Authenticity and Architecture: A Contemporary Stamp of Incompleteness

Eric Richard Rivera

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book is submitted in pursuit of my master's in architecture. However the people in my life and those I have met since moving to Memphis share some credit for its completion. Thus, this acknowledgment gives thanks to those individuals. I would like to first give thanks to my mother; you deserve more credit than this entire book can fit. I thank you for the sacrifices you made in your life to care for my siblings and me. I can only try to understand raising four kids as a single parent. I know to some degree that you put your life to the side so that we could achieve our dreams. I remember those times when you would say to us, "Study...Don't be like me, don't struggle like I struggle." You played the best hand out of the cards you were given and this book represents just a piece of my gratitude to tell you I did it. Thank you and I love you.

To my father: I know you would give anything to help me. You supported me in anything that I wanted to do and helped me along the way towards this achievement. Thank you and I love you. Thank you to my brothers, Roger and Kenny, and my sister, Johanna. All of you are the family I hold closest and I want to show my gratitude for the support you have given me in taking time to call me just to check in during this intense process. I appreciate every single moment you all took to show me you supported me and I love you all more than I can say.

I would like to also thank my beautiful girlfriend, Julie. You have shown me nothing but support and love during this process and were truly my partner in crime. Thank you much for all that you do for me; I love you so much.

I would like to thank the people I have met during my time in Memphis and those who have supported me during my time here. Thank you to Alex and Kyle, for providing a place to stay when I first moved here and had no where to go. Thank you to Christen, Gabe, Edgar, and Sophia for all being great friends to me. I cherish every single moment created these past two years. To those who showed me how to turn my passion into architecture: an exceptionally large thank you, to my thesis committee members Jennifer Thompson, Brian Andrews, and Andrew Guthrie. Not only did each of you provide support and guidance throughout this process, you also challenged me to continually question and refine my thoughts and ideas. I was left with my best work. To those who made this project possible: another special thanks to Jennifer Barker, Michael Hugg, Sherry Bryan, and all at the Department of Architecture at the University of Memphis who gave me the opportunity to pursue my dreams of getting my master's degree.
Moving to Memphis (Figure 1) was a choice I made to continue my pursuit towards becoming an architect. Upon my arrival, the adjustment phase was difficult. The social and cultural differences were apparent and the lack of ownership (feel towards Memphis) further stunted my growth as an individual and group member within the community. However, just as Memphis had given me an opportunity, it was only fair to extend the courtesy back. Thus, this thesis is an opportunity to broaden my perspective and shift my views, contingent on my willingness to become more than an entity within the city, but instead a part of the city.
ABSTRACT

This thesis engages a discussion of authenticity and its relationship to architecture, and utilizes the design process to understand the result of employing authenticity as a conceptual approach. The city of study is Memphis, Tennessee. To establish solid grounding, the project utilizes an abandoned building and examines its historical record to understand the site context and history. This project’s typology, primarily housing units to promote an active zone, known as a “micro-neighborhood,” for the public to engage socially to reinforce collective gathering and community ownership. This is accomplished through an adaptive urban renewal process that includes economic, environmental, and social redevelopment in an effort to foster community growth.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE OF CONTENTS</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>List of Figures</td>
<td>xii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manifesto</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design Solution</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annotated bibliography</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure Credits</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendices</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
MANIFESTO

We design symbols reflected in the food we cook, the music we play, and the architecture that shelters us. Each example represents an act of expression and insight in an effort to deepen our coexistence with the natural environment. They are solutions meant to address its creator’s place and encapsulate its values with the ultimate goal of becoming the next widespread standard or tradition. Architecture’s best examples survive as artifacts that follow this line of thinking. They are only bound by the ideas that serve as the blueprints to improve the human condition. Since this is the only constraint, the aesthetic is purely a product of its time; the form becomes the skin for the building, but does not dictate the intent. This leaves the responsibility of the architect to maintain the integrity of architecture while also seeking to innovate the existing; to generate new ideals to explain the heritage of current architecture for future generations, to improve on through their own iteration. In return, another chapter is added onto the timeline of Architecture’s immortal heritage.

