Introducing the URBAN FAIRGROUND for Harvard Square

by

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Rotch
The work presented in this thesis is fondly dedicated to an Italian tilesetter, Mister Simon Rodia, who for thirty-three years, beginning in 1921, labored to express his gratitude to the U.S.A. "with something big". Working alone Mister Rodia assembled nine pinnacles of mosaic "bric-a-brac" now known as the Watts Towers in that Los Angeles suburb. Due to political harassment, vandalism, and ignorant destruction of the Towers, Mister Rodia abandoned his "home" in 1957 to live anonymously somewhere in the Northwest.
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This thesis endeavors to establish a possibility for assembling varied elements to create a multi-use urban facility. The notion of an URBAN FAIRGROUND makes use of three-dimensional built form (architecture) and advanced technologies (non-architecture) to provide a CONTEXT in which a wide range of small and large scale activities may take place. As a variable FRAMEWORK the URBAN FAIRGROUND establishes a catalyst for learning, living, loving and leisure. Though capable of being considered complete at any one time it is intended to be a conglomeration of parts that would be in constant change according to varied needs and activities. Though this thesis suggests a specific proposal for a specific site it should be viewed as a way of providing an extended range of use-possibilities in present and future urban environments.

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Author's Note:

Due to antiquated thesis regulations the true spirit of this work is not evidenced within this document.

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In 1971 a group of citizens working with the merchants of Harvard Square and the City of Cambridge established a pedestrian way along Brattle Street in the Harvard/Brattle Square area of that city. The creation of Brattlewalk, as the pedestrian way has come to be known, was considered by all concerned to be "an attempt to alleviate the continuous deterioration which has stricken the historic area of Harvard Square for over a decade".

Though based upon good intentions the efforts taken thus far by the architects, planners, politicians, people, and organizations involved have done very little to accomplish the above ambition. Brattlewalk has been considered as a singular element in this ambition. An incomplete traffic pattern has caused vehicular havoc and poor parking access to the Brattlewalk; efforts to enliven the experience
of the Brattlewalk have at best managed to produce only minimal success; merchants complain of decreased sales; and the overall use and quality of the Harvard Square area remains virtually unchanged from last year.

Prohibition of traffic along several hundred feet of Brattle Street cannot be expected to be the elixir for the urban blight Cambridge is attempting to stave off. Any provisions that attempt to improve the quality of activity and experiences (both everyday-kind and special activity-kind) must be viewed as a segment of a much larger urban organization. Though some of the vehicular annoyances are gone there is still no reason to go to Harvard Square as a place unless you want to buy something, eat something, watch a movie, or catch a bus.

To be successful any endeavour in this area of Cambridge must do more that provide easier pedestrian access for existing shops and lunchrooms. The quality of Harvard Square has not deteriorated because of the people who use the area or the type of shops that are there. It has deteriorated because Harvard Square, as
an urban place, has been ignored for such a long time. For the most part it lacks any of the qualities which are synonymous with enjoyment in the urban environment. Though heavily used there is virtually no place to do anything within Harvard Square except eat, shop, or watch a movie. The only minimal break provided in this situation is the Holyoke Center Plaza. It is in this place that most of the actual activity in Harvard Square takes place. It is here that people sit down to take a rest, eat a sandwich, sing or listen to music, sell things on occasions, and perform a myriad of other activities that make urban activity somewhat pleasant.

At the present time much of the Harvard Square area is being "Uplifted". Many shops and smaller complexes are being renovated; an increase of public activities in the area are planned; the City of Cambridge has scheduled the relocation of the electric bus storage and turn around area in Brattle Square; the MBTA is hoping to rebuild their rapid transit stop in the near future; and the Kennedy Library is slated to be built
on the site of the present transit storage yard just outside Harvard Square sometime soon.

The establishment of Brattlewalk has provided the necessary catalyst for continued additions to this environment. Enter the URBAN FAIRGROUND .................
In establishing a design program for the URBAN FAIRGROUND the concern is with a concept that will extend over a long period of time. Growth and change may be the only factors that can be viewed as being continuous. In a dynamic urban situation the ingredients of the program will continuously change their meaning over different periods of time. To give appropriate form to metamorphic notions the designer cannot start with preconceived ideas. Every form must be polyvalent and capable of withstanding changes in meaning, in order to remain meaningful in a situation which is constantly renewing itself. It is the rhythm of existence that provides the meaning of anything.

