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The Charleston Single House: An exploration of type and method

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The Charleston Single House:
An Exploration of Type and Method

by

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ABSTRACT

The Charleston Single House:
An Exploration of Type and Method

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The Charleston Single House's form is explored as a topical communicative artifact.

The Charleston Single House, a single family urban house type, indigenous to Charleston, South Carolina, and almost 300 years old, is analyzed through its constituent elements of form. The architectonics of each element, in relation to other elements and the urban fabric, is examined.

Knowledge gained from the analysis is used to manipulate the architectonics of the elements within the constraints of the type to produce a modern Charleston Single House. These topical artifacts are proposed as infill for a decaying neighborhood, consistent to the type and desiring renovation.

Socio-political and methodological concepts derived from Thomas Jefferson and Hannah Arendt--focused on history, the public realm, and artifacts--grounding the thesis are enumerated.
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ANALYSIS OF CHARLESTON SINGLE HOUSE

The Charleston Single House is a residential type that is both identified with and identifies the city of Charleston, South Carolina. The pervasiveness of the type through time and across economic and social divisions is articulated by Charleston historian Samuel Gaillard Stoney, who noted "you can trace the persistence of this plan through nearly every notable style of architecture Charleston used..." and that the type "so suited Charleston that even our shanty towns were built on similar lines."¹

As an urban house type, the Charleston Single House manifests a distinctive heritage. Common principles of urban house types are: "1) definition of a public street or place; 2) three types of walls: public street facades; party or blind walls; and walls internal to the block or court yard; 3) relation to an overall city plan or morphology."² The Charleston Single House clearly exhibits the first two principles and fits a more generalized notion of the third in that it relates to a larger pattern of the city.³ The distinctive aspect of the type is its simultaneous adherence to principles common to rural houses: "1) a recurring plan/section schemata as the primary character, regardless of applied stylistic treatment; 2) adherence to geometric simplicity from overall mass to elements such as porches, windows, and doors; 3) proportion of detail subordinate to mass; 4) ornamentation which is directly developed from craft, construction and the nature of the materials."⁴ Again all but the last of these principles common to rural house types are clearly exhibited in the Charleston Single House. Further, the Charleston Single House with its side porch or "piazza" (the distinctive element of the type) consistently located on the south or west side exhibits a conscious relationship of the house to land and sun--the larger pattern to which rural house types act.⁵ Repeated as a type, it builds an urban fabric while preserving its status as an independent event on the land.
The Charleston Single House stands "endways to the street, broadside to the south or southeast and one room thick,"\(^5\) two rooms in each story. It has six constituent elements of form:

1) The hearth, traditionally a focal point for family life, represents the intimacy of home and private life.

2) The envelope, the walls and roof of the house, defines a clear boundary between the public and private realms.

3) The foundation, embedded in the earth, connects the house to the world while elevating and separating the envelope from the public life of the street.

4) The side porch or "piazza"\(^7\) is an amendment to the envelope. It mediates the transition from public to private realm while tempering the climate.

5) The garden isolates each house from its neighbor, reinforcing each as an independent event on the landscape.

6) The garden wall defines and buffers the separation of the community of the street and the individuality of the house.
The hearth, traditionally a focal point for family life, represents the intimacy of home and private life. Insulated from the public by the boundary walls of the envelope and comforting the inhabitants, the hearth connects them to the earth.

Most often constructed of locally-produced brick, the location of one or more fireplace within the enveloping walls is flexible. The fireplace may be free standing (dividing space), perpendicular or parallel to an adjoining wall, or in cases of multiple fireplaces, a combination of the above. When adjoining a wall it is most often located against the blind wall. The fireplace is seldom articulated on the exterior surface of the wall.
The envelope, the walls and roof of the house, defines a clear boundary between the public and private realms.

The walls of load-bearing wood frame or masonry construction form a narrow rectangle. The rectangle is closed above with one of a variety of roof types: gable, jerkin, or flat. The pitch of the sloped roofs is usually steep, with a slope of 1:2 very common.

The typology derives its name, Single House, from its plan organization. The plan is a single room wide with two rooms on each floor. Circulation is usually at the center between the two rooms or along one of the long sides.

