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I, ______________________________ Mathias John Detamore ______________________________, hereby submit this work as part of the requirements for the degree of:

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______________________________ A Margin for the Heterogeneous

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This work and its defense approved by:

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Paradox and the City:
A Margin for the Heterogeneous
Connection of Urban Networks

A thesis submitted to the
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by

Mathias J Detamore


Committee Chairs:
Michael McInturf
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Colleen McTague
This Thesis is dedicated to

My mother and father
whose moral, spiritual, emotional
and sometimes economic support
have made this adventure possible.

and

Doctor Colleen McTague
Whose mentorship has helped
me to define my path.
Abstract

This thesis draws on the work of Edward Soja and his Thirdspace theory to apply a hypothesis and a methodological approach to urban design. An understanding of paradoxical space and political margins are filtered through the Thirdspace model to develop an idea about heterogeneous connections of urban networks. The research discusses the politics and perception of space and the power structures that maintain unhealthy urban relationships.

The main focus of this thesis is to diagram and abstract social relationships as they are understood through post-structuralist and feminist critiques and then apply this hypothesis to a physical design project on Third Street in downtown Cincinnati/riverfront that further abstracts these relationships into a theory of urban connectivity.

The subject for this thesis is the connection of intra-urban identities and mobility; how people move through space and across these different urban places (particularly pedestrians) and the locations of interest are those left-over conditions that bind urban spaces and often make them impassable such as underpasses and highways. The social theories of heterogeneous connections are grafted onto deficiencies in the urban environment through the design of urban programming and infrastructure to become larger connective tissues in the metaphorical environment by suturing together disconnections in the physical environment.
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The postwar landscape of contemporary American society is drawn out of the fabricated economies that support consumption, led by the federal government through the FHA, the automobile industry, and road construction. This, at the time, was to bolster our economic vitality, spurred on by WWII; and refrain from falling back into a large scale depression. The ensuing consumption has led the culture down a precarious path of deconstructed environments and abandoned urban cores, reinforcing hegemonic structures of power, both political and economic, that have alienated the fringes of our social structures, widening the gap between the privileged and the outcasts. The urban environment has suffered greatly over the past 50 years because of this; roads and highways cutting off once vital connections of neighborhoods; land speculation in urban cores tearing holes in the urban fabric; the stratification of land-use zoning in city centers, homogenizing districts into exclusionary wastelands; corporate mega-structures killing the streets by creating walls at the street level and removing all ancillary functions, etc. The new public space is the highly controlled environment of sterilized activity.

Urban environments are at their very core paradoxes; the contested space of disparate objects and value structures. This is neither a positive or negative statement, but simply alludes to the inherent diversity related to cities. Yet, for cities to thrive, this diversity must remain heterogeneous in nature, but that heterogeneity must also be able to flow indiscriminately from place to place without interruption. This is what cities must be to sustain culture and remain vital; the cohesion, or at least fluid adjacencies, of unlike value systems either in cooperation or in conflict. But the deconstruction of the urban environment through the consumption economy has led to discontinuities in the fabric (both physically and socially) that have stressed the ability for cities to function.
This thesis looks at these discontinuities by analyzing the edges and boundaries of the urban environment, to deconstruct the exclusionary space of contemporary hegemonies and stitch back together the fabric of a democratic city. Through geographical texts, the post-structural philosophies of Lefebvre and Foucault are drawn upon to gain an understanding of the heterogeneous nature of social structures as they act in space. Edward Soja calls it Third (or lived) Space, bell hooks calls it margin, Gillian Rose calls it paradoxical space; they all lead to similar conclusions: if we are to coexist in space, then a proper resistance to exclusion must be mounted.

In an ironic sense, edges and connections between specific adjacencies are by their very nature margins. These “margins” (so to speak) are being criticized here, for being the exclusionary boundaries that frame and maintain their parent structures of power and exclusion. It is by this claim, however, that this thesis attempts to reclaim these margins in their physical sense to reorganize them in their metaphorical sense as the radical positioning of ideas (bell hooks) to create meaningful bridges of access, connection, and urban space; fundamentally breaking down the hegemonies of existing power structures physically, psychologically, and metaphorically. This new margin then, transforms out of the exclusionary boundaries of hegemonic power structures into the free flowing interstices of culture, space, and time; manifesting in physical space the manifold particularities of social constructs and scales as they interlace in the complex weaving of culture(s), defining place.

To accomplish this, the study defines a methodology, based on a values system(s) derived from the literature and then filtered into a process of formal response. The methodology seeks to create a matrix of values that are flexible enough to be applied to any environment, but universal enough to be consistent in their application. To illuminate this process, a design project examines the Thirdspace potential of Third Street, in downtown Cincinnati. An edge between two major parts of the city
(the CBD and the riverfront) exists here that, for the most part, are bound from each other. Strategies are investigated to holistically stitch the fabric back together, connecting both the riverfront and the CBD, and reevaluating the pedestrian’s role on the north side of an otherwise hostile (Third) street. The project looks at how different typologies and scales of intra-urban movement function and attempts to develop an architecture/urban design that embraces holistically the potential for urban cohesion.
1.0/Problem

1.1/The Power of Exclusion

The contemporary environment is stretched in tension across a value structure rooted in the limited perspective of a specific kind of economy, culture, politic, geography, etc. and the fringes of society that have been disregarded from its privileges. The conservation of this particular power structure set against the multiplicity of alternative approaches and perspectives that have been squelched in their efficacy has defined the battlefield of our age. More than the blood speckled wars of freedom versus tyranny, democracy versus dictatorship, power versus power, this new battlefield sets itself to define our differences and learn to accept our place in a world where there is no one overriding value system. It attempts to validate all values of the human condition and set apart those differences that make us, as a species, special. This new battle wages itself against oppression; physically, psychologically, metaphorically, spatially and otherwise.

The patriarchy of a predominately white, affluent, heterosexual, male culture has defined the existence of this country. From its passions to its conquests, its morality to its economy, the contested space of the American environment has been crafted out of the desires of an elite group of men. The effects of this control are evident in the environment: the role of women in society and their domestication, the concentrated pockets of urban poor (predominately African American) in slummed areas, aggregate homosexual populations polarized in urban areas, etc. While each of these as a cultural manifestation is discrete in their actual impact on the spatial environment, the larger implications lie in the homogenizing forces set to establish control of and limit access to the environment at large, defining how it is used. This definition determines the abilities we have to navigate the environment and the boundaries
by which we are tethered. Exclusive spaces of masculine hegemony stretch back through history – at the very least, Western society has been drawn out of white masculine interpretations of the environment. This thesis concentrates on contemporary American society and the impact of a white hegemony on its spatial environments.

![Image](image.png)

**Figure 1:** The objectification of women and the attitudes toward domesticated gender roles traces back throughout history. The production of these forms of spatial exclusion still persist today.

Certainly before, but primarily after WWII the economy and culture of the American paradigm have been defined by our ability and eventually our compulsion to consume. At the end of the war, the United States was in threat of falling back into a depression.\(^2\) The war economy was over, thousands of troops were returning from overseas, and the government was eager to insight home ownership to spur investment and economic growth. Dusting off the Federal Housing Act of 1934 from Roosevelt’s New Deal policies under the new Housing Act of 1949, and massively increasing its lending power, the federal government was able to secure loans for new homeowners.\(^3\) The banking and construction industry (who had been on a wartime moratorium) were also eager to jump back into the economy through housing construction.

Alongside subsidizing housing for the returning troops and buffering the economic capacity of the middle class, these loans were also meant “...to bring hope and accomplishment into the lives of the urban poor.”\(^4\) But it quickly became apparent that subsidizing the inner-cities was not about bolstering their efficacy.
Although the long waiting lists for the units [low income housing] perhaps attest to their superiority over the slum alternatives, the ‘projects’ were stigmatized with mean-spirited architectural designs and authoritarian administrations.5

The Urban Renewal Arm of the FHA under the new housing act quickly became a con game as city officials realized an increasing amount of the federal dollars used for slum clearance could be used for other things. Urban Renewal, which was allocated to help inner city poor, became a “device for protecting central city business and property investments (a massive rent redistribution) and the careers of white politicians.”6

Figure 2: An example of the new spatial form of the postwar American suburb on the left and the impact of highway construction on the American city with the Golden State Freeway in California on the right.

Much of the inner city renewal projects, lasting through the late 1960s, targeted inner city poor. “Most of the urban renewal programs were truly … ‘Negro removal.’”7 Highway and Interstate, and mega-block consolidation projects dislocated and disconnected millions of urban poor, predominately African American. The new situation for these urban dwellers was devastating. Disinvestment quickly ensued on all fronts, from the disconnected neighborhoods of declining housing stock that became redlined by financial institutions8 (who moved their operations out to the suburbs for lower risk investment) to the section 8 tenement buildings that quickly fell into disrepair soon after they were built. As financial investment is leached out of an area, it subsequently declines, then vandalism and crime further devalorization.9
Figure 3: On the left, Miami Florida after the highway and urban renewal. On the right, part of the Futurama exhibit sponsored by General Motors in 1939.

Ways and means of postwar urban deconstruction are voluminous. It is not the intent of this thesis to outline in great detail the deterioration process of the urban environment as it served exclusionary political and economic interests. Its mention here sets the context from which patriarchal power structures are criticized as facilitators of this blind, unquestioned scheme and how their passions still define oppression and control of the urban environment today.

Rampant suburbanization in the 1950s was accelerated by the federal government to wane the effects of a looming economic crisis. Suburbanization responded to the threat of depression by “open[ing] up a whole series of investment possibilities which could help to revive the profit rate.”10 The suburban dream became the American Dream. However, it goes without saying that this “dream” has limitations; impacts that filter through the entire socio-political-economic machine, shifting
centers or rather decentralizing them without concern for what was left behind.

Such a life is not available to all who want it, however. Attaining control over the social and material conditions of everyday living, real or illusory, requires power and creditworthiness. This desire for a stable and predictable residential environment also fuels the engine of accumulation, so the ideal of the stable, ordered community is promoted by property developers and financial institutions. The ordered community of responsible citizens and nice families also has a political cachet in developed societies at the end of the twentieth century, when polarization and the social exclusion of sections of the population are perceived to threaten the social well-being of “middle-America.”

This “stable” America is simultaneously the dis-stabilizer of the America left behind. It invalidates the lives of those without means.
or access to its benefits, while using their unstable position to further exploit from them economic and political gain.

There is still an outward trajectory of sprawl that is devouring the American landscape, however, there are also current trends to redevelop the inner cities of our past. These current trends are bent on the same means and methods that lead to sprawl and the current fringes of the underclass are further being exploited and displaced by economic and political gain. “There is political capital to be made from advocating increasing control of the dispossessed, the underclass, in what Neil Smith has called ‘the revanchist city’, and other exclusionary spaces.”

The revanchist city speaks of a new urban frontier according to Neil Smith where current trends toward a reurbanization, while shifting the focus in geography, are drawn out of the same means that led to suburbanization, where “redevelopment and rehabilitation… functions as a substantial engine of profit.”

If there truly is a reurbanization of the city, which many believe that there is, what does its impact mean? Is there a new exclusive space on the horizon, or even in current practice that can further damage our social construct more than sprawl already has?

Popular among gentrification theorists is the notion that young, usually professional, middle-class people have changed their lifestyle... Thus, with the trend toward fewer children, postponed marriages and fast-rising divorce rates, younger homebuyers and renters are trading in the tarnished dream of their parents for a new dream defined in urban rather than suburban terms.
Figure 5: Society Hill in Philadelphia. These before, during, and after images show the process of gentrification on the urban environment.
And what does this mean to the urban economy? Is there a new economy of exclusion based on trends of suburban/urban?

