Clarity without Rigidity –
Urban Performance Landscape in Berlin

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Submitted to the Department of Architecture in Partial Fulfillment
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document in whole or in part.
mitte theater rhizome
To my brother, Zak –

_Looking forward to the things you will do._
abstract

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“What is necessary, is an incomplete design; a design that has clarity without rigidity; one that could be called ‘open’ as against ‘shut’. This is the essence of theatrical thinking: a true theater designer will think of their designs as being all the time in motion, in action...”

- Peter Brook, The Empty Space. (1980).

“What interests me is the opportunity for all of us to become something different from what we are, by constructing spaces that contribute something to the experience of who we are...”


This project is an urban landscape: a proposal to strengthen the stance of the famous Theater am Schiffbauerdamm towards the city of Berlin and provide a connection to the Spree River. Historic forces (such as the wholesale destruction of the fabric of Berlin during the bombing raids at the close of WWII), as well as a current reading of the city, shape and inform the design; while the theater itself provides great inspiration and guidance. The proposal transforms the core of the block containing Bertolt Brecht’s Berliner Ensemble into a network (rhizome) of stages, aiming to provide focus at large for the theater community of Berlin as well as a public garden to be used by local residents when no performances are occurring.

Conceptually, Brecht’s subversive attitude towards political power structures as well as his concept of Verfremdung (alienation) provide a bridge into the (phenomenological) design; Oscar Schlemmer focuses on the relationship between actor and audience and the importance of the stage as a place of ritual for our culture. Richard Serra informs the design in terms of mass, compression, and intensity. Adolphe Appia provides a form language for performance which can easily flow into the garden...

Thesis Supervisor
Fernando Domeyko, Senior Lecturer in Architecture
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1 THEATROPOLIS BERLIN/MITTE
Bertolt Brecht & I.

Summer, 1997.
introduction: theater on a dais

Epic theater allows for a circumstance which has been too little noticed. It may be called the filling in of the orchestra pit. The abyss which separates the players from the audience as it does the dead from the living; the abyss whose silence in a play heightens the sublimity, whose resonance in an opera heightens the intoxication - this abyss, of all elements of the theater the one that bears the most indelible traces of its ritual origin, has steadily decreased in significance. The stage is still raised, but it no longer rises from an unfathomable depth; it has become a dais. The didactic play and the epic theater are attempts to sit down on a dais.

-Walter Benjamin, *What is Epic Theater?*

Viewing the city as a place of unintentional, or accidental, theater, as in the photographs of Weegee or Gary Winogrand, one develops an understanding of the role performance plays in our everyday lives. Dramatic, ritualistic occasions such as sports events, military parades, or even international televised tragedies (such as the death of the Princess Diana) are all shared theatrical moments which serve as common landmarks in the establishment of our identity as citizens of a local or global grouping of humanity. In our contemporary world, the didactic play occurs on the dais; it is only slightly higher for the purely functional purpose of allowing us to see. Walter Benjamin's discussion of the filling in of the orchestra pit has left the audience with no clear separation from the stage; it is demoted from ritual podium to dais. Nonetheless, these rituals continue to be an indispensable part of our lives.

2. See city, in *Lexicon* section, chapter two.
Context

Germany in Europe;
Berlin in Germany
This thesis is an exploration of stage and performance working as a metaphor for architectural design. *Theater on a Dais* implies the placing of the ritual itself on a stage to be examined, understood, and utilized to inform architectural practice. It is an architectural exploration of the phenomenon of theater within culture.

**berlin: stadt des zeitgeist(s)**

Berlin. City of modern history. Cross-road between East and West. Always a city of extremes, Berlin is now once again the focus of great activity. It is a city which has been constantly re-built, re-formed, and transformed to represent the ideals of its leaders. It is my belief that this city is so unique in modern times precisely because it quite often seems to embody the zeitgeist\(^3\) of our modern era.

In part, it is has been the intention of this thesis to explore and respond architecturally to the context of Berlin's long and convoluted relationship with history. The drama of the Berlin Wall and John F. Kennedy's famous, "*Ich bin ein Berliner...*" speech symbolized for many the Cold War. One hundred years earlier, the architect Karl Friedrich Schinkel was constructing masterpieces to embody the growing power and affluence of the Prussian Empire. Albert Speer worked towards filling Berlin with massive neo-classical buildings to represent the power of the Nazi regime.

---

3. "Spirit of the times"
*left*

Berlin as Entertainment,
Humboldthain Sommerbad,
Summer 1997

*left*

Berlin as Place of Freedom,
Hilmar Schmundt as Angel.

photo by Hilmar Schmundt.
Today, Berlin continues to serve this role. Helmut Kohl, Chancellor of Germany for nearly two decades, is working to shape the city once again into a city representative of the new, re-unified Germany at the center of a strong European Union. To embody the economic power of the country, the city is once again being constructed at a shocking pace. Potsdamer Platz, which was only a few years ago a desolate no-mans land between two ideologically opposed states, is now home to perhaps one of the biggest building projects of all time. Berlin is in fact itself a massive stage set, renovated and transformed every few years by the latest director for the great play of history – a *Theatropolis*.

---


the.ater or the.atre /ˈθiː.ə.tər, ˈθiə.ətər/ n [ME theatre, fr. MF, fr. L theatrum, fr. Gk theatron, fr. ἱθαναίον to view, fr. θεα act of seeing; akin to Gk θαύμα miracle 1a: an outdoor structure for dramatic performances or spectacles in ancient Greece and Rome 1b: a building for dramatic performances 1c: a building or area for showing motion pictures 2a: a place rising by steps or gradations 2b: a room often with rising tiers of seats for lectures, surgical demonstrations, or other assemblies 3: a place of enactment of significant events or action 4a: dramatic literature or performance 4b: dramatic effectiveness

po.lis /ˈpaː.lɪs/ n or po.leis [Gk - more at POLICE] pl: a Greek city-state
above
Berlin as Icon,
advertisement seen on the MBTA,
Boston, MA. Fall 1997
RCN Telecom Services, Inc.

left
Berlin as Place of Dreams
"Die Friedensgöttin schwebt am Reichstag vorbei" 3.23.90
Along with the responsibility of Berlin to history, the city also serves the role of icon. Berlin was in the 1920's an icon of "the free life," home to transsexual singers, poets, and jazz musicians. In the 1940's the hate of the Allies was centered on the city, which was bombed beyond recognition. Today, Berlin continues as icon; a symbol of the triumph of capitalism over communism, and a continuing icon for youth and freedom. The Annual Love Parade, an international festival of techno dancing and insanity attended every summer by hundreds of thousands of people from all over the world, serves well as an example of Berlin's unique role as youth icon and point of zeitgeist release.

right
Berlin as Place of Youth Freedom
The Love Parade 1997

http://www.tu-chemnitz.de/-lto/pics/scans/love97a.JPG
Bertolt Brecht

photo and signature from
bertolt brecht

“The representation of human behavior from a social point of view is meant indeed to have a decisive influence on the spectator's own social behavior...”

– Bertolt Brecht, *Influencing the Audience*

February 10, 1998 will be the 100th anniversary of the birth of Bertolt Brecht. One of the most important German writers and playwrights of the 20th century, Brecht has become an icon of German theater and a rallying point for politically motivated art in this century. A militant opponent of the Nazis, Brecht was interested early on in educating the masses through his art. Before being forced into exile in 1933, Brecht premiered his immensely popular *Threepenny Opera* at the *Theater am Schiffbauerdamm*, beginning his long relationship with this particular theater.

As we are now in the centenary year of Brecht’s birth, a great deal of attention is being given internationally to this man’s work and to his theater, *The Berliner Ensemble, (BE)*. The press in Germany is running regular features on his life: *Stern*, a popular German weekly news magazine, ran a three-issue feature on Brecht, calling him, “the dialectic, communist, woman’s man, and lustful thinker...” On June 20, 1997, I ran into a protest at the Bertolt Brecht Platz in Berlin, proclaiming, “Freedom for Bertolt Brecht!”

---

The following is a translation of the poster which was taped to Brecht’s legs during the protest:

(1898–1998) One Hundred Years of Brecht

Freedom for Bertolt Brecht!

Masked protest against the battle between the Berliner Ensemble and Barbara Brecht-Schall!