It is through site orientation that rural traditions are blended with urban considerations and a type
distinct to Charleston begins to emerge. The rectangular envelope is located with a narrow end on the street, one long side up against the lot line, and the other facing onto the garden space. This convention forms an urban space out of the street and dictates differentiation in the facades of the envelope: an ordered street facade, a blind wall for privacy, and an internal facade in direct communication with the garden. Rural traditions and geographic and climatic constraints are adhered to in the consistent orientation of these facades. The broad side facing the garden is almost exclusively arranged to face south or southwest, capturing the prevailing breeze.
The foundation, embedded in the earth, connects the house to the world while elevating and separating the private realm from the public life of the street.

Typically a masonry wall, more modest houses use masonry piers for foundations. Most early homes were raised only 2 feet above grade. A broad survey reveals a general increase in foundation height over time, with later houses having a full story of foundation space. Some of these full floor height foundations are partially below grade. This change reveals prosperity and an adaption of imported traditions and practices to the requirements of a new land. The low elevation of the peninsula, susceptible to flooding, and a desire to take advantage of prevailing breezes off the bay and rivers predicated this change. Often there is a relationship between
foundation height and the distance between the house and the sidewalk. The urban convention in Charleston is to have the street facade of the house abut the sidewalk. However as foundation height increases, the distance between sidewalk and house increases. This distance is determined by the run of the stair to the first floor entry. This relationship can be altered by containing the run of the stair within the piazza.

The foundation and the envelope are separate elements that act together, independent from neighboring houses, dependencies, or even the attached piazzas.
The side porch or piazza, is an amendment to the envelope. It mediates the transition from public to private realm while tempering the climate.

The piazza is a trabeated structure, lighter and more open than the load bearing walls of the envelope to which it is attached. Opposite the envelope on the garden side, the columns of the piazza rest on masonry piers which are independent from the foundation of the house. The deck of the piazza aligns with the floor of the house. The piazza works to shade the walls and reduce glare along the southern and southwestern exposures of the house, while providing shaded space to sit in the cooling breezes during hot, humid weather.
The piazza is also a vital transitional element in the entry procession which begins where the first private step intersects the public realm of the sidewalk. The procession concludes by welcoming the public inside the walls that define the private realm. The piazza accomplishes this task of mediation between opposing spaces of public and private by being an independent space which displays characteristics of both the spaces it bridges. It acts in a similar way to mediate between the house and the garden.

Bottom photo\textsuperscript{11}
The garden isolates each house from its neighbor helping establish each as an independent event on the landscape.

This independence and a house "communicating more with the side garden than the street" reflects the rural architectural traditions of a community rooted in agriculture and the land. The zoning of this garden into public and private areas reiterates the urban civility that creates an urban space of the street.

The public garden adjoining the street parallels the piazza and the entry procession. It is usually visually accessible to the passerby and enriches the community. The private garden is separate and secluded. It is rarely visible from the street and offers the inhabitants another dimension of pleasure.
The garden wall defines and buffers the separation of the community of the street and the individuality of the house.

Garden walls are typically masonry, wrought iron, or a combination of the two. The walls maintain a planar quality which is passed by, not through. This aspect differentiates them from the walls of the envelope. This difference is increased by the scale and visual permeability of the garden walls. The walls work to maintain a strong edge for the street while buffering or softening the separation. This buffering is mediation of the sectional changes between house and street, softening the appearance of stairs that result from higher foundations. Buffering also occurs by layering visually denser walls to separate the public and private gardens.
These elements and principles, combined in a generous and flexible way, established an indigenous residential architecture that remained prototypical of Charleston for more than one hundred years. A free standing house communicating more with the side garden than the street, Charleston Single Houses "were sensitive compromises between the public need for urban density and the private desire for domestic seclusion..."\textsuperscript{13} They articulated the importance of land and its ownership in a cultural and economic setting rooted in agriculture. Independent acts, each was an architectural statement about the individual's or family's relationship to nature and the community.