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1 Cross County Diagram
Figure 2 Bird’s Eye View of Project Site
Figure 3 Contextual Map
Figure 4 Commerical College, South Memphie
Figure 5 Romanesque Masking of Steel Column
Figure 6 Existing Interior of Church, Facing South
Figure 7 Wood and Steel Fracture Roof, Interior of Church
Figure 8 Existing Interior of Church, Facing North
Figure 9 Project Site Map
Figure 10 Commercial College, St. Thomas Catholic Church
Figure 11 Salisbury Demographic Diagram
Figure 12 Programmatic Analysis Diagram
Figure 13 Architectural Approach Diagram
Figure 14 Narrative Diagram
Figure 15 Narrative to the East
Figure 16 Sitel Prep
Figure 17 First Floor
Figure 18 Second Floor
Figure 19 Southern Housing Typologies
Figure 20 Wall Connection Detail
Figure 21 Early Development of Orange Mound
Figure 22 Remaining Shotgun Example
Figure 23 Bedroom Housing Module
Figure 24 Modular Arrangement and Assembly Organization
Figure 25 Housing Module Transposed
Figure 26 Community Space
Figure 27 Modular Bedroom
Figure 28 Building Cross Ventilation Diagram
Figure 29 Section Showing Stack Effect
Figure 30 Third Floor
Figure 31 Second Floor, Residential Courtyard Perspective
Figure 32 Top of Bell Tower
Figure 33 Walking Path at East Facade
Figure 34 South Elevation
Figure 35 North Elevation
Figure 36 West Elevation
Figure 37 East Elevation
Figure 38 South Courtyard, Day and Night
Figure 39 North Courtyard, Second Level
Figure 40 West Perspective
Figure 41 View From Southwest Corner
Figure 42 Potential Unit Arrangement with Supporting Structure
Figure 43 Potential Unit Organization
Figure 44 Potential Arrangement with Module Boys Grid System
Figure 45 First Presentation Boards 1-3
Figure 46 First Presentation Boards 4-6
Figure 47 First Presentation Boards 7-8
Figure 48 First Presentation Boards 9-12
Figure 49 First Presentation Boards 13-15
Figure 50 First Presentation Boards 16-18
Figure 51 Section Model
Figure 52 Massing Model
Figure 53 Final Presentation
Figure 54 Forum Presentation Slides
Figure 55 Concrete Model
Figure 43 Potential Unit Organization
Figure 44 Potential Arrangement with Module Boys Grid System
Figure 45 First Presentation Boards 1-3
Figure 46 First Presentation Boards 4-6
Figure 47 First Presentation Boards 7-8
Figure 48 First Presentation Boards 9-12
Figure 49 First Presentation Boards 13-15
Figure 50 First Presentation Boards 16-18
Figure 51 Section Model
Figure 52 Massing Model
Figure 53 Final Presentation
Figure 54 Forum Presentation Slides
Figure 55 Concrete Model
Figure 42 Potential Unit Arrangement with Supporting Structure
Figure 43 Potential Unit Organization
Figure 44 Potential Arrangement with Module Boys Grid System
Figure 45 First Presentation Boards 1-3
Figure 46 First Presentation Boards 4-6
Figure 47 First Presentation Boards 7-8
Figure 48 First Presentation Boards 9-12
Figure 49 First Presentation Boards 13-15
Figure 50 First Presentation Boards 16-18
Figure 51 Section Model
Figure 52 Massing Model
Figure 53 Final Presentation
Figure 54 Forum Presentation Slides
Figure 55 Concrete Model
Figure 42 Potential Unit Arrangement with Supporting Structure
Figure 43 Potential Unit Organization
Figure 44 Potential Arrangement with Module Boys Grid System
Figure 45 First Presentation Boards 1-3
Figure 46 First Presentation Boards 4-6
Figure 47 First Presentation Boards 7-8
Figure 48 First Presentation Boards 9-12
Figure 49 First Presentation Boards 13-15
Figure 50 First Presentation Boards 16-18
Figure 51 Section Model
Figure 52 Massing Model
Figure 53 Final Presentation
Figure 54 Forum Presentation Slides
Figure 55 Concrete Model

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The world is selective in the architecture it chooses to keep. Buildings kept often embody the ideal standard of approaching design with a simple solution, and they live on as artifacts. Surviving examples provide a blueprint of architecture’s agreement with a particular climate and site and light in the forces of art’s technical advancement and social values. As the time line of architecture continues to extend further back in regions, reference to past era’s ascendance is important in weighing lessons for developing or authentic concepts. The development of a concept is fundamental in creating authentic architecture, as concepts provide reasoning for decisions made and a design’s potential resides solely on the light weighing of the concept with its context of place and present time. Buildings that do not live up to this standard often fall doors prematurely, becoming abandoned when they do not suit well in a particular place or time beyond their time of intended use. The challenge for the current generation of architects is to reinvigorate the disciples of abandoned, but architecturally significant, buildings, in hopes of integrating them into the face of architecture. By blending past and current architectural principles to achieve the design of an extension to older buildings, the contemporary attachment is appropriate to the nature of the existing shell and the present time. This is all in an effort to better grasp the concept of authenticity and its relationship to architecture.

This thesis creates a conscious type of micro-neighborhood that describes an existing structure as if it were an open book, allowing the reader to understand who the architecture is serving and how it might manifest in a contemporary fashion. This project seeks to accomplish a successful readaptation of the existing site and church, era, neighborhood values, and context. Each aspect is addressed by the design in terms of material, program, housing typology, and precedents.

To begin, one must first understand the multitude of layers applicable to the notion of “authenticity” in relation to architecture. David Fixler, an architect and harvard associate professor says, “the topic is intensely discussed in philosophy and psychology in an effort to bridge the dialogue between the modernist’s search for truth and the postmodern hunger to extract meaning from this truth and re-present it in a contemporary fashion.”

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Concept of Authenticity

Authenticity in architecture, as seen through past examples, sheds light on the technical and esthetic differences between that period and what we see today. Authenticity in architecture is a reminder of the site context, era of conception, and the genuine intent the building wishes to accomplish. Taking into consideration the origins of architecture as the traces of past building developments deepens the understanding of what makes people uniquely human.

Context

“Context is defined as the interrelated conditions in which something exists or occurs. It is the works of Frank Gehry; architecture should speak of its time and place, but form as timelessness. Architecture should be connected to the era, where technology and culture form an interrelated structure.” Furthermore, “contextual and adaptive responses to its surroundings by respecting what is already there.” The site context is best suited in the creation of a project design to provide a functional building that conforms to the local rules of nature. The site context is essential to designing with the surrounding environment. The above the project located in both nature and adaptable to its environment. Site context overall reveals traditions, which respond to local conditions such as climate and geography.

Site Selection—Soulsville (Era/Context)

Since 1966, Memphis has been experiencing increased growth architecturally. Many of the city’s areas are in the midst of rehabilitation to update the city and preserve its rich history. One site in need of this attention is Soulsville in South Memphis, a neighborhood that has its roots in a time-specific and a cross-cultural mix of black population growth in the 1920s with the establishment of Orange Mound, the country’s first community built by and for African Americans.” Ultimately, as residential tensions increased, this led to the sale of many properties in South Memphis and a major shift in the demographics of Soulsville in the 1950s and 1960s. Many of its previous white residents sold their land with the surrounding suburbs. During the early part of the 1980s, this trend continued as Soulsville, a neighborhood once a major hotbed for intracity soul music into American pop-culture. However, as a result of the shift, the area was plagued by disinvestment and a once vibrant community has now become in dire need of attention (Figure 4). Plans to revitalize the community with efforts from long-time community members are to provide housing for low-income residents and spur economic growth by opening more brick and mortar stores.

