I, Andrew W. Gauggel, hereby submit this original work as part of the requirements for the degree of Master of Architecture in Architecture (Master of).

It is entitled:
The Resurrection of the Dead: New Construction in Cities of Memory

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This work and its defense approved by:

Committee chair: Aarati Kanekar, PhD

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The Resurrection of the Dead:  
*New Construction in Cities of Memory*

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 and Interior Design of the College of Design, Architecture, Art, and Planning by

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Bachelor of Science in Architecture  
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The Resurrection of the Dead: New Construction in Cities of Memory

ABSTRACT

Over-the-Rhine (OTR), Cincinnati is a neighborhood trying to redefine itself after years of neglect and abuse. As might be typical of many inner city areas, OTR’s recent history has been one characterized by division and violence. Separated from its richly historic inner core, Cincinnati residents have lost a key part of their cultural heritage. OTR, historically a German district, has been home to many different populations of working class citizens. New construction in OTR has been at a standstill for almost a century and the 19th century architecture is beginning to decay and be demolished wholesale from years of neglect. The violence perpetuated on the neighborhood—neglect, destruction from infrastructural projects, and rioting—has flattened the complex historic city. It can only be read as a ruin, divorced from its context. With new interest in the area, the cleared lots gain new value for redevelopment.

Much is being done already to preserve what is left of the important historic buildings, and the primary site of conflict in the emerging city will be over the cleared and whitewashed sites. For OTR to be once again a vibrant and active cultural center, new construction needs to engage deeply with the disconnectedness and propose new solutions that bridge the gap. This mediation can be accomplished through a critical engagement with the building envelope as the necessary translator between outside and inside, public and private, and the membrane through which goods and services filter. This thesis critiques contemporary construction approaches in the area to address issues of connectedness and memory in urban environments. It proposes the insertion of ‘grafts’ of historic program/material/form into the void spaces of OTR as a conceptual and physical anchor for the development of new construction.
THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD:
NEW CONSTRUCTION IN CITIES OF MEMORY
The Resurrection of the Dead: New Construction in Cities of Memory

fig. 1
Aerial view of Cincinnati, Over-the-Rhine shown in color.

fig. 2
Building remnant. Corner of 15th and Race.
# CONTENTS

**ABSTRACT** ii

**IMAGE CREDITS** viii

§1 **INTRODUCTION** 1

§2 **IMPRINTS ON A COLLECTIVE LIFE:**
  TOPICS IN MEMORY 3
  - Making Memory History 3
  - Preserving Memories 4
  - Urban Artifacts of Memory 5
  - Time and the Urban Artifact 8
  - The Political Capacity of the Envelope 11

§3 **BUILDING THE QUEEN CITY:**
  CHANGES IN THE LANDSCAPE OF MEMORY 12
  - Historic Summary 12
  - History of Oppression 19

§4 **THE PHOENIX FALLEN:**
  A CITY AT WAR 21
  - Scabs and Scars 21
  - The war on OTR 23

§5 **REINSERTIONS OF FORM** 25
  - Present Insertions 25

§6 **LAYERS OF CONNECTION:**
  THE RESTRUCTURED ENVELOPE 26
  - From wall to sheath 26
  - Complexity and Contra-façadism 28
  - Developing Complexity 31
  - Design Development 35

**BIBLIOGRAPHY** 36
The Resurrection of the Dead: New Construction in Cities of Memory

Image Credits

fig. 1  Photograph: Aerial view of Cincinnati; prepared by 3CDC
fig. 2  Photograph: Building Remnant 15th and Race; personal photograph
fig. 3  Photograph: Decay in OTR; Bing with personal alterations.
fig. 4  Photograph: Construction of the Roebling Suspension bridge. 1865. Grace, Kevin and White, Tom. Images of America: Cincinnati’s Over-the-Rhine.
fig. 5  Diagram: Steps in Establishing A Collective Memory and Identity.
fig. 6  Diagram: Monuments and Permanencies in a City
fig. 7  Diagram: Responses to Decay in the Urban Fabric
fig. 8  Diagram: External possibilities in the architectural envelope.
fig. 9  Image: Map of Cincinnati, 1815. Cincinnati Historical Society
fig. 10 Photograph: The canal. Grace, Kevin and White, Tom. Images of America: Cincinnati’s Over-the-Rhine
fig. 11 Image: Historic Post-cards showing Cincinnati Riot. Cincinnati Historical Society
fig. 12 Photograph: Traces of Bremen St.; Personal Photograph
fig. 13 Photograph: 19th C. OTR. Grace, Kevin and White, Tom. Images of America: Cincinnati’s Over-the-Rhine
fig. 14 Drawing: The Canal. Grace, Kevin and White, Tom. Images of America: Cincinnati’s Over-the-Rhine
fig. 15 Photograph: Aerial view of OTR. 1970s. Cincinnati Historical Society
fig. 16 Photograph: Rioting in Cincinnati: Cincinnati Enquirer
fig. 17 Photograph: Rioting in Cincinnati: Cincinnati Enquirer
fig. 18 Photograph: Barriers to establish protection from rioters: Cincinnati Enquirer
fig. 19 Photograph: Work by Future Blooms (part of Keep Cincinnati Beautiful): personal photograph.
fig. 20 Diagram: Destruction of fabric from widening Liberty: John Stoughton
fig. 21 Photograph: Neglect in OTR: personal photograph
fig. 22 Photograph: Major Decay in OTR: personal photograph
fig. 23 Drawing: Lebbeus Woods, Radical Reconstruction
fig. 24 Drawing: Lebbeus Woods, Radical Reconstruction
fig. 25 Photograph: Residential Complex at Vine St. and Central Pkwy: personal photograph
fig. 26 Photograph: Aerial of Residential Complex: Bing Maps
fig. 27 Photograph: SCPA: personal photograph
fig. 28 Photograph: 14th and Vine
fig. 29 Diagram: Exploded Axonometric of building construction methods
fig. 30 Photograph: UC’s Engineering Research Center
fig. 31 Diagram: Insertion of an artifact into the void. Scabbing and Scarring
fig. 32 Diagram: Connections of historic program elements and modern insertions
fig. 33 Map and Key showing proposed location of inserted programs
fig. 34 Design Development Drawings
fig. 35 Schematic Elevation of the inserted graft. Artist-in-Residency
§1 INTRODUCTION

In Cincinnati, the neighborhood of Over-the-Rhine (OTR) has had a complex history. Recently, interest is growing in this poor urban neighborhood and with renewed financial interest comes new construction. New works of architecture struggle to find their footing in the historical landscape. Over the past century there have been few attempts at new construction leaving a uniquely intact district of 19th Century historic artifacts. Many architectural insertions in OTR have sought to minimize their presence by mimicking the image of the neighboring historic buildings. This distorted reflection negatively affects the experience of the area and OTR is in danger of becoming a city filled with shallow architecture. By examining the unique nature of the history of OTR, society’s response to historic artifacts, and the use of the envelope as a mediating membrane, we can develop an approach to design in the area that deepens a person’s connection to the urban landscape and provides a different future for new construction in the area.

Construction in an area reflects the importance given to it and as the economic interests of OTR faded in the early 20th Century, so did new construction. OTR was once a major center for culture and business in the United States; as the greater Cincinnati area forgot about their core, OTR transformed from a living urban city to a dead city filled with lifeless artifacts—monuments to a forgotten past. The city lost its continuous identity and a divide was created between the identity of the past and the present.

