

Student Work 1998-2006

Boston Architectural College
James Moses and Adam Mitchell

By common consent, the Parthenon is a great work of art. Yet it has esthetic standing only as the work becomes an experience for a human being. And, if one is to go beyond personal enjoyment, ...one has to be willing...to turn from it to the bustling, arguing, acutely sensitive Athenian citizens, with civic sense identified with a civic religion, of whose experience the temple was an expression, and who built it not as a work of art but as a civic commemoration.... The one who sets out to theorize about the esthetic experience embodied in the Parthenon must realize in thought what the people into whose lives it entered had in common, as creators and as those who were satisfied with it, with people in our own towns and on our own streets.

John Dewey



Jason Bennett
Berton Bremer
Judd Christopher
Phoebe Conant
Deron Granville
Derek Gunn
William Mowatt
Charles Stewart

Since the 1950's, many American cities have seen the abandonment of their centers for the inexpensive, abundant, and safe land of the suburbs. A shift in cultural and economic life from the immigrant point of arrival to the pastoral ideal has rendered downtowns little more than theme park versions of the city. Boston may be one exception to this pattern. One could argue that cities do not stay locked in one period but evolve over time; that while Boston's evidently rich past sets a tone of scale, the Prudential Center is as much a city treasure as Trinity Church or Fanueil Hall.

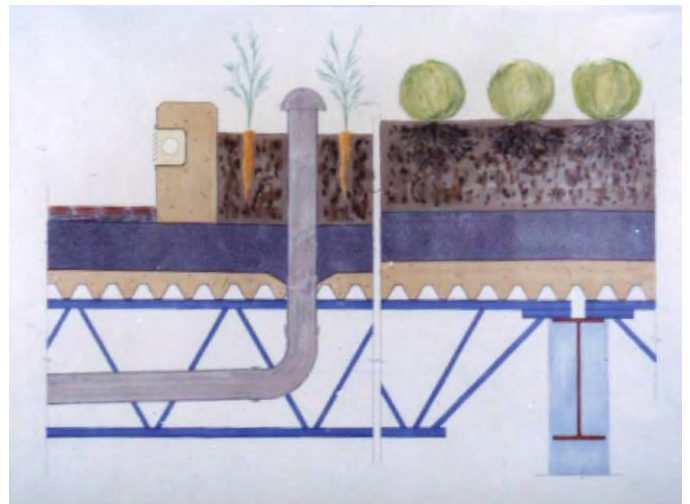
A fundamental question of the studio is 'What in the city has value?' Is it Boston Garden? The new Federal Courthouse? Will the next Dunkin' Donuts occupy a renovated firehouse or the ground floor of the steel and glass office building? One's own developed sense of value is essential if one intends to put forth architectural propositions in a city that is built to capacity.

The studio breaks the semester into two discrete but related segments:

Five weeks: We will observe an aspect of the city at several scales (from the regional to the hand-held), paying attention to manners of occupation specific to the neighborhoods of Boston. A series of exercises will attempt to draw out students' individual interests with respect to life in the home of the bean and the cod.

Eleven weeks: Having developed an understanding of locale, participants will speculate upon construction in a context with 360 years of accumulated stuff. Students will propose programs and projects that transform their sites, manifesting earlier observations in a more explicitly tectonic expression. Issues related to construction will be the generators of opportunity.





Land in North America, according to Locke, is destined to remain worthless until it acquires the status of a commodity in the market or capitalist economy. With the image of America as boundless, scaleless space in mind, he was able to contemplate the possibility, unimaginable in Europe, that fertile, habitable land could be so abundant as to lack value. The importance of the commodity-exchange facet of the American ideology of space cannot be exaggerated.

Leo Marx



Jenn Campbell
Priscilla Harcourt
Dawn Hayes
Susan Kossa
Todd Lariviere
Len Osborne
Ron Paolillo
Wen-Chia Tsai
Aileen Vantomme

The studio will explore the opportunities inherent at the intersection of *landscape* and *type*. One could argue that in the canon of Modernism, there are pitifully few examples of 'the garden', that the primary focus within this tradition has been on the object. One version of this is the Corbusian city, a collection of tall buildings set in bucolic parks catering to a bourgeois culture. Since designers have for the last half-century obsessed about the object and largely ignored the garden, we believe it may be time to transfer our collective compulsion, and propose that participants take a head-on look at the potential of the urban garden. To that end, the first part of the semester will be dedicated literally and figuratively to preparing a bit of ground.

A great criticism of the Modernist city has been that the open, unprogrammed plaza has led to urban spaces devoid of life: latter-day critics have tried to fill them in with the tarted up shed-palace. While surely the modern plaza has by and large been a failure, the original motivation was generally sincere: the provision of more open space, a pre-WWII response to the overpopulated, poorly ventilated, disease-ridden conditions of many European cities. Recent American projects have dismissed this ambition and replaced it with a nostalgic view of the "dense" urban core, a thinly veiled attempt to maximize land use for profit. Is there another version of urbanity that captures Modernist idealism but is also local, particular, and democratic?

Object obsession and the commodification of land has resulted in the architecture of building type, with all the attendant connotations about cultural specialization. We are troubled by the possibility that typology may have buttonholed occupation. Is there really an ideal way to live in the city? Is there an opportunity to transform accepted types and provide for unanticipated lifestyles? To test this concern, the second, longer part of the semester will overlay an investigation of a particular occupation on the earlier landscape revelations.

In method, the studio places high priority on participants taking responsibility for locating their own interests and developing appropriate means of investigation. We therefore expect that projects will vary widely in scale and complexity, relative to experience and ambition, with the common theme and point of departure being the tie that binds. This being said, students will not be without guidance in identifying the trajectory of their projects.

Required text: *Denatured Visions: Landscape and Culture in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Stuart Wrede and William Howard Adams



Wen-Chia Tsai



Priscilla Harcourt



Len Osborne



Michelle Bailey
Eric Bottenhorn
Mike Conroe
Patrick Leroy
Damon May
Robin Shirley-Granville

