by Aaron Malnarick

Bachelor of Design [Architecture]
University of Florida, 1999

Graduate Studies [Building Construction]
University of Florida, 2001

Submitted to the Department of Architecture In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Architecture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, February 2004

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Author

Aaron Malnarick
Department of Architecture
January 22, 2004

Certified by

William L. Porter
Leventhal Professor of Architecture and Planning
Thesis Advisor

Accepted by

Bill Hubbard, Jr.
Adjunct Associate Professor of Architecture
Chairman, Department Committee on Graduate Students
abstract

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The Rock'n'Roll Hall of Fame in Cleveland, the Kansas City Jazz Museum, and the  
Experience Music Project in Seattle, illustrate the steady interest in memorializing music and  
its innovative creators. But these memorials, lavishly adorned with classic memorabilia and  
exuberant imagery, rely solely on formal and aesthetic qualities to honor the musical culture  
they are trying to describe.

What if the "Museum" for music was actually a dynamic space that illustrated its medium  
through active performance and culture? Could traces in contemporary precedents be  
used to recite the history of a musical genre? Maybe music history can be better described  
through a series of strategically placed architectural interventions, rather than through the  
autonomous building typologies that are conventionally used?

The purpose of this thesis is twofold. First, the proposal for developing a Blues Museum will  
establish a venue for delivering the Blues to a mass audience. Second, this investigation  
will challenge the notion of the music museum as a place for cultural inquiry.

Rather than recreating the experience of the Blues primarily through cultural artifacts  
and memorabilia, this project utilizes contemporary "traces" to tell the story. The Blues  
transcended from a secluded rural environment to a dense urban one, and eventually to an  
international arena, without losing its original message. The design of this project celebrates  
this transformation through an experiential spectrum that one moves across through time  
- a series of performance modes across an evolving path.
I would like to thank Bill Porter for his constant stream of criticism and guidance throughout the course of this thesis. His dedication and contributions to this project led me to extraordinary levels of inquiry and expanded my knowledge beyond what I could have imagined.

I also thank Barbara London for providing an amazing body of musical knowledge and experience to this project. Without her insight and enthusiasm, it would not have been possible to deconstruct the many complicated layers of The Blues in such limited time.

Bill Arning has been an inspirational force since the beginning of this project. His comprehensive knowledge of music, art, and architecture opened my mind to the potential of museum design and introduced me to an entirely new body of contemporary artists, musicians, and architects.

To Mr. Bergsma, Robert Hudson, and St. Petersburg Junior College for introducing me to architecture, which led to the motivation and passion that got me here. And, to Chris Johns and Jason Hart for our many miles together. We have traveled a long way.

To Chuck Murphy who taught and introduced me to the Blues many years ago. You said that when I was a rock-star I would forget about you. Did you mean rock-star architect?

Finally, I would like to thank my family, Mariana, and my friends back home for repeatedly bringing me back to earth and reminding me that there really is a life beyond architecture.
committee

Advisor
William L. Porter
Leventhal Professor of Architecture and Planning
MIT

Readers
Bill Arning
Curator, List Visual Arts Center
MIT

Barbara London
Chair, Department of Harmony
Berklee College of Music
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Blues can’t be adequately understood if we confine our analysis to phonograph records or to the music that’s sung in nightclub and concert situations by blues musicians today. We need to understand what blues came from, where it grew, how it changed, what sorts of camouflage it had to adopt in order to preserve its identity.

-Robert Palmer, Deep Blues

My academic career began nine years ago when I enrolled in courses at the St. Petersburg Junior College in Clearwater, Florida. I was an 18-year-old from Chicago fresh out of high-school. Only one week before the move, I was in a recording studio with my band cutting tracks for what would be our first and last recording together.

I started playing guitar when I was eleven-years-old. Up to that point, most of my listening experiences were limited to contemporary artists and those musicians who will forever occupy our sound waves: The Beatles, Zeppelin, and G’n R. A few months into my training, I remember asking my instructor about a stack of cassette tapes piled in the corner of our tiny practice room. Perhaps inspired by my curiosity, Chuck handed me the tapes and advised me to give them a try. He was my guitar teacher and mentor, so I had little doubt the tapes would be good. The tapes were compilations of famous Blues artists: Charley Patton, Robert Johnson, and Sleepy John Estes. At first, I was impartial to the recordings. They sounded scratchy, muffled, and amateur compared to the recordings that I was accustomed to. I copied them, nevertheless, convinced that I would eventually understand their value. Some time after my first encounter, I decided to give the tapes another try. While listening the second time, I recognized lyrical phrases and themes that I had heard in recordings by other musicians. Once I made the connection between these classic blues recordings and the contemporary music I was listening to, I welcomed the Blues with open arms.