Characterized by constant development, a living city is a transient being. The experience of this type of city is dynamic and fully alive; as passersby notice sometimes subtle or sometimes extreme changes in their neighborhood, they are tied to that particular moment and carried along with the city as it changes. This transformation reinforces the past as moments of memory that mark a resident’s life. As buildings age they are repurposed, and as they cross the threshold into “historic” they become richer with each layer of paint applied to the window boxes and each new exterior sign signifying its care and upkeep. This layering of a building’s identity serves to reinforce its age, function, and experience in the minds of residents as they hold in their memory layered images of its transformation over time.

Not all cities experience such constant layering. Some cities reach a point where they shrink, collapse, and stagnate. No longer does one walk past a vibrant and ever-changing landscape of urban forms; the city becomes a ruin, settling softly into the background of human experience. Similar to our experience of Grecian ruins, eventually a city may be so detached from the everyday human experience that it is considered ‘dead.’
Over-the-Rhine could be described by this definition of a dead neighborhood. Originally a district rich in German heritage, from its name to its dense collection of Italianate architecture, OTR developed slowly over the 19th century and reached an amazing level of density and cultural production. Since World War II the population has been decimated and new residents have been characterized by extreme poverty. The lack of speculative interest in OTR has caused the built environment to languish from its lack of use; buildings remain abandoned and many are torn down as they become unstable and dangerous, leaving gaps in what is considered the largest contiguous historic district in the nation.

Recently, interest in the beleaguered neighborhood has resurfaced and players such as Cincinnati Center City Development Corporation (3CDC) are largely responsible for the work that is happening in the area. 3CDC works on two fronts: preservation/adaptation of historic architecture and economically driven new construction that fills in the gaps from decay and neglect. This new construction is the most troubling, as architecture has developed through the advent of digital representation tools and cultural trends to be increasingly 2-dimensional. While recognizing the need for a positive aesthetic experience in the development of socially focused projects, architecture should be intellectually deep and meticulously crafted as well. This plague of image-focused architecture is especially problematic in the historic area of OTR where there is a need and a desire to reinforce the existing context. The response of the image-focused design culture has been to respond to the OTR’s image as opposed to its spirit. Essentially this means focusing on material, massing, and iconography instead of construction ethics and detailing.

The various approaches to the area can be seen in new construction that vacillates between historic mimicry and flashy post-modernism in attempts at being contextual either through copying or complete rejection of style. Each of these approaches focuses on the image of the resultant building. What is essential to redeeming the oppression is that the functional and technically needs of the building envelope be addressed thoroughly. To be reborn, OTR needs to connect people to one another and to a shared identity. Places need to be developed that specifically relate to aspects of the history of OTR as well as provide opportunities for different socio-economic classes to interact.

What will be discussed in this thesis is the way in which people interact with the built environment; the importance of memory—a connection to the past—as a source of identity, and its expression in architectural artifacts (Aldo Rossi). Specifically, issues of context and image (Frascari, Pallasma, and Leatherbarrow) in areas filled with historic artifacts (Riegl) will need to be unpacked so as to understand the role of new construction in Over-
Andrew Gauggel / the-Rhine. The history of OTR, filled with its violence and decay, is easily associated with Lebbeus Woods’s “Radical Reconstruction” as a methodology for understanding the role of Architecture in war torn cities. This role exists primarily as a political one centered on the building envelope as the mediator between complex societal forces. Mediation, the bringing together of two disparate viewpoints to reach a common goal, is the primary redemptive property of new construction in a city pulled apart by violence and decay.

§2 IMPRINTS ON A COLLECTIVE LIFE: TOPICS IN MEMORY

Making Memory History

In establishing any sort of historical narrative there are, by necessity, a series of subjective judgments that get made in order to tell the story more succinctly. In this way, remembering could be rephrased as ‘selective forgetting’ as it enables us to hold onto certain memories as more important, or more essential to our identity while letting go of others. In public (collective) memory, those with political or cultural power often make these subjective judgments. These choices have a significant impact on those they affirm or deny. For a member of a repressed group, these histories exist as a form of oppression.

History is the stringing together of memories. In architecture, the built world acts as a history, representing specific memories or values of those involved in its creation. In OTR, such priority is given to the historic architectural character. How do these buildings represent anything of value? To understand buildings as constructs of society, the taxonomy of memory and its relationship to history needs to be explored. Tim Benton, in his book Understanding Heritage and Memory, discusses four types of memory as selective forgetfulness, or ways in which history distorts memory for its own good—this is not meant to convey qualitative values like good or bad but they simply provide a way of exploring the transformation of individual experience to recorded history. The first: distanciation is the effect of time on our collective memory (the American Revolution has become inevitable for us, not as something revolutionary or remarkable); it represents the old adage that time heals all wounds. The second: Instrumentalisation is the present using the past as an instrument, and putting it to work to reinforce

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1 “War torn” in this context specifically meaning: the flattened city; the city whose dense historic content has been removed from its context and been damaged in some permanent way.
current ideas (Nazi Germany used classical architecture to represent their own dominance and power); distorted viewpoints are elevated as accurate. The third: Narrativisation is the creation of compelling stories in order to inspire or motivate the populous—for example the story of “Joe the Plumber” from the 2008 American presidential elections. The fourth distortion: Cognitivisation is an internal distortion; when we engage with memories as raw data we necessarily interpret them so that they make sense to us and so thereby we alter them as they become individualized.²

These alterations represent the difficulty of blind acceptance of recorded history—specifically the elevation of historic buildings to the exclusion of all else. Buildings are an outcome of complex forces and are unique to their time and circumstance. The present tendency when viewing historic architecture is to value its detailing and composition as deliberate and worthy of copying in new construction. In Benton’s terms: distanciation occurs when we look at the urban fabric as a whole, denying its layered nature; instrumentalisation occurs through the use of historic style to blend an obscene building into the fabric; narrativisation happens constantly, notably in the OTR Brewery tours that give the area a distinct identity; cognitivisation is the cause of distorted understandings of the nature of OTR, either positive or negative as people internalize the growth, the violence, and the decay.

Another framework for the understanding of memory is Pierre Nora’s system of memory types. This system explores ways in which we understand that which we haven’t experienced. The first type of memory in Nora’s system: “Archival Memory” is the systematic appropriation or solidification of History; our memories begin to align with the given view. The second: “Individual Duty” is our own learning and understanding that comes from active exploration of history; this is similar to Cognitivisation. The third: “Alienated Memory” is a description of frustration at our natural disconnectedness with history and the attempt to recreate “authentic” historical experiences.³ This last one is clearly articulated in the desire for places like Williamsburg.

These two theories underscore the desire to engage with the past but also the difficulty of translating it to the present. There is a sense of loss that occurs, even when the history is well documented. There must be some way of integrating personal experiences into the structure of history that goes beyond mirroring badly the fabric of the past. It would be inconceivable to force visitors to urban historic districts to dress in period styles, and yet isn’t that also a part of the reconstructed experience? So why would Planning Departments require new construction to do just that. Clearly, the need for history goes beyond simply requiring the maintenance of a certain architectural style.

Preserving Memories

² Tim Benton (editor), Understanding Heritage and Memory (Manchester University Press, 2010). 18-19
³ Tim Benton (editor), Understanding Heritage and Memory (Manchester University Press, 2010). 22
To overcome this inability to relate to the past, we create lasting monuments as a way of experiencing the events of the past in the present. In general, we respond to events both as individuals and as a society. When we choose to commemorate an event in the built environment architecturally there are certain expectations of the universality and importance of that event for both individuals and society as a whole.

