I, Ryan M Mills, hereby submit this original work as part of the requirements for the degree of Master of Architecture in Architecture (Master of).

It is entitled:
Meaningful Differentiation: Manifesting Context in Architecture as a Strategy in the Experience Economy

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Meaningful Differentiation: Manifesting Context in Architecture as a Strategy in the Experience Economy

A thesis submitted to the Graduate School of the University of Cincinnati in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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in the School of Architecture & Interior Design in of the College of Design, Architecture, Art & Planning by

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Bachelor of Science in Architecture June 2009 Committee Chairs: Aarati Kanekar, PhD George Bible, MCiv. Eng.
While architecture has almost always been viewed as an asset, its explicit value tends to be difficult to measure. Various studies by Venturi and Scott Brown identified what can be termed as “consumer vernacular”, where many gestures in the built environment are intentional measures to entice visitors, therefore, deriving economic benefits from their design. Architecture can therefore be seen as an important vehicle contributing to the economic health of not simply its owner but also its neighborhood and region by creating an experience desirable to potential users.

Whether it has been to respond to modernism, to evoke consumption or to inform the user, Architecture has a long history of appropriating and communicating a project’s context, known as regionalism, and through the use of a language derived from the theory of linguistic structuralists, architecture finds a vocabulary and establishes a framework for signifying culture, identity and narrative.

Using semiology as a tool to impart meaning as an strategy to both differentiate an experience as a product and elevate the modern aesthetic of the mid-19th century stadium, this thesis will suggest a design for a new stadium development in Minneapolis, MN, that explicitly expresses a unique and profound contextual identity intended to add value through meaning, setting the experience apart from other entertainment destinations.
My gratitude is extended to all of those that helped shape this thesis and provided my education with direction. This includes the professors of the University of Cincinnati’s School of Architecture and Interior Design as well as the numerous professionals I have had the opportunity to work alongside during my education. Whose greatest contribution was to push me to ask “why?”

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Architecture’s ability to perform as a product to leverage consumption fuels an economy driven by experiences. This includes both as an experience to enhance a good or service as well as acting as a product itself consumed through experience. Whether it is the inviting atmosphere of a Starbucks as compared to the vibrant and quick environment found in most McDonald’s franchises, the experience is a tool to appeal to potential customers. These experiences add value to the product often garnering a higher margin for the seller. The concept of an experience as a product can be seen in tourism and entertainment industries. Examples such as Disney World sell an experience to park guests, and some companies have even introduced museum-like experiences into their production to entice visitors and potential customers to learn more about their product and spend their disposable income during their visit or on later purchases of the company’s product. Brands such as Coke, Hershey and Woodford Reserve construct museums and conduct tours at their headquarters and production facilities, spawning an additional stream of revenue through tourism to supplement the sale of their products. With the saturation of entertainment options available to tourists, many destinations look to set themselves apart from their competitors. Creating a product that is unique and not replicable by the competition is known as the strategy of differentiation, a strong tool resulting in a product with a higher value as opposed to a product that is one of many.

This thesis aims to focus on that strategy to inform a design where a unique experience provides value to the owner by setting it apart from other destinations. The more specific method by which the design will be derived, utilizes the context as a source of narratives and identities to impart into the design. Several movements within architecture have taken a
similar approach whether it’s World’s Fairs to the Strip in Las Vegas to the works of the Critical Regionalists and even exhibition and museum designs have for one reason or another appropriated cultures and expressed them through the built environment. Semiological analysis has been an important component to understand the means by which culture is signified.

Beginning with the writings of linguist theoreticians such as Ferdinand de Saussure, the field of semiology gave postmodern architectural theoreticians such as Charles Jencks a framework to describe how meaning is communicated through the built environment. Because architecture does not have the agreed upon set of expressions in the same way language has sounds, letters, words and phrases, theorists like Geoffrey Broadbent and Charles Jencks have attempted to make explicit those variables with which designers can manipulate to communicate a signified beyond the simple function of the building. This thesis will appropriate Jenck’s codes of content and codes of expression to explicitly convey a narrative derived from the context for the purposes of differentiation.

The function of a stadium as an event space readily lends itself to be treated as an experience that can benefit economically from the strategy of differentiation. Therefore, this method will be employed in the design for a new stadium development located in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Figure 1: Preliminary design for new stadium site
1.1 “Architainment”

Tourism has long been an avenue for economic growth and categorized as an industry of its own, but it was not until the 20th century that its opportunities were popularized in our built environment whether that is in the parks of Disney or The Strip and casinos in Las Vegas. These places are products of a $5.7 billion industry. However, this trend primarily devised by the modern era is a consequence of the individual’s new found ability to travel long distances relatively easily along with the five day work week that resulted in free time for individuals and families to spend their disposable income at these constructed entertainment venues.

The 20th century may have exploited the design and construction of entertainment and pleasure destinations, but it certainly did not invent them. Dating back to the Greeks and Romans, people would seek enjoyment in their free time by attending events at the Coliseum or social interaction at the many bath houses. These concepts of pleasure destinations gave way to public gardens in Europe in the 17th and 18th centuries. The popularity of winter gardens in the United Kingdom was fostered by the application of a new building material. Steel augmented with glass infill permitted the growth of exotic and lush vegetated environments typically only seen by those with the means to travel to the native lands of many of the plants. The controlled space gave visitors the ability to experience these environments year-round. While many of these winter gardens were owned and controlled by aristocracy, the profitability of these destinations became apparent and were later made available to the public. The first modern example of a large-scale tourism driven environment was Tivoli in Copenhagen, Denmark, but the popularity of World Exhibitions

gave architecture some of its grandest examples in Joseph Paxton’s Crystal Palace, an exhibition hall in 1851 London, and the Crystal Palace was succeeded by Le Palais de l’Ectricite in the Paris Expo of 1900. Along with their great scale, new technologies such as steel and glass construction and electric lighting, provided tourists with the excitement of an environment they could not experience anywhere else. While these were some of the greatest examples in architectural history, other projects can be found where the aim of the architecture was to bring in tourists and consumers to socialize and spend their time and money. Several shopping and entertainment arcades appeared in France during the late 19th century. These destinations were essentially urban shopping, dining, and entertainment districts covered by steel and glass to keep out the weather and promote use year-round. Arcades were the predecessors of our modern shopping mall, amusement park, and entertainment venues described by Oliver Herwig and Florian Holzherr as “Architainment,” architecture that profits from theming and visually based communication to facilitate a consumer culture and escape.

1.2 Sports Tourism: Economics & Consumption

The label of “architainment” typified by casinos, theme parks, and shopping centers can be effortlessly translated to the program of a sporting venue. The modern era has given rise to a large culture that finds pleasure in the participating and spectating of sports from baseball and basketball to football and hockey in the United States, tennis and rugby or golf and soccer internationally. The consumption of sporting events can be divided into two groups, active participants and passive participants, or spectators.

Active participation describes individuals who take part in the event. Both young and old can participate in athletic leagues whether competitively or recreationally. Those who run or workout in a gym to stay physically fit are also considered active participants. These individuals derive various benefits ranging from physiological needs to self-actualization in Maslow’s hierarchy of human needs. Many seek personal improvement whether that means a sense of accomplishment, mastering a skill or improved health. Others simply appreciate the sport or enjoy the social setting facilitated by the activity. With the popularity of athletics, it is understandable how this group is willing to travel to take participate. Ski resorts, destination based marathons, or regional sporting tournaments all aim to draw active participants to their event and location.

The second group, passive participants, or spectators, are identified with the consumption of sports through watching or listening to an event whether in-person, through a television broadcast, or a radio description of the event. Through the viewing of both team and individual sporting events, spectators derive benefits of self-esteem, diversion from everyday life, entertainment value, eustress, economic value, and aesthetic value.

While many spectators are fans of local teams and rarely need to travel far to attend events in person, some will set aside time and other resources to travel considerable distances to be part of the event experience. Heather J. Gibson, Cynthia Willming and Andrew Holdnak have identified some habits of the tourist spectator in their paper, Small-Scale Event Sport Tourism: Fans as Tourists. As of 2001 event tourism has produced an industry estimated at $27 billion, and that number has surely grown in

the last ten years. As a matter of fact, “75 million American adults reported attending a sports event as either a spectator or as a participant while traveling in the past 5 years,” which describes two-fifths of the population.