June 20 & 21, 1997 from 6:30–7:30 at the Bertolt Brecht Platz in Berlin/Mitte

Let Us Celebrate One Hundred Years of Bertolt Brecht Together!

All new productions of Brecht’s plays must be approved by his family, adding yet another layer of difficulty for the Berliner Ensemble to continue to explore and innovate in its productions. Nonetheless, this masked protest and the current popular media attention given to Brecht prove that he remains a controversial and culturally relevant character despite his death more than forty years ago.

It is, however, important to note that within the context of this project it is not necessary to extensively explore the role of Brecht within German theater or literature. Rather, acting as an architect, I have focused on the place which the German people have chosen to monumentalize him, and on developing an understanding of the mechanism with which Brecht intended to affect the changes upon his audience listed in his quote above – the V-Effect.
the berliner ensemble

After Brecht returned to Germany from the United States following World War II in 1949, he founded, along with Helen Wiegel, the Berliner Ensemble (BE). Built in 1892 by the architect Hienrich Seeling, this theater was destined to hold a special place in the history of Berlin and of theater in Germany at large. Originally called the Neues Theater; it boasts a lavish neo-baroque interior. Likely due to its stepped back position from the river Spree, the theater survived the war with very little damage and was one of the first to re-open after the war. It is on the space surrounding this theater that this thesis focuses.

During the Cold War, the BE was known internationally as one of the “cultural gems” of the Warsaw Pact nations. The BE regularly made visits to theater festivals in Paris, London, and even to New York, famous for its innovative productions and acting techniques. Today, the BE is in great difficulty; many productions of Brecht’s plays must be approved by his family, and the theater now has to cope with the extensive competition offered by the many commercial theaters in Berlin. It is my belief that Fritz Cremer’s monument to Brecht sitting in front of the theater embodies more than just a commemoration of the man. The unchanging bronze material of the sculpture is symbolic of the difficulty of the BE has to remain, vital, active and controversial. It is the proposition of this thesis to demonumentalize Bertolt Brecht in relation to his theater and support this quest of the Berliner Ensemble, as far as possible, architecturally.

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8. “New Theater”
The kind of acting which was tried out at the Schiffbauerdamm Theater in Berlin between the First and Second World Wars, with the object of producing such images, is based on the 'alienation effect' (V-effect). A representation that alienates is one which allows us to recognize its subject, but at the same time makes it seem unfamiliar... [these] new alienations are only designed to free socially-conditioned phenomena from that stamp of familiarity which protects them against our grasp today... This technique allows the theater to make use in its representations of the new social scientific method known as dialectical materialism. In order to unearth society's laws of motion this method treats social situations as processes, and traces out all their inconsistencies. It regards nothing as existing except in so far as it changes, in other words is in disharmony with itself... That is why the Theater must alienate what it shows.”

– Bertolt Brecht, A Short Organum for Theater

Brecht’s strategy of Verfremdung (alienation) remains one of the pillars of his theatrical theory. Brecht felt that through exposing the mechanisms of the theater the audience would be able to empathize with the stories of the actors on the stage – and therefore carry with them greater responsibility for the lives of the characters being presented. A simple example of this theory in action is the elevation of the orchestra out of the pit and onto the stage. In this way the entire audience would be visually conscious not only of the work that the orchestra was doing in order to make the music but also of the mechanism of the theater. It was as if he was saying, “How does one make music? One plays an instrument.”


10. And here one finds the socialist agenda of Brecht.
Similarly, Brecht at times presented his plays with no curtain, using instead a white handkerchief, which was dropped at the moment the “play” began. Beyond blurring the boundaries between “play” and “reality” this anti-ritual worked against “suspended disbelief,” placing Brecht’s audience rather in a state of heightened presence—empathy. According to Brecht historian Elizabeth Wright,

> “Verfremdung is a mode of critical seeing that goes on within a process by which man identifies his objects. It goes beyond the concept ‘defamiliarization’: it sets up a series of social, political, and idealogical interruptions that remind us that representations are not given but produced...”

Thus, “stage and auditorium are purged of all that is ‘magical’ and...no ‘hypnotic fields’ come about...”

What, therefore, can an architect learn from this strategy? What is to be taught, or learned, through the act of visiting a work of architecture? It is my proposition that an essentialized version of phenomenology serves as an excellent translation of the V-effect into architecture.

---

11. As in the work of Luigi Pirandello, for example.
12. Elizabeth Wright in *Postmodern Brecht*, page 19. The best example of Brecht’s use of this strategy is generally considered to be his brilliant but emotionally violent play, *The Measures Taken*.
14. Perceptually essentialized, that is, from the place of phenomenology in literary or critical theory.
appia and serra: alienating phenomenology

“What interests me is the opportunity for all of us to become something different from what we are, by constructing spaces that contribute something to the experience of who we are…”


The phenomenology of Richard Serra offers an excellent model for the union of the V-effect with architecture. Similar to revealing the mechanism of the theater, the pure mass and substance of many of Serra’s works challenge the visitor to generate an understanding of their own body in relation to the sculpture. Serra’s 1970–72 work, Shift, is a series of six concrete walls set along a smooth slope. The ambiguous relationship of the walls to one another causes the visitor to question their own judgement as to the relative position of one wall to another and indeed to question one’s own position relative to the walls. In this way Serra is able to generate a space that causes the visitor (his “audience”) to re-evaluate the results of their own perception. The mechanism of perception by their body is revealed. Similarly, Serra’s recently built Torqued Ellipses functions to generate a work in which “…space moves and shifts in response to the viewer’s motion in and around the forms…”15
I also found great inspiration in the drawings and writings of the Swiss theater designer Adolphe Appia. Born in Geneva in 1862, Appia was a fervent theater reformer and is generally recognized as a key figure in the development of modern stage design. Inspired greatly by the operas of Wagner, particularly his *Ring*, Appia became frustrated with the two-dimensional staging which was the fashion at the time. He was exasperated with the "dull, over-bright" use of the new techniques of electrical lighting. Says Appia:

"The drama, all shadow and highlight, sharp contrasts and infinite nuances, is projected on a uniform surface, all parts of which are monotonously clear... an object lit from three or four directions throws no shadow and, from a theatrical viewpoint, does not exist. Today's staging, almost without exception, is merely a collection of such non-existent objects, the characters included..."\(^\text{17}\)

Appia was calling for the quality of *darkness* on stage; he was a proponent for *lack* of light, of shadow.

In addition, Appia seemed to be greatly interested in the simple phenomenology suggested by Serra's work. During that time, most stage sets were made by painting a series of "flats," which were, just that, flat as the sectional diagrams on the following page show. Appia searched to generate stage sets which had *mass*; he was interested in the possibilities that the phenomenon of reality could offer to the illusion of the stage.

---

above
The Elysian Fields, Act II, Scene II, (no date).
Adolphe Appia

below
Setting for Schiller's 'Le Plongeur', (1909).
Adolphe Appia

from
Beacham, Richard C. *Adolphe Appia, Theater Artist.*
The human body does not try to create any illusion of reality; it is reality! Naturally such a conception completely changes the purpose of the setting; in one case it is the realistic appearance of objects that is sought, in the other the highest possible degree of actuality for the human body... scenic illusion is the presence of the living actor.\textsuperscript{18}

Clearly, Appia searched to confront the stage with \textit{Architectural fact}.\textsuperscript{19}

Moreover, the form language Appia choose to do this with was brilliant, for its simplicity, quality, and elegance.

It is therefore greatly on the basis of these two precedents that the design of this project was constructed. Within my own design, one may note that at the top of the amphitheater in the garden section lies a structure which borrows heavily from the forms of Appia. I call this piece the \textit{Appia Structure}. It is intended to transcend its use for the theater and to provide a space for working and living in times when no performance is programmed.

An attempt is made to use the phenomenology of Serra (via the compressive walls in the sloping lawn section) and a loose interpretation of the form-language of Appia to generate a space which informs the viewer, “contributing something to the experience of who we are...” as a strategy towards building a \textit{living V} effect monument to Bertolt Brecht.