The ability of the type to work as architecture has been impaired. The urban fabric which the Charleston Single House is part of was almost fully developed prior to the turn of this century. This, coupled with the preservation policies of the city, discourages flexible interpretation and promotes weak imitation. The Housing Authority of the City of Charleston, in a narrative about their scattered Infill Public Housing Program describes their own use of the type: "They are in reality a planning statement rather than an architectural one".\textsuperscript{14} The statement reflects the prevailing and general use of the type as a model. This pattern of imitation and lack of experimentation denies the type's ability to serve as architecture.
SITE DESCRIPTION

Knowledge gained from the analysis is applied to experimentation within the architectural vocabulary of the type to design a single family house. This single family residence is conceived of as infill for an existing neighborhood in Charleston, Gadsden Green.

Gadsden Green is a neighborhood whose fabric is consistent with the lower peninsula and Charleston Single House type. It is located in the northwest portion of the peninsula, Planning Unit 4 of the City of Charleston's neighborhood planning program. The adjacent neighborhoods (newer and different in style from the rest of the peninsula) Hampton Park Terrace, Wagner Terrace and North Central comprise the balance of Planning Unit 4. These other neighborhoods were developed primarily after The
Citadel (a state funded university) moved to the area in 1922. Gadsden Green's
development occurred earlier. All the neighborhoods have been within the city limits
since 1849, prior to which time they were located north of the city's fortifications and
used for agriculture and recreation.

Gadsden Green's southern boundary is the Crosstown Expressway (State Highway 17).
The Crosstown Expressway, a multi-lane, limited-access thoroughfare running east to
west across the peninsula, terminates Interstate 26 and becomes a gateway to the historic
city of Charleston. Gadsden Green is one of the first neighborhoods visible when
entering Charleston. Like many such thoroughfares, the Crosstown Expressway
physically divides the city and establishes perceptible economic and social separation as
well. Just north of the Crosstown within Gadsden Green is Line street. Line street
denotes not only the city's last fortified wall, but the old city boundary and limit to the
Board of Architectural Review's jurisdiction governing new construction. The western
portion of the neighborhood (which is not residential) is bounded by the Ashley river.
The northern and eastern boundaries are the residential areas previously listed.
Immediately accessible to the residential area of Gadsden Green (less than a one mile
radius) are: the medical center, dominated by the Medical University of South Carolina;
The Citadel, the largest non-federal all male military college in the United States; a
campus of Trident Technical College; elementary, middle, and high schools; important
city and county offices; a major hotel; and a mid-rise medical office building. In
addition, one finds the following public recreational facilities: Stoney field, Harmon
field, Jack Adams tennis center, and Hampton park, the city's only large citywide park,
which is home to Charleston's minor league baseball team.
Gadsden Green is an economically depressed and physically decaying residential neighborhood. The population is 98% African American\textsuperscript{15} and its density is 23 units per residential acre while the adjacent neighborhood of North Central has a density of approximately 15 units per acre.\textsuperscript{16} The homes in Gadsden Green are located close together and have been subdivided into apartments. There are a substantial number of vacant, abandoned houses and bare lots.

The surrounding neighborhoods, composed of a racially mixed and stable population, were originally predominantly white. During the 1960's and 1970's middle class black families replaced white families as the white families moved to the suburbs. Income and education levels in these neighborhoods can be characterized as moderate relative to
the rest of the peninsula. Residential sales prices in Planning Unit 4 tend to be approximately one half of those of the lower peninsula (south of the crosstown expressway). Gadsden Green's sales prices are the lowest in Planning Unit 4.

Gadsden Green is in a pivotal position relative to a number of physical, social, economic, and political circumstances within the city of Charleston. It is this pivotal position and the city's and residents' (of Gadsden Green) stated goal to lower the density and rehabilitate the neighborhood\textsuperscript{17} that recommends Gadsden Green as a site for a modern exploration of the Charleston Single House type.
DESIGN PROGRAM

Functional program requirements for the design exercise are articulated in the most broad and general terms. Consistent in each design are the requirements that the house be a single family residence, that the cost be moderate, and that the structure accommodate the automobile. The design studies deal with a variety of typical site conditions.

The focus of this design exercise is an exploration in the sensitive use of history to help communicate and physically manifest topical social-political ideas. The ideas most clearly manifested are the individual’s relationship to nature and community through the differentiation of inside and outside, and public and private realms.