It is no surprise as Gibson et al. have pointed out that the longer these tourists stay in the location, the more they spend and participate in the local economy through their consumption of lodging, food, and drink. For this reason, the authors suggest the event organizers team with local tourism agencies to promote the event as an opportunity for fans to vacation and experience the region while taking part in the spectating of the event. Their research includes a study of tourist spectators at University of Florida football games in Gainesville, Florida. Despite the specific example, their habits can be extended to various sporting events in other cities.

Even after the event is over, the site can be positioned in the minds of tourists as a destination to be experienced whether for smaller events or as a regional landmark. Many venues offer museums or tours for those interested in seeing the locations of memorable events that display memorabilia and tell the history of the city and its sports. While traveling near London, it is common for tennis fans to make the trip outside of the city to see “The All England Lawn and Tennis Club” where the annual international tennis tournament, Wimbledon, is held, and what baseball enthusiast could neglect a trip to “Fenway Park” or “Wrigley Field” while in Boston and Chicago? While the event, both live and in memory, may be the greatest reason for touring these destinations, the architecture certainly plays a significant role in defining the identity and differentiating these facilities, whether it is Fenway’s “Green Monster” or Wrigley’s ivy covered walls.

The exact economic benefits of sporting events have been

evaluated, but even the most scrutinizing researchers acknowledge that the numerous variables or parties that influence the costs as well as the myriad streams of revenue leaves for a complex arrangement of formulas and relationships. In an article by Holger Preuss, the author identifies three major multi-sport event economic impact sources:

1) Consumption of the organizing committee
2) Tourism and exports
3) Investments in infrastructure

Given these sources, tourism is only one branch or source of income. Pruess also makes evident that opportunity costs have to be incorporated into any calculations. These losses could be the “runaways” who are residents that leave the city during the event because of the crowds, or some tourists may also avoid the region during the event and elect to take a vacation to the city after crowds have waned. The primary conclusion of this article is that while economists agree hosting sporting events brings a positive economic impact to the region, its exact influence is not quantifiable or measurable with any singular formula and often ebbs before, during, and after the event. Therefore, this thesis will not attempt to provide a number on the value of what a premier sporting venue brings to a region or how much of that value is contributed by the venue’s architecture. It only suggests that a sizable market exists to ease the price tag of initial construction and operation.

1.3 The Stadium Product: Differentiation is Key

This understanding of sporting events as a product to be consumed through experience and targeted towards not just local fans but also tourists should lead event organizers to perceive and solicit their event in much the same way that the designer or marketer of consumer goods would with an eye towards enriching the goods, services and experiences associated with it. It is in the realm of experience where architecture plays its strongest role in influencing the visual and the organizational design of the stadium going experience. A strategy for gaining a competitive advantage in the minds of sports tourists and local fans when it comes to spending discretionary income on entertainment options becomes critical. The prevalence of choice or as Jack Trout terms it, “The Tyranny of Choice”, requires the producer to differentiate their product from the numerous other choices offered to the consumer. While the focus will be on distinguishing the stadium experience from others, it should be noted that sporting events also compete with options such as dining, theatre, shopping, among others for the attention and spending of consumers. This includes the option of viewing or consuming the sporting event through television or radio broadcasts.

While some sporting venues are able to differentiate themselves through the events, teams, and narrative history associated with them, new facilities must distinguish themselves without the aid of a long developed history. The previous examples of Wrigley Field and Fenway Park or the former Yankee Stadium leave their unique mark in the minds of sports enthusiasts with the aid of a long history while new stadia such as the new Dallas

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8 Ibid.

Cowboys stadium (figure 6) sets itself apart by being the newest and largest. Other new stadia make strides to differentiate themselves by referencing the city or region in which they are located. Examples such as the new arena and stadium in Indianapolis allude to a strong local tradition of basketball gymnasiums. The new stadium in Glendale, Arizona (figure 7) abstracts the appearance of a curled snake found in the deserts of the Southwest. These examples both differentiate the stadia from others in the United States as well as communicate an understanding of local culture, history, and landscape. This thesis will evaluate the act of appropriating cultural references and implement them in the built environment to enrich the stadium going experience as well as differentiate it from similar destinations in order to increase economic activity and evoke pride in a given city or region.

Figure 6: Dallas Cowboys Stadium

Figure 7: University of Phoenix Stadium
The Case for a New Metrodome

The city of Minneapolis and the Minnesota region is debating the issue of what value a new stadium can bring to its aging and ineffectual sporting infrastructure. The current primary tenant of the Hubert H. Humphrey Metrodome is the NFL franchise, Minnesota Vikings, whose lease with the Metrodome is set to expire at the end of the 2011 season. Despite losing the Major League Baseball team the Minnesota Twins and the University of Minnesota football team to new facilities, the Metrodome was the site of over 500 events held by 100 different groups. The importance of a new stadium has been made ever more evident by the recent collapse of the pneumatic roof covering the field. As a result business entities have made public the significance of such an economic force. These groups are advocating for a stadium development financed by both public and private entities. However, the $6.2 billion deficit faced by the state of Minnesota has the public concerned about other ventures that need funding as opposed to an estimated $900,000,000 stadium. With the current perceived strain on tax payers resulting in the growing deficit, lobbying for public funding is no easy task. Therefore, the case for a new stadium must include the economic benefits derived from its construction.

2.1 Value Created through Experience

Products have customarily been expressed as one of two offerings, either as goods or as services. Authors and businessmen Joseph Pine and James Gilmore, when specifying types of products in their book *The Experience Economy*, separate the categories of goods and services into three by incorporating commodities and makes the case for a fourth, experiences. This fourth opportunity to add value is where architecture has its most profound influence and can both increase the offering’s value as well as differentiate the simpler and easily replicable services, goods and commodities. Pine and Gilmore argue for the careful examination and inclusion of experiential offerings from a product since precedents show that an experience augmenting a product can garner a greater price.1

The most basic form of a product is critical, but often garners the lowest price and is easily replicated, leaving its producers to differentiate their product on price, a competition that few owners want to play. Commodities are materials extracted from the natural world such as wood, vegetables or minerals. While the commodities can be processed and refined before being brought to market, they are identified as fungible and subject to prices determined by the supply and demand of the market. As demand increases, so do price and profits. However, as supply outgains demand, a surplus results in lower prices and lesser profits. This economy was evident in the agrarian structure that dominated the landscape up until the industrial revolution.

Typically, the consumers of commodities are other companies looking to use the materials for goods. Goods are tangible products whose value is greater than the commodities from which they came. Products in

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this category can range from coffee cups to furniture and frozen foods. Certainly these products are more differentiated than their components, but the advent of mass production, led by the industrial revolution spawning a manufacturing based economy, has lowered the cost of production of many items and made them easier to replicate. From this standpoint, some goods share the fungible quality of commodities, and led producers to differentiate themselves from similar goods with the inclusion of services.

Services are intangible products that supplement a good and perform operations on or for a client. Examples are haircuts, or car repair. Economists also include food service because it is not standardized or inventoried and delivered upon request. The example of food services shows how a commodity, vegetables, can be used to create a good, a particular dish or recipe, and augmented by a service, the delivery of that dish to the restaurant diner. The service based economy has been prevalent since the mid 20th century and comprised 80% of the United States economy as of 1999. Automated services have begun to make services fungible as well. The use of the internet has diminished the need for customer service representatives and financial trading services. Industry intermediaries who acted as service agents from producer to consumer are falling victim to automation as it allows companies to sell directly to their customers.

The next succession of value and an emerging economy is classified by Pine & Gilmore as the experience economy. They submit that “experiences occur whenever a company intentionally uses services as the stage and goods as props to engage an individual.”2 Experiences are intended to be memorable and affect the consumer with sensations to evoke an emotional, physical and intellectual response. The argument for

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the added value of experiences is that while there are no tangible outcomes, the value exists within the consumer and can be shared with others. An example of which is evidenced in the decisions by thousands of families to travel and spend money at Disney theme parks together every year.

