

Theatrical Process: an Architectural Response

by

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THEATRICAL PROCESS:
AN ARCHITECTURAL RESPONSE



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Kate Wepler

 ABSTRACT

Contemporary society's expectations have evolved beyond their current environments. In order to reinvigorate our surroundings, we must re-evaluate the standard method of creating architectural space, from process to product. In an attempt to achieve this reformation of design, inspiration can be drawn from concepts and practices in contemporary theatre since the 20th century.

Theatre and architecture share a common goal of communicating to their audience. The existence and success of both these art forms vitally depends on the human body.

By paralleling concepts in contemporary theatre and architecture, this thesis will explore the integral components to creating holistically experiential architectural space. The corresponding design project is devised from an accumulative synthesis of the theatrical concepts examined in this text. These architectural moments consider potential social and spatial relationships encountered by the audience in an interactive and sensually stimulating environment, and in turn how their response can have a transformative effect on that space.

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AUDIENCE PLAYS.



Of all the artistic mediums, theatre and architecture uniquely depend on one vital element: an audience. The presence of the human body is essential in the inception, creation, and manifestation of both theatre and architecture. People experience the world through the body. The skin acts as a filter between our minds and spaces; we experience, interpret, and then react to everything we encounter. Both architecture and theatre explore the spatial fields between subject and object. They entice, provoke, envelop, and communicate to us, and we react. This dual relationship defines the success of any given experience.

“Without the character there is no action.”¹

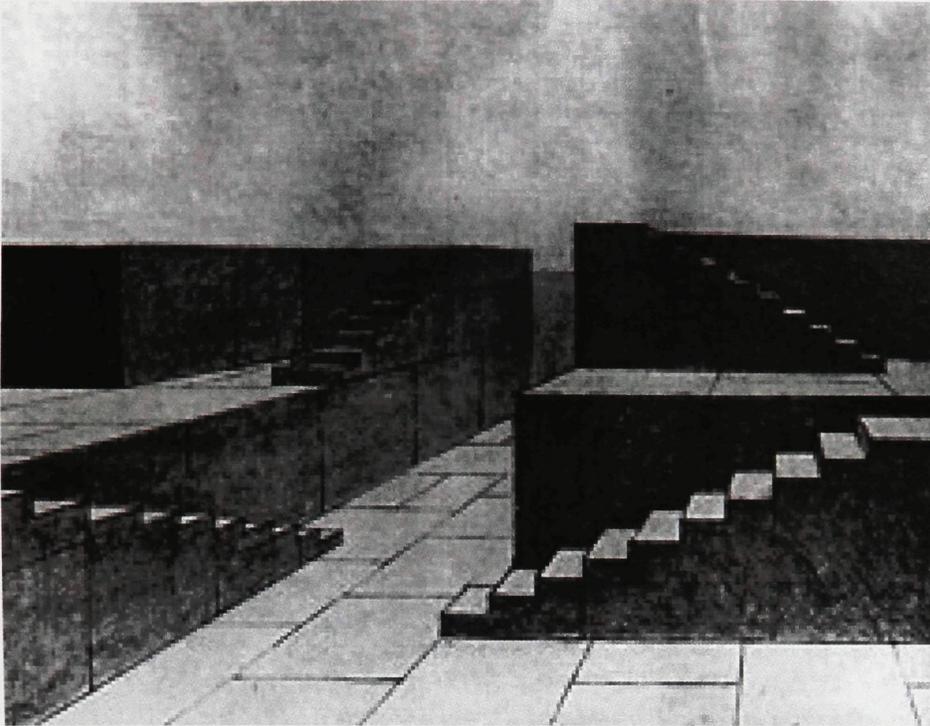
In theatre, our experience is expressed through the actor, but in architectural space our role can be transformed from observer to occupant. This graduated role elevates the potential of communication in our environments. Theatre encompasses every movement, sound, and animated object that can be described as

live performance. It communicates a theme or narrative by utilizing the potentials of speech, gesture, music, dance, visual arts, and multi-media. In the same way, architecture communicates an idea or mood through form, sound, light, colour, and now, more often, technical elements. There must be a careful consideration of how these elements affect and provoke a reaction from the "audience". There is an evident disconnect between occupant and environment when the architect does not consider this relationship a priority.

The complexity of architecture offers the architect a multiplicity of opportunities to communicate with their "audience". The architect's role is interpreting how the occupant perceives and engages with space. However, the obvious fact that people and space mutually exist and evolve together is often ignored in contemporary architectural practice. While theatre and architecture are connected through their common intention of communicating to their audience, they are drastically dissimilar in their methods of creation. But unlike the modern architect, contemporary theatre practitioners did not ignore the profound effect people and space can have on each other, and allowed it to redefine new performance.

At the beginning of the 20th century, industrious technology had a great impact on the creation of theatre. Predictability and a disconnect between action and audience had settled into live performance. A new generation of theatre practitioners saw the potential for a reinvention of collaboration on the stage, and introduced several radical strategies to reawaken audiences. Prior to this reformation, the two elements of theatre, action and scenery, were developed separately. As a result, the action and narrative were undone by unconvincing, pseudo-naturalistic pictorial backdrops which always fell flat.

One of the first innovators of the contemporary theatre reformation, Adolphe Appia, envisioned a shift from the traditional theatrical staging strategies – which separated actor from setting – to a responsive environment enhanced by transformable media. He proposed that actors physically engage with their surroundings, the "spatial arrangements of abstracted rhythmic forms."ⁱⁱ Appia also introduced a variable use of light. Rather than simply washing out a scene, he played with the contrast of light and shadow to enhance expressions and form. The materiality of the human body and constructed sets, combined with the immateriality of light and shadow created a unified *mise en scene*. Appia's introduction of physical sets and an intelligent use of technology to enhance the narrative, acted as a basic model for contemporary theatre that all future theatre practitioners could build upon.



①

The impact of the Industrial Revolution began appearing in all art forms as a commentary on a mechanized society. Technology was the future, and the future of the theatre. Bertolt Brecht represented an extreme in the Constructivism movement in the theatre. His concept of the *Epic Theatre* was characterized by political propaganda and modern machinery. Turntables, conveyor-belts, choreographed lighting, and film projection were all popular staging strategies in the *Epic Theatre*. Brecht believed that machinery was the key to modernizing theatre, as technology represented the current fixation of society.



②

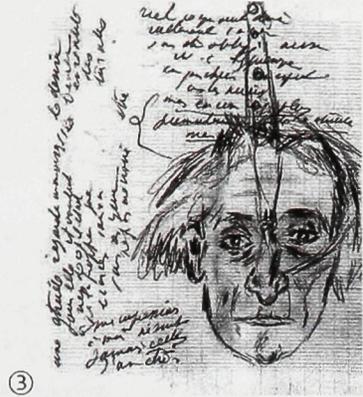
"Futurists, Constructivists, and the Bauhaus tried to mechanize the stage as the rehearsal room for a new kind of human being inhabiting a technologized environment..."ⁱⁱⁱ

Another extreme strategy proposed by Brecht was *Trennung*: absolute separation. The separation of media, as well as a distinct separation between scenes, was exercised so as not to overwhelm the spectator and to allow them to interpose their judgement. One of Brecht's contemporaries, Antonin Artaud, proposed an alternative approach of communicating to an audience: immersion rather than distancing.

Artaud sought to remedy the state of un-affecting theatre by communicating true narratives to an increasingly complacent audience. He outlined his strategies in his manifesto *The Theatre and Its Double*, the “double” being life itself.

“In our present state of degeneration it is through the skin that metaphysics must be made to re-enter our minds.”^{iv}

His approach to reforming theatre was greatly influenced by the entrancing gestural qualities of Balinese theatre. Artaud understood that our primary response mechanism is triggered by experiences that appeal to our senses. Sound and movement were the principal tools for an actor to communicate to an audience, as people use their bodies to understand and interpret experiences. Similarly, Polish avant-garde theatre director Jerzy Grotowski highlighted the primitivism of the human body and raw physical space while omitting the distractions of technical wizardry.



Grotowski’s manifesto *Towards a Poor Theatre* is a corrective reaction towards overly mechanized theatre that developed from the Constructivism movement in the early 20th century. The proposal was to strip theatre down to its purest form, its one true reality: the human body. He formed *Theatre Laboratory* in Opole, Poland in 1959. The group’s intention was to explore and reinvent

“...our productions are detailed investigations of the actor-audience relationship... That is, we consider the personal scenic technique of the actor as the core of the theatre art.”^v



methods of theatrical performance with an emphasis on the human relationship of person to person and person to place. Performances developed by the *Theatre Laboratory* were characterized by the rhythm and movement of the human body in space, the introversive effects of extroversive stimuli, and how we represent internal thoughts with external actions. Their audience was left with a greater understanding of themselves and their fellow man.

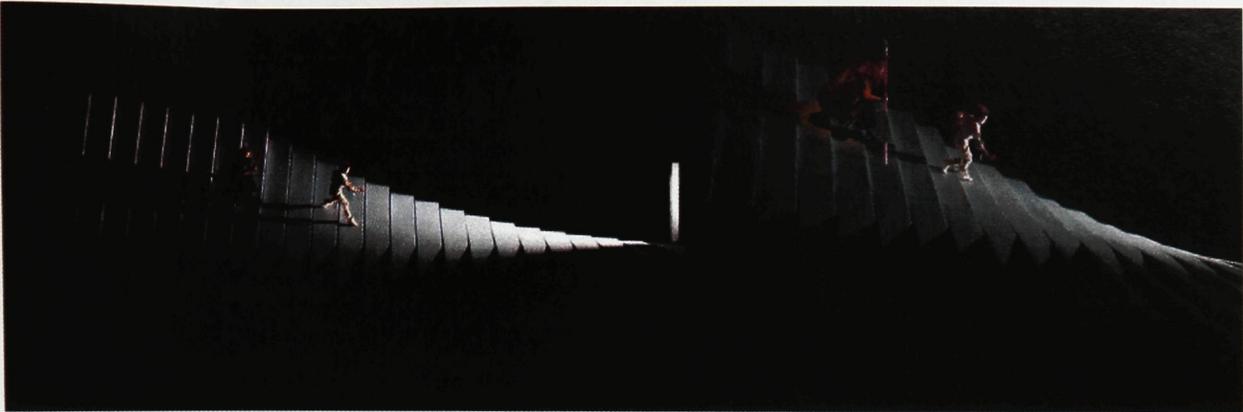
Along with the numerous interpretations for new representation, contemporary theatre practitioners are also inventing new narratives to reflect their changing society. Actors have become

the new authors in devising performance. Original narratives are created in rehearsals through a series of responses to specific themes or ideas. *Devising theatre* achieves a greater connection to the audience by focusing on the process of exploring the human experience in a narrative. Robert Lepage worked in a process driven dynamic based on the concept of devising theatre, as co-artistic director of *Théâtre Repère* in Québec. The ensemble's productions were aimed towards a local audience, presenting narratives fueled by a politically charged province struggling to maintain their French culture in a largely English speaking country. Crisis of identity was combined with topics of global health issues and multiculturalism and continually represented by a combination of physical sets and virtual media.

The use of technology in society has evolved from the Industrial Age of the early 20th century to our present day information media. However, in our technological age, as our society becomes more mechanized, it is becoming increasingly difficult to communicate to an audience using conventional methods. We have become desensitized to traditional media. As we adapt to the continuous evolution of technology, our physical surroundings get left behind. The societal focus shift from industrious technology to information technology did not go unnoticed in theatre. Digital media has been embraced by performance artists and theatre practitioners as a mode of representation that enhances connectivity between action and audience.

This collaboration between performance and technological mixed media arts is the driving relationship in the work of Robert Lepage. His scenographic experimentation is a balanced synthesis of physical, technological, and virtual *mise en scene*. His predecessors introduced a vast spectrum of concepts to the stage that Lepage has cohesively integrated into the development of his *transformative mise en scene*. In addition to being an accomplished stage director and playwright, Lepage is also involved in his productions as an actor, film auteur and set designer. In 1994, after leaving *Théâtre Repère*, he founded *Ex Machina* in Québec City, a multidisciplinary experimental theatre laboratory. The creative team believes that contemporary theatre should nurture the collaboration between performing arts and recorded arts, scientists and playwrights, set designers and architects, in order to connect to today's audience. The intention behind combining various contemporary mediums of representation was to allow the audience to choose how to experience and interpret the performance. Lepage's unique contribution to the stage is described as *transformative mise en scene*. He explores the transformable potentials of contemporary media in live performance, and its relationship with actor, action, and audience. Incorporating digital media into his theatrical

landscape, Lepage encourages actor and illusion to interact, perforating the boundary between physical and virtual space.



⑤

Tracing the various responses to reforming theatre – the relationship between body and constructed physical space, the use of contrasted lighting to express mood, the emphasis on communicating through the human body, mechanized sets, digital multi-media communicating multiple representations, and the shift towards new authorship – there is a common focus on the necessity for the evolution of process and product in theatre in order to compete with the evolving expectations of the audience. When examining an overview of theatrical methods developed as a response for the reformation of contemporary theatre, it is evident that the primary focus was re-evaluating the consistent themes of people, place, and process.

A similar reformation needs to occur in the current practice of architecture. The focus of design must move away from ocularcentric imagery to a holistically experiential space. Based on the similarities between theatre and architecture, concepts and methods practiced in live performance should be applied to the process of designing architectural space in order to create stimulating environments for occupants. Theatre can be viewed as an imagination laboratory for architects to experiment with the interaction and response of body, senses and space, in the dramatic microcosm of the stage.

"A real architectural experience is not simply a series of retinal images; a building is encountered – it is approached, confronted, related to one's body, moved about, utilized as a condition of other things, etc."^{vi}

This thesis will discuss themes of *context*, *process*, *senses*, *interaction*, and *temporality* in relation to their social relevance and representation in theatre and architecture. These themes have often been discussed in scientific and abstract terms in relation to architecture. Exposing the importance of these themes through a concise summary of contemporary theatre practices, and their respective critiques of traditional methods, will help provide a practical understanding and approach to the architectural design process. While highlighting the essence of concepts and methods of experimental theatre theorists and practitioners of the 20th century, one can understand the important impact each theme can have on an occupant when applied to architectural design.

By paralleling contemporary theatre and architectural practices, my thesis will expose the importance of devising an architectural space from process to product while focusing on the sensual, interactive, and responsive stimuli and the effects they have on the occupant. Themes of *context*, *process*, *senses*, *interaction*, and *temporality* have been discussed and debated in both architectural and theatrical mediums, but I am proposing that experimental theatre be viewed as an inspirational resource for devising architectural space that has the potential to influence the *audience* experience as well as their response.

ENDNOTES

- i Appia, How to Reform Our Staging Practices p.237
- ii Salter, Entangled: Technology and the Transformation of Performance p.5
- iii Salter p.45
- iv Artaud, The Theatre and Its Double: Essay p.99
- v Grotowski, Towards a Poor Theatre p.15
- vi Pallasmaa, An Architecture of the Seven Senses p.35

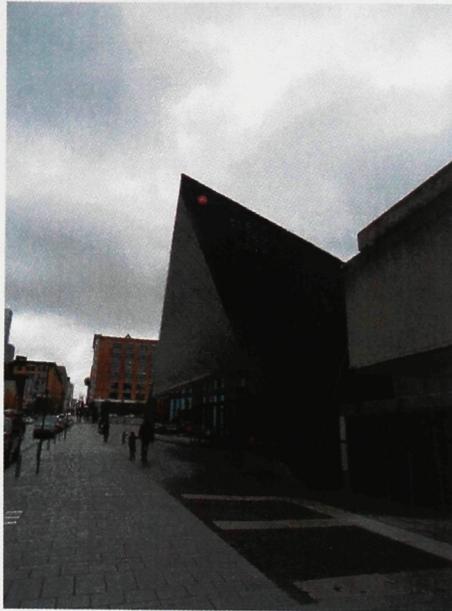
IMAGES

- 1 Appia, sketch. Set for Wagnerian drama.
- 2 Photograph. Set of *The Magnanimous Cuckold* by Meyerhold.
- 3 Artaud, sketch.
- 4 Weller, photograph. international Physical Theatre Laboratory.
- 5 Howard, photograph. Ex Machina: Der Ring des Nibelungen.

CON .TEXT//
THE INTERRELATED
CIRCUMSTANCES THAT
INFLUENCE THE
EXISTENCE AND EVOLUTION
OF A PLACE FOR AN
EVENT OR IDEA;
SETTING.



There is an opportunity to create a sense of occasion in architecture, an alluring characteristic embedded in the concept of theatre. Our environments should be equipped with tools and creative cues that can be used to generate happening. They should inspire a vast array of activities, and not strictly dictate one sole function. Every element of a site frames an event, which then inspires response. But what elements constitute this site which creates *happenings*? Something that evokes an idea and excites action. A space overwhelmed with titillating fascinations that inspire both physical and psychological activity; and yet still has the possibility to be interpreted in multiple conditions. This fundamental element of attraction is inherent in the site, due to a combination of social and spatial dynamics.



Montreal has its undisputable attractions, and for the past 8 years the city has been in the process of slowly unearthing what is celebrated as its new cultural gem: the *Quartier des Spectacles*. Over 80 cultural venues have been established within one square kilometre, outlined by Rue City Councillors, Rue Saint-Hubert, Rue Sherbrooke, and Boulevard Rene-Levesque. There is a continuous circulation of diverse cultural events that unfold in indoor as well as outdoor venues, during major

events and internationally known festivals. While many popular venues have emerged and flourished in the *Quartier des Spectacles*, there are still many areas of the neighbourhood left derelict. The city of Montreal and the partners of the *Quartier des Spectacles* have implemented strategies for coherently continuing the development of the neighbourhood. The catalyst that propels the development of the *Quartier des Spectacles* is:

LIFE, **art** and **entertainment**.

It is a vision based on the enhancement and preservation of the neighbourhood's cultural assets.



CONTEXT plays a large role IN THEATRE. The *mise en scene* designed – or found – for a live performance is a visual representation of the narrative that communicates the mood of each moment to both the actors and the audience.

...WHETHER REALISTIC OR ABSTRACT, MINIMALIST OR COMPLEX.

The mood of an environment affects our bodies and minds. Staging for a performance must take into account every thought and emotion in each scene. A performer will feed off of their environment. They respond to their surroundings, and are more likely to have a natural reaction if the context of the situation is set thoughtfully.

While a performer's action and response can be provoked by a "set" set, improvised sets can have a similar effect on both actors and narrative. "Set" sets are designed following a predetermined narrative. Improvised sets on the other hand, are site specific, chosen as a response to the narrative. They can be manipulated by the performers to set the mood of the scene, and even influence the evolution of the narrative.

The general goals for the development of the *Quartier des Spectacles* are:

- ...Enhance and support venues that promote cultural production, creation and events in harmony with residential and commercial activities
- ...Support real estate development
- ...Consolidate residential activity in the Faugbourg Saint-Laurent
- ...Support the retail vitality of Saint-Catherine
- ...Improve the design of public space



Adolphe Appia's interpretation of theatrical space removed all boundaries between actor and audience. His *Hall of Synthesis* was a 50mx16mx12m open space. In it, the audience was transformed from passive observer to active participant. In a similar way, Artaud broke down the separation between audience and spectacle by placing them in the middle of the action and providing mobile seating so they could physically follow the scene.

Theatre practitioners are exploring the possibilities of new spaces for live performance. Theatre is no longer confined to the conventions of stage and auditorium. Live performance can take place in any public space where narrative is witnessed and communicated through action.

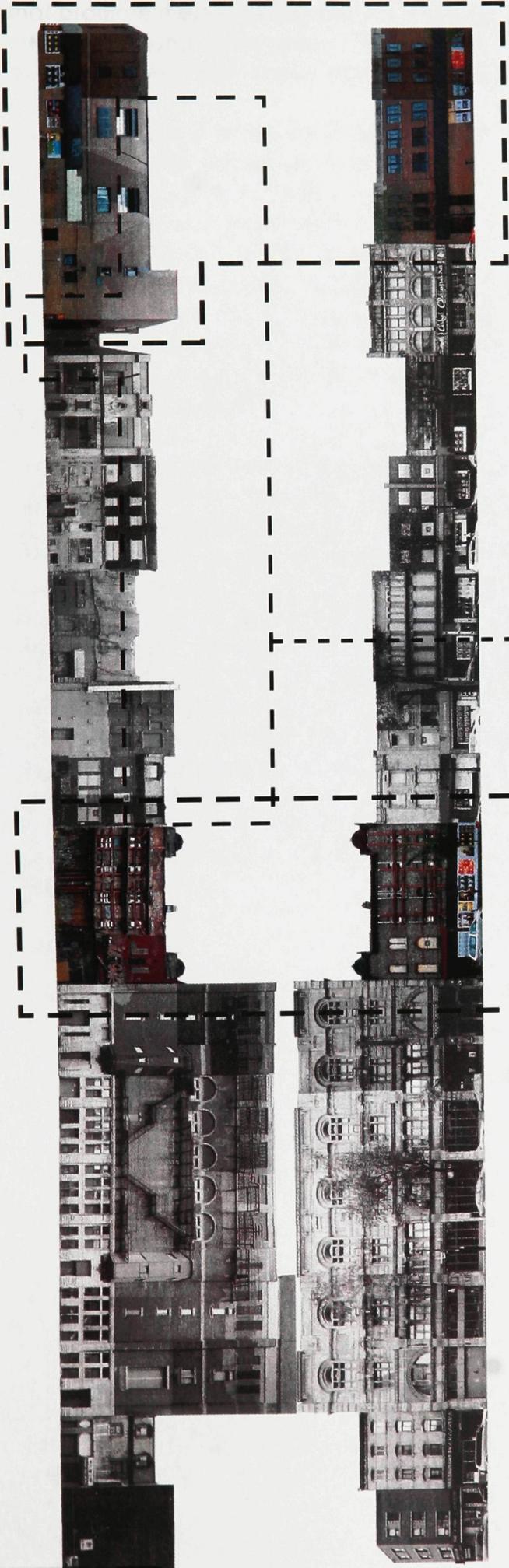


These goals, put into practice, will help redefine the *Quartier des Spectacles* as a neighbourhood in balance, characterized by the harmonious coexistence of diverse residents and various amenities. Great strides have been made in redeveloping this neighbourhood since 2002 however there are still major locations that are run down and abandoned. New activity in the neighbourhood continues to inspire further development which these abandoned buildings can support.

Two specific issues in the development plan are St. Catherine and St. Laurent Boulevard. As the central axis of the *Quartier des Spectacles*, St. Catherine should have the most concentrated activity. Unfortunately there are still vacant lots and buildings which diminish the quality of the area. Developing these areas would create a better sense of coherence along the street. Similarly, certain segments of St. Laurent Boulevard are rundown and abandoned; however, an influx in new residence would be beneficial to retail activity in the area and help reinvigorate the street.

St. Catherine and St. Laurent Boulevard intersect at the center of the *Quartier des Spectacles*. "It deserves a major architectural intervention, including a starting point from which Montreal's culture can be discovered."¹¹

Today our perceptions and expectations have adapted to evolve with innovation, and this constant social and technological evolution should be reflected in our built environments. An urban proposal should be a creative intervention both in public and private environments. Creative in the sense of diversity; providing a community with choice, opportunity, and a multiplicity of possibilities to respond to. In an effort to effectively continue the urban renewal of the *Quartier des Spectacles*, a combination of programmes and architectural interventions should be proposed



multi-programmatic
commercial space
32 Rue St. Catherine

residential space
1225 Rue Clark

community resource
+ techno-landscape
1200 Blvd St. Laurent

that promote themes of flexibility, innovation, sensual stimulation, interaction, and temporality. This requires a reinterpretation of our relationship with space and each other.

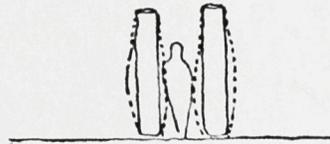
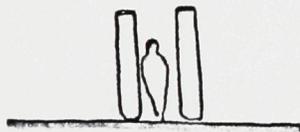
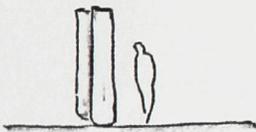
As St. Catherine is the main active artery of the *Quartier des Spectacles*, the deserted building spanning the block between St. Laurent and Rue Clark has been selected to experiment with a variety of programmatic interventions. In addition, the abandoned cavity in the block, hidden from St. Laurent by a crumbling free standing façade has been chosen to introduce another outdoor public space to the *Quartier des Spectacles*. In order to connect the two sites in this one block, a string of residences running across 32 St. Catherine to 1200 St. Laurent will also be proposed.

The architectural interventions to the selected site will be approached in a series of scales. First, at the urban scale, analyzing the existing condition of the St. Catherine–St. Laurent intersection and its role in the *Quartier des Spectacles*. This will include assessing the pedestrian movement in and around the site, and how that motion could be manipulated and enhanced. From a closer vantage of the site, various programmes for 32 St. Catherine and 1200 St. Laurent will evolve in response to the development plan for the *Quartier des Spectacles* set out by the city of Montreal. Finally, the focus will narrow in on the specific moments of experience and interaction, including spatial and social relationships created by the proposed interventions. This scale will evolve in response to theories and experimentation of process, interaction, and sensual stimulation in contemporary theatre.

ENDNOTES

- i Ville de Montreal
- ii Partenariat du Quartier des Spectacles

PRO .CESS//
DESCRIBING THE METHOD
USED TO DEVELOP
A PRODUCT;



DEVISING IN RESPONSE
TO AN IDEA.

The common approach to designing architectural space has followed the process from programme, to form and function, and finally inhabitation. While there have been endless debates over form versus function, it is evident that the majority of modern architecture has favoured form above all. These monuments of architectural eye candy seduce us in the first moment and then we quickly find ourselves unfulfilled and disillusioned. The process of devising architectural space must be redefined in order to nurture the relationship between occupant and environment. Rather than addressing the conflict between form and function, a new process of devising should focus on the importance of the concept of verb versus noun, as well as adopting landscape architect Lawrence Halprin's RSVP Cycles as a guideline for devising space.

Designers usually address space as an object occupied by other objects, categorizing place as *noun*. However, space should be perceived as a verb, animated by the actions that occur within them. Space cannot be defined by the objects that occupy them but rather by the actions that animate them. Perceiving space as *verb* rather than *noun* reinstates function as the precedent to form. Our day to day lives are defined by a series of actions, improvised in response to our environments. Considering the embodiment of space leads to other considerations of movement, activities, and sensations. The tandem theme of action and response stimulating this new design model can be elaborated by adopting the process of Halprin's RSVP Cycles.

An integral action that should always be an area of focus in the design process is *motion*. Beginning with an intelligent design response to how people move through, around, and between spaces can successfully inform future interventions.

“The essence of our urban experiences
is the process of movement through
a sequential and variegated series of
spaces.”¹

“The form of anything
is latent in the process.”²

Contemporary theatre practitioners redefined the process of creating live performance. Besides redefining the use of space in the reformation of contemporary theatre, another catalyst that had to be approached in order to affect change was the process of creating performance. The standard method of creating live performance has been “script-rehearsal-performance”. In a basic analysis of the various approaches to creating contemporary theatre the process can be described as “rehearsal-script-performance”. In the previous method, the script is predetermined and dictates every expression, movement, and moment in the performance. The rehearsals must never veer

from the script. The “rehearsal-script” method still has an outlined theme for the narrative, however, the actions and reactions of the performers during the rehearsals help to evolve and complete the narrative. This open process of creating theatre often results in compelling dramatic work, driven by real human connection.

