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Arrival / Departure: architectures of dislocation

by Manan H. Shah

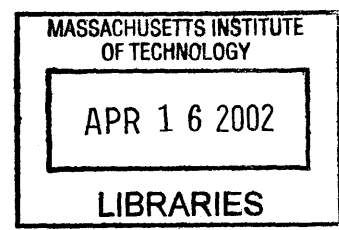
B.A. Architecture, University of California at Berkeley, 1998
B.A. Fine Art, University of California at Berkeley, 1998

SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF ARCHITECTURE IN PARTIAL
FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARCHITECTURE
at the MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

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ROTCH

Signature of Author: _____

Department of Architecture
January 18, 2002

Certified by: _____


Ann Pendleton-Jullian
Associate Professor of Architecture
Thesis Supervisor

Accepted by _____

Andrew Scott
Associate Professor of Architecture
Chairman, Department Committee on Graduate Students

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thesis committee

Thesis Advisor:

Ann Pendleton-Jullian, Associate Professor of Architecture

Readers:

Hasan Uddin Khan, Visiting Associate Professor in Architecture

Omar Khan, Instructor in Architecture

Deepest thanks to:

Ann, who as a teacher always remained a friend; who in the deepest depths of my tunnel vision, always gave a new and liberating idea, and who always provided encouragement and an anecdotal story which always made the process fun.

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Mom and Dad, for the help gathering site information, and for your endless support and love. Your patience and care in teaching me about my culture inspired and made this thesis possible.

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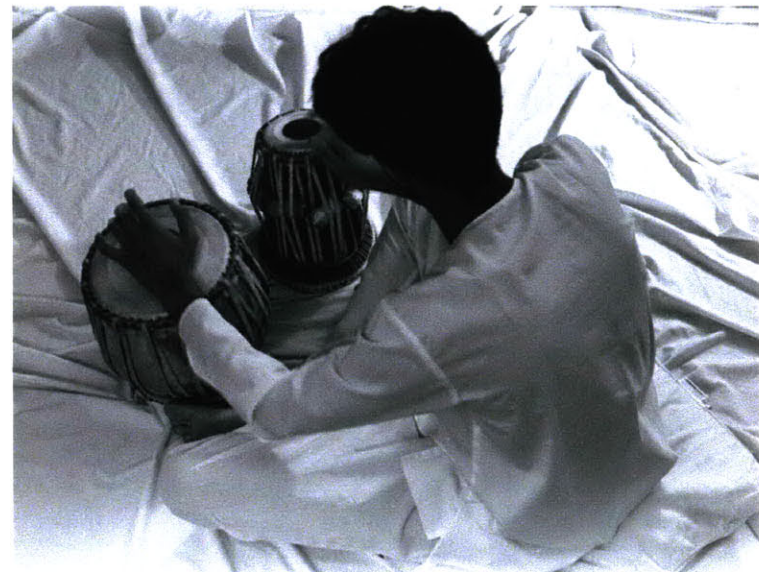


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artwork by manan shah

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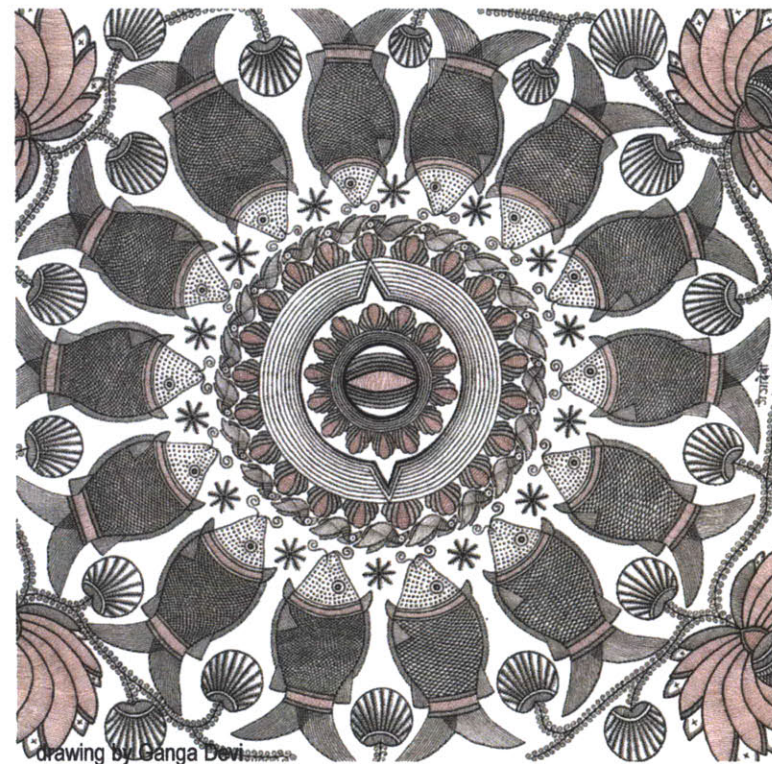
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ABSTRACT

Our identities are defined by a qualitative set of parameters that are at once universal and site specific. We are, as an old saying puts it, "products of our environment." Our knowledge and our beings are constantly being tested and changed through our interactions, both physical and cerebral, in our environments. Historically this sphere of influence was rather narrow, but as technology and travel have increased, environments have become fragmented; they no longer have clear edges, are discontinuous, and above all, are always changing. I am at once a product of where I live, where my parents lived, where I study, what I have read about, where I have traveled, and where I dream to be. I consequently have many homes, many anchors, and many points of reference.

The following architectural thesis investigations study architectural responses to the complexity of the conditions created in individuals and communities through the modern migratory process. Using the theme of ambivalence (the coexistence of opposing attitudes or feelings), this thesis addresses many independent and overlapping issues of identity and migration from both the scale of object and architecture. The thesis posits the question: is an architectural infrastructure possible that can allow for communication between migrants and local communities and between migrants themselves that can span time, language, and space? And can such infrastructure protect ethnicity while still allowing to be shared?

Thesis Supervisor: Ann Pendleton-Jullian
Title: Associate Professor of Architecture



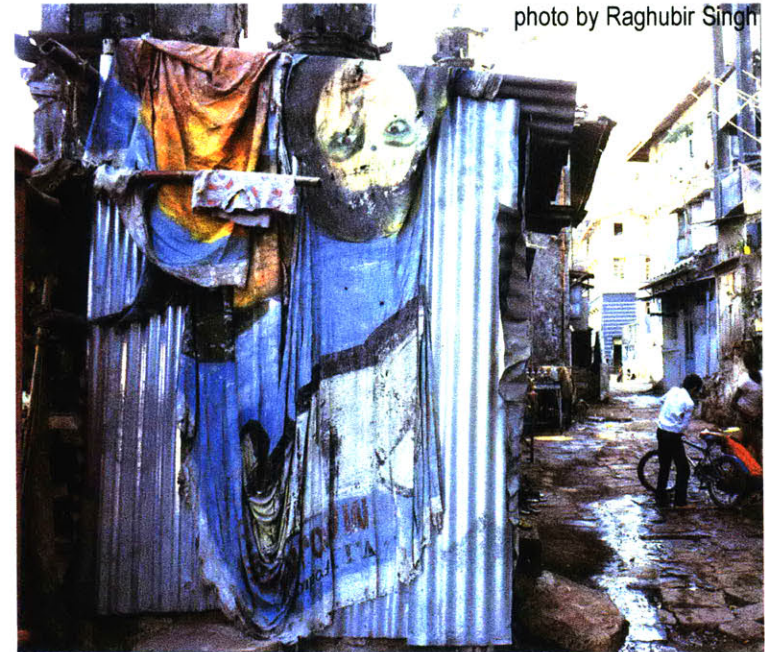


photo by Raghubir Singh

p r e f a c e a n d i n t r o d u c t i o n

"The man who finds his homeland sweet is still a beginner; he to whom every soil is as his native one is already strong; but he is perfect to whom the entire world is as a foreign land. The tender soul has fixed his love on one spot in the world; the strong man has extended his love to all places; the perfect man has extinguished his."

(Hugo of St. Victor, quoted in Diken 1998: 151)



photo by unknown artist

This thesis is the culmination of a series of undergraduate and graduate work I have done exploring the topics of individual identity in art and architecture. The interest comes out of a personal struggle within me to both hold on to ethnic roots that I have, while also embracing the culture I live in. It is a struggle I share with millions of people around the world. What makes this struggle so interesting is that it is so universal and yet so extremely personal. It encompasses an exploration of language, history, religion, art, ethics, and family life. The exploration has no particular goal other than learning, a quest to learn as much about one's self as possible. This master's thesis has been the most rigorous and difficult of my work, because it deals with extremely ephemeral concepts and tries to make them relevant for the physical practice of architecture.

The system of architectural research undertaken bases itself on a body of existing research by social scientists and writers on the workings of what is now known as "exchange theory." These theories set up various ways of framing the relationships between a dominant culture and a minority population (religious, ethnic, sexual, or otherwise.) A class I took at MIT taught by Jerrilyn Dodds open my eyes to how these theories could be applied to a historical reading of Islamic architecture. I found however that though the theories themselves were extremely helpful in understanding these issues in an academic environment, they failed in easy explanation within other social environments. Consequently in developing a theoretical basis for my thesis work I tried to draw from examples of the way people live, using my own experiences and biases as a test case.

In doing work that deals with issues such as identity, and culture, my work is also culture, it is only relevant at a particular time and in a particular place. It is also written in English, a language medium which is not always understood by the groups of people I will be discussing. I therefore have set the structure of this thesis up around language, more specifically around certain key words, which as I understand them, have a particular

relevance to the project. Certain topic sections will begin with a definition of a word. The definition gives as many relevant interpretations of the word as I could find. The point is to provide a common understanding of the important language used in the thesis, while also highlighting a multiplicity of readings on might have of a particular word and even the research work itself.

The idea of multiple readings is one that this thesis not only supports but is also dependant on to be understood. To further this point each project section is titled with a word couplet. The two words form an opposition, two points between which relevant readings of the work oscillate. The actual architectural project in this case is a proposed triptych of work. The three projects were to work at several scales, in terms of time, site, and size. Only two of the projects were completed because the ideas embedded in the second project became embedded within the third and thus became repetitive. Consequently there are two projects that follow, and theoretical introduction to both at the beginning.

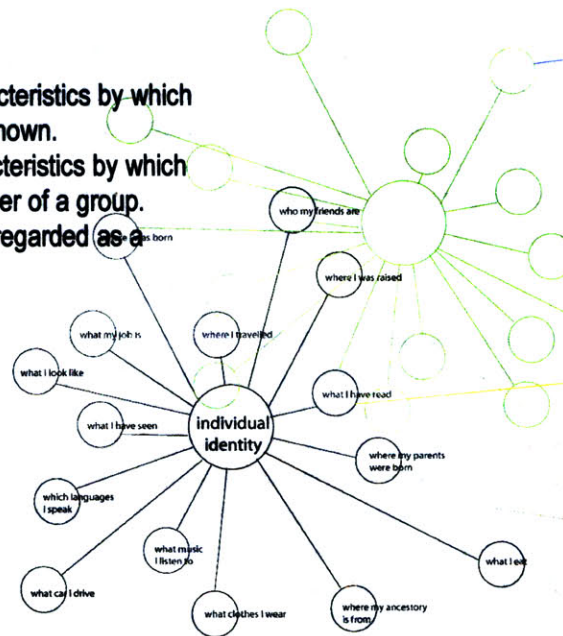
I consider myself very lucky to have been able to do such personal work in my academic environment, and I have to thank both UC Berkeley and MIT, for giving me the platform to research an explore what I feel are extremely important social and personal topics.

- Manan H. Shah

i·den·ti·ty

n. pl. i·den·ti·ties

1. The collective aspect of the set of characteristics by which a thing is definitively recognizable or known.
2. The set of behavioral or personal characteristics by which an individual is recognizable as a member of a group.
3. The distinct personality of an individual regarded as a persisting entity; individuality.



This diagram represents the process of identity formation through the metaphor of a network. An individual's identity is formed through linking a series of independent and neutral experiences and characteristics. Many individuals may share one or many of these characteristics, such as being born in a particular country. This exponentially complex network illustrates how our identities are formed through a taking individual path through a larger collective environment.

Historically one's sphere of influence was rather narrow, but as technology and travel have increased, environments have become vast and thus fragmented; they no longer have clear edges, are discontinuous, and above all, are always changing. I am at once a product of where I live, where my parents lived, where I study, what I have read about, where I have traveled, and where I want to be. I consequently have many homes, many anchors, and many points of reference. Our associations, our definitions, and identities are products of very personal narratives. My narrative contains its own history, present, and future different than all others in the world. However my environment remains to be shared; only my path through it is unique.

Our identities are not only products of personal narratives but it also depend on the collective lens through which the personal is seen. An aspect of one's identity is dependent on external views of one's self. Our shared environment is what gives people commonalities both locally and globally, and gives us our frames of reference on how to view others. This collective environment is what also ultimately judges your identity, and determines how others view you. This judgment is often based on cultured markers which other than language and appearance are usually commodities. These objects have embedded within them a reading of culture, class, and time.

The formation of an individual Identity is also not however entirely dependent on external circumstance imposing will upon one's self. Rather it is a combination of forces those past, present, and future. Between every external influence and us is a self-constructed filter. This filter is how one chooses to allow or resist influence, how one chooses to view and respond to culture, and history. Keya Ganguly discusses some of her conclusions after conduction ethnographic research by talking to many migrants.

"For my ethnographic informants, the present acquires meaning only with reference to a disjointed and conflicted narrative of the past - in which references to official narratives about colonization and a historical memory are tangled up with personal memories and private recollections of experience. For many the in Indian community, the past is an absolutely vital element in the negotiation of identity, but it comprises a 'renovated' and

identity as observed by others is based on a cultured, commoditized, projected image of self



selectively appropriated set of memories and discourses. The whole category of individual history is a leaky one, where past and present often seem to bleed over into one another and inflect each other. The authority of the past depends on people's present subjectivity and vice versa; the stories people tell about their pasts have more to do with the continuing shoring up of self-understanding that with historical truths" (Ganguly 1992: 31)



photograph by manan shah

am·biv·a·lence

n.

1. The coexistence of opposing attitudes or feelings, such as love and hate, toward a person, object, or idea.
2. Uncertainty or indecisiveness as to which course to follow.

For many of us that live in cultures where mobility and the pursuit of new experiences are valued, our identities often lie between cultures. Our cultures themselves often lie between other cultures. In our globalized world, this is the age of appropriation, mimicry, and exclusion. In other words, societies are trying to simultaneously understand other cultures while still pursuing the maintenance of a local. The result is a societal and personal ambivalence which defines a system in which opposing views actually influence a singular end result, whether an individual identity or that of a culture.

"The act of interpretation is never simply an act of communication between the I and You ... The production of meaning requires that these two places be mobilized in the passage through a third space, which represents both the general conditions of language and the specific implication of the utterance in a performative and institutional strategy of which it cannot 'in itself' be conscious. What this unconscious relation introduces is an ambivalence in the act of interpretation...The intervention of the Third Space, which makes the structure of meaning and reference an ambivalent process, destroys the mirror of representation in which cultural knowledge is continuously revealed as an integrated, open, expanding code. It is only when we realize that all cultural statements and systems are constructed in this contradictory and ambivalent space of enunciation, that we begin to understand why hierarchical claims to the inherent originality of 'purity' of cultures are untenable, even before we resort to empirical historical instances that demonstrate their hybridity." (Bhabha 1988: 208)

Bhabha convincingly makes the point that when one is not conscience of cultural attributes, the process of cultural interpretation is an ambivalent and contradictory one. Modern life for most people is like this, various cultures come in and out of our lives: driving a Japanese car, eating Indian food, where clothes from Korea, listening to Jazz. One is not always of the embedded cultural structure, and this is the "third space."

The understanding of the value of such ambivalence is also discussed very directly in architecture, through the writings of Robert Venturi, in "Complexity and Contradiction." He made the bold point, well before it was in fashion, "by embracing contradiction as well as complexity, I aim for vitality as well as validity. A valid architecture evokes many levels of meaning and combinations of focus: its space and its elements become readable and workable in several ways at once." (Venturi: 16)

"For a given individual, or for a collective actor, there may be a plurality of identities. Yet such a plurality is a source of stress and contradiction in both self-representation and social action," writes Manuel Castells while discussing the modern day construction of identity. The migratory process, like no other, tests the limits of the core of both one's individual and collective identities.

three phases of the narrative of ethnicity in U.S. -R. Radhakrishnan

- 1 Immigrants suppress ethnicity in the name of pragmatism and opportunism
- 2 In the call for total revolution that follows, immigrants reassert ethnicity in all its autonomy
- 3 The third phase seeks the hyphenated integration of ethnic identity and national identity under conditions that do not privilege the national at the expense of the ethnic.



Radhakrishnan makes very clear the stages that one may perceive in immigrants, however while it is useful to separate and categorize these emotions, it is important to realize that these three modes of ethnicity do not work linearly or at any one scale. In life, one may encounter these feelings at any time and in any order. It may also be the case that one person may live his / her life suppressing their ethnicity and their children may take on the call revolution.

"Every culture erects a series of boundary maintaining mechanisms through which external stimuli are filtered. These defenses of cultural integrity include such phenomena as language, religious beliefs, ideologies, the cultivation of ethnocentric mechanisms such as nationalism, and the institutions of welfare. All such mechanisms, whether generalized or directed at some particular are of culture, share in common the feature of providing a measure of time, time enough to incorporate, assimilate, and if necessary reinterpret, alien influences." (Glick and Pi-Sunyer 1969: 140)

it is a result of the modern condition that these three are not distinct but in constant dialogue with each other

mi·gra·tion

- 1: the movement of a group of people from one country or locality to another
- 2: the periodic passage from one region to another for feeding or breeding
- 3: To remove from one country or region to another, with a view to residence; to change one's place of residence

"It is part of the condition of post-modernity that we live in an age of transnational migration, and the result is cities and regions of extraordinary cultural diversity." During the process of migration a traumatic shift can be seen between the individual and collective aspects of one's identity. The moments of leaving home, departure, are when one leaves the collective aspects of one's identity temporarily in the past. The time of traveling can be seen as a solitary one, where one occupies anonymous space, belonging to a place between places: thinking about a past, and anticipating a future. Upon landing, however, the individual is subsumed in the collective experience of arrival. Arrival is the experience of having one's individual being: experiences, myths, and knowledge as tested by a new environment.

Migration is very different than it was even thirty years ago. The ease of travel has taken much of the hardship out of the process, leaving a great many who call several countries home. Some who live in one country for only a short time, and then move to another, and yet there are still people for whom a move, for no matter how long, to a foreign land is traumatic. There is no doubt however that the modern migrant is, in general, considerably more learned about the new host culture due to the proliferation of images and information we all share as a part of the modern world.