Bound by E.H. Crump Boulevard, Soulsville’s perimeter overlooks Vance Avenue to the north, Interstate-55 to the west, South Parkway to the south, and Bellevue Boulevard to the east. Figure 3. The neighborhood’s main street, McLemore Avenue, is St. Thomas Catholic Church on East Fiddy Avenue. The church is a large Romanesque-styled church that has been abandoned for nearly 40 years. As a circa 1820s building, St. Thomas Catholic Church also provides an opportunity to preserve the historical value, which contributes to the building’s authenticity. The adaption of the church introduces a housing design that celebrates a historical artifact in a contemporary manner and highlights the qualities and influences of African-American owned housing. The design stems from Orange Mound’s founding churches, which tell the story of the community’s beginnings and are aesthetic because they were built in style of limited resources and harsh social conditions. The house established a presence of community and a sense of safety, allowing for the community to thrive until disinvestment fractured the neighborhood.

Figure 4

Figure 3

1. Blans, “Material, Style, and Authenticity”
3. Ibid.
5. Genet, “Making Room for Traditional Architecture.”
7. Jesse, "History of Memphis.”
8. Smith, “Memphis Neighborhood: Soulsville”
9. Greenberg, "St. Thomas Catholic Church.”
About a mile southwest of the Soulsville area, at the intersection of Willie Mitchell Boulevard and East Trigg Avenue, are the remains of a historic Catholic church and convent (highlighted in red in figure 9). The 1926 church has Romanesque characteristics and is recognized from the street for its architectural significance. Not only was this church a physical landmark, but it also had an impact on religion within the neighborhood. Due to the majority of non-Catholic residents, the church received opposition to its construction. Despite the resistance, the church thrived through various demographic transitions of racial and religious discrimination, as well as economic and social shifts from the 1920s to the 1960s. With the neighborhood’s ethnic make-up changing to predominantly African American, very few of whom were a part of the Catholic congregation until the 1980s, the church slowly began to decline. Though the church once served as a house of worship for the community in South Memphis, today it stands as a dilapidated structure (figures 5-8) in need of new life. Blight has also touched the immediate corners of the adjacent intersection, as all three corners are vacant (figure 10). The distinctive form of the church, derived from churches built during the Early Christian Era in Western Europe and rendered in simple materials, made the church a pivotal landmark of the South Memphis community in its period of significance. The period of significance for the church begins with the construction of the earliest building on the site—the convent built in 1907—and concludes with the completion of the last remodeling of the church building in 1948. The remodeling work carried out in 1948 did result in some changes in surface materials but did nothing to compromise the overall Romanesque Revival design of the building.

The population of South Memphis in the early twentieth century was largely composed of working-class Protestants employed in the furniture manufacturing, cotton warehouse, and grocery distribution industries of the area. The non-Catholic residents of the area objected to the establishment of a Catholic church in the neighborhood. Community lore suggests that when the original church was under construction in 1906-1907, opposing residents would appear after the workmen had left for the day and take down the masonry and other work that had been accomplished earlier. The story continues that an unnamed local cleric of St. Patrick’s was determined to prevent further delays on the project by watching over the building site on a nightly basis, and occasionally discharging a blast from a gun to discourage vandalism on the project site. Despite whatever resistance the neighborhood may have shown towards the church, St. Thomas thrived until its closure in the 1980s.
Establishing the idea of creating a micro-neighborhood led to the first floor's serving as the public's commercial space. The church has been in conflict with the neighborhood since its conception and so the design solution aims to heal/mend these struggles with new programs that will serve the community and support new growth and connectedness among residents. The first-floor program was established to purposely fulfill the needed essentials for a functional community, considering the current conditions have wiped out essential businesses. Statistical data (figure 11) was used to establish housing type that are considerate of the neighborhood’s populace and provide a program that increases the accessibility of essential services to the residents and surrounding neighborhoods. 

One important part of the program, outside of housing, is the grocery store. The closest grocery store is within 3.8 miles, which is not far for an individual who owns a car, but for public transport, this can be another two-hour task just to acquire healthy food. The program serves the neighborhood by bringing essential needs to the residents, so that ventures to basic goods are closer and therefore considered ideal conditions of a functioning micro-neighborhood (figure 12).


### Contextual Needs-Based Program (Context/Era)

#### Racial Demographic

- 36.5% African American or Black
- 3.0% Caucasian or White
- > 1.5% Hispanic or Latino/a/x

### Household Demographic

- 46.6% Non-furry Households
- 39.8% Single Parent Households
- 13.2% Married Households

### Renter’s Demographic

- 50.0% Non-family Households
- 38.2% Single Parent Households
- 11.8% Married Households

### Work and Transport to Work

- 91% Over the Age of 60
- Average Household Size: 3.82
Architectural Approach (Era/Intent)

The architectural approach is meant to adapt the existing buildings based on new narratives, not preserve the existing shell and reproduce the building's original power in a new synthesis. Precedents utilized in this design seek to blend architectural principles inherent to certain typologies relevant to this thesis. Places of vitality, sites similar to the project, and contemporary housing designs were used to explore ideas or to group them as adaptation to housing can be approached in a seamless manner. Since the approach is focused on authenticity, it was appropriate to span the precedents over time to reveal that although the aesthetic is purely a product of time, the principles underlying the examples are the true values of architecture. To begin, the thesis of Figure 13 contains a diagram that shows the site as it exists today. The exterior remains untouched after the deconversion and the interior is simply a shell of what was once a church.

Figure 13, Diagram 1: The first precedent is the Temple of Bacchus in Baalbek, Lebanon. Built by the Roman Empire in AD 101 to celebrate the god of wine and fertility, the temple's importance is shown through its architecture as a unique and unfinished temple built of the time. Most temples even constructed to honor the temple itself on the altar, which would surround the open plan, single entry, and vestibule areas, or empty rooms, usually containing just a statue of the god. However, with the Temple of Bacchus, the architect took this concept of how to construct a temple and flipped ornamentation inside out, thus detailing the interior to show the story of Bacchus on the columns and walls. This left the exterior lacking of ornamentation. Based on this precedent, placing importance on the interior space meant flipping the existing buildings to represent the influence passed on from one of its ancestral examples. By removing the roof, the entire church is on one level, highlighting the sacred space as main courtyards in the adaptive reuse process. Since the interior will be the centerpiece, the expressed lack of ornamentation will carry out to the exterior, which would surround the often plain, and unusual temple built of the time.

