The Simultaneous Museum
A Transformation of the Exclusive Type
into a Coexistent Urban Form

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The images contained in this document are of the best quality available.
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This work is dedicated to the memory of my great-grandmother, Henrietta Bowman.
The city is a fact in nature, like a cave, a run of mackerel or an ant heap. But it is also a conscious work of art, and it holds within its communal framework many simpler and more personal forms of art. Mind takes form in the city; and in turn, urban forms condition mind. For space, no less than time, is artfully reorganized in cities; in boundary lines and silhouettes, in the fixing of horizontal planes and vertical peaks, in utilizing or denying the natural site, the city records the attitude of a culture and an epoch to the fundamental facts of its existence.

Lewis Mumford

"Isn't it possible that technological developments have both changed our lives and broadened the cultural field? And that segments of society are not discrete categories but rather simultaneous processes that collide, seep and withdraw with, into and from one another."

Barbara Kruger

"Both the past and the present deserve a museum; occasionally they cohabit beneath the same roof. When they don't they must break and define themselves apart, where they belong."

Douglas Davis
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Thesis Abstract

The desire to understand art in a context outside of the interpretive control of the museum environment is implicit in much of the work of contemporary artists. The city offers an alternative environment in which art can be understood as a part of a larger social order and the vitality of our everyday lives. To think of the city as a museum context requires first an understanding of the city as a weaving of systems (of movement, of use, of information, etc.); and then an understanding of the city in terms of the range of experiential encounters it offers, i.e. green spaces, public plazas, narrow allies, waterfront edges, heavily inhabited districts, privacies, passageways, and so on. With an understanding of this framework, one can conceive of overlaying yet another layer of encounter which exists in simultaneity with the existing urban order, while at times clarifying it or offering alternative interpretations to how the city can be understood. This work will attempt to establish some criteria for such an institution, then use those criteria in the development of the design proposition.
fig 1:
Guy-Ernest Debord
The Naked City (1957)
On Tuesday, 6 March 1956 at 10 a.m., G.-E. Debord and Gil J Wolman meet in the rue des Jardins-Paul and head north in order to explore the possibilities of traversing Paris at that latitude. Despite their intentions they quickly find themselves drifting toward the east and traverse the upper section of the 11th arrondissement, an area whose poor commercial standardization is a good example of petit-bourgeois landscape. The only pleasing encounter is the store at 160, rue Oberkampf: "Delicatessen-Provisions A. Breton." Upon reaching the 20th arrondissement, Debord and Wolman enter a series of narrow alleys that ultimately lead to the intersection of rue Menilmontant and rue des Couronnes, by way of deserted lots and very abandoned-looking low buildings. On the north side of rue des Couronnes a staircase gives them access to a network of alleys similar to previous ones, but marred by an annoyingly picturesque character. Their itinerary is subsequently inflected in a northwesterly direction.

Between the avenue Simon Bolívar and the avenue Mathurin Moreau they cross a prominence where a number of empty streets become entangled, a dismaying monotony of facades (the rue Remy de Gourmont, rue Edgar Poe, etc.). Shortly thereafter, they suddenly come upon the far end of the canal [Saint-]Martin and unexpectedly find themselves facing the impressive rotunda by Claude-Nicolas Ledoux, a virtual ruin left in an incredible state of abandonment, whose charm is singularly enhanced by the curve of the elevated subway line that passes by at close distance. One thinks here of

Chapter One
The Experiential Transformation

"Gathering of Urban Ambiances By Means Of The Dérive"
by Guy-Ernest Debord
Marechal Toukhachevsky’s fortuitous projection, previously cited in La revolution surrealiste, of how much more beautiful Versailles would be if a factory were to be constructed between the palace and the water basin.

Upon studying the terrain the Lettrists feel able to discern the existence of an important psychogeographic hub [plaque tournante] - its center occupied by the Ledoux rotunda - that could be defined as a Jaures-Stalingrad unity, opening out onto at least four significant psychogeographical bearings - the canal [Saint-]Martin, boulevard de la Chapelle, rue d'Aubervilliers, and the canal de l'Ourcq - and probably more. In conjunction with the concept of the hub, Wolman recalls the intersection in Cannes that he designated “the center of the world” in 1952. One should no doubt liken this to the clearly psychogeographic appeal of the illustrations found in books for very young schoolchildren; here, for didactic reasons, one finds collected in a single image a harbor, a mountain, an isthmus, a forest, a river, a dike, a cape, a bridge, a ship, and an archipelago. Claude Lorrain’s images of harbors are not unrelated to this procedure.