Increased globalization has created many types of immigrants, all varying in skills, education, and levels of expressed ethnicity.

Architecture, for the most part, has abandoned what was once the powerful experience of entering a new land for the first time. All one has to do is to compare the experience of landing at JFK in New York today with the images and recounts of immigrants arriving to Ellis Island. There are many things that were horrible about the historical migrant experience, but what I think is important is that the process had a definitive climax. This was a moment when the many individuals arrive at Ellis Island unite and become, for at least a moment, part of a collective environment of immigrants. However traumatic this event was it is undeniably true that all immigrants shared a common experience which bonded them with fellow migrants past and present. Today when immigrants land in most countries they must hit the ground running into the utterly diffused space of the modern airport. This is especially evident in the physical placement of the modern port within the center of the urban fabric. Ellis Island was different in that it was an island away from the main land. It was a physical transition from sea to land and between cultures. It was a space purely for the accepting of new immigrants. This type of infrastructure created a migrant space, a place all migrants shared and had passed through. It became legend and served as a point of bonding. The experiences of Arrival / Departure are subdued and uncelebrated. Does such an anonymous entry into a new home isolate immigrants from each other? And what of those who do not fit into the polarized discussion of locals and foreigners, there is a unique but yet shared transitioning that they too must go through too.

John F. Kennedy Airport, New York



Ellis Island Port of Immigration, New York



Many of the largest issues that face migrants are within their adopted local communities. I am choosing to investigate these topics through the vehicle of the migrant Indian community, one that I feel myself personally connected to and alienated from. This community has a very old history of migration with the United States and most specifically with California. "From 1850 to 1960, only some 13,500 Indians had entered the US legally. [Many] had settled in Northern California and the Pacific Northwest to work as farm laborers, mine workers, loggers, or railway construction crews." Though this community was small they have made a historically large impact both locally and abroad, most recently making up a majority of the Silicon Valley labor force. Most of the major immigration of Indians into California and the US has come in the last forty years, and thus the problems of identity and assimilation are still very visible and important.

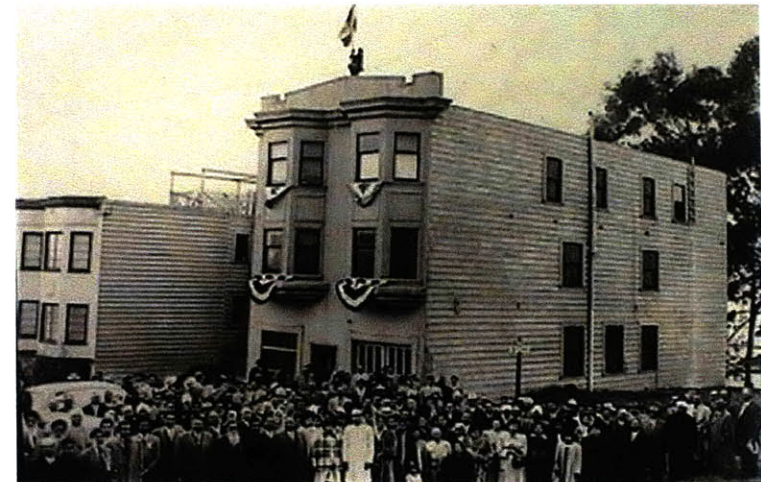
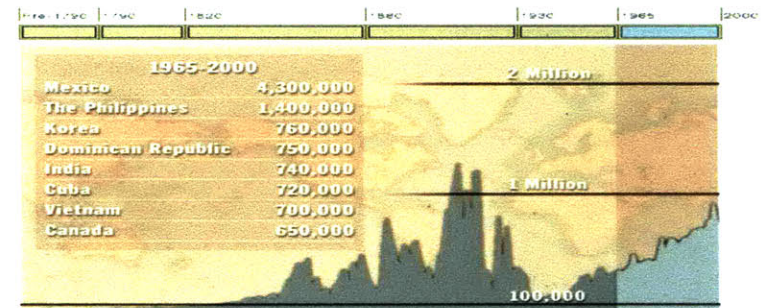
The data to the right is a timeline showing the major political and social changes in the modern history of Indian migration. This information is used in this thesis as only a reminder. It shows how fear and uncertainty in migrants today is caused by a political and social history where acceptance is not always a given, and individuals are seen as statistics to be balanced.

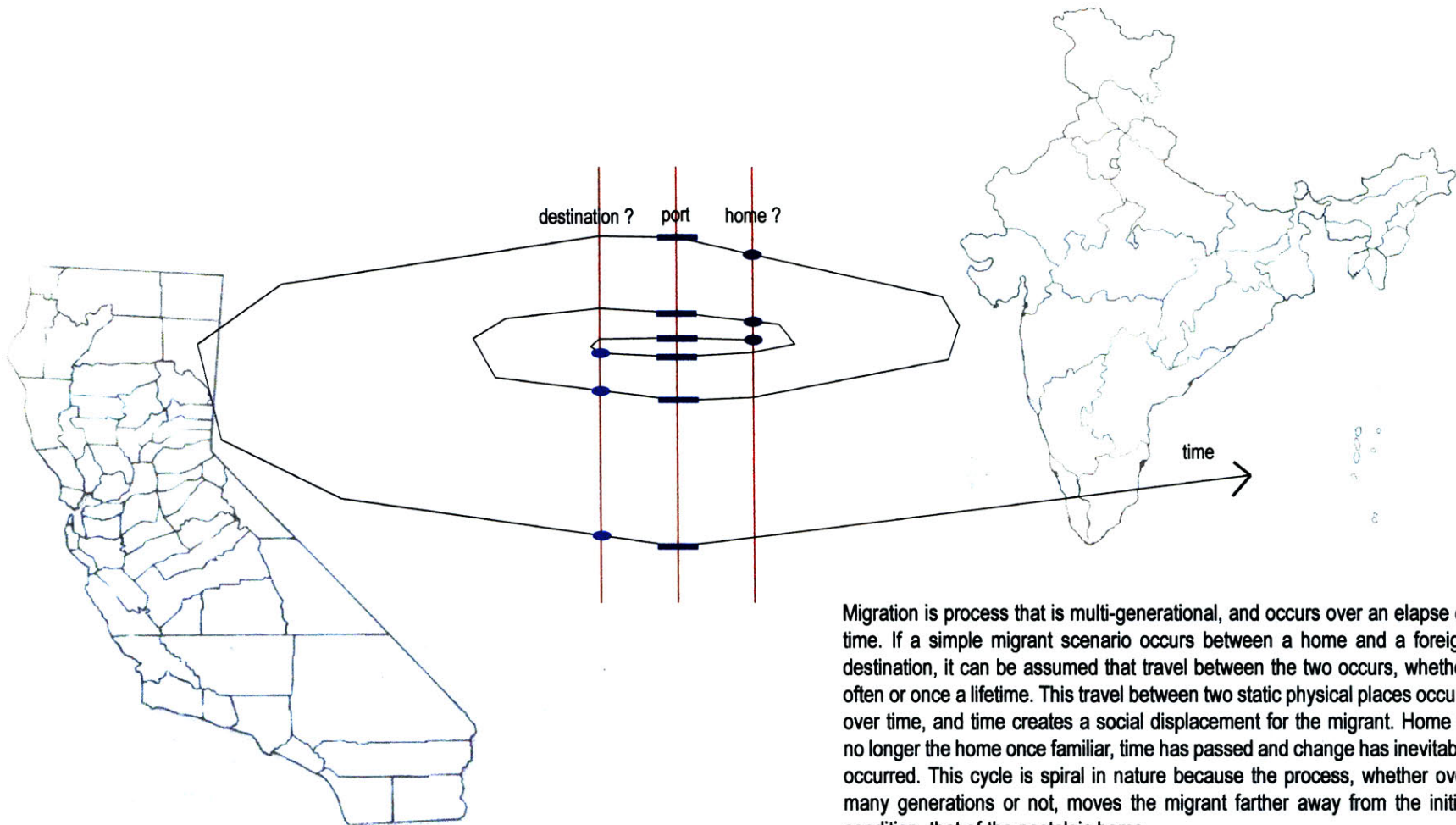
Timeline of South Asia-US Immigration

1790	[Naturalization Law] only free white person's eligible for citizenship
1834	[Emancipation of Slaves in British Colonies] indenture and contract labor begins overseas, beginning of south asian diaspora
1913	[Alien Land Laws] if you are not eligible for naturalization then you cannot own land
1907	[Indian granted US citizenship] abdullah dolla granted citizenship because his skin was pale beyond his tan line
1922	[Supreme Court : Third decision] highest court rules that south asians are not Caucasian and rather are mongloid all south asians were de-naturalized as were their spouses regardless of race
1924	[Immigration law of 1924 : asian exclusion law] anyone ineligible for naturalization could not immigrate created extremely small quotas for all immigrants into US
1930's	[Civil Disobedience] Mahatma Gandhi challenges British rule in India
1935	[Government of India Act] provincial governments of India would have full authority, limiting British power
1941	[Executive Order 8862] prohibited racial discrimination in hiring
1946	[Luce-Cellar bill] quota for asian immigrants raised to 100 per year people already here could become naturalized petitions allowed for family immigration asians allowed to run for political office
1947	[Independence Day] India and Pakistan gain Independence from the British

- 1960 [US Census]
6000 people from India in US
- 1952 [Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1952 : McCarran-Walter Act]
allowed people with communist affiliations to be deported
maintained asian immigrant quota to maximum of 100 per country
- 1965 [Immigration Act of 1965]
abolished national quotas, instead creating worldwide quotas by hemisphere
eastern (170,000) western (120,000) no more than 20,000 from any one country
based on preference system (family, work, refugees)
growing demand for inner city doctors, allows huge numbers of skilled Indian immigrants
at this point 58% of all doctors in NYC were of south asian descent
- 1968 [SFSU Student Strike]
beginning of "third world movement"
demanding people of color teaching and inclusion of history in curriculum
began the demand of ethnic studies
- 1976 [Health Professionals Assistance Act]
removed physicians from "shortage" list
- 1977 [Eilburg Act]
had to have job secured prior to immigration
- 1986 [US Immigration Marriage Fraud Amendment Act]
instituted a two year conditional period on spouses of green cards
to stop fraudulent marriages
- 1994 [California Proposition 187]
restricting provisions for Illegal Aliens

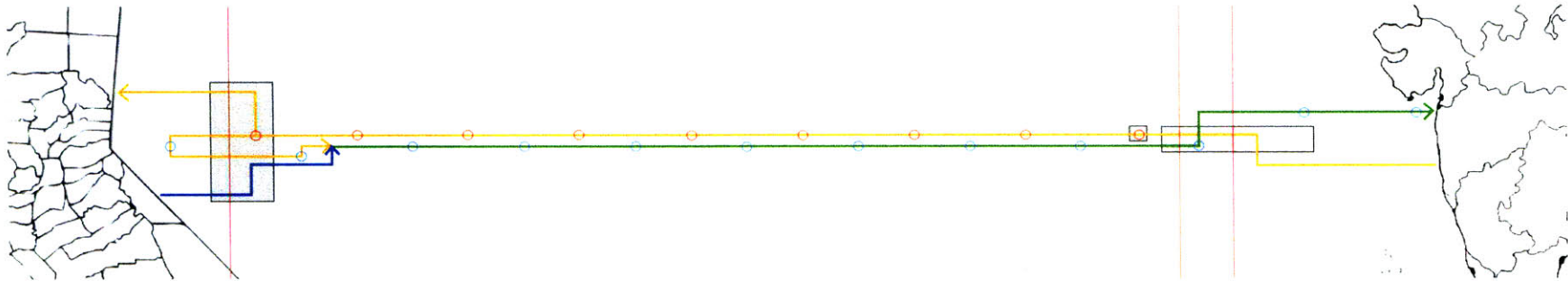
"With the official account of the population of refugees soon to reach 40,000,000, the United Nations has called the last quarter century the "Migration Era." The influx of immigrants to the United States has now reached the historic levels of the nineteenth-century immigration wave." - Krzysztof Wodiczko





Migration is process that is multi-generational, and occurs over an elapse of time. If a simple migrant scenario occurs between a home and a foreign destination, it can be assumed that travel between the two occurs, whether often or once a lifetime. This travel between two static physical places occurs over time, and time creates a social displacement for the migrant. Home is no longer the home once familiar, time has passed and change has inevitably occurred. This cycle is spiral in nature because the process, whether over many generations or not, moves the migrant farther away from the initial condition, that of the nostalgic home.

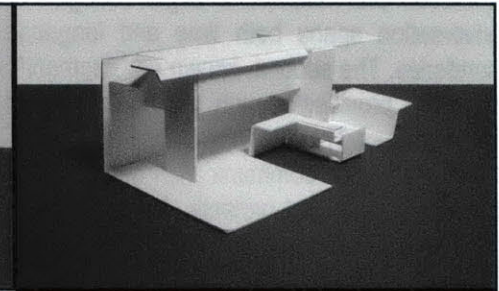
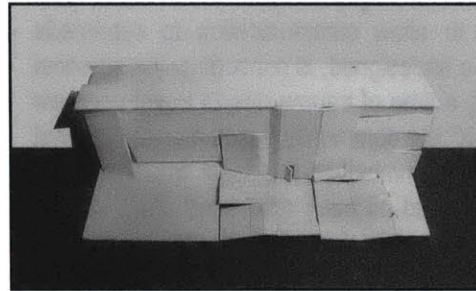
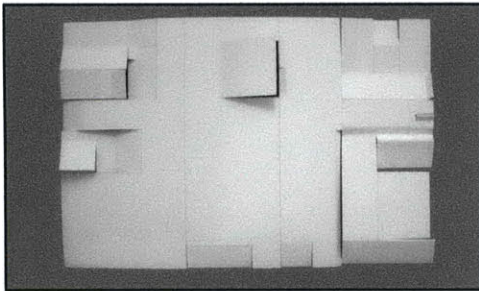
This thesis proposes a triptych of design projects that address the various needs of migrants at different stages throughout their travels. The first called the "xchanger", addresses the need for a larger dialogue between migrants around the world. This conversation spans both time and language to allow communication to supercede boundaries. The second, known as "fragment", is undesigned, is conceptually a personal object that provides security and memory during a time of trauma due to travel and new circumstances. The third project named "dropBOX" is a community based architecture that allows a complex communication between ethnic communities and local neighborhoods that both shares and protects. All three projects build off each other, and share certain goals and characteristics, developing a discernable architecture of dislocation.



A community based architecture allowing for a migrant node. Here migrants can continue on their travels, or stay and become part of a local community. Also here others who were locals or whose parents were once migrants can begin a new migrant or cultural journey.

An infrastructure that provides comfort to those who are perpetually migrants or are in a particularly lengthy state of unrootedness could be portable.

An infrastructure at the ports of arrival and departure could provide a meaningful communication between migrants, who are already at a singular node.

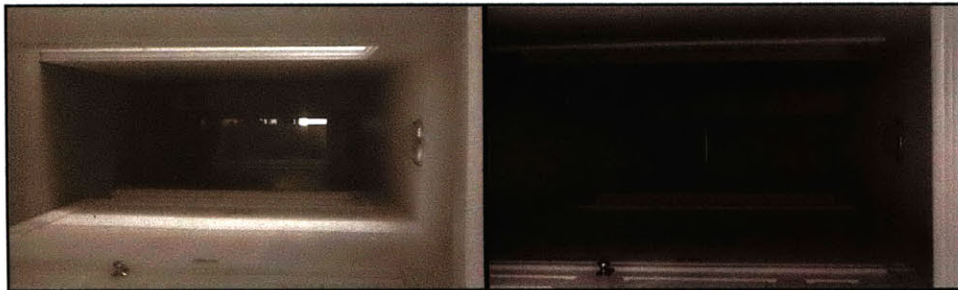


Form making methodology: *[un]fold*

Migrants require infrastructure that is flexible and transportable. Understanding the construction of traditional migrant shelter or luggage, one sees the dependence of the fold. The fold as a form making device can work at many scales but ultimately allows the user to create, from a singular plane, the opportunity for space: shelter, storage, and protection. Such an assembly is also incredible efficient yet not self-deterministic allowing for an open-endedness that suits the migrant.

Spatial characteristic: *transience*

Migrancy occurs in many different states. Some migrants are extremely foreign to a host culture, where others may be a part of the culture. The wide range of possibilities means that at times a singular individual may be recognized as alien, where at other time; the same individual may be seen as local. These shifting states of being, allow a migrant transience. This constant tension between the migrant and his / her environment continually redefines their identity. At times this may result in a need for protection, at others a comfort, and sometimes both. An infrastructure that can respond to the needs of changing dynamics could be seen as a supportive constant at all time for the migrant.

**Formal relationship:** *ambivalence*

An architecture that can be read in many ways and has many meanings is important in providing infrastructure that has value to many types of people. The architecture could also respond to the changing needs of the migrants and the community, allowing both a sense of protection and an atmosphere of sharing. Developing architectures that can both be open and closed allows for permutations of a middle state, which can shift, and therefore be more responsive to both human and architectural needs.







i n d i v i d u a l / c o l l e c t i v e

“Unlike the immigrants of the first wave, these new refugees enter cities that are already fully built, with their architectural, ideological, and monumental theaters in place. It is up to these newcomers, then, to transform and unbuild the cities by inserting their presence, their performances, and their histories in to the collective memories and democratic discourses of the city itself.”

