Imagine Pershing Square: Experiments in Cinematic Urban Design

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ABSTRACT

Each person experiences urban space through the shifting narratives of his or her own cultural, economic and environmental perceptions. Yet within dominant urban design paradigms, many of these perceptions never make it into the public meeting, nor onto the abstract maps and renderings that planners and designers frequently employ. This thesis seeks to show that cinematic practice, or the production of subjective, immersive film narratives, can incorporate highly differentiated perceptions into the design process.

By investigating a single public space, Pershing Square in downtown Los Angeles, California, with three cinematic “acts,” this project puts three different methodological approaches to the test. Act One, “Pershing Square: Of Time and Place,” employs critical theories to investigate the park through cultural conflicts that have propelled design interventions throughout its history. Act Two, “Pershing Square: Sense of Place,” employs an ethnographic approach to investigate the park through the diverse perceptions of its users. Finally, Act Three, “Pershing Square: Visions of Place,” takes a constructivist approach to re-imagine the park through its users’ aspirations.

This project runs concurrent with an international competition to redesign the park, which provides a benchmark for comparing the project’s findings with conventional use of film in design practice. Although the project will expand beyond the scope of this thesis, initial findings strongly support the value of cinematic methods in communicating broader narratives about urban space and in stimulating design thinking that incorporates a dynamic pluralism of user perceptions.

The final film project will be posted in the near future on www.moodyfilm.com.
IMAGINE PERSHING SQUARE: EXPERIMENTS IN CINEMATIC URBAN DESIGN

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Testing a new method in the design of public space, especially one that overlaps with another discipline (film) and interacts with an ongoing design process, would have been impossible to do alone. Although I injected this project with a lot of my personality and the training I received in both of my lives, as filmmaker and planner, it is much more of a curated conversation between many brilliant individuals than a personal brainchild. At the time of this writing nearly 200 people have made a direct, conscientious contribution to this project; countless others impacted the project in other ways. I will thank as many people here as I can, although I am sure to forget important individuals. I hope to do a more thorough job for the final release of the film.

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“Imagine Pershing Square” belongs to all of the individuals above, as well as anyone who feels a connection to Pershing Square or the narratives in the film. For my part, I dedicate the project to my chief communications expert, my guiding spirit and unconditional companion throughout the journey, Xiao Han Drummond. May your guts and grace help the world to see itself again.
CHAPTER 1:
INTRODUCTION

Urban design professionals often overlook the idea that no two people perceive urban space in exactly the same way, as each person’s experience of space is constructed through shifting narratives of their own cultural, economic, and environmental perceptions. Yet within dominant planning and design paradigms, many of these perceptions never make it into the public meeting, nor do they end up on the abstract maps or renderings that planners and designers frequently employ.

Cinema, or narrative-based film, is an immersive and democratically accessible medium that can offer urban designers a rich way to understand, represent and rethink urban space through the time-based, dynamic and highly differentiated perceptions of its users. Many studies have shown that cinema has the potential to substantially expand urban planning and design discourse, but few studies have investigated whether cinematic methods can be incorporated as part of urban design practice. The purpose of this thesis is to uncover the potential value of cinema in urban design practice by testing it in the design of a public space.

Motion picture film, including the earliest experiments with its technology, has had a significant effect on the way we understand the modern city. In 1896, just eight years after Jacob Riis took his photographs of slum housing on the Lower East Side of Manhattan that led to the advent of modern zoning policies, the Lumière Brothers set up their new cinematograph at the corner of Union Square, also in Manhattan. In this and other actualités, as they called them, they discovered that their motion picture machine had an amazing power to reveal the frenetic energy of the industrialized city not visible to the naked eye. Where Riis’ photographs could capture the gritty reality of a static moment in time, the Lumiere Brothers’ films could do this but could also embrace the “continuum” or “flow of life” as it

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1. Kallus, “From Abstract to Concrete.”
4. Kracauer, Theory of Film, p. 46.
streams across time.” Film theorist Siegfried Kracauer expressed that this quality lent itself perfectly to exploring the “jocular, unpredictable, seemingly disorganized public realm.”

But it was the discovery of editing, and especially montage editing, that made film truly cinematic. In the early 1900s, George Albert Smith, Georges Méliès, and D.W. Griffith invented continuity editing in order to bring theatrical narratives to the screen. Soon thereafter, German and Soviet film theorists such as Sergei Eisenstein discovered a much deeper sense of cinema’s potential with associational montage, or the juxtaposition of one image with another to create symbolic meaning that would not be possible if the images were shown separately. Montage not only allowed allowed Socialist thinkers to reimagine their cities as metaphysical utopias, but it also unlocked the potential for successive generations of filmmakers to reimagine the narratives through which people experience the city.

However, urban planners and designers have only fully embraced film as actualité: objective documentation of urban phenomena or presentation of objective concept. Even one of most heralded planning films, William H. Whyte’s The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces (1980), employs a hands-off, positivist approach to measure aspects of social behavior and their relationship with the built environment. Urban designers’ common use of three-dimensional “fly-throughs” and animated Photoshop renderings also struggle to embrace cinema as a language beyond showcasing their design proposals.

Before pursuing a master’s degree in city planning, I experimented with using cinematic narrative to explore the curious public spaces of the Central City of Melbourne, Australia. This resulted in the cerebral city, which won best urban design film at the New Urbanism Film Festival in 2015. The techniques I experimented with in this project, such as the narration of an urban designer and exploring different spaces from the subjective perspective of a resident, profoundly informed the design of my thesis.

But to explore how cinema could become a tool in the process of urban design, I realized I could not simply investigate another curious urban phenomenon. I had to experiment with the methodology of cinema itself, which meant holding constant an environment and altering the way in which I investigate it. Technically my environmental “laboratory” could have been anywhere, but prior research and past experiences told me it had to be in the public realm, and it should be in downtown Los Angeles—perhaps the most culturally integrated and historically rich place in the city where I lived and worked before coming to MIT.

Pershing Square, Los Angeles’ less-trafficked version of San Francisco’s Union Square, came up during a conversation with Los Angeles city planner Claire Bowin, who suggested I look within the Central City because it is a planned community area where the city holds a lot of control in affecting urban form. She also mentioned Pershing Square as...
a place that the city was seeking to better understand in terms of its patterns of use and the character of its users. It was then no coincidence (but still felt like a huge stroke of luck) to discover that the nonprofit organization Pershing Square Renew, Inc. (PSR) had just launched an international competition to redesign the square, and to find that the winner would be selected around the same time I would complete my thesis. I spoke with Central City planner Nick Maricich, who explained that the park and the competition were central to conversations about open space in downtown, which he observed as having shifted over the last five to ten years from an emphasis on defense to an emphasis on comfort.

But the 1994 design of Pershing Square by the late Mexican architect Ricardo Legorreta and Philadelphia-based landscape architect Laurie Olin maintains a popular image in the media as a defensive space, a failed product of the “fortress” mentality of 1980s Los Angeles planning. And downtown is no longer as spatially segregated as it once was. Therefore downtown politicians, pro-development media outlets, and many Angelinos and urbanists see the 1994 design as an abject mistake that can only be fixed by its complete “restoration.” This information gave me the green light that I needed, as what better location to study cinematic urban design than in a place that suffers from a major image problem?

Furthermore, several videos produced in conjunction with PSR’s competition offer perfect examples of conventional use of film by designers in an urban design context (in

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10 Bowin, Los Angeles City Planner.
11 Maricich, City Planner, City of Los Angeles.
12 Pershing Square Renew, Gensler, and NBBJ, “Phase 01: Request for Qualifications.”
13 In the article, “How LA Got a Pershing Square Everyone Hates,” real estate blogger Bianca Barragan alludes to the importance of emotion and perception in the experience of urban space: “Do we dislike Pershing Square because it’s ugly, or is Pershing Square ugly because we dislike it?”
In late April, 2016, PSR released five-minute videos produced by each team—including SWA | Morphosis, Agence Ter, wHY + Civitas, and James Corner Field Operations—to showcase each design concept. Although the videos dabble with some cinematic techniques, these devices struggle to convey a sense of lived-in experience because of their role in promoting preconceived design concepts.

In Chapter 2, I chronicle my three experiments, or “acts,” including the methodological approaches I employed and the practical decisions that went into their production. To avoid overlap with studies that take a post-positivist stance to understand the use of Pershing Square from an objective point-of-view, including a site analysis by Gensler LA in 2013 and surveys, pop-ups and stakeholder meetings conducted by Project for Public Spaces in 2013 and 2015, I decided that each experiment should channel a different non-positivist planning methodology.

In Act One, “Pershing Square: Of Time and Place,” I combine critical social theory methods with auteur film theory to examine the park’s history. Perhaps even more interesting than the timeliness of my study is the frequency at which Pershing Square has been redesigned since it was declared an open space 150 years ago. The five-acre block has been subject to five complete redesigns—in 1886, 1910, 1951, 1994, and 2016—and at least as many facelifts. For the film’s visual narrative (what the audience sees), I juxtaposed historic visual documents representing cultural forces behind each of its major design transformations with primary source design drawings and impressionistic shots representing the landscape of the park prior to each redesign. I structured the oral narrative (what the audience hears) from historical quotes by politicians and park users as windows into the political motivations for each redesign. This act provides a macro-structural counterpoint to the more bottom-up, anthropological approaches I employ in the latter two acts.

With Act Two, “Pershing Square: Sense of Place,” I employ an ethnographic approach to examine the design of the current park through the diverse perceptions of its users. I first structured its oral narrative from nearly fifty interviews that my collaborators (filmmaker-journalist Lisa Biagiotti and cinematographers Drew Ganyer and Garrett Lamb) and I conducted in the park. This involved the crafting of a set of interview questions aimed at understanding user perception and later transcribing and grouping their responses based on emotional content, rather than issue-based commentary, as a way to get at the largely psychological relationship between human beings and their environment. I then arranged their responses into a loose story arc in order to navigate a broad spectrum of perceptions that people experience within the park. This arc formed the basis of the act’s visual narrative, assembled using footage from the interviews and secondary footage I shot in the park, which was meant to interpret their perceptions. The continuous narration of park users colors the visuals with its emotional content, encouraging the audience to perceive the park through their eyes.

I use the terms film and video interchangeably because most so-called films produced today originate as video and are projected digitally. I do draw a distinction between film/video and cinema, which I note in this chapter.
Act Three, “Pershing Square: Visions of Place,” is an experiment in crafting an experiential touchstone for future design proposals. In addition to ethnographic methods, I drew from several design methods to communicate the diverse atmospheric and experiential aspirations of park users. As in Act Two, the oral narrative of this act is composed entirely from user responses to interview questions; however, I designed these questions to elicit personal aspirations for public space. I grouped these responses based on emotional content and arranged them into a loose narrative arc emulating a universal human journey. This inspired the visual narrative of the film, constructed from shooting footage in different public spaces around Los Angeles to capture impressions of the qualities that each person described. I then situated these diverse emotional/perceptual impressions within Pershing Square by integrating them with shots of a fictional protagonist—the designer—as she navigates different spaces that could potentially host each experience. The purpose of the final film is to serve as a collective touchstone against which to measure future design interventions.

In Chapter 3 I discuss my initial discoveries, including successes and strategies for future improvement. Act One is successful, primarily, at conveying a story of Pershing Square as a public space that has changed over time in response to a succession of changing design visions. Act Two succeeds in exploring the spaces of Pershing Square through the differentiated perceptions of its users and also in constructing a compelling narrative of it as a place that many people actually like and feel at home. Although not yet fully formed, Act Three so far succeeds at creating a dynamic and nuanced conversation about the potentials of public space in downtown Los Angeles.

In Chapter 4 I offer concluding remarks on the strengths of each experiment in comparison with cinematic techniques employed by films for the Pershing Square Renew competition.

The final film will be accessible in the near future on www.moodyfilm.com.
CHAPTER 2:
CINEMATIC EXPERIMENTS

Pershing Square serves as a case study for testing the use of cinema in the design of public space. The approach of each experiment, or each “act” in a three-act film, corresponds with three different subjective methodologies. This chapter describes each experiment so that the reader can grasp the influences, choices and deliberations that influenced my findings, which I discuss in Chapter 3.

Act One reflects on the past: it draws on critical theories to understand the political and cultural forces that have shaped the park throughout its history. Act Two grounds itself in the present through an ethnographic understanding of a variety of lived experiences in the park today. Act Three then projects a potential future for the place through a constructivist, collective imagination. Each act is a self-contained experiment, but, in dialogue, they provide a more coherent and comprehensive understanding of the place. At strategic points in each act I use the dramatic device of a central character (played by Los Angeles-based filmmaker-journalist Lisa Biagiotti, who also collaborated with me in conducting interviews) to represent a designer attempting to see the park through the eyes of its users.

During these experiments, Pershing Square was simultaneously the subject of an international design competition led by the nonprofit organization Pershing Square Renew. While I did not have the time, resources, nor experience to channel my research into a full design proposal that could rival the competing teams, the competition has nevertheless functioned as a convenient counterpoint to my study. Each competing design team also produced a video as part of their submission, but none employed my exact methods. I use these videos to help evaluate my experiments in Chapter 4.

The current film is a rough cut that I plan on refining post-graduation. The final version will be available for viewing in the near future on www.moodyfilm.com.
ACT ONE:
“PERSHING SQUARE: OF TIME AND PLACE”

APPROACH
I constructed Act One: “Pershing Square: Of Time and Place” as a subjective manifestation of a theoretical concept. As both a designer and a filmmaker I adopted the position of the critical social theorist, acting as a “transformative intellectual” who advocates for spatial justice.\(^{15}\) Act One walks in step with several related film theories, including auteur, Marxist, and postcolonial. I looked to Thom Andersen’s short documentary, Get Out of the Car (2010), as an inspiration for how to “map” several hidden and vanished cultural landscapes in Los Angeles within a narrative structure.\(^{16}\) “Random juxtapositions of sounds and places are one of the great joys of modern life and of city life in particular,” explains Andersen, and “cinema is the only art that can recreate these experiences and their emotional resonance.” Act One attempts to capture some of these experiences in the history of Pershing Square.

