IN-BETWEEN SPACES: ATMOSPHERES, MOVEMENT AND NEW NARRATIVES FOR THE CITY

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IN-BETWEEN SPACES:
ATMOSPHERES, MOVEMENT AND NEW NARRATIVES FOR THE CITY

A Thesis Presented
By
PAUL ALEXANDER STOICHEFF

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
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IN-BETWEEN SPACES:

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Approved as to style and content by:

______________________________

Pari Riahi, Chair

______________________________

Stephen Schreiber

Chair, Department of Architecture
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To my advisor, for her wisdom and guidance, I offer thanks. This project grew from a variety of sources and intentions; her ability to listen and determine the through line between them made this work possible. To my partner, for her encouragement and patience, her understanding and commitment, I offer my utmost gratitude. To my family who motivated me to pursue new thoughts, I am so grateful. And to all those authors, architects, and dreamers who live on as books, buildings, and ideas, I dedicate this work.
ABSTRACT

IN-BETWEEN SPACES:
ATMOSPHERES, MOVEMENT AND NEW NARRATIVES FOR THE CITY

MAY 2022

PAUL ALEXANDER STOICHEFF

BA, Bennington College

M.ARCH, University of Massachusetts Amherst

Directed by: Professor Pari Riahi, PhD

We often think of architecture as distinct buildings, yet as we move through the city we continuously pass through a built environment that is a collage of buildings. These spaces between buildings are underestimated as influences on our experience of everyday life in the city. Considering architecture as linked existential experiences through spaces rather than confined to individual buildings is more in line with our experience of the city as a series of interconnected spaces and places. Rather than describing a single, static architecture through words, how can we express this linked experience of spaces dynamically through narratives? Can writing reveal subtle experiences of interconnected atmospheres within the city? If so, how could this understanding inform the way architects consider the relationship between built-forms and the greater urban context?
This thesis investigates and interprets the atmospheres of pathways and in-between spaces to understand their influence on the experience of moving through the city. Although in-between spaces are where much of the human experience of the city occurs, they are rarely discussed and, in many ways, this keeps them out of the realm of design consideration.

Atmospheres (discussed by Peter Zumthor, Juhani Pallasmaa and Alberto Pérez-Gómez) arise from our multi-sensory perception of space. The thesis investigates the literature surrounding the phenomenological study and design of atmospheres as well as the connection between atmospheres and narratives—how they develop and are essential in creating meaningful spaces for embodied-experience.

Assuming the identity of the flâneur—city-wanderer, documentarian, and observer—as an entry point into investigating the city through movement, the project aims at documenting and rendering atmospheres in the city through photography and writing.

Through the intersection of architecture, atmosphere and narrative, the thesis presents a multi-media study of atmospheres of in-between spaces in Montreal focusing on writing as a tool for generating new narratives that inform design. This research project develops a new methodology that reorients
design-thinking towards a sequence of experiences through atmospheres in the city.

Ultimately, this research sets the conditions, methodology and context for the architectural intervention of an extension of Parc linéaire du Réseau-Vert (the Greenline) developed through the remainder of the thesis.
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CHAPTER 1

THE CRISIS OF MEANING: QUESTIONING THE CONTEMPORARY CITY

Introduction

Crisis of Meaning

Our current cultural epoch sees a crisis of existential meaning within the built environment. Regarding architecture, built-forms are often designed from a set of scientific, technological, or economic criteria. While these criteria may offer satisfactory, even novel solutions to contemporary problems, they are qualities that cannot be interpreted by human experience, and therefore lead to feelings of alienation. Strangely, not only humans feel that they are being alienated from the city, but also that the new built forms are themselves alienated from other built-forms and the city-at-large.¹ Perhaps this arises from the trend of ocularcentric designs that grip clients as renderings, but once built add little—or worse, detract—from the existing context. These designs may

appear as flashy facades and images, but they lack spaces that enliven our other senses.

Meanwhile, scientific and technological approaches are applied to engineer solutions to an array of challenges that must be considered for the design of built forms. Adapting built forms to changing global climate conditions, reducing the impact of building industries, the energy required to operate buildings, are a few of these challenges. While scientific and technological criteria are capable of providing quantifiable solutions to quantifiable problems, often the problems they address become the center of the design effort as the experience of the designed spaces becomes secondary, perfunctory, or unconsidered.

Technological advancements and the adoption of the scientific method into the design process realigns the focus of architecture to the design of site-specific objects or instruments rather than places that are the site of multi-sensory experiences. This focus on design from quantifiable criteria avoids the importance of the human experience. While a scientific approach can be applied by designers to address specific challenges with precise variables, this condition should be the foundation for design and not the end result, for the engineering of variables in this way references back to the initial problems they aim to address as opposed to enriching the experiential quality of the space.
Narratives and the Architecture of the City

Cities are layered. Physical elements overlap and intersect—telephone poles and cables, streets and alleys, buildings, and parks. Some narratives arise from intersections of physical and cultural layers, while others are an integral part of a city’s founding. Whether narratives foment naturally from history or associations or are applied consciously by design, they provide a layer of collective, cultural significance. Such narratives overlay a raison d’être, and the built landscape becomes justified within the city.

Alternatively, architecture in the city can conceal its narrative and links to the greater urban context and offer meaningful experiences to be uncovered and interpreted by individuals. This is architecture as a location for reflecting upon oneself—an architecture of existential quality.

As language is the basic means by which we describe our experiences, narrative is critical for the development of meaning. Whether narrative is a common story that is known or an individual interpretation of a place, it is a key

layer for built-forms inclusion into the city across all scales—from the apartment building to the linear city park, up to the city taken as a whole. Nonetheless, many contemporary designs favor concepts and qualities that are too abstract to be described through experience and are to a large degree meaningless from the perspective of experience.

**Narrative and Atmospheres**

The state of architecture lacking both narrative and an effect on our experience is discussed by Perez-Gomez who in his 2016 book *Attunement: Architectural Meaning After the Crisis of Modern Science*. In it he explores relationships between our experience and narrative. He presents the human experience of architecture as responding to architectural qualities termed atmospheres. As opposed to the dominant trend for ocular-centric designs that are spectacles, architectural atmospheres affect our moods through the chorus of our senses and our presence in the space. Additionally, the surrounding context is incorporated into the architectural space and not discarded as other.

---

3 Rossi, Aldo, and Vincent Scully, p.41
In this way the architectural space is attuned to its environ and the atmospheres are attuned to affect our emotions.\(^4\)

Further into the text, it is proposed that, our experience and imagination are primarily linguistic, and therefore there could be opportunities for designing for human experience through language.\(^5\) As technology for the design of architectures adopts software originally intended for the design of objects, could adopting a technology that developed in the human experience be understood as an integral tool in the design process? Furthermore, exploring the current writing methods of poets, journalists, novelists, and others, could new narratives be generated and incorporated into new designs to provide meaningful atmospheres amidst the urban context in which they are built?


\(^5\) Pérez-Gómez, Alberto, p.197
CHAPTER 2

METHODS

Explorations and Experimentations

The aim of my inquiry is to investigate atmospheres in the city. These are spaces and places with qualities effecting our multi-sensorial perception. Additionally, these spaces—by our sense of noticing them—distinguish themselves from the abundance of unremarkable spaces. To undertake an investigation into the atmospheres and qualities of atmosphere in the urban context, I developed methods that center on the human experience: observation, photography, and writing.

These methods are chosen as they are actions that do not disrupt the embodied experience. Analysis of a space, on the other hand, removes one

____________________

from the embodied experience of space and the sensitivity to atmospheres.\textsuperscript{7}

This would be the difference between inhabiting an architectural space, and visiting that space because of its designer, particular details, and its importance to architecture’s history. While these are fantastic reasons to visit built-forms, it removes one from the effect of these qualities and their significance on our experience of the space.

Writing about the atmospheres did not occur while in those spaces. Instead, writing occurred from my desk as a reflection of the experience. Reflecting on my experience this way elucidated which qualities affected my subjective experience, and the process of writing brought about personal associations that I used to clarify the experience in the rhetorical forms of analogy and metaphor. From these initial writings, I wrote poems imbued with the atmospheric architectural qualities such as: the sense of duration while walking a path, the glow of backlit columns, the gust of wind before the crescendo of the train in the underground metro. Writing revealed the sense-world enveloped by architecture in the city. As in the reading of a novel, could

\textsuperscript{7} Merleau-Ponty, Maurice, and Colin Smith. \textit{Phenomenology of Perception}. The Humanities Press, 1962, p.19
these qualities and the actions of persons suggest the surrounding built-forms and urban context? As qualities accumulated, I undertook exploring themes through essay writing.

Concurrently, as I moved daily through the city of Montreal investigating atmospheres in public spaces, I took black and white photographs with a 35mm film camera. Fitted with a 50mm lens and standard manual focus, the camera mimicked the human eye, and unlike modern cameras with digital interfaces and screens the film camera was not disruptive to the experience of being there. In fact, shooting film in this manner is akin to a tennis player swinging a racket—at a high-level the player no longer considers the minute processes and can move to the proper position in time and with good form to return the ball. Famously, street photographers have performed this way to take photographs reflexively. For my purposes, photography captured frames of my experience to be looked-over after the film was developed. Among the qualities revealed through the photographs were the light and shadow, the assemblage of built forms, the present materials, and peripheral context.

These observations, photographs, and writings exposed the city as a dynamic sequence of spaces rather than singular static architectures.

My initial exploration led to a more concentrated focus on the effect of narrative on our perception of atmospheres as we move through the city. This
concept would be further considered and developed in two books of my making, *Verdun* and *Undetermined Spaces*. They books are included in this thesis and can be found in Appendix A and Appendix B respectively.

**Flâneur: the City Wanderer, the Observer, the Documentarian**

The first collection of writings to be compiled into a book, *Verdun*, highlights the largely overlooked atmospheres encountered through our everyday movement through the city. Specifically, this book explores the experience of atmospheres in public designs, here the Verdun Metro Station, and through reflection considers the elements from which they arise. Additionally, I question how urban spaces are sequenced or composed when movement of people is a programmatic condition.

Fig. 1 Diagram of the flâneur at center and “displacement” focused
To explore these inquiries at the Verdun Metro Station, I was inspired by the writing and approach used by Michael Cadwell to investigate the tectonics of Carlos Scarpa’s Palazzo Querini Stampalia that he includes in his book, *Strange Details*. Moving through the various rooms and galleries of the Palazzo, Cadwell takes photographs and makes note of the peculiar details he observes. Taken as individual instances, the details do come across as strange, yet as one continues to move through the Palazzo, a narrative arises through the associations and links between the tectonics and details.\(^8\)

Taking Cadwell’s approach to the Verdun Metro Station, I moved through the station in the narrative progression of a typical passenger: from the platform, across the bridge over the tracks, beyond concrete columns supporting the ceiling of a more-than double-heighted space, through the turn-stiles and up three flights of stairs. All the while, I took photographs that aimed to capture how the metro station’s architectural elements punctuated the experience of the commonplace commuter-narrative turning it into an experience through attuned architectural atmospheres.

