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Phenomenal reading of place: Greenway Plaza and an architecture of the residual

Hoffmann, Dean Palmer, M.Arch.

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PHENOMENAL READING OF PLACE: GREENWAY PLAZA AND AN ARCHITECTURE OF THE RESIDUAL

by

DEAN P. HOFFMANN

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

APPROVED, THESIS COMMITTEE

Mark Wamble
Associate Professor, School of Architecture

William Sherman
Assistant Professor, School of Architecture

Elysabeth McKee
Assistant Professor, School of Architecture

Houston, Texas

May, 1992
ABSTRACT

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by

Dean P. Hoffmann

Phenomenal readings are used to identify the distance between the apprehension of place and place as a repository of design intents, to test a thesis that modern urban developments manifest meaning as a built language containing all the processes of understanding integral with an orchestration of perceptive sense. The usage of the phenomenal reading as a method in operation should place facets of the positivistic model of architecture into question.
Table of Contents

Research Document----------------------------------------1

Bibliography---------------------------------------------23

Appendices:

A--The Design Program-----------------------------------25
B--Transcript of Presentation-----------------------------29
C--Illustrations----------------------------------------35
D--Jury Comments---------------------------------------39
I. Phenomenal Reading of Place: The Project Defined

Does Greenway Plaza have a phenomenal dimension worth exploring for the architect? As a critical tool or instrument I (initially) believe it does: both as a litmus test of a *phenomenology of architecture* and as a way of revealing some aporias of architectural thought\(^1\). It is around these premises that I develop the themes of a design thesis on an architecture of re-inhabitation of the residual.

Residual suggests the left-over parts, and hence, the end product of that which was produced and is disposable. However, I believe at the outset that there is a poetics to all objects having the hand of man in them. Additionally, I suggest that spaces and buildings such as in Greenway plaza are the shadows of a cultural consciousness, and although taken for granted as valueless, are quite valuable as an index which can be referenced to show: 1. a voice of a culture is spoken therein even though it is perhaps a voice we don't like to hear 2. architectural meaning is situational, acquired, and consequently cannot be imposed through formal narrative., 3. architectural forms reveal the hidden as well as overt intentions of the architect, 4. such overt intentions often quickly fall away, and finally, 5: the superiority of an architectural approach which considers a phenomenologist's approach to the architectural project as an adjunct discipline.

Critical Position:

An attempted reconciliation between man and his environment through the architectural solution of determinism has been the overt aim of the architectural project.\(^2\) It is a

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\(^2\)For example, see Alberto Perez Gomez, Chapters 5 and 6, *Architecture and the Crisis of Modern Science*. MIT Press, 1983.
project that has gone astray. Recent research has suggested that the quest for such a reconciliation (assumed as a definite end point in the historical tradition) is unsatisfying. Such a traditional narrative form, where the end of the story is written assuming an invariance of symbolic meaning by virtue of formal representation—a formal representation of unwavering dimensions—has been exposed as problematic by various authors writing on literary theory. As time stratifies meaning, revealing the sedimentary and layered aspects of things we have made—in an attempt to accomplish this reconciliation—we become privy to a deeper understanding of place, form and the framing of a larger human situation that accounts for the perception of architecture as multi-dimensional in nature. We reassess the artifacts of old divorced from their direct metaphorical content in the narrative. We find a multiplicity of revelations amongst the linearity of an artifacts narrative structure.

Program Development:
The area and buildings under question is the Phase One Development (1969) of Greenway Plaza by Lloyd, Morgan, and Jones at 3500 Richmond; #’s 1, 2, 3 and 5

Taken from Guide to Houston Architecture (1980, S. FOX): The development consists of the twin 11-story Eastern Airlines and Union Carbide Buildings, the 21 story Kellogg Building and the 31 story Conoco Tower. This entire phase, [dated 1969] incorporates a massive 3,500 car underground garage that represented the largest continuous concrete poor in Houston's construction history at the time of its erection. The garage encompasses The Underground, a subterranean retail concourse modelled like #’s 3 and 5, on the work of I.M. Pei. The Underground is connected to the second phase of Greenway's development, the Stouffer's Hotel (1976) and The Summit (1976). Due to the high cost of underground construction, later phases of the center were developed with conventional above-ground parking structures.
I consider an array of additional objects for the re-inhabitation of the development, believing that: "If a film were made a building, with a frame of film for each day it lived, then it would appear to breath"\(^3\), through a phenomenal reading, exposing the spaces between the films, the literal and phenomenal frame, the intermundium.

In the design program I put forth these for development:

1: The terminus/depot
2: Health spa

Residual and the state of being in-between: The Intermundium.
Intermundium is a word from the Latin which has no equivalent term in modern English. This is surprising (and telling). It would be interesting to trace the etymology of this word rigorously; standard linguistic theory has it that the word feel out of usage contemporary with the simultaneous fall off of the Latin tongue and infusion of Norman French and the Nordic languages in the present day U.K. region, about the 10th century, A.D.\(^4\) Essentially, the word refers to a "state of in between": between being alive and dead, for example.

Literature is filled with examples of figures that reside in the intermundium. A good example from the Gothic style of writing would be in Hugo's Quasimodo from Notre Dame d'Paris, (who is really quite inseparable from the architecture of the cathedral as well as "representing" a composite image of all of the characters within the narrative.

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\(^4\) Daniel Libeskind, discussion with the author, winter 1987
combined). Another example would be the Phantom from the cheesy Victorian pulp, *The Phantom of the Opera*.

As a component of this design thesis, I pose the question of the intermundium, while attempting to deal with the other issues that have been outlined so far.

**Theory of strategy and method:**
The work is in part a critique of symmetry and closure applied to the architectural project during late positivism. The common belief today is that contemporary architecture (including works built in the past thirty or 40 years) is barren--given a loss of the traditional and symbolic which has been in the past so much an overt part of the architectural project. Thus, we are faced with what one would have to sum up as a "crisis of legitimacy" in architecture. Architects have throughout the modern period attempted to circumnavigate the difficulties that seem to come with an introduction of an architectural expression without the traditional myth/ritual a patterns in searches through a purely formal language. However, the overriding condition of architectural production comes from within a framework of highly stabilized types of architectural representation, which assume that the full extent of architecture is essentially a problem of reduction.

Objects become unstable through association with other objects in unusual contexts or settings, framing a larger ambiguous situation which can reveal possibilities unforeseen. The juxtaposition of disparate objects (texts, the everyday, products of high and low culture), into a non-contextual new situation leads to an alternative palate to break through deeply rooted thought structures and dissolve oppositional strategies in architectural thought and generation. This is not a new idea and can be traced back to Dada and Surrealism. However, the project of looking for new associations--or, to
borrow from structuralist theory of language--those outside the of "interstices" of standard meaning--departs from the project undertaken by the early 20th century masters in several ways.

The anthropologist Edmund Leach put forth an interesting theory of knowledge acquisition which, aside from the interest it may have to those working in the social sciences, suggests an insight into the architectural design problem and sheds light both on our conceptions of the architectural object and the way in which it is formulated through standard strategies adopted in the past 200 or so years. If we consider the realm of objects within the social and physical environment, rather than as discreet "things' but instead as a fabric or seamless flow of reality and then consider the imposition of an "ordering" of this environment of potentially great flux during early childhood, we arrive at the development of, essentially, an ordering "grid" which designates objects by virtue of intersections: the "interstices of consciousness"5, creating categories of designation which excludes an entire dimension of "other" objects and situations that are in existence but fall beyond the realm of standard description of categorization.

The operational function of this conceptual grid--which is essentially discriminatory and excludes the object of otherness--designates an entire realm of environmental markers of the everyday which in turn shape one's perception of the world and, of course, future expectations and anticipations of the reality of the architectural project. What I designate as "otherness" here undoubtedly gives rise to a broader perspective of an alternate reality--which has fascinated artists and architects for a long time.

The idea of a dimension of activity that can bring forth things other than the "interstices of consciousness" in a formal language which similarly addresses the problems of the present urban situation is an intriguing one and may develop towards a method to elicit an alternative or repressed architecture that defines new programmatic issues.
II. Site analysis: Phase One, Greenway Plaza.

Technical and Background Site information: In meetings with the original project architects the conditions for the development were outlined in two informal sessions of approximately two hours each. Several visits to the site in fall and winter 1991 were sufficient for an adequate documentation of the main plaza.

The site under question has an almost direct north-south orientation and is a rather standard proportioned rectangle in plan, comprising a plaza which is bounded by the Conoco building to the south, the M.W. Kellogg building to the north, the Traveler's Building to the east and finally the Stoffer's Hotel to the west. Edloe Street, a major traffic corridor specifically put in place during the development of the area in anticipation of heavy auto traffic, borders the general site area due west. Additionally, this corridor both functionally and practically separates the later developments of the area (the Summit, etc.) from the initial phase one project.

Previous to the start of construction, the area was a combination of residential and low rise buildings. The area fronting the phase one development, due south of Richmond, was apparently already practically in place and the relation of the Eastern Airlines Building and Union Carbide Building to the lower plaza (Phase One) which contains the Underground is tentative from a design standpoint.

A unique aspect of the phase one development that affords a particularly pregnant design possibility is the underground area, composed essentially of the spaces left over from the underground car park excavations. Although the Underground has not been a particularly successful economic or even aesthetic architectural work, non the less its
placement seems ideal, especially if one considers a possible penetration up into the plaza space above.

**Standard usage:**

Presently the ground level open plaza is in moderate use during standard business hours, allowing for variations in extreme climatic conditions. Activities include outdoor picnic luncheons and solicitation of conversation amongst workers. At other-than business hours the area is at best minimally occupied for a verity of reasons. These may be identified as: poor public recognition (due to sighing, which was the main reason that the architects gave upon questioning them why people didn't travel up from the theater into the plaza.) Actually, an entire array of obstacles, some hidden and culturally conditioned, probably add to its poor usage. These would include, but are not limited to, the tradition of private property, which the plaza management enforces through both locked doors and in a conspicuous presence of security personnel. Another reason is perhaps even more fundamental: the only drawing quality at present for the place to those who do not work there is the modest shopping which is marginal at best, catering to the business community (pipe shop, card shop, a U.P.S. agency, etc.), and the small theater which specializes in foreign cinematic offerings.

Rather than approach the design problem anticipating either a recreation of the European plaza or settling on an economically viable new development as a measure of one's architectural "success", the concern seems to beg a re-definition of the nature of deeper social and architectural issues. These are outlined in the design brief.
III. Phenomenology and Hermeneutics in Architecture

"Now if perception is thus the common act of all our motor and affective functions, no less the sensory, I must rediscover the structure of the perceived world through a process similar to an archaeologist. For the structure of the perceived world is buried under the sedimentations of later knowledge.\(^6\) (M. Merleau-Ponty)

How does one get away from the fact that presently two distinct types of empirical knowledge have arisen: one, the discursive and induction based knowledge used to witness, describe and analyze the natural events in the world, the other, what must be termed as phenomenological knowledge, which is concerned with textual relationships and the critical exploration and examination of phenomenal contents\(^7\). This leads to a choice of how I will approach an explanation of the phenomena of the critical world, either by a: an inductive and deductive method of empirical observation in our description of the phenomena or b: an account of the image based upon the phenomenologist's contents of language and the image as witnessed. Up front, I should point out the problems inherent in each method, which is the problem of excavating reality and truth from the world, an old problem to say the least. On the first account, let it be said that this type of coming into knowledge (empiricism) has been found to be lacking in depth upon close scrutiny by the very instruments of its own devise. On the second, in the search for pure knowledge, as the pure image, as something a priori, as a type of "pattern", finding it would underline the existence of a thing that was the biggest project of modernity, something that presently speaks through the failing voice of the last modern man.

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In analysis of architecture, we know that the meaning of a Doric Column in terms of its 
of-the-body impact cannot be assessed by an empirical, narrative, functional, or 
typological considerations alone. At least to a degree that is useful for an architect who 
is looking for that illusive intersection of space and meaning. Sociological based 
enquiries fall short in explaining transcendental qualities of spatial experiences we may 
experience in the presence of the column or office tower, artifacts distanced from us by 
sometimes 2000 or more years.

We know that architectural space is difficult to assess before it is actually built full-scale 
and perceived in real-time. Functionalist and typological considerations either: fall short 
or bypass this. A method to assess this "reality before the fact" would surely be a 
valuable thing to develop for a variety of obvious reasons. An instrument of 
phenomenology begins to approach the full complexity of this project; a complexity 
which is sobering.

The nature of architectural spaces as a phenomenon in close proximity to personal 
experience and interpretations does not render them or the phenomenologist's inquiry 
subjective: situation (like the spacing between words and letters in text—a spatial 
phenomenon) is not a vacuum but instead frames a larger cultural horizon and 
establishes a ground plane upon which communication can take place.

A phenomenologist's accounting of space in architecture privileges the nonempirical 
(and perhaps subjective, although certainly not unreal), aspects of place: place as a 
space-time reality. Space as a thing that speaks to the individual through his or her 
perceptions of it. Space as tied to materials and form but not dependent upon meaning 
residing within a formal narrative assigned to form.
Ultimately I attempt to illuminate and develop the "phenomenologist's instrument" further for personal use in architecture, with this document and the associated artifacts being primarily a mapping of an inquiry, an inquiry that can perhaps be improved upon by others. In the words of Husserl:

"...the problems regarding the origin of "space representation," regarding representations of time, thing, number, "representations" of cause and effect, etc., are phenomenologist's problems. Only when these pure problems, meaningfully determined, are formulated and solved do the empirical problems regarding the occurrence of such representations as events of human consciousness acquire a new sense that can be scientifically grasped and comprehended with a view to their solution. 8

Adolf Loos states that an architectural work with the greatest effect often seems ineffective in plan. 9 This brings to mind the true dimension of an architectural work: that its presence and perhaps authenticity begs the question of representation; one must assess the thing itself armed with a consciousness of the "other" conditions which constitute situation. Also, this natural truth that we find which should come as no surprise: the body as the seat of meaning. It would be interesting to argue within this thesis of Loos—which actually comes very close to a recognition of the phenomenological dimension of architecture before the discipline has been fully defined by Husserl—especially given the preponderance of modern architects who often have turned to dramatic formal dialogues in their work to define a modern condition that could be achieved through perhaps more subtle means.

This could ultimately either diffuse or strengthen the role of formalism (or ornament) in architecture; it certainly places the architectural narrative into serious question. What is

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8Edmund Husserl "Philosophy as a Rigorous Science", from Phenomenology and the Crisis of Philosophy, Harper and Row, New York. p. 115

9Beatriz Colomina "On Adolf Loos and Joseph Hoffmann: Architecture in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction", p. 72
ultimately strengthened is the position of the materiality of things held in perception—as a visual, tactile language without accompanying words—perceived in real-time within a framing of situation.

**Husserl and Modern Phenomenology:**

Edmund Husserl is considered the "father" of modern phenomenology. Originally, his work in the subject was from an outgrowth of an attack on "psychologism", an attempt at the turn of 19th century to reduce logic, and hence language, to a structured relationship of mathematical rules. What phenomenology does, as a non-system based "science" is to analyze consciousness, where the objectivity of consciousness through perception and the body is enough to account for our apprehension in the world's phenomena. It differs from the humanistic sciences (like psychology and the philosophies particular to late positivism, things that Husserl would argue as being actually non-sciences) which place emphasis on the stratification of layers of knowledge based upon an empirical based method at the expense of an objective truth of existence. In short, phenomenology is the "science of science" as it looks at that which all sciences ignore or take for granted: the essence of their own objects that they scrutinize.

Husserl states:

"The whole thing, however, depends on one's seeing and making entirely one's own the truth that just as immediately as one can hear a sound, so one can intuit an "essence"-the essence "sound," the essence "appearance of things," the essence "apparition," the essence "pictorial representation," the essence "judgement" or "will," etc.-and in the intuition one can make an essential judgement." (italics added)

**On Hermeneutics:**

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12 Edmund Husserl, 'Philosophy as Rigorous Science' from *Phenomenology and the Crisis of Philosophy*, p. 115
The historical project contains the basic hermeneutical goal of "make memory last"; and the historic text, like any other in literature, is faced with the formative task of always acquiring a simultaneity with our present. To gain an full understanding of the architectural project necessarily involves a present involvement with the thing, apart from its embrace by a short sighted tradition, or rather, by a writing of such a historical text that calls for one's "reasoning back" retrospectively to come to terms with that which is under scrutiny.

The architectural artifact of modern times, deeply situated within the intelligentsia and economic system in the west, appears to have left a myriad of (politically) palatable solutions for the problem of modern Dwelling. The object, building, topology, theory, is a held in a commodity based equation wherein the object is made to justify its legitimacy by either a: functionalist or b: aesthetic criteria.

Arguably, history's intervention has become "operative" by either, a: justifying this event or b: providing the 'pattern language' to support a particular ideology. Consequently, theory and history cannot operate independently. To announce the presence of critical theory in our account of architectural texts I am involving at least three levels of consideration aside from the problem of formal concerns. First, the interdependence between architecture as made and historical (or critical) motivated strategies. Secondly, the place of the ready-made object (as sign, signifier of cultural tradition, social closure) within the high modern city. Third, the questioning of the position of the artifact after its "deification" by the socio-political. Without getting into the discussion in Tafuri's *History and Theories*, I think it's fair to say that this has turned

\[\text{13} \text{Hegel's words: to make memory last. Taken from } \text{Truth and Method, p. 353.} \]
much attention to closer look at these functional apparatuses through an excavation of the historical *modus operandi*, rather than a return to any particular historic polemic.

The underlying theme is an attempt to restore an appreciation of the traditional artifact's value in light of the 20th century crisis of meaning. The historic precedents of this condition are causal and given in a synopsis from a previous class: the (classical) split, the dualism of subject and object. The development of epistemology to gain knowledge of the world is necessarily limited; destined to fall short in the exclusion of larger considerations. Epistemology's placement at the center of philosophy, effectively precluding certain truths of the body.

Epistemology is based upon two conditions which come to characterize the modern period: the dualism of subject/object, and b: the problem of this split, which is taken *a priori*, in the formation of a conception of reality, i.e., the problem of the external world and knowledge of it.

An all-encompassing form of critique that takes into account the dimension of experience and perception I know exists in reading a thing like architecture, can perhaps only developed through hermeneutics, which considers the basis of connection between all disciplines and rather than attempting to remove the shadow of doubt introduced by a subjective reality of a situation (something that is really quite inevitable and

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16 Alberto Perez-Gomez 8th paragraph into *Architecture and the conflict of representation*


unavoidable) plays upon the framework (the rules) in which this all occurs: to form a larger all-encompassing framework. We enter what has been termed the hermeneutics of the sacred.

In a structuralist hermeneutical understanding of the object, psychoanalysis for example, the symbolic content behind the image, dreams, thoughts, of the client in his interaction with the object is intellectualized, scrutinized, until it losses poetic meaning. Whether artist and poets (perhaps architects) can play an active role in the resurrection of an imagery based upon the clarity of the image is in part a large question that underlines the definition of present day meaningful participation in the tradition

**Bachelard and the Image:**

The phenomenologist's project is, in the words of Gaston Bachelard, a recovery of the bases for subjectivities and transsubjectivities of the image at the moment of its apprehension by perception: the onset of the image. His inquiry was the concentration of the poetic image, our object, whose essential newness cannot be explained by psychology or rationalism. His enquiry was directed towards an approach of the problem of creative being in literature and painting, in an appreciation of fundamental essence, those rooted in the pure imagination, or psyche, of the poet, which he sets out in example after example. This will be the approach that I attempt for an examination, quite initial, quite its own myth, beside this window with this looking glass--" When I

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19 From the distinction made by J. Kipnis, "Architecture: The Sacred and the The Suspect", *JAE*, Jubilee Issue, vol 40/#2 p.33-35: "The hermeneutics of the sacred, while recognizing a congenital subjectivity in the appreciation of any particular object, holds an a priori stipulation of the essence of the object and therefore of objective truth. Therefore, such an interpretation styles its calculus in terms of a treatment of accumulated subjectivity (either by phenomenal reduction or existential recognition), i.e., as a care and concern for the latent truth of the object." p.33.
have forgotten all our habits of scientific objectivity, I look for images of the first
time."\textsuperscript{20}

Hermeneutics encompasses the ideal that one can extract knowledge (truth) through a
subjective interpretation of a text, or an other way to say it is that all texts are not self-
limiting. Hermeneutics has a place in the reading of architecture; if phenomenology is
to the first instance of reading, responsible for one's appreciation of the architect's intent
in all of its thickness (or shallowness, or depth revealed in a conscious shallowness—a
very new phenomenon that has caused a lot of problems and confusion in contemporary
theory and criticism, reversing hereto deeply held traditions and ideas about beauty.

Hermeneutics is involved with, or signifies the theory of, interpretation, which in
architectural criticism (and practise) is an issue of significant importance. Our eventual
point of "arrival" which in a fundamental way is really our premise that I start with, is
that architecture, as a form of significant participation, is itself, like language, a
hermeneutical endeavor. We now begin to qualify this, using a quick look at the theory
of hermeneutics and two of its constituent parts(criteria): the idea of hermeneutical
circularity and the idea of dialogue as a fusion of horizons.

Hermeneutic circularity is associated with a notion of the constituent of parts to the
whole. To demonstrate a dependency of cultural and textual that I experience whenever I
"understand" (or interpret) a text. To understand an ecclesiastical text—the Bible for
example, the scriptures (as the texts) are not sufficient in themselves. The totality of the
text appears to guide the comprehension of its particular parts. But, one might ask (as
did the early supporters of hermeneutics), how can one rise from the part to the

\textsuperscript{20}Gaston Bachillard \textit{The Poetics of Space}, trans by Maria Jolas, Beacon Press, Boston 1969. p.156.
comprehension of the whole if to comprehend the part already requires a preliminary comprehension (as a sort of "pre-comprehension") of the whole. This is what is referred to as a "hermeneutic circle."

Such a thing is not self limited. For example, if I consider the phenomenon of learning language-the acquisition of language by a child. As Heidegger shows, such a part whole constituency constitutes a general definition of existence with existence as a part-whole circular (path); a condition of belonging to a whole: i.e., language for the human becomes an articulation of belonging. And the reason that I can learn a language from childhood is not that I already "possess" it (i.e., just like I don't already posses the architectural vocabulary that I will put to use throughout a lifetime as architects) but rather am born into a linguistic community of sorts.

This linguistic community is more than just being placed into an empty room filled with dictionaries; a condition of belonging already implies the second major constituent part of hermeneutics, that of the dialogue between parties where I am more or less heard and more or less understood, again, assuming that I speak the 'same' language.

For architects, perhaps the best lesson to be learned from this is that I not "possess" the building through a priori deductions using systems of reduction in the form of our plans, sections, elevations and other techniques of documenting the building, but that I belong to a situation in which I can elaborate a project (akin to our elaboration of

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21 Gianni Vattimo. "Project and Legitimization I", Lotus International, Milan #48/49, 1985-86. p.120

22 Martin Heidegger. "Einstein and the acquisition of language"

23 Ibid., Martin Heidegger, 'Einstein and the acquisition of language"

24 Gianni Vattimo. "Project and legitimization", Lotus International, p. 120-121
dialogue through the usage of language) as an articulation of the conditions of our belonging.

Architectural Space

From Roland Barthes, I suspect that architecture is a corpus of prescriptions and habits; common to all architects of a period. At its best, it is a natural construction, an "abstract circle of truths outside of which alone the solid residue of an individual logos begins to settle."26

The Representation of Architectural Space:

But architectural space is not limited to buildings; this is obvious. It is rooted in an intuitive understanding of space.

Architectural spaces are in representational images: photographs of buildings. Architectural spaces may be contained in fictional accounts, the novel for example. Architectural spaces are in films. Architectural spaces are in drawings. Each of these types of architectural space must be considered in the broader condition called architecture, which is a subdivision of an understanding and appreciation of bounded geometric space.

An architectural experience may be through a third hand exchange. For example, in a conversation I read in a fictional novel where the author is speaking the words of a 'character' who never existed, and I are reading these words, essentially, from beyond

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25 Barthes, Writing Degree Zero, p. 9
26 Ibid., Barthes, Writing Degree Zero, p. 9
the grave of someone who never even lived, requiring at least two instances of "extrasensory perception."

**Basic Premises of Phenomenology:**

**A:** Objects (including buildings) are pointless in themselves; without place, situation, etc. This is a superficial plane of reference to place oneself on. A larger problem is the accepted reduction of situation, including the architectural realm, to a few phrases in elementary English outside of the poet efforts.

Buildings inhabit space differently than models of them, or perhaps said better, they effect the space around them that people inhabit differently. Scale is a phenomenologist's as well as physical dimension that must be taken into account. Rowe and Slutzky, in "Literal and Phenomenal Transparency" begin to invoke the distance between physical and phenomenal dimensions of architecture.  

**B:** Transcendental meaning is held in symbolic representation, that which I associate with the privileged place, 'aura' of the object. Immanent meaning is embodied in formal representation. The resultant formal content of this is an aesthetic equivalent of the original transcendental meaning.

In approaching a fair assessment of the situation of art and architecture, not only the image architecture and art presents, I think of Dalibor Vesely's assessment of the situational aspect (which is the largest part of hermeneutical understanding) of coming

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28 Dalibor Vesely. An unpublished interview, from a seminar in the graduate history theory program, University of Houston, 1983. Transcription by Mark Schneider
to architecture and the environment, in his example of the historian and casual tourist's coming to St. Peter's in Rome. Of course one could easily dismiss the image, but the important thing really is that it is there—just like the environment at large. And this is the two way street between appearance and meaning, which in good measure allows us to make the distinction between formal and symbolic representation and have it mean something.

C: The reverence of a culture towards an artifact which has implicit meaning to that culture which goes beyond the surface, past representation. In other words, the object is more than a shadow cast upon a blank wall. Literature is filled with allusions to shadows, their rooted within the phenomenologist's self. Because this shadow is cast within cognition-through sensation, perception, and loaded with meaning, in approaching the artifact one is not coming across merely a tertiary authenticity.

IV Conclusions:
Phenomenology gives us a better insight of this phenomenon, because it attempts to remove the taint of subjectivity in the purjorative sense of the word, from this situation defined experience where there certainly will be cultural variance in an appreciation (reception, cognition) of the object. One can come to terms with the extension of the image as more than a sign (which I know intuitively) in the arena of discourse through its literal apprehension.

29 Ibid. Dalibor Vesely. An unpublished interview, from a seminar in the graduate history theory program, University of Houston, 1983. Transcription by Mark Schneider
Similarly, language is a road that leads to an approximation of truths, but a close enough approximation. We know enough from historical accounts and literature, But still, the image remains and coming to terms with such broadly encompassing languages (art, architecture) remains a measure of understanding and feeling (as if one thinks with one body and feels with another!). We cannot talk and think about objects, how they are, independent of our mind. Sensibilia (sense data) are not mind independent entities. Perhaps put a better way, one knows objects. Perhaps that is all.

But often, the language of language and the language of the artifacts a culture produces do not jibe. Some continue to choose a descriptive language dependant upon metaphors As a practical example, perhaps more telling: the work that is produced usually seems to not quite fit in anywhere within their language, nor is it poetic in an anachronistic sense.

From Gadamer, writing presents the hermeneutical problem in all of its purity:
"...detached from everything psychological..."32

Drawing is akin the written word in it's purest form.

An imprisoned man draws the scene of a tunnel and on the walls of his prison, much to the amusement of the warden and guards. On arriving one morning, they find the man

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mysteriously gone. How many times, notes Gaston Bachelard, "poet-painters in their
prisons have broken through walls, by way of a tunnel!"33

There is an parallel between language and drawing which deals with implied as well as
stated content. Again, we are reminded of the hermeneutical notions of linguistic
community that allows for meaningful interaction. Dialogue (in language, in art, in
architecture) consists not merely of the juxtaposition of different interests but rather in
the self-articulation of conditions of belonging which find legitimation as things, as
judgements, in a horizon of understanding reshaping me through a discourse. One
believes that the act of drawing, which "traces" the recognition of one's cultural
tradition, is a analogous form of social dialogue and discourse.34

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33Gaston Bachelard *The Poetics of Space* p.150

34Gianni Vattimo "Project and Legitimation", *Lotus International* #48/49. p.122
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Appendix A

The design program: Depot and Spa

There are objects, spaces, and persons that have been ignored and/or forgotten in the urban scheme of things: residual has sociological as well as physical implications. To begin, one can turn to many of the fine works on social theory; works which are referred to in the research portion of the thesis. Physically speaking, there are residual spaces within the building--by design. Finally, there are the individuals for whom the place was not explicitly designed (they were not considered "clients" in any sense of the term) but who inhabit--co-inhabit--the place none the less. These are the "residual" individuals, composed not only of the army of service staff in grey boiler suits who perform the mundane tasks but all those displaced by the power structure of the institutions which the buildings represent: including the nervous executive (male or female) in the business suite.

Given this: Intervene in the existing structure's residual spaces. In the lower level, consider the design for a depot. Then, consider a series of passageways promising meetings. Finally, design a health spa where people can come together.

I. Depot: Functional relationships and gross square footages

The new structure is worked into an existing parking area of vast dimensions. Auto and mini-bus entry/egress is not compromised, although the low ceiling height may preclude acceptance of very large vehicles. Throughout, glass enclosed corridors connect back into existing core structures.

The structure is located in the level designated as U2, presently used for parking and services. The structure is of reinforced concrete, with a floor to finished floor height of
12'-0". Existing cores, service shafts and structure are not compromised by the design, which fits into an area located directly central to the main plaza above. Leading away from the depot are glassed-in arcades, which connect with the Concourse / Retail level above via punctures cut into the Concourse floor.

**Facility includes:**

- Que-up area (public)  2.200 sf
- Baggage holding and sort (secure access)  1.200
- Claims area (public/limited access)  1.800
- Security consult/holding room (secured access)  100
- Toilet rooms  2 @ 144
- General pedestrian waiting (public)  1.000
- Ticket purchasing and preparation (public)  2 @ 300

**Offices:**

- Facility Director  425
- Receptionist area  410
- Administration  300
- Operations coordinator  270
- Transport director / meeting  425
- Private toilet rooms  2 @ 75
- Security room (private)  175
- Public toilet rooms  2 @ 425
- Public Info booth  175
- Janitorial storage  100

Eight bays for the acceptance and loading/unloading of passengers and baggage

**II. Spa Areas**
In all three buildings, sectors of available floor space are appropriated in the design scheme. These areas were calculated after a full measurement and represent the nominal available gross square footage for each floor that is deemed "residual"; i.e., either unleased or in disuse. This area is re-programmed for use as spa areas.

Spa areas are interspersed throughout the development. For example, in the Theme Building, floors 4 through 6 are connected by a spiraling ramp encircling the easterly sector of an existing core. The Central Building contains the administrative offices for the spa and the general security room. The latter is at the plaza level. The Theme Building houses the stair climb (between the 3rd and 6th floors), and an isolated massage room between two floors, at the half level of each. Several other rooms have been created in a likewise manner, allowing for the protrusion of indeterminate walled-off spaces into the existing corridors of leaseable space.

Breakdown of areas:

Private Message rooms: 4 (2 male, 2 female)@ 100sf (Central Bldg.)
Shower rooms 2 (one male, one female) @600 (Theme Bldg)
Locker rooms 2 @ 450 (Theme Bldg.)

III. Pathways

A series of pathways represent the "footprint" or mapping of a single phenomenal reading. These are treated as open areas, allowing visual penetration of spaces. Additionally, they do not necessarily correspond with the existing circulation corridors. A complete description is provided in the plan and sectional drawings.

IV. Large circulation ramp: spiraling design
Placed into an existing hole penetrating the plaza. Overall diameter is 65 feet. Vertical circulation is by a system of ramps. One ramp connects level U2 with open plaza above, bypassing the Concourse while the other connects the Concourse with the Plaza.
Appendix B

Transcript of presentation delivered at final jury.

Phenomenal Reading of Place: Greenway Plaza and an Architecture of the Residual

Phenomenal readings are used to look at the distance between the apprehension of place and place as a repository of design intents, to test the thesis that urban developments manifest meaning as a built language containing all the processes of understanding integral with an orchestration of perceptive sense. The usage of the phenomenal reading as a method in operation should place facets of the positivistic model of architecture generation into question.

Initially, the thesis was undertaken to address issues raised by Dalibor Vesely in a letter written back in 1984...the full extent of which I won't get into here, but suffice it to say that it concerned the broad topics of making architecture and reality. focusing on the introduction by Descartes in his Discourse on Method:

"Turning over in mind all of the objects that had ever been presented to my senses, I freely venture to state that I had never observed any which I could not explain by the principals I had discovered: never accept anything for true which I do not already clearly know to be such. Divide the difficulties of examination into as many parts as possible. Always work from the simple to more difficult in an orderly manner. And, make enumerations so complete and reviews so general so as to exclude the possibility of omission. But it is necessary to confess that the power of nature is so ample and vast; I have not observed a particular effect which I cannot at once recognize as capable of being deduced in many different modes from the principals. I cannot extricate myself other than by again seeking other experiments..."

The project is divided into two parts, the scheme for the re-(or co-)occupation of the site, an existing office park dating from the early 70's, which involves alternative circulation systems and the development of a depot/terminal. And at a more modest scale the development of a health spa in the 12-story tower that to the east.
I began the project by taking a series of "readings" or phenomenal accounts: I sketched several sequential visits (documented in these drawings) and prepared a written narrative that subsequently was introduced into the drawings as a mapping for the development of the urban scheme.

After this, I attempted in the case of each office tower to identify the "phenomenal" residual space --represented as a nominal average of area in square feet, shown in model form in ziggurat-shaped cuts in the tower floors. And then find the "literal" residual space by a empirical method of measurement. literal residual space is the nominal average in square feet of space that is, as the term implies, left over. however, it doesn't include utility spaces, i.e., mechanical rooms, toilets and the like. These are essential spaces which, like the general lease space, have a transparent function/usage. Instead, I'm considering things like spaces that seem un-leasable for some opaque reason. This area is represented by the larger rectangular plates into which the phenomenal areas are punched out.

This thought model is abstracted in the physical model, which shows the overlay of phenomenal and literal residual spaces...like a ven diagram

Circulation and the reoccupation (or co-occupation) of the design are based upon two themes: First-order slippages, such as in residual dimensions and values that are represented by a made object --a quirk). These quirks are in the existing design and can be observed. For example, the left-over space that surrounds a service vent or janitor's closet...to make way for the introduction of mechanical devices such as air handlers. This leaves spaces that cannot be inhabited (literally or phenomenally) by the conscious
body...such as the small run of curb that cannot be physically occupied yet still delineates a pathway.

Second, space that is unaccountable for due to gaps produced by the linear and deterministic method which drove the original project. I think that there are things that were excluded from the project but which have left a 2nd order "footprint." i.e., they are usually directly represented in the supporting documents but do not look like the strong formal dialogue that characterizes a first-order quirk. There is no other way to rationally come to terms with--or understand--certain facets of the project/artifact. These seem to lend themselves to being "fictionalized", to fabricate an architectural mythology around this kernel of misguided pragmatism.

In distinguishing between first and second order slippages is entirely designation is, one of degrees or extents and not as concrete as I'd have liked. In any event, its useful.

The Theme Building is a case study in which I try and address these issues as well as accommodate program for a health spa.

To begin with, the dimensions of the formal intervention were determined using a first-order slippage. Namely, the distance left over when two modules (one existing, another applied) are overlaid leaving residual dimensions seemed particularly interesting and pregnant as a "theme" to extricate the demons of the work. The design of the spa is thematized around the distance of 5 feet--a linear dimension that came about through the observation of the fact that 5 feet is normally lost throughout the garage's horizontal plane in the overlay of the larger 30' building module (designating the location of main
structural columns) and the width of the parking striping.-- Spaces that can not be occupied physically or phenomenally.

The appropriation of this dimension is in section, with the goal being to offset the vertical circulation in a manner analogous with the horizontal circulation offset. In essence, each floor contributes to the final slippage, which occurs at the 8th floor. This is the device that regulates much of the essential "detailing" of the project, that I've attempted to show in the axonometrics...

The usage of this particular drawing convention yields other remainder residual dimensions when placed against the offset of existing systems of modules. In the volume of carved out space that is almost of a cube proportion, residual space is manifest and re articulated, leaving new residual areas...

The top three floors in the cores are skewed, functionally preventing the same type of access that characterizes all of the others below. On floors 8, 9 and 10, the occupant in this sector of the building (its south core) is confronted with the iconic representation of a door that occurs at the "right place in the north core. It is the memory of the location of door, a door that has been rendered unusable, i.e., unstable. Entry and egress is now in the offset landings...shown by the dotted-in doors at the offset landings. Of course, in these areas, the elevators as well don't function correctly.

The insertion of the upper three stories as "exercise spaces" can be programmatically summarized: stair-climb to the pump-room (top floor), aerobic area, and stationary machines: Sit-up's in five foot high space -- the private functional service areas of the
spa have been appropriated to spaces internal to the core as in exists, with no displacements.

An alternative path, to foster a literal (but not phenomenal) secret meeting area--programmed as a message room--was another part of the project. This was in the theme of the lost room, an idea that developed from the cheesy Victorian pulp, *The Phantom of the Opera*...as well as with a discussion with (Don Bates)....

Looking at a print of the project, there is a gap in room numbering. Apparently, the sequencing was broken for an unknown reason. Consequently, we have a series of 217, 218, 219, and then 221. The question was, where was that room? And then, both how could we account for it and what programmatic usage would the room have if it could be extricated? The "room between floors" is an architectural proposal that on functional grounds is an absolute absurdity--contrary to the original design intent.

Access to the room is divided, with service entry at the half-landing on floor four and virtual egress at full landing on floor two. User entry is on the third as well as 2nd floors. The manipulation of the walls is zipper covered cloth--analogous to a violin case cover--over a light frame of movable panels which hopefully would cause bulges and protrusions in the wall surfaces that intervene in the otherwise work space.

**Notes on the larger circulation and Depot**

**Circulation spiral:**

The addition of a dual circulation ramp links directly the lower underground level number two with the open plaza, bypassing the in-between level, presently a retail area.
The retail area has the outer spiral. The others have the inside spiral. The meeting of these two groups of inhabitants is physically indirect, but hopefully richer

\textit{phenomenally speaking} by virtue of the architectural environment; namely, the manipulation of the tubular screen which separates these two pathways.

Walkways:

These are the residual of an early "mapping" of the site. The intent is to visibly link the entire development through the usage of a re-occurring theme, but one that does not rely upon direct iconic reference. The desire is to have nodal points which become almost "shrines" in a non-denominational sense.

At the second underground level these are enclosed in glass for air conditioning and lead directly into the cores of all three buildings, providing an alternative means of entry into the development.

The depot:

The depot houses functional requirements (that are dealt with in a separate document) in an existing space two levels underground, in what presently is a large expansive field of structural columns interspersed with occasional service stairs and air shafts. The predominant element is, again, the 30 x 30 foot bay. The small 1/4 inch model suggests materials the architectural treatment of new interventions such as glass curtain walls. The central object is a diagrammatic model, representing the pathway of the sun, taken from measurements on a winter day in the center of the open plaza. The idea is to introduce the footprint of sunlight.
Figure 1 Existing site: Greenway Plaza from the south.

Figure 2: Plan. Level U-2, showing Depot.
Figure 3: Plan. Concourse Level.

Figure 4: Plan. Plaza Level.
Figure 5: Example of "phenomenal reading" sketches.

Figure 6: Axonometric of health spa, the Theme Building.
Figure 7: Model photo, showing core interventions.

Figure 8: Interior model photo, showing architectural details at level U-2.
Appendix D: Jury Comments.

At the jury review, guest juror Steven Harris commended the effort, recognizing the density of the work and its very good articulation of difficult themes. He suggested that an intervening testing of method, by making interim objects, may have been helpful in bringing to light the implicit problems of a constructed methodology. He suggested I continue the work further by building a large-scale section of the proposal.

Ellen Whittemore found the work intriguing. She suggested the project could be furthered by elaborating upon the specific methodology through a parallel exploration.

Thesis committee director Mark Wamble was pleased with the final outcome of the work, and unlike the guest jurors appreciated the density of the axonometric drawings as a "representation of an architectural representation" as an ironic comment on modernist deterministic method and to highlight the inadequacy of standard forms of architectural representation.

Committee reader Elyzabeth McKee appreciated the work and felt that the model--as a pedagogical instrument--would have been best concentrated on throughout the presentation.

All jurors recognized the problem of having to rely upon standard architectural representation formats--the "rules" set down in professional schools of architecture--to convey ideas that are implicated in complex theses.