With the above in mind I would like to suggest some activities which might be accommodated by the URBAN FAIRGROUND in Harvard
Square. It is similar in nature to suggested uses that guided F. van Klingering in designing a similar facility, the Dronten Angora in Holland:

... a theatre for yesterday, today, and tomorrow, congresses, meetings for a few or masses, folk Christmas songs and other mystical happenings from beat to symphony orchestras, sports for those who are well organized, and plays for those who want exhibitions in the total area as well as in small parts, a cabaret, courses to be creative and happenings to become creative, dancing by school or impulse, a public pub, a restaurant, mass-bacchanals for all, a place to eat your own sandwich to do nothing but watch and wait and fool around, and last but not least Metro Goldwyn Mayer's own roaring lion on the screen...
The essentials of a new traffic pattern for the Harvard Square area may be understood by referring to the first drawing of the Drawing and Illustrations Section of this thesis.

S1. The area indicated by this designation is the proposed site for the URBAN FAIRGROUND. At the present time it is the site for the electric bus terminal that Cambridge is in the process of relocating, a gasoline service station that has lost a large amount of income due to the earlier pattern, and a specialty department store. It is at the intersection of Brattle and Mt. Auburn Streets and defines one edge of the Brattle Square.

S2. The area indicated by this designation is the proposed site for the new
Kennedy Memorial Library being designed by the architect I.M. Pei and scheduled for construction in the near future. Due to its relative close proximity to the S2 site the URBAN FAIRGROUND could become an additional source of activity and accommodations of the new library.

S3. The area indicated by this designation is the site of the present Brattlewalk system. It is lined on either side of Brattle Street by continuous small shops and lunchrooms.

S4. The area indicated by this designation is along the edge of Boylston Street in the center of Harvard Square. At the present time it is used as a bus transportation link and will continue to be used in the same way, only more intensely, after the URBAN FAIRGROUND is established.

S5. The area indicated by this designation is in the center of Harvard Square. At the present time
it is used as a rapid transit link and will continue to be used in the same way, only more intensely, after the URBAN FAIRGROUND is established.

S6. The area indicated by this designation is the link from the Harvard Square transportation facilities to the URBAN FAIRGROUND. Appropriate modifications will be made to this area to keep it in the spirit of a major approach to the URBAN FAIRGROUND.

S7. The area indicated by this designation is the region now known as Brattle Square. The URBAN FAIRGROUND will begin to take place in this area.

S8. The area indicated by this designation is the Charles River region. Memorial Drive and Storrow Drive, both major vehicular arteries are located here. This will provide easy access to the URBAN FAIRGROUND when activities of much larger interest take place. Also, in the near future the Charles River will become the stage for a continuous per-
formance of visual phenomena that the Center for Advanced Visual Studies will be staging in the near future.

Major traffic flow in the North-South direction will be accommodated by Boylston Street through the center of Harvard Square. Major traffic in the East-West direction will be accommodated by Mt. Auburn Street and Memorial Drive.
The essential elements of the URBAN FAIRGROUND may be understood by referring to the second and third drawings of the Drawing and Illustrations Section of this thesis.

P1. The area indicated by this designation is a series of existing shops and apartments that are along the edges of the URBAN FAIRGROUND.

P2. The area indicated by this designation is the existing complex that houses the Brattle Theatre, the Club Casablanca, a boutique, a candle shop, and a coffee shop. Connections on both the subterranean levels and the above ground levels will be established between the URBAN FAIRGROUND and this facility.

P3. The area indicated by this designation is the access ramp and underground
service and parking facilities. The former bus terminal left a large cavernous space under the site which will provide a source of local parking without the need for establishing more above ground in the area. The underground area will also serve as a delivery and service point for goods and activities which are utilized by the URBAN FAIRGROUND.

P4. The area indicated by this designation is an area where some amount of planting will take place in harmony with the rest of the site.

P5. The area indicated by this designation is a below grade level area that will provide both access to the Casablanca Complex and a link to the URBAN FAIRGROUND.