The differentiation is articulated through the architectonics of space, structure, circulation and materials. Modern concepts of these architectural elements are used within the common and historical vocabulary of the Charleston Single House type. The presumption of the exploration is that the limit of the vocabulary is the recognition of the type’s form. It is based on the need to stay within a common, shared, and meaningful vocabulary of type and that "typologies must be based on form, for form is the most persistent, the least changing of an object's components."\(^{18}\)

It is recognized that neither the ethical questions answered nor the methodology of response varies from the historical practice observed in the analysis of the type. However, imitation and what can be the sentimental, nostalgic, and senseless use of history is avoided by responding with modern answers and technique. This action rehabilitates the Charleston Single House to serve not as a model but as a persistent form of communication that is topical and accessible.
Five house designs derived from the program described are presented in chronological order of their development. Each design variation is produced by manipulating the architectonics of the Charleston Single House's elements. The variations are driven by knowledge and understanding gained by a diligent reading and rereading of the type.

The first four designs are documented with a description, a diagram and photographs of schematic models. The fifth design is more fully developed and documented with additional diagrams, drawings, and photographs.
DESIGN ONE

This design is proposed for a corner lot approximately 50 feet square. The primary ideas explored are: the projection of interior space outward into the piazza; differentiation of circulation for public and private zones; and the transformation of the hearth into a service core.

The second floor interior space of the envelope is projected or expanded outward into the piazza through the use of a balcony. Circulation for public and private zones of the interior are separated, being located at opposite ends of the envelope. The more public stair and formal entry are adjacent and parallel to the more heavily trafficked street of the site. This stair works as an additional buffer between the street and the most public room of the interior space.
The hearth is transformed into a service core, separating public and private zones of the interior.
DESIGN TWO

Design Two is proposed for a corner lot approximately 40 feet by 80 feet. The primary ideas explored are: the infiltration of the piazza into the interior of the envelope; a zoning of piazza space in correspondence with interior space zones; a differentiation between formal and informal entry within the same architectural and spatial element; and a transformation of the hearth into a circulation node.

The piazza progressively infiltrates the interior of the envelope, differentiating public and private zones within. The more public and formal spaces within the envelope evidence less intrusion by the piazza. The more private and informal spaces within the envelope exhibit a greater presence of the piazza, with an attendant reduction in the distinction between inside and outside.
Both the formal and the informal entries use the piazza as a transition from the public life of the street to the privacy of the home. The formal entry occurs on the more heavily trafficked street. The piazza is established as a discreet transitional space. There is an equal elevation difference between the piazza (entry level) and the street and public garden.

To enter the house an individual must pass through the masonry wall of the foundation. An informal entry is located on the neighborhood street. Recognizable as a discreet element, the piazza overlaps the envelope adjacent to the entry point. There is not change in elevation as the individual enters the piazza space from the street. A flight of stairs which passes around and through a masonry pier allows the individual to reach the first floor. At this point,
(the first floor) the distinction between the piazza and the interior of the envelope is diminished by the transparency of the envelope's wall, allowing a simultaneity of spatial identity.

The hearths are figuratively expressed by masonry piers. The stairs hang from these piers. The piers establish a progression of movement from public to private zones. Each change in the progression requires the individual to pass through a load bearing masonry element.

The model also displays a change of surface for the wood-framed, load-bearing walls of the envelope. The more private and informal zone is sheathed in wood siding. The exterior of the public or more formal areas are plastered.
DESIGN THREE

The last three designs are proposed for a lot 25 feet wide with existing houses on either side of its long boundaries. A site this narrow has a significant impact on the "piazza." The narrow site almost precludes many of the traditional functional justifications for the piazza. Each of the following three designs addresses that impact in some way.

The primary idea explored in this third design is the transposition of structural systems between formal elements. The garden wall, normally a permeable plane, uses the structural system (columns and beams) of the "piazza." The piazza is formed by load-bearing brick walls, normally a structural system reserved for the envelope. The envelope uses the planes of the garden wall, rotated 180 degrees, supported by columns. Visual
permeability of the garden wall plane is preserved with the use of glass block between the planes which are now the floors of the envelope.

The piazza, no longer able or required to functionally mediate the physical environment because of the proximity of the neighboring house and modern mechanical devices, still serves culturally as a transitional element. It is the space of transition from the public life of the street to the privacy of the envelope. The sensory experience of both the piazza and the envelope are radically transformed by the transposition of structural systems. Their formal recognition and utility are retained.