\(^8\) Cadwell, Mike. *Strange Details*. MIT Press, 2007, p.18
Ultimately, the book, *Verdun*, through these photographs and writings explores the role of displacement in the city, transitional architectures, tectonics, and layering within the city in the generation of atmospheres in urban contexts. While I argue in the book that these elements are qualities of atmospheres, I also suggest—similar to Cadwell—that these elements when experienced
through movement across a duration of time are responsible for architectural narratives. ⁹

While essay writing is used as a technique to investigate qualities of architectural and spatial elements that may contribute to the atmospheres, poetic writing relates the unfolding narrative. This narrative reveals itself as one moves through the sequence of spaces, gathering associations and sensations arising from perception while displacing and across a duration of time.

This embodied experience and the descriptions of the space—like the reading of a piece of literature—is influenced by personal associations beyond what is readily physical. Yet, architecture does have this affect: triggering actions or observations that send our imaginations to fill in the gaps or make new connections; so, it encounters us (or we it) through the senses and the body, but at the same time through our imagination; here, architecture becomes linguistic—perhaps poetry, narrative, or a poetic image with the structure of language.

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⁹ Cadwell, Mike. *Strange Details*, p.41
**Curator: the Selector, the Alternator, the Narrator— influencing atmospheres**

In the second book, I deliberately switched from being the flâneur as a passive observer to that of a curator who intentionally selects instances of the city and frames associations and writings to establish a specific context for a specific narrative.\(^{10}\) While in the first book on the Verdun Metro Station, the approach started with observations and photographs while moving through linked spaces in a single architecture and later reflecting on that experience, the research for the second book began from observations and photographs of atmospheres throughout the entire city. Poems associated with the experiences of these atmospheres led to the altering and augmentation of the photographs to align with feelings that arose during the encounters with atmospheres.

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\(^{10}\) White, Edmund. *The Flaneur: A Stroll through the Paradoxes of Paris.*

Bloomsbury, 2016, p.43
Fig. 3 Diagram of the curator at center and “narratives” focused

Photographs inspire poems that then inspire alterations to the photograph. The manipulation of photographs adds a graphic and imaginary quality missing from the case-study based *Verdun*. Pieces are removed, collaged, and new forms are drawn into the photographs. Thus, the written and the graphic together frame the story of the space. A third element, an inquiry or appeal to an architectural discourse, arises from the process of alteration and poetic/narrative thinking. Through this process a second book emerged titled *Undetermined Spaces*.

*Undetermined Spaces* refers to the spaces that surface in the urban environment between buildings and often in a space that would seem unusable and generally overlooked. Despite (or because of) this, these spaces are not thought of as vacant lots that could be determined as some future building site.
I believe that they are the byproducts of the city and not thought about often. Eluding definition, they are up for interpretation. This possibility for misunderstandings as well as new narratives, drew my attention. On top of this, these unique spaces are revealed as sites of atmospheres specific to urban environments.

The preface to the second book expands on what is meant by curator in the following passage:

“All curation is an individual history—that of the curator’s. Just the same, every book is the library of the author who wrote it. Every novel, too, is the history according to the author. Finding how that history is framed and recognizing the allusions to the author’s own library is the task of the reader.” – (Undetermined Spaces, the work of the author)

The curator is similar to an author: both are involved in the framing of narratives, and both their works are incomplete until they are read by an audience. This holds true for the architect as well, whose built-forms are incomplete until they are inhabited.

“Perhaps a dutiful framer incorporates associations and memories alive in the public imagination, for it is ultimately the romance of the framed work and the audience that creates the experience—better that they have
more in common than less: a dialogue, a discussion, varied perspectives
on past experiences, various outlooks on the future.” – (Undetermined
Spaces, the work of the author)

Framing arises as a way to consider relationships between context and
narratives and the work produced.

The second section of the book deals with the current role of language as
metaphors and narratives in the everyday experience of architecture in the city.
Here, I suggest narrative is the common way to reflect on experience, yet
architecture is often described objectively in technical and analytic language
that doesn’t relate to the experience of spaces from the perspective of the
human body or perception.

In the final sections, context in the city is described as existing at multiple
scales and durations.

“Consider displacement in the city as a passage: entry, path, and goal.
Entry relates to both a beginning and a continuation. A beginning
because one is entering a new space, and a continuation because the
space is new and thus differentiated by something before it.”
(Undetermined Spaces, the work of the author)
**Application of the Methods**

Starting from the aim to understand atmospheres in the city, my thesis explores a variety of approaches mixing writing, photography, and graphics—in both the layouts of the books themselves as well as in the altering of photographs. As observations accumulated into relatable concepts, I further explored their relevance through essay writing. In each book the essay titles there-in became recognizable as drivers or qualities of atmospheres in the city.

Meanwhile, the process suggested that writing could be used to describe experiences of real and imagined places. As the method developed from a process that began by observation in the role of flâneur, into alteration and framing of contexts as the curator, the natural progression would be to move into the role of architect imagining new narratives and designing new atmospheres for the embodied experience of the public.
CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction: The Experience of Atmospheres

“I enter a building, see a room, and in a fraction of a second, I have this feeling about it… We perceive atmosphere through our emotional sensibility—a form of perception that works incredibly quickly, and which we humans evidently need to help us survive”.

—Peter Zumthor

Considering architecture as both an intellectual and physical experience is an area of research undertaken in the philosophical school of phenomenology. Phenomenology, which deals with the direct human experience, moves past the Cartesian mind and body dichotomy, and instead

suggests at its foundation that the two are indivisible. Further, physiological and psychological processes influence one another—or more precisely—are working together at all times. The channels through which the body and mind are interconnected are the five basic senses as well as perceptions of other sense-feelings such as duration. When looking at architecture as designed spaces attuned for human experience, phenomenologists investigate qualities of what are termed atmospheres.

Atmospheres affect our interpretation through the body—of actually being in the architectural space—and affect our mood and disposition. In fact, the term ‘atmosphere’ as used phenomenologically is very similar to the way the word is commonly used to relate spatial experiences—such as, candles on the


table at the fancy restaurant added to the romantic atmosphere of the dinner.\textsuperscript{14} In this case, the experience of the space is being modulated through the soft light cast by a candle; an intimate space is created within the limits of the candle’s luminance.

This atmosphere can be expressed through narrative—our common way of sharing stories of our experiences (Perez-Gomez 197). While most of our embodied experiences may still allude to scientific language, metaphors provide expressive possibilities for relating the effect of a space. With the physiological and psychological perceiving occurring in tandem, metaphoric language is well-suited to explore and express our relationship to architectural space. The multi-sensory faculties and personal associations influence one another cyclically.

\textsuperscript{14} Pérez-Gómez, Alberto. \textit{Attunement: Architectural Meaning after the Crisis of Modern Science}. The MIT Press, 2016, p.15
Perception

The Embodied Experience

What is perceiving—or from what cognitive faculty—is one perceiving when they are experiencing architectural atmospheres? In *Meditations on First Philosophy*, Descartes is clear that there exists a mind that is capable of thinking, and in thinking is aware that the body is not thinking. Descartes’s dualistic view arises from the philosophical premise of the possibility of distinction—that things can be separate—and from this concept, the desire to prove that the mind could exist without the body. Such qualities of the body being “by nature always divisible, and the mind… indivisible,” support the aim of this meditation to claim that a soul exists despite being immeasurable and indistinct.¹⁵

Through thought exercises drawing conclusions from premises, Descartes arrives at a theory of a mind-body dualism. This claim suggests that thought can be affirmed as occurring in a mind that can think regardless of whether a body is present. Descartes, addressing perception and the experience of senses, arrives at the conclusion that the corporeal information is

available to be interpreted by our imagination, but remains separate and in
doubt.\textsuperscript{16} From this line of reasoning, there could be no affirmation for the body’s
role in cognition.\textsuperscript{17}

While this theory continues to pervade in the sciences and across fields
in the humanities concerned with human cognition, studies in phenomenology
contradict this theory and move beyond the dualism with the theory of the
embodied experience. The notion of an embodied experience is central to the
possibility of perceiving architectural atmospheres. Thinkers like Merleau-Ponty
take-on the theory of mind-body dualism through a direct investigation of
experience and perception. First, Merleau-Ponty problematizes Descartes’s
notion of, “perceiving myself surrounded by my body,” by considering the
experience and condition of supposing such an idea. To contradict the mind as
separate from the body, the question is asked, “Would I know that I am caught
up and situated in the world, if I were truly caught up and situated in it?”\textsuperscript{18}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{16} Rene Descartes, \textit{Meditations on First Philosophy}, p.26
\end{flushright}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{17} Merleau-Ponty, Maurice, and Colin Smith. \textit{Phenomenology of Perception},
p.231
\end{flushright}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{18} Merleau-Ponty, Maurice, and Colin Smith. \textit{Phenomenology of Perception}, p.37
\end{flushright}
Posing this question, Merleau-Ponty suggests a distinction between modes of experience. Being, “caught up and situated in the world,” is what is considered the embodied experience; the position of mentation from which Descartes poses his dualism is a mode of reflection.\footnote{Merleau-Ponty, Maurice, and Colin Smith, p.X}

Merleau-Ponty further explains that such an experience of being truly situated in the world and reflecting on the world are different positions. Further, Merleau-Ponty questions the efficacy and supremacy of the reflective experience over the experiencing itself. For him, reflection is a kind of mentation that, “must elucidate the unreflective view which it supersedes”. In critiquing reflection, he suggests that for reflection to, “justify itself… as progress towards the truth,” it needs to demonstrate how the “naïve view of the world is included and transcended by the sophisticated one”. The ‘I’ that is capable of reflecting is not present as something separate upon that which it is reflecting upon and cannot “recognize (itself) in this embodied,” experience.\footnote{Merleau-Ponty, Maurice, and Colin Smith. Phenomenology of Perception, p.247}
This contradiction of an ‘I’ capable of reflecting upon experience and a separate embodied ‘I’, pushes Merleau-Ponty to suggest that the embodied experience is an undifferentiated cognition.\textsuperscript{21} This produces the model of a thinking-body and a cyclical relationship between perception and thoughts.

Reflecting on the world is separate from being in the world while the embodied experience is the physiological and psychological intelligence perceiving “the schema of intersensory relations” that compose “the natural world”.\textsuperscript{22}

\textbf{Atmospheric Perception}

Perception is the chief means by which architectural atmospheres are interpreted in an embodied experience. Then, to understand the relationship between human experience and architectural space, it is necessary to probe first the definitions surrounding perception and unlock the role of perception in the embodied experience.

\textsuperscript{21} Merleau-Ponty, Maurice, and Colin Smith, p.247

\textsuperscript{22} Merleau-Ponty, Maurice, and Colin Smith., p.381
Perception is used colloquially to describe one’s ability to ‘read between the lines’ and intuit an esoteric meaning in a statement or in the phrase, ‘a keen perception’ refers to the acuteness and harmony of one’s senses. In both instances perception is understood to be a presence of mind actively interpreting. Merleau-Ponty explores the boundaries of perception in the work *Phenomenology of Perception*. His work on the topic expands upon the interconnection and dissonance between our senses, awareness, and cognition. Due to the entanglement of the five senses and the associations they produce, Merleau-Ponty suggests that perception during the embodied experience is a multi-sensory process.23

The idea of a multi-sensory process that extends beyond the standard five senses is further elucidated in the writing of architect and phenomenologist Juhani Pallasmaa. For Pallasmaa, there is “an atmospheric perception” that includes, “sensations of orientation, gravity, balance, stability, motion, duration,

continuity, scale and illumination”.