Over time, I would eventually grow to love the Blues. As a white Catholic teen growing up on the south-side of Chicago, I couldn’t relate to the messages and themes revealed in the songs: Oppression, sex, love, addiction, murder, rape, hell, etc. These are hardly the thoughts that I was pondering over as an eleven-year-old boy. But what I could identify with
was its raw and honest sound. It connected me to my musical roots. The Blues provided a context for the music that I had grown up listening to and was learning how to play. Mistakes, blemishes, and out-of-tune guitars were an inherent characteristic of early blues records and were an integral part of the music's essence and evolution. The blues artists in these recordings were playing and singing for themselves and to others about quandaries that they were all experiencing. They often passed over miniscule details - setting, tuning, and conventions - that musicians are so concerned with today. This honesty and innocence is what attracts me most to the Blues.

Over the years, my time and energy has been occupied by my architectural endeavors leaving me with very little time to expand my musical interests. This thesis returned me to my musical roots. The experience provided me with the chance to finally meld my passion for music, more importantly The Blues, with my passion for architecture.

figure 1: Portrait, Charley Patton
The purpose of this thesis is twofold. First, the proposal for developing a Blues Museum will establish a venue for delivering the Blues to a mass audience. Second, this investigation will challenge the notion of the music museum as a place for cultural inquiry.

The Blues transcended from a secluded rural environment where it was a localized intimate art form to a dense urban environment where it became publicized and nationally recognized. Eventually, the Blues evolved into an international phenomenon with a fan-base stretching across the entire globe. With this thesis, I am proposing the development of a Blues center where musicians and enthusiasts conjugate to learn, discover, and reflect on their musical origins. I am proposing a cultural and educational center that reinterprets traditional modes of musical performance (i.e. nightclub, street corner, performance hall, etc.), whereby the listener and performer become readily involved and conscious of their Blues surroundings.

This thesis will also investigate the museum as a place for musical and cultural inquiry. How does one view, learn, and experience an abstract concept such as music in a setting that typically relies on imagery and artifacts to convey its meaning? Museums honoring musical figures or genres have been attempted several times in the past decade with varying results. The Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in Cleveland, the Jazz Museum in Kansas City, and the Experience Music Project in Seattle are recent endeavors that employ traditional strategies of museum display to depict their subjects. One critic argues that these museums, lavishly adorned with classic memorabilia and exuberant imagery, leave the visitor with the notion that the music is "dead." Rather than recreating the experience of the Blues predominantly through the display of cultural artifacts and memorabilia, this project will illustrate its medium through dynamic spaces of active performance and culture.
Prominent musical groups, such as *Led Zeppelin*, *Cream*, and *Guns'n Roses* regularly incorporated fragments of blues lyrics, themes, and musical riffs into their songs.

While the search for authenticity may be rooted in our desire to experience a place in all its complexities, in truth, people tend to seek out a very small set of popularized images thought to represent authenticity in spite of their frequently arbitrary and even superstitious nature.

-David Grazian, Blue Chicago

The history of the Blues is by no means a linear story. It has been a constantly evolving and transforming art form since its discovery in the early 1900's. Its layered history crosses into several musical genres and its influence on popular musical culture is evident; from Hard Rock to R&B to Hip Hop. What began as an African American musical form performed by black musicians and supported by a predominantly black audience has shifted to an international scale, with a mostly non-black audience and a diverse range of performers.1

The Blues gets its roots from the west Coast of Africa. As the "Slave Trade" of the 16 and 1700's transported thousands of Africans to America, it brought with them their deeply rooted rhythmic and percussive musical traditions. Over time, these Africans became versed in the European dance and classical music that was already prevalent in the U.S and these musical styles began to merge. At this time, other types of music were also evolving in the South: Negro folk spirituals and work songs. The Negro spirituals and work songs emerged from Protestant hymnal and spiritual music and became the foundation for the common blues song structure2. Having experienced horrendous conditions of oppression and abuse pre Civil War, the end of the War and slavery only worsened the conditions for African Americans. Ex-slaveholders felt threatened by the presence of the freed slaves and the already existing problem of oppression and racism grew stronger. In an attempt to alleviate the hardships they were facing, these Black Americans sought to their musical heritage for inspiration. In the end, they conceived of an entirely new type of music that combined their African musical roots with European and American styles. Out of brutal and unjust circumstances, the Blues was born.

The Blues is recognized as having been "discovered" in 1903 by W.C. Handy as he waited for a train in Tutwiler, Mississippi.3 The train was several hours late, and at some point
during the evening, a man with a guitar pulled up next to him and began playing a "weird" style of music. Handy, an experienced and professional musician had never heard anything like it before. The music and lyrics were sorrowful and remorseful, and were a distant step from the ragtime and classical music that Handy was accustomed to hearing and playing. The verses combined three repetitive lines of vocals followed by a slide guitar riff [played with a knife across the strings] that seemed to "answer" the vocals.

