BROADWAY RHYTHM:
63rd STREET CINÉMATÉQUE

Leah Greenwald
B.A. Yale 1972

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the
Degree of

Master of Architecture

at the
Massachusetts Institute of Technology

February 1978

Signature of the Author

Richard Tremaglio, Adjunct Professor of Architecture
Thesis Supervisor

Accepted by
Chester Lee Sprague, Associate Professor of Architecture
Chairman, Departmental Committee for Graduate Students

copyright © Leah Greenwald 1978
ABSTRACT: The text of the thesis defines cinémathèque as a film study center, gives its history, and describes its program requirements. The author's attitude toward the project and her experiences with film, New York City, and the West side of Manhattan are explained. There is a rational description of the design site, a description of the design process, a word or two of hindsight, and a list of printed sources. Included is a note on the title, an acknowledgement, and illustrations of the design, including plans, sections, models, photographs of the site, and detail drawings.
Acknowledgements:

We were a fairly close bunch, we thesis students of the fall of 1977; the teas and underground religious ceremonies and general high level of tolerance all made it easier to take. My predecessors gave me the benefit of their wisdom, and my friends the benefit of Lawrence Cheng's interest and caring. Stephen Perry and George Tremblay helped me materially and invaluably; John Kane and Roger Sametz and Barbara Kellerman helped me spiritually and no less invaluably. Richard Tremaglio was the best of all possible advisors: honest, helpful, supportive but not sparing, gentle; mostly educational and energizing. Bob Slattery and Jack Myer, my readers, and Kyu-Sung Woo and Leon Groisser were helpful and imaginative at crucial points. Most important, there were Mark Haber and Michael Slezak, and, of course, Rosemary and the Jack of Hearts.

This is for my father, Bernard Greenwald.
Broadway Rhythm: 63rd Street Cinémathèque

A Note on the Title

One day in early December, about twenty-four hours after the final versions of our thesis titles were due in Headquarters, I was fidgeting aimlessly in my thesis office (a practice which, during the term, I honed to a fine art) while Rosemary, one of my office roommates, was discussing her thesis with Richard Tremaglio, who is both her and my advisor. They were talking about how the general configuration of a building could respond to the buildings in the neighborhood around it. Tremie turned to me (I was at this point leafing through Wet, the Magazine of Gourmet Bathing for perhaps the eighth time in half-an-hour) and he said, "What was it that Kyu-Sung had said about the massing of your building?" (Kyu-Sung Woo had earlier in the term given me an enormously helpful and design-block-breaking crit, of which more later). I replied, with the offhand air that always preceded such important pronouncements, "He suggested that I mass it high on the south and low on the north, following the rhythm that's on Broadway."

They turned back to their discussion, but I froze. The metaphoric omnipresent celestial camera zoomed in for a close-up; "Rhythm That's On Broadway! (I said to myself) That's it!" And I realized that this was the clever and telling thesis title for which I had been searching in vain for the past week with my trusted editors (S. Klapper and M. Haber). The former was nowhere to be seen, but I immediately phoned the latter and said, "Broadway Rhythm: 63rd Street Cinémathèque" and he said, "I think you've got a pretty good one."

And in fact I had. Not only does it express something about my design trying to follow the cues given by its physical context, which
is something I was trying to do, but it also alludes to a familiar film motif: Broadway as seen by Hollywood. "Broadway Rhythm" is the title of an Arthur Freed-Nacio Herb Brown song written for *Broadway Melody* (1929) one of the early and highly successful of the all-talking, all-singing, all-dancing films made just after the advent of sound to motion pictures. Hollywood in particular and the movies in general-- this refers to musicals made in Europe as well as in America-- have always been fascinated by Broadway; not particularly any realistic image of the legitimate theatre, but rather a mythic vision of Broadway as the fertile field of dreams and ambition achieved according to the great American rags to riches formula; or the official setting of glamour, sophistication, and art which movies desperately sought in the naive belief that what they had to offer was paltry by comparison. There have been countless movies, good and bad, which have paid homage to Broadway and the people and events popularly supposed to be found there. The song "Broadway Rhythm" was used again in the film *Singin' in the Rain*, made in 1952, a movie about the history of movies. Since the site for my thesis design is on Broadway between 62nd and 63rd Streets, and its program is a film study center, *Broadway Rhythm: 63rd Street Cinémathèque* struck me as the most appropriate and felicitously multi-meaninged of titles.

I went down to Headquarters and begged Linda LaPlante to allow me the privilege of walking a mile to the Registrar's so that I might change it from its previous title, the succinct but inelaborate Cinémathèque. This she graciously consented to allow me to do.

Thus the title; besides, it's got a good beat and you can dance to it.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Title Page</td>
<td>i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Note on the Title</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table of Contents</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindsight</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illustrations</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**PROGRAM**

*Cinémathèque* is a word from French, conceived of and first realized by Henri Langlois, the Parisian film archivist and historian. He meant it as a place to study and collect films, as a *bibliothèque* is a place to study and collect books. Its broadest purpose was to provide a means of preserving, studying and making available to the public, films (regardless of their current critical value) and the paraphernalia associated with films and filmmaking (cameras, projectors, scripts, costumes, etc.). This, then, is the basic purpose of the facility I have designed for this thesis.

Langlois ran his cinémathèque in Paris, and it was and is the primary source of film education for French filmmakers; Godard, Truffaut, Chabrol, Rohmer, and many others of the New Wave did their initial learning and pondering about movies there, and I imagine it is safe to say that without the existence of the Paris Cinémathèque their films, if they had become filmmakers at all, would have been different and probably less rich in the variety of sources and references to the existing body of film art.

In New York, there is a cinémathèque; the organization has no facilities of its own (it is presently housed at the Metropolitan Museum) but its aims are similar to Langlois'. Since they do not have their own space for libraries, archives, or museum exhibitions they cannot function as a cinématheque should, except for the occasional showing of films; but there was a time, a few years ago, when they thought they would have the chance to build a center for themselves under the piers of the Fifty-ninth Street Bridge on Second Avenue.