\textsuperscript{18} Appia, as quoted in Beacham, (1987)., page 26.
\textsuperscript{19} A term borrowed from my advisor, Signor Fernando Domeyko.
2 METHOD
BERLINER ENSEMBLE
method

This book documents the process of the development of the thesis and includes two conceptual (non-site related) exercises which were of critical importance to the development of the project.

Research during the preparation semester (spring 1997) originated three major components. First, to generate a conceptual foundation for the project, I began to develop a lexicon which eventually grew to provide a conceptual skeleton for the project and clarify my own attitude towards performance and the theater. As this project is ultimately based on the ritual of the theater and performance functioning as a mirror of culture, I also began fairly early to develop an annotated bibliography of books/plays/essays/films/happenings to serve as a major element of the foundation for the thesis. Lastly, the seeds of the spatial (architectural) model where explored in the form of a series of “black boxes” which had a loosely defined program - to explore set design and the power of light to define spaces.

During the fall semester, these elements were folded together with an exploration of the site and context to create the final design. In terms of methodology, the diagram at left expresses that for me, the final design (product), is a waystation to knowledge. Primarily, the project has produced a modest and fairly realistic proposal for a very small, but important, piece of Berlin.
the boxes
These two boxes were built in the middle of the spring of 1997 and constitute my initial, intuitive exploration of stage set design. They were designed in order to generate a greater understanding of the perceptual activity within a set space (stage) and can be seen as the origin of many of the later developments from the design phase of the project, particularly those dealing with light and phenomenon.

These small, diorama-like constructions allowed me to examine the effects of highly controlled light in very small spaces. I include photos of these two boxes as well as a series of images generated from them in the following section. I present here only the results from the two boxes which were for me the most successful in terms of both variability and quality of effect.
series one: points

Points of light are markers. Solid but ambiguous, they tend to connote beginning or ending.
series two: lines

Two points define a line. They are the minimum marks to make space.
series three: planes

Two lines define a plane. This box began to explore color and texture as well as light, revealing further levels of complexity. To be continued...
the lexicon

actual size:
8.25" x 4.25" x .13"
lexicon

During the spring of 1997, I began this project by attempting to identify some of the major terminology which is associated with the theater at large. This exercise eventually developed into a lexicon, which collects 32 of these terms into a cohesive whole which I bound together as a book, seen at left.

The conceptual foundation for this project is primarily outlined in the project lexicon, which provides an elaboration of the central ideas underlying my attitude to performance ritual as well as the conceptual skeleton for the project. As such, the lexicon is a fundamental element of the project and is here presented in full. I made the decision to re-format the content of the lexicon – but it should be seem as acting within the context of the thesis as an independent, autonomous element – a lexicon.
holding the lexicon
Broken into five sections, the lexicon strategizes the major programmatic elements of the project. Each section acts somewhat like a part of speech; that is, rather than nouns, this lexicon has players, or modes; rather than adjectives, the lexicon has qualities:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grammar</th>
<th>Qualities</th>
<th>Players</th>
<th>Modes</th>
<th>Elements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>lexicon</td>
<td>color</td>
<td>actor</td>
<td>cinema</td>
<td>arena stage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mark</td>
<td>light</td>
<td>audience</td>
<td>city</td>
<td>backstage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>metaphor</td>
<td>perception</td>
<td>director</td>
<td>dance</td>
<td>flexible stage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>narrative</td>
<td>presence</td>
<td>playwright</td>
<td>research</td>
<td>proscenium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>notation</td>
<td>shadow</td>
<td>receptor</td>
<td>ritual</td>
<td>prop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>symbol</td>
<td>sound</td>
<td>technician</td>
<td>theater</td>
<td>set</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The lexicon provides images related to the words as well as text which explains the connotations of the words. Webster’s dictionary definitions are provided as a foundation and reference for the words.

It is my belief that beyond identifying these terms, the exercise had the additional benefit of providing fixed definitions, both visually and verbally, from which to build the conceptual framework of the project.
lexicon

A lexicon organizes one’s thoughts. It is an expression of a personal understanding of the world on the basis of one’s own semantics. Lexicons hold pieces of one’s experiences and places they have been, visions they have seen, things eaten and heard. Ideally, a lexicon would have the ability to express a person’s entire perceptions of a single concept in a concise way.
Often when beginning it is important to put something down off which further steps can be measured. A mark begins to block out the world and acts as a signpost. A mark is the most simple element of witness. It is the minimum result of an act of creation. A mark can be simultaneously both immensely quick and deeply profound.

1. **mark** 1. meaning boundary, march, sign; akin to OHG marha boundary; L. margo 1: a boundary line; 2a: a conspicuous object serving as a guide for travelers 2b: one of the bits of leather or metal banding placed on a sounding line at intervals 2c: TARGET 2d: the starting line or position of a game agent 2e: GOAL, OBJECT 2f: an object of attack, ridicule, or abuse; specif : a victim of an act; 2g: the point under discussion 2h: a standard of performance, quality, or condition 3a: INDICATION 3b: an impression (as a scratch, scar, or stain) made on something; a distinguishing trait or quality; CHARACTERISTIC 3c: a symbol used for identification or indication of ownership 3d: a cross made in place of a signature 3e: TRADEMARK 3f: POSTMARK 3g: a grade used by a teacher to represent his estimate of a student's work or conduct; esp : GRADE 3h: RECORD 4a: IMPORTANCE; DISTINCTION 4b: a lasting or strong impression 4d: an assessment of merits
metaphor

Metaphor is the workhorse of poetry. It allows one to string together connotations, opening the door to an alternative level of discourse. Metaphor is a study in contrasts and fine shades of difference. It is often, but not always, the collaborator of narrative in the exercise of deepening an idea.

narrative

Connective tissue, narrative functions to string together various elements of the world. Spatially, narrative is the topology of movement which links a series of physical experiences. Metaphorically, narrative generates stories within a project; as a novel has a plot, with ups and downs, so too can architecture be tuned with rhythm and timbre to maximize its effect on the receptor.
A form of writing with symbols, notation is fundamentally a personal and cultural lingo for a certain set of persons. Notation is fascinatingly flexible, able to be used to denote everything ranging from dance to battle, cooking to lovemaking.

A symbol is something that represents something else. It is a presence which speaks of elsewhere. It is also a compressed container, retainer, of meaning. Symbols can mask as easily as they can inform.
Strangely, color is both the most essential and the least important element of vision. To form, color has a strange relationship; it can either create a form or simply shade it; that is, it can act as either skeleton or skin. Color is the lover of light, spending the evening lounging until light returns to reveal her proclivities.
Light is the fundamental building block of architecture. It is the only material which we can perceive at a distance, and has an intimate relationship with color. Light is holy by its very nature. It brings warmth and helps to establish the basic outlines of our world. Light can block spaces, inform them, or shift a reality as effectively as any other tool.
perception

Perception is the process by which we construct our identities. The key to our senses, it is the door to ourselves, providing the connection between our bodies and the world. The act of perceiving something affirms our vicarious existence and the substantial realities that surround us.

Physical fact. The reality of a material; the weight of a column perceptible as one passes; the lingering wetness of a kiss hours later.

“Perception does not give me truth like geometry but presences.”
- Merleau-Ponty

presence

Presence alerts us to our carnal selves and reminds us to reconnect to life. Emotionally, presence can act as guilt, pulling us back or forcing us to reconsider our position. Presence is the vanguard of power; the first palpable inkling we have of the capabilities of force - physical, emotional, sexual, or political.
shadow

Counterpoint/lack of light. Absence. A state of not having, which therefore reveals the state of having. Shadow speaks of the alternative. It thickens lines, gives depth and propels the world into three dimensions.

sound

Like color, sound ranges between acting as skeleton to acting as skin. Unlike color, sound does not depend on anything to reveal its effect. Sound is incredibly powerful; able to directly induce emotion as well as physical pain. Married with harmony and rhythm, sound produces music, another essential element of culture. Sound is a texture, first applied to the surface of our perception, but easily trickling down to our greatest depths.
actor

The one who is acting, making, playing, doing, being. The state of action; the focus.
Identification with the actor allows us to be within the set; to share the emotions of the other.
The actor is the container of the emotions, we, as receptors, are experience through our stasis.
The audience is a group of people of varying size generally in a state of reception, focusing on the action of a stage or of a separate group of people who are performing. Known in the singular as, "receptor". The audience is the masses; the people, the populi in reception of the world.
**director**

The Facilitator, the Priest, the Choreographer, the Boss. The director is the person with vision who holds the central focus of a group of performers in every medium. A position of great importance, the director is ultimately responsible for establishing the connection between the actors and the receptors, as well as co-ordinating the various impulses and instincts of the rest of the technicians, and the writer. In exchange for accepting these responsibilities, the director is given the honor of having her vision take precedence over all others in the group.

