INFORMATION TO USERS

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps. Each original is also photographed in one exposure and is included in reduced form at the back of the book.

Photographs included in the original manuscript have been reproduced xerographically in this copy. Higher quality 6" x 9" black and white photographic prints are available for any photographs or illustrations appearing in this copy for an additional charge. Contact UMI directly to order.
The mask and the masque

Gjertson, W. Geoff, M.Arch.

Rice University, 1992
RICE UNIVERSITY

THE MASK AND THE MASQUE

by

W. GEOFF GJERTSON

A THESIS SUBMITTED
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
MASTER OF ARCHITECTURE

APPROVED, THESIS COMMITTEE:

[Signatures]

Péter Waldman, Chairman
Professor of Architecture

Albert Pope
Associate Professor of Architecture

Elysabeth Yates Burns McKee
Assistant Professor of Architecture

Houston, Texas
April, 1992
dedicated to the memory of M. Sean Murphy
ABSTRACT

The Mask and The Masque

by

W. Geoff Gjertson

The dance is a physical embodiment of ritual. The mask is a physical vehicle for the dance, indexing the event in its absence. The structures of dance, exemplified by the mask, are a powerful means of ordering an architectural problem.

The project analyzes and maps the physical and covert structures which exist within certain dances of the Northwest Coast Indians and applies these structures to the design of an exhibit space for the masks used in the rituals. By attempting to permeate the built form of the exhibit space with the structures of the dances, it is intended that a new dance will be created in the experience of the designed space.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to extend sincere thanks to all the people who gave moral, physical and intellectual support to my project. The two years spent on the project, would not have been possible without them.

To the members of Rice faculty and staff, who were involved, go my thanks for your criticism and aid. Especially, my gratitude goes to Peter Waldman for his unending enthusiasm. In Seattle, several people had faith in the project and gave me the reality of a need to fulfill. To Steve Charles and the United Indians of all Tribes Foundation as well as the Seattle Arts Commission, I am indebted.

Jack Abraham and Alex Williams created the masks which have inspired me—Mr. Abraham’s mask as a gift and Mr. William’s masks as the subject of the exhibit space.

Many people lent and gave materials and time for this project. For a project which is so centered on building, these "begged and borrowed" items are greatly appreciated.

To my friends at Rice who created the wonderful atmosphere in which to work, I will always be grateful. Thanks go especially to Jonathan Campbell, Don Choi, Will Rosebro, Meena and Daniel Hewett, Shisha van Horn, Alexis Karolides and Rosanna Keleher.

At last, I wish to thank the individuals most dear to me, my wife and my parents for their love and inspiration.
CONTENTS

Abstract
Acknowledgments
Figures

Introduction.................................1
i. Mask.......................................6

ii. The Kwakiutl.............................20

iii. Choreography and Architecture.....30

iv. Case Studies
   a. La Tourette............................40
   b. Hamar Museum.........................47

v. The Exhibit..............................51

vi. Methodology..............................59
   a. Proposed................................60
   b. Analysis................................67
   c. Schemes................................83
   d. Conceptual Model.......................96
   e. The Prototype.........................103

Bibliography.................................147

Appendices

I. Final Thesis Review-Jury Comments...150

II. The Building as Mask: Two Projects..153

III. The UBC Museum of Anthropology....177
FIGURES

The Totemic Traveling Mask Exhibit, First drawing... 58
Sequence photos of Kwakiutl dances................. 66
The Big-house........................................... 73
Big-house/Exhibit......................................... 74
Mask Analysis............................................. 75-80
  Photos
  Silhouette/Axes
  Expression
  Graphics
  Plans
  Sections
Labanotation/Photo Juxtaposition...................... 81
Invented Notation......................................... 82
Mask/Masque............................................. 88
First Scheme............................................ 89-90
  Plan/Section
  Rendering
Mask Armature........................................... 91-95
  Sketches
  Concept
  Overall
  Detail
  "The Hand"
Conceptual Model....................................... 101-102
  Overall
  Detail
The Seven Masks of the Exhibit Space................ 113
Chronological Sketches throughout Project........... 114
First Working Drawings of Prototype................ 115
First Transformation Diagrams........................ 116
Photo Sequence of Exhibit Space-Parish Gallery..... 117-122
Photo Sequence of Exhibit Space-Daybreak Star..... 123-128
Exhibit Space- Plans/Instructions................... 129-135
Four Exhibit Sites..................................... 136
Exhibit Crate- Sections, Elevations and Plan....... 137
Exhibit Space Elevation................................ 138
Crate Transformation................................... 139
Collage.................................................... 140
Competition Presentation of Exhibit Space......... 141
Final Prototype......................................... 142-146
Montrose Public Market Project...................... 156-164
  Concept Diagrams
  Site Plan
  Plan
  Sections
  Bath/Kitchen Module
  Community Center Plans
  Model
  Rendering
Houston High-Rise Project.................................169-176
Site Plan
Elevation/Plans
Elevation/Plans
Section/Plans
Lobby Section
Office Window Wall
Residential Window Wall
Wire-Frame Model

All photos and drawings– W.G. Gjertson
INTRODUCTION

A dichotomy exists between the object-mask and the noun/verb-mask. The mask as an artifact holds much more meaning than the word "mask" as it is often verbally used. The "mask" is defined as synonymous with a cloak or disguise. In architectural discourse, the definition of "mask", as a disguise, reinforces the notion of a facade as false. However, the mask, as a primal artifact, found in many cultures, is a powerful device of transformation. The ability to conceal is an inherent quality of the mask; its power goes much further.

The discussion to follow and the subsequent project will be concerned with one early culture and the importance of its masks. The limitation to a specific culture is necessary, for masks have existed and still exist in almost every society. The scope of study will focus on the Indians of the Northwest Coast with the Kwakiutl of British Columbia being spotlighted.

The Kwakiutl Indian’s program of cyclical ritual and celebration may be one of the most developed and rigorous programs of primitive cultures.¹ The winter season was devoted entirely to potlatching, extensive feasting and dancing in which tradition was extended and wealth given away. The "summer" season, which actually made up most of

¹Based on the quantity of analysis written on the Kwakiutls attesting to the importance of their ritual. See bibliography.
the year, was the "skeletal"\(^2\) opposite of the "winter." During the "summer" season every action was in preparation for the "winter" season. For the Kwakiutls, life revolved around these potlatches.

At the potlatches, the dances were the primary means of establishing a link between the past and future. Where there was no written word, the dance served to communicate the stories and aspirations of the people. The dancers changed but the structural integrity of the dance remained sound from year to year.

Various elements served to structure the dances for the Kwakiutls. Certain movements and rhythms were taught and are still taught to the young. However, no structural element was more powerful or more physical than the mask in the dances of the Kwakiutl. A formal consistency as well as a narrative was maintained from generation to generation through the mask.

Just as architecture is about space-making, so is the dance. Both architecture and dance place designed form in space. In each case, the forms define space in their own unique ways. If architecture is "like frozen music"\(^3\) then dance is this music allowed to flow. Dance and architecture are as much about the positive space of the object as about


\(^3\)Reputed to have been said by Mies Van der Rohe.
the negative space which is made.4 Both architecture and
dance function in the mediums of time and space. Dance
flows in both mediums; architecture flows by relying on the
dynamic human experience.

Structure plays the most vital role in the ordering of
dance and architecture. In architecture, this structure is
necessarily physical and definable. While dance utilizes
rhythm and music, it also contains a covert structure, not
easily perceptible. The covert structures seem to be at
times related to movement and negative space.

In the case of the Kwakiutl Indians, the mask functions
as both a physical structure through its formal qualities
and also a covert structure in its ability to communicate
the stories and traditions of the culture. The human body
becomes an extension of the mask. The mask is a "new skin"
with the body as a "new soul."5

The structures which order architecture and dance are
necessary to the continuation of both forms of expression.
My project will attempt to discover the physical and covert
structures which exist within the certain dances of the
Northwest Coast Indians and apply these structures to the
design and construction of an exhibit space for the masks of
these dances. By attempting to permeate the built form of
the exhibit space with these structures of the dances, it is

4Refers to the notion of "chora", see Peter Eisenman, "Chora

hoped that a new dance will be created in the experience of the exhibit space.

In preparation, the following written discussion, will provide a basis leading to the analytical studies and finally the design of the exhibit space. The discussion will be divided into seven sections: First, a description of the notion of masks, masking and the masque in terms of anthropological and architectural issues will be given. The next section will discuss the Kwakiutl Indians, in depth, pertaining to their masks, dances and rituals. The third section will cover the general subject of dance and its design, choreography. Parallels will be drawn between architecture and choreography regarding their respective methodologies and structures. In the fourth section, two built works of architecture will be discussed in their relation to the structures of dance, Le Corbusier's monastery at La Tourette and Sverre Fehn's Hamar Bispegard Museum.

The program of the exhibit space and the methodology for the project will be discussed in the final two sections. A proposed methodology was developed which responds to my education as an architect and also seeks a reaction or critique of this outward approach. The actual methodology which was established differs from the proposed which initiates another discussion. The methodology section covers the analysis to the prototype with description, drawings and photographs. The design and construction of an exhibit
space was chosen as the project to test the structures of dance as applied to architecture. The subject of the project, the mask, as well as the scale of the project make it an appropriate exercise.

The comments of the final thesis review jury are paraphrased in the first appendix. Jurors for this review were Michael Rotundi, Michael Benedikt, Alan Balfour, Peter Waldman, Albert Pope and Elysabeth McKee.

As additional appendices to the discussion, two of my previous projects, a Montrose public market and an office/residential high-rise for Houston will be reflected upon in terms of their attempts to be "communal masks." The "building as mask" has been explored in these projects and seems to be part of an evolution culminating in the exhibit, which seeks to become a mask at a deeper level, through the structures of dance.

An essay on the UBC Museum of Anthropology will conclude the appendix. This essay presents a museum which is an alternative to the "Natural History" museum and the "purely aesthetic" museum.

In conclusion, the project will attempt to show that the dance is a physical embodiment for ritual, the mask is a physical vehicle for the dance and that the structures of dance, exemplified by the mask are a powerful means of ordering an architectural problem.
i. MASK

The word "mask" is layered in meaning. It commonly has become known as a disguise, a pretense or a cloak. However, even within the Webster's definition\(^6\), another meaning or side to the word "mask" begins to make itself visible. In the first definition, the word "identify" is used when defining the mask as an artifact. Later, the mask is described as at times being translucent implying that there is partial transparency. There is a duality which exists within the word "mask". As a verb, the word contains the negative connotation of being something false which leads to the word "façade" or "face." The realm of architecture is first entered with the relationship to façade. However, like the face of a building the "mask" does not necessarily conceal completely what it covers.

The mask as an artifact is understood as being a device of concealment but more importantly as a device of transformation. The viewer of a "masked" performance is aware that a person lies behind the mask. The mask silently speaks for the performer. It contains a message which the wearer acquires. The "mask" is something that both reveals and conceals. As Italo Calvino says in the adventures of a photographer:

The mask, being first of all a social, historical product, contains more truth than any image claiming to be "true"; it bears a quantity of meanings that will gradually be revealed. 7

The word "mask" is quite elusive. Being charged with the definition of something that, both conceals and reveals may seem to leave its meaning fairly open-ended. This ambiguity of meaning is obviously one of the powers that the mask holds. However, concealment is an inherent function of a mask (i.e. one object blocking the view of another.) The revealing aspect of a mask is a variable which is dependent upon many things such as the wearer, the maker and the culture in which it was produced. At this point, it must be made very clear, the discussion will deal with the mask as an artifact which both conceals and reveals.

Calvino's astute observation about the truth of the mask underscores the prejudice that has been accrued to the word over time. The word "mask" has joined the ranks of the words "cloak and disguise" in Webster's dictionary. 8 Referring to these words reveals a discrepancy under the definition of disguise--"mask" is listed as a synonym. However a note follows: "a mask...does not always imply deception or pretense." 9


8Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary, p.730.

9Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, "Disguise."
How has "the mask" shed its full definition over time? In its common usage, "mask" is seldom referred to as an artifact. An anthropological understanding of the mask is necessary to fully comprehend the mask’s implications.

Claude Levi-Strauss, the noted author of Structuralism in anthropology, has addressed the mask in quite complete terms. The mask is understood by Levi-Strauss as quite a complex object.

...Each one (mask) does not contain within itself the entire meaning.¹⁰

The mask is described by Levi-Strauss as an object that combines mythic elements and social and religious functions with plastic expression. In my mind, very few objects in the world succeed in this endeavor, save possibly the Gothic Cathedral.

NOTRE DAME

The Cathedral of Notre Dame may be one of the best examples of the representation of religious ideals and mythical beliefs in built form. For those who conceived of and built the cathedral, Notre Dame is the embodiment of the Virgin Mary.

But will God indeed dwell on the earth? behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain Thee; how much less this house that I have builded?\textsuperscript{11}

By the fifth century, the Virgin’s image had become miraculous and the first shrine to Mary was consecrated. In France in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the image of the Virgin Mary dominated the church. Although Notre Dame best exemplified the Virgin’s image, the cathedrals of Amiens and Beauvais also belonged to the Virgin.

Through the conception, construction and ceremony of the Cathedral of Notre Dame the religious and mythical were integrated in the whole of the form. At the ground breaking, Holy water was used in the mortar of the corner stones. The corner stones themselves were symbolically and literally built upon the remains of previous religious structures some of which dated back to the time of the druids.\textsuperscript{12} The craftsmanship carried out in the Notre Dame was truly complete. Every surface was fully detailed and finished. This ethic included the corner stones and the gargoyles, both of which would never be seen closely by human eyes. The entire construction process was ritualized with a daily religious service as well as larger ceremonies at important stages throughout the cathedral’s construction.