Figure 13, Diagram 2: The first precedent is the Temple of Bacchus in Baalbek, Lebanon. Built by the Roman Empire in AD 101 to celebrate the god of wine and fertility, the temple’s importance is shown through its architecture as a unique and unfinished temple built of the time. Most temples even constructed to honor the temple itself on the altar, which would surround the open plan, single entry, and vestibule areas, or empty rooms, usually containing just a statue of the god. However, with the Temple of Bacchus, the architect took this concept of how to construct a temple and flipped ornamentation inside out, thus detailing the interior to show the story of Bacchus on the columns and walls. This left the exterior lacking of ornamentation. Based on this precedent, placing importance on the interior space meant flipping the existing buildings to represent the influence passed on from one of its ancestral examples. By removing the roof, the entire church is on one level, highlighting the sacred space as main courtyards in the adaptive reuse process. Since the interior will be the centerpiece, the expressed lack of ornamentation will carry out to the exterior, which would surround the often plain, and unusual temple built of the time.

Figure 13, Diagram 3: Nearly 1600 years later, the Renaissance period produced many masterpieces of architecture. An exceptional work used as the next precedent to use in this thesis is Palazzo della Cancelleria, Rome, Italy, da Sangallo the Elder in 1513. The images to the center and right display the church’s floor, which was once celebrated for its intricacy on the church’s floor, will be refinished in this design to once again become the welcome mat for the community to observe the history left behind. The existing materials include the use of iron spotted brick, which was used to construct the church; stained glass, which was once celebrated for its intricacy on the church's floor; and terrazzo, which exists as mainly an entrance for people passing by and encountering the building in its ability to convey a story for people passing by and encountering the building in its ability to convey a story for people passing by and encountering the building in its ability to convey a story; and terrazzo, which exists as mainly an entrance for people passing by and encountering the building in its ability to convey a story.

Figure 13, Diagram 4: Nearly 500 years later in 2019, the final precedent 1000m² Prefabricated Housing. The importance of the precedent was to integrate contemporary technology to facilitate the conversion of the existing buildings. The aim was to provide precedent spanning over time to create a cohesive project referencing the past but still embracing the present and future. The project is simple, and takes a single idea, from the precedent to use in this thesis. Since the Cancelleria is influencing the project by engaging the existing buildings with one level, the construction of this project will be similar to the prefabricated housing units will also be stacked atop one level to its manner to influence the building aesthetic, while also using the site's existing materials as well as contemporary ideas.

Application of Precedents and Materiality

Figure 14 describes the development of an interior and exterior design through the implementation of precedent ideas to visualize how these spaces interact with the public and consider the building’s role within the neighborhood. Utilizing materials of the existing church helps in visually integrating the new design. These materials include the use of iron spotted brick, which was used to construct the church; stained glass, which was once celebrated for its intricacy on the church’s floor; and terrazzo, which exists mainly as an entrance for people passing by and encountering the building in its ability to convey a story. The project is simple, and takes a single idea, from the precedent to use in this thesis. Since the Cancelleria is influencing the project by engaging the existing buildings with one level, the construction of this project will be similar to the prefabricated housing units will also be stacked atop one level to its manner to influence the building aesthetic, while also using the site's existing materials as well as contemporary ideas.

15. Herko and Herko, “Palazzo della Cancelleria.”
16. Pereria, “1000m² Prefabricated Housing.”
Connection Beyond The Site (Intent/Context)

In order to satisfy another quality of the church's genuine intent, effort was focused towards community outreach. This specifically meant incorporating a bike path in the project to connect the site to various community resources (figure 15). Installation of the bike path would provide better circulation around the site and allow for travelers to have easier navigation and transport beyond the project site. Orientation of the main bike path is important to lead users to immediate green space, while also allowing those who use the path to view off south towards South Memphis Farmer’s Market to grab local fresh produce, or north towards Memphis Delta Prep and Stax Records. An alley, which is currently underutilized, is the proposed location for a perpendicular bike path that connects E Trigg Avenue with amenities located north and south of the site. The alley bike path would be a simple design with the addition of a few street lights for safety, allowing the site’s outreach to extend further and activate a corner of the city outside of the downtown area.

Connection At Site

Highlighted in red on figure 16 is the footprint for the building’s proposed extension. The eastern half of the “L” shaped site will remain undeveloped to allow for future phasing. In the current state of design, the space remains as a park for public use. The site plan explains how access to and around the site is gained through the mapped out crossings, as well as in other elements such as parking.

Figure 15 – Amenities to the East

Figure 16 – Site Map
The first floor executes the first two precedents from the architectural approach. The new courtyards take on the ideas of the Temple of Bacchus as the interior spaces flip to become exterior spaces. The new courtyards serve as the main circulation spaces for the public to convene, as well as a preserved interior exemplifying authenticity shown in the architectural qualities, time passage of being in the space, and the patina left from years of age.

Shown next in the first floor is the new program that wraps around the existing buildings, following along the ideas set from the second precedent, the Palazzo della Cancelleria. To remain consistent with the Cancelleria, a new grid was extended from the original grid lines to form the new adaptive structure that is symmetrical and seamless. The new grid lines were defined from the church’s original columns and are partially represented by the dotted lines shown in figure 17 as an example of how the grid was created. The second building, the convent, also follows the same ideas; however, it was important for the second building to keep its own identity separate from the first building. The exterior of the second building is not as important since the interior is now the highlighted space, which serves central purposes but has different intents. The defined spaces on the first floor would then be the host for the needs-based program. The highlighted spaces in figure 17 are color coded to match the program analysis (figure 12). Surrounding resources are placed in close proximity, such as the playground to the left of the new building adaptation, which sits close to the day care. By installing this program, the first floor offers an opportunity for individuals to seek economic progression within the neighborhood and beyond to the city.

