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Drawing the line: An exploration of urban edge conditions

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DRAWING THE LINE:
AN EXPLORATION OF URBAN EDGE CONDITIONS

by

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ABSTRACT

Drawing The Line: An Exploration
of Urban Edge Conditions

by

Halliday Meisburger

The thesis investigates a means of establishing a more meaningful connection between the individual and the city through providing opportunities to experience urban space in an atypical manner. The atypical is created by an architecture which elaborates edge conditions and displaces the individual’s conventional circulation within those edge conditions. Alternate methods of circulation are studied through an elaboration of their salient features, the appearance of those features in historical examples and in examples found in Seattle, Washington. A project for a ferry terminal in Seattle, Washington is presented as an illustration of these concepts.
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Perception/Intention Dichotomy

The landscape architect Andre formerly in charge of the suburban plantations of Paris was walking with me through the Buttes-Chamont park, of which he was the principal designer, when I said of a certain passage of it, "That, to my mind, is the best piece of artificial planting of its age, that I have ever seen." He smiled and said, "Shall I confess that it is the result of neglect?"1

This passage illustrates the often unpredictable link between intention (or lack of intention) and perception, implying that experience and memory play strong roles in our ability to perceive and hence to give meaning to the world around us. Olmsted, a stranger to the park and unfamiliar with its history, places the scene within his vast memory of landscape design. His companion's response reveals a completely different concern which is rooted in his own association with the project.

Olmsted's anecdote refers to a singular event but as we move through the city we are confronted with a multitude of such
events and to a greater or lesser extent we are all strangers to the facts that comprise them. In Foucault's words, "We are in the age of the simultaneous, of juxtaposition, the near and the far, the side by side and the scattered." Narrative provides a powerful way to find meaning in such an environment by enabling us to order these events: we write the city.

In the Capitol Hill neighborhood of Seattle there is a street which begins at the edge of a hilltop cemetery and runs for two blocks through a residential neighborhood before reaching a point where the grade falls off sharply. Here the street is transformed into a running stair that cascades down the hillside for some two hundred feet, still lined by houses, landing underneath a massive freeway viaduct. The last step is confronted by a field of huge columns that support the freeway overhead, forming a strange subterranean landscape in the open air of the city.
Although this path is linear in form it is not an ordered chronological sequence of construction; to traverse it does not result in an archaeological progression into the history of the city. Nor was it built in a clear sequence of intentional events, it is not like the uni-directional path leading to the Acropolis. That path is intentional, designed to evoke specific symbolic/ritual relationships and traditions. The Capitol Hill path is bi-directional and provides multiple readings, allowing each observer to reveal (or to construct) an order within apparent disorder:

"To the idler who strolls the streets things appear divorced from the history of their production, and this fortuitous juxtaposition suggests mysterious and mystical connections..."3

These 'mysterious and mystical connections' are in direct opposition to the calculated readings that result from the intentional path. They are spontaneous, borne from the intersection of the individual psyche with the
structures of the city. A signpost designates a "Dead End" where the street becomes the stair since automobile traffic is impossible, yet passage is certainly permitted. Similarly at the bottom of the stairs there is a street sign which identifies the stair as Boyer Street although it is clearly not the Boyer Street which exists further east. Thus the path exists in an readily recognized context but has a clearly ambiguous relationship to that context. Such places are fundamental to discovering facets of the city's nature by providing the opportunity for the construction of a phenomenal (known through the senses) narrative by the observer. This narrative is a crucial means of establishing ties between the individual and the city; without them the city remains a relatively distant, superficial construction. In the words of Walter Benjamin:

Not to find ones way in a city may well be uninteresting and banal. It requires ignorance, nothing more. But to lose oneself in the city -as one loses oneself in a forest -
that calls for quite a different schooling.\footnote{4}

Benjamin's idea implies an interaction between the individual and the city which allows the individual to become lost. In a paradoxical way the individual must engage the city in order to become detached from it. This idea is echoed in Collage City where the authors raise the issue of exclusion as a positive element which creates opportunities for the construction of narrative:

One walks through the city—whether it is New York, Rome, London, or Paris who cares; one sees lights upstairs, a ceiling, shadows, some objects; but, as one mentally fills in the rest and imagines a society of unexampled brilliance from which one is fatally excluded, one does not feel exactly deprived. For, in this curious commerce between the visible and the undisclosed, we are well aware that we too can erect our own private proscenium and, by turning on our own lights, augment the general hallucination which, however absurd it may be, is never other that stimulating. Rather than being empowered to walk everywhere—being always the same—almost certainly
it would be more satisfying to be presented with the exclusions - wall, railings, fences, gates, barriers - of a reasonably constructed ground plane. 5

A path such as the one found in the Capitol Hill example serves a similar function but achieves exclusion in a different way. This path, differentiated from its context, becomes the vehicle for glimpsing the half-disclosed orders of the surrounding city.