The benefit or importance of the built monument of an event is impactful for the individual in a couple ways. First, the creation of specific space for reflection allows a person to engage with emotions or memories they may not easily or voluntarily bring up. Second, the site can act as a trigger in order to refresh the memory as a way of reassuring the viewer of their place in society or as a way of encouraging continued engagement with ideals or lessons of the event. Benton, in explaining our need for public monuments writes: “Memories seem to atrophy unless rehearsed and recreated to meet the needs of changing circumstances.” Memories fade, and the permanent monument is an expression of longevity in the fleetingness of life. As the stone weathers and fades, the monument becomes more alive as those it was made for return to it needing to be reminded of their identity in the memories it provokes.

Monuments create moments for shared experience among traditionally disparate people. Specifically, lives affected by war or violence may come together to grieve over loss of loved ones or pride at having served. Generally, this could be represented through icons or rituals, such as Memorial Day celebrations and monuments. Monuments also enable those without any personal experience of an event to create memories associated with it. Our creation of permanent artifacts is a way of expressing our desire to see our intentions and memories preserved for future generations. Additionally, the younger generations who desire to feel connected with ancestors can establish memories of their family’s past through its recreation and internalization. Finally, the preservation of certain events establishes what is important to a society. A city’s monuments tell of the bravery, sacrifice, and history of its people. In a less intentional way, these stories can accompany any built work of architecture.

Urban Artifacts of Memory

Urban artifacts represent our lasting presence in the city. A natural byproduct of existing in one place for any length of time, people will cultivate or transform their immediate area to customize it for their needs. Architecture is society’s way of establishing permanence and buildings are monuments of their own creation. This permanence can be seen as a kind of structural analogy for the internal expression of our existence in the world, and thereby constitutes a collective memory. Sébastian Marot writes that the city works as a metaphor for frameworks of memory, "which,

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4 Tim Benton (editor), Understanding Heritage and Memory (Manchester University Press, 2010). 13
in the same way, are all subject to slow processes of evolution.” Memories are a direct and individual link to the past. This link is essential as it is the past from which we derive identity and stability—understanding our evolution through time.

In the editor’s introduction to Aldo Rossi’s *The Architecture of the City*, Peter Eisenman uses the analogy of a skeleton to describe the relation of history to a city and Rossi’s analysis of it as if studying individual parts. He writes that this skeleton “is at once a structure and a ruin, a record of events and a record of time, and in this sense a statement of facts and not causes.” We experience what is there, not why it is there; those are only guesses. The way in which these experiences affect us we will return to later, but first let us examine a framework for understanding artifacts.

Cities contain artifacts (buildings) that represent those living and working in the city. As long as cities are continuously inhabited, they are still connected to the residents and the area is considered living; once the development of a city halts long enough, the whole fabric becomes a ruin as fewer and fewer people remain attached to the creations of the area. This idea is explored by Rossi who summarizes a theory developed by Poëte and Lavedan called a “Theory of Permanencies”, in regard to historic artifacts in an urban landscape. His definition of permanencies is that “they are a past that we are still experiencing.” Permanencies can be divided into two types of permanencies: Propelling and Pathological. Both types of permanencies are visible in living cities.

A propelling permanence is an artifact that exists, largely untouched, and is still in continuous use. Rossi calls it propelling because it is contributing to the present, vibrant, life of the city. To be propelling, an artifact must continue to exhibit more than simply its original form, it must evolve in function to maintain its relevance in the everyday life of the city. For instance, the street and the city’s urban plan

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7 Aldo Rossi, *The Architecture of the City*, 35
(plot size, zoning, etc) are both examples of propelling permanencies; for Rossi, they are particularly important, as they remain incredibly whole and influential in the present city.\footnote{10}

When an artifact can no longer be transformed along with the fabric in a meaningful way it becomes pathological. The word pathological may be understood in this case as compulsive or obsessive, as it is the pathological permanence that persists in its form and allows no changes or modifications in form or function. The link of pathological permanencies to the real fabric of the city is not a strong one, "it stands virtually isolated in the city; nothing can be added. It constitutes, in fact, an experience so essential that it cannot be modified."\footnote{11} It would seem that this comparison implies that one type is preferable to the other, yet the reality is that both conditions of urban artifacts still exist and so retain their significance—one for its continued function, the other its image or form. Both are defined in relation to their context.\footnote{12}

For Rossi, monuments and persistent urban artifacts are essentially the same; the more persistent an artifact, the more readily it enters the symbolic realm.\footnote{13} A key note to his theory is his discussion of dead cities. He remarks that in cities removed from their culture there is no such thing as permanencies since we can no longer understand their original context. But what is a dead city? Rossi describes the opposite, or living city, as characterized by uninterrupted development. The dead city then could potentially be described as a city where development has been interrupted for a long enough period of time that we can no longer truly understand the cultural experience of historic buildings, as we are removed from their function and a sense of their historical context. "...the dynamic process of the city tends more to evolution than preservation, and that in evolution monuments

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext[10]{Aldo Rossi, \textit{The Architecture of the City} (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1982), 59}
\footnotetext[11]{Aldo Rossi, \textit{The Architecture of the City} (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1982), 59-60}
\footnotetext[12]{Aldo Rossi, \textit{The Architecture of the City} (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1982), 60}
\footnotetext[13]{Aldo Rossi, \textit{The Architecture of the City} (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1982), 60}
\end{footnotes}
are not only preserved but continuously presented as propelling elements of development."

So if a city stops preserving and presenting their monuments or artifacts, they decay; denying the memory of an event long enough to atrophy; it stands to reason that substantial population loss, lack of development, and disinterest in a large urban area, over time would become a city of dead artifacts—remnants of a past that has become obsolete, they stand in steady decline. In Cincinnati, Over-the-Rhine could either be considered a pathological permanence—if viewed within the Greater Cincinnati area—or a dead city if viewed alone. This is the violence perpetuated on Cincinnati’s Over-the-Rhine. It is a neighborhood that has lost its identity, and it is a fallacy to believe that all it needs is a coat of paint. How does one build in a city of artifacts? The initial assumption is that new buildings must be “contextual” as a way of reinforcing the past. The desire to be reconnected to the past is often made manifest in works of architecture that mimic historic materials or forms, causing the same sense of alienation that was trying to be avoided from the start. The destruction and neglect of Over-the-Rhine requires us to act aggressively to save what we can, and to propose work that increases the area’s value and brings life into this city of the dead.

**Time and the Urban Artifact**

Alois Riegl, a 19th Century art historian, in his essay “The Modern Cult of Monuments: Its Character and Its Origin”, explores time in relation to the creation of monuments. He writes that buildings increase in value as they age, and buildings that are not created as monuments (“unintentional monuments”) gain meaning as they age and eventually become representational of the period, a monument to the age they were created in. Riegl’s work is important because it addresses the issue that value is subjective and changes based on many factors, one of which is the age of the artifact that is being preserved. This “age-value” plays a predominant role in Over-the-Rhine. The artifacts that exist in the historic district are not all works of art and yet the entire district becomes essential to the creation of identity. The fact that every building has age-value presents a problem for those seeking alterations or demolitions. Also, it elevates the historic style to an object of worship as it becomes an essential link to the collective historic identity.

What has happened in OTR is described accurately in this quote of Riegl’s:

…human creation continues uninterrupted: what is modern today and accordingly complete in its individuality is also bound to turn gradually into a monument and to replenish those which nature will inevitably destroy over time.