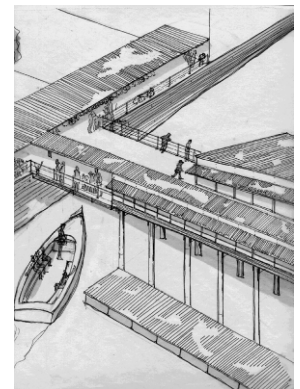
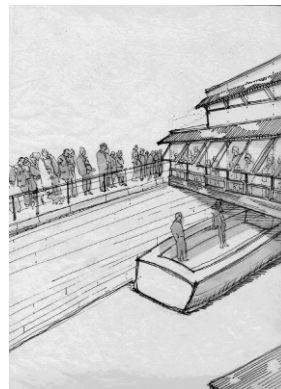
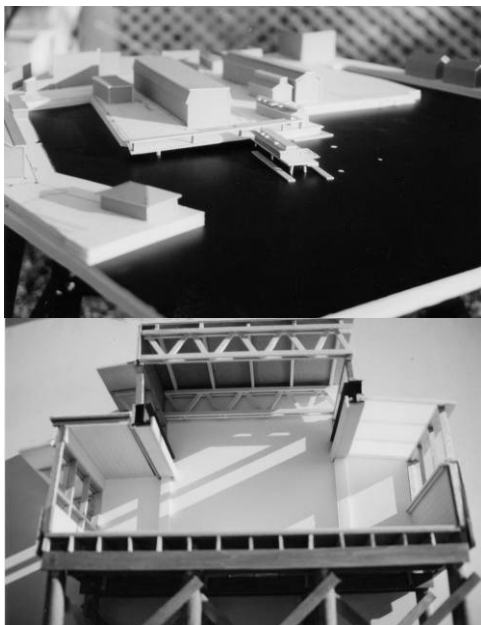
As we enter the new century, it appears the rhetorical dream of the early Modernists has been fulfilled. A global economy, with its proliferation of all manner of media imagery, the mass production of 'designed' consumer goods, and a construction industry that is standardized to the point of rigid conformity, has produced the much anticipated international style. Do the shelves of Target and K Mart contain the pinnacle of contemporary design? Is there opportunity at the local level to transcend the limits of the global economy?

The scene in Boston has shifted. With the Big Dig near completion, and the conservationist whip cracking, downtown expansion may have reached maturity. The reluctance of neighborhoods to allow new development and an absence of political will may cripple the speculator's lust for the next big deal, a lust that has built the cities of the New World. What is Boston's future if on the one hand there is little undeveloped land remaining, and on the other all existing fabric is considered sacred? Is Boston destined to become the next Venice, frozen in the twentieth century?

We propose a studio that speculates upon the nature and potential of urban expansion, takes a cue from the ambitions of the Big Dig, and harkens back to an earlier form of development. In Boston's early years, when the settlement occupied a peninsula, growth was contained by the Charles River on one side and the harbor on the other. The current waterfront and the Back Bay are no more than the location of the last infill project by the last daring speculators: marsh and harbor were filled in to create more land. The boundary of city and harbor has become arbitrarily fixed. The next frontier may not be the air rights over the Mass Pike, but rather water rights adjacent to the New England Aquarium.

The studio then will consider a version of the strategy of 'infill'. The current city/harbor boundary will be examined with the anticipation of developing alternative relationships. Does private development always preclude the public good? Will a clean harbor require rope swings at every pier for lunchtime swimmers? Participants may propose new forms of occupation along the waterfront that question current conceptions of use. Engineered lumber will be the material of choice in all proposals.

A series of exercises aimed at uncovering students' preoccupations through discreet, precise observations of our locale will culminate in a project, the scale and complexity of which will relate to each participant's ambitions and abilities. As in past studios, we will place high priority on each student's willingness to define his





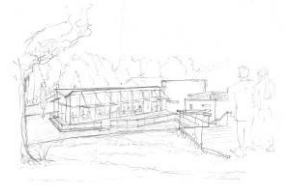
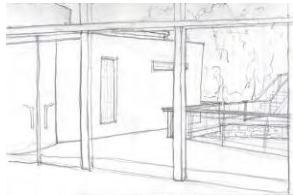
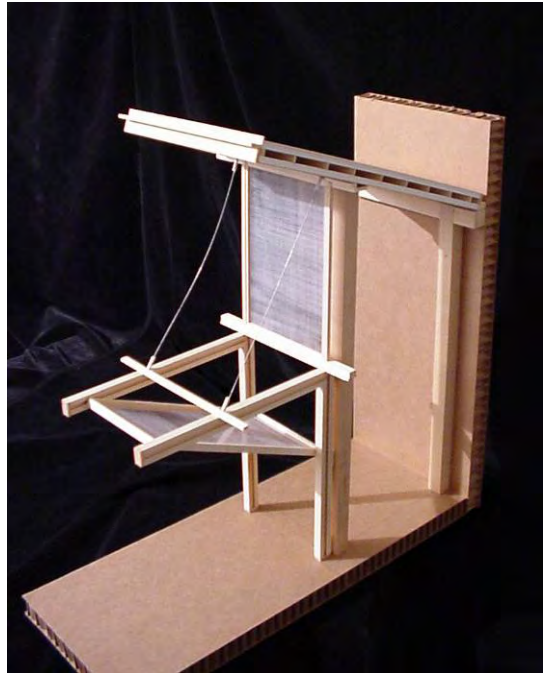
David Bemiss
Steven Fournier
Monte French
Jeffrey Leclair
Richard Leheny
Soiti Mazumder
Geoffrey Rogers
Alejandro Soto

Has the eighteenth century Jeffersonian ideal been achieved in Framingham? While the 50s ranch house may be a version of Monticello, we are not gentleman farmers. Jefferson strived to set up a model for the North American landscape that would locate us all in bucolic settings of agrarian bliss; this critical position is perhaps the first example of an American architect's pitch. One might argue, however, that the miracle mile is the only authentic American contribution to urban planning. Our arbiters of taste decry the Island, the Valley and Houston. As architects, what is it that appalls us about these placeless spots? Are they really placeless? Is it the relentless uniformity of latter day global capitalism or the domination of the automobile?

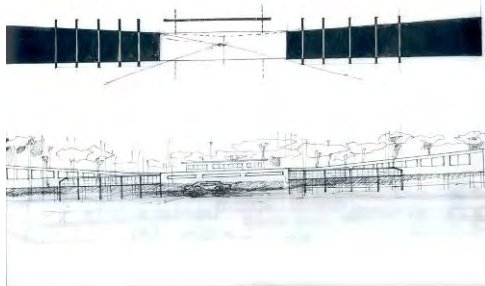
Here in New England we are on a high horse. We have quaint towns that muster militias. The strip operates in conjunction with the village green. If we want antiques we hit the high street; if it's linen its off to Route 9. We delude ourselves by thinking that our culture is integral to our historic legacy manifest in our built relics. Yet our strip and village green culture is the same as the rest of America. Do we as architects have a role to play in nursing this space to become a mor democratic, heterogeneous, and local landscape?