Debord and Wolman continue to walk north along the beautiful and tragic rue d'Aubervilliers. They eat lunch on the way. Having taken the boulevard Macdonald up to the canal [Saint-]Denis they follow the right bank of this canal heading north, making stops - sometimes long, sometimes brief - at various bars patronized by the bargemen. They
abandon the canal at a familiar lock directly north of the pont du Landy and arrive at 6:30 p.m. in a Spanish bar regularly referred to by the workers who frequent it as the "Tavern of the Revolters." This bar is located at the westernmost point of Aubervilliers, across from the site called "La Plaine" that is part of the town of [Saint-]Denis. Passing by the lock once again, they roam about for a while in Aubervilliers, an area that they have traversed dozens of times at night but which is unfamiliar to them in daytime. As darkness descends they finally decide to put an end to a dérive that they deem to be of little interest as such.

Undertaking the critique of their operation, they establish that a dérive that starts out from the same point would do better to head in a north-by-northwesterly direction and that since from this point of view Paris remains to a large extent unknown, the number of systemic dérives of this sort should be increased. They also ascertain that the contradiction between chance and conscious choice involved in the dérive itself recurs at subsequent levels of equilibrium and that the development is unlimited. As a program for upcoming dérives Debord proposed the direct link between the center Jaures-Stalingrad (or Centre Ledoux) and the Seine as well as the exploration of its tributaries towards the west. Wolman proposes a dérive that would begin at the “Tavern of the Revolters” and would follow the canal north all the way to [Saint-]Denis and beyond.
THE SIMULTANEOUS MUSEUM

Discovery

The city is the remarkable venue for discovery. We may overlook this fact in our acceptance of the city as a purely economic entity, a means of bringing together consumer and supplier, of facilitating services, and concentrating points of origin and destination. The two notions are not mutually exclusive, however (fig. 5).

The Situationists, like their precursors the Surrealists before them, saw the city as an incredibly rich resource of expressive information, and in their exploratory wanderings ("déritves") they encountered the city purely on its own terms, directed by the environmental cues they discovered along the journey.

The dérive (literally, "drift," in the nautical sense) was a matter of opening one's consciousness to the (so to speak) unconsciousness of urban space; the dérive meant a solo or collective passage down streets, a surrender to and then pursuit of alleys of attraction, boulevards of repulsion, until the city itself became a field of "psychogeography," where every building, route, and decoration expanded with meaning or disappeared for the lack of it.²

Like the city, the museum runs the risk of being understood only as a convenient organizer, a tool for facilitating comprehension or cataloging. The best museums, however, are often those in which we feel we can interject a bit of ourselves, becoming involved in the sense of understanding through personal discovery. Museums of science and natural history, as well as museums for children, have pioneered this
format. It is less common, perhaps because it is less deliberate, in museums for art.

Colossal museums, such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, achieve this quality of discovery to some degree by sheer scale and the extent of their collections. The visitor can literally become lost in the endless expanses of galleries. Unintended encounters occur en route to intentional destinations.

The Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston is a better example. While its scale is quite approachable, its galleries are packed with the intricate and ironic juxtapositions of works as collected and assembled by its founder. No large institution would ever exhibit work in this manner; yet because of its density and seeming chaos, we are encouraged in a sense to pick and choose what we wish to focus on. Often, the visitor may come

\[
A \rightarrow B \quad (the \ Economio \ City)
A \rightarrow ? \quad (the \ Situatist \ City)
A \rightarrow ? \rightarrow B \quad (the \ Simulation \ City)
\]

fig. 3: Sidewalk Sam, Botticelli Primavera, with elements of Haymarket.

fig. 4: sketches from my own derive in the North End

fig. 5: urban journeys: 3 models.
across a piece so unobtrusive that he may feel he is the first in years to notice it. This is the essence of discovery, the ability to see the goal not as one of exhaustive consumption, but selective experience, chance encounter, or specific focus.

**Sequence** The museum which looks to the whole city as its "galleries" takes on an obvious attitude of inclusiveness. As such, the notion of discovery becomes inevitably linked to the choices we make about how to use it.