In the realization of the building, the form bespoke its marriage to meaning. The overall form, the Roman cross,


\textsuperscript{12}Temko, \textit{Notre Dame of Paris}, p.118.
although centuries old, obviously became the largest order. However, layers of subtlety exist within this larger order. As the long nave extends through the church there is a point where a slight shift occurs. The slanted nave is said to represent Christ on the cross. The Holy Body is once again recalled in the singular door which occurs in the north transept. This door is unanswered in the south transept and it is unclear as to its function. Allan Temko, speculates that this door was seen as the spear wound in Christ’s side.\textsuperscript{13}

Regardless, of whether or not these stories are true they continue the mystical fascination many have had with Notre Dame. Victor Hugo was captivated with the cathedral. He believed that the cryptic symbols on the facade held the secret to alchemy.\textsuperscript{14} The stories of the Hunch-Back of Notre Dame are another myth which seizes our imagination.

In analyzing Notre-Dame through its architectural "parts" the religious ideals and mythical beliefs of the twelfth century are further embodied. The nave was clearly a place for mortals. Indeed, its name must be related to "knave" or common folk of the middle ages. The modulation and regularity of the nave must have resulted as the expression of the everyday. The choir and its form, the apse, are quite different. The only circular form in plan

\textsuperscript{13}Temko, \textit{Notre Dame of Paris}, p.118.

\textsuperscript{14}Ibid, p.13.
occurs in the choir. The Virgin dwells here. The choir is a quiet place occupied only by the altar—the machine for transcendence.

The facade of Notre Dame differs greatly from the nave and the apse. It is a separate element—not only separated figuratively in space but also in its late construction. The facade as a mask, conceals the section of the nave to a degree but reveals thematic passages of the entire experience through Notre Dame. The Gothic triptych order of the entry portals is repeated throughout the church. Religious stories are illustrated by reliefs and sculpture on the facade as if it were a billboard. The facade attempts to make a connection with the world and the everyday through the most direct means—the sign. However, the facade functions subtly as well. The expression of the cathedral is begun here as well as ended. Procession is obviously the most significant aspect of the experience of a cathedral, particularly Notre Dame.

Like the "mask as an artifact", "the building as a mask", such as Notre Dame, is made up of form and ritual. The ritual is the daily, weekly and yearly use of the church. The church, probably more than any other building is primarily conceived of as a space for ritual. Procession from the outside world through the gates into this Holy realm, the cleansing with Holy Water, the journey down the nave, while experiencing various religious themes along the way, reaching a zone around the altar in which to pray and
then returning to reflect in the nave, all are significant aspects of ritual. The labyrinth which is inscribed in the floor of Notre Dame and many other Gothic cathedrals is symbolic of man’s struggle to reach perfection in the eyes of God. Thus, the mask can be analogous to architecture in both formal and ritualistic ways.\textsuperscript{15}

THE HISTORICAL MASK

The mask will now be discussed in anthropological terms with relation to history. The mask as an artifact has existed in almost every culture from primitive times. The mask most likely first evolved as a means for protection.\textsuperscript{16} It was probably carried in the hand and at least at its origin was unornamented. The earliest analysis of masks was probably William Healey Dall’s report for the Smithsonian’s Bureau of Ethnology in 1882.\textsuperscript{17} His conclusions were somewhat telling of the atmosphere of the day. Dall describes a point in the evolution the mask.

If remarkable for destroying enemies of the tribe, or for the benefits resulting to it [the mask] from his prowess, death, lapse of time and traditions, snow ball-like accenting as they descended, would tend to the association of super human qualities (in form of hero-myth) with him and with his distinctive battle emblem or device. If his device were derived or conventionalized

\textsuperscript{15}See Appendix II The Building as Mask: Two Projects.


\textsuperscript{17}Ibid.
from some predatory, shrewd, or mysterious animal, a mental blending of the ideals of each might be expected, and the seeds sown of a totemic or polytheistic system.\(^{18}\) Dall goes on to say that the mask would eventually take its place among religious paraphernalia as cultures advanced. The mask became not only associated with communities and their relations to the supernatural but also with an "intermediary individual"\(^{19}\)--the shaman. In the case of the Kwakiutl the "initiated" used the masks. It must also be noted that the mask is and will always be simply, at times, a device for entertainment.

Dall breaks the general classification of mask into three categories mask, maskette and maskoid. The mask being worn over the face, the maskette worn on the head or other part of the body (not covering the face) and the maskoid not intended to be worn at all. Additionally, Dall theorizes that the idea of the mask representing the human visage may have arisen out of another practice of preserving the head or skull of the deceased. This practice existed(s) in certain areas such as New Guinea, Borneo, Australia etc.\(^{20}\)


\(^{19}\)Ibid, p.75.

\(^{20}\)Ibid, p.94-97.
THE MASK RECONSIDERED

For various reasons, man has sought to reproduce the image of the face in a disembodied form. In 1983, a symposium was held at the University of British Columbia to attempt to develop a general theory for the mask. The mask theory is summarized as:

Masking itself involves the use of power--objects that have either transformed themselves into idols and/or produced a ritual transformation of the human actor into a being of another order.

Crumrine\textsuperscript{21}

There are three basic ways which the mask can function: "the audience provides the focus of power and is transformed, the maker is possessed by the power of the mask, or of a name" (very important with regard to the Kwakiutl Indians to be discussed later) and finally the mask "becomes the focus for power and is transformed into an idol."\textsuperscript{22} As we will see in the case of the Kwakiutls, the mask becomes a means of communication and more importantly, a record of stories.

\textsuperscript{21}Crumrine, \textit{The Power of Symbols}, p.2.
\textsuperscript{22}Ibid, p.3.
LEVI-STRAUSS

In returning to Levi-Strauss, the Structuralist approach utilized in The Way of the Masks will explain the mask at a deeper level. The Way of the Masks deals with the Indians of the Northwest Coast and their masks. Levi-Strauss begins by stating that unlike previous studies of masks which isolate each artifact as an independent entity, his study understands that the masks are endlessly intertwined.

...A mask does not exist in isolation; it supposes other real or potential masks always by its side.\(^{23}\)

Levi-Strauss examines several masks which are at times related and at others, in opposition. Like a story or rumor, the dialogue of a mask is reinterpreted by each individual who hears it or experiences it. As the dialogue is passed from one people to another it is transformed or even reversed to suit the desires of each successive audience. Thus, form and meaning are not always congruent. An example of this occurs with the Dzonokwa and Swaihwe. These two masks occur in two different tribes. The Kwakiutl had the Dzonkwa mask and the Salish had the Swaihwe mask.

The stories which each mask tells are essentially the same. A supernatural figure meets a mortal who is an outcast and confers upon him powers of wealth. The outcast

returns to his people and is accepted. Where the meaning of the stories are concerned both masks are similar. However, an inversion occurs in the case of the plastic features. The Swaihwe mask is mostly white, fringed with feathers and punctuated by protruding eyes and a protruding tongue. On the other hand, the Dzonokwa is a dark/black mask fringed with fur and characterized by deep recessed eyes and a wide gaping mouth. The opposite case can also occur as seen in the relationship of the Swaihwe and the Xwexwe masks. Here the masks formally are almost identical, the inversion occurs in their semantics. Where the Swaihwe transforms one's enemies into friends, the Xwexwe is inverted and its power is transformed to the copper, a symbol of wealth. The Xwexwe contains selfishness and the Swaihwe frees one of selfishness. Levi-Strauss concludes that one mask's existence may only be to contradict another mask.\textsuperscript{24} Masks are part of a system which transforms each other.

FORM AND MEANING

The inversion of the meaning of form is an occurrence which can clearly be seen in architecture. In the same way that the Swaihwe mask, which occurred in similar forms, in a large region among nine tribes, the international style put many different functions in similar glass boxes from Dessau to Des Moines. In the IIT Campus by Mies van der Rohe, the

\textsuperscript{24}Levi-Strauss, \textit{The Way of the Masks}, p.57.
forms of buildings are analogous but their meanings or functions are diverse. The power plant with its vertical element of the smokestack has been often seen as more "church-like" than the anonymous box of the actual chapel.25

Post-modernism in a way, inverted the meaning of form just as modernism had. Now, we have Greek temples as our courthouses and bookstores. In architecture, the inversion of meaning between like forms can occur coincidentally (as at IIT) whereas the inversion of form with like meaning usually occurs across gaps in time or in geography. Obviously some architectural "types" have never established a consistent form. When one thinks of the program of restaurant there is no one formal image which consistently occurs. The notion of type will be discussed later in the case study section.

THE SILENT MASK?

In a return to the initial discussion of the word "mask" and its various meanings, I would like to address two final quotations by Levi-Strauss:

...A mask is not primarily what it represents but what it transforms that is to say, what is chooses not to represent.

Like a myth, a mask denies as much as it affirms. It is not made solely of what it says or thinks but what it excludes.26

25Albert Pope, lecture Rice University, Spring '91.

Levi-Strauss very aptly describes the subtlety of the mask. The mask has a power to silently speak. Adolf Loos when describing the solemnity and silence of the Steiner House, noted the confusion and cacophony of the many architectural "styles" of the day. For Loos, the only way to react to these unintelligible languages was not to speak at all. The mask is obviously more than an exercise in formal or plastic expression. However, we are intrigued by the mask's expression—particularly its beauty or sublimity. Today, in a society, which cannot understand the stories told by the artifact or see its transformational ability, the power of the mask lies in the wonder which arises within us. We question and try to imagine how the masks were used. Our culture finds inspiration in these vehicles of ritual. Our ritual, in comparison to these primitive peoples, is somewhat empty. The power of the mask is its silence, for in its enigmatic stare we are captured.

THE MASQUE

A short allegorical
dramatic entertainment of
the 16th and 17th centuries
performed by masked actors

---


28 Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary, P.730.
Although sometimes used as a substitution for the spelling of "mask," the "masque" is very different and yet the same. The "masque" would not exist without the "mask," and vice versa. The mask is the physical vehicle for the masque. In a sense, the masque is the dance (as I will describe in the following section.) It is the dance, or masque which gives the mask, as an object, its power, meaning and purpose. The inseparable nature of the masque and the mask is the basis for this investigation.

\[
\text{mask/masque} = \text{masque/mask}
\]
ii. THE KWAKIUTL INDIANS

Claude Levi-Strauss considers the plastic arts of the Northwest Coast Indians the most developed in North America.\(^{29}\)

The Kwakiutl Indians, in particular, have been studied to the greatest extent of the group of Northwest tribes which extends from the Columbia River to the Aleutian Islands. The large amount of attention given to them can be attributed to their accessibility both geographically and socially as well as the tremendous amount of artifacts which they produced and still produce.

Direct credit for much of what we know of the Kwakiutl can be given to Franz Boas and George Hunt. Boas was an anthropologist working with the American Museum of Natural History and Hunt was the son of a Tlingit woman and a Scottish trader who grew up among the Kwakiutl in Fort Rupert.\(^{30}\) Boas began working with Hunt during one of his first expeditions to British Columbia in 1888. George Hunt served as an interpreter and collector of artifacts. Subsequently, all who write of the Kwakiutl are indebted to Boas and Hunt.


The Kwakiutl universe is predicated on a single, fundamental assumption that the universe is a place where some beings are eaten by other beings and where it is the role of some beings to die so that other beings may feed on them and live.\textsuperscript{31}

As we shall see, the cyclical food chain is not only the key to the Kwakiutl’s proliferation of art but also the key to their cultural and religious beliefs. The physical environment in which the Kwakiutl lived and live must first be taken into account.

The Indians of the Northwest Coast are necessarily separated from their inland neighbors. The sea, as both an alternative world and means of sustenance creates a unique and favorable environment in which to live. The presence of year round food from the ocean, in particular, salmon in the summer, created an abundance of creative time. The harvest of large numbers of salmon and subsequent drying and smoking, left the winter season free from food gathering. Not only is the sea rich in this region but the forests also provide tremendous amounts of food as well as building materials. The Kwakiutl understood the luxury of their environment, and constantly referenced the greater beings to whom they were indebted. Food represented wealth and power (as did other symbols).

Kwakiutl means "smoke of the world."\textsuperscript{32} Here in the name, the reference first exists as to the idea of exchange of wealth. The Kwakiutl as a rich cultural group, in terms of their resources and beliefs, sought to exchange these riches among themselves and with other tribes. The "smoke of the world" refers to the potlatches\textsuperscript{33} where so many people would gather that "the smoke from the fires would be visible around the world." Potlatch comes from a Chinook term meaning "to give."\textsuperscript{34} The potlatch occurs at both a regular interval and at certain other "unique" times. As mentioned earlier, the summer season, which actually comprised three quarters of the year, was devoted to the amassing of food and preparation for the "winter ceremony." Fish would be caught and dried, the "big house" made ready, ceremonial pieces crafted and painted and supplies gathered.

THE POTLATCH

The winter ceremony, which was a potlatch, lasted at times, for three months. During this time, tribes exchanged wealth both materially and socially. Feasting and dancing


\textsuperscript{33}The potlatch actually underwent its most prolific period from 1849 to 1930 beginning when the white man first encountered the Indians. This proliferation was due to the influx of wealth in the form of material items used for payment to the Indians in exchange for labor (fishing etc.).

characterized these periods. Potlatches would also take place coinciding with marriages, deaths, births are other important happenings. These potlatches did not last as long as the winter ceremony and did not include the initiation rites of the winter ceremony.

There are several reasons theorized by anthropologists for the potlatch. Levi-Strauss, as mentioned earlier, supports a common attitude that the potlatch became the setting in which stories and aspirations could be further communicated (no written word existed.) Ruth Benedict, a colleague of Boas, theorized that the potlatch was a "manifestation of psychic abnormality,"\textsuperscript{35} or a way of making such abnormalities (abnormality to the Western mind) normal by enacting them. Helen Codere, believed that the potlatch originated when the intervention of the white man prevented the traditional "warfare pattern" among the tribes, to exist.\textsuperscript{36} The aspect of rivalry is definitely present in the potlatch. However, Philip Drucker and Robert F. Heizer, in their book \textit{To Make My Name Good}, disagree with Codere's thesis and argue that the potlatch as "fighting with property" is a belief generated by the inadequacies of translation.\textsuperscript{37} The "rivalry gestures" of the potlatch may


\textsuperscript{36}Ibid, p.125.

appear at first to be acts of aggression analogous with warfare but in fact these gestures are essentially signs of status and power.