Important to Pallasmaa’s assertion of atmospheric perception is that “it is perceived in a diffuse, peripheral and unconscious manner rather than through precise, focused and conscious observation”. This claim reinforces the distinction between the embodied experience of architecture and reflecting on architecture.

The distinction between the embodied experience and the reflective experience is key to appreciating spaces in the moment. In fact, buildings that have achieved fame and notoriety may be difficult to experience in the present. Knowing the architectural importance and details or qualities of a famous building may inhibit one from an embodied experience; instead, one is drawn to analyze a building as an object: a piece of art, history, a museum, or some other thing. Considering elements of architecture separate from their effect would be the condition of an experience in reflection or analysis rather than an embodied experience. As a parallel one could imagine watching a magician to discover their secrets; this removes the viewer from the awe arising from the

24 Pallasmaa, Juhani. Space, place and atmosphere. Emotion and peripheral perception in architectural experience, p.19

25 Pallasmaa, Juhani, p.23
performance. Still, one can appreciate elements as generating atmospheres of architecture—notable both in the moment and in reflection—as the atmospheres arise and we consider them in the present. Rather, atmospheres are an experience of space unfolding through emotions and associations in time with the duration of our presence.

The attempts of phenomenologists to expose this division and elucidate the non-analytic interpretation of space during the embodied experience provides the foundation for architects to consider not only the elements of a building, but the significance of those elements. This position foments a number of questions for the architect that are contrary to the practice of reducing buildings through analysis. Rather, architects’ awareness of the atmospheric perception suggested by Pallasmaa should push the focus to the questions, “what elements trigger associations that shape the human experience in the space,” and “what is being perceived that produces this effect?”

The Linguistic Dimension of Architecture

Associations and Memory

Although perception is related to our experience of things in our present moment, our understanding and cognition occurs over time. This act of
“experiencing implies duration” and perception is fused with memory and imagination according to Pallasmaa.26 The interrelation of memory and imagination and the influence of perception problematizes the general and collectively held ideas of memory—the recalling of past experiences as a series of images in the mind’s eye triggering some sense recollections. On the other hand, this fusion highlights the multi-faceted characteristics already present in the understanding of memory that can be acknowledged.

The idea of a deliberate progression of a sequence of frames constituting memory comes out of a conscious reflection on past events. Meanwhile, remembering also occurs unconsciously, reflexively, as recognition such as understanding that a doorknob functions to open a door—even if the size, shape, or material is unfamiliar. Rather than memory as a sequence of events, memory is understood as a web of associations in the form of emotions, symbols, sense-reactions, and abstracted simulations of causal sequences of events (imagining an archetypical door swinging open).27


27 Merleau-Ponty, Maurice, and Colin Smith. *Phenomenology of Perception*, p.18
Thus, it would seem perception triggers associations and is not bound to the present empirical information. In fact, Merleau-Ponty identifies things are given additional significance by previous experience. As a simple example, if one is to say they, “have before (them) a red patch, the meaning of the word patch is provided by previous experiences,” that inform the appropriate use of the word.\textsuperscript{28}

Merleau-Ponty further investigates the multi-faceted relationship between what is perceived and what is concluded through associations. He recognizes that this interplay distorts the linear paradigm of memory. As an example of perception’s influence on memory, he describes an approaching ship that has run aground. The top deck of the ship cannot be seen, but the recognition of the ship suggests an association that completes the image of a ship. This is similar to seeing storm clouds and concluding that a storm is brewing. There is an empirically perceived object triggering associations.\textsuperscript{29}

This suggests that which is given or remembered are primarily linked. If a smell reminds us of grandma’s cookies, do we also see the cookie and

\textsuperscript{28} Merleau-Ponty, Maurice, and Colin Smith., p.14

\textsuperscript{29} Merleau-Ponty, Maurice, and Colin Smith, p.17
perhaps abstract images or elements of the kitchen—and grandma—and other associated sounds, sights, tastes, an emotion of the simplicity of youth, etc.?

**Narratives and Metaphors**

The interpretation of our embodied experience of what is given is considered as a combination of our multi-sensory perception as well the associations tied to our previous experiences with that which is in our presence. While such amalgamation may seem dense as an understanding of experience, this process is evident in our creation and interpretation of narratives.

Narratives are the common way in which one describes their experience. Words, phrases, metaphors, and sounds as well as their absence build-up a poetic-image in the imagination of the person hearing or reading the narrative. As our eyes move across the phrases of a poem, we can imagine the experience and setting of the poem. Just as Merleau-Ponty identifies that we can see storm clouds and conclude a storm is brewing, the selection of specific phrases can evoke associations beyond that which is given in the text. Such that, the smell of cherry blossoms produces the image of a cherry tree in bloom.

For the reason that narrative is used to relate our experiences, Perez-Gomez suggests that writing could be used to generate architectural
atmospheres.\textsuperscript{30} In his writings on atmospheres in \textit{Attunement} he reinforces this idea claiming, “a true poetic work is not a shadow or reduction of reality... but the opposite: a depiction of reality”. He goes further stating that a poetic work, “enlarges our existential horizon by augmenting it with meanings intrinsic to its own universe of discourse”.\textsuperscript{31}

Poetic and narrative language in this way may be a more accurate model for the imagination. Rather, the imagination may be more linguistic than visual.\textsuperscript{32} This is reinforced by again reflecting on the amalgamation occurring during our embodied experience. Substantiating this is the existence of metaphor which Perez-Gomez claims orient us and derives from the embodied experience.\textsuperscript{33}

The significance of language as a means of orienting ourselves in the world is also taken up by Merleau-Ponty who claims that there could be no

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\textsuperscript{30} Pérez-Gómez, Alberto. \textit{Attunement: Architectural Meaning after the Crisis of Modern Science}, p.210
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\textsuperscript{31} Pérez-Gómez, Alberto, p.189
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\textsuperscript{32} Pérez-Gómez, Alberto, p.199
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\textsuperscript{33} Pérez-Gómez, Alberto, p.195
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significance to a literal reading of reality through the senses exclusively. This would amount to knowing how to read letters and make the sounds of words without a knowledge of their significance. To this end he states, “...in reality all things are concretions (ideas forming around a solid base) of a setting, and any explicit perception of a thing survives in virtue of a previous communication with a certain atmosphere.”

With narrative as the compulsory means of retelling experiences and the suggestion that the model of the imagination is acting similarly when we read as when we are perceiving in an embodied experience suggests the possibility of new narratives for the generation of new places in an act of reversing the process. Meanwhile, this is commonly done—the imagining and transportation of readers into new settings—by authors. As we read, we can expand upon the text and imagine—subjectively based on our own associations to the content—an entire world surrounding the words.

The fantastic cities of Italo Calvino's writing and the impossible settings of the short fictions of Borges inspire the imagination. While these writers

34 Merleau-Ponty, Maurice, and Colin Smith. *Phenomenology of Perception*, p.399
descriptions build-up the images of architecture that can only be imagined, architects like John Hejduk and Lebbeus Woods supplement the intentions of their architectural works through narratives in the form of creatively written programs and contextualizing narratives. Could writing function to explore the possible embodied experiences of an unbuilt architecture?

Vectors and Paths of Movement

Our personal narratives—the plots of our experience—shape the paths and durations of our paths. Movement is the base condition of our experience between buildings. Whether moving to or through a location, the condition remains: the human body perceives architecture in the city while in motion, and hence it is a temporal experience. This temporality can be thought of in various instants of duration amid which moments distinguish themselves. Bachelard clarifies this condition saying that, “were we to complete an analysis of an action which has duration, we would see that this analysis is expressed in separate phrases centered on instants of a very precise singularity.”\(^{35}\)

\(^{35}\) Bachelard, Gaston. The dialectic of duration. United Kingdom, Clinamen, 2000, p.29
I interpret the notion “of instants of a very precise singularity” as moments of heightened perception. These moments are embodied experiences of existential delight that occur amid the blur of everyday life. As movement through the city and transportation are integrated into the city, considering the architectural interventions as moments across a duration could be used to reshape these banal elements and provide for meaningful experiences in the urban context. Relating movement and duration back to our perception, Bachelard states, “…what fragments thought is not the handling of solids in space but a dispersion of decisions in time”. In this, Bachelard and Merleau-Ponty agree; the significance of experience is not entirely encapsulated within that which is given, but the accumulation of associations and conclusions that arise from perception across time.

36 Bachelard, Gaston. The dialectic of duration. United Kingdom, Clinamen, 2000, p.29
CHAPTER 4

APPROACH

Narrative Analysis

Having moved through the city of Montreal with the aim of photographing and describing the qualities of atmospheres in the urban context—as exhibited in the two books I developed from my findings, creative writings, and photographs—I selected three locations for developing a project. The sites were selected for their qualities as undetermined spaces. Unlike a vacant lot that by being termed as such loses its poetic reading, undetermined spaces have idiosyncratic characteristics and qualities that foment unique atmospheres to be encountered within the urban context.

To uncover the impact of these undetermined spaces, I explored my relationship to their layers of meaning and associations. The process applied two words to each site that described this existent atmospheric quality. To further probe the intention behind the descriptive word, additional words associated with it are written to build-up its meaning particular to the description—rather than as a general meaning. This web of associations enhances the definition of the original descriptive word, and exposes its poetic potential to describe the experience.
Site Writings: Essence

1.1

Agora:

Some multi-level space suited to moods

Podiums, stairs, bleachers

The noise of discourse

Shadows on geometries

A disorder/discourse

Passing thoughts

Unadorned by ornament

Expression of the spirit of the civic

For all

An approximation of natural government

A whirlpool/dervish

1.2
Barren:

Something lost; removed; laid waste
Dust and sky
Parts non-existent
Desertified
To pass on earth no longer earth
Nothing sacred and nothing profane
Abyss
Haze, smoke, eternal
Despair/ duress
Unorientable/ illusory

2.1

Wrinkle:

A crease
A memory folded in skin
Unlike the violence of a scar
An accepted fold
A fissure uneven on a surface
The distortion of a true surface

Age/ depth

A mark of distinction

A show of times passage

Dignified, telling, a mark of movements past

2.2

Channel:

Along some banks, apart or parallel

Stories travelling

Shared air

The means of delivery

The chasm that connects while dividing

Distance

Flow

Unearthed, dug, divided, linear

A mark

A place of crossing

Gouge

A message relayer

A distance between places
3.1

Backside:

Faceless

Unrevealed/ inconsequential

Mysterious

An alley for all fronts

In absence of direction though it is suggested

Secondary

Private/ considered insignificant

Not-facing, undirected, open

Secret, primal, unruled

3.2
Carousel:

A wheel of space

All around the periphery and never the center

A movement

A twirl, a spin, a dance

The dervish or their dance or the flow of robes

Uncertain

Up, and down, and around

Circling an axis

No wrong entry/ a circular threshold

A spinning

Rotation/ Redirection

Moving beyond/ no stable place
Narrative Site Interpretation

Introduction

As a narrative approach to understanding the site, I made a visit moving through the three locations. Writings were done after the visit by reflecting on the experience. This method sought to expose the qualities that affected my experience across the duration of the site.

Attributes: Context + Materials

Looking at the three sites several attributes appear universal.

The buildings are primarily brick/masonry constructions. Many of them are between four and five stories. Along Esplanade, flanking Zone 2, the buildings
before the corner are residential (at the corner is a shipping company) and the facades are crimson brick. Aside from red/crimson bricks, there are sandstone brick facades as well. These are often paired with an ornamental brickwork of brown or red and highlights around windows (either steel or wood)—a forest green, a hunter green, a deep green; I believe these are Italian influenced; although, there are a few 1910-1930 buildings in the area with this sandstone and brown brick combination and the green details, and they are the utility or civic buildings in the area and one is an old fire station or police headquarters. From Zone 1 one can see the twin steeples poke through the skyline: a copper greened with time. Despite the snowfall across the lengthy winter in Montreal, in this neighborhood the roofs appear flat.

The scale of the facades depends on what is entering or exiting.

Typologies

There are so many variations on loading docks that they may be a considered a typology.

Surrounding Zone 2:

To the north for SAQ a single dock with a single concrete wall and suspended roof, to the NW across the street a large cavity in the façade with a
ramped drive and stations for two large trucks (but not semis), along the street at the south approach is a continuous wall of blue garage doors for coming and going vans.

Surrounding Zone 3:

To the south along the railroad the loading dock could accommodate three or four semi-trucks, but today I saw an open rolling door and someone unloading their sedan. Along the south boundary is one of those Italian-like masonry buildings and currently a brasserie with a loading dock suitable for two box trucks to station perpendicular to one another.

ZONE 3

Location: 6820 rue Marconi
Environment: edge of industrial and residential mixed-office; bordered by railroad tracks
Features: scattered deciduous trees, concrete barriers, condemned auto-garage
Challenges: off-route; truck cul-de-sac; difficult continuity
Opportunities: a link/gate/or center;

Fig.5 Zone 3 image, location, and information
Paths

In the snow, the vectors of movement intersecting the sites are visible clearly. The Zone 3 crossings are determined by entrances and exits, and there is an odd number of these. For this reason—a misunderstanding or reassessment of the paths in-between one’s entry and exit—there is a unique path through the center. So, the paths intersect within the site like the Cyrillic ‘zivete’.

ZONE 2

Location: 6559 Avenue de l’Esplanade
Environment: residential mixed-office; sequential to SITE 1;
Features: deciduous trees; level changes retained by concrete walls; ditch along north
Challenges: displacing parking area; large and necessary ditch; access
Opportunities: sequential experience; old trees; ditch; concrete bordered landscapes

Fig.6 Zone 2 image, location, and information

The Zone 2 crossing is a dog path. It is the kind of path with a logic of access. There are some steps from the sidewalk off Esplanade to access Zone
2 that is at the height of my waist just below my ribs. Normally, these stairs would not allure, but like a dog moving in a direct line, these stairs provide the quickest access for chasing the horizon. Next, the path continues along the ditch-edge amid the trees, and as the ditch-slope meets the level ascended by the stairs, a joyful path between the trees emerges. A shortcut descends and ascends the ditch here. Cars parked at the ditch-edge often inhibit a view to this, and the dog-minded walker will miss the wooded path; instead taking another step-up at the site’s southwestern boundary where the body brushes against a corroding concrete wall. The wall is taller than one can reach; it hides the path around the corner. The step is taken, and a narrow path of only a few paces closes the portal—that hinge that is neither Zone 2 nor Zone 1.

Fig.7 Zone 1 image, location, and information
It is a jagged entry into Zone 1 this way. The body rotates around, sees the trees, rotates to face the new horizon, and sees the bareness. The directional queue of the ditch and the colonnade of poplars interlocked by skyward branches spurred the dog-minded travel through Zone 2. Zone 1 is vacant of queues. Its vacancy affects travel. (Perhaps this is what keeps it from linking with the established pedestrian trail). It suggests the void, and despite being an empty and undetermined site in the urban environment, it is not asking to be developed or intersected. For paths, there are many and none, and this is particularly uncanny considering the possibility for intersections along its minor axis and especially along its major axis (NW/SE) with the potential of linking to the existing (and well-traveled) Green Line Pedestrian Path just across the two-lane Rue Beaubien Ouest.

So, each transit across Zone1 is either absent-minded wandering or an efficient vector. No path is repeatable, and the horizon always remains at a distance as there are no landmarks. However, there are boundaries—concrete blocks—that further deter travel. And this is a contradiction or brings into question boundaries generally. Here, there is nothing beyond the boundary but the vacant. Is the boundary instead the limit of the activated space? The barren quality disrupts the potential of the path of travel along the major axis. Any path
is measurable across Zone 1 by duration as one sights the Green Line on the horizon; it is entered arbitrarily and crossed carelessly.

**Notations**

The first image is a composite sun study that illustrates the depth of the shadows where they accumulate throughout the year. Zone 1, with the far right three squares is mostly in the shadows afternoon during the colder third of the year; Zone 2 with the rotated square is receive year-round sun as the buildings to the west are set back. Not shown are the trees that cover this portion of the site, providing more possibilities for dappled light adjusting with the leaves on the trees. Zone 3, like Zone 2 is some distance from the taller four to six-story office buildings surrounding it, allowing for steady, undisrupted sunlight.

Further investigations and notations of site conditions were continued through overlaying 30m x 30m Frames along the path of the site. The Frames are useful for thinking of movement through the spaces rhythmically—as Tschumi does in the Manhattan Transcripts—and also to consider these spaces as atmospheres that are uniquely perceived by the narrative lens of the persona actively intersecting them. While the Frames
provide a spatiotemporal order for sequencing these encounters, they meanwhile provide a straightforward graphic quality that uses positive and negative space to generate emotional readings in perspective, plan, and abstraction. This graphic investigation joins with The Narrative Site Interpretation to provide a personal retelling of the site and qualities as perceived by a viewer (myself) moving across the sites from Zone 3 to Zone 1.

Fig.8 Study of the shadows throughout the year
Fig.9 Photographs in frames show industrial context
Fig.10 Existing paths, vegetation, and building facades
CHAPTER 5

PRECEDENTS

Introduction

As one moves through the city, the experience of architecture is dynamic, and this experience is commonly retold and expressed through words. Architect or not, a person moving through the city can describe their experience telling their narrative. Amid buildings and at the level of the street, an analytic understanding of their surroundings is unlikely. Rather, they can tell of the wind between two buildings, the reflection of the afternoon-sun in the rose-tinted glazing, and the cold granite steps bordered with the scent of soggy rosebuds on a foggy morning.

For precedent studies, I looked to architects who were curious about the role of human experience within an imagined space in the design of that space. I first looked at The Manhattan Transcripts where Bernard Tschumi explores the impact of narrative to incite movement through space and how taken together movement and narrative shape the way a space is imagined. Tschumi takes this literally and “shapes” the architecture around the space imagined through the movement-narrative experience.

Tschumi addresses the ability of our experience to shape our surroundings to the abstract associations of our mental landscape, but to
understand the ways that architecture can be crafted to shape our experience, I read into the qualities of atmosphere that Peter Zumthor articulates. These qualities are given a narrative description from a deliberate investigation by Zumthor as he looks into what it is about buildings that “moves” him.37

Bernard Tschumi

Manhattan Transcripts

The Manhattan Transcripts is a theoretical project that through a collection of drawings and texts investigates the links between narrative, movement, and designed space. The project was developed over the course of five years, and is the work of architect and educator, Bernard Tschumi.38 It aimed at bringing together writing, movement, and design, a unique process and a set of rules were developed to pursue the investigation.


First, the narrative plot is given in a brief statement in the space of less than a half page presented in white letters on a black background recalling the intermittent contextual writing on the screen of a silent film. The same plot is repeated across the five urban environments; a murder takes place, and the murderer must distance themselves from the crime. In choosing a plot at the extremes of human experience, Tschumi can expose the link between the narrative and the movement it produces. Additionally, the personal narrative of individuals affects their perception of designed space.\(^\text{39}\)

Tschumi further explores the relationship between the narrative-charged movement and urban space through a grid of related drawings. While the layout of the grids develops across the five transcripts, generally three representations are displayed in the frames: a perspective or elevation drawing, a section or plan drawing, and in a third frame a photograph depicts an ‘event’—some action that is taking place in the urban space.\(^\text{40}\) The hand-drawings are abstractions and not only depict architectural and urban forms, but also show the movement of people (or characters). To include movement

\(^\text{39}\) Tschumi, Bernard, p.11

\(^\text{40}\) Tschumi, Bernard, p.XXI
and its possible duration within a frame of the urban environment, Tschumi adopted movement notations used by dance choreographers, military strategists, as well as sports coaches.

The use of narrative activates a path of movement through different environments in the city, and these environments become charged by a temporal event (set in motion by the author). From this, the vectors of movement in open-space are used to carve and trace new paths and forms in an otherwise neutral site. Tschumi demonstrates the possibility for narrative to be used as a trigger to propel a movement and event-specific reading of space for the creation of new forms for the urban-environment.

The Manhattan Transcripts expose the city as a neutral stage that acquires meaning temporally through personal narratives that trigger personal perceptions. These human narratives and perceptions unfold across space and through duration by movement. All the while, other events occur concurrently further influencing the interpretation of space. This ever-changing interpretation of space suggests the possibility for new narratives for the urban environment to arise from the human actions and events that take place. Rather

41 Tschumi, Bernard, p.XXVI
than scripting and limiting the intended use of a space, designers should consider the generation of new spatial narratives through the movement and events triggered by human-narratives (how the site is used).

Tschumi’s project takes narratives, urban environments, and movement as variables that combine to reveal ‘events’ and possibilities for new architectural forms in the city that reflect these variables as their inputs. Arranging these variables into various equations and combinations became a method that Tschumi elevated into actual architectural project as well as large urban designs.

Parc la Villette

Immediately following the five-year process of the Manhattan Transcripts, Tschumi entered a competition for the Parc la Villette in Paris and won. Applying the methods of the Transcripts and philosophical insights from deconstructionist Derrida, the theoretical foundation of the project considered the site location as being within the *chora*—a term with a dual meaning.\(^\text{42}\) First, it is a place beyond the edge of the city, and it is further interpreted as a place

where ideas originate before they are given form. Using this concept—as the site was very much outside the limits of Paris proper, Tschumi’s drawings from The Manhattan Transcripts—strange conglomerations of ramps, bridges, staircases, and shelters, were placed along an existing grid to suggest movement through the 137-acre parc and provide locations for ‘events’—spontaneous and unprogrammed actions—to take place. The Follies are placed along a historical grid, yet new narratives for the city are explored.