**playwright**

The maker. The writer is the ultimate creator, the researcher, who is generating something from nothing. This person differs from the director in that he has no responsibilities of critique or interpretation, and must only facilitate between his own ideas and the world. Playwrights often collaborate with a director and at times fulfill both roles, but in the purest sense the playwright enjoys a level of freedom (and autonomy/anonymity) that the other players do not.
A single member of the audience can be referred to as a receptor. A receptor is a person in the act of actively perceiving. A receptor is someone who uses their senses, is open to the world and is hopefully processing the messages they are receiving.

**receptor**

RECEIVER

as a cell or group of cells that receives stimulus: SENSE ORGAN: a chemical group having a specific affinity for a particular antibody or a virus

**technician**

A facilitator as is the director, the technician is responsible for technology. No less creative than other players, the technician must be a master of craft but also be willing to skew and subvert her own skills in order to push the boundaries of her vocation.

**technician**

specialist in the technical details of a subject or occupation: one who has acquired the technique of an art or other area of specialization
cinema

Magic. Hundreds of thousands of images, blurred together in concert with sound create an experience which plays with narrative and metaphor as easily as a child eats ice cream. Cinema utilizes technology and sequence as fundamental tools to achieve these goals. The first of the "virtual" arts, cinema is as beautiful as it is tragic, painful as it is uplifting, and might well encompass nearly all other arts, including architecture, painting, dance, photography, poetry, theater......
A city is a concentration of activity and intensity in one place. People moving rapidly and making bigger things happen. A city is a zone of accidental encounter and vast intensification.
Stimulation and contradiction, extremes of rich and poor, good and bad, commerce and exchange. City is the family of activity, the sum of the whole, the maximum and the minimum.
dance

Dance is the intersection of movement with space and time. It is a particular type of performance that focuses attention on the human body and the expressive possibilities it offers. Dance should be calm and elegant, yet controlled and forceful. Dance masks the strength upon which it depends.

research

Research is the process of exploration of an idea or relation between things. Research in this case produces visual debris which can be followed by others, who, using perception, can empathize with the researcher and partake in the benefits of the exploration. Research is the vehicle of creativity.
Ritual

Repetition of events over time. Rituals are the landmarks of our lives, establishing continuity between our past and future. They are crucial moments in the establishment of our identity as members of a group.

Ritual

n
1. the established form for a ceremony; specifically, the order of words prescribed for a religious ceremony
2a. ritual observance; specifically, a system of rites
2b. a ceremonial act or action
2c. any formal and customarily repeated act or series of acts

Theater

Performance is a cultural universal. However, there appear to be three major splits as to the origin of theater: first, those who say that theater is innate; that there is some sort of biological instinct to perform for our colleagues. Others mention that theater is about dominance, acting as propaganda to support the power structure, while the third school states theater is a ritual, based perhaps on religion and acting as a cultural identity bond.
A stage which is, "in the middle". This type of stage is interesting because it has no front, no back - it is in a sense non-hierarchical. However, it provides a clear, perhaps even clearer, focus - on stage is truly on stage and off stage is elsewhere. This type of stage has strange connotations for me because it so easily lends itself to violent sport, from boxing to bullfighting to gladiator battles.

arena

A stage which is, "in the middle". This type of stage is interesting because it has no front, no back - it is in a sense non-hierarchical. However, it provides a clear, perhaps even clearer, focus - on stage is truly on stage and off stage is elsewhere. This type of stage has strange connotations for me because it so easily lends itself to violent sport, from boxing to bullfighting to gladiator battles.

arena adj L. arena, arena sand, sandy place] 1: an area in a Roman amphitheater for gladiatorial combats 2a: an enclosed area used for public entertainment 2b: a building containing an arena 3: a sphere of interest or activity

Royal Exchange Theater.
behind the set, the domain of the technician, the backstage is privacy. It is the reality that generates the illusion, the place where imagination is transformed to product through the application of spirit. It is the realm of secrets where transmitters (actors) lay in wait, preparing for the ritual of performance.
This type of stage is the art stage of the late 60's. I think that flexible stage means two things:
either it is a stage that can be used as one of the other major stage types (proscenium, thrust,
arena) - that it is flexible in this way - or that in fact it is simply a space in which the event occurs.
In this meaning, a flexible stage is multi-purpose and easily lends itself to a blurring of the
boundaries between the actor and the receptor.

**proscenium**

A stage which lies for the most part behind an arch. In this type of stage, the audience faces the
performers in a frontal relationship and is more likely to feel the separation between themselves
and the actors. This type of stage provides a clear boundary and thus increases awareness of any
transgression of these boundaries. It is a classical, traditional type of theater.

**pro.scen.i.um** pro-ske-'ne-um n ['E, fr. Gk proske-onion front of the building forming the back-
ground for a dramatic performance, stage, fr. pro- + ske- scene- building forming the background for a
dramatic performance - more at SCENE 1a: the stage of an ancient theater 1b: the part of a modern
stage in front of the curtain 1c: the wall that separates the stage from the auditorium and provides
the arch that frames it 2: FOREGROUND
prop

The duty of the prop is to build a relationship between an actor and the set. A visual prop, for instance, can indicate subtleties of time and generally connote a situation the way spices widen a dining experience.

1. prop (prap) n [ME proppe, fr. MD. stopper; akin to MLG proppe stopper]: something that props or sustains: SUPPORT 2. prop vt or propped; or propping: to support by placing something under or against 1b: to support by placing against something 2: SUSTAIN, STRENGTHEN 3. prop n: PROPERTY 4. prop n: PROPELLER

set

A series of elements which establishes the context of an action. A set can be as simple as a small single object or short series of words or as complex as a baroque castle. Sets are highly symbolic, usually representing something they are not, and can serve to coerce people into acts they might not normally do. As a cue for imagination, sets have the singular power and wonderful ability to embody everything, and nothing, at once.

1. set (sett) vb or set; or setting [ME setten, fr. OE settan; akin to OHG sezen to set, OE sjütan to sit 1a: to cause to sit 1b: to place in or on a seat (as a king on a throne) ... 13c: to spread to the wind (as the sails) 14a: to put in order for immediate use (as a place for a guest) 14b: to provide (as words, verses) with melody and instrumental accompaniment 14c: to make scenically ready for a performance (as the stage) 14d: to compose (type) for printing: to put into type 15a: to put a fine edge on by grinding or honing (as a razor) 15b: to bend slightly the tooth points of (a saw) alternately in opposite directions 15c: to adjust (a measuring instrument) to a desired position 15d: to sink (a nailhead) below the surface 16: to fix in a desired position (as by heating or stretching) 17a: to adorn with something affixed or infixed: STUD, DOT (clear sky with stars) 17b: to fix (as a precious stone) in a border of metal: place in a setting 18a: to hold something in regard or esteem at the rate of (as a great deal by daily exercise)
An area in which to present; it is a raised platform, often physically separated from the audience by change in section. A stage is the center of focus. A place to perform, the presence of a stage functions to key the audience into the ritual and generally prepares them to be passive, (as receptors), rather than active, as actors. Stages can be highly symbolic in and of themselves. As Shakespeare says, “All the world’s a stage...”

**stage** (1) n [ME, OF estage, fr. (assumed) VL staticum, fr. L stare to stand - more at STAND 1a: one of a series of positions or stations one above the other 2a1: a raised platform 2a2: the part of a theater between the proscenium and the rear wall including the acting area, wings, and storage space 2b: a center of attention or scene of action 3a: a scaffold for workmen 3b: the small platform of a microscope on which an object is placed for examination 4a: a place of rest formerly provided for those traveling by stagecoach 4b: the distance between two stopping places on a road 4c: STAGECOACH 5a: a period or step in a process, activity, or development 5b: one passing through a (specified) stage 6: an element or part in a complex electronic contrivance: specif : a single tube with its associated components in an amplifier 7 a propulsion unit of a rocket with its own fuel and container 8: in or into the acting profession - on the stage. stage (2) vt 1: to produce on the stage 2: to produce for public view { - a track meet

**thrust**

A stage which cuts out into the audience area. This type of stage has been used for some time in the English theater. Because the audience surrounds the stage on three sides, a very different type of prop must be used which can be seen from all sides. Therefore scenery is usually extremely limited and almost always vastly simplified. This brings the focus on to the performers (actors) as people and probably increases attention to their movements.
SITE
The Mechanic, (1920)
Ferdinand Léger

from
figure/ground block development

The Mechanic, by Fernand Léger, serves well as project site analogy. Léger's painting presents an organic figure in couched in a plane of rigid, technical forms: industry, road pattern, rows of windows, etc., combine to express the characteristics of the modern city. In contrast, the figure itself is unabashedly organic. The curves of the mechanic's muscles and the aggressive expansiveness of the smoke from his cigarette make no compromise to the rigid pattern of the city. However, the boundaries are clear: his is a place of nature, of softness, surrounded by the hard edge of the city. Only at the bottom of the painting does his shirt run off the edge of the canvas indicating a point of “natural” expansion – in the case of this thesis, the river. A comparison of this painting to the project proposal diagram at the end of this section will hopefully reveal some of the same qualities - the organic, a garden, autonomous and strong yet couched and integrated into its intensely urban surroundings.

This section illustrates the historical development of the block enclosing the project. The development of the spatial structure over time can be examined by comparing the shifting pattern of the diagrams. This allowed me to strategize my urban scale moves and aided in understanding the history of the site. The original source material is presented at the top of the following pages, while my own diagrams at the bottom present a consistent graphic for comparison. Two other alternatives are included for informational purposes: Albert Speer's 1939 project and the 1986 East German (DDR) city planning project.
Detail from 1747/48 plan of Berlin.
Samuel Graf von Schmettau
from
Demps, Laurenz. *Der Schiffbauerdamm.*
In 1747, Berlin was an extremely rural place. At this time, the site was the confluence of two rivers: the Panke, running roughly north-south, and the Spree, running roughly east-west. Although the Unter den Linden was already in place and terminated by the "Brandenburger Tor," the block was at this time mostly open farm land, with one building associated with the Panke which may or may not have been a mill.
Detail of Situationsplan von der Haupt- und Residenstadt Berlin und Umgebung.
Wilhelm Liebenow (1867)

from
By 1867, Berlin was already known for both its business activities as well as its political power. Schinkel's architecture had begun to transform the city into a major international city representative of the power of the Prussian Kings. Up on the Schiffbauerdamm, the block began to have edge closure and a long north-south axis which cut through the middle. The Panke was open to the sky, but crossed by bridges at the Spree and at the future Rienhardt Straße to the north. Note that the large central volume of the block was at this time a newly opened market hall, which had only recently replaced the circus that had occupied the site for some time.
Detail of Stadtplan Berlin, (1936)

Senatverwaltung für Bauen, Wohnen and Verkehr - Vermessungswesen.
1936 exemplifies the apex of the built intensity for Berlin. Shortly after this point, many buildings were ripped down and replaced by Bunkers (as at the corner of Reinhardt and Albrecht Straße). Note that the Panke is by this time underground across the entire site. At the center of the block is Poelzig’s *Theater des Volkes*.
Detail from Stadtplan Berlin, (1993)
Senatverwaltung für Bauen, Wohnen and Verkehr - Vermessungswesen.
Existing

This diagram from 1993 shows the existing condition of the site. The entire center of the block is open and used at present mostly for parking. The Panke is underground, for the most part forgotten. The block is only loosely defined, open at the corners and full of "residual spaces." While the block does offer access from the north at Rienhardt Straße, there is no longer an east-west access across the site.
Detail of Stadtplan

from
Albert Speer Plan (1939)

Speer’s design for the *Reichshauptstadt* was thankfully never executed, being interrupted by World War II. This plan included the famous north/south axis (from “Rome to the North Sea”) and a massive re-organization of the city on a Hausmanian scale. The Panke plays no part in Speer’s plan; in fact, the site is largely obliterated by the design, including notably the *Theater am Schiffbauerdamm*. The Spree is widened and a grand allee is put in place on both the north and south banks of the river.
Detail from DDR city plan of Berlin.

from
This DDR (Deutsche Demokratische Republik - or East German) plan for the site, from a plan of all of East Berlin, shows that there was an intention to build on the footprint of Poelzig’s theater, most likely as a series of pre-cast concrete housing buildings. The hard corner of the Schiffbauerdamm and Friedrichstraße is restored, but there remains an ambiguity about the project’s strategy concerning closure on the northern edge of the site and if the importance of the tower to the Berliner Ensemble is recognized. The Panke remains underground indefinitely.
These images clearly illustrate several of the urban-scale moves of the design. Here, one can see the edge and figure definition strengthened by the three additional buildings (shaded, above left) which are massed out on the north, south east corner and north west corner of the site. The division of the space and variability of figure is achieved via the influence of the walls in the southern section of the garden and the additional interior masses of the new, smaller digital theater and the café building.

Note the expanded and restored role of the Panke, as well as the permeability of the site, both north-south and east-west.
1936 plan showing locations of historical site images
visual site history

The map on the facing page indicates the approximate location from which the various photographs & sketches on the following pages were taken. The historical development of the site is intricately related to my final design, both in terms of the block development (previous section) and in terms of the quality of the site as I understand it to have developed over time. These images were selected in order to convey some of character of what was; and perhaps what can, be.


Note constricted street condition along the East façade of the building. Where is the entrance?
2. North view of the Theater am Schiffbauerdamm. (1919)
Photo courtesy of the Landesbildstelle Berlin, #23/197.

Note the mouth of the Panke, exactly as it is today, below the tower entrance.

3. North-East View of the tower entrance, with Panke below and the Volks Theater at right. (1930?)
Photo courtesy of the Landesbildstelle Berlin, #28/2231.

This photo shows clearly the location of Mies Van der Rohe's Glass Skyscraper, on the triangle in the foreground, and its direct relationship to thesis project site.


This design was located directly across the river from the thesis project site.

9. Max Missmann’s advertisement from the 1920’s.


plan from 1993 showing locations of contemporary site photographs
contemporary visual documentation

The map on the facing page indicates the location from which the various photographs on the following pages were taken. The intention of this section is to present the existing conditions of the site with a particular focus on those features which were important to the final design. For example, the view from #12 takes on great importance in the design, as this is the point of crossing as one marks passage along the river. Aside from the two aerial photographs at the end, all photographs in this section are my own.

1. The Tower, and façade, of the Berliner Ensemble.
2. East view from the Berliner Ensemble’s tower.

3. Looking North from the Zirkus.

5. North from the Weidnämmbrücke.

6. Summer time at Bertolt Brecht Platz.

7. Winter, from South (Bertolt Brecht Platz).
8. Corner Albrecht Straße (at left) and Reinhardt Straße. Note Bunker at left.

9. Corner Friedrich Straße (at right) and Schifflauerdamm.
10. Corner Friedrich Straße and Reinhardt Straße, looking at the Friedrichstadt Palast.

11. Corner Albrecht Straße, looking North.
12. Looking under the Wiedenammer Bridge, East.
Imagine walking along the Spree under this bridge.

13. View of the Courtyard, looking West.

Accidental Monument

15. Detail of a bullet hole on the Monument. the mark of war...
16. West view of the Wiedenammer Bridge.

17. North view of Bertolt Brecht Platz.
18. Aerial perspective. Site is at lower left. courtesy of Architekturburo ProStadt, Berlin.