Second Floor

The second floor utilizes the last precedent of the 1000m2 Prefab Houses. The design of the modular units began with references to home designs local to the context. Therefore, the design utilizes the shotgun house, which was a prominent housing type during Orange Mound’s founding as a community, and a previous plantation. Orange Mound was repurposed for housing by E. E. Meacham who purchased the property in 1889. “He developed the property as efficiently as possible by arranging the streets in an unrelieved grid with narrow lots”, which he would sell to African Americans as a safe haven to escape the harsh conditions of the Jim Crow era. From these conditions, new property owners would build shotgun houses out of their limited resources. He adapted to the narrow lots and adopted the southern summers. “The neighborhood originally contained 982 shotgun houses that sold for less than one hundred dollars each, an inexpensive price even for the time.” From this example, each module in this project takes precedent from Orange Mound’s original houses and, therefore, are adapted to the project’s contextual relationship with the climate, neighborhood, and existing buildings. The units consider the significant portion of single parents and older single individuals to develop modules for one and three bedrooms. The materials on the exterior of the units reflect the existing materials already local to the site and neighborhood. The call out in figure 18 shows a complete unit, which will be examined to further uncover the qualities that define the adapted units.

Figure 17: First Floor

Figure 18: Second Floor

Floor Plans (Intent/Era/Context)

17. A Community Called Orange Mound, 2:03.
18. “Historic Orange Mound.”
Housing Unit Study (Era/Intent/Context)

The housing design derives from successes of southern examples such as the shotgun house, a housing typology built in the founding of Orange Mound (figures 21 and 22), and also the dogtrot house shown in figure 19. The modules are 31'-6" long and 8'-6" wide and the program is organized to fit within the defined modular space. Although the length is not a constraint in terms of transportation, the width is limited in order to reduce cost and eliminate the "wide load" signage attached to homes that exceed the limit. This makes the units easier to transport (figure 25) and prefabrication an affordable option. The common spaces such as the front porch, living room, bedroom, and kitchen are placed within a singular module (figure 26) and the master bedroom and bathroom are placed in another (figure 27). The singular modules are then stacked atop the first floor by a crane lifting them into place, and each module is organized in a sequence shown in figure 24. Each module is then bolted together (figure 20) to transform the individual modules into a complete housing unit.

The materials palette used in the unit’s design is derived from the materials already existing on the site. The combination of metal, wood, and brick adapts the units with the site to create a cohesive project that embraces the unique qualities of the site’s climate, neighborhood, and existing materials. The housing units are designed to consider the context and demographics of the area by the means of creating a one bedroom unit for older single individuals, and a two bedroom unit addition to create a three bedroom unit for single parents and their children (figure 22), utilizing the design to tap the area’s largest population within the community. Designing for context and climate facilitates a space familiar to its new residents, and although few examples of shotgun houses remain in the community (figure 24), this design methodology will foster a housing project that aims to engage with its community members.
Figure 26: Common Space

Figure 27: Master Bedroom
Building and Unit Study—Passive Ventilation (Context)

The design uses passive ventilation systems in addition to mechanical ones. The entrance south of the larger courtyard will have the largest opportunity to capitalize on the influx of wind. The triple height space of the courtyard creates a stack effect. The housing and shown in figure 28, captures wind from certain times of the year and funnels it into the new courtyards (figure 29). The public porch, which separates the two existing buildings, captures the east and west winds during certain times and acts as a breezeway similar to the housing example of a dogtrot.

Third Floor (Intent/Context/Era)

Residential units continue to be aligned along the third level; however, the third floor introduces additional elements of design aimed to resolve circulation issues and unused space. The first important design element is represented in the center space, called out as the residential courtyard shown in figure 30. This space is designed to bring light into the second level by opening up the third level connecting slab to the two existing buildings. The courtyard also acts as a common space for the residents to enjoy, as well as allows for the housing design to function properly as it expels the hot air from the large openings on the third level (figure 31). The bell tower firepit completes the building design in terms of program, and places yet another common space for residents in the space above the third floor (figure 32). The extra space is semi-open to allow for an extra firepit to be added within the bell tower, utilizing the entirety of the building within the adaptive reuse process.
Figures 34-37 highlight a few aspects taken into consideration throughout this design. The first is noticeable in the stained glass, which is an abstraction of the glass once in the original materials pallet provided by the existing building. The color is used to differentiate each unit from another, giving each a sense of identity in an otherwise uniform project. Different brick patterns are used to display the difference between old bricks and new bricks. Figure 33 shows the east exterior alongside the walking path to give an understanding of how the community may interact with the new design.
Existing Bell Tower

Existing South Facade. New stained glass installed

RAMP

Figure 34  South Elevation

Existing Trees

Picnic Tables and Grills

Daycare Playground

Food Pavilion

Figure 35  North Elevation

Level 1

Level 2

Level 3

Level 4

Public Porch

New Roof

Existing Roof Structure

Figure 36  West Elevation

Public Porch

New Roof

Figure 37  East Elevation
Courtyards (Intent/Context/Era)

A major component of the overall building design is the re-adaptation of the church and convent to serve as courtyard spaces. The large spaces allow for public use and interior access to ground level programs. The only change to the existing structure includes removal of the roofs and the lowering of side windows to allow for stained glass doors to be inserted at entryways. Circulation at the various levels is connected within the church to allow for a full integration between the existing buildings and the new adaptation.

The existing columns, walls, and archways were preserved to encapsulate the interior as a space built during a previous era (figure 38). The cracks, faded paint, and exposed structure highlight the historical value, which further deepens the approach to authenticity. The layout of the space was simplified by creating seating areas for locals to enjoy the semi-exterior space, as well as adapting the atrium to serve as a stage for the neighborhood's rich music history. A water feature was added along the existing grid line of symmetry to provide interest in the courtyard.