Eugene Stavis, the director of the New York Cinémathèque, worked with the office of I.M. Pei to develop a program and preliminary designs for the site. Langlois, who was still alive then, worked on the project as
The funds and the opportunity to build on the site dried up in the inevitable but mysterious way these things do; but I was able to interview Stavis, Andrzej Gorczynski (the architect at I.M. Pei who had done much of the work on the project) and Abe Spaier, now an architect with the N.Y.C. planning office, but at the time an architecture student at C.C.N.Y. who did his thesis design of the Cinémathèque using the 59th Street site.

After studying the material I gathered from these men, and taking as a springboard my own thoughts, experiences, and pet images from my academic and personal life as a film major in college and a West-side resident in my early years, I decided upon the design of Cinémathèque for my thesis project, but decided to use a site which was cleared at the time of its choosing (it is now being excavated) which is on Broadway between 62nd and 63rd Streets taking up the western half of the block between Central Park West and Broadway.

The main way that this program has changed since it was first written is that it did not take into account any of the realities of New York City real estate or the financing of a non-profit venture such as the Cinémathèque is meant to be. Early in the term, though, based on the advice of my advisor and readers and on some information about N.Y.C. real estate practices which I got from Michael Giuliano, I realized that the building must include more than just the square footage necessary for the cinémathèque functions and that in fact the only sensible way to build such a building on such a site would be to make it at least a medium-rise building (by which I mean in the range of twenty stories or so, like most of the existing upper West side and Broadway context) with the upper floors of the building for a mixed-use of office and dwelling. Since I was so inter-
ested in focusing on the theatre and the public spaces, it took me quite a while to be comfortable with this idea (I think I had also become pleasantly intrigued with the idea of designing a highly visible "object" sort of building, something one doesn't get to do around here very often.)

The square footages designated were taken largely from the program material given to me by Stavis and Gorczynski, and I have treated it somewhat elastically (for example, the large theatre is larger and the smaller theatre is smaller than originally described). I do feel, though, that I have incorporated the spaces called for and retained most of the relationships I envisioned in the original program, with the exception of some of the relationships of the outdoor and the indoor spaces; this last was largely because I decided that all the careful rules I'd learned about wooing the reluctant city-dweller into a building through an un-threatening and seductive screen of landscaped transitions doesn't count for New Yorkers; in fact, they like a challenge (on the lines of "penetrating this building will involve some effort, but it's worth it and besides getting there is the interesting part").

My possibly over-lyrical description of why I chose this particular site and program will follow a bit later in this paper, but first I would like to discuss the program and how it has changed during the design process.

I should begin by saying that both the choices of Cinémathèque for a program, and Broadway and 63rd Street as a particular site, were made because I wanted to have a program and a site that I felt strongly positive about as the vehicle of an exploration of the design of a large space with public uses, a large urban building, and some urban outdoor space. It is this design exploration, then, which I consider the purpose of the thesis.
The interest in urban outdoor space is one which I have had since I began here, but I have never had a chance to design such spaces to any developed degree; I don't feel I've done it satisfactorily here, either, but that was the way I set up the problem. The design and the focus of the design shifted considerably during the term, which I will discuss later in this paper in the section on process.

The program at which I arrived is based upon the program information I got from Stavis, Gorczynski, and Spaier, and on my own considerations and observations based on many years of intensive moviegoing. Also, the fine-tuning of that program and the adjustments it went through were largely filtered by my personal choices and inclinations.

The original program follows, with annotations, written after the fact, enclosed by asterisks:

Here is a list of the functions/spaces which should be incorporated in the Cinémathèque:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Function</th>
<th>Size (s.f.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A theatre seating 500</td>
<td>6000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A theatre seating 300</td>
<td>3750</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Projection room seating 100</td>
<td>1500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Projection, rewinding, switching for large theatre</td>
<td>450</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ditto for smaller theatre</td>
<td>350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ditto for projection room</td>
<td>350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equipment storage for above</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An open area incorporating the building entrance/lobby, admissions booth, and exhibition area</td>
<td>12000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library (not for general public)</td>
<td>4000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Film and Videotape archives</td>
<td>2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Librarian office</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offices: (includes secretarial and storage space)</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*there should be much more than 2000 s.f.*
While the building should be (perhaps it goes without saying) responsive to the neighborhood, especially in the aspects of response to traffic (vehicular and pedestrian), security needs, and provision of open public space, it is a facility meant to be used by the entire metropolitan area, and as such is entitled to some singularity of form. I think it is more important that the form of the building make clear that it is a moviegoing place and it should incorporate some of the standard symbols of the cinema building, including clear public display of the films being shown and a use of "night architecture" lighting. It is also a museum and civic building and the form should be expressive of that as well, not through the usual monumentality but rather through forms and materials which are welcoming and enduring.

There are several questions to be dealt with in the design of the...
theatres; questions of sightline and slope and viewing angles are more easily decided than those of decoration, lighting, and the treatment of the screen-edge or frame. In general, it seems preferable to avoid having a balcony, pleasant as the image is, for reasons of sightlines and better projection conditions. It is also desirable that each theatre be flexible enough to show films whose frame formats vary from almost square to a rectangle more than twice as wide as it is high. More difficult is the question of psychological settings for films of different periods; (the reaction to an early silent shown in a small theatre with early twentieth century decor is different from the reaction when it is shown in a huge, spare, modern supermarket cinema).* This is one of several issues I never really addressed, although I have come to feel that the historical date of the film and its setting is not so important as some kind of coordination between its mood and its setting; certain pictures call for intimacy, some for vast space, etc.*

The mechanical requirements of such a building are special only in regard to acoustic isolation for the theatres and for the projection booths within the theatres, and for the air handling and fireproofing necessary for the same spaces. I believe that buildings being designed now should incorporate the potential for some solar energy retrofitting, and so although this will not be a "solar building" in the usual sense, its orientation and roofing (or possible roofing) should be able to make it partially so. *Another worthy ambition. I would not say that my design now automatically precludes such considerations by any means, but it is a far less solar-oriented building now than it was in its early stages of planning. Again, New York helps you to break all the rules: they'll have all the solar collectors in Westchester anyway.*
Relationships between spaces: the entrance to the building and the open plaza should be adjacent, but the arrangement should be such that part of the park which is close to the street forms a transition zone between street and building. There will also be a clearly defined lobby and I think it is desirable for these zones to overlap; a little bit of park in the street, street in the park, building in the park, park in the lobby, exhibition in the lobby. The park must be no more dangerous than the avenue which it is on but there should be zones of relative privacy and removal from the pedestrian traffic within it. It should also be accessible from inside the building as well as just from the street.*