4 DESIGN
Oscar Schlemmer, *Scheme for Stage, Cult, and...*  
design

"What is necessary, is an incomplete design; a design that
has clarity without rigidity; one that could be called
‘open’ as against ‘shut’. This is the essence of theatrical
thinking: a true theater designer will think of their
designs as being all the time in motion, in action…”

- Peter Brook, The Empty Space. (1980)

More of an exploration of what the theater has to offer architects than of
what architects have to offer the theater, I decided not to design another
theater for Berlin, but rather to understand and theatrically integrate the
space around an existing theater - the Berliner Ensemble. This space,
“residual space” from the war, has a long history of what Oscar
Schlemmer would call “stage, cult, and popular entertainment.” Over
the years, the site held a circus, a market hall (a very theatrical type of
place), Hans Poelzig’s Grosses Shauspielhaus, and finally served as the
original home of the Friedrichstadt Palast. Thus I felt quite comfortable
with examining the history of this theme on the site and working towards
developing a “theatrical” strategy for the organization of the space.
Currently a parking lot, I decided to re-organize the interior of the block
as a public garden with a series of theatrical “zones” in which performance
can freely occur. This network of stages - a rhizome - becomes a
microcosm of the network of theaters and stages throughout Berlin/Mitte -
what I refer to as the Mitte Theater Rhizome. The space of the project is
conceived to hold all of the theatrical possibilities of Schlemmer’s scheme,
and more – in an open, public, and vibrant piece of the city.

21. By “residual,” I intend that this space is still carrying its scars from the bombing
of WWII, and has yet to be re-integrated in a meaningful way with the living,
contemporary city of Berlin.
23. See photo #2 in the section Contemporary Visual Documentation.
Renzo Piano

sketch, fall 1997.
For some time during the fall semester I was unsure as to the physical limits of the area I was designing. At a certain point it became clear to me that the proposal is in fact one for the entire block containing the Berliner Ensemble. The figure/ground relationships I had been exploring through the diagrams and plans presented in the block development section, as well as a long series of 1:1000 study models, emerged as important exercises towards strategizing a wholistic proposal for the block.

In a certain sense I see the design as a repair job. This area, and indeed all of Berlin, are only now emerging from the devasting effects of World War II. I attempted throughout the design process to develop an understanding of the quality and texture of this part of the city as it existed before the War. I did not, however, intend to replicate those pre-existing conditions but rather used the result of these researches to inform myself as to what might have been as a precusor towards deciding what could be.

Lastly, I would like to mention that I was very fortunate to discuss this project with the architect Renzo Piano during the design phase of the project. During our discussion, the project’s emphasis on edge definition (also suggested by Sig. Piano’s sketch at left) became clearer to me. To paraphrase his words, the project, “is a kind of tooth with a cavity inside…”

24. See discussion of The Mechanic, in the section Figure/Ground Block Development.
Literally, Berlin/Mitte means the middle of Berlin. Indeed, as one can see from the map at left, Mitte’s central location gives it a particular importance to the life of the city. Several major lines cross in Mitte - the Spree and the Panke, the railroad lines, the former Berlin Wall, all come together in this part of Berlin. In the near future, Mitte will be home to the offices of the Federal Republic of Germany.
berlin/mitte – elements of the city

It is therefore within this context of an intense international city that this project is designed. Within a few years the major politicians and bureaucrats running Germany will be crossing these streets, looking for the latest hip lunch joint and buying cases of Prosecco to take home. Where will these people relax? And what role will a theater such as the Berliner Ensemble play in their lives?

On the following pages I have prepared a series of diagrams to explore the overlapping urban intensity of Berlin/Mitte. The first diagram shows the major cultural, governmental, and landmark buildings in the city. What is important is not so much the specific role each of these building plays, but rather that they are all there, contributing and making Berlin Berlin.

The second diagram outlines the Mitte Theater Rhizome.
While not intended to show absolute relationships between the theaters in this part of the city, this diagram is an attempt to graph the interactions of the theater community within the city. The major theaters are called out in red and a series of lines creates a network between them.
**program**

This diagram was produced fairly early in the design phase and acts as a sort of textual collage discussing the character and activities of the various zones of the project.

**traintraintraintrain**

Movement and intensity of transport offered by the S-Bahn from the station across the river.

**riverriverriverriver**

The Spree. Spine of the city.

**stagestagestagestage**

Place of performance. See lexicon.

**residenceresidence/commercialcommercial**

Enclosure and city context.

**grasgrasgrasgrass**

A lawn. Simple, sloping and open space to get to the river.
theatropolis and stage network

Programmatically, the block can be seen as a providing residential and commercial enclosure for a core which is given to public open space and theatrical performance. Permeability across the site is stressed; both north–south (from the Zirkus down to the Spree) and east–west (from Friedrichstraße to Albrecht Straße). The figural spaces produced by the design are broken down in the following section.

The stage network, or rhizome, is a fundamental element of the strategy of the design. A series of stages are linked, re-producing in miniature the network of stages and theaters already present within Berlin/Mitte.
In order to link the block to the city at large, a series of zones are created to give a variability of form and experience to the future visitor. Note the strong edge in each diagram; this gives context to the form and a link to the larger figure of the city.

A primary zone of intensified urban experience is born out of the existing courtyard. The addition of another, smaller theater to the north, and the café, transform and strengthen this area into a piazza. A bridge carries momentum across the garden, terminating in a smaller piazza along to the Friedrich Straße.

The core of the project is a garden, an open space intended to delight the visitor and provide relaxation for the local residents. This zone stretches down to the river Spree and allows access, becoming a place “to go down to the river.”

A zone defined as lying between land and water, the edge provides lateral movement along the Spree at the southern edge of the site as well as a place “to go up to the theater” by climbing a large generous stair to the west of the site or populating the long train-like café...

The variability of the zones replicates the experience of the city. Nature, the built, and movement are brought together.
collage
On the northern edge of the project, a grove of trees produces an area of intimacy: a hill at the north east corner helps close this area down. This forest could be a stage, for viewers sitting on the hill or on the *Appia Structure*; or perhaps it is a place to sit for views watching a play unfolding on the hill. In times of no performance, local children could climb the trees or hide behind the hill.

The center of the project finds the amphitheater. This is enclosed to the north by the *Appia Structure*, as explained on the ground floor plan. Its materials are stone and light.

To the south, along the river, lies the lawn. This sloping plane intersects the river and is an open, free space, cut by walls. The walls provide artificial horizon and compression, defining the space.

To the west lies the piazza of the *Berliner Ensemble*; enclosed but permeable, its edges are inhabited by public program, such as the café and the smaller, digital theater on its northern edge.

A great stair reaches down to the river Spree on the south western corner; this stair allows access and permeability to the river path and the piazza.
On the ground floor, one can see the plan of the Berliner Ensemble and new "digital" theater on the north east corner of the piazza. The lobby of this theater gives to the piazza, contrasting the entrance to the café below.

Inside the Appia Structure, one finds public bathrooms and control rooms for the light poles spread throughout the garden.
The underground plan (1:600 metric) reveals the connection between the existing buildings of the *Berliner Ensemble* and the new structures. The café is conceived of as a long skinny volume, much like a train car diner, with a long series of ceiling fans marking the space.

Service for the digital theater is through the basement of the existing practice stage building and a small bar is provided for mid-performance drinks, bathrooms, and coat check.
east–west section(s) – 1:250 & 1:1000

Section C (1:250 metric) is cut through the central garden and amphitheater space of the project. This shows to the right the Appia Structure with a single actress standing on stage and reveals the ceiling fans of the café to the left. The façade of the digital theater is to the left rear with its ticket window on the left. The Panke is cut as it winds down towards the Spree. This drawing is presented at 1:1000 (section D) in order to show the “lowness” of the project in comparison to the height of the surrounding buildings.
north–south sections – 1:250 & 1:500

Section A (1:250 metric) is cut through the central garden and amphitheater space of the project. The intimate zone of the forest is at left with the hill giving enclosure. The cut continues through the Appia Structure showing how the light posts may be used to carry fabric stage flags and revealing its long low steps. At the middle lies the glass column, seven meters high and actively carrying light down under the bridge. To the right, the lawn slopes to the river.

Section B (1:500 metric) is cut through the digital theater. Designed as an update of Brecht’s industrial era conveyor-belt theater, this theater incorporates a series of sensors as well as projection technology in order to allow research of today’s technology and performance. At right is the café with its façade of windows and the steps to the river.
north–south sections

section A - 1:250

section B - 1:500
The models below are mostly from the development phase; all at 1:1000, they were attempts to understand the urban possibilities of the project. At the lower left in is the plug from the final 1:1000 model. For some time I was unsure if the project should be built with a large building in the middle of the site; that is what many of these models were exploring.