The piazza also serves as part of the circulation system providing the landings and hallways for each floor, as well as being a service core.
These programmatic uses are common for the piazza of older Charleston Single Houses which were adapted for modern mechanical systems and plumbing, or subdivided into multifamily dwellings.

This design eliminates the figural representation of the hearth while maintaining formal recognition of the type.
DESIGN FOUR

This design is proposed for a lot 25 feet wide with existing houses on each side. The primary ideas explored are the manipulation of space defined by a structural system and the identity of those spaces within the traditional vocabulary of the type. The mechanics of the exploration are the transposition of structural systems between formal elements and a shifting of the positions of spaces recognized within the traditional vocabulary.

The transposition of structural systems occurs between the frame system of the piazza and the load-bearing masonry walls of the envelope. The envelope is now a frame structure (clearly articulated only on the piazza side of the model). The piazza is formed by masonry walls. The space formed by this relationship is manipulated
by shifting the plane in which each structural system occurs. This shift occurs at the primary entry of the piazza and envelope which align with one another.

The shift clearly defines public (front) and private (rear) zones of the house. At the same time it calls into question the identity of the space defined by the frame wall of the envelope and masonry wall of the piazza. The question is forced by the transposition of the structural systems. It is advanced by the similarity of the (now masonry) piazza wall to a garden wall. The second reading of the piazza wall, as the garden wall, is enhanced by the extended adjacent passage, which leads to the piazza entrance, similar to the traditional sidewalk experience, and its planar nature. Scale does not allow it to be a garden wall.
Within the obvious clarity of public and private zones, questions arise as to the identity of space. This is traditionally posed by the piazza. Within the traditional vocabulary, the piazza was obviously private, while evidencing characteristics of both interior and exterior space. This design attempts to force the question of what is inside, what is outside, and add the questions of: What space is this? Where does it start? Where does it stop?
DESIGN FIVE

Design five is also proposed for a lot 25 feet wide, with existing houses on either side. The primary idea explored is the manipulation of spaces identifiable within the traditional vocabulary of the type. The manipulations establish a conflict between the general and the particular nature of spaces by provoking multiple, simultaneous, and contradictory readings within an immediate and overall clarity.

The mechanics of the exploration include: the establishment and re-use of materials, elements, and relationships in the compression of structural systems, planar shifts of those systems, reflection, and the repositioning of traditional spatial elements. The use of localized symmetry within a general asymmetry also contributes to design.
The load-bearing, wood-framed blind wall (abutting the northern property line), street facade and rear wall of the dependency clearly establish three walls of an envelope which encompasses two buildings and the private lives of the residents. The fourth (southern) wall shifts position, expanding and contracting the space and nature of this private life.

The main house is divided from front to back into public and private zones by a mechanical and plumbing core, the figural representation of the hearth. This hearth is centered front to back, side to side within the interior space of the main house.
The front and more public interior space of the main house is intended to read as being both envelope (inside and private) and piazza (outside and public). These multiple readings are produced by compressing or shifting the positions of the distinct structural systems of envelope and piazza into one plane. The south wall of this interior space (normally a load-bearing wall with windows) is established by the wood-frame structure of the piazza, infilled with glass but maintaining its transparency. This piazza rests on a foundation and is attached to a wall of the envelope. This arrangement escapes tradition in that the piazza foundation and the fourth wall of the envelope have shifted position or been compressed into the envelope's foundation and blind wall respectively. The exact identity of the space is now called into question.
Multiple readings of this space are furthered by the hearth and the interior elevation of the street facade. The symmetrical positioning of the hearth establishes this space as a single volume. The interior elevation of the street facade divides that same volume asymmetrically into two spaces: a large space with a symmetrically placed window that views the street and a narrow gallery visually open to the street and garden (a piazza).

Outside, an adjacent gallery, defined on one side by the transparent southern wall and wood-frame of the piazza and on the other by a visually permeable plane supporting vines and plants, continues this compression or shifting of structural systems. Maintaining the traditional syntax of the formal elements while expressing particular attributes of both, this space can be identified as either piazza or garden, while occupying the formal space of the piazza in the type's traditional vocabulary. The reading of the space as garden by traditional pattern or order of elements is furthered by the walkway adjacent to the garden wall. This walkway provides a procession sequence similar to the sidewalk experience that leads to the piazza entry.

