

The formative power
in media are the
media themselves.

- Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media*



It is open because
all is present available
seizable
Open to receive
Open also that each may
Come there to take

...
Sight resides in
palpation...

—Le Corbusier, (Offre, La Main Ouverte)
Poem of the Right Angle (1948-52).



Winnipeg Free Press event with journalist Dan Lett.

MATTERS MEDIA MILIEUX

This studio explored architectural multi-media via three interconnected senses: as the palpable stuff of the material world; as diverse means of communication; and as cultural modes of exchange.

Students also considered their own hands as mediating agents of friendship (as in a handshake), of political advocacy (as in voting and protesting), and as agents of making through drawing, building and cooperating. Le Corbusier's Open Hand Monument in Chandigarh served to raise further questions on democratic architecture and how to facilitate and symbolize a society's collective reach for peace.

Explorations were directed toward designing multi-media institutions, including a new Winnipeg Free Press headquarters on a culturally and politically-charged block directly across from City Hall, occupied by the crumbling Public Safety Building (a police headquarters) and a condemned Parkade. Standing like a pair of closed fists on a historic market site where Winnipeg's 1919 labor strike took place, these failed brutalist structures were 'demolished'

for students to develop proposals that better foster democratic opportunities. Sited between City Hall, Red River College, Chinatown, market square and former 'Newspaper Row,' this location is well positioned to foster public engagement and debate on issues of civic, national and global concern.

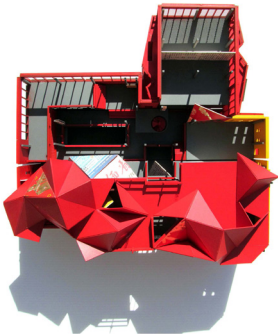
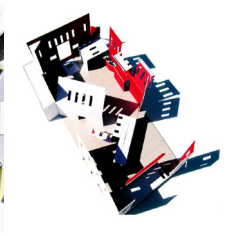
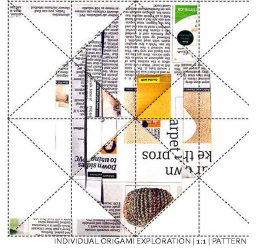
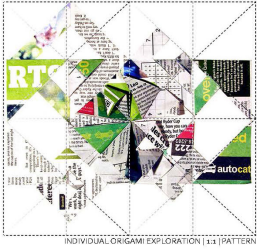
In addition to designing for the work of public media & journalism, students proposed other socially mediated programs: for music, dance, theatrical performance, protest, poetry, public debate, and construction. Students also engaged media by meeting with journalists, being interviewed by reporters, participating in public debates at the Winnipeg Free Press Café, and preparing media blasts and front page news stories of their developing projects for public review.

The studio included a field trip to New York City and Boston to study sites of media and mediation, including Renzo Piano's New York Times building, Storefront for Art and Architecture, civic spaces associated with the Occupy Wall Street movement, Boston Commons and buildings by Le Corbusier and Alvar Aalto.

Jeff Kachkan
Front page news



Tiffany Leong, OROGRAPHY: Chinatown's Past, Present and Future. Learning from the arts of origami and palmistry, this thesis mapped the history and future of Winnipeg's Chinatown through a festive rumination of the legendary Shanghai Restaurant.



SECTION VIEW



SECTION VIEW

Tiffany Leong, ORIOGRAPHY. Architect, author Brent Bellamy used this thesis to provoke discussion about the possible revitalization of Winnipeg's Chinatown.

A vibrant vision for Chinatown

Thesis project sees blend of new, historic marketplace

On a late November evening in 1977, the distinctive clip-clip, clip-clip of horses' hooves would pierce through Winnipeg's cold autumn air. The setting sun outlined the silhouettes of an overcast steppelands staggering along the sharp prairie horizon. Curious onlookers were drawn by the moan of rigid wheels struggling to navigate the city's duty.



BRENT BELLAMY
CIN ARCHITECTURE

Unfamiliar sounds of foreign voices came from within the American caravan transporting the first three Chinese settlers to the isolated town of 6,500 people. Charley Yam, the leader of the three, would soon open the city's first Chinese laundry on Post Office Street (now Lombard Avenue). Three months later, demanding better living conditions, his employees would stage an armed revolt. The "Chinese War" would captivate readers of the *Manitoba Free Press*, which announced the end of the week-long standoff with the simple message: "Two Chinese laundries are now in operation in this city. Six more would open over the next eight years."