The best way to express this evolution of value is to take an example and follow it from commodity to experience. The popular example of coffee begins with the extraction of the coffee bean from the fruit of certain trees, which can warrant as little as a few cents for the amount it takes to create one cup (commodity). Then it is roasted and packaged to be sold in stores where it values itself around 20 to 50 cents per cup (good). Cafes and restaurants will grind and brew those coffee beans to sell to the consumer for as much as $1.00 to $2.00 per cup. The value of the service to grind and brew the coffee increases significantly (service). However, the added value of an experience, such as the introduction of a café environment can increase that same cup of coffee from $1.90 to $4.50. The example of this is illustrated by the success of companies like Starbucks. While a company such as McDonalds may serve the same or similar coffee, Starbucks trumps McDonalds convenience and warrants a greater price with the experience of a café that encourages customers to stay, work and socialize. This staged event touches the consumer by evoking espresso bars of Europe with their inclusion of comfortable seating areas, a cohesive themed setting, the sound of grinding coffee beans and the aroma of brewing coffee.

While companies such as Hershey and Coke include experience offerings to supplement their goods in the form of museums or theme parks, some products such as events are exclusively experiences. Dating

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back to the Greeks and Romans, theatre and sporting entertainment was witnessed and consumed by the public. Examples in the 20th century include again theatre, concerts as well as amusement parks, museums and even restaurants and shopping malls. The authors of *The Experience Economy* refer to these playfully as “eatertainment” and “shopertainment”. As noted previously, the role of the experience not only enriches the product, but also exists as an opportunity to differentiate it among its competitors.

### 2.1.1 Case Study: Woodford Reserve Distillery

One enterprise that has leveraged their architecture in an experienced based attraction sits just outside Lexington, Kentucky. Along what the Kentucky Distillers Association terms the “Kentucky Bourbon Trail” is the Woodford Reserve distillery. With five other distilleries, Woodford has opened their manufacturing process to the public and created a destination for whiskey enthusiasts or those interested in the traditions of Kentucky. While a number of the distillery’s buildings are over 100 years old, renovations and the careful scripting of sequences through the process adds a layer of experience for the groups that would otherwise simply purchase their bottles of Woodford Reserve from their local grocery or liquor store. With over 10,000 visitors to visit all six of the distilleries since its inception in 2007, the creation of a whiskey destination has successfully added one more venture to expose and influence potential customers who will now associate their experience and memories of the pastoral landscape and aroma of fermenting mash with the goods it produces.

The experience begins in the visitor’s center, a modest plantation style house that contains a small museum about the history and process of

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5 Kentuckybourbontrail.com/history
distilling at Woodford as well as a tasting bar, movie theatre and gift shop. The interior reflects the simple but elegant homes of the South during Reconstruction. From the visitor's center, guests travel to the bottom of the hill where a fermenting and distilling building has been renovated and opened to foster tours that lead the guest from the mixing tanks to the fermenting casks to the copper stills. Design of the space to expose the steps of the process as well as signage to communicate some of the intricacies and facts about the distillery provide visitors an in depth look into the history and culture that produces their drink. The interiors of the processing building are restored to its pre-prohibition appearance. Simple wood structure hangs off of the rough stone masonry that vaults over copper, pot stills. In addition to the signage that adorns the end wall of the still room, designers have utilized used white oak barrel scraps as a finish material on the wall that displays some of Woodford's large batch purchasers such as restaurants, hotels and wealthy bourbon enthusiasts. The tour moves to an adjacent building where the bourbon is aged in the charred white oak barrels for a minimum of two years. While the store building is not as polished as the processing building, its rough cut wood store racks allude to a time when barrel runs where fabricated for their utilitarian use and not for presentation. To ensure that all of the senses are engaged during this experience, the tour ends with a tasting of Woodford's only bourbon, a small batch whiskey married from select barrels.

Not only does this experience prompt sales of their product in the gift shop, guests are imbued with memories what intend to translate a positive feeling about Woodford into the purchase of their bourbon in the future. It also does not hurt the distillery to charge a nominal fee for the tour (the only distillery of six that does). In this case, the experience is leveraged to sell more products as well as participating as a product, itself.
2.2 The Necessity of Differentiation

Differentiation becomes critical when the choices for other products grows and similar products whether goods, services or experiences compete for the same consumer’s attention. Products that are too similar or the same can only differentiate themselves on price. However, a unique product has an advantage over its competitors in that it cannot be replaced. Author Jack Trout expounds on the concept and strategies for differentiation in his book with Steve Rivkin, *Differentiate or Die*. Trout cites advertising agency chairman Rosser Reeves and his perspective on advertising that is simplified in the “Unique Selling Proposition,” a three pointed strategy to gain advantage over competition and target potential customers. The three parts are:

1) Proposition – be explicit about the benefit received from purchasing the product
2) Uniqueness – the proposition must be one that competitors cannot claim
3) Strength – the proposition must be strong enough to evoke a reaction by the customer

The design of the offering is most directly linked to the second strategy, its ability to create a unique product not offered by other experience driven options while not distancing it from its product type by being seen as foreign.

Trout provides a method to differentiate a product and give it a competitive advantage against other similar products, or more specifically in the case of a stadia, experiences.

1) Make sense in the context
2) Find the differentiating Idea
3) Have the credentials
4) Communicate the difference

2.3 Application to the Stadium

Extending the concept of increased value for an “experience-based attractions,” by focusing on the theming of an environment to differentiate and enrich it as an entertainment option to a sporting event and its associated stadium experience is not difficult. Much in the same way concerts and theatre events are experiences consumed by its attendees, sports events act in the same manner. Therefore, even though the event may change, an environment themed around the culture of a sporting venue and its location can enhance the experience and differentiate it from other stadium experiences to compete with the choices available to fans and sports tourists. This experience must be one that other stadia cannot claim or reasonably replicate because of its unique context.

Despite the discussion of a genuinely unique experience manifested in the design for a stadium, an established type such as a stadium, can generate a baseline from which the elements of the design can expand upon or differentiate from. A simplified definition of type is offered by Giulio Carlo Argan as not an image to be copied or imitated exactly but “as the idea of an element which should itself serve as a rule for the model.”

He suggests that a type exists when “a series of buildings having between them an obvious formal and functional analogy.” Therefore, types share

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7 Ibid.
certain characteristics which can be appropriated for future implementation and signification of the building’s function. The example provided by Argan, the circular temple can be seen in Bramante’s Tempietto and carried to the temple of Sybil at Tivoli and has become a component of other temples. This application of type is apparent in stadium design. Since these structures must facilitate a large number of users while enclosing a wide space, the expression of structure dominates the type.

2.3.1 Case Study: The Indiana Fieldhouse

Central Indiana has never been the destination to distinguish itself within the sporting landscape of the United States. It can’t compete with the size and grandeur of New York or extensive professional sports history of Green Bay, Wisconsin or even Cincinnati, but the state’s historical culture and enthusiasm for basketball, particularly at the high school level is unlike any other. It was this tradition that spurred the design for both a new arena and football stadium.

While other states filled stadiums on Friday nights to take pride in their local high school’s football team, Indiana residents spent cold winter nights in both small and large gymnasiums around the state to watch each community’s high school basketball games. It is unclear what motivated Hoosiers, a common nickname for Indiana residents, to identify with the sport of basketball as opposed to football or any other sport, it may be that smaller schools could more readily field a five man team instead of a twenty-two man squad for football, or it could be the long standing tradition of the single class state basketball tournament that allowed even the smallest schools such as Milan High School in southeast Indiana to compete against larger schools like Muncie Central for a singular
state championship, an underdog story immortalized in the 1986 movie, Hoosiers. The gymnasium featured in that movie has become a popular tourist destination in Knightstown, Indiana and has remained almost identical to its original appearance after its 1922 construction.8

The architecture that has come to epitomize this tradition is found a few miles north of the city center of Indianapolis on the Butler University campus. Originally called “Butler Fieldhouse” the 1928 gymnasium of 15,000 (since been reduced to 11,000) has stood as an icon for Indianapolis “one of the nation’s top sports destinations.”9 Despite renovations and a renaming in the ’60’s to Hinkle Fieldhouse, the name taken from longtime Butler Coach Paul Hinkle, the gym still maintains its small town feel, a modest value appreciated by local basketball fans.10

Hinkle Fieldhouse is identified by its long masonry façade broken up by subtle pilasters and clerestory windows, but the strongest identifying character resides over the court where trusses support a roof spanning the length of the arena, opening one end for large dormer windows, a necessity for many of the older gymn in the state that did not support electric lighting.