The weatherboarded piazza entry, which aligns with the formal entry to the interior of the envelope and the hearth, becomes a point of transformation as well as transition. Reading from front to rear, the piazza, as both an object and a space, assumes a more traditional appearance in this more private zone. The roof of the piazza is now an experientially and visually independent element.

The other elements and systems also become more independent as the compression of the garden is relieved, while its verticality is maintained. A plane supporting vines and plants, it continues to work as both garden and garden wall. However, it no longer
defines or forms the piazza space.

Opposite the garden the piazza attaches to a wall of the envelope. Again the compression has been relieved, the piazza rests on an independent foundation, and the wall to which the frame structure attaches is no longer the blind (northern) wall of the envelope.

A fourth (load-bearing, wood-frame) wall now forms and clearly defines an envelope and a continuation of the narrow gallery that was part of the large interior volume at the front of the house. This piazza is attached to this wall. Between this wall and gallery (containing a stairway) and the columns of the piazza is a continuation of the fenestration that filled in the piazza structure forward.

The gallery has most of the particular characteristics of the interior space forward of the entry and hearth, with the exception that the envelope wall to which the piazza attaches, has an exterior finish, as opposed to the interior detailing of the wall in the forward space. Despite the similarity of particular characteristics, the general spatial character is vastly different.

Behind this wall is the hearth and the more private spaces of the home: a bedroom above; kitchen and dining below, both in close proximity to the hearth. The overall plan dimensions of these rooms equal that of the more public room in front. However, they differ in volume. Like the front space each of these spaces is perceptually divided into two areas. These divisions occur perpendicular to the division of the front space. In each of these spaces, one of the two areas is a square defined by the hearth and two opposing walls of the envelope.
The remaining area, a rectangle, is articulated as part of the piazza and opened up by reiterating the piazza structure as expressed on the interior elsewhere, and the fenestration system of the south wall. Additionally plaster on the interiors of the end wall has an exterior finish.

The dependency is virtually a reflection of the rear portion of the main house. The interior spaces and opposing elevation of the dependency are the same as those of the more private area of the main house. The fourth wall of the dependency, like its counterpart forward, has no windows, only doors. However, the dependency's fourth wall changes the boundary, and expands the envelope. It shifts its position in plane to align with the transparent southern wall of the main house. Attached to this wall is
an abbreviated piazza or porch. Like the piazza of the main house, it corresponds to openings in the envelope.

A private courtyard is formed between the two buildings of the envelope. The continuous nature of the blind wall, the opposing main building and dependency with interior finish plaster on their exterior surfaces, and facades that reflect one advance the idea that this exterior space is integral to the envelope. This perception is furthered by the plastered fourth wall that expands the boundary of the envelope to the opposite property line and completes the exterior room. The courtyard continues the use of established elements, relationships, and materials manipulated to provide multiple readings of space and identity.
Although more fully developed, this fifth design should not be viewed as a final solution. Like the other four designs it represents only possible answers to questions which each individual and family should speak to.
PHILOSOPHY AND METHOD

The original motivation for this work was the desire to discover a means of reconciling a perceived disjunction between how we make things and why we make things in architecture. This exploration for a methodology could not proceed without an assumption as to why we make things.

The need to define this motivating or primary cause and the reasoning used to identify it align with the Aristotelian method for knowing a thing: that the existence of any thing can be understood through the identification of its four causes, the most important of which is its primary or motivating cause. Its primacy can be identified by its self-sufficient nature: It is an end in itself. It is a reason for being that is independent and final.

The thesis is based on the assumption that the motivation for the uniquely human act of making or building is the affirmation of our individual and collective existence.

The act of making or building affirms our existence. Embodied in this affirmation is communication. The act constructs a common ground that is experienced physically, sensually, and abstractly--intellectually. The sentient experience is self-contained. It cannot be examined nor explicitly shared with another being. The sentient experience is derived from a material reality: it is fact that cannot be confirmed. The abstract, the intangible product of our intellect is what we share. It has no material reality; Its tenuous existence is based on our collective agreement.