VISUAL NARRATIVE
In thinking about how to use cinema to situate the history of Pershing Square within greater cultural forces, I concentrated first on producing images that could symbolize each of its past redesigns. By channeling the “Critical Conservation” thinking taught by Susan Snyder and George Thomas at Harvard’s Graduate School of Design, as well as critical geographer David Harvey’s concept of three major “spatial fixes” since the dawn of urban industrial development, I came up with matrix to determine each one of these images.\(^{17}\) This composed the visual narrative of the film, or that which the audience sees. Each of the park’s major redesigns is therefore portrayed as a shot sequence from the form of the park prior to redesign to its form post-redesign. To simplify the narrative, I repeated this shot sequence for each of the park’s major physical redesigns (occurring in 1886, 1910, 1951, and 1994), and collapsed conflicts corresponding with less groundbreaking “facelifts” (which occurred in 1870, 1930, 1962/64 and 1984) into these eras. The shot sequence proceeded as follows:

1. The “organic” or degraded condition of the park prior to the impending redesign. Using primary source photographs, drawings, and/or text descriptions as inspirations, cinematographer Drew Ganyer and I shot an “impression” of each condition somewhere in Los Angeles. For example, we shot a representation of the arroyo (dry riverbed) that existed in Pershing Square before 1886, an overgrown gravel

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\(^{15}\) Central to these “transformative intellectuals” was the late Eduard Soja, a critical geographer at UCLA whose longitudinal studies of Los Angeles led him to understand the city’s development as a series of crisis-generated urban restructurings. See Soja, My Los Angeles for an excellent Cliffs-notes version of his works.

\(^{16}\) If Soja had a counterpart in the film world, it would be Thom Andersen, lecturer at CalArts and director of 2003’s Los Angeles Plays Itself, a video essay that critiques how the movies have featured and defined the City of Los Angeles.

\(^{17}\) According to Harvey, these “spatial shifts” occurred over the periods 1850-1900, 1910-1930, and 1945-present. See Harvey, “The Spatial Fix – Hegel, Von Thunen, and Marx.”
pathway that would have been there before 1910, and the dead grass lawn before 1994. Stylistically, each shot was handheld and close up to help the audience “experience” the landscape from their own point-of-view.

2. The impending cultural force. I determined that the simplest way to visually evoke each of these was with a kinetic image of transportation infrastructure, such as a horse trail (1781), railroad tracks (1886), or a highway (1951). At first I elected to shoot each one as original footage to avoid the potential emotional dissonance people experience when watching black-and-white archival footage, but as I note in my findings, I reverted to using archival footage so that the audience would be fully cognizant of each historical era.

3. The resulting structural change to downtown Los Angeles. At first, Ganyer and I shot point-of-view shots of extant buildings from each era, but eventually opted for historical photos. Static photos worked well in conveying a sense of order and stability.

4. The new design concept for Pershing Square. I used primary source illustrative plans instead of figure-ground or technical drawings in order to give the audience a sense of how politicians and designers “sold” each redesign. The only original plan I could not track down was John Parkinson’s 1910 plan, but I substituted it with a very similar plan from 1930.18

5. The resulting change to Pershing Square. For this I also elected to shoot original footage to represent particular design features of each design, inspired by primary

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18 Architect John Parkinson noted the only change to his design by 1930 was the addition of a walkway perpendicular to Olive and Hill Streets. See Parkinson, “Letter from John Parkinson.”
sources, of extant features in Los Angeles, California and Cambridge, Massachusetts.19 “Locked-off” shots (film jargon for “on a tripod”) worked well to convey a sense of order. Mixing these with static historical photos helped to ground each shot in time.

**ORAL NARRATIVE**

The oral narrative, or the dialogue that the audience hears, is composed entirely of historical quotations from figures who had a direct relationship with Pershing Square, with some minor modifications to speed the story along. I pursued primary source quotes because the writings of experts, reporters, and literary figures were often too far removed from first-hand experience. I also thought it would be a more novel and accessible approach to reveal historical conflicts through contrasting perceptions of the park rather than through detached opinions and arguments. For each shot sequence, I alternated between the two following statements:

1. A park user describing an experience in the park prior to a redesign. It was very important that this be a matter-of-fact personal perspective so that the audience could access the “vibe” of the park at the time. Finding these quotes may have been the greatest goose chase of the entire project, as some only existed as original longhand or type-written documents, but it was well worth it to be able to cut past the condescending standpoint of many newspaper reporters. Ultimately, I will have different voices actors record these in a conversational speech pattern.

2. A park user describing an experience in the park prior to a redesign. It was very important that this be a matter-of-fact personal perspective so that the audience could access the “vibe” of the park at the time. Finding these quotes may have been the greatest goose chase of the entire project, as some only existed as original longhand or type-written documents, but it was well worth it to be able to cut past the condescending standpoint of many newspaper reporters. Ultimately, I will have different voices actors record these in a conversational speech pattern.

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Los Angeles in the late 1800s was basically a colony of New England; its architecture reflected this. See Starr, *Americans and the California Dream, 1850-1915* for a broad exploration of Anglo California’s early cultural development.

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2.2 Classic bench design in Grand Hope Park to evoke benches in 1940s Pershing Square (still from Act One, pre-color correction)
2. A political or planning official describing the new design as a fulfillment of the new cultural force. Since I planned on showing each park design visually, I avoided redundancy by cutting out descriptions of particular design features. Eventually, I will have different voice actors record these in a precise, authoritative speech pattern.

I also planned to include statements from semi-structured interviews I conducted with officials involved in some way or another with Pershing Square, but decided against it. While these proved very valuable in understanding the park’s recent history and cultural conflicts surrounding the current redesign process, they did not fit well with the narratives I had come up with for Act One. I hope to draw quotes from them in a future version of Act Two, which deals more directly with modern-day perceptions of the park.

**ACT TWO: “PERSHING SQUARE: SENSE OF PLACE”**

**APPROACH**

Act Two is an attempt to explore the park through a subjective, cinematic narrative of the concrete, lived experiences of park users. Taking inspiration from urban planner Kevin Lynch’s 1960 study *The Image of the City*, I sought to “image” the park from interviews with park users and film footage interpreting their perceptions. I also drew inspiration from Jim Jarmusch’s *Night on Earth* (1991), a feature film which dramatizes the Lynchian process of urban “wayfinding” used by taxi drivers and their passengers when navigating a city.

My specific approach was ethnographic. Originally I intended this act to be a participatory exercise where I would fully share creative control over the filmmaking process with a group of park users, but full participation was impossible given the time involved—not only in recruiting stakeholders, but also in building mutual trust and knowledge to develop a solid narrative. The next best thing, an ethnographic approach, still allowed me to emulate an *emic* position (from within) with limited time. Robert Flaherty’s *Nanook of the North* (1922) offers an early example of the techniques I employed, mixing both dramatic and documentary elements to study Inuit culture in Northern Quebec. Today, the technique is often used to amplify voices that have been suppressed in dominant cultural narratives. For example, Abounaddara’s *Syria and the Right to the Image* (2015), features on-the-ground, everyday perspectives of war-torn families in the Syrian conflict in an attempt to fight for control over their popular image in the media.

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20 Kevin Lynch’s 1960 study *The Image of the City*, along with Jane Jacob’s 1961 book *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, was instrumental in forcing modernist planners and designers to incorporate user perspectives of urban environments as central considerations in designing the public realm. Downtown Los Angeles featured as one of Lynch’s case studies; a late 1950s Pershing Square featured prominently for his subjects as a central “node” in their mental maps of the district.

21 Otway, “Night on Earth, Urban Wayfinding and Everyday Life.”

22 Many consider *Nanook* to be the first documentary, in addition to being the first instance of visual ethnography. See Jacobs, *The Documentary Tradition, from Nanook to Woodstock.*
STAKEHOLDERS

The greatest challenge at the outset of producing Act Two was to identify whose perspectives to represent, since literally thousands of people could pass through or use Pershing Square on any given day. Ultimately, I realized all I needed to do was simply interact with strangers that I met in the park. As I discovered, Pershing Square is an incredibly diverse and well-trafficked place, and I experienced surprisingly little opposition in getting people to participate in either audio or video interviews.

I wish that I had understood this sooner in my process. Before ever taking a camera to the park, I spent weeks contacting and visiting organizations in a quest to represent diverse communities and interests across the Central City. I was concerned that I would fail to include certain stakeholders who might have been left out of the urban design process, such as illegal immigrants or homeless people. I identified many stakeholder groups with the help of Los Angeles planners Stephanie Ritoper and Rosten Woo, as well as Sara Hernandez, Downtown Area Director for the council district serving most of downtown Los Angeles. But, with limited time, I found it difficult to convey the value of making cinema about a public space to activists that were mostly focused on direct political action or material appropriation of space. I did meet one community advocate and organizer, Louise Mbella “Sinai,” who was very sympathetic to my approach. Together we developed several interview questions and conducted interviews with homeless on the streets of downtown Los Angeles on the morning of Thursday February 4, 2016. These interviews revealed great insights about spatial perceptions by homeless people in the blocks surrounding Pershing Square, but I decided not to include them in Act Two because of time constraints in editing and the decision to frame my study around interviews conducted in the park itself.

I also dedicated quite a bit of time to constructing a social media presence for my project in the hope that it would attract a variety of organizations and individuals to participate, either in person or virtually through submission of written or artistic works. But without a budget for branding or marketing, this turned into a flop. Even though I set up a website, spent multiple mornings “e-blasting” advertisements on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram, consulting with social media experts, and recruiting the help of the moderator of the 14,000-member DTLA Facebook group, I found no evidence that people showed up for my interview sessions in response to these ads.

ORAL NARRATIVE

I held interview sessions in Pershing Square during the afternoons of Thursday the 4th, Friday the 5th, and Saturday the 6th of February, and on Thursday the 31st of March, 2016. Afternoons on these days were the most suitable time for these interviews given restrictions imposed by location permits required to conduct professional filming in Pershing Square and the superior quality of afternoon light in the space. I also conducted several spontaneous interviews during other days I filmed in the square. Interviews included individuals and groups of up to five people. This amounted to 48 distinct interviews with a total of 76
respondents. I met all of the respondents for the first time in Pershing Square with only two exceptions (these were people I had met off-site and personally invited to participate).

While my sample size was quite large for a subjective documentary study of the place, I felt it was necessary in order to capture a diversity of perceptual experiences. Respondents included a great spectrum of users: entrepreneurial downtown residents walking their dogs, families using the playground equipment, security guards, homeless people, residents who live in downtown’s affordable and single-room occupancy (SRO) hotels, shoppers, tourists, workers in the Jewelry District, and creative agency professionals. Nevertheless, I noted significant biases in my sample. By virtue of these being people who were willing to participate, the sample likely over-represented gregarious individuals who were not significantly pressed for time. It also likely over-represented people who felt comfortable with me, a thirty year-old white male in need of a haircut, and my occasional collaborators, approaching them and prodding them with questions. Some people certainly did not feel comfortable, either because of time constraints or possibly—in the case of one man I saw at the park repeatedly—suspicion that I might expose someone’s immigration status, or some other reason. Finally, the sample very likely under-represented people who typically use the space as a lunch spot around noon (such as workers from Bunker Hill and the Financial District), the smaller number of people who typically use the space in the morning, people who use the space late in the evening, and people who avoid the space altogether.

Even though I waited as long as I did to conduct interviews, it provided me the time to develop a very simple yet provocative set of questions, the answers to which would frame the oral narrative of Act Two. The open-ended questions I asked of respondents were some variation of the following:
1. How do you feel when you are in Pershing Square? What is it about the space that makes you feel that way?

2. Do you have a favorite spot in Pershing Square? What is it about the space that you like?

Ultimately I realized it worked best to switch the order of these questions. Asking people to focus their attention on personal feelings for the first question in an interview met with frequent success, but it also frequently generated single-worded answers with no spatial context. Asking the “favorite spot” question first allowed users to consciously focus their attention on the environment while subconsciously engaging their feelings, which they could then engage consciously in response to the next question.

Instead of transcribing all of the interviews, which would have been too expensive or time-consuming given the volume of material, I listened to the audio recordings and only transcribed statements that pertained to the following:

1. how the respondent uses the park
2. how the respondent feels in the park (rather than how they feel about it)
3. how the respondent’s use or feeling in the park relates to other life experiences

If I was not able to capture a respondent on video, I also transcribed statements that would help the audience to get to know the person. Subsequently, I grouped all state-
ments based on my interpretation of their basic emotional content (such as “comfortable” or “excluded”), rather than their references to specific spatial features, urban design issues (controversy surrounding the building of two playgrounds where the homeless once slept was one example), or my assessment of the interviewee’s socioeconomic standing. This step, I realized after trial and error, was crucial to constructing collective “sense of place.” By starting from the users’ emotion- and memory-influenced perceptions, I was able to position the environment as a function of their perceptions, rather than the other way around. This alone helped to curb positivist tendencies to portray the park objectively.

To arrange these statements into a screenplay I established three categories that correlated with a basic story narrative:

1. **Sense of relief:** I feel...
   - relieved
   - rested
   - grounded
   - surprised
   - energized
   - healthy
   - wowed
   - fascinated
   - entertained
   - amused
   - protected
   - informed
   - aware of my environment
   - connected with other people

2. **Sense of distress:** I feel...
   - unhealthy
   - unsettled
   - uncomfortable
   - victimized
   - unbalanced
   - saddened
   - disappointed
   - terrified
   - stunted
   - exposed
   - unembraced
   - ingenuine
   - isolated
   - excluded

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23 That basic structure consists of 1) equilibrium, 2) challenge, 3) catharsis. See Jones, “Kurt Vonnegut Diagrams the Shape of All Stories in a Master’s Thesis Rejected by U. Chicago” for some “brilliantly simple” examples of story arcs.
3. Sense of belonging: I feel...
   special
   connected with home
   humbled
   connected to the past
   free
   embraced
   included
   lucky

Inspired by this narrative flow, I derived shot ideas for “b-roll” footage (footage that supplements the main or “a-roll” footage) that could represent the different perceptions and spatial experiences of the respondents.

**VISUAL NARRATIVE**

Most of the interviews I conducted were audio-only, either because the respondent declined to be filmed or because I was alone and simultaneously performing the role of interviewer and cinematographer. When conducting interviews by myself, I found it nearly impossible to both operate the camera effectively and converse effectively with respondents. Eventually, I realized I could compensate for this by completing an audio interview and subsequently requesting to take a video shot of the interviewee “in their element.” The diversity of faces and expressions in Pershing Square is one of its most valuable assets as an urban space, so I strived to capture this whenever I could.