The early years of the Blues were dominated by two styles known as Classic Blues and Country Blues. Classic Blues has a jazzy sound and consisted of popular female vaudeville singers backed by large jazz bands. This style of blues was performed in theatres and auditoriums and was popular [first recorded Blues music] in the 1900's up until the early 1930's when the Great Depression hit. Because of the expense and limitations associated with lavish theatre settings, Classic Blues was most accessible through records. After the Stock Market Crash of 1929, major record companies sought more economical means for recording and marketing records. These companies were aware of the demand for Black music in America and were confident they could continue a steady market. With this in mind, the record companies shifted their attention from the expensive professional Classic Blues performers to the more accessible Country Blues performers.

Country Blues usually consisted of one or two musicians with vocals accompanied by guitar or piano; sometimes a second instrument. The most celebrated of these performances took place in the late evening hours in a plantation house or a nearby juke joint and were supplemented with heavy doses of alcohol, dancing, and partying. The Country Blues, which included musicians from the Mississippi Delta, East Texas, and the east coast of the U.S. [Carolinas, Georgia, Florida], was being recorded in the mid-twenties concurrently
with Classic Blues; however, it did not reach its peak of popularity until after 1929 when the Classic Blues style diminished.

Following the Civil War, Jim Crow Laws made it almost impossible for Black Americans to gain any ground in the South. Coupled with the boll weevil infestation that was wiping out cotton plantations and the advent of the mechanized plow that reduced the need for manual labor, many southern Black Americans migrated north to cities such as Chicago, St. Louis, New York, and Memphis, in search of work and improved living conditions. As the migrating blacks acclimated to the urban context of the northern cities, the raw and unpolished sound of the rural Country Blues transformed into something a bit more upbeat and refined. This polished and contemporary music style became known as Pre-War Urban Blues and was popular until the end of the Second Great War.

Following the War, Urban Blues took on a grittier and raunchier sound. Urban Blues was being played on the radio and live performances could often be seen and heard at parties, nightclubs, bars, and on street corners. The crowded and loud nature of these urban settings forced many Blues musicians to trade in their acoustical instruments for more powerful electrified instruments and amplifiers. The blues got louder, but its popularity within the U.S. leveled-off during the 50's and 60's as the era of Rock and Roll ushered its way in. As interest in the Blues declined in America during the 50's, many of the leading bluesman traveled to Europe and England in an attempt to attract an international audience. With endorsement from leading European Rock bands who were inspired by these blues artists, the Blues was well-accepted by the European audiences.
Rock and Roll music dominated the American airwaves in the 60's and many of those same British rockers that sold the Blues to Europe eventually traveled to America. As many of these bands toured, they were honoring their American Blues influences at concerts and in interviews. Younger generations of Rock fans were now being introduced to Blues legends that had been out of the spotlight since the 50's. With the urging of Blues activists, many legendary bluesmen that had been inactive for several decades came out of retirement. The revival of blues in the U.S. resulted in several historical concerts, radio shows, and a resurgence of Blues recording.

Thanks to the Revival, the Blues persevered throughout the 70's, especially Urban Blues by Muddy Waters, Howlin' Wolf, and BB King who were consistently hitting R&B charts with their music. Although artists continued to produce Blues records into the 80's and 90's, most of them were only replicating styles and sounds of older Blues generations. Perhaps a hangover from the Blues Revival, audiences demanded stereotypical images and sounds that depicted nostalgic Blues scenes from the past. Equally disappointing, the raw and honest characteristics that defined the Blues had all but disappeared from the music. Guided by New Wave and Electronic music, the 80's marked an era dominated by synthesizers and studio editing. Technological advances in the recording industry had filtered out those precious defects and blemishes that gave the Blues its raw and honest edge.

Today, most of the Blues legends have deceased and the few contemporaries that exist are carrying the music into the 21st Century in a time capsule. Although little advancement has been made in the genre of Blues, it would be better to look to other genres of music to comprehend its progression. Perhaps another way of understanding the Blues is...
to acknowledge that it is no longer an art form of itself, but rather something that has transformed into other types of musical styles. From the Rock and Roll of the 50's, 60's, and 70's to the Heavy Metal and Hip Hop of the 80's, the Grunge of the 90's, and the Garage Sounds of the early 00's, the Blues is very much present but is disguised within other forms of music.

Since the 1960's, the Blues has been much more than just "Black Music" played by only black musicians. Contrary to the stereotypes that suggest Blues is only performed by older generations of Black musicians, today many different races and ages of people listen to and perform the Blues. The Blues has evolved from a social antidote for African Americans into a rich musical form that transcends many musical styles, many cultures, and many nations. This thesis seeks to celebrate the Blues as a transforming and evolving musical form. With this project, I will seek out strategies for reconstructing the Blues as an architectural form. Rather than focusing on the nostalgic character of the Blues as is done in most contemporary precedents [i.e. House of Blues, Chicago Blues Fest, blues bars], I will attempt to capture the qualities of the Blues based on the experiential.
To gain a comprehensive understanding of the complexities and layers of the Blues, I established a diagramming structure based on the evolution of the Blues [Histogram: figure 10]. As my research progressed throughout the course of the semester, I concurrently developed this Histogram along with my building design. The diagram provides a comprehensive [by no means complete] history of the Blues and was instrumental during the conceptual development of the museum.

The diagram contains four layers of information. The base layer, consisting of the horizontal and vertical axis, contains only general data such as time and category. The horizontal axis is represented as a timeline and spans the years leading up to the discovery of the Blues to present day. The vertical axis represents the various sub-categories of the Blues. The second layer is the data layer and includes events and circumstances that correspond to the time and categories contained in the base layer. The third layer, or nodal layer, comprises patches or clusters of information bound by common elements and may span multiple years and sub-categories. Finally, the thread layer is represented by linear strands that connect various events from the data layer. These strands correspond to specific narratives or stories that had taken place over the 100-year life of the Blues.
When designing a history museum, one of the more critical tasks is to define the environment in which the artifacts are exhibited. Exhibit spaces are usually straightforward in concept with priority given to the pieces within the space, rather than the spaces themselves. But, how does one define "exhibition" in a museum for an intangible medium such as music? Should the traditional notion of exhibition, whereby objects in space are viewed by visitors, be applicable to music museums? Or, should the "exhibits" be represented by performances or another means of sound delivery? While it is clear that the embodiment of music cannot be described solely through the conventions of imagery and nostalgia alone, it seems that an experience primarily dependent upon sound would also offer an incomplete experience.

To better understand this conflict, I have selected four contemporary precedents that confront this dilemma. The Experience Music Project, the Kansas City Jazz Museum, the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, and the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art were chosen based on their programs that include both traditional exhibition spaces and performance spaces. For each of these projects, I analyzed and compared their programmatic elements, exhibits, and performance spaces.
The first large-scaled commercial museum built for music was the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum completed in 1995 in Cleveland, Ohio designed by I.M. Pei. Very much based on principles of traditional museum exhibition, the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame exhibits rare artifacts and nostalgia from legendary Rock musicians. The museum does very little to enhance the experience of Rock and Roll and there are very few exhibits that permit the visitor to engage with the museum pieces.

The main entrance and lobby space is furnished with a small stage for live events and there are variable-sized performance spaces and theaters in the upper levels of the museum. The building is circulated linearly and the exhibits and multimedia/theater spaces are arranged along this path. Toggling the arrangement of performance spaces and exhibits along the circulation path is successful in that it offers the visitor the opportunity to experience the museum’s themes through various forms of media.
The Kansas City Jazz Museum was completed in 2002 and was a part of a $60 million revitalization project in an historic urban district. In the 1920's and 30's, the 18 and Vine area of Kansas City was thriving with some of the greatest jazz musicians and jazz clubs. In the 1950’s, corruption and neglect led to the demise of the district and the area was razed for redevelopment. While most of the area had been demolished, some of the historic buildings and theatres remained intact and were included in the redevelopment plan.

In regards to design and program, the actual Jazz Museum does little to challenge museum conventions; it contains 55,000sf of conventional interactive research, educational, and exhibit spaces. More interesting, however, is how the museum operates in the larger planning scheme. Acting as a catalyst for development, the museum is the centerpiece of the district with theatres, restaurants, housing, and retail occupying adjacent plots. The urban quarter composed of these diverse programmatic elements collectively work to redefine the historic jazz district as an area of cultural significance.
The $240 Million Experience Music Project in Seattle, WA [2002] was designed by Frank O. Gehry Associates with the intention of creating a museum honoring the legendary Rock guitarist Jimi Hendrix. As the program evolved, the project transformed into a comprehensive museum for all of Rock’n Roll. The museum’s exhibits were designed and arranged based on the concepts of intervention and technology. A unique feature of the museum is its Museum Exhibit Guide [MEG], which is a portable computer that the visitor carries along with them during their visit. As they proceed through the museum, the MEG provides supplemental audio-clips and information pertaining to the museum's exhibits.

The building contains 25,000sf of exhibit space, which is divided up among a series of theme galleries. These galleries contain a mixture of both traditional wall-mounted exhibits and interactive displays. For instance, the "Quest for Volume" is an exhibit illustrating the history of the guitar, while the "Sound Lab" is an interactive studio that allows visitors to operate and learn about musical and recording equipment. As a museum precedent, this building makes a series of innovative moves. Technology in the EMP is the interface that binds the visitor with the exhibit. Instead of the conventional museum approach that portrays the museum as a place that segregates the artifact from the visitor, the EMP is a place where the visitors are as much a part of the exhibit as the exhibits themselves.
The Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art is located in North Adams, Massachusetts and occupies a campus of late 19th-century warehouse and manufacturing buildings. The program is specifically designed for contemporary art with conventional gallery spaces, but there are a series of internal and external performance spaces contained within and between the buildings that make MASS MoCA a useful precedent. The internal performance spaces are straightforward and standard, but the external spaces are significant. They are defined by the interstitial spaces created by the buildings and activate what would be an otherwise un-programmed space. As the visitors traverse through the galleries, they are consistently confronted with alternate views of the exterior courtyards and whatever live performances may be occurring.
The museum site is located along the western bank of the Chicago River between Lake St. and Randolph St where the river divides into the north and south river branches. The north edge of the site is sheared by the Lake Street Bridge and elevated rail. The western edge of the site is occupied by commuter rail lines and housing. The south edge of the site is bordered by the Randolph St Bridge, and to the east the Chicago River and downtown Chicago. Chicago was selected because of its critical role in the development of the Blues and because of its reputation as a major urban center.

A few miles south of the site is the historical Maxwell Street Market. Originally located on Halsted St, Maxwell Street was a cultural haven for immigrants around the world during the first half of the 20th century. Jews from Eastern Europe, African Americans from the south, and many others from various social classes and ethnic groups, settled in this area seeking opportunity and change. The area became quite...
prominent for its mile-long bazaar filled with street vendors and blues musicians. It was here in Chicago where the traditional "down-home" blues style of the southern delta transformed into the electrified urban blues of the north. Currently, there are no physical Blues museum in Chicago although there is a traveling Blues exhibit [called Chicago Blues Museum] that moves from gallery to gallery in various museums around the city. The design of this museum will provide a permanent home for these artifacts and will make them more accessible for viewing.

As an urban center, Chicago is a suitable location for delivering the Blues to the masses. It has a steady tourist base and the Chicago Blues Festival alone attracts over 750,000 visitors per year. In addition, the chosen site is in a prime area in the west Loop adjacent to Chicago's Theatre and Shopping Districts. The site is a short train ride or stroll from other cultural attractions, such as the Art Institute and Grant Park and is easily accessible by commuter rail, the "EL," and automobile. The site is bordered by the "Green Line," which is the public elevated rail line that connects many of the cities' major cultural institutions. Just south of the site is Union Station [Amtrak] and the Metra commuter lines, which connect the city to the Northwestern and Southern suburbs.
figure 31: existing site conditions, longitudinal section

figure 32: existing site conditions, transverse section
In his book *Blue Chicago*, David Grazian discusses the evolution of the Blues into a multi-ethnic music, p.37.

While there are exceptions, most blues songs [especially the earlier ones] follow a general A A B pattern, where the first two lines of a verse are the same [A] often declaring a problem or misfortune. The third line [B] is then a response to the first two lines and is usually in the form of a solution to the stated problem.

The exact date and birthplace of the blues is unknown. Although the term "blues" was being used in song titles during the 1890's [Kansas City Blues], the sound and structure often associated with blues music had not materialized until the early 1900's.

Qtd. in Robert Palmer, *Deep Blues*, p.45

David Grazian in *Blue Chicago*, p. 43.