DEVISING THEATRE is the collaborative, process driven method of developing a unique narrative and communicating it to a specific audience through live performance. The process can initiate from anything: an idea, object, place, memory, current event, musical composition; anything that arouses a response. The precise product is always unknown. To start, an individual interest is translated within a group context. Not only is the original concept influenced by the theatre group's personal issues and interpretations, it is also shaped by the community, physical environment, and socio-political climate on a local and global scale. Devised theatre cannot evolve or

thrive in a vacuum. It must be open to the impression of every facet of the environment in which it is created. The collaborative aspect to devising theatre is an integral component to the process because every individual involved has unique experiences and responses. Each individual can contribute a different interpretation of how the narrative could evolve and be represented. Every contribution enhances the depth and richness of the final product. Devising theatre is able to explore the relationship between actor and audience, since the production is in constant flux. It is continually being analysed and adapted to reinvigorate each performance.

The *Quartier des Spectacles* contains a multitude of arts venues scattered throughout the neighbourhood. In order to visually link these cultural hot spots, red spot lights were installed to illuminate the sidewalks surrounding each venue. The “red light” was reinvented as the icon for the *Quartier des Spectacles* along with the entire neighbourhood as strip clubs were converted into concert halls and art galleries. Now theatre goers and art enthusiasts can follow the illuminated paths in the *Quartier des Spectacles*, moving from one venue to the next.

The red lights are an inspiring resource to enhance the movement and connectivity in the *Quartier des Spectacles*. The concepts of *illumination* and *motion* came together in a light installation I assembled in the upper street of Carleton’s architecture building. Tall slender columns suspended from the ceiling and hovering above the floor were constructed out of wax paper. Each column contained a red light connected to a motion sensor. The intention was to harness light as a tool for tracing the rhythm of pedestrian motion as well as increasing activity in the space.

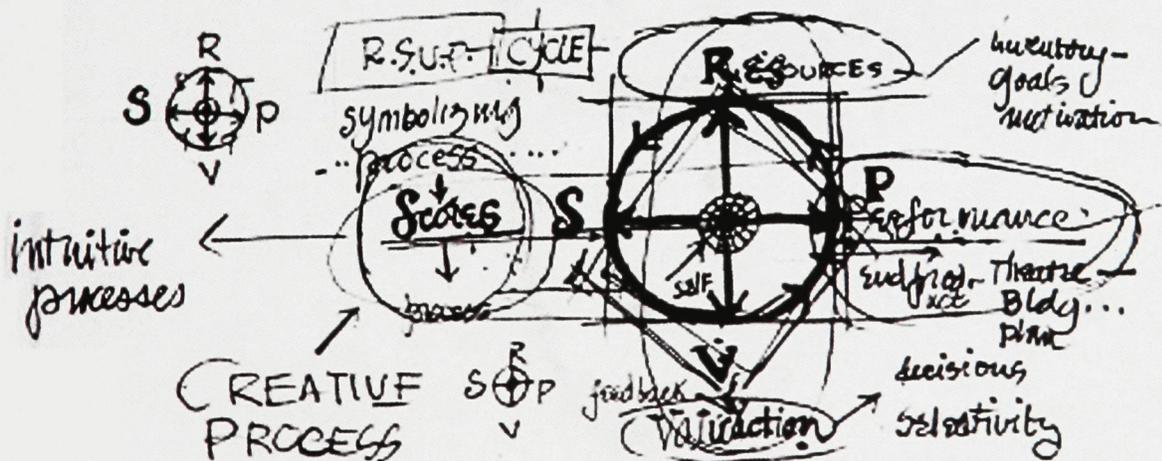
Installations are useful experiments for examining the impact architectural interventions have on people and space. These experiments of interaction between body and space should be recognized as an integral component in the process of design, just as rehearsals are integral to the process of developing theatrical performance.

The *RSVP CYCLES*, developed by Lawrence and Anna Halprin, exemplifies the methodical approach to the process of devising theatre. Represented as an acronym which translates as “please respond”, *RSVP* is a vehicle for exposing the process integral to devising performance. By recognizing and categorizing the stages in the process of devising – resource, scores, *valuation*, performance – the resulting action can have a deeper resonance with actor and spectator. Understanding the process means understanding the product. The resource [R] represents the catalyst that initiates the process of creating. As mentioned before, it can be anything. How the individuals of a group respond to and interpret this catalyst falls under the category of scores [S].

During the development of scores, performers enter in the act of creation. Participation, communication, collaboration, response are represented through images, movement, any mode of representation other than words. In the moments of *valuation* [V], the raw scores are refined. A variety of scores can then be analysed and edited in the *valuation* [V] stage. The results of the activity are evaluated, moments are filtered, segments are edited, and “value” is found in the “action” presented in the scores. The resulting performance [P] is a compilation of scores as edited in the *valuation* stage, and represented as an expression of the process. *RESOURCE*, *SCORES*, *VALUATION*, and *PERFORMANCE* are four interrelated parts.

As someone moved past each column, their movement would trigger a series of illuminations that would infer the speed and direction in which they travelled through the space. As one person triggered a light, the sudden illumination could attract more people to the space until it is eventually flooded with bodies and light. The space was recorded on video over several days, from various perspectives. The videos documented the organic movement produced by human intuition, and how we are manipulated by surprising and unexpected elements in our regular environments. Certain segments of the videos were translated as motion traces over a plan of the installation site. The resulting motion map was then transposed onto a site map of the *Quartier des Spectacles*.

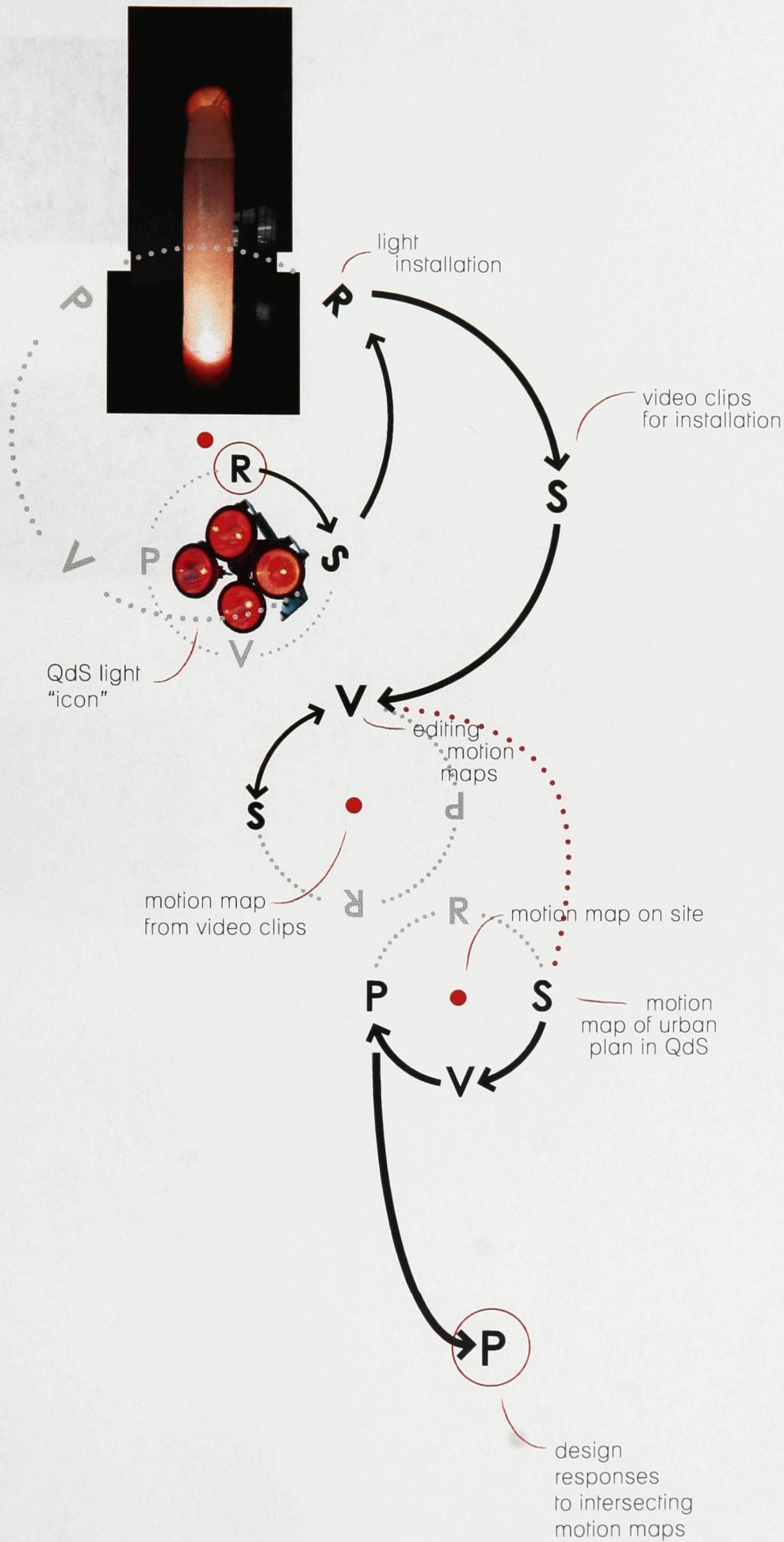
The streets in the *Quartier des Spectacles* are typically laid out in a grid pattern, intersected by varying lengths of diagonal lanes. The motion map derived from the light installation captured the fluid and often sporadic nature of pedestrian motion, and by transposing it onto the site map of the *Quartier des Spectacles*, numerous interventions could be inferred that would promote pedestrian movement through the entire neighbourhood, the selected site block, and the specific buildings in the block highlighted for this thesis.

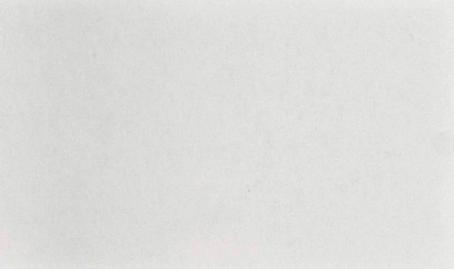
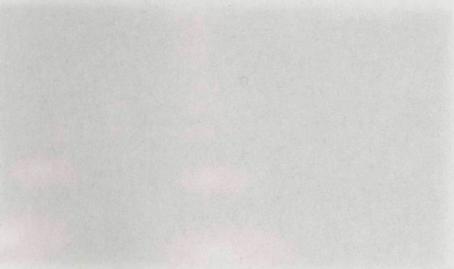


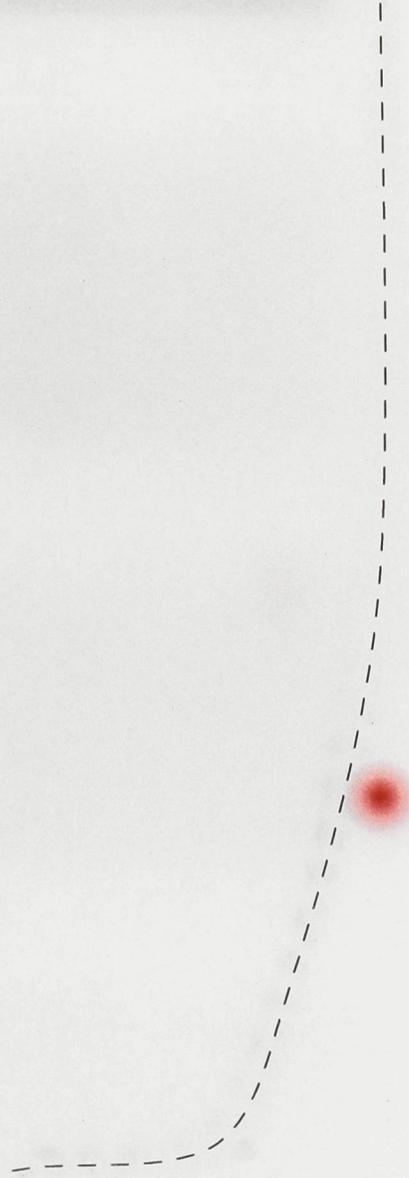
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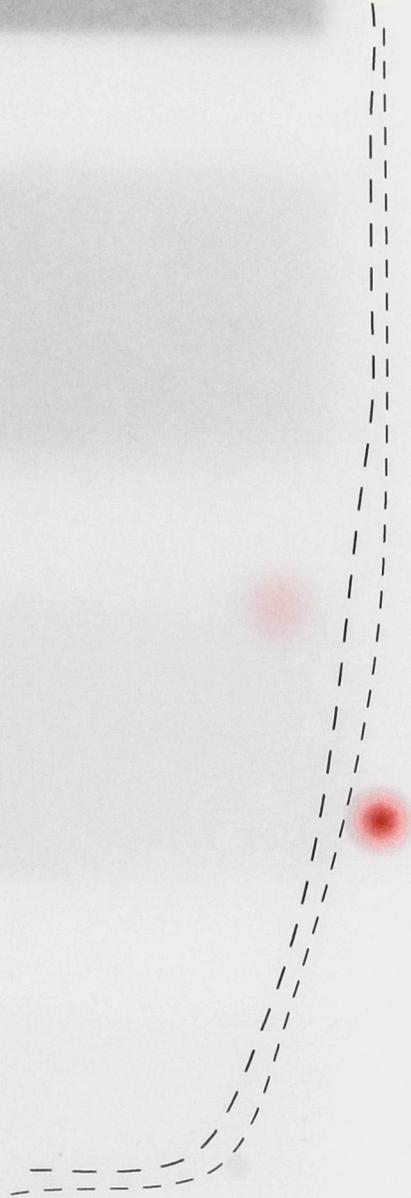
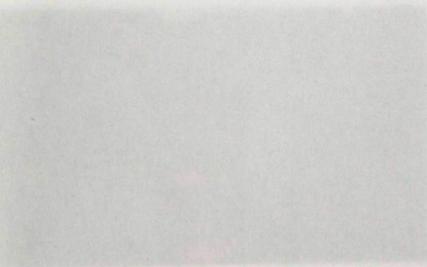
Although it is described as a cycle, it does not necessarily operate in a singular direction. The individual aspects can function in any order, overlapping and repeating. Each stage can also have individual self-cycles, meaning that the process is a complex orchestration of orbits and actions.

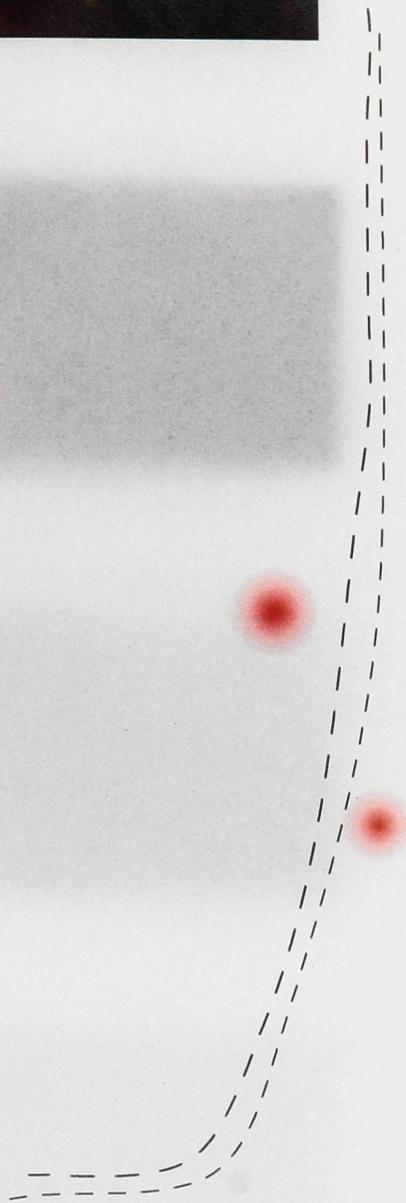
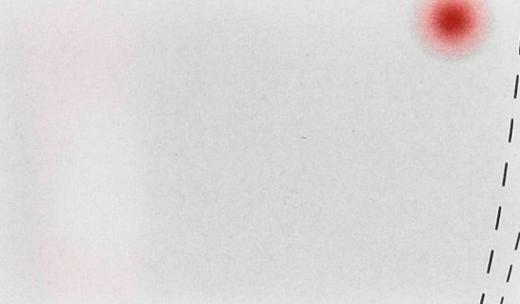
The RSVP cycles are an excellent vehicle for exposing the process of devising not only theatre, but also the process of every human endeavor. Example: an empty fridge [R] inspires the contents of a shopping list [S]. Specific items from that list are chosen [V] and translated into a meal [P].

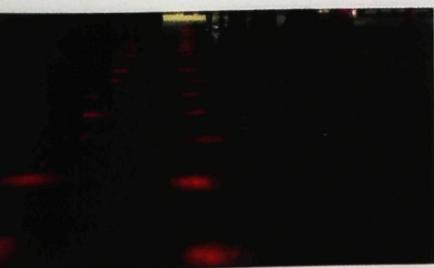




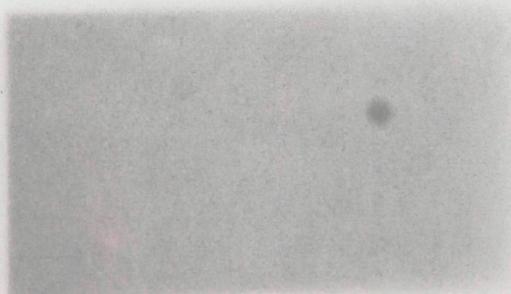


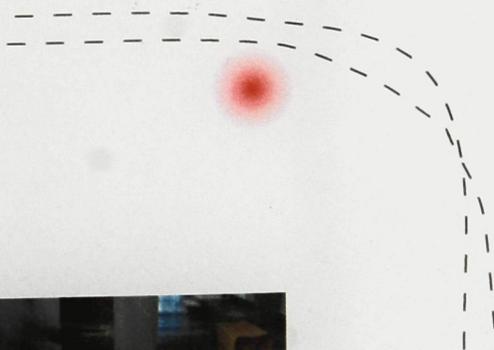


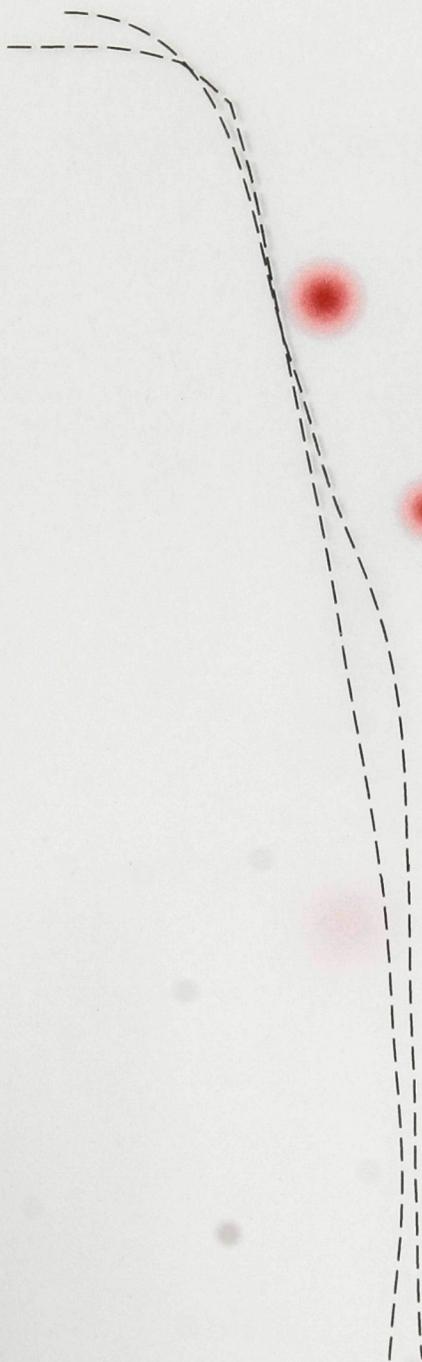


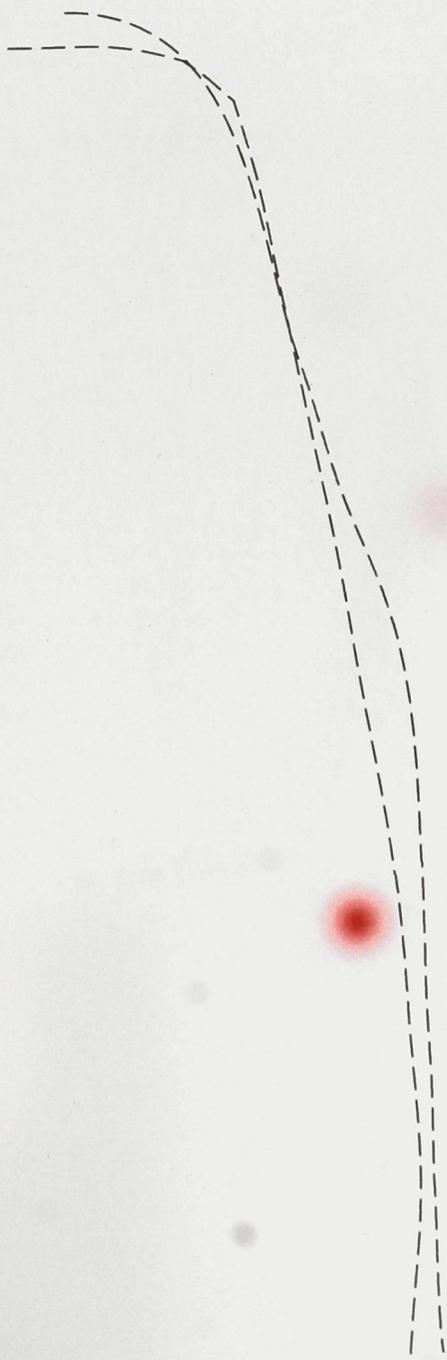


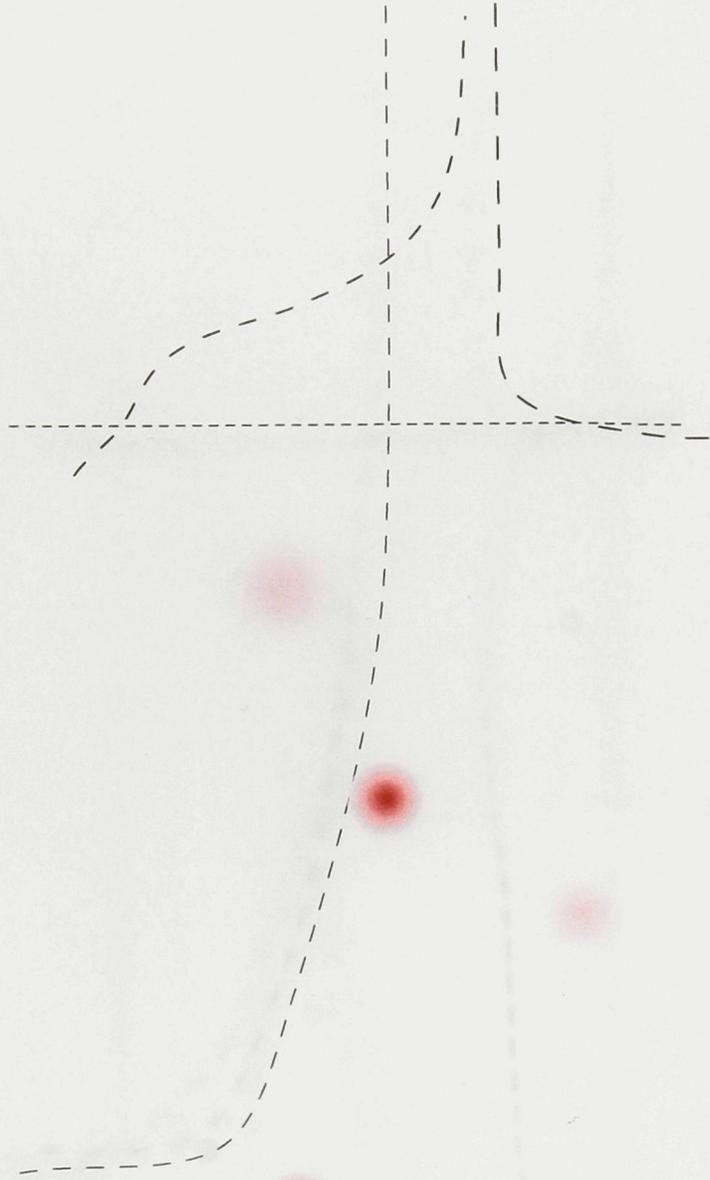


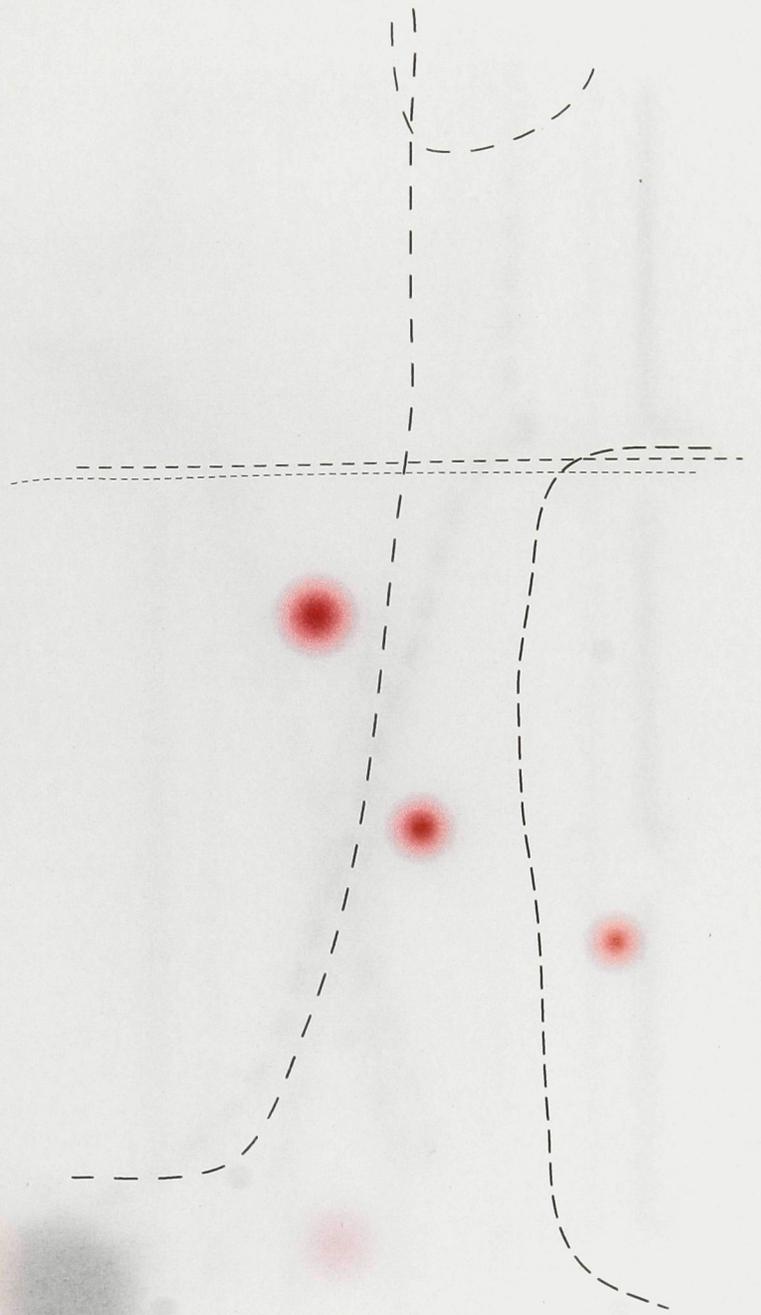


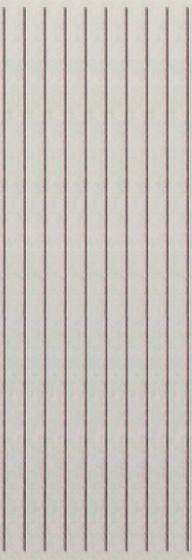
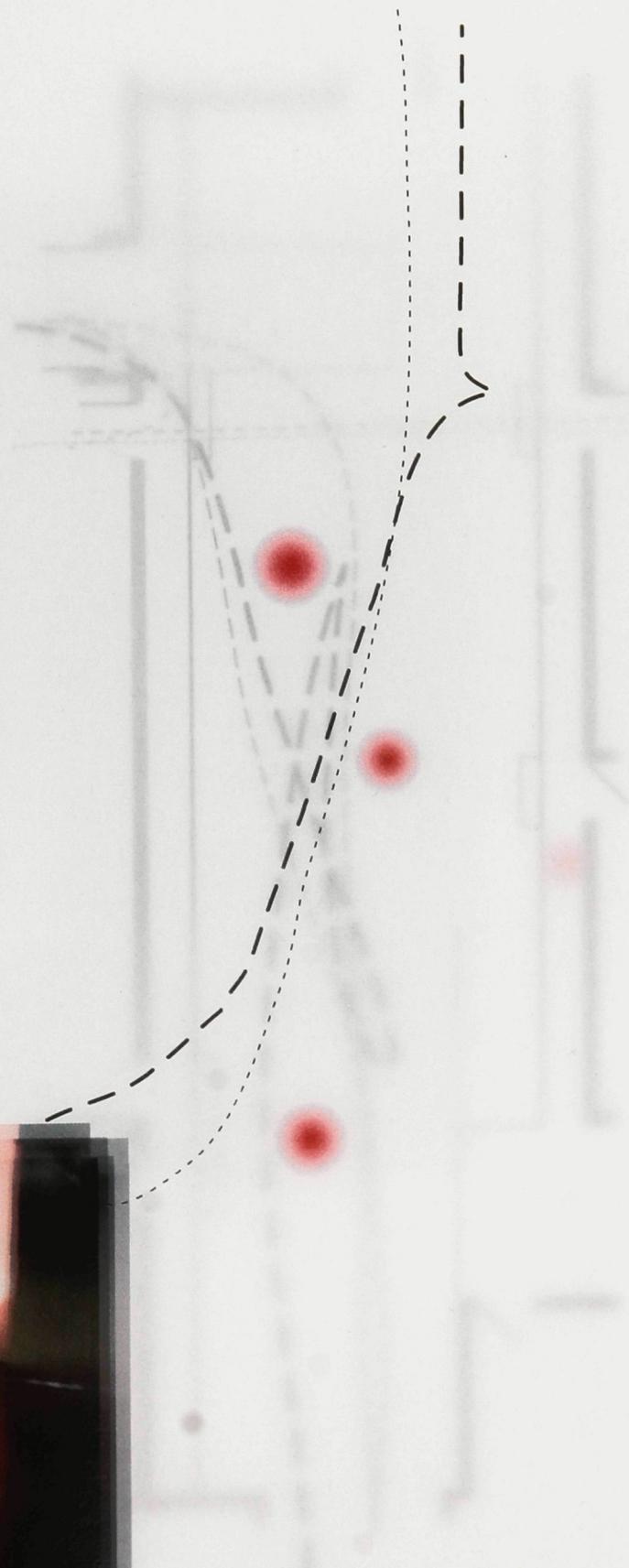