To shoot the interviews, my collaborators and I found that we could best complement the emotional reactions of the interviewees’ oral responses with different shot types. For instance, if the user revealed that he or she felt comfortable in the space, it worked best for the camera to be “inside” the conversation, with the camera close to them but the lens set at a wider angle. Cinematographer Roger Deakins claims that this produces an environmental effect that is not possible with the camera set farther away and the lens zoomed in, which is why he uses it in much of his work with directors Joel and Ethan Coen, to situate cinematic characters in their own world. For users who said that they felt uncomfortable or paranoid in the park, we found that paranoid camera tricks, such as tighter shots that partly or entirely obscure the interviewee’s face, worked best to complement this feeling. Director Martin Scorcese points to *The Wrong Man* (1956) as a standout example of producing the effect of paranoia simply with the treatment of the camera and a person’s face.

To shoot “b-roll” footage of the park, I simply followed my shot list derived from the screenplay, which I had constructed from the interviews, and collected footage in the park over eight non-consecutive days in February, March and April, 2016. Even though my cin-

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24 Each of these terms is a condensation of one or more statements I extracted from the interviews. The particular term I used is based on my own interpretation of the basic emotional content in their words and tone of voice (see appendix for examples in screenplay).
25 Fauer et al., *Cinematographer Style*; Zhou, *Joel & Ethan Coen - Shot / Reverse Shot*.
26 Favreau et al., *Dinner for Five*.
27 I returned to the park during so many days in March and April that the park manager joked that she thought I was one of her staff members. One security guard likened me to the T-1000 character in *Terminator 2: Judgement Day*: “whenever you think he’s dead, he just keeps on comin’!”
ematographers and I sometimes gave into the urge to shoot “the action” of major events in the park, we largely focused our lenses on the park’s physical form. We also generally stuck with the visual palette we had developed for interviews: looser handheld for comfortable, easy-going experiences; tighter locked-off shots for a sense of restriction. Cinematographer Garrett Lamb operated a Steadicam device for smooth motion that lent itself to a feeling of breathing easy, while cinematographer Drew Ganyer captured some very unnerving, claustrophobic experiences by hand-holding the camera very close to different park features and keeping users far out of focus.

EDITING

With all of the footage transferred from my camera’s memory cards and appropriately catalogued in my editing system, I began the edit of Act Two by assembling the individual audio cuts into a timeline as per the script. For this assembly it was essential to leave lots of “breathing room” for future revisions. I then layered the video on top of the audio as per my shot list. Since only a small percentage of my interviews included video of the person speaking (in other words, where the video actually “synced” with the audio), I found it essential to front-load the film with synced interviews so that the audience could understand that all of the subsequent voices, synced or not, belonged to people in the park. In subsequent revisions, it was important to limit extemporaneous comments unless they communicated to the audience a significant social or environmental context for the person. I eliminated many redundant comments unless they had a dramatic effect, and reordered interviews as needed until the film started to feel like a continuous conversation between people.

To achieve a sense of continuity, I employed a style of montage editing that director
Alfred Hitchcock once called the assembly of “little pieces of film.” Hitchcock demonstrated sophisticated use of this technique in the infamous scene in *Psycho* (1960). Because of the “Hays” morality code that governed motion pictures between the 1930s and 1960s, Hitchcock could not portray the murder of a nude woman in a shower from an objective point of view, so he constructed the scene “impressionistically.” Assembling many little pieces (a hand, parts of the torso, the showerhead) in quick succession conveyed the sensation that multiple images—shot over the course of many hours or days—were all happening in the same time and place. Similarly, a more objective portrayal of Pershing Square was not only impossible given that the park is five acres composed of lots of individual, sequestered spaces, but it might have worked against this film as a non-positivist experiment.

Careful sound mixing for the final version will further solidify the effect of continuity through an immersive and seamless sonic landscape. Sound design and mixing has always taken me as least as much time as video editing, which is why I opted to hire a sound engineer for this project.

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28 Markle, *A Talk With Hitchcock*.
ACT THREE:
“PERSHING SQUARE: VISIONS OF PLACE”

APPROACH

Act Three is an attempt to curate the collective aspirations of the park’s current users into a cinematic imagination of what the place could be. I followed the tradition of “scoring,” a dance technique adopted by landscape architect Lawrence Halprin to frame different “programs” or activities in a designed landscape. As a democratic alternative to drawing prescriptive master plans, Halprin employed “scores” as open-ended suggestions for activities that could take place in a particular location, allowing lots of room for user interpretation.

Act Three is basically a reversal of this concept. Aspirations expressed by users in interviews inspire impressionistic sensory experiences; the designer then envisions a narrative for how these could fit into the spaces of the existing park. The result is intended as a cinematic equivalent of Swedish landscape architect Sven-Ingvar Andersson’s “touchstone papers,” which he routinely produced at the outset of a project to serve as a “pragmatic and poetic, measureable and ephemeral” set of goals against which to evaluate future design decisions. But unlike Andersson’s papers, which were only written on paper, Act Three takes advantage of the range of sensory experiences possible with cinema.

Although not a perfect example, I took some inspiration from the pseudo-documentary film My Winnipeg (2008), which involved a similar utopian exercise. Guy Madden, the film’s director, mixed several factual and mythical stories about the capitol city of Manitoba, Canada into a fantastical cinematic narrative about the city and its spaces. Roger Ebert called it the tenth best film of the decade.

ORAL NARRATIVE

For each interview I conducted in the park, I asked two additional questions:

1. Do you have a favorite public space anywhere in the world? / Do you have a favorite place in L.A.? Can you tell me why?
2. Is there something you wish you could do in a public space / in Pershing Square that you haven’t been able to or haven’t tried yet? How would that make you feel?

The answers to these questions were the basis for the oral narrative of Act Three.

I designed the questions specifically for respondents to break free of the conceptual space of the park’s current design and speak instead to that for which they maintain ultimate authority: their memories, emotions and sensations. Landscape architect Laurie Olin helped steer me toward this idea after a conversation with him in January, 2015. After describing the peculiar success of the Getty Center, a free museum that opened in the hills near UCLA in 1997 (Olin designed its gardens in 1992), he mused,
People can tell you what they like and don’t like about what they see and know but they can’t tell you what they want about the thing they don’t know to ask for. That’s why Olmsted was such a genius: he invented something that people didn’t know to ask for. What’s the thing that people need that they will respond to enormously positively if we provide it? All they can think of is a version of what they know.

I saw this as a challenge to begin to reimagine the park based on something much deeper than simply what people want. As Olin alluded to, what people want is often myopic. Want is a function of fashion, and fashion will inevitably go out of style. By contrast, the things that people need—comfort, awareness of their surroundings, a sense of discovery or belonging—these are timeless. As I learned from Ian Dryden, one of the designers behind the successful revitalization of the central city in Melbourne, Australia, urban designers almost have to be “classic” with their designs in order to meet people’s needs over the long term (and therefore, to avoid having to redesign things every generation).

To construct the questions, I also took a page from the urban planner James Rojas, who took twenty women to Pershing Square on one day in 2013 and asked each to find their favorite spot and imagine what they could do there. Their descriptions, he said, were astonishing.

Equally astonishing were the responses to my questions. Respondents described experiences in public spaces around the world and the Los Angeles area, from walks in Rio de Janeiro to feeling at home in Pershing Square itself. Much like “favorite spot” data accumulated in an internal study conducted by Gensler LA, many people mentioned Griffith Park, a major regional park and home of the Hollywood sign, as well as several Southern California beaches. In response to what they wish they could do, respondents described a huge variety of activities, from sleeping and zooming in on their work to community organizing and running a fashion show. Although some respondents had a difficult time steering their thoughts away from the current limitations of the park, I was surprised at the ability of these questions to provoke “out of the box” thinking.

Again, I did not have a budget or time for full transcription, so I only transcribed statements pertinent to:

1. how the respondent feels in her favorite place
2. spatial qualities of the respondent’s favorite place
3. how the respondent feels when performing his imaginary activity
4. the spatial context of the respondent’s imaginary activity
5. how these answers relate to other life experiences

31 Frederick Law Olmsted is popularly known as the “father of landscape architecture.” Some of his best-known projects include Central Park in Manhattan (1858) and the Emerald Necklace system of parks in Boston (1880s-1890s). In 1930, his sons John Charles and Frederick Law, Jr. designed a similar system of linear parks for the greater Los Angeles metro region. Their proposal was never adopted.

32 Olin, Landscape Architect.
Despite recording many eloquent complaints and opinions about the park’s design, I attempted to ignore these in my transcription so that the ultimate narrative would only contain experiential aspirations. I then grouped statements based on their dominant emotional stance (for example, I grouped “It feels really peaceful, you’re just looking at the overview of everything” with other statements that also had the stance of “I can feel connected with environment”) and filed them under three categories:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I can feel...</th>
<th>I can feel...</th>
<th>I can feel...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>protected</td>
<td>connected with environment</td>
<td>creative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>comfortable</td>
<td>connected with community</td>
<td>reinvented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>focused</td>
<td>connected with history</td>
<td>new</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>grounded</td>
<td>curious</td>
<td>free</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>isolated</td>
<td>engaged</td>
<td>cathartic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>meditative</td>
<td>part of something</td>
<td>embraced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>generous</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The second group of statements had a lot of differentiation, so I split it into three parts—for a total of five groups—and arranged statements into a narrative arc that symbolizes a universal journey of finding peace and redemption:

1. “I can relax” (i.e. have my own space)
2. “I can observe” (i.e. be aware of/draw energy from my surroundings)
3. “I can discover” (i.e. uncover opportunities)
4. “I can engage” (i.e. connect with environment/community)
5. “I can create” (i.e. make the space my own)
While using this structure to write the screenplay, I realized that this “journey” is not only what has motivated countless generations of people to migrate or immigrate to Los Angeles, but it is intentionally built into the experience of many architectural works.\(^{33}\) I also discovered that landscape architects are familiar with this as prospect-refuge theory, a concept advanced by geographer Jay Appleton that interprets human ambition for aesthetic experience as expressions of inborn needs for opportunity (prospect) and safety (refuge).\(^{34}\) Suffice to say, the “journey” I independently constructed from a diverse sampling of park users’ aspirations contains many precedents in both personal narratives of Los Angeles and in the design world.

**VISUAL NARRATIVE**

Each shot in Act Three is directly inspired by a statement in the oral narrative. But in conceiving the overall visual style of the film, I drew from some of the best examples I know of beautifully and meaningfully edited feature films that started as millions of feet of raw “impressions.” Every one of director Terrence Malick’s films since 1978’s *Days of Heaven*, for instance, evoke poetic landscapes of memory and fantasy though careful assembly of hundreds of otherwise discontinuous impressionistic shots into temporally and emotionally continuous sequences.

With Malick’s films in mind, I concentrated on gathering “impressions” of people’s aspirations.

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\(^{33}\) For example, Frank Lloyd Wright houses and religious buildings such as the Wallace All-Faiths Chapel at Chapman University and the Cathedral of Our Lady of Angels in downtown Los Angeles.

\(^{34}\) See Jay Appleton, *The Experience of Landscape* and Anne Whiston Spirn, *The Language of Landscape*. Despite these parallels, it is important to note the high degree of authorship I exercised in this process. This was just the simplest way for me to blend together a diverse array of human aesthetic experiences. In no way would I expect someone repeating this experiment in another context to develop the same narrative.
favorite places, as well as spaces that could evoke the activities that people aspired to do. I could not practically travel to every place (one respondent mentioned a market in Istanbul, for example), so I instead traveled to places I could find in Los Angeles that might feel similar (the same respondent described, for example, “I just find myself lost there. Every time I go it’s as if it were the first time.”). Nevertheless, this became a massive undertaking, involving traversing the city to different spots at different times, spending as much time as I could in each to capture the “essence” of what my respondent said. Mostly I focused on shooting environments rather than people, but if the shot felt too much like a static photograph I would give it a slight gliding movement, to help the audience understand the three-dimensional qualities of the space.

To avoid a potential hodge-podge effect from stitching together tons of disconnected shots from around the city, I decided to ground each visual impression in Pershing Square through a central character (the “I” in “I can relax”). The designer who ostensibly conducted the interviews, played by Lisa Biagiotti, therefore becomes this character by interacting with different spaces in the park—through walking, sitting, observing, smiling—while recollecting the voices of park users and daydreaming the spaces of their aspirations. For emotional continuity between the voices, impressions, and Biagiotti’s actions, I “directed” her with questions that could elicit similar emotions (such as, “Try to sense the pressure of the ground under your feet,” or, “Think about your favorite place”).

**EDITING**

Similar to Act Two, I began with a very loose assembly that I could whittle down through successive iterations until I achieved a continuous emotional flow. I also deliberately cut out many references to specific places other than Pershing Square in order to construct the sensory illusion that these aspirations could take place in Pershing Square itself. Ultimately, I hope to make it clear, perhaps in the credits sequence of the film, that the original statements referred to places other than Pershing Square.

For specific cuts in this film I drew from a style of cutting that Hitchcock referred to as *pure cinematics*. Editors know this best as the Kuleshov effect, discovered one hundred years ago in Lev Kuleshov’s experiment to show how a simple juxtaposition of two different shots can produce a totally different psychological effect than if each shot were shown by itself. Today, Scottish director Lynn Ramsey makes subtler but no less sophisticated use of this technique by positioning a shot of a person’s face, often with a neutral affect or expression, next to a shot of a specific environmental detail. This detail clues the audience into the emotional state of the person. The simplicity of this effect alleviates some of the pressure placed on actors to carry the emotional arc of a film, which is partly why I opted to use it.

Although my edit of the film is not yet complete, in the next chapter I will discuss several discoveries I made and provide suggestions for how the experiments could be improved.

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35 Zhou, Lynne Ramsay - *The Poetry of Details*. 
CHAPTER 3: FINDINGS

In this chapter I revisit each experiment to present my discoveries, including many of the difficulties I encountered, and discuss strategies for future refinement. With Act One I was able to convey a very nuanced and immersive narrative of Pershing Square’s incessant redesigns but the experiment falls short of offering a clear implication for the future design interventions. I suggest using deeper design analysis to help enhance this effect. Act Two comes out ahead of the other experiments as it not only captures a diverse spectrum of perceptual experiences in the park, but it also communicates a compelling narrative about the current design of Pershing Square as something that many social groups like and feel at home. With Act Three I was able to substantially explore the construction of a poetic and impressionistic concept for the future park, but it will require further refinement to effectively demonstrate the concept.

ACT ONE: “PERSHING SQUARE: OF TIME AND PLACE”

SUCCESSES

“Pershing Square: Of Time and Place” is successful, primarily, at conveying a story of Pershing Square as a public space that has changed over time in response to a succession of changing design visions. The film’s oral narrative proved crucial in communicating this story. Original footage for the visual narrative proved very effective at representing intimate, point-of-view experiences by park users, and the use of primary source media was essential in conveying the passage of time. Channeling critical research for this act into a balanced cinematic narrative also led to the discovery of a more nuanced and intimate understanding of the history of Pershing Square than existed in secondary sources.