A series of four interventions were designed as a means of investigating the relationship between site, program, and form. While the first three schemes investigate the possibilities of engaging both tracts of land north and south of Lake Street, the fourth scheme focuses only on the south plot defined by Randolph and Lake Streets. Each of the interventions challenge different concepts and vary in size, shape, scope, and program. The first scheme, *the water-view*, hinges around the notion of an urban park that doubles as a performance space. The primary programmatic elements wrap the park and establish it as a focal point of the scheme. The second scheme, *the water-edge*, includes a large meandering form that follows the profile of the river's edge acting as a visual screen for oncoming views from the east. The third scheme features a series of independent buildings separated by exterior pathways programmed with performance and retail. At the river’s edge, bracketing the scheme, are two performance spaces that engage both internally with the site and externally with the river. The fourth scheme incorporates successful attributes of the previous schemes and expands on them. In this scheme, several converging and diverging pathways lead the visitor on multiple journeys throughout the museum. Scattered along these paths are nodes, or clusters, where various scales of Blues-related performance take place.
This scheme served as an introductory inquiry into the formal and scalar forces of the site and was used to spur further analysis into the project. The south site contains two low-story buildings: Museum galleries and artist housing. Separating the two buildings is an axial open space that connects both the north and south sites together. The north site is on axis with the east branch of the Chicago River, thus making it a dominant visual marker. With this in mind, the site was treated as a backdrop for oncoming riverviews. This site contains a mid-rise housing tower with an attached parking garage. The lower floors of this complex are occupied by retail. The housing and retail components are proposed as a means for activating the site, similarly to the Jazz Museum in Kansas City, where these elements work to draw people into the area. The notion is that as the site becomes activated with casual functions, such as retail and housing, more dynamic functions such as performance can then be supported.
The largest formal gesture of this scheme is the urban park that slopes down to the river from the housing tower. This park is designed as an open green-space with a stage at the water’s-edge offering views from both the site and the river. With panoramic views of the performance, the scheme challenges the idea of live performance being only an autonomously-viewed experience.
Similar to the urban park feature from Scheme 1, this scheme makes use of an outdoor performance space with views from both the site and the river. This performance space is contained by a series of museum structures, one being a large linear structure that extends along the edge of the river. This linear structure houses the museum's primary galleries and links both the north and south sites. This particular structure evolved from a series of unfolding forms with multiple paths and views into a single form containing multiple paths that culminated to a common point [an informal performance space that overlooks the Chicago River—figures 40-43]. The idea was that these multiple paths would relate to various categories of blues history and as the paths evolved through time, they would eventually converge to a symbolic "present day."
An important design characteristic of this scheme is the prominent edge that is created along the river by the linear museum form. This idea was supported by the notion that the site is on axis with the river and any potential development of this area could be used to celebrate the critical junction where the river splits into a north and south branch. Along this building edge, I am proposing that visual connections between the museum and the river be established. These connections could be in the form of transparent performance spaces, galleries, or projection.
The Campus Complex scheme reinterprets the city grid into a set of interconnected buildings that guide the visitor through a series of alternating interior and exterior spaces. The complex includes a cluster of segregated buildings separated by narrow interstitial spaces that are activated with performance and retail. The visitors move in and out of the enclosed exhibition spaces via bridges that span over the interstitial performance spaces. In this particular concept, the transitioning between exhibition and performance is regulated by interior and exterior space.

This plan differs from the previous plans in that it minimally engages the north site. As the scope and scale of the program became more apparent, I began to favor the intimacy and accessibility of the south site. While the north site still remains a critical element of the project, it will be used primarily for its prominent view upriver. The north site contains only a performance space that opens to the river.
figure 49: orthographic view

figure 50: NW view

figure 51: view from westbound "el" train

figure 52: SE aerial view
This scheme is composed of a series of performance nodes linked by a set of paths accessible from various points on the site. These paths are defined by media walls that direct the flow of movement through the site. Similar to the concept introduced in Scheme 2, the paths converge at a performance activity. However, instead of multiple paths converging towards the same point as in Scheme 2, these paths intersect at various points creating numerous opportunities for experiencing the museum.

The media walls are being introduced as a way of directing and transitioning between the exhibits and live performance. The large outer wall acts as signage for the building and helps relate the low flat museum structures to the more dominant scale of the neighboring cityscape. Furthermore, I view this wall as a shell or skin that protects the precious museum contents from the external world. As the visitor dives deeper into the
museum, these walls transform in scale, transitioning the visitor from the urban scale of the city to a more intimate scale of the museum.
From each of the four schemes, I have selected the strongest conceptual material to pursue for further analysis. Of these concepts, I felt that the ideas with the most potential were those generated by the node+path scheme. Building from this concept, I will attempt to link the idea of the multiple paths or journeys with the narratives [thread layer] contained in the Blues Histogram [figure 10]. These narratives or stories will take the museum visitor on a journey through Blues history and will intersect at nodes or clusters that correspond to significant Blues moments. Another concept that I will carry forward is that of the media walls as an orientation device. These walls will display various forms of digital media and will act as the transitional spaces between performance and exhibit. What has yet to be determined is how the traditional modes of gallery viewing will be incorporated into this plan.

In addition to Scheme 4, there were features from the other schemes worth exploring. For instance, the idea of the multi-viewed performance space in Schemes 1 and 2 will be investigated further. Experiencing a live musical performance from multiple vantage points offers new ways of understanding and engaging with the music. Furthermore, the inclusion of artists and musicians housing not only activates the site, but also provides opportunity for the residents to become a part of the museum’s live exhibits.
From the precedent analysis and the concept schemes, I derived a general museum program that served as a guide for my museum design. While the program is specific in nature, it is not meant to set limitations on the project. My challenge to design a "museum" for music that will serve both as a center for cultural inquiry and a venue for delivering music to the masses has led me to conceptualize this project in terms of two programmatic themes: One revolving around the notion of *Exhibition*, and the other around *Sound Exchange*.