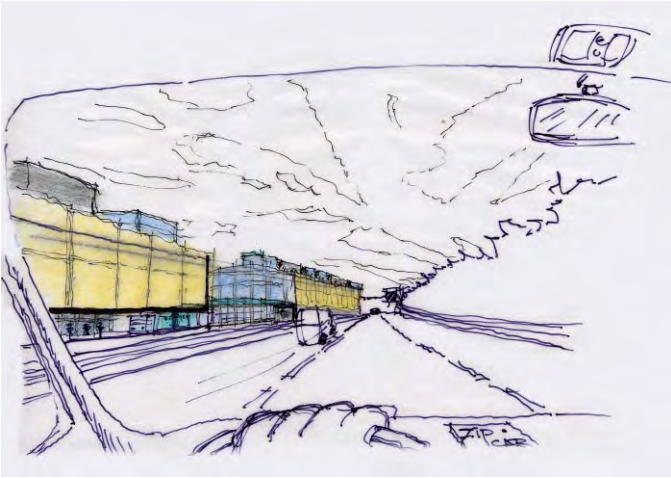
The economic priorities of individuals and groups operating in 'the middle-landscape' have more often than not produced bland, ephemeral expressions, which tend to look tattered even before they are occupied. If architects are, in a sense, midwives for the built environment, can we afford to continue to ignore this landscape? Additionally, in contrast to downtown Boston, might this not be a place where one could challenge literal interpretations of 'context'? What, in fact, is the context here? Is there a suburban equivalent to the Prudential Center?

Atop these larger socio-cultural issues concerning the origins and development of the contemporary American landscape, the studio will overlay Gottfried Semper's re-combination of Laugier's primitive hut and the Vitruvian triad (firmness, commodity, and delight): earthwork, framework/roof, hearth, and screen. These 'four elements of architecture' are explicitly tectonic in nature, suggesting that Construction precedes and makes possible Architecture. Beyond that, they potentially lend themselves on the one hand to a modest exterior, formal expression and, on the other, a more exuberant, improvisational interior, spatial one. Our hope is that by anchoring studio projects in tectonic processes a potentially richer landscape might evolve. Early studio exercises (including a brief case study) will test and elaborate the four elements. It will be impossible, in this studio, to answer the question of 'why' without simultaneously answering the question of 'how'.



Semper In Suburbia

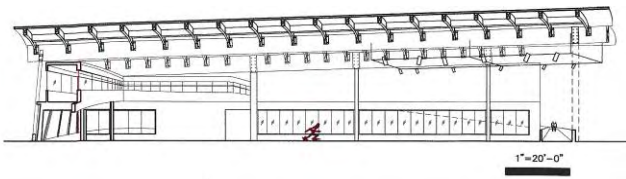




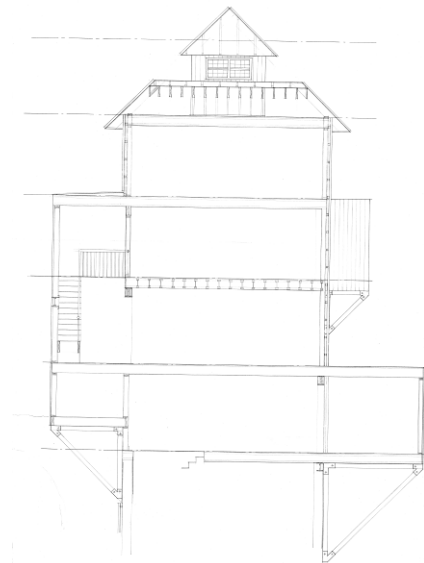
Steven Fournier



Jeff Leclair



Alejandro Soto



Geoffrey Rogers



Gary Brock
Will Cheever
Brad Favreau
Cindy Lee
Matt Nugent
Yolanda Romero
Abby Tourtellotte
Chris Vandall

American street culture is endangered. Most of us metropolitans tend to spend our days in cocoons of glass and polymers. It is not a stretch to say that we move between home, car and workplace. How many of us walk to work, to school, to the movies? Even in Boston, arguably America's most walkable city, the inclination is to drive: the Star Market provides a 400-car lot; Haymarket is a motor destination; loitering is strictly prohibited. While the American street is the most unambiguously public space we have, we have done all we can to remove ourselves from it.

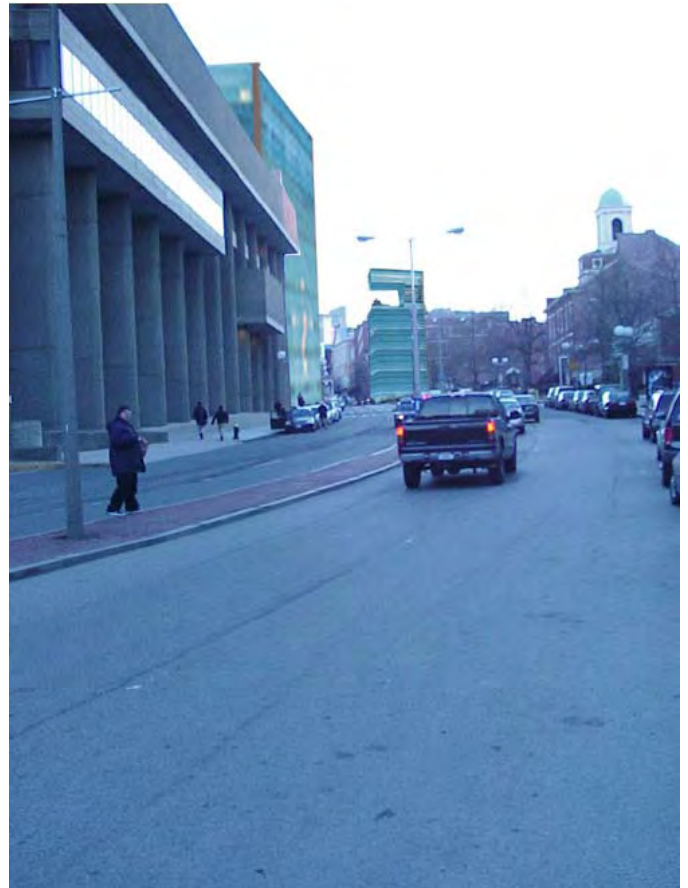
The studio seeks proposals for the Twenty-first Century Street. Have we learned from Las Vegas? Is Newbury Street the most appropriate model for Boston? Is it possible to conceive new models of the city street given the preference for private stewardship over public use? With a few exceptions, the proposed greensward above the submerged artery may be given over to the private sector and the demands of the real estate market: what ought to be an extension of the Emerald Necklace may in fact become Louisburg Square. What are the cultural limits of the market economy relative to these issues? Is there a role for political will, or will the free market have the final say? In the new century, is a democratic landscape necessarily an utterly privatized one?