REFLECTION: FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

To warrant and improve future iterations of this experiment, the filmmaker should
strive to communicate the critical aspect of a place’s history which has greatest implications for future design interventions. In the case of Pershing Square, this history was the perpetual conflict between downtown political forces and park users. My instinct to stay within a consistent perceptual space by shooting original, live-action footage for the entire film not only proved difficult from a practical point of view, but it made it more difficult to communicate the idea that the film traverses different historical periods. I attempted to balance my own footage with primary sources, such as survey maps and archival film footage, but this had a rebound effect of isolating each redesign too firmly in their respective time periods. As a result, the audience understands when and where they are in time, but each redesign feels like the result of circumstances particular to each time period rather than a repeating set of circumstances. Despite further attempts to highlight repetition by treating politicians and park users with separate editing and visual styles, the sheer heterogeneity of elements instead conveys multiplicity.

To effectively communicate this type of historical spatial conflict requires that the filmmaker distill primary data to the point where the contrast between competing cultural groups is clear and precise. This in no way means that the filmmaker has to make the film any less cinematic. An easy way to do this would be with an operation that designers and map-makers call “figure/ground”; filmmakers understand it as “foreground/background.” Some sort of ground or background throughout the film, even if only displayed periodically, would give the audience the sensation that this is all taking place in one location and would serve as a base for comparison between cultural groups in conflict with each other.

The filmmaker could then introduce a simple duality by assigning a distinct motif or color palette to each figure/foreground representing each cultural group. Star Wars (1977) offers an excellent example: it helps the audience keep track of good guys and bad guys throughout the film based on their distinct clothing choices, light-saber colors, and perhaps most importantly, the spaces they typically inhabit. Contrasting the “inhabited spaces” of one group with the “inhabited spaces” of another should be relatively easy. Rather than personifying each oral narration with a photograph of the speaker, the filmmaker could instead display an environment or artifact associated with each narrator. A Hollywood filmmaker might represent this by taking the camera into the visceral, material spaces of each group, such as the smoky drafting office of the planner or the sun-drenched bench of the park user. But the designer/filmmaker with a limited budget might establish contrast more simply by representing each “inhabited space” as a territory on a map, such as buildings occupied by members of the Downtown Business Men’s Association or street spaces inhabited by park users. This would certainly require a deeper geographic analysis than I was able to perform with this project. But even without statistics or figures, a clear and cleverly animated map would give the audience an unmistakable impression of conflict. Furthermore, keeping the film entirely within this perceptual space would significantly cut down on the film’s production time.

However, if mixed media are necessary for maintaining the curiosity and attention of the audience, the prudent filmmaker will either finish research before beginning produc-
tion or consider pairing up with another researcher to complete the work. I cannot stress this enough. Even without geographic analysis, Act One consumed half of my time on the entire project. With only six months between the selection of Pershing Square as my site and the submission of my thesis, and with the reliance on a large amount of original footage and rare primary sources, I experienced enormous tension between my role as a researcher and my role as a filmmaker.

**ACT TWO: “PERSHING SQUARE: SENSE OF PLACE”**

**SUCCESSES**

The ethnographic methods employed in “Pershing Square: Sense of Place” succeeded in conveying the soft, often hidden qualities of Pershing Square. With the amount of information that I was able to uncover with this experiment, I find it bewildering that public space design processes do not require this type of investigation in addition to other studies. The questions you ask, how you ask them, whom you ask, and where you ask, all affect the content of the answers. Carefully constructed interviews can reveal significant insights about whether or not an urban design intervention will achieve its stated goals.

The particular questions I asked—designed to elicit emotion as well as opinion—had an effect on the vocabulary that respondents used. Like the online survey conducted by Project for Public Spaces (PPS), I frequently recorded respondents using the word “concrete” in reference to the park. But unlike PPS, I rarely recorded the word “dirty” and only recorded the word “ugly” in two out of my 48 interviews. Circumventing discussions about
the design and instead focusing on feelings about the place—something that anyone can claim authority on—certainly contributed to this. Many of the negative comments about the park resulted from respondents who deflected my questions and instead told me what they felt about the park’s design, whereas almost all of the positive comments reflected personal feelings—a sense of relaxation or a sense of belonging—from being in the park. Interestingly, many of the people who delivered negative appraisals were designers or design students, suggesting a popular orthodoxy within the design world that rejects the park’s postmodern style. Positive reactions crossed every social group I interacted with, with first-time visitors to the park and the more socially marginalized users overwhelmingly expressing positive feelings.

How, where, and to whom I asked my questions also significantly affected the quality of these responses. Speaking only with people I met within the park, staying within the spaces that they chose to occupy, and using a small, handheld camera allowed each respondent to interact directly and calmly with the environment itself. This helped to avoid the potentially speculative and anonymous qualities of pop-up sessions and online surveys. Memory, perception and experience of the space were more immediate, and the person could respond in their own words. When I was able to shoot video footage of the person, this also helped to give a social and environmental authenticity for the person making the comment. Short of participatory action (in which many people may never participate because of time commitments or other reasons), this served as a very effective method for dignifying the voices of all different types of people, from the privileged to the marginalized.

Of all of the responses that I recorded, those that connected the park (especially specific spaces within the park) to the respondent’s life experiences worked best to paint a portrait of the park beyond its physical design attributes and its popular “image” in main-
stream media. When combined with photographs and videos of the park, these statements serve as an invitation to examine the park’s design features, stimulating a perceptual effect that is hard to achieve in other media.

It is this perceptual effect that allows the act to deliver an alternative and more accessible narrative of how people use and experience Pershing Square. Contrary to the singular narrative that has helped to fuel the redesign, the film compellingly shows that many people actually like the current park and make it their own. Despite obvious editing, the audience can sense a reality there that would not be as striking in a written report, photographs, or urban designers’ current use of film techniques. Blending representations of many real people and real environments to create a plurality of perceptual experiences gives the audience a sensation of many independent realities—quite different from the representation of Pershing Square as an objective, singular reality.

Discovering a narrative for this film also helped to confirm what I had discovered in my historical research for Act One: the enduring identity of this place as a space for people with nowhere else to go. Just as it has been since 1866, Pershing Square is a refuge for a constantly shifting spectrum of not just homeless people, but also transients, tourists, and low income residents. Furthermore, the climbing residential population of downtown, more aggressive events scheduling, and increased security have likely contributed to making it a more diverse and inviting place than it was even five years ago. Politicians and designers involved in the competition may be aware of its diversity and its “refugee” quality, but the overwhelmingly glossy qualities and ubiquity of trendy young people in the competition’s design renderings do not reflect this in any way.

REFLECTION: FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

My interview subjects skewed toward downtown residents and visitors and underrepresented the suit-clad office workers who supposedly use the square during lunchtime. This is likely a result of the particular times I chose to conduct interviews—typically after 1PM—but my peculiar schedule was almost unavoidable given restrictions imposed by location permits and several other coordination activities (equipment rentals, paperwork, social media campaigns) that occupied my mornings during the main week of shooting. This was unfortunate because I feel that the perceptions of non-resident workers are often underrepresented in public outreach, despite being important stakeholders in the neighborhoods where they work. Furthermore, I feel that I missed a chance to find significant overlaps between the perceptions of office workers, residents, and vagrants who visit the square. Potential remedies for this issue include those that would improve almost any film production: more money, a bigger staff, or more time—so that I could be in the square throughout the day and many days throughout the week. But the constituency I ended up interviewing is far from incidental, as it covers an excellent cross-section of personalities who visit the park.

Conducting several audio-only interviews in addition to my video interviews significantly increased the number and diversity of people I interviewed, but the emotion-
Drafting a simple yet meaningful narrative arc from nearly fifty interviews required much more time than I had anticipated, especially without the extra cash for full transcription. However, this saved a ton of time in future filming and editing phases. With a succinct shot list, inspired by the characters and the narrative flow of the screenplay (which I composed from quotations of interviewees), I was able to shoot “b-roll” (secondary) footage, more efficiently. Without the necessary time for listening and interpreting all the interviews, I would have had to appoint a fulltime editor or screenwriter to handle the task. Another way to avoid this type of time commitment in the middle of production would be to dedicate more time at the outset to raising money and support for a participatory film project that would allow interviewees to shoot their own footage or to become collaborators in generating b-roll footage that would represent their own perceptions of the place. But because of the limited time and budget, this simply was not possible. It remains a potential goal for future projects of this scope.

Since I was most interested in studying perception, or the spaces in between humans and their environment, the ethnographic approach presented several challenges. My depictions of the physical form of Pershing Square took a backseat to the human story, and the overall goal of highlighting differences between people’s perceptions of that form tended to get a bit lost. To enhance cinema’s ability to investigate design and physical spaces, the filmmaker must resist the common urge to fill each shot with movement. Human beings are very sensitive to movement.36 When people see a person moving through a shot, that often becomes their lasting memory of that shot, rather than the space itself that the person moves through. In the case of Pershing Square, it would have been okay to show a piece of the park without people occupying or moving through it, as long as it fit the narration. Furthermore, it is important for the filmmaker to counterbalance portraits of users and wide shots of the environment with close-ups on specific points of interaction between users and their environment, such as hands on a wall or feet dangling off of a seating platform. These shots can then become the symbolic connective tissue to help the audience to focus on the form of the park itself. To reinforce the audience’s attention on physical form, the filmmaker could then cross-cut between these close-up shots for different users in different spaces.37

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36 Ding, “Mapping Urban Space: Moving Image as a Research Tool.”
ACT III:
“PERSHING SQUARE: VISIONS OF PLACE”

SUCCESES

Although not yet fully formed, the current cut of “Pershing Square: Visions of Place” is an excellent application of cinematic techniques to create a poetic and immersive conversation about the potential of public space in downtown Los Angeles. Additionally, the layering of oral narration and visual montage of users’ desired activities, favorite places, and the designer interacting with spaces in the park conveys an innovative and abstract narrative that advocates a more dynamic role for the designer. Here, the designer becomes a listener and mediator rather than an expert removed from community engagement. Rather than imagining the future park as an empty shell that can be filled with a variety of exciting programs, she imagines the future park as evolving from the deeper psychological/emotional aspirations of its present users. Responses to interviews directly inspire potential spatial qualities of the future park, instead of conducting interviews to gather granular evidence to support preconceived design goals. The resulting narrative, traversing park users’ stated aspirations for rest, observation, discovery, connectedness and creativity, does not serve as a complete design concept. But like one of landscape architect Sven-Ingvar Andersson’s “touchstone papers,” it becomes an experientially visceral benchmark for measuring future design decisions.
REFLECTION: FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

As it stands, the experiment remains a bit rough around the edges, and the effect is incomplete. To strengthen future iterations, the filmmaker-designer must seek to uncover specific spatial and material qualities, including light and sound, which park users experience in their favorite places or desired activities. Without asking these of the park users, shooting "b-roll" footage becomes too much of a speculative exercise. For example, when I asked one subject why her favorite public space is on "the tops of buildings," she replied, "It feels pretty relaxing." This answer allowed me to determine the general qualities of the experience she desires, but it without a follow-up question it fell short of describing specific qualities of the space that might cause her to feel that way. The filmmaker must get at the "why," not just the "what." A coordinated effort to crowd-source footage from park users or distribute cameras amongst park users may be effective ways to do this. But without the budget or the means, follow-up questions may be just as effective at eliciting these spatial details, such as the following:

1. What is it about the place that makes you feel that way?
2. What sort of environment would have made you really happy to discover here today?
3. What does/would that place look like?

Discovering these qualities in interviews could also help with another significant challenge that I experienced during this experiment: traveling to so many different places across the city and being "present" in each long enough to gather spatial or sensory "impressions" that
could represent each speaker’s aspiration—all without making it obvious that these shots were outside of Pershing Square. Hiring a “second unit,” i.e. a second filmmaker/cinematographer who could shoot simultaneously in other locations, would certainly cut down on net shooting and travel time. But with a more acute understanding of the spatial qualities that users aspire to, the lone filmmaker could focus his attention on gathering multiple impressions in fewer places, rather than few impressions in a multitude of places.

Further refinements to footage of the protagonist could also help to improve the experiment. If the goal of this exercise is to nudge the audience toward believing that diverse sensory aspirations of users could take place within one public space, the filmmaker might borrow from a common music video technique of “transporting” the protagonist between different environments with “match-on-action” cuts, or edits that imply a continuity of movement from one shot to the next. The 1972 film *Slaughterhouse Five* makes excellent use of this technique to transport its characters seamlessly between different historical eras and locations. Other films achieve this with subtler techniques. The films of director Terrence Mallick are each essentially very long montage sequences, constantly jumping between disconnected vignettes, but individual sequences still feel continuous because of the continuity of central characters, sound, and music. Beyoncé also recently made use of this technique, to powerful environmental and emotional effect, with her video album *Lemonade*. By filming the designer protagonist—or better yet, the park users themselves—not only in the public space under investigation but in the spaces of their aspirations, the filmmaker could compress distances between places and create an unmistakable sensation that the events of the film are all happening within one space and a short period of time. The result could be a more poetic, yet more concrete, touchstone for the possibilities of the future park than any design medium I am aware of.
CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSION

On May 14, 2016, the front page of the Los Angeles Times announced in bold letters, "A PEOPLE PLACE: A French landscape firm wins the competition to redesign downtown L.A.’s historic Pershing Square." Agence Ter’s design concept—detailed in its video as having the dominant features of a central lawn, several gardens and a block-long pergola—was the unanimous choice of the competition jury and the majority preference of 1359 surveys collected during a night of presentations, three days of pop-up sessions in Pershing Square, and a week of online surveys. History was made, and the now the attention turns to raising the $50 million estimated to carry out the restoration.

Like its competitors, Agence Ter investigated and reimagined Pershing Square through the creation of drawings, maps and renderings. During the same period of time my collaborators and I investigated and reimagined the park through the creation of cinematic experiences. Although the methods I employed could not have delivered a full design concept, they nevertheless unlocked perceptual dimensions of the park that were either invisible or impractical in the design thinking employed throughout the competition. In this chapter I offer concluding remarks on each experiment and evaluate their successes against occasional cinematic techniques employed by the competing design teams.