Patterns of consumption come to dictate patterns of production; the values of consumption rather than production guide central city land use decisions. Gentrification is explained as a consequence of this new emphasis on consumption. It represents a new urban geography for a new social regime of consumption.¹⁵

So, now, if the new consumption is both outward and inward, meaning that sprawl is continuing its outward trajectory, but that there is a small inward inertia moving back to reclaim the city; what is the place of the underclass? And not only the underclass of privilege, but the under-classes of race, gender, sexual orientation, age, physical and mental disabilities, the marginalized? Are they remarginalized into a narrower and more diabolical system of pruning and weeding? Or is this potentially a good thing, where economic vitality reenters the realm of the city and access becomes equal and democratic? What is the impact of a new urban landscape? Is it nostalgia? Is it novelty? How do we defend ourselves against violent infiltration? How do we ward off the oppressor? How do we wage his influence to come toward an urban geography that recognizes an infinitely broad scope of interests to mutual gain?

We are rooted in our environments. Our individual identities come out of our ability to enact in and react with our surroundings. When that environment is controlled by an outside source i.e. someone/thing that is not directly related to the locational particularity of a certain place the impact on that specific culture can be profoundly devastating.

Severe instances of an entrenched patriarchy fundamentally paralyze the meaning of space and establish a disjunctive relationship between metaphorical space and real space that sets them at odds. This generates a political tight rope walk, as people force themselves to wear the appearances of social norms, while (and sometimes dangerously)
suppressing certain components of their personalities in an attempt to conform to the center. In so doing, the emotional and experiential qualities of space are terrorized, sterilized, and removed as liabilities of function. The question then becomes, can a system of values fundamentally breakdown the political and sociological constructs that dictate our urban environments and come toward an urban design that is organized by that value system to allow for all the unpredictable qualities that make a city an exciting place to be?

1.2/What is city?

Cities are by their very make-up complex places of spatial and social networks that simultaneously transcend and define history. To be crude, and perhaps cliché, cities are easily understood by the principles that rule organisms; organic. Although we want to be careful here not to make a direct corollary between cities and organisms, the metaphor is appropriate. If we take the human body for example, we have the body, which is made up of systems, which is made up organs, which is made up of tissues, which is made up of cells, which is further made up of smaller and smaller components. It would be too easy to draw on the direct correlation between the systems of the body and the systems of a street, neighborhood, community, city, region, country, etc., so, it is unnecessary to explore. But the more interesting thing to draw out of the body analogy is the differences between individual bodies that allude to differences in urban typologies.

Figure 6: These are a series of images compiled from Right of Inspection by Jacques Derrida, photographs by Marie-Françoise Plissart. Here we see the complexity and differences in the human condition; from body to body, experience to experience.
Every system of the body works in relatively predictable ways. Blood moves through the veins, food moves through the digestive system, finger nails and hair grow, etc. It is this predictability on which the study of medicine is defined. But although these systems are predictable, they work in subtly different ways. What works for one person does not necessarily work for another. Take the metabolism for example. Everyone’s metabolism works differently based on an individualized set of chemistry. For one a low fat diet may be ideal to stay healthy, where for another it is low-carbohydrate. This does not necessarily mean that one diet is good and the other is bad, just that one is appropriate for some and one is appropriate for others. And the analogy certainly does not need to be drawn for illness and disease as the corollaries are obvious.

The subtle differences in the human body; of predictability and performance, make-up and appearance, similarity and diversity; holds true for cities. There is a multiplicity of urban typologies and morphologies that are rooted in their particularity of place and location. It is impractical if not dangerous to think that any one urbanism can be applied part and parcel to another urbanism under the guise of “revitalization” and solve the deep structures of urban decay.

Cities happen for many different reasons. There are geographical, political, economic, social, etc. advantages for the layout, construction, maintenance and perpetuation of cities. Historically, cities have performed as the infrastructure to support human endeavor and transaction. They are the matrix through which economy, culture, politics, philosophy, and all other forms of human creativity have been filtered. The hierarchy of their spatial adjacencies has organized the pluralistic nature of class and order for millennia. “Whether agora, castle, piazza, or downtown, the idea of a city of centers stands, at a minimum, for the idea of a spatial city, a city in which order is a function of proximity.” It is at the very core of human
socialization that cities have historically defined the nature of progress and civilization.

The morphologies of cities in contemporary American culture may have drastically changed over the past fifty years; yet at least since Jane Jacobs (which precedes postmodern thought), we have begun to understand that there are issues within the make-up of cities that require special care and attention. Whether, contemporary American society has responded appropriately to that awareness or not remains to be seen. As our collective imagination grows more and more aware of the fragility and complexity of urban structures in regards to economy, politics, and culture, it is society’s debt and duty to take the steps that transform these environments into healthy and efficient places to be. Abstract principles can be distilled and applied here that are general in nature without generalizing what any one city identity/morphology is.

There can be no one overriding definition of what a city is. Cities function in similar ways based on larger scales of economy and performance, but each city is also unique; unique in its geography, its history, its use, its social and economic make-up, all of which define its particular identity. The spatial form of a city is as random as it is precise. Random in that there are no predefined patterns that can predict what any one city will become over a long span of time and precise in that every stroke across the canvass is a purposeful and meaningful response to the multi-scalar climates and geographies in which any city operates. But whatever the agglomerated factors are that form a city over time and space, to maintain their vitality; they must support the people for whom they serve.
Figure 1: From Gandelsonas’ work X-Urbanism on diagramming city form. These diagrams of New York show the evolutionary morphology of the city from the southern tip of the island, its radial patterns and shifting grids to the locking in the orthogonal street grid of mid-town and up-town.
Figure 2: Again from Gandelsonas' X-Urbanism, these images show the differing morphologies of three American cities: (from top to bottom) Los Angeles, Boston, and New Haven.
There is no proven way to normalize a theory for urban design that is holistically compatible with the multiplicity of urban possibilities, but a generalized set of principles can be developed out of basic humans necessities that bend and fold to fit the particularities of any urban place. Kevin Lynch defines these as “Dimensions of Performance”. The fundamental character of a city and its networks is defined by it form and how it is occupied. This alone can make it difficult to come toward understanding the complexity of how any one city works, yet Lynch notes three tactics that narrow the possibility of exploration in a palatable understanding.

First, we can elaborate those linkages between form and purpose which exist because of certain species-wide or human settlement-wide regularities… Second, we can add to the description of the spatial form of a place those particular social institutions and mental attitudes which are directly linked to that form and repeatedly critical to its quality… Third and last, however, we must realize that it would be foolish to set performance standards for cities, if we mean to generalize.18

Following these tactics, he develops performance dimensions that adhere to the preceding limitations; each dimension should have the following characteristics:

1. They should follow the form of the city speaking to the nature of human beings and their cultural variations;
2. they should be as general as possible;
3. they should connect to the goals and values of the culture they portend to represent;
4. they should cover all forms and features that are relevant to the basic value structure of a culture;
5. they should be flexible over differing or evolving value structures;
6. they should be identifiable and measurable;
7. they should maintain similar levels of generality across them;
8. they should be set independent of one another; and
9. they should be able to deal with trends leading toward the future.19
Dimensions of performance refer to the generalized content of the environment; how it is used and formed. Lynch defines six basic dimensions of performance that are general in their meaning yet become specific in their execution: Vitality, Sense, Fit, Access, Control, and Efficiency and Justice.

Vitality is the ability of an environment to support the health and well-being of its inhabitants. We are biological in nature and therefore have a specific set of needs. These biological necessities can be defined as “sustenance, safety, and consonance.” Sustenance is access to the food, energy, water, air, waste removal, etc that we require to survive. Safety requires freedom from hazards, poisons, and diseases, as well as, the perception that the possibility of these dangers actually occurring is low. Consonance is reached when the scale of the environment is in proportion to the scale of the human body and environmental conditions such as temperature, rhythm, and sensory input are amenable, making it possible to use.

Sense is the ability for an environment to be understood and identified. “Sense depends on spatial form and quality, but also on the culture, temperament, status, experience, and current purpose of the observer.” This is the perceptual read on the environment; the spatio-temporal devices that we develop to navigate it. It creates our feelings and emotions, our opinions about a place. This is how we map our surroundings; define in our subconscious which paths we take and which paths we avoid.

Fit is the relationship between the physical environment and how it is used (although they are interrelated). “The fit of a settlement refers to how well its spatial and temporal pattern matches the customary behavior of its inhabitants.” Here sense follows through with form. This is the physical environment and how well it allows us to move through it, or, if poorly rendered, hampers movement.

Access is the infrastructure, both physical and metaphorical, that moves us through space and
connects from one place to another. It can be anything from a pedestrian sidewalk to public transportation to highways to communication systems including telephones, televisions, and the internet. Access is hierarchical in nature and can be discriminatory; what is access for one is a dead end for another. “The valued end [in most if not all urban design schemes] is greater access, although increased mobility may not always increase access.”23

Control defines how a space, specifically public space, is used and regulated. “Man is a territorial animal: he uses space to manage personal interchange and asserts rights over territory to conserve resources.”24 How space is controlled both determines and reinforces the pecking order of a social food chain. Control of space consists of assumed rights of that space which are “presence,” “use and action,” “appropriation,” “modification,” and “disposition.”25 Presence is the right to be in a space; Use and Action is the right to behave freely in a space and use its facilities; Appropriation is the right to take control of a space to personal gain; Modification is the right to alter a space’s physical characteristics; and Disposition is the right to dispense the use of that space to others like a commodity. These rights can be used in any combination, or exclusively, but they define how we behave in space.

Efficiency is the loss of some value at the constant achievement of another. It balances that which is held at a higher value than that which is considered a lower value to maintain a consistent recovery of the former. “Efficiencies of settlements can be compared only by seeing which achieves the best level in some one dimension, given a fixed amount of other values expended or achieved.”26 Justice balances efficiency by making certain that the values being reinforced and those being subverted by efficiency are equitable to all.

These six dimensions for the performance of urban fabrics and their networks create a starting point from which to evaluate a city and determine what a proper course of action could be for urban design. They are not literal
representations of an urban environment, but a framework to support critical investigations. They do not offer answers but construct a means to ask the right questions. Urban places are vastly unique phenomena, each with their own particular needs.

It becomes apparent then, that to come toward an urban geography that incites true revitalization beyond economy and supports its communities, an urban design process that questions the nature of identity and how we function in space is necessary. The process could ultimately lead to an architecture that grounds itself in space/time relationships, enabling environments that support diversity while structuring continuity. We can come to understand this relationship to spatial organization through the concept of the Same-Other. The Same-Other comes out of post-structuralist/deconstructionist theories, refuting the absolutism of dualistic dichotomies: object-subject, real-imagined, center-margin. The Other places value on a trialectic possibility to breakdown the categorically closed logic of “either/or.” The feminist geographer, Gillian Rose notes that the Same-Other and its many spatial manifestations has the tendency, however, to create what she calls Paradoxical Space. This is neither a positive or negative position, but does respond in political positioning that simultaneously toggles between the two (same-other).27
2.0/Exploration

2.1/Paradox and the Nature of Space

The African American, feminist writer and social critic, bell hooks takes the position that outside arenas of social installation can become powerful political tools and platforms for resistance. Through her studies, she advocates a margin of location for the radical positioning of values. The resistance created through spatial definition then begins to assert a voice against oppression while celebrating the spatiality and connectivity of human creativity and diversity. Using the concept of margin as the “Other” to spatial orientation, we can begin to see the breakdown of fragmentation within society as it builds itself back up on the capacity of its creative merit rather than on the dogmas of inherent discriminations built in to its own identity.