The changes that took place here are described later in this paper.*

Naturally the retail space should be available from the street, but there should also be a possibility of its intimate connection with the cinemateque building, as well as a provision for total separation. The loading area for the cinémathèque functions and for the commercial functions should be shared. *Ah, yes. The Loading area. Some examination of that requirement as well as a study of the loading methods in that part of town (which seem to consist of triple-parking two-ton semis) have made me feel that the one necessary loading area is in the alley behind the covered plaza, with access to the restaurant; even then, most such situations would be taken care of by street parking during certain hours of the day.*

Questions of security and circulation must be considered simultaneously; for example, I think it is good to be able to leave a theatre after seeing a film by an exit door which takes you directly to the street so that you can have relative privacy when leaving, rather than filtering through the crowds waiting to get in; but whether this is desirable from
a security point of view is unclear. There has to be an arrangement for people who want to see the exhibits but not the film, the retail area, but not the exhibit, the park but none of the building. Ticket selling can be done in one place; but ticket collecting and a discreet entrance to each theatre should be provided. Two kinds of security should be considered: protecting the people who work in and go to the cinemathque, and protecting the building itself -- while trying to make it gentle, amenable, and inviting. Ha. Good luck. *This last comment is a rare instance of foresight on my part.*

The relationship between the office and library spaces, which should be available to everyone but not indiscriminately so, and the public exhibition spaces can be treated a number of ways. I think the best arrangement might be a gallery over the exhibition space which serves as circulation among the offices or to them (or both) and which is visible to the public but accessible only through a particular elevator or staircase. Another consideration is how to have free and easy audience feedback into an acoustically-isolated projection booth. *By which I meant that one must be able to shout a random comment or two up to the projector to let him or her know whether the sound level is too loud, when to wake up and focus, what humorous alternatives there are to fixing a piece of broken film, etc. *

The exhibition space should provide for exhibits that can be seen in daylight, those requiring special lighting, and those requiring darkness. The exhibition space should be comprehensible as one large space (got to have a place for exhibit-opening cocktail parties and festivals) but also provide for smaller, more private uses and a natural subdivision of space for association with different parts of an exhibit. *The exhibition
itself that I propose would involve less permanent material, such as Langlois would have wanted, and more changing shows on different aspects of films, different directors, etc. I share Langlois' interests in the preservation and study of film; I do not, however, share his obsession with the history of the moving image. Langlois was very interested in what he called "Pre-Cinema", which was what he felt was the urge and anticipation in Western art, even before photography, to be able to produce moving images; when he wrote about his ideal Cinémathèque, it always incorporated a permanent exhibition of objects and art dealing with pre-cinema as well as cinema. While I find this perfectly valid as an interest, it is not one of the things I would incorporate in the New York Cinématheque.*
ATTITUDE

Here I want to discuss why it is that I decided to design a Ciné-
matheque on Broadway between 62nd and 63rd Streets on the upper West side
of Manhattan in New York City.

My feelings about cities in general and this city in particular
have done nothing but intensify since I wrote my application essay to
architecture school four years ago. I said then that the main reason I
wanted to go into architecture was that I had grown up with a very posi-
tive experience of a city, that I wished to do something that made that
sort of experience available to more people in cities (rather than the
more typical experience of urban frustration, fear, and crowding). I
feel that cities must be made desirable (rather than necessary) places
to live for most people in the future because of the way technology and
population growth affect this country and the rest of the world. I still
want to do something that will contribute to the improvement of urban life
(my naiveté has probably intensified also), and therefore it feels good to
be working on a theoretical design which will never but which could be
an improvement in urban life.

Possibly my fondness for cities comes only from that fact that I
grew up in one, and the rest on my reasons are just rationalizations. My
memories could also seem much better to me than the experience itself was,
but I doubt that. I do remember clearly telling myself at the age of
fifteen, that I was happy and extremely lucky to be living in such a
wonderful place, and not to forget it later on. The city meant to me a
dizzying kind of availability of riches. I felt a great sense of power,
as if I could do anything (I had relatively permissive parents, but it
wasn't that sense of freedom; it was a sense of internalized freedom).
I thought I could see anything, go anywhere, take my mind to any museum or book or movie or store or neighborhood, and experience whatever I wanted. I also felt at the time that the only things worth seeing were in New York anyway; but what was important, I think, was not the riches but their availability. Granted, I now believe that the quarters and dollars I spent getting around should be provided by the metropolis for all its citizens rather than by my parents simply for me, but that sense of knowing you live in a place of infinite possibilities is something every urban dweller should have. The excitement is also there, and that's very important too. Life in the city is vivid, confusing, overwhelming; maybe its best and its worst aspect is that things always seem to be a little too much to cope with. Even in a protected setting (and in the city, a protected setting of some sort is one of the best kinds to have), you feel you're living just on the edge of things. The changes are terrifying whether they're for good or bad. It's maybe arguable that you aren't much in touch with the processes of life and nature when you live in a city; but you're sure in touch with a lot of powerful metaphors for those processes.

The West Side, where I grew up, is one of the best theatres in town for those metaphors. It is a neighborhood with a distinct sense of itself; by which I mean its citizens are a self-recognizing and coherent community. Ignoring their penchant for organizing themselves in groups of all kinds, there is a sense you can have about a person on the West side which says that the person is a Westsider, that he or she belongs there. It is a combination of seeing that person around all the time, and sensing that he or she carries a comfortableness, a naturalness, that you don't always see in other parts of the city. Needless to say, you don't have to be a West-
sider to live on the West side; in fact there are an alarming number of
Eastsiders living there right now.

