PARADIGM OR PARIAH?

An Architectural Intervention Into Daniel Burnham's

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ABSTRACT

PARADIGM OR PARIAH?
An Architectural Intervention Into Daniel Burnham's Timeless Plan Of Chicago

by Paul Stephen Pettigrew

This thesis is not a eulogy to but an analysis of and contemporary intervention into Daniel Hudson Burnham's 1909 Plan of Chicago. It presses the boundary of what is known, and concentrates on dissecting and analyzing extremes brought about by the polar boundaries of (re)presentation and abstraction, in order to reveal the nature of time and move closer in my personal search for the qualities of timelessness (a timeless architecture). It allows one to imagine an instance in which Daniel Burnham's Plan for Chicago is physically overlaid upon a diagram of the city today. Then makes real the thesis, that further completions of Burnham's plan could occur through the building of appropriate architectural programs upon site transformations of coincidental junctures resulting from the juxtaposition of Burnham's plan and its corresponding contemporary overlay.

This definition of appropriate programming is followed by the further locating of three sites, three sites upon which a further single site believed most exemplary or appropriate for a select mixed use Regional Public Library Facility is derived. A unique program for a library facility which seeks to establish connections to the theoretical designs of Burnham's Plan as well as with the contemporary site and time specific influences and demands of an existing urban fabric.

Thesis Supervisor: William Lyman Porter
Title: Professor of Architecture and Planning
This thesis is dedicated to Louise Mae Sedlacek, and to so many others, whose dreams and potential were infinite yet their time to realize them prematurely limited.
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To my best friend, my grandfather, Carl Zarlenga, whose wisdom, foresight, and vision, supported and nurtured my dreams along their seemingly endless path into reality.

To my family for having the wisdom to teach me about the wonders of life in the city.

To: Julian Beinhart
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For broadening the scope of my sight without altering the path of my personal vision.
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"Make no little plans; They have no magic to stir men's blood and probably themselves will not be realized. Make big plans; aim high in hope and work, remembering that a noble, logical diagram once recorded will never die, but long after we are gone will be a living thing, asserting itself with ever-growing insistency. Remember that our sons and grandsons are going to do things that would stagger us. Let your watchword be order and your beacon beauty."

 Appropriately, I begin these words of introduction by referring to the often repeated quotation of Daniel Hudson Burnham, a man in whose name there elicits the suggestion of a seemingly timeless plan for the city of Chicago. Published in 1909, "The Plan of Chicago" has remained an influential force over a long period; the various portions of it actually realized were, in fact, carried out largely after the interval of depression and First World War.
This persistence would seem to indicate that between the formal proposals and the organizational decisions there existed a structural coherence, within which the formal proposals could remain, at least in part, purely theoretical enunciations.

This coherence, undoubtedly arose from the unity of the design, provided by the two principle features: the park system, in which existing and projected parks were related by an organic logic to the general structural elements of the plan; and the radial road system that, encountering the existing urban grid, created structural relations on a scale far greater than the grid, therefore giving prominence to the forceful new lines of connection between outstanding elements in the center as well as on the periphery of the city. Thus the general scheme did not suffer unduly when individual elements, even fundamental ones, were not executed, since their projected functional role tended, in any case, to survive.
Consciously or unconsciously, the urban design had a double function. The first was the technical one of supporting the theoretical scheme as a whole and defining the scale of its major elements; all local solutions were referred back to the overall scheme, and the adaptation of the formal proposals was left to be worked out during the phase of execution according to the dictates of reality. The second function was ideological, to give sense to the plan as a finished product in itself, on paper, capable of mobilizing the citizenry on its behalf.
As stated previously, the structural coherence of the Burnham plan resulted from the unity of the design provided in large part by the lake front system of parks, and the extensive system of radial roads. Of the two, the park system in overlay is recognizable and in reality implemented successfully. My emphasis will consequently be on the eventual realization of the proposed radial road system, via a transformed interpretation which draws from both Burnham’s ideological intentions and the city in its contemporary rendition.