But to understand why these margins exist and why they are necessary, a further understanding of space and time is necessary. The geographer Edward Soja notes in his many writings on spatial constructs and social theories of the environment that most academic theory has historically been stuck in binary ways of thinking about space and its relationships to social and historical contexts. Through a positivist frameset of scientific action/reaction/consequence binaries, geographical knowledges inherently lose their spatial contexts.

Exogenous approaches explain material geographies by focusing on the underlying social and physical processes that produce them. Human geographies are seen here as the product or outcome of forces which are not in themselves geographical or spatial.

Commenting on such post-structural thinkers as Foucault and Lefebvre, he comes toward an understanding of their use of the “Other” as a third and unlimited possibility about spatial thought. He calls this Thirdspace.
Figure 9: We are all torn and contained by the conventions that we hold for ourselves. We are an amalgamation of different selves that we put on at different times to appease different people, as if to please ourselves. It is easy to get lost in translation between the self that we are and the self that we play the part for. A margin is a place one goes into at risk. It is simultaneously fragile and sturdy: fragile in that it lacks the support of normative structures where it may be difficult to stand in the minority and sturdy in that its constant, rigorous attention to self and surroundings draws strength of spirit.

Firstspace, according to Soja, is the empirical knowledge derived from material geographies. They are mappable and measurable within analytical matrices that manifest in completely quantitative forms of knowledge. This he describes as perceived space, or that which is directly drawn in through, and by the limitations of sensory perception. This is the “text” or the “body” of the environment. So here, a street is a
street, a building is a building, and a streetscape becomes the visual linkage of discrete objects in the environment.

Secondspace is the subjective imagination derived from emblematic geographies. They are concerned with images and representations of spatiality – the processes presumed to shape both material manifestations and symbolic meaning of space. This he describes as conceived space, or that which is filtered through the cognitive faculties of the human brain. This is the “interpretation” or the “read” of the environment. So here, a street is a connection to another street, a building is defined by its use value to the user and whether its services, experiences, or aesthetic qualities fit into the individual’s patterns, and a streetscape is a component of a neighborhood linked and connected to larger social networks. For Lefebvre, this space dominates the human imagination because it is here that critical analysis takes place and controls how we act upon space.

Thirdspace was developed as an academic term by Soja to continue the discourse of Lefebvre’s Production of Space. According to Lefebvre, binary logic systems: nature-culture, capitalism-socialism, center-margin, cannot fully encompass holistically the possibilities of the real and imagined world. Il y a toujours l’Autre. There is always an-Other. Within the space of representation, there is an experiential complexity that cannot be defined in concrete dualisms. Yet, merely adding a third term to the equation is not sufficient.

This Othering does not derive simply and sequentially from the original binary opposition and/or contradiction, but seeks instead to disorder, deconstruct and tentatively reconstitute in a different form the entire dialectical sequence and logic. It shifts the ‘rhythm’ of dialectical thinking from a temporal to a more spatial mode, from a linear or diachronic sequencing to configurative simultaneities and synchronies…

From here, thirding becomes a “heuristic chain of approximations,” as discovery compiles on top of discovery and experience adds to experience to become an “ever expanding process of knowledge formation.” Soja describes this as lived space, or through the multiplicity of experiential possibilities within
the environment that no two existences or perspectives can ever be the same and that these processes of knowledge should not be limited to generalized essentialisms that are inherently biased.

Thirdspace is the simultaneous occupation of both Firstspace and Secondspace, the result of which is a complex positioning of identity in the environment based on physical surroundings; individual experiences; cultural bindings; real and imagined awareness; oppression, fear, struggle, freedom, courage, triumph, etc. This requires a radical openness to different kinds of knowledge and requires an unyielding commitment to intellectual and political understandings and critiques to refrain from hyper relativism.

Figure 10: Edward Soja’s diagram the Trialectics of Spatiality where the elements of space, First-, Second-, and Thirdspace come together in an integrated chain to yield a sense of location and position in space.

An example of this thirding is evident in the critique of a second year, undergraduate, architecture project. The project was to design an urban movie theatre using the parts and pieces of a previous series of analyses based on building systems; site, spatial, structural, enclosural, and mechanical. The project was trying to discover the relationship between two
disparate entities, a solid mass (jewel) and a transparent enclosure (jewel box). Prior to the critique, I was having difficulty reconciling the dynamics of the relationship between these two elements. Professor William Taylor, a professor at the University of Cincinnati at the time (fall 2000), presented a process for thinking about this relationship by relating it to the movie experience.

He asked me to think about what a movie experience actually is. First, there is the projected celluloid and amplified sound. Second, there are the individual audience members. These would in effect create the construct of the First- and Secondspaces. The projected movie is Firstspace because it is static; the individual audience member is Secondspace because s/he is transitional. He challenged me to think of a movie not as a singular event happening over a specific period of time, but rather as a multiplicity of events, where numerous movies were going on simultaneously and that each individual movie was the transaction between the projected information and the life experiences of each individual watching the movie. The movie then becomes a spatial phenomenon without a beginning or an ending. Although there is a specific period of time that the information the movie contains is projected, the experience of the audience member begins before s/he ever enters the theatre and the impact of the gained knowledge leaves with them. So, the movie never actually begins or ends, it is just a part of lived space that happens to occur. This drastically made me rethink the methodology for crafting the space in the design project. The pertinent information is in the idea that space is not limited to the physical realm or even time; space can be perceived and conceived, but it is in the individual representations of space that are as infinite as they are significant.
Thirdspace is a place in between; the moment where the physical realm and how we experience it, over time, over the extent of our life experiences, over our own opinions and biases about the world, over our own struggles, our own pain, our own identities occurs. Soja notes five distinct assets of a Thirdspace knowledge set that resonate not only in the preceding example of thirding, but in the potential of the spatial imagination. 1) It is a rigorous approach to understanding space and enacting change; 2) it is no better or worse than Firstspace and
Secondspace, although often neglected; 3) it is an encompassing spatial perspective that engenders all typologies and perspectives; 4) which becomes the intersection of different constituencies to mobilize against oppression; and 5) it is a starting point for the continuation of knowledge sets that move beyond binary circuits or third terms.38

2.2/Margins and Edges

Margin is a location. It is a location outside the center, where center is defined as the hegemonic power structures that control the environment. To be in the margin is to be outside the center. This is the fringe, the edges of a naturalized society that amputates that which it deems deviant or abnormal. To be marginalized is to be discriminated, but to marginalize oneself can empower.

As such, I was not speaking of a marginality one wishes to lose – to give up or surrender as a part of moving into the center – but rather of a site one stays in, clings to even, because it nourishes one’s capacity to resist. It offers to one the possibility of radical perspective from which to see and create; to imagine alternatives; new worlds.39

From the margin it is possible to reimagine time, space, and theory to include the images and representations that are omitted, forgotten, and/or ignored.

Figure 12: Barbara Kruger, (Untitled) We Won’t Play Nature to Your Culture, 1983. This image speaks to an oppression that will no longer be tolerated. It is a refusal to subjectify the identity (or naturalize it) through a value structure that is outside its production.
2.2.1/A Political Theory of Location

It is from the position of the margin as a source to define and amplify a specific set of values that do not necessarily normalize themselves through conventional methods as opposed to creating a leading set of architectures and values, limited in scope to be inclusive, that can begin to define a new approach to urban design. But before we can make that leap, it is helpful to understand how Thirdspace translates into social manifestations that position themselves to resist hegemonic structures. This can be described as a 'politics of location.' According to this, “any subject can be located within particular discursive and material matrices of power, resistance, and subjectivity”. bell hooks materializes this linkage in her definition of margin, where space becomes the lived phenomena of both her surrounding environment(s) and the political resistance to oppression that she mounts in this space. This resistance becomes the spring board for change.

I am located in the margin. I make a definite distinction between that marginality which is imposed by oppressive structures and that marginality one chooses as a site of resistance – as a location of radical openness and possibility. This site of resistance is continually formed in that segregated culture of opposition that is our critical response to domination. We come to the space through suffering and pain, through struggle... We are transformed, individually, collectively, as we make radical creative space which affirms and sustains our subjectivity, which gives us a new location from which to articulate our sense of the world.

This margin positions itself outside the center and uses its identity as a voice of empowerment toward a transformative process, as it works to fold its interests into the environment.

We live in a society that is rooted in oppression. We simultaneously perpetuate the devices and environments that maintain oppressive conditions and ignore that these devices in fact cause oppression. We may whine about homosexuals wanting “special rights” or for the urban poor, “why can’t just get a job?”, but the fact remains that it is our doing that these issues of complaint are issues at all. The deeper questions are why is there any need to argue the point of homosexual marriage?
And why do we continue to centralize poverty so that there is no equal access to the opportunities and resources that would allow the urban poor to get a job or even a career?

Figure 13: James Ensor, Ensor with Masks, 1899. This image is riddled with an identity that is struggling between the masks one wears to function in society. The masks surrounding his self portrait simultaneously represent a fear of the collective pressures brought on by societal expectation and the fractured representations of himself that are ganging up to destroy him.

A further example, and perhaps even more devious, is “color-blindness”. The idea that perceiving a black person as having no color is the derivative of an altered perception that seeks to see that person as white as a means to
alleviate our inherent discomfort with “blackness.” It should be that “blackness” is a variable, in a multitude of variables that make people different, and should be celebrated rather than stigmatized as a component of who someone is. But that these questions that challenge discrimination are avoided, challenged, or even shrugged off provides proof that those who are marginalized must mount resistance, and that resistance can be mounted from the same margins that set to oppress them. Racism still exists, sexism still exists, homophobia still exists, elitism still exists and they all terrorize space and limit the capacity for a fluid culture of cultures to coexist.

It is not an easy position, however, to be the fringe, the underclass and choose that place in the margin as a place of resistance. The margin itself is a paradox. Every Other is an-Other by contrast to some Same, where the treatment of the Other within the construct of the Same defines the identity, through oppression, that the Other wishes to protect. “Resistance to the consequent exclusions and absences … is difficult, because it is impossible to find a position that is entirely outside hegemonic discourses.” For example, there is no true feminism because feminism is defined by its resistance to patriarchy, meaning that because women’s identity is defined by either assimilation or resistance, there can be no true woman’s identity; it is still tethered to hegemonic structures (white masculinity). But even to the extent that the margin is fettered by hegemonic power, even defined by it, radical resistance to these power structures positions itself for ever expanding bits of freedom and identity that are their own.

To be in the margin requires a courage and strength that are simultaneously opposed to and bound by the hegemonic power structures that define exclusionary space. The options are simple, or are they?

Moving, we confront the realities of choice and location. Within complex and ever shifting realms of power relations, do we position ourselves on the side of colonizing mentality? Or do we continue to stand in political resistance with the oppressed, ready to offer our ways of seeing and theorizing, of making culture,
towards that revolutionary effort which seeks to create space where there is unlimited access to the pleasure and power of knowing, where transformation is possible?44

Do we assimilate? Or do we stand to maintain our own personal and cultural identities in the hopes that some day our voices may be heard equally?

It is for the margin, as a place outside the center that resists oppression, even if it has to mimic the voice, the timbre, the language of the oppressor that this thesis stands, using the “counter-language” of an “irrevocable transformation.”45 “If radical postmodernist thinking is to have a transformative impact, then a critical break with the notion of ‘authority’ as ‘mastery over’ must not simply be a rhetorical device.”46 A break from this authority requires a new definition of value in space. If economy and politics (and most-likely a rigid morality) has led us thusly, then what becomes the values of transformation?