The traditional museum, as a singular building, may attempt to clarify the encounter in a number of ways. First, there is a clear sense of entry; the point at which one leaves the outside world and enters the museum is indisputable. There is generally an attempt at providing an overall sense of how the building is organized. In many cases this is around some primary space, such as a massive lobby (the Met, the National Gallery in Washington), a courtyard (the Gardner Museum, the Hirshorn in Washington), or a central rotunda (the Altes Museum in Berlin, or one of its countless offspring). This becomes the space to which the visitor is constantly reintroduced as a means of orientation. Also, there is the manipulation of space and theme, the collaboration of architecturally defined space with art historical, theoretical, or interpretive themes to lend a sense of continuity to the journey. One of the most remarkable examples of this sort of sequencing is found in the Noguchi Museum (designed by the sculptor himself) in Long Island City, New York. Here, the
organization is achieved by expressively linking sculptures and spaces along a journey from the harsh and exposed, through more refinement and protection, and concluding with the delicate and intimate (figs. 7-9).

At the scale of the city, how does one go about achieving the same clarity of experience? Is it possible, or even desirable?

One can simply declare that "the city is a museum!," allowing the individual to interpret the metaphor in his own way. This hardly takes an active position on shaping the experience, however, and leaves the architect's role ambiguous at best.

Alternatively, one may chose to identify those components within the city seen as part of the "collection." This approach assumes a stance of inclusion/exclusion and the task then becomes one of revealing the interconnectedness of the included elements - largely a problem of information. Boston's Freedom Trail, which relies on painted stripes and maps, is based on this notion.

The fact is the city cannot offer the singularity of intent that the individual building does. The city is an expansive amalgamation of systems existing concurrently (though not necessarily harmoniously). It cannot be approached as an architectural form.
figs. 7-9:
Spatial and Thematic sequencing through the Isamu Noguchi Museum.
We do not think of "entering" the city in the same sense that we may enter the various buildings within it. We may speak of "arriving" in the city, but it is in a processional sense; we know when we have arrived, but the experience of arriving is one of intensification. This can be seen as a quality of the modern city which distinguishes it from the medieval, where arrival was the literal entry through the city wall.

The assumption taken in this work which attempts to reconcile the architectural act with the rich complexity of the urban structure, is to establish a place of origin, a well-spring from which active and interpretive interventions are disseminated and within which visitors can become oriented both spatially and didactically. The experiential result is a sense of intensification as one approaches the source, vice versa as one moves away. There is an awareness, then, of when one has arrived, but, like the city itself, a "blurring" of any actual boundaries. There is no limit to growth. Where deliberate installations may end, the unintended reading may persist. Furthermore, the form suggests there is no "right way" to encounter this place. Each user maps out his own "Freedom Trail."
The notion of intensification suggests another qualitative transformation: the museum as a filter. While the familiar museum form suggests an isolated and controlled encounter, the proposed new type leaves open the possibility that encounters with art might inform or even relate directly to daily activities (fig. 10). The hope is that users will take away with them a heightened sensitivity to their environment, an ability to be critical of their urban habitat much as the Situationists were.

The critic John Dewey writes:

"Usually there is a hostile reaction to a conception of art that connects it with the activities of a live creature in its environment. The hostility to association of fine art with normal processes of living is a pathetic, even a tragic, commentary on life as it is ordinarily lived. Only because that life is usually so stunted, aborted, slack, or heavy laden, is the idea entertained that there is some inherent antagonism between the process of normal living and creation and enjoyment of works of esthetic art. After all, even though "spiritual" and "material" are separated and set in opposition to one another there must be conditions through which the ideal is capable of embodiment and realization - and this is all, fundamentally, that "matter" signifies."

The museum as we know it fits well into a scenario which sets art apart (beyond) our everyday lives (what Dewey calls an esoteric theory of art). This may not be seen as completely undesirable. We go to the museum, the theatre, and so on, often to escape a life where outcomes are predictable, even banal, as daily life can so often be. By entering the doors of these
institutions we agree to be transported to other times, to other settings, to be exposed to other points of view - all with a minimum of risk, for we know that we will be delivered back to our own time and place, hopefully somewhat renewed or enlightened by the encounter.