The line of action that will then bring about this compilation of intentions can be broken down into three phases, each collectively building upon the information gathered by the one previous. I will begin by introducing an overlay of Burnham’s circuitous boulevard with its three most prominently delineated parks. This overlay will be placed upon a rational study of the corresponding urban fabric which is today the contemporary plan of Chicago.
Phase two selects one of the three previously delineated parks along Burnham's implied boulevard, juxtaposing it against its equivalent contemporary site, thereby informing phase three which is a specific point within the site, with a specific program generated by both the overlay at city scale and site scale.

To understand the intentions of Burnham’s plan for Chicago one must also understand the intentions of the contemporary city. In the words of Daniel Hudson Burnham, “A noble, logical diagram once recorded will never die, but long after we are gone will be a living thing, asserting itself with ever-growing insistency”. This diagram and the insistency of which Burnham speaks, are the points upon which I may now depart. I have mentioned three phases and it is within these three phases that this notion of the insistent diagram will be circuitously explored.
My assertion is that this situation will be brought about through a series of transformations which are generated by overlaying Burnham’s semi-circuital boulevard and it’s three major parks, upon a rational study of their corresponding contemporary fabrics and their appropriately generated architectural programs.

At a small scale this six mile radius would show through overlay that the three parks and the implied common boulevard of Burnham are today a diverse range of fabrics including; parks, public housing, a major east-west expressway, ethnic row-houses, abandoned industrial park edges, high-rise apartments, an adjacency to a zoo in-the-park and countless others. This diversity is complimented by a simultaneous equality i.e.; all are very urban, all play off of unique encounters with the extending grid, each displays ready accessibility to the city, and all possess legitimate multi-use zoning possibilities.
A situation then exists in which a process can and will be established for working through a rationalization of what will occur at each of these points. This process will recognize three areas, establish what is formally occurring, and then describe possibilities for an appropriate architectural program.

This definition of appropriate programming will be broadened through the further locating of a single site believed most exemplary or appropriate for a selectively mixed-use architectural program. A unique program, for a regional library facility and one which will in some way seek to establish connections to the theoretical designs of Burnham's plan as well as with the contemporary site specific influences and demands of an existing urban fabric.
Burnham's proposed system of diagonal thoroughfares like the park and boulevards, allows for a reading at a scale equal to or larger than the grid. Unlike the grid however, these diagonals appear with no consistency or pattern in their juxtaposition with the city. Seemingly arbitrary, their choice is formally dependent upon the notion that "the shortest distance between any two chosen points is a straight line".
Burnham's plan calls for more than six miles of continuous park along the lakefront: it would become, in a sense, the diameter of the huge semi-circle with an implied center at the intersection of Congress Avenue and Halsted Street. The semi-circle is then the metaphorical limit of the city, which is served by means of an efficient radial system of roads, emanating from the civic center of the city. This immense semi-circle was the third of the fundamental structures conceived by Burnham and the fourth capable of a reading on a scale far greater than the grid.
What is this city Chicago and more specifically what is the contemporary significance of its seemingly timeless Burnham Plan? Minimally read, the river, lake, and grid represent both the historical and contemporary general structural elements of the city’s plan. The grid is a neutral support, the principal of order and rationality, a spatial composition within which arbitrary operations and vital efficiency thrive.
It is the applied grid, encountering the existing lake and river which creates structural relations on a scale far greater than the grid, therefore giving prominence to elements in the center as well as along the periphery of these forceful new lines of connection. In an almost rectilinear mimicry of the river and lake's formal relations to the grid, the pre-Burnham boulevard and park system parallels by an organic logic with the general structural elements of the plan. Thereby or in addition, rationally encountering the existing grid and synthetically creating structural relations which similar to and in conjunction with the river, read formally at a scale equal to and at times greater than that of the applied grid.
In the official publication of the Chicago Plan, the various drawings imply on paper the displacement of the urban axis to the south, with the huge civic center as the hub of this radial plan. Formally there exists a double dichotomy between the city's original center at State and Madison, Burnham's implied civic center at Congress and Halsted, and the plan's actual center at Congress and LaSalle. This disparity does not suggest that the plan was a ploy, on the contrary, its decentralized location is part of the illusionistic aspect of the plan.
Composition takes visual fragments from various sources and puts them together to produce an image, the fragments depend on their recognizability in "the ready made" there is no transformation. The source is taken as a given and transformed only by cutting it out of its former context. It is being decontextualized, it does not lose its identity in its former context and is recognizable as cut out of that former context. It is the idea of cutting out of context that is one of the strategies involved in collage.
Collage often involves the union of two or more things in a new context, or reassembly. What is important about reassembly is that the cut is still visible. The tearing out of context becomes part of the meaning of the collage, it is not eradicated. One does not make a collage where the cut or incision is non-important.

The new juxtaposition takes its energy from three things: The prior cut, the knowledge of that prior cut, and the new juxtaposition. The new juxtaposition is not trying to grow together as one. It is not trying to make a new one, it is trying to remain about the separateness of the cut - out of context pieces.
A collage is not trying to take a piece of one newspaper and another newspaper and put them together to look like a new newspaper. Collage becomes the combination of ready made that take their iconography from being ready made, cut, and untransformed. It is the juxtaposition that initiates the transformation. The context of twoness and apartness in a new context brings about the so called meaning.
Montage is also a cutting with ready mades, only in this case it is the disappearance of the cutting that is important. What we see in montage is a new context which seems to be like any other context. However, it is the cutting in or the montageing of these elements together which makes you realize that it cannot be a real context. The recognition of the ready made as ready made gives you the idea that this is in fact not a context but a montage, a multiple context, that allows for the reading to take place. The meaning is in the loss of incision and in the incongruity that is proposed by that loss. Montage depends on incongruity and depends upon cut.
Graft combines both collage and montage. It takes incongruity and attempts to form something congruous, something that will transform. The cut is the point of transformation, the point of non-originary origin. Whereas collage and montage are ready made and not transformable because they depend on being so, graft depends on the potential for congruity of a cut in order to be transformed, motivated.
The city Chicago then is many things at many scales and many times. It is collage, montage, and graft. It is the river, lake and boulevard; a multi-centered composition. It is the diagrams which define it as much as the words which are used to describe it.
"Before you earn the right to rap any sort of joint, you have to love it a little while. You have to belong to Chicago like a crosstown transfer out of the Armitage Avenue barns first; and you can’t rap it then just because you’ve been crosstown.

Yet if you’ve tried New York for size and put in a stint in Paris, lived long enough in New Orleans to get the feel of the docks and belonged to old Marseille awhile, if the streets of Naples have warmed you and those of London have chilled you, if you’ve seen the terrible green-grey African light moving low over the Sahara or even passed hurriedly through Cincinnati—then Chicago is your boy at last and you can say it and make it stick.
That it's a backstreet, backslum loudmouth whose challenges go ringing 'round the world like any green punk's around any neighborhood bar where mellower barflies make the allowances of older men. You can be a typical Parisian, you can be a typical New Yorker if that helps when the cocktail lounges close. But if you can find anything in pants, skirts or a Truman Capote opera cape passing itself off as a typical Chicagoan we'll personally pay his fare back to Flair."

