Play_Ground

by
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in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

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ROTCH

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Abstract:

Though currently bound by a purely horizontal logic and limited to fulfilling only the most basic provisions, the design of surface parking has significant latent potential.

Taking from the rubber-stamped landscape strategies of municipal playgrounds found in urban America and the rubber-stamping strategies of big-box retail which are disseminated throughout the American suburban landscape, this thesis attempts to recover the surface parking lot by equating park and parking in a double-loaded program of 100 % PARK / 100% PARKING.

With cues from the examination of play and game strategies, this thesis infuses the 'Lot' landscape with double meaning that attracts both the consuming and unassuming into a physical space of chance, strategy and play.

As an adaptable cover with interwoven programs, the double-loaded the surface parking lot can then serve as a new landscape typology which responds to contextual situations and in turn sponsors new patterns of occupation.

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This book is dedicated to my parents.

To my mother, who lovingly saturated my childhood with creativity, imagination and play.

To my father, who never taught me Architecture, we just simply lived architecture.

100% PARK | 100% PARKING
Recovering the Parking Lot in Matters of Point, Line and Plane

Though currently bound by a purely horizontal logic and limited to fulfilling only the most basic provisions, the design of surface parking has significant latent potential **(1)**.

Taking from the rubber-stamped landscape strategies of municipal playgrounds found in urban America and the rubber-stamping strategies of big-box retail which are disseminated throughout the American suburban landscape, this thesis attempts to recover the surface parking lot by equating park and parking in a double-loaded program of 100 % PARK / 100% PARKING **(2)**.

With cues from the examination of play and game strategies **(3)**, this thesis infuses the 'Lot' landscape with double meaning that attracts both the consuming and unassuming **(4)** into a physical space of chance, strategy and play **(5)**.

As an adaptable cover with interwoven programs, the double-loaded the surface parking lot can then serve as a new landscape typology which responds to contextual situations and in turn sponsors new patterns of occupation **(6)**.

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(1) Beginning Notes pg. 9

(2) Defining Rubber, Stamp, Play, Ground, Park pg. 17

(3) Learning to Play the Game pg. 31

(4) Observations, Adaptions, Inventions pg. 55

(5) Matters of Points, Lines and Planes: The Architecture Played Out pg. 65

(6) End Notes and Bibliography pg. 103

Though currently bound by a purely horizontal logic and limited to fulfilling only the most basic provisions, the design of surface parking has significant latent potential **(1)**

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(1) Beginning Notes

Aerial map of Boston, The Boston Commons and The South Bay Shopping Mall

The South Bay Shopping Mall

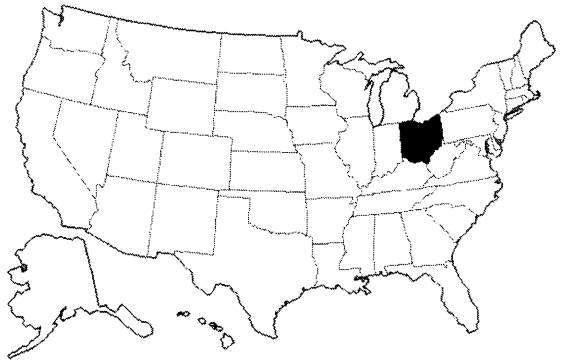
(1) Beginning Notes

In earlier times the landscape, rural as well as urban, always contained a variety of spaces and structures, which the public, no matter how humble, could occupy and use on a strictly temporary basis....

I am tempted to dwell on the importance of the parking lot. I enjoy it as an austere but beautiful and exciting aspect of the landscape. I find it easy to compare it with such traditional vernacular spaces as the commons: both are undifferentiated in form, empty, with no significant topographical features to determine use, both easily accessible and essential to our daily existence. But on another level, the parking lot symbolizes a closer, more immediate relationship between various elements in our society; consumer and producer, public and private, the street and the dwelling...

Ours is a society where vernacular values are taken seriously... Perhaps we can go one step further and see how in the vernacular world we are learning to share spaces, learning how to use them in a temporary way in order to overcome both the old fashioned biological exclusiveness and the more modern overemphasis on competition and control.

(Landscape in Sight, Looking at America, J. B. Jackson, 76)



Research with night-time satellite photos conducted by The National Oceanic and Atmospheric administration reveal the amount of impervious pavement by examining artificial light reflection present on the earths surface. From these nighttime photographs they have determined that over 40,000 square miles (or roughly the size of Ohio) of Americas landscape has been paved over by roads and parking lots.

(June 6,2004 Weekend Edition, npr.org)

It should come as no surprise that the paving of America for the purpose of surface parking lots is an expanding condition on our landscape. To address this as a topic for an architectural thesis suggests the potential for rigorous investigations, designs and redesigns of these types of surface conditions by architecture, urban and landscape designers whose interests address the cultural, environmental and spatial effects of America's evolving impervious landscape.

The task at hand is to address the latent potentials of the surface parking lot by infusing a fully functioning surface parking lot with the actions of play. The desire of the thesis is to subvert existing conditions, patterns, markers and language of the parking lot with particular architectural moves and in turn, flip them into conditions of park, while at the same time maintaining conditions of parking.

A space for both park and parking is not only intriguing for its suggestion of oppositional programs of how cars and non cars are claiming territory in our cities, but it is also interesting as I realize that this marginalized space already acts as an adaptable surface for subversive activities. Surface parking lots, the banal unconsidered space of suburban sprawl, are in fact loaded with program completely invented by the unassuming, and carefully carried out around the activities of the consuming. When announcing this research topic to colleagues as a spatial investigation for both park and parking I would always receive a story in return recalling a particular instance of misuse in a parking lot. The stories situated themselves in the site of the parking lot because it is a place in the city you know you can mess around in your car. Not quite public, but not really private either, the stories situated themselves around the premise that the parking lot is an unassuming site with an incredible flat surface for cars. And so it is a sort of destination, a turn around, a play area or a meeting point. With a collection of stories and with my own research, the parking lot began to come to life with actions and activities, invented and happening either outside or on the edges of its original use as a place to store cars for the consuming culture. Interesting to me is that these stories and activities of misuse carried out by the unassuming were sited at parking lots not by coincidence. As J. B Jackson suggests, the parking lot, similar to the vernacular space of the commons but between public and private, consumer and producer, is like no other place in the city.

To understand the possibility of a program which accommodates both park and parking research was conducted into the aspects of play, game strategy and parking lot behavior. While the research suggests the parking lot as an expanding landscape typology and can be considered in its repetitive totality, the research culminated in the design proposal of a 'recovering' of one existing parking lot, located at the South Bay Mall in South Boston, Massachusetts

Taking from the rubber-stamped landscape strategies of municipal playgrounds found in urban America and the rubber-stamping strategies of big-box retail which are disseminated throughout the American suburban landscape, this thesis attempts to recover the surface parking lot by equating park and parking in a double-loaded program of 100 % PARK / 100% PARKING **(2)**.

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(2) Defining Rubber, Stamp, Play, Ground, Park

definitions

Rubber

In its natural state, rubber is a yellowish, amorphous, elastic material obtained from the milky sap or latex of various tropical plants, especially the rubber tree, which can be pigmented, finished, and modified into a number of different products. Rubber can also be defined as any of numerous synthetic elastic materials of varying chemical composition with properties similar to those of natural rubber. Items made from rubber include an eraser or a set of tires on a vehicle. A rubber can also describe one that rubs, especially one that gives a massage, or can be used as slang terminology for a condom. As well, a rubber is used as terminology for a series of games of which two out of three or three out of five must be won to terminate the play.

(The American Heritage Dictionary, 2000)

Rubber-Stamp

Rubber-stamping is to mark with the imprint of a rubber stamp. It is an action of endorsement, or approval without question or deliberation as in to approve of automatically.

(The American Heritage Dictionary, 2000)

Stamp

As an action, to stamp means to extinguish or destroy by trampling underfoot, or to crush or grind with a heavy instrument. It can also suggest imprinting with a mark, design, or seal or to identify, characterize, or reveal. As an object, a stamp is simply the device used to impress, cut out, or shape something to which it is applied. A stamp is used as an identifying or characterizing mark or impression, an official mark that indicates ownership, approval, completion, or payment.

(The American Heritage Dictionary, 2000)

(2) Defining Rubber, Stamp, Play, Ground, Park

Play

The American Heritage dictionary lists no fewer then thirty meanings for the word play. The most common definition of the word play is described as a way of spending our leisure time in games and sports; as in play as an agreeable pastime. In addition to using the word as an action of leisure, play can also take on the meaning of becoming something else, as to assume the role of, to be spontaneous, as in to act as, quick, often irregular movement or action, especially of light or color, or to move or operate freely within a bounded space, as machine parts do. While these are hardly precise definitions, examining the word play does reminds us that its meaning is broad and loose and its use in language provokes a sense of delight, chance, activity and disport.

(The American Heritage Dictionary, 2000)

Ground

The word ground is a bit more complex. Ground can mean the past tense and past participle of the verb to grind. To grind can mean to crush, pulverize, or reduce to powder, to shape, sharpen, or refine by friction, especially by rubbing between two hard surfaces, to produce mechanically or without inspiration, a laborious task, routine, or study, or to oppress or weaken gradually. The word ground can also take meaning as both an object and an action; the ground, as in the soil of earth, grounds as in the basis of an argument or grounds as in the area of a particular purpose.

(The American Heritage Dictionary, 2000)

Park

Park n 1: a large area of land preserved in its natural state as public property; "there are laws that protect the wildlife in this park" [syn: parkland] 2: a piece of open land for recreational use in an urban area; "they went for a walk in the park" [syn: commons, common, green] 3: a facility in which ball games are played (especially baseball games); "take me out to the ballpark" [syn: ballpark] 4: Scottish explorer in Africa (1771-1806) [syn: Park, Mungo Park] 5: a lot where cars are parked [syn: parking lot, car park, parking area] 6: a gear position that acts as a parking brake; "the put the car in park and got out" v 1: place temporarily; "park the car in the yard"; "park the children with the in-laws"; "park your bag in this locker" 2: maneuver a vehicle into a parking space; "Park the car in front of the library"; "Can you park right here?"

(The American Heritage Dictionary, 2000)

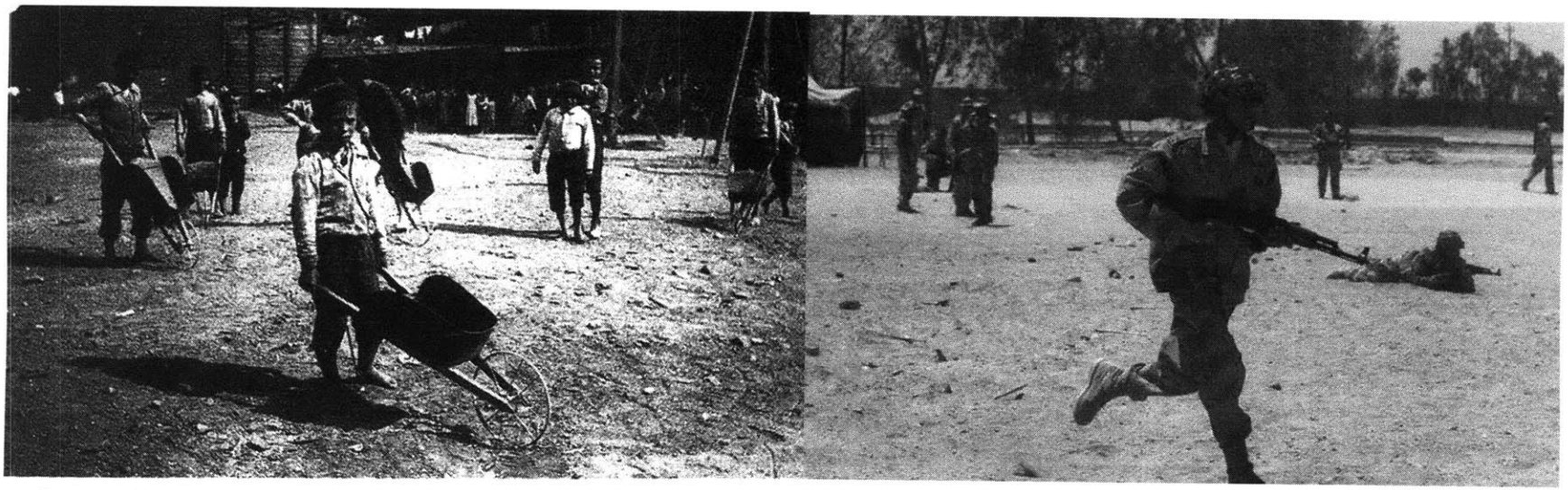
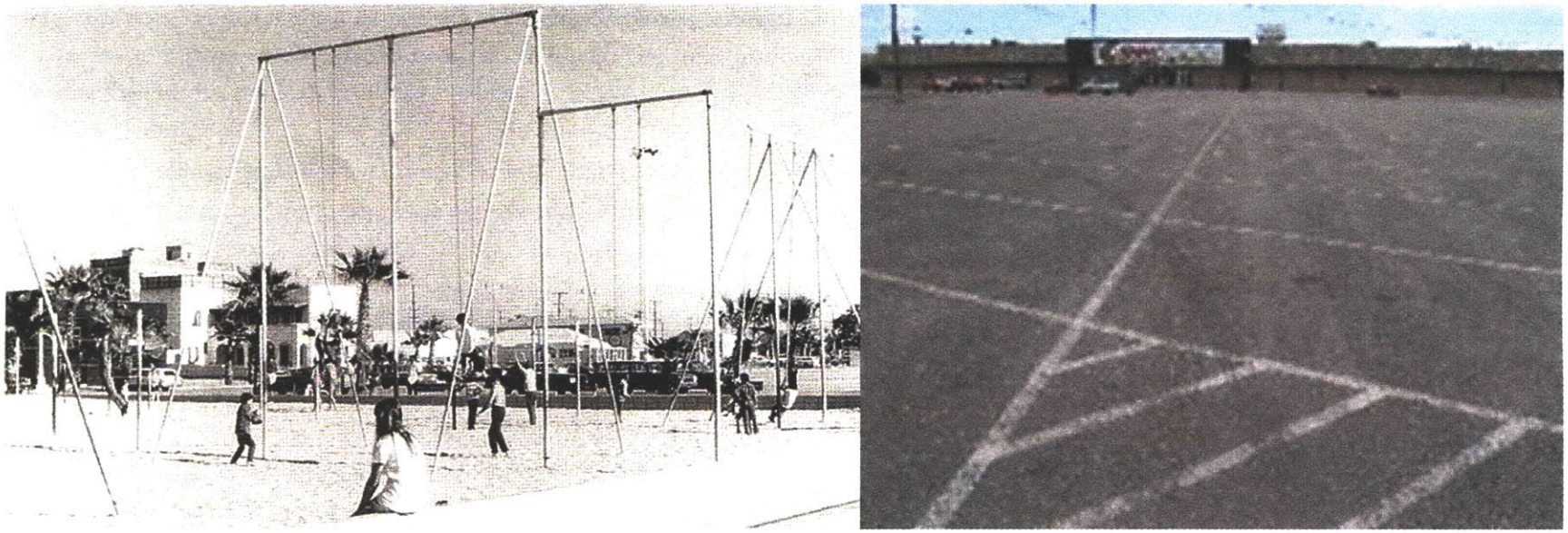


Fig. 2.3. "Children's playground in Poverty Gap." *Photograph by Jacob Riis (ca. 1888 – 1889). Courtesy Library of Congress.*

This is not a Toy: The History of the American Play Ground

The notion of setting aside outdoor spaces for children to use for play and to furnish it with devices to support the play is a relatively new idea in the development of western civilization. While people have been making swings, seesaws and maypoles for centuries for the privatized use of wealthy and idle adults it was only in the 19th century that western society undertook setting up pubic play yards for children. The provision of public play facilities was part of the Reform Movement, which was an attempt to improve the living conditions of workers in the rapidly growing and polluted industrial cities of the 1800's. General health and living conditions were so poor that the average body size of the nineteenth century urban dweller in American was less than that of the persons living in the middle Ages. Following the passage of legislation against children's labor and the requirement for mandatory basic education for all children, play provision for children was part of a set of new measurements supported by public funds and charities. (Hendricks, 2001. p.15)

Around the same time that a number of private educational facilities located in the poorest districts of Boston were constructing sand yards and sand gardens for their youth (Cavallo, 23) social reformer and journalist, Jacob Riis was complaining of the lack of play areas for children growing up in the tenement areas of New York City. As the street was the only playground available and unsafe at that, Riis believed that providing city children with proper playgrounds would not only help children stay out of trouble but that through social play, the foundations for a better society could be laid. (Riis, 1894, p.666)



JBJ, photo, playground

While the ground work was set in place by social activists of the Reform movement, the rapid boom of municipal playground construction in urban America took hold when it was discovered that male children growing up in nineteenth century industrial cities did not meet basic physical tests for entering military service. With the wars at the beginning of this century, culminating on World War I, the need for physically fit men helped push the need for the widespread development and funding for publicly accessible areas for exercise and recreation. This manifested itself most greatly in the growth of public playgrounds in America. (Hendricks, 2001. p.16)

The push for urban playgrounds can not only be seen as a subversive military strategy to insure physically fit urban recruits, but it also was used in the tactics of urban planning and political warfare. Public play provision is tied to the history of the development of the urban planning profession, and the political agendas of city officers beginning in the 1920's on through today. For the most part, playgrounds are seen as a necessity and a utility; a matter of functional, and not an issue of spatial design or architecture. With little funding, research and innovation, and overbearing concerns of safety and insurance, there is a certain uniformity and repetition in the leisure opportunities for children. The majority of neighborhood parks are facsimiles of all others, as though they had been rubber-stamped through out the city. (Hendricks, 2001. p.17)

The Mega store

While the traditional neighborhood development checklist of an urban planner might ask themselves, are there small playgrounds distributed evenly through each neighborhood, roughly within one-eighth mile of every dwelling? Wal-Mart is asking itself, do we have an equal distribution of mega stores all within a ten-minute driving distance of each other? While there are similarities in the, repetitive, perhaps redundant, rubber-stamping of these spaces, it is interesting to note that one is regulated by public funds, and the other by a private business enterprise.

A Mega store, or a "big box" retail structure, is defined as a large, freestanding, single-use building with

CALVARY CHAPEL

one major room. These structures, popular among the giant retailers that popularized one-stop shopping, are agile in offering consumers a very large selection of product, at very low costs, all under one very large roof. As the buildings are not designed in response to regional conditions, such as weather, local architecture, or the surrounding landscape, the structures are reassuringly the same, layout after layout, town after town, state after state. In cases where big box retailers have built on the fringes of emerging towns, the retailers have been known to stay in their buildings for 5 to 7 years before upgrading their operation or relocating, which means building an entirely new structure to house their superstore, often within a few miles of the original store. As a result, the United States has not only been left with hundreds of empty big box buildings every year, but has acquired hundreds of new occupied big box buildings every year. In addition, it is not only the structure that is environmentally unthoughtful weather in-use or in its abandon state. The impervious surface parking lots that serve these stores must also be considered when discussing their cultural and environmental effects. In the same way communities are beginning to take hold of the idea of re-programming abandon big box retail spaces like empty Wal-Mart buildings, K-Mart buildings, Target buildings into useful structures for their community I began to wonder if the same were possible for the parking lots that are inherently part of these structures. Even with an in-use big-box commercial space, the parking lot is rarely used to full capacity. Was there opportunity to incite the parking lot with more program? (http://www.bigboxreuse.com/)

'Hook-ups'

The term boondocking is used to describe the independent campers who use their RVs without the benefit of "hook-ups" or amenities common to RV parks. These RV'ers live on public lands, Wal-Mart parking lots, truck stops, or city streets, anywhere that is independent of fixed services. The American Southwest has become the point of congregation for boondockers, drawn by free or cheap camping on public lands, and the warm winter temperatures. The most common place for boondocking is on Bureau of Land Management (BLM) lands, and in wilderness areas established as Long Term Visitor Areas (LTVA). It is estimated that in the winter months up to several hundred thousand campers are boondocking on public lands in

WAL★MART

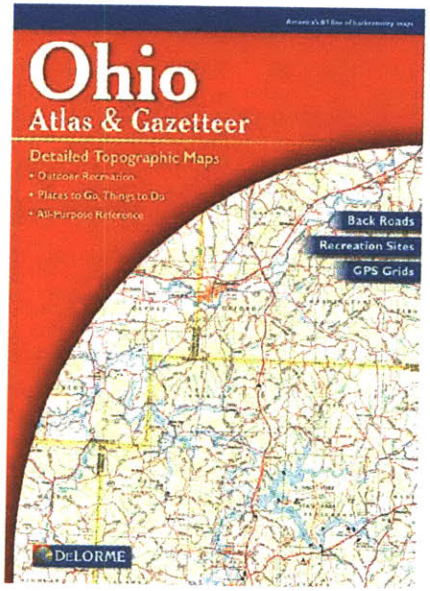
California and Arizona. For around one dollar a day, campers can purchase a LTVA visitors permit and camp for 14 days in a 28-day period. Similar in aim to a farm crop rotation, after the 14th day of occupation campers must move outside of a 25-mile radius of the previous location (polarinertia.com). It is imperative the campers rotate location in order for the land to recuperate from camper wear and tear.

Without proximity to "hook-up" locations, and relatively cheap or free land to roam on, there is nothing out of necessity to ground these boondockers to any place or any group. Because of issues of safety and comfort in familiarity and accessibility, RVers often use the parking lots of Wal-marts as an accommodation 'road map' for their road travels. To assist in this phenomenon, Wal-mart widely distributes a road atlas which provides directions and landmarks each Wal-mart in the United States.

Quoting documentary Filmmaker Doug Hawes-Davis, who reveals this culture in the film "This is Nowhere" , "The inherent contradiction of 'camping ' in a box-store parking lot seemed like the perfect starting place for exploring cultural attitudes towards nature, community, and sense of place. Themes of urban sprawl, tourism, and consumerism are accessed by examining RV camping in Wal-Mart parking lots."

While Wal-Mart parking lots have been replacing traditional venues for public space for years, hosting events ranging from army recruiting to 9-11 memorial gatherings, allowing RV'ers to permanently park in their lots confuses how we construe new definitions of public space. The Wal-Mart parking lot has been developing as a space that allowed for chance encounters typical of traditional public space: from celebrating public events to acts of violence such as robbery and all of this occurs under the watchful eye of Wal-Mart surveillance. Because Wal-Mart is a privately owned space, it is able to condone which activities are allowed in this contested space. Yet, recently, it is also becoming more typical of traditional public spaces in larger cities.

The introduction of people living in RV's in Wal-Mart parking lots suggests that the parking lot is not as



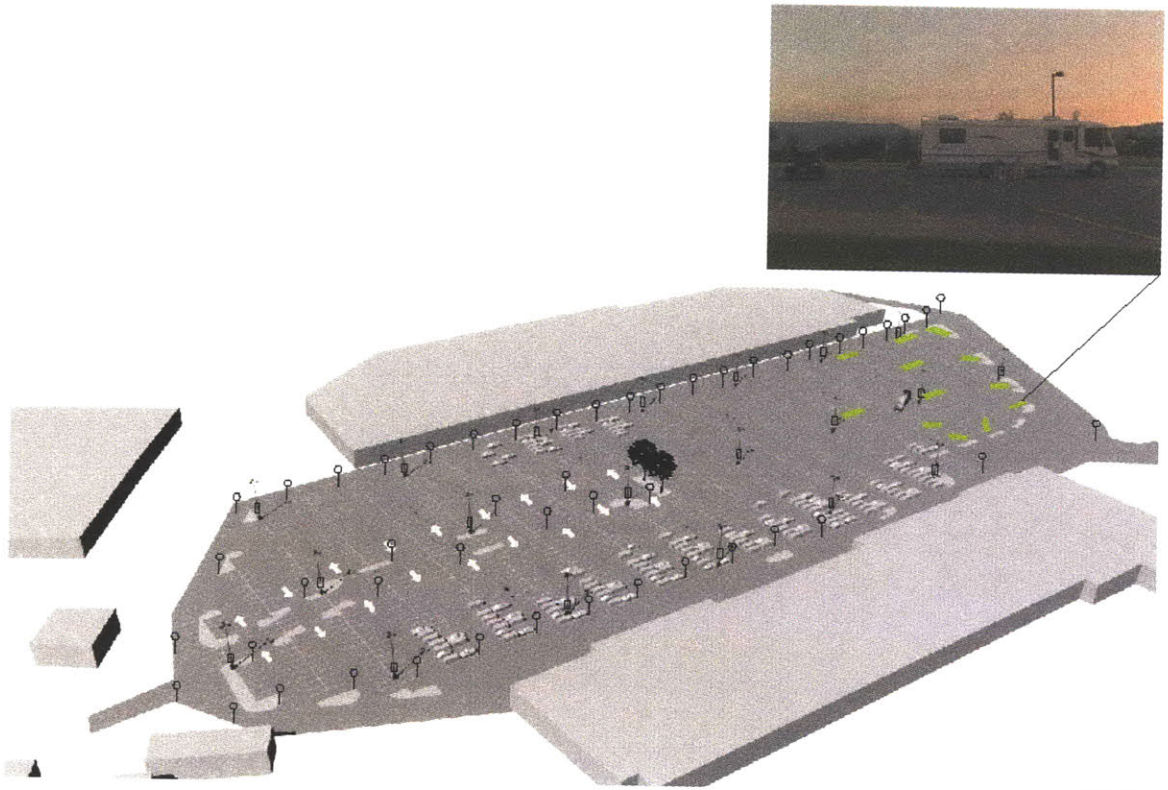
www.walmart.com

program specific as had been thought. For example, definitions of homelessness should be re-examined; how different is living in an RV from living in a cardboard box? As should definitions of what are appropriate venues for sexual activity; are two promiscuous teenagers in the back of a Chevy any different than two promiscuous seniors in an RV? How are social boundaries defined in these roaming communities and what acts are taken to define sense of place?