The potlatch was a very theatrical occurrence. As previously mentioned, the winter ceremonies primarily dealt with initiation. The dances and performances were specifically directed at the uninitiated and were intended to cause reactions. Terror, drama and sometimes comedy were sought to convince the uninitiated that spirits were present.\textsuperscript{38}

The head of the mythical raven could be opened in two or four parts, revealing a human face which had been hidden from the spectators; cannibalistic birds could clap their beaks; the Spirit of Sleep could alternately open and close his eyelids, and roll his eyes while moving his jaws; and birds perched on an immobile head could beat their wings. A bladder filled with blood, surreptitiously burst, allowed the sorcerer-conjuror to simulate the public severing of a slave's head.\textsuperscript{39}

Levi-Strauss

Ridicule and mocking aimed at the visiting tribes and their chiefs were intended to display the power and wealth of the host. At times the hosting chief, might pour valuable fish oil, of his possession, into the fire, igniting it. Here, the chief showed that he could afford to waste a commodity for he was wealthy. Often the enraged


fire, fueled by the oil, was close to the visiting chief. If the chief moved away from the fire to avoid being scorched, he admitted defeat; he acknowledged the host's wealth. The whole experience of the potlatch was surely a drama--actions were exaggerated creating a tension.

INNER LOGIC

In our conservative society, the drama of these potlatches seems almost mad. But, often the actions of our rituals are subdued--we are extremely self-conscious in comparison with the Kwakiutl. In the television series, "Twin Peaks"\(^{40}\), we are presented with elements analogous with the potlatch. Situations in the series seem exaggerated or mad at times. For example, in the midst of a conversation between and FBI agent and the local sheriff (which occurs in the morgue after a murder), Dale the agent, interrupts to ask, "Sheriff, what kind of trees have you got here?" or in another scene, a character who is speaking pauses to spit into a fireplace.\(^{41}\) We are unaccustomed to these events. But, it is not our daily lives with which we compare these occurrences--for at times, these actions do take place. We are lulled into a comfortable uniformity through the images which we see in media. As well, this comfortable uniformity begins to structure our daily lives, making the act of spitting into fireplace something that

\(^{40}\)ABC, "Twin Peaks," Fall 1990.

\(^{41}\)Ibid.
only happens in front of close friends. The potlatch, in a sense, is the media for the Kwakiutl - a culture without the written word.

The potlatches consisted of a choreographed set of events. Speeches were made by the chiefs in a precise order, food was distributed and wealth was exchanged. Through all of the protocol ran the structure of the dance. Many dances were given. Over the course of a potlatch some dances were even repeated. The dances give physical form to the entire ritual of the potlatch. The sense of tension and drama is maintained by the rhythms, chants and masks of the potlatch. The dances enact the events surrounding encounters of man and spirit. In the case of the cannibal-raven dance. The masked performer first enters the big-house as the raven. He speaks by clapping his beak. The raven captures the young men who are to be initiated into the secret society of cannibals (Hamatsa) and takes them away. Traditionally the young men would be kept away in the forest for weeks being initiated. When the young men return they had gone mad and dance wildly out of control. They pretended to bite members of the audience (drawing blood with a secret blade.) Finally, they are tamed by elders who are already initiated. The dances are not only part of the ritual of initiation into manhood but also are understood to represent a point in the past where the raven spirit first captured man. Thus, the dances function both literally and figuratively.
STRUCTURE

As touched upon in the raven-dance example, the mask is the crucial element in the dance. The mask represents the physical structure of the dance. Stanley Walens lists the three ways in which structural similarities are created between spirits and man:

I. Prayers, songs and myths concerning ancestors
II. Social forms of spirit life
III. Ceremonial objects—masks, rattles

Structures can be understood as systems which serve to order or provide consistency. They are essential to the whole. Without structures—there would be no entity.

Before pursuing the mask further, the notion of Kwakiutl causality must be discussed. Simply put "causal" is how one action effects or affects another action. In our Western understanding causality must have "continuity in time and contiguity in space" to occur. For the Kwakiutl, "causality is a matter of sympathy in form and motion." A "metaphorical relationship" is created between entities.

The mask is an element of transformation. It is part of the "magic show" that is the potlatch. To our

42 Walens, Analogic Causality and the Power of Masks, p.72.
43 Walens, Feasting With Cannibals, p.21.
44 Walens, Analogic Causality and the Power of Masks, p.71.
45 Ibid.
sensibilities, the mask may seem trivial in its functions. We think nothing of a thunderbird mask unfolding to reveal a human visage. It may be interesting but it is a gimmick. Our reading of the mask is due to the fact that we have not and cannot fully enter into the structures of the Kwakiutl dances. As Stanley Walens discusses, the dances have a rationality working within them just as a magic trick does, even though it may not be easily perceptible.\textsuperscript{46} If the dance is the media for the Kwakiutls, then the mask becomes the device for storage and transmission. The mask is a constant within the dance. At a potlatch, the same mask may be used several times by several people. The masks are also passed down within a family from generation to generation or at times given as a valuable gift. The masks were kept in individual storage boxes which helped to preserve them. The masks maintained a constant, repeated image which served to structure its dance.

Stanley Walens, points out that each mask has a name (which is also the name of the dance) and that these names "are the boxes in which the history and identity of the Kwakiutl is stored..."\textsuperscript{47} All masks are named, and all names are masks\textsuperscript{48} Like the written word, the image of a

\textsuperscript{46}Walens, \textit{Analogic Causality and the Power of Masks},: p.71-72.

\textsuperscript{47}Ibid, p.72.

\textsuperscript{48}Ibid, p.73.
mask physically recalls "a name" and all of the meanings of that "name."

The Kwakiutl Indians, through living in a plentiful environment, created ritual with the dance and the mask. The dance gave expression to the ritual and the mask structured the dance.

The wearing of the mask for the Kwakiutl represents the coming to terms with several things. Every being is dependent on food to sustain itself. When a being is created another being must die. Also, the mask is a way of facing and overcoming "the primal voraciousness"49 which lies within all of us.

---

49Walens, Feasting With Cannibals, p.39.
iii. CHOREOGRAPHY AND ARCHITECTURE

I can feel them [the dancers] like clay in my hands. The minute I see them I become excited and stimulated to move them.

George Balachine\textsuperscript{50}

Time and space are the mediums in which dance and architecture exist. When Mies van der Rohe called architecture "frozen music", I believe he had not thought of dance. Both architecture and dance create form in space. Isn’t architecture, more correctly, a frozen moment of the dance? Architecture requires the dynamic human experience in and around the form.\textsuperscript{51} Dance can be experienced from a static point because its form flows. Like architecture, dance must have structures which order form. In this sense, music creates one structure for the dance based on rhythms and tone. However, many structures exist in the dance.

The word "choreography" comes from "chorus", --"an organized company, or recurring part."\textsuperscript{52} Chorus in turn stems from the root, "chora". "Chora" is a form/space which is not easily perceptible. Peter Eisenman, spoke of chora in the 1990 J.A. article "Chora and Weak Form".\textsuperscript{53} Eisenman references Jacque Derrida and ultimately Plato's "Timeaus"


\textsuperscript{51}Certain Rennaissance architects, however, intended that their buildings be able to be experienced from one position (ie. Brunelleschi's San Lorenzo.)

\textsuperscript{52}Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, "Chorus"

\textsuperscript{53}Eisenman, "Chora and Weak Form"
as originating the notion of chora. To Eisenman the chora is something between positive and negative space. Chora "is like a membrane which receives imprints and also leaves a trace on that which is imprinting."\textsuperscript{54} The example given by Eisenman is that of a foot leaving its imprint in sand where a trace of sand is left on the foot when it is picked up. However, chora "is neither the foot nor the sand."\textsuperscript{55} Chora is akin to a Japanese concept of "mu," "which is something more than nothing."\textsuperscript{56}

Indeed, the idea of dance in oriental thought is similar to the notion of chora. When dance is experienced, it is just as important to perceive the form of the human body as it is to attempt to perceive the voided space around the dancer—similar to the wake of a boat. In the mind of the viewer of a dance, there is simultaneously the reflection upon the previous gesture of the dancer as well as the anticipation of the form to come. In this way, dance is a very interactive expression.

In Richard Schechner's, \textit{Essays on Performance Theory 1970-1976},\textsuperscript{57} performance is structured around both a fan system and a web system. Schechner refers to the connections among items 6 through 9 as the "deep

\textsuperscript{54}Eisenman, "Chora and Weak Form"

\textsuperscript{55}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{56}Ibid.

structures"\textsuperscript{58} of theater. For Schechner, the preparations for performance by the performers (training, rehearsals) as well as the audience, and what happens after a performance are significant to the entire experience of the performance. Dance as a performance, is more than form in space--it also involves a dynamic. A dynamic of expression between past and future.

The dance is a primal instinct in the human being. The presence of a rhythm motivates our bodies. A gathering of people is also instinctual. In fact, it has been found that primates too, exhibit this primal desire to gather and "dance."\textsuperscript{59} Schechner characterizes, our "payback/exchange" rituals, in which the potlatch as well as family picnics can be included, with several attributes:

1. Gathering of different bands
2. Singing, drumming, rhythmic movement
3. Sharing of food
4. Neutral meeting place--not home\textsuperscript{60}

These gatherings transform a place into a space. The ritual operates as a regulatory mechanism for political, social and religious interaction with other tribes.


\textsuperscript{59} Ibid, p.109.

\textsuperscript{60} Ibid.
METHODOLOGY

The methodology of choreography varies just as much as the methodology of architectural design. The modern choreographers often relied on pure structure generated by music. One post-modern choreographer, Merce Cunningham, relies on chance with the role of dice to determine the movements of the dance. Choreography, at first, may seem to be a purely subjective construct. But like architecture, choreography relies on a set of materials and structures. Doris Humphrey draws a comparison between architecture and dance in her book, The Art of Making Dances. 61

I like to think that choreographic theory and the study of it is a craft, and only that, for I do not claim that anyone can be taught to create, but only that talent or possibly genius can be supported and informed by know-how, just as an architect, no matter how gifted, must understand the uses of steel, glass and stone. 62

Humphrey breaks dance down into a set of ingredients. At the time she wrote the book in 1959, dance theory was still relatively new. In fact, some professionals, at that time, felt that analysis of the art would only serve to stifle it. Although, architectural theory is much older and possibly more defined than that of dance, we can learn from an analysis of choreography.


62 Ibid, p.19
DANCE ELEMENTS

Humphrey's "Elements of Dance Movement," are design, dynamics, rhythm and motivation. Design is the relationship of objects to each other in space. In architecture, "design" in this sense is obviously one of the primary elements we are taught. Humphrey defines dynamics as "an energy flow." Although "an energy flow" may be present in the quick conceptual sketch of an architect, dynamism in this sense rarely ever survives through the construction of a built work.

One example of architects, who attempt to maintain the dynamics of a sketch are Coop Himmelblau. There are few development drawings made between the initial sketch and those necessary to get the work built. In Coop Himmelblau’s work the challenge of maintaining the sketch comes in the final detailing and choice of materials.

Rhythm as an element of dance, "is the most persuasive and most powerful" element according to Humphrey. She calls rhythm "the great organizer." Indeed, rhythm is certainly the most perceivable structure of a dance. For the Kwakiutls, there is no dance without the drum pounding out a rhythm in the background and the dancer’s heels visually mimicking the beat. Rhythm defines the overall

63Doris Humphrey, The Art of Making Dances, p.46.
64Ibid.
65Ibid, p.104
66Ibid.
shape of the dance, down to each individual gesture. Rhythm creates a continuity through the dance and provides a field in which the object can be read. In architecture, rhythm can be read in several ways. Rhythm can be the fabric of a city in which the monument can be read. The column grid of a building is also a rhythm. Without the order that rhythm establishes there would be no dance or architecture as we know it. It is hard to imagine what form architecture would take without rhythm. Dance without some form of rhythm would scarcely exist.

With regards to movement, Humphrey focuses on the motivational force. She says, "that no move will be made until a reason, simple as it may be, demands it." This phrase obviously also occurs in architectural discourse. Both architecture and dance are mediums for communication. By placing objects in space with certain relationships, are we not trying to say something? In all cases, we are at least attempting to stir emotion in the witness.

"Motivation is the all-inclusive core of dance-composition, and gesture is a branch of it." Humphrey illustrates with clear examples of body expression how feelings can be conveyed in dance. In architecture, there is a constant struggle to find the proper means of expression. How might the human body begin to inform

---


68 Ibid, p.112
architectural expression? Anthropomorphism, in this sense, occurs in architecture, to a limited extent. The plastic qualities of the mask—frontality, confrontation and expression may be utilized, to name a few.

Architecture has always created an analogue with the human body as seen in the classical column. However, the human body, in the case of the classical column, was translated primarily into the aesthetics of proportion. The classical column does not convey the expression of feelings that the human body does.

Antonio Gaudi’s leaning columns in his park in Barcelona, begin to convey bodily feelings. Here there is the human expression of struggle, endeavoring to support a load. Another example of human expression in architecture can be seen in the brooding forehead of Erich Mendelsohn’s Einstein Observatory. This comparison leads to a literal connection of dance to the Expressionist movement. However, what is sought in the analogy to dance is an abstraction of the human expression.

Gestures, as defined by Humphrey, "are patterns of movement established by long usage among men." Social gesture in architecture might be seen as the "classical language." However, the meanings of certain elements such as pediments have been so often corrupted by current usage that they do not hold the commonality of a handshake.

Gesture in architecture must also be something that is felt rather than literally visualized. The craftsmanship of a building, or richness of materials, or development of proportion must be the gesture that physical signs once were.