Foucault defines this type of vehicle as a heterotopia:

A sort of counter-arrangement...in which all the real arrangements, all the other real arrangements that can be found within society, are at one and the same time represented, challenged, and overturned: a sort of place that lies outside all places and yet is actually localizable. 6

This concept has been echoed by many authors from a variety of disciplines; although their definitions vary there are several themes common to all. In the next section of the paper a working definition of heterotopia will be established,
followed by a discussion of related terms which will clarify some of the architecture implications of the heterotopic path.

Heterotopic Path - Definitions

The Oxford English Dictionary defines heterotopia in pathological terms: "Displacement in position, misplacement...the occurrence of a tumor in a part where the elements of which it is composed do not normally exist." An analysis of the constituent roots of the word leads to a more general definition: 'hetero' - meaning different, and 'topic' - concerning commonplaces.

The working definition for the purposes of this paper is as follows:

That which is different from the commonplace, with regard to three specific conditions:

1. An area with finite boundaries located within a specific context.

2. Within a heterotopic condition the rules of syntax are broken or at least
called into question, leading to a new organization of the constituent elements. The elements which comprise this condition may be the same elements found in the surrounding context but are composed in a radically different way; or, they may be foreign to the context but function in an analogous way to those found in the context.

3. This new organization is distinctly different from the surrounding context but also related to it - both excluded and engaged - and therefore it provides a simultaneous appreciation of the syntactical, physical, social, and political conditions of the contextual order that was deformed.

A further explanation of these points and some examples which illustrate them follows:

*An area with finite boundaries:* The heterotopic condition demands exclusion, it must be separate from its context in order to provide the position for critical observation. For example, in Grand Central Station there is an inhabitable
space within the large arched windows on the west facade of the building. This cavity is formed between the interior and exterior glazing systems of the window and has a translucent glass/steel floor. Within this cavity the individual is held between the rushing traffic of Manhattan on the outside and the mass of travellers crossing the terminal floor on the inside; exposed to both and yet completely hidden. This sense of secrecy (and anonymity) is conferred by the heterotopic nature of the space: it is completely different from the other two realms that confront it, and yet is spatially a part of both.

The rules of syntax are broken: Within the heterotopic space, elements typical to the context are recombined to form startling juxtapositions. In the earlier example of Capitol Hill in Seattle the relationship between the elements of the private home and the public thoroughfare are rearranged where the stair occurs. The typical relationship is a gradation from street to sidewalk to formal front yard to the home itself with a private
yard to the rear. Along the stair access to the houses occurs on the landings which lead directly to the private yards of the houses. The houses face away from these landings to take in the view to the west, resulting in buildings that do not address the stair. This creates a confrontation between the private/informal and the public passage, evoking a feeling of confusion and trespass in the individual using the stair as a means of moving through the city. The stair itself is an example of an element that functions as an analog. In this case, it is an analog for the street which exists up the hill to the east. Given the differences in the way the two elements function the stair serves to emphasize the attributes of its contextual counterpart.

*Excluded and Engaged:* The heterotopia, although excluded from its context, nevertheless engages that context through its manipulation of syntax. The exclusion is accomplished through some combination of form, materials and spatial qualities which create a necessary opposition
between the heterotopia and the context. This creates a tension between the two which the observer must resolve, and this resolution creates the engagement which contributes to a meaningful experience of the city. In the Capitol Hill example referenced above, such an exclusion is generated by the sudden transformation of the street into the stair and its new relationship to the houses along it. This elicits a feeling of trespass and by pondering its cause the individual begins to engage part of the city's structure: the spatial arrangements common to the typical street. The heterotopic path facilitates the recognition of these fundamental structures in the city which otherwise are accepted passively. In the words of Northrup Frye: "What is dull is not the universe but the mental operations prescribed for us in observing it." 8

Liminality
The Oxford English Dictionary offers the following chain of entries for the word liminal:
"psychol. Of, pertaining to, or situated at the limen."