"Exhibition" refers to the museum as a place that isolates artifacts from the external world and time so that they may perceived in a void. This is the most traditional method for displaying museum pieces as it completely segregates the objects from any external influences that may make them appear differently than they want to be. An example of "exhibition" in this museum program would be a collection of 1930's blues guitars from the Mississippi Delta suspended on blank wall.

"Sound Exchange" refers to the museum as a place that cultivates the interchange of ideas while displaying them as they occur. This concept pertains more to a dynamic performance or display, rather than a static museum object. An "exchange" translates into user interaction where the observer interacts with and is part of the exhibit. In this project, an example of "sound exchange" is the museum visitor interacting with the performer through the visualization of a recording session or live performance.
The following programmatic functions have been organized into either Exhibition or Exchange-related categories. "Exhibition" being the more traditional museum typology as we know it, and "Sound Exchange" being the more performance-related spaces. Please note that this categorization of spatial functions does not mean to imply any specific spatial relationships.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exhibition</th>
<th>Sound Exchange</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gallery Space</td>
<td>Rehearsal Studio Warehouse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exhibit Storage</td>
<td>Night Club/Bar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library</td>
<td>Bathrooms [2]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Museum Shop/Bookstore</td>
<td>Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blues Education/Scholarship Center</td>
<td>Recording Studio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restaurant/Café</td>
<td>Small studios [6]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information/Ticket booth</td>
<td>Large studios [4]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entry/Lobby</td>
<td>Sound booths [4]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Music Outlet/Exchange</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL EXHIBITION</td>
<td>Performance Space #1 [2000 person]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Performance Space #2 [500 person]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TOTAL SOUND EXCHANGE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Building on the concepts established in Chapter 3, I worked to develop the node/path scheme through a series of study models. These models were constructed at various scales and were used to investigate possible modes for experiencing live performance. The main focus of all of these models is the performance clusters or nodes that occur at the intersection of the paths. As the museum visitor approaches the clusters, the performance spaces begin to deconstruct creating multiple views and entrances. The clusters serve as a sort of circulation junction between the various pathways. As the visitor transverses through one narrative, he or she might decide to switch paths and begin another. While developing these models,
the Blues Histogram [Chapter 2] was beginning to take form and reveal patterns and relationships that could be translated into spatial characteristics. For instance, while each of the narrative strands tells their own story, there are often points of intersection where the two paths meet. These intersection points might be a specific event, or they might be a larger nodal boundary that links a series of events. In terms of my original concept for the museum as a place to convey the transformation and journey of the Blues, experiencing the threads and nodes of the Histogram would offer different ways of experiencing the museum. Perhaps, instead of serving the Blues as a linear chronological form, the story of the Blues could be told through a set of unrelated narratives. But when these narratives were taken...
collectively, they would convey a comprehensive experience of the Blues.

As the study models become more advanced, they began to incorporate more and more themes of the Histogram. The first model represented by only one cluster and a few paths to the final model illustrating several clusters, multiple paths, and a tertiary layer of exhibit space.
In the final cluster study, I began to investigate the paths and performance nodes in more detail they related to the program. In this scheme, recording studios and a small performance space are represented by the clusters. The repetitive grid-like spaces on the lower levels are the gallery spaces and contain the traditional museum experience. The grid evolved from a translation of the base layer of the Histogram and is used to represent time. Like the Blues Histogram, the various categories of Blues will be represented in the galleries and will transcend chronologically as the visitor moves through the museum. At various points in the gallery field lie the sound exchange clusters that enable the visitor to access the narrative journeys or to experience a live performance.
figure 74: orthographic view

figure 75: view into performance space

figure 76: converging paths

figure 77: path/gallery interface
plate 1
photomontage: S_view_river_walk
plate 2
photomontage: roof + media walls
plate 3
photomontage: interstitial space between nodes
plate 4
photomontage:intersecting_paths@node
The final scheme is composed of three layers of experience: exhibition galleries, performance clusters, and the narrative paths. The traditional gallery spaces exhibiting historical Blues artifacts are on the ground floor and are represented by the grid. The categories of the Blues [Delta, East Coast, Piano, etc.] are loosely represented in transcending order within this grid field. The model represents each of the gallery spaces as the same dimensions; however, these galleries may be adjusted and combined to suit the exhibit. The monotony and repetitiveness of the grid is a symbolic reference to the roots of the Blues as having evolved from a labor-intensive and oppressive culture.