Dance notation is an area of development within choreography which potentially is a useful way of thinking of architectural drawing. The goal of notation is the creation of a "score" for the dance. "The score" as seen in music provides the basic unbiased structure for interpretation by the musician. In the past, dancers had to rely on moving pictures to provide a description of the dance. For a student wishing to learn a dance it is difficult to go beyond imitating the image. The individual's technique as seen in the moving picture is much too prominent for an unbiased reading of the dance. Through notation, a person wishing to learn a dance will hopefully gain an insight into the structures of the dance. By combining the time measure of the dance with the notation of movement, the hidden, covert structures may be realized on paper.

The architectural plan is notational in the sense that it is a somewhat neutral expression of the three dimensional object. In other words, the plan does not necessarily reveal elevational, sectional or material aspects of the building. In this way, the plan can be a beautifully ambiguous device for creating numerous readings of an
object. The plan allows a designer to study various alternatives without biasing one solution. Again, as with dance notation, all architectural drawings such as a plan can reveal the structure and order of an object.

One interesting difference between dance notation and architectural drawing as another form of notation is the order of existence. Dance notation, as it has been developed, usually follows the creation of a dance—it is a way of describing the dance. Architectural drawings usually precede the built work. Two attitudes can be taken towards the drawing— that "it is architecture, in and of itself" (the form is realized on paper) or "the drawing is a device leading to the realization of the built form."70 Architectural drawing as notation implies that the drawing is a tool, thus the first attitude discussed is irrelevant here. Can the drawing achieve the "non-relationship of form"71 with the building just as the notation with the dance?72 Can non-physical structures of the building be mapped in architectural drawings? If so, who would these drawings be useful for? The student attempting to learn from architectural precedents and the builder/craftsman who

70My quotations.

71The relationship/non-relationship of entity/image/representation will be discussed in the Methodology section.

72Refers to the abstract relation between the form of dance and its notation.
constructs the building would both be informed possibly by the drawing as notation, in this sense.

With regards to the methodology and project to be proposed in the final sections of this discussion, the possibilities of achieving a notational drawing will be discussed. Can a drawing of this nature pre-exist the built work?

In this section, architecture has been presented as seen through the structures of choreography to attempt to bring to light the paths of exploration required for this project. Dance is a metaphor for the experience one can have of a building. For the designer seeking to order this experience, the structures of dance must be understood. As no one definitive list of structures exists with regards to dance, Doris Humphrey's list of the elements of dance was chosen as an analytical exercise. Design, dynamics, rhythm and movement comprise this list. All of these elements exist in architecture at varying degrees of perception. In the following case studies these structures of dance will provide a framework for analysis.
iv. CASE STUDIES

The following case studies are intended to examine the experience of two buildings. Each of these buildings hold something personal to me. Thus, the analyses of these two buildings will be subjective,\(^1\) relying on a personal experience with one building and experience only through text (and scant photos) on the second building. At times I will rely on additional referenced material, but it will be primarily of a factual nature.

a.

During the summer of 1989, I visited Le Corbusier’s Monastery of La Tourette. The difficulty of reaching the monastery certainly was part of this moving experience. After finally reaching Eveux-Sur L’Arbresle outside of Lyon, a two mile hike up a hill awaited me. The hike seemed very short, for I was anxious to reach the monastery and hopefully stay overnight. After winding through fields and past farm buildings I arrived at the monastery just before

\(^1\)This approach simply follows previous historians. For each art/architecture history text is basically composed of the subjective ponderings of an individual substantiated by examples readily found in the rich field of art/architecture.
sunset. I approached the Monastery at the top of the hill and having read Colin Rowe's essay in the *Mathematics of the Ideal Villa*,\(^2\) was curious to see just how ambiguous the entry sequence would be.\(^3\) After spending the night at the old chateau nearby which accepts guests, I was led on a tour of the monastery by a female, German architect student--a surreal occurrence. Upon reflecting on the tour and my visit there is a power which existed in the building which I find akin to a dance. If dance can be described in relation to it's structures, as noted by Doris Humphrey, then one can analyze La Tourette as a dance.\(^4\)

**Design** -- the relationship of forms to each other in time and space\(^5\)

---

\(^2\)Colin Rowe, *Mathematics of the Ideal Villa and Other Essays* (Massachusetts, First MIT Press, 1976.)

\(^3\)The main road leading to the monastery approaches the building from the upper side thus diffusing Rowe's impression of the lower approach from the old monastery.

\(^4\)The dance can exist as though one is participating- moving through the building. Also, the dance can exist in a frozen state- one can view a static object which can visually index movement, gesture, rhythm and all of the structures which define dance.

\(^5\)Humphrey, *The Art of Making Dances*, p.46.
To discover, to create a different, other architecture, unique and original in its essential nudity—that was our goal.

—Iannis Xenakis, assistant designer to Le Corbusier

La Tourette conforms to the age-old rectangular courtyard plan. However, there is a displacement of tradition. The normally rectangular cloister which usually surrounds the courtyard is here inverted, into a cross. Where there is usually the flat ground of the courtyard, La Tourette’s ground falls away, allowing the forms in the courtyard space to become animated. The oratory, spiral stair, chimney, atrium and sacristy stand at different levels with different connections to the ground. There is a silent confrontation among them. These objects are participating in a performance and we are seizing one tense moment.

**Dynamics** — "an energy flow," texture

Architecture is the magnificent play of forms in light.

—Le Corbusier

---


7Ibid.


The textures of the bare concrete, basically the only building material at La Tourette, are as varied as the men who formed it. From the first view of the belfry at sunset to the experience within the chapel, the ways in which light transforms the building by illuminating the textures were numerous. On the outside wall of the chapel, the setting sun defined the measure of concrete formwork and revealed the nature of the sloping parapet. The absence of light on the east side of the building exaggerated the depth of the monk's cells and the exposed aggregate balconies.

After entering the building, one experiences the modulation of light through the monasteries variety of fenestration. Two slits, one behind and above, and one in the corner, subtly illuminate the oratory. The slit in the corner, lightly ripples over the rough plastered wall. Walking down the hallways outside of the communal rooms, a strip window followed our path at head height. In response to the monk's restriction from gazing out into the outside world, Le Corbusier placed "sugar cubes,"\textsuperscript{10} fins of

\textsuperscript{10} Tour of La Tourette, June 1989.
concrete, perpendicular to the hallway to limit views out while moving.

In opposition to the monks relatively dark cells, the atrium adjoining the chapel is filled with light: the effect of the saw-tooth windows is that of an explosion. The chapel returns one into solemnity. Upon entering the huge volume of the church, I was overtaken by the beauty of the space. I believe it is the most incredible space I have ever experienced. All at once, each type of lighting experienced in the monastery is collaged in the chapel—from the dark sacristy to the brightness of the corner window.

Rhythm -- "the great organizer"11

La Tourette contains a richness of rhythm seldom found elsewhere. Rhythm in architecture, is often exemplified by structure. The structure at La Tourette is sometimes visible and at others concealed. The solid planes of the chapel denote load-bearing walls. The almost transparent facades of the courtyard and the south side reveal a rectangular column grid behind mullions based on music. One of Corbusier’s designers, Xenakis designed the fenestration

based on the rhythms from Metastasis, a music score.\textsuperscript{12} The rhythms are rich visually in terms of the density/lightness of the window-wall. Invisible structures lie hidden in various locations throughout the monastery. In the flat, smooth roof of the crypt, pre-tensioned cables remain taut supporting the light cannons. Everywhere in the rough concrete, one finds traces of the first La Tourette built—the structure of wood used to form the concrete. Down on the lowest level, where the cloister meets the ground, the walls are eroded, blurring the distinction of wall or pier. Shadows fall from scuppers onto the vertical surfaces and from mullions onto the flow creating rhythm. Measure is given to the monastery in the form of music, formwork and shadows.

Motivation -- A force causing a change of position\textsuperscript{13}

The visitor to the Monastery of La Tourette, provides the motivation to experience the "frozen dance."\textsuperscript{14} The entire journey from Paris to Lyon to L' Ambresle to the

\textsuperscript{12} Iannis Xenakis, "The Monastery of La Tourette," p.145-146.

\textsuperscript{13} Humphrey, The Art of Making Dances, p.114.

\textsuperscript{14} Refer to Section iii. Choreography and Architecture, p.19.
first sight of La Tourette to the chapel to the last sight of La Tourette embody an experience I will never forget. The feelings that one encounters over this journey are innumerable. Anticipation of the first view of the monastery, surprise at its scale (much smaller than one would think), and awe in the chapel are examples of just a few.

**Gesture -- A language of movement**\(^{15}\)

Just as the traditional form of the cloister has been displaced but still rendered recognizable, Corbusier, transforms other symbolic forms. The oratory becomes pure through its composition of Holy Cross, platonic cube and platonic pyramid. The parlatorium forms seem to recall tents set up at the gates of the castle monasteries of the past.\(^{16}\) The belfry of the church, the bold element first visible, stems from Corbusier's early sketches of churches in Greece.\(^{17}\)


\(^{17}\)Iannis Xenakis, "The Monastery of La Tourette," p.147.
In the monastery of La Tourette, Le Corbusier transcends the literal "type" of the monastery as well as other gestural symbols to create something new—an abstract dance. As Rafael Moneo stated "type" can become "A frame within which change operates."  

The type rather than being a "frozen mechanism" to produce architecture, becomes a way of denying the past, as well as a way of looking at the future.  

b.

In the Hamar Museum, designed by Sverre Fehn, I have found a new inspiration. It has been partially the discovery of Fehn, that lends him so much credence. To learn of an architect, with such powerful work, who has not been consumed by the media is truly remarkable. Fehn shows an attention to detail and care for the built work which is seldom paralleled.

Although I know little of the Hamar Museum, there is a sense of power which is conveyed by the few bits of text and photos available. Fehn's own writing propels the Hamar

---

18 Rafael Moneo, "On Typology."

19 Ibid.
Museum towards greatness. There is a dance of words—a static form which conveys dynamism.

Paths or trajectories across history. Some fade as the grass grows or the footprints of the young lovers and the strolling visitors. The heavy farm wheels, the cows and the horses on their way home, all part of the memory.\textsuperscript{20}

The Hamar Museum was built above the ruins of a bishops manor. Through a relatively few number of interventions, Fehn has succeeded in creating a machine from which to survey the ground (an archeological site).\textsuperscript{21} Peter Cook describes Fehn’s precision composition of ramps, stairs and galleries and other elements as analogous to that of a "watchmaker’s."\textsuperscript{22}

Fehn’s "machine"\textsuperscript{23} brings one into conflict with the past. Each new element which he creates is carefully juxtaposed with the old. The plate glass covering the large broken-away parts of the stone wall does not seek to mend

\textsuperscript{20}Fehn, \textit{Sverre Fehn: The Thought of Construction}, p.130.


\textsuperscript{22}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{23}Ibid.
the wound but instead to illuminate it. In this respect (the way in which the new relates to the old,) Sverre Fehn’s Hamar Museum brings to mind Carlo Scarpa. In the same Summer I visited La Tourette, I also visited Verona and Castle Vecchio. Here again, the ruins of an old building (a castle) are embraced and filled with a new breath of life. The building is animated by the carefully crafted details which Scarpa is known for. The new planar surfaces, of walls, ceiling and floor are treated with a reveal to visually separate them from the existing surfaces. The works of art in Castle Vecchio are given a new context in which to exist. Scarpa has designed easels and other display systems which carry on a dialogue with the artifact while still remaining in the background. Scarpa’s interventions like Fehn’s, seem to have always existed. They are definitely distinct from the existing ruins but they are also mutually dependent on each other.

The Hamar Museum and Castle Vecchio are dances through the experience of procession. The overriding image of the ramp at the Hamar museum reminds one of the ramp at Le Corbusier’s Villa Savoye. The ramp becomes a vehicle for the dance not only figuratively but also in its tracing of
the memory of a previous structure. The mutual dependency of the old and new seem to waltz, at times slowly and at others rapidly.

As I cannot fully convey the feelings of Sverre Fehn's work, let me end with another quotation from an interview with Per Olaf Fjeld. In this discussion, Fehn speaks of the transcendence of materials. Materials receive the plastic expression of the architect just as the human body receives the plastic expression of the choreographer.

Per Olaf Fjeld:
Does material have its own language?

Sverre Fehn:
Each material has its own shadow. The shadow penetrates the material and radiates its message. You converse with material through the pores of your skin, your ears, and your eyes. The dialogue does not stop at the surface, as its scent fills the air. Through touch, you exchange heat and the material gives an immediate response. Speak to a stone and it gives resonance's mystic. Speak to a mountain ledge, and it gives sound a mirror. Listen to a snow-covered forest, and it offers the language of silence. The great master in the use of wood as a material is a musical instrument maker. His ear gives each piece its dimension.24

---

v. THE EXHIBIT

Does there exist a greater loneliness than that of a catalogued Egyptian mummy in foggy London, lying in the shadowless world of fluorescent light? All things excavated from deep within the earth demand the magic of history. The artifacts must be reborn and find their "space" in the new context. So that the various artifacts can find this space, the architect has to live within the artifact, as the words within the soul of the actor

-Sverre Fehn

Sverre Fehn's quotation has been inspirational and motivational to this project throughout its duration. As it has been the mask as an artifact, particularly the Kwak'wala mask which has interested me, the mask must become the subject of the project. Through the previous discussion and the analysis to follow I have "lived [and will live] within the artifact" the images of these masks have been posted on the wall in my studio for months increasing my familiarity with the artifact. As my permanent home is in Seattle, the Northwest Indians and their art lies very close to me. To conceive of a project of this nature and successfully carry it out to completion, there must be a passion. Architecture and making as well as the power of the mask embody my passion.