I think one reason for all this is that the West side incorporates
in a fairly small amount of space so much of the variety available in the
city that it can pass as a microcosm of the city. Its fringes even have
representatives of big business in the form of the Gulf and Western
Building, and there are very closely packed homes, schools, stores,
museums, churches, temples, libraries, subways, movies, concert halls,
restaurants, police stations, parks and people. Other neighborhoods can
be described that way; but there is an endemic bohemianism on the West
side which is left over from the reputation it had in the 'twenties and
'thirties and which is currently in some revival; a Westsider's self
image generally includes a belief that he or she is more aesthetically
advanced and politically aware than his or her East side counterpart. What
was once referred to as the Beresford-Dakota Central Park West mafia,
includes a fair number of actors and artists and musicians; maybe no more
than live in other parts of town, but conventional New York wisdom says
it does. The West side has a reputation for earthiness, for appreciation
of the finer though not the more expensive things of life. Surely con-
sumption is as conspicuous west of Central Park as east of it; but what
is being consumed may not be only costly -- it must also show that the
consumer has imagination, panache, a sense of humor and the surreal, and
not merely the bucks to live in New York. Westsiders are ethnocentric,
which is to say that they think they are better than residents of any
other neighborhood and that they have the best bakeries and Cuban res-
taurants and shoe stores of anywhere in the city (need I add the world?).
This is my personal sense of the West side, the idea I grew up with, nur-
tured by everyone from the mommies in Central Park to the ballet groupies I went to college with who now live there. It doesn't acknowledge much, and it doesn't allow for any injection of rationality (which I hope to deal with more soberly later on) in the view of the neighborhood; but it's indelibly there as an assumption of attitude in my dealings with the place, including the design of this project.

My personal visions also determined the choice of Cinémathèque as a thesis design project. I chose this project because movies have been primary academic and artistic experiences in my life. I saw my first movie in a theatre at the age of four and a half. I underwent an immediate and total suspension of disbelief; I began to cry as soon as the MGM lion roared at me. I went to a fair number of movies between then and when I was sixteen, though no more than most other people my age. At sixteen, I met a young man who was studying photography and film, and I observed his conscious and abiding study of film; as has been the case often with me, I adopted the enthusiasm of someone I was close to long after we had ceased to be close, and developed it as my own. Before I was sixteen, I enjoyed every movie I went to; no matter what the intrinsic quality of the film, I liked the experience of going to the movies (on which more follows) to a degree which made the film itself beside the point. When I began to hang out with someone who knew about the history and art of films, though, I began to appraise films critically and form opinions of them and I was for the first time in my life able to tell whether a movie was good or bad or boring. I no longer automatically enjoyed every film; I even walked out on some, but I was able to enjoy other films more intensely, on more levels, with even more self-immersion. I studied film history, criticism, and theory when I was in college and
during my last three years in college and my first two years out of college, I saw about twelve movies a week. I have had to cut down pretty drastically since I became interested in architecture; I'm lucky if I see one movie a week. Maybe I care less in some ways about film now, but I think I probably don't; the answer to why I'm not involved in film professionally if I love it so much is that I always knew I never wanted to pollute the pleasure of my film experiences (reading about them, writing about them, as well as seeing them) by having to associate them with work and discipline and necessary tasks and deadlines. Architecture is the only pursuit I ever found in which I not only don't mind some of those tasks and deadlines, I even like them; my interest in architecture is at once less definable and more concrete than my interest in movies. It is not the pure source of pleasure which films are to me; but it is the only way I have ever wanted to make a living.

I think my academic interest in movies, and my interest in their history and economics, is a by-product of my fascination with film form itself. One of the first things I realized about films is that they have a similarity to dreams -- maybe not everyone's dreams, but to my dreams, although Luis Bunuel is quoted in a recent interview as saying, "The cinema is an involuntary imitation of dreams. It might have been invented to express the life of the unconscious, whose roots go so deep into poetry." It is hard to tell now, ten years after I first started seeing films with an examining eye, whether I dreamed in jump cuts and wipes and montage and two-shots and zooms as a child; but I do now. And just as leaps in time and space are coherent in the language of film as they are not in life, so they are coherent in the experience of a dream. Thus the vocabulary of film has an effect on me as powerful as a dream, but
the pleasure can be greater because I am in a position of control and conscious appreciation and awareness of my removal and safety.

Good films also have in common with good fiction and good theatre and good music, the ability to express ideas and emotions and to communicate them in complex and compact images or segments, bringing in an almost poignant way the force of that idea to the consciousness of the viewer. Even bad films incorporate elements of cultural mythology which are found only in less potent forms in the other "popular" arts; and, unlike theatre, films have permanence and retain a potency in their recording as books can do but reproductions of art and music cannot. Films have for me a vividness of impression that can be retained in a way that the vividness of dreams cannot because the experience with a film is a conscious one.

I also associate with films an experience of communality with an audience. Since I have seen a fair number of films alone both on television and in a screening room, I know that for me the experience is different when I am with people and when I am not. The intensity of response is greater and reinforced in the company of others. That is something with which virtually all students and producers of film agree. But I also bring to my body of feelings about films memories of audience experiences. There is the sense of specialness when my mother would take me to the Museum of Modern Art to see old musicals, or when I would persuade her to take me and some friends to the Music Hall for a birthday celebration. There is the conspiratorial hysteria I remember from getting into Loew's 83rd Street for the under-twelve price, when I was thirteen, then sitting in the adults' section and making a nuisance of myself along with my friends during afternoon horror movies. There is the no less
conspiratorial sense of sophisticated defiance which came from cutting school to go to the movies and the disillusioned realization that other people were bored, with too much time on their hands, rather than fellow-law-defiers. There is the extremely clear memory of being fourteen years old in the second balcony of the RKO 86th Street and not paying any attention to the movie at all. There is the great sense of camaraderie in the Yale Law School auditorium whistling and catcalling and booing and suggesting activities to the characters on the screen and the person in the projection booth, to the loud response of other members of the audience. Now, perhaps sadly, there is the great awareness of all that and of the conscious artistry of the film which one must make known to one's moveingoing companion over the raisinets and popcorn.

When I reflect on the many conditions under which I've seen films, I come to the conclusion that if a film is at least seen in a dark and reasonable comfortable place, the details of the movie theatre itself are completely beside the point in enjoying an appealing and absorbing film; but when the film is either a familiar one which can still be loved but for which one is no longer virginal, or if it is a film which for some reason poses problems for the viewer, the audience and the theatre gain in importance, and the experience of the film changes enormously depending on the environment and the audience in which it is seen. All this, in fact, ignores the question of what subliminal effect the theatre has on the audience, which does not seem to have been dealt with in any of the literature I can find but which I still feel is a valid concern.