The follies remain as cues to organization and wayfinding for park visitors. Some house restaurants, information centers, and other functions associated with the park’s needs though they are primarily unprogrammed spaces—tabula rasa awaiting the influence of human interaction to nourish their meaning.

"...at times appears to be neither this nor that, at times both this and that," wavering "between the logic of exclusion and that of participation." - Derrida

Derrida

The projects of Tschumi provide an approach to designing in the city through mapping movement. Narrative is used to generate this movement and to establish the attitude of the person moving—suggesting how they may view their experience and interpret the urban setting. This interpretation suggested by our attitude and narrative situation is part of the embodied experience; it is how we experience the world when we are not thinking about how we experience it. Tschumi’s projects work through the possibility of movement to shape the urban architecture and generate new forms that suggest new narratives. However, the projects do not explore the effect of this architecture. In a reversal of the roles—to explore the effect of space upon human movement and attitude—I looked at the work on atmospheres by Peter Zumthor.

**Zumthor on Atmospheres**

Zumthor’s work focuses on the experience of being in spaces and investigates deeply the effects within architecture that achieve atmospheres. Focusing on the qualities of atmosphere that affect human experience, Zumthor’s practice seeks to design for atmospheres. This approach to design is present in the attention to the interior spaces and the elements of architecture that people interact with—as opposed to the design of a monumental form with a clever façade, Zumthor’s interest lay in the dimensions of an entry doorway.
and the shape and material of its doorknob as well as how the glass used in the transom above the door filters into the foyer.\textsuperscript{44}

Zumthor’s investigations into the qualities of atmosphere are present across his oeuvre, yet the main exhibition of his findings in the craft of atmospheres comes from his lecture-turned-book, \textit{Atmospheres: Architectural Environments-Surrounding Objects}. The book begins with the question that drove Zumthor to investigate atmospheres. He begins by stating, “Quality architecture to me is when a building moves me,” and then quickly turns this into the question, “What on earth is it that moves me? How can I get it into my own work?”\textsuperscript{45}

Through writings paired with photographs of spaces, Zumthor discusses nine major concepts and three secondary concepts for designing towards the possibility of architectural atmospheres. As much as the concepts expose methods for producing architecture conducive for atmospheres, as a precedent, 

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\textsuperscript{44} Zumthor, Peter. \textit{Atmospheres: Architectural Environments - Surrounding Objects}. Birkhäuser, 2006, p. 51
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\textsuperscript{45} Zumthor, Peter, p.10
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I was interested in the way that Zumthor undertook the investigation and exhibition of these qualities as a study.

As opposed to only showing traditional architectural drawings, Zumthor composes a narrative through writing to reflect on the experience of atmospheres to explain the qualities from which they arise. Additionally, photographs offer vignettes that further illustrate the concepts. Photographs can capture the exact moment and viewpoint of the photographer’s perception. Perhaps the photograph’s reference to time and light and writing’s building-up of ideas and associations is akin to the multi-sensorial experience of atmospheres and thus apropos for the explanation of the component qualities that make up the concepts he presents.

Zumthor presents twelve concepts that elucidate the effects, experience, and qualities for the design of architectural atmospheres; often through one of these three approaches an understanding of the other two arises. Below is a summary of these twelve concepts defined as terms.

**The Body of Architecture:** the material presence of thing; architecture as a corpus; a collection of materials that come together as "a body that can touch me".
Material Compatibility: qualities appear differently in different contexts of other materials; "there are a thousand different possibilities in one material alone".

There is a relationship between materials’ proximity, type and weight.

The Sound of a Space: “That has to do with the shape peculiar to each room and with the surfaces of the materials they contain, and the way those materials have been applied”. Buildings produce a particular sound—it is the sound of their stillness.

The Temperature of a Space: There are warm materials and cold materials.

Temperature also evokes the association “to temper” as in the tuning of an atmosphere; a similar desire to Perez-Gomez’s attunement.46

Surrounding Objects: These are the “things people have around them that come together in a very caring, loving way, and that there’s this deep relationship.”

Between Composure and Seduction: Architecture is both spatial and temporal (not grasped in a single second)—this relates to movement; inducing a sense of a freedom of movement rather than directing people; "the gentler art of seduction, of getting people to let go, to saunter…—a way of bringing separate parts of the building together that they form their own attachments."… —these were spaces were you could stay there—that you were not just passing through…but then something would be drawing me round the corner—it was the way the light falls”; Consider evoking guidance, preparation, stimulation, the pleasant surprise, and relaxation.

Tension Between Interior and Exterior: The effects of thresholds, crossings, and the almost imperceptible transition between the inside and the outside—as well as facades—the inside that is revealed and the inside that is private—and also the opposite.
Levels of Intimacy: This "all has to do with proximity and distance" and is "more bodily than scales and dimensions". It relates to where the body is within the architecture and how the architecture acknowledges the scale of the human body. This does not have to do with the size of a building… intimacy is accomplished at all levels.

The Light on Things: The kinds of light include natural light, artificial light, and luminosity. First one is to address light as a mass “seeping in to hollow out the darkness”, and second to choose materials in the knowledge of the way they reflect.

Architecture as Surroundings: This is to have an architecture or built environment that is the background of an experience, that exists as a setting of a memory.

Coherence: "When the proof in the pudding is found in the eating". The architecture is to be usable and delightful as a place for people—not for someone to grasp the "cool form" you intended.
Form: Ultimately, when all these qualities are considered in the design, the architecture will result in a form unknown from the outset; if it is not beautiful, it must be beautiful. 47

Looking across Zumthor’s built projects, one can see how these concepts are applied and overlap. Such is the case when we look at the use of light to seduce movement through the Therme Vals project. All the while, that same light is entering through thin cracks in the roof plane that disrupt the perceived experience of interior and exterior space. It seems that these twelve qualities are combined to develop a unique, attuned atmosphere for the desired experience within architecture. To consider how concepts and qualities may overlap and interact within a space—at first imagined with the intention that they will be built—builds-up a poetic image influenced by the human experience rather than focusing on the appearance of the architecture’s geometry and form alone.

Although Zumthor provides qualities, he does not offer a direct method of applying these qualities. Perhaps in the case of the Therme Vals, where the parti is developed from imagining the site emerging from a collection of

47 Zumthor, Peter, p.21-73
boulders at the base of the mountain, the application of the concepts “between composure and seduction”, “the tension between interior and exterior”, and “the light on things” are selected and intertwined to evoke the atmosphere of a place that exists within geological time, carved from the mountainside.48

A Method: From Narratives to Frames to a Spatiotemporal Understanding

To begin the process of exploring architectural possibilities through narrative, five personas were selected: the Vagabond, the Toddler, the Train Chaser, the Flâneur, and the Commuter. These personas were selected to represent individuals who currently inhabit the neighborhood and would likely interact with the site.

For each persona four concepts are given: a season (environment), a feeling (emotion or mood), a sense (speed; effect), a dream (metaphor; wonder; projection; motive). The specific persona and affiliated concepts produced a fifth concept that suggest the overall relationship to the experience of the site that they encounter, such as association for the Flâneur and scale for the Toddler.

For the development of atmospheres, the personas were paired with qualities discussed by Zumthor in his book *Atmospheres: Architectural Environments, Surrounding Objects*. Qualities were selected for personas that fit their narrative as suggested by the concepts. Using two qualities such as, “the
tension between interior and exterior” and “material compatibility” in the narrative of the Vagabond, provides a focused investigation of the atmospheres through the narratives and frames.

The concepts situate the persona in a context of self and environment; a single word gives their condition in relation to their experience across the narrative; two qualities of atmosphere provide insights into their perceived experience. Ultimately, these conditions culminate in a written narrative—a plot-driven poem—of the persona’s experience through the architectural space. Through this process of fictions arises the possibility of an architecture.

Each narrative intersects and occurs within several or all seven frames overlayed on the site. The narratives provide the content to generate drawings/notations within those frames (expanded upon later). As with other forms of architectural representation, the notations and the narratives reinforce one another building-up in tandem a more complete understanding of the architectural space. The matrix of frames that relate to each narrative can be found in Appendix C.
The Vagabond: Affect

1. Material Compatibility

2. Tension between interior and Exterior

- Fall
- Reflection, indecisiveness
- Moments, and times of idleness
- Changes over time, invisible place-based histories

Parting—speed crossing—atmosphere of a thing beyond or out of reach or grey on the horizon. Peaceful, monk-like stroll; a ledge for the hand and a bench in the sun. Passing between shadows and noticing the light reflecting from the interior outward. A pause to reflect rather than to decide. And without the desired effect, to willingly open to the absurdity of the present—the place and the situation. A detour—no a diversion—arising from indecision.

Called to here; something familiar amidst the change. A place to stay, and beyond, a place to move-on. A pull to continue now with head-up. Thoughts of
tomorrow are the conversation for the discourse with memory. Passing these openings onto spaces of varying size at their rhythm.

(Shuffling. The warmth of autumn’s late sun. Leaves twirl in a dance across the street)

A series of trees beckons. A place to touch the warmth of a stone. “How long have you stood in the sun and in the weather?”

To pause again, to face the train tracks, and be crossed by the thin shadows of young trees in autumn’s late sun.

**The Toddler: Scale**

1. **Between Composure and Seduction**

2. **Levels of Intimacy**
   - Spring
   - Naivety, surprise, wonder
   - Sight vs. Play
Tension between desire/alure and play

In some new space. Spring. A wonderful place. It’s even bigger up close.

The first room—it isn’t really a room—it’s under a roof though. If my friends were here, we could disappear into so many hiding places—the shadows, the low ledges, or by leaning against the rough surface of the walls. It feels like outside still.

A hall continues. The light comes through small holes and where the walls don’t reach the roof. In the holes are small things: flowers, a blue figurine, a candle, a painted rock with a face. Some holes glow with sunlight and others are black. The wall’s dappled surface is splotched like a blanket left under a passing rain.

Down the hall to the right. We can see the flowers framed by the big opening. Along the way, I practice stepping over the strips of light. I look up to the ceiling and over to where they meet the walls—where the corners
should be and sometimes aren’t—I notice the light overlaps as it enters. Was it that way last time?

Instead of going out the large opening, we take a small doorway to a private kind of space. I climb onto a seat so I can look-out; I see other little terraces: some old people that are playing a game, big kids eating snacks together, and a few that are empty. Noises pass inside and it sounds like some people having fun, so I step down from my perch to glance through the door back into the hall. I don’t see anyone. I look at the wall; it’s the kind that doesn’t reach the ceiling, so I’m not sure if the doorway is really a doorway. I reach out and put my hand on the surface. I notice other openings in the wall. I’m puzzled, but I don’t mind.

A shadow passes overhead. It’s a cloud. Another shadow swoops past and lands in a tree. It’s a bird. I saw it. Then I notice something tall near the bird. Covered by green leaves, it’s revealed by the light it reflects. There are people in there.
I want to see the bird from that place. How I want to be up there. It must be some path off the grand hall, some path I haven’t seen—it’s possible; I didn’t know about this small space.