In 1945, the *Guang Chong Tai* Company opened a grocery at 249 King St., fortifying the genesis of Winnipeg's Chinatown. In the next year, another grocery and four laundries would open and by 1959 the neighbourhood would take on a distinctive exotic flavour.

Facing significant linguistic and cultural barriers, economic hardship and racial discrimination, early Chinese settlers would band together by isolating themselves on inexpensive land at the fringes of city centres across the country. In search of security, social networks and community support, this voluntary residential segregation would result in the birth of Chinatowns in many Canadian cities.

Winnipeg's Chinatown would reach



Tiffany Leong's Chinatown incorporates traditional second-storey apartments above street-level shops.

its zenith in the 1920s, covering six city blocks with King Street as its main commercial artery. With 900 Chinese residents and 300 laundries across the city, the pulsating sidewalks and pungent smells of Chinatown served as the commercial and social focal point of a vibrant community.

The area's original wooden structures were replaced with two- and three-story brick buildings, typically with small-scale commercial storefronts along the sidewalk and residential floors above.

In 1923, the federal government would introduce the *Chinese Act*, virtually terminating Chinese immigration to Canada. This resulted in the eventual economic stagnation and physical decline of Chinatown neighbourhoods across the country. By 1938, only 128 Chinese laundries remained in Winnipeg. Many of Chinatown's shops and restaurants began to close as the area fell into decay.

In 1975, architect Gaston de Roza was commissioned to develop a Chinatown revitalization plan. Typical of the era, the scheme called for a clean-slate

redevelopment strategy with the gradual demolition of the entire area, to be replaced with an enclosed shopping mall, recreation space and housing. The grand plan never gained traction but the ideal of top-down, mega-project urban renewal strategies has lived on ever since.

Like any successful urban neighbourhood, Chinatown's physical character inspired much of its historic vibrancy and street life. Small-scale storefronts created commercial diversity, economic opportunity and intimate, pedestrian-focused street-scapes. Low-rise, mixed-use buildings provided population density and visual connection to the sidewalks.

Chinatown's redevelopment initiatives, past and present, have generally disregarded this traditional neighbourhood character, choosing to focus on large-scale institutional buildings or suburban-style residential high-rises, projects that are disengaged from the sidewalk and offer little commercial activity or pedestrian vibrancy. These projects have severed the traditional economic and social networks of the neighbourhood, resulting in empty

sidewalks, struggling businesses and further proliferation of surface parking lots.

The empty lot on the former site of the Coronation Block, home to the historic Shanghai Restaurant, sits as a poignant reminder of the clean-slate renewal strategies that have been promoted in the area for four decades. With second-floor residential units above a series of small-scale, low-rent commercial storefronts, the building had an ideal configuration to promote organic, ground-up neighbourhood growth and small-business opportunity, but it was demolished last year in hopes one day an assisted-living complex will be built on the site.

After almost 70 years in operation, Shanghai owner Henry Lee sadly closed his iconic restaurant, unable to convince the younger members of his family to be the fifth generation to run the business. Tiffany Leong, one of those young family members with dreams of her own, recently completed her master's degree in architecture at the University of Manitoba.

For her thesis project, she took on the unique personal challenge of

investigating opportunities for the site of her great-grandfather's restaurant and the neighbourhood that has been so much a part of their lives.

Leong's project envisions an urban marketplace that restores the historic social and commercial networks of the neighbourhood's past, while providing a modern platform from which a new kind of Chinatown can blossom. Her small-scale urban-scale architecture explores ways of re-engaging what once made Chinatown a vibrant urban neighbourhood.

To promote pedestrian activity, her scheme implements a strong sidewalk edge, while creating a welcoming transparency and porosity in the building facade by incorporating a unique system of awnings, louvers, pocket doors and folding partitions that allow interior spaces to spill open to the sidewalk and an exterior marketplace beyond.