There is a good deal of literature on the effect of film as a form on the individual viewer. Kracauer says it is "the redemption of reality" meaning that it takes the reality of situations and objects in life and
gives them a meaning which heightens and redeems (almost sanctifies) their reality. Pauline Kael says that it is the one real art form disguised as a popular art form, where it's available to everyone but where the response of the viewer can be honest and unintimidated by notions of classicism and awe; you can still say that a Griffith or a Bergman film is lousy, but you can't say it of a Beethoven symphony. Andrew Sarris says that it is not, really, a visual medium; it is a medium of spirit and emotion but its visual impression on the screen is secondary to the impact of its content. There is one theory I recall running across in a course on the psychology of art which said that the blank white screen is analogous to the mother's breast (or for those of you born in the fifties, a glass bottle) on which the feeding infant pleasurably projects fantasies. Eisenstein and Pudovkin discuss theories of editing which are Pavlovian in their implications of control of the viewer by the speed and variety and associative meaning of the images composed by the filmmaker. Everyone, though, seems to agree that seeing a film is a powerful experience which must be treated with care and consciousness on the part of the filmmaker; and I would add that it must be so treated on the part of the designer creating a setting for watching films.

There is also to be considered in the attitude towards this thesis design the place of film and other theatres in cities. (Although my project carries with it some of the sanctimoniousness of a museum, and indeed in part must be treated as such, the meaning of moviehouse is much more appealing to me than the meaning of museum or library in their cultural contexts). Theatres have always been special places. They have been settings for religious rites and great communal assemblies; in some bad and good ways they still are. They have been landmarks; which is not
to say that they have been determinants of environmental fabrics but
simply that in some ways they have stood out in the fabric and been
noticed as special places by their form. They connote pleasure and exci-
etement both in the events which take place in the performance and in the
events surrounding it. They are places for delight, and, especially in
last few centuries, they have been places where everyone could go and be
in a setting which, by the form of the building and the decoration and
materials used, implied aristocracy and elegance. The obviousness of the
association of the pleasure of the film experience and the opportunities
for the freedom of one's imagination within its mythic confines with the
economic and social elevation of the rich and noble is embodied in the
motion picture palace. There are fewer and fewer of these buildings
left, and they no longer are the common place for seeing movies because
so many of them are converted, gone, or strangled downtown among porno-
ography parlors, but the vestigial meaning of plush seats and carpeted
walls and bright lights at night remain, even in the Cinema One-through-
Ten of the suburbs. There are issues of night architecture and pleasure
architecture which can and should be considered in the design for a
cinematheque, as well as the civic meanings of a building which is a
gathering point for citizens as a museum, library, theatre, or any build-
ing which fronts on one whole block of a busy urban avenue. Theatres
seem to embody in their formal refences the communal cultural fantasies of
a people; I would like to try to address that issue in this design.

One theoretical aspect of the design of a theatre engages me particu-
larly: that is, in addition to the physical programmatic constraints to
be considered in this problem (which in their own way are similar enough
to the programmatic requirement of a house or a school or a hospital or
any place where the physical activities are clearly defined), the main activity that takes place in a film theatre (and therefore the activity that dictates program) is not one which can easily be described in physical terms, but rather in psychological terms: the passive and vicarious experience of emotion and the direct experience of artistic communication are the real activities going on with the people in a film audience. Creating settings for the optimum care of patients or the optimum flow of consumer traffic or the optimum gain of solar energy are difficult but relatively straightforward; creating a setting for emotional experiences is more subtle, more subliminal, harder for me to approach. I spent a lot of time on the approach and relatively little time on the design, owing to an annoying inflexibility in the realm of time and space that suddenly began to inflict itself upon me in mid-January of 1978. I would like, therefore, to transcribe some of my notes on those considerations in theatre design, although I can scarcely hope that my design deals with any of them adequately. Perhaps these notes can be used as a reference for considerations to be taken in the design of any theatre, film or otherwise.

Conscious design of a setting for the (passive, sometimes unconscious) experiencing of emotion, art, stimulation, insight, provocation, fantasy, history, time-travel, expansion of human awareness

Motifs in Decoration of emotion, fantasy: images of referents and of abstract shapes; form of the whole space: reminiscence of sleeping rooms, underwater, tubs, pools, ocean, river, closets, wombs, eggs, cave-withina-cave, bright center after passage through a dark cave

Comfort/Luxury not synonymous. Comfort: softness, firmness when
needed, warmth or coolness, space, lightness and darkness. Luxury: rich materials, plushness, glitter, references to royal/sacred places (viz. "movie palaces" "movie cathedrals" the Easter show at Radio City) super-cool, superhot, going too far

**Fantasy:** images where they are expected or only semi-expected. Richness of decoration; multiplicity of images in light as well as color and form; a little (at least) more than you can take -- size, large but not dwarfing -- references to sites of fantasies -- sky, foreign places, cities, mountains, ocean

**The Rational:** a place for succoring, kindliness, encouragement of feeling. Some conflict in elements but not too much.

**The Irrational:** non-integration of images or images integrated in a novel way; not fitting into preestablished systems.

**Forms:** ones which seem self-stable, which do not shock or disturb, which perhaps in the final equation stress the horizontal (earth, peace, balance) yet which also lend themselves to some king of kinetism: perceptible rhythms of physical elements, perhaps movement of light in the architecture as well as on the screen.