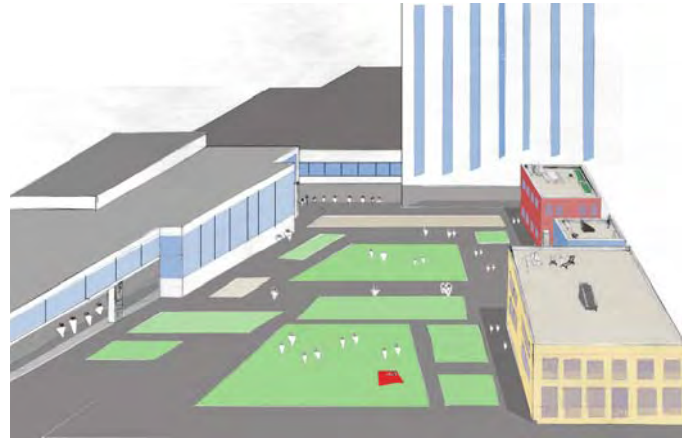
A recent critique of the state of the field reflects upon the schizophrenia of current urban design. The tendency to orchestrate behavior or obsess about appearance seems irrelevant. Perhaps it is time for an approach that is unsentimental about not only the past, but also the future: is it possible to be both Bleecker Street and Santa Monica Boulevard? One might expect this strategy to achieve a quality that is driven more by a subtle understanding of the everyday life of the city, accounting for its vagaries, and less by the desire to leave behind a collection of monuments.

The semester will be divided into three parts, all based in Boston: participants, in teams of at least two, will first map the character of a street; next, individually, a short project of a relatively ephemeral nature (perhaps a temporary structure or event); and finally, a long project which will have a more or less overt architectural expression, depending on the individual's interest. Our hope is that each proposal will have the capacity to anticipate and accommodate as yet unknown ways of inhabiting the city.









The placement of art in the midst of life is not always an unqualified good, and it is still insufficiently appreciated that the right of people to participate in the decisions that affect their lives extends to art when it impinges on their lives as lived. The right of free expression is constitutionally guaranteed. What remains to be explored is what recourse we have over art that is imposed on us without our consent.

Arthur Danto, "The Removal of Tilted Arc"



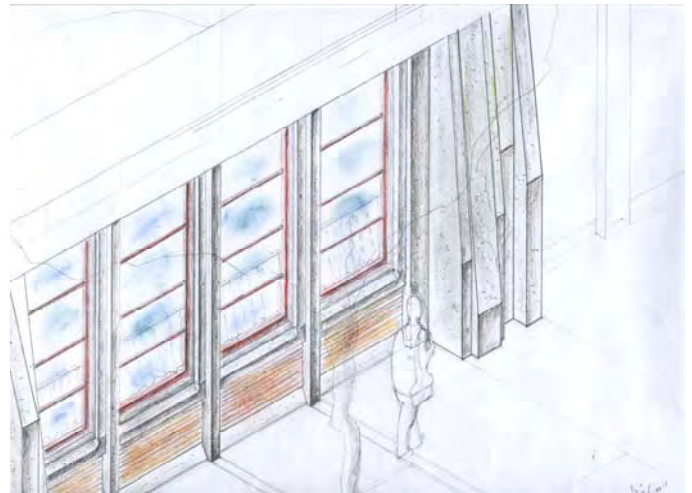
Ed Casurole
Mirren Fischer
Pax Hornbostel
Adriana Ramacciotti
Ruth Super
Son Wooten

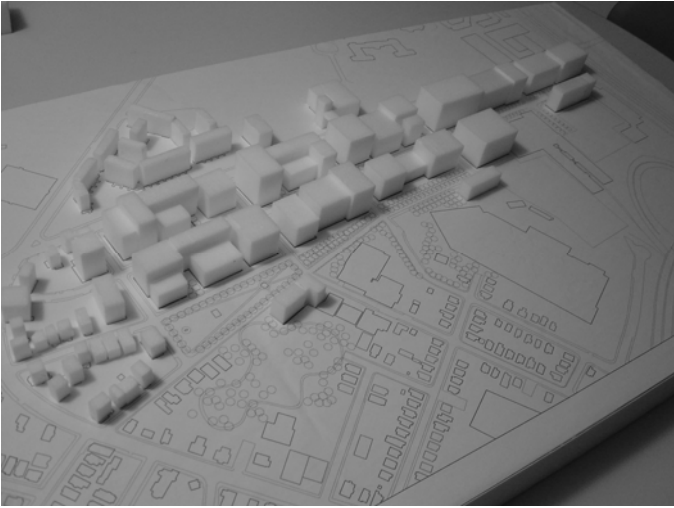
Do we live in an uncivil society? What unites us? The myth of the American Golden Age is just that: the melting pot, that trusted saw, used to blend distinctions of race, class and ethnicity, may be ready for the sociologist's tag sale. In its place we are left with a polyglot people that has been disparaged as the "culture of identity". However one describes America, at the end of the day we must all live next to each other, neighbors in every sense. How does our landscape mediate our differences and bring commonality and mutual respect into the public realm? We would argue that an important aspect in forming this cultural cohesion is the institution.

Since its "founding" Boston has been defined and distinguished by the number and longevity of its institutions. According to the 'creation myth', immediately upon settling the end of the Neck, the Puritan fathers founded Harvard College to provide a supply of clergymen in perpetuity. If one social function of the institution is to serve as repository of collective memory, Boston, it would be fair to say, is built of these. On the one hand, this suggests a continuity, even constancy, to the social and physical landscape. On the other hand, we know that institutions that are incapable of evolving to meet the demands of a particular era's ethos die, or become irrelevant. In an increasingly open, globally oriented (dare we say "multicultural"?) world, the successful institutions have broadened their constituencies.

It seems ironic, if not tragic, that during a period of increasing democratization, many institutions, particularly colleges and universities, are choosing to collect buildings for whom the dominant force is the authors' intent. (They often come with a collection of images and text offering a facsimile of the design process.) One cannot deny that much of this work is thrilling to behold. We live at a time when, because of the power of computing, it is possible to produce buildings of any shape and configuration. We have come to expect spectacle.

This studio seeks proposals for a grounded, even quiet, architecture. One that anticipates and invites use, even uses not expected: a latent architecture. We are interested in the opportunities that might become apparent where the territories of institutions (utopia) and the outside world (reality) meet. It is our belief that the neighboring precincts of these institutions, which are continually changing, with comings and goings, keep the places fresh and enlivened: the changing tide cleanses the harbor.





... perhaps what liberalism brings to the cultural table is not level and featureless, like a playing field, but adaptable and absent-minded like a park...

Adam Gopnik, "Olmstead's Trip"

In this culminating period since 1992, closed by three national elections, our politics has become cultural, with each side offering distinct and counterpoised views about government, values, the family, and the best way of life. The politics of culture has pushed other voting issues off the public agenda, though not out of the consciousness of ordinary voters.