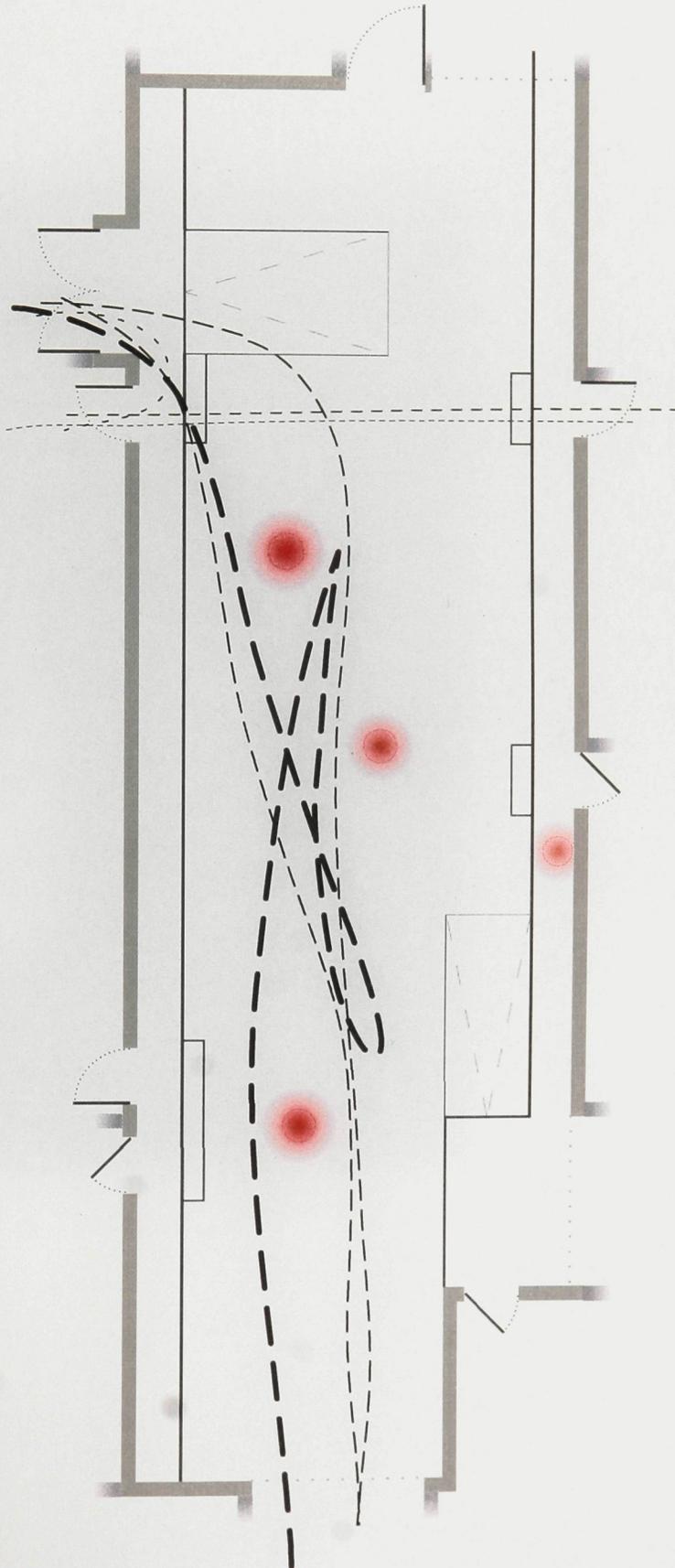


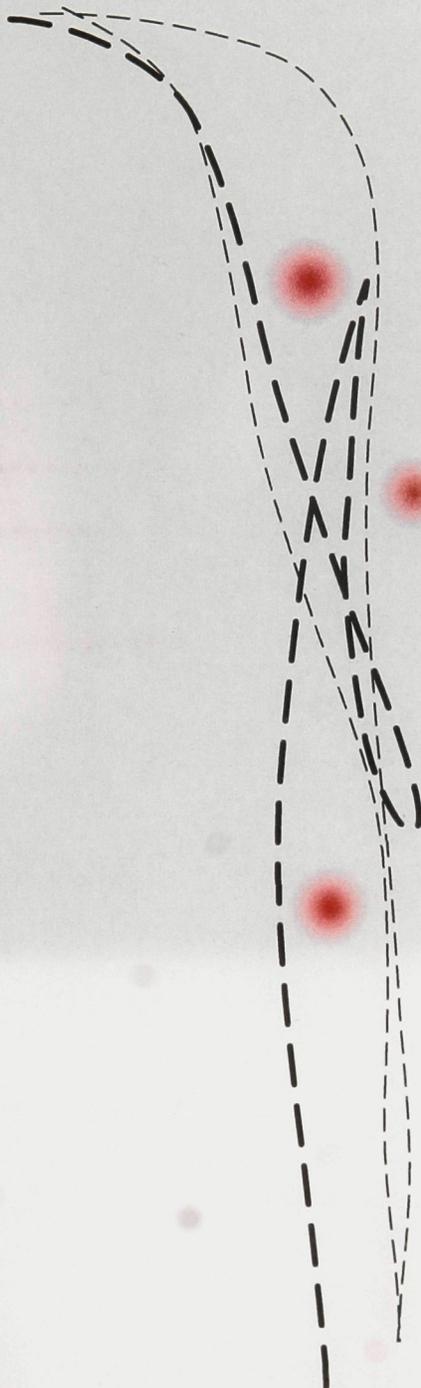


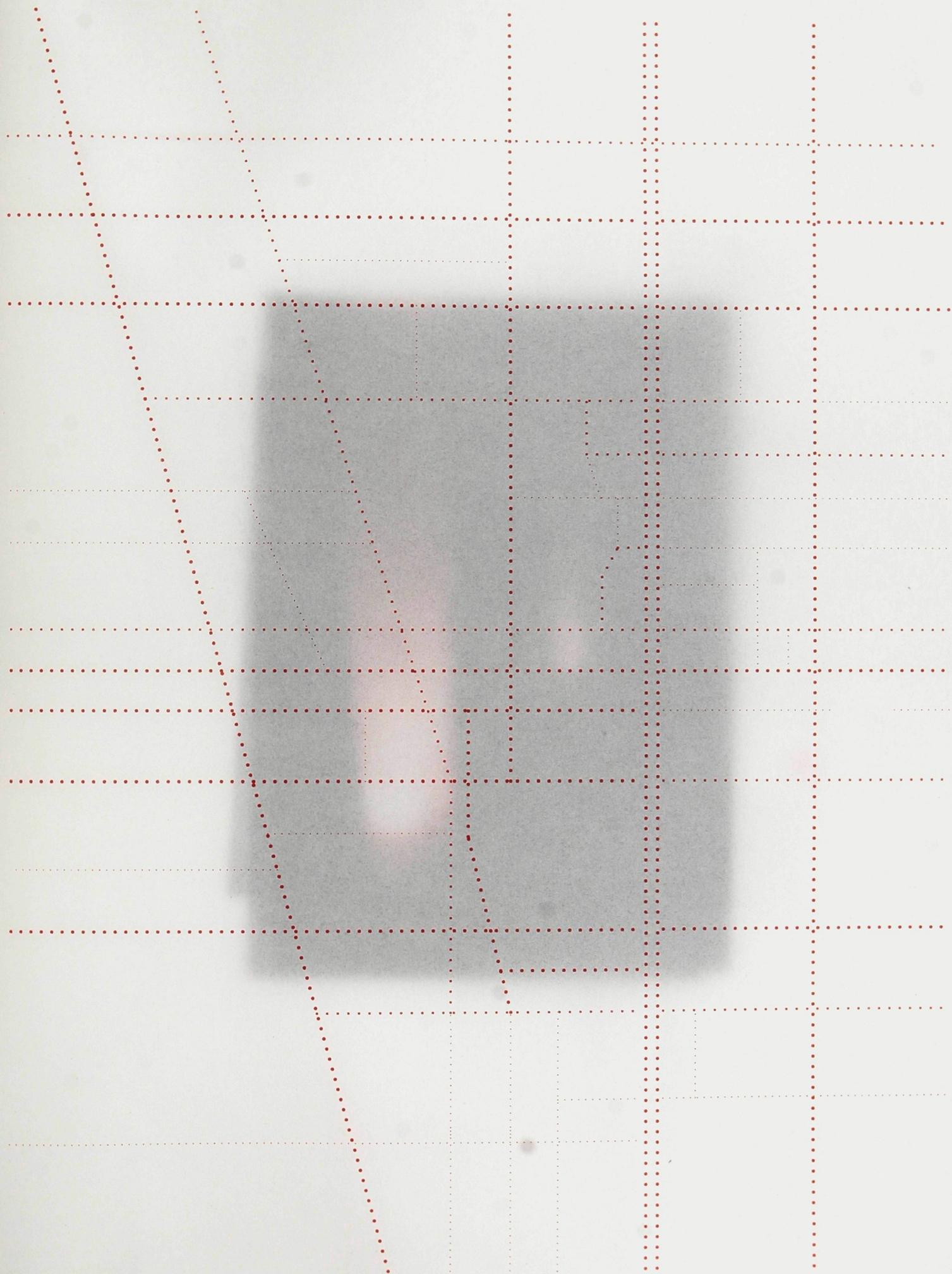




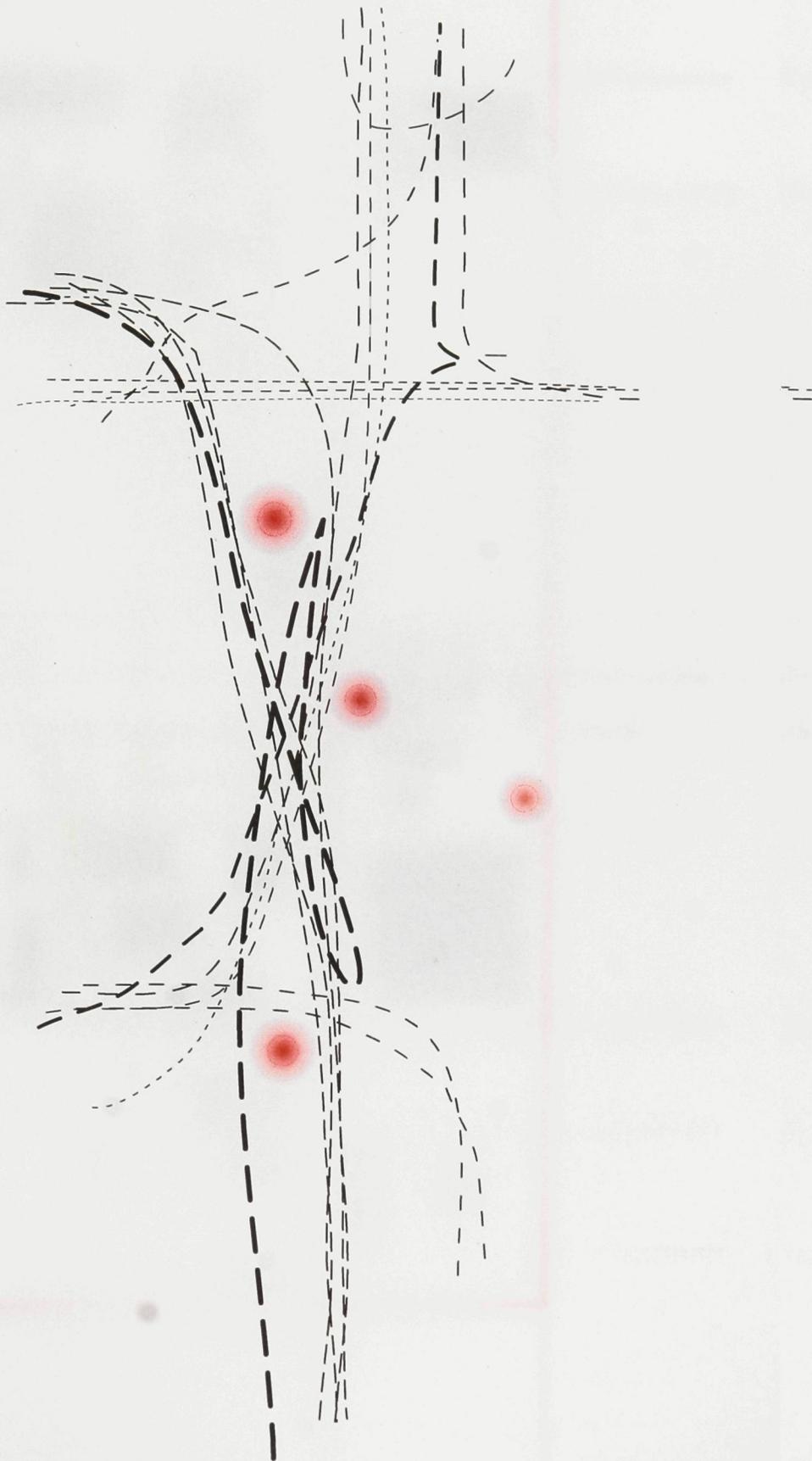














rue saint-hubert

rue sherpaxoche

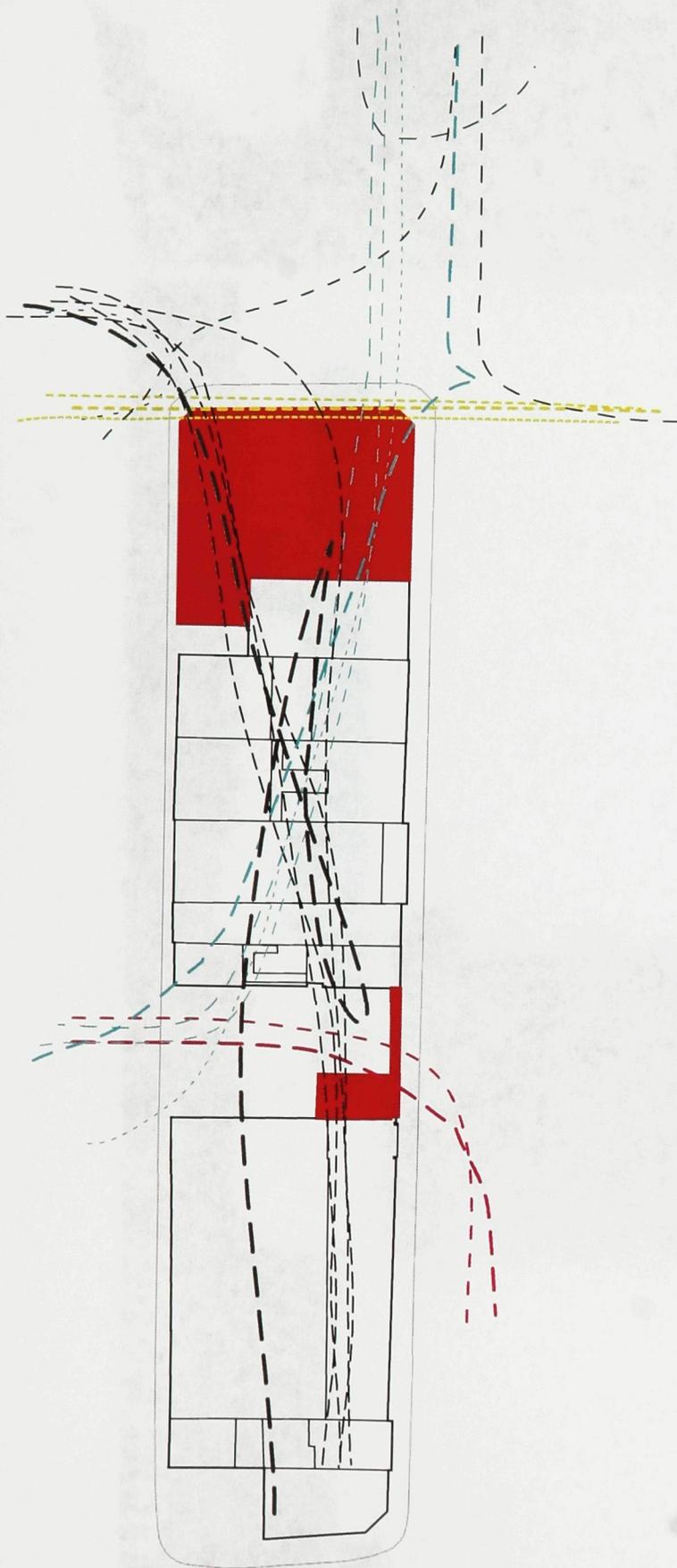
blvd rene-levesque

rue sainte-catherine

blvd shawmont

rue clark

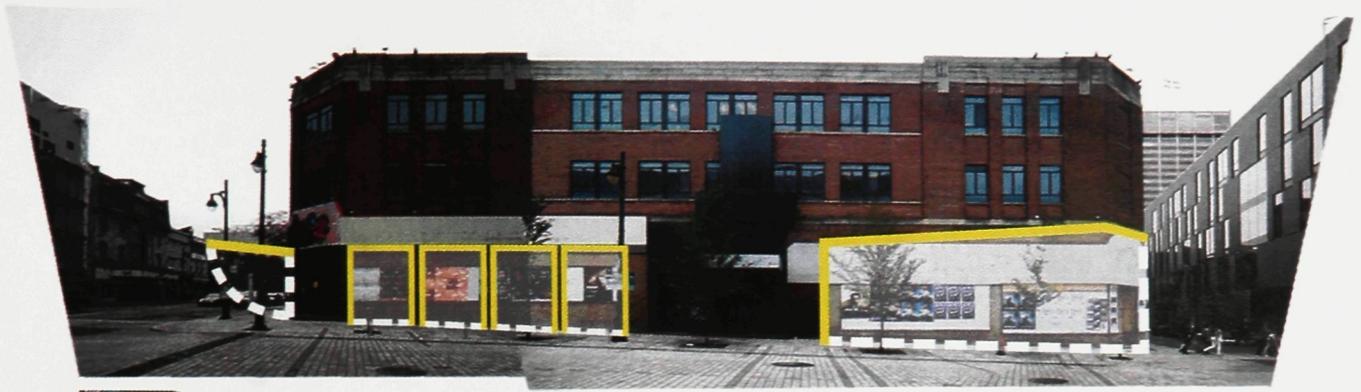
rue city councillors



The façade at the south-west corner of 32 Rue St. Catherine peels away from the street revealing a public theatre excavate into the site. Once the physical barrier is removed, pedestrians can enjoy an interlude moment between interior and exterior space. Similarly, segments of the façade on the north-west corner are removed to allow the interior programme to spill out onto the street. Pedestrian motion is uninhibited as they weave in and out of the new apertures.

Introducing a housing component that spans between 32 Rue St. Catherine and 1200 Blvd. St. Laurent responds to the city development plan to increase residential activity in the Quartier des Spectacles, as well as creating a visual connection linking the two interventions at the public level.

The freestanding façade at 1200 Blvd. St. Laurent currently acts as a barrier to Rue Clark. Breaking through this barrier at street level will preserve the unique aesthetic of the remaining façade while simultaneously allowing pedestrians the freedom to cross directly through the site.



RE: ACTIVE //
EXTRACTING SPECIFIC
ACTIONS AND ACTIVITIES
OF A PLACE OR OBJECT
IN ORDER TO SIMPLIFY AND PORTRAY
DEFINITE ATTRIBUTES AND MEANINGS

The intervention at 32 Ste. Catherine was designed as a montage of programmes, fused together at moments where actions describing space intersect. Rather than separating the individual programmes, the design approach focuses on the building as one entity. Intersecting moments of interrelated space can promote spatial and social interaction.

The programmes collected into 32 Rue St. Catherine were selected as a response to the city of Montreal's development strategy for the *Quartier de Spectacles* to support the vitality of existing cultural venues by diversifying future commercial ventures in the neighbourhood. In order to achieve a cohesive montage of these programmes, the concepts of *verb vs noun* and *interACTION* worked as dual resources for analysing how specific moments would intersect. The scores that evolved from both resources first itemized the individual actions that define the use of each programme. The general actions listed could be used to describe completely different events depending on which programme they were assigned to. However, bringing these varying moments of the same action together into one space was the challenge in creating a new and unique user experience.

Robert Lepage adopted the process of devising theatre with his experimental theatre group *Ex Machina*. It is important to Lepage to auteur unique theatrical experiences that would communicate to contemporary audiences issues and events that are prevalent in their everyday lives, rather than recycling predictable plots latent with lost meanings. The resources for Lepage's productions are based on personal experiences, that are then translated to a communal level. His theatrical situations are built upon layers of self-consciousness and cultural

consciousness. The performance is a vehicle of self-exploration for Lepage, the actors, and the audience. At *Ex Machina*, the importance of product has been shifted to process. Lepage's interpretation of performance theatre exercises in a workshop dynamic, presenting something raw and fragmented from time and continuous narrative. The emphasis on dramatic situation and imagery rather than text and narrative, allow collaborators to intimately explore the relationship between actor, action and audience in a specific moment.

For example, how an artist composes a painting compared to how a shopper composes an outfit are two completely different experiences. But when these two actions are brought together through a physical or visual connection, a new, refreshing experience is created for both parties.

The façade was included as an additional programme for the site. While one aspect of devising the interaction between multiple programmes focused on an interior spatial relationship, it was also important to consider how those programmes would interact with the street and surrounding neighbourhood through the façade.

By using the RSVP Cycles as a model for devising architectural space, scores of schematic spatial intersection were able to evolve into detailed elements of a specific moment where an occupant would experience interaction at a social, spatial, and sensual level.