Act One, "Pershing Square: Of Time and Place," succeeds at exploring the history of a place historic through the motivations behind its competing design visions. One video produced by the PSR design teams, the wHY + Civitas video, substantially explores the history of the Pershing Square, but voiceover narration by expert designers/consultants and simplistic analysis of the park’s identity hampers the video’s historical element to function as more than a deductive exercise. By contrast, Act One’s focus on cultural conflicts surrounding each redesign, its reliance on historical quotes, and its mix of primary source media with video “impressions” invite the audience to examine the park’s history with more criticality. For this experiment to become more effective at revealing historical implications for the po-

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38 Pershing Square Renew, “Instagram Photo by Pershing Square Renew • May 10, 2016 at 10.”
39 Hawthorne, “French Landscape Firm Wins Pershing Square Competition with Call for “Radical Flatness.”"
tential effectiveness of future design interventions in a place, I propose that the filmmaker strive to create a stronger contrast between the “inhabited spaces” of competing cultural groups, either through more sophisticated “period” filming or through critical geographic analysis. Doing so would require that the filmmaker save time either by finishing research before filming or by working in full collaboration with another researcher.

Act Two, “Pershing Square: Sense of Place,” succeeds at exploring and communicating the everyday qualities of a place through the diverse perceptions, memories and experiences of its users. Like Act Two, two of PSR’s competing teams included interviews with non-experts in their videos, but only one video seemed to convey that its interview subjects are users of the current Pershing Square while the other video features interviews with downtown residents who may or may not visit the park currently, but would in the future if the design were different. Against the drab backdrop of their environments, respondents in these videos all seem to be very clean and sociable, and there is little focus on capturing or communicating a sense of the current park. When featuring the current park they opt for either quick shots of digitally desaturated park features that are mostly absent of people, the lively activity of the Wednesday farmer’s market, fast-motion timelapse photography, or expert designers brainstorming during a site visit.

In stark contrast, the entirety of Act Two is a user-centered narrative of Pershing Square that simultaneously dignifies the enduring image of the park as a refuge for people who have nowhere else to go, the competing but equally valid image of the park as unwelcoming, and many steps in between. Crafting a set of open-ended questions to elicit emotional connection to place, limiting interviews to park users I met within the park itself, and shooting with a small handheld camera were all instrumental in gathering a set of highly intuitive and differentiated perceptions of the park. Taking the time to construct a narrative arc and shot list inspired from the interviews then allowed the camera to explore the spaces of the park in a dynamic way. To better focus on physical form as a function of user perception, and to find more experiential overlaps between diverse park users, I encourage the filmmaker to focus their visual exploration on points of contact between people and different design features and to conduct interviews across a variety of times and days of the week.

Although in need of further refinement, Act Three, “Pershing Square: Visions of Place,” succeeds at constructing a user-inspired vision of the experiential and material qualities of a future public space. Like Act Three, videos produced for PSR also contain some cinematic footage shot in real environments and narratives of potential park users. In the two videos that feature interviews with current or potential park users, respondents either describe their preferences for changing the park or describe a narrative of how they might use it. This conveys the impression that “real people have been consulted” for their design concepts, even though the interviews may have been conducted well after their design concept was established. Regardless of the timing, their use and techniques for interviews nevertheless seem to advocate for the role of the designer as satisifier of lifestyle preferences of future users. Another cinematic technique, character-driven narrative to explore the
future park, features in the SWA | Morphosis video. It depicts a woman in the future park's stylish restaurant texting with a man who is navigating the park's several garden spaces. But because of the staged, almost cartoonish presentation, the effect sacrifices any emotional weight. This video and the Agence Ter video also make use of impressionistic close-up shots (eg. fish swimming in a pond or "stock" footage of out-of-focus city lights), but unlike Act Three they do not ground them in any way back into the real space of Pershing Square. Other media employed in the videos for pitching their design visions, including fly-throughs of three-dimensional models, animated Photoshop renderings, experts and professionals describing what public space should be, voice-over narration describing different design concepts and features, animated planimetric drawings, animated perspective drawings, and animated artistic collages all serve to clearly represent static, abstract design concepts. However, they fall flat in evoking real places in the real world. They highlight the monumental, rarely ever the ephemeral; the visual qualities, rarely the atmospheric; the objective perspective, rarely the lived-in.

But by taking inspiration directly from user interviews to imagine potential spatial qualities in the park, Act Three advocates a much more dynamic role for the designer as mediator of psychological aspirations of current users. To improve future iterations of the experiment, in Chapter 3 I offer strategies for better learning the material qualities of spaces that can host user aspirations and for enhancing cinematic continuity.
The methods explored in this thesis suggest that urban design professionals will find value in using cinematic practice in the following ways:

1. to understand the immersive qualities of an urban space through the perceptions of its users
2. to dignify unheard voices, experiences, or narratives of an urban space
3. to envision the potentials of an urban space through the aspirations of its users.

When engaged with real people in real urban places, cinema’s elegant but simple devices—developed nearly a century ago and since interwoven into the diversity of ways in which we perceive the city—can illuminate and compellingly imagine the experience of space and place unlike any other medium. It is time for urban design practice to finally embrace cinema’s unique potential for shaping the future city. The experiments of “Imagine Pershing Square” merely scratch the surface.

I invite all readers to stay tuned for the final cut of the film, which will be available in the near future on www.moodyfilm.com, along with a comprehensive list of credits and acknowledgments.

4.2 “Home” (still from Act Three, pre-color correction)
APPENDIX
## EXPERIMENT METHODS MATRIX

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>EXPERIMENT 0 (skip)</th>
<th>EXPERIMENT 1</th>
<th>EXPERIMENT 2</th>
<th>EXPERIMENT 3</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>CINEMA AS A</strong></td>
<td>measurement tool &amp;</td>
<td>&quot;forensic analysis&quot; tool</td>
<td>&quot;mapping&quot; tool</td>
<td>&quot;design&quot; tool</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>measurement tool &amp;</strong></td>
<td>design backdrop</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td><strong>KNOWLEDGE CLAIM</strong></td>
<td>positivism</td>
<td>critical theories</td>
<td>participatory</td>
<td>constructivism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>nonfalsified hypotheses</strong></td>
<td>that are provable</td>
<td>structural/historical</td>
<td>primacy of practical</td>
<td>individual &amp; collective</td>
</tr>
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<td><strong>facts/laws</strong></td>
<td>insights</td>
<td>knowing, critical</td>
<td>subjectivity, living</td>
<td>reconstructions, sometimes around</td>
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<td><strong>KNOWLEDGE GROWTH</strong></td>
<td>accretion, &quot;building</td>
<td>historical revisionism,</td>
<td>in communities of inquiry</td>
<td>more informed and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>blocks&quot; adding to &quot;edifice</strong></td>
<td>generalization by</td>
<td>generalization by</td>
<td>embedded in communities of practice</td>
<td>sophisticated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>of knowledge&quot;</strong></td>
<td>similarity</td>
<td>similarity</td>
<td></td>
<td>reconstructions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PLANNER/FILMMAKER</strong></td>
<td>&quot;Disinterested scientist&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;transformative intellectual&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;equal participant&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;passionate participant&quot; as</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>POSTURE</strong></td>
<td>informing decision-</td>
<td>as advocate/activist</td>
<td>engaging with process</td>
<td>facilitator of multi-voice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>makers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>dialogue</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>SOCIAL THEORY</strong></td>
<td>Utilitarianism, modernism</td>
<td>Marxist, feminist, race,</td>
<td>Advocacy, storytelling/narrative, cognition (Lynch)</td>
<td>Storytelling/narrative (Sandercock), cognition (Lynch), postmodernist (Foucault)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>postcolonial, postmodernist (Soja, Lefebvre), uneven development (Smith, Harvey)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>FILM THEORY</strong></td>
<td>Auteur, Formalist</td>
<td>Auteur, Marxist, Feminist, Postcolonial, Race</td>
<td>Cinema Vérité, Situationism, primary narrative (Georges Méliès)</td>
<td>Narrativity, Structuralist, Constructivist, Meta &amp; post-narrative (Deluze)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>UNDERSTANDING OF SPACE</strong></td>
<td>4-dimensional (time and motion)</td>
<td>Fragmented 4D/memory</td>
<td>Fragmented 4D/memory/fantasy</td>
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<td><strong>WHAT'S HAPPENING IN THE FILM?</strong></td>
<td>objective representation</td>
<td>objective manifestation</td>
<td>subjective representation</td>
<td>subjective representation + production</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>CONCEPT OF REPRESENTATION</strong></td>
<td>&quot;on the screen&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;in the screen&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;in the screen&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;in the screen&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>MATRIX PILL ANALOGY</strong>*</td>
<td>Blue pill (reality is reality)</td>
<td>Red pill (reality is hidden beneath illusion)</td>
<td>Blue pill (reality is a collective process)</td>
<td>3rd pill (reality is constructed in illusion)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EXAMPLE URBAN FILM</strong></td>
<td>The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces</td>
<td>Los Angeles Plays Itself</td>
<td>My Winnipeg</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>STUDY SAMPLE</strong></td>
<td>Case study or survey</td>
<td>Case study</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>QUALITY OF DATA</strong></td>
<td>Measured &amp; empirical</td>
<td>Sensed / &quot;soft&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>STRATEGY OF INQUIRY</strong></td>
<td>Mixed methods</td>
<td>mixed methods: comparing individual cases to measured surveys &amp; established theories</td>
<td>qualitative</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TYPE OF OBSERVATION</strong></td>
<td>Direct observation</td>
<td>Critical observation</td>
<td>Direct, participatory &amp; action observation</td>
<td>critical, participatory &amp; action observation</td>
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<tr>
<td>TYPE OF OBSERVATION</td>
<td>INTERVIEW STYLE</td>
<td>INTERVIEW QUESTION FORMAT</td>
<td>FIELD RESEARCH</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct observation</td>
<td>structured, focus groups</td>
<td>“Who lives nearby?”</td>
<td>Non-participant</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Critical observation</td>
<td>Semi-structured, focus groups</td>
<td>“How does the sun affect the space?”</td>
<td>Non-participant</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Direct, participatory &amp; action observation</td>
<td>Semi-structured, open ended, Focus groups, Narrative</td>
<td>“Who controls the space?”</td>
<td>Participant</td>
<td></td>
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<td>critical, participatory &amp; action observation</td>
<td>Semi-structured, Focus groups, Narrative</td>
<td>“What does this place mean to you?”</td>
<td>Individual or Participant</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**KNOWLEDGE CLAIM**

- positivism
- critical theories
- participatory constructivism

**NATURE OF KNOWLEDGE**

- nonfalsified hypotheses
- that are provable
- facts/laws
- structural/historical
- insights

**KNOWLEDGE GROWTH**

- accretion, “building blocks” adding to “edifice of knowledge”
- historical revisionism, generalization by similarity in communities of inquiry
- embedded in communities of practice
- more informed and sophisticated reconstructions

**PLANNER/FILMMAKER POSTURE**

- “Disinterested scientist” informing decision-makers
- “transformative intellectual” as advocate/activist
- “equal participant” engaging with process
- “passionate participant” as facilitator of multi-voice dialogue

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- Narrativity, Structuralist, Constructivist, Meta & post-narrative (Delueze)

**UNDERSTANDING OF SPACE**

- Fragmented 4D/memory

**WHAT'S HAPPENING IN THE FILM?**

- objective representation
- objective manifestation
- subjective representation
- subjective representation + production

**CONCEPT OF REPRESENTATION**

- “on the screen”
- “in the screen”
- “in the screen”
- “in the screen”

**MATRIX PILL ANALOGY***

- Blue pill (reality is reality)
- Blue pill (reality is a collective process)
- 3rd pill (reality is constructed in illusion)
- Red pill (reality is hidden beneath illusion)

**EXAMPLE URBAN FILM**

- The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces
- Los Angeles Plays Itself
- My Winnipeg

**STUDY SAMPLE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUALITY OF DATA</th>
<th>STRATEGY OF INQUIRY</th>
<th>INTERVIEW STYLE</th>
<th>INTERVIEW QUESTION</th>
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<td>comparing individual cases to measured surveys &amp; established theories</td>
<td>Semi-structured, focus groups</td>
<td>“Can you walk me through your experience of the space?”</td>
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<td>Case study or survey</td>
<td>mixed methods:</td>
<td>Semi-structured, open ended, Focus groups, Narrative</td>
<td>“If you could change anything here, what would it be?”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Case study</td>
<td></td>
<td>Semi-structured, Focus groups, Narrative</td>
<td>“What does public space mean to you?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field research</td>
<td></td>
<td>Semi-structured, Focus groups, Narrative</td>
<td>“What do you do in other places that you wish you could do here?”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**FIELD RESEARCH**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non-participant</th>
<th>Non-participant</th>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Individual or Participant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Structured</td>
<td>Structured</td>
<td>Structured framework, Unstructured product</td>
<td>Structured, Experimental</td>
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### ACT 1 SHOT SEQUENCE MATRIX

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>QUESTIONS</th>
<th>ANSWERS</th>
<th>SYMBOLIC REPRESENTATION (SHOT SEQUENCE)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>How was the square 'fixed'?</td>
<td>barriers and abstraction, no funding for events/greenery</td>
<td>abandoned factory, vibrant ethnic marketplace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1769</td>
<td>What did not match up in the landscape pre-1800?</td>
<td>Random use</td>
<td>virgin field</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1800: &quot;PRODUCTIVE LANDSCAPE&quot;</td>
<td>What was the structural reaction in Los Angeles?</td>
<td>Decline of traditional Tongva villages</td>
<td>mission courtyard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1866 OFFICIAL PARK DESIGNATION &quot;BACKYARD GARDEN&quot;</td>
<td>What was the structural reaction in Los Angeles?</td>
<td>ronchos subdivided, small Yankee orchards &amp; sheep farms</td>
<td>small Yankee farm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1886 EATON PLAN: &quot;ENGLISH GARDEN&quot;</td>
<td>What did not match up in the square pre-1886?</td>
<td>Camp sites for travelers on El Camino Viejo, grazeland for cattle</td>
<td>campfire smoke/paint, open grazing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910 PARKINSON PLAN: &quot;CITY BEAUTIFUL&quot;</td>
<td>What was the structural reaction in Los Angeles?</td>
<td>Stately English-style garden w/ serpentine pathways</td>
<td>ordered row of trees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994 LEGORESTA PLAN: &quot;POSTMODERN SPACE&quot;</td>
<td>What did not match up in the square pre-1994?</td>
<td>Large area for protests, littering</td>
<td>passed-out homeless on unkempt lawn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016 PERSHING SQUARE RENEW: &quot;COMFORT SPACE&quot;</td>
<td>What did not match up in Pershing Square pre-2016?</td>
<td>visual barriers, Occupy LA</td>
<td>concrete</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### YEAR QUESTIONS ANSWERS SYMBOLIC REPRESENTATION (SHOT SEQUENCE)