This model was an early 1:500 attempt. Although this model falsely attempted to produce a large building on the site, it did clarify the stage rhizome strategy of the project.
Building models has always been a very important part of my design process. The problem with presenting models in a book is that they are no longer three dimensional; nonetheless, I present a few images of the models here in order to document this element of my design process.

*Conceptual model, 5-6 September 1997*

At the scale of 1:3000, this early model clearly indicates the major moves of the project; movement and access down to the river via sloping plane at the core of the project, the importance of the existing three buildings of the *Berlin Ensemble*, and the fundamental principles of pedestrian permeability across the site.
This model shows the plug from the previous page in the context model.

Note the massing buildings added in the corners of the site and the line of the Panke. Also, the movement along the River Spree is clearly shown on this model.
At left, lies the new location of the “old” Brecht Monument; center finds the café, the Panke, and the large grass slope. At rear is the Appia Structure, and the light posts. Note the Serra-inspired walls giving compression and horizon to the lawn.
These two shots reveal some of the detail within the final presentation model.
The project edges are clearly shown on this model, as well as the result of the additional massing buildings. Slope, wall, and the *Appia Structure* are shown on this model.
5 RESOURCES
annotated bibliography

notes on an annotated bibliography

Many of the sources listed here have a short paragraph or so after the citation which are a series of notes originally intended for myself. I include them here because the reader might perhaps find them useful in moments of future scholarship. They are, however, by no means intended as an exhaustive discussion of the sources, nor are the annotations to be taken on any authority other than being a fairly accurate representation of this author’s feelings towards a particular work at the moment of being written. Perhaps the reader will find an additional understanding of the author’s process and inspirations through these notes. The numbers at the beginning of the entries are the dates that the annotations were written. All dates are from 1997, “4.5” meaning April 5, 1997, save the few which indicate otherwise, such as “1.5.98,” which would have been written January 5, 1998.


4.30–Chapter 2, *Design versus Non – Design* details the relationship of theater to cinema and utilizes theatrical terms to understand both the cinema and the city. Very good reference in this case for the lexicon, this essay also explores the relationship of design to theory and cultural systems, specifically the mechanisms of metaphor and symbol.


3.15–Solid project for a traditional theater on a buildable Boston site. Useful bibliography and seemingly a good reference for conventional design methodology. Design shows heavy influence of Scharoun, Aalto.


12.29 – Beacham’s book provides an excellent discussion and of the the “life and times” of Appia. Discusses the world of Appia and the context of set and theater design as he began his work; also goes fairly extensively into Eurhythmic dance and Jaques Dalcroix. Appia’s drawings are unfortunately too small in this book to really get a sense of them, but there is enough material to get by in a crunch. During a certain period of the thesis, I looked at this book a bit as a bible; not really for Beacham’s writing, but just for the little bits of drawings that I could see...

3.18—Excellent treatise; has *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, (1936) among other essays. Very important: *What is Epic Theater?* (1939); quoted above in introduction…“Epic theater allows for a circumstance which has been too little noticed. It may be called the filling in of the orchestra pit…” etc. (page 154.) Also writes extensively on Brecht in this essay.


3.17—This book has an introduction an excellent quick summary of the history of theater, along with images of representative theaters from the major movements of western theater. There are also short interviews with current theater makers, such as: Tadeusz Kantor, (radical polish?), Ariane Mnouchkine, (French: she says on the ritual of theater: “You lay a carpet on the floor and an Indian actor walks in. Although he is surrounded by a grim, intimidating suburban theater, the carpet becomes his universe. It is a clearly defined and crossable frontier but it allows both actor and spectator to stand apart and create a changing world…[p. 16]”), Peter Brook (English: acoustics & the role of the relationship established between actors and audience); & 2 others. Also plans and sections from many major international theater buildings and also the HALF MOON THEATER in London.


3.17—Peter Brook's delightful book is full of extremely accessible essays concerning the Theater from a director's point of view. He offers opinions to everyone in the theater, from stage designers to actors to directors, theater directors, etc. The book is split, somewhat theatrically, into four sections: Deadly (what he calls
BAD theater), Holy, Rough (popular theater), and Immediate (his, clearly brilliant, theater). He is also very articulate about certain things:

"In performance, the relationship is actor/subject/audience. In rehearsal it is actor/subject/director. The earliest relationship is director/subject/designer... I have often done my own designs... when the director is working this way, his theoretical understanding of the play and its extension in terms of shapes and color both evolve at the same tempo. A scene may escape the director for several weeks, one shape in the set may seem incomplete—then as he works on the set he may suddenly find the place of the scent that eludes him, as he works on the structure of the difficult scene he may suddenly glimpse its meaning in terms of stage action or a succession of colors... a sympathy of tempo is what matters most..." (page 101).

He then goes on to discuss the work of the designer/director relationship and the development of a design process in this context:

"What is necessary, is an incomplete design; a design that has clarity without rigidity; one that could be called 'open' as against 'shut'. This is the essence of theatrical thinking: a true theater designer will think of his designs as being all the time in motion, in action, in relation to what the actor brings to a scene as it unfolds. In other words, unlike the easel painter, in two dimensions, or the sculptor in three, the designer thinks in terms of the fourth dimension, the passage of time—not the stage picture, but the stage moving picture..." (page 101 – 102)

Also of interest: introduction to Rough Theater, pages 65 – 66....

"...as for theaters, the problem of design cannot start logically...(It) must come from studying what it is that brings about the most vivid relationship between people—and this is best served by asymmetry, even by disorder...If we find that dung is a good fertilizer, it is no use being squeamish; if the theater seems to need a certain crude element, this must be accepted as part of its natural soil..." And so on.


3.19—Constant inspiration. Most pertinent to this project because of its ability to slip in and out of multiple realities— the point of view first of Marco Polo & then of Gengis. Each story presents a possible play, a simple narrative. Some say every city is Venice anyway. A possible "site" quotation from: *Cities & The Sky* "Those who arrive at Thekla can see little of the city, beyond the plank fences, the sackcloth screens, the scaffoldings, the metal armatures, the wooden catwalks hanging from ropes or supported by sawhorses, the ladders, the trestles. If you ask "Why is Thekla's construction taking such a long time?" the inhabitants continue hoisting sacks, lowering leaded strings, moving long brushes up and down, as they answer "So that it's destruction cannot begin." And if asked whether they fear that, once the scaffoldings are removed, the city may begin to crumble and fall to pieces, they add hastily, in a whisper, "Not only the city." If, dissatisfied with the answers, someone puts his eye to a crack in a fence, he sees cranes pulling up other cranes, scaffoldings that embrace other scaffoldings, beams that prop up other beams. "What meaning does your construction have?" he asks. "What is the aim of a city under construction unless it is a city? Where is the plan you are following, the blueprint?" "We will show it to you as soon as the working day is over; we cannot interrupt our work now," they answer. Work stops at sunset. Darkness falls over the building site. The sky is filled with stars. "There is the blueprint," they say."


Sensationalist account of Brecht's "exciting" time of exile...


A very extensive discussion of the history of the Schiffbauerdamm in Berlin, from the earliest settlement until the fall of the Berlin Wall. An important source for local site history.


11.5—Amazing images of the body. Wonderful source of inspiration.

3.11—Catalog for an exhibition of Wilson’s work at the MFA, Boston. Full of drawings and texts — and also a short play by Susan Sontag and various quotes by Richard Serra. Wilson is himself an architect turned set designer. Also includes a CD of music inspired by Wilson’s theater.

Friedman, Martin L. *Hockney Paints the Stage.* London: Thames and Hudson. (1983).

3.12—Essays by and about Hockney and the connection between painting and stage design. Fairly comprehensive collection of Hockney’s major set designs, bibliography, etc. The introduction, “Painting into Theater” seems a fairly standard art—historian type but exhaustive discussion of Hockney “in context.”

Funke, Christoph and Jansen, Wolfgang. *Theater am Schiffbauerdamm.*


1.11.98—Very useful overview and reference about the city of Berlin, some historical facts, population, etc. A good travel guide, if somewhat uninspired.