There is a cycle: buildings age, decay, and are replaced by new works. At any given point there are examples in a city of artifacts from a large range of historic periods. The neglect of OTR stopped this cycle. Buildings that might have been replaced or altered were left alone, allowing them to gain accidental age-value. The desire to connect with the past has allowed the preservation of many of the historic buildings giving the area its uniqueness, however this refusal to impact the existing fabric has left new construction in OTR lost for direction. New buildings are inevitable and important as they fill in the vacant lots of the districts. The trap however, is to create new buildings as monuments to the historic area and not as independent entities.


How has this happened? What capacity does architecture have to engage a sense of time?

In *The Eyes of the Skin*, Juhani Pallasma describes architecture as giving time a human scale:

Architecture is our primary instrument in relating us with space and time, and giving these dimensions a human measure. It domesticates limitless space and endless time to be tolerated, inhabited and understood by humankind.  

We create buildings as anchors in time and we understand our own mortality in relation to the life of the buildings we inhabit. We are afraid of them; seeing the decay and rot of buildings becomes for us an unpleasant reminder of death.

It is no wonder we avoid these places, preferring to let something be destroyed than to engage with its decay. There are numerous examples of this in a city. One is our refusal to acknowledge our own waste; we ship it away to city dumps and never think about it again. Another is the tendency to prefer an empty lot to a boarded up building; the lot has potential, and the building is merely a corpse.

A building’s condition, its image, has a tremendous impact on our experience of a city. We engage physically with the openings and materiality; we enter into a conversation with them. This dialogue has traditionally been a slow process, unfolding over time. Now, it is no longer necessary to even visit a building to experience it visually. The mass production of images in our modern era has stunted our growth in our knowledge of architecture. Images become our primary mode of knowing places and what we lack are truly physical experiences. Pallasma sees this as a type of flattening of the world:

The experiences of space and time have become fused into each other by speed, and as a consequence we are witnessing a distinct reversal of the two dimensions—a

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17 Juhani Pallasma, *The Eyes of the Skin* (Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley - Academy, 2005), 17

18 Juhani Pallasma, *The Eyes of the Skin* (Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley - Academy, 2005), 32
temporalization of space and a spatialisation of time ... the world of the eye is causing us to live increasingly in a perpetual present, flattened by speed and simultaneity. 

This "perpetual present" is damaging to any understanding of the past. We can no longer understand our place as a moment in a larger story and we become accustomed to believing that our reality is perpetual. Therefore, we represent our desire to live forever in an architectural typology of icons, pure forms that should never be touched by time or experience.

Pallasma is arguing that our true experience of architecture is felt largely in every sense other than the eye and yet we still give preference to the eye in the design of buildings. Our first encounters of architecture are often through images in books; we become accustomed to appreciating interesting compositions or striking forms and our buildings become objects to be judged from a distance instead of lived in. If we want to feel connected to the environment and feel at home in the vastness of space and time then we need to allow architecture to engage our senses of touch, smell, hearing, and maybe even taste. It is the other senses that integrate us with the world whereas the eye creates distance.

This integration of our bodies and the world occurs in the realm of the building envelope. There are four fundamental external potentialities of the envelope (fig 7): to represent construction, to represent cultural situation, to provide protection from outside forces, and to create spaces of social interaction and dialogue. The extent to which a building addresses each of these categories visually is up to the individual architect and is expressed in the detailing. One method (to the environmental protections for instance) might commonly be to repress any visual reading of the building’s response. It is unfortunately typical to reduce the building envelope’s capacity to be expressive down to simply material choices.

In On Weathering, Moshen Mostafavi and David Leatherbarrow discuss this transformation of buildings by natural forces as they age. It is another critique of the current idea that the architecture is the image at the time of its creation and that time deteriorates this image. They believe that architecture can embrace the opportunities present in the aging and transformation of building materials over time. They contrast this with the modern movements obsession with white images and the advent of the architectural photograph. Weathering removes architecture from the realm of image and anchors it in the cycles of time. Images become irrelevant, as they no longer match up with the experience of the building in the present.

Marco Frascari discusses the way in which architecture is treated as image his book Eleven Exercises in the art of architectural drawing. In it he is presenting a case for the return to hand-wrought architecture and a critique of the glossy render of digital design. Speaking on the nature of architecture to create an inhabitable world, he writes,

A shallow architecture of pure exteriority is the dominant presence in strip malls, builder tract housing, office parks, and high rises. These buildings look much better on the flat and glossy pages of real estate brochures than in the reality of world-making.

19 Juhani Pallasma, The Eyes of the Skin (Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley - Academy, 2005), 21
20 Juhani Pallasma, The Eyes of the Skin (Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley - Academy, 2005), 25
21 These four potentialities are my own categories and were derived from discussions in David Leatherbarrow’s book Surface Architecture and Alejandro Zaera Polo’s essay: “The Politics of the Envelope”
23 Marco Frascari, Eleven Exercises in the Art of Architectural Drawing (Routledge, 2011), 61
We have a cultivated view of these places as the worst of what society can create and yet they are everywhere.

The detachment of architecture from society—through the flattening of the experience of the envelope—has created a populous that wants this type of commercial building. Their physical senses have become numb and we give them what they want. A sense of dissatisfaction gnaws at the people; they don’t know why they aren’t happy with their architecture of "pure exteriority" and they are resigned to accepting things the way they stand. The true aim of the architect is to revive them with architectural expressions of depth and meaning—engaging them with the conceptual thickness and richness of the building envelope.

**The Political Capacity of the Envelope**

Finally, the analogy of architecture representing our own bodies through time can be taken one step further. As with artifacts or monuments of culture that serve to reinforce our identity, architecture can be powerfully transformative. This power can be harnessed for good or ill, depending on our approach to history. Pallasma cautions that, if we desire architecture to have an emancipating or healing role, instead of reinforcing the erosion of existential meaning, we must reflect on the multitude of secret ways in which the art of architecture is tied to the cultural and mental reality of its time.24

One of these ways is through the political capacity inherent in architecture, and specifically within the realm of the envelope. Alejandro Zaera Polo discusses this capacity in his essay “The Politics of the Envelope: A political critique of materialism.”

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24 Juhani Pallasma, *The Eyes of the Skin* (Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley - Academy, 2006). 34

He encourages architects to challenge the flow of power in the design of buildings:

The envelope as a concept becomes a way to politicize all typologies (new and old) and represent in any given example the intersection of technology, social values, environmental or security performances and human constituencies: a vehicle for the discipline to define political, social, and cultural terms.25

This potential for the envelope to be a vehicle for engaging with the above transitions is often not explored in contemporary construction.

Polo also discusses the distinctness of volumes in contemporary architectural possibility; there are no longer any major restrictions and so "it is the construction of the envelope that is charged with architectural, social, and political expression."26 The relationship of part to whole in decisions of detailing at all scales could be seen to represent the role of the individual in the collective. For instance: the building’s relationship to its context, or the way a window is received into the envelope could both have potential for making a statement about the relationship of part to whole.27 Specifically relevant to OTR, the building in relation to its context is the most compelling for political action.

This gives credence to the aggressive approach to construction in OTR. There is a potential for architecture to reject the normative forces of development in the area. This rejection has the ability to influence future design and transform the...
area slowly; not only as a subversive force, but also as a progressive force. Envelopes control the flow of materials, present an image to the community, and give definition to the city; engaging these forces removes buildings from the typical power struggles of race, gender, class, and creed. Notably for Over-the-Rhine, issues of race and economic class are highly controversial in the new development, and it is in these areas that we must make a stand.

§3 BUILDING THE QUEEN CITY: CHANGES IN THE LANDSCAPE OF MEMORY

Historic Summary

The history of cities can be characterized by a slow development of erasures and scars. Any project starts with some form of erasure, clearing, or removal of the existing conditions; and ends with a lasting joining, or “scarring,” of man-made materials in the landscape. Scars are traditionally seen as negative but in reality they are physical representations of something that has undergone change and been knitted back together—the open wound healed.