Still, we may be justified in seeking a less clear-cut distinction between a world that surrounds us and a world of alternative or surreal visions that attempt to make sense of that world; that at times we might be simultaneously here and there; or in the passage through our daily lives we might discover intermittencies where we move through that world in the midst of this one quite by chance. The deliberacy with which we must make the effort now lends to that other world a peripheral status. Like distant lands, we are conscious of its parallel existence, but required to make lateral moves from our present course in order to engage it. The city as unveiled by the Situationists seems to offer a likely context for reconciling these worlds.
In discussing the transformation of the institutional type we call the museum, it will probably be useful to clarify just what that type means. I begin with the vaguely concrete understanding that a pure definition can provide. Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary defines a "museum" as "an institution devoted to the procurement, care and display of objects of lasting interest or value." This definition describes the three major roles associated with the museum: collection, conservation, and exhibition. I offer another definition, slightly more rigorous, as a practical point of departure: the museum is a built environment designed to house and to provide a context for understanding those artifacts "we" (as a culture) find worthy of collecting.

Annie Dillard states:

Art remakes the world according to sense. The art object is a controlled context whose parts cohere within an order according to which they may be understood. Context is meaning. 5[my italics]

The notion of context is of great curiosity, for the arrangement and attitude taken toward the presentation of works leaves as much room for interpretation as the work itself. The museum is a framing device, an aperture through which we view views of the world. In our attempt to extract meaning from works of art, we must be equally conscious of its framing.

Chapter Two
The Institutional Transformation

Context
In 1970, the performance artist Chris Burden was shot in the arm as an audience looked on in a Santa Barbara gallery (fig. 12). While Burden might argue that it was his conception of the act as an "artist" and/or the intensity of the anticipatory and experiential moment alone which marked it as an artistic act, I suggest that some consideration in the understanding of this as an art event be given to the fact that it took place in an environment which exists for the sake of art. The act was framed by the device of the institution. Had the event taken place elsewhere - on the street, in a church, in the artist's own basement - its meaning would have been greatly redirected.

Since the early 1970's countless artists have addressed the authority of the museums the legitimate institution for art, either by attempting to stretch its traditional inclusive scope or by denying it altogether, creating works which could not be "institutionalized."

While the artist has been busy challenging institutional norms, the designer has assumed a largely passive role. The accepted standard in museum and exhibition design has been in the direction of "neutrality;" spaces, that is, which (for the sake of understanding, at least) attempt not to be there at all. This, no doubt, is an attitude which emerged alongside the minimalist aesthetic. Now, in nearly every museum and gallery we encounter exhibition spaces with tall ceilings, white walls, and reductive
track lighting, which stand symbolically for environmental invisibility. "Don't mind us," they exclaim, "we're just here in the service of art!"

I have to conclude that the notion of neutrality is pure myth. That vacuous white box in which the work by Judd or Serra is housed becomes as much a part of the art experience as the artifact. The seeming subtractive nature of the space is an enhancement of the intense singularity of the sculptural object. To borrow from Dillard's notion, the space itself is one of the "parts" in that "controlled context."

Where does this leave us? If the neutral white spaces of Richard Gluckman are not altogether what they claim to be, should we look to the opposite extreme? Eisenman's Wexner Center for the Visual Arts at Ohio State University takes an unabashed stance that architecture dominates art - not in a purely hierarchical sense, but in its position that the architectural idea must be carried through without compromise. For Eisenman, the architecture is the art.

Scarpa and Moneo offer another model. Museums by these practitioners demonstrate that the architecture does not have to be either passive or dominant in relation to the works of art it houses. Yes, works and environment become contextually interlocked... but that is inevitable. In these instances, that interlocking is at least active, and not by default. The
spaces do not strive for environmental neutrality. Here, art and architecture coexist, supportively, yet each on its own terms. (fig. 13).

With this in mind, I turn again to the city, where coexistence is the rule. The use of the city as a framing device offers possibilities for both artist and viewer. Having exploded the confines of the traditional museum, the complex variety of urban "galleries" offer infinite possibilities for the artist to build deliberate contextual ties between place and thing or place and event. At the same time the city always allows for the unpredictable; this is a place which repels singularity of meaning. Art is, after all, as much an act of interpretation on the part of the viewer as it is a statement on behalf of the artist. If the idiosyncrasy of the city sheds unexpected light on the work, so much the better.

Given the vast opportunities for individual expression that the city may offer, decisions still must be made about the "who," "where," and "why" of works being displayed. The graffiti artist uses the city as his personal museum without apology or explanation. Vigilante artist groups, such as the Guerilla Girls, rely on the same kind of anonymity in their propagandist manipulation of public space. As a civic institution the museum cannot be anonymous or invisible. Though the galleries of this place may be the undifferentiated "city," decisions about what goes into those galleries must come from some identifiable source. Suzanne Lacy writes:
Whereas a work of individual art executed in the studio needs approbation only after its creation in order to move into an exhibition space, a public artwork must rely from its very inception on some degree of cultural approval. That is, for a work to be made in the public sector (except for extremely transient and guerrilla works), it must enter a negotiating process with those who represent that sector.  

The museum synonymous with the city has a responsibility to address its public. Providing an identifiable and accessible locus for the administration goes beyond a mere provision for acknowledging where to point the finger. There is a mandate for the institution to provide facilities for education and orientation, and a forum for information, for dialogue, and for debate regarding the work it sponsors.

The mission statement of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, sets forth as a prime goal "to collect and to preserve the best of the world's fine art..." This is a noble and necessary mission in a world in which artifacts are prized, but fall quickly into a state of decay. Franco Rella refers to the museum as "the culminating and final phase of the act of collecting." He suggests this is man's attempt to confront his anxieties about transience and mortality, perhaps explaining the morbid stagnation that is often characteristic of historical museums.

A museum of contemporary art should, above all, be vital. Its contents are not precious dead relics of some bygone age, but the cultural products of our
own, very current, civilization. As such, the institution must remain responsive, unencumbered by the baggage of its own warehouses. The institution should be in a constant state of flux - expanding, shrinking, purging, exploding - defined primarily by its content and form at any given moment.

Its past is important only as a means of metering its own transformation. Thus, the institution also serves in the capacity of self-documentation (seen as replacing the traditional role of conservation). Rella's definition seems more accurate in describing an archives. The institutional records, in the form of catalogues, photographs, video-tapes, journals, tape recordings, and so on, should be made available, along with a full library on the arts, for public retrieval.
The issues discussed thus far have centered around re-evaluating the ideological and programmatic stance of the museum. These notions provide an important departure point for architectural decision-making, but do not give specific criteria as to how the formal transformation might be carried out. For this we must look to the physical nature of the building and the city itself. This investigation has been approached from two directions; first, by looking to the traditional museum as a kind of closed, restrictive form which must be decomposed in order to reintroduce it into the city, second, by observing the city structure and seeing the museum's organization as an extension of that structure.

In the first case, we will consider the museum as a traditional building type - the museum with which we are familiar. Though the style and scale may vary, such museums are, generally speaking, quite self-contained and self-centered. Attempts have been made in recent years to create museums which are more publicly accessible, most notably Piano and Roger's Pompidou Centre in Paris and Stirling's Staatsgalerie in Stuttgart. For the most part, however, the museum remains highly fortified and singular in its form.

As a means of developing a vocabulary of formal principles which might be useful in breaking down ("decomposing") such exclusive forms, I shall refer to a model. The Hirshorn Museum (the Smithsonian Museum of Contemporary Art) in Washington D.C., designed by Gordon Bunshaft of

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**Chapter Three**

**Formal Transformation**

**The Decomposition Paradigm:**

**The Hirshorn Transformations**

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*fig. 14: Old facade, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.*
SOM in 1974, is so relentless in its singularity that it becomes a perfect diagram, of the antithetical position, i.e. the museum that is not integrated with the city.

The Hirshorn is an object, cylindrical in form, differing greatly from the wall-like civic buildings which line the Mall. It is raised on a squarish plinth which defines the dimensions in which the object resides and creates a public plaza. The building itself hovers over the plaza, propped up by four enormous piers that lift the gallery spaces one story above the ground in the manner of a piano nobile. Only a minimal entry lobby at grade serves to receive patrons and move them up into the museum proper.

The form, which reads as a solid cylinder from the outside, is actually a donut, the center being an exterior courtyard and fountain. All views from inside the museum are into this courtyard, the single exception being a
Garden and the National Archives across the Mall. Aside from this balcony, the exterior surface is uninterrupted concrete.