In this scheme, there are four modes of performance clusters: recording studios, a radio studio, a nightclub/bar, and a performance hall. Each of these nodes is located within the grid based on their time of appearance in Blues history. As the visitor meanders through the galleries, they will encounter these clusters scattered about the grid. These clusters not only serve as the performance spaces, but they are also the primary means for accessing the narrative paths. Each of the narrative paths begins and ends at a performance cluster with all of the paths culminating at the large performance space. This idea is a reference to the Blues as having evolved from a very private and intimate musical style to being commercialized and very public.

The large form along the west side of the site contains the artists and musicians housing [upper floors], the studio/practice spaces [middle floors], and a music store, exhibit storage, and offices [lower floors]. The housing block not only activates the site, but it also provides scale to the site, which would otherwise be lacking. The sub-floor spaces along the river include the education center, the music exchange where amateur musicians share their music, and the restrooms. The northern edge of the building serves as an access for frequent river taxis and to the existing parking lot on the west side of the north plot.
figures 78-84: process sketches

figure 77: SW aerial view
figure 85: NW aerial view of site

figure 86: view from westbound "ei" train

figure 87: W aerial view of site
figure 89: ground floor plan

figure 90: second floor plan
figure 91: view of narrative path

figure 92: view of media wall and performance space beyond

figure 93: NW aerial view
Plate 5
photomontage: SW view from river
photomontage: south, entrance, river, walk
plate 7
photomontage: north_entrance + boat + dock
direction final review

December 12, 2003
4:15 pm

William L. Porter
Leventhal Professor of Architecture and Planning, MIT
Advisor

Barbara London
Chair, Department of Harmony, Berklee College of Music
Reader

Peter Lynch
Department Head, Cranbrook University Architecture
Critic

John DeMonchaux
Professor of Architecture and Urban Planning, MIT
Critic
As I reflect back on my goals for this project, I remember thinking about how difficult this project might be. I am not just talking about the amount of discipline and motivation required to carry out a thesis, but I am also speaking of the complicated subject of the Blues. Besides its complex and layered history [which I have only begun to understand], designing a museum for something as rich and nostalgic as the Blues is a difficult task. On the one hand, everybody expects a Blues Museum to include rustic shotgun shacks and lots of dirt. That is the image I had in my mind when I first considered the project. On the other hand, if the museum does not include the rustic aesthetic, then there better be a good reason for it not being there. Fortunately in my case, I only had to convince a jury of architectural minds and those that were familiar with my design process that it didn’t need that to work.

During my final review, Barbara London commented about how this project is not only a place where the public becomes educated about the Blues, but it is also a place where musicians can go to connect with their musical heritage. She went on to say that many musicians play without ever really understanding their musical roots and that the experience of this museum would bring out this understanding. While designing this project, I had only really considered the education process to be one-dimensional [musician performs and educates visitor] and never really considered that the musicians would also be a part of the educational loop.

If I were to continue this project further, I would spend much more time developing the performance clusters and the narrative paths. While I was able to organize these spaces within the larger picture of the museum, the individual experiences of each of the clusters and paths have yet to be resolved. With these few exceptions, I am very pleased with the
results of my project. Although the project could have been more developed, a week or two would have solved that. I was able to avoid the conventional stereotypes of the Blues and turn the project into something else. A museum about the Blues must reflect its rich past, but it should also speak of the present and the future, and this project does that. My museum was a place where musicians of all kinds could gather and make music for others to witness and hear. It was not just a place that one would hear the “Blues.” The Blues is contained within all types of music and that is the future of the Blues.

Most of what I learned from this thesis, I could not represent in this book. This project reconnected me with my musical background and opened many new doors for inquiry. I intend to continue researching the Blues with the hopes that one day somebody might confront me about the design of a Blues Museum.


“Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum.” Architectural Record 11 [1995]: 82-87.


All illustrations by author unless otherwise noted.


3 Southern juke joint in _Ibid_, p.79.


5 Howlin' Wolf by Raeburn Flerlage in _Chicago Blues: As Seen From the Inside_ edited by Lisa Day. ECW: Toronto, 2000, p.46.

13 Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, interactive exhibit in "Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum," _Architecture Record_. 11, 1995, p.87.

14 Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, exhibit in _Ibid_.


17 Kansas City Jazz Museum, exterior in _Ibid_, p.67.


23 MASS MoCA, view of small multi-purpose space by Kevin Kennefick in Ibid, p.95.

24 MASS MoCA, night view of large performance space by Frederick Charles in Ibid, p.107.

25 Chicago Loop aerial image by mapquest.com.