S1 combine (and add) programmes from city development plan for QdS

V1 select defining actions common between multiple programmes

S2 devise multiple schematic designs representing intersecting actions

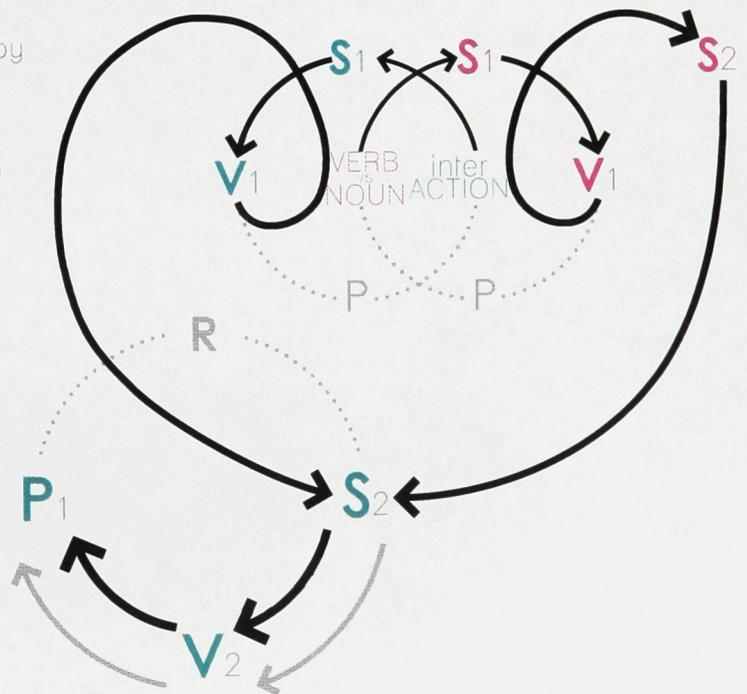
V2 select schematic design according to successful or interesting moments of interaction

P1 detail selected intersecting actions in intersitial spaces

S1 itemize actions that define programmes

V1 categorize programmes by activities that define them

S2 pair actions to connect programmes



restaurant

consume
converse
quench
smell
swell
experience
enjoy
prepare
taste
indulge
sustain
satisfy
devour
compose
observe
interact
nourish
surprise
serve
present

artists' studio

create
collaborate
inspire
imagine
muse
expand
produce
compose
accumulate
interpret
represent
dream

lounge

relax
conspire
unwind
intergrate
meet
interact
converse
mingle
recline
observe
watch

boutiques

change
browse
replace
update
select
remove
excite
consider
return
accentuate

covet
accumulate
spend

cafe
connect
watch
replenish
concentrate
observe
work
converse
hydrate
recharge
energize
snack
meet
chat

bookstore

peruse
flip
itemize
align
organize
explore
search
concentrate
wander

market

replenish
explore
accumulate
imagine
collect
immerse
smell
acquire
taste
sample

video

reference
library

research
concentrate
analyze
study
realize
connect
search
view
observe
watch
document
share

residences

regenerate
organize
dream
unwind

regroup
relax
evolve
invite
remove
hide
decompress
accumulate
collect

exhibition space

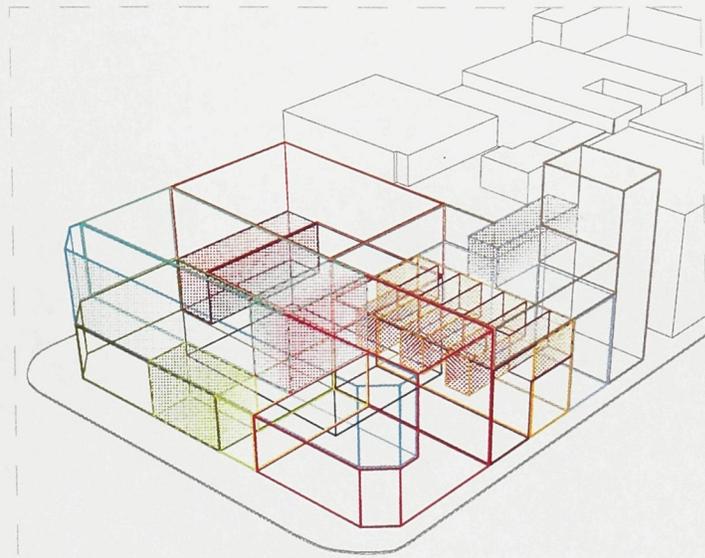
wander
glance
analyze
display
currate
observe
assemble
coordinate
interact
contemplate
entice
interpret
imagine
mingle
inspire
promote

independent art cinema

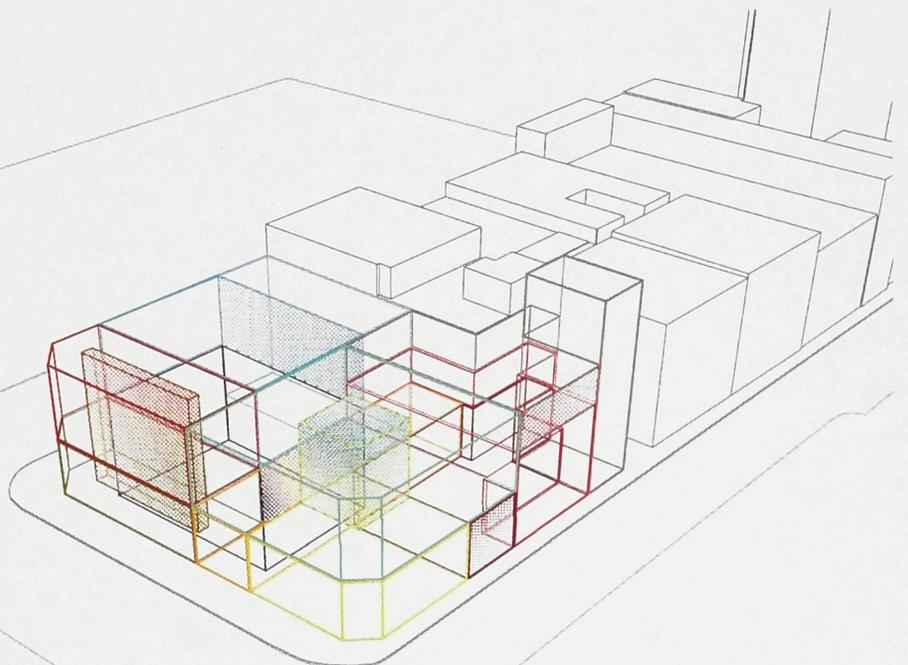
congregate
view
transport
surprise
fascinate
watch
excite
transcend
snack
reminisce
enjoy
react

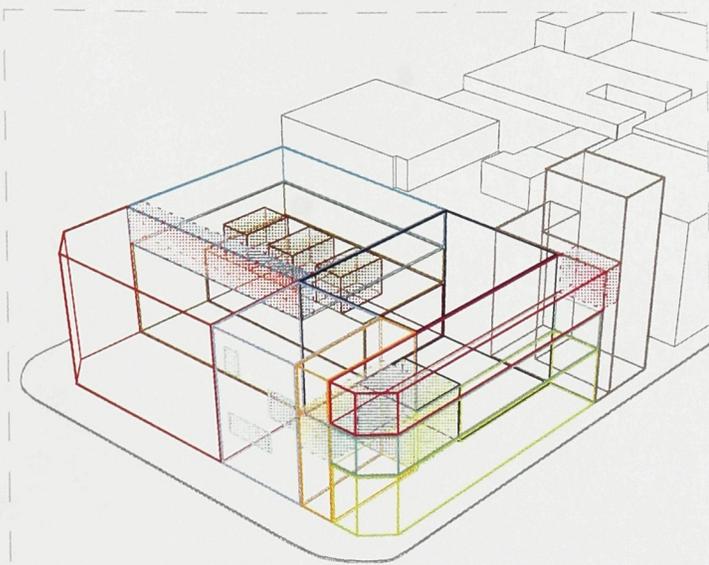
facade

align
announce
divide
protect
reveal
accentuate
contain
monitor
filter
represent
overwhelm
entice
display
confine
reflect
highlight

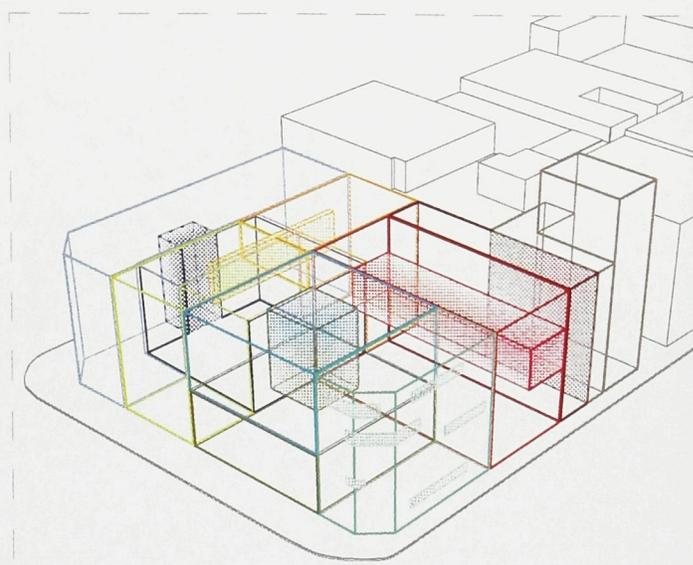


surprise - represent - interact - replenish - search - remove





compose - relax - snack - explore - analyze - accentuate



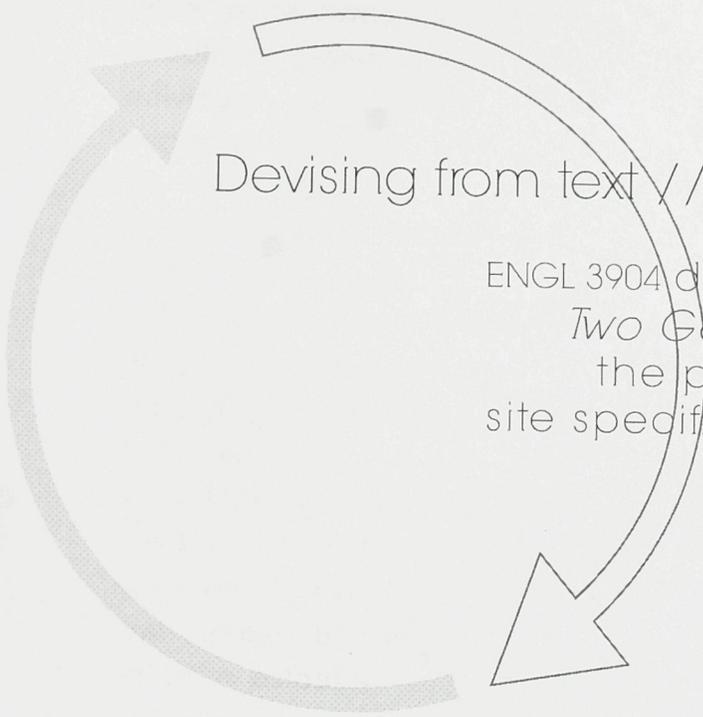
interact - imagine - excite - connect - organize - entice

ENDNOTES

- i Halprin, *Cities* p.197
- ii Halprin, *The RSVP Cycles: Creative Processes in the Human Environment* p.4

IMAGES

- 1 Halprin, sketch. *RSVP Cycles*.



Devising from text // DUAL RESOURCES:

ENGL 3904 drama workshop presents
Two Gentlemen of Verona,
the process of devising a
site specific performance from
Shakespearean text.

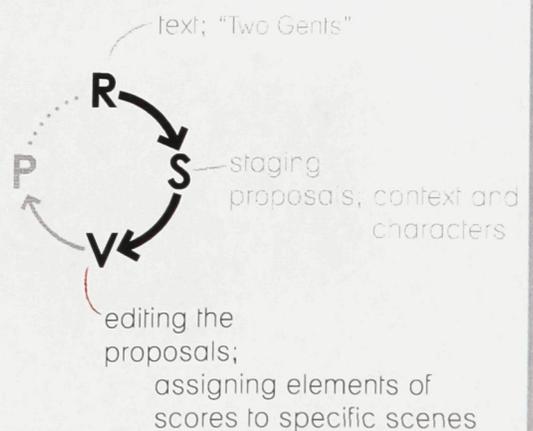
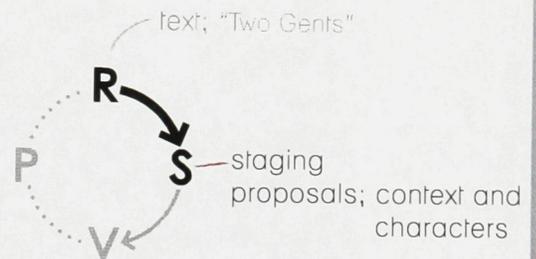
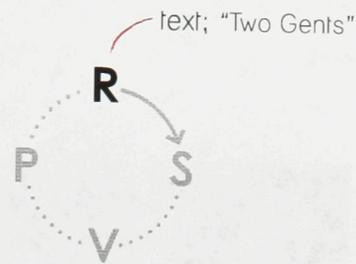
When devising a performance, the ensemble begins with a resource. This is the starting point, or catalyst, from which the individuals of the workshop drew inspiration. In the case of devising *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, the group worked with the text and the site as dual resources. *Two Gents* was selected as the resource for the workshop production based on the course objective: staging and performing a Shakespearean play. Using text as a resource is a less conventional approach to devising since the aim is to create an original product. However, Shakespeare's plays present a great amount of flexibility in the text. The plot and dialogue are strictly outlined but setting and characters are vaguely defined providing an opportunity for creative reinvention. The interpreter is able to translate Shakespeare's archetypal conflicts and characters into a contemporary context, allowing the work to be more accessible to today's audience.

Once a resource is proposed, it evokes sensations, ideas, and images from an individual perspective. These individual responses are then presented to the group. The initial responses, or *scores*, to *Two Gents* reinterpreted the context of the play. While Shakespeare's play was originally set in and between Verona and Milan, the actors interpreted these settings, not in terms of geographical context, but rather in terms of social dynamics.

The scores for staging concepts presented by small groups in the workshop transported the play from 16th century Italy to various decades and locales. Shakespeare used Verona and Milan to establish a clear contrast between class, scale, values, and expectations. These contrasts were translated, via scores, into the context of the wild West, rebellious 80's, conservative 50's, contemporary culture, and even a "timeless" moment absent of age and gender.

The attitudes, and sometimes physical appearance of characters in the play constantly change. They flirt, lose interest, and betray each other from one moment to the next. Youthful fickleness is the strongest theme that stands out in the text which led to the general consensus that the workshop's production should be set in high school to best communicate the narrative.

Each group presented intriguing scenarios for the play, and rather than just selecting one, attributes from various proposals were selected to define specific scenes. Without any implication of time travel, the characters would pass through decades as well as cities: Verona became defined by conservative



idealism in the 1950's; Milan was transformed into a high school in the 1980's; in one scene the audience witnesses Proteus experience a surreal expressionist moment of inner conflict;

Proteus: To leave my Julia, shall I be forsworn;
To love fair Silvia, shall I be forsworn;
To wrong my friend, I shall be much forsworn;

...I cannot now prove constant to myself...



and the play closes in present day, where the expelled students of Milan high school hangout. Time impacted setting just as much as physical place with the intention that the socio-political climate of specific decades would create a richer definition of each scene. The attitudes conveyed by Shakespeare's characters in Verona were reinterpreted by the group in the context of a quaint North American town in the 1950's. The thoughts and actions of the characters from Verona are similar to the stereotypes of gender roles and social conformance associated with the 1950's. Julia is desperate to fulfill herself with a romantic relationship. She seeks the advice of her friend Lucetta over which of her prospects she should hold out for while vainly trying to conceal her emotions.



Julia: But say, Lucetta, now we are alone,
Wouldst thou then counsel me to fall in love?

Lucetta: Ay, madam, so you stumble not unheedfully.

Julia: Of all the fair resort of gentlemen
In thy opinion which is worthiest love?



Proteus' mother Antonia also has to ask her friend for guidance concerning where to send her son to school (to ensure he is following the norm).

Antonia: I have consider'd well his loss of time
(to Panthina) And how he cannot be a perfect man,
Experience is by industry achieved
And perfected by the swift course of time.
Then tell me, whither were I best to send him?

...

(to Proteus) I am resolved that though shalt spend some time
With Valentine in the emperor's court:
To-morrow be in readiness to go.

When the action moves to Milan, characters' attitudes fast forward to the 80's, a time focused on activism, freedom of speech, and gender and sexual equality. Silvia captures every boy's attention; unlike Julia in the 1950's, she is teasingly forward and speaks her mind.

Silvia: Ay, ay: you writ them, sir, at my request;
But I will none of them; they are for you;
I would have had them writ more movingly.

Valentine: Please you, I'll write your ladyship another.

Silvia: And when it's writ, for my sake read it over,
And if it please you, so; if not, why, so.

Valentine: If it please me, madam, what then?

Silvia: Why, if it please you, take it for your labour:
And so, good morrow, servant.

All of the characters gradually migrate to "the woods", the hideout of the outlaws. The ensemble's interpretation of the play concluded in a contemporary setting, and every actor playing an outlaw designed their own character based on ideas of current social misfits. Goths, thugs, hippies, and anyone you would have seen "occupying Wall Street" banded together for the final scene. It presented a sense of unity between all characters despite their backgrounds, beliefs, and past transgressions.

Once the scores of the text were condensed to the themes of high school and a time-lapse of socio-political dynamics, the site for the performance was selected as a partner resource to the text. Rehearsals and performances took place in the PIT in Carleton's architecture building.

The numerous levels and thresholds intersecting the PIT provided a multiplicity of staging opportunities. Instead of following conventional staging strategies such as stationary playing space and the division of actors and spectators, the ensemble decided to use every surface of the PIT, and have the action physically revolve around the audience.



The decision to move the scenes around the PIT and centralize the audience in the action was also due to a lack of financing for the production. Scenic design did not involve built

sets, but rather informed the use of space by the actors. With a limited amount of resources, the ensemble constantly had to devise creative solutions to communicate the setting to the audience without sets or imagery.

The process and product of the workshop shares many similarities with the theories and practices of Jerzy Grotowski's *Theatre Laboratory*. Their productions investigate the relationship between actor and spectator by removing technical distractions and disguises that are popular in theatrical spectacle. While disclaiming technical enhancement in live performance, Grotowski emphasized the importance of collaboration between architecture and theatre. His performances took place in raw spaces that emulated the narrative. He did not see any benefit in separating the audience from the action. The audience occupied the space, and the actors filled the negative space with their performance. The actors only had their bodies and their surroundings as tools for communicating the narrative.

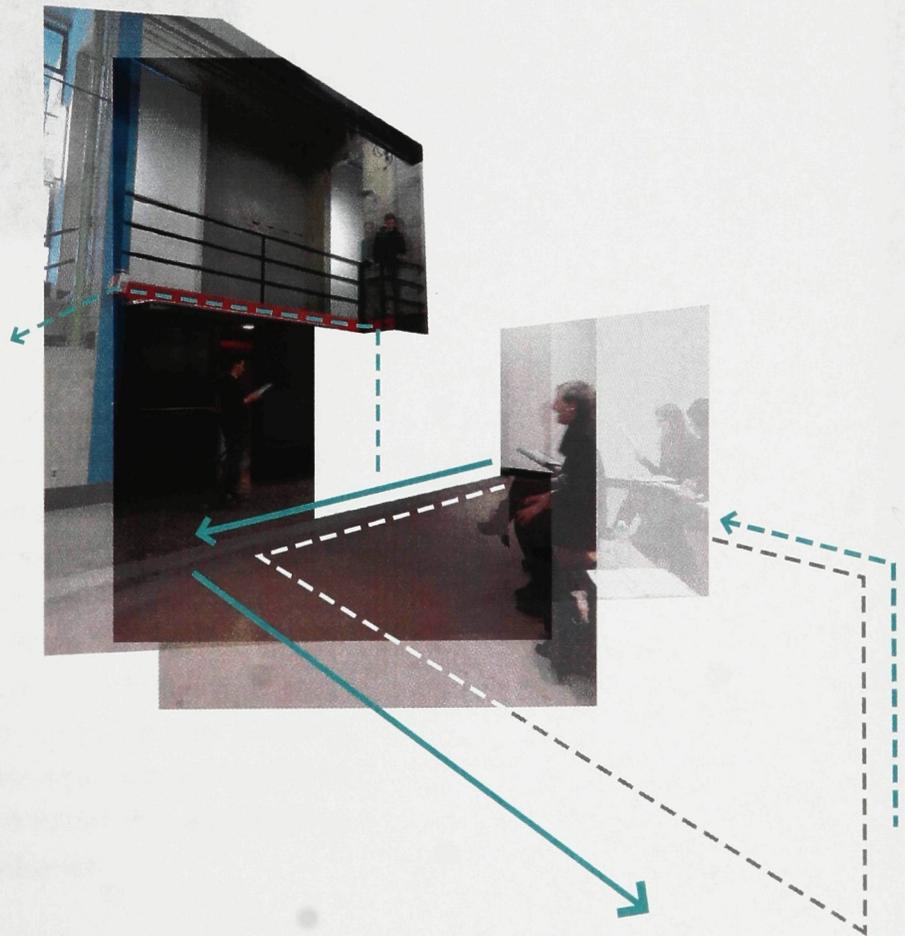
["[Theatre] cannot exist without the actor-spectator relationship of perceptual, direct, "live" communion."¹¹]

In the workshop's production, communication of the setting and story also depended on the actors. Their gestures and expressions transformed their surroundings from a frame of lights to a bedroom window, or an open door into a pathway leading to the dangerous outskirts of a city. Since the scenes were transitioning to different areas of the PIT, lighting and vocal cues had to be effective enough to physically draw the audience's attention from one place to another. Clothing

and voice inflection were also important tools used to communicate a shift between decades. Julia was a young lady from the 50's with a proper, restrained manner, whereas Silvia delivered her lines like a material girl from the 80's.

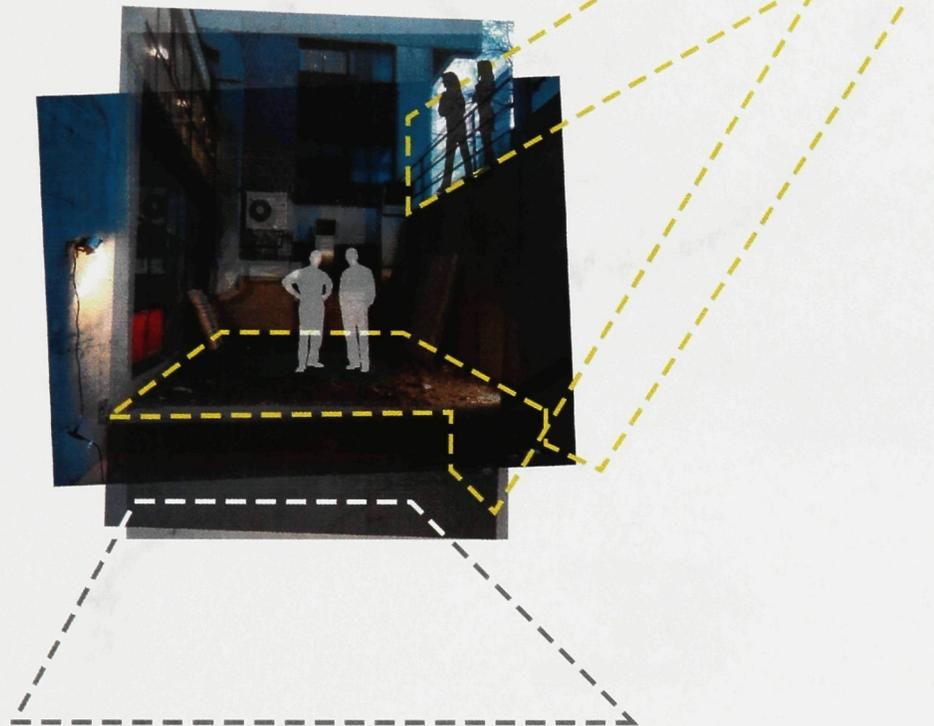
Minimal staging interventions left the actors exposed. Without overwhelming sets and technical effects to hide behind, they had to rely on their bodies in their environment to portray the scenes. Similarly, the role of the spectator required more involvement than conventional performances. Instead of being forgotten in the darkness, the audience was visible and present in the action. This created a sense of self-awareness in the individual spectator, which can be disturbing for some

"By his controlled use of gesture the actor transforms the floor into a sea, a table into a confessional, a piece of iron into an animate partner, etc."ⁱⁱ

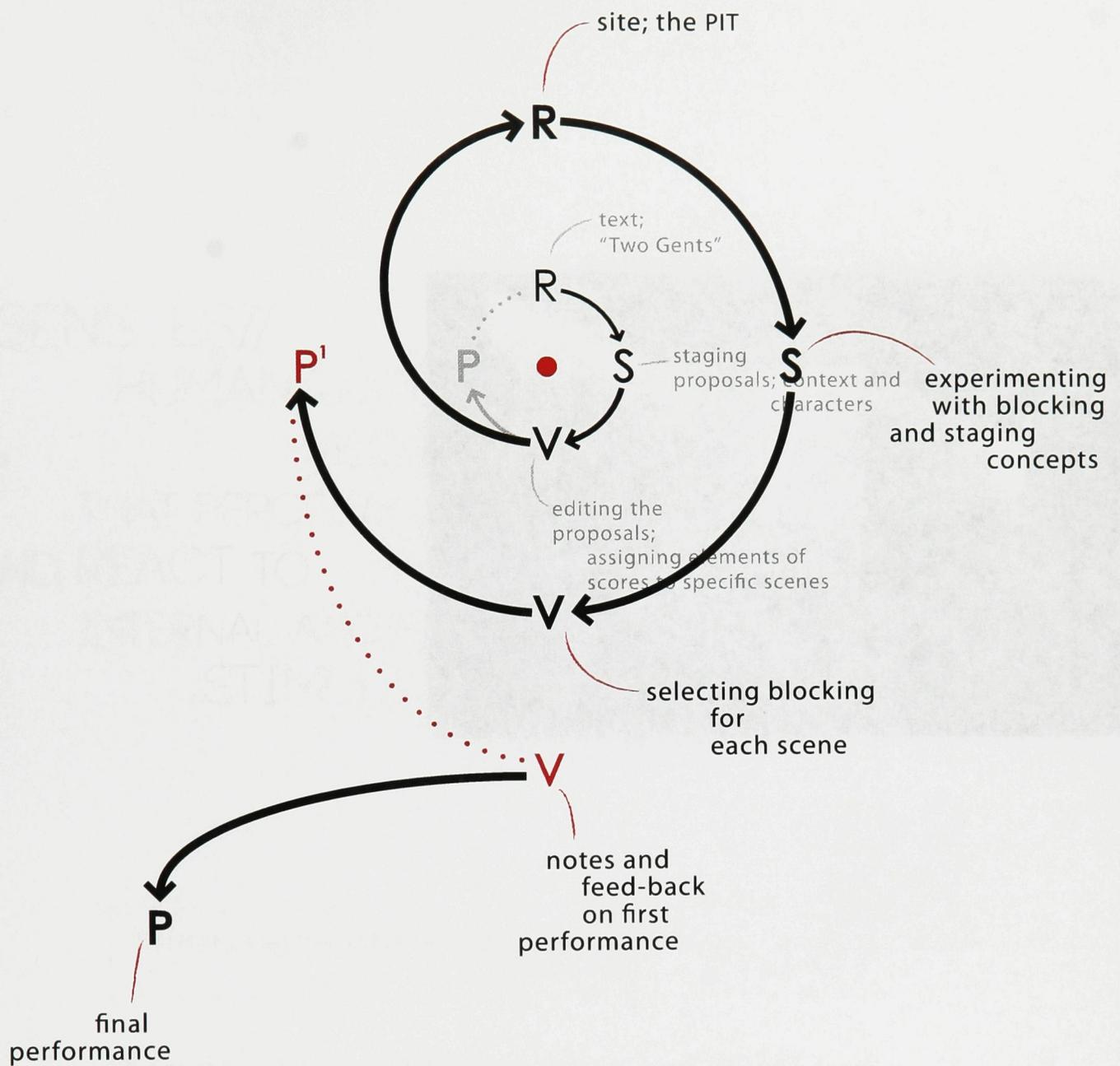


people, and spatial awareness as individuals physically followed the action and understood their relationship to the embodiment of the space through the actors.

For the final scene, all of the characters reunited through different circumstances at the outlaws' hideout in the woods. The ensemble decided to interpret this change in setting literally and move the actors and audience to a new location outside the building.



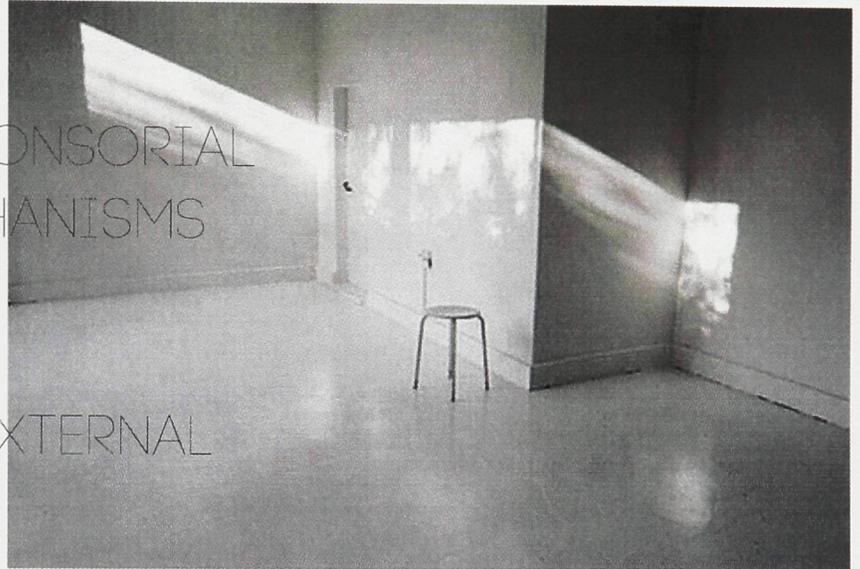
The process of devising *Two Gentlemen of Verona* demonstrated the importance of collaborating with a group in order to create a richer product. The dual resources of text and site acted as effective tools for experimenting with performance from an individual and group perspective. The process and product helped develop an individual sense of self and spatial awareness, and foster the relationship between actor and audience.