1851 | What was the structural reaction in Los Angeles? | Set aside as park: informal, "organic" space | planting tree/row of poplars |
1910 | What was changing systemically/culturally in 1910? | Fordism, Progressivism | film studio |
1951 | What was changing systemically/culturally in 1951? | Postwar Boom: Mass Consumerism, High Modernism | department store isle |
1966 | What was the square 'fixed'? | Car-friendly, containment and enclosure | parking entrance sign, garage ramp, open lawn |
1994 | What was changing systemically/culturally in 1994? | Neoliberal Reindustrialization | Bunker Hill walkways, security cameras |
2016 | What was changing systemically/culturally in 2016? | Post-Fordism, Hyper-Personalization | hipster sipping latte on Macbook in café |

### ACT 1 ACTUAL IN-SCENE DESIGN PROPOSAL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACT 1 SHOT SEQUENCE MATRIX</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

48
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ALTERNATE SHOTS</th>
<th>LOCATION</th>
<th>ALT LOCATION</th>
<th>SOUND EFFECTS</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pershing Square</td>
<td>Natural</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Sycamore tree</td>
<td>Hahamonga/Hacienda Pk/Whittier Narrows</td>
<td>Mugu State Park</td>
<td>native birds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Gabriel Mission</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>bell toll</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Gabriel Mission</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Latin spoken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hahamonga Watershed Park</td>
<td></td>
<td>Hacienda Pk, Whittier, Santa Monica Mtns</td>
<td>native birds, Tongva speaking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chino Hills: Heaven's Ranch</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>cows</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Collapsing into next era)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arroyo Hondo Preserve, Santa Barbara</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>steam engine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carroll Ave, Echo Park</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>horse-drawn carriage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campfire smoke</td>
<td>Hahamonga Watershed Park</td>
<td></td>
<td>frogs, mosquitoes / campfire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vista Hermosa / Los Encinios State Park</td>
<td></td>
<td>digging earth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>textile factory</td>
<td>Paramount Studio Melrose Gate</td>
<td></td>
<td>early film studio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Continental Building / Bradbury Bld</td>
<td></td>
<td>electric streetcar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vista Hermosa Park</td>
<td></td>
<td>woman screaming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Griffith Park / MacArthur Park / Grand Hope Park</td>
<td></td>
<td>docile conversation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>hidden camera in mall</td>
<td></td>
<td>1950s advertisement/music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>freeway</td>
<td>Elysian Park / Arroyo Seco Freeway</td>
<td></td>
<td>car noises</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gay cruising</td>
<td>Griffith Park / Venice Beach / Studs Theater</td>
<td>Studs Theater</td>
<td>soap boxer / &quot;Everybody's Talkin at Me&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pershing Square</td>
<td></td>
<td>car on ramp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(collapsing into next era)</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>South LA, Santee Alley</td>
<td></td>
<td>gate closing, market</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bunker Hill, DTLA</td>
<td></td>
<td>distant traffic, café</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>beer bottle on grass</td>
<td>MacArthur Park</td>
<td></td>
<td>empty beer bottle rolling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pershing Square</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Any café, anywhere</td>
<td></td>
<td>Trendy music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>New Girl converted loft building, Arts Dist.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Trendy music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pershing Square</td>
<td></td>
<td>chalk on concrete</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grand Park</td>
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- **49**
ACT 1 EXAMPLE SHOOTING SCHEDULE

Film 1: Critical Map Schedule

Around Town 1/23/2015

7 - 9am  Hahamonga Watershed Park
         arroyo creek: low slow creep
         virgin field?
         drone hover: natural landscape

if time  Pasadena City Hall  fountain
         balustrade

9-10am  San Gabriel Mission
         cross or bells
         courtyard

10-11am Griffith
         axial pathways
         balustrade?

11-12pm Paramount Picturesgate (or water tower & bldgs)

1-2pm  Elysian Park
         large empty parking lot
         Arroyo Parkway (Park Row Drive Bridge)
         virgin field?

2-3pm  MacArthur Park
         balustrade
         homeless passed out on unkempt lawn
         flat lawn

3-4pm  Vista Hermosa Natural Park
         curvey pathway
         row of trees?

if time  USC Library
         fountain
         balustrade

if time  Grand Hope Park
         bench
         row of trees?

Out of Town Week of 1/25/16

Arroyo Hondo Preserve
         Railroad trestle bridge

Hacienda Hills / Whittier Narrows
         virgin field?

Chino Hills (near Heaven’s Ranch)
         cows in field

Santa Monica Mtns
         natural landscape

Downtown Week of 1/25/16

Pershing Square
         iconic elements
         narrow sidewalk
         steps
         ramps

837 Traction Ave
         New Girl loft exterior
IMAGINE PERSHING SQUARE: EXPERIMENTS IN CINEMATIC URBAN DESIGN
USER STORIES/QUESTIONAIRES
COMPiled BY JOHN MOODY AND LOUISE “FRENCHY” MBELLA 1/30/16

QUESTIONS FOR USERS IN PERSHING SQUARE

Hi, I’m (interviewer name). I am speaking to people about their experiences in Pershing Square for an educational film project at MIT about using cinematic storytelling (narración cinematográfica) in designing public space. You don’t have to speak if you don’t want to. (No tiene que hablar si no quiera)

Are you willing to be recorded on video? audio? | Está bien si yo la recuerde esta entrevista en video? Audio?

What is your name? | Cual es su nombre?

1. How do you feel when you come into Pershing Square, or when you decide not to come in? | Cuando viene usted a Pershing Square, como se sienta?

2. What do you like about the square? Do you have a favorite spot? | Que le gusta sobre esta plaza? Tiene un lugar preferido en la plaza?

3. Do you have a favorite public space? What is your favorite place in Los Angeles? | Tiene un espacio publico preferido? Qual es su lugar preferido en Los Angeles?

4. What do you wish you could do here? How would you make this space your own? | Que espera usted hacer aca? Cómo hacerlo usted para ser su propio espacio?

QUESTIONS FOR USERS IN OTHER PLACES

Hi, I’m (interviewer name). I am speaking to people about their experiences in public space for an educational film project at MIT about using cinematic storytelling (narración cinematográfica) in designing public space. You don’t have to speak if you don’t want to. (No tiene que hablar si no quiera)

Are you willing for us to record you on video? audio? | Está bien si la recordemos esta entrevista en video? Audio?

What is your name? | Cual es su nombre?

1. Do you ever go to Pershing Square? | Va usted a Pershing Square?
   a. YES: Why do you go to Pershing Square? | Porque va usted a P.S.?
   b. NO: Why not? | Porque no va?

2. Is there anything special to you about this place? How does it make you feel? | Hay una calidad especial para usted de este espacio? Cómo se hace sentir?

3. Do you have a favorite public space? What is your favorite place in Los Angeles? | Tiene usted un espacio público preferido? Qual es su lugar preferido en Los Angeles?

4. What do you wish you could do in public space in the city? | Que desea usted hacer en los espacios publicos de la ciudad, que todavía no pueda?
Hi, I’m (interviewer name). I am speaking to people about their experiences in Pershing Square for an educational film project at MIT about using cinematic storytelling (narración cinematográfica) in designing public space. You don’t have to speak if you don’t want to. (No tiene que hablar si no quiera)

Are you willing to be recorded on video? audio? | Está bien si yo la recuerde esta entrevista en video? Audio?

What is your name?

1. Do you have a favorite spot? Why or why not?

2. How does that spot make you feel? | or when you decide not to come in? Why?

3. Do you have a favorite public space? | What is your favorite place in Los Angeles? Why?

4. What do you wish you could do in a public space? | How would you feel at home here?
# LOCATIONS PERMITS

**CITY OF LOS ANGELES**  
DEPARTMENT OF RECREATION & PARKS  
FACILITY USE PERMIT  
PERSHING SQUARE #16-014

Permission is hereby granted for the use of PERSHING SQUARE on the dates and times indicated to:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME OF ORGANIZATION:</th>
<th>MIT Department of Urban Studies and Planning</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TYPE OF ACTIVITY:</td>
<td>Student Film</td>
</tr>
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| CONTACT PERSON:      | John Moody  
77 Massachusetts Ave.  
Cambridge MA 02139  
509-336-9189  
moody@mit.edu |
| DATES/TIMES:         | Wednesday, February 3, 2016 (12-5 pm)  
Thursday, February 4, 2016 (1-5 pm)  
Friday, February 5, 2016 (12-5 pm) |
| LOCATION:            | Use of entire Pershing Square |
| FILM MONITOR:        | No |

<table>
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<tr>
<th>FEES: (REFER TO SCHEDULE OF RATES AND FEES CHARGES)</th>
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<tr>
<td>STUDENT FILM FEE:</td>
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<tr>
<td>(4 hour maximum) $150.00 (50 per day)</td>
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<tr>
<td>$100/EACH ADDITIONAL HR: $0.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>MAINTENANCE &amp; BREAKAGE FEE ($400 REFUNDABLE): $0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CATERING: $0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UTILITIES: $0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STAGE RENTAL FEE: $0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SECURITY STAFFING: $0.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>ADMINISTRATIVE STAFFING: $0.00</td>
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<td>TOTAL: $150.00</td>
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| RECEIPT NUMBER(S): B1184721                          |
| PFO REFERENCE NUMBER: #50454                         |
| INSURANCE CA #: #90772                               |
| REP./CLERK: S. Perez                                 |

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<tr>
<th>TYPED NAME AND TITLE OF OFFICIAL RECOGNISING PERMIT:</th>
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<tr>
<td>Gus Sedano, Recreation Coordinator</td>
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<tr>
<td>SIGNATURE:</td>
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<td>DATE: 2/2/2016</td>
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<tr>
<th>TYPED NAME AND TITLE OF OFFICIAL RECOGNISING PERMIT:</th>
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<tr>
<td>Louise Capone, Recreation Facility Director</td>
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<tr>
<td>SIGNATURE:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DATE:</td>
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<tr>
<th>TYPED NAME AND TITLE OF OFFICIAL RECOGNISING PERMIT:</th>
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<tr>
<td>Annamaria Galbraith–Stewart, Recreation Supervisor</td>
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<td>SIGNATURE:</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<th>TYPED NAME AND TITLE OF OFFICIAL APPROVING/ISSUING PERMIT:</th>
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<tr>
<td>Anita Meacham, Principle Recreation Supervisor II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIGNATURE:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DATE:</td>
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This permit is issued with the understanding that the permittee will comply with the rules and regulations adopted by the Board of Recreation & Parks Commissioners and the instructions of the Recreation Director in Charge. This permit must be given to the Recreation Director on its expiration date.
**Invoice**

**For Estimated Fees**

**Bill To:**
MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY  
77 MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE  
CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02139

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Permit Number</th>
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<td>Company</td>
<td>TECHNOLOGY</td>
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<tr>
<td>Production Title</td>
<td>IMAGINE PERSHING SQUARE</td>
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<tr>
<td>Invoice Number</td>
<td>0137212</td>
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<tr>
<td>Invoice Date</td>
<td>02/02/2016</td>
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<tr>
<td>Due Date</td>
<td>upon receipt</td>
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**Fees**

FILMLA STUDENT PERMIT FEE SIMPLE  
$25.00

Total Permit Fee  
$25.00

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<tr>
<th>Paid with Permit</th>
<th>Amount Paid</th>
<th>Check Number</th>
<th>Amount Due</th>
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</table>

There are no payments recorded at this time.

**Credit Terms: Net Payable 15 days**

Make Check Payable to:  
FilmL.A., Inc.  
Attn: Accounts Receivable  
6255 W Sunset Blvd, 12th Floor  
Hollywood, CA 90028

Please reference your Customer Number on your check. If you have any questions about this invoice, please contact FilmL.A. Accounting at (213) 977-8600. Thank you.

Reminder: A late charge of 1.5% will be applied to all balances over 15 days.
**CERTIFICATE OF LIABILITY INSURANCE**

**DATE (MM/DD/YYYY):** 01/26/2016

---

**INURES**

**INSURED:**
John Moody,
55 Magazine St Apt 56,
Cambridge, MA 02139

**INSURER(S) AFFORDING COVERAGE**

**NEW HAMPSHIRE INSURANCE COMPANY:** 23841
**UNITED STATES FIRE INSURANCE COMPANY:** 21113

---

**COVERAGES CERTIFICATE NUMBER:**

**REVIsION NUMBER:**

---

**DESCRIPTION OF OPERATIONS / LOCATIONS / VEHICLES (Attach ACORD 101, Additional Remarks Schedule, if more space is required):**

The Certificate Holder is added as Additional Insured with respect to our Insured’s operations only.

This insurance is primary and non-contributory as required by written contract.

This coverage is with respect to Imagine Pershing Square event to be held 1/26/2016 - 2/24/2016 at Pershing Square Los Angeles CA

---

**CERTIFICATE HOLDER CANCELLATION**

SHOULD ANY OF THE ABOVE DESCRIBED POLICIES BE CANCELLED BEFORE THE EXPIRATION DATE THEREOF, NOTICE WILL BE DELIVERED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE POLICY PROVISIONS.

---

**AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVE**

---

**ACORD 25 (2010/05)**

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ACT I: THE MAP OF PERSHING SQUARE

EXT. DAY: A SIDEWALK, 2016

CLOSE UP:

Pavement. We move slowly along it, the tempo set by cracks between blocks of concrete. We settle onto one crack that is overtaken by wild grass.

CUT TO:

EXT. DAY: PERSHING SQUARE, 2016

A woman's shoes glide curiously over the pavement. They belong to LISA, filmmaker-journalist. She crosses a street and into a city square. This is PERSHING SQUARE, at the center of historic downtown Los Angeles. As she sits onto a concrete bench, she sets down her notebook and phone. From behind, we see the back of her head, scanning the space around her. Amongst the largely concrete space,

SHE OBSERVES:

1. An orange tree sheltering a woman from the sun.

2. Art canvasses on a wall, drawing the attention of a young couple.

3. A purple fountain spout, pointing to a passenger jet passing high above in the sky.

Lisa takes a deep breath.

CUT TO:

EXT. DAY: DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES, MID-1700S

Clouds traverse the sky over a river at high flow. A single sycamore tree rests below the rolling hills of a verdant meadow. The modern city of Los Angeles is no where to be seen.

