

[De]Familiarizing the Familiar:
the city - its society, its architecture

by

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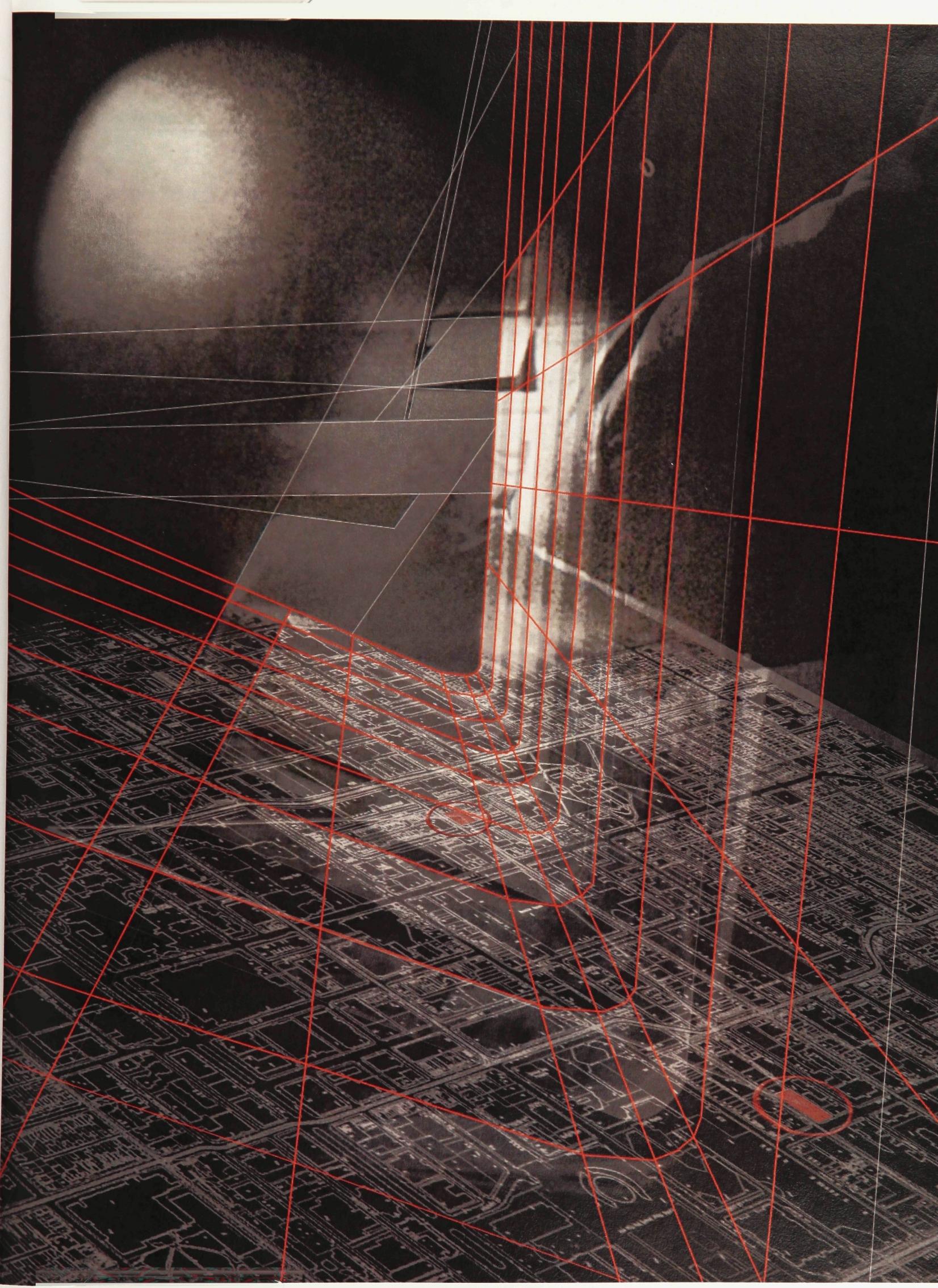
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Abstract

This thesis examines the relationship between the city, its architecture and its inhabitants, in the North American context. It looks to the North American urban centre as a realm that provides both a sense of identity to the city, as well as a means for interaction between members within its society. With the city of Toronto acting as a case study, the project examines specific aspects pertaining to North American culture, and the manifestation of these issues in the realm of architecture. Touching upon characteristics of popular culture, including the concept of the everyday and its influence on society's conscious/subconscious perception, the study engages the urban centre and its architecture in the context of experiential space. This investigation deals with essential elements within the city of Toronto that are often overlooked, being considered as practical, habitual and expected. The device of defamiliarization is implemented in an effort to highlight the effects of habituation in regards to the urban sphere. Thus, this thesis will act as an exercise in defamiliarization at both the scale of the city and at the scale of a building.

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Introduction

“Architecture, attesting to the tastes and attitudes of generations, to public events and private tragedies, to new and old facts, is the fixed stage for human events. The collective and private, society and the individual, balance and confront one another in the city.”¹

There is a direct relationship between the city, its architecture and its people. The character of a city suggests the nature of the society that exists there. Cultural implications, values and economic status are illustrated through its civic monuments, public spaces, and overall urban morphology. The city is a construction in itself, and may be viewed as a layering of elements and nuances that are built up over time. Urban centers are often the defining element in a city. These regions are the most intriguing fragments of the city incorporating many different functions, social classes and cultural milieus. Thereby, these environments give identity, meaning and character to our increasingly placeless urban regions.² This is especially true in a North American setting where the growth of a city is greatly accelerated due to the fact that high density puts great amounts of pressure on land usage.³ Thus, the urban centre, often the oldest district in a conurbation, has been permitted to develop and transmute over time.

Elements within a city may act as a frame for social interactions. The element of architecture acts as a means for human interaction at a micro-level, while the city provides the same function on a macro-scale. Consequently the two factors are contingent upon one another. These two aspects are also linked to the collective culture

¹ Rossi, Aldo. *Architecture of the City*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1982. p.22

² Ford, Larry R. *America's New Downtowns Revitalization or Reinvention?* Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2003. p.3

³ Rossi, Aldo. *Architecture of the City*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1982. p.95

of the individuals that inhabit them. The North American culture is extremely distinctive in its nature. As relatively new constructs, countries such as Canada and the United States do not have vast amounts of history or tradition to base their cultural values upon. Moreover, the citizens of these countries originate from varying cultural backgrounds, and carry with them their own cultural principles and customs. As a result, the myth of Americana is prevalent in North American culture. This concept embodies the idea that each individual may achieve a successful and prosperous life, and relates directly to notions of immigration. This myth is essentially tied to conceptions of capitalism and economic success. The allegory of the North American dream is arguably both idyllic and idealistic; however these aspects have been ingrained in some parts of the underlying North American culture.

Culture may be defined as: “the constant process of producing meanings of and from our social experience, and such meanings necessarily produce a social identity for the people involved.”⁴ Culture is an on-going development that has no end result. Like the city, culture transforms over time, and is influenced by world events, technological developments and past histories. It is a layered assemblage consisting of meaning, manner and intellectual ideology.

North American culture is increasingly schizophrenic in nature. It consists of the overlap of many different ethnic conventions, differing from individual to individual. However, when speaking in terms of society as a whole, the common thread lies in social systems,

⁴ Fiske, John. *Reading the Popular*. New York: Routledge, 1990, p.1

particularly in the case of Western patriarchal capitalism.⁵ Often these issues are discussed through the mode of popular culture. Popular culture may be described as that which is: “a culture of conflict, it always involves the struggle to make social meanings that are in the interest of the subordinate and that are not those preferred by the dominant ideology. The victories [...] in this struggle produce popular pleasure, for popular pleasure is always social and political.”⁶ This form of culture is often deemed as “for the masses”, and is based upon elements of everyday life such as television, music culture, the fashion industry, video games, language, etc. These factors may be identified as cultural commodities, and convey notions that are both economically and ideologically dominant.⁷ Therefore, popular culture is the process of the average citizen making meaningful statements regarding society through the (re)interpretation of specific resources; these being discursive and material.

In most cases, these resources have been imparted to the public by individuals in positions of authority, such as the media. In many ways, this cultural movement is appropriate to the North American condition, as it is primarily concerned with current and immediate issues concerning social relationships at one given time. Through the mode of popular culture, a common ground is established between vastly differing groups in one particular society. This form of culture is widely accessible in the fact that: “its excess offers opportunities for parody, subversion, or inversion, [...] refusing to produce the deep, complexly crafted texts that narrow down their audiences and social

⁵ Ibid

⁶ Ibid, p.2

⁷ Ibid

meanings.”⁸ Pop culture is discerned when it is engaged by the people and is ingrained into everyday life.

The concept of the everyday, or the habitual, often manifests itself in the domains of architecture, design, material culture, news media, political discourse, film, television, art and photography.⁹ When addressing the habitual, these spheres are discussed in terms of perception. As perception becomes habitual it also becomes automatic, on an unconscious level. For example, this type of habituation explains why often in verbal language, phrases are left unfinished and words partially expressed.¹⁰ In other words, “we apprehend objects only as shapes with imprecise extensions; we do not see them in their entirety but rather recognize them by their main characteristics.”¹¹ Modes such as art, philosophy and design cultures deal with this human tendency by highlighting the habitual in their discourse, in an attempt to deautomatize perception. In many cases, there is an effort to illustrate the familiar in such a manner that it is perceived as unfamiliar. This method is classified as the process of defamiliarization.¹² The process often results in a product that evokes a form of intellectual uncertainty, which is linked to the psyche and the subconscious.

This thesis examines North American culture and its reflection in the realm of architecture through the following aspects. It touches upon characteristics of popular

⁸ Ibid, p.6

⁹ Moran, Joe. *Reading the Everyday*. New York: Routledge, 2005. p.ix.

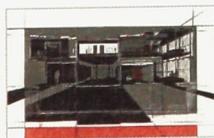
¹⁰ Shklovsky, Viktor. (1965) ‘Art as Technique’ in Lemon, Lee T and Marion J Reis (eds): *Russian Formalist Criticism: Four Essays*, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press. pp. 3-24

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

culture including the concept of the everyday and its influence on society's perception, both conscious and subconscious. The North American city, its urban centre and its architecture will be explored as both a discourse of events and discourse of spaces.¹³ The mechanism of defamiliarization will be utilized as a means of addressing these issues. Thus, this thesis will act as an exercise in defamiliarization at both the scale of the city and at the scale of a building. The design project is situated in the city of Toronto, and touches upon four different sites in its downtown core. This thesis deals with essential elements within the city of Toronto that are often unnoticed by the general public, in some cases being considered as practical, habitual and expected. These elements may be classified as infrastructures that include aspects such as community, commercial and service oriented building functions. In terms of the thesis design project, more specified infrastructures are addressed, including both a car dealership and a funeral home. Lastly, aspects of the project carry with them issues and cultural implications regarding socio-economics, style and notions of commercialization.

¹³ This idea is discussed in Bernard Tschumi's *Space as Event*. Tschumi explores the analogy that exists between film and architecture, and theorizes that spaces within buildings can act as generators of events.



Part 1: Precedent Studies

1.1 – Lynchland – The Work of David Lynch

A precedent for this study is the work of David Lynch. Lynch has produced a vast collection of projects including painting, sculpture, photography and writing; however, he is best known for his contribution to cinema. Themes in his work include those of the architectural domain such as notions of urbanism, industrial landscapes and the importance of the neighbourhood as both a macrocosm and microcosm. Cultural issues, such as the myth of Americana¹⁴ and the collective subconscious, are prevalent in Lynch's creations, as is the concept of defamiliarization, which is perhaps the most notable trait of his work.

1.1.1 – Lynch's Process + General Themes

"If you could take bits of writing that you did sometime, or even somebody else sometime, and just chop them up and arrange them at random, and just throw them, you know like people have done, and then read that, it could be fantastic. It could spark a whole other thing. And you always have to leave an opening for other forces, you know, to do their thing. When you're on your own, just writing these things down, it's so limited, and you wanna somehow open it up and throw it out and intervene. More ideas come out of that, and it becomes really unbelievable. By trying to remove yourself you can see some fantastic things sometimes."¹⁵

- David Lynch

David Lynch's process is decidedly intuitive in nature, thus resulting in a quality of non-specificity that affects the core of his work. The collective subconscious and waking dreams often play a huge role in his projects, thus defining the Lynchian process of

¹⁴ See *Introduction*, p. 2.

¹⁵ Rodley, Chris. *Lynch on Lynch*. New York: Faber and Faber, 2005. p.18

creation. His method is described as being one of “a very peculiar logic, requiring us [the viewer] to renounce all *a priori* interpretations of behaviour and facts, whether taken separately or in succession.”¹⁶

Inspiration for Lynch’s work draws directly upon his culture. As Lynch was brought up in 1950s Middle America, the myth of Americana is an underlying feature in all of his endeavours. Representations in his projects of the idyllic neighbourhood, industrialization and the conflict between biological processes versus machine culture, are allusions to this myth. However, it is important to note that his works evoke a universal quality, there being a sense that Lynch draws upon both the mythic and archaic. He enlists traditional archetypes in his narratives and imagery, altering them in such a way that they retain characteristics that can only be described as Lynchian.

Beginning his creative process as a painter, Lynch was influenced by the work of Jack Tworckov, Edward Hopper and Le Douanier Rousseau;¹⁷ however, most influential was the work of Francis Bacon. In examining paintings by Bacon, it may be inferred that these works often imply a sense of narrative, while the overall meaning of each piece is unclear. He attempts to relate the logic of narrative to both subconscious emotion and event. Bacon theorized that realism in visual art was possible only through the connection between an artist’s nervous system and the world, and should be left unfiltered by the brain and force of will as much as possible.¹⁸ This artistic process is one

¹⁶ Chion, Michel. *David Lynch*. London: British Film Institute, 1995. p.21

¹⁷ Chion, Michel. *David Lynch*. London: British Film Institute, 1995. p.9

¹⁸ Nochimson, Martha P. *The Passion of David Lynch: Wild at Heart in Hollywood*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1997. p. 22

of escapism. This manner of creating art enables the image to break away from the white noise of its own conventions, in order to activate the emotions and energy situated in both the body's subconscious and nervous system.¹⁹ Through this type of process, cultural forms became real once combined with the subconscious energies of the artist.

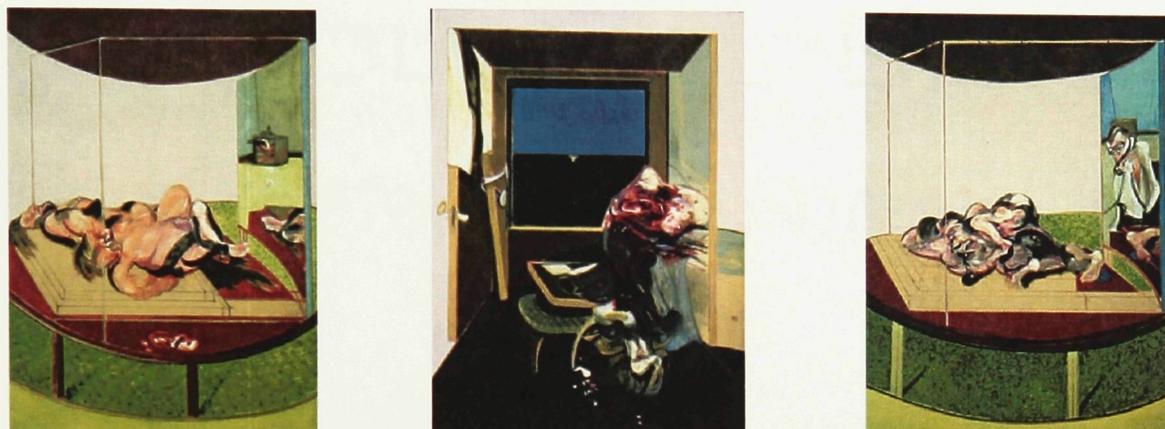


Fig. 1, 2, 3 : Francis Bacon, *Sweeney Agonistes Triptych*, 1967.

As with Lynch, Francis Bacon's narratives are often fragmentary and cryptic.²⁰ These works combine the realistic with the surrealistic, by playing with scale, texture and composition. Imagery in Bacon's work is often linked to organic matter such as skeletal structures and raw flesh. Lynch's contemporary paintings are similar in spirit. Dark, rich pigments are used, and evoke a similar raw beauty. In Lynch's paintings, organic matter acts as both the subject matter and medium. Materials such as butcher meat, small dead animals and insects are all incorporated onto Lynch's surface. Often live insects such as ants and maggots aid in the creation process, sculpting decaying matter into derivative forms. This type of process highlights Lynch's penchant for making through chance.²¹ To the artist, the joy comes in the making of the piece, as well as discoveries made during the overall process. This is illustrated through the piece *Rat, Meat, Bird* completed in

¹⁹ Ibid. p. 23

²⁰ Rodley, Chris. *Lynch on Lynch*. New York: Faber and Faber, 2005. p.17

²¹ *Pretty as a Picture: Art of David Lynch*. DVD. Dir. Toby Keeler. 1998. Image Studios, 2002.

1996. This mixed media painting incorporates organic matters including a rat carcass and portion of raw roast beef. The raw flesh is, in large part, where the element of chance manifests itself, as the laws of nature go to work on the canvas surface. In simple terms, Lynch describes this unconventional process as harnessing the mechanism of transformation: “That roast beef has gone through a strange metamorphosis. It was bigger when I started, but one day a squirrel came by and took a big hunk out of it. I’m [...] working with it.”²² Thus, the resultant abstract image is a product of man and nature working in symbiosis.



Fig. 4. David Lynch. *Rat, Meat, Bird, in Process*, 1996.



Fig. 5. David Lynch. *Rat, Meat, Bird*, 1996

The most common theme in David Lynch’s paintings is linked to notions of the house and neighbourhood. They are often a reference to childhood and refer to the artist’s memories of Boise, Idaho, and Spokane, Washington in the 1950s.²³ These works emphasize the use of dark rich colours, and never imply a sense of realism. They are highly abstracted pieces that are two-dimensional in composition. They incorporate differing scales and generate emotion and mood through the use of extreme contrasts

²² Lynch, David. “Quotations.” *The City of Absurdity – The Mysterious World of David Lynch*. 3 Dec. 2006. 15 Feb. 2007. <<http://www.thecityofabsurdity.com>>

²³ Rodley, Chris. *Lynch on Lynch*. New York: Faber and Faber, 2005. p.10

between light and dark. Figures are fragmentary, thus being unrecognizable as to whether or not they represent human, animal or insect.



Fig. 6. David Lynch. *Suddenly My House Became a Tree of Sores*, 1990.



Fig. 7. David Lynch. *She Was Crying Just Outside the House*, 1990.

Descriptive titles explain, to some extent, the main theme of the piece. Often these varieties of paintings explore the frustrations of childhood, and the difficulty of expressing oneself in this stage of life. As Lynch explains, he does not fixate on big problems and situations that concern the world. Instead, he examines issues pertaining to his immediate context:

“Some people, just by their nature, think about the President of the United States and Africa and Asia. Their mind thinks over thousands of miles, big problems and big situations. That just completely leaves me cold. I can’t get there. I like to think about a neighbourhood – like a fence, like a ditch, and somebody digging a hole, and then a girl in the house, and a tree, what’s happening in that tree – a little local place that I can get into. The two are really the same: it’s all based on human nature and the same sorts of things.”²⁴

This type of subject matter has been addressed by many North American painters in the past. It is common that most artists dealing with such a topic will focus on what is both positive and patriotic. Norman Rockwell is one example of such a painter. Rockwell depicted the American culture through highly realistic imagery that has often been

²⁴ Ibid

described as both idealistic and sentimental.²⁵ Interestingly, both Rockwell and Lynch depict this subject matter through a child-like lens; however Lynch's take on this concept is the antithesis of his predecessors'. In his paintings, he portrays home-life as something that is threatening and ominous, and rejects any kind of nostalgic sentiments to his past. In his opinion, "the home is a place where things can go wrong [...] A home is like a nest – it's only useful for so long."²⁶ Thus, in many ways Lynch takes on a traditional notion and defamiliarizes it through a conceptualized, image of negativity. A familiar concept is made unfamiliar through an abstracted image, while the abstracted image is made familiar through its title and concept.

At the cusp of his painting career, Lynch explored a variety of different pictorial topics including the issue of industrialization. However, the theme of industrial landscapes is more frequently explored through his efforts in photography and cinema. Lynch's industrial photographs share similarities with his efforts in painting. The key link between the two mediums is the emphasis on the contrast between light and dark. However, while his painting series are rooted in abstraction, having no reference to time or a concrete place, Lynch's photographs are incarnations of the past. They retain a certain timeless quality, with a subject matter that focuses on historical factories and technologies. These images illustrate the notion of traces. There is a sense that what is photographed is the result of the collaboration between man and nature. The imagery often lacks a sense of scale and point of reference.

²⁵ Springville Museum of Art. *Thematic Teaching Using the Arts*. 8 Jul. 2003. 25 May 2007. <<http://sma.nebo.edu/swap/pkt/thematic>>, p. 33

²⁶ Rodley, Chris. *Lynch on Lynch*. New York: Faber and Faber, 2005. p.10

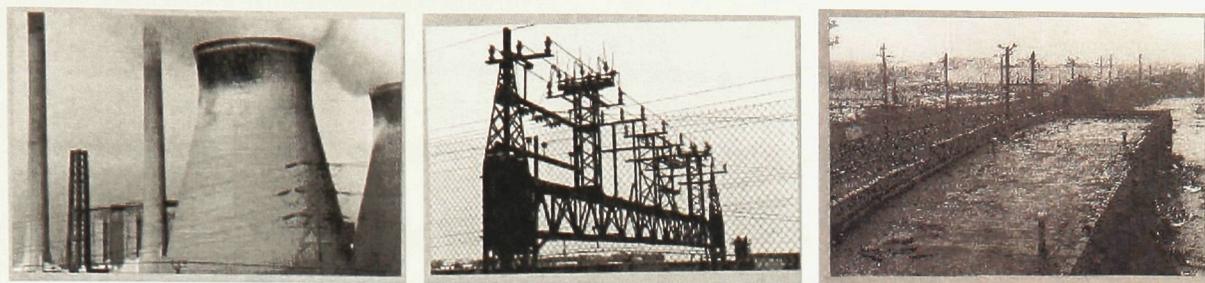


Fig. 8, 9, 10. David Lynch. *Industrial Photographic Series*

Moreover, they imply a monumental scale evoking notions of power, smoke and sound. They are almost synesthetic in experience.²⁷ Lynch explains his fascination with factories and industry as an obsession with power and production: “It makes me feel good to see giant machinery [...] working: dealing with molten metal. And I like fire and smoke. And the sounds are so powerful. It’s just big stuff. It means that things are being made, and I really like that.”²⁸ Lynch looks to the remains of these old structures as ruins of history, and values them in their decrepit state. In his words, their beauty came through the process of, “rotting - like corpses.”²⁹

In terms of Lynch’s photographic studies, capturing the subject is not the main focus. To the artist, the process of photography is considered to be of greater importance than the subject matter itself.³⁰ Lynch explains that the machine of the camera provides a means for discovery and transformation in the practice of creation:

“It’s really a fantastic thing. Everyone who’s ever taken a picture gets a *thrill* when it comes back from the lab. It forces you to *see* that moment, but in a different way. And sometimes, usually because of some screw-up that you didn’t count on, it really jumps and becomes a magical moment. Again, you’re not

²⁷ *Synesthesia* may be defined as an experience that is a result of one sense modality occurring when another modality is simulated, or when one sensory experience is defined in terms of another

²⁸ Rodley, Chris. *Lynch on Lynch*. New York: Faber and Faber, 2005. p.110

²⁹ *Ibid*

³⁰ *Pretty as a Picture: Art of David Lynch*. DVD. Dir. Toby Keeler. 1998. Image Studios, 2002.

completely 100 per cent in control. There are a lot of processes, and I like these processes, because there are more opportunities for accidents.”³¹

An example of this type of practice is the process of cinema. Lynch’s films may be described as anything but realistic. He deals with abstract dimensions, exploring Mobius strip worlds, those of waking dreams rooted deeply in the collective subconscious. This form of thought may be defined as the state between waking and dreaming. Regarding this topic, he states: “When you sleep, you don’t control your dream. I like to dive into a dream world that I’ve made, a world I chose and that I have complete control over.”³² In this manner, Lynch allows his mind to take over the creative process, generating storylines and motifs that do not make their meaning apparent upon first examination.

This practice relies on the overlap between conscious and subconscious thought:

“I learned that beneath the surface is another world and still different worlds as you dig deeper [...] There is goodness in blue skies and flowers, but another force – a wild pain and decay – also accompanies everything. Like with scientists: they start on the surface of something, and then they start delving. They get down to the subatomic particles and their world is now very abstract.”³³

Lynch treats filmmaking in the same manner as his paintings and photography. He approaches film almost as if it were an act of faith, as a kind of delicate equilibrium between unknown forces.³⁴

Elements in Lynch’s films are highly dependent upon one another. The narrative and plot rely upon the imagery, sound and pacing of the film. The director is involved in all

³¹ Rodley, Chris. *Lynch on Lynch*. New York: Faber and Faber, 2005. p.109

³² Chion, Michel. *David Lynch*. London: British Film Institute, 1995. p. 168

³³ Rodley, Chris. *Lynch on Lynch*. New York: Faber and Faber, 2005. p.8

³⁴ David Lynch relies heavily on the concept of intuition in his creative process. When viewing Lynch’s work, one is aware that each film serves as a process of discovery for the director. His work in film is often described as instinctive, and dependent upon the operations of luck, fate and accident. Lynch draws upon forces within the past and present of his own life; however he has the mysterious ability to channel the experiences of others into his films.

aspects of creation in the project. Script, music and noise, as well as all phases of design are explored to their fullest extent by Lynch and his team. Unlike the majority of directors, he attempts to investigate every nuance in the realm of film-making, refusing to limit himself to one specific style or film genre. His unconventional education in the art of cinema has resulted in products that are highly layered, rigorously constructed, and innovative as totalities. “He is a film-maker without any *a priori* judgment of what cinema is, whether it be an *a priori* he wishes to respect or one he wishes to contest.”³⁵

There is importance in the relationship between the rhythm and speed of a film to its imagery and soundtrack. Juxtaposition of sound and visuals, both to one another as well as themselves, is of value in the structuring of a piece. The use of visual scale in shot/sequence composition is a significant factor as well. Ultimately, these elements are tied to the overall plot of the project. Emotional connections to the audience are made on a subconscious level by drawing upon aspects of the collective subconscious. These connections are made apparent through Lynch’s first feature, *Eraserhead*, released in 1976.

In this film, Lynch achieves his objective through the techniques of juxtaposition, visual scale as well as rhythm and speed to underscore the overall mood and message of the piece. Visual and auditory components work together on a variety of different levels to create the world of *Eraserhead*. This film depicts the austere world of Henry Spencer in an unknown time and an almost indiscernible place, with the setting being that of an industrial wasteland. Scale is an important visual aspect of the piece. Through this

³⁵ Chion, Michel. *David Lynch*. London: British Film Institute, 1995. p.158

device, a clear distinction is made between interior and exterior spaces, treating each realm as a separate entity. Henry's exterior environment consists of architecture and machinery at monumental scales that are in stark contrast with the humans that inhabit them. They appear to be bleak, lonely and desolate. Interior spaces belong to the other extreme. These areas are severely tight in both the horizontal and vertical dimensions. As the viewer follows Henry traveling from interior space to exterior space, from expansive space to constricted space, a disorienting tension is created. This results in sensory experiences that range from agoraphobia to claustrophobia.



Fig. 11, 12. David Lynch. *Eraserhead*, 1976. Exterior vs. Interior Settings

The use of repetition is another important aspect of the project. The notion of motif is heavily employed, specifically when speaking in terms of symbolic representation. For example the appearance and reappearance of organic cords is one theme that is exploited, representing a variety of different meanings. These meanings pertain to human biological matter and functions including: sperm, umbilical cords and the human fetus. These elements are integral to the plot, underscoring Henry's apprehension towards the horrors of unexpected parenthood. Repetition of sound and noise may also be classified as motif. Lynch integrates the sounds of traffic, machinery, wind, the noise of infant cries, and most importantly, silence, as the backdrop to his imagery, orchestrating these components in repetitive sequences.

The most important component of the film is the overall movement and pace that is established throughout. The general speed is deliberate and slow, resulting in an uneasy dream-like quality. Including both visual and auditory cues, this technique provides a simplistic way to give scenes and objects, that otherwise may appear to be unimportant, an imbued symbolism. A kind of anticipation is experienced by the viewer. This is reiterated through the sudden change in pace, startling the viewer into attention, thus refocusing the audience's concentration. Moments of methodical slowness are followed by the unexpected.

Moreover, David Lynch's cinematic projects utilize the technique of defamiliarization as a means of reinterpreting reality. Lynch makes the attempt to acquaint his viewers with their own existing conditions. Often perceptions of the real world are resultant of "the reductive illusionist image to which we have become acculturated that is bizarre in its exclusions. Perhaps we are experiencing the shock of recognition of our own learned habits of perception when we think that Lynch films are strange."³⁶ Lynch's body of work encourages the viewer to re-evaluate his or her impression of reality, thus fulfilling the objectives set out by the concept of defamiliarization.

Visual examples of defamiliarization are found in all aspects of Lynch's work. In some cases, this device is utilized in a manner that has been disparaged by critics as pure camp.³⁷ For example, at the end of the film *Blue Velvet*, circa 1986, a mechanical robin

³⁶ Ibid. p.38

³⁷ Ibid. p. 119

appears in the frame, to remind the viewer that they are indeed watching a motion picture, a mere interpretation of the real world. A similar instance occurs at the end of another of Lynch's works, *Wild at Heart*, released in 1990. In this case, Sailor, the male protagonist, arrives in the last scene of the film with a swollen nose, as a result of a fight. Obviously a prosthetic, this nose reminds the viewer that they are indeed watching a representation of reality. Moreover, elements such as these remind the audience of: "mysteries [that] suggest the wonder of reality in the way that the air already fills the space and yet there is also room for the culture that human beings create."³⁸



Fig. 13. Mechanical Robin, *Blue Velvet*



Fig. 14. Sailor's Prosthetic nose, *Wild at Heart*

Lynch's distinctive take on the process of creativity has resulted in a body of work that is wonderfully strange and fantastically disturbing. He has the ability to channel North American culture directly into his work, creating intriguing hyperrealities of everyday Americana. His work has become colloquial language; his imagery, part of popular culture, particularly when speaking in terms of his films:

"What is it in a shot from his films or a line of his dialogue that insinuates itself into the audience's imagination? Certainly audience members have not recently found a severed body part in a vacant lot, chased a deformed creature through London streets, or invented a silent runner for drapes. That these scenes are Lynch's vision of his world is unquestionable; but more significant, the force of

³⁸ Ibid.

his images – their charge – uniquely and accurately describes our contemporary world. Lynch’s cinematic shards reflect and create contemporary reality.”³⁹

The effect of Lynch’s work is difficult to describe in words. It is highly experiential, and must be observed by the viewer in order to be understood.

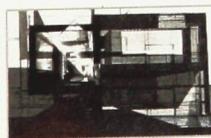
Similar to the work of Lynch, an individual’s relationship to the city and its architecture is dependent upon personal experience. A person’s perception of what a city and its architecture represent are contingent upon one’s memory, cultural bearing and level of familiarity. Issues concerning the North American perception of the urban realm are explored in this thesis, via the lens of David Lynch’s ideology and process.

This thesis project displays similar characteristics, in terms of process. A non-linear format is implemented in the development of design methodology, site studies and theoretical research. Such issues pertain to the city at both the level of the pedestrian as well as at the furthest extents of the urban sphere. The process is one of constant transformation, and may be exemplified directly by the city itself, as a layered, ever-changing entity.

The design portion of the project incorporates the visual techniques exemplified in the work of David Lynch. Firstly, the use of visual scale is an important aspect of the design project. While both the funeral home and car dealership structures respect the volumetrics of the streetscape, the internal dimensions of the buildings display distinctive contrasts between scales. Additionally, repetition is implemented through the use of

³⁹ Kaleta, Kenneth C. *David Lynch*. Toronto: Prentice Hall International, 1995. p. ix

motif in both constructions. The manipulation of light, via aperture-like fenestrations in the building envelope, is one such example. Lastly, a distinctive rhythm and pace is established throughout each building through the organization of programme, space, materiality as well as light and sound.



