Collective Experience: How Architecture Can Promote Community

Mario Derrell Oliver

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COLLECTIVE EXPERIENCE: HOW ARCHITECTURE CAN PROMOTE COMMUNITY

by

Mario Oliver

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Architecture
Major: Architecture

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I would like to dedicate this work to my in-laws, Neill and Virginia Grimes; my mother, Willie Mae Oliver; my wife Jane; and my daughter, Virginia.

To the Grimes': without your support, I do not know how I would have made it through this process. Your love for and encouragement of all the Olivers throughout the process has been invaluable. This work belongs as much to you as it does to me; without your succor, I could not have possibly completed this process. Thank you so much.

To my mother: the way you have supported me throughout my life has had a sizeable influence. You raised me to remember to work hard and put my all into pursuing whatever I truly want in life. To get to this point has required hard work and sacrifice, and without the lessons you taught me, I am not sure I could have completed this process. Thank you; I will continue to strive to make you proud.

To my wife: words cannot express how imperative a role you played in helping me get to this point. Your sacrifices, your love, your support: all these things are the reasons why I have this book to write. This is the culmination of many hours of work and strife by us both. We were willing to go through this process for the betterment of our family. I truly appreciate all you have done to allow me to pursue this dream: from the hours spent home alone while I worked late in the studio, to the time spent taking care of the necessities for both of our lives, to the nights spent taking care of Virginia alone. I cannot express how much I appreciate and love you.

And to my daughter, Virginia: Daddy did it baby! It was all for you and mama and I plan to keep making you two proud.

Thank you each for your support.
I would like to acknowledge my committee for their support and guidance through this process. Each of you has offered excellent advice during project development and I am thankful to you all.

I would also like to thank James Williamson for his guidance as studio professor. Many of the concepts and design decisions for this work were the direct result of insightful conversations with professor Williamson.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge Elaine Turner, Director of Slave Haven Underground Railroad Museum. Having her knowledge and input had a major influence on the purpose and direction of this project.

Thank you.
ABSTRACT

Many current social issues have been attributed to people attaining their social interactions through television, social media and other online services. This thesis investigates how architecture can be utilized to engage people in a way that encourages interaction between individuals. Buildings are often designed for functional purposes, with a focus on how users will engage the building. Not enough thought is given to how the building and site can be designed to facilitate interpersonal interaction between people within the project. This thesis design primarily involves study into human psychology, the nature of human interaction, what draws people to places, and how technology influences human behavior. This research, and its implementation in this project, shows the complexity of human behavior and how technology can be a powerful tool to both help and hurt people. Ultimately, architecture needs to be as engaging to people as is technology. Spaces that engage people in interesting and meaningful ways, can encourage individuals to interact with one another, thus dissuading people from attaining social interaction through technology alone.
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MANIFESTO

What does it mean to think, to experience, to be? We must ask ourselves these questions regularly to create something that affects people. Through contention comes something meaningful, as there is no true solution without struggle.

Architecture is movement, it is stationary, it is specific, it is impactful. Architecture is about balance and intentional moments of contrast to affect personal change and inspiration. Architecture must evoke emotion, create moments, emphasize positive and negative space, acknowledge that light and dark are key, and work tirelessly to inspire personal change. These aspects must be a part of architecture so that people are affected by their spaces, rather than just using them as a backdrop to everyday life.

People want to derive meaning from everything they allow into their lives today. Architecture must provide spaces that can harbor that meaning, as well as spaces that contribute to that meaning. Before the rift becomes too great, it is crucial, now more than ever, that Architecture help to facilitate connection between people and rebuild community.
INTRODUCTION

Architecture should work as a reminder of the complexity of life by evoking emotion, being the stage for creating meaningful moments, and encouraging societal oneness. The phrase “more disconnected than ever” has recently been used to refer to the current state of society and its relationship to devices versus other people. The irony is that the internet and social media were supposed to make individuals more connected and less lonely. But in reality, studies show individuals are less connected to one another. The primary driving belief for this thesis is that many social ills are due to this societal disconnect. Psychologist Sherry Turkle states that technology is changing the way we relate to each other and the way we relate to ourselves; We are getting used to being “alone together.” Architecture can be used to draw people away from the technologies creating the disconnect, bringing people together to build true community.

Segments of society are using technology as a buffer to fulfill their need for social interaction. Robert Putnam theorizes that the reason for the loss of true civic spaces is the invention of the television. The television keeps people in their homes and out of the public realm. The next evolution of the television is the cellular phone; many people today use their phone as a mobile television. But beyond that, most people are using their phone as a distraction from daily life. As a result, individuals are more disconnected than in the past. A remedy to this false social interaction is to design spaces that encourage meaningful intercommunication and encourage people to engage with one another instead of their devices. Robert Putnam theorizes that the reason for the loss of true civic spaces is the invention of the television. The television keeps people in their homes and out of the public realm. The next evolution of the television is the cellular phone; many people today use their phone as a mobile television. But beyond that, most people are using their phone as a distraction from daily life. As a result, individuals are more disconnected than in the past. A remedy to this false social interaction is to design spaces that encourage meaningful intercommunication and encourage people to engage with one another instead of their devices.

In his book City Comforts, David Sucher states that art engages people and opens conversation. Not only does art engage people, but so does design in general. This is why a space that emphasizes art and design is the correct typology for this project. Art and design are subjective and their ambiguity tends to encourage people to want to share their opinions of what they see in the work. This architectural work features art and design primarily from local creators; both past and present. The building will focus on creators from Memphis and the immediate surrounding areas. The goal of the project is to bring together members of different communities to encourage conversations across the city, not only within the neighborhood immediate to the site. For this reason, the site needs to border multiple communities. The chosen North Memphis site is on the edge of commercial and residential properties. Ultimately, the goal is that people will be drawn to the area for social connection and for the cultural aspects of the site and surrounding areas. The works in the building will spark conversations that will begin to encourage the fostering of more empathy between the residents of Memphis, providing them a reason to exchange techno-centric engagement for real human interaction. In the following document, you will see how these ideas and theories manifest into architecture.
DESIGN SOLUTION

Creating more meaningful interpersonal connection demands more meaningful conversation and interaction between people. Creating a space that sparks interpersonal interaction is the impetus for these conversations. Equally as important to the building, for sparking this intercourse, is the site.

SITE

The site is located in North Memphis, on the same block as Slave Haven Underground Railroad Museum (figure 1). This site is on the border of commercial and residential districts. This neighborhood has business owners, residents, churches, and a cultural landmark which will draw to the area visitors from both inside and outside of the city. According to the zoning overlay for the area, the future plan has this neighborhood slated for more multi-family residential. The overlay also talks about the importance of having community anchors for future community development. The selected site is designated to be park space. I am proposing that this site would be better served as a community anchor as it borders two very distinct areas (one residential and one commercial). The goal of the project is to draw in a variety of people to encourage interaction and conversation. With the commercial area’s prospective plans and the future residential plans, this site is rife for a community anchor that also serves as a neutral meeting space for members of both neighborhoods. Ray Oldenberg refers to these locales as Third Places. These are locales people frequent, between work and home, with the intention of having social interaction.

PROGRAM

The program for the building and site has a focus on spaces that encourage interaction. The program’s major spaces consist of galleries, community activity spaces, artist residences, outdoor park spaces, and a restaurant. The restaurant is a key programmatic element. The neighborhood has a lack of places for the community to gather and enjoy a meal. It is widely believed that food making and service spaces (like a home kitchen or restaurant) are natural gathering spaces. Food encourages conversation and personal engagement. The program includes two galleries. The artwork in both is used to draw people onto the site and to spark conversation. For this reason, the galleries front Second Street and Chelsea, respectively. Both galleries offer the passersby views in to encourage people to enter the building. There are a series of community activity spaces that benefit both the neighborhood and any members of the wider community who visit the site. These spaces are the art studio, classroom, children’s room, and meeting room. These are programmatic elements that are available for use that help educate and uplift the community. For example, the classrooms can be utilized by an organization that volunteers to offer training for adults, perhaps on subjects like financial literacy, real estate investment, or how to pursue higher education. The site itself is designed to encourage interaction between visitors and provide meeting space for small or large groups of people. Another major site aspect that encourages interaction is the design of the walking paths connecting the various nodes of gathering.

2. Oldenberg, The Great Good Place.
AMPHITHEATER

An amphitheater is another part of the site design that encourages interaction; it also helps to provide a bridge space between the building and Slave Haven Underground Railroad Museum to the north (figure 3). The amphitheater is designed in a way that serves both the new design and Slave Haven by being available to both sites, so that cultural events can take place in a more public setting. The amphitheater is available for use by the wider community to be used how they see fit. For example, if the community wishes to have meetings there, or if a filmmaker makes a film about the neighborhood, a showing can take place in the amphitheater. Elaine Turner, the director of Slave Haven, mentioned that they occasionally have performances related to the museum and they often perform them in the Slave Haven parking lot. The amphitheater can become the venue for these performances. Finally, a central plaza helps to connect the new museum to Slave Haven, thus connecting the two culturally significant sites.

WALKING PATHS

The walking paths are eight feet wide so that, as mentioned in City Comforts, people walking together can continue to walk side by side without having to go around another group of walkers, thus being able to continue their conversation uninterrupted (figure 4). Each line of the diagram represents an eight foot path; with the circles representing places to gather at the end of the paths. An additional eight foot section has been added to the width of the walking path at the center of the building to offer separate designated seating and a lounging area. Much of the walking path is covered to offer protection from the weather.

Figure 3 Early site design sketch

Figure 4 Walking path diagram
THE PROBLEM

The problem that this thesis project is attempting to address is the idea that people have begun to use technology in substitute for meaningful human interaction and connection, and thus have begun to lose connection to one another (figures 5, 6, 8). The solution to this problem architecturally is that the built environment can be used to draw people away from technologies creating this disconnect and bring people together to build true community (figure 7). Some basic goals of the project are to provide spaces that encourage interaction between people, create spaces that feel open and have a high level of permeability, and design spaces that are flexible and can serve multiple functions based on the needs of the community.

Key Theories

There are some major theories that helped to support the ideas utilized in the design solution. One is Robert Putnam’s theory that television is the main culprit in the loss of civic spaces (figure 9). This loss of civic space has hindered the ability for people to create social connections, due to a loss of public spaces to house these interactions. Another theory is Ray Oldenberg’s concept of the Third Place (figure 10). This theory posits that between work and home are locales—third places—where we have our primary social interactions. The third theory is Peter C Brett’s notion of how to design great civic space (figure 14), in his writing “15 Principles for Designing Great Civic Space,” he lays out fifteen principles for designing civic space that can be highly engaging to people. The next theory is the Urban Magnets Theory (figure 11), derived from a study by the Institute for Urban Vitality, investigating why people return to places repeatedly. The final theory comes from the text “City Comforts: How to Build and Urban Village” by David Sucher. This text lays out three basic principles (figure 12) for designing spaces for people in regard to approaching and interacting with the exterior of buildings.
Figure 14: Peter Ciemitis’s 15 Principles diagrams. The diagrams stroke in blue are principles that were key in the design of the building and site.

Figure 15: My solution to the issue. This figure is a minimalized, graphic representation of the front of the building design.
When looking at the site, there was a need to find guidance on what was needed in the area. The residential analysis diagram (figure 16) shows the different forms of development in the area. Knowing the distribution of development types was important to establish both the familial make-up of the area and helped to point out what was missing. Two missing components of the area were a variety of food options and the lack of a cultural/community gathering space. The Bickford Community Center (figure 18) is to the Northeast, but the building is not inviting for the community.

This Memphis Uptown Community plan was created by the Community Redevelopment Agency. This plan for the site provided invaluable knowledge about the future plans for the site. One key aspect of the thesis design is to bring together a variety of people from around the city at large. Seeing that the site development plan includes future commercial/residential development (figure 17), the project location is at the corner of Chelsea and Second Street. The site photos on the next page point out some of the potential future difficulties and opportunities with the site.

After looking at the larger site, the next step was to focus in on the immediate project site (figures 19, 20). Based on the larger analysis and information gained from the future site plan, this particular site, at the corner of Chelsea Avenue and Second Street, seemed the best for the project. It is centrally located in the neighborhood, is near an existing cultural site, and has no future plans for development (figure 17). The site photos on the next page point out some of the potential future difficulties and opportunities with the site.
SITE OPPORTUNITIES

Grade change across site presents some challenges and opportunities for design. Main site is primarily level.

4.5’ to 8’ retaining wall South of site, 2’-3’ grade change just South of Slave Haven Museum.

Regrade?, Level site?, Grade down to street level?

Slave Haven

Primary Site

SITE OPPORTUNITIES

Retaining wall could present some challenges to design. Lowest point near corner (~4.5’ change in grade).

Grade change goes back about 80’ until level with 2nd street.

Pavement might allow better views to downtown.

Regrading to street grade addresses street well, but causes issues on rear of site.

Regrading higher gives better views but does not address street well.

New Structure

New Structure

Figure 21 Site Analysis: Diagram for grade change site issue

Figure 22 Site Analysis: Diagram of how to address site change issue. This diagram and series of images ask questions of how to address the grade difference of four and a half feet on the site. The City Comfort text suggests building to the street; however, if this project is about making space for interpersonal connections, then building to the street may not be the best solution. Also, building to the street presents other problems, such as to either lower the grade to street level, or bring people up onto the site.
SITE OPPORTUNITIES

Views from on grade to downtown establish visual connection to downtown. Visual connection to residential and commercial neighborhood to the South and Southwest.

Figure 23  Site Analysis: Diagram addressing views to Downtown. Second Street stretches South to downtown. It was important to make a visual connection between Downtown proper and the site. It is easy to forget that this area is also part of Downtown Memphis, and this site should be given the same prestige as the rest of Downtown.

Figure 24  Site Analysis: Diagram for how to address existing and new street art.

SITE OPPORTUNITIES

Corrugated steel wall to west surrounds city owned land. Opportunity to engage public art across from proposed public art on new building.
Slave Trade Awareness Concept

One additional way to connect the project to Slave Haven is to speak about a little discussed aspect of the city, its history of slave auctions. (figures 25, 26, 28). The way the project addresses this issue is through a permanent art piece included as part of the exterior of the project. At the center of this art piece is a wood stump which is representative of an auction block. Visitors are invited to stand on the block and become the auctioned. The concentric rings on the ground (figure 29) represent the effect of the auction on the surrounding viewers, land, and building. The flooring material changes at each place that the ring touches.

In the courtyard are figures. These figures are ghostly, partially dissolved statues that represent the “buyers.” They are posed in a fashion that suggests they are yelling out what they are prepared to pay for the visitor atop the auction block (figure 27).

Figure 25: Axial diagram of history of slavery in Memphis. The largest slave auction site in the city is on axis with the project site.

Figure 26: Slave auction drawing.

Figure 27: Statues in courtyard concept sketch.

Figure 28: Slave auction advertisement poster.

Figure 29: Slave auction block and its ripple effects.
Precedents

There are some key precedents that influence the design. These precedents guided choices regarding material selection, site layout, and building form. Some influences from these precedents can be visually evidenced in the design, while others helped shape concepts.

GLENSTONE MUSEUM: TRAVILAH, MARYLAND

The Glenstone Museum by Thomas Phifer and Partners (figure 30) was useful for influencing both material selection and site design. The simplicity of the exterior of this design emphasizes the form of the buildings over the finish. This idea was carried over into the thesis design; the building has unique contours from certain elevations. It felt important to keep the exterior material uniform and fairly understated so as to not have it compete with the building form.

J. PAUL GETTY MUSEUM: L.A. CALIFORNIA

The J. Paul Getty Museum by Richard Meier and Partners Architects (figure 31) was influential in the building form in regard to the main courtyard. The Getty Museum is a series of spaces that surround a central courtyard. The buildings are of various scales and heights, and the way they are handled give the central plaza a real sense of enclosure. In this thesis project, there is an intention to use the building to both give a feeling of enclosure to the courtyard, and to direct the focus of the visitor toward Slave Haven.

Glenstone Museum: Exterior

Glenstone Museum: Interior

J. Paul Getty Museum: Exterior

J. Paul Getty Museum: Interior

CIVIC CENTER PARK: DENVER COLORADO

Civic Center Park (figure 32) was an early precedent for the design. As considerations were being made for the potential form for the project, such ideas were explored as should the design be a linear, cross-axial, or circular layout. This precedent is an analysis of a very typical layout for a civic center. All of the most important points are laid out on a linear axis and secondary points of interest are on either side of this axis. Below the image are early notes regarding thoughts on the linear layout. In the end, the design does contain a major linear axis between the building and Slave Haven. The rest of the project, however, does break away from a linear layout.
SILVER SPRING CIVIC BUILDING: MARYLAND

Silver Spring Civic Building (figure 33) is perhaps the most influential of all the precedents on the final design. Ideas gained and lessons learned from this project made a major impact on both the design concept and building design. The initial area of study for this precedent was how to design a project in an urban setting on a small site. This project is in the middle of a heavily populated and visited area of Maryland. However, the project implements some very essential choices to make the building stand out and make the best use of the site. Choices such as placing the building further from the street and allowing the front plaza to be for and about people instead of the building, and offering one large central space in the building that serves multiple purposes and has a wide variety of interior configurations.

In the final thesis design, there are some clear influences pulled directly from this precedent. The second floor gathering space takes cues from the great hall in this design. The building retreats itself away from the street and sidewalk so as to offer more gathering space. The choice of the use of a warm wood material and concrete is drawn from this project. And the over-scaled rectangular form framing the entrance in this precedent directly influenced the choice to do the same in the thesis project. 4

CENTRAL COURTYARD CONCEPT

How to address different entrances in different ways

Central courtyard concept

How to handle ambulatory (separated from courtyard, but practical for heating and cooling)

Using exterior material and solid/void to denote activities inside

Covered patio area doubles as ice skating rink in winter

Offset axis entry onto site

Outdoor public space

Good use of a small site

Covered area has meaningful multipurpose use

Building has very contemporary feel

Style of incorporation of natural materials to counter paved feel of city center life

Too much of the site is paving

4. “Silver Spring Civic Building”

SAYNATSALO TOWN HALL: JYVASKYLA, FINLAND

This town hall by Alvar Aalto (figure 34) was a precedent study in how to create a space around a central courtyard intended to be a civic space. The contrast between the treatment of the interior courtyard walls and the exterior building walls were influential in the final thesis design. Saynatsalo opens its interior walls to encourage a visual connection between those inside the building and those in the courtyard. The central courtyard in the final thesis has the same design element so as to encourage interaction between all users. The final design also had to address issues of a variety of entrances that needed to achieve different goals.

In this project, Aalto differentiated between the two entrances to the courtyard; one being more formal and one being more casual. Ideas about the entrance can be evidenced in the final thesis design by how the two primary entrances to the site are handled. The building entry from the south speaks to the design of the building itself; but the north entrance speaks to the connection between the site and neighborhood to the north. 5

4. “Sayanatsalo Town Hall”
THE BUILDING

Uptown Cultural Centre

There is a belief by many in fields such as psychology and sociology that there is a lack of community in many parts of the world today. One main culprit, proposed by many experts, of this social disconnect between people is the proliferation of mobile entertainment technologies; items such as cellular phones, social media, and portable television entertainment. How can Architecture counter the issue of the usage of technology as a primary form of interaction and social engagement? Many theories point to the use of tools, such as art and design, to encourage interaction between individuals. The Uptown Cultural Center utilizes art, design, and education to engage users and spark conversation between individuals. The intention is that the cultural aspects are the catalyst for conversation, and thusly facilitate the first step in community building. In order to build true community, individuals must be willing to have conversations and interactions with one another (figure 35). The Uptown Cultural Centre (figure 36) provides a space for these conversations and interactions to happen.

Figure 35. Why don’t we gather, together diagram. After observing people’s public interactions, questions arose about why when people are near one another, they tend to focus on devices rather than other people. This diagram questions how we gather. The upper part of the diagram asks why when we are together in close proximity, there still seems to be tension between people. Some might believe this contention between people is an effort to avoid invasion of personal space. The lower part of the diagram questions why when we gather, we don’t interact and start to make connections.
Early in the design, it was important to connect the new project to the existing Slave Haven site. This diagram shows how anchors were established early in the design to help give some solidity to the form on site.

1. Slave Haven Underground Railroad Museum
2. Northern community entrance and pavilions
3. Artist residences
4. Central Plaza Pavilions
5. Amphitheater
6. Uptown Cultural Centre

The design from the site scale down to the building scale has a series of triangulations. This diagram shows how these three types of spaces triangulate and connect throughout the site.
1. PLAZA
2. LOBBY
3. GALLERY
4. RESTAURANT
5. GIFT SHOP
6. ART STUDIO (PUBLIC)
7. CHILDREN’S ROOM
8. CLASSROOM
9. MEETING ROOM
10. AMPHITHEATER
11. SECURITY OFFICE
12. CARPENTRY SHOP
13. ART PREP ROOM
14. STORAGE
15. MECHANICAL
16. RESTROOM
17. CUSTODIAL CLOSET
18. CENTRAL PLAZA
19. CENTRAL COURTYARD
20. MULTIPURPOSE ROOM
21. ROOFTOP PATIO
22. OFFICE
23. LOBBY
24. MEETING ROOM
25. ART STUDIO (PRIVATE)
26. ROOFTOP GARDEN
27. STORAGE
28. RESTROOM
29. CUSTODIAL

Figure 41 Level 1 Plan
Figure 42 Level 2 Plan
Figure 44. Eye contact at multiple levels diagram. Peter Ciemitis’ 15 Principles for Designing Great Civic Places was used for many aspects of the design. This sketch visualizes the concept that one should design into the project the ability for users to have eye contact from multiple levels in civic spaces.
This West wall is intended to be the Second Street art exposure wall. This wall promotes the art aspect of the design to the visitors approaching from Second Street. This wall is also available for the exposure to both professional street artists and members of the community. When visiting art they can explore the technology to document their experiences. The mural wall’s design is also a possible interactive activity through use of technology. On this wall, the mural wall acts as a place where people can take photos together. This usage of technology still promotes a collective experience and growth of the larger community through a collective experience.
Figure 50: Section Drawing C
Approach

Upon approach, the first design move one will notice is how the front plaza and front of the building is given over to the people. The building physically moves away from the sidewalk to make room for the user. Also the plaza space shifts and changes to accommodate seating and walking areas (figure 51). The building is attempting to create spaces for human interaction and connection. The permeability of the building at human scale and height also promotes connection between people inside and outside of the design (figures 53, 54). Also, when considering how visitors who might have difficulty walking or climbing would approach the building, it became necessary to add drop off areas to the design (figure 52).

- Extended canopy denotes entry and beckons to visitor to enter site
- Seating/gathering area makes space for interaction of various forms
- Permeable front at night reverses building perception; inside starts to become outside.
- Signage is clear and visible both near and far, acting as a beacon to those blocks away.
- Permeable front and linear lighting concept directs visitor view into the building
- Renovated front at night enhances building perception; inside starts to become outside.

Figure 51 Diagram for how building addresses the sidewalk and street

Figure 52 Existing parking and drop off area alternative parking diagram. This diagram offers an alternative parking lot design that allows for drops off circulation on site.

Figure 53 Entrance: Day

Figure 54 Entrance: Evening
Plaza

The plaza begs to be used. This area was primarily driven by Peter Ciemitis’ idea that eye contact needs to happen at a variety of levels. The fact that interaction can happen at different depths and heights creates a new way to interact in what might be considered a fairly compact space (figures 57, 58). This space could be considered a micro version of what the entire project is attempting to achieve. The Plaza includes green space, natural materials, colorful ramps, and a mural wall (figures 55, 56). All of these ingredients create a space that offers a multi-sensory experience that is meant to be collectively shared.

Figure 55  Approach diagram. There are multiple points of approach, entry, and access across plaza.

Figure 56  Plaza circulation and seating diagram

Figure 57  Plaza Day

Figure 58  Plaza Evening

Primary approach  Secondary approach

Indirect lighting at night emphasizes form and offers less harsh lighting on approach.

Mural wall acts as western approach introduction to building.

There are various ways to approach and circulate in plaza. There is also a variety of places to sit and to gather.

There are multiple points of approach, entry, and access across plaza.
Lobby
The interior spaces are designed to be voluminous, warm, and engaging. There is intentional use of material and color to spark inspiration and conversation. Wood is widely used for its warm and familiar properties. The interiors are meant to support the proliferation of ideas and conversation. Specifically here in the lobby space, the board-formed concrete exterior gives way to a wood material both on the walls and ceiling. This change in material offers strong contrast to the somewhat hard and rough exterior. This is the pearl inside the oyster. The lower overhead plane also focuses the view to the distance. This emphasizes the blurring of the line between interior and exterior and between individual spaces.

The visual permeability diagram (figure 59) shows how the spaces surrounding the lobby allow users to see into the lobby and connecting hallways. A key concept with the building design is to allow people inside to have a visual connection to other spaces, thus encouraging interaction of people within and between the spaces (figures 61, 62); however, a user is not forced to be a part of the activity by being in the same room as another person. This idea that one can watch interactions without having to be a part of the activity is the concept of prospect and refuge (figure 60). This means that throughout the building there are many opportunities to observe without needing to be directly involved. One can act as voyeur for future activities of interest.

The large skylight opens to the overhead plane making it less oppressive, allowing lots of natural light into the space. Glazing allows clear view of courtyard and auction block art piece. Also, combined with the lowered overhead space, the glazing emphasizes long view deep into the site.

Figure 59: Visual permeability and connection diagram. Visual barriers between spaces are strategically dissolved to encourage more interaction between spaces.

Figure 60: Prospect and refuge diagram. People can see activity from one space to another, but are not required to be in the same room to observe the activity within. One can choose to join the activity now, later or not at all.

Figure 61: Lobby: Day.

Figure 62: Lobby: Evening.
Front Gallery

The front gallery is intended to primarily host visiting exhibits by local artists, or shows by the community. This space is at the front of the building, so that those traveling past the building can have a visual connection to the work inside. More importantly, the view into the gallery from the street allows the passerby to view the people and activity inside (figure 63). The shade system is sheer (figure 64), so as to allow the pedestrian outside to see the movement inside the gallery. In the evening (figure 65), the protective shades raise automatically, giving even more connection between exterior viewer and interior user.

An automatic shade system protects work throughout the day, but is sheer to allow the pedestrian outside to see movement and forms within. The system also stops short of the floor to allow light to bounce into the space from below.
Art Studio (Public)

The public art studio is a place where the community of visitors (and those within the existing community) can come to be creative together (figure 66). This space emphasizes capturing natural light with many clerestory openings (figure 67). This space is a third place in which students can become teachers and everyone has the shared experience of being creative and open with others.

Figure 66: Art Studio (Public)

Figure 67: Art Studio natural lighting concept diagram. Natural light is intended to penetrate the space from high above, run across the ceiling, and filter down into the space. The windows to the south would have glazing that helps to mitigate the solar heat gain and direct light on the paint wall.

Children’s Room

The children’s room (figure 68) is a space that encourages interaction between both kids with kids and parent with parents. The space is bright, colorful, and prioritizes a high level of flexibility. There is also an emphasis on play by having all the furniture be rearrangeable for a variety of functions.

Figure 68: Children’s Room
Central Courtyard (Atop the Auction Block)

The intention of the design is that the interactions and conversation begin inside the building and spill out into the exterior spaces (Figure 69). The central courtyard (Figure 72) is designed to catch these interactions and funnel them either around the courtyard or toward Slave Haven. This moment is where the interaction comes with the piece addressing the history of slave auctions in the region.

In the courtyard, there are seats for visitors. There are also bronze sculptures that represent the memory of those bidding on the enslaved (figure 71, 73). One is invited to climb up on the auction block and look out at the people and sculptures in the courtyard; the one atop the block being the auctioned and the audience the bidders. A reminder that we are all culpable if we do nothing to fight injustice.

From the auction block, one can see a wall in the distance. On this wall are the names of those bought and sold in Memphis and Shelby County. Hanging within this wall is the monument to those lynched in Shelby County (Figure 70); this monument comes from the Legacy Museum and Memorial for Peace and Justice in Montgomery, Alabama. Beyond this wall, exists another wall, upon which are the cast hands of the elders of the community (Figure 75). This wall gives the user the ability to touch the hands of those who hold the knowledge and history of the community. One is able to literally touch history. This wall of hands is a way to visually preserve the history and memories of the community.

The evening offers a different experience upon the auction block. Here it is easier to see the wall in the distance. The wall has many cast hands (Figure 72). These hands are casts of members of the existing community. The wall holds the history of this neighborhood and this place. One is invited to touch the hands, and thus embrace the history. The experience begins with being bought and sold and ends with a reminder of the strength and perseverance that can come from standing up to and fighting adversity.
Central Plaza

This central plaza (figures 77, 78) is an expanded version of the front plaza. This space invites users to have a more casual interaction experience, much like the front plaza, but on a larger scale. This space also offers a reprieve for those who just finished the auction block art piece in the central courtyard. To the right of this space are the artists in residence homes. Effort was made to give the artists a sense of privacy in their homes by distancing them from the building and placing them among the existing trees on site (figure 76). However, they are never far away from their studios and their work.

The wall of hands, where one can literally embrace the past history of this neighborhood. The hands are casts of the elders of the neighborhood, the keepers of the history.

At night, the mood of the central plaza changes. The lighting is designed to be ambient, primarily indirect, and specific. Certain areas, such as the pavilion and amphitheater, are given more light so as to attract people by making them feel like destinations.

The main green space is for gathering, rest, and discussion. The light source is hidden and even so that the focus in this space becomes interaction rather than the space itself. This type of lighting also encourages people to be closer to one another because the luminosity of this space is lower than in a space like the pavilion.
Central Plaza Pavilion

When speaking with residents of the area, one main complaint was that there was not enough space for children to play. Here at the pavilion, a shallow water play area is included (Figure 80). This is an amenity that both parents and children can enjoy together. The pavilion could be utilized for cookouts or community events that also incorporates the users of the Centre. This space is uniquely different than the park space to the north that is intended to mainly serve the existing community. This space is meant to promote interaction between visitors and residents, hopefully starting those conversations that lead to better understanding and acceptance. This plaza is the nexus for most of the key areas in the project (Figure 79). This aspect of the space makes it even more ideal for gathering and interaction (Figure 81).

Figure 79: Point of convergence diagram. All of the paths from the key points on site converge at the Central Plaza Pavilion.

Figure 80: Central Plaza Pavilion: Evening.

Figure 81: Central Plaza Pavilion: Evening.

Shallow water play area provides safe entertainment for children and adults while mitigating the high temperatures common in summer in Memphis.
Bickford Community Entrance

When considering the entrances both from Chelsea to the South and Bickford from the North, each needed to be equal in weight of design. I did not want the long-term existing residents in the area, those North of the site, to feel that the project was primarily for those not from the area (figure 82). When designing the Bickford entrance, the design needed to feel more residential, hence the gabled roof look (figure 83). The central entrance on to the North maintains the same dimensions as the entrance to the Cultural Centre. It was also important that the entrances both have distinctive day and night characters (figure 84).

Figure 82  Local Bickford Residents. Richard and Annie Jones. Longtime residents of the existing neighborhood. They would be one of the many cast hands found on the wall of cast hands that completes the auction block art piece.

Figure 83  Bickford Community Entrance: Day

Figure 84  Bickford Community Entrance: Evening

Integrated seating goes through the length of the pavilions. Pavilions take on a gabled form to represent a minimalized version of the residential neighborhood to the north. The material also changes to wood here because wood is the structure for the houses in the neighborhood, and the residents to the north are a key component of the structure and support for the Cultural Centre. This entrance has its own version of signage that is more casual. The letters are also five feet in height, which gives them presence in relation to the glulam pavilions. They share the key color theme prevalent through the Cultural Centre.
Slave Haven Porch (New)

The porch of Slave Haven looks out onto the project, and specifically to the Amphitheater. Part of the program of the Amphitheater is to be a venue for the traditional dance that Slave Haven hosts (figure 86). This space also serves the community by being a space that can be utilized by the community for a variety of social events (figure 87). Having this porch open will also benefit Slave Haven by encouraging better access to the museum from the new building and site (figure 85).

Figure 85: Slave Haven New Visitors Diagram: Reopening the front porch of Slave Haven establishes a direct connection between the site and Slave Haven. This would also increase foot traffic into and out of the Slave Haven.

The Amphitheater is intended for use by all members of the community. Here, the facility is being used to premiere a film, by a local filmmaker, highlighting the history of the Bickford community.

In this rendering, the Amphitheater hosts a traditional African dance troupe. Having the activity occur just off of the Slave Haven porch extends the activity from the interior of Slave Haven, and adds an additional point of connection between the project site and Slave Haven.

Figure 86: Slave Haven Porch (New): Day

Figure 87: Slave Haven Porch (New): Evening
Upper Balcony

This upper balcony allows a birds eye view of the entire project (Figure 88). From here one can observe all of the activity on the site, experience the auction block as a less culpable viewer, and access the upper floors of the project and art studio. This space is meant to be a reprieve from the activity on the ground floor. It is a space that offers the potential for some quiet time while also still being both engaged with the activity in the project and having a view of the variety of activities available when looking for your next experience here (figures 89, 90).

At night, the courtyard becomes illuminated and each section of the space takes on its own experiential quality. From this vantage point, one can see down into the courtyard. This view offers a more removed and voyeuristic viewing of the auction block art piece. One can also see the full procession from the auction block to the wall of hands.

Figure 88  Second Floor key view diagram

Figure 89  Upper Balcony: Day

Figure 90  Upper Balcony: Evening

Figure 88  Second Floor key view diagram

Figure 89  Upper Balcony: Day

Figure 90  Upper Balcony: Evening
West Graffiti Wall

This project celebrates mural and graffiti work (figure 91). In this space, the building moves out of the way to allow these graffiti alcoves. These spaces are available to both professional artists and members of the community to display their work. Once in the alcove, there is glazing that allows for interaction between those in the gallery and those in the graffiti space. One can still view the mural work even from within the gallery space. This puncturing of the wall space also allows interaction between people inside and outside the building (figure 92), operating as yet another space that starts to break down the barrier between interior and exterior; offering more opportunity for shared experience. The mural wall also operates as a place offering controlled use of technology. This wall has been designed to encourage interaction between people by creating the collective experience of taking a photograph (figure 92); the idea being that people will meet by taking group pictures or asking a stranger to take their picture in front of the mural.

Figure 91: Graffiti Wall elevation.

The graffiti wall acts as a space where use of technology is both contained and controlled. This wall is meant to be a place where people can take photos. Perhaps, one will ask a stranger to take their photo, offering an opportunity to possibly make another interpersonal connection.

Figure 92: West Graffiti Wall Day.

These openings allow for visual interaction between people inside the gallery and people viewing the graffiti wall. The windows also allow the graffiti art to be both a part of the art in the main gallery and their own art pieces on the exterior of the building.

Figure 93: West Graffiti Wall Evening.
Artist Residences

The artist residences follow the same conventions and materiality as the main building. The front porch recesses back into the building, and where it has touched, while recessing, is replaced with a rich wood material (figure 94). The exterior is finished board-formed concrete. The porch contrasts the walls so that one is encouraged to move toward the porch and promote more interaction (figure 95). The artist residence space is separated from the main project by a grove of trees (figure 96). These trees do not prevent interaction between the two spaces, but act more as an implied barrier to give a greater sense of privacy and separation without being a true wall.

Planters offer a sense of privacy, but also serve as a seating element with a built-in bench.

Opening in wall allows unobstructed view to the north of the site, so as to encourage interaction with those who may be entering from the north.

Residence approach paths still link to primary site path. The transition from home to main site is made when passing through the tree line.

Figure 94. Generation of wood texture diagram

Concrete recesses and is replaced by warm wood material

Concrete shed roof form

Figure 95. Artist Residences: Day

Figure 96. Artist Residences: Evening
the complex nature of Memphis. It would be yet another addition to the rich tapestry that makes up the positive and negative aspects of its history. This monument for Peace and Justice by MASS Design Group in Montgomery, a slave auction art piece a reality. This portion is the part that identity, and that amenities brought into the area benefit the voices are heard, that the community can maintain its cultural in the area down a path that would ensure the existing residents’ might help the community steer the discussion of the changes certain initiatives they may have to better the community. The information would especially be helpful now, as there is much be utilized to provide some guidance or assistance with. My intention with contacting them was to express how I felt of studying the community, Slave Haven Underground Railroad Museum, and the history of the city of Memphis. After completing the project, I attempted to reach out to representatives of the community to discuss this project. I was unable to reach them due to circumstances of the pandemic. My intention with contacting them was to express how I felt this project, and the research that went into it, could potentially be used to provide some guidance or assistance with certain initiatives they may have to better the community. The information would especially be helpful now, as there is much development in the Black Lloyd community. The ideas of the thesis might help the community steer the discussion of the changes in the area down a path that would ensure the existing residents’ voices are heard, that the community can maintain its cultural identity, and that amenities brought into the area benefit the existing residents as well as new residents moving into the area.

Finally, there was some discussion of making a portion of the slave auction art piece a reality. This portion is the part that contains the monument from the Legacy Museum and Memorial for Peace and Justice by MASS Design Group in Montgomery, Alabama (figure 70). I would like to design a new stand-alone construct for a specific site in the city, and present the design to the city for construction. I do believe that this monument needs to be constructed. As a city, Memphis accepts and displays both the positive and negative aspects of its history. This monument would be yet another addition to the rich tapestry that makes up the complex nature of Memphis.

Completing this thesis has been a formative experience. I have learned much about myself as a designer, and how important it is that design be for all people. I have learned much about myself as a designer, and how important it is that design be for all people. I have learned much about myself as a designer, and how important it is that design be for all people.
Urban Magnets Theory was created by the Institute for Urban Vitality based in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. This theory is built on the observation that people often prefer to frequent certain places and areas. Bruce Haden is a principal at Human Studio in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. He has over 30 years of architectural design experience and has twice been the chair of the City of Vancouver Urban Design Panel.

The “Urban Magnets” theory contains a series of suggestions of what aspect spaces contain, or could be designed with, to encourage people to experience a space. This is often done in some way that people are enthusiastic about a specific subject and allow them to space to practice their interests (what they call “living out loud!”) And the theory is that people will gather to watch these enthusiastic people practice their activity.

In this thesis project, there was a need to give some validity to why people would come to this building, and the Urban Magnets Theory was vital in offering direction to how and why people might enter the building as they are designed. The idea of this theory combined with Oldenberg’s thoughts of the “Third Place” and Polimédio’s ideas of Steven Holl Architects. He has over forty years of architectural design, had won many prizes, including the Pritzker Prize, and has been the chair of the City of Vancouver Urban Design Panel. Currently, he is a visiting scholar at New York University’s Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service.

This book is a reminder during not to only concern oneself with the physical attributes of a space, but how a user might experience the space. His text does a good job of considering how the psychology of spaces and the users within them can be vital to the design process. This text does a good job of describing the experience of a space from the viewpoint of a user who is not a designer; he uses a variety of sources to support his arguments, one of which is Dr. John H. Park, ecologist and former special science assistant at the Smithsonian Institution. This text does a good job of describing the experience of a space from the viewpoint of a user who is not a designer;


In Working With Doubt Holl is discussing what it means to design the urban landscape in a twenty-first century setting. Holl explains how designing space effects people psychologically and how important urban design is now. Steven Holl is principal of Steven Holl Architects. He has over forty years of architectural design, had won many prizes, including the Pritzker Prize, and has authored many texts on design.

This book discusses concepts such as psychological space and urban porosity. The author discusses how urban cities now have a different sectional quality and how innovations like the elevator have impacted the “Z” axis. When he talks about urban porosity, he is easy to visualize his points on the importance of offering the visitor a way out of the urban fabric by separating


In this journal article, Oldenberg is discussing what are known as “Third Places.” These are places between home and work where people receive much of their social interactions. These places can include bars, restaurants, and coffee shops. They are essentially any places where a person might interact with other members of the community to exchange ideas or have conversation. Ray Oldenberg is a sociologist and writer who has written the book The Great Good Place. He is currently Professor Emeritus at the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at the University of Florida.


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This book discusses concepts such as psychological space and urban porosity. The author discusses how urban cities now have a different sectional quality and how innovations like the elevator have impacted the “Z” axis. When he talks about urban porosity, he is easy to visualize his points on the importance of offering the visitor a way out of the urban fabric by separating structures and offering visual transparency through large buildings. With this idea of porosity, he references Jane Jacobs and her work on city environments and the need to move not only with the design, but how they will move around and through the building. This reading is a reminder that not only do people experience the physical aspects of the building, but they also interact with the exterior. Most people may never enter the building; therefore, it is important to have visual connections to the structure. These ideas were incorporated with the ideas from Sucher’s City Comforts when thinking about how the building needed to sit on it and how it addressed the sidewalk.


In this article, Polimédio writes about how fewer Americans are participating in religious and religious services. As a result, Americans are missing out on one of the oldest forms of civic engagement in the United States: church attendance. Chayenne Polimédio is a writer for New America; an organization that focuses on issues in public policy. She write primarily about American democracy and civic engagement.

Churches are places where members of the community can come together regularly and engage in various community activities. As churches struggle to attract attendance, some communities have created other solutions to a lack of third places. According to Polimédio, some of these solutions include “promoting private-public partnerships as a tool to develop public infrastructure, to ensure more flexible zoning laws in residential areas. And still other efforts propose mixed-income neighborhoods, which might increase diversity and community cohesion, though mixed-income neighborhoods can often generate diversity.” In the American South, churches have long been involved in the local community, attending events and helping to meet with members of their specific community, which is oftentimes racially mixed. In the article, Polimédio makes good points about how churches are helping the local area by being a key part of the town for a long time when few points of content in society. However, what can be learned about how churches are helping and build community is invaluable to the reestablishment of civic spaces.

Polimédio’s ideas about how communities are attempting to promote third places was useful in guiding how to think about the civic third place. The idea of creating mixed income communities is useful to the project, for example, the central courtyard is intended to be a place to gather and learn about the history and culture and that the design space might be about gathering and learning, directly to the third place point, which is that third places should help unify neighborhoods. The courtyard helps to understand and allow all users to learn about the history of Memphis and the community, thus allowing the collective experience of learning together.
Putnam, Robert. “The Strange Disappearance of Civic America.” The American Prospect. December 19, 2001. Accessed April 09, 2019. https://prospect.org/article/strange-disappearance-civic-america. The American Prospect offers helpful background information on the design principles behind civic spaces. Rowe discusses how the Piazza successfully appeals to these broad social groups: government nobility, the well-to-do middle class, and working class, non-citizens. The author writes about what aspects civic spaces should have, to whom they should appeal, and what should be their purpose. One of the most important points that the book makes it that it is crucial that both the government and the people come together to design civic spaces. The author writes that when the government creates places in “its own image,” the project often fails. He points to public housing as an example of how greater government-focused civic spaces. This reading offered some helpful background information on the history of civic space and how it changed over the years, and the memories they have made at the project. The author of this text combined with ideas from Ray Oldenberg’s idea of Third Place helped to shape thinking about the civic aspects of the building.

Tiller, Jeremy. Architecture Depends. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2013. This text, Tiller is discussing the concept of how architecture addresses time. He writes about how architects should address time in their designs. Tiller believes that architects should address time by fighting against time by creating works that are meant to last for decades. Jeremy Till is an architect, author, head of Central Saint Martins, and a Professor of the Social Studies of Science and Technology in the Program in Science, Technology, and Society at MIT, and the founding director of the MIT Initiative on Technology and Self. Tiller has also written many texts regarding people's changing relationships in digital culture. In this presentation she discusses how people use technology to replace personal interaction for such reasons as they do not feel listened to (and thus go to social media where there are hundreds of thousands of listeners at an instant). People resort to technology because they are "lonely, but afraid of intimacy", and so they can "have the illusion of companionship without the demand of friendship." This type of use of technology can lead to worsening feelings of loneliness. This presentation lends some legitimacy to the hypothesis presented: that technology is replacing human interaction. And, Design and the government creates places in “its own image,” the project often fails. It seemed from the reading Till is implying that architects attempt to make works that never seem to age. Tiller believes that in order for architecture and architects to truly connect with users and society, they must address time and its effects in their design. Time is intertwined with life. Attempting to deny or overcome the effects of time will lead to worsening feelings of loneliness. The government creates places in “its own image,” the project often fails. It seemed from the reading Till is implying that architects attempt to make works that never seem to age. Tiller believes that in order for architecture and architects to truly connect with users and society, they must address time and its effects in their design. Time is intertwined with life. Attempting to deny or overcome the effects of time will lead to worsening feelings of loneliness.

Turkle, Sherry. “Connected, but Alone?” The American Prospect. December 19, 2001. Accessed April 09, 2019. https://www.ted.com/talks/sherry_turkle_alone_together#t-1162196. According to the author, civic spaces of today should be open and accessible to everyone. It was made at the project. This text gave me the tools to encourage this type of use of technology can lead to worsening feelings of loneliness. This presentation lends some legitimacy to the hypothesis presented: that technology is replacing human interaction. And, Design and the government creates places in “its own image,” the project often fails. It seemed from the reading Till is implying that architects attempt to make works that never seem to age. Tiller believes that in order for architecture and architects to truly connect with users and society, they must address time and its effects in their design. Time is intertwined with life. Attempting to deny or overcome the effects of time will lead to worsening feelings of loneliness.

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Material choice was a very important part of this thesis design. This reading facilitated deeper thinking about material selection and how these materials effect the feel of the spaces. Wood is a major material in the design (especially interiors), and it was chosen to offer a contrast to the rather cold concrete exterior, to encourage people to enter the building, and to denote areas of importance.

A contrast to the rather cold concrete exterior, to encourage people to enter the building, and to denote areas of importance. Also the way that Zumthor visualizes his spaces (by use of perspective) during design was very useful. Much of the interior design was completed through perspective drawings and sketches.

The site provided invaluable knowledge about the future plans for the site. One key aspect of the thesis design is to bring together a variety of people from around the city to work to a Third Place to home. Seeing that the future development for the area is primarily more residential space, helped to bolster the idea that this area will be a hub for a multitude of socioeconomic groups. The one item that appears to be missing from future plans is a centralized “third place” setting are to build to the sidewalk, make the building front permeable, and prohibit parking lots in front of the building.


Figure 8  Infographic on cell phone addiction. Designed by New Theory. Retrieved from https://venngage.com/com/en/Travelguide/Atlanta/cafes/javavino-36835


Figure 12  City Comforts’ three basic principles diagram. The three basic principles for designing buildings in an urban setting are: build to the sidewalk, make the building front permeable, and prohibit parking lots in front of the building.

Figure 13  The Culture Wheel. Retrieved from https://bridgestogether.org/celebrating-our-culture-a-new-how-to-guide/

Figure 14  Peter Ciemitis’s 15 Principles diagrams. The diagrams studied in this main principle were key to the design of the building and site. Created by Peter Ciemitis. Retrieved from https://www.kissclipart.com/pulovr/15-principles-designing-great-space-places-peter-ciemits

Figure 15  My solution to the issue. This figure is a minimalised, graphic representation of the front of the building design.

Figure 16  Residential Analysis Diagram

Figure 17  Burkle Park Area Future Development Plan. This plan for the site provided invaluable knowledge about the future plans for the site. One key aspect of the thesis design is to bring together a variety of people from around the city at large. Seeing that the future development for the area is primarily more residential space, helped to bolster the idea that this area will be a hub for a multitude of socioeconomic groups. The one item that appears to be missing from future plans is a centralized “third place” setting are to build to the sidewalk, make the building front permeable, and prohibit parking lots in front of the building.

Figure 18  Ballard Community Center

Figure 19  Concept Sketches. These early concept sketches show ideas on how to address Slave Haven Underground Railroad Museum. Slave Haven is an already established culturally significant landmark. Any new project on the site should engage Slave Haven. These sketches show the design beginning to open and address the Slave Haven site.

Figure 20  The Site. The project location is at the corner of Chelsea and Second Street.
The largest slave auction site in the city is on axis with this area. It is also part of Downtown Memphis, and this is Downtown proper and the site. It is easy to forget that important to make a visual connection between people up onto the site.

Addressing views to Downtown. It is easy to forget that important to make a visual connection between the people inside and in the street. An added benefit is encouraging people to come into the building, as they can preview activity before entering. People who are entering have a long hand in avoiding personal space of the lower people. The diagram questions why when people are near one another, they tend to focus on either us or other people. The diagram questions how does the upper site affect on one side or other people. The diagram asks, why are we not together in the same street to observe the activity within. Some might believe that this connection between people is an effort to avoid invasion of personal space. The lower part of the diagram questions why when we gather, we don’t interact and start to make connections.

Eye contact at multiple levels diagram. Peter Ciemitis’ Restraint, Transcendent, Long Hard Slavery! Slavery! was used for one of the design. This diagram shows that people inside and outside of the building. Between the people inside and outside of the building.

Visual permeability and connection diagram. Visual barriers between spaces are strategically dissolved to encourage more interaction between spaces.
null
APPENDIX 1: PRESENTATION BOARDS

Figures 97-123 are the final presentation materials.
a multi-sensory experience that is meant to be collectively
space could be considered a micro version of what the entire
by Peter Ciemitis' idea that eye contact needs to happen at a
The plaza begs to be used. The areas was primarily driven
for the people. The building is attempting to create spaces
shifts and changes to accommodate seating and walking
the front plaza and front of the building is given over to
outside.
Permeable front at night
visible form both near and
entry and beckons to
those blocks away.
far, acting as a beacon to
create plaza
Building shifts
Plaza
Seating/gathering

of the community to display their work. Once in the
available to both professional artists and members
to allow these graffiti alcoves. These space are
injustice.
they the bidders. A reminder that we
The intention of the design is that the
neighborhood and this place. One is invited to touch the
of the existing community. The wall holds the history of this
has many cast hands. These hands were cast from members
etched the names of those bought and sold
The Legacy Museum and Memorial for

in this region.

the activity on the ground floor. It is a space that
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the activity on the ground floor. It is a space that
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Figure 112 Presentation board-lobby.

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Figure 111 Presentation board-central courtyard.

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Figure 110 Presentation board-approach

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Figure 109 Presentation board-upper balcony lobby.

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Figure 108 Presentation board-graffiti wall

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Figure 107 Presentation board-plant place

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Figure 106 Presentation board-site opportunities

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Figure 105 Presentation board-site opportunities

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Figure 0 Presentation board-site opportunities
Sections and become the auctioned. The courtyard. At the center of the piece city, its history of slave sells. The way about a little discussed aspect of the project to Slave Haven is to speak Slave Trade Awareness Concept Forest and Maples slave auction site Multipurpose Space Private Art Studio Private Art Studio Front Gallery Main Art Storage Storage Kiln Room Curator’s Office

Figure 119: Presentation board- northeast elevations

Figure 120: Presentation board- main sections Section

Figure 122: Presentation board- sections and diagram

Figure 124: Student research forums presentation

Figure 123: Thesis presentation announcement poster

Figure 121: Presentation board- north/south elevations

Figure 125: Presentation board- south/south elevations

Figure 118: Presentation board- slave trade awareness concept Sections

Figure 132: Thesis presentation announcement poster

Figure 130: Presentation board- south/south elevations

Figure 131: Presentation board- northeast elevations

COLLECTIVE EXPERIENCE

When laying out the site, it became evident that either around the courtyard or toward Slave Haven. This moment is where the interaction comes with the community. The wall holds the history of this neighborhood and comes from standing up to and fighting adversity. This puncturing of the wall space also allows community. Some basic goals of the project are to provide spaces that encourage interaction between people from attaining their social interactions through technology. Robert Putnam theorized in his text Bowling Alone, published in 2000, that television is the main culprit of this shift in social interaction. His people from attaining their social interactions through technology. The major focus of this project is to use Architecture to build community, with a focus on dissuading television keeps people in their homes and out of the public realm. The next evolution of the television is disconnect. Psychologist Sherry Turkle states that technology is changing the way we relate to each other and that we are getting used to being “alone together.”

The problem that this thesis project is attempting to address is the idea that people have begun to use television and the way we relate to ourselves, and that we are getting used to being “alone together.” Any new project on site should engage Slave Haven. These sketches show the design beginning to open and gained from the future site plan, this item that appears to be missing from future plans is a centralized “third place” for the community.

Invaluable knowledge about the future plans for the site. One key aspect of the design is to bring together a variety of significant landmark. Any new project on site should engage Slave Haven. These sketches show the design beginning to open and gained from the future site plan, this item that appears to be missing from future plans is a centralized “third place” for the community.

This Memphis Uptown Community plan, from the Community Redevelopment Agency, for the site gave me foundational knowledge about the future plans for the site. One key aspect of the design is to bring together a variety of significant landmark. Any new project on site should engage Slave Haven. These sketches show the design beginning to open and gained from the future site plan, this item that appears to be missing from future plans is a centralized “third place” for the community.

The Children’s Room space, natural materials, a pop of color in the ramps, and a mural wall. All of these ingredients create a considered a micro version of what the entire project is attempting to achieve. The Plaza includes green creates a new way to interact in what might be considered a fairly compact space. This space could be
APPENDIX 2: PROCESS PIECE

This process piece offered a unique opportunity to create a piece in relationship to a specific subject matter. There was a play entitled “Shaming Jane Doe” that dealt with issues of sexual assault and “victim blaming.” This play primarily focused on these issues on college campuses. The play was written and directed by Taylor St. John and was performed by the University of Memphis Department of Theater and Dance.

When working on the piece, the plan was to express the key points mentioned in my manifesto. These points are that architecture should evoke emotion, create moments, emphasize positive and negative space, acknowledge that light and dark are key, and work tirelessly to inspire personal change. When analyzing the focus of the play, there was a realization that these points are a necessity of architecture, but also could be utilized to make people aware of the horrors of sexual assault.

The central concept for the piece was to make the survivor of the assault visible to the viewer; both physically and emotionally. There was a need to show the assaulted as a person first. The secondary concept of the piece was to show how bystanders can be culpable in the assault. As a viewer of the piece, one must wrestle with the idea that one can be a perpetrator of victim blaming and shaming. How many have prejudged a victim, based on the most minimal of evidence, due to their own systems of beliefs and interpretations of the situation? So often people assume that because the abused did not behave in a way that they would, this individual is being dishonest. The expression of these concepts came from aspects of the construct’s design. Doors were used as the primary structure. Specific doors offered specific views to the interior of the piece. Inside the piece was a chair, which was offered to anyone who cared to sit. The views into the space helped to frame the assaulted in different ways. As the viewer moved around the piece, the visibility into and out of the piece became simultaneously more open and more obscured. The screens on the front of the piece were back lit from the interior, so from this point it was clearer for the viewer to see the abused, but harder for the abused to see the viewer. This represents the complexity of sexual assault and how with time, the event can become very clouded and complex, causing the observer to reconcile many factors to decide about the event and the survivor of the assault.

The screened section is next to a door that reads “Jury Room.” This door next to the screened view reminds the observer that they are ultimately the juror in the situation. The construct represents the envelope of the abused’s contention with their assault. And the viewers stand on the outside, judging.

Before the show began, a person would be sitting inside of the structure, and it would be lit with both the ambient light from the room and four lights interior to the piece. After the show, the lighting would change to a strong spot light from above, which shined down onto the chaotic empty window frames above the chair. The person is replaced with a series of images of various body parts of a combination of people. This transition is representative of the chaos that can come from a sexual assault situation, and how all parties involved are affected.

The lighting, images, and construction style evoke emotion. The seat inside the construct and the interaction between the observer and victim create moments. The openings in the doors, screens, and window frames above emphasize positive and negative space and the tension between them. The changing of the lighting before and after the play acknowledges that light and dark are key, as the change in lighting dramatically changes how one interacts with the piece. After seeing the play and interacting with the piece, the intention was that the observer would be inspired to either explore some type of personal change, or have gone through some form of internal transformation.

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A couple of departments collaborate for big issue drama production

By Josh Lawyers

The University of Memphis Department of Theatre & Dance collaborated with the Department of Architecture in the winter to create a new experience for the students. The production of "Dreaming Deep" was directed by Taylor Fisher, and the set design was created by architecture students. The production was a unique experience for both the students involved.

The collaboration between the departments was a great success, and the students were excited to see their creations come to life on stage. The production was well-received, and the students were proud of their hard work.

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APPENDIX 3: ADVANCED ISSUES IN CITY BUILDING RESEARCH SYNTHESIS

While working on this thesis project, information was also being introduced through our Advanced Issues in City Building class. Much of the study and research in this class was directly utilized in the project. This section shows how the work done in this class influenced much of the design, both physically and conceptually.

Synthesis Map

Throughout the course of this class, the texts were helpful in directing many still unresolved questions and potential issues with the project. There were many ideas expressed in the texts that had a direct influence on the design of the project. When surmising the influence these readings had on the project, it felt necessary to create a physical connection map (figure 131) that shows how the research and study has had a direct influence on the building. Each segment of notes, surrounding the central design, has highlighted areas. These highlights incorporate information, some of which influenced the design concept and some which can be directly evidenced in the physical appearance of the design.

Color Coding

Each segment of the layout coincides with an aspect of the overall design. After completing the readings and laying out the notes, I began to group them based on how they contributed to the overall design (figure 132). Most of the groups shown include multiple ideas, from multiple chapters, of multiple texts. The next sections explain how each section of notes contributed to the research effort and building design as a whole.


This segment of the research includes many ideas that were used as support for the overall design (figure 134). This area includes both theories and general notes from the texts. One theory included here is Urban Magnets Theory. This was learned from the presentation about Crosstown Concourse. Urban Magnets theory, and its primary precedent project, offered some validity to one of the main ideas regarding my thesis; that art could be used as a catalyst for interaction and conversation.

City Comforts Chapter 5, “Knowing Where You Are”, talks about way-finding and signage in urban design. This chapter was useful in guiding me on figuring out how I want the design to be visible and navigable starting even from miles away from the project. Finally, the For the Love of Cities text’s Chapter 7, “Love Notes” was a good reminder that the design should treat everyone like a “world class citizen,” and that it is often the small details that endear people to a place.

This segment of the research primarily contains information from City Comforts (figure 133). The three rules of Urban Design (Build to the Street, Make Building Front Permeable, and Prohibit Parking in Front of Building) were a large contributor to the design. I used these rules as a basic rubric when beginning to consider how my design would address the site and the street. With my design being on a corner, these rules helped me to figure out how and why the building should sit on the site in a particular area with a particular orientation.
This segment of the research influenced many of the design choices for the courtyard area of the design (figure 135). The courtyard is intended to be one of the primary communal spaces in the design. City Comforts had many points regarding how urban design can encourage interaction. One main point from the text was to make walkways wide enough so that passing groups in conversation do not have to stop and move around one another. From this suggestion, I decided to incorporate 8’ wide walking paths through the courtyard space. The book also mentions that public space should be in the sun, so I made the walkways covered, but left the central area of the courtyard open to the sky.

When considering the facade design for the building, I was considering how people would both approach and interact with the building. The exploratory city sketches (figure 136) were very valuable to inform decisions regarding the facade. I completed a facade study series on South Main (figure 137) because of how those buildings segmented their facades to break them down to a more human scale. As I continued to explore the city and sketch, I took note not only of how other buildings handled their facades, but also the fashion in which the facades were handled to encourage interaction between people both outside and inside of the buildings.
The City Comforts rule to “make the building front permeable” is a concept that emerged early in the design. This segment includes an early diagram expressing the importance of permeability throughout the length of the project (figure 138). Also talked about here are ideas about making space for children and making space for everybody. City Comforts talks about the importance of having space for children in the city. The text talks about building to the scale of a child and how having children interact makes adults more comfortable interacting. I have added child scale elements in the children’s room. For example, there is a separate child and adult entrance. On the site, I have included a playground space. What Makes a Great City Chapters 3 and 4 talk about designing space that is available to everyone. Some of the suggestions from these chapters that influenced the design are creating space people want to return to again and again, how urban places should include spaces where people can enjoy themselves, and where they want to both see and be seen by other people.

City Sketches
The exploratory city sketches were very influential to my thesis process. Doing these sketches added a local, real-world element to the City Comforts readings. Working through these sketches gave me the opportunity to closely study what was mentioned in the text and to think visually about how the subject matter in the book could be applied to my thesis. These sketches (figures 139, 140, 141, 142) in particular, were very helpful in my research. Exploring both the buildings and their neighborhoods gave me useful insight into what aspects of their design encouraged interaction between people and what did or did not keep people returning to these spaces over and over again.
Figure 141  387 South Main and Spindini

Figure 142  Local Gastropub in Overton Square