North Courtyard

The courtyard in figure 38 is the converted convent. Based on the original intent of the building, it was important to express this courtyard as one of peace. The walls are consistent with the existing age, yet the third floor above reveals the new design and materials. The court atrium also serves as the main access point to surrounding program and the existing windows were brought down to allow for entryway into the new winged spaces. A single tree is placed on the center line of symmetry on the courtyard and the seating area next to the tree promotes peacefulness as a reflection space. The hybrid planter-seating contains lavender plants to further promote peace.
Since my move to Memphis, assimilation meant attending festivals, games, and general Memphis traditions to better acquaint myself with my new home. By becoming part of the city's local culture, this allowed me to better grasp what this city holds most important. On a smaller scale, this same approach aided in the process of this thesis, as small encounters with locals of the neighborhood gave me a better sense of the unique qualities that separate Soulsville from the rest of the city.

Furthermore, immersion also best answered the inherent question of: “Can you be authentic to a place when you are not from that place?” Addressing the community members in person broadened my understanding of the area beyond what statistics could account for. Eventually, this led to my own in the very early years of this thesis, which was to find a place to live within South Memphis, as living in the area seemed necessary to pursue total immersion. Once settled on Douglass Avenue in Orange Mound, resources such as articles and documentaries provided a grounding for the research, eventually leading to visits and attendance at places like churches and longtime restaurants.

The research of this thesis also determined authenticity through historical reference, to discover the community members own personal immersive investment to neighborhood archives. Entry and engagement with friendly community members was an approach to reach a sense of transparency when looking at why the architecture would be helping in an effort to reach a higher authentic value within the thesis. In order to shed light on the complete concept, it was important to take coming from a place does not necessarily disqualify an architect for designing with authenticity in mind. The solution more lies in the immersive grounding the architectural processes, which is both bound by willingness and time.

The intent of this thesis is to produce meaningful architecture by attempting to understand what is authentic to the area where the architecture is taking place. Placing interaction into the site, as well as understanding of the neighborhood's conditions, needs, and history provoked a different approach to the use of such a large space. This thesis brings two strains of architecture together to test the relationship architecture has to its environment. The project attempts to seamlessly integrate into its surroundings to maintain the relationship between the neighborhood and the new addition of the project (figures 40 and 41).

The theory developed around authenticity attempts to explore the possibility that authentic values can be extracted by exploring the context, era, and intent of the program while still representing a contemporary approach. The definition of authenticity through architecture presented in this document holds that the architecture must be responsive to the users' needs. Considering the past and present coexisting together requires critique about how people have adapted residential and community living over time. Recognizing this prompts further consideration about how adaptable the living modules are to the needs of the people that would live in them.
Further Consideration (Intent/Context/Era)

One significant critique raised during the process of this project development was the strict adherence to the module dimensions, which may prevent the residential units from having functional and comfortable interior spaces. Limitations on space based on the narrow module could make the building不适 for the two main user groups (single and single parents with multiple children). To address concerns about the authenticity of living in such constrained spaces given the current way people live, it was suggested that the modules become independent of one another, thus giving more freedom to the resident. This would yield customizable spaces that would function in a manner authentic to the user. The IE-module bay would then be like a grid system that regulates the beginning and end of units but allows for program changes to the bay’s width threshold in order to gain more space for circulation. This variation is possible as a potential redox, as the grid could further be created as individual grids that are formed together by choice. The flexibility is also limited to the amount of bays a resident wishes to utilize within the availability of the new floor plate (Figure 42). Since the expansion of spaces can change, Figure 43 shows the program potential layout generated by prefabrication. Each program listed in Figure 43 would be designed within the pre-defined dimensional boxes, still allowing for simple and affordable transport.

The new structure is embedded into the present buildings and supports the second and third floor plates with a column system shown in the floor plane. Since this structure is self-supporting, the individual program units could then be placed using a crane and bolted after their arrangement has been finalized. The exterior walls then become a paneled facade separate to the program and could then be created as individual grids that are fashioned together by choice. The void space takes on the form of the column system shown in the floor plane and defines the interior use of the space. This quality would produce a user-made exterior that is still addressed through the existing materials, but is designed by the residents. Furthermore, this freedom of the walls will allow residents to consider the incorporation and placement of the colored glass to become more experimental to the interior of the residence.

Examples of floor plan layouts are shown in Figure 43, and follow the similar manner authentic to the owner. The 8’-6” module bay would then shift to a grid system that regulates the beginning and end of units but allows for program changes to the bay’s width threshold in order to gain more space for circulation. This variation is possible as a potential redox, as the grid could further be created as individual grids that are formed together by choice.

This article is important to this thesis because the author explains how architecture captures time through the evolution of human history and growth over the past 200 years, justifying examples of how architecture is constantly in transition to improve the human condition, suggesting that the next revolution is coming but is unknown.

Note: Elevation is not updated. It is included to show how updated modules would be placed across floor plates.

Potential Unit Arrangement with Supporting Structure

Potential Unit Organization

4+-Bedroom Unit (4 Module Bays)

Studio/1-Bedroom Unit (2 Module Bays)

Historical Architecture

Orange Mound and How South Memphis Came to Be What It Is Today

This documentary helped clarify questions raised about the context of the site. This essay discusses five arguments used by Modernist to promote their design approach, which is opposite of traditional design. Mark Gelernter is an American academic, architect/historian, and writer, who is the Dean of the College of Architecture and Planning at the University of Colorado, Denver. After the examination, Galerter presents Modernism as a type of style similar to traditional styles, he concluded that for reasons of making room for traditional architecture and transitory qualities of a building in a way that “allows the original’s power to be reconceptualized in the new synthesis” (para. 27). Fixler acknowledges that there are parts of the dialogue between old and new architecture that are left hanging and suggests that an evolution of existing structure will prove answers to the missing pieces.

This article contributes to the thesis by providing thoughts from the author on the idea of authenticity within the realm of architecture. The author’s examination of buildings and site-related histories is used to relink the development of the concept of authenticity, which is shown in the beginning of the documentary as a route to approximate the entire project in an appropriate manner.