A few words of a more rational and descriptive nature on the neighborhood and the site: this particular site in the upper West side of Manhattan is near the West side's southern edge (that edge being Fifty-ninth Street) and it is a residential, commercial, and "cultural" part of town. Lincoln Center, which is a bit of planning and architecture that Mussolini would have been proud of, is one block further north on the west side of Broadway (technically it's on Columbus but the Broadway block at that point narrows down to a triangle before it crosses Columbus,
and it is planted as a park). To the east of the site is the Century apartment house (built in 1931 by the Chanins on a site which had once held New York's farthest north legitimate theatre, the Century, which tried to be too artistic and thus failed), and further east is Central Park. To the west of the site is the median green strip of Broadway which certainly gives it status as an avenue but because most of the plantings are low and the benches are mostly occupied by junkies and some of your more successful elderly Jewish novelists, it somehow fails in giving the avenue the lush urban garden sense of, say, Commonwealth Avenue or the Champs Elysées. On the west side of Broadway are small commercial retail and office building, a small movie theatre (R.I.P.), the AAA chapter of New York, and, farther west, some of Paul Milstein's more hideous Lincoln Center upper-middle-class housing developments. To the north of the site is a many-storied brand new brown-and-cream-colored brick-faced building which complies with New York's zoning envelope laws in a particularly graceless way by coming to a triangular point along with the property line for the first ten stories and then abruptly stepping back to a triangular shaped tower; up the same block towards Central Park West is the McBurney School, a private boys school, a rather Islamic-looking chapter of the YMCA, and then apartment buildings to the avenue. In the neighborhood farther north are more grand old art deco Central Park West apartment houses, some beautiful, expensive and stately townhouses, many of which have been converted into apartments and into headquarters for such organizations as the Scientologists and the Institute for Physical Psychotherapy. ABC has some studio and warehouse space in the neighborhood, and on Central Park West are the Ethical Culture Society and school and a couple of elegant old Greek Revival places of worship;
it's rather hard to tell the Sephardic synagogue from the church further up the street. Going north up Broadway and Columbus are the new elegant-funk shops developing, it would seem, only to be written about and patronized by the editors of New York magazine. To the south on the next block is the New York Guild for the Blind (R.I.P.) more of the smaller-scale commercial buildings, and, on Central Park West, the Mayflower Hotel and the enormous glass tower of the Gulf and Western Building, ending in Columbus Circle, the difficult and confusing juction of the southwest corner of Central Park with Eight Avenue and with Broadway, and the New York City Coliseum. Paul Milstein, incidentally, one of New York's fatter cat developers, owns and has cleared the site on which I am intending my thesis design. He is somehow mysteriously connected to Kinney Leisure Services of which Warner Brothers is a division, but what he wants to build on the site is rumored to be a tall office building partly used by ABC, and either the community or the city or both are against it and holding up its construction in court. As we go to press, ground is being broken there, but the usual trumpeting signs of what's going up are nowhere to be seen.

The neighborhood obviously has a mix of uses, though by now most of the people living in the neighborhood are in the middle- or upper-income bracket. This part of town, especially where Lincoln Center now stands, was referred to at the turn of the century as San Juan Hill which I believe was a not-overly-veiled reference to dangerousness (relative) of the neighborhood and the skin color of its inhabitants (Japanese, Hispanic, Black), and it is where the exteriors of the film West Side Story were shot just prior to its razing and reincarnation as Kulturpalast. When I was a child, the West side had not become fashionable again and many
of its residents, especially on the sidestreets, were poor and of a vast variety of ethnic backgrounds. The West side has now changed into a kind of continuum going from elegant to middle-class funky/respectable to poor and elderly and somewhat dangerous, with a sharp demarcation occurring at 86th Street and again at 96th Street. It is still pretty mixed, though, and its inhabitants deal with each other and see each other all the time.

Access to this part of town from other parts of town is to be considered because the Cinémathèque is meant to be a city resource. It is so extremely available, though, by 8th Avenue and Broadway buses and by the IRT 66th Street stop or the 59th Street IND and IRT junction, that the issue of determining major traffic flows and responding in the building to those flows is a false and pointless one. However, since the site fronts on Broadway and since Broadway is the spine of the West side, the appropriate location for the main visible entrance and "circulation node" is on Broadway.
PROCESS

This project for a thesis design was suggested originally by Rosemary Grimshaw, who was considering the 59th Street Bridge site at one point for her thesis site, and in investigating it I decided to take on the program and use a different site. I spent some of last summer collecting data in interviews and stalking the New York City Planning Office for maps and information: a genial and not very bureaucratic group, the planning office. I also stalked the West side and photographed my site to within an inch of its life. I looked at lots of books about movies and the film experience and the history of film theatres.

I then tried to organize my thoughts; this was, I have decided in hysterical retrospect, a large mistake. Thinking too much has often been a problem of mine; or, more accurately stated, thinking too much about esoteric tangents to the exclusion of common sense about the main theme. This has affected me all my life and whatever made me suppose it would not in this project I can't imagine, but I went ahead and spent a solid week in the fall simply ruminating, and while it resulted in a certain amount of prose heavily influenced by some of the more colorful American writers of the first half of this century, its devastating effect on the physical design process more than outweighed any good that it did. Every time I found myself blocked in some aspect of the design, I would resort to this habit of analytic idiosyncratic thinking rather than working on structures or plumbing or something like that, and I am now, before your very eyes, paying for it. So: I will excise further references to this painful aspect of the process; but it way always there, dangling over my head like a spectre left over from some half-baked neo-Freudian literature course in college.
The first part of the design process was to make several diagrams at 1/100th" = 1' 0" scale. This was followed by a 100th" scale massing model made of plasticine; while I was simultaneously trying to do slightly finer diagrams at 1/50th" = 1' 0", I found myself hung up on the massing problem. It was at this point, after a particularly disastrous review, that I went from the exclusively-Cinémathèque program to a program which called for a building of mixed uses of about twenty stories which incorporated the Cinémathèque; this helped me to deal with some of the problems of scale that I was having by making the building mediate in size between the supertall office and apartment building to its north, the monolithic glass tower of the Gulf and Western Building to its south, and the venerable existing fabric of the streets and avenues of the West side, some of which gets to be quite tall in an articulated way by incorporating a range of sizes of elements in massing, not by just extruding up to the skies. I was still, though, having a problem with the distribution of the mass, and asked Kyu-Sung Woo to talk to me just about that problem; he came in and, in half-an-hour of incisive analysis and observation without an ounce of intellectual fat on it, showed me the way out of the art-deco skyscraper bind I'd gotten myself into, as well as bringing to light the specific proposition that New Yorkers function as no other urbanites do, that it was not necessary to hand them their urban delights on a parsley-trimmed platter, and that my stubborn eradication of the southwestern corner of my site (at the intersection of Broadway and 62nd) was neither useful nor desirable, that in fact the nature of the outdoor public space which I had planned should be altered to something more internal to the building, that it should be covered for all-weather availability, and that given some reasonably interesting function on the
ground floor of this building, I need not worry over the theoretical question of whether such a place would be used or not; it would be ferreted out, especially if it were the locale, as my advisor had suggested, of outdoor movies in the summer. As I described earlier, Kyu-Sung observed that since the tendency in buildings along this part of Broadway was to be massed so that the higher parts of the building were on the south corner, I should follow that rhythm of high on the south and low on the north; and that the outside space could be further up 62nd Street, especially if it were accessible through an internal path from Broadway as well as from the street. With these guidelines and with the strictures of the Lincoln Center area zoning regulations (which call for an arcade along Broadway of minimum dimensions which I find so large that I almost consider them maximum dimensions), and for retail uses and certain floor-area ratios (within bounds of which I easily keep) I arrived at the basic organization of the first couple of floors of the building, the floors incorporating the Cinématheque functions and the retail spaces.