Commenting on Teresa De Laurentis, Gillian Rose defines an approach to postmodern feminism as a subject that is constituted “...not by sexual difference alone, but rather across languages and cultural representations [where critiques of exclusion could be seen as] the acceptance of diversity and a productive mobility between differences.”47 As well, postmodern feminism, while simultaneously occupying a subjective description within the scope of hegemonic discourses and being itself self-representative, claims that this self-representation challenges the “exhaustiveness of masculinism.”

This does not assert itself to replace one hegemonic structure with another, but rather becomes an alternative, an-Other view through which to critique, challenge and modify the status quo.48 This implies a universal without universalities, a general without generalities. Where space is occupied center and margin, left and right, from the individual to the collective and each contingency along the way from the micro to the macro is valid. It implies a scale of scales working together to the best interest of the whole without depriving the part.
Figure 14: Barbara Kruger, (Untitled) We Have Received Orders Not to Move, 1982.

Figure 15: Barbara Kruger, (Untitled) Your Comfort is My Silence, 1981.
This paradox becomes the relentless synchronization of spatial occupation from both sides; center and margin. Each contingent force working together in coalition defines a new public realm, a new public space.

This space is multidimensional, shifting and contingent. It is also paradoxical, by which I mean that spaces that would be mutually exclusive if charted on a two-dimensional map – center and margin, inside and outside – are occupied simultaneously. 49

Figure 16: Olga Grechina, Corridor, 1988-1989.

Here identity is drawn out of a larger spectrum. It is multi-faceted and synchronized. I am at once male, white, homosexual, a member of my body, a member of my family, a member of my race, a member of a race among races, a member of a class, a member of a class among classes, a member of a gender, a member of a gender among genders, a member of my species, a member of my city, a member of my state, a member of my country, a member
of the globe; each scale, each component, each happy memory, each sad memory are all part of a continuum that is at once mine and the world’s. Space becomes occupied. As I occupy it, it occupies me. As others occupy it, they occupy me. And the grand subjectivity of it all resonates irrevocably. Just. As a citizen of one and a citizen of all, I cannot be mapped; I cannot be located, but I can locate myself.

Figure 17: René Magritte, Titanic Days/Les jours gigantesques, 1928.

To occupy space, one has to come to know that space and then one has to come to know that space; it is deconstruction and reconstruction. “Identities are a process of both ‘deterritorialization and reterritorialization.’”
environment is navigated materially first, then conceptually, then synchronously (although the element of synchronization is always present – true synchronization requires familiarity). From here a spatial order, a material order begins to emerge from the multiplicity of possibility. “These notions of space, location, place, position, mapping, and landscape imply radically heterogeneous geometries. They are lived, experienced and felt.”51 These conceptual geometries that refute the status quo represent empowerment, resistance, and an accepting acknowledgement of diversity.

It has to be stated here that the scope of my abilities to use paradox and margin as a location of values is limited. I can speak from my own marginality as an “out” homosexual, but cannot speak outside of my ethnicity, my whiteness, which does limit me to certain experiences of privilege. I cannot write as a woman, or a black man, or any other ethnic group; I cannot write impoverished, or handicapped. But I can exploit the shortcomings of my whiteness to keep them balanced. “To ignore white ethnicity is to redouble its hegemony by naturalizing it. Without specifically addressing white ethnicity, there can be no critical evaluation of the construction of the other.”52 A set of urban values that attempt to be inclusive in their sensitivity and approach can be developed, and are developed; but even to that affect, I am still partial to my whiteness. So, it is here that it is necessary to define the audience or use-group for which I am designing.

Race, gender, and class in this research are simultaneously subverted and highlighted. This thesis makes claim to margin both physically and metaphorically. But here, margin is used as a radical device to call “attention to those shared sensibilities which cross the boundaries of class, gender, race, etc., that could be fertile ground for the construction of empathy – ties that would promote recognition of common commitments, and serve as a base for solidarity and coalition.”53 The user groups of urban space are defined more by typologies of intra-urban mobility,
than specifically by class, race, and gender. The resident, the commuter, and the tourist are seen to fall within different classes of pedestrians that are underrepresented in certain urban typologies; these typologies of edge and boundary. Local city traffic and pass-through highway traffic are the primary oppressors as classes of automobiles (which certainly speaks to a type of exclusive space). Ironically, these classes automobile drivers can switch roles to pedestrians in many urban typologies, but they cannot in this instance occupy both at the same time, therefore, they can be critiqued separately.

Figure 18: James Rizzi, Empire State Building, 1995.
Discussing how people use and experience space based on their different motivations and devices does speak to the multiplicity of identity types. Unfortunately, due to the limitations of both time and resources, this thesis cannot introduce a full survey of specific class, race, and gender identities. It does, however, make assumptions that a restructured public space by radical thirding – where “radical thirding” is defined as an approach to redefine the nature of public space by analyzing and reconfiguring the juxtapositions of different typologies of urban mobility – that sutures together disparate objects in the environment, intrinsically broaches the subject. The best that can be done here is to remain consistent with and dedicated to the interpretation of the literature as it seeks to define a formal response.

2.2.2/A Social Theory of Place

If cities are defined as the complex interlacing of social and physical fabrics and it is assumed that the role of paradox is the appropriate general (not generalized) organization of heterogeneous geometries of lived interests, then urban design and urban fabrics become the matrix through which these features are filtered. As it has been mentioned, cities are complex identities that are unique from city to city; but even within cities, there are complex networks that have different typologies and unique identities. A riverfront is different from a CBD is different from a residential neighborhood, which are different from each other based on the specific micro-cultures that occupy them which are always evolving. A healthy city recognizes the differences that makes it a whole and connects them to one another fluidly for the exchange of both economic and social capital to incite diversity and solidarity, while being flexible enough to respond to changing needs and desires.

These connections, however, do not seek to homogenize the environment. Sameness paralyzes urban space and creates social inactivity. If everything is the same
then there is no reason to move through the environment, for what is seen in one, is seen in another. Rather, connections between places should be different and incite those differences. This adds to the possibility of serendipitous exchange and engenders an aura of excitement.

Urban connectivity happens in the spaces between places; they are quite literally the spaces that connect one place to another. They are simultaneously places themselves. The street, plazas, piazzas, public greens, bridges, verandas, promenades, arcades, public squares are all part of a contiguous fabric that connects one thing to another. There is no determining factor that can assume what happens in these spaces. What happens there is a product of the culture and socio-economic structures that use them.

…Urban program[ming] exceeds function. Whether inside or outside, one way to conceptualize it is as everyday space, that is, the non-monumental aspects of urban life. This urban program operates as a social condenser to allow and support interaction.54

The physical spaces that connect our urban networks become a canvass for public life. On the street and in public space in cities; we sit, read, write, talk, sun ourselves, sleep, play games, loiter, run, walk, ride bikes, skate, lounge, eat, smoke, watch people, walk our

Figure 19: René Magritte, The Celestial Muscles/ les muscles célestes, 1927.
dogs, laugh, and just generally make ourselves visible to the world. Many of the most interesting about humans happens on the street in urban environments.

Figure 20: James Rizzi, Living Near the Water, 1993.

Without these spaces, our cause to interact with one another is diminished. With modern technology, business transactions can be distilled to a phone call and an email; almost anything can be purchased online down to groceries and toothbrushes; it is quite possible to maintain personal relationships over cyber-space. These are only recent examples of social withdraw; it goes without saying that the automobile has had a tremendous impact on the way we interact with one another. To remain social creatures, humans must in fact physically react with other humans. It has become exceedingly easy to retreat from
public life and while our networking capabilities have cast a broader net, our human and social abilities may have suffered.

To remain vital, we must rethink public space. It is not enough that we allocate a certain space for “public” interaction then through a systematic editing process remove the elements that make it public so that it becomes a theme-park rendering of what we imagine public space to be, safe for the tourists. Public space, to engender true democratic use, must be given to the public. This may be where the occasional demonstration or protest occurs, but it is also where spontaneous art events and day-to-day happenings occur. This is where people of all shapes, sizes, ages, ethnicities, orientations, classes, etc. have the opportunity to coexist. Even if there is no direct interaction across differences, proximity breeds tolerance.

How can public space be reimagined so that it becomes truly public? Or can it? When thinking of “public space,” nostalgic interludes of constructed fantasies about the past are often draw upon; what is dreamt public space must have been in historic cities to the extent that the term “city” itself becomes elusive – in fact the notion of public space is a modern one. But if public space has only come to be obsessed
over in modern discourse, what is it, and for that matter, what is public?

Public space is itself, of course, a highly problematic concept. First and foremost, ‘public’ is a historical and extremely mobile category that is also never singular; there are always many publics and multiple changing definitions of what constitutes these publics. In fact, the public realm might be nothing more than this kind of process of ongoing definition and redefinition.

The idea of public space often goes misconstrued and what sets itself out to be public becomes another controlled environment with little relationship to the public it serves.

‘Public space’ is an exemplary global category that suppresses the very heterogeneity it supposedly describes. Truly public space would defy categorization. Indeed, it would not even be recognizable as a space. Its openness to heterogeneous social transactions would be such that it would have no clear form, no definable limits.

Public space is defined by its relationship to private space and private space is defined by that which is kept hidden or secret. “Private space is typically associated with ideas about individual specificity vs. external diversity.” The formlessness of public space only takes shape in the edges between these two conditions. “The borders between what will eventually be called private and public, multiply and overlap.” There is no clear definition, however, of how these borders are constructed; everything overlaps and evolves past its own sensibilities or even possibilities.

This implies a radical approach to understanding the urban environment where urban design is a contradiction and public space is a paradox. But how are the limitations of space that can not be tethered by intention moved past? First, it is essential to give up our obsession with fragmentation as a detrimental factor to cities and city form. Fragmentation, and more correctly fragmentations (implying multiple shifts in fractions toward a heterogeneous entropy) are an intrinsic force in collective life for human beings. “Fragmentation is neither a negative nor a positive term. The risk lies not with
fragmentation but with the fantasy of stable form.” By assuming, or trying to assume, that human life settles in stable forms ironically generates instability.

So this brings up the question of what is being designed when attempting to approach the connectivity of city networks. To talk about public space requires specificity. But to be specific about anything public negates the term (hence the paradox); therefore, it is impossible to discuss public space, at least where design is concerned. To say that public space is being created is a contradiction if not sheer deception. Then what is actually being done? It is the assumption of this thesis that we are refining the functioning of the city. The dimensions of performance: vitality, sense, fit, access, control, efficiency and justice are being enhanced by developing strategies that ease the
use of the formal structure of the urban environment. Urban space which specifically has form is the designer’s media of production.

Figure 23: James Rizzi, It was Beauty that Killed the Beast, 1995.

Public space is formless, urban space is not. It is not about public space. It cannot be by definition. It can be designed in such a way that the public has access to it; it can be controlled in such a way that the public can shape its use; it can bring sense to the environment by connecting different networks in more scaled, navigable ways; but its use cannot be predetermined. “Public spaces often have little specific use program, or to the extent that this program exists, it may not be the engine of the space.”61 It ultimately has to be what it is as a piece of architecture, remain self-conscious, and accept the limitations of its
existence. However, this does not relieve the designer of responsibility.

If urban culture is a complex and fluid system of borders between private and public that are often institutionalized by architectural forms, these borders, and the discipline of architecture that assists in their assertion, is never innocent. Design fits here by realizing that it is altering how things operate in space – not apologizing for it; but simultaneously remaining rigorously sympathetic to the context that it is infiltrating.

Figure 24: Barbara Kruger, (Untitled) Don't Be a Jerk, billboard, Melbourne, Australia, 1996.