THE TONGVA (V.O. BY LISA)

(soft, sensing)

everything we see:

stars, stones, wind, and waters,

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

(cont'd)

the furred, finned, and feathered,
bushes and trees,

are the Ancestors of the new
people,

the human beings.

CUT TO:

EXT. DAY: PERSHING SQUARE, MID-1700S

We creep slowly through tall, springtime grass.

CUT TO:

EXT. DAY: DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES, 1781

The sounds of horses and wagons cascade over a dirt trail running through the native landscape.

LAW OF THE INDIES (V.O. BY JOHN)
(Tammany Hall style)
Once the region, province, county, and land are decided by the expert discoverers, select the site to build a capital of the province and its subjects.

A fortress-like adobe structure obscures the sky.

LAW OF THE INDIES (V.O. BY JOHN)
Separate the land that is needed for the house plots of the town, then allocate sufficient public land for pasture, plus another portion for the natives of the area.

SHOT ON: 1786 DRAWING OF JOSE ARGUELLO'S PLAN OF PUEBLO DE LOS ANGELES.

CUT TO:
EXT. DAY: PERSHING SQUARE, MID-1800S

The sounds of cows mooing and chewing travel across endless fields of low grass.

MARY TAFT (V.O. BY LISA)
On my way home I noticed a woman frying something in a skillet over a fire in the park. A little boy was with her.
(beat)
It brought back the days when we used to cook over a campfire on the plains trip.

Sounds of bullfrogs and mosquitoes give harmony to a swampy creek bed. At the sun sets, a campfire illuminates mustard grass and cacti.

MARY TAFT (V.O. BY LISA)
This woman I found had just come over the plains. She’d been camping there for two days. We had quite a good talk.

CUT TO:

EXT. DAY: DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES, 1870

The chugging of a steam engine pulsates as we glide along the tracks of a railroad trestle bridge.

COMMON COUNCIL (V.O. BY JOHN)
The block has been set aside for public purpose. An association of gentlemen have subscribed funds for the purpose of fencing in and ornamenting said block...

Distant sounds of horse-drawn carriages and train whistles reach a Victorian homestead/church at the edge of town.

COMMON COUNCIL (V.O. BY JOHN)
...therefore, be it resolved that it be declared a public place forever.

(CONTINUED)
SHOT ON: 1886 DRAWING OF "THE EATON PLAN" FOR 6TH STREET PARK (PERSHING SQUARE).

CUT TO:

EXT. DAY: PERSHING SQUARE, LATE 1800S - EARLY 1900S

The sounds of shoveling and nailing echo over the sight of enclosed garden beds, white picket fencing, and bright gravel walkways.

LOUIS DE BUFF (V.O. BY LISA)
I was a visitor to Los Angeles in 1908, a perfect stranger, and it seemed to me that this park answered the true purpose of a city park more completely than any area its size I had seen anywhere.

A soap box rests on an old bandstand, while the voices of socialist debaters and overgrown plants envelope a gravel pathway.

LOUIS DE BUFF (V.O. BY LISA)
I could find right there in the city quiet and repose, or meet with someone willing to talk at any hour of the day.

EXT. DAY: DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES, 1910

The raw sound of a Ford Model-T engine whooshes over a curving, paved roadway. (Alt: floating over a set of streetcar tracks)

COMMISSIONER SILENT (V.O. BY JOHN)
Our parks are inexcusably commonplace, and hardly up to the standard of a city of fifty thousand.

A Beaux-Arts high-rise building looms above a cacophony of unmuffled combustion engines, screeching streetcars, and horse-drawn buggies.

(CONTINUED)
COMMISSIONER SILENT (V.O. BY JOHN)
Botanical features will not thrive in the heart of a busy, dusty city. Our Central Park should be a thoroughfare from its corners and across it.

SHOT ON: 1910 DRAWING OF "THE PARKINSON PLAN" FOR CENTRAL PARK.

EXT. EVENING: PERSHING SQUARE, 1910 - 1950

A dense sheet of water empties into a fountain basin. A concrete balustrade encloses green grass. Bird calls compete with crickets as an ornate streetlamp replaces the light lost to the evening sky.

JIM KEPNER (V.O. BY LISA)
I came to the Square in 1944. I remember a man named Sidney, who seemed devoted to picking up every Marine who stopped in Pershing Square and recording the details for Doctor Kinsey.

The sounds of drunken wartime songs float over a wooden bench that has lost most its paint.

JIM KEPNER (V.O. BY LISA)
I remember the warm, gay nights when the crowd stayed on till three in the morning. I remember the ever-shifting group of people who weren't afraid to be different.

EXT. MORNING: DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES, 1951

Revving sounds of a 1950s hot-rod as we shoot out of a tunnel on a four-lane highway. Cars stream away in multiple directions, highway stacked on top of railway stacked on top of channelized river.

DOWNTOWN BUSINESS MEN'S ASSOCIATION (V.O. BY JOHN)
No complete solution of the parking problem under post-war conditions is possible except one which will

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

DOWNTOWN BUSINESS MEN’S ASSOCIATION (V.O. BY JOHN)
involve setting aside land
exclusively for parking.

Narrow parking lots saddle between the blank back sides of
old office buildings.

DOWNTOWN BUSINESS MEN’S ASSOCIATION
(V.O. BY JOHN)
Construction of a garage under
Pershing Square would permanently
meet a large part of the
requirement for centrally located
parking at comparatively high
rates.

SHOT ON: 1951 PERSPECTIVE CUTAWAY DRAWING OF STILE’S O.
CLEMENT’S PARKING GARAGE UNDER PERSHING SQUARE.

EXT. DAY: PERSHING SQUARE, 1951 - 1994

Rows of ceiling lights reveal the heavy concrete structure
of an underground parking garage. Traffic noises greet a
long parking ramp emerging from a ticket kiosk. Under the
sun, fresh-cut green grass extends far into the distance.

JAMES ROJAS (V.O. BY LISA)
As a teenager like most people I
used to walk the diagonal paths of
Pershing Square as a short cut to
and from different downtown
destinations.

Beer and wine bottles float aimlessly in a fountain basin.
huge dead patches blot the expanse of grass.

JAMES ROJAS (V.O. BY LISA)
One particular morning I saw a dead
body in the middle of Pershing
Square with a white sheet over it.
I wanted to look under the sheet
but walked on.

EXT. DAY: DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES, 1994

From high above, the carpet of the city appears pinched
upward by the towers of downtown. From below, the belly of a
passenger jet slices through the sky before touchdown.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

JANET MARIE SMITH (V.O. BY JOHN)
Los Angeles, the once notorious
city without a skyline and
proverbial cultural desert, has
become a world class city.

Mexican shop signs and display cases clutter the sidewalks
of a busy shopping street. Nearby, expansive pedestrian
walkways host a small gathering of coffee-carrying
professionals. Sounds delivery vehicles and police
helicopters ricochet between the trunks of glass-encased
skyscrapers.

JANET MARIE SMITH (V.O. BY JOHN)
In step with this multibillion
dollar investment downtown is the
soon-to-be-restored Pershing
Square. It is a neglected jewel in
the center of a dynamic civic
environment.

SHOT ON: 1994 DRAWING OF "THE LEGORRETA PLAN" OF PERSHING
SQUARE.

END ACT I.

ACT II: THE IMAGE OF PERSHING SQUARE

EXT. DAY: PERSHING SQUARE, 2016

Lisa retrieves her notebook and phone from the bench. She
walks toward a man sitting near one of the park's entrances.

ACT II, PART 1: RELAXATION & CONNECTION (THE GOOD)

Voices, faces and sensory perspectives of people using
Pershing Square mix together whimsically, evoking feelings
of relaxation...

TRAN LOUIS THE 4TH
Cool, laid back, there's enough
space for everybody.

ICE CREAM GALS
It's like calming even in the midst
of traffic.

(CONTINUED)
JACOB (V.O.)
It's nice to sit down since we've been driving for five hours.

VICKI VANFOSSEN
With these tall buildings here, blocking the shade, that's what I like.
(laughs)

LELAND (V.O.)
I work in the Jewelry District here. I sit here in this spot so I can get my sun.

LINDSAY (V.O.)
I like to seek out a public space like this that has this outdoor sculpture artistic element so I can breathe...it brings a sense of peace and groundedness in a crazy city.

SHANE (V.O.)
I'm from Chicago and there's something about it. It's just really cool to see people in L.A. just kinda relaxing. You know what I mean?

KEVIN (V.O.)
I'm in the 40 and up club so I like places that are peaceful.

Words, faces and images begin to reach outward, connecting with the physical and social environment of the square...

KEVIN (V.O.)
There's so much to look at here, so I like to sit in a place where I change my view like a sun dial.

BRITTANY (V.O.)
I like to travel, you know, one minute be here one minute be there. I came to Los Angeles for opportunity. From this view you can

(MORE)
BRITTANY (V.O.)(cont'd) see everything.

CAROLINE (V.O.) I came here to see E.T. on the big screen but got distracted by the skyline.

RICHARD BATTS (re: fruit trees) They're healthy lookin'. We used to have some of those in our yard when I was growin' up.

CHRISTIE I've never experienced security guards that are so personable, and warm...

PEDRO (V.O.) (in Spanish) When I come in here I feel like I'm in Paradise! True because they do movies, security, tons of stuff.

ANGELA I like it, I like it a lot. Really eclectic, it's a different vibe.

SIDNEY For people to have a place to meet and they don't have to buy a coffee - I love it just the way it is.

ACT II, PART 2: EXCLUSION & DISCOMFORT (THE BAD)

Voices, faces and visual impressions of the square start to feel more apprehensive and constricted, suggesting feelings of exclusion...

LENNY Honestly, when I do come here, it's a little bit shifty, halfway not so shifty, so it's a little bit of both worlds. I do come here because I'm looking for a quieter area, to do a little phone call where I

(MORE) (CONTINUED)
LENNY (cont'd)
don't want people hearing me.

LOVISA
It's hard to know where to enter,
in a way. It's almost like it's
shutting you out.

ADRIAN
It's all open, there are no places
to hide.

JULIA
We just saw security stop the guy
from playing the saxophone.

JOE (V.O.)
(re: the fountain)
Right there just describes LA
perfectly: totally dry.

MICHELLE
That's for kids. I'm not a kid, I
don't have a kid...I wanna climb on
it, cuz I'm a big kid! Okay so I'll
go play in some other park by my
house.

CHRISTINE
We do "unity rallies" for our
nonprofit that helps
underprivileged teens. Most of the
kids we work with have never been
to the beach or the mountains. We
have an organizational culture to
operate in public space.

CHRISTINE
There's a cap on the amount we can
do. In some senses I understand.
But because it holds such an
important legacy for our
organization, it's hard sometimes
when it's like, "please stop, shut
down the culture."

(CONTINUED)
IGNACIO
I think this place is for "respect."

WARD WHITNEY (V.O.)
I've been downtown here for six years, living a block and a half away and I still haven't found a comfortable place to be.

WARD WHITNEY (V.O.)
You're not supposed to be in a park. You're only supposed to use a park. When you park your car, you pull over and you leave the car there, that's called parking. When you park yourself, you're not allowed to just kinda sit there in a park - this is kind of crazy.

JOSE FLORES (V.O.)
I feel it's very much like prison. I work in that building right there. I just cut across because I don't have a choice.

The landscape in and around Pershing Square begins to feel torturously unsettling...

KRISTIN (V.O.)
I guess they've chased all of the degenerates out...

SECURITY GUARD
Homelessness - the system can't help them. It's sad to push them out. We just recycle them around the city.

KRISTIN (V.O.)
It's not so much the homeless it's the the drug addicts that are terrifying. You know right across the street it's terrifying, right? At the subway entrance it's disgusting and scary and it's really not a pleasant environment.
CONTINUED:

NANCY (V.O.)
See when you come down to the heart of Broadway, Main, Hill, 6th and Spring and so forth, you're a bit harassed all the time. Brutally, I should say.

NANCY (V.O.)
You almost have to build a character within yourself - a character that you really don't like about yourself to live Downtown LA.

NANCY (V.O.)
I'll be here five years March 22nd but it's really not worth my health. It's the fact of the matter of knowing that you're in a space and you're constantly victimized. I was a victim for a long time as a child. Now I'm victimized every single day because of my environment.

ACT II, PART 3: A SENSE OF HOME (MEMORY AND MEANING)

Light appears at the end of Fifth Street: Pershing Square is just beyond the corner. Voices, faces and visual sensations in the square take on a more peaceful, grounded, floating quality.

NANCY (V.O.)
In spite of all I just said, I don't know why your heart just manifests home.

No matter what. It just does.
CONTINUED:

NANCY
(holding up her book)
I wanna mention Jane Fonda, she's seventy-eight. I'm reading her book. It's incredible. She also quit drinking.

NANCY
I feel liberated because I have a lot of freedom to spread my wings and relax.

NANCY
It's gonna be rockin' and rollin'. There will be yoga groups and Christian groups with their pizzas. You never know what you're gonna see here in the park.

TRAN LOUIS THE 4TH
This is where the magic happens. I meet a lot of my girlfriends here. One time, I was sitting here with my new girl, and my old girl see me with her from across the street. S'all good - I'm still with the new girl.
(beat)
I love it.

LORRAINE
I feel overwhelmed and excited because I used to be one of the bums in this park, yeah, so to be able to come here clean and sober with my dog is just wonderful.

LORRAINE
I lived in a doorway downtown for seven years, then got clean and sober.
(beat)
You have to look ahead as well. That's why a lot of people become homeless. They don't mean to be on drugs or alcohol - they probably got on it after they got on the

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)
streets cuz that's the only way to survive! It's a survival kit.

LORRAINE
It's grown. And maybe people didn't see how bad it was before. But to cover up something like that and make it beautiful, it's awesome.

MS. BEASLEY
This was one of the known spots to score your drugs. There weren't any trees, People used to snatch purses...Goodness gracious I've seen some things in this park! Especially when it was tents everywhere, I was scared!

MS. BEASLEY
When I was 14 I runned away here. Most of the transgender people live in the alleys. They wouldn't embrace us and we wind up in places like this.

MS. BEASLEY
I just sit by the electrical outlets and they don't bother me. At night time there's a lot of people walking, and I just sit there and look; me and my puppy.

MS. BEASLEY
I come here to meditate and find peace. And then I like the skyline. I just like lookin' at it, gives me peace.

MS. BEASLEY
There's a lot of gay boys...yeah they cruisin'. That hotel is famous for gay cruising. I used to do the same thing and hopefully somebody would meet me and take me away - it didn't happen! But it's alright. I've had a good life.
WARD WHITNEY (V.O.)
You see that mural over there
that's sticking out? Do you know
who painted that mural?