Or is the Wal-Mart parking lot merely a representation of a larger phenomenon found in the American landscape that favors models of specialization: strict diagrams that favor efficiency and uniformity while also generating landscapes that negate flexibility to adapt to local conditions. The Wal-Mart parking lot, and Wal-Mart itself, provide a familiarity from location--to-location that attracts a segment of the population that know what to expect whether it be camping, parking or shopping. This results in both a fictitious environment, free of the uncertainties found in other types of traditional public space, and the mass production of a web of familiar retail experiences, spanning across the country. (Lab.theboxtank.com)

With cues from the examination of play and game strategies **(3)**,

(3) Learning to Play the Game

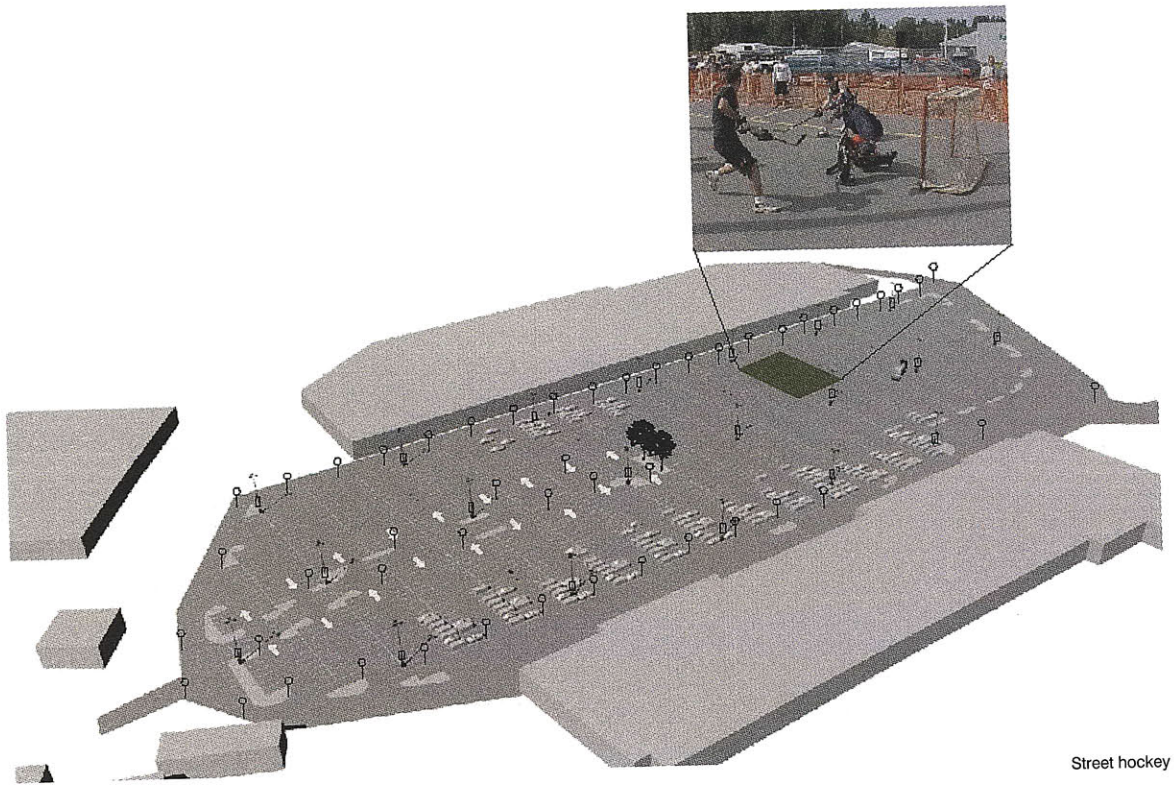


RV pitstop

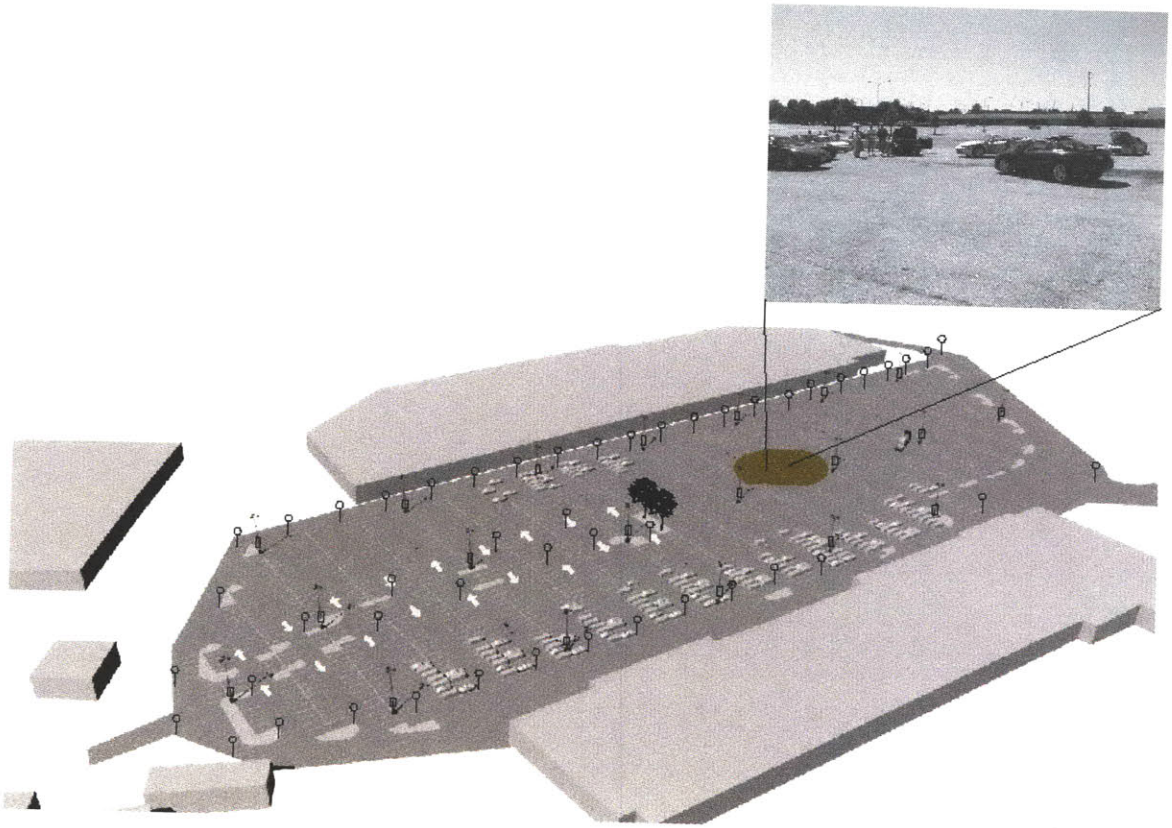
(3) Learning to Play the Game

> *The automobile allows one to travel almost at will anywhere in the public domain while remaining in a completely private wolrd unequivocally defined by physical boundries....It might be that the rapid and continuing changes in the American social scene over the last fiftly years have produced a general uncertainty and unease that places more importance and value upon the protection and clear definition of the private, personal realm. While the traditional utopian visions have been built around a communal structure, modern Americans are attempting to build very personal or at least familial utopias- utopias structured around detached housed, television and automobiles...*
> *This ability to move through public space without suffering impingements upon, or readjustment of, one's own personal space could explain much more that the commuters attachement to his private automobile. (It explains the success of the auto rental company, the use of the car in wilderness areas.) ....*
> *The appeal of the automobile is not just a silly habit easily gotten rid of, but a means of fulfilling deeply rooted concepts of human territoriality.*
> (JB Jackson, " Auto Territoriality" Landscape 17, No.3 (spring 1968) 1-2, excerpt.)

There are certain elements of a parking lot which attract these unassuming activities. In this research of which the desire is to program park and parking into one surface space, realizing that instances of play and parking are already happening in parking lots made me consider- either my thesis is done, game over....or that through the redesign, or recovering of this landscape, could you heighten, make suggestion of the possibility of those other actions without reducing any element of the original intentions of the space, A space dedicated for the storage of cars, territorialized by cars.... Could you make a place that is both 100% parking and 100% park?



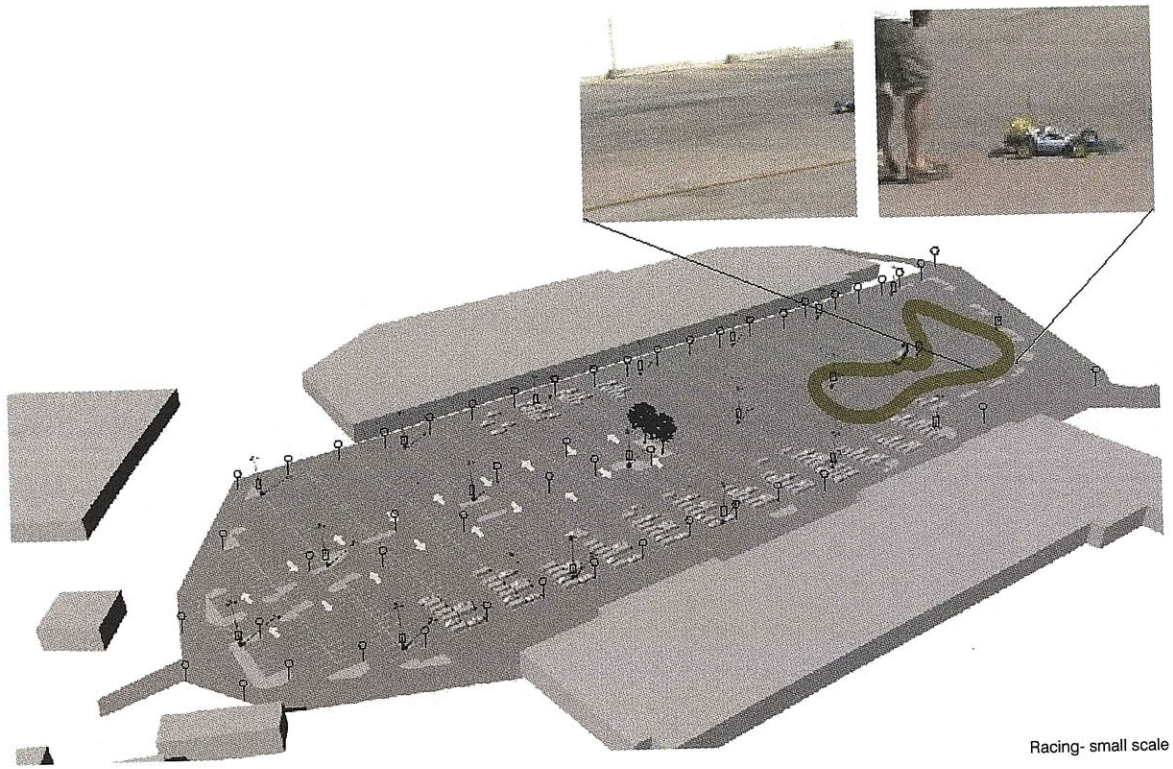
Street hockey



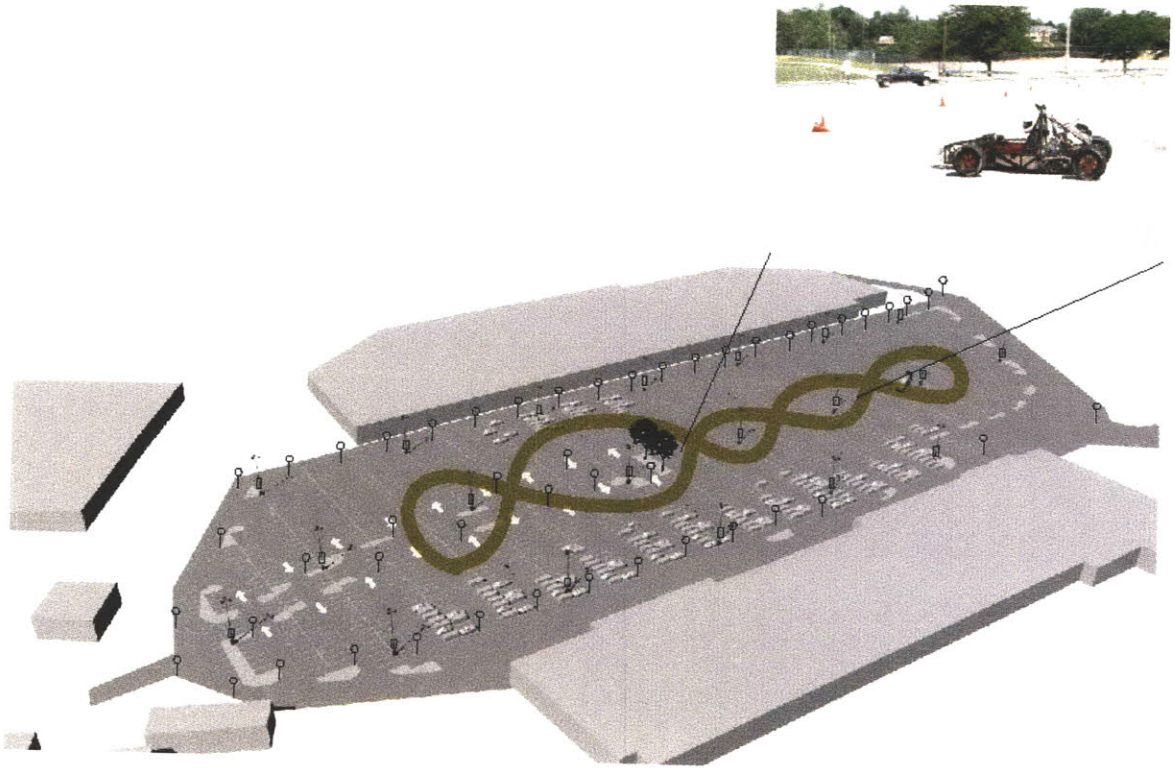
Meeting point

Is there a way to adapt this typological surface condition, a surface void of any character, but full of activities and implied behaviors, and address this behavior by suggesting additional use of programs rather then turning our backs on it all together by attempts to hide it, dress it up or argue against it all together.

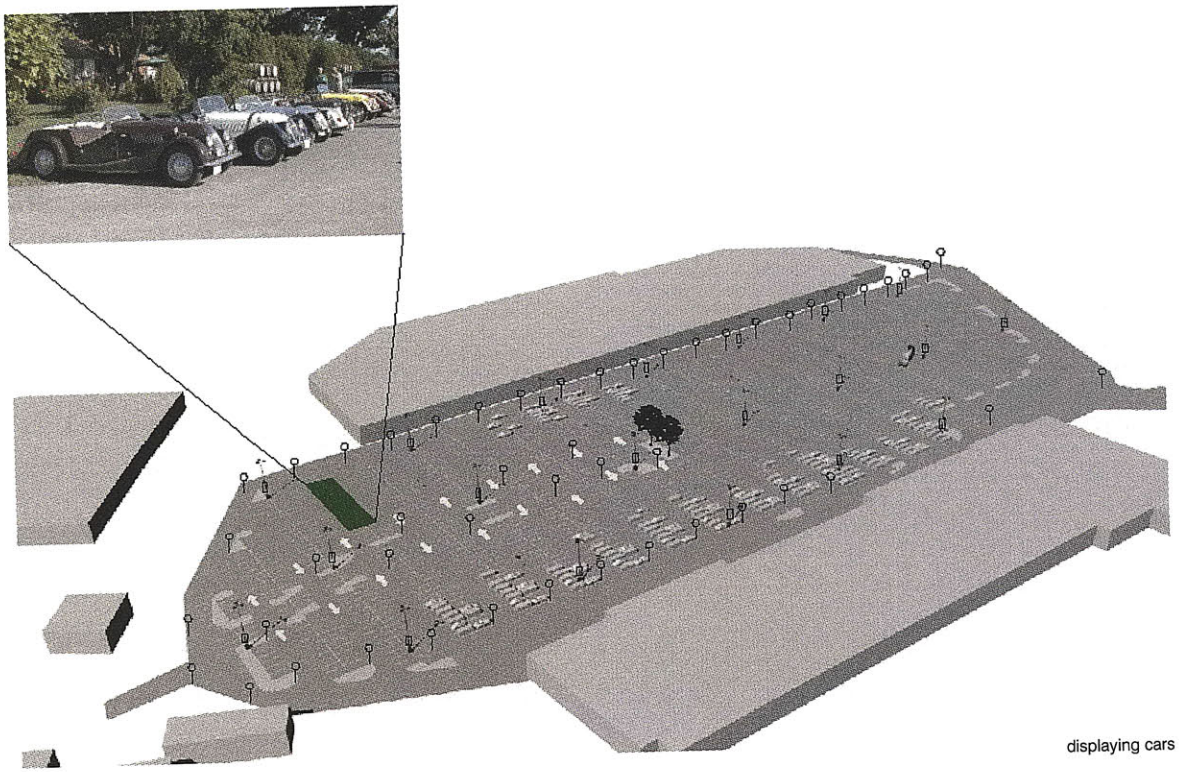
In understanding the parking lot as a typological surface, with cues of behavior embedded in its sparse physical elements, one can consider the parking lot as a kind of game board- a board of which, rules and



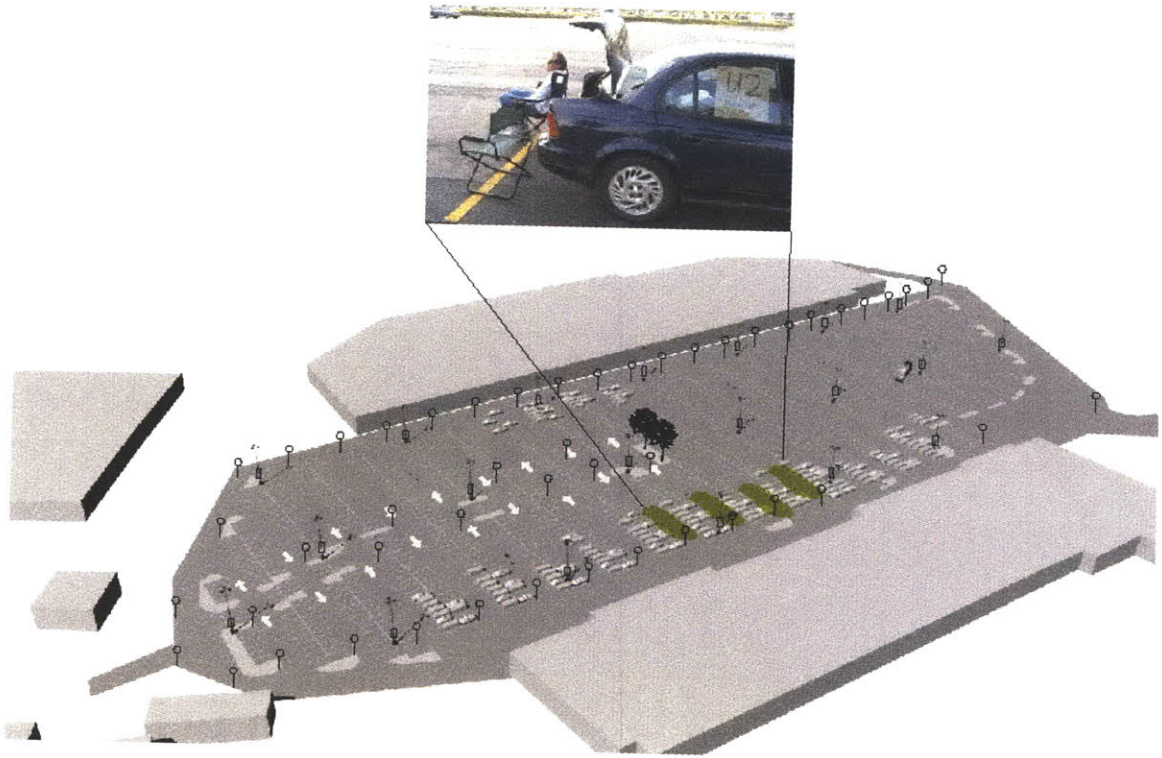
Racing- small scale



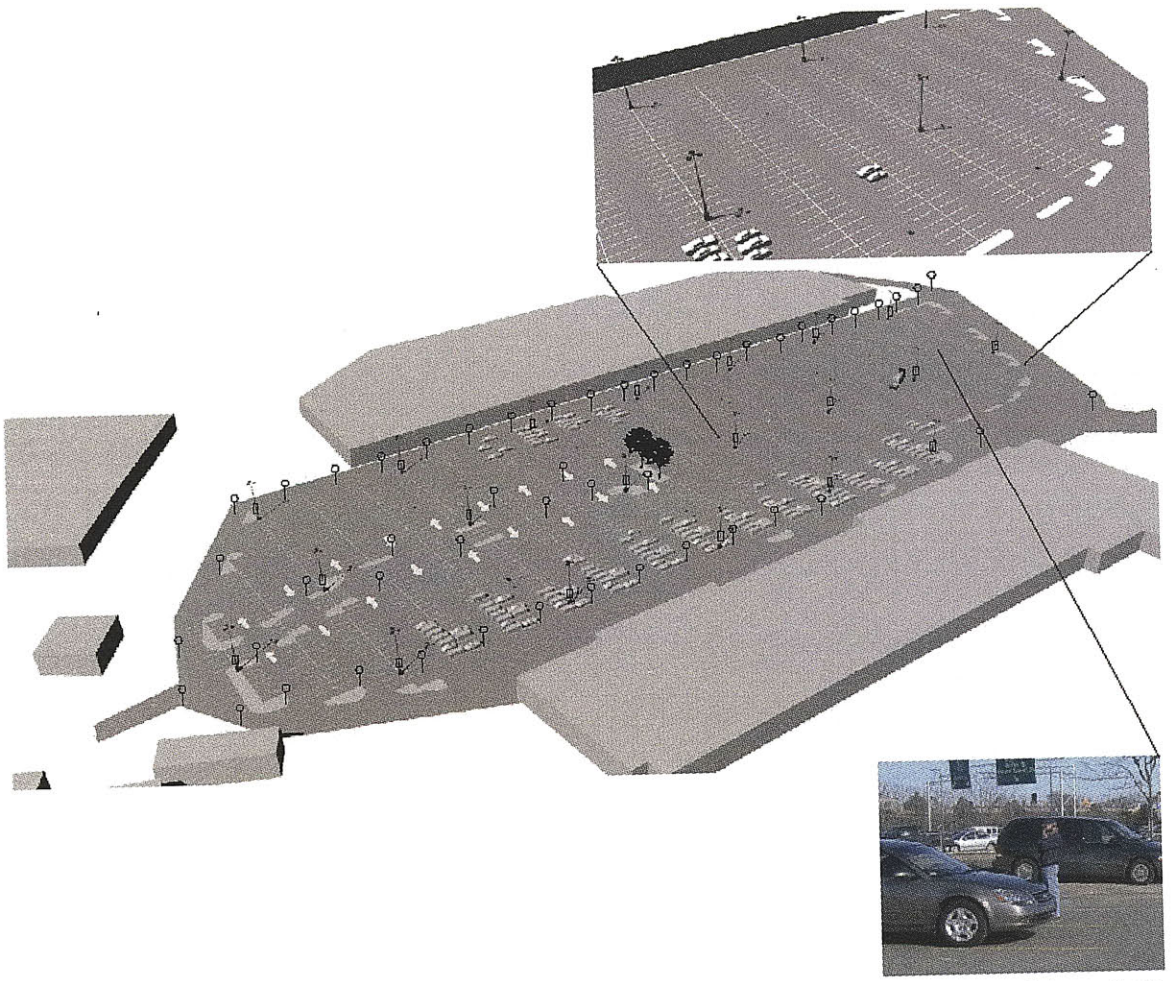
Racing- large scale



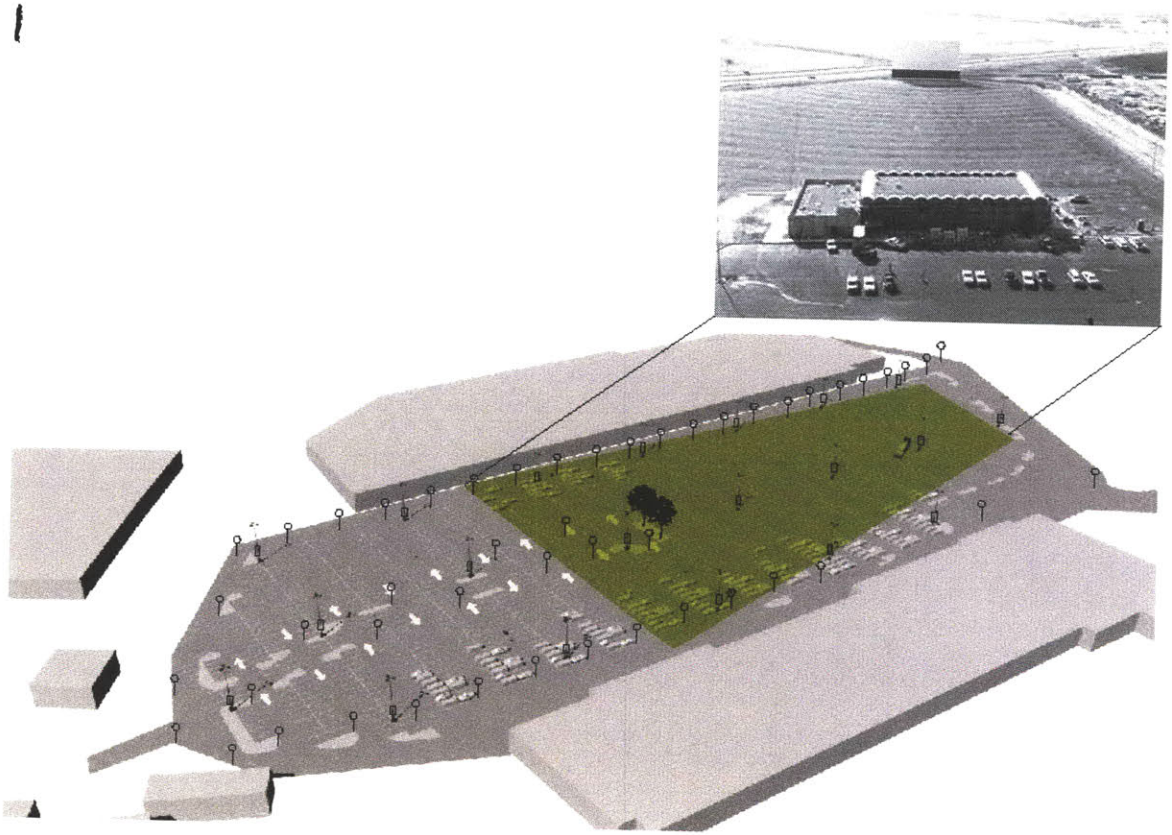
displaying cars



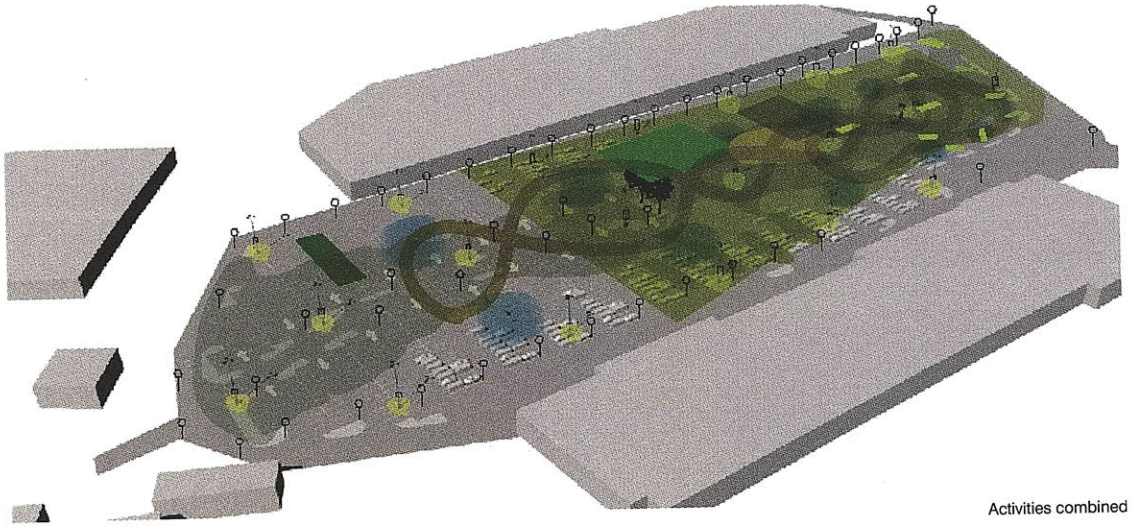
Tail-gating



ImproRacing- small scale



Drive-in movie theater



Activities combined

are implied in the physical elements and the behavior is played out according to the rules.