3.17—This book is a truly excellent history and discussion of the putting of movement on paper. It includes a chronology of dance notation from the mid-15th century until the current day, and is generally both quite scholarly and accessible. I found this book very inspirational in terms of time; how time can be written with movement and space together. Includes an extensive bibliography and short descriptions of the major dance notational systems.


4.30—An excellent source. Details the theories of Oscar Schlemmer, Moholy– Nagy & other Bauhaus people. Quite possibly the program of the project could be modeled somewhat after the Bauhaus...

“Any serious system of movement notation avoids words because they are a deterrent in international communication...”


3.13—Summary of well known productions during the period. Lots of b & w photos, very good for browsing and understanding, “the period…” A short essay called, “A Bird’s Eye View of Some New Trends” is just that, but very dated.


3.18—Part of a special section featuring I.D. magazine’s list of 40 leading — edge designers of 1995. The Interaction Design Group at IDEO San Francisco specializes in “interaction” design. Design, understood in this way, takes the form of a multicolored process that lies somewhere between science and theater; the team’s “research” often includes playwriting and the invention of character sketches based on user profiles and product demographics.” [Abstract from Art Index Online]


3.10—Beautiful drawings and excellent photographs of Samarkand. Formal, spatial analysis with some historical context. Mostly graphic with little text.


4.8—Charles Correa’s 1978–82 project for a vacation hotel in Goa is an exercise in blurring the distinction between reality and illusion. His Kala Akedemi also in Goa could be an excellent precedent for me, acting as a research center for theater and dance...

A range of essays discussing what makes the theater directly applicable to daily life and further why theater is necessary to society. From the viewpoint of a contemporary playwright from Chicago.


4.30-The above two books are collections of Duane Michals photographs. These photographs are excellent examples of narrative photography; “static cinema,” a form which has always held great inspiration for me. Images from these books are in the lexicon.


3.23-Photographs by Duane Michals serve as excellent examples of narrative – clear, simple images which can be so eloquent delightful and simple. Michals is a formalist but a master of what he does.


3.10-Full of beauteous yellowing photographs of Samarkand from the late 19th century. The text is translucent and even annoying at times, but the images are inspirational and informative about the Samarkand of old, pre - USSR restoration. See images #96: Arches on the Zervashan River, or #23, The Shah – i – Zindah Complex.


3.19-I recently saw an excellent production of Luigi Pirandello’s *Six Characters in Search of an Author* which inspired me to learn more about the theater and to begin thinking about designing a set or perhaps a theater as a thesis project. What was particularly amazing to me about the Pirandello play was the way that the line between the play and the not – play – my reality – was blurred. Pirandello filled in the orchestra pit with such ease and skill that I felt myself in transformation – the characters on stage were themselves blurring into the actors – who in turn were blurring into me as they discussed current issues and allowed me to
identify with them.” from my own essay. This copy includes a short essay of introduction which develops the character of Piradello himself, giving insight into the person who could cross these boundaries...


A short book discussing considerations for the actor; how to deal with emotions on the stage, the idea of acting as a craft, rather than an innate talent. Many of these advices seem directly applicable to architecture as well.


This book is the manifesto of the contemporary “phenomenologist builder” architects. It has essays by Steven Holl on the primacy of light in his work and eloquently describes the importance of materiality and phenomenon in architecture.


3.15—Original Text written in Italian in 1638. An important early treaty on how to make set design. Includes an essay on perspective in the set, how to draw plans...most with the classical Italian 3 door – type permanent scene “gli tre strade con tre punti...” Full of glorious illustrations of machines, plans of sets, simple sketches, etc. Also includes contemporary essays about Sabbattini.


11.2-Albert Speer's eerie and astonishing work. Excellent documentation, photographs, etc...


Essays about culture art in “the long view.”


3.19 - A book of poetry; delightful book, short vignettes of life inspired by the work of and the person of Joseph Cornell. It seems to be a sort of *Citta Invisible* of New York. But this could easily offer sites for short sketches of set designs. Might be useful to get going when things are slow...: (page 53)

*The Moon is the Sorcerer’s Helper*- As the curtain goes up we see a forest with tall, fantastic trees. It is night. There’s a moon half hidden by the clouds. Blue mist drifts through the trees. The forest is a place in which everything your hear desires and fear lives. “Blue is the color of your yellow hair,” said Schwitters. He walked into a forest near Hanover and found there half a toy train engine, which he then used in one of his collages. Beauty is about the improbable coming true suddenly. The great ballerina, Emma Livry, a protégée of Taglioni, for instance, died in flames while dancing the role a night butterfly.


29.12 - Recorded Feb. 1981, at Columbia 30th St. Studio, this digital recording provided inspiration during the final hours of drawing production of the thesis and is a beautiful rendition of the Brecht and Weill’s *Zeitgeist*. Strata’s voice is wonderful.


1.11.98 - A fairly extensive collection of Brecht’s writings, translated by Willett. Letters, essays, etc., ranging from 1918 until his death in 1956. On Alienation (*the Verfremdungs Effekt*): “The representation of human behavior from a social point of view is meant indeed to have a decisive influence on the spectator’s own social behavior...” (p. 100-101); or, more pointedly, “The kind of acting which was tried out at the Schiffbauerdamm Theater in Berlin between the First and Second World Wars, with the object of producing such images, is based on the ‘alienation effect’ (V-effect). A representation that alienates is one which allows us to recognize its subject, but at the same time makes it seem unfamiliar... (these) new alienations are only designed to free socially-conditioned phenomena from that stamp of familiarity...
which protects them against our grasp today...This technique allows the theater to make use in its representations of the new social scientific method known as dialectical materialism. In order to unearth society's laws of motion this method treats social situations as processes, and traces out all their inconsistencies. It regards nothing as existing except in so far as it changes, in other words is in disharmony with itself...That is why the Theater must alienate what it shows.” From *A Short Organum for Theater*, 1949, pp. 191-193.


12.29.97—“In this radical and deliberately controversial re-reading of Brecht, Wright challenges the view which threatens to turn him into a museum-piece...” quote from book-jacket. This book, which is somewhat fashionable as a “po-mo” interpretation of Brecht, seems nevertheless to provide a good discussion of the critical context of looking at Brecht in the late 1980's/early 1990's, before the fall of the Berlin Wall and loss of the convenient East/ West German dichotomy. She says lots of stuff like, “Humanist and Marxist critics have seen the play as an indictment of the party’s machiavellianism: the Humanists thought that Brecht was being Leninist and the Marxists feared that the play would be seen as Leninist by the Humanists...” (page 16), but also provides a very accessible critique of Brecht. A useful book for anyone interested in Brecht.

image credits

Unless in the text or here noted, all images and diagrams are by the author. See Bibliography for full citations.

overlay 1 (abstract)
Oscar Schlemmer (in part); in Gropius, Walter. Die Bühne... (page 8).

chapter 2 title image
17th century French Court Dance notation, from Guest. Dance Notation.

lexicon
narrative: photographs by Duane Michals in Duane Michals. (1992)
notation: from Guest, Anne. Dance Notation.
light: photograph of sculpture by James Turrell, Arfurm-Proto.
perception: Eye Reflecting the Interior of the Theater of Becanacon, Ledoux.
shadow: photograph by James Turrell, Mendota Stoppage 69.
actor: Alexander Calder, from The Circus
director: Kurt Schmidt, Marrionette. (Bauhaus puppeteer, 1920’s...)
playwright: Othello (see bibliography, page 142)
technician: The Pet Shop Boys
city: photograph by Gary Winogrand
research: Phillips, Dr. David in Ewing, William A. The Body. (page 1).
theat er: Oscar Schlemmer in Gropius, Walter. Die Bühne... (page 8).
arena: illustration in Breton, Gaelle. Theaters.
backstage: René Magritte, ceci n’est pas un pipe.
flexible: illustration in Breton, Gaelle. Theaters.
proscenium: illustration in Breton, Gaelle. Theaters.
set: photograph by Mark Jarzombek, Rome.
stage: Samarkand, from Herdeg, Klaus. Formal Structure in...
thrust: illustration in Breton, Gaelle. Theaters.

design
plan of mitte (underlay): Senatsverwaltung für Bau- und Wohnungswesen V.

chapter 5 title image
Richard Serra, Shift.
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* *

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