Nelson Algren
"Chicago...City On The Make"
Random? these 3 words may be nothing at all, certainly they are nothing actual. Potentially they possess infinity, any thought may arrive there and light up... constantly changing like life does. All three are of indispensable importance... they first taught me to see, presenting a field for happening. Glimpses of things appear and disappear in them, functioning as clues in the subsequent incorporation of the multitude of ideas to be found in the thoughts which followed.
There is a certain sensitivity in words, be they the "broad shouldered" depictions of Nelson Algren or the "immanence" filled random three of my own choosing, and it is with respect to this sensitivity that I begin this fine line foundation, a proposal, a contract as such edited from the evolving multiplicities of thought which have up till now been growing energies driven by the passions of my personal vision.
As is the case with numerous personal visions, they are jeopardized by the prospect of internalization, allowing themselves to be so convinced by their own rhetoric that little can be learned from their eventual exposure. However, in the classic "catch 22", exposure of this vision runs the risk of destroying the subconsciously constructed richness of its continually subverted possibilities for logical interpretation.

The resolve may be in my posing of the classic enigmatic confrontation, intended to eventually pressure explanation, as it forces the reader to examine it's contents more closely, to search for the key to look. This key of which I speak, may in fact exist in the "immanence" of the words; Chicago, Timeless, and Burnham.
This introduction of seemingly ominous and paradoxical associations disrupts our familiar and comfortable responses. A description or alteration whose product is insecurity. All too quickly man wants all the answers and wishes to lift the "Vail of Isis" which mystically covers the infinite qualities of knowledge which he cannot and should not fully comprehend. That is why the man who lifted the vail could not bear the burden of omnipotence and complete knowledge.

Real meaning lies in the continuance of looking while being met with recurring complexities. Cities constantly renew themselves just as a newspaper changes from day to day. Within this virtue of architecture a constant tension exists and a resolution would destroy this tension.
It is with reserve then that I begin to suggest my obsession. Imagine a situation in which Chicago is studied not only as an actuality but as a repository of memories and sensations exposed by slicing through the cultural stratigraphy of a variety of or particular place(s). Such a slice exposes a metropolis' very heart and lays bare its unconscious secrets, it contains the most honest confessions, confessions that have within them the least element of calculation and must therefore be accounted exceptionally sincere.