Stanley Greenberg, "The Two Americas"



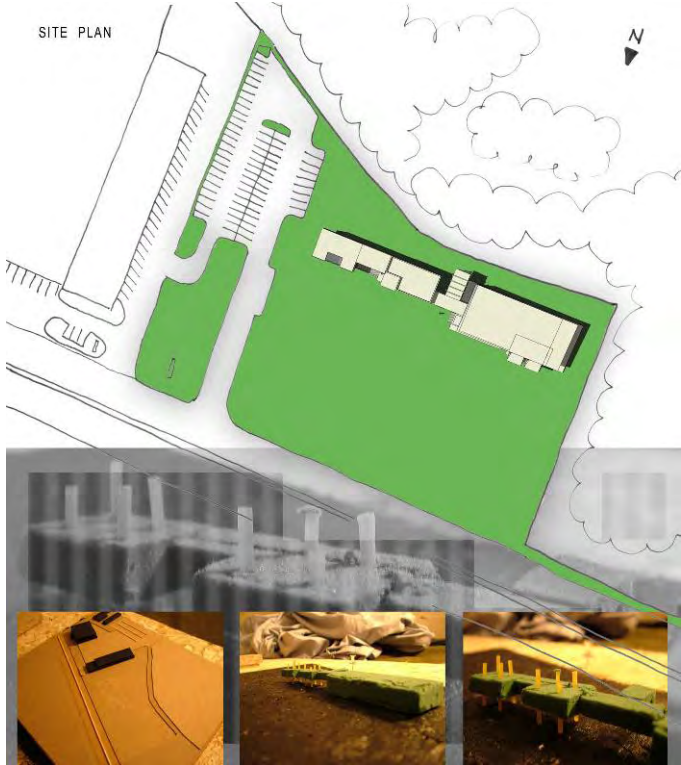
Scott Biranyi
Kathryn Giardi
Steve Go
Stephen Mott
Matthew Nugent
Sarah O'Keefe
David Rader

We Americans are continually relocating, downsizing, upsizing, supersizing, migrating, dieting, and exercising; we remain the most mobile people on the planet. Yet in our mobility, might we be losing something? We leave behind the detritus of our consumer culture. We push outwards without ever getting to know our old neighbors. A shared conception of what it means to be American has deteriorated. Increasingly we lack common ground. Do architects have a role in re-forming potentials for shared experiences?

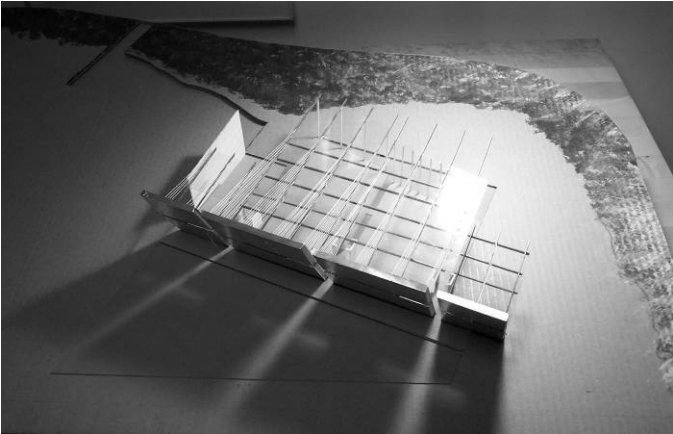
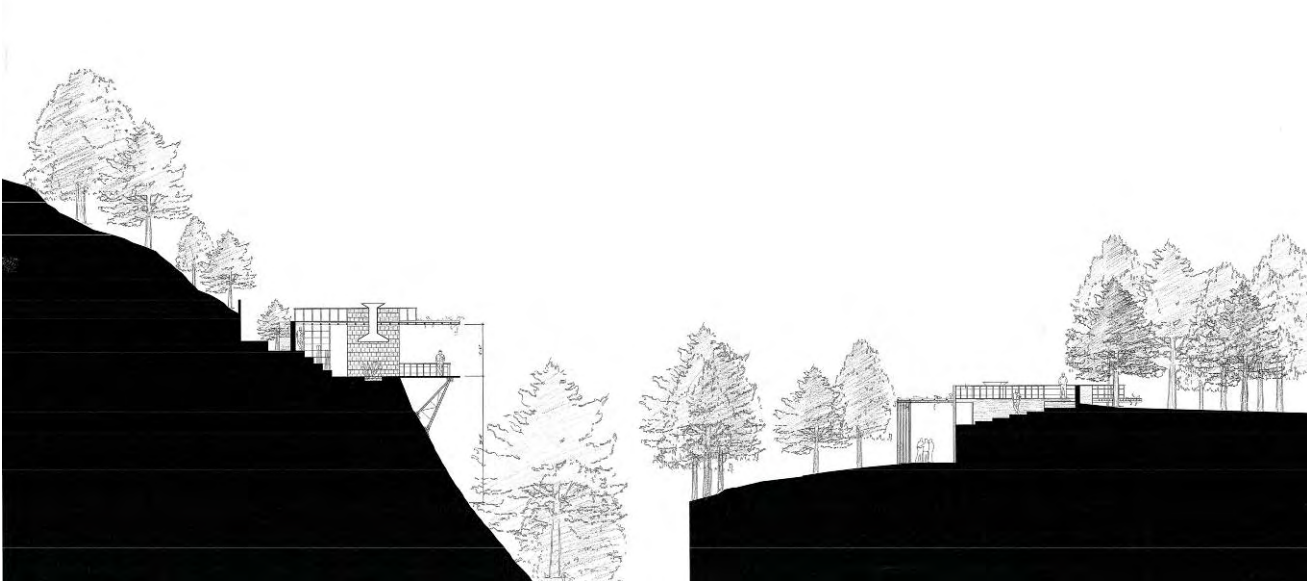
One consequence of post-WW2 suburbanization is a patchwork of unresolved fragments of land, pieces leftover from the construction of major roadways and subdividing of farm- and woodland. They tend to be neither urban, suburban, nor rural in character, but largely untended and sometimes forgotten. These parcels seem to invite new and common occupation.