Once you identify the board, the pieces and the rules, opportunity for adaptation to the game can happen. In research conducted in game playing, certain tactics for adaptation are determined. This is done by consideration into changing the rules, changing the board, opening new perceptions of the game.
Now understanding the subtleness of the game at hand, the tactics for re-design began with determining what the game pieces were and on what board.

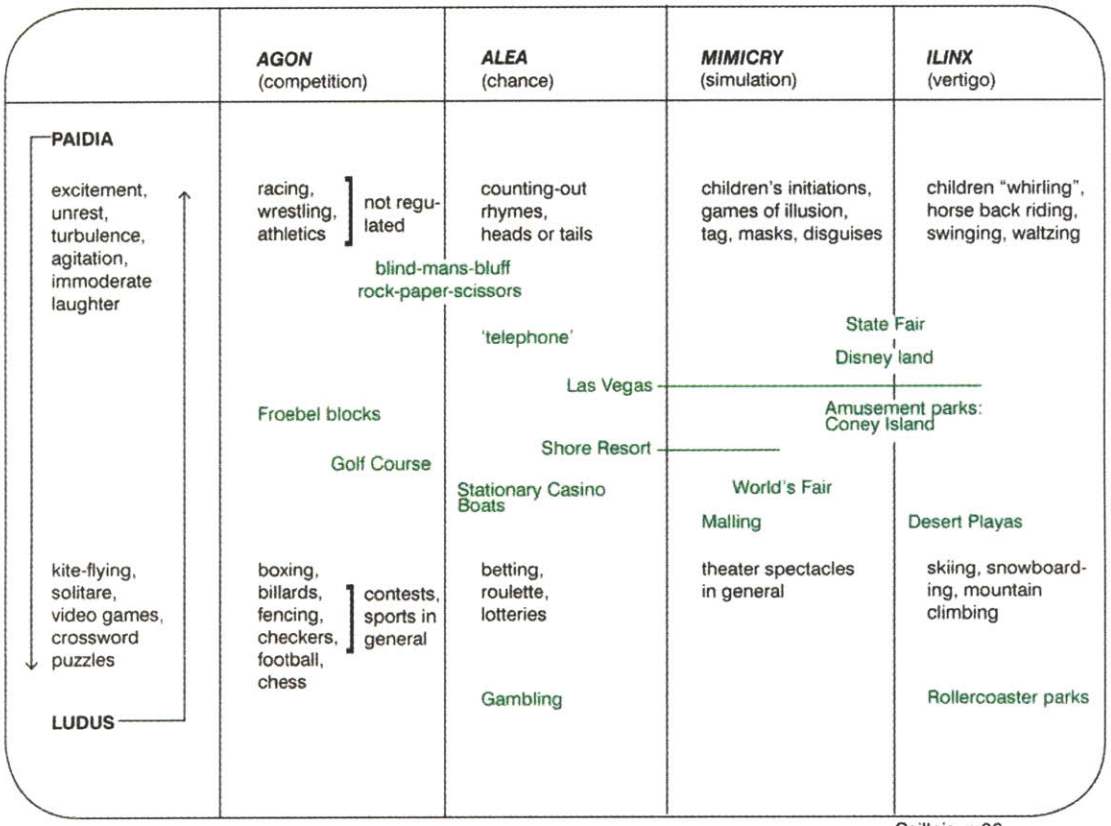
So how to do that?

First was to understand terms of play and the rules, actions and design of game playing.

Terms of Play

Examining a brief background into the aspects of play lead us to Contemporary philosopher and author, Roger Caillois who defines play as free, separate, uncertain, and unproductive, yet regulated and make-believe. He subsumes the various kinds of play and games are under four categories; agon (competition), alea (chance), mimicry (simulation), and ilinx (vertigo).

The name alea is the Latin name for the game of dice. Games of alea are based on a decision independent of the player, an outcome of which the player has no control and in which winning is the result of fate rather then triumphing over an adversary. Such traits are exemplary in dice, roulette, 'heads or tails' and lotteries. It is not skill, but rather chance that constitutes the unique appeal of the alea game. The player is entirely passive; he does not deploy his resources, skill, muscles, or intelligence. All he need do is wait, in hope and trembling, for the cast of a die. Alea negates work, patience, experience, and qualifications. Professionalization, application, and training are eliminated. The player of alea is a negation of the will, a surrender of destiny, totally dependant on everything except himself. (Caillois,18)



Caillois, p.36

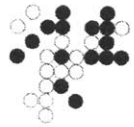
Most interestingly, Caillois determines that games or types of play in each of the four categories can be placed on a continuum representing an evolution. Activities, which are active, exuberant, and spontaneous, are defined as paidia. Activities representing calculation, artifice, and deviation to rules, and are defined as ludus. (Caillois,viii)

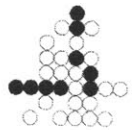
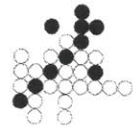
Paidia and ludus

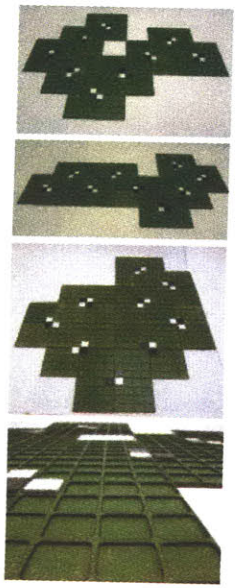
Paidia, an almost invisible principle at one end of the play continuum, is common to diversion, turbulence, free improvisation, and carefree gaiety and gamboling about. At the other extreme of the play continuum, the impulsive exuberance of paidia is absorbed by the inverse tendency of ludus: which is to bind it with arbitrary, imperative and purposely tedious conventions, to oppose it still more by ceaselessly practicing the most deviousness upon it, in order to make it more and more uncertain of attaining its desired effect. This act, while completely impractical, requires an even greater amount of effort, patience, skill, and ingenuity. (Caillois,13) The tendencies of ludus bridge across many types of activities and include the activities of betting, gambling, puzzles and mathematical recreations. In certain ways, Paidia is used more often in association with acts of childs play, while ludus is seen more in association with acts of adult play.

Ludus is the type of play that relates to the primitive desire to find diversion and amusement in arbitrary, perpetually recurrent obstacles. It is important to note that the difference between agon and ludus is that with ludus the tension and skill of the player is not related to any feeling of rivalry: the conflict is with the obstacle, not with another. Ludus, in itself, seemingly incomplete is a kind of makeshift device intended to allay boredom. One only becomes resigned to ludus while awaiting something preferable (Caillois,33). Industrial civilization has given birth to a special form of ludus, as the hobby, a secondary and gratuitous activity, undertaken and pursued for pleasure or to pass the idle time. While hobbies can be productive actions, such as model ship building or cooking, they can also take the form of calming repetition. Actions include knitting or whittling wood.

Othello
Othello

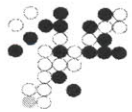
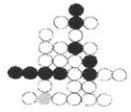
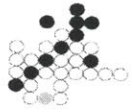


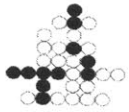
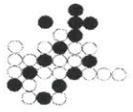





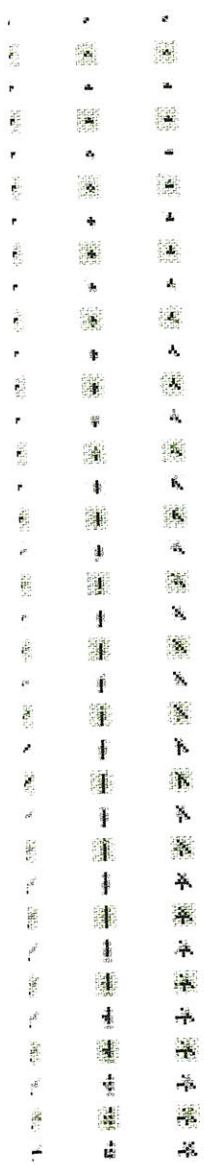
Othello

To understand more aspects of play in terms of competition and chance I turned my focus on game playing by examining the board game, Othello. Othello, which takes its cues from the ancient game of Go, identifies itself by two oppositional players, a fixed board and game pieces which act for both players on the opposite sides of the disc. The games objectives are to claim the most territory on the board with the most discs of your color, either the black or white side of the disc. Through the act of surrounding your opponents pieces on both sides, the pieces in the middle can be flipped to your color, enabling more territory to be claimed on the board. In understanding the strategies of the game the next step was to understand how adaptation of the game could occur. in this instance, the strategy is to claim the edges of the board as the safest zones to occupy, as the pieces in the middle of the board are vulnerable to being flipped over and over again. To subvert this strategy became the adaption of the game. To make an expandable edge, thus expanding the fixed board, created new strategies for game playing with the accumulation of more game pieces and an ever expanding action of play.

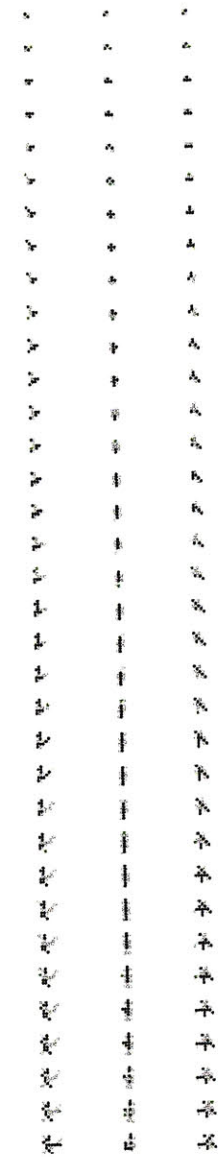




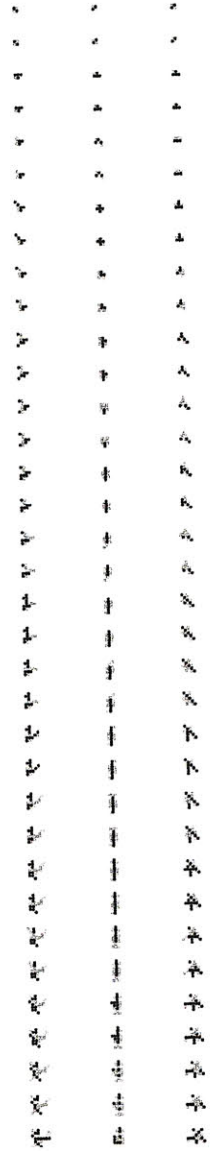
addative disc with reactionary disc flip and gridded game board



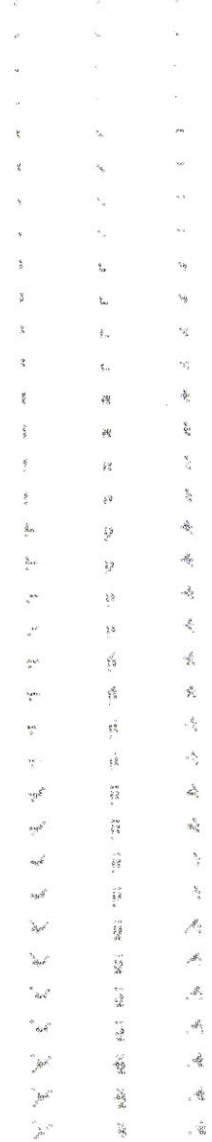
addative disc with reactionary disc flip



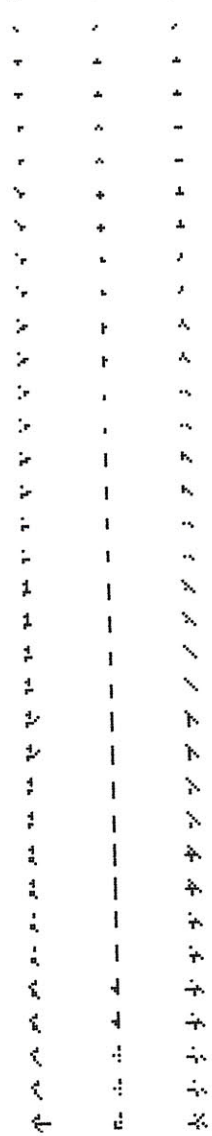
black disc



white disc



white and black reactionary disc flips



addatiive disc

Same rules, different board. Subverting the strategies inherent in the game board- The expanding field as a subversion of the games strategy. A quadrant of the played out board is removed and a new board is inserted. The middle section becomes the edge of the new board, the edge of the new board become the center of the played out board. New games can be played into the old game, thus expanding the field and number of game pieces and changing the strategy of the game.

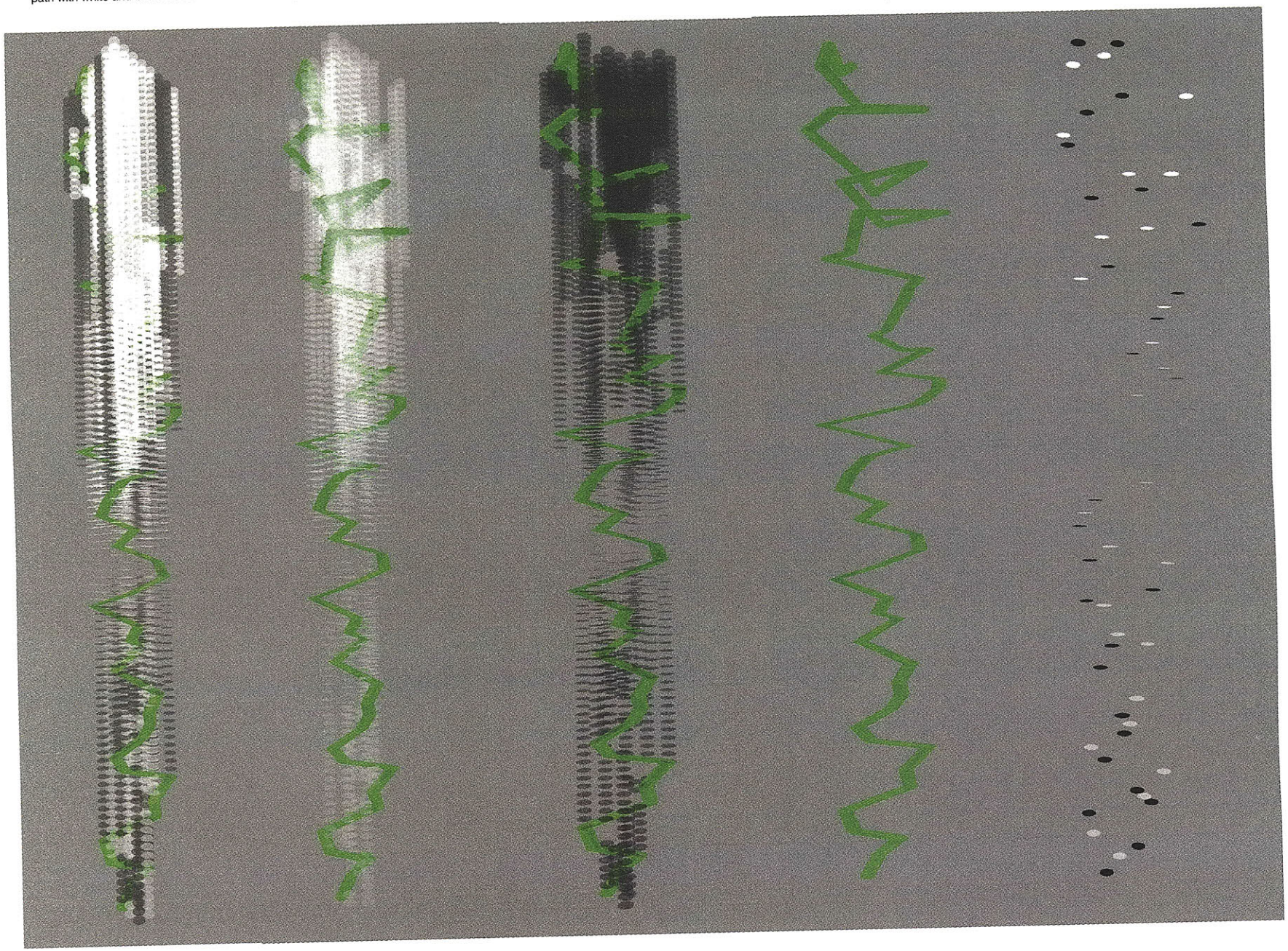
path with white and black discs

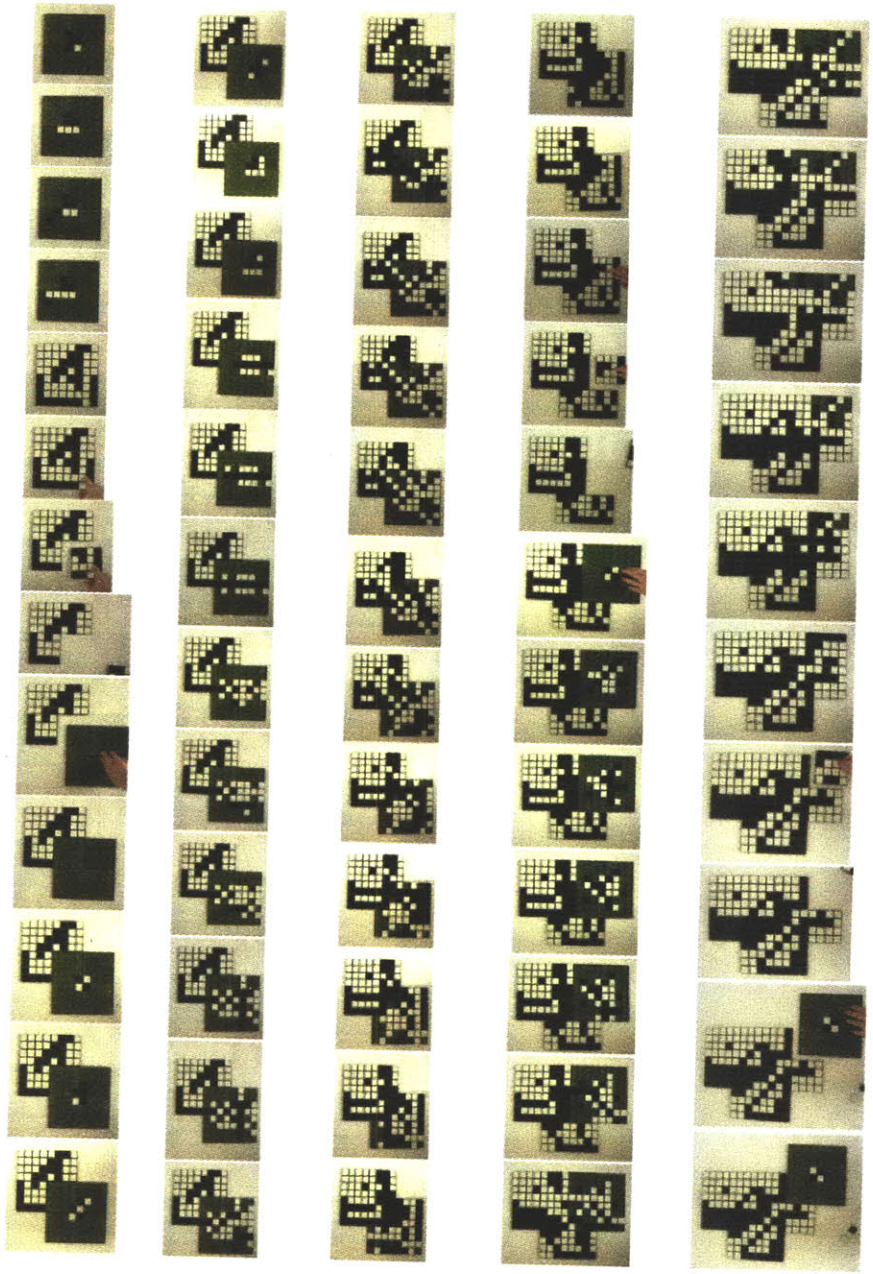
path with white discs

path with black discs

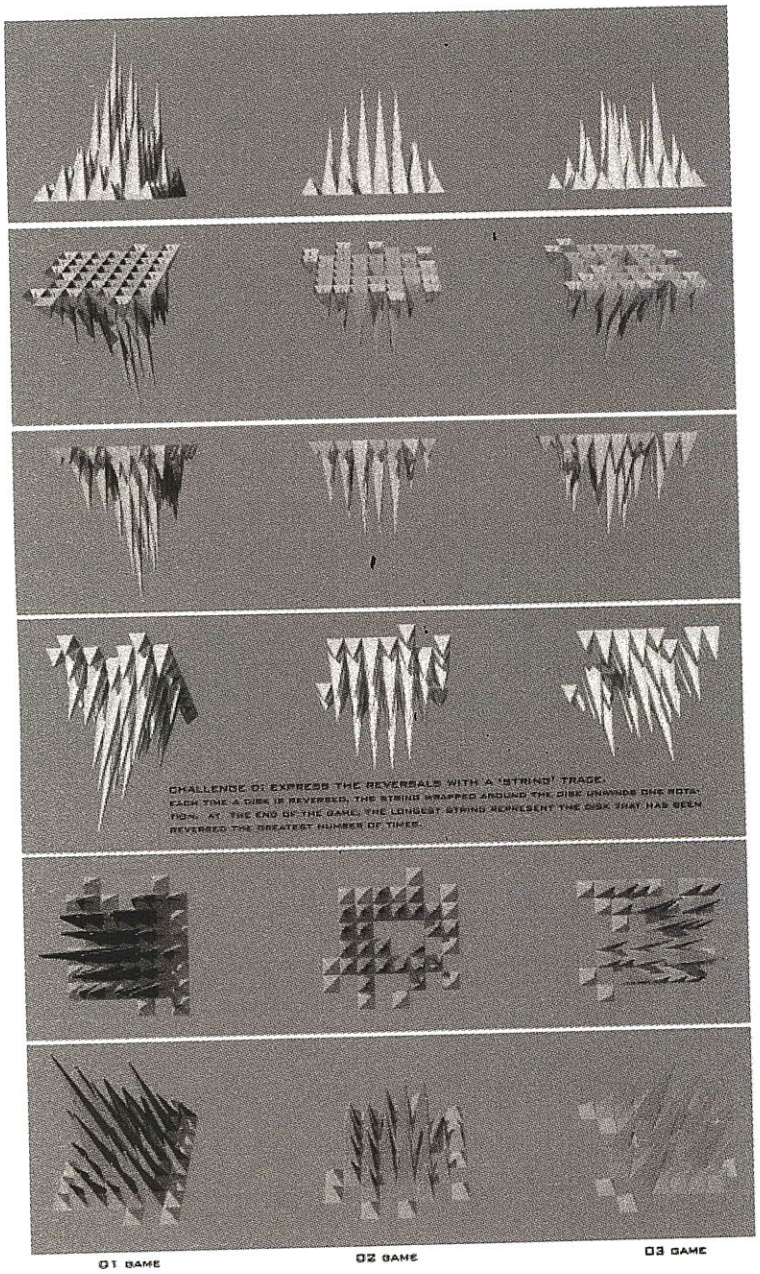
connecting the path of
the addative pieces

addatiive disc

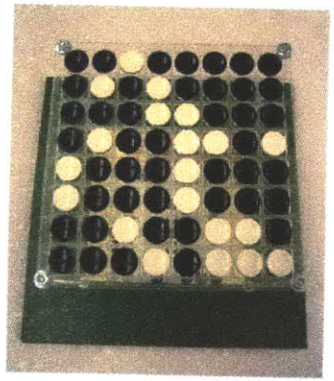


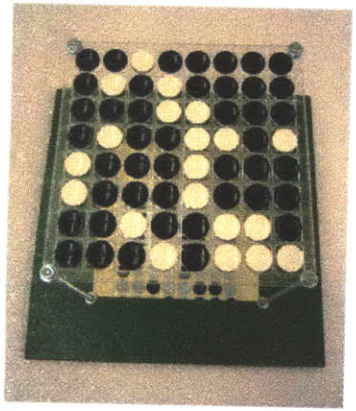


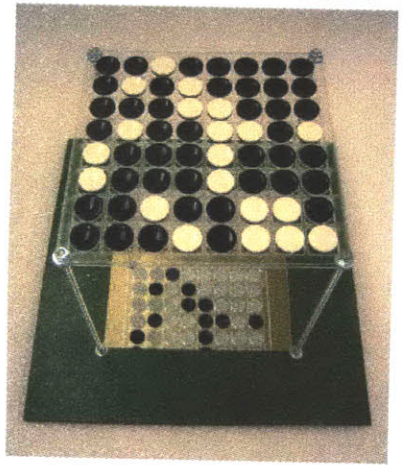
example of expanding board being played out



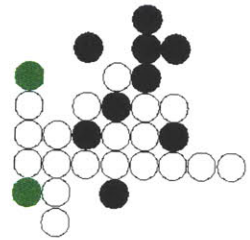
The documentation here expresses the disc reversal with a 'string' trace. Each time a disc is reversed, the string wrapped around the disc unwinds one rotation. At the end of the game, the longest string represents the disc that has been rotated the greatest number of times.