This “girders and windows setup” became the architectural reference appropriated by the architects of recent Indianapolis sporting venues, Conseco Fieldhouse and Lucas Oil Stadium. Designed by HKS Spots and completed in 2008, Lucas Oil Stadium, described “like an old gymnasium on steroids” and as having a “basketball friendly vibe”, is home to the National Football League franchise, the Indianapolis Colts.11

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9 Ibid.
new stadium sets itself apart from other NFL stadiums around the country through its use of contextual references. Not only does this strategy differentiate it from other sport destinations, it enriches the experience by alluding to a relevant, local, sporting narrative.

Competitors to the New Metrodome

Any new stadium in the Minneapolis region must understand the opportunities that exist to bring in both tourists and local fans, it must also realize the existing competitors as an entertainment venue and destination. This understanding first begins with an evaluation of the consumer, the individuals or groups who will attend events and experience what the new facilities have to offer. These consumers have the choice to spend their time and money at similar events, activities, and destinations. Therefore, environmental scanning and identifying those choices in both direct and indirect competition with a sports venue, is critical before a strategy for differentiation is implemented. Competitors exist in both the nature of the offerings, in this case, sports related events and activities, as well as geographic entertainment options within the region. Sporting events and entertainment options directly affecting consumer's decisions on how to spend their time and money are:

Local Sports Events to Attend
- Minnesota Twins Baseball
- Minnesota Timberwolves Basketball
- Minnesota Wild Hockey
- University of Minnesota collegiate sports

Regional Outdoors Sport Activities
- Skiing, Biking, Water sports, Snow sports, Hunting & Fishing

Regional Sports Events
- Green Bay NFL football (Green Bay Packers)
- University of Wisconsin collegiate sports
- University of Iowa collegiate sports

National Sports Events
- New NFL Stadia Experiences
  - Indianapolis, IN
  - Dallas/Arlington, TX
  - Glendale, AZ
  - New York / New Jersey

Non-sporting events and activities are also competitors and draw tourists. Local Entertainment

Arts & Culture
- Weisman Art Museum, Ordway Center for the Performing Arts,
- Walker Art Center, U. of M. Theatre & Dance,
- The Guthrie Theatre
Gaming
- Canterbury Park, Mystic Lake Casino
Amusement Parks & Zoos
- Minnesota Children’s Museum, Mall of America, Depot Water Park
- Valleyfair Amusement Park

Shopping
- Minneapolis shopping district, Mall of America

Dining
- Wineries & Breweries

Despite both direct and indirect competition with these other entertainment options, local options can be used to leverage and enhance the offerings of the new stadium to tourists who will most likely opt to spend more time in the region and spend their time at multiple events and experience several of the entertainment options. Therefore, particular concern should be paid to the competition that offers choices to the sports tourist that exist outside of the region such as other stadia.

Not mentioned previously is the competition with other cities and stadia for certain rotating events awarded by governing bodies to different cities each year. This could be the NFL’s championship game, the Superbowl (awarded to Minneapolis for 1992) or the collegiate basketball tournament’s Final Four. A suitable and distinguished new stadium can warrant attention from these governing bodies, bringing an influx of attention and tourism to contribute to the local economy.

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The strategy to differentiate or add value to architecture through references to contextual identities or narratives has been evaluated and given a baseline for discourse in the 1970's. A few architectural theorists working to provide a language to describe the meaning conveyed by architecture and the urban environment, leaned on theory from semiological and linguistic studies in architecture were in the forefront in the 1940's. These studies focused on identifying the essential components of meaning and how the urban environment communicates the intended message. Architecture, according to these theories, can be defined as “the use of formal signifiers (materials and enclosures) to articulate signifieds (ways of life, values, functions) making use of certain means (structural, economic, technical and mechanical).” While this definition may not suffice or even be acceptable to many architects or theorists, it provides insight into how some Postmodern designers evaluated what they perceived as the most basic role of architecture, a definition that not only varies among practitioners and theorists, but also over time. However, most definitions include three components, that of form, function and technic, that Charles Jencks and his peers argue the three parts as system of signifiers.

### 3.1 Semiology’s Basics

Architecture in no way originated this discussion, and may be considered late to the discourse. Linguistic theorists of the mid 20th century have become the originators and starting point for any field that looks to understand their work by its most basic components and their meaning. The seminal work in linguistics is Ferdinand de Saussure’s *Course in General*
Linguistics in 1959 and its “General Theory of Signs”. The more specific study of signs was termed by de Saussure as “Semiology”. Other academics built upon the base of work that Saussure has written, including Charles Sanders Pierce, but for the purposes of appropriating terms to inform the discussion about semiology in architecture, Saussure’s terms and definitions gives architects and this thesis a base language of semiology to work from.

The most fundamental element of semiology is the sign, and Saussure defines the sign as “a two part entity consisting of signifier (the pattern of marks on paper, sounds in the air or even building forms by which the sign itself is made physically manifest) and the signified (the concepts, ideas or other thoughts which the signifier actually stands for)”

In the English language, the typical example used are the letters “c-a-t” to act as a signifier for the four legged furry feline, the signified. Examples expose the fluidity with which the terms signifier and signified can be applied. Any signified can also be a signifier. While the letters “c-a-t” can signify the animal, that animal can be used as a signifier to refer the idea such as craftiness. Therefore, although these terms help architects and theorists discuss meaning in their environment, they do not always define themselves consistently.

To describe this lack of precision, two other terms can help define the degree to which the signifier and the signified are linked. Charles Pierce uses the triad of *iconic*, *indexical*, and *symbolic*, to describe how signifiers are more directly associated with their signified, but to maintain consistency with Saussure’s semiology, the preferred terminology, *connotative* and *denotative*, take the place of Pierce’s phrasing. Denotative signs are more directly associated than connotative. Referring to the previous example, “c-a-t” denotes the furry animal, but it could also connote the idea of

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craftiness. This degree of association is based on what Saussure calls *codes*. Codes are conventions of communication held by similar cultures. The most apparent example of a code shared by a culture is language. However, they also have codes where links between signifier and signified are stronger associations than may exist in other cultures.

### 3.2 Applications in Architecture

While architectural theorists have looked toward structuralist and semilological theories to lend perspective on meaning within the built environment, a one-to-one correlation does not exist. Architecture operates in modes that are different from language, and does not have the extensive agreed upon tools for communication in the same way language has letters, words and phrasing. To express this difference, Broadbent comments that architecture can not readily communicate Einstein’s equations. Therefore, architectural theoreticians such as Geoffrey Broadbent, and Charles Jencks have borrowed ideas from the works of Pierce and Saussure and adapted them for discussion and application in the field of architecture.

Charles Jencks lays out the most general and comprehensive approaches to understanding and describing the ability for architecture to signify ways of life, values or functions through the design of spaces. He provides the tools with which the architect has to manipulate the meaning of the built environment, *codes of expression*, as well suggests the possible “forms of content” that architecture most often expresses. Jencks has outlined two tools, the first of which, termed *codes of content*, a list six possible realms that architecture can intentionally signify: (see Appendix i)

#### Codes of Content

**Socio-Anthropological Sign**

This signified is omnipresent in architecture. Derived from proxemics and social norms, it describes the distances and separation among people. Not only do architects dictate these relationships, but normative prescriptions in the form of codes impose sizes and boundaries for safety and comfort. One such example is the separation of servant rooms and corridors from the public or family rooms in early American houses.

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4 This sign was taken directly from Jencks with some adjustments in the definition
Function Sign

While function can describe a number of activities or uses associated with building, the function sign describes the technical actions of architecture such as structure and environmental servicing. The epitome of this sign is Rogers and Piano’s Pompidou Center in which the structure and HVAC are expressed outside of the enclosure. An example of architecture expressing a structural responsibility is SOM’s John Hancock Center in Chicago where the structural bracing is expressed on the exterior illustrating the significance structure plays in the construction of high rises.

Program Sign

The program, defined by the activities that take place within the building, can be an opportunity for signification. The greatest movement within architecture to express the program is functionalism, typified by the work of American architect Frank Furness. The translation of the same approach in contemporary architecture is OMA’s work including the Seattle Public Library where the program is diagrammed according to size and adjacencies before manifesting itself in the library’s form.

Process Sign

The process sign results from signifying a tool or series of steps that lead to the final product. Often the process of making is expressed in as a pattern or marking resulting from the tool used to create it such as when the formwork for concrete can be seen on the surface of the pour. Milling tools leave marks in their wake. This same sign can also signify a process that leads to a design. The practice of indexing or indexical design is becoming more prevalent with the use of the computer. Here the architect or software establishes a process with which the inputs are translated through a tool, the software or algorithm. The work of Peter Eisenman may be the most well known for this system of design and signification.

Figure 19: Exterior image of Pompidou Center
Figure 20: Seattle Public Library

5 Including the Program Sign, the Function Sign is separated out of Jenck’s Various Functions Sign
Psychological Motivation Sign

This sign intends to signify power or prowess of its owner or client. This power can be found in any form, but is typically a result of political or economic success. A political example is a triumphal arch or gateway such as the Brandenburg Gate. Modern examples stem from the increased social value in economic success and materialized in the built form of skyscrapers which can signify the economic prosperity of a city or region. Size and lavish finishes typically connote this signified.

Aesthetic Sign

Aesthetics, or the study of beauty, is very much an intrinsic field with some rules or guides addressing proportion and composition and has a ubiquitous influence in the visual consumption of architecture. Architects such as Frank Gehry have explored architecture’s role as a visual stimulus through his sculptural designs.

Narrative & Contextual Sign

This sign might be the most prevalent and comprehensive of all the codes. It references a story or set of values affecting the client or context. Sources of narratives can come from the landscape, a history, or a social culture. Daniel Liebskind’s Jewish Museum in Berlin defines its form from the overlay of significant locations and events throughout Berlin’s Jewish history. The Casa del Fascio by Giuseppe Terragni uses form, spatial manipulation and surface to signal the values of the Italian fascist government in 1932. Many other signs can stem from a narrative and context, such as a process derived from cultural traditions.

Architectural Style Sign

The architectural style sign is derived from the narrative and context sign, but it’s prevalent enough to warrant its own designation. Designs utilizing this form of signification typically seek to further reference a context within which an architectural style played a prominent role. Examples of this act include Neoclassicism or the application of historical facades in older neighborhoods or aging urban areas.

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6 This sign was taken directly from Jencks with some adjustments in the definition of the sign
7 This sign was changed from Jenck’s Traditional Ideas and Beliefs sign
It should be noted that these signs are not mutually exclusive and often multiple codes of content are at work within every designed building or landscape, but certain signifieds may be more expressive than others whether intentionally or unintentionally. For example, all architecture addresses socio-anthropological codes, but these codes may be servant to a more expressive form derived from an appropriated architectural style.

While the codes of content identify those narratives, functions or identities that are available to the architect to signify, the codes of expression identify the components of buildings as tools that are part of the architect’s palette. Often one code of content can be signified through multiple codes of expression or different contents may be expressed with different forms of expression. All codes of expression are evident in every architectural project, but often, the designer chooses one or two to dominate over the others.

Codes of Expression

Activity & Function Sign
While this sign is not always under the control of the architect, he does have some influence in augmenting the PROGRAM OR FUNCTION of the building to include uses or performances of the project that signify a social or cultural signified.

Spatial Manipulation Sign
This tool for the architect represents SPACE AS A POSITIVE ENTITY to be experienced and described by its VOLUME, AND ADJACENCIES and affecting plausible activities and acoustic quality. This expression may or may not be evident in the building’s formal articulation.

Surface Covering Sign
Probably the most apparent and flexible expression available to the architect to manipulate, the LAST LAYER OF CONSTRUCTION can utilize MATERIAL AND GRAPHICS to communicate through RHYTHM, COLOR, TEXTURE, PROPORTION, SIZE, SMELL AND TACTILITY.

Formal Articulation Sign
This tool is defined through the use of SHAPE MASS AND DENSITY to describe the architecture’s form. Variation in PROPORTION, SCALE, and TEXTURE contributes to the articulation of the project’s formal expression.

Much like the discussion about structuralism and semiology in linguistics, the problems of legibility and varying codes among groups of people makes for different interpretations and a lack of any absolute reading. However, a literal signification such as the direct appropriation of a signified like that of an architectural style is more widely understandable than the abstraction of a narrative or concept that is not typically expressed through architecture. This inability to easily communicate a concept derived from the context should not suggest that architects distance themselves from the explicit act of signification.

An examination of a work that intentionally alludes to a contextual narrative will provide the application of a process where identification of a meaningful signified leads to a design where multiple codes of expression are utilized to signify the values and beliefs of the user.

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8 The Spatial Manipulation Sign, Surface Covering Sign, and Formal Articulation Sign are all adjusted slightly from Jenck’s codes of expression.
3.2.1 Case Study: Casa del Fascio

The example of the Casa del Fascio, touches a number of codes in both expression and content. That is what makes it a strong precedent to begin to describe how architecture can signify a greater context from which it is derived. The design for new offices under the Italian Fascist government in Italy intends to signify the principles of its constituents on a few different levels. The commission went to modernist Italian architect Giuseppe Terragni in 1932. The primary concept for the new building was derived from Mussolini’s description of “fascism as a house of glass into which everyone can peer gives rise to this wholly faithful interpretation: no encumbrance, no barrier, no obstacle between the political hierarchies and the people.”

This description was signified most directly in the arrangement of the spaces and program. With the intent to increase the visibility between the public and its government officials, the design called for public access to the various functions and offices. This literally manifested itself in an open atrium with an easily visible public stair accessing the first three floors. In the terms of the various codes, this act can be considered an expression through the spatial manipulation and activity & Function signs where Terragni played with the arrangement of spaces, volumes, and access to denote a ‘Socio-Anthropological’ signified derived from a political context that could be considered the connotative level of the sign. This level of signification belongs to the ‘Narrative & Context’ sign.

The rational and visibility concept was further suggested by

10 Ibid. p. 147

Figure 26: Crowds outside Casa del Fascio
the construction in its use of honest and durable materials. Exposed concrete columns in the atrium intend to render a rational and honest display of structure on the interior. However, the exterior columns are adorned with Italian marble. Since the Casa del Fascio was thought of as a propagandizing tool, the finishes lend themselves to signifying the wealth and power of the current political regime. The inclusion of propagandistic graphics was desired for the facades and interiors. Two artists were selected, but only a couple installations were implemented. These gestures all signify the values of facism through the Surface Covering Sign where material, construction, and graphics are employed.

The third act of signification reinforces the sign of a fascist government’s power. Concerned with composition and proportion, Terragni, knew that art played a role in the priorities of his client. Therefore, careful consideration of form and location of openings drove the expression of the Formal Articulation sign. A platonic rectangular form divided into a grid informed by the structural bays results in a composition that stands on its own. These decisions denote, most closely, the Aesthetic Sign, one of innate beauty and harmony. The connotation of the sign once again falls within the Narrative & Context sign identified by fascist beliefs.

While on the most literal or denotative level, the signifiers suggest socio-anthropological, program, and aesthetic signifieds, the second level of signification can be identified within the category of narrative and context. Either a third level or a second connotative sign is that of Psychological Motivation. The Casa del Fascio represents the power of the fascist regime and exudes that success to its constituents though its architecture. This signification can be understood through the aims of propaganda which

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13 Ibid. p. 161-162
seeks to influence attitudes in the direction of the government that operates within its walls.

Within this single project, numerous techniques or expressions have been manipulated to impart meaning from several codes of content, with both a denotative, or literal relationship and a connotative, or abstracted relationship.

Figure 29: Interior of Casa del Fascio and graphic wall
The use of applying meaning through codes of expression has become the tool by which architects can explicitly impart meaning into their work and provide value to the client. The strategy in this case uses the terms of signification to identify a signified to express as a means of not only adding depth to the design but also to differentiate it among other entertainment and tourism destinations. Here a determined geographic region provides an identity and narrative to be imbued into the design in multiple scales or forms of expression. The particular signified stems from the ‘Narrative & Context Sign’ where unique characteristics and stories lend themselves to a differentiated design to compete with not just other stadia but also popular tourist excision options within the region and nationally.

The evocation of a culture within a context derived from either a geographic location or a narrative influencing the values of the users, has been signaled throughout architecture history. This section will identify and examine movements and types within architecture that have leveraged narratives and identities in the design of a built environment. Reasons for this act come from a number of aims including to respond to modernism and globalization, to evoke consumption, and to inform the viewer/user.

The discourse of imparting context and culture into architecture has been referred to as regionalism. However, differing terms have further segmented regionalism according to the ends by which the appropriation of context is intended to meet. Although regionalism has been a discourse within architecture since the ancients, only since the modern movement has regionalism been addressed from so many directions. The following sections discuss the movements within architecture over the last half century that have taken the appropriation of context and culture to task.

1 Alexander Tzonis credits Greeks with imparting regional signifiers in the capitals of their columns. Critical Regionalism: Architecture and Identity in a Globalized World. p.11
4.1 Responding to Modernism

After the swift criticism of the modern movement in the early and mid-19th centuries, the postmodern architects and theoreticians looked to understand and impart a pluralistic understanding of the world over the more championed universal and imperialistic nature of modern architecture. One such response came from Liane Lefaivre, Alexander Tzonis and Kenneth Frampton. Their essays called for a return to regionalism and give “priority to the identity of the particular rather than to universal dogmas.”

While the term “Critical Regionalism” was coined by Lefaivre and Tzonis, Kenneth Frampton provides a description which focuses on a critical understanding of regionalism where cultural traditions and notions of space are analyzed and imparted into the design in contrast to a sentimental or ironic vernacular seen in populism (discussed later). Critical Regionalism is also not the vernacular which is described as a spontaneous response to climate, culture, myth and craft, not dictated by architects. Frampton offers examples of this work found in the Catalonian Regionalism of the 1950’s and the late work of Alvar Aalto.

While Alvar Aalto’s work spanned five decades and underwent many changes in that time, his work in Finland later in his career provides fodder for the tenants of regionalism in a time where modernism was the going trend. The town hall for Synantsalo, Finland, a town of only 1,000 at the time, marks a shift from the international style-like projects of the past such as Paimio Sanatorium. Critics praise Aalto’s gentle gesture and nod to the beautiful forest setting surrounding the town hall. A lower profile and softer materials such as brick, wood and copper provide a humanistic result.

compared to the stark white stucco of previous projects. A reverence to landscape and concern for Scandinavian modesty strike a cord with critical regionalists who applaud Synnatsalo’s design, particularly in response to the harsh modern designs that show little regard for place.

4.2 Evoking Consumption

Often indicted as being “consumerist iconography masquerading as scenography,” Populist architecture has been ever omnipresent since the 1950's and has followed alongside the growth of a consumer driven economy. However, its roots date back to the 19th century where national fairs and exhibitions looked to exploit cultural iconography to bring in tourism. Amusement parks such as Coney Island in New York peaked in the late 19th century as escapes for urban workers and their families. This consumer directed architecture was first identified and discussed by architects Venturi Scott Brown in their seminal works, Learning from Las Vegas and Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture. The focus of their discoveries can most readily be understood by the term commercial vernacular. Both the subject of their research and epitome of populism is the city of Las Vegas where grandiose signage and architectural forms aim to attract potential customers to casinos, restaurants and numerous other shops and stores. This approach to architecture as entertainment extended all over the world in restaurants, theme parks, and retail outlets. Primarily operating only as visual signifiers, the theming in these projects is not constrained to the context in which the building resides. Casinos in Las Vegas evoke cultures from all over the world. The Bellagio, Caesars

5 Frampton, Kenneth. p.472
Palace, and The Venetian all resemble the imagery of Italian architecture and themes to evoke ideas of elegance, refined taste, decorum, leisure, and the exotic. Similar approaches have even been extended to housing and community projects. The town of Seaside, Florida leans on the cultural and architectural history of the Deep South to theme its waterfront community as a way to attract residents and visitors.

However, this movement in architecture has been criticized for being superficial and dishonest about context and only imagery based. Designers and owners of these themed projects will contend that the predominately visual evocation of distant lands and places suites the needs and desires of its users and owners, which could be argued as the most significant goal of this type of architecture.

4.3 Informing the User

One of the most intentional and explicit forms of contextual and cultural appropriation resides in the design of exhibitions. Here architects intend a form of communication that elevates the understanding of the content in the exhibition for the user. Historical examples of this are most notably evidenced in Worlds Fairs. Beginning in 1851, cities began hosting international fairs where nations offered the opportunity to display or exhibit their culture and industries to visitors. After the first fair in London, countries including France and the United States leveraged the fairs to sell themselves and their exports to other countries. The early fairs concentrated on exhibiting industry and innovation. The architecture of this exploitation resulted in the structures of the Eiffel Tower and the

Ferris wheel. While industry and innovation were a primary focus of fairs in the 20th century, specific nation’s pavilions exhibited their culture and identity. The fairs became more entertainment based, and less economically motivated for the exhibiting countries. For these countries, the use of local materials and construction methods informed the design for individual pavilions.

A similar strategy is observed in museums who seek to make the architecture communicate to the users in the same way the exhibits within tell a story. A strong example of this practice is evident in the Museum of the Earth in Ithaca, New York, a project undertaken by architects Marion Weiss and Michael Manfredi. The Paleontological Research Institute wanted an exhibit space for its large collection of fossils where they could communicate the history of the earth through various exhibits within the museum. Weiss Manfredi Architects saw opportunity to utilize the design of the site and building to describe the narrative leading to the form of the landscape in the Finger Lakes region, where the museum resides. Angled, terraced parking lots leading to “erupting” roof forms intend to describe the movement of glaciers over the landform nearly 20,000 years prior. This design concept was seen as making the project “intrinsically powerful.”

The narrative appropriated by the designers is not only contextually relevant but also communicates teachings about geological history parallel with the mission of the museum.


Figure 36: Image of Museum of the Earth

Figure 37: Plan illustrating sitework of the museum
The Culture of Minnesota (for full description see appendix ii)

With the importance of context in a process where contextual narratives and cultures are foregrounded, one of the most critical steps of that process is the assessment of the context and those cultural factors influencing the site and the users of the stadium development. The first step in this analysis is to identify the region and cultures in which pertinent narratives exist. For the purposes of a new stadium in Minneapolis, the designated geographic boundary is the political and geographic boundaries of the state of Minnesota.

The strong market for animal pelts drove industry up and down the Mississippi River. Its success prompted the United States government to locate a fort near the Falls of St. Anthony, the northernmost navigable part of the Mississippi near its confluence with the St. Croix and Minnesota Rivers. The area around Fort Snelling became the city of St. Anthony, which later merged with the city south of the river to become Minneapolis. After Minnesota was recognized as a state in 1858 and the pelt industry began to slow, Southwestern Minnesota leveraged their fertile soil for a strong agriculture-based economy. Investors in the north recognized the deposits of iron ore and began mining it to contribute to the steel factories across the Midwest. The third industry to make its mark in Minnesota’s economy was timber. Forests in the North were harvested and logs where shipped down the Mississippi to mills. However, it was the grain farmers that had the greatest influence on Minneapolis’s economy where their grains where milled into flour and cereals. Companies such as General Mills and Pillsbury grew out of the grain products produced in Minneapolis.

One of the most distinguishing features of the state gave rise to its nickname, the Land of 10,000 lakes. Glacier movements at the end of the...
last ice age carved the region leaving anywhere from 11,400 to 11,800 lakes depending on the reporting source. While these waterways were utilized in the young states history for navigation and the resources within such as food, they are now primarily for recreation. This includes various water sports such as skiing, boating and swimming but also fishing and ice hockey. The combination of numerous bodies of water and the milling industry have influenced both Minnesota’s architecture and choice of recreation and sporting activities.

Apart from the four major sports, activities and smaller sports pertaining to cold weather or water have their place in Minnesota’s leisure time. The summer months bring out visitors to enjoy the waterways to boat and camping in the wilderness.

The one reoccurring theme, that may not unique to this geographic region, but has a strong influence that is unlike any similar locations. Minnesotans have long been asked to manage the omnipresent bodies of water, working both with and around them. While seen as obstacles the waterways have provided assistance and pleasure to its inhabitants. The design for a new stadium development will look to explore this relationship and understand the numerous interactions between the organic, natural and fluid nature of the landscape and the rigid, utilitarian and functional requirements of the built environment and the industry that spurred it.
The need for a new football-sized stadium in or around the city of
Minneapolis has led to heated financial discussions about costs and return
on investment in a time where public funding is scarce. That is why a design
proposal must be considerate of its opportunity to become an economic
driver for the city and region. This can be addressed in by a number of
different strategies from the revenue producing spaces allocated to the
structure of the financing, from the management structure to its physical
design. This architecture thesis, addresses most closely the latter, focusing
on how function, space, form, and surface contribute to a successful
investment.

The specific strategy intended by this project is one of
differentiation through the expression of contextual signs (signifiers and
signifieds). Differentiation describes the act of creating and marketing a
product that is unlike its competitors in a given market. That given market
in this project is entertainment venues, specifically 60,000+ capacity sports
facilities. To add another modifier, this stadium will most directly compete
with tourist destinations and stadiums in the American North and Midwest.

To address differentiation, this design will look to the state
of Minnesota for cultural influences that are profound and unique.
As described previously, the strongest influence in this state is the
omnipresence of bodies of waters, from rivers to lakes. Nicknamed “The
Land of 10,000 Lakes”, Minnesotans have been utilizing and negotiating
these waterways for over 150 years. Initially used for transportation,
connecting industry to the rest of the country, the rivers and lakes have
given way to roadways, railroads and flight. Now residents find the water
most useful for its recreational qualities, fishing, water sports, and boating.
This thesis will evoke that pervasive relationship that the people of
Minnesota have had with its landscape, suggesting that development should
not act in spite of the landscape but in accordance with and alongside it.
While Minnesota coins itself the “land of ten thousand lakes”, the city center of Minneapolis is quite flat unlike its twin city, St. Paul when it comes to topography. The Mississippi River has its origins in Minnesota, about two hundred miles north of the twin cities, and its convergence with the St. Croix and Minnesota Rivers marks the location of the two cities. For transportation purposes, the city of Minneapolis was founded as a means to control the fur trade and logging industry. Growth of the city was made easy with its flat topography. Like many other cities, including Cincinnati, the city of Minneapolis is investing in its waterfront developing a culture center with the development of museums and theatres. The land has also shown to be valuable for high-end urban housing projects. The planned site for the new stadium, is previously developed and therefore, flat. However, surrounding buildings and interstates provide views onto the site from elevations higher than the grade of the current stadium.

Like many stadia, the current Metrodome is surrounded by surface parking lots. While some light business and medical research exists on the plots adjacent to the site, the majority is asphalt for the movement or storage of vehicles. The north and south sides of the site are defined by four lanes of two-way traffic, creating a barrier to enter the site. The west and east sides are also bordered by streets, except these are two lanes each. While some parking is provided on the site, the majority of visitors come from outside the immediate boundaries by foot. However, the culture of attending sporting events often includes tailgating where the use of the nearby parking lots is important to the fans who grill and spend time with other fans prior to the event. Opportunities for this practice should be provided for while still encouraging connections to dissolve the barriers created by the roads and traffic.
The urban context plays a strong role in the definition of the site, being located in downtown Minneapolis. All adjacent plots are developed and are currently asphalt or occupied by buildings. Surface parking comprises most of the area. While these lots are important for tailgaters and commuters, it offers little value to visitors. The light business and dining are a sign of activity, but a lack of the skywalk system makes this area undesirable to travel in the winter. It also offers few resources to the hospital and government workers located directly south of the current Metrodome. The buildings in this neighborhood average 5-7 stories, communicating a distinct urban context, without the density or resources expected from a thriving city. The traffic map shows the directionality of the streets adjacent and near the proposed site along with the light rail system defined by the yellow line. The light rail extends to the airport and to the western edge of downtown. The city block directly northwest and adjacent to the Metrodome is the location of the nearest light rail station. Because of the large and pregraded site, few shadows impose on the site. The hospitals and medical research buildings to the south can impose a shadow in the winter months with the sun is lower in the sky. The greatest consideration are the shadows created by the massing of a large program that is a stadium. A potential strategy could be to step or lower the height of the project on its northern edge to allow light north of the stadium and encourage development on those sites. The tailgaters, would also probably appreciate any warmth offered by the sun during cold Sunday mornings.

The history of Minneapolis is much like other midwestern American cities. Founded as a means of controlling and monitoring the fur trade in the early 19th century, its location at the convergent of three rivers made it a strategical location for commerce. After becoming a state in the 1840’s, the cities grew with the rest of America until the recession of 1893. The growth picked back up in the early 20th century. However, the push of the modern movement in the 1850’s and 60’s resulted in the destruction of a number of historic buildings in Minneapolis’s downtown. Since then,
Design

At the scale of the site, the most profound intervention is the relocation of two adjacent roadways to the north and south into and through the site. These connectors to the interstate intend to partially dissolve the barriers circulating around the stadium and express the infrastructure as a tool that sculpts and influences the stadium program developing around it in the same way the waterways were leveraged for their ability to transport goods while shaping the industry created about them.

The programmatic components of the office and hotel extrude from the site along the curve and undulation of the infrastructure. These two towers are expressive of the landscape in their fluid form. However, their materiality and rigid extrusion cannot be mistaken as a natural formation, particularly in this urban context. The base of these structures expresses an orthogonal base that fronts the developing promenade leading to one of the city’s cultural neighborhoods along the Mississippi River. This base level references the strong rocky ground sculpted by Minnesota’s rivers and quarried by industry. Its rigid formal expression contrasts the more fluid-like forms of the infrastructure and massing above.

The stadium is relocated to the southeast area of the site to open up the hotel and office spaces to views of the river and city. This also creates public space that fronts the primary direction of access and faces the city center. Entry to the stadium parallels the infrastructure with sloping
ramps that moves pedestrians from the ground level to the concourse level. Along the way is a ribbon of vegetated softscape that both softens the expansive hardscape both on and next to the site as well as reference the vegetation of Minnesota’s landscape.

The motif of vegetated nodes is continued throughout the site, evident in the public plaza, in a grid pattern, on the ground floor, as well as within the buildings of the hotel and office. In the same way vegetated landscape climbs the ramps into the buildings, planted, terraces are distributed throughout the hotel and office. Here the architecture, once again, suggests that landscape can be integrated within a building as opportunities for respite or recreation.

The cylindrical form of the stadium is adorned with a surface that alludes to the organically shaped forms of the waterways found throughout the state. The surface expression of this identity may not be as profound as functional or formal expression, but the visual allusion is strong in its ability to communicate both abstractly and literally. Incorporated into the project are opportunities for graphic depictions similar to signage that tells narratives about the city and region as well as the state’s sporting traditions and stories.

The collective expression of this identity through function, form/space, and surface concludes in a design that profoundly communicates meaning about the project’s context as well as expresses a unique stadium development to attract attention from potential visitors to the city and its sporting events.
Architecture for Consumption


Preuss, Holger. “The Economic Impact of Visitors at Major Multi-sport Events.” European Sport Management Quarterly 5.3 (2005): 281-301


The Experience Economy


The Use of Signs


The Appropriation of Culture


Russell, James. Weiss/Manfredi Evoked a Geology shaped by Water to Help the museum of The Earth tell the 4.6-billion-year history of the planet. Architectural Record. V. 192 no.1 (Jan. 2004)

Appendix I

Charles Jecks Codes of Content and Expression from *The Architectural Sign in Signs, Symbols, and Architecture*

**Codes of Content**

A way of life sign, a sign of ethnic domain, a sign of inhabitation and comfort. This code is almost entirely specific to architecture although it is shared by clothing, personal possessions and other artifacts.

A sign of building activity, of the historical process of change, personal involvement, buying and selling etc. Although connected with the former sign, this one is distinct enough to warrant separation. When John Turner speaks of “housing as a verb”, he has in mind the existential connection of the inhabitant with his house, the way the latter becomes a sign of personal endeavor and identity, even fulfillment.