The isolation and crystallization of paradox into the urban environment can be a powerful tool to create strategies that reinforce the environment, while trying not to lead it in a specific, biased direction (although an element of this is unavoidable). “The power of paradox is in showing that sense always follows two directions at the same time.” It is impossible for a designer to control the outcome of the term “public space,” but elements can be brought together; disparate in their association yet conformed in their execution; that suture rifts in disconnected
adjacencies. The disruption of connecting unlike spaces becomes an ecosystem of spaces that “energize space into more than the sum of its parts.”

Urban space is a field in tension through its complexity and difference which derives social space as the “encounter, assembly, and simultaneity of everything that is produced by nature or by society, either through cooperation or through conflict.” Here urban relationships, both physical and social accept discrepancies within their make-up without yielding control to one overriding system or element.

Figure 25: James Rizzi, Turning the City Upside Down, 1994.
Cities are by their very natures paradoxes; an agglomeration of disparate objects that form networks connected to each other in the environment. Public space is carved out of the city form through a series of appropriations and transformations. These transformations translate, into the environment, the layered landscapes of politics and culture. They are the intersections of human endeavor and social interactions. When these spaces are over controlled by a specific power structure, bent on its own agenda, they die. When they are formed to support human interaction and left to the devices of the culture that uses them, the ability to reach their Thirdspace potential is achieved. Thirdspace speaks of a place (where place is defined by a resultant identity derived from cultural construction) in between. That in between is derived from the interaction of the Same and the Other. The same is the center, where the patriarchal structures that dominate the environment establish norms. The other is the margin, where the fringes of society linger in precarious deviance from those norms. The interstices of these two contrary forces create the simultaneity of a lived force. Here, public space is seen as the Other, the irreducible aggregation of political and social factions. Private space is seen as the Same through measures of control. Thirdspace is the constant ebb and flow of both.

To come toward an analysis that will acquiesce, in design, a responsive urban form, we must have guidelines. We draw on two sources here: 1) a critique of Michael Sorkin on the detrimental direction of urban design and 2) a Dutch urban report that has distilled contemporary city making into essential urban elements.

Sorkin has criticized urban design to similar ends as above. It is limited in its histrocentric nostalgia and monochromatic fetishism without a visionary understanding of the urban environment and its future. He lays out eleven principles that can be applied generally to any environment:
1. **Reinforce Neighborhoods** where the neighborhood “is the means by which the social city is comprehended;”

2. **Make it Sustainable** demanding a “restoration of the greatest reasonable degree of self-sufficiency: local self-reliance is the lesson of global interdependence;”

3. **Add Green** as both “an exception and compliment to a [city’s] territory, legible on relation to the green spaces in which it sits and which sit in it;”

4. **Secure the Edge**: “there is a boundary of apraxia, a point of absolute dysfunction beyond which the city simply can no longer perform coordinated actions;”

5. **Make Public Places**: “the forms of gathering are a central subject for the imagination of urban design;”

6. **Be Sure Rooms Have Views**: “a city with an infinity of views that embody of luxury of choices, not a system of privileges;”

7. **Finesse the Mix**: “urban design must keep pace by exploring the tectonics not simply of new use but of unpredictable transformation, creating cities that are as malleable as lofts and as fixed as works of art;”

8. **Elaborate Movement**: “it is time for a radical shift toward human locomotion in cities;”

9. **Localize Architecture**: “cities are form makers, and urban design should astutely recognize indigenous forms that have reached some kind of perfection;”

10. **Defend Privacy**: “public space should be about choice, and choice is a private matter… public space needs to be rethought not simply as a series of sites but as a conceptual resource out of which an infinity of private fantasies and behaviors can be drawn;”

11. **Make It Beautiful**: “we are negligent in our tasks if we fail to engage deep desire, the means by which we enlarge the city of sense, the millionfold techniques of an urban erotics.”

Although some of the aspects of these principles seemingly contradict the thesis laid out here, the root of their generation is similar and these principles can be distilled in their application to
an urban form that does not seek to define use, but offers itself up as an urban canvass nonetheless.

The Dutch urban report has condensed its finding to four key elements: flexibility, complexity, identity, and strategy. As the term implies, flexibility speaks to the ability for a place to change over time using flexible forms of centrality that avoid static programming and land-use zoning. Complexity is both a function and result of flexibility that allows for the “mixture of functions, densities, and changeability.” The identity of a city, defined by the relationship between culture and spatial form, strongly determines the direction of urban development. “A city is always on the lookout for its own identity.” Strategy defines the methodology and approach through which a design will be executed. “A clear concept is indispensable for the design of an urban environment.”

There are many types of spaces that need consideration for their role in collective life and public interaction: corporate plazas, “public” squares, city parks, etc; but this thesis focuses on the possibility of left-over urban space. The spaces that are considered left-over here are those forgotten, undersigned, aggressive spaces that create bold edges in the

Figure 26: James Rizzi, Good Day, 1987.
environment, cutting off urban networks: underpasses; highways; vast solid walls at the street; obsolete and decayed buildings; vacant lots that create malicious, ugly urban vistas – all of which contribute to the contemporary urban miasma.

2.3/Translating Design

The following is a series of architectural precedents that reflect different aspects of the theory developed in this thesis to support and impact an approach to designing from the margin.

2.3.1/Paradox and Metaphor

In a project titled “Imperfect Utopia: A Park for the New World;” the Joseph M Bryan Theatre at the North Carolina Museum of Art, in Raleigh, North Carolina; designed by Smith-Miller + Hawkinson Architects and Nicholas Quenell, Landscape Architect, in collaboration with artist Barbara Kruger, 1987 – 1996; space is transformed into paradox through the clever use of metaphor. The NCMA occupies a 167-acre site in Raleigh and the Imperfect Utopia project engages three acres just to the southwest of the building proper. Back and right from the main entrance, the composition begins to take shape approximately
15-20 feet below the elevation of the main entrance to keep its presence a surprise to its visitors. The project is comprised of two distinct, yet masterfully integrated pieces of program: an amphitheatre that seats 1200 people and an interactive sculpture park. For our purposes, we concentrate on the design of the sculpture park.

Barbara Kruger is known for her postmodern feminist critiques on the role of women in a white masculine society. Her images are iconic representations of repression, often drawing on nostalgic images of the 1940s and 50s and manipulating them through short quips and text to represent the oppression handed down to women through a blind acceptance of a status quo.

Kruger’s work is about the war at home, in each of us: between good and bad, men and women, black and white, losers and winners, creeps and assholes, all the socio-cultural dissonances that make the world so tweaked. It seems to issue from an angrily saturnine clarity about how things go wrong between people, how affection subtly modulates into rage, how the brightest moment can turn to shit on a dime.72

We are constantly reminded when looking at Kruger’s work that our actions and assumptions have impact that trickles down through the culture, often in negative ways. But as well as her biting critiques of male society, much of her work is about affirmation, affirmation of the human spirit and its ability to remain strong.

The space in Imperfect Utopia, adds a layer of Thirdspace that can only come to be lived and occupied at the same time. The text “PICTURE THIS” inscribed, artistically across the grounds, is at once textual, conceptual, and occupiable. Each letter has a uniquely rendered, literal representation of struggle against oppression. Each letter becomes an occupiable space that reports on a message of history, culture, geography, and topography offering the user a multiplicity of experiential possibilities. From achievements of women in history to affirmations in only the way Barbara Kruger can do, the user is
humanized in their own experience. It is a truly inclusive space. It is a monument to inclusivity.

The “P” is a viewing wall entrenched in the landscape and butted up closest to the museum building. “Please read the writing on the wall;” “Please do unto others as you would have them do unto you;” “Please read between the lines;” “Please be all that you can be” are some of the streaming lines of text inscribed into this feature of the site. Each line questioning, asking, showing; reveals representations of self and connection to both the site and humanity. The simplicity in the text drones on common sense; but strung together, there is a profound and touching message of hope through tolerance and diversity.

Figure 28: Detail photograph of the “P” in the sculpture garden.

The adjacent “I” portrays an outline of the state of North Carolina. Plaques of historical achievements to the state and to women surround the image and lines of metal, tacked down every 12 inches or so, sketch back to point to the geographical locations where they occurred. Abstract representations in the “C” “T” “U” “R” “E” and “S” speak about the site and its topography, using lines, materials, massings that imply through and around the site. The “T” and “H” are given over to the amphitheatre to bring its functioning into the message of the composition. The top part of the “T” is a pavilion that terminates the walk from the museum building. The bottom portion is resolved by becoming seating for the theatre. The “H” is
a complex composition of stage and canopy, simultaneously occupying ground and air; it is the theatre. Its adjacent “I” is another message for self awareness: “To be rather than to seem.”

Figure 29: Detail photograph of sculpture garden.

Figure 30: Detail photograph.

Much like the movie experience outlined above, this is space that transcends time and space. It is a transaction of transactions flowing free over the interchange of ideas and emotions. The user is forced to question their role in the environment. From the affirmative command, “picture this” to the space that each letter individually occupies, the user is simultaneously bombarded with imagery and calmed by the nature of its unyielding acceptance. The metaphor is textual and it is quite literally applied here, but to occupy the space is a paradox of meanings from emotional catharsis to intellectual intercourse. Each step is a step forward and a step back, constantly questioning its meaning.
2.3.2/Transformation and Transience

While writing this thesis, a project was erected in Central Park, New York that helped to define urban space, its qualities, and how it can be transformed. From February 12 – 28, 2005, the artists Christo and Jeanne-Claude were finally able to realize a project 25 years in the making. “The Gates” was an urban undertaking of substantial proportion; 7,500, sixteen feet tall, steel frames covered in a recyclable polyvinyl with saffron colored fabric hanging down were spaced at ten to fifteen feet intervals over 23 miles along the edges of the park’s pathways. The longtime running negotiations for the project finally received approval in 2003 by Mayor Michael Bloomberg on the contingency that there would be no holes dug into any part of the park and that the installation would not disturb the use of the park.73

This was an exciting project in the understanding of not only urban space, but space and spatial perception in general. For anyone that lives in New York and uses the park on a day to day basis, or anyone that has ever been to Central Park and had the opportunity to experience this installation should have been amazed by the dramatic transformation of space. Space is not static, especially and specifically because time changes everything. How ironic (and shall it be called paradoxical) that this
was a temporary installation. Not only was space being critiqued, but time as well. The project went up and down and before the end of its sixteen day run; a methodically illustrated representation of its rendering was measured, documented, catalogued, published and printed for sale by Taschen. It was distributed and even had a signing by the artists at the Guggenheim while the project was still up, with a line out the door and around the corner. This documentation certainly reminds of the project, but it is only a static approximation of the project. The phenomenal thing here was the event itself.

Not many people got to see it; but for those that did, there was a profound opportunity to explore the production of space. There is a seemingly static relationship in familiarity with a place, even if we constantly discover new nuances about it; our perception of it does not change (or at best, it evolves slowly) unless something drastic happens. But drastic happenings cause us to remember time. The key element to the production of space is time. Space exists, that is beyond our control, but spatial perception is a result of spatial manipulation and spatial manipulation is a result of time whether the result of humans or nature. In this project there was a spatial construct that is a piece of American heritage. Central Park is a spatial production belonging to our collective identity across multiple scales and publics. The opportunity here, to alter that space, even if for a moment, dramatically snapped the collective consciousness back into the mechanics of its production. And the fact that it was so temporary reinforces that snap; there was a before, an after, and what can be defined as an “after-before,” meaning that our collective consciousness knows the park; its alteration forced us to question our understanding of it; and the return to its original form was accompanied by a refreshed understanding of its meaning.
Figure 32: Photographs taken by the author.
These forms disrupted space on multiple axes. First, receding from any point along their 23 mile path redefined, and perhaps refined the user's understanding of Olmstead's English Garden Structure; as if having drawn a red (or in this case saffron) line across the existing paths to highlight the hierarchy of movement within the park. Second, from a perpendicular orientation to the inscription, an object would have been placed between the path and what lies beyond, disrupting the foreground, middle-ground, background. What was once a path, a margin, and some feature like a pond, a field, a rock formation, a pavilion, an amphitheatre, etc. was altered by these alien forms. Third, the verticality of these structures caused a reexamination of the human form from a scalar point of reference. Each gate was roughly three times taller than a human body; with the fabric hanging half-way down there was another spatial reference of approximately two feet or so taller; when that fabric billowed in the wind or breeze that reference fluctuated and the human perception of spatial volume fluctuated with it.