To the hall, along the columns, stepping over the stripes of the shadow and light, and there is a stair—and the light passes under the steps. I want to go up. The first landing is a dark place, and I can see the shadows of the leaves shaking. I think about the bird. Is it scared before it touches down on a branch?

I go up only the first two stairs. I return to the ground, and back up. The hall seems even more open now. I face the big opening. The flowers beyond seem to enter the hall, and at the same time, the columns from inside the hall seem to go free towards the beyond.
The Train Chaser: Effect

1. The Sound of a Space

2. The temperature of a space

• Summer

• Empowered, alive

• Speed, heat, adrenaline, smell, blurred periphery

Keeping pace with the train we accelerate to the west—beating, pounding—the body fully in each beat. Moving not to answer, “where does it go?”, but to proclaim that it moves; it is free. We drive toward an expanse of open territory, a wide horizon, a wind that does not dissipate amid the alleys and buildings of the city.

Our twin tracks diverge—hot dust—a sharp turn North. Now, to catch that other train—across the site!
Rather than moving towards the horizon, it is like pulling some net that brings everything to you. Movements are compulsory: a dash across the street, a lunge beyond a column, finding an unintended straight line—DASH! Shadow and light _flicker, flicker, flicker, flicker_—DASH! Passing under a gate and into a covered space. Quick feet striking rustle the floor—_pat-pat-clack-pat-pat_. The rhythm resonates the walkway. For an instant, the shade is refreshing. A distant whistle blows. Crisp dark shadows are crossed by sutures of light. The horizon is indiscernible—a glowing portal. A hand is placed on a column polished by a thousand hands pulling the horizon forward. STEP—STRIDE—LEAP—DROP—DASH!

Carving the city with a desire too personal to explain. Another four-hundred meters, another corner and another, a series of young trees—_one, two, three, four_—and beyond, a gap in the fence and the tracks.

**The Flâneur: Association**

1. The Body of Architecture

2. Surrounding Objects
   - Winter
- Openness, linking associations, between wonder and delight, novelty
- Present/Anchored
- A dream of the space

_Crunch, Crunch, Crunch, Crunch._ The snow is white, but not 2 centimeters beneath the surface it is blue. It’s the blue snow that looks like breath. It makes the shadows appear always a deep slate rather than black. The wonders of winter are not in its greys but in its blues.

A blue sky shines a bright sun against the snow reflecting a blue light into a dark space. I am still far away, but the light grips my attention. More light stripes the floor of the dark space. Above this I notice a balcony—covered—perhaps it is the major space of this place. For a moment I see myself there looking at me here amid the columns.

I hear the crunch of someone’s footsteps, the sounds of conversation; thinking of a place, a perspective, just standing here, I suddenly feel conspicuous. My movement is compulsory—\textit{crunch, crunch}\textemdash I step beside a column, a private space.
This column stretches upwards and is among one of many columns. They’re mounted on some big blocks; the blocks are painted with scattered glyphs and some hardy vines encircle a few. They are not spaced evenly.

I kind of space that in a fairer month would be like a garden here now is like a pile of fresh linens, featherbeds, and pillows heaped on a bare bed. And in the white-folds the blue light glows.

Here—crunch, crunch, crunch—no space is alone, yet they are individual. They are layered, their spatial aspects trickle from one into another like a cascading stream, and perhaps I am the stream. Small features—a ledge to sit, a lone column, a set of stairs, a block of stone—suggest these soft boundaries.

I’ve wandered like a balloon let free, carelessly floating, rerouted by invisible winds. Then, the crunching underfoot is gentler as the snow thins to whisps and then into well-trotted boards within the sheltered space I’d first glanced in distance. Glancing over my shoulder the bright blue glow frames this opening.
The tooled surface of the walls undulates in the periphery catching bits of light as I continue to stroll through the halls. Apertures and doorways of various size cut openings haphazardly to one side, and along the other the columns maintain a steady rhythm. It could be that the wind or the rain is carving channels through this place. But there is also a sense that these are not channels carved out of the space, but the very movements, gestures, and postures of the space. I believe that I found it is mid-dance, and I am just now hearing the music.

I catch sight of a large room, and I imagine dancers. I look out. Further ahead can be seen another column and a series of blocks spaced like a skipping stone captured frame by frame. A person walks by, and the stones seem long.

I approach and then pass these markers. Thin trees stand posed like skinny soldiers—bare of leaves, simply posts. They cast grey shadows that fall on the snow and upon the walls beyond suggesting sheltered paths that fade into winter’s tones. A few of these narrow passages circle one another creating a courtyard. I can’t seem to find the courtyard’s entrance until I fully stop and look for it. The low angle of the winter sun does not enter the courtyard but reflects blue light from the snow upon the stone walls.
The Commuters: Routine

1. The light on things

2. Architecture as Surroundings

   • Seasonless
   
   • Ennui, routine, hopeful
   
   • Between "somewhere else" and anticipation
   
   • Landmarks/Horizon

Crossing the city along routine paths, landmarks remain as they were; only shadows change from morning to evening and with each season. Commuting blurs the city into familiarity, and it becomes a landscape of duration.

Paths intertwine and do not intersect. Adjacent paths sight each other. It is a gallery of vignettes of the other choice. Morning sunlight is fragmented across the paths; in the late afternoon it enters wholesomely upon the west—blue, even light in winter and striped bands of orange and brown light in autumn.
In early and late hours, a decision twice daily to choose the path amid the forms, and a chance—a moment amid the blur of the routine—to see her. The place becomes the setting for the dream of that moment. Perhaps it will not be today, or this week or season—neither this evening nor tomorrow morning—but perhaps it will.

**Parti**

The paths of movement of the personas in the narratives were tracked through the frames, and from the plans drawn in frames, I directly interpreted the spaces on the site. The paths in site one are open and meandering with columns creating a rhythm, and architectural elements and level changes establish soft boundaries, at Zone 2 a covered multistory space offers an opportunity for finding spaces of various sizes for different events—the second level being appropriate for dance, music, or exhibitions. Zone 3 is a site that is passed through, and at its center a courtyard and exhibition space. The movement of commuters carves this courtyard at the center that is an opportunity. It becomes a peaceful center amid the movement traversing the site and a quiet public space.

Like a kind of matrix, the frames were scaled and overlayed across the site according to their context in the narrative. While moments amid experience
are flashes of frames, the story is one of a fluid movement. These paths and intersections generate and influence the parti.

Fig. 11 Narrative Paths through 30m x 30m frames
Program

Drawing inspiration from the earliest writings of the sites’ essences, the site visits, the narratives and their paths, as well as the influence of the precedents, a program developed calling for a new kind of public space in the city. The program suggests that both interior and exterior spaces be provided along an extension of an existing pedestrian path. This program would allow for the implementation of qualities of the atmospheres discovered in the city during my research, as well as designing for an architectural experience that occurs across a variety of possible durations. In this setting designs can relate to the context and associations can accumulate to unify the architectural project across the large urban site.

*The program calls for the design of cultural facilities across three sequential sites.*

*In turn, these three sites should become a single cultural location within the urban commons.*
The sites are located at the current terminus of the Green Line pedestrian path, and should consider extending the path and movement through the three sites.

The design will serve as a non-determinist, "open stage" for arts and events to happen. These democratic, cultural spaces will allow for creative activities including performing arts (such as: dance classes, music performances, theater, circus, etc.) visual arts and design exhibitions.

A mix of open and covered spaces should be included to allow activities to occur year-round.

Eighty percent of the site shall be available for unprogrammed, spontaneous events driven by anonymous actions.
CHAPTER 7

DESIGN DEVELOPMENT

Developing a Project

The design developed directly from the narratives. The paths of the personas were overlayed on the site establishing the organizing principles. Further, each narrative, framed by the 30m x 30m frames overlaid on the site, suggested various durations at different locations.

Before the inception of the program, the design of built-forms adopted narrative research into the site. The narratives were influenced by the writings of the key words and their associated meanings as well as my personal reflection on moving through the site. Thus, the narratives can tell a story as they too were propelled to move through the existing atmospheres. Added to this was an imagined space. Through the narrative story, clues were uncovered as to what the experience of that imagined space could be.

Recognizing the length of the site, and the many paths and durations of experience, the program attempts to establish an atmosphere of latent possibility. Where some paths provide routes for traversing the site quickly, others seduce visitors to detour, saunter, and pass the time. Meanwhile, the program calls for spaces of both planned and spontaneous events. Thus,
designs provide spaces for new possibilities, new narratives, to be enacted and experienced by those visiting the site.

As the first sketches and formal developments emerged from these concepts, new narratives arose that would further influence the designs.

**Context Study**

**The Greenline**

To better understand the context of the path which this project extends through these sites, and the Greenline, I walked a 2km section photographing and noting the various elements of zones and neighborhoods: materials, tectonics, and urban artifacts like old smokestacks and water-towers. The Greenline follows the railroad track and intersects residential neighborhoods, old industrial, new industrial, and reimagines this path as space for the public.

These materials shine light on the datum’s industrial origin: beams are concrete or riveted ironworks; facades are blank or composed of a grid of punched windows themselves a grid of glass. At the human scale are abstract metal sculptures, voluminous lounge chairs and concrete curbed planters. Trees of various heights and diameters grow along its length.
Material Context

This investigation inspired an affinity towards visually heavy and deep materials that patina with time: the concrete, the steel beams and columns. To counter this weight of materials, I look to a play of light—a major element in the narratives. Beams and columns cast well-defined places of light and shadow produce rhythms for movement, and subdued light passing through screens adjust the levels of intimacy in a space. Meanwhile furnishing are seemingly an
extension of the architectural vocabulary that fades and becomes part of the context. While vegetation and earthworks take queues from the existing environment.

**Design Across Three Zones**

**Zone 1 Development**

![Fig. 14 Photograph of Zone 1](image)

Approaching designs for the site using the paths and intersections, I worked in plan while considering the earlier writings on the essences of the site and the narratives from the personas. Here, the paths develop as forms that provide level changes to facilitate public performances and meetings. A
covered place could be a stage for events and classes, while an amphitheater seating can be casual or anticipating an audience.

Fig. 15 Plan drawing for Zone 1 developed from narrative paths
Fig. 16 Design Sketches for Zone 1
The middle site shelters the paths. It is composed of covered rooms without doors or glass windows that hover over the existing channel. The spaces are of various sizes and provide opportunities for classes, informal gatherings, exhibitions, and formal performances. Multi-level spaces provide queues to larger or smaller spaces. Meanwhile, screened apertures punched into these solid walls diffuse the light.
Fig. 18 Plan drawing for Zone 2 developed from narrative paths

Fig. 19 Design Sketches for Zone 2
Fig. 20 Design Sketches for Zone 2

Zone 3 Development

Fig. 21 Photograph of Zone 3
With this location the paths intersect and cut doorways through parallel halls. The shadows cast by crisscrossing beams shine light in different ways throughout the day favoring differing passages through the site. The central hall is more enclosed and pockets in the wall provide sheltered alcoves to exhibit works. Meanwhile, the place is an anti-courtyard or inverted courtyard with garden spaces existing in the spaces activated between the adjacent buildings.