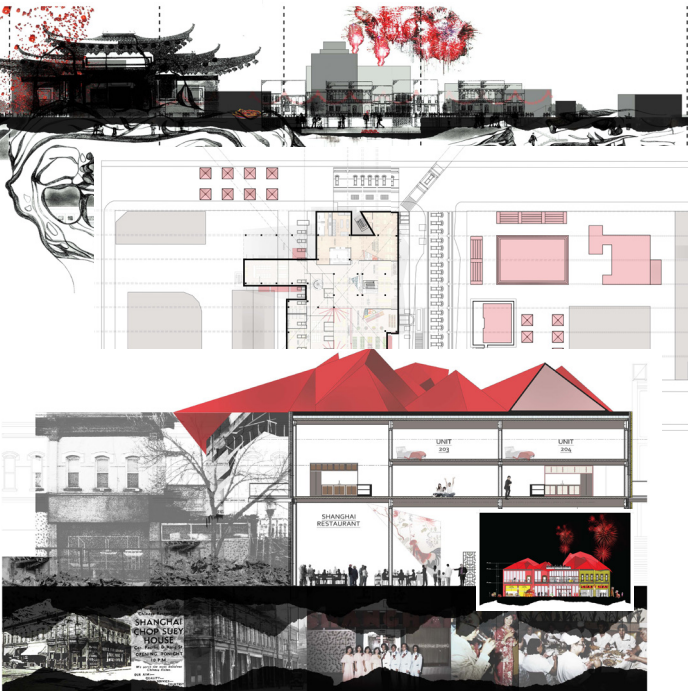
Her small-scale intervention reestablishes Chinatown's traditional mixed-use building configuration with second-storey apartments above street-level shops, accessed through a series of catwalks, intermediate floors and external entrances.

The composition of private and public spaces recaptures the spirit of traditional Chinatown neighbourhoods with intimate hidden spaces and small passageways.

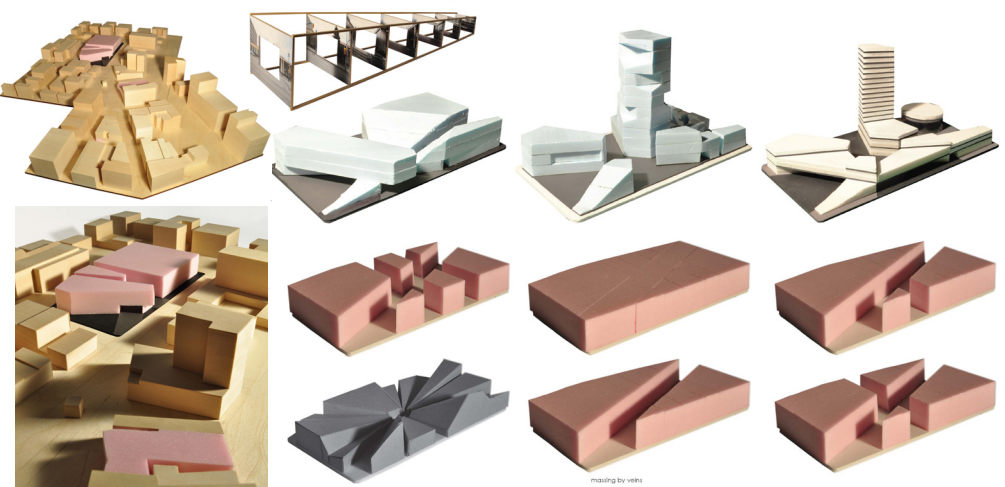
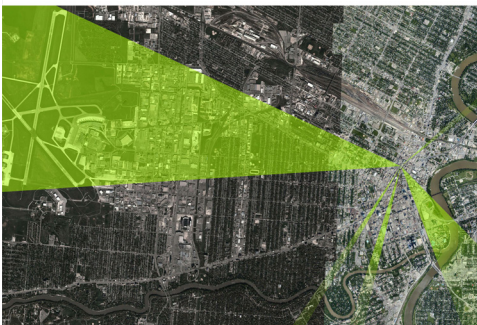
An architectural expression that references traditional Chinese paper art, similar to *origami*, folds outward into a dramatic roof form, seen as a characteristic element that could provide shade across the empty parking lots of the neighbourhood, unifying new buildings in the district with a signature modern expression.