WARD WHITNEY (V.O.)
Frank Stella. I mean, that's a real
ejewel. It's a major world class
mural and nobody even knows it's
there, they just ignore it and it's
fading in the sunlight.

END ACT II.

ACT III: THE IMAGINATION OF PERSHING SQUARE

EXT. DAY: DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES, 1999 - 2016

Slow-moving vehicles clog a braid of ten-lane freeways and
elevated ramps between downtown buildings. Nearby, a light
rail train decelerates in front of a stadium parking lot.
Several people debark onto a platform.

COUNCILMAN HUIZAR (V.O.)
We will work hand in hand with the
Department of Recreation and Parks
so that Pershing Square Renew can
raise capital...

(alt: statement from Project
for Public Spaces or PSR RFQ)

Construction cranes stretch toward the sky. A curvaceously
postmodern skyscraper glistens in the sun.

COUNCILMAN HUIZAR (V.O.)
...and create a design competition
that will ultimately restore and
redesign Pershing Square into an
iconic, world-class public space in
Los Angeles.

SHOT ON: PLAN OF WINNING DESIGN FOR "PERSHING SQUARE RENEW"

CUT TO:
EXT. EARLY EVENING: DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES, THE FUTURE?

A tributary joins a larger stream in a concrete riverbed.

MS. BEASLEY (V.O.)
I believe that you can always stop and start over. No matter what you have done in the past your future is spotless.

We cruise headlong down several bike trails, then roads, then sidewalks.

ANGEL (V.O.)
I ride a bike, I go everywhere. I just like discovering new places.

SHANE (V.O.)
The bike trails go to it!

EXT. EARLY EVENING: PERSHING SQUARE, THE FUTURE?

Lisa walks into the park in the same curious way as before. In the square she slows in her walk, sensing the texture of the ground contacting her shoes.

ACT III, PART 1: RELAXATION (THE SMALL GARDEN)

Lisa sits in her own spot. Her consciousness reaches out to the places and feelings that people speak of...

TRAN LOUIS THE 4TH (V.O.)
Where I can go and rest: woo-saw. Get it all outta you. People need that! Therapeutic.

NANCY (V.O.)
If I could only get a Chaise lounge chair, that's where it would be.

ICE CREAM GALS (V.O.)
I'm a big fan of hammocking. I have my own that fits in my backpack.

MS. BEASLEY (V.O.)
I just walk a lot. Evidently my body is tired, you know. We walk, walk, walk until dead tired. Let me (MORE)

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

MS. BEASLEY (V.O.) (cont'd)
lie down somewhere where I know I'm safe, and I don't have to worry bout getting my bag stolen and somebody taking my puppy. And when the good lord open my eyes and said, "you've had enough rest, c'mon, let's go," I'll go.

LENNY (V.O.)
Where I can sit comfortably, zoom in and not worry that somebody's gonna hit me over the head, or watch my back, so I can kinda focus.

CLAUDIA (V.O.)
A little room, a little library, where you can concentrate just on you and the book you're reading.

MARK (V.O.)
It's not so grandiose but there's a lot of depth to it. I've been going there for years.

ACT III, PART 2: RECONNECTION (THE LARGE GARDEN)

Lisa looks out to the park around her, but she senses the aspirations of the people...

LOVISA (V.O.)
You feel comfortable and safe but don't necessarily have to interact with anyone, and behold the life that's going on.

CAROLINE (V.O.)
I like sitting up higher - feeling like a bird of prey, a vulture over the city.

MS. BEASLEY (V.O.)
The beauty of a vista. I'm from Kansas and it's flat as the eye can see! Take the back ways: it was longer but it was worth it.

(Continued)
ALENA (V.O.)
It feels pretty relaxing, you're looking at the overview of everything.

CHRISTINE (V.O.)
Brave enough to sit in roots of the tree and watch the bay.

BRITTANY (V.O.)
Energy, lights, you know.

RICHARD BATTS (V.O.)
It's a good place to sit down and watch the traffic go by, you know, serene place to hang out in.

Lisa takes her time moving under the trees and along the art gallery...

CAROLINE (V.O.)
You forget that you're even in the middle of the city in different parts – it's just endless.

MILA (V.O.)
Lake, spacious, huge, grassy.

MICHELLE (V.O.)
I can let my dog off-leash to run around.

JOSE FLORES (V.O.)
Balancing a jungle in the middle of the city with the metropolis.

KARA (V.O.)
Even a little creek...

LINDSAY (V.O.)
A nice big open area that has a large amount of public sculpture, and it's along a nice winding path through a natural landscaped area.
"DINA REY" BAND (V.O.)
(LACMA)
It has a lot of art displays, it's nice because it's a pretty big area...

Lisa walks through a dark passageway, reaching for the walls. She imagines diverse textures, colors, lights...

JOSE FLORES (V.O.)
I find myself lost there - every time I go it's as if it were the first time.

LAURA (V.O.)
You can see things there you can never see anywhere else in the world. The four corners or it are four totally different worlds.

"DINA REY" BAND (V.O.)
I've been here my whole life and you're constantly finding new places that you're just like, "Really? This has been here?"

JOE (V.O.)
I love seeing all the old things that used to be here.

IGNACIO (V.O.)
Prefer la antiguo - the old. The detache - the details of the buildings.

RICHARD BATTS (V.O.)
You can spend a day there, as an outing. We brought our lunch with us. You can see the telescopes and watch the stars...

Lisa walks between people, between crowds as the voices play around her...

JESS (V.O.)
...where community can gather no matter what your community is.
CLAUDIA (V.O.)
Every time I go there I like to spend time with my family.

MILA (V.O.)
Cool for all the nerds to do something...they can all be who they are and not be at Comic-Con.

CHRISTINE (V.O.)
Community organizing for kids who would never come otherwise...

CAROLINE (V.O.)
...for teenagers, where they felt welcome and they weren't "loitering."

ADRIAN (V.O.)
I would totally just sit here and drink.

ANGELA (V.O.)
Night life atmosphere.

ANGELA (V.O.)
Dancing in the street!

LORRAINE (V.O.)
Dance more. Beautiful, and good exercise.

JOSE FLORES (V.O.)
The vibe that you have in some restaurants...

Lisa smiles at the thrill of meeting someone really interesting in the space...

IGNACIO IGNACIO (V.O.)
The mix of the people in the place.

SIDNEY (V.O.)
You have the option to talk to people if you want to, and sure you may sit next to somebody who may smell or on their phone but that's

(MORE)
CONTINUED:

SIDNEY (V.O.) (cont'd)
part of sharing the world with
everybody. They probably don't like
my shirt or whatever, it's not a
big deal.

KEVIN (V.O.)
a free restaurant...

KEVIN (V.O.)
They have a clinic there to help
out people (that are less
fortunate) with free medical needs.
Dentist, hygiene, foot care once a
week.

MS. BEASLEY (V.O.)
Skid Row is my home. These are my
people, I'm not ashamed of them...

MS. BEASLEY (V.O.)
These little squares: they should
be dedicated to somebody. Who did
something in this community.

ACT III, PART 3: REINVENTION (A NEW SENSE OF HOME)

Lisa runs her hands along different surfaces in the park...

"DINA REY" BAND (V.O.)
I've never been to New York, but
I've seen pictures of it and I wish
I could build a snowman in Pershing
Square.

IGNACIO (V.O.)
We can play soccer, with rocks,
stone is the goalkeeper. We play in
this space.

MICHELLE (V.O.)
It's nice to have a park that even
adults could play in...

LINDSAY (V.O.)
I take a lot of pride in crafting
things with my hands.
CONTINUED:

JACOB (V.O.)
Cook a meal over a fire.

ICE CREAM GALS (V.O.)
...a bunch of street artists that are just doing their work out on the streets so you can watch and if you want you can buy the art afterwards.

CAROLINE (V.O.)
The buildings: If they're going to be loud and noticeable - opportunity for artists making murals on them.

ICE CREAM GALS (V.O.)
A nice practice place without having the expectation to perform.

LORRAINE (V.O.)
I can practice my guitar - they made me a sign!

NANCY (V.O.)
A dress rehearsal of all studio rehearsal spaces that people can't afford - with mandated restrictions of course.

SHANE (V.O.)
(little girl laughing)
Like, I brought her there, man, she played piano, and people were just stopping to watch...so cool.

NANCY (V.O.)
Uh uh, not tonight, she's gonna play and the guys are gonna love her, and the professional photographers with their big lenses are gonna take some dynamite pictures.

ACT III, CONCLUSION

The sun is down. The lights are up, and the square is mostly
empty. Lisa takes a deep breath of the city, the sky, and the ground below - a space deeply saturated in memory and identity and hope - and can't help but think of home.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DOWNTOWN</th>
<th>WEATHER</th>
<th>TOD</th>
<th>SHOT</th>
<th>EQUIP</th>
<th>STYLE</th>
<th>ACT</th>
<th>SCENE</th>
<th>DIALOGUE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arroyo Seco Pkwy</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>POV car shoot out of tunnel</td>
<td>GoPro/drone</td>
<td>HH &amp; kinetic</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1950</td>
<td>&quot;no complete and permanent solution...&quot;</td>
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<td>Mariachi Plaza</td>
<td>R</td>
<td></td>
<td>Virgen de Guadalupe</td>
<td></td>
<td>HH &amp; kinetic</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>create &quot;street artists creating, selling&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Latino Ubr Street</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>day</td>
<td>Latino urb</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>create &quot;she played piano, ppl stopping to watch...&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Union Stn</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>day</td>
<td>piano</td>
<td></td>
<td>HH &amp; kinetic</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>observe &quot;balancing jungle w/ metropolis&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Little Tokyo: garden</td>
<td>S</td>
<td></td>
<td>Japanese idea garden?</td>
<td></td>
<td>HH &amp; kinetic</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Joe's Auto Parking</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>day</td>
<td>parking lot sandwiched btwn bldgs</td>
<td>tripod</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>&quot;construction of a large parking garage...&quot;</td>
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<td>R</td>
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<td>Bradbury</td>
<td>R</td>
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<td>texture/color/detail</td>
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<td></td>
<td>discover &quot;4 corners are compl. Diff worlds&quot;</td>
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<td>Biddy Mason</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>morn</td>
<td>POV moving</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>discover &quot;I find myself lost there&quot;</td>
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<td>records</td>
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<td>connect &quot;I used to be a DJ back in the 90s&quot;</td>
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<tr>
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<td>R</td>
<td>day</td>
<td>alley atmosphere</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>discover &quot;most of the transgender live in alleys&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Santee Court</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>morn</td>
<td>TODO</td>
<td></td>
<td>HH &amp; kinetic</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>discover &quot;I find myself lost there&quot;</td>
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<td>Cal Plaza</td>
<td>S</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>create &quot;dress rehearsal of all studio spaces...&quot;</td>
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<td>day</td>
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<td>pov</td>
<td></td>
<td>HH &amp; kinetic</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>center &quot;chaise lounge chair&quot;</td>
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<td>HH &amp; kinetic</td>
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<td></td>
<td>observe &quot;great place to watch traffic go by&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Convenction Ctr</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>late arvo</td>
<td></td>
<td>HH &amp; kinetic</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>observe &quot;great place to watch traffic go by&quot;</td>
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<td>South Park metro</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>morn</td>
<td>train stops, people debar</td>
<td></td>
<td>HH &amp; kinetic</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>&quot;so PSR can raise capital&quot;</td>
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<td>Long Beach train</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>morn</td>
<td>seating environ</td>
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<td>HH &amp; kinetic</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>engage &quot;you have the option to talk...&quot;</td>
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<td></td>
<td>discover &quot;I find myself lost there&quot;</td>
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<td>eve</td>
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<td>&quot;feel of some restaurants&quot;</td>
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<td>&quot;dancing in the street&quot;</td>
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### NEAR DTLA

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<th>Equip</th>
<th>Style</th>
<th>Act</th>
<th>Scene</th>
<th>Dialogue</th>
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<td>S</td>
<td>day</td>
<td>telescopes, stars (lunch w/ friends)</td>
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<td>“spend a day up there”</td>
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<td>family environment</td>
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### MOUNTAINS

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<th>Equip</th>
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<th>Act</th>
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<tr>
<td>Mountains</td>
<td>R</td>
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<td>low grass grazeland</td>
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<td>campfire glow on cacti/grass</td>
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<td>slow creep</td>
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<td>Sepulveda Basin</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>morn/arvo</td>
<td>spaciousness</td>
<td>slow zoom out?</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>observe</td>
<td>“lake, spacious, huge, grassy”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### BEACHES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Weather</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Shot Description</th>
<th>Equip</th>
<th>Style</th>
<th>Act</th>
<th>Scene</th>
<th>Dialogue</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Huntington</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>day</td>
<td>Dog beach</td>
<td>HH</td>
<td>HH peacefuI</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>observe</td>
<td>“my dog can run around”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Docweiler Beach</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>Used condoms</td>
<td>HH</td>
<td>HH/slow creep</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>pre-1950</td>
<td>“there was nothing to do”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sepulveda Basin</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>arvo</td>
<td>blanket/spot to sit</td>
<td>HH</td>
<td>HH/static</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>observe</td>
<td>“behold life that’s going on”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venice</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>arvo</td>
<td>ped mall</td>
<td>HH</td>
<td>something cool - energy</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>observe</td>
<td>(Aaron)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venice</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>arvo</td>
<td>practice space</td>
<td>HH</td>
<td>HH?</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>create</td>
<td>“practice w/o having expectation…”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sepulveda Basin</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>late arvo</td>
<td>Waves on sand</td>
<td>HH</td>
<td>HH/POV: match ground</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>relax</td>
<td>“woo-sah”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sepulveda Basin</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>late arvo</td>
<td>Light off water</td>
<td>HH</td>
<td>HH/static</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>relax</td>
<td>“people can come together”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sepulveda Basin</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>arvo</td>
<td>sand castle</td>
<td>HH</td>
<td>HH/kinetic</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>create</td>
<td>“snowman”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malibu</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>plane landing</td>
<td>tripod</td>
<td>under wide</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1994</td>
<td>Maguire Thomas</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Dialogue

- “spend a day up there”
- “spend time w/ my family”
- “lake, spacious, huge, grassy”
- “my dog can run around”
- “there was nothing to do”
- “behold life that’s going on”
- (Aaron)
- “practice w/o having expectation…”
- “woo-sah”
- “people can come together”
- “snowman”
- “sit in roots of tree & watch bay”


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