The program of the exhibit space comes out of these two passions: making and the mask. For me, the initial motivation to become an architect comes from the desire to make. After completing six years of study in architecture

---

1Sverre Fehn as quoted by Per Olaf in Sverre Fehn: The Thought of Construction (New York: Rizzoli, 1983) p.17.
with the only realized projects being furniture, my thesis project seemed to be necessarily a built work. The success and interest spawned by an earlier built project, by a previous thesis student, housing for the homeless, also contributed to my desire to build.\(^2\)

Initially, the program of a museum came to mind as an appropriate exercise in dealing with the mask as an artifact. The way we see an object displayed affects our attitude towards the object and the museum. The museum program was translated into an exhibit space for two reasons. First, a museum for Northwest Indians would be unrealizable in terms of an individual carrying out most of the construction. The second reason for an exhibit space program over a museum program was the dynamic and temporal nature of a travelling exhibit. My critique of the institution of the museum demanded a different program, one which stands outside the traditional model.

The critique of the museum evolved out of frustration with the way which in artifacts, particularly masks, are often experienced in the museum. I have visited many of the museums in the Northwest and elsewhere which have collections of Indian art. Of these museums, the types of

\(^2\)Steve Mayman, Fall of 1990 Thesis Project, Rice University.

\(^3\)See Appendix III, The UBC Museum of Anthropology with regards to the idea of the "aesthetic" museum and the "history" museum.
environments for the artifacts can be divided into two types.

The first type of museum environment for the display of artifacts intends to create a neutral backdrop. This supposedly unbiased presentation of art desires to have no interaction with the art and provide flexibility, in the case of changing exhibits. One assumption is correct in the creation of a neutral, sterile environment: the original context in which the artifact was produced and seen, can never be fully recreated. This argument falls short, in terms of having no discussion with the artifact. However, examples of this type of museum can be seen in the de Menil (Houston), or the Burke (Seattle). Here, there exists an abstract white-washed aesthetic of purity and minimalism. The artifacts are grouped together behind glass with no particular historical or geographical order.

Of the second type of museums experienced, the opposite scenario to the abstract exists. The intention in these museums, is to recreate the original context of the artifact. Obviously, the result of such an endeavor approaches the pastiche of Disneyland. The Indian mask in such museums as the B.C. Provincial in Victoria, is at times displayed on a mannequin, flanked by a painted backdrop. The notion of the diorama is an interesting approach to the display of an artifact in terms of having a background.

---

4This section was written before reading Clifford.
relationship with the object. However, in most cases, the painted scenery and the mannequin become much too literal—everything is presented to the viewer leaving no room for one's mind to explore. Additionally, what is being presented is the "official" story not necessarily the only story.

The intention of the case studies discussed earlier was to illustrate examples of the built form transcending literalness and creating a new context. In particular, I believe Sverre Fehn accomplishes in his Hamar Bispegard Museum what his stated intention had been. The artifacts are seen in a new light in a new space. Similarly, Carlo Scarpa's Castle Vecchio achieves a middle ground between the sterile environment and the diorama. Both the Hamar and Castle Vecchio rely heavily on the relationship of new to old. Both buildings play off the connections of the new structures within the old ruins.

The program of the exhibit space answers to several criteria: the critique of the museum, the completion of a built work and the usage of transformational qualities of the mask and dance. Through the intention of travelling to various locations, sometimes to museums, the exhibit will conduct an ongoing critique of the museum as we usually know them.

The exhibit space will be a mask for the artifacts it holds. It will arrive concealing its contents—the masks. However, the making of the containers will begin to reveal
the masks. Through the structure of the mask, the exhibit space will become a dance for the masks it displays. These dances in their original context are gone. A new dance must be created. The exhibit space will transform, like one of the masks it contains, the exhibit will have this ability to present an overall image as well as the individual visages of the masks. The dance will be performed through the exhibit space’s transformation from container (introverted space) to display space (extroverted space.)

Initially, the exhibit space was to accommodate four Kwakiutl masks. The Legacy Gallery\(^5\) in Seattle first offered to lend a cannibal raven mask, a thunderbird mask, a komokwa mask and transformation mask. These masks are largely representative of Kwakiutl masks and their dances have been documented.

The final program evolved after I was contacted by Steve Charles of the Sacred Circle Gallery of United Indians of All Tribes Foundation. I had first met Steve in December of 1990 and spoke to him about my initial ideas. In June, Steve presented me with the opportunity to design an exhibit space for up to twelve Northwest style masks designed by Alex Williams, a Nez Perce living in Seattle. The masks were commissioned by the city’s One Percent for Art Program and are in the custody of the Sacred Circle Art Gallery. Due to the lack of space in the facility, Steve Charles

\(^5\)The Legacy Gallery, Seattle, Mardonna Austin-Mckillop, President.
agreed to let me take on the project so that many people would be able to view the masks which had been kept in storage.

At the time, Steve Charles contacted me about the exhibit, he had seen only my initial conceptual drawing. I produced the drawing in February ('91) to generate interest in the project and convey my overall ideas. The exhibit depicted in the drawing is pure "whim"—the small diagrams are actually the important drawings. These diagrams were eventually transformed into the prototype.

Also accompanying the conceptual drawing, when I sent out information to possible mask donors, was an intuitive, dramatic description of my visualization of the exhibit. Originally, I saw the exhibit space as a square defined by four totem-pole-like crates. These crates would open revealing the masks.

The functional program for the exhibit space will consist of several requirements. The exhibit space will be a self-contained system of packing crates suitable for transportation. When transformed, the exhibit space will provide an adequate amount of space for the viewing of four Indian masks. These masks will be protected in transportation by the crates and a secure system of "mounting" the masks will be developed. The exhibit space will be able to accommodate a set number of people. The specifics of the program will be established during the analysis/design portions of the project.

In conclusion, the exhibit space will attempt to mediate between the literal diorama and the abstract,
neutral exhibit. This aim, will be sought through an analysis of the structures of each mask’s dance. It is hoped that a new understanding of the artifact will be achieved. Through the analysis, the design of a new context will be informed.
THE TOTEMIC TRAVELING MASK EXHIBIT - conceptual design
vi. Methodology

All too often the sheer power and beauty of Northwest Coast design prevents one from going beyond the mere artistic merit of a piece to a deeper understanding of its nature as a ritual object. Exhibits of masks in museums rarely do more than tell the provenience and date of a mask; the better ethnographic exhibits might give a minimum of information on the being whose likeness is portrayed.

Masks are meant to be worn...\(^7\)

―Stanley Walen

The discussion to this point in the project is intended to provide the foundation needed to begin an analysis of the Kwakiutl dances and ultimately build the exhibit. This foundation has been established by first defining the mask in terms of the project. Next, a background into the Kwakiutl Indians was discussed. Choreography and its relation to architecture defined a set of structures within the dance. These structures were then used as a framework for an analysis of two case studies. The case studies were chosen due to their ability to mediate between the literal and the abstract, an attribute I have tried to illustrate as relying on the structures of dance. Finally, the project and program of the exhibit space was argued for and defined.

The following section will consist of the initial proposed methodology, the actual analysis, the early schemes, the conceptual model and the prototype.


\(^7\) Walens, "Analogic Causality and the Power of Masks," p.70.
a. PROPOSED (4/91)

[What follows is my original plan for the analysis. Although, the analysis which actually occurred differed I feel it is useful and enlightening to see the direction I had intended to take one year ago.]

The analysis will begin with visual data of the Kwakiutl dances. I have made copies of three video recordings containing information about the Kwakiutl Indians. I feel that video recordings are a valid medium for analysis for several reasons. As we are inherently removed from these dances, any medium is just as valid as another. Video, however, has the ability to present the images and sounds of the dance in real time or by "freezing" moments of the dance. Additionally, as the dances which exist on one of the video tapes were recorded at the World Expo in 1986 in Vancouver, a setting already removed in time and space from the traditional context of the dance, the videotape is an appropriate medium in our time. The other two video recordings document the origin of the U'mista cultural center (a Kwakiutl center) and the potlatch. Some images from these two recordings as well as the documentary information will supplement the dance recordings.

Two Lines

There will be two concurrent lines of analysis. The first line of analysis is inevitable—it is my intuitive process based on my education as an architect. The
secondary action will be a response to the first. This analysis may be an equal and opposite reaction or simply an answer to the first process. So, each intuitive act will be followed by a reaction. The purpose of this secondary reaction is to take a critical look at my trained intuition as an architect and at times counter its prejudices.

Just as the structures of dance are not always easily perceptible, my second line of analysis will necessarily be a discovery. I will generate this reactive move by objectively describing the intuitive move with words and then listing words in reaction. The secondary act will be based off of these descriptive words.

My first intuitive method of analysis once I received the video recordings was to record them. I not only made my own recordings of two of the tapes but also photographed stills from the third tape. In describing this first move, I listed the words, "coveting", "acquiring" and "freezing image." In response to these words, I listed, "giving", "sharing", and "continuous flowing." Thus, by interpreting these words I generated the reactive move to be a written apology. My apology will be based on a conversation I had with Jack Abraham, an Eskimo artist who carves masks. During that conversation, I realized that although I was not directly aware of it, I held within me certain

---


9Telephone conversation March 1991; Houston/Anchorage.
stereotypical opinions of the Native American Indian. I will address these stereotypes and prejudices within me as a "gift" to the Indian. If my architect's intuitive move can be seen as an act of making, the secondary move is the revealing of that which exists—a quality of the mask.

In presupposing the following lines of analysis, I can only guess as to the exact course it will take. However, for the purposes of this discussion, I will attempt to outline some possibilities.
**INTUITIVE ACT**
Based on an architect’s education

**SECONDARY ACT**
A reaction to the intuitive act

Photographing moments of the dance

- coveting
- acquiring
- freezing image

- giving
- sharing
- continuous, flowing

Apology to the Native American

Overlay drawings from the photographs

- scientific
- clarifying
- simplifying

- intuitive, personal
- clouding
- complicating

A list of intangible qualities of the dance

Plan and section drawings from overlay drawings

- architectural
- spatial
- measured

- non-structured representation
- vacuous
- no scale

A series of paintings from "frozen moments" of the dance

Notation of percussive rhythms within the dance

- making physical
- capturing
- quantifying
- gathering

- making ephemeral
- setting free
- making ambiguous
- spreading

Recording of an unstructured, ad lib drum solo
Drawings of the mask

- measured
- architectural
- specific
- elevation
- imperceptible

Sketching the movements of the mask

Dance notation

- freezing the dance
- unbiased
- a description

- freeing the dance
- biased, subjective
- expression

Model of intangible qualities of the dance
Each of the two lines of analysis are intended as a discovery into the "deep structures" of the dance. As Sverre Fehn says, I am intending "to live within an artifact as the words within the soul of the actor."

In the final stage of analysis and design I will step from "within' the dance and the mask to "without" their realm. This reaction is in response to the knowledge that I cannot learn everything I need to know from the dance and the artifact alone. At some point every designer must step back from his work and simply rely on his trained judgment. Le Corbusier, Sverre Fehn and Carlo Scarpa each have a design process. However, within each process there is the "arbitrary move" which is unexplainable. It is this ephemeral structure which makes their respective work truly great.
Sequence photos of Kwakiutl dances
b. ANALYSIS (6/91-10/91)

After carrying out the initial intuitive move of photographing the videotape of the Kwakiutl dances, I begin to look at the actual space of the dance. The Northwest Coast Indian big-house or long-house became the focus of the analysis. The big-house provided and still provides to an extent and incredible container for the dance.10 The word "container" stems from the Kwakiutl notion that the body is a container for the soul, the mask is a container for the body (as a new soul) and the big-house is a container for the collective body (the tribe.)11

However, the big-house is much more than a container. The act of building the big-house is a dance or ritual in its own rite. Just as the dance is structured, the big-house becomes a diagram for a dance composed of two structures. The primary physical and spiritual structure of the big-house is composed of the four house-posts, two trabeated beams and two transverse beams. This primary structure is constructed first becoming a frame on which the secondary structure can be supported. The log, "primary structure" is obviously larger than the structural demands but what is sought here is a very physical and heavy anchor to the spiritual world. The primary structure will not only

10There are fewer and fewer existing big-houses left in the villages of the Kwakiutl. Many have either been torn down or have been converted to museums. The dances still occur but often in other public spaces such as gymnasiums.

function as the means of physical support but also as a gateway to the beyond. The masked dancer, as the spirit, always enters through either of the two gateways (defined by the houseposts) or through the smoke hole in the roof.

The secondary structure composed of smaller wood members serves to mask the primary structure both revealing it and concealing it. The smaller structure provides a barrier to the outside world of everyday life. There are basically only three openings in the big-house. The singular entrance for those who come to witness the dance, the entrance for the dancers (usually hidden) and the exit for smoke/entrance for the spirits.

The final stage in the ritual of building the big-house is its ornamentation. Only the primary structure (with the exception of the front wall of the big-house) receives carved reliefs and paint. The ornamentation serves to qualify the space as a place for the spirits and also to dematerialize the physicality of the log structure. The primary structure now can shed its main visual reading as a load-bearing frame and function as the spiritual gateway that it is thought of as.

Out of the analysis of the big-house came the notion that the exhibit space might became a metaphorical big-house. The exhibit space would remove the visitor from everyday life and allow magic to happen. Paralleling this idea was that the ritual of setting up the exhibit space
would be abstractly analogous to the construction of the
big-house.

The critique that developed of this notion of the
exhibit space as big-house came about out of two issues.
First, the exhibit space was to be more than a container for
the masks (or dance.) The dance itself was to be imbued in
the structure of the exhibit space. Secondly, the formal
and transformational aspects of the exhibit space paralleled
too closely the big-house. A bigger shift needed to occur
between the prototypical big-house and the exhibit-space to
reflect the rift in the cultural continuum and the belief
that the "original context" could not be recreated.

My analysis begin to take the form of three not-
necessarily parallel lines. The analysis of the structure
of the big-house seemed to support the notion of a sequence
of construction. The analysis of the masks came next: its
primary focus being the relationship to the wearer, the
relationship to the audience and its formal make-up. These
issues begin to inform spatial concepts for the exhibit.
Finally, the analysis could delve into the structures of the
dance.