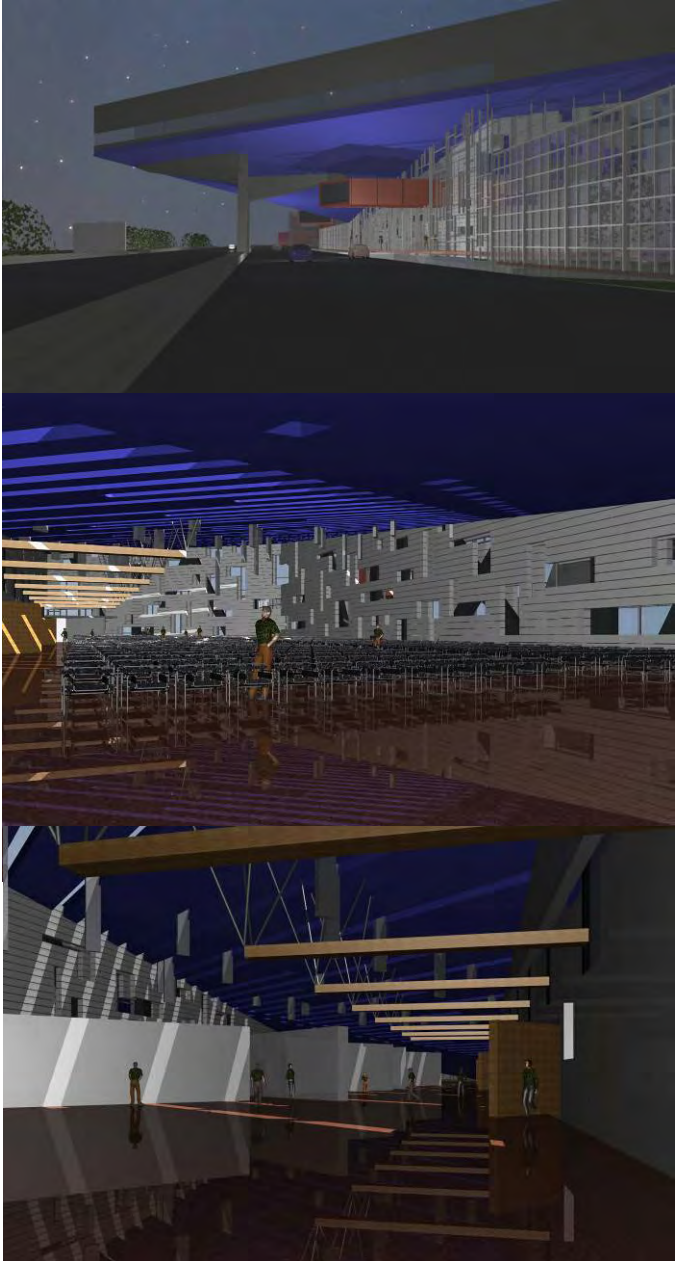
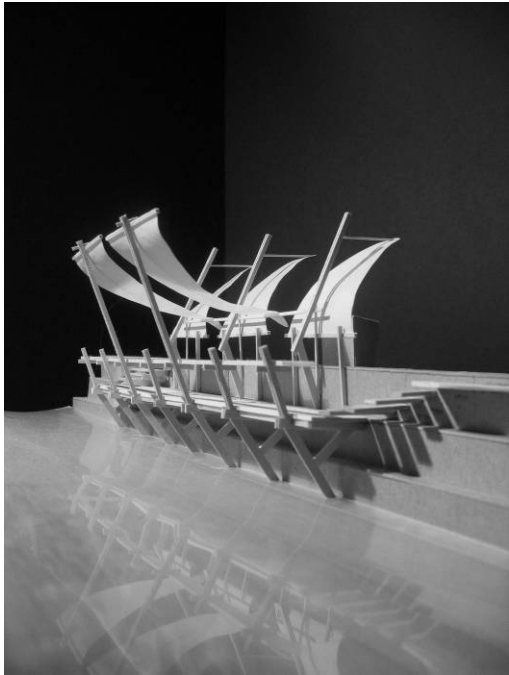
We observe in current architectural practice two distinct phenomena: a) an increasing obsession with consumer object architecture and b) the privileging of the immediate uses of buildings over the inevitability of change. There is a sense that these facts contribute to a built environment that is limited in the choices it offers the citizenry, distrustful of diversity. We are interested in the possibility of an architecture that expands social opportunity and fosters shared experience more in keeping with our democratic values. These observations will serve as the critical underpinning of the studio.

As a catalyst for discussion of the issues raised above and a touchstone for the second half of the term, two preliminary studies will be undertaken: 1) a case study of 'buildings in the landscape' and 2) a design study taking as its primary focus the weather, its impacts and the ways in which they might begin to have a consequence on architectural decisions such as siting, materiality, composition, and detail; students will be encouraged to look beyond the literal to the figurative. These studies will lay the groundwork for a long project that will be sited in a landscape not dissimilar to one of those untended, forgotten parcels. As is typical for our studios, the function, scope, and scale of the project will be determined, with our guidance, by each student individually, based on experience and preoccupation.









There are valued times in almost everyone's experience when the world is perceived afresh: perhaps after a rain as the sun glistens on the streets and the windows catch a departing cloud, or, alone, when one sees again the roundness of an apple. At these times our perceptions are not at all sentimental. They are, rather, matter of fact, neutral, and undesiring – yet suffused with an unreasoned joy at the simple correspondence of appearance and reality, of the evident rightness of things as they are.

Michael Benedikt, *For An Architecture of Reality*

*Do you see O my brothers and sisters?
It is not chaos or death — it is form, union, plan — it is eternal
life — it is Happiness.*

Walt Whitman, "Song of Myself"



Wen-Hung Chen
Gabrielle Deifik
Oliver Klein
Andrew Lawrence
John Leach
Patrick Rettig
Scott Walker

Reports of Mies van der Rohe's death are premature. He lives in every *Design Within Reach* catalog we receive in the mail. Who would have guessed that the Eames lounge chair would still signify sophistication, wealth, and taste after fifty years? Postmodernism failed to drive a stake through the heart of the Modern Movement: it seems to have come back from the grave like a zombie. And like a zombie, today's modernist is a pale imitation of the original: with all of the white, but none of the heart. How ironic that a great reformist tradition is relegated to the bathroom magazine stack.

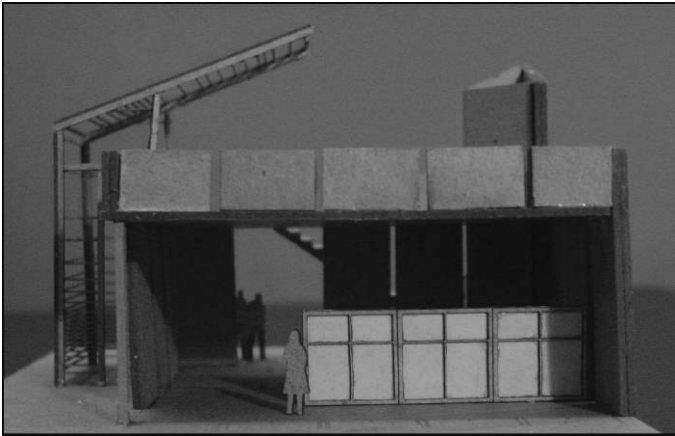
Despite, or because of, our apparent national fondness for 'moral clarity', America is as economically stratified, socially polarized and regionally isolated as it ever has been. It appears that architects have responded to the mighty challenges of our epoch with warmed over versions of the Barcelona Pavilion. The previous century's proposition that architecture could, at its best, embrace the complexity of life, respond to our needs, all the while inspiring with insight and grace, has been abandoned for a fin de siècle notion of style and status.