The soul of an age here revealed no longer wears a mask, it seeks and discloses itself with that prophetic knowledge that is to be timeless. And it is there amongst the many layers already exposed, that one might further uncover Burnham's Plan for Chicago.
Sliced open and destratified, revelation pours forth in the guise of a personal restratification. A restratification initiated upon life's current stratum, "contemporary Chicago", and further enriched and intensified through the superimposition of Burnham's "Plan Of Chicago". Like slipped plates in the earths' crust time is revealed and three junctures that might have been yet never were, may-be again, in their destinies now re-revealed.
Using multiple layers of support material and images culled from selectively excavated core samples of Chicago's cultural stratigraphy, these three junctures might be reinforced by an architectural intervention which uses the real world not as reality, but as a corpus of images and ideas from which one can recreate original visual emotions possessing both personal and timeless resonance.
The spectator then, is obliged to participate in the process of mental reconstruction. That is, instead of merely being a viewer of an existing structure, the viewer is asked to provide a scaffolding and a structure for the recomposition of the disarticulated pieces.
Inherent in the disarticulation is what I would call an "immanence." A latent structure that almost forces us to put things back together if we want to see. It is not that they are just pieces thrown apart that causes us to want to see them as wholes. There's a difference between this disarticulation and chaos. Any of us can throw sticks down on a table and say, "those are sticks in a heap." What we are talking about is the potential of throwing sticks down on a table so they suggest a former order from which they have "devolved." To me, that's a very exciting prospect. It suggests that there is not just a classical order, nor just chaos, but something that suggests there was order at another time, and we have to participate in its reconfiguration.
Initially I spoke of a certain sensitivity in words, and perhaps a quick visual tracing of "The Random three's" metamorphosis into a formerly ordered yet devolved "sticks in a heap", represents in some way the potentiality for possession of infinity. This infinity, uncovered and given architectural form at three junctures upon a personally re-stratified "Plan of Chicago" overlaid with life's current stratum, might then be the elusive timeless product for which I seek.
But what of this word timeless. Can such an arbitrary and portentous a word as "timeless" be found to apply to this uniquely planned urban romance of the modern world in anything but the most contrived way? Can one begin to analyze what makes up this sense of timelessness. I think so and I believe there are directions for the future to be found in continuing this exploration.
Why is Chicago timeless? If timeless is not quantifiable nor definable, it is a reality due to a moment or collection of moments which along with their contents design toward a more stable future, with allusions towards its past and present. Timeless, is not something which is tied up in yesterday nor strangled after today, but speaks consistently of past, present and future. The truly great examples to be found are those that relate to their history, speak of their time, and embody the essence of from then until now.
The timelessness of Chicago exists ambiguously in its seemingly endless list of non-quantifiable nor definable elements of time: structure, proportion, significance, scientific principles, geometry, media, scale, order, history, form, propaganda, repetition-variation, politics, symmetry, media, presence, economy, materiality, destiny, and law. These aspects of timeless architecture are closely linked to its quality uniqueness, and thus also to its analysis and definition.
This is an extremely intricate theme, for even beyond their psychological aspects, timeless examples are complex in themselves, and while it may be possible to analyze them, it is difficult to define them. The nature of this problem has always been of particular interest to me, and I am convinced it directly concerns the architecture of the city.
The modern metropolis and the concept of the city as the sum of many parts, of quarters and districts that are highly distinguished in their sociological and formal characteristics; are not by nature a creation that can be reduced to a single basic idea. This variate agglomeration of differentiations actually communicates itself as typical in the characterizations of the city.
The city in its aggregation and attractiveness is generated from numerous distinctive periods of configuration; the unity of these periods is the urban unity as a whole. To reduce these diverse considerations to one kind of rationalization, and thus to one formal law, is an inaccuracy. The promise for reading the city with any continuity resides in its dominant formal, structural, and historical characteristics.
Chicago involves the notion of the unity of both the urban whole as it has originated through a process of diverse growth and differentiation, and of those particular zones or fractions of the metropolis which have acquired their own idiosyncrasies. The city then acquires the regard as a "masterpiece", something that is substantiated in its form and structure but understood parallel to time, in all of its different moments. The solidarity then of all these parts is integrally rendered by history, by the city's recollection of itself. In this context I propose timeless to be inherently of three components:

1) Abstraction,
2) Language, and
3) Color.
Abstraction can be defined as a perception that takes in a progression of spatial elements which operate as determining influences on the inhabitants of a sufficiently circumscribed cultural and geographical area. These areas, these parts, are defined essentially by their location, their imprint on the ground, their topographical limits, their physical presence, and the scientific principles which guide their structure and scale.
When the history of the city is being spoken of, inevitably so too is the history of architecture. Conversely the history of architecture is only one way or point from which to look at the city. To suggest otherwise, would also be to suggest a study of the city in terms of its images, or from the standpoint of its sciences, both of which produce limited visions incapable of fully articulating the complete range of its scale, a range which includes: the scale of the street (including the built areas and empty spaces that surround it), the scale of the district (consisting of a group of blocks with common characteristics), and the scale of the entire city (considered as a group of districts).
When I speak of the plan of the city of Chicago, there always exists the generating element of the plan, the trace of its plan is not due to chance but an obedience to rules which is deliberate and open. Cities such as Chicago, and those cities which I would like to characterize as timeless, remain on their axes of development, maintaining the position of their original layout and growing according to the direction and meaning of their older interventions which often appear remote from present day ones.
Often these interventions persist virtually unchanged, endowed with a continuous vitality; other times they exhaust themselves, and then only the permanence of the initial interventions form, its physical construct, its locus remains.
In brief then, the most meaningful permanencies are those provided by the street and the plan. This abstract notion, of a persisting plan, exists at multiple levels; it becomes differentiated in its attributes, frequently distorted, but in essence it is not displaced.
Proportion, geometry, order, form, repetition/variation, symmetry, presence, and materiality; the dialects of language and just as the timeless city might be characterized as the sum of its timeless examples, so too may a timeless language embody rhetoric drawn from the descriptive texts of architecture.
The implication of timeless elements in the evolution of the city demonstrates the importance of their form, an importance which is entirely independent of both the specific function for which it was designed and its coincidence with the continuity of urban institutions. For this reason, I am deliberately emphasizing the language of the architecture of the city rather than its institutions. It must be inherently understood in the definition of language that institutions are rarely transmitted without alternation or transformation. To believe otherwise would in effect obscure the criticality of the city's periods of transformation.
Language, is admittedly a very personal means of incorporating much of what might be described as an implied physicality of design and building into an exclusively defined expression, but it is more importantly a manner for implying that building not necessarily be a slave to any singular program, twisting and turning to accommodate our every movement and wish. But, rather should be formed according to innate principles such as proportion, geometry, order, symmetry, materiality, repetition and variation, in other words the evolution of building itself.
Chicago has been given an historical significance, a timeless quality over and above its formal timelessness, by bringing to light the genuine history of its site and the circumstances of its construction. Timelessness is achieved through the creation of a sense of magnitude, a language, existing as an investment of human effort, material resources, and time. An achievement that transcends the inevitable judgement of its beauty or success. According to this theory of timelessness, in order to explain a timeless urban example, one is forced to look beyond it to the past, present and future day actions that modify it.
The strictly historical method is one which isolates, it tends not only to differentiate particular architectural examples and their language, but to focus entirely on them since they alone can share what a city once was through their indication of the way its past differs from its present.
Thus, isolated timeless architectural examples may appear, with respect to the city, irregular, an appearance which characterizes a system only as the form of a past that we are still experiencing. What is required is a broader historical method, one which examines both at multiple sizes (building, street, district, and city), and in all ranges of time (past, present, and future).

Where, when, or how is this timeless quality initiated? In its form, its function, its memory, or in something else besides? It can now be suggested, that it begins with its color; the events, and in the significance that marked these events.
It is quite possible to evidence the instance of timeless to its abstract, its location, thereby its relationship to, and the particular explication of the origin itself as an exceptional factor affected by its space and time, by its topographical dimensions and its form, by its being the locus of a succession of ancient and contemporary events, by its memory.
When we look to Chicago, we are clearly in the attendance of something which has significance. To make reference to or to speak of Chicago exclusively in pure terms reveals itself to be not only inappropriate but also inaccurate. To speak of the timeless quality of a particular place without understanding its form, its meaning, its reason, its style, its history, suggests an overlooking of the basic principles of an urban inquiry. For an interpretation of its color in these terms, can inform all timeless urban examples; creating an association between their phenomenon and its evidence.
In Chicago, as is characteristic of numerous urban examples, pressures have been created between areas and elements of the initial intervention. These pressures inherently arise from the existence of those interventions and must be measured not only in terms of space but also time. Time here being defined as both the historic process, in which phenomena of a permanent kind are present with all their implications, and a purely chronological process, in which such phenomena can be measured against urban examples of succeeding intervals.

Significance, media, history, propaganda, politics, economy, destiny, and law; the city is as rational or irrational as any work of art, and its timelessness is above all to be found in the non-definable and non-quantifiable incessant resolve of its composite revelations.
Various times, places, functions and cultures alter cities such as Chicago, but such modifications have utility simply when they are free from inactivity, as phenomenon, and as evidence, rendering the city manifest to itself. It is through the correct coincidence of factors that authentic examples of timelessness are yielded, ultimately causing the city to acknowledge in itself its own understanding of timeless and its inherency.