ENDNOTES

- i Grotowski, *Towards a Poor Theatre* p.19
- ii Grotowski, *Towards a Poor Theatre* p.21

SENS . ES//
HUMAN RESPONSORIAL
MECHANISMS
THAT PERCEIVE
AND REACT TO
INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL
STIMULI



“Sensory experience does not underlay culture;
it is a product of it.” - KEITH MITNICK

Our senses allow us to encounter, interpret, and respond to our surroundings. Sight, sound, scent, taste, and touch intermingle and overlap, allowing us to fully experience our complex environments. Our senses are not isolated, although some may be numbed. While all of our senses should react in unison, sight plays a dominant role in our perception of space. Our eyes guide us, analysing everything that surrounds us in the initial moments we witness them. However, a superficial, abrupt visual impact will have no deep resonance with a person. A dependence on sight can dull our other senses inevitably depriving us of bodily and spatial awareness.

Our perception of space cannot be based solely on sight. We are capable of mapping space from sound. Vibrations and

volume echo the scale and materiality of our surroundings. Sight can invite us into a space, but sound connects us to it. The long hollow echo of footsteps paces the seemingly endless length of an atrium laid with cool hard terrazzo tiles. The ascending vibrations of a series of steel stairs pitching higher and higher, tells the climber they have nearly reached the landing.

Sound contributes another dimension to space, whereas smell can extend to vivid memories, colliding physical space with psychological space. Sound, scent, and taste are all intangible sensations connected to compartments in our psyches. The smell of freshly milled cedar decking could remind the lounge of the sweet damp aroma of a cedar panel closet. This memory associates cedar as a material for quiet, secluded, intimate spaces where a child would indulge in the pleasure of flinging a closet door open and inhale deeply to become intoxicated by the smell of cedar as a mink cuff slid forward and brushed against her cheek.

Our subconscious influences our experiences. We associate immediate experiences with selective memories in order to elaborate our understanding of space. And while it may be challenging to create space that directly evokes our senses of scent and taste, since we generally stop arbitrarily licking things past the age of three, architecture can enhance the experience of a moment that stimulates our senses.

A restaurant can be a palatable and aromatic experience through the way the space enhances our indulgence in food. In an extreme scenario *O. Noir* restaurant in Montreal serves their dishes in total darkness to prevent the diner's senses of



The mutual goal of the reformation of theatre in the 20th century was to promote creative representation as the primary mode of communication with audiences through their senses.

Western theatre had regressed in a similar way to modern architecture prior to the 20th century. Audiences were disconnected from the performance as the content and representation became irrelevant and predictable. This form of theatre focused on text, lectured the audience with rambling dialogue. Experimental theatre practitioners of the 20th century sought to remedy this by reintroducing all the elements of live performance that Western theatre had forgotten.

Contemporary theatre theorists such as Antonin Artaud believed, "our sensibility has reached the point where we surely need the theatre to wake us up heart and nerves."¹ In order to reconnect with audiences, his theatre reverted back to a more primitive form of expression using movement, sound, and space. Artaud realized that we "...think with our senses first and foremost..."² Live performance has to utilize the power gesture, music, dance, light, sound, and space have over our senses in order for the action to resonate with the audience.

taste and smell to be skewed by their sense of sight. Taste is also inferable through sight and smell. A familiar scene or scent can unearth a memory that trickles down to your palate and causes your mouth to water.

We depend on our sense of touch, as well as sound, to navigate space without sight. When someone enters a dark room, unable to distinguish shadow from object, they suddenly feel panicked and helpless as they grope the walls to find a light switch.

While sight is a crucial sense which informs our other senses, it is dangerously unreliable as it can be confused with illusionary devices. Touch senses weight, resistance, and dimension of physical forms. We are aware of the reality of multi-dimensions through touch; the fact that planes extend away from us in all directions. Touch is the only sense which can give us a true measure of spatial depth. Our bodies are constantly in contact with another surface. The most common connection between a person and their environment is foot to ground. The texture and resistance of a ground surface can affect how a person experiences space. A hard smooth ground cover can make a person more self-aware of their strides as they listen to their heels clap the floor. In another instance, the uneven and unpredictable undulation of cobblestones in a piazza can force someone to slow down and contemplate the space they are in rather than being preoccupied with where they are going.

We perceive everything through sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch. The simultaneous stimulation of our senses can foster a profound connection to our bodies and our surroundings.

While methods of communication and representation were a primary focus during the reformation of contemporary theatre, content also had to be addressed. Since theatre is an artistic medium of communication, contemporary theatre practitioners took advantage of this by exposing startling truths in their narratives, commenting on current political and social issues. Artuad developed his theory *Theatre of Cruelty* with the intention of bringing a sense of awareness to his audience. This surrealist form of theatre sought to correct the degradation of theatre

that expressed lifeless art to a complacent audience. The notion of cruelty was not meant in a bloody, violent or sadistic sense, but rather a strict, unrelenting decisiveness that would shatter false realities that society had blindly come to accept.

Bertolt Brecht's concept of *The Epic Theatre* proposed that a play should not cause the spectator to identify emotionally with the characters or action before them, but should instead provoke rational self-reflection and a critical view of the action on the

It is a misguided perception to say architecture engages the senses, when often it only engages one: sight. There is a bias toward vision in the way architecture is conceived, taught, and critiqued. Consequently, this leads to the suppression and disappearance of sensory and sensual qualities from architecture. This ocular-centric design practice detaches people from their environments; their role as occupant is diminished to observer.

"The fact that the modernist idiom has not generally been able to penetrate the surface of popular taste and values seems to be due to its one-sided intellectual and visual emphasis; modernist design at large has housed the intellect and the eye, but it has left the body and the other senses, as well as our memories, imagination and dreams, homeless." iii

It is peculiar that we perceive architecture as if it is confined in the pages of a textbook or on the front of a postcard; architecture is a three dimensional space that we have the potential to embody. Architects can make the mistake of pursuing a singular iconic image in their designs. They think about what the occupant of their design will see, and forget to consider how the occupant will respond to the space with their other senses.

stage. Brecht thought that the experience of a climactic catharsis of emotion left an audience complacent. Instead, he wanted his audiences to adopt a critical perspective in order to recognise social injustice and exploitation and to be moved to go forth from the theatre and effect change in the world outside. For this purpose, Brecht employed the use of techniques that remind the spectator that the play is a representation of reality and not reality itself. By highlighting the constructed nature of the theatrical event, Brecht hoped to communicate that the audience's reality was equally constructed and,

as such, was changeable.

Jerzy Grotowski's vision of modern theatre was that the art of performance should be a vehicle which allows the audience to have access to another level of perception. Similar to the concepts of Brecht and Artaud, Grotowski wished to make the complacent audience aware of the reality that they were blind to. Grotowski believed that theatre is a vehicle for self-study and self-exploration. We are able to enter our psyche through our senses.

"The ocular bias has never been more apparent in the art of architecture than in the past 30 years, as a type of architecture, aimed at a striking and memorable visual image, has predominated. Instead of an existentially grounded plastic and spatial experience, architecture has adopted the psychological strategy of advertising and instant persuasion; buildings have turned into image products detached from existential depth and sincerity."iv

"It is evident that "life-enhancing" architecture has to address all the senses simultaneously and fuse our image of self with our experience of the world." v

It is this current static form architecture which led me to question how architects can re-evaluate their methods, and attempt to communicate with people through their senses. In order to understand and express how the experience of architecture can be enhanced...

By examining these theories and manifestoes which greatly influenced theatre of the 20th century, as well as today, one can see a basic pattern between the thoughts of Artaud, Brecht, and Grotowski. That being that it is imperative to create stimulating experiences that evoke the senses in order to have a connection with people.

Society is becoming increasingly desensitized to conventional stimuli. A new environment quickly becomes stagnant and predictable. Innovation has accelerated at such a rapid pace that we are conditioned to expect immediate results. We require bold and innovative experiences to reconnect with our senses and each other.

The following narrative describes an individual moment in the proposed design that attempts to create an environment that simultaneously stimulates the occupant's senses:

There is a hidden oasis in Montreal. The location is commonly known, but it is hidden in the sense that you can't always find it there. You cannot enjoy this place in solitude, because no one will believe you when you recount the experience. On the off chance you are lucky enough to stumble across this random phenomenon, share it in company. It is a completely surreal moment in time, and I am always surprised to notice that everyone else there acts as if it is a natural occurrence. It could be that every individual has a familiar connection with the experience, but there is nothing natural about an ocean in the middle of a city. And yet, the hypnotic ebb and flow of the sound of waves dragging across the sand always lulls me into a trance as I slips into my subconscious. Even the echoing pitch from birds gliding overhead is soothing. The wafting air conditioning can easily be mistaken as a gentle sea breeze, but the subtle yet distinct scent of salt water must be my imagination. Either that or the anchovies hiding under the zucchini flowers on my Roman-style pizza I picked up from *cafe* _____. The sunlight skipping on the water draws my attention back to the stunning vista. Shadows of invisible clouds slide across the ground and over our bodies. My mind is flooded with the memories of all the vacations I have spent relaxing on a beach; the cool sensation of sand between my toes as I bury my feet deep beneath the surface. A bright, warming calm washes over me...
Lunch is over, and I remember it's raining outside.



ENDNOTES

- i Artaud, *The Theatre and Its Double: Essay* p.64
- ii Artaud, *The Theatre and Its Double: Essay* p.65
- iii Pallasmaa, *The Eyes of the Skin: Architecture and the Senses* p.19
- iv Pallasmaa, *The Eyes of the Skin: Architecture and the Senses* p.30
- v Pallasmaa, *The Eyes of the Skin: Architecture and the Senses* p.11

IN .TER . AC . TION //
A RELATIONSHIP
DEFINED BY
A CONTINUOUS CYCLE
OF ACTION
PROVOKING
RESPONSE

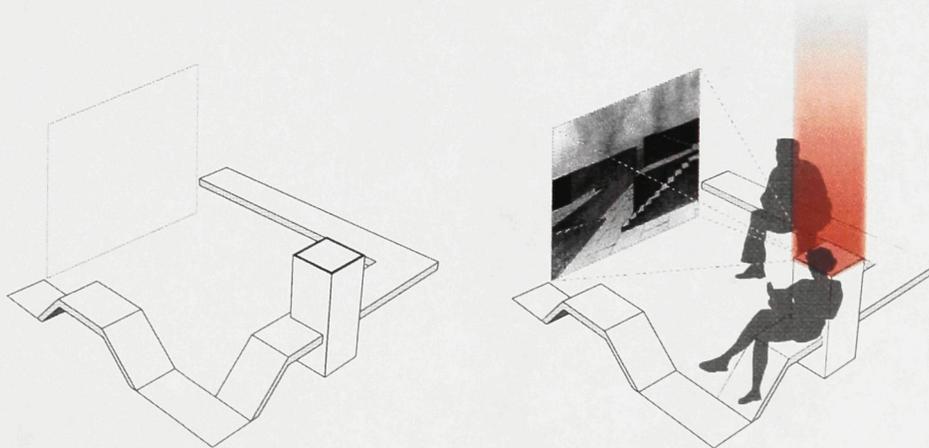


Interactive experiences can occur both socially and spatially. There is a continuum of moments of connection between person and person, and person and space. There is even the possibility of instances of connectivity between “space and space”. These interactive relationships can be categorized as physical or virtual connections. The physical aspect takes place in immediate time; individual moments converge in one space and time to create a communal experience. The virtual aspect of interaction is allowed more flexibility as its creation is not confined by immediacy. It is transient, and often intangible, associating to moments either past, present, or future. The virtual realm of interaction has become more popular than our immediate physical environments with the rise of information technology and social media. While industrious technology has completely redefined how we

experience physical space – increasing human efficiency and mobility – information technology has shifted our attention from our physical spatial realm to virtual social interaction. However, the loss or distraction from physicality due to technology is segregating individuals. Our present environments give us no incentive to connect with our surroundings so we stay connected to our virtual environments instead. Information technology is a powerful resource that should be adopted and adapted to provide a communal user interface. Merging our physical and virtual environments will simultaneously unify and excite multiple users to create a successful level of social and spatial interaction.

PHYSICAL DIMENSION OF INTERACTION:

The physical aspect of spatial interaction in architecture can be enabled simply by intersecting varying programmatic elements through common activities. The resulting interstitial space redefines conventional categorizing of programmes by unifying similar activities that are usually segregated by physical division in space. This literal fusion of physical space will encourage a dynamic integration of varying activities into one unified social experience.



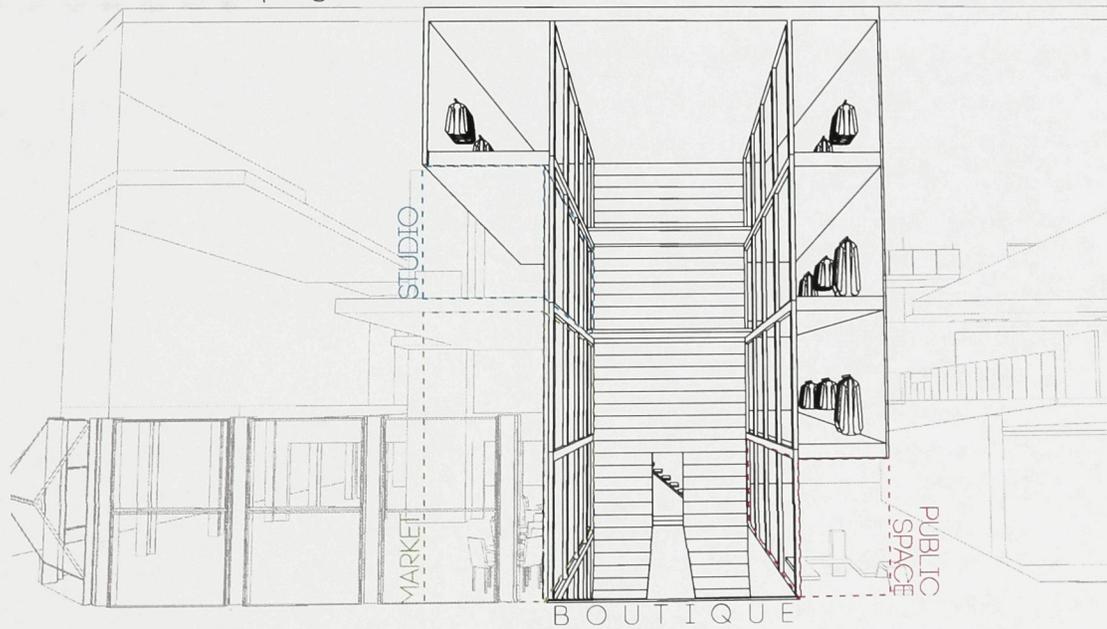
INTERACTION IN THEATRE occurs in both physical and virtual realms. According to Artaud, there are two aspects to everything which affect all space and being: the physical aspect, and the interior aspect. The physical aspect describes immediate and haptic experiences, whereas the interior or psychological aspect refers to the moment of an experience associated with memory. This “interior” aspect can also fall under the category of “virtual” interaction.

A strong physical presence must always remain in theatrical experience however; the introduction of digital technology to the understated virtual aspect of live performance can greatly enhance the physical experience of theatre.

Artaud’s strategy of categorizing moments of interaction as physical or psychological (virtual) was intended to understand the connections in theatre between body, mind, and space. These connections can be further detailed as interactions between “actor and actor”, “actor and space”, and another relationship connecting the audience with actor, action, and their own psyche. The stream of interaction between actor and actor and actor and space is created by an ebb and flow of action and response. An idea or event at the beginning of the narrative triggers a cycle of responses that unfurl until the final scene.

Spatial interaction, in both physical and virtual dimensions, as well as social interaction can be stimulated by various architectural moments devised for 32 Rue St Catherine. Elements such as intersecting programme communicating through apertures and overlapping planes, light and digital projections that create visual connections, and integrated features promoting public inhabitation, can unite people and place. By utilizing these elements at specific moments in the design, each programme maintains an individual identity while simultaneously influencing and responding to the various activities occurring around them.

A tall narrow boutique wedged between multiple programmes has the opportunity to engage with a variety of activities through operable apertures. From one perspective, an occupant in the boutique could consider their role as the voyeur, witnessing other events unfold around them as they ascend through the levels of the shop. From another perspective, the boutique occupants could be the “seen” rather than the “seer” as people in the market, artists’ studio, public lounge, exhibition space, and even pedestrians on the street, look in through the apertures on all sides. Whichever perspective you consider, all of the actions influence each other and redefine the traditional experience in each programme.



While an actor's interactive experience is often highly physical, directly contributing to the creation of the narrative, the interactive experience from the audiences' perspective is equally important. The interaction between the audience and action is usually restricted to a psychological experience. The audience connects to the narrative through their individual memories and experience the performance empathetically through the actors.

VIRTUAL DIMENSION OF INTERACTION:
[INTERACTIVE TECHNOLOGY INACTIVE]

It is an undeniable trend that contemporary culture has become consumed with technology. It enables our daily activities, and yet also hinders them from achieving their full potential as the current advantages of technology build a virtual median between people and their physical surroundings. The majority of our interaction with others is filtered through information technology. Innovations in communication technology are intended to promote and increase connectivity in society, and yet they are isolating individuals from their physical reality. Rapid technological innovations have also conditioned our culture to anticipate a constant state of change. Our expectations have evolved beyond the current state of our environment. We are desensitized; uninspired by our surroundings. Our physical space has been reduced to a static coincidence. However we must not dismiss technology as the catalyst for segregating society, but rather focus on the inherent potentials of technology that have yet to be sourced in order to truly enable communal interaction. In recent years, video and light installations have become a

Today, theatre has evolved beyond the interdisciplinary realm of the performing arts, and adopted scientific methods of representation by using digital media. Scenographic projections, synthetic sound qualities, and even virtual realities are becoming popular fields of experimentation for artists and performers.

Technology holds an undeniable power over contemporary culture; we are captivated by its limitless potentials. The use of technology in theatre is not only a response to its relevance in society, but also as a vehicle to evoke and provoke new ideas, feelings and associations in the audience. Digital multimedia is viewed by artists and performers as a new tool to communicate inferences and symbols. The interaction between actors and digital media creates a new environment on stage for the audience to lose themselves.

The ability to change scenery and create spectacle for the audience has always been a central feature in theatre. However,

the limited flexibility of physical sets and props and their ability to only change sporadically, or not at all, is a challenge which the introduction of digital media to the stage can overcome. Scenographers can transcend the laws of the physical world by manipulating tangible objects with intangible methods. With the tools of digital media, current scenography techniques focus on: redefining the concepts of static pictorial representation of place, creating an animation or action that contributes to the audience's identification of place in a scene, and combining theatrical tactics of perspective with cinematic sight lines in the mise en scene. As scenographers and set designers collaborate to blur the boundary between the 2-dimensional pictorial and the 3-dimensional experiential, they enable the scene to become a performance in itself.

Rather than isolating individuals, technology can aid and alter our perception of reality. By integrating a virtual aspect into live performance, theatre practitioners are able

popular form of expression for artists. Some even use building facades as a canvas for their work, combining digital images, sounds, and motion sensors, causing the audience to have a playful interaction with each other and the structure. Artists transcend the laws of the physical world by harnessing the influential power of technology and digital mediums. There are many experimental and prototype examples of digital interactive media, mostly designed for public spaces, which can create an attraction or event. Most of these prototypes are mechanism controlled by specialized computer programs, although some on a smaller scale can be manually manipulated or engaged by the individual user, fostering a more intimate relationship between occupant and environment. Interactive architecture presents an emerging trend where digital technologies and virtual spaces merge with tangible and physical spatial experiences; an active architecture, sensing, observing, feeling, listening, thinking, reacting, proposing, adapting, learning, even sometimes interacting. It is an architecture in constant flux, responding to light, sound, and touch.

This collaborative state of architecture presents the opportunity to reconcile human interaction within their environment.

to enhance the representation and effect of the physical components of the mise en scene.

ROBERT LEPAGE'S *TRANSFORMATIVE MISE EN SCENE*

A scenographic technique that has become a signature in Ex Machina productions is Robert Lepage's transformative mise en scene. On Lepage's transient playing stage, the boundaries between physical and virtual elements are blurred. These dynamic and collaborative sets contribute to the action, communicating the dramatic situation to the audience. The physicality of the human body and built sets meet virtual backdrops and effects, to be transformed beyond the traditional limitations of reality. This physical and virtual cohesion elevates the potentials of communications, and also provides a multitude of mediums for the audience to read and interpret, transitioning their role from voyeur to auteur.

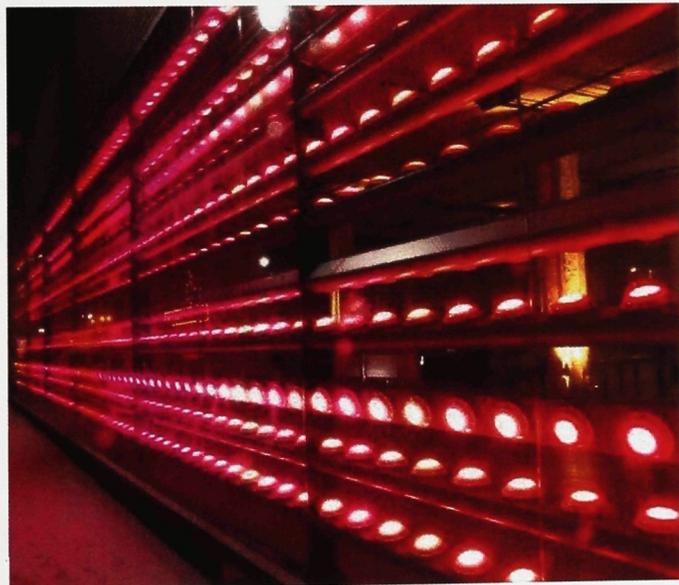
In Ex Machina's production of "The Andersen Project", Lepage and his team use a variety of digital projection sets to portray a sense of place, either realistic or symbolic. Unifying physical action with motion picture backdrops were successful experiments in creating a new relationship between actor and set that perforated the conventional boundary dividing place and action. Coordinating the actor's exploration of the stage with the movement of the video projection transformed the backdrops from 2-dimensional planes to 3-dimensional environments that could be inhabited.

Technological advances have caused a disruption in human interaction, however re-evaluating the way in which we use current technology and integrating it into architectural design can rehabilitate and heighten our social and spatial experiences. The technical and interactive work of current installation artists and the interdisciplinary nature of modern theatre should encourage architects to experiment with hypermediacy in their designs, and collaborate with other scientific and artistic fields to create spaces that inspire and respond to the occupant. Implementing a hybrid of digitally automated mechanisms, and smaller modules that can be manipulated manually, architects can inspire the users to act and react with each other and their environment.

PIXINESS is an interactive façade designed by visual artist Axel Morgenthaler for the SAT building on Blvd St Laurent. This kinetic, user enabled, light installation is comprised of 960 LED's - or pixels - that flash, spin, and change colour to create an anthropomorphic experience for pedestrians on Blvd St Laurent. The animation and rotation of each pixel creates a dynamic connection between the interior and exterior of the SAT building. This light façade realizes an innovative concept of how people experience and affect architecture. Passers-by can manipulate the animation of the light façade through their iPhones.

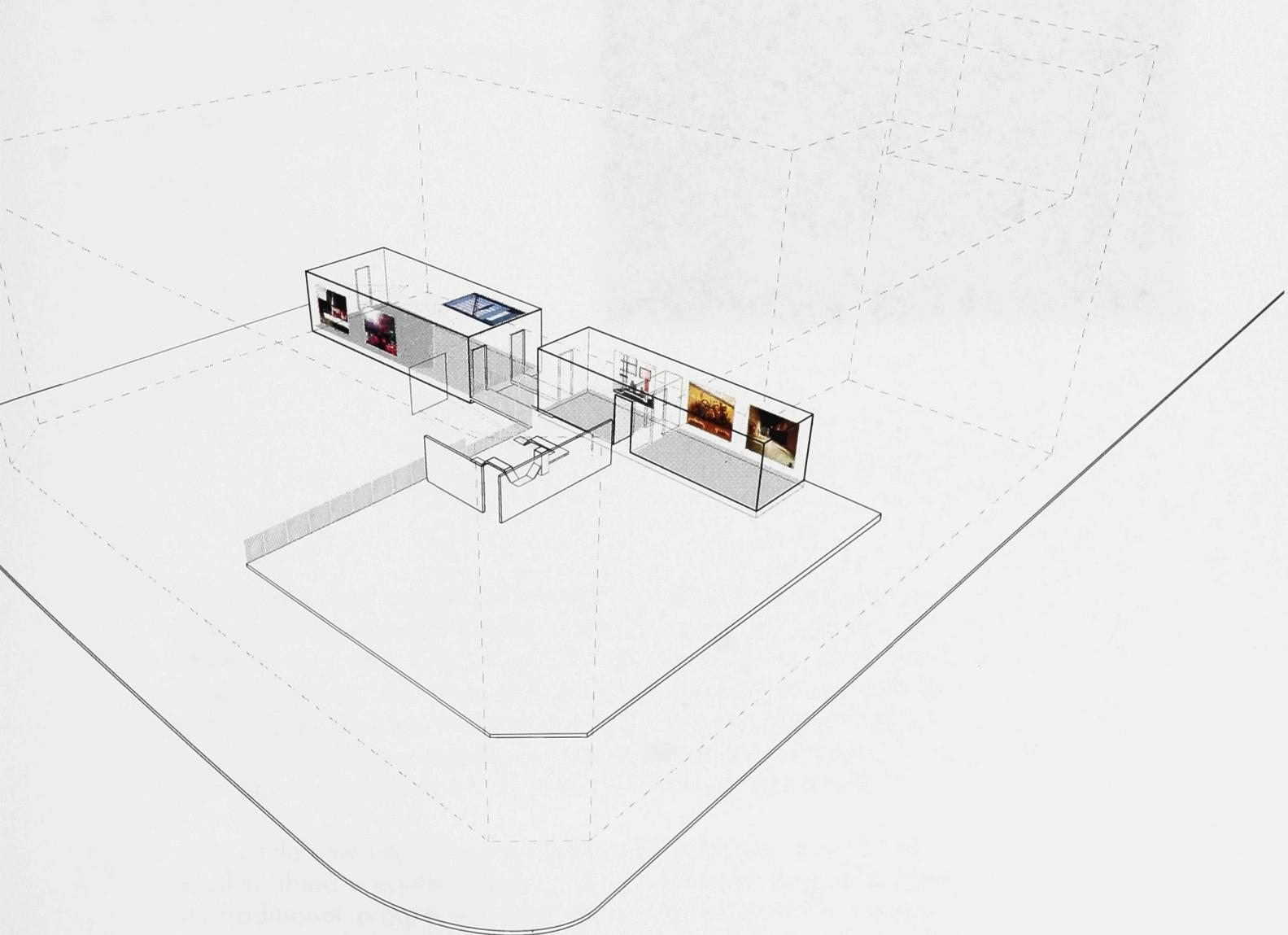
“This light creation is part of a process of reflection on the pixel and creation with LED light sources. PIXINESS was born of the desire to merge digital artistic expression and the urban environment to offer viewers not only a digital playground, but also an anthropomorphic work able to engage the viewer by the importance of his sensuous dimension by its playful appearance.”

