



Main street is almost alright.

— Robert Venturi,
Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture (1962)

MAIN STREET STUDIO

This studio's principal site of investigation was Winnipeg's South Main Street from the infamous intersection of Portage and Main in the historic Exchange District to the Bridge of the Old Forts over the Assiniboine River.

This stretch of Main is ripe for transformation! With the nearby Canadian Museum for Human Rights newly opened, with the Upper Fort Garry Provincial Park nearing completion, with the recent revitalization proposal launched by the Forks Renewal Corporation, and with renewed investment in the area's empty lots by Winnipeg's downtown development agency CentreVenture, this section of Main Street will undoubtedly change over the next several years.

But what kind of change will it undergo? What civic values will guide the transformation? Will aesthetic and ethical considerations influence the metamorphosis? Or, will private interests and economic ambitions rule? What about public space, artistic practices, prosaic routines, urban festivals, idiosyncratic tendencies, and happy accidents or cosmological phenomena?

Will agendas and qualities such as these have a place along Main? What role might architecture and architects play in the re-imagination of this crucial street of our city? How can the site's divisive conditions—not least of which is its elevated railway—be mediated? Can this and other physical, cultural and socio-political barriers be transformed into inviting thresholds? In what ways might the area's divided conditions be converted to situations of inclusive diversity? These are some of the questions our studio will confront. Work will involve artistically exploratory modes and mediums of investigation, including large and small-scale physical models, while developing comprehensive design projects sited in thoughtful relation to South Main.

The studio involved explorations of divisive and connective urban conditions; collaborative design charrettes; visionary scheming for downtown Winnipeg, its historic riverfront and Forks; invention of pedestrian micro-narratives; making of chimerical constructions adapting to body, building and city scales; and comprehensive design proposals for multi-use buildings.

Like all big cities, it consisted of irregularity, change, sliding forward, not keeping in step, collisions of things and affairs, and fathomless points of silence in between, of paved ways and wilderness, of one great rhythmic throb and the perpetual discord and dislocation of all opposing rhythms, and as a whole resembles a seething, bubbling fluid in a vessel consisting of the solid material of buildings, laws, regulations, and historical traditions.

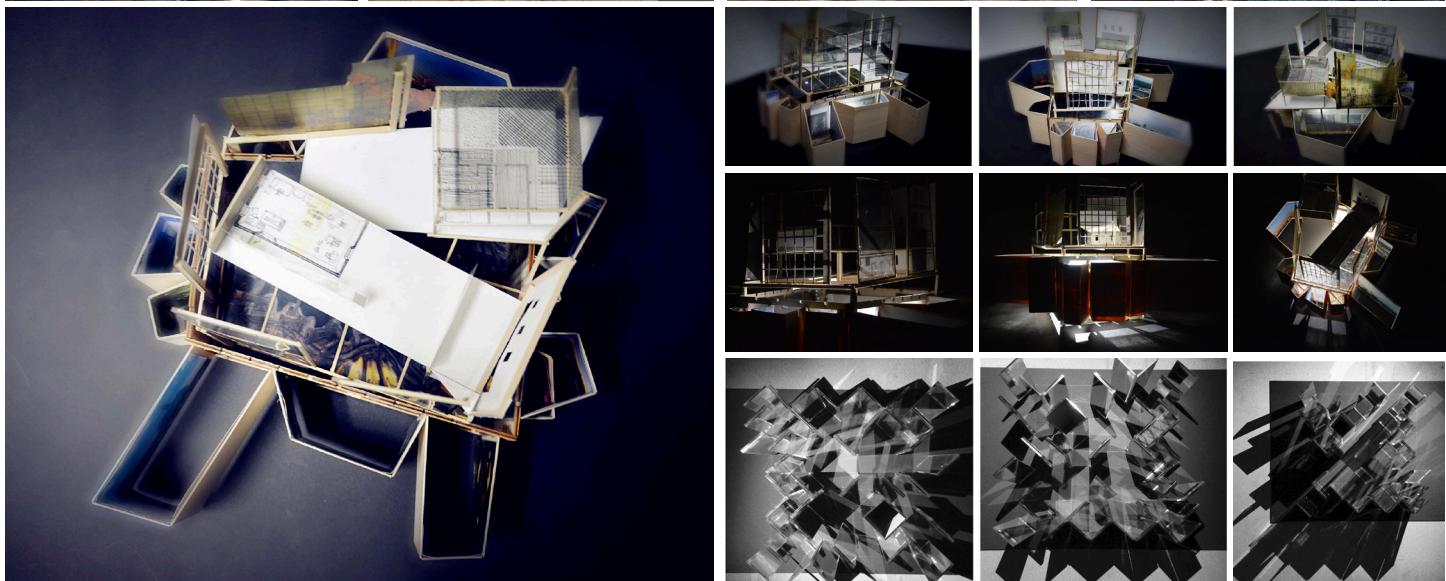
— Robert Musil, *The Man Without Qualities* (1930-42)

Poetry is in everything—in land and in sea, in lake and in riverside. It is in the city too—deny it not—it is evident to me here as I sit: there is poetry in this table, in this paper, in this inkstand... in the rattling of cars on the streets, in each minute, common, ridiculous motion of a workman, who [on] the other side of the street is painting the sign of a butcher's shop.

— Fernando Pessoa, *Always Astonished*
San Francisco: City Lights, 1988, p.1.

Main Street Studio included a field trip to Los Angeles and the vicinity to study urban and spatial conditions relevant to the studio theme. Excursions included studies of LA's Main Streets and site visits to award-winning projects by Koning Eizenberg, Michael Maltzan, Todd Williams and Billie Tsien, Louis Kahn, Frank Lloyd Wright, Richard Neutra, Rudolph Schindler, and others, as well as theatrical and artistic adventures.

Ye Lin, URBAN TEXTURES: This project imagined a dense and thriving downtown Winnipeg with multi-level multi-modal transportation and mixed-use multi-family residences with vibrant spaces in-between. A set of imagined characters and scenarios animated the design process, including a Dreamer (on a merry-go-round), a Yogi in isolated meditation, a Family engaged in meal making, and urban pedestrians seeking cultural connections.





Chuan Tong This mixed-use housing development densely straddles the rail line and builds connections above and below the divisive infrastructure, while animating the most prominent section of Main Street with shops and amenities. The fast pace locomotion is amplified with an underground nightclub and off-set with a soothing yoga facility hovering over slow moving trains.



Trevor Coulthaud Sited at the meeting of the river and elevated railway, where a popular ball park backs onto the historic warehouse district – this project adaptively reimagines the Nutty Club (a heritage candy factory) into a tasty museum celebrating Winnipeg's biscuit business. Interconnected public and garden spaces extend throughout the design to accommodate urban lovers, candy lovers and the nuttiness of game day!



Nathan Johns. DISEMBODIED ARCHITECTURE. Merging the corporeal and the monstrous, with technically sophisticated breathing walls and interwoven spaces of nature and dwelling, this thesis proposes an architecture of reconciliation for the Forks. Across from the gargantuan new Museum for Human Rights, this mixed-use housing, market and school facility, seeks mediating urban, domestic and cultural conditions at multiple scales.