Using the Hirshorn as the model for demonstration, form principles of reconfiguration will be discussed: Radiation, Penetration, Fragmentation and Integration. These principles are demonstrated as abstractions. The intention is to understand how a new form might be generated out of some reference to the existing type. These principles are really labels describing some interactive relationship between the building and its surroundings.

figs. 15, 16: The Hirshorn Museum, Washington, D.C.
fig. 17: diagram - existing Hirshorn.
figs. 18-21: diagrams - transformed Hirshorn (l to r: radiation, penetration, fragmentation, integration)
Radiation. Radiation describes a formal gesture that the building makes to its environment. It suggests that from some clear origin, the building can emerge to embrace the larger city. At the minimum level this would mean visual connections to the city, a recognition of the world that exists beyond the containment of the museum - a backdrop for viewing. However, it may also suggest a physical extension from the place of origin into the actual fabric of the surrounding environment. In the case of the Hirshorn, this is shown as a reversing of the inward focus of the form to one with a more outward (centrifugal) nature.
fig. 24: Alvar Aalto: apartments in Bremen.

fig. 25: Mies van der Rohe: Brick Country House.
Penetration. Penetration refers to a gesture which an environment makes to the building. It suggests a violation of the completeness, the singularity, of the form by the interjection of some external element or system. Most promising here as a means of increasing public inclusion and accessibility is the notion of the street as the penetrating element. By incorporating street and building in some overlap, the sense that the building actively participates in the public realm is enhanced. The formal idea of penetration is closely tied to the experiential notions of passage and intermittency discussed in the first chapter. It implies that the building is no longer a mere border element along the street, but an actual encounter that is integrated with the path.

fig. 29: Le Corbusier, design for exhibition pavilion.
Fragmentation. Fragmentation suggests violating the completeness of a form by either deconstructing or shattering it into smaller composite pieces. The use of fragmented form is one which has been particularly fashionable in recent years. More to the point here is the opportunity that a fractured form offers in creating new spatial and contextual relationships to the environment while maintaining some sense of its own identity, i.e. the fragments possess critical clues as to their wholistic integrity and perhaps even their place of origin.

Tschumi's conceptual diagrams for Parc de la Villette offer an explanation as to how the formal program was generated. The second diagram, in particular, suggests the flexibility that the fragmented pieces offer once released from their absolute formal structure, still maintaining some reference to their initial morphological origins.
A simple structural solution exploding programmatic requirements throughout the site onto a regular grid of points of intensity (a mark, a trace). Hence the different types of activities are first isolated and then distributed on the site, often encouraging the combination of apparently incompatible activities (the running track passes through the piano bar inside the tropical greenhouse).

fig. 32: Bernard Tschumi: diagrams for Parc de la Villette.
Integration. Integration can, in some sense, be seen as a further iteration on the fragmentation principle. Here, it is intended to suggest that the smaller pieces which now comprise the transformed program can be incorporated into the urban fabric in some harmonious way, still retaining a certain comprehensiveness as a system (the Freedom Trail problem).

To return again to Tschumi, his third diagram for the La Villette transformation shows the fragmented components "settling" onto a regular, imposed grid pattern. Such a rationalization has little to do with the structure of the city of Paris, and it forfeits the sense of kinetic evolution offered in the second diagram. The product is a static organization isolated from the larger city.

Since the previous three principles have dealt primarily with the decomposition of the form itself, I offer the principle of integration as a hopeful way of reconciling city and institution. Its viability remains to be proven since I cannot point to any known examples.
Reinterpretation. I offer the notion of artistic reinterpretation not as a principle for any architectural form-making, but as a reminder that no process of the building's transformation is ever complete. Part of the intention of this project is to offer both an institutional and physical structure which inspires and invites artists to intervene. As such, its actual presence is always apt to be transformed by the artist, as well as reinterpreted by the user.

fig 34: Krzysztof Wodiczko, projection onto the Hirshorn (1988)
THE SIMULTANEOUS MUSEUM
Approaching the investigation now from the other angle, we may look at the new museum as a more generative form, an outgrowth of the existing city, rather than the decomposition of some more traditional building type inserted into the urban fabric. N. John Habraken describes a similar process employed in the design he submitted for a new Amsterdam Town Hall:

The rich urban tissue, so distinct in scale, monumental in its tree-lined canals, ever human in its abundant variety of individual buildings, a generous organism full of vitality, capable of growth and self-renewal for many centuries. Would it be possible to cultivate the organism, to have it sprout yet another part? Could something grow there in an almost natural way, or did something have to be imposed, alien and artificial - a dead stone in living vegetation? Here you can see the themes that have fascinated me for so long: growth and change, the continuation of patterns as results of human action; the way living urban tissues are developed out of many small, individual entities; and, above all, the underlying structure, the relatively constant holding the relatively ephemeral; the unity and diversity; the beauty of the extraordinary that compliments the beauty of the ordinary - the leaves and the flowers that speak of the same tree.

**The Site.** For this discussion, I shall turn to the actual site which has served as the focus of my exploration. In the heart of downtown Boston, it is a zone located between the large-scale buildings and public spaces of Boston’s Government Center (the early 1960’s urban renewal project) and the dense, medieval streets of the North End, a district of lowrise brick buildings housing small businesses and tenements with a longstanding immigrant population.
The site is comprised of three primary block structures. The first of these plots is currently vacant, used as a temporary parking lot, and includes an entrance to the Orange and Green Lines of the subway. It is directly across from the lowrise wing of the JFK Federal Building and City Hall Plaza, which stands some 15 feet higher in section, inviting connection to the site by means of a pedestrian bridge across Congress Street. The block is dominated on the north by the mammoth Government Center Parking Garage; to the south is the Blackstone Block, an isolated remnant of small buildings similar to those of the North End, now idiosyncratically isolated in a sea of later large-scale structures.

The two other blocks are presently occupied by the Central Artery, an elevated freeway that now cuts through the city, but which is slated to be submerged in a major urban redevelopment plan that will open up large areas on the surface for new uses. With the highway buried in a tunnel,
Hanover and Sudbury Streets would be extended on the surface. Two heavy-traffic access roads, (one south-bound, one north-bound) would be maintained at the ground level paralleling the buried freeway.

The attractions of this site are numerous. There is the challenge it poses as a potential connector between very different types of urban tissues. There is the well-established path system which is utilized by residents and tourists moving to and from the North End; the major path, a part of the Freedom Trail, has already been informally claimed as an "ant-walk" and includes rather casual sorts of street art, murals, mosaics, etc. There are also many existing activities in the district which would enhance the vitality of a public museum, including the subway station, the Haymarket, the various functions of Government Center, and the North End shops. There is also the opportunity to engage vehicular as well as pedestrian movement since the area is so heavily used by varying scales and speeds of traffic.
fig. 38: the Central Artery as it appears now on the site.

fig. 39: City Hall Plaza.

fig. 40: Site Mapping Model, attempts to make projections onto the site based on an understanding of the city's structure.
It is important to point out, that the site was chosen as much for its generic urban qualities as for its peculiarities. The site model included here was developed as a response to the site structure. Its components represent the movement through and along the site; the location of perceived nodes or intersections; the recognition of important visual axes; the deployment of size elements found in existing fabric; and the extension of other pieces of urban structure onto the site. Many of these moves will be utilized rather literally; others will be further transformed; some will be excluded altogether. The point of the exercise is to compile a set of intentions which are generated from an understanding of the place.
The following images depict my final proposition for the project. The design relies heavily on the second paradigm of formal transformation. A major turning point in the project was the realization that the two paradigms were incongruous. The initial hope was, of course, that by working from each end -- that is, by decomposing the form of the traditional building and generating form the structure of the city -- a new type would emerge that was related both to the museum and the city. As work progressed, it became evident that this was problematic.

Faced with the decision of which strategy to rely upon, I turned back to my initial statement of intent (the thesis abstract included with this document is nearly identical to the one initially submitted with my proposal in November; the intent is the same). A rereading of that document made it clear that the city really offered all the information needed to pursue my mission.

Further reading of John Habraken helped to reinforce this. Using the city as form generator required a faith in the process to produce the final design; while starting with the museum meant that an actual image was available from the start. Habraken states:

*When we are concerned about "doing our own thing" and feel we must be on top of the form all the time, we can not relax and trust the process. Once students find out how one's dialogue with form will always bear the imprint of one's personality -- whether one likes it or not -- the complaint is no longer heard.*
THE SIMULTANEOUS MUSEUM
THE SIMULTANEOUS MUSEUM

Here, the design relies heavily on the gesture made in the early site mapping model, reinforcing many of the gestures made there regarding building sizes, movement, the creation of large and small public spaces, and so on. Even having accepted this, there is a certain amount of image-making that persists. This will be especially evident in the developmental sketches which follow.