Urban space and its derivative, public space, are constantly in a state of flux. Just as no two points in space are ever the same, neither are any two points in time. It is difficult to spatially conceptualize time, even though the two are so crucially interdependent, but this project began to break down the translation barrier between the two; where urban space could be seen for the transformational form that it is.
The project “Island in the Mur,” in Graz, Austria by Vito Acconci, 2003; is quite literally a bridge between two disconnected geographies of the same city. Here, the program is outlined by a 300 seat amphitheatre, a café, and a children’s playground. The structure was erected out of a three year long design process to help venerate the year-long celebration of art and culture in Graz. Originally slated as a temporary project, it was so popular among the locals that it was voted to remain as a permanent structure.

The project derives its form from two twisting planes that come together to create two spaces and a boat-like structure. “One space twists and turns and warps to become the other. A dome twists and turns upside down to become a bowl, while the bowl twists and turns upside down to become a dome.” The amphitheatre is located in the bowl, the café is under the dome, and the children’s playground is at the interstices of the intersecting volumes.

The functions are mixed... There’s no hierarchy, no boundaries, no separation between inside and outside; the user decide for himself/herself where to set the limits. The playground form the background to the stage; while you’re watching a performance on the stage, there are screaming children in the background, while you’re having a drink in the café the children are playing overhead.
Formally, this project is the most directly translatable to the goals of this thesis. As an architecture project, it links two material geographies together that are vastly separated by the River Mur, that define these two edges of the city. This project winds down to the river, occupies it, creates space out of it that is multi-functional, and then winds back up to the other side of the city; a connection that is occupied and an occupation that is connected.

This connection gains its “paradoxical identity as new city center and irreducible other place by alternating between affiliation and differentiation…” The connection of two (or more) urban networks, i.e. the production of urban space must simultaneously respond to the networks that it is connecting and have its own identity. This intermediate identity is its ability to derive at place, if we see place as a resultant of both cultural definition and formal response where neither are controlled explicitly (nor can be). But the connection; which creates a new center out of the other supports the notion of a “city of centers;” further develops the identity of the city whole. Disparate objects remain disparate objects connected through devices that afford accessibility, while maintaining difference.

Figure 34: Photograph of Island in the Mur, nighttime view on right.
2.3.4/Reclamation and Reconstitution

Figure 35 Aerial photograph of Westergasfabriek Park and detail photos on left, plan on right.

Westergasfabriek Park is situated to the west of the city center in Amsterdam, the Netherlands. Designed by Gustafson Porter, LTD and opening in September 2003, this park reclaims a deserted industrial area of the former municipal power company’s gasworks and has transformed it into a new cultural area. The project retains 22 of the buildings abandoned on the site including a large gas tank. An “English Garden” is situated to the east of the park as an existing piece of the Westerpark District City Council, who acquired the site in 1992. Between that time and when the plant closed down in the 1960’s, the site had been used for storage and parking. The site is a brown-field recovery which reintroduces among the other program elements vegetation to begin reconstruction of its eco-system.

Among the other program elements of the park are a theatre (located inside the old gas drum),
exhibition halls, a market, artist studios, large open fields, and smaller outdoor spaces. “In this park landscape is program, not in a pastoral tradition of refuge … [but] as process conceived as part of the city as a space of (incommensurable) differences.”77 These differences result from a committed temperance of contextual relationships with an unyielding process toward transformation that doesn’t pander to convention or forget its subjectivity. “Kathryn Gustafson combines multiple scales within the project, a refusal to domesticate this landscape that is so out of scale with the human body.”78 By carrying the project past the polite backgrounds of landscape reduction, she has integrated natural elements into the urban landscape, or has integrated urban elements into the natural landscape, however the process goes.

This project speaks about the reclaiming of space. Much of what this thesis claims to be able to do in transforming the urban environment is to take physical margins of left over space and transform them into metaphorical margins of radically heterogeneous geometries.

This spatial progression represents changing attitudes towards landscape, in order to acknowledge it as a cultural construction, but also strive, through its arrival at spaces which are a result of a present-day process of reclamation, to integrate humans into an ecologically-based understanding of the land.79

As well, this project not only reclaim space, but does so on such a scale that it has to consider its connections to the city and how it can stitch together urban fabrics. It uses paradox to construct this identity by framing its new use within the construction of the old, simultaneously giving it meaning through the production of a new spatial identity while maintaining its contextual relationship to the canvass on which it was created.
2.3.5/Integrating the Center and Margin

Weiss/Manfredi Architects were commissioned by the NYC2012; a non-profit development corporation overseeing the spatial organization of the Summer Olympics 2012 in New York; to design a rowing course that would reimagine Flushing Meadows-Corona Park in Flushing, Queens. This would be an extension of the existing park famous for hosting the 1939 and 1964 worlds fairs that birthed the iconic Unisphere (1964). The motivation of the design was to test the feasibility of placing here flat-water and white water rowing courses, and accommodations for media and spectators.

The community of Flushing is quickly evolving through metropolitan expansion and the site is partially divided by highways. The highways create a “spaghetti” of
underpass conditions that are situated in existing marshland that both divides and isolates the site. The 2000 meter flat water course runs through the marsh connecting two lakes and is lined with boathouses, docks, and spectator seating. The white water course sits just east of the Unisphere and claims the existing circular reflecting pool to carve into it a course with the required 20 feet drop where the interior section of the pool becomes seating for 15,000.

An ancillary piece to the program is the integration of infrastructure to natural systems. The design links the parts of the park divided by highway with elevated boardwalks, creating a new wetland terrain that captures storm water and supports new plant life as well as bird and animal habitats.

This project speaks of an urban typology that integrates both infrastructure to support the automobile at one scale and carves out, reclaims, and introduces infrastructure that supports the human and human scale at the other end of the spectrum. Here, the infrastructure that already cuts through the site is used in a contextual way to occupy both center and margin. Rather than asserting itself as a louder voice, it integrates itself into the system, while maintaining its own, new, and Other identity.
3.0/Hypothesis:

This thesis hypothesizes that margins are locations with which to occupy as the unlimited possibility for the reconstitution of the urban environment. The margins we target here are part of a fragmented urban evolution. It is not the fragmentation that is in question here, but a formal urbanism that is myopic and top-heavy, especially in what remains of our older city centers. Specific urban typologies are examined that render urban space hostile, masculine, and exclusive; the margins of urban space that have lost their abilities to connect holistically i.e. the inability for pedestrians to occupy certain urban spaces.

It is not the purpose here to deconstruct American culture through its evolutionary paths, but to simply continue that evolution in a way that maintains an urban viability. The automobile is here to stay, perhaps its current form will eventually become obsolete; but regardless of any critique to the contrary, personal modes of transportation are not going anywhere, anytime soon.

In the meantime, and ironically to the benefit of this thesis, it is maintained that a meeting point can be reached, where the efficacy of both the automobile and the pedestrian are reinforced. To that end, it should also be possible not only for the pedestrian and automobile to coexist (in some draconian way, they already do) but that the forms that represent space here transcend mere proximity and somehow come toward a profound renegotiation of terms. This is the point at which the production of space reaches its Thirdspace potential, where the interaction of the automobile and the pedestrian are no longer exclusive, but simultaneous. Now, it must be said that it is not an intention to have them literally occupy the same space at the same time; that would be dangerous. But an urban architecture can be produced that brings the two together in a fashion that forces them to experience each other in a different way.
Three overriding guidelines are established here; to understand both the assets and liabilities that design has, through the use of margins as a framework, for urban space. These guidelines are set out to maintain a consistency in process that follows a clear path from the urban and social theories outlined above. They are defined through geometry, paradox and time.

3.1/Geometries of Representation

If there is a point or goal to this thesis, it is to come toward reconciling otherwise irreconcilable geographies. But a definitive goal implies the same binary circuit codes that this thesis portends to refute. So, from the point of view of infinite possibility the research attempts not to define, but to frame a cross-section of scales and typologies that manifest in the urban environment and use their inherent qualities and identities to refine environment. Heterogeneous geometries of social constructs (disparate constructs of cultural manifestation) can be translated into heterogeneous geometries of material realities to stratify the environment and imply democratic use.

3.2/Irony and Margin: a paradox of meaning

Margin has a double meaning in this thesis, as has already been alluded. It is both metaphorical and physical. Metaphorically, margin is defined as a set of values, radically positioned outside the center, that (at least) challenge the patriarchal structures of exclusionary space. This space simultaneously occupies the margin and the center and therefore is a paradox. Physically, margin is defined as the edges and boundaries of the urban condition, not the spaces that contiguously connect urban networks, but those left-over spaces that have been deconstructed and forgotten through urban deterioration and reconstitution that disconnect urban networks. These are masculine spaces, by their shear force that controls and regulates use and movement; and are the targets to be reclaimed and revised as
spaces of inclusion, both in terms of current use (center) and the potential for further means and modes of connection (margin), also defining it as paradox. Finally, the meeting point of these oppositional margins, metaphorical (margin) and physical (center) is also a paradox.

3.3/To Infinity and Beyond

However brave or meek, loud or quiet, radical or orthodox, design can never completely encompass the infinite possibilities of human responses and experiences. Material realities are limited in their capacity to represent lived geometries of spatial possibility because they are ends in a means/ends circuit. Yet, we can think past design, not as an end in itself, but as the canvass of further evolutionary sets of geometric heterogeneities. Meaning is as personal as it is cultural. And culture is as diverse in its manifestations as it is stratified in its structure(s). Design isolates moments of time in space, but culture temporalizes moments of space in time. These moments of space become the manifold constructs of function. Use is determined by both factors (design and function), and meaning is an exponential factor of both.
4.0/Methodology

4.1/Leaning Toward a Transformational Process

Much in the same way that political margins define a voice against oppression that constantly check themselves against the center, a formal response can define a value structure for that which it seeks to create that constantly checks itself against that which it seeks to change. This is a deconstruction and a reconstruction. It is the simultaneous occupation of the metaphorical margin and the physical margin, mapping out the fragmentations in each and defining the heterogeneous geometries that glue them back together. The parts and pieces that make a whole body system are weighed against the value system and reintroduced or suppressed through a series of valuations. The main body is then transformed out of a process where the environment is diagrammed, torn apart, rediagrammed, put back together and infilled with the new as it cooperates and enhances the existing.

4.2/Naked Space

To begin with, we have to come to know the environment that we are dealing with. This is a snapshot of the environment. This fact finding begins with photographs, exploration, and geographical exposure. Just as we come to be socialized in an environment through contact to its cultures and features, as we coax ourselves into understanding how the patterns of life operate, we must first get acquainted. This is the dry end of pure research, but probably the most crucial to the process; without it, no insightful decisions can be made. This seems painfully obvious and to a certain point it is, but it is the very nature of design that a clear understanding of context, conditions, and constraints be reached before executing any design process can occur. It is in fact a part of the process.