Part 2: Design Ideology

2.1 – The Collective Subconscious and the Double

“When I enter the world of dreams I am deconstructed, I am transformed from the one who holds the internal world in my mind to the one who is experientially inside the dramaturgy of the other. Gathered and processed by the dream space and dream events, I live in a place where I seem to have been held before: inside the magic and erotic embrace of a forming intelligence that bears me.”⁴⁰

In the dream world exists a place where one is able to experience unconscious desires, as well as the resurfacing of what is repressed in conscious life. Dreams often involve the challenging of norms, conventions and taboos.⁴¹ This domain is a type of perception that has a direct relationship between life experience and memory. Ultimately, the dream world is embedded in the subconscious mind. However, it is not the dreamer that shapes the dream but the dream that shapes the dreamer.⁴² Through dreams, a person is able to explore the unknown, and view the conscious world through a fresh perspective.

The subconscious is a state of mind, in which exists a psyche that is not directly available to conscious modes of thought. It is a type of mental activity that is carried out just below the threshold of consciousness.⁴³ Experience acts as fodder for the subconscious mind. From life experience comes memories. There are two different types of memory, each relating to either a state of consciousness or that of subconsciousness. The first type of memory is named *implicit* and is procedural in nature. This type of memory is linked

⁴⁰ Bollas, Christopher. *On Being a Character: Psychoanalysis & Self Experience*. New York: Hill & Wang, 1992. p.14

⁴¹ Nowlan, Bob. *Defamiliarization, Dreams and Frames*. 15 Nov. 2006. <http://www.uwec.edu/ranowlan/defamiliarization_dreams_frames_film.html>

⁴² Ludlow, Ken. “‘Stop Making Sense!’ (David Byrne): Themes from the Writings of Franz Kafka and the Films of David Lynch”. In *The First CTP Faculty/Graduate Forum on Culture and the Arts*. February 19, 2000. 6 Dec. 2006. <<http://www.ctp.com>>

⁴³ Merriam Webster Online Dictionary. 9 Mar. 2007. <<http://www.m-w.com/>>

to the subconscious; it is a type of memory that is automatic, aiding individuals in their day to day lives. For example, one harnesses their implicit memory in completing tasks such as tying a shoe or brushing one's teeth. The second type of memory is named *explicit* and relates to facts and events. Explicit memory may be divided into two subcategories; semantic/public memory is collective in its nature, whereas episodic memory is strictly autobiographical.⁴⁴

Memory is not an accurate rendering of the past. The past affixes to the present; when conjured up as a memory, it has undergone a transformation that is dependent upon duration and experience. What is important is the reality of the unconscious, of an individual's emotions, and not the reality of a fact.⁴⁵ Henri Bergson explores this topic in

The Perception of Change:

“We cannot here undertake the discussion of that theory which claims that the brain is useful for the preservation of the past, that it stores up memories like so many photographic plates from which we afterward develop proofs, or like so many phonograms destined to become sounds again [...] The brain's function is to chose from the past, to diminish it, to simplify it, to utilize it, but not to preserve it.”⁴⁶

Thus, memory acts as an apparatus that rationalizes the past, thus being of relevance to both the present and future contexts. Past occurrences reside in the subconscious; they float to the surface, making their presence known in the conscious mind when necessary.

⁴⁴ Eco, Umberto. *The Mysterious Flame of Queen Loana*. Trans. Geoffrey Brock. Toronto: Harcourt Inc., 2004. p. 12

⁴⁵ Rossilini, Isabella. In: Paul A. Woods, *Weirdsville USA: The Obsessive Universe of David Lynch*. London: Plexus Publishing Ltd., 1997. p. 123

⁴⁶ Bergson, Henri. *The Perception of Change*, in McNeil and Feldman, “Continental Philosophy”, op.cit, 1975. p. 94

The double refers to a condition where two states of consciousness exist at one time, in one entity. This state is exemplified in the projects of David Lynch. Both the light and dark sides of psyches are illustrated and elaborated in his body of work. Lynch argues that if one wishes to appreciate one side of their psyche, they must explore the opposing side as well.⁴⁷ As a result, many of his projects, primarily his cinematic works, explore the metaphor of a Jekyll and Hyde co-existence. Such films include *Lost Highway* and *Mulholland Drive*, as well as the television program *Twin Peaks*. Each piece is divided into sections. Through each section, the story transmutes, as points of views, settings, and characters are significantly altered. These non-linear narratives leave the viewer to wonder if one section is perhaps a dream, an alternate reality or an entirely new story. This device forces the viewer to become more engaged in the film, as they attempt to draw links between each side of the double.⁴⁸ Lynch does not make an effort to portray reality in his films. Instead, he uses cinematic narrative as a device to act as a subconscious bridge to the real perceptions of life.⁴⁹ Thus, this technique can be linked to theories pertaining to the collective unconscious, proposed by the theorist Carl Jung.⁵⁰ His theory infers that there is a part of each individual's subconscious (unconscious) which shares a commonality with all other human beings. This mode of consciousness relies heavily on archetypes, and is described as instinctual. It illustrates a natural

⁴⁷ Rodley, Chris. *Lynch on Lynch*. New York: Faber and Faber, 2005. p. 23

⁴⁸ Dualism in the urban sphere is often explored by David Lynch in many of his projects. In the film *Mulholland Drive*, the city of Los Angeles is portrayed as two different cities. This project explores the Mobius strip world of Hollywood and its surrounding districts. On one hand, the setting is displayed as an idyllic place where *dreams can come true*. It is stylish, exciting and feels secure. However, as the plot shifts, so does the perception of the city. The city, now viewed through the lens of a different sort of character, has changed completely. It is uninspired, and depressing, with settings that are confined to cheap housing, and hostile upscale environments. It is through this juxtaposition of two characterizations, which make up one city, that Lynch acknowledges the fickle nature of Hollywood.

⁴⁹ Nochimson, Martha P. *The Passion of David Lynch: Wild at Heart in Hollywood*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1997. p. 13

⁵⁰ Ibid. p.6

process of generalization, in the human mind. This process incorporates common traits and experiences, traversing cultural differences, into a similar type of substratum of the subconscious.⁵¹ Works that harnesses the collective subconscious speak to the viewer in an inexplicable way, on a subconscious level. They employ the faculties of memory, imagination and an understanding of the collective psyche of humankind.

Similar to artistic, cinematic and literary works that are rooted in the subconscious, the discipline of architecture relies on memory, the collective and, to some extent, archetypal typologies. Architecture has the ability to construct and instruct society due to this basis.⁵² Often childhood memory has a great influence in the design and appreciation of architecture. Research by Clare Cooper Marcus has shown that young architects tend to repeat their favorite childhood places in their designs and avoid those which have negative associations.⁵³ This is one example of how architecture shapes the subconscious condition: “in reading or sensing architecture in various ways, body memories suggest something deeply embedded that connects our bodies, eyes, and minds, as well as our abilities to think. Architecture can shape our own sense of ourselves, our identity, and thus can construct and instruct us.”⁵⁴

The subconscious is a conceptual starting point for many artist, architects and designers. It is a realm that deals with the past, present and future, and effects individuals both in the space of their dreams, as well as the space of their everyday lives. It is a condition that

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² La Marche, Jean. *The Familiar and the Unfamiliar in Twentieth Century Architecture*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2003. p. 109

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid. p. 115

exists under the surface of awareness; it is an illustration of the concept of the double, in itself. By engaging this domain in the process of creation and design, one is able to respond to the viewer/user on an intuitive level, thus enriching the design in a subtle manner.

2.2 – The Habitual in the North American Context

“And so life is reckoned as nothing. Habituation devours works, clothes, furniture, one’s wife, and the fear of war. ‘If the whole complex lives of many people go on unconsciously, then such lives are as if they had never been.’”⁵⁵

The concept of the habitual is relevant when discussing the North American context of both city and suburb. It deals with the mundanities of everyday life, as well as the mundanities that can be found in design, at both the level of city and building.

The habitual is often related to cycles of everyday life. Daily life is regarded as a mode that exists independent of historical change. The everyday is deemed as being both familiar and expected. While history changes, daily life remains as a constant.⁵⁶ This frame of thought results in complacency in the collective psyche of society. Thus, a sense of unimportance is attached to everyday life, and the realm that it exists in. The lack of attention to this topic is caused by a tendency, in both mass-media and political discourses, to view the public sphere as something that is intrusive, threatening or simply uninteresting.⁵⁷ By re-evaluating the concept of the everyday through an unlikely perspective, one is better able to understand their habitual world in a new dimension. This practice denotes the process of defamiliarization.

⁵⁵ Shklovsky, Viktor. (1965) ‘Art as Technique’ in Lemon, Lee T and Marion J Reis (eds): *Russian Formalist Criticism: Four Essays*, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press. pp. 3-24

⁵⁶ Moran, Joe. *Reading the Everyday*. New York: Routledge, 2005. p. 163

⁵⁷ *Ibid.* p. 168

2.2.1 – Architectural Themes

The city is a character in itself. It is never constant, always inconsistent. It is a culmination of moments, instances stitched together like pieces of cloth in a quilt. Moments of listlessness, moments of loneliness. There are moments in which one feels unprotected, and unguarded, as though that particular area were a gaping wound within the city fabric. A few paces later, one feels sheltered as though the city is surrounded by an impenetrable enclosure – it is difficult to see the sky. This city is schizophrenic in its behavior.

The urban city is analogous to the construction of a building. It is built upon foundations, structured through the city blocks, roads and bridges. Its mechanics lie in its sewer systems, electrical networks and hydro structure. At ground level, building configurations create barriers and walls, while the subway resides in its basement. Districts and zones are synonymous to programme functions. It is a super-structure on a universal scale, while its building components exist as separate entities at a local scale.

The city of Toronto is an example of an urban construction. As the capital city of Ontario, it is also known as a centre for multiculturalism, corporate business, and the entertainment industry. Varying socio-economic classes co-exist simultaneously. Having the largest population in Canada, Toronto is this country's most sizeable metropolis.⁵⁸ It is a city that subscribes fully to North American cultural values. Entrenched in the present, rather than the past, it is a place that acknowledges popular culture in its art, architecture, and entertainment spheres. The tradition of its ethnically diverse population is recognized, as well. Like many North American cities, the city of

⁵⁸“About Ontario: Cities and Towns: Toronto.” *Government of Ontario*. 12 Sept. 2005. 20 Feb. 2007. <<http://www.gov.on.ca/>>

Toronto suffers from a lack of a “spirit of place,” otherwise known as *genius loci*,⁵⁹ in terms of its overall scope. It is this city’s urban centre that offers a contrast to this flaw, giving identity and character to the overall region.



Fig. 15, 16, 17. *Site Studies*, 2007.

The four sites examined in this thesis serve as case studies in observing the everyday life of society in the city. They explore areas in the city of Toronto that may often be viewed as obscure and mundane. These are sections that are not seen as definitive to the character of Toronto. These are settings where everyday life occurs; the study of areas such as these reveals the mindset of the city’s society.

⁵⁹ Aravot, Iris. ‘Narrative-Myth and Urban Design,’ in *Journal of Architectural Education* (1984-), Vol. 49, No. 2. (Nov., 1995), pp. 79-91.



Fig. 18, 19. Site Studies, 2007.

Popular culture is a movement that exists in the present day context. This form of culture is a reflection of the current psyche of a society. The depiction of North American urban environments in contemporary film, photography and all other forms of art, illustrate the city as perceived by popular culture. Through these mechanisms, it is made apparent that there is an inherent duality existent in the urban realm, both materially and immaterially. Juxtapositions within the city are highlighted in pop-art forms, and are manifested as being intrinsic to this setting, both in society's constructs as well as the city's physical morphology.

In these projects, representations of urban settings merely allude to their counterparts of the real world. Often, aspects are exaggerated and highlighted in order to evoke a mood, moral, or underlying narrative that relates to the overall storyline of the work.

Essentially, works of this nature bring key issues concerning North American culture to the surface.

2.3 – Defamiliarization

“Defamiliarization is found almost everywhere form is found [...] An image is not a permanent referent for those mutable complexities of life which are revealed through it; its purpose is not to make us perceive meaning, but to create a special perception of the object – it creates a ‘vision’ of the object instead of serving as a means for knowing it.”⁶⁰

Defamiliarization is a conceptual device that relies on the subconscious, referencing both implicit and explicit memories, in order to be effectual. It is a method that challenges aspects of the conventional by pervading the familiar with irregularities in an attempt to deautomatize perception.

2.3.1 – Defamiliarizing Art, Cinema, and Literature

The concept of defamiliarization was first explored by Viktor Shklovsky’s *Art as Technique*. In this essay, he examined this mechanism in terms of linguistic theory, particularly in regards to the literary technique of imagery. He theorized that defamiliarization is displayed almost anywhere an image is found, thus:

“defamiliarization is as old as literature, as old as metaphor, even as old as language itself and its history is in fact the history of these phenomena.”⁶¹ If used effectively, the artist/designer familiarizes by defamiliarizing, bringing to the viewer a much richer

⁶⁰ Shklovsky, Viktor. (1965) ‘Art as Technique’ in Lemon, Lee T and Marion J Reis (eds): *Russian Formalist Criticism: Four Essays*, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press. pp. 3-24

⁶¹ Stacy, R.H. *Defamiliarization in Language and Literature*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1977. p. 39

vision: “he renews our familiarity, or even refamiliarizes us, with some more or less ordinary facet of reality, image, literary tradition, or resource of the language.”⁶²

This technique is illustrated through the literature of Franz Kafka. Kafka concentrated upon subject matters that were simultaneously surreal, absurd, and mundane. In his short novel, *The Metamorphosis*, the protagonist, Gregor, awakes one morning to find himself transformed into a gargantuan insect. This bizarre premise is made familiar and conceivable to the reader through the language employed by the author: “Kafka’s meticulous pseudo-Realist description produces the effect of the total reality of the metamorphosis. However absurd, its reality is nevertheless convincing and frequently more convincing than the responses of Gregor and those around him; and yet their responses are always psychologically ‘true.’”⁶³ The converse condition is true in Kafka’s work as well. He often focuses on habitual subject matters, making them unfamiliar through the use of language and narrative device:

“What he often presents us with are narrative representations of those ordinary habits of the mind that prevent the perception of mystery. In the short story *The Burrow*, for example, we are taken into the narrating creature’s obsessive concerns about his physical safety and comfort. His mind-numbing ruminations about the construction, maintenance, and security of the burrow are qualitatively no more bizarre than those of any obsessive’s preoccupation. This could be a hypochondriac monitoring every minute’s bodily sensation, or an obsessed lover mentally tracking all imagined movements of the absent partner; the thought processes are essentially the same, only their content differs.”⁶⁴

⁶² Ibid p. 49

⁶³ Corngold, Stanley. “Explanatory Notes to the Text” In *The Metamorphosis*, Franz Kafka. New York: Bantam Books, 2004. p. 57

⁶⁴ Ludlow, Ken. “‘Stop Making Sense!’ (David Byrne): Themes from the Writings of Franz Kafka and the Films of David Lynch”. In *The First CTP Faculty /Graduate Forum on Culture and the Arts*. 19 Feb. 2000. 6 Dec. 2006. <<http://www.ctp.com>>.

Thus, works by artists such as Kafka and Lynch employ the instrument of defamiliarization in an attempt to reawaken the audiences' perception. Their created worlds are presented as alternate realities, possessing qualities that make them close enough to reality to be considered disturbing.⁶⁵ They are likenesses to the real world, which bring issues, which may otherwise be neglected by viewers, to the forefront. The spectator is encouraged to look at his or her own world with a fresh perspective. What was once habitual is now deautomatized.

The film *Blue Velvet*, by David Lynch, is a good example of the layered use of defamiliarization. This film tells the story of Jeffrey Beaumont, a young all-American college student, returning home after his father suffers a serious stroke. His home-life is rendered as the idyllic American hometown, illustrated through intensely sunny images of suburban gardens, white picket fences, and good natured housewives tending to their households. As the film unfolds, Jeffrey becomes immersed in a mystery that introduces him to the seedy underworld of his seemingly innocent town. At the opening of the film, the town is presented as an exaggerated version of reality, almost carnivalesque in its appearance. This interpretation of small-town American life is presented as a false façade, and compels the viewer to become a willing participant in Jeffrey's adventure towards the truth.⁶⁶ Scenes of everyday life in the town are presented as spectacles: "Rather, they are representations that emphasize the social construction of the forms of

⁶⁵ Arquette, Patricia. In *Pretty as a Picture: Art of David Lynch*. DVD. Dir. Toby Keeler. 1998. Image Studios, 2002.

⁶⁶ Nochimson, Martha P. *The Passion of David Lynch: Wild at Heart in Hollywood*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1997. p. 105

ordinary social life. Curiously, we believe in these forms as if they were real.”⁶⁷

However, it is this imagery that reminds the viewer of the constructed nature of representation in everyday life, and underscores issues pertaining to the habitual in North American suburban society.



Fig. 20. *Blue Velvet*, 1986.

Setting is not the only subject that undergoes defamiliarization in this film. The character of Ben is the embodiment of defamiliarized masculinity: “Ben is [...] a more pointed revelation of masculine alienation from femininity and the subconscious. He is the reduction of the feminine to a masculine performance of softness and receptivity.”⁶⁸ Ben obscures his violent nature of a criminal by dressing in glamour drag, presenting himself as effeminate. The crucial scene for the character of Ben is a lip-synching performance of Roy Orbison’s *In Dreams*. In this portion of the film, the character holds a work light to his mouth, as if it were a microphone. Its light casts an eerie glow on his face as he performs: “Ben lip-synching ‘In dreams I walk with you; in dreams I talk with you’ is its revelation of the pathetic reduction of dreams within this context [...] His performance is the icon of non-being – a man who makes the gestures of femininity, and who opens his

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid. p. 113

mouth and does not sing.”⁶⁹ Ben’s mannerisms and appearance give the impression of femininity; however his actions and lifestyle are the antithesis of this persona. In this character there lies an inherent juxtaposition; in Ben, Lynch plays up notions of defamiliarization as well as the double.



Figs. 21, 22, 23. *Blue Velvet*, 1986.

Popular culture explored through art, literature and cinema enables the implementation of defamiliarization. The process of defamiliarization draws upon pre-existing conditions in contemporary culture. It is a method of introspection, allowing a particular society to re-evaluate its ideas, ideals and ideologies.

⁶⁹ Ibid. p. 114

2.3.2 – Defamiliarizing Architecture

“Architecture is full of eyes, and the city is full of faces. Figure, scale, and proportion can also be understood as other examples of the same interest [...] The imagined subject of architecture is projected and hailed. It is shocked by the new and grounded by the familiar. It is split, complex, imbalanced, moving, multiple and erased. It is free or dialectical, a single reader and, at least partly, collective in nature. It experiences presence and absence by means of the body and the eye as complex and interdependent modes of experience often correlated with associations and memory. [There must be an intention] to balance or integrate it, to ground it, or to shock and defamiliarize it.”⁷⁰

Over the course of the modern and post modern periods, there have been attempts to address both the familiar and unfamiliar in architectural design. The concept of defamiliarization in architecture began with critique of the concept of the familiar. It was believed that the familiar brought with it notions of reaffirming the conventional. This idea also focused on the comfort and security that was a result of stability, regulation and influence in design.⁷¹ Consequently, architects such as Le Corbusier rejected the typical styles of the past, believing that these historical designs did not reflect the present day psyche. Instead, Le Corbusier looked to the logic and clarity of newer, machine-like forms, regardless of the fact that they appeared unfamiliar, strange and disturbing.⁷² He theorized that these new forms could be fused into the realm of architecture through the method of employing a human dimension to his buildings. Calculated aspects of architecture such as proportion, scale, functional rationality, and the spatial, temporal, and formal qualities were at the forefront of his designs.⁷³ Movement through

⁷⁰ La Marche, Jean. *The Familiar and the Unfamiliar in Twentieth Century Architecture*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2003. p. 105, 115

⁷¹ Ibid. p. 6

⁷² Ibid. p. 38

⁷³ Ibid. p. 40

architecture was advocated, as well: “‘One must always try to find the human scale,’ says Le Corbusier [...] ‘an architecture must be walked through.’”⁷⁴ It was through this ideology that Le Corbusier attempted to integrate a human connection to modernist machine-like forms.

The Villa Savoye is one of Le Corbusier’s best-known pieces of architecture. Completed in 1929, this building draws upon Classic forms as inspiration.⁷⁵ Though the villa is classically proportioned, it takes on an extremely modern appearance, with the main living space lifted-up off the ground level.⁷⁶ The overall form recalls the new machine-aesthetics of the 1920s era.



Fig. 24. Le Corbusier. *The Villa Savoye*, 1929.

The villa’s roof terrace is analogous to nautical design while the façade may be compared to aviation aircrafts developed during the 1920s period. It was through this manner that Le Corbusier engaged the dialectic between architecture’s historical framework and his contemporary industrial world. Structures were “designed to present glimpses of

⁷⁴ Ibid. p. 41

⁷⁵ Frampton, Kenneth. *Modern Architecture A Critical History 3rd Edition*. London: Thames and Hudson Ltd., 1992. p. 158

⁷⁶ Colquhoun, Alan. *Modern Architecture*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002. p. 150

abstracted machine forms framed in a classically proportioned spatial matrix.”⁷⁷ In essence, Le Corbusier focused on making the unfamiliar familiar.

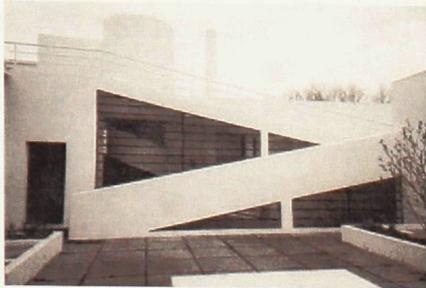


Fig. 25. Roof Garden

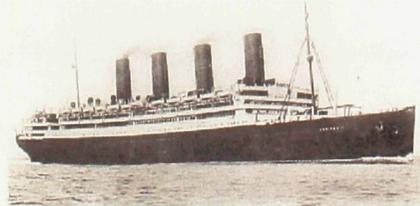


Fig. 26. Nautical Design



Fig. 27. Façade



Fig. 28. Aviation Technology, 1920s

The post-modern architect, Aldo Rossi, approached architecture from an entirely different viewpoint. Instead of rejecting the familiar in favour of new forms, Rossi focused on the analysis of typologies in architecture, believing that they represented collective intentions.⁷⁸ Rossi strived to create a familiar architecture that married modern design sensibilities with those of the past. He stressed that building type played a key role in determining the morphological structure of urban form as it transformed over time, structuring his work about historical architectonic elements which would both reference and surpass predeceasing architectural paradigms.⁷⁹ He theorized that designs based on these types would result in urban formations that were familiar to people. However,

⁷⁷ La Marche, Jean. *The Familiar and the Unfamiliar in Twentieth Century Architecture*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2003. p. 46

⁷⁸ La Marche, Jean. *The Familiar and the Unfamiliar in Twentieth Century Architecture*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2003 p. 57

⁷⁹ Frampton, Kenneth. *Modern Architecture A Critical History 3rd Edition*. London: Thames and Hudson Ltd., 1992. p. 294

Rossi's built projects were critiqued as having the adverse effect. The most controversial of his projects was the Cemetery of San Cataldo in Modena, Italy, constructed in 1971. Characterized as both surrealist and alien in nature, the built structure encompassed spaces that were likened to paintings by Giorgio de Chirico.⁸⁰ This cemetery emphasizes a sense of emptiness; there is an inherent message that this emptiness is the goal of the journey.⁸¹ It was Rossi's intention to "overlay stark forms and the mundane rituals of everyday life, [in order to imbue] his work with emotion."⁸² The substantial ossuary in the cemetery takes the form of a large sepia-coloured cube. This structure is roofless, allowing wind to enter the mass grave. Square openings are placed evenly along each façade. On approach, there is no sense of scale or hierarchy in organization of the façade or points of entry. The structure is devoid of any sense of human life.

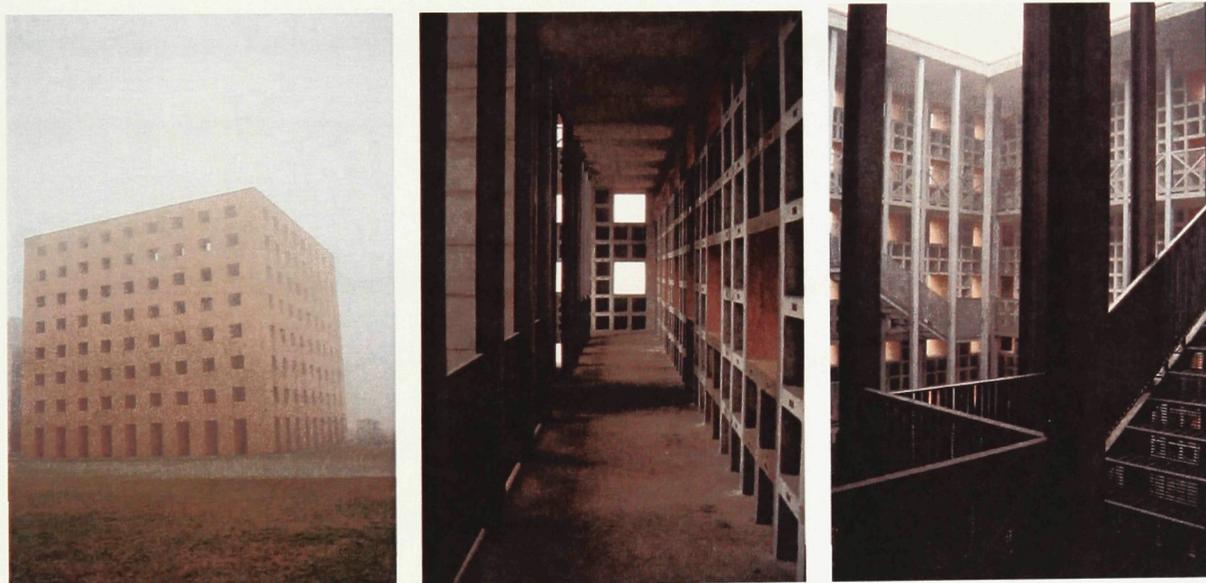


Fig. 29, 30, 31. Aldo Rossi, *Cemetery of San Cataldo*, 1971.

⁸⁰ Ibid. p. 70

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Lew, Stefanie Ed. *Aldo Rossi Architecture 1981-1991*. New York: Princeton Architectural Press, Inc., 1991. p. 19

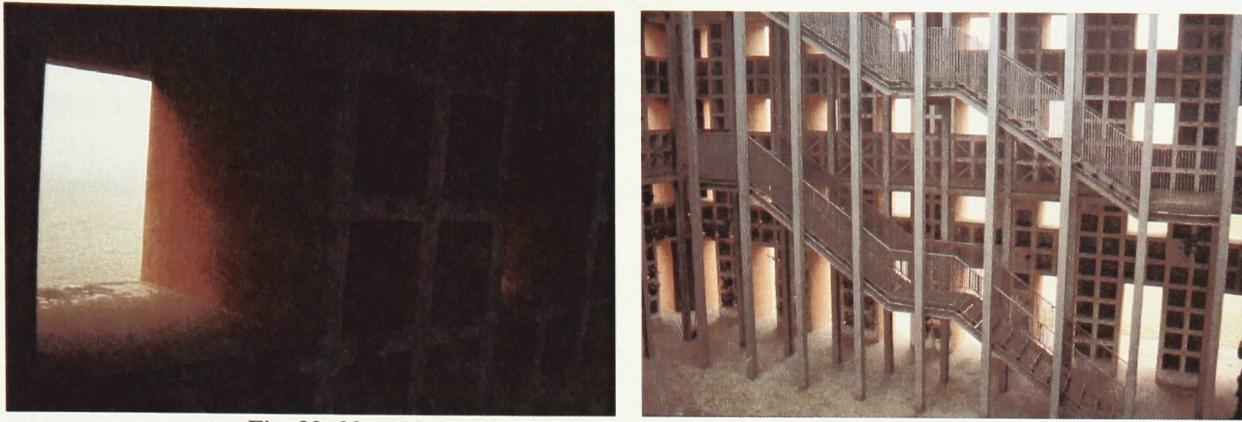


Fig. 32, 33. Aldo Rossi, *Cemetery of San Cataldo*, 1971.

It was this austere quality of the Cemetery as well as many of Rossi's other works that were met by the most resistance. Though Rossi believed that this quality would foster life into his architecture, the stark atmosphere resulted in the opposite outcome. His projects were criticized as having little to no reference to time, place, or scale. Thus: "the timelessness that Rossi sought haunted his work."⁸³ Though Rossi sought out to integrate the familiar into both building design and the fabric of the city, his projects resulted in making the familiar strange.

The importance of the familiar in architectural design is a topic of intense debate to this date. In the past, familiar architectural styles may have been classified as two different entities. The first type of familiar architecture refers to the use of building typology in architectural design, as illustrated by the theories of Aldo Rossi. The second type of familiar architecture refers to generic forms found in many North American cities, which carry with them negative connotations. An example of this type of architecture is the Big-Box shopping centre. This generic form of architecture is often linked to habituation and complacency in the urban realm. Presently, the notion of the habitual manifests itself

⁸³ La Marche, Jean. *The Familiar and the Unfamiliar in Twentieth Century Architecture*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2003. p. 74

in both urban planning and building design principles in North America. The lack of mixed use areas in zoning practices results in a disjointed landscape of functions traversed by the space of the automobile. Though this condition is less apparent in the urban context, it does manifest itself in the architecture of the city. New projects often ignore human qualities such as scale, thus resulting in the disassociation between the public and its city. New construction projects ignore notions of public space, instead focusing upon land as an economic resource. The mechanism of defamiliarization has the ability to highlight these oversights in North American planning practices.

Defamiliarization is a movement that encourages the questioning of society's present standards. It persuades the viewer to re-evaluate norms in the cultural landscape, which are regarded as fact. This conceptual device reawakens an individual's perception by battling the human tendency towards habituation. Defamiliarization is a device that enables society to rediscover the character of the city they reside in, as well as their own connection to it. It permits the architect to design in a manner that addresses the urban context, as well as highlights and challenges habituation in design culture.

Defamiliarization is the key concept in this thesis study. The design project will implement defamiliarization on conceptual, programmatic and formal levels, being dependent upon the context of the city of Toronto, as well as North American popular culture.



Part 3: The Project

3.1. Project

3.1.1. Site

The thesis study centres upon four sites in the urban core of the city. The city of Toronto highlights its more commercialized regions in its urban centre, in an attempt to generate activity within the tourism and commercial spheres of the conurbation. However, it is the nondescript, hidden areas of the urban centre, which can reveal a city's true nature. The sites belong to support zones, which are situated along secondary streets within the urban realm. These areas are generally of a human-scale. They emphasize a sense of community and are geared towards pedestrian-oriented traffic. The city of Toronto has many of these areas, woven throughout the city fabric. These regions contain buildings that emphasize heritage and history; however, these structures and their surrounding areas often suffer from neglect, and are left in a state of disrepair. Newer structures in these settings are simply inserted into the fabric, without much attention to existing buildings in terms of scale, materiality and innate rhythm. Often support zones are treated as secondary characters within the city, and are viewed as mundane and ordinary. Thus, these areas serve as a good case study in the implementation of the device of defamiliarization.



Fig. 34. Aerial Image, Four Sites.