By midterm, I had built a study model at 1/16th" scale; at that point I was still ignoring the rest of the building except for my acknowledgement of its being there, and my plan for the Cinématheque was still very diagrammatic. It was the responses from my advisor and readers after the midterm review that led me to pay enough attention to the non-Cinématheque program of the building, trying to leave the problems inherent in it more solvable, and led me to experiment with circular and curved forms as a means of organizing and defining spaces of a certain size and of a collective use. I have never experimented with curvelinear forms before, so their expression in my design is, I feel, tentative and not a little awkward; but I do feel that for the purposes I have in my program of
large open public meeting places where the interpersonal interactions
are the most important thing going on, large circular forms are the most
appropriate ones, having simultaneously collective and enclosing qualities
and non-directional and open qualities.

The basic organization is as follows: the entrance to the Cinéma-
 théque and to the internal path which leads to the covered plaza are in
the middle of the block, on Broadway, at the one wider bay of the arcade.
Near the entrance of the Cinematheque, at an angle which extends into the
arcade and therefore brings itself to the attention of the pedestrian,
there are rear-projection screens which are meant to show short film loops
about various things going on in the Cinematheque; this is its form of
posters, coming attractions, grabbing the public. There is a rear-pro-
jection screen in the covered plaza meant for nighttime showings of films
in warm enough seasons. The path entrance, which could also lead to shops,
although the design I've developed is for a restaurant at the south side
of the path, is at grade level. The Cinématheque's main entrance is up
two feet by means of shallow, wide steps; a secondary entrance at grade
is around the corner on 63rd Street; this entrance can also serve as
elevator access to the functions in the upper floors above that side of
the building. The 63rd Street entrance has shallow stairs and a ramp
leading up to the +2' level of the main lobby exhibition space of the
Cinémathèque. The arcade to the north of the main Broadway entrance
fronts on retail space at grade level.

Upon entering the Cinématheque, one can buy a ticket at the booth
just inside the entrance, or one can wander around the exhibits, for free,
before returning for a ticket to a showing. One enters what is supposed
to be a fairly non-directional space from which can be seen the choices
available: the exhibition space, the large theatre, or the smaller theatre. Part of the exhibit includes a room where short film strips can be viewed on a rear-projection screen. Large staircases lead up to the second floor, one to the main theatre (arrived at through a cave, of sorts, meant as a waiting space leading to the main theatre and also as a permanent experience of a dark film-fantasy anteroom with places to climb up to and things to look at) and one to the extension of the exhibition space on the second level. Most of the non-directional lobby and part of the exhibition space has a double-height ceiling, and there is even an oculus above the lobby and a triple-height square opening above the exhibition staircase; these are meant to make visually semi-accessible the semi-public library and archives and offices on the third floor, which are accessible either by elevator and by smaller, somewhat less inviting staircases in the Cinématheque. There is a spiral staircase leading from the grade-level smaller theatre lobby to the "cave". The path to the smaller theatre leads past a checkroom and movie-food concession, down a few steps or a ramp to grade level, where the theatre is entered. A door to the right of that path leads to the covered plaza; and beyond it are the public bathrooms.

The entrance to the major part of the office and housing floors is on 62nd Street. As I have drawn it up, a multi-level restaurant which uses part of the covered plaza as well as the arcade take up most of the first two floors of this part of the building, except for the elevator lobby entrance to the building above. I should explain here the attitude with which I approached the ground-level retail space and especially the building above: I (correctly) assumed that there was no way to design them with any thoroughness and care if I also wanted to devote my attention
to the finer grained details of the cinémathèque; so instead of trying to solve the problems, I tried to leave them potentially solvable by the choice of what I hope are reasonable bay sizes (arrived at by studying the bay sizes of various office building, and using the smaller range as acceptable for office space and housing space). I tried to test this by arbitrarily making up two programs, one of offices for a talent agency, and one of a variety of housing units, which were both tested by George Tremblay. This satisfied me that the bay sizes and the placement of elevators, fire stairs, plumbing stacks, and the size and shape of the columns were acceptable.

The building system uses concrete columns and beams, floored by a ribbed concrete slab. The columns are cross-shaped in section, and the beams span across the thirty- and fifteen-foot bays, the slabs spanning the eighteen-foot direction. The structural system (about which I consulted Leon Groisser) placed at seventeen-foot centers along the arcade (in accordance with the zoning regulations) except for one twenty-one foot bay, and alternating bays of columns 720 square inches in area at fifteen- and thirty-foot centers in the internal part of the building. The thirty-by-eighteen measurement was derived from the fact that its diagonal is the same angle (31° to the horizontal) that the arcade follows along Broadway; this is the (rather simple)means I arrived at for integrating the directions inherent in the building system and the site. The bays are also shifted just about at the internal path; this is to integrate the different lengths of building line at either side of the site; these also occur on a diagonal at the same angle as the arcade, and in fact the beams span diagonally at that point. The building has a basement, mainly for storage purposes, and should also have a sub-
basement for mechanical uses. It is supported by clusters of four fourteen-inch web steel piles beneath each column, driven to bedrock. The main mechanical equipment is on the roof of the eighth floor of the building (the building by the way, is twenty-one floors). The duct work runs in the direction of the beams, making the ceiling-to-floor height 30".