 See discussion on Lebbeus Woods’s “Radical Reconstruction” in the next section
tracing of these erasures and scars can reveal moments of significance in the life of a city.

Cincinnati began its history after the Revolutionary War. Once the British ceded the Ohio territory to the fledgling nation, the intrepid owners of a newfound freedom headed west to discover and settle their new land. Cincinnati was a natural choice for new development with its abundant natural resources and prime location. The earliest physical marks on the area were of the earthwork constructions built by the native Ohio tribes that dotted the basin. An 1815 map of the city by Daniel Drake shows Israel Ludlow’s city plan alongside and overlapping Native American earthworks. This tension was quickly resolved in the expansion of the city and the erasure of the earthworks. The city grid, perhaps the most persistent of remnants according to Aldo Rossi (as discussed above), was established by 1815. The streets ran perpendicular to the river at a slight angle of 11 degrees west of true north. The streets were all 60–65 feet wide with eight lots of 99 by 198 feet per block. 30

The Miami and Erie Canal was a statewide project begun in Cincinnati in 1825 and finished in 1845. In Cincinnati, the canal crossed its northern boundary and wrapped along the city’s eastern edge into the river. The city was surrounded on all sides by water, with the Mill Creek on the west and the canal on the north and east. The canal has become a major scar in the city, defining the very identity of Over-the-Rhine and ingraining itself in the minds of everyone in the city.

In the 1830s German immigration increased dramatically, and by 1840 Germans represented one third of Cincinnati’s total population of 75,000. Most of these immigrants, because of the low cost of housing, chose to settle north of the canal in the periphery of Cincinnati. The canal became known as the “Rhine”—either affectionately or sarcastically—as many were from the Rhine region in Germany and it became a way of establishing their identity in the new world. They represented a vastly diverse cross section of the still unincorporated German states and established self-sufficient communities in Over-the-Rhine. Each community developed their own way of representing themselves through architecture and newcomers could find communities from similar areas of Germany based on defining characteristics of their architecture.

By the end of the 19th century, the German immigrants in Cincinnati had left their permanent mark on the city. At its peak, Over-the-Rhine could boast a population density of 32,000 people per square mile, a density rivaling Manhattan at the same time. At this time development was constant, with new architecture constantly replacing the old and layering itself among and over the old fabric. This is the very definition (according to Rossi) of a living city, a city in which the past is reinforced in the present through constant use.

32 American Legacy Tours, “Queen City Underground” (Cincinnati, August 15, 2011).
33 Kevin Grace and Tom White, Images of America: Cincinnati’s Over-the-Rhine (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2003), 29
One of the early destructive events was the riot of 1884. Resulting from racial tensions among immigrants, the poor, and the upper class, the riot was an outcry against the corrupt judicial system. A man, William Berner, was convicted of manslaughter for killing his boss—a lesser sentence than citizens felt he deserved. Meeting in Cincinnati Music Hall, the discussion quickly got out of hand and a mob marched across Over-the-Rhine to the courthouse to lynch Berner. The mob destroyed and set fire to portions of the courthouse. The physical destruction pales in comparison to the loss of 50 men from the militia’s attempt to restore order with the Gatling gun; an additional 300 men were wounded.\textsuperscript{34}

World War I signaled the end for the Germanic community in Over-the-Rhine. Changing street names\textsuperscript{fig 12} and the outlaw of teaching German in public schools were just two examples of ramped up racism against Germans at the outbreak of the war. This, coupled with the economic devastation of Prohibition, dispersed the citizens of Over-the-Rhine into the surrounding suburbs. What had been an incredibly contained area due to the landscape of Cincinnati, began to open up with the arrival of new types of public transportation that brought easy access to the hilltops and Over-the-Rhine started to empty. Finally, the canal was abandoned in 1907 and drained by 1919.\textsuperscript{35}

It began to be clear that the construction of the new subway was causing structural damage in the houses adjoining the canal beds.\textsuperscript{36} The city couldn’t afford to handle all of the lawsuits that would inevitably come from the continued subway development and were forced to shut it down.

\textsuperscript{34} Kevin Grace and Tom White, Images of America: Cincinnati’s Over-the-Rhine (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2003), 22-23

\textsuperscript{35} Kevin Grace and Tom White, Images of America: Cincinnati’s Over-the-Rhine (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2003), 30-31

\textsuperscript{36} Kevin Grace and Tom White, Images of America: Cincinnati’s Over-the-Rhine (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2003), 78-79

The man-made river was replaced by a man-made river of stone in the creation of central parkway, and the partially completed subway tunnels still exist in the memory of a public discouraged by the insufficiency of public transit in Cincinnati—a pathological permanence, taunting Cincinnati with its failed promise.

With the flight of Germans from Over-the-Rhine there were huge vacancies in the tenement houses and storefronts, this meant cheap rents for the new wave of immigrants coming up from the Appalachians to find work in the city. This population was largely unconcerned with the German history, and did not have the means to make significant architectural contributions to the area. Because of this, the Appalachians are the people group most often over-looked in discussions of Over-the-Rhine history. Even though the culture of the Appalachian people was
often at odds with the city life they had moved into, they were able to maintain strong family connections. Joined by the African American population, the new residents of Over-the-Rhine were largely uneducated, unemployed, and living in severe poverty. What was once an upwardly mobile community working their way out of poverty, had become a ghetto filled with victims of generational poverty.

By the 1960s Over-the-Rhine had become largely separated from the lives of the people in the greater Cincinnati region. The area developed as a slum town. Slum Lords owned a majority of low-income housing units, and buildings fell into heavy disrepair from abandonment and lack of upkeep. The abjection of the poor became a rallying cry for citizens of Over-the-Rhine and the people’s movement was the start of unrest in the center city area. This unrest and distrust of city leaders finally erupted in violence in the 2001 riot. Timothy Thomas, a black unarmed 19-year-old boy, was shot and killed by a police officer on the corner of 13th and Republic in Over-the-Rhine. The outrage at what was interpreted as clear class and ethnic prejudice became a nationally publicized event. Heavy vandalism and violence in many areas of the city forced officials to declare a curfew and to impose military rule on the street. Mounted, heavily armored, police officers faced off against the rioters to keep the peace.

This social unrest is one of the main reasons for the high levels of vacancy and decay in the area today. The question is: Should we try to remember the events of those terrible days.
or simply forget about them and move on. We can’t pretend the walls weren’t there; it would be impossible to forget and move on, yet that amnesia is exactly what development has been trying to create in the last decade.

As of 2000 the population of Over-the-Rhine had fallen to 7,638 with the African American population at 5,974. Of 3,594 housing units, 1,667 were empty. The riots only hurt the image of an already tough area, and the decay of time marched on as more and more historic buildings were destroyed. The public image of Cincinnati began to seriously affect the recruitment potential for the major corporations in Cincinnati and they decided to do something about the crime and abandonment of Cincinnati. Forming the Cincinnati Center City Development Corporation (3CDC)—a non-profit—they pooled their money and bought up many of the properties formerly owned by slumlords. They forced the closure of many liquor establishments to drop the crime rate and they took seriously the need to rehab and save buildings under threat of destruction due to disrepair.

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38 Kevin Grace and Tom White, *Images of America: Cincinnati’s Over-the-Rhine* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2003), 8 - Please note the incredible vacancy as compared to earlier population density of 32,000 ppl/sq. mile.