Mask analysis

After receiving photographs of the thirteen possible
masks for the exhibit, I enlarged them to a working scale.12

---

12Twelve masks were included in the analysis drawings. The
thirteenth mask is a larger raven mask similar to mask #11
I begin to trace the photographs each time trying to isolate a particular aspect or reading. I believe the value of these drawings was not only the familiarization of the masks for me but also the ultimate discovery of the masks ability to define two types of space. The sections of the masks are the most important drawings; they illustrate the introverted space between the inside of the mask and the face of the wearer. Notice how each introverted space is unique. Not only the profiles of the masks generate this uniqueness but also the relationship of the mask to the face.

The unavoidable gaze of the mask, produced by facial expression as well as the dance, define the second type of space— the extroverted space. This space is bounded loosely by the cone of vision of the mask and the bodies of the audience.

Labanotation

The analysis of the dances of the Northwest Coast Indians begin with the photographs taken of the videotape of the Kwakiutl dancers in Vancouver, as mentioned earlier. The next step was notating one of these dances.13 My sister, Jo Gjertson-Frederiksen, kindly notated a section of the Hamatsa using Labanotation.14 When I received the

in the drawings. In the final scheme seven masks were selected for the exhibit.

13see section on Labanotation- "Architecture and Choreography."

14Hamatsa or Raven Dance— performed at the Winter Ceremony.
notated dance I was astonished by its formal interest. I transcribed the Labanotation at a larger size and juxtaposed it with a sequence of photos from the dance. In this juxtaposition, an interesting question arose: how can the exhibit space begin to index the dance just as the notation does? In other words, how can the structure of the exhibit space be imbued with the structure of the dance as represented by the notation. Formally, they were completely different, yet the Labanotation and the images were indexing the same event. Both indexes revealed different aspects of the dance. The notation recorded the time and body/mask movements yet was sterile. The photos each froze an instant of the dance. In their distorted and blurred characteristics they begin to re-present the drama of the dance. The photos capture expression, light and implied movement. However, even juxtaposed the Labanotation and the photos only index the dance to an extent. That is the point— you can never fully index a past or absent event. But, in the struggle to collage the indexes, a new event is created. This new direction, the collage of indexes, was the turning point towards the prototype.

"The Changer"

The masks which the exhibit space is being designed for were not used in a singular dance or performance. In fact, no mask in any museum was ever used so specifically. This
is the reality which at first seemed to taint the purity of
my initial idea—to design a specific exhibit space for a
specific set of masks used in a specific dance.

After meeting with Steve Charles, the curator of the
masks, I spoke with Jack Abraham, Phyllis Brisson, Bruce
Miller and Alex Williams. Through each of these Native
Americans I begin to grasp the complexity of modern Indian
life. At one time, they are "expected" to be like the
"whiteman", while at others, they must maintain their
"heritage."

The question arose, what material, what indexes are
appropriate to rely on in the structuring of the exhibit?
My belief is that everything I learned, both "fact and
fiction," about the masks, the people involved in the
performances and the heritage which surrounds them is
appropriate.

I received the script of "the Changer" and spoke to
Bruce Miller of its conception and enactment. Relying upon
Labanotation as a model I fabricated my own system of
notation to record the performance. Once again, this
analysis served as way of familiarizing my self with the
structures of the performance. This invented notation would
provide the impetus for the first scheme.
The Big-house
Big-house/Exhibit.

Stages of construction of the Northwest House building.

Stages of construction of the Exhibit space—built scheme.
Labanotation/Photo Juxtaposition

[Diagrams and images of various locations and layouts.]
Invented Notation

TIME: THE SET OF THE PERFORMANCE (EACH UNIT IS EQUAL TO ONE MINUTE)

WHITE

MOVEMENT: THE DANCE

LIGHT

SOUND

CEREMONIAL OBJECTS

TRADITION

"THE CHANGER" FOLK NOTATION
c. SCHEMES (9/91-11/91)

The Mask and the Masque

The intention of the exhibit is to deal with the artifact (the mask) and the performance (the masque.) For as Stanley Walens says, "the mask is meant to be worn."15 The mask's reason for existence is the dance.

Drawing from the two discovered/invented indexes for the mask and the masque respectively, my first presented scheme evolved. In my analysis, the section of the mask became the ideal index for it revealed the mask in a new way. The section allows one to experience the space in front of as well as behind the mask. This spatial awareness generated the idea that the exhibit space would be in effect the space within the mask. Thus, a conceptual section of the exhibit space was conceived— the rough section of the Raven mask (the most important of the masks.)

The index of the performance "The Changer," is the notation I had developed. The linear nature and sequential aspect of the notation seemed to suggest a plan for the exhibit. So now I had a plan and a section of the exhibit space. The length of the performance, twenty-five minutes determined the size of the exhibit— twenty-five feet. Aspects of the performance suggested how the exhibit should be located, lighted and viewed. The varying space between each of the masks and the wearer's faces informed the cross

section of the space. The time bars structuring the notation came to be seen as a track on which a crate could move down over a series of days unloading the components of the exhibit space.

I set up a meeting with Steve Charles and the Seattle Arts Commission, on September 6th, to present my analysis and first scheme. Several days before, I had arrived at the previously discussed scheme. I quickly produced the plan/section drawing and the rendering for the presentation. I was still unsure of its merits but the presentation went off well and I received the approval to go ahead.

After returning to Houston, I presented the scheme to my thesis committee. They, like me, had reservations about this particular scheme. It was obviously not refined to a level where it was ready to be built. The scheme lacked the richness of my analysis and was too predictable. It was decided by all that I owed it to myself and the project to extend its design throughout the Fall semester delaying its construction to the following Spring.

The Armature

As a way of getting a fresh start after I had generated the first scheme, I begin to look at the exhibit space design at its most minute scale—its connection to the mask. The design of the armature, as I came to call it, was in response to several issues. Having talked to Alex Williams, who carved the masks, I had the feeling that he almost
seemed to have lost them. When I begin thinking about how the masks should be supported, I decided that the mask would not be hung on a surface—the mask would be worn. I wanted the viewer to be able to look at the back side of the mask (or look through it) and also be aware of the way the mask was supported. The connection should be visually tenuous yet actually very secure.

The armature is seen as an arm and a hand—the arm and hand of Alex Williams, the maker. The next question became, how should the armature’s "grasp" be read? If Alex had, in a sense, nearly lost the masks, I decided that the armature’s grasp would be read as if the mask had just been taken off by the wearer. The wearer would be surrendering the mask—just about to let go of it.

The armature is quite obvious and possibly distracting. However, this reading is intentional. The mask does not exist on its own—it must always have something (someone) connected to it.

In my final critique of the armature I would say that it is a bit overly obtrusive and needs to be refined. Additionally, the arm itself is difficult to resolve. It needs to dissolve, in a sense, as it gets farther away from the mask. Finally, the "hand" of the armature lacks the necessary stability to properly support the larger masks.16

16In fact, a different type of armature would need to be developed for each specific mask. Relying on the way each mask is worn and taken off would begin to inform the various configurations.
The Site

Following the armature study, I started looking closely at the first "site" for the exhibit space, Farish Gallery at Rice University. In the exhibit space, I was trying to design something that was both site-specific, to an extent, but also widely adaptable. I built several small models of Farish Gallery experimenting with the effect of the exhibit space. In one model, I superimposed the prototypical Indian big-house on the gallery. This imposition was done at first to examine the scale differences. What the model came to inform, however, was the siting for the exhibit space within the gallery. The portion of the lowered dance-area indicated by the model, which occurred in the Farish Gallery, eventually became the size and location for the exhibit.

Concepts

Throughout the conceptualization and development of the project there were many attitudes taken towards the "function" of the exhibit space. As mentioned earlier in the Analysis section, I first thought of the exhibit space as analogous to the big-house—a place where a new dance would occur. The exhibit space was also visualized as the inside of a mask and as an index for a past dance. Similarly, the exhibit space can be seen as a "surrogate" for the past performances—fulfilling the same function as those past performance but not pretending to be them. As I
approached mid-term, I saw the exhibit as a machine—A machine that took a body of information (the dance, the masks, heritage, etc.) and transcribed it into another language. The new language would be a language of built form. Just as in a translation of verbal language, some of the initial meaning is lost but new meanings are formed.

...from literal to abstract...
MASK

ENTITY

Masque

ENTITY

From time immemorial before the Great Flood, and even before the world was turned upside down, all mankind were kindred to each other as to brother, sister, and as the branches of all the family. But when the Flood was sent down from Heaven, all the people fell to confusion and division, and the names and the substances of the branches of the human family were scattered amongst all the nations that were on the earth. And ever since, the scattered extended, and were gathered thereafter.

All the people would come together in a great council. They would lift their hands in the sky toward God and the concept of peace and thanksgiving.

MASQUE

IMAGE

SPACE OF THE EXHIBIT

RE-PRESENTATION

TRANSFORMATION INTO
CONCEPTUAL SECTION OF THE EXHIBIT SPACE

TRANSFORMATION INTO
CONCEPTUAL PLAN OF THE EXHIBIT SPACE
"The Hand"
d. CONCEPTUAL MODEL (10/91)

The model produced for the mid-term review was both abstract and literal. Elements of it remain in the final prototype and I hope the beauty and richness of it also remain. A diagram I produced of the superimposition of three indexes of the dance led to the model. Two of the indexes were the juxtaposed Labanotation and photographs of the Kwakiutl Hamatsa dance. The third index was the index of the masks— their sections. These three indexes, all aligned in a linear fashion, were then overlayed on the flat surface of a hewn log. The hewn log was used as a ground surface not only to recall the log structure of the big-house but also to create a feeling of heaviness in contrast to the somewhat ephemeral structures above. It was then my task as an architect to give the diagram a third dimension.

Based on the notion of chora, or the negative space of the dance, I first carved into the log. This action was a somewhat intuitive desire to do as the mask-maker had. Also, carving into the log was representative of my idea to manipulate the ground plane of the exhibit space. I felt that when one entered the space there should be a removal, of some type, from the existing condition. The carved-out voids in the log were created by imagining a "wake" left behind the moving dancer—a area of voided space.

The next move entailed the extrusion of the sections of the masks. This created a ribbed frame which I then covered with fabric. The screen provided a sort of niche of space
(the space behind the mask) which the mask could be displayed against.

As a means of limiting the problem of extruding the diagram into the third dimension, I roughly restricted my available materials to those needed to structure the seven crates of the exhibit.17 The dimensions of the crate were taken to be the maximum shippable size (2'3"x2'8"x8'0").18

The idea of the curved roof (the section of a mask) reappeared in the conceptual model taking a slightly different form. The need for a structure to support the roof as well as lighting, etc., generated a long transverse beam. The beam took its cue from the linear, subdivided Labanotation. Working with the plywood panels which would make up the seven crates I arrived at a twenty-nine foot wood box-beam (twenty-nine coming from the number of time measures in the notation.) The box-beam made logical sense in terms of the need for a load-bearing member made up out of plywood panels. The visual heaviness but actual lightness of the box-beam also related nicely to the transformation of the log beams of the big-house to the modern capabilities of plywood, as well as, the practicality

---

17Seven crates and seven masks were chosen as the subject of the exhibit due to the cyclical and mystical nature of the number as well as space limitations.

18Continental Airlines gave these dimensions to me as the largest size crate that they ship without a large added cost. To work more efficiently with the dimensions of a sheet of plywood, the dimensions were later reduced to 2'0"x2'8"x8'0".
of a travelling exhibit. Now the curved roof of copper could be supported off the beam.\textsuperscript{19} The roof was desired for a sense of enclosure and to reflect the exhibit’s lighting.

The Experience of the Space

Although the exhibit is organized in a linear fashion in the conceptual model, the visitor’s route was envisioned as circuitous—moving around the seven screens. The masks would be lighted from fixtures mounted to the beam. Natural light, entering on the opposite side of the long, gauze-like screen would silhouette the structure. Slight air movements would cause the suspended copper roof to sway. As mentioned earlier, modulations in the ground plane would make the visitor aware of his every step.

Mid-term Review

Jurors: Albert Pope, Elysabeth Yates Burns McKee, Todd Hamilton (UTA), Lawrence Speck (UT), Peter Waldman and Julie Taylor (Anthropology)

After making my presentation, Albert Pope spoke first. Albert questioned my expressed omission of music and video

\textsuperscript{19}Copper was the chosen material not for its weatherproofing abilities but for its sacred value to the Indians and its reflectivity.
from the exhibit. He stated that music and video are valid indexes of past events just as the masks and notation were.

Elysabeth McKee felt that the exhibit space needed an economy of means and minimal logic. She believed that too much was going on and that I needed to be more specific. Overall, Elysabeth thought that the cacophony of the exhibit reduced its clarity.

Todd Hamilton liked the heaviness as expressed by the log. He advised me to look at Native American canoes. Overall, Todd felt that the exhibit had strength. Lawrence speck praised the exhibit as a "beautiful representation of dance." Lawrence posed the question, 'was there a difference between architecture and exhibit design?' He also wondered whether or not I was limiting myself by having the exhibit be transitory.

Peter Waldman was concerned that the model only showed one stage in the transformation of the exhibit space and that it was this "dance" that is the most important aspect. Peter also felt that the exhibit space needed to fill Farish

---

20 This was a question which I had always hoped would be raised. Lawrence Speck was asking rhetorically in this instance. I, of course, feel that the design of the exhibit space is architecture. I am dealing with space-making and although I do not have to contend with some issues such as weatherproofing and functional complexity (the crates when packed are to be weatherproof) I believe that I am creating a building within a building. The transitory nature of the exhibit space create new problems and opportunities that architecture, as it is most commonly thought of as, does not have.
Gallery similar to the fullness of the big-house/gallery model.

Finally, Julie Taylor focused on my verbal presentation. Julie questioned my generalization that dance was ephemeral. She pointed out that although Western dance may be thought of as ephemeral, Eastern dance was more rooted in the ground. Native American dance characteristically involves stomping the heels and lowering the body. Julie also felt that I should follow, to a greater extent, the idea of the dancer as analogous to a magnet pulling iron fillings.

