H o m e : r e l l o c a t e d

Exploring the Notions of Home and Slippage in the Perception of Space

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Abstract

*Home; ife*located examines how Eastern immigrants to Canada interpret and gradually transform their perception of personal space. By establishing a parallel spatial and metaphorical association between the immigrants and a traditional Chinese box, the thesis extends this analysis into a proposed architectural project whereby the principles of centre-peripheral-decentre are used to explore how the spatial perception of immigrants is transformed through their assimilation to new environments. Shifts in centre, scale and tactility as they relate to immigrants and their personal evolution resonate with the paradigms of the Chinese box and the Project Scroll. The contrast between the immigrant's cultural/physical background and their new home will be explored by combining recycled buildings with new infrastructure, allowing insights into how new immigrants symbolically adapt to an existing culture (and architecture). Through a series of architectural interventions, the immigrant's sense of home is relocated. The changes the immigrant experiences as while adapting to their new environment are reflected in the architecture proposed by

*Home; ife*located.

For my m o m m i e and d a d d i e ,
who were not offered the opportunities of higher education,
but who have always been incredibly and creatively nurturing to me.

For my b r o t h e r s ,
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"All you need is *passion*."

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Prologue

"... Home is not merely the homestead - my house, my room, my garden, my town - but everything it stands for. The symbolic character of the notion 'home' is emotionally evocative and hard to describe. Home means different things to different people... "To feel at home" is an expression of the highest degree of familiarity and intimacy." Alfred Schütz.¹

As a middle-class child growing up in Hong Kong in the 1960's, I always lived in a high-rise apartment building. My childhood memories of Hong Kong are of concrete 'forests' and mobs of people on crowded streets. When I emigrated to Canada in 1994, my first impression of this new place was of a vast openness, formed by a long and boring highway drive from the airport to our house. While my brother commented on the fresh clean air, I felt it was physically exhausting for the eyes to look at flat empty countryside along the highway. My vision was blurred by the grandeur of the landscape that stretched beyond the range of my vision.

Our new house was a spacious bungalow that was fully furnished and resembled the perfect image of a warm welcoming Western home that I'd seen in storybooks. Although I consciously knew that this place, as a physical

¹ Schütz, Alfred, and Arvid Brodersen. "The Homecoming." *Collected Papers*. Vol. 2: *Studies in Social Theory*. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1976. 107-108.

shelter, was our new home, I did not *feel at home*. In his essay, "The Homecomer", Alfred Schütz describes this feeling as a lack of *intimacy* and *familiarity* with the new environment. The echoes of emptiness in the new house were the result of excessive and underutilized spaces, such as the playground, storage space, living room and dining area, that we had never had the luxury of having in Hong Kong. As the living room was almost as big as my entire apartment in Hong Kong, I often questioned the functionality of these spaces. I was overwhelmed by the sense of boundless space in Canada.

This unfamiliar incident is only one of many examples of culture shock³ that is experienced by immigrants. Culture shock is a "natural state of psychological and physical disorientation that occurs when encountering a new culture"⁴. The interpretation of one's culture shock is very subjective; the difficulties caused by culture shock are unique to everyone, and the effects will vary with time. I did not realize that my perception had undergone a gradual acclimatization since my arrival to Canada until a trip I took to Beijing with my father last year.

My first conscious realization of this change occurred at an attraction park in Beijing. On a hot summer day, my father and I were longing for a place to rest after a long walking tour. After competing with a mob of people, my

² Schütz (1976), 106.

³ The term "culture shock" was coined by Kalvero Oberg in a 1954 report published by Bobbs-Merrill, in which 5 distinct stages of culture shock were identified. All people experience a feeling of strangeness when travelling to or living in another country. This process has a cause, symptoms and resolution.

⁴ Furnham, Adrian, and Stephen Bochner. *Culture Shock: Psychological Reactions to Unfamiliar Environments*. London: Routledge, 1994. 25.

FIGURE 1. THE FRACTION OF THE BENCH THAT WAS OFFERED.

father eventually found an empty bench. As he was trying to reserve a spot for me, a grandmother, who was with her grandchildren, rushed to share the same bench. When she became aware of my presence, she kindly offered me a place to sit. The fraction of the bench that was offered astonished me, and it was then that I realized how differently the grandmother and I perceived space. She offered me only a sliver, whereas in Canada, I had become accustomed to being offered an entire seat. In that moment, I experienced a momentary disconnect, a slight disorientation of the perception of my personal space. According to Robert Sommer, *Personal Space* is the invisible boundary or physical region surrounding a person, which is their referential domain or territory – if that space is entered by another, he or she feels uncomfortable.⁵ Anthropologist and cross-cultural researcher Edward Hall writes that "...people brought up in different cultures live in different perceptual worlds [and it is] found in their manner of orienting themselves in space". In this case, the personal space accepted and offered by the grandmother differed greatly with my perception of personal space. I became intrigued by this difference in the perception of space between Eastern and Western cultures.

After residing in both Eastern and Western societies, I experienced two kinds of culture shock, both in Canada and in my country of origin. My perception of personal space has slowly transformed over time, continually

⁵ Sommer, Robert. *Personal Space: Behavioural Basis of Design*. Prentice Hall, 1969:66.

⁶ Hall, Edward. *Hidden Dimension*. New York: Anchor Books, 1990. 70.

shifting between the familiar and the unfamiliar. My dual identity as an immigrant and as a local is interchangeably shifting, as if I am located in an in-between or interstitial space between a pre-existing past and a new present.

Opening the Chinese Box

“...Geography includes cultural differences between two countries, it includes travelling but it also includes the geography of space. It's not just going to Europe in a plane, it's also the geography of the human environment and what that means and how does it have an influence?”

Robert LePage.⁷

In an attempt to study the perception of space, Edward Hall introduces Proxemics for the “interrelated observations and theories of man's use of space as a specialized elaboration of culture.”⁸ Most people are fundamentally aware of one culture, one setting, and one home; however, immigrants are aware of at least two, and this plurality of awareness gives rise to a consciousness of simultaneous dimensions.⁹ Chinese immigrants often experience unfamiliar conditions that challenge their preconceived perception of space. Be it conscious or subconscious, a search for balance and centre to compensate for the influx of shifts in perception is always present - there is a continuous desire to reach a new centre. Stemming from my own personal experience, as a Chinese immigrant living in Canada, and influenced by Hall's *Hidden Dimension*, the spatial experience led me to question the role of architecture in mediating my engagement with my new ‘home’.

⁷ Dundelević, Aleksandar Saša. *The Cinema of Robert LePage: the Poetics of Memory*. London: Wallflower, 2003. 153.

⁸ Hall (1990), 1.

⁹ Said, Edward W. *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 2000. 186.

Home:[re]located illustrates that the way in which space is perceived has a direct relationship with one's perception of familiarity and the notion of 'feeling at home'. It challenges the idea of familiarity inherent in the expression 'feeling at home' as experienced by immigrants who migrate to their new environment. In addition to the use of Hall's *Hidden Dimension*, which postulates that people from different cultures have different perceptions of space because they inhabit different perceptual worlds, the Chinese box, both structurally and metaphorically, forms the core of this thesis. Using the same operating technique as in the Chinese scroll, the Project Scroll is introduced as a tool for design exploration. There is a fundamental difference between the Chinese scroll and the Project Scroll. Instead of an historical artifact, the Project Scroll is both a tectonic and metaphoric representation of narrative of the immigrant's journey and the design process for the architectural project. Using the Project Scroll as a device, different layers of the Chinese box are unfolded to illustrate the journey of immigrants and the way in which their *home* is gradually *relocated* over time. Hence, the Chinese Box captures episodes of experience while the scroll links these in a narrative structure.

The Chinese box offers a variety of representations at different physical and experiential levels, which can be used to represent and describe the notion of *Home*. Physically, Chinese boxes are a series of nested ornamental boxes, similar to the layers of the Russian *Babushka* doll or of an onion. The essence of a Chinese box is illustrated in the beginning of the film, *Chinese Box*. As Olivia Khoo describes, "[i]t is a montage of overlapping scenes that

gradually unfold and re-fold on top of one another in a palimpsest-like effect."¹⁰ The four layers of this thesis will unravel all the potential threads and episodes while aligning new relationships to immigrant's transforming perceptions of space. Each episode within the layers is titled so as to correspond to stages in the immigrant's journey, which are parallel to the process of the architectural exploration.

The outermost, *Layer One*, unravels how space is perceived and how slippage of perception occurs. The discussion is then followed by three episodes of the immigrant's journey: "The Arrival", "Between the Two Cultures", and "Of Space and Distance". The Chinese scroll and Project Scroll are introduced in order to explain the perceptual worlds in different cultures. The Project Scroll will be used as a record throughout the process of investigation and design, documenting the evolving perception of immigrants. The understanding of the differences in the perception of space between the East and the West leads to a better understanding of the unfamiliar, which is when one does not 'feel at home'.

The physical opening of the Chinese box symbolizes the arrival of the immigrants and the revelation of the hidden contents. *Layer Two* will reveal the notions of containment and "contentlessness" associated with the paradoxical structure of the Chinese box and its role as a symbol of the immigrant's past and attachment to their home

¹⁰ Kho, Olivia, "Folding Chinese Boxes: Sensing the Chinese Exotic," *The Chinese Exotic: Modern Diasporic Femininity*, Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2007, 33.

land. The pinhole camera will be introduced in order to capture the hidden "content" of the empty Chinese boxes through observation and exploration. The episodes will explore how emotion and memory affect the perception of space, and how they are necessary for one to 'feel at home'.

Layer Three explores the journey immigrants take as they undergo, over time, a series of changes and adaptations in their new environment. The Project Scroll will be used as a vehicle to demonstrate and document the idea of centre-peripheral-decentre, which occurs during the readjustment process of immigrants. The 'centre' described here refers to one's conditioned perception. The idea of synthesis will be introduced to illustrate the experience of the shifting of perception, during which the tension of shifting centres is reconciled. The use of axonometric and perspective drawing techniques on the scroll symbolizes the encounter between Eastern and Western cultures. By combining the drawing techniques, one can begin to understand how the boundaries between the two cultures dissolve and new experiences are synthesized.

Home/(re)located is a process of revealing the layers of the Chinese box to investigate the notion of *home* and its relationship with the transforming process of perception of space in immigrants. The last layer elaborates, through architecture, on the perceptual changes and shifting of centre-periphery that exemplify the immigrant's journey. The project intends to communicate through the experience of space. The architecture frames a narrative that

suggests the presence of the immigrant's experience. It attempts to motivate bodily engagement and particular emotional responses to the environment and form. By playing the role of an immigrant, one can discover the embedded patterns of change and temporality in both physical and cultural dimensions within the architecture of the proposed building.

Layer One: The layers

"Asianicity, particularly in North America, has always posed ambivalence and ambiguity, whether by blood or by culture." Fred Wah.¹¹

Cultures vary in terms of the perceptions embedded in their understandings of spatial relationships. The perceptual worlds and the perception of space in the East and the West can be very different, and it is these differences which often lead to the inevitable feelings of ambivalence and ambiguity when immigrants settle in their new environments. The perceptual differences between two cultures can be described through the physical structure of Chinese boxes. The sequence of opening the boxes is limited, because there is only one way to open them, with the structure of encapsulated layers, every layer must be unfolded from the outside towards the inside. To truly understand the experience of immigrants settling into their new environment, it is important to become familiar with their definition of space, their spatial perception and to understand the environment through their senses.

FIGURE 2. A CHINESE BOX, A SERIES OF NESTED ORNAMENTAL BOXES, SIMILAR TO THE LAYERS OF THE RUSSIAN BABUSHKA DOLL....

¹¹ Sze, Gillian, and Fred Wah. "Writers-in-dialogue." *Ricepaper* 10 March. 2010: 9.

The Notion of *Home* | *Slippage* in Spatial Experience

To perceive¹² [OF. *percevoir*, *percevoir*, L. *percipere*, *perceptum*; *per* (see *Per-*) + *capere* to take, receive. See *Capacious*, and cf. *Perception*.]
1. To obtain knowledge of through the senses; to receive impressions from by means of the bodily organs; to take cognizance of the existence, character, or identity of, by means of the senses; to see, hear, or feel.

Perception¹³

The word "perception" comes from the Latin words *perceptio*, *percipio*, and means "receiving, collecting, action of taking possession, apprehension with the mind or senses"

The notion of home has a great deal in common with the perception of space and spatial experience. To *perceive* space is to use the bodily senses to obtain knowledge of space. By the act of perceiving space, one is constantly building up *experience* about space. This spatial experience, according to Hall, is *multisensory*¹⁴ and hence is subjective because it deals with the abstract interpretation of one's mind. The act of perceiving space is always ongoing, because all the senses can never be at rest at the same time. The body, with the mind as a perceptual medium, becomes the *home* that constantly receives and processes the information in its periphery. The perception of space and spatial experience are thus individually varied, due to the different senses of the human body and the interpretation of each individual's mind.

¹² "To perceive." Def. 1. *The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition*. 2000.

¹³ "Perception." Def. 1. *The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition*. 2000.

¹⁴ Hall (1990), Author's Preface, xi.

The *home*, representing the body and the mind, is where the perception of space and spatial experience meet. As Alfred Schütz says, 'feeling at home' is an expression that deals with a high degree of familiarity, as the notion of *home* is related to one's experiences and familiarity with that space. The shift from the familiar to the unfamiliar results in a *slippage* of an individual's perception of space. The *slippage* in the perception of space is related to both physical and psychological states of the body and the mind and results when one's culturally conditioned perception of space is challenged. By definition, the act of slipping is the movement away from an original or secure place.¹⁵ Home is often referred to as a secure place in one's mind because of the familiar sense of space which is perceived. When there is a *slippage* in the perception of space, the sense of 'feeling at home' becomes unbalanced. Metaphorically and physically, the *slippage* of the centre and periphery in the perception of space implies the abstractions of one's mind laced with the fear of the unknown. To reconcile an uncomfortable *slippage* of centre, a negotiation between the familiar and the unfamiliar environment occurs.

Although an individual's perception of space is unpredictable, one's perceptual patterns and the manner in which individuals orient themselves in space are closely related to how people are brought up in different cultures. As Hall mentions, "selective screening of sensory data admits some things while filtering out others, so that *experience* as *it is perceived* through one set of culturally patterned sensory screens is quite different from experience perceived

¹⁵ 'Slippage' Def.1. *The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language*, Fourth Ed. 2000.

through another.”¹⁶ Cultural difference affects the relationships between perception and the body. According to Hall, “both humans and their environment participate in moulding each other. Humans are in a position of creating the worlds in which they live, which determine what kind of an organism they will be.”¹⁷ The perceptual and sensory experience of one culture is constructed in a cycle originated by man’s perception of space. Through the act of perceiving, one accumulates experience about a space. With the act of interpreting and formulating by one’s mind, the experiences are conceptualized and applied to the construction of space. This speaks to a cultural difference that exists when Eastern immigrants with preconceived perceptual patterns experience the different perceptual world of another culture.

Episode 1: The Arrival: Threshold and the Dynamic

Originating from ancient China, the Chinese scroll is an ancient artefact that serves to convey and record information. The painting, *Along the River during the Qingming Festival*, captures the daily life of people in the capital during the Song period. The theme celebrates the festive spirit at the Qingming Festival. The entire piece was originally painted on a hand scroll, which can be held by the viewer. The content reveals the lifestyle of all levels of society, from rich to poor, as well as different activities in rural areas and the city. It offers glimpses of period clothing and architecture.

¹⁶ Hall (1990), 2.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

FIGURE 3. A PARTIAL VIEW OF THE CHINESE SCROLL, ALONG THE RIVER DURING THE QINGMING FESTIVAL, C.1085.

The Chinese scroll, as it is the metaphor of Chinese culture, serves to represent Chinese immigrants. Similar to the trailer of the film, *Chinese Box*, the Chinese scroll possesses a cinematic quality as it unfolds in space and time. This aspect of the Chinese scroll is used here to investigate the adaptive conditions of immigrants. The Project Scroll acts as a threshold that allows the viewer to engage with the evolving perception of immigrants and reveals the episodes of their shifting experience, recording the representational difference between the East and West.

FIGURE 4. THE UNFOLDING SEQUENCE OF THE PROJECT SCROLL.

To view the content, one must physically unroll the scroll, and the act of touching and unrolling invites immediate engagement by the user. As Hall suggests, "man's boundary begins and ends with his skin."¹⁸ Symbolically, the unrolling represents the arrival of immigrants, in which the reaction and transformation occurs immediately in the new surroundings. As Hall says: "man's sense of space and distance is not static; that it has very little to do with the single-viewpoint linear perspective developed in the Renaissance artists... His perception of space is dynamic because it is related to action – what can be done in a given space – rather than what is seen by passive viewing."¹⁹ One views the painting by unrolling it, as one page is exposed at a time. Jan Krikke writes that "unlike European painting, which depicted a frozen moment in time, Chinese scroll painting, provided a kinetic medium, based on the synthesis of space and time"²⁰.

The dynamic action of unrolling and the lack of explicit vanishing points in the drawing speed up the eyes to constantly flow along the scroll, to adjust and to refocus to the next episode, while staying peripherally aware of the image as a whole. Unlike the fixed framing of a painting, the scroll allows the eyes to flow. It is a collection of episodes, each one of which maintains its individual identity. The motion of unrolling allows the viewer to physically engage with the content of the scroll in the narrative sequence. Time is significant, as it is the constant in both cases. The viewer's attention weaves between one story and the next, with constantly changing vistas from the centre to periphery.

¹⁸ Hall (1990), 115.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.114, 115.

²⁰ Krikke, Jan, "Axonometry: A Matter of Perspective," *IEEE Computer Graphics and Applications*, vol. 20, no. 4, July/Aug. 2000, 7.

The Project Scroll acts as a metaphor, illustrating both the notion of space and immigrant's experiences upon arrival. The act of unrolling, with respect to constantly changing vistas, allows the viewer to be the immigrant, to experience the continuously evolving sensory stimuli from the new surroundings. Since both man and his environment participate in moulding each other, immigrants will have a sense of unfamiliarity because they have a different perception of space and a different perceptual world. Therefore, in order to understand how the perceptual world in one culture is constructed, it is important to learn how space is differently perceived by the two cultures.

Episode 2: Between the Two Cultures

"the concept that no two people see exactly the same thing when actively using their eyes in a natural situation is shocking to some people because it implies that not all men relate to the world around them in the same way...The distance between the perceptual worlds of two people of the same culture is certainly less than that between two people of different cultures". Hall.²¹

How immigrants react to changes and relate to themselves and the world around them depends on their origin, and the problems they encounter grow out of the difficulties they experience in assimilating to the new culture. Different geographical and cultural environments have a direct relationship to how space is perceived. In his

²¹ Hall (1990), 69.

conversion with Aleksandar Dunderović about his use of space in theatre production, Robert Lepage reveals his understanding of differences in the perception of space, from his experience working in Japan. As he says,

“...in Japan there is no space. People live in small houses, so when they go to the theatre, the curtain opens and there's nothing on stage and there's a little tree and then the actor comes in, but they all go “Ohhh”. They go ‘Ohhh’ to the space ... When we did *Possible Worlds* we wanted to shoot something that with the opening image people would go ‘Ohhh’, but they don’t go ‘Ohhh, it’s beautiful, it’s big’ they go ‘Ohhh, it’s space’.”²²

By understanding this difference, Lepage is able to produce a versatile theatre set that shows an understanding of his audiences, whose ways of seeing are shaped by their perception. This sensitivity to the use of space enhances his audiences' experience and understanding of the performance.

In parallel to immigrants who experience multiple cultures, the shift occurs because each individual emphasizes different things when they perceive space. Understanding how immigrants perceive their new culture

²² Dunderović (2003), 153.

enables us to better understand the difference in perception between the two cultures. It helps to explain the notion of *home* and how it varies in different cultures.

Episode 2.1: Of Space and Distance

"When Westerners think and talk about space, they mean the distance between objects ... we are taught to perceive and to react to the arrangements of objects and to think of space as 'empty.' ... the meaning ... is contrasted with the Japanese, who are trained to give meaning to spaces – to perceive the shape and arrangement." Hall.²³

The perception of space is closely related with methods used to depict the sense of depth in art. The difference in the perception of distance between the East and the West can be explained through the viewing of art and drawing methods of these two cultures. The axonometric or parallel perspective from the East and linear perspective from the West both serve the purpose of capturing a three dimensional space on a two dimensional surface. Although they depict the same space, the nature of both types of drawings captures different senses of space. The art of a culture reveals the different perceptual worlds of the two cultures:

²³ Hall (1990), 153.

“Oriental art shifts the viewing point while maintaining the scene as constant. Much of Western art does just the opposite. In fact, a most significant difference between the East and the West although it is reflected in the art far transcends the field of art. Space itself is perceived entirely differently.”²⁴

Oriental art refers to the use of axonometric or parallel perspective in Chinese scrolls. Chinese artists developed the scroll as a pictorial medium,²⁵ as seen in the painting, *Along the River during the Qingming Festival*. The nature of axonometric drawings preserves the relative proportions of the object and size and scale of space, in which parallel lines never meet. As Needham writes,

“... There is no true vanishing point in Chinese drawing, and no exact rules of foreshortening ... [What] they employed was ‘parallel perspective’, i.e. a system in which lines, which were parallel in fact, remained so in the drawing. The Chinese, who had little or no Euclidean geometry, remained faithful to the postulate that parallel lines never meet at all, even in pictures”²⁶.

²⁴Hall, (1990) 74

²⁵ Krikke, 9.

²⁶ Needham, *Joseph Science and Civilisation in China (series)*. London: Cambridge University Press, 1971. 113.

The axonometric method is also a fiction which allows us to see what the viewer wants to see. Without distortion, the axonometric drawing permits precise linear measurements and hence, corrects dimensions of objects and spaces. Uddin describes that axonometric and oblique drawings have the ability to express the totality of projects...convey a sense of real space...and are unsurpassed in their ability to involve the viewer.²⁷

In the Western world, on the other hand, the perception of distance in art is related to the "law of perspective," which was developed in the Renaissance period²⁸. The linear perspective achieves visual realism in paintings of three dimensional environments. Vanishing points are established in the drawing to convey the qualities of space, in which lines recede, creating a sense of depth and mimicking the effect of objects diminishing in size as they move away from the viewer. A perspective drawing typically aims to reproduce how humans see the world, with objects that are farther away presented as smaller.

²⁷ Uddin, M. Saleh. (1997) *Axonometric and Oblique Drawing: a 3-D Construction, Rendering and Design Guide*. New York: McGraw-Hill, Back Cover.

²⁸Hall (1990), Appendix, 191

FIGURE 5. JUXTAPOSITION OF A PERSPECTIVE DRAWING (LEFT) AND AN AXONOMETRIC DRAWING (RIGHT).
ALTHOUGH BOTH DEPICT THE SAME SPACE, THE NATURE OF BOTH TYPES OF DRAWINGS CAPTURE DIFFERENT ASPECTS OF SPACE.

Episode 3: Perception of Space: Relationship and Activity

"As we open a door, our body weight meets the weight of the door; our legs measure the steps as we ascend a stair, our hand strokes the handrail and our entire body moves, diagonally and dramatically through space."

Juhani Pallasmaa.²⁹

In order to fully capture the moments when every immigrant experiences or encounters unfamiliar events, we should take into account the "interrelationship between the kinesthetic experience of space and the visual experience"³⁰. It is through bodily sensation that one can get more information about space. The concept of spatial experiences concerns not only the level of vision, but is multisensory. The body subconsciously reacts to the environment as "our legs *measure* the steps as we ascend a stair." How one perceives a space and the proximity of others is different for each individual. One can distinguish a space and distance through the bodily senses.³¹ For Hall, "the study of culture that the patterning of perceptual worlds is a function of not only of culture but of *relationship, activity, and emotion*."³² The perception of space cannot be measured, but only defined by comparing and approximating the relationship between one perception of space and another.

²⁹ Pallasmaa, Juhani, 'An Architecture of the Seven Senses', *A+U Questions of Perception: Phenomenology of Architecture*, July 1994, 35.
³⁰ Hall (1990), 51.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 128.

³² *Ibid.*, 181.

The perception of distance leads to the concept of familiarity with the distance between one and another that is associated with the sense of privacy and intimacy. Hall suggests that the shift in the perception of distance leads to visual distortion or exaggeration, as one might feel intimate or distant in a particular moment, while the other person might feel intimidated. Sommer confirms that “individual distance is not an absolute figure but varies with the relationship between the individuals, the distance at which others in the situation are placed, and the bodily orientations of the individual one to another.”³³ In such a scenario, the same distance is perceived differently by people from different cultures because they are accustomed to their own perception pattern.

Space is perceived differently not only based on different relationships, but it also transforms as different activities take place in it. For example, a space immediately transforms from communal to personal as the Chinese grandmother practices her Tai Chi on her terrace. A place can both be exposed and enclosed; light and dark; outside and inside. There is always a dialogue between the user and the environment. How one views and occupies a space transforms its purpose and function. In the immigrant's process of adaptation, their perception of space changes as they move from one cultural context in order to re-establish their lives in another. The immigrant's changing process of perception might alter immediately or gradually over time. The sudden shift in the spatial relationship is emphasized when one recognizes that the new perception of space is overriding the old.

³³ Sommer (1969), 45.

A formal and experiential threshold announces one's arrival into Ottawa's Chinatown – the proposed site for the thesis project. Although the Chinatown district starts earlier on Somerset Street, the presence of two dominant Chinese restaurants on either sides of the street creates a threshold effect in the dynamics of the neighbourhood. The buildings are constructed in noticeably different styles and materials; however, one can still sense the change in spatial and cultural dimensions. The street activities in the Chinese community not only enrich the culturally distinctive experience of Chinatown, but the smell from the restaurants triggers one's immediate response to the place. As Pallasmaa writes, "The strongest memory of a space is often its odor...A particular smell may make us secretly re-enter a space that has been completely erased from the retinal memory; the nostrils project a forgotten image."³⁴ This relates to the production an almost incidental sense of familiarity, which one can associate with Chinese culture and recognize the moment one enters Chinatown in Ottawa.

³⁴ Pallasmaa (1994), 32.

FIGURE 6
FIGURE 7
A FORUM, AND EXPERIENTIAL THRESHOLD ANNOUNCES
ONE'S ARRIVAL INTO OTTAWA'S CHINATOWN.

FIGURE 8
FIGURE 9
STREET ACTIVITIES IN THE CHINESE COMMUNITY. THESE
ENRICH THE CULTURAL DISTRICT EXPERIENCE OF
CHINATOWN. THE STREET FROM THE RESTAURANT
TRIGGERS AN IMMEDIATE RESPONSE TO THE PLACE.

Layer Two: Opening the Invisible in the Chinese Box

"It's not so important if a fishing story is true or not. What really counts is how we transform events through the distorting lens of memory. It's the blurred, invented aspects of story-telling that give it its beauty and greatness" Robert

Lepage.³⁵

The study of spatial perception is interrelated with the study of culture. The immeasurable layers, such as relationships, activities and settings, involved in the study of culture can be figuratively described by the notion of infinite encapsulation found in the Chinese box. *Layer One* emphasised how space is perceived differently in the East and the West. Immigrants inhabit different sensory worlds and therefore are accustomed to a certain cultural pattern of perceiving space. This difference in the perception of space is closely related to the "distorting lens" of memory of the immigrant's past and of their homeland. Using the notion of containment as represented by the Chinese box, *Layer Two* now investigates how *emotion* and *memory* influence the way immigrants perceive and occupy space.

³⁵ Dundjerović (2003), 17.

The Notion of Infinite Containment

The Chinese box has a symbolic meaning, associated with the immigrant's longing and attachment to their home culture. The opening sequence of the film, *Chinese Box*, shows successive wooden boxes closing away, each box containing within it a montage of personal articles. These articles accentuate the importance of personal history and one's memories. The closing of the box in the film suggests the closing of one's past and associated memories. The animated sequence in the film enables the viewers to immediately engage with the idea of fading memories as the box closes.

FIGURE 10. THE OPENING SEQUENCE OF THE FILM. CHINESE BOX, SHOWS SUCCESSIVE WOODEN BOXES CLOSING AWAY, EACH BOX CONTAINING WITHIN IT A MONTAGE OF PERSONAL ARTICLES. THESE ARTICLES ACCENTUATE THE IMPORTANCE OF PERSONAL HISTORY AND ONE'S MEMORIES.

FIGURE 11: THE UNFOLDING SEQUENCE OF THE CHINESE BOX

Both the paradoxical structure of the box and the manner in which it unfolds are symbolic and representational, when compared to the immigrant's experiences. The connotation of memory found in the montage of personal articles in the film can be regarded as symbolic of the immigrant's memories of the past and their emotional attachments to their home land. The memories in the film that are being closed away metaphorically are those left behind by immigrants when they migrate to a new setting. The infinite layers within the Chinese box can be seen to symbolize the emotional layers of the past memories, and the present experiences of and feelings about the new culture. The memories and emotional states of immigrants, which differ from those of people belonging to the new culture, contribute to a sense of unfamiliarity with the new culture. The memories and emotional states become the primary divergence in the perceptions of the two cultures.

The encapsulating structure of the Chinese box leads to the notion of "nesting". Describing the relationship between content and form Susan Stewarts, in her book *Nonsense*, states:

"...in nesting is... revealed the fundamental problem of the notion of framing and metacommunication – the problem of 'what is within the frame?'" Chinese boxes contain within them other boxes. They are **contentless**. There is 'nothing there'. They are an illustration of the

problem of logical types and the paradoxes it bears of container and contained, form as content and content as form. There is no privileged place for content.”³⁶

Since the Chinese box is literally one box fitted into another, the artefacts from the film are synthetic images with symbolic meaning, implying what is possible inside the box. As Stewarts suggests, Chinese boxes are physically “contentless”. The cinematic technique of the film permits the illogical action to make sense, which allows the viewers to focus on the implied symbolic meanings of the film sequence, instead of the paradox it demonstrates. The film triggers in the viewer a multitude of rich and complex possible interpretations. The viewers’ responses differ according to *different interpretations* based on their personal recollections. Similar to the viewer’s response to the film, the act of perceiving and interpreting a space relies on the mind’s interpretation, based on emotional associations that are unique to each individual. The mind, along with one’s personal memories, will form the information gathered from the bodily senses into spatial experience. ‘Feeling at home’ is an expression of the perception of space, which not only involves the notion of familiarity in the physical sense of one’s mind and body but also in an emotional sense. In reference to Hall’s quote, perceiving a space involves different emotional states during different activities, in different relationships, and in different settings and contexts.

³⁶ Stewart, Susan. *Nonsense: Aspects of Intertextuality in Folklore and Literature*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1985. 129.

The juxtaposition of the Chinese and English characters on a restaurant sign in Chinatown exemplifies the presence of Chinese culture in the Western context. By being able to read the Chinese sign on the restaurant façade and recognizing the smell of food from their home land, the immigrant suddenly feels a sense of familiarity associated with their home culture. The centre of perception momentarily becomes unbalanced as the emphasis is shifted onto the understanding of the Chinese characters, and brings out a recollection that previously rested in the background.

In the opening of the film, a Chinese box opens out in order to reveal the hidden contents of several interior compartments. The notion of containment in the Chinese box symbolizes the possibility of an infinite number of personal interpretations of the content inside each box. Similarly, immigrants have different observations and spatial experiences in their new environment due to their own personal association and reaction to the new place. To express this idea in a more tangible way, a Chinese box, a pinhole camera and a Project Scroll are used in order to explain and illustrate the immigrant's transformative journey. Instead of being regarded as "contentless", the Chinese box now becomes a "container" or recorder of the process of the immigrant's readjustment.

FIGURE 12. RESTAURANT SIGN IN CHINATOWN, BY BEING ABLE TO READ THE CHINESE SIGN ON THE RESTAURANT FAÇADE AND RECOGNIZE THE SMELL OF FOOD FROM THEIR HOME LAND, THE IMMIGRANTS ARE REMINDED OF THEIR HOME CULTURE AND SUDDENLY FEEL A SENSE OF FAMILIARITY.

The opening of the Chinese boxes metaphorically represents the way meaning is brought to the box by associating it with a personalized narrative. It signifies an internal discovery as the layers are revealed over time. Inspired by the structure of the Chinese box, its sliding mechanism is replaced by a film holder for a pinhole camera. The pinhole camera introduced by this investigation does not merely transform the Chinese box physically. It signifies that the box is no longer an empty void; rather it is an analogy of how we bring meaning to our own discoveries. This becomes the "distorting lens" of memory, which is the cause of the differences between each individual's interpretations of space. The camera acts as a bridge between the remembered and the physical world of new culture. The images that are captured represent the invisible essence of "contentlessness" at a particular episode in time.

Capturing the Momentarily Visible in the Invisible

In response to Stewart's comment that "there is 'nothing there'"³⁷, the opening of the Chinese box can be seen to be more than just the internal discovery of one's journey, associated with one's personal memories. The conversion to a pinhole camera signifies a transition to a representation of personal discovery. The Chinese box manifests itself as both internal and external discovery unfolding in time and space. In contrast to the personal narrative of discovery that is internal and invisible, the temporal narrative captured by the pinhole camera accesses the external and visible. The pinhole camera and its generated images form an intermediate device that bridges the private, personalized, Chinese box and the Project Scroll, which can be publicly shared.

Similar to the unrolling of the Chinese scroll, the process of successive picture taking and the generated photographs are understood as a linear, continuous narrative explored in space and time. The pinhole camera is a recorder that momentarily captures the shift from the box as "contentless" to the box as a vehicle for the representation of an experience. There is a transition between the inside and the outside, between the Chinese box that relies on personal narrative and the pinhole camera that captures images that can be shared. The generated images are

³⁷ Stewart, 129.

episodes set in a temporal sequence in order to illustrate the tension between the two cultures and the layering of perception within the immigrant's experience.

A pinhole camera consists of a light-proof box with no lens and a single, very small aperture. Light from a scene passes through this single point and projects an inverted image on the opposite side of the box's interior. Without any lens or viewfinders, one cannot tell exactly what is going to be captured in the frame of the pinhole camera. The images generated from the pinhole, the most primitive of cameras, signify the immigrant's primal experiences with the unfamiliar situation upon their arrival. The near infinite depth of field allows for interplay between near and far, compressing the space between the image's subjects and their background. The outside world is

FIGURE 13. PINHOLE CAMERA AND ITS GENERATED IMAGE. WITHOUT A LENS OR VIEWFINDERS, ONE CANNOT TELL EXACTLY WHAT IS GOING TO BE CAPTURED IN THE FRAME OF THE PINHOLE CAMERA.

captured within the small confines of the box, which produces personalized images. Paralleling the immigrant's experience, this captures the layering of the two cultures. Although the subject remains the same, pinhole cameras produce negative images of outside objects, which symbolize a contrasting relationship between the familiar and the unfamiliar.

FIGURE 14. JUTXAPOSITION OF THE PINHOLE IMAGE (LEFT) AND PHOTOSHOP MANIPULATED IMAGE (RIGHT)

FIGURE 15. OPERATING PRINCIPLE OF A PINHOLE CAMERA. LIGHT FROM A SCENE PASSES THROUGH THIS SINGLE POINT AND PROJECTS AN INVERTED IMAGE ON THE OPPOSITE SIDE OF THE BOX'S INTERIOR.

The Chinese box, the pinhole camera and the Project Scroll all suggest an active and cinematic realm, symbolizing the conditions of the immigrant, rather than a representational objective realm that is fixed. They are a

form of narrative that allows "memory to give personal interpretations of, and hence distort, the events of the past."³⁸ The immigrants' perception of their new surroundings will be different depending on how long they have been there or whether it is their first exposure to the new environment. Metaphorically, the generated images from the pinhole camera are the particular moments and memories that record the immigrant's journey. The images signify an unambiguous record for the past and present, within a constantly changing context. On the other hand, the Project Scroll is a collection of episodes from the pinhole camera, which not only records events and facts, but also changes within an evolving process. The Project Scroll is public and can thus act as a record of the process which led to the development of this thesis.

Episode 4: The "Juxtaposition"

Paralleling the immigrant's process of ongoing social adaptation, the Project Scroll represents the theoretical shift of "content" within the Chinese box. There is a transition from observation to the creation of physical images. The combination of the effect of the pinhole camera and the drawing techniques of the two cultures symbolizes the spatial and temporal experience of immigrants.

³⁸ Dundjerović, Aleksandar Saša. *The Theatricality of Robert LePage*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's UP, 2007. 12.

FIGURE 16. JAPANESE UKIE PRINT. A SCENE FROM THE PLAY DODO AT THE NAKAMURA-ZA THEATRE BY OKUMURA MASHIMOGU, C.1700s. ALTHOUGH THE PERSPECTIVE DRAWING CATCHES THE VIEWER'S ATTENTION, THE MERGE WITH THE AXONOMETRIC DRAWING ALLOWS THE EYES TO FLOW FROM ONE POINT TO THE NEXT, BETWEEN ONE EPISODE AND WHAT LIES BEYOND.

The vanishing point in perspective drawings guides the viewers to understand the story of immigrants as they zoom in and out of the scroll. The combination of the two types of drawings signifies the meeting of two cultures, representing the juxtaposition of the individual experience and the experiences common to all people of a particular culture. Although the perspective drawing draws the viewer's attention, the merge with the axonometric drawing allows the eyes to flow from one point to the next, between one episode and what lies beyond.

The alternation between the axonometric and perspective drawing refers to the idea that entering a new culture is potentially a confusing and disorienting experience. Such a technique can be seen in the Japanese artwork *Ukie*.³⁹ The hybrid drawing directs the viewer to relate "to what the artist of the picture wanted to express through the drawing... to create the feeling of actually being inside ... through the use of one point perspective and to show the content of the play through the use of combined oblique projection, thus placing the emphasis on the main actors." The use of two different drawing techniques creates a new expression of space which gives "a sense of movement, a shakiness, which adds tension to the scene."⁴⁰ The shift from one type of drawing to the next suggests the shift in perception and awkwardness when two cultures are juxtaposed.

³⁹ For the *Ukie* works, artists utilized a Western method of linear perspective that was introduced to Japan at that time. This Western method of perspective drawing revealed a "natural view", which was the primary method of perspective employed in *Ukie*.

⁴⁰ Mende, Kazuko. "The Representation of Pictorial Space in *Ukie*"" *Journal for Geometry and Graphics* 1.1, 1997: 31.

Episode 5: The "Encounter"

The juxtaposition of axonometric and perspective drawings in one piece of art underscores its representational relationship to the experience of the immigrants. As immigrants operate within a different and unknown culture, they encounter and experience a high level of unfamiliarity. Their lack of control results from their relocation to a different culture, where their expectations are not met. Axonometric drawings give a sense of measurable space, whereas perspective drawings give a quality of space in terms of depth, materiality and light. As one is adjusting to the scroll's perspective drawings and trying to make sense of the space, the viewer is naturally aware of the peripheral axonometric drawing. The eye hovers, causing the viewer to lose sense of which direction to follow. The attention is then shifted, and the viewer tries to make sense of the axonometric drawing that depicts the space at a different scale. The peculiar spaces created by the changing scale cause the viewers to experience a feeling of unfamiliarity and sense of ambiguity and disorientation. The combination of the two drawing techniques signifies the combination of fiction and reality. The eyes of the viewer will have to adjust to the spatial interruption in order to reveal the story. The drawings here provide some level of - but not full – accuracy of reality, symbolic of the immigrant's experiences in which the interpretation and process of bridging the fragments are always approximate and dependent on the viewer's own imagination.

The constant visual readjustment signifies that actions take place at many different levels simultaneously. While one is learning the geography of a city, and forming new relationships, one's body is adjusting to a new physical and social climate. Every adjustment – every detail - must be negotiated under a different set of cultural rules. Immigrants interact with their new environments and hence, try to locate their centre between their old and new cultures. The lives of immigrants unravel in each episode on the scroll, as it unrolls. As immigrants arrive in Canada and begin the process of adjustment, they constantly face countless complex issues, which occur simultaneously.

FIGURE 17. PARTIAL VIEW OF THE PROJECT SCROLL.

The process of adapting to a new culture can often be related as a sequence of multifaceted sensory stimuli. The body and mind need time to settle in. The Project Scroll depicts this process, in which every scene is situational,

and must be seen independently. In both the Chinese box and the Project Scroll, the interpretation is based on the subject's understanding of, alignment with, and positioning in space and time.

Physically, the transformation of the unfolding box functions as an expansion as well as a containment of space. It is used to describe the changes and transformations which immigrants experience over time. It also serves to explore the sensory world of the past and how man's perception, as well as the nature of his awareness of perception, has changed. The Chinese box symbolizes both visual spatial encapsulation and the narrative of the immigrant experience. By placing the Chinese box in a different setting and context, there is a change in meaning and in experience. This also signifies that the immigrants are no longer set within the rigid bounds of the existing culture.

The sense of unfamiliarity accompanied with ambivalence and ambiguity causes the *slippage* of perception, as immigrants will never fully 'feel at home'. The perception of space of some immigrants might have been transformed to suit the conditions and circumstances of a new country and community, while others' perspectives might have remained unchanged. During the process of adaptation, immigrants may experience a shift in their centres, and constantly re-establish their centre to adapt to their new surroundings. *Layer Three* will discuss the "centres" which immigrants originally possess, and which become peripheral and slowly dissolve during the ongoing process of adjustment and adaption. New centres are then established, resulting in a new perception.

Layer Three

The Discovery of the Chinese Box: Synthesis: Familiar | Unfamiliar

"An accent marks the lag between two cultures, two languages, the space where you let go of one identity, invent another, and end up being more than one person though never quite two." André Aciman,⁴¹

The opening of the Chinese box is an expansion into a space of *difference*. It enables negotiations between outside-inside, the remembered-observed and the home-host cultures. The unfolding of a Chinese box suggests a shift from essence to representation to experience. As it opens out, the boundaries dissolve. The spatial dimension changes as the representation changes.

Although the transition and transformation of their spatial perception may start as soon as immigrants arrive in their new surroundings, some characteristics from their place of origin may remain the same. As Ien Ang writes, this process is considered: "... as hybridization consist[ing] of exchanges, crossings, and mutual entanglements, it necessarily implies a softening of the boundaries between 'peoples': the encounters *between* them are as constitutive of who they are as the proceedings *within*."⁴² There is a continuous exchange between immigrants and their

⁴¹ Haene, Michael. *Creativity in Exile*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2004. 241.

⁴² Ang, Ien. *On Not Speaking Chinese: Living between Asia and the West*. London: Routledge, 2001. 87.

environments. Immigrants are constantly experiencing shifting and negotiation as they try to maintain their own social and personal values while adapting to a new culture. The perception of space is related to the sensibility of each individual. Through assimilation, immigrants not only adapt to their new environment, but their perception of space becomes hybridized through this cross-cultural exchange. In analyzing the Project Scroll, one can begin to understand the continuous shifts in the perspective of immigrants. The use of axonometric and perspective drawing techniques on the scroll signifies the encounter between the Eastern and Western cultures. By combining the drawing techniques we can begin to understand how the boundaries between the two cultures dissolve.

FIGURE 18. THE COMBINATION OF THE AXONOMETRIC AND PERSPECTIVE DRAWING TECHNIQUES. SIGNIFYING THE COMBINATION OF THE FICTION AND REALITY, THE EYES OF THE VIEWER WILL HAVE TO ADJUST TO THE SPATIAL INTERRUPTION IN ORDER TO REVEAL THE STORY.

Episode 6: The Transformation by Synthesis

"Man at certain critical points synthesizes experience...man learns while he sees and what he learns influences what he sees. This makes for great adaptability in man and enables him to exploit past experience." Hall.⁴³

The journey the immigrants undergo over time involves a series of changes and adaptations in their new environment. The Project Scroll will be used as a vehicle to demonstrate the notion of centre-peripheral-decentre and synthesis as an experience of shifting. The shift here refers to the adjustment in the perception of space which the immigrants experience, both consciously and unconsciously. When one's perception is challenged in an unfamiliar environment, this centre becomes decentred and dislocates to the periphery. In an attempt to relocate the centre, a continuous shift occurs and a new perception of space results. The idea of synthesis is proposed to represent this shifting experience and the continuous search for the centre.

As discussed in the previous chapter, spatial experience is gained by the act of perceiving space through a sensory system. Since people "interpret their sensory data differently and combine them in different ways,"⁴⁴ different

⁴³ Hall (1990), 66.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p.3

individual spatial experiences are accumulated. Synthetic experience occurs when there is a lack of information to conceptualize the spatial experience. Experience is synthesized to bridge the mental gap, in order to complete the process of spatial conceptualization. For Hall, vision is synthesis and is always active.⁴⁵ There is a distinction between what one knows to be present and what one sees. In the process of perceiving space, the body will selectively acknowledge certain information and interpret according to the memory of past experiences. Although it is always the same space that is seen, the spatial experience of each individual is always influenced by one's mind and varies slightly from person to person.

Inspired by the *Ukie*⁴⁶ prints in Japan, the Project Scroll uses perspective and oblique projections within the same image. The *Ukie* print, *A Scene From The Play Dōjōji At The Nakamura-Za Theatre*, as shown in the previous chapter, demonstrates the use of the one-point perspective for the audience space and combined oblique projection for the stage. The perspective drawing reveals the content of the play and the oblique projection gives emphasis to the actions of the characters on stage. The use of two drawing techniques helps to redirect the viewers to readjust their focus to the event as well as the content.

⁴⁵ Hall (1990), 66

⁴⁶ A type of ancient Japanese wooden prints.

The exploration drawings found on the Project Scroll serve to do more than intensify the scene - they synthesize a new expression of space, and signify the new perception the two cultures create as they meet. The combination of two methods attempts to create contained space and in-between space to connect the fictional and the real. It is an attempt to intensify the experience of space as viewers engage with the drawing. Metaphorically, as the situation changes in unexpected directions, the centre of one's perception is shifted to the periphery, representing a decentring. Synthesis occurs when the individual needs to construct new perspectives that "fit" with the new situation. The hybrid drawing serves to reconcile the tension and ambiguities between the East and West.

FIGURE 19. CONTAINED SPACE AND IN-BETWEEN SPACE. AS THE SITUATION CHANGES IN UNEXPECTED DIRECTIONS, THE CENTRE OF ONE'S PERCEPTION IS SHIFTED TO THE PERIPHERY, REPRESENTING THE IDEA OF DECENTRE.

Analyzing the images of the hybrid drawing allows us to better understand the immigrant's experiences. The combination of axonometric and perspective drawings allow the viewer's focus to shift continuously, in the same way as the immigrant's perceptions are constantly shifting during the process of assimilation to their new culture.

Continuously experiencing new elements, the immigrant's perception is also synthesized, as they connect new experiences with their past knowledge. The process of synthesis, born from continuous readjusting, is always transitional and active.

Between axonometric drawings (revealing the true measure of a space) and the perspective drawings (giving a sense of space and distance in terms of materiality and light), the viewer can recreate the story by connecting all the fragments and synthesizing the scene on their own. The scroll communicates to the viewer the experience of the immigrant, as the viewer imagines themselves interacting with the content and spaces portrayed on the scroll.

Episode 7: Transition: In-between Space as Communication

As described in *Layer One* and *Two*, the Project Scroll is a metaphor for the coexistence of two cultures. Although Hall argues that no one has the same perception, the hybrid drawing in the Project Scroll can be used as a symbol of the coincidental moment when two individuals share the same view. The conventional lines and angles used in axonometric drawings are integrated with the perspective drawings, while each drawing is extended to meet the other fragments. The lines serve as the common denominator between the two drawings, giving logic to the floating fragments of each episode. As the eyes of the viewer wander across the scroll, they find their focus on the interstitial

FIGURE 20. PROJECT SCROLL. THE SPACE BETWEEN EACH EPISODE ALSO SUGGESTS THE POTENTIAL FOR TRANSFORMING SPACES.

space, yet at the same time, synthesize the episodes to make sense of the drawing. There is a momentary loss of boundaries between the two events. At that moment, a suspension of disbelief is required in order to compensate for the sudden shift. The space between each episode also suggests the potential for transforming spaces, in the same way that immigrants are located in an in-between or interstitial space, between a pre-existing past and a new present.

Use of Models and Drawings as a Metaphor

The three-dimensionality of a scene is emphasized by using a one point perspective. Different layers of images give the impression of a recession in space, which symbolises the immigrant's memory of what is being kept or left behind. Although the combination of two drawing techniques suggests many potential spaces, the drawing seems to have an "intrinsic limitation of reference." As Robin Evans states, *Translation from Drawing to Building*: "not all things architectural can be arrived at through drawings"⁴⁷. As such, Evans claims that drawings can be disengaging, oblique, abstract, and mediated or acted upon at a distance. The following section will introduce the use of modeling to bridge

⁴⁷ Evans, Robin. *Translations from Drawing to Building*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT, 1997. 159.

the gap between the fictional and the tangible. Andreas Huyssen, in describing Italo Calvino's *Invisible Cities*, postulates that "...real and imaginary spaces commingle in the mind to shape our notions of specific cities,"⁴⁸ implying that the mind is the key combining fiction and reality. Together with the mind, one is able to elevate a two dimensional plane to a three dimensional space using imagination. The act of abstracting certain elements from the hybrid drawing and constructing it in physical form using a model is related to the personal interpretation of one's mind. The model becomes the intermediary between the drawings and the mind. It is a representation of how one sees the space in the drawings and interprets what the space can become. This relates to Hall's statement that "man learns while he sees and what he learns influences what he sees."⁴⁹ As the mind learns about the space and creates new forms of models and drawings, a new dimension of space is created, which will become the next to influence the mind. Both models and the drawings have a *real* physical form, but they become an influence on the mind. The model possesses a sense of *fictional* space due to the abstract interpretation of the mind.

⁴⁸ Huyssen, Andreas. *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford UP, 2003. 49.

⁴⁹ Hall (1990), 66.

The production of model making and drawing is a process rather than an end point of development. Flattened and obscured by photography, the model and drawing influence each other. There is an ongoing process in working simultaneously with the mix of the axonometric and perspective drawings and constructing the physical model. As in collage, the real becomes representational, and the representational, real. The result is no longer contained within fixed spaces but becomes continuous with them. It is the juxtaposition of the real and the imaginary, allowing for a continual interplay, a constant substitution. There is a constant search to find a resting point in the real as the immigrant constantly searches for their personal centre.

FIGURE 21. THE PRODUCTION OF MODEL MAKING AND DRAWING. PHYSICAL MODEL OVERLAID ONTO PROJECT SCROLL.

FIGURE 22
PARTIAL VIEW OF MODEL 1
SHADOWS OVERLAPPING THE RENDERING

FIGURE 23
FULL VIEW OF MODEL 1
OVERLAPD ONTO PROJECT SCROLL

FIGURE 24 MODEL 1:
SPATIAL & SHADOW STUDY FOR POTENTIAL
ARCHITECTURAL PROGRAMS

FIGURE 25 THE PRODUCTION OF MODEL MAKING AND DRAWING OF MODEL 2

FIGURE 26. SPATIAL AND SHADOW STUDIES OF DRAWING AND MODEL.

The generated models from the process of model making and drawing are superimposed over layers of different scenes or plots narrating various conditions and environments. These conditions are narrated at multiple scales, and the space between the model and drawing is interchangeable. The drawing and generative model are not a full representation. There is a constant dialogue between model making and drawing, in which the models and drawings complete one another. The resulting product allows infinite potential for imagination. The continuous process and the infinite readings of model making and drawings intensify the visual experience between the imagined and the actual. The dialogue between the production and the mind is similar to that between the immigrants and their environment. Analyzing the relationship between model making and drawings allows us to relate to the shifting and readjustment the immigrant experiences in their perception of space.

The Project Scroll stands as a symbol of the immigrant's experiences. It contains a mix of drawing media, which embodies the meeting of different cultures. The drawings and the models generated from the scroll now become the syntactical spatial translation of the actual space. The next chapter elaborates on the idea of architecture as language that defines the notion of *home* and bridges the different stages of the immigrant's adaptation to their new culture. Inspired by the Chinese box and the narrative structure of the scroll, the essence of the architecture reflects the changing spatial, temporal, and cultural experience of immigrants.

THE DRAWINGS AND THE MODEL ARE GENERATED FROM THE SCROLL, BECOMING THE SYNTACTICAL SPATIAL TRANSLATION OF THE ACTUAL SPACE.

FIGURE 27. MODEL 2 IN 90 DEGREE ROTATIONS.

FIGURE 28. DETAILED VIEW OF MODEL 2.

FIGURE 29. SOLID VOID RELATIONSHIP. THE VOIDS CREATED BY THE LAYERINGS OF PLANS BECOME POTENTIAL SPACE FOR FUTURE PROGRAMS, INDICATED IN RED.

Layer Four

Architecture of Home

"There is only one interesting difference between the cinema and the theatre. The cinema flashes on to a screen images from the past. As this is what the mind does to itself all through life, the cinema seems intimately real ... it is a satisfying and enjoyable extension of the unreality of everyday perception. The theatre, on the other hand, always asserts itself in the present. This is what can make it more real than the normal stream of consciousness. This also is what can make it so disturbing." Peter Brook.⁵⁰

The Chinese box is not only an inanimate art object, but also a story-telling device that can be used as a mode of communication in architectural production. In this chapter, the Chinese box moves beyond a metaphor and becomes a transitional theatre-cinema. The Chinese box and the Chinese scroll will be the inspiration for the design of a social gathering space that reflects the embedded patterns of change and temporality in both the physical and cultural experience of immigrants. The shifts and tensions in spatial perception of immigrants resonate with the temporal and spatial structure of a theatre-cinema. The proposed theatre-cinema serves to provide a social-cultural gathering space which features films of different genres and from different cultures.

⁵⁰ Brook, Peter. *The Empty Space*. New York: Touchstone, 1995. 99.

In addition to its role as a social-cultural gathering space for interaction and social activities, the theatre-cinema aims to provide the visitors a kinesthetic repertoire of spatial [and cinematic] experiences,⁵¹ allowing them to experience the way that perceptions change as immigrants enter their new environment. A constant need to search for a balance between the familiar and the unfamiliar is always present. This project acts as both cinema and theatre, aiming to combine fiction and reality as the visitor momentarily takes on the role of the immigrant. The proposed architectural settings and sequence are meant to structure the visitors' spatial and temporal experience so that it parallels the immigrant's experience. The contrast between the immigrant's cultural/physical background and their new surroundings will be foreshadowed in the recycled building, where the new cinema is attached to an existing restaurant. Transformative synthesis will be the result of the adjustment to the unfamiliar. The gradual recognition of adjustment and synthesis familiarizes one with the constant shifting of centre, and as a result, one becomes reconciled with the continuing tension.

⁵¹ Hall (1990), 62.

Pre-existing Condition

Ottawa's Chinatown symbolizes the roots and presence of the city's Chinese community. An increase of new development in Chinatown, and the takeover and maintenance of both traditional and more recent buildings, are evidence of the strength of the Chinese presence and the community's commitment to the neighbourhood. The site chosen for this project is located at a part of Somerset Street which has gone through many transformations, creating an eclectic urban fabric. However, as restaurants dominate the current Chinatown, the lack of alternative attractions has become a critical issue for Somerset Chinatown. There exists a need to expand and diversify the retail base and define Chinatown as a significant cultural and heritage hub. Aside from the need to distinguish Chinatown from other areas in Ottawa, a social link between the immigrants and native Canadians is also missing in the neighbourhood. The success in revitalizing Chinatown on Somerset Street will set a precedent for Ottawa as a global dynamic city that meets people's real needs, and embraces diversity, culture and openness.

The objective of this project is to create a social-cultural gathering space for Chinatown in Ottawa, which will allow an exchange between the growing immigrant population and the locals within the city. The chosen site, located at the intersection of Booth Street and Somerset Street, is currently a vacant parking lot due to a massive fire in 2007, which destroyed about 30 apartments, a pizzeria, a pool hall, and Asian and Caribbean grocery stores. This intersection marks the apex of the two winding streets. Despite having great potential with a geographical advantage,

the void becomes the broken link that interrupts the continuity of Somerset streetscape and disrupts the balance of the neighbourhood. The chosen site acts as a social and geographical stage to link people within the neighbourhood, providing entertainment and a gathering space for the community, as well as a destination for visitors.

FIGURE 31. THE CHOSEN SITE, LOCATED AT THE INTERSECTION OF BOOTH STREET AND SOMERSET STREET, IS CURRENTLY A VACANT PARKING LOT DUE TO A MASSIVE FIRE IN 2007.

FIGURE 32. SOMERSET STREET ELEVATION OF THE CHOSEN SITE.

A Place for Exchange | Detailed Building Program

The relationship of the existing Vietnamese restaurant with the new cinema acts as the metaphor expressing the coexistence of the East and the West. The proposed cinema is linked to the existing restaurant, setting up a communal stage that encourages social interaction between cultures. The architecture aims to reflect a shift between the familiar and the unfamiliar. Paralleling the unfolding of the Chinese Box, the story of the immigrants is used as inspiration for the narrative structure within the proposed cinema-restaurant. To encourage and enhance the temporal experience of the spaces, form, light, texture, space and sequence are used to create the symbolic path of the immigrant's perceptual journey. The detailed list of architectural programs consists of:

Setting 1: The Arrival | Main Entrance

Setting 2: The Encounter | the Juxtaposition of the Existing Restaurant and the New Cinema

Setting 3: Building up the suspense | Lobby and Public courtyard

Setting 4: Foreshadowing | In-Between Spaces

Setting 5: Disruptions | Galleries and Education Centre

Setting 6: From Unfamiliar Towards Familiar | Black Box Theatre-Cinema

Setting 7: Replay of the familiar | Roof Garden

Setting 1: The Arrival | Main Entrance

"Architectural synthesis of changing back ground, middle ground, and foreground with all subjective qualities of material and light forms the basis for an intertwining perception." Steven Holl.⁵²

Arriving on the site, one notices the surface of the façades, a mixture of brick, stone and glass, juxtaposed with the existing eclectic streetscape. Anchored to a wooden structure, a new glass façade overhangs the sidewalk below. On the right/west side, a new façade detached from the opposite wall looks like a screen placed in front of the old restaurant. The transparency of the glass subtly reveals the brick façade of the existing Vietnamese restaurant, reflecting the other side of the street, which is lined with old houses built in a variety of styles. There is a dialectical relationship between the visible and invisible, resulting from the reciprocal relationship between the transparency and the changing light throughout the day. The reflection of the glass gives an illusion of continuity within the streetscape, making the restaurant temporarily invisible during the daytime, though it begins to glow from within at dusk.

FIGURE 33. THE ARRIVAL.
THE TRANSPARENCY OF THE GLASS SUBTLY REVEALS THE
BRICK FAÇADE OF THE EXISTING VIETNAMESE
RESTAURANT, REFLECTING THE OTHER SIDE OF THE
STREET

⁵²Holl, Steven. *Intertwining*. New York, NY: Princeton Architectural, 1996. 12.

through it begins to glow from within at dusk.

FIGURE 34. STREET ELEVATION, ARRIVING ON THE SITE. ONE NOTICES THE SURFACE OF THE FAÇADES, A MIXTURE OF BRICK, STONE AND GLASS, Juxtaposed WITH THE EXISTING ECLECTIC STREETSCAPE. STILL IMAGE FROM PRESENTATION VIDEO.

Setting 2: The Encounter | The Juxtaposition of the Existing Restaurant and New Cinema

FIGURE 35 ENTRANCE SPACE THE FEELING OF HEAVINESS IS INTENSIFIED BY THE OPAQUE QUALITY OF THE ENTRANCE DOOR. PLAN (ABOVE) AND SECTION (BELOW)

The juxtaposition between the past and present structures in the eating area signifies the relationship between the immigrants and their new culture. The glass facade is like a new mask applied to the existing facade of the restaurant. The new dining area is located between the existing brick wall and the transparent glass facade. The presence or absence of the sensation of tactility marks the line between intimate and public space. At the street level, along the facade, one finds the entrance recessed below the glass overhang. As lightweight and transparent as glass can appear, the structure gives the visitor an impression of immensity suspended from above. The feeling of heaviness is intensified by the opaque quality of the entrance door. While a visitor believes the door will be heavy, a shift of balance occurs as the visitor becomes aware of the feathery lightness of the door. Similar to the opening of the Chinese box, the act of opening the door represents one of the perceptual shifts that occur through the interaction with the architecture. The ease of opening the door gives an impression of disbelief, as if a mysterious and symbolic journey is now about to begin. The visitor is departing from the familiar Chinatown and journeying to the unknown. Here the path narrows as the visitor begins their journey to the interior.

Setting 3: Building up the Suspense | Lobby and Public Courtyard

When immigrants enter their new environment, they are exposed to a variety of new and unfamiliar conditions. As a result, the play of multisensory stimuli is one of the architectural themes of the project. When passing through a narrow threshold, one can glance at the surroundings through slits between heavy dark walls. While staying aware of a restaurant located on the upper right side, one arrives at the spacious central atrium that is bathed in changing natural light. Resembling an actor in a living cinema under spotlight, one finds oneself in the circulation hub surrounded by intersecting movements and actions, constantly bombarded with multi-sensory stimuli. Visually, the charred traces on the existing brick wall reveal the absence of the burnt house, while the faint smell of Asian cuisine will momentarily remind the visitor of the presence of the current restaurant. The existing brick wall and the black box create a dialogue between the old and the new. The juxtaposition between the enormous black box and its surrounding volumes has created a figure-ground relationship where the enormous solid mass can be perceived as both solid and a void.

The presence of the mass is revealed by the absence of light throughout the day. While the restaurant's entrance dominates the end of the walkway, areas housing utilitarian functions, (coat area, seating and washrooms, etc.) are sprinkled like fragments on the periphery. One begins to take on the role of a *spectator* in a live performance

as one's attention is not only drawn to the suspended box, but one's peripheral vision also gives glimpses of the unexplored beyond. Filling the emptiness, this floating volume gives an impression of an overwhelming tension between void and density.

As one's eyes continue to roam, one becomes aware of the stairs and bridges connecting the various spaces. Like a preview of upcoming episodes, this cinematic experience creates an atmosphere of anticipation and suspense, which lures the visitor to discover what lies ahead. Scanning their surroundings, the visitor will find a wooden ticket office located in the brightest part of the room. The abundance of light and wood used in the entry gives a sense of familiarity and a hint to the common tectonics of the building's entry spaces. Not only meant to provide a

waiting area for visitors of the theatre-cinema and the restaurant, the lobby space acts as a platform to encourage social interaction and informal gathering, paralleling the temporal exchange between cultures.

One can also enter the cinema through a public courtyard from the entrance on Booth Street. This garden is designed to support and encourage uses beyond its function as a waiting area for the visitors. It serves reciprocally as both a breakout space from the auditorium and as part of an arrival sequence from the entrance to the bar to the performance.

FIGURE 38. LONGITUDINAL SECTION, THE LOBBY SPACE ACTS AS A PLATFORM TO ENCOURAGE SOCIAL INTERACTION AS WELL AS FORMAL AND INFORMAL GATHERINGS PARALLELING THE TEMPORAL EXCHANGE BETWEEN CULTURES.

FIGURE 38 PUBLIC COURTYARD. IT SERVES RECIPROCALLY AS BOTH A BREAKOUT SPACE FROM THE AUDITORIUM AND AS PART OF AN ARRIVAL SEQUENCE FROM THE ENTRANCE TO THE BAR TO THE PERFORMANCE.

Setting 4:
Foreshadowing: In-between Spaces
[vertical stairs, horizontal pathways and diagonal bridges]

Since the space on the ground level is taken up by the lobby and public courtyard, one must become familiar with the circulation connectors in order to explore the rest of the building. The visitor navigates the building through the negotiation of one's corporeal orientation within the architecture. Without a distinct physical connection with each room, the bridges and stairs allow the eyes to synthesize a mental connection to the unknown. Stairs, pathways and bridges are crucial to the spatial organization of the cinema. Going up the stairs yields a startling view of the next staircase, leading to other galleries. One is constantly aware of the peripheral happenings. Contrasting with the shift in height and materiality, the intersection of the three elements creates a layering effect for the interconnected spaces. Depending on different use of light and materiality, these spaces will host different exhibits that can be either permanent or temporary. Like a collage of spatial experiences, the multi-sensory effects of sound and vision are traditional, but layered with the new and contemporary. This is achieved by allowing the visitor to bridge the gap, using their own imagination in order to navigate between each image projection gallery. The exhibits and galleries will be linked, representing the dialogue between various modes of expressions as well generations of immigrants.

FIGURE 40. FORESHADOWING, AS THE SCROLL UNFOLDS, MORE DETAILS ARE REVEALED. WITHOUT A DISTINCT PHYSICAL CONNECTION WITH EACH ROOM, THE BRIDGES AND STAIRS ALLOW THE EYES TO SYNTHESIZE A MENTAL CONNECTION TO THE UNKNOWN.

Setting 5: Disruptions | Galleries and Education Centre

The galleries are linked in clusters by winding pathways. As a visitor moves from one cluster to the next, the design of space requires the person to interact and respond to the environment in order to move into different spaces. One must combine the view from multiple vantage points to gather information that is unavailable from any single view. The visitor must adjust their orientation and find another winding walkway in order to access the next gallery. Many transitional thresholds are used to connect all the rooms. Each gallery, separated by walls of different thickness, signifies the transformation that an immigrant's perception undergoes at different stages of their adaptation.

The capability for spatial reconfiguration becomes more flexible as the visitor moves from the first gallery to the last. The last two theatres have the capability to merge into a continuous, fluid space. Representing the temporary, ever-changing condition experienced by the immigrants, this fusion of space promotes flexibility and diversity for performance, exhibitions and for meetings and public events. The availability of both natural and artificial light allows for different activities to take place. The educational space will provide students and professionals a place for educational seminars and interactive lectures. The thickness and textures of the walls will allow the user of the classroom to be aware of the surrounding activities, but without disruptions from the outside. One will notice the

FIGURE 41. DISRUPTIONS. EACH GALLERY, SEPARATED BY WALLS OF DIFFERENT THICKNESS.

presence of the newcomer in a dramatic play of shadows, while the presence and absence of the sensation of light, marks the line between intimate and shared space.

FIGURE 42. GROUND FLOOR PLAN. PREVIOUS MODEL STUDIES ARE INTEGRATED INTO THE SPATIAL DESIGN.

Setting 6: From the Unfamiliar towards the Familiar | Black Box Theatre-Cinema

The walk to each cinema gallery on the second and third levels embraces the challenge of adaptive flexibility of one's perception of space. The transition between each level is emphasized by the differences in light and materiality. The visitors must re-scan their visual surroundings and their immediate vicinity in order to reconcile the disorientation and confusion of the spatial circumstances. The process of recognition permits the visitors to reorient themselves in the space. Finally, there is the gradual recognition of the visitor's actual, rather than expected, circumstances, which are the point of reference for navigating the building.

FIGURE 44
SECTION DRAWING OF PROJECTION GALLERY

The walking repertoire towards the upper level is a metaphoric expression of the immigrant's transformative journey. Through the physical walking experience, one can sense the temporal shifts in perception, which parallel those of the immigrants. After walking through a series of spaces and stairs, one finally arrives at the level of the black box theatre-cinema, which was previously perceived as a mysterious heavy mass. Now the sense of mystery shifts from the physical form of the box to the anticipated activities and planned performances within it. Using same materiality as of the main entrance, the pathway to the theatre gives its visitors a sudden feeling of familiarity. This also provides the visitor with a hint that something new is awaiting their discovery. The pathway towards the end of the theatre is enclosed by a dark slab of granite, which accentuates its depth and with it the sense of mystery and suspense. The visitor can glance at the surroundings through slits cut within the dense dark walls. Progressively, different views of a secret garden are revealed; its entrance, however, remains a mystery. As one reaches the path's end and enters the theatre-cinema space, the role of the actor immediately switches to the role of a spectator. The room's black colour not only provides a neutral canvas for the visitor's imagination, but also creates an intimate relationship between the audience and performers, allowing them to connect with each other. The openness of the theatre allows for flexible configurations for live and projected entertainment, allowing people to engage their imagination.

FIGURE 45. FORESHADOWING. PROGRESSIVELY, DIFFERENT VIEWS OF A SECRET GARDEN ARE REVEALED. ITS ENTRANCE, HOWEVER, REMAINS A MYSTERY. STILL IMAGE FROM PRESENTATION VIDEO.

FIGURE 46. LONGITUDINAL SECTION. THE OPENNESS OF THE THEATRE ALLOWS FOR FLEXIBLE CONFIGURATIONS FOR LIVE AND PROJECTED ENTERTAINMENT, ALLOWING PEOPLE TO ENGAGE THEIR IMAGINATION.

Setting 7: Replay of the Familiar | Roof Garden

The visitor's perception of space, like the immigrant's, is constantly being challenged. While the visitor has an option to go back to the lobby at the end of the show, he or she can follow another ramp to the hidden threshold of a café opening onto the rooftop private garden. The bright and spacious rooftop garden, which one first became aware of while approaching the theatre, contrasts with the enclosed black box.

Although the physical dimension of space changes, the sense of intimacy remains the same. Bounded on one side by the café, the garden on top of the black box resembles a floating stage which provides the visitor with a place to reflect and relax after the performance. The meditating quality of the garden provides one with an opportunity to locate their centre, while peripherally overlooking the cityscape. The spectator role of the visitor now switches again to an actor, as if they are performing monologues and soliloquies under the wood canopy. Depending on where one stands, the café and the view of city become the scenic backdrop.

A sense of familiarity is suggested due to the identical layout and landscape of the courtyard and the rooftop garden. Differing from the courtyard, which is surrounded by buildings, the elevated height of the garden allows the visitor vast, uninterrupted views. Further, the roof garden provides internal views into the rehearsal studios and the

courtyard on the ground level, similar in effect to looking at an axonometric drawing whereby the interior of rehearsal spaces are exposed to the viewer. This environment provides the visitor with the unique opportunity to view the artists outside of the formal performance area.

At the highest elevation, which offers a view from the inside out, one can finally see and experience the architecture as it was imagined. The architecture becomes the bridge that allows spatial and temporal exchanges between the people and the city. The relationship between near-far and private-public is dramatically exaggerated on the highest level of the building, suggesting a cinematic experience as one's eyes constantly shift into focus. The

FIGURE 47. REPLAY OF THE FAMILIAR.
A SENSE OF FAMILIARITY IS SUGGESTED DUE TO
THE IDENTICAL LAYOUT AND LANDSCAPE OF THE
COURTYARD AND THE ROOF-TOP GARDEN.

private rooftop garden is, through sectional layering, in a dialogue with the public courtyard on the ground level. Though they have a vertical relationship defined by similar architectural and landscape elements, both places have different functions. One is a transitional space as a waiting area before the performance while the other is a solitary space for personal reflection and entertainment after the performance.

FIGURE 48. REPLAY OF THE FAMILIAR 2.
DIFFERING FROM THE COURTYARD, WHICH IS
SURROUNDED BY BUILDINGS, THE ELEVATED
HEIGHT OF THE GARDEN ALLOWS THE VISITOR
VAST, UNINTERRUPTED VIEWS.

Physically and mentally, the play in multisensory stimuli allows the visitor to connect more completely with the architecture. Like the sliding component of the Chinese box, the boundaries between the interior and exterior dissolve. Not only spatial transformation but also a transformation at the multi-sensory level occurs when the restaurant café opens directly onto the garden. The lingering smell of Asian cuisine again subtly reminds people of the presence of the restaurant below.

FIGURE 49 REPLAY OF THE FAMILIAR 3
THE PRIVATE ROOFTOP GARDEN IS, THROUGH
SECTIONAL LAYERING, IN A DIALOGUE WITH THE
PUBLIC COURTYARD ON THE GROUND LEVEL.

The theatre-cinema serves as a social-cultural gathering place in Ottawa's Chinatown, while also acting as a platform which allows the visitors to take on an immigrant's role. The architecture challenges visitors' perceptions, allowing them to build their own interpretations and responses to the environment. Whether their sudden shift in perception is experienced as a result of the intentional architectural features or occurs accidentally, as the visitors adjust to the unfamiliar conditions, the immigrant's experience is felt and the real intention of the architecture is achieved.

FIGURE 50. ROOF PLAN, DEPENDING ON WHERE ONE STANDS, THE CAFE AND THE VIEW OF CITY BECOME THE SCENIC BACKDROP.

Closing the Chinese Box: A Never-Ending Journey

“... The home is imagined as the safe harbour, where one will calm down, reconstitute, regain composure, remember and therefore potentially re-experience oneself as a competent entity traveling through space. Home becomes a floating anchor.” Binnie Klein,⁵³

“Chaos, accidental discovery, intuition, and invited disorder are all part of Lepage’s creative process, but they are also forces at the root of live, spontaneous theatrical events.” Dundjerović,⁵⁴

Home:[re]located proposes a metaphoric relationship between the framework of spatial experience as a transformative journey and the immigrant as a transformative being in a new environment. As Hall’s theory investigates personal space, the Chinese box is used as a vehicle to investigate a theoretical bridge between architectural transformation and corporeal experience.

The idea of ‘feeling at home’ relates to how space is perceived and the difference in the perception of space between the East and the West. Along with a discussion of the notion of “contentlessness” found in the Chinese box, the thesis extends to an understanding of how emotion and memory influence the immigrant’s perception of space. As

⁵³ Bordo, Susan, Binnie Klein, and Marilyn K. Silverman. “Missing Kitchens.” *Places through the Body*. By Heidi J. Nast and Steve Pile. London: Routledge, 1998. 75.

⁵⁴ Dundjerović, Aleksandar Saša. Preface. (2007). X.

one says "home is *imagined* as the safe harbour", *home* is not only highly related to one's familiarity with one place but also involves one's *imagination*, which, along with emotion and memory, is necessary to consider one place as safe. Similarly, the *contentless* Chinese boxes rely on one to *imagine* and give meaning to every act of opening of boxes. A pinhole camera is a storytelling device used to capture the essence of *contentless* – the idea that the Chinese box is no longer a void but rather allows memory to give a personal interpretation of the past and present. The opening of the Chinese box involves more than one's association of many different spatial and temporal qualities as well as different memories and history. This association of one's memory and the imagined leads to the idea of a synthetic experience, which occurs as one tries to familiarize oneself with the unfamiliar. The synthesis of spatial experience is a result of one's attempt to create their own sense of *home* during the readjustment process in the perception of space. It involves a mental connection made by synthesizing fragments of actions, situations, user experiences, the creative mind and conceptual mental constructions. This understanding explains the different levels of familiarity in play with the notion of *home*, and how immigrants experience and interact with the host environment by combining different emotional backgrounds.

These analyses and understandings of how the immigrant's perception of space is transformed have been infused into the design process. The proposed architecture uses spaces to illustrate the immigrant's experiences in their host cultures and to achieve the idea of "home." The disordered sense of proportion and balance in the

architecture symbolizes the immigrant's sense of perception. The architecture refers to the referential mismatch of perceptions in the minds of visitors concerning space, distance, and time. The materiality and the spatial organization in the architecture intensify spatial experience through the interaction between the user and architecture. It is designed to initiate a response and a reaction from the viewer when they encounter the lack of familiarity.

The visitors' perception and response swings between the familiar and unfamiliar, as repeated architectural elements enhance the sense of suspense. The architecture allows the visitors to engage with the place with all their senses, interacting with others, with the materiality, and with the atmosphere of the place. The architecture encourages the visitor to use their creative mind and to form mental constructions.

In the coincidental moment when the visitor's perception suddenly shifts, he feels the experience of the immigrant. As he attempts to readjust his perception to become familiar with the unfamiliar, his centre of perception is shifted and his new 'home' has been defined and relocated. The opening of the Chinese box involves a change in both spatial and temporal dimensions. As each box is opened and closed, spatial and temporal exchanges between the inside and the outside take place. This symbolizes a never ending journey, a constant dialogue that takes place between the immigrants and their environments, which is reflected in the dialogue between the visitor and architecture.

Epilogue

“...you can't go home again. Why? Because you are home...” Marjorie Garber.⁵⁵

After the trip to Beijing, the same drive from the airport to our house took longer than I expected, but felt extremely relaxed. The countryside along the highway was flatter and emptier than I expected, yet felt very soothing to my eyes. The same degree of temperature felt radically different, perhaps due to the possible difference in humidity between the two cities. I knew my body was still adjusting and making comparisons between them.

This car ride was slightly different from what I assumed it would be, but it was familiar to me. I felt the ultimate comfort as I enjoyed the dryness of the air and the warmth of the sun. My body soon adapted to these changes, and I fell asleep because I knew I was *home*.

⁵⁵ Garber, Marjorie B. *Shakespeare's Ghost Writers: Literature as Uncanny Causality*. London & New York, Methuen, 1987. 159.

THE HIDDEN DIMENSION OF HOME

Curiosity is hidden and primal.

Edward Hall concludes in his book of the same name that *the hidden dimension* is the cultural dimension, implying that the manner in which people act or interact is related to the medium of their own culture. The colour strip at the beginning of the thesis (which highlights the slice of space in the picture of my father and the grandmother's family) reveals the hidden dimension I felt between myself, my father, the grandmother and her family. This 'gap', this hidden dimension, demonstrates the intriguing difference in the perception of space between Eastern and Western cultures, defined here as the dimension of *curiosity* and *anticipation*. It is this intrigue which leads people to continually search for their own definition of what the hidden dimension is. The role of space and spatial reasoning is developed and differs according to each culture, yet also depends on curiosity and anticipation. Remaining hidden from vision, curiosity is considered the parent of anticipation. In other words, this curiosity leads us to the constant search for the slippage of our perception and for our own definition of the hidden dimension. Even if every unfamiliar moment is discovered, it is the curiosity and anticipation that stimulates people to imagine and synthesize what's next and what's yet to be discovered.

FIGURE 51. GALLERY SPACE BEFORE PRESENTATION, 9:00 AM, APRIL 29, 2010.

As when looking through a pinhole, which is very primal but in focus, both visitors and immigrants are unsure of what they will see and discover in their new, unfamiliar environment. The spatial qualities are secured not only by the architectural signifiers (signage, etc.) but also by the experience led by curiosity and anticipation.

The only limit to the black box theatre-cinema is one's imagination. There are only a finite number of intended architectural elements in the proposed architecture. In the axonometric and perspective drawings, the projection lines extend from the two drawings, and are projected toward each other. The two types of drawings share common conventional lines and angles. The places where the two meet fulfil one's curiosity of *what is happening*, because it is only when one's eyes follow the lines to their meeting places that one can make sense of the drawing as a whole. One's anticipation of *what is happening next* permits synthesis to occur. The place where the two drawings meet, is where and when one uses their imagination to connect the fragments in order to see the whole drawing.

The search for the hidden dimension is always a constant search for the new, a comparison with the previous and a readjustment to the unfamiliar. Hall raises the last question: "how long can man afford to consciously ignore his own dimension?"⁵⁶

Home:[re]located elevates the question to: "if man finally acknowledges his own dimension, what are the limits of his curiosity and where will it take him within this dimension? What is he anticipating?"

What are you as the visitor or the immigrant anticipating?

⁵⁶ Hall (1990), 189.

FIGURE 34. GALLERY SPACE DURING PRESENTATION, 10:00 AM, APRIL 29, 2010.

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Appendix

FIGURE 55. STILLS FROM PRESENTATION VIDEO (1 OF 2). 04MIN.04SEC.

FIGURE S6. STILLs FROM PRESENTATION VIDEO (2 OF 2). 04MIN.04SEC.

FIGURE 57. PROJECT SCROLL (1 OF 4), SHOWN FROM LEFT TO RIGHT, END TO BEGINNING.

FIGURE 48. PROJECT SCROLL (2 OF 4).

FIGURE 59. PROJECT SCROLL (3 OF 4).

FIGURE 80. PROJECT SCROLL (4 OF 4)