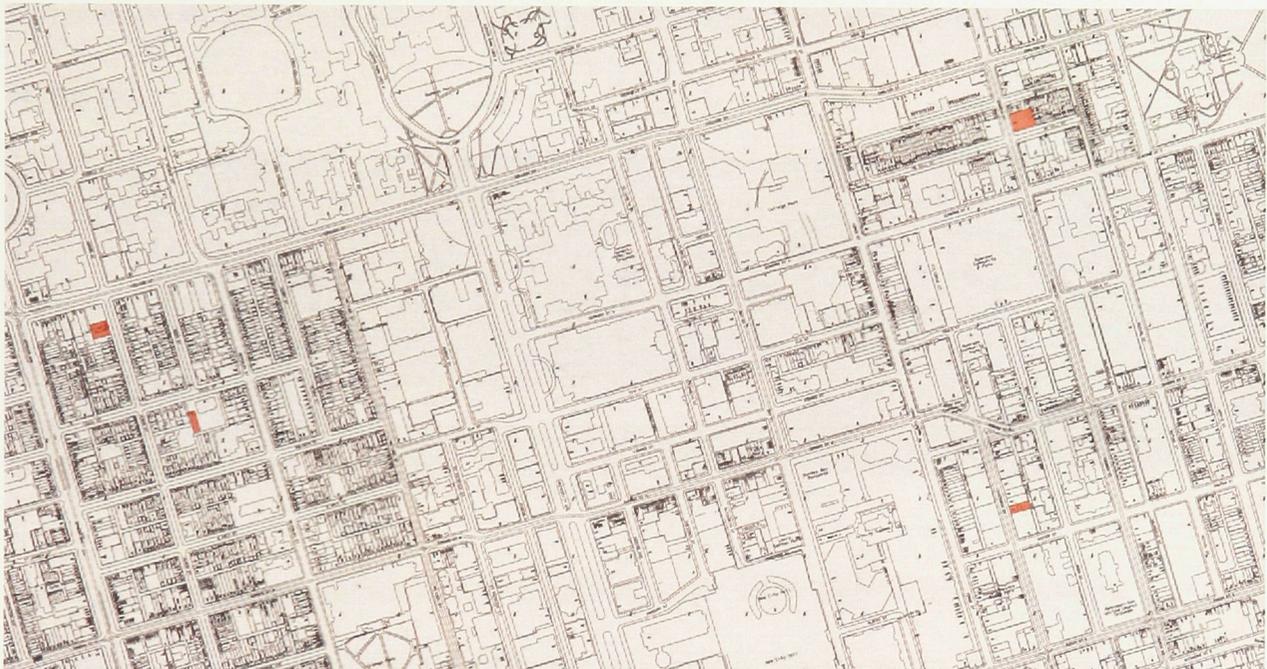


Fig. 35. Site Plan – Four Sites in Context.

The first site in the thesis study is located at the corner of College and Huron Street, and is designated as an urban park. The site bridges the divide between the large-scaled buildings and frequent traffic of College Street, to the small-scaled residential neighbourhood adjacent to it.



Fig. 36. Site 1 – Urban Park

The second site in the study is in close proximity to the first site. Located at 33 Cecil Street, this nondescript building, otherwise known as the Steelworkers Hall, is entrenched in a context of small-scaled residential, small business and community-oriented buildings.

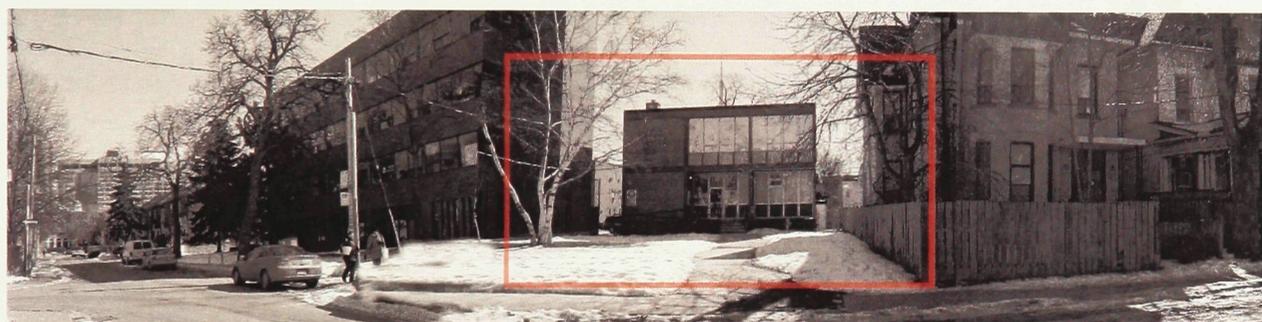


Fig. 37. Site 2 – Steelworker's Hall

These two sites reside in the same neighbourhood. This neighbourhood is at the periphery of two major centres in the city of Toronto. To the north of this area is the University of Toronto, St. George Campus. As a result, many students live in the residential buildings in this area during the academic year, as historic brick-masonry Victorian Homes have been converted into apartment-style dwellings. This neighbourhood is generally quiet, with little to no pedestrian or car traffic. Little to no street furniture such as benches and garbage receptacles are provided in this area; street and building signage are outdated and in a state of disrepair.

The third site in this study is located at 365 Church Street, at the intersection of Church and McGill Street.

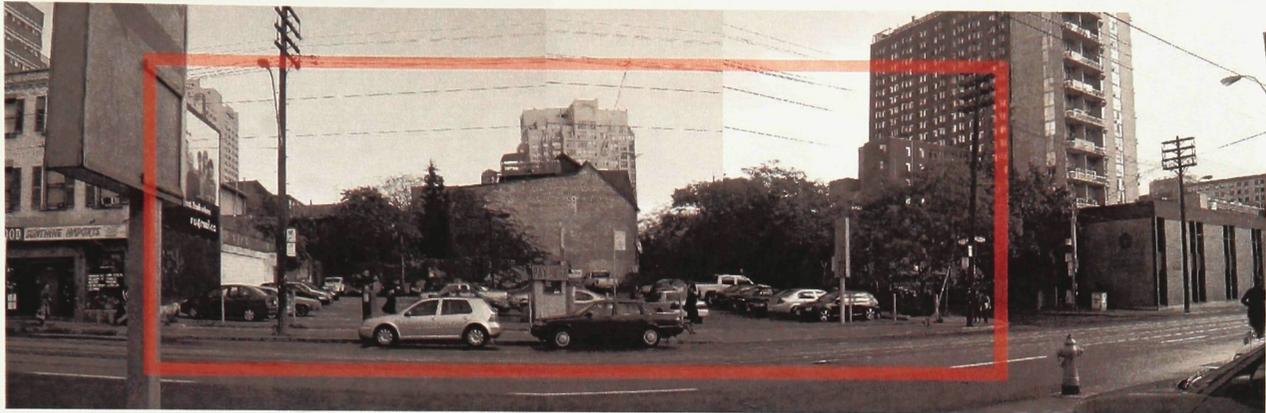


Fig. 38. Site 3 – Church/McGill St.

This particular neighbourhood contains structures that are both residential and commercial, with stores, restaurants, bars and small businesses along Church Street. Small-scaled residential homes and high-rise apartment buildings are situated along secondary streets branching off the main road. Like the previous two sites, the city has not invested in this area. This site is a few blocks away from commercial and tourist areas such as Allen Park, and is located at the periphery of Toronto's gay and lesbian community. Similar to the first two sites, the third site is situated in close proximity to the campus of Ryerson University.

Lastly, the fourth site is located to the south of the third location. Situated at 209 Victoria Street, near the intersection of Victoria and Shuter Street, this particular area is a mix of different architectural styles, scales and building functions.

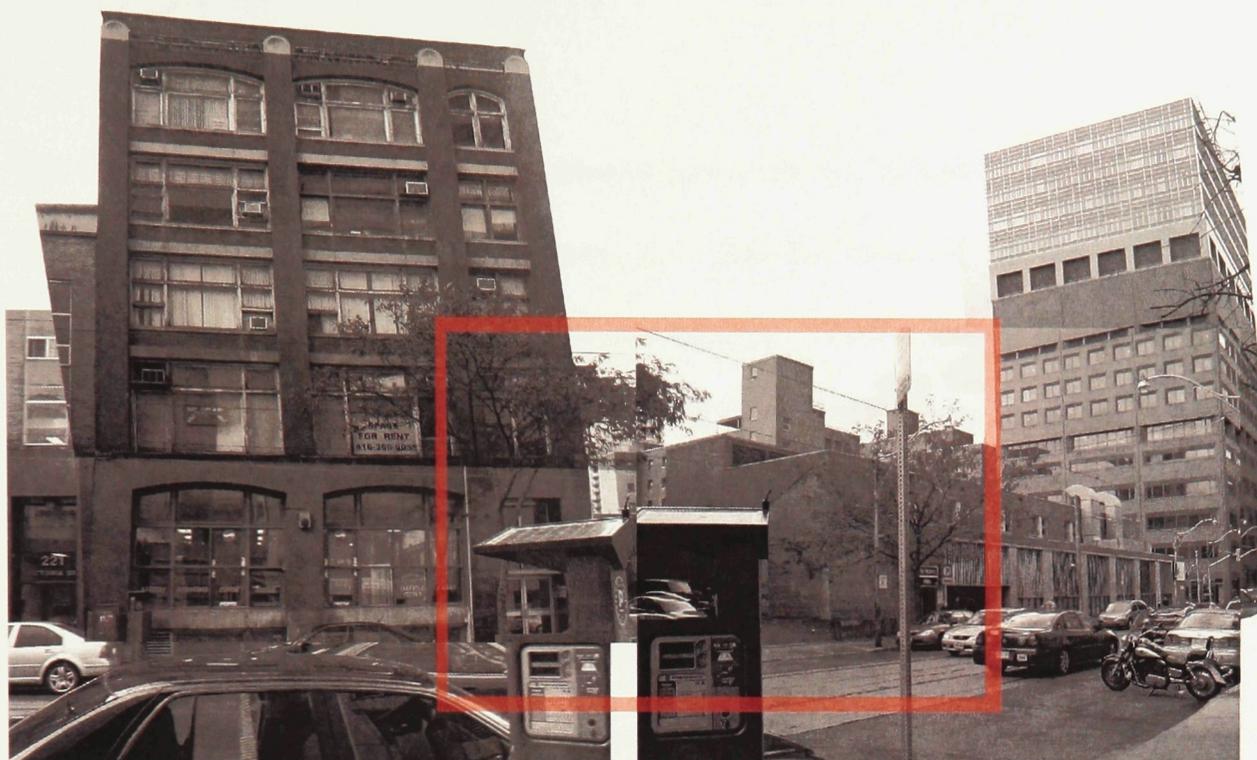


Fig. 39. Site 4 – Victoria/ Shuter St.

Office towers, cultural centres and hotels are a few of the programmes contained in this neighbourhood. The surrounding context ranges from low-rise, nondescript buildings to high-rise apartment structures of up to forty-stories tall. The site is surrounded by both building types and functions, which are in stark juxtaposition with one another. For example, across from the site is the Cannon Theatre, a structure that houses major theatre productions and concerts, while directly adjacent to the site is St. Michael's Hospital, a major teaching and researching facility. As a result, individuals that inhabit this area range from tourists seeking out cultural experiences within the city to individuals visiting patients at the hospital. A more commercial area is situated few blocks north of the site, including Dundas Square and the Eatons Centre shopping centre.

3.1.2. Process

This thesis examines the city as a sequence of spatial events. It focuses on the experiential qualities of the city of Toronto, and examines aspects of this conurbation, which are considered to be both mundane and habitual. There is a focus on society's perception of the urban realm, as well as how it is perceived by popular culture.

The four sites in the thesis were compared and contrasted in terms of their functional, physical and immaterial aspects. District-oriented characteristics of the sites were observed through the examination of public services provided by the city, building functions, and zoning regulations. The physical seen/lived qualities of the sites were examined through their surrounding context and typology, as well as traces left behind by those that inhabit/traverse the site(s). Lastly, unnoticed qualities of each site were investigated through elements located in these areas, which often denote the values, beliefs and desires of the individuals that reside there. They are represented by events that take place in these areas; political and social viewpoints are manifested in print-ads and flyers that litter the sidewalks and cover telephone and electric poles.⁸⁴

⁸⁴ See Appendix C, *i*.

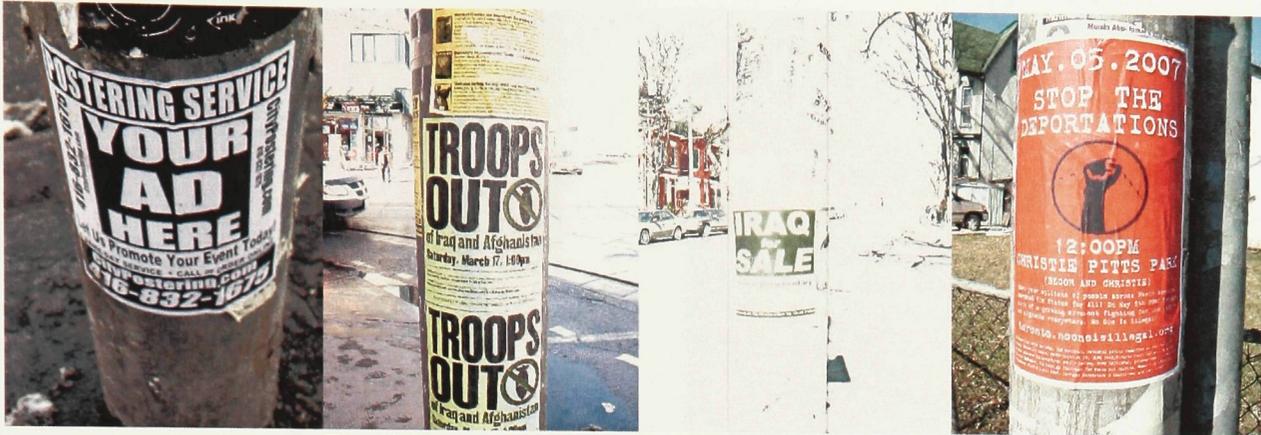


Fig. 40. Excerpt *Photographic Essays*, 2007.

The inherent qualities of the four sites were explored through a series of photographic essays, which concentrated upon many of the unrecognized yet lived qualities of a specific place. The essays highlight juxtapositions to existing conditions, aiding in the revelation of truths regarding the character/issues/psyche of a particular space in the city, not to mention the city itself. The study was seen through the eyes of a specific type of character, a person who does not have an intimate enough knowledge of the site to have a habituated perception of the area. This character may include a visitor from either outside the city or a Torontonian that is not familiar with that particular area. Throughout every examination of each site, specific unnoticed details become apparent to the observer; that which was previously irrelevant, becomes an object of study. Poster-ads are one aspect of the city that denote world events relevant to the general public at a specific moment in time. These graphic images often signify juxtapositions that exist in the cultural landscape of the city. One such example is the contrast in points of view between those in authority versus the citizens of a city, regarding political issues such as war, the environment and the situation of the homeless in the city.⁸⁵

⁸⁵ See Appendix C, *ii*

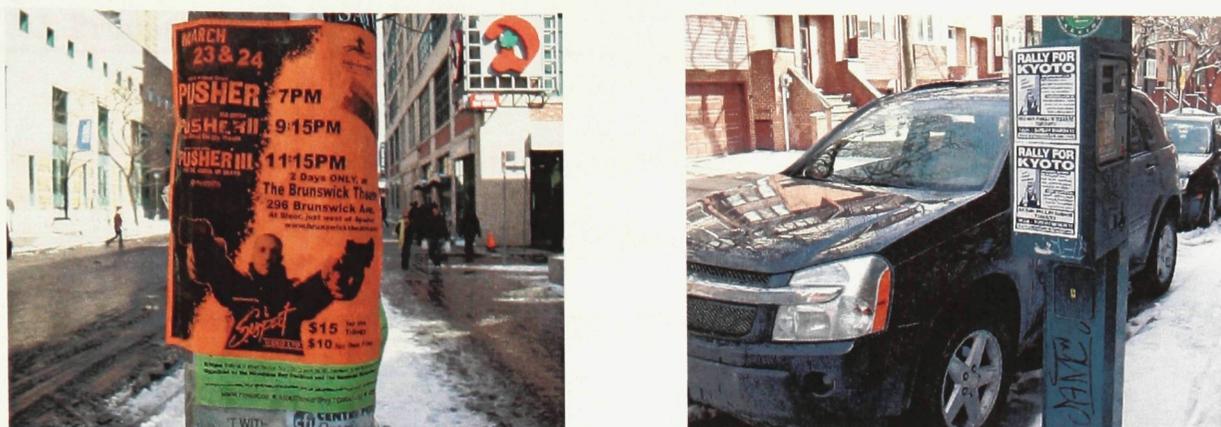


Fig. 41, 42. Site Studies, *Juxtapositions*, 2007.

The four sites in the study have many similarities and differences between them in terms of their function, physical factors and inherent character. Sites 1 and 2 are of a more humble nature in comparison to sites 3 and 4. Issues such as multi-culturalism and immigration have greater prevalence in this area, as well as the subject of poverty and homelessness. These factors are directly related to those that inhabit the neighbourhood and general area. The last two sites are more commercial and are of a grander scale. These sites address the importance of past histories of the community as well as acknowledge present-day popular culture. Moreover, it should be noted that a broader spectrum of individuals, belonging to different socio-economic groups, reside in both areas of sites 3 and 4.⁸⁶

⁸⁶ See Appendix C, *iii*

3.2. Proposal

Each of the four sites has a pre-existing function in its present context. These existing programmes are defined as infrastructures, thus being integral to the underlying structure of the city. The third and fourth sites act as the main focus of the thesis, and are situated at 365 Church Street and 209 Victoria Street, respectively. The existing condition of each of these sites is that of commercialized parking. These two areas are close to the centre of Toronto's urban core, and are more varied in the manner of building functions, scales and typologies. In terms of inhabitants, these areas are occupied with a large mix of individuals from different ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds. As opposed to the first two sites, these areas offer greater opportunity to examine juxtapositions and subversions that exist within a decidedly denser urban fabric.

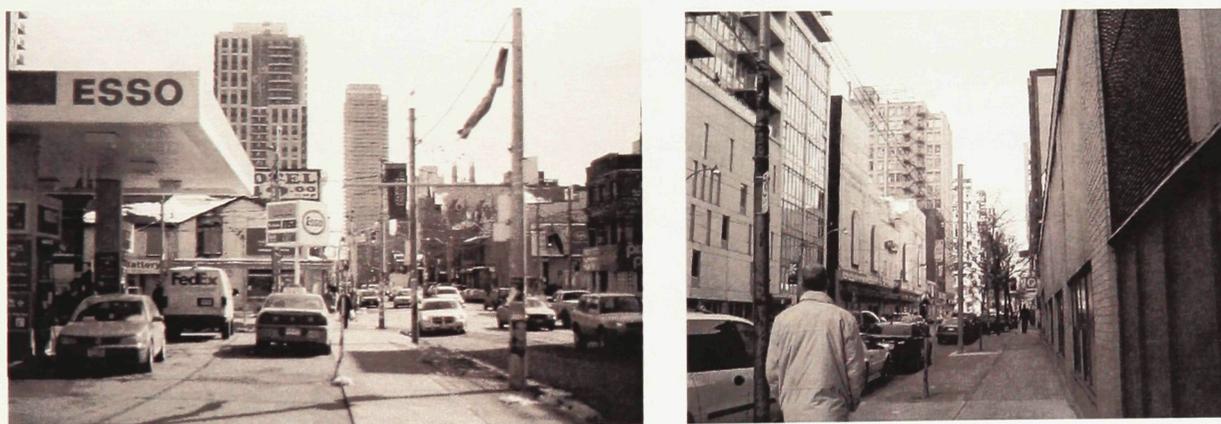


Fig. 43, 44. *Final Sites: Church/McGill + Victoria/Shuter (3,4)*

3.2.1. Programme

The proposed programmes for the sites 3 and 4 denote building functions that are often considered mundane in the North American context, but are integral to both its society and culture. However, when introduced in the urban core of a city, these programmes are considered to be both unfamiliar and strange, thus addressing one aspect of defamiliarization in the design project. The third site houses a car dealership specializing in used, compact-cars, while the fourth site accommodates a funeral home. These two kinds of programmes are, upon rare occasion, found in an urban centre. However, these types of buildings are generally situated at the outskirts of a city, as well as in the suburban context. Both programmes deal with the commercialization of two important aspects of life. The car is a prevalent characteristic of North American culture. It serves as a symbol of status within society. The car dealership marries the functional necessity of the car, in the context of the North American city/suburb, with the concept of the automobile as the ultimate accessory. The funeral home works on a similar basis. Death and ritual is treated as something that can be bought and sold in the form of a convenient funeral package. In this building, the sacred ritual of the funeral is conjugated with North American consumerism.

These two projects serve as instances in which the event of defamiliarization can take place on formal, intellectual and subconscious levels. The main focus of these projects is the experiential aspects of the building, focusing on the synesthetic experiences created

within the structures. The process of ritual is important to the composition of each design and relates directly to both the ritual of a funeral and the ritual of buying a car.

3.2.2. Design

The design process is based upon theories and concepts discussed in the thesis study. The building design acts an exercise in defamiliarization, and relates to society's perception of their current surrounding conditions. This mechanism is implemented through a variety of different techniques ranging from conceptual idea to physical manifestation. Firstly, building function aides in achieving this objective, by proposing programmes that are not frequently found in an urban core. Furthermore, each building design emphasizes the experiential qualities of individual spaces within. This is achieved thorough the use of synesthesia, and takes into consideration sights, sounds, textures and smells within each interior/exterior space of the structure. The mechanism of defamiliarization is further generated through the control of scale and rhythm; this approach allows aspects, such as anticipation and juxtaposition of space, to be a vital part of the building's experiential quality.

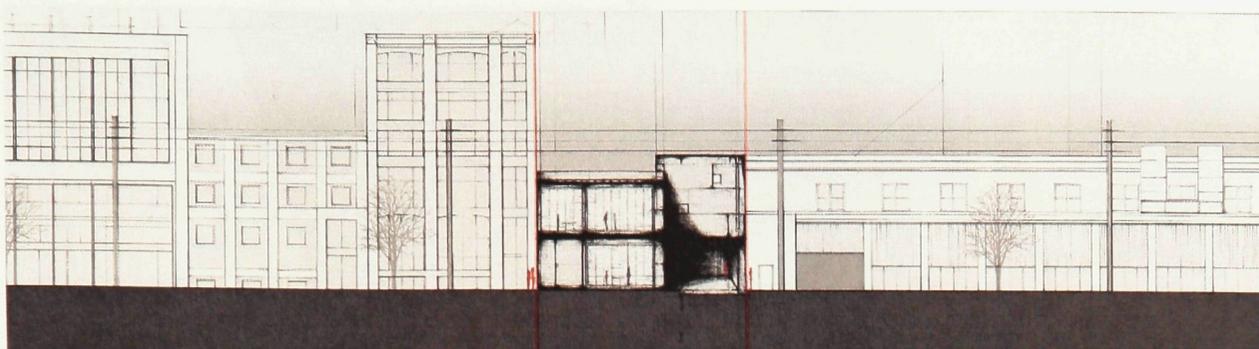


Fig. 45. *Funeral Home + Street Elevation*

The funeral home is an insular building, whose front façade is oriented perpendicularly to the main street. On approach of the building, the viewer experiences a blank wall, while a driveway/laneway bisects a formal procession through the entire site. A loading dock and small parking area is located at the rear of the building, sheltered by the overhung second level. Programmes within the structure are composed in a manner that plays on the unexpected; at ground level, commercial space, geared toward the sale of funeral services to the public, is situated at the rear of the building, while funeral preparatory space is located at the front. Defamiliarization works on the basis of the unanticipated, by bringing death to the main street, rather than shielding it from the general public. Though the street façade acts as a blank screen, it is made up of LiTraConTM concrete block⁸⁷, enabling a distorted view into the building. Figure and motion can be discerned from the main road; however the process of funeral preparation is still cloaked in mystery.

⁸⁷ See Appendix C, *iv*

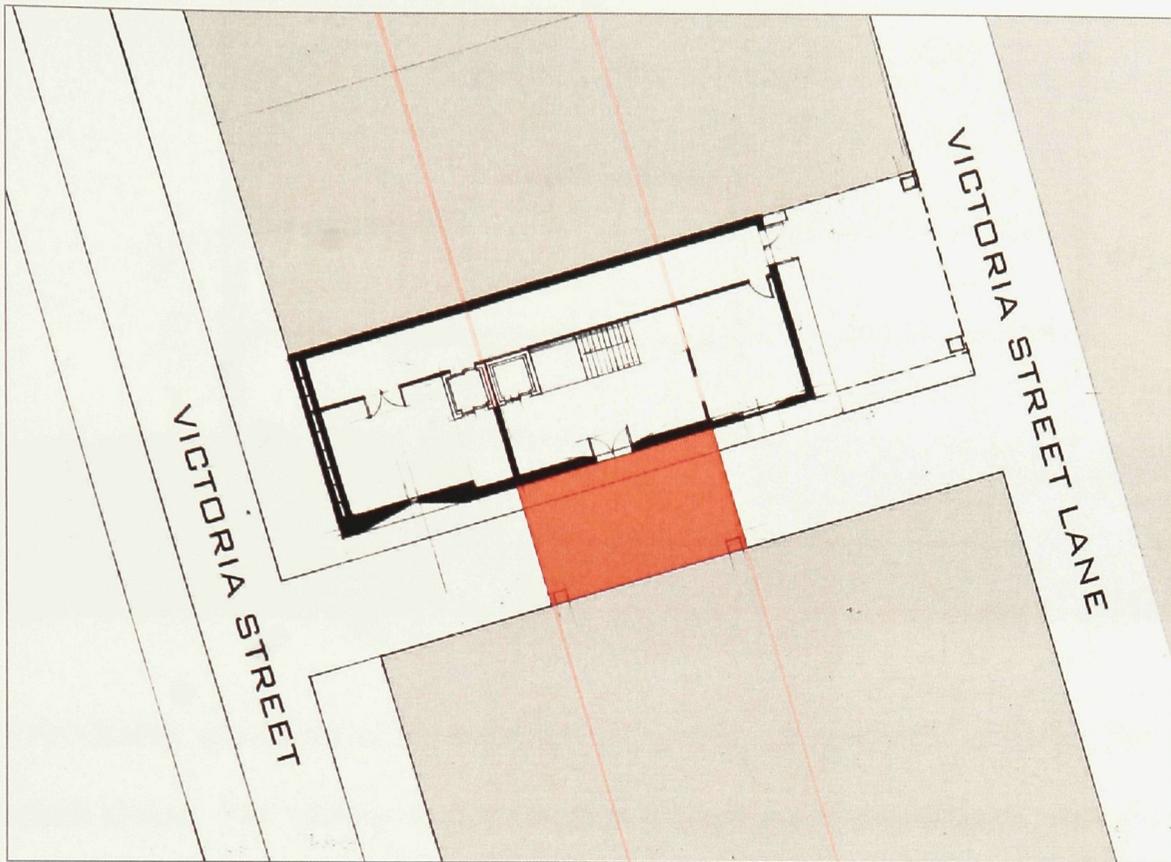


Fig. 46. *Funeral Home, Site Plan*

Wall, ceiling and floor thicknesses are utilized in this design. The shifting between thicknesses, according to spatial function, allows for plays with scale, rhythm and juxtaposition in relation to space. Each individual area is unique. For example public areas, such as the commercial space, implement thinner walls and a greater number of openings in contrast to the more private sections of the building. The preparatory space, the most private area in the building, emphasizes both thick walls and ceiling widths. This practice results in a more intimate, small-scaled space, which enables reduced amounts of light and noise to enter the room.

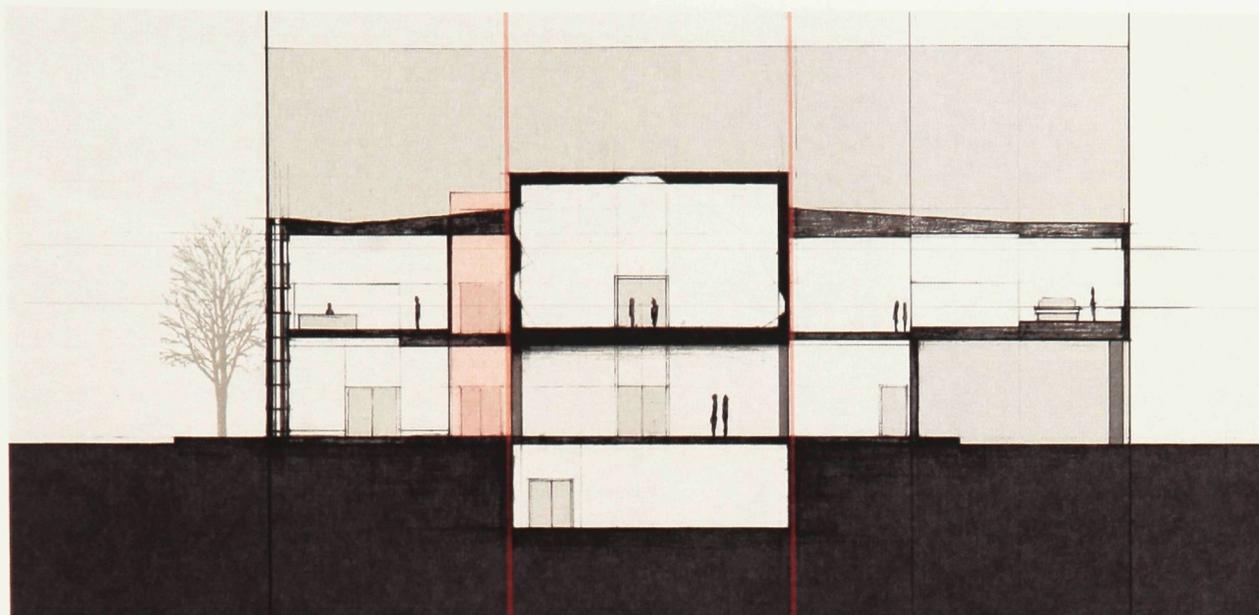


Fig. 47. *Funeral Home, Longitudinal Section*

The two feature spaces within the building are the viewing/ceremonial space and the interfaith chapel. The viewing area is set-up as a small-scaled amphitheatre, with the funerary procession situated at the highest point. The only window opening into this space is the wall directly behind the viewing platform. Thus, the main focus is placed upon death, through the manipulation of both space and light. The chapel acts as the primary feature space in the building. A distinctive volume, this space overhangs the driveway area, and is lifted-off the ground level. Within the structure, this room is accessed from the second level.

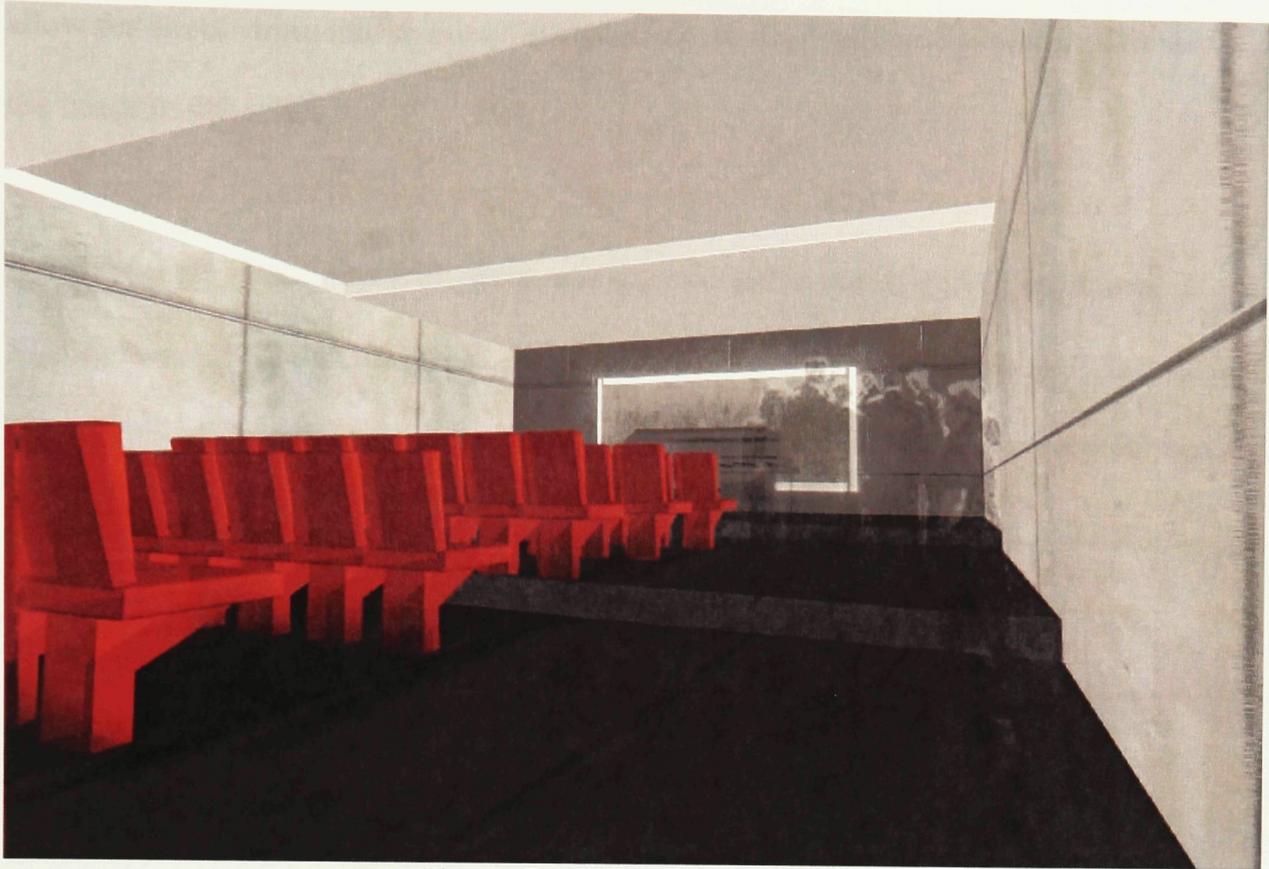


Fig. 48. *Funeral Home, Viewing Space*

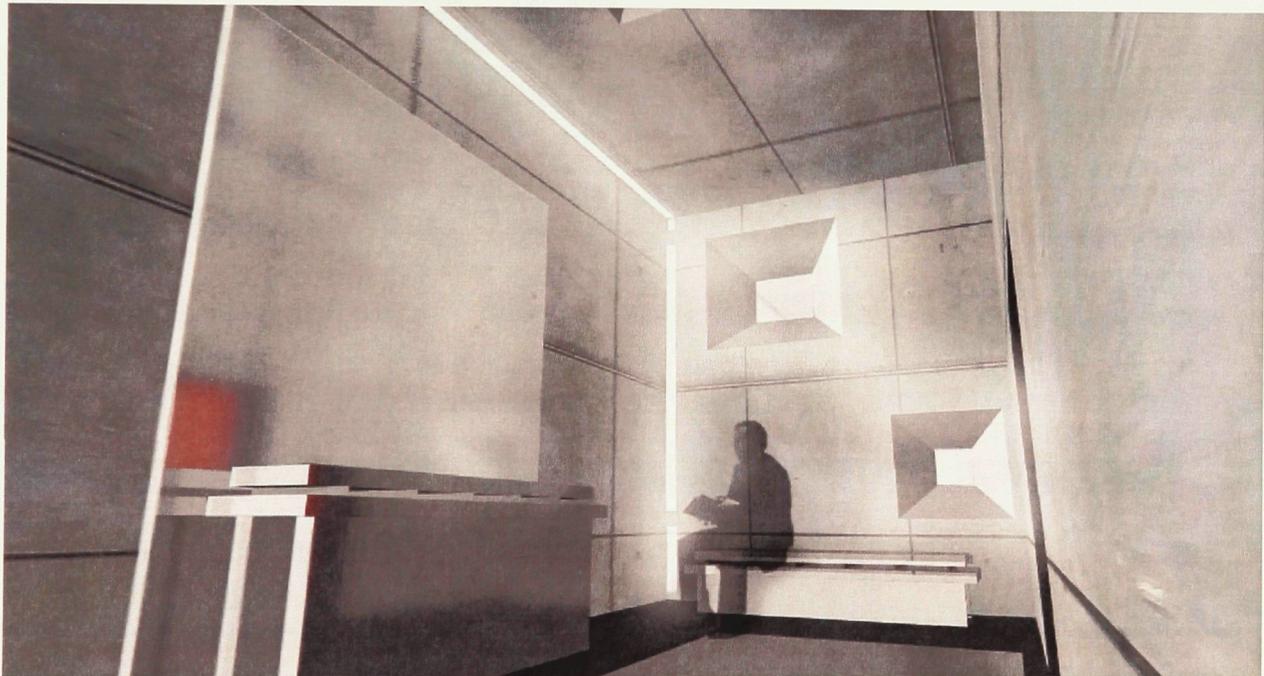


Fig. 49. *Funeral Home, Chapel.*

The chapel volume implements the thickest width of walls in an attempt to play with aperture and light. Strategically placed openings actively bring in light, however do not

allow for direct views into or out of the building. A disorienting, ethereal experience is the intent in this space.

Apart from the visual play with space and light, sound is also of great importance.

Silence is a main feature of this building. Ceremonial spaces are pulled away from the main street, while areas within the building are given distinctive divisions and barriers, in an attempt to advocate respectful silence.

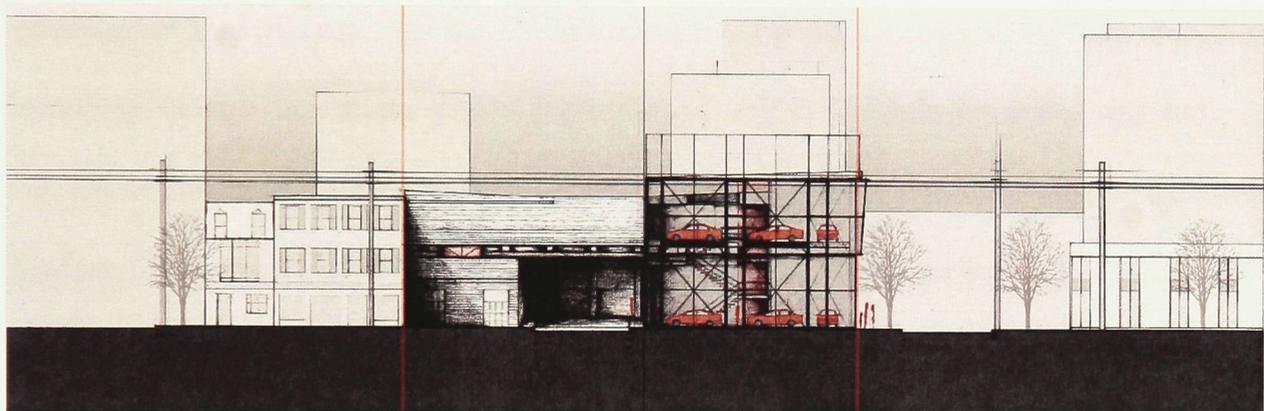


Fig. 50. Car Dealership + Street Elevation

The car dealership takes the same approach in design as the funeral home, in an attempt to promote experiential space.⁸⁸ However, while the funeral home is a private, internal building, the car dealership includes aspects of extreme transparency. The overall massing of the dealership works on two different levels. The building form takes its inspiration from relevant historical and contemporary building tectonics. Aspects such as formal language and materiality are important to the scheme, and are implemented as follows:

⁸⁸ This idea is discussed in Bernard Tschumi's *Space as Event*. Tschumi explores the analogy that exists between film and architecture, and theorizes that spaces within buildings can act as generators of events. These spaces are tied to programme, and are described in terms of sequences. These sequences vary depending upon personal experience. Individuals that inhabit the spaces within the structure, take on roles of both spectator and performer

The “shop-window” is a concept that is exploited in the design. Various automobiles are displayed in a two-level structure that takes on the role of the traditional shop-window, and serves as the main façade for most of the southern elevation as well as a portion of the western elevation. The shop-window concept is defamiliarized via a shifting to the larger scale of car exhibition.

The display tower has a contemporary appearance, and allows for a view into the inner workings of the building. The car lift that navigates the automobiles through the building is visible through the curtain wall of the tower, as well as the main reception area and circulation systems⁸⁹. The remainder of the construction is treated in an entirely differing manner. Whereas the car tower façade is fully transparent, the accompanying facades of the building are extremely opaque. These portions of the structure reference the traditional garage-style car dealership, which proliferated many North American urban centres in the 1920s. Materials such as rugged, poured concrete are implemented in order to emphasize the contrast between the high-tech southern façade and the remainder of the building. This juxtaposition between the two different construction methods makes reference to the concept of the double, discussed in 2.2.1. This notion of the double allows for a condition where two drastically different states may exist in concurrence with one another. Furthermore, this concept relies upon memory, both collective and personal, as well as on archetypal typologies, such as the traditional garage-style dealership.

⁸⁹ See Appendix C, v



Fig. 51. Traditional Garage-Style Dealership

The building is organized into three different volumes. On the ground level, at the north end of the site, the auto-shop/garage fronts onto the main street, while the car tower display is situated at the southern end. A two-lane driveway separates these two volumes; additional parking is located at the rear of the building. The car showroom and administration area is situated at the second level of the building, staggered between the garage and car tower. It is divided from the two volumes by a system of structural beams, which create a small space of separation in the vertical dimension. Through this space, framed views of the dealership's circulation systems, including stairs, elevator and car lift, can be discerned at the eastern elevation of the building. In this manner, the building is read not as a whole mass, but rather a series of volumes which are interconnected. Notions of defamiliarization are emphasized by situating the car merchandise on the upper level of the building, as opposed to the conventional practice of using the ground level as the primary commercial space. This portion of the building façade reads as a blank wall, with no direct views into the showroom space. Light is brought into this area through a variety of skylights, located at strategic areas such as

over car display areas and office spaces. The three masses, consisting of car tower, auto-shop and showroom, are connected to one another through the mechanism of the car lift.

These aspects work together to create a slightly disorienting experience for the user.

Generally, the traditional North American car dealership displays a great quantity of its merchandise at ground level, in the form of an outdoor parking lot. In the case of this particular dealership, the viewer is forced to enter the building and ascend upwards.

There is a sense that one must cross the threshold of the dealership, entering into another world. This notion is reiterated further, once an individual enters the structure, most specifically in the space of the showroom, located at the second level. Views of the surrounding streetscape are denied to the users of this space. Very little of the building's surrounding context is visible through the adjacent area of the car display tower along the southern façade of the building. The main focus in this space is the merchandise, as floors and ceilings slant, protrude and retract in order to create display platforms as well as compartmentalize space, while skylights bathe the cars in ethereal light.

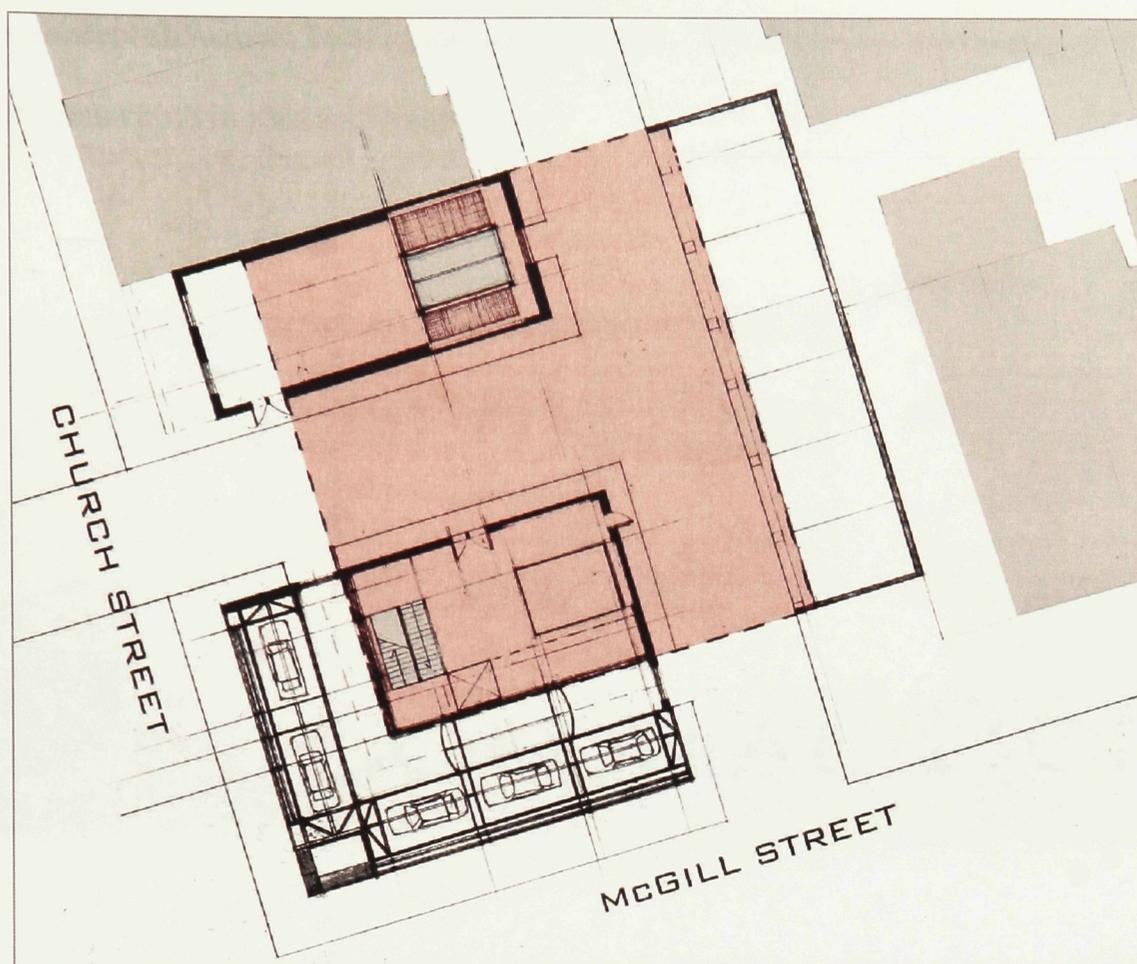


Fig. 52. *Car Dealership Site Plan*

Similar to the funeral home, experiential space is of vital importance. Visual contrasts between light and dark areas are emphasized in the building, particularly in the showroom space, on the second level of the building. Skylights are strategically placed over designated car display zones, as well as circulation areas. Texture and materiality are underscored through the use of rugged poured-concrete walls as well as slick machine-formed elements contained within the car tower display. The use of scale and rhythm, to create individuated spaces within the structure, is treated in the same manner as in the funeral home. Wall and ceiling thicknesses are manipulated in order to both compartmentalize and differentiate specific areas. This is particularly necessary in the

open-concept showroom level of the car dealership. The shrinking and expansion of space occurs both in plan and section.

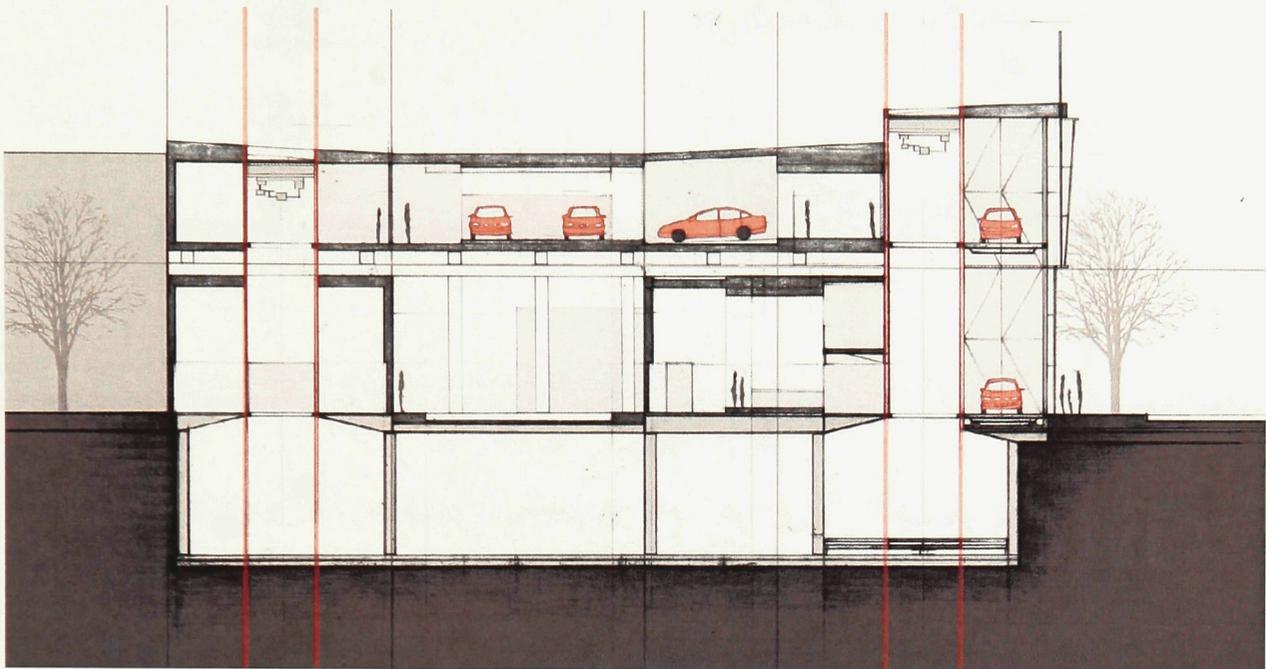


Fig. 53. *Car Dealership, Longitudinal Section*

Interestingly, the sense of sound is the main conflicting factor between the two buildings. While the funeral home necessitates silence, the dealership emphasizes aspects of power and noise. The car lift is the manifestation of this idea. Sound is generated through the car-lift system, as the mechanism transports vehicles from the lowest level of the basement to the topmost floor of the showroom.

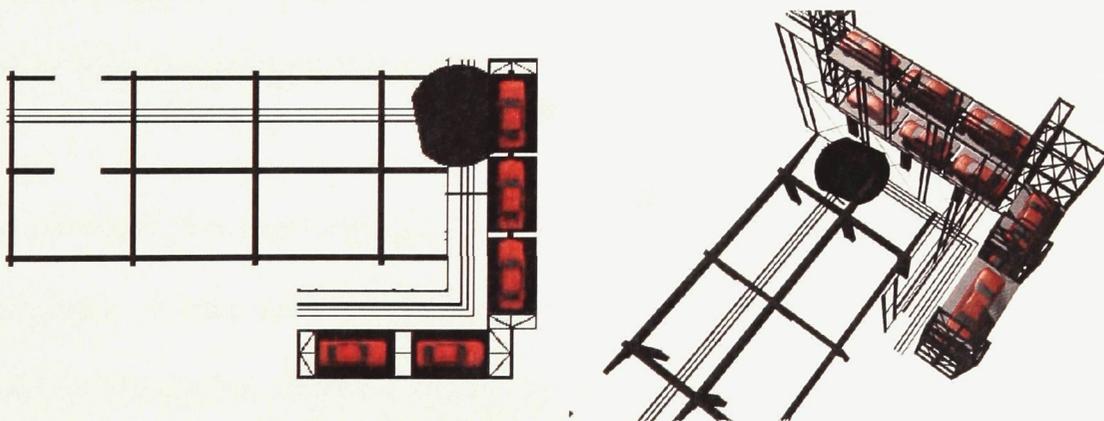


Fig. 54, 55. *Car-Lift Structure*



Fig. 56. *Car-Lift Structure*

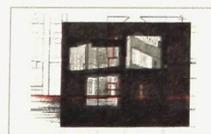
The design of these two structures illustrates the technique of defamiliarization in terms of building form, materiality and juxtaposition of space. This occurs both internally and externally. Contrasts between scales within both buildings work in a similar manner. Extremely tight spaces are found directly adjacent to expansive areas. Each building enables these individuated spaces to come together as sequences of events, emphasizing experiential qualities such as light, sound and texture. These buildings work together; both the funeral home and the dealership stress the importance of experiential space in terms of stimulating one's perception. The main difference between the two structures lies in the implication of programme. While one building is scaled in relation to the human body, the other correlates to the automobile.

The relationship between each building and its surrounding context is of great importance. Firstly, each building is highly dependent upon the city in terms of its formal configuration. Both the funeral home and car dealership respect the overall scale and rhythm of the streetscape, while differentiating themselves in terms of materiality and architectural language. For example, both sites 3 and 4 are directly adjacent to

buildings whose facades are constructed primarily of brick; however, both the dealership and funeral home implement form-worked concrete and concrete paneling, respectively. Thus, although the two proposed structures continue to follow the pattern of their surrounding context, they differentiate themselves in terms of materiality.

Each construction is integrated into the streetscape in terms of scale and rhythm; however both the car dealership and funeral home display a level of disassociation from the city context. Both structures situate their main entrances on an axis perpendicular to the main street, thus resulting in a certain level of disconnection from the surrounding context. This is especially true in the case of the funeral home, and emphasizes aspects of both privacy and disconnection from the general public. The car dealership is split between two differing personalities. On one level, it is extremely introverted, providing very limited views into and out of the building in terms of the garage and showroom volumes. However, this structure displays extroverted qualities as well, through the extreme transparency of the car display tower.

Lastly, each project distinguishes itself from the city context in terms of building function. Though both the funeral home and car dealership belong to the realm of commerce, their location in the urban centre of a major city is unexpected, as these entities are usually situated in a suburban context. Thus, in many aspects these buildings strive to strike the delicate balance between being seen yet unseen by the inhabitants of the city of Toronto. This duality is accomplished through the modes of building function, materiality and formal language.



Part 4: Conclusions

*“Defamiliarization compels us to look with fresh eyes, to hear with fresh ears, to think with fresh thoughts, to feel with fresh feelings—i.e., **to stop the process of habitualization and force us actually to see, to hear, to think about, and to feel in relation to something (or someone) rather than simply move right past it.** Defamiliarization forces an intense degree of alertness, and even seeks, beyond this, to promote a sense of wonder.”⁹⁰*

This thesis examines the city as a realm that can both enable and generate social interaction between its inhabitants, in terms of its districts, neighbourhoods, and architecture. It explores specific elements that define North American culture, postulating this culture’s reflection in the sphere of architecture. Popular culture acts as a unifying mechanism in the diverse landscape of North American culture and subcultures. It is a form that is concerned with the current and immediate, issues rooted in aspects of everyday life. These aspects have a direct influence on the perception of individuals within a particular society, often being classified as mundane, and habitual. Throughout this thesis, the concept of the habitual is investigated through specific mediums including literature, painting and cinema, as well as the urban morphology of the city and the structures that reside within.

The process of David Lynch acts as a precedent for this thesis. In the past, this process has often been described as both obscure and mysterious by those that study Lynch’s work. However, with the release of the book *Catching the Big Fish: Meditation,*

⁹⁰ Nowlan, Bob. *Defamiliarization, Dreams and Frames*. 15 Nov. 2006.
<http://www.uwec.edu/ranowlan/defamiliarization_dreams_frames_film.html>

Consciousness, and Creativity, penned by Lynch in 2006, this methodology has been demystified to some extent.

“Personally, I think intuition can be sharpened and expanded through meditation, diving into the Self. There’s an ocean of consciousness inside each of us, and it’s an ocean of solutions. When you dive into that ocean, that consciousness, you enliven it.

You don’t dive for specific solutions; you dive to enliven that ocean of consciousness. Then your intuition grows and you have a way of solving those problems – knowing when it’s not quite right and knowing a way to make it feel correct for you. That capacity grows and things go much more smoothly.”⁹¹

Lynch’s dependency on Transcendental Meditation, dating back as early as the years of *Eraserhead*, allows him to dig deep within his subconscious mind. Thus, the process itself stems from a type of personal intuition that is based upon past memories and experiences.

The thesis focuses upon the subject matter to which Lynch’s body of work gravitates towards. This subject matter is explored in the thesis and the resultant design project, and relates to the examination of North American contemporary culture through the domains of popular culture, the collective subconscious as well as the device of defamiliarization. The thesis views Lynch’s works as products of his process; thus each is seen as a type of artifact which merely hints at how and why it was crafted.

“I like the saying: ‘The world is as you are.’ And I think the films are as you are. That’s why, although the frames of a film are always the same – the same number, in the same sequence, with the same sounds – every screening is different. The difference is sometimes subtle but it’s there. It depends on the audience to the film and back. Each person is looking and thinking and feeling

⁹¹ Lynch, David. *Catching the Big Fish: Meditation, Consciousness, and Creativity*. New York: Jeremy P. Tarcher/Penguin, 2006. pp. 45-46

and coming up with his or her own sense of things. And it's probably different from what I fell in love with."⁹²

Though this thesis is predicated upon both the themes and techniques that Lynch employs in his projects, visual aspects employed by Lynch are implemented in the design project as well. These include the exploration of juxtapositions between scale, textures and light, as well as the use of rhythm and repetition.

The project relies heavily upon the urban centre as a basis; the urban domain serves as the site for the design project. The city of Toronto, acting as a case-study, is explored through its society's perception, at both the macro-scale of the city as well as the micro-scale of one particular location. This thesis critiques the city of Toronto as an entity that is viewed as being concurrently generic and unique. When examining the city in terms of surface qualities such as street orientations and the range of building styles/scales, it may appear generic and characterless in nature. However, when a more intimate knowledge of the city is acquired its unique aspects are revealed. In this thesis, this knowledge is accomplished through the study of Toronto's inhabitants and the cycles of their everyday lives, as related to a specific place in the city. Thus, it may be concluded that it is the subtleties within a North American city that gives it a sense of character, and may be read as a kind of subtext in relation to the city as a whole.

The concept of the habitual manifests itself in multiple areas of the project, including site selection, building tectonics and programme. The design portion of the thesis acknowledges the human tendency towards habituation, by engaging the device of

⁹² Lynch, David. *Catching the Big Fish: Meditation, Consciousness, and Creativity*. New York: Jeremy P. Tarcher/Penguin, 2006. p. 21

defamiliarization both formally and conceptually. The final two sites, studied within the context of Toronto, are classified as being nondescript, as well as not definitive to the overall character of the city. Design interventions proposed for these areas engage notions of the habitual by implementing programmes that may be classified as infrastructures, being integral to the construction of both the city and society. However, the selected infrastructures of a car dealership and a funeral home are more commonly found in the suburban sector. Thus, the manner in which these two structures utilize the technique of defamiliarization works on two different levels. Firstly, the unlikely decision to feature both a car dealership and funeral home in the urban core of Toronto forces those who inhabit the city to examine, not only the two proposed buildings themselves, but more importantly, the context of the city. By highlighting that which is not usually situated in the urban sphere, the understanding of one's habitual world in a new dimension is generated. What is contained, accepted and considered to be conventional in the city of Toronto is brought into question. The buildings themselves offer opportunities to draw attention to habituation in terms of building design. By dismissing all *a priori* notions of how both these building types should be formulated, those that encounter these structures are given the opportunity to re-evaluate conventional design tendencies, in relation to specified building types. Both the proposed car dealership and funeral home make distinctive departures from the traditional typologies of such buildings; form, street orientation and often contradictory internal programmatic configurations. These are some of the techniques that work together in an attempts to create defamiliar entities. Thus, these projects reveal issues that have been both repressed and unacknowledged in the event that is day-to-day life. They are viewed as

only small parts of a larger context that set the stage that is the city of Toronto. By defamiliarizing the familiar, a greater understanding of the city, its society and its architecture is attained.



Appendix A: Process/Conceptual Work

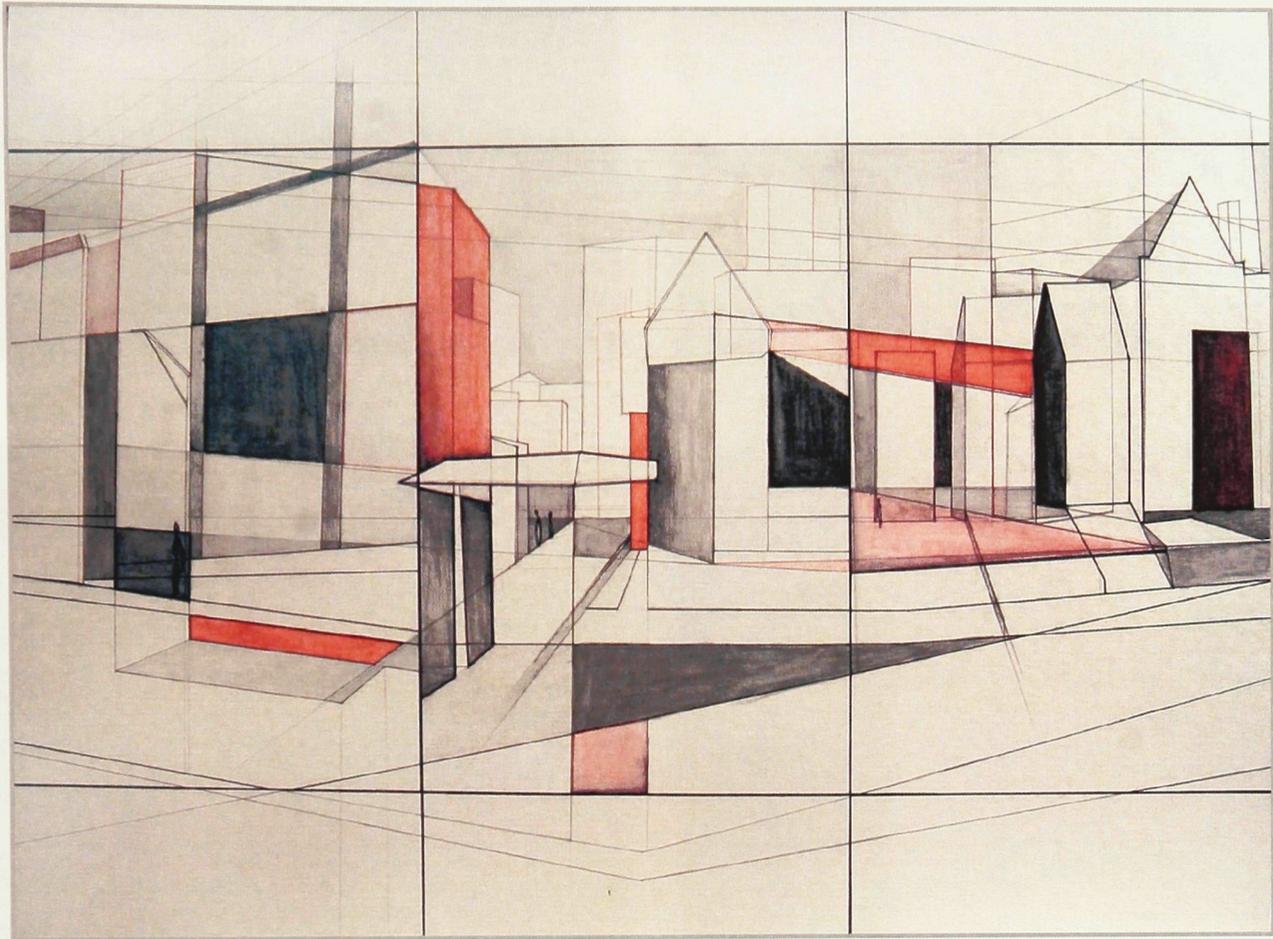


Fig. A-1 – Site Drawing: *Defamiliarization of Sites*

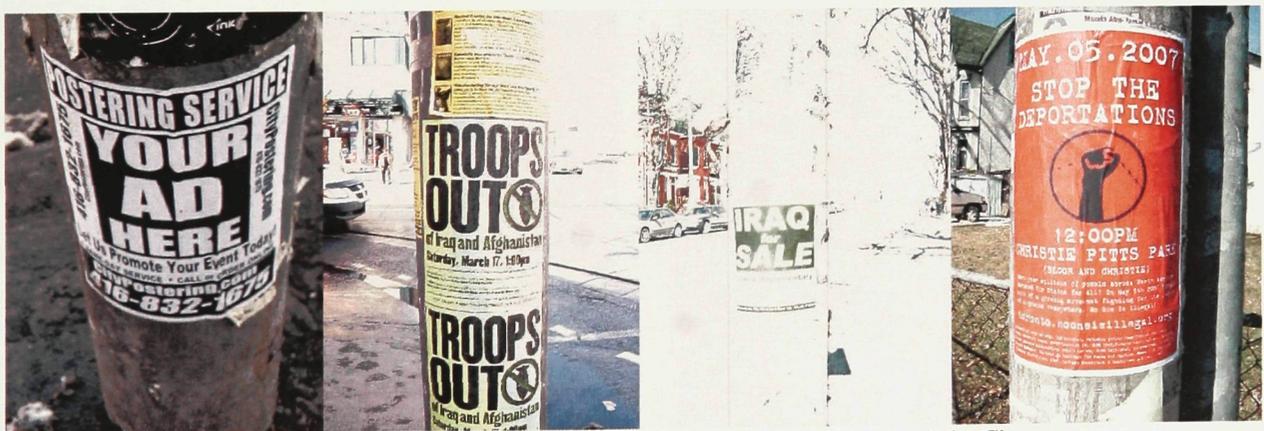
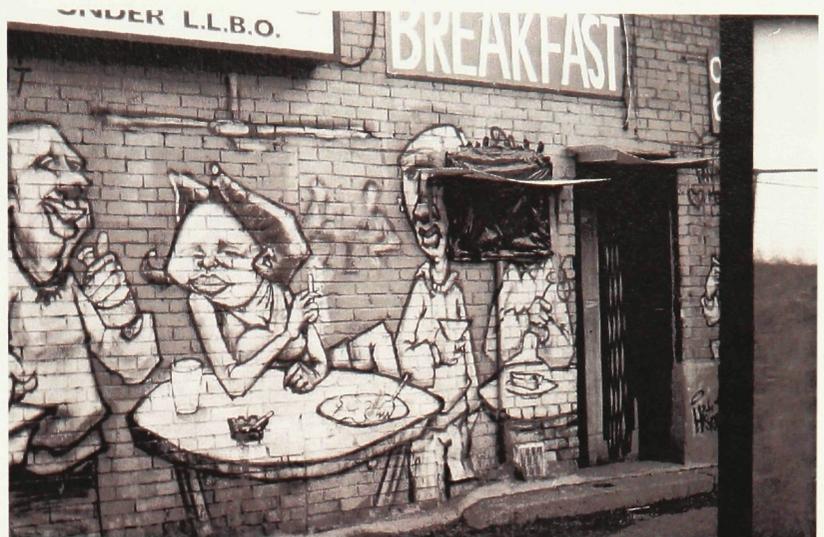
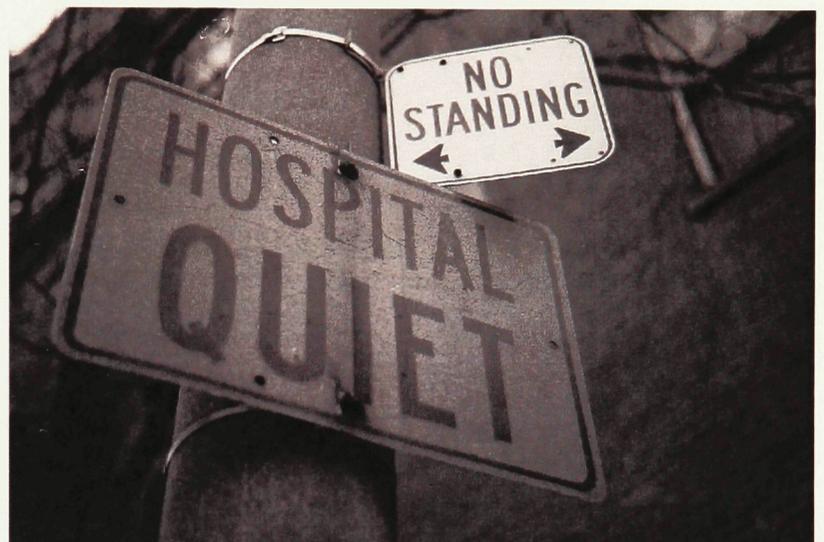
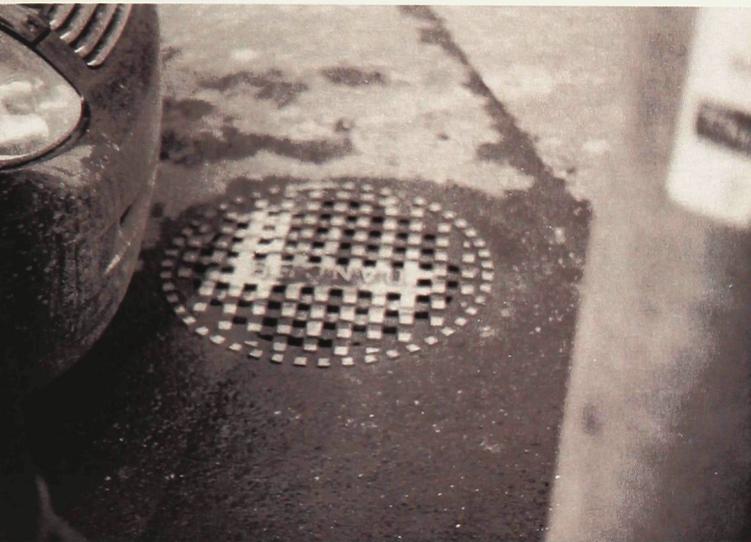


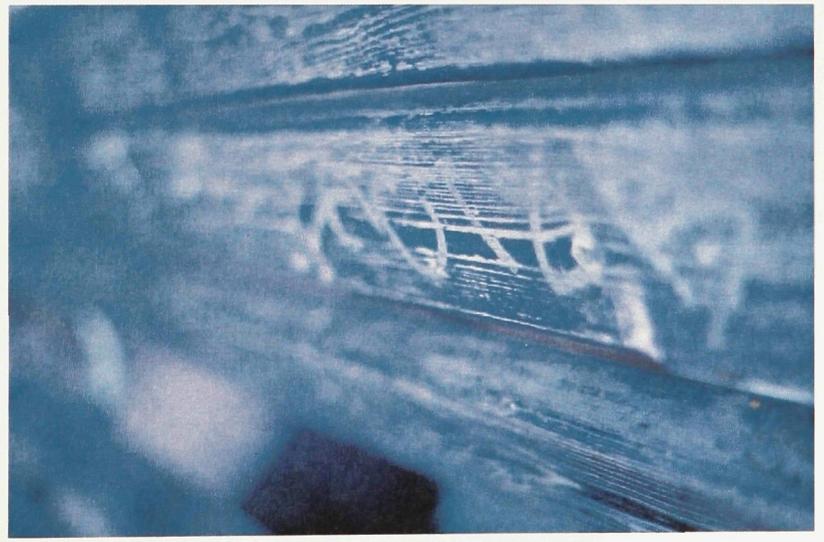
Fig. A-2 – Excerpt – *Photographic Essays – Advertisements of the City*



A4



A6

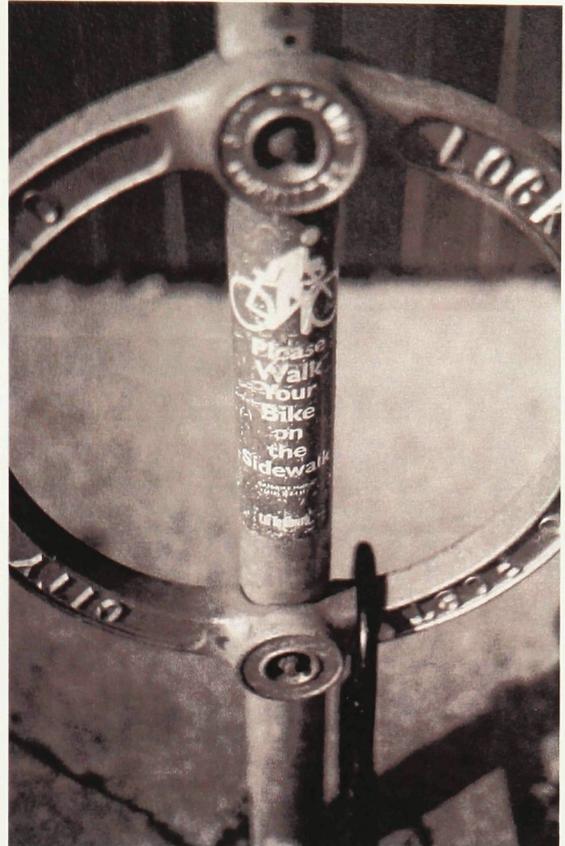


A8

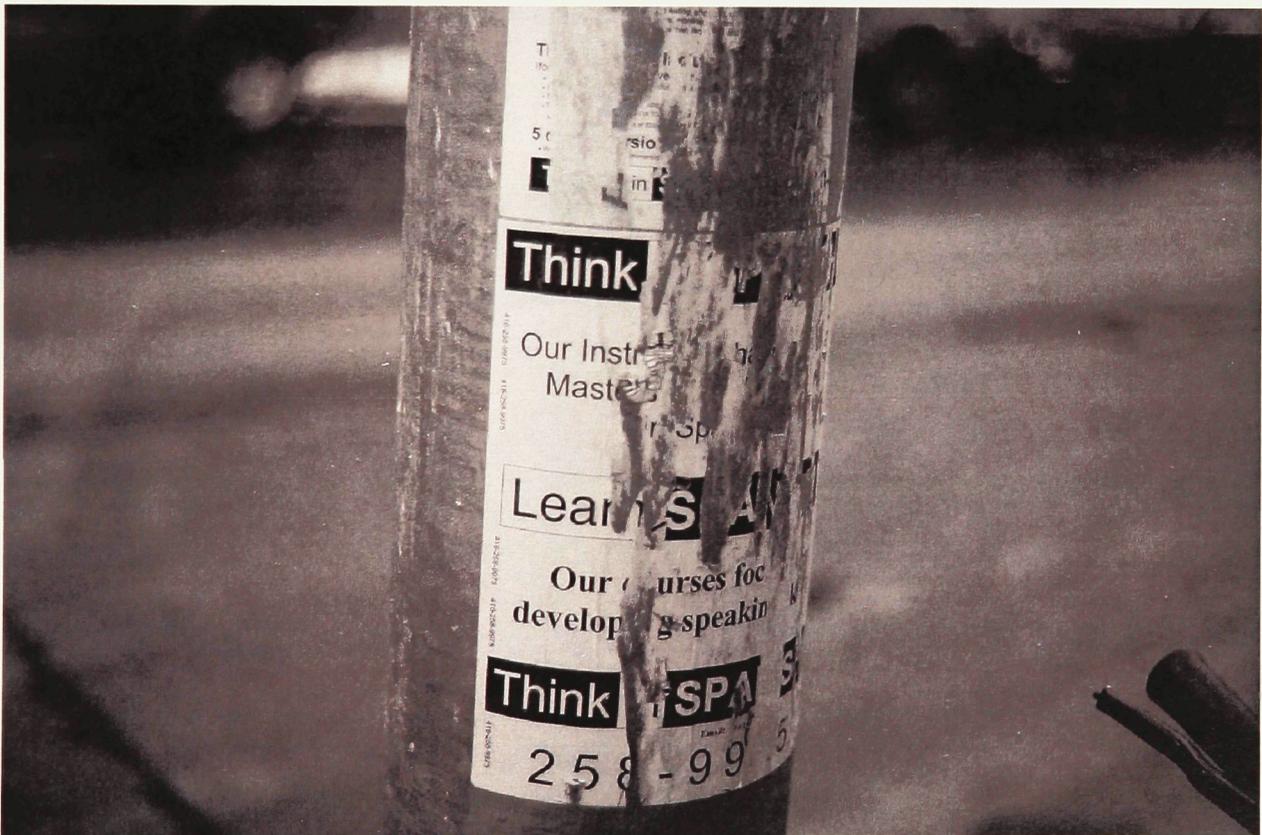
Fig. A-3 – A-8 – Excerpt – *Photographic Essays – Traces: The Lived City*



A9



A10

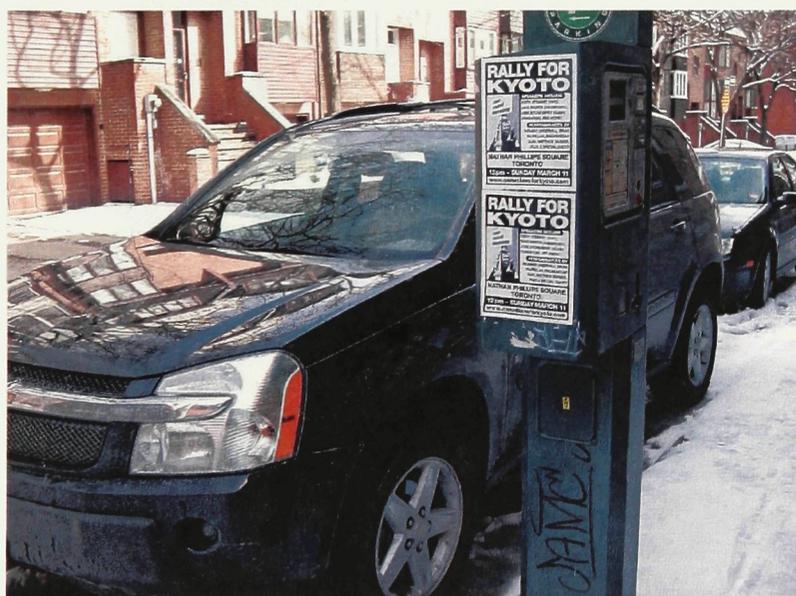


A11

Fig. A-9 – A-11 – Excerpt – *Photographic Essays – Traces: The Lived City*



A12



A13



A14

Fig. A-12 – A-14 – Excerpt – *Photographic Essays – Juxtapositions*

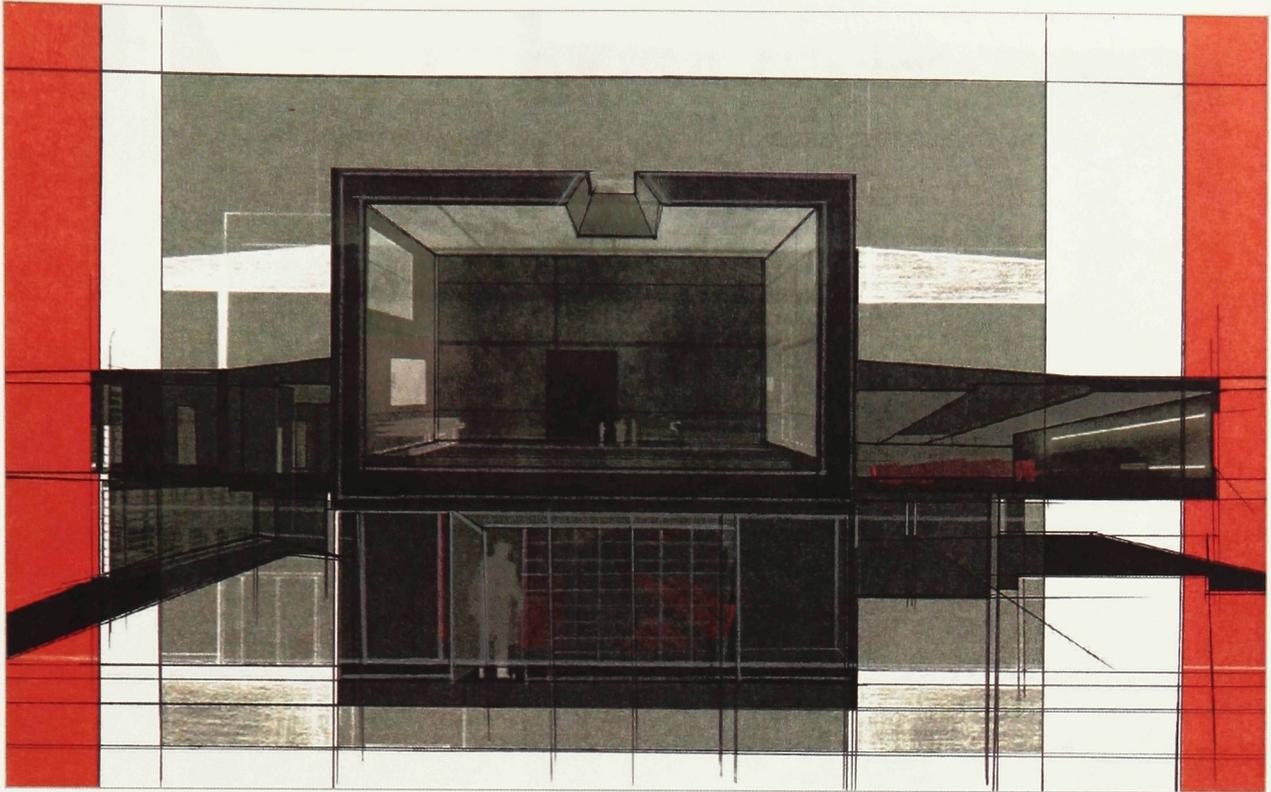


Fig. A-15 – Conceptual Study – Scale (Funeral Home)

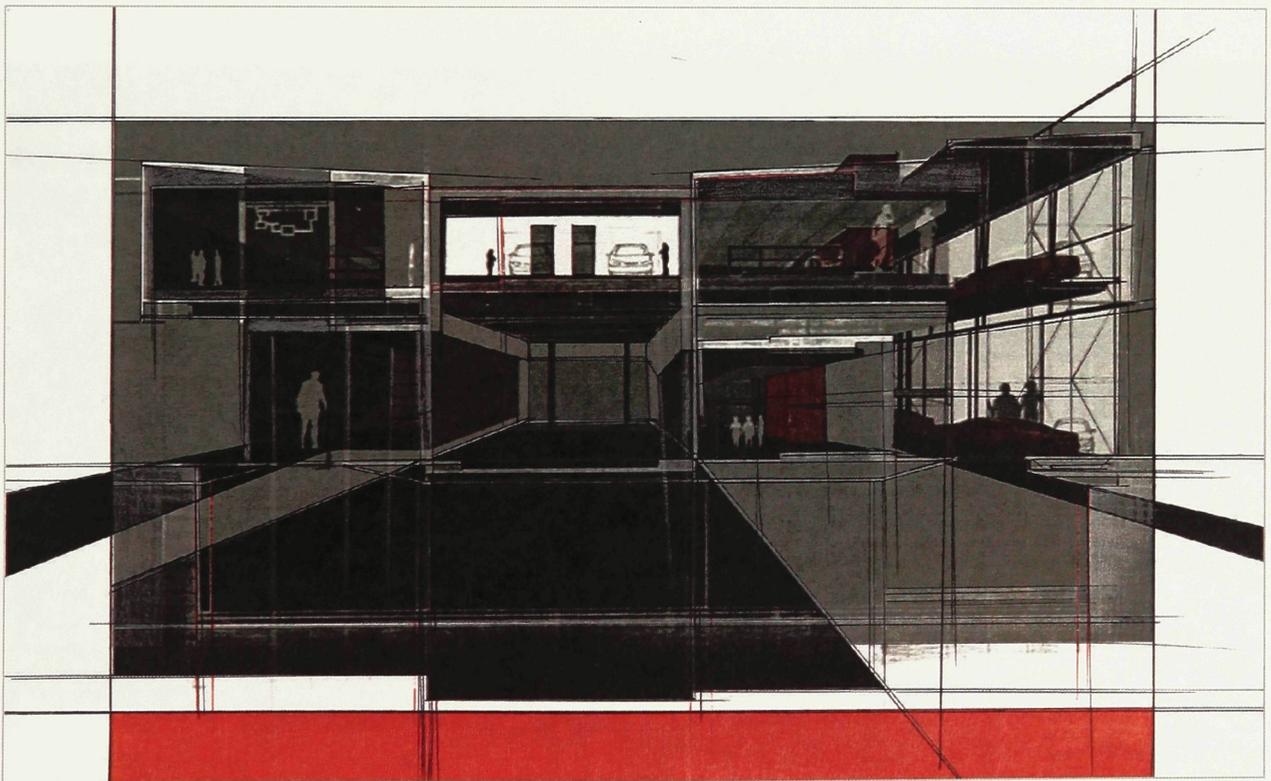


Fig. A-16 – Conceptual Study – Scale (Car Dealership)

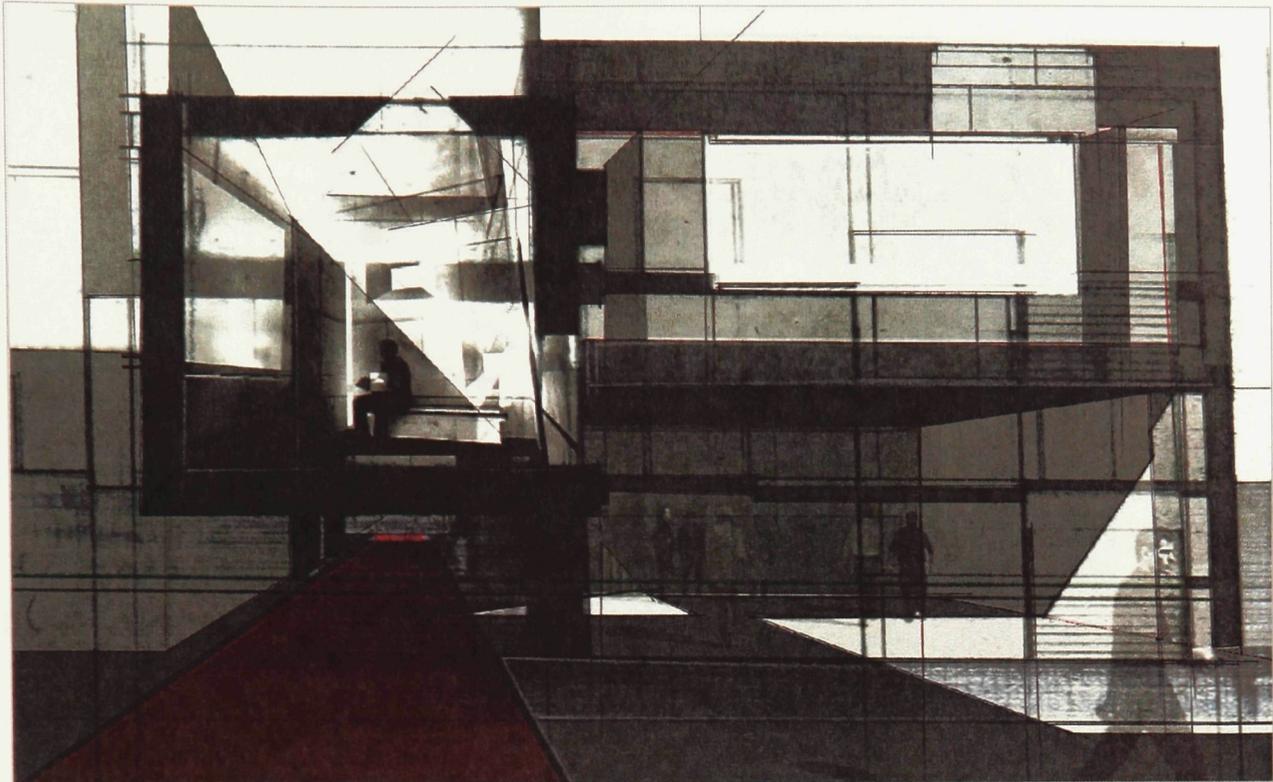


Fig. A-17 – Conceptual Study – Juxtaposition (Funeral Home)

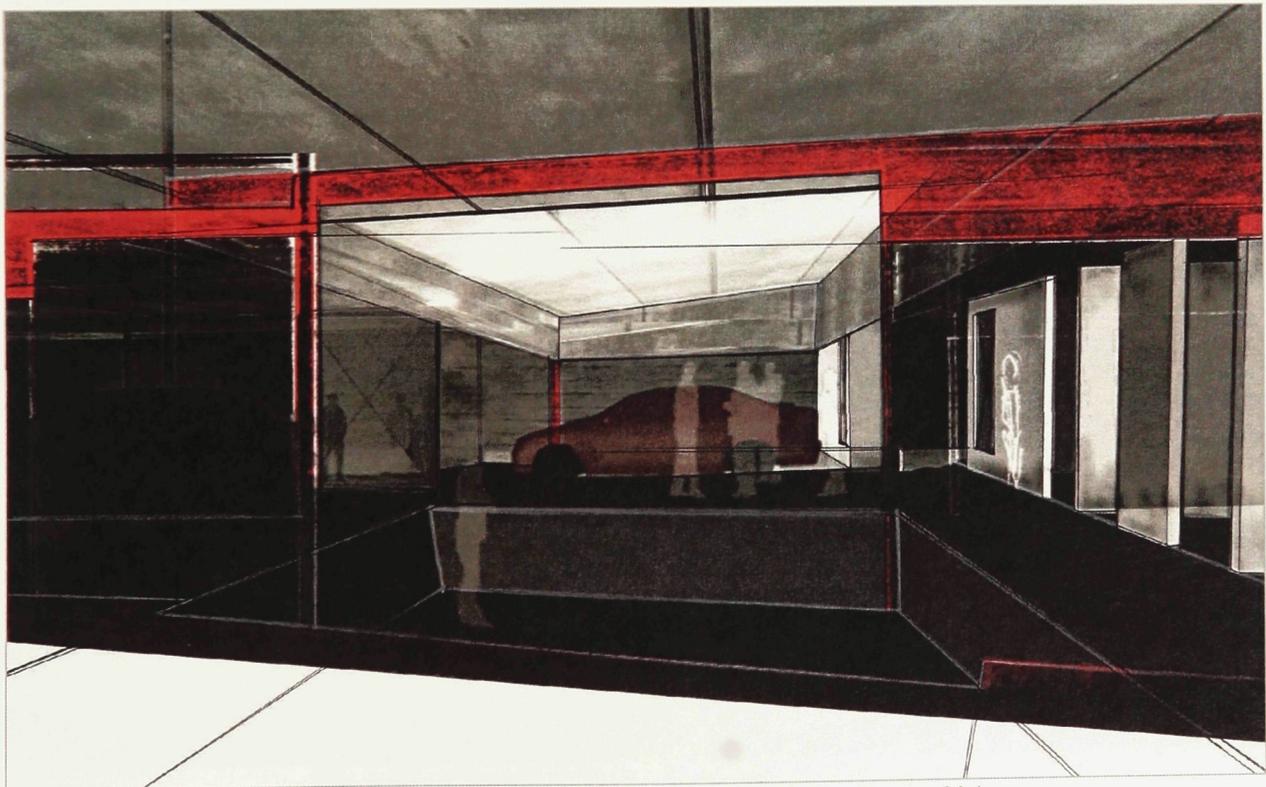


Fig. A-18 – Conceptual Study – Juxtaposition (Car Dealership)

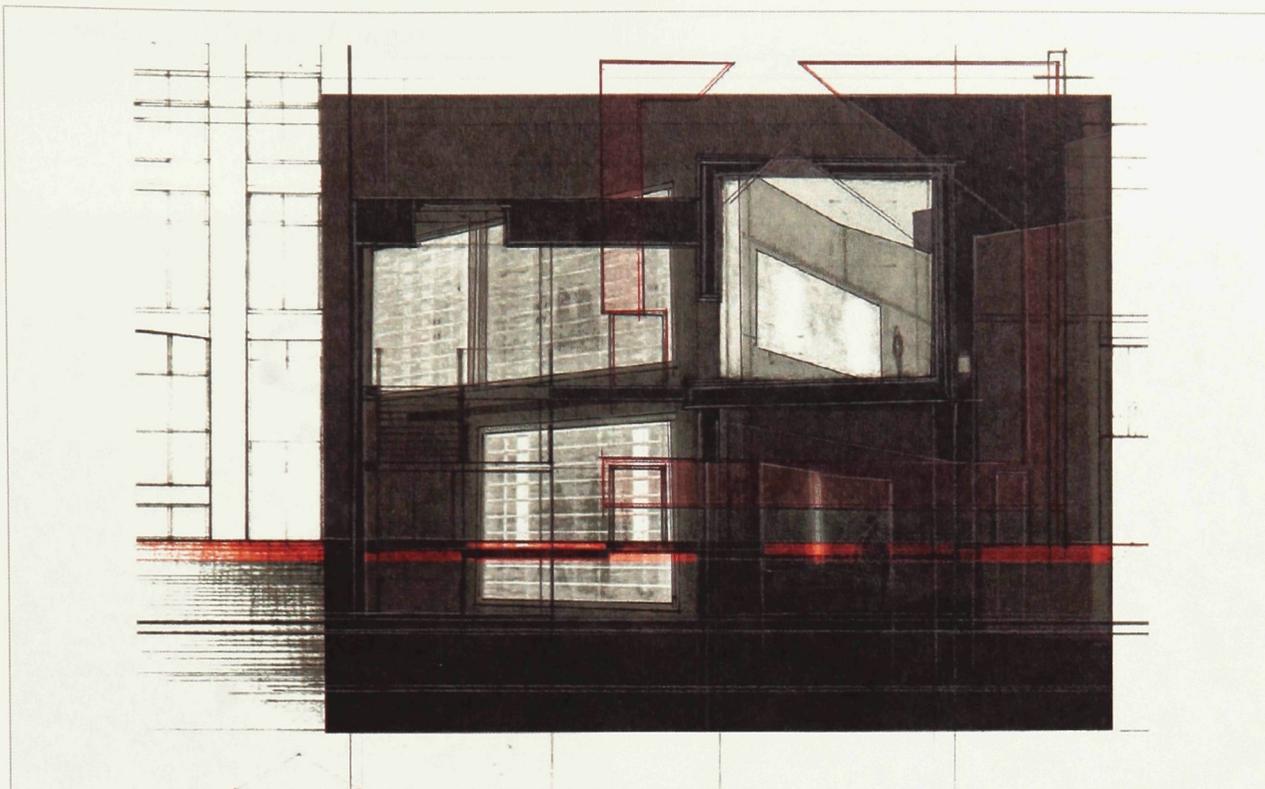


Fig. A-19 – Conceptual Study – Light/Dark (Funeral Home)

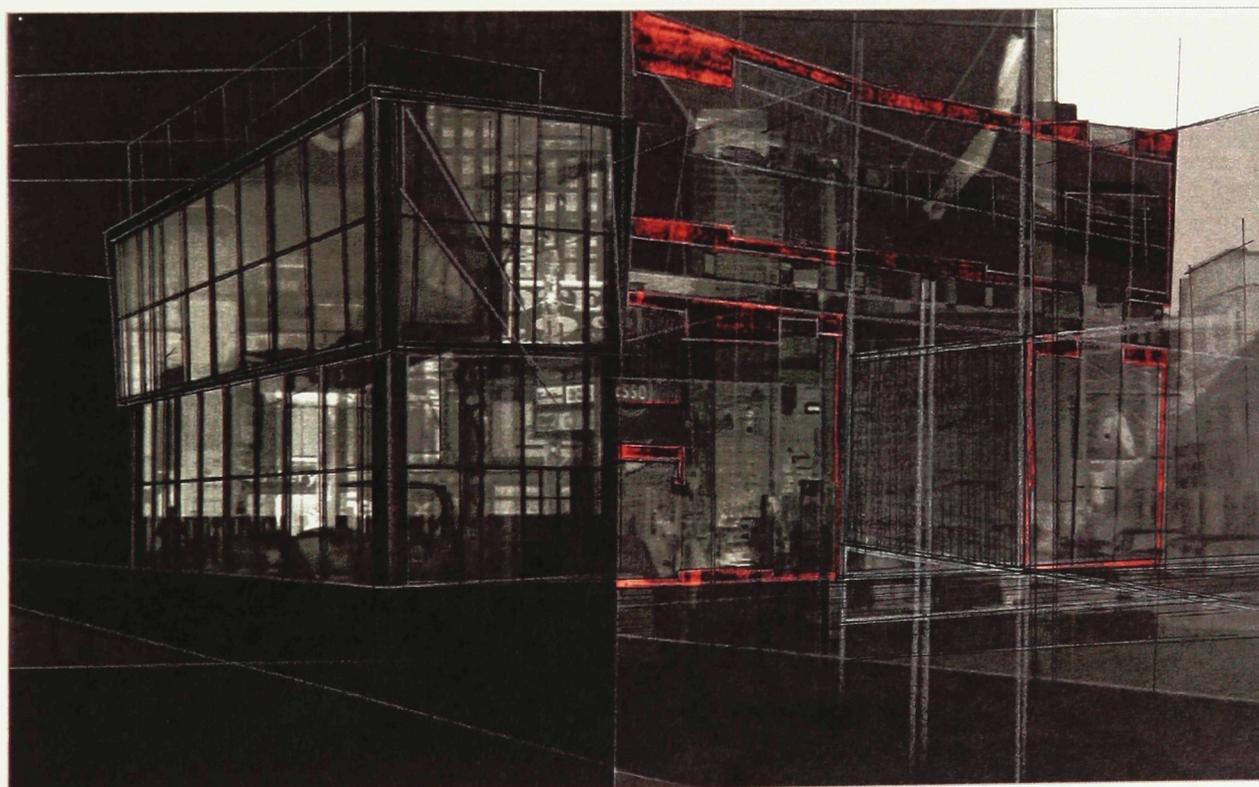


Fig. A-20 – Conceptual Study – Light/Dark (Car Dealership)

Appendix B: Project Images

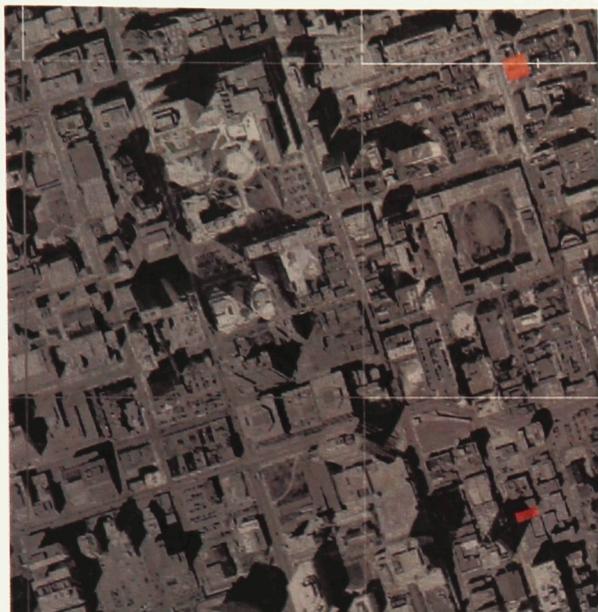


Fig. B-1. – Sites 3 + 4 in context *Aerial Photo*



Fig. B-2. – Sites 3 + 4 in context *Site Map*



Fig. B-3. – Sites 3 + 4 in context *Birds-eye Perspective*

Funeral Home

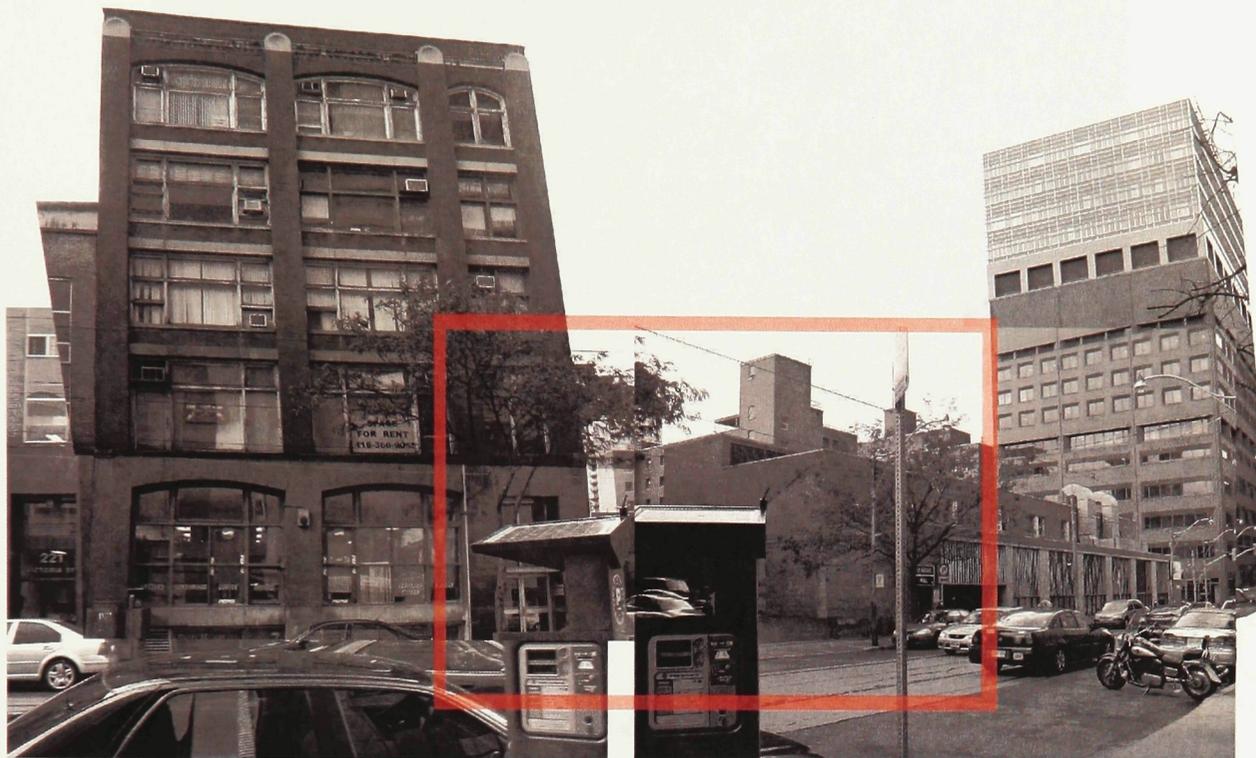


Fig. B-4. – Site 4 - Funeral Home – *Victoria/Shuter St.*



Fig. B-5. – Funeral Home *Birds-eye Perspective*

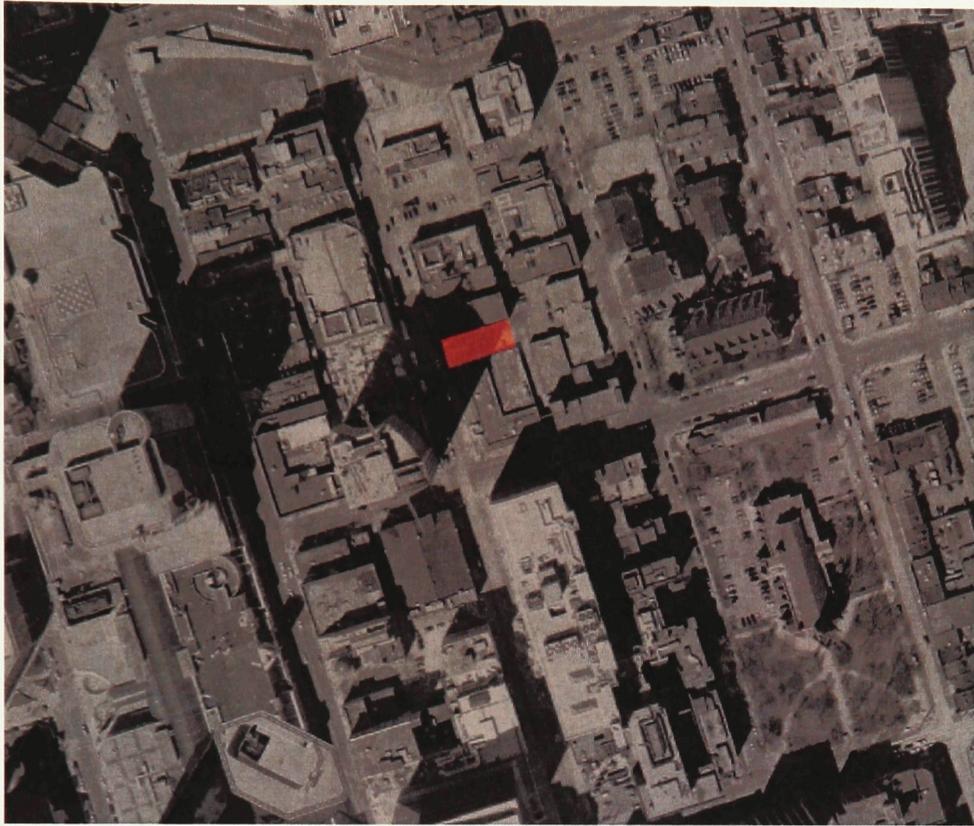


Fig. B-6. – Funeral Home *Aerial Photo*

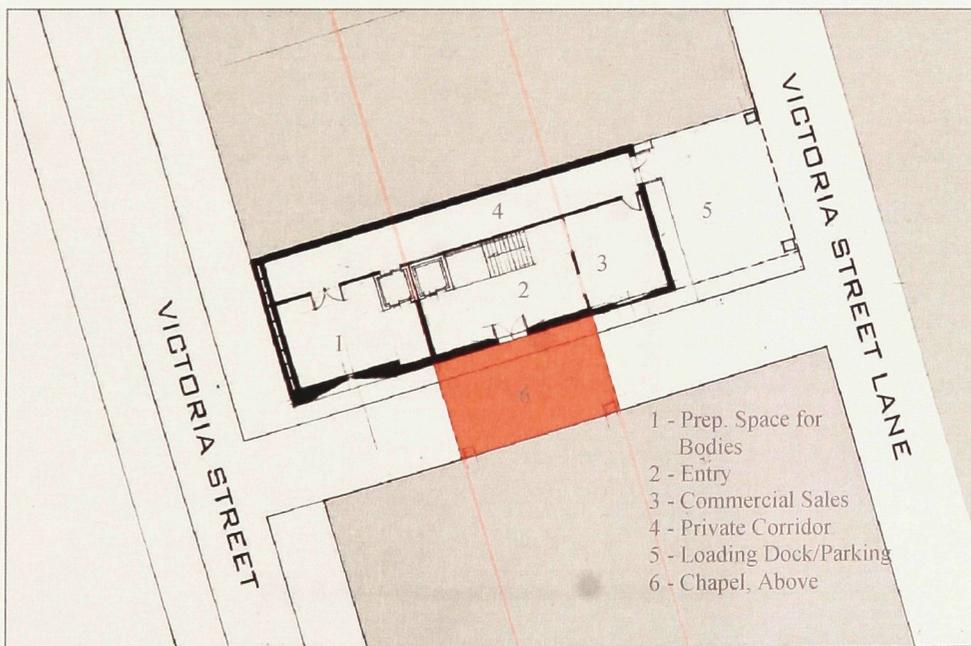


Fig. B-7. – Funeral Home *Site Plan*

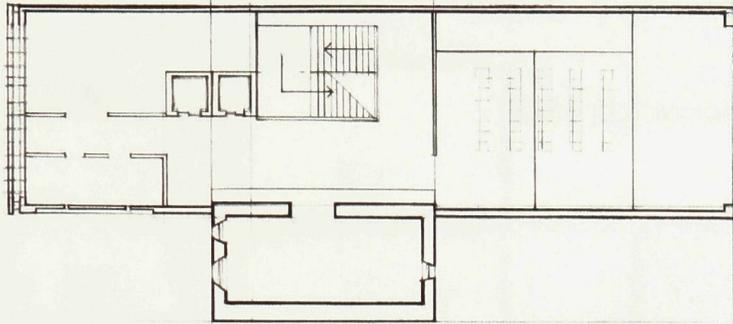


Fig. B-8. – Funeral Home *Second Level- Chapel, Viewing Room, Administrative Space, Services*

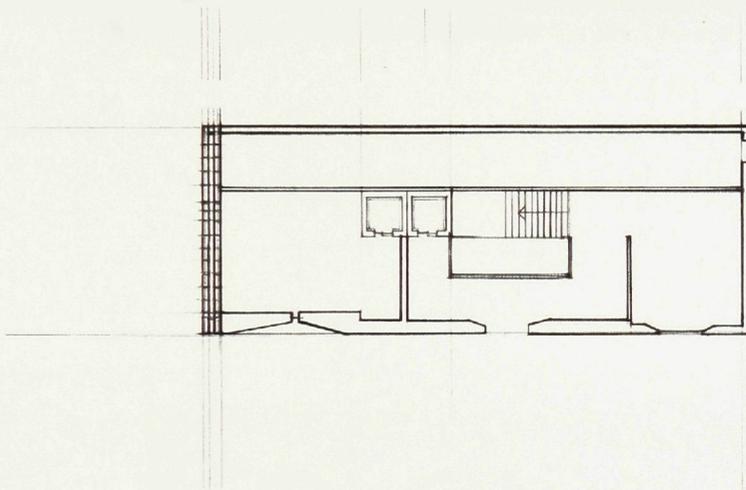


Fig. B-9. – Funeral Home *Ground Level – Prep. Space for Bodies, Commercial Sales*

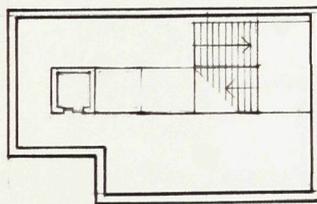


Fig. B-10. – Funeral Home *Basement Level*

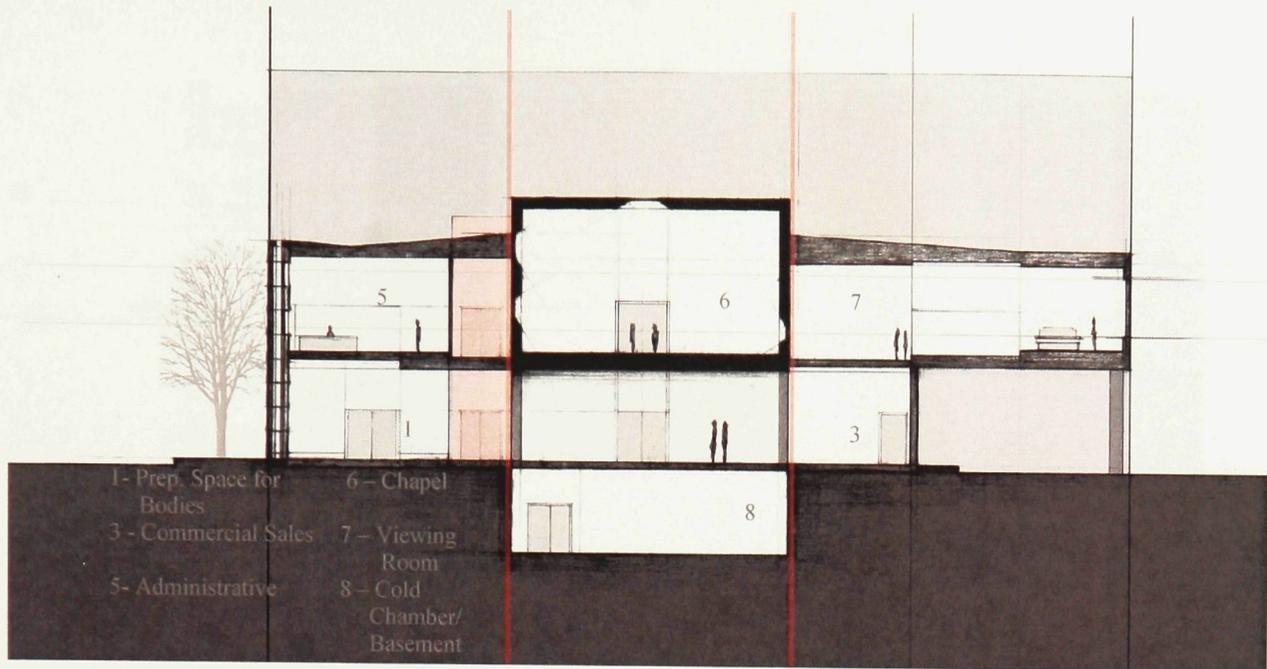


Fig. B-11. – Funeral Home *Longitudinal Section Through Chapel +Main Spaces*

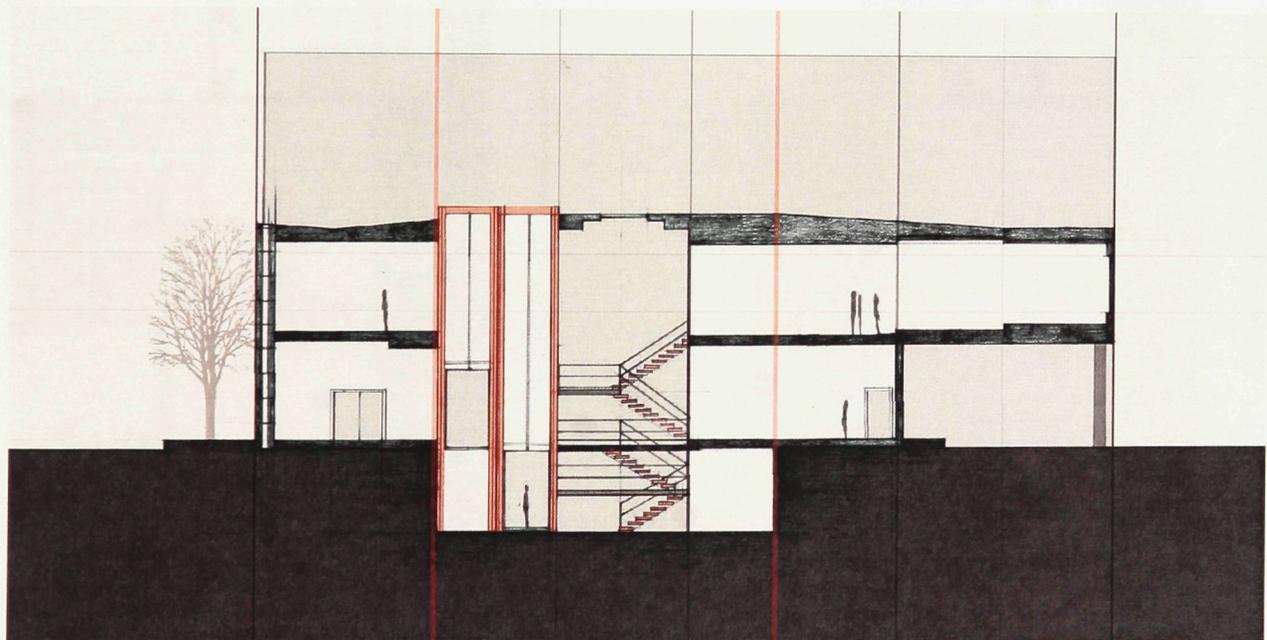


Fig. B-12. – Funeral Home *Longitudinal Section Through Circulation +Main Spaces*

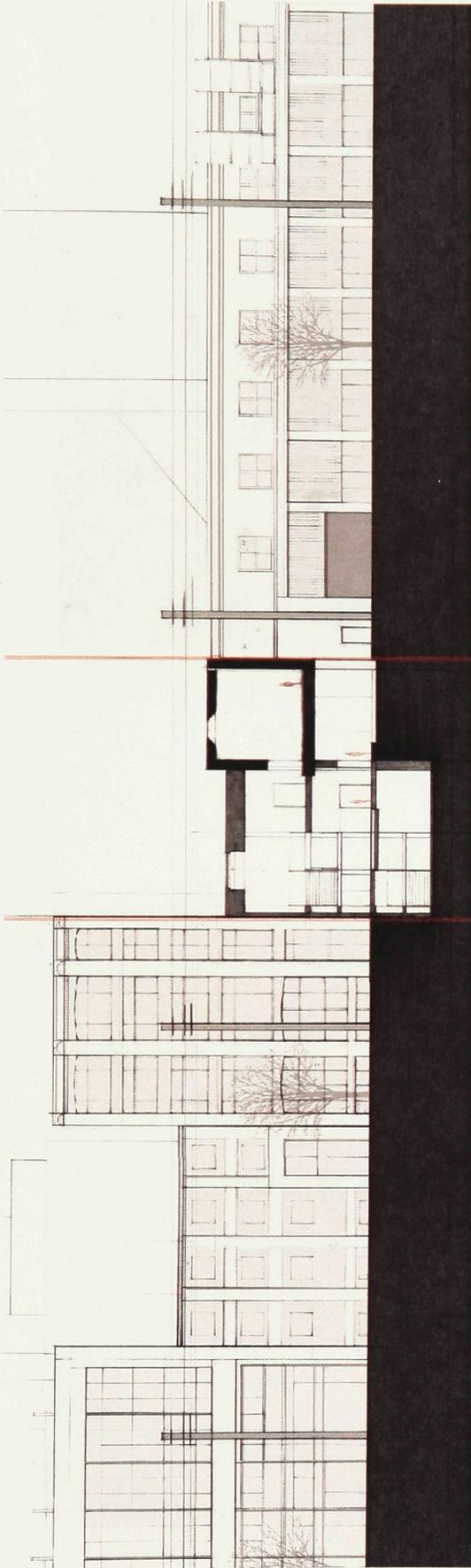


Fig. B-13. – Funeral Home Cross-Section Through Circulation + Main Spaces

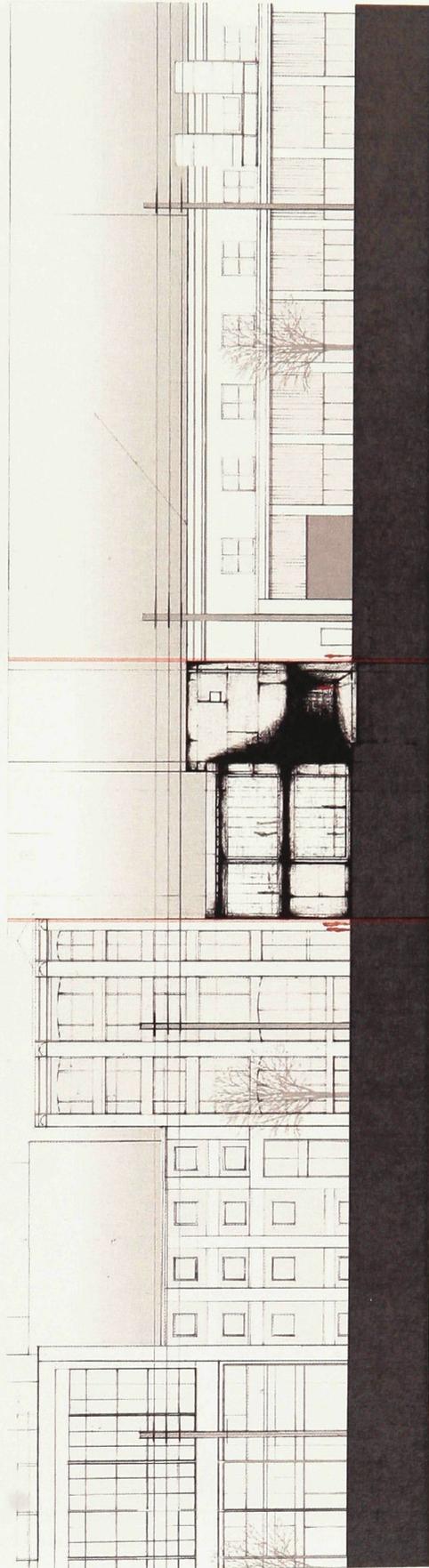


Fig. B-14.– Funeral Home Street Elevation

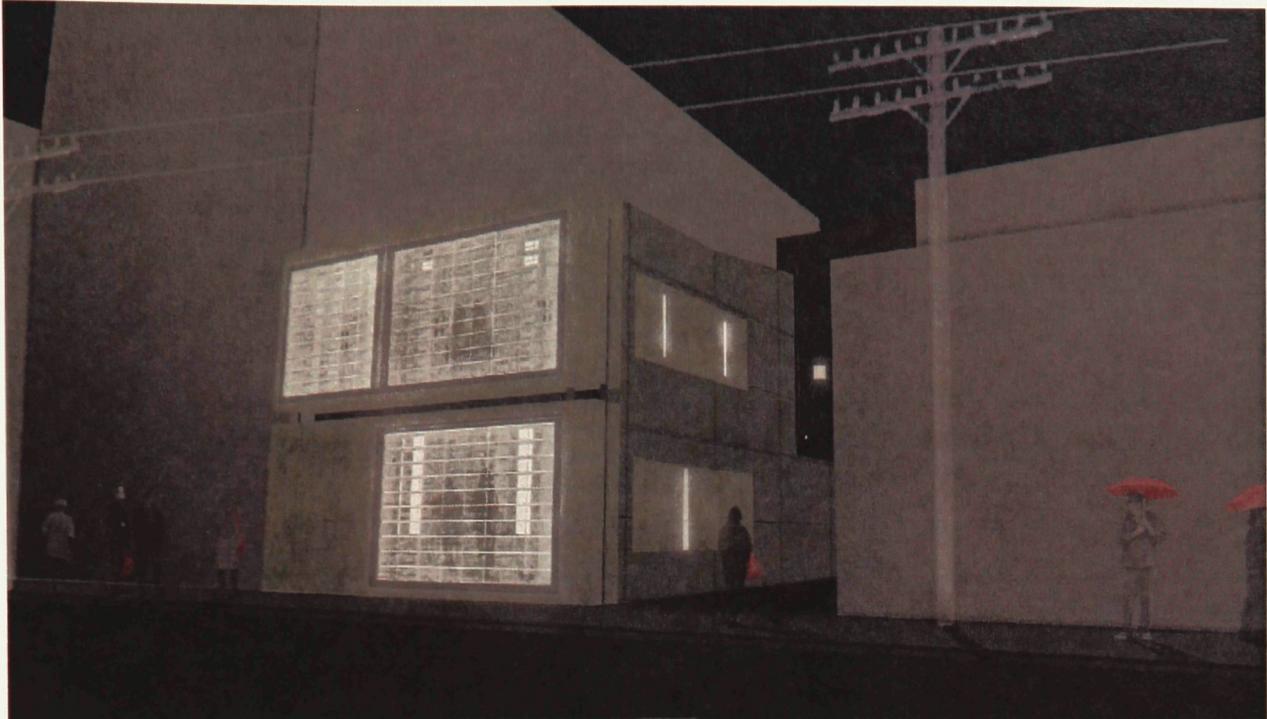


Fig. B-15. – Funeral Home *Night View – From Victoria Street*

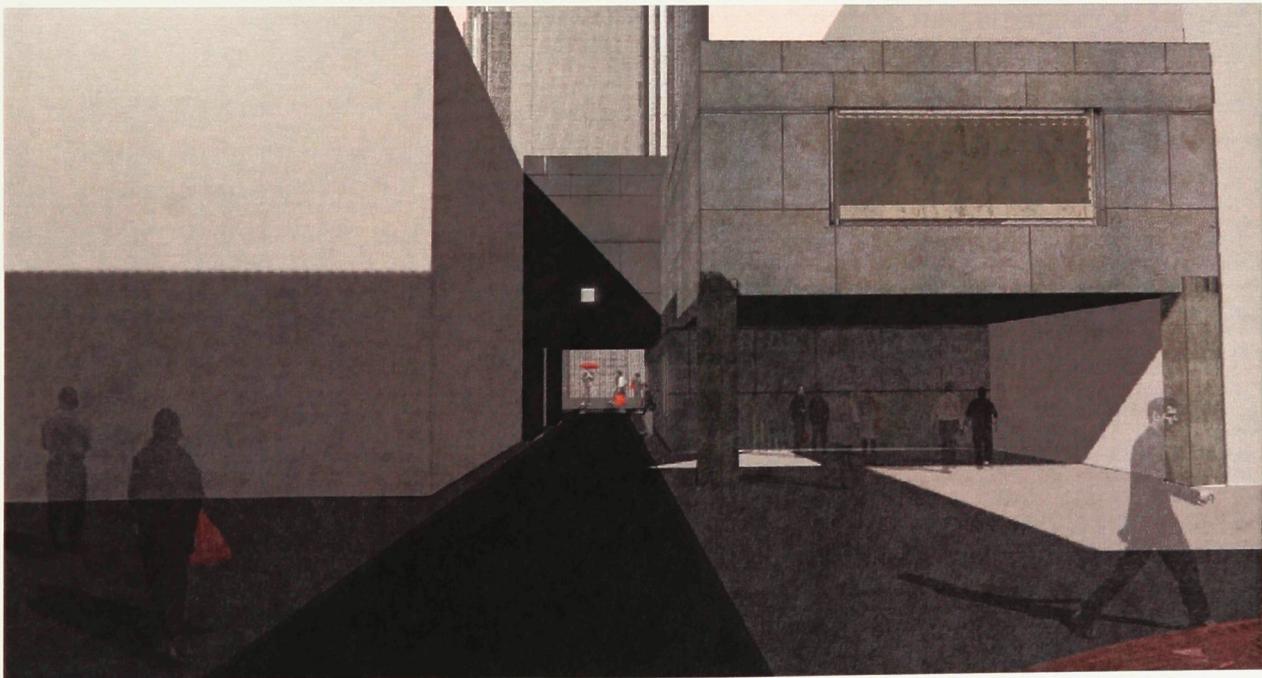


Fig. B-16. – Funeral Home *View From Victoria Street Lane*

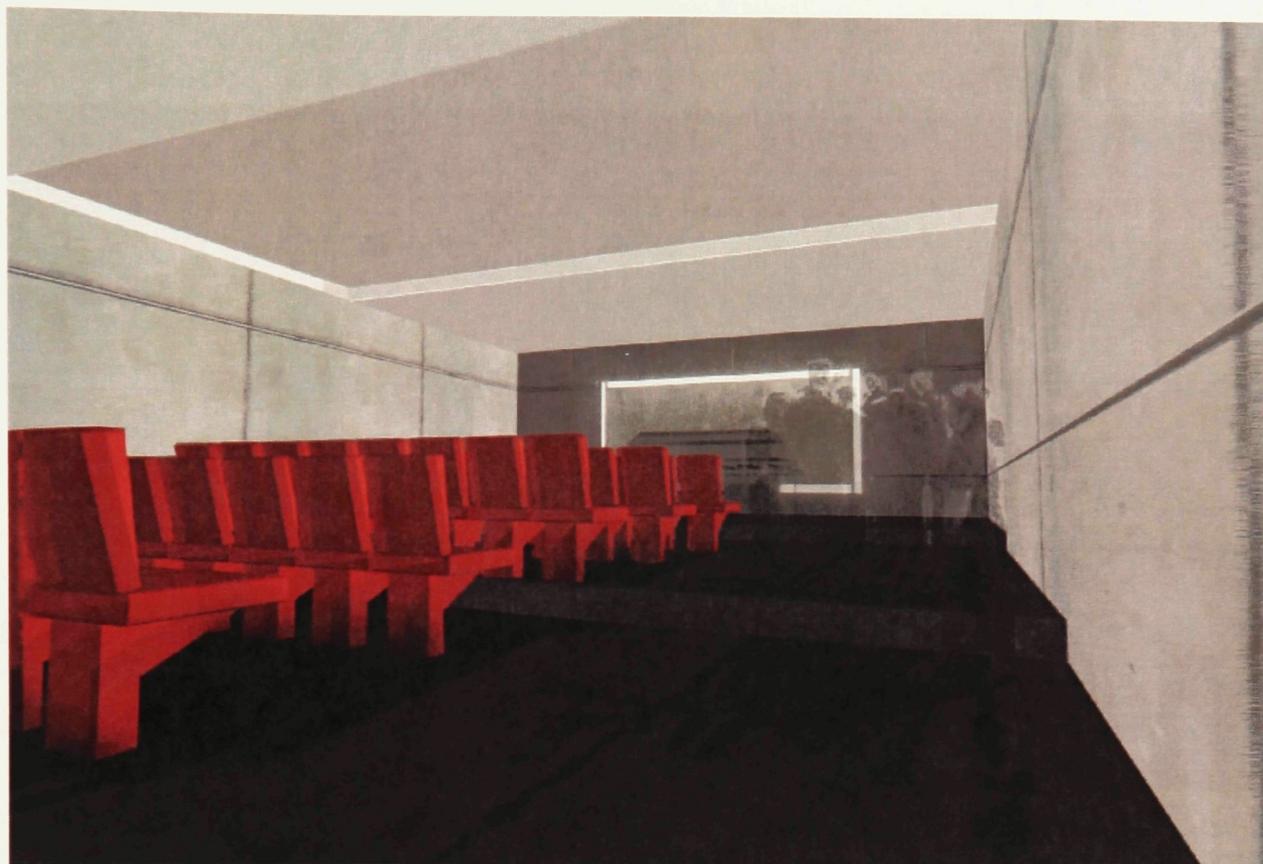


Fig. B-17. – Funeral Home *Viewing Room*

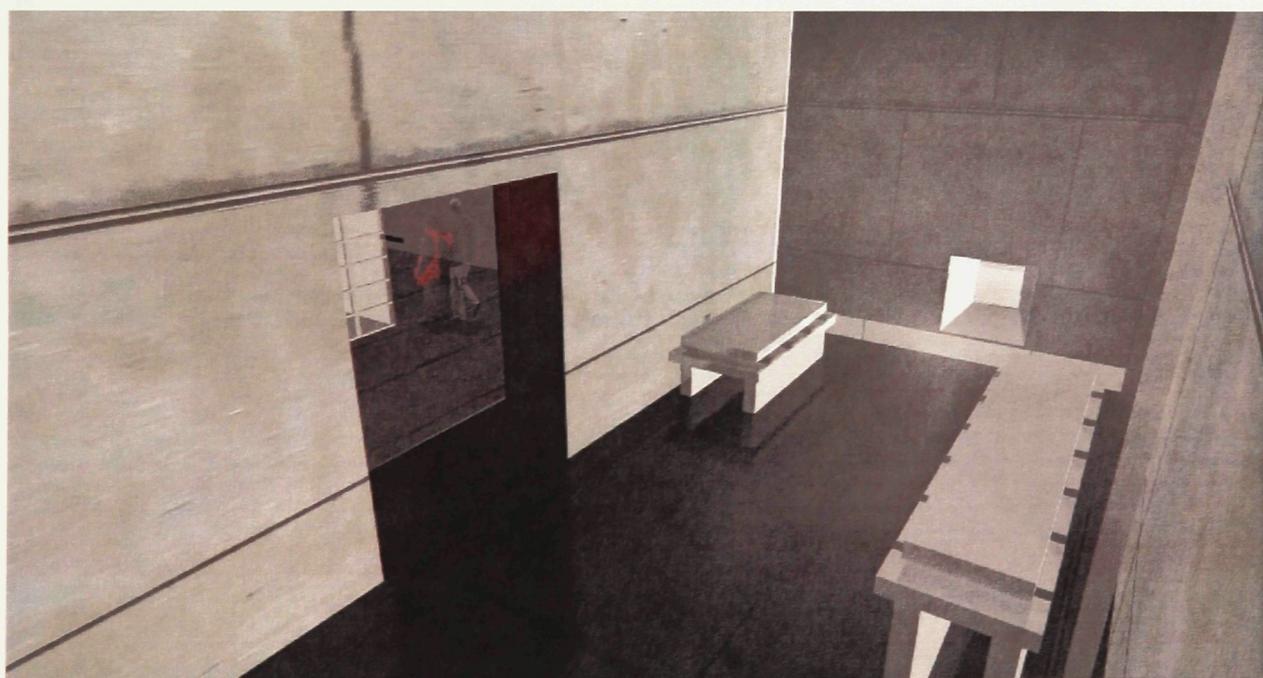


Fig. B-18. – Funeral Home *Chapel*

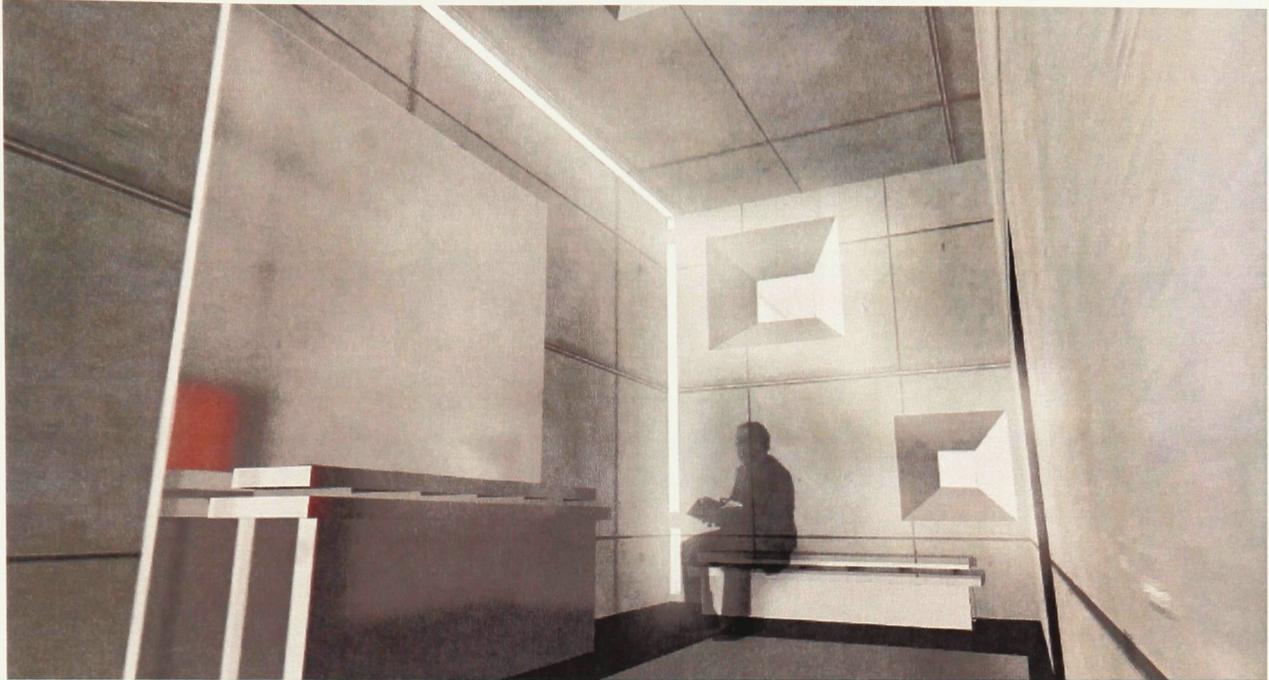


Fig. B-19. – Funeral Home *Chapel*

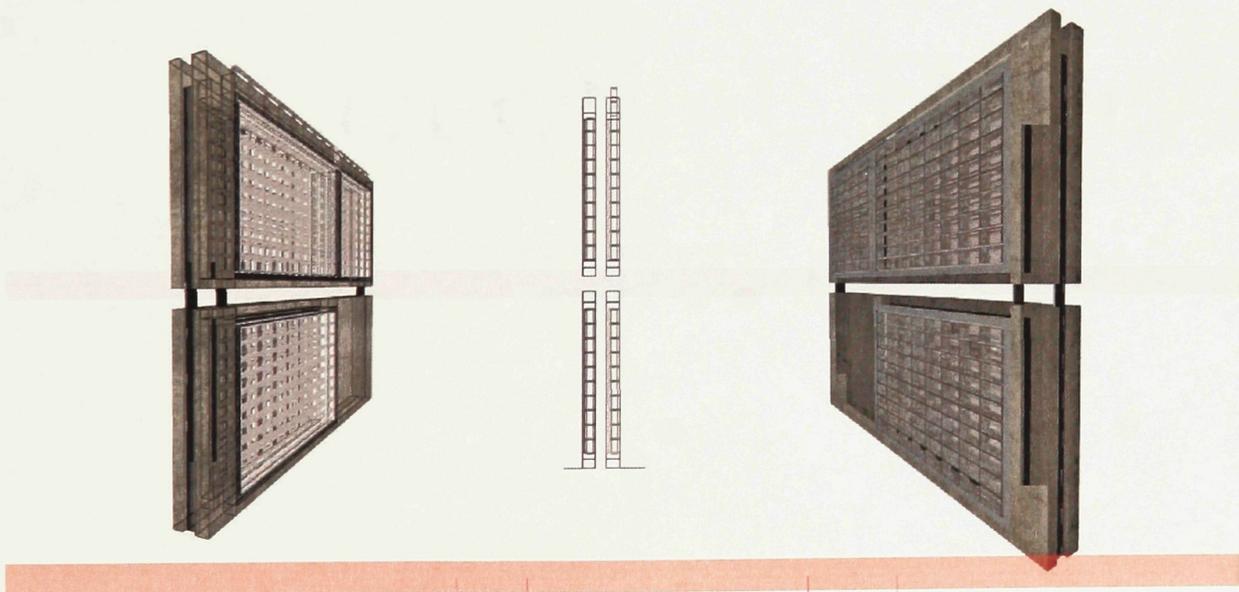


Fig. B-20. – Funeral Home *Front Façade- Detail*

Car Dealership

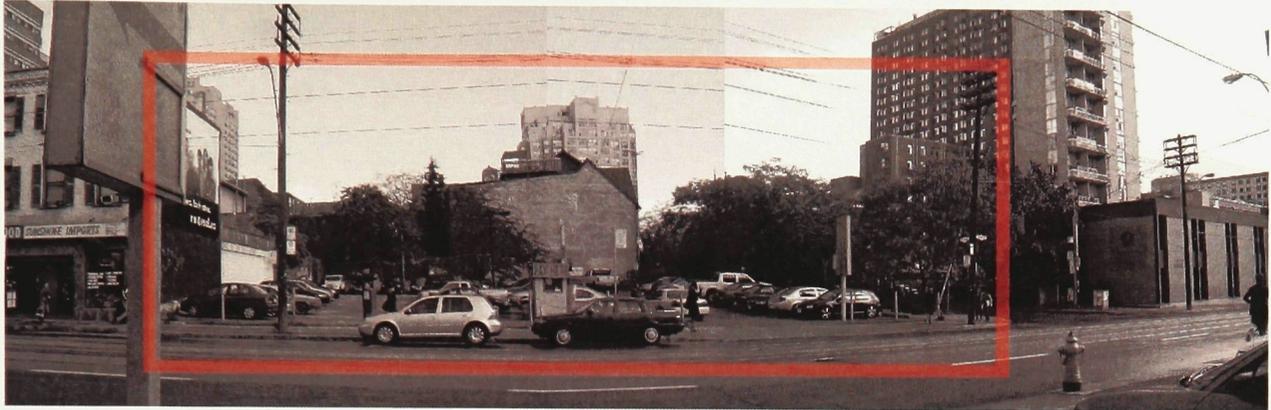


Fig. B-21. – Site 3 - Car Dealership *Church/McGill St.*

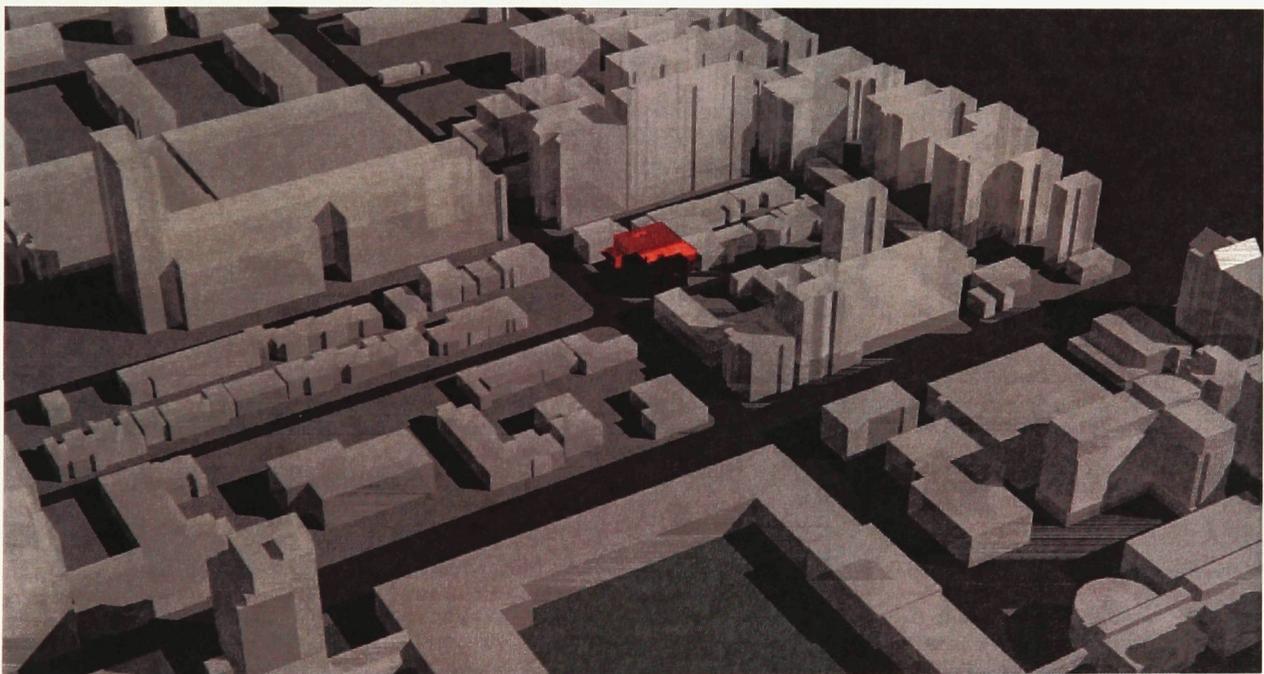


Fig. B-22. – Car Dealership *Birds-eye Perspective*



Fig. B-23. – Car Dealership *Aerial Photo*

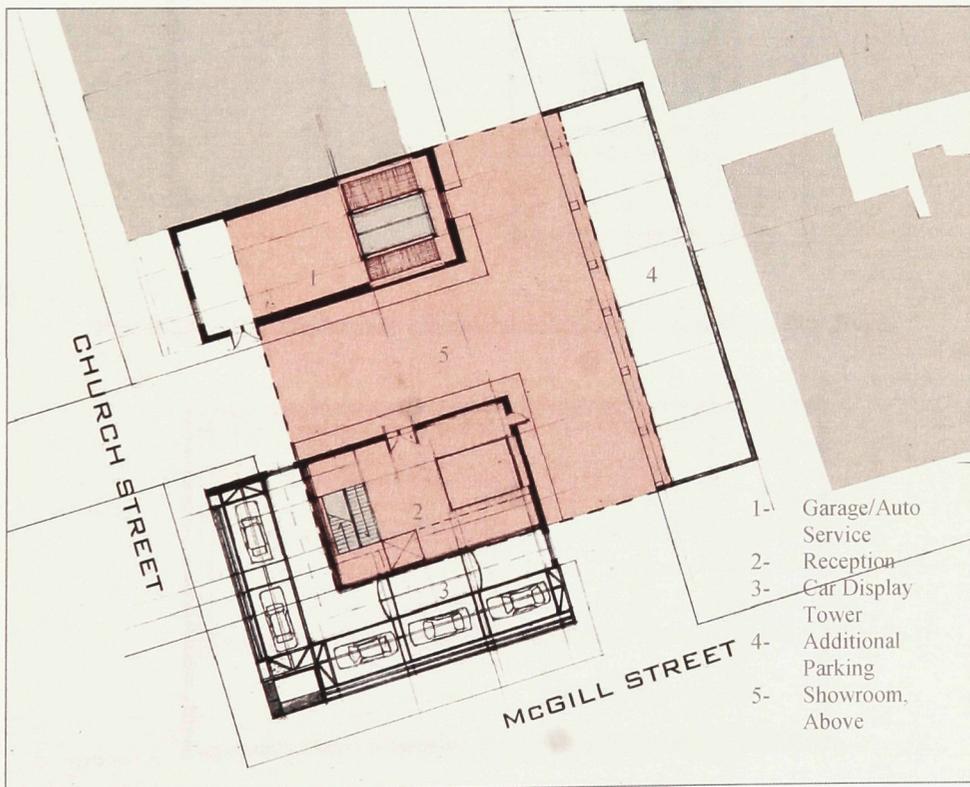


Fig. B-24. – Car Dealership *Site Plan*

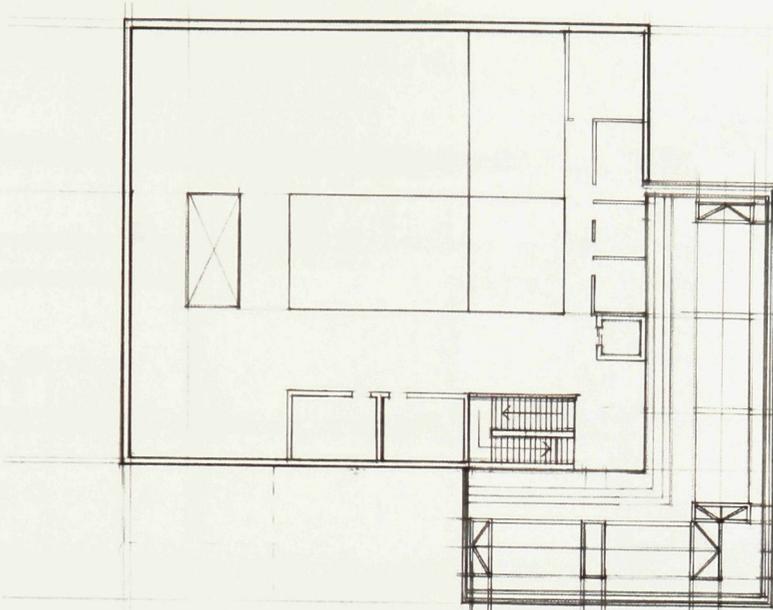


Fig. B-25. – Car Dealership *Second Level – Showroom, Car Tower*

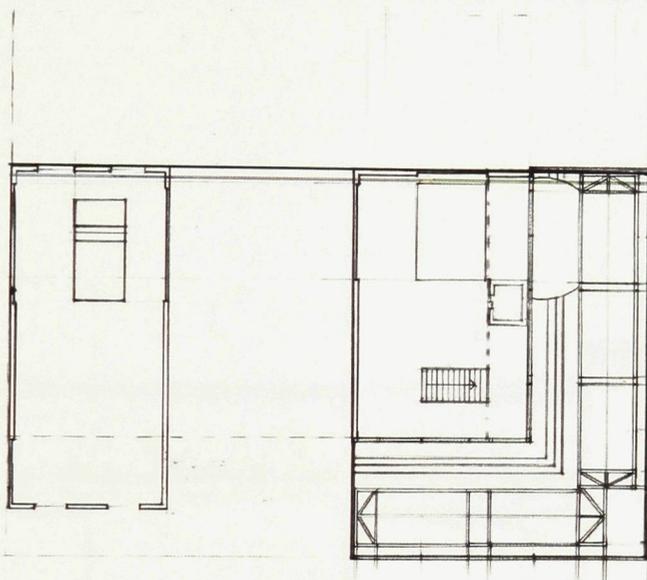


Fig. B-26. – Car Dealership *Ground Level- Garage, Reception, Car Tower*

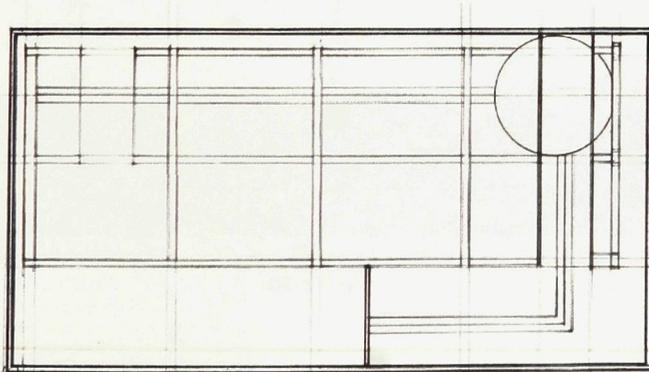


Fig. B-27. – Car Dealership *Basement Level – Car Lift Mechanism, Parking Garage*

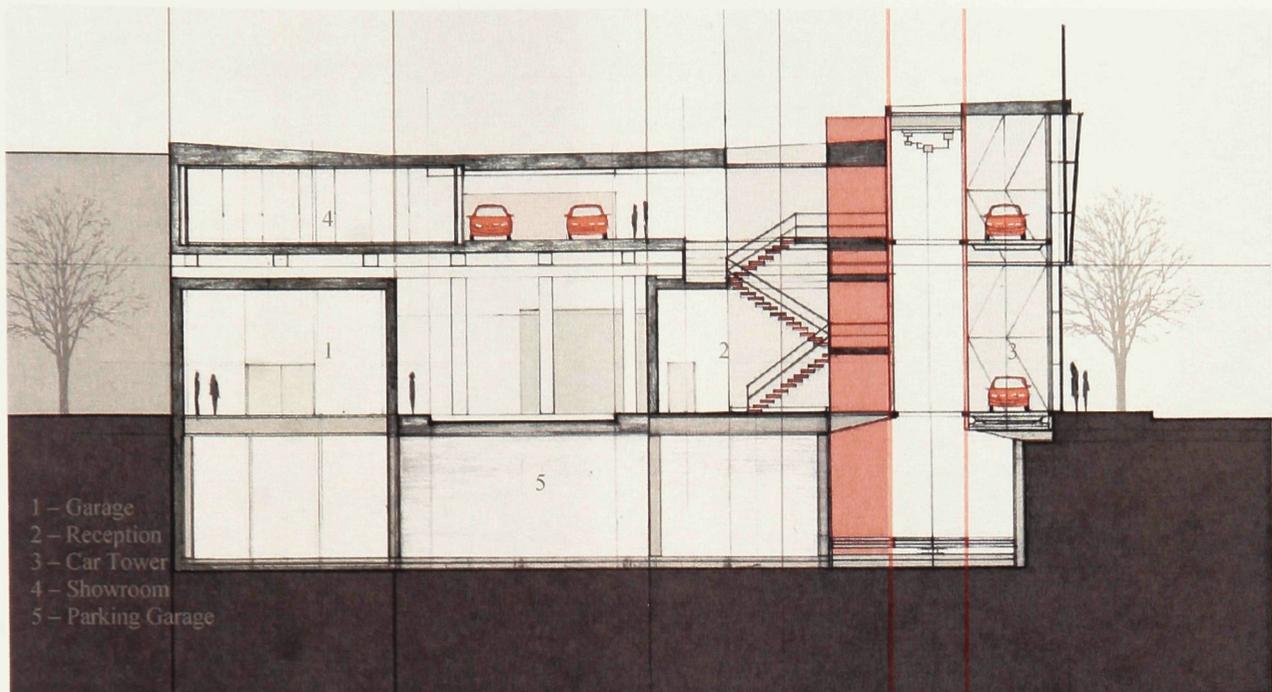


Fig. B-28. – Car Dealership *Longitudinal Section Through Showroom, Garage, Car Tower, Reception and Parking*

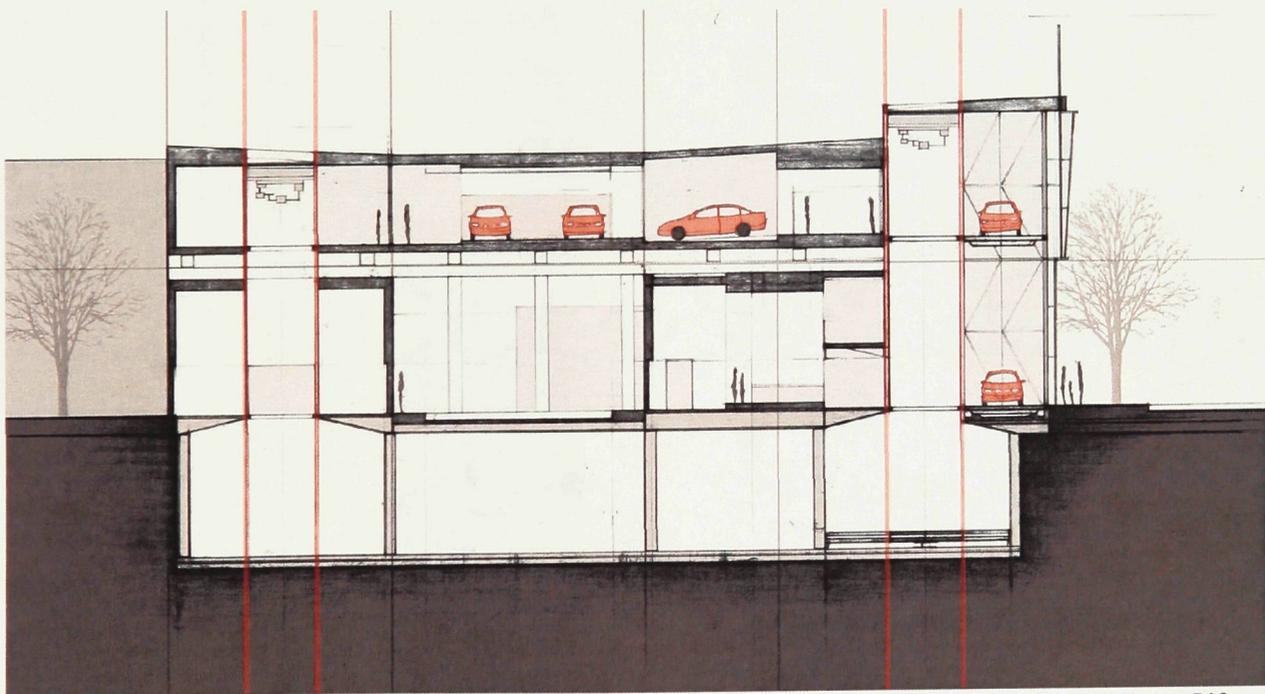


Fig. B-29. – Car Dealership *Longitudinal Section Through Showroom, Garage, Car Tower, Reception + Lift Mechanism*

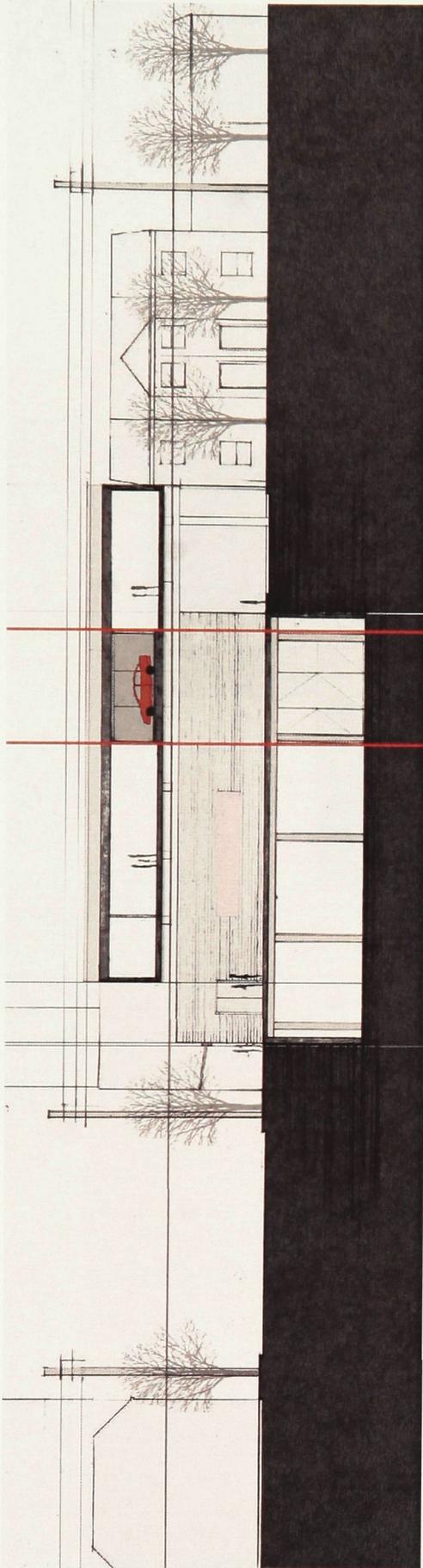


Fig. B-30. – Car Dealership Cross-Section Through Showroom; Parking Garage Elevation