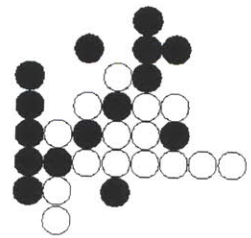




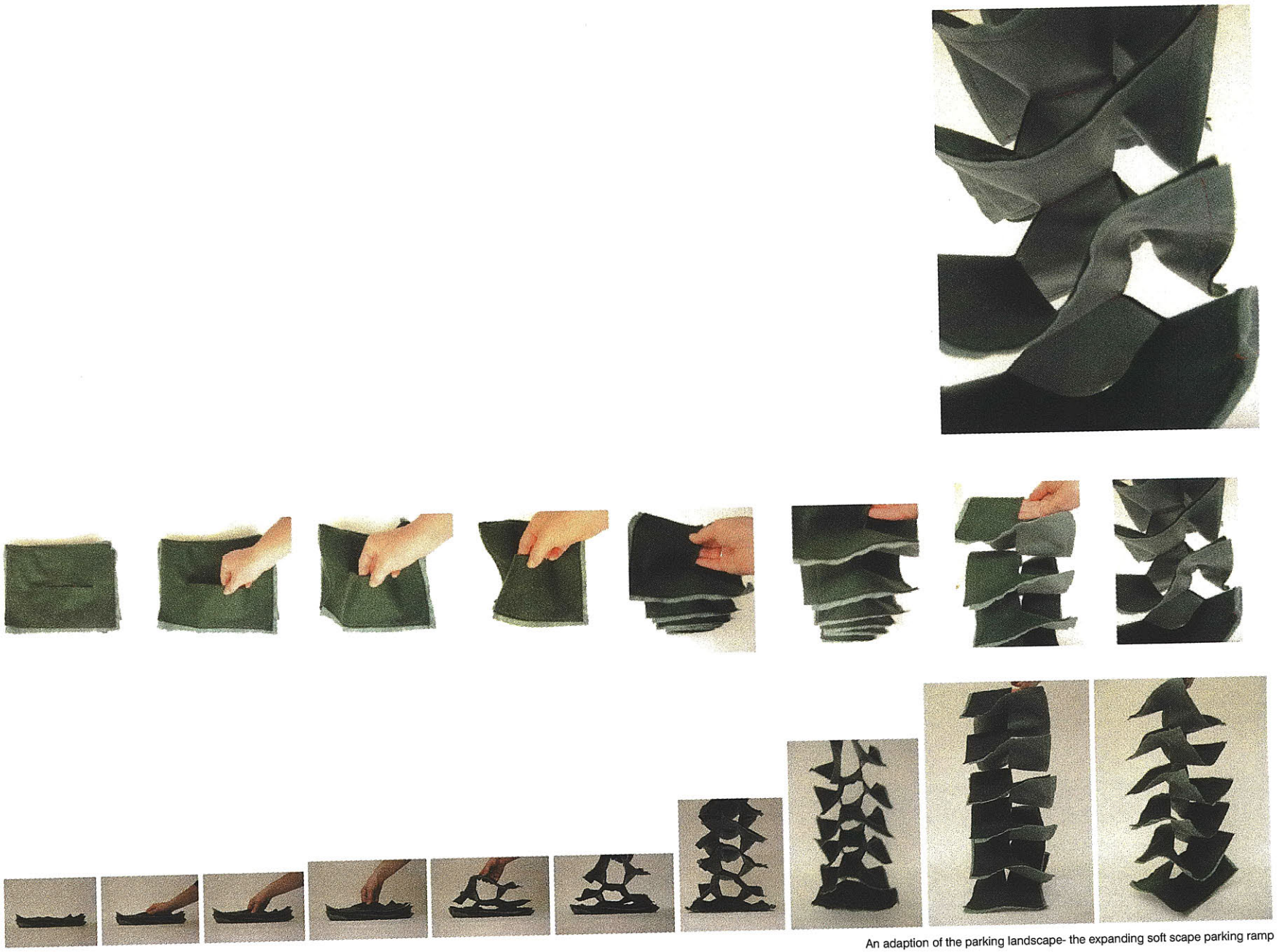


Same board, same rules, new perceptions. Seeing the game being played out through reflections. The board is elevated in the air 9" and revealing an inlaid mirror at its base. Being able to see the underside of the board reveals the opposite game being played out. So as you are winning on the top side, you whitness your self losing on the flip side.





Same board, change the rules. In this version of the game, two new pieces are laid down in one turn. This slightly alters the strategy of the game- more opportunities for flipping occur with two discs rather than one. It also makes the game twice as fast to play.



An adaption of the parking landscape- the expanding soft scape parking ramp

With cues from the examination of play and game strategies **(3)**, this thesis infuses the 'Lot' landscape with double meaning that attracts both the consuming and unassuming **(4)**

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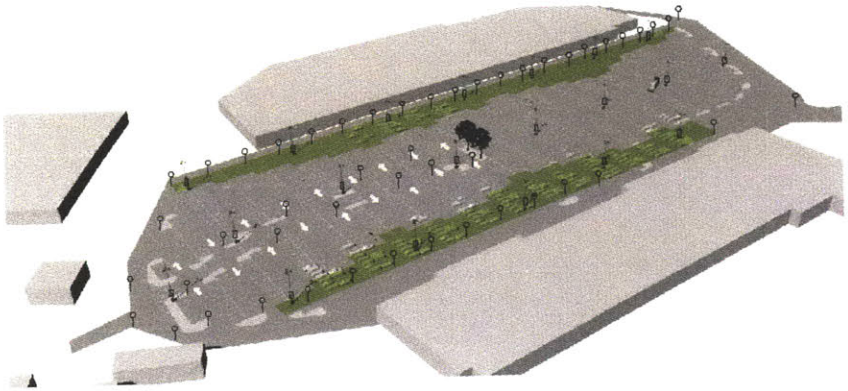
(4) Observations, Adaptions, Inventions

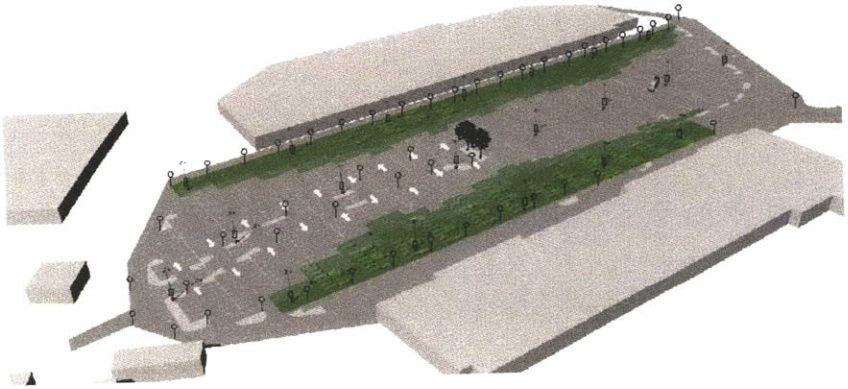
(4) Observations, Adaptions, Inventions

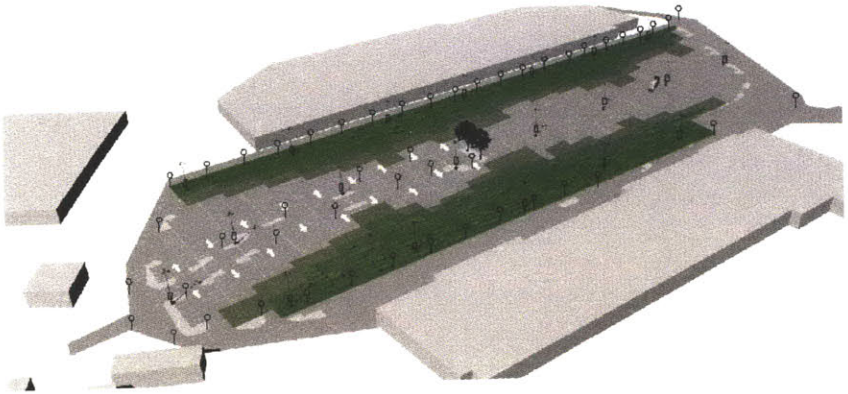
Using similar methods as the Othello adaption, I began to read the surface parking lot as a game board as a gridded board with the games pieces of cars and the rules of behavior set out by painted lines, surface and lights- In the same way, the objective of parking is to claim territory, but in this instance it is for the space of your car. In the same way as Othello, in the parking lot there is an attraction to the edge of the board, the attraction steaming from the proximity to the entrance of the store.

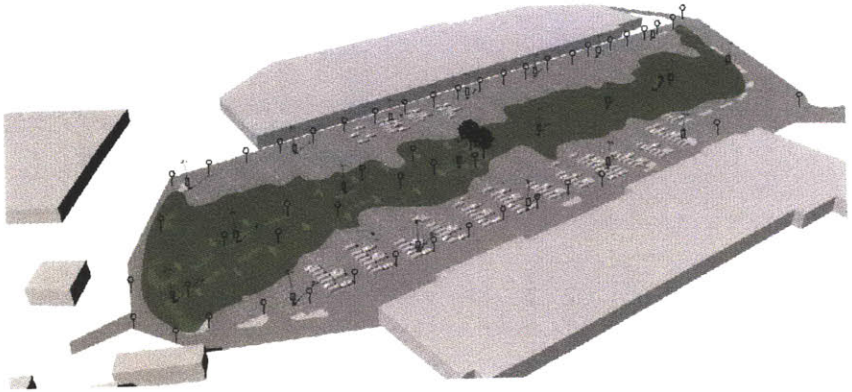
In order to understand parking lot behavior by individuals and their cars, 3 actions were performed on site:

Node Transfer: The Active Anomaly
The Following Piece, Revisited
The Parking Space Suit









Diagrams showing parking behavior and its attraction to the edges of the parking lot. The middle of the lot is rarely parked on and becomes the 'slop' space where ad-hoc traffic circulation takes place.

***The desired Parking Space**: How to find a parking space at the mall*
'Search and destroy,' 'lay and wait,' 'stalk' or 'see it and take it'

SYRACUSE, N.Y. - John Hrynyk emerged from his car at the Carousel Center mall after nabbing a parking space 100 feet from an entrance.
The 55-year-old scrap yard owner admits he's the type to slowly prowl the mall parking lot until he finds a spot close to the building. "I always look for the closest spot to the door, and 90 percent of the time I find one," he said.
A classic "search and destroyer."
Connecticut-based Response Insurance surveyed its drivers and identified what it says are the four main species of mall parkers: "search and destroyers," "lay and wait," "stalkers" and "see it and take it."
But in the asphalt jungle, it turns out, it's the least aggressive who are getting the last laugh.
Search and destroyers roam the aisles, cruising endlessly for the perfect spot. Lay and wait parkers position themselves at the end of an aisle and wait for a space to open up in what they start to believe is their territory. Stalkers, the most predatory, slowly follow shoppers leaving the store back to their parking spot.
The three methods risk situations that can lead to stress or conflict. In Hrynyk's case, he was lucky he didn't run into another search and destroyer waiting for the same spot, said Ray Palermo, a spokesman for Response Insurance.
"It's not like road-rage, but it can cause a lot of stress, nevertheless," he said.
The favored method is to see it and take it, where shoppers don't care how far they have to walk. The company said it's less stressful and helps drivers save the most time.
Even the AAA likes this option. On its list of tips for surviving holiday driving, the automobile association advises people to "play the outfield. Outlying areas have more spaces, lighter traffic and a lower risk of collision."
The advice comes at a time when parking lots may be crammed with last-minute shoppers. The National Retail Federation estimated that up to 20 percent of holiday sales would occur the week before Christmas.
Jena Hamilton, 24, gets irritated by the lay and waiters and the stalkers.
"You're trying to put your bags in the car," Hamilton said. "You want to get your car warmed up, everything adjusted. Then you see this car in the rearview mirror with its blinker on, and a line of cars waiting behind them. It can be nerve-racking, as if holiday shopping weren't stressful enough."
Greg Adessa, 18, a culinary school student, said he parks as far away as he can.
"I have a new car but even when I had my old beat-up Caddy, I park away from people so I don't have to deal with this," said Adessa, pointing to the chaos around him.

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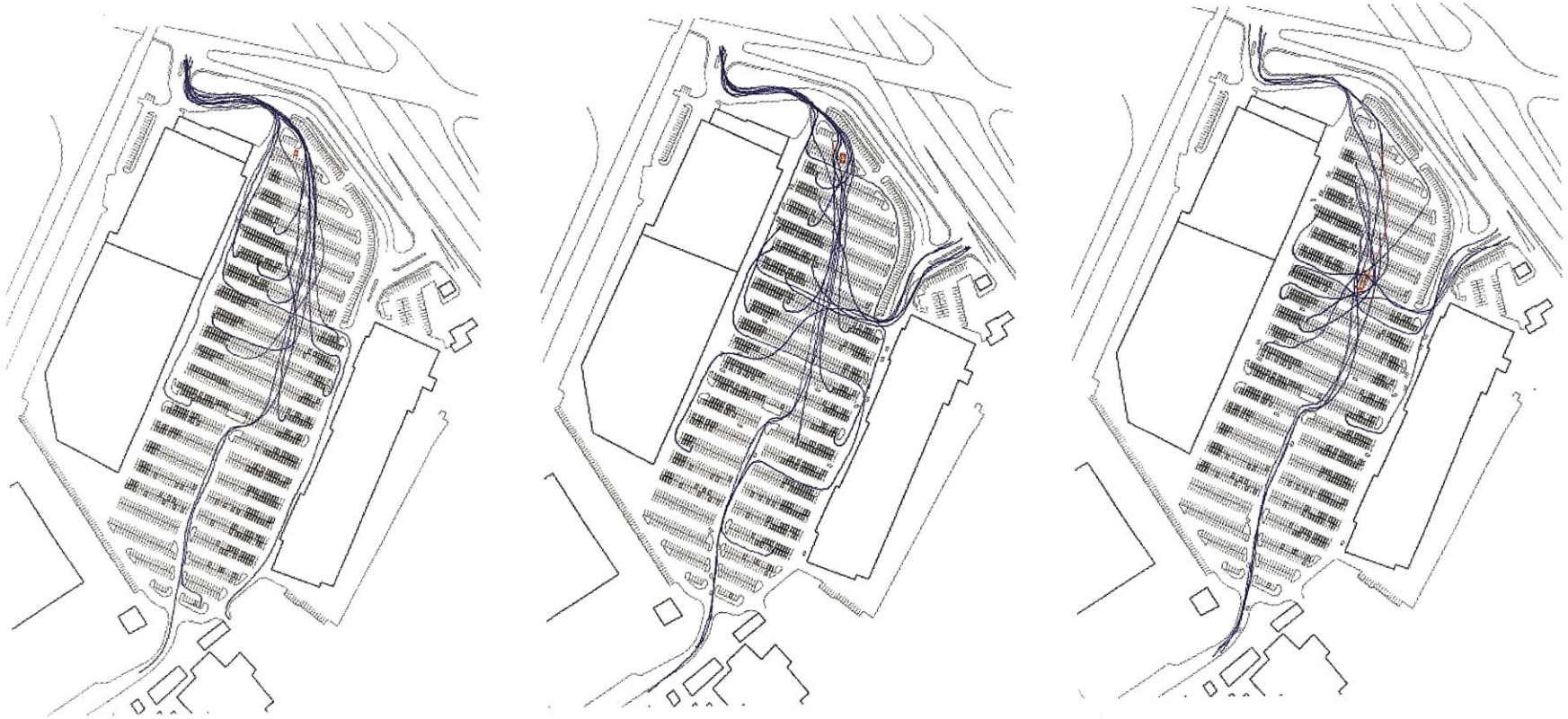
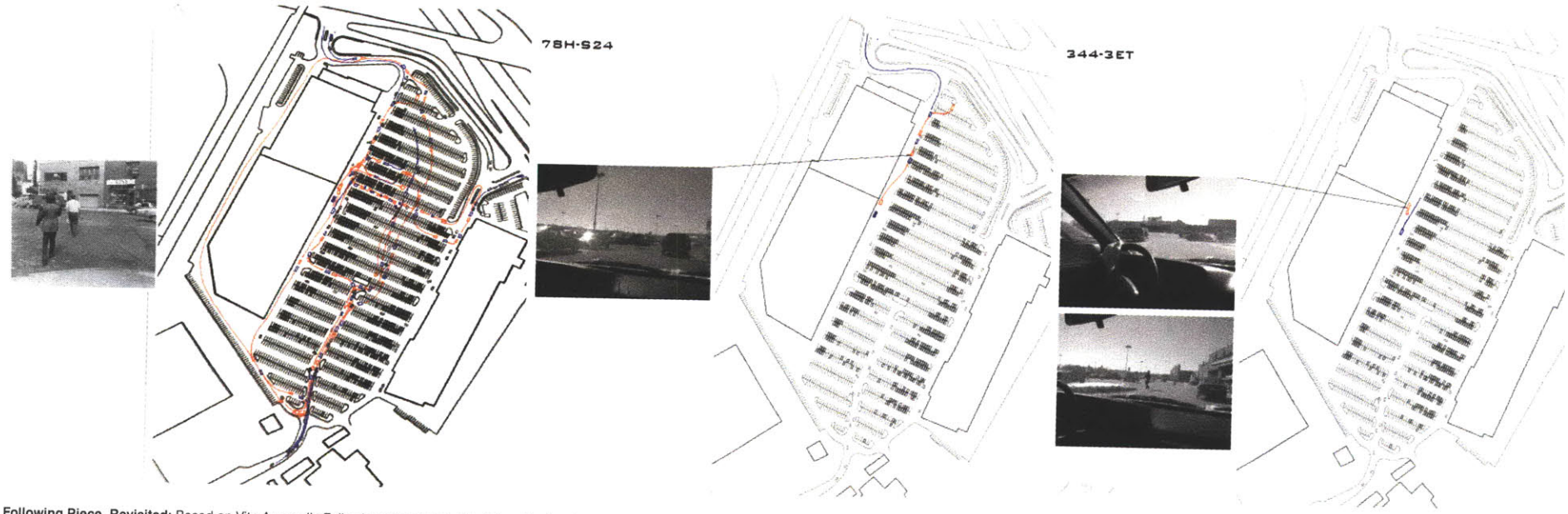
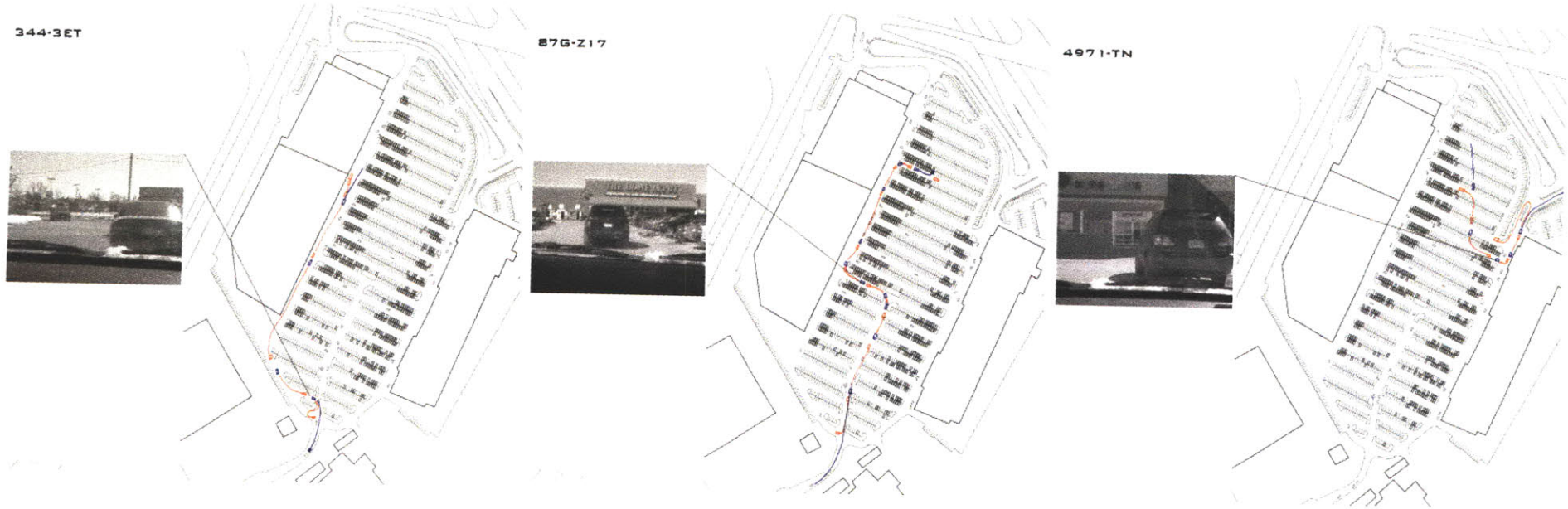
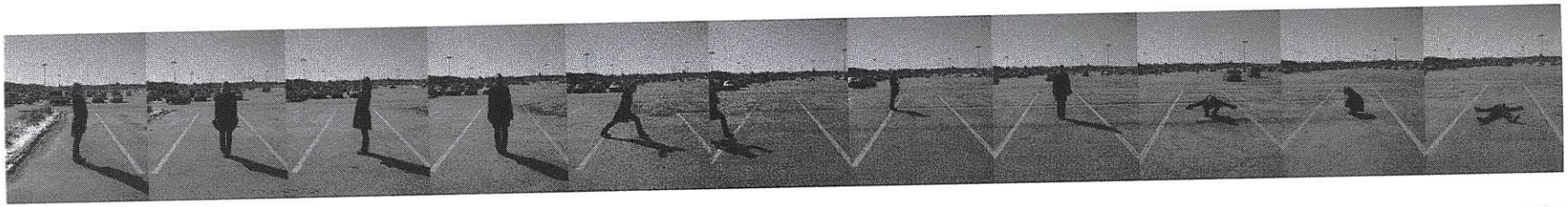


Node Transfer: Determine main flows of traffic and place the car in the middle of the node of activity. Action creates an anomoly in the field of parking.

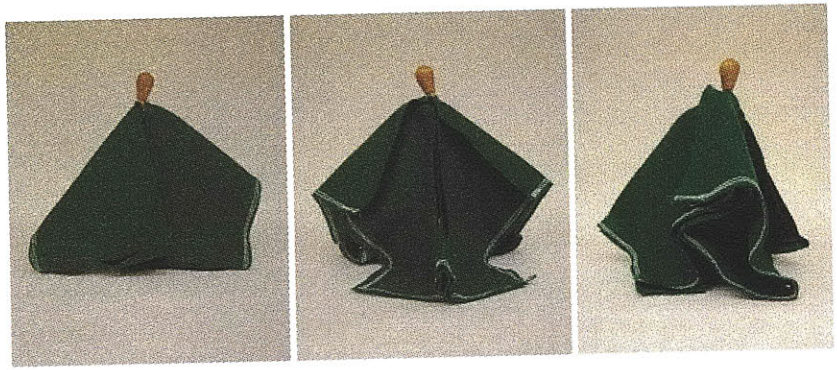


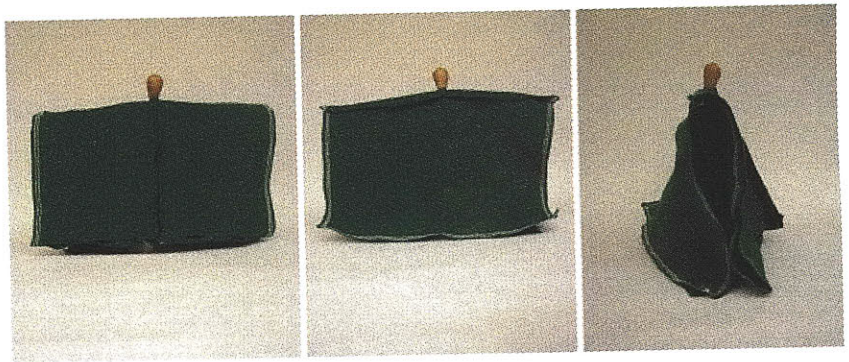
Following Piece, Revisited: Based on Vito Acconci's Following Piece in the City, this action involved following 8 cars and 1 pedestrian in the parking lot until they either parked or left the lot. As the follower, pulled by the actions of others, a new perception of the landscape evolved.



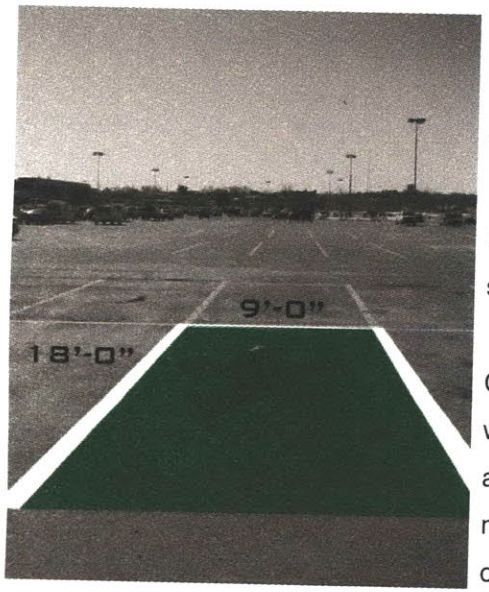


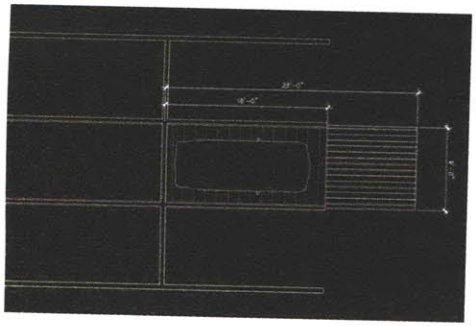
Parking Space Suit: Design a garmet which can claim the same territory as a car by recovering the surface area of a parking lot space.