As the title, "Conceptual Model" implies, although I presented the model of the exhibit space, at the review, as though it was primarily representative, it was ultimately conceptual. Its ideas were rendered, for the most part, abstractly. Now, during the last half of the semester, I would be concerned with refinement and choreographing the dance— the unpacking of the crates.
e. PROTOTYPE (12/91)

After the mid-term review, I begin working with the ground plane of the exhibit space. By taking all of the components from the seven crates it was possible to create a large platform. At the same time, I was still working to incorporate the box-beam supporting a roof. The most difficult question, with regard to the beam however, was the manner of its support. It would have been ideal if the beam could have defied gravity and floated quietly above the gallery. But, I was forcing the issue by inventing columns, struts and cables to achieve a roof inside of the gallery.

Finally I realized that the exhibit did not have to be "the big-house and the dancers," but simply "the dance." The roof that I had envisioned was not required or appropriate. Enclosure could be achieved through other means. Also, the roof of the big-house was thought of as the sky. The roof of the exhibit was also symbolically the sky.

My investigation returned the the ground, the locus of the dance. The idea of a slightly raised platform seemed to be the answer. By raising the ground of the exhibit, the visitor would be separated from the space around. A taut floor would resonate through one's movement. The question of the support and assembly of the platform remained to be answered.

At last, the beautiful notion of the plywood box-beam found its home. During a desk crit with Peter Waldman, the
idea arose that the beam should drop to the ground and fulfill the needed role of supporting the platform. Now, the meaning and importance was instilled in the place of the dance. In its means of support, a single, central beam, the platform became a ground and a roof. The platform was metaphorically the transformed place of the dance—once sunken now raised. The area below the platform was also available for elements of the exhibit—lighting, sound and video. Just as the big-house was seen as divided into four levels—the firepit, dance level, living level and sky (roof,) the exhibit also has four levels. The exhibit hovers slightly above the level of everyday life (the gallery floor) on rubber wheels and feet.21 In the hollow box-beam, composed of the bases of each of the seven crates, lie the elements of drama. An intense, central spotlight shines up through the ground as the campfire once did. Two speakers and two video monitors relay fragments of past, present and future performances, also from the box-beam.

The third level of the exhibit, the dance floor, is composed of the fourteen wide plywood panels of the crates, each 2'x2'8"x8'. These panels not only become scared with the effects of travel but also through the feet of the visitors. Textual information also adorns the surface—shipping instructions and dance notation.

21The rubber wheels and feet are in a sense buffers from the reality of the exhibit to the reality of the dance. They are the only "stock" pieces of hardware—all other hardware is designed.
The "sky", the fourth level, begins were "the outstretched arms" of "the dancers" end. Upon the dance floor stand "the seven dancers," once contained in the crates. Each dancer "wears" his mask to display to all. Above, the "sky" shines down from small halogen lights mounted on the top panel of the crates. These seven top panels are strung together and suspended in the gallery. The cables which suspend the panels, leave their mark in each gallery- either through eyelets in the walls or marks around the columns.

"The Dancers"

The sizing of the crates, as noted earlier, came about not only through practical constraints but also through "their" anthropomorphic character. Indeed, I often referred to their scale as approximate to that of a coffin. Later, the idea of a "coffin" hit its mark when describing the crate's content. The crates and their contents index many events past and present- they hold the remains of the dances. The remains may be seen as the skeletal frames of "the dancers," the drama of the dances, the costumes, a fragment of the big-house and most importantly, the physical index of the dance- the mask.
The Enactment of New Dances

When the remains of these past and present dances arrive at a gallery or display area, they are inanimate. They must be resurrected.

The crates will be rolled on their side out of a truck, through doorways and into the space. In the gallery, they will be stood up, with the aid of two people. Over the next several hours, in the case of a singular showing, or the next several days, the exhibit will be assembled. The process of setting up the exhibit space could be viewed as a performance on its own or the stages of the exhibit may be presented individually, allowing the visitor to discover the previous and future stages of transformation. The exhibit space is flexible, allowing for many different experiences of the masks and their dance.

As the sides of the crates are removed, these panels become different elements of the exhibit space. The narrow panels, become benches/steps and ramps allowing access to the raised platform to follow. The crates are connected one to another, in a chain, forming the longitudinal box-beam. Next, the wings of each crate are outstretched, becoming intermediate supporting beams for the platform. The wide plywood side panels are now placed on the outstretched wings. The dance floor is created- the skeletal "dancers" stand in single file in the center, cradling their masks. These "dancers" are thin fins of 1\8th" aluminum plate cut into the section or profile of the mask which they cradle.
The sections of the masks are seen first, indexing the masks to follow.

In an explosion of movement, the skeletal dancers are taken out of their coffins and reassembled—their ribs (the section/profiles of the masks) being supported off a single spine (the connecting rods, joined together.) The masks, in this position, are held between one of the five ribs of each "dancer." Springs allow the masks to be tautly suspended from the ribs. "A grasping hand" (similar to the previously designed prototype) joins the mask to the springs. The masks have no one specific relation to each other as the apparati of their display may be rotated in any direction.

Finally, in the climactic point of "the dance, the dancers cover their bodies in a fabric cloak and face each other in a circle." The lighting, sound and video also reach their tumultuous conclusion. The visitor to the exhibit may enter into the circle and become engulfed—surrounded by the staring masks.

This scenario, just described, can vary from place to place and day to day. The benches/steps and ramps allow the exhibit space to be adapted to almost any gallery. Instructions, which are carried with the exhibit, describe in text and drawing how the exhibit space is assembled.22

22My quotations.

23The juxtaposition of text and drawing, denoting the assembly of the exhibit space, are seen as analogous to the juxtaposition of the dance notation and the photos of the
Two people with phillip's screwdrivers and a step ladder are all that is needed to initiate the dance.

Readings

The abstract way I have presented the unfolding of the exhibit is just one way to read the exhibit. On practical terms, the idea of reusing the same crates of transportation/protection as the elements of the exhibit space is very efficient. The seven crates overall are quite compact and easy to deal with (shipping, maintaining, etc.) The exhibit is self-contained, carrying with it all lighting, sound, video and display apparatus. It requires only electricity.

The exhibit invades the gallery or lobby and creates a new space. In the process, the existing space is altered, making one aware of the existing and new conditions. The formal play of the geometries (point, square, rectangle and circle) create a dialogue with the existing space. This dialogue can be a sharp confrontation (as in the Guggenheim) or a melding (as in the Daybreak Star Lobby.)\(^{24}\) The benches and ramps can help to resolve or heighten the confrontation.

dance, as discussed earlier. Both the text and the drawings (plans) index different aspects of this new dance, attempting to re-present the event but ultimately failing to capture the ultimate drama.

\(^{24}\)See Exhibit space site plans.
Materials

A one-third scale model, was made of one of the exhibit crates to test and refine the design. The smaller scale was chosen not only to speed production but also to reduce the costs of the prototype. At this scale, the same materials that were to be used in the actual crate, could be used in smaller dimensions. The primary material of the crate is fir veneer marine plywood. In the case of the prototype, 1/4" plywood was used as opposed to the 3/4" or possibly 5/8" material of the full-scale crate. This plywood was chosen for its resistance to water damage as well as shipping and wear from feet. Marine plywood is denser than regular exterior grade plywood and must conform to higher standards because it is used in some boat construction. Fir veneer is thicker and more durable than other veneers. Also, fir veneer is common in crate construction. I intend for the exhibit crate to be as anonymous as possible when closed, hiding its contents (while subtly revealing certain aspects of them.) If I had used birch veneer, for instance, the crate would have begun to look too much like a piece of furniture.

For the same reasons of anonymity and toughness (visual and physical,) I choose steel angles for the corner connections. The darkness, weight and color of steel seemed appropriate for something rooted in the ground. I covered

---

25Some elements of the scale model could not be reduced in size such as the electrical outlet and the floodlight.
both the steel and the plywood with spar urethene for further resistance against water infiltration and corrosion.

On the top of the crate (or the front, if it is laying down) I installed curved rubber bumpers to indicate which way is up as well as providing protection when the crate is rolled on its side. Wheels on the bottom edge and side allow the crate to be rolled in two ways—upright and laying down. The only, peculiar, unexplainable elements on the exterior when the crate is first viewed, are the projected tie-rod ends and a copper cap. These elements begin to reveal the contents. The tie-rod ends form a sort of constellation denoting the sections of the masks within. The copper cap weatherproofs and conceals the electrical outlet within.

Within the crate, the majority of the hardware is aluminum with the only exceptions being a copper reflective surface at the top (symbolic of the sky), steel sprockets (to synchronize the downward movement of the arms) and the steel connecting rods of the mask profiles. Aluminum is used to connote the lightness and efficiency which it is often used for (i.e. airplanes.) The aluminum is intended to be read as somewhat neutral, devoid of any particular symbolic meaning, with the exception of the mask sections (they have the only sand-blasted finish.) Also, within the crate, solid fir members serve to strengthen and provide rigidity for the plywood panels which are walked and sat upon.
The symbolic copper is used in one other place besides the "roof." The "hand" which grasps the mask is also fashioned of copper, being the only element in direct contact with the only physical relic of the "dance." The fabric, which eventually covers the "dancer's" frame, is symbolic of the traditional costumes worn with the masks which are for the most part lost. The fabric functions in the closed crate to protect and cushion the mask in transit. Stretched over the frame, the fabric diffuses the light on the interior of the exhibit space and silhouettes the masks and visitors on the exterior. The seven fabric screens, used in the exhibit, will be similar in their color—off-white but varied in their textures and translucencies. The fabric selections will be based in an abstract way upon the qualities of each of the masks and their characters.

As mentioned earlier, the bases of each crate will have an element of "the drama" (sound, video, etc.) The prototype which I constructed is the middle crate in the sequence containing the singular brightest light (the fire.) This light is protected and the visitor is prevented from falling into the recess by a perforated metal grating. The other recesses will also be covered with perforated metal with the exception of the recesses containing the video monitors. These monitors, beneath the floor, will be covered with wire glass. The wire connections between the seven crates will be carried within the two stationary axles—one for electrical and one for video/sound.
In Conclusion

The methodology previously discussed leading to the prototype took approximately one half of a year. Numerous schemes and ideas have been explored and built upon. In the prototype it is hoped that I have embodied the concepts here described. The prototype and the exhibit space as a whole intend to resolve and consummate in built form my ideals for the exhibit. A certain transcendence has occurred. The exhibit space has multiple readings, a few of which have been elaborated on.

I intend that the exhibit space will be built, profoundly affecting all who see it. If the visitor takes with him only the awareness that there can more to seeing an artifact, I will have accomplished more than enough.
The Seven Masks of the Exhibit Space—by Alex Williams
Chronological Sketches throughout Project
First Working Drawings of Prototype
First Transformation Diagrams
Photo Sequence of Exhibit Space in the Parish Gallery
Photo Sequence of Exhibit Space in Daybreak Star
Exhibit Space - Plans/Instructions
Four Exhibit Sites

1. Exhibit in Park Gallery, Rice University, Houston, Texas
2. Exhibit in Volunteer Park, Seattle, Washington
3. The Exhibit in the Staatsgalerie, Entrance Lobby, Stuttgart, Germany
4. The Exhibit in the Guggenheim Museum, New York
Exhibit Crate - Sections, Elevations and Plan
Crate Transformation Photos
Final Prototype
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Clifford, James, Four Northwest Coast Museums. Chapter 4 P. 212-254. Exhibiting Cultures.


Fjeld, Per Olaf, "Has a Doll Life?" *Perspecta 24*, The Yale Journal of Architecture.


Moneo, Rafael, "On Typology."


Appendix I

Final Thesis Review- Jury Comments

5 PM December 6th, 1992- Farish Gallery (site of first proposed Exhibition)- Rice University, Houston, Texas

Jurors: Peter Waldman, Alan Balfour, Michael Benedikt (UT), Michael Rotundi (SCIARCH), Elysabeth McKee and Albert Pope.

(Note: comments are paraphrased unless in quotations.)

Rotundi: "I thought you were going to design a ritual, as well." There is the myth that is pre-existing out of the myth you devise a ritual. Maybe what you just did is a metaphor for architecture. "The struggle of putting this thing together undermines the sort of mystery of the whole thing.

Benedikt: "I can anthropomorphize those pictures [photos of the sequence of transformation] alot-a group of people standing about."

Balfour: "My disappointment was not the performance but that the result was much less than the performance. I think that everything that you've structured appears to demand that you actually ritualize this construction."

Pope: "Starting from the index of the mask what this thing is about is the absence of an event. The event that cannot be recreated because we're on the other side of a broken cultural continuum. No matter how hard you try, you cannot bring back the significance of these rituals. Starting from the mask, the mask being the ultimate index, there is an attempt to encode an index of the absent event. Is this [the photos of the sequence of transformation] key to understanding this [the prototype model] as an index for the absent performance?"

Benedikt: "Does this [the photos] travel with the exhibit?"

Pope: "Can these [the final configuration] stand on their own? The run of this [sequence of photos] is so convincing, in my mind, that I'm not sure
that these [the crates] stand as indexes for the absent event without these things [the stages of transformation] being run through."

Benedikt: "I don’t see why we simply can’t enlarge the scope of what the exhibit is. The exhibit is this [the prototype] and the exhibit is also this [the sequence of photos.] It’s [the photos] a fiction of some kind actually but its not bad fiction."

Balfour: "Instead of performance?"

Waldman: "Yes exactly, there’s no performance."

Balfour: If I went to the exhibit and saw the photos I’d be astonished- another absent event.

Waldman: It’s critical that that the dance is never done alone. Several people set up the exhibit. It is a social act- a collaboration. Rods might be better that screws to hold the thing together.