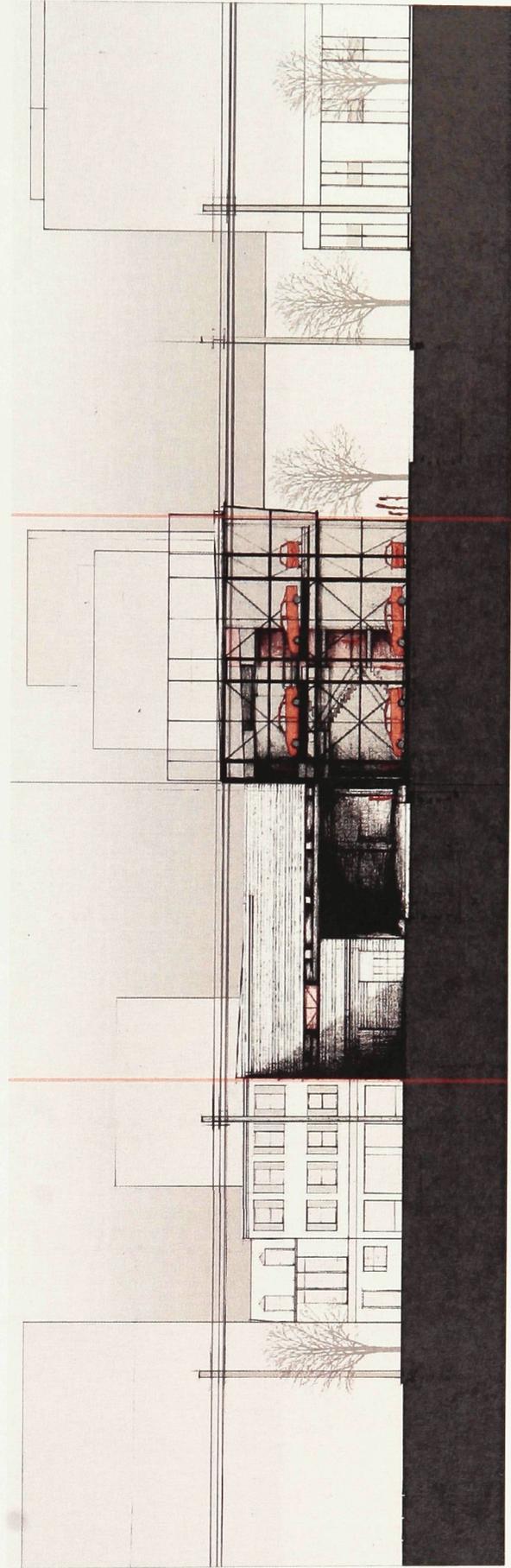


Fig. B-31. – Car Dealership Street Elevation

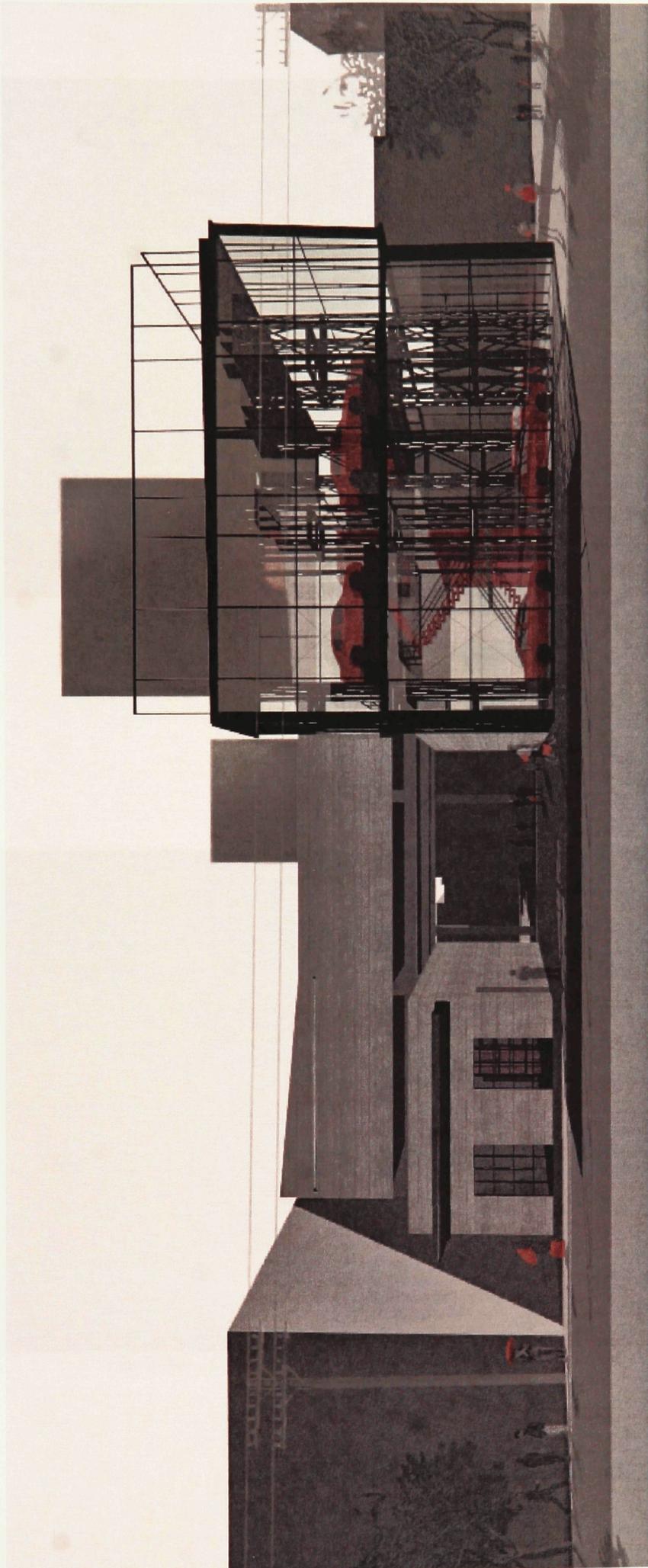


Fig. B-32. – Car Dealership View From Church Street



Fig. B-33. – Car Dealership *Night View – From McGill Street*



Fig. B-34. – Car Dealership *Night View – From McGill Street*

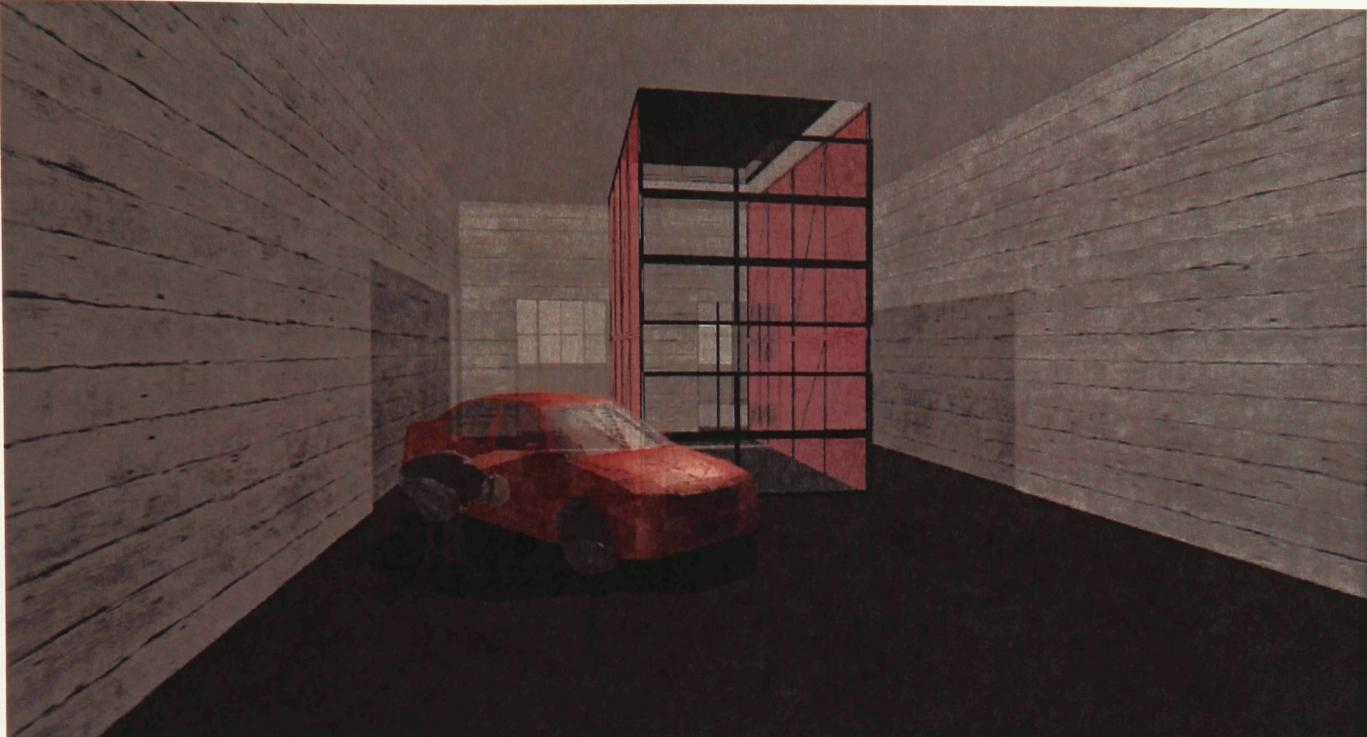


Fig. B-35. – Car Dealership *View of Garage*

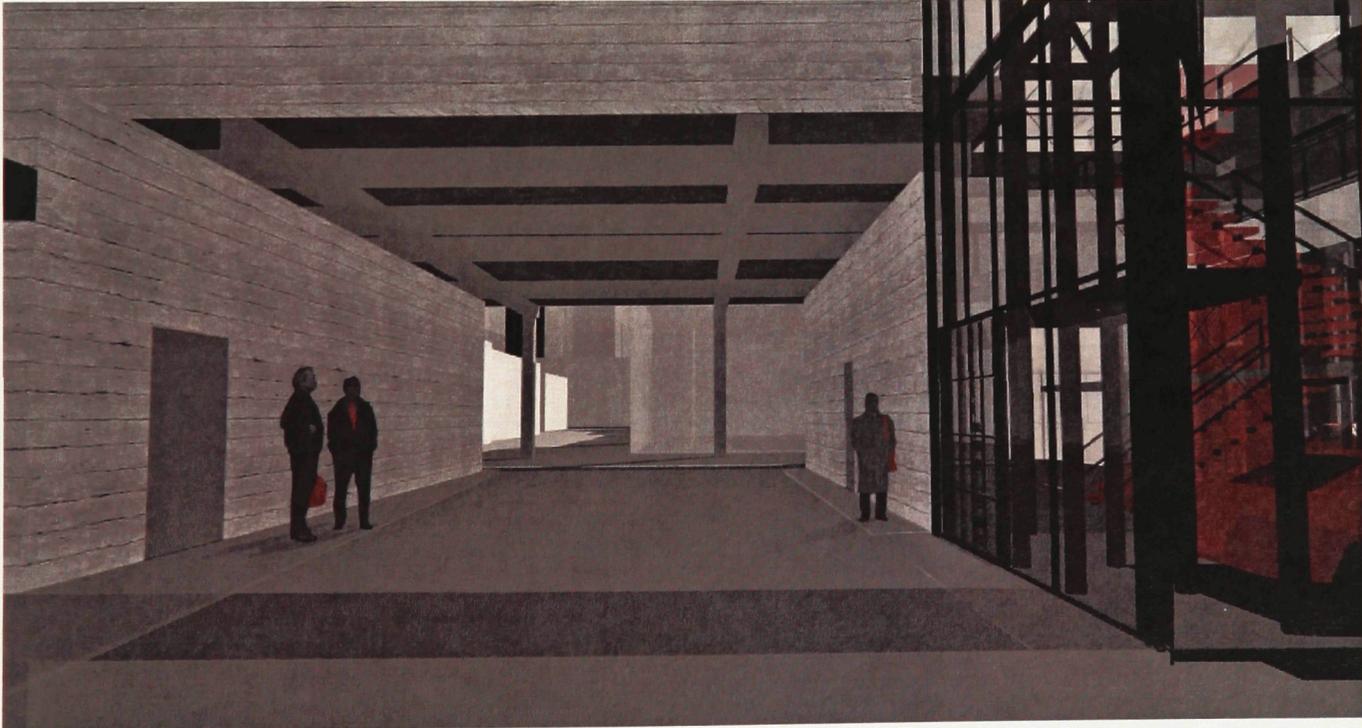


Fig. B-36. – Car Dealership *View of Front Entry*

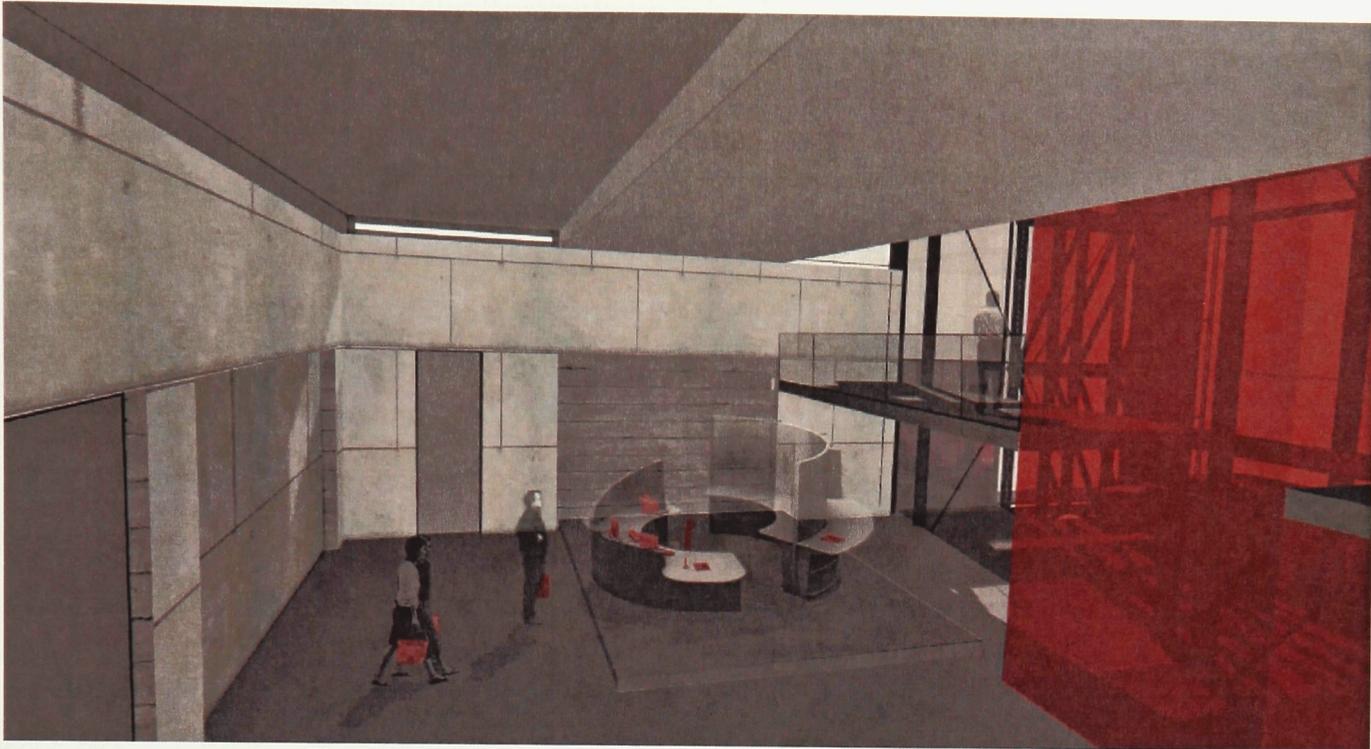


Fig. B-37. – Car Dealership *View of Reception From Mezzanine Level*

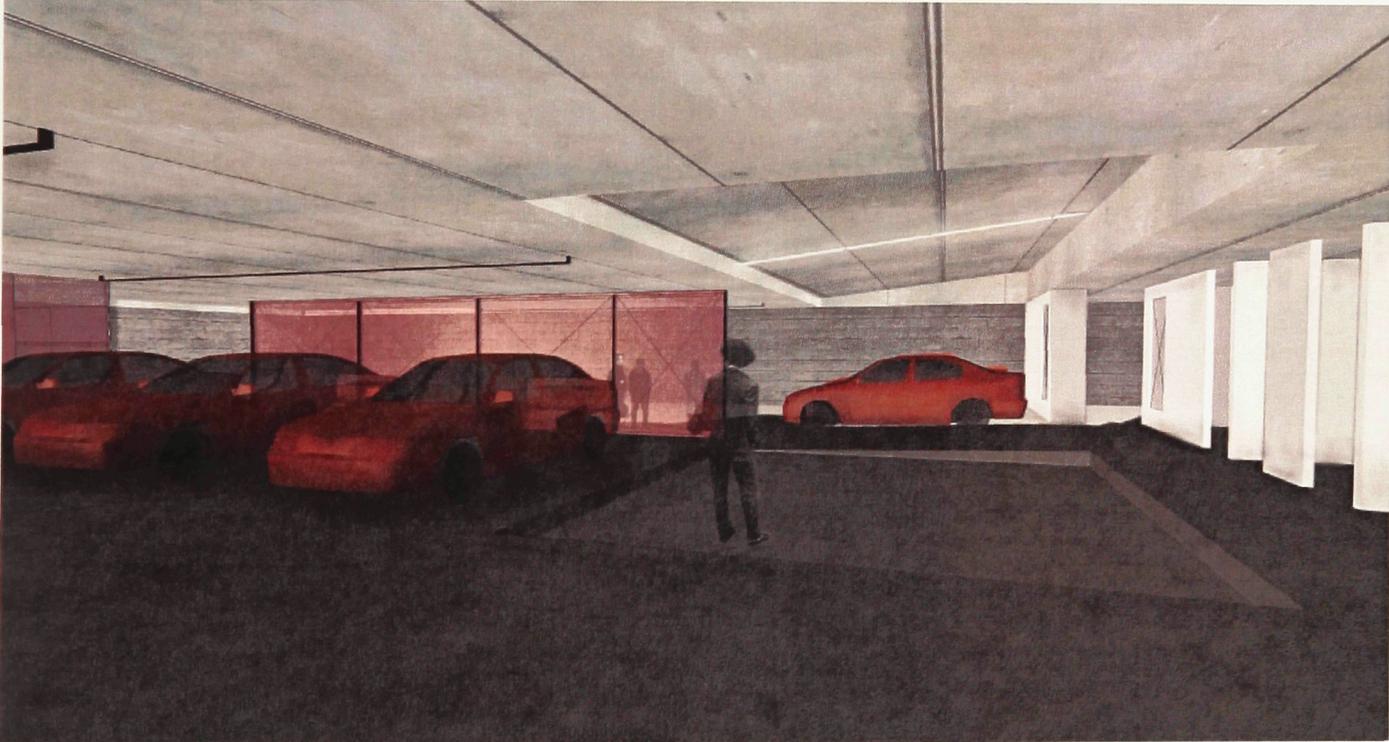


Fig. B-38. – Car Dealership *View of Showroom, Offices*

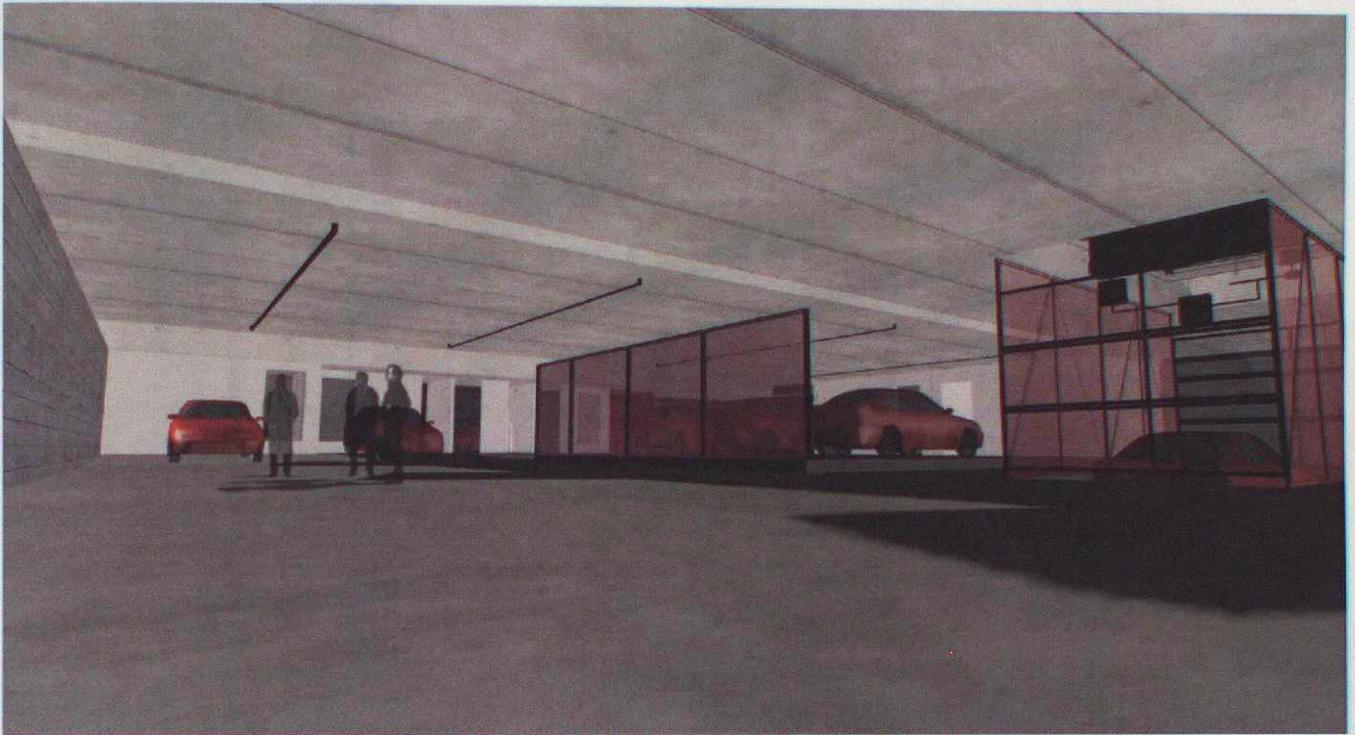


Fig. B-39. – Car Dealership *View of Showroom, Car Lift*

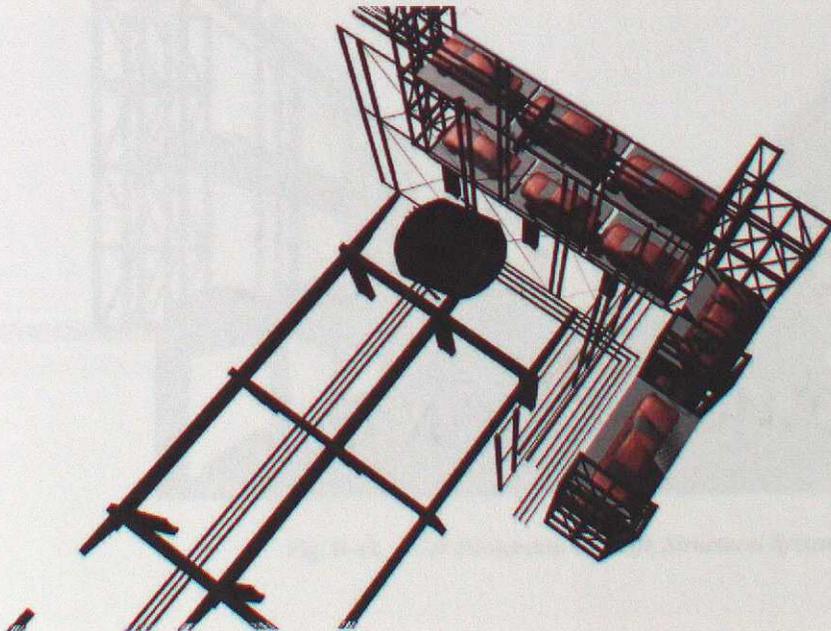


Fig. B-40. – Car Dealership *Car Lift, Structural System*

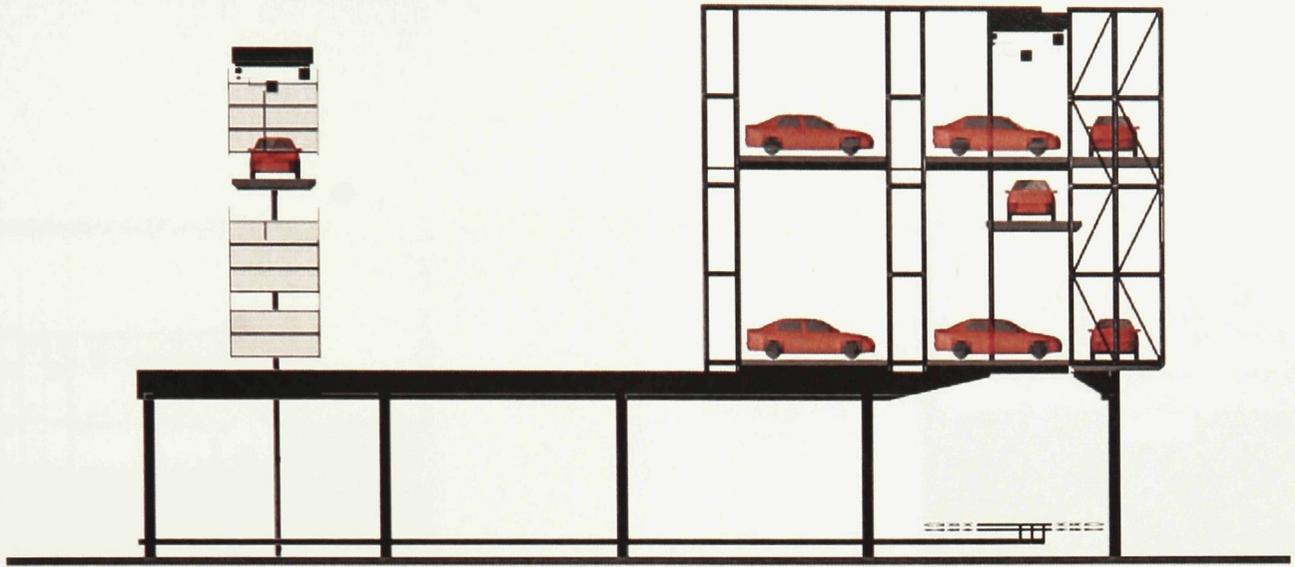


Fig. B-41. – Car Dealership *Car Lift, Structural System*

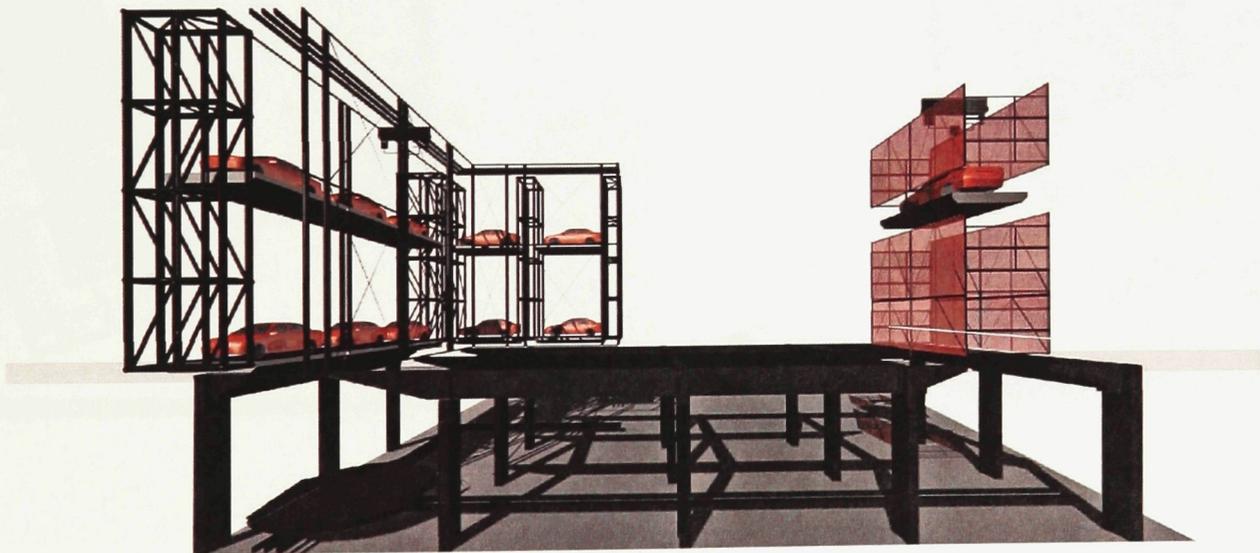


Fig. B-42. – Car Dealership *Car Lift, Structural System*

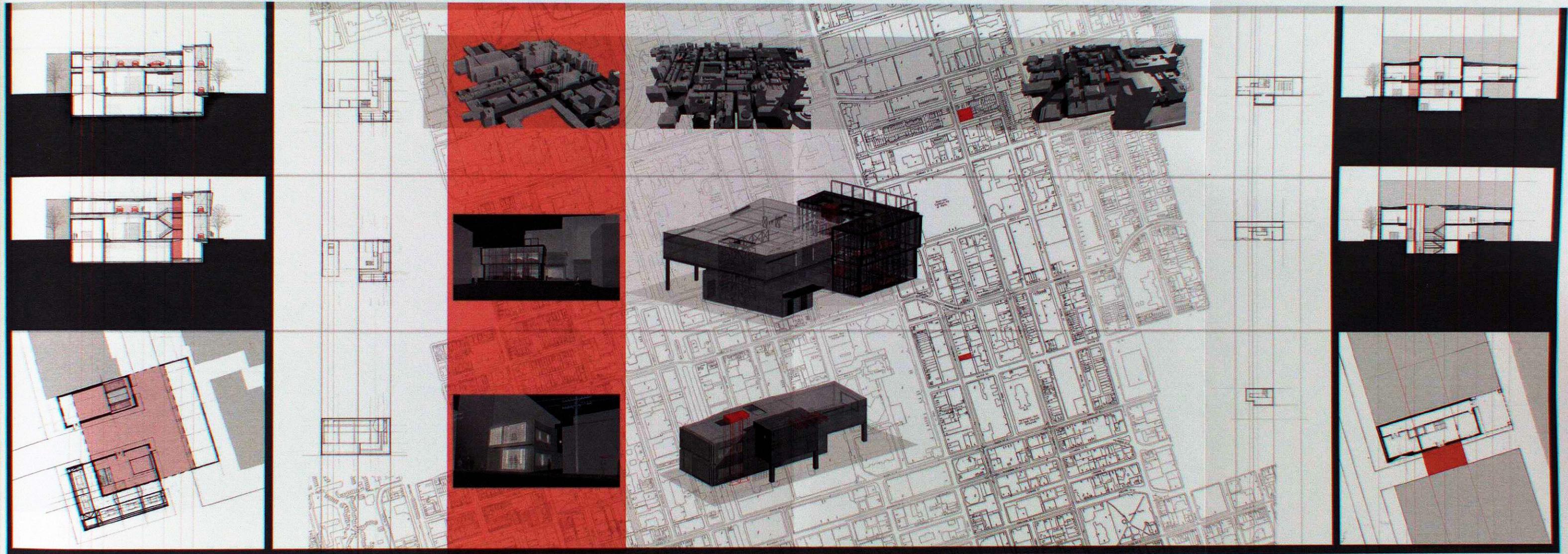


Fig. B-43. - Final Presentation Panels (60" X 165")

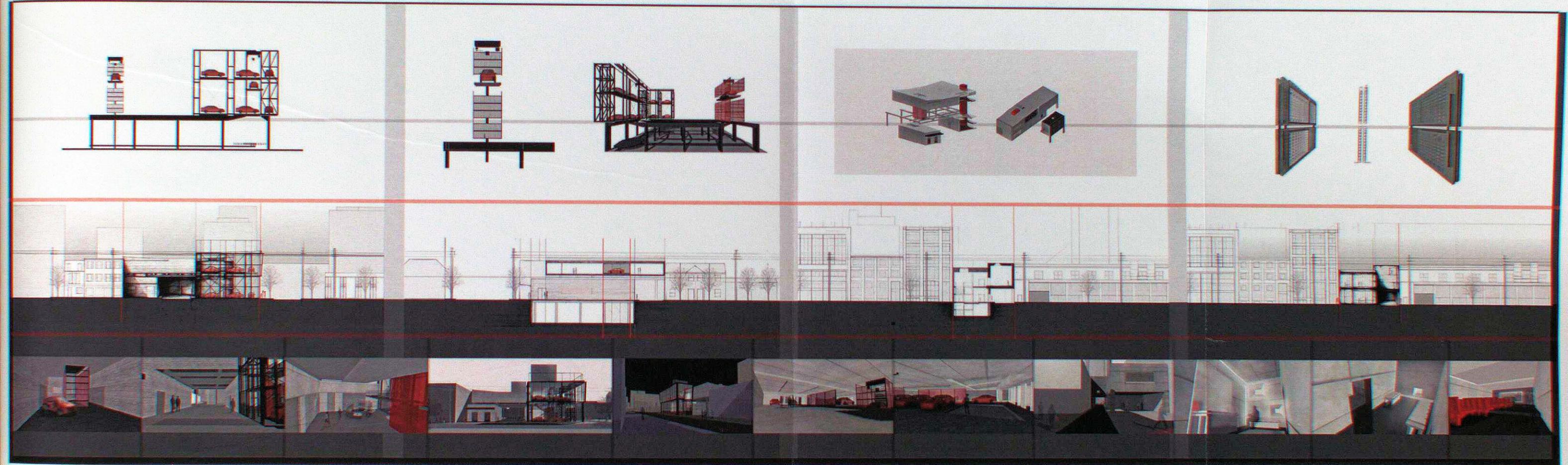


Fig. B-44 - Final Presentation Panels (50" X 165")

Appendix C: Clarifications

ⁱ *Categorization of Sites – Criteria:*

1. Zone Oriented

- FUNCTION: i.e. mixed function vs. sole function (programme based and will bring up issues that will affect the overall design.)
 - proximity to community oriented programming
- REGULATIONS:
 - STREET/SIDEWALK WIDTHS: car vs. pedestrian oriented
 - BUILDING PROXIMITY TO THE STREET: near/far + in what context? Residential, commercial, etc.
 - SPACE BETWEEN BUILDINGS: as a measurement + use
- SERVICES:
 - PUBLIC SERVICES: i.e. bus, subway, street car
 - PARKING: i.e. parking lots/meters (how much traffic/how busy an area is)
- STREET ELEMENTS:
 - SIGNAGE: i.e. language – English + ? (i.e. Cantonese) – indicates cultural population in area
 - STREET FURNITURE: i.e. bike racks, benches, street lights, garbage/recycling receptacles (how this influences the area – i.e. no receptacles = garbage in the street)
- SOCI-ECONOMICS: class that lives/works there

2. Seen/Lived Qualities

- CONTEXT:
 - BUILDING HEIGHTS OF SURROUNDING CONTEXT: i.e. sensitivity to SCALE (is everything at one scale/variety of different scales? Jarring scales?)
 - COLOUR + TEXTURE OF BUILDINGS: context
 - BUILDING CONSTRUCTION, TIME PERIOD: context

- TYPOLOGY:
 - LANDSCAPING: or lack there of – buildings + street
 - STREET TOPOGRAPHY
 - VISTAS AND VIEWS: links to the city

- POLLUTION/ART/CULTURE:
 - BILLBOARDS + ADVERTISEMENTS: how commercial/non-commercial an area is – are the advertisements out of place/scale in the area?
 - GRAFFITI: i.e. issues of maintenance, culture, “defacement” vs. “art” etc.
 - CULTURAL IMMERSION/ DETATCHMENT: i.e. presence of satellites, foreign lang. signs, etc.
 - AIR QUALITY: air pollution – as per # of cars, smokestacks, etc.

3. Unseen Qualities

- DISPLACED SITES: sites/buildings that have been abandoned/derelict
- DISPLACED PEOPLES: people who live on the city streets – Metropolitan nomads
- THE CITY AS SUBLIMINAL MESSAGE: elements in the city that denote values, wants, desires of the individuals that live there
- FALSE HISTORIES: a re-writing of the history of the city through images/building

ⁱⁱ *Photographic Essays*:

– *Series 1*

These images are based upon advertisements in the city, usually located on telephone/electrical poles, newspaper stands, etc. – places that tend to be overlooked by the public in their everyday lives. These advertisements are not prepared by large corporations, but by groups within the community or the municipal government. These images/words/phrases speak of the communities that construct them – they denote values, beliefs and future goals. In some cases they are juxtapositions to existing conditions, while in others they reveal truths about the character/issues/psyche of the city, which are suppressed by government leaders and tourism organizations, when presented through

more conventional modes of media. They are bold statements, and often traces of the public's reaction to them, can be discerned.

– *Series 2*

These images highlight juxtapositions in the city – they are a comment on society's values and existing conditions that often contradict these principles.

– *Series 3*

This series deals with traces found within the city. Through these traces, people have the ability to leave their mark, both intentionally and unintentionally. These traces are meaningful in the reading of the city – it is a way of deciphering what has transpired, who has been there, and what a particular space is used for. These traces are evidence of the lived city.

iii An illustration of this juxtaposition is the great quantity of advertising for the support of the needy in the city. However, in most parts of the urban core, there is a large quantity of homeless individuals living on the streets. There is a sense that the average Torontonian has become desensitized to this condition. The city dweller has undergone a type of habituation in their attitude towards the needy in the city.

iv LiTraCon Concrete Block:



Fig. C-1



Fig. C-2

“LiTraCon is a combination of optical fibres and fine concrete, and are produced as prefabricated building blocks and panels. Due to the small size of the fibres, they blend into concrete becoming a component of the material, like small pieces of aggregate. In this manner, the result is not only two materials – glass in concrete – mixed, but a third,

new material, which is homogenous in its inner structure and on its main surfaces as well. The glass fibres lead light by points between the two sides of the blocks. Because of their parallel position, the light-information on the brighter side of such a wall appears unchanged on the darker side. The most interesting form of this phenomenon is probably the sharp display of shadows on the opposing side of the wall. Moreover, the colour of the light also remains the same.

Thousands of optical glass fibres form a matrix and run parallel to each other between the two main surfaces of each. The proportion of the fibres is very small (4%) compared to the total volume of the blocks. Moreover, these fibres mingle in the concrete because of their insignificant size, and they become a structural component as a kind of modest aggregate. Therefore, the surface of the blocks remains homogenous concrete. In theory, a wall structure built from light transmitting concrete can be several meters thick, because the fibres work without almost any loss of light up until 20 meters. Load bearing structures can also be built of these, since glass fibres do not have negative effect on the well-known compressive strength value of concrete. The blocks can be produced in various sizes and with embedded heat-isolation.”¹

^v Car-lift/tower design is derived from Woehr Auto Parksysteme, car display Towers.
Website: <http://www.woehr.de>



Fig. C-3

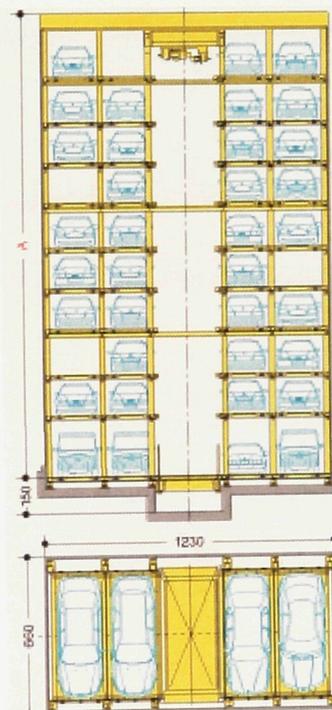


Fig. C-4

¹ LiTraCon concrete block literature, by LiTraCoNTM, <http://www.litracon.hu/aboutus.php>, 2001-2007
Litracon Bt.

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