Limen:
"psychol. Threshold (def.4)."

threshold (def.4):
"psychol. physiol. The point at which a stimulus is of sufficient intensity to begin to produce an effect."

The liminal concerns edges, specifically those edges that form thresholds and therefore imply movement (psychological or physical) across them. The issue of movement is central to the term for the liminal remains constantly in flux with regard to that which lies on either side of it. "That which is neither this nor that, and yet both", in the words of anthropologist Victor Turner. In the previous example of Grand Central Station the window can be seen as a liminal space;
there is a compelling ambiguity about the individual’s position: outside looking in, or inside looking out? Meaning is actively created, not passively received.

Another example is found in the third case study in Seattle, the 'Downtown Path'. As a means to facilitate movement up and down the steep grades in the CBD a series of buildings incorporated escalators within open lobbies; these functioned as internalized 'sidewalks'. The ambiguity occurs in the distinction between the publicly held ground of the typical sidewalk and the privately owned property of the building lobby. When the individual moves along this path an intermittent sequence of ownership creates a strange tension as one leaves the publicly regulated sidewalks and enters the privately regulated buildings. The act of moving from outside to inside carries with it an implicit change in the individual’s freedom of action. Although this change is part of an accepted social contract when entering a building to conduct business, it is rather disquieting
when using a building as a means for moving through the 'public' space city. Thus the individual has the opportunity to consider the relationship of these two spheres of influence - the public and private - and his own place within that relationship.

The liminal also carries profound implications for the creation of narrative, even at a scale much smaller than that of a city. In Calvino's *Invisible Cities* Marco Polo uses a game of chess to create an alternate city:

"your chessboard, sire, is inlaid with two woods: ebony and maple. The square on which your enlightened gaze is fixed was cut from the ring of a trunk that grew in a year of drought: you see how its fibres are arranged?...The quantity of things that could be read in a little piece of smooth and empty wood overwhelmed Kublai; Polo was already talking about ebony forests, about rafts laden with wood that came down the rivers, of docks, of women at the windows..."\(^{10}\)

In chess the pieces are the principle elements, yet it is their relationships to
each other that constitute the game. The chessboard is an ambiguous device: it provides a frame which allows the relationships between the pieces to become legible while existing as a non-hierarchical surface that recedes into the background. Calvino exploits this liminal quality of the board, culling visions of cities from a "little piece of smooth and empty wood."

In comparing the heterotopic and the liminal certain similarities as well as interesting distinctions emerge. Both terms define a relationship between a specific area and its surrounding context, and this relationship contains an element of ambiguity and/or tension. Both conditions can elicit an active response from the individual, fostering participation as a result of reconciling ambiguities or of resolving tension. The major difference between the terms lies in the fact that the liminal exists only in a threshold condition, in the edge between two realms. The heterotopic, although it can also exist within an edge, is not
bound by this condition. Rather, the heterotopic derives its power from the reflections and reinterpretations which it fosters.

The Parergon

"...we come to this collusion: between the question ("What is art?", "What is the origin of the work of art?", "What is the meaning of art or the history of art?") and the hierarchical classification of the arts. When a philosopher repeats this question without transforming it, without destroying its form, its form as a question, its ontointerrogative structure, he has already subjected all space to the discursive arts, to the voice and to logos. We can prove it: technology and hierarchy are prescribed in the envelope of the question." 11

In this passage Derrida argues for a philosophical position which is critical of the cultural context in which it operates. In his view it is not enough to simply ask a question, one must look at the structure of that question itself and
become aware of the mind set that produces it. Derrida would have the philosopher destroy "its form as a question", that is, achieve a position outside of that mind set, in order to engage in a philosophical inquiry. His point of view is reminiscent of the heterotopic condition of being removed from the context while simultaneously addressing it. To accomplish this removal he focuses on the term parergon from Kant's third Critique, where Kant is discussing the realm of aesthetic judgement. Although this philosophical debate is removed from the immediate scope of this thesis, a brief discussion of the idea of the parergon will add a shade of meaning to the concept of the heterotopic path.

