative excitement in every season of the year. It works like taking a moment out of living in the city and enjoying it; a vacation trip out of the country to appreciate the surrounding neighborhoods. And to slow down and take it all in!

2.2.1 Visual Journal Urban Space

*Identify with certain things
more than others*

The figure above illustrates the Thesis design process which employed a visual journal to extract memories of the urban core, using a collage, and with an excerpt of Haruki Murakami 1Q84, capturing layered moments, illustrations, and potential spatial narratives.

2.2.9 A Seat Above Sketch

2.2.10 A Seat Above Artifact

The text reads: "You're in effect doing the same thing. You transform the scenes you see into your own words and reconstruct them. And you confirm your own existence." (1Q84)

Here the character explains how he immerses himself in his passion for writing. There are areas in Vancouver one can identify with. Some areas are seemingly inviting; some are not. What was once a great public space, now only serves certain individuals who engage with it. When I claim it, I transform it into my own to hold onto a moment I want to identify with. There is a particular bench in False Creek that I identify as one of those things I enjoy most; a setting for the city and people watching.

2.2.11 "Alexander Building," 2021
2.2.12 "Water Street 1.0," 2021

THE URBAN CEREMONY: Downtown Vancouver

2.2.13 Sky Nook

Located in the business and high-rise residential district along West Georgia street, the Sky Nook aims to enhance the lifestyle of those who are living or working in the cramped space above the street. It can be relocated to other areas for festivities such as the fireworks display, while providing a view of the city merging with the North Shore mountains.

2.2.14 Outdoor Dip

A heated pool located permanently as an extension to the Coal Harbour deck and bike path leading to Stanley Park the Outdoor Dip is designed for chillier months of the year. Set in a neighbourhood of glass office and residential towers it would benefit those seeking a quick swim after work.

Sky Nook

The rise in housing development downtown has resulted in a great number of construction cranes popping up around the city core. With a slight modification, the *Sky Nook* can be mobile as well as stationary. Very much like the Ferris wheel, the *Sky Nook* crane carries the participant from place to place while providing a dramatic view of the city. Located in an area with high-density towers, the *Nook* can provide a break from the office or cramped apartment tower experience.

Outdoor Dip

Located near the Stanley Park area in the west end of downtown Vancouver, the *Outdoor Dip* is a picturesque pool that the city dweller can appreciate during the winter months. Facing the beautiful North Shore mountains, the pool provides options for a quick dip without the hassle and limitations of going to a public beach. Heated during the wintertime, the pool provides a lake-side stay-cation for those living in the city.

2.2.15 "Up Above," 2021

Rain Box

2.2.16 Rain Box

Rain Box is an installation set at the intersection of Terminal Avenue in False Creek and the empty lots slated for development. It highlights the city's abundance of rainfall by capturing its presence and fluidity while emphasizing our multi-sensory experience of it.

Rain Box

A speaker box rain cover collecting rainwater sound into a surround-sound experience. This accentuates the rainy season, celebrating the cold rainy days, generating another layer of experience of the outdoor for the locals in Vancouver. Located in the busy street in the urban core, it can relocate to an area of necessary rain shelter; thereby deflecting unwanted programs, unwanted activities. The *Rain Box* makes the rainy season tolerable; it speeds up the rainy season, creating new programs to connect to this rainy city.

Heightening our appreciation, the Rain Box frames a conversation about frequent rainfall while adding an environmentally conscious experience for the visitor.

2.2.17 Rain Box Water Street

*Collect rain water sound into a surround-sound experience
Generating another layer of experience of the outdoor.*

THE THEATRICAL

2.3

The thesis project has selected spaces that have the potential for citizens to take ownership. These are sites with high foot traffic, pedestrian-friendly areas where performing arts can take place. Passersby can take a moment and partake in an open theatrical public celebration. The strategy is to introduce spaces and activities that improve the public experience and thus add cultural value to the surrounding, adjacent neighbourhoods. It is an installation, a place to contemplate, eat lunch, project film and sound performances – all to create a theatrical experience for the passersby.