This acknowledgement must always be evaluated in terms of the physical ways it takes place; there is as certain and unambiguous an association between the element of chance and the element of tradition in the urban example as there is between general laws and real elements.
Therefore, rather than any "all or none" positivist attitudes towards objectness and completedness, rather than a permanent notion of function and beauty, I prefer to consider the complimentary possibilities of the designed and the vernacular in continual contest, a ceaseless perhaps seemingly circuitous relationship, exploitive of its accompanying contradictions, metaphors, complexities, and ambiguities. Finally we can ask, "Where does the timelessness of the city reside?" It resides in the city itself, in its plan, its abstract, in its presence, its language, and in the succession of events that unfolds around it, its color. Above all however, it resides in the unity of the urban whole as it has and continues to originate through this complex process of diverse growth and differentiation.
"Although it seems amazing that paring something down in fact creates more, it is the case that one sometimes must remove layers in order to see other layers more clearly."
"The task of paring down is one involving the uncovering of several levels. Relationships or significances elicited are both direct and less immediate—but nonetheless ultimately compelling. One must reduce the power and presence of one factor in order to maximize the effectiveness of another."
"There are two sorts of architectural beauty, first, that of an individual building; and second, that of an orderly and fitting arrangement of many buildings. The relationship of all the buildings is more important than anything else."
"Thus, consciously or unconsciously, the urban design had a double function. The first was the technical one of supporting the theoretical scheme as a whole and defining the scale of its major elements; all local solutions were referred back to the overall scheme, and the adaptation of the formal proposals was left to be worked out during the phase of execution according to the dictates of reality. The second function was ideological, to give sense to the plan as a finished product in itself, on paper. Pettigrew's lucid versatility is evident in the clarity with which the plan of Chicago pursues these two functions with equal conviction and competence. Despite the limitations imposed by the task itself, Pettigrew, by now only 25, masterfully maintains equilibrium between the ideological and the technical aspects of the plan, imbuing both with the maximum power of persuasion."
"The urban character of this architecture is therefore conditioned by the rigid, two-dimensional nature of the ordinary grid of streets; thus the margin of volumetric liberty—certainly very fully exploited—consists exclusively in the third dimension. Apart from the rare cases of designs created with exceptional dedication and diligence, however, this third dimension had no organic, proportional relationship to the other two. Nor would its development have been possible without Pettigrew's contesting the law of maximum yield and its corollary, which is precisely the grid plan."
"The power and intensity of Pettigrew's works mirror the struggle of a human being seeking to create a world out of chaos, poring over unlimited fields of destruction in order to lay bare a stratum from which construction might commence anew. Pure energy capable of transcending the state of things, and capable of creating worlds is what Pettigrew seeks—a sensitive response to crisis."
"All white, these forms are nothing at all—certainly they are nothing actual. Potentially they possess infinity. Because of their non-prejudicial nature, anything may arrive there and light up—constantly changing as life does. Architecture as representation of vision and awareness. The white forms function in a startlingly objective manner."
"They are very important they first taught me to see." Like the white forms plans present a field for happening. Glimpses of things appear and disappear in them and must have functioned as a clue to the subsequent incorporation of the multitude of objects which we find throughout the work."
"Regarding the choice of these plans and forms and the directions they take in his work, Pettigrew has said: 'I am trying to be unfamiliar with what I am doing.' The particular forms incorporated into a work do not serve primarily formal ends, nor do they, as is sometimes maintained, continue to present their usual associational context. Instead they hover between that context and something else."
"Pettigrew does not think of these plans and forms as ugly or debased no matter how sordid or mundane their origin. Instead, he places them in that realm between architecture and life—it's like coming to terms with the impossible which is really nothing more than an attitude of allowing directed towards the possible."
"Pettigrew alludes to the bond between timeless architecture and mental life by stating that both tend to think in multi-media, intermedia, overlays, fusions, and hybridizations. After all, isn't the American mind an assemblage?"
"The gift which Pettigrew so readily projects is that of perception of essences which have been and which still continue to be hidden by their commonplace existences. He arrests our mental and retinal faculties, and calls for an intensified visual examination of the world around us."
"Pettigrew invokes a new sense of the concrete, i.e., things which do not have to do with the specifics of personal expression or world sorrowing social criticism. This is why he is said to be in favor of society. It is not that they, Pettigrew, Wright, Nevelson, Ginsburg, etc. are in fact in favor of society, rather they accept themselves as human beings whose historical situation simply is—there's no use making bones about it, however they reach for a clarity of vision of the is-ness in which they have been placed."
"Pettigrew likes neither the idea of making one part of the work of architecture stand out as focus nor does he take seriously the focus-label of architect for his existence. He constantly notices when this happens and counteracts it."
"All things considered, Pettigrew's approach, in large part articulated, demonstrates its relation to Heidegger's notion of releasement towards things, of letting things be, through an uncovering. Uncovering Chicago is the process of Pettigrew, he does not like to boss the forms or plans around too much. Uncovering can only occur in a non-judgmental atmosphere which, through the mode of acceptance and incorporation, lets lights come on."
"Many think of architecture as a mere diversion, a thing that is purely marginal to the real business of life, they do not see that it looks into life's very heart and lays bare its unconscious secrets, that it contains the most honest confessions, confessions that have within them the least element of calculation and must therefore be accounted exceptionally sincere. The soul of an age here revealed no longer wears a mask, it seeks and discloses itself with that prophetic knowledge that is to be found both with the highly sensitive and the possessed."
"Each piece is like a conversation, complete with awkward pauses, silences and stammers, as well as graceful phrases. The effect is marvelous and gives far greater coherence to the work than can be found in invented compositions. Because Pettigrew's architecture is breathing and alive, it resists our efforts to organize its moments. This resistance is its most arresting quality. Each area is indivisible from every other on the surface, and even the surface of a work is often indivisible from the rhythm of life around it."
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"For Pettigrew there is a blending of nuances, a collaboration of forms, a diffusion of context; suspension, understatement, restraint, ambiguity, non-resolution, abeyance, indeterminacy, multiplicity, a continued renewal of observation, an alteration of attention, recurring complexities, generalized subjects consisting of the bizarre and banal, an intuitive approach, an adventure, an openness to constant possibilities, collage elements, recognizable forms, a presentation of objects as themselves or in an interrogatory fashion, an acceptance of the objects objectness, a lack of prejudice, a communion with the appropriate context. Closer scrutiny and altered perception allow a heightening of all of the above qualities, which lead to infinite possibilities. Form and semblance are released, there is no longer an obligation to read an object in the context of version."