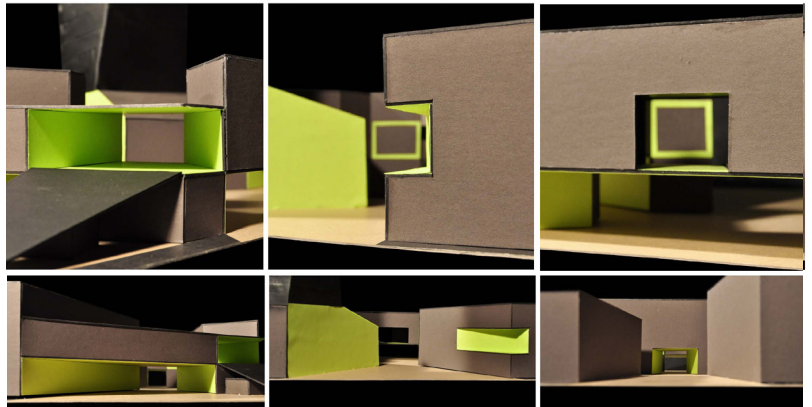
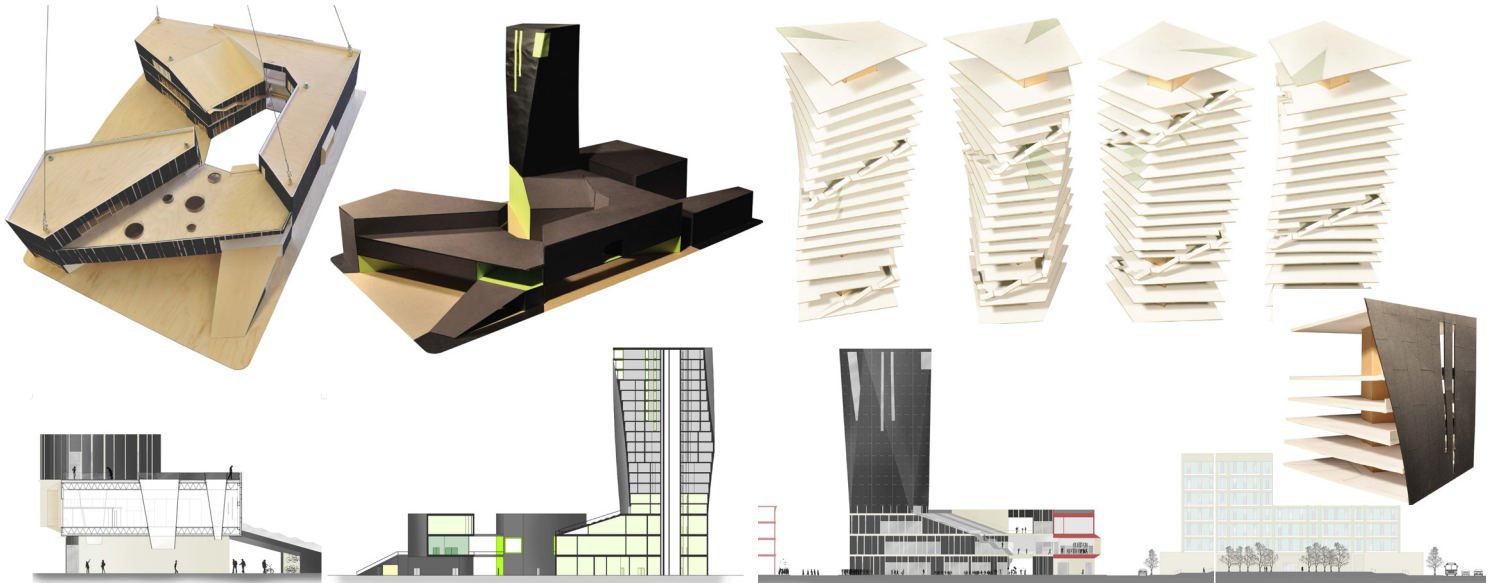
As Winnipeg's Chinatown continues to redevelop, the lessons of Leong's thesis exploration might provide an inspiring template for future efforts. By moving away from the ideals of mega-project renewal schemes and focusing on design principles that inform street urban communities, she exposes the importance of embracing fine-grain, street-friendly development that facilitates a vibrant street life. Her work re-engages the area's commercial past by providing a range of economic opportunities for its inhabitants, including those immigrants from across the globe who are new to our city and face the same fears and challenges Charley and his son friends did on that stagecoach 136 years ago.

Brent Bellamy is senior design architect for Number Ten Architectural Group. bbellamy@number10.ca