2.3.1 Visual Journal Urban Space

Not walking there

its not the right place

The figure above illustrates the Thesis design process which employed a visual journal to extract memories of public space in the city, using a collage, and with an excerpt of Haruki Murakami 1Q84, capturing layered moments, illustrations, and potential spatial narratives.

2.3.7 Seeing Sound Instruments Sketch

2.3.8 Seeing Sound Experience Sketch

The text reads: "She could hear her heart beating. And in her head, in time with the beat, resounded the opening fanfare of Janáček's Sinfonietta ... I'm here, but I'm not here. I'm in two places at once."
(1Q84)

Walking downtown gives me a sense of "I'm here, but I'm not here". There is no one particular moment when I would stop and linger – there are so many. Every street is unique with different demographics and numerous activities. Not one street is emblematic of downtown's image – the area is complex, layered, and seemingly disordered. Yet, demolition, gentrification, the displacement of people – this is the uneasiness found in the neighborhood – layered onto the excitement, rush, and thrill which disappears after a block or two.

2.3.9 "Alexander Building," 2021
2.3.10 "Water Street 1.0," 2021

THE THEATRICAL: Unused Open Space

2.3.11 Outdoor and Indoor Theatre

The locations of the Outdoor Theatre in Japantown and the Indoor Theatre on Granville Island were chosen for their rich histories of the performing arts. Within a short distance from a burgeoning food and beverage scene, the theatres highlight the importance of continuing support for local artists and performances within an active public/touristic environment.

2.3.12 Fog Machine

Permanently located at the entryway of Stanley Park and Gastown the Fog Machine is an atmospheric installation, rekindling the spirit of well-known Vancouver attractions by displaying a stunning fog show, immersing the locals and new visitors to a free-public-outdoor spectacle. It presents a renewed experience of Vancouver's iconic attractions, taking advantage of the quiet days of the winter months.

Outdoor + Indoor Theatre

These theatres can be located anywhere and everywhere. Constructed from simple wood framing allows them to be constructed in an improvisational manner responsive to their site. The *Outdoor Theatre* is flexible to host large gatherings, and can also be split in half to be multi-functional and open-ended. The *Indoor Theatre* is ideal for weather protection, creating intimate indoor performances along with a few community-based programs. The theatres can offer performances of the arts, music, and sound & visual shows – a workshop space for large or small gatherings enjoying a live experience.

2.3.13 "Old and New," 2021

Fog Machine

A machine generating fog creating anticipation of an atmospheric performance is located in an area at the end of the street by the water or a pond. The *Fog Machine* becomes a landmark where it exists at low levels. Generating fog, this machine accentuates the weather of Vancouver, while bringing activities during the rainy season. During the long dark winter months, the *Fog Machine* becomes an atmospheric light show, creating a new perspective of the destination that was once a conventional street.

2.3.14 Outdoor Illustration

2.3.15 Fog Machine Gastown

Create public performance machine, and a new perspective of the site.

THE SLOW LIFE

2.4

The act of taking a pause, a moment to reflect on a journey, a walk, is a Slow Life response to the hectic pace of Vancouver. Capturing a moment, taking a short break in a busy area, people watching, self-reflection; these are the actions promoted by the slow life response. As an installation, it creates and captures a moment on a personal journey and takes in the immediate context.

2.4.1 Visual Journal Downtown Streets

Remember that one time
underneath
the Cambie Bridge

The figure above illustrates the Thesis design process which employed a visual journal to extract memories of walking in downtown Vancouver, using a collage, and with an excerpt of Haruki Murakami 1Q84, capturing layered moments, illustrations, and potential spatial narratives.

2.4.7 Of Motion and Stillness (top)
 2.4.8 Of Motion and Stillness Side View (bottom left)
 2.4.9 Of Motion and Stillness Part I & Part II (bottom right)

2.4.10 Seeing Sound Experience 2.0 Sketch

The figures *Of Motion and Stillness* are an interaction of motion and stillness created through found objects and chance. This is then reinterpreted from interaction and stories within the site, becoming a snapshot of living and existing in the Cambie bridge.

The text reads: "Don't let appearances fool you. There's always only one reality," (1Q84) - the cab driver tell his passenger.

This is not something out of the ordinary, climbing down the emergency stair. Without hesitation, and not willing to wait in traffic, the main character heads to the emergency exit and climbs its steps, discovering a world that she knew, but had never seen. Here is an image that cannot truly replicate what it was as experience. It is only a fragment of many memorable moments that the reader can stitch together. 'Underneath the Cambie Bridge' captures that moment and what appears to synthesize a presumptive fiction.

2.4.11 Triptych

2.4.12 "Alley," 2021
2.4.13 "Water Street 2.0," 2021

THE SLOW LIFE: Busy Urban Nook

Warming Cart

2.4.14 Warming Cart

The Warming Cart(s) offer a safe spot for waiting, a moment to warm up, and for those enjoying the fresh air after the rain. Located near the Gastown railyard, it creates an experience for the rail spurs and alleyways. It can be relocated to open areas with a similar perimeter such as an empty lot, or locations with a minimal footprint.

2.4.15 Sky Lift

Similar to a ski lift creating a unique experience from above, the Sky Lift provides an elevated view along Quebec Street leading up to Gastown. It gives an elevated view of False Creek and a panoramic view toward downtown Vancouver – a privilege for those living above and moving around without being on the ground.

Warming Cart

A machine generating heat as the season gets cold and rainy. Vancouver receives rain nine months of the year. The *Warming Cart* is similar in its technology to outdoor patio heaters found in restaurants throughout the city. However, it generates energy by traveling on wheels, using solar power, and emitting heat when the temperature drops. It is intended for the public locations around the railyard as well as areas of high traffic, providing a momentary pause for those dodging the rain and cold.

Sky Lift

The gondola is a staple in the mountains surrounding Vancouver. Based on this, the *Sky Lift* proposes an alternative to existing public transportation and provides a point of view to witness urban growth and development in real-time. The *Sky Lift* is a slower pace of transportation that connects intimately with the urban centre but at an elevated height. It is a reminder to slow down and enjoy the view while traversing downtown on a scenic route from the east of False Creek to the east side of the railyard. The *Sky Lift* is the perfect scenic route, an alternative to the fast-moving pace of the city below.

2.4.16 "Gears," 2021

2.4.17 Warming Cart sketch

2.4.18 Warming Cart Downtown Vancouver

Emit heat when temperature drops.

MODULAR AND MULTIPURPOSE

2.5

This response utilizes the flexibility of a modular structure to promote its potential growth and continuity. It starts with a simple object or structure in a simple confined space which may be continuously added to as the program grows. It is a multipurpose structure that transforms over time. Using simple geometry and affordable materials the object is transformed from what it was intended for into a new purpose with a new narrative.

2.5.1 Visual Journal By the Water

The feeling of disconnect
with the city and ...

The figure above illustrates the Thesis design process which employed a visual journal to extract memories of walking and biking in Vancouver, using a collage, and with an excerpt of Haruki Murakami 1Q84, capturing layered moments, illustrations, and potential spatial narratives.

2.5.9 Scaffolding House Sketch

2.5.10 Modular Sketch

The text reads: “A physical object could only be in one place at one time. Einstein proved that. Reality was utterly coolheaded and utterly lonely.” (1Q84)

Human beings are prone to become attached to things – material things, experiences, one-of-a-kind experiences. How do we engage and disengage with the right (or wrong) things and experiences? Can there be continuity of events in a space, a continuous build-up of experiences and atmospheres? Promoting the feeling of anticipation having something to look forward to we fight that notion of reality – of being in one place at one time.

2.5.11 Diptych

2.5.12 "City Above," 2021
2.5.13 "Hidden Gem," 2021

MODULAR AND MULTIPURPOSE:
Act as point of destination for rail track

2.5.14 Container Booth

The Container Booth may serve those carrying a sketchbook, looking for a quiet beautiful view for a quick sketch; or the beginner trumpet player who wants to practice without disturbing anyone in a serene space. Located in the railyard of Gastown, it can be integrated equally into the urban fabric or a vast landscape.

2.5.15 Container Space

Providing a studio for the experimental woodworker, a start-up darkroom for photographers, or a small set for DJs to host parties for a select few, the Container Space is located near the end of English Bay just before the Burrard Street Bridge. The multipurpose space is a community hub for makers and creators, movers, and shakers.

Container Booth

A part of the railyard marker, an indication of the point of destination or departure, the *Container Booth* is a tiny space, safe and transparent, and either private or shared. It offers a space to take in the view, make a phone call, take a nap. It is designed to be adaptable by allowing the addition of another *Container Booth*, hence creating a small living space structure.

2.5.16 "Cross Paths," 2021

Container Space

A simple object turns into a multipurpose space. With modular fabrication and simple construction, the *Container Space* can host multiple programs in one open warehouse-like structure. The ideal height consists of three levels with the very top level turned into a billboard. The billboard introduces the function or event within the *Container Space* while featuring the schedule for the show's presentation. The fabrication is adaptive to its program, it is flexible and impermanent and ready for transport to its next location without compromising the existing conditions or uses of the site.

2.5.17 "Site Materials," 2021

2.5.18 Container Space Axonometric

2.5.19 Container Space Elevation

2.5.20 Container Space Section

*Warehouse-like structure to be adaptive – flexible in the
accommodation of its program.*

2.5.21 Container Booth Section

2.5.22 Container Booth Waterfront

It is designed for growth with add-ons creating additional living spaces.

QUICK BITE SLOW FOOD

2.6

Food trucks, hot dog stands, night markets, are examples of establishments serving fast and easy snacks and beverages. Quick Bite Slow Food (QBSF) is a response acknowledging the source of the food being consumed as well as the context of the act of consumption. The reinvented food stand is a didactic space revealing the food's origin and history. While enjoying quality food QBSF supports learning by revealing information about the surrounding landscapes, cityscape; flora and edible plants, buildings and urban contexts, etc. Creating an engagement, a dialog about food, culture, and living in Vancouver is the city's equivalent of a conversation in a home kitchen.

2.6.9 Past and Present

The text reads: "I use words to transform the surrounding scene into something more natural for me. In other words, I reconstruct it. That way, I can confirm without a doubt that this person, known as 'me', exists in the world." (1Q84)

Here Murakami uses his character to remind the reader that stories can be a breakthrough allowing for their synthesizing with the surrounding world; like a voyeur looking onto the imagined rather than the active gentrification of their neighbourhood. Here improvisational images enter through new lenses, new perspectives - like a tour guide of fiction walking around town

2.6.10 Reinvent

*There are elements of the past
and present to narrate the
imagined -*

Importance of heritage, ornament of the past.

*Keep it alive and prosper; like a tour guide walking
around town to improvise, to invent.*

2.6.13 "In Between Alley," 2021

2.6.11 "Backend," 2021
2.6.12 "Frontend," 2021

QUICK BITE SLOW FOOD: Railyard

2.6.14 The Farm Machine

An agriculture workshop located south of the urban core presents a new way of producing and consuming food. More than a farmer's market The Farm Machine is a community space for those living in the core who may participate and contribute, creating a unique shared backyard for the cultivation of food – a farm-to-table scenario for the city.

2.6.15 The Food Car

Located along the railyard between Chinatown and Gastown the Food Car is a response to the gentrification of the ethnic neighborhoods in Vancouver, showcasing the diversity of Vancouver's culture, providing local sustainable meals with ingredients sourced right in the urban core.

Farm Machine

A response that aims to recover the landscape-based culture of Vancouver, the *Farm Machine* reclaims the original seed of the Douglas Fir tree and replants these iconic giants in the urban setting. In addition, the *Farm Machine* monitors the glacier waters of the North Shore mountain, and questions how to sustain them for years to come. This serves as a workshop aiming to understand the source of BC agriculture, and truly support local ingredients placed in the heart of the city, thereby blending natural and urban elements, rewriting the narrative of farms in the interior of the province.