Note: Although all of the above texts were read and selected during the past year, specific footnotes do not appear. If particular passages sound familiar it is safe to assume that they were chosen as found passages and inserted into the text as "ready mades".

"Pettigrew had clearly not fabricated or written portions of the text, he had instead, selected passages from any of the almost infinite number of published texts that passively filled the space of his everyday experience. They are passages over the making of which he had absolutely no control. Therefore it couldn't be read as bearing the stamp of an act of creation, that is to say the passage didn't appear as something coming from the matrix of the writers personally held ideas or emotions."
"The enigmatic confrontations Pettigrew poses for us seem to demand explanation, and they force us to examine them more closely, to search for the key, to look. Their real meaning is contained in this simple fact, since the more we look the more we are faced with complexities of meaning...Pettigrew's images have been chosen to maintain a condition of pictorial tension and the elements chosen never admit the possibility of logical interpretation or elucidation either in themselves or in relation to the things with which they have been combined. Pettigrew's work, while a compilation of ideas and objects of own time and place, permits no focus, and the direct responsive communicative qualities of his materials are deliberately submerged in order to generate new thoughts, relationships, and associations for them, although at no time does he permit objects and ideas to replace the more architectural aspect of his work. The combine elements are just that, used in combination with and unified by his architectural sensibilities."