Architecture is an attempt to reconcile these intertwined and distinct parts of our
existence. It is a persistent attempt at communication that spans the past, present and future.

These distinctions between our self-contained, private and our shared or common, public realms are derived from and affirmed by the writings of Hannah Arendt. Arendt articulates the importance of the human artifact in the building of this common ground.¹⁹ The public realm, the common world which is not identical with earth or nature but related to the human artifact, the fabrication of human hands, relates and separates men at the same time.²⁰ Essential characteristics of this common or public world embodied by artifacts and architecture are permanence and objectivity. Arendt declares "the common world is what we enter when we are born and what we leave behind when we die. It transcends our life span into past and future alike...it is the publicity of the public realm which can absorb and make shine through the centuries whatever men may want to save from the natural ruin of time."²¹

Objectivity is essential in the construction of the common world because "only where things can be seen by many in a variety of aspects without changing their identity, so that those who are gathered around them know they see sameness in utter diversity, can worldly reality truly and reliably appear."²²

Participation in the construction of this public realm—the common ground of our existence—is inherent in the participation of human freedom. To be "deprived of seeing and hearing others, of being seen and being heard by them...[is to be] imprisoned in the subjectivity of their own singular experience, which does not cease to be singular if the same experience is multiplied innumerable times."²³
Coincidentally, similar ideas regarding the primacy of material reality in the communication of knowledge and meaning, and the need to act within the public realm as an expression of freedom, individuality, and community were articulated by the architect Thomas Jefferson.

Jefferson's thought and philosophy were grounded in an epistemology of materialism and sensationism; a reliance on the sense experience and the objectivity of material reality. The contrast of this epistemological position to the abstract and theoretical emphasis of Cartesian thought and philosophy are clearly described by Jefferson's statement: "I feel therefore I am", an adaptation of Descartes' axiom "I think therefore I am." A nominalist, Jefferson had an intense distrust of systems and theories. As a particularist, he viewed each object, each individual and example as potentially important. For Thomas Jefferson, "true knowledge was a progressive dynamic penetration of the world. Seeing, listening, and reading--reading above all. In this way one got more and more facts and included them in one's own personality until they became part of it. The unity thus achieved was a personal unity. Things seen and heard and read--read above all--became part of a man, and in each stage of his life they grew with him." It was this education, the sentient experience of nature and history, which Jefferson believed would result in the perfection of man.

Jefferson's convictions are materially evidenced by his recording of information and expansive collections of natural and human artifacts, particularly his libraries. Another expression of these philosophical positions with specific reference to architecture is Jefferson's statement regarding domestic architecture: "It is, then, among the most important arts, and it is desirable to introduce taste into an art that shows so much."
Jefferson's understanding or belief in the need to participate in the public realm, "of seeing and hearing others, of being seen and being heard by them," can be deduced from ethical positions affirmed in his writing. It is clear from the Declaration of Independence that Jefferson believed the pursuit of happiness, a natural right of all human beings, to be an intrinsic part of freedom. For Jefferson, freedom (similar to Arendt) and happiness can only be pursued and experienced within society. This conclusion may be drawn from the knowledge that Jefferson believed "individual happiness to be inseparable from the practice of virtue...that to be virtuous is to be virtuous in society."28

The coincidental positions articulated by Arendt and Jefferson may be made succinct with the following statement: To experience freedom and happiness the individual must act in the public realm. The public realm is the material reality of society, human artifact, the common ground that links the past, present, and future.

The design exercise is ideologically grounded in a belief presumably shared with Jefferson: An individual's or family's private residence (domestic architecture) can be the medium for action in the public realm. Its attempt to understand and empower the Charleston Single House's communicative potential, is guided by Jefferson through an examination and internalization of his methodology.

"Neither aiming at originality of principle or sentiment, nor yet copied from any particular and previous writing, it was intended to be an expression of the American mind. All of its authority rests then on the harmonizing sentiments of the day whether expressed in conversation, in letters, printed essays, or elementary books of public rights, as Aristotle, Cicero, Locke, Sidney, etc." is the response Jefferson gave to a charge that
he had copied parts of the Declaration of Independence from ancient sources. Jefferson might have given essentially the same response to a charge that any of the buildings he designed were copies from ancient sources.