This article is referenced to understand one of the project's precedents. The importance of the reference comes when the author describes the temple of the Baalbec in the context of other prominent architectural landmarks and discusses its significance. The article even discusses how the temple was restored, providing valuable insights into the architectural practice.

Herke, Ph.D., is an art historian. Pictorial explanations. John Herke is a computer programmer and Margaret to Renaissance Architecture. The publishers of the project began their efforts to Herke, John and Margaret Herke. “Quick Guide to Italian Renaissance: Palazzo. The history discussed in this article was used to understand the site and address points out keys to mimicking the design through basic organization of the load-bearing brick masonry. The building's floor plan is a combination of a cell-gabled-roof nave with a clerestory, flanked by shed-roofed wings covering the aisles, and a full tower located along the side. The article then discusses this conclusion as an additional building, which is also considered in the preservation of this project. This article is important to this thesis because it examines the architectural and historical significance of St. Thomas Church. This helped address the design in a meaningful manner to bring together both old and new architecture. Kane, Kevin. “History of Memphis.” City of Memphis. 2021. Accessed December 18, 2020, from https://www.memphistourism.com/explore/history.html

In this article published by the City of Memphis, Kane describes the history of the city as a beautiful collection of past, present, strength, innovation, and foundatons. Kane's focus is the preserved city's vision for the 2021 and 2020 Centennial of the City of Memphis. The article still touches on the founding of the city and ties it to slavery, the yellow fever, and the Civil War. The content is strong in events, spanning in terms of the City’s history. The article also provides the development of architecture in the city. This article is important because it shed light on the city of Memphis. The two selected published from this article that was of the city of Memphis's history and architecture. Laranjano, Kyotaro. “Laranjano on Authenticity in Architecture.” Academia. December 2015, Accessed December 21, 2020, https://www.academia.edu/3002360/Laranjano_on_Authenticity_in_Architecture

This article discusses the notion of authenticity of art works, which makes the author's book an important source of information in the discussion concerning architecture. Kyotaro Laranjano is an Architecture Professor at the University of Tokyo in Japan. Laranjano presents a review of authenticity in architecture as a complex realm shared between science, arts, technology, and daily life, rebuilding on the one hand the pointed of quality of the site and aesthetic values on the other. The article presents six case studies related to the architectural and phenomenological questions are posed to explain the foundations between them and the idea of authenticity. An analysis of the chosen architectural case studies is carried out for each of the relationships. This allows for a comprehensive view of the range of applicability for the notion of ‘authenticity’ as it relates to architecture. This article is important to this thesis because it sets the groundwork to better understand the author's point of view. Other authors who work on historical context and contrast. The author argues that “though contrast renders the city design as it appears chaotic” (76). The second and third levels would be the individual residential units. A ground floor level for a multi-service program connected with the public space. The article presents the idea of exploring ways to design while working within existing nodes, without changing the surface fabric. The research led to the identification of a defining feature that in the design of a building in a contextual nature. The setting showed that the element of surprise can be a site-specific phenomenon after a pop, simply appears chaotic. This is important to this thesis because it examines the importance of content. One of the features of this thesis is authenticity in its situational nature. By examining the importance of the situational nature, the project could be more of a necessity and, therefore, be more authentic. Singer, Nidhi. “Context in Architecture.” International Journal of Emerging Technologies: Architecture. 8, 7-19. 2017. Accessed January 3, 2020. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/337736224

This article highlights the importance of placing a structure with nature. The author explores how important it is to provide an appropriate surrounding. Nidhi Singer is an architect and designer for Building Delta Labs based out of New York. Singer argues that “rapid urbanization and cities turning into urban jungles” is a reason for the creation of “contemporary spaces, which not only are necessary in an urban jungle” (76). This is important to the project. The idea was to explore ways to design while working within existing nodes, without changing the surface fabric. The research led to the identification of a defining feature that in the design of a building in a contextual nature. The setting showed that the element of surprise can be a site-specific phenomenon after a pop, simply appears chaotic. This is important to this thesis because it examines the importance of content. One of the features of this thesis is authenticity in its situational nature. By examining the importance of the situational nature, the project could be more of a necessity and, therefore, be more authentic. Pereira, Mauro. “1001 Patties & Kebab.” Hungry & Smartly. April 2020. Version 2.0. https://www.archdaily.com/380295/1001-patties-kebab-hungry-smartly

This article is a project description from ArchDaily, on its visual for architectural projects. The article describes the requirements for the project. Mauro Pereira is an architect, photographer, author, and curator for ArchDaily. Pereira describes a few requirements for the project, including that the transformed space should be suitable for food, aesthetic, and functional over time. This article combines the studio to use prefabricated elements and have parts of the project ordered online (p. 25). The article points to the need for a building that will fit on a ground floor level for a multi-service program connected with the public space. The second and third levels would be the individual residential units. A ground floor level for a multi-service program connected with the public space. This article is important to this thesis because it presents the idea of exploring ways to design while working within existing nodes, without changing the surface fabric. The research led to the identification of a defining feature that in the design of a building in a contextual nature. The setting showed that the element of surprise can be a site-specific phenomenon after a pop, simply appears chaotic. This is important to this thesis because it examines the importance of content. One of the features of this thesis is authenticity in its situational nature. By examining the importance of the situational nature, the project could be more of a necessity and, therefore, be more authentic. Hopkins, J. “National Register of Historic Places Registrant Form: St. Thomas Church and Convent—Memphis,” TN.” Filed on March 15, 2005. https://www. npgallery.nps.gov/GetAsset/