Rotundi: "The ritual presupposes another event...you dance it rains..." If you just had the object [the crate] could you read it in a way, the way an archeologist does, that you would begin to understand the transformation- where it came from and where it’s going. I would say that it would be very difficult to speculate on what it was before- it breaks the continuity.

Balfour: For me, the most remarkable point in the procedure was when you took off one side of the crate and I invested it with more power and mystery than any point thereafter.

Benedikt: Three criticisms: First, the ramp elements are redundant- the cantilevered elements could become ramps. Second, you ought to be able to make a stronger statement on how the masks are lit. You will need low-voltage lighting on each mask. Finally, concerning the moments of the crates opening, the point at which the profiles were moving and the cloth was pulled away revealing the mask, was my favorite moment. It went downhill from there because of the discontinuity of having to take apart the profiles before they could go back together. Maybe the profiles could accordion or be fanned open.

Waldman: Might I suggest other dances where anyone of these configurations may be seen as the exhibit space.
Benedikt: "I must say, for all of that, I’m absolutely blown away by all the creativity at every turn."

Balfour: "The involvement of sweat and hands, in the doing of this in some ways seems terribly important."

Benedikt: That x-ray is exquisite.

Pope: That’s the x-ray of your moment, right?

Balfour: Comments from the floor?

Student: When the profiles were vertical they were swaying back and forth. They were so alive. They transformed the space. Maybe you don’t need to make the circle.

Benedikt: As a practical matter, people would fall against these screens. I don’t think you have enough strength to support them.

Balfour: Final Comments?

Rotundi: "It’s a very good project."

Benedikt: "Bravo."
Appendix II

The Building as Mask: Two Projects

In two previous projects, I have explored the notion of the building as a mask. During the Spring of ’90 I had a studio with Gordon Wittenberg exploring the question of the community of Montrose. It was our task to attempt to discover the boundaries, of this Houston neighborhood, if they existed, and define them. Overall, the studio seemed to share Venturi’s sympathy that "main street is all right." We liked Montrose as it was, but many of us agreed that it could use elements to hold it together or focus it.

Under Anderson Todd, in the Spring of ’91, our studio was to design a residential/commercial/retail high-rise in the center of downtown Houston. The first half of the semester involved many exercises and studies into the nature of the high-rise. This sort of mixed-use development was the wave of the future and there seemed to be a consensus that downtown Houston would benefit from the infusement of residents.

In the case of the Montrose project, my concept became that of not attempting to define borders (they don’t and can’t exist) but instead designing peripheral elements that announce Montrose and creating a center for Montrose. The center, as in the high-rise project, became a mixed-use development—abstractly modeled on Seattle’s Pike Place Market. Open air farmer’s markets and art’s fairs have and do exist in Montrose but not on a daily basis. At the site
of the annual art’s fair, the most-active center of Montrose (Westheimer Blvd. and Montrose Blvd.), I begin with the program of an open-air market. Soon, I added the program of artist’s housing and the necessary parking.

The program kept expanding, until I had taken two blocks (covered with many existing derelict buildings) and added professional offices, retail, restaurants and residential amenities. The programmatic piece which pulled the entire project together became the public element, in this case a community center and amphitheater.

At this point, I begin to think of the communal elements of housing and the market as a great dragon standing upon the site. The residential units formed the body and were raised above the market. Then, like an immense Chinese Dragon costume, the many individuals of the market and the residential units, would be united under a singular element and given a public mask. The dragon’s head or mask became the community center.

The notion of the Chinese dragon mask was not only a conceptual idea but also a formal organizer. All of the small elements— the market booths and the residential units were gathered together under this great mask, assuming the most hierarchical importance while retaining their individuality at the scale of each piece. The remaining elements of retail, offices and the garage assumed a minor role— simply providing a meter or a field upon which the dragon could be read. The public amphitheater and open
plaza were matched and countered by a low-scale assemblage of private amenities for the residents. The "neck" or programmatic connection between the community center and the residential body became galleries for local artist's work. The community center "head" contains meeting rooms, a theater and offices for local public organizations.

The project denies and criticizes traditional space-making attempts relying on city fabric and instead creates space through the interaction of objects and events-rituals. The public face of the dragon gives a powerful voice to the many while still allowing their freedom of expression.
Concept Diagrams
Bath/Kitchen Module
Community Center Plans
Houston High-Rise

The Houston high-rise project was surely affected by the Montrose project. Although the program was given in the high-rise project it coincided with goals of the Montrose project— to provide a place of great density and activity.

After first conducting a thorough site-analysis and the production of a Nolli map the building was sited within its 250’x250’ block. The retail provides a programmatic bridge between the two flanking department stores and faces the busy adjoining bus stop.

The next major question was the determination of a relationship between the major office program and the residential program.

The Skyscraper...

many, many people,  
each have an identity,  
each want a voice,  
each want to be heard,  
however, one by himself  
cannot be heard  
among the cacophony  
of the city.  
the people need  
a communal face—  
a unified image to  
speak for them  
a public mask...  
the Chinese dragon.
— W.G. Gjertson

Again, the notion of the Chinese dragon mask arose as a metaphor for a device of transformation for unifying many individuals. My fear as a designer was that by placing a new office building downtown with the added residential
component, the significance of the residential would be lost. Residential components are often lost in the scale of the office tower or are placed like a precious crown on top of an office tower. My goal with the office/residential tower was to blur the distinction between the two components and in the process create something new. By making the building a mask I intended to gather the individuals into one communal "shout" proclaiming their existence in the city.

The metaphor of the mask also applied formally to the distinction between the "skin" of a high-rise and the structure of a high-rise. I accepted early on in the project the incredible pragmatics of the high-rise and understood that my area for intervention, as a designer, was the skin of the building not the structure or overall form.

First, I placed the programmatic block of residential on top of the office block (for views and security as well as importance.) Both floor plates were sized accordingly for efficiency. Next, the skin or the "mask" was slid over this massing. The effect was two-fold: the set-back of the residential floor plate was obscured and a space was created between the structure and the mask. This was the place of my invention.

Between the ring of offices on a typical floor a narrow zone of space was developed. This space became a ring of light. A sand-blasted panel of glass is placed between adjoining offices in this zone creating a continuous
translucency. In each office, a private place was created with wood cabinets and a window seat. Glass doors and polished travertine form a reflective slot in each office to bring light into the inner secretarial areas. The saw-tooth profile of the office floors allows for this slot of space and intends to accentuate the individual floor by creating a shadow line. This shadowline is continued up the entire height of the building, stressing the horizontal and bringing down the scale of the building.

The residential floors, in effect, have two window walls: the inner ring at recommended floor plate size and an outer window wall, which is in the same plane as the office window wall. This outer window wall is actually a frame, remaining unglazed were there are not balconies, and providing protection for balconies. The new zone, as in the office floors, is a zone of light— a space for balconies, sunrooms or simply voids (vertical slots of space figuratively connecting the various residential floors into one entity.)

On the ground level, the relationship between the office lobby and the retail serves as a sort of microcosm of the building above. The office lobby is ordered in a Miesian nature, presenting a business-like face to the street. The retail stores each express there individuality formally and spatially. A canopy element is thought of as a continuous skin which unites the diverse elements of retail and lobby space.
Overall, the building attempts to break down the corporate icon of the office tower and provide recognition of the individual at a scale of the city. It is hoped that, the notion of the Chinese dragon, will create a domesticated skyscraper.

In both the Montrose and high-rise projects the mask has served as a mediator between the individual the public. Formally and conceptually the mask provides a structure for exploration which can result in two very different projects.
CITY CENTRE

AN OFFICE & RESIDENTIAL TOWER FOR HOUSTON
Lobby Section
Appendix III

The UBC Museum of Anthropology

Through their collections and exhibitions, museums purposely or accidentally teach about cultural values, social diversity, and cultural relativism.

In short, museums behave like sociocultural organizations creating a new culture for the things that come into their possession.

--J.J. Brody(P.59,61)

Even if the museum, today cannot claim to be an institution "representing the ideals of the people" as it once did, the museum is, nevertheless an institution. Museums are institutions because they function as an apparati of authority.

Museums are more than simply repositories of art or even just conservatories. They play a significant role in controlling the way in which "people" see art and thus cultures. Of course, the authority in which the museum upholds rests on individuals who make the decisions governing museums. As is most often the case in power structures, it is the will of a few over the consensus of many that controls. Those who decide how a museum will operate and display art intend to display art in an anonymous, supposedly "unbiased" setting or on the opposite
end of the spectrum—an "authentic" setting. Neither of these two approaches tell either "no story" or the "whole story" and this is where they may be faulted. We are faced with the aesthetic approach: the abstract space of the modern museum and the historical approach: the diorama (Clifford p.223, Exhibiting Cultures.) Few museums attempt the difficult task of presenting more than one context for art to be displayed. Multiple settings create a dialogue between visitor, art and its context. One museum which I feel provides an alternative to the abstract space of the modern museum and the diorama of the natural history museum is Arthur Erickson’s University of British Columbia Museum of Anthropology in Vancouver. Erickson’s museum presents at least three settings in which art can be seen and in their juxtaposition a new alternative is born.

The UBC Museum of Anthropology lies at the end of a peninsula jutting out into a sound. As is its name implies, the museum houses a collection of Northwest Coast Native American art. Indeed, this particular region of the Northwest Coast is probably the area with the most prolific, Indian art tradition. Inherent in the name "Museum of Anthropology" is a struggle: art vs. artifact. However,
Erickson's museum successfully deals with the opposition neither unequally glorifying or suppressing either reading.

The dramatic procession through Erickson's museum is useful in examining the various contrasting readings which are represented. Upon arriving at the UBC Museum of Anthropology, and surveying the site, one finds a setting which first begins to reflect the complexity of Indian life today. The site overlooks the ocean but is high above the water. A symbolic relationship has always existed between the Indian and the sea but today the Indian's dependence on the sea is not nearly as great as it once was. At one time, the Kwakiutl and other Northwest Indian tribes located their villages at the waters edge, or on islands for ease of fishing or warfare. The Museum of Anthropology looks longing to the sea without fully depending on it for its existence.

The building itself is an incredible synthesis of monumentality of early log Big-Houses and the materials of permanence of today (with which we craft our institutions). The materials of Erickson's building, concrete and glass, express in themselves the struggle of the native Americans. The concrete box beams of the main gallery exceed (180') the
original expectations of the structural engineer (Iglauer P.116). The glass in-fill window walls prove that glass can indeed support itself in both compression and tension. Where there was a level of redundancy in the original heavy log structures of Northwest Indians the UBC Museum appropriately refines itself to minimal level where only its great spaces, not simply its structural members, began to compete with the incredible power of the Northwest art.

When entering the building, one descends a ramp into the "great" main gallery. Along the ramp it is first apparent that the objects displayed, boxes and houseposts, are allowed to become "art" each in their own beautiful naturally lit alcoves. One sees only the formal aspects of each piece. "The history" of the objects is relegated to a small plaque next to each piece. "History" is understood as only one of the many readings available--not the primary source.

The main gallery is a large, bright space containing just enough tribal pieces to dominate the space. Forty foot totem poles rise within the space, answered on the exterior by newer carved poles.

The proximity of these new works to the old artifacts gathered behind the wall of glass makes
very clear the museum’s most important message: tribal works are part of an ongoing, dynamic tradition. (Clifford, P. 220 Exhibiting Cultures)

In the great gallery, the context is allowed to maintain an aggressive dialogue with the "art". The large space creates a dramatic environment in which the large pieces do not become overly dominate yet can be fully read in the full light of modernity.

Moving to the next gallery, a striking contrast is drawn. Now, we are directed by pin-point boutique lighting in a dark, low space to distinct pieces of jewelry and tools. It is as if we are shopping at Tiffany’s being coerced to buy these shiny baubles. Here, the hand of the curator controls our gate. But once again, Erickson provides a counterpoint to this otherwise "neat" package. At the corner, of the gallery, the small hedges strongly shadowing the space drop away allowing again the view to the sea and the legacy of the past.

If the contrast between the main gallery the boutique gallery were strong, the contradictions and cacophony offered in the final area of the museum prove the most startling. From the freedom of the main gallery to the calm yet highly focused darkness of the second space, we enter a
space filled with such quantity and repetition of pieces that our sight is assaulted. This final area, the visible storage area, presents the "anthropological" aspect of the museum. In fact, the visible storage area provides the cacophony of early natural history museum curio displays. Now, where we previously had one of each "unique" piece of "art", we have several similar "artifacts" clustered in confining, display cases. History, type, region, tribe, etc. (the limiting categories once only applied to "collected" objects) are now the dominant means of control. We see the "artifacts" as only associated pieces— not as single of acts of creation.

When visiting the UBC Museum of Anthropology one is reminded of the multiple ways in which art/artifacts can be displayed and how these display systems affect our perception of the pieces and the cultures who produced them. It is rare that we see Indian art displayed in an aesthetic way analogous to the way only "Western" art was displayed in the past. Arthur Erickson's building is a beautiful theater in which each of the actors (art, artifacts, curator, exhibit designer, etc.) is allowed to play various roles, sometimes dominant, sometimes subordinate. The building not
only creates a space for these performances to occur, but also attempts to mediate between the past and future as well as embody ideals inherent in the Indians of the Northwest Coast.
A CALL TO ANCHORAGE

separated by miles, years & culture
i thought i knew the Indian
my education had prepared me for my encounter
the Indian was my subject

NO...

we are both men
connected through words, morals, belief in good
i cannot generalize, the Indian cannot be met in books
the Indian was my teacher

NOW...

i must purge, admit, apologize
stereotypes - two types, simultaneous?
preconceptions
one can only judge a man, not a race or culture
the man is judged through his words & actions

THE PAST...

repression of the Indian
theft of their pride
it has taken years to begin to overcome
the white man

THE PRESENT...

the Indian can find his place
he does not have to live a white man's life
but neither can he return to forefather’s life
a medium must be reached

THE FUTURE...

knowledgeable of his past
looking ahead
the Indian will overcome

-W. Geoff Gjertson