Parking space surface area = 252 sq.ft.
Total parking lot surface area= 474,300 sq.ft.
Maximum number of parking spaces 1900



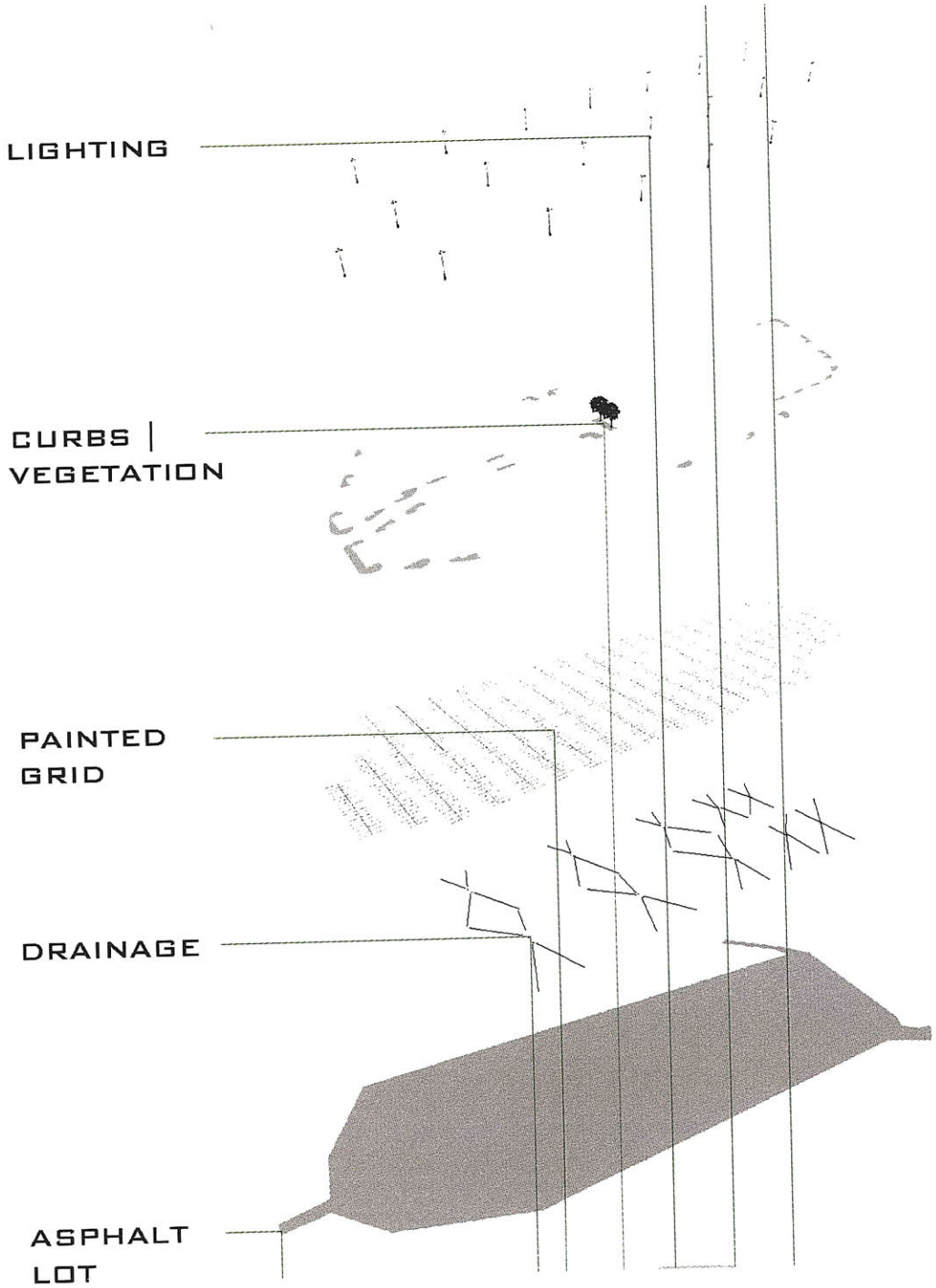


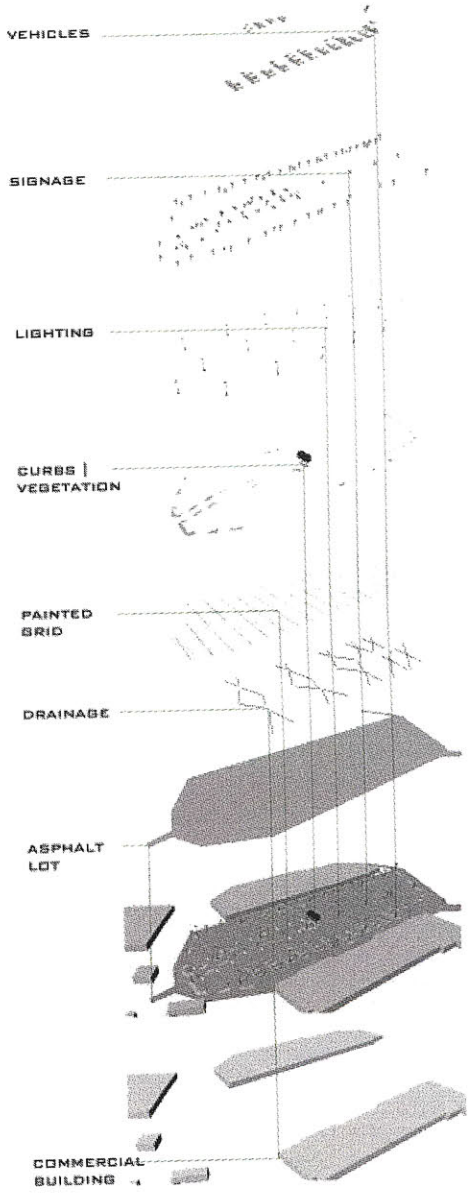
Auto-Territorializing

In understand how one claims surface territory in the parking lot with the car, I was also interested in the oppositional aspect of how the human can compete- how can the human claim territory in the landscape of the car?

If the board is the asphalt surface, the grid defined by the space of the car. The unit of the grid became the size of the parking space- 9'x18'.

Considering the accumulation of the parking lot space- makes a total surface of parking, the objective was to see how you can uncover the surface and reclaim it as park. So if the parking surface is covered at 100%, the park actions are at 0 % use, but as need for parking diminishes, park space is accumulated, making a shifting scale of the programs parking and park. This idea has merit for the park, only when you can direct the cars in such a way that the empty spaces start to make a greater whole. It is useful only when you can begin to direct the actions to different types of territorial claim, which is to say, to make it a game. When you can push and pull the location of cars relative to open space in order to assemble large surfaces rather than a random dispersal of smaller open spaces- if empty parking spaces are adjacent to each other, the void left behind creates a larger open space for park. They then have the means for action to be flipped into a space for another kind of activity, suggesting opportunity for another kind of behavior to be played out.


LIGHTING
CURBS |
VEGETATION
PAINTED
GRID
DRAINAGE
ASPHALT
LOT


VEHICLES
SIGNAGE
LIGHTING
CURBS |
VEGETATION
PAINTED
GRID
DRAINAGE
ASPHALT
LOT
COMMERCIAL
BUILDING

into a physical space of chance, strategy and play **(5)**.

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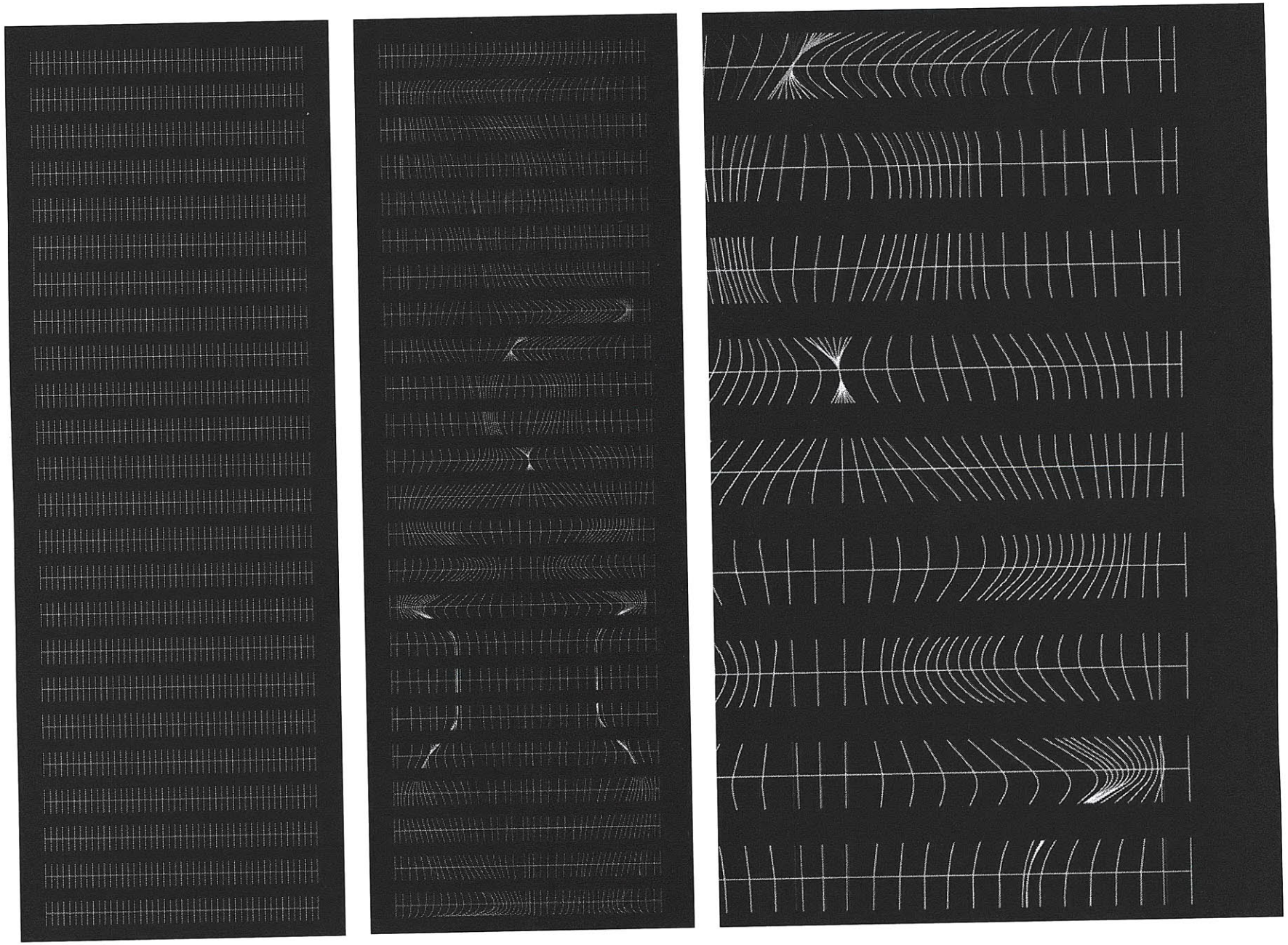
(5) Matters of Points, Lines and Planes: The Architecture Played Out



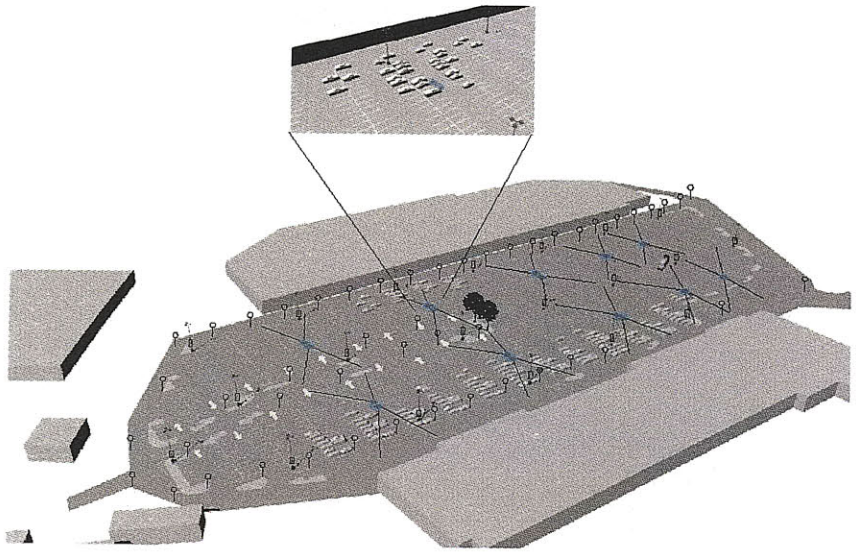
(5) Matters of Points, Lines and Planes: The Architecture Played Out

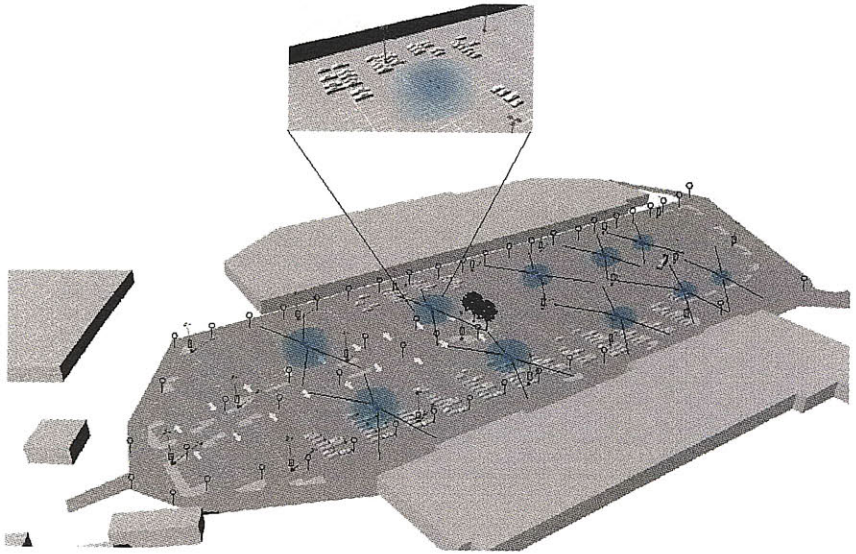
In order to attract and repel cars, elements of the landscape needed to be given agency. The basic notion of giving agency to parking Verses park is done through the redesign of existing markers on the site which instigate certain types of behavior. This is achieved through understanding and subversions of Points, Lines, and Planes.

Line

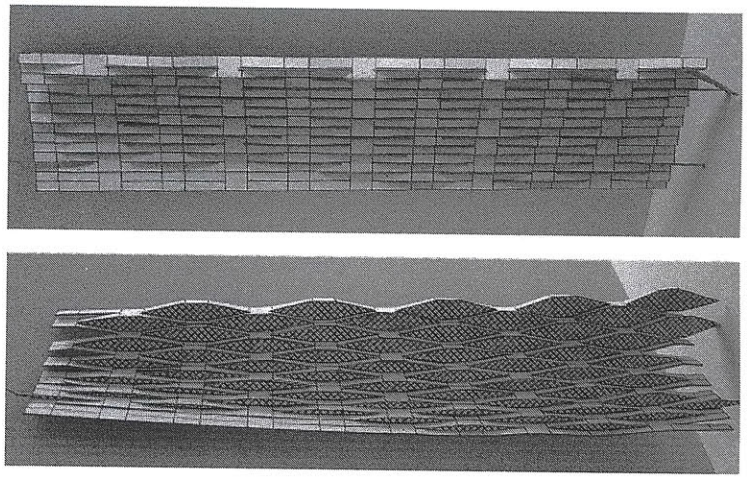
The long line stripper- the painted line on our landscape is everywhere. At the site of Boston's South Bay Mall parking lot the surface accommodates 2000 cars. The painted line applied to this surface alone equals a total of 30,000 square feet of painted line.

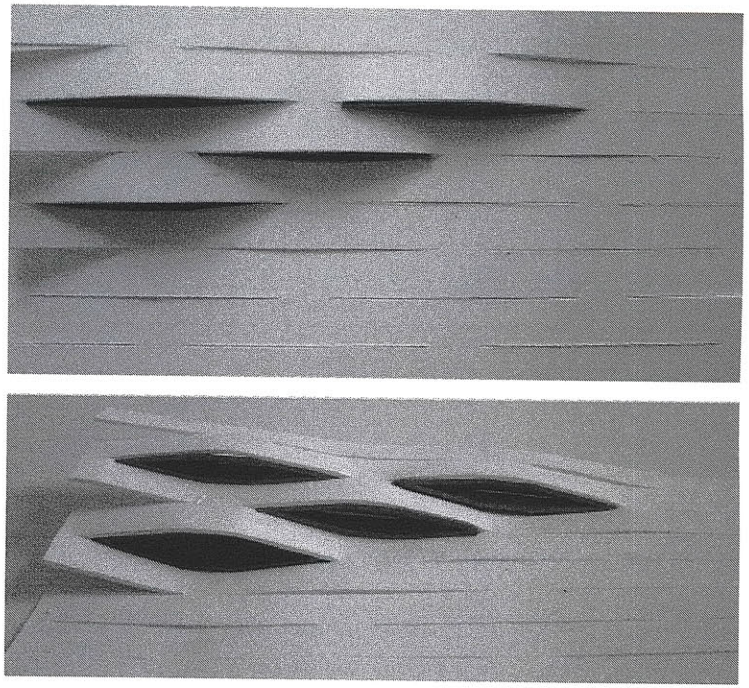
In examining the painted line and its uniform quality, I wondered if there was a way to make it more suggestive by subverting the line to provoke a hierarchy of territorialization. Could the line push users in one direction verses another by sizing the lot spaces in different ways? Could the line allow for new patterns of claiming territory and from a pattern adjustment for a new form to immerge?



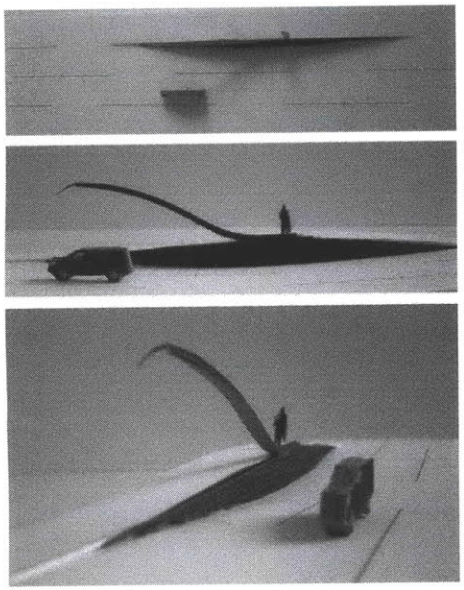


Concept for adaption of drainage swales. Clogging the drains redirects the cars to park in a new way





Expanding surface concept models

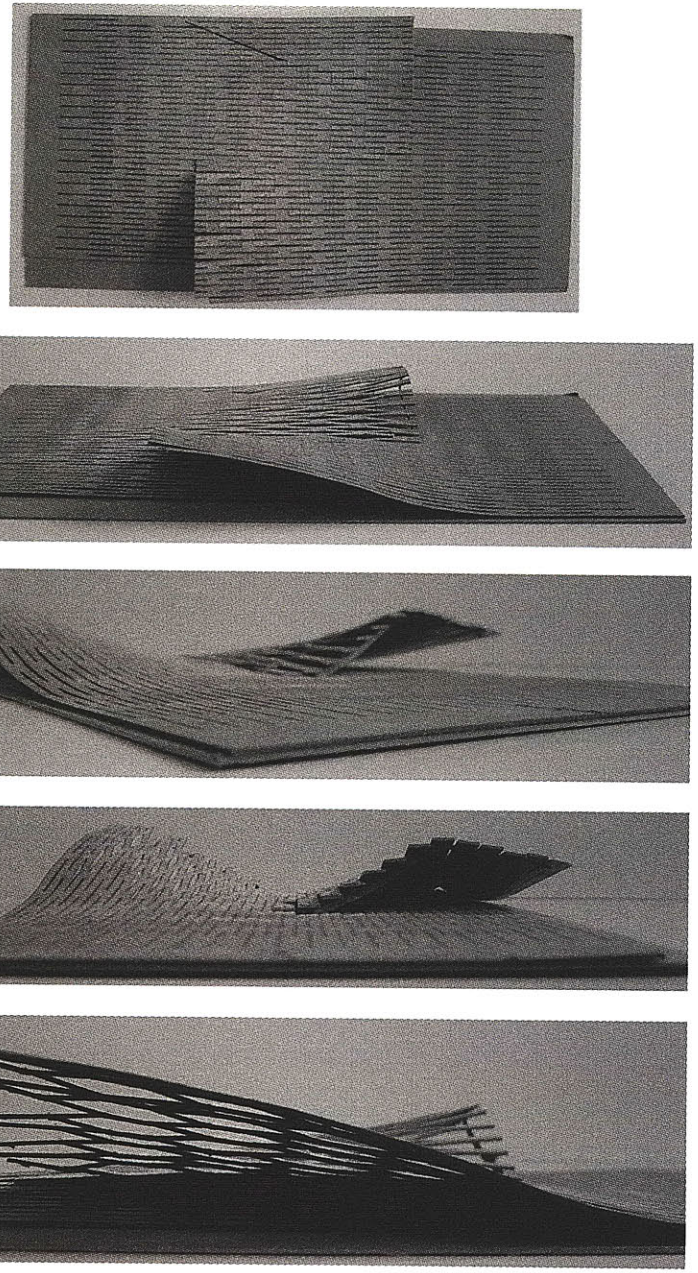


Light post sketch model

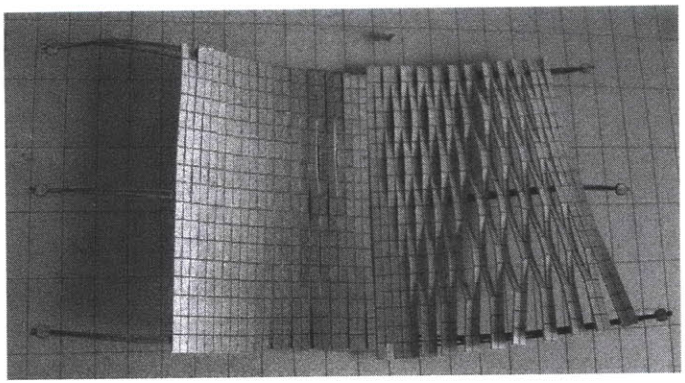
Plane

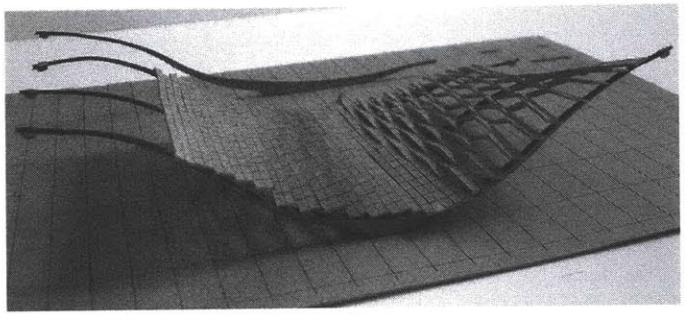
The uninterrupted occupied surface of the parking lot is its gold mine. With out disrupting its bounds of the purely horizontal logic- done for economy and accessibility, I considered ways of subverting the horizontal to insight new modes of activity and behavior. By pushing and pulling of the horizontal surface, it remains uninterrupted, but its high points and depressions gives agency to the landscape- allowing for new perceptions of the space and new behaviors with nature- shifts in elevation allow for new horizon lines, spaces hidden from view at its low points and panoptic view at its high points. Its topography also allows for run-off zones and collection zones- its low points used for large swales of drainage occur in the middle of the parking lot. Its delayed drainage creates pools- territory claimed by the water, which is used as play, of which the cars now have to work around.

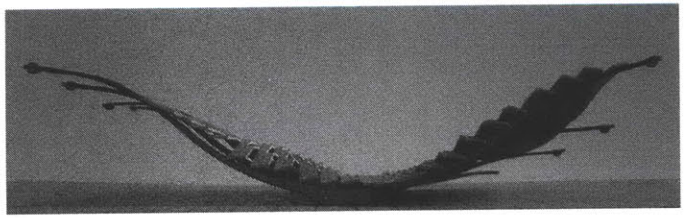
In working the surface plane, it became important to take the step of pushing and pulling one step further to define the kind of vertical movement. So the pushing and pulling of the horizontal is operated on again, more forcefully this time, allowing for the surface to be expanded by cutting, pulling and lifting. This is done by determining key moments on the landscape of heightened action, where multiple actions are taken place. Allowing the doubling up of program creates the need for the peeling apart of the original surface, allowing for two planes to exist rather then one. With this bubbling, the flip sides of the surfaces must be addressed; for example, the green space at your feet transitions to become the green space above your head.

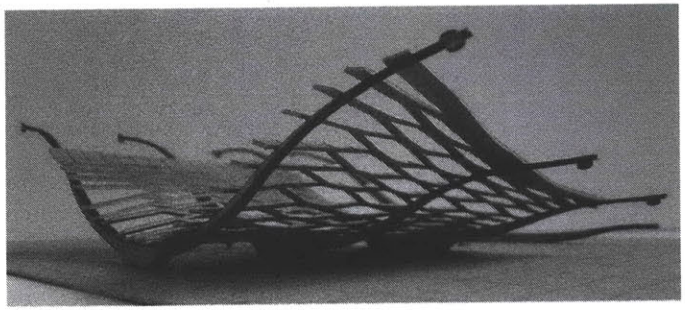


Expanding surface concept models

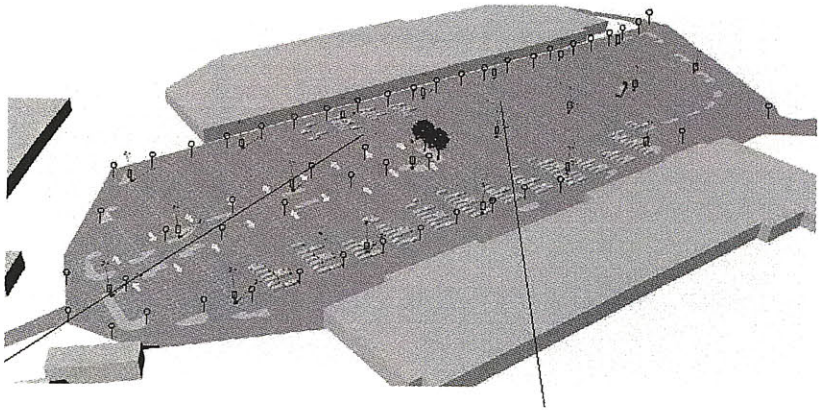


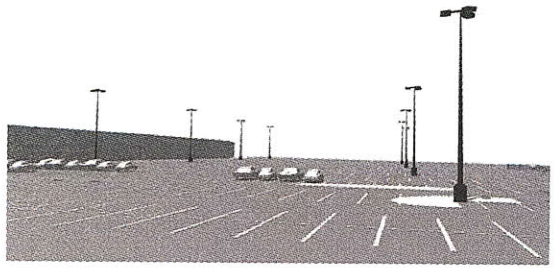


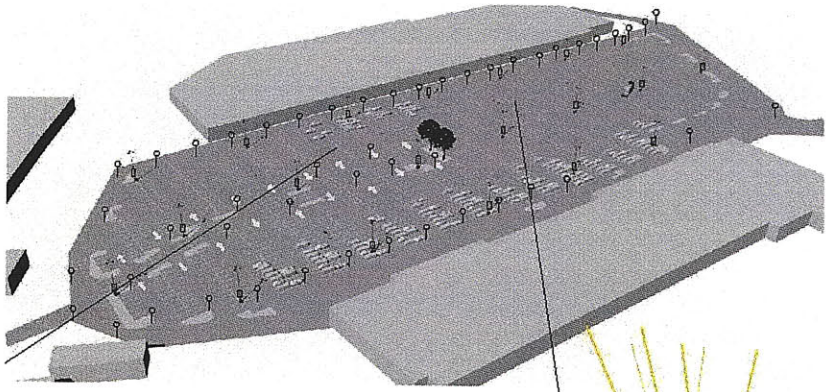


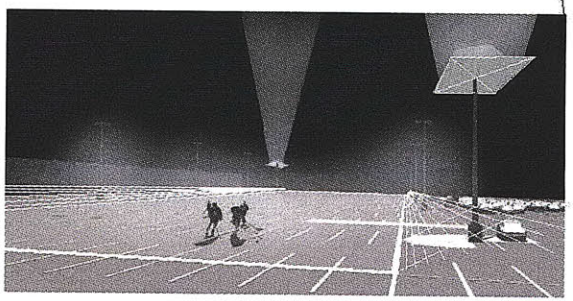


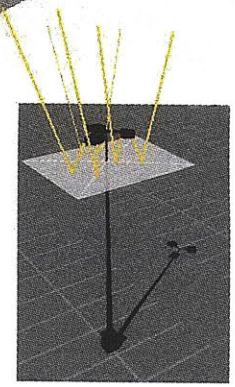
Sketch model- covered market







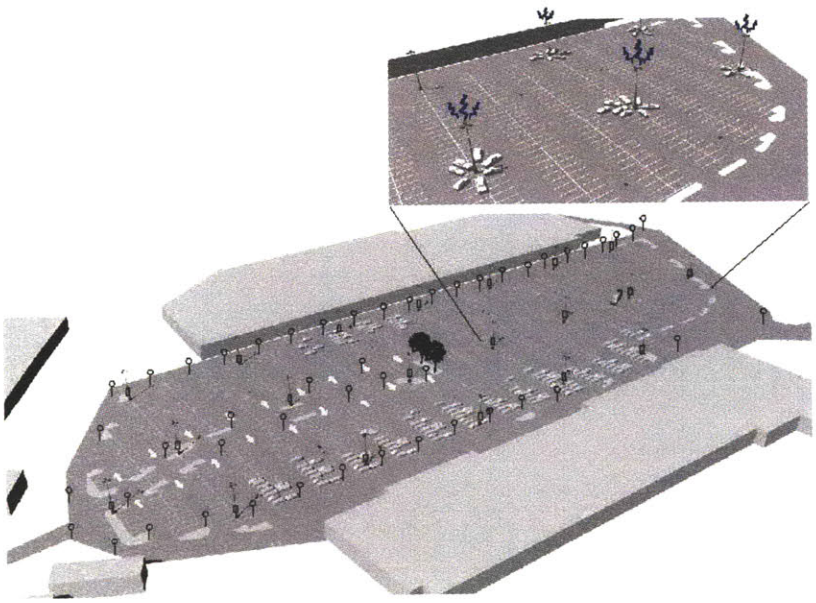




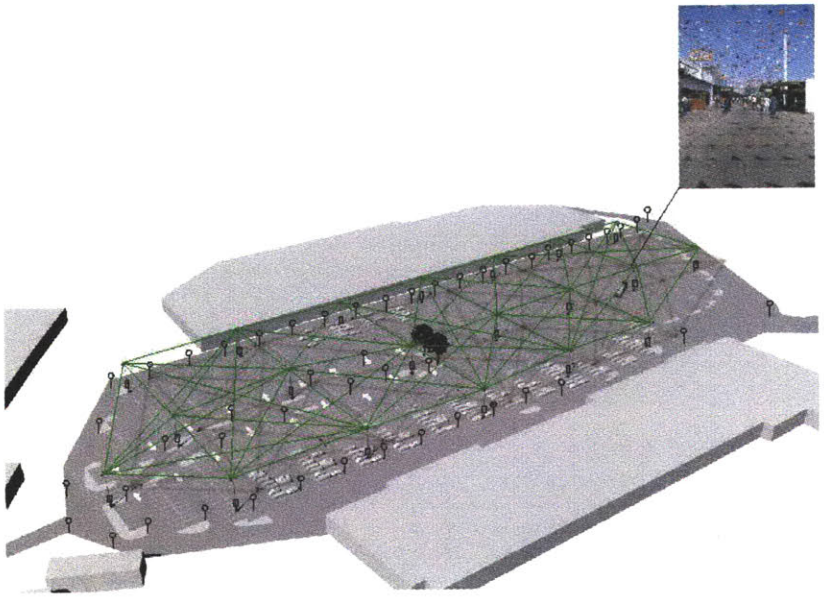
Concept scheme of light post design to redirect light at night