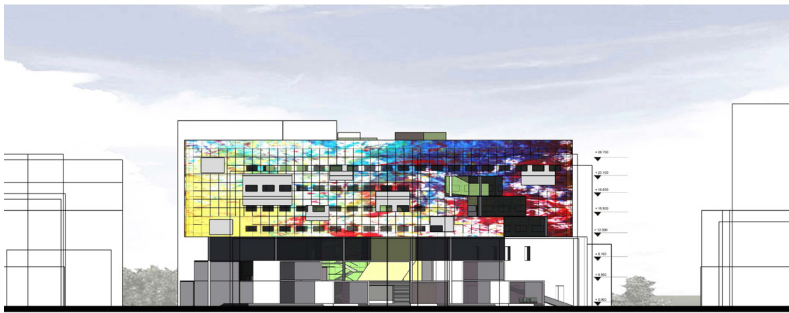
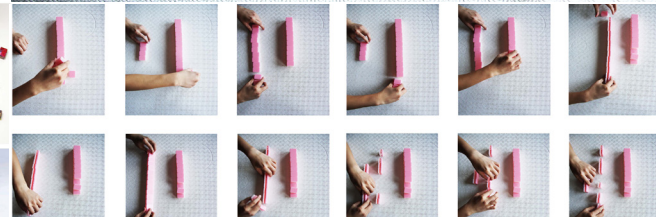
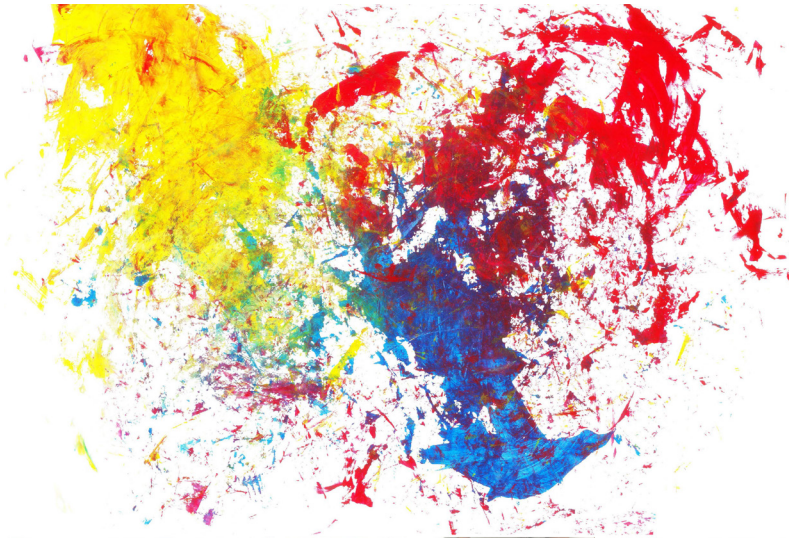


Jeff Kachkan, THEATRE OF MEDIATION. This project grew from iterative experimentation of individual views and collective experience as mediated by a series of playful interactive devises. The urban proposal included a residential tower, public forums and journalism offices designed in ways to support public spontaneity and hold public officials accountable by making their comings, goings, and interactions more visible.

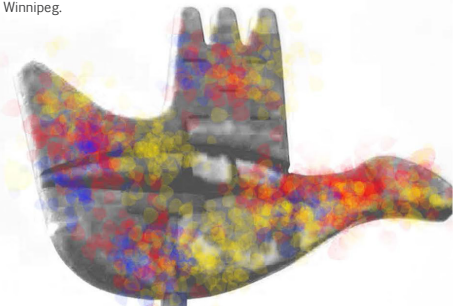
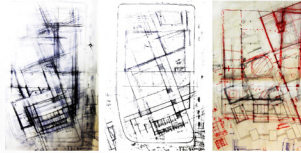
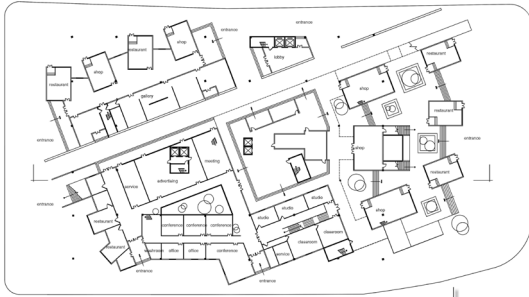
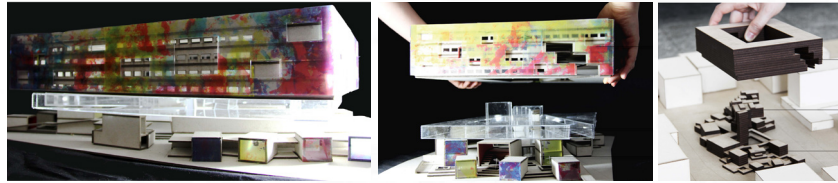




Ting Wu, HANDS-ON ARCHITECTURE. Explorations of the calculated and chance operations in Mahjong and hand-pointing, informed a mixed-media process of architectural representation and an urban design that enabled games and socializing to co-exist alongside politics and journalism in the heart of the city.



Ting Wu. This 'hands-on' design was inspired by Le Corbusier's Open Hand monument - a culturally mixed version of which was imagined to wave over Winnipeg.



James Robertson. Inspired by constructivist art, agit prop theatre and strategies of peaceful protest, this project explored political activism and public demonstration as forms of social media, devising architectural interventions that are both ad-hoc / ephemeral and deliberately permanent to foster social agency, affordable housing and safe civic space.