By zoning regulation, at a height of eighty-five feet, the building must have a setback on Broadway of fifteen feet, which it has, and this is also the point at which the plan of the building narrows and the tower begins; the plan changes at three more points on its ascent, reducing its floor area and changing from office to domestic use.

The main theatre is roofed by five-foot deep trusses which span about 105 feet between octagonal columns; the trusses then support columns which in turn support part of the building and tower above.

The development of the design was done virtually all at 1/16th" = 1' 0". Some of the details were worked out at 1/8" = 1' 0".

In the design of the theatre, I consulted books and articles which claimed to have the last word on the design of movie theatres for optimum viewing experiences; these involved many formulae which I soon realized differed vastly, and none of them seemed to give as much as I would have hoped with my own notions of what made a good movie theatre in terms of sightlines, comfort, etc. So I examined my experiences, and realized an important truth: serious film-watchers like to sit in the first several rows of the theatre, having the screen fill up their peripheral vision. This decision led me to enlarge the main theatre and bring seats far closer to the screen then Graphic Standards would approve. I also felt that continental staggered seating on a one-in-ten slope was the best for
unobstructed view of the screen. I felt the experience of a balcony was desirable although the overhang of one was not, so I have a "bleacher" form of seating in the back part of the theatre.

However, as for the ambitions I had for the developed design (as opposed to the quick caress of thought, which I have given it) of the environment of the theatre, the covered plaza, and the façade of the Cinematheque which was meant to incorporate movie-theatre imagery and lighting to some degree as a symbol of what was inside: this was never done. It's true that as I write this the design and drawing (rapidly becoming synonymous) of this thesis are by no means over; but as for the careful exploration of all the issues I outlined for myself (and cared about deeply) at the outset of this project, I must face the fact that it has largely bitten the dust. The pondering of design considerations took place on all of them, but the time to work them out dwindled, and what I have are sketches of the thoughts I had about them. Someday it would be nice to have the chance to deal with them.
HINDSIGHT

It seems to me that the major problem I had with this thesis was a conceptual conflict which I let confuse me. I realize now that I had wanted to design a building that was just for the Cinémathèque, which had a strong and distinctive image; what I was urged (correctly) to do by my advisor and readers was a New York City highrise with a more ambiguous (and partially anonymous) character which included the Cinémathèque. I let this conflict get in my way; I feel now that the two directions could have been integrated into a building which is more highly "imageable" than my design at its street-associated levels and which uses formal qualities of the surrounding urban fabric for its tower. In the last few days of my designing and drawing I have approached that goal more closely but it is still a great distance away.

This confusion during the process and clarity in retrospect is a pattern which has occurred in much of my work; I thought that this term would be the one time that I would have the chance to go over the things I realized at the end I did not like (a chance I've wanted in most of my studio courses), but the pattern held. Will this ever change? Do I need a long vacation from it all? Rosemary said it very concisely when she conjectured that I don't go through enough steps enough times; at the time, of course, I feel as if I am, but it generally turns out that I am simply deepening the same grooves. Somehow I feel as if what's lacking is an integration, a wholeness of concept; too often the separate pieces are merely knit together (in the Slatterian phrase).

I don't know the way to get past this, but I suspect that part of it may have to do with clarifying and capturing thoughts that I have as I have them, rather than tucking them away for future reference only to find them totally unevolved.
Haggling with unprocessed images is basically what generated the park and theatre designs; I am personally fond of them but they are not as developed as I would have liked them to be. The covered plaza is not too much more than a built diagram of the uses there, the paving following the circulation pattern and the concrete bleacher meant to be a convenient climbing and seating object. Its image is mainly drawn from a romantic one of a ruin in a greenhouse: moss grows between tiles of concrete, plants spill out of building blocks, all covered with a sometimes clear, sometimes stained glass roof, habitable to some degree year-round because of its cover and its shaded seating areas.

The theatre design is an attempt to make forms evocative of city, earth, and sky from abstract plaster forms; the sky is painted realistically, the walls in tones of color. The idea is to make something which is a rich environment but not too elaborate or distracting; it also has reasonable acoustic qualities. It should be evocative of the motion picture palace without actually being one. It too, though, is a first pass at the idea, and is embryonic.

Advice to future thesis students: rest in bed and drink plenty of fluids.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

These are sources which I consulted, some for information and some for inspiration, during the process.

2. Beaver, Patrick The Crystal Palace Hugh Evelyn Ltd London 1970
3. Brawne, Michael Neue Museen Verlag Gerd Hatje Stuttgart 1965
7. Dezzi Bardeschi, Marco Frank Lloyd Wright Hamlyn Publishing Group Ltd London 1972
8. Eisenstein, Sergei The Film Sense Harcourt, Brace, and World New York 1942
9. Gilliat, Penelope: Interview with Luis Bunuel, the New Yorker magazine, Dec. 1977
14. Manning, Peter, ed. Office Design: A Study of Environment By the Pilkington Research Unit, Department of building Science, University of Liverpool May 1965
17. Sharp, Dennis The Picture Palace Hugh Evelyn Ltd London 1969

21. Wright, Frank Lloyd  Taliesin Drawings  Wittenborn, Schulz Inc. New York 1952


I also used the article in Graphic Standards on movie theatres, an article given to me without an author or source by Andre Gorczynski called "Planning A Cinema", a book on the works of Van DeVelde, one on Victor Horta, and all of Pauline Kael's books.
ACROSS SITE, LOOKING TOWARDS 63RD STREET

SITE, LOOKING EAST, TOWARDS THE CENTURY
\frac{1}{100}" = 1'-0" SCALE SITE MODEL
\( \frac{1}{100} = 1'-0" \) Massing Studies
$\frac{1}{100}'' = 1'-0''$ scale massing model

$\frac{1}{16}'' = 1'-0''$ scale study model
COVERED PLAZA
ENTRY ENTRANCE

ARCADE COLUMN

LEAH GREENWALD
JANUARY 1973
CINEMATHEQUE DETAIL

BRICK BLOCKS