- Axel Morgenthaler



①

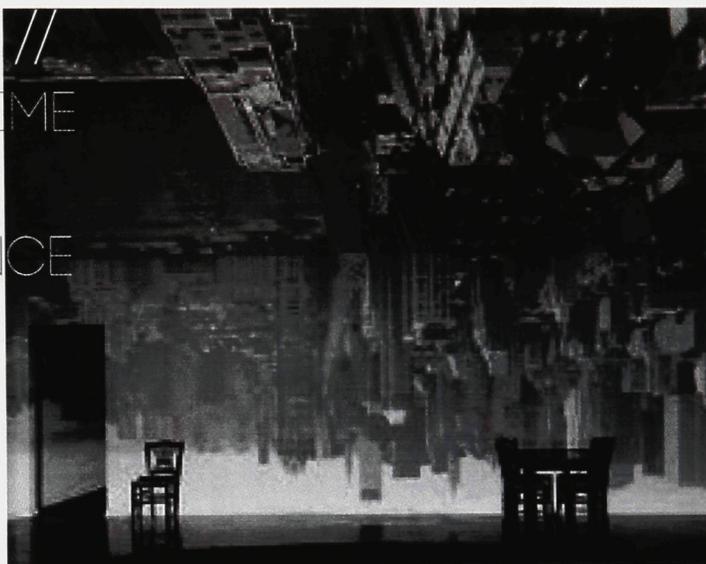
Morgenthaler designed PIXINESS as an interactive tool that reinvents the traditional role of personal electronics in order to elevate social and spatial experiences from an individual to communal level of connectivity.



IMAGES

- 1 Photograph. PIXINESS at SAT, Montreal, by Axel Morgenthaler.

TEM .PO. RAL . I .TY //
REFERRING TO TIME
THE MOMENTARY
ACTION OR EXISTENCE
OF AN EVENT,
PLACE,
OBJECT,
OR IDEA.



①

Temporality is a prevalent concept rooted in human existence. Time has the potential to affect every moment as it progresses. Whether it is the time of day or a season in the year, time manipulates our decisions and activities. People can coordinate with time by building routines; however, it is the transient nature of temporality that we should embrace as it is constantly evolving our experience to present us with new and exciting sensations.

And while time based in physical reality continues at a constant rhythm, there is a virtual aspect of time that can transcend both its traditional progression and the space in which it evolves. Elements such as artificial light, video, and synthetic sounds can be used as illusionary devices that virtually manipulate the standard pace of time. These elements can also transport us to virtual space that real time otherwise restricts us from entering.

Similar to the concept of interaction, temporality in architecture is present in both the physical and virtual dimensions. Transience in architecture can be expressed through form and/or imagery. In the physical dimension of temporality, architectural space acts as a flexible, moveable object. These transient spaces can be manually manipulated by the user or technologically automated. They adapt to the needs of the user, and often the environments they have been situated.

The virtual dimension of temporality on the other hand, refers to manipulating the perception of space through changing imagery. The application of imagery in architecture can derive from various sources: transition in lighting, digital textures, colours, or images projected onto surfaces, or even the malleable materiality of architectural space that reflects the actions of the users.



ROBERT LEPAGE'S

TRANSFORMATIVE MISE EN SCENE CONTINUED

The motion picture *mise en scene* used in *Ex Machina's* "The Anderson Project" – discussed in the previous chapter – allowed the actors to seemingly travel beyond the physical confines of the stage. This sense of transient immediacy capable in digital projection is a concept that Lepage continues to experiment with in order to exaggerate the potentials of temporality in theatre.

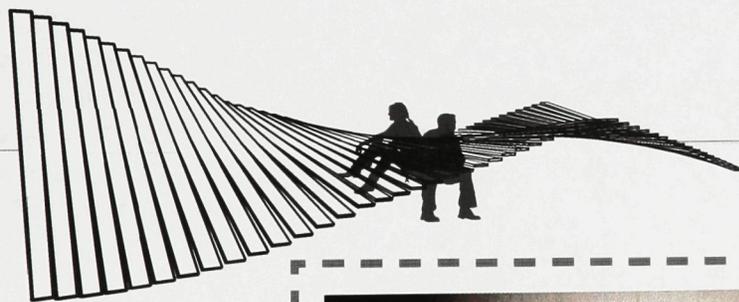
One of *Ex Machina's* most recent productions is Wagner's "Das Rheingold" series at the Metropolitan Opera in New York. In this production, Lepage and his team combine both the physical and virtual aspects of temporal staging. The physical set consists of a single monumental plane divided into twenty-four segments. The segments are connected through their centers to two towers

on each end, and animated using hydraulics. The division and movement of this plane has reinvented the concept of set as a static backdrop to a multifaceted functional architectural element that the players can embody and interact with. The transformative motion of this stage element is enhanced even further with the application of digital projections. The simple use of

colour, tone, and 2-dimensional texture can instantly transport the audience from the soothing unbounded tranquility of an underwater scape, to the harsh fiery fissures at the mouth of a volcano.



②



③

SHADOW PLAY is a genre of puppet theatre that depends on light and shadow, and the motion of objects to depict a narrative.

Shadow creates a sense of mystery. It captures the form of an object and reinterprets it as an abstracted 2-dimensional image.

The shapes of figures and objects are projected as shadow onto a screen. Although the physical figures are abstracted on a singular plane, they are reinterpreted and elaborated as complex three-dimensional scenes in the spectator's imagination.

All of the action of shadow play is condensed onto a singular plane. That is not to imply that the illusion falls flat. The coordination of figures and objects creates dynamic scenes that excite and amaze the spectator.

ARCHITECTURAL EXPRESSION OF TRANSIENT IMAGERY:

The community resource pavilion is designed to provide a flexible environment for community groups to meet, experiment, collaborate, conduct workshops, etc. all of the potential uses are enveloped in a translucent glazing, transforming the pavilion's façade into a light screen. The activities unfolding within the resource space are captured, through light, on the glazed skin. The image of this minimal glass box is in a constant state of flux from the perception of the exterior audience.

ARCHITECTURAL EXPRESSION OF TRANSIENT FORM:

The techno-scape situated below the community resource is inspired by *Ex Machina's* staging concept for the *Ring Cycle* at the Metropolitan Opera in New York. Acting as a resource for devising a flexible and interactive public space for the *Quartier des Spectacles*, the monumental members of the *Ring Cycle* set have been scaled down and operate on laterally positioned hydraulic pistons to allow the techno-scape to be manipulated into multiple schemes. The modularity of the system allows it to assume numerous positions depending on the desired environment of the user. The members can be arranged to provide public seating – sporadically placed or evenly raked liked an auditorium – an exhibition space, shelter from sun or snow, or an undulating landscape to lounge on. The techno-scape is always changing, from day to day or even within the day; imagine a sloped platform following the path of the sun. Users enjoying this new public space will always find something new and exciting behind 1200 Blvd. St Laurent.



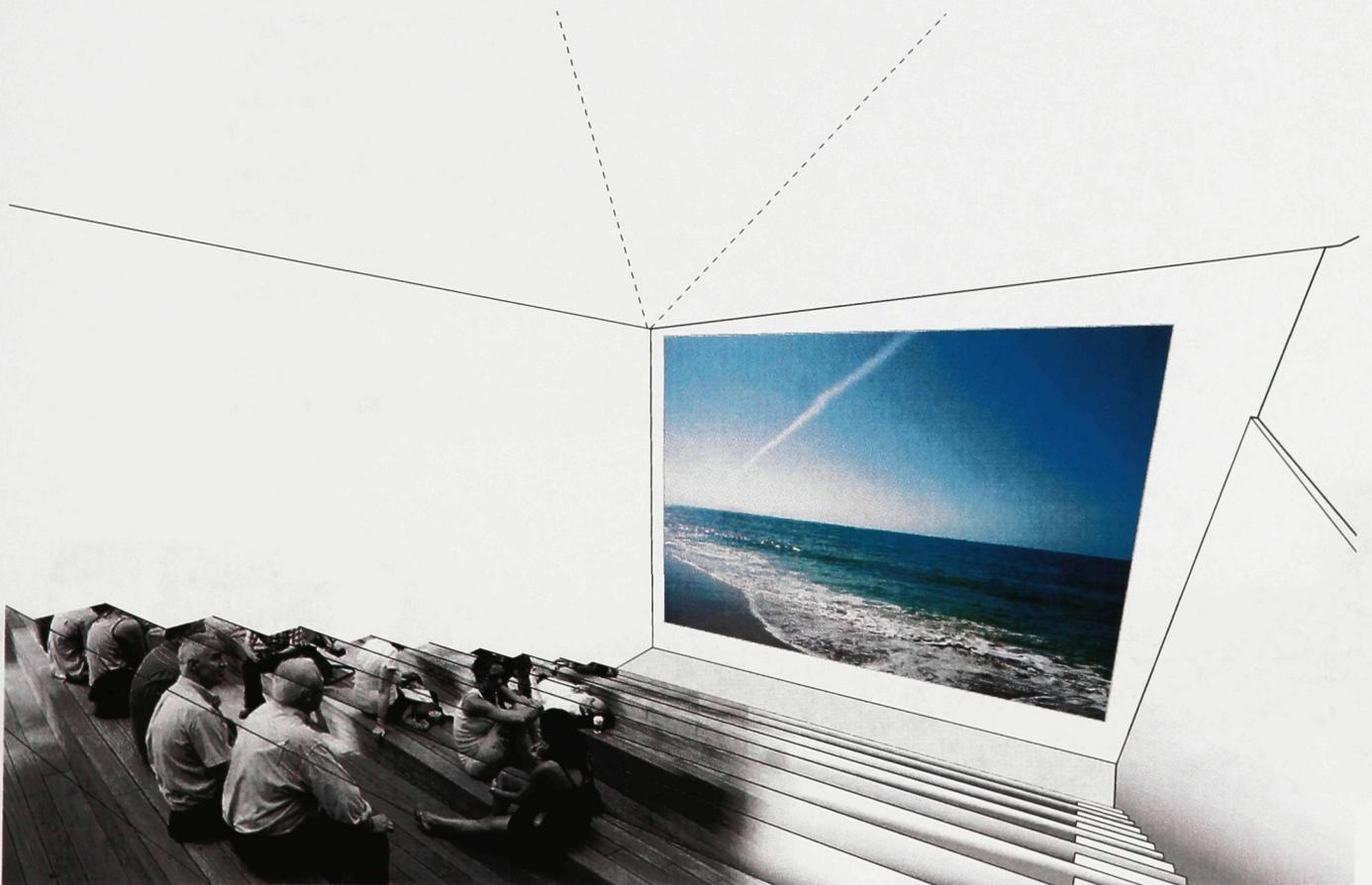
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IMAGES

- 1 Morell, photograph. *Manhattan view looking south in large room.*
- 2 Howard, photograph. *Ex Machina: Der Ring des Nibelungen.*
- 3 Labbe, photograph. *Sylvie Guillem; Ex Machina Eonnagata.*

While one can certainly
evolve in both directions,
a balance between
street-level and
high-level

CONTINUING DIALOGUE



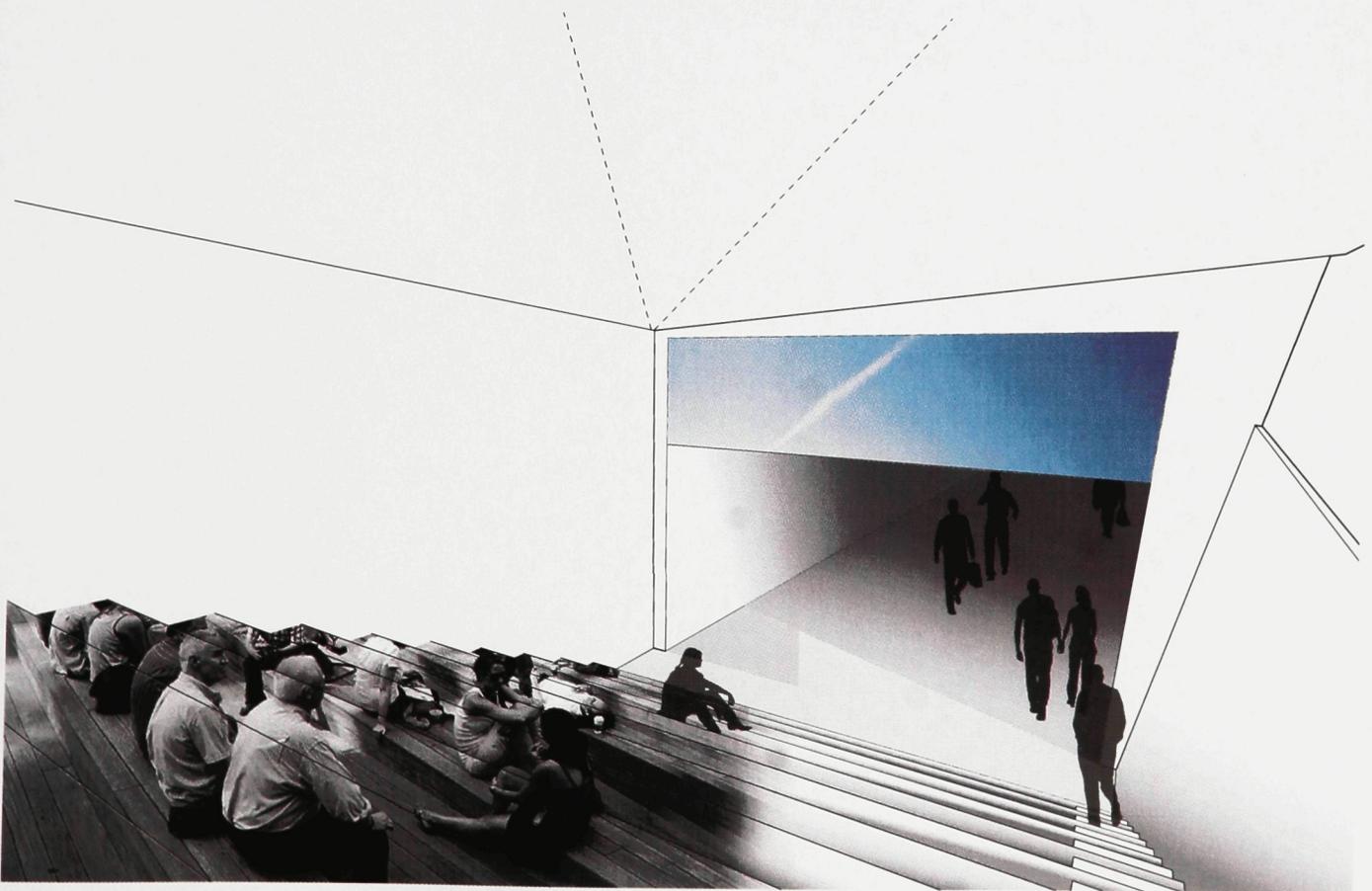
While one can speculate how the use of technology will continue to evolve in both theatre and architecture, it is important to maintain a balance between physical and virtual elements. The physical aspect should always remain the primary focus in both theatrical and architectural space, while being symbiotically enhanced by the presence of the virtual aspect. As the human body (and mind) play a pivotal role in the conception, creation, and evolution of both theatre and architecture, an environment intended for that audience should be tangible. A primarily haptic environment is necessary to keep our experiences grounded in reality.

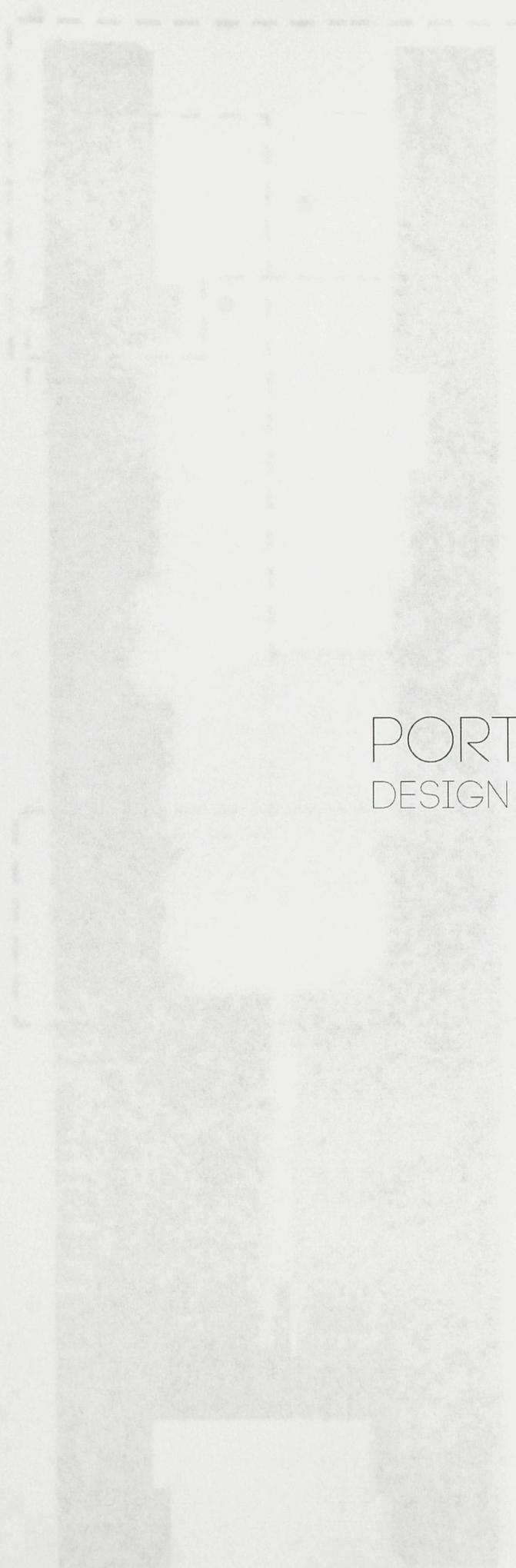
The design response to this thesis explores the potential of flexible space and how it enables the occupant to manipulate their environment, in both physical and virtual dimensions. The minimal design interventions proposed for the selected site in the *Quartier des Spectacles* inspire cycles of activity without inhibiting the creativity of the occupant through a fixed design. The spatial and social interaction between programmes and occupants can lead to an evolution of the initial environment. Following the concept of the RSVP Cycles, the initial design proposal should never be finite. As the initial design [P] is inhabited, a series of scores [S] will begin to develop as various actions and responses unfold in social and spatial relationships.

Continuing the cycle from the initial design response, the apertures and intersecting planes between spaces can inspire spatial and programmatic transformations. The central walkway in the boutique can become a playing stage, drawing an audience through the apertures of the walls from the public space, market, and studio. Envisioning the ground planes of the techno-scape as a shelter can reinvent the public lounge as a private dwelling. Another response to the initial design could be to remove the projection screen in the public cinema, and extend an underground promenade from the excavated stairs to the community resource and techno-scape.

There should be a running dialogue between programme and people, enabling the resulting environments to be in constant flux.







PORTFOLIO
DESIGN RESPONSE



multi-programmatic
commercial space
32 Rue St. Catherine

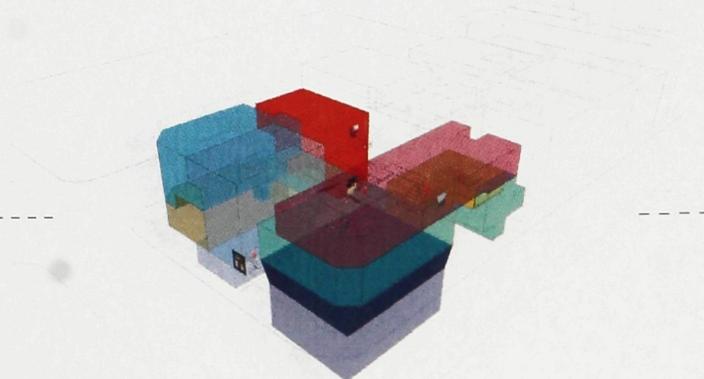
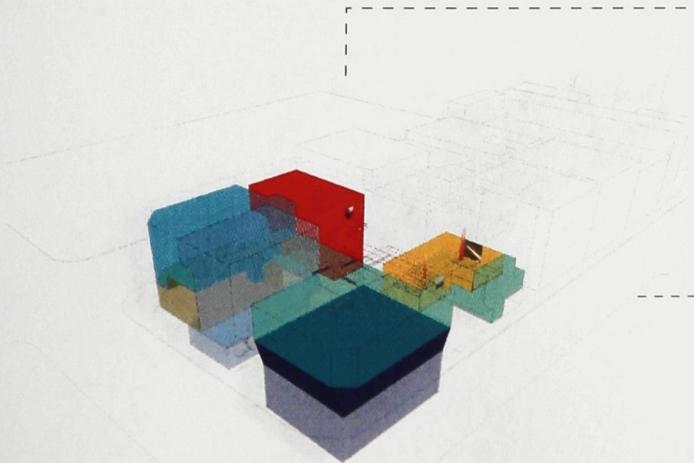
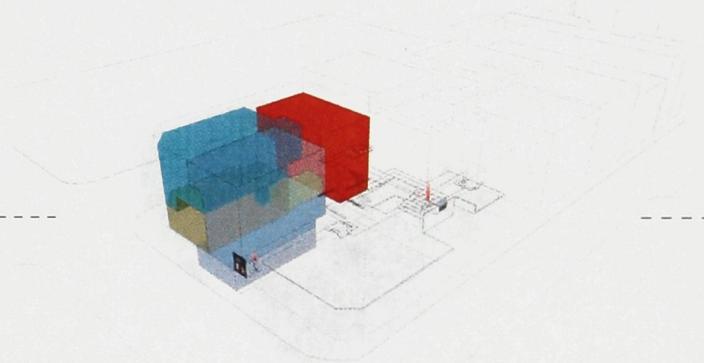
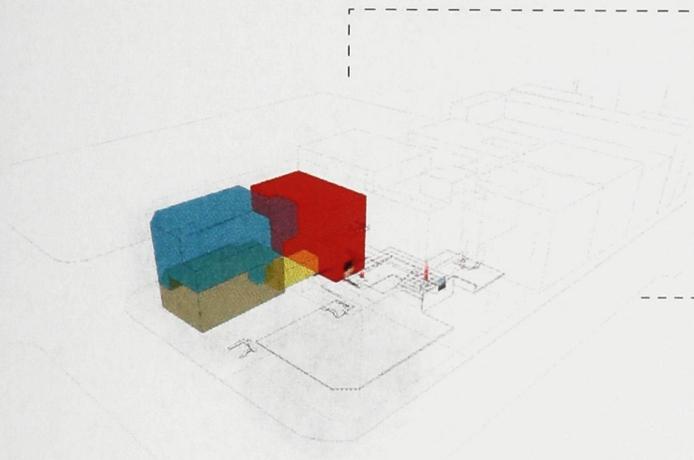
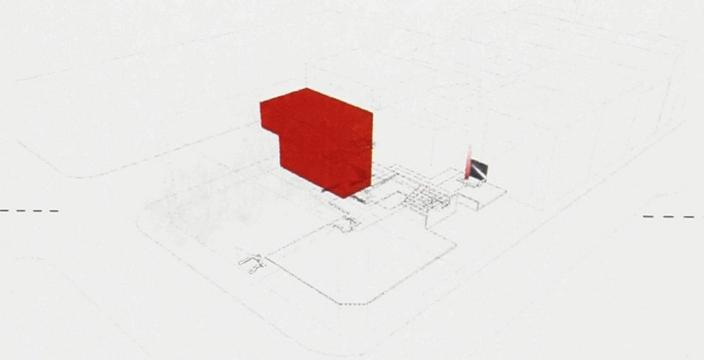
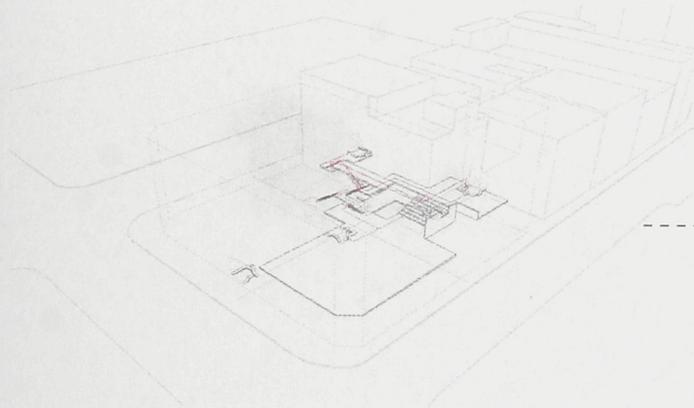
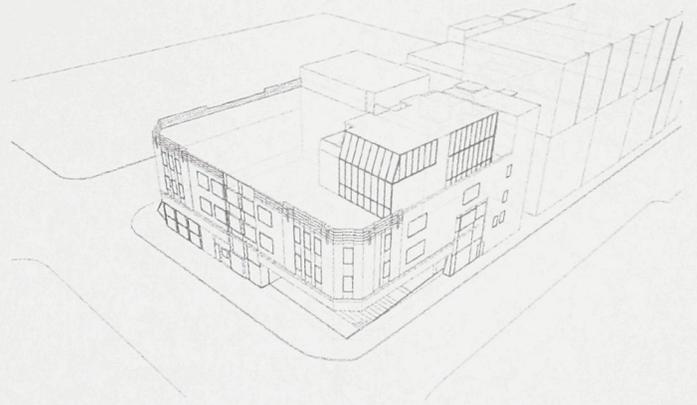
residential space
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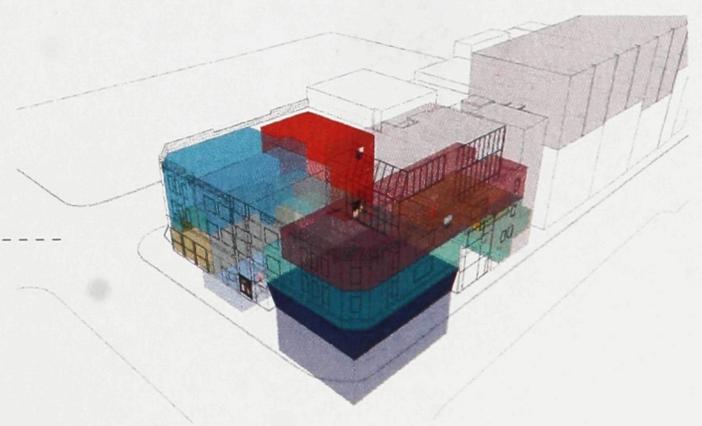
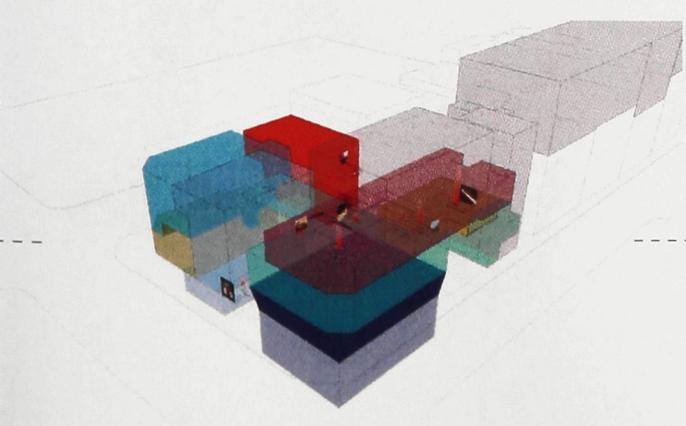
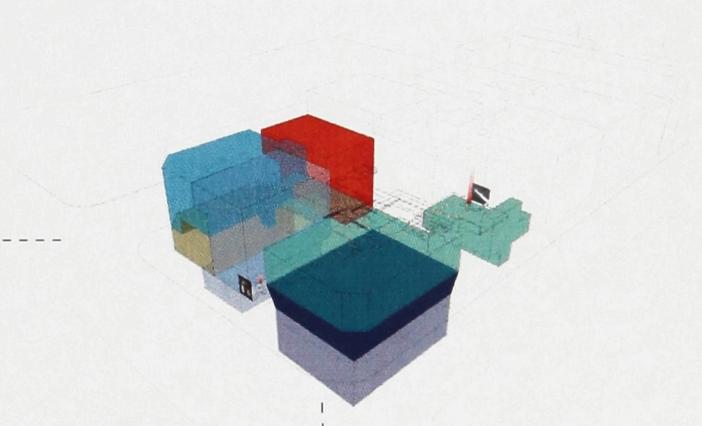
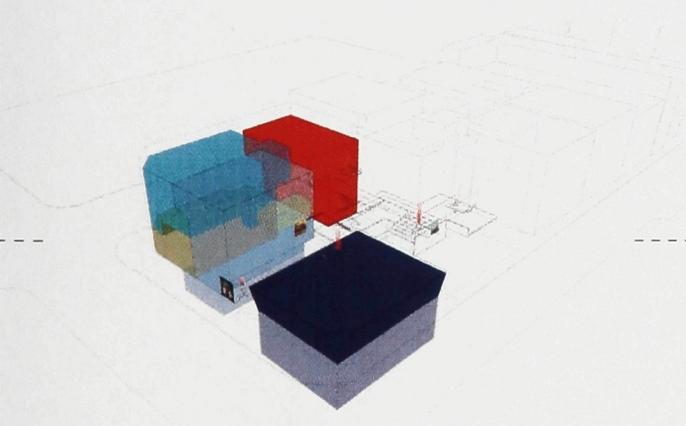
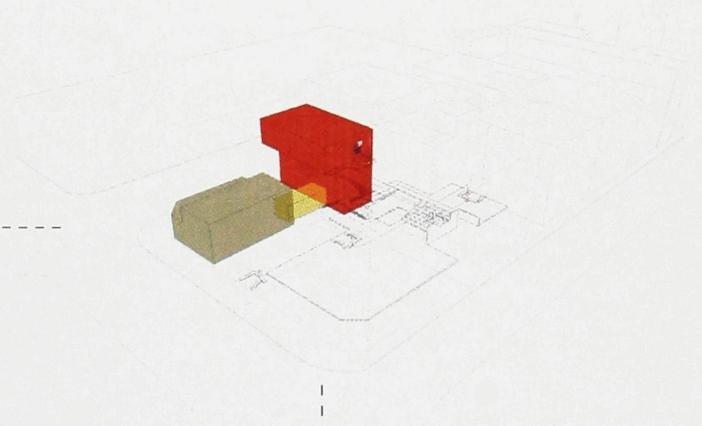
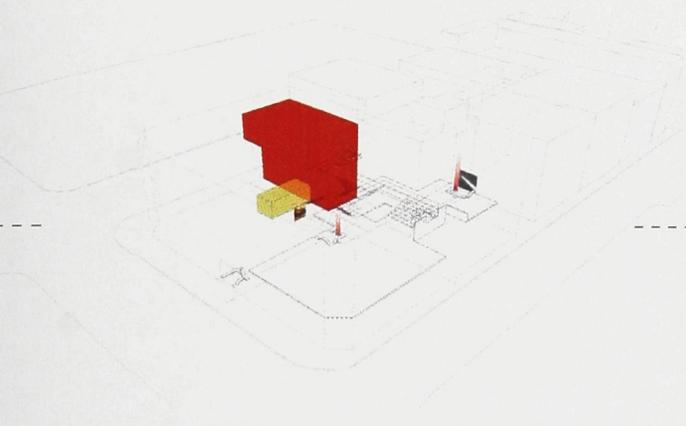
community resource
+ techno-landscape
1200 Blvd St. Laurent