This article describes one of the precedents used in the project's design. Nominations for the National Register of Historic Places are processed by the National Park Service and the state or local agency designated for their area. This source deepened the knowledge into the neighborhood to set precedent for a hopeful future for Orange Mound. This source deepened the knowledge into the neighborhood to set precedent for a hopeful future for Orange Mound. This source deepened the knowledge into the neighborhood to set precedent for a hopeful future for Orange Mound. This source deepened the knowledge into the neighborhood to set precedent for a hopeful future for Orange Mound. This source deepened the knowledge into the neighborhood to set precedent for a hopeful future for Orange Mound.
This article speaks of the author’s initial move into the neighborhood of Soulsville, implicitly, turning strategic intent into operational reality (para. 8). The architecture produced “is a result of the design choices made, either explicitly or implicitly, that is reflected in architecture. Finally, he concludes “that the architect is a builder and designer of time and space” (para. 3). Wittmann describes a building as a three-dimensional object in space, which can be represented on a paper drawing or a computer animation. Regardless of the medium, the building and its spaces cannot become separated into time. The author then explores three important temporal aspects that relate to a building and its architecture, which are described as the “influence of space on the experience of time” (image 1). The author explores the elements of a building that are “the realization of long stretches of time,” and finally, the aspect of timelessness of the design principles of architecture (image 2). The author then introduces time as a constraint in the design process (image 3). Time is built into the design principles of architecture (para. 2). He suggests that time is built into the design process, as well as how buildings can capture time through their built form.

This article contributes to the thesis by helping progress the concept of authenticity. By explaining how buildings are specimens of their time, the project represents “the influence of space on the experience of time” (image 1). The project is built to become agile to change, efficient to run, and an engaging place to reside. The architecture produced “is a result of the design choices made, either explicitly or implicitly, turning strategic intent into operational reality” (para. 8). This article is important to the thesis because it explains how building typology is reflected in architecture. Finally, he concludes “that the architect is a builder and designer of time and space” (para. 3). Wittmann describes a building as a three-dimensional object in space, which can be represented on a paper drawing or a computer animation. Regardless of the medium, the building and its spaces cannot become separated into time. The author then explores three important temporal aspects that relate to a building and its architecture, which are described as the “influence of space on the experience of time” (image 1). The author explores the elements of a building that are “the realization of long stretches of time,” and finally, the aspect of timelessness of the design principles of architecture (image 2). The author then introduces time as a constraint in the design process (image 3). Time is built into the design principles of architecture (para. 2). He suggests that time is built into the design process, as well as how buildings can capture time through their built form.

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Appendix 1: Presentation Materials

Figures 45-50 are the final presentation boards used at the time of the thesis defense. Figures 51-53 are the final model and defense boards. Figure 54 contains the research forum presentation.
This thesis proposal targets an opportunity to develop a sense of communication between the new and existing Development will include a hybrid of design elements. Therefore utilizing a city's authentic value as a tool to define the future of the practice. Utilizing today's advancements in materials, structures, and envelop pushing ideas to leave a unique stamp of this era's original vision for generations to come. However, in a world where we see a constant push towards the false expression. Providing opportunity for architects to push back against this trend, and therefore much more authentic.

As designers, a responsibility is handed down to safely guard the legacy of the neighborhood anchor. Once the base level is set, the prefabricated housing modules will then be placed atop the base slab and positioned along the existing church walls to allow for circulation into the housing units to take place within the large space of the church's interior. Thus utilizing the existing church roof opening to reveal socialization. With this solution, we see a need for a unique expression of community. Therefore, utilizing the unadorned framework as a canvas to aid in the manipulation of materials, structures, and envelop pushing ideas to leave a unique stamp of this era's original vision for generations to come. However, in a world where we see a constant push towards the false expression. Providing opportunity for architects to push back against this trend, and therefore much more authentic.
As designers, a responsibility is handed down to safely guard the legacy of architecture’s achievements. Granting authority for today’s architects to further continue the dialogue between the past and present in order to define the future of the practice. Utilizing today’s advancements in materials, structures, and envelop pushing ideas to leave a unique stamp of this era’s original vision for generations to come. However, in a world that becomes evermore globalized, placing importance on the present context and culture focus’ architecture on the essential utility of design rather than reaching for false expression. Pushing back against the “because we can” notion of designing with the question of “why?” architects practice in the first place. Providing opportunity for architecture to consider a path which strives to be genuine in its expression and therefore much more authentic.

Concept - Authenticity As A Design Tool

Authentic Cities arise from its unique adaptions to their distinctive context. Utilizing the unadorned framework as a canvas to aid in the manifestation of its own culture as a byproduct. For this thesis, a neighborhood within Memphis will be put under a microscope, examining the historic importance and current conditions to distinguish unique characteristics as design elements. Therefore utilizing a city’s authentic value as a tool to design in today’s present Memphis.

Thesis Objective

This thesis proposal targets an opportunity to develop a sense of community in an area plagued by disinvestment by way of immersion into the area’s rich past in order to promote its unique qualities while also providing the needs of the community. The design aims to support the community’s characteristics attributed to its authentic value in effort to create communication between the new and existing development will include a hybrid system of on-site construction and the pioneering technology of prefabrication acclimated to consider the neighborhood’s climate, income, values, and materials. Adapting the base level of the church to include a public “need-based” program that facilitates essential daily activity as well as pay homage to the building and neighborhood’s authentic qualities. Creating a market for the community to inhabit as well as a neighborhood anchor. Once the base level is set, the prefabricated housing modules will then be placed atop the base slab and positioned along the existing church walls to allow for circulation into the housing units to take place within the large space of the church’s interior. Thus utilizing the existing architecture to return the church to its original purpose of presenting a sense of nourishment for the neighborhood within its walls again. Weaving the future of architectural design through the adaptive reuse of the church in today’s existing city.
Appendix 2: Process Piece

This process piece is a concrete disc that takes the form of a musical record (figure 55). Since this thesis is focused on cultural and contextual influence on the urban environment, I felt it to be appropriate to create a piece that references all aspects of the project site. The construction began by breaking up pieces of marble and brick from the project site to be placed within the concrete mixture. The mold was then made in the shape of a musical record to reference the neighborhood’s rich music history. By taking the contextual materials and referencing the musical past of the project site, this process piece seeks to display the authentic qualities of the local Memphis neighborhood.

Figure 55  Concrete Record