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fig 16

The riots have left a huge impact on the collective memory of Cincinnati. The literally explosive violence pitted the citizens of OTR against police racism and city neglect. The violence last an entire summer.
The increased police presence in the area was in an attempt to curb the damage and violence done by the rioters. There was chaos, drugs were being sold on open tables in the street. No one was safe.

Fig. 17

Fig. 18

Actual physical barriers were created in order to establish boundaries and increase control by the Cincinnati Police Department.
Today, Over-the-Rhine is back in the minds of Cincinnatians. There is significant interest in redevelopment efforts, and city living is back in vogue among young professionals and retirees. With the reintegration of capital in the neighborhood, new construction is finally happening on a larger scale. Various new projects illustrate new interest in the area: the new SCPA building on Central Parkway south of Washington Park, the new residential projects on vine street, and numerous renovation projects. There are many projects in the works and development in Over-the-Rhine has never been more popular. This new transformation sees Over-the-Rhine as an untapped resource for the city and hopes to remake it into a vibrant urban neighborhood. The main driver for this trend has been 3CDC who provide money for developments and run many of the projects before turning them over to management companies. Their goals, driven by economic forces, are to present an image of the city that is inconsistent with its actual status. Their distilled and shallow view of OTR contributes to the feeling of separateness so present in their work.

**History of Oppression**

Cultural Distancing is the denial of heritage—the denial of any value of the preceding culture for the present. Systematically and without fail, this has happened at every stage of development in Over-the-Rhine. From the implicit denial of Native American values to today’s disregard for the poor there is a belief in the supremacy of the powerful over the past. This oppression presents itself in the breaking of permanencies through the removal of context and eliminates any ability to relate to the past since it is counted as irrelevant. Examples of this include the oppression of German culture in the early 20th century and the denial of
German industry with prohibition. Aside from active oppression, cultural distancing is enacted in the movement of people from their home or the home of their ancestors. The movement of Appalachians and freed men into the city after the war eliminated them from the former connection to their past and forced them to conform to a city lifestyle that they were not accustomed to. The oppression of Infrastructural Destruction is at first not easy to identify. Infrastructure is ostensibly a good thing. The creation of roads, and bridges, and other public works is meant to aid the experience of the city not to destroy it. When one looks closer at the history of infrastructural development in Cincinnati, however, there is a clear pattern of oppression aimed at the inner city. The first major development that wounded the city was the construction of I-75 through the West End. Along with the demolition of entire blocks to create public housing towers, this completely devastated the largely African American neighborhood. The goal was to get rid of the slums but the problem of poverty wasn’t dealt with and most of the displaced residents simply moved to Over-the-Rhine. The conversion of the canal to Central Parkway further segregated the neighborhood from the downtown through the creation of a largely impassable boulevard. This was reinforced by the widening of Liberty Street that destroyed huge swaths of buildings and created another physical boundary in the creation of an economic ghetto in Over-the-Rhine. Finally, viewing it unnecessary in such a poor area, privately run providers somehow neglected to upgrade the energy infrastructure of Over-the-Rhine when they upgraded every other district’s infrastructure over the 20th Century. The red shows the typical destruction caused by the widening of Liberty in OTR. The extent of the damage extends beyond the physical boundaries of the street and into the blocks adjacent to it.

One bright spot in the oppression of Over-the-Rhine is the accidental preservation of a majority of the historic buildings in the district. The geographically contained area prevented early sprawl creating an amazingly dense area of high quality architecture. This, coupled with the relative disinterest in the area for the better part of a century by those with money in Cincinnati, has prevented the destruction of artifacts in Over-the-Rhine during the high-minded period of modernism that destroyed much of the fabric of other cities. As one author puts it:

Because the area north of the canal escaped the continuous piecemeal improvements of the nineteenth century and the sweeping urban renewal of the twentieth century, much of Over-the-Rhine’s historic architecture remains.

Unfortunately, what had been saved by neglect is now being destroyed by it. Landlords had no incentive to refurbish their properties as they were

39 Adam Gelter, interview by UC’s MetroLAB, 3CDC Presentation, (October 2011).
renting to primarily low-income residents who didn’t have a choice in their housing. Recently, many of these properties that had fallen into substantial decay have been condemned by the city and torn down, leaving substantial gaps and many empty lots, devoid of purpose.

§ 4 THE PHOENIX FALLEN:
A CITY AT WAR

Scabs and Scars

What happens to the history of an area when a series of disconnected minority groups predominantly occupy a city neighborhood over time? In places like Over-the-Rhine there is no united history. The exploration and engagement of this forgotten history is key to establishing any identity in OTR, not just to subvert the established history. It is this lack of identity that causes controversy. As the city expands into what they believe is the wasteland of Over-the-Rhine, the angel of ’progress’ is coming up against an inconvenient people group. 3CDC is doing great work in the area, but in many cases at the expense of the city’s heritage and the minority populations.

In addition to the lack of unified history, Over-the-Rhine could be characterized as a steady severing of links. OTR has been a violent and contested area over its long history: riots, crime, poverty, and neglect have left a fragile neighborhood filled with holes-remnants of the violence. This type of destruction is similar to the destruction caused by war. The entire area has suffered from this militarizing and destruction. Additionally, in John Stoughton’s Master’s thesis dealing with this issue, he writes:

Upon entering the twenty-first century, we have reached a point where urbanization and militarization collide, for the battlegrounds and the projects bear uneasily similar conditions. 41

The violence of the riots and the increasingly decaying vacant buildings, have left major holes in the rows of Italianate architecture.


The neglect of the area is obvious in this picture (left). This type of scene is all too common in OTR.
In "Radical Reconstruction" Lebbeus Woods describes the effect of warfare in this way:

Made up of complex layers of buildings and open spaces, of uses and reuses, woven over centuries and generations into a living tissue of meanings, old cities absorbed into their complexity the hierarchies that governed them...war leveled old cities in much more than a physical sense. It reduced their multi-layered complexity of meanings to one-layered tableaux...

Woods’s description matches the disconnectedness felt in OTR. The complexity of the city has been reduced to a tableau—the artifact city—frozen in time. If we are to maintain or develop any sort of complex urban identity, it is key to understand how the urban fabric responds to the violence of war and the ways in which architectural interventions can work to reinforce the complexity instead of the tableau.

Woods sees destruction as filled with potential. Residents of the damaged area must come to terms with what was lost, not memorializing it but bearing it with pride, and recognize the new order imposed on the city by the violence. Within this new order, there is:

...another, more intimate scale of complexity that can serve as the point of origin for a new urban fabric...They are the beginnings of new ways of thinking.

living, and shaping space, arising from individuality and invention.  

Woods suggests the injection of “freespaces” into the voids of destruction—essentially bottom up architecture that acquires meaning as it is inhabited; a small scale injection of complexity. The redemptive nature of the type of architecture woods is suggesting is evident in the following quote:

Architecture, the very model of precision and self-exalting intelligence, should not fear its union with what has been the lowest form of human manifestation, the ugly evidence of violence. Architecture must learn to transform the violence, even as violence has transformed architecture.

This transformation is first formed as a scab and then a scar. The scab is the first response, the concentrated effort of dealing with the violence; it protects the wound and allows it to heal, acknowledging its existence while inhabiting it. The scar is the permanent marking of the union of old and new; it cannot be removed or made to be more than it is.