P6. The area indicated by this designation is an access ramp to an above level in the URBAN FAIRGROUND.
P7. The area indicated by this designation is a pass-through that will permit easy passage through the site without getting intensely involved in any activities which might be taking place in the URBAN FAIRGROUND at that moment. The possibility to be drawn in and get involved while passing through will be quite strong, if a person should so chose. By providing this the URBAN FAIRGROUND will permit each person to choose their own path and degree of involvement.

P8. The area indicated by this designation is a power grid that is incorporated in the Floor of the URBAN FAIRGROUND. It will provide power on a 16' bay system to power any activities that might require such facilities. There will also be a system of communication and computer links incorporated in this system.

P9. The area indicated by this designation is a mechanical equipment and services shaft that accommodates the necessary facilities in the service
mounds on either side of the URBAN FAIRGROUND. It is also the permanent air shaft for supplying the pneumatic arches that span the site for enclosure of different activities.

P10. The area indicated by this designation is a monitor and control facility for the URBAN FAIRGROUND. It is a place to purchase tickets, to make arrangements, to run those events and devices that need monitoring. It provides switchboards for all the URBAN FAIRGROUND facilities as well as computer terminals. It is a miniature television studio monitor room.

P11. The area indicated by this designation is an entryway that is to be used when the inflated arches and membranes have enclosed the URBAN FAIRGROUND. Entry control is provided by folding doors.

P12. The area indicated by this designation is the folding door facilities and its trackway to close the entryway.
P13. The area indicated by this designation is an open elevator which is used to service the other levels of the URBAN FAIRGROUND and provide an alternative means of access for people to those upper levels.

P14. The area indicated by this designation is a service area that is accessible from both the inside of the URBAN FAIRGROUND (when the enclosure is in place) and the outside. It provides additional service for the elevator.

P15. The area indicated by this designation are the ground level tracks for the service crane that is part of the URBAN FAIRGROUND. They provide travel throughout the site as well as service at the outer edges of Brattle and Mt. Auburn Streets.

P16. The area indicated by this designation is the edge of the inflated enclosure system that provides enclosure and shelter for events that need such facilities or during inclement weather.
P17. The area indicated by this designation is a covered walkway to serve as a partial enclosure and shelter for ticket-buying and entry into the URBAN FAIRGROUND when the enclosure is in place. It also provides a high level service and observation ramp to accommodate the activities that require such facilities.

P18. The area indicated by this designation are public toilet and washroom facilities which are accessible 24-hours per day to anyone.

P19. The area indicated by this designation are built seating and gathering forms that also act as retaining walls for the ground work behind them.

P20. The area indicated by this designation is a temporary parking edge and truck delivery. In the event that the underground service facilities cannot be used the truck delivery edge will accommodate many activities requiring use of the crane.
P21. The area indicated by this designation are the upper levles of the permanent built-form service mounds.

P22. The area indicated by this designation is the service crane for the URBAN FAIRGROUND. It travels along the system of tracks that extends along the site. It is capable of adjustable height requirements and accommodates boom travel in any direction. Vertical height adjustment is facilitated by hydraulic supports. The crane itself travel along a high-strength aluminum truss member that spans the distance between the two service mounds.
Several cross-sectional drawings provide further information about the URBAN FAIRGROUND. This may be understood by referring to the fourth and fifth drawings of the Drawing and Illustrations Section of this thesis.

X-S1. This is a cross-sectional view of the URBAN FAIRGROUND as it might appear when a large open space is necessary. It demonstrates the inflatable positive pressure arches and the membrane which is suspended from them. During festivals or on days when there are special events the arches and membrane could be filled with gas mixtures that incorporate stage or phosphorescent smoke as a light and color element. C. indicates either a positive tie-down ring or a water filled cavity to anchor the enclosure.
X-S2. This is a cross-sectional view of the UR-BAN FAIRGROUND that demonstrates the relationship of the service crane, the membrane, and the arches and service towers.

X-S3. This is a cross-sectional view of the UR-BAN FAIRGROUND that demonstrates how it might accommodate large scale events requiring extensive use of the seating module (MOD 3).

X-S4. This is a cross-sectional view of the UR-BAN FAIRGROUND that demonstrates one possible way the additional frameworks and columns could provide places for those activities which need smaller scale facilities. This configuration is by no means to be considered a fixed scheme, but instead should be seen as a diagram for one possibility.
The essential elements of the service modules may be understood by referring to the sixth and seventh drawings of the Drawing and Illustrations Section of this thesis.