(Wodiczko 1999: 8)

ex · changev. *ex·changed, ex·chang·ing, ex·chang·es*

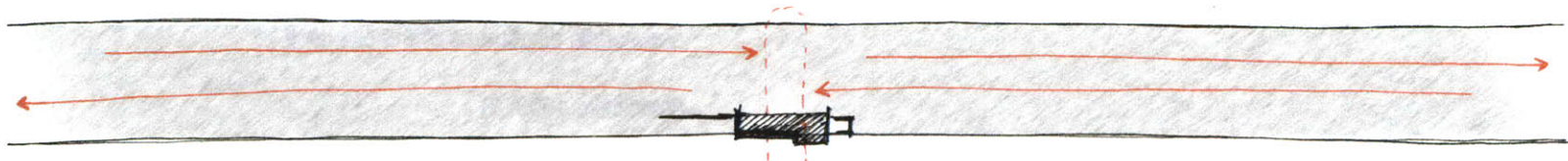
1. To give in return for something received; trade.
2. To give and receive reciprocally.
3. To give up for a substitute.
4. To turn in for replacement.

x . changer : a time-elapsed migrant conversation

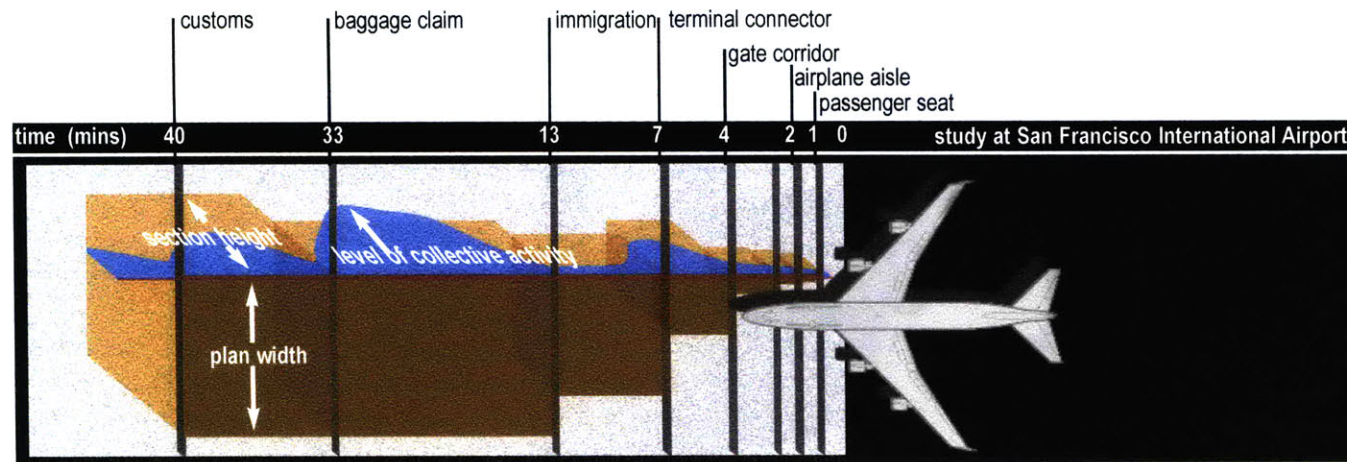
site[international arrival / departure . san francisco international airport]

Addressing the more universal aspects of migration, the xchanger sites itself at the point of both arrival and departure: the airport terminal. The terminal connector area is airport infrastructure that is shared by travelers both coming and leaving, however this sharing occurs asynchronously. The project aims to provide a subversive infrastructure allowing for communication that spans this lapse of time. The purpose of this conversation is to allow cultural exchange and learning between travelers.

A meaningful migrant exchange must occur above the limits of language and instead must rely on a vehicle that is common to all people. Music is such a medium, allowing a communication that can occur irrespective of culture, and education. The technology of music is also universal allowing a format for exchange that is once again above cultural specificity. Music has long been seen as an embodying culture in its various forms. Native to the art is an extreme cultural specificity having to do with local instruments, language, musical scales, etc. Simultaneously the media has always embodied the values of cultural exchange, forming hybrid styles and new forms of music that without collaboration would never have been born. Music also is an extremely sentimental art, often triggering subconscious reactions which can link people to history and place.



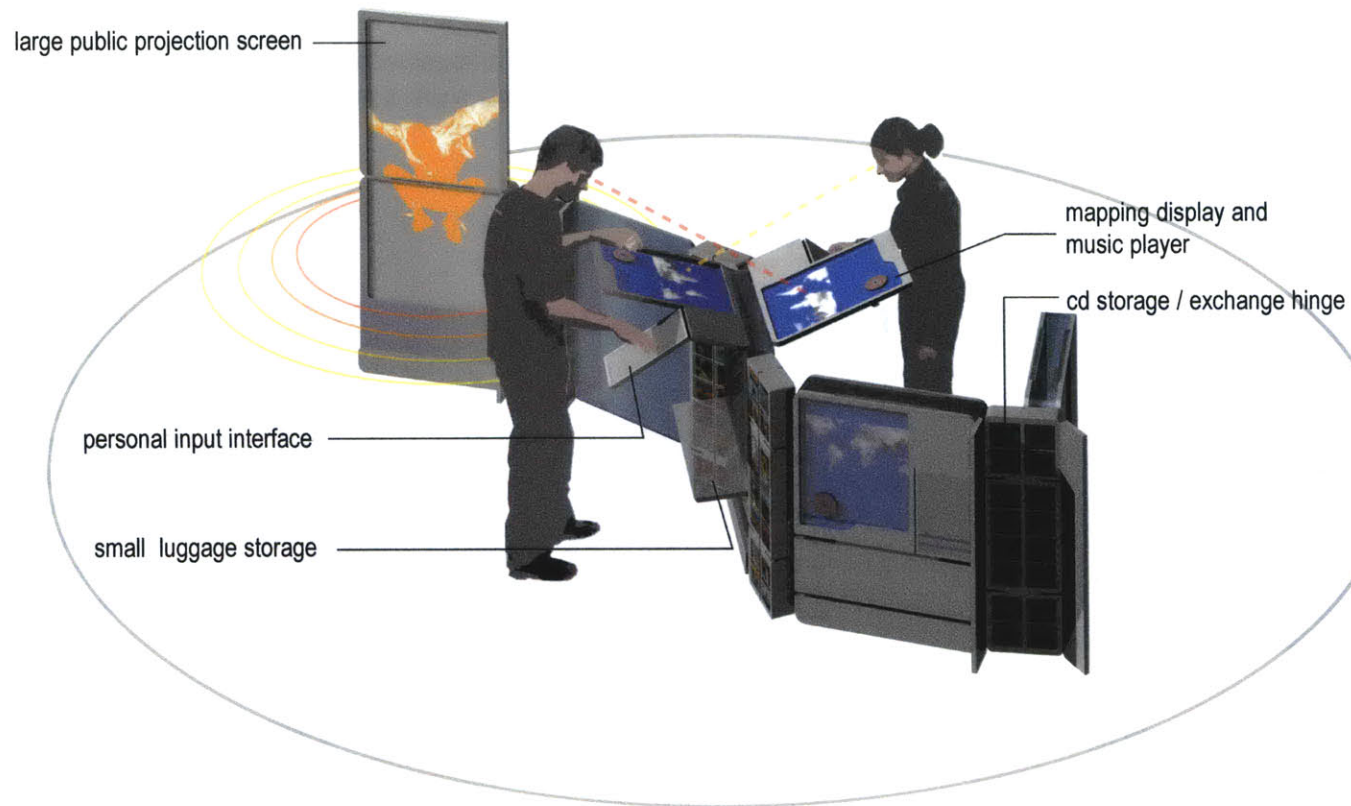
The trajectory of the migrant within the modern airport is that of an individual taken through a variety of experiences varying from isolation [airplane seat] to community chaos [baggage claim]. Is there a space where immigrants share a meaningful collective experience?



This study analyzes the types and intensity of spaces one encounters from the plane seat through customs. The highest level of activity was during baggage claim. A large number of various travelers paused for an indeterminate amount of time. This space would be an ideal local for an infrastructure which was meant to encourage traveler interaction.

It is possible to integrate an infrastructure for music exchange with those infrastructures already necessary in an airport, such as currency exchange, telephones, and news stands.





The xchanger interface is designed as both a computerized information system as well as a neutral mediating surface around which new person to person meetings can occur. The displays are designed such that one user has a input screen close to them, however their viewing screen is directly opposite them, in front of another potential user. The goal is a centralized object which, unlike telephones that privilege privacy, encourages sharing both in its programming and its physical design.



personal scale

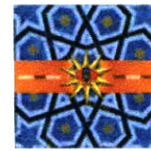
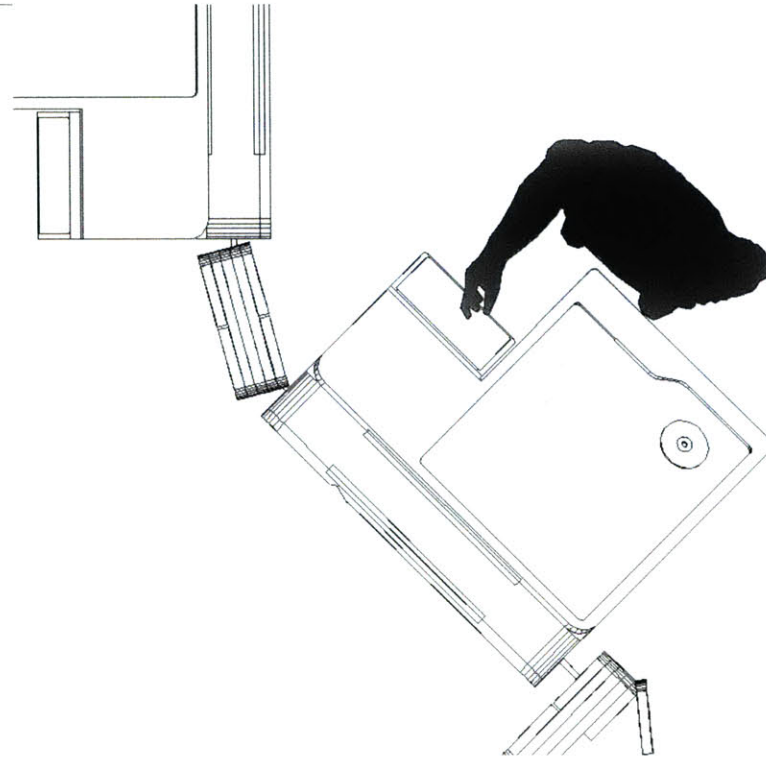
an individual can acquire new music through xchanger (both digital formats and cd formats are supported)

one can leave and acquire cds at the cd storage hinge

one can listen to any music, personal or exchanged through a personal audio interface

any cd or digital music file's travels can be visually mapped (music is encoded with tracking tags and physical displacement is recorded) creating a new type of history embedded within technology

an individual also has the choice of enter general information about themselves, allowing the display of relational diagrams, showing mappings of similarities between travelers in terms of paths and experiences.

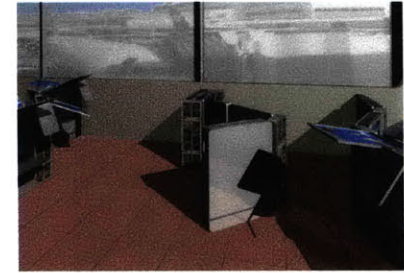
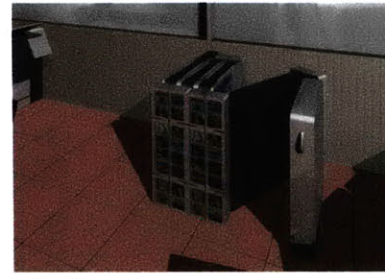
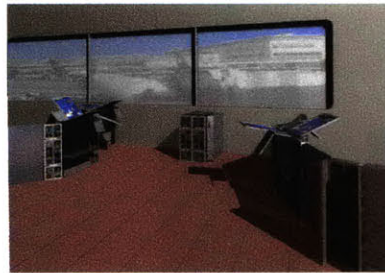
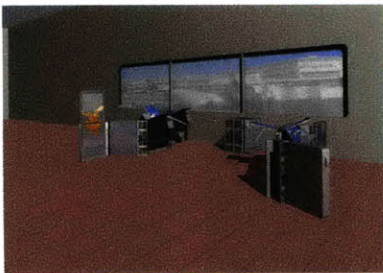
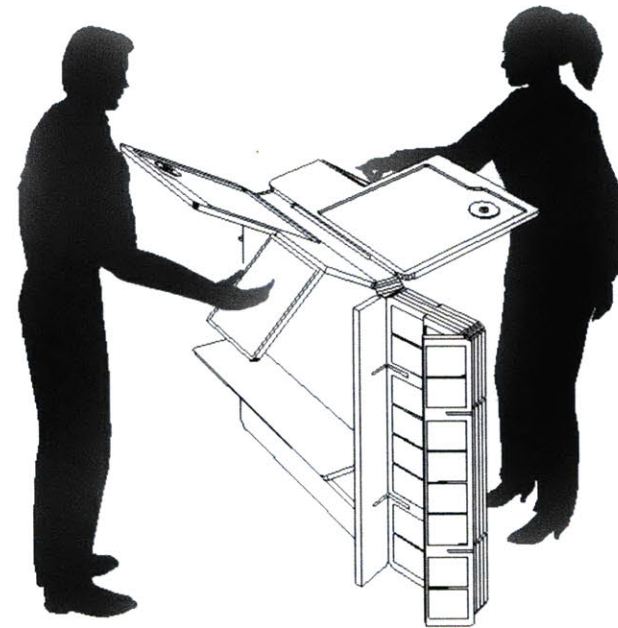


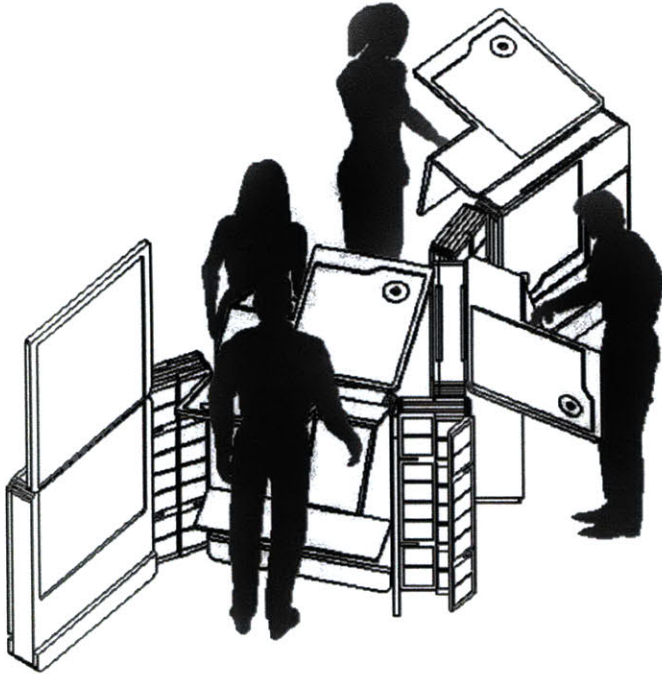
conversation scale

travellers can directly exchange music and information with each other, using the xchanger as a mediating surface

conversations and exchange can occur between migrants arriving and those departing (music, travel tips, places to stay, eat, etc.) *often migrants themselves are the best source of information for each other

visual and aural information can be displayed: maps, news, music etc. (this information can transcend the limits of language and can create a conversation sans mots)



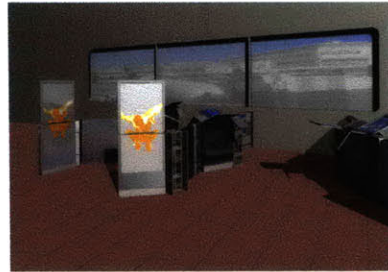
**public scale**

the xchanger itself projects music and video information through a large screen into the public space (the selection is randomly chosen from the current database)

any user can listen to any music currently on the network

one can also search any local users for possible information exchanges

all exchanges have the possibility of linking to a worldwide network



The xchanger is designed to fold and unfold as needed. Its portability supports the possibility of moving these devices around an airport, and installing them easily in an existing space. Through the xchanger, music, culture, language, space, time, and technology are collapsed into a device that allows an unconscious sharing, in an otherwise anonymous environment.





n e u t r a l / c h a r g e d

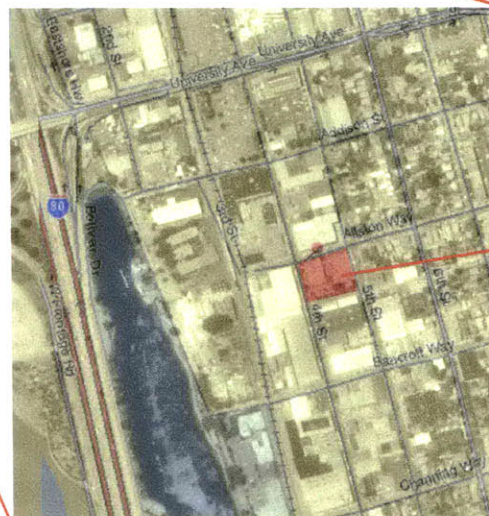
"The other is a neighborhood beyond
your skin's barbed wire fence; an uninvited
guest from a future age who could have been
your rescuer before your memory betrayed his origins."

(Saleem Peeradina, Rustomji-Kerns 1995: p60)



Centered on a program of necessity, such a restaurant or grocery store, the subversive program could subtly entice a communication that could enhance a relationship between the local community, students, and immigrants. This building is an "intermediate destination" for migrants. A place for those coming and going to pass, exchange, and leave: a permanent infrastructure based on transience.

The program is sited in Berkeley, CA, in an area that is a small ethnic shopping area, and relatively close to the UC Berkeley campus. Its location allows it to engage both students, who themselves are transients [migrants of place and mind], and other people seeking products of Indian ethnicity.



The chosen site at the corner of 5th street and Allston Way, is adjacent to the current homes of one of California's most successful, word-of-mouth restaurants, VIKS.

The city of Berkeley finds itself as one of the centers of the Indian ethnic experience. Much of the local South Asian population's modern history has roots in the local area. Some of the oldest restaurants and ethnic clusters also began in the area. Much of this has to do with the University of California campus, which was one of the first on to admit a sizable Indian population. The city of Berkeley also finds itself very close in between the economic center of San Francisco, and the technological center of San Jose. The selection of the site in Berkeley is to allow a connection to an already existing ethnic community and at the same time allow a strong connection with the University, which could create a greater level of activity and awareness.

VIKS began as an imported grocery store with a small kitchen to sell Indian snacks. As time has passed the restaurant took over an adjacent space, has developed a cult following. The patrons of VIKS, unlike many other successful ethnic places of business, are not a majority Indian. The local population has adopted the small store and restaurant, such that the clientele of VIKS on any day of the week is as diverse as one could imagine. Next to the warehouse building VIKS inhabits is a large parking lot space, which would make an ideal site for a new space that could feed off of the draw of such an establishment.

Berkeley's Indian Bazaar

Immigrants from the subcontinent bring their vibrant culture to this university town

KAROLA SAEKEL, San Francisco Chronicle Staff Writer
Wednesday, April 12, 1995

From hot-pink saris to hotter- pink tandoori chicken, from bins of crimson dal to row upon row of sitar tapes, Berkeley is becoming a shopping and dining mecca for much of the Bay Area's sizable Indian community.

The strongest emphasis is on food. At least half a dozen stores in the San Pablo/University Avenue area specialize in Indian foodstuffs, and Indian restaurants seem close to outranking those of any other ethnic cuisine.

But unlike the explosion of Thai food a decade ago, which was tied to the immigration of Southeast Asians, the Indian-restaurant phenomenon has evolved slowly. And nobody seems quite sure why Berkeley has attracted the lion's share.

The University of California, everybody agrees, is a big draw. After World War II, Ivy League schools attracted Asia's intellectual elite. But by the '70s, West Coast universities were gaining prestige, says Shobha Hyatt, who publishes a biannual guide to Asian-Indian businesses in California.

Looking back at the shopping area's history, Ajanta owner Manjul Batra reminisces: "We were the only ones" (when her family set up shop in 1970.) Batra, this year's president of the University Avenue merchants association, believes that Berkeley now has about 40 Indian-owned businesses.

Atul B. Vaidya, associate editor of India-West, a weekly magazine, also connects the growth of the Indian business community with the university, at both student and faculty levels.

And because the Indian community here has a strong affinity for living in suburbs such as Walnut Creek, Lafayette and other towns in Contra Costa County, it's logical that its members turn to Berkeley, where many of them lived as students, for shopping.



interior of VIKS restaurant



interior of VIKS grocery store

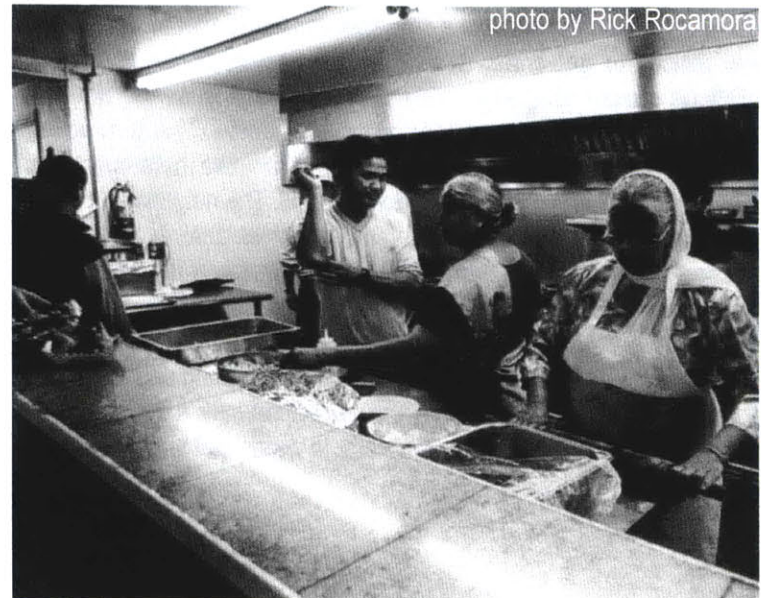
VIKS is unusual as an ethnic center because its expression of ethnicity is completely internalized. There are no symbols, logos, or icons that would give one a clue as to what the character of this place is during business hours. An outwardly Indian shopping center is a few blocks away on a major road, University Ave. An unfolding occurs at VIKS, in which the life of the place begins to flow out of the confines of the box. The spilling occurs because of the crowds that gather at this spot, and the corresponding lack of interior space for sitting and eating. Those ethnic elements that were then hidden within VIKS then become forcefully externalized. The result is haphazard, but lively and inviting. The area around VIKS from an architectural stand point becomes charged. The current situation has the problem however that there is no conductor or receptor for this charge. The area outside of VIKS is a parking lot, and while at time it may seem lively, it is far from comfortable. This is a unique opportunity for a new piece of architecture to feed of the already present and, as of yet un-harnessed energy of a strong cultural center like VIKS.

VIKS Distributors and adjacent parking lot





crowded street edge in front of VIKS door



kitchen inside of VIKS restaurant



one of the many squatters that make their homes for lunch in the adjacent parking lot.

The area around the site has a character much like that of VIKS itself. It is difficult to get a real sense of the makeup of the area. The buildings remain relatively anonymous towards the street, and the similarity of scales creates a perceived homogeneity. This is however, only on the surface. The area consists of a quite heterogeneous population of many racial and financial groups. The neighborhood has a mix of commercial, residential, and industrial, that in some way manage to function in harmony. There are research laboratories, a sake factory, internet start-up offices and a plastic molding factory, to name a few, within a two block radius of the site. This area, because of its mixed use, attracts various types of visitors during different times of day. This change provides a unique opportunity for a multi-use building that can change in program to work within the existing neighborhood way of life.





mix of residential, commercial, and industrial buildings with one block of site



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o b j e c t / l a n d s c a p e

"Pierre Bourdieu replaces the concept of 'society' with those of 'social space' and 'field.' 'Society' refers to an undifferentiated unity integrated by systemic functions, a common culture, or all-encompassing authority structures. In contrast, social space and field refer to a 'differentiated society', that is, 'an ensemble of relatively autonomous spheres of 'play' that cannot be collapsed under an overall societal logic, be it that of capitalism, modernity, or post-modernity."

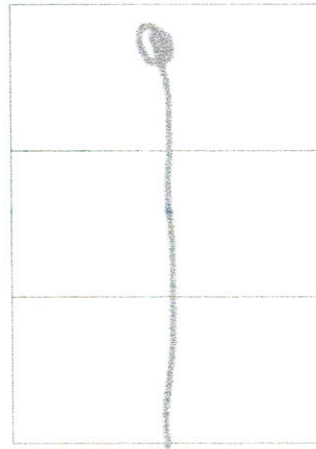
(Diken 1998: 93)

*re·pos·i·to·ry**n. pl. re·pos·i·to·ries*

1. A place where things may be put for safekeeping.
2. A warehouse.
3. A museum.
4. A burial vault; a tomb.
5. One who is entrusted with secrets or confidential information.

dropBOX : *a repository for migrant document*
site[Berkeley, CA]

The basis of this project is to provide a simultaneously interactive and protective platform for migrant and ethnic exchange. The exchange is between migrant communities and a larger base community, and within the migrant community itself. The discourse is predicated on the willingness of all parties to engage a conversation. This project does not speculate that this is always true. Tension caused by local and global events can often trigger a renewed alienation and fear within migrant communities. Such concerns are real and quite well founded. This project, while allowing a platform for communication and exchange, also includes mechanisms for withdrawal and protection. This multidimensional design (open/closed/between) positions itself as ambivalent (allowing the co-existence of opposing positions) as is the real position of migrants.



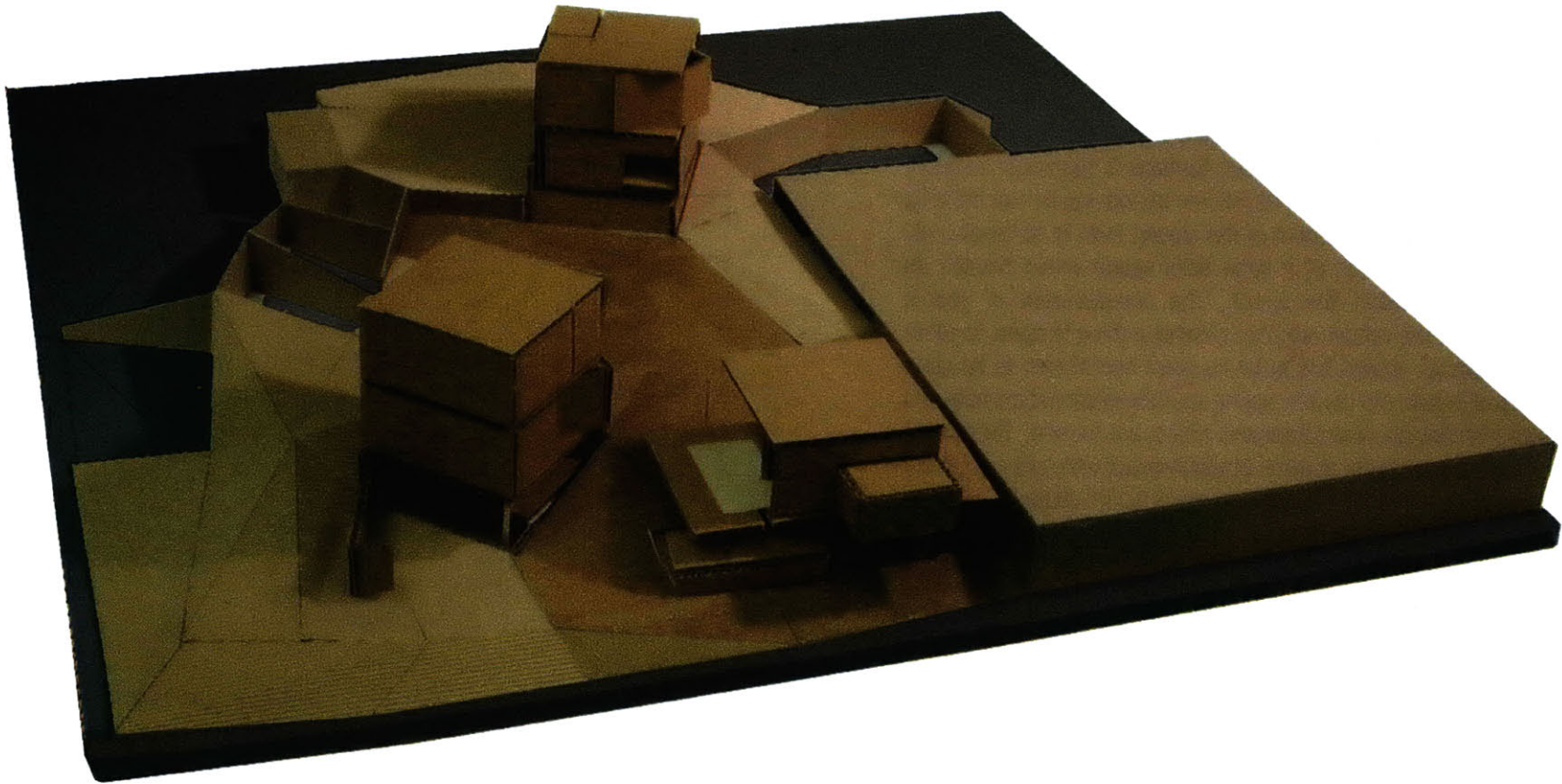
The program of the dropBOX is to contain, display, and extend the documents of a migrant community. The term document is meant to be taken in its most general terms, as something which helps to define or prove existence. The building provides an ethnic setting to which migrants themselves and local communities can come and participate in a variety of programs focused on education, outreach, and entertainment.

3 types of program based on Ethnic Document

Performed: temporal activities between multiple parties in which exchange occurs.
For example: plays, music, eating, etc.

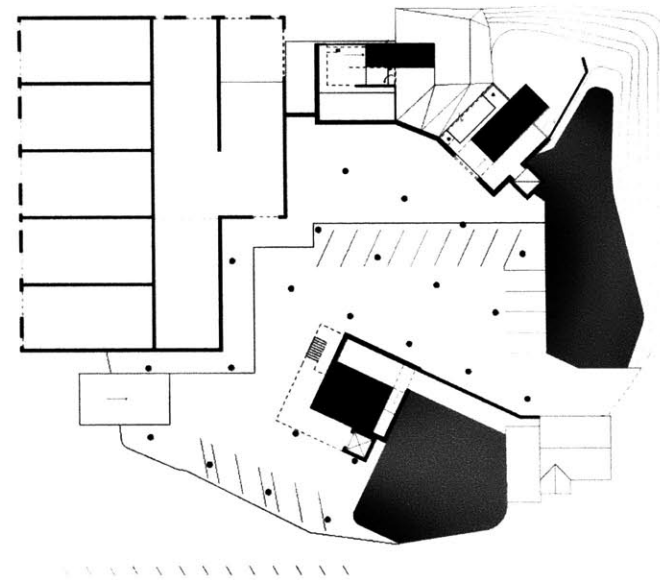
Presented: objects or documents that were previously created and can be viewed singularly.
For example: art, literature, film

Constructed: activities of mental processing in which ideas and experience is understood
For example: learning, thinking, dreaming, and imagining

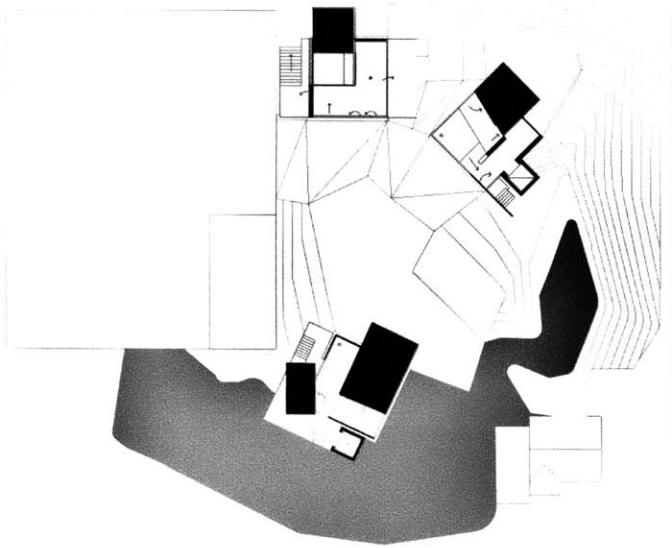


study model of dropBOX

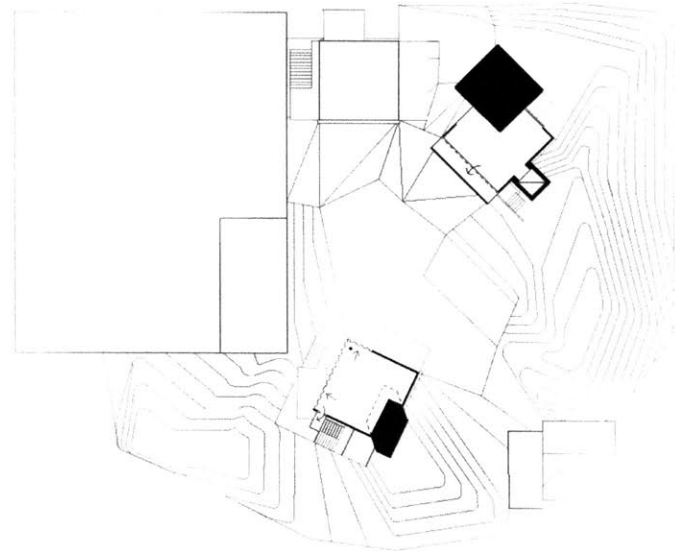
Each object in the landscape is a unique entity. A building with its own circulation and enclosure. Each floor contains a repository element that is considered solid space. The leftover interior space can be seen as a void. Because the footprint of the closed form is so small, only 30' x 30', the introduction of a large solid space within creates an internal pressure within the space. The compactness of space, combined within the written program creates a drive to open. In other words, the closed, sealed box must be open and shared to be used by a group of people. As the box opens up, new relationships between object and landscape, and object and object are formed. These new relationships set up larger spaces, in which boundaries are not clearly defined. The kinetic transformations of the structure allow for a variety of well plan moves that allow the creation of openly programmed, but not haphazard, community spaces.



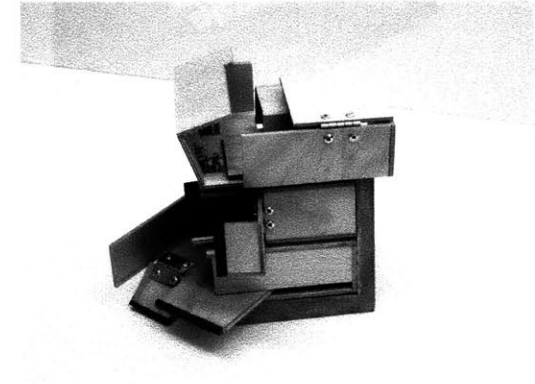
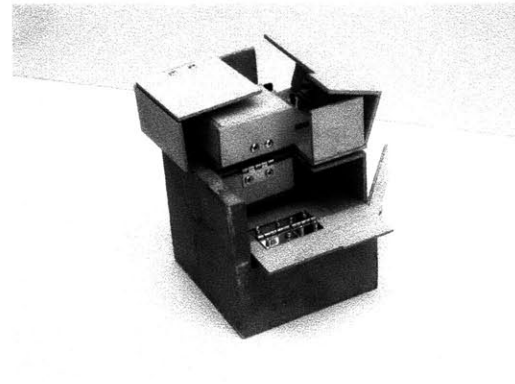
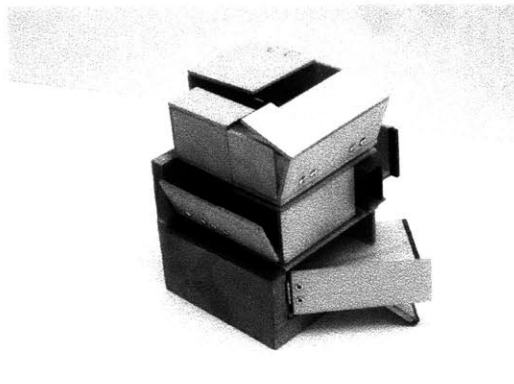
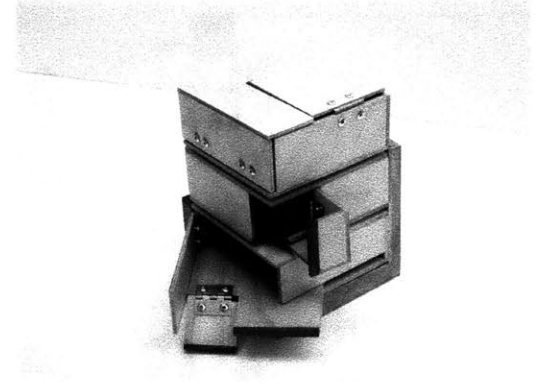
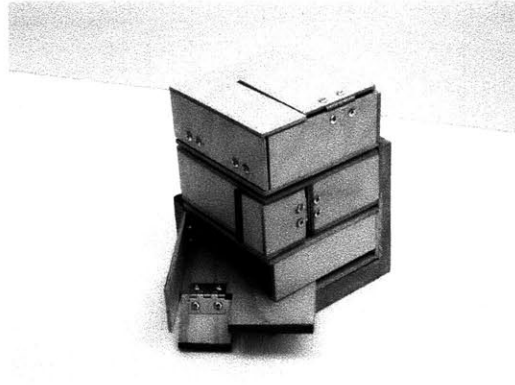
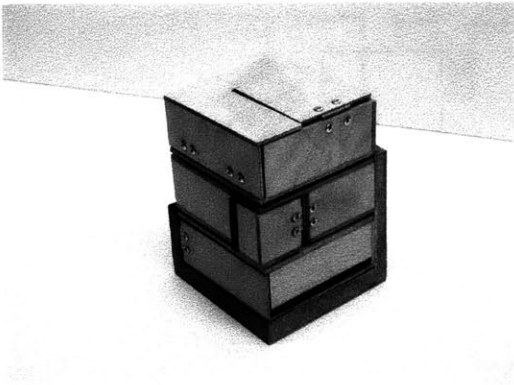
first floor plan [repository diagram]

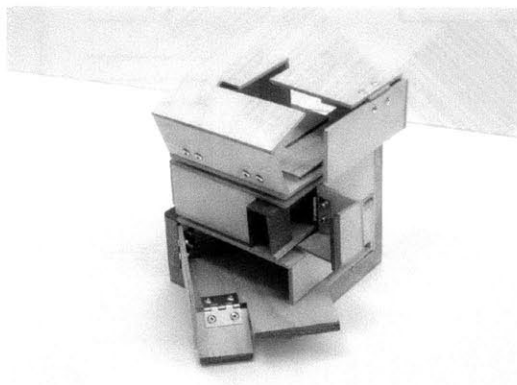


second floor plan [repository diagram]



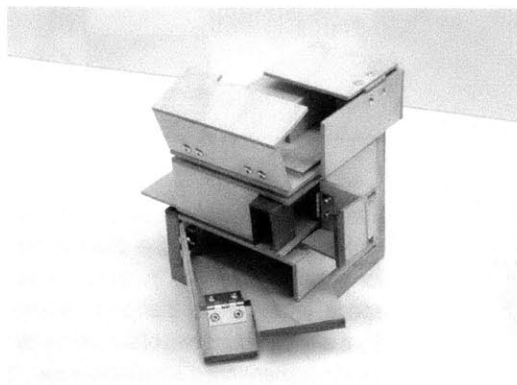
third floor plan [repository diagram]





The unfolding of the individual boxes, not only changes external relationships but also creates changes within the section and plan, which allow circulation, ventilation, and natural lighting to occur in controlled ways.

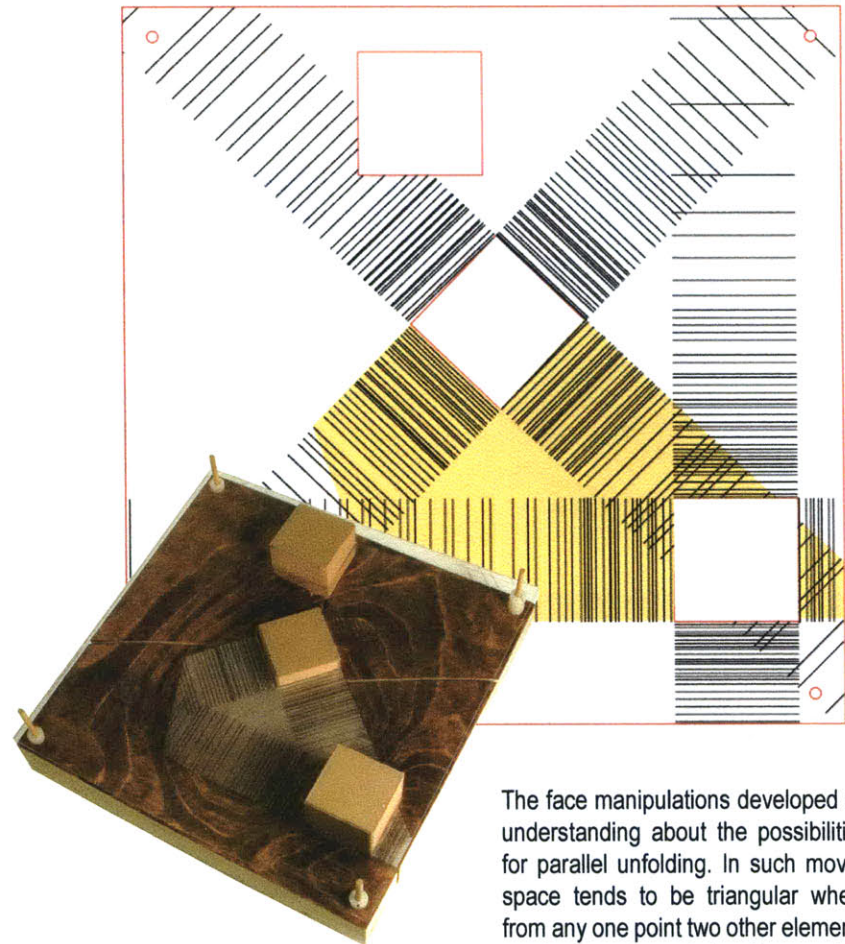
The open and closed states of the box allow a state of protection and a state of openness creating a ambivalence of form, use and intent.



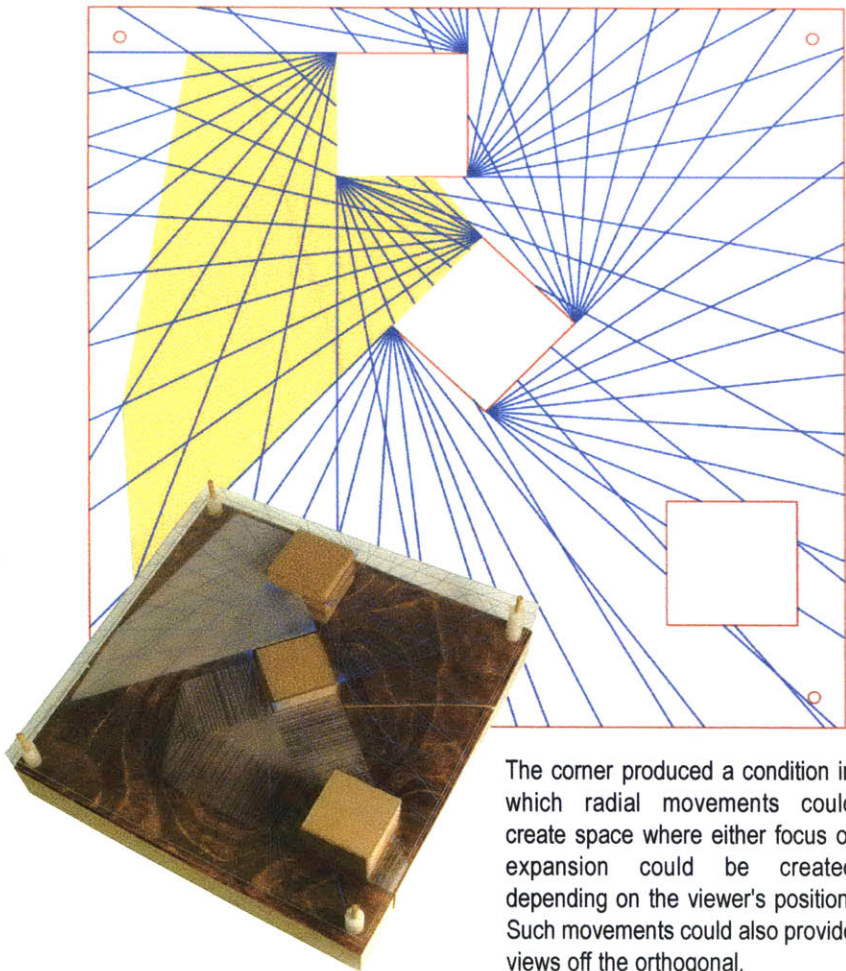
"As Heidegger says 'a boundary is not something that stops but, as the Greeks recognized, the boundary is that from which something begins its essential unfolding.'
-Bulent Diken

In understanding the possibilities for interaction between landscape and object, a series of formal rules were developed based around the formal manipulation of the orthogonal. The criteria for manipulation were based on the need for a structure that unfolded outwards to create a space that combined the interior of two boxes and an intermediate piece of landscape.

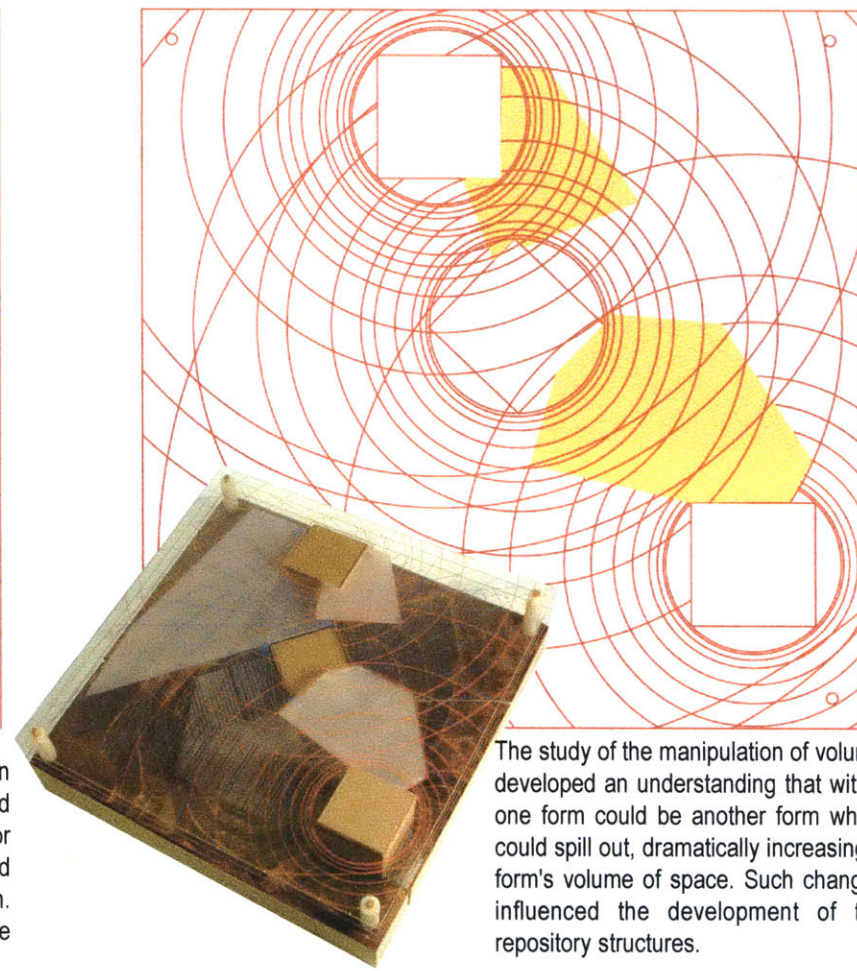
The manipulation of the rectilinear occurred at three geometric locations: the corner, the face, and the volume. The manipulations created an overlap of extended spaces which developed site locations for programs.



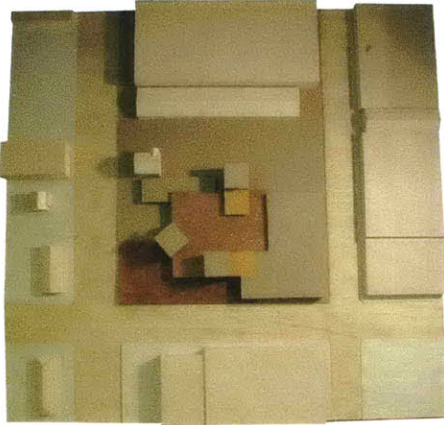
The face manipulations developed an understanding about the possibilities for parallel unfolding. In such moves space tends to be triangular where from any one point two other elements can be experienced simultaneously.



The corner produced a condition in which radial movements could create space where either focus or expansion could be created depending on the viewer's position. Such movements could also provide views off the orthogonal.

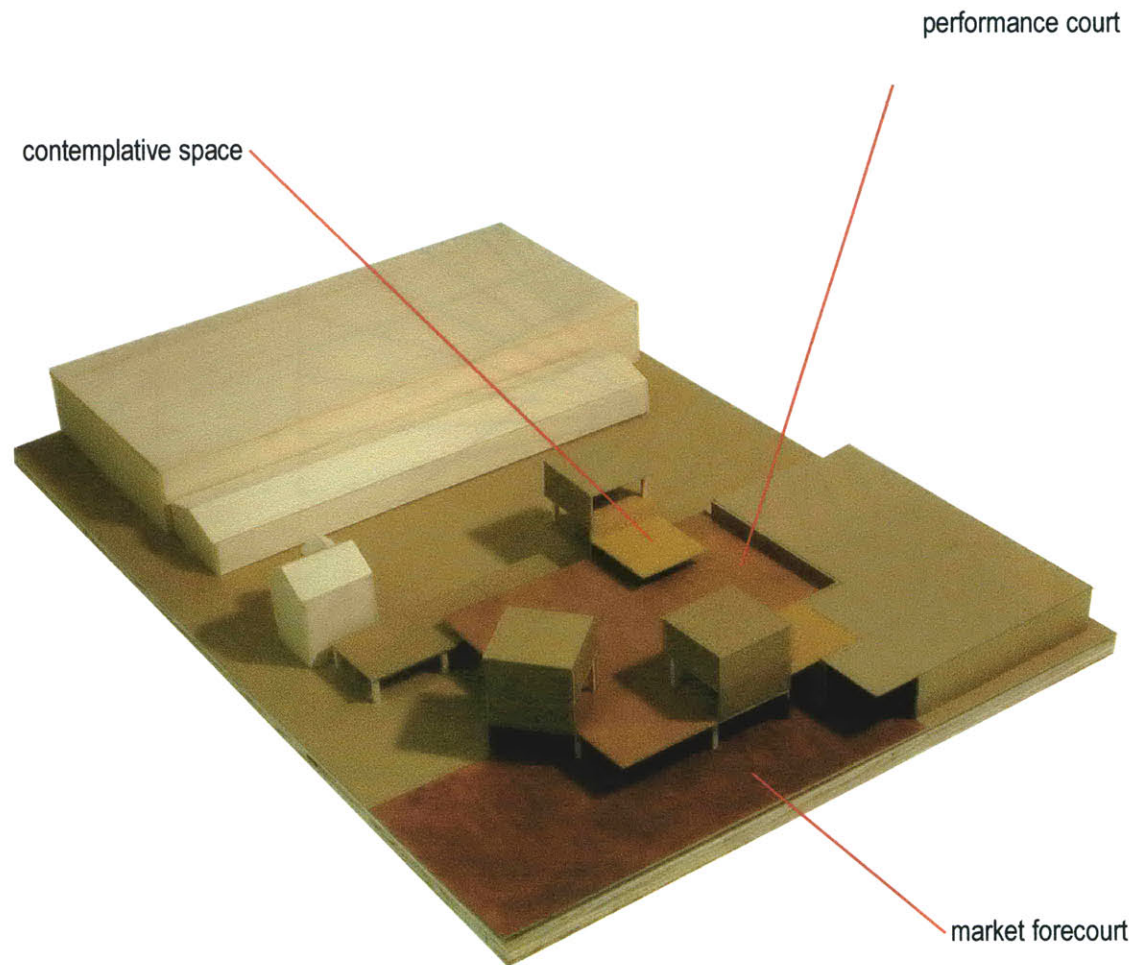


The study of the manipulation of volume developed an understanding that within one form could be another form which could spill out, dramatically increasing a form's volume of space. Such changes influenced the development of the repository structures.



The development of space centers around two objects and an intermediate piece of landscape. These criteria in combination with certain cultural goals and site conditions spurred the development of a plan based on a ground level forecourt, an elevated performance court, and third level contemplative spaces.

The creation of the landscape was not only based on mediating the box elements, but it also serves as mediating element between the site and the landscape around.

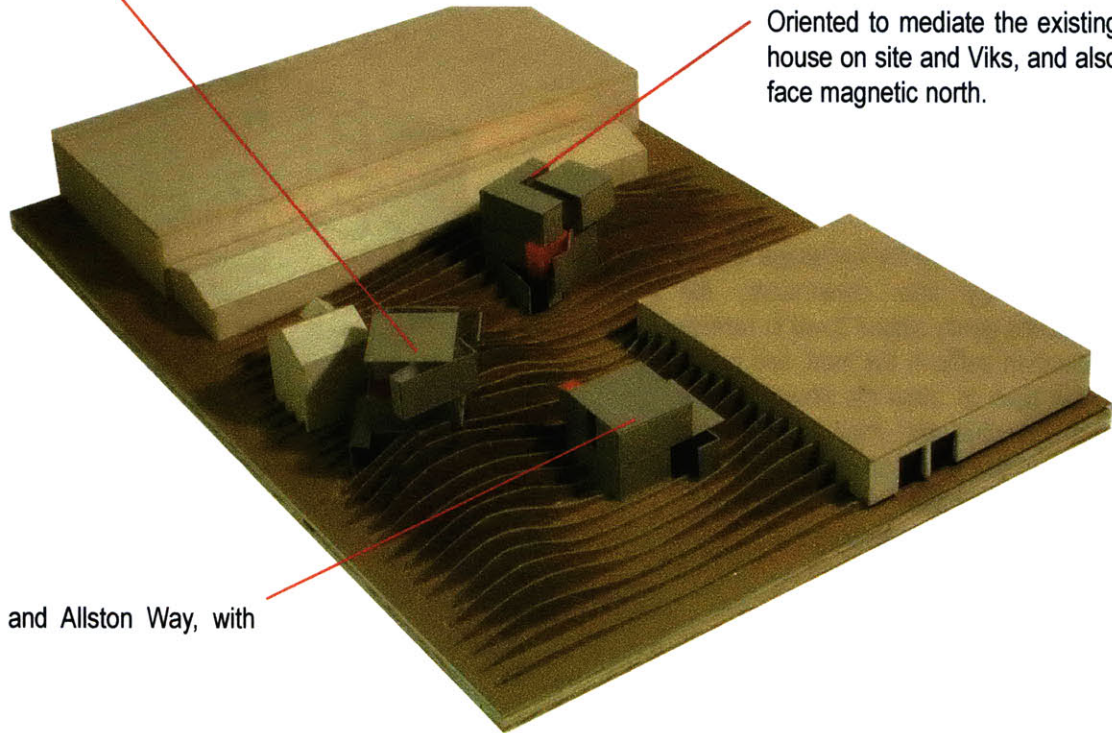




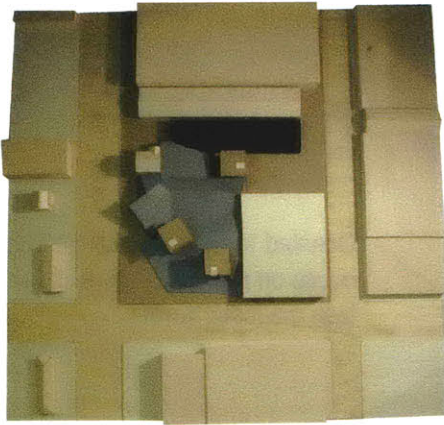
The orientation of the boxes themselves within the site are determined by a desire to respond to both the immediate and distant site geometries.

Oriented to mediate corner street condition and to face residential area.

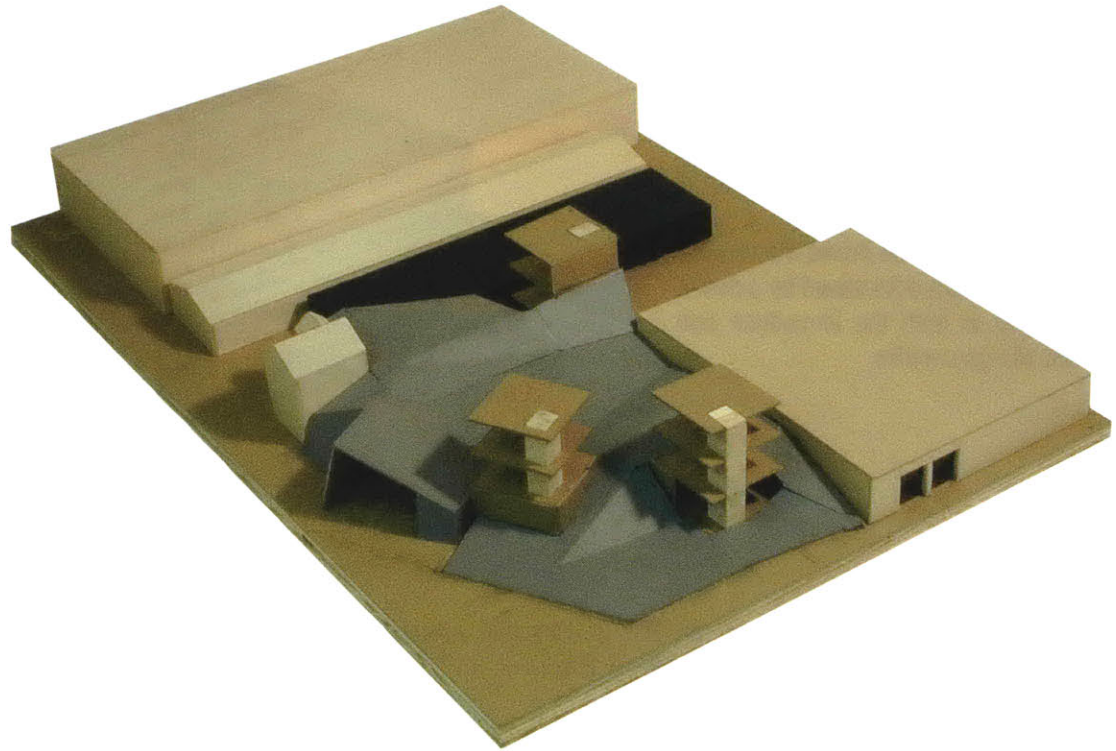
Oriented to mediate the existing house on site and Viks, and also face magnetic north.

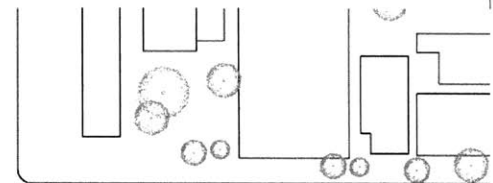
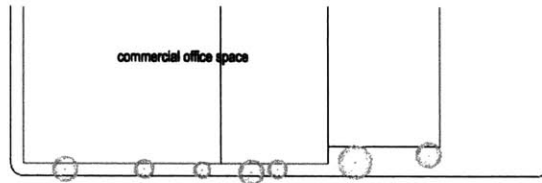
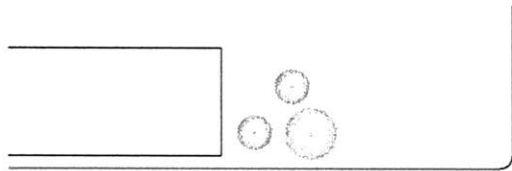


Oriented to respond to Viks and Allston Way, with views directly to the SF Bay

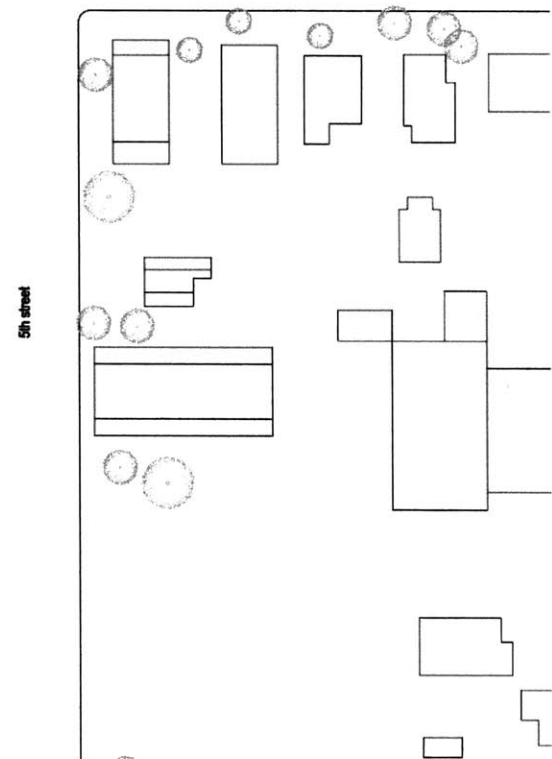
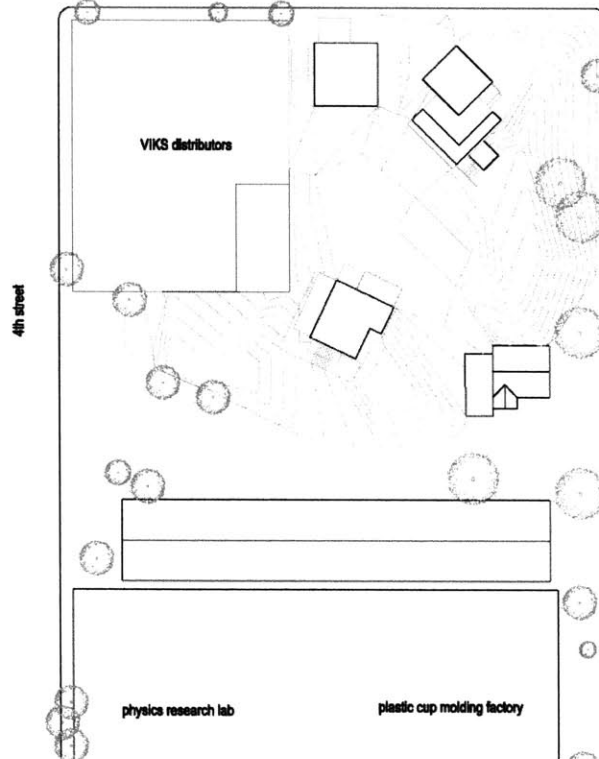
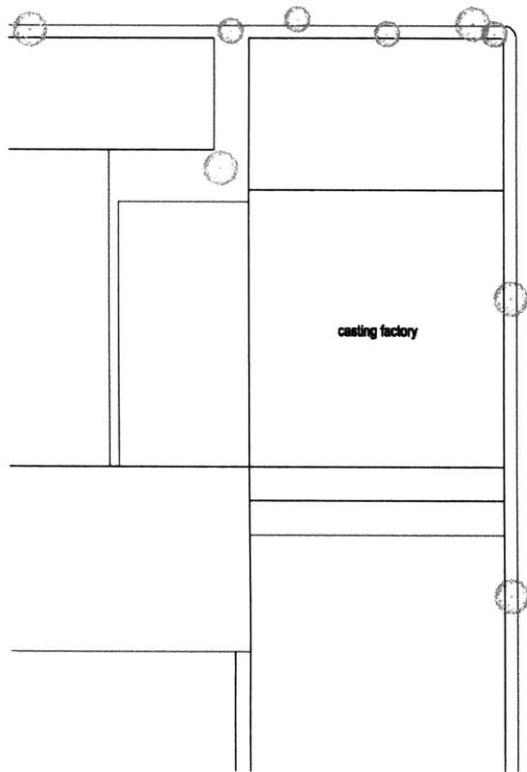


While the edges of the landscape remain confined by site constraints, the landscape gently slopes down to receive pedestrian traffic in the front, and raises in the back to allow the acceptance of cars from the main road. The shaping logics of the landscape push, pull and lifted the landscape in order to respond to both internal and external forces.





alston way







artwork by manan shah

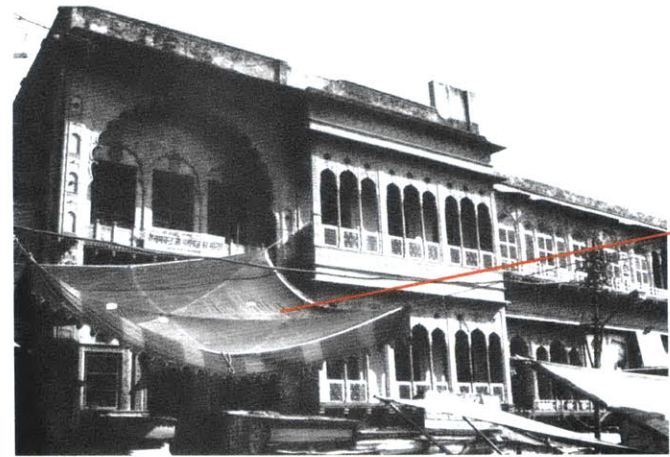
a b s t r a c t / e t h n i c

"This landscape contained two danger territories, the one a place of forgetting, the other of remembering, the one a condition in which the foreigner was demeaned by the desire to assimilate, the other in which he or she was destroyed by nostalgia."

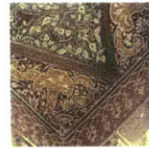
(Herzen quoted by Hasan Uddin Khan in *Thresholds* 13 1996: p8)

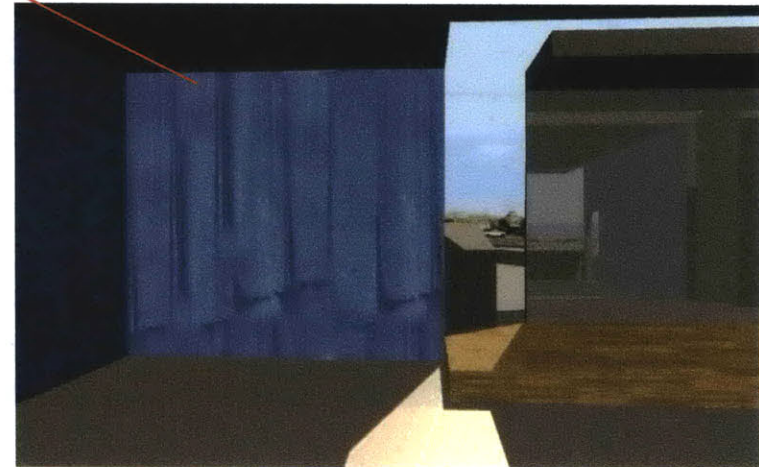
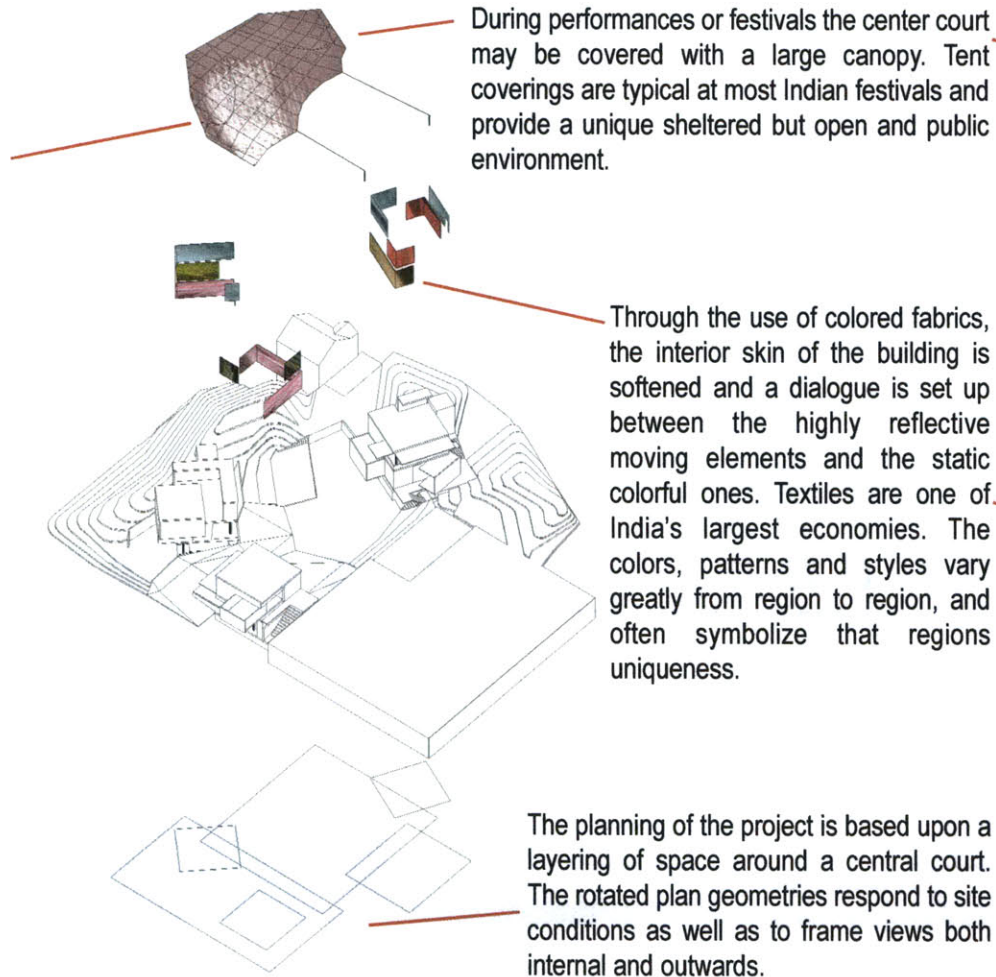
Within the design of a culturally charged architecture meant for all the various types of migrants of the Indian community, there is a constant struggle between the abstract and the ethnic. The abstract defines a set of characteristics and spatial qualities that are more universal and could be applied to many cultures or many people. The importance of the abstract is to develop a vocabulary that allows all who come to apply individual meaning. The abstract does not however imply a lack of content or charge, only that the forms are not iconic or do not depend on reference to create subject matter. The ethnic component is also extremely important because it is the set of characteristics by which we understand the boundaries, however grey they may be, between two distinct groups of people. The ethnic is the most difficult to deal with in architecture, because often one relies heavily on elements which are broadly understood, which often translates again into iconic form, or those which are symbolic.

The goal if this thesis is to present this tension, as a tension. Again, an ambivalent response, allowing both to exist in some form, creates a richness which can touch a greater number of people. The abstract has been discussed more thoroughly in the earlier parts of the project. However, the ethnic is equally important. The relationship between the two is a system of layers, where abstraction is applied to ethnic and ethnic applied over abstraction, in both programming and form.

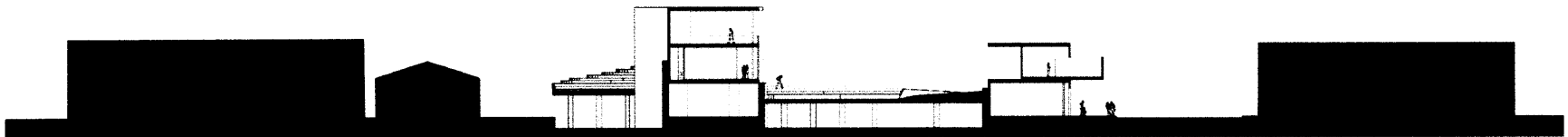


(picture Tillotson 1989: 87)

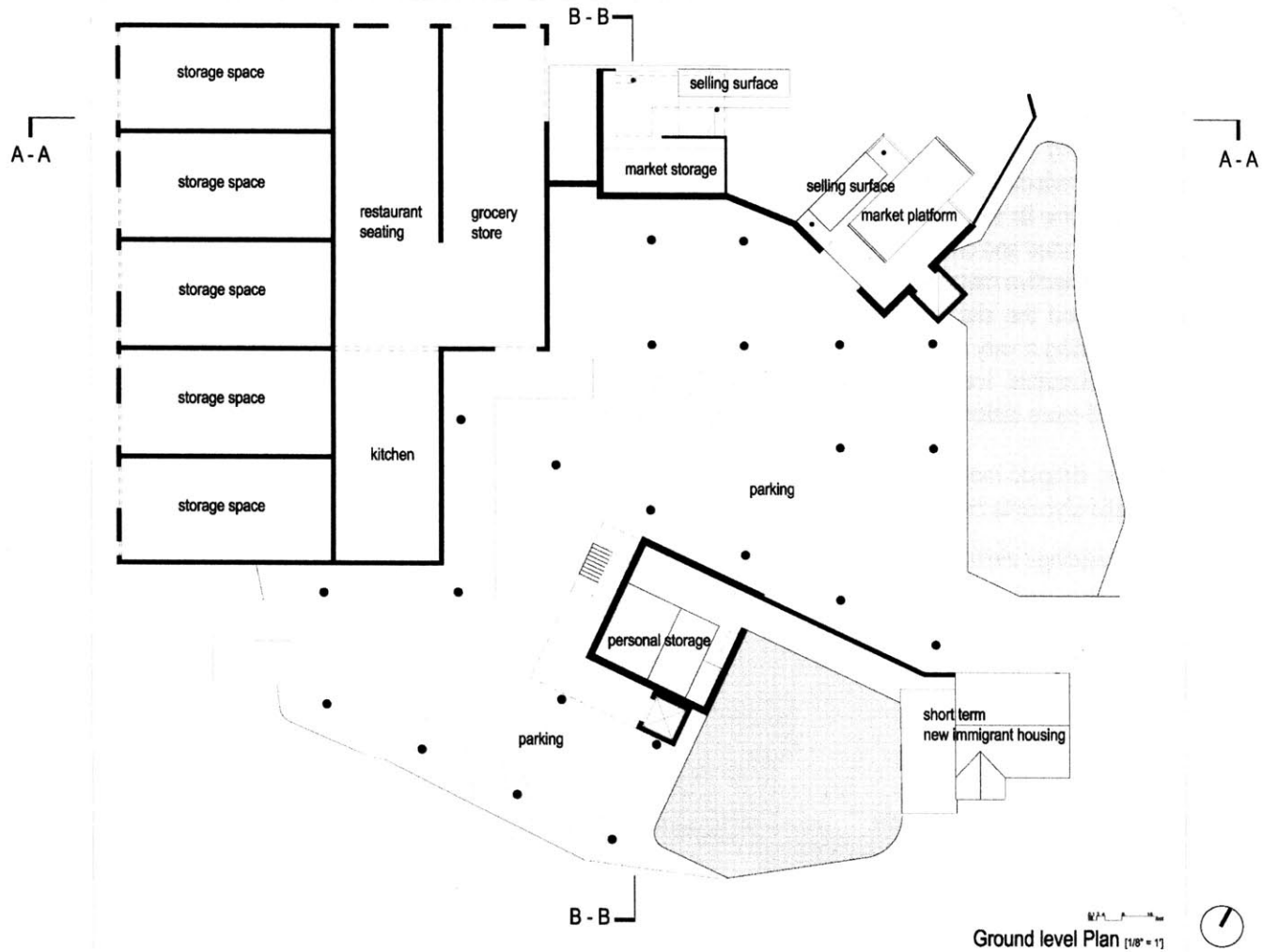




ground level design



Section B - B [1/8" = 1']



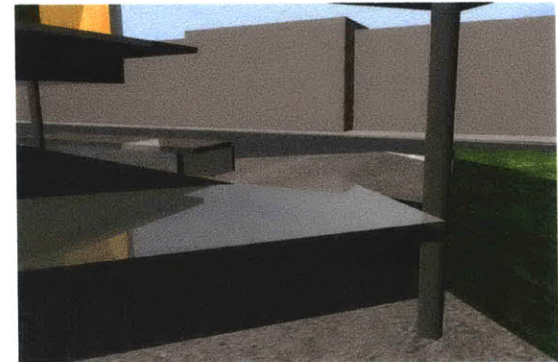
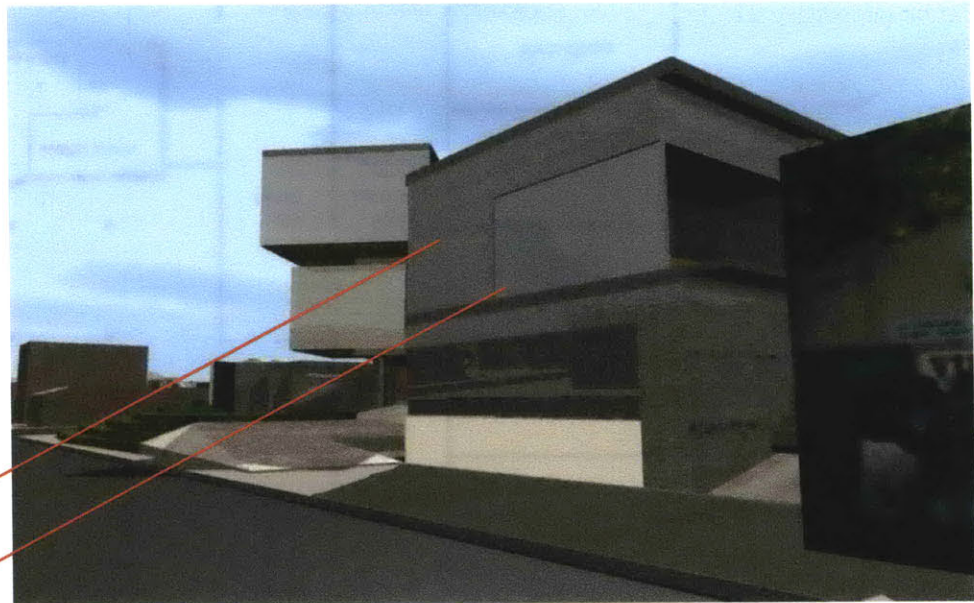
Ground level Plan (1/8" = 1')

Material Ambivalence

The materiality of the building is defined based on the criteria of ambivalence. The exterior of the building is completely metal panel, allowing for a reflectivity to occur. This reflectivity is seen as a kind of camouflage, allowing the building to mimic its surroundings. However the reflective mimicry that occurs is distorted and changes. The kinetic elements of the building are a highly reflective metal, creating moving mirrors which reflect off each other and the site. As elements are moved different reflections occur, creating a very dynamic surface. In contrast the more static exterior elements are a dimpled metal surface, allowing for a more solid and more distorting appearance.

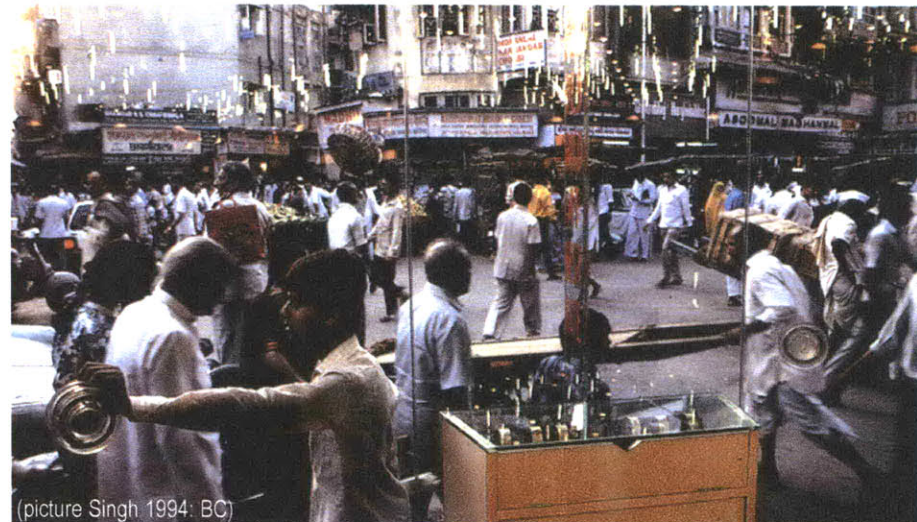
Reflective, dimpled metal surfaces on non-kinetic elements creates a distortion.

Highly reflective steel on buildings elements that are kinetic

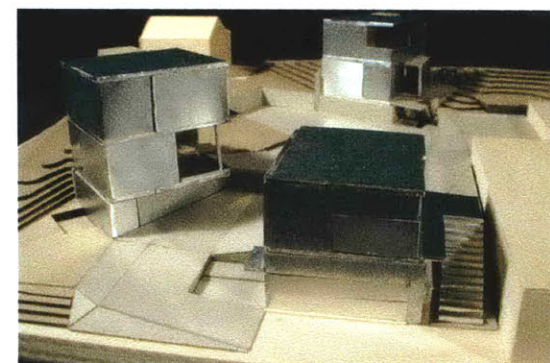
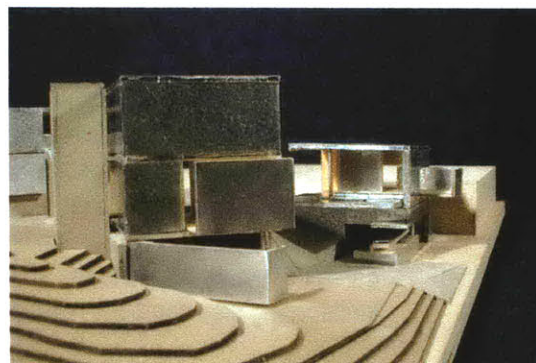


Bazaar (Marketplace)

The entrance of the project off of Allston Way is programmed as an outdoor market. In Indian tradition, the Bazaar is often the largest social and economic force that the people themselves control. In the U.S. similar spaces also exist: street side vendors, flea markets, and farmer's markets. In all cases, the retail space is dynamic in character, often occurs on a street, and creates a lively social space. To accommodate the creation of such space along the street edge, the bottom levels of Box 1 and 2 open to embrace the street. Also the kinetic wall elements fold to create a few small surfaces on which selling can occur. Stored within the level would be the rest of the stalls, which could be moved out along the edge of the street, and provide more infrastructure.



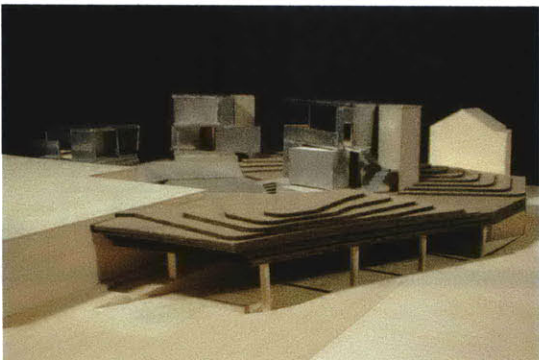
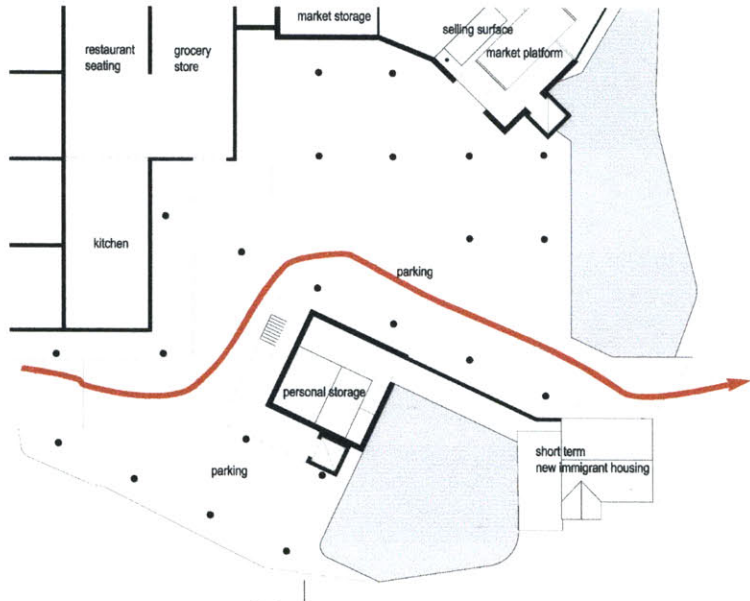
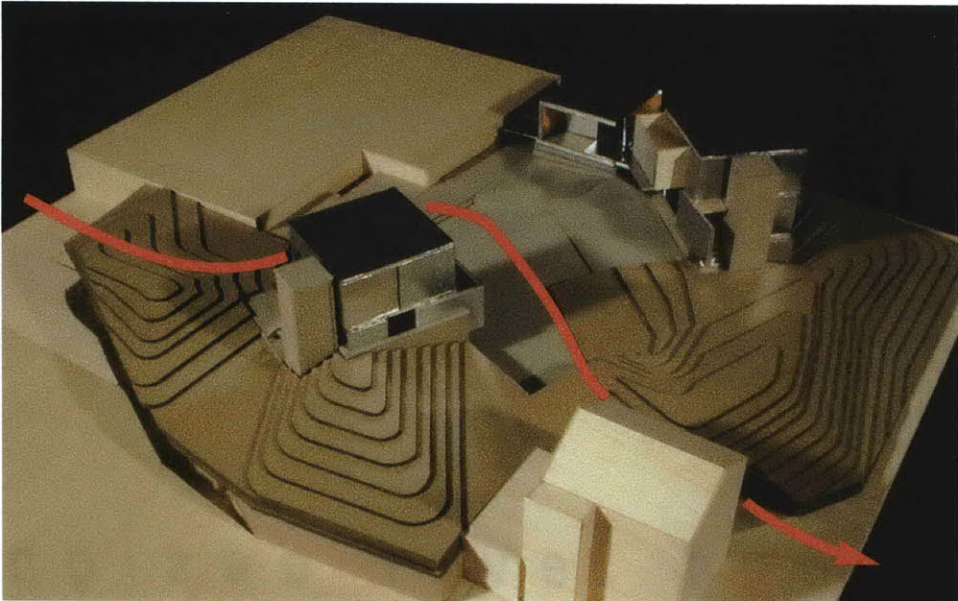
(picture Singh 1994: BC)



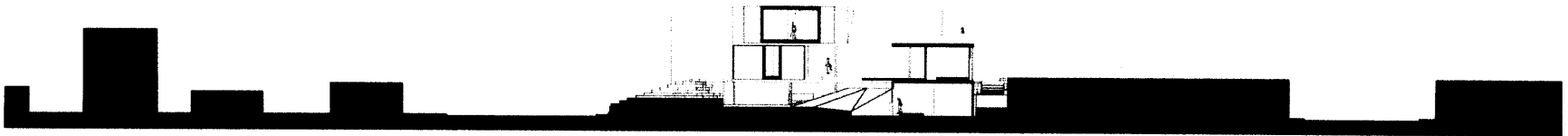


Underground Parking Garage

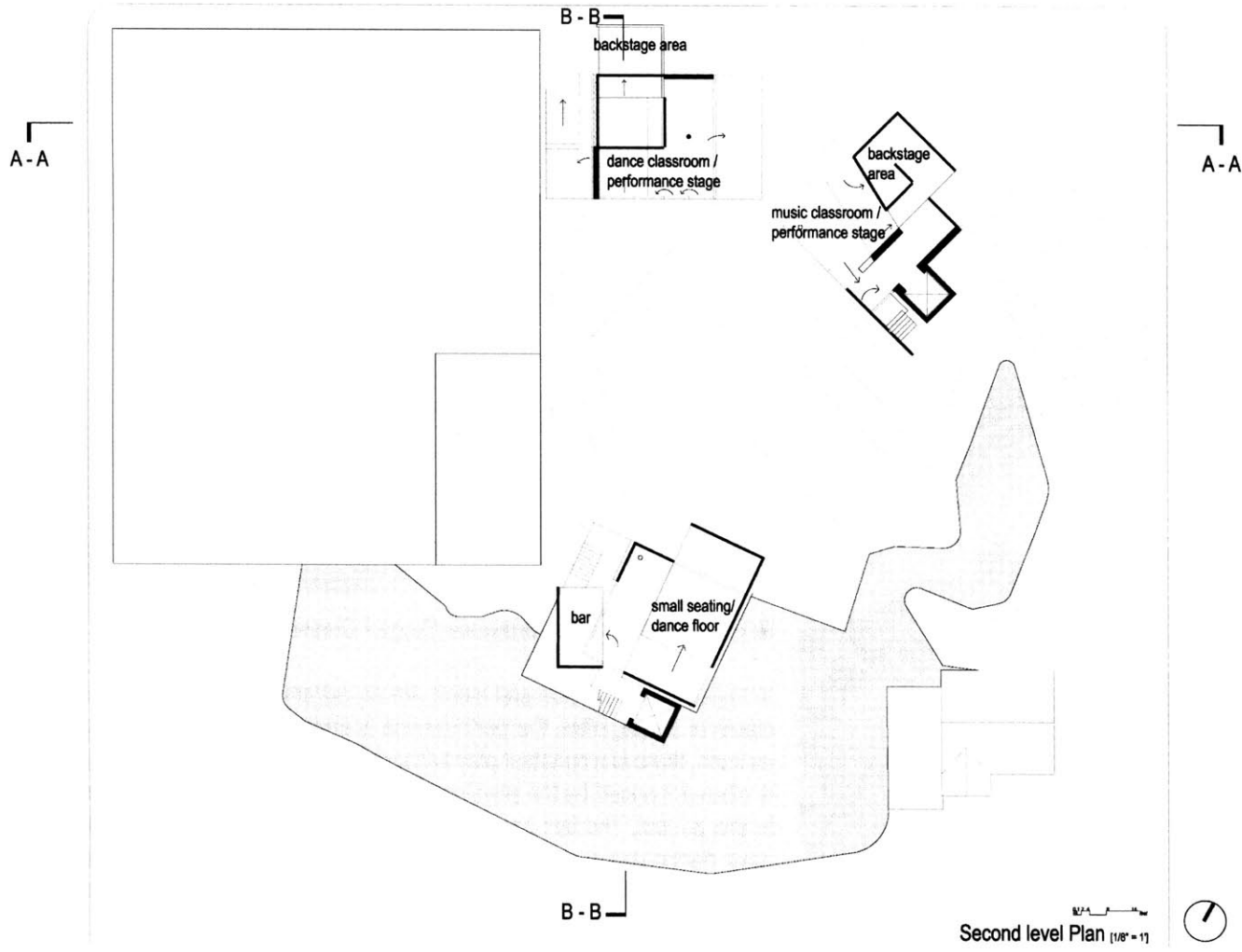
The project site is currently a parking lot which serves VIKS. Its immediate presence is extremely convenient for customers and relieves a potential street parking problem. In order to maintain this self-sufficiency an underground parking system was introduced. The garage has an entrance on the complex's west side and an exit on the east side. All the level one facilities as well as multi-story lifts are accessible from the garage. The concrete garage structure supports the above performance court. The weight of the structure and landscaping also dampens noise to allow the performance area to remain quiet.

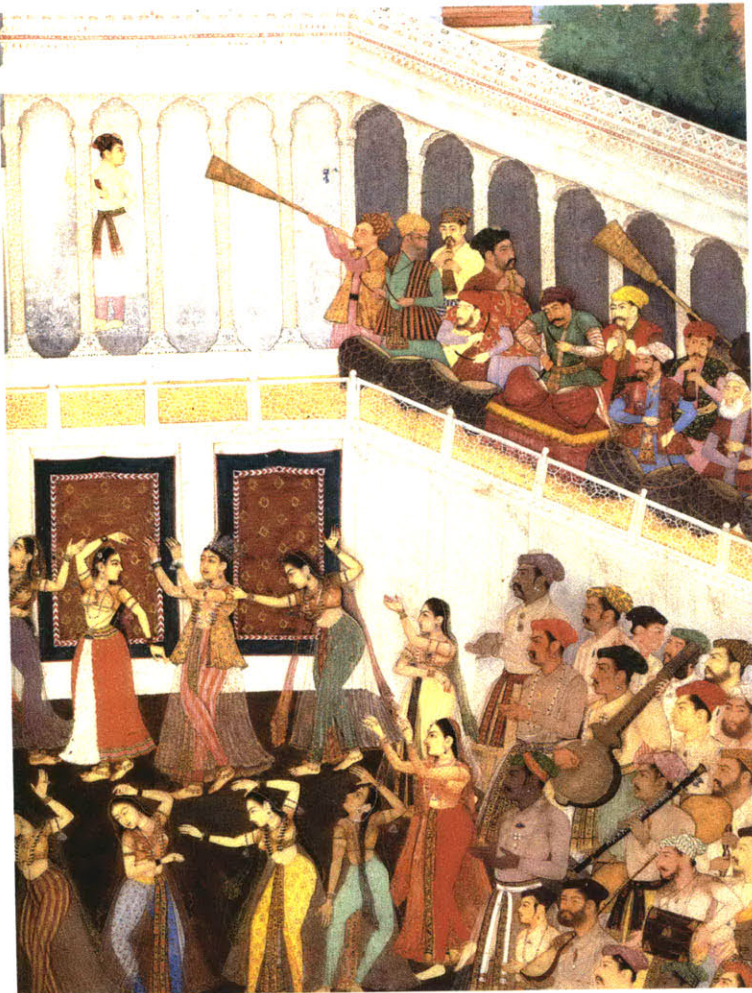


second level design



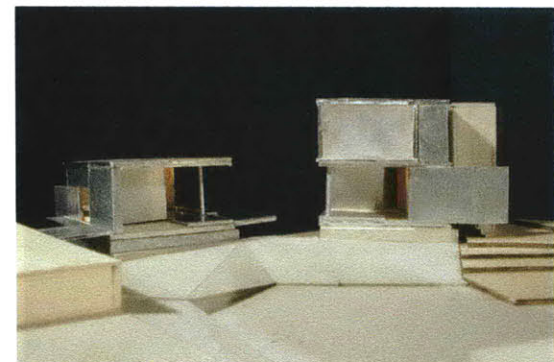
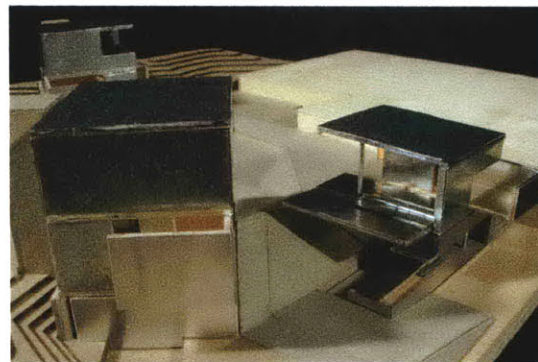
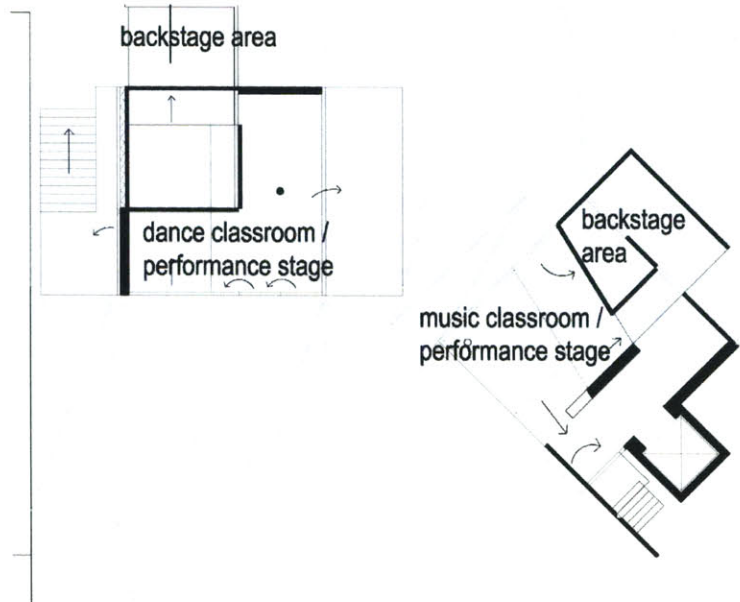
Section A - A [1/8" = 1']





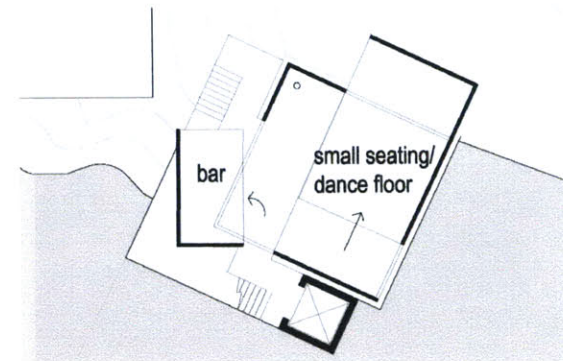
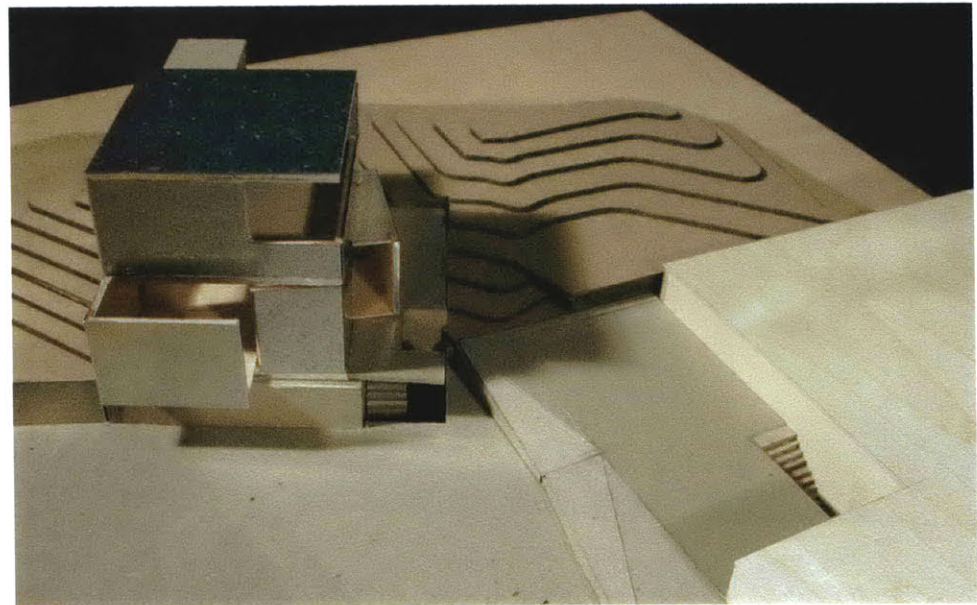
Music and Dance Performance Stage / Classroom

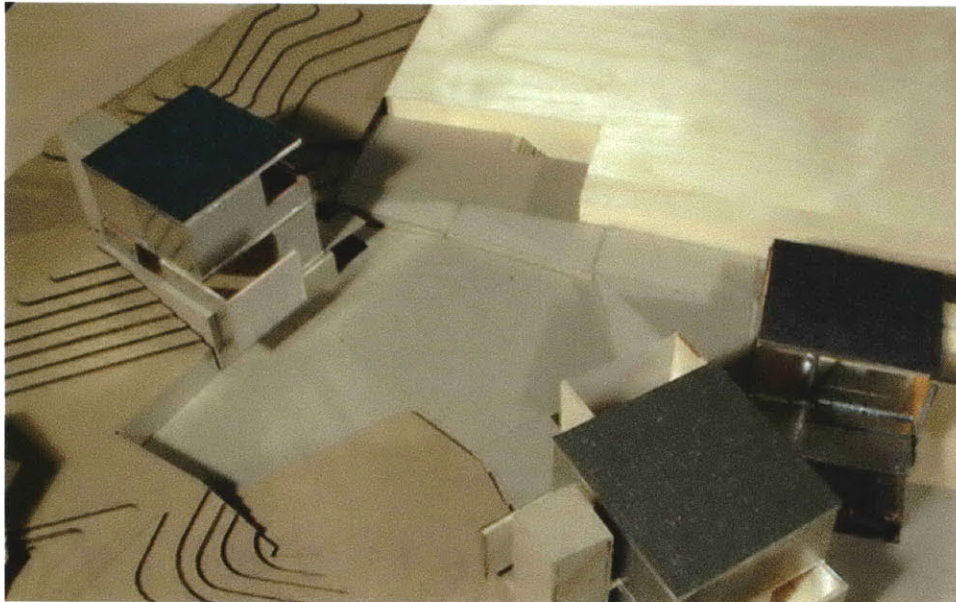
In Indian culture, dance and music are an extremely important part of all phases of life. In classical dance, often the performance is improvisational based on certain rhythms, and as such, there is a constant play between the musicians and the dancers. This relationship is often enhanced by the physical positioning of the music and dance stages, as it also is in this project. The two are positioned such that each is framed individually, the dancers have dance space and the musicians have music space. Both spaces then fit with one larger performance space. This positioning creates both a physical and emotional tension which is important in the performance.



Bar / Dance Club

Nightclub culture exists all around the world, and is a common social area which most youth understand. Again, in an effort to provide social space in which migrants and locals can socially interact, this space is designed to be an intimate bar with a small dance area. The interior space once has ample space to spill outwards to occupy either the back landscape or the front courtyard. This program is designed to target a specific age group and is only used certain nights of the week, but could provide a flexibility to allow a large youth gathering.

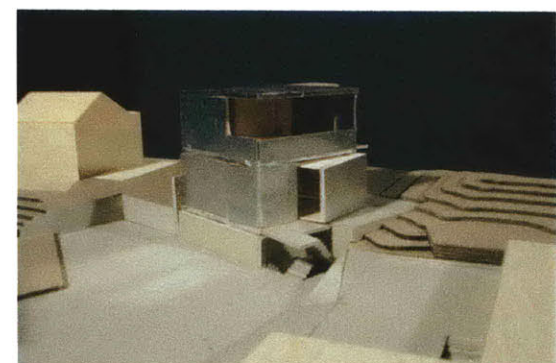




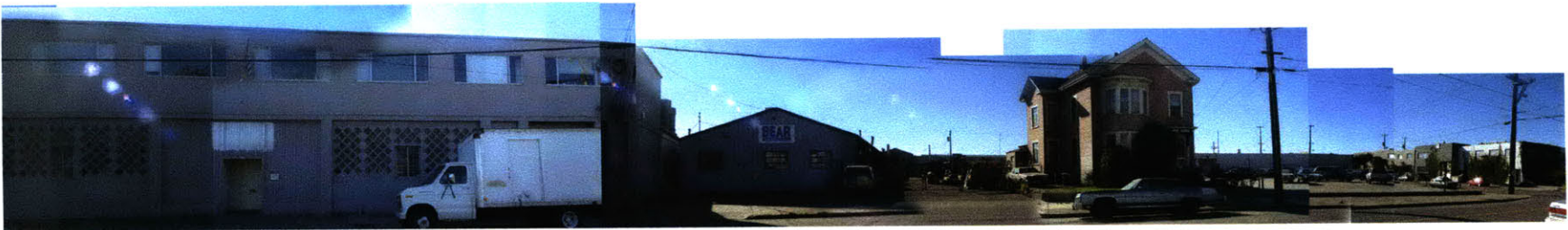
VIKS Outdoor Patio and Roof Area

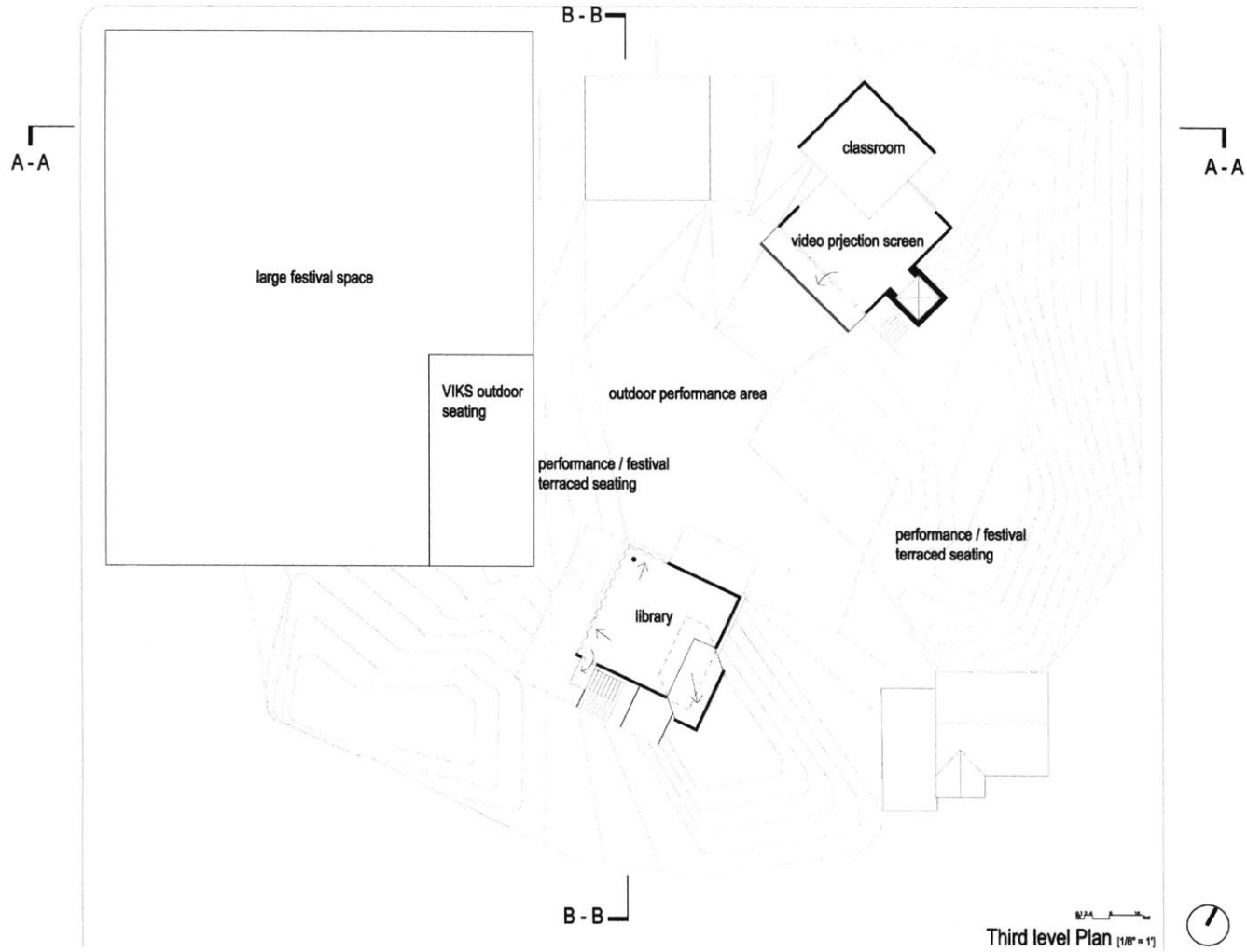
The restaurant within the VIKS warehouse is contained at the moment to the rigid infrastructure of the existing warehouse building. There is a great opportunity, as described here, to open VIKS to the large courtyard space on a new second level. The existing warehouse is cut away and a new platform and small stair is added to provide access from the existing interior restaurant. This outdoor eating space could add a wonderful presence to the courtyard during weekday and weekend afternoons. Again, it is assumed that the activity would not be confined to the platform but would spread throughout the area.

The roof of VIKS could also serve as a space for large festivals or gatherings. The roof has great views of the area and is an easily integrated space within the overall planning.



t h i r d l e v e l d e s i g n





Third level Plan (1/8" = 1")



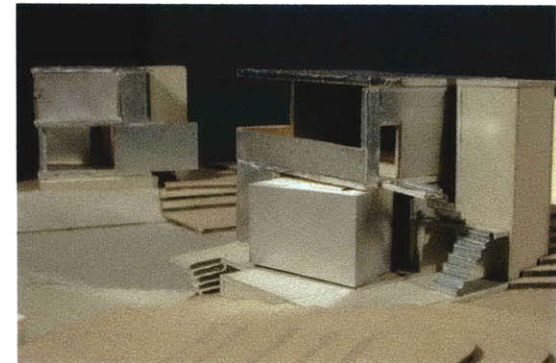
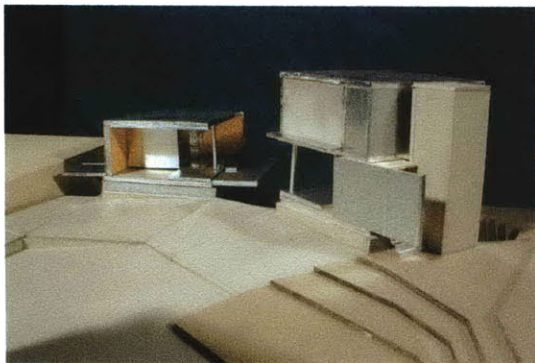


Movie Projection and Media Classroom

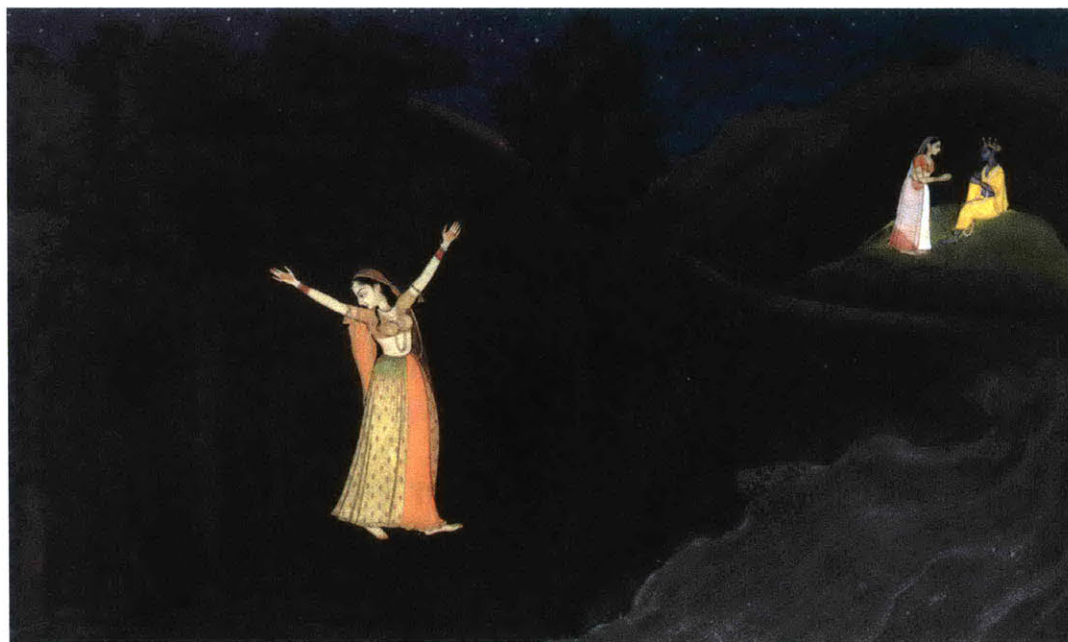
In India nothing, in terms of entertainment, can even come close to Hindi movies. These films are watched by rich and poor alike and the film industry, known as Bollywood, is larger than even Hollywood. Many Indian migrants, while abroad, keep in touch with fashion, culture, music, and politics by watching these Hindi Films. The few theaters that play Hindi Films in California have been extremely successful, and this project integrates the viewing of films with the outdoor experience of a drive-in. The combination can once again in a relatively inexpensive way charge the central courtyard with nighttime activity. During the day the local population can access an outreach center focused on teaching the media arts.

Library of Migrant Experience

As with many cultures, knowledge is the most precious commodity in India. Stories, books, poems, movies, art, etc. about Indian migration and its successes and failures in a singular collection would be the first of its kind and could provide a very important collection of information for the community at home and abroad.







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