Point

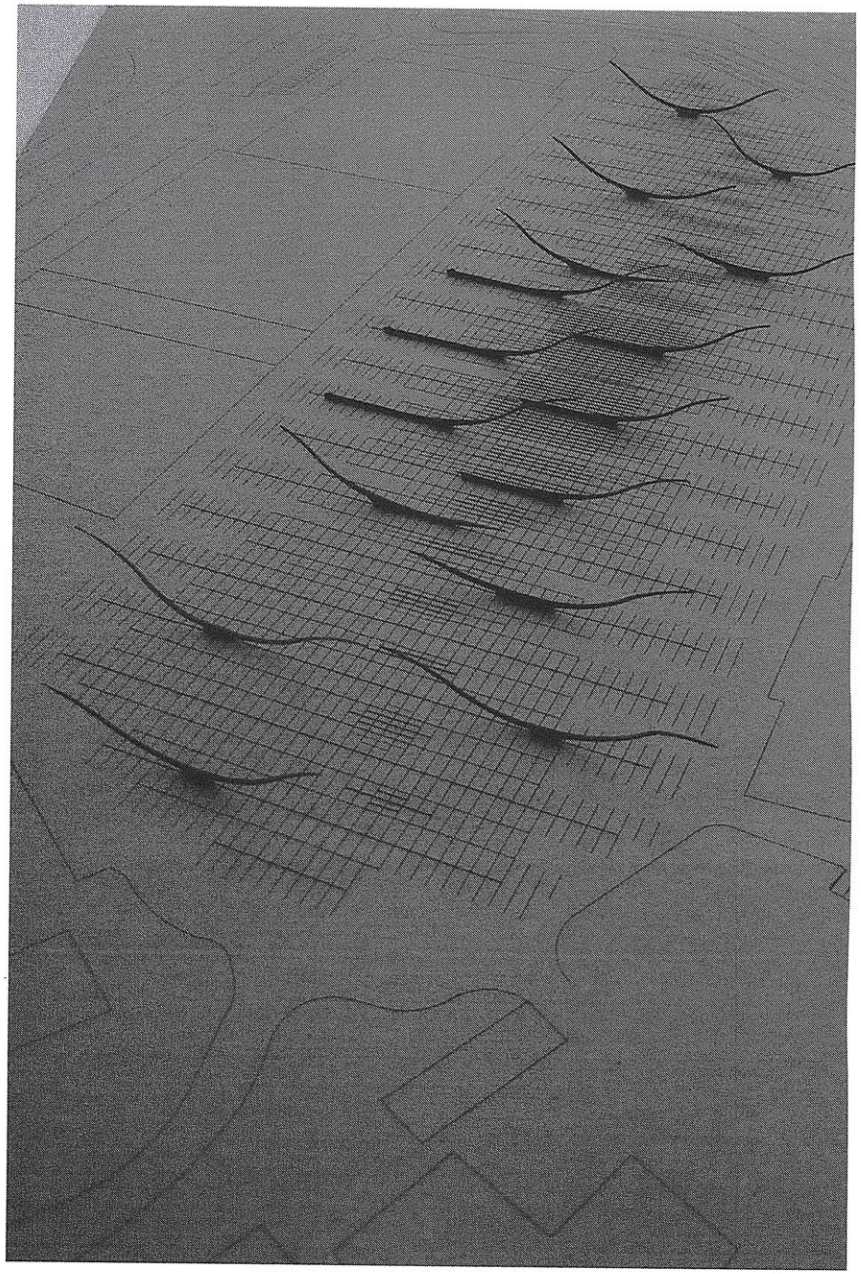
The point of light gives agency to activity at night- it suggests designated safe and unsafe zones, active and inactive zones. For this design, I have sites the lights in zones of accumulated actions of play. The remainder of the site is dark. This is perhaps problematic, but the idea was to engage to parking and the park-er into the same space as day turns into night.



light post as a wireless communication hub



Using light posts to suggest new datum

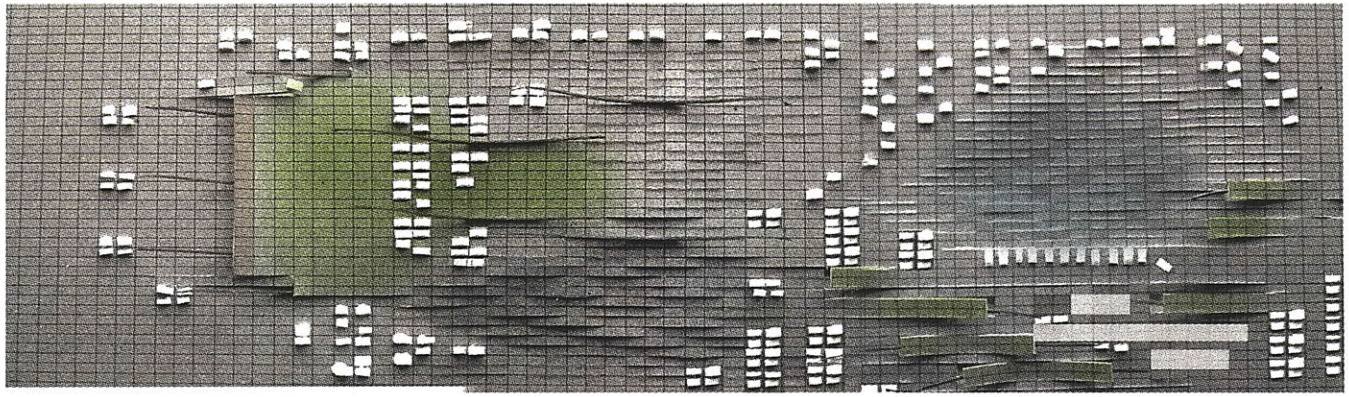


study models

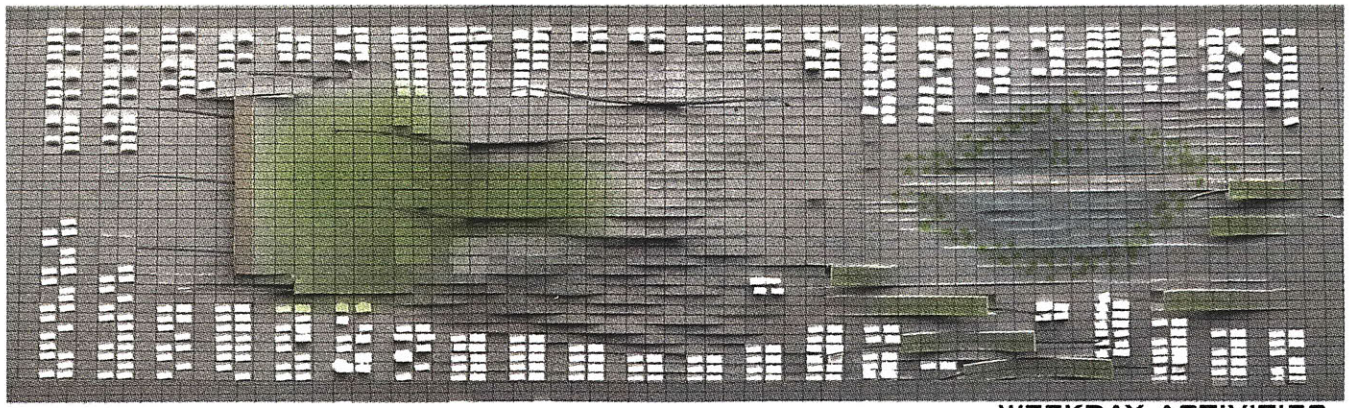
'Framework'

Can we, metaphorically and possibly physically, provide a 'scaffolding' framework for the site of 'big box' retail parking lot that situates itself in the pubic realm and addresses the desire to create a new kind of playground? The challenge and question remains, how do we build frameworks for which people can make their own experiences? The research presented here suggests a desire to accommodate idle play for a roaming, disparate population of America, one which, in one sense desires repetition and symmetry and in another, wants the joy of improvising, inventing, and creating infinite and varying solutions. As creators and participants, this untapped landscape is yearning to be itched, rubbed and ground out to reveal new programs and new meanings as a public arena for play.

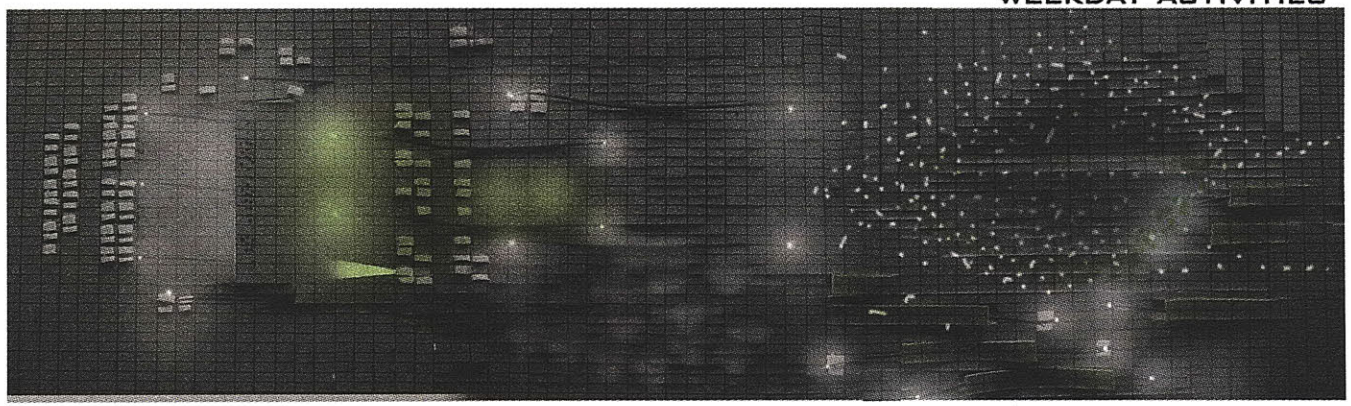
The challenge of designing a landscape for multiple use not defined by a strict timeshare code, but rather is suggestive of types of activities happening at different times with multiple readings, lies in trying to express the use of this space in a comprehensive way. In the same way parks and parking are designed to only suggest action- for they only supply the framework- never explicit about the arrangement of kinds of activities. Unassuming actions are welcomed between the lines of defined play. Tolerance is allowed, but cannot be defined or be determined by the architect. Based on the research into childs play and the open and participatory framework design junk playgrounds, (cite these instances) It is my belief that play is best left to be invented by the players- but these actions can be suggested through accommodating landscape and form. But to recite the rules and the outcome leaves the player bored, feeling compartmentalized and without the ability to exercise imagination and creativity.



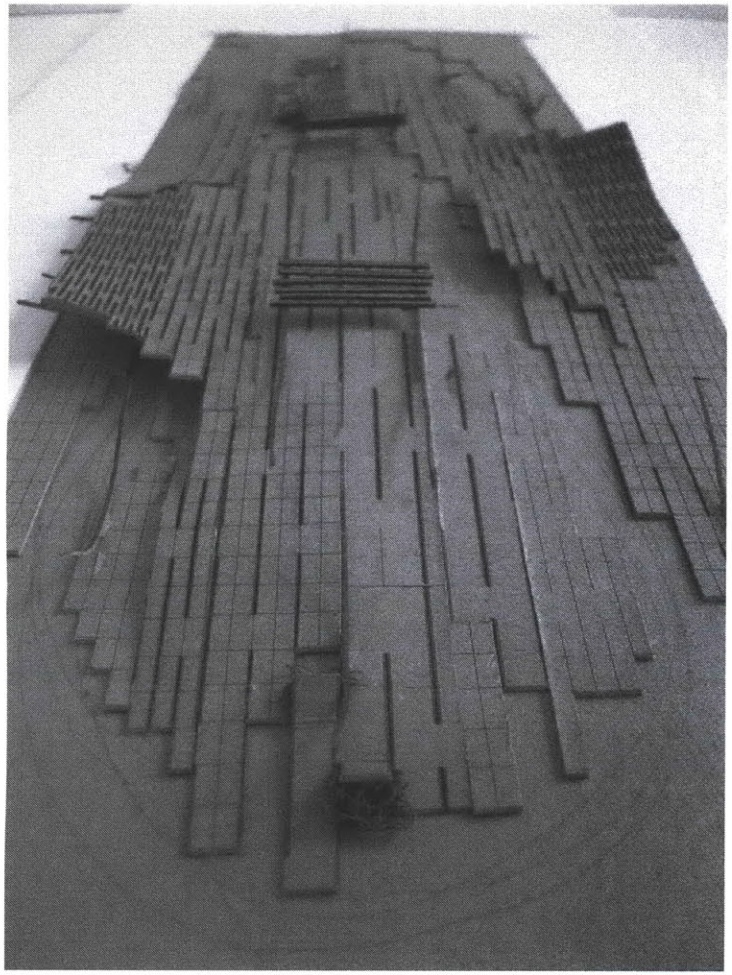
WEEKEND ACTIVITIES

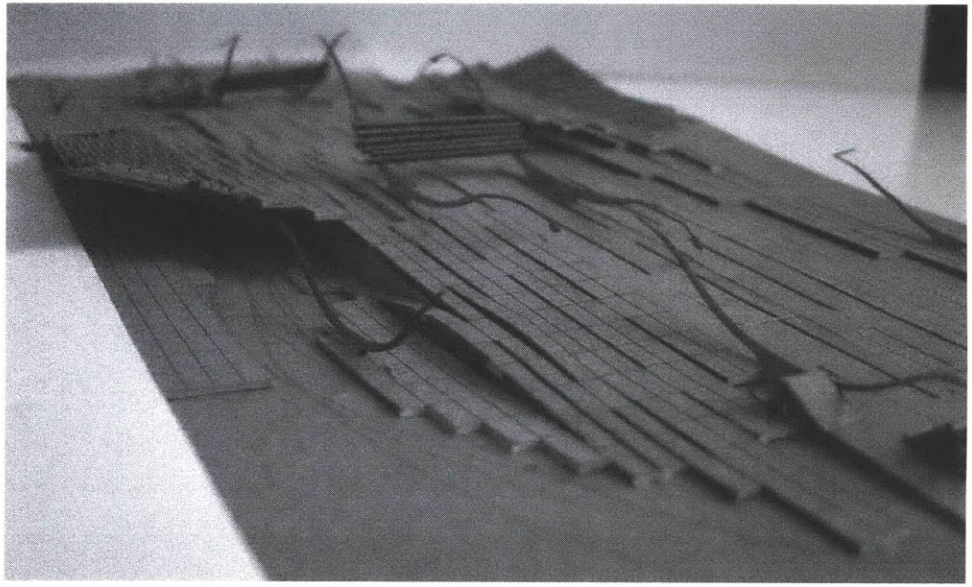


WEEKDAY ACTIVITIES

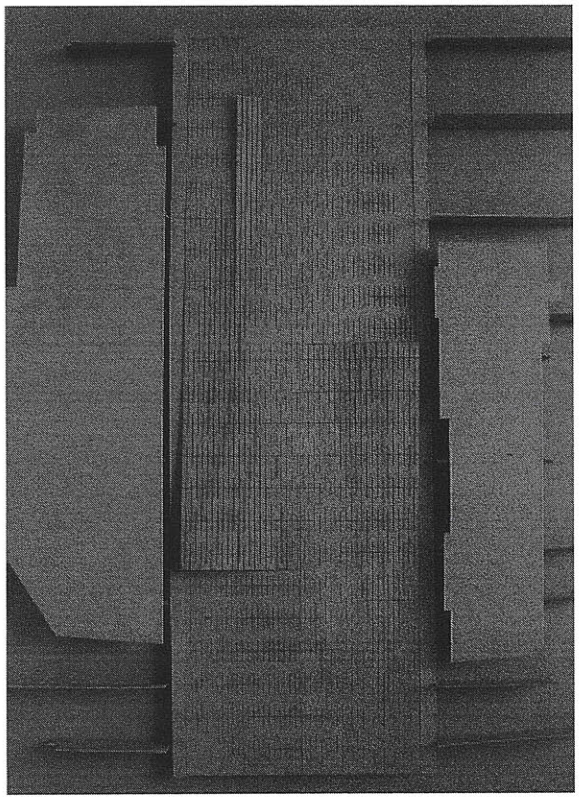


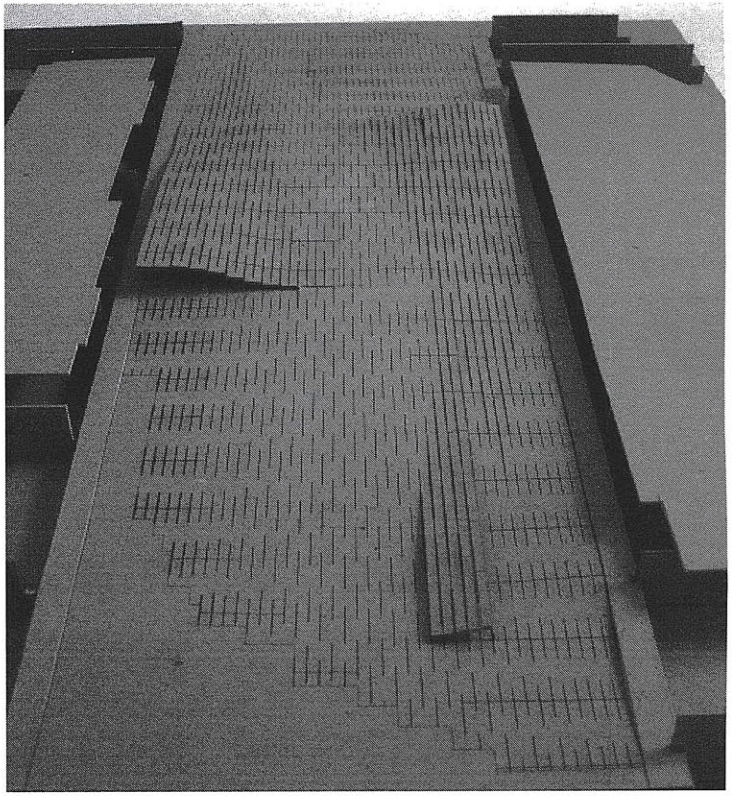
A) NIGHT ACTIVITIES



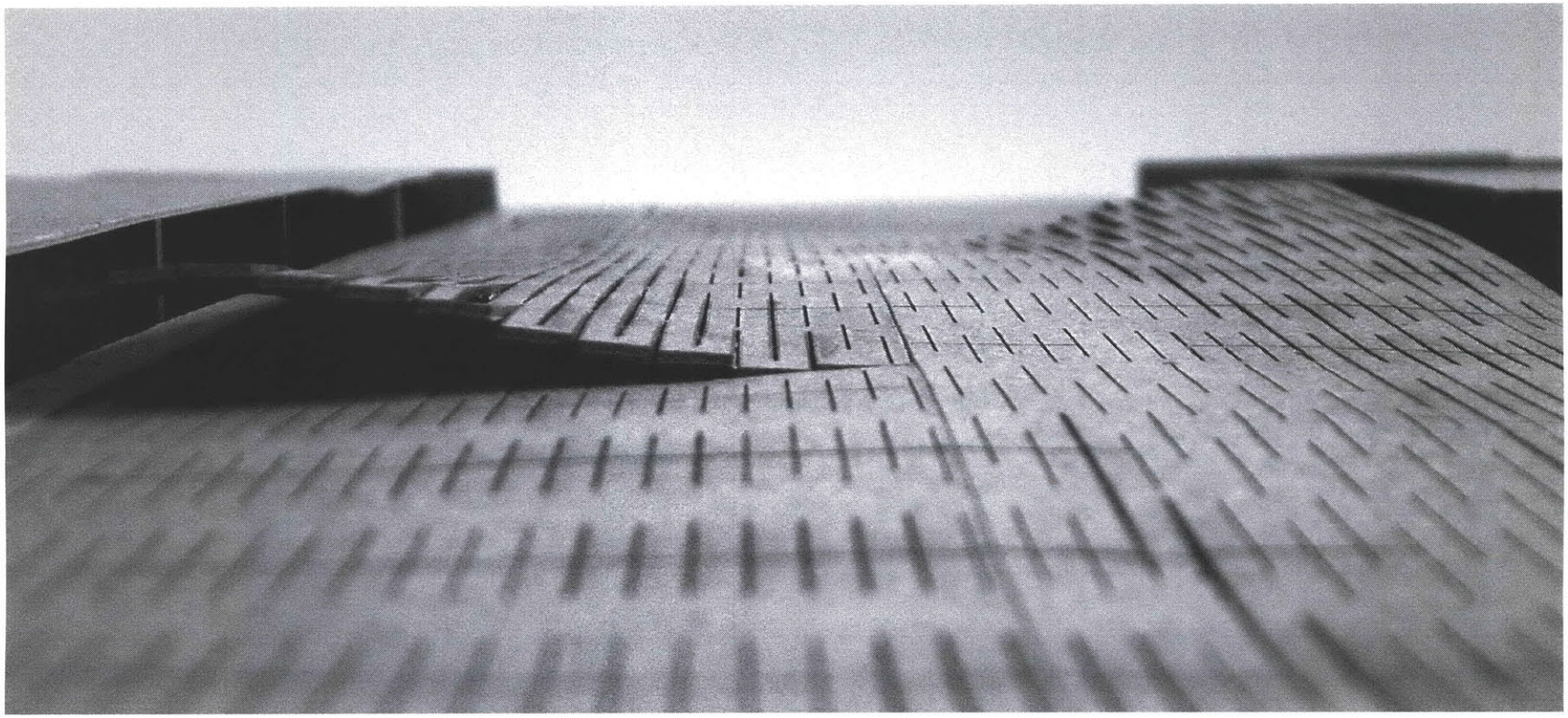


study models





study model



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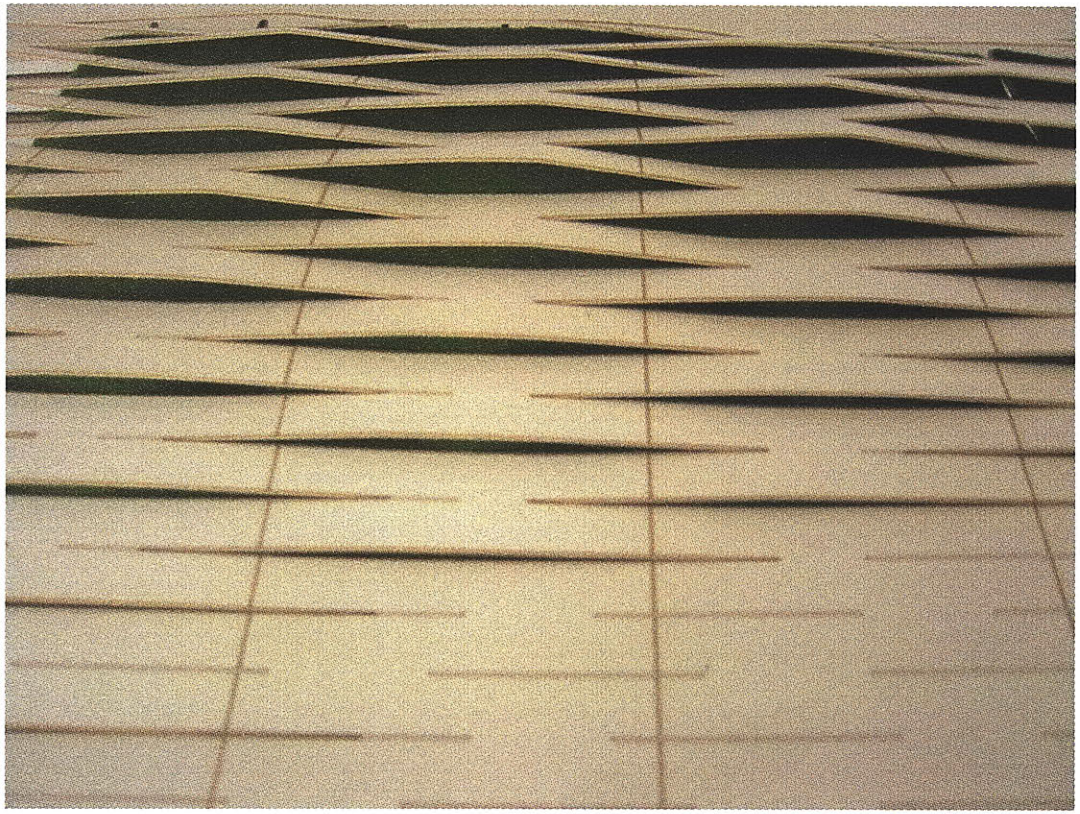

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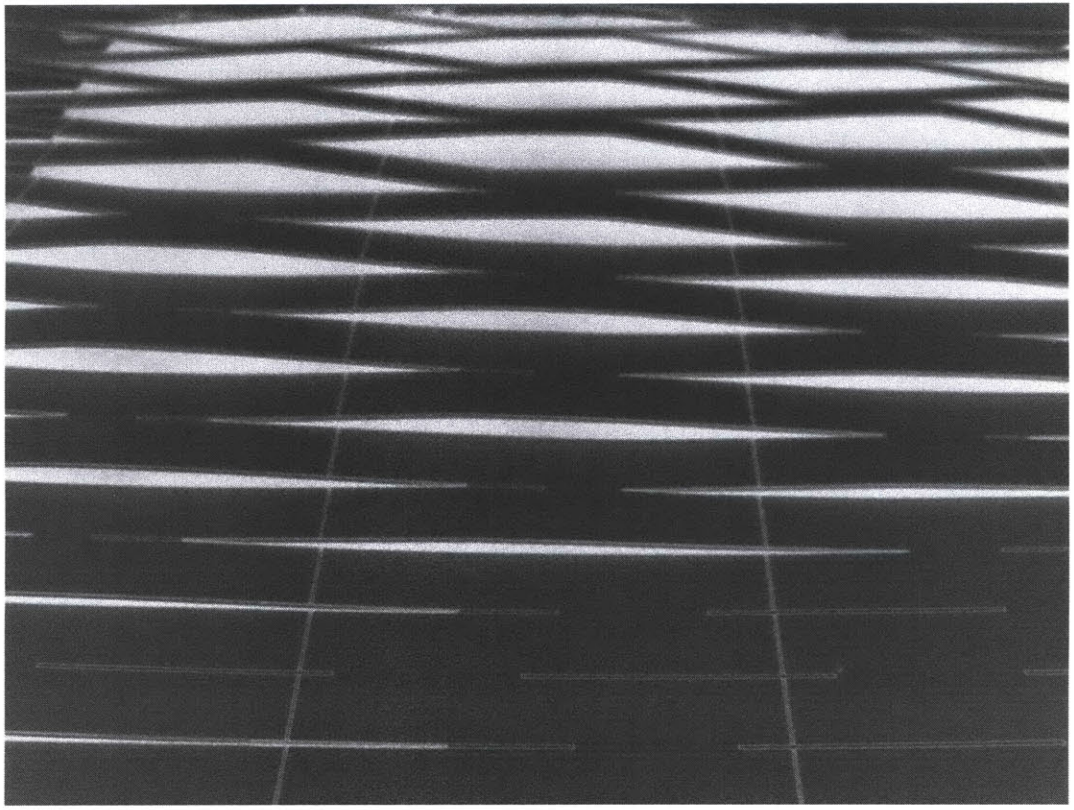

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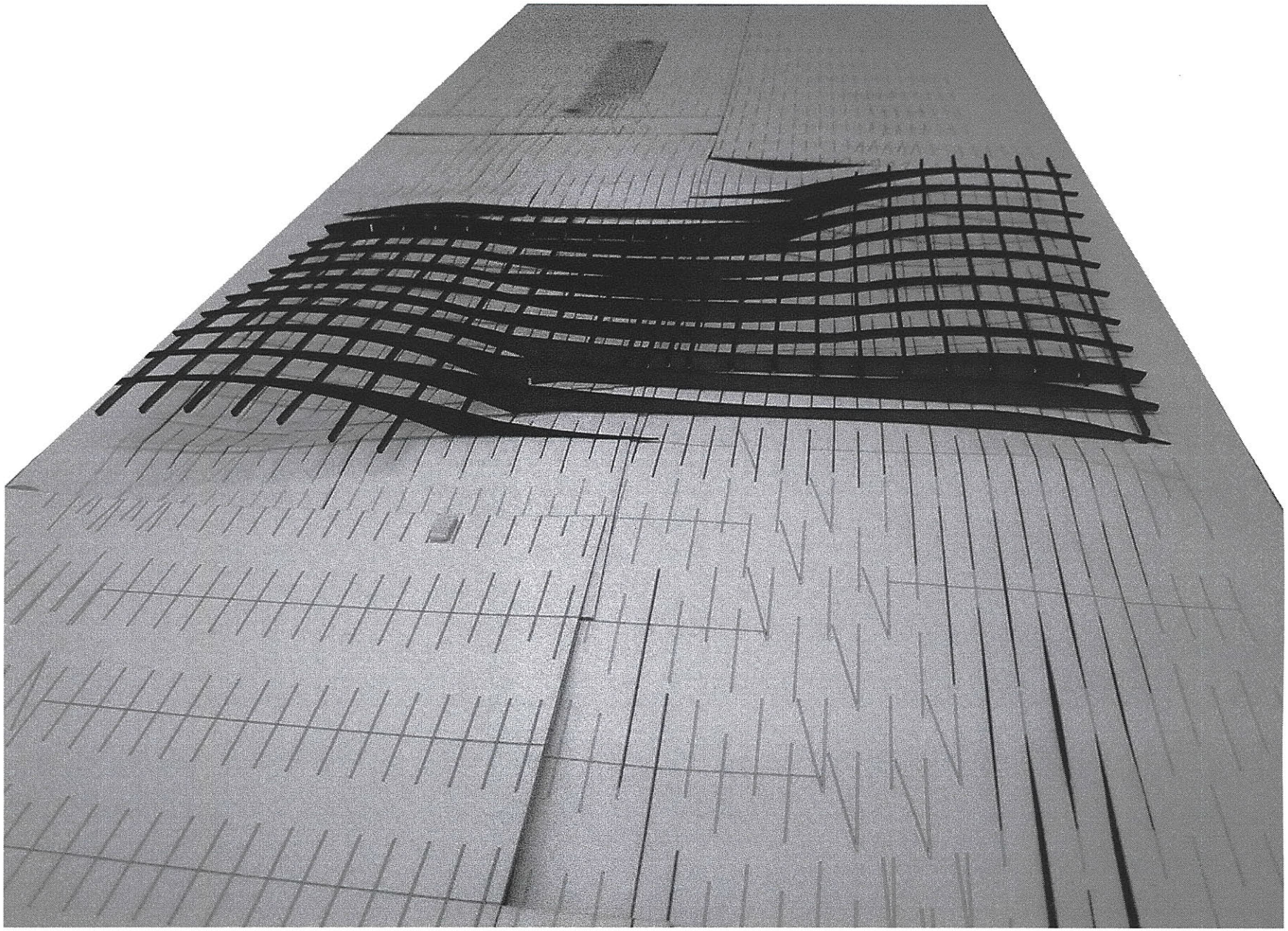
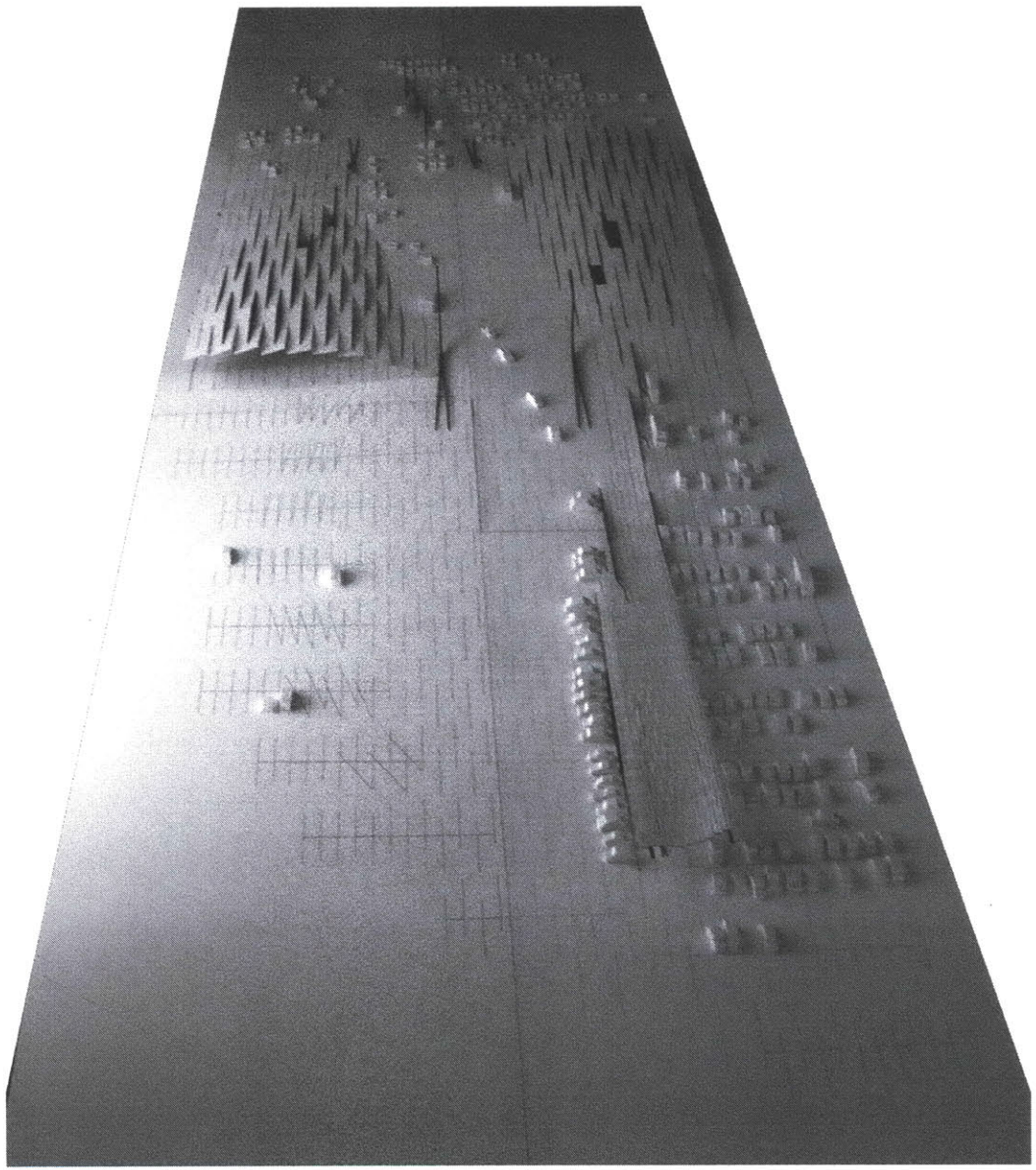
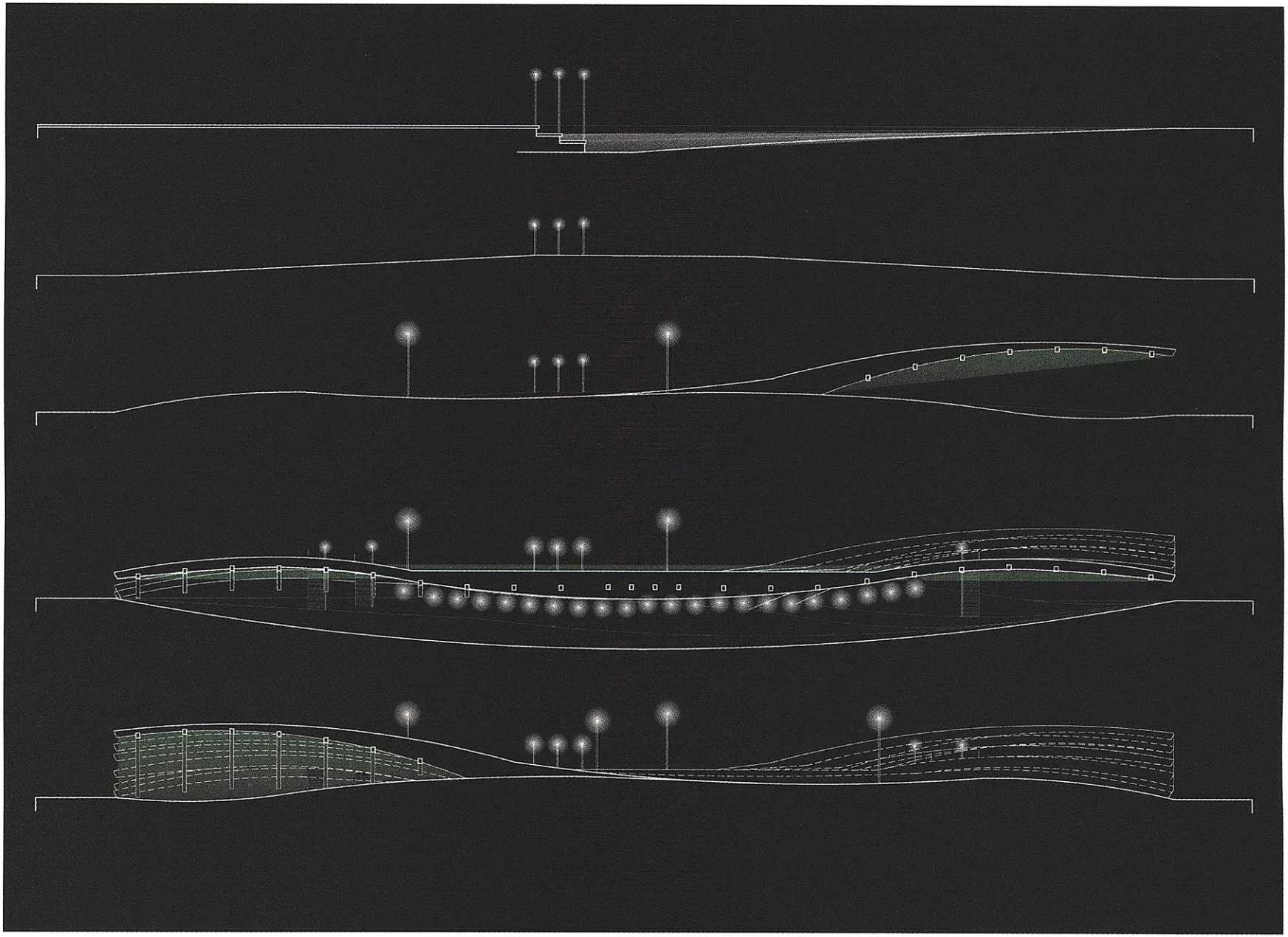


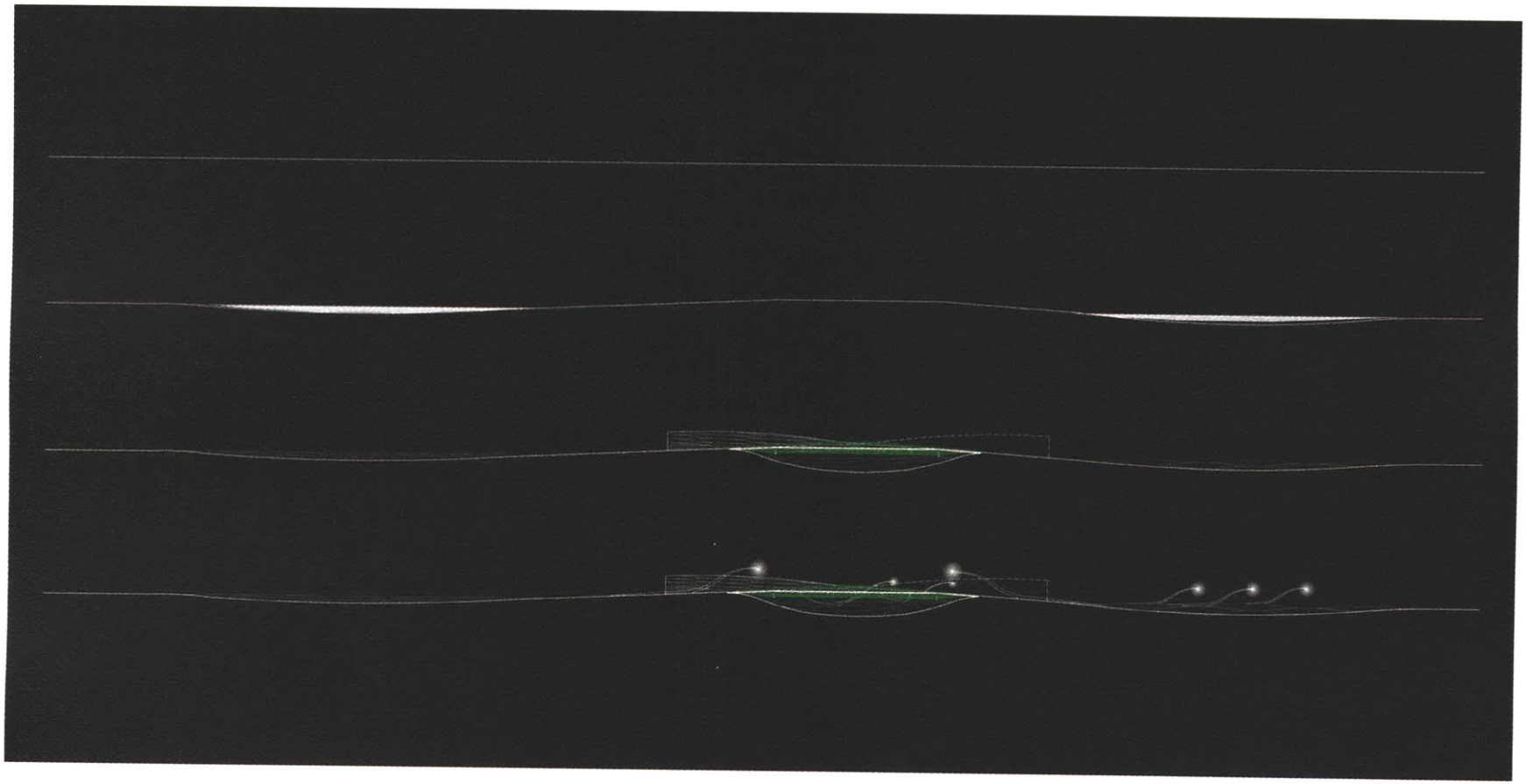
final scheme



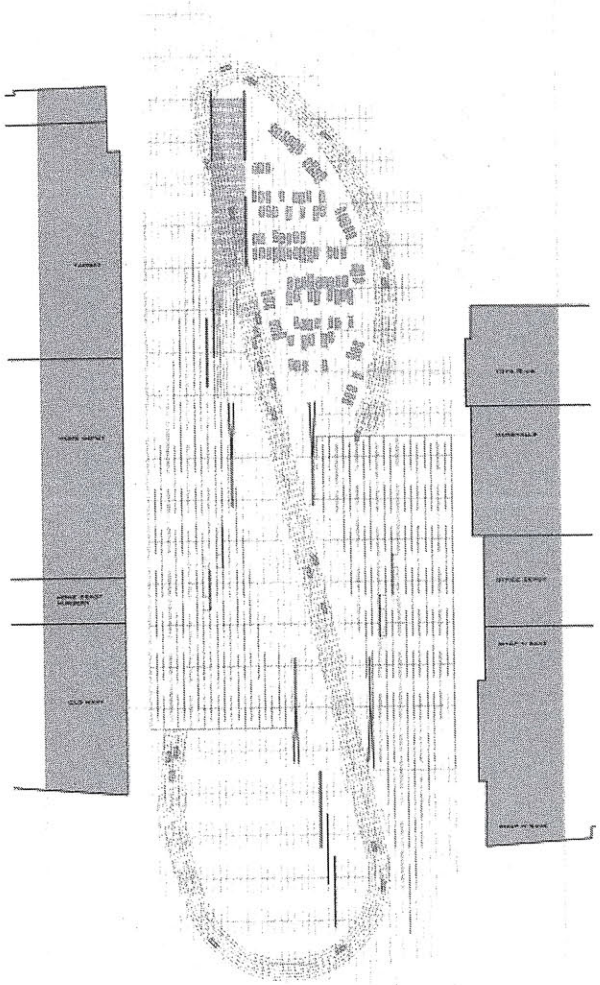
final scheme



transverse site sections



Longitudinal site sections



100% PARKING

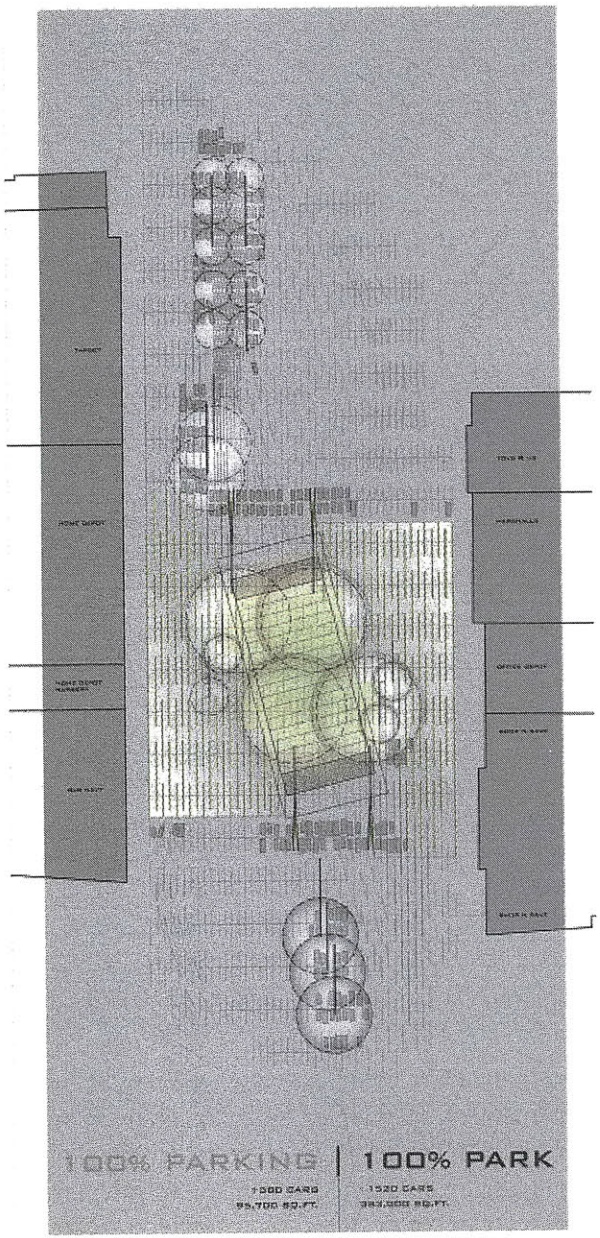
+0 CARS

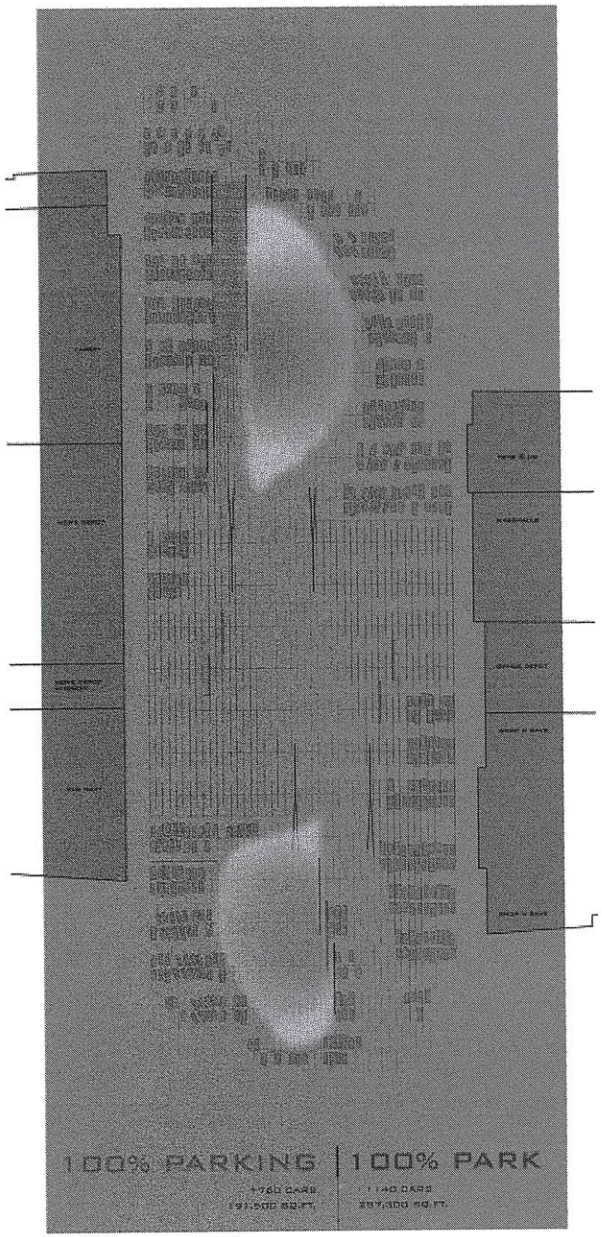
0 SQ.FT.

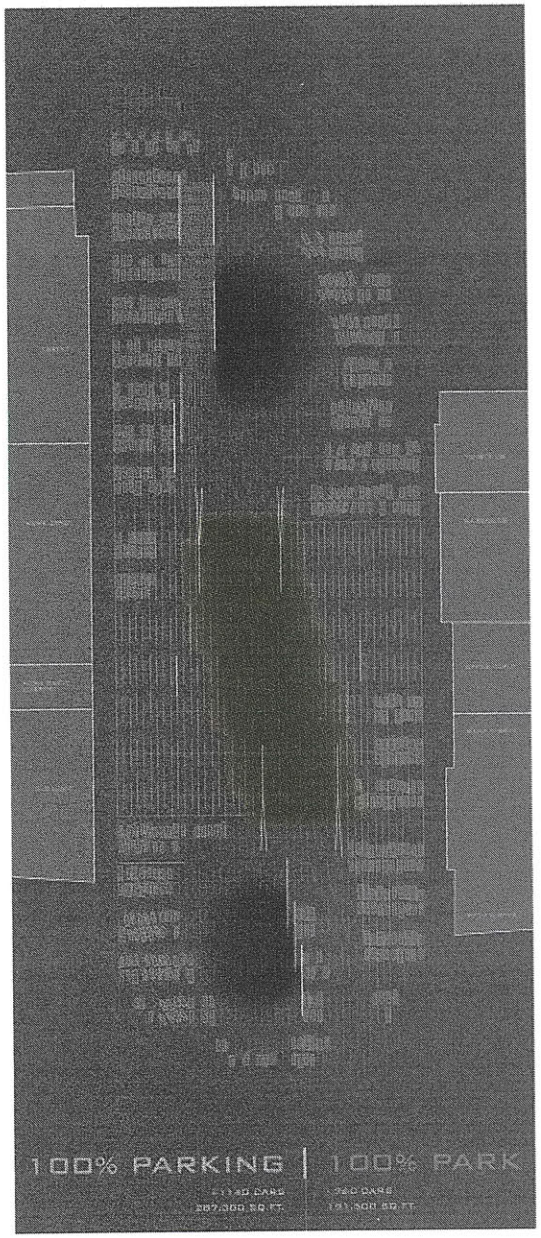
100% PARK

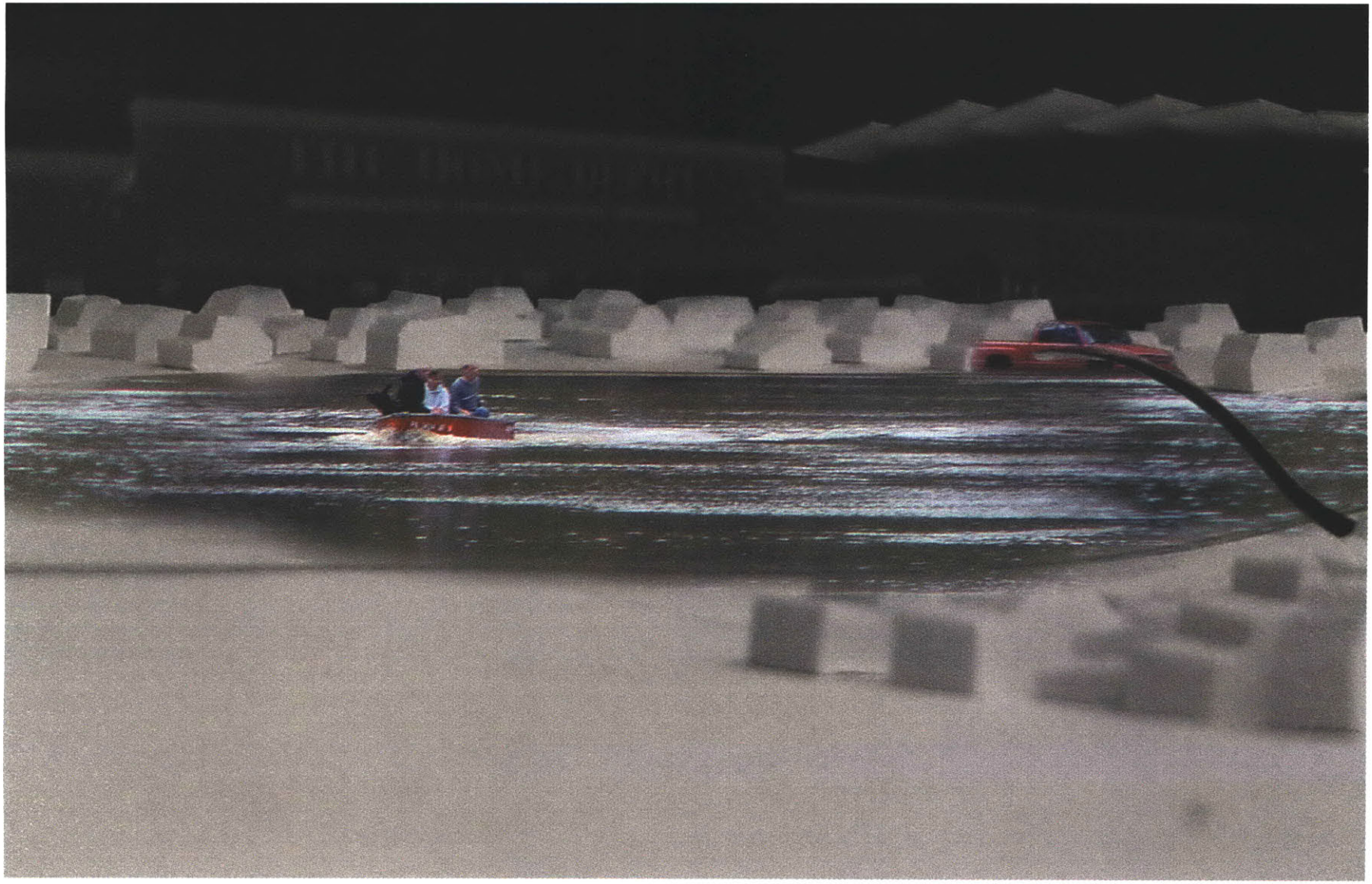
- 1,900 CARS

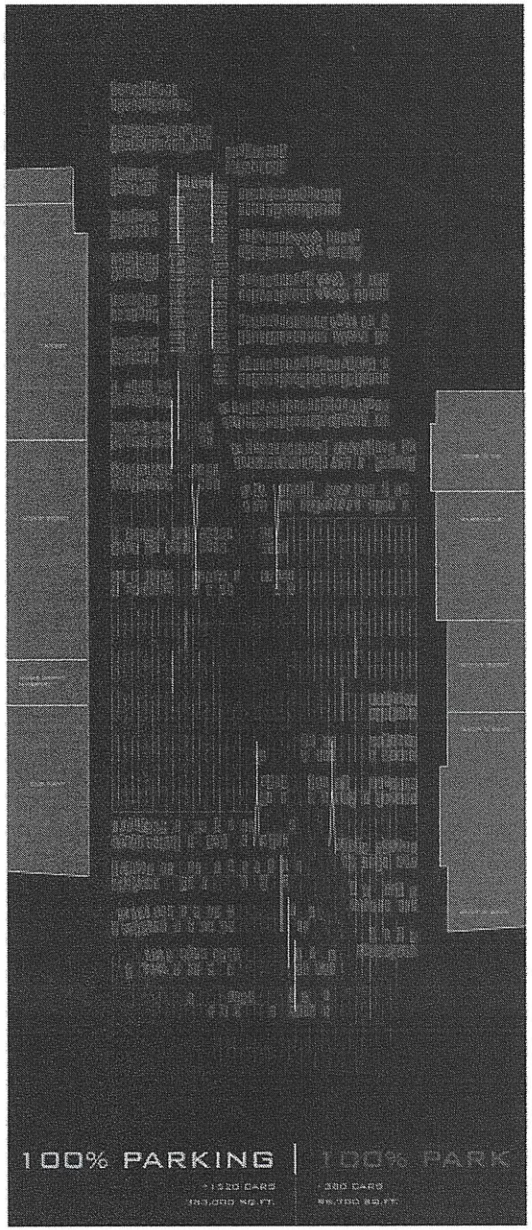
475,000 SQ.FT.

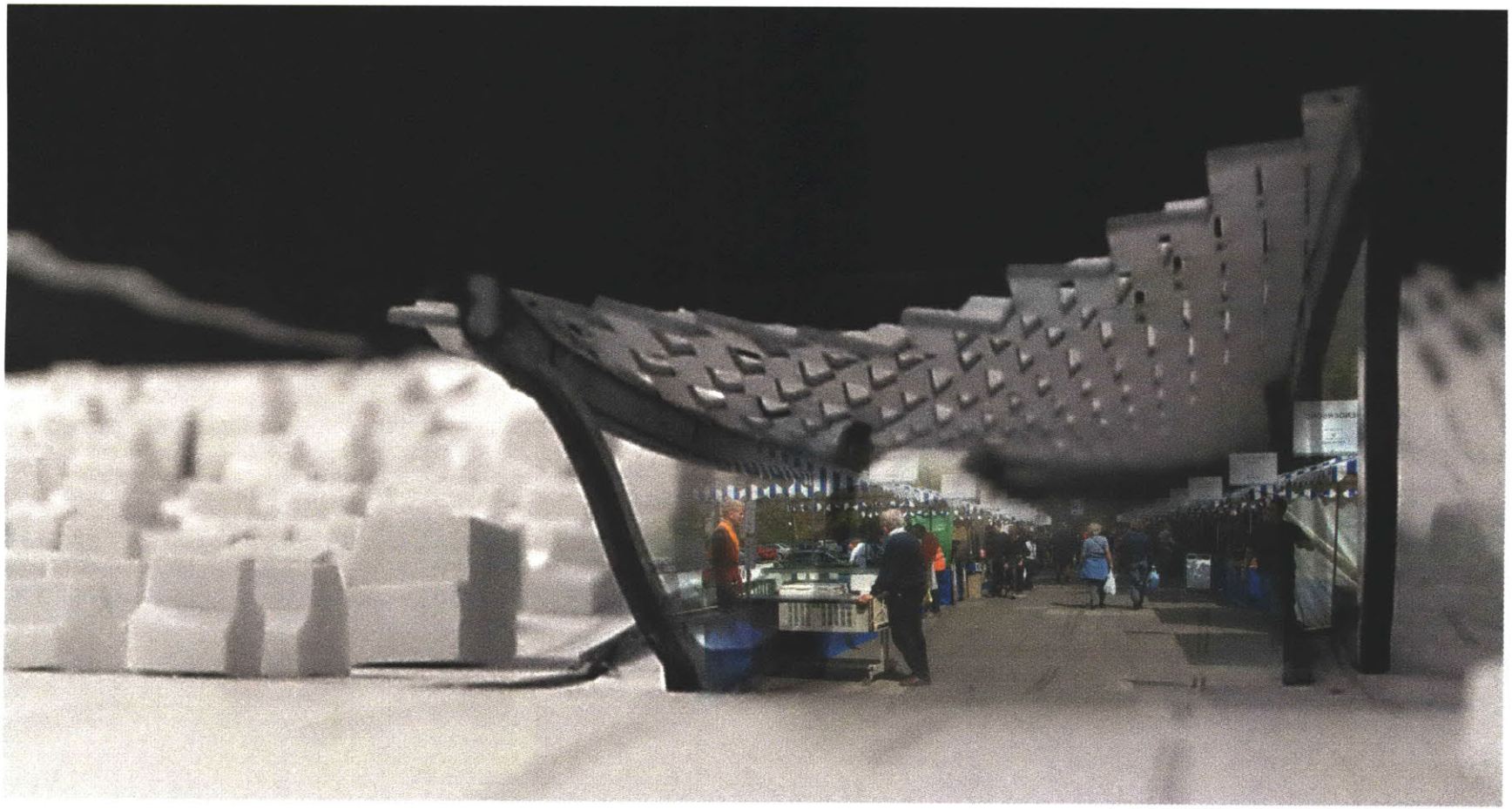

100% PARKING
1300 CARS
95,700 SQ.FT.
100% PARK
1320 CARS

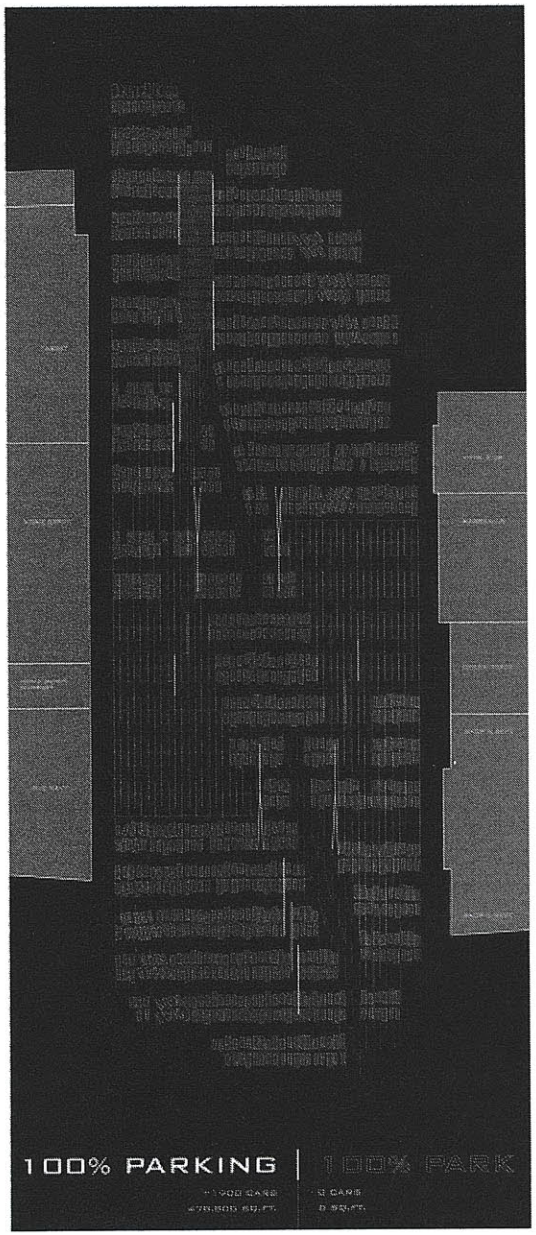

100% PARKING
100% PARK

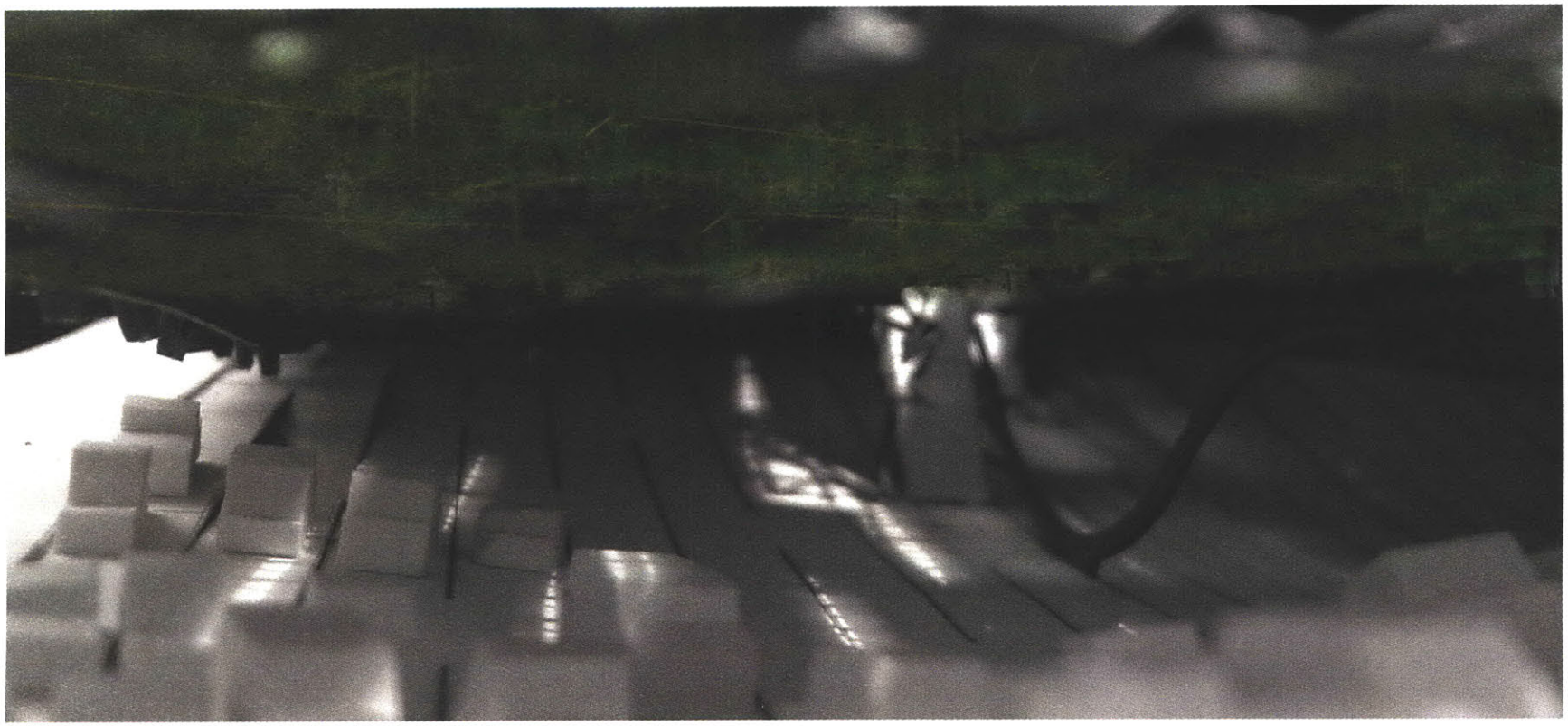

100% PARKING
100% PARK

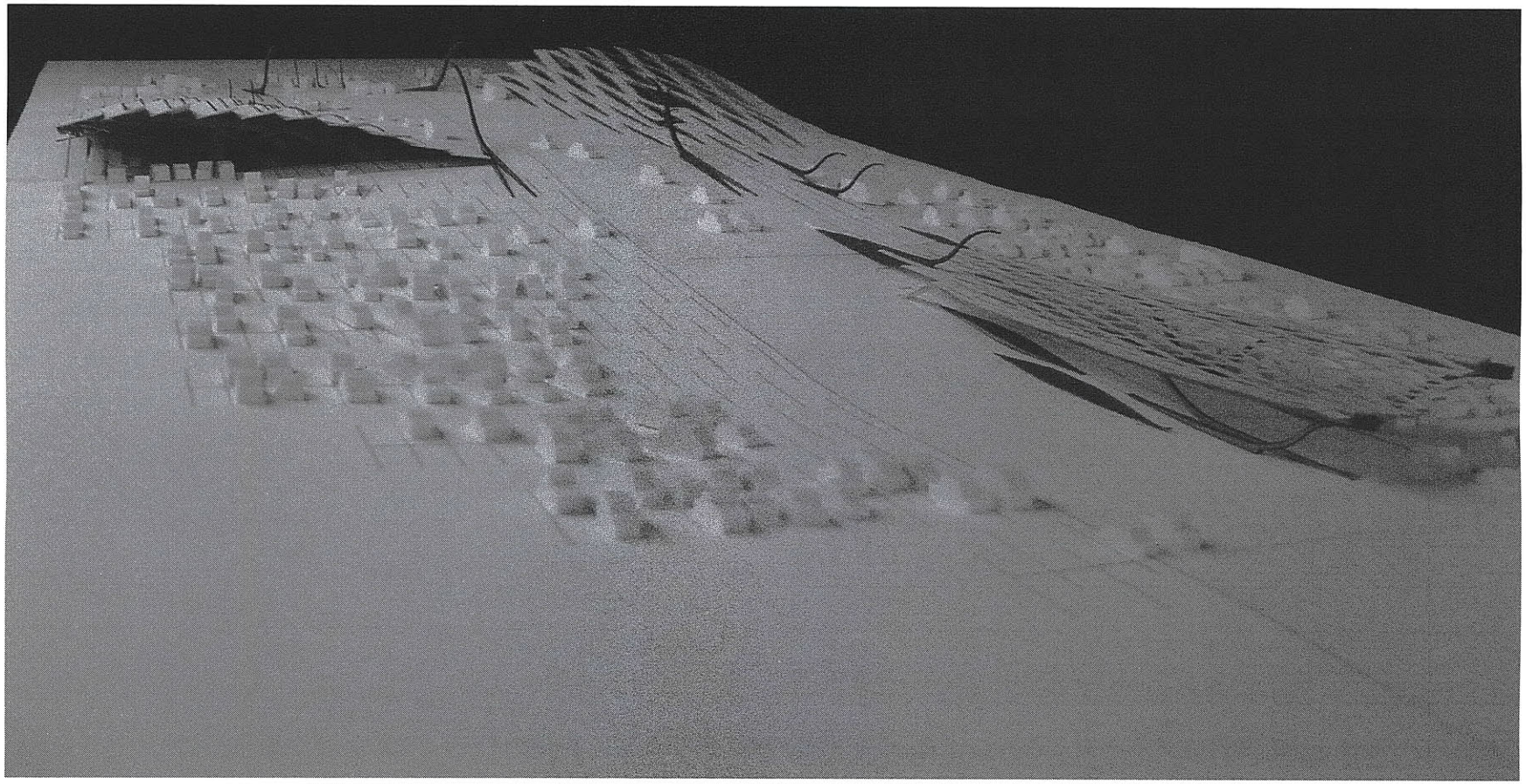


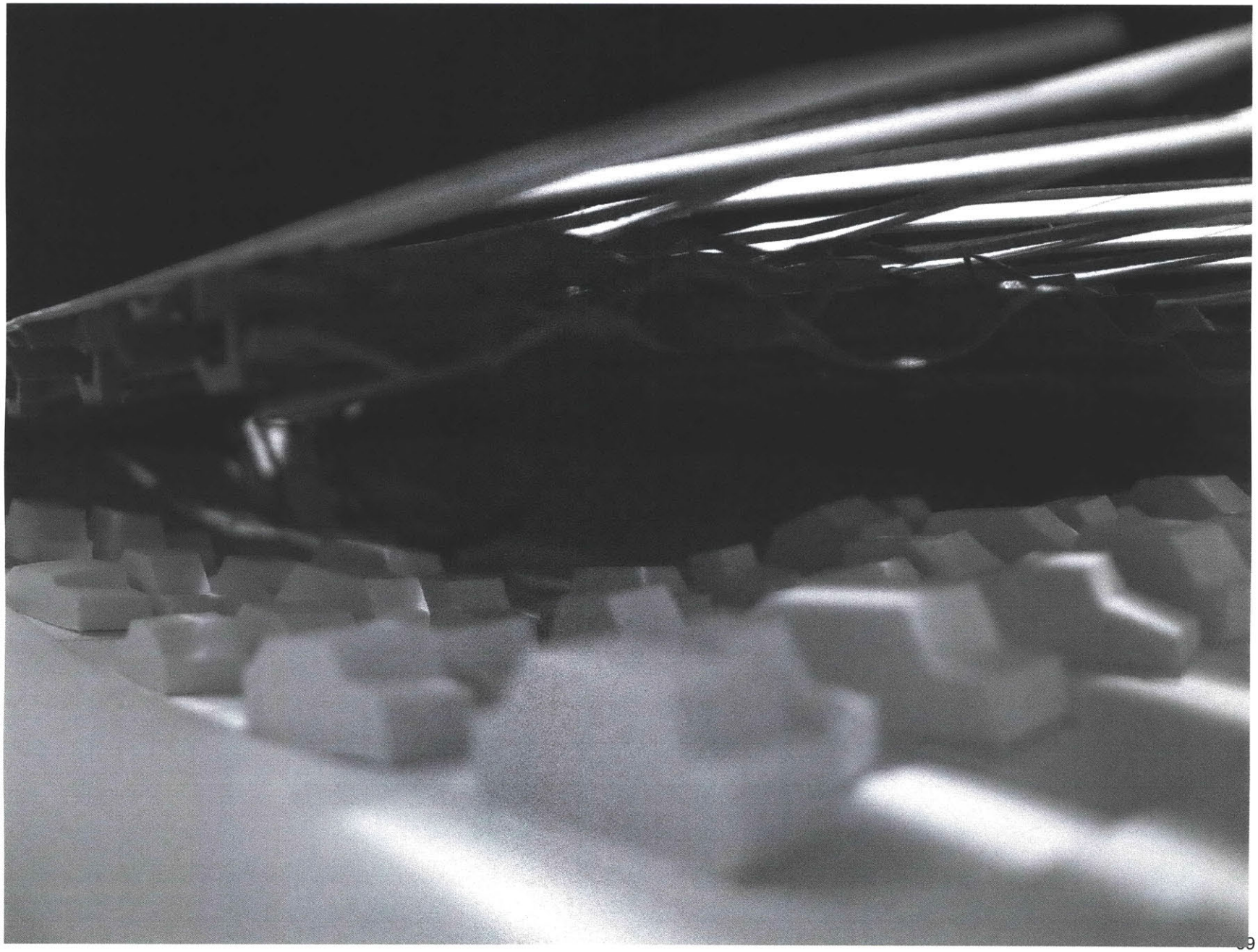

100% PARKING
1320 CARS
100% PARK
330 CARS

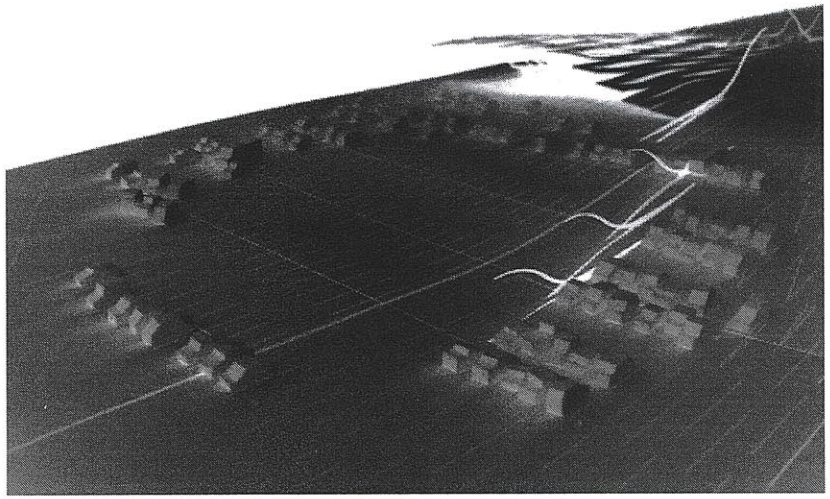



100% PARKING
100% PARK









Recovering the surface parking lot

As an adaptable cover with interwoven programs, the double-loaded the surface parking lot can then serve as a new landscape typology which responds to contextual situations and in turn sponsors new patterns of occupation **(6)**.

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(6) End Notes and Bibliography

(6) End Notes and Bibliography

End Notes:
Comments and continuing questions collected and in response to the May 13th, 2005 final review presentation of this Thesis:

Criticism addresses
-The lack of invention on my part to invent NEW kinds of play activity. Could this have been a new kind of playground for cars?

-Would this be such an attractive place that the commercial owners would no longer allow cars to park in the area, thus redirecting the cars to another parking lot?

-Big box retail has a relatively short life span- estimated at 10 years- what happens to this space when the commercial disintegrates- decays? Does the parking lot turn over into a park completely?

-Why such grand formal moves, why the symmetry?

-How better can I address the surface as a way to play? I have done so at the monolithic scale, but not at the scale of the individual unit- at the scale of the car, the individual.

-Cars are autonomous beings where as people play in groups. Can those kinds of relationships be explored further?

-In explaining the lot in 6 plans and 6 renderings, the possible impromptu activites are lost or not recognized.

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