

Building Acts

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Paper Presentations

Free Zoning: Designing a Framework for Typological Evolution and Continual Building Acts

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This paper presents the project *Free Zoning*, winner of the international ideas competition “Strip Appeal: Reinventing the Strip Mall,” organized by the City-Region Studies Centre at the University of Alberta in 2012. The competition asked designers for strategies to address the increasing number of vacant strip malls in North America.

While typologies for shopping centers change, on average, every fifteen years, the actual, physical buildings remain, with a much longer potential lifespan. How could this mis-match between typological relevance and physical lifespan be addressed in a productive way?

In *Free Zoning* we use a derelict Buffalo strip mall – Central Park Plaza – as a case study, and re-imagine it as a potential quarry for building materials. We suggest that opening-up building and zoning guidelines could offer radical, new possibilities for the site and spur a heterogeneous mix of building acts. Instead of relying on a single commercial developer to revive the building, declaring the site a zone of radical deregulation would kick-start a process of continual construction and building acts from the bottom-up.

We propose the following measures: 1/ that all building materials be demounted and sorted so they can be used freely for any new building activity on site; 2/ that the existing foundation, which is the most expensive building part to build as well as to demolish, be re-used as a seedbed for new construction; and 3/ that all uses be allowed, requiring no zoning variances.

This model would not require any significant monetary investment. Instead of designing a new form or proposing a specific use, this project designs the legal, economic and socio-political framework from which new forms and uses can emerge. It is an architectural solution to monetary lack and economic change. The result is a specific economic and legal zone triggering open-ended typological evolution of continual building acts.

Returning Anew: Sequential Experience in the Jewett Art Center

KEVIN MOORE

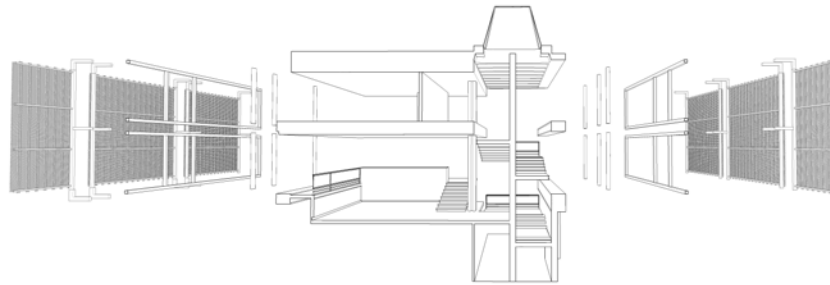
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The creation of sensuous places has recently assumed a full-bodied experience that drawing, photography or video cannot quite capture. This paper analyzes one such place, the interior of the Jewett Art Center at Wellesley College (1958) by Paul Rudolph. Noted for its ornamental exterior screen, the interior has almost entirely been forgotten. Unmistakably indebted to the picturesque sequences of Frank Lloyd Wright and Le Corbusier, the Jewett Art Center includes a memorable stair and gallery that structures an unfolding sequence whereby vision and movement are fused into a tactile experience.



In a series of analytical drawings, the deceptively simple plan is explained as a set of procedures that enrich the act of following an attenuated route: constrict a path; alter the speed of ascent and descent; disassemble the exterior wall and double its component parts; screen views to the exterior; and insert an insistent occluding plane. The effect is that movement reinforces sight through parallax and peripheral vision. As foreground and background rotate about the visitor at varying speeds, a heightened sense of depth is created. In addition, alternatively occluded and disclosed views add clarity to the immersive experience. A visitor consistently returns to view the same feature from a new vantage point. The effect is an uncanny and disarming deception; the space is continually new but familiar. By returning on itself, each sequence grows beyond its enclosure. A participant also begins to notice other things. The material restraint, for example, directs attention to subtleties of light. Here, meaning is experiential and participatory rather than symbolic and interpretive. Rather than contemplate meaning, we are called to action; the display of art is fused into a meandering visual field. Although this assumes a somewhat peripatetic visitor, it holds the promise of a continuously unfolding and sensuous experience.

Experiencing the Three-Legged Stool: Social, Economic and Environmental Education Through the Mariposa Redevelopment

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In design education it is common to see studios address hypothetical projects on real sites, wherein students investigate the neighborhood context in abstraction, collecting GIS data and performing various other research activities in order to validate their design solutions. However, rarely do students comprehend the inner workings of a neighborhood, the economic infrastructure, the social dynamics and environmental context, while simultaneously participating in the design of a neighborhood redevelopment project.

This presentation examines a community outreach program at the University of Colorado-Boulder developed to enrich student understanding of the interrelationships between sustainability and the social, environmental, and economic aspects of construction, operation and habitation in the built environment. The outreach program is a partnership with the Denver Housing Authority, Workshop8 Architecture, and Designers Without Boundaries (DWB). DWB is an academic support and scholarship program for financially at risk, first-generation, and historically underrepresented students. The group is composed of students pursuing studies in environmental design (architecture, planning and landscape design) who are eager to participate in real world sustainable projects. The University students form a bridge between the design team and the Denver neighborhood youth.

This year, the partnership project is Phase VI of the Mariposa Redevelopment in Denver. This neighborhood redevelopment calls for a mix of housing for a range of income levels, and incorporates innovative design features. The project will seek LEED Gold status and net-zero construction. The Mariposa project is an excellent example of sustainable redevelopment in Denver and a design process that connects community members, students, and design professionals through intergenerational conversations, community meetings, neighborhood arts collaborative activities, and youth design internships. Join us for a discussion that will offer a new methodological approach to engaging students in sustainable projects and to building community through design.

Black Contemporary: Act of Construction

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In this presentation, I will discuss the pedagogical role of Black Contemporary, a field station dedicated to the study of spatial phenomena. In using the term here, I am referring to a way of knowing that seeks to describe the underlying, essential qualities of human experience and the context in which that experience happens. Using perceptual logic as spatial conditioner, current studio projects focus on the act of making and curating a series of research assemblies within a dormant seed-drying facility constructed in 1979. Each inquiry is part of a process by which the cultural history and future potential of an abandoned typology is revealed. It is a subconscious engagement whereby we become immersed in the world and do not succeed in distancing ourselves from it in order to achieve consciousness of the world.

The site serves as laboratory for students who wish to conduct independent inquiry under my advisement. Studio projects focus on the act of making and fabricating temporary assemblies within an existing host space using a variety of different materials and methods. This course of study provides students the opportunity to make full-scale inquiries and, thereby, move beyond representational methodologies as the only procedural means of design development. On a deeper level, however, we want to cultivate a way of knowing that seeks to describe the underlying, essential qualities of human experience and the context in which that experience happens. The subsequent acts build on the role spatial phenomena have always had in architectural thinking and assist the resurgence of experimental productions in design education and practice. As the process of architectural design delivery has become almost completely reliant on digital means, spatial experiments in real time with real people and real materials at full size are a crucial counterpoint.