Woods’s arguments have been largely critiqued for aestheticising war and for creating spaces devoid of any connection to the dense historic canvas that he is working within. The specificity of his constructions and details causes a problem because it moves his highly futuristic and suggestive renderings from the realm of the symbolic to the literal. These literal free spaces, created ad hoc over a long period of time, are meant to be the new places of inhabitation in the existing fabric, even while the remains of the buildings are still perfectly inhabitable. It suggest an abandonment reminiscent of the fall of


Rome, where the reduction in density essentially recreates the functions and roles of the city.  

In using Lebbeus Woods’s strategy there must be some level of adaptation in order for it to make any sense. This injection, scab, and scar process needs to be removed from its biological metaphor and brought into the realm of practical architectural production. Additionally, the conditions of destruction in OTR is of an entirely different character and requires a different sort of response.

The war on OTR

The results of the war on OTR exist largely as vacant lots. These vacant lots undermine the complexity and identity of the historic architecture

and are the obvious thing to blame when discussing the loss of the urban character. The relationship between the vacant lot and the urban fabric is analogous to the relationship between the void of destruction and the building. The fragments have been denied, and it is impossible in most cases to uncover any artifacts that would enable a Lebbeus Woods style response. This doesn’t make the destruction any less valid, or any less reminiscent of war. How should the void be approached?

The initial tendency might be to try and replace the lost architecture; this is impossible. Woods describes it:

> Wherever the restoration of war-devastated urban fabric has occurred in the form of replacing what has been damaged or destroyed, it ends as parody, worthy only of the admiration of tourists… The attempt at replacement serves, in the end, only the interests of the decrepit hierarchies, struggling to legitimize themselves finally through sentimentality and nostalgia, a demagoguery that is all too comforting and appealing to people struggling to recover from the tragedy of profound personal and cultural losses.


While the city of Cincinnati does recognize the impossibility of re-creating the lost fabric, their insistence on referencing it to create contextual new construction almost intentionally inhibits the potential of new construction. 47 The Conservation Guidelines for new construction state:

> The appropriateness of design solutions will be based on balancing the programmatic needs of the applicant with how well the design relates to the neighboring buildings and to the intent of these guidelines. New design proposals should pay particular attention to composition, materials, openings, rhythm, scale, proportion and height.

§5 REINSERTIONS OF FORM

Present Insertions

It is essential to examine some of the existing approaches to Over-the-Rhine. There have been various attempts at New Construction under the historic district guidelines, as well as some guerilla art movements that deal with the vacancy. There are disagreements of method even among architects who desire to respond positively to the historic context. Various methods have included: using the historic materials as a referent, copying historic forms, staying within certain boundaries, or even rejecting the historic styles and creating something else entirely.

New construction has been mostly lackluster. Either it exhibits some sense of originality as a monumental building on a huge plot of land or it pretends to not even exist in the landscape of historic architecture. SCPA is an example of the first type, while the condo building on 14th and Vine is of the second. Neither building engages all four of the potentialities for expression of the building envelope (see above discussion in: "Time and the Urban Artifact"). Specific elements have been introduced in an attempt to make the buildings appear to 'fit' in the historic context. Notably these elements look like cast concrete window headers, brick facades, and fake cornice details. In every case, it is made obvious that the detail is being used as an icon and not to reinforce a structural or even aesthetic understanding. The comparison to the historic architectural style cheapens the look and makes obvious the deficiency in the contemporary solution.

One group working to beautify the abandoned parts of the neighborhood is Future Blooms, a division of Keep Cincinnati Beautiful. Future
Blooms used grant money to paint simple (but convincing) storefronts and windows (complete with flower boxes) on many of the boarded up buildings. It doesn’t seem like much, but the difference between the plywood and the paint is tremendous. It is a small illusion, but gains value when one realizes that the major difference is a perception of depth in the painted buildings that was lost with their boarded windows. This is just an illusion however, and though perceived depth has an amazing transformative effect on the area, it is not a substitute for actual occupancy, development, and complexity.

§6 LAYERS OF CONNECTION: THE RESTRUCTURED ENVELOPE

From wall to sheath

The façade is the place of interaction between building and city, architecture and people. In Over-the-Rhine, the image of the façade has been the primary focus of these architectural insertions. We turn now to the engagement of the building envelope and the development of a redemptive architectural response. Part of the problem with considering new construction is that construction methods no longer drive the project. In the 19th Century architecture of OTR, buildings were built simply and with standard parts; the bricks were not one of many options but were simply the only option for durable fireproof construction. The complexity of modern construction technique
Andrew Gauggel

Andrew Gauggel has freed the envelope from its purely functional requirements and has given unique freedom to the building envelope. This comes at a time when the building’s interiors are increasingly prescribed.

This complexity is largely a result of the invention of steel and the international style’s insistence on the free façade. David Leatherbarrow writes in his book *Surface Architecture*:

> Once the skin of the building became independent of its structure, it could just as well hang like a curtain or clothing. The relationship between structure and skin has preoccupied much architectural production since this period and remains contested today.

This independence is not simply one more choice in the myriad of aesthetic options available to architects; it is the new method of construction—for all the functional reasons the structural brick wall was the method of construction in the 19th Century.

Forget for a moment that brick is referencing the historic styles in OTR. Brick is a material perfect for compression, used ubiquitously for essentially all of recorded time. When attached to a structural frame as cladding, the brick no longer supports any weight and is in fact increasing the load on the frame. When used as a cladding, brick needs to behave in a completely different way than structural brick. This reversal of the function of brick is obvious when viewing any building. Contemporary large constructions, like Michael Graves’s Engineering Research Center (ERC) at the University of Cincinnati (fig. 30) are built to look monolithic; the one thing


Exploded axonometrics of typical building construction types. The use of similar materials does not hide the obvious markings of differences in technique.
That establish a visual rhythm. In dense commercial areas such as Vine Street, there are no setbacks, creating a solid wall along the street. This wall is articulated by the individual buildings, which in turn are divided by window groupings, changes in wall planes and decorative elements such as pilasters, columns or piers.\(^5\)

Unfortunately, this misuse of the historic brick is only serving to conceal potentially the worst building on the most public street in Cincinnati. It makes obvious the thinness of architectural design and unlike the ERC seems to be celebrating it.\(^5\)

There is some game going on here; it is clear that the envelope needs to be reclaimed if the oppression of OTR is to be stopped. The only approach to new construction has been a 2-dimensional image driven architectural design that when built sucks the life out of the surrounding context. These buildings are worse than the decaying, boarded-up, historic architecture because they deny the complexity of the urban landscape built over time.

**Complexity and Contra-façadism**

The envelope is the where architecture has the power to be political and it is through its implementation in the destroyed city that Over-the-Rhine will be transformed. As Zaera Polo says, architecture should:

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enter the realm of the contested entities rather than remaining the inevitable product of established forms
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51 The ERC is responding to functional necessity hoping to achieve a desired appearance of authentic brickwork, whereas the OTR project is making use of brick as an appliqué and it no way desires its appearance to read as authentic.
of power or the mere representation of alternative ideologies."

So of course, the argument is that current architecture in OTR is exactly a result of these "established forms of power" and the question is: what can we do to get out of it?

Lebbeus Woods's discussion of the scab and scar provide an adequate starting place for practically understanding the political potential of architecture. He believes that these "free spaces" can only be constructed outside of the hierarchical structures that created the wars and violence in the first place. "They are the beginnings of new ways of thinking, living, and shaping space, arising from individuality and invention." 52

He is subtly suggesting a type of anarchical society that would be self-governed and essentially post-apocalyptic. While this might be a fascinating exploration in the context of human annihilation post-war, the assumption that the anti-typology of collage and adaptation can create a fundamentally different type of society is a bit strong. This is especially unapproachable in a city like Cincinnati, where oppressive new construction is happening regardless of the actions of individuals in the community. Essentially, the new construction is seen as a good investment in the city. So the necessary adaptation of Woods's work is to allow it to be political but not utopian, anarchic, or futuristic. The organic, metabolic process is condensed into the design of new construction as opposed to construction itself.