The environment must be thoroughly catalogued and examined. Photographs must be taken of the targeted area and arranged in a way that begins to model the
formal construction of the space. Diagrams are generated from patterns of movement within the framework of uses; zoning typologies planned and coincidental; geographical features that influence movement; social nodes and fluctuations in densities; juxtapositions of different typologies and networks and how they are connected; scalar influences from the macro to the micro; historical layers of landscape that influence form. These diagrams begin to flush out how the geography of location operates.

Beyond the techniques of shear recording, absorbing the environment is essential as well; using the places that exist, mingling with the people, observing. It is difficult, if not impossible, to know an environment without using its facilities and experiencing its cultures. Just being in the environment is an integral part of understanding it.

4.3/Space Deconstructed

It is from the point of familiarity that diagrams that start to lean toward a formal design response can be generated. These diagrams start to deconstruct the environment. This is where an understanding of urban deficiencies can be formulated. What are the geographical barriers? What are the physical disconnects? What are the social disconnects? What is missing?

The diagrams that we use here are constructed through and understanding of a specific environment that looks at two key issues: 1) how are urban networks disconnected through marginal borders in the urban environment? and 2) what are the key features that cause this disconnect?

To understand how urban networks are disconnected, a number of factors are examined. First, the historical progenerator of the disconnecting set of features are diagrammed. What did it used to be? What did it become? How did it come to be that way? Did it follow a logical progression to become the way that it did? If so, what is the nature of shifting that evolutionary pattern? Or can that pattern be
enhanced in a progressive way that reaches beyond its past and present to follow a trajectory into the future? Second, the physical characteristics that make it a barrier are diagrammed. What are those characteristics? Is there a pattern? What is its form? What does it stop? How does it stop it?

To understand the features that cause the disconnect, a series of generic diagrams have been developed that begin to highlight present deficiencies. The generic diagrams used here are based on five typologies of what are considered hostile urban environments. They are masculine typologies because they control space in a way that is exclusive to a specific type of use. They include underpass connections; heavy traffic, highways and dead ends; obsolete and decayed buildings; vacant lots and vast urban vistas; and vast solid walls.

Underpass connections define the areas under highways and bridges. In many cases they are physically passable, but are not necessarily any place that people want to be. In many cases, because of their psychological impassability, they work as effectively as a wall to cut off one network from another. Simultaneously, their spatial volumes can be incredibly invigorating places to be if they were to be thought of as a designed part of the city rather than an after-thought.
Heavy traffic, highways and dead ends are any thoroughfares that; due to high speed, high volume traffic or even physical barriers due to raised highways; cut off urban networks. In many cases, it is difficult to define bridges of connection across; but in many conditions, especially those that cut through dense city forms, these spaces are bridgeable in manners other than a just a simple pedestrian bridge that does little to engage opposite sides of disconnected networks.

![heavy traffic, highways, and dead ends](image)

**Figure 38**

Obsolete and decayed buildings, as well as, vast solid walls don't physically cut off networks as literally as the previous two; but they create conditions of anxiety when standing or moving next to them. This can just as effectively kill urban movement. Similarly, vacant lots and vast urban vistas create an uncomfortable adjacency (out of scale with human experience) when navigating the environment. These are defined as open space at the street level, often given over to surface parking, that tear holes in the fabric that reveal unsavory views and unstable conditions.
Figure 39: obsolescent and unused buildings

vast solid walls

vacant lots and vast urban vistas (not parks or greenspace)
This is not an exhaustive list of the possibilities for deconstructing the environment. It is a starting point from which to begin to locate strategies that can formulate an urban design process.

Once the environment lay tattered and torn (metaphorically speaking) in front of us, it becomes possible to recognize patterns that reveal themselves as opportunities. Diagramming sequences itself around possibility. This is not the location of what is or what was, but the location of what could be and where and how. This is where the paths of least resistance yield the paradox of potential. Ideas are spawned in the metaphors of representation. What we seek to create are in the intersections of the differences discovered.

4.4/Scale, Scale, Scale

The most important thing that this thesis can do is remember scale. Scale directly, intrinsically highlights all parties present. While this thesis primarily concentrates on the role of pedestrian cultures in hostile urban morphologies, it most certainly does not forget the role of automobiles in those same environments. Here, rather, a new program is formed that accommodates both, and an urban architecture is derived from that that has the potential to engage these different types of urban mobility into a single architecture at once. It will be new public space.

Derived from the theoretical research, eight principles have been developed that explain the nature of public space and gives direction for how this new public space might be formed. They are derived out of both the geographical and design research outlined above including hooks, Soja and Rose, Lynch, Sorkin, and Bobic; but they are just as much a culmination of personal experience and understanding through digestion of the urban environment. These principles are all related to scale and function and become the foundation on which to develop a program for an urban design.
**Place of Refuge:** Public spaces should be places where anyone can go to get away from their own life’s bustle, slow down a minute and absorb the environment around them. The particularities of a site can be dynamic and anything but slow, but public spaces provide the opportunities for public expression.

**Left Over Space:** Sites that are fundamentally left over, which have been described here as margins, such as parking lots and underpasses are forgotten space. The psychological hostility that comes with these voids in the environment, stigmatize our ability to move through space creating discontinuities. They have the potential to be salvaged from wasted, important center city property and transformed into a dynamic mosaic of city life and culture.

**Flexibility:** Public space itself should have enough character to play up to its own identity and context, but be anonymous enough that it never dictates what happens there. It should be a canvass that simply exists to allow life to happen.

**Pedestrian Communion:** People go where people are, even when we want to be alone, we go where other people are. Humans enjoy, by our nature, the ability to commune with other humans. We need it; we crave it; and we define our identities by it.

**Suitable to Different Scales of Intra-Urban Mobility:** Many types of transitory and non-transitory cultures move through space at any time. Public Spaces and the infrastructure (i.e. the street) that connect them should be able to respond and support all types of traffic, whether loitering, or passing through, coming or going; they should facilitate indiscriminately.

**Outside Influences – Filtration (larger scales of connection):** Neighborhoods and districts in urban environments do not happen
in a vacuum. The multiplicity of micro economies and cultures are constantly bleeding past their borders and interacting with other geographical areas and typologies of the city. If this filtration process is properly intact, where different identities can move freely throughout the larger city structure; the city benefits from the diversity that is created which translates to economic solidarity.

**Inside Influences – Identity (morphology):** Any neighborhood or district within its own borders however blurred those may be; can also be defined by its major geographical features, economic industry (typology), ethnic/cultural features, etc. These are the major use types that both define and support identity for specific geographic locations throughout a city as a whole.

**Influence of Connection – Public vs. Private (infrastructure):** How public space – the street, public plazas, parks, etc. – is dealt with is the key ingredient to the vitality of cities. Some form of mixed use; that also deals with morphology, community, economy, integration, synthesis, liaison, density, and scale; may ultimately determine the success or failure of street life.

### 4.5/Paradox and the City

The preceding principles define a framework to develop an urban program that condenses the function of the urban fabric into a field on which public life can express itself. But these principles are formless. From here, guidelines are established that pre-stress these principles into a metaphorical representation that can generate a formal response. Five guidelines are outlined below, each of which is crafted out of the values distilled from the architectural precedents above.

**Paradox and Metaphor:** To render urban space in a way that translates past time and space, urban form must reach past its tired history and refresh its identity to survive into the future. Forms must incite, invigorate, and defy gravity. The metaphorical must become the material where form follows representation.
Transformation and Transience: The production of space is set against the canvass of familiarity and the shifting tectonics of an ever changing, ever evolving city. Space has to remain fluid to remain vital. If space becomes rigid by structures that limit their capacity to change it will disintegrate.

Connecting Discontinuous Geographies: Like a severed arm, urban networks that are cut off will die. This is an urban Darwinism that can only lead to the death of cities. To reconstruct urban fabrics the edges of disconnect must be identified, isolated, and sewn back together with exciting forms that simultaneously solidify and differentiate.

Reclamation and Reconstitution: The strongest opportunities to redevelop the urban environment are the same locations that cut off its functionality. Fragmentation is a dead horse. It is time to look past what we cannot change and direct our attention to what we can. Margins that cut off urban networks and left over spaces that rot in decay are waiting to be reimagined into exciting places to be.

Integrating the Center and Margin: Within the urban environment, the pedestrian and the automobile must coexist. To reach an equilibrium where these two urban manifestations come together under a single urban space, the concept of “street” must be reevaluated. It is too late, too fantastical, and too impractical to dream about going backward where the street is reclaimed by the pedestrian. The street must move forward, break the shackles of two dimensional planning, and reach its potential in a third and radical dimension.

At this point, the Thirdspace potential rests latently in the possibility of bringing the Same and the Other together. As this thesis has stated before, Thirdspace is a
place in between. The Same is the center and the Other is the margin. Ironically, the fusion of the Same and the Other in this instance is the fusion of a “margin-center” and a “margin-margin.” The reclamation of forgotten urban space that functions off of the prevailing power structure makes it a margin physically that operates in the center; by taking that margin and infiltrating it with a marginal political and social agenda, it transforms from the center to the margin. Thirdspace can happen in the interstices of that fusion. The principles laid out above detail the necessary characteristics of a lived urban space, where the production of metaphorical space is the happenstance result of cultural construction. The guidelines that will lead to a formal response infuse the formlessness of public necessity into a paradoxical representation that can inform the spatial production of the former.
5.0/Site and Design

The thesis up to this point has outlined and developed a hypothesis about urban design and urban space that results from an analysis of different social and urban theories. To test this hypothesis, an urban design project is developed in Downtown Cincinnati along the Third Street/Fort Washington Way corridor. In its current form, it disconnects two urban networks the CBD and the developing riverfront. What follows is an approach and process to a design project that examines the disconnect caused by this artery and attempts to suture them back together through an architectural response that remains sensitive to the networks its connecting while creating a new and progressive identity for itself and the city.

5.1/Third Street: A Margin of History

Figure 40: Cincinnati riverfront and skyline, 1930.

Third Street in downtown Cincinnati could be defined historically as being a disconnection between the riverfront and the CBD. This disconnect has historically created tension between the two socially and economically that has never been sufficiently bridged. Three main factors can be attributed to this called geography, class, and infrastructure, which are chronological, respectively.
The geography of the riverfront is of the least consequence to the overall rift between the two. The CBD rests on an edge of a basin that sits roughly 80 to 100 feet above the riverfront. The riverfront skirts the basin and extends out between 1000 to 500 feet, receding down to the pool stage of the Ohio River. This means that the entirety of the riverfront is the flood plain. But more than that, during the initial development of Cincinnati, this elevation change proved to be a technical challenge that was only scaled when it was necessary to ship and receive goods from the river trading along the river. This left the public
landing to the “river rats” that sailed up and down the river delivering and receiving goods. These river people were hardened men, next to criminals in their behavior and attitudes toward society and the riverfront became understood as raucous and unsafe.

In its early agrarian development, Third Street developed on the lip of the basin, overlooking the public landing. With the geographic disconnect in elevation, wealthy plantation owners during the early nineteenth century felt safe enough to build fortress-like (but not too safe) revival style homes in Federal and Greek along Third Street that overlooked the river. This established the social disconnect that would continue up through the midway point of the twentieth century.

Figure 43: Third Street circa early nineteenth century.

During the early part of Cincinnati’s commercial development in the mid-nineteenth century, Third Street became the heart of the city’s economic boon, before development quickly moved to Fourth Street, and then further north to Fifth. Many insurance and financial institutions began setting up shop on Third Street. The Burnet House was noted to be one of the highest rated hotels in the world. At this time in history, hotels were very important to the image of cities. “In the period of most rapid urban growth, it was not by churches or government buildings but by hotels that cities judged themselves and expected others to judge them”83
Alongside this development, the riverfront developed into a manufacturing and warehouse district. Tightly packed between Third Street and the river were Pearle Street, Second Street, Water Street and Front Street. These streets constituted low end mercantile business, a train depot, slaughter houses, and other low end economic industry. There was definitely an economic and social hierarchy that cascaded from the basin to the river.