2.6.16 "Red Cars," 2021

Food Car

The *Food Car* is stationed in the rail yard and is a modification of the boxcar into a kitchen; it serves food with ingredients grown within proximity of the rail track. The *food car* is a symbol of history and the rail culture of Vancouver's past. It is a response to those who wish to rebel against the present.

2.6.17 Food Car Axonometric

2.6.18 Food Car sketch

2.6.19 Food Car Railyard

Stationed in the rail yard, the food car is a symbol of history and culture.

FOLIO OF PROCESS

Photography

Film

Sketches

Illustrations

Explorations

Models

Drawings

2.7.1 Railyard of Gastown

“Tengo was not even sure it was possible to do a logical rewrite of a work of fantasy and feeling. True, as Komatsu had said, the style needed a great deal of improvement, but would it be possible for him to do that without destroying the work’s fundamental nature and atmosphere? Wouldn’t this be tantamount to giving a butterfly a skeleton?” (1Q84, 2013)

2.7.2 Railyard of Gastown towards Railtown/Japantown

“You leave the basic structure intact, keep the kitchen and bathroom in place, but tear out and replace the flooring, ceiling, walls, and partitions. I’m a skilled carpenter who’s been put in charge of everything, Tengo told himself. I don’t have a blueprint, so all I can do is use my intuition and experience to work on each separate problem that comes up.” (1Q84, 2013)

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2.7.27 Pacific Railyard Exhibition Model

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2.7.29 Pacific Railyard Exhibition Model studio view

PART III

POSTSCRIPT

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POSTSCRIPT

The thesis research began with the intent to discuss the need for a rethinking of the urban experience of the city of Vancouver as an extension or complement to the limited dwelling space of the city's prevalent housing typology – the small condominiums. Vancouver, surrounded by a beautiful natural landscape, may not be able to justify its status as one of the most livable in the world due to its exorbitantly high cost of living. Urban dwellers are forced into tight quarters while viewing a vast, infinite panorama.

The thesis project responds by installing imaginary constructions in various neighbourhoods in the city, as a starting point, prompt in a conversation to rethink the emerging living culture in Vancouver. These imaginary constructions are constructed installations inviting people to think outside of the normal urban experience in order to take on new perceptions on urban living, bridging the gap between limited dwellings and the existing living experience of Vancouver. They aim to bring excitement to the city, to complement and supplement the city's existing qualities. The everyday banal activities and the cold dark winter nights can become what Vancouverites appreciate, turning the narratives of expensive limited dwelling into something positive – a living extension to the urban experience in the city.

The exploration of moments of leisure (for pleasure, fun, or entertainment) led to the design of purposely exaggerated architectural conditions that would heighten the experience of particular moments within the urban journey by heightening the senses or challenging normal perceptions. It begins from the introspective of seasonal activities in Vancouver, leading to the design of purposely exaggerated architectural conditions. The result is to make living in expensive dwellings tolerable by heightening the leisure experience outside of

its limiting perimeters. This is achieved by creating an urban living experience derived from the existing conditions while enhancing them by engaging the senses. These installations accentuate the rain, the fog – embracing the environment of Vancouver, embracing the full context. By accepting the reality of burgeoning, expensive small dwellings, this thesis proposes a counterpoint – a plea to embrace the rain, an incentive to go out and change the perception of wet, gloomy days, made adventurous by an innovative backyard playground.

The thesis project has sought to contrast the banality of current development trends, offset the predictable status quo, by celebrating the power of the fantastic, the devious, and the power of provocation. A new Vancouver would benefit from a bold and radical rethinking of events and their associated architectures. These can serve to heighten our senses and enhance our lifestyles while developing a new modality of urban life – one that transforms the city into a celebration of these fantastical installations, a devious upgrade of the status quo, and creating a renewed excitement within its already beautiful landscape. Gone are the complaints of how expensive small dwellings are, and the gloomy nine months of the year. These fantastical instruments propose a radical rethinking of the future growth of the city of Vancouver, translating the negative into positives, prompting an active urban engagement that, through its tactility and context is – like a good novel – open for interpretation.

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