MOD 1. The audio-visual module is intended to provide state-of-the-art facilities for recording and playback of events of interest or importance. The swivel dolly it is mounted on accommodates the same level of mobility a television studio camera permits. In addition a series of telescopic members facilitate hanging of projection screens when necessary.

MOD 2. The panel-display module is intended to provide a system of panels that will not only act as surfaces for
information display, but also as variable space definers. It consists of a structural frame from which panels may be folded out as necessary. This frame provides for pass-through type connections between related areas, and separation between unrelated areas. The panels are hinged to each other to provide any manner of varied enclosure. In addition to the display/space panels there is a system of clip-on Lexan bubbles which may be attached to display objects that might not otherwise be appropriate for panel display. The entire unit is mobile and may be used on all levels throughout the site.

MOD 3. The seating module is intended to provide mobile seating that may be used throughout the URBAN FAIRGROUND as is needed. To the rear of the fold-out seating is a terminal link for lighting control.

MOD 4. The moveable pneumatic blower is intended
to provide an air source for smaller inflatable structures that might be incorporated in the URBAN FAIRGROUND.

MOD 5. The moveable food service is intended to permit the entire URBAN FAIRGROUND to be used as a banquet hall, or for only small portions of it as a cabaret, a pub, or a sandwich shop. The accommodations and service would vary according to the needs at the moment.

These are intended to be only a basic suggestion for service modules which will accommodate the activities in the URBAN FAIRGROUND. At any one moment a full range of service modules should be available to accommodate this place. As techniques improve extensive use of computer control could accommodate their service throughout the site. All modules should represent the highest state-of-the-art for that given time.
The essential interaction of all these facilities may be further understood by referring to the eighth drawing in the Drawing and Illustrations Section of this thesis.

The detail drawing shows the following elements in relationship to each other:

A. The variable level crane facility.
B. The moveable vertical columns for small scale and local definitions.
C. The lightweight aluminum frameworks and trusses that work in conjunction with the vertical columns.
D. The built-form service mound.
E. The upper level of the mound.
F. The inflatable membrane member.
The following works are to be considered highly influential in the development of my attitudes and the work on this thesis. They are included in the hope that they might begin to mean something to those who might read this thesis.

I owe much personal gratitude to each of the individuals quoted in this section. And wish to thank each one of them for the immense help they have been to me over this period of my development and education.

A complete bibliography can be found in the rear section of this thesis entitled Resources. I urge the reader to use it. In the words of Roland Kirk, a black, blind, broke, and beautiful jazz musician:"Seek and listen, you might find the truth you might find a lie, whatever it is something will pass you by." Seek and Listen......
One word remains constant
FRAMEWORK
By framework I mean context, and further,
BUILT-CONTEXT.

The city is framework.
The house is framework.
The lampost is framework.
All must provide the WAY for each man
to find security, make choice, and take
the next step. One step must IMMEDIATELY
AND DIRECTLY LEAD TO THE NEXT.

When there is no physical framework,
the human spirit is not given the chance
to enrich itself.
When the framework (or any part there of)
dominates, the spirit suffocates.
A reasonable framework is physically
specific, its form defined but not
completed.
Each man may find his place.

by Richard Tremaglio
Western Society for the past 300 years has been caught up in the fire storm of change. This storm, far from abating, now appears to be gathering force. Change sweeps through the highly industrialized nations with waves of ever accelerating speed and unprecedented impact. It spawns in its wake all sorts of curious social flora— from psychedelic churches and "free" universities to science cities in the artic and wife-swap clubs in California.

It breeds odd personalities, too: children who at twelve are no longer children; adults who at fifty are no longer adults, but children of twelve. There are rich men who play-act poverty, computer programmers who turn on with LSD. There are anarchists who, beneath their dirty denim shirt collars, are outrageous conformists, and conformists who, beneath their button-down collars are outrageous anarchists. There are married priests and atheist ministers and Jewish Zen Buddhists. We have pop... and op... and art cinetique.
There are Playboy Clubs and homosexual movie theatres... and amphetamines and tranquilizers... anger... and affluence...
and oblivion...
Much Oblivion."

3 by Alvin Toffler
"Para mi solo recorrer los caminos que tienen corazon, cualquier camino que tenga corazon.
Por ahi yo corro, y la unica prueba que vale es atravesar todo su largo. Y por ahi yo corro mirando, mirando sin aliento.