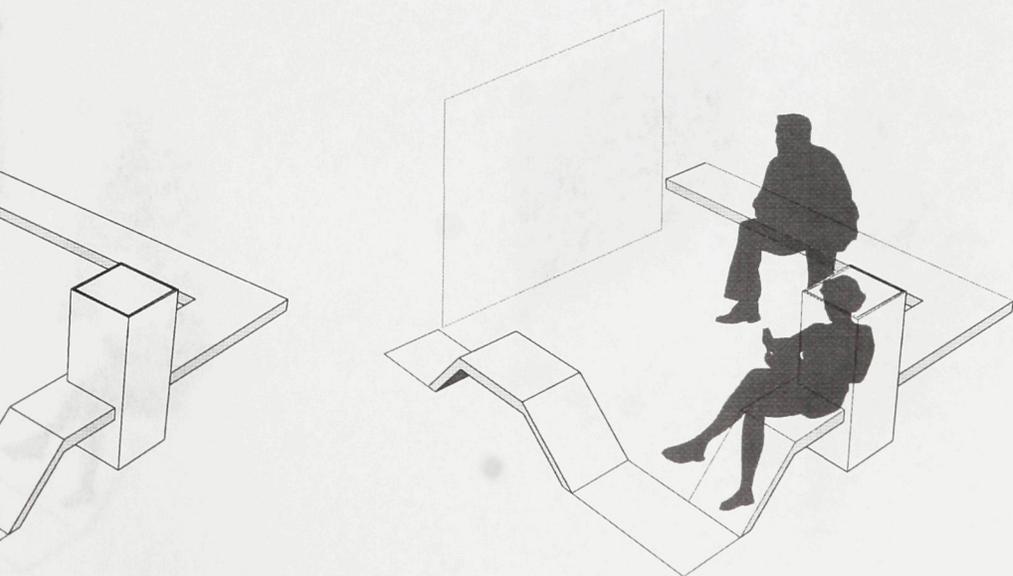


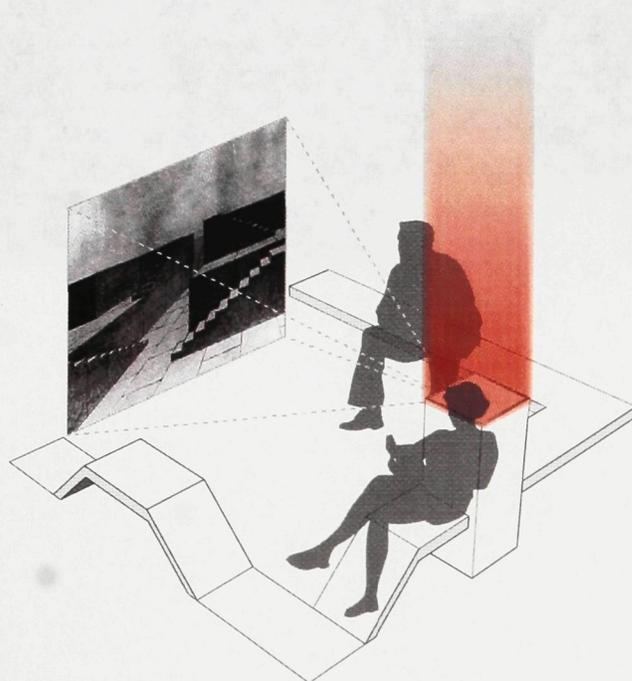
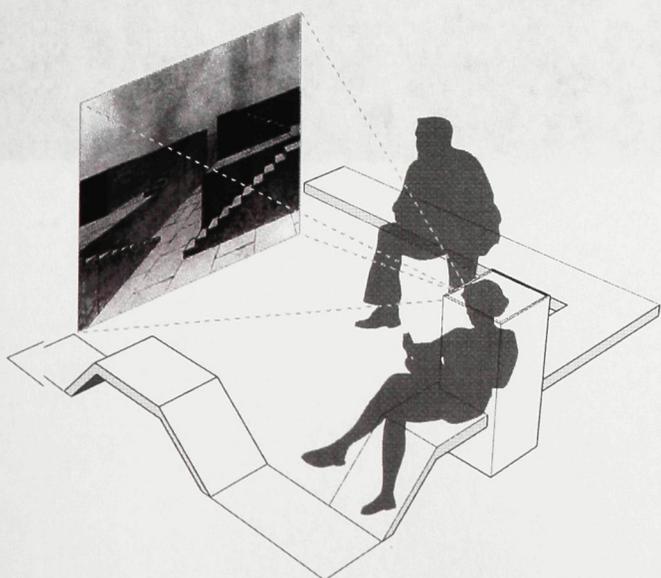


- Public Space + Benches - Restaurant
- Cafe - Market
- Artists' Studio
- Boutique - Public Cinema
- Exhibition Space - Video Reference Library
- Bookstore
- Residence





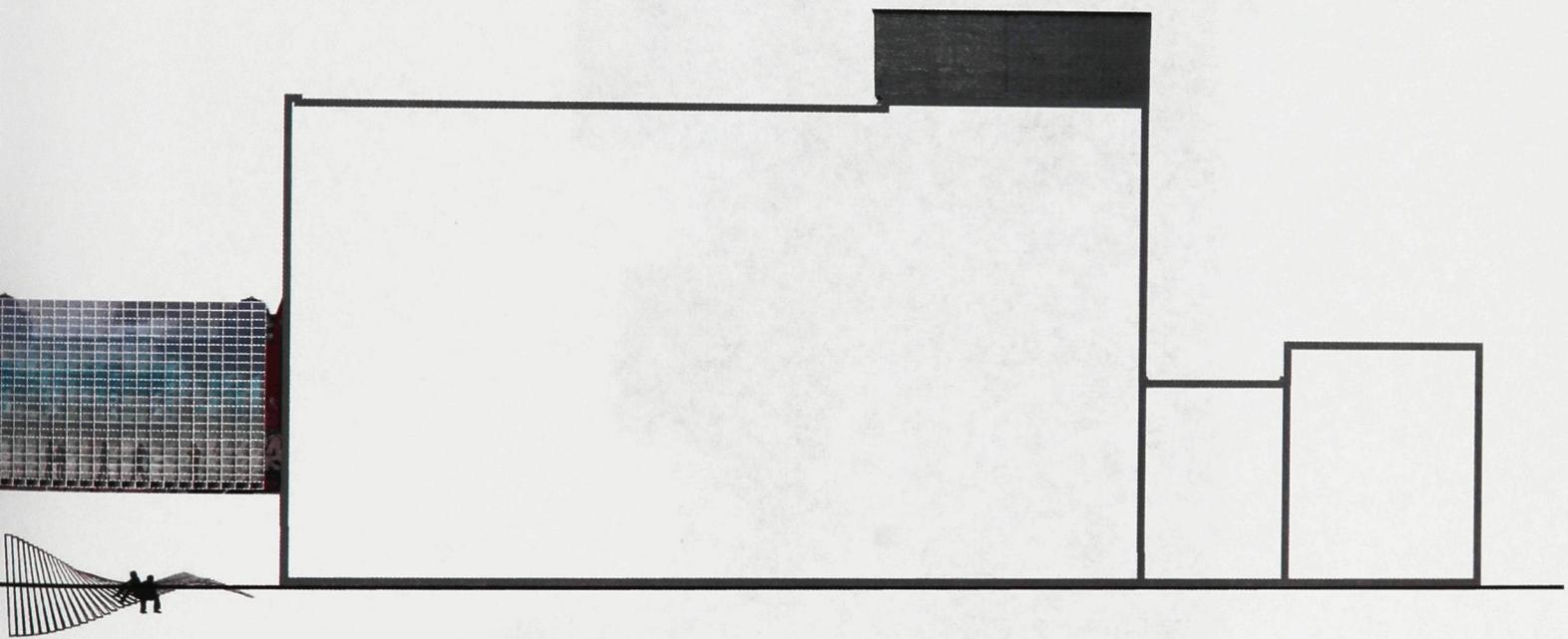






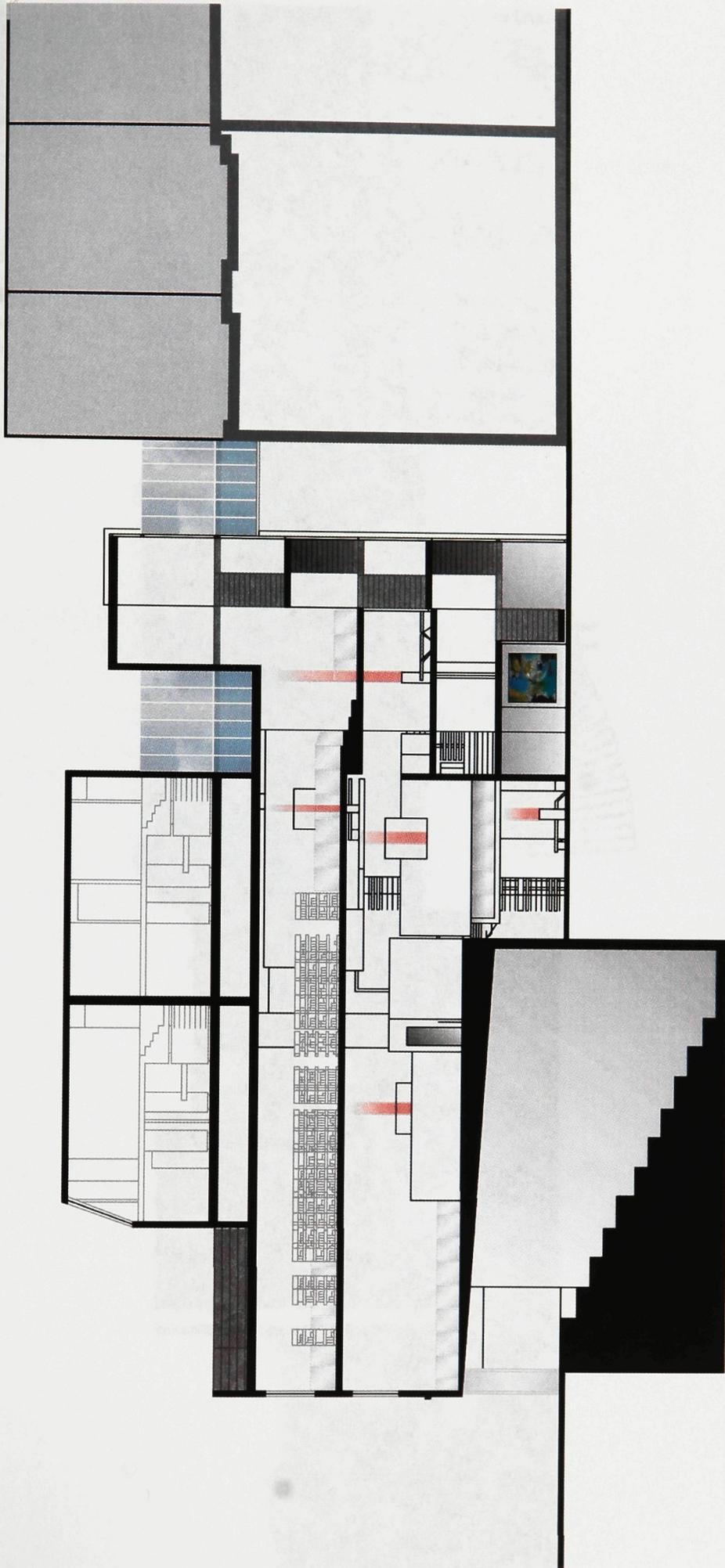


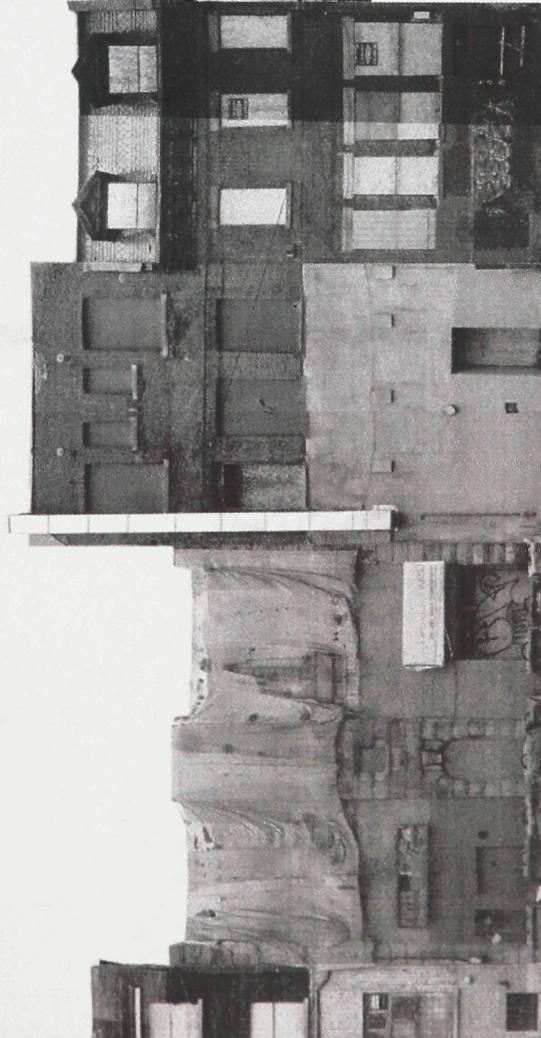
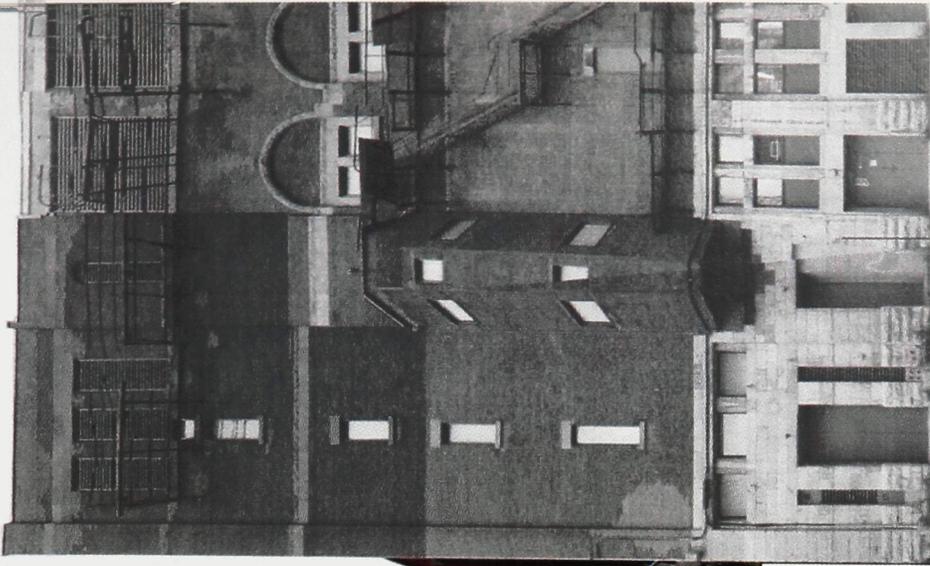




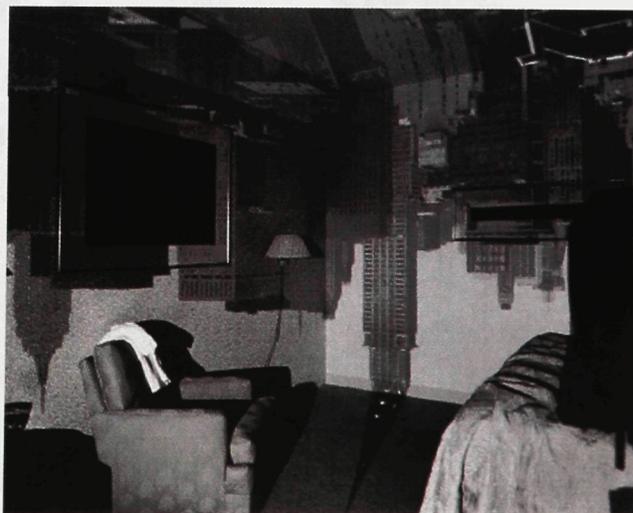
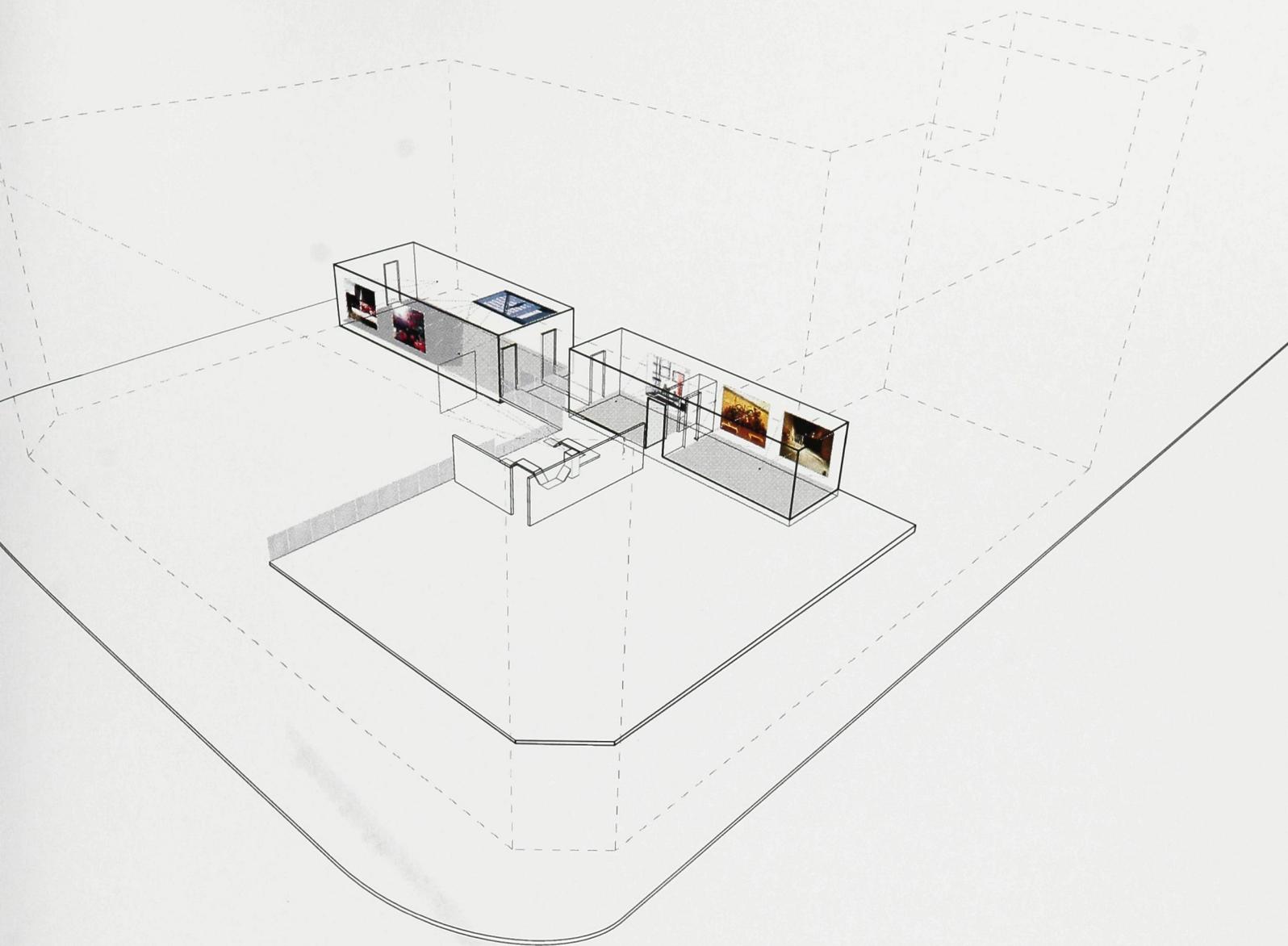


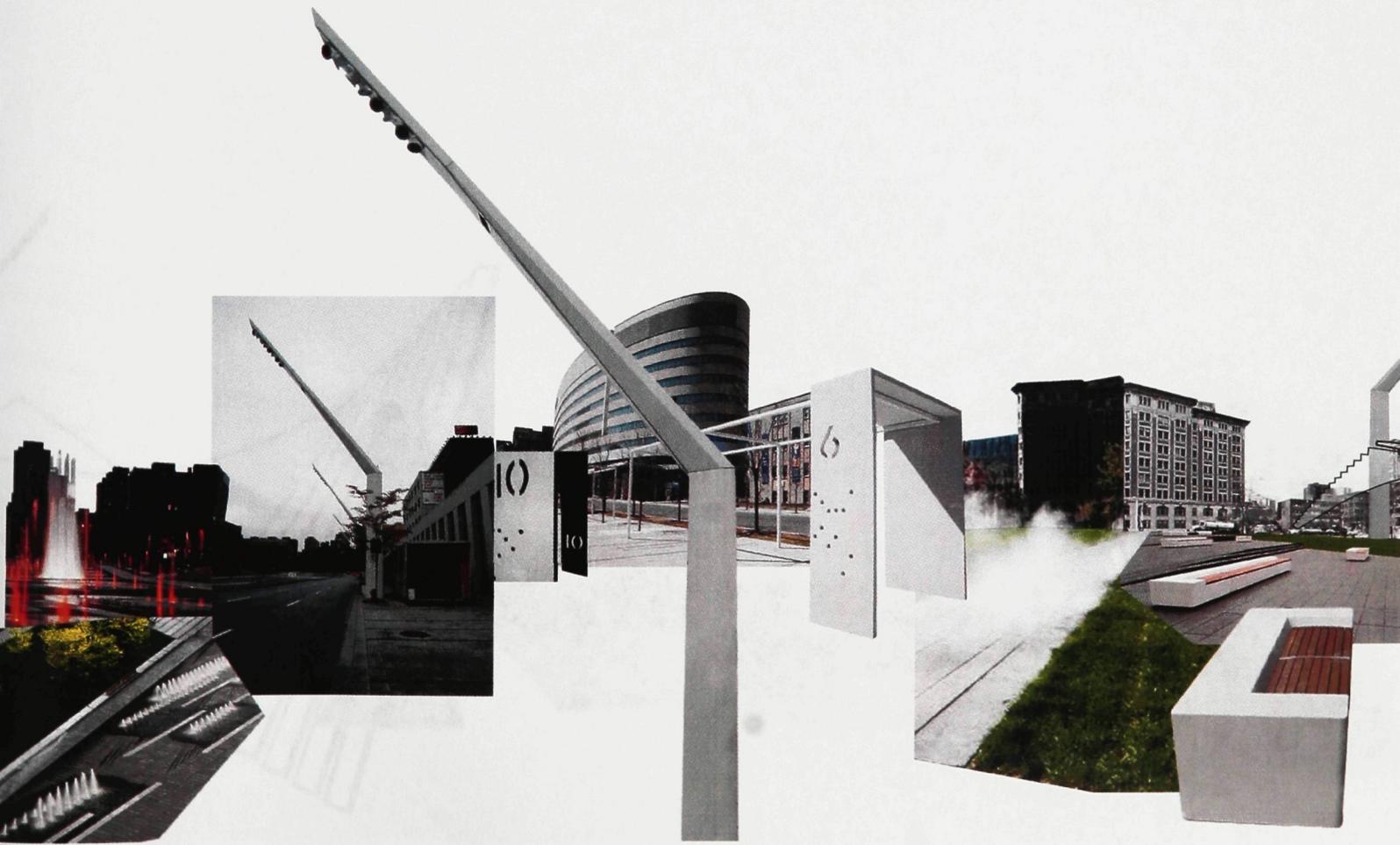


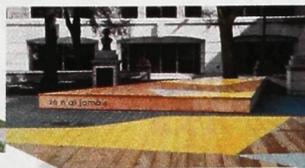
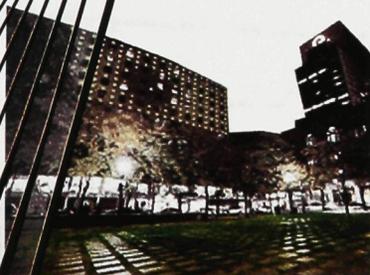
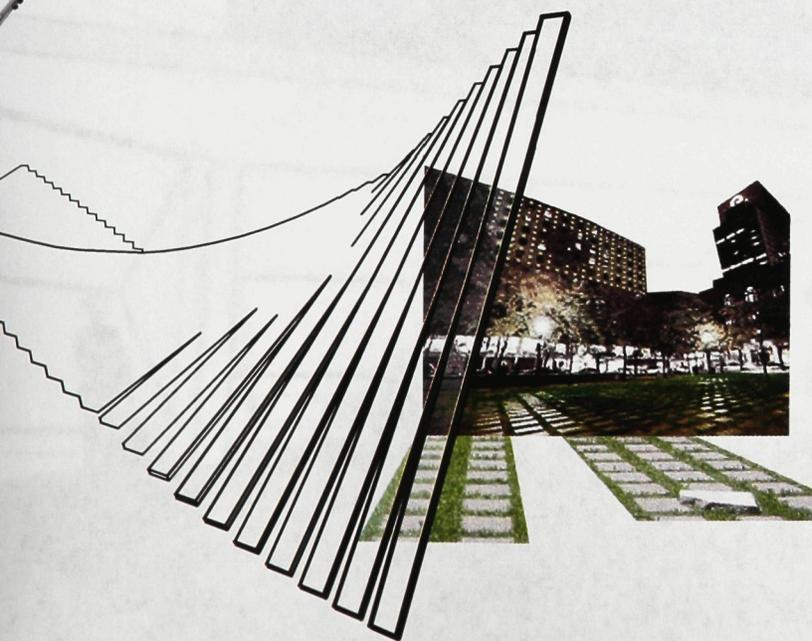