Figure 45: Pearl Street, on the left looking west from Broadway, and on the right looking east from Sycamore circa 1934.

Figure 46: Composite from Sanborn Maps from 1934 that shows the densely packed river front with mercantile development below Third Street on Pearl, Second, Front, and Water Streets.
Figure 47: Hand painted postcard photographs of Cincinnati, early 1930's
After the flood of 1937, which reached the 80 foot flood mark (almost reaching Third Street – a flood mark that was exceeded again in 1996), much of the already aging building stock on the riverfront was irreparably damaged. By 1948 a new master plan was adopted for the city that responded to a rising desire for highway infrastructure to deal with the rising use of automobiles for transportation. Along with the planning of the Mill Creek Expressway (I-75) and the Northeast Expressway (I-71), the Third Street Distributor was planned to connect the two new expressways across the south edge of the basin.

This distributor which was eventually named Fort Washington Way connected to Columbia Parkway (which already existed in 1948) and Interstate 71 to the east and removed what was Pearle Street between Third and Second Streets and connected to Interstate 75. All of the building stock that was once on the riverfront was removed. This infrastructure became the ditch that most clearly defined the disconnect between the CBD and the riverfront. The program for
the riverfront completely shifted from one of regional/local commerce to one of destination tourism, with the planning of a new baseball field to replace Crosley Field, a convention center (which was built elsewhere downtown), a heliport (which was never built), recreation space, and residential apartments (only a small percentage of which were actually built).

This new riverfront lost its public flavor. It became a non-public/public space. One that at once had the appearance of being public, but under the clear, precise control
of private agencies, set to their own interests; clearly defined how the space was to be used. The new stadium controlled what kind of commerce could happen around it and what was left of the public landing on the central riverfront was given over to surface parking.

5.2/Third Street: A Margin of Power

Fed by planning and directed by a collage of stake holders, Cincinnati is layered through a historical set of evolutions and developments influenced by geographical, social, cultural, political, and economic factors. Analysis reveals deficiencies in the city’s structure as the gestalt has eroded through its evolution to reveal a new set of values, primarily based on the economy and the automobile.

From a distance, Third Street is the picturesque and iconic image of Cincinnati. The buildings cascading down to form one of the most beautiful skylines in the country culminate on Third Street. When we think of Third Street, it is from this detached place where only the visual sense has access to; someplace metaphysical, yet also someplace outside the city. There is no denying that Cincinnati’s skyline is beautiful and that Third Street frames that skyline to structure its beauty, but on the street, a real Third Street exists that is a hostile and masculine place to be, ruled by the automobile and defined by its terms.

Figure 51: A romanticized view of Third Street as we view it from afar.

Today, Third Street is not a fun place to be. Even after what some have called a “renaissance” of revitalization due to a couple new office towers going up in the late 1980s and early ’90s, the north side of Third Street is a hostile environment. The street itself is scaled to the automobile, from five
lanes of one way traffic (heading west) to a streetscape that is

Figure 52: This collage of the street level of Third Street creates a wonderful visual mosaic, but a closer examination reveals the inherent hostility of the street.

almost exclusively garage entrance or surface parking lots. The pedestrian in this space is almost exclusively removed. A total of two restaurants exist here that are supported by tourist activity from the three stadiums that now occupy the riverfront, a dry cleaners, a small law firm that deals with bankruptcy law, a few other small office spaces (most of which are unoccupied), and some rather dismal entrances to the new office towers are the only things offered to the pedestrian on this masculine street.

The ambiance of this automobile streetscape acts as a barrier that curtails any natural flow from the CBD to the riverfront. What little pedestrian traffic that there is, is so task oriented that street life is non-existent. Pedestrians will cross to go from parking downtown to the two new stadiums during seasonal football and baseball games and some commuters that park there will cross only to go to and from their cars.
5.3/Third Street: A Margin Deconstructed

This margin has become the impassable moat of automobile traffic that has fundamentally crippled the possibility for pedestrian traffic to access the river. In addition the deconstruction of the riverfront via the 1948 plan has left little on the riverfront to go to. A simple figure ground diagram
Figure 55: Figure Ground Map of current downtown area and Third Street compiled from existing CAGIS data.

Figure 56: Land Use Map at street level of downtown and Third Street compiled from existing CAGIS data. (Light orange represents surface parking and dark orange represents parking garage where the street level is devoted to parking entrance).
Figure 57: Diagram showing the three conditions that occur when the north/southbound streets of the CBD intersect with Fort Washington Way, caused by the ABA pattern.
of the existing downtown shows this. Aside from the stadia and the new Freedom Center, nothing currently exists there with the exception of surface parking. There are plans, however, that seek to redevelop the central riverfront into a new-age, mixed-use retail facility. But this plan is criticized for its historicized forms and destination oriented development. From a land-use standpoint, Third Street is devoted to the parking garage. The lack of any ancillary urban functions including restaurants and retail further devalues the streetscape into a wasteland of unused potential.

Figure 58: This diagram illustrates the expanse of Fort Washington Way as it severs the CBD from the riverfront.

Even if someone were to waive a magic wand and suddenly the central riverfront, dubbed “the Banks,” was to be suddenly populated with buildings and elite residential and retail, the disconnection caused by the physical mass of Fort Washington Way and the dead feel that the north side of Third Street carries would render the project impotent. As an urban project, it would be impossible to make the Banks work. Fort Washington Way is an incredible juggernaut of highway ripping through the city, and like all amputated limbs, they die. But there is hope for this site. An incredible amount of capital, time, and annoyance were paid in the 1990’s to sink Fort Washington Way and elevate Second Street to the same level as Third Street. Now, Fort Washington Way digs into the city from both ends and there are four blocks across the basin where the highway is submerged. The north-south streets across these four blocks (five streets) bridge across Fort Washington Way and were structured to
accept “caps” that could create occupiable surfaces over the highway.

This newly structured highway creates a pattern across the edge of the CBD that is ripe for exploitation. An ABA pattern was created out the retooling of Fort Washington Way that adds interest and intrigue to the formal composition of the space. Starting at the west end of the CBD, Central Avenue and Plum Street create the first ‘A,’ where Central goes under the highway via an underpass and Plum dead ends into the retaining wall that receives the descending highway. Elm Street, Race Street, Vine Street, Walnut Street, and Main Street (respectively from west to east) create the ‘B’ section of the pattern, and bridge across Fort Washington Way becoming the structure for the potential caps. They alternate in one way directions, north and south where Elm, Vine and Main run north, and Race and Walnut run south. The mirroring ‘A’ condition is Sycamore Street and Broadway where Sycamore dead ends into retaining wall and Broadway runs under the highway in another underpass condition.

Even though this acts as a potential progenator for structuring a formal urban design that would make critical connections across Fort Washington Way, stitching together the CBD and the riverfront, the current condition of Third Street and how that connects across Fort Washington Way is still hostile. Of the five hostile urban typologies developed in this thesis; underpass connections; heavy traffic, highways and dead ends; obsolete and decayed buildings; vacant lots and vast urban vistas; and vast solid walls; a minimum of two of these conditions exist on each block across downtown.
Third Street is a hostile place to be, the Banks is a wasteland, and other than destination oriented entertainment, there is no reason to be at either. But it should not be that these are abandoned, but rather, retooled to bring the city back to the river. To do this an urban architecture grows out of the necessity to connect, but grows into the ability to root itself in both the riverfront and the CBD drawing them both together across a great divide.

5.4/Third Street: A Margin of Connection

It has to be said that the original intention for connecting the CBD to the riverfront was to deal specifically with the connection across Fort Washington Way, where the highway was an exclusive margin and Third Street was a masculine wall that clotted the flux of pedestrian traffic. This is still
the intention, but it cannot be done without dealing with the riverfront more implicitly. The extent of the design stretches from the river across Fort Washington Way and is anchored through strands back to the CBD that act simultaneously as a continuum to stratify the urban fabric and as a series of urban program including park space, sculpture, spatial orientation, way finding, etc. The project has jumped scope, not scale; and the metaphorical need to use the margin as a progenator of metaphor must be tied back into the opposing urban structures as a means to connect.

Urban program is a precarious beast. If it is over designed than it is no longer urban; if it is under designed then it loses all sense and fit. The process that this design portends to take is the shaping of urban space that is lacking in the current fabric. To pull two urban networks together, even where one arguably does not exist, requires an infiltration that blurs the borders between the two. In those blurred borders the heterogeneous geometries of dynamic interaction occurs. There are a few key elements here that are still highlighted. The restructuring of Third Street; the Fort Washington Way caps both as a new and irreducible place and nucleus for the formal generation; the underpasses on either end of Fort Washington Way as new and dynamic urban space are all still key elements to the design. It is in these spaces that the crescendo of the paradoxical experience occurs. Here, the automobile mixes with the pedestrian on new terms, the space is occupied on a multiplicity of levels and vantage points to render different perceptions on the environment.
Notes:

Introduction

It should be noted from the onset that we derive a distinction between “public” space and “urban” space. It will be argued that the two, although often mistaken for the other, are different manifestations of socialized spatiality. Urban space has form, therefore can be “created” or designed, where Public space is conceptual, therefore formless, therefore cannot be designed. Since this is an architecture thesis, our discussions should pursue space that can be designed, so that, when ever we are talking about public space, we are making reference to deeper social issues imbedded in this topic. See section 2.2.2 for further discussion.

The Power of Exclusion


What is City?

16 By “urbanism” here, I mean the formal typologies and morphologies that define what a place is and how it is used. For example, the urban/suburban form of New Urbanism is defined by its housing networks that feed into a town square for a small town feel. This works or does not work for what it is, but to be applied someplace else like Over-the-Rhine in Cincinnati, Ohio as an urban typology would be alien and subsequently detrimental because it does not work within the social coding and make-up of Over-the-Rhine. Each place is different and has to be approached from the vantage of that difference.


Paradox and the Nature of Space


29 We make a distinction here between a fragmentation of social structure which is imbedded in the biases that generate discrimination and a fragmentation of spatial organization which generates urban value structures. See section 2.2.2 for further discussion.


37 This was one of the truly inspirational moments of my life which totally reframed my thinking about space, time, and architecture. Prior to the critique I was thoroughly frustrated with how the project was coming together. I remember thinking on my own critique of the critique that Professor Taylor made me fall back in love with my project and consequently made me scrap the project and redesign it.


Margins and Edges


A Political Theory of Location

40 Gillian Rose, Feminism and Geography: the Limits of Geographical Knowledge (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1993) 139.


43 Gillian Rose, Feminism and Geography: the Limits of Geographical Knowledge (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1993) 137.
A Social Theory of Place


Translating Design


Hypothesis

80 This certainly makes the assumption that the urban environment needs to be reconstituted, but if we accept that urban environments are a continuum of evolutionary processes that are continuously deconstructed and reconstructed, then the assumption is valid.

81 It must be admitted here that this thesis puts a strong bias on the pedestrian. It is not that the automobile doesn’t have a place, but similarly to our theoretical discussions on masculine oppression, we take the stand that the automobile has come to rule, if not terrorize urban space. The goal is not to eliminate the automobile, but to bring the two, automobile and pedestrian, to an equitable playing field, which in text forces a heavy hand toward the pedestrian and a subversive attitude toward the auto.


Site and Design

The following images are a series of process models and sketches that have contributed to the design of the Third Street Thirdspace urban design. All images herein were created or derived by the author. They are here for their graphic capabilities to tell the story of the design process.