(For me there is only the travelling on paths that have heart, on any path that may have heart. There I travel, and the only worthwhile challenge is to traverse its full length. And there I travel looking, looking, breathessly.)

...nothing more can be attempted than to establish the beginning and the direction of an infinitely long road. The pretensions of any systematic and definitive completeness would be, at least, a self-illusion. Perfection can here be obtained by the individual student only in the subjective sense that he communicates everything he has been able to see."

4 by Carlos Castenada
"Touch not the shoulder of the knight who passes, he would turn and it would be night... A night without stars without arc or clouds... What then became of all that makes the sky... the moon and its passage and the sound of the sun...? You would have to wait until a second night as powerful as the first consented to pass... On such an expectancy rests a large part of the fantasy in science fiction, the coexistence of interlinked and separate notions, the hazard of passing from one notion, one set of ideas to another... and back again along the protracted time scale of the now... to the silent awareness the skinny cat is all cat... of cat in past, present, and future, but even buildings, they have less to say than cats but they communicate, they almost turn themselves inside out... in their eagerness to share secrets they tell of the men that made them, the beings that dwell in them; without words, without discourse?? all in an instant, ... we seem to have found the art of suspended time, what we said ten
YEARS AGO, WE ARE SAYING TODAY......WHAT WE MUST
LOOK FOR NOW IS THE LINKAGE OF THE SIMULTANEOUS...
AND NOT THE VISTA OF THE SUCCESSIVE...THE SELF-
SCAN DISPLAY SYSTEM DISPLAYS A DISCREET TRAUMA...
LIFE SYSTEMS ARE IMPORTANT... THE PROBLEM IS IN
DISCOVERING SOME FERTILE GROUND IN WHICH TO PLANT
THESE SEEDS... AND BEWARE OF THE CREEPING SLUGS...
APPARENTLY, THE PATH OF EVENTS HAS DEFFLECTED
FROM ITS ORIGINAL DIRECTION, WE HAVE DISCOVERED
SOMETHING- TECHNOLOGICAL BACKLASH, AND BARGAIN-
HUNTERS FOR TOMORROW ARE RELUCTANTLY TUNING-DOWN
THEIR ELECTRONIC PSYCHO-ENVIROMENTAL EQUIPMENT OF
EVENTS... THE ELECTRIC SOURCE OF OUR OWN NEGATION?
EVERYBODY IS TOO BUSY TO NOTICE, BUT THE RABBIT
IS NOT FOUND IN THE COMPANY OF SHEEP... ECOLOGY-
THERE, I'VE SAID THAT WORD... I'VE SAID THAT WORD
...IS A SOCIAL PROBLEM...WE'VE BEEN TOLD SO BY
"TIME", "LIFE", "NEWSWEEK" AND THE NIXON ADMIN-
ISTRATION... POLLUTION IS INSIDIOUSLY GROWING...
EITHER THE ENVIROMENT GOES OR WE GO...AND YOU ALL
KNOW WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF THE ENVIROMENT GOES...
WE HAVE A SOCIETY WITH PRODUCTION FOR THE SAKE OF PRODUCTION... EVERY HUMAN-BEING A COMMODITY, NATURE A RESOURCE... OUR VERY SURVIVAL DEPENDS UPON AN ECOLOGICAL UTOPIA... TECHNOLOGICAL BACKLASH MUST BE FOUGHT WITH A MORE SOPHISTICATED TECHNOLOGY, PRESENT, BEAUTIFUL CHEMISTRY HAS TURNED OUT AS NOT-SO-BEAUTIFUL BIOLOGY... BUT IF WE ARE TO PREVENT ECOTASTROPHY IT MUST BE BY MORE SOPHISTICATED ENVIROMENTAL SYSTEMS, NOT BY DROPPING-OUT, NOR BY THE HIPPY-TYPE PHILOSOPHY; DID YOU SEE "DROP CITY" IN "EASY RIDER"? EVERY MAN HIS OWN TREE, AN ACRE TO TILL...LET'S FACE IT: TOTAL DISPERSAL WON'T WORK ECONOMICALLY ANY MORE TOTAL CENTRALIZATION... INDIVIDUALS NEED TO CREATE EVEN MORE ENVIROMENTAL STIMULATION... A PERSON SWITCHED-ON TO THE ELECTRIC TOMATO CAN EXTEND AN EXISTING SITUATION... GETTING PEOPLE INTO ACTION... A TRY-IT-AND-SEE ATTITUDE... IT'S DIFFERENT... LET'S HAVE IT ALL... AT WOODSTOCK FESTIVAL YOU GOT BOTH- A FIELD TURNED-ON, A THREE-DAY CITY... BEAUTIFUL..."