Briefly, the complex is made up of three kinds of components: buildings (in the traditional sense of structures with a system of closure), landscape elements, and frameworks -- that is, built structures that may not be fully enclosed or that may invite further intervention on the part of the artist. The building pieces include the nine-story library/archives, an adjacent lowrise wing containing administration and orientation facilities, gallery space, and shops at ground level. Other functions included in the complex are the subway station, the market, and various theaters for performance and projections.
fig. 46: view east down Hanover Street toward the North End.

fig. 47: view west down Hanover Street toward Gov't. Center.

figs. 48, 49: details of building and circular ramp at the subway entrance.
I offer the following images with only brief descriptions as a visual record of the project’s development. I have chosen not to explain in depth each stage of the process, primarily because it did not evolve in orderly stages. Rather I will make a general summary of the exploration and product at the conclusion of the work.
THE SIMULTANEOUS MUSEUM
THE SIMULTANEOUS MUSEUM
"The museum as conceived of here will exist simultaneously with the city, rather than singularly within it. It will utilize the resources of the city, and in return offer new resources. It will take its cues from the structure of the city, and offer opportunities for further definition through its architecture, its art, and user interaction. It will at once be the city, be a part of the city, and be a place for commentary on the city."

These statements were taken from my initial thesis proposal of November 1990. As much a manifesto as a statement of intent, the words demanded a radical response. Those with whom I spoke in the early days of the project seemed enthusiastic, but uncertain as to how the project might evolve. I was uncertain, too; and, I must admit, many questions about the project remain unanswered. Much has transpired in the past semester: readings and writings, drawings and models, conversations and criticism. Still, despite the fact that a proposition has been put forth, I have little confidence that it is the "right" solution.

A persistent struggle has accompanied me throughout, a struggle largely about convention and innovation. As architects, we rely heavily on example; we constantly refer to the familiar to gage the validity of our suppositions. How, then, do we gage the potential success of an idea when we cannot point to its success in example? In science, the idea is tested in the lab; experiments rely on quantifiable data to confirm or disprove a theory. In architecture, there are no labs, only the real environment. So the case is stated by the designer, then debated (nearly always inconclusively) by the critics. The designer is called upon to be confident

**Conclusion**

fig. 64:
Rene Magritte
Euclidean Walks (1955).
(as well as competent) in his work and his method. If anything, I have suffered here from a lack of confidence in my own ideas.

My approach to this unconventional problem has been largely conventional. Although I have been ideologically critical of the building type I was transforming, it was often to that building type that I returned as a reference. It is for this reason that the "decomposition paradigm" (the Hirshorn transformations) proved not so useful; it relied too heavily on a conventional understanding of the type as a departure point. Despite the evolution, the conventional always remained as a referential datum against which the transformed type would be metered. My consistent reliance on an imageable building was largely a matter of keeping on familiar ground. None of these solutions offered the sort of radical departure upon which the problem so necessarily insisted.

In the end, it was not the museum as an institution, the museum as a building type, or even the museum as a collection of urban pieces which proved to be the critical metaphor. It was the city as a museum context, the metaphor with which I began. For the city was already ripe with opportunities. Nothing alien really needed to be introduced. Conventional or innovative? The city has always been both! Therefore, one would expect to find both in the Simultaneous Museum. The real innovation, I believe now, was in how the city was to be revealed. To this end, my proposition
offers one such reading of the city. Undeniably, there are others, many of them equally, if not more, convincing.

For now, it is with great relief that I put this project to rest.
Notes
2. Sussman, p.127
3. John Dewey, Art as Experience, p.22
4. Annie Dillard, Living by Fiction, p.177
5. Suzanne Lacy, "Fractured Space" in Art in the Public Interest, Arlene Raven, ed., p.296
6. John N. Habraken, "The Leaves and the Flower" in Via
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fig. 2: Ibid., p. 51.

fig. 6: from the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Visitor's Brochure, October 1990.