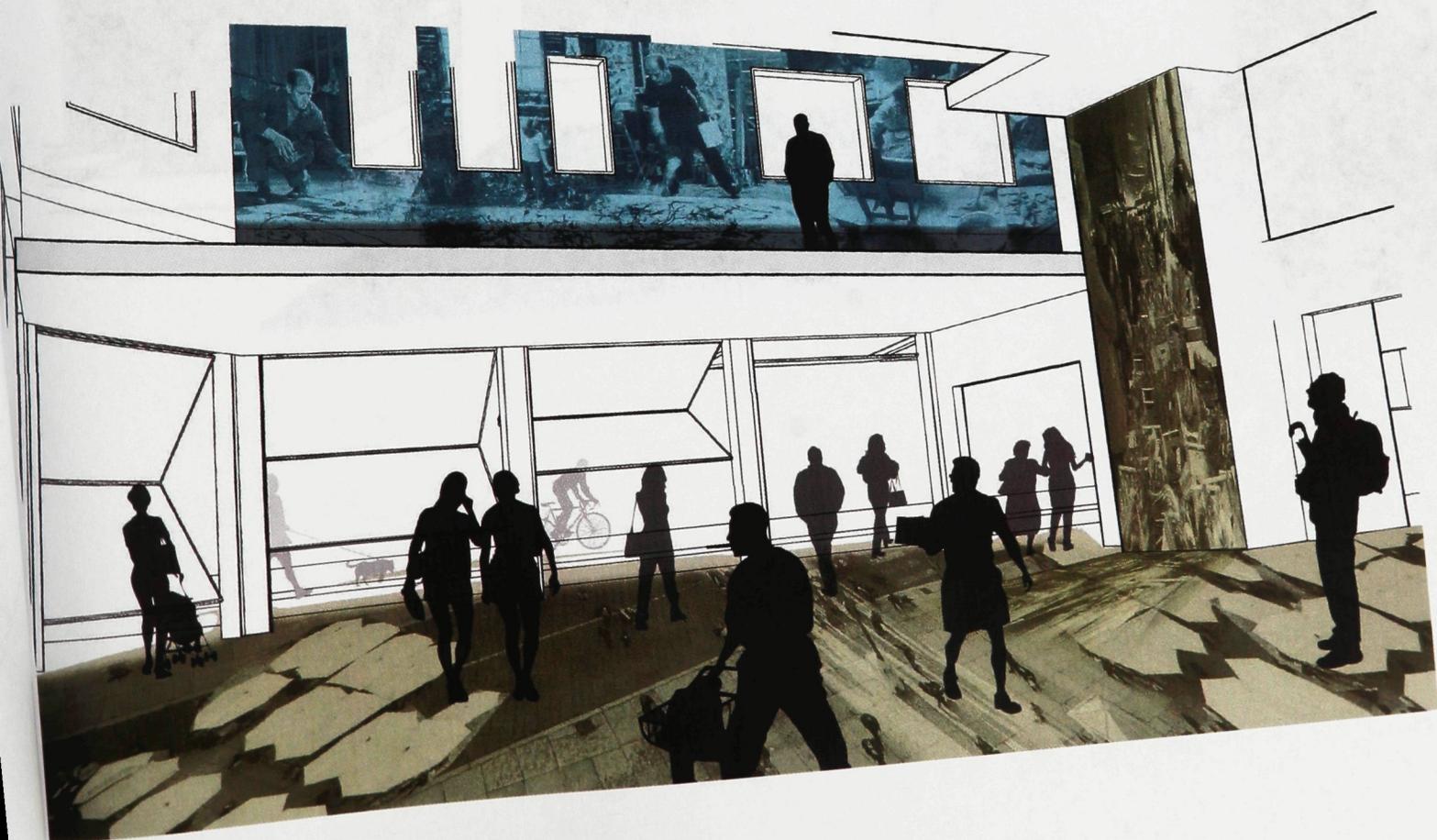


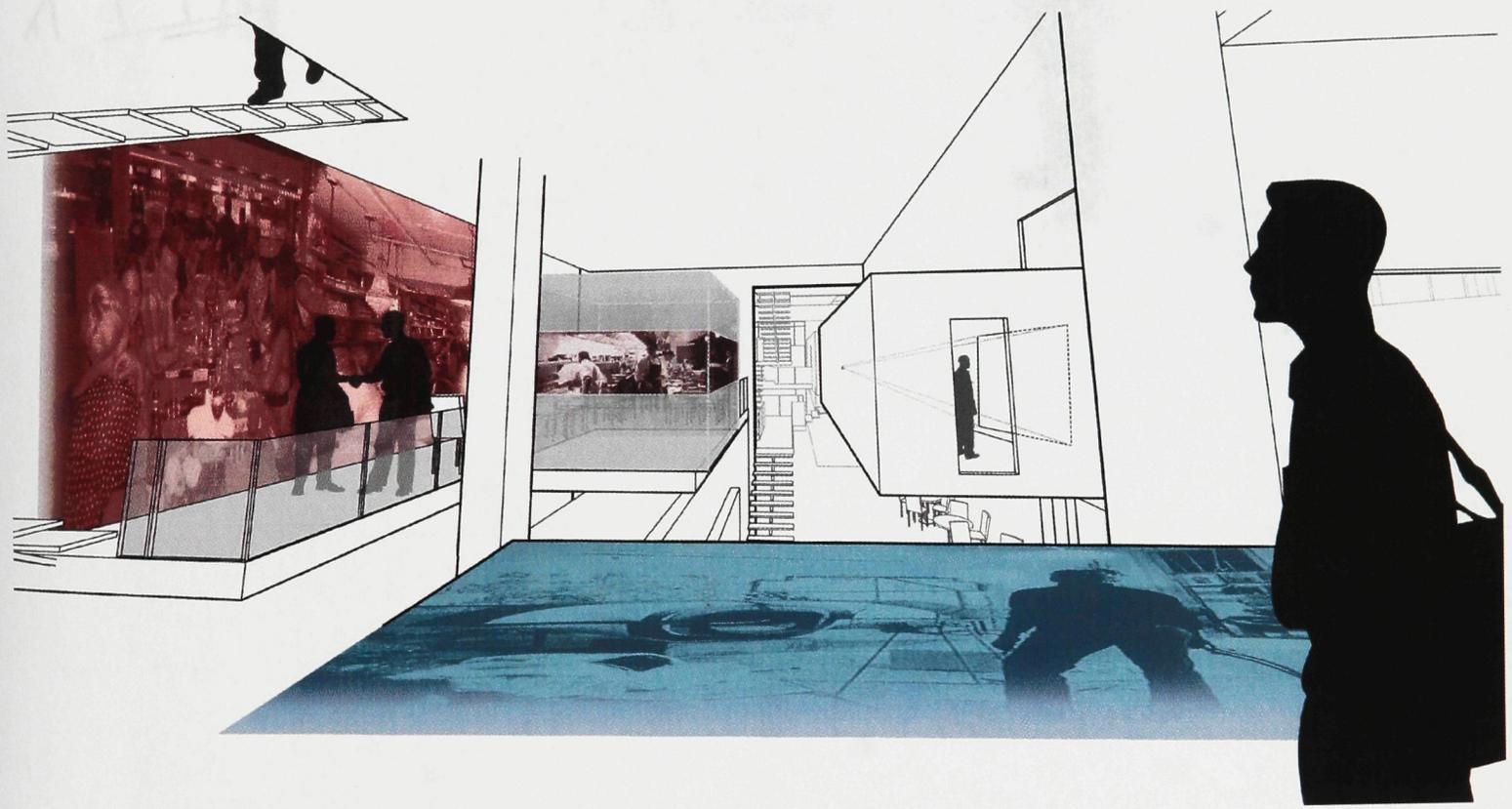




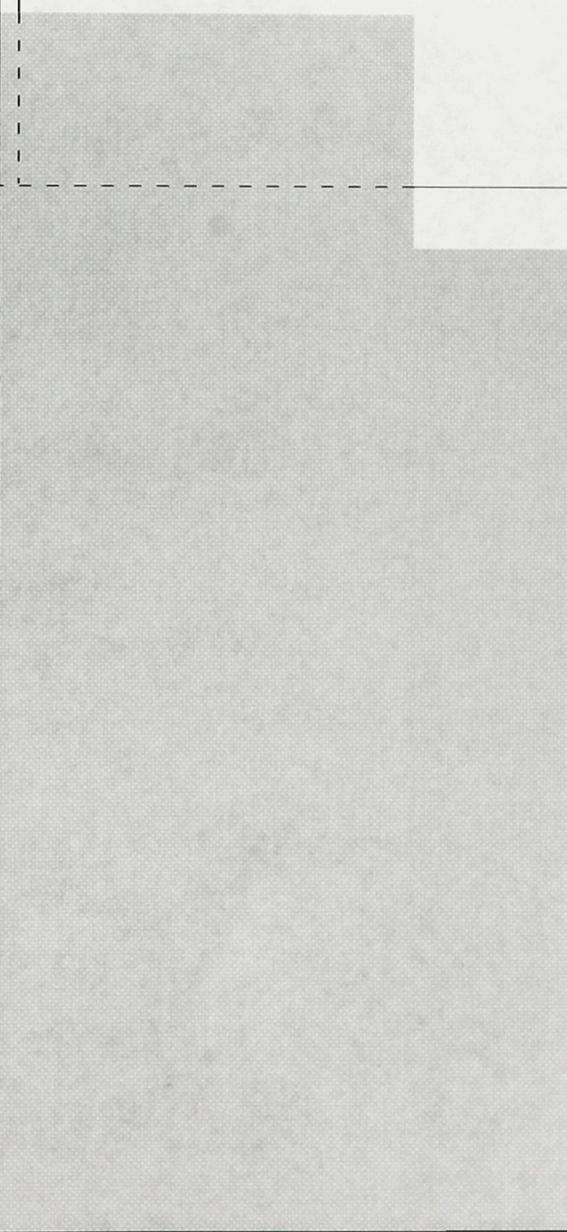
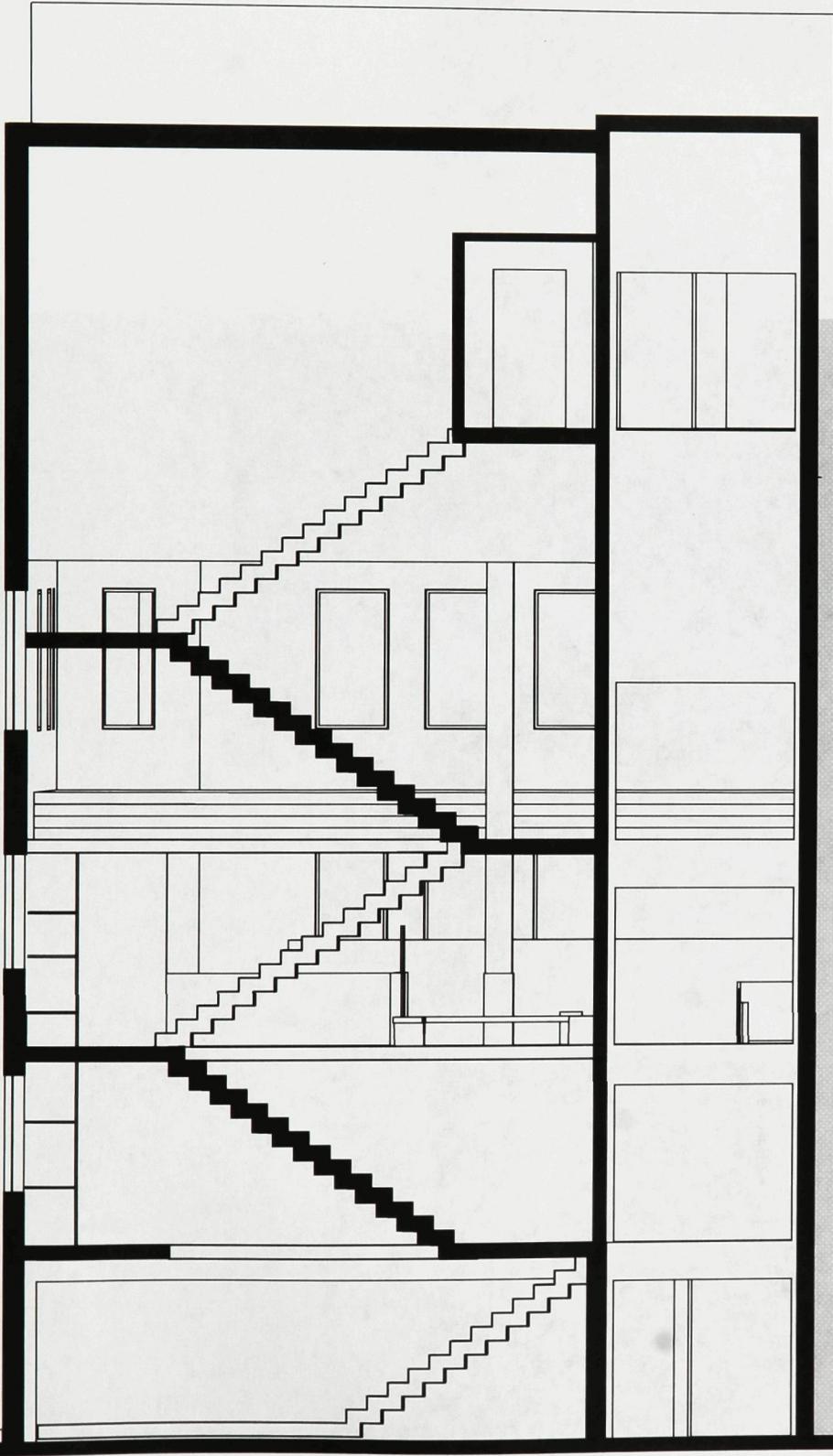


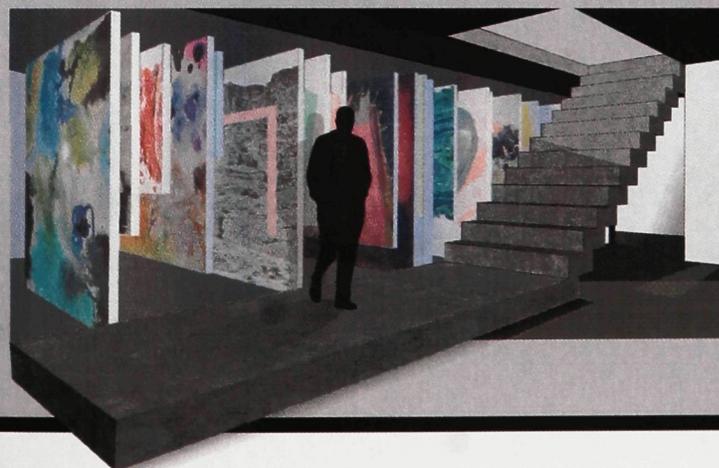
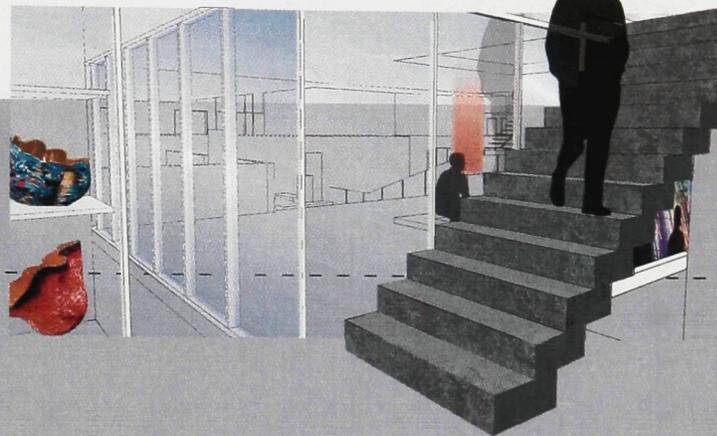
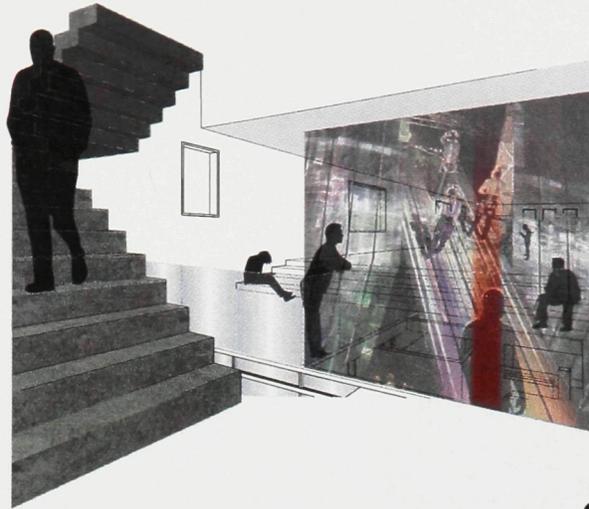




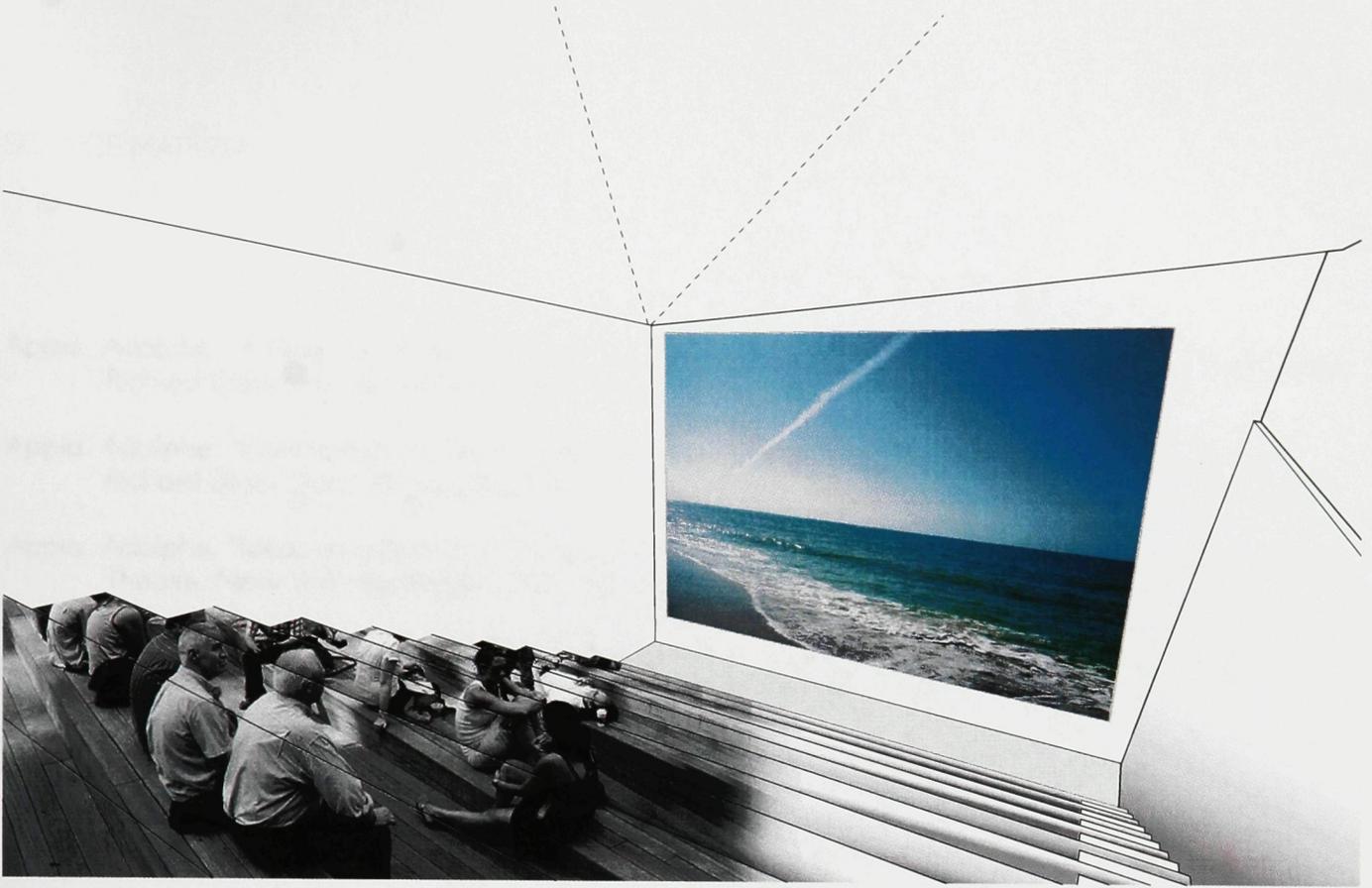




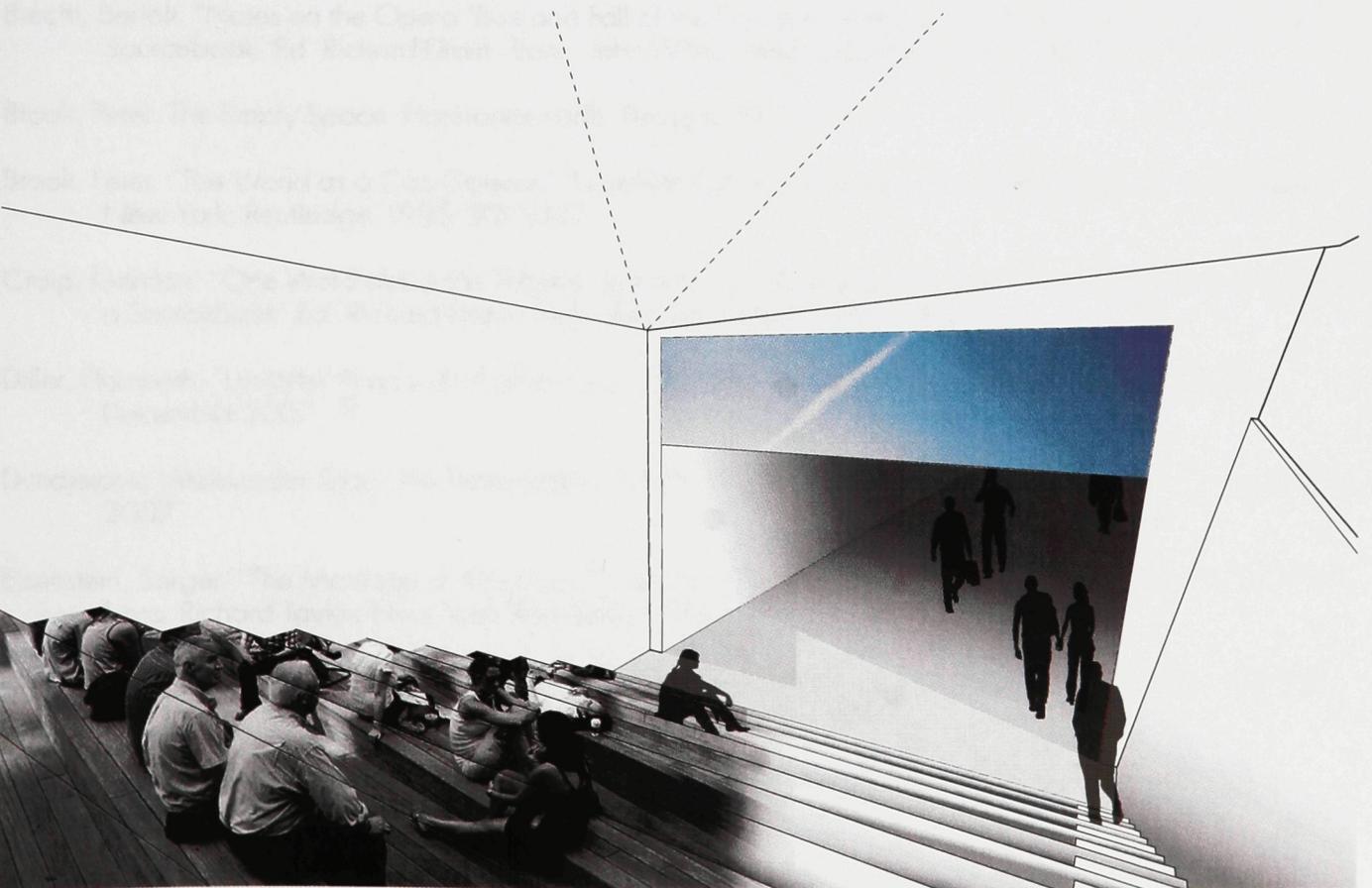








Marinella Manno and Ana Alicia Alvarez, Light Café, New York, NY, Norman & Co., 2010



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