A sign of traditional ideas and beliefs. This is the most commonly known area of signification which traditional architectural history describes as iconography. All sign systems articulate this area, so it is hardly specific to architecture, but no less important for that.

A sign of various functions, including use, social activity, structural capability, environmental servicing, temperature control and building tasks such as church, library, factory etc.

A sign of socio-anthropological meaning, proxemics, the study of social spatial dimensions, has revealed how architecture may signify conventional distances between people and groups. Obviously people keep these distances without architecture, so the sign is not specific to building, but may be mostly monopolized by architecture. Many anthropological studies, notably those of Claude Levi-Strauss, have shown how architecture and village and city patterns articulate social
and economic life.

Any city can be read as an economic class and social icon, in spite of the fact that no one understands how land value and social status really interact as a semiotic system. The fact that people choose their house location according to subtle cues of status and way of life is well observed by real-estate dealers.

A sign of psychological motivation, sometimes hidden, sometimes betrayed, sometimes overt. Phallic and sexual codes have often been discovered, but rarely signaled.

**Codes of Expression**

A sign of spatial manipulation. Since renaissance architects began representing space positively as the interval between walls and structural elements shaded darkly, this expressive form has been quite consciously on their minds. Probably the ancient Greeks had a well developed notion of internal space and a topological idea of ordering external space, and no doubt the Romans were highly conscious of their notion of hollowed out, domed space. But in our century space has become fetishised as the specific medium of architecture, whereas it is clear that it is shared by other sign systems (landscape, sculpture) and ordinary people notice surface before they understand space.

A sign of surface covering. What we are continuously looking at is the last layer of the constructional meaning, the epidermis, not the deeper architectural meaning. The fact that architects relinquished control of this area, about the same time that interior decoration was born as a modern profession (1925) might be regarded as a coincidence with interesting implications. This expressive plane of meaning is perhaps the most potent in conveying the content ‘way of life’. Clearly there are other sign systems which also concentrate on this plane – furniture, sculpture, painting, television, books, film, landscape etc. But just because it is not specific to architecture, does not make it any less essential. In a hierarchy of semiotic importance it should probably be placed first in the expressive codes, not only because it is most noticeable but also because it has many levels of articulation – e.g. rhythm, colour, texture, proportion, size, smell, tactility etc.

A sign of formal articulation. It is difficult to decide how many categories of material articulation one should separate out, as there is a great redundancy of meanings, but three dimensional shape – volume, mass, density etc. – seem distinct enough from surface to warrant a separate classification although they both have proportion, scale, texture, smell, acoustic properties etc. In any case it is a question of conventional relevance, and in the West formal articulation has been culturally define for a long time. Architecture shares this plane of expression with sculpture, landscape, opera etc.
With the importance of context in a process where contextual narratives and cultures are foregrounded, one of the most critical steps of that process is the assessment of the context and those cultural factors influencing the site and the users of the stadium development. The first step in this analysis is to identify the region and cultures in which pertinent narratives exist. For the purposes of a new stadium in Minneapolis, the designated geographic boundary is the political and geographic boundaries of the state of Minnesota. While these boundaries are not profound in distinguishing peoples and cultures, it is an agreed upon filter by historians to direct the research. The primary tenant of the current stadium also describes themselves as the Minnesota Vikings, placing the name of the state in front of their nickname instead of the city like most other franchises. A number of high school and recreational teams within the state also have the opportunity to play in the current Metrodome as one of the 500 events held in it each year.

The program and site of the project elicits a few different opportunities to act on and signify as a means of imparting meaning and differentiating the stadium, site, and any supplemental program buildings. Those three contexts are the history & landscape, architecture, and sports. The following sections will describe the histories and significant identities that exist those cultures under the geographic filter Minnesota.

The history of Minnesota is not that different from that of other Midwestern American cities. The area that is now Minnesota was acquired through the Louisiana Purchase in 1803 by President Jefferson from the nation of France. The strong market for animal pelts drove industry up and down the Mississippi River. Its success prompted the United States government to locate a fort near the Falls of St. Anthony, the northern most navigable part of the Mississippi near its confluence with the St. Croix and Minnesota Rivers. The area around Fort Snelling became the city of St. Anthony, which later merged with the city south of the river to become Minneapolis. After Minnesota was recognized as a state in 1958 and the pelt industry began to slow, Southwestern Minnesota leveraged their fertile soil for a strong agriculture based economy. Investors in the north recognized the deposits of iron ore and began mining it to contribute to the steel factories across the Midwest. The third industry to make its mark in Minnesota’s economy was timber. Forests in the North were harvested and logs where shipped down the Mississippi to mills. However, it was the grain farmers that had the
greatest influence on Minneapolis’s economy where their grains where milled into flour and cereals. Companies such as General Mills and Pillsbury grew out of the grain products produced in Minneapolis.¹

One of the most distinguishing features of the state gave rise to its nickname, the Land of 10,000 lakes. Glacier movements at the end of the last ice age carved the region leaving anywhere from 11,400 to 11,800 lakes depending on the reporting source. While these waterways were utilized in the young states history for navigation and the resources within such as food, they are now primarily for recreation. This includes various water sports such as skiing, boating and swimming but also fishing and ice hockey. The combination of numerous bodies of water and the milling industry have influenced both Minnesota’s architecture and choice of recreation and sporting activities.²

Much like the history of Minnesota that parallels the history of the United States, its architecture is not any different from that of similarly sized cities in the Midwest. Architects in the region typically followed the trends of their counterparts in America. The cities of St. Paul and Minneapolis also have their share of projects by prominent American architects over the last 150 years from Louis Sullivan to Frank Gehry. Evidence of the Chicago School to American Beaux Arts to Modernism made its mark in Minnesota, but no one style or movement dominated the built environment. Unfortunately, the 1950's and 60's allowed the excitement of modernism to erase much of the late 19th and early 20th century building stock. The few buildings that remain from the era stand as memories of the mills and storehouses that supported the grain and milling industries from the 1800's up through the 1960's.³

While a region’s sporting history may not inform many architectural projects, but for the sake of a new stadium development, its narratives and identities define and help to differentiate the building’s program and its influence on the users. Minnesota’s sports past is mired in instability at a professional level. One may think that hockey and cold weather sports dominate the sporting landscape, but all major sports are represented. Baseball has the longest history in the United States and that notion remains the same in Minnesota. Several minor league teams have been spread all over the state including both major cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul. In 1961 the state added major league professional team, the Minnesota Twins. While the team has had its low points over its time, the team has managed to win two world series, one

2 Ibid. p.3-10
in 1987 and the other in 1991. Basketball took longer to get started in Minnesota. While the University of Minnesota had a team, the state did not have a professional team until 1947. The Minnesota Lakers, despite competing in different leagues over ten years, managed to win five league championships before being moved to Los Angeles. Professional basketball returned to the twin cities in 1989 with the expansion of the Minnesota Timberwolves. Hockey has not dominated the sports pages of Minnesota, but its influence has been stronger in this state more so than others in the United States. This is evident at the high school and college levels where several schools field teams and the colleges have been competitive nationally. The current professional team, the Minnesota Wild replaced the previous team that left for Dallas, the Minnesota North Stars. The popularity of the sport of football can be seen in the fan bases the state’s two dominant teams, the University of Minnesota Golden Gophers and the professional Minnesota Vikings. The Vikings were added to the National Football League in 1960. The team, like many franchises, has had both good and bad seasons making it to four Super bowls but winning none. This diverse history shows that while hockey may be more popular here than in other states, it has not been able to overwhelm fans of the other three major sports. Apart from the four major sports, activities and smaller sports pertaining to cold weather or water have their place in Minnesota’s leisure time. The summer months bring out visitors to enjoy the waterways to boat and camping in the wilderness.4

The evaluation of the cultures influencing this project are evidence of the homogeneity of the nation where one state is not all that different from the others. However, one occurring theme, that is not unique to this geographic region, but its pervasiveness and strong influence is unlike that of any similar locations. Minnesotans have long been asked to manage the omnipresent bodies of water and work both with and around them. While seen as obstacles, the waterways have provided assistance and pleasure to its inhabitants. The design for a new stadium development will look to explore this relationship and understand the numerous interactions between the organic, natural and fluid nature of the landscape and the rigid, utilitarian and functional nature of the built environment and the industry and spurred it.

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