Fig.22 Plan drawing for Zone 3 developed from narrative paths

Fig.23 Design Sketches for Zone 3
Final Drawings and Narratives

Approach

With iterative drawing as an interpretation of narratives developed through writing, narratives that considered the human experience were refined alongside designs. The aim of this practice was to develop the qualities of the atmosphere.

Aside from the writings that were part of the original influence during the design development, to further nourish the atmosphere of the site, I looked to the observations of atmospheres catalogued in *Verdun and Undetermined Spaces*. In these texts layering, tectonics, seduction, metaphors and narrative, transitional spaces, displacement, and undetermined spaces were identified as key atmospheric qualities of designs in the urban context. These qualities are the headings of essays within these two books where their significance is detailed. These two books can be found in their entirety in the Appendices.

The final iteration of the project incorporates these themes across the linear, quarter-mile span of the scope of the design.
Zone 1 THE GUINGUETTE

Fig. 24 Rendering of Zone 1 looking toward Zone 2

Fig. 25 Rendering of Zone 1 looking toward edge of project site
Situated at the end of the Greenline, adjacent to industrial and residential mixed-office, the Guinguette is an open park favoring public gatherings and cultural initiatives. Wide paths, numerous seating areas and public exhibition booths are all here to encourage public ownership and creative showcase.

Casting attention from the main street Beaubien, the Guinguette compels entry to the site, and beckons pedestrians towards the Studio spaces in an unexpected and playful way.

Fig.26 Zone 1 Plan and elevation
Zone 2 THE STUDIOS

Fig.27 Render of Zone 2

Fig.28 Interior render of Zone 2
Studios elevated over a drainage bridge the residential Northwest of the neighborhood and the industrial warehouses on the Southeast side. Routine pathways and intersections that wind around trees and along the banks of the drainage carve a multilayered space for activities. Following a rhythm of courtyards, thresholds, and rooms of subdued light, the Studios offer places for gathering, acting, and wandering. The play with light, the unprogrammed corners, and the semi-covered / semi-enclosed spaces interrelate in a mesmerizing tension between interior and exterior seducing movement along diverse pathways.

Fig.29 Zone 2 Plan and elevation
At the backside of mixed creative offices and bordered by railroad tracks, this hidden lot becomes the place for a mysterious Gallery.
Following the deliberate footsteps of the Commuters crossing the site on the winter snow, the emergent pathways orient the mesh-panels of the Gallery. Light passes through the panels and overlaps changing with the hours and the seasons, suggesting alternate routes and detours for routine passers-by. This play between transparent and opaque evokes curiosity and discovery. A covered space provides a site for exhibitions.

Fig.32 Zone 3 Plan and elevation
CHAPTER 8

REFLECTIONS AND DISCUSSION

Reflections

Narratives are our common way of describing the world around us. Exposing the subtlety of experience and perception, our observations, and the moments amidst the mundane. Like iterative drawings searching for the perfect gestural line, focusing on words with the appropriate associations to produce a precise poetic image can enable the designer to develop atmospheres attuned to our senses and perception.

Narratives tend to express all the qualities of a space, while drawing often produces only forms. Thus, iterative writing, like iterative drawing, pushes designers beyond their first compulsory impulses, designs and ideas.

The literary dimension of architecture not only offers a potential means to move beyond what we first bring conceptually to a project as designers, but also has the creative potential for new programs and proposals by projecting narratives into an imagined space.

Ultimately, architecture can be taken as designing for a duration, for a dynamic sequence of experiences through atmospheres rather than a base
sequence of spaces. As narrative is the most applicable means of relating past experiences, it has an application in design for potential experiences.

**Discussion**

**Subjectivity and Authorship**

This thesis looks at how architects could use writing to explore human experience in space to influence the design of atmospheres. In this instance the writing comes from an embodied experience where the one perceiving is caught up in the experience rather than reflecting or analyzing it in the moment. This is a first-person perspective with the possibility of allowing one to envision the world from another’s point of view. Although, this becomes problematic when both the personas and narratives originate from the architect bringing into question subjectivity.

Drawing into question subjectivity draws into question authorship and methods at large, for the architect is involved in design that originates from their understanding of the experience of space. This is beyond the capacities of a computing machine that may be capable of understanding the measurable elements of a space but not their significance. In applying significance whether
through personal or cultural narratives, sensory or tectonic qualities, design requires the architect to apply a level of subjectivity—better termed authorship.

In the creation of narratives and personas, the methods could address the subjectivity through the influence of other’s narratives. For example, as opposed to selecting the five personas and writing their narratives, an architect could interview a client or community and write narratives from their perspectives. In this way the architect would be creating a common bond of understanding through the clarity of the writing that interprets their description of embodied experiences.

Taking this approach, a step further in addressing the question of authorship—with the condition still five personas for five narratives—five persons could pursue the task individually writing their own narratives inspired through reflection on their real embodied experience on the site.

Perhaps this is why when narrative is present in architectural proposals it is often an architectural narrative rather than a human narrative. In this way the architect shrouds their subjectivity. The process of writing narratives from human experience is aimed at design spaces for human experiences. To this end the variety of experiences and descriptions of qualities that evoke moods and sense aid in the understanding of atmospheres and the possibility of their design.
What are the Elements of Atmospheres in Urban Environments?

Research for this thesis began with exploring the city of Montreal probing for atmospheres. This method arose from wondering where atmospheres were in the city. As a base condition for conducting the research and for the question itself, I needed to be aware of what atmospheres are. In this thesis I have described their effect, and because the culmination of our experiences, cultures, and references are unique so are our experiences with atmospheres. Nonetheless, atmospheres’ effect is recognizable when we perceive them, why we perceive them is uncertain.

The effect of atmosphere upon us is what we describe as we relate our experience of such impactful spaces. The effect is near-emotional. Stating what the quality of an atmosphere is may be simple while asking what elements compose atmospheres would be harder to place. As a parallel, we may be aware that something makes us sad but not understand what specific qualities makes us feel this way. So, to continue this parallel, the line of questioning with emotions is often moves from, “how did it make you feel,” to a second question that requires reflection, “and what do you think made you feel that way?”.

Atmospheres affect our moods, and by documenting the variety of ways they
are sensed in *Verdun and Undetermined* Spaces I was able to capture the feeling for further investigations—to later ask, “what made me feel this way”.

As poetry often appeals to abstract imagery to elucidate our experience of everyday life and expose universals, the study of atmospheres may be deciphered similarly. As architects move beyond feelings of spaces to consider the qualities and elements that compose atmospheres and all-together new language of architecture could emerge. As modernist championed ‘planar’ and ‘linear’ as elements that directly described geometries, perhaps elements such as layering, seduction, and displacement could be used as an architectural language for the composition of built forms.
APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: Verdun
PREFACE
MONTREAL METRO

I feel at once in a romance when I am changing trains.
The speed, the obstacles that come after one another as you move through an unfamiliar station following signs or following the back of someone. The call to move with haste and yet without the faintest idea of where you are.

The lighting does not seem significant because the tiles on the walls meet the floors at a dark intersection. Is the floor tiled as well, or concrete? I cannot recall. I can recall the white reflection of light on the stainless handrails of the escalator. Yet, for the sake of time, and because of the spirit of hasty travel, we were taking the stairs—two or three at once.

I remember as we passed from the well-lit base of the stairs and into the intermediate place of the slope, of the transition, where the light did only overlap so faintly, that it was night and that the sky had become dark. I could not know this.
THERE ARE MANY PASSAGES THROUGH THE CITY. CIRCULATION IS NOT WHAT DEFINES THE CITY, BUT IN OUR DISPLACEMENT THROUGH THE CITY WE ACCUMULATE IMAGES OF THE CITY.
DISPLACEMENT IN THE CITY

These images collage and overlap. New associations develop as we pass through the city and experience new sensations.

At the same time associations and new memories are formed, prior memories are displaced; this is the process producing new meanings and narratives.

Such is the case when one visits a new neighborhood, spends an afternoon in a park that they’ve passed many times, or approaches a place from a new path – a change of approach, perspective and duration evoke new readings and change the associations between spaces in the city.
Stations interconnect narratives of displacement through the city, physical networks of displacement, and the transition to the city beyond the station.

As in-between spaces, stations possess criterion for dynamic design possibilities that are not present when the station is detached as a single object.

For the design of stations to move beyond utility, designers must recognize the many unique narratives provided by a station’s locus as well as the developing narratives projected by those moving through stations as part of their displacement through the city.
TRANSITIONAL ARCHITECTURES

The architecture of transitional spaces is not often considered. Partially, it is an architecture that fulfills a service – moving people through the city – a program that overshadows the possibility of designing an architecture that provides further experiences.

Although stations often develop as architectures of economy and efficiency of both design and circulation to fulfill that program, this is a limited understanding of their function. This outlook produces metro stations that contain the paths of circulation and staging areas necessary to fulfill the function, but the station is merely utilitarian in this way.

With this narrow focus on the function of the station, the station is an extension of the train and detached from the city. The architecture does not fully develop, and instead the station only acts as a stage for a set of procedures.

BY RECOGNIZING THAT A STATION IS A SPACE LOCATED IN A SEQUENCE OF SPACES THAT PEOPLE MOVE THROUGH ACROSS MANY LEVELS DRIVEN BY A NARRATIVE OF DISPLACEMENT, THE STATION EXPANDS INTO A BROADER CONTEXT OF THE PHYSICAL AND NARRATIVE CITY.
IN

VERDUN

VERDUN METRO
In Verdun, one ascends the grotto walls in the washed light of a dried waterfall ultimately to exit its shelter and turn to see a fountain of water sprouting from Verdun and droplets falling like glass marbles.

The fountain is the center of a small park with deciduous trees lining the five paths that converge on the circular promenade formed by the fountain, and beyond it the grotto breaches la terre in the form of a pyramid in corduroy concrete.

Beyond that is the city hall. And so this is a civic architecture: the station from its depths to its heights—a tower that we ascend to its limits and step out to earth and not air, to the silent neighborhood streets and the patter of falling waters, a fountain in a small park and a few artifacts of the city’s layers, and the city hall at the opposite end.
The metro station in Verdun is a transitional place that develops a narrative through architectural details that link the underground metro system with the street-level surface.

The station as a nexus between the subterranean passages and the surface-city fully develops by sequencing experiences across multiple levels.

Further, the architecture not only ascends and unifies multiple layers of the city, but the architecture fractures these stratified layers by bringing elements of the surface into its depths and by piercing the surface with architectural forms. This emergence blurs the reading of the layers as stratified, and the station extends from a single place into the greater context of the neighborhood through displacing elements from one layer into and across another.
This light is seen beyond the artificial lights as one steps off the train-car onto the platform.

Daylight shining from above connects the surface layer to the mezzanine of the station below.

**LAYERING**

Daylight shining from above connects the surface layer to the mezzanine of the station below. The daylight gradually diffuses against the square concrete panels and fills the space before the light passes all the way to the tiled floor. Its source is not visible from the platform, or from the bridge across the tracks; it is not visible until one passes a series of spaces and thresholds. While the light creates a connection vertically across layers, its presence below grade acts as a guide for movement through the station in both horizontal and vertical pathways.

Above the station, a park. An orthogonal corduroy-concrete form reveals one face to be the aperture that is the daylight’s source. Nearby a fountain’s source is imagined as a spring emerging from a fracture in the earth—perhaps it is the same fracture where the daylight descends.
More than divided into disconnected objective spaces, the Verdun Station is a multi-level subterranean landscape. Spaces blur into one another. Materials are repeated at different scales throughout the station further unifying the multi-level space. Across these materials both natural and artificial light overlap.

A colonnade of forked concrete columns acts as a soft-threshold between the platforms and the hard, programmatic threshold of the turnstiles that distinguish the ticket lobby from the trains. While this colonnade does not disjoin any part of the space, it blocks a direct gaze of the aperture letting in the light. This works to increase the connection of these spaces seducing one to move beyond the columns to seek the source of the phenomena.
TECTONICS

In Verdun the limited palette lends itself to vignettes that appear as pleasing compositions: linear elements set against planar masonry walls that are themselves carved catches the eye in layered compositions of similar vocabularies.

The elements are in this way repetitive, yet unique tectonic geometries frame unique compositions.

A myriad, small, square white tiles flow across the platform.

Larger square tiles climb the walls at the lowest level of the train platform.

Ascending the walls above this level, the material transitions into precast concrete panels and they are also square climbing towards the surface.

This repetition is disrupted by an intentional crisscrossing corduroy pattern carved into the concrete. The carved by flowing water—rather than crafted—grotto long ago constructed. Where the daylight now enters, the crisscross carving climbs as though water once flowed here along the face of stones.

There is a sense that this station was
APPENDIX B: Undetermined Spaces

UNDETERMINED SPACES

PAUL-ALEXANDER STOICHEFF
Passing unnamed places

Perhaps it is true that places that are rarely thought of are the most poetic. Perhaps it is true the places are written for the first time when we think of them, or a designer thinks them. Perhaps a designer still does not think them, but in either way they pass into being without the full tinge of an ideology or of some other script within the designer. The most undetermined spaces are the most poetic and mysterious. The spaces unnamed are not yet limited to an unknown metaphor.
Perception is unique to the viewer.
This series of collaged photographs curates the city.

All curation is an individual history—that of the curator. Just the same, every book is the library of the author who wrote it. In every novel, too, is the history according to the author. Finding how that history is framed and recognizing the allusions to the author’s own library is the task of the reader.

And no author is the sum of their books and their history. And it would take any reader two lifetimes—their own and a parallel life lived as the author’s shadow—to claim otherwise.
Instead, the creative work of an author is completed when it is interpreted by a reader. A banal reference may be an intensely seductive passage when read for the first time.
The author, like the curator, is a framer of an experience for an audience. An audience encounters the work and completes it sans framer. Thus, the experience is the play between that selected by the framer and the imagination of the audience.
Is a novel to be directed at a particular audience? The personal associations gathered in a life may lead to a language unfamiliar and indecipherable to a larger audience. Perhaps a dutiful framer incorporates associations and memories alive in the public imagination, for it is ultimately the romance of the framed work and the audience that creates the experience—better that they have more in common than less: a dialogue, a discussion, varied perspectives on past experiences, various outlooks on the future.
METAPHORS AND NARRATIVES

Narratives that guide our everyday actions pass unnoticed.
It's a narrative that informs the aging artist that they were once young and the countertop was tall when they awake. Never could you know the entire artist. The artist is glimpsed in their work.

The form of a book does not interest me as much as the story within unless it is of that rare quality where the cover is an extension of its contents.
Narrative is a possibility to develop the atmosphere, the soul of an architectural space, before the formal expression.
The role of interpretation of narratives in architecture
The effect of architecture is a mood or atmosphere.

This does not arise from geometries alone. It is not possible to describe the experience of an architectural space by describing its base form: it is squares; circles; triangles. The atmosphere arises from a narrative.

Narratives are generated as interpretations either during or when reflecting on our experience. The recognition of an atmosphere happens through the linguistic imagination in an act of interpretation.
Interpretation is an inner discourse. It is communicated to another through language by employing familiar metaphors or from a unique pairing of apropos associations for the creation of new metaphors. Although a single description of the physical-form tells us nothing about the atmosphere, describing the architecture through a single adjective can direct our imagination towards visualize a space: it is translucent; weathered; vacant.

From even a single seed of language, the linguistic imagination is sparked, and capable of exploring the possibility of meaning.

How often architecture is passed unnoticed as if language eludes its most significant qualities. The conversation around architecture is often limited to the description of its parts, but are these elements capable of expressing the emotional and existential qualities of an environment? Our experience takes two forms: one immediate and the other delayed (or never occurring). First, as an in-the-moment experience fomenting from an accumulation of perceptions, and as a possible reflection on that experience as we attempt to pull the clouds out of the sky to term their forms and sensations in communicable language. In a reflection on a lived-experience a narrative description is formed.
Is a descriptive language adequate for inspiring the image of an architectural space and an atmosphere to an audience?

Perhaps retelling the postures of people or their paths of transiting a space can communicate an atmosphere. Such postures that come to mind: a congregation seated in rows of pews like rigg and furrow of a barley field; the elderly men seated on the low stone wall aside the fountain where a young couple leans into see their rippling reflection; pedestrians stroll and pedal around the paved and level path encircling the sport-field where others pant, sweat and sprint chasing one another.

Perhaps a retelling of the passing of light across the face of some geometry can communicate an atmosphere. Such passing of light that comes to mind: in the bare writing chamber, the crisp quadrants of the window’s shadow transiting the white wall are disrupted by my head peering out to see the westward lavender meadow; an oak sapling sets down a slender grey line across the courtyard as green leaves’ play overlaps light and confuses the noon sun before settling on a low-bench.
There is a tall hill on the outskirts of town with a name known only to neighborhood kids. Large and gnarled oak trees abound. Limestone surfaces as outcroppings, boulders, and steep crags. Often, kids discover entrances into the depths of the hill who's name they know. No entrance is like another, so there is no method to finding them. Inside, the interior is calm, dark. There is something beyond play that attracts them. Only kids know how it is called; they speak of it when they pass over its name in silence.
CONTEXT

Layers of the city blur creating an image that can be held in the mind’s eye. A collage of neighborhood typologies, public spaces, landmark buildings, and personal as well as cultural events that occur in a city shape the way the city is perceived. Some of the most impressionable parts of the city are its streets and public ways and the architecture of unremarkable buildings that taken together at the scale of city blocks are neighborhood-defining—coming together as a field or mosaic rather than a desultory mashup.

Consider displacement in the city as a passage: entry, path, and goal. Entry relates to both a beginning and a continuation. A beginning because one is entering a new space, and a continuation because the space is new and thus differentiated by something before it. This concept is important in considering the significance of designing with unfolding narratives mediated by duration.
If mystery and seduction are effects, what are their causes in architecture?

What is the significance of mystery in architecture? Mystery is the place of new meanings and is an evolving creative act that occurs. It is a forced event of self-reflection as we try to understand the mystery by developing metaphors to tame it and comprehend.

**THE SEDUCTIVE IS THAT WHICH EVOKES A DETOUR.**
IT IS NOT LIKE A HALL THAT IS FOR MOVING THROUGH, BUT MORE LIKE A DOORWAY THAT IS PASSED THROUGH.
Between the two districts, scattered trees cast amber shadows on the lot of a decaying auto-garage.

You come across this in-between space along the asymptote of two districts. Both districts are residential with mixed offices. Both districts are bordered along the west by the railroad. Both districts situate larger office buildings along the railroad.
Like the bunkers of Virilio's archaeology, these structures with repeated construction methods and without reference to context become anthropomorphized and zoomorphized.
Structures graze in a silent park encircled by tall buildings.

Before, the park was a pasture.
Before it was a pasture, a paddock.
Before it was a paddock, it was some arena.

Or was it only an arcade?

The structures graze and pass the days in impermenance. They take postures to communicate with one another. Although varied in form and scale, the angles of their bones are the same. And they are familiar to one another.
AND I'M NOW ASTONISHED WHEN I PLACE MYSELF ON THE MAP.
This stair above McGill
along the slope of Mount Royal
Some places come from
unpredictable angles.
I remember seeing Leonard
from the summit.

I tilt my head to look down
the stairs not really pausing.
A leaf-sweeper sweeps leaves;
a woman in dark clothes
approaches the stair.

Tall trees shroud the path
up the stairs.
Light posts punctuate the
ascent or descent.

And what views of the city!
Rossi and Hejduk investigated the tower as a typology in the collective imagination, but what are the proportions of a tower?
The tower.

A patchwork tower casts a late-afternoon shadow across the alley.
It was first and then the neighborhood was erected in brick around it.
Even the trees grew up in its shadow.

Does it have a face?

Some residences face into an alley, and it is the backside of others.
Perhaps then the tower faces toward the alley too.
The trees grew, so the tower grew taller erected piece by piece.

Always incomplete, the tower is ageless.
AT THE FAR END, FORKING PATHS DISAPPEAR IN THE TALL GRASS.

Perhaps Rossi’s Cemetery at Modena is not so much incomplete as unfinished, for a good architecture is left to be completed by the subject’s imagination.
Beside the tracks, under the parkway, between passages,

The skeleton of a great hall with exposed ribs encloses an interior.

Not dead and not yet born, but open to:
  becoming,
  interpretation,
  embracing,
  imagination,
  addition,
  seasons,
  definition.

The skeleton remains undetermined.

A path passes beneath the steel-rafter lattice.
At one end a cyclone fence is sliced and peeled to allow passage.
Autumn pulls crisp gold leaves to the floor.
Crossing the path seventy seconds pass.
At the left is the ledge at my hip protecting me from the fall to the path and the street below. To the right a bare-brick unadorned side of some long building.
Across seventy seconds the path tapers.
From my beginning it is wider than my arms outstretched.
By my end I may easily place a palm facedown on the ledge and the other palm flat against the brick with my fingers pointed skyward.
It is no one’s path.
Weeds and small saplings grow up from the asphalt along its intersection with the ledge to the left and at the right along the façade. Weeds and small saplings graze me intermittently for seventy seconds.
The path below rises too as time passes and the seventy second path fades into it.
APPENDIX C: Narrative Frames

The Flâneur
The Vagabond
The Toddler
The Train Chaser

The image contains a series of drawings and a poster for a performance titled "The Train Chaser." The drawings are sketches of urban environments, possibly showing scenes from the play or related scenes from the director's vision. The poster features a silhouette of a person running through an urban landscape, with text describing the performance. The text at the top of the poster reads: "THE TRAIN CHASER." Below the title, there is additional text that appears to be a description or a tagline, but it is not fully legible in the image provided. The overall theme of the content is related to urban exploration and movement.
The Commuter

The Commuter(s)

The lights on things
Architecture as surroundings
session
SAGENESS
outing
WINDMOUTH/HOPEFUL
version
BETHLEHEM Sufferer Rule & Participation
scene
LANDMARK/VERDICT
special relationship THE EFFECT