5 by WARREN CHALK
"DISTURB THE DELICATE INTRICACIES OF THE LIMITLESS MICRO COSM. TRESPASS INTO THE LIMITLESS MACROCOSM AND FRIGHTEN THE ANGELS. IN BETWEEN, MESS UP THE MISSISSIPPI AND THE MEKONG. IF THIS IS WHAT WE DESIRE IT WILL SOON BE HERE: LIMITLESS MEDIOCOSM. FOR THERE IS A LIMIT EVEN TO THE LIMITLESS. MAN FALLING IN LINE WITH ENTROPY AFTER ALL.

We have already turned the theory of relativity and quantum physics against ourselves. We now split atoms. SOON IT WILL BE STARS. We even have anthropologists and sociologists—of all people—trained especially in great universities so they can spread over the globe, and smiling their way into the quarters of the poorest, gather information for the ministries at home: to be used against those multitudes.

WHEN THE TIME IS UP AND THEIR TIME FOR ACTION HAS COME.

So beware of them also; the anthropologist, sociologist and their like; beware of their smiles and wiles. They are not angels.
Remember that tanker holding the largest quantity of oil in a single hull and the way it broke in two.

Never mind the millions enjoying those coasts on a fine summer's day.
Never mind the birds.

And that coal hill towering over a little school at its foot.

Never mind those children.

And those thousands of square miles of other peoples' jungle chemically defoliated; their rice fields ruined and their soil poisoned.

Never mind what or who lives in and between those trees.
Never mind those who live off that soil.
And, lest forget, Ben Tre. The city "... we had to destroy in order to save it."

Never mind the streets, shops, schools, houses and all the small intimate things. Oh yes, and never mind the dead.

Remember also the large and little portions of the same kind of thing occurring all over the globe hour by hour. NEVER MIND.

FROM LIMITED TOTAL LOSS TO LIMITLESS TOTAL LOSS."
"In architecture, we have to make everything so that it really is possible for people to reveal as many different facets of themselves as possible. The more the opportunities for interpretation are increased, the more people will become involved. Therefore there must be as many possibilities for different interpretations as there can, giving each place its maximum capacity for choice.

It is essential that differences between places should be differences of quality. Otherwise they will merely offer variations of the same thing and only pseudo-interpretation will be possible. A new stereo-typed pattern will have been born. Only with real differences of quality between places will there be any question of choice sufficient to establish a maximum interaction between people and activities.

Everything we design must be a catalyst to stimulate individual people to play the variety of roles
through which their own identity will be enlarged. The aim of architecture is to achieve a condition where everyone's feeling of identity is maximized. User and object manifest each other, affirm each other, make each other more themselves - the problem is to find the right programme for each. It is a question of the right dimensions, the right placing, the right beat, the right articulation and the right relationship between object and person. Designing is nothing more than finding out what person and object want to be; form then makes itself. There is really no need for invention - you must just listen carefully."

7 by Herman Hertzberger
On May 1 through May 14 of 1972 a festival of the arts was to be held in Harvard Square. The list of events was quite ambitious and noble. Perhaps it would have been the start towards that original goal the citizens and the city had been striving for. Though scheduled to happen in Harvard Square many of the activities depended largely upon co-operation of Harvard and Radcliffe Universities for the necessary open space and facilities.

Unfortunately the early days of May were miserable with constant rain and inclement weather. As I stood there one afternoon, towards the end of this thesis, and as the rain soaked my head and feet, I could see the arches and membranes slowly floating down in place at the URBAN FAIRGROUND.
Soul first, technique later. "Better to drink wine from the hands than water from a beautiful cup". Of course the ultimate is wine from a beautiful cup.
Those readers desiring a more thorough knowledge of the Guidelines Section of this thesis are urged to consult the following sources:


