Bridge: An Unraveled Architecture

by

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Abstract:

The bridge is an inhabitable structure housing live/work artists studios, galleries and workshops. It is an urban/architectural/personal intervention that strives to explore issues of latent/potential narratives within a built form.

It accepts a tightly bundled cord of circulation and unravels it as it traverses the water. Each strand becomes an individual opportunity for a sequence of narrative projections that simultaneously affect and are affected by overlapping, intersecting and parallel strands.

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Any occupation of space involves a moment of experiential analysis by the individual. Humans are highly referential beings in that we are continually trying to understand/process any new stimulus in relation to previously stored information. My aim was to try to tap into this process so that the building is actively involved in this act of experience making. Not just a phenomenological experience that occurs within a moment in time but an intellectual and emotional experience that takes place over a longer period. The city skyline is not simply a backdrop or a pretty vista that I should orient certain spaces towards. The design attempts to integrate the skyline into a larger sequence of experiential events that tie the bridge experientially/emotionally with the city as well as visually and physically. It is either the instigator or the culmination of a set of events and narratives that tie in with the urban environment. Humans will make conscious or subconscious experiential connections regardless of the context at which this occurs. My aim was to give the bridge a prominent role within this process, inserting it so to speak within each user's individual internal narrative so that it is tied conceptually as well as phenomenologically.

The choice of a bridge as a vehicle for this exploration was due to a number of considerations related to the decision regarding the use of narrative (a particular type of linear narrative) as a catalyst for these investigations. It became apparent that one would need to find a typology that would afford a fairly controlled field in which to operate, but would simultaneously provide a wealth of potential exterior constraints. Rather than describe a particular sequential experience, the ‘events’ here are a design tool that requires the designer to draw and infer from the bridge’s environment and its interactions with its various component strands, an experience/narrative based architecture that is intrinsically aware of and linked to its urban, social, physical and psychological context. Once these connections have been established, how will each individual user process these connections, reconfigure them and combine them with personal experience towards a new individual narrative?
site
the current bridge traverses an inlet that separates the South Boston and Dorchester areas along Summer street. The area is largely low density industrial and warehouses on the South Boston side, transforming into finer grained residential/light industrial as one crosses towards the Dorchester side.

The Boston skyline looms large to the north rising up like an impenetrable wall protecting Boston's south end from the fragmented wasteland to the south.

Standing on the bridge at mid-day, the large airplanes pass low overhead, one every few minutes, taking off from Logan Airport to the northeast.

The open water is to the east of the bridge, and on the north shore is a dock where every so often a massive cruise ship will sail in.
The urban mass of downtown Boston to the north is both a visual anchor and a physical destination although at times there can be a very real disconnect of these two roles. Viewed from the bridge the city is an edifice that acquires an almost semiotic significance and yet it is still close enough to touch and experience. Directly to the south of the bridge is Dorchester. Its effect of its proximity is only slightly tempered by the presence of the narrow strip of industrial buildings centered around the Summer st. power station. The pull that these two urban masses exert on the site are largely responsible for the basic shape and orientation of the site.
Barely visible from the site, the airport’s presence is nonetheless a significant part of the bridge’s identity that makes itself apparent every time the sound of a plane passing overhead draws one’s eyes skyward. It is yet another of the many directional vectors that permeate the site albeit one that is more subtle and implied than those that touch the bridge at ground level. And yet there is something about the unfeathered flow of motion that is a vicarious type of escapism, a simultaneous break from z-axis locomotion and from the mundane concerns of the earthbound.
The single most important element of the bridge. It is its raison d'être and it dictates a number of its defining characteristics. The water here is not merely an obstacle to be overcome or a void to be traversed. While the structure will almost inevitably touch down, the rest of the bridge is similarly in a constant dialogue with the water, whether it is a partially submerged ramp or a framed view out onto the open water.
unraveling
Three types of traffic flow throughout the site: pedestrian, vehicular, and marine. Each traversing the building along separate paths at different speeds and with individual functional requirements. In proposing to create an inhabitable structure along the path of the bridge, another type of action is added, one that is unique in that it posits the possibility of occupation/lingering. At the edges of the site these streams of program/circulation are tightly bundled in a fairly rigid urban conduit that enters and exits the site at a single point.

As they traverse the site each of these individual streams is unraveled and pulled apart from the main bundle. By pulling them slightly apart, the dialogue between the strands that make up the bridge are made starkly apparent, and from any point on the bridge it is possible to ascertain certain relationships with the bridge and its environs. i.e. from any point within the bridge, the rest of the strands of the bridge act as an aperture through which one may experience a multitude of framed/interrupted/distorted/enhanced views of the city. Each strand becomes an individual opportunity for a sequence of narrative projections that simultaneously affect and are affected by overlapping, intersecting and parallel strands.
workshops

gallery/display space

live/work studios

public plaza

retail space
A large part of this exploration is concerned with trying to define constraints outside of the typical trinity of site/program/function, upon which to build an architecture. For this reason the program is deliberately relegated to a secondary role. The spaces are shaped and organized in relation to a set of events that occur throughout the bridge. and their function is left deliberately ambiguous.

As much as the ‘event spaces’ that are described later in this book are not meant to be a deterministic scenarios that anticipate or shape an individual users experiences, rather they are a design tool that enables the designer to draw upon the buildings relationship with itself and its environment in a way that embodies a

By envisioning an architecture that is shaped by a set of hypothetical/imaginary/fantastical events that draw upon the buildings relationship with itself, with its surroundings, and with the pathos of its users, I would propose that the end result would be an architecture that is sufficiently aware of its connection to its inhabitants as well as its urban environment to generate an unlimited number of events that may or may not correspond to the ones described in the design process, but are a direct result of that process’ need to ‘connect’ in order to produce a coherent narrative.

Similarly, the programmatic elements described here are one of a multitude of potential configurations
on narrative
The story has always held a fascination for architects, possibly since before they even were able to identify themselves as such. Ultimately it is the story that transforms any work of building from a physical object such as a stone or a mountain or a grassy knoll into a work of human endeavor. The knowledge that there has been a human intervention, an act of reshaping of our environment is an acknowledgement of an event/ a story that has taken place. A mountain is simply there. For all intents and purposes it has existed for an eternity (even if the geophysical truth of the matter is quite different.) A building though, was shaped by a human, and we cannot help but speculate, even if subconsciously on a narrative that was involved in its creation. These personal, individual stories are informed by each persons normative preconceptions/ cultural expectations etc. The extent to which the building seems to elicit this type of narrative speculation will vary from building to building, and from person to person but it is always there. It is the human hand; not only what it has done but also why it has done it and under what circumstances.

In the instances that we do see a clearly defined purpose to/in Nature, people can, and are compelled to imagine a god/devine creator and the story of the creation that follows.

While I would conjecture that narrative (or at least the story) has been an intrinsic part of architecture for at least as long as it has existed in the more familiarly associated literary and visual forms, such an assumption relies to a large extent on how one defines a story and/or a narrative.

Mieke Bal is one of a few narratologists to first try to extricate the study of narrative from
the medium that it inhabits. An example of this approach is evident in her treatement of Louise Bourgeois' work specifically his "Spider", which she views as not merely a sculptural object nor even as an architectural artifact. These categories and a number of others are all invoked and contested.

It is this aptitude for categorical defiance that is the reason that I believe that Bals approach to narrative may be helpful in the search for a definition for what an architect might term "narrative"

Bal's 'Narratology' provides a unified framework from which to launch investigation and to which one can reference.

Bal dissects narrative works into three main parts (while acknowledging that this separation is an heuristic construct that allows us to study the work and that they are inexorably tied within the narrative work).

These three parts are the fabula, the story, and the text. Were one to try and find analogues for these terms within the discourse of architecture and physical experience (perhaps I am forcing the analogy, but for the time being I will assume that it is possible to find parallels between the two), one might come up with something along the lines of:

- Fabula: an idea about architecture, a quality of space
- Story (an independent element. not a link between fabula): topological relationships/cultural referencing
- Text: the building material, concrete steel brick and mortar/ The room that you are in, the façade that you can see. one glimpse at a time, the individual vignettes that are presented for your consumption/ colour and light/phenomenological aspects of the building
Historically, attempts at consciously addressing ‘narrative’ in an architectural context have run the gamut of degrees from these three terms. Terragni’s (unbuilt) Danteum is one example of architecture that at first appears to occupy the space between story and text, where each room corresponds to a specific event or chapter in Dante’s epic poem. Of course in this instance the back story behind the building is at least as interesting as the narrative work that it is attempting to convey and personal speculation (a secondary internal narrative) regarding the fascist agenda behind Mussolini’s commissioning of the edifice becomes a much more compelling issue.

Religious architecture has always relied heavily on imparting some kind of ‘story’ through the use of carefully sequenced, sited and positioned architectural/phenomenological events.

From the Ancient Egyptian holy of holies positioned at the end of a progressively diminishing passageway, to the Fatimid mosque with its bent entrance/dark passageway into the light of the inner courtyard (the holy space, the gothic cathedral with its soaring buttresses and floating panes of light drenched iconography and coloured lead, to even the stadium sized mega-churches of the US midwest.

Recently however, architects seem to have recognized the pitfalls of trying to invoke a clearly defined narrative in which the user is intended to partake (The exception to this of course is something like Las Vegas, but in that case one is aware that they are a part of an. the architecture then is clearly representational and the issue becomes one of semiotics rather than an actual narrative.) In other words, using an architectural ‘text’ to convey a narrative has become increasingly rare and attempts at creating such an architecture are viewed as crude, or at best simplistic.
Bernard Tschumi's Parc de la Villete is an example of an attempt to integrate issues of event/sequence/ and progression (perhaps wary of past attempts at architectural narrative representation, Tschumi rarely, if ever resorts to the term 'story', and even less so to 'narrative'.)

In his introduction to Event Cities 2, Tschumi dismisses the divorcing of theory from the more tangible, pragmatic, even mundane aspects of the architecture (site/program/technology). He goes on to define and create a clear distinction between 'program' and 'event', while simultaneously outlining a framework in which they are inextricably linked.

The Parc de la Villette is almost certainly the most explicit instance of the application of these basic edicts that he has outlined. However it is also one where the choice of programmatic elements and their subsequent treatment has almost immediately precluded the practical application of most of what he was trying to achieve re: 'program and event'. Whether this is due to a conscious attempt at avoiding the challenges of creating an 'event driven' architecture that is inexorably linked to its programmatic elements, or rather a byproduct of the incorporation of another set of theoretical experimentations that have been superimposed on the 'program/event' agenda (such as certain theories regarding the place of the park within its urban context or the implications of programmatic superimpositions and the grid, etc...) is debatable.

The programmatic elements are so physically dispersed and so topologically indifferent that the 'program' becomes a set of utilitarian vignettes as opposed to a structurally unified whole that may in turn serve as a framework with which 'events' (scripted or spontaneous and unexpected) may occur. Tschumi addresses and acknowledges this aspect when he names his programmatic elements 'follies'; a label that implies an almost defiant estrangement from the constraints of function.
A key feature of the park is the Cinematic Promenade. As the visitor travels along this path (which is...) he is encouraged/prodded by the architecture to follow a set route explicitly set in order for him to experience a certain sequence of events (what?... Its so vague.). This is the raison d'être of the promenade when it should have none. The promenade never becomes the 'in-between'. Rather it is always present in the background, prodding the user as to where he should be going.

Tschumi addresses the linearity of the spatial experience of the promenade by creating spatial links (eg. a line of trees) that bypass, double back and connect parts of the sequence to each other in emulation of narrative devices such as "flashbacks, jumpcuts, and dissolves...". Rather than creating a truly non-linear experience, these links only draw attention to the fact that (based on this design logic) the number of experiences are limited to a permutation of the number of physical links provided.

Regardless of whether or not the design succeeds in achieving its goal of presenting a compelling event sequence, there seems to be a number of problems with this approach. The first has to do with broader applicability beyond the almost theme park setting that Tschumi has chosen as his context. In a sense we can forgive him this indulgence as analogous to a controlled scientific experiment where the original controlled results may then be applied to a more general setting. Howere the second issue which is in my view even more problematic is the fact that as opposed to the aforementioned "las Vegas architecture" the parc de la villete does not present itself as a series of semiotic cues and yet it many ways it is precisely that. People will gladly accept overtly obvious manipulation of their experiences/emotional states (and do so frequently every time they go into a movie theatre or read a novel), but only when they are aware of the conditions and are willing participants.
Lebbeus Woods lies at a seemingly opposite end of the spectrum. Woods urges architects to design buildings as they might imagine them to be decades after they are built. This implies a projection of a single narrative (one out of an infinite number) on the building and its effect on the surrounding urban fabric. At first it may seem that this is a clear cut case for the ‘textual’ application of a singular narrative to architectural form. However Wood's designs are all almost violently non-textual. In fact if anything, they are 'pre-fabula'. They exist as almost purely phenomenological geo-tectonic movements. The violence of the architectural intervention clearly demands the creation of a narrative to justify its existence, but the onus is always placed squarely on the beholder to define said narrative. And it becomes apparent the Woods' singular narrative is something akin to a design tool and not an end unto itself.

As the distinctions between different types of media and experience continue to blur, questions of narratives, form, truths and stories, will increase in immediacy. Architects may find themselves in a unique position to address these issues, and it would be advantageous to be able to recognize the various ways in which the creation of experiences takes place and the ways that they are shaped whether it is by writers, sculptors, filmmakers or architects.
event
Can an architectural intervention evoke such an abstracted notion, in this case “flight”, without succumbing to an overtly explicit or deterministic type of narration? As one of the three primary events that anchor the design of the bridge, “flight” attempts to answer that question, through a utilization of a range of narrative techniques, some of which are ubiquitous to most representational media while some are uniquely architectural.

The storyboarding process is borrowed as a technique from film and animation, but the sequence that is being determined is not only one of timing and visual exposition but also of light, sound, smell, touch, mass, and gravity.

The dark enclosure, its boundaries barely outlined by carefully controlled fissures, followed by the bend in the path that exposes the a doorway framing the open water beyond. The thickness of the walls and the bend in the entrance/exit mutes and distorts the outside noise. The sounds of the airplanes jet engines grows gradually stronger as one approaches the terrace, exponentially so as soon as one turns the final bend, and experiences the most dramatic aural and visual shift.

The slope of the ramp leading from the ground level is non uniform. What starts out as a staircase flows into a rather steep ramp the slope of which gradually becomes more gentle until it culminates in a flat surface at the moment of exit/exposition. The effect is of the lightening of ones body. It is as if the user is shedding mass as he approaches “flight”.

Flight:
Occupying the center portion of the bridge where the various strands diverge, overlap, and intersect. Each strand maintains its own structural/functional rhythm that it contributes to this central syncopated experience of the crossing. The breakdown of order towards the mid point of the crossing brings attention to the tenuousness of the link that the bridge provides, both physically and psychologically. In some ways (and this is apparent in some of the ‘threads’ more than others) the act of standing at one edge of the bridge looking across to an unattainable destination is the more profound experience.
Housing the workshops and a number of gallery spaces, the tectonics of this portion of the inhabitable bridge structure differ greatly from the southern portion. While the approach from the south is characterized by an almost flowing, almost geological transition from landscape to building, the northern segment wedges itself into the opposing shoreline. It is a much more violent stance and yet it is anchored so deep within its new resting place that is no less connected with its environment than the fractured tectonic shifts to the south. The north building is an anchor, but one with a strongly directional bias. Between the two monumental walls that define the structure the building plunges into the water and, opens upwards onto the sky, and digs into the harbor infill.
crossing
A series of drawings that explore the relationship of the bridge with its surroundings and how they shape the form of the building. Each drawing focuses on a particular aspect: flow, directionality, border condition, and access.
the deception of the physical document
The first recorded description of the camera obscura was by al-Hassan Ibn al-Haitham (better known in the west by the Latinized ‘Alhazen’) in 1038 AD. The device was, as the name suggests a dark room (or any enclosed space) with a small aperture in one of the walls. As light passed through the aperture an image of the exterior is projected, inverted onto the opposite wall. The scientist (who only much later became ‘the artist’) would then proceed to paint over the projected image thus preserving it for posterity.

Let us imagine that Ibn al-Haitham is using his camera obscura to capture an image outside his room. The image is of a woman and her young child standing in a field of barley. It takes al-Haitham a few hours to paint over the projected image and in that period his subjects must remain quite still in order for him to be able to trace over a consistent image. The child is restless but some stern words from his mother are enough to keep him sufficiently immobile for the duration of the process. Now let us imagine that the passage of time outside Al-Haitham’s camera is greatly accelerated. From the moment he begins through the time it takes him to complete his tracing the seasons have changed, the barley has withered, the mother has died and the young child has become a man and long ago walked away.

If you can imagine what the image on Al-Haitham’s wall might have looked like, then you may begin to imagine the challenge of attempting to create an architecture that is resonant with its urban context.

As a metaphorical device, the temporal inconsistency that I have subjected al-Haitham to may seem excessive and unrealistic. However the realities of contemporary urban development suggest the opposite. The bridges, the cathedrals, the citadels, and the mosques, the architectural monuments that stand as the physical cornerstones of our cities once took their builders generations from conception to completion of their original plans, by which time the earliest parts of the building will have been already been used, restored, and modified..... in other words, by the time the building is complete,
it has already undergone major changes and modifications, and therefore the physical purity of the building as self sufficient and rigidly set conception is a non-issue.

The concept of the building as a manifestation of a set of ideas (about society/the city/urbanism/anything...) that depends for its integrity on retaining the physical/formal purity of the architectural object is thus moot since the original ‘architect’ (who is by this time likely long passed) realizes the necessity of relinquishing a degree of physical control over his building (and even then the changes are usually more drastic than he might anticipates)

The physicality of the object never becomes sacrosanct.

The contemporary architect faces an urban/sociocultural landscape that is not unlike the accelerated temporal state outside al-Haytham’s hypothetical room. However unlike al-Haitham he has a much more advanced set of tools at his disposal. Were he to attempt to capture the scene behind the wall he would use a modern camera to freeze the moment and capture the entire image in a single instance. Which is precisely what he does. The monuments that took generations are now built in a few short years. The meaning ascribed to buildings is wholly dependant on the integrity of their physical form and their relationship to an existing urban condition. However, the urban landscape is now, more than ever, exceedingly (frustratingly, unnervingly, exhilaratingly ) fluid and so the ‘purity’ of the physical object becomes all the more vital.

What was a palimpsest has become an object.

Before I even attempt to speak about the production of architecture I must address the way in which we perceive of it within the urban landscape that it occupies.

Therefore my first concern is with the modalities of reading of architecture within a specific sociocultural environment (and the fallacy of the physical object). I will argue that our understanding of the mechanics of the interaction between buildings and people, architecture and the city is severely hindered by our bias towards the physical.
If we accept narrative as a tool for understanding the architecture and its relationship with the city, it follows that it should inform the way we build. This segment is more of an investigation into the possibilities of creating an architecture that is conceptually as well as physically fluid/flexible.
The Deception of the Physical Document:

In his seminal historical work, the Muqadimmah, Ibn Khaldoun address a number of institutions and typologies within the urban environments.

Of the many methods that Ibn Khaldoun uses to formulate his statements I found among the most intriguing the first hand accounts of public spaces. A segment dealing with mosques and the markets in particular offered insights into specific aspects of the development of such institutions.

In the case of the mosque, the personal accounts by Maqdisi et al were particularly effective in depicting the development of an institutional structure from a largely social/religious one. The image of the interior of the mosque as the bustling setting for a broad range of human interactions, a great number of them less than coincident with the image of what is "permissible" in latter/modern day mosques, is an amazing insight into the gradual development of a concept of sanctity of space that is today frequently perceived to be an ingrained part of Muslim religious architecture. The need to sanctify space and institutionalize social and religious behavior, has been studied in depth in relation to larger political goals. What is extremely interesting to me is the way that the reading of physical architecture fluctuates along with the meaning that is ascribed to it by prevailing cultural understanding (i.e. the mosque as a forum for social interaction versus a sacred space). The institutionalizing of this cultural understanding almost requires a revisionist approach to the reading of the architecture, an approach that is implicit, if not explicitly articulated in the case of most modern Islamic nations, and is evidenced throughout history in virtually every major world civilization. If the reading of architecture is ephemeral, then the effect of it is equally unquantifiable over time. Historians and architects are aware of the enormous challenge of attempting to
reconstruct a coherent image of societal/political structure from, among other things, what remains of any circumstantial architectural evidence. Each of the two (the historian and the architect) would seem to approach any such reconstruction from a unique perspective. If not for the aforementioned ephemerality of architectural reading we might almost be able to say that the historian is concerned with the cause, while the architect seeks to determine the effect of a given space/structure. But of course we must deal with these concerns, along with the knowledge that as the role of each individual building or typology evolves it affects the reading of the larger urban structure which in turn feeds back into the development of the other individual components within it. A complex matrix of possibilities comes to mind represented by closed feedback loops generated from an infinite number of possible social/urban/cultural interactions and permutations. It seems almost impossible to ascertain the past much less extrapolate what we know of it into the future. And yet certain patterns emerge that appear to repeat themselves if only to taunt us with their ineffability.  

Ever since the invention of photography, a healthy debate has raged over the validity of the photographic medium as an objective representation of “reality”. Decades before the prevalence of easily manipulated digital imaging, factors such as selectivity, contextualism, and aesthetic manipulation have cast into doubt the role of the photograph as an impartial document. It appears to me that the way we study historical (or even contemporary) urban development would benefit from a similar debate.  

In studying the urban development of a given city architecture is often viewed as a document. A permanent document, its immutability reinforced by the physical weight of stone and mortar. We give precedence to empirical accounts that appear to us more real than statements that are more obviously apocryphal. The role of narrative is largely secondary and is used mainly to supplement the cold hard facts, to soften them up for easier consumption, while in fact narrative may be the only expressive medium
flexible enough to have been able to provide an accurate representation of the state of the urban condition.

An architecture that ingrains itself to the city is one that is willing to forgo the stasis of material and shift. This is not to say that a more transient type of architecture does not have its place or is not part of the urban landscape, however this is a different species of building. It is easier to deal with this fluid mass of building as a singular multicellular organism rather than individual architectures. I am thinking here for example of the explosion of informal housing along Cairo’s ring road (or mention china) Their effect on the city is profound and distinct and yet I have chosen not to address specifically this type of urban growth as it falls somewhat beyond the range of influence of the architect, who as much as he would like to, is most likely not consulted when it comes to their construction. The opposite of course is not true. The influence of these transient architectures is immediately apparent on the way people perceive and use the city. Essentially, what I am arguing for is the validity of the architect himself. It is painfully obvious that this “snapshot mentality” that architects succumb to is at best delusional and at worst a sadly inadequate defense mechanism. A type of elaborate justification of self-existence. Our attempts to freeze a moment within the sociocultural timeline, reference a contemporary understanding of social order to formulate meaning regarding a specific urban condition, construct a precise and determinate conceptual framework that is given material shape as an architectural object are ultimately futile. The futility of this ongoing exercise is apparent in the realization that by the time we have realized this architecture, sociocultural conditions/our reading of cities and architecture, and the meaning we ascribe to them have likely all shifted and changed. It is a process much like trying to trace a moving image. Al-Haitham (in our hypothetical situation) was able to look back from his wall and realize that what he had drawn was
not a moment but the passage of time. If he had been able to use a modern camera
to capture the image outside in its entirety in a single moment, the passage of time
outside would not have stopped. It will have continued in its accelerated pace although
al-Haitham, inside his room with his photographic image of a frozen moment in time
might have believed that he had captured the essence of what lay outside his wall. In
that, like ourselves today, he would be quite mistaken.
The result is architectural debris. The shells of buildings that have become crippled as
the conceptual frameworks that were the true cornerstones of their construction (more
than stone and brick and steel and concrete) are superceded and abandoned.