Parergon is an archaic Greek term: that which exists in some relation to the ergon (the work). In Kant's words, the parergon is "only an adjunct, and not an intrinsic constituent in the complete representation of an object."\textsuperscript{12} Thus the parergon occupies a position on the edge, but like the liminal it is difficult to
fix its relationship to the element which it augments. Considered in one way the frame on a work of art is part of the painting and is therefore distinct from the wall on which it is hung. Yet when considering the canvas itself the frame tends to recede into the wall and becomes part of the ground in which the canvas remains a figure:

"The parergon is nevertheless a form which has traditionally been determined not by distinguishing itself, but by disappearing, sinking in, obliterating itself, dissolving just as it expends its greatest energy. The frame is never a ground in the way the context or the work may be, but neither does its marginal thickness form a figure."13

The heterotopic path functions in an analogous way, providing a level of separation from the context while being intertwined with it. Although it does distinguish itself, the content of its form tends to disappear in that it is a reflection or reinterpretation of its context; it is not something wholly
foreign and removed from it. It never has an overwhelming presence and yet it asserts itself by continually referring back to the context, making the individual aware of that context and therefore aware of the platform from which it is seen. To refer once again to Derrida:

"It is not simply their exteriority that constitutes them as parerga, but the internal structural link by which they are inseparable from a lack with the ergon. And this lack makes for the very unity of the ergon."

Architectural Examples

Up to this point the primary focus of this thesis has been to define and elaborate some of the basic qualities of heterotopia and the heterotopic path. A comparison with some examples of intentional paths (and the narrative structures which they can support) will help to further clarify the position of the heterotopic path with regard to the history of architecture as well as with the contemporary city. Intentional paths exist in a variety of forms, from the
Roman town to the *sacra monte* of Italy to the public institutions of our own century. These paths attempt to communicate a specific and unambiguous set of cultural/civic/political values as a means of structuring the urban experience.

**Intentional Paths**

**Djemila**

The Roman city of Djemila, built in the first century AD, provides evidence of the strong role that the intentional path played in maintaining the identity of the Roman town. A long, wide street extends through the town, with the major public/civic building (forum, market, baths, temples) arranged along its length. Colonnades line the thoroughfare, triumphal arches frame the major intersections and mark the points where the path’s direction changes. Fountains and wells are also placed along the path to provide the public water supply. The use of colonnades and arches reinforces the coherence of the path while framing views of the various structures that lie
along it. This path constitutes a type of armature which organizes the civic structure of the town. The integration of public services (i.e. the water supply and market) with the civic buildings provides a clear reading of the interdependence of the individual with the Roman empire.

Sixtus V / Sacra monte

The role of the intentional path is also clearly seen in Sixtus V's plans for Rome as carried out by Fontana in the seventeenth century. Sixtus proposed a series of straight avenues that would link the major pilgrimage sites of the city, cutting through the dense tangle of the existing city fabric. As Spiro Kostoff notes: "Here the street was now composed as a bifocal project, urging the user from either direction to move along its path toward the visual inducement at the point of convergence."16 The plan also used obelisks as intermediary landmarks to reinforce the paths' continuity, assuring a clear perception of its course.
Sixtus V's streets emphasized the church's pervasive presence; religion and the political entity which administered it were made more clearly present throughout the city. This emphasis occurred at the expense of local conditions, which were altered to create the papal roads - by their very nature these new paths existed independently of what lay around them. This type of path is directly opposed to the heterotopic path, which resists the imposition of any central authority and is intricately connected to its context.

Another path founded on religious premises is the sacra monte of northern Italy. These 'stations of the cross' are arranged as separate chapels along a pathway. The individual visits each chapel in sequence, recreating the narrative of the journey made by Christ. The experience of the sacra monte depends on following this prescribed path, without the correct sequence the narrative structure fails and destroys the intended meaning. This type of sequential path is also antithetical to the heterotopic which
prescribes no specific experiential order and relies instead on the narrative developed by the individual.

Stockholm Public Library

Asplund’s Stockholm Public Library of 1926 offers an example of an intentional path that operates at the urban scale as well as at the scale of the individual building. Located on a fairly large site whose only other structure is an observatory, the library creates a number of strong ties to its urban context. It addresses a street which is connected to the center of the city. The large plinth on which the building rests provides a well-defined street edge as well as incorporating market stalls which relate the building to the immediate street life. The height of the central drum corresponds to the cornice heights of the adjacent buildings across the street, maintaining a coherent scale within the block. Finally, the central cylinder of the library is aligned with the principal axis of the
observatory, thus integrating the two structures to create a coherent site plan.

In this elaborate set of relationships Asplund created a strong processional path which takes the form of a staircase that leads from the sidewalk to the entrance of the library. The sides of this stair are skewed to create a forced perspective that helps to draw the observer up into the building. Once inside, the direction of the exterior stair is continued by another flight of steps that terminate at the center of the cylindrical reading room. In section, this last part of the sequence moves through a series of increasingly large spaces with the reading room being the largest. This path is unmistakable in its intent to tie the public realm of the city into the publicly held knowledge contained in the library. The single, continuous stairway creates a monumental display of urban importance of this building.

Heterotopic Paths

ZUP Housing Project
An urban example of the heterotopic path is found in Lucien Kroll's ZUP housing project built in Normandy in 1978. Kroll's design involves additions and alterations to an existing housing project which was constructed in the 1960s. The modernist ideals are clearly evident in the original project, with its long bar buildings sited as objects within a park-like campus. The residents intensely disliked their project, citing the poor quality of the public 'quadrangles' and especially the limited and prescribed ways of moving through the site.

Kroll developed an alternate path through the site, connecting the project to the adjacent districts at either end. The site plan shows the way in which this new path exists independently of the utopian orthogonal order of the existing buildings, relating instead to the contours of the site's topography. Penetrating some buildings, skirting others, this heterotopic path carries the observer through both the old and new
construction, while at the same time respecting the site’s ground conditions. There is no prescribed sequence on the path, nor is it deliberately separated from its context. It exists in a manner that allows the user a different way of interacting with the older parts of the project than was originally conceived, while at the same time considering the realities of moving through the site. Following the completion of the site it was discovered that Kroll’s 'new' path closely followed an ancient roman footpath that at one time ran through that region.

Staatsgalerie

Stirling’s Staatsgalerie addition in Stutgaart, 1983, is the heterotopic equivalent Asplund’s library project. The museum also attempts to tie into its context by matching the scale, alignment and materials of the adjacent structures. Its form echoes that of the existing building, although it substitutes a central void for an enclosed space. The heterotopic path is found in a pedestrian
walkway which, although required by the competition, is nevertheless rendered in an unorthodox way. This path cuts through the building without actually allowing access to it, skirting the central sculpture court and emerging on the pedestrian entrance level plaza. The path is intertwined with the building and yet still excludes the individual from entering it at any point along its length. Such an exclusion is surprising given the public nature of the institution; yet Stirling was clearly quite conscious of his decision. At the upper end of the path a pair of scuppers extend well overhead like a pair of gargoyles guarding the entrance to the path, during a storm a pedestrian would have to pass through a trial by water in order to use the walkway. Stirling raises the question of the individual's relationship to the artistic culture, simultaneously inviting participation while denying access.

Hotel de Beauvais
A fourth example, the Hotel de Beauvais, constructed in Paris during the 1650's by Andre Le Pautre, incorporates both the intentional and heterotopic path in its design. The use of party wall construction and the porte cochere and central court create a strong link with the surrounding urban fabric while providing a formal spatial progression from street to residence. Once inside, this intentional path continues and is clearly marked by large stairways and en filade sequence through the major public rooms.

In contrast to this linear, intentional sequence are the secondary and tertiary rooms linked by a number of small halls and stairways which allow more choices for movement. In these lesser stairs, for example, the intermediate landings often lead to mid-level rooms and hallways. The dominant public stairs draw the visitor upward directly into a public space without providing these intermediate opportunities. The secondary rooms exist in a variety of locally structured areas -
each with its own organizing geometry, but unrelated those that surround it. They are held together only by their disposal around the central figure of the court.

In this example the heterotopic path exists in plural in the multiplicity of circulation routes that burrow around the central figures of the public areas of the hotel. These paths occupy the residue between the figural rooms and the exterior walls of the structure and by doing so they expose the difference between the envelope of the site and the forms of the spaces located within it.