Lebbeus Woods's futuristic, mechanical, angular forms are responding to specific issues in the context of his work—notably the chaotic and unpredictable nature of war. Even with this chaos, each drawing responds to a similarly destroyed environment and there arises a uniformity of style or form that would be unexpected if these spaces were truly created ad hoc as a result of the needs of individuals. Additionally, the use of the existing building shell at all shows a need for

53 Lebbeus Woods. “Radical Reconstruction.” 16
The Resurrection of the Dead: New Construction in Cities of Memory

the support of the previous regime even while denying their relevance in a new utopian society.

In OTR, the historic district guidelines attempt to mandate this uniformity of style that is apparent in Woods’s work. It would be unthinkable to demand any type of uniformity of new construction even one that claims to be embracing the complexity of the historic fabric as opposed to denying it. What is essential is that we elevate the conversation about new construction from style and image to process and complexity. Then new construction might have the ability to influence more than simply the visual experience of the area but also the sociopolitical experience.

This process and complexity could derive from a conversation about the injection, scab, and scar. These as biological processes are evidence of a work being done beneath a protective skin. This skin shows the need for protection while healing or reknitting the flesh occurs. This process shows promise for creating political architectural responses as the new needs to be protected from the entrenched and dominating status quo, yet it must be rethought within an architectural context and not directly applied.

In Over-the-Rhine, the (political) architectural injections are the novel programs that seek to reconnect the intangible separations inflicted on the district over time. (fig 32) These proposed programs are not innovative or new typologies but they merely express the potential for individual or artistic expression in the neighborhood that would connect either historic elements that have been lost or cultural identities that have been ignored. These small-scale interventions are vulnerable to the established paradigms that are transforming OTR and need some form of protection. This protection is represented in the analogy of the scab.

The scab is the shell that wraps the most fundamental, or precious, element of the injected design. The scab provides visual and physical separation of the kernel to elevate its perceived importance to the design. It also provides space for isolation in a series of programs that are primarily focused outward. This outwardly focused nature of the projects might be expressed in the next stage of development: the scar.

Scar tissue forms as a result of something being transformed and so is the static representation of a force or process. If the injection of a protected shell is entirely about separation then it is the scar that provides a way to mediate the isolation of the kernel with the surrounding context. The scar tissue is the building envelope. The final barrier of protection that acts more as a passable membrane than a protective shell. The scar tissue remains visible, the envelope is the public expression of the insertion of something new into the urban fabric.

The reason the envelope is recognized as having political force or power is that it is the zone of representation where the complex processes of creation come together and coexist. The envelope is empowered with the ability to express a variety of ideas or motives. I have identified four categories of representation that can be considered when designing the envelope. These four potentialities are (again): to represent construction, to represent cultural situation, to provide protection from outside forces, and to create spaces of social interaction and dialogue. They could also be described as being constructionally or culturally representative, and environmentally, or socially (politically) functional. All four need to be engaged in a project as necessary points of decision making for the architect if a project is to make a holistic impact. They enable the dissection of the envelope to examine its authenticity or effectiveness in achieving its goals.

\[54\] These four potentialities are my own categories and were derived from discussions in David Leatherbarrow’s book *Surface Architecture* and Alejandro Zaera Polo’s essay: “The Politics of the Envelope.”
The potentialities act as a broad way to categorize how envelopes perform. The goal here is to create a language that communicates clearly and allows the building to thrive in the following areas: that it has an aesthetic engagement; that it presents an intellectual position; that it is worked out with great craft; and that it is engaged within its context (recognizing its impact on the community).

In contrast to the complexity of any potential architecture, an image-centered design solution is found lacking in almost every way. The experience of the distorted mirrored image—of the type of creation found in Over-the-Rhine—is not furthered by continued exploration, or enriched through any in depth study. Once the building is photographed it becomes immediately irrelevant. Contrast this with a building that resonates deeply with the area it is placed in. So deeply, in fact, that a common visitor might not be able to read its association with the complexity of the city but that they would feel it subconsciously. This type of architecture could be explored over and over again, unpacking the true complexity of the city and understanding its transformation over time.

**Developing Complexity**

Programs such as a print studio and gallery, a movie house, and a brew pub could function politically by engaging not only the physical oppression but also through its social connections.

In OTR the majority of the damage has already been cleared and leveled into benign looking lots that conceal the destruction. It is necessary to re-engage the void with the programmatic insertion—not to recreate the decay, but to make explicit the destruction of the site.
New construction is a complicated endeavor in any city and requires careful contemplation of the appropriateness for each insertion. In Over-the-Rhine, the painfulness of the past oppression needs to be dealt with and not whitewashed. Vacant spaces are the key elements of a city that have the potential to influence the future of construction, but they are also indices of violence in the city. This conceptual understanding of the design process of inserting, scabbing and scarring is the way in which new construction can avoid the pitfalls of historicist architecture, while increasing the complexity and depth of the political architectural response.

The small-scale political injections of program into OTR would work to re-establish some form of cultural identity in the area. The type of response I’m discussing in this thesis would not be appropriate for all insertions in OTR, but would be perfect for public-focused buildings that deal with a connection to the culture or history of the neighborhood. Specifically, a brew-pub, artist-in-residency program, and movie house will be used to explore the response under a variety of conditions.

These buildings will be designed on the unique vacant lots in OTR most appropriate for each program. The programs will be assumed to be designed and completed concurrently, enriching the fabric of OTR as a whole and not to be viewed independently. Their commonalities will be the method of their joining of new and old.

Due to the white-washed effect of the destruction of OTR, the lots lack anchors that can provide the needed genesis for connecting the new and the old. For each new architectural response, a related historic structure will be found in OTR that can act as a graft. This graft is the piece that connects the new architecture to the urban fabric. They connect two things that should belong together: the historic urban fabric, and thoughtful new construction. Thus healing the gap between new and old.
The Resurrection of the Dead: New Construction in Cities of Memory

**Fig 34**
Design Development

*(left)*
Plan showing gallery wrapping the insertion.

*(below left)*
Collage section showing Cincinnati Music Hall beyond.

*(below right)*
Early digital model. The red mass is the graft, joined into the existing fabric by the lighter gallery elements.
The design concepts are centered around a larger, urban-scale approach to the site that includes five different programs on five sites. Each site varies in scale and program to address different aspects of the disconnectedness of the site. (fig 33)

In order to understand how the concepts are specifically implemented one project (the artist-in-residency print studio) will be explored in detail. The early stages of that design process have been included in this document. (fig 34)

The graft for the Artist residency comes from a typical residential building in OTR. (fig 33) This building is abstracted in its insertion. Where the graft connects to the existing and new programs, it is animated through the use of historic materials. The nature of the graft is constantly changing. At times it is the proportions of the historic architecture, in other places it is the spolia of the nearby structures that are being torn down.

The Gallery spaces wrap the graft and give it an enclosure. The support space is held here. The stairs and mechanical equipment are external to the historic graft but still integral to it.

This process of grafting and responding to the insertion through the application of program elements can be repeated in each of the proposed sites. In each case, the graft would be a different building. Since the graft is abstracted, it should be read in subtle ways, not overtly. It hints at the historic heritage of the typologies and the physicality of the remnants in the reused materials, but it is by no means a reconstruction.
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