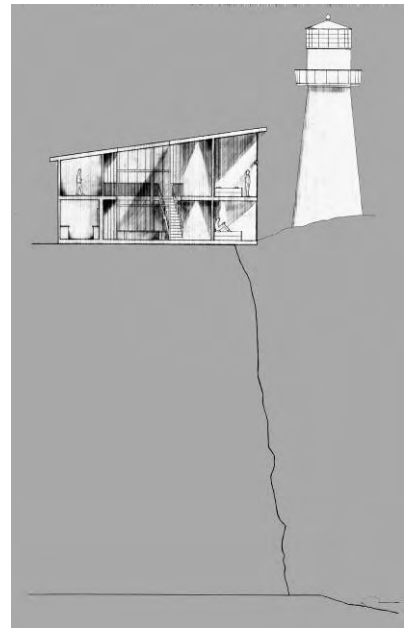
Aren't the veneer plaster wall and stainless steel escutcheon low aspirations? Is there an architecture that can respond to human needs, propose a background for alternative social dynamics and provide a breath of fresh air into the culture in which we live?

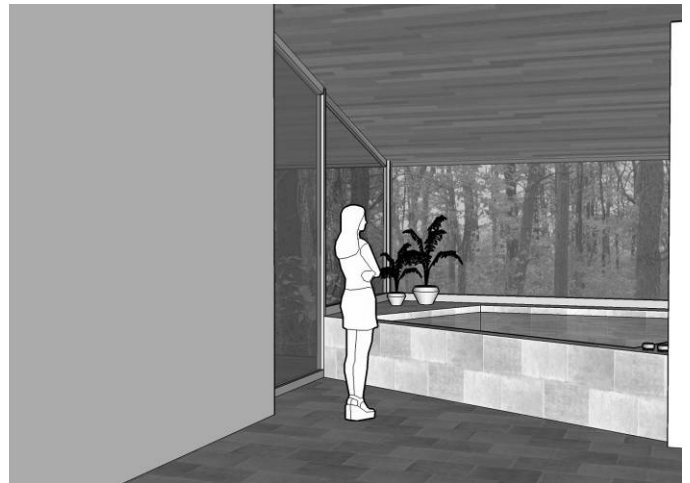
As a means to begin addressing these questions, this studio will investigate the opportunities of designing in cast-in-place concrete, following a rich modern tradition informed, in part, by the desire for monolithic construction, where structure and enclosure are a single entity.

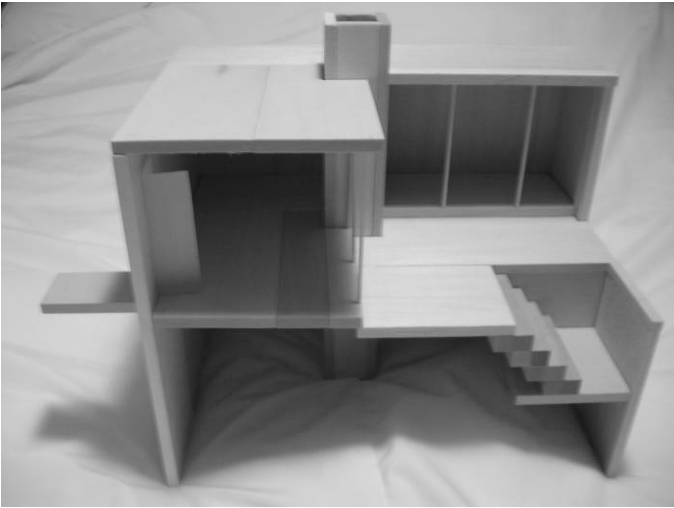
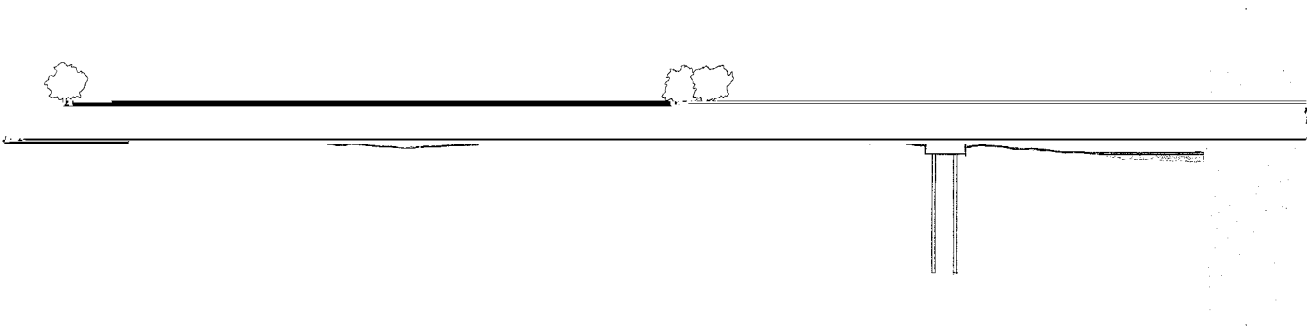
As building materials have become ever thinner and lighter and construction schedules more compressed, the quality of architectural concrete work has diminished, along with the number of workers capable of achieving it. (Were Adolf Loos alive today he might be tempted to wonder aloud if there is a correlation between the depth of today's typical wall section and the cultural influence of, say, FOX News. The trappings of 'modern' life may be as thin a veneer as Sir Norman Foster's techno walls.) David Pye's 'workmanship of risk' is rarely more evident than in the design and execution of architectural cast-in-place concrete, where the opportunities to make corrections are scant.

The interest in exploring the character of concrete as a building medium is not nostalgic. It is, however, critical, potentially challenging the hegemony of style over substance; aesthetics over meaning; the marketplace as final arbiter of value. One of the great shortcomings of contemporary architecture, and spatial practice generally, may be its lack of social engagement, a vigorous correspondence between design and reform. We believe this is an essential aspect of the development of an architecture that engages life.









*I'm all lost in the supermarket
I can no longer shop happily
I came in here for that special offer
A guaranteed personality*
-The Clash



Franziska Garcia
Rachel Harris
Carolyn Highlands
Greg Hill
Andres Lizarraga
John Oldenburg
John Paratore

The idea that a *laissez-faire* market is the last, best vehicle for shaping our landscape may have disappeared as the swollen waters of Lake Pontchartrain receded into the Gulf of Mexico. Have we Americans come to realize that the free market is not capable of solving every ill that faces our society? Given the limits of private development, in the face of natural and economic disaster, to create authentic, sustainable community, we wonder if there are alternative models for imagining our future? Likewise, are there models that do not embody the 'control of nature' practiced by the Army Corps of Engineers, which are, at best, temporary in their capacity? Is there a mode available to us not unlike the way in which the dance halls of Central Texas were created: a community getting together, deciding to build a dance hall, and building it?