Seattle

Principal Conditions

Foucault claims that heterotopias exist in every society but that their forms change to respond to the unique conditions of a particular time and place. A similar relationship exists between the heterotopic path and the city: the path reflects and reinterprets the normative conditions of the city. Thus the nature
of the heterotopic path is dependant on the nature of the city in which it is located. The existence of distinct and discrete edges is one of the most prevalent and formative conditions in Seattle, existing from the scale of the regional landscape to the scale of the individual building.

**Regional Landscape**

Located in the western region of Washington state the city lies between two mountain ranges: the Cascades to the east and the Olympics to the west. These two ranges run parallel to each other along a north-south axis, forming the horizon for the city and emphatically locating it within a finite field. As one moves through the city the mountains continually disappear from view only to reappear with startling presence as the crest of a hill is reached. The limits of this region are further emphasized by its temperate climate which contrasts with the arid regions to the east and the rain forests to the west. This landscape sets the tone for a city in which abrupt edges play a
crucial role in determining the urban structure.

Urban Scale

At the next level of scale lies the city itself, bounded by Lake Washington to the east and Puget Sound to the west, and divided by a waterway and lake which connect them. Given the sheer quantity of shoreline it is not surprising that nearly every neighborhood has at least one edge formed by water. One obvious physical result of this condition is to limit the degree and direction of access between districts. Two neighborhoods separated by only a thin strip of water become completely isolated from each other; direct visual linkages are rendered physical only by means of an indirect route leading to a bridge.

Topography also forms distinct edges, abrupt changes in grade are common in almost every district and these often define the boundaries between adjacent districts. Within the confines of these boundaries individual neighborhoods display a high degree of homogeneity and
have developed unique qualities of lot size, density, building type, etc..

This separation is made even more emphatic by the conventions used for naming the city streets. In the middle of the city streets terminate at one shore of Lake Union only to reappear with the same name on the opposite shore and continue in their original direction. While this pattern is evident in plans of the city the coherency between interrupted segments of a street is not experienced when moving through the city. The water forms too powerful an edge; the two segments of the same street assume completely different identities. For example, Mercer St. on the west side of the lake is a broad commercial strip while on the east side it is a quiet residential street. Although this convention of naming would appear to unify the city, in fact it accentuates the effect of edges formed by water.

It is interesting to note the example of the Denny Regrade, a neighborhood plagued by abandoned housing, vacant lots, and an unclear sense of community. This district
was at one time located on one of the steepest hills in the city. Arthur Denny, a prominent developer in the 1860's, proposed and later financed the complete re-grading of the neighborhood; buying nearly every lot on the hill and then literally sluicing the hill into the Puget Sound. His intent was to create a level commercial area that would form the heart of the new central business district. The resulting neighborhood was never redeveloped and lapsed into the no-man's land which it remains today. It is as if the neighborhood's identity was erased as completely as its topography.

The combined effects of these principal conditions is to produce a city composed of isolated neighborhoods connected only by a limited number of routes. To move between any non-adjacent neighborhoods requires a specific progression through intermediate districts. This limited movement is analogous to an "en filade" sequence as opposed to a "free plan" arrangement embedded in the nature of the gridded city. The strong edge conditions
amplify this sequential movement by strongly marking the transitions between districts. Given these circumstances it is not unexpected that the heterotopic paths in Seattle are concerned with edges in a physical or psychological sense. In the Capitol Hill example the path provides a unique method of crossing an edge between two districts, and in the Downtown path it reflects the edge between public/private space. The pages that follow this section contain an analysis of the Capitol Hill case study.
Conclusion

Up to this point the discussion has focused on the heterotopic path's properties and an analysis of those properties. In the conclusion I would like to turn to the challenges posed in designing a heterotopic path.

At a general level the design raises the issue of intention: can the heterotopic path's form and meaning exist only in relation to its context or does it embody its own set of principles and meanings? The heterotopic paths found in Seattle all have a startling presence and sense of place although functionally they are simply passages. The same is true of the Grand Central Station example: its powerful nature is partly due to its existence within the wall of the building, an element typically perceived as an uninhabitable membrane. Yet these paths also depend upon their context to imbue them with another level of meaning. The problem is to design a passage which adequately engages and challenges its context but still exists on its own terms.
Another concern relates to the function of the heterotopic path in today's society. Although these paths can afford an opportunity for individual engagement it remains up to the individual to accept the invitation. If Foucault's description of our age is accepted then it is possible that the inversions presented by the heterotopic path will not strike the observer as unusual but rather as another component of an atmosphere filled with "background noise". To what extent is it possible to "shock" anymore?