All of Thomas Jefferson's endeavors were guided by a close examination of history. His actions manifest a conviction that the essentials, the fundamental ideas of life had been considered and given expression by the ancients. The Ancients became living companions for Jefferson. For Jefferson, "ancient books were a rich source of knowledge in all fields of the humanities and sciences." Language itself, "a compound of reason and imagination...reflected the mental richness and creativeness of any given people and age."

Jefferson's "continuous and progressive study of ancient texts is quantified by Karl Lehman's estimate, "it is no overstatement to say that at the end of his life the 'Sage of Monticello' had read more of ancient literature, both poetry and prose than any other man of his time, apart from a group of professional classicists." His study was approached with "four tools, original sources, use of analogy based on personal experience, study of living remnants of the past, a grasp of the singularity of the specific facts." "The scholarly method of condensing the author's argument...in his Commonplace book" was part of his process. Jefferson valued this method in its requirement that one was forced to determine the essentials, and condense those thoughts.

The objective of Jefferson's method was not imitation. In written composition he held the conviction that direct imitation of another idiom was not the way to form one's own style. The objective was "to form your style in your own language" a language
revealing the richness and creativeness of your own people and age.\textsuperscript{39}

In architecture as in any other form of expression or communication the objective was not imitation. "To be radically modern during these decades was not to invent but to transform. The search for new design principles in Jefferson's time led towards a re-examination of historical prototypes, not in order to imitate them, but to provide a consistent and compatible theme capable of variation, one that would harmonize with 'the sentiments of the day.'"\textsuperscript{40}

To these ends, the utility of history for Jefferson and others is that "history by apprising them of the past will enable them to judge of the future;...it will qualify them as judges of the actions and designs of men."\textsuperscript{41} History's artifacts provide "extended social human experience."\textsuperscript{42}
CONCLUDING STATEMENT

The design work is a Jeffersonian education in the language of the Charleston Single House. Each Charleston Single House examined first hand or through literature is viewed as an historical artifact, an oration of topical significance. The analysis of the type and each design is the result of reading and re-reading those orations. The objective of the design thesis is to explore the possibilities for transformation of this historical prototype, producing variations harmonizing with 'sentiments of the day.'
NOTES

1 Stoney, This is Charleston, p. 25.
2 Holl, p. 5.
3 Ibid.
4 Ibid.
5 Swaim, p. 37. Samuel Gaillard Stoney traces predecessors for the Chareston Single House to Middleburg Plantation built approximately 1699. "The planning of rooms, put as it were end to end so as to give them chances to catch breezes from as many directions as possible, and the use of shading 'piazzas' make Middleburg the nearest approach to prototype of the 'Low Country' Single House so popular in Charleston and found nowhere else north of Antilles." Stoney, p. 47. Plantations of the Carolina Low Country.
6 Stoney, p. 25. This is Charleston.
7 "Piazza" is an Italian word traditionally translated as plaza. It is used idiomatically in Charleston to refer to a side porch.
8 Molloy, p. 165.
9 Simons and Lapham, p. 19.
10 Ibid. p. 22.
12 Severens, p. 7.
13 Severens, p. 7.
14 Narrative regarding Infill Public Housing Program, Housing Authority of the City of Charleston.
16 1978 Planning Unit 4 document. There has not been a significant change in residential density.
17 City of Charleston Planning Unit 4. p. 4-5.
19 Arendt, p. 50-58.
20 Ibid, p. 52.
21 Ibid, p. 55.
22 Ibid, p. 57.
23 Ibid, p. 58.
24 Ibid, p. 41.
25 Lehman, p. 11.
26 Nichols, p. 175.
27 Nichols, p. 178.
28 Miller, p. 98.
29 Pickens, p. 257.
30 Even the Virginia State Capitol, admittedly (by Jefferson) owing much to the Maison Carree, is transformed by Jefferson to fit the requirements of a tripartite government, and
Palladian proportion.

31 Lehman, p. 53.
32 Ibid.
34 Ibid, p. 15.
36 Ibid, p. 49.
37 Horat, p. 65.
38 Lehman, p. 151.
40 Pickens, p. 259-260.

41 Jefferson, "Notes on the State of Virginia" - The Source in which this Jefferson quotation was located could not be retrieved at the time of writing.
42 Lehman, p. 204.
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