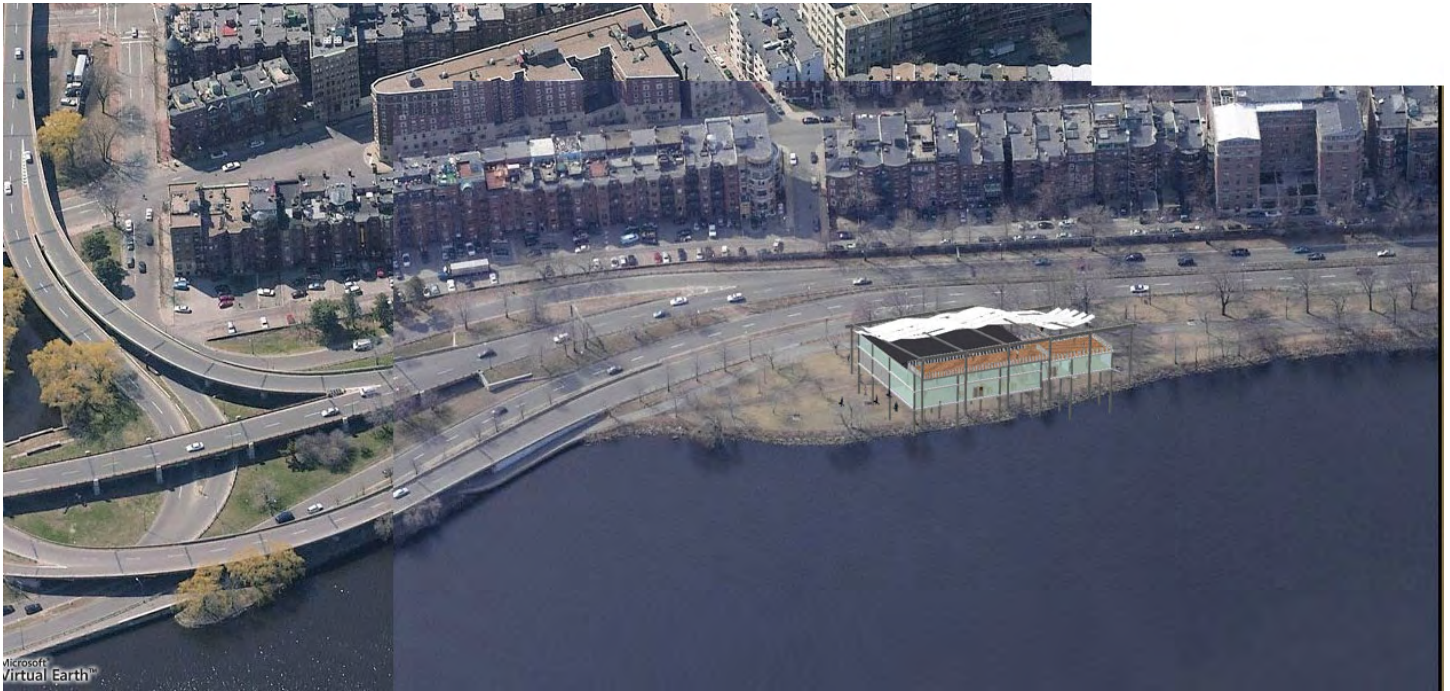
It is possible to imagine a time in the not too distant future when our patterns of settlement and life might be altered by necessity in significant ways. The effects of war, mass migration, and global warming may conspire to change fundamentally the ways we live. One reaction is to view these potentials as imminent disasters and hunker down in gated communities. An alternative is to seize both the latent and manifest opportunities such challenges present and channel our resources to develop new ways of living together. This might lead us to live more of life in view of others. Where many of us now move from home to car to work in a series of more or less private moments, we may enter an era in which we more explicitly acknowledge our dependence upon neighbors. How might the design of the public realm respond to such a possibility? Can we imagine one that is not first and foremost an opportunity for engaging in commerce? Where the goal of social engagement is not consumption?

Since the late Jane Jacobs's withering critique of modern urban planning and development practices, observers of the urban scene have expressed anxiety about the depletion of public space in the city. As economic abundance has grown, an inverse movement has occurred relative to the creation and maintenance of public space. As public space has waned and the privatization of historically public places has accelerated, the private sphere has swelled. The essence of Jane Jacobs's critique was to point out the failure of public housing policy, which tended to 'warehouse' people of low income in towers. This model removed people from *terra firma*, and denied parents the ability to supervise easily their children at play outside. In Jacob's view, the old New York walk-up apartments in Greenwich Village allowed mothers to sit in their living rooms, engaged in private activities, and watch their children as they played out in the street, the public realm. What might reasserting the priority of public space mean for our understanding and experience of the private?

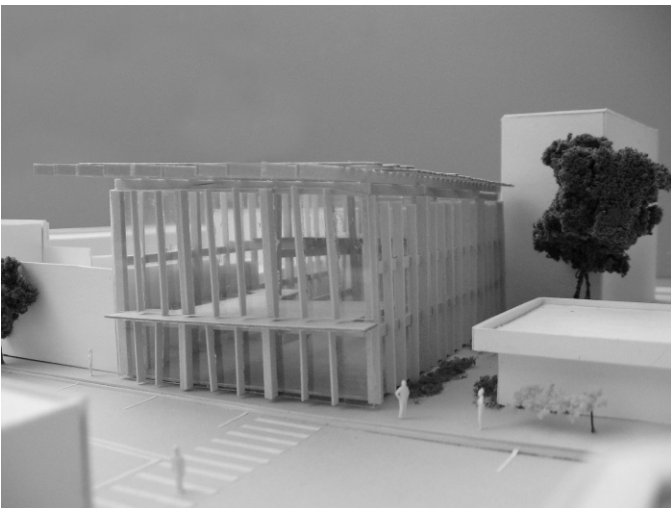
It is important to acknowledge that the discipline and profession of architecture have precious little to say about this condition, and that most remedies exist within the purview of public policy and its practitioners. The backlash against the supposed alienations of modernist orthodoxy may have delivered a *coup de grace* to any social agenda held by the profession. The retreat to a hermetic, aestheticized architecture, on the one hand, or a torpid populism, on the other, has dramatically circumscribed the arena in which spatial practice participates. Is it time for a more explicitly activist architecture?

With careful observation as the core method, case studies, mapping exercises, reconnaissance, writing, and reading will lead to the culmination of the semester: the design of an interior public space. As always, the scale and scope of this project will be calibrated to the preoccupations, ambition, and experience of each participant.

Back to the Green: Celebration's End



Back to the Green: Celebration's End



Davis Square

Intention: Public node to foster community and provide focal point for local events.

Use: High

Movie theater, coffee shop, ice cream store, major transportation hubs and restaurants serve to triangulate public focus on centered public space.



Porter Square

Intention: Public node to foster community and provide focal point for local events.

Use: Medium to low

Recessed public space outlined with concrete barriers creates quiet sleeping place for city's homeless at night, and recreational park for skateboarders during the day.

Recently completed public area of black and white stripes and jagged rocks for seating have increased awareness of site.