In thinking of architecture and narrative, it is quite possible to fall into a familiar trap
of determinism and anticipation. While linear narratives are useful, and quite possibly
necessary in the understanding of architecture, if we are to use narrative as a tool for
the creation of architecture it must be significantly more flexible. The building should
not anticipate its future role in the city but must contain within it the seeds of a trans-
formation that is both physical and related to its meaning within the city. It is a subtle
distinction that invites a gamut of possible interpretations. These range from restora-
tion and modification to actions as drastic as the demolition and reconstruction of the
physical structure, where the meaning of the architecture in relation to the city is so
pronounced as to exert an inexorable force on the space and any form that encloses
it. In this extreme example we can think of the building as having achieved the pen-
ultimate display of physical adaptability, shedding its old skin and inhabiting a newer
one. And the only reason the building does not cease to exist altogether as its physical
structure crumbles is that it has exerted such influence on the city, that its absence
creates a void in the consciousness of the urban collective. The architecture in its most
essential is preserved in the physical, social, and cultural memory of the urban collec-
tive and shapes the next iteration of tangible architectural form.

In this way I can begin to conceive of architecture as a narrative. Not as a book with a multitude of possible outcomes, but as one with blank pages at the end and an infinite amount of space between the lines.
process
These 'comic book' vignettes were a tool in the imagining of a certain type of alternate use scenario for the building. In these pages (left, opposite), starting with a single photograph of the existing bridge, layer upon layer of narrative projection is applied onto the site. The flexibility of the medium and the process encourages one to temporarily put asides certain considerations such as program and function (in their more rigid definitions, at least) and focus on fully exploring an idea about occupation, inhabitation, reading, mass and light.
I hardly see the propaganda balloons anymore. Lift like they're not there, they're actually quite beautiful at dusk, all lit up...
لا أعرف ما إذا كنت معنيًا.
لا أعرف ما يعني حقيقة
لا أعرف ما إذا كنت معنيًا.
لا أعرف ما إذا كنت معنيًا.
لا أعرف ما إذا كنت معنيًا.
These images are part of an investigation early on in the process, into the extraction of a set of constraints from one narrative and using these constraints to drive an architecture that is expressed through another, different narrative medium. A kind of story-architecture-story closed loop. While the process produced some interesting results, it eventually proved to be somewhat forced and prescribed. The observations made however, were largely influential in formulating the design methodology used later in the process.

In this particular exercise the text was William Gibson's seminal 'Neuromancer', the location was a dilapidated office block in Osaka, Japan's Honmachi district. The constraints are displayed on the image to the right.
sketches models drawings
Epilogue/A note on process:::

Much of the time spent on this thesis was directed at exploring a process of design. Through this explorative process a number of issues were brought up, the scope of which ultimately proved too broad for a single design thesis. These issues ranged from social responsibility, to the role of constraints (external and self imposed) on architectural design, to questioning such precepts as program, function, and aesthetics. In this book I have chosen to present the areas of investigation that have had the most direct effect on the architectural product presented therein. As the period of time allocated to produce this thesis drew to a close I had the chance to re-evaluate the questions that I have been asking myself about architecture and how far I had progressed towards answering these questions (to myself if no one else). I found that I was able to address a number of issues/concerns in a way that I could only have achieved with the flexibility and independence afforded by the format of “academic thesis” and of course with the invaluable input of my advisors, readers, and fellow students. More importantly I find that I now have considerably more questions than I started out with. This is the best outcome I could have hoped for. I look forward to many years of looking for the answers.
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