At the more specific level of methodology there are also a number of challenges in designing a heterotopic path. A central part of the design involves establishing the normative conditions which exist at a given site. While it may be possible to painstakingly catalog every piece of information which pertains to the site, it may not be desirable to do so. The heterotopic path reflects and reinterprets normative conditions; attempting to respond to every condition could ultimately overwhelm the
legibility of the path's reaction to those conditions. Some criteria must be developed which will limit the number of relevant conditions that are considered.

A related issue concerns the method used to determine the response to those relevant conditions. Perhaps there is no clear answer to this question other than to test a variety of methods and attempt to assess the clarity of each. Ultimately the design will reflect a number of personal choices which hopefully will not preclude the path's ability to function as a platform for the interpretations of others. The Hotel de Beauvais provides answers to some of these concerns. In terms of normative conditions its public spaces provide one clear set of architectural conventions to which the secondary and tertiary spaces respond.

In the final analysis the value of the heterotopic path may lie in its ability to provoke, rather than answer, questions about the cities in which we live. While we are confronted by a rich variety of media whose goal is often identical, to
attempt provocation through and about architecture is a means of reintroducing a singular source of richness to our appreciation of the city.
Postscript

The doubts concerning the ability to design a heterotopic path were realized early in the semester. Although the concept was clear, the means to render it in architectural terms was not. One of the stumbling blocks lay in trying to emulate the conditions found in the case study. Those conditions were linked to a specific site whose qualities of scale and density were not transferable to the project's urban site or public program.

As the design process continued the project's focus shifted away from an attempt to design a specific path. Instead, the project attempted to achieve the function of a heterotopic path without literally constructing one by reinterpreting the qualities of the site's edge conditions, their relationship to the programmatic functions of the ferry terminal, and the nature of the setting in which one enters and leaves a city. This approach proved to be much more fruitful
without sacrificing the original intentions.

The comments from the final jury reflect the results of this late change in approach: although the analysis was well received the jurors were less convinced by the architectural elaboration. "You seem to be circling around with great thoroughness but you need to zero in", was a comment by Michael Benedikt which typified the responses. At the time of the final jury a suggestion was made to study the sectional pieces of the project in order to achieve this focus.

To that end a series of sections were developed to explore in greater detail the nature of each edge condition. Beginning at the inland edge of the site, the space of the terminal consists of largely vertical volumes of densely structured space which reflect the built-up new ground of the modern city. A degree of transparency is included to expose the nature of this edge from below as well as above. The structure also carries outwards into the space of the plaza.
itself to highlight the edge between old and new.

The opposite side of the plaza is composed of a building which reinforces the existing street edge on one side while opening out on the other to provide a view of the new city against the foreground of the old. Its roof structure recalls that on the opposing side by slipping free of the exterior wall. The volumes here are not as vertical, and the walls begin to become more transparent, foreshadowing the conditions at the water side of the terminal.

At the water’s edge this increasing horizontality is reflected in the longer, narrow building of the ticket counter. The edge here is comprised of the raised viaduct to the east and the shoreline to the west; the terminal reflects this thickened edge by cantilevering out over the water while water undercuts the roadbed, further breaking down the clean line between land and water.

At the final section on the water, the terminal is composed of horizontal
elements reflecting the horizontality of the open water. Wall structures achieve their greatest transparency, and a more open, lightweight structural system is contrasted to the heavier pilings supporting the pier.
Footnotes

1 Quoted in "Frederick Law Olmsted and the Dialectic of Landscape" by Robert Smithson. *Art Forum Magazine*

2 Michael Foucault, "Other Spaces", p.9.


5 Koetter and Rowe. *Collage City*. pp. 66-68.

6 Foucault, "Other Spaces", p. 12.


14 Derrida, p. 21.
Bibliography


Foucault, Michael. "Of Other Spaces"


Smithson, Robert. "Frederick Law Olmsted and the Dialectical Landscape". Artforum.

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p.25 Top: Kroll, Lucien Kroll, p. 103.

p.28 Top: Dennis, Court and Garden, p.73.

Final Project